III

THE MONKS OF PALESTINE AND THE GROWTH OF CHRISTIAN LITERATURE IN ARABIC

Palestinian monasteries such as those of Mar Sabas, Mar Charitôn, and St. Catherine at Mt. Sinai are well known to historians of eastern Christianity as centers of notable Christian culture in the Holy Land. One has only to mention the names of the monasteries themselves, or of some of their more famous author-monks, such as John of Damascus or Anastasius of Sinai, to make the point. They all enjoy virtually instant name recognition among modern western scholars.[1] However, it is also true that because of their close association with Constantinople one almost automatically associates these monasteries and their scholar-monks with the history of Christianity in Byzantium, ignoring the fact that by the eighth century, the time of John of Damascus (d.c. 750) and the last years of Anastasius of Sinai (d.c. 700), one is actually speaking of the Islamic era, and of authors who lived under the authority of the caliphate. By the time John of Damascus had finished his career, the Holy Land had been under the rule of Muslims for more than a hundred years.[2] Of course, John and Anastasius had written their works in Greek, and the familiarity of this language itself allowed their compositions to play an important part in Byzantine church life, once they had been carried to Constantinople by refugee monks. For modern historians, however, this very familiarity has obscured the fact that in the patriarchate of Jerusalem, by the second half of the eighth century the readership of John of Damascus's works was being steadily restricted to an ever smaller circle of scholar-monks, who were themselves busy producing the first ecclesiastical literature in Arabic, the public language of the new Islamic society.

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[1] For a guide to the early history of the Palestinian monasteries, see B. Flusin, *Miracle et histoire dans l'oeuvre de Cyrille de Scythopolis* (Paris: Etudes Augustiniennes, 1983); Derwas James Chitty, *The Desert a City: an Introduction to the Study of Egyptian and Palestinian Monasticism under the Christian Empire* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1966), pp. 101ff; H. Leclercq, "Laures palestiniennes," *DACL*, VIII, 2, cols. 1961-1988. See also the earlier landmark studies: A. Ehrhard, "Das griechische Kloster Mar-Saba in Palaestina," *Römische Quartalschrift*, XVII (1893), 32-79; S. Vailhé, "Les écrivains de Mar-Saba," *Échos d'Orient*, II (1898-1899), 1-11, 33-47, and his "Le monastère de saint-Sabas," *Échos d'Orient*, II (1898-1899), 332-41; III (1899-1900), 18-28, 168-77. For the Greek writers of the eighth century cf. R.P. Blake, "La littérature grecque en Palestine au VIII[e] siècle," *Mus*, LXXVIII (1965), 367–80.

[2] See J. Nasrallah, *Saint Jean de Damas, son époque, sa vie, son oeuvre* (Harissa, 1950); Daniel J. Sahas, *John of Damascus on Islam, the "Heresy of the Ishmaelites"* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1972).

Accordingly, it is the purpose of the present communication to give an account of the growth and development of this new Arabic literature in the Palestinian monasteries. It first comes to light in the course of the first Abbasid century, and it represents the first fruits of what was to become a long-term project, carried out in many communities under the rule of the caliphate, to commend Christian faith in the *lingua franca* of the new socio-political reality brought about by the establishment of the *dār al-islām*. For the Palestinian monasteries themselves this project represents the continuation of a long-term devotion to scholarship, now turned to meet the intellectual challenge of Islam.

I.
The First Abbasid Century

Already under the Umayyad caliphs, and particularly during the reign of ʿAbd al-Malik (685–705), the Islamic government in Damascus had been taking steps to assimilate the conquered territories of the oriental patriarchates into a publicly recognizable Islamic realm.[3] A striking monumental symbol of this campaign was the construction under ʿAbd al-Malik of the shrine of the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem.[4] Furthermore, during the reign of the same caliph the purpose was equally well served in numerous humbler instances, ranging all the way from the installation of road signs proclaiming the Islamic *shahāda*,[5] to the circulation of coinage stamped with an unmistakably Islamic iconography.[6] Under the caliph al-Walīd I (705-715) orders were given for all official records to be kept in the Arabic language.[7] ʿUmar II (717-720), in spite of his brief reign, eased the way for conversions to Islam by adjusting the tax laws, and by espousing the principle of the equality of all Muslim believers.[8] Yazīd II (720-724), although he too reigned only briefly, is on record as having given orders for the extirpation of the public symbols of Christianity, that is, crosses and images, even from private Christian premises.[9] The cumulative effect of these

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[3] See ʿAbd al-Ameer ʿAbd Dixon, *The Umayyad Caliphate 65-86/684-705; a Political Study* (London: Luzac, 1971).

[4] See Oleg Grabar, "The Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem," *Ars Orientalis*, III (1959), 33-59, reprinted in the author's *Studies in Medieval Islamic Art* (London: Variorum Reprints, 1976); E.C. Dodd, "The Image of the Word," *Berytus*, XVIII (1969), 35-79; C. Kessler, "ʿAbd al-Malik's Inscription in the Dome of the Rock: a Reconsideration," *The Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 1970, pp. 2-14.

[5] Cf. Moshe Sharon, "An Arabic Inscription from the Time of the Caliph ʿAbd al-Malik," *BSOAS*, XXIX (1966), 367-72.

[6] Cf. G.C. Miles, "The Iconography of Umayyad Coinage," *Ars Orientalis*, III (1959), 207-13.

[7] J.B. Chabot, *Anonymi Auctoris Chronicon ad Annum Christi 1234 Pertinens* [Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium (CSCO), vol. 81] (Paris: J. Gabalda, 1920), pp. 298-99.

[8] See H.A.R. Gibb, "The Fiscal Rescript of ʿUmar II," *Arabica*, II (1955), 1-16; ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz Durī, "Notes on Taxation in Early Islam," *JESHO*, XVII (1974), 136-44. See also W.W. Barthold, "Caliph ʿUmar II and the Conflicting Reports of his Personality," *IQ*, XV (1971), 69-95—an English version of a Russian original, written in 1922.

[9] See A.A. Vasiliev, "The Iconoclastic Edict of the Caliph Yazīd II, A.D. 721," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 9 and 10 (1956), pp. 25-47.

and similar measures over the first century of Islamic rule, taken together with the continuing success of Muslim arms in holding Byzantium at bay, prepared the way for the society of Abbasid times, which in theory had been built on the principle of the equality of all Muslim believers.[10] After the revolution of 750 all eyes in the caliphate, Jewish, Christian and Muslim alike, turned east, towards Baghdad as the new center of socio-political stability, and the source of religious and civil policy for the whole Islamic realm.[11] There ensued almost two centuries of virtual isolation from the Roman/Byzantine world, during which time the classical civilization of Islam came to fruition, without the interference of Byzantium, even in internal Christian concerns.[12] This state of affairs lasted until the second half of the tenth century, when Islamic military power was unable to stop the incursions of the crusading Byzantine emperor, Nicephorous Phocas (963–969), and his successor, and murderer, John Tzimisces (969–976).[13]

Official Islamic policy regarding the subject religious communities, that is to say the scripture people (*ahl al-kitāb*), who, according to the Qurʾān, *S. al-Tawba* (9):29, were supposed to receive state protection (*al-dhimma*) in return for the payment of a special poll tax (*al-jizya*), found its classic expression during the first Abbasid century, in the so-called "Covenant of ʿUmar."[14] This legal instrument was perhaps more ideal than real in the prescriptions it laid down for the government of Christian and Jewish life in the caliphate, but the very fact that it came to its final form around the year 800 is a testimony to the full development, at this mid-point in the first Abbasid century, of the classical ideal of the Islamic society. And the achievement of such an ideological coherence among Islamic jurists regarding the protected religious communities had obvious implications for the Christian church. As the present writer has argued elsewhere, it was at this time that conversion to Islam must have become more appealing to upwardly mobile Christians. So it is not surprising that it is also to this era, the first Abbasid century, that one must date the appearance of the earliest Christian Arabic literature, when Christians within dār al-islām must finally have realized that their lot for the foreseeable future was to live as a

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[10] See M.A. Shaban, *The ʿAbbasid Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), p. 168.

[11] See Jacob Lassner, *The Shaping of ʿAbbāsid Rule* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980).

[12] For a survey of government functions and policies during this period see Dominique Sourdel, *Le Vizirat ʿAbbāside de 749 à 936*, 2 vols. (Damas, 1959). Some hints regarding the ecclesiastical situation in Syria/Palestine are given in Hugh Kennedy, "The Melkite Church from the Islamic Conquest to the Crusades: Continuity and Adaptation in the Byzantine Legacy," in *The 17th International Byzantine Congress; Major Papers* (New Rochelle, N.Y.: A.D. Caratzas, 1986), pp. 325-43.

[13] See George Ostrogorsky, *History of the Byzantine State*, rev. ed. Tr. Joan Hussey (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1969), pp. 288-98. Cf. also P.E. Walker, "The 'Crusade' of John Tzimisces in the Light of New Arabic Evidence," *Byzantion*, XLVII (1977), 301-27.

[14] See Arthur Stanley Tritton, *The Caliphs and their Non-Muslim Subjects; a Critical Study of the Covenant of ʿUmar* (London: Oxford University Press, 1930); Antoine Fattal, *Le statut legal des non-musulmans en pays d'islam* (Beyrouth, 1958); Bat Ye'or, *The Dhimmi; Jews and Christians under Islam* (Cranbury, N.J.: Fairleigh Dickinson, 1985).

subject population in an Islamic state.[15]

The earliest Christian Arabic literature may be divided into two broad categories. The first of them comprises what one might call "church-books," that is, works which Christians require for the ordinary conduct of their internal religious affairs. These writings would be the scriptures, patristic classics, inspirational homilies, lives of the saints, and such practical texts as creeds and canons, which govern the inner life of the community according to the decisions of the several major church councils. The second broad category of material which one might discern in the early Christian Arabic archive includes those works which one might loosely call apologetical treatises. The basic characteristic of these writings is that they were composed with an eye to the outside. In them the authors intend to bring the traditional theological considerations of their own Christian party to bear on the intellectual challenges of the day, in the very idiom of the current socio-political scene. Inevitably, of course, in the Christian Arabic literature of the first Abbasid century, Islam was the major horizon in view of which the Christian writers had to discuss not only their own internal differences, but their reactions to the claims of the newly established religion as well. Furthermore, in addition to the need to commend the credibility of Christian faith to the Muslims, in the first Abbasid century there was also the increasingly important requirement to furnish Christians themselves with persuasive reasons, stated in clear Arabic, for not heeding the evermore persistent call to Islam.

Chronologically, the monastic communities of Palestine seem to have led the way in the production of both categories of Christian Arabic literature. For even though the Abbasid revolution ushered in the era of the general Arabicization of Muslims and Christians alike in the Aramaic/Syriac speaking areas of the oriental patriarchates,[16] it was only in Melkite Palestine that the Christian "church-books" customarily had been kept in a non-Semitic language. Due perhaps to its strong ties with Constantinople, and to the triumph of Chalcedonian orthodoxy in the patriarchate of Jerusalem,[17] as well as to the fact that pilgrims flocked there from all over the Christian world,[18] Greek had

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[15] See Sidney H. Griffith, "The Prophet Muḥammad, His Scripture and His Message, According to the Christian Apologies in Arabic and Syriac From the First Abbasid Century," in T. Fahd, ed., *La vie du prophète Mahomet* [Colloque de Strasbourg, 1980] (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1983), pp. 99-146. See the author's further remarks in "The First *Summa Theologiae Arabica*, 877 A.D.," *Conversion and Continuity: Indigenous Christian Communities in Medieval Islamic Lands, a Colloquium* (The University of Toronto, 23-25 October, 1986), forthcoming.

