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THE ISLAMIC WORLD AND THE LATIN EAST: WILLIAM OF TRIPOLI AND HIS SYRIAN CONTEXT

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I am submitting herewith a dissertation written by Jeremy Daniel Pearson entitled "THE ISLAMIC WORLD AND THE LATIN EAST: WILLIAM OF TRIPOLI AND HIS SYRIAN CONTEXT." I have examined the final electronic copy of this dissertation for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, with a major in History.

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**THE ISLAMIC WORLD AND THE LATIN EAST:
WILLIAM OF TRIPOLI
AND HIS SYRIAN CONTEXT**

A Dissertation Presented for the
Doctor of Philosophy
Degree
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Jeremy Daniel Pearson
August 2018

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finished. I am lucky to have called him my friend for nearly sixteen years. He was with me as I relocated to three different states, and spent many lonely nights writing. This is dedicated to you my friend.

ABSTRACT

For nearly two centuries after the First Crusade, a Latin-Christian elite controlled significant parts of the eastern Mediterranean, home to a diverse array of Christians, Muslims, and Jews. While seemingly a rich context for inter-religious cultural exchange, the dominant historical narrative has called this society a form of “proto-Apartheid,” with Frankish rulers successfully erecting impermeable boundaries between themselves and their largely Arabic-speaking subjects.

This dissertation challenges this narrative through an investigation of the life and work of William of Tripoli, a thirteenth-century Dominican born in modern Lebanon, who spent his career evangelizing Muslims from a priory in Akko (Acre, Israel). William wrote two treatises on Islam that have been called “peculiar,” because of their positive portrayal of both the Qur’ān and the Prophet Muḥammad, but have not otherwise been integrated into our understanding of the cultural milieu of the Latin East.

I argue that the “peculiar” elements in William’s work were borrowed from Arabic-Christian and Muslim sources, and that his entire rhetorical approach to Islam was informed by them. Through a contextualization of his work, I show that the religious, cultural, and social barriers of the Latin East were far more permeable than prior scholarship has acknowledged. Living and working alongside Muslims and eastern Christians cultivated within the Franks of the Latin East a uniquely Latin Eastern perspective. This was defined, above all, by the mental and emotional flexibility to interact with one’s neighbors from different sectarian communities in any of the ways that the context required, even while disagreeing with them in a broad, religious sense. William of Tripoli is the best written example we have of this perspective. He sought a *pia interpretatio*, or a pious interpretation of the Qur’ān, two centuries before this term was coined, because personal engagement with Islam had convinced him this was the best way to accomplish his missionary goals.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction and Literature Review

In the year 1095, thousands of western Europeans were inspired to march nearly two thousand miles to “reclaim” the city of Jerusalem. Most had never been to Jerusalem, and yet they felt it belonged to them and were prepared to make the trip at great personal and financial cost. After three years of misery and thousands of deaths on all sides, they successfully sacked the holy city, and established political control over a swathe of the Near East that included parts of the modern countries of Palestine, Israel, Lebanon, Jordan, Syria, and Turkey. We call this territory the Latin East, and at its height it comprised the Kingdom of Jerusalem, the Principality of Antioch, and the Counties of Tripoli and Edessa. While the borders of these territories changed through treaty and conquest, and Jerusalem itself was lost more than once, the Latin East would endure as a political entity for nearly two centuries until it was finally conquered in 1291 by the Mamluk Sultanate.

Western Europeans administered these territories, but the clear majority of the total population were indigenous Muslims, Jews, and Christians. The western European immigrants, or “Franks” as they were most often called, some of whom had fought in the wars of the Crusades and others who had not, found themselves in authority over a population that was more diverse than anything that existed in the West. For these Frankish authorities, a *modus vivendi* to accommodate this diverse population became vital for a host of religious and economic reasons. While no Latin Eastern census data survives to provide us with precise demographic information, we know, for example, that

the majority of the labor force, like the population generally, were Muslims and Eastern Christians. The Latin East could not sustain itself without the local population, as there were simply not enough Franks to produce the food and other vital necessities to maintain itself. Moreover, even though the period from 1100 to 1300 was a time when religious and secular authorities in continental Europe were becoming increasingly intolerant of what they defined as religious deviance, such deviance was never widespread enough in Europe to provide a parallel for dealing, violently or otherwise, with the sheer number of “Saracens” and “heretic” Christians in the Holy Land.¹ Furthermore, the permissibility of “holy war”, the justification for the crusades themselves, was itself controversial, and one of the recurring debates of the Middle Ages was whether Muslims and Christian heretics should be dealt with primarily through armed military action or missionary preaching.²

Since it was neither economically nor morally viable to get rid of these communities, it became vital for the Franks of the Latin East to develop strategies for accommodating the diversity of religious practices and beliefs of the pluralistic society that was under their dominion. Fulcher of Chartres, a participant in and chronicler of the

¹ In their writing, most Latin authors referred to Muslims as Saracens, which had both religious and ethnic connotations. When I use the term Saracen, I am specifically referring to the language used by medieval authors. Moreover, when I refer to certain eastern Christians as “heretics,” I am referring to the Latin Christian perspective. For a useful overview of eastern Christianity prior to the first Crusade, see Sidney H. Griffith, *The Church in the Shadow of the Mosque: Christians and Muslims in the World of Islam* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 1-134. On the growing “intolerance” of western European society, see R.I. Moore, *The Formation of a Persecuting Society: Authority and Deviance in Western Europe 950-1250* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), 1-57. While Moore rightly observes the development of systematic violence to eliminate deviance, more recent scholarship has shown the ways violence could also have an integrative function. See, David Nirenberg, *Communities of Violence: Persecution of Minorities in the Middle Ages* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 3-43.

² See Benjamin Z. Kedar, *Crusade and Mission: European Approaches toward the Muslims* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014), 3-135.

First Crusade, claimed that this accommodation happened within the first generation of Frankish settlement. As Fulcher describes it:

For we who were Occidentals have now become Orientals. He who was a Roman or a Frank has in this land been made into a Galilean or a Palestinian. He who was of Rheims or Chartres has now become a citizen of Tyre or Antioch. We have already forgotten the places of our birth; already these are unknown to many of us or not mentioned any more. Some already possess homes or households by inheritance. Some have taken wives not only of their own people but Syrians or Armenians or even Saracens who have obtained the grace of baptism...Some tend vineyards, others till fields...People use the eloquence and idioms of diverse languages in conversing back and forth. Words of different languages have become common property known to each nationality, and mutual faith unites those who are ignorant of their descent. Indeed, it is written, "The lion and the ox shall eat straw together" [Isai. 62: 25]. He who was born a stranger is now as one born here; he who was born an alien has become as a native.³

Fulcher was a member of the clergy who served as chaplain to Count Baldwin of Boulogne, one of the leaders of the First Crusade, accompanying him from Edessa to Jerusalem. Fulcher, like Baldwin, remained in Jerusalem the rest of his life, possibly even serving as canon of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher. The passage above occurs in his chronicle, the *Historia Hierosolymitana*, which he began in 1100 or 1101, but continued to add to until at least 1127. Fulcher's claim that the first generation of Frankish settlers

³Nam qui fuimus Occidentales, nunc facti sumus Orientales. Qui fuit Romanus aut Francus, hac in terra factus est Galilaeus aut Palaestinus. Qui fuit Remensis aut Carnotensis, nunc efficitur Tyrius vel Antiochenus. Iam obliti sumus nativitatibus nostrae loca, iam nobis pluribus vel sunt ignota vel etiam inaudita. Hic iam possidet domos proprias et famias quasi iure paterno et hereditario, ille vero iam duxit uxorem non tantum compatriotam, sed et Syram aut Armenam et interdum Saracenam, baptismi autem gratiam adeptam. Alius habet apud se tam socerum quam nurum seu generum sive privignum necne vitricum. Nec deest huic nepos seu pronepos. Hic potitur vineis, ille vero culturis. Diversarum linguarum covtitur alternatim eloquio et obsequio alteruter. Lingua diversa iam communis facta utrique nationi fit nota et iungit fides quibus est ignota progenies. Scriptum quippe est : leo et bos simul comedent paleas. Qui era alienigena, nunc est quasi indigena, et qui inquilinus est, utique incola factus., Fulcher of Chartres, *Historia Hierosolymitana (1095-1127)*, ed. H. Hagenmeyer (Heidelberg, 1913), 748-49.

had been dramatically changed by their new circumstances occurs near the end of his chronicle. Few scholars have taken this passage seriously, however, because in other parts of the chronicle Fulcher harshly condemns Muslims and local Christians. In the most thorough study of the *Historia* to date, Verena Epp has claimed that Fulcher inserted this passage in the second recension of the text in a self-conscious attempt to tone down some of its rhetoric, but does not provide a satisfying explanation for what his goal in doing so would have been, and why, if this was his aim, he did not edit out the earlier, harsher passages.⁴ Marcus Bull has acknowledged that Fulcher might be describing a genuine phenomenon, but that this cannot be interpreted as “evidence of a significant softening of attitudes”, because in the main his work reflects the “stock image of the Franks’ opponents as pagan and perfidious, exotic and threatening.”⁵

Bull’s analysis is accurate to a point. Fulcher does rely on “stock” images of the Saracens in other parts of his work, but Bull’s conclusion suggests that Fulcher was a one-dimensional thinker, unable to maintain more than one image of Muslims at a time. In his dismissal of this passage, Bull admits that if these sentiments can be taken seriously at all they reflect “localized rationales.” What he means is that Fulcher might have had a more nuanced view of the actual Muslims that he and his fellow Franks

⁴ Verena Epp, “Miles und militia bei Fulcher von Chartres und seinen Bearbeitern,” in *Militia Christi e crociata nei secoli XI-XII. Atti dell undecima settimana internazionale di studio Mendola, 28 agosto-1 settembre 1989* (Milan, 1992), 769-84 ; ----, Fulcher von Chartres: Studien zur Geschichts-schreibung des ersten Kreuzzuges (Düsseldorf, 1990), 46-79; Y.N. Harari, “Eyewitnessing in accounts of the First Crusade: The *Gesta Francorum* and other contemporary narratives“, *Crusades* 3 (2004): 77-99; Jay Rubenstein, “Putting history to use: Three crusades chronicles in context”, *Viator* 35 (2004): 131-68.
⁵ Marcus Bull, “Fulcher of Chartres”, in *Christian-Muslim Relations 600 - 1500*, ed. David Thomas. Consulted online on 12 October 2017 http://dx.doi.org.proxy.lib.utk.edu:90/10.1163/1877-8054_cmri_COM_24025.

interacted with, even if that did not change the broader way he wrote about Saracens as a whole.

In a recent monograph, Thomas Burman has analyzed western efforts to translate the Qur'ān into Latin. One of the first such attempts was Robert of Ketton's twelfth-century, *Lex mahumet pseudo-prophete...*, or *The Law of Muḥammad, the Pseudo-Prophet*. As the title indicates, Robert did not consider Muḥammad a genuine prophet, and translated the Qur'ān in order to refute what he and his fellow translators considered its distortions, absurdities, and incompatibilities with the Old and New Testaments. Doing so, however, required a sustained, intimate engagement with the text. While this did not fundamentally change Robert's view that the Qur'ān was false, Burman shows that his engagement resulted in "a subtle shift of purpose," which caused him to render the Qur'ān into an elevated Latin prose usually reserved for the most sacred, high-status Latin texts.⁶ Sustained engagement with the Qur'ān changed his relationship with the it: he treated it like a text of worth, even though the mainstream of Latin rhetoric was dismissive of or hostile to it. This dissertation will argue that Fulcher's statement describes a similar phenomenon. Sharing physical space with local Christians and Muslims, another form of sustained engagement, caused the Franks of the Latin East to undergo a similar "subtle shift of purpose". This shift provided them with the mental and emotional flexibility to hold multiple, sometimes conflicting propositions about Muslims and local Christians at once. In their writings, authors such as Fulcher could disparage

⁶ Thomas E. Burman, *Reading the Qur'ān in Latin Christendom, 1140-1560* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), 1-21.

them in the abstract as heretics and enemies of Christ, but in their daily lives appreciate -- or at least accommodate-- the specific Muslims and local Christians who were their neighbors.

Detecting the concrete signs of these shifts is, however, a difficult task, and one of the reasons the quote from Fulcher is so often used (and admittedly overused) is that it is one of the most explicit statements by a resident of the Latin East of how the Franks had been changed by living abroad. Since there are so few parallels to this passage, it is often mentioned in passing but rarely engaged with in any meaningful way. For those who have dismissed it, the acculturated perspective that Fulcher expresses has been easy to treat as propaganda: an attempt by a Frank, who knew how dependent the Latin East was on western support, to encourage more of his countrymen and women back home to immigrate. While this study does not believe that Frankish society was ever a fully integrated one, I will argue that Fulcher is describing something that was real to a point. Some acculturation did happen, and Franks like Fulcher, who were born or spent significant time in the Latin East, did have a fundamentally different, and often more nuanced view of Muslims and eastern Christians than Europeans in the West, for whom there were few firsthand examples, outside of Iberia, to challenge the “stock images” of medieval literature.

William of Tripoli: An Introduction and Overview

One such Frank was a Dominican friar named William of Tripoli, who spent his career evangelizing Muslims in the Latin East. William wrote two treatises on Islam that express a nuanced and complex point-of-view, but like Fulcher’s statement, neither text

has been seriously considered as examples of how sustained engagement with local communities affected the Frankish perspective. Little of William's early biography is known, but we assume he was born to a French or Italian family in the Latin County of Tripoli.⁷ We do not precisely know when he was born, but it was likely in the 1220s, within a decade of Saint Dominic's death in 1221. Dominicans had been in the Latin East since at least 1226, but it was not until a meeting of the general chapter in Paris in 1228 that the Holy Land was officially established as a regional province for founding priories. Between 1228 and 1291, at least six Dominican priories were founded in the Holy Land. While the city of Jerusalem was always of paramount religious importance, the priory in Acre (Akko/Akka) became the largest and most important in the region. This was largely because of the significance of the city to the Frankish settlements as a whole. The Latin East relied on supplies of goods and manpower from the West, and Acre was the most vital port city in the region. It was so important, in fact, that it became the capital of the Latin Kingdom during periods when Jerusalem was no longer in Frankish hands.

As a crossroads between the Mediterranean and Middle East, Acre was a place of tremendous religious and ethnic diversity. The Andalusian Ibn Jubayr, for example, traveled through Acre during his many journeys, describing it as a dirty and chaotic place

⁷ This is purely an educated guess based on his name, and demographic factors. Most families who settled in Tripoli were French and Italian in origin; moreover, "the friars preferred some mission fields over others. French and Italian Dominicans sought the near East and Asia; French friars were in the majority in 13th century Palestine", William Hinnebusch, *The Dominicans: A Short History* (New York: Alba House, 1975), 51; Also, F.M. Abel, "Le Couvent des Freres Precheurs a Saint-Jean d'Acre," *Revue Biblique* 43 (1934): 265-84; Berthold-Altaner, "Sprachkenntnisse und Dolmetscherwesen im missionarischen und diplomatischen Verkehr zwischen Abendland und Orient im 13. Und 14. Jahrhundert," *Zeitschrift fur Kirchengeschichte* 55 (1936): 83-126; Martin Grabmann, "die Missionsidee bei den Dominkanertheologen des 13. Jahrhunderts," *Zeitschrift fur Missionwissenschaft* 1 (1911): 137-48.

filled with a cacophony of sights, sounds, and smells. Jacques de Vitry, a French priest who was elected bishop of Acre in 1216, was similarly uncomplimentary, comparing the religious diversity of the city to a nine-headed beast trying to devour itself. This was a place full of “commercial activity from Italian and other European maritime cities, along with travelers and envoys, both Christian and Muslim, who were passing through Acre at this time.”⁸ The city had a cosmopolitan ambience, and William of Tripoli was at the center of it.

We do not know whether William entered the Dominican order in Tripoli or Acre, but we do know he was based in Acre for most of his career. This is based on two hard pieces of evidence, the first of which is that he signs both of the treatises attributed to him as “Guillelmus Tripolitanus Acconensis conventus Ordinis Pradicatorum”, or “William of Tripoli, of the priory in Acre of the Order of Preachers.” The second comes from a series of three papal bulls issued by Pope Urban IV in 1264, in which William is referred to by name as coming from the city of “Acconensem”. Urban is complimentary of William, referring to him as his “dear son” and “messenger” (*nuntius*) who does “not cease working for the benefit of the [Holy] land, exposing his own person to dangers on land and sea.”⁹ According to Urban, William first traveled to him to deliver an urgent

⁸ Jaroslav Folda, “Acre and the Art of Crusaders: The Final Years, 1268-89,” in *Crusader Arrt in the Holy Land: From the Third Crusade to the Fall of Acre, 1187-1289* (New York: Cambridge University, 2005), 374.

⁹ Ceterum, predictum fratrem Guillelmum qui, sicut scire te credimus, non cessat pro dicte terre profectibus laborare, personam suam maris et terre periculis exponendo, et qui ad tuam propter hoc accedit presentiam, regia benignitate recipias eique benivolam prebeas audientiam in negotiis dicte terre, que ipse tue magnitudini confidenter exponet., M. Jean Guiraud, *Les registres d’Urbain IV (1261-1264): recueil des bulles de ce pape publiées ou analysées d’après les manuscrits originaux du Vatican*, vol. 2 (Paris: A. Fontemoing, 1901), 235.

message: vital defenses, such as fortifications at Jaffa, had fallen into disrepair. Money had evidently been promised for this by Louis IX of France, as well as other nobles and church elites in both Europe and the Latin East, but it had not been delivered. All three of Urban's bulls are an attempt to raise this money, the first of which is addressed to Louis himself. The Pope uses William's firsthand report to motivate the king to pay what had been promised.

Louis was captured during the Seventh Crusade, and spent four years in the Levant after his release.¹⁰ During this time he appears to have met William. Urban is explicit on this point, saying that "we believe that you [Louis] know him [William]." "Urban uses the personal regard he believes Louis has for William to motivate the King. The second bull, addressed to John of Valenciennes, Archbishop of Tyre, reports that William has been sent back to the Holy Land to raise funds there as well. Urban similarly refers to "William, who we believe you know."¹¹ The third, also addressed to John, indicates that William had still not raised the necessary funds. All three bulls indicate that William was well known both in Europe and the Holy Land, and he was actively engaged in efforts to defend the Latin East from territorial losses. Sultan Baybars of the Mamluk dynasty had begun to conquer the lands of the Latin Kingdom beginning in 1263, and thus William's request for help was indeed urgent.¹²

¹⁰ Helpful overviews of the Crusades are Jonathan Riley-Smith, *The Crusades: A History*, 2nd ed. (New Haven: Yale Nota Bene, 2005), 158-205; Jean Richard, *The Crusades, c. 1071 – c. 1291* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 245-300.

¹¹ *Ceterum predictum fratrem Guillelmum qui, sicut scire vos credimus etc., usque exponendo, et qui ad vestram propter hoc accedit presentiam, benigne recipere eique benignam audientiam in negotiis dicte terre, que idem vobis confidenter exponet, exhibere curetis.*, Guiraud, *Les registres d'Urbain IV*, 236.

¹² Peter Thorau, *The Lion of Egypt: Sultan Baybars I and the Near East in the Thirteenth Century* (London: Longman, 1992); Reuven Amitai, *Mongols and Mamluks: the Mamluk-Īlkhānid War, 1260-1281*

The Broader Context

In 1261, around the same time William was serving as papal nuntius, a man named Teobaldo Visconti, Archdeacon of Liège, had found himself in conflict with Henry of Gelders, a military man who had used his family's power and influence to get himself elected Bishop of Liège.¹³ During a meeting in 1262, Archdeacon Teobaldo accused Henry of fornicating with the daughter of a local noble family, who was then so incensed that he threatened to physically assault Teobaldo. Dismayed by Henry's behavior and the situation that had placed him in power, Teobaldo decided to leave on pilgrimage to the Holy Land, but only made it as far as Paris. Here he, like William, became acquainted with King Louis IX. Five years later Teobaldo was sent to England by Pope Clement IV, where he also met Prince Edward, the future King Edward I, accompanying him to the city of Acre as part of the Eighth Crusade. Four months after his arrival in May 1271 Teobaldo was elected pope in absentia, returning to Italy that September where he was inaugurated as Pope Gregory X. Before leaving the Holy Land, however, he gave a final sermon in Acre where he is reported to have quoted Psalm 137: "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem to my chief joy."

(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); David Ayalon, *Le phénomène mamelouk dans l'Orient islamique* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1996); Linda Northrup, *From Slave to Sultan: The Career of Al-Manṣūr Qalāwūn and the Consolidation of Mamluk Rule in Egypt and Syria (678-689 A.H./1279-1290 A.D.)* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1998). Julien Loiseau, *Les Mamelouks XIIIe-XVIe siècle: une expérience du pouvoir dans l'islam médiéval* (Paris: Seuil, 2014).

¹³ Philip B. Baldwin, *Pope Gregory X and the Crusades* (Woodbridge : Boydell & Brewer, 2014), 30-31.

Pope Gregory X did not forget Jerusalem. One of his first acts after his election was to call the Second Council of Lyons, one of the primary goals of which was to raise the military and financial support for a new crusade. Before he departed for Europe, Gregory requested a number of reports on the situation of the Holy Land in preparation for the task he was about to undertake.¹⁴ During his four months in Acre, Gregory met William of Tripoli and requested such a report from him. In response, William wrote two treatises, the *Notitia de Machometo* and *De statu Sarracenorum*, both of which are dedicated to the “venerable father and lord Teobaldo, archdeacon of the church of Liege.” In the preface to both texts, William is explicit about his purpose, explaining that “since I understood that your illuminated faith desired to know what the Saracen people and their book believe about the Christian faith, I strove, with a pious vow of devotion to serve the Lord and provide what you desire.”¹⁵

Both texts are organized largely the same, beginning with a biography of the Prophet Muḥammad, which is followed by a narrative of the Islamic conquests, a description of the compilation of the Qur’ān, a translation of nineteen Qur’ānic *ayāt* (verses), a discussion of these passages and their potential for evangelical work, a report on the geopolitical situation of the Latin East, and a description of the rituals and beliefs of non-elite (*mediocres*) Muslims. The two most similar sections of each treatise are the

¹⁴ Fidentius of Padua’s *Liber de recuperatione Terre Sancte*, for example. This will be discussed in detail in the second chapter. For a brief overview, A Leopold, *The Crusade Proposals of the Late Thirteenth and early Fourteenth Centuries* (Ashgate: Aldershot, 2000).

¹⁵ Venerabili patri ac domino Thealdo Leodiensis ecclesie archidiacono digno Sancte Terre peregrino sancto frater Guillelmus Tripolitanus Aconensis conventus Ordinis Predicatorum ipsum in Christo pie peregrinationis adipisci votiva. Quoniam intellexi illuminatam fidem vestram cupere scire, quid gens Sarracenorum et liber eorum de fide sentiat christiana, votis pie devotionis studui in Domino deservire et offerre cupita., Wihelm von Tripolis, *Notitia; De statu*, 194, 266.

biography of Muḥammad and translations of the Qur'ān. The sections that diverge the most are William's narrative of the Islamic conquests and his description of contemporary events, both of which are greatly expanded in *De statu*.

While Islam was a popular topic for twelfth and thirteenth-century Latin writers, the detail of William's descriptions, and the rhetorical tone of his approach are virtually unique. Most Latin biographies of Muḥammad, for example, portray the Prophet as a magician and/or conman, who fools his followers through tricks and the help of an excommunicated, heretical monk named Sergius.¹⁶ William, by contrast, centers his biography on the formative relationship between a young Muḥammad and a pious, Christian monk named Baḥīrā.¹⁷ He portrays Muḥammad's message as based in Christian truth, and blames the divergence between Islam and Christianity on Muḥammad's followers. He implies, in other words, that Muḥammad was a true prophet, a dramatically different take than his medieval Latin contemporaries for whom Muḥammad was exclusively portrayed as a false pseudo-prophet. The differences between William of Tripoli's rhetorical approach and that of his peers has not gone unnoticed. Norman Daniel has called William's perspective "mysterious" and "peculiar", observing that "quite the most remarkable of all Latin appreciations of the Qur'ānic Jesus is that by William of Tripoli. His accurate use of the text of the Qur'ān is unique..."¹⁸ Palmer Throop has explained that "in William the pope found a competent authority on the religion and

¹⁶ For an overview of this style of Latin biography, see John Tolan, *Saracens: Islam in the Medieval European Imagination* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 135-169.

¹⁷ This will be discussed in detail in the first chapter with the relevant bibliography.

¹⁸ Norman Daniel, *Islam and the West: The Making of an Image* (Oxford: Oneworld Publishing, 1993), 193.

manners of the Saracen. He wrote sympathetically and showed astonishingly few of the rabid prejudices so often met with in the abundant medieval literature concerning Mohammed and Mohammedanism.”¹⁹ More recently, Thomas O’Meara has similarly described William’s writings as “unusual in offering a favorable presentation of Muslim life and faith and, even more, a Christian theology of that religion.”²⁰

While William’s treatises are indeed different in their presentation of Islam, this dissertation will argue that they are neither “mysterious” nor “peculiar,” but the result of the “subtle shift of purpose” that came from firsthand, sustained engagement with Muslims and eastern Christians in the Latin East. The few scholars who have discussed William’s work have emphasized William’s fair and positive presentation of Islam, but have overlooked the fact that both treatises contain sections that are highly polemical. Just as Fulcher had the mental flexibility to draw on stock images of Saracens when writing about Muslims broadly, but emphasize a close relationship with the Muslims and eastern Christians who were his neighbors, so William of Tripoli should be understood as an author who had similarly cultivated the ability to maintain multiple, sometimes conflicting propositions about Islam at once. This flexibility was one of the vital skills that allowed a pluralistic society to function, and one of the clear differences between his work and the work of Latin authors for whom Muslims were a purely literary concern, without any firsthand experiences to complicate their point-of-view.

¹⁹ Palmer A. Throop, *Criticism of the Crusade: A Study of Public Opinion and Crusade Propaganda* (Amsterdam: N.V. Swets & Zeitlinger, 1940), 119.

²⁰ Thomas F. O’Meara, O.P., “The Theology and Times of William of Tripoli, O.P.: A Different View of Islam,” *Theological Studies* 69 (2008): 80.

The Notitia de Machometo and De statu Sarracenorum

We believe William wrote the *Notitia* in 1271, and that *De statu* was written two to four years later. The *Notitia*'s date is based on the fact that both William and Gregory were in Acre during the summer of 1271, and the future pope would have been best positioned at that time to request such a report. Moreover, William addresses the *Notitia* to "Teobaldo, Archdeacon of the Church of Liege". Gregory was crowned pope in March of 1272, and it seems likely that William would have referred to him by his papal title if this had happened already. William also addresses the Pope as Teabaldo in *De statu*, but there are other clues in the text that indicate it was written later. In the chapters describing contemporary events, William reports several of Sultan Baybars activities, including a recent pilgrimage to Medina. As he explains, "[the Sultan] seems very devoted to his Prophet Muḥammad, to whose tomb he was not content to go only one time, but added a second trip. He went around the time of the feast of the blessed Mary Magdalene, at which [time] this [text] was written, in the year of the Lord, 1273."²¹ Since *De statu* was clearly written after Pope Gregory's inauguration, it is not entirely clear why William does not address him as such in the introduction to it. The most likely explanation is that he merely reused the first part of the *Notitia*, which he had written prior to Gregory's inauguration, and did not bother to change the dedication at the beginning of it.²² Indeed, the biographies of Muḥammad, which comprise the first three chapters of both the *Notitia* and *De statu*, are nearly identical. It is most likely that

²¹ Item ad suum prophetam Machometum videtur esse valde devotus ; ad cuius sepulchrum non fuit contentus semel ivisse, nisi adderet secundo ire. Unde venturs erat circa festum beate Marie Magdalene anno Domini, quo hec scripta sunt, MCCLXXIII., Wilhelm von Tripolis, *Notitia ; De statu*, 328.

²² The dedication is the same in every surviving version of the text. See Engels below.

William incorporated the first part of the *Notitia* as he was reworking it into *De statu*, which diverges the most in the middle and later sections.

This leads us to one of the most controversial elements of both texts. Until recently, there was no debate as to whether William of Tripoli authored both treatises. Hans Prutz, who compiled the first edition of both texts, considered William the author.²³ Prutz's editions were valuable for making the two texts more accessible for general analysis, but were flawed, with a number of significant transcription errors. Prutz also did not comprehensively consider the relationship between the extant manuscript copies. This was rectified by Peter Engels, who successfully corrected Prutz's errors in his critical edition, and traced the provenance of each manuscript and the relationships between the various copies.

There are three surviving copies of the *Notitia*, the earliest of which Engels has dated to the middle of the fourteenth-century, and is currently held by the Bavarian State Library in Munich.²⁴ There are more extant versions of *De statu Sarracenorum*, fourteen of which survive. The two earliest versions have been dated to the beginning of the fourteenth-century, which Engels has confirmed, and are presently held by the Vatican Library in Rome and the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris. The extant versions of both the *Notitia* and *De statu* are based on thirteenth-century archetypes that no longer exist, but which were, at one time, kept together at the papal curia.²⁵

²³ Hans Prutz, *Kulturgeschichte der Kreuzzüge* (Berlin, 1883), 1-35.

²⁴ See Engels for an exhaustive analysis of all extant manuscript versions of both the *Notitia* and *De statu*. Wilhelm von Tripolis, *Notitia; De statu*, 112-182.

²⁵ O'Meara, "Theology and Times of William of Tripoli," 14; Wilhelm von Tripolis, *Notitia; De statu*, 165-181.

In addition to providing improved critical editions and an analysis of the manuscript tradition, Engels has also argued that William of Tripoli wrote the *Notitia de Machometo*, but another author wrote *De statu Sarracenorum* based on the *Notitia* and another, unknown text.²⁶ Since he first argued this in 1992, Engels has generally been followed on this point, most recently by John Tolan in his brief analysis of both works.²⁷ Engels argument is based on three factors: 1) there are variations in some of the passages that both the *Notitia* and *De statu* have in common. Engels especially focuses on the translations of the Qur'ān, correctly identifying differences of word choice and sentence structure in the Latin translations of these passages.²⁸ 2) Engels claims that the author of the *Notitia* and the author of *De statu* express fundamentally different views on Islam. Engels argues that the *Notitia* is harsh in its appraisal of Islam, whereas the author of *De statu* emphasizes the similarity between Christian and Islamic beliefs. 3) In the introduction to the *Notitia* William fails to mention his religious order, whereas in *De statu* he is explicit on identifying his affiliation. In the former, he calls himself “frater G. Acconensis conventus,” and in the second, “frater Guillelmus Tripolitanus Aconensis conventus Ordinis Predicatorum.”

As Thomas O' Meara has recently observed, Engels argument is new and not convincing.²⁹ Regarding the first point, it is true that there are variations between

²⁶ “In jedem Fall halte ich Wilhelm von Tripolis für den Autor der *Notitia de Machometo*. Die von ihm verfaßte Schrift wurde dann einschließlich der Widmung, die seinen Namen enthielt, von einem Bearbeiter verwendet, der aus *Notitia* und einem weiteren kleinen Werk die Schrift *De statu Sarracenorum* kompilierte,” Wilhelm von Tripolis, *Notitia; De statu*, 73.

²⁷ John Tolan, *Saracens: Islam in the Medieval European Imagination* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 203-212.

²⁸ Wilhelm von Tripolis, *Notitia; De statu*, 45-60.

²⁹ O'Meara, “Theology and Times of William of Tripoli,” 14.

passages the two texts have in common, but the differences are minor and superficial.³⁰

There are no changes that affect any of the substantial narrative or thematic points. The differences between the two texts are of a degree that are just as likely (and arguably likelier) to reflect an author's revision of their own work than the perspective of an entirely new writer. There is nothing in *De statu*, in other words, that explains why a second author would make such minor revisions, and yet keep the substantial points intact.

Regarding the third point, Engels reasoning is tenuous at best. Engels rightly points out that it was customary for Franciscan and Dominican authors such as Riccoldo da Monte Croce, Francisco Pipino, William Rubruck, etc. to identify their order in the dedications of their work, but it is actually *De statu*, the text that Engels claims William did *not* write, that he explicitly states his order. Engels argues that many of the readers notes in later manuscripts seem to have been made by Franciscans, and he reasons that William's order was omitted in the *Notitia* to conceal the origin of the text. Engels then uses the reverse logic for *De statu*, arguing that its true author was a Franciscan, and that William's order was added in *De statu* because the author wanted to disguise his monastic affiliation.³¹ Engels provides no satisfying reason why a later author would have been motivated to do this, aside from the usual pseudo-epigraphical desire to elevate the status of a work by claiming authorship by a more well-known or highly regarded

³⁰ Chapter 3 will discuss some of the differences in William's translations of the Qur'ān in greater detail.

³¹ "Wenn nun in der Notitia die Angabe des Ordens fehlt, so wurde sie nach den oben beigebrachten Belegen nicht vom Autor selbst weggelassen, sondern von einem späteren Bearbeiter gestrichen, um vielleicht die Herkunft des Textes aus dem Dominkanorden zu verschleiern. In jedem Fall halte ich Wilhelm von Tripolis für den Autor der Notitia de Machometo," Wilhelm von Tripolis, *Notitia; De statu*, 73.

writer. Engels' argument is interesting, but highly speculative, requiring far more assumptions than merely taking the dedication of the two texts at face value.

Engels' second point reveals some of the ways the field has progressed since his edition was first published in 1992. Throughout his analysis of the *Notitia* and *De statu*, Engels attempts to place William within very narrow and rigid generic parameters.

Engels claims, for example, that:

William of Tripoli is repeatedly mentioned in the same breath with other missionaries and mission theorists, especially with the Florentine Dominican Ricoldo de Monte Croce (ca. 1243-1320)..., but while Ricoldo repeatedly reported on his missionary activities in his works, and established guidelines in his *Libellus ad Nationes Orientalis* for the conduct of missionaries toward Muslims and heretical Christians, nothing is known of this kind by William....The promotion of missionary zeal or the Dominican policy of working in the mission field was therefore not William's concern.³²

Engels says this despite the fact that William of Tripoli explicitly claims to have baptized more than a thousand converts, and he presents his Qur'ānic translations as the means by which Muslims can be led to accept such baptism. William is less direct than other missionary theorists in his recommendations, but a missionary emphasis is central to both texts. Using a reductionist logic, Engels believes that William could not have been a missionary theorist, because he does not explicitly state that he is writing a missionary manual in the same way as authors such as Riccoldo da Monte Croce did. Both the *Notitia* and *De statu* are complex texts with a variety of purposes, chief among these

³² “Dennoch wird Wilhelm von Tripolis immer wieder in einem Atemzug mit anderen Missionaren und Missionstheoretikern genannt, vor allem mit dem Florentiner Dominikaner Ricold von Monte Crucis (ca. 1243-1320)...während Ricold jedoch in seinen Werken mehrfach über seine missionarischen Aktivitäten berichtete und in seinem *Libellus ad Nationes Orientalis* Richtlinien für

being William's desire to provide Gregory with insights about Islam he is unlikely to hear otherwise. William is clear, however, that his insights about Islam are fundamentally informed by his role as a missionary whether he always explicitly says so.

In addition, Engels argues that the sentiments expressed in the *Notitia* toward Islam are diametrically opposed to those in *De statu*. Engels says, for example, that the author of *De statu* uses the Latin translations of the Qur'ān to show the nearness of Islam to Christianity, whereas "in exact contrast, the author of the *Notitia* adds polemical disputation to his translations of the Qur'ān. After a short, disingenuous *apologia* inviting Saracens to convert, a detailed, polemical response follows, in which there is no trace of a conciliatory mood, or [acknowledgement] of similarities between the two religions."³³ Engels is correct that the *Notitia* is more explicitly polemical than *De statu*, but the chapters which follow will argue that he misunderstands why they diverge.

The *Notitia de Machometo*, which can be translated as "data" or "information concerning Muḥammad," was intended, as the title and dedication indicate, to provide Archdeacon Tebaldo with vital information on Islam. Archdeacon Tebaldo learned of his papal election while in Acre, and one of his first decisions as Pope was to call an ecumenical council, the Second Council of Lyons, one of the main priorities of which was the situation in the Holy Land and renewed plans for crusade. While the *Notitia* translates the very same Qur'ānic *ayāt* that the *De statu* uses to show that missionary

³³ "In genauem Gegensatz dazu fügt der Verfasser der *Notitia* an seine Übersetzungen aus dem Koran gerade eine solche polemische Disputation an. Nach einer kurzen fiktiven Apologie eines zur Konversion aufgeforderten Sarazenen folgt die ausführliche, polemisch gehaltene Antwort eines Christen, in der nichts von versöhnlicher Stimmung oder von Gemeinsamkeiten der beiden Religionen zu spüren ist.", Wilhelm, *Notitia; De statu*, 49.

efforts to convert Muslims are not, as many thirteenth-century missionary theorists had begun to believe, hopeless, but that the Qur'ān could be used for Christian purposes, this is not the *Notitia*'s primary goal. Rather, the *Notitia* is a rallying cry for the very people who would be attending Gregory's council. William specifically calls on "our theologians, scholars, legal disputators, and lovers of all living beings to arise against those errors, and shoot arrows [of disputation] to drive those miserable spirits from the devil's snare into the net of Christ, and with a complete effort to draw them through the gate of salvation."³⁴ William of Tripoli is writing to this very specific audience of theologians, polemicists, and apologists, and the standard attacks he levies against Islam should be understood in this context. As the chapters that follow will discuss, William of Tripoli made a distinction between elite and non-elite Muslims, and he presents Muslim religious authorities as the primary barrier preventing "average" (*mediocres*) Muslims from converting. Pope Gregory X had personal relationships with important scholars and theologians such as Bonaventure and Thomas Aquinas, and William of Tripoli clearly believed that such writers had an important role in confronting Islam polemically. There role was to confront Islamic intellectuals through the written word, whereas his role was different. He makes a distinction between his calling as a missionary working among Muslims, and their role in defending Christianity through the written word from attacks that were abstract and at a distance. The tonal differences between the two texts were, in other words, differences of purpose: the *Notitia* was his call for Gregory and his circle to

³⁴ Contra igitur istos errores nostri theologi et doctores nostre legis disputatores et omnium animarum zelatores debent insurgere, sagittas accuere et emittere et ipsos repellere et animas miseras de laqueo dyaboli eripere et in sagena Christi concludere et toto conatu trahere ad portum salutis., Wilhelm von Tripolis, *Notitia*; De statu, 260.

rise up and confront Islam in the ways they could, whereas *De statu* was a detailed and more thorough explanation of his role, and the ways in which a missionary approach based in the Qur'ān could be part of a multi-pronged effort to counter Islam.

The Latin View of Islam

The medieval Latin “view” of Islam has been a serious topic of study since the 17th century, but gained serious momentum during the 20th century. One of the early questions scholars grappled with was why medieval Latin descriptions of Islam were generally inaccurate. The first scholars to study this believed these errors and mischaracterizations were due to a lack of hard data on Islam. This perspective reached its fullest expression in Robert W. Southern’s *Western Views of Islam in the Middle Ages*, which characterized the period until the twelfth-century as an “Age of Ignorance,” when Europeans had no firsthand, accurate information about Islam. This was followed by what he called a “Century of Reason and Hope,” when better data began to enter Europe from Spain and the eastern Mediterranean through the Crusades and the Reconquest.³⁵ Southern was correct that a greater amount of authentic information about Islam did enter Europe in the twelfth-century, but he failed to account for the fact that Europeans continued to write about Islam in ways that were absurd and highly exaggerated. It was common to portray the prophet Muḥammad as a lecherous and disingenuous pseudo-prophet, and Islam itself as a religion devoid of any morality.

³⁵ R.W. Southern, *Western Views of Islam in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962), 34-66.

Norman Daniel was the first to observe in *Islam and the West: The Making of an Image* that access to accurate information about Islam had very little to do with how medieval Latin apologists and polemicists chose to portray the religion. In one of the most thorough surveys and analyses of medieval Latin writings on Islam to date, Daniel showed that European writers used this new information not to correct the errors of the past, but to construct a deliberately inaccurate image of Islam, one which portrayed the religion as Christianity's distorted and counterfeit inverse. For Daniel, this was the result of some inherent deficiency in the medieval Latin mind, for whom "it was an impossible imaginative effort...to imagine Scriptural stories in forms other than those in which the Scriptures recounted them."³⁶ Daniel believed that Latin authors were incapable of understanding how Muslims could view Jesus and Abraham as Muslims; moreover, "no medieval author could see any concept of God that was not Trinitarian as other than wholly defective." Daniel was severe in his final appraisal, writing that "the frontier that divided the mental attitudes of Christians and Muslim was emphatically defined and crossed with the greatest difficulty."

While Daniel's characterization of the medieval Latin "view" of Islam was harsh, he was responding to a real phenomenon. Latin polemical presentations of Islam generally obliterate all nuance, and use highly derivative language. What recent scholarship has observed, however, is that Daniel conflated the generic conventions of polemic with the men who adhered to them. Thomas F. Glick has recently observed, for

³⁶ Norman Daniel, *Islam and the West: The Making of an Image* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 35, 66, 98-99, 201.

example, that polemical roles have always been “tightly scripted,” and a vital part of this script is portraying one’s religious enemies in the worst possible light.³⁷ This script was not unique to medieval Latin writers, but an inter-religious phenomenon that was common to all the Abrahamic religions. When Latin writers failed to give Islamic beliefs their full due, this tells us more about the genre that the authors were writing in than the totality of their conceptual horizons.

Indeed, as Thomas Burman has observed, most modern scholars have “assumed that medieval polemicists were displaying the full scope of their personalities and abilities in the tracts that they wrote.”³⁸ As discussed above, Latin translators of the Qur’ān experienced a “subtle shift of purpose” as they sought to refute the text, indicating that their view of the central Islamic holy book was more nuanced than the polemical tracts they produced would indicate. If one is not careful, the subtle shifts that Burman discusses are too easily drowned out by the emphatic and polemical language that authors who wrote in this genre usually relied upon. The often hyperbolic aspect of this language, and the degree to which it falls well outside the bounds of what many modern readers consider appropriate has led, in many cases, to reductive analyses. William of Tripoli’s *Notitia* and *De statu* are cases in point, as both have been casualties of a discussion that tends to be binary in its terms: medieval writings are described as “hostile” or “sympathetic”, “accurate” or “absurd”, without much in the way of middle ground connecting the extremes. In this binary discussion, the *Notitia* and *De statu* are often

³⁷ Thomas F. Glick, “My Master, the Jew: Observations on Interfaith Scholarly Interaction in the Middle Ages,” in *Jews, Muslims, and Christians in and around the Medieval Crown of Aragon: Studies in Honor of Elena Lourie*, ed. Harvey Hames (Brill: Leiden, 2004), 158.

³⁸ Burman, *Reading the Qur’ān*, 6.

referred to as the rare “accurate” and “sympathetic” Latin treatments of Islam that are used prove the rule. As Engels has observed, however, even this is not entirely true. In the *Notitia*, William of Tripoli follows his translations of the Qur’ān with a chapter that reiterates many of the day’s standard polemical attacks against Islam. These attacks sit awkwardly within the text as a whole, however, indicating that he was an author who was writing within the conventions of an established tradition, even though the main thrust of his rhetorical approach diverges from it. In William’s description of the Qur’ān’s compilation, for example, he claims that Christians and Jews were conscripted to create the text, but since they could not find anything worthwhile from Muḥammad’s life, they were forced to cobble together a document drawn from the Old and New Testaments. William’s preceding biography of Muḥammad contradicts this characterization. He describes the young Muḥammad in complementary terms, and presents the Christian core of Islam as the result of Muḥammad’s genuine catechism at the hand of the Christian monk Baḥīrā, rather than a form of plagiarism.

In the *Notitia* and *De statu* we do not see a hostile or sympathetic portrayal of Islam. We see both. William of Tripoli was hostile to certain aspects of Islam and considered elite Muslims a barrier to conversion, but he was appreciative of other aspects of the religion and admired the religious piety of non-elite Muslims. In one chapter he describes the Qur’ān as “diabolical”, but in the next, a text of such beauty that its words rivaled the Gospels themselves. While the *Notitia* is more clearly polemical, and *De statu* more thoroughly describes the similarities between Christianity and Islam, neither is one-dimensional in its presentation. This study argues that, between the two texts, we are

seeing the full scope of William's personality and abilities, rather than two, separate authors with fundamentally different views of Islam. This work will, therefore, treat both texts as the product of the same author. I will argue, however, that William's unique perspective on Islam had nothing to do with his own personal qualities, but were the result of the strategies of accommodation that were required in a diverse, pluralistic society. We know that the thirteenth-century archetype for the *De statu Sarracenorum* originated from the Latin East. This means that even if Engels is correct, and another author took the *Notitia*, preserving its ambiguous parts and expanding them into *De statu*, this only strengthens that point.

One of the reasons that Engels has, I argue, mischaracterized and misunderstood these works is that he analyzes them as purely intellectual exercises, placing them alongside other Latin authors for whom Islam was a distant, rather than intimate "other."³⁹ William of Tripoli indicates clearly throughout both texts that his perspective on Islam is directly informed by observing and interacting with the Muslims who were his neighbors and the focus of his missionary efforts. This context was fundamentally different than that of his continental, European contemporaries, and is the primary explanation for why William of Tripoli expresses the kind of nuance and ambiguity that comparable treatises do not.

³⁹ Some useful studies of the intimate rather than distant "other" are, Jonathan Z. Smith, "What a difference a difference makes," in *Relating Religion: Essays in the Study of Religion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 251-302; Daniel Boyarin, *Border Lines: The Partition of Judaeo-Christianity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006); David M. Friedenreich, *Foreigners and their Food: Constructing Otherness in Jewish, Christian, and Islamic Law* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014).

The Crusades and the Latin East

William of Tripoli was born in the Levant, and spent most of his life there. Since the Latin East was established, and its fortunes dictated by the wars of the Crusades, the history of the Latin East and the history of the Crusades are often treated as synonymous. This is not accurate, however, as most residents of the Latin East were not crusaders, most of whom traded and worked with Muslims far more than they fought them. This *modus vivendi* is easily missed, as later chroniclers and polemicists, Muslim and Christian alike, justified the wars of this period, and sought to inspire their co-religionists through the charged rhetoric of Crusade and Jihād. This has created the misleading notion that religious ideology was the fundamental way that individuals and communities in the Latin East defined themselves and others. This may have been true for certain religious elites and secular leaders, but for most “communities living in the Levant, both indigenous and Frankish, crusade and Jihād played little role in the way they understood or experienced the world around them.” Rather, “individuals and communities formed their identity through a network of families, civic relationships, professional ties, and associations with churches, shrines, and local holy places. Taken together, such identities often crossed religious boundaries.”⁴⁰

The Latin East was not only home to Franks and Muslims, but also a wide variety of eastern Christian communities, and thus there were many boundaries to be crossed. The two largest of these eastern Christian communities were the Greek Orthodox, often

⁴⁰ Christopher MacEvitt, *The Crusades and the Christian World of the East: Rough Tolerance* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, Press, 2008), 2.

disparagingly called the “Melkites”, who agreed with the Latin church on matters of theology, but denied Rome’s universal authority over the Church, and the Syrian Orthodox Church, often called “Jacobites” by their enemies, who rejected the Council of Chalcedon’s description of Christ’s nature, and were thus, from Rome’s perspective, heretics. In addition, there were adherents of the Armenian church, the Church of the East -- often called “Nestorian” --, and the “Maronite” churches. In Jerusalem, there were possibly even clergy from the Coptic and Ethiopian churches.

The modern study of the society and culture of the Latin East begins in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries with European scholars who sought to justify their colonial ambitions in the Middle East by emphasizing the close relationship between the Franks and indigenous communities.⁴¹ Such scholars portrayed an integrated society, one in which the darker sides of European authority were elided in the attempt to show a society that was better off for being part of the western world. The pendulum swung dramatically the other direction after World War II, best exemplified by R.C. Smail, who argued that Frankish society was highly segregated, and that Frankish elites successfully erected impermeable boundaries between themselves and the communities around them.⁴² This segregationist position has remained the dominant one, reaching its fullest articulation with Joshua Prawer, who described the Latin East as an example of proto-colonialism, and used the term “apartheid” to describe its judicial and legal systems.⁴³

⁴¹ For example, *Emmanuel Rey, Les colonies franques de Syrie aux XII^{me} et XIII^{me} siècles* (Paris, 1883), 1-30 ; Claude Conder, *The Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem, 1099 to 1291 A.D.* (London, 1897), 1-183.

⁴² R.C. Smail, *Crusading Warfare (1097-1193)* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 40-57.

⁴³ This has been largely followed by Joshua Prawer’s many students, and most of the substantial scholarship of the 1980s and 90s. See, Joshua Prawer, *The Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem: European Colonialism in the Middle Ages* (London, 1972), 524; Jonathan Riley-Smith, *The Feudal Nobility and the*

For many recent scholars of the Latin East, the modern situation, in which much of Israel's Arab-Palestinian population lacks full rights of citizenship and inhabits a different legal and social sphere, has remained the primary lens to view the region's medieval precursor.

Scholars have recently begun to push back on this, and this work is a part of that. The most serious challenge to the segregationalist model has come from two archaeologists, Adrian Boas and Ronnie Ellenblum, both of whom have convincingly shown that the Franks were not, as previously thought, confined to the cities, but lived among the eastern Christian rural population in the first decades of settlement, later expanding into Muslim areas after Salāh ad-Dīn (1138-1192).⁴⁴ Art historians such as Jaroslav Folda and Mat Imerzeel have also highlighted integrated styles of art and architecture which emerged in the region. One of the most dramatic ways this manifested is that Frankish elites commissioned local artisans to produce icons and other decorations that were dedicated to eastern saints, some of whom were not recognized as such by the Latin church.⁴⁵ Textual historians have been slower to turn away from the segregationalist model. While some have observed that Latin Eastern writers drew from the Arabic-Christian and Muslim tradition, and the writings of authors such as William of

Kingdom of Jerusalem, 1174-1277 (London: Macmillan, 1973); Steven Tibble, *Monarchy and Lordships in the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem, 1099-1291* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989); Peter W. Edbury, *John of Ibelin and the Kingdom of Jerusalem* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1997).

⁴⁴ Adrian Boas, "Archaeological Sources for the History of Palestine: The Frankish Period: A Unique Medieval Society Emerges," *Near Eastern Archaeology* 61 (1998): 138-173; Ronnie Ellenblum, *Frankish Rural Settlement in the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

⁴⁵ Jaroslav Folda, *Crusader Art in the Holy Land: From the Third Crusade to the Fall of Acre, 1187-1291* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Mat Immerzeel, *Identity Puzzles: Medieval Christian Art in Syria and Lebanon* (Peeters, 2009).

Tyre indicate the growth among the Franks of a new, eastern identity distinct from ancestral homelands in Europe, most historians have not had the expertise to tell this story outside the Latin corpus.⁴⁶ The most recent and notable exception to this is Christopher MacEvitt's *The Crusades and the Christian World of the East: Rough Tolerance*. Macevitt draws on Arabic and Armenian sources to challenge the segregationist model, arguing that the societies of the Latin East were "communities of silence."⁴⁷ By this he means that the diverse society was able to function because differences that would not have been tolerated in the heart of Christian Europe were deliberately minimized and overlooked.

This work largely agrees with MacEvitt but expands upon his work. MacEvitt's analysis is largely restricted to the twelfth-century, whereas William of Tripoli's work reflects the thirteenth-century world in which generations of Franks had lived in the region, and the political power of the Latin Eastern territories was in decline. Both of these details are factors in his work. One of the difficulties in engaging with a complex context like the Latin East is that, much like scholarship on Latin views of Islam generally, there has been a tendency to describe this context in binary terms as integrated or segregated, a society of conflict or harmony. Sources exist that express each of these extremes, because the Muslim and Christian authors who wrote them were motivated by

⁴⁶ For example, Alan Murray, "Ethnic Identity in the Crusader States: The Frankish Race and the Settlement of Outremer," in *Concepts of National Identity in the Middle Ages*, eds. Simon Forde, Lesley Johnson and Alan V. Murray (Leeds: University of Leeds, 1995), 59-73; There are a few exceptions to this mostly Latin-based analysis, most obviously the French historian Claude Cahen, Carole Hillenbrand, *Crusades: Islamic Perspectives* (Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh Press, 1999) and Paul Cobb, *The Race for Paradise: An Islamic History of the Crusades* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

⁴⁷ Christopher MacEvitt, *The Crusades and the Christian World of the East: Rough Tolerance* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), 1-26.

the desire to make particular polemical and apologetic points rather than soberly describing the mundane, daily experiences of the people who lived in this context.

This dissertation will argue that William of Tripoli's *Notitia de Machometo* and *De statu Sarracenorum* are best understood as one of the rare written examples of an author who straddled these extremes. He firmly believed that the Latin version of Christianity he held was best, but this did not prevent him from seeing value in other beliefs and practices. This was not because he had a uniquely enlightened perspective, or held an egalitarian belief that all points-of-view were equal. Rather, the diverse context in which he lived forced him to compartmentalize his world, but these were permeable compartments that could be passed through when it was useful to do so.⁴⁸

Compartmentalization often carries a negative connotation, but in the context of the Latin East, it was the vital skill that allowed the society to function.⁴⁹ This allowed Latin Christians to believe, in a general sense, that Muslims and “heretical” eastern Christians held false beliefs, but still buy from, sell to, or employ *specific* Muslims or “heretical” Christians who were part of their day to day life. Similarly, William of Tripoli could employ the usual Latin, polemical attacks against Islam when encouraging his co-religionists to confront Islam through writing, even when the thrust of his missionary approach was at odds with this call. William says things that contradict one another,

⁴⁸ This is not unlike the recent academic nod to “interdisciplinarity”, when academics who reside in one discipline transgress it when convenient to do so. Much social research has been done on this. For example, Eviatar Zerubavel, “The Rigid, the Fuzzy, and the Flexible: Notes on the Mental Sculpting of Academic Identity,” *Social Research* 62, no. 4 (1995): 1093-1106.

⁴⁹ Compartmentalization and integration have been studied as strategies for the construction of self-identity. See, for example, Carolin J. Showers and Virgil Zeigler-Hill, “Compartmentalization and Integration: The Evaluative Organization of Contextualized Selves,” *Journal of Psychology* (2007): 1181-1204.

because he had cultivated the ability to interact with people in different ways in different contexts. This is a form of compartmentalization, and when I use this term I am referring to a specific strategy that allowed one to temporarily set aside fundamental differences in order to interact with people you otherwise disagreed with.

Islamic Historiography

In addition to the historiography of the general medieval Latin view of Islam and the Latin East, aspects of this work will touch on the historiography of the Islamic World. William of Tripoli's *Life of Muḥammad*, narrative of the Islamic conquests, and description of the compilation of the Qur'ān are all topics that have been fiercely debated among scholars of early Islam. Since the 1970s, with John Wansbrough's seminal work, *The Sectarial Milieu: Content and Composition of Islamic Salvation History*, the so-called "revisionist school" of Islamic Studies has been ascendant. This is partly because Wansbrough's students, Andrew Rippin, Norman Calder, G. R. Hawting, Patricia Crone and Michael Cook, have been among the most prolific and dominant voices in the field.⁵⁰ One of the fundamental questions these scholars grappled with is what, if anything, we can know about the first two centuries of Islamic history, since our earliest Islamic sources do not appear until then, and most of what we know about early Islam comes from Syriac and Greek-Christian sources. The revisionist school has generally rejected the idea that the Qur'ān, and other early Islamic texts tell us much about these early years. They tell us instead about the eighth and ninth centuries, when a truly Islamic

⁵⁰ The relevant historiography on this topic is given in Chapter 1.

intellectual culture was developing, and scholars attempted to create a revisionist past. These are fascinating and important issues, but they do not directly inform this work. When William of Tripoli engages with the Qur'ān, or the Life of Muḥammad, he is doing so with a very specific aim. He knows that Muslims revere both the Qur'ān and the Prophet, and he exploits that regard, regardless of what its historical accuracy might be. To put a finer point on it, I believe William of Tripoli thought that Muḥammad existed. His goal, however, was to interpret his life, mission, and message in a way that would suit his purposes. As such, when I refer to the Qur'ān and the Prophet, I am referring to both in the way I believe William understood them.

Methodology and Chapter Overview

William did not develop this strategy from scratch. Muslims, Jews, and eastern Christians in the Near and Middle East had honed these tactics for centuries because the context demanded it. His work has been treated as an anomaly because most scholars have not recognized these sources, or the inter-religious discourses he was participating in. He was writing to a Latin Christian audience, but he was informed by Muslims and eastern Christian traditions. This is to say that each element of his work that scholars such as Norman Daniel found “mysterious” and “peculiar” has a direct parallel in Arabic-Christian and Muslim sources. My methodological approach is to assume that these parallels are not a coincidence, but indicate that he was influenced by and drawing from these traditions they represent. Specifically, I am referring to a tradition of polemical and apologetic writing in which authors attempted to gain leverage with their ideological rivals by making arguments based on common discursive ground of shared ideas and

religious symbols. Each chapter of this dissertation will reveal the sources that most closely parallel William's approach, and show how he adapted them for his own purposes, using them to accomplish his missionary goals and confront the challenges of a pluralistic society. While it is not possible to say with precision which specific Arabic texts William possessed, I will demonstrate that he was drawing on the strategy that these texts represent, a strategy that transcended any single source.

The first chapter analyzes William's two *vitae* of the Prophet Muḥammad. Latin biographies of Muḥammad were written throughout the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, but William's was unique among them. Instead of denigrating the Prophet, he emphasizes the enduring relationship between a young Muḥammad and a Christian monk named Baḥīrā. In the Islamic tradition, Baḥīrā was an important figure who was considered the first to acknowledge Muḥammad's future prophethood. Instead of rejecting this claim, many eastern Christian counter biographies accepted it, but used it to claim that Muḥammad and his message were essentially Christian. William was participating in this conversation, and I analyze the ways in which this was useful to him as a rhetorical tactic.

The second chapter discusses William's narrative of the Islamic conquests. Most comparable Latin narratives emphasized the depravity of the Arabs as a people, and the destruction Muḥammad's teachings inspired them to wreak. William's narrative, by contrast, emphasizes the fair and evenhanded treatment of the conquered Christians by Muḥammad's successors, and the degree to which Christians and Muslims cooperated during the early years of the conquests. In doing so, William was participating in a narrative discourse in which Muslims and eastern Christians negotiated their community

status in the present by telling and retelling narratives of the past. William of Tripoli was writing at a time when Sultan Baybars was ascendant, and had recently conquered the major city of Antioch. William knew that the Frankish position was precarious, and as he contemplated the worst, the eastern Christian example offered some hope. Eastern Christians had been through this before, and had shown how Christianity could survive, and sometimes even thrive under Muslim dominion.

The third chapter analyzes William's missionary approach. I argue that William was casting himself as an Islamic *wā'iz*, a type of popular preacher that relied on stories of the pre-Islamic prophets. Islamic religious elites were highly critical of these preachers because they felt they confused Muslims with these stories, blurring the boundaries between Islam and Christianity. They remained, nevertheless, incredibly popular, and stories of Jesus and the Virgin Mary were especially in demand. Much like eastern Christian apologists and polemicists had done before, William translated the very Qur'ānic passages that would allow him to exploit this regard, and convince potential converts of Christ's incarnation.

In the fourth and final chapter, I show how sharing space with Muslims and eastern Christians was fundamental to each of William's rhetorical choices. Unlike his contemporaries, William believed, for example, that Muslims could be led to accept Christian baptism through a "simple message." The core of this message are the nineteen ayāt I discuss in chapter three, but his belief in this strategy was informed by personally witnessing the deep regard Muslims had for Jesus and Mary. The dexterity with which William adapted eastern discourses for his own purposes is indicative of an acculturated

perspective that we also saw Fulcher articulate. The hallmarks of this perspective were a flexibility of thought characterized by categories and boundaries that were rarely rigid or absolute. Instead, Muslims and eastern Christians could be written about in one way, but interacted with in another. William could believe in an absolute sense that Islam was a false religion, but still appreciate Islamic practices and use both the Qur'ān and other Islamic traditions to facilitate his goals. The *Notitia de Machometo* and *De statu Sarracenorum* should be viewed as examples of an acculturated Latin Eastern perspective, rather than outliers in the continental European Latin corpus.

CHAPTER TWO

Muḥammad's Catechism and the Monk Baḥīrā

One of the most striking elements of William of Tripoli's *De statu Sarrecenorum* and *Notitia de Machometo* is his *vita Mahumeti*, or Life of the Prophet Muḥammad, a nearly identical version of which appears in both texts. The narrative of William's biography centers on Muḥammad's lifelong relationship with a monk named Baḥīrā, who mentors him and teaches him the essential elements of Christian doctrine. William portrays Baḥīrā as true and saintly Christian, an unusual rhetorical choice as most Latin biographers who included a Baḥīrā-like figure nearly always portrayed him as a negative influence who teaches Muḥammad heretical and profane beliefs. This chapter asks why William portrayed the relationship between Muḥammad and Baḥīrā so differently than his contemporaries, and attempts an answer through a comparative analysis of the Arabic and Latin biographies that feature the Baḥīrā legend.

We begin with a discussion of the Islamic Arabic sources that are the first to mention Baḥīrā and that later Arabic and Latin-Christian authors relied on and reimagined for their own rhetorical purposes. William of Tripoli was one such author, but in order to appreciate the novelty of his appropriation of the Baḥīrā story, the second part of this chapter provides an overview of the Prophet Muḥammad as he appears in the Latin tradition. Biographies of Muḥammad were written throughout the Middle Ages, and many of these were informed by Arabic sources and the Islamic tradition, but even among this group William's *vitae* stand out. The third part of this chapter examines these "pseudo-historical" Latin texts, identifying the Arabic sources they drew upon and

highlighting the ways they took the story of Muḥammad's encounter with the monk and used it to denigrate the Prophet and deny the legitimacy of the religion that he founded. Muḥammad's encounter with the monk was, for these Latin authors, an opportunity to attack Islam and portray it as Christianity's distorted and counterfeit image. They offer no parallel for William of Tripoli's quite different approach of describing, in effect, Muḥammad's genuine catechism. To find such a parallel, the final part of this chapter will turn to the Christian-Arabic and Syriac biographical tradition, best exemplified by a group of texts collectively referred to as the *Legend of Sergius Baḥīrā*. The *Legend* similarly emphasizes Muḥammad's lifelong relationship with the Christian monk Baḥīrā, and uses this relationship as a narrative focal point to claim that both the Prophet and his message are essentially Christian. Arabic and Syriac writers, such as the authors of the *Legend*, were writing, generally speaking, in a far more diverse and sectarian context than any of the Latin biographers, one which sometimes required a greater degree of rhetorical flexibility. By emphasizing Islam's Christian core and the points of agreement between the Gospels and the Qur'ān, Christian authors were able to formulate attacks in language and on a discursive ground that was familiar, and -they hoped- more likely to be taken seriously by a Muslim audience. William's role as a missionary in the Latin East required a similar rhetorical flexibility, and he adopted the Christian-Arabic version of Muḥammad's encounter with Baḥīrā in order to similarly establish a familiar discursive ground to engage with Muslims in ways that the traditional Latin attacks were unable to facilitate.

The Prophet in the Islamic Tradition

There is no biography of the Prophet in the Qur'ān, and it was over a century after his death before the first fully realized one emerged.⁵¹ Muḥammad is only mentioned by name four times in the Qur'ān, and the text lacks even the most rudimentary chronological and topological framework for his life. Moreover, the Qur'ān was itself, codified, arranged, and ordered well after Muḥammad's life, making it impossible to trace, with certainty, a chronological development to his thought. For modern scholars the process of reconstructing Muḥammad's life began with Gustav Weil's 1843 biography which, though he had access to earlier sources, was based on much later summary works, 'Alī ibn Burhān's al-Dīn al-Ḥalabī's *Sīra* for example, most of which were from the

⁵¹ Some important works on this extensive topic are Theodor Nöldeke, "Die Tradition über das Leben Muhammads," *Der Islam* 5 (1914): 160-170; Rudi Paret, "Das Geschichtsbild Muhammads," *Die Welt als Geschichte* 4 (1957): 214-24; 'Abd al-'Azīz al-Dūrī, *Nash'at 'ilm al-ta'rikh 'inda l-'arab* (Beirut, 1960), 20-33, 61-117; Fuat Sezgin, ed., *Geschichte des arabischen Schrifttums*, Vol. 1 (Leiden and Frankfurt, 1967), 237-302; John Wansbrough, *The Sectarian Milieu: Content and Composition of Islamic Salvation History* (London: Prometheus Books, 1978); 'Abd al-'Azīz al-Dūrī, *The Rise of Historical Writing among the Arabs*, trans. Lawrence I. Conrad (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), 20-41, 76-135; Maher Jarrar, *Die Prophetenbiographie I islamischen Spanien: Ein Beitrag zur Überlieferungs- und Redaktionsgeschichte* (Frankfurt am Main, 1989); Frank E. Peters, "The Quest of the Historical Muḥammad," *International Journal of Medieval Studies* 23 (1991): 291-315; Tarif Khalidi, *Arabic Historical Thought in the Classical Period* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 17-48; Uri Rubin, *The Eye of the Beholder: the Life of Muḥammad as Viewed by the Early Muslims: a Textual Analysis* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995); Jacqueline Chabbi, "Histoire et tradition sacrée—la biographie impossible de Mahomet," *Arabica* 43 (1996): 189-205; Gregor Schoeler, *Charakter und Authentie der muslimischen Überlieferung über das Leben Mohammeds* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1996); Uri Rubin, "The Biography of Muḥammad," in *The Formation of the Classical Islamic World, Vol. IV*, ed. Lawrence I. Conrad (Aldershot, 1998); Fred Donner, *Narratives of Islamic Origins: the Beginnings of Islamic Historical Writing* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998); Lawrence I. Conrad, "Muḥammad, the Prophet" in *Encyclopedia of Arabic Literature, Vol. II*, eds. Julie Scott Meisami and Paul Starkey (London and New York: Taylor & Francis, 1998), 539-43; Clinton Bennett, *In Search of Muḥammad* (London and New York: A&C Black, 1998), 17-65; Toufic Fahd, ed., *La vie du Prophète Mahomet* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1983); Harald Motzki, ed., *The Biography of Muḥammad: the Issue of the Sources* (Leiden: Brill, 2000); Ibn Warraq, ed., *The Quest for the Historical Muḥammad* (Amherst: Prometheus Books, 2000); Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Munajjid, *Mu'jam mā ullifā 'an Rasūl Allāh* (Beirut, 1402/1982).

sixteenth century and later.⁵² At the end of the nineteenth century a wealth of manuscripts were discovered and edited, the most important of which were al-Wāqidi's (d. 207 AH/822 CE) *Maghāzī*, Ibn Hishām's (d. 218/833) *Sīra*, Ibn Sa'd's (d. 230/845) *Ṭabaqāt*, and al-Ṭabarī's (d. 310/923) *Ta'rikh*, which, alongside the Qur'ān and al-Bukhārī's (d. 256/870) *ḥadīth*, were thought to finally provide the first clear and coherent picture of the Prophet's life.⁵³ This view, however, was soon challenged in Ignaz Goldziher's *Muhammedanische Studien*, which argued that most of this material reflects the historical circumstances of later periods rather than of Muhammed's life.⁵⁴ A version of Goldziher's critique has since prevailed, with some scholars going so far as to claim that nearly everything we know from the sources about the historical Prophet is apocryphal; moreover, the *ḥadīth* and the Qur'ān itself are actually products of the second Islamic century, revealing little about either the Prophet's life or his teaching.⁵⁵

Some scholars have pushed back against this opinion, arguing that the most pessimistic appraisers have been primarily *ḥadīth* specialists who have too readily extended their evaluations to the *sīra* and *maghāzī* literature.⁵⁶ William Montgomery Watt agreed that these two genres of prophetic biography had, indeed, been modified by

⁵² Gustav Weil, *Muhammad der Prophet, sein Leben und seine Lehre* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1843); Lawrence I. Conrad, ed., "Editor's Introduction," in *The Earliest Biographies of the Prophet and Their Authors*, Vol. 11 (Princeton: The Darwin Press, 2002), xv.

