Article

On the Foundation Period of the Maronite Tradition

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Abstract: The Maronite Church states that it is an Antiochene and Syriac Church. This article traces, in chronological and discursive fashion, the emergence of the Maronite tradition. It explores the life and significance of St Maroun (d. *ca* AD 418–23), giving consideration to thinkers who helped to understand his outlook and methods and assessing what we know of the St Maroun monastery (Dayr Mar Maroun) and its vicissitudes down to the sixth century. The piece then treats Maronites in the context of the seventh-century monothelite controversy, following their foundational developments up to the time of their first patriarch Yohanna Maroun (*flor*. 680s). The paper considers not only the ascetic and monastic currents in the early Maronite community but also touches on the influence of Syriac typology and its gradual displacement by analytic and dogmatic theology.

Keywords: Maronite Church; Syriac Catholic Churches; typology; Saint Maroun (deceased by 423); Dayr Mar Maroun (monastery); Saint Yuhanna Maroun; theological typology; Monothelitism

1. Introduction

The Maronite Church declares, in its official documents, that it is an Antiochene Syriac Maronite Church. For Maronites, their patriarch is officially the Patriarch of Antioch and all the East. The Maronite Church is Catholic, being one of the 24 autocephalous or sui juris Churches that comprise the Universal Catholic Church (each of such churches, as the Latin indicates, "with its own law"). There is no recent, critical, and systematic overview of the early Maronite period, which is understandable because there is little material at hand. Most ecclesiological concentration has been placed on the church's institutional inheritance as it stands today because the legitimacy of claiming early Patristic foundations seems too tricky (e.g., Le Quien 1740, pp. 3–99) or scholars are resigned to dealing with existing "fabrics" that have slowly been woven up to our time (e.g., Mouhanna 1980). The scarcity of documentation probably has most to do with the persecution of the Maronites as alleged heretics in the seventh century. Unfortunately, it has long been a common scholarly opinion that the Maronites only made a definite appearance in church history at that time. However, Maronite collective memory has always seen itself as being (a central) part of and integral to the Antiochene Orthodox tradition, which is crucial to Syrian monastic beginnings, sharing in the hermeneutic and liturgical styles most prominent in Syriac Christianity, and as a pro-Chalcedonian community, which entangled it and pushed it somewhat into the shadows before a clearer (and prospectively unfortunate) exposure in the midst of the monothelite controversy (esp. 620s–30s). This article defends the usefulness of assembling as much ancient material pointing to Maronite foundations as we can and sets it out chronologically, with accompanying explanations along the way. It should be considered as "a new case made" by a published Maronite scholar who presented the "indigenous viewpoint" in a critical mode.

From its origin in Antioch, the "mother church of the mission to the Gentiles" (cf. Acts 11:26) accepted early self-recognition as part of the "Catholic Church", the epithet used by the third Antiochene bishop Ignatius of Antioch (*Epistulae* [to the Smyrmaeans] 7, 2) as he was taken as a captive to Rome to face martyrdom (Azize 2015). The writings of both Ignatius (d. 117) and Theophilus (Antioch's seventh bishop, *ca* 169–188) attest to an ancient

Syrian fashion of expressing the Christian faith we may call *typological*, a peculiarly Semitic way of conveying ideas and insights by evoking parabolic and mystical relationships. Already in the New Testament (cf. Goppelt [1939] 1982) Lampe and Woolcombe (1957), this theological manner survived in Syrian Christianity (e.g., Theophilus, *Ad Autolycum* [ed. Grant], cf. Rogers 2000, pp. 158–83) until it was gradually displaced by the analytic theology required to participate in the Christological controversies of the fifth century and beyond. I dealt with some aspects of this hermeneutical issue in an earlier article on beauty in Syrian typology. There, I wrote the following:

> While the Greeks knew symbolical and even allegorical interpretations of mythology, this was not typology because "typology presupposes a divine history in past, present and future". Both typology and symbolism coexist within the Syrian tradition. Typology can use symbols, but a symbol is not a type, for a symbol is not a template, mold or pattern. In symbology, for example, a baby being baptized might represent innocence. But when the relationship is typological, we may say that the baby is both the Child Jesus and Jesus being baptized, not completely, but as an imperfect copy of the eternal original (Azize 2020, p. 162).

This fashion of thought penetrates into the ascetic, institutional, liturgical, homiletic, and literary life of the early Maronites, as well as a general mode the earliest followers of St Maroun imbibed along with other Antiochene Christians. It is natural to begin with Maroun (sometimes called Marun or Maron) as the saint from whom Maronites collectively take their name.

2. Maroun and His Legacy

"Monasticism" took different shapes in diverse times and places. Maronite monasticism has appeared in three different forms: the monastic "city in the desert" of Dayr Mar Maroun near Apamaea, Syria; then as houses of prayer founded in Mount Lebanon as independent concerns; and finally, as centrally-directed orders through the Middle East and then beyond, from the time of Patriarch Istifan Dwayhi in early modern times. Monks were not initially organized into "orders" (Caseau 1999, p. 585).

It is doubtful that Christian monasticism began with Anthony the Great (*ca* AD 251–356) and then spread from Egypt. Rather, elements in early Christianity, which tended towards monasticism, asceticism, and seclusion for the purposes of prayer, grew up, cross-fertilized, and developed in various other places, in Palestine, Syria and Cappadocia, not only in Egypt, and probably earlier than Antony Harmless (2008, pp. 493–94) sees "ascetic commitments" from the "very foundation" of Christianity, identifying four elements:

I.   Praying in deserts
II. Fasting
III. Celibacy
IV. Renunciation of family and wealth.

It is significant, however, that by the early fourth century:

> Newly Christianized by more radical forms of Christianity, the countryside always threatened to slip from the orderly embrace of the Christian empire. . . . In northern Syria and in many areas in North Africa, populations had risen and new forms of village life throve. It was in the countryside that the most radical forms of Christianity took root. . . . In Syria . . . the roads had long been travelled by bands of charismatic preachers who owed nothing to the "world". Pointedly celibate, and filled with the power of the Holy Spirit, their travelling bands were a sight to be seen. . . They were "unique ones", the "lonely ones". In Egypt, the Greek word *monachos*, "lonely one", from which our word "monk" derives, soon become attached to such eccentric persons. Unmarried, detached from society either by living in the desert or by their restless movement, the "wanderers" of Syria and the "men of the desert" of Egypt represented a new form of radical

Christianity, henceforth associated with a new term, "monasticism"—the life of monks (Brown 2003, p. 81).

To anticipate: Maroun, the man acclaimed by the Maronites to be their monastic founder, represents, I suggest, the bridge between the city and the countryside, the uniting of the "orderly embrace" and "radical . . . Christianity". Brown uses the term "eccentric", i.e., "out from the centre". These men following Maroun left the centre, the city, to live their faith in the countryside. Maronite roots are arguably found in a radical interpretation of the teaching of Christ and turned into a settled way of life with minimal compromise. We now turn directly to Maroun's life story, which is the obvious beginning-point or account of early Maronite history.

2.1. Theodoret's Life of Maroun

Cyr, also known as Cyrrhus and Kurros, in northwest Syria, was a Seleucid city founded in about 300 BC, not far from Aleppo. The famed Theodoret was its bishop (*ca* AD 423–458), and we are almost totally reliant upon his *Historia monachorum Syriae* or *religiosa*. etc. (*History of the Monks of Syria*) for our knowledge of Maroun. It appears that Theodoret did not ever meet the extraordinary ascetic (Price 1986, p. 119, n. 1), but in this special *Historia* (composed *ca* 444), Theodoret recounts Maroun's doings glowingly (sometimes using typological language):

I.   After Akepsimas, I will call to mind Maroun, for he adorned the godly troop of the holy ones. Maroun embraced life under the sky, taking for himself a certain hill-top which had long ago been honoured by the impious. And having dedicated to God the sacred precincts of the demons in that place, he passed all of his time there, pitching a small tent, but making little use of it. Maroun did not only employ the customary labours, but he conceived others also, gathering together the wealth of wisdom.

II.   The judge measured out grace for these labours: so richly did the Munificent One grant to him the charism of healing, that Maroun's fame ran about everywhere, and everyone from everywhere was attracted, so that experience taught them the truth of the report. It was seen that fevers were quenched by the dew of his blessing, shudderings ceased, and demons fled—many and varied sufferings were cured by the one remedy. For the race of physicians applies to each illness the corresponding medicine, but the prayer of the holy ones is the common antidote to all pathologies.

III. But Maroun healed more than bodily weaknesses alone: he also applied the bountiful cure for souls. He heals the greed of this man, and the anger of that man. For one man, Maroun proffers the teaching which leads to self-control, while for another man he bestows lessons in justice; he tempers the man of intemperance, and arouses the sluggish. Farming in this wise, Maroun cultivated many crops through his wisdom: it was he who planted the paradise which now blooms in the land of Kurros. The great Yakobos (James) was a product of this cultivation: of him and of all the others whom I shall recall individually with God's help, one could rightly apply the famous prophetic saying: "The just man will flower like the palm tree, and will be multiplied like a cedar in the Lebanon" [Psalm 92:12].