[16] See A.N. Poliak, "L'arabisation de l'orient sémitique," *Revue des Études Islamiques*, XII (1938), 35-63.

[17] See the discussion and further bibliography in Christoph von Schönborn, *Sophrone de Jérusalem, vie monastique et confession dogmatique* [Théologie historique, 20] (Paris: Beauchesne, 1972).

[18] See J. Wilkinson, *Jerusalem Pilgrims Before the Crusades* (Warminster: Aris & Phillips, 1977); E.D. Hunt, *Holy Land Pilgrimage in the Later Roman Empire A.D. 312-460* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982); P. Maraval, *Lieux saints et pèlerinages d'Orient* (Paris: Cerf, 1985).

remained the dominant ecclesiastical language of Palestine until the end of the Umayyad era.[19] It began to be replaced by Arabic in the first Abbasid century. While scripture and liturgy, along with the other "church-books," had long been in Syriac in much of Syria, Mesopotamia, and Iraq, and in Coptic in Egypt (outside Alexandria), in Palestine the custom had grown up from the fourth century to provide for the needs of the speakers of the vernacular languages through interpreters at the divine liturgy, but to preserve the basic rites and their texts in Greek. The earliest testimony to this practice in the Jerusalem church is to be found in the account of her journeys in the Holy Land left behind by the fourth-century pilgrim, Egeria. She visited Jerusalem in Holy Week of the year 381, and she recorded the following observation:

> In this province there are some people who know both Greek and Syriac, but others know only one or the other. The bishop may know Syriac, but he never uses it. He always speaks in Greek, and has a presbyter beside him who translates the Greek into Syriac, so that everyone can understand what he means. Similarly the lessons read in church have to be read in Greek, but there is always someone in attendance to translate into Syriac so that the people understand. Of course there are also people here who speak neither Greek nor Syriac, but Latin. But there is no need for them to be discouraged, since some of the brothers or sisters who speak Latin as well as Greek will explain things to them.[20]

Although there did eventually appear a small Christian archive of "church-books" in the Syriac language of which Egeria spoke, which is more accurately called Palestinian Aramaic,[21] its origins no doubt may be traced to the interpreters whom she mentioned.[22] This literature, even though it was still being copied by refugee Palestinians as late as the twelfth century,[23] never seriously challenged the hegemony of Greek in the ecclesiastical scholarship of Palestine, which had grown up from the earliest days in Caesarea, Gaza, Jerusalem, and, of course, in the Judaean monasteries. But then, once the speakers of Greek were effectively off the scene, that is by the middle of the first Abbasid century, Palestine, unlike the other oriental patriarchates, was ripe for a virtually complete conversion to Arabic. This state of affairs explains why one finds

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[19] See Blake, "La littérature grecque." John of Damascus, the last notable Greek writer of Syria/Palestine died c. 749, around the very year when the first Christian Arabic writer of note was born, i.e., Theodore Abū Qurra, about whom see below.

[20] John Wilkinson, *Egeria's Travels to the Holy Land*, rev. ed. (Warminster: Aris & Phillips, 1981), p. 146.

[21] See the comment and bibliography of B.M. Metzger, *The Early Versions of the New Testament* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), pp. 75-82; M. Goshen-Gottstein, *The Bible in the Syropalestinian Version; Part I: Pentateuch and Prophets* (Jerusalem, 1973), pp. viii-xv. See also the bibliography in J. Barclay, "Melkite Orthodox Syro-Byzantine Manuscripts in Syriac and Palestinian Aramaic," *Studii Biblicii Franciscani Liber Annuus*, XXI (1971), 205-19.

[22] See the insightful remarks of M.-J. Lagrange, "L'origine de la version syro-palestinienne des évangiles," *Revue Biblique*, XXXIV (1925), 481-504.

[23] See Metzger, *The Early Versions*, p. 79, and n. 1

evidence of "church-books" in Arabic from Palestine already in the eighth century, as will appear below, with their incidence growing steadily throughout the ninth century; while in the other Syriac-speaking areas, where Greek was never so deeply embedded as it was in the Jerusalem patriarchate, the earliest Christian Arabic literature belongs almost exclusively to the second category of writings described above, and appears first in the ninth century.[24] In Egypt there is no appreciable Christian Arabic writing to speak of at all until the time of Eutychius of Alexandria (d. 940) and Severus b. al-Muqaffa' (d.c. 1000).[25] Their works, however, clearly belong to the second category of Christian Arabic literature, and do not include texts which Christians in Egypt in the first two Abbasid centuries would have employed in the daily exercise of their devotional lives.

II.
Old South Palestinian Arabic

Georg Graf was the first modern scholar to call attention to the fact that Palestine's early Christian Arabic archive, with its collection both of "church-books" and apologetical works, actually forms a distinctive literary ensemble, which was the product of the scholarly activity of the monks of the Holy Land's famous monasteries, from the eighth to the tenth centuries.[26] Following Graf some twenty years later, W. Heffening came to the same conclusion in the course of studying the origins of an Arabic version of one of Ephraem the Syrian's works hitherto known only in Greek.[27] According to Heffening, who paid special attention to codicological and linguistic considerations, by the end of the ninth century "one may speak of a scribal school of the Mar Saba cloister, and perhaps even of scribal schools of the cloisters of Sinai and Mār Ḥarīṭan."[28]

From the very beginning of the publication of Christian Arabic manuscripts from Palestine, scholars have commented upon the peculiarities of the morphology, grammar, syntax, and even the orthography, to be found in them. Joannes Arendzen called attention to these considerations in the very first publication of an integral work from the Palestinian Christian Arabic archive which he brought out in 1897, viz., Theodore Abū Qurra's tract on the Christian practice of venerating images. The work was copied by Stephen of Ramla at the

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[24] See Griffith, "The Prophet Muḥammad." Even the versions of the scriptures in Arabic that may have been produced in Iraq by Ḥunayn b. Isḥāq (d. 873) and others were for scholarly, not liturgical, purposes. See the discussion in Sidney H. Griffith, "The Gospel in Arabic: an Inquiry into its Appearance in the First Abbasid Century," *Oriens Christianus*, LXIX (1985), 126-67.

[25] See Khalil Samir, "Arabic Sources for Early Egyptian Christianity," in B.A. Pearson & J.E. Goehring, eds., *The Roots of Egyptian Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), pp. 82-97.

[26] See Georg Graf, *Die christlich-arabische Literatur bis zur fränkischen Zeit, eine literarhistorische Skizze* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1905), pp. 8-21.

[27] W. Heffening, "Die griechische Ephraem-Paraenesis gegen das Lachen in arabische Übersetzung," *Oriens Christianus*, XXIV (1927), 94-119.

[28] Ibid., 102.

monastery of Mar Charitōn in the year 877.[29] In the light of earlier publications of specimens of texts from the same time and place, Arendzen noted in his introduction to Stephen of Ramla's manuscript that "one will easily be persuaded that the Christian Arabs, at least in Asia, intentionally preserved for themselves a peculiar manner of writing, and that while the Muslims were using a rounder, more cursive hand in the ninth, tenth and eleventh centuries, which is called *Nasḫī*, they [i.e., the Christians] were making use of the old square, angular forms of the letters, which in the first place remind one of Syriac, and which hold a place midway between old Kufic and *Nasḫī*."[30]

Arendzen was too hasty in assigning this Palestinian, monastic hand to all of the Christians of "Asia," over the three centuries he mentions. But it is true that, whether intentionally or not, the monks of the Holy Land employed a recognizably distinctive style of writing in the ninth and tenth centuries,[31] which is but one of a number of characteristics which set the Palestinian texts apart. Morphological, grammatical, and syntactical considerations also have a role to play among the distinctive traits of the Arabic written in the *scriptoria* of the Holy Land monasteries. And it is instructive to observe that already in the midst of the nineteenth century, when the texts themselves were first coming within the ken of western scholars, these linguistic considerations claimed their immediate attention.[32] By the century's end, largely on the basis of Palestinian texts, Arabists were speaking of the role of the Christians in the development of the modern "vulgar Arabic," as if there were indeed such a thing as a "christliches Arabismus."[33] And in 1905 Georg Graf published a linguistic study, again based largely on Palestinian manuscripts, the title of which clearly announces the scholarly consensus that had already developed: *Der Sprachgebrauch der ältesten christlich-arabischen Literatur, ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des Vulgär Arabisch.*[34] Thereafter, it became the practice in editing these manuscripts to

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[29] Joannes Arendzen, *Theodori Abu Ḳurra de Cultu Imaginum Libellus e Codice Arabico Nunc Primum Editus Latine Versus Illustratus* (doct. diss., Bonn, 1897).

[30] Ibid., p. xvi.

[31] See, e.g., Agnes Smith Lewis and Margaret Dunlop Gibson, eds. and trs., *Forty-One Facsimiles of Dated Christian Arabic Manuscripts* [Studia Sinaitica, XII] (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1907), plates II, III, IV, pp. 3-8; E. Tisserant, *Specimina Codicum Orientalium* (Bonn, 1914), plates 54, 55, 56, pp. xxxviii-xxxix. A change in hands, moving from Kufic to *naskhī* can actually be observed in Sinai Arabic MS 151, which contains dated texts written in the years 867, 1021 and 1025 A.D. See the remarks of Harvey Staal, "Codex Sinai Arabic 151, Pauline Epistles; Part I (Arabic Text), Part II (English Translation)," (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Utah, 1968; Ann Arbor, Michigan: University Microfilms, 68-14, 443), Part II, pp. 9-10, and plates I-IV in appendix. Note that Staal mistakenly translates the Hijrī dates 412 and 416 to 1030 and 1035 A.D. on p. 16. Part I of this dissertation has now been published: Harvey Staal, *Mt. Sinai Arabic Codex 151: I, Pauline Epistles* [CSCO, vols. 452 and 453] (Louvain, 1983).

[32] Notice, e.g., H.L. Fleischer's attention to these matters in articles written in 1847, 1854, and 1864, in *Kleinere Schriften*, 3 vols. (Leipzig: S. Hirzel, 1885-1888), III, 378-99.

[33] J. Oestrup, "Über zwei arabische Codices sinaitici der Strassburger Universitäts - und Landesbibliothek," *ZDMG*, LI (1897), 469.