⁵³ See Aloys Sprenger, *The Life of Mohammad from Original Sources* (Allahabad, 1851); Sir William Muir, *The life of Mahomet and History of Islam to the Era of the Hegira* (London, 1858-61).

⁵⁴ Ignaz Goldziher, *Muhammedanische Studien* (Halle, 1889-90).

⁵⁵ For example, L. Caetani, *Annali dell'Islam*, Vol. I (Milan, 1905), 28-58, 121-43, 192-215 ; H. Lammens, "Qoran et tradition. Comment fut composée la vie de Mahomet," *Recherches de Science Religieuse* 1 (1910): 27-51; J. Schacht, *The Origins of Muhammadan Jurisprudence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1950).

⁵⁶ Rudi Paret, *Muhammad und der Koran* (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1957); Maxime Rodinson, *Mahomet* (Paris: Club français du livre, 1961).

their authors and the historical circumstances in which they wrote, but that it was still possible to mine concrete data from these sources, and use them to reconstruct a historically plausible life of the Prophet.⁵⁷ This remains the minority perspective, however, and more recent scholarship has generally accepted the pessimistic view. John Wansbrough and Patricia Crone best exemplify this, both having abandoned the search for historical data in the earliest Islamic sources, the former treating the Qur'ān and *ḥadīth* as works of literature best approached with the tools of literary analysis, and the latter restricting her reconstruction of the first Islamic century to non-Muslim sources.⁵⁸ As Harald Motzki has observed, the historical study of Muḥammad is at an impasse: “on the one hand, it is not possible to write a historical biography of the Prophet without being accused of using the sources uncritically, while on the other hand, when using the sources critically, it is simply not possible to write such a biography.”⁵⁹

As we shall see, this is a dilemma that Muslim biographers in the Middle Ages struggled with as well. Because there is no narrative framework for the Prophet's life in the Qur'ān, and thus no central biographical text, pre-modern scholars were faced with creating some systematic order out of a disparate body of texts that included *ḥadīth*, *tafsīr*, and *sīra* materials. Moreover, these earliest attempts to frame the Prophet's life were written by authors whose literary output was far from dispassionate, but rather was

⁵⁷ William Montgomery Watt, *Muḥammad at Mecca* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1953), xiii-xvi; ----, *Muḥammad at Medina* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1956); ----, “The Reliability of Ibn Ishāq's Sources”, in *La Vie du prophète Mahomet: Colloque de Strasbourg, octobre 1980*, ed. Toufic Fahd (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1983), 31-43.

⁵⁸ Wansbrough, *The Sectarian Milieu*, 36-46; Patricia Crone and M. Cook, *Hagarism: The Making of the Islamic World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977).

⁵⁹ Motzki, *Biography of Muḥammad*, xv.

shaped by the fierce political rivalries of the time. While these first two Islamic centuries are rightly considered an intellectual “golden age”, it was also a time when the broad Islamic *umma*, or community, was fractured, and powerful families vied for dominion of the vast territory rapidly conquered by Muḥammad and his successors. Some of the earliest attempts to collect traditions about the Prophet’s life and render them coherent were written by men such as Muḥammad ibn Muslim al-Zuhrī (d.124/742), whose families participated in the sectarian battles of the ‘Abbāsīd Revolution and for control of Medina itself.⁶⁰ When al-Zuhrī was still a boy his father supported ‘Abdallāh ibn al-Zubayr, a prominent Arab noble who led an unsuccessful revolt against the Umayyad Caliphate, but briefly held Medina and other parts of the *Hijaz* (western part of Arabian peninsula).⁶¹ During the revolt al-Zuhrī served at the court of ‘Abd al-Malik, his father’s enemy, where his intellectual talents were conscripted into the Caliph’s service, tasked with interpreting *ḥadīth* in ways that would weaken his adversary’s position. ‘Abd al-Malik wanted the pilgrimage to Jerusalem deemed equal to the one to Mecca, the center of his rival’s power, and commissioned al-Zuhrī to help make his case.⁶² Later in his career al-Zuhrī turned his efforts towards *sīra* and *maghāzī* accounts of the Prophet’s life that were less obviously partial, but for al-Zuhrī and the other early biographers the writing of this history was never removed from its partisan context.

⁶⁰ See Donner, *Narratives of Islamic Origins*, 302; Josef Horowitz, *The Earliest Biographies of the Prophet and their Authors*, ed. Lawrence I. Conrad (Princeton: The Darwin Press, 2002), 40-50.

⁶¹ Horowitz, *The Earliest Biographies of the Prophet*, 60.

⁶² Goldziher, *Muhammedanische Studien*, 35-36; al-Dūrī, *Rise of Historical Writing*, 117-119; Shelomo Dov Goitein, *Studies in Islamic History and Institutions* (Leiden: Brill, 1966), 135-48; Amikam Elad, *Medieval Jerusalem and Islamic Worship: Holy Places, Ceremonies, Pilgrimage* (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 153-57.

In addition to his own scholarly efforts Al-Zuhrī was also a renowned teacher, and mentored a number of students who would go on to have influential careers of their own. Of these the most famous was Muḥammad ibn Ishāq (d. 159/770), the early biographer most responsible for creating a narrative framework, and establishing what would become the standard elements of the Prophet’s life. He was born and educated in Medina, but moved to Iraq sometime after 136/754 to be nearer to the court of the new Caliphate. Al- Manṣūr, the second ‘Abbāsīd Caliph, had moved the capital of the dynasty to Baghdad where he promoted scholarly research, and helped make the city into one of the great intellectual centers of the pre-modern world. It was here that al-Manṣūr became aware of Ibn Ishāq, and asked the author to write a grand history that stretched from creation to the present. This work spanned three volumes, with the second, *al-Ba‘th*, covering the Prophet’s life until the *Hegira*, or flight to Medina, and the third, *al-Maghāzī*, his post-*Hegira* exploits.⁶³

While there are no extant editions of Ibn Ishāq’s original text, his work survives in recensions and redactions by later authors, most importantly ‘Abd al-Malik ibn Hishām (d. c. 215/830), whose *sīra* was the first to be transmitted in fixed form, and was based primarily on excerpts from Ibn Ishāq’s biography.⁶⁴ This along with the works previously mentioned, al-Ṭabarī’s *Ta’rīkh*, al-Wāqīdī’s *Maghāzī*, and Ibn Sa‘d’s *Ṭabaqāt*,

⁶³ Miklos Muranyi, “Ibn Ishāq’s *Kitāb al-Maghāzī* in der *riwāya* von Yūnus b. Bukair,” *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 14 (1991): 214-75; Martin Hinds, “‘Maghāzī’ and ‘Sīra’ in Early Islamic Scholarship,” in *La vie du prophète Mahomet*, ed. Toufic Fahd (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1983), 57-66.

⁶⁴ Ibn Hishām, *al-Sīra al-nabawiyya li-Ibn Hishām*, eds. Muṣṭafā al-Saqqā, Ibrāhīm al-Ibyārī, and ‘Abd al-Ḥafīz Shalabī, Vols. 1-4 (Cairo, 1936); Ibn Hishām, *Kitāb Sīrat rasūl allāh*, Vols. 1-2, ed. F. Wüstenfeld (Göttingen, 1858-61); Alfred Guillaume, trans., *The Life of Muḥammad: A Translation of Ishāq’s Sīrat Rasūl Allāh* (London: Oxford University Press, 1955).

all included elements of Ishāq's *sīra*, and were the standard Islamic biographical sources for the Prophet Muḥammad throughout the Middle Ages.⁶⁵ William of Tripoli might have known about these sources indirectly, but otherwise most Latin writers had no direct access to these Islamic *sīra*.

One of the recurring elements in the Islamic *sīra* literature established by Ibn Ishāq and followed by his transmitters is that early in his life Muḥammad had an encounter with a Christian monk. This monk, who most call Baḥīrā, is generally associated with a monastery near Bosra, a town in the far south of modern Syria near the border with Jordan.⁶⁶ Ibn Ishāq describes Baḥīrā as a man well versed in the “knowledge of the Christians”, who obtained this learning through an unnamed book that had been passed down to him over several generations.⁶⁷ Baḥīrā's monastery is located near a major trading route frequented by passing traders, but Baḥīrā “never spoke to them or took any notice” until the arrival of a caravan led by Abū Ṭālib, Muḥammad's uncle.⁶⁸ On this particular occasion he made a great feast for them, because as they approached his cell from a distance, he saw two miraculous signs: a cloud materializing above and following one of them, and a tree near the monastery bending to cover this same individual in its shade. Curious, Baḥīrā invites Abū Ṭālib and his travelling companions to partake in the meal, but Muḥammad, the youngest of the group, is left outside to care

⁶⁵ al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh al-rusul wa-l-mulūk*, in *The History of al-Ṭabarī*, Vols. 1-40, ed. Ehsan Yarshater (Albany, 1985–2007); al-Wāqidī, *Kitāb al-maghāzī*, Vols. 1-3, ed. Marsden Jones (London: Oxford University Press, 1966); Muḥammad Ibn Sa'd, *Kitāb al-ṭabaqāt al-kabīr*, Vols. 1-9, eds. Eugen Mittwoch and Eduard Sachau (Berlin, 1904-1940); Motzki, *Biography of Muḥammad*, xi.

⁶⁶ This is true for the Islamic *sīra*, but not so for the Christian Latin and Arabic biographies. As will be discussed below, the site of this meeting is usually identified as Mt. Sinai.

⁶⁷ Guillaume, *Life of Muḥammad*, 80.

⁶⁸ Idem.

for the baggage. Baḥīrā’s book predicted the arrival of a prophet bearing a physical mark, the *ḥātim al-nubuwwa* or seal of prophecy, but the monk does not see it on Abū Ṭālib or any of his companions.⁶⁹ When the monk learns that one of them has been left outside, he convinces the men to invite Muḥammad in, and:

...he stared at him closely, looking at his body and finding traces of his description (in the Christian books)...Baḥīrā got up and said to him, ‘Boy, I ask you by al-Lāt and al-‘Uzzā to answer my question.’ Now Baḥīrā said this only because he had heard his people swearing by these gods. They allege that the apostle of God said to him, ‘Do not ask me by al-Lāt and al-‘Uzzā, for by Allah nothing is more hateful to me than these two.’⁷⁰

Along with this statement of his belief in one God, Muḥammad also satisfactorily answers Baḥīrā’s questions, and is revealed to bear the *ḥātim al-nubuwwa*, thereby confirming his prophetic status. When the monk asks about the boy’s family Abū Ṭālib lies and says that he is his son, but Baḥīrā discerns that Muḥammad is, in fact, his nephew.⁷¹ The monk then predicts Muḥammad’s future greatness, and warns Abū Ṭālib to protect the boy, especially from three hostile Jews named Zurayr, Tammām, and Darīs who have seen signs of Muḥammad’s arrival in their own sacred books, and seek to destroy him.⁷²

⁶⁹ S. Gerö, “The legend of the monk Baḥīrā: The cult of the cross, and iconoclasm,” in *La Syrie de Byzance a l’Islam-VIIe-VIIIe Siecles*, eds. P. Canivet and J.P. Rey-Coquais (Damascus: Institut Francais de Damas, 1992), 47; Ibn Hishām, *Kīṭāb Sīrat rasūl allāh*, 139, 141; al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-ashraf*, Vol. 1, ed. S.N. Mārdīnī (Damascus: Dār al-Yaqazah, 1996), 96–97.

⁷⁰ Guillaume, *Life of Muḥammad*, 80.

⁷¹ Barbara Roggema has suggested that this is most likely an allusion to Samuel’s anointment of David. When Samuel visits Jesse’s house he meets his children, but does not find the one he seeks, and asks if he has any others. Barbara Roggema, *The Legend of Sergius Baḥīrā: Eastern Christian Apologetics and Apocalyptic in Response to Islam* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 39.

⁷² Guillaume, *Life of Muḥammad*, 81.

The narrative skeleton of this story, that Muḥammad met a Christian monk in his youth who predicted his rise, resonated for Muslim authors as evidenced by its transmission into the later medieval period and beyond. Nearly every biography of the Prophet contains some version of the encounter, and its popularity has led some historians to try and uncover the historical foundations that supported the various incarnations of this tradition under the assumption that there was sufficient overlap among them to assume they were based on an actual event.⁷³ The currently accepted view has rejected this reading. Patricia Crone has claimed that the accounts of this story are “equally fictitious versions of an event that never took place”.⁷⁴ John Wansbrough has similarly argued that such stories tell us less about an actual history and more about the inter-religious sectarian context in which they were written, one in which Muslim scholars attempted to forge an Islamic identity that relied on Jewish and Christian traditions, but was distinct from them.⁷⁵ This study sides with the latter view. While a historical meeting may have happened between Muḥammad and a monk, the “facts” of this encounter were never the primary concern of the Prophet’s biographers, and have very little to do with its popularity in the literature.⁷⁶ Whereas the formal writing of history was common in western medieval Europe, it was a genre to which few Muslim scholars (‘*ulamā*’) devoted themselves. In contrast to their European peers, these ‘*ulamā*’

⁷³ See, for example, Watt, *Muḥammad at Mecca and Muḥammad at Medina*; Aloys Sprenger, “Mohammed; Zusammenkunft mit dem Einsiedler Bahyrā,” *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 12 (1859): 238; Aloys Sprenger, *Das Leben und die Lehre des Mohammed*, Vol. 1 (Berlin, 1869), 178–190.

⁷⁴ Patricia Crone, *Meccan Trade and the Rise of Islam* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), 220.

⁷⁵ Wansbrough, *The Sectarian Milieu*, 46.

⁷⁶ This is to say that the historicity of this encounter was not the *reason* for its popularity. The supposed reality of this meeting was part of what made it a convincing story, but its verisimilitude was always made to serve its author’s more important apologetic or polemical goals.

generally considered such writing inferior to that which added to the understanding of religion, and those rare exceptions that were held in higher regard, accounts of the Prophet's life and the first so-called "Rightly-Guided" caliphs (*Rāshidūn*), were valued for their edifying qualities rather than facticity.⁷⁷ Scholars who seek to uncover the truth in these stories beneath the proverbial veneer mistakenly believe that there is some core to them that the invented, figurative parts conceal. This study argues that, however counterintuitive, it is more accurately the reverse, that biographies of the Prophet always had a primarily apologetic purpose, and the search for their historical foundations obscures the more important aim of these stories, namely carving a discrete space for the Islamic *umma* within a milieu of overlapping religious symbols.

Indeed, the Qur'ān itself, and the later Islamic works that defined the religious and socio-cultural parameters of the Islamic community arose in a context that was rich with pre-existing symbolic imagery. The Qur'ān shares much in common with the Jewish and Christian scriptures. Its pages revere the same prophets, chart the same progression of world history from creation to its apocalyptic end, and conceptualize an analogous relationship between humanity and its Creator. Muḥammad, as he is portrayed in the Qur'ān, explicitly places himself within the Judeo-Christian tradition as the last of the prophets from Noah to Jesus with whom God has made a covenant.⁷⁸ Muḥammad is the first of his people to become a Muslim, but in doing so he is merely following in the

⁷⁷ Alex Mallett, ed., "Introduction" in *Medieval Muslim Historians and the Franks in the Levant* (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 4-6. Also, C.F. Robinson, *Islamic Historiography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); T. Khalidi, *Arabic Historical Thought in the Classical Period* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); F. Rosenthal, *A History of Muslim Historiography, 2nd edition* (Leiden: Brill, 1968); B. Lewis and P.M. Holt, eds., *Historians of the Middle East* (London: Oxford University Press, 1962).

⁷⁸ Q 33:7.

footsteps of these previous prophets whom the Qur'ān also calls Muslims, those who believed there is one God and that he has no associate.⁷⁹ The Qur'ān repeatedly emphasizes the familiarity of Muḥammad's message, that it confirms the scriptures that came before it, and illuminates those matters that Jews and Christians disagree on.⁸⁰ Muḥammad and the Islamic *umma*, just like Jews and Christians, explicitly trace their lineage to Abraham, he who “turned away from all that is false, and was not of those who ascribe divinity to aught beside God”.⁸¹ For this reason the Qur'ān asserts that Muslims are the true inheritors of Abraham's covenant, a legitimacy made evident in direct opposition to Jewish and Christian communities that have each fallen short in their own ways. Muḥammad's message relies on the Jewish and Christian scriptures for its authority, but in this there is a fundamental tension. For this authority is based on texts that these rival communities could rightly claim as their own.

This tension is important to keep in mind, because one of the primary reasons that scholars have persisted in seeking the historical basis for the Baḥīrā legend is that both Christian and Muslim communities have their own independent accounts of it. It is assumed that Christian and Muslim apologists were unlikely to collaborate, and that there was thus truth to the account if both sides attested to it. This thinking, while on its face reasonable, misunderstands the challenges these authors faced. Indeed, highlighting markers of difference has always been most challenging in contexts where symbols and

⁷⁹ Q 5:44, 6:162-3, 7:143, and 10:72.

⁸⁰ Q 3:3; 5:48; 6:92; 27:76; 35:31.

⁸¹ Q 16:123

semiotic signifiers overlap between religious communities.⁸² The truly alien “other” requires very little effort or imagination to identify; it is rather the familiar “other” that is often the most threatening to communal identity, and the most difficult to demarcate. For apologists and polemicists in the medieval Near East, one of the most challenging tasks in inter-religious dialogue was finding a common discursive ground, and staking a claim upon it that would carry symbolic weight and that one’s ideological opponents would accept. For this reason a certain amount of collaboration was, in fact, vital, and it is in this context that the Baḥīrā Legend should be understood. Whether Ibn Ishāq and the authors who transmitted his work believed in the reality of a historical encounter between Muḥammad and the monk, for them Baḥīrā’s value lay in his potential to corroborate the Prophet’s message, and facilitate their attempts to carve a discrete space for their community.⁸³

Indeed, Ibn Ishāq and the other Muslim biographers present Muḥammad’s meeting with Baḥīrā as a straightforward historical account, but it was specifically articulated to defend the Prophet against attacks that Christian authors began to formulate within a century of his death, and would become standard throughout the Middle Ages. John of Damascus, a near contemporary of Ibn Ishāq, wrote one of the earliest such attacks in which he condemned Muḥammad for his idolatrous youth, and dismissed his prophetic claims as illegitimate on the basis that he performed no miracles and that his

⁸² Jonathan Z. Smith, ed., “What a difference a difference makes,” in *Relating Religion: Essays in the Study of Religion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 251-302; David M. Freidenreich, *Foreigners and Their Food: Constructing Otherness in Jewish, Christian, and Islamic Law* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), 1-17; Daniel Boyarin, *Border Lines: The Partition of Judaeo-Christianity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 1-22.

⁸³ Roggema, *Legend of Sergius Baḥīrā*, 49.

coming, unlike Christ's, had not been predicted.⁸⁴ While John was one of the first Christians to formally articulate these three critiques, the Qur'ān itself depicts Muḥammad facing and struggling to respond to them from the very beginning of his mission. When, for example, Muḥammad presents some of the Jews with his message, they demand he call fire down from heaven.⁸⁵ Even the unbelievers (*kāfirun*), those not of the *ahl al-Kitāb*, or people of the book, ask for miracles like those performed by Moses and Jesus.⁸⁶ When Muḥammad fails to do so to their satisfaction he is called a sorcerer and accused of being demon possessed.⁸⁷ Numerous passages in the Qur'ān directly address these attacks, but never convincingly.⁸⁸ Indeed, at several points the Prophet is even described as doubting his own mission, and is explicitly instructed to consult those “who have been reading the Scripture before you” in order to confirm that what has been revealed is true.⁸⁹

Muslims might claim that their community had superseded the communities that preceded them, but the tension inherent in Muḥammad's message meant that those who came before still had authority, especially the “priests and monks” whom the Qur'ān singles out for their humility.⁹⁰ Indeed, these holy men, particularly desert dwelling ascetics like Baḥīrā, are the Christians who receive the highest praise in the Qur'ān, and

⁸⁴ D.J. Sahas, *John of Damascus on Islam. The 'Heresy of the Ishmaelites'*, (Leiden: Brill, 1972), 132-41; A. Davids and P. Valkenberg, “John of Damascus. The heresy of the Ishmaelites,” in *The three rings. Textual studies in the historical dialogue of Judaism, Christianity and Islam*, eds. B. Roggema, M. Poorthuis and P. Valkenberg (Louvain, 2005), 71-90; P. Valkenberg, “John of Damascus and the theological construction of Christian identity vis-à-vis early Islam”, *Jaarboek Thomas Instituut te Utrecht* 20 (2001): 8-30.

⁸⁵ Q 3:183

⁸⁶ Q 2:60; 3:49; 5:110; 6:8-9; 7:106-8, 117, 160; 11:12; 13:7, 27; 15:7; 20:69; 23:24; 26:31-3, 45, 83.

⁸⁷ Q 10:2; 11:7; 37:36; 44:14

⁸⁸ Q 12:110-11. I

⁸⁹ Q 10:94

⁹⁰ Q 5:82

were prominent figures generally on the religious landscape of the late antique and medieval Near East.⁹¹ It is undoubtedly for this reason that, in addition to the *sīra* literature, Baḥīrā also appears in a variety of early Islamic historiographical, geographical, and exegetical works (*tafsīr* and *asbāb al-nuzūl*),⁹² all of which describe a seventh century background to the Prophet's life where Christianity had fallen into decay, and the Scriptures had been misused and corrupted.⁹³

Baḥīrā is portrayed as the rare Christian exception, however, and it is here that the story most clearly reveals itself to have a primarily symbolic function. For while the sources agree on Baḥīrā's personal character and generally follow Ibn Ishāq's narrative outline, the details of his meeting with the young Muḥammad vary, sometimes widely. One biographer describes Muḥammad's encounter with the monk, but the encounter happens later when the Prophet is around twenty-five years old and working for his future wife, the widow Khadija.⁹⁴ Some biographers include both Ibn Ishāq's earlier meeting with Baḥīrā, and this later encounter with a now second, unnamed monk. One author even places both Baḥīrā and the second monk together as mutual witnesses to the Prophet.⁹⁵ There is still another tradition where Muḥammad's encounter with Baḥīrā is

⁹¹ See Peter Brown, "The Rise and Function of the Holy Man in Late Antiquity," *Journal of Roman Studies* 61 (1971): 80-101; Thomas Sizgorich, *Violence and Belief in Late Antiquity: Militant Devotion in Christianity and Islam* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, Press, 2009), 108-144; Daniel Caner, *Wandering, Begging Monks, Spiritual Authority and the Promotion of Monasticism in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).

⁹² See, Rubin, *The Eye of the Beholder*, 44-55.

⁹³ Barbara Roggema, *The Legend of Sergius Baḥīrā*, 37.

⁹⁴ Ibn Sa'd, *Kitāb al-ṭabaqāt*, 83; Ḥammād Abū Nu'aim, *Kitāb al-fitan*, ed. Majdī ibn Maṣṣūr ibn Sayyid al-Shūrī (Beirut, 1997), 133.

⁹⁵ Roggema, *Legend of Sergius Baḥīrā*, 41; Rifaat Y. Ebied and David Thomas, eds., *Muslim-Christian Polemic during the Crusades: The Letter from the People of Cyprus and Ibn Abī Ṭālib al-Dimashqī's Response* (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 176-177.

witnessed by a number of people who would eventually be important in the early Islamic community. The historian and biographer Ibn al-Athīr (d. 630/1232), for example, removes Muḥammad’s uncle, Abū Tālib, from his account, and instead inserts Abu Bakr, companion and first successor to the Prophet. In this version Baḥīrā acknowledges Muḥammad as he sits beneath a Lotus tree, declaring to Abu Bakr that he is the first since Christ to sit there. Following Muḥammad’s death there was intense competition between families in the Islamic *umma*, and emphasizing the proximity one’s family had to the Prophet was an effective way of gaining social status. For such families the story of Muḥammad’s encounter with Baḥīrā was a way of claiming that their forbearers, Abu Bakr in this case, converted as early as possible.⁹⁶ It should be emphasized that by including Abu Bakr, Ibn al-Athīr was making a point that would have been relevant primarily to other Muslims. Yet he uses a Christian monk to address an issue internal to his own community. Ibn al-Athīr, member of Ṣalāḥ ad-Dīn’s retinue who wrote one of the important Muslim histories of the Crusades, was a near contemporary of William of Tripoli, and his work demonstrates that Baḥīrā and the authority that he embodied continued to have rhetorical currency among Arabic writers throughout the Middle Ages.

William of Tripoli follows this Islamic tradition. Both the *Notitia* and *De statu* begin with a life of the Prophet Muḥammad, and in both texts the monk Baḥīrā is central. The two *vitae* open with Isaiah 19:21, a prophetic verse predicting that the Lord will come to be honored throughout pagan Egypt. William then pivots from this to praise of the sacred Christian fathers, the ones who fulfilled this prediction and “illuminated” the

⁹⁶ Rubin, *The eye of the Beholder*, 50–51.

cities and deserts of Egypt like stars in the firmament.⁹⁷ This is clearly meant to frame his introduction of Baḥīrā, a man characterized as living a simple and austere religious life in a monastery in the Arabian desert on Mount Sinai.⁹⁸ William describes Baḥīrā’s monastery as a busy outpost along the road regularly visited by Syrian, Arab, and Egyptian travelers and merchants, both Christian and “Saracen”.⁹⁹ It had been previously revealed to the monk that among these travelers a boy would come who was destined to be a great and powerful member of his tribe, and through whom “Christ’s church would be terribly afflicted.” For this reason Baḥīrā “eagerly desired to witness his coming,” but does not find him despite searching each caravan for his arrival.¹⁰⁰ Eventually through “divine revelation he discovered the one he was seeking, an orphan boy, common, poor and sickly, an Arab from the tribe of Ishmael who was custodian of the camels.”¹⁰¹ William follows this by quoting Genesis 16:12, a prophetic verse concerning Ishmael which predicts that “he shall be a wild man: his hands will be against all men, and all men’s hands against him, and he shall pitch his tents against all his brothers.”¹⁰² This

⁹⁷ “dum scilicet sancti patres christiani in civitatibus et desertis tamquam firmamenti sidera Egyptum et mundum illuminantes splendorem Deo et hominibus et odorem darent...” Wilhelm von Tripolis, *Notitia de Machometo. De statu Sarracenorum*, ed. Peter Engels (Echter, 1992), 268. NB: Unless otherwise indicated, all translations are my own.

⁹⁸ “extitit quidam religiosus vir christianus simplex, sed vite austere nomine Bahayra, reclusus in quodam monasterio sito in deserto Arabie via, que ducit ab Arabia Mechana relinquendo Mare Rubrum ad levam ultra Montem Synai.” Ibid.

⁹⁹ “Ad prefatum quidem monasterium, ubi clausus morabatur Bahayra, tamquam ad stationem et terminum unius diete conveniebant frequenter mercatores itinerantes Syri, Arabes et Egyptii, Christiani et Sarraceni.” Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ “qui futurus erat in gentem magnam ac robustissimam, per quem Christi ecclesia esset multum affligenda. Et hec revelata fuerant dicto Bahayra recluso, propter quod vehementer desiderabat videre venturum et eius cotidie prestolabatur adventum.” Ibid.

¹⁰¹ “et divina revelatione invenitur, qui querebatur, puer videlicet orphanus egrotativus papuer et vilis, custos cameli nationes Arabs de genere Ysmaelis.” Id., 270.

¹⁰² “Hic erit ferus homo; manus eius contra omnes et manus omnium contra eum et e regione omnium fratrum suorum figet tabernacula.” Ibid.

prophecy had not yet been fulfilled, and Baḥīrā recognized that Muḥammad might be the one to do so.¹⁰³

With this critical future role in mind, Baḥīrā invites Muḥammad into his monastery so that he might try and change the future, or at least shape it. It is here, William writes, that,

the Saracens place the first miracle that God worked on behalf of his servant who was, at this point, still a small boy, saying that when he wished to enter the tiny gate of the monastery, through which everyone passed, it increased by divine will in width and height at his presence, so that it appeared to be a gateway of the imperial court or an entrance to a house of royal majesty.¹⁰⁴

If there was any doubt about Muḥammad, the miracle confirms that he is the one Baḥīrā has been waiting for, and he invites the young boy into the monastery where he is fed, clothed, embraced, and named Baḥīrā's adopted son.¹⁰⁵ In his new home Muḥammad is “instructed and taught to shun idols, and worship the one God of Heaven, and indeed, with his whole heart he regularly called upon Jesus, son of the Virgin Mary.”¹⁰⁶ Muḥammad remained at the monastery for a number of years, but as he approached adulthood he desired to venture out into the world. He obtains the brothers' permission to

¹⁰³ “Qui legit intelligat, si hec prophetia in hoc Machometo impletur, quoniam, ut bidetur, in nullo filiorum suorum Ysmael invenitur ita ferus et potens ad figendum tabernacula contra omnes sicut in hoc solo, de quo est sermo.” Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ “Hic ponunt Sarraceni primum miraculum, quod Deus operatus est, ut dicunt, pro famulo suo adhuc puerulo, dicentes quod parva porta curie monasterii, per quam transibant omnes, ad presentiam pueri, dum vellet intrare parvulus, ita divinnoo utu crevit dilatata et arcualiter exaltata est, ut curie imperialis videretur hostium aut introitum domus regie maiestatis.” Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ “Recipitur tandem puer a religioso Bahayra; tamquam filius dilectus tractatur, pascitur et induitur, ab omnibus amplectitur et filius adoptivus nominatur reclusi.” Id., 270-272.

¹⁰⁶ “Instruitur et docetur, ut fugiat ydolorum culturam et unum Deum celi colat et Iesum Marie virginis filium frequenter invocet toto corde.” Ibid.

do so, but only after promising that he would eventually return to them.¹⁰⁷ Over the next several years Muḥammad faithfully serves a rich merchant, but he also honors his word to the brothers, regularly and devotedly returning to Baḥīrā, his teacher.¹⁰⁸

Muḥammad in the Latin Tradition

So ends the first chapter of William's biography of the Prophet, a chapter virtually unique in the Latin corpus in its presentation of Muḥammad and Baḥīrā. This is no trivial statement because Muḥammad was a topic of interest throughout the Middle Ages, with over 150 accounts of the Prophet written in Latin between the 8th and 15th centuries in every major genre.¹⁰⁹ The earliest texts to explicitly mention him by name are two Mozarabic chronicles, the *Chronica Byzantia-Arabica ad annum 741* and the *Chronica Muzarabica ad annum 754*, both written in Spain in the 8th century shortly after the Islamic conquests.¹¹⁰ Both seem to share a common unknown source, and are aware that Muḥammad's people hail him as God's messenger and a prophet, but differ in several other ways in their characterization of him. The *Chronica Byzantia-Arabica* portrays the Prophet as a prince from an important tribe who is wise and able to see into the future and

¹⁰⁷ "Verumptamen fratres monasteriū predicta facientes puerum detinere non potuerunt. Quem dimiserunt abire sponsione ab eo recepta, quod ad ipsos rediret." Id., 272.

¹⁰⁸ "et ad magistrum suum, memoratum reclusum, frequentius et devotus veniebat." Id., 272.

¹⁰⁹ Michelina Di Cesare, *The Pseudo-Historical Image of the Prophet Muḥammad in Medieval Latin Literature* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter GmbH & Co., 2012), 2.

¹¹⁰ Critical editions for both are found in: Juan Gil, ed., *Corpus Scriptorum Muzarabicorum*, Vol. 1 (Madrid, 1973), 8-9; Id., 18-19; for further discussion, Luis Agustín García Moreno, "Elementos de tradición bizantina en dos Vidas de Mahoma mozárabes," in *Bizancio y la península ibérica: De la antigüedad tardía a la edad moderna*, Vol. 24, eds. Inmaculada Pérez Martín and Pedro Bádenas de la Peña (Madrid: Nueva Roma, 2004), 247-71; Ann Christys, *Christians in al-Andalus, 711-1000* (Mitcham, 2002), 28-51; John Tolan, *Saracens: Islam in the Medieval European Imagination* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 78-85; Kenneth Baxter Wolf, "Christian Views of Islam in Early Medieval Spain," in *Medieval Christian Perceptions of Islam*, ed. John Victor Tolan (New York, 2000), 85-108; Robert G. Hoyland, *Seeing Islam as Others Saw It: A Survey and Evaluation of Christian, Jewish and Zoroastrian Writings on Early Islam* (Princeton: The Darwin Press, 1997), 422-27.

who leads a revolt against the Byzantine Empire. The *Chronica Muzarabica*, by contrast, describes him in less flattering terms, emphasizing his opportunism and attributing his rise to power to personal guile rather than divine providence. In addition, the *Chronica Muzarabica* places Muḥammad and the Islamic conquests in an apocalyptic context, associating the Prophet with the antichrist and dating his death to the year 666. Of the two approaches, the latter was far more common, and the Prophet's guile and association with the Antichrist became two of the standard elements of the Latin *vitae*. Most of these earliest biographies of the Prophet were written in Islamic Spain in the context of the "Martyrs of Cordoba" movement, an effort by some Christians to resist Islamization by denouncing Muḥammad and courting intentional martyrdom. Biographers such as Eulogius Cordubiensis (d. 859), John of Seville (d. 9th c.), and Paulus Albarus (d. 861) were supporters of the movement, and emphasized Muḥammad's weakness of character and prominent eschatological role as a way of encouraging their fellow Christians to resist conversion and the attractions of Arab culture.

Outside of Islamic Spain, Latin descriptions of Muḥammad and accounts of his life did not, generally speaking, have an explicit organizing principle like the "Martyrs" movement, and as a result there was great variety among them. Despite this diversity, these accounts can be grouped into one of two general categories: absurdist depictions having virtually no connection to the historical person, exemplified by the epic poem the *Song of Roland* (c. 11th c.) which describes Muḥammad as an idol and one of three gods

worshipped by Muslims in Mecca,¹¹¹—what one scholar has called pseudo-historical depictions of Muḥammad, accounts that attempt some minimum level of verisimilitude and are grounded, however superficially, in the Islamic tradition.¹¹²

The divide in these two approaches has been a subject of some scholarly analysis, one worth briefly discussing for its direct pertinence to understanding William of Tripoli's approach. The first modern scholars to examine this topic attributed the absurdist depictions of Islam to a lack of factual information. R.W. Southern divided the Middle Ages into an "age of ignorance", those pre-crusade centuries when Europe had only a passing familiarity with Islam, and the period after the First Crusade and the Reconquest of al-Andalus when factual information entered Europe, spurring what he called a "century of reason and hope".¹¹³ While this model had a sheen of common sense to it, the field soon moved past it as scholars such as Norman Daniel showed that even when European authors possessed accurate information about Islam, they often deliberately misinterpreted its basic tenets in order to portray it in the least favorable terms. Accuracy was rarely the deciding factor in how acceptable a given account or treatise happened to be, and Daniel was pointed in his condemnation of European authors who were enmeshed in ways of thinking that precluded any possibly empathy with Muslims.¹¹⁴ While Daniel's study is still the starting point for any examination of

¹¹¹ Gerard J. Brault, *The Song of Roland: An Analytical Edition* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1978).

¹¹² Di Cesare, *The Pseudo-Historical Image*, 1-12.

¹¹³ R.W Southern, *Western Views of Islam in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962).

¹¹⁴ Norman Daniel, *Islam and the West: The Making of an Image* (London: Oneworld Publishing, 1993), 98-99, 201.

medieval European approaches to Islam, more recent scholarship has shown that he often confused the genre of polemic with the authors who wrote within its conventions.¹¹⁵

Authorial purpose was in actuality the deciding factor in writers' approaches, not their level of enmeshment in a system of thought, nor their possession of factual information.

As a case in point, it is worth considering the representation of Muḥammad in three contemporary accounts: the *Historia Ecclesiastica* by Hugh of Fleury (c. 1109), the *Otia de Machomete* by Gautier of Compiègne (c. 1137), and the *Gesta Tancredi* (c. 1115) by Raoul of Caen.¹¹⁶ In the first of these, Hugh of Fleury portrays Muḥammad as an opportunistic magician who learned about the Christian and Jewish scriptures while on trading missions into Christian territory.¹¹⁷ Muḥammad convinces his rich wife Khadīja as well as numerous Jews and Christians that he is the messiah, invents a new law for them, and leads an invasion of the Byzantine Empire with his newfound support. The Prophet begins to suffer from epileptic fits, but convinces those around him that these are caused by visitations from the angel Gabriel. Hugh casts Muḥammad as the anti-Christ, emphasizing his guile and deceit, counterfeit claims, and idolatrous youth. Certain trace elements from the Islamic tradition can be detected in Hugh's account, and the Near

¹¹⁵ See Thomas Burman, *Reading the Qur'ān in Latin Christendom, 1140-1560* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), 4-5.

¹¹⁶ Di Cesare, *The Pseudo-Historical Image*, 3-10.

¹¹⁷ Hugonis Floriacensis monachi Benedictini, *Chronicon*, ed. Bernhard Rottendorff (Münster, 1638), 149-50, 152-53; MGH, *Scriptores, Chronica et Annales Aevi Salici*, fol. 9, ed. Georgius Heinricus Pertz (Hannoverae, 1851), 357; for further reading, Ekkehart Rotter, "Mohammed in der Stadt. Die Kenntnis um die Stadt Medina und das dortige Prophetengrab in mittelalterlichen Europa," in *Zeitschrift für historische Forschung* 36:2 (2009): 183-233; Alessandro D'Ancona, *La Leggenda di Maometto in Occidente*, ed. by A. Borruso, (Rome, 1994), 58, 115; Benjamin Z. Kedar, *Crusade and Mission: European Approaches toward the Muslims* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 87, 208-210; Nico Lettinck, "Pour une édition critique de l' *Historia ecclesiastica* de Hugues de Fleury," in *Revue Bénédictine* 91 (1981): 386-97; Marie-Thérèse D'Alverny, "La connaissance de l'Islam en Occident du IXe au milieu du XIIe siècle," in *L'Occidente e l'Islam nell'Alto Medioevo*, vol. 2 (Spoleto, 1965), 577-602.

Eastern backdrop to the Prophet's life is authentic, but overall any recognizable details are subverted in order to cast Muḥammad in an eschatological role.

In Gautier of Compiègne's *Otia de Machomete*, the author portrays Muḥammad as a young Christian educated in the liberal arts who served a rich sovereign in the land of *Ydumea* (Edom).¹¹⁸ Early in his life Muḥammad visited a hermit seeking advice about his future, but was chased away because the monk believed him demon possessed, and predicted that he would deform Christian law by turning vices into virtues. Muḥammad goes on to have a very successful and lucrative career, which allows him to marry his master's widow after he dies. On his wedding night he has an epileptic fit, and attempts to cover his infirmity by claiming it was due to a visitation by the angel Gabriel. Muḥammad forces the hermit to corroborate his story, and proceeds to convince those around him that he is a prophet through a series of elaborate tricks. He teaches a dove to eat corn from his ear in an attempt to imitate the Holy Spirit alighting on Christ in the Jordan river, trains a cow to kneel in front of him and "miraculously" deliver the Qur'ān, and predicts that milk and honey will flow out of a place in the ground where he had previously hidden containers of it. Muḥammad is hailed as a prophet and made ruler of Edom, and uses his newfound power to legalize polygamy and abolish both baptism and the Eucharist. Like Hugh of Fleury's account, there are traces of the Islamic tradition in Gautier's *Otia*, but these have been similarly subverted in order to serve as an *exemplum* of Christian truth by showing its distorted and counterfeit image. The backdrop for

¹¹⁸ Guy Cambier, "Quand Gautier de Compiègne composait les *Otia de Machomete*?" in *Latomus* 17 (1958): 531–39; R. B. C. Huygens, ed., *Le roman de Mahomet de Alexandre du Pont: édition critique précédée d'une étude sur quelques aspects de la légende de Mahomet au Moyen Age par Yvan G. Lepage. Avec le texte des Otia de Machomete de Gautier de Compiègne (XIIe siècle)* (Paris, 1977).

Gautier's account is the chronologically distant land of biblical Edom, putting it in the realm of parable where concrete indicators of time and place are unnecessary and possibly counter-productive. While Hugh also depicted Muḥammad as Christ's inverse, his purpose in doing so was to demonstrate his role in an unfolding eschatological script. This script, by contrast, would play out in a definite time and place, one that Hugh deliberately reflected in the setting of his account.

Raoul of Caen's *Gesta Tancredi* is a prosimetric work that tells a narrative of the First Crusade. Raoul arrived in the Holy Land in the aftermath of its events, and while his account, which was intended to honor his patron, the crusade leader Tancred, is supposedly based on eyewitness testimonies, it includes a number of bizarre details.¹¹⁹ Foremost among them is his depiction of the conquest of Jerusalem, which vividly narrates Tancred's heroics as he fought his way into the city and into the *Templum Domini*, or Dome of the Rock. Once inside Tancred beheld an enormous idol of Muḥammad decorated in jewels, gold, and purple robes. At first Tancred is at a loss to explain what he is seeing, but eventually concludes that it is an image of Muḥammad as anti-Christ, and proceeds to destroy it. By any measure this is an absurd portrayal of the Prophet bearing no connection to the Islamic tradition. It was well known in Europe by this time that Muslims were not idol-worshipping polytheists, and we have little evidence that anything like this statue was ever found in the *Templum Domini* or any mosque the crusaders would have encountered.¹²⁰ Moreover, by the time he began this work (c. 1112)

¹¹⁹ Radolfo Cadomensis, *Gesta Tandcredi in expeditione Hierosolymitana*, RHC Occ. 3, 587-716.

¹²⁰ Xenia Muratova has suggested that a statue from the Roman Period may have been placed in the *Templum*, but even so it stretches the imagination to think Raoul would have actually believed this was an image of Muḥammad. Xenia Muratova, "Western Chronicles of the First Crusade as Sources for the

Raoul had been in the Holy Land for five years, and must have understood at some minimum level that Islamic beliefs precluded such a thing. The *Gesta* is far more detached from reality than the *Historia Ecclesiastica* and even the *Otia de Machomete*, but what it shares with them is an author who subverted what he knew about Islam in order to service his thematic aims. Where Hugh emphasized Muḥammad's role in an unfolding eschatological script, Raoul stressed the part his patron Tancred would play. As Christians at the time understood it, a key part of that script is that the Anti-Christ would place a statue of himself within the Temple. By destroying this statue, Tancred became, in Raoul's hands, a vital protagonist in ushering in the apocalyptic events that many Christians believed were imminent.¹²¹

The brief discussion of these three texts has tried to emphasize the fact that medieval Latin depictions of Muḥammad were diverse, and that accurate representations of Islam were not primarily due to a lack of accurate information.¹²² All three of these authors were contemporaries who lived in the same geographical area and were part of the same ecclesiastical circles; and yet, their depictions of Muḥammad were sometimes drastically different because each had different aims, and each of them wrote about Islam and its Prophet in the ways that best suited them. Indeed, it is perhaps ironic that the *Gesta*, the most removed from the Islamic tradition, was written by an author who spent

History of Art" in *The Holy Land in Crusader Art in the Twelfth Century*, ed. Jaroslav Folda Oxford (British Archeological Reports: International Series, no. 152) 1982, 47-69.

¹²¹ See, Brett Whalen, *Dominion of God: Christendom and Apocalypse in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009), 3-34.

¹²² Jay Rubenstein has observed a two-tiered system in Guibert of Nogent's biography of the prophet, one level of which was deliberately absurd and the second made some attempt at accuracy. J. Rubenstein, *Guibert of Nogent: Portrait of a Medieval Mind* (New York, 2002), 121-22.

years in the Holy Land, and conceivably had the greatest access to first-hand beliefs about the Prophet Muḥammad.

William of Tripoli, like Ralph of Caen, had direct access to Islamic traditions, but he took a very different path. This point has been stressed, because William of Tripoli's *vitae* are arguably the two Latin biographies most faithful to the Islamic tradition; and yet, the few scholars to consider them have made very little attempt to ask why this is the case. Rather, one scholar concluded that this could be explained by his mere physical presence in the Levant, observing in reference to William of Tripoli that "there are examples of texts in Latin which do reflect the Eastern traditions about a pious and persevering counsellor to the Prophet. It need not surprise us that one important channel of transmission was the Crusader States."¹²³ While there is a gloss of common sense to this, the reality is that Raoul of Caen, along with other Latin writers such as Riccoldo da Monte Croce and Jacques de Vitry, spent considerable time in the Holy Land, and still wrote about Muḥammad in ways that were hostile and sometimes highly inaccurate.¹²⁴ This is to say that there was nothing self-evident about William's presentation of

¹²³ Barbara Roggema, *The Legend of Sergius Bahīrā*, 165.

¹²⁴ Riccoldus a Monte Crucis, *Epistole de prosperitate sarracenorum in temporalibus et deiectione christianorum*, ed. and trans. Emilio Panella in <http://www.e-theca.net/emiliopanella/riccoldo/epi.htm>, prologue and ep. 1; Jean-Marie Mérigoux, "L'Ouvrage d'un Frère Prêcheur Florentin en Orient à la fin du XIII^e siècle, *Le Contra legem Sarracenorum de Riccoldo da Monte di Croce*," in *Fede e Controversia nel '300 e '500: Memorie Domenicane* (Pistoia: Centro riviste della provincia romana, 1986), 60–68, 70–104, 108–10, 113–23; Jacques de Vitry, *Histoire Orientale, Historia Orientalis*, ed. and trans. Jean Donnadiou (Turnhout, 2008), 104–26, 131–44, 246; Also, Jessalynn Lea Bird, "Crusade and Conversion after the Fourth Lateran Council (1215): Oliver of Paderborn's and James of Vitry's Missions to Muslims Reconsidered," in *Essays in Medieval Studies* 21 (2005): 23–47; Id., "The *Historia Orientalis* of Jacques de Vitry: Visual and Written Commentaries as Evidence of a Text's Audience, Reception, and Utilization," in *Essays in Medieval Studies* 20 (2003): 56–74; Jean Donnadiou, "L'histoire orientale de Jacques de Vitry: Tradition manuscrite et histoire du texte," in *Sacris erudiri* 45 (2006): 379–456.

Muḥammad, and his adoption of “Eastern traditions” was not an inevitable process of cultural osmosis. The Crusader States were a channel of transmission, but this was the result of the deliberate actions of individuals who had a number of options available to them, but made the decision to draw on a *particular* set of “Eastern traditions” in the face of Islam. Indeed, the Arabic and Syriac textual corpus was diverse, and many eastern Christians wrote about Muḥammad in ways that were every bit as hostile as their Latin peers. Embedded in the notion that William’s approach was determined by his exposure to “Eastern traditions” is the idea that familiarity with Arabic sources somehow had a moderating effect on Latin writers. While there are situations where this appears to have been true, it is not at all clear that this was the general effect of such familiarity.

The “pseudo-historical’ image of Muḥammad

William’s portrayal of the relationship between Muḥammad and Bahira cannot be explained by sources alone. Indeed, in one way or another all of the pseudo-historical Latin biographies of the Prophet are based on Arabic and Syriac sources, although often indirectly through Latin translations of Greek, but William is virtually unique in portraying a positive relationship between a pious Baḥīrā and Muḥammad, his devoted student. The earliest Latin biography of Muḥammad in western Europe that can be called pseudo-historical is Anastasius the Librarian’s 9th century account in his *Historia Tripartita* (c. 871). Anastasius served as Pontifical Librarian for Popes Adrian II (867-872) and John VIII (872-882),¹²⁵ and translated a number of Greek texts into Latin,

¹²⁵ See Di Cesare, *The Pseudo-Historical Image*, 51-54; Rotter, “Mohammed in der Stadt,” 183-233; Tolan, *Saracens*, 104, 157, 168.

including Theophanes the Confessor's (d. 817) *Chronographia*, which contains a biography of Muḥammad drawn most likely from Syriac sources that Anastasius relied on for his own account.¹²⁶ Anastasius describes Muḥammad as a prince and pseudo-prophet (*pseudopropheta*), who grew up poor and orphaned, but married a rich woman named Khadīja early in his adult life. Muḥammad travelled regularly to Egypt and Palestine to sell her goods where he often conversed with Jews and Christians, At some point he decided to “seize” some of their writings and bring them back with him.¹²⁷ Soon after doing so he is beset by frequent seizures, which causes his wife to express regret at marrying someone so infirm. He therefore tries to convince her that they are visions from the angel Gabriel.¹²⁸ Skeptical of his claims, she seeks the advice of a “pseudo-monk” (*pseudomonachi*) who corroborates Muḥammad's story.¹²⁹ Muḥammad attracts many followers by claiming that whoever kills or is killed by an enemy will enter a paradise full of sensual pleasures, and then leads them on a series of invasions.¹³⁰ Anastasius' biography was very influential, incorporated, often word-for-word, into a number of Latin *vitae* throughout the period.¹³¹ Anastasius' authority rests in large part on his

¹²⁶ Anastasius Bibliothecarius, “Historia Ecclesiastica sive Historia Tripartita,” in *Theophanis Chronographia*, vol. 2, ed. Carl de Boor (Lipsiae: B.G. Teubneri, 1883-85), 108, 208-210.

¹²⁷ “cumque veniret in Palaestinam, conversabatur cum Iudaeis et Christianis. capiebat autem ab eis quasdam scripturas.” Anastasius Bibliothecarius, “Historia Ecclesiastica,” 209.

¹²⁸ “quo comprto huius coniuux oppido tristabatur, utpote nobilis et quae se huiusmodi copularit, egeno scilicet et epileptico. procurat vero ipse placare illam taliter dicens, quia visionem quandam angeli Gabrihelis dicti contemplor et haud ferens huius aspectum mente deficio et cado.” Ibid.

¹²⁹ “veritatem locutus est: et enim iste angelus mittitur ad cunctos prophetas”. Ibid.

¹³⁰ “docuit autem auditores suos, quod, qui occidit inimicum vel ab inimico occiditur, in paradisum ingrediatur. paradisum vero carnalis cibi ac potus et commixtionis mulierum perhibebat fluviumque vini ac mellis ac lactis et feminarum...”. Id., 210.

¹³¹ For example, Landulphus Sagax's *Historia Romana* (c. late 10th), the *Chronicon Universale* (c. 1125) begun by Frutolfus de Michelsberg and finished by Ekkehardus Uraugiensis (d. 1125), and Ralph Niger's *Chronicon ab initio mundi ad annum Domini* (1199). Amedeo Crivellucci, ed., *Landolfi Sagacis Historia Romana*, vol.1 (Roma: Fonti per la Storia d'Italia, 1912-13), 58-61; MGH, *Scriptores, Chronica et Annales*

establishment of the standard elements of the Prophet's life in the Latin corpus, namely his descent from Ishmael, early contact with Jews and Christians, epileptic fits, marriage to the wealthy Khadija, and cynical invention of a paradise full of sensual pleasure. There are approximately fifty Latin *vitae* that can be categorized as pseudo-historical, and in one form or another these elements appear in every one of them.

The second significant and influential body of pseudo-historical works about Muḥammad --and Islam generally-- that was based on Arabic sources was a group of texts that are known collectively as the *Corpus Cluniacense*. In 1141 Peter the Venerable (d. 1156), the Abbot of Cluny, travelled to Spain to meet with a group of scholars he had tasked with translating a number of important Islamic texts into Latin. Peter's goal was to refute Islam, but to do so based on authentic information rather than the ignorance and false opinions that he saw dominating the Latin approach. The primary texts in the collection are Peter the Venerable's *Summa totius haeresis ac diabolice secte Sarracenorum*; Robert of Ketton's (d. 1160) *Fabule Sarracenorum: Chronica mendosa et ridicula Sarracenorum* and *Lex Sarracenorum*; Herman of Carinthia's (d. 1160) *Liber de generatione Mahumet et nutritura eius* and *De doctrina Mahumet*; and Peter of Toledo's (d. after 1142) *Epistola Saraceni et Rescriptum Christiani*. The first of these, Peter's *Summa*, is a polemical treatise intended to disprove and dismantle the "heresy of the Saracens". As the name suggests, Peter considered Islam a corrupted form of Christianity, and heresy forms a key element of Peter's *vita*, as he compares Muḥammad

Aevi Salici, fol. 6, ed. Gorgius Henricus Pertz (Hannoverae, 1844), 153; Robert Anstruther, ed., *Radulphi Nigri Chronica: The Chronicles of Ralph Niger* (London, 1851), 141-142.

to the 4th century heretic Arius who considered Christ subordinate to God the Father. Peter claims in the *Summa*'s introduction that his biography is meant to address the false opinions and general ignorance about Muḥammad that are commonplace. He credits Anastasius the Librarian with the information in his account, but actually appears to draw far more from the *Risālat al-Kindī*, an Arabic text that was transmitted into the Latin corpus via Peter Alfonsi's (d. 1140) *Dialogi contra Iudaeos* (c. 1108) and Peter of Toledo's *Epistola Saraceni et Rescriptum Christiani* (1142).¹³²

In Peter the Venerable's biography a heretical monk named Sergius of the "Nestorian sect" is expelled from the church and banished to Arab lands where he joins forces with Muḥammad and teaches him Nestorian interpretations of the Old and New Testaments.¹³³ With the help of other learned Jews and heretics Muḥammad creates his own holy book, which mixes truth with falsehood and innovates new ideas such as the belief in a carnal paradise. Muḥammad accepts some things from the Old and New Testaments, but ridicules the idea that Christ himself is God. Indeed, in doing so Peter compares Muḥammad to Arius and calls this the greatest of his heresies.¹³⁴ Peter,

¹³² The actual date of the *Risālah al-Kindī* is a matter of dispute, and will be discussed below. For studies on the efforts of Peter the Venerable and the other clunaic translators, see M.-T. d'Alverny, "Pierre le Vénérable et la légende de Mahomet," in *À Cluny. Congrès scientifique*, (Dijon, 1950), 161-70; D. Iogna-Prat, *Order and exclusion: Cluny and Christendom face heresy, Judaism, and Islam (1000-1150)*, trans. G.R. Edwards (Ithaca, 2005), 323-57; Jose Martinez Gazquez, "El lenguaje de la violencia en la prologo de la traduccion latina del Coran impulsada por Pedro il Venerable," in *Cahiers de linguistique et de civilization hispaniques medievales* 28 (2005): 79-92; Tolan, *Saracens*, 155-65; James Kritzeck, *Peter the Venerable and Islam* (Princeton. 1964).

¹³³ "et Sergium monachum, haeretici Nestorii sectatorem, ab ecclesia expulsum ad partes illas Arabiae transmisit, et monachum haeticum pseudoprophetae coniunxit. Itaque Sergius coniunctus Mahumeto, quod ei deerat supplevit, et scripturas sacras tam Veteris Testamenti quam Novi secundum magistri sui Nestorii intellectum, qui Salvatorem nostrum Deum esse negabat, partim prout sibi visum est ei exponens simulque apocryphorum fabulis eum plenissime imbuens Christianum Nestorianum effecit." Petrus Venerabilis, *Schriften zum Islam*, ed. Reinhold Gleib (Altenberge, 1985), 3-4.

¹³⁴ "Inde est, quod Mosen optimum prophetam fuisse, Christum dominum maiorem omnibus existisse confirmat, natum de virgine praedicat, nuntium Dei, verbum Dei, spiritum Dei fatetur...Filium Dei dici aut

following his source the *Risalāh al-Kindī*, emphasizes Muḥammad’s opportunism, cynicism, and relationship with the heretic Sergius, all of which became standard narrative elements in the Latin corpus.¹³⁵

The date and authorship of the *Risālah*, also called the “*Apology*”, are both matters of debate. The text purports to be the correspondence between a Muslim named ‘Abdallāh b. Ismā‘īl al-Hāshimī and a Christian named ‘Abd al-Masīḥ b. Ishāq al-Kindī, but the latter appears to be a pseudonym and both letters have been shown to originate from a Christian author. William Muir, author of the first modern translation, situated the text in the ninth century during the Caliphate of al-Ma’mūn (786-833) based on its internal historical references, and most scholars have followed him on this.¹³⁶ In the Arabic version of the text, the Muslim al-Hāshimī writes to al-Kindī and invites him to convert to Islam, or present a cogent defense of Christianity. Al-Kindī’s response is pointed, and his refutation of Islam centers on the Prophet’s life. He describes

credi prorsus deridet... Summa vero huius haeresis intentio est, ut Christus dominus neque Deus, neque Dei filius esse credatur, sed licet magnus Deoque dilectus, homo tamen purus et vir quidem sapiens et propheta maximus. Quae quidem olim diaboli machinatione concepta, primo per Arium seminata...” Ibid.

¹³⁵ The precise details of its arrival in the Christian West are not entirely known, but it is certain that the efforts of the clunaic translators played a huge role in its diffusion and popularization. See, Di Cesare, Michelina Di Cesare, “Pietro il Venerabile, Ka‘b al-Aḥbar e il *signum Ioniae*: Una nuova interpretazione del ‘ritratto’ di Muḥammad nel Corpus Cluniacense,” in *Per Gabriella: Studi in memoria di Gabriella Braga*, eds. Marco Palma and Cinzia Vismara (Cassino, 2011); Burman, *Reading the Qur‘ān*, 59–87; Óscar de la Cruz Palma, “Los Textos della llamada Collectio Toletana, fuente de informacion sobre el Islam,” in *The Journal of Medieval Latin* 17 (2007): 413 – 34; Ludwig Vones, “Zwischen Kulturaustausch und religiöser Polemik: Von den Möglichkeiten und Grenzen christlich-muslimischer Verständigung zur Zeit des Petrus Venerabilis,” in *Wissen über Grenzen: Arabisches Wissen und Lateinisches Mittelalter*, eds. Andreas Speer Lydia Wegener (Berlin and New York: *Miscellanea Mediaevalia*, 2006), 217–37.

¹³⁶ See S.K. Samir, “La version latine de l’Apologie d’al-Kindī (vers 830 ap. J.-C.) et son original arabe,” in *¿Existe una identidad mozárabe? Historia, lengua y cultura de los cristianos de al-Andalus (siglos IX-XII)*, eds. C. Aillet, M. Penelas and P. Roisse (Madrid, 2007), 33-82; G. Tartar, “L’authenticité des épîtres d’al-Hāshimī et d’al-Kindī sous le calife al-Ma’mūn (813-834),” in *Actes du premier congrès international d’études arabes-chrétiennes*, ed. S.K. Samir (Rome: Pont. Institutum Studiorum Orientalum, 1982), 207-21; J. Muñoz Sendino, “Al-Kindī. Apología del cristianismo,” *Miscellanea Comillas* 11-12 (1949): 339-461; P. Casanova, *Mohammed et la fin du monde* (Paris, 1913).

Muḥammad as a poor orphan who grew up as an idolater, raised out of his station by an opportunistic marriage to the wealthy widow Khadīja. After attempting and failing to lead his people through secular means, he claims to be a prophet instead. The ignorant and gullible Arabs accept his claim, and he rouses their natural inclination to violence, leading them on a number of often failed military expeditions whose lack of success al-Kindī takes as a sign of the Prophet's lack of divine favor. Al-Kindī characterizes Muḥammad as a wanton adulterer with a penchant for violence, who, unlike the prophets of old, failed to predict the future or perform any miracles. Al-Kindī also claims that Muḥammad had very little to do with the Qur'ān itself. Early in his life the Prophet met an excommunicated Nestorian monk named Sergius who convinced him to abandon idolatry and instructed him in Nestorian doctrine. At the point that Muḥammad was near converting Sergius died, and two Jews named Abdallah and Kab ingratiated themselves with him, claiming that they would help him spread Sergius' message among Muḥammad's people. After Muḥammad's death the two sow discord in the Islamic *umma* between Ali and Abu Bakr, and corrupt Sergius' doctrine when committing it to the pages of the Qur'ān. The *Risālah* shares much in common with most Latin biographies, and was arguably the most important Arabic source that shaped and influenced the Latin approach.

The earliest surviving Latin version of the *Risālah* is Peter of Toledo's *Epistola Saraceni et Rescriptum Christiani*, which dates from the twelfth century.¹³⁷ The key

¹³⁷ The most recent critical edition is found in Fernando González Muñoz, *Exposición y refutación del Islam: La versión latina de las epístolas de al-Ḥašimī y al-Kindī* (A Coruña: Universidade da Coruña, 2005).

narrative elements in the Arabic version are present in the Latin text, but there are a number of changes, some intentional and some not, and the tone of the Latin account is much more aggressive. The *Epistola* puts far greater emphasis on Serguis's heretical beliefs, and the "pseudo-monk's" only reasons for teaching the Prophet are self-interested,¹³⁸ persuading Muḥammad to include passages that are favorable to priests and monks for example.¹³⁹ Peter's access to a more "authentic" Arabic source did nothing to soften his stance toward Islam. Rather, he amplified the polemical attack he found in the *Risālah*, and invented new ones, claiming in several passages that the pilgrimage to Mecca is really in honor of the goddess Venus, and that Islam is not the strictly monotheistic religion it claims to be.

As the Islamic Baḥīrā tradition, retold and reimagined by eastern Christian authors, began to find its way into western Europe, there was nothing self-evidently positive about Muḥammad's relationship with this monk. Indeed, the very purpose of the original, Islamic version of this story was to validate Muḥammad's message, a message that undermined Christianity's place in the sacred hierarchy. One response to the Islamic Baḥīrā was a direct one, to deny his authority and recast his relationship with Muḥammad in the least favorable terms. For Latin authors intent on doing so, Arabic sources like the *Risālah* provided plenty of raw material which could be arranged and developed to

¹³⁸ "...quia Sergius monachus, cum in monasterio graviter pecasset et propter hoc excommunicatus et expulsus fuisset...volensque aliquid facere unde monachis illis qui eum expulerant, placeret et reconciliari mereretur, erant enim heretici nestoriani, qui dicunt Mariam non peperisse Deum nisi hominem tantum..." Id., 66.

¹³⁹ "Et ita factum est ut ab isto monacho aliqua de verteri et novo testamento edoctus, ipsa in Alcorano suo fabulose et mendose intexeret. Hoc etiam ille persuasit ut in Alcorano poneret dictum a De quod monachi et presbiteri christiani familiares ei esse deberent, quia non superbiunt." Id., 67.

emphasize this polemical point. Another potential response was to work *with* the Islamic Baḥīrā tradition rather than against it, accepting many of its propositions, but redirecting them in ways that were advantageous. Along with the general tone of his biography, one of the signs that William of Tripoli was attempting this second response is his use of the name Baḥīrā. Until now I have used this name whenever I have referred to the monk, but in the Latin corpus the name Sergius is actually far more common. Indeed, in all of the Latin texts that mention the monk, I am aware of only four that use the name Baḥīrā, three of which I will consider here, the fourth of which I will discuss separately below.

The first is the *Liber denudationis sive ostensionis aut patefaciens*, also known as the *Contrarietas Alfolica*, a 13th century Latin translation of an Arabic Mozarabic work that is a mix of the Islamic tradition and familiar Christian polemical tropes.¹⁴⁰ Muḥammad is described as a pseudo-prophet who used fraud to attract and deceive his followers.¹⁴¹ The author of the *Liber denudationis* claims that the legitimate parts of Muḥammad’s teaching were informed by a monk named Boheira, a Persian named Salon, and a Jew named Abdalla. Of the three, Boheira has the longest relationship with the Prophet, instructing him throughout his life, and “pushing him” (*promouit eum*) to read the Old and New Testaments.¹⁴² Despite the instruction he receives from his three

¹⁴⁰ The Latin text with analysis and an English translation can be found in Thomas Burman, *Religious Polemic and the Intellectual History of the Mozarabs, c. 1050–1200* (Leiden: Brill, 1994).

¹⁴¹ “Cum sederet aliquando Machometus in stipatione sotiorum suorum et quaereret quaerens de aliqua quaestione, dicebat, “Non habeo inde scientiam, sed nunc veniet ad me Gabriel qui quaestioni tuae respondebit. “Sedebat autem sic per horam cogitans. Cumque veniret ei responsio, cadebat in fatiem suam et retorquebat manus et pedes, et sic uidebant eum donec caput leuaret, dicebatque, ‘Ubinam est quaerens ? Venit,’ aid, ‘mihi responsio tuae questionis per Gabrielem, et est talis et talis.’” Id., 264.

¹⁴² “Adhaesit autem Machometo monachus quidem dictus Boheira, et ipse primus qui adhaesit ei, et factus est ei doctor et promuit eum in lectura librorum...fuitque cum Machometo pene usque ad mortem Machometi.” Id., 270.

teachers, Muḥammad takes the entirety of the credit for his law and doctrine, an explicit reference to Q 16:103 which reads, “we know very well what they say about you, O Muḥammad: ‘A certain man teaches him.’ But the man they allude to speaks a foreign language while this is in eloquent Arabic.” The author of the *Liber denudationis* quotes this passage, and is clearly quite familiar with Islamic sources as he quotes several times from them. He references, for example, several of Bukhari’s *ḥadīth* (*Bukhari* 3:47:786; 5:59:713) which describe Muḥammad’s supposed poisoning at the hands of a Jewess, an action which some believe caused the Prophet’s death.¹⁴³ In addition, the author of the *Liber denudationis* rightly points out that the text of the Qur’ān was compiled after the Prophet’s death by his disciples, but uses this information to claim that the text is largely incoherent. In support of this he quotes Q 3:7 which reads, “No one knows its meaning except God. And they say of its foundations [that they are based] in knowledge. We believe in it [they say], for it is entirely from our Lord.”¹⁴⁴ This passage does, in fact, acknowledge that some verses in the Qur’ān are precise while others are obscure, and that those “in whose hearts is aberration or deviation” (قلوبهم زيغ) will exploit the lack of specificity in the obscure ones to cause division and doubt. The author of the *Liber denudationis* does just that, using passages from the Qur’ān, the circumstances of its

¹⁴³ “Deus misit me corripere uos de sermone quem dixistis quod tales me docerent; legitque eis sentiam unam quae est in fine lectionis *Elnahel*, quod interpretatur ‘palma,’ quae sic dicit: *Scimus quod ipsi dicent quod instrueret eum homo. Lingua autem qua loquuntur ei Persica; haec autem Arabica patens est,* reference”; fertur tamen mortuum ex toxicatione quam immisit ei quaedam Iudea in minutione.” Burman, *Religious Polemic*, 272.