IV.   Caring in this way for the garden of God, doctoring to both souls and bodies alike, he patiently suffered but a short illness. Maroun, teaching us the frailty of our nature and strength in commitment, withdrew himself from this life.

Quarrelling broke out between the neighbours over his body, a violent quarrel. A populous bordering village came out in a body, scattered all of the others, and seized this most-desired treasure. They built a great sacred enclosure, and even to this very day they reap the profit, honouring Maroun the victory-bearer with a public feast. And even we, who are at a distance, reap his blessing, for it is not Maroun's tomb which contents us, but his memory (*Hist. mon.* [sect.] 16 [Greek edn. Canivet/Leroy-Molinghen; author's trans.]).

Maroun was no controversialist but a missionary of unique and disciplined form. Whether he was the first hermit to live an open-air existence, as opposed to in a town or in a desert cell, is not, to my mind, as important as his example of holiness. He was not so extreme as some others, as he had a small hut to which he could retire in very bad weather. His way of life impressed contemporaries, and exposing himself to the elements assisted in that, although his ascetic life was expressed to be a physical means to a spiritual end.

Maroun must have been born sometime in the fourth century AD and almost certainly died between 410 and 423. One can hardly envisage him as being less than 40 years old at death, but he might even have attained a century. If Theodoret stresses that Maroun "planted the paradise which now blooms in the land of Kurros", signs of his local impact by 360 could allow an intelligent conjecture of his lifespan. When Julian passed through northern Syria in about 363, he found that the area was quite Christian until he came to Batnae, east of the Euphrates (Bowersock 1978, p. 109), where the scene altered. Batnae's "name is barbarous, but the place is Hellenic . . . [in] all the country round about the fumes of frankincense arose on all sides, and I saw everywhere victims ready for sacrifice" (*Epistulae* [ed. Wright, vol. 3]. [No] 58 400c).

Wolf Liebeschuetz observes the following: "By the 380s monks were settled in large numbers in the desert just beyond the inhabited areas of Syria. In the next hundred years or so, Syria was covered with monasteries", and on his reckoning, these monks were generally people from the country and probably spoke Syriac, not Greek (Liebeschuetz 1972, pp. 234–35). It is hard to think of the evangelization of an entire region being carried out by a man before he was 50 years of age, especially as he himself did not travel. Admitting his influence was exerted through his disciples, a very long life might well have played a role in the regional conversion process and a marvel in itself if he died, as some have alleged as late as 423. Part of the evangelizing by Maroun's followers, as when Abraham of Cyrrhus entered what is now North Lebanon), would surely have involved evolving his exemplary way.

2.2. An Analysis of Theodoret's Life of Maroun

Theodoret's short account highlights Maroun's magnetism. By the saint's "customary labours", he appears to have in mind prayer, fasting, penance, and depriving the body of sleep. Theodoret paid particular attention to any measures that might check the passions and bring the faculties under the control of a Christian will. His account is similar to the account of the life of Antony, famously penned by Athanasius (*ca* 360).

> Through him the Lord healed many of those present who suffered from bodily ailments; others he purged of demons, and to Antony he gave grace in speech. Thus he consoled many who mourned, and others hostile to each other he reconciled in friendship, urging everyone to prefer nothing in the world about the love of Christ. And when he spoke and urged them to keep in mind the future goods and the affection in which we are held by God . . . he persuaded many to take up the solitary life. And from then on, there were monasteries in the mountains and the desert was made a city by monks, who left their own people and registered themselves for the citizenship of the heavens. . . Before long, through the attraction of his speech, a great many monasteries came into being, and like a father he guided them all. (Vita Antonii [ed. Gregg] [sects.] 14–15).

Although similarities to the life of Maroun are evident, there are differences in the stories of their deaths, Antony's body was buried in a secret location (*Vit. Ant.* 92) while Maroun's deposition is very public, and a church was built ver his tomb, re-discovered as recently as 2002 in Barad, northwest Syria. If Theodoret knew well about Antony's deeds, he did not blindly copy this earlier life and, rather, stressed that Antony "acted in the same way in Alexandria" as had been done in Antioch (in *Historia ecclesiastica* 4. 24). It was probably because Theodoret believed Maroun to have been a great founder-figure of monasticism in Syria, however, that he filled gaps in his knowledge of him by touches from the doings of that "far-famed most excellent master in the school of mortification" (4. 18).

Additionally, Maroun accepted the guidance of an earlier monl Zenibas (*Hist. relig.*, 24) even we know his own discipline was more radical and was imitated by his disciples (21–23).

2.3. John Chrysostom's Letter to Maroun

To help plug holes in our own current lack of documentation, we have another source on Maroun. John Chrysostom (347–407) wrote a letter to a hermit named Maroun and asked him for his prayers, and it is more probable than not that this was the fabled Maroun who initiated the tradition in his name. And when one reads and gauges the feeling, one might easily imagine that they studied together in Antioch.

> The bonds of affection and good will tie me to you and I can see you as if you were right here beside me. No distance can weaken the look of love. I would like to write to you more often, very pious Sir, but that is not easy due to all the obstacles in my way here [in exile in *ca* 403] (*Epist*. 36).

3. The Ancient Ethos behind Maronite Expressions of the Christian Faith: On Ephrem and Jacob Sarug

It must be stressed that we do not have much Maronite theological and liturgical material from before the fifteenth century, and even that is actually sparse in the extreme. But we are at liberty to reckon which Antiochene Christian thinkers most resonated with the first (very shadowy) Maronites detectable from the fourth and fifth centuries. Where the evidence is available, however, we would have to admit the enduring influences of Ephr[a]em and Jacob of Sarug.

3.1. Ephrem and Antiochene Religious Thought Most Resonating with the Early Maronite Way

Ephrem (ca 306–373) was born in Nisibis, living there until the last ten years of his life when, as a result of the Persian conquest, he had to move to Edessa (Brock 1985, p. 16; Colless 2008, p. 46). Known as "The Harp of the Spirit", Ephrem was a deacon and may have been one of those committed fourth-century ascetic leaders among Syriac Christians called the "Sons of the Covenant" (*Bnay Qyāmā*) (Murray 2004, p. 30). He had many talents, being a teacher of catechesis, hymn-writer, choir leader and commentator (Brock 1985, p. 16; Murray 2004, p. 30). He introduced a woman's choir, chosen from the "Daughters of the Covenant"—virgins, and possibly also widows, who lived ascetic lives (Colless 2008, p. 46). In his fine book on Ephrem, *The Luminous Eye,* Sebastian Brock assesses that

> To Ephrem, theological definitions are not only potentially dangerous, but they can also be blasphemous. They can be dangerous because, by providing 'boundaries', they are likely to have a deadening and fossilizing effect on people's conception of the subject of enquiry . . . the human experience of God. Dogmatic 'definitions' can moreover, in Ephrem's eyes, be actually blasphemous when these definitions touch upon some aspect of God's Being: for by trying to 'define' God, one is in effect attempting to contain the Uncontainable, to limit the Limitless (Brock 1985, pp. 23–24).

Ephrem was well aware of contemporary theological battles. For him, for a key example, the root error of the Arians was that they thought they could investigate and define the nature of the Son, because they saw him as having been created on this side of the chasm between eternity and time. As Brock puts it,

> The search for theological definitions, a heritage from Greek philosophy, is of course by no means the only way of conducting theological enquiry. Ephrem's radically different approach is by way of paradox and symbolism [and what we here call typology], and for this purpose poetry proves a far more suitable vehicle than prose, seeing that poetry is much better capable of sustaining the essential dynamism and fluidity that is characteristic of this sort of approach to theology (Brock 1985, pp. 24–25).

For example, a person working from definitions might enquire into the meaning of God's omnipotence. This can get complicated and involve conundrums such as the "omnipotence paradox" class of arguments (e.g., if God is all-powerful, then why... ?). To Ephrem, this would have been not only useless and absurd but also blasphemous: for God was the Great One who became small, the Rich One who became poor, the Hidden One who revealed Himself. The paradoxes give us something to ponder but nothing to grasp.

The hiddenness (*kasyuta*) and the revelation of God work together in each human life, although there is significant overlap, not least in the sacraments and the Bible. The hidden and the revealed go together: even if the Incarnated Lord could be seen by those then living, no mind could ever grasp his hidden divinity. Types and symbols are not instruments of God's revelation: they belong to this world, but what is hidden in them is from above (Brock 1985, pp. 25–29). Seeing the types behind the antetypes visible in the things of this world is a way of approaching the Beatific Vision, which will only later be vouchsafed in its fullness.

Kees den Biesen discerns that the use of polarity by Ephrem (above and below, hidden and revealed, eternal and mortal, holy and sinful, shadow and fulfilment, temporary and lasting, etc.) embody

> ... the primordial polarity between Creator and creation ... All in creation is therefore image or symbol of the Creator, in the sense that in it and through it the Invisible is seen, the Unknowable known, and the Omnipresent and Eternal experienced within the limits of space and time (Den Biesen 2006, p. 22).

