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# Reception of Islamic Theology among Syriac Christians in the Thirteenth Century: The Use of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī in Barhebraeus' *Candelabrum of the Sanctuary*

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## Abstract

The Syrian Orthodox Christian author Gregory Barhebraeus is known to have often drawn his inspiration and materials from the works of Muslim authors in composing his own writings. The paper provides an account of what is known about his borrowings from the works of Islamic theology, especially Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's *Muḥaṣṣal afkār al-mutaqaddimīn wa-l-muta'akhhirīn*, in his major theological work, the *Candelabrum of the Sanctuary*, and attempts an assessment of his achievement through a comparison of this work with another of his theological works, the *Book of Rays*, as well as with Bar Shakkō's *Book of Treasures*.

## Keywords

Syriac Christians – Islamic theology – Christian theology – Barhebraeus – *Candelabrum of the Sanctuary* – *Book of Rays* – Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī – Bar Shakkō – *Book of Treasures*

## 1 Introduction

The readers of the present journal will require no reminder about how in the early centuries of Islam the Syriac Christians living in Mesopotamia and the surrounding areas made a major contribution to the development of the sciences in Arabic through their translation work, and how their methods of theological debate, too, are believed to have had a major influence on the

development of Islamic theology. In later times, however, the direction the influence was largely reversed. The Syriac Christians were fully aware of the developments in scholarship among the Muslims with and under whose rule they lived, and towards the end of the first Christian millennium we begin to note instances where authors writing in Syriac are borrowing materials from their Muslim neighbours. The trend becomes much more prominent in the period of the so-called Syriac Renaissance in the early centuries of the second millennium.

The most important representative of this trend in the Syriac literature of the later period was the Syrian Orthodox maphrian Gregory Abū l-Faraj Barhebraeus (b. 1225–1226; d. 1286), who indeed gathered much of the scientific knowledge presented in his works from the writings of Muslim authors.<sup>1</sup> His philosophical works are based to a large extent on the works of Ibn Sīnā (d. 428/1037) and subsequent Arabic works on philosophy. The longest of his compendiums of Peripatetic philosophy, the *Cream of Wisdom* (*Hêwat hekmtā*), is modelled as a whole on Ibn Sīnā's *Kitāb al-Shifā'*. In a study of the parts of that work on mineralogy and meteorology, it was found that he also made use of the works of scholars who lived after Ibn Sīnā, such as Abū l-Barakāt al-Baghdādī's (d. 560/1164–1165) *Kitāb al-Mu'tabar* and Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's (d. 606/1209) *Kitāb al-Mabāḥiṭh al-mashriqīyya*. In working on an edition of the part of the same work on physics, Jens Ole Schmitt found that Barhebraeus also used Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's *Mulakhkhaṣ fī al-mantiq wa-l-ḥikma*.<sup>2</sup> Barhebraeus was a younger contemporary of Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī (d. 672/1274), and he is known to have spent a significant amount of time, especially towards the end of his life, in Marāgha where Ṭūsī had worked. The part of the *Cream of Wisdom* dealing with practical philosophy is modelled on and based to a large extent on Ṭūsī's Persian work on the subject, *Akhlaq-i nāṣirī*, while his work on astronomy and mathematical geography, the *Ascent of the Mind* (*Sullāqā hawnānāyā*), reflects the results of the work on astronomy carried out by Ṭūsī and others at the observatory in Marāgha.<sup>3</sup>

Given what we know about Barhebraeus' contacts with Muslim scholars in Marāgha and elsewhere, it is not surprising that he made use of their works

1 On Barhebraeus' use of Arabic (and also Persian) sources in general, see Takahashi, *Bio-Bibliography*, pp. 96–99; and Teule, "Barhebraeus," pp. 590–593. Among the instances of such borrowing brought to light in recent years is the use of Suhrawardī's *Risāla fī ḥālat al-ṭufūliyya* as the source of Barhebraeus' *Childhood of the mind* (*Ṭalyūt hawnā*) (Fathi, "The Mystic Story").

2 Schmitt, *Barhebraeus, Butyrum Sapientiae, Physics*.

3 Takahashi, "Mathematical Sciences," pp. 485–487.

in his writings on secular subjects such as philosophy and the mathematical sciences. It is perhaps a little more surprising that we should find him drawing on Islamic sources in his more specifically religious works. It has been known for some time that one of his major works, the *Ethicon* (*Ktābā d-Ītīqōn*), which may be described as a guidebook for pious Christian living, is modelled on and draws much of its material from Ghazālī's *Ihyā' 'ulūm al-dīn*, and that the autobiographical account in his monastic handbook, the *Book of the Dove* (*Ktābā d-Yawnā*), has close similarities with Ghazālī's *al-Munqidh min al-ḍalāl*.<sup>4</sup> Another work in which we find much evidence of Barhebraeus' familiarity with the works of Islamic authors is his major work on Christian theology, the *Candelabrum of the Sanctuary*. In what follows, a summary account will be given of what has been known about the borrowings from Islamic authors in this work, together with an example illustrating how such borrowing is made, and some brief comments on how the treatment of such material in the *Candelabrum* compares with the treatment in another work by Barhebraeus himself and a work by another Syriac author from the period just before that of Barhebraeus.

## 2 *Candelabrum of the Sanctuary* and Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's *Muḥaṣṣal*

*Candelabrum of the Sanctuary on the Ecclesiastical Foundations* (*Mnārat qudshē mettōl shetessē 'ēdtānāyātā*) is a comprehensive work on Christian theology, divided into twelve parts called "bases" or "foundations" (*shetessē*):<sup>5</sup> 1. Knowledge (*īda'tā pshūtā'it*); 2. The Creation (*kyānāyūtā d-hānā kōl*); 3. Theology (*mmall'ūt alāhūtā*); 4. The Incarnation (*metbasrānūtā*); 5. Angels (*ūsiyas shmāyānāyātā/mala'kē*); 6. The priesthood (*kāhnūtā*); 7. Evil spirits (*rūhē bīshātā/shēdē*); 8. The rational soul (*napshā mliltā*); 9. Free will (*shallītūt byātā*); 10. The Resurrection (*ḥayyat mūtē*); 11. The Last Judgement (*ḥartā w-dīnā w-pur'ānā d-ṭābē wa-d-bīshē*); 12. Paradise (*pardaysā*).