¹⁴⁴ “Nullus novit eius expositionem praeter Deum. Et fundati in scientia dicunt, ‘credidimus ei; totus enim est a domino nostro...’” Id., 278.

compilation, and unflattering episodes from Muḥammad's life as an opportunity to undermine the legitimacy of both.¹⁴⁵

The Latin translation of the *Liber denudationis* was well known and used by a number of authors, notably Ramon Llull (d. 1315/16) in his *Liber disputationis Raimundi Christiani et Homeri Saraceni* (1318), an account of a disputation he claims to have had with a learned Saracen named 'Umar while he was imprisoned in Algeria for preaching Christian doctrine.¹⁴⁶ In the disputation, part of Llull's refutation of Islam hinges on his unfavorable comparison of Muḥammad to Christ, and he seems to draw most of his information about Muḥammad from the *Liber denudationis*.¹⁴⁷ However, where the author of the *Liber denudationis* attempted to support his polemical points by reference to Islamic sources, Llull instead chooses to ground his refutation in the so-called forty signs of true religion: the ten commandments, seven sacraments, seven virtues, seven deadly sins, and nine principles. Indeed, when Llull discusses Muḥammad's familiarity with the Old and New Testaments, he tellingly omits mention of the monk and never uses the name Baḥīrā. Llull spent his career attempting to convert Muslims to Christianity, and

¹⁴⁵ "Si enim, ut dicit, solus Deus expositionem nouit, igitur nec Machometus. Stolidus fuit nuncius de penitus ignoratis. Aut si ei notificata sunt, quare ipse aliqua non tradidit expositionem?" Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ Raimundi Lulli, *Opera Latina, Tomus XXII, 130-133: Liber Disputationis Raimundi Christiani et Homeri Saraceni*, ed. A. Madre (Brepols: Turnhout, 1998); J. Gayà, "'Sapientia ignota'. La cuarta virtud teologal." in *Il mediterraneo del '300. Raimondo Lullo e Federico III d'Aragona, re di Sicilia. Omaggio a Fernando Domínguez Reboiras*, Subsidia Lulliana vol. 3, eds. A. Musco and M.M. Romano (Brepols: Turnhout, 2008), 449-63; Jordi Pardo Pastor, "Mahoma y el Anticristo en la obra de Ramon Llull," *Anales del Seminario de Historia de la Filosofia* 22 (2005): 159-75; Jordi Gayà Estelrich, "Ramon Llull i l'islam: Infideles sunt homines, sicut et nos," in *Vós sou sant, Senyor Déu únic: Franciscanisme i Islam* (Barcelona, 2002), 115-43; A. Bonner, "Correccions i problemes cronològics," *Studia Lulliana* 35 (1995): 85-95; H. Daiber, "Der Missionar Raimundus Lullus und seine Kritik am Islam," *Studia Lulliana* 25 (1981-83): 47-57; A. Llinarès, "Le séjour de Raymond Lulle à Bougie (1307) et la 'Disputatio Raymundi Christiani et Hamar Saraceni,'" *Studia Lulliana* 4 (1960): 63-72.

¹⁴⁷ The *Liber denudationis* was also used by Riccoldo di Monte Croce (discussed below), and Ramon Martí in his *De seta Machometi* (c. 1257).

was actively involved in the Arabic to Latin translation movement, but in this case he makes little attempt to actively engage with Islamic sources in his dispute with ‘Umar. In some ways Lull was an esoteric writer, but here he does exemplify a Latin treatment of Islam which considered it sufficient to refute its tenets based entirely on Christian and Jewish sources. While this was also true of some Christian authors who wrote in Arabic and Syriac, it was far less common, and most apologetic and polemical treatises by eastern Christians felt compelled to engage with Islamic sources on a minimum level, some even making an explicit point of proving Christianity’s superiority entirely from the Qur’ān.¹⁴⁸ One of the differences between the two approaches is clearly audience, with such authors attempting to reach a Muslim audience through a meaningful engagement with the sources that they were familiar with, the name Baḥīrā in this case, because in that familiarity lay an authority that Christians could deliberately and shrewdly exploit.

In Lull’s case, however, he deliberately omits explicit references to the Islamic tradition that are present in the *Liber denudationis*, and that he was otherwise clearly familiar with. This despite the fact that the very nature of a disputation suggests a rival

¹⁴⁸ For example, the so-called *Disputation of Jirjī the Monk*, one of the most popular Arabic-Christian texts among the Christians of Lebanon, a disputational account of an encounter (c. 1217 according to the text) between a delegation of monks from the Monastery of Mār Sim‘ān al-Baḥrī and Muslim scholars in the service of the emir al-Malik al-Mushammar, son of Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn. Jirjī speaks for the delegation, and attempts to defend Christianity with evidence drawn entirely from the Qur’ān, during which he refers to Muḥammad’s encounter with Baḥīrā. The most complete critical edition is Būlus Qar’alī, *Al-Naṣrāniyya wa-l-Islām. Diḡā‘ mansūb ilā l-āb Jirjis rāhib Dayr Mār Sim‘ān al-Baḥrī amām al-amīr al-Zāfir al-mulaqqab bi-l-Malik al-Mushammar ibn Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Ayyūbī, 1207 m* (Beit Chebab: Lebanon, 1933); also, Roggema, *The legend of Sergius Bahīrā*, 161-64; S.H. Griffith, *The Church in the Shadow of the Mosque* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), 77-81; Barbara Roggema, “Ḥikāyāt amthāl wa asmār... King parables in Melkite apologetic literature,” in *Studies on the Christian Arabic heritage* (Eastern Christian Studies 5), eds. R. Ebied and H. Teule (Leuven, 2004), 113-31; S.H. Griffith, “The monk in the emir’s *majlis*. Reflections on a popular genre of Christian literary apologetics in Arabic in the early Islamic period,” in *The majlis. Interreligious Encounters in Medieval Islam*, ed. H. Lazarus-Yafeh (Wiesbaden, 1999), 13-65, 53-60; J. Nasrallah, “Couvents de la Syrie du Nord portant le nom de Siméon,” *Syria* 49 (1972): 127-59.

audience, one that the author might be eager to convince. However, many medieval Latin texts that appear directed outward, disputational accounts and conversion narratives for example, were actually inward looking, targeting a more limited Christian audience than their premise might suggest.¹⁴⁹ With this in mind I argue that the presence or lack of the name Baḥīrā in Christian biographical accounts of the Prophet, both Latin and Arabic, is an important indicator of whether actual engagement with Muslims was intended, or whether Islamic ideas were merely a convenient way to address concerns internal to the Christian community. The author of the original Arabic version of the *Liber denudationis* certainly had a Muslim audience in mind as demonstrated by his relative fidelity to the Islamic tradition, and specific references to the Qur'ān and various *ḥadīth*. It is true that the Muslim audience he was addressing may well have been unconvinced and likely offended by his message, but the use of the name Baḥīrā is a concrete manifestation of a distinction between the two approaches.

The second Latin reference to Baḥīrā occurs in Riccoldo of Monte de Croce's (d. c. 1320) *Liber peregrinationis*, an account of his several year journey from Acre to Iraq and then into Persia.¹⁵⁰ Mainly a general account of his experiences abroad, there are

¹⁴⁹ See Ryan Szpiech, *Conversion and Narrative: Reading and Religious Authority in Medieval Polemic* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014).

¹⁵⁰ R. George-Tvrtković, *A Christian pilgrim in medieval Iraq: Riccoldo da Montecroce's encounter with Islam*, (Brepols: Turnhout, 2012); Stephen Mossman, "The Western Understanding of Islamic Theology in the Middle Ages: Mendicant Responses to Islam from Riccoldo da Monte di Croce to Marquard von Lindau," *Recherches de Théologie et Philosophie Médiévales* 74:1 (2007): 169–224; Dorothea Weltecke, "Die Macht des Islam und die Niederlage der Kreuzfahrer: Zum Verständnis der Briefe an die himmlische Kurie des Riccoldo da Monte di Croce OP," *Saeculum* 58 (2007): 265–96; Thomas Burman, "How an Italian Friar read his Arabic Qur'ān," *Dante Studies* 125 (2007): 93–109; Andrew Jotischky, "The Mendicants as Missionaries and Travellers in the Near East in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries," in *Eastward Bound: Travel and Travellers, 1050–1550*, ed. Rosamund Allen (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), 88–106; Tolan, *Saracens*, 245–54; Jean-Marie Mériçoux, "Les débuts de l'ordre

several sections in the text devoted to Islam, in one of which Riccoldo reports the widespread belief in the East that Muḥammad was trained by three teachers, two Jews named Salon and Aabdalla, and a Christian monk named Bahheyra. Riccoldo claims that the monk mentored Muḥammad, teaching him “many things from the New Testament and certain things from a book about the Savior’s infancy and the seven sleepers. Indeed, this is written in the Qur’ān. But as for this great teacher, I believe that he was the Devil!”¹⁵¹ Riccoldo was often vicious in his appraisal of Muḥammad. In two of his other works, the *Epistole ad ecclesiam triumphantem* and the *Liber contra legem Sarracenorum*, describes the Prophet as a tyrant and robber who murdered Christians, and founded Islam in order to justify his own iniquitous behavior.

In many ways Riccoldo’s attacks on the Prophet are quite standard, but a closer look at the rest of his work reveals a deeper engagement with Islam than his aggressiveness might initially suggest. The *Epistole*, a lamentation full of bitter recriminations in which Riccoldo acknowledges God’s evident favor toward the Saracens, directly asks why He has permitted their temporal success. In the *Liber contra legem Sarracenorum* Riccoldo describes his time spent at a Muslim school in Baghdad where he studied Arabic and attempted a translation of the Qur’ān. While he condemns it

dominicain et le monde musulman: Riccoldo da Monte di Croce,” *Les dominicains et les mondes musulmans: Mémoire dominicaine* 15 (2001): 55–77.

¹⁵¹ “verumtamen cetissimum est in omnibus partibus orientis quod maccomettus habuit tres pedagogos; scilicet duos iudeos, scilicet nomen unius Salon persa, et nomen alterius Aabdalla, quod interpretatur servus Dei, filius Sela. Et isti facti sunt saraceni, et docuerunt ei multa de veteri testamento et multa de thalmud. Alius autem fuit monacus cristianus et nomen eius Bahheyra, iacobinus ; qui dixit ei multa de novo testamento et quedam de quodam libro de infantia salvatoris et de septem dormientibus. Et ista scripsit in alcorano. Sed maior magister ipsius credo quod fuit dyabolus.” Riccoldus a Monte Crucis, *Liber peregrinationis*, ed. and trans. Emilio Panella in <http://www.e-theca.net/emiliopanella/riccoldo/liber.htm>.

as a book full of “fables, lies, and blasphemies,”¹⁵² and targets what he considers its irrationality, contradictions, and lack of prior attestation, he also demonstrates his thorough knowledge of the text and draws on a significant number of its passages in his attempts to undermine them. Similarly, the *Liber peregrinationis* often praises Islamic religious devotion, saying that “they have the greatest reverence for the name of God, and for prophets, saints, and holy places...as to mercy for the poor, you must know that the Saracens are the most charitable...”.¹⁵³ In addition, Riccoldo commends the Saracens for their manner of prayer, devotion to learning, dignified behavior, friendliness to foreigners, and love for their co-religionists. Riccoldo’s perspective was, in a word, complex, and he was thoroughly engaged in understanding Islam even though much of his written production was devoted to refuting it.

While sometimes obscured by the harshness of their polemic, Dominicans like Riccoldo were in general more methodologically flexible than, for example, Franciscans. From the founding of the order, Dominicans had prioritized translation and encouraged a certain amount of cultural adaptation in their missionary approach.¹⁵⁴ While the generic nature of polemic makes the signs of this flexibility and adaptation sometimes difficult to

¹⁵² “Unde cum transissem maria et deserta, et peruenissem ad famosissimam ciuitatem Saracenorum Baldaccum, ubi generale ipsorum solemne habetur studium, ibi pariter linguam et litteram arabicam didici. Et legem eorum diligentissime relegens, et studiose in scolis et cum magistris ipsorum frequenter conferens, magis ac magis, per experientiam apprehendi peruersitatem predictae legis. Et cum inceperim eam in latinum transferre, tot inueni fabulas et falsitates et blasphemias...” Mérigoux, *Le Contra legem Sarracenorum*, 67.

¹⁵³ “Reverentiam vero maximam habent ad nomen Dei et prophetas et sanctos et loca sancta. Nam hoc maxime osservant quod nichil notabile faciunt vel dicunt vel scribunt quod non incipiant a nomine Domini... De misericordia ad pauperes sciendum est quod sarraceni sunt maximi elemosinarii.” Riccoldus, *Liber peregrinationis*, <http://www.e-theca.net/emiliopanella/riccoldo/liber.htm>.

¹⁵⁴ Thomas F. O’Meara, O.P., “The Theology and Times of William of Tripoli: A Different View of Islam,” *Theological Studies* 69 (2008): 80-98.

detect, I argue that Riccoldo’s decision to identify the monk as Baḥīrā is one indication that interacting with Muslims and Islamic literature had made a concrete impact on his rhetorical approach. The name Baḥīrā is very rare in the Latin tradition, and thus Riccoldo must have learned of it through contact with Arabic sources, oral or written. When it came time to describe Muḥammad’s encounter with the monk, he deliberately chose to use the name that people “in every part of the East” were familiar with. Much like Peter the Venerable, who criticized the false opinions and general ignorance about Islam that characterized the Latin approach, Riccoldo’s goal was to refute Islam, but he was committed to having that refutation take place on ground recognizable to both sides of the debate.¹⁵⁵

The Prophet in the Syriac and Arabic Tradition

William of Tripoli is the third Latin author to use the name Baḥīrā, and as previously discussed, the relationship between Muḥammad and Baḥīrā is the centerpiece of his two *vitae*. Unlike most of the pseudo-historical Latin biographies of Muḥammad, which not only call the monk Sergius, but describe him as a heretic and an excommunicate, there is never any hint of heresy in either of William’s *vitae*, and no suggestion that Baḥīrā has taught Muḥammad anything but orthodox Christian doctrine.

¹⁵⁵ The name Baḥīrā was, of course, not the only sign of such engagement. Ramon Marti, the Latin writer with arguably the broadest and deepest knowledge of Islamic sources, does not rely on the story of Muḥammad’s “catechism” and does not use the name Baḥīrā. Ryan Szpiech, “Translation, transcription, and transliteration in the polemics of Raymond Martini, OP,” in *Translating the Middle Ages*, eds. K. Fresco and C.D. Wright (Ashgate, 2012), 171-188; R. Vose, *Dominicans, Muslims, and Jews in the medieval Crown of Aragon* (Cambridge, 2009); H. Hames, “Reason and Faith: Inter-religious Polemic and Christian Identity in the Thirteenth Century,” in *Religious apologetics. Philosophical argumentation*, eds. Y. Schwartz and V. Krech (Tübingen, 2004), 267-84. Burman, *Religious polemic*, 46-49, 57-59, 204-10.

There is, in other words, little parallel for William of Tripoli's rhetorical approach in the Latin corpus. To find one, it is necessary to look beyond it to the Arabic and Syriac Christian traditions that circulated in the Near East within a generation of the Arab conquests and continued well into the modern era. Christians in the Near East, much like Latin writers in the West, were compelled to defend the superiority of their religion in a context where Islam's temporal success seemed to challenge it. Some eastern Christians chose to do so on Christian terms, and crafted refutations drawn from the Old Testament, the ninth century *Kitāb al-burhān dīn al-naṣrāniyya* (The Proof of the Christian Religion) by the Levantine Melkite Peter of Bayt Ra, for example, an Arabic apology that exclusively used Old Testament *testimonia* to argue that Christ, unlike Muḥammad, had been predicted.¹⁵⁶ Others, such as the aforementioned *Apology of Al-Kindī*, sometimes made references to the Islamic tradition, but their apologetic and polemical arguments were crafted primarily using the Gospels as textual support. Then there were those Christians who not only realized that these two approaches were unlikely to carry the same semantic weight in debate with Muslims, but also that there were opportunities that could be exploited in discussions internal to the Islamic community. As early as the 8th century, Muslim writers such as the theologian and ascetic Wāṣil ibn 'Aṭā' were forced to

¹⁵⁶ P. Cachia, ed., *Kitāb al-burhān: The Book of the demonstration* (Louvain, 1961); M.N. Swanson, "Beyond Proof-texting: The use of the Bible in some early Arabic Christian Apologies," in *The Bible in Arab Christianity*, ed. D. Thomas (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 91-112; Barbara Roggema, "Hikayāt amthāl wa asmār... King parables in Melkite apologetic literature," in *Studies on the Christian Arabic heritage*, eds. R. Ebied and H. Teule (Leuven, 2004), 113-31; S.K. Samir, "The Prophet Muḥammad as seen by Timothy I and other Arab Christian authors," in *Syrian Christians under Islam: The first thousand years*, ed. D. Thomas (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 75-106; M.N. Swanson, "Ibn Taymiyya and the Kitāb al-burhān: A Muslim controversialist responds to a ninth-century Arabic Christian apology," in *Christian-Muslim encounters*, eds. Y.Y. Haddad and W.Z. Haddad (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1995), 95-107; S.H. Griffith, "The monks of Palestine and the growth of Christian literature in Arabic," *The Muslim World* 78 (1988): 1-28.

make sense of the conflicting accounts of important episodes in the early Islamic tradition.¹⁵⁷ Later writers, particularly of the Mu‘tazilī school of Islamic theology, similarly grappled with contradictory accounts of the prophet’s life, especially those testimonies that attested to the miracles that Muḥammad performed throughout his career.¹⁵⁸ In the midst of this morass some Muslim writers, especially the biographers, sought firmer discursive ground through an appeal to authority, and Baḥīrā was one of the authoritative voices to which they turned.

It is in this context that one of the Arabic/Syriac texts with the clearest parallels to William of Tripoli’s *vitae* was created. Christian versions of Muḥammad’s encounter with Baḥīrā began proliferating in the ninth century, one of the most popular of which was a group of texts that have come to be collectively referred to as the *Legend of Sergius Baḥīrā*. This text was widely copied throughout the medieval and early modern periods, and four recensions of it, two Arabic and two Syriac, circulated among every Christian community from Mesopotamia to Syria, the Levant, and North Africa.¹⁵⁹ While many of these communities fiercely competed with one another in other contexts, the text’s transmitters instead chose to elide sectarian differences, and in every version of the *Legend Baḥīrā* is characterized as “Christian” in a general sense, training Muḥammad in a Christianity that lacks identifiable sectarian markers.

¹⁵⁷ See, J. van Ess, *Theologie und Gesellschaft im 2. und 3. Jahrhundert Hidschra: eine Geschichte des religiösen Denkens im frühen Islam*, vol. 2 (Berlin: Gruyter, 1992), 276–280.

¹⁵⁸ Idem., vol. 3, 385–386; Idem., vol. 6, 183–187. Van Ess discusses the reliability of the sayings of the Prophet and the trustworthiness of its transmitters.

¹⁵⁹ Roggema, *Legend of Sergius Baḥīrā*, 11-36, 211-248; S.H. Griffith, Muḥammad and the monk Baḥīrā: Reflections on a Syriac and Arabic text from early ‘Abbāsīd times, *Oriens Christianus* 79 (1995): 146-74. There is also a Latin recension that will be discussed below.

The *Legend* is actually a composite work that combines two separate polemical texts: the apocalypse of Sergius Baḥīrā, an apocalyptic work patterned on pseudo-Methodius,¹⁶⁰ that predicts the rise and fall of several Islamic powers leading up to the eventual demise of the Saracens, and what some have called “Muḥammad’s catechism”, a retelling of the Islamic Baḥīrā story that casts the monk as Muhammad’s confidant and mentor who teaches him the essentials of Christian doctrine.¹⁶¹ All four Syriac and Arabic recensions of the *Legend* are told through the first-hand narration of a monk named *Marhab* and *Isho ‘yahib*, respectively, who visits Baḥīrā’s monastery on Mt. Sinai. During his stay he converses with Baḥīrā, and receives the two prophetic visions patterned on pseudo-Methodius that begin and end the narrative. Baḥīrā tells the narrator that forty years prior he had spent many years wandering the Middle East before finally setting in the land of the “Sons of Ishmael”, who were “like animals” at that time in their customs and beliefs. With Baḥīrā’s guidance the Ishmaelites slowly begin to embrace the one true God and turn away from polytheism, and out of gratitude build the monastery on Sinai that Baḥīrā had lived at since.¹⁶² Seven days after relating his tale Baḥīrā takes ill and dies, and as the monk prepares to depart the monastery Baḥīrā’s most devoted

¹⁶⁰ The so-called Apocalypse of Pseudo-methodius was one of the most popular and influential Christian apocalyptic texts of the Middle Ages. The original, most likely composed in Syriac, was widely disseminated and translated into Arabic, Greek, Coptic, and Latin. Like the *Legend*, Pseudo-methodius avoids any mention of sectarian differences, presenting Christianity as a unified front. See, G.J. Reinink, *Die syrische Apokalypse des Pseudo-Methodius*, vols. 1-2 (Louvain, 1993); M. Laureys and D. Verhelst, “Pseudo-Methodius, *Reuelationes*. Textgeschichte und kritische Edition. Ein Leuven-Groninger Forschungsprojekt,” in *The use and abuse of eschatology in the Middle Ages*, eds. W. Verbeke, D. Verhelst and A. Welkenhuysen (Louvain, 1988), 112-36; P.J. Alexander, “The diffusion of Byzantine apocalypses in the Medieval West and the beginnings of Joachimism,” in *Prophecy and millenarianism. Essays in honour of Marjorie Reeves*, ed. A. Williams (London, 1980), 53-106.

¹⁶¹ Roggema, *Legend of Sergius Baḥīrā*, 104.

¹⁶² Id., 389-91.

“pupil” approaches him and begs to give a fuller accounting of a man renowned for “his virtues, the greatness of his knowledge, his excellences in the sciences, and his saintliness.”¹⁶³ The pupil describes the monk’s many miracles among the Ishmaelites that include curing leprosy, making the mute speak, healing cancerous tumors, and causing the people’s flocks to multiply. Baḥīrā also taught the important men among them the “divine sciences” (العلوم الالهيه), and became so trusted that “whatever he used to say to them they would believe, and whatever he commanded they would do. And he taught them the faith little by little.”¹⁶⁴

The pupil then tells of Baḥīrā’s first meeting with Muḥammad, deliberately evoking Ibn Ishāq’s narrative as he does so. Baḥīrā first observes Muḥammad when he is a small boy and part of a caravan that stops near the monastery to rest, water, and resupply. Sometime prior Baḥīrā had received a prophetic vision that God would raise up a great man among the Ishmaelites. As the monk saw the young Muḥammad approaching he recognized that he was this very man, and announced that “‘A great and glorious person is with them. Something great will be achieved by him’. And he said to me: ‘Woe to you! That one, who is approaching the well with the Ishmaelites, will acquire the standing of prophethood. He and his sons will rule over the earth for many years.’”¹⁶⁵ Just like in Ibn Ishāq’s account Muḥammad is left outside while his companions enter the monk’s dwelling. Baḥīrā convinces them to bring the boy in, and points out the “mark” (العلامه) on his body, and tells them about “what he saw above his head”, a clear reference

¹⁶³ “وجعل يخبرني بفضائله و بكثرة معرفته وتقدمه في العلوم بطهارته”، Id., 391.

¹⁶⁴ “و كلما كان لهم يقول كانا يصدقوه وكلما كان يامرهم كانوا يفعلوا وكان يعلمهم الامانه قليل قليل”، Id., 394.

¹⁶⁵ انسان عظيم و جليل معهم و سيكون منه امرا عظيما و قال لي ويحك ان هذا الذي من الاسماعيليين مقبل الي بئر الماء سيأخذ اسم النبوه “، Id., 392. ويملك هو واولاده علي الارض سنينا كثيره

to the miraculous cloud in Ishāq's account.¹⁶⁶ Baḥīrā then prophecies concerning the Muḥammad that he will be a great king, and warns them to protect him from the Jews.

The first half of this narrative mirrors Ibn Ishāq's nearly beat for beat. The real innovation in the *Legend* is that it expands the tale, describing an ongoing relationship between the two men extending long after their first encounter. Indeed, Muḥammad and his companions depart the monastery, but sometime later he returns to Baḥīrā and the monk begins to teach him more sophisticated Christian theological concepts. Muḥammad fears that the Arab people will not accept his message if they know it comes from the Baḥīrā, and so the monk suggests that he teach the Prophet in secret, and that if people ask, he say he received his knowledge from the angel Gabriel. As the two men work together to craft their message, Baḥīrā acknowledges that the demanding nature of Christianity may require some amelioration in order to make it more palatable to the Ishmaelites. The new doctrine should “grant them things according to their aptitude and what their minds can bear; like a boy who is first suckled, then weaned, then eats tender food and then gets more, bit by bit, until he becomes mature.”¹⁶⁷ This incremental approach is framed as a necessary evil, explaining those areas, such as the Islamic belief in a carnal paradise, where the two religions diverge. As Muḥammad is illiterate Baḥīrā agrees to write all of his teaching down for him, and to avoid inconvenient questions about where it originated he suggests that they trick the Ishmaelites by delivering it to them on the horns of a cow. These two details, Baḥīrā being the true author of the Qur'ān

¹⁶⁶Id., 394. “اعلمهم بما ابصره علي راسه”

¹⁶⁷Id., 404. “تعطيهم حسب طاقتهم وما تحتمله عقولهم كالصبي الذي يرضع اولا ثم يفطم و يطعم طعاما لينا ثم يتصاعد به شي الي شي حتى يكمل”

and the “miracle” of the cow, were standard elements of the more hostile biographies, but in the *Legend* both are done out of necessity.

In sum the author of the *Legend* presents the relationship between Baḥīrā and Muḥammad as a positive one, describing the Prophet as:

...a humble simple boy, good-natured, bright and eager to learn. He received knowledge from Baḥīrā, memorized it and devoted himself to it day and night, until the day that the Qur’ān was written. He continued to visit Baḥīrā frequently and to consult him about his affairs and what he said. And he visited him every day and he continued that consistently until Baḥīrā died.¹⁶⁸

There is in fact never any breach in the relationship. The real rift only emerges after Baḥīrā’s death, when a Jew named Ka’b al-Aḥbār appears and deliberately distorts the monk’s message, sowing confusion among the Ishmaelites by denying the Trinity and claiming that Muḥammad was the true Paraclete.¹⁶⁹

Of any biography of Muḥammad, the *Legend* most closely parallels William of Tripoli’s rhetorical approach to the Prophet’s life. The narrative thrust of both is the same, centering on a positive relationship between the orthodox Baḥīrā and a divinely fated Muḥammad. This relationship is the catalyst that leads the Prophet to a belief in the one true God, and motivates his desire to lead his people from their polytheistic ways. Moreover, the language in William’s account mirrors that in the *Legend*. The *Legend*

وكان م شاب متواضع منبسطا سليم الصدر دكيا محبا(؟) للعلم وكان يقبل علم بحيرا و يحفظه ويقبل عليه نهارا و ليلا الي يوم الذي كتب¹⁶⁸ فيه القرآن ولم يزال يتردد الي عند بحيرا ويشاوره في اموره ويعمل بقوله وكان بتردد اليه كل نوم ولم علي ذلك مواضب الي ان مات بحيرا.” Id., 408.

¹⁶⁹ Id., 390-91.

describes Baḥīrā as virtuous and saintly, and nearly every time William mentions the monk he modifies his name with the adjective *religiosus*, *austerus*, *christianus*, or *sanctus*. The *Legend* similarly describes Muḥammad as a humble, simple boy who was eager to learn and devoted himself to Baḥīrā’s teaching. Likewise, William describes Muḥammad as “*vilis*” and “*pauper*”, both of which can have a negative connotation of “cheap” or “worthless”, but *pauper* can also mean “humble”, and *vilis* can carry the more neutral meaning of “common”. Taken as a whole, William clearly meant the latter senses of both words, as later in the text he describes Muḥammad as full of “*industria*” and “*prudentia*”, who applied himself to Baḥīrā’s teaching, learning to honor Christ and the one true God with his whole heart (*toto corde*).

The *Legend* and William of Tripoli’s *vitae* are also unusual among Latin and Arabic/Syriac biographies in their description of an enduring and positive relationship between the two men. Indeed, both are explicit on this point, with the *Legend* saying that Muḥammad continued to consult and visit Baḥīrā “every day...consistently until Baḥīrā died”, and William saying that, “having vowed to do so, Muḥammad regularly came to his teacher.” One of the notable differences between the *Legend* and William’s *vitae*, however, is that where Baḥīrā dies of natural causes in the former, in the latter it is Muḥammad’s devotion to his teacher that ultimately leads to his death. In William’s chronology Muḥammad begins to attract followers, eventually rallying all the desert dwelling Arabs around him, which then enables him to conquer the surrounding kingdoms of the Chaldeans and North Africa. This is never stated explicitly, but William’s timeline suggests that these initial conquests were for religious reasons rather

than outright greed, as the more hostile biographies portray them. Muḥammad first invites the surrounding regions to turn away from idolatry, and accept the one true God. It is only after their refusal that he turns to a military solution. Even in the midst of these military campaigns, Muḥammad “regularly came to Baḥīrā, his aforementioned teacher, but by visiting and lingering with the monk he aggravated his companions. Nevertheless, Muḥammad gladly attended the monk, and did many things on his behalf. For this reason, his companions plotted to destroy Baḥīrā, but they were afraid of their master.”¹⁷⁰ They continue to scheme, however, and eventually an opportunity presents itself. During one of Muḥammad’s many visits, he and Baḥīrā both imbibe too heavily, and after the two fall asleep, the Prophet’s companions kill Baḥīrā, laying the murder weapon near their master. In the morning when he discovered him dead “he was exceedingly sad and began to question the killers. And when it was alleged by them that he, being addicted to drink, was the perpetrator of the crime he believed that what they were saying was true, being aware that he was drunk that night and seeing his own bloodstained sword.”¹⁷¹ Baḥīrā’s death becomes the cause of the Islamic prohibition of alcohol as Muḥammad swears it off and forbids his followers from drinking it as well. The episode that William describes combines two elements that appear in a number of Latin and Arabic biographies.

Riccoldo da Monte Croce and the author of the *Liber denudationis*, for example, both

¹⁷⁰ “Ad predictum magistrum suum Bahayra frequentius veniebat et in veniendo et moram faciendo apud ipsum sodales gravabat. Quem tamen ipse libenter audiebat et multa pro eo faciebat. Ob quam causam sodales cogitaverunt Bahayra interficere, sed timebant magistrum.” Wilhelm von Tripolis, *Notitia. De statu*, 274.

¹⁷¹ “inveniens ipsum mortuum vehementer contristatus cepit querere homicidas. Et cum argueretur a sodalibus tamquam actor sceleris ebriosus credens verum esse, quod dicebant, conscius, quod ebriosus extiterat nocte illa et videns proprium gladium cruentatum...” Id., 276.

describe Baḥīrā's murder, but in their telling it comes at Muḥammad's hands.¹⁷² A number of biographies portray the Prophet as a drunkard who passes out and is eaten by pigs. This is used to explain the Islamic prohibitions of both pork and alcohol. Similar elements also appear in Arabic biographies. In the 9th century pseudo-epigraphical *Apocalypse of Peter*, for example, Christ predicts to Peter that "he" will kill his teacher, and will prohibit things such as alcohol and pork because of it.¹⁷³ The allusion to Muḥammad here is oblique; Barbara Roggema has suggested that the reference was so widely known that the author did not need to be explicit.¹⁷⁴

There are good reasons to believe then that both William and the author of the *Legend* were aware of alternative versions of this story, and yet both instead chose to emphasize the enduring bond between Muḥammad and Baḥīrā in their accounts. The most likely explanation for this is that each had a Muslim audience in mind, and had tailored their biographies in such a way as to gain greater traction with it. While it is doubtful that either the *Legend* or William's *vitae* were meant to be *read* by Muslims, their narrative choices reveal the ways their authors likely attempted to engage with Muslims in other contexts. The Prophet is the most revered figure in Islam, and on a most basic level a Christian could not denigrate him and expect to be heard by a Muslim audience. One can see this, for example, when comparing the missionary approaches of the Franciscan and Dominican orders. While there are certainly parallels between the two groups, they were, generally speaking, quite different in their methods. Whereas the

¹⁷² Burman, *Religious Polemic*, 270–271; Mérigoux, "L'ouvrage d'un frère prêcheur", 118.

¹⁷³ Alphonse Mingana, "The Apocalypse of Peter," in *Woodbrooke Studies*, vol. 3 (Cambridge, 1931), 254, 322.

¹⁷⁴ Roggema, *Legend of Sergius Baḥīrā*, 191.

Dominicans prioritized translation and a certain degree of cultural adaptation, the Franciscans were less flexible in their approach, which often consisted of denouncing Muḥammad in places where it was illegal to do so. It often appears that they were more interested in martyrdom than actually converting anyone. For anyone attempting actual engagement, more measured language was required.

A degree of tact when representing the Prophet was therefore the minimum barrier for entering into a dialogue, but beyond this there were other strategic advantages to portraying Muḥammad in a more positive light. While Muslims as a whole were in agreement about Muḥammad's status as the Prophet and the sanctity and authenticity of his message, there was disagreement within the Islamic *umma* about the textual integrity of the Qur'ān that contained his message, and the *ḥadīth* that were used to define the community's extra-Qur'ānic contours. Indeed, in addition to debates of interpretation, both Shia and Sunni scholars accused one another of altering the text of the Qur'ān in order to support their sectarian claims.¹⁷⁵

When attacking the Prophet himself there was therefore little rhetorical space to maneuver, but by putting distance between Muḥammad and the people and events that followed him, there was, as Muslims themselves acknowledged, ample room that Christians could shrewdly exploit. The *Legend* is clear on this point, emphasizing that the divide between Christianity and Islam only occurs after the deaths of both Muḥammad and Baḥīrā. According to the shorter of the two Arabic recensions, after their deaths “a

¹⁷⁵ See H. Modaressi, “Early Debates on the Integrity of the Qur'ān: A Brief Survey,” *Studia Islamica* 77 (1993): 5–39; Rainer Brunner, “La Question de la Falsification du Coran dans l'Exégèse Chiite Duodécimaine,” *Arabica* 52 (2005)1–42.

man appeared who is known as Ka‘b al-Aḥbār from the progeny of Abraham. He began to teach the Sons of Ishmael and to invalidate the word of Sergius.”¹⁷⁶ In one of the rare, significant divergences between the four recensions of the *Legend*, the longer Arabic version never mentions Ka‘b al-Aḥbār. Instead, before Baḥīrā dies he recalls that,

numerous important things I wrote and devised for him, although I know that they will be changed and subtracted from and added to many times, because after him people will follow him who will become inimical to us and so on. Every one of them will deem appropriate whatever he likes, and after him they will change most of what I have written for him. A group of his followers will rise up and fight about the rule and the power and many of them will be killed. And there will be discord and enmity amongst them after his death.¹⁷⁷

This passage concludes an extended section also unique to the longer Arabic recension in which Baḥīrā recounts over twenty passages from the Qur’ān, explaining how the true Christian meaning was misunderstood and distorted by later readers and transmitters. While Ka‘b is not mentioned by name, the effect of this passage is the same. It draws a clear distinction between Muḥammad and the people and events that followed him. Doing so not only allows Baḥīrā to highlight the intra-Muslim sectarian disputes that Christian authors shrewdly tried to exploit, but also targets the Jews, another community that eastern Christians often competed with. Indeed, parts of the Qur’ān single out the Jewish community for criticism, and in the passage above the *Legend* is clearly gesturing towards *suwar* such as Q 4:46 which states that “some of the Jews pervert words from

¹⁷⁶Roggema, *Legend of Sergius Bahīrā*, 390.

¹⁷⁷“وَأشياء كثيرة عظيمة كتبها له واحكمتها له وانى اعلم انها ستتغير وتنقص وتزداد مرار كثيرة لان من بعده يستتبعه قوما ويتموا لنا اعدا واحبا وغير ذلك ويستحسن كل واحد منهم ما احب ومن بعده يغيرون اكثر ما كتبت له ويقوم قوم من اصحابه ويقاتلون علي الملك والدوله ويقتل منهم خلق كثير ويقع بينهم الخلف و العداوه بعد موته” Id., 488.

their meanings saying, ‘We have heard and we disobey’...twisting with their tongues and denigrating religion...God has cursed them for their unbelief so they believe not except a few.’ In all four recension of the *Legend* there is either a direct reference to Ka‘b, or as in the longer recension a not so subtle insinuation of the Jewish community’s role in the corruption of the Qur’ān’s authentic biblical roots. In the latter case this is clear not only because its language is reminiscent of similar passages in the Qur’ān, but Bahīrā also mentions the Jews by name throughout the text as likely obstacles to Muḥammad’s mission. Most manuscript copies of the Syriac recensions also include a separate text titled *‘Eltā d-mawteh d-Muḥammad*, or *The Affair of the Death of Muḥammad*, an anonymous 9th century work that centers on Ka‘b, and describes his attempts to convince the Ishmaelites that Muḥammad is the Paraclete whom Christ predicted would follow him.¹⁷⁸ He also convinces the Ishmaelites that Muḥammad, like Christ, would be resurrected after three days, but instead his followers open his tomb only to find his rotting corpse.¹⁷⁹ This text, as Roggema has observed, is aimed at disproving claims that Muḥammad was predicted in the Bible, but more than this it is also an effort by its Christian authors to draw a distinction between their own communities and that of the Jews, their fellow *dhimmi*s or “protected peoples”.

Dhimmitude was, at a most basic level, a status that granted Christians, Jews, Zoroastrians, and in some areas even Hindus and Buddhists, certain freedoms from

¹⁷⁸ No critical edition exists for this text, but it is accessible in several manuscripts, Berlin, Staatsbibliothek, MS Sachau 10; Birmingham, University of Birmingham, MS Mingana Syriac 604; also, B. Roggema, *The Legend of Sergius Bahīrā*, 243-45, 302-3; K. Szilágyi, “Muḥammad and the monk. The making of the Christian Bahīrā Legend,” *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 34 (2008): 169-214.

¹⁷⁹ Szilágyi, “Muḥammad and the monk,” 182.

Islamic law in exchange for the payment of a tax and a number of social obligations and prohibitions. This status was apocryphally based on the so-called Pact of ‘Umar, an agreement between the second Rashidun Caliph ‘Umar ibn al-Khattab (d. 644) and the Christians of recently conquered Damascus, that was then broadly applied to the rest of the “people of the book” under Muslim rule. The Pact itself and *dhimmi* status generally is often considered emblematic of the relative tolerance of Muslim rulers when compared with the sometimes harsher conduct of Christian rulers toward their Jewish and Muslim subjects. In a very general sense this is true, but this perspective owes much to hindsight. The reality is that the Pact, the text of which is actually a product of the late 8th or 9th century, was an attempt to enforce stricter and more onerous regulations on non-Muslim communities.¹⁸⁰ During the first century and a half of Arab expansion, Christian communities in particular were often able to negotiate fairly lenient and favorable surrender terms, with few obligations or restrictions. By the late 8th and 9th century, when this text was “discovered”, Muslim rule in these areas was more or less secure, and some jurists sought to enforce a stricter social hierarchy with Muslims at the top. While the Pact achieved canonical status in Muslim law, its enforcement was always dependent on the individual ruler, and its application a matter for debate. As late as the 14th century Ibn Taymiyya, one of the period’s foremost scholars, penned several treatises advocating for its stricter enforcement, while his contemporary, the Mālikī jurist Shihāb al-Dīn al-

¹⁸⁰ The most recent critical edition of this text can be found in, Abū Bakr al-Khallāl, *Ahl al-milal wa-l-ridḍa wa-l-zanādiqa wa-tārik al-ṣalāḥ wa-l-farā’id min Kitāb al-Jāmi’*, ed. I.Ḥ. Sulṭān, vols. 1-2 (Riyadh, 1996), 431-34; for several English translations and discussion of the text, M. Levy-Rubin, “*Shurūṭ ‘Umar* and its alternatives. The legal debate on the status of the *Dhimmi*s,” *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 30 (2005): 170-206; Ibn Zabir, “What was the Pact of ‘Umar? A literary-historical study,” *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 23 (1999): 100-57; M. Cohen, *Under crescent and cross. The Jews in the middle ages* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 52-74.

Qarāfi, argued that the Prophet himself prohibited Muslims from harming *dhimmi* through inappropriate speech or any kind of physical harassment.¹⁸¹

For Christian authors living under Muslim rule, the status of their communities could not, therefore, be assumed or taken for granted. It was instead subject to continual negotiation. In the *Legend* we not only see that this is one of its central concerns, but there were at least two tactics for doing so. The first was through direct appeal to the Prophet himself, and every recension of the text includes a discussion between Baḥīrā and Muḥammad about the future of the Christian communities after his eventual rise to power. In the long Arabic recension Muḥammad asks Baḥīrā how he can repay his help and guidance, and Baḥīrā replies,

‘I do not want anything from you from this world... except that you care for the situation of the Christians ... Amongst them are poor monks who have renounced this world and detest its fine and pleasurable things... So prevent them from being harmed, troubled, molested or attacked by any of your people... I also desire from you that you order that none of the Christians be oppressed or wronged. If you take care of this, I expect that God will lengthen your rule and make your power last.’ He said to me... ‘I will demand from them, with regard to all the Christians, that they do not act unjustly towards them, and that their ceremonies will not be changed, and that their churches will be built, and that their heads will be raised, and that they will be advanced and treated justly. And whoever oppresses one of them—I will be his adversary on the day of the resurrection.’¹⁸²

¹⁸¹ See, Thomas F. Michel, *A Muslim Theologian's Response to Christianity: Ibn Taymiyya's Al-Jawab Al-Sahih* (Caravan Books, 1985), 80-81; S. Jackson, *Islamic law and the state. The constitutional jurisprudence of Shihāb al-Dīn al-Qarāfi*, (Leiden: Brill, 1996).

¹⁸² فقلت له ما اريد منك شيء من غرض الدنيا ولا ما قل ولا ما جل ولا مناي الا العنايه بامر النصاري في ايام ملكك وملك قومك لانهم اعضا ضعفا وقد اومروا بالتواضع والصبر الشديد وفيهم رهبان مساكين فقرا وقد زهدوا في هدوا في هذه الدنيا بغضوها و ما فيها من خيراتها... فتحمل عنهم الادا والموديه والعنت اصحابك... وايضا اريد منك ان تامر ان لا يلحق الحدا من النصاري ظلم ولا جور فانك ان حملت عنهم هذا رجوت ان يمد الله في ملكك ويديم سلطانك. فقال لي علي انا ان امر قومي ان لا يوخذ من راهت خراج ويبجل وتقضا حوائته ويعني باحواله وامرهم في امر جماعه النصاري ان لا يتعدا عليهم ولا يغير عليهم في رسومهم شيئا وتعمر كنايسهم ترفع روسايهم ويقدموا وينصفوا ومن ظلم احدا منهم كنت خصمه يوم القيامه.” Roggema, *The Legend of Sergius Bahīrā*, 454-57.

The conversation in this passage intentionally echoes Q 5:82, which praises the priests and monks “who are not proud”, but it takes this further by attacking the very provisions of the Pact of ‘Umar, such as building new churches and monasteries, that contemporary Muslim jurists were trying to normalize. This line of attack was evidently effective because Muslim scholars continued to refute these claims well into the later Middle Ages, and criticize rulers who failed to enforce the Pact’s conditions.¹⁸³

The second tactic many Christian authors employed to assert their status in the social hierarchy was to position themselves against the Jews, their fellow *dhimmis*. In every version of the *Legend*, Muḥammad’s vow of protection and acknowledgement of Christian virtue is juxtaposed against his condemnation of Jewish perfidy. In a passage just before the one above, Muḥammad asks Baḥīrā if his mission will succeed, and Baḥīrā answers that,

your saying will be given credence by the nations and peoples, except by the cursed Jews. They lie, saying ‘the Messiah has not come yet, because the one who brought heretical innovations—we crucified him, killed him and destroyed him. They are lying about this... Whenever two of them fix their mind on a man they plot to kill him.’¹⁸⁴

This passage deliberately echoes similar *suwar* throughout the Qur’ān that condemn Jewish unbelief and treachery.¹⁸⁵ While there are more passages in the Qur’ān that are positive or neutral in their appraisal of the Jews, or lump Jews and Christians together, Christians such as the authors of the *Legend* were eager to emphasize the minority of

¹⁸³ In his short treatise *Fī shurūṭ ‘Umar*, Ibn Taymiyya retroactively condemns the Ismā‘īlī Fatimids for having allowing new churches and monasteries to be built in Egypt. See fn 134.

¹⁸⁴ قولك مصدقا عند الامم و الشعوب ما خلا اليهود الملاعين فانهم يكذبون قائلين انه لم يات بعد لان الذي اتي ببذخ فصلبناه وقتلناه وابدناه “... وهم في هذا كاذبون...وما اتفق اثنين منهم علي رجل الادبرا في قتله...” Roggema, *The Legend of Sergius Bahīrā*, 454.

¹⁸⁵ Q 2:88, 4:160, 5:12-13.

them that were critical of the Jewish community in order to differentiate themselves from their fellow *dhimmi*. Protected status was something that Christians appealed to when it suited them, but otherwise they did not accept that they were part of a homogenous *ahl al-Kitāb*, and Christian writers continually tried to elevate their community's status in the social hierarchy they inhabited.¹⁸⁶ Christians were not alone in this. Jewish writers similarly advocated for their own communities, penning apologetic defenses and polemical attacks before a Muslim audience.¹⁸⁷ This sectarian competition did not go unnoticed. The Qur'ān observes that “the Jews say, ‘The Christians have nothing [true] to stand on,’ and the Christians say, ‘The Jews have nothing to stand on,’ although they [both] recite the Scripture...But Allah will judge between them on the Day of Resurrection concerning that over which they used to differ.”¹⁸⁸ This last line acknowledges a tension inherent in Islam's inheritance of both Jewish and Christian traditions, one sometimes strained by the host of issues upon which neither agreed. Christians such as the authors of the *Legend* shrewdly tried to exploit the uncertainty it created. Rather than patiently wait for the Day of Resurrection, they tried to speed things along by convincing their audience that they were closer to the truth, a proximity they hoped would elevate them in this world just as much as the next.

¹⁸⁶ For example, Paul of Antioch, the Arabic-speaking bishop of Sidon who will be discussed in detail in a later chapter, does just that in his so-called “Treatise to the Nations and the Jews.” He emphasizes the similarities between Christianity and Islam, while characterizing the Jews as willfully rejecting both the Christian and Islamic messages. See, H. Teule, “Paul of Antioch's Attitude towards the Jews and Muslims. His Letter to the Nations and the Jews,” in *The Three Rings: Textual Studies in the Historical Dialogue of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam*, eds. Barbara Roggema, Marcel Poorthuis, and Pim Valkenberg (Leuven: Peeters, 2005), 100-110.

¹⁸⁷ See, S.H. Griffith, *The Church in the Shadow of the Mosque: Christians and Muslims in the World of Islam* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 68-71.

¹⁸⁸ Q 2:113

The *Legend* was written in the 9th century, a time when Christians could look back to a point before Muslim dominion, but a dominion that had been in place long enough that they had also been forced to come to terms with it. The *Legend* is an attempt by its authors and transmitters to do so by creating a discursive space to confront the religious challenges posed by Islam, and negotiate the terms of that domination. Both of these actions required the Prophet. Appealing to the Prophet allowed Christians to assert rights and status for their communities that were inviolable and independent of the whims of a particular authority. Muḥammad placed himself within the Jewish and Christian traditions that had preceded him, and the Qur'ān that is attributed to him deliberately draws upon them. Islam's place within this tradition, however, gave authority to those who could then use it for their own purposes. Indeed, the effectiveness of the Islamic story of Baḥīrā depended on the monk's authority, but once granted this authority could be turned back against those who had conceded it. By working with the Islamic tradition Christian authors attempted to do just that, using Baḥīrā's role in the Prophet's life to assert ownership -partially at least- of both his teaching and the Qur'ān. This ownership allowed them to articulate their arguments using language, including the Prophet's own words, that was familiar and harder to dismiss, interjecting it into topics of legitimate debate regarding, for example, the textual integrity of the Qur'ān, and exploiting the more ambivalent attitudes toward the people and events that followed Muḥammad. Moreover, by alleging that Muḥammad's origins were Christian, these authors could claim the Prophet as an ally, conscripting his aid as they negotiated their place within the social hierarchy of Islamic society.

The apologetic and polemical approach that the *Legend* represents was not the only, or even primary one deployed by eastern Christians. The lion's share of Christian writings that treat Islam, both Arabic and Latin, attempt to denigrate it in some overt way. As much as these more hostile biographies might challenge modern sensibilities, they are in many ways entirely explicable. Muḥammad's message, the religion it inspired, and the temporal success of his followers threatened, from a Christian perspective, the natural order of things. It is no surprise that Islam's assertion that it superseded what had come before provoked hostility in many Christians, a hostility that some made manifest in their depiction of the Prophet. The real surprise are those authors who chose an alternative path, who were less overt in their critique, and emphasized the similarities between Islam and Christianity over the differences. This approach is less immediately explicable, and this discussion has tried to reveal the rational underlying it.

Just as there is nothing obvious about the *Legend*'s biography of Muḥammad, there is also nothing self-evident about William of Tripoli's description of it. Indeed, in many ways his decision is even more inexplicable than his eastern Christian peers, for unlike them he was not living under Muslim dominion. He did not feel the same pressure to negotiate his community's place in the social hierarchy, and there was no outside authority preventing him from disparaging Islam and denouncing the Prophet. Moreover, medieval polemic and apologetic vis-à-vis Islam was, generally-speaking, far more derivative than innovative. Norman Daniel's harsh appraisal of the European "view" of Islam was the result of seeing the same arguments and motifs recycled time and again, even by authors who had access to sources of information that should have forced them

to revise their approaches. Very few did, however, and even among those Latin biographies of the Prophet that did diverge in new or innovative ways, none was so dramatically and conceptually unique as William of Tripoli's *vitae*. This can only be explained by William's engagement with the Arabic and Syriac tradition that the *Legend* represents, and not just on textual level.. Copies of the *Legend* circulated in the Levant in the 12th and 13th centuries, and William may have had access to one of them. But it seems more probable that he would have learned of this approach while interacting with local Christians and Muslims in his role as a missionary. As will be discussed below, the *Legend* is written in a lower, colloquial register of Arabic, indicating that its narrative was a topic of conversation as much as a literary construct. Seen from this angle, the *Legend* is a codified representation of an approach eastern Christians employed in conversation and debate both with Muslims and internally within their communities. William's presence in the Levant and role as missionary provided him a point of entry into this dialogue, and I would argue that his appropriation of it explains the dramatic ways in which his *vitae* are so different from other Latin biographies.

Indeed, many Latin biographies describe Muḥammad's relationship with a Baḥīrā-like figure, but few center their narrative upon it. Among those few that do, Baḥīrā is always "other-ed" in some way, either explicitly called a heretic, or at least the holder of heterodox beliefs, who committed a crime that banished him to Arab lands. In William of Tripoli's biography, by contrast, Baḥīrā is compared to the saintly Desert Fathers, receives prophetic foreknowledge from God, and attempts to instruct Muḥammad in an orthodox form of Christianity. Moreover, the relationship between

Muḥammad and Baḥīrā is the centerpiece of the narrative. There is never any rift between the two, and the true divergence between Islam and Christianity occurs after both men have died. As William tells it, “after the Christian Baḥīrā’s death, it was as if, having been unbridled, Muḥammad’s followers were freed from all military restraint: they roamed about so that like robbers and thieves they were plundering, slaughtering, and destroying, throwing the provinces and kingdoms into chaos until Muḥammad’s death.”¹⁸⁹ This is the most negative passage about Muḥammad in the entire biography, and even here William emphasizes the role of Muḥammad’s followers over the Prophet’s. Indeed, William never attributes a specific act of cruelty or depravity to Muḥammad. Rather, immediately after this passage William reports the prosaic circumstances of Muḥammad’s death in Mecca, the same city, so he says, where the Prophet was born. He follows this passage with a broader description of the Arab conquests.¹⁹⁰ William’s chronology thus shifts the responsibility for its horrors from Muḥammad to his followers, creating, much like the *Legend*, a distinction between them.

The conquests following Baḥīrā’s death mark the first real divide between Islam and Christianity. The second, and more important breach occurs many years after Muḥammad’s death. As William tells it, nearly forty years later his surviving companions came together and decided they needed a book that contained the law and teaching of Muḥammad. They chose ‘Uthman, the second of Muḥammad’s successors, to oversee

¹⁸⁹ “Mortuuo itaque Bahayra Christiano quasi freno soluto Machometi caterva laxat militie frena: discurrunt ut predones, raptores rapiunt mactant et perdunt provincias perturbantes et regna usque ad mortem ipsius Machhometi.” Wilhelm von Tripolis, *Notitia. De statu*, 276.

¹⁹⁰ “De morte ipsius Machometi dicunt sui imitatores, quod mortuus est in Mecha civitate Arabum, in qua natus est.” Id., 276.

this task. He was not up to it, however, and “from the unfortunate ones, those Christians and Jews who, through fear of death, had become Saracens, he chose scholars to serve as helpers in the compilation of a worthy and excellent work with authority and honor.”¹⁹¹ Unfortunately, they could not find anything worthy in Muḥammad’s life or teaching, and so they were forced to borrow from previous scriptures. William then shifts into a jarring and harsh appraisal of these compilers, calling them liars who did not master the arts of literary composition, and did not follow in the footsteps of the philosophers, historians, or prophets. Their final product conveys neither morality nor faith, and contains neither knowledge nor history. This is followed by an extended metaphor comparing the Qur’ān to a black crow that covers itself in the colorful feathers of previous revelation in order to appear more beautiful than it is.¹⁹² This passage is dissonant because it clashes with nearly everything that has come before. Here William says there was nothing worthy in either Muḥammad’s life or his teaching, and yet he neglects to attribute a single corrupt or negative action to him. Rather, his appraisal of Muḥammad’s behavior and personal character has been uniformly positive, and the message he brings to the Arabs clearly has worth as it is based on the orthodox teaching of his mentor, the *religiosus, christianus, austerus*, and *sanctus* Baḥīrā. Indeed, there are several points in the treatise where he

¹⁹¹ “Post mortem Machometi annis ferme XL convenerunt superstites sodalium eius, ut tractarent de libro componendo, qui diceretur doctrina et lex Dei data per Machometum filiis Arabum, qui de Agare et Ysmaele descenderunt. Et deliberato consilio omnium et auctoritas scribendi et componendi librum data est uni eorum, qui dicebatur Esman filius Heffan. Sed quoniam non erat sufficiens ad hoc opus, de miseris, qui timore mortis de Christianis et Iudeis effecti erant Sarraceni, elegit, quos habere potuit, doctores sui existerent coadiutores ad componendum opus electum et auctoritate dignum et honore.” Id.,

¹⁹² Id., 333-334. This part of my scanned copy is distorted. I will include the Latin for this section, but I need to re-order the text from ILS first.

explicitly praises the Qur'ān, commending its beauty and saying that in certain passages its words seem truer than the Gospels themselves.

For all of the ways William of Tripoli's *vitae* are innovative, we see in passages like this one that he was also writing within an apologetic and polemical tradition in which a general dismissiveness and condemnation of Islam were standard. Such language is powerful, and the sheer repetitiveness with which Latin authors turned to it can easily have a bleaching effect, creating the impression of uniformity when there is actually more complexity marking the surface. William of Tripoli certainly resorts to such language, but it is worth asking why, if he intended a standard attack on the Prophet, he chose such an oblique and unusual way to go about it. There were established narratives of the Prophet's life available to him, but he chose to write about Muḥammad in ways that defied those conventions and whose only parallel can be found in the Arabic tradition. Why?

This question has several answers that this chapter has attempted to reveal, and that the remaining chapters will explore in greater depth. The first, and most important reason is that William was, as he himself asserts, a missionary. Everything we know about him suggests his career was devoted to evangelical work, and he concludes his treatise with the statement that, "he, who by God's authority has baptized more than a thousand, has written and said this."¹⁹³ William's missionary activities explicitly frame his treatise, and there was nothing theoretical or abstract about those he was trying to

¹⁹³ "Hoc dixit et scripsit, qui auctore Deo plus quam mille iam baptizavit." Wilhelm von Tripolis, *Notitia. De statu*, 370.

baptize. Later chapters show, in fact, that he was a keen observer of the Arabic-speaking milieu that surrounded him. While there, he must have learned that viciously attacking Muḥammad was the least likely way to achieve his evangelical goals.¹⁹⁴ Just as the *Legend* sought a common discursive ground with Muslims, William's biography seeks to create space between the Christian core of the Prophet's message, and the later people and events that distorted or deviated from it. William's "positive" biography of the Prophet allowed him the rhetorical freedom to sidestep Muḥammad, rather than directly opposing him, using concepts and language that were familiar to Muslims in order to present conversion as a small step along a parallel path rather than an abrupt change of direction. William's work provides clear evidence of the effect that time in the Levant had a concrete effect upon western, Latin culture, especially on those, like William, who were part of its second and third generation. It should not surprise us that William's treatises, both of which were addressed to a western European audience, should, at times, display the polemical language that was familiar to such audiences.

What should surprise us is that *any* of the innovative elements were incorporated into these texts, unintentionally capturing a snapshot of the divide between the way authors like William wrote about Islam, and the ways in which those same authors interacted with the actual Muslims who were part of their daily experience.¹⁹⁵ The fact that William understood the authority that Baḥīrā embodied demonstrates that some Latin Christians were immersed in the Arabic Muslim-Christian dialogues that were an

¹⁹⁴ This will be discussed in Chapter 3.

¹⁹⁵ Riccoldo da Monte Croce's *Liber peregrinationis*, for example, is evidence of this, and will be discussed further in below.

important and dynamic part of the inter-religious culture of the Near East. William's adoption and adaptation of the *Legend* indicates that he was conversant enough to repurpose it for his own needs, and redeploy it, not only in his role as missionary, but also in dialogue with eastern Christians.

CHAPTER THREE

Destabilization and Strategies of Accommodation in the *Notitia* and *De statu*

In the twenty first chapter of *De statu Sarracenorum*, titled “what wicked things it would be possible for him [the Sultan] to do”, William of Tripoli writes that Sultan Baybars I (d. 1277), fourth Sultan of Egypt’s Mamluk dynasty, could, if he chose, “do many more wicked things to the Christians than he has done.”¹⁹⁶ William explains that he has not done so, in part, because “almighty God, who sometimes grants the means, but not the will, and vice versa, has restrained his power.”¹⁹⁷ Despite God’s restraint, William admits that if he really tried, it would be possible for Baybars “to capture, whenever he wanted, many Christian cities and fortresses without resistance or response, such as Sidon, Beirut, Biblos, Tortosa, Margat, and perhaps Tyre and Tripoli...”¹⁹⁸ William reports that “on account of [Baybars’] favor and mercy, he said that he did not want to ruin the Christians as much as he could, even though they were deserving of it.”¹⁹⁹ This description of Baybars highlights the Sultan’s capacity for evil, but is otherwise relatively balanced. Indeed, the prior chapter, titled “regarding the good things the Sultan does”, elaborates on what William considers Baybars’ positive qualities, namely: the Sultan’s

¹⁹⁶ “Hic si vellet multa peiora posset facere Christianis quam que fecerit”, *Notitia; De statu*, 328.

¹⁹⁷ “...sed suam potentiam refrenat omnipotens Deus, qui quandoque tribuit facultatem, sed minime voluntatem et e contra in multis.”, Idem.

¹⁹⁸ “Civitates enim plures Christianorum et castra posset sine contradictione et resistentia capere, quando vellet, u test Sydon, Beritum, Biblium, Antharadum et Margatum et forsitan Tyrum et Tripolim, si bene vellet niti.”, Idem.

¹⁹⁹ “Sed pro munere et sua clementia dicit, quod non vult Christianos affligere, quantum posset, licet sint digni.”, Idem.

abstinence from wine, prostitutes and sodomy,²⁰⁰ and his mandate that “his subjects live justly and in peace.”²⁰¹ Moreover, William claims that “toward his Christian subjects, especially the monks who are on Mount Sinai and the various parts of his kingdom, he appears favorably inclined to their affairs, and immediately determines and ends their disputes when he hears them.”²⁰²

For a Latin Christian, this is a bizarre characterization of one of the most infamous figures in the history of the Crusades. Baybars was responsible, arguably more than any other figure, for the demise of the political entities that we call the Latin East.²⁰³ When Baybars is mentioned in western sources, it is usually in connection with his cruelty, capriciousness, and hostility toward the Franks. He was known to be suspicious and bad tempered, with, for example, Jean de Joinville, chronicler of the seventh crusade, reporting that he had one man beheaded merely for disturbing him in the middle of a recreational hunt.²⁰⁴ In the year 1266, five years before the *Notitia* was composed, Baybars laid siege to William’s home city of Acre and other surrounding fortresses, including a Templar stronghold in the nearby town of Safad. After promising the badly outnumbered knights safe passage to Acre, he reportedly betrayed his word and had each

²⁰⁰ Concubinas habere reprobate et condempnat peccatum contra naturam., Idem; Sobriety might seem a peculiar compliment for an adherent of a religion that ostensibly prohibits the consumption of alcohol, but Muslims were often depicted as drunkards by Latin writers. In Walter the Chancellor’s *Antiochene Wars*, for example, he describes the enemy soldiers as spending all of their time between battles drunk. *Walter the Chancellor’s The Antiochene Wars*, ed. and trans. by Thomas S. Asbridge and Susan B. Edgington (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999), 90.

²⁰¹ “Iuste et in pace suos subditos vivere postulat et mandate.”, Idem.

²⁰² “Ad sibi subiectos Christianos maximeque religiosos, qui sunt in monte Synai et in diversis partibus sui imperii, favorabilis existit et causas eorum statim, ut audit, determinat et lites abscidit.”, Idem.

²⁰³ Peter Thorau, *The Lion of Egypt: Sultan Baibars I and the near East in the Thirteenth Century*, trans by P.M. Holt (London: Longman, 1987), 143-157.

²⁰⁴ “Je ne vous salue pas”, car il li avoient destourbé sa chace. Et leur fist les testes coper., Jean de Joinville, *La Vie de Saint Louis. Texte du XIVe siècle*, ed. by Noel L. Corbett (Sherbrooke, 1977), 285-6.

of them beheaded.²⁰⁵ According to the Arab historian Muḥyī ad-Dīn ibn ‘Abd az-Zāhir, Baybars bragged about his own brutality toward the Franks. After his conquest of crusader Antioch, for example, az-Zāhir reports that Baybars sent a letter to Bohemond VI, in which he boasted that after his forces took the city:

...you would have seen your knights prostrate beneath the horses’ hooves, your houses stormed by pillagers and ransacked by looters, your wealth weighed by the quintal, your women sold four at a time and bought for a dinar of your own money! You would have seen the crosses in your churches smashed, the pages of the false Testaments scattered, the Patriarch’s tombs overturned. You would have seen your Muslim enemy trampling on the place where you celebrate the mass, cutting the throats of monks, priests and deacons upon the altars...²⁰⁶

Some of Baybars’ exploits were exaggerated by Latin authors for propaganda and rhetorical effect, but this shows that his overall reputation was earned, and there is no obvious reason for William’s relatively evenhanded portrayal of the Sultan.

One of this chapter’s goals is to make sense of William’s characterization of the Sultan through an analysis of two of the most significant parts of the *Notitia* and *De statu*: his history of the Islamic conquests, and several prophetic passages predicting the end of Islamic dominion. From the medieval Latin perspective, past, present, and future were all linked, part of what some scholars have called a divine script, and William’s portrayal of Baybars was intimately connected to his conception of how this script would play out.²⁰⁷

²⁰⁵ Thomas F. Madden, *The Concise History of the Crusades* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2014), 168.

²⁰⁶ Francesco Gabrieli, ed. and trans., *Arab Historians of the Crusades* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), 311.

²⁰⁷ Jay Rubenstein has recently argued that “Apocalyptic fervor” was the motivating force behind the First Crusade. The crusaders not only believed in such a script, but saw themselves as playing active roles in it. Jay Rubenstein, *Armies of Heaven: The First Crusade and the Quest for Apocalypse* (New York: Basic Books, 2011), 305; see also, Bernard McGinn, “The Apocalyptic Imagination in the Middle Ages,” in *Ende und Vollendung: Eschatologische Perspektiven im Mittelalter*, ed. by Jan Aertsen and Martin Pickave

In both the *Notitia* and *De statu*, William predicts that Islam's demise is imminent, and in one of the rare analyses of his work, John Tolan has argued that,

this assertion of a swift and inevitable victory of Christianity over Islam makes his positive presentation of Islam and Muslims less problematic. There are good rulers on both sides, such as 'Umar and Saint Louis, and there are bad rulers, such as Frederick and Baybars. Yet Muslim piety, and Muslim reverence for Christ and Mary, can be presented in an unapologetically positive light.²⁰⁸

While Tolan's analysis is the best attempt thus far to explain William of Tripoli's perspective, it neglects the fact that, as shown above, William does not present even Baybars, someone nearly universally despised by western writers, in an entirely negative light. Neither, in fact, is he entirely complementary of Muslims as a whole. As will be discussed in the following chapters, his admiration for Muslim piety was targeted specifically at non-elite Muslims. Throughout both works he is critical of Muslim authorities, especially the *qādi* and the *khaṭībūn*, portraying them as the primary barrier preventing Muslim conversion to Christianity. Furthermore, when William put pen to parchment in 1271, the major city of Antioch had fallen to Baybars a mere three years earlier, who then razed it, killing or enslaving most of the surrendering inhabitants. As William explicitly states, Baybars was in a position of power, and could, at any time,

(Berline, 2002), 79-94; ---, *Visions of the End: Apocalyptic Traditions in the Middle Ages* (New York, 1998), 1-36; Richard K. Emmerson and Ronald B. Herzman, *The Apocalyptic Imagination in Medieval Literature* (Philadelphia, 1992), 95-110; Norman Housely, "The Eschatological Imperative: Messianism and Holy War in Europe, 1260-1556," in *Toward the Millennium: messianic Expectations from the Bible to Waco*, ed. Peter Schafer and Mark Cohen, *Studies in the History of Religion* 77 (Leiden, 1998), 123-150; Robert Lerner, "medieval Prophecy and Politics," in *Annali dell'Istituto storico italo-germanico in Trento* 15 (1999): 417-432; Norman Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millennium: Revolutionary Millenarians and Mystical Anarchists of the Middle Ages*, rev. ed. (London, 1970); Brett Whalen, *Dominion of God: Christendom and Apocalypse in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009), 1-9.

²⁰⁸ John Tolan, *Saracens: Islam in the Medieval European Imagination* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 207.

conquer even more of what was left, perhaps even Acre itself. While William surely believed the prophecy that Islamic dominion would ultimately end, there is nothing in either the *Notitia* or *De statu* that indicates he thought deliverance was around the corner, or that when it did arrive he would be the beneficiary of it.