[34] Georg Graf, *Der Sprachgebrauch der ältesten christlich-arabischen Literatur. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des Vulgär-arabisch* (Leipzig: Harrassowitz, 1905). Palestinian MSS numbered twelve among the seventeen documents on which the study was based; cf. pp. 1-3.

catalog the ways in which the Palestinian texts exemplify the alleged tendency among Christian writers of Arabic to abandon standard linguistic usages in favor of what Bernhard Levin called, "die lebendige Mundart."[35]

One will quickly notice the tendency on the part of the earlier scholars to put forward their findings in the Palestinian manuscripts as general characteristics of all Christian speech in Arabic, almost as if their purpose was to isolate a single, distinctly Christian 'dialect' in the language. This tendency, which is perhaps more accurately to be described as a misapprehension due to the employment of the vague expression "Christian Arabic," is now discredited by the appearance of Joshua Blau's more orderly linguistic studies of the Palestinian texts. As irony would have it, however, Blau's own *chef d'oeuvre* in this line of inquiry is itself unqualifiedly, and therefore misleadingly, entitled, *A Grammar of Christian Arabic*.[36] Blau in fact is the scholar who has given a more precise focus to the study of Middle Arabic dialects, by defining more closely the several component speech groups, one of which he describes in this book. He does indeed often call this language "Christian Arabic (Ch A)," which for him is a broad term including a number of sub-groups. But he also, and more accurately, calls the principal subject of his study "Ancient South Palestinian (ASP)."[37] For, what he in fact describes here is the Arabic language of the manuscripts written by Christian monks in the ninth and tenth centuries in the Holy Land. Blau intends no more, and certainly does not claim that here we have the grammar of a universal, Christian Arabic language, as some may have taken the book's inaccurate title to imply.[38]

What made Blau's linguistic investigations possible, and what extended their range much beyond the limits under which earlier scholars labored, was the easy availability after 1950 of microfilm copies of the Arabic manuscripts preserved in the library of St. Catherine's monastery in Sinai.[39] Many of the manuscripts

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[35] Bernhard Levin, ed. and tr., *Die griechisch-arabische Evangelien-Übersetzung* (doct. diss., Uppsala, 1938), pp. 18-19.

[36] J. Blau, *A Grammar of Christian Arabic* [CSCO, vols. 267, 276, 279] (Louvain: Secr. CSCO, 1966-1967). Other publications by Blau, pertinent to the present inquiry, are: "The Importance of Middle Arabic Dialects for the History of Arabic," in Uriel Heyd, ed., *Studies in Islamic History and Civilization* [Scripta Hierosolymitana, 9] (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1961), pp. 205-28; "Uber einige christlich-arabische Manuskripte aus dem 9. und 10. Jahrhundert," *Mus*, LXXV (1962), 101-108; "Uber einige alte christlich-arabische Handschriften aus Sinai," *Mus*, LXXVI (1963), 369-74; *The Emergence and Linguistic Background of Judaeo-Arabic; a Study of the Origins of Middle Arabic* [Scripta Judaica, 5] (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965); "Sind uns Reste arabischer Bibelübersetzungen aus vorislamischer Zeit erhalten geblieben?" *Mus*, LXXXVI (1973), 67-72; "The State of Research in the Field of the Linguistic Study of Middle Arabic," *Ar*, XXVIII (1981), 187-203.

[37] Blau, *Grammar*, p. 20.

[38] See the remarks of Kh. Samir in Kh. Samir, ed., *Actes du premier congrès international d'études arabes chrétiennes, Goslar, septembre 1980* [Orientalia Christiana Analecta, 218] (Rome: Pontifical Institute for Oriental Studies, 1982), pp. 52-59.

[39] The first catalog of St. Catherine's manuscripts was Margaret Dunlop Gibson, comp., *Catalogue of the Arabic MSS. in the Convent of S. Catherine on Mount Sinai* [Studia Sinaitica, III] (London: C.J. Clay & Sons, 1894). After the Library of Congress/University of Alexandria microfilming expedition in 1950 there appeared: K.W. Clark, ed., *Checklist of Manuscripts in St.*

housed there came originally from the monasteries of Mar Sabas and Mar Charitōn. These copies, taken together with the studies of earlier scholars, based on manuscripts preserved in other libraries, allowed Blau to compose a virtual catalog of all that now remains of the Christian literary production in Arabic in Palestine, in the ninth and tenth centuries.[40] His *Grammar,* is, therefore, a linguistic description of a rather precisely defined archive, from which certain historical extrapolations may legitimately be drawn. For comparative purposes, Blau also makes reference in his *Grammar* to Arabic texts composed by Christians elsewhere than in the Holy Land, at roughly the same period of time. These references are, however, for comparative purposes only, and the texts are not among those which exemplify the "Ancient South Palestinian" Arabic which is the focus of Blau's study.[41] But the very fact that these other texts are available for reference serves the useful purpose of more closely defining the Palestinian archive.

The "Ancient South Palestinian" archive is distinguished by an ensemble of linguistic features, including the handwriting as Arendzen had mentioned. Altogether they compose the recognizable stylistic profile of the Arabic written by the scholar monks of Palestine during the first two Abbasid centuries. It is precisely this composite profile, emerging from the ensemble of distinguishing linguistic features, that is important to notice. Any one of the distinguishing features taken singly, or even some few of them taken together, as Samir Khalil has reminded scholars, may be found elsewhere, in Arabic texts of different times and places, written by Christians, Jews, and Muslims alike.[42] This is not the place to rehearse once again the principal features in question because Blau's three volumes are easily available.[43] What is important for the present purpose, however, is to call attention to certain historical conclusions which one may draw from the linguistic investigations.

From a literary point of view, one of the most obvious facts is that out of the sixty some works in "Ancient South Palestinian" which Blau studied, he is sure of only five of them as original compositions in that language.[44] All of these are

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Catherine's Monastery, Mount Sinai, Microfilmed for the Library of Congress, 1950 (Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress, 1952); Aziz Suryal Atiya, *The Arabic Manuscripts of Mount Sinai; a Hand-list of the Arabic Manuscripts and Scrolls Microfilmed at the Library of the Monastery of St. Catherine, Mount Sinai* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1955). A revised numbering system has now been elaborated in Murad Kamil, *Catalogue of All Manuscripts in the Monastery of St. Catherine on Mount Sinai* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1970). Yet more recent finds of Arabic manuscripts at Sinai are cataloged and described, with numberous specimen photographs, in I.E. Mei̇̈marē, *Katalogos tōn neōn arabikōn cheirographōn tēs hieras monēs hagias aikaterinēs tou orous sina* [Greek and Arabic] (Athens, 1985).

[40] See the list of published and unpublished works on which the grammatical study was based, Blau, *Grammar*, pp. 21-33.

[41] Consult the list of pertinent non ASP texts, ibid., pp. 34-36.

[42] See Samir, *Actes du premier congrès*, p. 56, and n. 68.

[43] See esp. Blau, *Grammar*, pp. 42-54.

[44] Ibid., pp. 21-23. One suspects that the number should really be six, if not seven. The present writer believes that the *Kitāb al-burhān* which is usually ascribed to Eutychius of Alexandria, should properly be considered the composition of a Palestinian monk. See M. Breydy, *Études sur Saʿīd ibn Baṭrīq et ses sources* [CSCO, vol. 450] (Louvain: E. Peeters, 1983).

apologetical works. The remaining compositions, most of them translations, fall into the category of "church-books" described above. Among them is a group of thirty-five items, consisting mainly of homilies, saints lives, martyrdoms, patristic selections, and so forth,[45] while twenty-one pieces are Arabic versions of parts of the scriptures.[46] This ratio of original compositions to translations, leaving room for the reassignment of some of the hagiographical items to the status of originals, accords well with what one otherwise knows of the socio-historical situation of Christians in Syria/Palestine in the ninth and tenth centuries. The "church-books" would have served the ongoing needs of the members of the Melkite community, whose vernacular language would increasingly have been Arabic. The apologetic, original compositions in Arabic represent the first steps taken by Melkite Christians in Syria/Palestine to address themselves to issues beyond their own internal community life, issues which take into account questions raised by Muslims and others, and which inevitably would have been raised in Arabic. More will be said about these original Arabic works below.

Next, Blau's examination of the Palestinian texts highlights the linguistic features which he believes are sufficient in the aggregate to have played a role in bringing about a new linguistic type, viz., a dialect of Middle Arabic. However, Blau insists that the writers of these manuscripts were themselves intending to write Classical Arabic, an intention which is revealed in the numerous pseudo-correct forms to be found in the texts, either of what Blau calls the "hyper" correct, or the "hypo" correct variety.[47] They both reveal the writers' efforts to make a hitherto spoken fluency conform to the requirements of correct usage in a literary language. This conclusion involves the corollary that, contrary to the earlier assumption that the Palestinian writers were abandoning standard usage in favor of a more colloquial expression,[48] they were in fact laboring to write a more correct literary Arabic than they must have spoken. Their failures, or deviations from standard usage, are what reveal the burgeoning new linguistic type. Their efforts to write correctly call attention to the fact that the documents in the Palestinian archive furnish the evidence which allows one to infer that in the first two Abbasid centuries, Melkite Christians in the Holy Land, whose ecclesiastical language had been largely Greek, with a substratum of Syriac, were in fact now making the endeavor to produce a fluent Christian literature in Arabic. Again, this conclusion accords well with what one otherwise knows about the socio-historical situation of Christians in the Holy Land in the period between the Islamic conquest and the incursion of the crusaders.[49]

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[45] Blau, *Grammar*, pp. 23-29. Blau lists all thirty-five of these works under "translations." The designation is not completely accurate. The story of ʿAbd al-Masīḥ (Christodoulos, p. 24), the account of St. Anthony Ruwaḥ (p. 26), a short response of Abū Qurra (p. 27), and maybe more, are surely original compositions in Arabic. See below.

[46] Ibid., pp. 29-33.

[47] Ibid., pp. 42-52.

[48] See above, and especially the views of B. Levin, n. 35 above.

[49] Consider Kennedy, "The Melkite Church," n. 12 above; Griffith, "The First *Summa*," n. 15 above.

Finally, Blau's study of the grammar of the Palestinian manuscripts puts into high-relief yet another feature of the Arabic language to be found there, which also accords well with what one knows from other considerations to have been an important bias, namely the influence of Aramaic and Syriac.[50] Most of the Palestinian texts in question were translated from Greek or Syriac originals, as the statistics cited earlier testify. In fact, the versions are sometimes so literal that "they are hardly worth being called Arabic at all (especially concerning word order)."[51] But even in those works which were written originally in Arabic, as Blau goes on to observe, Aramaic/Syriac influence is evident. This should not be a surprising circumstance when one recalls that not only was Palestinian Aramaic the ongoing vernacular language in the Holy Land until early Abbasid times and even later, but that once the Greek speakers virtually disappeared from the area, the writers in the Palestinian monasteries were themselves largely from Syriac-speaking communities. It is no wonder then that their Arabic hand reminded Arendzen of Syriac.[52] And this fact corroborates the historical point made on other grounds that during the first two Abbasid centuries even the Melkite Christians in the caliphate turned their eyes to the east, and had virtually no contact with Byzantium until the mid-tenth century.[53]

Before leaving the subject of the distinctive state of the Arabic language to be found in the South Palestinian Christian manuscripts from the ninth and tenth centuries,[54] it is instructive to take into account the additional fact that there is a notable difference to be observed between the states of the language in texts from different times and places, which carry the work of the same author. Here is not the place to develop this issue in any detail, but one must mention it briefly because it reinforces one's perception of the distinctiveness of what was written in Palestine during the period of time which is of present concern. The works of Theodore Abū Qurra (c. 750 - c. 825) provide the only real opportunity for such a comparison, because he is the only writer of the time and place whose works spread well beyond his own era, and are available in modern published editions. Abū Qurra's career will be discussed below. Here the only purpose is to call attention to the differences in the "state of the language" to be observed in the author's works published on the basis of Palestinian manuscripts of the ninth and tenth centuries, and those published on the basis of manuscripts from later times, or other places.

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[50] See Blau, *Grammar*, pp. 54-55, and p. 628, where the index to the *Grammar* cites passages throughout the work which designate "Aramaic influence."

