

UNIVERSITÀ CATTOLICA DEL SACRO CUORE

Sede di Milano

Dottorato di ricerca in Scienze linguistiche e letterarie

Ciclo XXXV

S.S.D. L-OR/12



UNIVERSITÀ
CATTOLICA
del Sacro Cuore

**A terminological reconstruction of
Arabic variety in apologetical and Gospel
texts:
Birth, flourishing, Islamic influence, and
survival**

Coordinatore:

Ch.ma Prof.ssa Federica Missaglia

Tutor:

Ch.mo Prof. Wael Farouq

Tesi di Dottorato di:

Silvana Bebawy

N. Matricola: 4914649

Anno Accademico 2021/2022

Acknowledgements

This acknowledgement is a tribute to all the people who made my academic journey worthwhile.

Firstly, I would like to express my sincere thanks to the professors of the Doctoral School who gave their invaluable expertise and guidance along this challenging but fulfilling study path.

I would like to thank my supervisor, professor Wael Farouq, whose unwavering support gave me my bearing in the completion of this thesis.

I extend my deepest gratitude to the significant contribution made by professor Sameh Hanna whose encouragement was unstinting and precious. I extend my appreciation to Stefano Arduini who read and reviewed my dissertation.

I am grateful to the research group, members of the North American Society for Christian Arabic Studies, thanks to whom I have enriched my knowledge in my field of research.

I want to express my gratitude to my parents and brothers whose support was my strength: this achievement is as much theirs as mine. Special thanks go to my husband Maged who supported me ever since we met and was the mirror of my thoughts. Thanks to my friends, who always believed in me and made this journey less daunting.

Finally, I thank God who guided me and enlightened my mind and my intercessor Anba Kirolos who sustained me from the heavenly world.

Abstract

Arabs confessed Christianity since its early days and before the rise of Islam. As Christian communities contributed to enriching the Arabic language, so Islam came to interact with and influence the language of Arabic Christian literature. I ask whether today the Eastern churches could still benefit from this rich albeit under-researched literary production, one influenced by particular socio-cultural conditions and which came to a halt.

This thesis explores the historical and literary sources to reconstruct the terminology of Arabic-speaking Christians, from pre-Islamic times to the Coptic Golden Age of the XIV century, in the fields of apologetics and Gospel translation. My aim is to outline linguistic characteristics of the Arab-Christian literary heritage and to trace the social and cultural dynamics that determined and influenced this production. The methodology applied combines Toury's theory of Descriptive Translation and Bourdieu's Sociology of Culture. The study tries to collocate the translations of the Gospels within the culture concerned and offer a way to deepen and compare biblical translations; and it describes this literature according to the three major Bourdian fields identified.

In conclusion, this thesis contributes a new lens through which to read Arabic Christian literature in order to revalue it in modern times.

**A terminological reconstruction of Arabic variety in apologetical and
Gospel texts:
Birth, flourishing, Islamic influence and survival**

Table of contents

Table of contents	7
Transcription Key of Arabic	9
Liturgical References	10
Introduction	13
Chapter I - The Arabic variety used by Arabic-speaking Christians and its influence on Arabic	40
Introduction	40
I. Christianity in Arabia	45
I. The History of Arabic-speaking Christians	45
II. State of the Church(es) of Arabia	64
II. Christianity in Arabic	65
I. Historical evidence	65
II. Dictionaries and Historical books	82
III. Pre-Islamic poetry	84
Conclusion	97
Chapter II - Christian Arabic Literature and the Gospels	101
Introduction	101
I. Contextualising the beginning of Arabic Christian literature	103
II. The field of the Arabic Gospels: a long, hybrid and complex editorial history	116
III. Some Early Christian works and Islamic language	123
IV. Two Arab Christian theologians of the IX century	136
I. Theodore Abū Qurrah	138
II. Abū Rā'īṭah al-Takrīti	148
Conclusion	160
Chapter III - The Coptic Church and the Arabic language	164

Introduction	164
I. Arabic language in the apologetic literature	169
I. Sāwīrus Ibn al-Muqaffa'	169
II. Apologetic writers in the Coptic Golden Age	176
II. Status of the Arabic Gospel in the Coptic Golden Age	183
Conclusion	197
Final Conclusion	200
Bibliography	207
Appendix 1	240
Appendix 2	266

Transcription Key of Arabic

(International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies Translation System)

CONSONANTS

ء	’	ش	sh	ن	n
ب	b	ص	ṣ	ه	h
ت	t	ض	ḍ	و	w
ث	th	ط	ṭ	ي	y
ج	j	ظ	ẓ	ة	a ¹
ح	ḥ	ع	‘	ال	²
خ	kh	غ	gh		
د	d	ف	f		
ذ	dh	ق	q		
ر	r	ك	k		
ز	z	ل	l		
س	s	م	m		

¹ In construct state: at. ² For the article, al- and -l-.

VOWELS

Long or	اَ ā	Doubled	يَّ		iyy (final form ī)
	و ū		وَّ		uww (final form ū)
	ي ī				
Diphthongs	اَ وِ au or aw	Short	اَ		a
	اَ يَ ai or ay		اُ		u
			اِ		i

Liturgical References

***Ajbiyya* or Book of Hours:** The *Ajbiyya* is primarily utilised within the Coptic Orthodox Church. It encompasses prayers designed for seven distinct moments of the day. These hours are systematically arranged, with each one carrying a thematic connection to events in the life of Jesus Christ. Each hour is structured with an introduction that comprises the Lord's Prayer, the Prayer of Thanksgiving, and Psalm 50. This is followed by a series of Psalms, an excerpt from the Holy Gospel, and Litanies. The prayer continues by reciting the phrase "Lord Have Mercy" 41 times (symbolising the 39 lashes that Christ endured before the crucifixion, along with one for the spear wound in His side and another for the crown of thorns). After this, there are several additional prayers, including the introduction to the Creed, the Creed, and a concluding section.

Hymns of the *Thī'utūkiyyāt* : This name derives from *Thī'utūkus* (Mother of God), a name given to the Virgin Mary. The Hymns of the *Thī'utūkiyyāt* reflect the faith and the dogma formulated in the Council of Ephesus (431 CE) in response to the heresy of Nestorius Bishop of Constantinople, who argued that the Virgin Mary is the mother of Christ and not the mother of God. These Hymns were translated into Coptic in the monasteries of Wādī al-Naṭrūn and are considered "the reserves of faith". They were attributed to different writers (see *Al-'Abṣalmudiyya al-muqaddasa*, Dayr Al-sayyida al-'Adhra' Baramūs, Ed. II, Dār Nūbār lil-ṭibā'a, 2007, pp.186-187).

***Al-Khūlājī*:** this is a word of Greek origin and means "Book of Prayers." Originally, this book contained texts of all the liturgies of the Coptic Church, including the prayers for the seven sacraments. Over time, it was condensed to the Eucharistic Prayers, encompassing Vespers and Matins prayers, becoming the reference text for the Holy Mass. The book also includes the three liturgies used during the Holy Mass: the liturgy of St. Basil (addressed to the Father); the liturgy of St. Gregory (addressed to the Son);

the liturgy of St. Cyril (also addressed to the Father). It also contains the responsorial prayers for deacons and the congregation, chants, and the exegesis of the Holy Mass.

Prayers of the Fractions: These are prayers recited during the fraction or the breaking of the bread before the Communion in all Eucharistic Liturgies. It refers to the Gospel episode where Jesus broke the bread (Matthew 26:26). According to the Coptic rite, the Fraction occurs in two moments during the liturgical celebration. Immediately after the Prayer of Consecration, where the celebrant delicately divides the offering without completely separating it, and after the Prayer of Transmutation (the Epiclesis), where bread and wine, through the Holy Spirit, become the body and blood of Christ, accompanied by particular prayers known as the "Fraction" prayers.

Trisagion: The term comes from the Greek τρίς [tris], meaning 'three times' and ἅγιος [haghios], meaning 'holy'. It is a prayer of praise to the Trinity that consists of the repetition of the phrase 'Hágios o Theós, Hágios Ischyrós, Hágios Athánatos, eléison himás', which means 'Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal, have mercy on us'. This prayer is found in the book of Isaiah 6:3 and is typical of the Byzantine liturgy practiced by the Orthodox Churches, the Churches of the three councils and the Catholic Churches of the Eastern rites. In the Coptic Church, it is sung during the Liturgy of Saint Basil, immediately after a reading from the Book of Acts and the Synaxarion (a collection of hagiographies).

Introduction

The Arabic language is often associated with Islam, ignoring the fact that even the Christian faith and its liturgy are expressed in Arabic, but above all, that the Arabic language was spoken before the birth of Islam. Modern scholars hypothesise two possible scenarios before the advent of Islam: translations of the Sacred Scripture in Arabic had existed or there never were translations and the Gospel was handed down only orally through the liturgy.¹ However, one cannot deny the expression of Christianity in Arabic even before the rise of Islam. Therefore, the first questions I will try to answer are: is it possible to establish a beginning of what will be called Arabic Christian literature? And, what are the linguistic characteristics of this first stage of the language? Second, subsequently, what is the evolution of the Arabic Christian literature and what were its external or internal influences? How to identify and analyse these influences? Third and finally, is there a continuum of this field today? What are the social and cultural dynamics of the modern era that break with the rich literary production of the so-called Golden Age of the XIII-XIV centuries?

I start by defining some focal points for my research questions. First of all, I have to start from the fact that up to now numerous clues, which I will illustrate, attest that Arabic-speaking people living in the Arabian Peninsula converted to Christianity before the rise of Islam and for social and cultural reasons their religious written literature appeared late.

Here one important premise to establish for the whole understanding of this research is to bear in mind that the Arabic language was not the original language at the time of the birth of Christianity but a target language. According to discovered sources, Christians began to speak in Arabic about the matters of Christianity later and in a progressive manner, but it is difficult to think that for centuries they did not formulate any Christian expressions or precepts in Arabic at least orally. Research is still open to new discoveries. Hence in the centuries before Islam the use of Arabic among Christians

¹ Authors who have no doubt that pre-Islamic translations existed are, to name but a few: Baumstark 1931, 562-75; Baumstark 1934; Shahid, 1984c, 438-441; Newby 1988; Khoury 1989; Kashouh 2012; who argued against an Arabic Bible before the rise of Islam are Graf, 1944, 27-52; Arbache, 1994, 28-33; Griffith, 2013, 114-118.

is still unclear but almost taken for granted as I will illustrate. Then Christians formulated their faith in Arabic by translating Christian literature from Greek and Syriac and creating new texts.

From a linguistic point of view this production was automatically influenced by Syriac, the neighbouring and the dominant language with a literature that was fruitful, Arabic writers following in its footsteps. From a religious point of view this production was influenced by the dominant social status of Islam that drove Christians to defend themselves by writing Islamic-oriented texts.

Despite these influences, it can be stated that the Arabic-speaking Christians developed a real branch of Arabic literature in its own right, which is being studied today by a modest group of researchers. Within this branch there are mainly the three dominant Christian confessions, Melkites, Nestorians and Jacobites, who have each developed their own literature and created another level of theological debate.

This brings me to a second premise, namely that theological knowledge is as indispensable as knowledge of the Arabic language in order to conduct and understand this type of research and to correctly interpret this kind of text. Added to this, the socio-cultural understanding of the different historical periods in which such literature was produced will be a cornerstone of this project. The period under review is undoubtedly long and with historical and literary production points still unclear, but the continuous production of Christian literature indicates, as I will try to show, an equally continuous operation of inclusion/exclusion of what was produced before.

Christianity spread among the Arab peoples and tribes. I specify that the term “Arab” indicates several things: who spoke a dialect of the Arabic language, who adopted the nomadic life, who lived in the Arabian Peninsula and who lived in an Arab society or kingdom. Christianity was of different forms and doctrines and was divided between heresy and orthodoxy. The Christian tribes in Arabia, having adopted a nomadic life, did not have a developed and organised ecclesiastical life as did other Christian civilisations. In addition to the influence of the various heterodox doctrines, they also had relations with and were influenced by the churches or denominations in the areas

surrounding their homeland. Despite this, Arabia had bishops and these represented their churches at ecumenical councils. Following the Council of Chalcedon, a great schism occurred in the Church. Disagreement among Christians over the Christological formulae led to the separation and establishment of three large groups: Nestorians who did not accept the Council of Ephesus; Monophysites who did not accept the Council of Chalcedony and were constituted by Jacobites (Syriac-Orthodox), Copts, Ethiopians and Armenians; Chalcedonians who accepted the Council of Chalcedony and its christological formula (Melkites and Maronites). Arab tribes being linked to these major denominations, they too found themselves divided on Christological grounds.

Consequently, the three major denominations organised themselves into independent churches with their own separate hierarchies. The role of the Arab tribes in the VI and VII centuries was decisive for two reasons: they continued to have contact with these churches by showing allegiance to their doctrine and submission to their hierarchy; their allegiance sometimes involved alliance with one of the two empires, Byzantine and Sassanid, that were at war during this period. With the Arab Muslim conquest these Arab Christian tribes, if they did not convert gradually, integrated with the major Eastern Christian denominations, thus contributing to the birth and development of Arab culture and the Arab Christian heritage. While on the one hand the church was weakened because of its internal dissensions, and subsequently the Byzantine church tried in vain to impose internal peace through a formula that could have led to the union of the churches; on the other hand the Arab Muslim conquest of the Near East created another field of clashes and debate. In fact, contrary to what is claimed, the Arab Muslims were considered conquerors of, and not liberators from, the Byzantine empire (Griffith 1994, 7-8; Suermann 2006, 95-109). All the Christian denominations began to be subject to the policies of the caliph or Muslim ruler, and Christians found themselves framed under the status of *dhimma* (protected) and had in return the obligation to submit to the Muslim system.

Hence the arrival of Muslim Arabs established a political-socio-economic-religious system that changed the linguistic map of the conquered lands. Arabic gradually became the language of the Muslim empire and became a cultural language capable of

expressing the contents of various sciences. Arabic became the language of Arabs but affected also the lives of Non-Arab Greek-, Syriac-, and Coptic-speaking Christians; they began to use Arabic in daily and church life and developed it with Muslims. Otherwise, all Christian denominations adopted for the first time the same language thus enabling evangelisation, dialogue, religious exchange, and each denomination defended its doctrine before other denominations and before Muslims. Their writings had two characteristics: catechetical, and containing polemics against different Christian denominations, and apologetic, having their own beliefs as their basis. Thus is formed what will later be called the Arab-Christian heritage.²

In the beginning, Christians translated apologetic works from their own languages into Arabic and transmitted the entire Greek philosophical treasury into Arabic. This created an important translation and transmission movement that enriched both Arab-Christian and Muslim cultures (Griffith 1994, 1). Muslim Arabs developed a keen interest in the sciences and philosophy, particularly during the Abbasid dynasty, which led to the translation of scientific and philosophical knowledge from the ancient world into Arabic. This translation movement was initiated by Caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd,³ centred in Baghdad, known as *Bayt al-ḥikma* (the House of Wisdom)⁴. The key translators in this movement were often Christians, especially Nestorians, such as Ḥunayn 'ibn Ishāq and his school, who translated works from Syriac and Greek into Arabic. Eventually, Muslims took over and expanded upon this translation movement. In addition, from one side the translation movement developed, from the other side it started to compile terminological dictionaries in specific fields of knowledge or general terminological dictionaries. An important example is Al-Kindī (805-873)⁵ who wrote

² For the history of Arabic Christian literature and its large corpus see G. Graf, *Geschichte* and the set of volumes under the editorship of D. Thomas, *Christian-Muslim Relations: A Bibliographic History*

³ See T. El-Hibri, *Reinterpreting Islamic Historiography. Hārūn al-Rashīd and the Narrative of the 'Abbasid Caliphate*, Cambridge-New-York, 2004

⁴ See M.J.L. Young, J.D. Latham, R.B. Serjeant, eds., *Religion, Learning, and Science in the 'Abbasid Period*, Cambridge History of Arabic Literature, Cambridge 1990, 446-460

⁵ Al-Kindī was the first philosopher in the history of Islam. He was chosen by Caliph Al-Ma'mūn, the son of Al-Rashīd, to be the general supervisor of Bayt al-ḥikma in Baghdad.

the first terminological dictionary, containing about one hundred terms of philosophy and related subjects, a great number of which were coined by him or translated by him from Greek.

Having arrived at this point in the narrative, my exposition will focus on Arabic-language theological works which will be the object of my study. Christians started to write according to *‘ilm al-kalām* and were called *mutakallimūn* (theologians). The debate between Timothy I and Al-Mahdi is proof of that. It was written in Syriac but immediately translated into Arabic and became a model for dialogue with Islam. The beginning of literary production in Arabic was in the monasteries of Palestine, that of Mar Saba and that of Mar Cariton. This area was characterised by the presence of the Arab tribes, particularly in the Negev desert and Transjordan. There was thus a rapid adoption of the Arabic language by Christians in Palestine. Another factor that accelerated Arabic literary production was the construction of two important mosques: the ‘Umayyad mosque in Damascus and the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem. These two monuments prompted Christians in the area to advocate a response to Islam’s religious challenge (Griffith 2010, 36) particularly on the part of the Melkites of Jerusalem. They detached themselves from Constantinople, gradually abandoned Greek and were the first to use Arabic. Christian communities in Palestine used Aramaic, and this justifies the contention that the Arabic language of the Melkites had a Syriac-Aramaic influence as can be read in the manuscripts.⁶ The Palestinian monasteries became the base for a school of Christian writers in Arabic where the theology of the Melkites was developed. The Melkites of Palestine were more Arabised among near Eastern Christians even if their language is classified initially as Middle Arabic (M. Levy-Rubin 1998, 153-157). In this context I will analyse the first apologetical work, *On the Triune Nature of God*.

Contrary to what one might think, the identity of the three major denominations “came to the full statement of their confessional identities” (Griffith 2008, 62) within a period of conflict, the early Islamic one, and in a foreign language, the Arabic.

⁶ J. Blau studied the language of the Melkites in this area at that time, the so-called “old south Palestinian texts”.

After translating the Bible and Church books into Arabic, there follows a full generation of creative thinkers represented by the Melkite Abū Qurrah, the Jacobite Abū Ra'īṭa (d. ca. 851) and the Nestorian 'Ammār al-Baṣrī (fl. ca. 850) who started a theological and philosophical tradition in Arabic. An exception that I will analyse is the Coptic Church which started to write in Arabic much later, only after the first half of the X century with the main author Sāwīrus Ibn al-Muqaffa' and a subsequent Golden Age. Socio-cultural dynamics then caused the eloquent literary production of the latter community to come to a halt. I will attempt to understand why.

This study examines the development of the heritage of linguistic varieties used by Arabic-speaking Christians throughout history. Initially, in order to carry out a linguistic analysis of Arabic words inherent in the Christian sphere, the first textual traces still available will be retraced and more complex texts will be progressively examined depending on what the material offers me. While the study will therefore initially be linked and limited to fragments of texts or narratives that can be traced back to a terminological construction, the focus of the study will then be on Arabic Christian theological terminology, in particular the analysis will be concentrated on the three major debated subfields: God and the person of Jesus Christ, the Trinity and the Incarnation.

Hence I will investigate the linguistic variety used by Arabic-speaking Christians in the traceable writings related to the Holy Bible and apologetic treatises in Arabic up to contemporary ecclesiastical literature.

I will attempt to formulate explanatory hypotheses capable of accounting for the establishment of translated texts and to reconstruct or outline the decision-making process behind such texts. I will try to examine the function of the translation phenomena in the historical evolution of Arabic Christian literature and of the production of sacred literature in Arabic driven by different cultural and religious influences. Last I try to illustrate the status of Arabic used by Christians today in relation to the ecclesiastical literature and the past production of the Coptic Church in particular.

The aim of this study is to trace the evolutionary path of the terminology and to describe the characteristics of the Arabic language in Christian sacred literary production from its birth to its status today, and to understand the social and cultural dynamics that have determined and influenced this production and also the contrary: trace the social and cultural spaces to understand the Arabic language in Christian sacred literary production.

The interdisciplinary nature of this project will allow the reader to explore the dynamics and relationships that were created throughout history and led to literary production with specific characteristics using tools from different research fields. The theoretical framework will be adapted according to the available sources and genres.

In terms of genre, the development of this literature starts from particular words mentioned in narratives, inscriptions found by archeologists and poetry. I will make use of Historical Linguistics which comprises of different sub-fields; first, Etymology which concerns the study of word histories. This process may entail answering questions like: Why did a particular word enter the language in question? Where does that word, in my case root, come from? In addition, Comparative Philology studies will help to establish the relatedness of languages and then to understand the derivation of Arabic words.

This approach will be accompanied by the study of Arabic lexicography and the scanning of some Arabic dictionaries and subject specialist dictionaries in order to trace the appearance/disappearance of words and their field of use. Then, as far as possible, I will attempt to verify the use in today's Arabic Christian literature to answer the question of whether there is a continuum or an evolution/changes in terminology. This will be the methodology that will cover the content of the first chapter.

The available sources, as I mentioned before, are more complex than before. I will have to deal with written dialogues, treatises, apologetical and liturgical texts and Bible translations. I read relevant texts in the field of Arabic Christian literature which consists of translations from Greek and Syriac and texts produced from scratch containing language specifically adapted to the target culture and context.

Before explaining the methodology adopted in chapter two and three, I will outline the criteria used to select the texts analysed. As far as chapter two is concerned, I will use the following:

Availability: many texts have been lost and others have not been published. The study will not be exhaustive and will be based on the available and decipherable manuscripts and their publications.

Chronological: I will identify the oldest available texts in order to establish the beginning of Arabic Christian literary production, up to its (hypothetical) halt.

Primacy: the primacy of Arabic Christian literary production is attributed to the Melkite denomination followed by the other churches. Having identified the community from which this type of literature originates, I will select the texts to be analysed on the basis of the criteria mentioned above and on the basis of the subject matter.

Inclusion: I will choose a sample of texts to illustrate the broad panorama of Arabic Christian literature comprising the three main confessions that emerged after the Council of Chalcedon: Melkite, Nestorian and Jacobite. I will thus be able to identify characteristics of the language used by the different communities.

Authority: their authority within each community will be the criterion for the choice of the authors I will treat.

Subject: first, I will focus on apologetical texts covering the three most debated topics in the field of theology: the Trinity, the Incarnation and the person of Jesus Christ.

While I will proceed to select texts according to the above-mentioned criteria and trace their socio-cultural framework and analyse their language, space will also be made for the study of Bible translation, in particular of the four Gospels. Initially, my attention will be on the Gospel extracts or verses contained in the selected texts in order to study the Gospel translations not only from entire manuscripts dedicated to them but from texts of other genres. As Griffith (1985, 128) claimed, the “Gospels became available for the first time, for both liturgical and apologetical purposes, in the ninth century...” If true, this would mean that the Gospel extracts are of considerable importance since they are the earliest traces of translation, and if not true, this would

mean that these extracts derive from a translation that predates them. My aim instead is to follow the thesis that the Bible, or extracts from it, was most probably translated into Arabic before the rise of Islam.⁷ Probably, starting with verses extrapolated from texts of other kinds will help to identify how parts of the Gospels may have been translated in an earlier time. Hence the verses of the Gospels contained in different sources will be compared with some selected Gospel versions which I will illustrate shortly. This will serve to demonstrate a minimal attempt to partially outline the linguistic evolution of Gospel translation according to the selected versions to the present day and to define the socio-cultural dynamics and contexts that influenced and diversified this production.

As far as chapter three is concerned, it will be dedicated to the literary production of one of the last Churches which adopted Arabic in its liturgy and literature: the Coptic Church. I will follow the availability, chronological, inclusion, authority, subject criteria. I will choose a sample of texts which represents the Classical Arabic of that time and the language used for apologetical purposes. But before arriving at the third chapter some parts of the Arabic Coptic church books, concerning liturgy and hymns, will already have been compared to some content of other texts. This is to compare the language of one of the largest Christian communities in the Middle East today that still uses Arabic with the literature of the past as I present it, always with the aim of verifying what has remained today of the language of the past and what has changed.

What Gospel translations?

To define the corpus of this research I start my study with Kashouh's work *The Arabic Versions of the Gospels The Manuscripts and Their Families* (2012) which is an

⁷ This thesis is argued for example by I. Shahīd, *Al-Massīhiyyat Qabla Zuhūr al-Islām*, in *Al-Massīhiyyat 'abra Tarīkhiha fī al-Mashriq*, Beirut, Majlis Kana'is al-Sharq al-Awsat, 2001, 429-465; *Ibid.*, *Nushū' al-Kanīsat al-Mashriqiyya wa Turāthiha*, al-Qarn al-Khāmis - al-qarn al-Thamin, *Al-Massīhiyyat 'abra Tarīkhiha fī al-Mashriq*, Beirut, Majlis Kana'is al-Sharq al-Awsat, 2001, 219-233; L. Cheikho, *Nisakh 'arabiyyah Qadīma fī al-Mashriq*, *Al-Mashriq*, 4, 1901, 97-109; A. Baumstark, *Die Sonntägliche Evangelienlesung Im vorbyzantinischen Jerusalem*, *Byzantinische Zeitschrift*, 30, 1930: 350-359. See also *ibid.*, *Eine frühislamische und eine forislamische arabische Evangelienübersetzung aus dem Syrischen*, *Atti del XIX Congresso Internazionale Orientalisti*, Rome, Tipografia del Senato, G. Bardi, 1938, 682-684.

important study of the classification of the Gospel manuscripts. The author examined a substantial number of Arabic manuscripts, more than two hundred, that contain the continuous text of the canonical Gospels copied between the eighth and the nineteenth centuries and found in twenty-one different library collections in Europe and the East. This work grouped the Gospel translation manuscripts into twenty-four families according to their Vorlagen (Greek, Syriac, Coptic, and Latin); in addition, through phylogenetic software, the author identified the relationship between the families and, as a result, he grouped them into seven different clusters.

Following the above-mentioned classification I will examine and compare in terms of terminology selected manuscripts which were placed in four periods of time: the first period includes Gospel translations dated from eighth to the tenth century; the manuscripts consulted are Vatican, Arabic 13,⁸ Vatican, Arabic 17 and 18,⁹ Sinai, Arabic 70¹⁰ and Sinai, Arabic 72.¹¹ The second period will be represented by the translation made by Ibn al-'Assāl,¹² who lived during the Coptic Golden age. Then, the XIX century will be represented by the translation of al-Bustānī-Van-Dyck¹³ and B.O., Or 430¹⁴ and, finally, the XX century by The inter-confessional Arabic translation.¹⁵

⁸ I consulted it at: https://digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS_Vat.ar.13

⁹ I consulted it from the Phd dissertation of J. Ibrahim Naṣr, *Dirāsa wa taḥqīq Makḥṭūṭ li-Injīl Lūqā min al-qarn al-tāsi' al-mīlādī/al-thalīth al-hijrī*, Markaz al-Turāth al-'Arabī al-Masiḥī lil-baḥṭh wa-al-tawthīq wa-al-nashr, Vol. 26, Beirut, 2011. She edited the Gospel of Luke comparing the manuscript Leiden Oriental 2328, a manuscript dated XV century, to Vat. Ar. 17 (dated 1009 AD) and 18 (dated 993 AD, it contains the Gospel of Luke only). This three manuscripts are of family *f* according to Kashouh.

¹⁰ I consulted it on: <https://sinaimanuscripts.library.ucla.edu/catalog/ark:/21198/z1f496r2>

¹¹ I consulted it on: <https://sinaimanuscripts.library.ucla.edu/catalog/ark:/21198/z1cn8nmt>

¹² I read the edited version of Moawad S.Q., *Al-'Anajīl al-'Arba'a Tarjamat al-'As'ad Abī al-Faraj Hibat Allāh bin al-'Assāl*, Madrasat al-'Iskandarīyya, 2014

¹³ I consulted *Al-Kitāb al-Muqaddas*, Arabic New Van Dyck Bible, Dār al-kitāb al-muqaddas fi al-sharq al-'awsaṭ, Fourth edition fourth print 2009.

¹⁴ I consulted it on: <https://www.vhmmi.org/readingRoom>. This manuscript is a version dated 1885 but there is strong evidence that it was in circulation by at least the first half of the tenth century.

¹⁵ I consulted *Al-Kitāb al-Muqaddas*, al-tarjama al-'arabiyya al-mushtaraka, Bible Society, Lebanon, 2020

For the first period of time, the first translation that I consider is the manuscript Vatican, Arabic 13, which comes from Mar Saba in south Palestine and is placed in family *h* according to the Kashouh study (2012, 142-171). Even if the manuscript contains only Mt 1:1-28:11, Mk 5:19-16:8, Lk 3:31-7:11, Kashouh's study suggests that the lacunae in Vatican Ar. 13 can be filled from Beirut B.O., Or 430 (family *g*)¹⁶ given their relationship, namely that family *g* is an edition of family *h* written in elegant language and preserving archaic renderings.¹⁷ For this reason I include Beirut B.O., Or 430 within the manuscripts examined.

It is important to say that I have chosen to analyse and compare Vatican Arabic 13 because, first of all, its source language is Syriac and not Greek. As I will demonstrate, Arabic was influenced by Syriac, hence to reconstruct the development of the Arabic variety used by Christians it is more appropriate to follow this route. The second reason why I selected this manuscript is its dating. It seems to contain the earliest text of the Arabic Gospels and, according to Burkitt (1898, 136), to belong to the Convent of Mar Saba near Jerusalem and assigned to the eighth century. But, Kashouh disagrees with Burkitt and even claimed that "it does not belong to the Middle Arabic or Arabic of south Palestine...the palaeographical features of this codex point back to an archaic Arabic exemplar which seems to have emerged in the south of Arabia in the seventh or early eighth century at the latest" (2012, 147), and he added also that there are linguistic features that which demonstrated this dating. At the end of his analysis he maintained that "it is not only translated from Syriac but from the Peshitta Syriac which had preserved Old Syriac readings, and seems to have been written for a community whose knowledge of Syriac, Greek and the Qur'an appears to have been absent" (ibid., 324). Third, for its archaic nature I will study it linguistically in the light of the selected passages and of other versions. The manuscript is not complete and it contains a portion of the Gospels but it may be sufficient for an initial reconstruction.

¹⁶ Kashouh (142) claimed that Beirut, B.O., Or. 430 is from the XIX century but evidences suggests that it was in circulation by at least the first half of the tenth century and that its archetype translated from the Syriac Peshitta version goes back much earlier.

¹⁷ See H. Kashouh, *The Arabic Gospel Text of Codex Beirut*, Bibliothèque Orientale, 430: Is it Recent or Archaic?, *Parole de l'Orient*, 32, 2007, 105-121.

Next, I have chosen Vatican, Arabic 17 and 18, from which I analysed the Gospel of Luke, for two reasons principally. Firstly, the two manuscripts were copied respectively in 1009 A.D. and 993 A.D. and they were translated from Syriac Peshitta (Kashouh, 2012, 129).¹⁸ Second, they contain the rhymed Gospels and their “terminology moves closely toward the Qur’ān” (ibid). I deduce that these manuscripts must have emerged in an Islamic milieu and their aim was to communicate Gospel through linguistic features familiar to Muslims.

Another important old manuscript is Sinai, Arabic 72 (family *a*) dated from 897 A.D, copied from earlier codices and amended “to present a more smothered Arabic text” (Kashouh ibid., 96). The original language from which was translated is Greek but there is possible Peshitta influence (ibid).

The last useful version is Sinai, Arabic 70 (family *d*) which was copied in the early IX century and its terminology approaches the Syriac closely and the language is Middle Arabic (Kashouh, ibid., 123-124).

For the second period of time I will analyse the Ibn al-‘Assāl translation, edited in the thirteenth century (1252/3 A.D.). I chose this version for the following reasons:

Al-‘Assāl built up his own version from Coptic and Arabic versions.¹⁹ He cited, among the available versions in his time, the version of Codex Beirut B.O., Or 430 in his edition. As said, this Codex is included in familia *g* which, according to Kashouh (2012, 150), is a re-working of the text of *h* (the family of Vatican Ar. 13).²⁰ Hence Kashouh traces a continuity of translation starting with Vatican Ar.13, continuing with Codex Beirut B.O., Or 430 up to the production of Ibn al-‘Assāl. I will attempt to verify this connection according to the terminology presented in the selected test passages of these manuscripts.

With his translation Al-‘Assāl contributed to the religious and literary renaissance among the Christians of Egypt of that time. Copts needed an Arabic Bible because they no longer understood Coptic. But, this edition was found to be too complicated for

¹⁸ Kashouh hypothesised a possible dating between the eighth and early tenth century.

¹⁹ He prepared his translation from at least five Arabic and three Coptic manuscripts (Kashouh, 2012, 266-267), for this reason it is considered an eclectic version.

²⁰ He based his thesis on a linguistic comparison and a phylogenetic analysis.

popular use, and at the end of the thirteenth century was superseded by other versions such as the Alexandrian Vulgate. Although it did not have much luck, it is important for our study to analyse its language in order to show to what levels the Arabic language reached, especially in a community that initially resisted the Arabisation of its church.

Since the purpose of my work is also to take a look at the status of the Arabic language in the church today, I will also have to consider more modern versions of the Gospels that are in the hands of Christian believers. I refer first of all to the American missionary translation known as *al-Bustānī-Van Dyck's Arabic Bible* or *Beirut* (1865). The translation was made initially by Eli Smith and then by Cornelius Van-Dyck and members of Lebanon's literature elite among whom were Buṭrūs al-Bustānī who transferred from Greek and Hebrew to Arabic, and others who revised and improved the Arabic language, including Muslim scholars. The style adopted was simple but pure Arabic without Islamic idioms and expressions, free from foreign idioms (Smith-Van Dyck, 1900, 28). This translation was well received among Eastern churches such as the Orthodox Church of Antiochia and the Coptic Orthodox Church and its use was not limited to churches but spread in other socio-cultural fields. In the introduction of his book Khalaf (2009, 6) claimed that the Bustānī-Van-Dyck translation is the most accepted popular printed version in the Arabic-speaking countries but the absent linguistic improvement of it was not up to its great success. From a linguistic point of view, the writer denounces the fact that for more than a century there has been neither a linguistic revision, nor a correction of its errors nor an evolution of its expressions, and it remained untouched, linguistically arid and lacking in vitality and seamlessness (Khalaf, 7). Otherwise, from a socio-cultural point of view, this translation had given a Christian identity detaching it from the Arabic of the Qur'ān. Hanna in his lecture at the Catholic University of Milan in 2019 reclaimed Christianity back to its Middle Eastern origins maintaining that "Christ and Christianity have been hijacked out of their cultural roots by Western Christianity."²¹ Consequently, over time, the identity of Arabic-speaking Christians and of Christ's message have changed in the perception of Arab

²¹ S. Hanna's lecture in *The Bible in Arabic: Questions on Translations of Sacred Texts* at the Catholic University of Milan, 18/19/2019.

Muslims because there was created a gap between Arab Muslims on the one side and the Christian sacred text on the other. (Chandler, 2007, 128). Hence, I chose to analyse this version because is still the most widely used in Egypt these days and for its socio-cultural context of creation and what it triggered socially.

After more than one hundred years a new translation appeared: *Al-tarjama al-'arabiyya al-mushtaraka* (the *inter-confessional Arabic translation*) is a translation made by a group of translators and specialist agents from Catholic, Orthodox and Evangelic Churches in 1979 and then revised three times in 1980, 1983 and 1993. For the translation of the New Testament the group of translators relied on the Greek version of *Nestle-Aland*. In the introduction of the translation one reads that the principles on which this translation is based are: using a modern, simple language understandable to ordinary Arabic readers of the late twentieth century because the word of God has to be understandable to all; avoiding when necessary literary translation and use of linguistic modernity to the maximum extent. Certainly, this translation is an important fruit of the Churches who have engaged in ecumenism.

It seems that the use of the two latter versions goes hand in hand even though I think the Van-Dyck version still dominates the production field but time will prove this.²²

Finally, the juxtaposition of four translations produced far apart in time may not seem appropriate, but their diversity can provide a glimpse of the breadth of the variety of translations present in the history of the transmission of the Bible; help us to understand how far the translations in use today have strayed from the first; and outline the role of translations of the sacred text in (de)constructing the identity of Arabic-Christian speakers over time.

Methodology

²² For example, in the Coptic Orthodox Church Heritage site of st.takla.org, one of the most consulted sites of the church, the version of Van-Dyck is indicated in the first place by importance and the inter-confessional Arabic translation is in second place.

In this broad context, the methodology applied will be based on two other disciplines: the Descriptive Translation Theory of G. Toury²³ and the Sociology of culture of Bourdieu.²⁴

The Israeli scholar G. Toury was an influential scholar in the field of Translation Studies at the end of the last century. He proposed the “Descriptive Translation Studies” framework, which aimed to analyse translations from a descriptive and empirical perspective rather than prescribing normative rules and judgments. Toury’s theory revolutionised the field by shifting the focus from evaluating translations based on idealised standards to understanding translations as products of social, cultural, and historical factors.

For the translations of the sacred text, I will resort to his theory which has broader applications in the fields of comparative literature and sociology of literature, yet it has not been applied to Bible translations.

According to Toury, translation is a cultural activity that involves the transformation of a text from a source language (SL) to a target language (TL). He claimed that translation should be seen as a phenomenon that is influenced by the social, cultural, and political context in which it takes place and he argues that translation studies should consider three levels of analysis: the translated text, the translation process, and the translation context.

First, the translated text should be analysed as an autonomous product that has its own identity and can be studied independently from the source text, being a rewriting

²³ Toury G., *Descriptive translation studies and beyond, Revised Edition*, Amsterdam, Philadelphia: John Benjamins Pub. Co., 2012; Toury G., A Handful of Methodological Issues in DTS: Are They Applicable to the Study of the Septuagint as an Assumed Translation?, in *Bulletin of the International Organisation for Septuagint and Cognate Studies*, Vol. 39, 2006, 13-25

²⁴Bourdieu P., *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, trans. Richard Nice, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1997; idem, *The Rules of Art: Genesis and Structure of the Literary Field*, trans. Susan Emanuel, Cambridge, Polity Press, 1996; idem, *Sociology in Question*, trans. Richard Nice, London, SAGE Publications, 1993; idem, *The Logic of Practice*, trans., Richard Nice, Cambridge, Polity Press, 1990; idem, The Forms of Capital, in J.G. Richardson (ed.), *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*, New York, Greenwood Press, 1986, 241-258; Wacquant L.J.D. Toward a Social Praxeology: The Structure and Logic of Bourdieu’s Sociology, in P. Bourdieu and L.J.D. Wacquant (eds.), *An Invitation to reflexive Sociology*. Cambridge, Polity Press, 1992, 1-60.

that can differ in various aspects such as language, style, structure, and content. For this point, I found from Kashouh's analysis that a translation can be traced back to its archetype, but in this study I will consider the translations as unique: I will examine the translations as such not by comparing them to the source text but by comparing them to each other.

Second, studying the translation process is important because translators are influenced by external factors (such as the expectations of the target audience, translation conventions) and internal factors (such as the translator's personal preferences, linguistic and cultural competence); these factors determine, for example, the strategies and decisions made by the translator during the translation work. Here, there are texts for which their author is unknown or there is very little information about the translators, but a framework can be constructed on the basis of the historical data within which the translations were produced and from the comparison of the same passages assumptions can be made about the language choices made.

In addition, in the translation process some aspects of the source text are retained unchanged but there are adjustments to the requirements of the target system. In particular, as regards literary translations, subjugation to target literary models and norms may involve the suppression of some source-text features; additionally, it may require reshuffling certain features or introducing new ones to make the translation more acceptable as a target literary text, or to align it with a specific type of target literature. This is the case for example of the Vatican Arabic 13 which conserved some archaic words that were suppressed and substituted by others in later versions.²⁵

Third, the translation context plays a fundamental role in determining translation choices. Considering the socio-cultural context in which the translation takes place, cultural values, reader expectations, and power relations help to understand the legitimation of the translations. As I will show, this third level of analysis will justify the Islamic influence on literary production. In fact, from the one side, the transmission of the Bible and the continuous apologetic production were driven by a desire for Christian

²⁵ For example, Kashouh (2012, 161) indicated for the word disciples the archaic الأرباء (الأرباء) which was substituted by الحواريون possibly because of Qur'anic influence, and التلاميذ because of Syriac influence.

response and defence; by maintaining Christian identity as Arabs and equal status with Muslim Arabs; and by an affirmation of the sacredness of the Bible. From the other side, progressively, there were a detachment from Islamic culture and a formulation of Christian belief that is not linguistically influenced by Islam with an intent to reject the dominant culture. In fact, as Toury's principle of Translation studies claimed, translations are facts of target cultures (Toury, 2012, 23), they were designed to fulfil certain needs of that culture.

The theory provides a useful tool for understanding how translators tackle the specific challenges of Bible translation given a complex field influenced by theological, cultural, and linguistic considerations. Bible translation or portions of it were produced many times over the centuries but each translation is unique, it has not been there before. Under this theoretical lens I will analyse translational features which means translation choices made by translators, how they handle the rendering of complex theological terms, the adaptation of culturally specific expressions, and the transmission of textual meanings into the target language. As I will show, in some cases the translation intention was to produce proper TL literary texts and the translator intentionally deviated from the source text.²⁶

Some considerations about my analysis

The core questions addressed during the research project were be what translation specific lexemes can imply, how the intended meaning of such items was to be determined and how these translation-specific items were represented in dictionaries, which are expected to reflect the forces which were at play and in conflict during the evolution of the lexicon. In the field concerned, to express theological concepts, Arabic used habitual TL lexemes, but also items which do not pertain to the generally acknowledged repertoire: there were new combinations of previously existing lexemes and newly coined words as well. Therefore, the way of items usage by Arabic speakers will give an indication as to its potential value and the way they will be used, thus enabling me to reconstruct the Arabic terminology adopted by Christians.

²⁶ This is the case for example of the rhymed version of *Al-Şūbāwī* (1300).

First of all, is to consider what original language and text are taken into account for the translation process. It is possible that a concrete source text may never have existed or that a translation had more than one source or only a single source text. The study conducted by Kashouh (2012) is proof of the complexity of identifying the source language (SL). For the translation of some portion of Bible or single verses included in treatises or other literary works, the question will be more difficult to clarify and it will be necessary to consider some hypothesis: the writer knew the biblical passages by heart when writing a text; the writer would make a translation of the biblical passages from a Greek or Syriac version that he had at his disposal or copied them from an Arabic version previously translated.

Second, is to consider the several varieties of language constituting the translation. Toury makes an example relevant to my research: which language is the Septuagint formulated in, is it Greek, Jewish Greek, or maybe an ad hoc mixture of several varieties that never existed as a language in itself? (Toury, 2006, 15-16). As Kashouh demonstrated concerning Vatican Ar.13, writers might not have attached importance to the uniformity of the lexicon, instead they might have used several translations in preparation for their version and consequently adopted different translations for a single word.

Considering Bible translations throughout history, the formation and the development of Arabic Christian culture is understandable also through the identification of the position of each translation within the culture concerned. Position means how much translation has spread and survives according to its ageing and quality under specific socio-historical conditions. I will try to identify dominant and discarded translations. That means that linguistic choices were made reflecting cultural needs and are the results of a clash of different cultures. In this sense, describing the lexica, terms and expressions regarding the subject of my research will permit on the one hand to identify and read the dominant culture of a certain period and, on the other hand to justify them through analysis and overall to understand what were the needs that led to a new translation that replaced those before and, also the case where there have been translations completely erased from the collective memory. Therefore, one of my aims

is try to contextualise properly the translations which I take into account and tentatively to reinstate them in the positions they were designed to have.

Another aspect which I will tackle during my analysis is whether it is possible to identify conventions, norms and strategies with regard to the literature under review for each epoch I will illustrate. Following Toury's reasoning, when a group comes together they form agreements which arise through negotiations within the group. These negotiations give rise to conventions, norms and strategies that dictate how group members should behave in specific situations. It will be a matter of understanding how Arabic Christian literature has adapted and/or has distinguished itself after continuous processes of negotiation primarily in the Islamic context that has strongly influenced it and involves power struggles. In particular, linguistic choices, expressions, renderings of theological concepts and others, that will be the object of my analysis, are the result of prescribed and tolerated norms²⁷ or instructions which I will try to identify and bring to light. Under this aspect, I will try to verify whether this process had an end or is still ongoing because as long as the group exists, social order is continuously being (re)negotiated, especially when new members seek to join or when there is a challenge from a rival group. This is the case of the Bible's translations which have had different versions and still today is not completed.

It is important to point out that in this study I will not principally consider the source texts but I will concentrate the analysis on the target texts because the aim is to study expressiveness and language in Arabic. In particular, another important task that I will face is the specific contextualisation of the sources; therefore I will adopt a "target-oriented approach" (Toury, 2012, 206). In my case, the Bible has been translated into Arabic at different times, so I will attempt to offer exhaustive descriptions and explanations for states of affairs of the versions examined: the initial positioning of a translation, the exact status of the target language, a heightened differentiation between translational items pertaining to one and the same culture (in terms of their respective positions within it), and the possibility that translations may see their position in the

²⁷ Toury defined norms as "explanatory hypotheses for actual behaviour and its perceptible manifestations", 2012, 65

target culture change over time. Being a cultural activity, translation is characterised by immense variability within a single culture in space or time, as with all culturally-determined kinds of activity, it is norm-governed. Toury developed *translational norms* which control the agents behaviour but “they may change very quickly or at other times they are more enduring and the process of change takes longer” (Toury 2012, 86). Nevertheless, translators could shape the process wittingly or unwittingly and divert it according to their preferences (ibid.). Therefore, at the end of his book, Toury attempts to formulate *laws of translational behaviour* which are general principles that describe recurring patterns of translational behaviour within a community of translators in a specific historical and cultural context. These laws are not intended as normative prescriptions but rather as empirical observations based on the analysis of the actual translations produced. He emphasises that translational behaviour cannot be seen as a set of rigid rules but rather as a complex phenomenon that reflects the interactive dynamics between translators, source texts, and target audiences.

He identifies the laws of “growing standardisation” (Toury, 2012, 303) and of “interference law” (Toury, 2012, 310). Growing standardisation refers to the phenomenon where, over time, translations tend to follow increasingly standardised patterns and conventions. This happens because translators rely on previous translations, establishing norms and expectations that influence future translation choices. In other words, growing standardisation occurs when translations align with established patterns that have developed over time within a specific translation community. Through the comparison of texts I will try to identify elements that do or do not confirm this law and to justify this generalisation.

The interference law, interconnected to the first, refers to the influence that the source language and culture can have on the target language and culture in the translation process. Linguistic and cultural interferences can manifest in translations, leading to the inclusion of elements or characteristics typical of the source language and culture in the target translation. These interferences can be intentional or unconscious and depend on power relations, cultural exchanges, and mutual influences between the involved linguistic communities. For instance, one of the first languages that interfered

in Arabic translations was Syriac, which, broadly speaking, influenced the Arabic lexicon²⁸ and it was also a source from which Arab-Christian speakers drew to form their Christian linguistic background. But not only languages have the power to interfere but, in my case, phenomena pertaining to the make-up of the Islamic source language tended to force themselves on the translators and be transferred to the target text or to be assimilated, consciously or not, by the translators.

The literary production, in particular the apologetic works and Gospel translations, and the identity of Arabic-Christian speakers will also be described also in the light of P. Bourdieu's concepts. Bourdieu was a prominent sociologist and anthropologist. He is widely regarded as one of the most influential social theorists of the XX century for his contributions to the study of culture, education, social class, and symbolic power. Bourdieu's contribution allows to respond to social questions related to the Arabic translations of the Bible and to the literary apologetical production of texts ex-novo through, first of all, the concept of the *field of cultural production*. The *field* is delineated by its own boundaries through parties and linguistic and cultural norms (Bourdieu 1996, 223); it is established and developed around this literary production and by its members who are allowed to enter and whose positions are related to each other in terms of difference, distinction and conflict (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, 102). The *field* of cultural production is the *social space* which gathers individuals and institutions who have a common interest in producing specific cultural products, such as a book, a translation, a treatise etc. The first task, therefore, is to identify the *fields* of cultural production. During my studies I distinguished chronologically three main fields: acquisition of the Arabic language; Theology in Arabic; translations of the Gospels. Individuals develop through their experiences, such as early education,

²⁸ I mention otherwise that according to the theory of some scholars like Jean Starcky, *Pétra et la Nabatène*, in Pirot, L., Robert, A., Cazelles, H.& Feuillet, A. (eds.), *Supplément au Dictionnaire de la Bible*, vol 7, Paris, cols 886-1017; J.A. Bellamy, *the Arabic Alphabet*, pp. 99-100; B. Gruendler, *the Development of the Arabic script: From the Nabatean Era to the First Islamic Century According to Dated Texts*, pp.1-3; Sh. Blair, *Islamic Calligraphy*, p.71, the Syriac cursive script used in the courts of the Lakhmid kings of al-Hira was probably the origin of the Arabic script.

socialisation and events, the so-called *habitus*: systems of durable, transposable, internalised dispositions and behaviours (Bourdieu 1990, 53). In its turn *habitus* orients the practices of the individual within the social space and generates dispositions or strategies for action; it “contributes to constituting the *field* as a meaningful world” (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992:127). I gather from this that it will be important to define the *habitus* of each producer of culture considered, as far as possible, for each *field*.

What unites the members of the *field* is their agreement on what is seen as acceptable or legitimate at a certain moment (what Bourdieu called *doxa*) (Bourdieu 1977, 73) but it is brought into discussion by members in order to challenge it and disrupt its dominant position in the *field* (Bourdieu 1993, 73). In the context of this research and according to the identified *field*, in the first *field* Arabic was the language of the inhabitants of the Peninsula Arabica, including Christians; this condition was an habitual practice, but at a certain moment Muslim members believed in the eloquence of Arabic, being the sacred language of the Qur’ān, and considered Christians in a dominated position in the *field*. In the second *field*, the *doxa* was the principle of the theology inherited from the early Church. When the separation of the Church took place theology was formulated also in Arabic by each Church who over time adopted the language. The original *doxa* was modified and discussed by each denomination and then the Muslim newcomers took over and disputed with Christians. The dynamics were complex and the *doxa* became the object of two opposite discourses: Christians, who were separated, and Muslims. The last *doxa* seen in the third *field* was characterised by the fidelity to the source biblical text and by the eloquence of the translated text to demonstrate the sacredness of the Bible. These two *doxas* were the subject of debate by the communities for centuries, the proof being the numerous translations that have been made in the history of the Bible in Arabic.

The network of individuals and institutions produce culture in order to invest and accumulate *economic* or *social* or *symbolic capital* from this production (Bourdieu 1986, 243): *economic capital* means the money obtained as a result of the production; *social capital* means the relations established with others involved in the same *field*; *symbolic capital*, such as prestige, honour, and recognition, means that the production of

an individual or institution is approved by the other cultural producers. In this framing, the agents are constantly engaged in a struggle for dominance and control over the resources and capital within that *field*.²⁹

The struggle for *social capital* can be seen in the acquisition and assimilation of the Arabic language in the new political context that arose with the birth of Islam. Arabic is a *field* in which there will be many struggles and from which I start my study. As I will demonstrate the *field* of Arabic was present in early times and was characterised by linguistic varieties among the tribes and was the language of the churches which had been established there. After the Islamic conquest and by the second half of the VIII century, Jews, Christians and Muslims had fully integrated into a new Arabic-speaking intellectual culture. Arabic-speaking Christians proved equal to the dialogue established with the Muslims not only thanks to the use of theology and philosophy but also to their linguistic skills. It was also a question of identity and of establishment in society because Arabic was the language of Christians before Muslims.³⁰ The result was that Christians were able to defend their faith thanks to the production of apologetic texts and Bible translations, though their language was influenced by many fields, Syriac and Greek, and Islamic language. But, the most important thing is that they will consolidate their position in the field and were not excluded from it. This tension over time seems eased because the Christians of the Eastern Churches affirmed their identity regardless of their linguistic knowledge of Arabic.

The struggle for symbolic capital can be seen, for example, among Christians of different denominations in the field of theology. Theology and its formulation through literary production was inherited by the fathers of the church who wrote in Greek, defending the Trinity and the nature of Christ as a result of heresies and in response to the controversies that occurred in the Councils.³¹ Hence the three major denominations/ Churches and the corresponding writers had the same interest of producing apologetic

²⁹ See the concept of struggle in P. Bourdieu, *Sociology in Question*, trans. Richard Nice, London, SAGE Publications, 1993, 72

³⁰ In this regard when Islam entered Egypt, for example, Christians had to learn Arabic not to lose their positions in the public administration.

³¹ A great role in defending the faith of the early Church was played by the fathers of the church of Alexandria.

works and translating into Arabic the work of the fathers to demonstrate the truth faith within the field of Christianity, each according to its beliefs, and against the field of Islam. As I will illustrate the writers adopted strategies in apologetic literary production that could be understood by Islamic readers/interlocutors. Finally, the field of theological literary production in Arabic remained an active field at least until the XIII century after which the literary production created for centuries was decreasing. The tension remains but outside the literary production in Arabic.

Another struggle for symbolic capital is identified in the field of the Bible translation. Churches, institutions or individual actors struggled for the approval and acceptance of their translation. There was also a struggle for social capital in terms of the social relations needed for the achievement of the translation and its diffusion and its difference from previous translations. This relation included all the actors involved in its realisation, such as revisers, theologians, copyists as regards manuscripts, editors for printed versions and also the different churches that promoted these translations. In the history of Bible translation in Arabic there were widely used versions such as the Alexandrian Vulgate³² (Arabic Vulgate or Egyptian Vulgate classified in family *k* in Kashouh 2012, 205- 252) and others which were not very successful such as version of Al-‘Assāl. There are different dynamics that come into play to define their diffusion: it depends on the needs of the Arab Christians, on the strategies of translations, on the role of the agents/institutions and on the purpose of the translations.

An attempt to place Bible translation within the framework of the field of cultural production was made by S. Hanna (2018) in which he explored the complex socio-cultural dynamics involved in this production, in particular referring to the Bible by al-Ṣūbāwī (1300) and al-Buṣṭānī-Van-Dyck. I take up what he says about the Van-Dyck translation as it is relevant to the content of this study.

In his contribution, Hanna explained the framework of the Van-Dyck translation, claiming that the most influential factor that changed the standards of Bible translation

³² Kashouh (2006) claimed that “by the end of the thirteenth century the Arabic Vulgate superseded all other Arabic translations”.

was the role of Protestant and Catholic missionaries, removing all previous translations from the field because of their incapacity to satisfy the needs of believers (Hanna, 2018, 36). The challenge was to change the language related to the Qur‘ān preserving its eloquence. After tensions occurred within the field with the Catholic Church, this translation was successful in its intention to create an Arabic Protestant identity and to threaten Catholic authority.

What were the characteristics of the field at the time the translation of Vatican Arabic 13 was produced? Which struggles, which actors and which influences contributed to the production of this translation? What was the social/symbolic capital for which it competed? The same questions can be raised regarding the translation of Al-‘Assāl and the *inter-confessional Arabic Bible*. These are some questions I will attempt to answer by examining Arabic-Christian literary production.

I have identified the three main fields that I will analyse in the next chapters. The emergence of these fields and these tensions are the reasons for which I will analyse terminologically speaking, some apologetical works on the Trinity, the Incarnation and the person/nature of Christ that were topics of debate as well as the above-mentioned translations of the Gospels.