The *Candelabrum* is one of the earlier works of Barhebraeus. It was probably written over a number of years. The Second Base, which stands somewhat apart from the rest of the work in its style and content and which may originally have been conceived of as a separate work following the traditional pattern

4 See Teule, "Barhebraeus," pp. 604–607, with the literature cited there; also Takahashi, "The Influence of al-Ghazālī".

5 On the editions and translations of the work, see Takahashi, *Bio-Bibliography*, pp. 170–180. To the translations listed there may be added the Italian translation of the Fifth Base by Berti ("L'angelologia siriana").

of works on the *hexaemeron*, was probably written in 1266–1267. In the Fourth Base, on the other hand, Barhebraeus mentions the birth of Christ as having taken place “1274 years ago”, which, when the traditional Syriac reckoning for the date of Christ’s birth is taken into account, suggests that this part of the work was composed in 1271–1272.<sup>6</sup>

There are earlier Syriac treatises dealing with the individual topics handled by Barhebraeus in his twelve bases, and the treatises of Moses bar Kepha (d. 903) are of particular importance in this respect as they are likely to have been known to Barhebraeus.<sup>7</sup> It is difficult, however, to find earlier instances in Syriac where the whole range of subjects treated in the *Candelabrum* is covered in a single work. One comparable work is the *Book of Treasures* by Bar Shakkō, which will be discussed further below, but its scope is more limited than that of the *Candelabrum*.<sup>8</sup> The idea of composing such a work as the *Candelabrum*, a handbook covering all the different areas of Christian theology, may therefore have come from outside of the Syriac tradition and, in particular, from the handbooks of Islamic theology. In this regard, it may be noted that the order of the material at the beginning of the *Candelabrum*, where a discussion of epistemology is followed by an account of the Creation of the World before we reach the discussion of ‘theology’ proper, resembles the order found in a number of classic works of *kalām*, such as Juwaynī’s *Kitāb al-Irshād* and Bāqillānī’s *Kitāb al-Tamhīd*, as well as Māturīdī’s *Kitāb al-Tawhīd*.<sup>9</sup>

6 Takahashi, *Bio-Bibliography*, p. 91.

7 The surviving works of Bar Kepha include a Hexaemeron commentary and treatises on the soul, the Resurrection, on the creation of the angels, on the hierarchy of the angels, and on free will and predestination, as well as works on liturgical matters corresponding to those treated by Barhebraeus in the Sixth Base of his *Candelabrum* (see Reller, *Moses bar Kepha*, pp. 59–76).

8 One further possible instance is a lost work of Dionysius bar Ṣalībī (d. 1171), if Baumstark was correct in suggesting that the treatises mentioned in a list of his works as dealing with such matters as theology (*mmall<sup>e</sup>lūt alāhūtā*), the Incarnation, the Tree of Life, the angels and the demons, the rational soul and the priesthood, as well as the heavens and stars, the Paradise and the Resurrection, actually constituted a single work, but that this was the case is far from certain. See Baumstark, *Geschichte*, p. 296, with n. 10, and for the list of works in question, Assemanus, *Bibliotheca Orientalis*, vol. 2, pp. 210 f.

9 Juwaynī’s *Irshād*, for example, begins with two chapters dealing with theories of knowledge (*bāb fī aḥkām al-naẓar*, pp. 3–11; *bāb ḥaqīqat al-‘ilm*, pp. 12–16) and another on the generation/creation of the world (*bāb al-qawl fī ḥadath al-‘ālam*, pp. 17–27) before we reach the discussion of the existence of the Creator (*bāb al-qawl fī ithbāt al-‘ilm bi-l-ṣānī*, pp. 28–29) and of His attributes (*bāb al-qawl fīmā yajibū li-llāh ta’ālā min al-ṣifāt*, pp. 30–51). Cf. Gardet/Anawati, *Introduction*, pp. 136–186; Rudolph, “Reflections,” pp. 7–9.

Within each base of the work, the material is divided into chapters (*qepale'a*, [*kephalaia*]) and sections (*pāsōqē*), and sometimes into smaller subsections. The method of discussion usually adopted by Barhebraeus is to first list the “rational proofs” (*mḥawwyānwātā ḥushshābāyātā*) for a given position, and then to confirm this by enumerating the “written testimonies” (*sāhdwātā ktībātā*), taken from the Bible and the writing of the Church Fathers.<sup>10</sup> This is followed by the discussion of the possible objections to that position, which are followed, in turn, by the refutation of those objections. Scholars who have worked on the editions of the different bases of the *Candelabrum*, such as Graffin, Houry and Poirier, have commented on the similarity of this procedure to that of both Western scholastic theology and Islamic *kalām*. It has been noted, for example, that Barhebraeus’ “rational” and “scriptural” arguments correspond to what are called the *ʿaqlī* and *naqlī* or *samī* arguments in *kalām*.<sup>11</sup>

A number of scholars have noted the debt that this work owes in particular to Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī. Among the first to do so was Hubert Koffler, who pointed out in his study of the Tenth Base of the *Candelabrum* (on the Resurrection) that there were many points of similarity between the arguments presented there and those found in Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī’s *Muḥaṣṣal*.<sup>12</sup> Barhebraeus does not normally mention by name the Arabic sources (or, for that matter, the more recent Syriac sources, as opposed to the works of the earlier Church Fathers) that he is using. One of the rare occasions where he does mention his Arabic source is in the discussion of Muslim views on miracles in the Fourth Base of the *Candelabrum*, where, in reporting the opinions of Ghazālī and Jāḥiẓ, Barhebraeus explicitly names the *Muḥaṣṣal* as his immediate source.<sup>13</sup> In a paper published elsewhere, it has been shown that the parts of the Second Base dealing with mineralogical, geographical and meteorological matters are based primarily on Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī’s *al-Mabāḥith al-mashriqīyya*, although Barhebraeus combined the materials taken from there with materials gathered from other sources, including earlier Syriac works and Syriac translations of Greek works, such as those of the Pseudo-Aristotelian *De mundo* and Nicolaus

10 For studies on the use of the Fathers in the *Candelabrum* and other works of Barhebraeus, see Juckel, “La réception des Pères grecs” (especially pp. 108–112, 117–121), and Taylor, “L’importance des Pères de l’Église”.