It is not appropriate to try to fit Ephrem's doctrines into current theological models. He is not a contemporary theologian, defining terms and using them consistently. Some of Ephrem's key terms are interchangeable: *rāzā*, *tupsā*, *dmutā*, *almā*, and *urtā* (symbol, type, image, portrait and picture). A phrase like *lbeš pagrā* (he put on the body like a garment) cannot be rightly understood unless one understands *all* of Ephrem's thoughts (ibid., pp. 18–20). Typology expresses "interrelated aspects or layers of reality which the reader imaginatively and intelligently incorporates in his own vision of the faith". The mind is the "meditative eye of faith" which looks "out in all directions" and reaches "the meta-historical or cosmic dimension through the contemplation of the various stages in the history of salvation". This is what Ephrem called "the luminous eye", *'aynā šapitā* (p. 24), and it is his outlook and colour of thought that most reflect what was developing in early Maronite teaching, which is like Ephrem's approach also practical and disciplined.

In *Hymns on the Church* 24, Ephrem wrote *haymānutā gēr itēh 'aynā ḥāzit kasyātā* ("faith is the eye that sees the hidden"), which relates to the desire for what we now call the "Beatific Vision". Even now, in Maronite spirituality, it is said that we are made to seek truth, goodness, and beauty, but to seek them in God through faith, hope, and love. If we only seek beauty, like an aesthete, all we find is beauty. But if we seek it in God and with love, we may find God and his love. Contemplating goodness, truth, and beauty can raise our souls to God, but only if the impulse is for Him. Some of what Ephrem writes instantly makes sense to us, as when he describes nativity as the tree of life bringing hope to the dying (*Nativity Hymns* [ed. McVey] 1.8).

3.2. Jacob of Sarug and Antiochene Liturgics Most Resonating with the Early Maronite Way

As for Jacob of Sarug (*ca* 450–521), he was born at Kurtam, now Kutak on the Euphrates, and was raised near Edessa in the district of Serugh (Suruc in today's Turkey). He was, therefore, born about 30 years after the death of Maroun. He was a priest and, in about 519, was made bishop of Batnan in the district of Serugh, and his entire life was thus based in northern Mesopotamia. The church there had a number of religious celibates (*îHídōye*), and Jacob's account of them as single and living alone as hermits reveals that this way of life in the church was known across the length of Fertile Crescent, from Antioch to the East (*Festal Homilies* [ed. Kollamparampil, pp. 1–2, 5, 76]).

In controversies during his lifetime over the nature of Christ, Jacob is considered to have belonged to the grouping called "Monophysite" (today often "Miaphysite" or

"Henophysite"), teaching Christ had only one, the divine, nature enfleshed in a human body), although he himself disliked theological arguments and refused to commit to any side, opposing all division over Christ but also maintaining that the mystery of Him could never be defined (Kollamparampil 1997, pp. 1–2, 5, 11, 76). When Maronites brought Syriac manuscripts to the West and evinced their reverence for Jacob and his orthodoxy, he was generally assumed to have been an outright Chalcedonian (Forness 2018, pp. 259–69, 273–77). Jacob's material was used in Maronite liturgy: his anaphora (Eucharistic prayer) is included in Dwayhi's unpublished *Book of Syriac Anaphoras*, and his two series of Vespers, Nocturns, Matins and Compline were published in the Maronite Divine Office of 1656.

Apparently, Jacob also basically assumes Ephrem's approach to typology, but he adds to Ephrem's "luminous eye" the possibility of seeing what has happened in past history. In *On the Friday of the Passion*, he commences as follows:

> Every time that you celebrate one of the feasts of our Lord, reflect first upon the purpose of the feast, because from the purpose discernment will stir up in you so that you will provide honour to each feast as it deserves. For nothing is more useful to the soul than letting discernment stir it into (its) action . . . Let us consider the feast of today with the lucid eye of the soul for which it is easy to see the distant things from as if close at hand. (*Fest. Homil.* [p. 279]).

Through the eye of light, Jacob makes typological connections:

> And it happened thus, the veil (of the sanctuary) gives testimony to me for it was torn into two from top to bottom (Matthew 27:51). For if the tunic of the priest was torn by the hands of the priest, by whose hands was the veil of the sanctuary torn apart if not by (the hands of) the Holy Spirit who left them and went out: "Behold, your house is forsaken, rendered a desert by you" [Matt 23:38]. . . The Lord of the Sanctuary is carrying the vestments of His ministry, because the Hebrew nation has thrown upon Him. When a betrothed woman desires to separate herself from her betrothed, she throws his clothes to him. Thus the Synagogue, too, because her mind fled away from the Holy One, all the worship and the priesthood which He had donated to her, she threw and wrapped it round upon Him in the veil of the altar (pp. 23–24).

This virtuoso display of disciplined imagination shows how typology can take events from daily life (such as the custom of breaking off a betrothal) and be related to sacred history.

4. The Monastery of St Maroun and Its Vicissitudes

What happened to the monks who followed in the teacher's footsteps? It is difficult to prove they evangelised far and wide and then came back to a base, that is, let us say to the proverbial "Cave of Monks" in North Lebanon or Southern Syria, carved out a mountain cliff-face and widely (but not unanimously) accepted as the oldest Maronite monastic house. There are five fairly detailed sources to come to grips with in this connection: Dionysius (Denys) of Tell Mahre; Euthyches (Sa'id ibn Batriq); Michael the Great; Thomas (Tuma) of Kfar Taba (Kfartab); and Bar Hebraeus (Bar 'Ebroyo). The leading analysis of the evidence has recently been made by Abbot Paul Naaman (2009), who is almost certainly correct in asserting that the monastery of St Maroun (Dayr Mar Maroun) was founded by Emperor Marcian in 452 to be a local centre for the teaching of the Council of Chalcedon (451). Its monks were among the foremost of the orthodox in the troubled period which followed that council (which defined Christ as truly God and truly Man, two Natures unconfused in the one integral Person and Hypostasis) (Sellers 1953, p. 211). The Christological controversies surrounding the Chalcedonies pronouncement plagued the development of the Maronite Church from thereon right up to 1736, and their effects have not yet entirely subsided (Moosa 1986, p. 1). Although there are various candidates for the precise place, it has long been thought that the monastery was in the vicinity of Homs (ancient Emesa), on the Orontes River, not far from the Lebanese border (Naaman 2009, p. 1).

The earliest direct evidence, though, is found in a brief architectural allusion by Procopius' (*De aedificiis* [*On Buildings*, Grk. *Peri Ktismatōn*)] [ed. Downing]), given around 560. The historian states that Justinian the Great (*ca* 482–565) restored many monasteries, among which he lists a number in Jerusalem, and then

> . . . in Phoenicia, the following:
>
> The house of the Virgin in Porphyreōn;
>
> The Monastery of St Phocas on the Mount;
>
> The house of St Sergius in Ptolemais;
>
> In Damascus, the House of St Leontius;
>
> Near Apamaea, he restored the Poor-house of St Romanus;
>
> The wall of the Blessed Marōn (*teikhos tou makariou Marōnos*);
>
> Near Theopolis, he restored the Church of Daphnē;
>
> In Laodicea, he restored St John's (*Aedif.* 5. 9).

The "wall of the Blessed Maroun" surely must refer to the monastery of Maroun. Procopius' list commences in Jerusalem, then proceeds northwards. The monastery of Our Lady in Porphyreōn is modern Jieh in Lebanon. I can find no reference to a monastery of Phocas other than in Constantinople and none to one "on the Mount". However, it must have been somewhere between Jieh and Damascus; for one to travel that road, one must pass over the mountains. The list follows north to Apamaea and then to the monastery of the blessed Maroun and proceeds further northwards inland to Antioch but then southwards to Laodicea (Latakia) on the Syrian coast. So Procopius almost certainly thought that the monastery of Maroun was north of the current Lebanese border perhaps in the vicinity of Apamaea. Scholars reckon his testimony reliable (e.g., Downey 1961, p. 521 n. 80; Suermann 2010, p. 68). Further, Eutychius also seems to have thought that the monastery of Maroun was near Emesa, and Thomas of Kfar Taba, who cited him as his source in the eleventh century, placed the monastery outside Hama north of Emesa along the Orontes and estimated it had 800 monks (Suermann 2010, pp. 71–72).

Still, the exact location of the monastery remains unknown. Referring inter alia to Al-Mas'oudi's description of it being an important building with 300 hermitages around it, Suermann conjectures that it must have been near Apamaea, on the Orontes, and near a mountain, which may have been the Jebel al-Alawiya (Suermann 2010, p. 86). Naaman also concluded that the monastery lay near Apamaea and that it was built on the orders of Emperor Marcian in 452 after the Council of Chalcedon, which he found plausible. On 28 July 452, the emperor issued a stringent law against the monks and the followers of Eutyches (who espoused Monophysitism or that Christ had only one Nature, the divine one). This monastery was to be the Chalcedonians' headquarters in the sixth and seventh centuries (Naaman 2009, p. 19; Suermann 2010, p. 85).