In the light of Bourdieu’ concepts I will review the history of each field, its members, the influences of other fields on it, the tensions within it, the relationships between its authors, the change of the field over time and the dynamics within it.

As can be deduced from this introduction, there are many questions and challenges in describing the history of the development of Arabic Christian literature and just as many disciplines under whose light to present this study.

Thus, in the first chapter, the primary focus will be on Christianity in Arabia and its relation with the Arabic language; I seek to trace the History of Arabic-speaking Christians, of Christian tribes and the State of the Church of Arabia before the rise of Islam. In addition to historical sources, I will examine single words, inscriptions, dictionaries, liturgical texts and the so-called pre-Islamic poetry.

In tracing this history I will try to understand what remains as Christian and what is thought of as foreign or, more precisely, belonging to a distant culture in which the faithful of today no longer recognise themselves, and which is far removed from the expressiveness of today.

In the second chapter I will concentrate on the translations of the Gospels into Arabic. Many traces suggest that the Bible, or at least parts of it, were translated in the pre-Islamic era. There were numerous translations and biblical quotations in literary texts over the centuries and I will extrapolate Gospel verses cited in apologetic treatises to understand the stage of the translation and its variety. In fact, over time, internal Christological disputes and political interests delineated what would later be called the Jacobite, Melkite and Nestorian Churches.³³ And, while on the one hand the birth of Islam slowed down Christianity, on the other hand Christian communities played an important role in the development of the Arabic language and in the movement of translation from the Greek language that evolved into a literary production in Arabic *ex novo*. Between the IX and XIII centuries there was a vast production of texts and Christians were engaged in defending their faith in theological disputes with Muslims.³⁴ In the elaboration of their arguments and vocabulary, numerous authors spoke a language close to Islamic thought and in some intertextual relationship with the Qur'ān. In this chapter I will consider the debate between Timothy I and Al-Mahdi and the anonymous *On the Triune Nature of God*. The treatises and the apologetic writings studied are of of Abū Qurrah and Abū Rā'ṭa Al-Takrītī.

³³ For a brief survey of the story of each church from its foundation see the work of Atiya 1968.

³⁴ The Encyclopaedia of Graf (1944-1953) testifies this vast production. Each denomination had its compositions. Melkites were the first to produce religious literature, in particular, the dogmatic and apologetic genre prevailed, See Pizzi (2018, 39, 41). Nestorians also were defenders of Christianity and the principle dogmas of Unity, Trinity and Incarnation were the main their arguments (ibid. 152).

Jacobites engaged with he the challenge of Islam from the ninth century too. See: Keating 2022, 201.

By the IX century, literates spoke and wrote in Arabic and Coptic was progressively to disappear. From the X century, the Copts started to use Arabic in their writings. See: Al-Maqārī (2012, I, 77) who translated into Arabic the Coptic part of Graf's work; Samir, *Arabic Sources*, 1986, 83

The versions of the Gospels which I consulted were principally the Vatican, Arabic 13, Sinai 70, Sinai 72, Beirut, B.O. Or, 430 being the closest historically to the period in question.

In the third chapter I will deal with Coptic Arabic literature. This interest is due to the fact that the evolution of the Arabic language in Egypt was slower and the detachment from the Coptic language was gradual. I will consider al-Muqaffa' s works which laid the foundations of a vast production that will flourish only in the Golden age of the XIII century; for this reason, I will analyse the Gospel version of al-'Assāl and the apologetic works of Sim'ān Ibn Kulayl and Al-Ṣāfi Ibn al-'Assāl.

However, after the XIV century a dark period began in the history of the Coptic church that continued until the modern era. One of the challenges in attempting to trace the Arabic-Christian literature that spans hundreds of years is the need to understand the reasons for the interruption of this type of production and language and to try to enhance it outside the Islamic context today.

Finally, a word on the style and structure of the thesis is important. The footnotes include complete bibliographical references. For the full-length citations, the reader may consult the bibliography at the end of the study. Translation into English have been made to provide access to the Arabic Christian texts being studied. All these translations are mine and for Arabic names and terms I have followed the transcription key for Arabic of the International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies.

This study is certainly not without its limitations. I have attempted to reconcile the multiple disciplines involved in achieving my goal. However, In addition, many of the manuscripts documenting Arabic Christian literary production remain unedited and understanding them took many and prolonged readings. Rather, I attempt to provide some of the most significant examples that represent the language of Christianity in Arabic.

The aim of this work is to narrate some an overview of the literature that constituted the Arabic-Christian literary theological heritage; the intention is not to provide a comprehensive account of the entirety of Arabic Christian literature.

Chapter I - The Arabic variety used by Arabic-speaking Christians and its influence on Arabic

Introduction

This study has the purpose of studying the Christian Arabic and of understanding its relation with the Arabic language and showing its history and evolution. I will start with some reflections on the role of the Arabic variety used by Christians . In particular, I will reflect on when Christian doctrine was formulated in the Arabic language, was Christian terminology transferred to the Qur'an and did Islam adopt it? From this I derive a second question about the influence of Christian Arabic language on the Arabic language and its literature; and finally, on how and why Christian Arabic language changed the Arabic language yet was abandoned and reformulated. In fact, for this last point, the ancient texts in Arabic reflected in poetry of pre-Islamic times were characterised by a high level of expressiveness and precision, so why does this language change with the advent of Islam and subsequent translation movements in the course of history?

The ongoing research is guided by a set of questions that in turn raise further questions that I will highlight as I proceed. Firstly, to have a clear definition of what is today the Arabic language in the Eastern Church I have to undertake a diachronic study that ranges from the pre-Islamic literature times up to the Arabic language of the Eastern Church today.

Despite the evangelisation of the Arab tribes, the existence of Arab Christian literature, in the first centuries of Christianity, and then at the time of the Christological controversies, and until the eve of Islam, may have been difficult for understandable reasons, as Ebeid argues (2018, p. 51): nomadic peoples were not interested in almost any written literature, and for many tribes, interest in Christianity was a factor in obtaining and realising political interests. The Arabic language remained in oral form, developed into several dialects/varieties, not yet being developed as a cultural language.

As we will see in this chapter, some inscriptions containing either Syriac-Aramaic or alphabets of Arabic dialects and quotations of some poems found in authors after the

arrival of Islam will be considered as a starting point to trace the development of terminology in this study. I can state that despite the paucity of what we possess of written pre-Islamic Christian Arabic literature, Arabic was used as an unwritten language within the life of the tribe. One cannot therefore exclude the fact that Christian Arab tribes throughout Arabia also had the capacity to live a liturgical life with a developed cult and a widespread religious and monastic life.

The interest of the study of the history of the linguistic dialects/varieties used by Arabic-speaking Christians over this vast span of time lies in showing the link between the development of Christian thought and the development of vocabulary. The history of Arabic-Christian terminology allows us to understand the history of a society characterised by a continuous reformulation of its doctrine characterised by a language that struggled to emerge because of the influence of the Islamic religion, although the latter was born six hundred years after Christianity, or by the translation movements that have appeared over time. This study is an attempt to retrieve and to revive the Arabic-Christian heritage using the Linguistic Sciences, in particular the lexicographical and terminology fields, in order to understand and examine in depth the relation between Christianity and the Arabic Language. In order to trace this development I have concentrated on the lexicology field yet without ignoring the economic and historical social context in which the terms originated.

Therefore, a diachronic analysis of terminology is the end point of long research in the study of the History of the Arabic-Christian and non-Christian speakers, the History of Christianity in the Middle East, Arabic-Christian literature, the History of the Church in the East, Arabic Manuscript Studies, the comparison of stages of Arabic (Classical Arabic, Middle Arabic, modern dialects and modern literary Arabic) and the relation between Christianity and Islam.

The breadth of the subject and the sources implies that my study does not even claim to provide a complete description of the linguistic varieties used by Arabic-speaking Christians, it only wants to contribute towards the elucidation of how this language evolved and the reason why this language is not considered Arabic and is neglected compared to the period when there was a vast literary production (X-XIV century).

The study of terminology was an ancient Arabic science which was also developed in the context of Christianity. The history of Christian terminology helps to understand and revisit the history of the Christian society which lasted long time, developing in different contexts. In fact, studying Arabic-Christian terminology entails focusing geographically on the Middle East where different realities have succeeded each other or lived together. Therefore, terminology is a base from which we can start because, as Zanola (2018) claimed, it is a trace which helps to understand the culture and traditions of peoples. Furthermore, she adds:

Les termes ont été souvent recensés dans des lexiques, des glossaires, des dictionnaires et des encyclopédie, et vivent leur vie dans les connaissances des domaines respectifs, traversant les générations. Tantôt ils sont remis en marche par l'usage parcourant ainsi les emplois, les textes et les discours, spécialisés et non, tantôt ils restent de propriété d'un groupe d'utilisateurs, tantôt ils se répandent partout jusqu'à ce qu'ils deviennent d'emploi commun.
(Zanola, 19)³⁵

The history of Christianity in the Middle East is told in different types of works which preserve a specific terminology which contributed to enriching the Arabic language. In general, the religious lexicon had a great impact on society and it renewed life deeply. The testimony to this is the spread of the religions themselves and their coexistence. The fact that Christianity has had many obstacles to its survival and spread does not mean that it had no impact on the Arabic language. The complexity of the picture is also highlighted by the emergence of Islam, to be taken into account along with the social and religious factors that I will illustrate as I proceed. According to tradition, this complexity was gradually formed in the first quarter of the VIII century thanks to Muslim grammarians and philologists who had to deal with the various dialects present among the Bedouins of the peninsula. In particular, pure Arabic came from the Qays, the Tamīm, and the 'Asad³⁶ from which the bulk or principal amount of

³⁵ Translation: the terms have often been listed in lexicons, glossaries, dictionaries, and encyclopaedias, and they lead their own lives within the knowledge of their respective fields, spanning generations. At times, they are revived by usage, thus traversing through uses, texts, speeches, both specialised and non-specialised. Sometimes, they remain the property of a group of users, while at other times, they spread everywhere until they become commonly used expressions.

³⁶ They were Adnanite tribes.

borrowings was drawn and on which the vocabulary, the syntax and the morphology are based; then there were the Hudhayl and certain groups of the Kināna and the Ṭayy.³⁷ According to my research, the work of classification and the description of this type of terminology were ignored by language purists because Arabic was alone the *fusha* of the Qur'an. An example to prove that the Arabic variety used by Christians had difficulties in being independent from Qur'anic language in some periods of its history is shown in some Christian manuscripts which contain Islamic expressions and words.³⁸ But, at the same time heresies and dogmatic conflicts allowed the production not only of definitions of Arabic terms from a Christian perspective but to translate entire Christian works into Arabic and to write directly in Arabic.

The analysis of Arabic-Christian terminology leads us to consider three methodological guidelines in terminological research in different eras: neology, descriptive systematisation, the wealth of documentation sources (Zanola 2014, 32-34).

An example of neology is all the terms originating in the Syriac and Greek languages and adopted by the Arabic language.

To study the progress of descriptive systematisation I have consulted the main lexicographic works produced over centuries to reconstruct in reverse the history of Arabic-Christian terminology and to verify the development of this field and to understand which terms have been recorded and which not.³⁹ I take into consideration other dictionaries such as *Muʿjam al-lāhūt al-kitābī*⁴⁰ and the *Greek English Arabic Dictionary*,⁴¹ without neglecting the vast production of Arabic speakers in the compilation of dictionaries.⁴² In addition to dictionaries and specialised glossaries, the third methodological guideline, characterised by the processing of documentary sources,

³⁷ Al-Siyūṭī, *Kitab al-iqtirāḥ fī 'Uṣūl al-Naḥw*, see www.shamela.ws.

³⁸ We will discuss this topic in the second chapter.

³⁹ We refer for example to: Graf G., *Verzeichnis Arabischer Kirchlicher termini*, Louvain, 1954, Dozy R., *Supplément aux dictionnaires arabes*, T. 1,(1881) and T2, 2e édition (1927).

⁴⁰ Bāsīm B., *Muʿjam al-lāhūt al-kitābī*, IV edition, Beirut, Dār al-Mashriq, 1999.

⁴¹ Al-Maqārī, A., *Greek English Arabic Dictionary, Qāmūs Yūnānī Injilīzī 'Arabi*, I Edition, Dār majalla Marqus, Cairo, 2021.

⁴² References: John A. Haywood, *Arabic Lexicography, its History, and its Place in the General History of Lexicography*, Brill, Leiden 1965, Ramzi Baalbaki, *The Arabic Lexicographical Tradition. From the 2nd/8th to the 12th/18th Century*, Brill, Leiden 2014.

is the basis of any terminological work. I will illustrate key dates of some important events, works and controversies in Christian thought which help to arrive at a complete view. First, Christianity clashed with paganism and Greek philosophy; secondly, Christianity clashed with Islam and lived with it; thirdly, within Christianity heresies emerged and divided the Church. For this reason, a diachronic analysis of the terminology allows a return to the sources of the historical stages mentioned above and it connects the knowledge of different domains. In fact, words can be adopted and adapted by Arabic in a certain period and after a time fall into disuse or, in other words, be part of a domain (terminologization) and then describe completely different concepts (determinologization) or have a meaning in a subdomain and another meaning in another subdomain.

As we shall see, the difficulty is not in the quantity of terms to be classified, the neologisms to be introduced, the superfluous synonyms to be eliminated but in giving precise definitions.

One last consideration: an analysis that covers a long period of time does not claim to be complete but, perhaps studying the subject diachronically will demonstrate the necessity of this methodology in researching terminology.

I. Christianity in Arabia

I. The History of Arabic-speaking Christians

A manuscript dating back to A.D. 512 and written in Greek, Syriac and Arabic was found near Aleppo, listing the names of men involved in building the church where the manuscript was found ('Ali 1993, I, 51). Some translation and interpreting activities must also have existed in the very early days of Islam, for example some form of linguistic mediation between the Prophet and non-Arab rulers.

To understand the Christian Arabic presence and role of Christians in the Arabian Peninsula we have to build ties with singular events, narratives and sources each of which represents a unique contribution to the Christian story in the Peninsula.

The history of the Arab peoples is long-standing, and, as will be illustrated, it is diversified. If one considers the relations with the Roman Empire during which Christianity was born, Arab-Roman relations starts from the first century BCE, more precisely around 63 BCE, the year of Pompey's settlement (he created the Province of Syria), and it develops up to the third century AD. As historical sources narrate, in this first period some Arabs knew Christianity and were converted. From this period I speak of Arabic-speaking Christians and their history begins to differ and become distinct from the history of the Arabs in general. Then, Arab-Christian history continues in the Byzantine period of three centuries, and it takes a different turn with the rise of Islam and the Arab Conquests in the seventh century to the point of almost disappearing or acquiring a different identity.

Before analysing the context in the Arabian Peninsula, history sheds light on the relationship between the "Orient" and the Roman Empire. Historical sources testify to the Arab presence in Syria, Mesopotamia and Egypt before the first century BCE.⁴³ These Arab groups lived in these regions and were influenced and affected by other nations in different ways and to varying degrees, but at the same time "they remained

⁴³ For a summary list of sources see the interpretative surveys of I. Shahīd in *Rome and the Arabs, a prolegomenon to the study of Byzantium and the Arabs*, Washington D.C., Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 1984a, pp. 3-5.

Arab in ethos and mores and above all in their use of the Arabic language” (Shahīd, 1984a, 9) and “they did not lose contact with Arabia” (Shahīd, 1984a, 11). It is clear, for example, in the case of the Nabatean Arabs who had remained independent despite being clients of the Romans, while at the same time they “kept their laws, customs, semitic rites, and the Arabic language” (Shahīd, 1984a, 10). From this description, we can first deduce that those Arabs present on the day of Pentecost were already settled there or were part of a constant flow from the Peninsula and were in contact with their motherland. Second, if these groups kept their linguistic tradition within different political contexts why did they not keep it within a tenacious and conservative cult like Christianity in subsequent centuries? Or, why would they not have wanted to express the liturgy in their own language as well?

Therefore, the Arabs of the Orient are an important factor in understanding their cultural and religious role in the Roman Empire and the evolution of the spread of Christianity. In fact, in the third century they contributed to the fortunes of Christianity which became the state religion of the empire in the fourth century. An example is the conversion of the Arab Abjarid dynasty that made of the city of Edessa the great fortress of the Christian faith in the Semitic Orient and the great center for its propagation in Mesopotamia (Segal, 1970, 17-33). Another Arab city was al-Ḥira, which for more than three centuries was a center of cultural radiation because of Christianity and it also exercised a powerful influence on religious events (Shahīd, 1984a, 47). The first three centuries are identified as the golden period of Arab Christianity, meaning that Arabs developed a fairly mature Christian culture. As Shahīd (1984b, 13) claimed:

And the most important borrowed cultural constituent in the life and history of the Arabs in these centuries was Christianity, which was most powerfully mediated by Byzantium. In fact, Christianity gave Arab history in these three centuries its distinctive character culturally. Before this period, most of the Arabs were pagan, and after it most of them became Muslim. Consequently, these three centuries are those during which the dominant and significant cultural current that influenced the life of the Arabs was the Christian one, and thus they represent the middle period in the spiritual journey of the Arabs, from paganism to Christianity to Islam.

From the point of view of religious practices, Nallino (1938, 151) describes Christian Arabs as people who did not take part in the struggles over religious doctrine but they had strong feelings about the veneration of holy hermits, respect for monks and

religious authorities, pilgrimages to holy places and prayers to saints to obtain grace (Shahīd 1984, 13). But, if we consider instead the relation or the coexistence with other religions in that time and later, Christian Arabs had a great influence on other peoples and were influenced by others. As Jawād ‘Alī claimed:

انها كأكثر الأديان تأثرت بمؤثرات عديدة لم يكن من الممكن على الداخلين فيها التخلص منها. فدخلت فيها وصارت جزءا منها, مع ان بعضها مناهض ومناقض لمبادئ هذا الدين.

(‘Ali, VI, 624).⁴⁴

Although research in this field is more structured and not inconsiderable than in the past, the studies of the Arabs and Arabia on the eve of Islam still remains fragmentary.

As Peters (1999, III, 49) claimed:

We know too much of the Yemen and too little of Mecca; too much on the Ghassānids and too little on the Quraysh; more about Greek and Roman designs on Arabia at the beginning of the Christian Era than about the circumstances in which God worked in the beginning of the Muslim era.

Following the first three centuries Christianity among the Arabs was more evident because it became an element on which the political relations of that time were built and because different leaders or men of power had to deal with it.

Christian tribes in the Arabian Peninsula

Focusing on Arabia, in particular in the Byzantine period, researchers consider three radiation centers of Christianity according to the historical sources:⁴⁵ the Reign of al-Ghassāsana in the North-West (Syria and Palestine), the Reign of al-Ḥira in the north-east and, Yemen in the south-west with Najrān as its centre. Byzantine historians have traced the history of Christian Arabs, bearing witness to a significant presence. We will try to reveal some events and point to the lives of saints or Arab believers who had contributed to the spreading of Christianity.

44 Translation: (Christianity), like most religions, underwent the influence of many elements which new believers could not avoid. They entered it and became part of it, even if some were opposed to and in conflict with the principles of this religion.

⁴⁵ See the work of T. Von Hainthaler, *Christliche Araber vor Dem Islam Verbreitung und konfessionelle Zugehörigkeit: eine Einführung*, Peeters, Leuven, Paris, Dudley, MA, 2007; for the Arabic translation: T. Von Hainthaler, *Al-masīḥiyyūn al-‘Arab qabla al-‘Islām*, L. Fāyid (translator), Cairo, Dār al-Nashr al-‘Usqūfiyya, 2019.

Palestine was one of the cosmopolitan and multilingual monastic centers in the Byzantine and early Islamic periods. The two principal languages that flourished in Syria/Palestine were Aramaic and Arabic. In addition to the notable monks of the desert who were founders or members of the monastic communities whose stories Cyril of Scythopolis tells in his *Lives of the Monks of Palestine* and others in the first centuries AD, we focus on the monks who were in regular contact with both “Saracens” and other Palestinians.

Saint Hilarion (291-371 AD) was a monk who had healed many Saracens possessed by demons. On the occasion of his passage to Elusa with a great company of monks there was the annual festival at the temple of Venus of whom Saracens were devotees. When they heard that the Saint was there, they went to meet him in crowds and crying in the Syriac tongue *Barech*, that is, bless. He did not refuse them, prayed that they might worship God and promised that if they would believe in Christ he would visit them often. A lot of them were converted and a church was built in Elusa and a priest ordained (Hieronymus, 1883, col. 41-42).

Another important proof of the history of the preaching of Christianity is the story of Mavia the Queen of the Saracens from the fourth century (Rufin, XI, 1908, 1010-1011). Most famous is the story of Moses bishop of the Saracens occurring in the era of Valens (364-378) because it is the axis of a plot. Queen Mavia was the head of the Tanūkhids confederation after the death of her husband (375 AD) and led a revolt against the Romans and attacked Fenicia, Palestine and neighboring provinces. She consented to peace only on the condition that a certain Moses was ordained bishop. He was led to Alexandria to be ordained. In that time (373-378) Bishop Peter, successor to Saint Athanasius, was exiled and he was substituted by Lucius, the Arian. Moses refused to be ordained by Lucius and he was brought to the mountains where the pro-Nicaean bishops were exiled and he was ordained by them. Despite Sozomen (24, 27-298) testifying that there were few Christians in the tribe of Mavia before Moses’s ordination, the Saint carried out a great evangelising action among the peoples transmitting the teachings of the apostles and performing miracles (Theodoret IV 23, 5). He held fast both to his Orthodox faith and peace with the Roman Empire. We can deduce from this story that

political questions, like independence in this case, depended on doctrinal questions even if there is no certainty about the Christianity of Mavia and her tribe. Anyway, Mavia's story is an important testament to the history of preaching Christianity among Arabs and their power formations.

Among the other stories of adherence to Christianity we can mention the story of the monk Euthymius (377-473) which was reported by Cyril of Scythopolis (Cyril, 1939 18-21; Festugière, III/1, 1961-1963, 71-74). It is told that a certain Aspebetos who was pagan and was under dependence on the Persians helped Christians to escape Persian persecution. Consequently he himself was being persecuted by the Romans for helping Christians and he had to find refuge with his family from them. Then, Aspebetos became philarch of the Saracens allied in Arabia. After settling in Arabia, Terebon, Aspebetos's paralysed son, saw in a vision Saint Euthymius and was healed. The Saracens believed in Christ, were baptised and confirmed in the faith. Euthymius ordained priests and deacons and since believers now became numerous, Aspebetos was ordained bishop with the name of Peter and later participated in the Ephesus Council (Cyril, 32-33; Festugière, 20).

As Christianity grew among the Arabs at the same time the Sinai region offered martyr monks who were persecuted by Bedouins. Indeed in the IV century there were a lot of monastic gatherings in Sinai which Egeria talked about and whose martyrdom Nilus (Geerard, 1980, 6044) and Ammonius (Geerard, 1980, 6088) narrated. Moreover Procopius of Caesarea testified that to protect the monks and to reinforce the Eastern border of the empire the Emperor Justin built walls around the monasteries from the Bedouin incursions in Palaestina Salutaris.

But let us raise the question of language in this process of Christianisation. As John Binns (1994) claimed, the question about the language used is not completely solved today, he writes:

The relationship between the monks and the Arabs raises the question of the language used. The monks spoke Greek, and while they also used their native languages of Armenian, Bessan, or some other language, they were not reputed for their linguistic ability...Arab nomads did not speak Greek, according to information provided by Theodoret...This lack of a common language must have complicated the catechetical process. (114)

Contrary to this statement, we assume rather that there was no “lack of a common language” as Sidney Griffith claimed (1997, 21). We know that Greek was the dominant cultural language, a prestigious ecclesiastical language and the principal source from which the local Christian community took its sense of socio-confessional identity but, there was the common idiom of Christian Palestinian Aramaic (Syriac) which flourished during the period between the fifth and the seventh centuries. In addition, there was also a currency of Arabic in this milieu in the fifth and sixth centuries that did not infringe on the communicability of Christian Palestinian Aramaic but that was joined to the linguistic capabilities of nomadic and settled Arabs in those territories until it largely supplanted Christian Palestinian Aramaic after the eighth century and gradually became an ecclesiastical language in the Islamic period, a language of a burgeoning commonwealth (Fowden, 68-138) and a language that spread from the territories of the patriarchate of Antioch southward through the Sinai and into Egypt. In particular, Arabic characterized the Melkite ecclesiastical identity. It was defined by Joshua Blau, the modern scholar who has studied this *koinē*, as a manifestation of Middle Arabic (1966-67). It was a distinctive Arabic that was used by John of Damascus the great eighth-century teacher from Mar Sabas monastery to systematise the doctrines of the six councils and then by Theodore Abū Qurrah who was the scion of a new generation at Mar Sabas monastery and who put forward the ecclesiastical Hellenism in an Arabic idiom.

Later we will look more closely at the account of the early production of texts in Arabic by the monks of the monasteries of Palestine.

In the Patriarch of Antioch

Justin the Martyr (100-165 AD) was the proof of the diffusion of Christianity among Bedouins; in fact, in the dialogue with the Jew Trypho (117 AD), he said: “for there is not one single race of men, whether barbarians, or Greeks, or whatever they may be called, nomads, or vagrants, or herdsmen living in tents, among whom prayers and giving of thanks are not offered through the name of the crucified Jesus.”⁴⁶

⁴⁶ Translation by George Reith, wikisource.org

As we read from historiography in fact, already after the defeat of the Nabatean reign, the city of Buṣrā, an ancient Nabatean city, became the capital of the Roman state of Arabia established in 106 AD and an important ecclesiastical center. As Maurice Sartre (1985, 99-100) claimed, Christianity in Buṣrā expanded very rapidly, perhaps even beginning before the Roman conquest. In fact, Buṣrā and the territory of the so-called Arabia were involved in the quarrels of their time, giving the image of lively and open churches. The same Origen (185-253 AD) had a good relationship with Arabia starting from about 215 AD and was called frequently to resolve questions, as during the Councils of Arabia (Scherer, 1960, 20-21).

The actions of the bishops and archbishops of Buṣrā, including Beryllus (222-235 AD) and Titus (d. 378 AD), illustrate a period when sects flourished in the region, but from the inscriptions it would seem that the city remained faithful to Chalcedonian thought in the face of the Monophysitism of the Ghassanids (Sartre, 1982). Eusebius of Caesarea (1964, VI, 33, 37) refers to the bishop Beryllus, who introduced a new doctrine contrary to the faith and was called the Arabic heretic by Augustine.

He adds that during the persecution (303-311 AD), the Christians of Arabia were persecuted with hatchets (Eusebius, 1964 VIII 12,1) under the rule of Diocletian (284-305 AD) and Galerius (305-311 AD) but, Philip the Arab, the Roman emperor from 244 to 249 AD, was Christian (Eusebius, 1964, VI, 34) and that “one day, the last Easter Eve, he wanted to take part with the people in the functions that took place in the church. But the one who presided over the cult did not allow him to go there, before he had confessed his transgressions and joined the crowd of sinners in the space where they did penance.” If he refused to do this, he would not have been introduced at all because of the many sins he had committed. It is said that the prince subdued himself generously, demonstrating in fact his sincere and religious feeling of fear of God (Dindorfius, 1886, 558-665). There are divergent opinions about his religious identity and his Christianity cannot be proved but, unlike the subsequent persecutions it seems that he was tolerant towards Christians.

In addition, Epiphanius of Salami indicates in Panarion the presence of pagans, Christians and heretics in Arabia in the fourth century and he mentions in particular

Kūkābā (Epiphanius 1980, 330-6). He spoke about eighty heresies coming from this territory and while therefore on one side it became “Arabia haeresium ferax” as Theodor said, in the fifth century it became an exile for heretics like the bishop Pelagius of Laodicea and others (Theodoret, IV 13,3 and 18,5). This designation derives from the extraneousness of Arab Christianity due to the theological conflicts of centuries IV and V and to the presence among the Arab populations of various schools of Christian thought. The presence of Arab bishops at the ecumenical council would have revealed their heresies when they took part in debates and there was one who was against the Chalcedony in Arabia, the bishop Cassian who was called pious by Severus of Antiochia.

Other Greek documentation attested to the history of Syriac monasticism in the Fourth century and Tel’ādā was the center of monasticism at Dayr Teleda. During the reign of Theodoritus the Dayr hosted 150 monks (Theodoret, IV 9) and in the Middle Ages the Dayr was besieged by four Syriac patriarchs and it may be that it opposed Chalcedony.

It is not possible to count the number of Arabs, their kings and their advisors who received baptism, accepted faith in God, knew Christ and the Word, and constructed churches in their tents (Lietzmann 1908, p. 108, 20-23). The most ancient Nestorian monastery was built four miles from al-Ḥira by the monk ‘Abdishū, who spread Christianity in Mīshān, al-Baḥrayn and al-Yamāma, during the bishopric of Tomarsa bishop of Seleucia (363-371 AD).

Later, at the end of the fourth century, the chief of the Al-Ṣāliḥ tribe ruled Arabia and a confederation of tribes was formed lasting till the beginning of the sixth century. The fact that the Kinda ruling clan professed Christianity is seen in the inscription of Hind’ Dayr:

هذه الكنيسة شيدتها هند بنت الحارث بن عمر بن حجر، ملكة وابنة وأم الملك عمر بن المنذر،
أمة المسيح، وأم عبده وابنة عبده، أثناء حكم ملك الملوك خسرو انوشروان وقت السيد الأسقف
إبراهيم (إفراهيم). فالإله الذي بنت له هذا البيت يغفر خطيتها، ويترحم عليها وعلى ولدها، ويقبل
بهما إلى إقامة الحق، ويكون الإله معها ومع ولدها الدهر الداهر.

The expansion of Christianity among the nomads of the Syriac-Mesopotamian borders took place in three periods: initially, there was contact between these populations and wandering or sedentary monks who had a great impact on the religious life of the Arabs; see for example the evangelical work of Saint Sergius who became patron of the tribe of Taghlib (Lammens, 2010, 355) which led to a pilgrimage movement to the sanctuaries dedicated to him, with all the ceremonies that involved this cult, until the rise of Islam (Charles, 1936, 29-35). Or, Saint Simeon the Stylite (390-459) who attracted a large number of “the Ismailites” and had a great evangelical influence on Arab tribes, as the bishop Theodoret of Cyrus (393-466) wrote and testified (XXVI 13-18). In fact, “every human being became happy in grace through miracles, as many Berbers joined him nearby...”(Theodoret, *ibid.* 350).

Then, during the preaching and dogmatic dissension of the three Churches, Melkite, Jacobite and Nestorian, who tried to recruit believers among the nomads, only the Jacobite church, thanks to a very large clergy, succeeded in adapting to the life of the nomadic tribes and in organising their religious and sacramental life to some extent (Charles, 5). In the life of John of Tella, for example, John of Ephesus records 170,000 priestly ordinations, “subjecting every man to a careful examination and test in reading the Scriptures and repeating the psalms...” (Brooks, 1911, t. XVIII, 518, 522). Or, James the Baradeus, who appointed eighty-seven bishops and two patriarchs (Brooks, 1911, t. XIX, 243), not counting the number of ordinations of priests. These mass ordinations allowed the multiplication of preaching and the beginning of nomadic Christianity in different areas of the desert such as Ḥarrān, Badāya, al-Qarqisiya (Circesium), Callinice, al-Roṣāfa, Tadmor (Palmira).

⁴⁷ Translation: This church was built by Hind daughter of Al-Ḥarīth, son of ‘Umar, son of Ḥajar, queen, daughter and mother of the King ‘Umar son of al-Mundhir, servant of Christ, mother of his servant and daughter of his servant...during the Reign of the king of kings...Khristo and Anūshurwān...during the period of His excellence Bishop Ibrahim (Ibrahim). The God to whom was built this dwelling may forgive her sins and may have mercy upon her and this father, and may lead them to establish the right. May God be with her and his father in the everlasting time.

Finally, when the number of conversions was sufficient to allow the existence of a hierarchy, the church of the desert flourished freely and lived on its own alongside sedentary bishops who guided peoples and participated in the Councils as “Bishops of Arabia”, as mentioned in the episcopal lists, giving proof of the stability and permanence of the Church as an institution. This happened thanks to the Jacobite church that managed to appeal to the nomadic people of the desert. In fact, as Charles concludes in his analysis, from the VI to the IX centuries, the Jacobite church kept alive a truly nomadic Christianity, a unique phenomenon in the history of the Church (Charles, 1936, 97). This immense evangelical work is counter-proof to the nature of these peoples. In fact, the Arabs were against attachment to place and this stems from their nature, they are not disposed to stability but, literally, for raiding (Prokop, 1970, 2,11,19); and therefore, considering the totality of my research, this point represents one of the major obstacles to tracing Christianity in Arabia.

Reign of the Persians

In the V and VI centuries, the history of Christianity among the Arab populations crosses to the south with the story of the Homeric kingdom, to the north with that of the tribes of the Ghassanids (also sometimes referred to as the Jafnids) and the Lahmids (also known as the Naşrids). The precise events, following which the Arabs belonging to these two tribes converted to Christianity, are not well known. They are, however, nomadic populations who became sedentary after being welcomed, respectively, within the borders of the Byzantine and Persian Empires. Their kingdoms, in effect, constituted two buffer states that, placed between the two great empires, on their borders, attenuated direct clashes. From the cultural point of view their function was no less important: they absorbed elements from the cultures of their respective powers of reference (Syriac-Byzantine and Persian) and then transmitted them to the Arab peoples. The Ghassanids settled in Transjordan, particularly near Damascus in the early III century. They were tenaciously attached to non-Chalcedonian Christianity and this caused them many political difficulties with Byzantium. Many monastic settlements and the ecclesial

complex of St. Sergiopolis, which exerted on the Arabs an undeniable attraction, date back to their initiative. They became the leading tribe among the Arab confederations.

The Laḥmids were of greater importance. They were a tribal confederation that was allied with the Sassanian empire. Their territory was located on the borders of present-day Iraq and their capital was al-Ḥira. This city was the capital of Arab-speaking Christianity in the pre-Islamic Middle East and was home to a school of the Church of the East. Al-Ṭabarī described it via three elements:

أولى هذه العناصر هم التنوخ وعاشوا في أكواخ وخيم من الشعر والمعاطف بين الحيرة والأنبار وما بعدها وثانيهما هي العباد وهي من استقرت (وأصولها) من الحيرة وكانت لها بيوتاً مستقرة هناك، وثالث هذه العناصر هم "الأحلاف" ممن لحقوا بشعب الحيرة واستقروا هناك دون أن يعيشوا في خيم تنوخ ولم ينتموا إلى بيوت العباد، ممن خضعوا لأرداشير.
(Al-Ṭabarī 822, 21-22)⁴⁸

The 'Ibād were the principal residents in Ḥira and they were Christians. It is unknown when the name 'Ibād (the plural of 'abd that means "servant") appeared but, maybe it indicates a sort of reference to the religion or it was an expression to differentiate themselves from pagans. It was famous for its large number of churches⁴⁹ and of some forty different monasteries (al-Ḥamawī). The confederation of 'Ibād was important in spreading Christian thoughts among Arabs. This transmission was to the Bedouins through the trade in wine and the (taverns) of the Christians and Jews. Various authors in the medieval Islamic tradition believed that the Arabic alphabet was invented at al-Ḥira and that, as reported, Syriac was the language of culture and Arabic was the daily language (Rothstein, 1899, 26-27).

Laḥmid Christianity is attested to later than that of their neighboring Ghassanid opponents and this can be explained by their being vassals of a non-Christian state, as the Zoroastrian kingdom of Persia. Also because of their political affiliation, the

⁴⁸ Translation: The first of these elements were the (tribes of) Tanūkh who lived in huts and tents of hair and wool tissue wandering between al-Ḥira, al-'Anbār and beyond. The second was the (tribe of) 'Ibād who originated from al-Ḥira where they settled down and had fixed homes there; the third of these elements were the al-'ahlāf (alliances) who joined the people of al-Ḥira and settled there without living in the Tanūkh tents and not belonging to the 'Ibad's homes who were submitted to Ardāshīr.

⁴⁹ See: J.M. Fiey, *Assyrie chrétienne* III, Beirut, Imprimerie Catholique, 1968, 206-207; E. Hunter, Syriac Inscription from al Hira, *Oriens Christianus* 80, 1995, 66-81; Y. Okada, Early Christian architecture in the Iraqi south-western desert, *Al-Rāfidān* 12, 1991, 71-83.

Lakhmids professed Christianity according to the doctrine and rite of the Church of Persia (Nestorianism). At their court, in the second half of the sixth century, was active the only certainly Christian Arab poet of pre-Islamic era: ‘Adi Ibn Zayd.⁵⁰

Therefore, in the Reign of the Persians two different Churches took shape: the Persian Church which adopted a strict Antioch approach at the end of the VI century and was called Nestorian and the Church which was against the Chalcedonian creed and pursued feverish missionary activity led by the bishop Simeon of Bet Arsham and others at the beginning of the VI century.

The Nestorian Church was confined to the regions subjected to the Sassanian Empire. It lived its own life, with its hierarchy, its dogma and its discipline. Thanks to its strong organization, it was able to resist bloody persecutions and overcome the many and serious difficulties that the policy of the sovereigns raised. (Chabot, 1902 1-2). Its documents belong to Syriac literature and only in 893 AD, on the basis of the *Synodicon Orientale*, Élias Jawhari wrote a canonical collection in Arabic for the use of churches under its jurisdiction in a country where the use of the Syriac language was increasingly lost later (Chabot, 1902, 14-15).

The *Synodicon Orientale* reports that there were Christians in Bahrain, too, at least in the great tribes such as the Taghlib. Mashmahīg was the most ancient bishopric. The greatest tribe was ‘Āl ‘Abd al-Qīs and there were a lot of Christians; Abū Bakr Ibn Wā‘il was partially Christian; also the Tamīm whose leaders were Christians.

We mention also the presence of writers who came from al-Qatar al-Bahrī such as Ishāq al-Nīnawī, Mār Dādīshu (421-456), the interpreter ‘Āhūb, Jabrīl the liturgist, and Bābāi the Great. The Church survived for a long time: J. Beaucamp concludes in fact that “the Eastern Syriac Bishopric in Persia and Bayt Qaṭrya was in great prosperity between the sixth and eighth centuries on islands and oases that have not been erased by sand.” (Beaucamp, Robin, 1983, 186-187).

The question of how far Christianity permeated remains, but the fact that there were controversial disputes between the two churches is a well-known fact.

⁵⁰ According to Muslim tradition, his father Zayd ibn Ḥamād was among the first Christians to write Arabic (ca. 500 A.D.). see Rabin C., *Arabiyya. Encyclopaedia of Islam*, II eds. Vol1, 561-567.

Simeon of Bet Arsham (d. 531) was a Syriac bishop who spread his teachings at the beginning of the sixth century in the Persian kingdom. He wrote about Najrān and the Nestorian heresy. Another attestation that proves this controversy is the letter of Severus of Antiochia against Julian who spread his heretical teaching in al-Ḥira. And even, Justin I the emperor (518-527) wrote to Al-Mundhir Ibn al-Nu'mān, king of the Arabs, to expel all the heretics from the Roman Empire whose lands had become a refuge for them (Scher, 1911, II, 144). When Al-Mundhir expelled them some took refuge in Najrān (in Iraq) and spread Julian's teachings.

Another leader was Akhūdimih (d. 575) the bishop of the Arabs who was enthroned by Ya'qūb Al-Barād'y in the middle of the sixth century during the Persian Empire. He was known as a preacher with an important position among the Arab tribes and a Church organiser. He was called the leader of the Orthodoxes (Barhebraeus, 1874, II, 22-23) by John of Ephesus.

In Tajrīt jabal shajāra, Bālād, Niṣībīn he baptised and handed over the teachings to some tribes and ordained for each a priest and a deacon, established monasteries in Tajrīt such as 'Ayn Qanāya and Ja'aṭāny (Nau, 1909, 7). Thanks to the influence of Arab Christians in Tajrīt, a city which became one of the centers of the non-Chalcedonian church, a group of Taghlib accepted the Christian faith and non-Chalcedonian bishops remained in Taghlib. The tribe of Taghlib stuck to the faith and maintained their Christianity for three hundred years AH, continued the consecration of bishops, provided portable altars (ṭablīth) and celebrated the Eucharist in Arabic (Yaḥyā Ibn Jarīr al-Takrītī d. 1079):

وقد كان في العرب نصارى كبنى تغلب وقوم من اليمن وغيرهم ومعهم اسقف يطوف معهم في
الحلل في سفرهم وينقل المذبح اعني الدفة المقدسة (طبليث) من موضع الى موضع الى سنة
ثلاثمائة للعرب وصل الى تكريت قوم من العرب النصارى وابتاعوا لهم ميرة ليبتاروا بها.
وكان منهم رجلا دينا حسن الطريقة فقلده مطران تكريت الاسقفية وكان يقدس لهم باللفظ العربي
وكان يقدس لهم الانجيل.

From this passage we can see firstly that there remained nomadic Christian Arabs at the beginning of the X century and this represents an important cultural factor which can lead to thinking about a consequent spread of the faith that can hardly be traced; second, that the nomadic bishop celebrated mass in an Arabic that will be revisited later because “translations of the Syriac liturgies into this language will not be done again until the XVII century” (Fiey, 1963, 321). This confirms to us the presence of some Arabic, the importance and centrality of orality in the celebration of the rites and in the transmission of the faith. Third, in this extract, as in others, Ibn Jarīr has taken care to report Arabic words with their Syriac correspondences as in the case of the Syriac word *ṭablith* (Graf, 1954, 73) which is translated by Ibn Jarīr as *al-daffatu al-muqaddasa* which correspond to *al-lawḥ al-muqaddas*. This makes us think that on the one hand there was still a link to the language of origin and, on the other that the Arabic liturgical vocabulary was at the time of the author fixed.

In another passage (Ibn Jarīr, 1937, 349) he states: وفي القديم كانت تقرأ الكتب العتيقة⁵² بالعربية فمنع عن ذلك القديس الجليل ماري افرام We question whether this could partly justify the absence of texts written in Arabic in our possession today or the reason why the liturgical texts were revisited much later.

South of the Peninsula Arabica

The history of Christians in the south of the Peninsula Arabica comes to us through inscriptions. Greek and Syriac sources testify that Christianity entered this area through merchants, Byzantine diplomats, itinerant monks and zealous converts. Eusebius of Caesarea told that Pantaenus, one of the managers of The Catechetical School of

⁵¹ Translation: There were Christians among the Arabs, such as the Banū Taghlib and a tribe from Yemen, and others; with them there was a bishop who accompanied them in ecclesiastical robes on their travels and carried with him an altar, that is, the *ṭablith* from place to place. Until in 300 (H) a group of Arab Christians arrived in Tajrīt to buy supplies for themselves to consume them. Among them was a religious man of exemplary conduct. The metropolitan of Tajrīt conferred on him the episcopate. He celebrated mass with them in Arabic, and officiated on the Gospel.

⁵² Translation: In ancient times, ancient books were read in Arabic, so this was forbidden by St. Mar Ephram.

Alexandria (177-200 AD) travelled as an evangelical missionary in India which some researchers have suggested that by this Eusebius meant South Arabia (Harnack 1924, p. 698).

John of Ephesus claimed that the people of Ḥimyār believed in God thanks to missionaries in 305 AD and followed Byzantine evangelical missions like that under the empire of Constantius by Theophilus (Philostorgius, 1864, 481-490). The latter was successful in directing the leader of the people of Ḥimyār towards faith in Christ; he also built three churches with the help of Caesar (ibid.) in Zūfār, in the Roman commercial market in ‘Adn and in the commercial Persian market in the Persian Gulf (ibid., 485). As regards the inscriptions there is still no systematic archaeological survey of Christianity in the Arabian peninsula from the fourth to the sixth century and beyond: the collected materials, more often in the margin of an exclusive epigraphic interest, are, however, sufficient to show the intensity and duration of the phenomenon in the region (Fiaccadori 1992, XIX-XX). John Diakrinomenos said that the people of Ḥimyār during the empire of Anastasius (491-518 AD) became Christians, and a bishop was ordained for them (Diakrimonios, 1971, epit. 559). Najrān became the seat of a bishopric and the reigning doctrine was apparently that of the Monophysites. The second occupation of Yemen by the Abyssinian empire could only obviously promote the propagation of the new faith. Following the persecution of the Ḥimyārite king Du-Nuwas (523 AD), the third occupation of the country by the Ethiopians could only strengthen the position of Christianity in these regions. Christian propaganda was undoubtedly felt up to al-Ḥijāz. Otherwise, a tradition of questionable historicity, would have the Prophet Muḥammad hearing the preaching of Quss Ibn Sā‘ida, one of these Yemeni missionaries, at the fair of ‘Ukāz (Lammens, 1927, II, 1161). In any case, the tribe of Bal-Ḥarith, from the vicinity of Najrān, was completely converted at the time Islam appeared.

Going into more detail, the city of Najrān was the most considerable Christian center. It was an important crossroads, placed between the caravan roads that led from the southernmost San’a and Mā’rib and continued towards the Mediterranean, and the other path that, crossing the Wadī Dawasir, Yamāma and al-Baḥrain, connected it with the kingdom of the Persians. Al-Ṭabarī told two stories about the rise of Christianity in

Najrān. According to Ibn Ishāq who reports the story of the Yemenite writer Wahab Ibn Munabbah, that a certain Fymywn was a pious man and worked as a brick manufacturer in Syria. He used to keep Sunday holy and went into the desert and prayed and worship. He was noticed by a certain Ṣāliḥ who loved him and followed him secretly. One day Salih marvelled at Fymywn for having cursed a seven-headed serpent and decided to reveal himself and from that day he became his companion. Then, when they wandered in a certain territory of the Arabs they were captured by Arabs who sold them at Najrān. On this occasion he had the opportunity to explain to the Najranites that their religion was erroneous after he had destroyed a palm tree through prayer and eventually he instructed them in the law of the faith of ‘Īsā b. Maryam.⁵³ In the second story Ibn Ishāq summed up the story of Muhammad Ibn Ka’b Qurzi from Najrān. He told about the Najranites who worshipped idols and about a certain magician who taught magic to the inhabitants of Najrān. When Al-Ṭamir sent his son ‘Abd Allah to the magician, during the journey ‘Abd Allah passed by the tent of Fymywn and was impressed by his prayers and worship so he accepted the faith and professed the unity of God and worshiped him (*waḥḥada Allah wa ‘abadahu*). ‘Abd Allah would like to know the name of God the Supreme and after many attempts he knew it and he treated all the ill people in His name until the interest of the king was aroused. The King tried to kill ‘Abd Allah but he failed. When the King converted to ‘Abd Allah’s faith, the latter died and the Najranites converted too (Al-Ṭabarī, 1958, 21-22).

The Qur’ān finally bears witness to these Christian influences via its language. The divine name *al-Raḥmān* (The Most Compassionate, see for example Furqān 25:60) appears in the inscription of the Ma’rīb Dam, in Yemen (Glaser, 1897, 618), referring to the worship of the king Abraha who usurped the throne in Yemen from 530 ca to 575 AD. He began with the phrase: *بخيل وردا ورحمت رحمن ومسحو ورح قدس* (*bi-khayl wa-rada wa-rahmat raḥmanan wa masihu wa ruḥ qudus*), which means *bi-ḥawl wa quwwa wa rahmat al-raḥman wa masihuhu wa ruḥ qudus* (by the power and strength of al-Rahman and His Messiah, the Holy Spirit). Besides the fact that this inscription attests

⁵³ Al-Tabari, II, <https://al-maktaba.org/book/9783/745> last view on August 2022, pp.19-22

that Abraha was a Christian, it attests the worship of *al-Raḥman*, which was interpreted as a divinity or as a divine name, before the rise of Islam. Further, some orientalist claimed that the deity *al-Raḥman* had origin in the entry of Judaism into Yemen, while some philologists affirm that *al-Raḥman* originates in Hebrew and that it was from South Arabia that the word came into use in Arabic (Jeffery, 1938, 141), instead of *al-Raḥīm* which is an Arabic form (‘Alī, 1993, VI, 38). The word is also reported in another significant passage in the inscription CIH 644 of Sharaḥbi’il Yakuf dynasty in Saba’ (570-595 AD). The inscription reads: رحمن وبنهو كرشتش غلبن (*rḥmnn wa-bnhw krshtsh ghlbn*), which means *al-raḥman wa-ibnuhu al-masih al-ghālib* (the Most Compassionate and His Son The Messiah [the Christ] the Dominant) (Jamme, 1961, 4). This element shows not only the monotheistic religion in that period but also the creed affirming Christ, Son of God, the Dominant. In this case the root *r h m* is attested before the rise of Islam, in Yemen, for Christian usage. The derived words *Raḥman* and *Raḥīm* conserved in the Qur’an show that classic Arabic was not an ex-novo language born with Islam but rather that there could have existed two linguistic scenarios: Arabic is laden with traces of ancient languages spoken by Christian communities who were on the edges of Arabia and who had contact with the Arabic-speaking tribesmen of the interior until the time of Muhammad; or, Arabic was the language of the Christian communities that in their several ecclesial identities were among the tribesmen of Arabia, albeit that their characteristic confessional formulas would have been originally phrased in other languages: Greek, Syriac, Coptic, Armenian, and Ethiopic (Griffith 2008, 8-9).

Philologically, Ethiopic, the ancient language of Abyssinia, was one of the ancient language most closely related to Arabic of all the Semitic tongues. *Lisān al-ḥabasha* (the language of Ethiopians) was almost certainly a medium for trade relations between Abyssinia and Arabia at a much earlier period than the Aksumite occupation of Yemen. Many Ethiopic words of cultural significance may have come into current use in Arabia through commercial and political interactions (Jeffery, 1938, 13). It is hard to believe that the religious sphere could have remained outside this interaction. As Andrae spoke about this Axumite occupation:

mit den neuen Herrschern kamen aber sicher auch Geistliche herüber, und wir dürfen annehmen, dass eine grosse Zahl der athiopischen Lehnwörter als Bezeichnung für kultische und religiöse Dinge, die uns im Koran begegnen, während dieser Periode ihren Weg in den arabischen Sprachschatz gefunden haben.

(Andrae, 1926, 15)⁵⁴

With regard to terms of a probable Ethiopian origin,⁵⁵ Jeffery (1938) in *The Foreign Vocabulary of the Qur'ān* indicates as borrowings from Abyssinia *ḥawāriyūn*, (apostles), *tābūt* (Ark of the Covenant or the box containing the sacred books and vessels in the Abyssinian Church), *rajīm* (cursed), contained in Glaser's South Arabian inscriptions collection, *bashshara* (to bring tidings), used in the Raḥman inscription. Noldeke in *Neue Beiträge* shows that *tasbīḥ* (act of praise), *qiss* (priest), *injīl* (Gospel) are of the same origin.

Other words may be included in the above list, but the multiplicity of languages sharing roots does not allow for a clear distinction of the language of origin. In addition, the socio-cultural context and power relations further complicate the tracking of words. What emerges from the study of philology is the confirmation that there was close contact between the tongues, a transmission of vocabulary from one language to another and the consequent sharing of it.

Finally, the essential point here is to note that the existence of these words, belonging to linguistic varieties that established themselves within the Arabic language, attests to Christian influence up to the al-Ḥijāz and that they were adopted in Qur'anic language and remain to this day in the language of the church.

In the center of Peninsula Arabica and Mecca

⁵⁴ Translation: But the new rulers were certainly accompanied by spiritual rulers, and we may assume that a large number of the Ethiopian loan words used to refer to cults and religious things that we encounter in the Qur'ān found their way into the Arabic vocabulary during this period.

⁵⁵ In *al-Mufaṣṣal* III, p. 538 'Alī generally spoke about Ethiopian Christians influence on the Yemen Christian people's language without specifying which words were introduced by the Ethiopians. Instead, Mingana (1927, 80) stated that "the foreign influences on the style and terminology of the Qur'ān Ethiopic would represent about 5 per cent of the total, Hebrew about 10 per cent, the Greco-Roman languages about 10 per cent, Persian about 5 per cent, and Syriac (including Aramaic and Palestinian Syriac) about 70 per cent."

Sources that attested to Christianity in and around Mecca are few. Nothing attests to a strong Christian presence and an episcopal see which organised and controlled it. There is a startling reference to Masājid Maryam, the praying places of Maryam, outside Mecca on the way to Medina (Al-Maqdisi, 1877, III, 77); and on the Ka'ba itself there was a picture of the Virgin Mary and also one of Jesus in 630, when Muḥammad conquered the city (Al-Azraqī, 1964, 165). But, Christianity spread thanks to merchants who sold wine from al-Hira to Mecca (Wellhausen, 1897, 231-232); they formed very strong trade links and they brought with them Christian thought. There was superficial knowledge of Christian denominations, religious practices, doctrine, legends and stories of the Holy Bible but, undoubtedly they were widespread. Another important city with commercial links was Baṣra in particular for wine and grain (Sartre, 1985, 129-131).

On the Eve of Islam, among the inhabitants of Mecca, there was a group of Christian displaced strangers including slaves, traders, preachers and professional workers. The role of the slaves was particular: they could read and write, they knew the affairs of their religion; and many of them who had not spoken Arabic:

يرطنون بها, أو يتلعثمون ومنهم من كان لا يعرف شيئا منها, أو لا يعرف منها إلا القليل من

الكلمات.

(‘Ali, VI, 603)⁵⁶

The city of Mecca was also reached by Abyssinian Christians in the early sixth century. They left an impact on the language of the people of Mecca. In fact, not a few Christian terms of Abyssinian origin have been ingrained in the Arabic language. For example, beyond the terms listed above, *mā'ida* (plate), *miḥrāb* (altar), *mi'rāj* (ascension to heaven), *munāfiq* (hypocrite), *shayṭān* (demon) were Abyssinian (Wellhausen, 231-232).

⁵⁶ Translation: They pronounced words that they did not understand or stuttered them and some of them knew nothing of it or a few words are known.

II. State of the Church(es) of Arabia

From the III century, an episcopal hierarchy was organised in the province of Arabia which sent its representatives to the Councils. Only at the Council of Chalcedon were seventeen bishops present from this province (Devresse, 1945, 211); religious life was spreading and the centres for this radiation were multiple. The Orthodox missions were above all concerned with bringing heretics back to the truth of the Church, while the Monophysite and Nestorian missionaries, for their part, preached the polytheistic Bedouins with tireless fervour.

The antagonism of Byzantium and Persia is naturally found on the religious level in the struggle between the Nestorians, welcomed by the Sassanids and in al-Hira, and the Syriac-Palestinian Monophysites. The result of these christological quarrels, in which rivalries and personal ambition occupied as much space as theological opposition, was found in the final triumph of Nestorianism. This doctrine was widespread, on the Eve of Islam, among all the tribes of the Syrian-Palestinian lands and it was the reason why Arabia was called the land of heretics.