11 Poirier, “Bar Hebraeus sur le libre arbitre,” p. 33.

12 Koffler, *Die Lehre des Barhebräus*, p. 28 and *passim*.

13 Houry, *Quatrième base*, p. 118; cf. *ibid.*, pp. 246–249. The passage had been discussed earlier by Nau, “Deux textes,” p. 316; cf. Griffith, “Disputes with Muslims,” pp. 270 f., Teule, “Barhebraeus,” p. 596, and the paper by Roggema in the present volume.

Damascenus' *Compendium of Aristotelian Philosophy*, as well as Arabic works including Bīrūnī's *Kitāb al-Taḥfīm li-awā'il šinā'at al-tanjīm*.<sup>14</sup>

In discussing Barhebraeus' possible debts to Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, it will also be worth remembering what he says about the latter in his *Chronicon*, where he makes a curious comparison likening Rāzī to Origen, a comparison which seems to indicate his favourable opinion of Rāzī's works.<sup>15</sup>

In this year, Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī died at the age of sixty-three lunar years, an intelligent man and a great investigator among the Muslims.<sup>16</sup> By him and by the many books that he composed the Muslims in every land were and are being enlightened to this day. I would compare this man to Origen. Although the doctors of the Church were enriched and enlightened by his books, they called him in return a heretic. Just so, the Muslims call this man an infidel (*kāpōrā*)<sup>17</sup> and a follower of the teaching of Aristotle.<sup>18</sup>

The *Candelabrum* begins with a lengthy poem written in rhymed prose. Some selected passages of that poem are quoted below.

Infinite glory and perpetual thanksgiving to the Father, from whose fatherhood all fatherhood takes its name, and to the Son, through whose sonship the causality ('*elltānāyūtā*) of every result ('*elltānā*) is brought into being, and to the Holy Spirit, through whose abundant gifts the

14 Takahashi, "The Greco-Syriac and Arabic Sources".

15 Barhebraeus does mention Origen in the list of heresies appended to the Fourth Base of the *Candelabrum*, but his condemnation is a moderate one: "They say concerning him that he did not hold a sound belief on the Trinity and that he denied the resurrection of the body, but he was rich in the word of teaching, and he composed many commentaries on the Old and the New [Testaments], so that many teachers of the Church up to Mar Iwanis [i.e. John Chrysostom?] were enriched and profited by his writings, that is to say, they gathered the roses and burned the thorns" (Nau, *Document pour servir*, p. 256 [146]). Cf. also Barhebraeus, *Chronicon ecclesiasticum*, part 1, coll. 49–51, where Barhebraeus describes Demetrius' condemnation of Origen as having been motivated by his envy for Origen's fame.

16 *gabrā mlīlā w-dārōshā rabbā d-tayyāyē*. This is translated as "logicus & dialecticus magnus Arabum" by Bruns & Kirsch (*Bar-Hebraei Chronicon syriacum*, trans. p. 466) and "grosser arabischer Logiker und Sophist" by Koffler (*Die Lehre*, p. 28). The word *mlīlā* here, however, is probably to be taken simply in the sense of "rational, intelligent" rather than in the technical sense of "logician".

17 The word is no doubt intended here to be an equivalent of Arabic *kāfir*.

18 Barhebraeus, *Chronicon*, ed. Bedjan, p. 425.

beauty of the Creation is brought into being, nature to be worshipped, which is perceived by the mind in the trinity of persons and is believed in in their particular properties ...

Because, although the holy teachers brought forth their proper teachings against the multitude of false opinions that sprang up in the world, the children of our age, dim-witted and enfeebled, are incapable of comprehending the amplitude of (the teachings) and of measuring the immeasurability of their extension—and for this reason, the field of wisdom has lain fallow, the love for it has grown cold, its fire has been extinguished and its light has darkened—I have judged it necessary to collect together the necessary questions in an encompassing work, and to treat in a philosophical way and to discuss (*pīlōsōpīsē e'bed w-emallel*) the doctrines pertaining to both theology and the natural sciences (*dōgmē te'ōlōgīqāyē w-pusiyōlōgīqāyē*). So that some inexperienced person coming across this work for the first time might not judge it to be foreign to the priestly enclosures, he must restrain the impetuous force of his rashness and incline his ear to (the one who) meditates upon divine things ...

Therefore, I, the feeble one, having come like a gleaner of a vineyard after the gatherers, have filled the press by the grace of my God ...<sup>19</sup>

The aim of the work is outlined in the middle part of the passage quoted above, namely to provide a comprehensive work on Christian doctrines in which the material is treated in a “philosophical” way. This “philosophical” tone of the work is also already apparent in the invocation of the Trinity at the beginning of the proem. Barhebraeus’ fear that this method of conducting theology might appear too innovative to some is expressed in the sentence at the end of the second part of the proem quoted above.

The pessimistic picture of the state of the sciences is, of course, a topos found in many works. It is interesting to note, however, that a similar picture of the state of the sciences is found near the beginning of *Talkhīs al-muḥaṣṣal*, the critical commentary on the *Muḥaṣṣal* by Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī.

In this age, when the endeavours for the accurate study of the truth have been abandoned, and footsteps have slipped away from the straight path, so that none is found who desires the sciences and none who preaches virtue, and people’s character has become as if they had been formed

19 Bakos, *Candélabre*, pp. 21, 24f., 26f.

for ignorance and depravity ... and there remains nothing to be seen or heard of the *‘ilm al-uṣūl* in the books that are current and no sign or trace of the introduction to the true principles, except the *Kitāb al-Muḥaṣṣal*, whose name does not conform to its content and whose exposition does not attain to its claim ...<sup>20</sup>

Since Ṭūsī's *Talkhīs al-muḥaṣṣal* was written in 1271, and we know that one part, at least, of the *Candelabrum* was composed in 1271–1272, assuming, as is likely, that Barhebraeus wrote his proem after writing the bulk of his work, it is quite possible that he knew that passage of the *Talkhīs* when he wrote this proem. Even if that is not the case, the similarity of the sentiment suggests that Ṭūsī and Barhebraeus both shared in the same intellectual atmosphere, and Ṭūsī's statement that the *Muḥaṣṣal* was the only work of theology that was being widely read finds its echo in the passage of Barhebraeus' *Chronicon* that we have looked at.