[51] Blau, ibid., p. 54.

[52] See n. 30 above.

[53] On this subject see Kennedy, "The Melkite Church," n. 12 above, and the following articles by Sidney H. Griffith: "Eutychius of Alexandria on the Emperor Theophilus and Iconoclasm in Byzantium: a Tenth Century Moment in Christian Apologetics in Arabic," *Byzantion*, LII (1982), 154-90; "Stephen of Ramlah and the Christian Kerygma in Arabic in Ninth Century Palestine," *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, XXXVI (1985), 23-45; and "Greek into Arabic: Life and Letters in the Monasteries of Palestine in the Ninth Century; the *Summa Theologiae Arabica*," *Byzantion*, to appear.

[54] Samir prefers to speak of the distinctiveness of this Arabic usage as "un état de langue." See Samir, *Actes du premier congrès*, p. 58.

The majority of the published Arabic works of Theodore Abū Qurra are based on manuscripts of relatively recent vintage. For the edition of ten of Abū Qurra's Arabic tracts, which Constantin Bacha published in 1904, he relied on a copy made in 1735, which the copyist himself said was made from yet another copy, written in 1051, which in turn was said to be based on an older manuscript kept at the monastery of Mar Sabas.[55] Similarly, Louis Cheikho published another work of Abū Qurra based on a unique manuscript, now said to date from the end of the seventeenth century.[56] When one compares the "state of the language" in these editions of the works of Abū Qurra with what one finds in the author's tract on the veneration of images, which Arendzen edited from the manuscript written by Stephen of Ramla in 877,[57] the distinctiveness of the earlier Palestinian Arabic is immediately evident, even to the casual reader. Clearly, over the centuries, Abū Qurra's diction must have been "improved" from copyist to copyist. This is in fact a process which one can observe beginning already in the Palestinian manuscripts of the ninth and tenth centuries. For example, in the tenth century another scribe copied Abū Qurra's tract on images in Sinai Arabic MS 330, making numerous orthographical and grammatical changes from what Stephen of Ramla had written, and not always for the better, from the point of view of the requirements of classical Arabic, but remaining within the range of usages characteristic of Palestine in early Abbasid times. Then one may observe a diverging trend in the "states of the languages," now leading away from the earlier Palestinian practice, in the text of the creed by Abū Qurra which Ignace Dick edited on the basis of two manuscripts, Sinai Arabic MSS 549 and 561, from, respectively, the tenth and thirteenth centuries. Almost all of the variants in the latter manuscript are of the "improving" variety. And now they veer away from the peculiar profile constituted by the ensemble of linguistic traits which characterized the earlier state of Arabic used in the Holy Land monasteries.[58]

Two historical conclusions may be drawn from observations such as these. The first of them is that the several "states of the language" which one may perceive in the transmitted works of Theodore Abū Qurra testify to the distinctiveness of the Arabic employed by the monks of Palestine in the ninth

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[55] See Constantin Bacha, *Les oeuvres arabes de Theodore Aboucara, évêque d'Haran* (Beyrouth, 1904), p. 5; and his *Un traité des oeuvres arabes de Théodore Abou-Kurra, évêque de Haran* (Tripoli [Syria] and Rome, 1905), p. 8.

[56] L. Cheikho, "Mīmar li Tādurus Abī Qurra fī Wujud al-Khāliq, wa 'l-Dīn al-Qawīm," *al-Machriq*, XV (1912), 757-74, 825-42. See the new edition by I. Dick, *Theodore Abuqurra, Traité de l'existence du Créateur et de la vraie religion; introduction et texte critique* [Patrimoine Arabe Chrétien, 3] (Jounieh et Rome, 1982). Cheikho, in his *al-Machriq* article, XV, 757, dated the MS in question to the eighteenth century. Dick has revised the date to the seventeenth century. See Dick, "Le traité de Théodore Abū Qurra de l'existence du Créateur et de la vraie religion," in Kh. Samir, ed., *Actes du premier congrès*, p. 149.

[57] See no. 29 above.

[58] See I. Dick, "Deux écrits inédits de Théodore Abuqurra," *Mus*, LXXII (1959), 53-59. Dick is now preparing a new edition of the tract on images, to appear in the series "Patrimoine Arabe Chrétien."

and tenth centuries, as they were learning to write more felicitously in the language they had presumably been speaking fluently since the middle of the eighth century. Secondly, it is clear that this was not an inert state of the language. Rather, it is clear from manuscript to manuscript, as well as in the margins and between the lines of individual manuscripts, that in the Palestinian *scriptoria* there was an ongoing effort to write ever more correctly in Arabic.[59] Of course, Christian writers and copyists of later periods and other places developed their own characteristic "scribal errors," particularly writers whose real ecclesiastical language continued to be Syriac or Coptic (or even Greek, after the incursion of westerners into the territories of the caliphate in the eleventh century and later). In some places, some Christian writers and scribes wrote notably correct classical Arabic. But this is another story, and one which is not pertinent to the present inquiry.[60] It remains here only to draw the obvious corollary from all that has been said thus far. It is that the writers of the few original works preserved in "Ancient South Palestinian" Arabic, including Theodore Abū Qurra, actually wrote their compositions in this distinguishable dialect or 'state' of Middle Arabic, and that they did not employ the good classical usage which one might otherwise have presumed, especially for a writer such as Abū Qurra, who alone of the Syro-Palestinians achieved a widespread fame in the Arabic-speaking world of later times.

III.
The Earliest Christian Arabic Texts

After the middle of the first Abbasid century few if any original Greek writers remained in the monasteries of the Holy Land. There is a Greek account of the martyrdom of twenty monks of Mar Sabas monastery in the year 797, and a Greek life of St. Stephen the wonder-worker, from the same monastery, said to have been written by Leontius of Mar Sabas.[61] And sometime in the ninth century monks of Mar Sabas translated the ascetical homilies of Isaac of Nineveh from Syriac into Greek. But this is all there is to cite, until the eleventh

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[59] The ongoing process can be observed in the 'states' of the language evident in a single family of Gospel MSS, mentioned in Georg Graf, *Geschichte der christlichen arabischen Literatur*, 5 vols. [Studi e Testi, 118, 133, 146, 147, 172] (Città del Vaticano, 1944-1953), I, 142-47. See Sidney H. Griffith, "The Gospel in Arabic," n. 24 above. Look for Samir Arbache's long-promised study of the Gospels in the Sinai MSS. See also evidences of the continuing efforts in the Palestinian monasteries to write "correct" Arabic, in S.H. Griffith, "The Arabic Account of ʿAbd al-Masīḥ an-Naǧrānī al-Ghassānī," *Mus*, XCVIII (1985), 331-74.

[60] See Samir, *Actes du premier congrès*, pp. 60-68.

[61] See Vailhé, "Les écrivains," pp. 39-43; R.P. Blake, "La littérature grecque," p. 375; I. Ševčenko, "Constantinople Viewed from the Eastern Provinces in the Middle Byzantine Period," *Harvard Ukranian Studies*, III/IV (1979-1980), 735-37. See the editions of the Greek texts cited in F. Halkin, *Bibliotheca Hagiographica Graeca*, 3rd ed., 3 vols. [Subsidia Hagiographica, no. 8a] (Bruxelles: Société des Bollandistes, 1957), II, 96 [no. 1200] and 254 [no. 1670]. For Isaac of Nineveh's homilies see [Dana Miller], *The Ascetical Homilies of St. Isaac the Syrian* (Brookline, Massachusetts: The Holy Transfiguration Monastery, 1984).

century. An exception to prove the rule may be the work of Basil of Emesa, the alleged writer of the life of St. Theodore of Edessa.[62] This *Vita* has survived in Greek, in a manuscript dated to the year 1023, which belonged originally to the Georgian monastery, Iviron, on Mt. Athos.[63] It has also survived in Arabic, in a thirteenth-century Egyptian manuscript, now in the Bibliothèque National de Paris.[64] Modern scholars consider the *Vita* in its present form to have been written originally in Greek, and the Arabic accordingly is a translation.[65] This conclusion, plus the additional observation that the *Vita* contains such unlikely elements as an account of the alleged synod of the oriental patriarchs in Jerusalem in the year 836, which is supposed to have issued an anti-iconoclast letter to the emperor Theophilus,[66] the story of a supposed visit by Theodore to the court of Emperor Michael III (842-867), and tales about the conversion to Christianity of a "Persian King Mawijas," all conspire to prompt one to the further conclusion that the *Vita* itself, in its present form, was written in Byzantium, and is not at all the composition of any monk living in the Holy Land in the mid-ninth century.[67] However, this is not to say that the *Vita* has no relationship to the literary activity of the monks of Mar Sabas monastery. For, as Paulus Peeters reminded scholars in 1930, the *Vita* of Theodore of Edessa includes the story of St. Michael of Mar Sabas, the account of whose martyrdom at the hands of the Muslims is told independently in an eleventh-century Georgian manuscript.[68] And furthermore, Peeters was able to show that the Georgian account is in fact the translation of an Arabic original, in which Basil of Emesa is the narrator of the story about Michael. So the investigation has at this point come the full circle back to Basil of Emesa, who, if he is not

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[62] See Halkin, *Bibliotheca*, II, 274-75 [no. 1744, a-e].

[63] See A. Vasiliev, "The Life of St. Theodore of Edessa," *Byzantion*, XIV (1942-1943), 167-69.

[64] See G. Troupeau, *Catalogue des manuscrits arabes; première partie, manuscrits chrétiens* (Paris: Bibliothèque Nationale, 1972), MS 147, pp. 110-13, cf. p. 112, no. 12.

[65] See G. Graf, *GCAL*, II, 24-25; Vasiliev, "Life of St. Theodore," 192-98.

[66] On the probably fictional character of this event see Ševčenko, "Constantinople Viewed," 735, n. 36. See also the pertinent remarks and further bibliography in Sidney H. Griffith, "Eutychius of Alexandria on the Emperor Theophilus and Iconoclasm in Byzantium: A Tenth Century Moment in Christian Apologetics in Arabic," *Byzantion*, LII 1982), 154-90; and his "Greek into Arabic," n. 53 above.

[67] See Vasiliev, "Life of St. Theodore," 199-210, 216-25 for a summary of these two topics. What highlights their fictional character is the otherwise well attested isolation of Syro-Palestine from Byzantium during the period in question. See Griffith's "Eutychius of Alexandria," and his "Stephen of Ramlah and the Christian Kerygma in Arabic," n. 53 above. Regarding the inauthenticity of the works attributed to Theodore in the *Vita*, see the article by Gouillard, n. 69 below, 138-57.