For all of their merit, prior analyses of the *Notitia* and *De statu* have fallen short because William's work has not been situated in his full context, and scholars such as Tolan have distilled William's approach to a single cause. William's belief in Islam's demise was, indeed, a significant, organizing principle that helped him order a world in which the divine script seemed to be at its nadir, but this does not alone explain all of his rhetorical choices. Fidentius of Padua, for example, a contemporary of William's, was a member of the Franciscan order who served as vicar of the Franciscan province of the Holy Land beginning around 1266. He was in the region at the fall of Antioch in 1268 and Tripoli in 1289, at which time he personally travelled to Baybars' encampment in order to minister to the Latin prisoners there.²⁰⁹ He knew some Arabic, appears to have been familiar with the Qur'ān, and in 1274 he was asked by Pope Gregory X, the same Gregory who requested William's treatises, to write a report on the recovery of the Holy Land.²¹⁰ This work, the *Liber recuperationis Terre Sancte*, could not have been more different in its approach.²¹¹ Unlike William, Fidentius argues that Islam should be resisted through violent military action rather than preaching or debate. Moreover, he

²⁰⁹ Fidentius of Padua, *Liber recuperationis terrae sanctae*, in *Biblioteca bio-bibliographica della terra santa e dell' oriente francescano*, ed. by Girolamo Gulubovich (Quarracchi: Collegio di S. Bonaventura, 1906-27), 21.

²¹⁰ Tolan, *Saracens*, 211.

²¹¹ Fidentius of Padua, *Liber recuperationis*, 1-60.

describes Muḥammad as a charlatan and a magician, who was not only “...most false and lying, but a most atrocious plunderer, the worst spiller of human blood, and even most stinking in the sin of lust.”²¹² Fidentius is equally condemnatory of Muḥammad’s followers, portraying them as lecherous, greedy, and hostile to all things Christian, including Christ himself. After the capture of Tripoli, for example, he claims that the Saracen soldiers “dragged a crucifix on the tail of an ass, and hurled every insult they could upon the [Christian] images.”²¹³

In addition to polemical attacks on Muḥammad and Islam, Fidentius also includes a prophecy predicting Islam’s demise. The prophecy was drawn from a no longer extant work called the *Liber Clementis*, a book of prophecies originally written in Greek and later translated into Arabic, which Fidentius claims was brought to him by a Syrian monk.²¹⁴ The prophecy takes the form of a conversation between Christ and the apostle Peter, during which Christ predicts that a “lion cub” will come who will “liberate the Christian people from the hands of the sons of the wolf...and the Christians will subjugate the sons of the wolf for forty times beyond that which the sons of the wolf subjugated the Christians.”²¹⁵ Fidentius interprets the “sons of the wolf” as the Muslims,

²¹² “Non solum autem fuit vir predictus falsissimus et mendacissimus, ac predo atrocissimus, et humani sanguinis effusor pessimus, sed etiam fuit in peccato luxurie fetidissimus: habuit enim simul xv uxores ingenuas et duas ancillas, preter alias quas in peccato cognoscebat; ipse etiam separabat uxores a viris suis et accipiebat eas sibi.” Idem, 18.

²¹³ “Sarraceni trahebant crucem Xpisti ad caudam asini, et omnia vituperia que poterant ymaginibus inferebant.” Idem, 21.

²¹⁴ “Et quidam liber scriptus in littera arabica sive sarracenicam, et forte liber iste translates fuit de Greco in arrabicum, et vocatur iste liber Climens, id est liber Clementis; in quo libro introducitur Xpistus loquens ad beatum Petrum apostolum, et beatus Petrus loquitur ad discipulum suum sanctorum Clementem”, Idem, 26

²¹⁵ “Veniet, inquit Xpistus, catulus leonis et liberabit populum Xpistianum de manibus filiorum lupi et superabit eos et coget residuum ipsorum redire ad deserta, de quibus exierunt, et subjugabunt Xpistiani filios lupi quadragesies tantum ultra id quod filii lupi subjugaverunt Xpistanos.”, Ibid; This book of prophecy is mentioned by both Jacques Vitry (see below) and Oliver of Paderborn. Oliver of Paderborn,

and the “lion cub” a Christian king, and advocates for renewed military efforts in the Holy Land. In his analysis of this work, Tolan remarks that “ironically, while *De statu* used these predictions to prove that a crusade was not necessary, for Fidentius they prove that it is necessary.”²¹⁶

The differences between *De statu* and the *Liber recuperationis* are only ironic if one believes that responses to Islam can be reduced to a single cause. For Tolan, the singular cause of William’s optimistic outlook, and positive portrayal of Islam is his belief in Islam’s demise. If true, it does not follow that Fidentius’ approach should have been so fundamentally different. Rather, William’s approach cannot be reduced to a singular cause. William lived, worked, and wrote in a diverse context in which there was no single response to Islam. Christians in the Near East began grappling with Islam’s temporal success in the decades following the Islamic conquests, and the earliest solutions to this problem came in the form of apocalypse and history, two genres that were intrinsically linked in the contexts that they were written. History and apocalypse became a way of framing events that seemed incomprehensible, but these authors were not writing in a vacuum, and the frame’s form was often dictated by contemporary circumstances. For example, one of the most popular and influential apocalypses, the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius*, was written in Syriac in 690 or 691, but was copied throughout the Middle Ages, and translated into several languages, including Arabic and

Historia damiatina, in *Die Schriften des Kolner Domscholasters, spatern Bischofs von Paderborn und Kardinal-Bischofs von S. Sabina Oliverus*, ed. by O. Hoogeweg, Bibliothek des litterarischen Vereins (Stuttgart, 1894), 35; John J. Gavigan, trans. *The Capture of Damietta* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press), 89-90.

²¹⁶ Tolan, *Saracens*, 212.

Latin.²¹⁷ The unknown author of the *Apocalypse* called the Muslim conquerors, or “Sons of Ishmael”, barbarians, tyrants, and murderers, and explained their success as a chastisement for Christian sin. Unlike prior Syriac works that equated disaster with Christian sin and called for repentance, the *Apocalypse* considered the conquests a sign of the world’s imminent end and the ascendance of the “Sons of Ishmael” as a temporary phase before Christ’s second coming and the Last Judgment.²¹⁸ The author of the *Apocalypse* based this interpretation on the Old Testament book of Daniel’s historical/prophetic schema, according to which the Last Judgment would be preceded by four world kingdoms. Most Christians interpreted these kingdoms as the Babylonians, Persians, Greeks, and Romans. According to this schema, the “Sons of Ishmael” could not last, and would be overthrown by a king of the Greeks, which is to say a Byzantine Emperor.

The overriding concern of the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius* and the other histories and apocalypses written in the first century after the Islamic conquests was why Christianity had been overrun and what that meant, but a century later, when Christian communities began to accept that Islamic dominion was not as fleeting as they had hoped, authors began to frame the same events quite differently. One of the first such

²¹⁷ Michael Philip Penn, *Envisioning Islam: Syriac Christians and the Early Muslim World* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015), 29; G.J. Reinink, ‘Alexander the Great in seventh-century Syriac “apocalyptic” texts’, in *Syriac Christianity under late Sasanian and early Islamic rule* (Aldershot, 2005); G.J. Reinink, ‘Heraclius, the new Alexander. Apocalyptic prophecies during the reign of Heraclius’, in *The reign of Heraclius (610–641): Crisis and confrontation*, ed. by G.J. Reinink and B.H. Stolte (Louvain, 2002), 81-94; Bernard McGinn, *Antichrist. Two thousand years of the human fascination with evil* (New York, 2000), pp. 89-94; A.M. Guenther, ‘The Christian experience and interpretation of the early Muslim conquest and rule’, *ICMR* 10 (1999) 363-78; S.P. Brock, ‘Syriac views on emergent Islam’, in *Syriac perspectives on late antiquity*, (London, 1984), 17-19.

²¹⁸ Cynthia Villagomez, “Christian Salvation Through Muslim Domination: Divine Punishment and Syriac Apocalyptic Expectations in the Seventh and Eighth Centuries,” in *Medieval Encounters* 4 (1998): 203-18.

attempts written under the newly established 'Abāssid-caliphate was Theophilus of Edessa's *Chronicle*. Most of what we know about this author comes from other sources, and the text itself is no longer extant, preserved in Greek, Syriac, and Arabic versions, parts of which were incorporated into separate works that were made a century later instead. By comparing the passages in common between these versions, Michael Penn has provided a rough sketch of what the original must have looked like.²¹⁹ Theophilus describes the Islamic conquests, but one of the most noticeable changes from earlier histories is that he is now much more concerned with *how* they happened than *why* they happened. Theophilus was especially interested in how Christian cities surrendered to the Muslim conquerors, emphasizing, for example, the story of the Archbishop of Jerusalem's surrender to the Caliph 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭāb. Theophilus claims that the Archbishop, Sophronius, received a guarantee of safety for the city's Christians, as well as an assurance that certain rights would be maintained. Similar agreements were also made with other Christian cities in the region, including the author's home city of Edessa.²²⁰

Theophilus frames his history, in other words, with the long view in mind. While he had by no means given up on a divine drama that would end in Christian triumph, the script was potentially longer than anyone had anticipated. Until that denouement, Christians must negotiate their status in the world as it existed rather than the one they would like it to be, and by highlighting Christian-Muslim cooperation during the

²¹⁹ Penn, *Envisioning Islam*, 41-43.

²²⁰ Passages from the *Chronicle* are translated and analyzed by Hoyland. Robert G. Hoyland, *Theophilus of Edessa's Chronicle and the Circulation of Historical Knowledge in Late Antiquity and Early Islam* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2011), 118-119.

conquest, Theophilus hoped to elevate the position of his community in the present. Both Theophilus and the author of the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius* were responding to the same problem: the diminishment of Christian communities and the expansion of Islamic dominion. Even though their solutions were different, both used history as a way to make sense of the problem. Moreover, neither solution negated the other, and both responses remained possibilities for the Christian communities who preserved them. This is to say that for a Christian writer living under Muslim dominion there would be no need to negotiate their community's status if divine deliverance was immediately around the corner. One could, however, believe in Christianity's ultimate triumph in some indefinite future, while also understanding the need to preserve one's community in the present.

The *Apocalypse* and Theophilus' *Chronicle* were two responses to Islam's primacy, but there were also many others which remained relevant after their composition. Some of these, like the *Apocalypse*, reflect the abstract or the aspirational, while others, like the *Chronicle*, were dictated by the concrete concerns of the present. These responses existed in the Near Eastern contexts in which they circulated as options that could be called upon as circumstances dictated. They overlapped and complemented one another even if they did not fit together in a way that was seamless or coherent. This chapter will argue that understanding this is crucial to making sense of the *Notitia* and *De statu*, both of which have defied a full analysis because the various parts of each treatise do not seamlessly or coherently connect. Rather, both treatises reflect the many options that were available to someone like William who was engaged with the various Muslim and Christian communities of the Near East. William was struggling to answer the same

basic question Pseudo-Methodius and Theophilus grappled with: why was Christian dominion faltering, and someone like Baybars ascendant. The traditions around him offered several ways to frame his solution to this problem, and the various, sometimes conflicting parts of *Notitia* and *De statu* demonstrate that he turned to all of them.

The destabilization of William's world thus led him to embrace a perspective that has not been articulated in scholarship on Latin approaches to Islam in the Middle Ages. In response to the failure of the Second Crusade, western European scholars began to turn to history more than ever before as a way of understanding the past, which in turn could be used as a way of framing present and future events.²²¹ This effort, which Kathryn Kerby-Fulton referred to as "reformist Apocalypticism", was one of the important intellectual developments of the 12th century.²²² Scholars who were at the forefront of this movement, such as Rupert of Deutz, Honorius Augustodunensis, Anselm of Havelberg, and Gerhoh of Reichersberg, saw Christian failures in the East as punishment for Christian sin and church corruption, and in their efforts to correct this, saw themselves in "an unprecedented crisis of truly apocalyptic significance with God's forces massed against those of Satan."²²³ Brett Whalen describes this apocalyptic scenario in which,

²²¹ Marie-Dominique Chenu, "Theology and the New Awareness of History," in *Nature, Man and Society in the Twelfth Century*, trans. by Jerome Taylor and Lester Little (Chicago, 1968), 162-201.

²²² Kathryn Kerby-Fulton, *Reformist Apocalypticism and Piers Plowman* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Bernard McGinn, "Apocalypticism and Church Reform: 1100-1500," *Encyclopedia of Apocalypticism*, 2: 81-86; Robert Rusconi, "Antichrist and Antichrists," *Encyclopedia of Apocalypticism*, 2: 294-300; E. Randolph Daniel, "Reformist Apocalypticism and the Friars Minor," in *That Others May Know and Love: Essays in Honor of Zachary Hayes*, ed. by Michael Cusato and F. Edward Coughlin (New York, 1997), 237-253; Brett Whalen, *Dominion of God: Christendom and Apocalypse in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009), 75.

²²³ Amos Funkenstein, *Theology and the Scientific Imagination* (Princeton, 1968), 243; See also, Richard Southern, "Aspects of the European Tradition of Historical Writings," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 5th series (London, 1971): 159-80; Guntram Bischoff, "Early Premonstratensian Eschatology: The

...battle lines were being drawn between faithful Christians, on the one side, and the enemies of God on the other, the latter including heretics, schismatics, pagans, Jews, and other opponents of Christendom...by speculating about the insidious activities of such ‘outsiders,’ reformist apocalyptic thinkers implicated themselves in another characteristic of the twelfth century—a hardening in Christian attitudes toward groups targeted as deviant or threatening.²²⁴

A century later William of Tripoli found himself confronted with an equally apocalyptic scenario, one that threatened the imminent destruction of the world that he knew, but his response to it was fundamentally different from either the reformist thinkers who preceded him or his 13th century contemporaries who continued to rigidly divide up the world. Rather, his sense of desperation and destabilization forced him outside of these comfortable and familiar modes of thought: instead of hardening battle lines, he looked past them, drawing inspiration and encouragement from the very same “deviant”, eastern Christian communities that the reformist writers in Europe railed against. William believed in Christianity’s ultimate victory, but his immediate concern were those practical measures that would help his fellow Christians make it through the chaos of the present to its triumphant finale. This might require negotiations to reach an accommodation with Antichrist-like Muslims such as Baybars, and for someone looking for models of Christian resilience in the face of Islamic dominion, some of the best examples were the “heretical” Christians who had done it before.

Apocalyptic Myth,” in *The Spirituality of Western Christendom*, ed. E. Rozanne Elder (Kalamazoo, 1976), 41-71; Peter Classen, “Res Gestae, Universal History, Apocalypse: Visions of Past and Future,” in *Renaissance and Renewal in the Twelfth Century*, ed. Robert Benson and Giles Constable (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982), 387-417.

²²⁴ Whalen, *Dominion of God*, 75.

Islam Unleashed

In the *Notitia* William frames the Islamic conquests in the context of the monk Bahira's death, explaining that:

...after Bahira's death, it was as if, having been unleashed, Muḥammad's now emboldened followers began to rush through the Arab provinces, plundering merchants and travelers, destroying roads, invading and plundering villages and whatever [else] they wanted. They entered Syria, occupying its lands in the way, formerly, of the Vandals, and in our times of the Tartars. They attacked the cities and fortresses killing those who do not wish to join their band, and saving those who did wish to enter it. They discovered that the provinces were lacking royal or military power and that the then reigning Roman Emperor Heraclius had returned from his victory, which he had over the Persian King Chosroes (II), after bringing the sacred cross back to Jerusalem, and raising it there with honor and esteem. Later, Damascus, Aleppo, and the entire region all the way to the River Euphrates were subjected.²²⁵

William's description of the brutality of the Islamic conquests has parallels in both Latin and Arabic/Syriac histories. The *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius*, for example, calls the conquerors "Sons of Devastation", who are, "defiled and love defilement. And when they come out of the desert, they will split open pregnant women. They will snatch babies from their mothers' laps and dash them upon the rocks like defiled animals...they are rebels, murderers, blood shedders, and annihilators."²²⁶ Jacques de Vitry describes the Islamic conquests equally hyperbolically in his *Historia Orientalis*, a history and

²²⁵ "Mortuo igitur Bahaira quasi solute freno cepit illa Machometi caterva licentius per provincias discurrere Arabum more, mercatores et viatores expoliare, infringere vias et campestris villas invadere et rapere, que volebant. Intran in Syriam, occupant terras more olim Wandalorum et in nostris temporibus Tartarorum. Irruunt in civitates et castra interimentes eos, qui nolebant intrare in globum eorum, et salvantes, qui intrabant. Provincias inveniebant sine regali potential sive militia et tunc regnabat imperator Eraclius Romam reversus de Victoria, quam habuit victo Cosdroe rege Persarum, cruce sancta in Ierusalem deportata, ibidem honorifice et mirifice collocata. Subiugatur postea Damascus, Hallapia et region tota usque ad Euphraten fluvium." *Notitia; De statu*, 334.

²²⁶Gerrit J. Reinink,, *Die syrische Apokalypse des Pseudo-Methodius, Corpus scriptorium orientalium* 540 (Syri 220), trans. from German translation by Gerrit J. Reinink (Louvain: Peeters, 1993), 31-32.

geography of the Holy Land written c. 1224, that is framed by a biography of Muḥammad. Jacques briefly mentions Heraclius' victory over King Chosroes II, but his emphasis is on the "infinite multitude" of Arabs, who have "violently" and "aggressively" invaded the Holy Land.²²⁷ Jacques describes them as raging like beasts (*bestia seviens*), and shedding Christian blood throughout the Near East. The focus of Jacques's narrative is on Muḥammad's depraved character and diabolical doctrine, and while he acknowledges that ʿUmar ibn Al-Khaṭāb (*Homar*) is the prince of the Arabs (*princeps Arabum*), he lays ultimate blame upon Muḥammad himself, calling ʿUmar merely the "disciple" of "the most wicked and perfidious Muḥammad and the third successor of his kingdom."²²⁸

While the results of the conquests are equally disastrous in all of these accounts, each author has chosen to emphasize something quite different. For the author of *Pseudo-Methodius*, the conquests are punishment for Christian sin, but the sheer brutality of the invasions is from the innate depravity of the Arab people themselves. A common refrain in many Syriac apocalyptic works is that the Arabs are hideous in appearance and conduct themselves like women, both outward indications of their debased inner character.²²⁹ Jacques Vitry similarly suggests that the conquests can be explained by the

²²⁷ "Cum autem imperator ecclesias ordinary, quas nequissimus Cosdroas deiecerat, et ex propriis sumptibus reparari precepisset, statim post eius recessum, princeps Arabum, nomine Homar, collecta secum infinita multitudine, tam potenter, quam violenter Terram Sanctam hostiliter ingressus, modico tempore non solum contra christianos qui in regno Hierosolymitano morabantur prevaluit, sed etiam universas civitates a Laodicea Syria usque in Egyptum, Damascum etiam cum multis urbibus aliis, cum multa sanguinis effusione, bestia seviens occupavit.", Jacques de Vitry, *Historia Orientalis*, ed. and trans. Jean Donnadiu (Turnhout: Brepols, 2008), 346.

²²⁸ "Hic autem impiissimus Homar discipulus erat perfidi et sceleratissimi Mahometi et regni eius successor tertius.", Idem.

²²⁹ *The Apocalypse of John the Little*, for example, a late 7th century polemic written during the reign of ʿAbd al-Malik, and which continued to circulate throughout the Middle Ages, emphasized their effeminate

Arabs overwhelming numbers and inclination toward violence, but he blames Muḥammad for stoking this violence and channeling it toward its calamitous result. William of Tripoli does suggest that Muḥammad’s followers have destructive tendencies, describing them as having been “unleashed” or “unbridled”, but his emphasis is very much on Bahira’s death and the influence that he exerted, rather than their innate depravity as a group. Unlike Jacques Vitry and other Latin authors who primarily identified Muslims with ethnic or tribal markers (*Arabs* or *Saracenus*), William often uses more neutral terminology, referring to Muḥammad’s “army” (*exercitu Machometi*) or “band” (*Machometi caterva*) instead. One also sees this distinction, for example, in works such as the *Legend of Sergius Bahira* or Paul of Antioch’s *Risālah*, which emphasize the pre-Islamic Arabs’ paganism over their innate tribal or ethnic character. William very much comes from this tradition, and by emphasizing Bahira’s role and the catastrophe that followed his death, he is suggesting that Muslim violence is not inevitable, but can be contained under the right circumstances. Moreover, when Muḥammad’s people are under the “right” (i.e. Christian) guidance, they can be part of the civilized world.

and depraved nature. J. Rendel Harris, *The Gospel of the Twelve Apostles Together with the Apocalypses of Each One of Them*, English translation from Syriac by J. Rendel Harris (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1900), 34-37; Michael J. Penn, *When Christians First Met Muslims: A Source Book of the Earliest Syriac Writings on Islam* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2015), x; S.P. Brock, “Gospel of the Twelve Apostles,” in *Encyclopedic Dictionary of the Syriac Heritage*, ed. by Brock, et al., 179; Han J.W. Drijvers, “Christians, Jews and Muslims in Northern Mesopotamia in Early Islamic Times: The Gospel of the Twelve Apostles and Related Texts,” in *La Syrie de Byzance a l’Islam VIIe-VIIIe siecles*, ed. by Pierre Canivet and Jean Paul Rey-Coquais (Institut français de Damas, 1992), 67-74; Robert G. Hoyland, *Seeing Islam as Others Saw It: A Survey and Evaluation of Christian, Jewish and Zoroastrian Writings on Early Islam* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 267-68.

William's optimistic view of Christian guidance is further revealed in his description of the Emperor Heraclius. As discussed in the first chapter, there are approximately 54 extant Latin biographies of the Prophet Muḥammad, most of which begin, like Vitry, by mentioning Heraclius. In nearly all of the biographies, however, Heraclius is mentioned only to situate Muḥammad's life in its concrete time and place. Theophilus' *Chronicle*, for example, which includes a biography of Muḥammad that highly influenced the Latin tradition after it was translated into Latin by Anastasius Bibliothecarius, only mentions Heraclius in passing.²³⁰ William, by contrast, not only describes Heraclius's defeat of the Persian King Chosroes II, but also his liberation of the True Cross and his role in returning it to Jerusalem, its "rightful" home. Of all of the Latin biographies of Muḥammad, William's is the only one that I am aware of that mentions this detail.²³¹ While William is certainly more focused on spiritual fortifications than the renewed crusade that someone such as Fidentius of Padua prioritized, here he suggests that it is only in the absence of Christian royal and military power (*sine regali potentia sive militia*) that the Islamic conquests were possible in the first place. From William's perspective, then, a military response could be effective, even if it was not the primary goal of either of his treatises.

²³⁰ "Mundi anno VIcxxii, divinae incarnationis anno dcxxii, anno imperii Heraclii vicesimo primo Iohannes papa Romanus habetur.", Di Cesare, *The Pseudo-Historical Image*, 156.

²³¹ Outside of the *vitae Mahumeti*, however, Heraclius role as the liberator of the "True Cross" was well known in the Latin corpus. William of Tyre mentions this for example. He has even been called "the first crusader". See, for example, Constantin Zuckerman, "Heraclius and the Return of the Holy Cross," in *Travaux et Memoires 17: Constructing the Seventh Century*, ed. by Constantin Zuckerman (Paris: Ouvrage publié avec le concours de la fondation Ebersolt du Collège de France et de l'université Paris-Sorbonne, 2013), 197-218.

Another clear difference between William of Tripoli's history and the histories of biographers such as Jacques Vitry, is that the primary explanation for the Islamic conquests, beyond God's punishment of Christian sin, is Muḥammad and his wicked inspiration. William's presentation is dramatically different. He mentions Muḥammad, but throughout his history the emphasis is always on Muḥammad's followers rather than the man himself. When William describes the horrors of the invasion, for example, he never attributes a single, specific atrocity to Muḥammad. Rather, he lays the blame on Christian sectarian disunity:

Meanwhile, a dispute arose within the city of Alexandria among the indigenous Egyptians and the foreign Greek merchants. When the Egyptians saw that they were [about] to be overcome by the Greeks, they sought aid from Muḥammad's now powerful army, promising tribute, [and] a wage worthy of their merit. Muḥammad agreed, but before he could come to Alexandria he died in the sixty-third year of his life. Nevertheless, the army fulfils what Muḥammad promised. They offer aid to the Egyptians, and after the Greeks had been expelled, [the Egyptians] did not wish to [pay] the wage and tribute, which they had promised them for their effort. However, the victors said, 'the tribute you have promised to us is yours; we are content [with] the victory and we will divide [among ourselves] the captured booty, and the city that has been acquired by our hand is now ours. You were formerly the citizens, and we the guests, [but] by Muḥammad's blessing and favor we will now be the lords, and you the servants.' And thus, they have continuously held Alexandria since the time of Dioscorus, the heretical patriarch of the city, [a fact] which is not known. Thus, from Christian discord a great scandal among them has arisen by God's permission, and they who were formerly a [pleasing] aroma to God, have been made viler, by some judgment of God, than a [foul] stench, and those whom the preaching of the apostles had brought under the yoke of Christ have been subjugated to Saracen dominion.²³²

²³² "Oritur interea discordia inter cives Alexandriae, Egypti indigenas et alienigenas Grecos mercatores. Videntes Egyptii se superari a Grecis succursum petunt ab exercitu Machometi iam potenti promittentes stipendia, meritis mercedem condignam. Annuit Machometus, sed antequam veniat Alexandria, moritur anno vite sue LXIII. Nichilominus supplet exercitus, quod Machometus promisit; auxilium prestatur Egyptiis, et Grecis expulsi nolunt solver pro labore mercedem et stipendia, qui ea promiserunt. Sed aiunt: victores: Stipendia nobis promissa sint vestra; contenti sumus de Victoria et captam predam dividemus et

We do not know the precise date of Muḥammad’s birth, but William’s claim that he was 63 years old is in line with Islamic tradition.²³³ Otherwise, elements of William’s chronology are inaccurate. The historical Muḥammad is believed to have died nearly a decade before the conquest of Alexandria, and Dioscorus the Great (d.454), who was condemned at the council of Chalcedon in 451, died nearly two centuries before the city’s conquest in 642.²³⁴ More important than the accuracy of his timeline, however, is his characterization of the conquest. The beastlike, violence-loving “Sons of Ishmael” from Pseudo-Methodius or Jacques Vitry are absent. Instead, the real cause of the conquest of Egypt is Christian disunity. Muḥammad’s army, whose military virtue William acknowledges—they are promised payment equal to their merits (*meritis mercedem condignam*)—did not invade but was instead invited to intervene, and the soldiers behaved honorably even after the Egyptians had violated their word and failed to pay them what they are owed.

William’s narrative of Alexandria’s conquest is notably similar to an anonymous Coptic/Arabic prophetic text known as the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Samuel*, the earliest extant manuscript of which is held at the Vatican Library (MS Vat. Ar. 158). The text is purportedly an account of a sermon by a Coptic saint named Samuel of the Monastery of

civitas nostro brachio acquisita iam est nostra. Vos olim eratis cives, nos hospites; fortuna Machometi et gratia nos erimus deinde domini, vos servi. Sicque tenuerunt Alexandriam usquemodo a tempore Dioscori patriarche dicte civitatis heretici, quod non est notum. Ex Discordia igitur Christianorum est Deo permittente scandalum exortum eorum, et qui errant olim Deo odor, nescio quo Dei iudicio facti sunt viliores quam fetor, et quos iugo Christi subiugaverat predicatio Apostolorum, subiugati dominio Sarracenorum.”, *Notitia; De statu*, 204.

²³³ Conrad, Lawrence I. (1987). "Abraha and Muḥammad: some observations apropos of chronology and literary topoi in the early Arabic historical tradition" in *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 50 (2): 225–40.

²³⁴ We do not know the sources of William’s history, but they were most likely William of Tyre’s no longer extant *Gesta orientaliū principum* and/or the annals of Eutychios. Engels, *Notitia; De statu*, 89-99.

Qalamun outside of Cairo. Samuel was asked by a group of his fellow monks whether the recently arrived Arab conquerors would be around for a long time, and the text is his extended answer to this question. The work is pseudo-epigraphical, dated to the 11th century, and the question posed by the monks is a conceit allowing the author to criticize his fellow Copts for assimilating so thoroughly into the culture of their conquerors, and not preventing the diminishment of the Coptic language. The *Apocalypse* draws from other Arabic and Syriac prophetic texts, such as *Pseudo-Methodius*, and as a result there is a disconnect between the beginning of the text, which is a brief historical overview of the conquests, and the later prophetic portions. The narrator, Samuel, situates the conquests, like William, in the context of the Council of Chalcedon, claiming that Chalcedonian partisans were persecuting Dioscorus and his allies, and, “when God heard the plea of his elect who were crying out to him he sent to them this people who demand gold, not [adherence to their] doctrine”.²³⁵ The author specifies, like William, that the

²³⁵ ولهدا سمع الله طلبية اصفياه دن بصرخون اليه وارسل اليهم هذه الامة التي تطلب الذهب لا المذهب حسب طلبتهم, J. Ziadeh, ‘L’Apocalypse de Samuel, supérieur de Deir-el-Qalamoun’, *Revue de l’Orient Chrétien* 20: (1915-17), 376. Similar sentiments are expressed in *The Prophecies and Exhortations of Pseudo-Shenute*, *The Letter of Pseudo-Pisentius*, and the *Prophecies of Daniel*. One of Daniel’s prophecies, recently translated by Jos Van Lent, mentions an Ishmaelite King who will, “gather gold and much silver. He will pass judgement on the earth with justice. He will start a war in Egypt (مصر) and the Egyptians (المصريون) will find relief”, Jos Van Lent, “The Fourteenth Vision of Daniel,” *Academia*: https://www.academia.edu/16863577/The_Fourteenth_Vision_of_Daniel_A_Critical_Translation_DRAFT_1_; See also, A. Périer, ‘Lettre de Pisuntios, à ses fidèles’, *Revue de l’Orient Chrétien* 19: (1914) 79-92. J.R. Zaborowski, ‘From Coptic to Arabic in medieval Egypt’, *Medieval Encounters* 14: (2008) 15-40; M.S.A. Mikhail, *Egypt from late Antiquity to early Islam. Copts, Melkites, and Muslims shaping a new society* (Diss. University of California, Los Angeles, 2004), 161-64; M.N. Swanson, ‘Recent developments in Copto-Arabic studies, 1996-2000’, in *Coptic studies on the threshold of a new millennium. Proceedings of the Seventh International Congress of Coptic Studies*, ed. by M. Immerzeel and J. van der Vliet (Brill: Leiden: Brill, 2000), 239-67; F.J. Martinez, ‘La literatura apocalíptica y las primeras reacciones cristianas a la conquista islámica en Oriente’, in *Europa y el Islam*, ed. by G. Anes y Álvarez de Castrillón (Madrid, 2003), 143-222; J.R. Zaborowski, ‘Egyptian Christians implicating Chalcedonians in the Arab takeover of Egypt. The Arabic Apocalypse of Samuel of Qalamūn’, *OC* 87 (2003): 100-115; B. Witte, *Die Sünden der Priester und Mönche. Koptische Eschatologie des 8. Jahrhundert nach Kodex M 602* (Altenberge, 2002), 55-57; J. van Lent, *Koptische apocalypsen uit de tijd na de Arabische verovering van Egypte* (Brill: Leiden, 2001), 20-24; ---, ‘The nineteen Muslim Kings in Coptic Apocalypses’, *Pd’O* 25 (2000): 643-93; H.

Arabs came for pay rather than religious reasons, and, for a while at least, treated the indigenous Copts more fairly than their Christian rivals had, saying that, “when the Arabs took possession of the land of Egypt, they treated the Christians with kindness and generosity. The first king was ‘Umar. He conquered Egypt, and he ruled it.”²³⁶ Samuel then transitions into prophecy, claiming that Islamic dominion will only become onerous as Arab numbers increase, and they began to expand their territory. From this point in the text Muslims are described in the same stereotypically barbarous ways we see in *Pseudo-Methodius* and other prophetic works. The author also makes the standard claim that their dominion is punishment for Christian sin, although with the added twist that the most serious of these sins is assimilation into Arab culture.

While assimilation into this culture was surely happening faster than the text’s author would have liked, this was still a long term concern, one that he would not need to address if, as prophetic works such as *Pseudo-Methodius* suggest, deliverance was nigh. Moreover, Arabs are described very differently in both parts of the text, and if Arab culture was perceived as being truly as vile as this text characterizes it, it does not follow that Copts would so easily be attracted to it. The seeming incoherence of the text demonstrates the tension inherent in many prophetic works which ostensibly spoke about the future, but whose authors were, in fact, focused on present concerns. More than anything else the dual level of this discourse has to do with the generic conventions of

Möhring, *Der Weltkaiser der Endzeit. Entstehung, Wandel und Wirkung einer tausendjährigen Weissagung* (Stuttgart, 2000) 185, 347; J. van Lent, ‘An unedited Copto-Arabic apocalypse of Shenute from the fourteenth century’, in *Ägypten und Nubien in spätantiker und christlicher Zeit*, vol. 2, ed. by S. Emmel et al. (Wiesbaden, 1999), 155-68.

²³⁶ ولهدا استولى العرب على أرض مصر كانوا يعاملون المسيحيين باللطف والكرم J. Ziadeh, ‘L’Apocalypse’, 376.

these prophecies, which express a timeless, authoritative point-of-view, even if the contexts in which they were originally written had dramatically changed. The most frequently recycled prophecies that predicted Islam's imminent demise were written in the first century after the Islamic conquests, when such authors could reasonably assume their rule might be temporary. By the end of the 8th century, Islam had proven less fleeting than most Christians had hoped, and writers had to address the practical problems this created for maintaining community stability and cohesion. Their community's survival also required negotiating with Muslims regardless of whatever animosity they might have felt. These earlier responses to Islam did not disappear with greater familiarity, but continued to circulate comfortably alongside the newer, more practical responses, even if they did not seamlessly fit together. Rather than a single, integrated answer to the problem of Islamic dominion, such texts instead reflect multiple ways of approaching the challenges it posed.

Both William of Tripoli's *Notitia* and *De statu* are similar kinds of texts, reflecting multiple approaches to Islam, rather than as Tolan and Engels have suggested, a single, integrated one. While there is no way of knowing whether William possessed the text of the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Samuel* itself, its description of the conquests and the narrative we see in it strongly suggests he was familiar with the tradition that it represents. This would even explain the chronological errors in William's timeline, as he situates the invasion of Egypt in the post-Chalcedonian time of Dioscorus. The author of *Pseudo-Samuel* was a partisan in the debates that followed it, and portrayed Dioscorus as a historical hero delivered by the Arabs. William seems to have taken the basic narrative

and tweaked it, identifying him as a heretic instead. This is inelegantly done in the *Notitia*, however, as he appears to contradict himself. On the one hand, he describes Alexandrian piety as a “[pleasing] aroma]” to God, but on the other, characterizes its Patriarch as a heretic.

In *De statu* his narrative is even more confused. He similarly frames the conquest of Alexandria around an argument between the Greeks and the native Egyptians, but he explicitly places, rather than merely implies, its origin at the Council of Chalcedon where he says Dioscorus was condemned as a “most wicked heretic” (*pessimum hereticum*).²³⁷ William bizarrely misidentifies the Coptic Dioscorus, however, calling him the “Greek patriarch”. As he tells it, “there were at that time two peoples in the eminent city of Alexandria, which is the outstanding port of Egypt: namely the Greeks, who were defending their Greek patriarch Dioscorus, and the locals, who are called Copts. After a dispute arose among them, the Greeks prevailed, expelling the indigenous [Copts] from the city.”²³⁸ William then explains that in order to get revenge, and regain the city that rightly belonged to them, the Egyptians recruited the Arabs, who, in line with the *Notitia*’s narrative, took the city of Alexandria rather than the tribute that was promised to them. In *De statu* their terms are even more fair, however, as after doing so they call the Egyptians their “co-citizens” (*concives estote nostri*), rather than “servants” (*servi*) as

²³⁷ “Post mortem vero Machometi accidit in Alexandria et Egypto causa fidei eximie seditionis tempestas propter Dioscorum Alexandriae patriarcham condemnatum ut pessimum hereticum cum Euticio phisico et monacho litterato Constantinopolitano, condemnatum dico in quarto concilio Calcedonie celebrato, congregatione sexcentorum et XXX episcoporum”, *Notitia; De statu*, 278.

²³⁸ “Erant tunc quidem due nationes hominum in Alexandria civitate egregia, que est nobilis portus Egypti, Greci videlicet, qui suum Grecum patriarcham Dioscorum defendebnt, et indigene terre, qui dicuntur Capti. Inter quos orta Discordia prevaluere Greci expellentes indigenas de civitate.”, Idem.

they do in the *Notitia*'s version. *De statu* was written after the *Notitia*, and in terms of character presentation, the Arabs have grown even more sympathetic.

Dioscorus was, indeed, condemned as a heretic and deposed at Chalcedon, but he retained support in Egypt, and is considered a saint by the Coptic and Syrian churches. It is actually the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Churches, or the “Greeks”, who consider him a heretic. In the prior chapter, William claims that much of his information comes from the “Chronicles of the Orientals” (*Cronicis Orientalium*), and Peter Engels has convincingly argued that at least one of his sources is Sa‘īd ibn Baṭrīq’s (Eutychius of Alexandria) *Annales*, based on the fact that sections of William’s history match those in the *Annales*, and reproduce some of its chronological errors.²³⁹ Moreover, William begins his history by identifying the Roman Pope (*Rome papa*) in Heraclius’ time, Honorius I, as “Loterius”, which can be explained by corruptions, (لوتيريوس) for (اونويوس), in later manuscripts, such as the 14th century version of the *Annales* that Louis Cheikho used for his edition.²⁴⁰ It is also intriguing that the earliest known manuscript of ibn Baṭrīq’s text, currently held by St. Catherine’s monastery (MS Sinai Ar. 582), was produced in crusader Antioch, and the Melkite historian Yaḥyā ibn Sa‘īd (d.c. 1066) reports that the patriarch faced a rebellion within his own church during his tenure as patriarch of Alexandria. The opposition was led by a Melkite Bishop from Fuṣṭāṭ (part of Old Cairo), resulting in ibn Baṭrīq’s name being banned in many Egyptian churches. This

²³⁹ “De morte ipsius Machometi dicunt sui imitators, quod mortuus est in Mecha civitate Arabum, in qua natus est; et constat, sicut legitur in Cronicis Orientalium, quod obit undecimo anno imperatoris Eraclii in Syria existentis, quo anno surrexit Rome papa nomine Loterius et in Ierusalem erat patriarcha Modestus.”, *Ibid*, 79; 276.

²⁴⁰ L. Cheikho, B. Carra de Vaux, and H. Zayyat, eds., *Eutychii Patriarchae Alexandrini Annales*, 2 vols (Paris, 1906-9), 235-257.

could partly explain William's confused narrative: he mistook fights internal to the Egyptian Melkite church with an external fight between "the Greeks", or the Melkite church itself, and the "Egyptians". This seems especially likely as Engels has also suggested that another of William's sources was William of Tyre's *Gesta orientarium principum*. While no longer extant, William of Tyre mentions the *Gesta* in his *Chronicon*, and explicitly names ibn Baṭrīq as one of his sources.²⁴¹ King Almaric, who requested the *Gesta*, provided the twelfth-century William with other Arabic sources, and it has been suggested that Yaḥyā ibn Sa'īd's *Dhayl*, or *Chronicle*, which described these fights within the Egyptian Melkite church, was one of them.

William of Tripoli's errors can also be explained by a phenomenon that Barbara Roggema has observed in Arabic and Syriac polemical and apologetic responses to Islam, such as the *Legend of Sergius Bahira*. As discussed in the first chapter, the *Legend* survives in five recensions: two Syriac, two Arabic, and one Latin. In every version of the Bahira legend, the monk is described as "Christian" in a generic sense, without any obvious sectarian markers tying him to a particular religious' community. This despite the fact that the Arabic and Syriac recensions were produced and circulated among communities who fiercely disagreed and competed with one another in other contexts. Roggema has convincingly argued that, when faced with Islam, the need to put forward a unified front outweighed the sectarian issues that divided them--- temporarily at least.

²⁴¹ Alan V. Murray, "William of Tyre and the origins of the Turks: Observations on Possible Sources of the *Gesta orientarium principum*," in *Dei Gesta per Francos: Études sur les croisades dédiées à Jean Richard*, eds. Michael Balard, Benjamin Z. Kedar, and Jonathan Riley-Smith (Farnham: Ashgate, 2001), 218; Peter W. Edbury and John Gordon Rowe, *William of Tyre: Historian of the Latin East* (Cambridge, 1991), 23-24; H. Möhring, "Zu der Geschichte der orientalischen Herrscher des Wilhelm von Tyrus. Die Frage der Quellenabhängigkeiten," *Mittellateinisches Jahrbuch* 19 (1984): 170-83; Davis, *William of Tyre*, 71.

William demonstrates a similar desire to elide actual history, and flatten the differences among “the Egyptians” in order to uniformly portray them as the “good guys”, so to speak. Indeed, throughout both texts he commends Egyptian piety and monasticism, and he mentions the monastery at Mt. Sinai more than any other location, including Jerusalem. William concludes his description of Alexandria’s conquest by saying that despite now being under Saracen dominion, Egyptian communities continues to serve as a model of Christian piety:

Truly, regarding the faith, piety and love of the Christians, those who are in Egypt, if I were [able] to write the things which I have seen and the tales of the faithful that have been instilled in my ears, I would be able to compile a not insignificant book [about it]. Therefore, may God help the Egyptians, whose necks were placed under Christ’s yoke by the preaching of the Apostles, but are nevertheless compelled to serve the ministers of the Antichrist.²⁴²

Passages like this are scattered throughout both treatises. For William, the “Egyptians” as a whole served as a model for Christian resilience in the face of Islam. The courage that they embodied was not the only possible response to Islam, however, and William contrasts their example with those Christians who converted to Islam after the Conquests:

Thus, it was established by divine decree and the command of God in heaven that all men believed in their hearts and confessed with their mouths this [creed]: ‘there is no God but God and Muḥammad is his messenger.’ Indeed, those who did not profess and say this were killed. Therefore, just as there is a formulation by which we are baptized and become Christians: ‘in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,’ there is a formula for them, by which they become Saracens: ‘La eleh ella Alla, Mahomad rosol Alla’, which is: there is no God but God, and Muḥammad is His messenger. Thus, through error many have been

²⁴² “De fide vero, pietate et caritate Christianorum, qui sunt in Egypto, si scirem scribere ea, que vidi et fidelium narrations meis auribus instillarunt, librum possem componere non pusillum. Subveniat igitur Deus Egyptiis, qui predicatione apostolorum colla supponunt sub iugo Christi et servire tamen coguntur ministris Antichristi.”, *Notitia; De statu*, 280.

deceived [into] becoming Saracens, not only Jews, but also Christians, both great and small.²⁴³

William's commendation of Egyptian resilience draws partly on longstanding tradition, the valorization of exemplary Christians, martyrs especially, as a form of communal "memory making" as one scholar has called it, but unlike William's contemporaries in western Europe, Egyptian courage was a concrete rather than abstract exemplar for our author.²⁴⁴ Not only, as he says, had he personally witnessed it, but as he explicitly states he was facing a geopolitical landscape where the Latin Christian Levant had been pushed, quite literally, to the brink, and Baybars was in a position to take William's city of Acre whenever he wanted. By prioritizing William's use of prophecy, John Tolan has, unintentionally I believe, cast William as naïve, so caught up in his belief in Islam's demise that his rose-colored glasses have allowed him to see Muslims in a more charitable light. William, by contrast, repeatedly demonstrates his grim and realistic assessment of the present situation. While I agree with Tolan that he ultimately believed in the prophecies that predicted Islam's demise, history and personal experience had taught him that the prophecy was unlikely to be fulfilled during his own lifetime. William wrote the *Notitia* three years after Antioch had fallen to Baybars, and he was acutely aware that being a Christian was no protection against the worst temporal things that

²⁴³ "Unde statutum est pro divino decreto et Dei celi imperio, ut omnes corde credant et ore profiteantur ad salute, quod unus est Deus nec est deus nisi Deus et Machometus Dei nuntius; et qui hoc nolebat profiteri et dicere, moriebatur. Unde sicut apud nos est forma verborum, qua baptizamur et efficimur Christiani in nomine Patris et Filii et Spiritus Sancti, ita hec forma verborum est apud illos, qua efficiuntur Sarraceni: la eleh ella Alla, Mahomad rosol Alla, hoc est: non est deus nisi Deus et Machometus est nuntius eius. Multi igitur decepti errore effecti sunt Sarraceni, non solum Iudei, sed magni et mediocres Christiani.", *Notitia; De statu*, 286.

²⁴⁴ See, for example, Elizabeth Castelli, *Martyrdom and Memory: Early Christian Culture Making* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 1-21.

could happen. While the divine script would climax in Christianity's triumph, a lot of Christians were still going to die along the way.

Indeed, there are several prophetic passages scattered throughout both the *Notitia* and *De statu*, and William concludes the *Notitia* with one stating that:

It is written in their [Islamic] laws that the Romans or Latins, having been defeated by them, must soon [afterwards] overcome and destroy them; no one denies this. Thus they all predict, expect, and believe, that the position of the Saracens must soon end, while that of the Christians will last until the end of the world, which is coming at the end of 7000 years, of which, according to them, more than 6000 have already passed. Moreover, they all predict, prophesy, and believe that the Saracens will be divided into three parts: the first will flee to the Christians, the second part will perish by the sword and the third part will perish in the desert. Amen.²⁴⁵

Prophecies of Islam's demise proliferated throughout the 13th and 14th centuries, many of which were based on the Arabic works of Muslim astrologers such as Abū Ma'shar (d. 886), al-Kindī (d. 873), and al-Ghazālī (d. 1111).²⁴⁶ Latin authors regularly claimed that these authors had calculated their own religion's end. Roger Bacon, for example, mentions Abū Ma'shar (*Albumazar*) by name, claiming in his *Opus Maius* that,

Albumazar says in the eighth chapter of the second book, the law of Muḥammad cannot endure more than 693 years...it is now the six hundred and sixty-fifth year of the Arabs from the time of Muḥammad, and

²⁴⁵ "Item scriptum est in lege eorum, quod Romani sive Latini victi ab ipsis eos debeant in brevi vincere et delere, nec est, qui contradicat. Item omnes predicant, credunt et expectant, quod cito debet desinere Sarracenorum status, Christianorum autem usque ad mundi consummationem, que ventura est, usque ad finem septemmillenarii annorum, de quibus secundum eos iam transacti sunt sex milia annorum et satis plus. Item omnes predicant, prophesant et expectant Sarracenos dividendos in tres partes, quorum pars prima ad Christianos fugiet, secunda pars peribit sub gladio et tertia pars peribit in deserto. Amen.", *Notitia; De statu*, 260.

²⁴⁶ Useful starting points for this vast topic are, R. Lemay, *Abu Ma'shar and Latin Aristotelianism in the twelfth century*, (Beirut, 1962); Charles Burnett, *Arabic into Latin in the Middle Ages: The Translators and Their Intellectual and Social Context* (Ashgate: Variorum 2009).

therefore it will be quickly destroyed by the grace of God, which must be a great consolation to Christians.²⁴⁷

While William does not name his source, he is surely drawing from the same tradition. Even Roger Bacon's optimistic calculations admit that Islamic dominion is likely to continue for another twenty-eight years. A span of time that was quick, perhaps, from the perspective of someone sitting in Oxford, but not such a "great consolation" for someone staring down the shaft of Baybars' sword. While William also claims that Islam will soon (*in brevi*) end, his calculations are more vague than Bacon's. He says Christianity will triumph and the world will end in 7,000 years, and that we are well past the 6th millennium, but how far into it he either does not say or know. This puts the prophecy's fulfilment likely well beyond the end of William's life, before which William and his fellow Christians might find themselves, like the Egyptians, "compelled to serve the ministers of the Antichrist" (*subveniat igitur Deus Egyptiis...et servire tamen coguntur ministris Antichristi*).

William did believe in a triumphant divine script, but it was not yet at its climax. His own prophecy admits that his people, the Latins (*Romani sive Latini victi ab ipsis*), were facing defeat before their final victory. This meant he and his fellow Christians needed to remain resilient through the bad times to come, and the Egyptians and other

²⁴⁷ "Nam secundum quod Albumazar dicit viii capitulo secundi libri, non potest lex Mahometi durare ultra sexcentos nonaginta tres annos...et nunc est annus Arabum sexcentessimus sexagesimus quintus a tempore Mahometi, et ideo cito destructur per gratiam Dei, quod debet esse magnum solatium Christianis.", Roger Bacon, *Opus Majus*, ed. John Henry Bridges (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1897), 266; other contemporary works, such as Giovanni Villani's *Nuova Cronica* (early 14th c.), echo Bacon, without referring to Abū Ma'shar by name: "E nota che per certe profezie si truova, e per grandi astrolaghi s'aferma, che la detta setta de' Saracini dee durare circa ad anni VIIc, e allora de finire e venire meno," Giovanni Villani, *Nuova Cronica Vol. I*, ed. by Giuseppe Porta (Fondazione Pietro Bembo: Ugo Guanda Editore in Parma, 1990), 119.

“indigenous” (*indigenas*) Christians, having done so before, provided a model and inspiration for how to do so in the future. Even more practically, however, some local narratives of the conquests provided hope that a future defeat would not be as catastrophic as the more histrionic Arabic/Syriac and Latin histories suggested.

William explicitly articulates this hope in his narrative of the invasions of Palestine and Syria. As he relates, after taking Alexandria, the general ‘Amr ibn al-‘As (*Gomar Ebnelhas*) continued on to conquer the city of Gaza, but first he instructed “his companions not to kill any old man, boy or girl, not to cut down any ripe, fruit-bearing tree, and not to destroy [the captured] houses.”²⁴⁸ It cannot be overstated how different this is from other Latin descriptions of the conquests, which emphasize their devastation and the depravity of Muḥammad’s followers. William develops these ideas further, writing that before ‘Amr ibn al-‘As’s arrival at Gaza:

‘Amr sent a message to the citizens of Gaza that they should join his community, since he required neither gold, nor silver, nor wives, nor sons or even daughters, nor cities nor houses, but only their affection, harmony, security and peace, [and] that from two peoples should come one, all of whom would say there is one God and Muḥammad is his messenger. But Emperor Heraclius’ tributary soldiers, who had come to protect the city, did not admit the messenger and joined battle with their adversaries, but they were defeated and fled. The Arabs pursued them to the mountains, all the way to the holy city of Jerusalem, and to the sea, all the way to the Palestinian city Caesarea.²⁴⁹

²⁴⁸ “Dux autem Arabum et princeps exercitus erat Gomar Ebnelhas, qui precepit sociis non interficere senem, puerum nec puellam, non truncare arborem fructiferam et uberem, non diruere domos.”, *Notitia; De statu*, 282.

²⁴⁹ “Ad Gazenses vero nuntium misit Gomar, ut societatem suam intrarent, quia non requirebat argentum, non aurem, non uxores, non filios aut filias, non civitates neque domos, sed eorum amorem, concordiam, securitatem et pacem, ut ex duobus populis unus efficeretur et dicerent omnes unum esse Deum et Machometum Dei nuntium. Stipendiarii vero Eraclii imperatoris, qui Gazam venerant ad custodiam civitatis, non admittentes nuntium bellum commiserunt cum adversariis, sed victi fugerunt. Quos persecute

On a basic level William is criticizing the rashness and cowardice of Heraclius' mercenaries, but this approach suggests that the soldiers should have heard the messenger out. This interpretation is supported by William's flattering description of 'Amr ibn al-'As, whose only difficult request was that the inhabitants of Gaza accept that Muḥammad is God's messenger. As discussed in the third chapter, there was a tradition in Arabic/Syriac polemical and apologetic traditions, such as Paul of Antioch's *Risālah* or Timothy I's (d. 823) famous debate with the caliph al-Mahdī, which accepted Muḥammad as a prophet, just not a universal one. When, for example, Timothy is asked by the Caliph about Muḥammad, Timothy replies that he,

walked in the path of the prophets, and trod in the track of the lovers of God. All the prophets taught the doctrine of one God, and since Muḥammad taught the doctrine of the unity of God, he walked, therefore, in the path of the prophets. Further, all the prophets drove men away from bad works, and brought them nearer to good works. And since Muḥammad drove his people away from bad works and brought them nearer to the good ones, he walked, therefore, in the path of the prophets. Again, all the prophets separated men from idolatry and polytheism, and attached them to God and His cult. And since Muḥammad separated his people from idolatry and polytheism, and attached them to the cult and the knowledge of the one God, beside whom there is no other God, it is obvious that he walked in the path of all the prophets. Finally, Muḥammad taught about God, his Word and His Spirit. And since all the prophets had prophesied about God, His Word and his Spirit, Muḥammad walked, therefore, in the path of all the prophets.²⁵⁰

Timothy's answer, in the context of the debate, is an understandably careful and political one, but it appears in his Syriac account of the discussion, which would have been in

sunt Arabes versus montana usque ad sanctam civitatem Ierusalem et versus mare usque ad Cesaream Palestinam itinere duorum dierum.”, Idem.

²⁵⁰ S.K. Samir, trans. “Al-turath al-‘arabi al-masihi al-qadim wa-al-islam”, in *Al-Masihyya wa-al-islam*, edited by G.N. Nahhas (Cairo, 1997), 31-6. Also discussed in S.K. Samir, “The Prophet Muḥammad as Seen by Timothy I and other Arab Christian Authors,” in *Syrian Christians Under Islam: The First Thousand Years*, ed. by David Thomas (Brill: Leiden, 2001), 75-106.

Arabic. This means that this was not just his “on-the-spot” attempt to wriggle out of a tricky question, but he considered it a legitimate interpretation of Muḥammad’s status that would be acceptable to a Syrian-Christian audience. We see this same perspective articulated in the *Legend of Sergius Bahira*, which commends Muḥammad and Bahira for bringing Arab polytheism to an end, even if Islam’s final form was not what either of them intended. William of Tripoli’s biography of Muḥammad reflects a similar point of view, emphasizing the Christian core of Muḥammad’s message. One can see how, from this perspective, it might not have been difficult to talk oneself into accepting Timothy or Paul of Antioch’s position toward the Prophet.

To put a finer point on it, when taken together, William’s presentation of Muḥammad, and his descriptions of the Islamic conquests, could function as a strategy of accommodation. This strategy was reminiscent of the Islamic principle of *Taqiyah* (تقية), a word which literally means prudence, fear, or caution, which permitted Muslims in certain contexts do deny their religious affiliation, or participate in rituals that would otherwise be prohibited.²⁵¹ This principle was based on Q 3:28, which instructs Muslims not to take “unbelievers” as protectors, but still enjoins them to “guard yourselves against them, guarding carefully.” This clearly vague passage was eventually interpreted as permitting Muslims to prioritize survival over martyrdom. The Sunni scholar Ibn Kathīr writes that Q 3:28 applied to, “those believers who in some areas or times fear for their safety from the disbelievers. In this case, such believers are allowed to show friendship to

²⁵¹ See, for example, Michael Cook, *Early Muslim Dogma: A Source-Critical Study* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 35-57; Me’ir Mikha’el Bar-Asher, *Scripture and Exegesis in Early Imami Shiism* (Leiden: Brill, 1999).

the disbelievers outwardly, but never inwardly.”²⁵² While Islamic scholars generally accepted this principle, it was never the ideal response, and Muslims were encouraged whenever possible to avoid falling into such situations. Martyrdom was useful in the abstract, as a form of communal memory making and identity formation, but practically-speaking, no religious community can survive long term unless it develops strategies to persevere in less than ideal situations. While Christian scholars never developed a version of *taqīyah* that was precisely equivalent, we see a subtler version of the same strategy of accommodation it facilitated when, for example, Timothy tells the caliph that Muḥammad walked in the path of the prophets, and writes this in Syriac to his co-religionists. This strategy was not a first choice for Christians any more than it was for Muslims, but long-term community survival required it. While some of William’s contemporaries intentionally courted martyrdom by denouncing Muḥammad in places it was illegal to do so, that is not the goal we see in either the *Notitia* or *De statu*.²⁵³ We see, instead, someone whose concerns are practical, and who sees a less hyperbolic presentation of Muḥammad as the most effective way to achieve this strategy of accommodation.

Accommodation was, however, a strategy that was forced on William by necessity, rather than a natural response to the present situation had circumstances been

²⁵² Majid Fakhry, *An Interpretation of the Qur’ān* (New York: New York University Press, 2002), 127.

²⁵³ Generally speaking, Franciscan preachers seemed to court martyrdom more than actual engagement with Muslims. See, for example, E.R. Daniel, *The Franciscan Concept of Mission in the High Middle Ages* (University of Kentucky Press, 1975), 34-59.

different. In both the *Notitia*'s and *De statu*'s histories of the Islamic conquests, he repeatedly expresses his bewilderment at Islam's dramatic rise:

Therefore, it happened that in the very year that Heraclius received the imperial crown, the Arab people through Muḥammad [gathered] a hostile army and held military dominion in the land of Egypt, and in the twenty-four years in which Heraclius lived, the Christians lost Egypt and all of the land which God had promised to Abraham, saying in Genesis 15: I give this land to your progeny from the river of Egypt to the great Euphrates, the Kenites, the Kenizzites, and the rest., from which nothing remains of their former dominion and power. What a miraculous thing, stupefying to even the scholars, that the sons of the serving maid, who was driven with her son from the house of Abraham, have acquired more lands and kingdoms in twenty-four or thirty years after Muḥammad's rise, than the free sons, namely the Jews and the sons of Israel [did] in a thousand years, who were never able to acquire or possess the promised land.²⁵⁴

William's contemporary, Riccoldo da Monte Croce, expressed a similar surprise that Muḥammad's followers were able to conquer the "promised land" more quickly and thoroughly than God's chosen people, the children of Israel, ever did.²⁵⁵ Riccoldo studied Arabic, and spent ten years preaching and traveling the Middle East. Most of his written production was devoted to Islam, the most famous of which, his *Contra legem Sarrecenorum*, was arguably the most influential polemical treatise against Islam of the Middle Ages.

²⁵⁴ "Factum est itaque, quod eo anno, quo Eraclius accepit imperium, populus Arabum per ipsem Machometum cepit habere hostile exercitum in terra Egypti exercitum et dominium, et in XXIII annis, quibus vixit dictus Eraclius, Christiani ita perdiderunt Egyptum et totam terram, quam Deus promiserat Abrahe dicens Gen. XV: Terram hanc dabo semini tuo a fluvio Egypti usque ad fluvium magnum Eufraten, Cyneos et Cenezeos et ceteros..., quod nichil eis remansit eis dominii seu potestatis. – Mira res et ipsis stupenda sapientibus, quoniam filii ancille, que eicta est cum filio de domo Abrahe, maiorem terram et plura acquisierunt regna in XXIII annis aut XXX, postquam surrexit Machometus, quam filii libere, Iudei videlicet et filii Israel in mille annis, qui nunquam potuerunt dictam promissam terram acquirere nec possidere.", *Notitia; De statu*, 294.

²⁵⁵ Rocoldo da Monte Croce, *Contra legem Sarrecenorum*, in *Memorie Domenicane* N.S. 17, ed. Jean-Marie Merigoux OP (Paris, 1986), 3: 19-21.

While the *contra legem Sarrecenorum* contains the standard Latin Christian attacks against Islam—the Qur’ān is irrational, Muḥammad was not a true prophet, his mentor, Sergius, was a heretic, etc.—Riccoldo’s other works add nuance to this view. These include the *Liber peregrinationis*, an account of his travels through the East, and the *Epistolae ad ecclesiam triumphantem*, a series of lamentational letters addressed directly to God and the other saints in heaven. In these letters Riccoldo actively grapples with the meaning of Islam’s temporal success. In the first of his letters after the fall of Acre in 1291, he calls out to God himself, writing, “and you, O lord, irreproachable in wisdom and admirable in justice, you have given strength to a sinful man, a criminal. To Muḥammad, the greatest criminal, you have given an early kingdom--- nay, you have given him and his people rule over the whole world!”²⁵⁶ Riccoldo explicitly acknowledges how destabilizing his first-hand experiences in the Middle East have been, and how challenging it is to continue believing that Christianity is superior when confronted with so much evidence to the contrary. This challenge proves too difficult, in fact, for some Christians, and “it now seems to those who are weak in faith and intolerant of suffering that you have justified and given life to the liar Muḥammad in his promises—the one who promises to give this land to those who follow him.”²⁵⁷ Riccoldo concludes his letter by pleading with God, “to confirm me in my faith and to rescue the Christian people quickly from the hands of the wicked! May your name be blessed from age to age, because *wisdom and power are yours; you change the times and the ages, and*

²⁵⁶ Riccoldo da Montecroce, *Epistolae ad ecclesiam triumphantem*, ed. Reinhold Rohricht, Archives de l’Orient latin, 2 (1884), 269; Rita George-Tvrtovic, *A Christian Pilgrim in Medieval Iraq: Riccoldo da Montecroce’s Encounter with Islam* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2012), 141.

²⁵⁷ Idem.

you establish and depose royal powers [Daniel 2:20-21]. If it pleases you that Muḥammad should rule, tell us so that we may venerate him.”²⁵⁸ It is unlikely that Riccoldo expected God to affirm Muḥammad’s veneration, but his hyperbolic language is evidence of the degree to which his expectations have been challenged.

The emotional intensity and immediacy of Riccoldo’s letter provides a glimpse at an aspect of medieval interreligious encounter that has been understudied, and is one of the primary reasons that neither the *Notitia* nor *De statu* have been fully incorporated into our larger picture of medieval Muslim-Christian relations. Norman Daniel’s seminal work, *Islam and the West: The Making of an Image*, was the first to comprehensively argue that the hostility and derivativeness of medieval polemic revealed some lack of critical empathy in the Latin mind. Indeed, “the basic tenets of Islam were well understood by a considerable number of writers and in one way or another deliberately misinterpreted by most. Anti-Islamic polemic formed a coherent pattern of ideas so inextricably linked as to enmesh the thought of some of the best minds. It inhibited any possible empathy with Muslims, or any warmth towards all that range of theology that the religions share.”²⁵⁹ While the field has largely moved on from this perspective, similar sentiments continue to be expressed. One scholar recently argued that, “on the whole, the destruction of the traditional myths of Islam was very slow, the image of Muḥammad and Christian ideas of Muslims evolved only slightly, further proof that

²⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 272.

²⁵⁹ Norman Daniel, *Islam and the West: The making of an Image* (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 1993), 35.

medieval man's picture of the world changed very slowly."²⁶⁰ Because this perspective has been dominant, less conventional writers and sources, such as William of Tripoli or Riccoldo da Montecroce's *epistolae*, have been treated as errors in the data set instead of as significant challenges to the image of a static, bigoted Latin outlook. Indeed, the features that so dismayed Daniel are now largely seen as aspects of the genre in which polemicists were writing, rather than indications of the intellectual and emotional lives of the authors themselves.

Daniel was, however, reacting to something real, namely the extreme and absurd lengths to which medieval Latin authors went to defame Islam. The same absurdist and hyperbolic arguments and motifs were recycled time and again, indicating that for most medieval Latin authors, they were enough to fortify themselves against any challenge Islam's uninterrupted challenge posed to their worldview. For others, however, these tropes did not suffice, and this was a concrete result of interreligious encounter. Riccoldo da Montecroce recycled the standard polemical ideas in the *Contra legem Sarracenorum*, but during his ten years in the Middle East, he was confronted on a daily basis with evidence that defied them. This visceral, first-hand experience was discomfiting and destabilizing, and resulted in a series of writings that are utterly unique in the Latin

²⁶⁰ Svetlana Luchitskaja, "The image of Muḥammad in Latin chronography of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries," *Journal of Medieval History* (2000) 26:2, 115-126. 126. Similarly, Sini Kangas recently wrote that "of similar importance is the question of what factors and processes facilitated rapid establishment of a popular western image of Muslims once interest in the Muslim world had been aroused. It is remarkable how uniform this image already was at the beginning of the twelfth century and how its fundamentals would remain basically intact for centuries." Sini Kangas, "Inimicus Dei et sanctae Christianitatis?: Saracens and Their Prophet in Twelfth-Century Crusade Propaganda and Western Travesties of Muḥammad's Life," in *The Crusades and the Near East*, ed. Conor Kostick (London: Routledge, 2010), 130.

corpus. Riccoldo admits as much, saying that after the fall of Acre, “I was suddenly seized by a strange wonder. I was stupefied in thinking about God’s judgment concerning world governance, and most especially concerning Saracens and Christians...since I was unable to prevail over my wonder nor find a solution, I decided to write to God and the celestial court...and also ask God to confirm me in the truth and sincerity of my faith.”²⁶¹

Riccoldo is describing, in other words, a challenge to his schema—a term in the fields of psychology and cognitive science that describes a pattern of thought or behavior that organizes categories of information and the relationships among them. A schema is “a system of organizing and perceiving new information. People are more likely to notice things that fit into their schema, while re-interpreting contradictions to the schema as exceptions or distorting them to fit.”²⁶² Schemata exist today, just as they did in the medieval world. While pre-modern schemata often challenge modern sensibilities, they are not in the abstract a negative, but a vital way that the brain makes sense of an infinite amount of data. When new information that does not fit the schema is encountered, it is usually ignored, but sometimes, “when the new information cannot be ignored, existing schemata must be changed or new schemata must be created. This is called accommodation.”²⁶³ Severe crisis can challenge a schema and force one to consider new information arguably more than anything else. While apocalyptic Latin writers were usually writing in response to a crisis, the failure of the Second Crusade or the fall of Acre for example, the crisis was usually at a distance, and thus not destabilizing enough

²⁶¹ George-Tvrtovic, *A Christian Pilgrim in Medieval Iraq*, 245.

²⁶² See, P. Dimaggio, “Culture and Cognition,” in *Annual Review of Sociology* 23 (1997): 263-87.

²⁶³ Chris T. O’Sullivan and Francis T. Durso, “Effect of schema-incongruent information on memory for stereotypical attributes,” in *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 47 (1984): 55-70.

to dramatically adjust their point-of-view. Neither William of Tripoli nor Riccoldo da Montecroce had this luxury of distance, and as a result we see in their work schemata that have been dramatically adjusted. These complicated, conflicted responses are one of the destabilizing effects of the visceral, first-hand experience of interreligious encounter, and show that given the right circumstances, medieval Latin schemata were no more static than the modes of thought that dominate today.

In another of Riccoldo da Montecroce's letters, he describes in vivid detail the devastation he witnessed after the fall of Acre. In particular, from the Christian refugees and survivors of Acre's fall "I hear that not merely one or even ten but many Friars Preachers (Dominicans) have remained in the city of Acre, [some] were not able to escape and flee, and [others] chose to remain with the people of God so that they might be with them for the strengthening of their faith."²⁶⁴ While William does not explicitly say so, his history of the Islamic conquests indicates he was contemplating the city's imminent fall. William's narrative has emphasized the Christian communities, such as the "Egyptians", who resisted conversion to Islam, and maintained community identity in the face of it. Indeed, throughout his narrative of the invasions he describes a topography of survival and resistance. In his description of the conquest of Damascus, for example, he blames the governor of the city, a man named Mansur, who also happened to be the, "father of the church theologian, John of Damascus."²⁶⁵ William's account is otherwise

²⁶⁴ "Ego autem non modo unum vel decem sed plures et plures audio remansisse in civitate Accon fratres Predicatores, qui poterant exire et fugere, et preelegerunt cum populo Dei mori ut essent aliis ad fidei firmamentum...", George-Tvrtovic, *A Christian Pilgrim in Medieval Iraq*, 230.