If we bear in mind the likely debt of the *Candelabrum* to Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's *Muḥaṣṣal*, it is tempting to understand the comparison Barhebraeus makes of himself to the “gleaner” in the vineyard as allusion to the title of Rāzī's work, *Muḥaṣṣal* (“Harvest”). As a further possible allusion to the *Muḥaṣṣal* in the *Candelabrum*, one might also remember the term used for its parts, the “bases” or “foundations”, which may be intended to echo the term “*rukṅ, arkān*” used for the four major divisions of the *Muḥaṣṣal*.

As has been noted above, the First Base of the *Candelabrum* is devoted to a discussion of “knowledge”. It is the shortest of the twelve bases, and consists of only one chapter, although in at least two manuscripts (Berlin, Sachau 81, and Yale, Syriac 7), a short work on logic, known elsewhere as an independent work by the name of the *Book of the Pupils of the Eye* (*Ktābā d-Bābātā*) has been incorporated into this base as its second chapter.

## Chapter 1: That knowledge is acquirable

- 1.1. That instruction is necessary for rational beings
  - 1.1.1. Rational proofs (3 proofs)
  - 1.1.2. Written [scriptural/patristic] testimonies (10 testimonies)
  - 1.1.3. Written testimonies confirming that the holy [Fathers] consented to participation in the pagan sciences (4 testimonies)

<sup>20</sup> Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī, *Talkhīs*, p. 1; Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *Muḥaṣṣal*, ed. Sa'd, p. 15 (margin).



- 1.1.4. Written testimonies confirming that the holy doctors used disputations, objections and retorts (6 testimonies)
- 1.1.5. That it is necessary to attain excellence in practice as well as in theory
- 1.2. Contrary opinion of those who say that there is no perception
  - 1.2.1. Objections of those who deny sense perception (3 objections)
  - 1.2.2. Objections of those who deny mental perception (3 objections)
  - 1.2.3. Written testimonies of those who detest wisdom
- 1.3. Refutation of the opinions of those who falsify and destroy knowledge
  - 1.3.1. Refutation of the objections of those who deny sense perception
  - 1.3.2. Refutation of the objections of those who deny mental perception
  - 1.3.3. Collective response to the written testimonies of those who detest wisdom

The *Candelabrum* is a work of Christian theology, and its principal sources are the works of earlier Christian authors. This is apparently also the case in the first Base, but at least one section there, namely the objections put in the mouths of those who deny the validity of sense perception (Section 1.2.1), appears to be closely based on the *Muḥaṣṣal*. The passage is quoted below together with the corresponding part of the *Muḥaṣṣal* as an illustration of the way Barhebraeus makes such borrowings.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Bakos, *Candélabre*, pp. 530–532 [42–44]. Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *Muḥaṣṣal*, ed. Atāy, pp. 87–92, ed. Sa’d, pp. 23–27; cf. Horten, *Die philosophischen Ansichten*, pp. 198–201. Numbers have been inserted in brackets in the translation of the “First Objection” in the *Candelabrum* and the corresponding part of the *Muḥaṣṣal* to facilitate the identification of the correspondences.

First objection. They say that the sense of sight often perceives what is as what it is not, e.g. (1) a moving shade as being stationary; (2) a stationary star next to a moving cloud as moving; (3) a moving boat as stationary; (4) land by the sea or a river as moving; (5) a water-drop falling through the air as a straight line; (6) a raisin in water as a plum (*haḥtā*); (7) a ring, when it comes near the eye, as a bracelet; (8) a single thing as double, when the eye is twisted; (9) many things as one, as the various colours on a rotating mill; (10) and the moon in the water, when it is not there; (11) and snow as white, although it is composed of small particles of ice which are not white; (12) and a crack in glass as white, although neither the glass itself nor the air in it is white. It is clear that these and similar things are perceptions of the senses and are not true. The prophet Isaiah indicates this when he says “Not as his eyes see will he judge, and not as his ears hear will he punish. He will judge according to justice, and he will punish according to correctness” [Is. 11:3–4], that is to say, the sight of the eyes and the hearing of the ears are neither just nor correct.

*Muḥaṣṣal*: First [argument]: The sense of sight sometimes perceives a small object as large, e.g. a distant fire is seen as great darkness, (6) a raisin in water is seen as a pear/plum (*ijjāsa*), and (7) when we bring a signet ring close to the eye, we see it as a bracelet. It sometimes sees a large object as small, as is the case with distant objects. It sometimes perceives a single object as two, (8) e.g. when we wink with one eye ... and (10) when we look towards water as the moon is rising, we see a moon in the water and another in the sky. (9) Sometimes we see many things as one; e.g. when we draw many lines with different colours next to one another from the centre to the periphery of a mill, and the mill is rotated, we see them as a single colour, as if it were a mixture of all those colours. Sometimes we see what does not exist as something that exists, e.g. ... and (5) we see a drop of water falling from the sky to the earth as a straight line. (1) Sometimes we see a moving object as stationary, as is the case with a shadow, and (3) a stationary object as moving, as is the case with someone riding a boat, for he sees the stationary shore as moving and the moving boat as stationary. Sometimes we see an object moving in one direction as moving in the opposite direction, (2) for someone moving in a certain direction will see a star as moving in that same direction when he looks [at the same time] at the cloud below it, although the star is [in fact] moving in the opposite direction (ed. Atāy, 87.11–89.1).

Fifth [argument]: (11) We see snow as extremely white. When we then examine it carefully, we see that it is composed of small particles of ice, and each of those particles is transparent and devoid of colour. Snow is therefore colourless in itself, although we see it as having a white colour ... (12) Furthermore, we see the place [occupied by] a crack in thick, transparent glass as white, although there is nothing there except the air enclosed in that crack, and air is colourless and glass is colourless. We know therefore that we sometimes see an object as being coloured even though it is colourless in itself (ed. Atāy, 91.9–12, 92.7–10).