All that is known of the activities of the monks of Dayr Maroun is to be deduced from the few letters to ecclesiastical authorities about their persecution (during the sixth century, see below), and they tell us little about monastic lives, religion and thought. At some point, the monks began to ordain patriarchs and bishops from among their own number. The monastery must have been standing in 791 and possibly as late as 823 but had been destroyed by 956. The Nestorian Patriarch (Catholicos) Timotheus I (780–823) wrote a letter to the monastery in the year 791, referring to it as *bayt maroun*, which means that it was larger than a *dayr* or an '*oom.ro*, the two words together actually denoting "monastery", though *Bayt Maroun* can mean the monastery, the monks, or the people (Suermann 2010, p. 69, with n. 117). It appears that the monastery was probably still standing at or near 845, since the twelfth-century Syrian Patriarch Michael the Great states the following: "They ordain a patriarch and bishops from their monastery" (Dib 1971, p. 5). Was this patriarch for Syria, Lebanon, or both? Were these bishops *periodeuts* who would travel around to those villages and towns which lacked their own resident bishop? This is all unknown, as

is the precise date of the monastery's destruction. Arab historian 'Ali al-Mas'oudi wrote (930s) that "It was destroyed with all the cells which surrounded it, after continued raids by the Bedouins, and the violence of the Sultan" (Suermann 2010, pp. 51–52). However, all this is rather blurred, and we do not even know to which Sultan he referred. However, after Mas'oudi, the monastery is not mentioned, even when discussing others in Syria (Dib 1971, p. 7; El-Khouri 2017, pp. 395–96). So, the monastery must have been destroyed by Muslims sometime after 845 but before 956, when Mas'oudi died. If the apparent silence of Eutychius is significant, then we can narrow that range from roughly 940 to 956.

4.1. The Massacre of 517 and the Pro-Chalcedonian Stance of the Monks of Maroun in the Sixth Century

After the establishment of the monastery of Mar Maroun in 452, the monks remained out of our sight until 517, when Monophysites massacred many Chalcedonian monks, including some from the monastery of Maroun, probably totalling 350. The massacre was the subject of three reports by the surviving Chalcedonian monks of Syria Secunda to Pope Hormisdas, the bishops of Syria Secunda, and Patriarch John of Constantinople between 517 and 536. These reports contribute little of significance to our understanding of ancient Maronite mentality, although the fact of the massacre does. It emerged from the first letter, sent to the Roman Pope Hormisdas in 517 and delivered in person by two monks, John and Sergius, that the monks of Dayr Maroun held to the position of both Pope Leo (in his Tome of 449) and the Chalcedonian definition. However, Hormisdas' reply seems to consider the Maroun monks to have been on the side of Acacius of Constantinople, long excommunicated for apparent Monophysitism in 484 in the contemporary controversy (El-Khouri 2017, pp. 161, 173), and Hormisdas may have thought the massacre occurred from an internal dispute between Monophysites.

Harald Suermann (2010, p. 107) speculates that the monks of the monastery of Maroun probably attached themselves to Rome, leaving the imperial church of Constantinople in 516, not because of any change in their own doctrine of the Maronites but because of the former Patriarch Acacius and the (temporary) schism he triggered (482–519). On this reconstruction, the Maronite monks were initially under the Patriarch of Antioch (insofar as it is not anachronistic to speak of them being "under" any bishop), and since that patriarch was subordinate to the Patriarch of Constantinople, any issue they might have with Antioch would be referred to Constantinople. The Maronites were not so geographically close to Rome as the other two patriarchates, and not until they found themselves in opposition to the two Eastern great Sees did they turn to Rome. This respect for the Pope was not new or opportunistic: only after the brothers were refused at Constantinople and realised that Constantinople was supporting Severus, the newly appointed (albeit moderate) Monophysite Patriarch of Antioch (512–518, did they reconsider their communion allegiance, and so turned to Rome. Suermann (2010, pp. 107, 115–16) is even prepared to speak of it as some kind of *return*, which, considering how the old letters of Ignatius of Antioch were honoured (see above, Introd., cf. Vall 2013; Azize 2016), is not so tendentious as it sounds.

The monks' writing to the Pope perhaps shows that they held some notion of the seniority and global jurisdiction of Rome, yet it was still exceptional to call upon her. Three factors might have contributed to their decision: (1) The difficulties of communication in the ancient world; (2) Fear of offending Constantinople; (3) The welcome uncertainty that Rome would ever use her power to intervene, whereas Constantinople could enforce its will, either directly or through Antioch. It was an effort of last resort for a monastery, inland of Antioch and actually within a province ruled from Constantinople, to appeal to Rome. Admittedly, we do not know if the monks approached any other authorities in 517–518. That the surviving letter from the monks of Apamaea to their bishops looks lonely could, after all, be an accident of history. Might not John and Sergius have taken a letter to the Byzantine emperor? And, had there been letters sent to the civil authorities in Antioch?

It is noteworthy that in the letters written by various monks of Syria about this issue, the monks of the monastery of Maroun had leading roles. Altogether, some nineteen priests

seem to be from the monastery of Mar Maroun (or at least under its jurisdiction, as several of them are archimandrites and it is not clear that there could be more than one archimandrite in any monastery (Naaman 2009, p. 137)). The monk whose name appears at the very head of each list of the signees to the letters is Alexander, Archimandrite of Mar Maroun. Suermann observed that the monasteries were from Syria Secunda, that the authors must have been originally from the region of Apamaea, and that, as they travelled to the *mandra* (enclosure) of St Simeon, they were ambushed at a place called Kaprokerameon, today Kafr Karmīn, about twenty kilometres south of Qala'at Sim'an (Suermann 2010, p. 64). By their references to the synod of Chalcedon and Pope Leo, the monks identify themselves as Chalcedonian (El-Khouri 2017, pp. 173–74).

On 10 February 518, Pope Hormisdas replied. He did not promise any aid, only encouragement. Doubtless, there was nothing he could do. Perhaps the writers knew this, for they had made no specific request. Their letter to the bishops of Syria Secunda was expectedly more specific, both in detailing the violent sequel to the massacre and in asking that Peter of Apamaea be deposed. These surviving monks also wrote to the bishops of Syria Secunda in 518. Again, the same signatory came first, "Alexander, priest and archimandrite of the Monastery of the blessed Maroun, have made public this letter above, signing it with my own hand" (Naaman 2009, pp. 143–48). The letter to Patriarch John of Constantinople, "the Cappadocian" (518–520), was signed by, inter alia, the monks of the monastery of Maroun, who took precedence over the other clergy except for those from Antioch itself, thus showing that the monastery was subordinate to Antioch.

Dayr Mar Maroun heads each of the three lists. I suspect, then, that the monks of the monastery of Maroun organised a session at which a number of monks and clergy met, and all signed one document. They doubtless also had input into it: this would explain why the terms of the letters, like the names of the signatories, show much overlap though are not identical. It seems that up to 40 monasteries were under or somehow dependent upon the monastery of Maroun, so it is not surprising that they could not all meet at once (El-Khouri 2017, pp. 177–80), but neither should we be surprised the houses we can fairly call "Maronites" were acting in concert and showing an independent identity in the tussles of the Chalcedonian controversy.

What turned out to be a synod (or regional council) of Constantinople convened by Emperor Justinian in 536 saw the churches of Rome and Italy, Constantinople, Antioch, Jerusalem, Palestine and Ephesus all collaborating. The eastern churches of Mesopotamia and Persia and the church in Alexandria under the fervent Monophysite Patriarch Theodosius I (536–567) did not (Suermann 2010, pp. 123–24), and the alleged episcopal abettors of Monophysitism were banished from the capital (Sellers 1953, pp. 312–13). At this synod, the Monastery of Maroun was represented by Paul, monk and apocrisary, who signed at the head of the monks of Syria Secunda. He signed using this formula: "Paul . . . apocrisary of the monastery of the Blessed Maroun, the monastery which governs the holy monasteries of Syria Secunda" (Dib 1971, p. 5).

At a subsequent conference at Antioch in 591, monks of the monastery of Maroun again defended the Chalcedonian doctrines. After the conference, Philip and Thomas, two monks of the monastery, wrote a letter to adherents of the Jacobite Patriarch of Antioch (578–91)—Peter of Kallinike (Kallinikos). The reply, made by Theodore of Mar Abaz, attacks them for having the same faith as Chalcedon and Leo. The letters show how vicious the arguments were and that the so-named Jacobites (followers of the theology Jacob Baradaeus [d. 578]) considered that those holding to the two Natures of Christ were veering towards the deplored "Nestorians" and insisted that the Maronites should accept the Monophysite teaching of Cyril of Alexandria. In this correspondence, the Maronites called themselves sons of the Catholic and holy church, something the Jacobites did not do (Naaman 2009, pp. 152–53).