²⁶⁵ William is incorrect. Mansur was John of Damascus' grandfather; "Hic confortatus in dominio et regno Arabum Quinto anno regni sui cum exercitu ingentis multitudinis venit obsidere Damascus. Eraclius vero Romanorum imperator, qui tunch morabatur in civitate Haman in terra Emath, audiens Damascus

highly unflattering, claiming that Mansur acted “unfaithfully” by refusing to pay the troops who were stationed there to protect the city. The soldiers then abandoned Damascus, and “because of this betrayal by the governor, Mansur, the city of Damascus was captured by the Saracens and remains in their possession to this day.” Like the rest of his narrative there are several levels of commentary. Most obviously, he criticizes Christian leaders who abandoned their duty and left the region undefended, but more subtly he offers readers a glimmer of hope. Even in places that had been conquered, Christian survival was possible, and great theologians like John of Damascus could still thrive.

In his description of the conquest of Mesopotamia, William is more explicit on this point. He begins by framing the region as a land of saints, a place that was promised to Abraham, and the home of the “eminent teacher Ephrem [the Syrian]” and also “Theophilus, who was delivered from the hand of the enemy by the blessed Virgin.”²⁶⁶ William then turns to the present day, writing that God’s “judgment and decision” allowed all the lands where Christians lived to be overrun, including the city of Baghdad, where “Ahasuerus [Xerxes] and Queen Esther reigned, and holy Daniel saw miraculous

obsessam in Antiochiam se collegit. Baiulus vero eius, quem Damasci reliquerat nomine Mansor, pater egregii theology, qui dicitur Iohannes Damascenus, infideliter agens noluit sustentare stipendiaris debitis stipendiis, quos Eraclius imperator conduxerat et mandaverat ad custodiam civitatis. Propter quod dilapsus est ab eo exercitus et remansit civitas defensoribus destitute; et sic dolo ac prodicione dicti baiuli Mansor capta est civitas Damascena a Sarrecenis, quam usque hodie tenant.”, *Notitia; De statu*, 284.

²⁶⁶ Theophilus of Adana was a sixth century saint whom legend claimed made a pact with the devil out of jealousy at not receiving an archdeaconship. He soon repented and after fasting for 40 days the Virgin Mary appeared and interceded for him. While this was before the time of Muḥammad, William uses the same language when describing the conquests, referring to Christians subject to the “hand(s)” of the antichrist; “Inter prefatos caliphos XV nomine Hebbas intravit in Mesopotamiam, regnum olim Persarum ultra Eufraten ad Orientem, in qua civitas metropolis est Aram, in qua habitabat Abraham, quando dictum est ei a Domino Gen. XII: Egredere de terra et de cognatione tua et de domo patris tui. De qua civitate fuit floriosus doctor Effrem et etiam Theophilus, quem virgo beata de manu inimici liberavit.”, *Ibid*, 296.

and divine visions,”.²⁶⁷ Queen Esther was a biblical hero for protecting her people during their exile in Babylon, and Daniel served as an adviser to both Babylonian and Persian kings. Daniel’s visions, which predicted God’s ultimate triumph after the passing of a series of earthly kingdoms, were the primary influence on apocalyptic literature in both eastern and western churches. The prophecies that William includes in his two treatises clearly draw from apocalyptic traditions based on Daniel, but even more than this, he mentions both Esther and Daniel as exemplars of fidelity to God and one’s community in the midst of hostile circumstances. Riccoldo observes that a great number of Dominicans remained behind after the fall of Acre in order to strengthen the faith of their neighbors. For such men, William possibly among them, these models would have been vital.

William concludes his narrative of the conquest of Mesopotamia by observing that this is not only the land of biblical heroes, but also a place where, in the present day, average (*mediocres*) Christians have maintained their religious identity in the face of Islamic dominion. For “the Christians, who were lords of that land but are now servants of the Saracens, persevere in the Christian faith and confession. Many divine miracles, which God has worked among them, attest to them being faithful servants of God. If anyone were able and willing to collect them into a single volume or work, a great book

²⁶⁷ “Sicque factum est iudicio ac permissione eius, cuius est universal dominium et dat regnum et imperium, cui vult hominum, ut in brevi tempore cursuque veloci omnis terra Christianorum et omnia regna et provincie terrarium a prefata civitate Baldach, in qua regnavit Assuerus et regina hester et sanctus Daniel vidit revelations miras et divinas, usque ad desertum, quod dividit Asiam ab Affrica, subiciretur et Christiani, qui errant terrarium domini, Sarracenorum fierent servi usque in hodiernum diem perseverantes in fide et confessione nominis christiani. Quos fideles Dei famulos et testes crebras testantur divina, que inter eos Deus facit, mirabilia; que siquis vellet et sciret colligere in unum volume sive corpus, grandis exurgeret codex.”, Ibid, 298.

would result.”²⁶⁸ Much like his descriptions of the “Egyptians”, William has completely elided the fact that, from the perspective of the Latin Church, the Church of the East, often disparagingly called the Nestorian Church, were heretics. The schism between the Latin Church and the Church of the East was well known, and in many Latin biographies of Muḥammad, as noted above, the heretical monk who inspired Muḥammad is often identified as Nestorius. During Riccoldo da Montecroce’s journey through southern Turkey, he mentions, for example, the city of Mopsuestia, “where the greatest heretic Bishop Theodore used to live, who—corrupting the entire gospel with his interpretation—said that the Virgin was not a ‘God bearer’ but bore a regular man and a ‘*templum Dei*’. We found his poisonous books among the Nestorians throughout the East. For Nestorius was his [Theodore’s] disciple.”²⁶⁹ From the very founding of the Franciscan and Dominican orders, bringing eastern Christian ‘heretics’ back into the fold was part of the mendicant agenda. William’s eliding of these sectarian differences was thus intentional and strategic, and his primary concern was practical. He was using his history to trace a topography of survival and resistance, and much like eastern Christians who, in one context debated fiercely with one another, but in others, such as the *Legend of Sergius Bahira*, minimized sectarian differences in order to portray a unified front,

²⁶⁸ “Et Christiani, qui errant terrarum domini, Sarracenorum fierent servi usque in hodiernum diem perseverantes in fide et confessione nominis christiani. Quos fideles Dei famulos et testes crebra testantur divina, que inter eos Deus facit, mirabilia; que siquis vellet et sciret colligere in unum volume sive corus, grandis exurgeret codex”, Idem.

²⁶⁹ The Dominicans were well established in these areas among eastern Christian communities such as the “Nestorians” and the “Jacobites” by the end of the 13th century. Raymond-Joseph Loenertz, ‘Les Missions dominicaines en orient au quatorzieme siecle’, *Archivum Fratrum Praedicatorum*, 2 (1932): 187. Riccoldo da Montecroce, *Liber Peregrinationis*, in *Riccold de Monte Croce: Peregrination en Terre Sainte et au Proche-Orient et lettres sur la chute de Saint-Jean d’Acre*, ed. and trans. Rene Kappler (Paris: Champion, 1997), 78.

William needed the example and the traditions of these otherwise “heretical” communities to accomplish this goal.

To put a finer point on it, every unusual part of William’s two treatises has a parallel in the Arabic/Syriac Christian tradition. His biography of Muḥammad, which is utterly unique in the Latin corpus, reflects the biographical traditions we see in the *Legend of Sergius Bahira*. His history of the Islamic conquests, which is also unique, has parallels in eastern Christian histories and apocalyptic works such as the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Samuel* or *Pseudo-Pisentius*. Many of these parallel traditions came, however, from schismatic and ‘heretical’ communities. By deliberately overlooking these distinctions, William was not only able to draw from their traditions, but he was able to create an alternative sacred topography, one that valued practical concerns, such as survival and resistance to conversion, over theological purity.

One sees the adjustments to William’s schema demonstrated perhaps no more vividly than his narrative of the first Islamic conquest of Jerusalem. As he tells it,

at this time in the city of Jerusalem there was a patriarch named Sophronius, a Greek without an army, military experience, or strength. ‘Umar came to the city with his [army] to seize it. Sophronius left the city to meet him asking for his favor and [a treaty] for the inhabitants in the city, which he obtained, receiving letters of alliance in the [following] form: the Christian inhabitants in Jerusalem should have confidence and security, and should be without fear of bloodshed, and the safety of their moveable goods should [be preserved] and their churches and houses should remain untouched [along with] the people in them.²⁷⁰

²⁷⁰ “Eo tempore in civitate sancta Ierusalem erat patriarcha, qui Sofronius dicebatur, Grecus sine militia et armorum usu seu potential. Ad quam venit Gomar cum suorum multitudine capiendam. Obviam egreditur de civitate Sofronius implorans dextram et confederationis gratiam habitantibus in civitate, quam obtinuit, et litteras confederationis sub hac forma accepit: sint habitores christiani in Ierusalem confidentes et secure,

This meeting between Sophronius and ‘Umar is based on a real series of agreements that were negotiated between Muslim rulers and the Christian cities that surrendered to them during the initial conquests. The best known of these, the so-called Pact of ‘Umar, is attributed to the same ‘Umar ibn Khattib, and is traditionally viewed as the first attempt to codify social relationships between Muslims and local *dhimmi* communities.

Dhimmitude was, at a most basic level, a status that granted Christians, Jews, Zoroastrians, and in some areas even Hindus and Buddhists, certain freedoms from Islamic law in exchange for the payment of a tax and a number of social obligations and prohibitions. This status was apocryphally based on an agreement between ‘Umar and the Christians of recently conquered Damascus, that was then broadly applied to the rest of the “people of the book” under Muslim rule. The *Pact* itself, and *dhimmi* status generally, is often considered emblematic of the relative tolerance of Muslim rulers when compared with the sometimes harsher conduct of Christian rulers toward their Jewish and Muslim subjects. In a very general sense this is true, but it is a perspective that owes much to hindsight. The reality is that the *Pact*, the text of which is actually a product of the late 8th or 9th century, was an attempt to enforce stricter and more onerous regulations on non-Muslim communities.²⁷¹ During the first century and a half of Arab expansion, Christian communities in particular were often able to negotiate fairly lenient and favorable

sint sine timore sanguinis, sint mobilia eorum salva et eorum ecclesie atque domus integer maneat et salvi habitatores in eis.”, *Notitia; De statu*, 288.

²⁷¹ The most recent critical edition of this text can be found in, Abū Bakr al-Khallāl, *Ahl al-milal wa-l-ridda wa-l-zanādiqa wa-tārik al-ṣalāḥ wa-l-farā’id min Kitāb al-Jāmi’*, ed. I.Ḥ. Sulṭān, vols. 1-2 (Riyadh, 1996), 431-34; for several English translations and discussion of the text, M. Levy-Rubin, “*Shurūt ‘Umar* and its alternatives. The legal debate on the status of the *Dhimmi*s,” *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 30 (2005): 170-206; Ibn Zabir, “What was the Pact of ‘Umar? A literary-historical study,” *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 23 (1999): 100-57; M. Cohen, *Under crescent and cross. The Jews in the middle ages* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 52-74.

surrender terms, with few obligations or restrictions. By the late 8th and 9th century, when this text was “discovered”, Muslim rule in these areas was more or less secure, and some jurists sought to enforce a stricter social hierarchy with Muslims at the top. While the *Pact* achieved canonical status in Muslim law, its enforcement was always dependent on the individual ruler, and its application a matter for debate. As late as the 14th century it was still vigorously contested, with Ibn Taymiyya, one of the period’s foremost scholars, penning several treatises advocating for its stricter enforcement, while his contemporary, the Mālikī jurist Shihāb al-Dīn al-Qarāfī, argued that the Prophet himself prohibited Muslims from harming *dhimmi* through inappropriate speech or any kind of physical harassment.²⁷²

Whatever their eschatological hopes for an eventual Christian triumph, for Christian authors living under Muslim rule, the status of their communities could not be assumed or taken for granted. It was instead subject to continual negotiation. In the *Legend of Sergius Bahira*, for example, when Muḥammad asks Baḥīrā how he can repay his help and guidance, Baḥīrā replies,

‘I do not want anything from you from this world... except that you care for the situation of the Christians ... Amongst them are poor monks who have renounced this world and detest its fine and pleasurable things... So prevent them from being harmed, troubled, molested or attacked by any of your people... I also desire from you that you order that none of the Christians be oppressed or wronged. If you take care of this, I expect that God will lengthen your rule and make your power last.’ He said to me... ‘I will demand from them, with regard to all the Christians, that they do not act unjustly towards them, and that their ceremonies will not be changed, and that their churches will be built, and that their heads will be raised,

²⁷² See, Thomas F. Michel, *A Muslim Theologian's Response to Christianity: Ibn Taymiyya's Al-Jawab Al-Sahih* (Caravan Books, 1985), 80-81; S. Jackson, *Islamic law and the state. The constitutional jurisprudence of Shihāb al-Din al-Qarāfī* (Leiden: Brill, 1996).

and that they will be advanced and treated justly. And whoever oppresses one of them—I will be his adversary on the day of the resurrection.²⁷³

The conversation in this passage intentionally echoes Q 5:82, which praises the priests and monks “who are not proud”, but it takes this further by attacking the very provisions of the Pact of ‘Umar, such as the prohibition on building new churches and monasteries, that contemporary Muslim jurists were trying to normalize. This line of attack was evidently effective because Muslim scholars continued to refute these claims well into the later Middle Ages, and criticize rulers who failed to enforce the Pact’s conditions.²⁷⁴

Such concerns also shaped William’s presentation of Muslim figures. In William’s chapter on Sultan Baybars good qualities, he mentions that, “toward his Christian subjects, especially the monks who are on Mount Sinai...he appears favorably inclined to their affairs...”.²⁷⁵ While the monks at Mt. Sinai enjoyed certain advantages: the location and reputation of their monastery chief among them, even they had to negotiate for the protection of their community. One of the ways they have traditionally done so is through a document known as the *Ahtiname* of Muḥammad, a letter of protection supposedly dictated by the Prophet himself, and sent to the Monks at Mt. Sinai

فقلت له ما اريد منك شيء من غرض الدنيا ولا ما قل ولا ما جل ولا مناي الا العنايه بامر النصاري في ايام ملكك وملك قومك لانهم
اعضا ضعفا وقد اومروا بالتواضع والصبر الشديد وفيهم رهبان مساكين فقرا وقد زهدوا في هدوا في هذه الدنيا بغضوها و ما فيها من
خيراتها...فتحمل عنهم الادا والموديه والعنت اصحابك...وايضا اريد منك ان تامر ان لا يلحق الحدا من النصاري ظلم ولا جور فانك ان
حملت عنهم هذا رجوت ان يمد الله في ملكك وبديم سلطانك. فقال لي علي انا ان امر قومي ان لا يوخذ من راحت خراج وييجل وتقضا حوايته
ويعني باحواله وامرهم في امر جماعه النصاري ان لا يتعدا عليهم ولا يغير عليهم في رسومهم شيا وتعمر كنايسهم ترفع روسايهم ويقدموا
ويصنفوا ومن ظلم احدا منهم كنت خصمه يوم القيامه.” Roggema, *The Legend of Sergius Bahīrā*, 454-57.

²⁷⁴ In his short treatise *Fī shurūṭ ‘Umar*, Ibn Taymiyya retroactively condemns the Ismā‘īlī Fatimids for allowing new churches and monasteries to be built in Egypt.

²⁷⁵ “Ad sibi subiectos Christianos maximeque religiosos, qui sunt in monte Synai et in diversis partibus sui imperii, favorabilis existit et causas eorum statim, ut audit, determinat et lites abscedit.”, *Notitia; De statu*, 328.

in 626.²⁷⁶ As Muḥammad was illiterate the document is “signed” with his handprint, and in it he permanently grants certain rights and protections to the monastery, including a prohibition stating that no Muslim is allowed “to plunder these Christians, or destroy or spoil any of their churches, or houses of worship, or take any of the things contained within these houses and bring it to Muslim houses.”²⁷⁷ The *Ahtiname* seems to have actually been written in the 9th century, as this is the earliest known manuscript, and Ibn Hisham (d. 833) is the first Muslim writer to mention it.²⁷⁸ Muslims have, however, mostly accepted it as genuine. When a mosque was built by the Fatamids on the grounds of the St. Catherine’s Monastery in the early 12th century as a place of prayer for Muslim pilgrims and a sign of protection, Muḥammad’s covenant was part of the justification.²⁷⁹ Moreover, the earliest manuscript no longer resides at the monastery as it was taken to Istanbul by the Ottoman Sultan Selim I in 1517 for safekeeping. Before doing so the Sultan reaffirmed the protections in the document, and later had a Turkish copy transliterated into Arabic sand sent as a replacement.²⁸⁰ Much as eastern Christians took the Islamic tradition of Muḥammad’s meeting with Bahira and repurposed it for their own needs, early agreements like the *Pact of ‘Umar* became fertile topics of debate,

²⁷⁶ Aziz Suryal Atiya, *The Arabic Manuscripts of Mount Sinai: A Handlist of the Arabic Manuscripts and Scrolls Microfilmed at the Library of the Monastery of St. Catherine, Mount Sinai* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1955); Jacqueline Lafontaine-Dosogne, "Le Monastère du Sinâï: creuset de culture chrétienne (Xe-XIIIe siècle)," in *East and West in the Crusader states. Context – Contacts – Confrontations. Acta of the congress held at Hernen Castle in May 1993*, ed. by Krijnie Ciggaar, Adelbert Davids, Herman Teule. Vol 1. (Louvain: Peeters, 1996) 103–129.

²⁷⁷ ولا يهدم بيوتا من بيوت كنائسهم وبيعتهم ولا يدخل شيء من مال كنائسهم في بناء مسجد ولا في منازل المسلمين. B. Moritz, ed., *Beitrag zur Geschichte Des Sinai-Klosters Im Mittelalter Nach Arabischen Quellen* (Berlin, 1918), 6.

²⁷⁸ Moritz, *Beitrag zur Geschichte*, 4.

²⁷⁹ L. Cheikho, *Les archeveques du Sinai* (Beirut: Melanges de la Faculte Orientale), 416.

²⁸⁰ I have visited the monastery and seen this manuscript first hand. It is one of the most prominently displayed items in the entire library. See, <http://www.sinaimonastery.com/index.php/en/library/patent-of-mohammed>.

because both Muslims and Christians agreed that they had happened. The real discussion was what they meant and how they should be interpreted.

William was very much participating in this conversation, not only through his use of the eastern versions of the Bahira legend, but also by emphasizing these early agreements, such as the one negotiated by Sophronius, in his history of the Islamic conquests. William elaborates on the concessions granted to Sophronius more than any other episode of the conquests, writing that after ‘Umar had agreed to protect the Christians in Jerusalem,

the fathers [of the city] consented and opened Jerusalem’s gates and the commanders of the Arabs entered with their troops. But when ‘Umar, leader and commander of his people, who was called Muḥammad’s heir, entered, he asked the patriarch Sophronius for a suitable place to pray, wishing to thank God for his victory. Sophronius led him to the church of the Lord’s Sepulchre, since it was consecrated as a house of prayer for all peoples. However, he did not wish to pray there, saying, ‘Show me another place!’ He led him to the temple built by Constantine, the faithful emperor. ‘I do not wish to pray here either,’ he said. Instead he chose a simple place next to the prayer houses of the Christians and he prayed there. After he had finished praying he said to Sophronius, ‘Do you know why I did not wish to pray in your prayer houses?’ [Sophronius] responded, saying: ‘My Lord, ruler of the faithful, how could I know the secrets of your wisdom?’ And he said, “If I had prayed there, the Christians would have lost these places and they would have become prayer houses for my people. I do not wish this to happen. Even in this place where I prayed, I do not want the Saracens gathering together to injure the Christians, except perhaps one by one, so that a great mass of people does not congregate there. And because of this, I now grant to this city the following liberty, that the Saracens not be able to build prayers houses for themselves or mosques, except at a single place which you designate.²⁸¹

²⁸¹ “Hiis promissionibus patres consentiunt et aperitur porta Ierusalem et ingrediuntur duces Arabum per turmas suas. Ingressus vero Gomar, rector et dux populi, qui dicebatur heres Machometi, in sanctam civitatem petiit a patriarcha Sofronio locum aptum ad orationem volens forte gratias agree Deo pro Victoria. Quem sofronius ad ecclesiam dominici sepulcri duxit utpote ad domum orationis cunctis gentibus

Sophronius was a historical figure who was, indeed, patriarch of Jerusalem at the time of its conquest. Several letters survive by his own hand in which he describes Arab incursions in the region and the loss of the nearby city of Bethlehem, but there is otherwise no contemporary report of his conversation with ‘Umar.²⁸² The first extant account to describe this conversation, including an explicit promise from ‘Umar to protect Christian rights and property and restrictions on building mosques, is in Sa‘īd ibn Baṭrīq’s (Eutychius) *Kitāb al-ta’rīkh al-majmū‘ ‘alā l-taḥqīq wa-l-taṣdīq*, or *Annales*, one of the very sources William of Tyre and (we think) William of Tripoli had at their disposal.²⁸³ Engels has argued that ibn Baṭrīq was one of William of Tripoli’s sources, but he has not connected the similarity between William and ibn Baṭrīq regarding ‘Umar’s promise. I believe this parallel between the two texts confirms he was either drawing directly from ibn Baṭrīq or an intermediary source that relied on the *Annales*. Ibn Baṭrīq was living in a context where Muslim jurists and theologians had begun to use

consecratam; sed ibi noluit orare, sed ait: Alium locum ostende! Quem deduxit ad templum edificatum per Constantinum imperatorem fidelem. Nec hic, inquit, volo orare; sed elegit simplicem locum preter oratoria Christianorum et ibi adoravit et complete orationem dixit ad Sofronium: Scis, quare nolui orare in vestris oratoriis? Qui respondens ait: Domine mi fidelium imperator, quomodo valeo scire secreta sapientie tue? Et ait: si ibi orassem, Christiani loca illa perdidissent et facta fuissent oratoria gentis mee. Quod fieri nolo; sed et in loco etiam, ubi oravi, nolo, ut Sarraceni orent congregare ad iniuriam Christianorum nisi forsitan unus solus post alium, ut non fiat ibi multitudinis congregatio. Et confer ex hoc nunc huic civitati sancta hanc libertatem, ut Sarraceni non possint edificare sibi oratorum sive mesged nisi in uno tantum loco, quem tu volueris eis assignare.”, *Notitia; De statu*, 328.

²⁸² Robert G. Hoyland, *Seeing Islam as Others Saw it: A Survey and Evaluation of Christian, Jewish and Zoroastrian Writings on Early Islam* (Princeton: The Darwin Press, 1997), 67-71; D.J. Sahas, “The face to face encounter between Patriarch Sophronius of Jerusalem and the Caliph ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb: friends or foes?”, in E. Grypeou, M. Swanson and D. Thomas (eds), *The encounter of Eastern Christianity with early Islam* (Leiden, 2006), 33-44; ---, ‘Why did Heraclius not defend Jerusalem, and fight the Arabs?’, *Échos de l’Orient* 24 (1999): 79-97.

²⁸³ L. Cheikho, B. Carra de Vaux, and H. Zayyat, eds. *Eutychii Patriarchae Alexandrini Annales*, CSCO vols. 50-51 (1909): 236-345; S.H. Griffith, ‘Apologetics and historiography in the annals of Eutychius of Alexandria: Christian self-definition in the world of Islam’, in R. Ebied and H. Teule (eds), *Studies on the Christian Arabic heritage* (Louvain, 2004), 65-89; G. Troupeau, ‘Ibn Taymiyya et sa réfutation d’Eutychès’, *Bulletin d’Études Orientales* 30 (1978): 209-20.

documents such as the *Pact of 'Umar* to enforce a more rigid social hierarchy, and thus his “recollection” is less a historical memory than a deliberate counter-narrative meant to forcefully challenge their efforts. Such challenges were especially effective when, like counter-narratives of the Bahira legend, they took place upon a common discursive ground that Muslims accepted. William is the only Latin author who uses both of these counter-narratives, demonstrating that his role as a missionary forced him to accept this common ground, and stake a claim on it.

I have already argued that William used this common ground, whether the Bahira legend or passages from the Qur'ān, as a missionary strategy, but his history of the Islamic conquests is something different. He is facing the real possibility of his home city of Acre's conquest, and preparing, like the Dominicans who remained behind after the city was actually conquered, the practical measures that would protect his community. One of the ways he does so is by tracing a topography of resistance and survival, showing that in every phase of the early conquests Christian communities were able to survive, and sometimes even thrive, under Islamic dominion. Such exemplars would, he hoped, fortify those people who might be tempted to convert. Even more practically, however, if Baybars conquered Acre or Tripoli, the remaining Christians would have to negotiate with him to extend to them the same rights and privileges that had been granted to Christians in earlier times. This, I argue, is the best explanation for how the same author can, in one passage, describe Baybars as a “minister of the antichrist”, but devote another chapter elaborating on his “good qualities.” The Latin apocalyptic schema did not allow for any positive aspects to the Antichrist's character. Unlike most authors who wrote

about such things, however, William might actually have to make a deal with the devil. This led to a dramatic adjustment of his schema, and explains why his two treatises do not coherently fit together. On the one hand, William describes in general terms the violence perpetrated by Muḥammad's followers during the conquests, but in later descriptions he neglects to elaborate on this brutality, emphasizing instead the merits of their leaders and the fair treatment given to the cities they conquered. Unlike most of his contemporaries, William did not have the luxury of critical or geographic distance. As a result he was compelled to marshal every rhetorical defense available to him.

This broad rhetorical defense was a deliberate choice on William's part, however, rather than the only inevitable response to military and political setbacks. As mentioned above, Jacques de Vitry served as bishop of Acre and participated in the Fifth Crusade, during which he sent a number of letters back home to Europe, including one to Pope Honorius III, that indicated he believed ancient prophecies were coming to pass and Islam's demise was imminent.²⁸⁴ Vitry, like many of his contemporaries, had heard reports of a powerful Christian king in the East, popularly known as Prester John, who Vitry called the "hammer of pagans", and believed was about to destroy the "perfidious Machomet's vile tradition and execrable law."²⁸⁵ Vitry's hope was informed by a number of local prophecies, including a book that had been presented to him by some Syrian Christians. This text, the so-called *Revelations of Saint Peter the Apostle*, predicted that

²⁸⁴ Jacques de Vitry, *Lettres de Jacques de Vitry*, ed. R.B.C. Huygens (Leiden, 1960), 150-53.

²⁸⁵ C.F. Beckingham and B. Hamilton, eds., *Prester John, the Mongols and the Ten Lost Tribes* (Aldershot, 1996); U. Freidrich, "Zwischen Utopie und Mythos. Der Brief des Priester Johannes," *Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie* 122 (2003): 73-92; C.E. Nowell, "The historical Prester John," *Speculum* 28 (1953): 435-45.

two powerful kings, one from the West and another from the East, would converge in the Holy Land and destroy Islam.²⁸⁶ According to Vitry, some Muslims would convert to Christianity, but the rest would be killed. In the prophecy that he uses to conclude the *Notitia*, William states an almost identical belief that ultimately, “the Saracens will be divided into three parts: the first will flee to the Christians, the second part will perish by the sword and the third part will perish in the desert. Amen.”²⁸⁷ While both men were drawing on similar prophetic traditions, and both believed in Christianity’s final triumph, their perspectives on Islam and their Near Eastern context were dramatically different. Vitry was, for example, vicious in his appraisal of Muḥammad personally and Islam generally, and despised the city of Acre, which he described as a seven headed beast because of the various Christian communities that inhabited it. William, by contrast, presented the most positive biography of Muḥammad in the entire Latin corpus, praised the fairness of early Islamic leaders and their cooperation with Christians, incorporated local Christian traditions into his schema, and praised the piety and resilience of the communities that, from Vitry’s perspective, represented the heretical heads of the beast. If a belief in the imminent fulfillment of prophecy was enough to trigger an “optimistic” or “positive” view of Islam, Vitry’s perspective, like that of Fidentius of Padua, should not have been so dramatically different.

²⁸⁶ Versions of this prophecy survive in both Latin and Old French. See, *Prophetiae cuiusdam Arabicae in Latinorum castris ante Damiatam vulgatae versio quadruplex*, in *Quinti belli sacri scriptores minores*, ed. Reinhold Rohricht, Societe de l’Orient Latin: serie historique 2 (Geneva, 1879), 204-228; John Tolan, *Saracens*, 194-213; Jean Flori, *L’Islam at la fin des temps: l’interpretation prophetique des invasions musulmanes dans la chretiente medieval* (Paris, 2007), 338-347.

²⁸⁷ “Item omnes predicant, prophetant et expectant Sarracenos dividendos in tres partes, quorum pars prima ad Christianos fugiet, secunda pars peribit sub gladio et tertia pars peribit in deserto. Amen.”, *Notitia: De statu*, 260.

This chapter has argued that prophecy alone cannot explain the ways in which the *Notitia* and *De statu* are so dramatically different than anything else in the Latin corpus. Rather, William's immediate context provided first-hand experiences of interreligious encounter that were unlike anything his contemporaries back home would have experienced; moreover, the destabilization of William's world directly threatened him in ways that writers such as Roger Bacon, who found prophecies of Islam's demise "a great consolation", were not forced to contend with. These two factors were sufficiently challenging to William's schema that he was forced to accommodate by adjusting it. While Vitry shared space with Muslims and eastern Christians, actual encounters with them were filtered through interpreters, and his intention was never to find common ground, but subject them to the authority and rites of the Latin church. William, by contrast, learned Arabic, was familiar with the Qur'ān, and spent time observing Muslims and Islamic religious rituals in an attempt to engage with them on their own terms. In his analysis of Latin translations of the Qur'ān in the Middle Ages, Thomas Burman has observed that, "...we may be seeing something even more intriguing, the gradual and unaware transformation of purpose that extensive engagement with a text sometimes brings, an insensible shifting of pragmatic, polemical interest in the text into a 'drive for completeness' and systematic coverage."²⁸⁸ Engagement with the Qur'ān cultivated, perhaps grudgingly, a regard for the text that manifested in translations that were in the highest register of Latin, a register that was usually reserved for the most sacred Christian and philosophical works. This shift was not inevitable, however, but was encouraged by

²⁸⁸ Burman, *Reading the Qur'ān*, 75.

immediate circumstances and the sensibilities of the individuals who reacted to them. William demonstrates that such a transformation of purpose could happen via processes of first-hand, interreligious encounter just as it did through sustained engagement with a text.

In one of a series of lectures at Harvard University, the early 20th-century philosopher and psychologist, William James, argued that, “the plain fact is that men’s minds are built, as has been often said, in water-tight compartments. Religious after a fashion, they yet have many other things in them beside their religion, and unholy entanglements and associations inevitably obtain.”²⁸⁹ Sometimes circumstances and/or experiences can puncture these water-tight compartments, and we see the ways in which this allowed “unholy entanglements and associations” to pervade William’s work. Both texts, despite their seeming contradictions, demonstrate the ways in which circumstances were able to push a medieval thinker to adjust familiar schemata to cope with the world as it existed, rather than the world he might wish it to be.

²⁸⁹ William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985), 308.

CHAPTER FOUR

A Dominican Wā‘z Preaches Mary and Her Son

In the final chapter of *De statu Sarracenorum*, titled “regarding the doctrine of Christ,” William of Tripoli claims that Muslims can easily be prodded, “just like simple sheep, to ask for Christ’s baptism, and cross over into God’s flock.”²⁹⁰ Rather than trying to convince them with complex philosophical arguments, or compelling them to convert through force of arms, he claims that they can be convinced by a “simple message.” William’s confidence in this is based on his own first-hand experiences, as he follows this recommendation for a simple message by asserting that “this was spoken and written by one who has, by God’s authority, baptized more than a thousand.”²⁹¹ William’s declaration has generally been dismissed as a wild exaggeration, however.²⁹² One of the few scholars to take William’s claim seriously has suggested, in fact, that this can only be explained if William’s converts were primarily slaves and prisoners of war.²⁹³ While William likely did preach to slaves and prisoners, there is nothing in either the *Notitia de Machometo* nor *De statu Sarracenorum* to suggest that these groups were the primary targets of his missionary efforts. Rather, William indicates quite clearly throughout his writings that his real focus was on “average” (*mediocres*) Muslims-- the free laborers,

²⁹⁰ “Et sic simplici sermone Dei sine philosophicis argumentis sive militaribus armis sicut oves simplices petunt baptismum Christi et transeunt in ovile Dei.”, *Notitia; De statu*, 370.

²⁹¹ “Hoc dixit et scripsit, qui auctore Deo plus quam mille iam baptizavit.”, *Idem*.

²⁹² Kedar concedes there might be some truth to this as long as one accounts for the “medieval unconcern for numerical exactitude,” Benjamin Z. Kedar, *Crusade and Mission: European Approaches toward the Muslims* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 154.

²⁹³ J. Henninger, “Sur la contribution des missionnaires à la connaissance de l’Islam, surtout pendant le moyen âge,” *Neue Zeitschrift für Missionwissenschaft* 9 (1953): 176.

merchants, and other non-elites that were his neighbors, and an intrinsic part of his world's social fabric.

William's claim to have discovered an effective evangelical approach has either been minimized or discounted, because there is, generally-speaking, minimal evidence that western missionary efforts to Muslims were at all successful. Scholars have instead observed a growing pessimism among western proponents of mission --even among the Dominicans whose order placed the conversion of Muslims as one of its primary goals-- at the prospect that this was at all achievable. As case in point, Humbert of Romans served as master general of the Dominican Order, and in 1255 called on his brother friars to study Arabic and travel to the Holy Land.²⁹⁴ Two decades later he acknowledged their apparent lack of success, lamenting that Muslims rarely converted except for "a few captives, perhaps, and this rarely."²⁹⁵ In Humbert's analysis of the failure to convert Muslims in large numbers, he wrote that "the Saracens close for themselves the way of preaching, for according to their law they decapitate everybody who wishes to preach

²⁹⁴ B.M. Reichert, ed., "Litterae encyclicae magistrorum generalium Ordinis Prædicatorum, 1233-1376," in *Monumenta Ordinis Fratrum Prædicatorum Historica*, vol. 5 (Rome, 1900), 18-20; Humbertus de Romanis, *De vita regulari*, ed. J.J. Berthier, vol. 2 (Rome, 1889), 492-93. See also, E. Brett, *Humbert of Romans: His Life and Views of Thirteenth-Century Society* (Toronto, 1984), 1-65; P.J. Cole, "Humbert of Romans and the Crusade", in *The Experience of Crusading, Vol. 1: Western Approaches*, eds. M. Bull and N. Housley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 157-74; J. Brundage, "Humbert of Romans and the Legitimacy of Crusader Conquests", in *The Horns of Ḥaṭṭīn: Proceedings of the Second Conference of the Society for the Study of the Crusades and the Latin East*, ed. B.Z. Kedar (Jerusalem, 1992), 302-13; K. Brunner, "Theorie als Praxis, Praxis als Theorie: Humbert von Romans und Thomas von Aquin", in *Bettelorden in Mitteleuropa Geschichte, Kunst, Spiritualität: Referate der gleichnamigen Tagung vom 19. bis 22. März 2007 in St. Pölten*, eds. H. Specht and R. Andraschek-Holzer (St Pölten, 2008), 656-62.

²⁹⁵ Humbertus de Romanis, "Opusculum tripartitum", in *Appendix ad fasciculum verum expendarum et fugiendarum sive tomus secundus*, ed. E. Brown (London, 1690), 200.

anything against the law or sect of Muḥammad.”²⁹⁶ Indeed, in 1256 Humbert announced at a meeting of the order’s general chapter that recently “two brothers have been decapitated by the Saracens in the Holy Land.”²⁹⁷ While Humbert does not elaborate on the details of their deaths, it is likely that they were executed, as he suggests, for preaching against Muḥammad--denouncing him in other words, a capital crime in areas under Islamic dominion.²⁹⁸ Frustrated that Muslims were not receptive to outlandish attacks on their most revered figure, Humbert, like many thirteenth-century writers, renewed calls for crusade. As discussed in the second chapter, another such writer was Fidentius of Padua, a contemporary of William of Tripoli’s, who was also asked by Pope Gregory X for a report on the situation of the Holy Land. Unlike William, he prescribed renewed crusade over a missionary approach with a “simple message.” According to Fidentius, the Saracens had “closed themselves off to the way of salvation; for they do not want to hear anything that seems contrary to the sayings of their prophet Muḥammad, and should someone say anything contrary, he is killed without mercy.”²⁹⁹

²⁹⁶ “Sed Saraceni excluderunt a se viam praedicationis, quia secundum legem suam decapitant omnen hominim, qui eis vellet aliquid praedicare contra Mahumeti legem vel sectem.”, Humbertus de Romanis, *Opusculum tripartitum*, 200.

²⁹⁷ “Duo a Saracenis decapitati sunt in Terra Sancta.”, Reichert, *Litterae*, 42.

²⁹⁸ This was not always enforced, however, and some mendicant preachers were frustrated in their inability to court their own martyrdom. For those who were successful, James D. Ryan writes in a recent article that “It was Muslim abhorrence of blasphemy that brought wrath upon the friars and occasioned martyrdom, because missionary preachers, especially the Franciscans, thought it their task to indict Muḥammad as false prophet, heretic, and Antichrist,” James D. Ryan, “Missionary Saints of the High Middle Ages: Martyrdom, Popular Veneration, and Canonization,” *The Catholic Historical Review* 90, no.1 (2004): 8; See also, Robert I. Burns, “Christian-Islamic Confrontation in the West: The Thirteenth Century Dream of Conversion,” *American Historical Review* 76 (1971): 1386-1434.

²⁹⁹ “Stoliditas in hoc in Saracenos esse comprobatur, quia ipsi precluderunt sibi viam salutis. Nichil enim audire volunt, quod dictis prophete sui Machometh videatur esse contrarium, et si quis aliquid contrarium dixerit, sine misericordia occiditur.”, Fidentius of Padua, *Liber recuperationis Terre Sancte*, 23.

From the benefit of hindsight, it is hard to comprehend how these writers thought such tactics would be successful. Common sense suggests that if one is trying to engage with another, insulting that which is most dear to them is the least constructive way to do so. This tactic of direct confrontation was, however, “consciously ineffective” as one scholar has observed, designed less for forging personal connections with potential converts than it was to “engage the forces of heaven at some mystical level.”³⁰⁰ While ineffective, this type of dramatic engagement also captivated the imagination of many western Latin writers, and as a result their descriptions of the rare missionary successes are seldom prosaic.

One of the most remarkable missionary ventures of the thirteenth-century occurred during the Fifth Crusade’s siege of Damietta, when St. Francis left the crusader camp in order to preach directly to Malik al-Kāmil, the Sultan of Egypt. While the details of Francis’ conversation with the Sultan were not recorded, later contemporary reports claim that Francis was favorably received, and the Sultan was impressed by Francis even if he did not ultimately convert. Before reaching the Sultan, however, Francis did successfully convert an unnamed woman who tried to seduce him at an inn. In response to her advances, Francis reportedly declared,

“‘I accept your proposition. Let us be off to bed.’ She led him to a room, and Saint Francis said to her, ‘I will show you a beautiful bed.’ There was a great fire there in the fireplace, and Saint Francis, rapt by the Spirit, stripped off his clothes and entered the fire and then invited the girl to likewise undress and come join him in that beautiful spot. Saint Francis stood in that fire for a long time with a smiling face and was neither burned nor even scorched. The girl was so overcome by this miracle and

³⁰⁰ Burns, “Thirteenth Century Dream of Conversion,” 1395.

so penitent in her heart for her sin that she not only repented her evil but converted perfectly to the faith of Christ, and through her many other souls were saved in that area.”³⁰¹

In the same account Francis is so zealous, that he similarly announced prior to his meeting with the Sultan that he was prepared to be tested by fire through the ritual of ordeal in his attempts to convince him to accept baptism. While the details of accounts such as these were dramatic and compelling to their readers, what they lack is any indication that the missionaries who saw themselves engaged in a cosmic, apocalyptic confrontation, made a meaningful attempt to find common ground with Muslims, or speak to them in familiar terms. In the case of the woman above, she is not convinced by anything Francis says, but by a miracle. This episode is representative of western descriptions of Muslim conversion. When conversion did occur, the catalyst for it was usually extraordinary in some way, rather than a missionary convincing the convert through persuasion alone.

One of the rare exceptions to this is William of Tripoli, who asserts that Muslims can be led to baptism by a “simple message,” without the need for any miraculous intervention. Previous scholars have minimized or discounted this claim, despite evidence that conversions among non-elite Muslims were a reality in the Latin East. In 1264, Pope Urban IV wrote to the patriarch of Jerusalem, Guillaume of Agen, about the multitude of poor Saracens and Jews who had come to Acre in order to convert, instructing him that they should be supported by the monasteries and churches for a few days at least.³⁰² This

³⁰¹ Lawrence Cunningham, trans., *Brother Francis: An Anthology of Writings by and about St. Francis of Assisi* (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), 43-45.

³⁰² O. Posse, ed. *Analecta Vaticana* (Innsbruck, 1878), 35.

has been observed by Benjamin Kedar, who acknowledges that conversions in the Latin East were not rare, but emphasizes the “lower-class” status of the majority of these converts. In doing so he implicitly suggests that these were somehow not “real” conversions, but merely the pragmatic or cynical attempts by slaves to secure their freedom, or by poorer Muslims to attain some material advantage.³⁰³ While it is surely true that some did convert for cynical or pragmatic reasons, an emphasis on the converts’ social status diminishes their full agency, and the possibility that some converted because they found aspects of Christianity genuinely meaningful or compelling.

Prior analyses of William’s work have fallen short because little effort has been made to analyze his work for the ways in which it was different than his western Latin peers. Instead, his claims to convert Muslims through a “simple message” have been perceived through the lens of his contemporaries, whose missionary approaches were largely unsuccessful. There has been no meaningful attempt to ask what his “simple message” might have been, and why it might have been successful in ways other evangelical efforts were not. This chapter will attempt to rectify this, by revealing the tactics and strategies William adopted sometimes successfully, to prod Muslims toward baptism. This chapter will argue that William’s missionary approach was successful in ways others were not, because it was fundamentally different from the “consciously ineffective” tactics of his peers. Moreover, it will ask why William employed these strategies, when so many others did not.

³⁰³ Kedar, *Crusade and Mission*, 151.

As discussed in the first chapter, William of Tripoli's *Notitia de Machometo* and *De statu Sarracenorum* both begin with a biography of Muḥammad, which centers on his enduring relationship with the monk Baḥīrā who invites Muḥammad into his monastery, and teaches him to call upon "Jesus, son of the Virgin Mary."³⁰⁴ Throughout both the *Notitia* and *De statu* William rarely refers to Jesus without also mentioning Mary, his mother. This even though Mary plays a relatively minor role in the Gospels, and it was not standard for Latin writers in the later Middle Ages to attach this moniker to Christ's name when referring to him. While Mary became an important figure of popular devotion in the Latin West, and European Christians considered the miraculous details of Jesus' birth an important sign of his incarnation, his true authority was distinct from her, grounded in his status as the Son of God, a co-eternal part of the Godhead. Throughout the *Notitia* and *De statu*, however, William emphasizes Christ's connection to his mother, and highlights the circumstances of his human birth. This chapter argues that he does so because the Virgin Mary, like the monk Baḥīrā, was a figure revered by Muslims, but less entangled by the sharp points of disagreement that Jesus Christ, whom Muslims also honored, embodied. Indeed, she is portrayed in both the Gospels and the Qur'ān in complimentary ways, and Muslims and Christians largely revered her for the same reasons, namely her piety, obedience, and chastity.

The core of this chapter will discuss William's Latin translations of nineteen Qur'ānic āyāt, or verses, most of which center on Mary. While the twelfth and thirteenth

³⁰⁴ Instruitur et docetur, ut fugiat ydolorum culturam et unum Deum celi colat et Iesum Marie virginis filium frequenter invocet toto corde. Wilhelm von Tripolis, *Notitia; De statu*, 272.

centuries were a highpoint of western Christian efforts to convert Muslims in the East, the so-called missionary manuals that were developed for this purpose, the writings of Jacques de Vitry for example, were geared more for disputation and the kind of complex “philosophical arguments” that William of Tripoli explicitly dismisses. William’s purpose was different, and I will argue that William’s nineteen āyāt foreground the Virgin Mary, because she was an emotionally resonant figure for Muslims, and the most effective means to convince Muslims of a Christian understanding of Christ’s status.³⁰⁵

In addition to discussing William’s evangelical strategy, this chapter will discuss the local context that facilitated it. Islam is often described as an authoritarian religion, but this is a mischaracterization. Compared to the Latin Church, Islam has traditionally lacked a rigidly stratified religious hierarchy. As a result, there has been space in most Islamic contexts for alternative, popular expressions of piety. One of the ways this manifested was in a tradition of popular preaching. Religious elites were usually hostile toward these preachers, but they remained incredibly popular among many Muslims. One of the primary complaints the elite levied against the preachers is that they confused uneducated Muslims by relying too heavily on stories and traditions of pre-Islamic figures such as Mary and Jesus. I will argue that William benefited from this tradition of popular preaching, and that his evangelical strategy was in the mold of these preachers,

³⁰⁵ N.B.: There was, of course, no single “Christian” understanding of Christ in the Latin East. Since this chapter’s focus is William of Tripoli, I will be indicating those who adhered to the Latin rite when I refer broadly to things “Christian.” I will specify when I am referring to the rites and theological perspectives of other Christian sects.

using pre-Islamic stories about Jesus and Mary to encourage, in this case, Muslims to accept “Christ’s baptism.”

Mary in the Qur’ān

Mary is one of the few women mentioned in the Qur’ān, and the only woman referred to by name. Only Moses, Abraham, and Noah are mentioned more often, and Mary is only one of eight people whose name titles one of the Qur’ān’s 114 *suwar*, or chapters. The Qur’ān’s narrative of Mary is also much fuller than what we find in the New Testament--not only in terms of the amount of text devoted to her, but also the prominent role she is given. In the New Testament she is mentioned by name a mere nineteen times: twelve times in the Gospel of Luke, five times in the Gospel of Matthew, once in the Gospel of Mark, and once in the Book of Acts. Most of these references are in the context of Christ’s nativity story. The Gospel of Matthew credits Mary for her faith in the face of Gabriel’s Annunciation, but otherwise minimizes her role, emphasizing the part played by Joseph, her husband, instead. Matthew traces a lineage from Abraham to David to Christ through the line of Joseph, even though Joseph is not Christ’s biological father.³⁰⁶ Moreover, Joseph is the primary protagonist. When he discovers that Mary is pregnant, it is to him that the Angel of the Lord appears, telling him that he should still marry her.³⁰⁷ It is also Joseph, per Matthew’s narrative, who names Jesus, and receives a second angelic message warning him to flee Herod and escape to Egypt.³⁰⁸ The same angel appears to him a third time instructing him to return to Israel, and it is Joseph who

³⁰⁶ Mt. 1:1-16

³⁰⁷ Mt. 1:20

³⁰⁸ Mt. 2:13

decides to settle in Nazareth, thereby fulfilling a prophecy that the Messiah would be a Nazarene.³⁰⁹

In the Qur'ānic narrative, by contrast, Joseph is not mentioned at all, and Mary is the central protagonist. Most references to Mary are in two of the Qur'ān's 114 *suwar*: the third, titled "al-ʿImrān," and the nineteenth, the self-titled "Maryam." Al-ʿImrān deals with the circumstances surrounding Mary's birth and the events prior to the Incarnation. It is named after ʿImrān who was, according to Islamic tradition, Mary's father, singled out along with his wife Anne for their faith and righteousness.³¹⁰ Q 3:30 states that God chose Adam and Noah, the House of Abraham, and the House of ʿImrān above all beings, and blessed their progeny into perpetuity.³¹¹ ʿImrān and Anne were childless, but granted a child late in their lives after appealing to God. In gratitude, Anne dedicates Mary to God prior to her birth, appealing to Him to protect her from Satan.³¹² God accepts Anne's dedication, and she honors it by commending Mary to the care of Zachariah, whom the Qur'ān, like the Gospels, considers a prophet and the father of John the Baptist.³¹³

Under God's protection and Zachariah's care, Mary grows into a woman that the Qur'ān describes as "purified" and "chosen by God." The text is explicit about her virtue. When an angel of the Lord appears to Mary, he exclaims to her that "He (God) has

³⁰⁹ Mt. 2:23

³¹⁰ Anne is not actually named in the Qur'ān, but in later Muslim and Christian traditions she is referred to as Anne or Hannah.

³¹¹ Q 3:30

³¹² Q 3:32

³¹³ Q 3:33

chosen thee above all women.”³¹⁴ The angel then instructs her to obey God, and prophesies that she will receive “a Word from Him whose name is Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary; high honored shall he be in this world and the next, near stationed to God. He shall speak to men in the cradle, and of age, and righteous shall he be.”³¹⁵ In response, Mary expresses disbelief, asking the angel, “how shall I have a son seeing no mortal has touched me?”³¹⁶ The angel explains that God is all powerful, needing only to say the word “be” to reify a thing. He then predicts that Christ will be a Messenger to the “Children of Israel”, bringing, “the Book, the Wisdom, the Torah, [and] the Gospel,” all of which will be confirmed by signs and miracles: Christ will heal the blind, raise the dead, and breathe life into a clay bird.

Recent scholarship has observed that the Qur’ānic narrative of Mary’s life appears to draw on a variety of sources.³¹⁷ The closest parallel among the canonical books of the New Testament is the Gospel of Luke, which shares many elements with the Qur’ānic

³¹⁴ Q 3:40

³¹⁵ Q 3:45

³¹⁶ Q 3:47

³¹⁷ Some recent studies are, Suleiman A. Mourad, “Arabian Christianity between the Qur’ān and Medieval Qur’ānic Exegesis,” in *Arabische Christen—Christen in Arabien*, eds. Detlev Kreikenbom, Franz-Christoph Muth, and Jörn Thielmann, *Nordostafrikanisch/westasiatische Studien* 6 (Frankfurt am Main and New York: Peter Lang, 2007), 55-69; ----, “Mary in the Qur’ān. A reexamination of her presentation,” in *The Qur’ān in Its Historical Context*, ed. Gabriel Said Reynolds, *Routledge Studies in the Qur’ān* (London and New York: Routledge, 2008), 163-174; ----, “From Hellenism to Christianity and Islam: The Origin of the Palm Tree Story Concerning Mary and Jesus in the Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew and the Qur’ān,” *Oriens Christianus* 86 (2002): 206-216; and ----, “On the Quranic Stories about Mary and Jesus,” *Bulletin of the Royal Institute for Inter-Faith Studies* 1 (1999): 13-24. Cornelia Horn, “Mary between Bible and Qur’ān: Soundings into the Transmission and Reception History of the Protoevangelium of James on the Basis of Selected Literary Sources in Coptic and Copto-Arabic and of Art Historical Evidence Pertaining to Egypt,” *Islam and Christian-Muslims Relations* 18, no. 4 (2007): 509-538; ----, “Intersections: The Reception History of the Protoevangelium of James in Sources from the Christian East and in the Qur’ān,” *Apocrypha. Revue internationale des littératures apocryphes* 17 (2006): 113-150; and ----, “Qur’ānic Perspectives on Jesus’ Death and the Apocryphal Acts of John,” in *Apokryphe Passions- und Auferstehungstraditionen*, ed. Tobias Nicklas and Andreas Merkt, *Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament* (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 2009), 34-69.

account, namely: Gabriel's annunciation of Christ's birth, Mary's skepticism, Gabriel's assurance that she will conceive, and his declaration that she is especially blessed among all women.³¹⁸ Beyond this, there are few details in the Gospels about Mary's background and Jesus' early life, and as a result early Christian communities attempted to fill in these gaps with oral traditions and texts that were widely circulated even if they never became a part of the canonical corpus. One of the most popular of these is a text that has been named the Infancy Gospel of James or the Protoevangelium of James, so-called because the author identifies himself as James, Jesus' brother, and claims to recount events prior to the Gospels. This text was incredibly popular, surviving in over 150 manuscripts, and translated into Latin, Irish, Georgian, Old Slavonic, Armenian, Syriac, Ethiopic, Coptic, and Arabic. Most scholars believe the text pseudo-epigraphical, composed around 150 CE based on its description of contemporary Jewish customs which did not exist a century earlier when the author claims to have written it.³¹⁹ This later date puts its composition in the same period when the Gospel of Luke was being revised, and when other non-canonical texts, such as the Gospel of Thomas, were being produced, which scholars believe capture oral traditions about Jesus' life that circulated among Christian communities throughout the Near East in the centuries after his death.³²⁰ Even after the

³¹⁸ Luke 1:28-35

³¹⁹ Robert J. Miller, ed., *The Complete Gospels: Annotated Scholars Version* (Sonoma, CA: Polebridge Press 1992), 373-389; Ron Cameron, ed., *The Other Gospels: Non-Canonical Gospel Texts* (Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press 1982), 107-121; Ronald F. Hock, *The Infancy Gospels of James and Thomas: With Introduction, Notes, and Original Text Featuring the New Scholars Version Translation* (Polebridge Press 1996).

³²⁰ Miller, *The Complete Gospels*, 301-322; Cameron, *The Other Gospels*, 23-37; James M. Robinson, ed., *The Nag Hammadi Library in English* (San Francisco, CA: HarperCollins 1990), 124-138; Stevan L. Davies, *The Gospel of Thomas: Annotated and Explained* (Skylight Paths Pub 2002); Marvin Meyer, *The Gospel of Thomas: The Hidden Sayings of Jesus* (Harper San Francisco 1992).

Christian cannon was formalized, these texts continued to circulate and copies made well into the modern era, indicating their continued vitality among the Near Eastern communities who drew from them.

The oral traditions that were preserved in extra-Biblical texts such as the Gospels of James and Thomas were influential beyond the internal world of the Christian communities that maintained and disseminated them. Indeed, these stories are reflected in the Qur'ānic narratives of Jesus and Mary far more than any of the canonical Gospels. The passages in al-'Imrān that describe Mary's conception and dedication to the temple are mirrored in the Infancy Gospel of James down to even minor details. When, for example, the Angel of the Lord reveals that Anne will conceive, she declares that "as the Lord God lives, whether I give birth to either a male or a female child, I will bring it as an offering to the Lord my God and it will be a servant to him all the days of its life."³²¹ After nine months, the text reports that "Anne gave birth and she said to the midwife, 'What is it?' The midwife said, 'A girl.'"³²² This seemingly minor detail, Anne's impartiality to the sex of her child, is reflected in the Qur'ānic account in which "the wife of 'Imrān said, "My Lord, indeed I have pledged to You whatever is in my womb, consecrated, so accept this from me...but when she delivered her, she said, 'My Lord, I have delivered a female.' And Allah was most knowing of what she delivered, 'And the male is not like the female.'"³²³

³²¹ Hock, *The Infancy Gospel of James and Thomas*, 134.

³²² Hock, *The Infancy Gospel of James and Thomas*, 136.

³²³ Q 3:35-36

Nearly every detail in the Qur'ānic narrative of Mary's life prior to the Annunciation is reflected in the Infancy Gospel, but never comprehensively. Instead, the Qur'ān gestures towards scenes from these stories, indicating an audience who was already familiar with them on some level. Indeed, throughout the text the Qur'ān commands its audience to “remember” (ذَكَرَ), as in Q 2:151-152, which reminds its hearers that God has sent prior messengers, and so they should “remember Me (God), and I will remember you.” The Qur'ān's emphasis on remembering is because its message calls believers back to eternal, rather than novel truths. It does not attempt to do away with all that came before; instead, a prior backdrop of stories, traditions, and sacred texts are vital to understand its message.³²⁴ The Qur'ān is explicit on this point, with God declaring:

“O Jesus, son of Mary! Remember My favor unto thee and unto thy mother; how I strengthened thee with the holy Spirit, so that thou spoke unto mankind in the cradle as in maturity; and how I taught thee the Scripture and Wisdom and the Torah and the Gospel; and how thou didst shape of clay as it were the likeness of a bird by My permission, and didst blow upon it and it was a bird by My permission, and thou didst heal him who was born blind and the leper by My permission; and how thou didst raise the dead by My permission; and how I restrained the Children of Israel from (harming) thee when thou came unto them with clear proofs, and those of them who disbelieved exclaimed: This is naught else than mere magic.”³²⁵

Few of these events appear in the canonical Gospels, but Jesus is commanded to remember them as though they were self-evident and familiar. They were, in fact, familiar, as there is a parallel for each of these miracles in the same extra-canonical

³²⁴ See, for example, Fred Donner, *Muhammad and the Believers: At the Origins of Islam* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 2010), 3-56.

³²⁵ Q 5:110

works that were so vital to the Near Eastern Christian communities that circulated them. Moreover, as the Islamic community began to define itself, these stories were, for Muslims, among the most deeply resonant.

Beyond the Qur'ān, we see these same oral traditions reflected in what one scholar has called the “Muslim Gospel of Jesus.”³²⁶ Rather than a single text, this refers to a diffuse amalgamation of stories scattered across every major genre, including ḥadīth, works of *adab* and mysticism, anthologies of wisdom, and histories of prophets and saints.³²⁷ This lore circulated in every part of the Islamic world, and was part of a corpus that continued to expand until at least the eighteenth century.³²⁸ These stories about Jesus and Mary varied in length, from a few sentences to significant parts of these works, but all were generally written in Arabic of high quality, demonstrating care on the part of the authors who formulated them. The earliest extra-Qur'ānic stories can be traced to the eighth century,³²⁹ the same time that Muḥammad's encounter with Baḥīrā were first

³²⁶ Tarif Khalidi, *The Muslim Jesus: Sayings and Stories in Islamic Literature* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001) 1-11. See also, Don Wismer, *The Islamic Jesus: an Annotated Bibliography of Sources in English and French* (Garland Publishers, 1977), 1-47; Robert Caspar, “Bibliographie du dialogue islamo-chrétien,” *Islamochristiana* 1 (1975): 125-81; Samir Khalil, “La culture arabe chrétienne ancienne en interaction avec la pensée arabe musulmane,” *Islamochristiana* 8 (1982): 10-12; Oddbjorn Leirvik, *Images of Jesus Christ in Islam* (London: Continuum, 2010), 1-119; Geoffrey Parrinder, *Jesus in the Qur'ān* (London: Faber and Faber, 1965), 1-92; Al-Hājj Muḥammad Legenhausen, trans., *Jesus Through Shi'ite Narrations* (Qum: Ansariyan Publications, 2004), 15-214.

³²⁷ Khalidi, *The Muslim Jesus*, 4.

³²⁸ In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, for example, the same time William of Tripoli was active, there was tension between Sufis and legal scholars, and many Sufi writers conscripted Jesus into their cause. They saw parallels in Jesus life in his rejection of the legalism of the Pharisees and Sadducees. See, Shihāb al-Dīn 'Umar al-Suhrawardī, *Awarif al-Ma'arif* (Cairo: Al-Matba'a al-Maymaniyya, 1906); Abu al-Faraj 'Abd al-Rahman b. Najm b. al-Hanbali, *Al-Istis'ad bi-man Laqaytuhu min Salihi al-'Ibad fi al-Bilad*, in *Shadharat min Kutubin Mafquda*, ed. Ihsan 'Abbas (Beirut: Dar al-Gharb al-Islami, 1988), 175-205.

³²⁹ Jesus is referred to, for example, in the ḥadīth of scholars such as Hammām b. Munabbih and 'Abdallāh b. al-Mubārak. See, Hammām b. Munabbih, *Ṣaḥīfa*, ed. R.F. 'Abd al-Muttā (Cairo, 1985), 20-32; 'Abdallāh b. al-Mubārak, *Kitāb al-zuhd wa-l-raqā'iq*, ed. H. al-Raḥmān al-A'zamī (Beirut, n.d.), 290-303; David Cook, “New Testament Citations in the Ḥadīth Literature and the Question of Early Gospel Translations

described, when Muslim authors began to articulate a religious identity that was distinct from the Jewish and Christian traditions that informed it.³³⁰

Many of the earliest authors to make use of the literary Jesus were *zuhhād*, meaning those who cultivated *zuhd*, or detachment and indifference to things of the world.³³¹ These men did not believe it was their responsibility to judge the worldly decisions of secular rulers, but to accept a division of labor where they maintained divine wisdom, and kings looked to the affairs of the world. As one practitioner of *zuhd* put it, “if you do not contend against them [kings] they will not contend against you in your religious belief”.³³² Instead of contending against their rulers, these *zuhhād* directed their critiques against their fellow *fuqahā’*, *‘ulamā’*, *quḍāt*, and *qurrā’*, who had abandoned their roles as the cultivators of divine wisdom for a secular career and the worldly things that came with it. The *zuhhād* considered this pursuit of material comfort and status a betrayal, and in their works Jesus is pointed in his condemnation of these perceived opportunists, declaring, for example, “Woe to you, evil scholars, who take salaries and abandon good works”.³³³ In other intra-Muslim polemics, Jesus specifically addresses the

into Arabic”, in *The Encounter of Eastern Christianity with Early Islam*, eds. E. Grypeou, M. Swanson and D. Thomas (Leiden, 2006), 185-223.

³³⁰ See, Wismer, *The Islamic Jesus*, 141-142, 163, 205; Hanna Mansur, “Aqwal al-Sayyid al-Masih ‘ind al-kuttāb al-muslimin al-aqdamin,” *Al-Masarra* (1976): 45-239; Mahdi Muntazir Qa’im and Muḥammad Legenhausen, “Jesus Christ Speaks through the Shi’I Traditions,” *Al-Tawhid* 13, no. 3 (Fall 1996): 21-40; ---, “Jesus Christ in the Mirror of Shi’I Narrations,” *Al-Tawhid* 13, no. 4 (Winter 1996), 45-46; Louis Cheikho, “Quelques légendes islamiques apocryphes,” *Mélanges de la Faculté Orientale, Université Saint-Joseph*, 4 (1910): 33-56; Robert Caspar, “Bibliographie du dialogue islamo-chrétien,” *Islamochristiana* 1 (1975): 125-81, and 2 (1976): 187-249; E. Rudolph, *Dialogues islamo-chrétien, 1950-1993* (Lausanne: Université de Lausanne, 1993).

³³¹ Michael Sells, *Early Islamic Mysticism* (New York: Paulist Press, 1996), 202-203.

³³² Abu Rifa’ah, *Kitāb bad’al-halq*, 337. Also, Hamidullah, *The Earliest Extant Work of the Ḥadīth*, 78; Ibn al-Mubarak, *Kitāb al-zuhd*, 96; Ibn Hanbal, *Kitāb al-zuhd*, 93, 122.

³³³ Ibn al-Mubarak, *Kitāb al-zuhd*, 121.

qurrā’, or Qur’ānic reciters, and *‘ulamā*’, elite scholars who specialized in Islamic law and theology, declaring that “the most hateful of *‘ulamā*’ and *qurrā*’ to God are those who like to occupy the leading places in gathering,” and “an ignorant man will be forgiven seventy times before a *‘ālim* is forgiven once.”³³⁴ Indeed, this condemnation of the powerful is echoed in other collections, as when Jesus tells the *‘ulamā*’ and legal scholars that “you sit on the road to the afterlife---but you have neither walked this road to its end, nor allowed anyone else to pass by. Woe to him who is beguiled by you!”³³⁵ Jesus was useful to these authors because the reverence he is afforded in both the Qur’ān and later Islamic works meant that his words had authority, but his secondary status to the Prophet meant that he was a less symbolically loaded figure, and could be used in more radical ways.

This is to say that Christ occupied a liminal space, of sorts, embodying values that many Muslims admired, but that did not naturally fit within the parameters of Islamic praxis. This fuzziness meant that Jesus would rarely be at the forefront of issues that were central to Islamic theology, but from the periphery he could inspire, and be used as a proxy for authors to say things that it would have been personally or politically dangerous to state outright. Moreover, Jesus’ sympathetic status and authoritative voice could be used to challenge those in power. This role will be important to keep in mind, because William of Tripoli presents Islamic religious authorities as the primary barrier preventing greater numbers of Muslims from converting. By using stories of Jesus and Mary to

³³⁴Ibn Hanbal, *Kitāb al-wara*’, 21, 77; Abu Rifa’ah, *Kitāb bad’ al-halq*, 105.

³³⁵ Abu ‘Abdallah Muhyi al-Din Muḥammad b. ‘Ali b. ‘Arabi, *Al-Futuhat al-Makkiya* (Cairo: Matba’at al-Sa’ada, 1905), 1:368-369.

convince potential converts, he was not only tapping into a rich vein of popular traditions that regarded both highly, but he was also drawing on a symbol that had been used in intra-Muslim contexts to challenge the very same authorities who might try to interfere with his attempts to do so.

Jesus and Mary in Islamic Popular Culture

In William of Tripoli's context of the twelfth and thirteenth-century Near East, both educated and non-educated Muslims continued to look to Jesus as a model of piety, and a proxy for ideas and points-of-view that were potentially problematic and subversive. One of the most important venues in which this occurred was not literary, however, but the realm of public spectacle and performance. Indeed, performance has long been central to Islamic ritual, and one of the most important performances for all Muslims is the *khutba*, a service traditionally held on Fridays and certain holidays during which a *khātib*, or person who presents the *khutba*, delivers a message and leads the audience in ritual prayer. While the *khutba* is modeled on a pre-Islamic institution comparable to Greco-Roman oratory, its current form is traced from regular gatherings the Prophet Muḥammad held in the courtyard of his house in Medina after the flight from Mecca.³³⁶ Muḥammad took an existing authoritative discourse, and used it to “disseminate a new moral, religious, and political authority.”³³⁷ After Muḥammad's death

³³⁶ There are a number of ḥadīth which attest to this, but A.J. Wensinck has argued that the elements of the khutba attributed to Muḥammad were actually introduced after his death. See, A.J. Wensinck, 'Khutba', in *Encyclopedia of Islam*, 2nd ed, (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 74.

³³⁷ Linda G. Jones, “Prophetic Performances: Reproducing the Charisma of the Prophet in Medieval Islamic Preaching,” in *Charisma and Religious Authority: Jewish, Christian, and Muslim Preaching 1200-1500*, eds. Katherine L. Jansen and Miri Rubin (Turnhout: Brepols, 2010), 21.

the *khutba* became the primary mechanism to continue this dissemination by imbuing the *khātib*, who lacked Muḥammad’s unique status as messenger of God, with some small portion of the Prophet’s charismatic authority. This required a strict ritualization, however, and as a result the *khātibun* (pl.) followed a narrowly circumscribed script that imitated Muḥammad’s example as it had been preserved in the ḥadīth, Qur’ān, and other sources.

Failure to adhere to this script, even in minor stylistic ways, was harshly condemned, and could mean ridicule and punishment for the offender.³³⁸ In a 12th century biography of prominent judges of the Mālikī school of jurisprudence, al-Qādī ‘Iyād (d.1149), himself a *khātib* and judge in the Moroccan town of Ceuta, described the debut performance of the newly minted chief *khātib* of Cordoba, who “shook” and “convulsed” throughout his performance. After the performance he sought out several of his friends, and asked for their frank assessment of his performance. One of them retorted that “we sat down expecting a *khātib* to appear, but suddenly there was this hoopoe bird bobbing its head up and down at every word. This is not one of the characteristics of the *khātib*, so refrain from it! Articulate slowly and carefully your words and balance carefully your body.”³³⁹ It was incumbent on both the performer and the audience to enforce strict adherence to Muḥammad’s model--even regarding body language--in order to reap the

³³⁸ Linda G. Jones, “Prophetic Performances”, 20.