Second objection. They say that a man sees many things in his dream and judges that they are true, but when he wakes up knows that his judgement was not correct. It is not impossible, therefore, that there be another state (*kaṣaṣṭasīs*) in which we are shown the falsity of all those things we are engaged in in our wakefulness. Hence all sense perceptions are considered to be like shadows and without foundation.

Third [argument]: Someone sleeping sees something in his sleep and judges it to be true, and then realises in his wakefulness that that judgement was invalid. That being possible, it is not impossible that there be here a third state (*ḥāla*), in which what we see in our wakefulness are shown to us to be false (ed. Atāy, 90.5–7).

Third objection. They say that those suffering from phrenitis (*PRNYTYS*) or melancholy see shapes (*demwātā*) that do not exist as if they existed, and cry and weep and are afraid of them. Seeing that such a thing can occur to a person in time of illness, it is not impossible for a cause (*ʿelltā*) to occur to him in time of health because of which, though healthy, he sees things which do not exist as if they existed. Hence, there remains nothing reliable in sense perception.

Fourth [argument]: A person suffering from phrenitis (*sirsām*)<sup>22</sup> sometimes conceives (*yataṣawwaru*) shapes (*suwar*) which do not exist on the outside, sees them, judges that they exist, and screams in fear of them. This shows that it is possible for a state (*ḥāla*) to occur to a person because of which he sees a thing that does not exist on the outside as existing. This being the case, it is not impossible for the matter to be thus with the things that the healthy people see (ed. Atāy, 90.8–12).

22 The corresponding passage of the *Candelabrum*, as well as the context, supports the reading *al-sirsām* of the majority of manuscripts which is adopted by Atāy against the reading *al-birsām* (pleurisy) found in the 1905 Cairo edition (p. 11, l. 9) and the edition by Saʿd.

Although the discussion in the passage of the *Candelabrum* quoted above is somewhat simplified in comparison with the discussion in the *Muḥaṣṣal*, the three arguments placed in the mouths of the objectors by Barhebraeus can all be found among the objections mentioned in the *Muḥaṣṣal*. Furthermore, all the examples of optical illusion mentioned in the first objection can be found in the corresponding part of the *Muḥaṣṣal*, albeit in a different order and often in longer forms. This kind of summarisation and rearrangement of the material is something that one constantly encounters in studying the way Barhebraeus borrows materials from his sources. The quotation from the Book of Isaiah in the first objection, of course, is not taken from the *Muḥaṣṣal*, but must be an addition made by Barhebraeus, and may be seen as a typical example of the way in which he gives his works based on non-Christian sources a Christian colouring.

A much more thoroughgoing comparison of the whole of the *Candelabrum* with the *Muḥaṣṣal* will, of course, be necessary before we can make any meaningful assessment of the extent to which the former work is indebted to the latter. It is hoped that what has been said above will suffice to show that Barhebraeus had works such as the *Muḥaṣṣal* very much on his mind in composing his compendium of Christian theology and that the two works share similar concerns and speak in a similar language.

### 3 Barhebraeus' *Book of Rays* and Bar Shakkō's *Book of Treasures*

In order to place the *Candelabrum* in its context and to clarify its significance, we might take a brief look at two other Syriac theological works from the thirteenth century, Barhebraeus' *Book of Rays* and Jacob bar Shakkō's *Book of Treasures*. For the purpose of comparison, a summary of the chapter and section headings in the parts of these works dealing with the question of free will are given in a table below, together with the headings in the corresponding part of the *Candelabrum* and in an earlier work on the same subject by Moses bar Kepha.<sup>23</sup>

23 The material in the table is based on the following sources: (1) Bar Kepha: description of Ms. British Library, Add. 14731, as given by Wright, *Catalogue*, pp. 853–855 (no. 827), and Griffith, “Free Will in Christian *Kalām*”. (2) Bar Shakkō: Ms. Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, syr. 316; Havard, *Jacob bar Shakkō*; Tolstoluzhenko, “Iakov bar Šakko o božestvennom promysle”. (3) Barhebraeus, *Candelabrum*: Poirier, *Le Candélabre*. (4) Barhebraeus, *Book of Rays*: Barhebraeus, *Ktābā d-Zalḡē*, ed. Istanbul, pp. 222–283. Some of the headings are given in an abbreviated form.

Bar Kepha, [On Free Will]	Bar Shakko, Book of Treasures	BH, Candelabrum of the Sanctuary	BH, Book of Rays
Discourse 1	Part 3. On Divine Providence	Ninth Base: On Free Will ( <i>šallīqūt b-yātā</i> ) and Freedom	Book 8. On Free Will and End
1.1: lost	(bīlūtā alāhāytā)	(hērūtā)	of Life ( <i>qeššā</i> )
1.2. That we have free will	3.1. On the opinions that	Introduction ( <i>ūtātā</i> )	Chapter 1. On freedom
(šallīqūt b-yātā) and freedom	some have held on	Chapter 1: On Good and Evil	(hērūtā), decree ( <i>herqā</i> ) and
(hērūtā) (1 <sup>v</sup> )	such occurrences [as	1.1. That good is (of the) natural (order) and that evil is (of	destiny ( <i>helqā</i> )
1.3. That human lives are	those mentioned in the	the) legal ( <i>nāmōšyā</i> ) (order), not natural, but is absence	1.1. That human actions are
limited and are bound	introduction to Part 3] (11 <sup>v</sup> )	<i>(glizūtā)</i> of Being, i.e. Non-Being	voluntary (p. 222)
by a certain limited and	3.2. Against the ignorant	1.2. On the contrary opinion which professes evil to be	1.2. On objections and
measured term ( <i>prothesmia</i> )	opinion of Mani (112 <sup>v</sup> )	natural and not legal and not absence	convictions ( <i>pterophoriai</i> )
...(3 <sup>v</sup> )	3.3. Against the ignorant	1.3. Refutation of this opinion	that deny freedom (p. 227)
Discourse 2	opinion of those who	Chapter 2. On Divine Providence ( <i>bīlūtā alāhāytā</i> ) that	1.3. That everything partakes
2.1. ... it shows that the	propose one Being ( <i>tīyā</i> )	accomplishes ( <i>sā'ra</i> ) everything in a General Manner	(mšawtep) of divine
judgements of God are	from which good and evil	2.1. That everything proceeds from potentiality ( <i>haylā</i> ) to	providence (incl. discussion
inscrutable ... (7 <sup>r</sup> )	[arise] (114 <sup>r</sup> )	actuality ( <i>ma'bdānūtā</i> ) by the power of God ( <i>haylā</i> )	of objections of theologians,
2.2. On terrible deaths by	3.4. Objection [ <i>hapāktā</i> ] of the	alāhāytā), except the failings ( <i>buššārē</i> ) which are effected	natural philosophers
murder, suffocation, fires,	opponents which says that ...	through our freedom ( <i>hērūtā</i> ) when it is compelled	[ <i>physiologi</i> ], and
floods, rape ... (7 <sup>v</sup> )	(114 <sup>v</sup> )	<i>(met'asyā)</i> by the force of nature	astrologers [ <i>علم النجوم</i> ],
2.3. What is freedom ( <i>hērūtā</i> )	3.5. Which confirms the	2.2. On the contrary opinion of those who say that it is not	p. 237)
and what is will ( <i>sebyānā</i> )	assertion of us Christians	by Providence, i.e. divine power, that everything is	Chapter 2. On Good and Evil
(8 <sup>r</sup> )	that evil does not come from	effected (5 <i>eres'ayas</i> )	2.1. That evil is absence of
2.4. Against the ancient	God ... (116 <sup>r</sup> )	2.2.1. Peripatetic philosophers ( <i>علم الفلاس</i> )	good (p. 243)
pagans ( <i>hanpē'attiqē</i> ) who	3.6. [True good and evil and	who say that God is the cause of only one result, and	2.2. That good and evil are
deny freedom (9 <sup>r</sup> )	supposed good and evil]	other results are generated by one another	either natural or legal
	(119 <sup>v</sup> )		(p. 245)