4.2. On the Maronite Chronicle and the Emerging Seventh-Century Monothelite Controversy

We now come to an interesting but rather overlooked document. Its original title has been lost, but it is known as "the Maronite Chronicle", which extends only to the year 664. It survives in one copy only, which lacks the opening sections before covering affairs from Alexander the Great to the year 658 (Penn 2015, pp. 54–55). On the basis that the author is a Maronite and supports the Byzantines, it is thought that he must have been writing prior to the Sixth Ecumenical Council, held in Constantinople in 680/681 (ibid., p. 55; text in Palmer 1993, p. 29). The Chronicle was written after the Muslim conquest, which the author detests, complaining of the *dhimmi* system (of tax and regulations disadvantageous to Christians) and the way the Jacobites benefitted from it (in Palmer 1993, pp. 29–35). The surviving portion commences with Alexander the Great, who, it says, fulfilled the "goat" prophecy of the Book of Daniel (8:8), then mentions his successors, especially Pompey and the high priest in Jerusalem. It numbers the years from the time of Adam and the first Olympiad to the destruction and the rebuilding of the Temple of Solomon. It mentions the making of the translation of the Septuagint, names famous Jewish interpreters of Scripture, and the death of great philosophers such as Plato and Epicurus. It pays special attention to Jesus the son of Sirach (cf. Ecclus) and mentions some Phoenician history (Palmer 1993, p. 51). It says a good deal about the heretic Mani. It goes on to speak about Constantine and Arius and much church history, including details of Christianity in Antioch during this period. It refers to church calendars, both Western and Eastern, and mentions Apollinaris of Laodicea, and details his Trinitarian heresies (Palmer 1993, pp. 68–69). This most unusual document evinces a broad outlook. The interest in the feasts of the church and the difference between East and West demonstrates a connection with both sides.

The Chronicle includes this passage:

> In the same month (June 659) the bishops of the Jacobites, Theodore and Sabūkht came to Damascus and held an inquiry into the Faith with those of the House of Lord Maroun in the presence of Mu'awiya [the man rising in prestige to become the first Ummayad Caliph from 661]. When the Jacobites were defeated [in the debate], Mu'awiya ordered them to pay 20,000 denarii and commanded them to be silent. Thus there arose the custom that the Jacobite bishops should pay that sum of gold every year to Mu'awiya, so that he would not withdraw his protection and let them be persecuted by the members of the (Orthodox) Church (Palmer 1993, p. 30).

At this point, Penn (2015, p. 57) translates that the Jacobites were "punished by the [Maronite] clergy". The *Chronicle* mentions the arrangements by which the Jacobites were made to pay the money to the Muslim Caliph [to-be] and to keep their community peaceful. Penn interprets this to mean that the Jacobites were paying extra to Mu'awiya as "protection" against the Maronites and thus that the latter had earned the Caliph's favour (Penn 2015, pp. 54–55). Tannous (2014, pp. 51–52) notes that the debate may have had to do with who should have possession and control of the churches and that the Maronites appear to have been representing and speaking on behalf of all the Chalcedonians in Damascus, and, therefore, if this was true, the following applies: "the Maronites, that is, the Monotheletes, were the most important Chalcedonian group in Damascus in the earliest Umayyad period". But wait, who were the Monothelites?

5. The Monothelite Controversy in the Seventh Century

The pertinent doctrines of the competing parties of the major doctrinal dispute in the seventh-century Christian East are usually called "Monothelites" and "Dyothelites" (sometimes, and unfortunately, "Monotheletes" and "Dyotheletes"). For a long time in scholarship, it has been maintained that the Maronites only begin to be seen "in the clear light of day" or as a distinct historical entity in the context of this dispute. It has been one purpose of our tracings up to now, that this old contention is facile and that the tradition of

the monks of Maroun, though the steps are hard to follow, go back to the early monasticism of the Antiochene Church considered as (admittedly often fractious) whole,

5.1. The Progress and Decline of Monothelitism

"Monothelitism" is the doctrine that Jesus Christ had only one will, not two. It was part of a larger theological current, which Cyril Hovorun calls "Monenergism-Monothelitism", which stood over and against "Dyenergism-Dyothelitism". Although Hovorun says that these are "two integral doctrines", neither of them comprised one homogenous position but included many possible variants (Hovorun 2008, pp. 2–3). Both sides of the debate saw themselves as being in legitimate continuity with the Christian past (Tannous 2014, p. 30). I shall restrict myself to stating my opinion that these Christological issues are intrinsically difficult to resolve. One might doubt if any two people today who had not been instructed could possibly share the same opinion about Jesus' divinity and humanity. We may simply be faced with an "antinomy", or "a contradiction between conclusions which seem equally logical, reasonable, or necessary . . ." It occasions little surprise that one scholar believes that the differences between Monenergism and Dyenergism were mostly in vocabulary, "and not actually substantive" (Price cited in Tannous 2014, p. 61). The Council of Chalcedon taught that Christ had two Natures that were not in conflict with one another. Yet, the Natures could work differently: the difference between the two Natures is often said to explain how Jesus could say that even he did not know the hour and the day of the apocalyptic Coming of the Son of Man (in Matt 24:36 and Mark 13:32). This line of thought is attested as early as Athanasius and Gregory of Nazianzus. Others said that He did know that hour, but in the divine economy, it was better to deny this (i.e., he was "officially ignorant"). Others, such as Ambrose, said that some early Greek manuscripts omitted the reference to the Son not knowing. Perhaps even more significantly, his words in the Garden ("Not my will but yours be done") assume, on a natural reading, only one will in Jesus (see Mark 14:36, 38; Luke 22:42; and Matt 26:39–44) (see Pelikan 1974, pp. 56–75 for the relevant issues).

The issue became acute when, in 610, Heraclius became emperor and felt he was called to solve the problem of civil division between Chalcedonian and anti-Chalcedonian populations of the Empire (Hovorun 2008, pp. 53–72; Tannous 2014, pp. 30–31). Together with the Syrian Patriarch Sergius of Constantinople, Heraclius sought to unite all Christians, whether for or against Chalcedon, with the formula "two Natures–one Activity (*energeia*)" (Hovorun 2008, p. 55). These differences of belief were, of course, not always insuperable in daily life. Tannous (2014, p. 57) relates that, in the late eighth/early ninth century, [St.] Timothy of Kakhushta learnt woodworking from Monothelite Maronites in a Syrian monastery. Timothy tried to prove from Scripture that Christ had two wills, but his Maronite friends were not persuaded. This indicates a continuing Maronite presence in Syria, although we know little about it now. In any case, it is striking that Monothelites and Duothelites were able to coexist.

After early success, the progress of Monothelitism faltered until it was condemned at the Third ecumenical Council of Constantinople of 680/681, summoned by Constantine IV (Hovorun 2008, pp. 7–86; Kelly 1986, p. 75). However, Monothelitism did not immediately die: the last Umayyad Caliph, Marwan II, was trying to suppress Monothelitism in Syria in 736–745, and Michael the Great recorded the following:

> At this time, Marwan [*d*. 750]. . .ordered the Chalcedonians to take as patriarch, Theophilactus Bar Qanbarra of Haran, who had been Marwan's goldsmith. He obtained from Marwan an edict and an army with which to persecute the Maronites. He went to the monastery of Maroun and wanted to constrain them to accept the heresy of Maximus [the Confessor (d. 662), champion of Dyothelitism]. . . The Maronites (then) remained as they are today. They ordain a patriarch and some bishops from their monastery. They are separated from Maximus in that they confess one will alone in the Messiah and say: "Who was crucified for us", but they accept the Council of Chalcedon. Bar Qanbarra returned to Mabboug

and continued the struggle with the Maronites from there. But neither did they accept to say that there are two wills, nor to abolish the formula: "Who was crucified". That is why he accused them to Marwan, and he inflicted upon them a fine of a quarter of a million dinars. He (Theophilactus) behaved among them (the Maronites of Mabboug) as he had at Aleppo. Finally, Andrew, a Maronite, arrived, and with the permission of the king, built a church for the Maronites of Mabboug, and they separated from Maximus, and other disgraceful matters occurred amongst them (Michael the Great, *Chronicle* (ed. Chabot 2008, p. 511)).

Jack Tannous and Jean-Baptiste Chabot give different dates for Theophylactus Bar Qanbarra's accusation to Marwan. I suspect that not Theophylactus (my preferred spelling) but his father, Qanbarra, had been Marwan's goldsmith. To be "separated from Maximus" means to be Monothelites. It would excite little wonder if, after such crushing fines, the Maronites who had not yet gone to Lebanon might look at migrating, although there is no direct evidence of this (Suermann 2010, p. 313). This would also seem to be evidence that the monastery of Maroun was not under a patriarch or bishop of its own in 745. Rather, a manuscript about the deposit of a book in the monastery under the *hegemon* Giwargis suggests that it had a "hegemon" or leader. However, another note made around the same time states that there was a bishop residing there. Suermann conjectures that the bishop resided there only temporarily (Suermann 2010, p. 313). It could be that the leader was a bishop. I would conjecture that if the Maronites did have a patriarch at this time, he was in Lebanon, not at the monastery. These glimpses are too few, little, and far apart to allow us to say that the monks of Mar Maroun had ceased appointing patriarchs and bishops, a practice that Michael refers to.