[68] P. Peeters, "La passion de s. Michel le sabaïte," *Analecta Bollandiana*, XLVIII (1930), 65–98. Peeters proposed that the story of St. Theodore of Edessa was merely a calque on the biography of Theodore Abū Qurra, with the corollary that there never were two separate persons. Vasiliev, "Life of St. Theodore," no. 63, rejected this idea, and defended the historicity of Theodore of Edessa. But more recent scholars do not believe that Vasiliev made his case. See, e.g., Hans Georg Beck, *Kirche und theologische Literatur im byzantinischen Reich* (München: Beck, 1959), pp. 558-59. Regarding the Georgian MS itself, and its publication, see R.P. Blake, "Catalogue des manuscrits géorgiens de la bibliothèque de la laure d'Iviron au mont Athios," *Revue de l'Orient Chrétien*, XXIII, 3 ème sér., VIII (1931-1932), 324-25.

altogether a fictional character, emerges as a monk of Mar Sabas, later perhaps the Melkite bishop of Emesa, and who now appears not as a writer of Greek, as the unknown Byzantine author of the *Vita* of Theodore of Edessa would have it, but as a hagiographic *raconteur* who probably spoke and wrote in Arabic, and who flourished around the mid-point of the first Abbasid century.[69]

As if to reinforce the idea that by the beginning of the ninth century Arabic was a living literary language for the monks of Mar Sabas, it now appears that there was a Georgian version of the martyrdom of the twenty monks of Mar Sabas in 797, which was translated not from the Greek text mentioned above, but from Arabic, and, as it turns out, the same might be true even of the *Vita* of Stephen the wonder-worker.[70] This observation raises the possibility that the Greek texts of these works may not have been the original ones, but that still missing Arabic narratives were the first written accounts of the martyrs of 797 and of the life of Stephen. What adds some verisimilitude to this possibility is the additional observation that there is yet another Georgian text with roots in Mar Sabas monastery, which is definitely a translation from Arabic, namely the *Vita* of St. Romanos the Neomartyr.[71] Sometime in the 780s, the writer, a monk of Mar Sabas, composed an account of Romanos's martyrdom at al-Raqqa in the year 780, after nine years spent as a prisoner in Baghdad.[72] Since no Greek *Vita* of St. Romanos has come to light, the most reasonable assumption to make is that Arabic was indeed its original language.

The fact that Georgian manuscripts have played such an important role in discovering the history of the appearance of the Arabic language in the literature of the Holy Land monasteries in the first Abbasid century should cause no

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[69] See Peeters, "La passion de s. Michel," esp. 80 and n. 2. Therefore, Basil could not himself have been the author who invented Theodore of Edessa, as Gouillard would have it. Rather, the Byzantine author of the *Vita*, whoever he was, must have attributed his tale to Basil, who became Basil of Hieropolis when the story was later translated into Arabic. See J. Gouillard, "Supercheries et méprises littéraires; l'oeuvre de saint Théodore d'Edessa," *Revue des Études Byzantines*, V (1947), 137-38.

[70] See n. 61 above, and R.P. Blake, "Deux lacunes comblées dans la passio xx monachorum sabaitarum," *Analecta Bollandiana*, LXVIII (1950), 27-43; G. Garitte, "Un extrait géorgien de la vie d'Étienne le sabaïte," *Mus*, LXVII (1954), 71-92, esp. 77. There is in fact an Arabic life of St. Stephen of Mar Sabas, dated 902, among the newly discovered Sinai Arabic MSS, MS 66. See Mēimarē, *Katalogos tōn neōn arabikōn cheirographōn*, p. 35. The MS is a palimpsest, the Arabic written over an earlier Palestinian Syriac text.

[71] The text was published originally in 1910 by K. Kekelidze, and translated into Russian. For details see G. Garitte, "Bibliographie de K. Kekelidze (+ 1962)," *Mus*, LXXVI (1963), 447, no. 7.

[72] For the date of composition of the *Vita*, see P. Peeters, "S. Romain le néomartyr (+ 1 mai 780), d'après un document géorgien" *Analecta Bollandiana*, XXX (1911), 403. Note the *caveat* registered in I. Ševčenko, "Hagiography of the Iconoclast Period," in A. Bryer and J. Herrin, eds., *Iconoclasm* (Birmingham: University of Birmingham, 1977), p. 114, n. 9. There is really no reason, following Peeters, to set 787 as the year before which the *Vita* must have been written, just because the decrees of Nicea II forbade "double monasteries." On other grounds one knows that this council was virtually unknown in the territory of the oriental patriarchates during the ninth and tenth centuries. For pertinent bibliography and discussion see, in addition to the studies cited in n. 67 above, Sidney H. Griffith, "Theodore Abū Qurrah's Arabic Tract on the Christian Practice of Venerating Images," *JAOS*, CV (1985), 53-73.

surprise. There is a recorded presence of Georgian monks in Palestine almost continually from the fifth century until the sixteenth century.[73] This circumstance, taken in conjunction with the fact that the Georgians professed the same Chalcedonian convictions as did the Greek-speaking monks, explains the importance of the large Georgian archive associated with the Holy Land libraries. Both the Greek patriarchal library in Jerusalem and the library of St. Catherine's monastery at Mt. Sinai have significant collections of Georgian manuscripts. In the patriarchal library are assembled manuscripts from the Georgian monasteries around Jerusalem, dating from the eleventh century at the earliest.[74] This late date reflects the conditions in the Holy Land up until the reassertion of western power in the region, and it reminds one that during the two previous centuries Arabic had been gaining ground in the Palestinian monasteries. This latter phenomenon is reflected in the Georgian manuscripts of the tenth century preserved at the Iviron on Mt. Athos, which contain texts that are translations from Arabic.[75] The Georgian collection at Mt. Sinai on the other hand, while smaller than that in Jerusalem, contains among its eighty-five manuscripts some sixteen from the ninth and tenth centuries.[76] And all of them fall into the category of "church-books" described earlier. One does not find among them the apologetic texts which reflect a turn to the outside, Islamic society, such as are among the Arabic manuscripts from ninth- and tenth-century Palestine. Such texts as there are of this sort in Georgian are translations ultimately from Arabic, and here one thinks principally of the works of Theodore Abū Qurra, which for the most part came into Georgian via Greek in the twelfth century.[77] However, there is a report that in the early eleventh century the Georgian monk Euthymius Mt'ac'mideli (d. 1028) of the Iviron monastery translated a now unknown work by Abū Qurra from Georgian into Greek.[78] This notice prompts one to suppose that the Georgian text with which Euthymius worked was a direct translation from Arabic, probably made in the Holy Land, where in the monastic community at least there was still a Georgian readership, even during the ninth and tenth centuries,[79] to judge by the Sinai manuscripts, although there are no known original compositions in Georgian to record from this period.

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[73] See the long survey, based largely on pilgrims' reports, by G. Peradze, "An Account of the Georgian Monks and Monasteries in Palestine," *Georgica*, I, 4 and 5 (1937), 181-246. On the significance of Georgian texts for the history of Christian texts in Arabic in the Holy Land, see Khalil Samir, "Les plus anciens homéliaires géorgiens et les versions patristiques arabes," *OCP*, XLII (1976), 217-31.

[74] See R.P. Blake, "Catalogue des manuscrits géorgiens de la bibliothèque patriarcale grecque à Jérusalem," *Revue de l'Orient Chrétien*, XXIII (1922-1923), 345-413; XXIV (1924), 190-210, 387-429; XXV (1925-1926), 132-55.

[75] See, e.g., the text cited in n. 68 above.

[76] See Gérard Garitte, *Catalogue des manuscrits géorgiens littéraires du mont Sinaï* [CSCO, vol. 165] (Louvain: L. Durbecq, 1956), p. 1.

[77] See M. Tarchnišvili, *Geschichte der kirchlichen georgischen Literatur* [Studi e Testi, no. 185] (Città del Vaticano, 1955), pp. 208-209, 370-71.

[78] See ibid., p. 129, and Graf, *GCAL*, II, 21.

[79] See the remarks of Heinrich Husmann, "Die datierten griechischen Sinai-Handschriften des 9. bis 16. Jahrhunderts, Herkunft und Schreiber," *Ostkirchliche Studien*, XXVII (1978), 143-44.

The same is to be said about the Greek manuscripts written in Palestine in the ninth and tenth centuries. As noted above, there are only two works which might be considered original compositions, and both of these, one learns from Georgian versions, may have had Arabic originals.[80] For the rest, the Greek manuscripts written in Palestine during the ninth and tenth centuries, all seemingly in the "church-book" category, must have served the needs only of a Greek readership, which would have been found exclusively in the monastic community.[81] Beginning in the eleventh century, of course, with the reinstatement of relatively free communications with Byzantium and the west, Greek culture in the Palestinian monasteries took out a new lease on life. But by that time Christian literature in Arabic had already achieved its majority, and no longer depended on the direct support of the older Christian cultures.

The earliest recorded date so far published from an early documentary source which refers to a Christian text in Arabic is contained in a note appended to the end of an Arabic version of the story of the "Fathers who were killed at Mount Sinai," which appears in two manuscripts, Sinai Arabic MS 542 (f. 15r) and British Museum Oriental MS 5019 (f. 58b). The wording of the note is slightly different in the two manuscripts, but they agree in stating that the text of the martyrdom was originally translated from Greek into Arabic in the Hijra year 155, which corresponds to 772 A.D.[82]

Among dated manuscripts, the earliest one so far reported is MS 16, one of the newly-discovered Sinai manuscripts. It is a Gospel manuscript, dated to 859.[83] Next is Sinai Arabic MS 151, which was written in Damascus, and not in one of the Palestinian monasteries. It contains an Arabic version of the Epistles of St. Paul, the Acts of the Apostles, and the Catholic Epistles.[84] However, it is important to note that the early date, "the month of Ramadhān, of the year two hundred and fifty-three," that is, Sept. 4 to Oct. 4, 867 A.D.,[85] refers only to the translation of the Pauline Epistles in the first portion of the manuscript, and not to other portions of the text, which date to later times. This fact made Blau wonder if a later scribe may not have simply copied the first portion of the manuscript, colophon and all, from an earlier *Vorlage* into a later text.[86] However this may be, the year 867 remains for now the date of the earliest dated

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[80] See nn. 61 and 70 above.

[81] See, e.g., Husmann, "Die datierten griechischen Sinai-Handschriften," 145-47; D. Harlfinger, D.R. Reinsch, J.A.M. Sonderkamp, *Specimina Sinaitica: die datierten griechischen Handschriften des Katharinen-Klosters auf dem Berge Sinai, 9. bis 12. Jahrhundert* (Berlin: Dietrich Reimer, 1983).

[82] The note which mentions the date of the translation in BM 5019 has been published a number of times. It appeared first, in truncated form, in Ḥ. Zayyāt, "Shuhadā' al-naṣrāniyya fi 'l-islām," *al-Machriq*, XXXVI (1938), 462. J. Blau has published the note three times, twice in Arabic characters, once in transcription. See Blau's "The Importance of Middle Arabic Dialects," p. 219, n. 40 (Arabic); "Über einige christlich-arabische Manuskripte," 103 (transcription); and *Emergence and Linguistic Background*, p. 5, n. 7 (Arabic). For the full texts of both notes, plus discussion, see now S.H. Griffith, "The Arabic Account of ʿAbd al-Masīḥ," 337-42.

[83] Meimarē, *Katalogos tōn neōn arabikōn cheirographōn*, p. 27.

[84] See Atiya, *Arabic Manuscripts of Mt. Sinai*, p. 6; Kamil, *Catalogue of All Manuscripts*, p. 16.

[85] See Staal, "Codex Sinai Arabic 151," part II, p. 18.