Bar Kepha, [On Free Will]	Bar Shakko, Book of Treasures	BH, Candelabrum of the Sanctuary	BH, Book of Rays
2.5. Against Manichaeans and Marcionites, who deny freedom and good and evil things are given through mixture of beings ( <i>tīyē</i> ) (10 <sup>r</sup> )	3.7. Which shows why and in what ways all the chastisements that are brought upon human beings by God are brought upon them (120 <sup>v</sup> )	2.2.2. Natural philosophers ( <i>physiologoi</i> , <b>ⲉⲥⲁⲛⲁⲛⲟⲩⲁⲓⲛⲟⲩⲟⲩⲉ</b> ) 2.2.3. "Astronomers" [astrologers] ( <b>ⲉⲥⲁⲛⲁⲛⲟⲩⲁⲓⲛⲟⲩⲟⲩⲟⲩⲉ</b> ) 2.2.4. Manichaeans	2.3. That God is naturally pleased by good and not by evil (p. 249)
2.6. Against the Muslims ( <i>mhagrāyē</i> ), who too deny freedom and say that good and evil are prescribed for us by God (11 <sup>r</sup> )	3.8. [Different kinds of "handing over" ( <i>mašmānūtā</i> )] (122 <sup>r</sup> ) 3.9. That all the chastisements and trials brought upon human beings by God come [to them] because of their sins and are to their benefit (122 <sup>v</sup> )	2.2.5. [Certain] sects ( <i>prīšē</i> ) of Muslims ( <i>mašmānāyē</i> ) Chapter 3. On Divine Will 3.1. That God is pleased only by good and justice, and not by evil and sins 3.2. On the contrary opinion which says that, just as God is pleased by good and justice, He is similarly pleased by evil and sins 3.3. Refutation of this opinion	Chapter 3. On faith and works (p. 252) 3.1. Definitions of faith 3.2. That faith and works are causes of rewards (p. 256) 3.3. On the variations of just acts and sins (p. 259) Chapter 4. On illnesses of the soul and their cures (p. 263) 4.1. That no one is clean of the defilement of sin
2.7. Which shows which are the acts of freedom and which are of providence (13 <sup>r</sup> )	3.10. Which shows why God makes holy men undergo trials in this world (126 <sup>r</sup> )	Chapter 4. Presentation proper on free will and human freedom 4.1. That human beings have free will and they accomplish their actions ( <i>sā'ōrwātā</i> ) not by decree ( <i>hurqānā</i> ) 4.2. On the contrary opinion of the deniers of freedom who say that human actions are decreed by God 4.3. Refutation of the contrary opinion of the deniers of freedom	Chapter 4. On illnesses of the soul and their cures (p. 263) Chapter 5. On the modes of reward in [terms of] quality and quantity (p. 273)
2.8. Which shows that our actions sometimes issue according to our freedom ( <i>hāy d-han</i> ) <sup>24</sup> and sometimes according to providence and sometimes both (16 <sup>r</sup> )			

24 lit. "what is in/on us": The phrase probably goes back to Greek τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῶν, used as a technical term for "freedom".

(cont.)

Bar Kepha, [ <i>On Free Will</i> ]	Bar Shakko, <i>Book of Treasures</i>	BH, <i>Candelabrum of the Sanctuary</i>	BH, <i>Book of Rays</i>
2.9. Which shows what evil is in truth, because many think that chastisements and tormenting punishments mentioned in the preceding chapter, which God brings upon human beings, are evils (18 <sup>r</sup> )	3.11. Which shows why the wicked are kept from every trial (126 <sup>v</sup> )	Chapter 5. On the discourse on the end of life ( <i>qesṣā</i> )	5.1. That pleasures and torments are knowable (p. 274)
2.10. Which shows that God is not the cause of evils (20 <sup>r</sup> )	3.12. There are holy men who have lost their possessions ... (127 <sup>r</sup> )	5. [o].1. On the necessity of natural death 5. [o].2. On the opinions some have held concerning the end of life	5.2. On the eternity of the pleasures and torments (p. 277)
Discourse 3	3.13. The reason why there are just men who prosper in visible things (128 <sup>r</sup> )	5.1. That a human being dies in his time by the command of God	
3.1. [Different kinds of death] (21 <sup>v</sup> )	3.14. The reason why there are sinners who receive judgements for their deeds from this world (128 <sup>v</sup> )	5.2. On the contrary opinion of those who say that it is not in his time	
3.2. [Term of life determined and known to God, but not to us] (22 <sup>v</sup> )	3.15. [Life-span not determined by God] (128 <sup>v</sup> )	5.3. Refutation of this opinion	
Discourse 4	3.16. How one ought to perceive the term of life ( <i>qesṣā</i> ) (132 <sup>v</sup> )	5.4. That the term of life is not fixed in advance	
4.1. [Wars, glories and defeats of nations and kingdoms] (71 <sup>v</sup> )	3.17. [End of life ( <i>tullāqā</i> )] (134 <sup>r</sup> )	5.5. On the contrary opinion of those who profess a fixed term of life	
4.2. [Famines, diseases, etc.] (91 <sup>v</sup> )	3.18. [Plagues] (134bis v)	5.6. Refutation of this opinion	