In addition, from this general picture we find that the pre-Islamic Middle East and Arabian Peninsula were multilingual places;⁵⁷ on the one hand it cannot therefore be excluded that a person could speak a certain language in everyday life and another language for writing and worship. For this reason, it is at times difficult to know when exactly it was that Arabic speakers who converted to Christianity worshipped in Arabic and to follow the linguistic evolution of ecclesiastical activities. This is due to the fact

⁵⁷ See: A. al-Jallad, The Linguistic Landscape of pre-Islamic Arabia, Context for the Qur'an, Ch. 7, in M. Shah, M.A.S. Abdel Halim ed., *The Oxford Handbook of Qur'anic Studies*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2020; A. Beeston, Languages of Pre-Islamic Arabia, *Arabica*, 28(2-3), 178-186, 1981; M.C.A. Macdonald, Reflections On the Linguistic Map of Pre-Islamic Arabia, *Arabian Archeology and Epigraphy*, Oxford, UK, Oriental Institute and Wolfson College, II, 2000, 28-79; Ibid., Ancient North Arabian, in R.D. Woodard ed., *The Cambridge encyclopedia of the world's ancient languages*, Ch. 16, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2004, 488-533; N. Nebes and P. Stein, Ancient South Arabian, Roger D. Woodard, *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of the World's Ancient Languages*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2004, 454-487; Robin, Les Langues de la Péninsule Arabique in C. J. Robin ed., *L'Arabie antique de Karib'il à Mahomet. Nouvelles données sur l'histoire des Arabes grâce aux inscriptions*, in *Revue du Monde Musulman et de la Méditerranée*, 61, Aix-en-Provence, Édisud, 1991, 89-111.

that the connections between the languages people spoke, the language they wrote, their names, and their places of geographic origin are hard to pin down. On the other hand, the fact cannot be excluded that the conversion of Arabic speakers to Christianity meant that Arabic became a language used by Christians for religious purposes since religious issues became an integral part of the life of the tribes as we have mentioned above, and which we will take up later from some anecdotes.

Finally, the existence of Arabic-speaking Christian communities for several centuries before the rise of Islam, the existence of churches and monasteries in areas where Arabic-speaking Christians lived, as at al-Ḥira and in Najrān, the solid presence of the Arab Church in relations with other churches and the existence of inscriptions which will be illustrated below, are factors that strengthen our purpose in re-evaluating the language of a time and to place it in a modern framework.

II. Christianity in Arabic

I. Historical evidence

Whether sedentary or nomadic, Arab society, in all eras, appears as a conglomerate of clans and tribes. There were tribes which were entirely Christian or partly so, such as the Tanūkh, Taghlib, Banū 'Iyād and others and, as we have mentioned above, some tribes remained Christian even after the rise of Islam. During the expansion of Christianity, the languages of the Arabian Peninsula were different and influenced each other given the mixing of peoples due to religious or socio-political reasons. The question of the birth of the Arabic language is still debated. A tradition claimed the fact that Arabic writing was brought to Ḥijaz, al-‘Anbār and al-Ḥira and that it was composed by Christian men from Bawlān of Tī' who lived in al-‘Anbār.⁵⁸ The Qur'ān itself relates that the Arabic language was the language of peoples of that time (Surat

⁵⁸ See: Al-Sīyūfī, *Al-Mazhar* I, 39, <https://al-maktaba.org/book/6936/780> (last view on 7 October 2022); Ibn al-Nadīm, *Al-Fihrist*, Beirut, Dār al-Ma'rifa, 1978, 6-7; Ibn 'Abd Rabbih, *al-'aqd al-farid*, II, Mufīd Muhammad Qamīha ed., Beirut, Dār al-kutub al-'ilmiyya, 2006, 205.

Yusef 2). This means that Arabic was already spoken before Islam. Muslim scholars and Arab grammarians of the eighth century took the Qur'ān as their standard and as the only correct Arabic language (Fischer, 2006, 397); otherwise, to standardise Classical Arabic, Arab grammarians reported that Bedouin informants had provided them with information about the poetic language and that they spoke an Arabic dialect akin to Classical Arabic (Fischer, 2006, 400). As a consequence, its *langue* must be defined as such, discarding all “foreign” influence in its literature. Haywood adds that Arabs did not admit foreign influence because it detracts from their own achievements (1965, 3). These elements strengthen once again the thesis that claims the existence of Arabic language before Islam. However, the language of Qur'ān and the poetic tradition became the official and educated language during the first century of the caliphate of the Islamic empire placing the ancient Semitic languages at a secondary level. But, these languages survived for a indefinite time; al-Ḥamdānī described the linguistic state of affairs in the X century and claimed that not all peoples of Arabia spoke correct Arabic citing one hundred and thirteen regions or tribes and describing their level of Arabic (Rabin, 1951, 43-44).

Within the varieties of the Arabic language what will be analysed is the Middle Arabic used by Jews and Christians in the early Islamic period for translating biblical texts. With regard to the language used by Christians, Henry (2006, 383) distinguishes chronologically two forms of Christian Middle Arabic according to the date of the texts written in it: Early Christian Middle Arabic (back to the 9th or the 10th century) and Late Christian Middle Arabic (after the year 1000). As I go on with my study of the Christian Arabic language, I will analyse the terminology used to express theology and try to identify the context in which it was produced in order to understand its expressiveness.

We cannot ignore that Christianity introduced its vocabulary into the languages of the Arabian Peninsula and enriched them. In the following chapters I will perform a lexicographic check. But, the question that emerges here is whether the language of the

Christians was different from that of the Muslims as they understood each other. What if the languages they spoke were as different? We take an example from the traditional data relating the conferences held by Mohammed, in 631 AD, with deputations from the South: not once is it said that the Yemeni delegates used Southern Arabic in their message and, as Régis Blachère (1952, 12) claimed, the Muslim authors do not bear any traces of difficulties in being understood met by these South Arabians in Medina.

To take an example, Al-Ṭabārī (839-923 AD) reported a debate between the Prophet and a group of Christians of Najrān on Christ's identity.

فسألوه ما يقول في عيسى. فقال : هو عبدالله وروحه وكلمته. قالوا هم: لا، ولكنه هو الله نزل من ملكه، فدخل في جوف مريم، ثم خرج منها فأرانا قدرته وأمره. فهل رأيت قط إنسانا خلق من غير أب؟ فأنزل الله عز وجل.

(Al-Ṭabārī VI, 470)⁵⁹

This is an example to start exploring the language used to speak about the Incarnation and to understand what was the language of that time and how it was translated into Arabic.

From this dialogue reported by Al-Ṭabārī I understand that there were no translators present or misunderstandings on both sides. Christians understand the Prophet's answer and reply explaining the work of Christ in an understandable Arabic language using specific doctrinal words.

Since this is a linguistic and lexicographical study I cannot avoid making notes on the language reported. My observation stems from the expression *dakhala fī jawf Maryam* but, more precisely, from the word *jawf* being used, according to my biblical knowledge, in an unusual way in the above passage in reference to the Incarnation. In *The Doha Historical Dictionary of Arabic* the word *jawf* (womb) means *bāṭin wa 'umq al-shay'*, namely the internal and the depth of the object. But, the first question I raise is why did Al-Ṭabārī not use the word *baṭn* (womb) or other words like *ḥabala* or *ḥasha'*

⁵⁹ Translation: They asked him what he said on 'Isa. And he said: he is the servant of God, His Spirit and His word. They said: no, but he is God who came down from His Reign and entered the womb of Mary. Then, he emerged and showed us His ability and His authority. Have you ever seen a human being created without a father? God Almighty revealed.

or their derivatives? According to the context, the two biblical narrations pertaining to what Al-Ṭabārī reported are in Matthew 1:18,⁶⁰ Luke 1:41-42⁶¹ and Luke 2:21.⁶²

Here I raise a few questions: what is the meaning of the word *jawf* as used by Christians? In narrating this historical encounter between these early Christians and Muhammed, did al-Al-Ṭabārī have access to an existing Arabic translation? What Arabic version of the Bible did the early Christians use? To start answering these questions I have taken up Kashouh's classification of the Gospel manuscripts and I have consulted the oldest versions of the Gospels to try to understand the origin of the use of the word *jawf*. As explained in the introduction to this work, I have consulted the following manuscripts: Vatican, Arabic 13, Vatican, Arabic 17 and 18, Sinai, Arabic 70, Sinai, Arabic 72 and Beirut B.O., Or 430 for passages not present in Vatican Arabic 13. I extrapolated the verses from the oldest known manuscript translated from the Peshitta Syriac, Vatican, Arabic 13, to verify the adopted terminology before the rise of Islam. Then, I extrapolated from two manuscripts copied after the death of Al-Ṭabārī and their terminology a step toward the Qur'ān, Vatican Arabic 17 and 18;⁶³ from manuscripts dated to IX century, one presents a more smothered Arabic text, Sinai Arabic 72 and the other whose language is classified as Middle Arabic, Arabic 70. I deduce that these last manuscripts must have emerged in an Islamic milieu and the aim of them was to communicate the Gospel through linguistic features familiar to Muslims or influenced by them. These characteristics could fit in with the historical context reported by Al-Ṭabārī.

⁶⁰ In the *inter-confessional Arabic translation* version:

وهذه سيرة ميلاد يسوع المسيح: كانت أمه مريم مخطوبة ليوסף فتبين قبل أن تسكن معه أنها حُبلى من الروح القدس.

⁶¹ In the *inter-confessional Arabic translation* version:

سمعت أليصابات سلام مريم، تحرك الجنين في بطنها فهتفت بأعلى صوتها مباركة أنت في النساء ومبارك ابنك. ثمرة بطنك.

⁶² In the *inter-confessional Arabic translation* version:

ولما بلغ الطفل يومه الثامن، وهو يوم ختانه، سمي يسوع، كما سماه الملاك قبلما حبلت به مريم.

⁶³ As regards Vatican Arabic 17 and 18, I extracted the two passages of St. Luke from *Naṣr* (2011) but for reasons of legibility I could transcribe the verse of Matthew from the manuscripts.

Now I quote the verses from the different manuscripts as they are written.⁶⁴

Matthew 1:18⁶⁵

Vat. Ar. 13 (Folio 1v)	اما ولاد يسوع المسيح فها كذا كان اذ كانت مريم امه خطيبه ليوسف قبل ان يشتركا وجدت <u>حب</u> ل من روح القدس.
Sin Ar 70 (Folio 4v)	() كان مولد يسوع المسيح عند ما كانت مريم امه خطيبه يوسف من قبل ان يعرفها وجدت <u>حبلى</u> من روح القدس.
Sin Ar 72 (fFolio 3v)	اما مولد يسوع المسيح هكذا كان لما خطبت مريم أمه ليوسف ومن قبل ان يجتمعا وجدت <u>حبلا</u> من روح القدس.

Luke 1:41-42:

Beirut B.O., 430 (folio 86r)	لما سمعت الشبوع سلام مريم جدل الجنين في احشاهها فامتلات الشبوع روح القدس ونادت بصوت وقالت لمريم مباركة انت في النساء ومبارك ثمرة <u>احشاك</u> .
Sin Ar 70 (Folio 57v)	حيث سمعت سلام مريم اهتز الولد في بطنها وامتلت الشبوع روح القدس وصرخت بصوت عالي وقالت لمريم () مباركه في النساء ومباركة الثمرة () في <u>بطنك</u> .
Sin Ar 72 (Folio 59r)	فكان لما ان سمعت الاسابك سلم مريم عرض الصبى في بطنها وامتلت الاسابك من روح القدس وصاحت بصوت عظيم وقالت مباركة انت من النساء ومباركة هي ثمرة <u>بطنك</u> .
Vat. Ar. 17 and 18	فحين استمعت منها ما سلمت انقلب جنينها في المثوى، وامتلات أليشبع من روح القدس، فأبانت بصوت علا: يا مريم لقد بوركت من النساء، وبوركت ثمرة لك في <u>حشى</u> !

⁶⁴ The symbol () means that some words in the manuscript are incomprehensible. When () contains a letter it is my addition.

⁶⁵ Both Vat. Ar.13 and Beirut B.O., 430 reported ḥubl.

Luke 2:21

Beirut B.O., 430 (Folio 88r)	فلما انقضت ثمانية ايام يختن الصبى دعى اسمه يشوع الذي سماه الملاك قبل ان <u>يحمل في البطن</u> .
Sin Ar 70 (Folio 59r)	وحين تم ثمانية ايام يختن الصبى دعى اسمه يسوع () يدعى به من الملاك قبل ان <u>يحبلى به البطن</u> .
Sin Ar 72 (Folio 60r)	فلما تمت ثمانية ايام ليختنوه دعى اسمه يسوع كما مدعى من الملاك () <u>حبلى به في البطن</u> .
Vat. Ar. 17 and 18	ونجرت لإعذاره أيام ثمانية فدعوه بعيسى، كالذي كانت له من الملاك قبل <u>الحمل التسمية</u> .

The first observation that can be drawn from these translations is that there is no trace of the word *jawf* to indicate the Incarnation, but from this comparison one can understand that there were other terms commonly used. The words or the expressions extrapolated are: *hubla* (pregnant), *haml* (pregnancy), *hasha'* (viscera), *batn* (womb) and *hamala fi-al-batn* (to carry in the womb), *habala bihi (fi)-al-batn* (conceive).⁶⁶

In addition to the biblical sources, the liturgical sources which attest to the doctrine of the Incarnation are the daily hymns of the Coptic Church dedicated to the Virgin Mary. One maintains the use of the above words and adds *kharaja mn batn* (to come out from the womb), *halla fi al-batn/fi-al-hasha'* (to dwell in the womb/viscera), *wujida fi al-batn* (he was found in the womb), *ata batn al-'adhra'* (come to the womb of the Virgin).

I report some examples. In *Bi Oyk*⁶⁷ (The bread) hymn the faithful recite:

⁶⁶ Note that Vat. Ar 17 and 18 use the word *mathwa* (dwelling) but in reference to the womb of St. Elizabeth and not St. Mary. This word also does not appear in Christian texts and is present in the Qur'an (al-Zumar 32 and al-Fuṣilat 24)

⁶⁷ This Hymn is sung during the distribution of the Holy Mysteries at the end of the Holy Mass in the Coptic Church. See *Al-khulājy al-muqaddass wa khidmat al-shammas*, Maktabat al-maḥabba, Shubra, Cairo, 2008, p.128

خبز الحياة الذي نزل إلينا من السماء، وهب الحياة للعالم. وأنت أيضا يا مريم، حملت في بطنك المن العقلي الذي أتى من الأب". ولدته بغير دنس، وأعطانا جسده ودمه الكريم، فحيينا إلى الأبد.⁶⁸

Even in the Hymns of the *Thī'utūkiyyāt* (See the Glossary), the same word is repeated. In the Sunday Theotokiya is recited:

وأنت يا مريم ألوف ألوف وربوات ربوات يظللان عليك "مسبحين خالقهم، وهو في بطنك. هذا الذي أخذ شبها.⁶⁹

In the Tuesday *Thī'utūkiyyā* (*Al-'Abṣalmudiyya al-muqaddasa*, 302-303; 309-310):
أي ابن الله الذي أتى وحل في بطنك ونار لاهوته لم تحرق جسديك . وُجد مخلصنا يسوع في بطنك وولدته الى العالم حتى خلصنا . الساكن في النور غير المقرب إليه حل في بطنها تسعة شهور.⁷⁰

In the Wednesday *Thī'utūkiyyā* (*Al-'Abṣalmudiyya al-muqaddasa*, 330):
من تخافه الملائكة حملته مريم العذراء في بطنها.⁷¹

In the Thursday *Thī'utūkiyyā* (*Al-'Abṣalmudiyya al-muqaddasa*, 343):
ونار لاهوته لم تحرق بطن العذراء وأيضا بعد ما ولدته بقيت عذراء. يا لكرامة الحبل الذي للبطن البتولي والوالد الإله بغير زرع اذ شهد الملاك. طأطأ سماء السموات وأتى بطن العذراء وصار انسانا مثلنا ما خلا الخطية وحدها.⁷²

In the Friday *Thī'utūkiyyā* (*Al-'Abṣalmudiyya al-muqaddasa*, 375):
الكائن قبل الدهور أتى وتجسد منك عتيق الأيام خرج من بطنك.⁷³

In the Saturday *Thī'utūkiyyā* (*Al-'Abṣalmudiyya al-muqaddasa*, 400):

⁶⁸ The translation: the bread of life, which comes down from heaven and gave life unto the world. You too O Mary, have carried in your womb, the rational Manna, that came from the Father. You bore Him without blemish, He gave unto us, His honored Body and Blood, and we Lived forever.

⁶⁹ Translation: You too O Mary, thousands of thousands, and myriads of myriads, overshadow you. Praising their Creator, who was in your womb, and took our likeness, without sin or alteration.

⁷⁰ Translation: This is the Son of God, who dwelt in your womb, the fire of His divinity, did not burn your body. Our Saviour Jesus, was found in your womb, you bore Him for the world, that He may save us. He who abides in light, that is unapproachable, dwelt in her womb, for nine months.

⁷¹ Translation: The One feared by the angels, Mary the Virgin, has carried, in her womb.

⁷² Translation: The fire of His divinity, did not burn the womb of the Virgin, and after she bore Him, she remained a virgin. O what an honour to the conception, of the virginal womb, that bore God without seed, as the angel witnessed. He bowed the heaven of heavens, and came to the womb of the Virgin, He became man like us, save for sin only.

⁷³ Translation: He who existed before all ages, came and was incarnate of you, and the Ancient of Days, came out of your womb.

سلامنا إلى من قبلت غير المحوى في بطنها وبتولييتها مختومة من كل ناحية.⁷⁴

In the Saturday *Thī'utūkiyyā* Lubsh (*Al-'Abṣalmudiyya al-muqaddasa*, 405):⁷⁵
لأن مسرة الأب كانت في حبلك وظهور الابن كان في أحشائك.⁷⁶

Or, in *al-Dhukṣūlūjyya*⁷⁷ for the Virgin Mary of the Midnight prayer
(*Al-'Abṣalmudiyya al-muqaddasa*, 511):

ولدت لنا عمانوئيل من أحشائك البتول وصيرنا وارثين في ملكوت السموات.⁷⁸

In addition, to refer to the Virgin Mary we found the word 'ahsha' instead of jawf in the Holy Mass. In the section of the father in Christmas fasting and at Christmas the priest recites (*Al-khūlājī al-muqaddass*, 2008, 199):

أتى وحل في الحشاء البتولي الغير الدنس ولدته وهي عذراء وبتولييتها مختومة.⁷⁹

On the contrary, the word *jawf* is registered in the Qur'ān in Sūrat al-'Ahzāb (v.4):

مَا جَعَلَ اللَّهُ لِرَجُلٍ مِنْ قَلْبَيْنِ فِي جَوْفِهِ ۚ وَمَا جَعَلَ أَرْوَاجَكُمْ اللَّائِي تُظَاهِرُونَ مِنْهُنَّ أُمَّهَاتِكُمْ ۚ وَمَا جَعَلَ أَدْعِيَاءَكُمْ أَبْنَاءَكُمْ ۚ ذَلِكُمْ قَوْلُكُمْ بِأَفْوَاهِكُمْ ۗ وَاللَّهُ يَقُولُ الْحَقَّ وَهُوَ يَهْدِي السَّبِيلَ.⁸⁰

The question at this point is to verify whether the word *jawf* is used in other contexts as that of the Qur'ān or whether the word is not used at all. The Gospels tell of man's interior in two verses: Matthew 15:17 and Mark 7:19. In the old manuscripts consulted in this research (Vatican, Arabic 13, Beirut B.O., Or 430 Sinai 70, Sinai 72) also record in this case the word *batn* instead of *jawf*. The same applies to the translation of al-'Assāl. But, more recent translations, like *The inter-confessional* and *B.-Van-Dyck*

⁷⁴ Translation: We hail the one who did accept, the Infinite One in her womb, and her virginity, was sealed from all sides.

⁷⁵ The *Lubsh* is a final and summary chanted part after the *Thī'utūkiyyāt*. The word *Lubsh* is Coptic and means crown or completing.

⁷⁶ Translation: The joy of the Father, was in your conception, and the Coming of the Son, was in your womb.

⁷⁷ This is a glorification prayer for receiving benediction. There are different *Dhukṣūlūjyya* for feasts, angels and Saints too.

⁷⁸ Translation: You gave birth to Emmanuel, out of your virginal womb, and He has made us heirs, to the kingdom of heaven.

⁷⁹ Translation: He has come down and dwelt in the undefiled virginal womb. She, being a virgin, gave birth to Him, and her virginity is sealed.

⁸⁰ Translation from www.quran.com. Sūrat al-'Ahzāb v.4. "Allah does not place two hearts in any person's chest..."

record *jawf* in the two verses.⁸¹ Hence only translations from modern times recognise the meaning of *dākhil al-shay'* in the word *jawf*.

I can conclude from this preliminary analysis that the word *jawf* or the expression *dakhala fi jawf Maryam* are not used to indicate the Incarnation of Christ in the oldest versions of the Gospels or in the Christian sources consulted and that the words *batn* and *hasha'* are privileged. At this point, the reflections that can be made are multiple and on different levels. I think that each of these reflections can be put forward for further investigation in the future.

The event of the Prophet's meeting with some Christians of Najrān is not reported in Christian sources; this is all the more reason to suggest that the use of the word is purely Islamic in nature.

At a level of translation of the sacred text we cannot completely rule out the hypothesis that other versions of the Gospels, in addition to those consulted, existed at the time of al-Ṭabārī who lived between the ninth and tenth centuries. In addition, al-Ṭabārī was a contemporary of Christian authors who were already writing in Arabic,⁸² thus he may have had access to works in Arabic produced prior to his birth or during his life.

But, it is likely that Al-Ṭabārī did not consult an Arabic Bible or other Christian sources. Since it was a dialogue reported by the historian, it could simply have been a linguistic choice on the part of the historian, according to his *habitus*, i.e. his education, religion, internalised dispositions etc.

At this point, I think the use of the word *jawf* to describe the *interior* of the Virgin Mary may be accepted from a linguistic point of view but, from the point of view of a formulation of the doctrine of the Incarnation, it is also true that over time there was an

⁸¹ Matthew 15:17 : ألا تعرفون أن ما يدخل فم الإنسان ينزل إلى الجوف، ومنه إلى خارج الجسد؟

Mark 7:19: لأنه لا يدخل إلى قلبه، بل إلى جوفه، ثم يخرج من الجسد؟

(From *The inter-confessional* version)

⁸² In the second chapter, I will deal with the first authors who wrote in Arabic and distinguished themselves for their language as Abū Qurrah who was alive as late as 816 A.D., Abū Ra'īṭa al-Takrītī who died in 835 ca, and 'Ammār al-Baṣri who died in 850 ca.

evolution and then a fixed terminology in this lexical field, characterised by a multiplicity of expressions where *jawf* was excluded.

Finally, it is possible that at the time of the Prophet, Christians had had linguistic knowledge to explain religious matters in one of the spoken varieties of Arabic at least, and that this language was refined and expanded successively through the literature produced by theologians.

It is hard to accept the fact that the established Church among the Arabs did not feel the need to produce liturgical texts in their native language, especially when we think that Arabic was the language of Christians before Muslims and that a number of tribes had converted to Christianity in the late fourth century in Iraq, Yemen and Al-Ḥijāz. To convert people, it is essential to speak the language of these peoples and, with the progress in the spread of Christianity, interest in the Christian liturgy and Bible should grow. Consequently, we would expect the result to be the evident construction of an Arabic Christian vocabulary, at least in the sphere that concerns daily use, that is, the liturgical.

Thus, the existence of the Christian-Arabs dates back to Pentecost when the Holy Spirit descended on the Apostles before the eyes of many peoples, including Arabs. From a biblical point of view, the famous source of the Acts of the Apostles (Act 2:11) or the testimony of Saint Paul who went to Arabia and returned to Damascus (Gal 1:17), we know that there were Arabic peoples who became Christian before the birth of Islam, and consequently, we deduce, that a Christian vocabulary was incorporated, at least orally, in the language of the Arabs of that time. As foreign words are included in the Qur'ān and in the Arabic language today⁸³ there have been words that acquired a Christian meaning and are an integral part of the Arabic language.

If we go deeper with our reasoning, analyzing the content of St Peter's discourse is unavoidable. Through the monologue of Saint Peter peoples knew Jesus Christ, His death and Resurrection and they knew repentance, the Baptism and the gift of the Holy

⁸³ See the work of A. Jeffery, *The Foreign Vocabulary of the Quran*, Baroda, Oriental Institutes Baroda, 1938

Spirit. While, we cannot deny that the concepts of death and resurrection did not exist in Jewish tradition and in pagan tradition, the Resurrection became the center of the Apostolic evangelisation. Thus, the meaning of the word resurrection (*qiyāma*) was understandable and in that time the apostles introduced a Christian meaning of the word.

From an etymological point of view the word *qiyāma* is related to the root *q w m* as Arabic dictionaries⁸⁴ relate to it. It is also stated that the word is derived from Christian Aramaic though it is more similar to the Christian-Palestinian dialect (Jeffrey, 244). *Qiyāma* is registered in the verses of the Arabic-Christian poet ‘Adī Ibn Zayd al-‘Ibādī dated to 619 AD as follows:

سَأَكْسِبُ مَجْدًا، أَوْ تَقُومَ قِيَامَتِي عَلَيَّ بَلِيلٍ، نَادِبَاتِي وَعُودِي
يُنْحَنَ عَلَى مَيِّتٍ، وَيُعَلِّنَ رَتَّةً تُورِقُ عَيْنِي كُلَّ بَاكِ وَمُسْعَدِ

As in the verses of ‘Abīd Ibn al-‘Abraṣ (Wien, 1880):

أَنْتَ الْمَلِيكُ عَلَيْهِمْ وَهُمْ الْعَبِيدُ إِلَى الْقِيَامَةِ

The word is also reported in the verses of ‘Abū Ṭālib in 619 AD:

اعْلَمْ أبا أروى بِأَنَّكَ مَا جِدُّ مِنْ صُلْبِ شَيْبَةٍ فَانصُرَنَّ مُحَمَّدًا
شَرُفُ الْقِيَامَةِ وَالْمَعَادِ بِنَصْرِهِ وَبِعَاجِلِ الدُّنْيَا تَحُوزُ السُّودَدَا

The word is the name of a Sūra in the Qur’ān, and it is cited also in sūrat al-kahf v.105:

أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بِآيَاتِ رَبِّهِمْ وَلِقَائِهِ فَحَبِطَتْ أَعْمَالُهُمْ فَلَا نُقِيمُ لَهُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ وَزَنًا.
(Sūrat al-kahf, v.105)⁸⁵

In addition, to explain this word *The Doha Historical Dictionary of Arabic* reports this meaning: يوم بعث الناس من القبور للحساب.⁸⁶ We notice that this uses the word *ba‘th* to explain the entry as in the *Greek English Arabic Dictionary* in which the word is translated by *qiyāma, qiyām, nuhūd, inbi’āth, ‘ihyā’ mawta*. In addition, Graf (1954)

⁸⁴ See for example: Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-‘Arab*, XII, Iran, Nashru ‘adab al-ḥawza, 1984, 506

⁸⁵ The translation is from the Penrice dictionary p.123: “And we will allow them (their works) no weight on the day of resurrection.”

⁸⁶ Translation: the day people arise from their graves to judgement.

indicated this as being a Melkite word with the meaning of *gebet, lied zum preise der Auferstehung Christi* (prayer, song in praise of Christ's resurrection). A biblical trace of *ba'th is* instead in Beirut B.O., Or, 430 manuscript (John 11:24). Nevertheless, from my research I found that the current word in the lexicographic sources and in the recent biblical translations consulted is *qyāma*. Moreover, being a word that goes back to a pre-existent concept in the Jewish Creed, finally I assume that if the Christians spoke Arabic at that time, or even a similar language, this means that that moment was historically important for the formation of Christian meanings from words which already existed.

This is simply an example of how we observe the development of terms and their usage.

To begin with we must then ask about the Christian Arabs of the first centuries AD. At the same time we follow the history of the Arabic language, the birth of whose writing fluctuates between the third and fourth centuries, with its last stage of formation between the sixth and seventh centuries. Like other languages, the orality of the Arabic language preceded its writing; this is the case, for example, of the Arabic of al-Hijāz. From the first to the fourth century, people wrote in Greek and Armenian in Palmyra, in Greek in Syria and Ḥawrān, in Armenian in the Reign of Edessa, in Nabatea, an Armenian dialect survived until the hijra in Transjordan, Sinai and in northern Arabia as far as Mada'in Salih (Hijra) in the North of Medina (Nau, 95). Christians above all contributed to the creation of alphabets for converting peoples, who were taught to read and write or for facilitating the lecture on the Bible. Here are some examples. Mesrop Mashtots (361/2-440 CE), an Armenian bishop and scholar, invented the Armenian alphabet in 405 CE and the creation of alphabets for Georgia and Caucasian Albania is credited to him.⁸⁷ The Armenian alphabet was the essential tool to translate successively the Bible and ecclesiastical writings starting the Golden Period of Armenian literature,

⁸⁷ See the life of Mashtots by his disciple Koriwn in Terian A., *The life of Mashtots' by his disciple Koriwn: Translated from the classical Armenian with introduction and commentary*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2022, 380-450.

the fifth century. Also the Arian bishop Ulfilas (ca. 311- ca. 383) provided the Goths with an alphabet in the IV century and translated the Bible into Gothic.⁸⁸

Another contribution to the creation of alphabets was among Slav peoples during the Byzantine Empire in the IX century. The sacred rites in all the Churches had long been celebrated in Greek but the brothers Saint Cyril and Saint Methodius, when were sent to Moravia to evangelise, invented an alphabet for the Slavonic language and made it into an effective instrument to bring people closer to Christianity translating Bible and liturgy.⁸⁹ This new alphabet of the two Saints made a fundamental contribution to the formation and development of the culture and the literature of all the Slav nations.

For the Arabic language, the contribution of Christians is evident in some specimens of this writing by Arab Christians of Syria. There are some clues that attest that the Arabic language was developed in the fourth century. We have testimony that oral preceded written Arabic in the oldest and most famous inscription of the Namāra funerary monument, dated 328 A.D., discovered in 1901 and traced by René Dussaud (1902 409-21; 1903, 314-22); it is written in the Nabatean alphabet but in the Arabic language.⁹⁰ In addition, to cite James A. Bellamy (1985, 46), “the language of the epitaph is the same language that we encounter in pre-Islamic poetry.” It is the funerary monument of Imru’ al-Qays b. ‘Amr who was the second Laḥmid king of al-Ḥīrah. It testifies to the relationships between the Romans and the Arabs in that period and the impact of Christianity in Arabia, though it does not report any relevant Christian terms for our study, except the root *m l k* from which words like *malaka* (to reign) derive. Nevertheless, the words of this epigraph revolve around the domains of the kingdom, defeat and death, which, in some ways, recall biblical themes.⁹¹

⁸⁸ See Philostorgius, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, in ed. J.P. Migne, *Patrologia Graeca cursus completus*, Vol. 65, Paris, Petit-Montrouge Excudebatur et venit apud J.P. Migne editorem II, 3, 1864; Socrates, *Historia Ecclesiastica* in *ibid.*, IV, 33; Sozomenus, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, in *ibid.*, Vol. 67, VI, 37.

⁸⁹ See *Slavorum Apostoli* in https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_19850602_slavorum-apostoli.html

⁹⁰ For a Consultation of Arabic Epigraphy see: Ét. Combe, J. Sauvaget et G. Wiet, *Répertoire chronologique d'épigraphie arabe*, T. 1 [- XVI], Le Caire, Imprimerie de l'Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale, 1931-1956.

⁹¹ A reproduction of the inscription is in R. Dussaud, *Mission scientifique dans les régions désertiques de la Syrie moyenne*, Paris, Imprimerie Nationale, 1903, p.315

Few literary vestiges of this historical period have survived but, apart from the Namāra inscription, other inscriptions were discovered such as the Arabic inscription of Zebed post 512 AD⁹² testifying to the worship of Saint Sergius, and the Arabic inscription of Ḥarrān of 568 AD.⁹³

If we continue our search chronologically we must dwell on the ecclesiastical historian Sozomen who recorded the revolt of Queen Mavia during the reign of Valens in *Historia Ecclesiastica*, as mentioned above.⁹⁴ The historian told about the consecration of Moses as the bishop of the Saracens, the conversion to Christianity of the whole tribe of Zokomos, the *eponymous* founder of the Salīhid dynasty, the Arab foederati of Byzantium in the V century and, the earliest attestation of Arabic poetry, which “les Sarrasins l’ont mis dans leurs chants” (Sozomen, 459), in praise of Mavia’s victories. The odes are not extant but they attest the presence of poetry already in the pre-Islamic era. We can deduce from the Namara inscription and from the odes of Mavia’s reign the fact that Arabic in the fourth century was both a written and a literary language and, if Arabic was such a well-developed language for expressing pre-Islamic poetry, it had therefore reached a very high level of literary expressiveness, and was ready to express the Christian liturgy and to accommodate easily the religious concepts of the new faith.

Another witness is reported by St. Epiphanius on the religious life of the pagan Arabs of Petra who celebrated the epiphany of Venus in the Arabic language (Fahd, 1968, 204). He stated that the people of Petra “hymn the praises of the virgin in the Arabic dialect or language, calling her in Arabic *Χορῶν*, that is, ‘Korē’.” The fact that the

⁹² Discovered by Sachau 1879, it testified to the cult of Saint Sergius and to the fact that the Christian Arabs of Syria had an alphabet before hijra. I quote the text as it stands: بنصر الإله سرجو بر أمت منفو وطيباء بر مر القيس وسرجو بر سعدو وسترو وسرجو (With the help of God, Sergius, son of Amat Manaf, and Tobi, son of Imru’l-qais, and Sergius, son of Sa’d, and Sitr, and Sergius). See the interpretation of M.A. Kugener, Nouvelle note Sur l’inscription trilingue de Zébed, *Rivista degli studi orientali*, 1908, Vol. 1, Fasc. 4, 583-584.

⁹³ For a consultation see R. Dussaud et F. Macler, *Mission scientifique dans les régions désertiques de la Syrie moyenne*, Paris, Imprimerie Nationale, 1903, 19

⁹⁴ The standard edition of Sozomen’s *Historia Ecclesiastica* is that of J. Bidez in GCS, Livre VI, Chapitre 38, pp.457-465

Arabs of Petra celebrated their pagan liturgy through the medium of the Arabic language indicates that Arabic was appropriate for liturgical expression.

At this point, the question which arises concerns ritual texts, written or oral. In particular, one of the most important rites to take into account is the liturgy which, for all Christians communities, is characterised by biblical passages, psalms, prayers, and lessons. Hence, as Armenians, Syriacs, Copts, and Ethiopians developed their own liturgies, why should the Arabs have not developed their own in a period characterized by the spread of public Christian worship and the standardisation of a form of the liturgy as a result of the christological controversies which characterized the fourth century onward?

According to my research *barech/bārik* is an Aramaic/Hebrew liturgical term and the only one recorded in historical sources. It occurs in Jerome's Life of St. Hilarion (Jerome, 1893, 303-15) and is pronounced by the Saracens of Elusa to ask St. Hilarion to bless them,⁹⁵ and the Saint then converted them. It is not clear whether they knew Syriac together with Arabic, but spoke Syriac in order to communicate with the saint. However, the word employed by Syriac and Arabic for bless are homophonous; in particular, according to Jeffery, the root acquired the sense of to bless in the North Semitic area, and then it passed to the South Semitic area. In addition, in the first century of Hijra, this word was used by al-'Ajjāj Abū al-Sha'thā' 'Abd Allah ibn Ru'ba (born during the caliphate of 'Uthmān),⁹⁶ a poet of the Tamīm tribe, who resided mainly in al-Baṣra and whose verses are frequently cited by lexicographers and are characterized by a verbal richness. We find in *qaṣīda*:⁹⁷

وَلَوْ رَأَى الشُّعْرَاءُ دَيَّخُوا
وَلَوْ أَقُولُ بَرَّخُوا لَبَرَّخُوا
لِمَارَ سَرْجِيسَ وَقَدْ تَدَخَّخُوا

⁹⁵ *Acta Sanctorum Octobris*, Collecta Digesta, Paris, Rome, Apud Victorem Palmé Bibliopolam, Tomus Nonus, 1869, 46-59; 52.

⁹⁶ Ch. Pellat, Al-'Ajjāj, *The Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, W.P. Heinrichs ed., Vol I, Leiden, Brill, 1960, 207.

⁹⁷ <https://www.aldiwan.net/poem27864.html>, last access 31.05.2022. Translation: If poets see me they overcome, If I say *barriḥū* not *barraḥū*, To Mar Sarjīs they will be confused.

The expression *barriḥū la-barraḥū* contains the verb *barriḥū* which became *barakah* in Arabic. Later on, Ibn Durayd (837-933 AD) said, quoting the line of al-‘Ajjāj, that *barkh* is either Hebrew or Syriac (Al-jamharah, I, 232, 33). Although the word is considered a foreign term and belonged to the pagan liturgical language of the Elusans, *Bāraka*, to bless, appears in the Qur’ān (Jeffrey, 75) and in the Bible together with many derivatives of the root *b r k* and, in addition, the word is inserted into the formularies of the liturgy of Christian communities today.

Considering another term that has survived from pre-Islamic times, we have to introduce the history of the Martyrs of Najrān, a region in South Arabia. Najrān is famous for being subjected to the persecution of Christians by the king of Dhu Nuwās, converted to Judaism, during the Himyarite Kingdom (مملكة حَمِير) in the sixth century (ca. 520) in the so-called struggle between Christianity and Judaism before the rise of Islam. Najrān became the Arabian martyropolis, a place of pilgrimage for the Peninsular Arabs and a place where Arabic was the language of the original communications on the martyrdoms, such as the letter of Simeon of Bēth-Arshām (شمعون الأرشامسي) provided in Syriac (Shahīd, 1971, 31). The author is a monophysite cleric who wrote to another concerning the martyrs of South Arabia and appealed for help, in the original dispatches, in “the Najrānite language”, namely in an Arabian language (Shahīd, 1971, p.62 ;pp.96-98; pp.242-250).

After two Ethiopian expeditions, Dhū Nuwās was defeated and replaced by Christian kings, firstly by Émésiphée and then by Abraham; the bishop Aretha was martyred and replaced by Gregentius. Abraham and Gregentius were keen to draft a general law for the whole country. Of particular interest are Laws Nos. 35 and 38 in the *Nomoi Homeritatum Leges, Sanctus Gregentius, Patrologia Graeca*, 86, vol. I, cols 600-601) in which there is a clear reference to the Psalms, the singing of which is recommended (Law 35). It is explicitly stated that they are available in written form, but whether this was in Arabic, or Sabaic is not clear. In Law 38 there is an exhortation to perform “in the holy churches”: prayers, singing of Psalms, reading, and almsgiving. He makes a

distinction between the singing of Psalms and readings, and from this we deduce that he might have meant reading the Bible or at least the Gospels.⁹⁸

In the Book of the Himyarites, a Christian Syriac source, the Himyaritic king Dhū Nuwās was called *masrūq*, that means “stolen” or “robbed”. This word is a pejorative nickname in Arabic chosen by Christian Arabs and probably set against the background of the Christian-Jewish polemic of the period. They could not accept the nickname Yūsuf, as he called himself, and they chose *masrūq* not without reason, as Shahīd tries to explain (Shahīd 1971, 263). Besides it is a word related to the question of the Resurrection in one of the major issues in the Christian-Jewish polemic, namely that Christ’s body had risen and not been stolen by his disciples, the most plausible explanation coming from the story of Joseph in the Old Testament. In Genesis 40:15 Joseph says that “he was stolen away”, which words in the Hebrew and Syriac versions of Genesis, namely, *gunnav* and *gnīv*, are the exact equivalent of Arabic *masrūq* in root and grammatical pattern. Regardless of whether a word from the same account in the Bible was chosen and that the name *masrūq* belongs to an ancient conflict, its use by the Syriac writers can easily imply that ca. 520 Genesis had already been translated into Arabic and then it may be the single word which has survived from a pre-Islamic Arabic version of the Bible, or that at least, the Christian-Jewish conflict had determined the use of this word in Arabic as of so many others, written or oral, that is around one of the most important Christian themes, that of the Resurrection.

Continuing to identify the words that have a relationship with Christian worship I have to consider *quddūs* (holy, sacred) that is seen as a word that belonged to an Arabic pre-Islamic Christian liturgy (Baumstark, 1931, 565). This word may have come from Ethiopic language (Horovitz, 1925, 218) or from Syriac (Mingana, 1927, 85, 86) but Hirschfeld (1886, 39) stated that the Arabic use developed under Jewish influence. In

⁹⁸ Dareste, R., LOIS DES HOMÉRITES: NOMOI ΤΩΝ ΟΜΕΡΙΤΩΝ, *Nouvelle Revue Historique de Droit Français et Étranger*, 29 (2), 157-170, 1905.

the Doha Dictionary the word is defined as an Islamic word and is referred to as the name of God⁹⁹ by citing the verse of the Qur'an (Surat al-Ḥashr 23):¹⁰⁰

هُوَ اللَّهُ الَّذِي لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْمَلِكُ الْقُدُّوسُ السَّلَامُ الْمُؤْمِنُ الْمُهَيْمِنُ الْعَزِيزُ الْجَبَّارُ الْمُتَكَبِّرُ ۗ سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ عَمَّا يُشْرِكُونَ.

Instead, we find the word *muqaddas* in the poem *Ilah al-'alamīn* (God of the Universe) of Ummaya Ibn Abī al-Salt in these verses (les poètes, 226):¹⁰¹

مُعَمَّرٌ لَا بُدَّ يَوْمًا وَذِي دُنْيَا يَصِيرُ إِلَى زَوَالٍ وَيَفْنَى بَعْدَ جِدَّتِهِ وَيَبْلَى سِوَى الْبَاقِي
الْمُقَدَّسِ ذِي الْجَلَالِ.

But, we have to emphasise that unlike other words that are claimed to be Islamic and not used in languages/Christian speech today, the word *quddūs* is very frequent in the Christian liturgy. As well as being present in Isaiah 6:3 and Revelation 4:8, the word is repeated in the prayer of *Ajgbiyya* (See the Glossary), that contains the *Trisagion* (See the Glossary) that starts with:¹⁰²

قدوس الله، قدوس القوي، قدوس الحي الذي لا يموت.

Besides, during the Holy Mass people praise God and say:¹⁰³

قدوس قدوس قدوس. رب الصاباوت. السماء والأرض مملوءتان من مجدك الأقدس.

II. Dictionaries and Historical books

Another way to understand the path and the impact of Christian terminology is therefore through the investigation of the first Arabic dictionaries; in particular, I examine one of the earliest classical Arabic dictionaries known: *Kitāb al-'Ayn* of Abū 'Abd al-Rahmān al-Khalīl Ibn Ahmad al-Farāhidī (718-19 to 786-791 AD). The author was born in Oman in Southeast Arabia; he was a scholar of the school of Bosra and was

⁹⁹ <https://www.dohadictionary.org/dictionary/قدوس>, access on 31.05.2022

¹⁰⁰ Translation: He is Allah, there is no god except Him: the King, the Most Holy, the All-Perfect, the Source of Serenity, the Preserver, the Almighty, the Supreme in Might, the Majestic. Glorified is Allah far above what they associate with Him in worship.

¹⁰¹ Translation: Every long-lived and earthly ones one day must go to disappear and perish after being old and being crumbled, Only the Holy and the majesty will remain.

¹⁰² Translation: Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal.

¹⁰³ Translation: Holy, holy, holy, Lord of hosts, heaven and earth are full of Your holy glory.

an expert in lexicography, grammar and several other fields. Initially, I read his dictionary keeping in mind that it was designed not for popular use but for scholars. In addition, at the time of the author, Islam was now consolidated and therefore some words have a background of common meaning for Christianity and Islam and some words may have been inserted without giving a Christian definition; and that al-Khalīl offered scientific means for detecting foreign words,¹⁰⁴ frequently quoting examples from religious literature and poetry. For example, the author registered the root ‘ *m d* and explained the different words that derive from it, but he did not include the Christian word ‘*ammada*, to baptise (al-Khalīl, II, 57-59).¹⁰⁵ But, we find the word *qiss* (al-Khalīl, V 12) as priest, *baṭrīq* as the Byzantine guide (al-Khalīl, V, 257) and *ṣalīb*, cross, as what Christians take (al-Khalīl, VII, 128). He also registered *quddūs*, *muqaddas* and *mutaqaddis* as attributes of God and added *qudās* as a silver pearl but he did not record *quddas* (Holy Mass) (al-Khalīl, V, 73). Regarding the word *quddās* it belongs to one of the most important practice in Christianity and, as I showed above it was present in the daily practice of Arab Christians too. Al-Maḳārī (2012, III, 122) claimed that it is from the Syriac word *kuddasha* and that appeared starting from the IV century and it is used in the Syriac and Coptic Church in particular. But, despite being a

¹⁰⁴In the introduction to the dictionary, the author in his definition of what are Arabic and non-Arabic constructions admits the use of foreign words within Arabic saying “so that true Arabic constructions should be differentiated from what has been interpolated (into the language).” (the translation is taken from Haywood, 1960, 33). The phonological idea of al-Khalil is to ascribe every letter to its position and place, and based on their juxtaposition, to establish the constructions of words that are acceptable or not in Arabic. For example, he said: “If you come across a quadriliteral or quinquiliteral word free from lingual and labial letters, you should realise that it is modern and made-up, not Arabic.” (Ibid. 31) Then, he gave the example of the construction of onomatopoeic words in Arabic with respect to foreign onomatopoeic words which are rejected because they do not suit the juxtaposition criteria.

¹⁰⁵By contrast, in the VII book (p. 109) he recorded *tanaṣṣara* (*dakhala fi al-nuṣraniyya*, meaning to enter Christianity) under the root *n ṣ r*. It could be that the word *tanaṣṣara* was more common among the Arab people, or had an Islamic connotation. Consulting the earliest available Christian biblical sources, the reference to baptism is indicated by the word ‘*ammada* in the Vatican, Arabic 13 (see folio 3r) and in early IX century Sinai 70 manuscript (see folio 36r or folio 60r). In the 897 AD Sinai 72 manuscript the verb is translated as *ṣabagha* (see folio 37r and 62r). The word *tanaṣṣara* in these old manuscripts is not used.

word of pre-Islamic origin, it is recorded only in modern dictionaries such as *Al-mu'jam al-Wasīṭ* (1990, 719) or *Al-Munjid* (2000, 612).¹⁰⁶

Not only the sources on poetry and literature reported Christian terminology, but also the books on the history of religion and foreign civilisations. A representative of such works is Al-Bīrūnī's (973-1048) *al-Āthār al-Bāqiyah 'an al-Qurūn al-Khāliyah* in which the author highlights the social and religious beliefs and practices of a number of communities, including Christian peoples. From the linguistic point of view, he follows an accurate system of transliterating Hebrew and Syriac proper nouns and he often transliterates Hebrew or Syriac words or gives their Arabic forms, and then translates them into Arabic. In other cases he uses a vast amount of Hebrew and Syriac terminology without attempting arabicization. He reported, for example, *مشمشانا* *mshamshānā* (الشماس), *قشيشا* *qashshīsha* (القس), *فار قليط* *paraqlītā* (روح القدس). From these uses we have further confirmation that at that time:

- A. There was interaction between Arabs and other peoples.
- B. Terms derive from other languages such as Hebrew and Syriac.
- C. Foreign terms become part of the Arabic language.
- D. Some Christian terms cannot be traced back to their Arabic roots.
- E. Arab lexicographers were conscious of the affinity between Arabic and its sister languages.¹⁰⁷

III. Pre-Islamic poetry

¹⁰⁶ It is not recorded in more ancient dictionaries such as *Lisān al-'Arab* (1884), *Asās al-balāgha* (1998, I), *al-Ṣiḥaḥ* (2005).

¹⁰⁷ This is also the conclusion of R. Baalbaki in *Early Arab Lexicographers and the use of semitic languages*, Berytus: Archaeological Studies, (31), 1983, pp.117-128

Historians agree in attributing the introduction of writing to Christians (Al-Sīyūfī 1:39; Ibn al-Nadīm IV) and there is a long scholarly tradition that supports the thesis of the Christian literary use of Arabic before the rise of Islam. We know that there are divergent opinions on the beginnings of pre-Islamic Arabic poetry and its authenticity¹⁰⁸ but historical sources show that the art of Arabic poetic composition goes back to at least the fourth century A.D., as the Greek ecclesiastical historian Sozomen testified (Shahīd, 1884c, 443). Another historical clue is the period before the War of al-Basūs (ca. 496 AD).¹⁰⁹ Although debate is still ongoing, this does not limit us in considering Arabic poetry for the purpose of our research, especially because “the presence of Christianity in the Peninsula affected the poets in different ways, not only its local poets, but also some pagan ones.” (my translation from Dayf, 2011, 103); at the same time in the ancient poetry were mentioned allusions or comparisons inspired by monks and Christian rites (Cheikho 1904, 618-628, 647-652). Consequently, poetry cannot be detached from the biographies of its poets and their *aḥbār*. To this is added the importance of the nature of such documentation; in fact, poetry is considered the most eloquent form for the oral expression in the Arabic language and, as we will see, is the first *official* written testimony of Christianity and its expressiveness. Furthermore, poetic texts are an essential document for the study of the literary language of the VI century, provided they are compared with other linguistic monuments. Otherwise, Arabic poetry has a historical character and “verse in the pre-Islamic times was to the Arabs the register of all they knew, and the utmost compass of their wisdom; with it they began their affairs, and with it they ended them” (Ibn Sallām II, 236)¹¹⁰. Socially, the profession of the poet was everywhere honoured and rewarded; when there appeared a poet in a family of Arabs, the other tribes round about would gather together with that family and wish them joy of their good luck. Feasts would be prepared, the women of the tribe would join together in bands, playing upon lutes, as they were wont to do at bridals, and the men and boys would congratulate one another; for a poet was a defense

¹⁰⁸ On the question of pre-Islamic poetry see for example Taha Hussein (1925; 1927); D.S. Margoliouth, (1925) and Naser al-Din al-Assad (1988)

¹⁰⁹ See: <https://www.aldiwan.net/poem685.html>

¹¹⁰ Translation of Charles James Lyall in Translations of Ancient Arabian Poetry, 1930, 15.

of the honour of them all, a weapon to ward off insult to their good name, and a means of perpetuating their glorious deeds and of establishing their fame forever. And they used not to wish one another joy but for three things: the birth of a boy, the coming to light of a poet, and the foaling of a noble mare (Ibn Rashīk, quoted in Muzhir, 11, 236). The court of al-Nu'mān, the last king of al-Ḥīra, and the court of Ghassān, were the resorts of the most famous poets but, when Islam came, the Arabs occupied themselves with other matters to the neglect of poetry, and that when later on they turned to it again, they found they had too little poetry, and therefore tried to supplement it (Ibn Sallām in M.M. Shākir, 22, 39-40).

The religions of the Arabs before Islam are by no means easy to characterise; they worshipped the sun, moon, and stars, they erected temples, trees and stones and they presented sacrifices and offerings. Pre-Islamic poetry tells us the religious thought of that time through different references. In *Al-naṣraniyya wa-‘ādābuha bayn ‘Arab al-Jāhiliyya* (1989) Cheikho's purpose is to prove that traces exist of the history of Christianity in Arabia,

فإن هذه البقايا مع ما تضع منها بتوالي الزمان تنبئ بترقي النصرانية بين أهل الجاهلية وتثبت
من وجه آخر سعة نفوذها في جزيرة العرب.

(1989, 151)¹¹¹

In his work, first he introduced the social-geographic and religious contexts of pre-islamic Arabia; then, in the first section, he illustrated the history of Christianity in the different provinces and tribes of the peninsula; in the second section he described in detail the influence of Christianity on many aspects of the intellectual, civil and religious life in Arabia; finally, in the last section he provides the proofs for the Christianity of many poets of the *Jāhiliyya*. In fact, he collected poetry of poets (Cheikho, 1890) who are supposed to have been Christians according to their lives, kinship, education, beliefs and subjects; for example, ‘Adī B. Zayd al-‘Ibādī, a poet of al-Ḥīra, represents with al-Nābigha and al-A’shā the type of dignified and urban poet familiar with a culture and civilisation superior to that of the desert (F. Gabrieli, 1986 I,

¹¹¹Translation: In spite of dilapidation of time, predict about the progress of Christianity among the pre-Islamic populations and also prove the extent of its influence in the Arabian peninsula.

196). Al-Ibādī was an official in the Persian administration and, according to Ibn al-Kalbī and Ibn al-Aʿrabi he used Arabic writing (Al-Aghānī, II, 101, 2-6) and was the first who wrote in Arabic at the Persian court (Al-Aghānī II, 102, 4). Among the features that most distinguish him there is his formation in a “civil” environment unlike the other poets who were formed in a Bedouin environment. Or, Umayya b. Abī al-Ṣalt, who belonged to the Christian tribe of Iyād, which was part of the Ḥanīf who were also Christians; he knew Syriac and the Scriptures and had associated with monks and Christians. He developed topics such as the attributes of God, judgement, angels, hell, the Virgin Mary and the birth of Jesus.

The debated work of Cheikho illustrates a vocabulary and a language to some extent far removed from what is Christian today but not utterly different. In my analysis, the first question I ask is whether the lexicon of that time had any development over time, particularly with the advent of Islam and subsequent social or religious events in church history such as the autonomy of the Eastern church. As I mentioned above, I observe the development of terms starting from the etymology of that time; I restore sources which include them and verify their application and place them by domain. In other words, I identified three categories of terms to focus on: a) terms which already existed and which Christianity (or better, Arab Christians) adopted at that time, b) new terms that came into existence through the Bible and c) terms that are no longer used today. From this collection we have extrapolated the names of God, divine attributes, terms referring to the creation of world, the description of paradise and hell, vocabulary referring to worship, monastic life, names of places, objects and dress. From the point of view of etymology, there are words that derive from Syriac like the word *qis* (priest) and *bayʿa* (Christian temple), from Syriac or Hebrew like *kanīsa* (church), from Greek like *injīl* (Gospel) and from Aramaic or Hebrew like *haykal* (altar). In addition, there are terms that are quoted to this day but which Christians do not identify with. A simple term to consider is *nuṣrānyya* with its derivations. Orientalists claimed that the term *Nuṣrānyya* derives from Syriac and others claim that it is from Hebrew (Kramers, III, 1934, 848; Fiey, VII, 1993, 970). The term was used to name the followers of Jesus. It is reported in pre-Islamic poetry in different verses (Cheikho 1986, 224-225) and in the

dictionary of Graf (1954, 112). In the Doha Dictionary the meaning is المتعبد بالنصرانية (who is devout to Christianity). From this term the verb tanaṣṣara has been formed to indicate those who enter into this religion through Baptism. But, while tanaṣṣara is well accepted in the Christian vocabulary, today the term *naṣrānī* is substituted by *masīḥiyy*. *Naṣrānyy* is used by non-Christians to name Christians and it is probably not appreciated for this reason.