[86] Blau, "Über einige christlich-arabische Manuscripte," 107.

and published Christian manuscript in Arabic. But soon the record will move more than a century earlier, with the new edition and publication of the full text of the anonymous treatise on "The Triune Nature of God," from Sinai Arabic MS 154. Although scholars have long dated this manuscript to "the eighth or ninth century," its new editor has reportedly found a date in the 740s written in an unpublished portion of the text of the anonymous treatise.[87]

Of all the manuscripts mentioned by Blau in his catalog of "Ancient South Palestinian" texts, only eleven actually mention the dates when they were written. And of these eleven, only four are from the ninth century.[88] British Museum MS 4950 was written in the year 877.[89] The six leaves of a manuscript of Mar Sabas, now in the Leningrad library, contain a work which the scribe says he wrote out in "the year 272 of the years of the Arabs," that is, somewhere between June 18, 885 and June 7, 886 A.D.[90] Vatican Arabic MS 71, according to its colophon, was written at Mar Sabas in the same year as the previous manuscript, viz., in 885/886.[91] And Sinai Arabic MS 72, according to its colophon, was written in the year 897.[92] For the undated manuscripts in Blau's catalog, dates in the ninth and tenth centuries have been assigned largely on the basis of paleographical considerations by the scholars who have studied the texts, and whose works Blau has noted.

Among the newly-discovered Christian Arabic manuscripts from Sinai not mentioned in Blau's list of old South Palestinian texts, at least three carry dates from the ninth century: MS 1, containing saints lives and martyrologies, was written in 868; MS 16, with the Gospels in Arabic, as already mentioned, was written in 859; and MS 46, which is a portion of Sinai Arabic MS 151, mentioned above, contains Arabic versions of some theological discourses, and was written in 867.[93]

In the absence of many dated manuscripts from the eighth century one must necessarily fall back on the only other available evidence, which is the evidence of paleography. Of course, there is also the biographical evidence of the only

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[87] The major portion of the text is published in Margaret D. Gibson, *An Arabic Version of the Acts of the Apostles and the Seven Catholic Epistles, from an Eighth or Ninth Century MS. in the Convent of St. Catherine on Mount Sinai, with a Treatise 'On the Triune Nature of God'* [Studia Sinaitica, no. VII] (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1899). The new edition is being prepared at Rome, in the Pontifical Institute of Oriental Studies, under the direction of P. Samir Khalil.

[88] See Blau, *Grammar*, pp. 21-33

[89] See the colophon to the first work in this MS (f. 197v) published in A.S. Lewis and M.D. Gibson, *Forty-One Facsimiles*, pp. 2-4; Arendzen, *Theodori Abu Ḳurra de Cultu Imaginum Libellus*, p. xv.

[90] See I. Krackovsky, "A New Testament Apokryphon in an Arabic MS of the Year 885-886," [Russian] *Vizantysky Vremennik*, XIV (1907), 261 (Arabic text).

[91] See the colophon published in E. Tisserant, *Specimina Codicum Orientalium* (Bonn: A. Marcus et E. Weber, 1914), pp. xxxviii-xxxix, pl. 54. Regarding both the Leningrad and the Vatican MSS see now S.H. Griffith, "Anthony David of Baghdad, Scribe and Monk of Mar Sabas; Arabic in the Monasteries of Palestine," to appear.

[92] See the colophon (f. 118v) published in C.E. Padwick, "Al-Ghazali and the Arabic Versions of the Gospels, an Unsolved Problem," *MW*, XXIX (1939), between 134 and 135.

[93] Meïmarē, *Katalogos tōn neōn arabikōn cheirographōn*, pp. 21, 27, 32.

Christian Arabic writer of the period whose name is known, that is, Theodore Abū Qurra (c. 750 - c. 825). But his biography, and his writings, are themselves known mostly from later witnesses.[94] And while the study of Arabic paleography in this early period is not yet on as sure a footing as one might wish, it nevertheless does provide some basis for the assumption that Syro/Palestinian Christians were actually writing Arabic in the eighth century. Concretely, in addition to Sinai Arabic MS 154, one may cite Sinai Arabic MS 514 as another case in point. This manuscript is a palimpsest. It originally came to the attention of Margaret Dunlop Gibson and Agnes Smith Lewis in 1902, who immediately noticed that the characteristic Christian Arabic hand of ninth- and tenth-century Palestine was superimposed on a much earlier Syriac hand.[95] When Aziz Suryal Atiya came upon the manuscript again in 1950, he was able to determine that it is in fact a "quintuple palimpsest." The lower two layers, containing Syriac texts of the Peshitta, are succeeded by a Gospel lectionary in Greek uncials of the seventh century, followed by an undetermined text in an archaic Kufic hand of the first century of the Hijra, which was in turn washed away to make room for what Atiya calls the "middle Kufic of the eighth to early ninth century."[96] In addition to some *memre* of James of Sarūg, this uppermost layer contains a collection of Arabic versions of martyrdoms and saints' lives of uncertain provenance. So this manuscript, which Atiya nicknamed "Codex Arabicus," is all by itself virtually a complete stratigraphic record of the Christian literary history of Palestine, up to the early Arabic period.

Another manuscript which provides paleographic evidence for Christian Arabic writing in the same period, although it comes, like Sinai Arabic MS 151, originally from Damascus, and not from the Palestinian monasteries, is the bilingual fragment of Psalm 78:20-61, in both Greek and Arabic, with the Arabic text appearing in Greek script.[97] On the basis of this Greek script, along with other considerations, the editor of the fragment dates it to the end of the eighth century.[98] In the same vein is the collection of fragments of a trilingual Psalter, in Greek, Syriac and Arabic, found at Mar Sabas monastery, and now in Leningrad.[99] On the basis of paleographic considerations, the manuscript, which contains Pss. 70:7-16, 73:4-14, 77:28-38, and 79:9-16, is dated to the ninth century.[100] Finally, from Sinai there is a bilingual Gospel lectionary in Greek

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[94] The basic biographical study remains that of I. Dick, "Un continuateur arabe de saint Jean Damascene: Théodore Abuqurra, évêque melkite de Ḥarrān," *POC*, XII (1962), 209-23; 319-32; XIII (1963), 114-29.

[95] See Lewis and Gibson, *Forty-One Facsimiles*, frontispiece and pp. xvii-xviii.

[96] See Atiya, *The Arabic Manuscripts of Mount Sinai*, p. 19. Note also plates II-V, showing the Syriac, Greek, and Kufic palimpsests.

[97] See Bruno Violet, *Ein zweisprachiges Psalmfragment aus Damaskus* (offprint, with corrections, from the *Orientalistische Litteratur-Zeitung*, 1901; Berlin, 1902).

[98] Ibid., fol. 23.

[99] See N. Pigulevskaya, "A Greek-Syriac-Arabic Manuscript of the Ninth Century," [Russian] *Palestinskiy Sbornik*, LXIII (1954), 59-90.

[100] Ibid., 60.

and Arabic written by the monk John, son of Victor of Damietta, in the year 995/96.[101]

As Blau has observed, it stands to reason that some of the manuscripts copied in the ninth and tenth centuries in the Palestinian monasteries were actually composed in the eighth century, and he even questioningly mentions the seventh century.[102] Be that as it may, the available documentation now clearly shows that the first Christian texts in old Palestinian Arabic were written in the eighth century, and increasingly in the tenth century there was a concerted effort in the monasteries to provide ecclesiastical books of all sorts in Arabic. Thereafter, the spate of Christian publishing in Arabic never ceased, as the manuscripts of St. Catherine's alone make evident. So it now remains in the present study to describe briefly the original works in old South Palestinian Arabic with a view to highlighting the productivity and originality of the first Arabophone writer-monks of the Holy Land's monasteries.

IV.
The Monks of Palestine and Christian Kalām

By far the majority of the some hundred surviving Arabic texts which monks associated with the monasteries of Palestine wrote in the ninth and tenth centuries are translations of the scriptures and other "church-books" from Greek and Syriac originals. Gradually, modern scholars, in their studies of the Arabic versions of Biblical books and Patristic texts, are taking more account of these Palestinian materials.[103] There are also some saints' lives in the archive, which appear to be Arabic originals.[104] But among the most interesting of all these Arabic texts from the Holy Land monasteries are the few works of Christian *kalām*, or controversial, apologetic theology in the Islamic milieu, which are

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[101] See Harlfinger et al., *Specimina Sinaitica*, pp. 17-18, and plates 18-22.

[102] See Blau, *Grammar*, p. 20, n. 7.

[103] Of studies not mentioned earlier, one might cite the following: R.M. Frank, *The Wisdom of Jesus ben Sirach (Sinai ar. 155, ixth/xth cent.)* [CSCO, vols. 357 and 358] (Louvain: Secr. CSCO, 1974); B. Knutsson, *Studies in the Text and Language of Three Syriac-Arabic Versions of the Book of Judicum, with Special Reference to the Middle Arabic Elements* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1974), for which see Samir Khalil, "Trois versions arabes du Livre des Juges," *Oriens Christianus*, LXV (1981), 87-101; F. Leemhuis, A.F.J. Klijn, and G.J.H. van Gelder, *The Arabic Text of the Apocalypse of Baruch* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1986). For patristic texts, see the recent publications of Jacques Grand Henry on the Arabic versions of the works of Gregory of Nazianzus, among which are the following: "Les discours de saint Grégoire de Nazianze dans le manuscrit arabe du Sinaï 274," *Mus*, XCIV (1981), 153-76; "La version arabe de quelques textes apocryphes attribués à Grégoire de Nazianze," *Mus*, XCVI (1983), 239-50; "La tradition manuscrite de la version arabe des 'Discours' de Grégoire de Nazianze," in J. Mossay, ed., *II. Symposium Nazianzenum: Louvain-la-Neuve, 25-28 Août 1981* (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 1983), pp. 113–18. See also Samir Arbache, "Sentences arabes de saint Basil," *Mus*, XCVIII (1985), 315–29.

[104] See I. Dick, "La passion arabe de s. Antoine Ruwaḥ, néomartyr de Damas (+25 dec. 799)," *Mus*, LXXIV, (1961), 108-33; S.H. Griffith, "The Arabic Account of ʿAbd al-Masīḥ an-Naǧrānī al-Ghassānī," *Mus*, XCVIII (1985), 331-74.

truly original compositions. It is appropriate to bring the present essay to a close by giving some account of these important works.

It was in religious dialogue with Muslims, and in the apologetic effort to confirm the faith of Arabophone Christians challenged by the manifest success of Islamic thought and institutions, that the scholar-monks of the Holy Land monasteries showed the most ingenuity. For they took up the challenge to become *mutakallimūn*, religious controversialists, with the task of defending the faith in public argument, in the very language of Islam. Such works of Christian kalām are, to be sure, few in number by comparison to the majority of Arabic texts in the "church-books" category that have survived from the ninth and tenth centuries. But there can be no question that the kalām texts, the truly original Christian compositions in Arabic, show the most evidence of the resolve of the Holy Land monks seriously to meet the Qur'ān's criticisms of key Christian doctrines, in the very Arabic idiom which made them appear so plausible to their contemporaries, Christians and Muslims alike.

Perhaps the earliest text of Christian kalām so far known to survive from the old Palestinian archive is the treatise, "On the triune nature of God," in Sinai Arabic MS 154, published and translated into English already in 1899.[105] As noted above, there is reason to believe that the manuscript was written as early as the 740s, which means that it was composed even before the birth of Theodore Abū Qurra, the only Christian mutakallim of the early period whose name one now knows. As for the contents of the work, they are almost entirely given over to a presentation of scriptural testimonies from the Old and New Testaments, which the unknown author construes as evidences for the veracity of the doctrine of the Trinity. In this enterprise his work is utterly traditional, and may almost be styled a translation of customary testimony lists.[106] What is new in the work is the author's employment of quotations from the Qur'ān alongside the scripture testimonies to buttress his arguments. And the irony of this situation is that if the dating of the manuscript to the first half of the eighth century is secure, this Christian text is among the earliest surviving documents containing quotations from the Arabic text of the Qur'ān.