The very title of Barhebraeus' second work on theology, the *Book of Rays and the Confirmation of the Ecclesiastical Foundations* (*Ktābā d-Zalgē w-shurrārā d-shetessē ʿēdtānāyātā*) suggests that it will treat the same subject as the *Candelabrum*, and much of the material in the work is, in fact, a summary of the material found in the *Candelabrum*, although there are some significant additions and changes. The work is clearly to be dated after the *Candelabrum* and was probably composed towards the end of the 1270's.<sup>25</sup> It consists of the following ten books (*mēmre*): 1. the Creation, 2. theology, 3. the Incarnation, 4. angels, 5. evil spirits, 6. the soul, 7. the priesthood, 8. free will, 9. the end of the two worlds and the beginning of the new, 10. Paradise. The difference from the *Candelabrum* includes, besides the change in the order of the topics in the middle part of the work, the disappearance of an independent book dealing with "knowledge" and the redistribution of the material treated in the two bases on the Resurrection and the Last Judgement in the eighth and ninth books of the *Book of Rays*. The discussion of knowledge, however, is not suppressed completely, and we find a brief discussion of the subject at the beginning of the first book, which includes a mention of the objection of those who deny the validity of sense perception, together with the quotation from the Book of Isaiah.<sup>26</sup>

When we compare the order in which the material is treated in the eighth book of this work with the order in the corresponding part of the *Candelabrum*, we find that Barhebraeus immediately begins his discussion in the *Book of Rays* with the question of Free Will itself, which he had postponed until the fourth chapter in the *Candelabrum*. The last (third) section of this first chapter, dealing with Providence, corresponds to the second chapter of the *Candelabrum*. Although they are not given separate, numbered, subsections in the *Book of Rays*, the discussion of the views of the philosophers, the *physiologi* and the astrologers is still there. The discussion, however, of the views of the Manichaeans and the Muʿtazilites, to which Barhebraeus had devoted separate subsections in the corresponding part of the *Candelabrum*, is no longer there in the *Book of Rays*. The second chapter in the *Book of Rays*, dealing with the question of Good and Evil corresponds, in the first place, to the first chapter of the *Candelabrum*, although Barhebraeus incorporates into the third section of this chapter the material he had treated at the beginning of the third chapter of the *Candelabrum*. The remaining parts of the eighth book of the *Book of Rays*, goes on to deal with such matters as "faith and works", "illnesses of the

25 Takahashi, "Bemerkungen".

26 Barhebraeus, *Ktābā d-Zalgē*, ed. Istanbul, pp. 2 f.



soul” and reward and punishment in the afterlife, which are subjects which Barhebraeus had dealt with in the Eleventh Base (on the Last Judgement) of the *Candelabrum*.

The impression one receives in looking at the *Book of Rays* is that it is a less “academic” work than the *Candelabrum*, and that it is geared more towards actual pastoral needs. The omission, for example, of the discussion of the views of the Manichaeans and the Mu‘tazilites, which might have been of academic interest but no longer of a real pastoral concern to a Christian author writing in the thirteenth century, may be seen as a typical example of this tendency in the *Book of Rays*.

Severus Jacob bar Shakkō, who lived a generation before Barhebraeus, was a monk of the Monastery of Mar Mattay near Mosul, and later became its abbot and titular bishop. He died, apparently at a relatively young age in 1241. We are told by Barhebraeus in his *Chronicon ecclesiasticum* that Bar Shakkō studied grammar with the East Syrian scholar Yōḥannān bar Zō‘bi, and philosophy, in Mosul, with Kamāl al-Dīn b. Yūnus (d. 639/1242), a widely acclaimed scholar in his day.<sup>27</sup> Bar Shakkō’s two surviving major works are the *Book of Dialogues*, which deals with the various secular sciences, and the *Book of Treasures* (*Ktābā d-Sīmātā*), a work on theology completed on 10th May 1231.<sup>28</sup> The latter work consists of four parts (*adshē*) dealing with 1. the Trinity, 2. the Incarnation, 3. divine providence, and 4. various matters including the Creation, the angels and the nature of the soul. Herman Teule has recently brought to our attention another, lost work by Bar Shakkō called the book of “Evident Truth” (*Shrārā galyā*), or *The religion of the Christians has more truth than the all other confessions*, a work whose title speaks for itself and of which he gave a summary in his *Book of Treasures* (Part 2, chap. 41).<sup>29</sup>

As a student of Kamāl al-Dīn b. Yūnus, Bar Shakkō may be expected to have been familiar with the works of Islamic scholars. In an examination of the mathematical part of his *Book of Dialogues*, Julius Ruska found that the material there showed an affinity with the material in Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Kh‘arizmī’s encyclopedic work, the *Mafātīḥ al-‘ulūm*.<sup>30</sup> In an examination of the meteorological section of the same work, it was found that much of the material there was taken, not directly from Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī’s *al-Mabāḥith al-mashriqiyya*, but from an intermediary work that was apparently dependent

27 Barhebraeus, *Chronicon ecclesiasticum*, part 2, coll. 409–411.

28 Assemanus, *Bibliotheca Orientalis*, vol. 2, p. 237; Ms. Paris, syr. 316, 215<sup>f</sup>.

29 Teule, “Jacob bar Shakkō”.

30 Ruska, *Das Quadrivium*.

upon it and was also used by Zakariyyā' al-Qazwīnī (d. 682/1283) in his *ʿAjāʾib al-makhlūqāt*.<sup>31</sup>

Those who have so far looked at his theological work, the *Book of Treasures*, on the other hand, have usually failed to find any direct influence of Arabo-Islamic works there, and have often noted Bar Shakkō's dependence on earlier Syrian Orthodox authors, especially Moses bar Kepha. Bar Shakkō is not unaware of the teachings of the Muslims on certain subjects, but his interest is in refuting them and not in learning and borrowing from their arguments.