The word *bay'a*, originating in Syriac, is mentioned in the poetry (Cheikho, 201-202), in *Sūrat al-ḥajj* (v. 40). With regard to Christian sources, the word is reported in Manuscript S310 and also, in the masterpiece of Ibn al-Muqaffa' who use the word in the title of his work (*Sīrat al-bay'a*); successively I find it in Graf (1954) who translated it as Kirche (church). While the *Encyclopédie de l'Islam* (p. 1146) and in *The Encyclopaedia of Islam: An Anthology in Arabic Translation Online* the meaning reported indicates only the political sense of the word namely the act by which a number of people recognise the authority of another person; *The Doha Dictionary* indicates that the word is used in a Christian context as *ma'bad al-Nasara* (the sanctuary of Christians). This word is still used today in Coptic prayers, for example, in the prayer for the Church during the Vesper the deacon says صلوا من أجل هذه البيعة المقدسة واجتماعتنا¹¹² (*Al-Thalathatu al-quddasāt*, 33) or, in the conclusion to the Coptic Praxis (that is the reading of the Acts of Apostle), the deacon says وكلمة الرب تنمو وتزداد وتعتز وتثبت في بيعة الله المقدسة¹¹³ (*Al-Thalathatu al-quddasāt*, 229). But, this word is also substituted by the word *kanīsa* which is more common.¹¹⁴

A different evolution is for the words *qulays* or *qullays* (church) and *ṣauma'a* (cell or hermitage) both registered in Dozy (1927). The word *qulays* is probably from Greek and is reported in the narrative of building the church in Ṣan'ā' by the King Abraha (Al-

¹¹² Translation: Pray for this holy church and for our assemblies.

¹¹³ Translation: The word of the Lord shall grow, multiply, be mighty, and be confirmed in the holy Church of God.

¹¹⁴ See for example Coptic Reader App of Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States

Tabarī, 2, 30)¹¹⁵ and is indicated by Ibn Sīda as القليس بيعة كانت بصنعاء للحبشة هدمتها (Al-Muḥaṣṣ, 4, 67),¹¹⁶ thus it indicates a particular church which no longer exists.

The word ṣauma'a is reported in the Qur'ān (Surāt Al-Hajj, 40) and in *Tāj al-'Arūs* as كجوهرة: بيت النصارى ومنار الراهب (VII, 411)¹¹⁷. It is defined as the hermit's home in Humbert's *Guide* (1838, 151) and Boethor's *Dictionary* (1864, 323), as Dozy (1927) mentioned in his work. The recent Doha Dictionary defined it as بيت مرتفع يتعبد فيه. ¹¹⁸ From an etymological point of view, Arthur Jeffery classifies it as a foreign word and concludes that its origin it is to be sought in South Arabia with an Ethiopian origin. We have consulted other modern Christian sources such as the *Greek English Arabic Dictionary* (2021) which translates monastery/hermit's cell as دير, صومعة ناسك, (dayr, ṣauma'at nāsik, qallāyat rāhib aw nāsik). From this last source we find that ṣauma'a and qallāya are considered synonymous. The word qallāya is from Syriac which derived it from Greek and is reported in *The Doha Dictionary* as ¹¹⁹شبه الصومعة تكون في كنيسة النصارى يتعبدون بها as in Graf and, in addition, it is the most used word in *Bustān al-ruhbān* (2013, 22).¹²⁰

I dwell on the word monk who, as I have cited, was a major figure and has multiple Arabic equivalents in the literature. The common word is *rāhib* accompanied by other words which can act as *ṣifāt* (attributes) or other appellations: *nāsik*, *mutawāḥḥid* and *zāhid*. In the collection of Cheikho we find words such as *al-muqaddis*, *al-muta'abbid*, *al-sā'iḥ* which are present today in the Christian vocabulary and are familiar, but there are other words that are not in common use today or are no longer used and they are improperly considered as foreign words or Islamic. We are referring to: *al-'abīl*, *al-ḥabīs*, *al-ḥanīf* (Hadhīl 18:11), *al-dayrānyy*, *al-rabīṭ*, *al-julādhyy*, *al-nuhāmyy*,

¹¹⁵ See: <https://al-maktaba.org/book/9783/756>

¹¹⁶ See: <https://al-maktaba.org/book/3590/1488>. Translation: The Qulays was a church (bay'a) in Ṣan'ā' of Ethiopians destroyed by Ḥamīr.

¹¹⁷ Translation: As a jewel. The Christians' home and monk's beacon.

¹¹⁸ Translation: a High home where monks worship.

¹¹⁹ Translation: similar to the cell (ṣauma'a), situated in the Church that Christians worship in.

¹²⁰ This is a Coptic book which narrates life of monks and reports the monk's sayings. There are many copies of this book translated from Coptic, Syriac and Greek starting from the X century.

al-‘ash’ath, *al-muḥarrar* and *al-nadhīrat*, *al-ḥāzyy*. First, we try to understand the meaning by considering the roots of the word. We start from the words constituted by an Arabic root.

Habīs comes from *ḥ b s* which means to imprison (Hans Wehr, 180). In fact, the monk holds fast to a place, the *qallāya*, and does not leave it as he is living with God. In The Doha Dictionary we find a religious reference in the plural *ḥubasā’*. The dictionary uses a *ḥadīth* which refers to people who are imprisoned for God’s sake (*Ḥabīs fī sabīl Allah*). In addition, the word is reported in Dozy (1881) and, most significantly, in the prayer for the ordination of monks in *Miṣbāh al-Ḍulma fī ‘Īdāḥ al-khidma* (al-Barakāt, ed. Ṣamū’īl, 1992, 127) of the well-known Ibn Kabar.¹²¹ In addition, in a more recent source, I found *Ḥabīs* also in *Bustān al-ruhbān* (1968, 89, 401).

Dayrānyy has a Syriac derivation but entered into the Arabic language under the root *d w r* which means monastic but also friar or monk (Hans Wehr, 346). It has an intuitable meaning but only Graf registered it as a Nestorian usage.

Rabīṭ comes from *r b ṭ* and means to bind. *Taj al-‘Arūs* (Part 19, 301) explains that he is

الراهب, والزاهد, والحكيم الذي ظلف, أي ربط نفسه عن الدنيا أي سدها ومنعها.¹²²

A similar definition is reported in *The Doha Dictionary*.

Julādhyy is the plural of *Juldhyy* and means the servant of the temple in the dictionaries but its origin is unknown.

Nuhāmyy (or *nihāmyy*) comes from *n h m* and in *Taj al-‘Arūs* (34:22) it means:

وهو الراهب لأنه ينهم, أي يدعو.¹²³

‘Aash’ath comes from *sh ’ th* that means to dishevel, referring to the monk’s hair which is not taken care of. (*Taj al-‘Arūs* 16:71)

¹²¹ His full name was Shamsu al-riyāsa ‘Abū al-Barakāt. He was a Coptic priest in the XIII-XIV century (at the end of the Coptic Golden Age) and one of the most important thinkers in the history of the Coptic Church. *Miṣbāh al-Ḍulma fī ‘Īdāḥ al-khidma* is considered the largest Coptic encyclopaedia. See his life and works in Al-Maqārī A. 2012, II, 730-758

¹²² Translation: the monk, the ascetic and the wise man who is above sins that is, leaves the world, shuts it out and refuses it.

¹²³ Translation: he is the monk because he shouts, that is, calls (God).

Muḥarrar comes from *ḥ r r* and means that the child is freed that is, he is dedicated to serve the Church forever and he cannot leave it according to his religion. (*Al-Mukhaṣṣaṣ*, 4:66).¹²⁴

The word *Ḥanīf* has an unclear origin until today.¹²⁵ It is hypothesised that it may derive from the root *ḥ n f* to decline, turn from, in the sense of turning from the false religions to the true, in reference to what the Prophet Muhammad announced. Or, as Noldeke (30) maintained, it has a Syriac origin and might well have been known to the pre-Islamic Arabs as a term used by Christians for those who were heathen. Other researchers claim that the word refers to a Christian group (Sprenger, 1861, Wellhausen 87, C. de Perceval, 321). Instead, according to Cheikho, the word refers to the monk (119).

Finally, *al-‘abīl* from a Syriac origin refers to the monk in the poetry of ‘Amr Ibn ‘Abd al-Jinn al-Quḏā’yy (verses in *The Doha dictionary*) but its meaning cannot be verified from the root of the word.

In conclusion, the meaning of these words conveys values and characteristics of the figure of the monk. In reference to this example, we can conclude that the ancient Arabic language is rich in meanings that describe the figure of the monk which Christianity embraces, but that Arabic Christian language today lacks. Therefore, the question that we raise is whether it is possible today to recover this linguistic richness and accuracy.

There are a lot of other ancient words which sound foreign or incomprehensible and, as a consequence, are classified as belonging to an Islamic language or discarded because they are difficult to understand and substituted by others.

To take some examples I will consider the attributes of God. In a verse Ummaya Ibn ‘Abi al-Ṣalt wrote:¹²⁶

إن الأنام رعايا الله كلهم هو السَّليطُ فوق الأرض مستطر

¹²⁴ Translation from *Al-Mukhaṣṣaṣ*: ولد فحرره أي جعله نذيرة في خدمة الكنيسة ما عاش لا يسعه تركها في دينه.

¹²⁵ See Jeffery’s analysis (1938), 113-115.

¹²⁶ Translation: All creatures on Earth are the parish of God, He is governor on Earth, the ruler

I read that the word *salīṭaṭu* means, according to *Lisān al-‘Arab* (1884, VII, 322) *musallaṭ* (who is powerful and owns victory) but the author of the dictionary wrote that he was not sure about this meaning. I try to analyse the meaning of *s l l ṭ*. *Al-musallaṭ* is someone who receives certain power and becomes the governor; thus it is an inappropriate attribute of God who should be *al-mutasalliṭ*, who has absolute power or *musalliṭ*, who give power. What interests us here is to verify the use of the two words as attributes of God and whether they are both recorded in religious texts. Exploring the available old versions of the Gospels I report for example the verse in Mark 2:10¹²⁷ from Beirut B.O. Or, 430, Sinai 70 and Sinai 72:

Beirut B.O. Or, 430 (Folio 56v)	ولكن لتعلموا أن ابن البشر مسلط في الأرض يغفر الخطايا.
Sinai 70 (Folio 38r)	لتعرفوا أن لابن البشر مسلط في الأرض يغفر الخطايا.
Sinai 72 (Folio 38v)	لكي تعلموا أن لابن الانسان سلطان على الأرض يترك الخطايا.
Ibn al-‘Assāl (p. 202)	لكي تعلموا أن لابن البشر سلطانا على الأرض أن يغفر الخطايا.

While the translators of Beirut B.O. Or, 430, Sinai 70 used *musalliṭ*, Sinai 72 and *Ibn al-‘Assāl* use the expression *sultān ‘ala* (power, authority on).

And again, what attests to the use of *musalliṭ* in reference to an attribute of God is IX century *Kitāb al-Burhān* of ‘Ammar al-Basrī who wrote:

لأن الذي أعطى الحياة هو الذي أخذها وهو المسلط على أخذ ما له القادر عليه لا غيره.¹²⁸

More recent resources instead also register *mutasalliṭ* as an attribute of God. In the *kūlājī* (see the Glossary for the meaning) of the Coptic Church in one of the *Prayers of*

¹²⁷ Translation from NKJ English version: “But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins.”

¹²⁸ See A. Baṣrī, *The Book of the Proof Concerning the Course of the Divine Economy (Kitāb al-Burhān)*, in ‘*Ammār al-Baṣrī: apologie et controverses*, M. Hayek ed., Beirut, Dār al-Mashriq, 1977, 22.

Translation: because the one who gave life is the one who took it and He is the governor of taking what is rightfully His, and no one else has the power to do so.

Fraction (See the Glossary for the meaning) for the Son recited at Christmas (*Al-khūlājī al-muqaddass*, 686), the priest retains the same word and recites: “الله القوي المتسلط”.¹²⁹ An explicit and similar meaning of that word can be found in the prayer recited in Cyril’s Mass (*Al-khūlājī al-muqaddass*, 576):

لأنك أنت هو الله الذي فوق كل رئاسة وكل سلطان وكل قوة وكل سيادة وكل اسم يُسمى ليس في هذا الدهر فقط بل وفي الآتي.¹³⁰

It could be added that the use of *sultān* in this phrase is a substituted word for the meaning of *mutasalliṭ* and *musalliṭ*.

In addition, I find that there is a clear reference to God using *mutasalliṭ*. *B.-Van Dyck* and *the inter-confessional* agree on the use of the word. In 2 Chronicles 20:6 of *B.-Van Dyck* it reads:

يا رب إله آبائنا أما أنت هو الله في السماء، وأنت المتسلط على جميع ممالك الأمم، وببيدك قوة وجبروت وليس من يقف معك.¹³¹

This verse contains the word *mutasalliṭ* as in many other verses in which the word is used with regard to God.¹³²

I can conclude that the word *salīṭaṭu* is contained in a verse that at the level of meaning does not go against Christian doctrine if the meaning is *musalliṭ*, but *salīṭaṭu* is not used in Christian sources. Old Gospel translations and a theologian of the X century confirm the use of *musalliṭ* and the translations of *the inter-confessional* and *B.-Van Dyck* and the liturgical expressions also make use of the word *mutasalliṭ* in relation to God. Today, therefore to express the authority of God the words *musalliṭ*, *mutasalliṭ* and *sultān* coexist in the Arabic Christian texts.

To take another example, I identify the word *muhaymin* (The Preserver). It is difficult to establish the origin of this word. The philologists take it as genuine Arabic but Fraenkel (23) noted that it was a borrowing from the Aramaic or Syriac, and Noldeke

¹²⁹ Translation: God the Powerful, the ruler

¹³⁰ Translation: For You are God, who are above every principality and every authority, and every power and every dominion, and every name that is a name, not only on this age, but also in that which is to come.

¹³¹ In the NKJ English version: O Lord God of our fathers, are you not God in heaven, and do you not rule over all the kingdoms of the nations, and in your hand is there not power and might, so that no one is able to withstand you.

¹³² See for example; Psalms 22:28; 59:13; 66:7; Daniel 4:17, 25.

(27) claimed that the word is closer to Syriac. In addition, Jeffery claimed that it is difficult to decide whether it came from Jewish or Christian sources. Consulting our sources this word appears in Surat al-Ḥaṣhr v. 23 (this has been mentioned above) and in the verses of Quss Ibn Sa'da.: فأعوذ بالملك المهيمن مما غاله بالبأساء والنحس:¹³³ But, it seems not to be present in Christian sources. In the Doha Dictionary it means الرقيب الحافظ له¹³⁴; القائم على الشيء؛ الحافظ له but, in the Christian literature I find other words with a similar meaning as *ḥāfīz*, *ḥāris*, *‘āḍid* and *ḍābiṭ al-kull*. Although the word may have a foreign origin and use prior to the birth of Islam, the word is not used by Arab Christians because has assumed an Islamic connotation.

Besides terminological analysis, my aim is to understand throughout my research the reasons that the linguistic varieties used by Arabic-speaking Christians at that time are considered foreign and far from what is used today and try to verify that its meaning is not different to what is said in Christian rites or prayers today. If we examine, for example, some verses of the poet ‘Umayya Ibn ‘Abī al-Ṣalt, regardless of whether he was a Christian or not, we notice that this praise does not undermine Christian principle and contains Christian concepts:

لك الحمد والنعماء والملك ربنا	فلا شيء أعلى منك مجداً وامجد
ملكك على عرش السماء مهيمن	لعزته تعنو الوجوه وتسجد
عليه حجاب النور والنور حوله	وانهار نور حوله تتوقد
فلا بشر يسمو إليه بطرفه	ودون حجاب النور خلق مؤيد. ¹³⁵

He underlines the unity of God, he praises God, glorifies him and makes things come back to him. These verses are religiously neutral, there is nothing in them that Christian

¹³³ Translation: I seek the protection of the dominant king from tribulation and misfortune suffering.

¹³⁴ Translation: The guard, the sustainer of the thing; who preserve it.

¹³⁵ Translation: To You the praise, the blessing and the sovereignty our Lord, nothing is more glorious than you. Regnant on the throne of the heaven preserver, to his power faces submit and kneel. He has got a veil of light and light around him and rivers of light around him burn with zeal. There is no human being to his side and below the veil of light there is creation.

readers would find objectionable or offensive, yet they recall prayers and praises that are recited today in church, as in the Holy Week of Paṣkha in which it is said:

لك القوة والمجد والبركة والعزة إلى الأبد آمين.¹³⁶

And, in the Gregorian Mass, in the prayer of Reconciliation to the Son, the priest says:

الجالس فوق العرش الملتهب الشاروبيمي والمخدوم من القوات النارية.¹³⁷

In the translation of Revelation 4:11 we find:

أنت مستحق أيها الرب أن تأخذ المجد والكرامة والقدرة, لأنك أنت خلقت كل الأشياء, وهي بإرادتك كائنة وخلقت.¹³⁸

In terms of hymns to God, ‘Umayya wrote:

سبحانه ثم سبحانا يعود له وقبلنا سبح الجودي والجمد.¹³⁹

In the praises the Church chants in the refrain of the third *Hōs* (hymn):

سبحوه مجدوه زيده علواً إلى الأبد رحمته فهو المسيح والمُجد والمتعالى على الأدهار وإلى الأبد رحمته.¹⁴⁰

And again, ‘Umayya B. Abī al-Ṣalt, wrote verses which show the unity of God:

فَسُبْحَانَ مَنْ لَا يَعْرِفُ الْخَلْقُ قَدْرَهُ وَمَنْ هُوَ فَوْقَ الْعَرْشِ فَرْدٌ مُوَحَّدٌ
وَمَنْ لَمْ تُنَازِعْهُ الْخَلَائِقُ مُلْكُهُ وَإِنْ لَمْ تُفَرِّدْهُ الْعِبَادُ فَمُفَرَّدٌ.¹⁴¹

The concept of the unique God is often expressed in Holy Scripture and in Christian texts. Instead of the words *fard* and *muwahhad* we find *wāhid* and *wahīd*.

Indeed, as Cheikho claimed, this vocabulary is adopted in the Qur’an. Then, the question that arises is why does the reading of these verses recall the language of Islam and not Christianity.

¹³⁶ Translation: Your strength, glory, blessing, power forever Amen.

¹³⁷ Translation: Who sit upon the flaming throne of the Cherubim who are served by the fiery powers.

¹³⁸ Translation: You are worthy, O Lord, To receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and by Your will they exist and were created. (From *New King James English Version*)

¹³⁹ Translation: May (God) be praised and praise to Him, the Mount Judi praises Him before us.

¹⁴⁰ Translation: Praise him, glorify him, and exalt Him above all forever; His mercy. He is praised, He is glorified, He is exalted above all ages. His mercy is forever.

¹⁴¹ Translation: Glory to whom creation could not contain His magnitude and whom on the throne is the only one and whom the creation does not conflict His Reign and worshippers do not compete for His uniqueness.

As this point, we could argue that even though we do not have sufficient written evidence, we cannot completely rule out that the Arabic language was a vernacular language before the advent of Islam, especially in parts of Syria and Mesopotamia, while the languages of religious thought and dogma were Syriac and Greek. It is clear that the reason why Arabic began to be adopted in Christian circles is the demands of arabicization and islamisation by Muslim Arab rule. It is therefore a sharing of a language by two different religions. Christians adopted Arabic as their literary medium because they started to face debates and conflicts. Going through literature and history we can deduce that Christians have lived up to this adoption and that their Arabic production has a wealth that adds to pre-Islamic poetry an important building block for the literary development despite various challenges. Adopting Arabic, during that period of history, Christians used the Arabic variety used by Muslims and the reverse happened, creating in consequence an interaction that today is contrasted with the idea to retain distinguishing linguistic features that have been constructed over the centuries and probably have led to the impoverishment of the language. Another consequence of the adoption of the Arabic language may have been, on the one hand, the marginalisation of their contributions by Muslim control of political power and, on the other hand, the distancing from the broad congregations of the church as Jørgen S. Nielsen asserted in the preface to *Christian Arabic Apologetics during the Abbasid period (750-1258)*. In short, adopting Arabic was beneficial in some ways though difficult to accept.

Conclusion

To establish a beginning for the Arabic Christian literature is a question that is answered in the presence of Arab Christian community in the Peninsula Arabica. Historical sources testified that Christianity spread among the Arabs and churches and monasteries were established before the rise of Islam. Arabs were in contact with Christianity through the Christians of Syrian, Greek and Ethiopian origin who lived in an Arab environment; and through nomadic Arabs who frequented Christian communities in the north (Palestine, Syria and Iraq). The first available Arabic texts are documented by inscriptions before VII century in the centre of Arabia, Sinai and Syria. It is acceptable the fact that the Christianised Arab tribes possessed only an oral liturgy and that the evangelical message was transmitted orally. It is possible that these communities used a Syriac and Greek liturgy with possibly a spontaneous oral translation. This is because the oral culture still predominated at that time. In fact, Arab society was characterised by the tribal system, nomadism and the presence of storytellers who narrated facts orally. Thus, there was no solid tradition of written transmission. But, traces lead us to say that Arab Christians had their religious vocabulary.

The pre-Islamic Arabic language is a link in a long chain called the Arabic linguistic variety, which expressed Christianity before the birth of Islam. This initial link in the chain falls within the first field I have attempted to track in this first chapter. With the gradual and progressive Christianisation of the Arabian Peninsula, the pre-Islamic Arabic linguistic variety of Christian influence was characterized by individuals from various social backgrounds, such as monks or tribal leaders and their families, who certainly followed Christianity in their daily lives. The former preached the word of God and baptised the faithful, and the latter built sacred places, such as churches. Their language was primarily influenced by languages that had already reached the stage of writing, such as Syriac, Hebrew, and Greek, and as a result, many words borrowed from these languages were Arabised over time.

The tribal system determined various groups and identities, so it is likely that only the Christian faith served as a common point among them. As history reveals, even Arab bishops participated in councils, demonstrating that the Arab Church had its own distinct identity. Subsequently, after the ecumenical councils, particularly following the Council of Chalcedon, alliances were formed among tribes based on the Christian denomination to which they adhered, thus defining sub-fields within Arab Christianity. These sub-fields, in turn, developed and faced struggles among themselves and with other actors, such as Islam, as I will illustrate in the second chapter. In this complex context, the Arabic language, in its various facets, spoken by Christian actors, is certainly an important factor of identity, even though primarily expressed orally.

With the birth of Islam, there was a decline in oral culture, and the societal structure was characterized by strong centralisation of power (the caliphate). The unification of Arabia under a single authority led to the urbanisation of the territory. Culturally, there was a decrease in the role of memory and an emphasis on written forms for the transmission of culture in a very short time. The Arabic language soon became the official language of the caliphate and this was dependent on the sacred language of the Qur'ān. The linguistic question that preoccupied scholars was how to record the "fasaha" of the Arabic language by drawing from the speech of the Bedouins and distinguishing what was part of the Arabic language from what was not. In this new political context, Christians, who spoke different Arabic dialects, were considered newcomers in the *field*, progressively excluded from the *social space* that emerged with Islam, or accepted under certain conditions. Christians adapted to the new circumstances, some adhered to the new religion, and others did not lose either their religion or their language, demonstrating linguistic skill.

In addition, it is precisely in this historical and socio-cultural context that the first Arabic texts of the Bible appeared. The acquisition of Arabic was essential for maintaining Christians' social status and, at the same time, important for preserving the Christian faith, which will be the *struggle* I address in the second chapter.

I try to revive a language and establish a link between the variety of Arabic that is recited and written today and what it was in the past. The methodology applied reveals a complex linguistic framework. The linguistic situation that emerged in the first centuries after Christ is characterized by multilingualism that covered a vast geographical area. The Arabic dialects, influenced by foreign languages, were in a constant state of evolution.

Furthermore, with the advent of Christianity, languages had to reformulate a well-known field of knowledge, the religion, that went against the polytheism of that time and that proclaimed the coming of the Saviour. Although the sources are scarce, we can assert that the language of preachers and Bedouins was a part, and precisely the beginning, of a new knowledge within the Arabic linguistic variety. Therefore, the Arabs had their own knowledge out of which to express Christianity. Moreover, being in multilingual places, it is difficult to pinpoint precisely when Christian worship was translated into their individual languages, and consequently, to trace the linguistic development of an indefinite number of words. But, it could be said that the linguistic varieties of the Arabic language persisted even after the advent of Islam, until a common language prevailed throughout the entire community of the Peninsula.

The pre-Islamic Arabic linguistic variety has not completely disappeared from Christian language today, but over the course of history, as I will delve into, it assumed a predominantly Islamic connotation. As research demonstrates, even the Qur'ān itself contains terms that existed in other languages during the pre-Islamic era, and Islamic culture also dominated from the perspective of language appropriation, despite the contributions made by Christians to its formation. It can be said that initially, in the period covered by this study, the language was commonly used among both Christian and non-Christian tribes, but Islam progressively dictated the rules to the extent that the Arabic language is the only language today with a close, if not dependent, relationship with the Muslim religion. This is the perception of a Christian today who reads pre-Islamic poetry and compares it to the easily accessible liturgical texts, considering them as the only source of a purely Christian nature.

From consulting numerous sources, I can say that foreign terms were Arabised, but in the early dictionaries, limited space was given to terminology related to the Christian sphere. This has been demonstrated by more recent lexicographical sources where the terminology specific to this domain is illustrated in a more extensive manner. The use of ecclesiastical and Christian sources was necessary to demonstrate the depth of this terminology and to verify its use compared to what was reported by Muslim-oriented sources.

In conclusion, every term has its history, its sources, and its traceability. This initial study is certainly not exhaustive, but it can be considered as an attempt to illustrate the linguistic history of some words, which can be applied to others in future work through the study of the sources

Chapter II - Christian Arabic Literature and the Gospels

Introduction

The phenomenon of Christians using Arabic before the rise of Islam is a long-debated question. Factors that have kept this debate an active one come from the existence of Arabic-speaking Christian communities for several centuries before the rise of Islam; the presence of monasteries and churches in the Arabian Peninsula; finding pre-Islamic Arabic inscriptions made by Christians from Syria, Najrān and Dūmat al Jandal; and the general tendency toward scriptural translation within the Christian tradition, suggest that Arabic-speaking Christians had had the impulse to translate at least portions of religious texts into Arabic as others did.

Certainly, translation of Christian texts into Arabic took place after the Arab conquest. This translation movement had evolved into real literary production in Arabic. This period is what Tannous (2022) defined as the “second phase” in the history of the Arabic variety used by Arabic-speaking Christians after the first pre-Islamic phase. First of all, the depth and extent of the second phase needs to be better understood. Broadly speaking, the Arabic Christian heritage consists of is a large archive of Arabic texts composed by Christians from as early as the VIII century of the Christian Era and continuing right up until today. It is sufficient to realise that the pioneer work *Geschichte der christlichen arabischen Literatur* by G. Graf, written only between 1944 and 1953, simply mentions names of works and manuscripts in 2400 pages without analyzing them. In spite of this large quantity, the history of the Arabic-Christian literary heritage is deeply exciting but little known, as Father Samir Khalil has said (1982, 206-210). Arabic-speaking Christians not only made major contributions to Islamic culture, but they also wrote philosophical and theological texts of their own in Arabic and they translated much of their several ecclesiastical traditions from Greek, Syriac, and Coptic into Arabic. Unfortunately, this heritage is almost entirely unknown to all other religious or secular communities. To give an example, only for the Arabic Bible, Vollandt (2018, 442-443) claimed that studying of the Arabic Bible is a newly emerging field of academic research and that there are ten thousand items containing Arabic versions of the Bible produced from the IX to the XX centuries.

To understand better the importance and the volume of this heritage some characteristics need to be stressed. First of all, by “the Arabic-Christian literature heritage” is meant all the Christian and non-religious works written in Arabic or the works translated into Arabic by Christians. It includes on the one hand literary, medical, philosophical and scientific works, and, on the other, religious works and biblical translations, the Church Fathers and Council rules, etc. To the present day, despite this immense heritage, many manuscripts have yet to be studied. Geographically speaking, if we consider the period from the VIII century to the XIV century, the Arabic-Christian world is meant as that stretching from the Middle East to Spain. Several ancient cultures lived in this area, such as Greek, Syriac, Coptic and Latin, and then the Aramaic and Western cultures, which included Syriac culture and its three branches: the Maronite, the Syriac and the Assyro-Chaldean. From the point of view of the Christian denominations, the Christian world is characterised by Melkites, Jacobites and Nestorians. The Church in this area was positioned according to this settlement: the Coptic Church in Egypt and is the biggest Church in the East numerically and for its importance; in Iraq the Assyro-Chaldean Church settled by Syriacs and Melkites. Then, the Syriacs and Melkites deployed in Syria and Lebanon became the Seat of the Maronite Church. Historically, after the Islamic expansion, the Arabic language had spread across all the Middle East and, then the Christians of Egypt, Iraq and Levant adopted Arab customs and joined with the original Arab Christians. At this stage the Arabic language was the element that bound Christians in the East and it took the place of Greek. From the beginning of the IX century we find several works which were proof of Christian faith agreements despite different philosophies, vocabulary and expressions. The Arabic-Christian heritage has another uniqueness that deserves to be taken into consideration, one that has influenced its history and development. This literature has the characteristic of existing in a non-Christian environment and its writers have tried to provide the concepts of the Christian faith to non-Christians in an understanding way. In fact, Muslims demanded constantly that Christians defend and justify their faith, in addition to the conflicts which arose between them and the Jews.

Nowadays, the Christians of the East adopt the theology of the Westerners to constitute their religious identity and forget that they have their own theology, ecclesiastical law, ethics and spiritual literature, their biblical interpretations and their patristic translations; as Father Athanasius al-Maḳāry (2012, 82-83) claimed, “if we had a historical comparison between the Arabic Christian heritage and any Western Christian heritage, we would find that Arabic Christian thinking is more deep-rooted than any Western theological thinking.” In fact, Arabic theology starts at the end of the eighth century AD, without theological works from the Western languages till the fourteenth century AD. As a consequence of the plurality of Christian communities in the East, this heritage had expanded considerably and, despite the fact that each community possessed its own works according to its tradition and doctrine, all this heritage did not belong to one country or community or culture but was holistic, multifaceted and ecumenical.

In conclusion, in understanding the significance of the spread of Arabic culture in the East which was Christian and became Islamic, means to recognise that the Arabic language and culture had unified Eastern Christians.

The study will now illustrate the evolution of Arabic Christian literature, particularly in apologetic literature and the translation of the Gospel text, while contextualising it in order to highlight its linguistic characteristics and internal and external influences.

I. Contextualising the beginning of Arabic Christian literature

According to a Bourdian interpretation, I identify here a field of cultural production that is, in some ways, the development of what was previously discussed: Arabic Christian literary production. However, it is necessary to take a step back to understand the role of Christians in this production. The actors of this emerging field, the Christians, previously played a crucial role in transmitting Hellenistic culture in the Syriac language, starting from the V century, by establishing renowned schools of philosophy, science, law, and theology in Alexandria, Beirut, Antioch, Edessa, and Nisibis (Samir, 2007, 14). Many Christians dedicated themselves to the translation of

important authors such as Hippocrates, Galen, and Aristotle. The role of Christians in the transmission of knowledge continued during the Islamic conquest, but this time in the Arabic language. Christians adapted the knowledge of past civilisations into Arabic to convey it to Muslim Arabs, utilising Greek and Syriac as intermediaries.¹⁴² During the VIII and IX centuries, the first Arabic translations emerged and improved through a method of translation under the influence of the renowned Nestorian scholar Ḥunayn Ibn Ishāq of Hīrā (d. 873 AD). As Samir K. states (2007, p.23), during this phase, more than ninety percent of all accessible knowledge at that time was translated into Arabic by Christians. In addition to translations, starting in the 10th century, original works in Arabic were also produced, drawing inspiration from Hellenic thought. In this manner Christians gained prestige and success in that society that was forming its culture. The cultural prestige that Christians attained was further confirmed by the fact that Muslims themselves became their students until they took their place. Their contribution is, therefore, a recognition of their presence within the social order; they were able to "get [themselves] recognized, to get [themselves] noticed and admitted, and so to win a place" (Bourdieu 1984, 480-1). So, it is important to say here, that Muslims were newcomers to this *field* of cultural production, and in a short time, they shared it with Christians, thus giving rise to an interreligious Arab humanism (Samir, 2007, 32), in which, we can say, the agents, in service to Arab society, competed to accumulate symbolic capital. More broadly, the centers of knowledge that emerged thus contributed to gaining economic, social, and symbolic capital for the Islamic empire, which aimed to establish its supremacy in the region. The translation efforts, in fact, brought technological and scientific knowledge to that empire, which would strengthen it politically, socially, and economically.

The field of Arabic Christian literature fits into this broader context in which Christians carried out biblical translations and apologetic works that were gradually refined and linguistically enriched, much as had happened with scientific works. We identify within the Arabic Christian literature two interconnected *subfields* in which

¹⁴² A new vocabulary was indeed forged, capable of integrating all the sciences of the time due given the linguistic deficiency in terms of scientific terminology.

Arab Christians were engaged for an extended period, and which are the subject of this study. The first *field* is literary production in the realm of theology through apologetic works. The second *field*, which according to our thesis precedes the first *field* chronologically, is the translation of the biblical text. Given worship, evangelization, and the need for Arabic speakers to understand the sacred text, this *field* has a long history and its own evolution that continues to this day.

We believe that the two fields are related because the early apologetic texts were closely linked to the biblical text, which played a central role in defending the Christian religion against Islam. Samir (1994, 110) traces the evolution of apologetic literature and described the initial phases of the apologetical movement, indicating a biblical and homiletical approach (from the middle of the eighth to the middle of the ninth century) and a mixed biblical and philosophical approach (from the middle of the ninth century to the beginning of the tenth).¹⁴³ Most probably, the biblical quotations reported by authors contributed to the translation of the Gospels and they affected the translation itself. For this reason, I believe it is necessary to turn to apologetic texts with a biblical approach to understand the language adopted in conveying the Gospel text. Whether the Arabic Gospel text appeared before liturgical or apologetic texts containing biblical excerpts is still an open and not completely defined question. What matters in this study is to capture the early translations of the Gospel through the documentary sources available to us today. Certainly, the early translations are an integral part of the ongoing translation process, and conducting a comparative study between them and the biblical passages contained in another type of literature could be useful in establishing a hypothetical relationship.

¹⁴³Samir (1994, 110-112) places the apologetic works of Abū Qurrah and the anonymous Melkite author of *On the Triune Nature of God* treatise in the first phase characterized by a biblical and homiletical approach. The works of Ḥunayn Ibn Isḥāq, Abū Rā'īta al-Takrītī, 'Abd al-Masih al-Kindi, and 'Ammār al-Baṣrī are positioned in the second phase characterized by a mixed biblical and philosophical approach. He continues by identifying a third phase, a very philosophical approach, in which he places Yaḥya ibn 'Adī and his disciples. Finally, he identifies a fourth phase, a spiritual humanistic approach, as a continuation or renewal of the second phase, in which he places the works of Elias of Nisībīs (975-1043) and Sāwīrus Ibn al-Muqaffa'.

We will delve deeper into the field of theology here and address the field of translating the biblical text in the following section.

In Christianity, theology refers to the formulation of dogma, which was considered inviolable, inherited from the Church Fathers primarily in Greek. This *doxa* was subsequently reformulated by the churches during the age of the Councils as a result of the Trinitarian and Christological heresies of the III and IV centuries. Following the Arab conquest, theology was then expressed in the Arabic language to facilitate dialogue among Christians and with Muslims. The conflict between the churches continued in a new field of knowledge that was taking shape. Christian agents, once again, were involved in translating their creed into Arabic, each according to their own *habitus*, which means their theological and linguistic background. Their goal was to convey theology in Arabic because it had become the *lingua franca* of Christians and their interlocutors. Therefore, the struggle took place on two levels: one among the Christian communities for the consolidation of faith in Arabic, and the other with Islamic leaders and representatives to demonstrate the truth of Christianity. The aim was the recognition of the Church's dogma in the face of others, recognizing the Christian dogma before the Muslim authorities and encouraging co-religionists to hold onto their faith given the socio-political situation imposed by the Muslim empire. Another characteristic that distinguishes this early literature is that the apologists incorporated Qur'anic language for rhetorical purposes without losing sight of their dogma. According to the classification proposed by Samir, there is an evolution in this literary field where different approaches are adopted, with the climax reached between the 11th and 13th centuries (Samir 1994, 113).

Now, I try to trace the beginnings of Christian Arabic literature from a historical and literary point of view. From the VIII to X centuries vast amounts of Greek medical,

philosophical, and scientific literature were translated into Arabic.¹⁴⁴ Otherwise, in the IX century, in Baghdad, the first Syriac-Arabic lexica started to be compiled.¹⁴⁵ In the same century bilingual Greco-Arabic biblical manuscripts started to appear¹⁴⁶ and in Palestine the Melkites began to use Arabic in their liturgies.¹⁴⁷

As far as Arabic Christian literature is concerned, it was located in the Syrian-Palestinian Melkite milieu, since the Umayyad era (around the year 700), beginning with the translation of biblical, monastic and hagiographic works, and continuing in theological works in response to Muslim and Jewish criticism by as early as the middle of the VIII century.¹⁴⁸ But, as Griffith (1989, 12) mentioned, historical records found in the Syriac-Palestinian archive (known as old south Palestinian) of Christian texts in Arabic illustrate a recurring pattern of interaction between various locations, including Baghdad, Edessa, Damascus, sometimes Alexandria, and the monasteries in the Holy Land. This consideration brings one to bear in mind that the literature under review had no boundaries and that what enabled communication between the churches was precisely the Arabic language.

¹⁴⁴ See: G. Troupeau, Le rôle des syriaques dans la transmission et l'exploitation du patrimoine philosophique et scientifique grec, *Arabica*, 38/1, 1991, 1-10; S. Stroumsa, Philosophy as Wisdom: On the Christians' Role in the Translation of Philosophical Material into Arabic, in H. Ben-Shammai, Sh. Shaked, S. Stroumsa ed., *Exchange and Transmission across Cultural Boundaries: Philosophy, Mysticism and Science in the Mediterranean World*, Jerusalem, Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 2013, 276-293; A. Treiger, From al-Biṭrīq to Ḥunayn: Melkite and Nestorian Translators in Early 'Abbāsīd Baghdad, *Mediterranea, International journal on the transfer of knowledge*, 7, 2022, 142-181; G. Dimitri, *Greek thought, Arabic Culture: The Graeco-Arabic Translation Movement in Baghdad and Early 'Abbāsīd Society (2nd-4th/8th-10th centuries)*, London Routledge, 1998.

¹⁴⁵ See: D.G.K. Taylor Syriac Lexicography, in Sebastian P. Brock et al. ed., *The Gorgias Encyclopedic Dictionary of the Syriac Heritage*, Piscataway, NJ, Gorgias Press LLC, 2011, 391-393.

¹⁴⁶ For a list of bilingual Graeco-Arabic manuscripts, see D.C. Parker, *Codex Bezae: An Early Christian Manuscript and its Text*, Cambridge University Press, 1998, 60.

¹⁴⁷ See: K. Leeming, The Adoption of Arabic as a Liturgical Language by the Palestinian Melkites, *ARAM Periodical*, XV, 2003, 239-246.

¹⁴⁸ See: S.H. Griffith, *The Church in the shadow of the mosque Christians and Muslims in the world of Islam*, Princeton and Oxford, Princeton University Press, 2008, 138; S.K. Samir, Une apologie arabe du christianisme d'époque Umayyade?, in: S. K. Samir ed., *Actes du troisième congrès international d'études arabes chrétiennes*, Louvain-la-Neuve, septembre 1988, in: *Parole de l'Orient* 16, (1990-1991) (paru en 1992), 85-106; G. Graf, 2018, 39. For the History of the Melkite Church and its literature see J. Nasrallah, *Histoire du mouvement littéraire dans l'église melchite du Ve au Xxe siècle*, 4 vols., Louvain, Belgium: Peeters, 1979-89.

Most of the works in the surviving archive of old south Palestinian are translations of liturgical texts but five of them are original apologetic compositions (Blau, vol. 267, 21-23). The new cultural circumstances emphasized the importance of the translation movement and Gospel translations “were widely in circulation and extensively copied” (Kashouh, 2012, 93, 96, 112).

Anthony David of Baghdad¹⁴⁹ and Stephen of Ramla¹⁵⁰ are two monks and scribes of, respectively, the Mar Sabas and Mar Chariton monasteries in the late ninth century who played a great role in the Palestinian Church. They testify to a flourishing translation culture and a prosperous Arabophone monasticism. Anthony David of Baghdad copied translations from Greek into Arabic of ascetical works: lives of monastic saints, homilies, or tales of spiritual feasts. His two surviving manuscripts (Vatican Arabic MS 71 and Strasbourg Oriental MS 4226) are of monastic interest, one of the concern of the copyist and his Arabic-speaking community.

Stephen of Ramla worked on the British Library Oriental MS 4950 and the Sinai Arabic MS 72. The first contains two compositions originally written in Arabic, the one a summary of Melkite theology in Arabic called *The Summary of the Ways of Faith in the Trinity of the Unity of God, and in the Incarnation of God in the Word from the Pure Virgin Mary*,¹⁵¹ (called the *Summa Theologiae Arabica*) and the other Theodore Abū Qurrah’s Arabic tract on the veneration of the holy icons.¹⁵² The second manuscript

¹⁴⁹ See S.H. Griffith, Anthony David of Baghdad, Scribe and Monk of Mar Sabas: Arabic in the Monasteries of Palestine, in *Church History*, Vol. 58, 1, Cambridge University Press on behalf of the American Society of Church History, 1989, 7-19

¹⁵⁰ See S.H. Griffith, Stephen of Ramalah and the Christian Kerygma in Arabic in Ninth-Century Palestine, in *Arabic Christianity in the Monasteries of Ninth-Century Palestine*, Variorum collected studies series 380, Great Yarmouth, 1992, VII 23-45

¹⁵¹ See S.K. Samir, La somme des aspects de la foi: Oeuvre d’Abu Qurrah? And S.H. Griffith, A Ninth Century Summa Theologiae Arabica, in *Actes du Deuxième Congrès International d’Études Arabes Chrétiennes, Oosterhesselen, septembre 1984*, ed. S.K. Samir, 93-121 and 123-41, *Orientalia Christiana Analecta*, 226, Rome: Pontificio Istituto degli Studi Orientali, 1986

¹⁵² See S.H. Griffith, trans., *A treatise on the Veneration of the Holy Icons Written in Arabic by Theodore Abu Qurrah, Bishop of Harran; translated into English, with Introduction and Notes*, Leuven, Belgium: Peeters, 1997.

contains an Arabic copy of a translation of the four Gospels and is one of the earliest dated manuscripts of the Gospels in Arabic known to modern scholars.¹⁵³

These two monks and their colleagues intended to meet the needs of the Melkite community, whose language of daily communication was shifting towards Arabic. Additionally, they copied original Arabic compositions with apologetic themes.

In fact, the original literature of the Melkites almost always exhibits a dogmatic, apologetic, and polemical imprint (Graf, 2018, 41). The prominent figure of this trend is certainly Theodore Abū Qurrah (d. ca. 825)¹⁵⁴ who was the last doctor of the Greek Church in Syria, followed by others such as Qusṭā ibn Lūqā¹⁵⁵ (830-912) and Saʿīd Ibn Bīṭrīq (877-940).¹⁵⁶ Their works represented the Melkites' initial efforts to engage with topics beyond their own community matters.

¹⁵³ Sinai Arabic MS 72 was copied in 897 A.D. and is a translation from Greek. According to Kashouh (2012) it shows little Syriac influence and it is a revision and an improvement of the Arabic style of earlier manuscripts (Sinai, Ar. N.F. Parch 14 & 16 copied in 859 A.D and Sinai, Ar. 74 dated ninth century and Vatican, Borg. Ar. 95 dated eight/ninth century seem to have undergone fewer corrections and they are closer to the archetype which might go back to the seventh or eighth century).

¹⁵⁴ For an initial bibliographic reference, see Graf (2018) pages 43-62. More bibliography will follow in the section dedicated to him.

¹⁵⁵ In this context I cite the correspondence between a Muslim astronomer at the caliphal court in Baghdad, Al-Munajjim, and the two Christian scholars, the already-mentioned Nestorian Ḥunayn Ibn Ishāq and Qusṭā Ibn Lūqā. For bibliographical reference of Qusṭā Ibn Lūqā see Graf, 2018, 41; 70-72; S.H. Griffith, 2008, 86;88-89.

For the study of the correspondence see P. Nwyia and S.K. Samir, *Une correspondance islamo-chrétienne entre Ibn al-Munajjim, Ḥunayn ibn Ishāq et Qusṭā ibn Lūqā*, *Patrologia Orientalis*, no. 185, vol. 40, fasc. 4, Paris: Brepols, 1981; W.Z. Haddad, *Continuity and Change in Religious Adherence: Ninth-Century Baghdad, in Convention and Continuity: Indigenous Christian Communities in Islamic Lands; Eight to Eighteenth Centuries*, ed. M. Gerves and R.J. Bikhazi, 33-53, *Papers in Mediaeval Studies*, 9, Toronto, Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1990.

¹⁵⁶ He was the first Melkite of Alexandria to write in Arabic. His *Annals* is the main source of his theology. On his life and works, see Graf, 2018, 41; 72-78; for a study on the *Annals* see S.H. Griffith, *Eutychios of Alexandria on the Emperor Theophilus and Iconoclasm in Byzantium: A Tenth Century Century Moment in Christian Apologetics in Arabic*, in *Arabic Christianity in the Monasteries of Ninth-Century Palestine*, *Variorum collected studies series 380*, Great Yarmouth, 1992, IV, 154-190; *ibid.*, *Apologetics and Historiography in the Annals of Eutychius of Alexandria. Christian Self-definition in the world of Islam*, in R. Ebied, H.G.B. Teule, ed., *Studies on the Christian Arabic Heritage. In Honour of Father Prof. Dr. Samir Khalil Samir S.I. at the Occasion of his sixty-fifth Birthday*, Leuven, Paris, and Dudley, MA, Peeters, 2004, 65-89; and B. Ebeid, *La Tunica di al-Masih, La Cristologia delle grandi confessioni cristiane dell'Oriente nel X e XI secolo*, Roma, Edizioni Orientalia Christiana, Valore Italiano, 2018, 85-216.

From the original apologetic compositions which Blau studied closely, I will analyse *On the Triune Nature of God* treatise which is attributed to the Melkite tradition. In addition, I deal with Theodore Abū Qurrah's works; he was one of the first Melkite writers.

Not only the Melkites were producers of sacred texts but, at the beginning of the IX century, Arabic Christian literature was enriched by the production of the Church of the East composed by Syrian Nestorians and the Church of the West composed by Syrian Jacobites. As well as the monastic environment in which Arabic Christian literature was produced, Caliph's courts were also a place of debate where Christian theologians were invited to explain their beliefs. In this context, probably, as Samir (1994, 110) stated, Jacobites and Nestorians were more in contact with Muslims than the Melkites.

The members of Nestorian denomination made the largest contribution to the translation of Greek philosophical thinking into Arabic. The members of the Nestorian denomination made the largest contribution to the translation of Greek philosophical thinking into Arabic. I will try to reconstruct this field by highlighting some important figures. Nestorian literary production initially consisted of translations, and later expanded to include commentaries and independent works (Graf, 2018, 151). This tradition was born and developed in the Abbasid court of Baghdad. The authors who are part of this tradition had the peculiarity of being participants in Arab civilization through important positions in society; they included physicians, scholars of medicine and philosophy, and priests who, in addition to being authors in their professional and intellectual fields, were also influential in the ecclesiastical sphere. As mentioned earlier, the advanced education of Nestorian Christians made them teachers of Muslim Arabs and brought them into the schools of Muslim philosophers. Furthermore, this status led to a rapprochement between Nestorians and Jacobites; numerous Nestorian writers emerged from the Jacobite school of Yaḥyā ibn 'Adī. Even among Nestorians, the apologetic orientation in literature was prevalent from the beginning and continued to be so, but moderation in polemics, concessions made to Islamic proponents, and the exposition of the doctrine of faith encouraged worrying misinterpretations (Graf, 2018,

152). Among the main topics of controversy addressed were the unity and trinity of God and the mystery of the Incarnation.

The first among the polemicists was Patriarch Timothy I (780-823), who delivered his speeches on dogmatic issues, the Qur'ān, the Bible, and Christian worship in the Arabic language (Graf, 2018, 152; 163-166). Initially, his disputes were written in Syriac but later spread in the Arabic language. We will further explore this figure when examining his debate with Caliph al-Mahdī.

The most prolific and successful author in the field of philosophy and sciences was the aforementioned Ḥunayn Ibn Ishāq (808-873). He served as the chief physician of Caliph al-Mutawakkil (r. 847-61) and headed a school of translators. He translated numerous Greek texts into Syriac for Christian readers and into Arabic for Muslims. He was also an active apologist for his faith. He did not engage in Christian or inter-denominational controversies but focused on issues such as the creation of man and how to know the true religion (Griffith, 2007, 81-82).

He put his skills and knowledge at the service of Christian theology, although he did not write much on religious topics that has survived. He wrote brief apologetic treatises, including one that was lost on proofs of the existence of the one God. In addition, he responded to the previously mentioned al-Munajjim's letter in which the author called on him to profess Islam. The achievements and profile of this philosopher were so widely recognized that his writings were mentioned by other Christians. I am referring to the Coptic writers of the XIII century, 'Abū Ishāq ibn al-'Assāl, (al-Maḡārī, 2012, I, 562) and 'Abū al-Barakāt (Al-Maḡārī, 2012, II, 737) who transmitted his treatise *Kitāb fī Kayfiyyat idrāk al-diyānah* (On the ways of discerning the true religion). The first author transmitted another theological treatise called *Kitāb al-Ājāl* (Book on the hour of death) (Graf, 2018, 176).

On this occasion, it is important to point out that this is just one example demonstrating that an author was cited in the works of Christians from other denominations, but this was a very common phenomenon in the field of Arabic literature. This illustrates an important dynamic among the churches, namely that, despite being rivals in asserting their respective theological doctrines, they shared

untouchable beliefs and recognized works containing these beliefs. This dynamic is not evident in the Christian literature of today, which distances itself from literary writings that are not part of its own Christian tradition.

What contributed to this recognition of the author was undoubtedly the philosophical approach adopted by the writer, as also adopted by other writers. In his writings, Hunayn adopts a philosophical approach characterized by logical reasoning, a new line of thinking, which offers the means to defend the Christian faith and also adopt it as a way of life in the Islamic milieu, capable of allowing Christians and Muslims to live harmoniously (Griffith, 2008, 121-122). One can say that this approach helped the author establish a *consecrated* position in the field (Bourdieu, 1996, 239) and, at the same time, he adopted it as a strategy to appeal to the Muslim audience whose interests lay in "heightening the role of reason in religious discourse, moral development, the acquisition of virtues, and the beginnings of a political philosophy" (Griffith, 2007, 85).

Another figure who is considered the author of a unique apology in content and form is 'Abd al-Masīḥ al-Kindī.¹⁵⁷ This work is comprised of a risālah from the Muslim 'Abd Allāh ibn Isma'īl al-Hāshimī and a substantial response from the Nestorian al-Kindī. The letter from the Muslim interlocutor was likely a well-executed forgery that the Christian author used it to structure his apology (Graf, 2018, 193). The Muslim correspondent invites the Christian to convert to Islam and recognize the Prophet, but the author, in addition to persuasively defending his faith and Christian moral doctrine, criticizes Islam and Muslim ethics irreverently. Al-Kindī possessed an extensive literary knowledge that included the Qur'ān, the life of the Prophet, and Islamic religious currents, through which he revealed the weaknesses of Islam from historical and moral perspectives. Another strong point of this apology is his dialectical skill (Graf, 2018, 185), which certainly contributed to gaining symbolic capital that translated into his

¹⁵⁷ On al-Kindī's bibliographical sources and his letter, see Graf, 2018, 153; 184-195; B. Landron, *Chrétiens et musulmans en Irak: Attitudes Nestorienne vis-à-vis de l'Islam*, Paris, Cariscript, 1994; G. Tartar, *Dialogue islamo-chrétien sous le calife al-Ma'mūn; les épîtres d'al-Hashimī*, 2 vols, Combs-la Ville, Centre Évangélique de Témoignage et de Dialogue, 1982 (Arabic text with French translation); N.A. Newman, *The Early Christian-Muslim Dialogue: A Collection of Documents from the First Three Islamic Centuries (632-900 A.D.). Translations with Commentary*, Hatfield, PA, Interdisciplinary Biblical Research Institute, 1993, 345-555 (English translation).

popularity and dissemination among the Melkites, Jacobites, and Nestorians at that time. In the letter, we find another example of textual quotation, with a literal reiteration of the doctrine of the Trinity of God from the first letter of the Jacobite Ḥabīb Abū Rā'īṭa al-Takrīfī, which we will further explore in our study.

Another Nestorian writer was 'Ammār Al-Baṣrī (d.ca. 850) a theologian from Baṣra near to the seat of the 'Abbasid dynasty of Baghdad and a contemporary of both Theodore Abū Qurrah and Abū Rā'īṭa. He is distinguished from the other two by his knowledge about logical argumentation and, relevantly to my study, the creation of the theological vocabulary and its explanation in a philosophical manner (Hayek 1977, 14;18).

He wrote a literature of resistance due to the sociopolitical pressures of being dhimmis and with the pastoral aim of reinforcing Christians, who needed proof of the credibility of their faith. He wrote two apologetic works for Christians *Kitāb al-masā'il wa al-ajwiba* (The book of Questions and Answers) and for both Muslims and Christians *Kitāb al-Burhān* (The Book of the Proof concerning the Course of the Divine Economy).¹⁵⁸ While the former book lists fifty-one questions about the Incarnation, death, resurrection and ascension, *Kitāb al-Burhān* develops apologetic arguments and Christian practices.

'Ammār's defense relies more on rational arguments than on Scripture and tradition (Beaumont, 2009, 609). In addition, He employed Qur'anic language and contemporary Islamic theology for his arguments in a way that Muslims theologian would understand (Thomas, 2008, 3); his style is also influenced by *dhimmi* status and he avoided direct criticism (Mikhail, 2013., 316). He "is impregnated with the Qur'anic culture. He does not live in a Christian ghetto, he shares with Muslims the common Arabic culture, which carries many Qur'anic words and expressions, and a certain style and even Muslim thoughts", (Mikhail, *ibid.*, 320-321).

¹⁵⁸ For the study of these works, see Baṣrī A., *The Book of Questions and Answers (Kitāb al-masā'il wa al-ajwiba)*, in *'Ammār al-Baṣrī: apologie et controverses*, edited by Michel Hayek, 93-265, Beirut: Dār al-Mashriq, 1977; Baṣrī A., *The Book of the Proof Concerning the Course of the Divine Economy (Kitāb al-Burhān)*, in *'Ammār al-Baṣrī: apologie et controverses*, edited by Michel Hayek, 19-90, Beirut, Dār al-Mashriq, 1977.

In a later phase, other authors of high social status continued the Nestorian tradition, producing a vast body of apologetic literature. Notable among them are two authors with eclectic backgrounds, Elias of Nisibis (975-1046) and Ibn al-Tayeb (d. 1043), who marked the golden age of Arabic Nestorian literature (Graf, 2018, 153).