Another early work of Christian kalām, which survives now only in papyrus fragments dated to the eighth century, also contains quotations from the Qur'ān alongside testimonies from the scriptures to the standard Christian doctrines.[107]

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[105] See the texts in M.D. Gibson, *An Arabic Version of the Acts*, pp. 2-36 (English), 75-107 (Arabic). Unfortunately, the published text stops short of the end of the work. In the Library of Congress/University of Alexandria microfilm of Sinai Arabic MS 154 there are at least eleven more pages of text, which do not appear in Gibson's publication. And even in the microfilm, the text stops *in medias res*. One must wait for the new publication mentioned in n. 87 above for a fuller text.

[106] See Rendel Harris's review of Gibson's publication of the text, in the *American Journal of Theology*, Jan., 1901, pp. 75-86.

[107] See G. Graf, "Christlich-arabische Texte, zwei Disputationen zwischen Muslimen und Christen," in F. Bilabel and A. Grohmann, eds., *Griechische, koptische und arabische Texte zur Religion und religiösen Literatur in Ägyptens Spätzeit* (Heidelberg: Verlag der Universitäts Bibliothek, 1934), pp. 1-31.

And this coincidence reminds one that these two earliest Christian kalām texts together confirm the fact that in Arabic the first discussions between Christians and Muslims had to do with the interpretation of the scriptures, vis à vis the claims of the Qur'ān—a circumstance which accords well with what one knows from early Syriac texts related to Christian encounters with Muslims, but which stands in contrast to the polemics one reads about in Greek texts of the period.[108] Indeed, at one stage in the disputations between Christians and Muslims over scripture texts it apparently became customary even to include a Jewish interlocutor in the proceedings, for the purpose of verifying the quotations from the Bible. Such at least is the suggestion of a later Palestinian text which tells of a debate between a monk of Edessa named Abraham of Tiberias, who argues with a Muslim convert from Christianity in Jerusalem around the turn of the ninth century.[109]

It was not long, however, before Christian kalām texts from Palestinian monasteries moved beyond the stage of merely providing ready answers for Christians caught in controversy with Muslims. From the time of Abū Qurra through the tenth century there is ample evidence of a lively Christian intellectual life in Arabic, in Melkite circles in Jerusalem, Edessa, Ḥarrān, Baghdad, and Damascus, even Alexandria—all with some connection with the monasteries in Palestine, which seem to have served as the centers of Melkite scholarship.[110] To illustrate this, a brief review follows of three cases in point: the Arabic works of Theodore Abū Qurra, the now anonymous *Summa Theologiae Arabica*, and the *Kitāb al-burhān*, formerly ascribed to Eutychius of Alexandria. All of these works, at least in origin, properly belong to the archive of old South Palestinian texts described by Joshua Blau.

A. Theodore Abū Qurra

In all likelihood Abū Qurra was born and raised in Edessa, and his mother tongue was Syriac. In fact, he himself says that he wrote some thirty treatises in Syriac.[111] But his fame came from his fluency in Arabic. His career took him to the monastery of Mar Sabas in Judea, to the bishopric of Ḥarrān (795-812) in Syro-Mesopotamia, to the caliph's court at Baghdad, and finally back to Mar Sabas. In between these stations on the way of his life, Abū Qurra travelled to

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[108] For further discussion and bibliography, see S.H. Griffith, "The Prophet Muḥammad, his Scripture and his Message," n. 15 above.

[109] See K. Vollers, "Das Religionsgespräch von Jerusalem (um 800 D) aus dem Arabischen übersetzt," *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte*, XXIX (1908), 29-71; 197-221. For other MSS, see the entry in R. Caspar *et al.*, "Bibliographie du dialogue islamo-chrétien," *Islamo*, I (1975), 157-58. But see also the remarks of J. Nasrallah, "Dialogue islamo-chrétien à propos de publications récentes," *Revue des Études Islamiques*, XLIV (1978), 134. One should note another manuscript, from the twelfth century,(1137-1139), Sinai Arabic MS 434, ff. 171v-181v, which also features a Palestinian monk's replies to a Muslim's questions.

[110] One may trace these connections through the prosopography of the old South Palestinian archive of Christian texts in Arabic. See S.H. Griffith, "Anthony David of Baghdad," n. 91 above.

[111] Bacha, *Les oeuvres arabes de Théodore Aboucara*, pp. 60-61.

Armenia and to Egypt as a mutakallim in the service of Chalceḍonian orthodoxy.[112] He made a name for himself that amounted to notoriety among his adversaries. The Jacobite, Ḥabīb b. Khidma Abū Rā'iṭa, complained about what he perceived to be Abū Qurra's sophistries;[113] the Muslim mutakallim, 'Isā b. Ṣabīḥ al-Murdar wrote a tract, "Against Abū Qurra, the Christian";[114] and three and a half centuries afterwards, the Jacobite patriarch of Antioch, Michael I (d. 1199), recorded what the Jacobites thought of Abū Qurra, that "because he was a sophist, and engaged in dialectics with the pagans [*ḥanpê*, i.e., the Muslims], and knew the Saracen language, he was an object of wonder to the simple folk."[115]

Due to the industry of his fellow monks in Palestine, some of Abū Qurra's writings were translated into Greek and circulated in Byzantium. But it is doubtful if Abū Qurra himself ever wrote in Greek.[116] His own industry seems to have been consumed in composing the sixteen or so Arabic works we have from his hand, and the thirty Syriac works he says he wrote –not to mention his long and busy career as a controversialist.[117] In fact, his career in controversy is what puts its stamp on his writings. In them he addresses the concerns of his own Arabophone Melkite community, who required support in their faith, and who needed help to formulate responses to their adversaries. These adversaries were both Christian and non-Christian; the former included Monophysites, Nestorians, and Monothelites; the latter were comprised of Jews and, of course, Muslims. Abū Qurra's purposes were to answer the objections of the adversaries, and, perhaps most importantly, to make a clear statement of Christian faith in Arabic.[118] The latter achievement is what put him in the vanguard of the movement toward a fully Arabophone Christianity in the caliphate, a movement which had its earliest life-giving roots in the monasteries of Palestine.

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[112] See Dick, "Un continuateur arabe de St. Jean Damascène," n. 94 above.

[113] See G. Graf, *Die Schriften des Jacobiten Ḥabīb Ibn Ḥidma Abū Rā'iṭa* [CSCO, vols. 130 and 131] (Louvain: L. Durbecq, 1951), Arabic text (vol. 130), p. 73.

[114] See Bayard Dodge, ed. and tr., *The Fihrist of al-Nadīm; a Tenth-Century Survey of Muslim Culture*, 2 vols. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970), I, 394.

[115] J.-B. Chabot, *Chronique de Michel le syrien; patriarche jacobite d'Antioche (1166-1199)*, 4 vols. (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1899-1910), III, 32 (French), IV, 495-96 (Syriac).

[116] See the arguments in S.H. Griffith, "Stephen of Ramlah," n. 53 above.

[117] For the published works of Abū Qurra in Arabic, see above notes 29 (Arendzen), 55 (Bacha), 56 (Cheikho and Dick), 58 (Dick), as well as G. Graf, *Die arabischen Schriften des Theodor Abu Qurra, Bischofs von Ḥarran (ca. 740-820)* [Forschungen zur christlichen Literatur- und Dogmengeschichte, Band X, Heft 3/4] (Paderborn, 1910), G. Graf, *Des Theodor Abu Kurra Traktat über den Schöpfer und die wahre Religion* [Beiträge zur Geschichte der Philosophie des Mittelalters. Texte and Untersuchungen, Band XIV, Heft 1] (Münster, Westphalia: Aschendorff, 1913), and S.H. Griffith, "Some Unpublished Arabic Sayings Attributed to Theodore Abū Qurrah," *Mus*, XCII (1979), 29-35. For Abū Qurra's works preserved only in Greek, see *PG*, vol. 97, cols. 1461-1610. For the manuscripts of unpublished works attributed to Abū Qurra, see Graf, *GCAL*, II, 7-16, and Nasrallah, "Dialogue islamo-chrétien" in *Revue des Etudes Islamiques*, XLVI (1978), 129-32.

[118] See S.H. Griffith, "The Controversial Theology of Theodore Abū Qurrah (c. 750 - c. 820 A.D.); a Methodological, Comparative Study in Christian Arabic Literature" (Ph.D. Thesis; Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America, 1978)—available from University Microfilms International, Ann Arbor, Michigan; no. 78-19874.

B. The *Summa Theologiae Arabica*

The Palestinian Arabic manuscript which contains the earliest surviving text of one of the works of Theodore Abū Qurra, British Library Oriental MS 4950, written by Stephen of Ramla at the monastery of Mar Charitōn in 877 A.D.,[119] also contains the single most comprehensive statement of Christian faith in Arabic from the ninth century. It was composed, or maybe compiled, by a now unknown scholar monk in the generation after Abū Qurra, somewhere between the years 850 and 870.[120] The *Summa* stands complete in twenty-five chapters, the headings for which have long been published,[121] while the work as a whole still awaits publication in a critical edition of the Arabic text, with a translation into English by the present writer.

It is clear that the compiler of the *Summa* drew on a tradition of a century or more of Christian theology in Arabic for his work, including the treatises of Theodore Abū Qurra, as well as the growing library of scriptures and other Christian classics which the monks of Palestine had long been busy translating into the newly enfranchised language of the caliphate. It makes most sense to think of there having been a 'school' of Christian theology in Arabic, centered in the monasteries of Mar Sabas and Mar Charitōn in Judea in the ninth century, which was largely under the influence of the accomplishments of Theodore Abū Qurra in the previous generation.[122] Notably different, however, from the practice of Abū Qurra is a new sense of what one might call Christian ecumenism in the *Summa*. The author/compiler was obviously concerned to play down the differences among Christians, without at all denying them, for the sake of presenting a more effective argument in support of Christian doctrines against the challenges of Jews and Muslims.[123]

The full title of the *Summa* reads:

> The summary of the ways of faith in the Trinity of the unity of God, and in the incarnation of God the Word from the pure virgin Mary.[124]

Appropriately enough in a work of kalām, the "ways of faith" mentioned in this title refer to the creedal statements (*aqāwīl*), the modes of verbal expression,

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[119] See S.H. Griffith, "Stephen of Ramlah," n. 53 above.

[120] See now Khalil Samir, "Date de composition de la 'Somme des aspects de la foi,' " *OCP*, LI (1985), 352-87.

[121] See G. Graf, *GCAL*, II, 17-18.

[122] See S.H. Griffith, "A Ninth Century Summa Theologiae Arabica," in Khalil Samir, ed., *Actes du deuxième congrès international d'etudes arabes chrétiennes* [Orientalia Christiana Analecta, 226] (Rome: Pontifical Institute for Oriental Studies, 1986), pp. 123–41. In the same volume see also Kh. Samir," "La 'Somme des aspects de la foi,' oeuvre d'Abū Qurrah?"

[123] See S.H. Griffith, "A Ninth Century *Summa Theologiae Arabica* and the 'Sectarian Milieu,' " *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam*, to appear.