³³⁹ Al-Qadi ‘Iyad, *Tartib al-madarik wa taqrib al-masalik li ma’rifat a’lam madhhab Malik (The Order of Perception and the Approach to the Paths of Understanding of the Luminaries of the Maliki School of Law)*, eds. Sa’id Ahmad et al. (Rabat: Wizarat al-Awqaf wa Shu’un al-Islamiyya, 1990), 287-88.

benefits of the ritual. For the audience, the benefit was a portion of grace, or *baraka*, and for the *khātib*, a small measure of the Prophet's authority.

The strict formality of the *khutba* obscures one of the ironic characteristics of Islam, namely its lack of a clearly defined religious authority. While Islam is often described as an authoritarian religion, loci of power have always been diffuse, and there has never been an organized “church”, in the western European, Byzantine, or eastern sense, with a clearly defined hierarchy. Instead, religious authority has rested with the *‘ulamā’*, or “learned people”, “a broad and flexible group whose members are distinguished not by status nor by any formal act of investiture, but only by their reputations.”³⁴⁰ An *‘ālim*'s reputation rests on his mastery of *‘ilm*, or religious knowledge, but what this constitutes precisely is defined by the *‘ulamā’* themselves. As a result, Islamic religious authority has always been fuzzy and ill-defined, and is the primary reason why, in the case of the *khutba*, strict ritualization is required, because the *khātib* has little outside the ritual itself upon which his authority rests. Far from authoritarian, Islam's religious hierarchy has generally been nebulous, with plenty of interior and peripheral spaces for alternative expressions of authority. Two of the earliest and most consistent groups to fill these gaps have been known interchangeably as the *quṣṣās*, or storytellers, and *wu‘āz*, or “those who morally exhort others”, a group whose closest parallel are popular preachers in the western sense.³⁴¹

³⁴⁰ Jonathan P. Berkey, “Audience and Authority in Medieval Islam: The Case of Popular Preachers,” in *Charisma and Religious Authority: Jewish, Christian, and Muslim Preaching, 1200-1500*, eds. Katherine L. Jansen and Miri Rubin (Turnhout: Brepols, 2010), 105.

³⁴¹ Jonathan P. Berkey, *Popular Preaching and Religious Authority in the Medieval Islamic Near East* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2001), 203-15.

The *quṣṣāṣ* enjoyed their greatest prominence as a group in the first two centuries after Muḥammad’s death, a time before the codification of the Qur’ān as it exists now, and any consensus regarding an authentic body of ḥadīth literature. In these early years Islam’s parameters were fuzzy enough that one scholar has controversially argued that nascent Islam should be thought of as a reformist strain of Christianity rather than a distinct religious tradition.³⁴² Even if one does not subscribe to this, it is definitely true that Islam’s boundaries took clearer shape in the centuries after Muḥammad’s death, and the *quṣṣāṣ* were instrumental in the earliest parts of this process as they recited didactic stories about Muḥammad, the early Islamic community, and the prophets and events that predicted and prefigured both. Over time, however, “*qāṣṣ*” (s.) came to have a pejorative connotation among the ‘*ulamā*’, due to their supposed reliance on apocryphal and dubious stories of Jewish and Christian origin. This was partly, if not entirely, motivated by the ‘*ulamā*’s desire to eliminate competitors to their authority. Regardless, the *quṣṣāṣ* continued to enjoy a prominent, albeit somewhat diminished role among non-elite audiences long after the ‘*ulamā*’ had tried to do away with them.

The *wu’āz* performed a similar function to the *quṣṣāṣ*, with a slight distinction. While *wu’āz* often featured stories and parables in their homilies, their authority was grounded in the Qur’ānic injunction to “command what is good and forbid what is evil.”³⁴³ Moreover, while the *quṣṣāṣ* were generally considered uneducated by the standards of the ‘*ulamā*’, many *wu’āz* served as *khāṭībun* in contexts when they were

³⁴² Donner, *Muḥammad and the Believers*, 26.

³⁴³ For example, Q 3:104; 3:110; 5:78-79; 7:165.

following the strict ritual of the *khuṭba*, and *wu‘āz* in less formal settings, such as street corners, or the massive cemeteries which ringed cities like Cairo and which provided the setting for much of the religious life of the Muslim population.³⁴⁴

Most of the evidence we have about these preachers and storytellers comes from their critics, writers such as Ibn al-Jawzī, for example, a twelfth century Baghdadi scholar, and Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūfī, a fifteenth century Egyptian scholar, both of whom harshly condemned them for misleading their audiences through their ignorance.³⁴⁵ The Damascene scholar, Ibn Taymiyya (d. 1328), was particularly vicious in his criticism of popular forms of religious expression, writing a series of *fatāwā* (s. *fatwā*), the term for a non-binding, but authoritative legal opinion, against these uneducated preachers who:

...hold séances on the thoroughfares, in shops and elsewhere, with whom women sit, as well as the perverts, because of the women. These astrologers claim to give information about the hidden affairs, relying in this matter on the art of astrology. They write out magic squares, practice magic, write talismans, and teach magic to women, for use upon their husbands and others. Because of that, women, and men, assemble at the doors of their shops. The situation may even lead, sometimes, to other kinds of deeds that women commit against their husbands and to the corruption of the people’s beliefs, to their voracious attachment to magic and to the planets, to their turning away from God, Powerful is He and Majestic, and from trusting in Him concerning events and accidents.³⁴⁶

³⁴⁴ Jonathan P. Berkey, “Popular Preaching”, 107-108.

³⁴⁵ Ibn al-Jawzi, *Kitāb al-Qussas wa’l-Mudhakkirin*, ed. trans. Merlin Swartz (Beirut: Dar al-Machreq, 1986), 24-29; Jalal al-Din al-Suyuti, *Tahdhir al-khawas min akadhīb al-qussas*, ed. Muḥammad al-Sabbagh (Beirut: al-Maktab al-Islami, 1972), 3.

³⁴⁶ عقد سياتس على الطرق، في المحلات التجارية وأماكن أخرى، مع النساء الجلوس، فضلا عن المنحرفين، بسبب النساء. يدعي هؤلاء المنجمون إعطاء معلومات عن الشؤون الخفية، والاعتماد في هذه المسألة على فن التنجيم. يكتبون الساحات السحرية، وممارسة السحر، وكتابة تاليسمانز، وتعليم السحر للنساء، للاستخدام على أزواجهم وغيرهم. بسبب ذلك، النساء، والرجال، والتجمع في أبواب المحلات التجارية الخاصة بهم. بل إن الوضع قد يؤدي، في بعض الأحيان، إلى أنواع أخرى من الأعمال التي ترتكبها المرأة ضد أزواجها وفساد معتقدات الشعب، وتعلقها الشرييرة بالسحر والكواكب، وتحولها بعيدا عن الله، ماجستيك، ومن الثقة فيه بشأن الأحداث والحوادث Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmu’ al-fatawa*, ed. ‘A.R. b. M. B. Qasim (Rabat: Maktabat al-Ma’arif, 1402/1981), 188.

Ironically, Ibn Taymiyya's frequent criticisms of these extra-Islamic religious practices, and the general "ignorance" of the uneducated Muslims who sustained them, reveals that these expressions of popular religion were more common than references to them in the sources would suggest. According to Ibn Taymiyya, the ignorance of average people was the root of this confusion, and Christians had exploited it more effectively than anyone else. In the same treatise he is apoplectic, declaring:

How much the Nazarenes venerate the relics of their saints! One thus cannot rule out that they suggest to some ignorant Muslims that such a grave is the grave of someone whom the Muslims venerate, so that the latter might venerate it together with them. How would it not be so as they have already misled many ignorant Muslims! They have even gone as far as baptizing Muslim children, pretending that this ensures a long life to the child! They have also brought Muslims to visit churches and sanctuaries which they venerate, and many ignorant Muslims have been led to present votive offerings to the places that the Nazarenes venerate. Many ignorants among them have similarly been led to visit the churches of the Nazarenes and to ask for the *baraka* (grace) of their priests, of their monks, etc.³⁴⁷

As noted above, William of Tripoli's claim that he personally baptized more than a thousand Muslims has generally been dismissed as a wild exaggeration.³⁴⁸ While the number he quotes is surely inaccurate, intended as shorthand for *a lot* rather than a precise calculation, Ibn Taymiyya, William's near contemporary, is not at all skeptical that such a thing might be possible. One reason modern scholars have been doubtful about William's assertion is that they have evaluated it with a narrow definition of

كم نازارين تنجيل الاثار من قديسينهم! ومن هنا لا يمكن أن يستبعدوا أنهم يقترحون على بعض المسلمين الجاهلين أن مثل هذا القبر هو ³⁴⁷ قبر شخص يكرمه المسلمون، حتى أن الأخير قد يكرمهم معهم. كيف لا يكون ذلك كما أنها قد ضلل بالفعل العديد من المسلمين جاهل! حتى أنهم ذهبوا بقدر تعميدهم الأطفال المسلمين، والتظاهر بأن هذا يضمن حياة طويلة للطفل! كما أنها جلبت المسلمين لزيارة الكنائس والمقدسات التي يتوقون، والعديد من المسلمين جاهل قد أدت إلى تقديم عروض الناخبين إلى الأماكن التي نازارين تنجيل. كما أن العديد من الجهل من بينهم قد قادوا لزيارة كنائس الناصريين وطلب البركة (نعمة) كهنةهم ورهبانهم، وما إلى ذلك. Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmu' al-fatawa*, 22.

³⁴⁸ Peter Engels, the editor of the *Notitia* and *De statu*, for example. See, Wilhelm von Tripolis. *Notitia; De statu*, 36.

conversion in mind. If one's standard is an educated Muslim with a clear understanding of all the theological differences separating Islam and Christianity, who makes the deliberate choice to leave his religious community and embrace another, then there is, indeed, not enough evidence for wide-scale conversions to support William's claim. However, the frustration expressed by the *'ulamā'* at the "ignorance" of their co-religionists demonstrates that this standard applied to very few of them. Instead, Muslims and Christians in the Near East inhabited a religious context in which communal boundaries were often nebulous, and many decided which rituals they would participate in, which holy sites they should visit, or which speakers they flocked to, based on efficacy more than dogmatic precision.

Islam's lack of a clearly defined religious hierarchy, or formal investiture of its authorities, meant that there were ambiguous spaces that could be filled by alternative points-of-view and illicit expressions of piety. The success of the *wu'āz* and *quṣṣāṣ* in filling this gap, despite elite efforts to censure them, can partially be explained by the contemporary regard for Sufism, the practitioners of which disproportionately filled their ranks.³⁴⁹ Sufism emerged in the early 'Abbāsīd period as a distinct movement, and expanded rapidly until by William's time it was one of Islam's largest and most popular religious movements. What defined Sufism more than anything else was asceticism and a world-renouncing, inward-looking and esoteric attitude, and for such practitioners Christ was an ideal model. Sufis engaged in a wide range of practices, including astrology, talismanic literature, and alchemy. Indeed, when Ibn Taymiyya, himself a member of a

³⁴⁹ Berkey, "Audience and Authority," 110.

Sufi order, railed against astrologers in the passage above, he likely had Sufi astrologers in mind as he did so.³⁵⁰

By the 13th century, not only had Sufis disproportionately filled the ranks of *wu‘āz*, but the only sustained literary defense we have of the preachers and storytellers comes from a Sufi poet and shaykh named ‘Alī al-Wafā’ (d. 1404), a member of a Sufi order known as the Shadhiliyya, which was prominent in Egypt and North Africa, and renowned for the number of popular preachers the order produced.³⁵¹ The center of devotion for al- Wafā’ and his followers was a mosque located within a network of cemeteries that circle the southeastern part of Cairo.³⁵² Many ‘ulamā’ were critical of sites such as this, because it was in these liminal spaces where they were roused by stories of the pre-Islamic prophets.³⁵³ Among the stories that audiences demanded, we know from their critics that several themes predominated, namely: poverty, a renunciation of worldly things, death, judgment, and salvation.³⁵⁴ In large part this is because these were the specters that threatened many non-elite Muslims, as economic and material uncertainty loomed as an existential threat. Such audiences sought meaning in

³⁵⁰ Valerie J. Hoffman, *Sufism, Mystics, and Saints in Modern Egypt (Studies in Comparative Religion)* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2009), 154-160.

³⁵¹ ‘Ali b. Muḥammad b. Wafā’, *al-Bai‘th ‘ala’l-khalas min su‘al-zann bi’l-khawas*. B.L. Or. Ms. 4275; Berkey, *Popular Preaching*, 36.

³⁵² The mosque’s location is reported in ‘Ali Pasha Mubarak’s nineteenth century survey of Egypt, ‘Ali Pasha Mubarak, *al-Khitat al-tawfiqiyya al-jadida li-misr wa’l-qahira*, vol. 5 (Bulaq: al-Matba‘a al-Kubra al-Amiriyya, 1305 A.H.), 138-139.

³⁵³ See, Gordon Newby, “Tafsir Isra’iliyat: The Development of Qur’ān Commentary in Early Islam in Its Relationship to Judaeo-Christian Traditions of Scriptural Commentary,” in *Studies in Qur’ān and Tafsir*, ed. Alford T. Welch, *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 47 (1980): 685-97; Jacob Lassner, *Demonizing the Queen of Sheba: Boundaries of Gender and Culture in Postbiblical Judaism and Medieval Islam* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 47, 123; Joshua Finkel, “An Arabic Story of Abraham,” *Jewish Quarterly Review* 19 (1917): 84-103; Jane Dammen McAuliffe, “Assessing the Isra’iliyyat: An Exegetical Conundrum,” in *Story-telling in the Framework of Non-fictional Arabic Literature*, ed. Stefan Leder (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 1998), 347-348.

³⁵⁴ Berkey, *Popular Preaching and Religious Authority*, 45-46.

their situation, and many preachers and storytellers provided it by speaking directly to it. The Egyptian preacher, Shu‘ayb al-Hurayfish (d. 1398), would say, for example, that, “the poor man is doctor of the sick, and his cleanser”, possessing the power, through his prayers, to heal the rich man and forgive him of his sins.³⁵⁵ Sentiments like this not only elevated those in insecure situations, but provided an incentive for their more comfortable neighbors to provide assistance to them. This resonated with audiences, meeting needs that the more formal aspects of Islamic ritual could not do alone.

Much to the dismay of learned scholars such as Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn Jawzī, the cultural context was primed for William of Tripoli and others like him to be successful. By the 13th century the practice of popular preaching had been well-established by *wu‘‘āz* and *quṣṣāṣ* who relied on stories of the pre-Islamic, Jewish and Christian prophets. Even more, many of the most well respected of these were Sufis whose reputation was often based on religious ideals such as an ascetic lifestyle, and renunciation of worldly things that blurred the boundaries between Islam and Christianity. While some degree of asceticism or *zuhd* was part of the Islamic tradition, Christian priests and monks practiced it most fervently, and it always retained its Christian association. For this reason, excessive renunciation was often condemned as scholars began to erect the boundaries separating Islam from Christianity. In one of al-Bukhārī’s ḥadīths, for example, Anas b. Mālīk, one of Muḥammad’s companions, reports that:

A group of three men came to the houses of the wives of the Prophet asking how the Prophet worshipped (Allah), and when they were informed about that, they considered their worship insufficient.... Then one of them

³⁵⁵ ‘Abd Allah b. Sa’d Allah al-Hurayfish, *al-Rawd al-fa’iq fi’l-mawa’iz wa’l-raqa’iq* (Cairo: Mustafa al-Babi al-Halabi, 1949), 67-68.

said, ‘I will offer the prayer throughout the night forever.’ The other said, ‘I will fast throughout the year and will not break my fast.’ The third said, ‘I will keep away from the women and will not marry forever.’ Allah’s Apostle came to them and said, “Are you the same people who said so-and-so? By Allah, I am more submissive to Allah and more afraid of Him than you; yet I fast and break my fast, I do sleep and I also marry women. So he who does not follow my tradition in religion, is not from me.”³⁵⁶

Ḥadīths such as this were collected as ‘ulamā’ and other religious elites began to articulate what it is that made Islam distinct. One of the ways they did so was by staking a middle ground. Christian priests and monks were extreme in their ascetic choices, and so Muslims would be moderate. Jews enforced strict dietary prohibitions, and Christians were permissive; Islam, by contrast, would be stricter than Christianity, prohibiting things like alcohol and pork, but less restrictive than Judaism.³⁵⁷ Despite these attempts to place distance between Islam and the Judeo-Christian tradition, asceticism retained its appeal, and stories of the pre-Islamic prophets remained relevant to the audiences who demanded them. Indeed, many Sufis patterned their asceticism on Jesus’ model. In the poems of the thirteenth century Sufi poet, Jalāl ad-Dīn Muḥammad Rūmī, Jesus appears regularly. In Book 3 of his poetic masterpiece, the *Masnavi*, Rumi writes that:

Jesus, that man of the good path, would say his prayers / And would come out, seeing many groups of sick and weak people / Sitting and waiting at his door of hope. Jesus would say: Oh, the stricken ones! God has granted your needs and cures. / The people would then walk, with no pain and trouble, / Toward the blessings and mercy of the Divine. Like the camel whose chains were lifted from their feet / The people would walk freely and joyfully toward home. They all were cured by the prayers of Jesus.³⁵⁸

³⁵⁶ Bukhārī, Volume 7, Book 62, Number 1.

³⁵⁷ David M. Freidenreich, *Foreigners and Their Food: Constructing Otherness in Jewish, Christian, and Islamic Law* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), 12-34.

³⁵⁸ Jalal al-Din Rumi, *The Masnawi: Book Three*, ed. and trans. Jawid Mojaddedi (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 22.

In this passage we see that Jesus served as a model for the popular preachers, and stories about him spoke to the needs of the audiences who flocked to them. Jesus and his mother, Mary, were both popular figures, and one can see how, in the hands of a skilled missionary like William of Tripoli, both became a way to connect with Muslims. Indeed, in earlier chapters of both the *Notitia* and *De statu*, William describes a *khuṭba*, observing that when stories about pre-Islamic figures such as Mary and Jesus are recited, “[the listeners] praise God in heaven with joyful hearts and quiet whispers, and tears regularly flow down their face.”³⁵⁹ William had personally witnessed the emotional resonance of these figures, and was acutely aware of the ways this could be exploited.

In addition, both Christ and Mary also regularly appear in contemporary twelfth and thirteenth-century Islamic literature that blurred the boundaries between Islam and Christianity. One of the more puzzling examples occurs in Jamāl al-Dīn b. Wāsil’s *Mufarrij al-Kurub fi Akhbar Bani Ayyub*, a chronicle of the Ayyūbids and their wars against the Crusaders. Jamāl al-Dīn was a historian and sometime *qāḍī* who served the Ayyūbids and witnessed their fall to the Mamlūks. The *Mufarrij al-Kurub*, sometimes translated as “The Dissipater of Anxieties on the Reports of the Ayyūbids,” is a dynastic chronicle covering most of the twelfth and the first half of the thirteenth-century.³⁶⁰ Partway through his account he describes a peculiar report he had heard involving a man named Al-‘Uris who claimed Christ visited him in a dream. As Ibn Wāsil explains,

³⁵⁹ Et ubi nominatur Iesus, Maria, Ioseph aut Abraham vel nomen Machometi, cordis quodam iubilo et oris susurrio dulci laudant Deum celi et frequenter lacrimae per maxillas descendunt., Wilhelm von Tripolis, *Notitia; De statu*, 258

³⁶⁰ Jamal al-Din Muḥammad b. Salim B. Wasil, *Mufarrij al-Kurub fi Akhbar Bani Ayyub*, ed. Jamal al-Din al-Shayyal (Cairo: Jami‘at Fu‘ad al-Awwal, 1953).

“Al-‘Uris saw in his sleep Christ Jesus Son of Mary, who seemed to turn his face toward him from heaven. Al-‘Uris asked him, ‘Did the crucifixion really happen?’ Jesus said, ‘Yes, the crucifixion really happened.’ Al-‘Uris then related his dream to an [dream] interpreter, who said, ‘The man who saw this dream shall be crucified. For Jesus is infallible and can speak only the truth, yet the crucifixion he spoke of cannot refer to his own, because the Glorious Qur’ān specifically states that Jesus was not crucified or killed. Accordingly, this must refer to the dreamer, and it is he who shall be crucified.’ The matter turned out as the interpreter said.”³⁶¹

The first thing worth noting is that Ibn Wāsil refers to Jesus as the Son of Mary. Muslim authors considered the connection between the two indispensable, and it is exceedingly rare for one to be mentioned without the other. The second is that Al-‘Uris does not seem particularly troubled by Christ’s claim, even though his actual crucifixion and resurrection would have been highly problematic from an Islamic perspective, and, as the interpreter asserts, the Qur’ān specifically states otherwise. In this we see in stark relief the divide between the understanding of someone like al-‘Uris, presumably one of Ibn Taymiyya’s “ignorants”, and the perspective of the interpreter. This suggests that Christ’s status was less clear to the average person than it was to a religious or legal scholar. The third is that at no point is the dream rejected, just Al-‘Uris’ interpretation of it. No one questions the potential for Christ to intercede in the lives of an average person. This provides a glimpse at how emotionally resonant both Jesus and Mary were to the everyday lives of average people. Indeed, many of the Islamic stories about Jesus and

رأى العريس في نومه المسيح يسوع ابن مريم، الذي يبدو أن يتحول وجهه نحوه من السماء. سأله العريس: "هل وصل الصليب حقاً؟" مترجم، الذي قال: "الرجل الذي رأى هذا الحلم يجب أن تكون صليبه. لأن قال يسوع: "نعم، وصل الصليب حقاً". ثم ربط العريس حلمه إلى يسوع معصوم ولا يمكن أن يتكلم إلا الحقيقة، إلا أن الصليب الذي تحدث عنه لا يمكن أن يشير إلى نفسه، لأن القرآن الكريم ينص تحديداً على أن يسوع لم يصلب أو قتل. وعليه، يجب أن يشير هذا إلى الحالم، وأنه هو الذي يجب أن يكون صليبا". وقد اتضح الأمر كما قال مترجم Ibn Wasil, *Mufarrij al-Kurub* 1:248.

Mary emphasize their concern with daily concerns, describing, for example, Jesus' hospitality to strangers, or his aid to women in childbirth.³⁶²

One especially intimate story describes the special connection between Jesus and his mother. It is related by Abū al-Qāsim b. 'Asākir (d.1175), a Damascus-born historian and mystic, who describes Mary's recollection that "in the days I was pregnant with Jesus, whenever there was someone in my house speaking with me, I would hear Jesus praising God inside me. Whenever I was alone and there was no one with me, I would converse with him and he with me, while he was still in my womb."³⁶³ This passage is reminiscent of a similar Qur'ānic story in which Jesus speaks from the cradle to defend his mother's virginity from some of her kinsmen who were doubtful about her chastity.³⁶⁴ It is easy to see how Mary's example, as preserved in stories like this, could have served as inspiration and solace to women who found themselves in similar positions, widowed, for example, or forced apart from their husbands due to war or circumstance. The story of the cradle is one of the nineteen Qur'ānic passages that William of Tripoli translates into Latin, and it is worth recalling that critics of the *wu'āz*, such as Ibn Taymiyya, were especially scandalized by the number of women who flocked to hear them. Stories like these demonstrate that both Jesus and Mary were potent symbols that spoke to Muslims across the social spectrum. For learned Muslims, especially Sufis and other mystics, Jesus was a powerful challenge to authority, who could articulate alternative points-of-

³⁶²Kamal al Din al Damiri and Ibn al Hanbali. Need to locate citation.

³⁶³ في الأيام كنت حاملا مع يسوع، كلما كان هناك شخص في بيتي يتحدث معي، وأود أن أسمع يسوع مشيدا الله داخل لي. كلما كنت وحيدا
, ولم يكن هناك أحد معي، كنت أتحدث معه وأنه معي، بينما كان لا يزال في رحمي
Abu al-Qasim b. 'Asakir, *Sirat al-Sayyid al-Masih*, ed. Sulayman Murad ('Amman: Dar al-Shuruq, 1996), 30.

³⁶⁴ Q 19:29-34

view. For non-elite Muslims, Jesus and Mary were devotional figures who addressed many of the everyday concerns of lives that were uncertain and sometimes difficult.

William of Tripoli Translates the Qur'ān

William of Tripoli understood the regard Muslims had for Jesus and Mary, and in both the *Notitia de Machometo* and *De statu Sarrecenorum* he translates nineteen verses, or *āyāt* (*āyah* s.), from the Qur'ān into Latin, all of which center on both figures. While the same *āyāt* are translated in both treatises, he organizes and presents them differently in each. In the *Notitia* he combines these passages into two long chapters. The first, titled “Testimonia legis Sarracenorum de Iesu Christo et beata Maria et de imitatoribus Christi”, is a summary of these nineteen *āyāt* that describe the Virgin Mary and Jesus Christ in favorable terms. The second, “Testimonia libri Alcoran legis Sarracenorum de Christo et matre eius et fidelibus Christi”, is a direct translation of them from Arabic into Latin.³⁶⁵ These two chapters are followed by a third titled, “Responsio Sarracenorum quando invitantur ad fidem Christi per predicta sui libri testimonia”, which presents Muslim responses to Christians who try to encourage conversion by referring to these parts of the Qur'ān. William answers these critiques by laying out the Christian counter-arguments in the next chapter, titled “Christianorum responsio ad iam dicta”. While only four of the *Notitia*'s fifteen chapters, this section is one of the longest and most developed, comprising half of the treatise's total length.

³⁶⁵ These are Q 3:35-36; 3:37; 3:42-43; 3:45-46; 3:47-51; 19:16-21; 19:22-26; 19:27-33; 21:91; 66:12; 5:110; 3:55; 57:27; 2:253; 5:46-47; 4:155-158; 43:57-59, 63-64; 61:14; 5:112-115; 61:6.

In the *De statu Sarracenorum*, William includes an expanded version of the same material, but organizes it differently. He begins with a chapter titled “De continentia Alcorani,” that is a brief, but positive summary of the similarities between the Qur’ān and the Gospels. This is followed by a chapter titled “Ratio Sarracenorum quare post Legem et Evangelium Deus de Alcoranum,” which provides the Muslim rationale for why, after the prior revelations of the Old and New Testaments, the Qur’ān was necessary. The next chapter, “De laudibus Christi et beate Marie virginis et imitatorum eius,” is a brief Christian response to these claims. This is followed by the same nineteen āyāt presented in nineteen separate chapters, each introduced and/or summarized, and then directly translated.³⁶⁶ William provides no explanation for why the two treatises are organized so differently, and the extant manuscripts are close enough matches to suggest that most of the variations between the two texts cannot be explained by scribal error or revision.³⁶⁷ Half of the nineteen passages are from *sūrah* 3, The Family or House of ‘Imrān, and *sūrah* 19, Maryam. William also draws from eight other *suwar*. As will be discussed below, these āyāt were also the very passages that were often referred to by eastern Christians in debates with Muslims, especially when their aim was to demonstrate Christian truth with evidence drawn primarily or exclusively from the Qur’ān. This suggests that William was familiar with this eastern Christian apologetic tradition, and that his knowledge of the Qur’ān was relatively broad.³⁶⁸

³⁶⁶ Q 3:35-36; 3:37; 3:42-43; 3:45-46; 3:47-51; 19:16-21; 19:22-26; 19:27-33; 21:91; 66:12; 5:110; 3:55; 57:27; 2:253; 5:46-47; 4:155-158; 43:57-59, 63-64; 61:14; 5:112-115; 4:3.

³⁶⁷ See Engels, Wilhelm von Tripolis, *Notitia; De statu*, 60-74.

³⁶⁸ For example, Paul of Antioch’s *Risāla*, the *The Disputation of Jirjī the Monk*, and the *Risāla min ahl jazīrat Qubruş*, or *Letter from the People of Cyprus*. See below for references.

William presents all nineteen passages in the same order in both the *Notitia* and *De statu*, but there are variations in his translations. Qur’ān 3:35-36, the first of the nineteen passages, is representative. This passage, which centers on Mary’s birth and Anne’s consecration of her, reads,

when the wife of ‘Imrān said, ‘My Lord, indeed I have pledged to You what is in my womb, consecrated [for Your service], so accept this from me. Indeed, You are the Hearing, the Knowing.’ But when she delivered her, she said, ‘My Lord, I have delivered a female.’ And Allah was most knowing of what she delivered, ‘And the male is not like the female. And I have named her Mary, and I seek refuge for her in you and [for] her descendants from Satan, the expelled [one].’³⁶⁹

In the *Notitia*, William translates the first part of this passage as, “dixit uxor Amram: O Deus, tibi vovi **id, quod in utero, certum**. Accepta **ipsum a me**, quoniam tu es exauditor **et omnium perscrutator**.”³⁷⁰ In *De statu*, however, William translates this same passage, “Dixit uxor Amram: O Deus, **tibi vovi quod certe gero in me**. Accepta **enim, quod tibi vovi**, quoniam tu es exauditor **et inspector omnium**.”³⁷¹ Both passages are roughly the same with some minor variations. *De statu*’s inclusion of the finite verb *gero* (to bear, carry), for example, as opposed to the “esse” implied in the *Notitia* through ellipsis. The final result is that the *Notitia*’s translation more closely matches the Arabic word order and grammar. The Arabic reads: “نذرت لك ما في بطني محرراً فتقبل مني”، literally “I have offered to you what is in my womb, [she] having been consecrated [to you]. Accept [her] from me...” It is clear from the context that Anne is referring to Mary, but the Arabic is

³⁶⁹ اذ قالت امرات عمران رب ائني نذرت لك ما في بطني محرراً فتقبل مني انتك انت السميع العليم فلما وضعنها قالت رب ائني وضعنها
Q 3:36-37 ائني والله اعلم بما وضعت وليس الذكر كالانثى واني سميتها مريم واني اعيدھا بك وذريتھا من الشيطان الرجيم.

³⁷⁰ The variations between the two passages are in bold; Wilhelm von Tripolis, *Notitia; De statu*, 226.

³⁷¹ Wilhelm von Tripolis, *Notitia; De statu*, 342.

vague on this point, lacking any feminine pronouns (ها) that would make this explicit. The *Notitia* preserves this ambiguity and matches the Arabic word order, using the imperative *accepta* and neuter pronoun *ipsum* [it], rather than the feminine *ipsam* [her]. Another notable difference between the two is William’s translation of “السميع” and “العليم”, two of the so-called 99 names of God that end this passage. He translates السميع as exauditor in both, but العليم *perscrutator* in the *Notitia* and *inspector* in *De statu*. These two names for God are often translated as “the Hearer” or “The all-Hearing”, and the “All-Knowing”. Both are verbal nouns derived from the roots “سمع” (to hear) and “علم” (to know). The most obvious Latin equivalents to these two fundamental verbs are *audire* (to hear) and *scire* (to know or understand), the verbally derived nouns for both being *auditor* and *sciens*. In the Qur’ānic context, however, السميع and العليم express more than just the abstract qualities of hearing and knowing. Q 4:35, for example, reads, “And if you fear dissension between the two, send an arbitrator from his people and an arbitrator from her people. If they both desire reconciliation, Allah will cause it between them. Indeed, Allah is ever Knowing (العليم) and Acquainted [with all things].” In this passage Allah’s role as an arbiter requires knowledge that is active and probing rather than merely passive and conceptual. العليم is used to express this. When William translates العليم in both the *Notitia* and *De statu*, his equivalents, *perscrutator* and *inspector*, both carry this more dynamic sense of searching or examining.

I have elaborated upon this because as mentioned above scholars, Peter Engels, the editor of the critical edition chief among them, have doubted whether William knew

much Arabic, despite his explicit claim.³⁷² Not only does he regularly refer to and translate Arabic words throughout both treatises, but in the passage preceding his translations, he writes:

where the [Qur'ān] speaks from the sacred authorities, it contains words of such piety and devotion, that it arouses tears of zeal and faith. Moreover, where Lord Jesus' words appear, they are told with such dignity and reverence, that a simple man could believe that these words are truer than all the Holy Gospels. Since I did not wish to relate what [the Qur'ān] holds concerning Lord Jesus, his holy mother Mary, the Holy Gospel, and Christ's followers, according to words foreign [to the text], nor to alter the meaning or the words used [in it], I have translated 19 authoritative passages, or testimonies, from Arabic into Latin with sincere conscientiousness and honest accuracy. With God's help, I have gathered the roses and lilies of our faith into a bouquet, making them into a single work, namely this modest book. But I have not ordered these passages the same as [the Qur'ān], since it has no order, but in the order suggested by actual history and the teaching of faith.³⁷³

William clearly indicates that his fidelity to the meaning, structure, and order of the Qur'ān is intentional. He states elsewhere that other, less faithful Latin translations exist, and that his version is meant to correct this. Above all, William attempts to preserve the emotional power of these passages, as he acknowledges that the beauty of its Qur'ānic language is deeply affecting. This, I argue, is the key to his "simple message", which he believes can convince "simple" Muslims in ways the complex philosophical arguments of

³⁷² See Engels, Wilhelm von Tripolis, *Notitia; De statu*, 75.

³⁷³ Ubi vero de divinis auctoritatibus loquitur, verba continet ita pia et devota, quod ad lacrimas excitat devotionem et fidem. At vero, ubi de domino Iesu occurrit sermo, ita devota narrat et pia, quod simplex posset credere verba illa veriora esse quam sancti Ewangelii textus. Quapropter, que liber ille continet de domino Iesu et de eius beata genitrice Maria, de sacrosancto Ewangelio et de fidelibus Christi, nolui per aliena verba narrare nec mutare sensum nec verba, et pietate vera et fide sincera transtuli de arabico in latinum et XVIII auctoritates, quasi tot testimonia, fidei nostre rosas et lylia colligens et fasciculum faciens in unum corpusculum, hoc modicum dico opusculum, Deo iuvante peregi, redegi nec dictas auctoritates posui in ordine illius libri, ubi non est ordo, sed in ordine, quem hystoria veritatis ordinat et fidei disciplina., Wilhelm von Tripolis, *Notitia; De statu*, 220-222.

the usual Latin apologetic and polemic cannot. This suggests that the targets of his missionary efforts were not primarily slaves or prisoners of war, but the same uneducated Muslims who flocked to the *wu‘āz* and *quṣṣāṣ* to hear stories of the pre-Islamic prophets. Moreover, the same Muslims who the ‘ulamā’ believed were easily confused, and susceptible to Christian interpretations of the Qur’ān. William explicitly acknowledges that this is what he is trying to accomplish. He is not presenting these 19 *testimonia* neutrally or in chronological order, but in a manner that will facilitate the “teaching of faith.” William demonstrates, in other words, that his engagement with Islam is very much at the level of popular piety, oral tradition, and public spectacle.

William of Tripoli Preaches Mary and her Son

William’s nineteen *suwar* can be grouped into one of five thematic categories: Mary’s background and special status, Gabriel’s Annunciation of Christ’s coming, the miracle of Mary’s virgin birth, confirmation of Christ’s prophethood and resurrection, and condemnation of those who disbelieve Christ’s message.³⁷⁴ The first of these themes are articulated in Q 3:35-36, 3:37, and 3:42-43. As discussed above, Q 3:35-36 and 3:37 describe Mary’s birth, and Anne’s dedication of her to her uncle Zechariah. In Q 3:42-43, the Angel of the Lord declares to Mary that “indeed Allah has chosen you and purified you and chosen you above the women of the world.”³⁷⁵ Passages such as this illustrate

³⁷⁴ These are the same categories that were a frequent topic of debate in Muslim-Christian polemic, especially by eastern Christians who sought to prove the truth of their position with evidence drawn primarily or exclusively from the Qur’ān. See, Rifaat Y. Ebied and David Thomas, eds., *Muslim-Christian Polemic during the Crusades: The Letter from the People of Cyprus and Ibn Abī Ṭālib al-Dimashqī’s Response* (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 19-20.

³⁷⁵ *dixerunt ad Mariam: O Maria, Deus elegit te et purificavit te et preelegit te super omnes mulieres mundanas. Cole igitur Deum, adora eum, genua ei curva cum illis, qui Deo inclinant, Wihelm von Tripolis, Notitia und De statu, 342.*

Mary's position in Islamic tradition. Islamic scholars generally considered Mary's status preeminent, superseding even the Prophet's own daughter, Fatimah.³⁷⁶

For eastern Christians, two factors made Mary indispensable to any Christian apologetic defense, namely: her high status in Islamic tradition, and the fact that the Qur'ānic narrative agrees with the Gospels' depiction of the Incarnation. While many eastern Christian communities held differing theological positions on Christ's nature, these differences were often elided in debates with Muslims. Rather, the Christianity defended lacked any obvious sectarian markers. In Paul of Antioch's *Risāla ilā ba'ḍ aṣḍiqā'ihī alladhīna bi-Ṣaydā min al-Muslimīn* (c. 1200), or *Letter to a Muslim Friend*, this Melkite bishop of Sidon defends a neutral form of Christianity in his polemic, beginning his defense with the Qur'ānic version of the Marian narrative. As Paul describes, "we find in [the Qur'ān] glorification of the lord Christ and his mother... which says that, 'she [Mary] was chaste, and therefore we breathed our Spirit into her, and we made her and her son a sign for the peoples of the world.' And also, the angels said, 'Oh Mary, God has chosen you and purified you above all the women of creation.'"³⁷⁷ Paul begins with a number of assertions that Muslims generally accepted, using this as a platform to build on.

³⁷⁶ See, Susan Sered, "Rachel, Mary, and Fatima," in *The Routledge Reader in Christian-Muslim Relations*, ed. Mona Siddiqui (New York: Routledge, 2013), 328-340; Jane I. Smith and Yvonne Y. Haddad, "The Virgin Mary in Islamic Tradition and Commentary," *The Muslim World* 79, no. 3 (1989): 161-187.

³⁷⁷ ثم وجدنا في الكتاب ايضا من تعظيم السيد المسيح وامه, و ان الله جعلهما آية للعالمين, وذلك قوله, والتي احصنت فرجها, فنفتحنا فيها من روحنا, وجعلناها و ابنها آية للعالمين. وايضا واذ قالت الملائكة يا مريمو ان الله اصطفاك و طهرتك على نسا العالمين. Paul Khoury, ed., *Paul d'Antioche, évêque Melkite de Sidon (XIIe s.)* (Beirut: Impr. Catholique, 1965), 63.

Paul's *Risāla*, addressed to an unnamed "Muslim friend", circulated throughout the eastern Mediterranean. It was popular among many Christian communities, copied throughout the Middle Ages, and incorporated into contemporary works by writers such as the Copt al-Ṣafī ibn al-ʿAssāl and the anonymous *Risāla min ahl jazīrat Qubruṣ*.³⁷⁸ It was also known to Muslim scholars, many of whom found it deeply troubling. Ibn Taymiyya and Shihāb al-Dīn al-Qarāfi, for example, personally refuted it. For Christians such as Paul of Antioch and the authors of the *Risāla min ahl jazīrat Qubruṣ*, there was no better place to begin an argument about Christ's status than the Virgin Mary, as Muslims agreed about the things that made her special. From this common ground, a case could be made, and the authors of the *Risāla* do just that, transitioning from Qur'ānic praise of Mary to a series of testimonies about Christ,

[In the Qur'ān] there are also the witnesses to the lord Christ in the miracles, that he was conceived not through the intercourse of a man but by the annunciation of an angel of God to his mother, that he spoke in the cradle, brought the dead back to life, healed those born blind, made lepers whole, created from clay the likeness of a bird, breathed into it, and it was a bird by the permission of God. We also find in it that God raised him up to himself, He says in the family of 'Imran, 'O Jesus son of Mary! Lo! I am gathering thee and causing thee to ascend unto me, and am cleansing thee of those who disbelieve and am setting those who follow thee above those who disbelieve until the day of resurrection'; he says in the Cow, 'and we gave unto Jesus, son of Mary, clear proofs, and we supported him with the Holy Spirit'; he also says in Iron, 'And we caused Jesus, son of

³⁷⁸ D. Thomas, "Paul of Antioch's Letter to a Muslim friend and The letter from Cyprus", in *Syrian Christians under Islam*, ed. D. Thomas (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 203-21; S.K. Samir, "Notes sur la 'Lettre à un musulman de Sidon' de Paul d'Antioche", *Orientalia Lovaniensia Periodica* 24 (1993) 179-95; ----, "La réponse d'al-Ṣafī b. al-ʿAssāl à la réfutation des chrétiens de 'Alī al-Ṭabarī", *Parole de l'Orient* 11 (1983): 281-328; M.Z. Siddiqi, "Muslim and Byzantine Christian relations: Letter of Paul of Antioch and Ibn Taymiyyah's response", *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 31 (1986): 33-45; T. Michel, *A Muslim theologian's response to Christianity* (New York, 1984), 87-93.

Mary, to follow, and gave him the gospel, and placed compassion and mercy in the hearts of those who followed him.³⁷⁹

The Risāla's authors, much like William, order these Qur'ānic passages in a way that emphasizes their own "teaching of faith", rather than one that preserves the Qur'ān's chronological order. While these authors feel obligated to justify themselves in other contexts, they appear to have been engaging in a discourse that was so common that they did not need to explain this use of the text. Rather, in this concise passage, they fluidly refer to passages scattered throughout the Qur'ān in order to argue a number of fundamental propositions, namely: Christ was predicted, worked miracles, was resurrected, and that there is language in the Qur'ān that appears to support the Christian conception of the Trinity.

William hits all of the same points, beginning with his translation of the Annunciation of Christ's birth. As William presents it, the angel of the Lord tells Mary that, "Allah gives you good tidings of a word from Him, whose name will be the Messiah, Jesus, the son of Mary- distinguished in this world and the Hereafter and among those brought near [to Allah]. He will speak to the people in the cradle and in maturity and will be of the righteous [ones]."³⁸⁰ Mary expresses bewilderment that she could

مع الشهادات للسند المسيح بالمعجزات وأنه جبل به لا من مياضعة رجل بل ببشارة ملاك الله لأمه، لأنه تكلم في المهد وأحيا الميت وأبرأ الأكمه و نقى الأبرص وأنه خلق من الطين كهينة الطير ونفخ فيه و كان طيرا بإذن الله. ووجدنا أيضا فيه أن الله رفعه إليه. قال في سورة آل عمران يا عيسى ابن مريم إني متوفيك ورافعك إلي ومطهرك من الذين كفروا وجاعل الذين اتبعوك فوق الذين كفروا إلي يوم القيامة. و قال في سورة البقرة: وآتينا عيسى ابن مريم البينات و آيدناه بروح القدس. و قال أيضا في سورة الحديد: وقفينا بعيسى ابن مريم وآتيناه الإخيل و جعلنا في قلوب الذين اتبعوه. جعلنا في قلوب الذين اتبعوه الإخيل وجعلنا في قلوب الذين اتبعوه.

³⁷⁹ 62-63.
³⁸⁰ Q 3: 45-46; dixerunt ad Mariam: O Maria, scias, quod Deus evangelizabit tibi ex se verbum; nomen eius Iesus Christus Marie filius; primas erit preclarus in hoc seculo et in futuro; et erit de illis, qui ad Deum appropinquant, et loquetur infantulus de cunabulis et erit vir et erit de sanctis et iustis., Wilhelm von Tripolis, *Notitia; De statu*, 344.

conceive when “no man has touched me.” The angel, nevertheless, confirms that she will give birth, and that her son will be a messenger to the people who will perform miracles such as breathing life into a clay bird, curing the blind, healing the sick, and raising the dead.³⁸¹ These passages were indispensable for a Qur’ānic justification of a Christian perspective, because they confirm two of the most vital so-called “proofs of prophethood” or *dala’il al-nubuwwa*, namely: Christ’s prefiguration and the miracles attributed to him. Muslim and Christian scholars generally agreed on the criteria distinguishing a true prophet from a false one, and miracles and prefiguration were arguably the most important. Many of the polemical and apologetic debates about Muḥammad’s prophethood were not about the criteria that distinguished a true prophet, but whether he had met it. For someone like William, passages such as this could be used as clear and convincing proof that, unlike Muḥammad, there was no disagreement about Christ’s status. Furthermore, it bears noting that the angel refers to Christ as the “word” (*verbum*). While Muslim theologians and exegetes had by this time developed substantial arguments against "كلمة", or “word”, being understood in a Christian sense, Christians continued to cite passages like this, and use them to claim that the Qur’ān itself

³⁸¹ Q: 3:47-51; Dixit Maria: O Deus, eritne michi filius, cum non sim tacta ab homine? Et dixit Deus: Sic creabit Deus, quod vult, et cum decreverit, quid fieri, et dixerit “fiat!”, statim fit. Et docebimus eum librum et sapientiam et legem et Evangelium nostrum, nuntium ad filios Israel, et dicit: “Veni ad vos a Deo signum, quoniam ego creabo vobis de luto similitudines volucrum et sufflabo in eis et fient animalia auctoritate Dei; et sanabo mutos et leprosos et vivificabo mortuos auctoritate De et docebo vos, quid edere debeatis et quid thesaurizare, quoniam hoc erit vobis signum, si extiteritis fideles, quoniam ego verax sum in hiis, que de lege sunt, et in hiis, que licentiabo vobis de illicitis et vetitis; et veni ad vos in signum a Deo vestro. Credite igitur Deo et obedite ei, quia Deus meus est et Deus vester. Obedite igitur ei, quia hec est strata via videlicet rectissima., Wilhelm von Tripolis, *Notitia; De statu*, 344-346.

supported Christian interpretations of Christ's divinity.³⁸² Paul of Antioch is explicit on this point, arguing that,

All the Muslims say that the book is the word of God, and no one speaks except a living being. These attributes of the substance are like names, and each one of the attributes is not like the other, and [yet] God is one. As for the Word of God, which is creator, uniting with a created human, the exalted Creator never addressed any of the prophets except through revelation or from behind a veil...so the Qur'ān approves of God appearing through a veil, and Christ in his humanity is God's veil, through whom God spoke to creation.³⁸³

In both the Qur'ān and Islamic tradition, God is called by a number of names, the most important of which corresponded to key attributes or manifestations. Reference to these became one of the primary ways that Christians such as Paul defended Christianity from Muslim claims that it was a polytheistic theology. While Paul's discussion is deeper than what we find in the *Notitia* or *De statu*, both authors are attempting to show how a unified God can have three distinct aspects. According to William, this was one of the primary obstacles in discussions with Muslims. As he explains it,

[Muslims] are amazed when they hear the mystery of the divine and godly Trinity, without which no one on earth truly understands God. For when they hear that God -whom they worship, and say is the creator of heaven and earth and all creatures-, created everything from nothing except his Word, co-eternal with him, they gladly concede that God has a Word, through which everything was created and without which nothing

³⁸² The 13th century treatise, *al-radd al-jamil*, for example, a refutation of Christ's divinity that concludes with a long exegesis of the Qur'ān's use of the term "word" in Q 4:171. Abu Hamid al-Ghazali (Pseudo Ghazali), *al-Radd al-jamil: A Fitting Refutation of the Divinity of Jesus*, eds. Mark Beaumont and Maha El Kaisy-Friemuth (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 175-193; Mark Beaumont, "Muslim Readings of John's Gospel in the 'Abbāsīd Period," *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 19, no. 2 (2008): 179-197; Constance E. Padwick, "Al-Ghazali and the Arabic Versions of the Gospels: An Unsolved Problem," *The Muslim World* 29, no. 2 (1939): 130-140; James Sweetman, *Islam and Christian Theology: A Study of the Interpretation of Theological Ideas in Two Religions* (Cambridge: James Clarke & Co., 2002), 174-196.

³⁸³ وسائر المسلمين يقولون ان الكتاب كلام الله, ولا يكون كلام الالحي ناطق. وهذه فصفاة جوهرية تجري مجرى اسما. وكل صفة منها غير الاخرى. والاله واحد. وأما اتحاد كلمة الله الخالفة بإنسان مخلوق فإنه لم يخاطب الباري تعالى احدا من الانبياء إلا وحيا او من وراء حجاب...فقد جوز القرآن ظهور الله في حجاب, والمسيح بناسوته حجاب الله الذي كلم الله الخلق منه. Khoury, *Paul d'Antioche*, 75.

happened. Moreover, when they hear that God, who is word-like, that is having a Word, alive and the life of life, that He gives life to all living things, in whom life lives, the unfailing fount of life, from which all physical and spiritual creatures draw, they concede that God has life or the Spirit which we call holy. And when they understand that the word of God is divinely and eternally generated by God, and that the Holy Spirit is born from God, the creator, and the eternally created Word, they understand that Father, Son, and Holy spirit are three things or persons, according to themselves, in whom is one divinity, one glory, one divine essence, one virtue, one power, and one God. For if God, who is worshiped by all, did not have a word, then they understand that God would be mute. Indeed, if God did not have the Spirit, then one might say that God is neither alive nor dead, that to believe in God is evil.³⁸⁴

William's claim that Muslims are "amazed" when they hear the doctrine of the Trinity should not be overlooked. No 'ālim would be surprised by any of this, and William knows it. Educated Muslims are not, however, the focus of his efforts. Rather, William has taken a standard, eastern Christian apologetic approach, and repurposed it. Where eastern Christians such as Paul of Antioch or the authors of the *Risāla min ahl jazīrat Qubruş* exploited certain Qur'ānic language to defend their communities, William is using the same language to persuade uneducated Muslims who might not be familiar with such arguments. The core of his "simple message" is emotional, intended to tap the visceral connection many Muslims had to beloved stories about the Virgin Mary and her

³⁸⁴ Mirantur, quando audiunt divine et deifice Trinitatis misterium, sine cuius cognition non habetur de Deo vero in terra scientia. Nam cum audient, quod Deus, quem colunt, ut aiunt, est creator celi et terre et creaturarum omnium, qui creavit omnia ex nichilo verbo suo sibi coeterno, concedunt gaudentes, quod Deus habeat verbum, per quod creata sunt universa et sine ipso factum est nichil. Item cum audiunt, quod Deus, qui est verbalis, hoc est habens verbum, sit vivus et vita vitarum, vitam tribuens viventibus cunctis, in se vita vivens, fons vite indeficiens, unde vitam hauriunt corporalis creatura et spiritualis, concedunt Deum habere vitam sive spiritum, quem dicimus sanctum. Et dum colligunt, quod verbum Dei est a Deo per divinam et eternam generationem, et spiritum sanctum Dei procedure a Deo generante et verbo generato eternaliter, intelligent Patrem et Filium et Spiritum Sanctum tres res per se entes sive personas, in quibus est una deitas, una maiestas, una divina essentia, una virtus, una potentia et unus Deus. Nam si ille, qui colitur ab omnibus, Deus non haberet verbum, intelligunt utique, quod esset Deus mutus. Item si non haberet spiritum, nonne dici posset Deus non vivus aut mortuus, quod nefas est sentire de Deo., Wilhelm von Tripolis, *Notitia; De statu*, 366.

son Jesus. Whether William was entirely aware of it, his tactic was effective because there was a precedent for it in the traditions that the popular preachers had cultivated.

William continues to build his case, emphasizing the way certain passages could be used to engender emotional responses. In his discussion of the mystery of the Incarnation, William claims that,

When [Muslims] hear that every living thing was created by the Word of God, and every prophecy was brought forth by the Word of God, and all wisdom was revealed to men by the Word of God, that through the Word of God the dead have been resurrected, merits distributed (?), and the oppressed repaid (?), they exclaim: 'Father! A great virtue of God is this Word!', and conclude: 'Whoever is ignorant of the word of God is equally ignorant of God himself.' And when they again hear the testimony of their law, which is quoted above, where the angels say: 'O Mary, God declares to you, bringing news of a Word from his mouth, and his name is Jesus Christ, son of Mary-, all are compelled to say, and say [in fact] that, 'Jesus Christ is truly the Word of God', as in Saint John: 'In the beginning was the Word, and the word was with God, and God was the Word. Everything through it is made and without it nothing exists.' Indeed, there is a great article of belief among the Saracens: 'Abraham is the friend of God, Moses is God's spokesman, Jesus, son of Mary, the Word and Spirit of God, and Muḥammad is the messenger of God.' Among these Jesus, the Word of God, is superior, whose great praises have been demonstrated above. Thus, [Muslims] accept that Jesus is the Word of God, incarnated in the womb of the virgin, and this same incarnated word, born from the womb of a virgin, is named Jesus, son of Mary.³⁸⁵

³⁸⁵ Item quando audiunt, quod omnis creatura per verbum Dei creata est et omnis prophetia per verbum Dei illata est et omnis sapientia Dei atque scientia per verbum Dei hominibus revalata est et per verbum Dei fieri debeat resurrectio mortuorum, discussio meritorum, retributio premiorum, exclamant: Pape, magna virtus Dei est hoc verbum! Et concludunt: Qui ignorat Dei verbum, ignorat pariter et ipsum Deum. Et iterum cum audiunt testimonium legis eorum, quod ostensum est supra, ubi dictum est per angelos: O Maria, Deus annuntiabit sive evangelizabit tibi verbum ex ore suo et vocabitur nomen eius Iesus Christus Marie filius, compelluntur omnes dicere et dicunt omnes: Iesus Christus est vere verbum Dei, com beato Iohanne: In principio erat verbum et verbum erat apud Deum et Deus erat verbum; omnia per ipsum facta sunt et sine ipso factum est nichil. Unde apud dictos Sarracenos in genere credendorum est articulus grandis: Abraham est amicus Dei, Moyses autem prolocutor Dei, Iesus Marie filius verbum et spiritus Dei et Machometus est Dei nuntius. Inter quos quatuor Iesus, verbum Dei, est maior, cuius magnitudinis laudes et preconia monstrata sunt supra; et sic recipiunt, quod dominus Iesus est verbum Dei in utero virginis

While William surely overstates the universal effectiveness of this argument, it was clearly a provocative one as evidenced by its continued appearance in Muslim-Christian dialogues. Indeed, William's contemporary, the Damascene imām Ibn Abī Ṭālib al-Dimashqī (d. 1321), spent nearly a third of his *Jawāb risālat ahl jazīrat Qubruş*, or “reply to the letter of the people of Cyprus,” refuting the line of reasoning that William and other eastern Christian writers used to great effect. As al-Dimashqī argues,

You also say about the Word: it took flesh from Mary and was a physical object together with the physical object with which it was united without separation. When this child who was mixed was crucified, as you claim, and experienced death, the experiences that affected him also affected life and the Father, the two remaining hypostases, and the structure of the Trinitarian God, as you claim it, was destroyed when it lost speech. The condition of Adam and his descendants returned to a worse state than before, when he disobeyed the God of heaven, as you claim, and the god of earth grew powerful when he killed the son of the God of heaven. Think about all this lamentable ridiculousness, and either lament it or ridicule the minds that harbor this opinion and maintain this teaching.³⁸⁶

Al-Dimashqī might claim that the notion of Qur'ānic support for a Christian interpretation of Christ's status was “ridiculousness”, but he and other Muslim writers spent considerable effort refuting it, which indicates they took it seriously. To put a finer point on it, there would not have been a need to challenge this idea unless al-Dimashqī believed some of his co-religionists might be susceptible to it.

incarnatum et ipsum verbum incarnatum, de virgine natum, Iesus filius Marie nominatum., Wilhelm von Tripolis, *Notitia; De statu*, 368.

و قليم أيضا في الكلمتين وإنما تجسمت من مريم فكانت جسما مع الجسم متحدة به بغير انفصال. فلما صلب هذا الولد الممزوج بزعمكم و³⁸⁶ ذاق الموت اتصل ذوقان ذلك الى الحياة والى الاب الأقومين الباقيين و نقض تركيب الإله المتألف بزعمكان عند فقده للنطق وعاد أمر آدم و ذريته الى شر مما كانوا عليه و عطلت الهيئة اله السماء بزعمكم و عظم اله الأرض عند قتله لابن اله السماء. فتدبروا هذه الأضحو كانت المبكيات و ابكوا منها أو اضحكوا على عقول رأيت هذا الرأي و ذهبت هذا المذهب. Ebied and Thomas, eds., *Muslim-Christian Polemic*, 418.

In addition to the discussion of Christ's status as the Word of God, other topics of regular debate in eastern Muslim-Christian dialogue are reflected in William's collection of *testimonia*. William translates, for example, Q 19:22-26, in which Jesus attempts to comfort Mary from the womb while she experiences labor pains by causing a nearby palm tree to bend and offer her its dates.³⁸⁷ This is followed by Mary's return to her hometown with the newborn Christ, who speaks to her kinsmen from the cradle, confirming the miraculous details of his birth. The scene concludes with Christ declaring, "peace upon me the day I was born and the day I will die and the day I am raised alive."³⁸⁸ The last part of this verse was especially important, used by eastern Christians to demonstrate that Christ was superior among all the prophets. As the authors of the *Risāla min ahl jazīrat Qubruş* argue,

The Qur'ān witnesses that [Christ] spoke in the cradle and wished peace upon himself, 'Peace on me the day I was born, and the day I die, and the day I shall be raised alive!' Consider this instance of a child being made mighty enough to wish peace upon his own self alone; if there had been any other who was more prominent than him he would have wished peace upon this other. Observe how profound this address is, in that he was pre-eminent over creation and wished blessings and peace to himself, for if there had been any human before or after him more glorious than he, he would have wished peace upon him and then followed with a greeting on himself. The Qur'ān also says that God made Mary and her son a sign to the worlds, which supports the preceding explanation. If the rank of the

³⁸⁷ Q 19:22-26; concepit Maria filium et abiit cum eo in locum longinquum et remotum; et cum advenisset tempus partus, peperit sub palma, et tunc dixit: O utinam mortua fuisset, antequam hoc evenisset michi et oblivioni fuisset tradita! Et mox natus de ea dixit: Ne tristeris, ait, posuit sub te Deus secretum. Trahe ad te ramum palme cum fructu et super te cadet fructus electus et maturus. Comede ex eo et bibe et esto leta! Et cum apparuerit tibi quispiam et dicet Comede, dices: Ego vovi ieiunium misericordi Deo, et nemini loquaris, quasi tene secretum, Wilhelm von Tripolis, *Notitia; De statu*, 348.

³⁸⁸ Q 19:27-33; O Maria, rem grandem egisti. O soror Aaron, genitor tuus non fuit malus homo et mater tua non exposuit se. Illa vero tacens monstravit puerum et dixerunt: Quomodo loquitur infans in cunabulis? Et ipse puer dixit: Ego sum servus Dei et Deus dedit michi librum et me fecit benedictum prophetam, ubicumque ero. Et precepit michi semper orare et servare innocentiam, dum vita durat, iustificando matrem meam, ne inveniar rebellis passibilis. Salus et pax super me die, qua natus sum, die, qua moriar, et die, qua vivus resurgam, Wilhelm von Tripolis, *Notitia; De statu*, 348.

complete man born from Mary outstrips the ranks of all humans in exaltedness, including the prophets, the blessed and the angels, to the limit I have described of the creative Word of God and his Spirit uniting with him, then he must be perfection.³⁸⁹

William not only highlights the same ayat, but uses them to make the same point, introducing his translation of Q 2:253 by saying, “moreover, Christ is praised [in this passage], and it is said that, among all the prophets, he is more eminent and supersedes them all..”³⁹⁰ In addition, at the end of the paragraph quoted above, William refers to a saying among the Saracens that, “Abraham is the friend of God, Moses is God’s spokesman, Jesus, son of Mary, the Word and Spirit of God, and Muḥammad is the messenger of God.”³⁹¹ He claims that, “among these, Jesus, the Word of God, is superior, whose great praises have been demonstrated...” One of the striking things is that the Muslim dictum that William mentions is not in the Qur’ān as he presents it.³⁹² Rather, it is a composite saying that gestures toward multiple ayat scattered throughout the Qur’ān, such as Q 4:125, which reads, “and who is better in religion than one who submits himself to Allah while being a doer of good and follows the religion of Abraham,

و قد شهد القرآن انه تكلم في المهد و سلم على نفسه وقال السلام علي يوم ولدت ويوم أموت ويوم أبعث حياً فتأملوا أمر طفل يعظم الى 389 أن يسلم على نفسه خاصة فلو أن غيره أمثل منه سلم على غيره. هيبات ما أعمق هذا الخطاب حتى يفخر على الخلق و يصلّي على نفسه ويسلم فلو كان بشري قبله أو بعده أجل منه كان يسلم عليه ثم يعطف بالسلام على نفسه. وايضا فإن القرآن ينطق بأن الله جعل مريم وابنها آية للعالمين, و هذا يؤيد ما تقدم شرحه. واذا كان الاصفىء و الملائكة الى هذا الحد الذي و صفته من التحده بكلمة الله الخالقى و روحه و جب أن يكون هو الكمال. Ebied and Thomas, eds., *Muslim-Christian Polemic*, 144.

³⁹⁰ Item laudatur Christus et dicitur excellentior inter omnes prophetas et super omnes, et dicit sic: multi sunt nuntii et pretulimus alterum alteri et ex ipsis sunt, quos Deus allocutus est et per gradus quosdam pretulit ex eis. Dedimus autem signa manifesta, miracula et prodigia Iesu, Marie filio et confortavimus eum per Spiritum Sanctum. Et si Deus voluisset, guerre non extitissent post miracula visa. Sed diversi sunt homines: sunt quidam, qui credunt, et alii, qui discredunt. Deus autem facit, quod vult., Wilhelm von Tripolis, *Notitia; De statu*, 352-54.

³⁹¹ This saying, as William presents it, does not appear in any extant Islamic source that I am familiar with. As the paragraph will explain, this seems to be a composite saying that may reflect spoken rather than literary discourse.

³⁹² For example, Bukhari Book 1, Hadith 390. Imām Abul Hussain Muslim bin al-Hajjaj, ed. *Sahīh Muslim*, vol. 1 (Riyadh: Darussalam, 2007), 245-46.

inclining toward truth? And Allah took Abraham as an intimate friend.” This demonstrates his relatively deep knowledge of the eastern Muslim-Christian discourses that his entire rhetorical approach attempts to engage with. This discourse was utterly unlike the usual absurdist descriptions of Islam and its prophet found in most Latin polemics. Rather, William, just like the eastern Christians who influenced his approach, is attempting to build an argument from a common discursive ground that Muslims accept. Moreover, the rhetorical punch of this argument is based in those aspects of Islamic piety that were among the most emotionally resonant.

Another of the themes in common between William’s collection of *testimonia* and the eastern Christian polemical and apologetic writings that grounded their arguments in the Qur’ān, is that Christians, broadly considered, are juxtaposed against the Jews, who are condemned for their unbelief. As Paul of Antioch maintains,

we Christians have never done a single thing such as the Jews did. And for this reason in the Qur’ān it says , ‘you will find the most vehement of mankind in hostility to those who believe the Jews and the idolaters. And you will find the nearest of them in affection to those who believe those who say: Yes, we are Christians. That is because there are among them priests and monks, so that it cannot be said that this is said about anyone other than us. In this he points to our fine deeds, presents the goodness of our intentions positively, and denies the name of polytheism with regard to us, in his words, ‘the Jews and the idolaters are the most vehement in hostility to those who believe, and the Christians are closest to them in affection.’ Furthermore, he says in The Cow, ‘those who believe, and those who are Jews, and Christians, and Sabaeans—whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day and does right--- surely their reward is with their Lord, and there no fear shall come upon them nor shall they grieve’. Here he makes all people, Muslims and others, equal.³⁹³

وأما نحن النصارى لم نعمل شيئا مما عملته اليهود، ولذلك جاء في القرآن يقول: لتجدن أشد الناس عداوة للذين آمنوا اليهود و الذين اشر³⁹³ كوا و لتجدن اقربهم مودة ذلك بان منهم قسيسين و رهبانا وانهم لا يستكبرون. فقد ذكر القسيسين والرهبان لنلا يوقال ان هذا قيل عن غيرنا،

As discussed in the first chapter, Christian and Jewish communities competed among themselves in contexts where both were under Islamic dominion. Q 5:82, which praises “priests and monks” for their humility, was one of the primary passages that Christian apologists referred to when arguing for their community’s superior status as compared to the Jews. As he has done throughout his work, William takes this theme and adjusts it for his own purposes, associating anyone who would doubt his evangelical line of argument with Jewish unbelief. As William explains,

Regarding the wickedness of the Jews against Christ and his blessed virgin mother, the [Qur’ān] says: only a few of the Jews have believed and in their unbelief and rebellion they invented a great lie about Mary and Christ, saying: ‘We did not kill Christ, son of Mary.’ They did not crucify nor kill him, but one who looked like him. Furthermore, those who disagree about Jesus, they do not have [true] knowledge, because the Jews did not kill him, but God carried him and raised him to himself and exalted him [to heaven]. And God is caring and wise.³⁹⁴

William seems to be copying Qur’ānic discourse in this passage while addressing one of the standard attacks against Christ’s divinity, namely: that someone else died in his place, which appears in some of the earliest hadiths. Instead of directly attacking this claim, however, William takes one element of it, the Jewish role in Jesus’ death, and shifts the

ودلّ بهذا على جميل افعالنا و حسن نياتنا. نعم ونفى عَنَّا اسم الشرك بقوله، اليهود و الذين أشركوا كوا أشدَّ عداوة للذين امنوا و النصرارى أقر بهم مودة. و قال ايضا في سورة البقرة: إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَالَّذِينَ هَادُوا وَالنَّصَارَى وَالصَّابِئِينَ مِنْ آمَنَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَ عَمِلُوا صَالِحًا فَلَهُمْ أَجْرُهُمْ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ وَ لَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَ لَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ. و افصل في هذا القول بين سائر الناس المسلمين و غير هم. Ebied and Thomas, eds., *Muslim-Christian Polemic*, 82.

³⁹⁴ De malitia Iudeorum contra Christum et beatam virginem matrem eius, et sic dicit: de Iudeis non crediderunt nisi pauci et in infidelitate sua et verbositate mentiti sunt super Mariam mendacium magnum et super Christum dicentes: Nos interfecimus Christum, Marie filium. Sed non crucifixerunt eum nec interfecerunt, sed simile eius. Porro qui discrepant a Iesu, de eo procul dubio non habent scientiam, quia Iudei non interfecerunt eum, sed Deus eum sustulit et elevavit ad se et exaltavit. Et Deus est carus et sapiens., Wilhelm von Tripolis, *Notitia; De statu*, 354-56.

blame entirely to their community. Indeed, William targets the Jews as the primary reason for any doubt about Christ's status, claiming that,

the [Qur'ān] says that Jesus, Son of Mary, was given as a sign, but the Jews did not believe, but turned away from him and said: 'our gods are better,' and they did not confront him except with obstinate arguments. And he was not but a servant, and we gave his grace and wisdom as an example to the sons of Israel. And Christ, when he came, said: I come to you with wisdom to demonstrate to you, concerning those things which divide you. Fear God and obey Him, because God is my God and your God. Honor him, because this is the right way, which is called 'the path of grace which in Arabic is 'sirat.'³⁹⁵

While Q 43:57-59's statement that Christ was "but a servant" was an attack on Christian claims that Christ was also the son of God, William's focus is not on this, but Jewish unbelief. As described above, this was a common refrain in eastern Christian polemic. Indeed, in an attack on Jewish unbelief, the authors of the *Risāla min ahl jazīrat Qubrus* quote the book of Ezekiel, in which God says, "Indeed, I have withdrawn my hand from the People of Israel and have scattered them among the nations, because they have not acted according to my injunctions and have not obeyed me. They have offended me in what I said to them and they have not listened to me.'...But we Christians have never done a single thing such as the Jews did."³⁹⁶ William makes a similar point, contrasting believers in Christ with those condemned for their disbelief. Indeed, his attacks on Jewish faithlessness are followed by his translation of a Qur'ānic passage in which God says, "O

³⁹⁵ Positus est Iesus Marie filius in signum, sed Iudei non crediderunt, sed averterunt se ab eo et dixerunt: Nostri dii sunt meliores, nec percusserunt eum nisi disputationibus contentiosis. Et ipse non erat nisi servus et nos dedimus ei gratiam et fecimus eum exemplum filiis Israel. Et Christus, quando venit, dixit: Ego veni ad vos cum sapientia demonstrando vobis, in quo discordatis. Timete Deum et obedite ei, quia Deus est Deus meus et Deus vester. Colite eum, quia hec est via rectissima, que dicitur 'strata gratie', arabice vero 'sorat'. Wilhelm von Tripolis, *Notitia; De statu*, 356-58.