Another community living under Arab rule was the Jacobite. The Jacobites, from the early 9th century, also began writing in Arabic alongside their use of Syriac. This was to defend their religious identity and respond to the challenges posed by the Muslims. Under Muslim governance, the Jacobites experienced a level of religious empowerment that was unprecedented when compared to their relationship with their Byzantine counterparts, who considered their ecclesiastical activity clandestine (Atiya, 1968, 193). The initial tolerance towards the dhimmis and the Arab's desire to benefit from the advanced culture and learning of the ancient habitants settled within their dominion, regardless of religious differences, allowed the Jacobites, like the Nestorians, to secure prominent positions in the courts of the caliphs (Atiya, *ibid.*, 194). After intense translation activity in the IX century, in the X century, when translation was still crucial, scholars also began engaging in interpretative activities, commentaries, and the composition of philosophical treatises of their own.

During the time of Abū Qurrah and ‘Ammār al-Baṣrī, Ḥabīb ibn Khidmah Abū Rā’iṭah (d. before 850) was active on the Jacobite side. He was the first Jacobite to write theological treatises in Arabic. He defended the Jacobite Christology of Severus of Antioch (ca. 465-538) against the Melkites, and wrote on the doctrine of the Trinity and the Incarnation.¹⁵⁹ Not much is known of his life. It is known that in 817 AD he sent a Jacobite apologist called Nonnus of Nisibis (d. after 862) (Graf, 1951, vol. 130, 65-6) to debate with Abū Qurrah.¹⁶⁰ Abū Rā’iṭah was a flourishing figure during that time

¹⁵⁹ For an initial bibliographic reference, see Graf (1951). More bibliography will follow in the section dedicated to him.

¹⁶⁰ He wrote apologetic and exegetical works in both Syriac and Arabic. On this scholar and his works, see A. van Roey, *Nonnus de Nisibe, Traité apologétique: Étude, texte et traduction*, Bibliothèque du Muséon, 21, Louvain, Belgium, Peeters, 1948; S.H. Griffith, The Apologetic Treatise of Nonnus of Nisibis, *ARAM* 3, 1991, 115-38.

(Griffith, 2001, 49) and two of his works were preserved by Coptic writers (Graf, 1951, vol. 131, 25-26).

Later, the figure of Yaḥyā ibn ‘Adī (893-974) emerged. He was one of the “major proponents of the philosophical way of life as a guarantor of interreligious harmony and of logic and philosophy” (Griffith, 2007, 93) which were the principal tools of the Christian theologians and apologists in the Islamic milieu.¹⁶¹ He was part of a new generation of intellectuals in Baghdad, initially a student of the renowned Muslim philosopher Abū Nasr al-Farābī (ca. 870-950), later becoming “the head of the Baghdad Aristotelians in the mid-tenth century” (Gutas, 1998, 101). He contributed to the Christian endeavour of developing a logical, philosophical, and theological vocabulary in Arabic (Griffith, 2008, 124). In addition to his prolific work in philosophy, logic, and translation, the scholar was particularly engaged in defending the doctrines of the Trinity and the Incarnation in Jacobite Christology.¹⁶² His works were so effective that Coptic writers referenced them in doctrinal texts of the XIII century (see for example in Al-Maqārī, I, 430).

Regarding the Coptic Church, it was not until the X century that the Copts began to produce their literature in Arabic up until the XIII century. The most relevant author of the first Coptic literature in Arabic was Sāwīrus Ibn al-Muqaffa’ whom I will address in the third chapter. Therefore, by the X century, Arabic was the language used by Christians of all denominations: it was the target language and the writing language of significant works.

To sum, the disputations of this period did arouse a feeling of theological defence in religious men who wrote treatises to uphold Christian principles and Christian social practises aimed at both Christians and Muslims. The most-known theologians of the IX century were the Arab Orthodox Theodore Abū Qurrah (d. ca. 825); the Syriac Orthodox Abū Rā’iṭa al-Takrītī (d. 835); and the Nestorian ‘Ammār al-Baṣrī (d. ca.

¹⁶¹ In Samir (1994) Yaḥyā ibn ‘Adī is positioned in the third phase, which is marked by a purely philosophical approach and almost no Biblical references.

¹⁶² In this regard, G. Endress lists sixty works under the title of “Christian theology” in his bibliography of Yaḥyā’s works. See Endress, *Works of Yaḥyā ibn ‘Adī: An Analytical Inventory*, Wiesbaden, Reichert, 1977, 99-123.

850). Arab Christians contributed to Christian literature in the philosophical field, too, writing original works. We cite here Ḥunayn Ibn Ishāq (d. 873), Qūstā Ibn Luqa (d.912), Yahyā Ibn ʿAdī (d. 974). The Arab Christians also made their contribution in other genres such as Biblical commentaries, Saint's lives, historical works, as well as poetry.

In conclusion, Christian literature in the Middle East produced by the different dominations is vast and has continued since the medieval period; most of it still remains unknown and unexplored despite the attention paid to the Arab-Christian culture and it constitutes an enrichment given its precious belonging to Christian history, rich in heritage and long-suffering.

Before delving into the analysis of the selected apologetic works, it is essential to introduce the *field* of Gospel translation, as I mentioned, intertwined with theology and, linguistically, tied to the *field* of the Arabic language.

II. The field of the Arabic Gospels: a long, hybrid and complex editorial history

The Bible is a basic clue to understanding the history of Christianity in Arabia. We mentioned that Holy Scripture brings up the presence of Arabs on the day of Pentecost and that this Christian presence of the Arabs is confirmed in the V and VI centuries. Despite the fact that Arab populations adhered to Christianity, the issue of a late appearance of biblical or liturgical texts in Arabic is not fully resolved. From a different viewpoint, on the one hand, scholars like Cheikho, Baumstark, Peters, and Shahīd argue for a pre-Islamic existence of the Gospels, or parts of them. To cite one of them, Shahīd states that it is certainly possible that Arabic-speaking Christians long before the early seventh century had already translated at least the Gospels, the Psalms and then homilies into Arabic. He claimed that an Arabic translation of the Bible could have been undertaken in three areas: Mesopotamia, Syria, and South Arabia where Christianity had been propagated for at least three centuries before the rise of Islam.¹⁶³ Baumstark

¹⁶³ See in particular, Shahīd, *Byzantium and the Arabs in the Fourth Century*, pp.435-443; Shahīd, *Byzantium and the Arabs in the Fifth Century*, pp.422-429, 449-450; Shahīd, *Byzantium and the Arabs in the Sixth Century*, Vol. 2, part 2, p.295, Washington D.C., Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 1984.

recalled that early Muslim authors of the IX century, for example Ibn Qutayba in *Kitāb al-ma'ārif*, and al-Tabārī in *Kitāb al-dīn wa-al-dawla*, cited a few passages of the Gospels in Arabic from a Syriac Vorlage which is an old Syriac version (1934, 165-188). Kashouh (2012, 93) remarked in his analysis of the oldest manuscripts of family A (dated VIII-IX century) that “the archetype of this family goes back to the seventh or eighth century at the latest”.

On the other hand, others such as Graf, Blau, Arbache and Griffith argue for a post-Islamic date, around the ninth century. From a historical and cultural point of view Samir Arbache draws the conclusion that it was only after the Umayyad caliph ‘Abd al-Malik had the Arabic alphabet fixed that Christian Arabs started actively to write versions of biblical and liturgical texts (2007, 37-48).

However, we are reminded that in the recent study by Kashouh, the author claimed that there are several clues that suggest that the translation of parts of the Bible was in the pre-Islamic era. In this latest study by Kashouh, he claims that the Gospels were translated earlier, in either al-Ḥira, Iraq, or Najrān from Syriac between 500 and 620 AD (Kashouh, 2021).

In the first centuries after the rise of Islam, Christian communities demonstrated also a great variety in their biblical translations, especially for the Gospels: Arabic was in the service of reinforcing the Christian position within Islamic society. In fact, the biblical translations were often transformed and adapted to the setting of the receptors with an apologetic purpose in mind. Starting from the introductions of the translators, they showed their intentions and strategies. Over time, changes also occurred because older registers and translation techniques were not understood by later copyists and readers¹⁶⁴ (Kashouh 2012, 150).

What we know is that the two centres from which Arabic translations started to be rendered were Mar Sabas and, especially, St. Catherine’s monastery. What has come to us is that by the early IX century the Wisdom of Jesus ben Sira and Psalm 79 were translated into Arabic as regards to the Old Testament. Intense activity was not only in the IX century but also in the XIII and XIV centuries in which the majority of the

¹⁶⁴ This is what emerges for example from the analysis of Kashouh (2012).

manuscripts were not fresh translations but copies of earlier ones. Going over time, the XVII and XVIII centuries represent the third period of extensive efforts in copying and transcribing the Gospels. It must be remembered here that the first to engage in the comparative examination of Arabic versions of the Bible were Medieval Coptic scholars. In the year 1252 al-As'ad Abī Al-Faraj Hibat Allah Ibn al-'Assāl wrote a critical review of the Arabic Gospels. In his translation he avoided Qur'anic terminology and substituted it with more neutral terminology (Zaki 2011) to be accessible to Copts who no longer understood the Coptic language.

As regards the modern translations we mention the translations of Aḥmad Fāris al-Shidyāq (1851), Eli Smith and Cornelius Van Dyck (1860-1865), the Dominican version (1875-1878), the Jesuit (1876-1880) and *The inter-confessional Arabic translation* (1979). All these translations have been produced because there was strong disapproval of earlier printings of Arabic Bibles.

We start by defining the Arabic Gospel manuscripts which contain the continuous text of the Gospels. The first issue to take into consideration is the state of research in the field of the manuscripts and their classification. We retrace chronologically some scholarly contributions carried out that can help us to understand the dimensions of the matter and to pursue our research aim. First of all, we have to consider that the Arabic Gospels texts are translations from more than one language, in particular Ignazio Guidi (1888) developed five different groups (classi); firstly, the manuscripts translated from a Greek source (the chief source); secondly those translated from the Syriac Peshitta; thirdly those translated from the Coptic version; fourthly, manuscripts of two eclectic recensions: the recension of Ibn al-'Assāl and the "Alexandrian Vulgate"; and fifthly, the elegant or singular manuscripts. We remember that the Alexandrian Vulgate became common and influential and also the basis "of all printed editions of the Arabic Gospels from the edition princeps of 1591 down to the twentieth century" (Metzger 257-268).

Then, Graf (1944, I, 142-170) referred to three hundred and seventy-five Arabic manuscripts of the Gospels and followed this division in his volume with a division into four main headings.

In general, the study of the Bible in Arabic was limited in the XIX and XX centuries because their importance was underestimated and the studies of Islam was the main object of study in the academic world from the philological point of view.¹⁶⁵ On the other hand, some researchers claimed that biblical translations in Arabic have “textual significance”.¹⁶⁶ What complicates this field of research is that there is a large majority of translations which are anonymous and/or are not complete; then the plurality in terms of compilations and the difficulty of access to the manuscripts or simply being aware of them because there does not exist a comprehensive bibliography.¹⁶⁷ There is no single direction of research in modern studies of the Arabic Bible. Some scholars propose studying the Middle Arabic features of these texts,¹⁶⁸ but concentrating on the linguistic aspects weakens the historical importance of these translations. On the other hand, there are few analyses of translation techniques and studies of these translations in liturgical and apologetics contexts which influenced firmly the strategies of translators.¹⁶⁹ As regards the critical editions of the Gospels, we mention the critical edition of al-’As’ad

¹⁶⁵ Biblical scholarship tended to have a negative attitude toward the examination of Arabic biblical versions, see P. De Lagarde, *Die vier Evangelien arabisch aus der Wiener Handschrift herausgegeben*, Leipzig, F A Brockhaus, 1864, 1; E. Nestle, *Bibelübersetzungen, arabische*, in *Realencyklopädie für Protestantische Theologie und Kirche*, 3rd edn, Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, vol. III, 1897, 91; S.P. Tregelles, *Arabic Versions*, in *A Dictionary of the Bible Comprising its Antiquities, Biography, Geography, and Natural History*, 2nd edn, London: John Murray, vol. III, 1893, p.1615; B.J. Roberts, *Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart: Handwörterbuch für Theologie und Religionswissenschaft*, 3rd edn, Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1957, 1.

¹⁶⁶ See: B. Levin, *Die griechisch-arabische Evangelien-Übersetzung. Vat. Borg. ar. 95 und Ber. orient. oct. 1108*, Uppsala, Almqvist & Wiksells Boktryckeri, 1938, 1; C. Peters, *Grundsätzliche Bemerkungen zur Frage der arabischen Bibeltexte*, *Rivista degli Studi Orientali* 20, 1942, 129–143.

¹⁶⁷ For the last point I know online recent databases and inventories such as *Biblia Arabica*, Pavone, Vhmml sites and *Sinai Palimpsests Project*.

¹⁶⁸ See Levin, 1938; 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, Brill, 1974; B.J. Dikken, *Some remarks about Middle Arabic and Sa’adya Gaon’s Arabic translation of the Pentateuch in manuscripts of Jewish, Samaritan, Coptic Christian, and Muslim provenance*, in L. Zack and A. Schippers (ed.), *Middle Arabic and Mixed Arabic: Diachrony and Synchrony*, Leiden: Brill, 2012, 51–81.

¹⁶⁹ M. Polliack (1997) deals with translations in an exegetical context, see his study: *The Karaite Tradition of Arabic Bible Translation: A Linguistic and Exegetical Study of Karaite Translations of the Pentateuch from the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries C.E.*, Leiden, Brill.

Abī Al-Faraj Hibat Allah Ibn al-'Assāl's translation published by Samuel Moawad in 2014 based on the oldest eight manuscripts.¹⁷⁰

Returning to the enormous material at our disposal, we have to say that there is no a systematic inventory of this corpus yet. Kashouh did an enormous amount of work (2012) examining 200 manuscripts from twenty-one library and monastery collections.

Taking into account the classification made by Kashouh, through phylogenetic analysis, this study aims to focus on the earliest translations of the Gospels that are currently available to us. Even though these manuscripts are dated to the eighth or ninth century, Kashouh's study demonstrates that they are copies of earlier exemplars, and that by that time, the Gospel texts had already been textually contaminated and linguistically improved (ibid., 318-319).

In his classification, the Gospel text of Codex Vatican Ar. 13 is the most ancient. It is a copy from a much earlier and more archaic exemplar and it is supposed to be translated from the Peshitta before the rise of Islam given its linguistic features and translation technique; in addition it does not belong to the Middle Arabic or Arabic of south Palestine even if it does come from the St. Sābā monastery, but its language is classical Arabic. It contains difficult and rare expressions and is characterised by a rich and well-elaborated language and archaic vocabulary (Kashouh 2012, 142-149). The manuscript contains words such as *الاربا* and *الاردا* for disciples, *يوحنن* for John the Baptist, *الياسين* for the Prophet Elijah which “are obsolete within Islam and also within the emerging Arabic versions of the VII and VIII centuries” (Kashouh, 165). But this was not a completely discarded version. In fact, in Kashouh's contribution he discovered that Vatican Ar. 13 is a loose and free translation and was edited in the Codex Beirut B.O. Or. 430 bringing it closer to the Peshitta version (Kashouh, 328). So, there is a need to rework the translation to meet the needs of the society for which the biblical text is intended.

Another manuscript which is located in the early centuries from the birth of Islam is the Manuscript Sinai Ar. 72 which is the oldest complete and dated manuscript of the

¹⁷⁰ Most of these Gospels represent Family L in Kashouh, 2011, 258-274

Gospels (copied in 897 A.D.). It is part of a homogeneous group of manuscripts that originated in Palestine in the mid-eighth century. It contains corrections to present a text improved linguistically and close to classical Arabic (Kashouh, 7).¹⁷¹ Arbache confirms that the linguistic features of the manuscript are identified as the Middle Arabic variety previously studied by Blau (1966). According to Diem's study, there are influences of Aramaic, Nabatean, and Syriac from an orthographic perspective (1983, 214). Arbache (ibid. 128-129) argues that the text is closely linked to the source text (Greek), meaning that the word order and stylistic structures are similar if not identical to the source text. Furthermore, in the translation, the principle of literalness prevails, but there is also success in creating a style. Finally, the vocabulary of the biblical text is independent of the Muslim language but participates in the vocabulary of a common culture (Arbache, ibid. 138)

Sinai 70 is an undated manuscript but according to the feature of the script Kashouh (2012, 123-124) suggested that it was copied in the early IX century and its archetype is from as early as the eighth century. In addition, Kashouh (ibid.) confirms that it follows the Syriac in terms of word order and of terminology and that the language is Middle Arabic.

In the field of Gospel translation, there have also been versions that adopted language close to that of the Qur'ān. In this initial phase, the rhymed translation from the Syriac Peshitta of manuscripts Ar. vat 17 and 18 date back to the early tenth century is placed (Kashouh, 2012, 128). The two texts present the same translation but the author is unknown. The Qur'anic style of this translation elevates the Gospel text to a completely different level in terms of eloquence and understanding compared to the other above versions.¹⁷²

¹⁷¹ Manuscript Sinai Ar. 72 was the subject of study of A.G. Garland, *An Arabic Version of the Gospel According to Mark*, Master of Arts diss., Catholic University of America, 1978; and S. Arbache, *Une ancienne version arabe des Evangiles: langue, texte et lexique*, Thèse de doctorat dirigée par L. Jacques et T. Gérard, Études arabo-islamiques, Bordeaux III, 1994.

¹⁷² In terms of Qur'anic expressions, in the Gospel of Luke Naşr (2011) identifies an expressiveness and a vocabulary in 74 verses that are similar, if not identical, to an equal number of Qur'anic verses.

According to this preliminary description these translations one can formulate the following hypotheses. The Vatican Arabic 13 manuscript was written for a tribe which spoke an archaic language not belonging to the southern Palestinian region, and the translator was familiar with the Syriac Peshitta which influenced his translation. Sinai Arabic 72, a text translated from Greek, could be part of the extensive translation work undertaken at the beginning of the Islamic Empire. Given the dating of the manuscript, another hypothesis that could be put forward is that the translation may have been intended for a more civilised audience compared to the tribal association's form, probably by a translator who was well-acquainted with the Greek-speaking Byzantine Church. As for Sinai 70, it could be chronologically earlier than Sinai 72, as various studies agree, because the translation process began from Syriac into Arabic rather than from Greek, as previously mentioned; so the dominant culture at that time could have been the Syriac one. What certainly unites these translations is the fact that the language of the audience was now Arabic, and the demand for a biblical text in Arabic was growing stronger to maintain their Christian identity or even for the purpose of evangelisation. In the context of the translation of Arabic 17 and 18, that could indeed be a plausible hypothesis, emphasizing the sacred nature of the Bible through a language closer to that of the Qu'rān or using linguistic features familiar to the Muslim ear in order to trigger the Christian sacred text. As regards the translators, first, they might have encountered either a completely new translation, if the scribe had no access to any Arabic text, or a translation influenced to varying degrees, directly or indirectly, by another version circulating at the time. Second, they have been influenced by the historical period in which they lived, by what characterized the culture and art of the time. The linguistic richness of this heritage should not be neglected and in the next pages I will try to illustrate the variety of its vocabulary. In addition to comparing the Gospel versions among themselves, the intent is also to compare these versions with the oldest dated treatise, *On the Triune Nature of God*, centered on biblical verses, in order to establish a connection. In fact, my aim is to understand the Gospel linguistic choices from other types of texts that are not continuous Gospels because they have been created within a particular historical context.

III. Some Early Christian works and Islamic language

It is in the VIII century that we have the earliest dated translation into Arabic of a Christian text, produced as early as 772 AD. It is the Arabic translation of Amonious' Report on the Martyrdom of the Monks of Sinai and Raithu (CPG 6088).

In the early Islamic times Christian literature was characterised by elements borrowed from emerging Islamic concepts which were adapted and turned to a Christian purpose. Christian writers were adept at explaining their faith, approaching Islamic language without losing the Christian spirit and meanings. This was not an easy task and "special efforts were expended to find an appropriate Arabic vocabulary in terms of which to translate the technical expressions of Christian theology as they had been deployed earlier in Greek and Syriac" (Griffith, 2008, 94). And the opposite happened: "all of the religious vocabulary in Arabic had already been co-opted by Islamic religious discourse, which often systematically excluded the very meanings wanted by Christians, or at the very least Muslims Islamised the terms in a way contrary to Christian thinking" (Griffith, 95). In other words, Arab Christians participated with Muslim intellectuals in *'ilm al-kalām* or the science of discoursing about religion in the Abbasid period.

Gardet noted several times that the same word has different connotations in Christian and Muslim vocabulary (1967, 429). Ledit stated that the words often change their meaning when moving from Christianity to Islam (1956, 132). Watt reached the conclusion that there was a distinctive linguistic tradition among Arab Christians that, independent of Muslim culture, persisted into the tenth century (1957, 360-365).

Thus, the result seems to be that a common language was created but, with the passing of the centuries, this language assumed Islamic connotations and became unfamiliar to Christians.

The Abbasid empire (750-1258 AD) created political and religious reality which pushed Melkite Christians in particular to write apologetics in Arabic. This was the official language of the empire, non-Muslims were gradually marginalised within society and conversion to Islam became an increasing pressure. In addition, according to

the so-called pact of ‘Umar,¹⁷³ Christians were under the condition of *dhimmīs* that dictated the cessation of their rights to protection for those opposing the Qur’ān or Islam.

In this context, apologists tried to answer Muslim objections and to support the Christian faith developing proofs by way of reason and Bible. Thus, this literature had a double purpose: one of resistance through criticising Islam indirectly and the second of *accommodation*, namely of accepting challenge to produce an effective discourse of the Christian faith (Griffith, 2008, 17; Tarras, 2017, 85).

In this first period, between 750 and 850, apologetical movement was characterised by biblical and homiletic approach (S. Khalil 1994, 110) integrating a language familiar to Muslims for rhetorical purposes.

The earliest known apologetical debate belonging to the first period is the religious debate between the Nestorian Patriarch Timothy I (727-823) and the ‘Abbasid caliph al-Mahdī (754-785)¹⁷⁴ which is the earliest apologetic in Eastern Christianity and encapsulates the whole, still ongoing, debate between Christians and Muslims. Timothy was highly active in ecclesiastical organization and literary endeavors. In his work, he utilized the Syriac language, which was still predominant during his time, but he also advocated for the emerging activity in the Arabic language (Graf, 2018, 162). At the time, there was significant interest and dissemination of the debate that Timothy had with the caliph. It is a debate the script of which is familiar to the ears of a Christian or a Muslim and has an ecumenical character. From the linguistic point of view, it was recorded by Timothy in Syriac but was conducted in Arabic in 781 or 782AD; later it was translated into Arabic and circulated throughout the Christian communities of the

¹⁷³ See J. Tolan, *The Pact of ‘Umar* in D. Thomas, B. Roggema ed., *Christian-Muslim Relations: A Bibliographical History: Volume 1 (600–900)*, Leiden: Brill, 2009, 360-66; M. Levy-Rubin, *Non-Muslims in the Early Islamic Empire: From Surrender to Coexistence*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2014.

¹⁷⁴ The first edition of this debate is by L. Cheikho, *Al-muḥāwara al-dīniyya allati jarat bayna al-khalifa al-Mahdi wa Ṭimāthāwus al-Jathiliq*, *Mashriq XIX*, 1921, 359-374 of MS 662 of the Bibliothèque Orientale in Beirut. See also the edition and french translation of H. Putman *L’Église sous Timothée I, (780-823): étude sur l’église nestorienne au temps des premiers ‘Abbāsides: avec nouvelle édition et traduction du dialogue entre Timothée et al-Mahdī*, Beirut, Dar al-Mashriq, 1975.

Near East (Mingana, 1928, 11).¹⁷⁵ Instead of this argumentation, Browne (1931) claimed that the Arabic text is would have been highly unlikely before the Syriac version. The language of the debate is a simplified form of Arabic accessible to the Christian Arabs of that time. In addition, the text contains numerous analogies and Aristotelian logic presented in a simplified Arabic form.

Comparing it to the source text, the translation is literal, the narrative form is maintained in the first person, and some sections are condensed. The topics they engage with include: Christ as the Son of God and Son of Man, the Trinitarian relationship, the differences between Christians, Jews, and Muslims regarding ritual obligations, Christian opinions about the Prophet, the accusation of Scriptural falsification, the veneration of the cross, and the cause of Christ's crucifixion. Timothy's aim was also to demonstrate the agreement between Christian doctrine, specifically Nestorian beliefs, with the sacred texts, including the Qur'ān, and reason.

I will try to expound some notes about the language of this debate in accordance with the purpose of this study.

First of all, it is evident an Islamic influence, intentional or unintentional, in the choice of vocabulary in the process of translation. In fact, In the discussion there are traces of the Arabic words recorded in the pre-Islamic poetry such as *ḥawāriyūn* (disciples), *naṣāra* and *'Isā* but, there are also Islamic expressions in the lines of Timothy I, the so-called epitaphs which enriched the dialogue. For example, I have extrapolated *'azza wa jalla* (May He be exalted and glorified), *al-Masiḥ 'alayhi al-salām* (Christ, peace be upon Him), *Allāh ta'ālā* (God Most High), *Allāh al-bāri* (God the Creator) and *jalla sha'nuhu* (May his essence be exalted). As regards these expressions, in terms of meaning, they do not offend Christian belief (except *al-Masiḥ 'alayhi al-salām* because Christ is the Prince of Peace); simply, they are not found in today's language because they are considered to belong to Islam and then we find other expressions which were substituted for them. Another hypothesis could be that this is an ancient Christian terminology of the Arabic, fallen into disuse today because of an interruption by Arab expressivity after the Golden Age. For this second hypothesis we

¹⁷⁵ Also Putman (1975) claimed the same.

take into account the expressions *Allah ta'ālā* and *Allāh al-bāri'* which contain two attributes of God. Today, *ta'ālā* is substituted by *al-muta'ālī* and *al-bāri'* by *al-khāliq*. However, we find these two words in the *Fī tathlīth al-'ittiḥād* treatise of Ibn Al-'Assāl (1241 AD) written in classical Arabic. The author wrote (Sbath, 111):

البيعة المسيحية تعتقد أن البارئ تعالى جوهر واحد موصوف بصفات الكمال¹⁷⁶;

and he continues to quote these two words throughout the text. This example confirms the second hypothesis. In contrast, the expressions *'azza wa jalla* and *jalla sha'nuhu* have Islamic connotations. I find, for example, in *Fī waḥdaniyyati al-bāri' ta'ālā wa tathlīth aqānīmihi* treatise of Sam'ān bin Kulayl (1145-1235) the words *jalla* and *'azza* (Sbath 105; 106; 109):

وقد يجوز وصف الخالق جل اسمه بكل الصفات الحسنی... لأن سلطانه يجل عن الصفات
وعظم شأنه يفوق (عن) النوعت المكرمات.¹⁷⁷

And we also find:

ولما جاءنا التوقيف من الله عز وجل بأنه سمي ذاته أبا وابنا وروحا قدسا...¹⁷⁸

Another Qur'anic term in the debate is *'arraja* (to ascend) referring to the ascension of Jesus instead of using *ṣa'ada* that is the Christian common word for indicating the ascension of Christ.

From reading these treatises we perceive that Christian texts are aligned with to Islamic terminology especially when referring to God in praising and exalting him.

Second, I suppose that a Syriac influence. I have extrapolated the word *inthilām* which means, in the wider sense, defilement in regard to the virginity of the Mother of God (*dūna inthilām batūliyyatu al-wālidatu, without the virginity of the bearer being*

¹⁷⁶ See the text in Paul Sbath, *Vingt Traités Philosophiques et Apologétiques d'Auteurs Arabes Chrétiens du IX au XIV siècle*, Cairo, H. Friedrich et Co, 1929, 111.

Translation: The Church believes that the Creator, He exalted, is a unique essence and described by perfect attributes.

¹⁷⁷ Translation: the Creator, His name is worthy to be exalted, be described with all qualities...because His power is far above the qualities and the greatness of His essence surpasses honorable epithets (property).

Also the word *ḥusna* is not used today in the Christian context.

¹⁷⁸ Translation: When we receive the agreement from God, may be exalted and glorified, the command that He names Himself Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

We point out that the word *tawqīf* is *tawfiq* as mentioned by the author.

defiled). It could derive from Syriac¹⁷⁹ but the word entered into Arabic and is today recorded in dictionaries. In The Doha Dictionary it means *انتلام الشيء, انكسار حوافه* and *وانهدامها*¹⁸⁰ and the definition refers to its use by Bashār Ibn 'Abī ḥazim al-'Asādī, a pre-Islamic poet. In the B.-Van-Dyck Bible (2 Kings 22:5) *thulam* is used, referring to the temple of God which had to be repaired.

We find it in Dozy (1881)¹⁸¹ associated with *al-ṣīt* (the honor). *Thalam al-ṣīt* is “blesser l’honneur, décréditer, faire tort à, tenir la renommée de quelqu’un” and “sa réputation a été blessée, a reçu une atteinte; brèche à l’honneur.”¹⁸² In our case, there could be a connection between the breaking of an object or the wounding of a person’s honor with the virginity of Mary but in the ecclesiastical context other expressions are used to indicate this concept. In *al-lahūt al-muqārin* Pope Shenuda wrote *dawām batūliyyati al-'adhrā'* or *laysa li-'annaha fuqīḍat batūliyyatiha* (Pope Shenuda III, 95-98). It occurs for instance in The Burning Bush hymn:

دعيت أما لمن أنشاك لأجل خلاص البشرية اتى وسكن في أحشاك وانت عذراء بيكورية.¹⁸³

Finally, Ezekiel (44:2) speaks of the *mughlaq (shut)* door prophesying the perpetual virginity of Saint Mary.

In conclusion, I suggest that the translator of the Syriac debate or Timothy I himself used the word *inthilām* taking it from Syriac but, from the meaning registered in the dictionaries, the dogmatic meaning does not correspond exactly to breaking; the sense of defilement is a consequence of losing her virginity for an unmarried woman, but this is not the sense that Christian texts have transmitted.

Third, the text demonstrates that theological expressions in Arabic were already coined at that time. In fact, expressions such as *alladhī ḡahar bi al-jasad li-ajl khalāṣ al-'ālam* (appeared in the flesh for the salvation of the world); *al-masīḥ huwa Ibn wa-*

¹⁷⁹ The word in the Syriac manuscript means to loosen, break open and also unseal. See R. P. Smith, *A compendious Syriac Dictionary*, Oxford, Clarendon Pressed. J. Payne Smith (Mrs Margoliouth) 1903, 595.

¹⁸⁰ Translation: the breaking of the object, its edges and its collapse.

¹⁸¹ Dozy took up the definition of Boethius 1964, 96.

¹⁸² Translation: to injure honour, to discredit, to do wrong to, to hold up one’s reputation and one’s reputation has been injured, has received a blow, breach of honor.

¹⁸³ Translation: You became a mother of your creator, for the salvation of man kind, He came and dwelt in your womb, and your virginity is sealed.

mawlūd qabl al-duhūr (Christ is the Son born before the ages); *Kalimatu Allah ittakhadha jasadān* (the Word of God took on a body); *Allah wāhid wa-huwa muthallath* (God is one and triune), are still found today in liturgical and theological texts. In addition, there are words such as *aqānīm* (hypostases) or *lā yamtazij wa-lā yakhtaliṭ* (not be mingled or mixed) which are specific to explaining the trinitarian dogma. Thus, not only has this vocabulary been kept unchanged throughout history but from this manuscript I deduce that it was certainly fixed before the debate between the two protagonists took place. This is an important difference from the Syriac version in which there is no sophisticated theological vocabulary like the Arabic one (Putman, 183).

I extract some lines from the dialogue to show the strategies adopted by Timothy to respond to his interlocutor's questions about Christ which include the Unity of God, the Trinity and the Incarnation.¹⁸⁴

On the question whether Christ is the Son of God he responds:

فقلت: إننا نعتقد بذلك دون شك. لأن هكذا تعلمنا من المسيح نفسه إذ هو مسطور عنه في الإنجيل والتوراة والأنبياء أنه ابن اللة. ولكن ولادته ليست كالولادة الجسدانية، بل هي ولادة عجيبة، تفوق إدراك العقل ووصف اللسان، كما يليق بالولادة الإلهية.¹⁸⁵

إن المسيح هو ابن ومولود قبل الدهور. فلا نستطيع أن نفحص عن هذه الولادة، ولا أن ندركها. لأن الله غير مدرك في جميع صفاته.¹⁸⁶

ولكن نأتي بتشبيهه ما، مأخوذ من الطبيعة: فكما تتلد الأشعة من الشمس، والكلمة من النفس؛ هكذا المسيح، بما أنه كلمة الله، ولد من الأب قبل الدهور.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁴ I consulted and quote the edited text of Hackenburg (2009). All translation are mine.

¹⁸⁵ Translation: then I said, We believe this without a doubt because this is what we have learned from Christ Himself, as it is written about Him in the Gospel, the Torah, and the Prophets, that He is the Son of God. However, His birth is not like the physical birth but a miraculous birth that transcends the understanding of the mind and the description of the tongue, as befits a divine birth.

¹⁸⁶ Translation: Christ is the Son, born before the ages. We cannot inquire about this birth, nor can we comprehend it, as God's attributes are beyond comprehension.

¹⁸⁷ Translation: But we bring a comparison derived from nature: just as rays are born from the sun, and the word from the soul, thus Christ, being the Word of God, was born from the Father before the ages.

From these lines the author relies on the scriptures to defend Christ's figure and from the start declares the incapability of humans to understand His birth as it is divine. For this reason, he employs the analogy of the sun and the word to aid in understanding the birth of the Son of God.

On the question about the impossibility of Saint Mary's virginity after the birth of Christ, he responds:

إن هذا الأمر، نظرا الى الطبيعة، هو محال، وغير ممكن أن يصير دون انتلام البتولية. ولا يمكن أن يحبل به اصلا، بغير اشتراك رجل مع امرأة.¹⁸⁸

وأما نظرا إلى قدرة خالق الطبيعة، فمستطاع ذلك، أي ان البتول تلد بدون انتلام بتوليبتها. لأن الله سبحانه قادر على كل شيء ، وليس عنده أمر عسير.¹⁸⁹

اولا من الكتاب. قد سطر أن حواء قد أخرجت من ضلع آدم، دون أن تنشق تلك الضلعة. والمسيح (عليه السلام) قد صعد إلى السماء، دون ان ينشق الجلد. فهكذا مريم البتول ولدت ابنها، من دون أن تنتلم بتوليبتها ويعتريها ضرر.¹⁹⁰

ثانيا من الطبيعة. فإن الأثمار تولد من الأشجار، والنظر من العين، والروائح من الزهور، دون انشقاق وانفصال بعضها من بعض. وكذا تتلد الأشعة من الشمس.¹⁹¹

From these line, Timothy demonstrates an understanding that human reason deems Mary's virginity impossible, but he places this within the omnipotence of God. He supports his argument by drawing upon the common belief in the creation of Eve and parallels taken from nature.

Then, on the questions referring to the Trinity, first he explains his faith:

¹⁸⁸ Translation: This matter, according to nature, is impossible and cannot happen without the defilement of virginity. Moreover, it is not possible for a woman to conceive without the participation of a man.

¹⁸⁹ Translation: As for the ability of the Creator of nature, He is capable of this, meaning that a virgin can give birth without the defilment of her virginity. Because God Almighty is capable of everything, and nothing is difficult for Him.

¹⁹⁰ Translation: Firstly, from the Book, it is written that Eve was brought forth from Adam's rib without that rib splitting. And Jesus (peace be upon him) ascended to heaven without his skin splitting. So, Mary the Virgin gave birth to her son without the defilement of her virginity and without any harm befalling her.

¹⁹¹ Translation: Secondly, from nature. Fruits are born from trees, sight from the eye, fragrances from flowers, without any splitting or separation. Similarly, rays are born from the sun.

إن الاعتقاد بهذه الاسماء الثلاثة هو الاعتقاد بثلاثة أقانيم، أعني الأب والابن والروح القدس، الذين هو إله واحد وطبيعة واحدة وجوهر واحد. كذا نؤمن ونعتقد على ما علمنا صريحا عيسى (عليه السلام) وتعلمنا ذلك أيضا من الأنبياء.¹⁹²

Then, he continues by providing evidence based on creation and the Bible showing his philosophical and theological education as he does for the rest of the dialogue on more practical issues.

I can conclude that from this debate, one can discern a simple language and a dialogical strategy based on the norms of that era. The dialogue reflects the cultural setting and theological discourse and follows the expectations of the target audience, both Christians and Muslims. In addition, the translation of this dialogue into Arabic demonstrates the need to disseminate its content in a language comprehensible and spoken at that moment to reach a broader audience.

Another representative work of the first period mentioned above is the apologetical treatise which was called *On the triune Nature of God*. This treatise is attributed to Melkite tradition and it is a witness to biblical quotations in Arabic. It was found in the Arabic MS Sinai Arabic 154 manuscript (fols 99r-139v) at St. Catherine's monastery and edited and partially translated by Margaret Dunlop Gibson in 1899.¹⁹³ This treatise is dated to “746 years since the Christian religion had been established” (fol. 110v).

¹⁹² Translation: The belief in these three names is the belief in three hypostases, which are the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, these are one God, one nature, and one essence. This is what we believe and affirm based on the explicit teachings of Jesus (peace be upon him), which we've also learned from the prophets.

¹⁹³ M. Gallo translated it into Italian in *Palestinese anonimo Omelia arabo-cristiana dell'VIII secolo*, trans., Collana di Testi Patristici 116, Rome, Città Nuova 1994; M. Swanson translated it partially into English, see *An Apology for the Christian Faith*, in ed. S. Noble and A. Treiger, *The Orthodox Church in the Arab World, 700-1700*, an anthology of sources, *NIU Series in Orthodox Christian Studies*, Northern Illinois University Press, 2014, Chapter 1, 40-59; See also S.K. Samir, *Une apologie arabe du christianisme d'époque Umayyade?*, in: Samir Khalil Samir ed., *Actes du troisième congrès international d'études arabes chrétiennes*, Louvain-la-Neuve, septembre 1988, in: *Parole de l'Orient* 16, (1990-1991) (paru en 1992) 85-106; idem, *The Earliest Arab Apology for Christianity (C. 750)*, in *Christian Arabic apologetics during the Abbasid period (750-1258)*, Leiden, The Netherlands, Brill, 1994; Griffith, *the Church in the Shadow*, (2008 53-57; 89-90; 167-68); idem, *Bible in Arabic*, (2013 112; 121-122; 125-26).

This dating is implied by the manuscript, discovered by Samir Khalil Samir (1992, 85-106), from which he formulated two dating hypotheses: one starting from the date of Christ's birth which would date the manuscript to 738, the other starting from the crucifixion of Christ from which a later date (771) would be deduced. Others like Swanson (1993, 117-141) dates it to 788 considering the crucifixion of Christ; instead, Griffith, opting for the Incarnation, dates it to 755 (2008, 89-90 n. 47). In a more recent article Treiger (2016, 9, 12, 33) claims that the treatise should be dated to 753/4, considering the Incarnation, according to the Palestinian variety of the Alexandrian era used by Melkites in the ninth century.

Thus, it appears to be the oldest piece of Arabic Christian Theological writing in our possession. It is the work of a Christian which is addressed to Muslims, or, as Maria Gallo (1994, 18) claimed, it is a work of catechesis with an apologetic dimension for Christians living in a sectarian milieu. It is not particular to one given Christian community but it is based on what is common to all Christians; it contains many biblical quotations and traditional patristic arguments to defend the Christian faith in general, similar to those contained in the Timothy-Mahdi dialogue.

But, in this case Muslim and Christian idioms and vocabulary flow harmoniously. One of the main characteristics of this early Arabic Christian text is the use of the Muslim's sacred scripture and, this leads to the assumption that the author did not live in a "Christian ghetto" and he knew Islamic thought very well. According to Mark Swanson (2007, 119-120), the author of this treatise weaves the Qur'anic material together with Biblical material for greater effect. At the end of his text, Swanson spoke about "linguistic and conceptual bridges between the world of the Bible and that of the Qur'an." In fact, if we focus on the linguistic point of view we notice that the two languages are very similar and both are interchangeable. As S. Khalil estimates "*ces allusions s'intègrent parfaitement dans le texte, sans que l'on ne sente un quelconque effort stylistique*"¹⁹⁴ (Samir, 1992, 97). In another analysis he spoke about the phenomenon of inculturation which is characterised by expressing one's faith in one and

¹⁹⁴ Translation: these allusions are perfectly integrated into the text, without any sense of stylistic effort.

the same Arabic culture (Samir 1994, 70). This style could be due to and also justified by the fact that apologists could not openly express their disagreement with Islam in the social and political circumstances they were in. In fact, the text is explicitly addressed to Muslims but it lacks polemics. The structure of this apology is composed by the following sections: the introduction which contains a beautiful prayer influenced by the language of the Qu'ān; a section dedicated to the trinity in which the author narrates the story of redemption from Adam to Christ and proves Christ's divinity through a dominant biblical material; a section dedicated to Christ's life narrated through Old Testament passages.

Unlike the intermediate form of Christian Arabic of the Timothy-Mahdi dialogue, this treatise is an example of simplified Christian Arabic. In fact, linguistic phenomena are present in this treatise belonging to the so called Middle Arabic that “*constitutes the missing link between classical Arabic and modern dialects and is therefore of extraordinary importance for the history of both*” (Blau 36).¹⁹⁵ These phenomena, up until the IX century, were common to all Arabic writers, regardless of their denomination as S. Arbache has claimed (2008, 19).

Shared expressions that a responsive and alert Christian reader would accept today would be:¹⁹⁶

نسلك اللهم برحمتك وقدرتك ان تجعلنا ممن يعرف حقك ويتبع رضاك ويتجنب سخطك ويسبح
باسمائك الحسنى ويتكلم بامثالك العليا.¹⁹⁷

فانه لا اله قبلك ولا اله بعدك: اليك المصير: وانت على كل شى قدير.¹⁹⁸

(folio 102a from the Gibson version)

By quoting Qur'anic verses, the author shows agreement with Islam on the creation of the world (Sūrah III v.49) and man (Sūrah XC v.4; VI v.94) and on the elevation of

¹⁹⁵ The reference text for the study of Middle Arabic is Blau.

¹⁹⁶ I give the text as it is in the Manuscript.

¹⁹⁷ Translation: We ask You O Merciful and Mighty God, to let us know Your truth, follow Your will, stay away from Your indignation, praise Your Good names and talk about Your sublime sayings.

¹⁹⁸ Translation: in fact there is no God before You and no God after: You are the destiny and You are dominant over everything.

Christ and his followers above the disbelievers (Sūrah III v.55). His quotations are very similar or almost similar to the text of the Qur'ān. For example he writes:

انا خلقنا الإنسان في كبد (f.104b).¹⁹⁹
وانا فتحنا ابواب السماء بما منهمر (f. 104b).²⁰⁰
تاتون فرادى كما خلقناكم اول مرة (f.105a).²⁰¹
انى متوفيق ورافعك الى ومطهرك من الذين كفروا وجاعل الذين اتبعوك فوق الذين كفروا
الى يوم القيامة (f. 115b).²⁰²

From these passages it seems that the author know well the vocabulary of the Qur'ān and I hypothesis that the same is for the Bible. This treatise contains several biblical quotations, that give us further confirmation of a pre-existing Arabic translation of the two Testaments. Two possible hypothesis are that the author cites the verses from a translated Bible in his possession or that the verses were transmitted orally rather than in literary form to the author. Certainly, as the whole text has an Islamic influence so also the biblical references may have had it. As will be show, the author does not write always the whole verse as it is the biblical text but his purpose is to make use of them for his meta-narrative.

At this point it might be useful to understand in more detail the lexicography of the quotations of the Bible. I will focus on the New Testament verses and I will compare the 61 verses extrapolated with Vatican, Arabic 13, where possible, Beirut B.O., Or 430, Sinai Ar. 72, Sinai Ar. 70 and Vatican, Arabic 17 and 18, where verses from the Gospel of Luke are presented. First, according to the vocabulary used, I try to outline a theoretical *habitus* of the author who translated or quoted biblical extracts in the

¹⁹⁹ In the Qur'ān: لَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ فِي كَبَدٍ (Sūrah XC v.4).

Translation: indeed, we have created humankind in constant struggle. (The translations are from: quran.com).

²⁰⁰ In the Qur'ān: فَفَتَحْنَا أَبْوَابَ السَّمَاءِ بِمَاءٍ مُنْهَمِرٍ (Sūrah LIV v.11).

Translation: So we opened the gates of the sky with pouring rain.

²⁰¹ In the Qur'ān: جِئْتُمُونَا فُرَادَى كَمَا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ أَوَّلَ مَرَّةٍ (Sūrah VI v.94).

Translation: you have come back to us all alone as we created you the first time.

²⁰² In the Qur'ān:

إِنِّي مُتَوَفِّقٌ وَرَافِعُكَ إِلَىٰ وَمُطَهِّرُكَ مِنَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَجَاعِلُ الَّذِينَ اتَّبَعُوكَ فَوْقَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا إِلَىٰ يَوْمِ الْفَيْمَةِ

(Sūrah III v. 55). Translation: I will take you and raise you up to Myself. I will deliver you from from those who disbelieve, and elevate your followers above the disbelievers until the day of judgement.

apologetical text and, in the meanwhile, to understand the same in the manuscripts of the Gospels. Second, to understand whether social influences played a role in the choice of language.

I will add the corresponding verses from *the inter-confessional Arabic Bible* (indicated as *int.-conf.*) to give the reader an idea of what is being read today and to what extant words vary over this long period of time. In quoting the manuscripts, I will respect the orthography as it represents a specific field of research as well as a source of information on morphology and syntax (See the extracts in Appendix 1).

I summarise the main points of the linguistic features.

a) The Syriac influence

The author considered *surirt* and *shit* as synonyms in the verses. Both terms are present in the translator's linguistic repertoire and are interchangeable for him. The verb *shi'tu* comes from *sha'a*. *Sha'a b-* is a precise calque on the Syriac *šbā b-*. *Šbā* means “to will” or want (= *sha'a*) but *šbā b-* is an idiom that means to be pleased with something.²⁰³ This passage matches very closely the Peshitta at Matthew 3:17.

b) The Islamic influence

In Mark 16:16, the word *kafara* is used, while the other versions contain *'amana*. *Kafara* is an Islamic-sounding word contained in the Qur'ān which means to disbelieve.

In Christianity, to express this concept, for instance, *'ankara* (to deny) or, the negative form of *'amana* (to believe) is used.

In Luke 1:34 the author does not confine himself to a literal translation of the Greek verb that literally corresponds to 'to know' in reference to the words of the Virgin Mary but adopts the Islamic term *yamissu* contained in Surāt Maryam (19:20).²⁰⁴

In the Lord's Prayer, the author uses the word *bala'* instead of *tajribah* to refer to the trial. The concept of trial is present in both religions but today both words carry connotations, one Islamic and the other Christian.

c) Original words

²⁰³ I am grateful to J.B. Tannous who explained me the derivation of this word.

²⁰⁴ This word is confirmed also in Vatican Arabic 17 and 18.

The author maintains original words without modifying them, as is the case with *Sha'anīn* which comes from the Hebrew *husha'na* (Hosanna) that means to save.

d) No systematic choice of words

There is for example the use of the verb *qa'ada* but he also uses *jalasa* (to sit).

A few observations could be made about the author's overall framework based on his linguistic choices.

First, the author has adopted a highly inclusive approach in crafting the text, combining elements or concepts from more than one culture or tradition. He might have aimed to make the concepts understandable and recognisable to a wide range of readers, including those following the Islamic tradition and those within the Christian context.

One hypothesis is that the author could have been using a language that resonates with Islamic terminology to be understood in Muslim encounters but it could be plausible too because there was not yet a clear distinction between the two religious terminologies.

Second, quoting so many verses, without counting those of the Old Testament, could confirm the existence of a Bible from which the author drew, or could make one think that the author was translating from a Syriac or Greek Bible. The hypothesis that the author knows this by heart is plausible, too. On the one hand, skipping some parts of the verses could mean that the author was not interested in quoting them and, on the other hand, adding parts could mean that he wanted to specify or underline some concepts.

Having quoted identical or similar verses to the other versions in the choice of vocabulary and in the contents of the verses is positive evidence because it means that the translator had a good knowledge of the source language, of the Arabic language on the one hand and on the other side a good knowledge of the Sacred Scripture. This does not mean that the biblical corpus of MS 154 lacks its own identity or that the biblical translation is not unique. I would advance the hypothesis that the writer's ability to interweave language and biblical verses within his narrative is another factor that influenced the translation of those passages.

The last observation I would like to make is about the target audience. While explicit references indicate the apologetics were aimed at Muslims, the text also carries a strong homiletic and catechetical tone directed towards Christians. This aligns with the socio-political context of its time, marked by an advancing Islamic conversion process. Therefore, the text might have been conceived to slow this process and gain *social capital* in terms of believers.

As regards the passages of the early translations they exhibit grammatical and syntactical irregularities, as Griffith claimed in his study (2013, 138), as well as a diverse use of vocabulary. From the reading of Appendix 1, we observe a linguistic richness of Arabic from which we comprehend that the Arabization process was still ongoing, and therefore, that the choice of vocabulary had not yet been standardized. I believe that the vocabulary choices can be understood and justified through a more in-depth study of the languages of interference, Greek and Syriac. An Arabic lexicography with Greek and Syriac equivalences would be of great help in constructing the translation process for each version. Consequently, it would aid in understanding which terms were retained and which were discarded in subsequent versions, and discerning the reasons behind these choices. Future studies should be directed towards this direction.

IV. Two Arab Christian theologians of the IX century

In the ninth century terms such as *jawhar* (with the meaning of essence), *'uqnūm* (hypostasis), *ṭabi'a* (nature), *dhat* (being) started to appear in Christian texts.²⁰⁵ This is because with the dissemination of Islam Muslim-Christian controversies arose based mainly on three themes: the true religion; the Incarnation of the Logos; God one and triune.

With the development of Islamic doctrines and the foundation of Mu'tazilah, the first school of Muslim dialectical theologians (*mutakallimūn*), terminology²⁰⁶ was being

²⁰⁵ See: R. Haddad, *La trinité divine chez les théologiens arabes (750-1050)*, Paris, Beauchesne Religions 15, 1985. In this work the author lists the trinitarian vocabulary and indicates which terms each author used (182-183).

²⁰⁶ For example the one that refers to the attributes of God.

defined and sounded foreign to Christians and, at the same time, the long conflict among the Christian denominations threatened the integrity of each Church: Jacobite, Nestorian and Melkite. In addition, this period, the 'Abbasid, was transitional linguistically because the Christian communities had to face this double challenge from Syriac to the Arabic language; this means that terminology was at the center of the dispute. Moreover, Christians, called *ahl al-dhimma*, were protected during the 'Abbasid period and, as a consequence, apologetic tracts increased and there were various efforts to translate biblical books. Theologians started to write treatises and letters ex novo to give the proof, *burhān*, demanded by the Qur'ān. In their writings they seem to know Islamic sources very well and, without reducing the value of Christian doctrine, they offered a translation of Christian concepts in a philosophical and rational manner to be acceptable to Muslims. Their writings are full of Islamic terms and expressions but they often cited biblical verses, too, that do not match our day's verses exactly. Therefore, in my research I considered why biblical references differ in some terms. We know that there have been numerous translations of the Bible over time, but it is not clear to us yet what Arabic translations circulated at that time and analysis of the verses could be a way to understand how the Bible was translated.

Certainly, writers knew the Christian Sacred Scriptures very well but our first question is whether they worried about writing the exact verses or their purpose was merely to cite them vaguely or they changed the verses with the aim of being understood by their interlocutors.

In this section I will consider some writings of the first authors who wrote in Arabic: Theodore Abū Qurrah, Abū Rā'īṭah al-Takrīṭī and who represented respectively the Melkite and the Jacobite denominations and knew Christian heritage in Syriac and Greek. In addition, they launched in Arabic the great issues of philosophy and theology that had been addressed by *mutakallimūn* in Islam.

I. Theodore Abū Qurrah

Theodore Abū Qurrah was a Melkite Orthodox bishop of Ḥarran (south of Edessa), a city which was home to various religions, amongst which was Syriac Christianity, and famous for its schools. Though little biographical information is available and most comes from unfavorable sources, some details about his life can be reasonably reconstructed. He thrived between 755 and 830 and he served as a bishop in Ḥarrān for the Melkite church. Theodore had affiliations with St. Catharine's and Mār Sābā monasteries, both renowned for producing Christian Arabic texts. Despite past beliefs, there is no concrete evidence to confirm he was ever a monk at Mār Sābā, and his monk status at St. Catherine's remains uncertain (Lamorieux 2002, 2009).

He defended Christianity against Judaism and Islam; in particular, he was a pioneering figure in the history of the Christian-Muslim debate. There, too, he defended the Chalcedonian christological synthesis. He was one of the first Christians to write in Arabic and his works are singular because he tried to define Christian identity using the language of Muslim theologians.²⁰⁷ From studies dedicated to Abū Qurrah, we know that he regularly wrote Christian theology in Arabic and that he was a prolific author in Syriac too (Griffith, 2008, 60). There are also Greek compositions, translated from Arabic, which are attributed to him and published in *Patrologia Graeca*.²⁰⁸ There are several recurrent themes within his works. These include understanding what the human mind can comprehend about God (particularly the existence of God and the equality of His Son), the interconnection between faith and reason, determining the "true" religion, the concept of free will, the significance of Christ's death and Incarnation, the practice

²⁰⁷ For Abū Qurrah's life and works, see Graf, *Geschichte*, 2:7-25; S.H. Griffith, *Theodore Abū Qurrah: The Intellectual Profile of an Arab Christian Writer of the First Abbasid Century*, Tel Aviv, Tel Aviv University, 1992; S.K. Samir, *Al-jadīd fi sīrat Thāwadūrus Abī Qurrah wa-āthārihi*, *Al-Mashriq* 73, 1999, 417-449; I. Dick, *Théodore Abuqurra. Traité de l'existence du Créateur et de la vraie religion. Introduction et texte critique*, *Patrimoine Arabe Chrétien* 3, Jounieh et Rome, 1982; J.C. Lamoreaux, *The Biography of Theodore Abū Qurrah Revisited*, *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 56, 2002, 25-40.

²⁰⁸ J. Gretseri, *Theodorus Abucara Carum Episcopus*, *Patrologia Graeca cursus completus*, Vol. 97, e.d. J.P. Migne, Paris, 1886, cols. 1445-1610.

of venerating icons, and the question of whether Christ intentionally desired to be crucified.

At that time the Trinity and Christology were the most controversial issues and Abū Qurrah attempted to explain them “in an idiom in which the religious vocabulary was already determined by the Qur’ān and by the burgeoning theology of the Muslims” (Griffith, 1993, 273).

Like his contemporaries, Abū Qurrah quotes biblical verses to support his arguments, often paraphrasing them. Tritton maintains that Abū Qurrah did not have a fixed language to cite quotations; rather he wrote them on the basis of his purpose and memory (1933, 52-54). Samir talks about “fluidité” because Abū Qurrah did not ever cite the verses literally, his purpose is the content of the verse; in addition, he might have known by heart the verses in Syriac, his mother-tongue, but not the Arabic for the simple reason that the same verse can be found more than once but quoted differently (1983, 184-91). From the edited works, more than three hundred biblical quotations from the Old to the New Testament are counted (Tarras 2017, 81). These biblical renderings are essential to his arguments (Lamoreaux, 2009, 35).

In this section I deal with treatises that argue the Trinity and the oneness of God, as well as the Incarnation.