5.2. The Maronites as Monothelites

It is often said that the Maronites were once "Monothelites". Spagnolo, for example, states that "The (Maronite) Church traces its distinctive character to its stand on the Divine and Human Wills reposing in Jesus Christ" (Spagnolo 1977, p. 7). At one time, the formula also worked in reverse so that any Monothelite was considered "Maronite", hence Eutyches (= Sa-id ibn Batriq, born in Cairo 877, Patriarch 933–940) was alleged to identify Cyrus of Alexandria, Macarius of Antioch and Honorius of Rome, who were "protagonists of imperial Monothelitism", as "Maronites" (Hovorun 2008, p. 97). The majority of Maronite scholars now accept that the Maronite theologians were at one time Monothelite and that this had significant effects on their liturgy and history (Moubarac 1984, p. 281). Indeed, the evidence that the Maronite theologians were Monothelite is overwhelming (Hovorun 2008, pp. 94–98; Tannous 2014, pp. 34–35; Moffett 1998, pp. 349–57; and Gribomont 1974, *passim*). The *Exposition of the Faith* of Yohanon Maroun, which is quite plausibly an ancient Maronite document from the very beginnings of the church, cites Severian of Gabala, a contemporary of Chrysostom, in "On the Nativity of Our Lord" (*Homilies* 2):

For just as when we say: Father and Son and Spirit, we proclaim three Persons and we assert one Substance, in the same way when we say: Divinity and Humanity, we proclaim two natures and we confess One Person–One Son, one God, and one authority and one power and one energy, one worship (trans. in Tannous 2014, p. 52).

This is Monenergist rather than Monothelite, although the first doctrine implies the second. Furthermore, no available evidence ever shows the Maronites as duothelite. It is also said that the Maronites were intellectually dominant in their area and appeared to exercise some measure of control over other monasteries in the region.

In addition, there cannot be any doubt that the Maronites felt that they were different from other Chalcedonians. Even today, there is a relic of this: Maronites understand the Trisagion ("Holy are you, God; Holy are you (and) All-powerful, Holy are you (and) Immortal") as referring to Christ, adding phrases such as "Who was crucified for us" (Parry et al. 1999, p. 146). In Jerusalem, Constantinople, and the West, the Trisagion was

understood as referring to the Trinity, whereas in Syria, parts of Asia Minor, and Egypt, it was understood as referring to Christ alone. Peter the Fuller, Patriarch of Antioch (d. *ca* 488), added the following words: "Who was crucified for us" so as to "enforce a Christological interpretation". Brock's reconstruction is that since Constantinople was viewed as the centre of Chalcedonian orthodoxy, its usage of the Trisagion (that is, without the addition and as referring to the Trinity), therefore, became *identified* with Chalcedonian orthodoxy, but the particularly Christological understanding was earlier than the Trinitarian one (Brock 1985, pp. 28–29). Brock observes that "*both* understandings may be legitimate: in this case it is not a matter of contradiction, but of complementarity. . . .[and] the same approach needs to be applied to the doctrinal divisions brought about in Eastern Christendom by the Council of Chalcedon". (ibid., p. 31). One may opine that this may also be true of the Monothelite controversy. Most of the Christological Controversies may involve statements which are inconsistent or seem to be so, but which are complementary, for each is correct (similarly, Alexopoulos and Johnson 2022, pp. 356–57). I would also question how much the ordinary person, or even the ordinary priest, understood the controversy. The belligerents were almost certainly to be found mainly among the clergy.

However, some contemporary Maronites contend that the Monothelitism of the Maronite clergy was more a "moral" stance, as shown in the much later concurring opinion of Maronite and Antiochene Patriarch Dwayhi (d. 1704) and Maronite thinker Faustus Naironus (d. 1711). In Pierre Dib's view, their adoption of this view depends on the eleventh-century Maronite missal:

> The Merciful, who in Mary lived poor
>
> And, as a human, came from her womb humbly,
>
> Has entered the world by miracle and marvellously,
>
> In the union of two natures truly.
>
> Having one person, He had one will doubly
>
> With the properties of two natures indivisibly.
>
> The natures remain in one hypostasis divinely
>
> Recognized without separation or confusion.
>
> By his Divine nature, He performed wonders divinely.
>
> By his human nature, He endured suffering humanly.
>
> Paul has said: 'He has become like us entirely
>
> Except sin, iniquity, impiety, truly' (Dib cited in Hovorun 2008, pp. 98–99)

Yet, while he accepts that the foundations of this statement go back to late Patristic times, Hovorun holds the following point:

> This text quite clearly contains the standard Monothelite formula, there is one will in Christ which manifests itself in a twofold way, divine and human. Dib, in spite of the obvious, tried to interpret the passage in such a way that it would imply a human will subjected to the divine: 'Christ is at the same time both God and Man; He possesses a double will, but this will is one in the sense that the human faculty is irrevocably submitted to the divine. Also, according to Maronite thinking, the unity of wills extended only to the moral sense, for the author (of the hymn) did not doubt the existence of a human will insofar as physical power was concerned . . ."

In another late eleventh-century Maronite text, the Arabic text *Kitab al-Huda* or the *Book of Direction*, one finds similar, quite conventional Monothelite formulas:

> He (= Christ) has one person and two intellectual natures; He is God and man . . .
> We do not believe however that He is two, two Christs, two persons, two wills

and two *energeiai*. Far from it!. . .The Melkites and Maronites are divided on the question of the will (in Christ). The Melkites (comparable pro-Chalcedonians who remained in communion with Constantinople rather than going over to Rome) profess two wills, the Maronites one; and each party brings forth arguments to support its thesis. . .The Maronites say (to the Melkites): These two wills that you profess in Christ ought to be either conformed or opposed to each other. If they are conformed to each other one ends up with one will; but if they are opposed to each other, it follows that the divine nature wills what the human nature does not will. If this is so, there would be a division and opposition, resulting in two (persons in Christ); and therefore the (hypostatic) union would not exist anymore, the Trinity would become a quaternary and one would find himself reduced to the point of view of Nestorius and his opinions on Christ (trans. in Hovorun 2008, p. 99).

Here, the doctrine of two wills and *energeiai* is openly condemned, and one of the most popular Monothelite objections to the two wills is included: "Christ cannot have two wills because they of necessity would oppose one another" (Hovorun 2008, p. 100), with the argument that if two wills were in conformity, this amounted to one will. Yet, it would be possible for one person to count two wills as comprising one as one, while another counted them as two!

Finally, Moosa (1986, *passim*) states that the Maronites were at one time Monophysites (Miaphysites) or, more eccentrically, Syrian (Jacobite) Orthodox. The direct evidence is quite the opposite, as we have seen—in the events of 517, the subsequent correspondence, the exchanges between Maronites and Monophysites, the Maronite presence and signing of the acts of the Council of Constantinople in 536, and the *Maronite Chronicle*. That side of the matter can be dismissed, and in addressing it, we have been able to plumb he foundations of the Maronites deeply back into the Patristic period, with their later liturgical and formulaic material, as well as their continuing preservation of Aramaean, thought forms and hermeneutics, all bearing out their long-standing Antiochene background.

We should finish our story by going back to the seventh century to consider the position of Yohanon Maroun (or John Maron, 628–707), who, despite debates over his life or shadowy existence, is now almost universally recognised < YES?? to have become the first Maronite Patriarch of Antioch and all the East in 685, ratified by both Constantinople and the Roman Papacy.

6. Yohanon Maroun as Antiochene Patriarch

Due to the Christological controversies and the supervening Arab conquest, the seat of Antioch was practically vacant from 610 to 742 (Gribomont 1974, p. 95). Maronites preserved their faith by emigration from Syria to Lebanon, and their establishment there, though heralded by preceding movement, traditionally congealed under Yohanon Maroun. William Harris (2012, p. 36) makes the plausible suggestion that Yohanon Maroun "may have moved independently to Mount Lebanon from the Orontes Valley during the Arab civil war between the Caliph 'Ali and Mu'awiya" (657–59) The surviving documents do not allow us to be certain as to whether Yohanon Maroun, his monks, and many of his people, undertook their "exodus" to Mount Lebanon because of friction caused by Muslim persecution, or their position in the Monothelite controversy. I suspect that both sources of friction would have been operating together. One leading scholar even posits, albeit on slender evidence, that the exodus was occasioned by Byzantine attacks directed against their stubborn Monothelitism (Abouzayd 2019, p. 733). Certainly, through unclear times, a Maronite people in Lebanon was developing to the point that it was clearly obvious by the time of the Crusades (from 1095) and the Great Schism between the eastern and western churches (from 1054) (El-Khouri 2017, p. 399). And the Maronites shared the same concern in the Catholic and Orthodox divide to keep their bishops in the apostolic line.

Suermann summarises the intermediate sources on Yohanon Maroun, written down by Ibn al-Qilā'ī (Maronite bishop in Cyprus from 1507) and used by later Maronite Patriarch

Dwayhi and scholar Giuseppe Assemani (in the eighteenth century), the account running as follows:

> Yohanon Maroun was born at Sarum, in the area of Antioch, and studied at the monastery of Maroun and at Constantinople. His intellectual work caused him to be nominated as bishop at Batroun [northern Lebanon] in 675, by the Pope's representative in Syria. Thanks to his missionary work, he not only converted nearly all the people of Lebanon to the Roman faith but also would also have found many supporters in Asia Minor and Palestine. The clergy elected him patriarch in 685/686. Accompanied by the pontifical legate in the Orient, he visited the Pope, who confirmed his election. After his return, he was first installed at Antioch, then, being pursued by the troops of the Emperor Justinian II, he fled to Lebanon. From that point on, he wrote and distributed theological works to sustain the people in the faith. Yohanon Maroun also combatted the Arabs with the aid of the Mardaites {Monothelites in the Nur Mountains, north Syria), and finally entered a pact with the Emperor Justinian II against the Arabs. He died on 9 February 707 (Suermann 2010, p. 319).