The purpose of the third part of the *Book of Treasures*, which deals with the question of divine providence is set out in the introduction to that part.

Third Part of the Book of Treasures, which the lowly Jacob compiled. It is on Divine Providence. Many people in this most decadent (*ramshāyā*)<sup>32</sup> age of ours, when they see the things that are carried out, I mean the wars, divisions, devastations, destructions, plunders, and various happenings, I mean, famine, plague, men destroying and being destroyed by one another, especially the righteous being subjected to outrage by the wicked, and little boys and girls being abused by impious and impure men, say: "How and why does God allow such evil things to happen? If they have occurred and are occurring not by the will of God, from where do they arise? Who has such power that he can do something without the will and command of God? Where, then, is the almighty providence of God, when such evils overcome the good things?" For this reason, having completed the account of the Incarnation and the explanation of all the mysteries and rites of the Church in the preceding part, we come with the help of the Lord, who directs and guides, to our account in this third part of this Treatise (*pragmateia*) of Treasures which has been compiled by our humble and lowly self, so that we can speak of these matters and begin an account of such things, although it would have been better not to research and examine such matters, and it would be been more helpful to simply believe. So that, however, the curious might not think and say that it is because there is no power in our teaching to uphold its truth clearly that we silence the inquiries into such things and order people simply to believe, we come to enter these matters, drawing the material from the teachers who have breathed the Holy Spirit ...

31 Takahashi, "Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, Qazwīnī and Bar Shakkō".

32 lit. "pertaining to the evening". "Dangerous" Havard, "мрачное" (sombre) Tolstoluzhenko.

As may be inferred from this introduction, this part of the *Book of Treasures* is very much an exercise in apologetic and theodicy. As a comparison of the section headings in the *Book of Treasures* with those in Bar Kephā's work will show, Bar Shakkō's concerns in this part of his work are very similar to those of Bar Kephā. While a closer examination of the text will be necessary to show how much of the material in this work Bar Shakkō owes to his Syriac predecessors and how much, if any of it, to his study of Arabo-Islamic works, it is clear that the language Bar Shakkō speaks is the same language as that of his predecessors from the past centuries and a different one from that spoken by Barhebraeus.

#### 4 Conclusion

Comparison with his older contemporary Bar Shakkō helps make evident the achievements of Barhebraeus in his work of grasping the subtleties of the discussions being conducted in Islamic theology of his day and incorporating them into his own theological works. At the risk of perhaps being a little too harsh on Bar Shakkō, we might characterise his output, in his *Book of Treasures* at least, as a work of *taqlīd*, in the sense of blind imitation of predecessors, whereas what we find in Barhebraeus is a bolder attempt at renewal and rejuvenation of theology very much in the same spirit as that of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, and based, it would seem, on a study of the latter's works, as well as of others.

By way of an epilogue, to underline the achievements of Barhebraeus and the role he played in promoting the study of theology in his Syrian Orthodox community and beyond, I would like to mention just one more name from the century following that of Barhebraeus. Daniel of Mardin (b. 1326–1327; d. after 1382) is known, among other things, to have made Arabic summaries of a number of Syriac works by Barhebraeus.<sup>33</sup> He was also evidently a keen scholar who, as we learn from the colophon of a manuscript he copied (Berlin, Peterman I.23),<sup>34</sup> spent some years in Egypt where he had gone “in search of the wisdom of the Greeks”. One of his surviving works is an Arabic treatise called the “book of radiance on the religious principles and the foundations of the holy Jacobite Church” (*Kitab al-Ishrāq fī l-uṣūl al-dīniyya wa-l-qawā'id al-bī'iyya al-muqaddasa al-ya'qūbiyya*), which, as it happens, is preserved in a manuscript of Coptic origin (Leiden Or. 1290). The work is basically a summary in Arabic of

33 Takahashi, *Bio-Bibliography*, pp. 106–108.

34 Sachau, *Verzeichnis*, p. 683.

the Third and Fourth Bases of the *Candelabrum*, dealing with the Trinity and the Incarnation. In a study of this work, Floris Sepmeijer found that it contained some quotations from Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's *al-Mabāḥith al-mashriqiyya*, as well as his *Muḥaṣṣal*, quoted from the original Arabic rather than as a translation back from Barhebraeus' Syriac paraphrase.<sup>35</sup> Daniel is also the copyist of several old manuscripts of Barhebraeus' works.<sup>36</sup> These manuscripts invariably contain a large amount of marginal annotation in Arabic, and where it has been possible to identify their provenance, they have usually turned out to be the original Arabic passages from the works of authors such as Ibn Sīnā and Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, which Barhebraeus had paraphrased and used in his Syriac work.<sup>37</sup> In other words, Daniel was already doing in the fourteenth century what an editor of Barhebraeus' work would do in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries in attempting to identify the sources used by the author of the work he is editing. So we have in the fourteenth century, in Daniel of Mardin, a Syrian Orthodox author of Arabic works on Christian theology—whose works were apparently also read among the Copts—who made a serious study of the Syriac theological and philosophical works of Barhebraeus and, in doing so, had the ability, as well as the will and scholarly interest, to consult the Arabo-Islamic works used by Barhebraeus. And all that would not, of course, have happened if Barhebraeus had not initiated the project of renewing the study of theology in his Church based on serious engagement with the contemporary works of Islamic theology and philosophy.

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35 Sepmeijer, "The Book of Brilliance," pp. 381, 386.

36 Takahashi, *Bio-Bibliography*, p. 491 (index). To Daniel's manuscripts listed there, one can now add Ms. Trichur, Church of the East 82, a copy of the *Book of Rays* completed in 1372–1373 and heavily annotated in Arabic.

37 Takahashi, *Aristotelian Meteorology*, pp. 601–613. Although the main text in the manuscript studied there (Florence, Laur. or. 83) was not copied by Daniel, it is known to have been in his possession and the vast majority of the marginal notes are in his hand.

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