In the *On Trinity and Oneness of God* (*Maymar yuḥaqqiqu annaha lā yulzamu al-Naṣārā an yaqūlū thalatha...*) treatise, the author addresses Muslims.²⁰⁹ In this section, I look at this text and try to illustrate its Theology of the Trinity through the arguments and terminology the author uses. Following an introduction on the concept of faith and after calling upon evidence for the reliability of the sacred texts, the Christian doctrine of the Trinity is justified based on testimonies from the Holy Scriptures. He begins to justify Christian doctrine by evoking narratives from the Torah and inserting verses from the Old Testament, similar to the style of the treatise previously discussed. He addresses certain Old Testament texts (for example Ps: 109:1 and Hosiash 1:7) that might imply the existence of multiple gods. This choice indicates that they were referenced by

²⁰⁹ I consulted it in C. Bacha, *Traité Théologiques de Théodore Abu Qurrah en arabe*, Beirut, Maṭba‘at al-Fawā‘id, 1904

Muslims to suggest Christian *shirk* (polytheism). He endeavours to explain, through logic and theology, how the language of these statements aligns with, rather than contradicts, the concept of monotheism and the unity of God. He then proceeds by invoking other episodes from the Bible to speak of one Lord as “God, his Word and Spirit”, and not numerically of many lords (for instance, the narrative of the stories of Abraham, Jacob, and Noah). From there, the writer demonstrates the same with the New Testament. He refers first to John 1:1-3 to indicate the eternal sonship and divinity of God’s Word by attributing lordly status to Him, without implying that God and His Word are two separate lords, but rather establishing their equal status as lords:

إنه في البدء لم تزل الكلمة والكلمة لم تزل عند الله وإلها لم تزل الكلمة هذا لم يزل عند الله كل به خلق وبغيره لم يخلق شيء.²¹⁰

Then, he quotes what Saint Paul writes about the identity of the Three Hypostases citing Mt 28:19:

وقال مار بولس في شأن اليهود أن المسيح ظهر منهم بالجسد الذي هو إله على كل، له التسيجات والبركات إلى الدهر. فالمسيح الإله والذي يسبحه المسيح إله... وقال المسيح إلهنا لتلاميذه: اذهبوا علموا جميع الأمم وعمدوهم باسم الأب والابن والروح القدس . هذا يحقق أن الابن والروح كل واحد منهما إله مثل الأب ولم تجدد الخليقة بالمعمودية باسمهما مع الأب إلا وكل واحد منهما مثل الأب.²¹¹

Therefore, his purpose is to to illustrate, through the biblical language of lordship, the unity within the Trinity, the equality of divine or lordly status among God, His Word/Messiah, and the Spirit.

The trinitarian relationship is then clarified through a dialectical exposition of pertinent concepts and names as well as by using analogies from the natural world and biblical language and doctrinal terminology. Abū Qurrah articulates how Christians

²¹⁰ Translation: In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. (From New King James English Version)

²¹¹ Translation: Saint Paul said about the Jews that Christ appeared from them in the body, He who is the God on all, to Him praise and blessings forever. Christ is the God, and the one Christ praises is God...and Christ our God said to his disciples: "Go and teach all nations and baptise them in the name of Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. This realises that the Son and the Spirit are both God like the Father, and the creation has been renewed in baptism in their name with the Father, only because each of them is like the Father.

distinguish between names designating *wujūh* (faces) such as 'Peter,' 'Paul,' and 'John,' and those referring to *ṭabā'i* ('natures) like human, horse and ox. He highlights that counting many faces under one common nature avoids associating number with names representing nature, which might imply multiple natures. For instance, while counting Peter, James, and John represents individual differences, counting human suggests a single nature held by all three. Thus, the triune God is analogously described by Christians in a similar manner, he says:

كذلك الأب والابن والروح القدس ثلاثة وجوه²¹² لها طبيعة واحدة وطبيعتهم هي إله. فإذا عددتهم فليس ينبغي أن توقع العدد على اسم الإله الذي هو اسم الطبيعة وإلا فقد جعلت طبيعتهم الواحدة التي هي اسم الإله دليل عليها طبائع مختلفة وأخطأت خطأ بيتنا.²¹³

He continues associating the Godhead to the three hypostases together, saying:

كذلك أعلم أن الأب إله ولكن ليس الإله هو الأب. والابن إله ولكن الإله في وجه إذ اسم الإله دليل على الطبيعة ليس هو الابن. والروح إله ولكن الإله ليس هو الروح. فإذا عددت الأب والابن والروح القدس فليس ينبغي لك أن توقع العدد على اسم الإله فتقول ثلاثة آلهة. وإلا فقد أوقعت العدد على غير المعدود.²¹⁴

Then, he clarifies that the Father, Son, and Spirit share everything among themselves, without exception, and this occurs continuously:

فأما الأب والابن والروح القدس فليس هذا منهم في موضع ليس فيه للآخر ولا لأحدهم صورة ليست لغيره ولا مشيئة ولا مال ليس لغيره. فإذا كان الواحد من هذه الخصال قد تجعل المتفقين

²¹² Probably, Abū Qurrah employs *wajh* (face) to use a familiar term to Muslim, Arabic-speaking audience, given its relevance in discussions about God found in the Qur'an and Ḥadith.

²¹³ Translation: Likewise, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are three faces with one nature and their nature is God. So, if you count them, you should not predicate number to the name God, which is the name of the nature; otherwise you would make their one nature, the meaning of which is the name God, various natures, and commit a manifest error.

²¹⁴ Translation: Likewise, know that the Father is God [or divine], but God is not the Father [alone]. And the Son is God [or divine], but God in a face (since the name God designates nature) is not the Son [alone]. And the Spirit is God [or divine], but God is not the Spirit [alone]. So, if you count the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, you should not predicate number to the name God, saying three gods, lest you predicate number to what is not to be numbered.

فيها واحدا وإذا كانوا كثيراً فكم ينبغي للآب والابن- والروح القدس أن يكونوا واحداً إذ لا يفترون في موضع وهم متفقون في كل هذه الأشياء والوجوه وما شاكلها.²¹⁵

He explains, in addition, another Trinitarian aspect concerning Their distinction without implying their difference:

فأما الآب والابن والروح القدس فإنه لا اختلاف بينهم بتة له أثر في أقنوم أحدهم أكثر من أن كل واحد منهم غير صاحبه. فهم لعمري أولى أن يكونوا إلهاً واحداً وإن كان كل واحد منهم إلهاً تاماً.²¹⁶

He continues touching on another interesting and debated point on creation, stating that the creator is one without excluding two hypostases and without there being a hierarchy between hypostases in the act of creation:

كذلك يقال أن الآب خلق الخلق. ويقال أن الابن خلق الخلق. ولا يقال أن الآب والابن خلقا الخلق لأن الآب إنما خلق الخلق كله بآبانه.²¹⁷

And he clarifies more, saying:

ولا نرى أن الحرارة أولى بأن تكون للنار من الابن أن يكون للآب ولا أن الحرارة أشد اتصلاً بالنار من الابن بالآب حتى وإن كان كل واحد منهما أقنوماً، لأن الطبيعة الإلهية لا تقبل تركيباً كما تقبله الأجساد. ولا يكون فيها الهيولى والصورة ولا توجد بتة الغيرية في ذات أقنوم واحد منها، بل موقع الابن من الآب هو كموقع حرارة النار من النار وكموقع الشعاع من الشمس

²¹⁵ Translation: as for the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, there is not one of them in a position the other is not in, nor has one of them an image the other has not or a will or a condition which the other has not. So, if one of these characteristics may make those who commonly hold it one, even if they are many, this oneness is more applicable to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, who never part ways and who agree in everything and every respect and other things alike.

²¹⁶ Translation: Concerning the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, there is between them no difference whatsoever which can be traced in the hypostasis of one of them more than the fact that each one of them is other than himself. They are, I swear, more appropriately to be one God even if each one of them is a complete deity.

²¹⁷ Translation: Likewise, it is said that the Father created the creation. And it is said that the Son created the creation. And, it is not said that the Father and the Son both created the creation, for the Father created the whole creation by his Son.

والكلمة من العقل، حتى وإن كان الابن أقنوما تماما عندنا لأن الطبيعة الإلهية تلتف أن توجد
الغيرية في ذات أقنوم واحد منها كما قلت.²¹⁸

The author concludes this comprehensive discourse on the Trinity, leaving no room for further questions. Addressing the issue of God's unity, he encapsulates the Christian doctrine held universally throughout the patristic theology in a detailed manner.

Thus, Abū Qurrah appears to start from a common ground, whether purposefully or inadvertently, acknowledging the existence of a God best understood through a synthesis of reason and revelation. He shows the relationship of a balance between faith and reason through analogies. Thus, he uses the concept of employing the God-given reason to comprehend divine revelation which encapsulates the Mu‘tazili theological method too. Otherwise, analogical reasoning, known as *qiyās*, was a method utilised by Muslim jurists to draw conclusions regarding situations by referencing the Qur‘ān and the Ḥadith. It seems that Abū Qurrah is familiar with the teachings of Muslims regarding divine attributes, evident in the list of attributes resembling those articulated by Muslims.

One cannot exclude that this treatise can be seen as a homiletic text where the author speaks directly to Christians, defining responses to complex questions in their debates with Muslims. In fact, he explains the nature of God in a traditional Christian sense according to the Christian scripture and the teachings of the Fathers.

In the *On Incarnation (Maymār yuḥaqqiqu annahu lā yunkaru lil-'ilah al-tajassud wa-al-ḥulūl)* treatise, Abū Qurrah seeks to demonstrate, through biblical and rational

²¹⁸ Translation: And we do not think that the heat belongs to the fire more than the Son belongs to the Father, nor that the heat is more attached to the fire than the Son to the Father, [even] if each one of them is hypostasis, because the divine nature cannot be constructed [of several parts] as [physical] bodies can. Nor can it contain matter or form and there is never any otherness in the single person among them, but the position of the Son to the Father is like the position of the fire's heat to the fire and of the ray to the sun and the word to the mind, [even] if for us the Son is a complete person [uqnūm tāmm], for the divine nature is too refined to accept the existence of otherness within one of its per- sons, as I said.

arguments, the possibility of the Eternal Son's Incarnation.²¹⁹ The treatise has a structure with two primary parts, initially theoretical and then contentious. The introduction raises the central inquiry around how the Eternal Son can inhabit a human body, he says:

[ولعل قائلاً يقول]: يا هذا! قد أثبت أنه لا سبيل إلى [مغفرة ذنب إلا] بتقريب الأوجاع التي حلت بهذا [الابن المتجسد، التي] تعرض لها حتى تجشمها عنا، [فاستنقذنا بها من عقوبتنا] المستوجبها كل واحد منا [بما سلف من ذنوبه]. ولكن بقي عليك أن تخبرنا [كيف يستقيم لهذا] الابن، الذي هو إله، وهو عدل [الآب ومن جوهره، أن] يحويه جسد، حتى يوصل إليه [بالجسد، ويجد الألم] سبيلاً إلى اللحق به منه.²²⁰

The text is then divided into three sections. The first section, following an opening statement, emphasizes that God is not confined and illustrates the central concept: the throne's imagery²²¹ as a place from which God has been communicating with angels before human creation. He says:

فنحن [نقول إن الله، في طبيعته]، غير محوي، ولا محدود، ولا نهاية [له. ولكن، يكون له] (تبارك!) أن يظهر لخلقهم من حيث [ما شاء، وأن يبدي لهم فعاله] وكلامه من الموضع الذي يصلح لهم. وهذا منه نعمة عليهم، ومنفعة لهم. لأنه لو لم يفعل ذلك بهم، لتهكت عقولهم وتاهت ابتغاء له، ولما كان لهم هدو ولا قرار عن طلبه. وكانوا مديونين في ذلك باطلاً، لا يؤديهم أبداً اضطرابهم إلى دركه، الذي لا راحة لهم [إلا به. من] أجل ذلك، جعل له عرشاً يجلس [عليه للملائكة] منذ أول ما خلقهم، ليس لحاجته [إياه إلى ذلك] العرش (تعالى!)، ولكن لحاجتهم [إياهم]

²¹⁹ I consulted the edited version of P. Masri, *Maymar yuḥakkiku 'annahu la yunkar lil-'ilah al-tajassud wa-al-ḥulūl li-Thāudhurus 'Abi Qurrah (nahū 830 m)*, Part II, Lebanon, Dār al-Mashriq, 2022. (The text is reported as in Masri's edition). The author adds [] to indicate the modified or missing parts in respect to Bacha's edition; he adds double [[]] to indicate parts to be better defined in the future. () brackets in translation are my additions.

²²⁰ Translation: [It should be said]: You ! It has been proven that [forgiveness of guilt] can only be by bringing together pains that hit this [the incarnated Son, who] has been subjected to avoid us going through, [so he saves us from punishment] which each of us deserve [because of sins done before]. But you still have to tell us [how the Son should do for that], who is God and right of [the Father and of His essence] who embedded, in order to get to Him (the Father) in [His own body and through the way of pain] reaching Him.

²²¹ He focuses on the metaphor of God's Throne, which is also present in the sacred scriptures of Jews and Muslims.

إلى أن يعرفوا] محلة قراره، ليكونوا يسجدون [له في ذلك الموضع]، وليوعز إليهم بأموره
منه. 222

It includes numerous testimonies from the Old Testament prophets affirming this concept.

The text then addresses the idea of God sitting on the throne without being contained, agreed upon by all, and the potential for the Son's presence in a human body, also without containment, as held by Christians:

كذلك نحن نعرف أن الابن الأزلي هو في كل موضع، [وأنه لا] نهاية له، ولا يحويه شيء، ولا يحتاج إلى الحلول [في شيء من] المواضع. غير أنه تنازل برحمته، لحاجتنا نحن، [إلى حلوله في] الجسد الذي أخذ من مريم العذراء المطهرة. [لتصل به إليه] الألام والأوجاع، التي كانت إذا حلت [به، كما قد بينا من فوق]، «فدانا بذلك من لعنة الناموس» [وعقوبة خطايانا. لذلك] حل فيه برحمته، وصار [هذا الجسد له في الأرض للناس] بمنزلة العرش في السماء [للملائكة. أبدى للناس من هذا] الجسد فعل لاهوته [وكلامه، وتعرض لتلك] المصائب حتى حلت به، [فأنقذنا من خطيئتنا بالعدل]، [وأثبت الناموس، وجعله] [لم يوضع باطلا ولا عبثا]. 223

The second section addresses two objections from an Islamic source, probably aimed at the comparison between the throne and the body and the equation between them. The first argument asserts that the throne is vast while the body is narrow. Abū Qurrah

222 Translation: We [say that God is in His own nature] not contained, unlimited and endless [but He has the ability] (He be praised!) to appear to His creatures in the way [he wants, and to show them His acts] and words from a suitable form for them. This is a blessing and a benefit from Him to them. Because if He did not do it, their minds would have been broken and lost in searching for Him, and they would have had no decision to ask Him. They owed it unjustly, their turmoil never led them to His depth, which is their rest [only in Him. For] this, He made for Himself a throne to sit upon [for the angels] from the very first He created them, not for His need [for the throne] (He be praised!), but for their need [to know] the place of His decision, to be [in this place] to kneel [to Him] and to instruct them about His matters.

223 Translation: We also know that the Eternal Son is everywhere, [and that He has no] end, that nothing can contain Him, and that he does not need to be present [in any] place. However, He conceded His mercy for our needs, [to His presence in] a body which He received from the pure Virgin Mary. [To receive through it] pains and aches, which dwell [in Him as it has been shown from above], He redeemed us from the curse of the law [and from the punishment of our sins. So] He dwelled in it by His mercy, and [this body] became [His own on Earth for people] as the throne in heaven [for the angels. [He showed] His divinity and [words] [to the people] [from this] body [and was subjected to that] tribulation which dwell in Him, so He [saved us from our sins with justice], [and He proved the law and he did not make it] [unjustly nor unplanned].

responds to the first objection by explaining that human measurements are not applicable in divine matters:

ولكن لعلك تقول، إن العرش واسع، والجسد المأخوذ من مريم ضيق، فلذلك لا ينكر الله أن يحل في العرش، وقد ينكر له أن يحل في الجسد! فنحن نقول لك، يا حبيبنا!، إن العرش والسموات والأرض، ولو كان مثلها مما لا يحصيه عدد، ضيقة الله أن تسعه (جل وتبارك!). وليس ما ضاق من ذلك أو اتسع إلا واحدا عنده. وليس حلولة في هذا الجسد إلا كحلولة في العرش.²²⁴

The second claims that the throne is pure while the body is impure. He counters this second objection by highlighting that humans are the most honored of God's creatures in a way that cannot be measured. He argues that impurity stems from sin, a concept completely alien to the incarnate Son's humanity. He says,

وإن قلت إن العرش طاهر، والجسد الإنسي لا يعدله في هذا الحد. قلنا لك إن العرش في الخلق ليس بأطهر من الأنوسة. بل تقول أنت ونقول نحن: «إن الله لم يخلق خلقا أكرم عليه من الإنسان». ولم يكن الله يتفزز من الحلول في أكرم خلقه عليه. بل هذا [الخلق الإنسي] أولى أن يحل به الإله من كل الخلق، [لأنه أكرم الخلق على الله]. مع أن النجس الذي يتفزز الله منه إنما هو الخطيئة فقط. وهذا الجسد المأخوذ من مريم ما دبت فيه الخطيئة قيد حركة قط (حاشا له!)، كما قال [مار بولس]: «إنه أشبهنا في كل شيء ما خلا الخطيئة».²²⁵

This is supported by several verses from the prophet Isaiah. He goes on to explain how the body of Christ became the place of the divine nature, although this was not openly apparent until after his resurrection.

فجسد المسيح هو شمس البر، كما تنبت عليه الأنبياء. وكذلك كان للاهوت كجسد الشمس للنور. وكما أن الله خلق النور في اليوم الأول، ثم خلق جسد الشمس في اليوم الرابع، وأحل فيه ذلك

²²⁴ Translation: But, You would say that the throne is wide and the body from Mary is tight, so it does not deny that God dwells in the throne and it may be denied to Him that he dwells in the body! We are telling you, our beloved! The throne, the heavens and the Earth, even there were countless things like them, are narrow May God endure it (May He be exalted and praised!). It is only one that has narrowed or widened. His dwelling in this body is only His dwelling in the throne.

²²⁵ Translation: If you say that the throne is pure, the human body does not equal it to this extent. We told you that the throne in the creation is not purer than human nature. But You say and we say: God has not created a creature more honorable than man". God was not against dwelling in the more honorable creature. But [this human creature is more deserving to be dwelled by God of all creation, [because he is the most honored of creatures to God]. Although the impurity to which God is against is only sin. And this body taken from Mary, in which the sin does not enter minimally (except for him), as [Saint Paul] said: He made to be like us in every aspect expect for sin.

النور الذي كان خلقه في اليوم الأول، فكذلك صار هذا الجسد المأخوذ من مريم محلة اللاهوت، منه يشرق نورها، وتبدو فعالها وكلامها، اليوم، للملائكة وللخلق كلهم. وهذا الجسد لولم يوحذ من مريم العذراء، حتى ظهرت بروح القدس من أوساخ الخطيئة. فأخذ منها الابن [الأزلي، نقيا طاهرا مهذبا، متهيئا] لحلول اللاهوت فيه. [بعد حلول اللاهوت فيه]، صار عينا، تفيض منه كل مفاخر اللاهوت من البر والحكمة والقوة.²²⁶

The third section responds to denials of divine dwelling in the human body, explaining the superiority of this body over all other places and means God chose for His dwelling in the Old Testament. He says,

غير أن الابن الأزلي حصر جلال لاهوته، فلم يظهره في جسده إذ كان يتقلب بين الناس. وترك الأفعال الإنسية أن تظهر فيه، من الطعام والشراب والنوم وغير ذلك، لكيلا ينكره الشيطان ويجترئ عليه. حتى تحل به، على أيدي أهل طاعته، تلك الأوجاع التي كان حلولها به خلاصا لنا من خطيئتنا، وإبطالا لحجة الشيطان التي كانت على آدم، بدخوله في طاعته غير مكره. فلما قضى تدبيره من ذلك، وأسلم أنوسته للموت في شأننا، أقامها لليوم الثالث، وأفاض منها جلاله كله. وطلع فيها بالمجد إلى السماء، حيث رتب بها على العرش الذي كان عليه من قبل غير متجسد. ومن هناك يتوقعه محبوه أن يجيء، في ذلك الجسد، على السحاب، بأجناد ملائكته، ليدين الأحياء والأموات، ويكافئ كل واحد بما عمل.²²⁷

As the Father of the Church compared elements of the Old Testaments to the Incarnation, he draws comparisons with various mediums through which God revealed

²²⁶ Translation: Christ's body is the sun of righteousness, as the Prophets predicted. This was also for the divinity as the sun's body for the light. Just as God created the light on the first day, and then he created the body of the sun on the fourth day, in which he lay the light which he created on the first day, so this body from Mary became the place of the divinity, from which the divinity shines its light, and its acts and speech, today, appear to the angels and to all the creation. This body was not taken from the Virgin Mary, until it was purified by the Holy Spirit from the dirt of sin. From her, the [Eternal] Son took it, [a pure immaculate purified body prepared] for the dwelling of the divinity. [After the dwelling of the divinity], it became a source, from which flowed all the glories of the divinity which are righteousness, wisdom and power.

²²⁷ Translation: However, the Eternal Son confined the highness of His divinity, He did not show His highness in his body as he moved among people. He left human acts to appear in Him, from food, drink, sleep, etc., so that Satan did not deny Him and made Him free. Until he was afflicted, by his obedient people, by those pains, dwelling in Him, which were salvation for us from our sin, and were invalidation of Satan's argument that Adam had when followed his obedience by his will. When he accomplished his arrangements and delivered his humanity to the death for us, he resurrected it on the third day and filled it by all His Majesty. He ascended in it with Glory to heaven, where he arranged with it on the throne on which was before being incarnated. From there His lovers expect Him to come, in that body, on the clouds, with His hosts of angels, to condemn the living and the dead, and reward each of them for what he has done.

Himself in the Torah, such as the unburned unburned thornbush, the luminous cloud column, the gold plate, the dome of time, and the Ark of the Covenant.

Abū Qurrah skillfully amalgamates elements of biblical tradition with responses sought by the Islamic opponent, highlighting their shared elements while retaining the patristic tradition from which he draws to present the Christian dogma of the Incarnation. He does not mention Islam by name but he use Qur'anic language in an imperceptible way to defend Christianity.

Like his contemporaries, Abū Rā'īṭah al-Takrīti and 'Ammār al-Baṣrī, he wrote a treatise where he engaged in the intellectual exploration of the true religion and the signs that would authenticate it. This endeavour was largely shaped in response to the contemporary program of Muslim scholars to advocate for the religious credibility of Islam, emphasising the validation of true prophecy and religion in the life of Muhammad, the teachings of the Qur'ān, and the Islamic faith. But, certainly, due to its doctrinal content, the readers of this literature were also Christians.

II. Abū Rā'īṭah al-Takrīti

Abū Rā'īṭah al-Takrīti, contemporary to Abū Qurrah, was a Christian Arabic theologian of the Jacobite Church and tradition relates that he was the Bishop of Takrīt.²²⁸ Abū Rā'īṭah, at the time, likely had proficiency in both Syriac and Arabic, allowing him to straddle the line between the Syriac Christian community and their Muslim neighbors. Close to the evolution of Islamic thought, Abū Rā'īṭah evidently found it imperative to address inquiries raised by Muslims about the Christian faith. His works depict a profound intertwining of classical Christian doctrines with Islamic theological queries and the transmission of Greek philosophy into Arabic. Abū Rā'īṭah

²²⁸ See: G. Graf, *Die Schriften des Jacobiten Ḥabīb Ibn Khidma Abū Rā'īṭa*, CSCO, Vols. 130 and 131, Louvain, Belgium, Peeters, 1951; S.H. Griffith, Ḥabīb ibn Khidmah Abū Rā'īṭah, a Christian mutakallim of the First 'Abbāsīd Century, *Oriens Christianus* 64, 1980, 161-201; S. Keating, *Dialogue between Muslims and Christians in the Early 9th Century: The Example of Ḥabīb ibn Khidmah Abū Rā'īṭah al-Takrīti's Theology of the Trinity*, Phd diss., Catholic University of America, 2001; S. Keating, Abū Rā'īṭa Al-Takrīti (D.CA 835): A Defender of the "People of Truth" Against Islam, in A. S. Ibrahim ed., *Medieval Encounters Arabic-speaking Christians and Islam*, Piscataway, Gorgias Press LLC, 2022, 201-232.

acknowledges the insufficiency of relying solely on scriptural evidence to counter his Muslim neighbors, evident in his direct response to the accusation of *tahrīf*. However, he also recognizes the necessity for exploring alternative methods to address challenges posed by Islam.

To do this, “he perfectly combined both approaches: the biblical-homiletical tradition and the logical-philosophical approach” (Samir, 1994 111).

In his two letters, and in the majority of his writings, Abū Rā’īṭa cites a lot of scriptural references.²²⁹ Vööbus suggested that the source for the translated verses is the Old Syriac version (Early Versions, 271-7) and Keating claimed that the writer did not have an Arabic Bible and he translated the verses as he needed them for his project.

The First Risālah On the Holy Trinity and *The Risālah on the Incarnation* are considered the most important of all his writings.²³⁰ These two *rasā’il* are dialectical and answer to Muslim objections to principal Christian doctrines.

From the first lines of *On the Trinity* it is immediately understood that the language is complex and that he has an extraordinary capacity to blend the two doctrines through a unique discourse capable of being understood by Muslims and Christians of that time even quoting brief references to complex theological concepts.

I expound the content by selecting some passages from the letter. The *rīsālah* starts with a long incipit which incorporates the characteristics of the Syriac preface.²³¹ He wrote:

الهمنا الله واياك الصواب وأيدنا بتأييد المعلى على كل تأييد. وجعلنا واياك ممن يلتمس حقه ونوره وينقاد بضياء سرجه العلمية ويتبع مصابحه النيرة المرشدة لمن استنار بها الى ادراك حقائق الامور مواظبين عليها متمسكين بفرائضه لازمين لشرائعه متحربين لسننه اخذين بكلامه

²²⁹ For an analysis of the contents of the verses see S. Keating, *Defending the People of truth in the early Islamic period. The Christian apologies of Abū Rā’īṭah*, Leiden, The Netherlands, Brill, 2006.

²³⁰ We have consulted the Arabic texts in Keating 2006.

²³¹ For this argument see the study of E. Riad, *Studies in the Syriac Preface*, Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, *Studia Semitica Upsaliensia* 11, Uppsala: Uppsala University; Distributed Almqvist & Wiksell International, Stockholm, *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 121 (2), 1988, 313-314.

فرحين بدينه رافضين لمن خالفه مجتنبين لمن اسخطه جاحدين الكفر والطاغوت مصدقين بالله
وبما جاء من عنده. فانه ولي كل نعمة ومنتهى كل رغبة.²³²

Undoubtedly, this way of writing is not applied in today's literature but it sounds close to a Christian believer. First of all, from the point of view of content, it is rich and is marked by Christian and Islamic beliefs such as the juxtaposition of the light, the truth, the knowledge and the Law of God. It is a long invocation and request to God constituted by unusual phrases. I identify some expressions which have an Islamic background: (1) *farā'īdu* (precepts), (2) *sharā'i'u* (laws), (3) *mutaḥarribīn li-sunanīhi* (fighters for His Ways), (4) *jāhidīn al-kufr* (rejectors of unbelief), and (5) *al-ṭaghūt* (tyranny). From the point of view of the definition they do not always correspond to Christian thought and they are substituted by other words today. For (1) and (2) *waṣāyā* (commandments) and *kalām* (word) are the equivalent, (2) is used to indicate the Law of Moses. (3) could correspond to *mudāfi'yyīn al-'īmān* (defenders of the faith), (4) becomes *jāhidīn al-shayṭān* or *al-khatīyyah* (rejector of satan or sin).

Although largely centered on philosophical and rational proofs taken from Aristotle, Abū Rā'īṭah also incorporates a number of other methods and arguments such as analogy and various biblical proofs. Abū Rā'īṭah's starting point is a Muslim statement about God, highlighting the distinct perspectives on the oneness of God between Christians and Muslims. He says:

و اول ذلك من هاهنا. قال اهل التيمن ان الحجة في ايدينا والبرهان في قولنا. لانكم وافقتمونا
وشهدتم على ما في ايدينا بانه حق من حيث لم تنكروا علينا وصفنا ان الله واحد لم يزل ولا يزال
حى عالم بصيرسميع لا شريك له²³³ في جوهريته ولا في ملكه. وهو الاول والاخر خالق ما
يرى وما لا يرى غنى كامل ذاته لا يصفه الواصفون معتلى عن النقص والعجز غير موصوف

²³² Translation: May God grant us and you righteousness and support us firmly with His greatest support. May He make us and you know His Truth, His Light, be led by the light of His Knowledge's lamp, follow His enlightening and guiding lamps which illuminate those who seek the truths of things in which they persist, adhere to His Precepts, apply His Laws, fight for His Ways, observe His Words, rejoice in His Religion, refuse those who are against Him, avoid those who make Him displeased, reject unbelief and tyranny and believe in God and in what is granted by Him. Thus, He is Patron of all graces and the end of all desires

²³³ It recalls the verses 17:111 and 25:2 in the Qur'ān.

بالتبعض ولا بالتجري مالك قوى فاعل لما يريد لا يرى ولا يحس ولا يدرك ولا يحد وسع كل
شيء علماً. 234

This initiates a thorough discussion about the nature of this oneness, where Abū Rā'īṭah navigates through various types of oneness and concludes that describing God as a single entity in *ousia (jahwar)*, encompassing three hypostases, is most fitting. He says:

فان قلتم فهل تقدرن الا تصفون الله واحد في العدد بعض وليس بكامل يقال لكم قد نصفه واحد
كاملا في الجوهر لا في العدد لانه في العدد اى في الأرقام ثلاثة. فقد كملت صفته في الوجهين
جميعا. امّا وصفنا اياه واحداً في الجوهر فلاعتلائه عن جميع خلقه وبريته محسوسة كانت ام
معقولة لم يشبهه شيء ولم يختلط به غيره بسيط غير كثيف روحاني غير جسماني يات على كل
بقرب جوهره من غير امتزاج ولا لختلاط. 235

Unlike Abū Qurrah, who uses 'wajh', in this case, Abū Rā'īṭah cleverly employs the term *jawhar* to refer to substance. This term is familiar to the Mu'tazila, used by them to denote the substances of the world in terms of their Atomistic view, but not in reference to the essence of God. He indirectly engages with the debate on Muslim divine attributes by exploring the meaning and ontological status of God's attributes. He starts with a list of Muslim sounding attributes with which Christians agree:

واما ما وصفتم من ان الله حي عالم سميع بصير وظننتم انا وافقناكم في ذلك وشهدما لكم
بالصدق فلننتظر جميعا في هذه الصفات من حي وبصير وعالم في اسماء مفردة مرسله ام

²³⁴ Translation: And the first [issue] is here. The people of the South said that the argument is in our hands and the proof is in our saying. Because you agreed with us and testified to what is in our hands that it is true that you did not deny us the description that God is one, always was and always will be, living, knowing, seeing, hearing, having no partner in His essence or in His dominion. He is the first and the last, Creator of what is seen and what is unseen, self-sufficient, perfect in His being, He is not described by those who describe Him, exalted above decreasing and weakness, not described by division nor by substitution, Ruler, powerful, Doer of what he wants, not seen, not sensed, not understandable, not limited, who comprehends everything he knows.

²³⁵ Translation: If you say, "How are you able to describe God as one in number neither [as] a part, nor as a perfect [whole]? It is said to you: We describe Him as one perfect in *ousia*, not in number, because He is in number, that is, in *hypostasis*, three. His description is perfect in both ways: When we describe Him as one in *ousia*, then He is exalted above all His creatures, be it His perceptible or His comprehensible creation, nothing is comparable to Him and nothing is mixed with Him, He is simple, without density, spiritual, without a body, His *ousia* approaches everything closely without blending or mixing.

اسماء مضافة تدل على اضافة شىء الى شىء. وقد يجب علينا ان ننظر ما الاسماء المضافة وما المرسله المفردة. فالمرسله كقول القائل. ارض وسماء ونار وكلما كان مما قيل شبيها بما لا يضاف الى غيره. واما الاسماء المضافة المنسوبة الى غيرها فكالعالم والعلم والبصير والمبصر والحكيم والحكمة وما اشبه ذلك. فالعالم عالم بعلم والعلم علم عالم. والحكيم حكيم بحكمة والحكمة حكمة حكيم.²³⁶

Thus, He explains the Trinity in terms Muslims might understand by borrowing language and concepts from Arabic grammar, the divine attributes debate and combining it with philosophical notions.

Additionally, after establishing that the attributes are inherent to the essence of God, he explains how they are related. Then, he directly addresses common questions from Muslims, such as why the three hypostases should not be considered as three separate Gods. He takes the analogy of the light:

انما وصفنا انه متفوق في الجوهر مفارق في الاقانيم وجوهره هو اقانيمه واقانيمه هم جوهره بمنزلة اضواء ثلثة في بيت واحد. فلا يظنن منا أحد أنا عنينا سرجا ثلثة بل عنينا اضواءها فان كان الله تبارك عن كل قياس متعاليا فالاضواء ثلثة. وواحد هي بعينها اما ثلثة فلان كل واحد منهم قائم بعينه ثابت بذاته وان كان ليس بينه وبين غيره من الاضواء حاجز في المكان واما واحد فلا تفاقهم جميعا في الضوية. ودليل ذلك انها واحد وثلثة فان كل واحد منها غير الاخر في قوام ذاته. لانه لو اخرج بعض تلك السرج من البيت خرج ضوءه معه من غير ان يبقى منه شىء.²³⁷

²³⁶ Translation: As for your description of God as living, knowing, hearing, and seeing and for your thought that we would agree with you in this and witness to what is correct. We examine these descriptions of living and seeing and knowing. [Are they] single absolute names or predicative, indicating the addition of something to something. We may have to look at which are the predicative names, and which are the single, absolute. The absolute are like the words earth, heaven and fire, and anything similar of which it can be said that is not predicated of another thing. As for the predicative names, attributed to others, such as knower and knowledge, seer and seeing, wise and wisdom, and anything similar to this. Thus, the sower is knowing through knowledge, and the knowledge is knowledge of a knower. And the wise is wise through wisdom, and the wisdom is wisdom of the wise.

²³⁷ Translation: We describe [God] as unified in *ousia* and divided in the hypostasis, and His *ousia* is His hypostasis, and His hypostasis are His *ousia* as three lights in one house. None of us thinks that we mean three lamps but, we mean their light, even though God, blessed is He, is above every analogy. The lights are three and one and they are identical with each other. Each one of them is self-subsistent and permanent in its being, even if there is no barrier in place between it and the other, [they are] one, because they are all united in light. And the evidence that they are one and three is that each one of them is not the others in its being. Because, if one of these lamps were pulled out from the house, its light would be pulled out with it, and nothing of it would remain.

Abū Rā'īṭah also directly responds to common questions posed by Muslims, such as why the three hypostases should not be called three Gods, and why there are only three and not more. As to why there are specifically three hypostases, He says:

فان قالوا ما الذى دعاكم الى ان تصفون الله سبحانه اقانيم ثلاثة دون عشرة او عشرين او اقل من ذلك او اكثر يقال لهم انا لم نصفه ثلاثة اقانيم دون جوهر واحد. فهذه الثلاثة اقانيم جوهر واحد في جميع انحائه ما لا سبيل الى ان يوجد لذلك نظير ولا مثل.²³⁸

He launches into a series of other analogies designed to show how things can be described as one and three simultaneously. Then, he concludes the long part of the analogies, saying

وهى متفقة متميزة ومختلفة. اما متفقة ففى ماهيتها ووجودها وتمييزه لميزة قوام ذات كل واحد منها كما ذكرنا قبل هذا الموضوع ومختلفة لاختلاف خاصة كل واحد منها من غير ان يكون جوهرها. مختلفة لاختلاف خواصها. لان الخواص دالة على صفات اضافة قنوم الى قنوم لا على ذوات المضافة كاختلاف خواص ادم وحوى وهابيل من غير ان يكون جوهرها مختلفا لاختلاف خواصها. فادم والد لا ولد وهابيل ولد لا والد وحوى خالدة لا والد ولا ولد خواص مختلفة لاقانيم متميزة جوهر متفق.²³⁹

He starts to give examples from the Bible to explain the Trinity such as Genesis 1:26, 2:18, 3:22 in referring to the Creation and to Adam. In addition, he evokes some Suras to compare the same content of the bible to the Qur'ān to show that when God speaks he does it using “we” (See for example Suras 3:34; 15:26; 10:24).

²³⁸ Translation: If they say: what called you to describe God, May He be praised, as three *hypostasis* rather than ten or twenty or less than this or more? It should be said to them: We do not describe Him as three *hypostasis* instead of one *ousia*. These three *hypostasis* are one *ousia* in all aspects. It is not possible to find for this an equivalent or a likeness.

²³⁹ Translation: These entities are unified, distinct, and different. They are unified in their essence and existence, are distinguished by unique characteristics specific to each of them, just as we have explained before in this passage. [They are] different because of the difference in property of each one of them, without their *ousia* being different because of a difference in their properties. Because the properties express the attributes of the relation of [one] *hypostasis* to [another] *hypostasis*, not the essences of the [things] related, much like how Adam, Eve, and Abel have different properties but their *ousia* is not different because of the difference of their properties. Adam begets but is not begotten, Abel is begotten but not the begetter, and Eve proceeds but is neither the begetter nor the begotten. They have different properties belonging to distinguished *hypostasis*, and a unified *ousia*.

Finally, Abū Rā'īṭah also responds to accusations of falsification of Muslim scriptures, citing Abraham, David and Isaiah and affirming that what Christians possess (The Old Testament) is the same as what Jews, the other enemy of Christians, have in their hands.

In the final section, there are four questions which the writer responds to. The first is a question mentioned earlier, asking why the three hypostases are not considered three Gods; the second whether the name God is considered to be the name of the substance in general; the third and the fourth questions regard the issue of whether or not the Father precedes the Son and the Holy Spirit and how the Son and Holy Spirit relate to the Father.

Whereas *On the Trinity* focuses on redefining specific terms to make room for the conceptual feasibility of trinitarian descriptions of God, in *On the Incarnation*, there is a heavier reliance on scriptural evidence to support the arguments.

The aim of *The Risālah on the Incarnation* is the same as that of the previous one. In this writing the author establishes a common ground with the Muslim mutakallimūn in order to show that the doctrine of the Incarnation is coherent and that Christianity is the true religion. He explains how God took on a human form without undergoing any change or alteration. Muslims argue that Christian beliefs in the Incarnation necessitate holding contradictory statements about God: that God is both mortal and immortal, eternal and born in time, and more. As seen previously, the apologist answers by explaining the doctrine and presenting examples to show that what might seem incompatible with human understanding of God can be logically demonstrated as truth.

He initially deals with the relation between the three divine hypostases and the one incarnated in a human body, saying:

فان قالوا فابينونا عن فعل ثلاثتها او احد هو ام كل واحد منها فعل خاص دون الاخر يقال لهم اما في وجه الخلقة و المشية فكلما كان او يكون منهم فواحدا. و اما في الترابي و ظهور كل واحد منها باى فعل شاء حال فخاص ليس بعام و ذلك لامتياز قوام ذات كل واحد منها. فلو ان ثلاثتها قنوم واحد لا ثلاثة لكان ظهور شىء منها او ترابي على اى الاحوال كان ظهور و ترابي ثلاثتها. فاما اذ صار كل واحد من الاقانيم مع اتفاق ذاته ذات غيره من الاقانيم قنوما خاصاً مميزاً عن الاخر فلن يلزمها لا محالة ما شاءت ان يلزم احدها فقط. فقد شاءت احدها تجسد ذى نفس

منطيقية من العائق الطاهرة مريم. فالظهور بالتجسد لاحدها خاص دون الاثنتين. و اما خلقة الجسد او مشيتهم بتجسد احدها فعام لثلاثتها.²⁴⁰

Eventually addressing the challenge of how God enters the limitations of creation, saying:

وهكذا و القول فى كلمة الله سبحانه فانها موصوفة فى جسدها و فى الاشياء اما فى جسدها فاتحاد تركيب دائم ابدى و فى الاشياء كمن لا حد له ولا نهاية من غير ان يكون فيها مركبا ولا متجسما بها. لانه لا يجوز فى صفة الله سبحانه ان يكون موصوفا فى موضع دون موضع. لانه فى كل بلا حد معتلى عن كل بلا نهاية من غير ان يكون له الحمد بشيء منها متجسما او مركبا ما خلا ذلك الجسد الطاهر كما وصفنا.²⁴¹

The interlocutors then raise the necessity of God's choice to bring about salvation through Incarnation. The author says:

فان قالوا و ما كان يقدر يخلصهم من غير ان يصير انسانا يقال لهم بلى له الحمد هو القادر على ما اراد و لكن لم يرد ان يكون خلاصهم و انقاذهم فعلا منه وحده دونهم لكيلا يحرمهم الثواب على متابعتهم اياه. لان الثواب و الجزاء على فعل الثواب لا على فعل غيرهم بهم. و ما الذى كان يدعو سبحانه ان لا يصير انسانا لخلاص الذى دعاه صلاحه الى ان يخلقه و فى اى فعليه ترون العيب كان يلزمه عند نفسه و لم يكن يستبين صلاحه افى تركه لا شيء يصير شيئا

²⁴⁰Translation: If they say: "Clarify for us the act of the three *hypostasis*: is it a proper act of one or of each one of them a proper act without the others?" it should be said to them: from the view of creating and willing, everything that existed or exists through [the *hypostasis*] is one. As for manifestation and revelation, each one of them is in any act or state it wills, and this is specific, not common. This is because a mode of being differentiates each one of them. If the three of them were one and not three, then the revelation of something from them or a manifestation in any aspect, would be a revelation and manifestation of the three of them.

²⁴¹ It is the same about the Word of God, may He be praised! [The Word] is described in its body and in things: in its body as a united composition, lasting and eternal, and in things as one that has no limit and no end, without being composite with them or embodied in them. Because it is not possible of an attribute of God, may He be praised! that He be described as in one place and not in another, since He is in everything, without limit, exalted over everything, without end, there is nothing, praise to Him! in which He is embodied or with which He is a composite, except that pure body, as we have described.

موجودا يحدد خلقه بما فعله من تجسده لخلاصه او اهماله اياه فى الهلكة بعد ان صيره شيئا موجودا. فالذى دعاه الى ان يتجسد و يتانس صلاحه و رحمته كما ذكرنا²⁴²

The central matter revolves around the true nature and mission of Jesus: is he God incarnate for the redemption of creation as Christians assert, or is he a Messenger sent to deliver God's commands, as the Qur'an contends? However, at the core of the debate lies an unanswerable question: why did God choose this specific means to reconcile creation to Himself? Abū Rā'īṭah provides a standard Christian response to his Muslim questioners and then redirects the question to them, seeking justification for their teaching that God sent messengers.

وما عساهم قائلين لو سألناهم كنعوا ما سألونا اى الصنفين كان افضل و اجمل فى الله سبحانه و له الحمد اراد ان يدعوا الناس الى عبادته و طاعته ان يصيرهم عابدين له طائعين من غير ان يكلف بعثه الرسل و الوحي من ان يرسل اليهم رسلا يدعوهم الى الايمان به و العمل بطاعته فيشتمون و يضربون و يقتلون. ليعلموا ان الله تبارك و تعالى انما يدعوا الناس اليه من الجهة التى يعلم انهم يستوجبون باجابتها اياه بها الثواب و الجزاء لا من جهة فعله و ان كان عل ذلك قادرا. فليقال اذا فى كلما فعل الله الو فعل غيره كان اجمل و افضل اذ هو على ذلك قادرا.²⁴³

²⁴² Now, if they say: "Did He not have the power to deliver them without becoming a human being?" it should be said to them: Certainly, may He be praised! He is powerful over what He wills. However, He did not will that their salvation and deliverance would be an act from Him alone without them, in order not to deprive them of the reward from following Him, because the reward and recompense comes to [the ones who do]

the work [earning] the reward, not the work of others on their behalf. And what would have caused Him, may He be praised! not to become human to save those whom His goodness has caused Him to create? Which of [God's] acts that are inseparable from Himself do you regard as the disgrace and do not make plain His goodness: His allowing a 'nothing' to become an existent thing, and renewing His creation by what He did in His Incarnation for its deliverance, or His neglect of it in destruction after He had made it into an existent thing? That which caused Him to become incarnated and become human is His goodness and mercy, as we have mentioned.

²⁴³ What would they say, if we asked them in the same manner they question us: Which of the two ways is better and more suitable of God, may He be praised and Glory to Him! [that He] decided to call human beings to serve Him and obey Him, and to make them His obedient servants without commissioning His delegation of messengers and the revelation or that He sent messengers to them, calling them to belief in Him and to works of obedience to Him, so that they would be reviled and beaten and killed? Certainly they should know that God, the Blessed and the Exalted, only calls human beings to Himself in the way in which He knows that they will deserve merit through their response to it, and which has reward and recompense, not in the way in which He [alone] acts, even though He is powerful [enough to do] this. What act, small or great, could God, may He be praised! not have [accomplished] in another way with [His] power? So, does one say about every act of God, "if only He had done something else, it would have been more suitable and better", even though He is powerful [enough to do] this?

The issue circles back to the idea of God embodying the definable properties of a created being, he says:

فقول المسيح سبحانه ابي الذي ارسلنى اكبر منى ليس بعظم من جوهره لانهما جوهر اوحده كما وصف به نفسه من انه واياه واحد. ولا عظم خطر ايضا لانهما واحد فى المجد و الكرامة ذلك من قوله الحقيق من اكرم الابن فقد اكرم الاب و من لم يكرم الابن لم يكرم الاب. فاذ نفينا عنه عظم هاتين الصفتين وجب علينا ان نصف الاب اعظم من الابن فى العلة لا فى الجوهر. لان الابن من الاب كما وصفنا. لا ابن الا من اب. فلو ان الاب كان اعظم من الابن فى الجوهر لما جاز للابن ان يقول انا و ابي واحد. لان العالى فى الجوهر و الحطيط ليس بواحد. ليعلموا ان تعظيم الابن للاب ليس لانه احط منه جوهره لكن ليدلل بذلك السماع العباد باسم الاب و ليلحق قلوبهم بحبه و يدعوهم الى عبادته و الايمان به و بروحه. لان غرض تجسده له الحمد شرح صفة الله الحقيقية و ايضاح معرفة التصديق به و بابنه و بروحه.²⁴⁴

And he concludes by examining the Messiah's knowledge of the future and His volition in the crucifixion.

القول اذ اما نحن نطقنا به كان منا شكنا و استتارا فاذا ما نطق الله به كان اما احتجاجا و اما سياسة منه و اما وعيدا و اما توبيخا و اما استفهاما هكذا و القول فى انتفاء المسيح سبحانه عن علم الساعة سياسة و تحذير مجيئه ثانية. لان الساعة انما تكون مجيئه و هو صانعها. و كيف يكون جاهلا بالساعة من يصف علاماتها و دلائلها بان قال لتلاميذه اذا رأيتم كذا و كذا فقد حضر مجيئى و انتكم

²⁴⁴ Now, [as for] the statement of the Messiah, may He be praised!: "My Father Who sent me is greater than I", He is not superior in His *ousia*, because the two of them are one *ousia*, just as He described Himself [saying] that He and [the Father] are one. Nor is He superior in importance, because they are both one in glory and honor. This is [seen] in His true statement: "The one who honours the Son, honours the Father, and the one who does not honor the Son, does not honor the Father". If we deny Him the superiority of the first two descriptions [given], it is necessary for us [only] to describe the Father as superior to the Son in cause, not in *ousia*, because the Son is from the Father, as we have [already] described. A son is only from a father. Now if the Father were superior to the Son in *ousia* [in the Holy Trinity], it would be impossible for the Son to say: "I and my Father are one", because what is elevated in *ousia*, and what is diminished [in *ousia*] are not one.

الساعة. لتعلموا ان ذلك سياسة منه و تحذير و اخفاء لعلم ما يكون من هلاك العالم فى اعلانه لهم
كما ذكرنا لا لانه جهل علم الساعة كما ظنوا.²⁴⁵

وان كان قولكم راض هو فيما صنعت به اليهود او راض هو بما احتمل منهم غير مكره عليه قلنا بلى قبوله لذلك رضى لانه به خلص العالم و انقذهم من الضلالة التى تسلطت عليهم من غير ان يكون بفعلهم مريدا كما وصفنا. فان قالوا و كيف يكون بما احتمل منهم راضيا غير راض بما افعلوا فكانما فعلهم لديه غريب احتمله منهم يقال لهم بلى ان احتماله منهم عندنا غير فعلهم به و لذلك اوجبنا له رضى على احتماله ذلك منهم و النقم منهم بفعلهم. لان احتمال من المقتول للقتل غير احتمال المقتول للقاتل و الا صار القاتل مقتولا و المقتول قاتلا. فان ادعيتم ان فعل اقاتل و احتمال المقتول و احد سالناكم ما قولكم فى من استشهد منكم فعل الكفار به فعله و فعله فعلهم. فان كان الامر واحدا فالشهيد قاتل و القاتل شهيد و كل مذموم و ممدوح القاتل و المقتول مذموم عن القتل و ممدوح عل الاستشهاد.²⁴⁶

Abū Rā'īṭah's letters takes up all of the same questions concerning the Trinity and the Incarnation which have been addressed by Abū Qurrah. Many of the issues receive a more comprehensive treatment, incorporating additional philosophical and scriptural

²⁴⁵ In the same way, this statement, when we utter it, [indicates] doubt and concealment, but when God utters it, either it is an argument or governance [of creation] by Him, or a threat or reprimand or an explanation. This [is like] the statement of the Messiah, may He be praised! denying knowledge of the Hour [of Judgement]: it is [God's] governance [of creation] and a warning of His second coming. For the Hour is of His coming alone, and He will set it. How could He be ignorant of the Hour, when He described its signs and indications, in that He said to His disciples, "When you see such and such [a sign], [the time of] my return has arrived, and the Hour has come to you," so that you will know that this is [God's] governance and a warning and something [that has been] concealed, because He knows what would be destroyed in the world if He announced [the Hour] to them, as we have mentioned, not because He lacked the knowledge of the Hour, as [the opponents] think.

²⁴⁶ If you say: "He consented to what they did to Him, that is, He consented to what He suffered from them, without being compelled to it," [then] we say: Yes, indeed! He consented to accept this because through it He saved the world and delivered [human beings] from the error that had overpowered them, without willing their act, as we have described. Now if they say: "How did He consent to what He suffered at their hands without consenting to what they did, as if their action before Him were different from what He suffered at their hands?" it should be said to them: Yes, indeed! His suffering at their hands, according to us, is not their act against Him. In this way, we make His consent necessary for His suffering this [act] at their hands and their punishment [necessary] for their act. The suffering of the one killed because of the [act of] killing is different from the suffering of the killing caused by the killer, otherwise the killer would be the one killed, and the one killed would be the killer. Now, if you maintain that the act of the killer and the suffering of the one who is killed are one [and the same], we shall ask you: What do you say of the one among you who is a martyr: is the act of the unbeliever against him his [own] act, and is his act their act? If they are one [and the same] then the martyr is the killer, and the killer is the martyr, and all are blameworthy and praiseworthy, the killer and the one who is killed are blameworthy because of the killing, and praiseworthy because of the martyrdom.

evidence. In both these works, Abū Rā'īṭah presents well-articulated questions aimed at pinpointing the source of the conflict, followed by a repertoire of responses drawn from diverse sources. These letters are crafted to counter accusations put forth by Muslim mutakallimūn. They adopt a dialectical approach, closely adhering to the rules of debate to supply evidence demonstrating that the Christian doctrines of the Trinity and Incarnation are neither contradictory nor nonsensical.

The purpose of this section was to describe the field of apologetic literary production in the early literature. In particular, issues such as the Trinity and the Incarnation, which were the focal points of the Islamic-Christian debate and defining elements of the Christian faith itself, were addressed. Among the numerous works produced by intellectuals of different denominations, the focus was on two specific authors, Abū Qurrah and Abū Rā'īṭah. They are not just examples but true representatives of this literature. The writings of Theodore Abū Qurrah represent the initial approach adopted by Christian writers in the early phase of Arabic literary composition, namely a biblical-homiletic approach. On the other hand, the writings of Abū Rā'īṭah are characterized by a mixed biblical and philosophical approach.

Both authors demonstrate great argumentative skills, undoubtedly inherited from the Church Fathers and Aristotelian dialectics, within the context of the debate that emerged in Islamic culture. From the analysis of these works, the following conclusions have been reached. Christian intellectuals were tasked with expressing their faith in a language not entirely new to their ears but new in terms of the Christian literary production which had occurred in Greek or Syriac before this period. Christian thought is thus translated into Arabic through new works. While each author has their stylistic characteristics, what unites them is the defense of the *doxa* not only before Muslim representatives but also within individual denominations. That is, a literature that does not exclude the purpose of calling Christians to faith.

The purpose was therefore to try to earn social and symbolic recognition, not so much for themselves but for the content of their works.

Moreover, from a linguistic perspective, an Arabic terminology suitable and understandable to readers is constructed and established.

Finally, inevitably, in a context where different religions coexist but share the same culture, the authors adopted a language that was common but is now perceived as Islamic. It can be affirmed that intellectuals were able to comprehensively express Christianity in Arabic and confront their interlocutors.

Conclusion

With the first chapter, we found that the Arabic language, with its various dialects, was spoken by the Christian tribes of the Peninsula. The acquisition of Hellenistic knowledge by the Syriacs prior to Islam gave regions such as Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, Mesopotamia, and Egypt a significant cultural role. From the V century, there was a substantial movement to translate Greek works into the Syriac language, leading to the development of teachings in medicine, mathematics, philosophy, and theology within schools. Ecclesiastically, from the V century, the Church split into three major groups, forming three independent churches.

At the time of the birth of Islam and its rapid conquest, the Muslim civilization was still in its early stages, and the predominantly Christian populations conquered by Muslims became a source of knowledge for them. This brought about a social and political change that influenced the status of Christians within the caliphate. They contributed to the reformulation of the Hellenistic tradition by translating works into Arabic, gaining social and symbolic capital within Muslim society. Muslims quickly acquired significant linguistic skills, while the pressure from the caliphate to convert Christians grew stronger. Consequently, Christians found themselves in the status of dhimmis, no longer the dominant group. In response to this pressure, Christian intellectuals, through their writings, sought to encourage their fellow believers to maintain their faith and defend their beliefs before Muslims. Additionally, debates between Christians of various denominations were an integral part of this field of controversy. This historical context frames the Arabic Christian literary production.

Throughout my study, I have identified two subfields within Arabic Christian literary production in which their respective doxa are affirmed: the translation of the Gospels and the principles of Christian theology.

Regarding the translation of the Bible, previous studies have shown that this translation movement predates the birth of Islam. Certainly, for liturgical purposes, it was necessary to translate the biblical text. Consulting some ancient translations and examining the biblical verses contained in the treatise "On the Triune Nature of God," it is evident that there is linguistic variety in each version, based on linguistic influences, from source languages such as Greek and Syriac, as well as Islamic influence. It is necessary to construct an Arabic lexicography with Greek and Syriac equivalence to understand the processes of each translation and to be able to map the various stories of the Arabic Bible from a terminological perspective. Otherwise, the field of biblical translation is further enriched by the translation of biblical passages found in apologetic texts.