³⁹⁶ قال الله انها رفعت يدي عن بني اسرائيل وبددتهم بين الامم لانهم لم يعملوا بوصاياي و لم يطيعوني و خالفون فيما قلت لهم و لم يسمعونني... واما نحن النصارى لم نعمل شيئا مما عملته اليهود. Ebied and Thomas, eds., *Christian-Muslim Polemic*, 80.

Jesus, indeed I will take you and raise you to Myself and purify you from those who disbelieve and make those who follow you superior to those who disbelieve until the Day of Resurrection.”³⁹⁷ Eastern Christian authors who employed a comparatively irenic polemical approach were usually writing in a context where Muslims were in power. As a result, it was both dangerous and not terribly effective to attack Muslims directly, or denigrate those things that they held dear. Rather, criticisms were usually indirect, and Islamic traditions were, on the surface at least, respected and then redeployed for the Christian author’s alternative purposes. For such authors, the Jews were a useful target, because there are a number of passages in the Qur’ān that are critical of them. This meant that Christian writers could attack the Jews in a way that was authentic, even if their real goal was defending their community from the kinds of critiques that came from Muslims. They boldly criticized the Jewish community for the type of unbelief that Muslims shared as well, implicitly suggesting that when Muslims levy such attacks they are behaving like Jews. Moreover, by contrasting Christians as a group with the failures and misdeeds of the Jewish community, Christian authors were arguing that their community should occupy a higher social position in the Islamic world.

William was writing in a different social context, but he still makes use of this strategy. In the second chapter, which analyzed William’s account of the Islamic conquests, I argued that recent military setbacks in the Latin East had so destabilized William’s world that he was forced to consider strategies of accommodation should the

³⁹⁷ Q 3:55; Dixit Deus: O Iesu, ego sum mortificator tuus et exaltabo te ad me et purificabo te ab hiis, qui non credunt, et constituimus imitatores tuos super eos, qui discredent, usque ad diem iudicii et in iudicio redibunt ad me omnes et diiudicabo eos, Wilhelm von Tripolis, *Notitia; De statu*, 353.

situation continue to deteriorate. This may partly explain why he made use of this particular anti-Jewish discourse, which could have been used to negotiate the status of his community in the worst-case scenario. More likely, however, this discourse appealed because it became a way to address Muslim counter-arguments to his conversion efforts without directly attacking the traditions and beliefs of the people he hoped to convince. Instead of denigrating Muḥammad or the Qur'ān, he could target a Jewish proxy, implicitly suggesting that those who would interfere with his mission, or question Christ's status, were behaving like Jews. This was a regular topic of debate between Muslims and eastern Christians, and William's engagement with it demonstrates that he was very much attempting to participate in this discussion.

Another parallel between William's testimonial strategy and the eastern Christian traditions he drew from is his discussion of the sacrament of the Eucharist. The Eucharist, which commemorates Christ's blood and body sacrificed for mankind, was a frequent subject that Christian apologists in the Islamic world were compelled to defend.³⁹⁸ Muslim critics rejected what the sacrament commemorated, and reverence for the host appeared, from an Islamic perspective, to veer into the realm of idolatry. In one of the shared passages between Paul of Antioch's *Risāla* and the *Risāla min ahl jazīrat Qubruş*, there is a forceful defense of the sacrament, which insists that:

³⁹⁸ One of the first systematic defenses of the Eucharist and other Christian rites was 'Ammār al-Baṣrī's 9th century *Kitāb al-burhān 'alā siyāqat al-tadbīr al-ilāhī*. This remained a topic of debate throughout the Middle Ages. See, I.M. Beaumont, "Debating the Cross in Early Christian Dialogues with Muslims", in *Jesus and the Cross: Reflections of Christians From Islamic Contexts*, ed. D.E. Singh (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 55-64; D. Thomas, "Explanations of the Incarnation in Early 'Abbāsīd Islam", in *Redefining Christian Identity: Cultural Interaction in the Middle East Since the Rise of Islam*, eds. J.J. van Ginkel, H.L. Murre-Van Den Berg and T.M. van Lint (Louvain, 2005), 127-49; S.H. Griffith, "'Ammār al-Baṣrī's Kitāb al-Burhān: Christian Kalām in the First 'Abbāsīd Century", *Le Muséon* 96 (1983): 145-81.

[Muhammad] commends our communion and warns us that if we abandon what we have or do not believe in what was revealed to us, he will punish us with a punishment which he has not done to anyone in the world. These are his words in the *Table*, ‘when the disciples said: O Jesus, son of Mary! Is the Lord able to send down for us a table spread with food from heaven? He said: Observe your duty to God if you are true believers. [The disciples said:] we wish to eat from it, that we may satisfy our hearts and know that you have spoken truly to us, and that of it we may be witnesses. Jesus, son of Mary, said: ‘O God, Lord of us. Send down for us a table spread with food from heaven, that it may be a feast for us, for the first of us and for the last of us, and a sign from you. Give us sustenance, for you are the best of providers.’ God said: ‘yes, I sent it down for you. And whoever of you does not believe after, I will punish with a punishment of the kind that I have not punished any creature.’ The table is the holy communion which we receive in every communion service. Thus, in light of these arguments, it is not appropriate for reasonable people to abandon the Holy Spirit and the Word of God, both of whom are greatly praised in the book. For he says about him, ‘there is not one of them but will believe in him before his death, and on the day of resurrection he will be a witness against them.’³⁹⁹

Both Paul of Antioch and the authors of the *Risāla min ahl jazīrat Qubruş* are attempting to justify Christian reverence for the host, and curb any efforts by Muslim authorities to limit their worship. Their argument is based in Q 5:112-115, which does, as both accurately relate, describe a table sent down from heaven. Their innovation is a subtle, but significant one, claiming that the table sent from heaven is actually the communion table. Thus, any attack on it is an attack on a blessing sent directly from God.

In one of the most striking parallels between the *Notitia* and *De statu*'s curated collection of *testimonia* and this line of eastern Christian argument, William has mirrored

ثم انه مدح قراييننا وتوعدنا ان اهملنا ما معنا أو كفرنا انزل الينا يعذبنا عذابا لم يعذب به أحد من العالمين بقوله في سورة المائدة قال قال الحواريون يا عيسى ابن مريم هل يستطيع ربك أن ينزل علينا مائدة من السماء قال اتقوا الله ان كنتم مؤمنين قالوا نريد ان نأكل منها ونطمئن قلوبنا ونعلم ان قد صدقتنا ونكون عليها من الشاهدين قال قيسى ابن مريم اللهم ربنا أنزل علينا مائدة من السماء تكون لنا عيدا لأولنا و اخرنا و اية منك وارزقنا و انت خير الرازقين قال الله اني منزلها عليكم فمن يكفر بعد منكم فاني اعدّبه عذابا لا اعدّبه احدا من العالمين. فالمائدة هي القربان الذي نتقرب منه في كلّ قدّاس. ولما تقدّم به القول لانه غير لائق عند ذوي الالباب ان يهمل روح القدس و كلمة الله الذين شهد لهم. في هذا الكتاب بالعظائم. وقال عنه انّ عنه انّ ايا منهم لا يؤمن به قبل موته يوم القيامة يكون عليهم شهيدا. Ebied and Thomas, eds., *Muslim-Christian Polemic*, 84.

this approach and taken it a step further. In William’s account, the disciples, whom he calls “*hau arion*”, a transliteration of the Arabic word “الحواريين”, appeal to Jesus to ask God to send a table down from heaven.⁴⁰⁰ Jesus concedes to their request, and beseeches God to “send down to us a table from heaven to be for us a festival for the first of us and the last of us and a sign from you.” God grants Jesus’ request, but warns them that, “whoever disbelieves afterwards from among you, then indeed I will punish him with a punishment by which I have not punished anyone among the worlds.” William’s translation not only mirrors what we find in Paul of Antioch’s *Risāla* and the *Risāla min ahl jazīrat Qubruş*, but he makes the identical apologetic point, saying, “the sacrament of the table of God is mentioned (which is the altar) where it says: the helpers (these are Christ’s disciples) said to Jesus: O Jesus, son of Mary, surely your God is able to give us a table from heaven?”⁴⁰¹ William calls the table, or “مائدة”, “the sacrament of the table of God (which is the altar)”. Nowhere in the Qur’ān is the table associated with the sacraments, nor is it called an “altar”. Rather, William, much like the eastern Christians

⁴⁰⁰ *Hawariyun* literally means helpers, and some contemporary Muslim ‘*ulamā*’ disputed that the *hawariyun* should automatically be understood as Christians. The scholar Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 1209), for example, argued that the Qur’ān’s positive appraisal of Christ’s helpers only applied to those whose conception of God conformed to an Islamic view, not Christians generally. Jacques Waardenburg, *Muslim Perceptions of Other Religions: A Historical Survey* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 109; Al-Rāzī, *I’tiqadat firaq al-Muslimin wa-l-mushrikun*, ed. M. Sakakini (Cairo, 1992), 136; A. Shihadeh, “From al-Ghazali to al-Rāzī: 6th/12th Century Developments in Muslim Philosophical Theology,” *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy* 15 (2005): 141-79.

⁴⁰¹ Item demonstrator sacramentum mense Dei, quod est altare, ubi sic dicitur: dixerunt hau arion, hoc est discipuli Christi, ad Iesum: O Iesu fili Marie, poteritne Deus tuus dare nobis mensam de celo? Et dixit Iesus: Timete Dominum, si estis fideles et credentes. Qui dixerunt: Volumus comedere ex ea et certificabuntur corda nostra et sciemus vere, quia exaudieris nos, et erimus super eam de testibus. Et dixit Iesus ad Deum: O Domine Deus noster, descendat super nos mensa de celo et erit nobis festum et predecessoribus nostris et successoribus nostris et erit signum a te; et da nobis gratiam bonam, quia tu melior in datoribus. Respondit autem Deus: Faciemus mensam descendere super vos et eum, qui incredulus extiterit post vos; torquebo eum et puniam pena, qua maiore non puniam aliquem de mundanis, Wilhelm von Tripolis. *Notitia und De statu*, 358.

who influenced him, is giving this passage a Christian gloss by associating the table with the Eucharist.

Earlier in this chapter, we discussed the complaints of the ‘ulamā’ that Christians were adept at exploiting the ignorance of uneducated Muslims, effectively conflating Christian and Muslim traditions. Ibn Taymiyaa was especially apoplectic, complaining that,

[Christians] have also brought Muslims to visit churches and sanctuaries which they venerate, and many ignorant Muslims have been led to present votive offerings to the places that the Nazarenes venerate. Many ignorants among them have similarly been led to visit the churches of the Nazarenes and to ask for the *baraka* (grace) of their priests, of their monks, etc.⁴⁰²

In a chapter of *De statu* titled “what draws Saracens to the faith of Christ” William writes that, “credulity and a certain common conception in the hearts of all draws [Muslims] to the true faith as if it were already known...”⁴⁰³ What we see here, and what Ibn Taymiyya was so alarmed by, was the degree to which Christian and Muslim traditions overlapped, and blurred the distinctions between them. William of Tripoli was attempting to lead Muslims to accept Christian baptism, but rather than negating what they already knew, his approach emphasized the stories and traditions that both Christianity and Islam held in common. These stories and traditions did, indeed, exist in their hearts as if they were “already known.”

In the final chapter of *De statu*, William concludes with the observation that,

⁴⁰² See above.

⁴⁰³ *Attrahit etiam eos ad veram fidem credulitas et quedam communis conceptio in cordibus omnium tamquam prescientia sita, Wilhelm von Tripolis. Notitia und De statu, 360.*

Therefore, when [Muslims] hear that there is a perfect and complete faith in the doctrine of Christ, which is knowledge of God, the path [to which] is the one and only precept given to believers: love of God and one's neighbor, or true friendship -which alone fulfills all the precepts of God-, and that the future reward for believers is a beautiful life with the angels in heaven, a hoped for eternal bliss, then they will surely embrace the aforementioned virtues. And thus, with a simple message of God, without philosophical arguments or force of arms, they are prodded to accept Christ's baptism and cross over into the flock of God. This was dictated and written by one who, by God's authority, has baptized more than a thousand.⁴⁰⁴

Unlike prior analyses of William's work, which have dismissed his claims based on the assumption that his approach was similar to the "consciously ineffective" tactics of his peers, this chapter has attempted to reveal William's "simple message," and explain why it was effective in ways other western missionary efforts were not. William's evangelical strategy was built upon a common ground of stories and traditions that Christianity and Islam shared with one another. These stories had been cultivated by an Islamic tradition of popular preaching, and William, whether he was entirely aware of it, was tapping into it with his approach. While most Muslims were not convinced to accept Christian baptism, some were, and this did not require the desperation that came with being a slave or prisoner-of-war. William's strategy has not been appreciated, because it was informed by eastern Christian polemical and apologetic approaches to Islam. The dominant socio-cultural narrative of life in the Latin East has denied that western Christians participated

⁴⁰⁴ Item quando audiunt, quod in doctrina Christi continetur fides perfecta et integra, que est cognitio Dei in via et solum et unicum Dei preceptum datum credentibus, quod est Dei et proximi dilectio sive vera amicitia, que sola implet omnia Dei precepta, et merces credentium est in futuro cum angelis in celo vita beata, sperata beatitudo scilicet eterna, profecto amplectuntur virtutes memoratas. Et sic simplici sermone Dei sine philosophicis argumentis sive militaribus armis sicut oves simplices petunt baptismum Christi et transeunt in ovile Dei. Hoc dixit et scripsit, qui auctore Deo plus quam mille iam baptizavit., Wilhelm von Tripolis. *Notitia und De statu*, 370.

in the indigenous conversations that defined the inter-religious contours of this milieu. Eastern Christians in the Islamic world often attempted to defend their religious practices and negotiate their community's status on a Qur'ānic basis, using stories and traditions that were familiar to Muslims. While William was writing in a different social context, his approach was heavily indebted to theirs, and he took the arguments they had fashioned and redeployed them for his own missionary purposes. William of Tripoli's work demonstrates that the Latin East was thoroughly rooted in its context. Men like William occupied a liminal space. They were a part of the intellectual world of the Latin West, but they were also products of their local context. William's approach shows one of the important ways this context concretely influenced a Latin mind.

CHAPTER 5

William of Tripoli and an Acculturated Latin Eastern Perspective

In the year 1214, Jacques de Vitry, canon regular at the priory of Saint-Nocalas d'Oignies in the Diocesis of Liège, was elected Bishop of Acre, despite having never visited the Holy Land. He arrived in the Latin East two years later, and spent the following decade touring the Levant and participating in the Fifth Crusade's siege of Damietta. During this time Vitry wrote a number of letters back home that described the see that was now under his spiritual care, but toward which he had no love. He was especially vicious in his appraisal of the city of Acre, describing it "like a monster or a beast, having nine heads, each fighting the other."⁴⁰⁵ In Vitry's analogy, each of these heads corresponded to a different religious community. The city was home, for example, to the "Jacobites with their archbishop, who in the manner of Jews were circumcising their children and revealed their sins in confession to no one except to God."⁴⁰⁶ This was unacceptable to Vitry, who wanted uniformity of rite and custom, and sought to bend each head of this beast to Rome's authority. Worst of all were the "Syrians", who were, according to Vitry, "traitors and very corrupt men, for having been bought up among the

⁴⁰⁵ R.B.C. Huygens, *Lettres de Jacques de Vitry, 1160/1170-1240, eveque de Saint-Jean d'Acre* (Leiden, 1960), 83. See also, J. Tolan, *Saint Francis and the Sultan* (Oxford, 2009), 19-39; D.J. Birch, "Jacques de Vitry and the ideology of pilgrimage", in *Pilgrimage explored*, ed. J. Stopford (Woodbridge UK, 1999), 79-93; G. Duchet-Suchaux, "Jacques de Vitry" *Bulletin de la Société Nationale des Antiquaires de France* (1999): 187-94; J. Folda, "Jerusalem and the Holy Sepulchre Through the Eyes of Crusader Pilgrims", in *The real and Ideal Jerusalem in Jewish, Christian and Islamic art: Studies in Honor of Bezalel Narkiss on the Occasion of His Seventieth Birthday*, ed. B. Kühnel (Jerusalem, 1998), 158-64; M. Sandor, "Jacques de Vitry – biography", in *De l'homélie au sermon : Histoire de la prédication médiévale. Actes du Colloque international de Louvain-la-Neuve, 9-11 juillet 1992*, eds. J. Hamesse and X. Hermand (Louvain-la-Neuve, 1993), 53-59; J. Pryor, "The voyage of Jacques de Vitry from Genoa to Acre, 1216: Juridical and economical problems in medieval navigation", in *Derecho de la navegación in Europa*, ed. M. Peláez (Barcelona, 1987), 1689-1714.

⁴⁰⁶ Huygens, *Lettres de Jacques de Vitry*, 84.

Saracens, they had adopted their bad character, and some of them, who had been bribed, revealed the secrets of Christianity to the Saracens.”⁴⁰⁷ Vitry gave a number of sermons via Arabic interpreters to these religious communities in order to bring them in line, and “through the grace of God they were so struck by conscience that both their bishop and his followers manifested their obedience to me and promised me faithfully that they would live according to my recommendations.”⁴⁰⁸ We have no evidence, however, that any of the eastern churches actually modified their rites or customs in order to accommodate Vitry.

While Vitry intended his characterization of Acre as a condemnation, from another angle it reveals an important, albeit unintended truth about life in the Latin East. On the surface, where the beast’s heads were most visible, Acre was a place of great religious diversity with overlapping spheres of influence, but underneath was a body that joined them all together, pumping the blood and breath into each of its heads. This chapter will examine this body to determine what it was made of, and how it sustained these nine heads even when they appeared at odds with each other. In a recent monograph on the inter-religious veneration of saints in medieval Syria, Josef Meri writes that for Muslims the process of recognizing a saint was “both personal and informal as it was often based on the popular consensus of common people and disciples and their interaction with saints.”⁴⁰⁹ Popular consensus and personal interaction were two of the fundamental components that allowed the beast’s body to function. While there were

⁴⁰⁷ Huygens, *Lettres de Jacques de Vitry*, 84.

⁴⁰⁸ Huygens, *Lettres de Jacques de Vitry*, 85.

⁴⁰⁹ Josef Meri, *The Cult of Saints among Muslims and Jews in Medieval Syria* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 66.

many surface differences that separated the religious communities of the Levant from one another, beneath it all were a shared set of symbols, values, and practices that bound them all together. Prior chapters have discussed popular reverence for figures such as Jesus, the Virgin Mary, and the monk Bahira, that transcended the sectarian boundaries of any single religious community. Symbols such as these were so transcendent, in fact, that some Islamic elites were alarmed by their potential for exploitation. Ibn Taymiyya, for example, complained that Christians had explicitly exploited Muslim regard for these sites by bringing them “to visit churches and sanctuaries which they venerate, and many ignorant Muslims have been led to present votive offerings to the places that the Nazarenes venerate...to visit the churches of the Nazarenes and to ask for the *baraka* (grace) of their priests, of their monks”.⁴¹⁰ For all that divided Muslims and Christians, both communities believed that holy men and women had imbued certain places and objects with grace, or *baraka*, and popular consensus on this point led Muslims, Christians, and sometimes Jews to venerate the same sites and objects. The mutual convergence and interaction of different sectarian communities at these sites was actually further affirmation for the pilgrims who flocked there that these objects and places emanated divine power.

One such site, which will be discussed in greater detail below, was a well in the Old City of Cairo, which both Muslim and Christian popular traditions claimed the Holy

⁴¹⁰See prior chapter. Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmu' al-fatawa*, ed. 'A.R. b. M. Ibn Qasim (Rabat: Maktabat al-Ma'arif, 1402/1981), 22. See also, Y. Rapoport and S. Ahmed (eds), *Ibn Taymiyya and His Times* (Karachi, 2010), 1-67; Y. Michot, “Between Entertainment and Religion: Ibn Taymiyya’s Views on Superstition”, *MW* 99 (2009): 1-20; Y. Michot, *Ibn Taymiyya: Muslims under non-Muslim rule* (Oxford, 2006), 149-69; Y. Michot, “Ibn Taymiyya on Astrology: Annotated Translation of Three Fatwas”, *Journal of Islamic Studies* 11 (2000): 147-208.

Family of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph had rested at during their flight to Egypt. The popularity of this site, and the degree to which it was a place of inter-religious convergence, was observed by later travelers such as Burchard of Strasbourg, an emissary of Frederick II.⁴¹¹ According to Burchard, not only did Muslims and Jews, along with both eastern and western Christians flock to visit this well, but all performed the same ritual act of washing themselves in the water before praying for the Holy Family's blessing. Burchard was impressed enough by this and other examples of convergence that he noted them throughout his description of his travels. While we have no first-hand accounts of the western pilgrims who were washing themselves alongside Muslims and eastern Christians, it is worth asking what effect, if any, this might have had on them. What preconceived ideas did they have about Muslims, and did participating in the same rituals and venerating the same symbols challenge their expectations in any way.

In a discussion of the differences between Latin and Arabic/Syriac polemical and apologetic approaches to Islam, one scholar wrote that,

The main reason for the difference, in this respect, between Catholic Europeans and the Christians living under Muslim rule may very well be that for the latter Islam was a constant, daily challenge and threat that had to be warded off....Theodore Abut Qurra...writes, "it is the habit of the hypocrite Saracens that upon meeting a Christian, they would not greet

⁴¹¹ John Tolan, *Sons of Ishmael: Muslims through European Eyes* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2013), 157-172; M. Milwright, "The Balsam of Matariyya. An Exploration of a Medieval Panacea", *BSOAS* 66 (2003): 193-209; U. Zanetti, "Matarieh. La sainte famille et les baumiers," *Analecta Bollandiana* 111 (1993): 21-68; F. Worstbruck, "Burchard von Straßburg", in *Die Deutsche Literatur des Mittelalters. Verfasserlexicon*, vol. 1 (Berlin and New York, 1978), 118-19; P. Scheffer-Boichorst, "Der Kaiserliche Notar und der Straßburger Viztum Burchard", *Zeitschrift für Geschichte des Oberrheins N.F.* 4 (1889): 456-77; J. Laurent, "Burchard von Straßburg", *Serapeum: Zeitschrift für Bibliothekwissenschaft, Handschriftenkunde und ältere Literatur* 19 (1858): 145-54.

him, but say at once: ‘Christian, this is the testimony—God is one, without an associate, and Muḥammad is his servant and messenger!’⁴¹²

While it is unlikely that Muslims under Frankish dominion would have been as brazen as Abu Qurra’s Muslim interlocutor, and such encounters could be positive or neutral as much as a “challenge” or “threat”, Kedar’s characterization is otherwise apt. Living in a diverse context does allow for interactions that do not happen in situations that are, relatively-speaking, religiously and culturally homogenous. The Near East has been and continues to be a place where religion is a part of the public sphere, discussed in market places and public squares, and for the Latin Christian inhabitants of the Near East, this meant that engagement with Islam and local forms of Christianity was an explicit aspect of their daily lives.⁴¹³ This chapter will highlight the ways in which religious diversity framed the Frankish experience, and led to attitudes and encounters that would have been unfathomable in the heart of Christian Europe.

In 1098, shortly after the conquest of Antioch, the leaders of the First Crusade sent a letter to Pope Urban II expressing a point-of-view that was, at this early stage, unaccustomed to such diversity. Despite all their dramatic, and from their perspective, God-given success, they had encountered other challenges that they were at a loss as to

⁴¹² Benjamin Z Kedar, *Crusade and Mission: European Approaches to the Muslims* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 35-36; Also, B.Z. Kedar, “Convergences of Oriental Christian, Muslim and Frankish worshippers: The case of Şaydnâyâ and the Knights Templar”, in *The crusades and the Military Orders: Expanding the Frontiers of Medieval Latin Christianity*, eds. Z. Hunyadi and J. Laszlovszky (Budapest, 2001), 89-100.

⁴¹³ Eric Rebillard, for example, discusses this as a general phenomenon of the pre-modern, eastern Mediterranean, quoting Gregory of Nyssa, who claimed that Christians in the Levant could not buy a loaf of bread without being grilled on their Christological position. From my own travels in the Near East, I can confirm that religion remains a topic that one regularly discusses with strangers. Eric Rebillard, *Christians and Their Many Identities in Late Antiquity, North Africa, 200-450 CE* (Cornell University Press, 2012), 1-23.

what to do about. They had successfully “subdued the Turks and the pagans,” but they had no plan for the “Greeks and Armenians, Syrians and Jacobites,” whom they had “not been able to overcome.”⁴¹⁴ Their letter was an appeal to Urban himself to come to them, and help them deal with communities that did not fit within the limited religious and social categories that they knew. Two centuries later, the descendants of these first crusaders would not have sent a message like this, as they had developed strategies for accommodating a diversity of “conduct and beliefs that would have been unacceptable in Christian Europe.”⁴¹⁵ One strategy was to ignore this diversity, or what Christopher MacEvitt has called “communities of silence”. He means by this that when writers in the Latin East, such as William of Tyre or Fulcher of Chartres mention eastern Christians, they often minimized religious differences, focusing instead on less problematic linguistic and ethnic markers. This strategy of prioritizing social, cultural, or ethnic identities over religious ones was grounded in the immediate and local, allowing Frankish elites to employ “heretics” as doctors and religious confessors, and erect shrines to eastern saints that were not recognized as such by Rome.⁴¹⁶ When Frankish elites did any

⁴¹⁴ Fulcher of Chartres, *Historia Hierosolymitana*, ed. Heinrich Hagenmeyer, 264. Also, Fulcher of Chartres, *A History of the Expedition to Jerusalem, 1095-1127*, ed. and trans. Frances Rita Ryan (New York, 1972), 111; Christopher Macevitt, *The Crusades and the Christian World of the East: Rough Tolerance* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press), 2008, 1-3; S. Menache, “When Jesus met Mohammed in the Holy Land. Attitudes toward the “Other” in the Crusader Kingdom”, *Medieval Encounters* 15 (2009): 66-85; Jay Rubenstein, “Putting History to Use: Three Crusades Chronicles in Context,” *Viator* (2004), 131-168; A.V. Murray, “Ethnic Identity in the Crusader States: The Frankish Race and the Settlement of Outremer”, in *Concepts of national identity in the Middle Ages*, eds. S. Forde et al (Leeds, 1995), 59-73; P.J. Cole, “Christians, Muslims, and the “liberation” of the Holy Land”, *Catholic Historical Review* 84 (1998): 1-10.

⁴¹⁵ Macevitt, *Rough Tolerance*, 5.

⁴¹⁶ See, for example, Etan Kohlberg and B.Z. Kedar, “A Melkite Physician in Frankish Jerusalem and Ayyubid Damascus: Muwaffaq al-Din Ya’qub b. Siqlab,” *Asian and African Studies* 22 (1988):113-26; Mat Immerzeel, *Identity puzzles: Medieval Christian Art in Syria and Lebanon* (Leuven, 2009), 34-78; Jaroslav Folda, *Crusader Art in the Holy Land, From the Third Crusade to the Fall of Acre* (Cambridge: Cambridge

of these things, however, it was because of personal connections to these individuals, or because they believed the saint had personally intervened for them, not because they were making a broad religious statement.

This strategy of silence, or minimizing religious differences, had another important result: it provided entry into an inter-religious dialogue that Near Eastern communities had used long before the Franks arrived to reach accommodation with neighbors they dogmatically disagreed with. This dialogue was based on a visual and spoken vocabulary that was permeable, and informed by a shared set of symbols, values, and practices. This shared vocabulary was not formally articulated in any systematic way, but was a mostly popular response to the practical realities of interacting in a context where there was a plurality of religious points-of-view. This vocabulary was, moreover, connected to a sharing of space that was so intimate, that an outsider like Jacques de Vitry could not see its utility, but only the superficial ways it resembled a monster trying to eat itself.

As prior chapters have discussed, William of Tripoli made use of this shared vocabulary in a way that Jacques de Vitry did not, because he was a product of the context that created it. The intimacy of this context was sometimes threatening, and as the second chapter discussed, the immediate danger that Sultan Baybars posed to William's home city of Acre so challenged his apocalyptic schema, that he turned to Arabic narratives of the Islamic conquests to make sense of it. William's other rhetorical

University Press, 2005); Ronnie Ellenblum, *Frankish Rural Settlement in the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

choices had a less dramatic origin, however, informed as they were by the daily experiences and interactions that come with life in a pluralistic society. The previous chapter discussed William's missionary strategy, and how he cast himself as an Islamic wa'iz by relying on the same stories of the pre-Islamic prophets that Islamic, popular preachers had used to great effect in their sermons. The message of the wu'az and qussas was a religiously-entangled one, and though they were often denounced by the 'ulama and other Islamic elites, they remained popular because their entangled message reflected the religiously and culturally-entangled realities of their audience. Similarly, William cast himself in their mold because their approach was organically suited to the context he inhabited. We have abundant anecdotal evidence scattered through chronicles, travel narratives, and other texts, which suggest that the Franks who were born or had lived a long time in the Latin East were acculturated to their Near Eastern context in ways that recent arrivals from Europe were not. What we do not have is a comprehensive work that reflects this acculturated point-of-view.⁴¹⁷ As a result, these anecdotes have been treated

⁴¹⁷ William of Tyre, considered the Latin East's great historian, would seem to challenge this. While there are numerous examples in his surviving chronicle of a flexible point-of-view that was shaped by his eastern context, he was otherwise self-consciously writing in a continental Latin tradition of historical writing. As a result, he does not reflect an acculturated perspective to the same degree that William of Tripoli does, who makes eastern traditions central to his rhetorical approach. A few important studies on William of Tyre are, A.V. Murray, "William of Tyre," in *The Crusades: An Encyclopedia*, ed. A.V. Murray (Oxford, 2006), 35-50; T.M.S. Lehtonen, "By the help of God, because of our sins, and by chance: William of Tyre explains the crusades", in *Medieval History Writing and Crusading Ideology*, eds. T.M.S. Lehtonen and K.V. Jensen (Helsinki, 2005), 71-84; A.V. Murray, "William of Tyre and the origins of the Turks. Observations on the possible sources of the *Gesta Orientalium Principum*", in *Dei gesta per Francos. Études sur les croisades dédiés à Jean Richard / Crusade studies in honour of Jean Richard*, eds. M. Balard, B.Z. Kedar and J. Riley-Smith (Aldershot UK, 2001), 217-29; R.C. Schwinges, "William of Tyre, the Muslim enemy, and the problem of tolerance", in *Tolerance and Intolerance: Social Conflict in the Age of the Crusades*, eds. M. Gervers and J.M. Powell (NY, 2001), 124-32, 173-76; P.W. Edbury and J.G. Rowe, *William of Tyre, Historian of the Latin East* (Cambridge, 1988); R.H.C. Davis, "William of Tyre", in *Relations between East and West in the Middle Ages: Papers Delivered at the Second Colloquium in Medieval History to be Held at the University of Edinburgh, March 1969*, ed. D. Baker (Edinburgh, 1973), 64-76; D.T.W.C. Vessey, "William of Tyre and the Art of Historiography", *Mediaeval Studies* 35 (1973): 433-55.

either as anomalies or dismissed out of hand. This chapter will argue that one of the primary reasons that William of Tripoli's treatises are different than his Latin contemporaries is that his approach reflects this acculturated point-of-view, rather than the continental perspective that we usually see in Latin writings on Islam. This perspective was not akin to modern notions of multiculturalism. It was not the point-of-view of someone living in a utopian *convivencia*, but the perspective of someone from a community that had adapted to its pluralistic environment through the strategies of silence, and adopting a shared religious vocabulary. Both strategies appear in William of Tripoli's work, and explain nearly every one of his unusual rhetorical choices. As a result, his work should be viewed as a concrete example of a Latin Eastern perspective, deeply embedded in its Near Eastern context, rather than a "mysterious" or "peculiar" outlier in the continental Latin corpus.

The heart of this chapter will be a close analysis of one of the final chapters in both the *Notitia de Machometo* and *De statu Sarracenorum*, in which William describes several Islamic practices, including the *adhan*, or call to prayer, and the *khutbat al-jum'a*, or Friday prayer. William casts the sights, sounds, and rituals associated with the ceremony in a nuanced and positive light that is very rare in the Latin corpus. Indeed, William's account of the *khutbat al-jum'a* is one of the most detailed and accurate medieval Latin descriptions of this ceremony. This chapter argues that the intimacy of William's account is a product of his first-hand experiences living among Muslims in a diverse, sectarian context. For William, Muslims were an intimate rather than distant or alien "other", and this intimacy allowed him to forge connections with Muslims that were

based on the values and shared religious vocabulary that he had in common with them. William's perspective was directly connected to the space he shared with them, a world of sights, sounds, and personal relationships that was unlike the one inhabited by most of his contemporaries in Europe. This chapter will begin with a discussion of the adhan, one of the aspects that distinguished William's world from the worlds of his contemporaries back in Europe.

Immediately following the Islamic conquests, one of the most pressing issues the victors were forced to contend with in their new, religiously diverse dominion was the regulation of religious noise. One of the first such regulations is contained in the so-called Pact of 'Umar, attributed to the caliph Umar II (d. 720 C.E.), which prohibited the Christian subjects of the new regime from ringing bells, beating wooden clappers, and loud chanting during religious services. Moreover, they were instructed to pray quietly, and refrain from public displays such as processions during Christian holidays, funerals, crosses, and sales of pigs and wine.⁴¹⁸ These regulations were modified and transmitted over time, with the Christians in a 12th century version of this agreement vowing that, "we shall only ring bells in our churches very gently. We shall not use loud voices in our church or in the presence of Muslims, nor shall we raise our voices when following the

⁴¹⁸ For the so-called Pact of 'Umar, Abu Bakr al-Khallal, *Ahl al-milal wa-l-ridda wa-ll-zanadiqa wa-tarik al-salah wa-l-fra'id min Kitab al-jami'*, ed. I.H. Sultan, Vol. 2 (Riyadh, 1996), 431-34; several recent analyses, M. Levy-Rubin, "Shurūt 'Umar and its alternatives: The legal debate on the status of the Dhimmīs", *JSAI* 30 (2005): 170-206; M.R. Cohen, "What was the Pact of 'Umar? A literary-historical study," *JSAI* 23 (1999): 100-57; D.E. Miller, *From Catalogue to Codes to Canon: The Rise of the Petition to 'Umar among Legal Traditions Governing non-Muslims in Medieval Islamicate Societies*, (Kansas City MO, 2000) (Diss. University of Missouri).

dead.”⁴¹⁹ For the Muslims who cultivated, transmitted, and monitored such regulations, enforcing a soundscape that reflected the social hierarchy was fundamental to maintaining their religious authority. This was also true in Christian domains, and it is for this reason that Muslims in newly conquered territories made aural demands central to the terms they negotiated for their surrender. In 1265, for example, the Muslims of recently conquered Murcia made only three requests, one of which was that they be allowed continue the *adhan*, or call to prayer.⁴²⁰ In most cases they were granted this concession, but the conquerors often regretted doing so. James I of Aragon was reportedly so annoyed that he could hear the *adhan* every night as he tried to sleep, that he ordered the mosque nearest to his palace deconsecrated.⁴²¹

While Christian rulers with high populations of Muslim subjects generally permitted them certain rights of law and custom, the Islamic call to prayer was one of the first practices that Christian rulers tried to curb.⁴²² This was not just for the noise, but also because the call explicitly proclaimed Muḥammad prophetic status and the *shahada*, the central creed of Islamic belief.⁴²³ One scholar has suggested that Christian authorities were fearful that the religious content of the *adhan* might make it easier for Muslims in

⁴¹⁹ Al-Turtushi, *Siraj al-mulak* (Alexandria, 1289/1872), 229-230; Olivia Remie Constable, “Regulating Religious Noise: The Council of Vienne, the Mosque Call and Muslim Pilgrimage in the Late Medieval Mediterranean World,” in *Medieval Encounters* 16 (2010): 64-95. For a general discussion of sound and other sensory experiences, see Sally M. Promey, *Sensational Religion: Sensory Cultures in Material Practice* (New Haven: Yale University Press), 2014; Mary F. Thurlkill, *Sacred Scents in Early Christianity and Islam* (Lanham: Lexington Books), 2016; Stephen G. Nichols, Andreas Kablitz, and Alison Calhoun, *Rethinking the Medieval Senses: Heritage, Fascinations, Frames* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008).

⁴²⁰ Damian Smith and Helena Buffery, eds. and trans., *The book of Deeds of James I of Aragon* (Aldershot, 2003), 306-317.

⁴²¹ Smith and Buffery, *The book of Deeds*, 319.

⁴²² Smith and Buffery, *The book of Deeds*, 307; Constable, “Regulating Religious Noise,” 68.

⁴²³ Ignacio Perez de Heredia y Valle, *Sinodos medievales de Valencia* (Rome, 1994), 256.

Christian territories to convert their neighbors, or encourage recent Christian converts from Islam to return to their former religion.⁴²⁴ During his travels through Christian lands, the Andalusian traveler Ibn Jubayr frequently commented on the tolerance some Christian rulers had for Islamic holy sites. In the Sicilian city of Solanto, for example, he described having spent an “agreeable night in the mosque,” which he called one of “the finest mosques [in the world],” where he “listened to the call to prayer.”⁴²⁵ He noted these mosques, in part, because he was shocked that Christian officials tolerated such overt demonstrations of Islamic practices.⁴²⁶ The Holy Roman Emperor, Frederick II, was especially known for his tolerance, permitting not only the Muslims of Sicily to practice the call to prayer, but even the Muslims that he had resettled in the Italian town of Lucera.⁴²⁷ This tolerance outlived Frederick, as a decade after his death Jamal al-Din Ibn Wasil reported that he heard the call to prayer there in 1261 during a diplomatic visit to King Manfred.⁴²⁸

⁴²⁴ Constable, “Regulating Religious Noise,” 68-69. Also, Linda Gale Jones, *The Boundaries of Sin and Communal Identity: Muslim and Christian Preaching and the Transmission of Cultural Identity in Medieval Iberia and the Maghreb* (PhD dissertation, University of California, Santa Barbara, CA, 2004), 244-245.

⁴²⁵ ... في أعلاه مسجد من أحسن مساجد الدنيا... فبتنا في هذا المسجد أحسن مبيت والطيبة وسمعنا الاذان وكنا قد طال عهدنا بسماعه⁴²⁵ Ibn Jubayr, *The Travels of Ibn Jubayr*, eds. William Wright and M.J. de Goeje (Leiden, 1907), 329. See also, T. Khalaf, *Wasf Filasṭīn ayyām al-ḥurūb al-ṣalībiyya. Usāma ibn Munqidh, al-Diyā' al-Maqdisī, Ibn Jubayr* (Damascus, 2010), 24-37; I.R. Netton, *Islamic and Middle Eastern Geographers and Travelers*, vol. 2 (London, 2008), 46-89; R. Ellenblum, “Were there borders and borderlines in the Middle Ages? The example of the Latin kingdom of Jerusalem”, in *Medieval frontiers: Concepts and practices*, eds. D. Abulafia and N. Berend (Aldershot UK, 2002), 105-19; H.E. Kassis, “Images of Europe and Europeans in some Medieval Arabic Sources”, in *From Arabye to Engelond. Medieval Studies in Honour of Mahmoud Manzalaoui on His 75th Birthday*, eds. A.E.C. Canitz and G.R. Wieland (Ottawa, 1999), 9-23; G. Peyronnet, “Coexistence islamo-chrétienne en Sicile et au Moyen-Orient à travers le récit de voyage d’Ibn Jubayr voyageur andalou et pèlerin musulman,” *Islamochristiana* 19 (1993) : 55-73.

⁴²⁶ Ibn Jubayr, *The Travels of Ibn Jubayr*, 336.

⁴²⁷ Ernst Kantorowicz, *Frederick the Second, 1194-1250* (New York: Frederic Ungar Publishing Co., 1937), 190.

⁴²⁸ Constable, “Regulating Religious Noise,” 70; Julie Taylor, *Muslims in Medieval Italy: The Colony at Lucera* (Lanham, MD, 2003), 68, 71, 187.

Frederick II was known for his appreciation of Arabic and Islamic science, literature, and culture. He was raised in Palermo where this culture was a vital part of the cultural fabric. One of his tutors was a Muslim scholar who taught him Arabic, and helped him cultivate an appreciation for Arabic *kalam* and philosophical discourse. He was evidently an astute pupil, as he was later able to correspond in Arabic on Aristotelian logic with the Andalusian scholar Ibn Sab'in.⁴²⁹ Frederick was one of the leaders of the Sixth Crusade, and spent several months in Jerusalem negotiating with the Ayyubid Sultan al-Kamil. The Sultan had personally invited Frederick to Jerusalem, and out of respect for Frederick's presence, the muezzin of the mosque nearest to his quarters decided not to make the *adhan*. Frederick's reaction was not what they expected, however, as the next morning he is reported to have complained that he had specifically "stayed overnight in Jerusalem, in order to overhear the prayer call of the Muslims and their worthy God."⁴³⁰ While Frederick was in some ways an anomaly, described by his contemporaries as a *stupor mundi*, or astonishment of the world, it is undeniable that his appreciation for Arabic culture had as much to do with the physical spaces he shared with Muslims as it did with his personal qualities. Living around Muslims had cultivated in Frederick an appreciation for the call to prayer, one of the most distinctive aspects of Islamic culture. While Frederick and Ibn Jubayr's reactions to the *adhan* were different than James I's, what all reveal is that its aural power was a feature of the sonic environment that was impossible to ignore. As a result, none of their reactions were

⁴²⁹ Kantorowicz, *Frederick the Second*, 205.

⁴³⁰ Kantorowicz, *Frederick the Second*, 212.

ambivalent. In every case a visceral response was triggered because it was a constant reminder that Muslims were a vital part of the religious milieu.

It is perhaps not surprising then that William of Tripoli begins the final chapter of the *Notitia*, titled “regarding the Saracen prayer houses and how they enter it and conduct themselves [within],” with a description of the *adhan*. He describes the Saracens of Acre as having “very beautiful and clean prayer houses that are always guarded when the door is open.”⁴³¹ He continues by observing that they:

...do not have bells like the Latins nor clappers like the Greeks, but a herald with a sonorous voice. Five times during the night and day he climbs to the pinnacle of the prayer house or [stands] in front of the door and proclaims with a loud voice: ‘O blessed ones, arise! It is time for prayer! The hour has come to pray! Arise, oh blessed ones! Testify that there is no God but God and Muḥammad is his messenger.’⁴³²

The first thing to note is the sheer texture of the aural landscape that William describes, with bells, clappers, and the *adhan* flowing through the same sonic space. If the diversity of this religious noise was threatening to William, he neglects to say so; rather, his descriptions are positive, describing the mosque as “beautiful” (*pulchra*) and the voice of the muezzin as “sonorous” (*sonora*). He acknowledges, moreover, that the *adhan* was an unavoidable part of the religious soundscape, observing that it begins, “at dawn,” continuing three more times during the day, with the final one at “the first night

⁴³¹ Oratoria quidem habent valde pulchra, munda, semper xx dum porta est aperta., Wilhelm von Tripolis, *Notitia; De Statu*, 256.

⁴³² Campanas ut Latini non habent nec tabulas ut Greci, sed preconem cum sonora voce quinquies nocte et die ascendit super pinnaculum oratorii vel ante portam alta voce clamat: O benedicti surgite, tempus est orationis, venit hora orandi; surgite, benedicti! Sitis testes, quod non est deus nisi Deus et machometus eius nuntius., Wilhelm von Tripolis, *Notitia; De Statu*, 256.

watch”.⁴³³ Unlike James I who reacted with such hostility to the adhan that he had a mosque deconsecrated, William seems to have accepted the diversity of noise that it represented as part of the city’s diurnal rhythm.

William’s description of the *adhan* also demonstrates the strategy of silence, one of the central approaches that the Franks of the Latin East had adopted in response to the religious diversity of their society. William situates the *adhan* in the context of other religious noises, such as the bells of the Latins and the clappers of the “Greeks”, but he does not order these sounds into any sort of hierarchy. These are just three different types of noises that one might hear, without any explicit statement of which was superior. Like other Latin Eastern writers, his description minimizes difference, referring to the “Greeks”, for example, in ethnic/linguistic terms, without any explicit statement about which sect he is referring to, and what differences, if any, separate his community from theirs. We see this approach echoed in other works by writers who spent considerable time in the Latin East.⁴³⁴ Both Fulcher of Chartres and William of Tyre, for example, cut Jacques de Vitry’s nine headed beast down to only two heads, those being the “Greeks” (Graeci) and the “Syrians” (Suriani). Jacques is one of the few writers based in the Latin East who describes, in detail, the differences between the myriad Christian sects, and

⁴³³ Incipit autem sic clara in aurora et ter in die cantat et in prima vigilia noctis, Wilhelm von Tripolis, *Notitia; De Statu*, 256.

⁴³⁴ See, Joseph Nasrallah, “Syriens et Suriens,” in *Symposium Syriacum 1972*, *Orientalia Christiana Analecta* 197, 487-503; Johannes Pahlitzsch, *Graeci und Suriani im Palastina der Kreuzfahrerzeit*, 181-88; Amnon Linder, “Christian Communities in Jerusalem,” in *The History of Jerusalem: The Early Muslim Period 638-1099*, ed. Joshua Prawer and Haggai Ben-Shammai (New York: New York University Press, 1996), 146-47; Sidney Griffith, “The Church of Jerusalem and the ‘Melkites’: The Making of an ‘Arab Orthodox Christian Identity in the World of Islam,” in *Christians and Christianity in the Holy Land: From the Origins to the Latin Kingdoms*, eds. Ora Limor and Guy G. Stroumsa (Turnhout: Brepols, 2006), 175-204.

occasionally used the term “heretic” in reference to the eastern churches.⁴³⁵ William of Tyre, by contrast, only uses the word “heretic” once in all of his writings.⁴³⁶ William of Tripoli not only adopts the same deliberately vague language in references to eastern forms of Christianity, but he also neglects to explicitly cast his description of Islamic things, whether that be a mosque, the *khutba*, or otherwise, in a polemical light. He correctly identifies the muezzin’s declaration of the Islamic *shahada* in his call, but it is up to the reader to supply their own objections to its religious claims. William’s focus is elsewhere, very much emphasizing the beauty of the mosque as a place of worship, and the resonance of the *adhan* that is proclaimed from it five times a day.

This is not to say that William or any other writer who minimized the differences between Islam or other eastern Christian sects expected their readers to be entirely unaware of them. Neglecting to emphasize these differences was instead a rhetorical tactic that was used to foreground other topics of discussion that were too easily lost in the obliterating, hyperbolic language of apologetic and polemic. There are very few Latin descriptions of mosques. When Latin authors do describe Islamic holy places, there is often little verisimilitude, referenced primarily as physical places to ground some polemical point.⁴³⁷ William is doing something quite different. Throughout both the

⁴³⁵ Jacques de Vitry, “Historia Hierosolimitana,” in *Gesta Dei per Francos*, ed. Jacques Bongars, 1090-95.

⁴³⁶ Willelmus Tyrensis, *Chronicon*, ed. R.B.C. Huygens *Corpus Christianorum Medieevalis* 63, 22:11 (10), 1021.

⁴³⁷ For example, Embrico of Mainz mentions that Muḥammad’s casket is on display in Mecca, artificially raised by magnets in an attempt at a counterfeit miracle. Tolan, *Sons of Ishmael*, 3-22; A. Ferreiro, *Simon Magus in patristic, medieval, and early modern traditions* (Leiden, 2005), 224-30; S. Luchitskaja, “The image of Muḥammad in Latin chronography of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries,” *Journal of Medieval History* 26 (2000): 115-26; J. Tolan, “Anti-hagiography: Embrico of Mainz Vita Mahumeti,” *Journal of Medieval History* 22 (1996): 25-41; M.-T. d’Alverny, “Pierre le Vénérable et la légende de Mahomet,” in *À Cluny, congrès scientifique*, vol. 1

Notitia and *De statu*, he clearly positions himself as having first-hand knowledge and insight about Islam that few back home possess. He knows that few Latin Christians have ever stepped foot inside an Islamic place of worship, and thus his description of the mosque, and the rituals associated with it, might be truly novel information for his readers. As a result, he avoids the usual triggers that would activate a hostile, polemical reading, in order to articulate specific insights about Islamic religious practices.

We know from the memoirs of Usama Ibn Munqidh that pilgrims and other recent visitors from the West were guilty, at times, of disrespecting the kinds of Islamic religious practices that William describes.⁴³⁸ Usama, who was generally an astute observer of Frankish society, observes that “everyone who is a fresh emigrant from the Frankish lands is rougher in character than those who have lived and associated with Muslims.”⁴³⁹ Usama describes members of the Knights Templar (الداوية), some of whom he calls his “friends” (اصدقائي), as among the best of the Franks.⁴⁴⁰ According to Usama, the Templars were in possession of Al-Aqsa mosque, which they had converted into a church and were using as their headquarters. Al-Aqsa mosque is one of the holiest sites in Islam, and one can imagine Usama objecting to the Templar presence here in another context. Instead, he passes over their possession of this site, emphasizing the good

(Dijon, 1950), 161-70; A. d’Ancona, “La leggenda di Maometto in Occidente,” *Giornale Storico della Letteratura Italiana* 12 (1889): 199-281.

⁴³⁸ See, P. Cobb, *Usama ibn Munqidh: Warrior Poet of the Age of the Crusades* (Oxford, 2005), 1-43; R. Irwin, “Usamah ibn Munqidh: An Arab-Syrian gentleman at the time of the crusades reconsidered”, in *The Crusades and Their Sources: Essays Presented to Bernard Hamilton*, eds. J. France and W.G. Zajac (Aldershot UK, 1998), 71-87; A. Miquel, *Ousama, un prince syrien face aux croisés* (Paris, 1986), 1-57; Q. Kīlānī, *Usāma ibn Munqidh* (Dirāsa, s.l., 1982), 1-178; H. ‘Abbās, *Usāma ibn Munqidh, ḥayātuhi wa-āthāruhi* (Alexandria, 1979), 1-98.

⁴³⁹ فكل من هو قريب العهد بالبلاد الافرنجية اجفى اخلاقاً من الذين قد تبدوا وعاشروا المسلمين. Usama ibn Munqidh, *Kitab al-I’tibar*, ed. Philip K. Hitti (Princeton, 1930), 134.

⁴⁴⁰ وفيه الداوية, وهم اصدقائي... Usama ibn Munqidh, *Kitab al-I’tibar*, 134.

qualities his Templar friends have acquired by living near Muslims when compared to the rougher behavior of recently arrived Franks. In one of his most vivid examples of this difference, he describes entering a smaller mosque that was next to Al-Aqsa that the Templars had made available so that he and other Muslim visitors could pray. As Usama tells it, on one such occasion:

I entered it [the mosque], and stopped to pray, and as I rose one of the Franks attacked me, seizing me and turning my face to the east, and said ‘pray this way!’ A group of Templars rushed to him, took him and expelled him away from me. I returned to my prayer. The same man, while the others were otherwise busy, returned and attacked me, turning my face eastward, saying, ‘Pray this way!’ The Templars returned, rushed to him, and expelled him. They apologized to me, and said, ‘This is a stranger who arrived from the land of the Franks in the last few days and he has never seen anyone praying unless eastward.’⁴⁴¹

Many visitors from continental Europe had not only never met a Muslim before, but had never seen one pray nor stepped foot inside a mosque. The “enthusiastic” Frank, unlike the Templars, has only ever seen one mode of prayer, and as a result, being confronted with something that was so far outside his experience stimulates a visceral and violent reaction from him. Usama says as much, recalling the surprise he felt at the man’s conduct, especially the “change in the color of his face, his trembling and his sentiment at the sight of one praying towards the *qiblah*.”⁴⁴² The Templars’ behavior could not have been more different, and they seem to acknowledge that even though this Frank is their

فدخلته يوماً فكثرت ووقفت في الصلاة فهجم عليّ واحد من الأفرنج مسكني وردّ وجهي إلى الشرق وقال كذا صلّ! فتبادر إليه قوم من الداوية أخذوه أخرجوه عني وعدت أنا إلى الصلاة فاغتفلهم وعاد هجم عليّ ذلك بعينه وردّ وجهي إلى الشرق وقال كذا صلّ! فعاد الداوية دخلوا إليه وأخرجوه، واعتذروا لي، وقالوا هذا غريب وصل من بلاد الأفرنج في هذه الأيام، وما رأيت من يصلي إلى غير الشرق. فقلت حسبي من الصلاة! فخرجت فكنت أعجب من ذلك الشيطان و تغيير وجهه و رعدته و ما لحقه من هظر الصلاة إلى القبلة. Usama ibn Munqidh, *Kitab al-I'tibar*, 134-35;

فقلت حسبي من الصلاة! فخرجت فكنت أعجب من ذلك الشيطان و تغيير وجهه و رعدته و ما لحقه من هظر الصلاة إلى القبلة. Usama ibn Munqidh, *Kitab al-I'tibar*, 164.

co-religionist they do not have much in common with him as compared to Usama. While Usama's account of this event must be treated with the usual caution, it is worth noting that he recalls the Templars calling this Frank a "غريب", or stranger. This word, which can also denote something that is "strange", is inherently "othering". This is not the usual word one would use to describe a member of their own religious community. Moreover, the Templars describe this Frank as coming from the "Lands of the Franks", as though they were describing something distinct from themselves. Usama did not know any western languages, and so his friendship with the Templars was based on their shared social roles, cultural values, and mutual use of Arabic. This connection was so powerful that it caused him to elide the fact that the Templars, occupying Al-Aqsa mosque as they were, were committing a form of sacrilege. This truncation is deliberate, as demonstrated by the fact he uses harsh language for the Franks in other contexts. In his general characterization of the Frankish character, he describes them as "animals possessing the virtues of courage and fighting, but nothing else; just as animals have only the virtues of strength and carrying loads."⁴⁴³ In his description of his Templar friends, Usama, who was himself a member of a pluralistic society, uses the strategy of silence when it suited him. That is because this strategy was an organic outgrowth of living in such a society. This strategy of silence allowed Usama to ignore religious differences, and the potential sacrilege of the Templar occupation of Al-Aqsa, to count many of the Templars among his friends. This strategy transcended religious boundaries, allowing both Usama and the Templars to communicate with a shared vocabulary that prioritized their shared cultural

⁴⁴³ Usama ibn Munqidh, *Kitab al-I'tibar*, 132.

and social values over the religious differences that divided them. This strategy was so complete that these Templars considered themselves akin to Usama over their coreligionist, and treated his mode of worship as legitimate to the point that they were willing to physically defend his practice of it .

William’s observations of the *adhan* and *khutba* are sensitive of the fact that most Europeans do not have first-hand knowledge of Islam, and his primary motivation seems to be accurately reporting the details of Islamic worship to Europeans back home who, like the enthusiastic Frank who attacked Usama, might be ignorant of them. One of the aspects of Islamic worship that William elaborates upon is *al-wuḍū*, or the ritual cleansing Muslims perform before prayer.⁴⁴⁴ As he describes it, “no one enters the house of prayer unless he has first washed those parts of himself where the five most important senses reside, and where nature’s excess flows from the body.”⁴⁴⁵ His description of the ritual is concise, but accurate, and like his description of the *adhan*, seems to avoid making any overtly polemical point. Rather, William’s description is remarkable for its sheer neutrality. Just as he appreciates the physical beauty of the mosque, and the sonorous quality of the muezzin’s call, *al-wuḍū* is presented as a practice that is worthy

⁴⁴⁴ Al-wuḍū was a topic of debate between Muslims and Christians in the Near East, especially between twelfth and thirteenth century authors who lived under the Ayyubids. In Buṭrus Sawīrus al-Jamīl’s *Kitāb al-burhān* (c. 1246), for example, the author responds to a letter of the faqīh Jamāl al-Dīn, criticizing Christians for their lack of ritual purity. See, M.N. Swanson, “Butrus Sawirus al-Jamil, Bishop of Malij”, in *Historical Dictionary of the Coptic Church*, ed. Gawdat Gabra (Cairo, 2008), 52-53, 281; A. Wadi, “Introduzione alla letteratura arabo-cristiana dei Copti” [in Arabic], *SOCC* 29-30 (1998): 441-91, 473; R.-G. Coquin, “Langue et littérature arabes chrétiennes”, in *Christianismes orientaux. Introduction à l’étude des langues et des littératures*, ed. M. Albert (Paris, 1993), 35-106, 79; S.K. Samir, “Buṭrus évêque de Malig”, *Islamochristiana* 2 (1976): 201-42, 230-32.

⁴⁴⁵ *Oratorium nullus ingreditur nisi prius lotus in partibus, ubi vigent principales quinque sensus, et de quibus superflua de corpore emittit natura.*, Wilhelm von Tripolis, *Notitia; De Statu*, 256.

of admiration.⁴⁴⁶ After this ritual act of cleansing, William explains that the worshippers enter the mosque's central space, taking a spot side by side with their fellow worshippers. As William observes, in this place of prayer "no one sits upon the bare earth, nor raised above it, but all of them equally (*omnes equaliter*) [sit] upon carpets or mats or blankets of straw or rushes."⁴⁴⁷ It is not difficult to imagine an alternative scenario in which the same observations of Islamic worship could be portrayed in a negative light. When William describes the beliefs and practices of "average" (*mediocres*), non-elite Muslims, he never tries to make them look bad. Rather, he is complementary, praising their humility, and the egalitarian manner of their worship.

In all of these descriptions William is clearly, albeit implicitly contrasting the Islamic *oratorius* with the churches of his co-religionists.⁴⁴⁸ This is no more obvious than when he describes the behavior of the worshippers themselves. As William relates, "no one dares to sniff or spit except in a cloth which he discreetly carries with him. After the beginning of worship, no one talks to the one next to him, asks questions, or gives a response."⁴⁴⁹ William highlights this behavior because it is striking, and fundamentally different, one imagines, than the less-respectful behavior he is used to seeing in Christian

⁴⁴⁶ Some useful studies regarding the function of the pre-modern khutba are: Paul Ernest Walker, *Orations of the Fatimid Caliphs: Festival Sermons of the Ismaili Imams: an edition of the Arabic texts and English translation of Fatimid khutbas* (London and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 1-30; Linda G. Jones, "Islam al-kāfir fi ḥāl al-khuṭba: concerning the conversion of 'infidels' to Islam during the Muslim Friday sermon in Mamluk Egypt," in *Anuario de Estudios Medievales* 42, no.1 (2012): 119-140; Maria Teresa Penelas, ed., *Kitāb Hūrūshiyus: Traducción árabe de las 'Historiae adversus paganos' de Orosio* (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 2001), 27-42.

⁴⁴⁷ *Nemo sedet super terram nudam nec in alto, sed omnes equaliter super solum stratum tapetiis sive mactis aut sectoriis factis de palea sive iuncis*, Wilhelm von Tripolis, *Notitia; De Statu*, 256.

⁴⁴⁸ The historiography of medieval popular piety is vast. For a useful introduction see, Miri Rubin, *Medieval Christianity in Practice* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 150-173, 240-276.

⁴⁴⁹ *De ore aut naso nullus audet emittere nisi in panno, quem defert secum occulte. Nullus tamen proximo narrat rumores, interrogat aut respondet incepto officio.*, Wilhelm von Tripolis, *Notitia; De Statu*, 256.

churches. One can read such observations with an implied, “unlike our churches,” Muslims behave humbly and piously within their holy spaces. For William, sharing space with Muslims has provided more than just a polemical or apologetic lens to view their community through, but an alternative lens that reflects back on his own. By minimizing the religious content of the *khutba*, and focusing on its rituals and the behavior of the worshipers, he is able to strategically transgress religious boundaries, picking out those parts he approves of while leaving the rest. This has allowed him to describe a religious service superior to his own, even though he would presumably object to every dogmatic proposition articulated within it.

Sharing space with Muslims has cultivated within both William and Usama’s Templar friends a flexibility of thought that the enthusiastic Frank who attacked him lacked. This unnamed Frank perceived Usama’s worship through an exclusively religious lens, and his parameters of what constituted licit piety were so narrow that he was compelled to physically assault someone who seemed to violate them. Such uncompromising rigidity was unsustainable in a pluralistic society, and both William and Usama’s Templar friends demonstrate the ways the permanent residents of the Latin East had developed more viable strategies of accommodation. While William’s goal as a missionary was surely to baptize Muslims into the Christianity of the Latin church, he never emphasizes its specific theological formulations or rites anywhere in his work. Rather, he positions himself in a neutral, Christian space, one that is fluid and permeable, and able to selectively transgress religious boundaries when it was strategic to do so. This was only possible, however, because of a strategy of silence, one that could minimize

religious differences in the service of other goals. Similarly, Usama counted the Templars among his “friends” not because they saw eye to eye on religious matters, but as a warrior and their peer, he was able to overlook their religious differences, and forge connections that were based on shared connections.

One of the vital skills for someone acculturated in a pluralistic society was the emotional and mental flexibility to hold multiple propositions at once. In a recent monograph, Eric Rebillard has challenged the implicit, and sometimes explicit notion that for early Christians in the Near East, identity was exclusively defined by their membership in a particular religious community.⁴⁵⁰ He has instead argued that most people had several identities, whether that be economic, social or cultural, that could be “activated” in a given context. Christopher MacEvitt has similarly argued that individuals and communities in the medieval Levant “formed their identity through a network of families, civic relationships, professional ties, and associations with churches, shrines, and local holy places. Taken together, such identities often crossed religious boundaries.”⁴⁵¹ The economic, social, cultural, and religious diversity of the Latin East required its residents to maintain a variety of identities and “activate” them in the appropriate contexts. What this “activation” meant, above all, is that religion was not the sole lens through which the permanent or semi-permanent residents of the Latin East viewed those around them. Macevitt has shown the way this activation allowed Latin Christians to minimize religious differences, and forge other kinds of relationships with

⁴⁵⁰ Eric Rebillard, *Christians and Their Many Identities*, 12-37.

⁴⁵¹ MacEvitt, *Rough Tolerance*, 2.

eastern Christians, many of whom were, from Rome's perspective, heretics. I argue that William's work and Usama's anecdotes are prime examples of the way this was equally true with Muslims as well.

This context driven interaction between Franks and Muslims is illustrated by another of Usama's vivid anecdotes. In addition to serving as an envoy himself, Usama dispatched servants to Frankish cities on business in times of truce. During one such visit to Antioch, one of Usama's men reported that,

As I was passing in the market place, a Frankish woman all of a sudden hung to my clothes and began to mutter words in their language, and I could not understand what she was saying. This made me immediately the center of a big crowd of Franks. I was convinced that death was at hand. But all of a sudden that same knight approached. On seeing me, he came and said to that woman, "What is the matter between you and this Muslim?" She replied, "This is he who has killed my brother Hurso." This Hurso was a knight in Afiimiyah who was killed by someone of the army of Hamah. The Christian knight shouted at her, saying, "This is a bourgeois (i.e., a merchant) who neither fights nor attends a fight." He also yelled at the people who had assembled, and they all dispersed. Then he took me by the hand and went away.⁴⁵²

While Usama does not explicitly say so, it is clear that the intervening Frankish knight knew Arabic, as Usama's man makes a distinction between him and the woman who was "muttering" in their language. It should be emphasized that the woman's primary issue with Usama's servant is that she thinks he is a man who killed her brother, not that he is a Muslim. Her reaction, in other words, is personal rather than religious in nature. As for

وبينما كنت أذهب في السوق، علفت امرأة فرنجية فجأة على ملابسي وبدأت في تمزيق الكلمات بلغتها، ولم أستطع أن أفهم ما تقول. هذا⁴⁵² جعلني على الفور مركز حشد كبير من فرانكس. كنت مقتنعا بأن الموت كان في متناول اليد. ولكن فجأة أن نفس الفارس اقترب. على رؤيتي، جاء وقال لهذه المرأة، "ما هو الأمر بينك وبين هذا مسلم؟" فأجابت: "هذا هو الذي قتل أخي هورسو". وكان هذا هورسو فارس في العفمية الذي قتل على يد شخص من جيش حماة. صاح الفارس المسيحي في قولها: "هذا برجوازي لا يحارب ولا يحضر معركة". وصاح أيضا في Usama ibn Munqidh, *Kitab al-I'tibar*, 170. الناس الذين تجمعوا، وجميعهم فرقت. ثم أخذني باليد وذهب بعيدا

the knight, he is sensitive enough to social differences among Muslims, that he correctly identifies Usama's man as a member of the bourgeois (*burjāsī*), i.e. a merchant. Both this episode and the one Usama describes in the mosque are at odds with a persistent historical narrative that the Franks in the Latin East were untouched by the local culture around them, and few bothered to learn Arabic.⁴⁵³ As mentioned above, Usama is clear that he does not know any of the Frankish languages, and so when he and his servant speak with the Franks, it is most likely in Arabic. Both William of Tripoli and William of Tyre are explicit that they themselves know Arabic, and William of Tyre regularly mentions other Franks who do as well, such as a Templar who was part of a delegation sent by King Almaric in 1167 to the Fatamid Caliph of Egypt.⁴⁵⁴ In other contexts, especially during times of truce, Franks were permitted to visit cities such as Cairo and Damascus. In 1151 and 1240, Mujar ad-Din and al-Saleh Ismael, *atabegs* (governors) of Damascus, permitted Frankish soldiers to buy what they needed in the city's markets, and in 1140, Anar, another *atabeg* of Damascus, received gifts from King Fulk during a visit to Acre that included a hunting dog and falcon.⁴⁵⁵ It seems likely that the soldiers who visited these markets knew some amount of Arabic as they shopped for the things they

⁴⁵³ While the more recent work of scholars such as Adrian Boas, Ronnie Ellenblum, and Christopher MacEvitt have begun to revise this narrative, it still persists. See, Paul K. Hitti, *History of the Arabs* (London, 1963), 662; H.E. Mayer, "Latins, Muslims and Greeks in the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem," *History* 63 (1978): 175; ----, *Crusades*, tr. J. Gillingham, 2nd ed. (Oxford, 1988), 189; B.Z. Kedar, "The Subjected Muslims of the Frankish Levant", in *Muslims under Latin Rule (1100-1300)* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 174.