In the Maronite Syriac tradition, his name is given as Yohanon d'Maroun (Breydy 1988, p. 4), or "Yohanon of Maroun", which must mean from the monastery of that name. Peter El-Khouri (2017, pp. 268–69) notes that there is even a serious assertion by a Maronite "historian" that Yohanon Maroun had French ancestry. Suermann recounts that Chabot could not find any reference older than 1392 to Yohanon Maroun as patriarch, although the Maronite[?] ensemble of materials in Arabic *Kitāb al-Kamāl* (*ca* 1059, first pub. 1935), certainly older than 1058/1059, has a relevant tradition, different from that in Ibn al-Qilā'ī, naming him not as "Yohanon Maroun" but as "Maroun Yohanon". While it does not explicitly state that Yohanon Maroun was the first patriarch of the Maronites, it asserts that Maronites took their name from him, and so, as Suermann observes, this would lead one to infer his patriarchal status, nominally as Patriarch of Antioch, but never exercising jurisdiction in that venerable city. (Suermann 2010, pp. 320–21). Of course, the notion that the contemporary Bishop of Rome affirmed Yohanon Maroun as a patriarch of any description cannot be correct, as it would be recorded in Roman sources, and it was not.

A version of the *Kitāb al-Kamāl* goes back to the middle of the thirteenth century, from Qannoubine. It takes the name of the Maronites back to someone named "Maroun" *simpliciter*, and not to either Yohanon Maroun or Maroun Yohanon. It also states that the Maronites were Monothelites (Suermann 2010, p. 321). So, there are two ancient traditions suggesting that Yohanon Maroun was the patriarch of the Maronites. Even if these are slightly different in what they say, they demonstrate that the tradition must have been old. I see no reason to disbelieve the tradition that Yohanon Maroun founded his patriarchal see in Kfar Hayy, about ten miles to the east of the town of Batroun (Hitti 1965, p. 92).

Now, we come to an important document known as the "Exposition", which we deal with below, and the question has arisen as to whether Yohanon was its author. Whoever it was, he had access to Syriac sources that were not available after the seventh century, such as the text of Ephrem. Other sources include the profession of faith of Amphilocus, and the acts of the Synod of Antioch of 266–269, which disappeared after the sixth century, the *De principiis* (*Peri Arkhon*) of St Basil and the *De divinis nominibus* (*Divine Names*) of Dionysius [81] abridged from most ancient Syriac texts, and the *Mimro* of Sahdona, who died by 650. The author of the *Exposition*, whether Yohanon Maroun or not, seems to have had a fragment of John Chrysostom's homily on the baptism of Christ in an otherwise unique Syriac version. This must place the author in the seventh and eighth centuries. Further, Michel Breydy (1988, p. 6) dated the opuscules attached to the "Exposition" to the second half of the seventh century: the time of Yohanon Maroun.

Suermann (2010, p. 322) conjectures that since Assemani held Thomas (bishop) of Kfar Taba (*flor*. 1050s) to have written the *Exposition*, that it is not attested to an early date, that it was written by a Monothelite, and therefore cannot have been by Yohanon Maroun. Assemani does not state his grounds for attributing the *Exposition* to Thomas, and in this

context, also wrongly ascribed the *Chronicle of Zuqnin* to Dionysius of Tel Mahre (Parry et al. 1999, p. 163). But we have established Yohanon (and his clergy) *were* Monothelite, and we can only assume that Assemani, the great Maronite scholar collating manuscripts the Eastern manuscripts of the Fathers for the Vatican, was concerned to deny that his people had ever been Monothelite, creating the narrative that the Maronites had always been faithful duothelites, and attributing all Monothelite texts to the deceitful Thomas, using yet adding to the work 300 years later.

In any case, the *Exposition*, if fairly re-ascribed to Yohanon, shows a clear Antiochene theological lineage going back as far as Ephrem. There is also a legend that Yohanon did a lot of work among the afflicted during a plague and that he wrote a "Mass", presumably an anaphora, which is used in times of plague (El-Khouri 2017, p. 269). Although no early evidence for this survives, a scholarly study of the anaphora apparently places it to Yohanon Maroun in the second half of the seventh century (Breydy 1988, p. 7). This is not to say that it was not subsequently developed over the years (the version in the contemporary Maronite *Book of Offering* has been brought into line with what was taken as the "standard" anaphora, that of "the Twelve Apostles)**.**

Exactly how Yohanon Maroun was made Patriarch of Antioch is unknown, except that the monks of Dayr Maroun decided to raise him to this dignity. I shall not consider the fanciful legends surrounding his election and subsequent attempt at a military defence of the Apamea Maroun monastery in 694 when 500 monks were unfortunately killed under the imperial generals Marcian and Maurice (El-Khouri 2017, pp. 269–71). However, we need not reject out of hand the tradition that when Yohanon re-located his seat to Kfar Hayy (northern Lebanon) and fixed the patriarchal seat there (until in the mid-fifteenth century, it was moved to Qannoubine), he brought with him the skull of Maroun. As El-Khouri points out, Italian sources do claim that a skull of Maroun brought from Kfar Hayy was given to the crusaders in 1130 (El-Khouri 2017, pp. 270–71). Furthermore, there is no reason to doubt that Yohanon Maroun died in 707 (El-Khouri 2017, pp. 271–72). Because there are two old chains of tradition for him, I would conclude that the tradition that he was the first patriarch of the Maronites is accurate: if not, how is it that there is no other tradition of someone else being the first patriarch? Further, if, as I have conjectured, the move to Lebanon and the election of a patriarch went together, then it would make sense for the new patriarch to bring a relic of Maroun with him. It served to indicate continuity and to lend authority (as well as serving as a focus for reverence in a cultic setting, as the relics of other saints were revered in other places). This was a new beginning. Yet it also raises the possibility that the relics had been kept at the monastery of Maroun, probably from its establishment, though other relics were lost when the monastery was destroyed.

6.1. The "Exposition" Attributed to Yohanon Maroun

The title of the "Exposition" is *krTysō d.hymnutō* ("Exposition of the Faith"). Written in Syriac, it comprises the scribe's introduction and then the following contents:

I.   Our profession of faith (sections 2–25)
II.   ISupporting arguments from the letters of the Fathers (26–52)
III.   Explication of the patristic teaching:

    (a)   On the subject of the formula "one nature of God the Word Incarnate" (53–85)
    (b)   On the subject of the essence and of the subsistence (86–104)

IV.   Conciliar statements of faith (105–131)
V.   Questions and answers against the Monophysites (132–146)
VI.   Seven questions against the Nestorians (147–167)
VII.   An annexure [which has nothing to do with John Maroun]

The fourth quarter of the document has been lost, but it refers to a copy of the *Exposition of the Faith* by Yohanon Maroun, which was known to ibn al-Qalā'ī (1450–1516). It said that the original by Yohanon Maroun was in Syriac and that Thomas of Kfar Taba added his ten chapters to Yohanon's work. Breydy (1988, pp. 42–45) accepts this commentary, saying that

it would explain Thomas' desire to circulate his own work under the aegis of the revered patriarch. The style of appended Ten Chapters by Thomas is very different from that of the *Exposition*, and expectedly it has significantly more polemics against Monothelitism (see *Treatise of the Ten Chapters* [=*Dix chapitres*, see Chartouni 1987]).

The reliance on Patristic tradition in the *Exposition* is obviously important in establishing the long lineage of the Maronites. Through paragraphs 26 to 52, we find an impressive list of authorities:

26. Pope St Sylvester's letter to the Jews (d. 335)

27. St Athanasius, Bishop of Alexandria, *On the Soul*

28. St Athanasius, Bishop of Alexandria, *Against Apollinaris*

29. St Flavian the Elder, Bishop of Antioch (d. 404), *Commentary on St John*

30. St Basil, Bishop of Caesarea, *Against Eunomius*

31. St Gregory of Nyssa, letter to Philip

32. St Gregory the Theologian (d. 390), 2nd letter to Cledonius

33. St Gregory the Theologian, *Discourse on the Son*

34. St Ambrose, Bishop of Milan, *Against the Apollinarians*

35. St Ambrose, Bishop of Milan, *Against the Emperor Gratian*

36. St Amphilochus, Bishop of Iconium (died c. 393), *Exposition of the Faith*

37–39. St John Chrysostom, to the monk Caesar

40–42. St John Chrysostom, On the Baptism of the Lord

43. St John Chrysostom, *On the Ascension*

44–45. St Severian Bishop of Gabala (d. 425), *On the Nativity*

46. Proclus, Bishop of Constantinople (d. *ca* 446), *On the Nativity*

47. Cyril of Alexandria, third document *Against Nestorius*

48. Proclus, Bishop of Constantinople, *Commentary on John*

49. Proclus, Bishop of Constantinople, Letter to Pope Xystus

50. Proclus, Bishop of Constantinople, Letter to Eulogius

51. Proclus, Bishop of Constantinople, Against those. Christ had only One Nature

52. Proclus, Bishop of Constantinople, letter to Secundus

Then follows a section on the two natures which further quotes earlier Fathers in addition to some of the above: Cyril of Alexandria, Ephrem, Jacob of Sarug, Isaac of Amida (*d*, ca 451), Isaac the Syrian (*ca* 613–700), Isidore of Pelusium (d. *ca* 450), Justin (probably the first emperor of that name), Dionysius (d. mid-sixth century). And the treatise evokes a more general reliance on the Patristic tradition as "a third order" after the Old and New Testaments:

> [2] We, sons of the holy and catholic Church, believe and confess as we have learnt from the prophets and the apostles, and from the third order, that of the holy teachers, who at all times have made the true faith of orthodoxy to prosper, and through four synods have fought the good fight against those we have just named

The words translated "catholic" and "synod" are *qatuliqy* and *sunidus*, respectively. The four synods must be the Ecumenical Councils of Nicaea (325), Constantinople (381), Ephesus (431) and Chalcedon (451). There is nothing inherently improbable in the attribution of this text to Yohanon Maroun; further, there are indications that it was not, certainly not as a whole, the product of Thomas of Kfar Taba. The antiquity of the texts used by the author of the *Exposition* makes a seventh-century date more likely than not. In his *Ten Chapters*, Thomas quotes later writers such as Eutychius (Chartouni 1987, pp. 92, 94), and there is no such citation in the *Exposition*. The only other person who has ever been proposed as the author is Yohanon Maroun himself, and on balance, I think it is likely

to be by Yohanon Maroun, the first patriarch of the Maronites. Later, Maronites were to distance him from the *Exposition* because they perceived in it, quite correctly, Monenergist and Monothelite tendencies.

Time does not permit me to compare and contrast this with other kindred "expositions", most of which are, in any event, later and shed no light on Maronite history.

6.2. Reflections on Yohanon Maroun

The historicity of Yohanon Maroun has been doubted, but there is clear evidence that he lived. To illustrate, if the Corinthian naval commander Machaon is mentioned only in one place—Thucydides' *Peloponnesian War*, at 2.83—but does that give reason to deny his existence? Were Yohanon Maroun not central to Maronite history, the evidence for him would probably have been accepted without quibble. Two other questions arise: the manner of his *becoming* patriarch, and his vision for his people in Mount Lebanon. So far as we know, he was elected as patriarch not by any Pope, patriarch, or bishop, but by other monks and presumably priests. He was probably already the equivalent of the abbot of the monastery of Mar Maroun but may have been made *patriarch* by the same people who would have made him abbot. So attached were these monks to the hierarchy that they apparently considered the small exodus community needed a patriarch, given that there was none in Antioch, but the institution he filled had remained and continued after patriarchs had been more officially restored. This suggests that they may have desired a specifically Monothelite patriarch. But if this was so, it remains that they felt they needed a patriarch and that they could elect him. The procedure for the succession of the patriarchate was not at all fixed. Severus of Antioch had been appointed by a synod at Laodicea, succeeding Flavian (in 404), who had been both appointed and deposed by the emperor Anastasius. One might say that the patriarch could be appointed by whoever could appoint him, and if he was accepted, he reigned; if he was rejected, he was deposed. In fact, from one perspective, an election of a patriarch by monks makes more sense than one by an emperor. It is sufficient to indicate that the church's elders were, at the close of the first century, the choice of the local community. This can be traced back to the Jewish synagogue where the elders ". . .always, without known exception, provided themselves with an executive officer who presided over the community and over them" (Burtchaell 1992, pp. 295, 308). Later and modern applications of canon law should not be imported back into the seventh century.

When the Maronite monks and people were making their Exodus to Mount Lebanon, they seemed to have seen themselves as something like a *theocracy* (wielding "absolute ecclesiastical and political authority", the Greek *theokratia* was apparently first used to describe the Jewish polity guided under God). They had deliberately left Syria, where they were under the political jurisdiction of a civil government. They were deliberately going to where there was no government, except what they might take with them. That government was the patriarchate. The patriarch, being a creature of their church's need and insulated by distance and faith from any civil figure like the emperor, could be created at need by the church.

This would explain the looseness of the ancient system in Mount Lebanon, for the patriarchates they knew from Antioch and Constantinople did not organise civil affairs such as the army. There is no evidence of any civil government in Mount Lebanon, at least by Christians before the modern period. Neither did a secular Maronite ruling class arise until 1616, when the Druze Emir Fakhr al Din II at that time saw to it that Abu Nadir al-Khazin, a Maronite adviser in his court, was the first Maronite to achieve notability, or of that status called *muqati'ji* (Harik 1968, pp. 28–29). It seems that even long after the Druze ascendancy, there was little civil government among the Maronites of Mount Lebanon and that each village was governed from its own resources. I suspect that the village priest had a significant role, but this is an extrapolation from diverse materials we cannot examine here. However, after speaking of the destruction of the monastery of Beit Maroun in the tenth century, Charles Frazee asserted the following:

At this time the Maronite situation forced the church to develop its own peculiar type of this and civil authority. At the head of all Maronites an abbatial patriarch enjoyed absolute ecclesiastical and political authority. His seven or eight synodal bishops, also abbots of monasteries, enjoyed no independent power. They were simply patriarchal assistants. Civil authority was delegated by the patriarch to the heads of the feudal landowners of the mountain, the *mouqaddamin* (religious officials) (Frazee 1983, pp. 50–51).

The very fact that Yohanon Maroun became a patriarch shows that what was effectively a theocracy was intentional from the start. We should not underestimate how little we know, and it is hardly unreasonable to conclude that the patriarch up in Mount Lebanon had "political authority". We can ask, what does that mean? Did he have jurisdiction in legal cases? If two people had an argument, e.g., a dispute over land boundaries, how did they resolve it, and did the clergy have any role in it? If a controversy arose between landholders, did the clergy have any role in this? General patriarchal management in the isolated area concerned was obviously crucial. The corollary of all this is that the apostolic succession must have been continued into the Maronite patriarchate through Yohanon Maroun himself if he had a position equivalent to a bishop. I am not aware of any direct evidence, but it is hard to imagine that anyone other than an abbot would have ordained some of his monks to the priesthood.

I would conjecture that the Maronites intended to establish a theocratic community under the religious authority of the patriarch, who owed his position as a bishop to the apostolic succession and his patriarchate to the consent of the monks and perhaps of the community. This led to the Maronite insistence that their patriarch shared in the apostolic line, which was centred upon Peter, who was recognised as the first bishop of Antioch and Rome.

7. In Retrospect

The foundation period of the Maronites extends from the time of Maroun (died by 423) to the establishment of a theocracy (with no civil government in Mount Lebanon) around or after the year 685. If Maroun served as a bridge between the Greek Christianity of Antioch and the Syriac of the inland, the monks of Dayr Mar Maroun and their successors cultivated both sides of their heritage while turning to Rome as they felt the need—until the Monothelite controversy and the migration to Mount Lebanon.

I suggest that the development of a unique Maronite identity passed through several stages. First, the monks of the monastery of Maroun were champions of *both* the Chalcedonian faith *and* the ascetic tradition of the historical Maroun, which was based in the region of Apamaea but influential throughout Syria and probably Lebanon. This championing of the Chalcedonian theology is also evident from the *Maronite Chronicle* (which also displays a keen interest in history, both secular and religious). The ascetic nature of their faith is shown by the great number of monks attached to them, as evinced in the various pieces of correspondence that we have referred to. We learn that their ascetic and monastic position was separate but not isolated from the world from those letters, as the *Maronite Chronicle* itself demonstrates, and as do their debates with the Jacobites, both before the Caliph Mu'awiya in Damascus in 659 and in the letters we have enumerated. They were watching, commenting, and participating in contemporary events. That monastery and its monks were the centre-point of stage one, and their very asceticism gave them the moral authority to intervene in the world as they did.

As far as we can see, in the development of the Maronites' identity, they become, in a second stage, champions of the Monothelite doctrine while retaining their Chalcedonian beliefs that Christ had two Natures and also their ascetic traditions. The correspondence demonstrates their eminent position among Syrian Christians, being second only to the representatives of the See of Antioch. The monastery of Maroun was still the axis of the incipient Maronite Church at this time, but they were now playing on a wider stage

and being more historically visible: they were the Chalcedonian champions of those who understood Chalcedon as consistent with and perhaps even implying Monothelitism.

Finally, with the seventh century and the Monothelite controversy, we enter a late-Patristic age when the most historically significant section of the Maronites were living in communities remote from the rest of the world. From the time of their relocation to Mount Lebanon, they lived in villages, with no cities and hence no urban culture, and with limited cultural and social exchange with the non-Maronites of that area. They comprised a Chalcedonian church with a clergy who, insofar as they could follow the issues, were Monothelite. They were aligned neither to Constantinople nor yet to Rome but considered themselves to be in continuity with the major ecumenical councils up to but not including that of 680/681 (using Alberigo 1972, vol. 1), which they rejected. Until the crusaders appeared four hundred years later, they had limited contact, if any, with the great Christian Sees of Antioch, Constantinople, and especially Rome, to which they were strangers. In this period, the Maronites developed a unique culture with a unique liturgy (Macomber 1973). They kept a rich typological heritage in their expositions of the Bible and faith, and although their theology was often re-directed by analytic and often polemical theology, many ancient Antiochene, Syriac, and Semitic traces survived with them, especially in their liturgy.

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