The Arabic text of the Bible was then translated not only in a continuous text, or in a lectionary, but also in treatises and *rasā'il*. Studying these texts gives an understanding of the richness of this tradition and its potential contribution to Biblical studies and to Arabic Church history, linguistics and Muslim-Christian relations.

Although individual authors translated the same passages differently I think they contributed to the formation of the Arabic text of the Bible. The authors used biblical verses for narrative purposes and as evidence to support their claims. The translations they provided varied in their choice of terms, possibly influenced by the author's background and/or the type of audience being addressed. It is also conceivable that linguistic choices were affected by other factors, such as the varied language sources of the Bible, external cultures, and ultimately, the writer's intent in persuading their opponents. However, it is not always possible to establish the reasons behind the linguistic choices made by any given author in the translation or text production process. From Ms 154, it can be inferred that the author had a profound understanding of the Bible and Islamic thought, even though he did not adopt a systematic methodology in his translation. When it comes to the literary production aimed at

defending the *doxa* of Christian theology, representatives from various Christian denominations have left us an extensive legacy. We have examined some apologetic texts primarily directed towards Muslims, where we have observed hints of homiletic and catechetical approaches. The dialogue, Timothy-al-Mahdī, presents a simplified form of Arabic, translated from Syriac. It shows evident influences from the Islamic culture of the time. However, the author demonstrates an ability to engage in debate, employing effective stylistic tools such as analogy and Aristotelian logic. This illustrates that theological expression in Arabic had already been established at that time.

The second text we have focused on in our study is *On the Triune Nature of God*, characterized by stylistic elements similar to the Timothy-al-Mahdi dialogue. The anonymous author employs a biblical approach, typical of texts from that era, to address his arguments. The oldest available apology to date does not seem to be a translated text but an entirely new Arabic production with some Syrian influence. The expressiveness of Islamic culture perfectly blends with the biblical content, suggesting that this is not solely due to the author's skill but also the result of a shared culture. That was the language of that time, irrespective of religious affiliation.

Moving from the eighth-century apology to the apologetic treatises of Abū Qurrah, we witness an increase in the complexity of arguments, as elements of Islamic discourse combine with scriptural elements.

The authors of the analyzed literature, Abū Qurrah e Al-Takrītī, defended their faith using all that they inherited from Syriac and Greek tradition and from religious formation to find what is most apt and they meticulously chose a specific terminology they coined or, in certain cases, used a language common to both them and their rivals.

Christian Arabs, as Haddad (1985, 184,5) claimed in regard to Trinitarian vocabulary, Haddad (1985, 184,5):

Malgré un effort sérieux d'adaptation au langage, les théologiens ont maintenu la priorité aux dogmes de la foi, montrant ainsi leurs attaches étroites avec le grec et plus particulièrement avec le syriaque. L'élaboration du vocabulaire trinitaire par les chrétiens arabes, souvent polyglottes, ne semble pas avoir subi l'influence des écrivains musulmans, autant que celle des auteurs grecs et syriaques. D'ailleurs ce vocabulaire qui servait à exprimer les vérités les plus sacrées, ayant trait à Dieu lui-même, ne pouvait pas être créé à la légère, malgré la fausse impression qui se dégage

d'un contact superficiel avec les textes chrétiens. La Tradition imposait, dans ce domaine, un enseignement précis, exprimé dans des formules soigneusement étudiées par les Pères et les Conciles.²⁴⁷

This statement confirms that the writers of that time were attentive to the search for terms and to use them in their writing to defend the *doxa* that united the three denominations.

In conclusion, I would like to make two points about the contribution of early Arabic Christian literature. First, the adaptation of language and style to the culture of the time are what characterise this early literature, are part of the religious, cultural and linguistic challenges of that time, which have never gone away, and are part of the history of the evolution of Arabic Christian terminology. And, as Swanson points out, early Arabic Christian literature is not merely a literature of translation, it is also a literature in an intertextual relationship with the Qur'ān (Swanson 1998, 302).

Second, what I am trying to assert is that, even though the Qur'ān become the standard measurement for the grammars, lexicons and literary texts, the variety of language used for the dispute between Christians and Muslims is not stylistically inferior to the language used by Muslims. Likewise, the Arabic intended for the people and the monasteries, influenced by Greek and Syriac terms and far from grammatical norms and syntax is not any less; it bridges the gap between classical and pure dialect and is part of the variety of this literature.

²⁴⁷ Translation: Despite a serious effort to adapt to language, theologians have maintained the priority of dogmas of faith, thus showing their close ties with Greek and more particularly with Syriac. The elaboration of the trinitarian vocabulary by Arab Christians, often polyglot, does not seem to have been influenced by Muslim writers as much as by Greek and Syriac authors. Moreover, this vocabulary, which served to express the most sacred truths concerning God himself, could not be created lightly, despite the false impression that emerges from a superficial contact with Christian texts. In this area, tradition imposed a precise teaching, expressed in formulae carefully studied by the Fathers and Councils.

Chapter III - The Coptic Church and the Arabic language

Introduction

In the second chapter, I sought to illustrate the social and cultural role played by Christians in the development of Arab civilization. The extensive Christian literary production in the Arabic language emerged to meet various needs, such as the imposition of Arabic as the official language in the Islamic empire and, consequently, its adoption by the churches. Additionally, there was a need to respond to controversies with Muslims and internal struggles among the churches.

From the numerous sources passed down by Christian communities, we can confidently state that they navigated through these challenges with significant linguistic skills and adept argumentative abilities. At this juncture, the question that arises is: Is there a continuum in the field of Arabic Christian literary production today? To address this query, I deemed it fitting to follow the trajectory of this literature by examining the last church that adopted the Arabic language in its literature, the Coptic Church, which reached its peak between the XIII and XIV centuries. In this chapter, I will attempt to elucidate the linguistic characteristics of this literature and formulate hypotheses regarding the reasons I believe led to a break with this literature in the modern era.

The transition from Coptic to Arabic in Egypt had a different evolution compared with the transition from Syriac and Greek to Arabic (Rubenson 1996, 3) or compared with other communities (Vollandt, 2015: 22-36). The Coptic language was spoken and written before the Arab conquest (640-641 A.D.), after which Coptic survived in the administrative structure of the government for some decades. Progressively, Coptic and Arabic appeared in parallel in the official gubernatorial documents. In 705 AD Arabic became officially and exclusively the language of all administrative offices. Early on, Copts learned Arabic to maintain their position as scribes and tax collectors. At first, Egypt was ruled by a governor, appointed first by the early Caliphs up to 661, then by the Omayyad Caliphs up to 750 and after that by the Abbasid Caliphs. Then followed the Fatimid Caliphs with direct rule for some two centuries, 969-1169.

The Christians of Egypt were distinguished for their orthodoxy: earlier, the Egyptian Church had played a very important role in the Christological controversies in the ecumenical Councils which ended with the schism in 451 AD between the Egyptian Church and the Greek and Latin Churches. When Arabs entered Egypt, Christians were called Copts, a term that derives from the Arabic word *Qibt*, which in turn is merely a shortened form of the Greek word *Aigyptios* (Egyptian). However, the so-called Coptic Church was closed in on itself and it was not ready for either an exchange between the various languages of the neighbouring Christian communities or a dialogue with Muslims. One of the principal reasons for this closure was the opposition to the Melkite Church, that is the Imperial, Byzantine and Chalcedonian Church. This explains why after the Arab conquest, the Copts seem to have continued to use Coptic for almost two hundred years and they resisted the assimilation of Arabic.

Because of this conflicting situation, the period of transition is difficult to follow and the assimilation of Arabic occurred gradually. We know that only during the patriarchate of Pope Gabriel (1131-1145) was it established that for the faithful who did not understand the Coptic language could pray in Arabic (Burmester, 1935). By necessity it became the official language of the Church, used in historical, canonical, theological and liturgical contexts from the tenth century onwards. It follows that they produced the bulk of the Christian Arabic literature of the Middle Ages, forsaking Coptic (Vollandt, 3).

Rubinson identified three stages of this transition which cover the period from the early translations into a colloquial Arabic of the X century to the great Arabic authors of the XIII and XIV centuries, and in particular he pinpoints the crucial period of the transition in the last decades of the XI century (1996). In particular, in his analysis he claimed that by the XI century Arabic had become the language and the only viable medium of the theology of the Church. During these centuries not only were translations from Coptic no longer central, due to the growing relations with other Christian Arabic literature, but there had been a greater increase in the use of the Arabic, a development in the skills of translation and a greater command of the language to such

an extent that it can even be difficult to be sure if a text from that period is a translation or an Arabic original.²⁴⁸

Even though our study focuses on Coptic Christian literature, it is worth mentioning that the first Egyptian Christian who wrote in Arabic was the Melkite physician of Alexandria Naṣṭās Ibn Jurayj in the IX century (Khalil, Copt. Enc. 1775b-76a). He was followed by Sa'īd Ibn Baṭrīq who translated from Greek and wrote on medicine and philosophy, but his Annals entitled *Naẓm al-jawhar*, one of the first world histories in Arabic, was the most celebrated writing (GCAL II, 32-38, EI, F.Micheau).

Returning to the Christian literature, the two works that marked the beginning of this vast composition are *Kitāb al-Tawārīkh* by Sa'īd ibn al-Biṭrīq (877-940) and the other the *Tarīkh Baṭārikat al-'Iskandariyya al-Qibt* by Sāwīrus Ibn al-Muqaffa'. These works are relevant to understanding the transition period because, while Coptic was still the spoken language, the authors were proficient in classical Arabic.

Linguistically speaking, as it was for the other churches, Islamic influence was a constituent and essential element that Coptic writers faced to address Christians who needed Arabic resources to understand their faith, to skeptical Christians about to convert to Islam and to Muslims who continued to advance their criticism of *Naṣāra*.

From the X to XII centuries literary works dealt with education and morality in particular. In the XIII century, production starts to flourish in many fields. That period was known as the Golden Age of the Coptic Church. There had been an intellectual revolution because of internal conflict and political instability.²⁴⁹ Christians still had to deal with the Coptic language in translation activities but it is clear that Arabic was the true language understood at that time. The fact that Al-Mu'taman ibn al-'Assāl wrote a Coptic-Arabic dictionary *Al-Sullam al-Muqaffa' wa dhahab al-Kalam al-Muṣaffa'* and

²⁴⁸ For this argument see: R.G.Coquin, Christianismes orientaux: Introduction à l'étude des langues et des littératures, Micheline Albert et al. ed., in *Initiation au Christianisme Ancien*, Paris, Les Éditions du Cerf, 1993, 52-61; S.K. Samir, Arabic Sources for Early Egyptian Christianity, The Roots of Egyptian Christianity, in B.A. Pearson and J.E. Goehring ed., (Studies in Antiquity&Christianity), Philadelphia, Fortress Press, *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 1986, 82-97; S. Rubenson, The Transition from Coptic to Arabic, *Égypte/Monde arabe*, 27-28, 1996, 77-92.

²⁴⁹ There was an opposition to Pope Kirolos bin Luqluq (1235-1243). Conflict between Mameluk and Ayubin.

that his brother Al-'As'ad translated the Four Gospels into Arabic, his mother-tongue, confirms that Arabic dominated the linguistic sphere.

As mentioned above, at the top of the list of Coptic writers who wrote in Arabic there was Sāwīrus Ibn al-Muqaffa' (ca. 915-1000), bishop of al-'Ashmūnīn.²⁵⁰ He had a great contribution in introducing the Arabic language into Coptic literature (Graf, II, 300) and he wrote more than twenty works. His purpose was the religious education of people, in particular, in the essential truths of the faith evoking strong proofs, the comprehension of Sacred Scripture and the history of the Church. He is considered an isolated case and only after three more centuries can we find another similar figure.

Apart from al-Muqaffa', Abū Ishāq ibn Faḍl-Allāh wrote two treatises related to the Ultimate Times and the End of the World in 924/5 (CoptEnc, 19b-20a, Samir). One further author is al-Wāḍiḥ ibn Rajā' who converted to Christianity (during the reign of Caliph 'Abd al-'Azīz, 975-996) and wrote three apologetic works against Islam (CoptEnc, 2311, Samir).

The next period, which is characterised by Arabic intellectual achievement among the Copts, dates only from the second half of the twelfth century. Before then, period we find on one side few works on ecclesiastical history and Canon Law in Arabic²⁵¹ and on the other side the last identified writer Michael, Bishop of Tinnīs who ended literature in Coptic (after 1051), which definitively declined.

With regard to Bible studies, Al-'As'ad Ibn al-Assāl and al-Wajīh al-Qalyūbī dealt with translations; for biblical interpretations and commentaries we cite Ibn Al-Muqaffa', Murqus Ibn Qanbar, Buṭrūs al-Sadmanti and Būlus al-Bushī who is considered the successor of al-Muqaffa'.

The production of apologetic writings was in the first place because of conflicts which lasted until the XIII century. As with all Christians, Copts needed to defend their

²⁵⁰ For the life and works of Sāwīrus ibn al-Muqaffa', see A. Al-Maqārī, *Fihrs kitābāt 'Abā' kanīsat al-'Iskandaryya*, I, II, Maṭba'a al-Nubār, Cairo, 2012, 114-185; Ibn al-Muqaffa' S., *Miṣbāḥ al-'aql*, S. K. Samir ed., Cairo, Arabic Christian Tradition, 1978, 7-36; S.H. Griffith, *The Kitāb miṣbāḥ al-'aql* of Severus ibn al-Muqaffa': A Profile of the Christian Creed in Arabic in Tenth Century Egypt, *Medieval Encounters* 2, Brill, 1996, 15-42.

²⁵¹ See Table IV in A.Y. Sidarus, *From Coptic to Arabic in the Christian Literature of Egypt*, *Coptica*, 12, 2013.

faith against Muslims, Jews and Chalcedonian/Melkite accusers. They dominated discussions covering themes such as Christology, the Trinity and the authenticity of the Bible.

The defenders were Sim'ān Ibn Kulayl (d. ca. 1206) whose style and approach are associated with Yiḥyā Ibn 'Adī (893-974); also Butrus Sāwīrus al-Jamīl, Bishop of Malīj who was against liturgical deviations and Muslims and Jews.

In the XIII century, Coptic Arabic literature flourished; it starts with the theologian al-Rashīd 'Abī al-Khayr Ibn al-Ṭayyib who wrote *Khulāṣa al-'Īmān al-masīḥi*; he established doctrinal educational rules for the Sacraments and worship and explained Christian literature to Muslims and Jews. We cite also Butrus al-Sadmantī who wrote on faith, *al-difa' 'an al-Thālūth* and *al-Hall min al-Shukūk* books; and Yūsāb, bishop of Akhmīm who wrote a book on the defense of Christian doctrine against Islam.

The great defense was by Al-Sāfī Ibn al-'Assāl who wrote *Majmu' 'Uṣūl al-dīn* (1238) which is considered the broadest and most powerful defense of this kind.

Finally, at the end of the XIV century Al-Makīn Jirjis Ibn al-'Amīd wrote detailed defenses of Coptic faith and their belief in a classic language and theological style.

Monastic literature, liturgy, homilies, canonical and historical books and hagiography enriched Coptic Arabic literature too. But, after the XIV century began a dark period in the history of the Coptic Church that continues until the modern era. This happened as a result of the collapse of monastic life, neglect in teaching by the clergy and the sterility of literary production.

Although the Coptic Church history is unique, its deep roots, its fervent transmission of patristic teaching, its great contribution to Arabic Christian literature, on the one side, much remains to be done to rediscover its literary production and, on the other side, there is need today for this literature to be revived without departing from the Arabic language that characterized it.

Therefore, in the following pages, we will revisit the two fields that have been the focus of this study and that continue within Coptic writings: the defense of the *doxa* in the *field* of theology through apologetic texts and the translation of the Gospel text. As mentioned in the second chapter, Coptic writers adopted the content, terminology, and

methodologies used by writers of other denominations who preceded or were contemporaneous with them.

Therefore, we expect to find similarities. We will illustrate some stylistic characteristics of three writers to understand the status of Arabic Coptic literature in its early stages and during its peak production phase. We will analyze some works of the founder of this literature, Sāwīrus Ibn al-Muqaffa', and then proceed to illustrate a more mature phase of this literature by taking two examples from the Golden Age, Sim'ān ibn Kulayl and Al-Ṣāfī ibn al-'Assāl. Finally, we will show the culmination reached in the field of evangelical translation in the Coptic Church by considering the work of Al-'As'ad ibn al-'Assāl.

I. Arabic language in the apologetic literature

I. Sāwīrus Ibn al-Muqaffa'

We have mentioned that Sāwīrus Ibn al-Muqaffa' was the principal author of his time and no one followed in his footsteps until the second half of the twelfth century. He learned Arabic, which facilitated his role as a scribe in the Arab government administration. He attended the court of the Fatimid caliph al-Mu'izz and he represented the Coptic Church in public debates with other Christian, and Jewish and Muslim leaders. He is considered the theologian who laid a methodological foundation in Arabic in terms of Christian doctrine. In fact, considering that faith was not well defined linguistically in his time, he is considered the middleman who took from his predecessors and passed on to future generations. In addition to Arabic, he was also proficient in Greek and Syriac. Moreover, he had knowledge of Greek philosophy and the sciences of his time, to the extent that he could incorporate them into his works. (Ibn al-Muqaffa', Miṣbāḥ, 8). And, above all, he was very familiar with the philosophy of his time, namely Mu'tazilite philosophy.

It is a fundamental stage of our research to dwell on his apologetic style to understand how Copts were with regard to Arabic assimilation and how much Islamic influence had impacted on the language of the Church. On the one hand, he was concerned to explain the faith in Arabic because as he declared clearly in his book *al-Durr al-thamīn fī 'īdāḥ al-i'tiqād fī al-dīn* Copts listened to Coptic but did not understand it (Chapter 10), they quickly lost their ability to understand even the most fundamental doctrinal language, such as “Son of God”, due to their inculturation within Islamic society (Davis, 201). On the other side, he was involved in *ḥudhdhāq al-mutakallimīn* (Muslim philosophers) debates (Samir, 1978). Thus, he lived during a cultural and religious transition period in the Fatimid era.

The question of the existing translation of the Bible in Arabic remains but we know that he was interested in the transmission of the Bible and his knowledge of it was astonishing; in his writings he often quoted it; only in his *al-Durr al-thamīn* alone he cited 1,161 verses, 854 from the New Testament (Samir, 11); and he filled his *tafsīr al-'amāna* (The Interpretation of the Creed) with biblical references.

Probably, as noted by Samir (Ibn al-Muqaffa', Miṣbāḥ, 11-12), the author studied the Bible and the Fathers of the Church once he left secular life and entered the monastery, and this can be inferred from the frequent and careful use of patristic sources in his works.

One can say that this writer has covered all the topics that can be dealt with within the Church: He composed works on dogmatics, hermeneutics, history, and pastoral matters. He knew ecclesiastical and apologetic terminology very well; as well as the use and the interpretation²⁵² of the Liturgy in his writing and this is the proof that the text of the Hymns was more ancient than his writings.²⁵³

In order to understand his position among Christian writers, his contribution to a defined christological canon and his language we have chosen to analyse three works.

²⁵² For example, he interpreted the Mose's Hymn, Psalm 135, 150 and the Three Saintly Children hymn.

²⁵³ Samuel Rubenson identifies early translations of canonical, hagiographical, and liturgical texts up to the eleventh century, in *Translating the Tradition*, 4-14

The first is *al-Durr al-thamīn fī 'iḍāḥ al-i'tiqād fī al-dīn*²⁵⁴, the second is *Kitāb al-Majālis*,²⁵⁵ and the third is *Miṣbāḥ al-'aql*.²⁵⁶ From these works, my interest in this section is to extract three important aspects of Sāwīrus' discourse and not to present their content since they follow the same pattern as the works that precede them. First, how his language articulation merged in his writings in relation to his Islamic cultural context; second, how he expounds the Christian doctrine; third, how he translated the vocabulary of the Trinity and Incarnation.

Al-Durr al-thamīn is one of the most important works of al-Muqaffa' because it was an anthology with the important function of making the patristic tradition available in Arabic, following their lines, and emphasising and defending the christological dogma. It is composed of fifteen chapters concerning the Trinity and the life of Christ and cites twenty-six patristic writers. In this section, I will address the first two parts, which concern the Trinity and The Oneness of God and the Incarnation and Salvation. In each of these parts he explicitly explained that he will give a simple exposition to those who have little understanding and knowledge and another explanation to scholars and those who are intelligent. This first clarification shows the author's awareness of the complexity of the subject and his attention to expounding clearly more categories of authors. In the simple explanation he starts with a biblical approach:

وأبتدىء قبل كل شئ وأقول: ان الله لا يشبهه به شئ، ولا يمثل به شئ، بل ان عقولنا ضعيفة، وتحتاج الى أمثال وأشباه تشبهه بها حتى نعرفه بها، كما فعل هو ذلك بنفسه. اذ شبه ذاته لنا بأشباه كثيرة ليوصل علمه الى عقولنا الضعيفة، وذلك انه قال في انجيله المقدس انا نور العالم وقال داود في المزمور بنورك يارب نعابن النور. وترأى لموسى في العليقة في شبه نار... هذه الأشياء شبه الله نفسه بها ليوصل علمه الى عقولنا الضعيفة، والا فهو أعلى من كل شبه، وكل مثال، وكل صفة.²⁵⁷

²⁵⁴ I consulted Ibn al-Muqaffa', *Al-Durr al-thamīn fī 'iḍāḥ al-dīn*, Cairo, Abnā' al-Baba Jirullus, 1971.

²⁵⁵ I consulted the text edited by P. Chébli, *Réfutation d'Eutychius par Sévère (Le Livre des conciles)*, in *Patrologia Orientalis*, III, 2, 12, 1983.

²⁵⁶ I consulted Ibn al-Muqaffa', *Miṣbāḥ*, 1978.

²⁵⁷ Translation: And first of all, I say: Truly, God does not look like anything, he does not represent anything, but our minds are weak, and [the minds] need likes and similarities to know Him, as He did himself. He likened himself to us in many ways to give His knowledge to our weak minds. As He said in His Holy Gospel that I am the light of the world and David said in the Psalm in your light, God, shall we see light. And He appeared to Moses in the bramble in semi-fire...God liked Himself to these things to give His knowledge to our weak minds, because He is above all similarities and likes and attributes.

Then he continues clarifying that God likened himself to light and that Father and Son agree in essence. He inherits the use of the analogies which had been adopted from his predecessors to explain the Trinity. He reports the examples of the sun and the man with the aim of simplifying the concept of the Trinity as his predecessors did; and cites the example of the finger which is his addition:

أن الأصبع ثلاثة أجزاء كل جزء منها عقدة متصلة بعضها ببعض. فنقول أن الجزء الأول الأصلي شبه الأب، الذي لا شبه له ولا مثال، ... فالجزء الأول شبه الأب لأنه أصل كل شيء. والجزء الآخر الذي فيه الظفر شبه الابن المولود من الأب، وان كان لا شبه له ولا مثال. والجزء الأوسط الذي هو في الجزئين شبه الروح القدس، ان كان لا شبه له ولا مثال. وكما ان الجزء الأوسط متصل بالجزئين ثابت فيهما، خارج من الجزء الأصلي، فكذلك الروح القدس متصل بالأب والابن ثابت فيهما، خارج من الأب غير منفصل منهما. كما أن الجزء الأوسط من الأصبع غير منفصل من الجزأين وظاهر منهما كأحدهما، خارج بغير انقطاع ولا انفصال، كذلك الروح القدس غير منفصل من الأب والابن، وظاهر فيهما كأحدهما بغير انقطاع ولا انفصال. وكما أن الجزء الأخير من الاصبع الذي قلنا أنه شبه الابن، له ولا ينفصلان من الجزء الأصلي، والجزء الأصلي لا ينزل ولا يصعد، كذلك فان الابن نزل من السماء وتجسد.²⁵⁸

The author also inherits the formulation of Arabic Christian terminology, which I summarize here::

The expressions that he used to explain the Trinity and to respond to the multiple heresies are: *al-Īlāh al-wāhid wa-al-thalūth* (the one and triune God); *Allāh al-wāhid al-muthallath al-'aqānīm* (God the One and, the triune Hypostasis); *tawhīd al-dhāt al-'ilāhiyya wa-tathlūth al-'aqānīm* (the Oneness of the Nature of God and the triune Hypostasis), *jawhar wāhid wa thalāthat 'aqānīm* (One Essence and Three Hypostases); *jawhar wāhid ka'in fi thalathat 'aqānīm* (One Essence One Entity in three Hypostases),

²⁵⁸ Translation: The finger is three parts, each part of which is a knot connected to each other. We say that the first original part is like the Father, who has no likeness or similarity. The first part is like the Father, because He is the origin of everything. And the other part where there is the nail is like the Son born from the Father, and who has no likeness or similarity... The middle part of the two parts is like the Holy Spirit, and who has no likeness or similarity. And just as the middle part is linked to the two parts and it is fixed to them, derived from the original part, so the Holy Spirit is linked to the Father and the Son, fixed to them, derived from the Father, not separated from them. And just as the middle part of the finger is not separated from the two parts and appears as one of them, derived from (them) uninterrupted and inseparable, so the Holy Spirit is not separated from the Father and the Son and appears in them as one of them uninterrupted and inseparable. And just as the last part of the finger, which we said is like the Son, to him, they do not separate from the original part, and the original part does not come down and not rise, so the Son came down from the heaven and was incarnated.

ilāh wāḥid fi thalāthat 'aqānīm (One God in Three Hypostases), *tathlīth bi-il tawḥīd wa tawḥid bi tathlīth* (Triune with Oneness and Oneness with Triune) *al-thālūth laisa 'uqnūm wāḥid* (The Trinity is not One Hypostasis).

For the Incarnation he used: *al-Masīḥ al-mawlūd al-mutajassid* (Christ born incarnate); *ta'annasa al-ibn* (the Son became human), *rabbānā satara 'anhu lāhūtuh bi-tajassidihi min Maryam al-'adhrā' bi-ghayr natfat rajul* (Our Lord covered his divinity by His Incarnation through the Virgin Mary without man's sperm), *tajassud al-masīḥ* (The Incarnation of Christ), *al-tajassud sirr* (the Incarnation is a mystery), *ṣāra insānan* (he became a human being), *ṣāra mawjūdan, manzūran maḥsūsan malmūsan maḥdūdan bi-al-jasad alladhī ittaḥada bihi* (He became present, visible, perceived, tangible, limited in the body in which he was united). We add to the vocabulary already mentioned the words *munbathiq, khārij min, muttaṣil, thābit, zāhir, ghayr inqīṭa', lā infiṣāl* to indicate the relationship between the three *'uqnūm* (hypostases).

Considering that the *Kitāb al-Majālis* was written after 955 AD in response to Sa'īd Ibn Baṭrīq, he stressed the biblical narrative to explain the Incarnation. We notice that al-Muqaffā' used a clear and classical language but his style is far from that of Muslims or from Christian literati such as Abū Qurrah. In this book he started to expound the Bible from the Creation to the evangelisation of the apostles; the Councils and the reasons why they were summoned; the Fathers' teachings and the division of the Church; he narrated all that bringing together citations and history. There is not always uniformity in biblical quotations but, reading the work we can not completely preclude the possibility of the existence of a translation of the Bible in his time. He also cited the Creed in Arabic, the same as is recited today, specifying its importance and explained Christian doctrine in a simple way.

What we can say regarding the language is that in addition to inheriting words of the pre-Islamic time such as *ḥiwāriyyūn, bay'a, naṣrānyya, sharā'i', zabūr, inbi'āth* expressions such as *sanna sunan* (to establish laws), *Rabb al-'ālamīn, al-bāri'* or common Islamic designations for holy writings, *kutub al-tanzīl* (the books of divine revelation), and *kutub al-rusul* (the books of the prophets); he also adopts a dialogical

question-and-answer style, as a formal literary means, as Muslims did in their philosophical debates.

From the first lines, it is obvious that the author simply acquired the language dictated by the social situation. It is not a matter of distinguishing what is Christian from what is not from the language point of view because if we analyse phrases we realise that they are only stereotyped formula. For example in:

وصلت رسالتك ايها الاخ المؤمن المغبوط اسعدك الله بطاعته واعانك على مرضاته وتولاك بحفظه.²⁵⁹

And in the first line of the first chapter he wrote:

اعلم ايها الاخ السعيد حفظك الله ووفقك ان الله تعالى ذكره لم يخلق الخلق لحاجة منه اليهم وانما خلقهم تفضلا منه عليهم ليظهر لهم قدرته وتعرف ربوبيته وكلمما خلق الله سبحانه من البدء والى الان ثابت مقيم على الحال الذي خلقه لم يزل ولم يبتدل ولم يتغير من جميع ما خلقه غير لانسان وحده فكل الخليقة حزينه عليه وذلك ان الله جلت قدرته خلقه للبقاء...²⁶⁰

On the whole we can say that there are no particular modifications in the traditional vocabulary used in a controversial debate by a Christian and he used simple language and concepts.

The third work is *Miṣbāḥ al-‘aql* which is a brief work that shows Sāwīrus’ apologetic methodology within the Islamic milieu and other Christian denominations. He responded to questions and critics of adversaries choosing carefully the style, vocabulary, and appropriate arguments; he used philosophical and logical methods to expound the doctrine of the Christians. The fact that the work appeared within an Islamic cultural context is obvious in both the content and the vocabulary used, unlike

²⁵⁹ Translation: I received your message, faithful and blessed brother, may God please you to live in his obedience, help you do His pleasure and give His protection.

²⁶⁰ Translation: Know, blessed brother, God keep you and make you prosper, that God, His name be exalted, did not create the universe because he needed it, he did it out of pure condescension, to manifest his power and make known his sovereignty. All that he created, from the beginning to this day, remains as it was made without disappearance, without transformation and without change. Man alone grieves at the spectacle of creation, God, His power be magnified had created it to persist in existence.

the book of *al-Durr*. The author adopted some Islamic idioms to convey his ideas. We see for example:

عصمك الله من الزلل، وأعاذك من الخطل، ووفقك لصالح القول والعمل؛ تبارك اسمه؛
أسعدك الله؛ جل ذكره؛ البارئ تبارك وتعالى.²⁶¹

It is clear that the author would not use this type of address in another context. Or when he specified some characteristics of the Essence that are not included in a purely Christological discourse, he wrote in the first chapter:

الجوهر الفاضل الشريف الذى يفرق وصف الواصفين، ولا يبلغه نعت الناعتين.²⁶²

Thus, he started to explain the Oneness of God introducing terminology suitable and common to the understanding of his interlocutors. In the second chapter he described the Trinity as *jawhar wāḥid, ṭabī‘a wāḥida wa-dhāt wāḥida* (one essence and one nature and one self). In another extract, he made a distinction between *al-jawāhir al-basīṭa* (simple) and *al-murakkaba* (composed) to explain his argument.

He defined God as *jawhar mawjūd al-dhāt ‘azalī* (essence, present, eternal), *bāq* (staying), *sarmadī* (immortal), and he described also Allah as *ḥayy, nāṭiq and hayāh* following earlier Christian theologians (Swanson, Hypostases, 246).

In the third chapter he made additions, saying also that these *ṣifāt* of the hypostasis are *qā’ima* (exist), *thābita* (permanent), *lam tazal wa lam tazul* (they continued and continues), *ma’qūl* (the Intellected). And finally, he also gave synonyms for the word *aqānīm*: *ashkhāṣ, khawāṣṣ, ma’ānī and ṣifāt*.

In the later chapters he explained the Incarnation defining *Masīḥ* (anointed) and specifying that the Son became *Masīḥ* when the Word joined the human being. He narrated theophanies that happened to the Prophets in the Old Testament, that are parallel history in the Qur’ān, prophecies on the Incarnation, that Christ renewed *sharā’i’* and narrated his life on the earth. On the Incarnation he employed expressions

²⁶¹ Translation: May God protect you from sins, keep you away from wrong, help you to succeed for his favor and practice; Blessed be His Name; May God please you; May His Name be exalted; Blessed be the Creator and may He be glorified.

²⁶² Translation: the virtuous noble essence which distinguishes descriptions of describers and is not reachable by attributes of writers.

such as: *tajassada bi-jasad tāmm dhi nafs wa-‘aql* (he was incarnated in a complete body with breath and intellect); *ṣāra ‘insānan kāmīlan min ghayr taghyīr dhāt fa-ja’alahu lahu haykalan wa-maḥallan wa-ḥijāban* (he became fully human without changing His Nature and He made it for Him a temple, a dwelling place, and a veil); *al-dhāt al-basīṭa la yulāḥiquha ta’tḥīr* (the simple nature does not have any influence); *al-Masīḥ muta’allim min jiha ‘insāniyya ghayr muta’allim min ghiha lāhutiyya* (Christ suffered on the human side and did not suffer on the theological side).

In conclusion, Al-Muqaffa’ not only stood out in his time but there is no doubt that the author knew the Scriptures and the Tradition very well which he sustained Coptic doctrine. In addition, he explained the Trinity and Incarnation simple, not yet as mature or as complex as his posterity; we can say with certainty that the Christian Arabic vocabulary had been established and diffused in Egypt.

Finally, in his writings his usage of stereotyped formulas did not affect the exposition of his apologetical and biblical arguments and in terms of content he discussed all kinds of problems from the Coptic viewpoint and championing the cause of his church.

In the Arabic-speaking worlds, Sāwīrus's apologetic works were extensively duplicated and widely circulated, standing out as some of the most frequently reproduced Christian texts in the Arabic language (Griffith 1996, 15-42). Therefore, we can derive from this study that even the Coptic confession managed to express itself in the new lingua franca, Arabic, and that the need to respond to Muslims was a significant stimulus for the Copts to develop their own theology in the Arabic language. In fact, following Sāwīrus ibn al-Muqaffa’s era, Arabic rapidly became the primary language of the Copts. They subsequently generated a greater number of texts in Arabic compared to all other Christian communities in the caliphate combined. The list of known authors and their works during this period is extensive.²⁶³

II. Apologetic writers in the Coptic Golden Age

²⁶³ See Graf, *Geschichte der christlichen arabischen Literatur*, 2: 294–468. As mentioned, this work was translated into Arabic by Al-Makārī (2012).

Just barely two centuries after al-Muqaffa' a generation of skilled writers formed what will come to be called the Golden Age of Coptic Arabic literature.²⁶⁴ This is symbolised by the endeavours (from 1230 to 1260) of an extraordinary Christian family of scribes and writers collectively known as the *Awlād al-‘Assāl*, the sons of al-‘Aassāl. They were principally three, that is al-Ṣāfi, Al-’As‘ad Hibatallāh, and al-Mu’taman. They engaged in significant initiatives involving manuscript discovery, copying, translation, and the original composition of Christian theology in Arabic (Graf II, 387-414). Notably, their work displayed an unmistakably ecumenical character; they diligently sought out the finest Christian tracts in Arabic from earlier periods, authored by individuals from the Nestorian, Jacobite, or Melkite traditions. Among the Copts, there was also Shams al-Ri’āsa ’Abū al-Barakāt, often known as Ibn Kabar (d. after 1321). He composed a comprehensive encyclopedia of Christian theology in Arabic, incorporating texts from numerous earlier writers across different communities. His work serves as a reference book of Christian theology and ecclesiastical practices in Arabic, spanning from the origins to the XIII century.²⁶⁵

During this period of time literary activity focused on the translation of biblical, hagiographical, liturgical and doctrinal works into Arabic, and their reinterpretation (Davis, 237). In examining the literature of this period, we will complete our journey that began in ancient pre-Islamic times in the Arabian Peninsula and now ended in the medieval time in Cairo.

During the XIII century theological literature had a renewal and Copts adopted a sophisticated syntax and vocabulary for the purpose of Christian-Muslim apologetical debates (Davis, 202). In fact, a reason for this literary production may have been the uncertainty and the pressure of the Ayyubids (1171-1250 CE) on the religious minorities. Thus, writers, such as ’Awlād al-‘Assāl, produced new christological works

²⁶⁴ See, e.g., Samuel Rubenson, *Translating the Tradition: Some Remarks on the Arabicization of the Patristic Heritage in Egypt*, in *Medieval Encounters 2*, Brill, 1996, 4–14.

²⁶⁵ Graf, *Geschichte der christlichen arabischen Literatur*, 2: 438–45. For the text, see, Ṣamū’īl. ed., *Miṣbāh. al-zulma fī idḍāh al-khidma*, Cairo, Maktabat al-Kārūz, 1992

that proved a meaningful commitment to Christian tradition and to current disputations caused by Islam and that are characterised by an inherited philosophical language.

This topic deserves closer study and here we will concentrate on two writings.²⁶⁶ The first is *Maqāla fī al-tawhīd wa-al-tathlīth*²⁶⁷ by Sim'ān Ibn Kulayl (d. 1206), who was the secretary of armies during the reign of Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-'Ayūbī before becoming a monk. The second is *Fuṣūl mukhtaṣara fī tathlīth al-ittiḥād* (Brief on the Trinity and the Union) by Al-Ṣāfi Ibn al-'Assāl (d. ca. 1265).²⁶⁸

First of all, it is notable that the authors linked Trinitarian vocabulary to the Muslim discussion on the attributes of God. There are lot of *ṣifāt* such as *al-bāri'*, *al-nātiq*, *al-ḥayy*, *al-shāri'* which match *jawhar*, *'aqānīm*, *dhāt*, almost to form real definitions.

Second, the method of exposition, based on philosophy and logic, is characterised by the assumption of a particular terminology in addition to what we have expounded above to explain complex concepts.

Ibn Kulayl started to explain the concept of *jawhar* in comparison with the '*araḍ* (accident):

كل شيء موجود لا بد له من احد امرين: إما أن يكون قائما بنفسه ولا يحتاج في وجوده الى غيره، وهذا هو الجوهر. وإما أن يكون لا قوام له بنفسه ومفتقرا في وجوده الى غيره، وهذا هو العرض.²⁶⁹

He continued with the explanation of *mawjūd*, *ḥayy*, *nātiq*, through a derivation (*ishtiqāq*) relation with the *jawhar*, writing:

لزم أن نبين أنه لا يكون موجود بالحقيقة الا من اشتق له ذلك من الوجود، وأنه لا يكون حي بالحقيقة الا من اشتق له ذلك من الحياة، وأنه لا يكون ناطق بالحقيقة الا من اشتق له ذلك من النطق، لأن الوجود والحياة والنطق صفات ذاتية جوهرية، والصفات الذاتية لا تصح للموصوف ولا يجب أن يُنعت بها الا من جهة اشتقاقها من غيرها...²⁷⁰

²⁶⁶ We consulted them in Bath, 1929.

²⁶⁷ This is a part of the *Tiryāq al-'uqūl fī 'ilm al-'uṣūl* book.

²⁶⁸ We take the information on these authors from Al-Maqārī, 2012.

²⁶⁹ Translation: everything that exists has to be one of two things: either it is self-existing and in its existence it needs no other, and this is the Essence, or it is non-self-existing and it needs others for its existence, and this is the accident.

²⁷⁰ Translation: We must clarify that nothing truly exists except those who are derived from existence; truly nothing is alive except those who are derived from life; truly nothing speaks except those who are derived from speaking; because existence, life and speaking are self-essential attributes; the self attributes are not correct for the described and it does not have to be described with them except for their derivation from others.

Further on instead, he explains the Three Hypostases making a distinction between them and giving their characteristics and a definition for each of them:

هؤلاء الأقسام الثلاثة متفقون في الجوهرية مختلفون في الاقنومية، لأن كل اقنوم منهم له خاصة غير خاصة الآخر، وهم جوهر واحد بالعدد ولا يقال لهم ثلاثة جواهر، كما انه لا يقال ثلاثة آلهاء... فالآب له خاصة الابوة وليس هو ابنا ولا روحا قدسا، والابن له خاصة البنوة وليس هو أبا ولا روحا قدسا، والروح القدس له خاصة الانبثاق وليس هو أبا ولا ابنا... فالآب قائم بذاته، ناطق بالابن، حي بالروح القدس. والابن قائم بالآب من غير افتراق منه، وهو ناطق بخاصته، حي بالروح القدس. والروح القدس قائم بالآب، ناطق بالابن، حي بخاصته.²⁷¹

Finally, he explains the birth of Christ by explaining that there are two types of birth, *kathīfa* (dense) and *latīfa* (mild):

ثم ان الولادة تقال على نوعين: ولادة كثيفة بمباشرة وتناسل، وتقدم الوالد على المولود وتأخر المولود عن الوالد، كولادة اسحق من ابراهيم وولادة سليمان من داود. وولادة لطيفة من غير مباشرة ولا تناسل، ولا تقدم ولا تأخر بغير زمان ولا انفصال ولا افتراق ولا اعتزال بين الوالد والمولود كولادة النفس للنطق وولادة قرص الشمس للضوء وولادة النار للحرارة.²⁷²

Al-Ṣāfi Ibn al-‘Assāl had a similar scheme of Kulayl’s explanation. His *Brief* is considered the jewel of his writings and was inspired by Yaḥya Ibn ‘Adī.

He started to say that al-bāri’ is one *jawhar* described through attributes of integrity and He is three Hypostases; then he continued with “the Son became human”, “the *jawhar* is self-existing” and that “each Hypostasis has His characteristic”.

²⁷¹ Translation: These Three Hypostases agree with the essence and differ with respect to the Hypostasis because each of them has a different characteristic; they are one essence by number and they are not called three essences as they are not called three gods...thus, the Father has the characteristic of paternity and he is not son or holy spirit; the Son has the characteristic of sonship and he is not father or holy spirit; the Holy Spirit has the characteristic of proceeding and he is not father or son... thus, The Father is self-existing, speaking through the Son, is alive through the Holy Spirit. The Son exists through the Father without separation from Him, and speaks through Himself, is alive through the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit exists through the Father, speaks through the Son, is alive through Himself.

²⁷² Translation: Then the birth is of two types: (the first is) dense birth by sexual intercourse and procreation in which the father precedes the born and the born proceeds from the father as the birth of Isaac from Abram and the birth of Suleyman from David. (The second is) mild without sexual intercourse and without procreation, and without preceding or proceeding by time or separation or disjunction or retirement between father and son, as the birth of speaking from soul, the birth of light from sun and the birth of heat from fire.

Following an Islamic philosophical approach, he added that there are four types of *ṣifāt*: *salbiyya* (negative), *idāfiyya* (additional), *murakkaba* (composed) and *thubūtiyya* (confirmatory) he wrote:

والجوهر ههنا يشار به الى ذات البارئ التي قد ثبت أنها واحدة، وصفات هذه الذات الالهية منها سلبية كقولنا ليس هو تعالى جسما ولا محدثا، ومنها اضافية كقولنا هو قبل مخلوقاته، ومنها مركبة منهما كقولنا هو الاول، ومعنى الاول أنه ليس قبله غيره وهذه سلبية، وأنه قبل غيره وهذه اضافية، ومنها ثبوتية كقولنا انه قادر مريد اي القدرة صفة حاصلة في ذاته وكذلك الارادة، ومنها مركبة منهما كقولنا انه عالم فان العلم صفة حاصلة في ذاته ومتعلقة بالمعلوم، فمن حيث هي حاصلة في ذاته هي ثبوتية، ومن حيث هي متعلقة بالمعلوم هي اضافية. ثم صفاته تعالى إما ذاتية لا تتعدى ذاته كقولنا انه حي وناطق، وإما فعلية مشتقة له من افعاله كقولنا انه خالق ورازق.²⁷³

He continued saying that the Three Hypostases are only three and that this is proved by three directions: the verses, from the prophecies, the Gospels and letters; the wise men²⁷⁴ who proved that the Creator is *‘aql* (the Intellect), *‘āqil* (the Intellecting) and *li-dhātihī* (self-existing), nothing more and nothing less; from the first *mutakallimūn* who proved that He is *ḥayy* (alive), *‘ālim* (the All knowing), *qādir* (the Powerful) and a lack of these three is lack of perfection and an addition is subsidiary and unnecessary.

Al-‘Assāl proceeded with the Incarnation and its understanding, then, he explained the linguistic differences between Jacobites, Melkites and Nestorians in terms of the humanity and the divinity of Christ who is *al-ḥāliq al-rāziq al-maulūd min Maryam al-‘adhrā’ al-maṣlūb al-mā’it* (The Creator, the Provider, the born from the Virgin Mary, the Crucified, the Mortal), but he stressed “that with His divinity, and this with His

²⁷³ Translation: The essence here is intended to be the Creator’s self who has been proved to be one; from the attributes of this divine essence they are negative as we say “He, the Exalted, has not a body nor is he is a creature preceded by nothing”; additional as we say “He is before His creatures”; and composed as we say “He is the First”, and “first” means that there is no one else before Him, and this is negative, and means that is “He is before others” and this is additional; confirmatory as we say “He has the power and will”, which means that the power is an attribute occurring in Himself and for the will as well; composed as we say “The All knowing” thus, the knowledge is an attribute occurring in Himself and related to what is known. So, when it occurred in Himself it is confirmatory and when it is related to what is known it is additional. Then, His attributes, the Exalted, are His owns and do not exceed Him as we say that “He is alive and speaking”; or are of action related to his actions as we say “He is the Creator and the Provider”

²⁷⁴ In the past, other writers such as ‘Abd al-Masiḥ al-Kindī (IX century), Yaḥya ibn ‘Adi (X century) and also Būlus al-Bushī adopted a neoplatonist understanding of the nature of intellect to respond to the “Why three?” Muslim question.

humanity". Hence, he showed that the differences among the three Christian confessions are philosophic, not dogmatic in nature.

Finally, he proposed two directions to understand the reasons of the unity of the Creator with humanity, that is the necessity of Incarnation, by mentioning the concept of similarity and integrity and what is related to them:

قد ذكرت العلماء للاتحاد اسبابا كثيرة، وهي ترجع الى قسمين : الاول من جهة البارئ، وهو الذي لاجله أوجدنا، وهو جوده، هو الذي لاجله اتصل بطبيعتنا لتكميلنا وهو تكميل جوده. والدليل على وجوب الاتحاد أن البارئ تعالى هو افضل الجائدين، وافضل الجائدين هو الجائد بافضل الذات، وافضل الذوات ذات البارئ، فتكرم البارئ بجوده بذاته علينا، وهذا كان باتصاله بنا. والدليل بان وهو أن اتصاله بنا ممكن، لأن المانع من لاتصال المضادة، والخالق ليس هو ضد مخلوقه، اذ الضد يعدم ضده لا يوجد، وقد قال في التوراة: "انه يخلق الانسان شبهه"، والمشابهة مقربة للاتصال، واذا كان اتصاله بنا ممكنا وكان لنا فيه غاية الشرف وله فيه كمال للجود، ولا يمنعه لا العجز ولا البخل وهما من جهات النقص فهو يتعالى عنهما، فيجب اتصاله بنا.

والقسم الثاني من جهتنا، وهو أننا لما قصرنا عن بلوغ كمالنا الانساني، وقصرت الانبياء عن البلوغ بالاقليين الى مبادئ الكمال المذكور، تأنس الاله حتى بلغ بالاكثريين الى غاية الكمال الانساني، والوجود والكتب تشهد بهذا من حال المسيحيين بالنسبة الى حال المتقدمين عليهم في الابتعاد عن عبادة غير الله الى عبادة الله ومن كثرة التفسح الى غاية النسك.²⁷⁵

In conclusion, these two writings are an example like so many others that show that the Arabic language was not only developed by Islam and that Coptic Christian authors

²⁷⁵ Scholars mentioned that Union has many reasons divided into two categories: the first category concerns the Creator who made us exist for His generosity and joined our nature for our perfection that is to fulfil His generosity: the proof of the necessity of the union that the Creator, He Exalted, is the most excellent Benefactor, and the most excellent benefactor is the benefactor who has the most excellent essence, and the most excellent essence belongs to the Creator. Thus, the Creator bestowed Himself upon us with generosity and this was by joining our nature. And the proof showed up that His contact with us is possible because what impedes the contact is the contrariety. But the Creator is not against to His creature, since the contrary would eliminate what is its opposite not bring it into existence. God said in the Torah: "He created man according to His likeness" and this likeness is close to the idea of contact; therefore, if His contact with us is possible and if we have the goal of honouring Him by contacting and if He is the perfect benefactor by contacting with us, deficit and stinginess, which are imperfection, do not impede Him and He is superior to them. Therefore, his contact with us is necessary.

The second category concerns us. When we were negligent to reach our human perfection, and when the Prophets neglected to reach few people to the principles of the above mentioned perfection, God became human and reached the greatest number of people to the highly human perfection, and state of being. The Scriptures affirm the condition of Christians as compared to the condition of those who came before them: who passed from worshiping of false deities to the worship God and from a sybarite life to the goal of ascetic life.

were able to express their faith using combinations of biblical and Islamic expressions, Muslim terms in their resonance, stock phrases, invocations from the Qur'ān without changing the meaning of Christian doctrine and its tradition. In addition, the terminology of theology, that had already been coined in the Arabic language, was used without any discrepancy; indeed the authors demonstrated an exceptional ability in handling this vocabulary in a philosophically logical approach and in an interfaith context.

The fact that at that time this type of text was produced first of all shows the necessity and, once again, the urgency of defending the faith; second, it shows what level of writing Christians had developed the philosophical theology in a language common to Muslims. Also, at that time and in the Coptic context, Arab theology proves no less than and in compliance with Christian tradition. Finally, we pause to say that for a Christian reader today the proposed writings should not necessarily be understood as texts written only for the purpose of controversy but also as a means to examine his faith in depth, and then to compare with other denominations and religions.

II. Status of the Arabic Gospel in the Coptic Golden Age

Coptic translators contributed a large number of Arabic works in the biblical field after Arabicization. At first, they tended, like Christian communities in general (Griffith 2013, 118) to adopt and adapt older versions, probably because they were “in need of biblical translations at a time in which most other communities already had well-established traditions” (Vollandt, 70). Afterwards, these translations became independent from the older versions (Zaki, 2021). As mentioned in the previous chapter Al-'As'ad Ibn al-'Assāl composed a proofreading of the Gospels.²⁷⁶ Before his translation, the Alexandrian Vulgata was the most dissemination version translated from Greek and Syriac.²⁷⁷

Little is known about this author. Al-'As'ad Ibn al-'Assāl held the honorary title of *Fakhr al-Dawlah* (pride of the state), indicating his significant role in the administration of the Ayyubid government in Egypt.²⁷⁸ He knew Coptic from his childhood, but his mother tongue was Arabic, and as he himself states in the introduction to his version, he knew neither Greek nor Syriac (Moawad, 29).

Prior to his era, there existed various non-authoritative Arabic versions that required thorough examination to align them with the recognized original texts in Greek, Syriac, and Coptic. Al-'As'ad gathered these texts with the intention of creating his own revised version (Atiya, Coptic Encyclopedia).

²⁷⁶ I have consulted this translation from the edited text of S.Q. Moawad, *Al-'Anajīl al-'Arba'a Tarjamat al-'As'ad Abī al-Faraj Hibat Allāh bin al-'Assāl*, Madrasat al-'Iskandarīyya, 2014; for further studies see S.K. Samir, "La version arabe des évangiles d'Al-'As'ad Ibn al-'Assāl," *Parole de l'Orient* 19, 1994, 441-551; D.B. Macdonald, Ibn Al-'assāl's Arabic Version of the Gospels, *Homenaje a D. Francisco Codera en su Jubilacion Del Profesorado: Estudios de Erudicion Oriental*, Zaragoza, Mariano Escar, Tipografo, 1904, 375-392; K.E. Bailey, Hibat Allah Ibn al-'Assāl and His Arabic Thirteenth Century Critical Edition of the Gospels (With Special Attention to Luke 16:16 and 17:10) in *Theological Review: The Near East School of Theology* 1.1, April 1978, 11-26.

²⁷⁷ This version is, for example, in the codex Vatican Coptic 9 version using Kashouh's classification. Alexandrian Vulgata was a version translated from Greek and Syriac, then it was updated from the Greek text and finally revised from Coptic (Moawad (2014, 29).

²⁷⁸ Atiya A., As'ad Abu al-Faraj Hibat Allah Ibn al-'Assal , in *Coptic Encyclopedia*, Claremont Graduate University. School of Religion, Vol.1, <https://ccdcl.claremont.edu/digital/collection/cce/id/254/rec/1>.

From the methodological introduction provided by the author himself, we can extract important information to understand the reasons behind his composition of this translation.

First, one of the reasons why Al-'As'ad composed this translation was a request from a person whose name he does not mention. Then, the author justifies his act of translation by stating that he undertook it not only to update previous versions but also because there was a poorly crafted version in his time. In particular, he adds that in the existing versions of his era, there were alterations in Arabic writing concerning the vocalization of words in the biblical text, and he cited several examples of this phenomenon. However, he does not mention that in the previous versions there was an inaccuracy in the translation. The author informs the reader that the existing translations coincide exactly with each other and with the original. He notes that the differences between the translations lie in the variety of meanings of the words.²⁷⁹ Moawad (2014, 14-15) thus deduces that Al-'As'ad carefully addresses the differences in meaning between translations in order to respond to the accusation of falsifying the Bible (14-15).

Al-'As'ad's (1252-1253) translation is an eclectic version corrected against the Coptic version and prepared from at least five Arabic and three Coptic manuscripts (Kashouh, 2012, 266-267).²⁸⁰ These translations, as clarified by Ibn al-Assāl himself, have both Greek and Syriac as their source languages. Otherwise, what characterizes the translation process carried out by Al-'As'ad is that he inserts very many readings in the margins and between the lines. In other words, the main text contains the authentic readings, while the marginal apparatus displays the variant readings. Furthermore, he devised twenty-eight symbols for his detailed apparatus to assist the reader in identifying the source of a particular variant. We can therefore infer how complex the translation process must have been, view that the interference in the production of this translation came from more than one source text. As Kashouh (*ibid.*, 274) claimed,

²⁷⁹ This is one of the main reasons why this study focuses on illustrating the linguistic varieties adopted over the centuries to reformulate the biblical text.

²⁸⁰ As regards my study, in particular, the study of Kashouh shows also that the author made his translation from the Codex Beirut B.O., Or 430 which, as mentioned before, it is a continuous and an edited version of Vatican Arabic 13.

employing a minimum of five Arabic manuscripts and three Coptic manuscripts represents a remarkable and robust endeavour in the Arab world.

Thus, from the fact that more than one Arabic version has been consulted we can assert with certainty that there were multiple versions in circulation in Egypt in the XIII century. But, this edition was found to be too complicated for popular use. The sheer number of footnotes and marginal observations did not promote its dissemination so the Alexandrian Vulgata remained the more consulted and read. Evidence of this is that only fifteen manuscripts contain this version when about one-hundred and fifty are of the Alexandrian Vulgate (Kashouh, *ibid*, 274).

Comparing his version and the Alexandrian Vulgata, Moawad (2014, 31-35) shows that there are differences in the choice of words, that his choices are more literary and precise, that there are differences in verb tenses, in the way that Al-'As'ad laid the sentences between them and finally that his translation was more eloquent and stylish than the first. In addition, he made a language improvement from the point of view of vocabulary translating from Coptic.