[124] BL MS 4950, f. 2r.

in which Christians confess their faith. The *Summa* also includes a chapter (XIV) which states and then refutes what the author calls "the ways which exclude their proponents from Christianity,"[125] and each one of these "ways" is characterized as an allegation (*zaʿm*) made by an adversary who somehow contradicts an important thesis or doctrinal proposition (*qawl*) espoused in Melkite orthodoxy. For the rest, the chapters of the *Summa* set out reasoned statements of the Christian articles of faith, buttressed by numerous testimonies from the scriptures. Indeed, several chapters are devoted almost exclusively to the quotation of testimonies from scripture (XII and XIII), and these are the chapters which one finds copied several times in the manuscript tradition, even apart from the *Summa* as a whole.[126]

Special features of the *Summa*, in addition to the traditional doctrinal discussions of Trinity and Incarnation which it contains, are the chapters devoted to issues which arose in the controversies of the day as a direct result of the Islamic hegemony under which the Melkite community now lived. Among these is chapter XVIII, which provides tailor-made rebuttals, so to speak, against challenges to Christian doctrines which Muslims customarily posed in the course of day-to-day arguments about religion. Included in the chapter are also answers to objections to Christian ideas posed by Manichaean dualists.[127] Then there is a chapter devoted to proving that Christianity is the true religion of Abraham, and indeed of Adam before him (chap. XIX). And there are several chapters (XX - XXII) devoted to setting forth the position of Jews in the Christian scheme of things, which explain that the gentiles have now become heirs of the promise which God had once made to the Israelite people. The latter is a particularly intriguing theme because it suggests that in the increasingly Islamic cultural milieu of the first Abbasid century or so, Jews, Christians, and Muslims were all concerned to review and revise their conflicting religious claims. And it suggests that Jews and Christians in particular, being *ahl al-dhimma* and without political power, were now required to argue their differences with one another in open appeals to exegetical reason, without recourse to imperial power, be it Roman or Persian, to advance their interests in the public domain.[128]

The *Summa* is distinguished from other works of Christian apologetics in Arabic of the early Abbasid era by the breadth of its scope, and by the comprehensiveness of its coverage of issues of importance to the Melkite community, including even an Arabic translation of the so-called "Apostolic

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[125] BL MS 4950, f. 76r.

[126] See the convenient chart displaying the relationship of the chapters of the *Summa* and the contents of the MSS where portions of the *Summa* appear, in Samir, "Date de composition," 355.

[127] The contents of chapter XVIII are listed in Khalil Samir, "Kitāb ǧāmiʿ wuǧūh al-īmān wa muǧādalah Abī Qurrah ʿan ṣalb al-Masīḥ," *al-Maçarrat*, LXX (1984), 411-27; Rachid Haddad, *La trinité divine chez les théologiens arabes (750-1050)* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1985), p. 60; Griffith, "A Ninth Century *Summa*," n. 123 above.

[128] For the earliest Jewish *kalām* see now Sarah Stroumsa, "Dawūd ibn Marwān al-Muqammiṣ and his ʿIshrūn Maqāla" (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation; The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1983).

Canons," along with some other canonical provisions which date from the early church synods (chap. XXV). In fact, the *Summa* by itself matches and surpasses the range of topics which one finds addressed in the full bibliographies of the known works of early Christian mutakallimūn such as Theodore Abū Qurra, Ḥabīb b. Khidma Abū Rā'iṭa, and ʿAmmār al-Baṣrī.

Finally, a striking feature of the *Summa* is the fact that the kalām itself, the Arabic language of the discourse in this work of Christian apologetics, is replete with Islamic religious vocabulary, and with Arabic expressions which put the apologetic arguments in the *Summa* squarely within the framework of a reply to the Qur'ān's rhetorical challenges to the Christians.[129]

C. The *Kitāb al-burhān*

An important manuscript in the archive of old South Palestinian texts is Sinai Arabic MS 75 (Kamil, 68). On the basis of paleographical considerations, scholars have assigned it to the turn of the ninth and tenth centuries, but dates written on the last leaf of the manuscript clearly place it well within the tenth century.[130] It is important because it contains texts in both categories of works which the monks of the Holy Land were busy producing in Arabic from the ninth through the eleventh centuries: translations and original compositions.

The scribe of this manuscript left neither his own name nor the date when he wrote. But he named his monastery as that of Mar Charitōn.[131] His manuscript contains a version of the Gospels in Arabic which is seen to be a much improved offshoot of the text in the early Palestinian family of Arabic Gospel manuscripts such as Stephen of Ramla had copied and revised in Sinai Arabic MS 72.[132] The text of the Gospels in Sinai MS 75 is complete with a double set of rubrics, indicating the lectionary usages both of Jerusalem and Constantinople, and suggesting thereby an increased awareness in Palestine in the tenth century of what was happening liturgically and otherwise in Byzantium, a state of affairs in marked constrast to what one learns from ninth century texts.[133]

Of the two other works in the manuscript, one is a copy of what many scholars have long thought of as Eutychius of Alexandria's *Kitāb al-burhān*.[134] The attribution is made largely on the basis of the fact that portions of the work

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[129] See S.H. Griffith, "The First Christian *Summa Theologiae* in Arabic," n. 15 above.

[130] See Graf, *GCAL*, I, 146; Blau, *Grammar*, p. 30. Atiya, *The Arabic Manuscripts of Mount Sinai*, p. 4, and Kamil, *Catalogue of All Manuscripts*, p. 14, both prefer to date the MS to the ninth century. For the dates in the MS, see Cachia and Watt, *Eutychius of Alexandria* (n. 134 below), CSCO, vol. 192, pp. i and ii.

[131] Colophon, Sinai Arabic MS 75, f. 222r.

[132] See Graf, *GCAL*, I, 146.

[133] Ibid., 140, and see Blau, "Über einige christlich-arabische Manuscripte" (n. 36 above), 107. See also A. Baumstark, "Die sonntägliche Evangelienlesung in vorbyzantinischen Jerusalem," *BZ*, XXX (1929/1930), 350-59.

[134] The work is published, with an English translation, in P. Cachia, ed. and W. Montgomery Watt, tr., *Eutychius of Alexandria, the Book of the Demonstration* [CSCO, vols. 192, 193, 209, 210] (Louvain: Secr. CSCO, 1960-1961).

appear in Eutychius's chronicle of world history, quoted quite faithfully; and in another instance, the same words are attributed explicitly to Saʿīd b. Baṭrīq, the physician who is none other than the patriarch Eutychius himself.[135] However, there is now every reason to doubt the correctness of attributing this work to Eutychius.[136] Linguistically, it has many affinities with the group of Palestinian texts studied by Blau; the writer is quite familiar with Palestinian holy places, which he describes at length.[137] Moreover, since he was a Melkite himself, Eutychius, or anyone writing in his name, would have had every encouragement to quote from the scholarly works of the monks in the Palestinian monasteries. It is consistent with what one knows of the scholarship cultivated at Mar Charitōn to propose that the *Kitāb al-burhān* is the work of a monk who wrote in the tradition of the author/compiler of the *Summa Theologiae Arabica*. In fact, like the *Summa*, the *Kitāb al-burhān* is best thought of as a compilation of earlier doctrinal works, together with some original compositions in Arabic.[138]

The title of the *Kitāb al-burhān* is well chosen. In the Qurʾān there is the record of God's instruction to Muḥammad, in reference to his dealings with the religious claims of Jews and Christians, to say to them, "Produce your proof (*burhānakum*) if you are people who speak the truth"; S. *al-Baqara* (2):111. It is not unlikely that it is because of the influence of this phrase, which is repeated four times in the Qurʾān in several different contexts, that the title *Kitāb al-burhān* was a popular one among Christian apologists for their treatises in Arabic.[139] In the Palestinian text under consideration here, the apologetic topics are the standard ones: the doctrines of the Trinity, the Incarnation, and a number of typically Christian religious observances and practices. In addition, there are numerous quotations from works attributed to early fathers of the church, such as Athanasius of Alexandria, and long lists of scripture testimonies. A particularly interesting feature of the work, to which an allusion was made above, is the long section listing Palestinian holy places, which may itself be a separate work included in the *Kitāb al-burhān*. In it the author encourages pilgrimage to these holy places associated with the life of Christ, and he claims that they should always remain in Christian hands.

> Wherever there is a place that God glorified and hallowed by the appearance in it of His Christ and the presence of His Holy Spirit, be it plain or mountain, wherever there is a place in which God spoke to any of His prophets before that or in which His wonders were seen, He has set all these places in the hands of those who believe in Christ, to pass as an inheritance from fathers to sons for ever, until He brings them the kingdom of heaven which does not perish . . . .

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[135] See G. Graf, "Ein bisher unbekanntes Werk des Patriarchen Eutychios von Alexandrien," *Oriens Christianus* n.s. 1 (1911), 227-44.

[136] See Breydy, *Études sur Saʿīd ibn Baṭrīq* (n. 44 above), pp. 88-94.

[137] See Cachia and Watt, *Eutychius of Alexandria*, Part I, Arabic text (vol. 192), pp. 165-97.

[138] See Breydy, *Études*, pp. 88-89.

[139] Michel Hayek cites seven other Christian Arabic writers, who composed treatises under this same title, in his *ʿAmmār al-Baṣrī, apologie et controverses* (Beyrouth, 1977), pp. 32-33.

> God did not give the sites of the prophets and the relics of Christ and the places of the apostles and martyrs to any people save the Christians. It is they who sought them out, and honoured them and built churches upon them. That was done by their Christian kings and, beneath the kings, by governors and others, out of their eagerness, on account of their great faith and their desire for good, through the working of God in them (or what He did for them) in respect of that, and His strengthening them for it.[140]

It is interesting to note, at the end of the author's list of holy places, references to a church of the Theotokos in Constantinople, St. Peter's in Rome, St. Paul's in Kawkab, near Damascus, and finally, a reference to the *mandylion* in Edessa.[141] Clearly, the author of this work had a cosmopolitan view of Christianity. But he also clearly had an interest in securing the rights of the Christian shrines in the Holy Land.

As for the Holy Land monks, the three collections of original compositions in Arabic which are briefly reviewed here are not the sum total of their creative literary achievements. One knows, for example, of other works of Christian kalām from tenth-century Palestine which have not survived in full, or which have not been studied by modern scholars.[142] Furthermore, it is clear from the studies of Michel Breydy that in Palestine and elsewhere Melkite monks were busy enhancing the history of Christianity in the caliphate, an accomplishment which is usually attributed in its entirety to Eutychius of Alexandria.[143] But enough has been said here to give one some sense of the scope of the accomplishments of the Arabophone church in one quarter of its enclave in the Muslim world—the Melkite patriarchate of Jerusalem, and specifically the monasteries of the Holy Land.

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[140] Cachia and Watt, *Eutychius of Alexandria*, Part I, Trnsl. (vol. 193), pp. 134 and 162.

[141] Ibid., pp. 152, 153, 162.

[142] Consider, for example, the tenth-century upper text on a palimpsest manuscript from Sinai, which is a "Disputation between a Christian and an Unbeliever." Only one page of it has been published, in Agnes Smith Lewis, *The Forty Martyrs of the Sinai Desert and the Story of Eulogios* [Horae Semiticae, IX] (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1912), pp. 52-53, and the plate facing p. 69.

[143] Breydy, *Études*, passim.