⁴⁵⁴ For William of Tripoli, see chapter 3. Also, Hussein M. Attiya, "Knowledge of Arabic in the Crusader States in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries," *Journal of Medieval History* 25, no. 3 (1999): 203-213; William of Tyre, *Chronicon*, 100, 924-5.

⁴⁵⁵ Ibn al-Qalanisi, *History of Damascus*, ed. S. Zakkar (Damascus, 1983), 487; Maqrīsi, *Kitab al-Suluk ii Maarifat Duwal al-Mulauk*, ed. M.M. Ziada, vol. 1 (Cairo, 1934), 204; Usama ibn Munqidh, *Kitab al-I'tibar*, 252-3.

needed. Usama highlights King Fulk's gifts because hunting was one of the most important leisure activities for both Muslim and Christian warriors alike, and these gifts were a deliberate way for King Fulk to honor and connect with his visitors based on their shared interests. Indeed, Usama was an avid hunter, and it is likely that this was one of the common activities that allowed him to cultivate a friendship with his Templar "friends". In other parts of his memoirs, Usama is highly critical of the Franks, saying that comparing them to beasts (البهائم), and calling their religion absurd, but in face to face encounters with specific Franks, religious differences were minimized, and connections were forged that were based on aspects of warrior culture that Muslims and Christians had in common with one another.⁴⁵⁶ This was true in other situations as well. In the episode involving Usama's servant, there is no warrior culture to bind them, but the Frankish knight still came to the servant's defense just like the Templars came to Usama's. This knight knew Arabic, demonstrating a degree of acculturation, which meant that religious identity was not his sole, or even most important consideration. There were situations, in fact, where acculturated Franks felt they had more in common with their indigenous Muslim and Christian neighbors than their recently arrived co-religionists who were "muttering" around them.

The affinity certain acculturated Franks had for their new home over the homes of their birth is further illustrated by another of Usama's anecdotes. As he relates, another of his servants was dispatched on business to the house of a knight in the city of Antioch:

⁴⁵⁶ ورأى بهائم فيهم فضيلة الشجاعة و القتال لا غير, كما في البهائم فضيلة القوة والحمل و ساذكر شناً من امورهم و عجائب عقولهم. Usama ibn Munqidh, *Kitab al-I'tibar*, 132.

...who belonged to the old category of knights who came with the early expeditions [of the Franks]. He had been by that time stricken off the register and exempted from service, and possessed in Antioch an estate on the income of which he lived. The knight presented an excellent table, with food extraordinarily clean and delicious. Seeing me abstaining from food, he said, 'Eat, be of good cheer! I never eat Frankish dishes, but I have Egyptian women cooks and never eat except their cooking. Besides, pork never enters my home.'⁴⁵⁷

According to Usamah's servant, this knight has not only acclimated to a Near Eastern diet, but he proudly displays his new diet as a badge of honor. He self-consciously tries to connect with Usama's servant by presenting him with the kinds of foods he is familiar with. Moreover, he puts distance between himself and his co-religionists, explicitly rejecting a Frankish diet, and voluntarily abstaining from pork. The knight is articulating, in other words, a perspective quite different than the Frank who attacked Usama, or Jacques de Vitry, whose disdain for the pluralistic society around him kept him from connecting with it in any meaningful way. This is the perspective of someone who, while still Frankish, has been concretely changed by his experiences abroad.

The sentiment that the knight articulates mirrors one of the most famous passages in Fulcher of Chartres chronicle of the First Crusade. Fulcher was a priest and participant in the expedition, and in book III of his first-hand account he claims that

...we who were Occidentals now have been made Orientals. He who was a Roman or Frank is now a Galilaean, or an inhabitant of Palestine...Some have taken wives not merely of their own people, but Syrians, or Armenians, or even Saracens who have received the grace of

الذي ينتمي إلى الفئة القديمة من الفرسان الذين جاءوا مع البعثات المبكرة من الأفرنج. وكان في ذلك الوقت قد ضرب من السجل وأعفى⁴⁵⁷ من الخدمة، وكان يملك في أنطاكية عقارا على دخله الذي عاش. قدم فارس طاولة ممتازة، مع الطعام نظيفة للغاية ولذيذة. رأيتني الامتناع عن الطعام، وقال: "أكل، يكون من يهتف جيدا! أنا لا أكل الأطباق الفرنجية، ولكن لدي طهايات مصريات وأكل أبدا ما عدا الطبخ. الى جانب لحم الخنزير أبدا يدخل بيتي , Usama ibn Munqidh, *Kitab al-I'tibar*, 167.

baptism...one cultivates vines, another the fields. The one and the other use mutually the speech and the idioms of different languages...⁴⁵⁸

This passage has either been dismissed or treated as a wildly exaggerated and cynical example of propaganda.⁴⁵⁹ While the Latin East was not, as Fulcher seems to suggest, a fully integrated society, there was, for some Franks, a significant degree of acculturation. This acculturated perspective is embodied in the Franks that Usama describes as his friends, who brag about their rejection of a continental Frankish lifestyle, speak Arabic, are willing to accept and accommodate a diversity of Islamic religious practices, and defend a Muslim stranger from the threats and accusations of their own countrymen. This acculturation was not total, but it was significant. William of Tripoli, like many of his Frankish neighbors, had a foot in both the western and eastern worlds. He writes both the *Notitia* and *De statu* to a Latin audience on a topic that was popular in the Latin tradition, but as he does so he incorporates his first-hand experiences into his rhetorical approach, along with eastern traditions, and strategies of accommodation that were common in eastern, pluralistic contexts. This is a fully realized Latin Eastern perspective, one informed by multiple traditions.

One of the advantages of this perspective, is that it allowed William to treat Islam as an intimate “other”, rather than a distant or alien one. There were important differences between Islam and Christianity, but his first-hand experiences allowed him to forge

⁴⁵⁸ A.V. Murray, “Ethnic identity in the crusader states: The Frankish race and the settlement of Outremer”, in *Concepts of National Identity in the Middle Ages*, eds. S. Forde et al, (Leeds, 1995), 59-73; P.J. Cole, “‘O God, the heathen have come into your inheritance’ (Ps. 78.1): The theme of religious pollution in crusade documents, 1095-1188”, in *Crusaders and Muslims in Twelfth-Century Syria*, ed. M. Shatzmiller (Leiden, 1993), 84-111.

⁴⁵⁹ See above.

intimate connections on those things the religions had in common. This also allowed him to strategically cross religious boundaries, picking and choosing those aspects of Islamic praxis that he appreciated, while still remaining confident in the superiority of his own beliefs. We see this flexibility in his minimization of sectarian differences, and his unqualified, nuanced, and often complimentary portrayal of Islamic religious practices. Indeed, William regularly commends the seriousness of Muslim religious devotion, especially the piety of “average” (*mediocres*), non-elite Muslims. Following his positive description of the adhan, he writes that after hearing its daily call “only a certain few go to the prayer house unless it is Friday, but the devoted, wherever they happen to be, stop their work and drop to their knees three or five times before returning to work.”⁴⁶⁰ William’s description is sensitive to social differences, acknowledging that the laborers and other workers did not have the luxury of going to the mosque every day to pray. Even so, these non-elite Muslims made every other effort to express their devotion, dropping to their knees wherever they happened to be, and praising God. The sight is truly something to behold, for “while they are praying, they keep quiet, calling upon God and raising their eyes frequently to the stars.”⁴⁶¹ William has clearly been affected by witnessing such displays of piety and devotion. One cannot overemphasize, moreover, the effect this visual would have had, generally-speaking, on other Frankish residents as well. Five times a day, every day, the city was punctuated by the sonorous call of the

⁴⁶⁰ Ad oratoria quidem pauci vadunt nisi feria sexta, sed devoti, unusquisque volens orare in loco suo, cessant ab opere et tres genuflexiones aut quinque facientes revertuntur ad opus., Wilhelm von Tripolis, *Notitia; De Statu*, 256.

⁴⁶¹ Silentium quidem tenant, dum orant, ubique devote inclamantes ad sydera oculos frequentius attollentes., Wilhelm von Tripolis, *Notitia; De Statu*, 256.

muezzin, and Muslims, wherever they were – the field, the market, the public square-, dropped to their knees and prayed. This was a visual and aural landscape that was unlike anything one would find in the heart of western Europe. This does not mean, of course, that inhabiting this landscape led every Frank to appreciate and respect their Muslim neighbors, but it did mean that Muslims could not so easily be reduced to the harsh caricatures of those for whom Muslims were a murky and abstract “other”.

William transitions from his description of the adhan to a firsthand account of the ceremony itself. According to William, the *khutbat al-jum'a*, or Friday prayer (after this, *khutba*), is a ceremony in which Muslims can be seen “sitting in long rows or kneeling, turning their face to the East toward the city of Mecca, three days beyond which is the tomb of Muḥammad, just as the Jews, as it is said, wherever they are turn toward the holy city of Jerusalem to pray.”⁴⁶² Unlike the enthusiastic Frank, William seems unfazed by the fact that there are Muslims in Acre who pray in a direction different than Jerusalem. While concise, William’s description is an accurate account of the ceremony, during which Muslims alternate between sitting and kneeling, and prayer is directed toward the city of Mecca. Moreover, William correctly situates the Prophet Muḥammad’s tomb, and it is worth considering why he makes a point of mentioning this. Muḥammad’s tomb and place of death are described in other Latin works, biographies of the Prophet in particular, but usually only as an opportunity to denigrate him. William, by

⁴⁶² Sedentes in oratorio per longas series seu genuflexum tenentes vultum habent ad meridiem versus civitatem Mectam, ultra quam per tres dietas est sepulchrum Machometi, sicut Iudei, ubicumque sunt, vertunt se versus civitatem sanctam Ierusalem, ut aiunt, et orant., Wilhelm von Tripolis, *Notitia; De Statu*, 256.

contrast, does not use his description of the khutba or Muḥammad's tomb to make any overt polemical point.

Tradition holds that Muḥammad's tomb lies in the same place that he shared a house with his wife, Aisha. Islamic custom enjoins Muslims, if possible, to make a pilgrimage, or *Hajj*, to the *Kaba* in Mecca one time in their lives, and it has been normal for Muslims to visit Muḥammad's tomb after doing so. Today the tomb lies beneath the famous "Green Dome", so called because it lies beneath a green-colored dome in the southeast corner of al-Masjid al-Nabawi, the Mosque of the Prophet in Medina. The original structure that today's Green Dome is built upon was a wooden cupola that was first erected by the Mamluk Sultan al-Mansur Qalawun in 1279, nearly the same time William was writing. The Sultan did so more than six centuries after Muḥammad's death to accommodate the increasing numbers of pilgrims who sought to visit it. Many of the same pilgrims with the time and resources to make the *Hajj*, also made the journey to Jerusalem and other holy sites in the Near East. This high level of pilgrimage for both Muslims and Christians continued throughout the medieval period irrespective of military and political circumstances. Even during periods of intense conflict, or after the various conquests and reconquests of Jerusalem, the negotiating parties usually always made a point of allowing pilgrimage to continue freely.⁴⁶³ Moreover, at this same time that Muslim pilgrims were traveling through cities like Acre and Jerusalem on their way to and from Mecca and Medina, we have Qur'ānic commentators like Nasir al-Din al-Baydawi (d. 1286) writing that Jesus would return to the Holy Land in the final days to

⁴⁶³ S. Runciman, *A History of the Crusades*, vol. 3 (Cambridge, 1953-4), 186-88.

kill the Antichrist.⁴⁶⁴ After doing so he will rule for 40 years, and then be buried next to Muḥammad. This is to say that in the latter part of the 13th century, the very same time that William was active, Muslim veneration of Muḥammad's tomb was increasing, and traditions were circulating that placed Jesus, quite literally, at the Prophet's side.

William's topographic description of the physical space between the mosque he describes and the holy cities of Mecca and Medina, while admittedly brief, is nevertheless significant. *Itineraria*, or travel narratives, were one of the significant Latin genres of William's time, and the Holy Land was one of the most frequent subjects that these authors described. Such writers were, generally speaking, more concerned with describing a spiritual and religious topography that confirmed a particular Christian worldview, than they were in accurately describing every detail of the physical space.⁴⁶⁵ Usually this was implicitly done through omission, but occasionally authors were explicit on this point. In the "Rothelin" continuation of William of Tyre's *Historia*, so-called because the Abbey Rothelin owned one of its principal manuscripts, the unknown, but likely 13th century author describes the various holy places of Jerusalem, but concedes that:

I have told you the names of the abbeys and churches of Jerusalem outside the city, and those in the streets of the Latins, but have said nothing at all about the abbeys and churches of the Syrians, nor of the Greeks, Jacobites, Bedouin, Nestorians, Armenians, or any of the other peoples who had churches and abbeys in the city but were not of the Roman obedience. The reason I have no intention of telling you about all these people just

⁴⁶⁴ *Encyclopedia of Islam*, 1129; *Asrar ut-tanzil wa Asrar ut-ta'wil*

⁴⁶⁵ Jacques Vitry's *Historia Orientalis*, for example, at times describes a religious topography devoid of the Muslims and eastern Christians who live there. Jacques de Vitry, *Histoire Orientale: Historia Orientalis* (Brepols, 2008), 67-80.

mentioned is that they are said never in any way to have accepted obedience to Rome.⁴⁶⁶

For the Rothelin author, much like Jacques de Vitry, obedience to Rome and the Latin rite were necessary for the recognition of another religious community's very existence, and it was rare to allow anything that would challenge the articulation of a particular worldview to intrude upon its sacred topography. William not only allows such an intrusion, but he foregrounds it, describing an alternative, Islamic sacred topography in which Muslims, through their weekly act of prayer, face the city of Mecca, placing themselves on a sacred map that transcended the political circumstances of the present. As the previous chapter discussed, William's evangelical strategy relied on Muslim reverence for Jesus and other pre-Islamic prophets. William mentions Muḥammad's tomb and its place on this sacred map, because his goal was not to destroy this topography, but to place himself within it, and alter its contours.

Indeed, William's strategy, and the deeper reasons for his careful observations of the *khutba* ceremony becomes clear. As he explains, "while they [the Saracens] are gathered together, one of them begins to recite by heart a story of Mary or Joseph or Zechariah or another edifying narrative."⁴⁶⁷ These stories are popular and emotionally resonant to the Muslims who hear them, as demonstrated by the fact "when Jesus, Mary, Joseph, Abraham, or even Muḥammad are named, they praise God in heaven with joyful

⁴⁶⁶ *Crusader Syria in the Thirteenth Century: The Rothelin Continuation of the History of William of Tyre with Part of the Eracles or Acre Text*, trans. and ed. Janet Shirley (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999), 22-23.

⁴⁶⁷ Interim dum aggregantur, unus de devotis incipit legere cordetenus sine libro hystoriam Marie sive Ioseph aut Zacharie aut aliam devotionis excitativam., Wilhelm von Tripolis, *Notitia; De Statu*, 258.

hearts and quiet whispers, and tears regularly flow down their face.”⁴⁶⁸ William’s physical presence at this ceremony is crucial to his observations. Like an Islamic wa’iz, William’s evangelical strategy, based as it was in Islamic traditions about Mary and Jesus, was informed by seeing the emotional resonance of these stories up close. Such stories transcended religious boundaries, and his adoption of them was not forced, but organically suited to his context. In the first chapter I discussed William’s biography of Muḥammad, in which the young Muḥammad was trained by the Christian monk *Bahira* to call upon “Jesus, son of Mary.”⁴⁶⁹ Unlike his Latin contemporaries, whose biographies of the Prophet were almost uniformly hostile, William’s approach to Muḥammad’s life was far more irenic. Rather than portray the Prophet as a distorted other, he familiarizes him, grounding his life and mission in a Christian context.

Familiarizing Muḥammad had many potential benefits for missionaries such as William, one of the most important of which is that it provided him with much more rhetorical flexibility. By overtly denigrating the Prophet, one would destroy the connections William tried to cultivate by emphasizing the intimate stories and other traditions the two religions shared. This intimacy allowed one to use, for example, the Qur’ān for Christian purposes, and draw from the deep well of emotional regard that Muslims had for pre-Islamic prophets such as Jesus and Mary.

⁴⁶⁸ Et ubi nominatur Iesus, Maria, Ioseph aut Abraham vel nomen Machometi, cordis quodam iubilo et oris susurrio dulci laudant Deum celi et frequenter lacrimae per maxillas descendunt., Wilhelm von Tripolis, *Notitia; De Statu*, 258.

⁴⁶⁹ Wilhelm von Tripolis, *Notitia; De Statu*, 198.

The intimacy that came from sharing space with Muslims also rebounded back upon William, shaping his own perspective. Indeed, as he continues his description of the *khutba*, he relates that:

While the reader, who is considered like a priest – although they do not have priests or monks, whom they consider mediators between God and men, and say that these are only found among the Christians - recites [from the Qur’ān], there enters [a man] in white garments and his head wrapped in cloth, who begins [reciting] one of the chapters from their law book while all stand with their hands interlinked and extended over the earth. They all [then] bow in the same way together, rising and kneeling, and then touching their foreheads to the earth. [Finally], they bow together, and rise making such wonderful movements, like neither the Christians, nor the Jews, nor any other religious group makes, except, perhaps, the cloistered monks; by doing these marvelous things, I believe they would give pleasure to God and men if they had the true faith.”⁴⁷⁰

The accuracy of William’s description and the clear regard he has for these practices are rare for a Latin author to express. While William acknowledges that Muslims do not have the “true faith”, he makes no other overt attempts to “other” them. Instead, he familiarizes them by providing a Christian parallel for each part of the service. Moreover, his admiration for Islamic prayer is informed by the pluralistic context around him, as he compares it to practices of Christians, Jews, and other religious rules (*aliqui religiosi*). Previously, I discussed William’s description of the *adhan*, which he presents in the context of other religious noises, such as the bells of the Latins and the clappers of the Greeks. Similarly, William describes Muslims praying toward Mecca, comparing this to

⁴⁷⁰ Interim lector legit, qui quasi sacerdos reputatur – quamvis non habent sacerdotes nec monachos, quos repudent inter Deum et homines mediators, quos dicunt tantum esse apud Christianos – intrat in veste alba capite velato syndone et incipit unum de capitulis libri legis stantibus omnibus manu posita supra manum supra terram extensis et modo inclinant simul, modo se erigunt, modo flectunt genua et vertice tangunt terram, et modo inclinati, modo erecti gestus faciunt tales, quales nec Christiani habent nec Iudei nec aliqui religiosi, sed claustrales, in quibus mirabiliter, puto, placerent Deo et hominibus, si veram fidem haberent., Wilhelm von Tripolis, *Notitia; De Statu*, 258.

the Jewish practice of praying toward the city of Jerusalem. In both cases William merely lists these as options, without explicitly hierarchizing these practices in any way. For Christians writers who wrote about Islam from a distance, their purpose in writing about Islam was not primarily to accurately describe it, but demonstrate the superiority of their own practices and beliefs. For Christians such as William who shared space with Muslims, prioritizing religious identity at the expense of all else was unsustainable. As a result, it was vital to cultivate a flexibility of thought that allowed one, at times, to strategically overlook religious differences in order to forge connections with people in religious groups that were different than one's own. The enthusiastic Frank had not cultivated such flexibility of thought, and when he saw something that challenged his preconceptions of what was "normal", he reacted violently to it. The diversity of William's context, by contrast, had developed within him a toleration for difference that the Frank lacked. This flexibility had tempered William, expanding his parameters of what was normal, which meant that practices that were different than his own were not so directly threatening. Religious concerns were just one of many considerations, a fluidity of thought that allowed him to strategically transgress religious boundaries when it was convenient to do so, taking back what was useful and forging connections along the way. William was not trying to turn Muslims into Franks. Like the Knight who voluntarily abstained from pork, he appreciated aspects of Islamic culture to the point that he considered some elements of it superior to his own. Time and again William's admiration for Islamic praxis is centered on "average" (mediocres) Muslims rather than the religious elite. What is remarkable for William is not that there are *some* Muslims who can

compete with the cloistered monks in their mode of worship, but that the *only* Christians who can compete with the average Muslim are the religious practitioners *par excellence*. William's regard for Muslim prayer is visceral and emotional, and the result of experiencing Islamic religious devotion first-hand.

Visceral reactions like this were a byproduct of sharing space, which provided opportunities for experiences that could challenge one's expectations. This is vividly illustrated by another of Usama ibn Munqidh's anecdotes. For part of his career he served as an envoy of the Ayyubids, and during one of his trips through the Levant, he visited the village of Nablus in Sebastia. Here, as he explains,

I paid a visit to the tomb of John the son of Zechariah - God's blessing on both of them! - in the village of Sebastea in the province of Mablus. After saying my prayers, I came out into the square that was bounded on one side by the Holy Precinct. I found a half-closed gate, opened it and entered a church. Inside were about ten old men, their bare heads as white as combed cotton. They were facing east, and wore on their breasts staves ending in crossbars turned up like the rear of a saddle. They took their oath on this sign, and gave hospitality to those who needed it. The sight of their piety touched my heart, but at the same time it displeased and saddened me, for I had never seen such zeal and devotion among the Muslims. For some time I brooded on this experience, until one day, as Mu'in ad-Din and I were passing the Peacock House he said to me: 'I want to dismount here and visit the Old Men [the ascetics].' 'Certainly,' I replied, and we dismounted and went into a long building set at an angle to the road. For the moment I thought there was no one there. Then I saw about a hundred prayer mats, and on them each a Sufi, his face expressing peaceful serenity, and his body humble devotion. This was a reassuring sight, and I gave thanks to Almighty God that there were among the Muslims men of even more zealous devotion than those Christian priests. Before this I had never seen sufis in their monastery, and was ignorant of the way they lived.⁴⁷¹

قد قمت بزيارة إلى قبر يوحنا بن زكريا - نعمة الله على كل منهما! - في قرية سبسطية في محافظة مابلوس. بعد أن قلت صلاتي،⁴⁷¹ خرجت إلى الساحة التي كانت مقيدة على جانب واحد من قبل المخفر المقدس. وجدت بوابة نصف مغلقة، فتحت ودخلت الكنيسة. وكان في

Usama's response to Christian piety, like William's reaction to Islamic prayer, has nothing to do with dogma. It is visceral and emotional, the result of having witnessed it firsthand. Usama admits that seeing the Christian priests challenged his preconceived ideas, because if his religious community was superior, why were there no Muslims whose piety could compete.

Usama's relief at finding Sufis who could match the priests in devotion is not grounded in either the Qur'an or hadith literature. Indeed, Islamic tradition has generally tried to discourage excessive asceticism because of its Christian association. In one of al-Bukhari's hadith, for example, Anas ibn Malik, one of Muhammad's companions reports that:

A group of three men came to the houses of the wives of the Prophet asking how the Prophet worshipped (Allah), and when they were informed about that, they considered their worship insufficient....Then one of them said, "I will offer the prayer throughout the night forever." The other said, "I will fast throughout the year and will not break my fast." The third said, "I will keep away from the women and will not marry forever." Allah's Apostle came to them and said, "Are you the same people who said so-and-so? By Allah, I am more submissive to Allah and more afraid of Him than you; yet I fast and break my fast, I do sleep and I also marry women. So he who does not follow my tradition in religion, is not from me."⁴⁷²

الداخل حوالي عشرة رجال من كبار السن، ورؤوسهم العارية بيضاء مثل القطن بتمشيط. كانوا يواجهون الشرق، وارتدوا على ثديهم الأشرطة تنتهي في كروسبارس تحولت مثل الجزء الخلفي من السرج. أخذوا يمينهم على هذه الإشارة، وقدموا الضيافة لمن يحتاجونها. لقد رأى مشهد تقوى قلبي، ولكنه في نفس الوقت كان مستاء وحزني، لأنني لم أر أبدا مثل هذه الحماسة والتفاني بين المسلمين. فبالنسبة لبعض الوقت، فكرت في هذه التجربة، حتى يوم من الأيام، كما كنت موين الدين وأنا تمر بيت الطاووس وقال لي: "أريد أن أفلت هنا زيارة الرجال القدامى." "بالتأكيد،" أجبت، وفصلنا وذهب إلى مبنى طويل تعيين في زاوية على الطريق. في لحظة اعتقدت أنه لا يوجد أحد هناك. ثم رأيت حوالي مائة صلاة الصلاة، وعلى كل منهم الصوفي، وجهه معبرا عن الصفاء السلمي، وجسده التفاني المتواضع. كان هذا مشهدا مطمئنا، وأعطت الشكر لله عز وجل أن هناك بين المسلمين رجالا أكثر إخلاصا متحمسا من هؤلاء الكهنة المسيحيين. قبل هذا لم أكن قد رأيت حوالها Usama ibn Munqidh, *Kitab al-I'tibar*, 145. الصوفية في ديرهم، وكان جاهلا بالطريقة التي عاشوها

⁴⁷² Bukhari, Volume 7, Book 62, Number 1.

Islam was founded in an environment that already possessed a shared set of religious ideals and expectations that was informed, more than anything else, by overlapping Jewish and Christian traditions. Rather than do away with them, Islam attempted to stake a middle ground between Judaism and Christianity. Christian priests and monks were extreme in their ascetic choices, and so Muslims would be moderate. Jews enforced strict dietary prohibitions, and Christians were permissive; Islam, by contrast, would be stricter than Christianity, prohibiting things like alcohol and pork, but less restrictive than Judaism.⁴⁷³ In practice, however, the limits of this middle ground were not always clear, and the traditions that informed Islamic identity continued to hold their attractions.

Usama's reaction was the result of having witnessed the piety of these Christian priests firsthand, an experience that was powerful enough to overwhelm, temporarily at least, his knowledge of the ways in which these Christians were lacking the "true faith." In the end Usama was able to reconcile this tension, but doing so required another first-hand experience. This experiential aspect of religious piety is reminiscent of something that Palmira Brummett has also identified as a key aspect of pilgrimage and travel narratives. She uses the term "visuality" to describe both the witnessing of an event and the act of narrating what has been witnessed. According to Brummett, "such experience contains an inherent duality, for the traveler both shapes and is shaped by what is seen: the gaze shapes the sites...[and] the site shapes the traveler's eye and the specific language whereby each narrator addresses [it]..."⁴⁷⁴ In both William's description of the

⁴⁷³ David M. Freidenreich, *Foreigners and Their Food: Constructing Otherness in Jewish, Christian, and Islamic Law* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), 12-34.

⁴⁷⁴ Brummett, "Introduction: Genre, Witness, and Time in the 'Book' of Travels", 34.

khutba and Usama's account of the Christian priests and Sufi monks we see this duality, as both are clearly affected by what they have seen, but still attempt to reconcile it with their own worldview. While visuality is a useful starting point, I prefer the term experience. This is a term used by medieval writers themselves, as when Bernard of Clairvaux, encouraged monks meditating on the Song of Songs to "read from the book of experience".⁴⁷⁵ Bernard calls experience "the fruit of faith," using the term in a way that "is closely linked with a whole environment."⁴⁷⁶ When I use the term experience, I am indicating the "whole environment" that it reflects, not only the visual, but the aural, tactile, olfactory, and emotional aspects of living in a diverse environment in which there was no single, dominant worldview. I argue that the diverse, whole environment of which they were a part provided them with daily experiences unlike anything that existed in Mecca or the heart of Christian Europe, and all of these authors were, to varying degrees, shaped by these experiences, experiences which they in turn tried to make sense of as they wrote about them.

One of the ways that William of Tripoli attempted to make sense of the differences between Islam and Christianity was by placing Islamic rituals into categories that he or his intended readers were familiar with. In the final part of William's description of the *khutba*, he writes that:

in time the appointed hour comes for the reading of the law to the people, and one called *Ravi*, whose whole head is wrapped with a long ribbon, over which is resplendent white linen, climbs the platform with a sword or

⁴⁷⁵ Bernard of Clairvaux, *Sermones super Cantica canticorum*, 3.1 and 84.7.

⁴⁷⁶ Leclercq, *The Love of Learning and the Desire for God*, 213; Rita George-Tvrtkovic, *A Christian Pilgrim in Medieval Iraq: Riccoldo da Montecroce's Encounter with Islam* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2012), 108-109.

staff, and faces the people: he begins with a clear voice to praise God with the most elegant verses and with words flowing like honey he recites a chapter, which is called *sora*, which means the image and form of salvation. After this reading, all the Saracens are eager to know [it] just like the Christians' 'Our Father, who is...', or 'I believe in God.'⁴⁷⁷

As he has throughout this description, he avoids "othering" Muslims, offering Christian parallels for each activity. This strategy of familiarizing Islam, treating it as compatible with a Christian perspective is something we see throughout the Arabic/Syriac polemical and apologetic traditions. In Paul of Antioch's *Risāla* or Timothy I's (d. 823) famous debate with the caliph al-Mahdī, both accepted Muḥammad as a legitimate prophet, just not, as Muslims claimed, a universal one that superseded what had come before. As Timothy explains in his response to one of the Caliph's question:

[Muḥammad] walked in the path of the prophets, and trod in the track of the lovers of God. All the prophets taught the doctrine of one God, and since Muḥammad taught the doctrine of the unity of God, he walked, therefore, in the path of the prophets. Further, all the prophets drove men away from bad works, and brought them nearer to good works. And since Muḥammad drove his people away from bad works and brought them nearer to the good ones, he walked, therefore, in the path of the prophets. Again, all the prophets separated men from idolatry and polytheism, and attached them to God and His cult. And since Muḥammad separated his people from idolatry and polytheism, and attached them to the cult and the knowledge of the one God, beside whom there is no other God, it is obvious that he walked in the path of all the prophets. Finally, Muḥammad taught about God, his Word and His Spirit. And since all the prophets had prophesied about God, His Word and his Spirit, Muḥammad walked, therefore, in the path of all the prophets.

⁴⁷⁷ Post longam itaque lectionem legis ad populum ingreditur hora nota et debita, qui Ravi nominatur, stola bissina, et totum caput longa vitta involvitur, et desuper velatus syndone splendenti habens in manu gladium sive baculum ascendit pulpitem et facie ad populum matura voce elegantissimis carminibus et verbis quasi mellifluis exquisitis incipit laudare Deum recitando unum capitulum, quod dicitur sora, quod sonat ymago et forma salutis. Quam orationem omnes Sarraceni student scire sicut Christiani Pater noster, qui es aut Credo in Deum., Wilhelm von Tripolis, *Notitia; De Statu*, 258.

Timothy's answer, in the context of the debate, is an understandably careful one, but it appears in his Syriac account, indicating that he considered this a legitimate way to familiarize Muḥammad. While there are examples of Christians deliberately courting martyrdom by denouncing Muḥammad in places it was illegal to do so, this was not a sustainable tactic for Christian communities under Muslim dominion overall. The more sustainable tactic, as Timothy shows, is minimizing religious differences, emphasizing those common values and ideas that Islam and Christianity share.

The great lengths that William goes to familiarize Islam is especially evident in that his descriptions of the *khutba* also admits that aspects of it are adversarial towards Christians. As William explains, after the reading of the *surah*, the *Ravi* [*rāwin*] then commands the audience to:

‘Say! Your God is undivided, neither begetting nor having been begotten, nor is there any like Him.’ [Q 112:1-4] The Saracens say that this formula was given to Muḥammad by God and to the Saracens by Muḥammad. If anyone says it one thousand times, he will not be found guilty [of a crime]. However, this formula is nothing but a doctrine and dogma of Satan against belief in the Holy Trinity, just as the [saying] there is no God but God and Muḥammad is His messenger is against [our] faith and the sacrament of the Incarnation.⁴⁷⁸

As this passage demonstrates, William is not naïve about the religious beliefs that divide Muslims and Christians, nor does he ultimately consider Islamic doctrine valid. Rather, William's first-hand experiences have fostered a mental and emotional flexibility to hold

⁴⁷⁸ *Dic! Est Deus tuus Deus solidus non generans nec generatus nec est similis ei aliquis. Hanc formam dicunt esse datam Machometo a Deo et genti Sarracenorum a Machometo. Et si dicit eam quis mille vicibus, dampnari non potest. Sed hec forma non est nisi doctrina et docma dyaboli contra fidem sancta trinitatis, sicut et illa Non est Deus nisi Deus et Machometus eius nuntius contra fidem et sacramentum incarnationis., Wilhelm von Tripolis, Notitia; De Statu, 258-260.*

multiple, sometimes conflicting thoughts and feelings about Muslims at once. William characterizes this formula as diabolical, but spoken by a man who, moments earlier, was described as praising God in elegant verses and with words that flow like honey. William has cultivated an ability to respond in a nuanced manner, an especially useful skill, because, as he describes, the *Ravi* as becomes even more explicitly adversarial, explaining that “after [the formulation above], he praises God, and extols and praises his prophet. And then he disparages the Christians, whom he brands, with the [words] said above, as corruptors of the Gospel and enemies of Muḥammad.”⁴⁷⁹ While the *Ravi*’s attack on the “Christians” is certainly hostile, it is directed at “Christians” in an abstract, corporate sense, not against any specific Christians. His charges were the standard, timeless critiques of Islamic apologetic and polemic, geared to an audience with the mental flexibility to hold conflicting propositions at once: Christians, in an abstract sense, are corruptors of the Gospel and enemies of Muḥammad, but William and other local Christians were familiar, and could be treated in any of the many ways that context allowed.

This passage is also revealing, because it demonstrates William’s nuanced understanding of Islamic social differences. While he is generally complementary of Islamic religious devotion and practices, his harshest and most extreme condemnations are for Islamic religious elites. As he explains,

Therefore, it is forbidden that anyone who hears dispute or question what God or the Prophet says in this book, and anyone who does question is

⁴⁷⁹ Postquam itaque Deum laudavit, Laudat et suum prophetam et extollit. Ac deinde Christianos vituperat, quos notat corruptores Ewangelii et hostes Machometi, ut dicitur supra., Wilhelm von Tripolis, *Notitia; De Statu*, 260.

killed. For this reason, their teacher, who holds a position [like] a bishop, whom they call Kadi [*qādī*], the same one who reads or teaches, he holds a sword [for enforcing?] [that is unsheathed three or four inches ?] as a threat, so that if anyone [speaks] against their law he himself will raise [the sword?], and [the speaker] will immediately be slaughtered.⁴⁸⁰

Throughout both the *Notitia* and *De statu*, William suggests that the authority of the *qādīs* and other religious elites is based more on the threat of violence than that they their fellow Muslims have any true regard for them. Several times William mentions the ways violence and the threat of violence have been used by Islamic authorities to compel compliance to their law and doctrine. When William describes the compilation of the Qur'ān, for example, he recycles a familiar polemical trope that the “good” parts of the Qur'ān were borrowed from the Old and New Testaments, and written by Jewish and Christian authors. These were both standard attacks, but in William's version the emphasis is on the threat of violence that compelled their assistance. As he describes it, 'Uthmān ibn 'Affān third successor to ,Muḥammad realized that his religious , community needed its own holy book, but "seeing that there were no [Muslims] sufficient for this task, he picked learned men from the miserable ones, the Jews and Christians who had become Sarracens through fear of death...to be his helpers... and put While there is a clear polemical ⁴⁸¹" .together a book of authority, dignity, and honor point here that undermines the authority of the Qur'ān by stressing its Jewish and

⁴⁸⁰ Idcirco prohibitum est, ne aliquis audeat disputare nec querere, quid in hoc libro dicit Deus aut propheta, et qui querit, moritur. Propter quod etiam, quando doctor eorum, qui locum episcopi tenet, quem nominant Kadi, ipsum legit aut docet, ensen tenet abstractum quasi per tres aut quatuor digitos de vagina in signum comminationis, ut siquis contra doctrinam se erigat, illico trucidetur., Wilhelm von Tripolis, *Notitia; De Statu*, 218.

⁴⁸¹ Sed quoniam non erat sufficiens ad hoc opus, de miseris, qui timore mortis de Christianis et Iudeis effecti erant Sarraceni, elegit, quos habere potuit, doctores, ut sui existerent coadiutores ad componendum opus electum et librum auctoritate dignum et honore., 336.

Christian origins, William describes the final product of their efforts as a book of authority, dignity, and honor." This demonstrates, once again, the flexibility to maintain" multiple propositions at once. William of Tripoli was a Latin Christian, whose primary goal was to convince Muslims to accept Christian baptism. Of course he considered the things that he believed superior, and considered aspects of Islamic doctrine and culture problematic. What is surprising is that he rarely paints Islam with a broad brush. Even the parts of his writing that are most critical toward Islam are nuanced by the standards of medieval Latin polemic. Indeed, William repeatedly stresses his desire to present Islam and Islamic beliefs accurately and fairly. In his preface to his translation of the nineteen Qur'ān ic ayat, he says, "I have written this, so that if another translation of the Qur'ān should, perhaps, come to hand, the reader will know that this is not a translation of the Qur'ān Much like William's descriptions of the ⁴⁸².that the Sarracens now alone possess adhan and the khutba, William is imagining readers back home who might never have experienced such things firsthand, nor have the knowledge to tell a proper Qur'ān ic .translation from a fake one

William is articulating a truly Latin Eastern perspective to his co-religionists in Europe. This perspective was nuanced in ways that most Latin writings about Islam were not, because they are informed by William's firsthand experiences sharing space with Muslims. Even though he believed in the superiority of his religious position, and his goal was to encourage conversion, he appreciated many aspects of Islamic religion and

⁴⁸² Hec ideo scripsi, ut, si forte aliqua translatio Alcorani ad manus veniat, sciat lector illam non esse huius Alcorani translationem, quam Sarraceni nunc solam tenent ubique., 218.

,culture. He was not trying to turn Muslims into Franks. William is explicit on this point praising the Islamic form of worship as something that would give "extraordinary pleasure to God if they had the true faith." He believes certain Islamic practices are superior to his own. His goal is not to do away with those things, but merely shift them ,in the right direction. Moreover, William's nuanced presentation of Islam had a second strategic purpose. In the previous chapter, I argued that William cast himself as an Islamic wa'iz, or popular preacher. These preachers were criticized by the 'ulama and ,other religious elites for relying on stories of the pre-Islamic preachers. Nevertheless they remained popular, and often used these stories, especially stories about Jesus, to challenge elite authority. Considering this, it is intriguing that William mentions that blaspheming Christ is also a crime that can be punished by death. As he describes it they [the"Qur'ān ic passages] highly praise, magnify and extoll the LorJesus Christ, so that all Saracens understand that he is called the Word of God, judging he who This means that William attempted to engage ⁴⁸³".blasphemes him deserving of death with potential Muslim converts through the same stories that were used by the wa'iz, the emotional power of which he had personally witnessed. Furthermore, there was already a precedent for using Christ to defy the very Islamic authorities who were most likely to challenge him. Sharing space with Muslims had, in other words, made William sensitive ,to potential opportunities that someone like Jacques de Vitry would have overlooked showing the ways Islamic tradition could be harnessed to target potential converts, using

⁴⁸³ Dominum Iesum Christum in tantum laudant, magificant et extollunt, ut omnes Sarraceni cogantur eum dicere Verbum Dei, iudicantes dignum morte, qui in eum blasphemat., 212.

the traditions they valued for Christian purposes. These same traditions could also be used as leverage against the authorities who would try to prevent their conversion

William not only had firsthand experience of the degree to which these pre-Islamic stories resonated for Muslims, but he lived in a context where the cultural entanglement that these stories exemplify was self evident. In one of the most intriguing examples of this, Rane A. Katzenstein and Glenn D. Lowry examined a collection of thirteenth-century Islamic metal objects which they called one of the most “intriguing problems in Islamic art.” The canteen below is a famous example of this [Fig. 1], presently held by the Freer Gallery of Art.



Figure 1. The “Freer Canteen”

This so-called “Freer Canteen” is part of a group of objects that have been attributed to workshops in Syria and Egypt, most of which were crafted between the 1220s and 1300.⁴⁸⁴ All of these objects contain Christian themes, the middle image above is of the Virgin Mary and the infant Christ for example, and early studies assumed that they must form some isolated group of objects, distinct from other thirteenth century metalwork, and made, perhaps, by Christian artisans.⁴⁸⁵ As Katzenstein and Lowry observe, however, the Christian imagery is often confused, and the non-Christian elements that are a significant part of it “have either been downplayed or ignored entirely.”⁴⁸⁶ Both have convincingly shown that the iconographic errors indicate a basic misunderstanding or lack of awareness of the nature and order of Christian cycles, and this, combined with each objects Islamic imagery, indicates that the artisans were most likely Muslims, even though the dominant scenes on each object are all Christian. They describe the objects as having a “generic holiness that is nowhere found in eastern Christian art, and in fact could have only been conceived by individuals who were in contact with, but not participants in, the Christian culture of the thirteenth century.”⁴⁸⁷ The hallmarks of this “generic holiness” was the shared visual and religious vocabulary that transcended religious boundaries by a strategic minimization of religious differences. In the canteen above, this generic holiness manifested in scenes from Jesus and the

⁴⁸⁴ Rane A. Katzenstein and Glenn D. Lowry, “Christian Themes in Thirteenth-Century Islamic Metalwork,” *Muqarnas* v. 1 (1983): 53-68, 53. Canteen: flat side. Smithsonian Institution, Freer Gallery of Art, Washington D.C. Syria, 1245-50.

⁴⁸⁵ For example, M.S. Dimand, “A Silver Inlaid Bronze Canteen with Christian Subjects in the Eumorfopoulos Collection,” *Ars Orientalis* 1 (1954): 18-34; L.T. Schneider, “The Freer Canteen,” *Ars Orientalis* 9 (1973): 137-54.

⁴⁸⁶ Katzenstein and Lowry, “Christian Themes,” 54.

⁴⁸⁷ *Idem*, 61.

Virgin Mary's life that both Muslims and Christians agreed on, many of which were the very same stories that William of Tripoli used as the core of his evangelical message.

One of the mechanisms that maintained this “generic holiness” was the shared tradition of pilgrimage. Pilgrimage was an important practice for Muslims, Jews, and both western and eastern Christians alike, and was one of the prime situations where we see broad inter-religious convergence. Katzenstein and Lowry theorize, in fact, that generically holy metal objects like the Freer Canteen were crafted for pilgrims. St. Catherine's monastery on Mt. Sinai, one of the oldest and most famous Christian monasteries in the region, has long been a destination for Muslim pilgrims. The monastery sits alongside a mosque that was built by the Fatamid Caliph al-Amir in 1106, but the real attraction, for Muslims and Christians alike, has been the chapel of the Burning Bush which commemorates the place where God spoke to Moses.⁴⁸⁸ Magister Thietmarus, a medieval traveler who wrote an account of his journey through the Holy Land between 1217-1218, visited St. Catherine's and reported that Muslims and Christians worshipped at this shrine, both signaling their mutual respect by removing their shoes before entering the chapel.⁴⁸⁹

In a recent article, Benjamin Kedar identifies three different “sub-types” of this phenomenon of inter-religious convergence on mutually revered holy sites in the Near East. The first of these is one that he calls, “merely spatial.” Kedar describes this as an encounter where “adherents of different religions come to, or make a pilgrimage to, a site

⁴⁸⁸ H. Skrobucha, *Sinai* (London, 1966), 53-64.

⁴⁸⁹ Thetmarus, *Iter ad Terram Sanctam*, cc. 17-20, in de Sandoli, *Itinera*, 3, 274-82.

all consider holy. They may encounter one another at the holy site, and they may perform the same act, but no common service takes place.”⁴⁹⁰ To this he adds a second type: convergence at the same service, with the service officiated by a member(s) of one religion, and members of another religion being allowed access during the service. William of Tripoli’s observations of the khutba a prime example of this. The final category, which he describes as “apparently only rarely occurring,” is that of an egalitarian convergence at a shared religious ceremony. While Kedar’s classifications are useful to a point, he minimizes, I argue, the overall effect of the convergences that he would describe as “merely spatial.” In the example above, for example, Thietmarus describes a “merely spatial” convergence, but sharing space is no mere thing. Not only does sharing space have the potential to shape one’s experience of a place, by affirming or heightening, for example, a pilgrim’s perception of the site’s sanctity, but as our author points out, sharing space had a concrete manifestation: Muslims and Christians mutually signaled their reverence by removing their shoes.

While it is true that we have fewer examples of egalitarian convergences, I argue that when these did happen, they were a direct result of the other, “merely spatial” and “non-egalitarian”, types of convergences. In one vivid case of an egalitarian convergence cited by Kedar, the Egyptian historian Ibn Duqmaq (d. 1407) describes a drought in Jerusalem in 1317 that was so severe that all of the city’s inhabitants, Muslims,

⁴⁹⁰ Benjamin Z. Kedar, “Convergences of Oriental Christian, Muslim, and Frankish Worshippers: The Case of Saydnaya,” in *De Sion exhibit lex et verbum domini de Hierusalem: Essays on Medieval Law, Liturgy, and Literature in Honour of Amnon Linder*, ed. by Yitzak Hen (Turnhout: Brepols, 2001), 59-70.

Christians, and Jews, went to an open space and beseeched God for rain.⁴⁹¹ Ibn Duqmaq reports that after three days God answered their prayers, and the city's residents were saved. It makes sense that the desperation of the situation would have compelled all of Jerusalem's residents to pray for rain, but there is nothing self-evident about the residents' decision to share the same space while doing so. It would presumably have been easier for each religious community to pray for help separately in their own sacred places, but they chose to do so together instead. Congregating together, even when the motivating factor was severe, was still an acknowledgement that the prayers of those from other religious groups were, to some degree, worthwhile and effective. Indeed, it is not difficult to imagine an alternative scenario, one in which the drought caused division rather than convergence, each group blaming the presence of the other for their present misfortune.⁴⁹² One of the byproducts of personally interacting with other religious communities, however, is that it was more difficult to reduce their members to harsh, simplistic, and absurdist caricatures. When William of Tripoli says that Muslims lack the "true faith", but concedes that their mode of worship is superior to nearly every other religious group, he is attributing value to it, and allowing for the possibility that they

⁴⁹¹ J. Drory, "Jerusalem in the Mamluk Period," in *Jerusalem in the Middle Ages. Selected Papers*, edited by B. Kedar (Jerusalem, 1979), 177; G. Grunebaum, *Muhammadan Festivals*, 2nd ed. (London, 1976), 79; Sami G. Massoud, *The Chronicles and Annalistic Sources of the Early Mamluk Circassian Period* (Leiden, 1987), x.

⁴⁹² In one of the most infamous episodes of the First Crusade, many Europeans, especially in parts of modern Germany, were inspired to kill and forcibly convert their Jewish neighbors. These Jewish communities were not integrated into German social life to the degree that we see in the far more diverse societies of the eastern Mediterranean, and as a result, their killers did not recognize that their community had any inherent worth. Fn.

occupy a place along a spectrum. While this place is not as good as having the “true faith”, it is still valuable.

This attribution of worth to Islam, even while refuting it, is often found in Arabic/Syriac-Christian apologetic and polemical works, such as Timothy’s debate with the Caliph that was described above, in which he said that Muḥammad “walked in the path of the prophets.” In another example, Paul of Antioch’s so-called *Letter to a Muslim Friend*, this widely disseminated apologetic work similarly portrays Muḥammad in favorable terms as part of its defense of Christianity. Paul, a bishop of Sidon and near contemporary of William, accepts that Muḥammad was a prophet, but claims that he was sent exclusively to the Arabs to lead them away from polytheism, rather than as a prophet for all peoples.⁴⁹³ Paul’s letter illustrates the degree to which his diverse context had cultivated the capacity to express the relationship between Christianity and Islam as a continuum rather than a duality. Paul presents Islam as flawed, but much closer to the “true faith” than the polytheism that had preceded it. Paul acknowledges, in other words, that Islam possesses some fundamental worth. In Ibn Duqmaq’s convergence account, this way of thinking convinced each religious group that the best way to deal with this crisis was together, that all of their prayers would be more effective than any one community alone.

Another example of this kind of overlap occurred in a place called al-Matariyya in Old Cairo. Today’s Al-Matariyya has an old sycamore tree that was believed to shelter

⁴⁹³ Paul D’Antioche, *eveque Melkite de Sidon, XIIe s.*, ed. by Paul Khoury (Beirut, 1964), x; Rifaat Y. Ebied and David Thomas, eds., *Muslim-Christian Polemic during the Crusades: The Letter from the People of Cyprus and Ibn Abi Talib al-Dimashqi’s Response* (Leiden: Brill, 2005), x.

the Holy Family on their flight to Egypt that attracts thousands of pilgrims every year. According to multiple sources, it also boasted a fountain in the 12th and 13th centuries which the Holy Family was believed to have rested alongside during their journey. The Coptic-Christian writer, Abu al-Makarim (d. 12th c), reported that whenever envoys from Christian lands, whether Greek, Frankish, Ethiopian, or Nubian, visited the Caliph's court they would wash themselves in the fountain and worship.⁴⁹⁴ The fountain was also an important site for Muslims, and Burchard of Strasbourg, Frederick I's envoy to Salah ad-Din, observed that the fountain "is venerated by the Saracens down to the present day, and they bring there candles and incense when they wash themselves there. At Epiphany a vast number of people flock there from all confines, and wash themselves in its water."⁴⁹⁵ In addition, Burchard mentions a number of other sites associated with Jesus and the Virgin Mary that attracted large numbers of Muslim and Christian worshippers, including an ancient palm that Islamic tradition claims bent at the young Jesus' command, offering Mary, his mother, its dates.⁴⁹⁶ While the convergence at the fountain of al-Matariyya appears to have been "merely spatial", both Muslims and Christians revered it for the same reasons, and they expressed their reverence in the same way by washing themselves in the fountain's waters.

⁴⁹⁴ Al-anba Samu'il usqf Shibin al-Qanatir, ed., *Tarikh Abu l-Makarim*, part 1 (Cairo, 2000), 21-68; U. Zanetti, "Matarieh, la Sainte Famille et les Baumiers", *Analecta Bollandiana* 111 (1993), 36; "Abu l-Makarim et Abu Salih", *Bulletin de la societe d'archeologie copte* 34 (1995): 85-138.

⁴⁹⁵ P. Lehmann and O. Glauning, "Mittelalterliche Handschriftenbruchstucke der Universitatsbibliothek und des Georgianum zu Munchen," *Zentralblatt fur Bibliothekswesen*, Beiheft, 72 (Munich, 1940), 65-66; also appears in Arnold of Lubeck, *Chronica Slavorum*, ed. by J. M. Lappenberg, MGH, SS, 21 (Hanover, 1869), 238.

⁴⁹⁶ Q 19:24-25, for example.

The Church of the Holy Sepulchre in today's Jerusalem is one of the best modern examples of a "merely spatial" convergence. The Church, which is the holiest site in all of Christendom, is an incoherent architectural mess, having been built and rebuilt, modified and expanded without any single, organizational vision. The church is shared by several Christian sects, including the Greek Orthodox, Armenian Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Egyptian Copt, Syriac, and Ethiopian churches. There is no single space in the church for a shared Christian service, with each sect holding separate services according to its own liturgical schedule. There is also generally very little interaction between the members of these sects, despite the fact that many participate in the same rituals, such as lighting candles at Christ's tomb, and touching the Altar of the Crucifixion and the Stone of Anointing, where Christ's body was prepared for burial. While there is no regular, shared "egalitarian" service, and very little interaction between members of these Christian communities, this "merely spatial" convergence still has the effect of elevating the status of the entire site as a whole.

This is demonstrated, perhaps, by one of the rare, shared religious services at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. On Great Saturday, or Holy Saturday, the day preceding Easter according to the Greek Orthodox calendar, churches across the Christian world light the New Fire that represents Christ's resurrection. In the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, however, the New Fire lights spontaneously, and supposedly miraculously, in a service known as the Miracle of the Easter Fire. While both Muslims and Christians have at times expressed skepticism about the veracity of this "miracle", it remained

incredibly popular throughout the Middle Ages.⁴⁹⁷ Muslims and Christians of every sect participated in the ritual, with the scholar al-Biruni (d. 1048) reporting that Christians and Muslims even prayed together for the fire to appear.⁴⁹⁸ Even though this ceremony is largely of the “merely spatial” type, Muslim credulity, to the degree it existed, can largely be explained by the kind of popular consensus that Josef Meri has identified as the key contributing factor to the cult of the saints in medieval Syria.⁴⁹⁹ Because Muslims and Christians had certain shared values in common, namely that God has the power to work miracles, and that physical proximity to a miracle has the power to imbue one with grace or *baraka*, the sheer number of people who flocked to see the Holy Fire, even if those people were Christian, led some Muslims to reasonably conclude that there must be something to it. Interreligious convergence had, in other words, affirmed the prestige of the ritual.

This affirmation of a site could work the other way as well, as vividly demonstrated in another of Ibn Jubayr’s notes on William’s home city of Acre. Ibn Jubayr describes Acre as a diverse meeting place, full of Muslims, Jews, and Christians from every region. After the city was conquered by the Franks, he claims that many of the “mosques reverted to churches”, but that the city’s principal mosque had remained in Muslim hands. This mosque was situated next to the tomb of the prophet Salih- an

⁴⁹⁷ Shihab al-Din al-Qarafi mentions, for example, that the Ayyubid ruler Al-Muazzam Turanshah believed the ceremony a hoax, but allowed it to continue in exchange for money. Diego R. Sarrío Cucarella, *Muslim-Christian Polemics Across the Mediterranean: The Splendid Replies of Shihab al-Din al-Qarafi* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 61.

⁴⁹⁸ This is described in, M. Canard, “La Destruction de l’Eglise de la Resurrection par le calife Hakim et l’histoire de la descente du feu sacré”, *Byzantion* 25 (1965): 35-38.

⁴⁹⁹ See above.

ancient, pre-Islamic prophet mentioned in the Qur'ān-, and, according to Ibn Jubayr “God had protected this spot [the tomb] from the defilement of the unbelievers [to preserve] the grace of this holy tomb.”⁵⁰⁰ An alternative explanation is that Muslim reverence for the site had elevated it in Frankish esteem as a place worth preserving. This is especially likely considering that Ibn Jubayr goes on to describe a spring to the east of the town from which, according to Islamic tradition, God provided a cow for Adam after he and Eve had been driven from paradise.⁵⁰¹ As Ibn Jubayr explains, a mosque at one time marked the spring, but only its *mihrab* remained, which is a niche in the wall of all mosques indicating the direction of Mecca. Despite the mosques present state, Muslims still gathered there to pray. Even more striking, the Franks, according to Jubayr, “had placed to the east [of the spring] their own *mihrab*. As a result, Muslims and unbelievers [the Franks] gathered together at [the spring], and the one turned toward his prayer-house [to pray], the other toward his. Thus, at the hands of the Christians most of it is preserved, and God has kept it as a place of prayer for the Muslims.”⁵⁰² While the Islamic story of the spring is based on Genesis 3:17-19, in which God curses Adam and Eve to labor for their own sustenance, it is otherwise entirely a product of the Islamic tradition. There was no independent Christian tradition marking the spring as holy, and Frankish regard for it seems entirely based on Muslim veneration of the site. The Muslim and Christians who gathered together to worship are clearly informing one another, despite this being a

⁵⁰⁰... فحرس الله هذه البقعة من رجس انكره ببركة هذا القبر المقدس Idem.

⁵⁰¹ This is mentioned by al-Tabari, al-Kashaf, and Ibn Athir. For example, *The History of al-Tabari Vol. 1: General Introduction and From the Creation to the Flood*, ed. and trans. by Franz Rosenthal (New York: Suny Press, 1989), 294.

⁵⁰² ووضع الافرنج في شرقية محرابا لهم فالمسلم والكافر يجتمعان فيه يستقبل هذا مصلاؤه وهذا مصلاؤه وهو بايدي النصارى معظم محفوظ... وانقي الله فيه موضع الصلاة للمسلمين Idem.

“merely spatial” example of convergence. For all that divided them, Muslims and Christians shared a belief in the sacred topography of the region, one that had been marked, in large part, by Old Testament stories that both revered. Both communities believed that these places where God had manifested himself were sacred, emanating grace and divine power that could be accessed. Because Muslims and Christians shared many of these same beliefs and expectations, the popular consensus of one group, Muslims in this case, had the potential to imbue the spring with worth for the other. As this demonstrates, sharing space with Muslims had cultivated within certain acculturated Franks an underlying, although rarely explicitly stated assumption that the veneration of other religious groups had some inherent value.

The final example that I will discuss of this phenomenon is arguably the most famous instance of convergence, although one that has only recently received any significant scholarly attention. In the Greek Orthodox convent of Saidniya, located about fifteen miles outside of Damascus, was a wooden panel, upon which,

a likeness of the Blessed Virgin had once been painted, but now, wondrous to relate, the picture on wood has become incarnate and oil, smelling sweeter than balsam, unceasingly flows from it. By which oil many Christians, Saracens and Jews are often cured of ailments... To this place on the feast of the Assumption of the glorious Virgin and on that of her Nativity all the Saracens of that province flock to pray together with the Christians, and the Saracens perform their devotions there with great reverence.⁵⁰³

⁵⁰³ Burchard of Strasbourg, *De statu Egypti vel Babylonie*, in *Itinera Hierosolymitana Crucesignatorum* (saec. XII-XIII), ed. by S. De Sandoli, vol. 2 (Jerusalem, 1980), 406.

It is clear from Burchard's report that popular consensus has enhanced rather than diminished the site. Christian, Jewish, and Saracen attestation of the oil's curative power have made it all the more credible. Moreover, even though his time among these Saracen worshippers has been brief, Burchard has clearly been affected by the fact that Christians and Saracens pray together, and he, just like William, singles out the Saracens as performing their "devotions with great reverence". The visceral, first-hand experience of seeing these Muslims has placed them on a spectrum, one ultimately a few spots removed from the "true faith," but still a position that had some inherent value, and as such, aspects of it could be admired.

The incarnation of the icon, and its popularity as a site of pilgrimage is further attested by both Latin and Arabic sources. The Coptic Christian historian, Abu al-Makarim, for example, reports that on the Feast of the Virgin, "gather to this place Christians, Muslims, Nestorians, Melkites, Syrians and others, approximately 4,000 or 5,000 people", all of whom receive phials of the icon's oil.⁵⁰⁴ Other Arabic-Christian sources also mention the site, but not the incarnated icon, and for a time it was thought the incarnation stories originated in the West, especially since our earliest mention of the icon was thought to be in a thirteenth century manuscript attributed to a western traveler named Guy Chat, who visited the convent in 1186.⁵⁰⁵ This has since been corrected by Daniel Baraz, who has identified a previously unconsidered manuscript published by

⁵⁰⁴ ... فان في ذلك اليوم يجمع من الناس ايصري والمسلمين والنسطور والمملكية والسران وغيرهم نحو أربعة خمسة الاف نفس *Ta'rikh al-kana'is wa-l-adyirah fi al-qarn al-thani 'ashar al-miladi li-'Abi al-Makarim*, ed. Samu'il al-Suryani vol. 3 (Cairo, 1984), 72-74.

⁵⁰⁵ Paul Devos, "Les Premieres versions occidentales de la legend de Saidnaia", *Analecta Bollandiana* 65 (1947): 259-73.

Louis Cheikho that has been dated to 1183. This manuscript, held by the Monastery of Saint Catherine's on Mount Sinai, begins with a paragraph that reads,

We shall begin, with the help of God and his good guidance, to write the exposition of the story of the icon of the Lady which was incarnated in the monastery of Saidnaya, which is a village in the province of Damascus, and how was the beginning of the matter concerning it and its incarnation, and some of the miracles that came forth on its account.⁵⁰⁶

Through this, Baraz has shown that the reports of the cult were independent of one another. For Latins, the cult was especially promoted by the Knights Templar, who, according to one western traveler, “take [the oil of Saidnaiya] back to their houses [in the Latin East] when they have truces with the infidel, so that they may give [it] to pilgrims who come to pray there, who may take them back reverently into different parts of the world in honor of the Mother of God.”⁵⁰⁷ The Templars were responding to a demand to access the divine, and popular consensus had adhered around the Virgin Mary more than any other figure as a way to do that.

In the penultimate chapter of *De statu*, titled “concerning the sacrament of the Incarnation,” William writes that:

when [the Saracens] hear the testimony of their law, which has been shown above, where the angels say: ‘O Mary, God brings you good news and declares a word from His mouth, and his name will be Jesus Christ, son of Mary’,⁵⁰⁸ they are compelled to say: ‘Jesus Christ is truly the word of God, as in blessed [book of] John: ‘in the beginning was the word and

⁵⁰⁶ نبداً بعون الله وحسن توفيقه نكتب شرح قصة قونة السيدة المتجسدة بدير صيدنايا وهي قرية من اعمال دمشق وكيف كان بدو امرها... MS. Sinai, Ar. 585, f. 50r. This is one of the manuscripts I examined during my time at St. Catherine's.

⁵⁰⁷ Roger of Wendover, *Flores historiarum*, AD 1204, ed. by H.G. Hewlett, vol. 2 (London, 1887), 6.

⁵⁰⁸ Q 3:45-46

the word was with God and God was the word. Through him all things were made and without him nothing was made.⁵⁰⁹

William is explicit in this passage that Mary is the best way to bring Muslims to a Christian understanding of Christ. This is partly informed by his knowledge of Qur'ānic passages, such as the one he quotes above that echo Christian language, and could be used to support a Christian interpretation of Christ's status, but Mary's usefulness is informed, even more so, by his firsthand experiences living among Muslims. William had personally experienced the degree to which stories about Mary and Jesus emotionally resonated for the Muslims who heard them, and he lived in a context where, as Burchard of Strasbourg observed, shrines devoted to the Virgin Mary and the Holy Family were the most popular sites of inter-religious convergence. Sharing space with Muslims had made William acutely aware of the vital areas of overlap between Islamic tradition and his own, and by emphasizing the points of connection between them, he was convinced that Muslims would be "compelled to say: 'Jesus Christ is truly the word of God'".

William's confidence in this strategy is based on his physical connection to his surroundings. This context was so diverse that Jacques de Vitry could only describe it as a monster trying to eat itself, but the beast survived, because each of its heads had cultivated strategies of accommodation that could sustain themselves within a pluralistic society. The core element of this strategy was silence, or the strategic minimization of

⁵⁰⁹ Et iterum cum audiunt testimonium legis eorum, quod ostensum est supra, ubi dictum est per angelos: O Maria, Deus annuntiabit sive evangelizabit tibi verbum ex ore suo et vocabitur nomen eius Iesus Christus Marie filius, compelluntur omnes dicere et dicunt omnes: Iesus Christus est vere verbum Dei, cum beato Iohanne: In principio erat verbum et verbum erat apud Deum et Deus erat verbum; omnia per ipsum facta sunt et sine ipso factum est nichil., 368. Also, John 1:1-3.

religious differences. Silence had another effect: it allowed for the development of a shared visual and religious vocabulary that transcended religious boundaries, allowing for strategic transgression of religious boundaries and forging of connections across religious lines. This was not the only possible reaction to living in a diverse society. Jacques de Vitry shows that it was possible to live in a place, and make no meaningful effort to connect with the people around you. Jacques was not acculturated, because he refused to adapt to the context around him. Other Franks did adapt, however, whether it be Usama ibn Munqidh's Templar friends, Fulcher of Chartres, or William of Tripoli. The scarcity of evidence has made it more difficult to identify this acculturated, Latin Eastern perspective, but this chapter has attempted to show that William of Tripoli is one of the best examples of just such a point-of-view. He is writing in the Latin tradition, but the nuance of his perspective, and his strategic use of silence and adoption of eastern traditions, demonstrate a perspective different than his European contemporaries. Both the *Notitia de Machometo* and the *De statu Sarracenorum* should be viewed as a fully realized Latin Eastern perspective, rather than a mysterious and peculiar outlier in the continental Latin corpus.

CHAPTER SIX

Conclusion and Final Thoughts

In the year 1461, Nicholas of Cusa, a German-born priest and theologian who served the papal legate, Cardinal Giordano Orisini, wrote a text that he called the *Cribratio Alchorani*. This work, which can be translated as “sifting the Qur’ān”, was a form of polemic in that Nicholas was attempting to assert the superiority of Christian theology, but it was different than the polemical efforts of his Latin peers because of his effort to find what he called *pia interpretatio*, or a pious interpretation of Muḥammad’s prophetic role and the beliefs and practices of the religion that he established. *Pia interpretatio*, as Nicholas defined it, had five rules, the most essential of which is that the primary aim of interpretation was to bring glory to God. This meant that any religious text, even the Qur’ān, could bring such glory as long as it was properly interpreted, and the *Cribatio Alchorani* is Nicholas’ attempt to find those parts in the Qur’ān that could be reconciled with Christian theology, serving as a bridge between Christian and Islamic beliefs.

Nicholas, like Williami of Tripoli, sometimes recycled the same errors and hostility of other Latin polemical works, but overall his approach to Islam was irenic and rhetorically flexible. Nicholas tried to find the good in Islamic theology, an effort which might partially be explained by his active participation in the Conciliar reform movement. This movement argued that the universal Church should be led through the consensus of the faithful rather than an Imperial Papacy. The Church was, however, a diverse and sometimes contentious corporate body, and consensus required establishing

common ground between members who did not always, or even usually, agree with one another.

In addition to his reform efforts, Nicholas was also a careful student of Islam. He worked through Robert of Ketton's translation of the Qur'ān, and other Latin works of anti-Muslim polemic. He also frequently corresponded with other scholars interested in Islam such as Juan de Segovia. Nicholas' discussions about and sustained engagement with the Qur'ān led him to believe that Muḥammad's doctrine was flawed, but not diabolical. Muḥammad had done much good by leading his people from polytheism to monotheism, and those areas where Christianity and Islam diverged were due to Muḥammad's ignorance rather than hostility toward Christ or the Gospels. While a Muslim reader would, of course, find such a claim offensive, Nicholas' interpretation of Muḥammad's role was still far more nuanced than most Latin polemics which rejected the idea that there was anything worthwhile in the Prophet's life or mission. *Pia interpretatio* meant that there was value in the Qur'ān, and it could be interpreted in such a way that would bring glory to God and possibly even lead Muslims to Christianity.

Nicholas' perspective was the result of sustained textual engagement with Islam; this dissertation has shown how sustained personal engagement with Muslims could cultivate a similar approach. William of Tripoli spent his life interacting with Muslims in the Levant, and while his goal was to lead Muslims to Christianity, this sustained intimate and personal engagement had taught him that a pious interpretation of the Qur'ān and Muḥammad's mission was the best way to accomplish this. While there were barriers

between Frankish society and the indigenous communities of the Latin East, they were not impermeable and were regularly transgressed.

The Franks of the Latin East experienced religious and ethnic diversity on a scale that was, outside of Iberia, inconceivable in Europe. The Franks bought from, sold to, and worked alongside Muslims and eastern Christians. Through personal interaction, the Franks cultivated a mental flexibility to interact with Muslims and eastern Christians in any of the ways that context required, even when disagreeing with these communities in broad, religious terms. This flexibility has not been fully observed, because it is cultivated through a process that is far more implicit than explicit. We see it in William of Tripoli's work, however. William saw first-hand the deep regard Muslims had for Christ and the Virgin Mary, and the ways in which Christian and Muslim beliefs could be bridged through a pious interpretation. He arrived at this conclusion two centuries before Nicholas of Cusa, and wrote two works that represent the nuanced, and rhetorically flexible perspective that two centuries in the Levant had cultivated in the Franks who had made it their home.

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