Al-'As'ad version being more accurate, and close to the Syriac and Greek versions we dealt with it to check on the evolution of the language, and to show the growing standardisation in the translation process with respect to the Arabic manuscripts that we have mentioned in the second chapter. For this purpose, we have extracted from Al-'As'ad's version the same verses found in Ms 154 (See Appendix 2).

In the study of Moawad he collects the texts of the Gospels of Al-'As'ad extrapolated from eight manuscripts: α (1258-1260), β (1265), γ (1271-1272), δ (1280), ζ (1295-1296), η (1340), θ (1500), κ (1304).

I limit the following section to showing some linguistic features that allow us to observe and understand to the extent of the state of art of the Arabic Christian language “outside” the sacred text at that time. I use the introductions contained in these manuscripts written by the copyists at the beginning of each manuscript, except two of them that do not have introductions.

In (γ), (η), (κ) this general introduction says: ²⁸¹

بسم الإله الواحد, الأب والابن والروح القدس. مقدمة الأنجيل الأربعة المجيدة المقدسة والعشرة القوانين, بسلام من الرب ومعونته ورحمته. آمين. أما بعد, فإن أولى ما تقدم أمام الكلام المتقن الفصيح, وافتتح به القول البليغ الصحيح, شكر الله المظلل الساتر, الناطق القادر, الحي القاهر, الذي نبه القلوب على ذكره, وهدى الألسن إلى حمده وشكره ونحمده على ما أولانا من جميل الآية, واعترف له على ما أتانا من جزيل نعمائه, ونقدس اسمه الكريم تقديسا واجبا, لما أطلعنا عليه من أسرار الإيمان, وتوحيد جوهره وذاته, وتثليث أقانيمه وصفاته, ونمجده تمجيذا وافيا على ما منحنا به من نفسي الشبهات عنا, بما أتى به في إنجيله المقدس, الذي تظاهرت عجائبه ومعجزاته فسبحانه جل جلاله, وتعالى ذكره
وكماله...²⁸²

We observe that:

The extract is characterised by an Islamic sounding vocabulary to exalt God as that which follows. This confirms that this language was intrinsic to the language of that time.

To thank God the author cites His attributes and expressions related to His Essence and Trinity as if it were an apologetic treatise.

In (δ) (θ):

بسم الأب والابن والروح القدس, الإله الواحد. نبتدي بعون الله جل جلاله, وتعالى ذكره وكماله, الذي منه رئاسة كل جبروت, وبه غاية كل أمنية, إليه منتهى كل طلبه بكتب مقدمة أربعة الأنجيل المجيدة المقدسة, وعشرة القوانين, بسلام الرب. آمين. أحمذك, يا إله

²⁸¹ Al-Īlāh al-wāhid (The Only God) is different from ĩlāh wāhid (One God) that it is usually pronounced and written in liturgy or in ecclesiastical books today.

²⁸² Translation: In the Name of the Only God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Introduction to the Holy Glorious Fourth Gospel and the ten laws, in peace, support and mercy of the Lord. Amen. To proceed, the first thing to present before the masterful eloquent speech and with which I open the fluent correct statement, is the thankfulness of God who shades, who covers, the Speaker, the Powerful, the Living, the Conqueror, who warned hearts to speak of Him and guided tongues to praise Him and to thank Him, we praise Him for having beautiful verse, and I confess to Him for what comes to us from His abundant graces, and we properly sanctify His Precious Name for having the mystery of the faith, the unity of His Essence and His Nature and the Triune Hypostasis and His attributes, and we glorify Him adequately for granting us to deny suspicions, what is written in His Holy Gospel, whose wonders and miracles showed, May His majesty be glorified, His name and His integrity be exalted...

المعقول والمحسوس، وبارئ الأجسام والنفوس، حمد من ألبسته سربال الوجود بعد العدم
جودا وتفضلا...²⁸³

In (ζ) there is a completely different introduction:

الحمد لله ذي البهاء والجلال، معلن شريعة الفضل والكمال، بإنجيله المقدس الطاهر، المحق
المنير الزاهر، الذي به اهتدت العالمين على يدي الرسل الحواريين، وانعتقوا من أسر
الشياطين، وفازوا بإنعام رب العالمين نشكره على ما أولانا من أنعامه العظيمة، نحمده على
ما نلناه من كراماته الجسيمة.
أما بعد، فإن كتاب الإنجيل المقدس أشرف الكتب الإلهية، وأعظم البراهين السيديّة، وبه
كملت مقاصد التوراة الموسوية، واتضحت الرموز النبوية، وتروحت المثالات الجسمانية،
وثبتت الأوامر الروحانية.²⁸⁴

Also in the introduction to each Gospel there is similar language. We consider the
first lines of the Gospel of Matthew written by Al-'As'ad (from the manuscripts α, γ, η,
κ):

المجد لله منزل الإنجيل، ومحقق التنزيل، بالآيات الباهرة من كل رسول، والمعجزات
القاهرة لكل العقول، فأوضح به حقيقة الإيمان، وفضح به طغيان الشيطان ونقل خليفة الله
إلى عبادته بعد عبادتهم الأوثان، ونهج به المنهج المؤدي إلى الحياة الأبدية وخلص به
الناس من الكفر، واتباع عدوهم، وموت الخطية، وكمل سنة العدل بسنة الفضل، ففرض

²⁸³ Translation: In the Name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, the Only God. We start with God's help, May His majesty be glorified, His name and His integrity be exalted, who rules all powers, who is the purpose of every wish, to him is the end of all demands writing the introduction of the Holy Glorious four Gospels and the ten laws in the Lord's peace. Amen. I praise you O Intellected and Perceived God, Creator of bodies and souls, praise from whom you have, generously and favourably, dressed the garment of existence after nothingness.

²⁸⁴ Translation: Praise to God who is splendour and glorious, who announced the law of kindness and fullness, with His pure and holy Gospel, the right, the enlightening, the bright, with whom the world was guided by the apostles, the *hawārīn*, and they were freed from the devils' capture and they won with the graces of the Lord of the world, we thank Him for his great graces, we praise Him for what we received from His huge dignity. To proceed, thus, the book of the Holy Gospel is the most honourable divine book and the greatest proof of the Lord and with it the purposes of the Law of Moses were fulfilled, the prophetic symbols became clear, the carnal image spiritualised and the spiritual commands stand firm

المحبة والرحمة والصلح, وحث على اطراح القنينة, وعلى استعمال التواضع والصفح...
متى المصطفى, ويسمى لاوي, ترجمة اسمه المصطفى...²⁸⁵

Here also, there is vocabulary that would not be accepted today as the use of *munazzil* and *al-tanzil*, *kufr*, *sunna*, especially the word *muṣṭafa* to explain the meaning of Matthew.

With regard to the introductions extracts I state that this writing way was common in Christian literature over the period considered and that the Islamic influences was still present and that this resonance was unconscious in these writers because it was part of the language itself and to show that their meanings does not distort the principles of Christianity. In addition to the fact that it was a translation rejected at the time, the introductions we have reported demonstrate that the language used is not suitable for today's literature and, once again, makes it seem unfortunately an Islamic text to today's reader.

Despite Ibn Al-‘Assāl's version being rejected and replaced by the Alexandrian version, his rendition represents a significant stage in the development of the translation of the Gospel text. We understand from the presence of numerous Gospel translations in his time that there was a linguistic variety not yet standardized. The negotiation process of translating the Gospel text was still ongoing, and he took on the task of summarizing this variety by annotating it in his corpus. At the same time, he offered a new translation to address the needs of that society.

At this point, I would like to illustrate some lexical variations in the versions considered in this study by comparing them to Ibn al-‘Assāl's rendition.

In Chapter 2, I sought to outline a profile for each Gospel version. The information available to us is limited, and the position of each version is challenging to define in the

²⁸⁵ Glory to God who revealed the Gospel and who fulfilled the revelation with the splendid verses from every apostle and the irresistible miracles for all minds, with it He clarified the truth of the faith and exposed the devil's tyranny; He moved the creation of God to his worship (from the devil) after worshiping their idols; He established the way which leads to the eternal life and save people from godlessness and from following their enemies, from death caused by sin and He continued the law of justice with the law of favour, thus He imposed love, compassion and reconciliation, He urged the abandonment of wealth and to use humility and forgiveness... Matthew the well chosen, he is named Levi, the translation of his name is chosen...

historical context in which it was produced. We know from the previously conducted research that Vatican Ar. 13 is the most ancient and its language is classical Arabic and contained archaic vocabulary. This was not a completely discarded version but was edited in Codex Beirut B.O. Or. 430. Both contained a Peshitta interference.

Sinai Ar. 72 is characterised by a Greek influence and its linguistic features are identified as the Middle Arabic variety. Also the language of Sinai Ar. 70 is Middle Arabic but it is a translation influenced by Syriac.

These translations each contain "the norms" that prevailed at that time, and in turn, these norms have evolved from a continuous process of negotiation over the centuries. Therefore, the linguistic choices contained in them are the result of prescribed and tolerated norms. Therefore, we can apply Toury's "growing standardization law" in the field of Bible translation as well.

Thereafter, we can observe a growing standardization when we find the same biblical content in the verses or, in our case, when the same word is replaced by another, and the latter persists in later versions.

We limit ourselves here to consider the verses extracted from the Gospel of Matthew, which allows us to see the evolution of the lexicon from the Vatican Arabic 13 version to the Al-‘Assāl version. I have highlighted the lexical differences where the text of the versions allows.

Passages	Vatican Ar. 13	Beirut B.O. Or., 430	Sinai Ar. 70	Sinai Ar. 72	Ibn Al-Assāl

<p>Mt 2:2-6</p> <p>وقالت ابن () هو المولود لانا راينا نجمه في المشرق، واتينا لنسجد له.</p> <p>فسمع () الملك فذر وجميع اهل اورسليم معهم فجمع جميع عظام () وكتبه الشعب فاقبل يسلمهم ويقول لهم ابن يولد المسيح.</p> <p>قالوا له في بيت لحم يهودا هاكذي هو مكتوب في النبى (انك) انت () لحم يهودا لست بنا قصه في ملوك يهوذا وسيخرج منك ملك () هو يرعا الاسرايل شعبي.</p>	<p>قايون ابن ملك اليهود الذى ولد () راينا نجمه في الشرق وقد جنا لنسجد له.</p> <p>فلما سمع هيرودس الملك قلق وجميع اورسليم معه فجمع جميع عظام الكهنة وكتبه الامه وجعل يسالهم ابن يولد المسيح.</p> <p>فاما هم فقالوا في بيت لحم يهودا هكذا كتب في النبى وانت ايضا يا بيت لحم يهوذا ما انت بناقص في ملوك يهودا لأنه يخرج منك ملك يرعى شعبي اسرايل.</p>	<p>وقالت ابن ملك اليهود المولود لانا ابصرنا كوكب في المشرق وجينا نسجد له.</p> <p>فسمع هيرودس الملك وفرع وجميع اورسليم معه جمع جميع روس الكهنة ومعلمى الامه فسالهم ابن يولد المسيح.</p> <p>فقالوا له في بيت لحم ايهوذا لانه كذلك هو مكتوب في النبى انت يل بيت لحم ايهوذا لست بنا قصة في ملوك ايهوذا لانه منك يخرج ملك وهو يرعا شعبي اسرايل.</p>	<p>قايون ابن ملك اليهود المولود لانا قد راينا نجمه في المشرق و جينا لنسجد له.</p> <p>فلما سمع هيرودس الملك تقلق كل اروسلم معه وانه جمع كل روس الكهنة وكتاب الشعب فجعل يستخبرهم ابن يولد المسيح.</p> <p>وانهم قالوا في بيت اللحم اليهوديه لانه هكذا هو مكتوب في النبى وانت يا بيت لحم ارض يهوذا ليست بصغيره في ملك يهوذا منك يخرج في قايد الذى هو شعبي اسرايل.</p>	<p>قائلين: "أين هو ملك اليهود المولود؟ لأنا راينا نجمه في المشرق ووافينا لنسجد له".</p> <p>فلما سمع هيرودس الملك اضطرب وجميع ايروسليم معه. وجمع كل رؤساء الكهنة وكتبه الشعب، واستخبر منهم: "أين يولد المسيح؟"</p> <p>فقالوا له: "في بيت لحم يهودا. لأنه مكتوب في النبى هكذا: وأنت يا بيت لحم، أرض يهودا لست بصغيرة في ولايات يهوذا، منك يخرج مدبر، الذي يرعى شعبي إسرائيل."</p>
--	--	--	---	---

Mt 3:11	الذي يأتي بعدي. هو اقوا مني ذلك الذي لست ياهل ان انزع شسع حداه هو يعمدكم بروح القدس وبالنار.	الذى يأتي بعدي فهو اقوى منى ذلك الذى لست اهلا ان حل سيرو جوايد صفيه هو يعمدكم بروح القدس والنار.	والذى يأتي بعدي اعز مني الذى لست اهلا ان اخلع حداه هو يعمدكم بروح القدس وبالنار.	والذي يأتي خلفى فانه اقوا مني الذى ليست ياهل ان احمل حداه هو يصبغكم بروح القدس والنار.	والذي يأتي بعدي هو أقوى مني، ولا أستحق أن أحمل حداءه. فهو يصبغكم بروح القدس وبالنار.
Mt 3:17	هذا ابني الحبيب الذي به سررت.	هذا ابني الحبيب الذى به سررت.	هذا ابني الحبيب الذى به سررت.	هذا هو ابني الحبيب الذي به سررت.	هذا هو ابني الحبيب الذي به سررت.
Mt 5:17	لا تظنون اني انما جيت انقض الناموس والانبياء لم ات لا بطلها بل لاكملها.	لا تظنوا اني انا جيت لأقض التوراه والانبياء لم ات لأقض بل لاكمل.	لا تظنوا اليه حيث ان احل الناموس او الانبياء لم أجي ان احل ولكن أن ()	لا تظنوا اني جيت احل الناموس او الانبياء لم ات احل لكني اتم.	لا تظنوا أني جئت لأنقض الناموس أو الأنبياء. لم أت لأنقضها، بل لأكملها.

Mt 6:9-13	<p>ابانا الذي في السما تقديس اسمك باى ملكوتك تكن مشيتك كما هي في السما كذلك فلتكن في الارض ارزقنا من الخبز حاجة يومنا واغفر لنا ذنوبنا كما انا قد غفرنا للمدنيين الينا ولا تدخلنا في التجارب والبلايا - بل خلصنا من الشيطان المحال لان لك القوه والملكوت والمجد الى الابد الابد.</p>	<p>ابانا الذي في السموات ليتقدس اسمك لتات ملكوتك لتكن مشيتك كما في السما كذلك في الارض ارزقنا خبز حاجتنا اليوم واغفر لنا ذنوبنا كما انا نحن قد غفرنا للمدنيين الينا ولا تدخلنا التجارب لكن نجنا من الحبيث من اجل ان لك الملك والقوه والتسبحه الى ابد الابد.</p>	<p>ابونا الذي في السما يقديس اسمك ياتي ملكك تكون مسرتك كما في السما وفي الارض اعطينا خبز قوتنا ليومنا هذا واترك لنا ذنوبنا مثلما نترك () ولا تدخلنا في التجربة ولكن خلصنا من الحبيث لان الملك والعز والتسبحه لك الى ابد الابد.</p>	<p>ابونا الذي في السموات يقديس اسمك تاتي ملكوتك تكون مسرتك كما في السما وعلى الارض خبزنا كفافنا اعطنا اليوم واترك لنا كمثل ما نترك نحن لغر ما () ولا تدخلنا في البلايا ولكن نجينا من الشريير.</p>	<p>أبانا الذي في السموات ليتقدس اسمك، ولتأت ملكوتك، ولتكن مشيتك كما في السماء وعلى الأرض. خبزنا غدا أعطناه اليوم. واغفر لنا ما يجب علينا، كما غفرنا نحن لمن لنا عليه. ولا تدخلنا التجارب، بل نجنا من الشريير. لأن لك الملك والقدرة والمجد إلى الأبد حقا.</p>
Mt 10:16	<p>ارسلكم كالبهم بين الذياب.</p>	<p>مرسلكم مثل الحملان بين الذياب.</p>	<p>ارسلكم كالخرفان بين الذياب.</p>	<p>ابعثكم مثل الغنم بين الذياب.</p>	<p>هأنذا أرسلكم مثل خراف بين ذئاب.</p>

Mt 10:18-19	يدفونكم الى الحكام والملوك من اجل اسمي للسهادة عليهم وعلى الشعوب	سيقدمونكم امام الحكام والملوك من اجلي للشهادة لهم وللامم	يسلمونكم الى القضاء ويعذبونكم كنايسهم ويقدمونكم بين يدي الروس والملوك من اجلي لشهاده عليكم وكل الامم ()	سايسلموكم الى () وفي جماعاتهم تجلدوكم والى قواد وملوك تقدموا من اجل الشهاده لهم والامم	يقدمونكم إلى ملوك وولاة من أجلي، شهادة لهم وللأمم
	فاذا اسلموكم لا تهتموا كيف تتكلمون او بما () تحتجون	فمتى ما يسلموكم فلا تهتموا كيف او ماذا تقولون	سلموكم فلا تهتموا كيف او ماذا تكلموا	فاذا اسلموكم فلا تهتموا كيف او ماذا تكلموهم	فاذا أسلموكم، فلا تهتموا أن كيف أو بماذا تقولون،
	ولستم انتم المتكلمين بل روح ابيكم تنطق على السنتمكم.	لانكم ستلقون في تلك الساعة ما تنطقون به وذلك انكم لستم الناطقين كى روح ابيكم تنطق فيكم.	ولكنكم تعطوا في تلك الساعة ما تكلموا به ولستم انتم الذين تتكلمون لكن روح ابوكم تكلم فيكم.	ستعطوا في تلك الساعة ما تتكلموا ليس انتم المتكلمين لكن ابوكم المتكلم فيكم.	فانكم ستعطون في تلك الساعة ما تتكلمون به.
Mt 11:6	طوبا لمن لم يشك في امري.	طوبى للذى لا يفتنن فى.	وطوبا للذى لا يشك في.	طوبا لمن لم يشك في.	فطوبى لمن لا يشك في.
Mt 17:5	هذا ابني الحبيب الذي به سررت اياه فاطيعوا.	هذا ابني الحبيب الذى به سررت له فاسمعوا.	هذا ابني الحبيب الذى به سررت ايا اسمعوا.	هذا هو ابني الحبيب الذى به سررت له فاسمعوا.	هذا هو ابني الحبيب الذى سرت به نفسى. اياه أطيعوا.
Mt 20:28	وان يبذل نفسه عن خلاص الناس.	ليبذل نفسه خلاصا بدل الكثيرين.	ويبذل نفسه فدا بدل لكثيرين.	وجعل نفسه فدا عن كثيرين.	ويبذل نفسه خلاصاً لكثيرين.

<p>Mt 21:7-9</p> <p>اتيا () <u>لعبروا</u> الجحش فوضوا على الجحش ثيابهم وركبه <u>يسوع</u> وا() <u>المحافل</u> () على الطريق له واخرون () جعله يقطعون العصان من الشجر و() على الطريق اجلا لا له وجعلت <u>المحافل التي</u> <u>تسير امامه</u> <u>وخلفه توقيرا</u> <u>له ينادون و</u> <u>يقولون</u> <u>الخلاص</u> <u>والمجد لابن</u> <u>داود تبارك</u> الاتي باسم الرب المجد في <u>العل</u>.</p>	<p>وجاء بالاتان والجحش ووضعوا ثيابهم على الجحش ثم <u>ركب ايشوع</u> وكل <u>الجموع</u> كانوا يفرشون ثيابهم في الطريق واخرون كانوا يقطعون الاعصان من الاشجار ويلقونها في الطريق فاما <u>الجموع الذين</u> كانوا يمشون امام ويتبعون اثره فكانوا يصحون ويقولون اوشعنا لابن داود مبارك الاتي باسم الرب.</p>	<p>واتيا بالاتان والجحش ووضعوا على جحش ثيابهم وركب عليه يسوع وكثرة <u>الجموع</u> كانوا يفرشون ثيابهم على الطريق واخرون كانوا يقطعون اعصان الشجر ويلقون في الطريق والجموع الذين كانوا يمشون () يصرخون ويقولون المجد لابن داود ومبارك الذي ياتي باسم الرب.</p>	<p>وقرب الاتان والعفوا ووضعا ثيابهم عليهما وجلس <u>يسوع</u> عليما وان <u>الجماعة</u> الكثيرة فرشوا اثيابهم في في الطريق واخريين كانوا يقطعون اعصان الشجر ويفرشوه في الطريق وان <u>الاجماعة</u> <u>المتقدمة معه</u> والى تلخفه يصيحوا ويقولوا اوسنا لابن داود تبارك هو الذي باسم الرب.</p>	<p>جاء بالأتان والجحش، وجعلوا ثيابهم فوقهما و<u>جلس</u> فوقهما. وأكثر <u>الجموع</u> فرشوا ثيابهم في الطريق، وأخرون قطعوا أغصانا من الشجر وبسطوها في الطريق. والجموع السائرون أمامه والسائرون وراءه كانوا يصرخون قائلين: "أوشعنا لابن داود. مبارك الآتي باسم الرب. أوشعنا في الأعلى".</p>
--	--	---	---	--

Mt 22:42-44	وقال ما الذي تقولون في المسيح وابن من تدعون انه قالو اله ندعمو انه ابن داود قال لهم يسوع وكيف ادن اسمه داود بالروح ونيوته ربا وقد قال في ذلك ان الرب قال لرب اجلس عن يميني حتى اضع اعداك موكبا تحت قدميك.	وقال لهم ماذا تقولون في المسيح ابن من هو قالو اله ابن داود قال لهم وكيف يدعوه داود بروح ربا لانه قال القدس الرب لربي اجلس عن يميني حتى اضع اعداك تحت قدميك.	سالهم يسوع فقال ماذا تقولوا من جل المسيح بن من هو قالوا له بن داود فقال لهم وكيف داود بالروح يدعوه رباه قال ان لربه اجلس عن يميني حتى اضع اعداك تحت قدميك.	سالهم يسوع قايلما ماذا تظنوا في المسيح بن من هو قالوا له بن داود قال لهم يسوع فكيف يسميه داود بالروح ربه قايلما قال الرب () اجلس عن يميني حتى اضع اعداك تحت موكا قدميك.	وقال: "ماذا تظنون من أجل المسيح، ابن من هو؟" قالوا له: "هو ابن داود." قال لهم يسوع: "كيف داود بالروح سماه ربي، قائلا: قال الرب لربي: اجلس عن يميني حتى أضع أعداءك تحت أسفل قدميك."
-------------	---	--	---	--	---

From a preliminary reading of the extracted verses in appendices 1 and 2, one can observe a variety of lexicon as well as uniformity of the same across different versions.

Here some descriptions of the language of Ibn al-‘Assāl version.

In Mt 2:2-6, the word used for translating “to come”²⁸⁶ is *wāfa* (to descend suddenly) which gives the verse a nuance of meaning different from the simple verb *ja’a* (to come). In the same verse he uses for “troubled” *iḍṭaraba* which indicates a disturbed movement. The other versions uses respectively *dha’ara* which indicates fear and alarm; *qalaqa/taqalqala* which means to be troubled by something; *faza’a* which means severe panic.²⁸⁷ For “to demand” he does not use *sa’la* (to ask) but *istakhbara* (to inquire). In the prophecy he does not refers to Christ as the *malik* (king) but as the *mudabbir* (who rules and judges). He defines the categories of people that Herod refers

²⁸⁶ The English translation of the words in the verses is taken from the King James Version.

²⁸⁷ I tried to give a definition of these similar words by consulting The Doha Dictionary.

to as *ru'asā' al-kahana* (the chief priests) and *kahanat al-sha'b* (scribes of the people). We find other differences in the following verses.

In Mt 3:11 for “to be worthy” he substitutes *'ahl* (to be worthy of something) with the verb *istaḥaqqā* which has a similar meaning (to deserve or be worthy). Unlike other versions that translate the equivalent of 'to bear' with verbs indicating the action of removing, he translates it with *ḥamala* (to bear, to carry). “To baptize” he chooses to translate it not with *'ammada* but with *ṣabagha* which in the Christian vocabulary was used to indicate the action of baptizing.

He chooses *naqaḍa* (to abolish) in Mt 5:17 for “to destroy”; *'aṭa'a* (to obey) in Mt 17:5 for “to hear”; *khalāṣ* (salvation) in Mt 20:28 for “ransom” and not *fidā'* (redemption). Finally, he chooses the Hebrew word *'usha'na* to translate “Hosanna”.

In general, from these few passages, we can say that the author makes the Arabic translation more accurate and refined, without traces of Islamic connotations. Certainly, Al-As'ad's purpose in undertaking such an extensive and elaborate translation project was clear. One hypothesis that can be put forward regarding the rejection by his target audience is that it was likely a translation too scholarly to be read by the faithful, as Kashouh stated (2012, 274).

Ibn al-‘Assāl's version emerged during a period of religious and literary revival among the Christians of Egypt in the XIII century. We find a highly developed language that demonstrates that the writer was experienced, possessing great skill and a good command of Arabic.

Conclusion

After the Islamic conquest, the Copts quickly acquired mastery of the Arabic language. As early as the tenth century, there is evidence of works authored in Arabic by prominent figures within the Coptic community. This literature reaches its peak between the XIII and XIV centuries. At that historical moment, this production was a result of an awareness of the gradual disappearance of Arab Christian culture and, therefore, the need to preserve it (Samir, 2007, 42).

The initial reflection for this research project started with the observation that Christians, specifically with reference to Coptic Christians due to a personal connection, do not identify with the Arabic language, considering it primarily as the language of Islam. Therefore, we aimed to showcase the origins of this language and the significant role Christians played in shaping Hellenistic culture in the Arabic language. We also wanted to highlight the substantial Christian literary production that Christians generated over the centuries across various denominations. Following the Golden Age, this literary field experienced a setback,

Many Christians lost interest in renewing the Arabic expression of their faith. They continued to use the Arabic language of course, and to copy the texts produced in earlier times, as they do to this very day. But after the thirteenth century the creative genius for borrowing the cultural and linguistic idiom of the Muslim Arabs for the proclamation and defence of Christianity seems to have waned.

(Griffith, 2008, 21)

So, the attitude of the Arabic-speaking Christians changed. The use of Islamic-sounding vocabulary has long-since ceased in Christian Arabic texts today; expressions such as *Allāh al-khāliq wa-al-nāṭiq wa-al-ḥayy*²⁸⁸, *al-faqīr ilā raḥmat Allah*²⁸⁹ or *bi ism Allāh al-wāḥid al-dhat al-muthallath bī al-ṣifāt*²⁹⁰, have disappeared. After a fervent development and production of Arab Christian texts there was an interruption and a suppression of the language of Islam. The so-called Classical Arabic of Christian Arabs was replaced by a language of a lower level; the medieval Arabic apologetic heritage, with its accompanying Islamic nuances, is studied from the patristic and liturgical

²⁸⁸ Translation: God, the Creator, Who speaks, the Living.

²⁸⁹ Translation: the poor who seek God's mercy.

²⁹⁰ Translation: in the Name of God, the One, The Essence, the thrice attributed God

sources in the original languages of those sources.²⁹¹ The intriguing chapter in the history of Christian apologetic theology produced by Arab Christian theologians to defend their doctrine against Islam seems to have been forgotten or barely remembered today, except by those familiar with the history of the Eastern Christian communities.

The same seems to have happened concerning the translation of the Bible. In the field of the translation of biblical texts the growing inclination to create translations in the most refined Arabic style led Arabic Christian translators to incorporate expressions from the Qur'ān to demonstrate the sacredness of the Bible.²⁹² But, this trend was disrupted in 1865 when the translators of the Bustānī-Van Dyck version decided to *de-Islamicize their translation* (Hanna, 2019, 366).²⁹³ Today, this version is still the most used among Christian Arabs and a version really capable of replacing it has not yet been produced.

In conclusion, over the extended period I have delved into in this study, Arab Christians and Arab Muslims shared a linguistic closeness that is no longer evident today. This shift is driven by the need to distance themselves from Islamic culture and return to their roots, overlooking all the literature produced in the Arabic language. Regarding the development of the three fields discussed in this study, we can draw the following conclusions. First, Christians still speak the Arabic language, and it is still used in their liturgy. However, at the same time, they distance themselves from language associated with Muslim culture and the Qur'ān, despite having been promoters of this language in the past. Secondly, in the field of theology, Arab Christians today are engaged in defending their beliefs. However, what distinguishes this modern era from the medieval period is that the development of Christian doctrine by our predecessors was made possible or fuelled by (or due to) Muslim regimes, which engaged Christians

²⁹¹See: Mark N. Swanson, *Are Hypostases Attributes: An Investigation into the Modern Egyptian Christian Appropriation of the Medieval Arabic Apologetic Heritage*, *Parole de l'Orient* 16, 1990-91, 239-50.

²⁹²On this topic see S. Hanna, *'Intāj al-ma'rifa wa tashkīl al-hawiyya fi tarjamatayn lil-kitāb al-muqaddas 'ila al-'arabiyya*, [Production and Identity Formation in Two Arabic Translations of the Bible], in Baker, Mona, ed. *Translation and the Production of Knowledge(s)*, Special issue of *Alif. Journal of Comparative Poetics* 38, 2018, 11-45.

²⁹³Based on this statement, throughout this study, I have consistently referred to the Van Dyck version to verify its content.

in extensive literary production. Today, however, Arab Christian literary production is primarily created for educational and homiletic purposes directed towards the faithful. In the field of Bible translation, the commitment to ecumenical dialogue among Eastern churches brings to light an inter-confessional version aimed at providing Arabic-speaking Christians with a common text. The need today, compared to the past, is different. There is no longer a requirement to produce a biblical text solely for liturgical purposes or to showcase the sacredness of the biblical text by creating translations with a high Arabic register. Instead, the focus is on negotiating norms and translation strategies to offer a translation suitable for all Christian denominations.

Final Conclusion

This study was an attempt to reconstruct the terminological variety of Arabic in the fields of apologetics and Gospel translation. There were numerous questions to start with in reconstructing both fields. It was necessary to go back to the origins and explore the history of Christianity in its early days on the Arabian Peninsula in order to establish the beginnings of Arab Christian literature.

From the first chapter, I have reached the following conclusions.

The presence of Christians in Arabia before the rise of Islam is evident from historical and palaeontological sources. In addition, they expressed their faith in Arabic. It is not excluded that Christianized Arab tribes had at first only an oral liturgy through which to transmit the evangelical message. These communities might have utilized Syriac and Greek liturgies, potentially accompanied by spontaneous oral translation but traces lead us to say also that Arab Christians had their religious vocabulary and that they contributed to enriching Arabic by drawing from the other languages with which they had contact. The contact between Arab Christians and other Christian communities intensified during the period of the Councils, and even more so when the church split over theological doctrine. Thus, the Arabic language existed in its multiple varieties and was in a constant state of evolution. With the birth of Islam, the process of standardization of the language began.

In this initial phase of the study, an attempt was made to place religious terminology in this timeframe through its extraction from historical, lexicographical, and poetic sources. From the consultation of these early sources, it emerged that foreign terms were Arabised, though limited space was given to terminology related to the Christian sphere in early dictionaries. In comparison to Christian liturgical resources, particularly those of the Coptic Church, pre-Islamic Arabic linguistic variety has not completely disappeared from Christian language today. However, some words are no longer used by contemporary Christians, and the language of poetry is considered ancient and difficult to understand and attributed to Islam, even though it does not affect Christian doctrine. From the perspective of Christian dogma, poetry expressed the uniqueness of God, but to date, there are no other sources attesting to it in our possession; the only

source that summarizes Christian dogma, and that the early Christians certainly adopted, is the divine liturgy, but for now there is no written trace. With this first section, I have tried to demonstrate that the Arabic language was an integral part of the identity of Christians before the birth of Islam.

I did not aspire in this study to present a comprehensive exposition of all the terminology that previous studies have already made. My intention was to give examples of that language which served a dual purpose. First, to illustrate the stages of the field of Arabic Christian language that led to the formation of the fields of theology and Bible translation; second, to clarify the position of this language among Arabic-Christian speakers today.

In the second chapter, we delved into the heart of Arabic Christian literary production, particularly in apologetic literature and the translation of the Gospel.

After the rise of Islam, Christians translated Hellenistic culture into Arabic having previously translated it into Syriac.

I focused on the phenomenon of the Arabization of culture during that historical period, but I would like to note here that cultural production in Syriac influenced the field of literary production in Arabic and contributed to the formulation of the Arabic language. The search for sources for this study led me to discover another type of struggle within literary production, namely, the linguistic competition between the Syriac and Arabic languages. Which language was more suitable for expressing the knowledge of that time? I limit myself to saying that the two languages coexisted and competed in shaping knowledge. However, we know from this study that promoters of the Arabic language were able to implement a standardization process capable of expressing the culture of that time at levels comparable to those achieved by speakers of Syriac. I thus highlight this avenue for further exploration in future studies to better define the position of Syriac in relation to Arabic.

Thus, Christian intellectuals not only contributed to the dissemination of knowledge through the Arabic language but were also engaged in defending their faith against Islam and Judaism. Furthermore, through this new lingua franca, they were committed

to reaffirming Christian *doxa* for educational purposes among the faithful and to illustrating the true *doxa* within Christian denominations.

I focused primarily on texts produced for apologetic purposes with multiple goals. Firstly, apologetic texts were among the first types of texts produced by Christian communities in Arabic to address Muslims. Secondly, they bear witness to the native Christian Arabic terminology that expressed the foundation of the Christian faith, namely, the oneness of God, the Trinity, and the Incarnation. Thirdly, they were produced using the model of dialogue that occurred in the courts and debates among the *mutakallimun*. Fourthly, they contain linguistic features that today we would attribute to Islamic language but were an integral part of the culture of that people at that time. Fifthly, they contain biblical excerpts that indicate the stage of Bible translation in this early phase of literary production and that can be compared to the earliest biblical translations in our possession. Following these objectives, I selected the earliest apologetic texts and sought to illustrate their main characteristics. Concurrently with the study of the early apologetic works, a study was also conducted of the earliest translations of the Bible. From these, we selected the oldest versions and briefly outlined their linguistic features based on previous studies.

From studies conducted on the use of the biblical text in apologetic works, it has emerged that the authors of these works cited biblical verses to support their arguments and may have employed a liberal approach in their formulation. From the examination of the biblical passages in *On the Triune Nature of God*, I believe that this formulation, at the terminological level, should be placed within the long history of Arabic biblical translation and should not be ignored. Irrespective of whether the anonymous translator consulted a Bible at his disposal or relied on his memory, both scenarios should be considered. Beyond grammatical and syntactic irregularities, the diversity of vocabulary must be analyzed more thoroughly, taking into account the *Vorlagen* of such versions, and not merely conducting a comparative analysis of Arabic language lexicon. The biblical text, especially in its early translations, underwent linguistic interferences that led translators to formulate the lexicon in one way rather than another. While this study has thus been limited to the arduous task of extracting the biblical text to showcase its

linguistic variety, by doing so it also aims to draw attention to a larger endeavor that illustrates the complexity of the dynamics involved in the translation process of the various versions that are currently not well-highlighted. Therefore, we situated these initial translations within the context of an ongoing process of Arabization.

From a preliminary analysis of Ibn al-‘Assāl's version, we can affirm that in the extensive process of standardizing Arabic language translation, translators had, over the course of history, proposed various translations based on the cultural and social needs of each era. In general terms, the purpose of translating sacred texts has always been to provide a translation accessible and comprehensible to the faithful. Regarding Arabic translation specifically and within the context of the ascendancy of Islam, the aim had been to translate the text using language *akin* to that of the Qur’ān to affirm the biblical text's sacredness, but without *compromising* the terminology closely tied to Christian doctrine. The negotiation of translation norms and strategies is thus a phenomenon that has occurred slowly and remains open whenever a new translation is proposed.

The application of Toury's theory of the laws of translational behavior in my case is limited, as the contextualization of the translation is constituted by scarce information regarding the earliest manuscripts in our possession. However, satisfactory results could be obtained if there was an in-depth understanding of the *Vorlagen* languages, enabling more informed hypotheses about the translation process. To provide a few examples, after identifying the source language, one could compare the versions and determine whether the multiple Arabic translations for a single word are simply the result of linguistic skill on the part of the translators in using different translations for a single word, or if it indicates a negligence on the part of the translators to standardize the lexicon in their individual biblical translation. It could also suggest an incorrect or imprecise interpretation of the original text, or, alternatively, this linguistic variety might be interpreted as the Arabic language's ability to express the same concept with multiple words.

In conclusion, Christian communities demonstrated great variety in their biblical translations and every epoch, or even author, had its/his translation.

Future research would aim to map the linguistic differences in the versions presented here through the construction of an Arabic lexicography with Greek and Syriac equivalences.

Turning to the apologetic texts, we described the field as follows.

Writers knew the Scriptures very well and did not modify Christian doctrine while they nevertheless tried to make it understandable to opponents using a logical and philosophical approach. The Gospels, being in the service of reinforcing the Christian position, were adapted to the setting of the receptors with an apologetic purpose in mind.

The Arabic language of the early literary production, represented by the dialogue of Timothy-al-Mahdi and the treatise *On the Triune Nature of God*, is classified as a simple form of Arabic but is capable of expressing the Christian message following in the footsteps of the Fathers of the Church. At the same time, what characterizes these apologetics is the shared linguistic culture that today would be defined as distinctly Islamic but at that time, was part of a habitus that was common to writers, both Muslim and Christian.

At this point, the trajectory of the present study has aimed to focus on the presentation of some works by important authors such as Abū Qurrah and al-Takrīfī, who ha contributed to enriching Christian literary production. From the described works, there emerges an increase in the complexity of arguments that include elements of Islamic discourse combined with elements of sacred scripture. In addition, the writers meticulously chose specific terminology to express their doctrines in comparison to Islamic ones; for example writers linked Trinitarian vocabulary to the Muslim discussion of the attributes of God. They shared vocabulary but at the same time they defined the Christological canon in Arabic.

From this phase of literary development, it can be deduced that the vocabulary related to Christian doctrine had been definitively formulated and also adapted to Islamic philosophical thought.

To continue the description of this field and illustrate its developments, our focus was ultimately directed towards the literary production of the Coptic Church, considered the last Eastern church to adopt the Arabic language in its literature.

Thus, the Copts also confirmed their presence within literary production, but after the golden age, this production seems to have come to a halt. This interruption appears to have occurred for social and cultural reasons, and gradually, the desire to detach linguistically from Islamic culture becomes increasingly demanding, leading to a modern literary production with an identity different from that of the past. Today, Islamic-sounding vocabulary is substituted by other expressions, and the accuracy, eloquence and style of the Classical Arabic of the Gospels elaborated in the XIII century is considered inappropriate to the faithful today.

From the research and work done I have attempted to outline the characteristics of the Arabic Christian language and its terminology through the evidence of selected literature, from its birth, to its evolution and survival in a broad linguistic and cultural context; in order to clearly illustrate the field of Arabic Christian literature, the structure of this study was conceived based on the principal conceptual tools that the sociologist Bourdieu provided in his extensive works.

The aim of this work was to narrate some of the literature that constituted the Arabic Christian literary heritage, without providing a comprehensive account of the entirety of Arabic Christian literature. But we can conclude by saying that the long list of texts written by Christian thinkers with apologetic purpose thus responds to important questions such as: How did Arab Christians respond to Islamic challenges to the Bible, the Trinity, and the Incarnation? How did these theologians use Arabic, which became the language of the conquerors, to defend the faith and its principles? How was the divinity of Christ explained? To what extent were they able to articulate the concept of the triune God in opposition to Islamic monotheism? Can the Eastern churches still benefit from the arguments addressed in this literature developed in that language? Finally, can one also benefit from this literature within Arabic literature and linguistics programs? One of the aims of this study, in fact, has been to draw attention to this immense literary wealth within linguistic studies, which often limit themselves to the

analysis and study of the Arabic language, primarily using literature belonging to the Islamic tradition as a model. These writings could also be excellent sources of study in various academic subjects, such as early Islamic history, Islamic Studies, Christian-Muslim relations, Patristics etc.

This study originated from a general reflection on the status of the Arabic language among contemporary Christian speakers, but it developed with the aim of contributing to the study of the language and Arabic Christian texts whose authors interacted with Islam. This is an academic field that is growing, with an increasing number of studies on the subject²⁹⁴ and numerous unedited Arabic Christian texts that need deeper analysis.

In conclusion, the Arabic Christian language moved across time, as is the natural course of any language, and my future endeavors will compass contributions that further advance this field of study.

²⁹⁴ For example, see the studies by Noble and Treiger Eds, *The Orthodox Church in the Arab World*, DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 2014; Pratt, ed., *The Character of Christian-Muslim Encounter; Essay in Honour of David Tomas*, Leiden, Brill, 2015; Beaumont, ed., *Arab Christians and the Qur'an*, Leiden, Brill, 2018; Thomas ed., *The Bloomsbury Reader in Christian-Muslim Relations, 600-1500*, London, New York, Bloomsbury Academic, 2022.

Bibliography

Ibn ‘Abd Rabbih al-‘Andalsī, *Al-‘aqd al-farid*, II, Mufīd Muhammad Qamīha ed., Beirut, Dār al-kutub al-‘ilmiyya, 2006.

Abū al-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī, *Kitab al-Aghānī*, XXI, II, R. Brunnov ed., Leiden, Brill 1888.

Acta Sanctorum Octobris, Collecta Digesta, Paris, Rome, Apud Victorem Palmé Bibliopolam, Tomus Nonus, 1869, 46-59; 52.

‘Ali J., *Al-Mufaṣṣal fī tāriḫ al-‘Arab qabl al-‘Islām*, Baghdad, University of Baghdad, I, III, VI, 1993.

Anawati, G.C., Hunayn ibn Ishāq al-‘Ibādī, Abū Zayd, in C. Gillispie, *Dictionary of Scientific Biography*, Charles Scribners Sons/Reference, Vol. 15, Suppl. 1, 230-34, 1981.

Andrae T., *Der Ursprung des Islams und das Christentum*, Uppsala, Almqvist&Wiksell, 1926

Arbache S. Le texte du Sinaï arabe 72: éléments de morphologie verbale, in J. Lentin - J. Grand’Henry (eds.), *Moyen arabe et variétés mixtes de l’arabe à travers l’histoire*, in *Actes du Premier Colloque International (Louvain-la-Neuve, 10-14 mai 2004)*, Louvain-la-Neuve, Peeters, 2008.

Arbache S., *Bible et liturgie chez les Arabes chrétiens (VIe-IXe siècle)*, Leiden-Boston, Brill, 2007, 37-48.

Arbache S., *Une ancienne version arabe des Evangiles: langue, texte et lexique*, Thèse de doctorat dirigée par L. Jacques et T. Gérard, Études arabo-islamiques, Bordeaux III, 1994.

Arnold T.W., Heffening W. Houtsma M. Th., Lévi-Provençal E., Wensinck A.J., *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, III, Leiden, E. J. Brill LTD, 1927.

Atiya A.S., *A History of Eastern Christianity*, London, Methuen and Co Ltd, 1968.

Al-Azraqī M., *Kitab akhbār makkah wa ma ja'a fiha min al-athār*, F. Wüstenfeld ed., Beirut, Khayats, 1964.

Bacha C., *Traité Théologiques de Théodore Abu Qurrah en arabe*, Beirut, Maṭba'at al-Fawā'id, 1904.

Baalbaki R., *The Arabic Lexicographical Tradition. From the 2nd/8th to the 12th/18th Century*, Leiden, Brill, 2014.

Al-Barakāt A., *Miṣbāh al-Ẓulma fi 'Īdāḥ al-khidma*, ed. Al-Suryānī Ṣ., Cairo, Dār al-Kutub al-Qibṭiyya, 1992.

Barhebraeus G., *Chronicon Ecclesiasticum*, II, J.B. Abbeloos, T.J. Lamy ed., Louvain, Peeters, 1874.

Bailey K.E., Hibat Allah Ibn al-'Assāl and His Arabic Thirteenth Century Critical Edition of the Gospels (With Special Attention to Luke 16:16 and 17:10) in *Theological Review: The Near East School of Theology* 1.1, April 1978, 11-26.

Bāsīm B., *Mu'jam al-lāhūt al-kitābī*, IV edition, Beirut, Dār al-Mashriq, 1999.

Başri A., The Book of Questions and Answers (Kitāb al-masā'il wa al-ajwiba), in *'Ammār al-Başrī: apologie et controverses*, M. Hayek ed., Beirut: Dār al-Mashriq, 1977, 93-265.

Başri A., The Book of the Proof Concerning the Course of the Divine Economy (Kitāb al-Burhān), in *'Ammār al-Başrī: apologie et controverses*, M. Hayek ed., Beirut, Dār al-Mashriq, 1977, 19-90.

Bath P., *Vingt traités philosophiques et Apologétiques d'Auteurs Arabes Chrétiens du IX au XVI siècle*, Cairo, Imprimerie Syrienne Héliopolis, 1929.

Baumstark A., Eine frühislamische und eine forislamische arabische Evangelienübersetzung aus dem Syrischen, in *Atti del XIX Congresso Internazionale Orientalisti*, Rome, Tipografia del Senato, G. Bardi, 1938, 682-684.

Baumstark A., Arabische Übersetzung Eines Altsyrischen Evangelientextes Und Die in Sure 21:105 Zitierte Psalmenübersetzung, *Oriens Christianus*, 9. 3rd series, 1934, 164-188.

Baumstark A., Das Problem eines vor-islamischen christlich-kirchlichen Schrifttums, in arabischer Sprache, *Islamica* 4, 1931, 565-566.

Baumstark A., Die Sonntägliche Evangelienlesung Im vorbyzantinischen Jerusalem, *Byzantinische Zeitschrift*, 30, 1930, 350-359.

Beaucoup J., Robin C., L'évêché nestorien de Māšmāhîg dans l'archipel d'al-Bahrayn (V-IX siècle), D.T. Potts, ed., *Dilmun. New studies in the archaeology and early history of Bahrain*, Berlin, Berliner Beiträge zum vorderen Orient 1, 1983, 171-96.

Beaumont M., ed., *Arab Christians and the Qur'an*, Leiden, Brill, 2018

Beaumont M., Ammar al-Basri in *Christian-Muslim Relations: A bibliographical History, Volume 1 (600/900)*, D. Thomas and B. Roggema ed., Boston, Brill, 2009.

Beaumont M., Ammār al-Baṣrī on the Incarnation, In *Christians at the Heart of Islamic Rule: Church Life and Scholarship in Abbasid Iraq*, D. Thomas ed., *History of Christian-Muslim Relation 1*. Leiden, Brill, 2003, 55-62.

Beeston, A. Langauges of Pre-Islamic Arabia, *Arabica*, 28(2-3), 178-186, 1981.

Bellamy, J. A., A New Reading of the Namārah Inscription, in *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 105(1), 1985, pp. 31–51.

Binns J., *Ascetics and Ambassadors of Christ*, New York, Clarendon Press Oxford, 1994.

Al-Bīrūnī', *al-Āthār al-Bāqiyah 'an al-Qurūn al-Khāliyah*, Cairo, Maktabatu al-Thaqafiyia Al-Diniyyia, 2008.

Blachère R., *Histoire de la littérature arabe des origines a la fin du XV^e siècle de J.-C.*, Paris, Libraire d'Amérique et d'Orient, Adrien-Maisonneuve, 1952.

Blau J., *A grammar of Christian Arabic, Based Mainly on South-Palestinian Texts from the First Millenium*, I, II, III, Louvain, Secrétariat du Corpus SCO, 1966-67.

Bourdieu P., *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, trans. Richard Nice, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1997.

Bourdieu P., *The Rules of Art: Genesis and Structure of the Literary Field*, trans. Susan Emanuel, Cambridge, Polity Press, 1996.

Bourdieu P., *Sociology in Question*, trans. Richard Nice, London, SAGE Publications, 1993.

Bourdieu P., *The Logic of Practice*, trans., Richard Nice, Cambridge, Polity Press, 1990.

Bourdieu P., The Forms of Capital, in J.G. Richardson ed., *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*, New York, Greenwood Press, 1986, 241-258.

Bourdieu, Pierre, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice, New York and London: Routledge, 1984.

Bochtor E., *Dictionnaires français-arabe*, revisited by Caussin de Perceval, 3^o édition, Paris, Firmin Didot, 1864.

Brooks E.W., John of Ephesus, Lives of the Eastern Saints, *Patrologia Orientalis*, II, III, VII, XVIII, XIX, 1911.

Browne L.E., The Patriarch Timothy and the Caliph al-Mahdi, *The Muslim World* XXI, 1931, 38-45.

Burkitt F.C., Arabic Versions, in *Dictionary of the Bible: Dealing with its Language, Literature, and Contents Including the Biblical Theology*, Vol. 1, Edinburgh, T. And T. Clark, 1898, 136-138.

Burmester, The Canons of Gabril Ibn Turaik, LXX Patriarch of Alexandria, first series, *Orientalia Christiana Periodica*, tome I, 1935.

Charles H., *Le Christianisme des Arabes nomades sur le limes et dans le désert syro-mésopotamien aux alentours de l'hégire*, Paris, E. Leroux, 1936.

Chabot J.B., *Synodicon Orientale ou recueil de Synodes Nestoriens*, Paris, Imprimerie Nationale, 1902.

Chandler P.G., *Pilgrims of Christ on the Muslim Road: Exploring a New Path Between Two Faiths*, Chicago, New York: Cowley Publications, 2007.

Chébli P., Réfutation d'Eutychius par Sévère (Le Livre des conciles), in *Patrologia Orientalis*, III, 2, 12, 1983.

Cheikho L., *Al-Naşraniyya wa 'ādābuha bayna 'Arab al-Jahileyya*, Beirut, Dar al-Mashriq, 1989.

Cheikho L., Al-muḥāwara al-dīniyya allati jarat bayna al-khalifa al-Mahdi wa Ṭimāthāwus al-Jathiliq, *Mashriq XIX*, 1921, 359-374 of MS 662 of the Bibliothèque Orientale in Beirut.

Cheikho L., Les récites bibliques et les allusions chrétiennes dans la poésie préislamique, *Al-Mashriq*, VII, 1904.

Cheikho L., Nisakh 'arabiyyah Qadīma fī al-Mashriq, *Al-Mashriq*, IV, 1901, 97-109.

Cheikho L., *Kitāb shu'ara' al-Naşrāniyya*, I-II, Beirut, Maṭba'at al-Ābā' al-Mursalīn al-Yasū'iyyin, 1890-1891.

Cyril of Scythopolis, *Vita Santi Euthymii*, Schwartz ed., Leipzig, Heinrichs Verlag, 1939, 9-85.

Combe Ét., Sauvaget J., Wiet. G., *Répertoire chronologique d'épigraphie arabe*, I- XVI, Le Caire, Imprimerie de l'Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale, 1931-1956.

Coquin, R.G., Christianismes orientaux: Introduction à l'étude des langues et des littératures, Micheline Albert et al. ed., in *Initiation au Christianisme Ancien*, Paris, Les Éditions du Cerf, 1993, 52-61.

Dareste, R., LOIS DES HOMÉRITES: NOMOI ΤΩΝ ΟΜΕΡΙΤΩΝ, *Nouvelle Revue Historique de Droit Français et Étranger*, 29 (2), 157-170, 1905.

Davis S.J., *Coptic Christology in practice Incarnation and Divine Participation in Late Antique and Medieval Egypt*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2008.

Devreesse R., Le patriarcat d'Antioche: depuis la paix de l'Eglise jusqu'à la conquête arabe, *Etudes Palestiniennes et Orientales*, Paris, Librairie Lecoffre, J. Gabalda et C., 1945.

Diakrimonios, J., *Historia ecclesiastica*, in Hansen ed., Berlin, Akademie Verlag, 1971.

Dick. I., Théodore Abuqurra. Traité de l'existence du Créateur et de la vraie religion. Introduction et texte critique, *Patrimoine Arabe Chrétien 3*, Jounieh et Rome, 1982.

Diem W., Untersuchungen zur frühen Geschichte der arabischen Orthographie, I, Die Schreibung der Vokale, *Orientalia* 48(2), 1979, 207-257.

Dimitri G., *Greek thought, Arabic Culture: The Graeco-Arabic Translation Movement in Baghdad and Early 'Abbāsid Society (2nd-4th/8th-10th centuries)*, London Routledge, 1998.

Al-Din al-'Asad N., *Maṣādir Al-Shi'r Al-Jāhiliyy wa Qimātiha al-Tarikhiya*, Beirut, Dār al-Jīl, 1988.

Dindorfius L., Chronicon. Paschale, in J.P. Migne ed., *Patrologiae Graeca cursus completus*, 92, Paris, Petit-Montrouge Excudebatur et venit apud J.P. Migne editorem, 1886.

Dikken B.J., Some remarks about Middle Arabic and Sa'adya Gaon's Arabic translation of the Pentateuch in manuscripts of Jewish, Samaritan, Coptic Christian, and Muslim provenance", in L. Zack and A. Schippers (ed.), *Middle Arabic and Mixed Arabic: Diachrony and Synchrony*, Leiden: Brill, 2012, 51–81.

Dozy R., *Supplément aux dictionnaires arabes*. T. 2, 2e édition Leide: E. J. Brill, 1927.

Dozy R., *Supplément aux dictionnaires arabes*. T. 1, Leide: E.J. Brill, 1881.

Dussaud R., Macler F., *Mission scientifique dans les régions désertiques de la Syrie moyenne*, Paris, Imprimerie Nationale, 1903.

Dussaud, Inscription nabatéo-arabe d'En-Namâra, *Revue archéologique*, 2, 1902.

Ebeid B., *La Tunica di al-Masih, La Cristologia delle grandi confessioni cristiane dell'Oriente nel X e XI secolo*, Roma, Edizioni Orientalia Christiana, Valore Italiano, 2018.

Endress, *Works of Yahyā ibn 'Adī: An Analytical Inventory*, Wiesbaden, Reichert, 1977.

Epiphanius C., *Panarion haer.*, I, Karl Holl ed., Berlin, Akademie-Verlag, 1980.

Eusebius C., Storia ecclesiastica e i martiri della Palestina, *Scrinium Patristicum Lateranense*, Roma, Desclée &C., 1964.

Fahd T., *Le Pantheon de l'Arabie centrale à la veille de l'hégire*, Institut Français d'Archéologie de Beyrouth, Bibliothèque Archéologique et Historie, Paris (Geuthner), 1968.

Festugière A.J., *Les moines d'Orient* III/1, Paris, Éditions du Cerf, 1961-1963.

Fiaccadori G., *Teofilo Indiano*, Ravenna, Girasole, 1992.

Fischer W., Classical Arabic, in Kees Versteegh et al. (Eds.), *Encyclopedia of Arabic Language and Linguistics*, Leiden, Brill, 2006, Vol. 1, 397-405.

Fiey J.M., Naṣāra, *The Encyclopaedia of Islam* VII, New Edition, C.E. Bosworth, E. Van Donzel, W.P. Heinrichs, Ch. Pellat ed., Leiden, Brill, 1993, 970.

Fiey J.M., *Assyrie chrétienne* III, Beirut, Imprimerie Catholique, 1968.

Fiey J.M., Tagrît. Esquisse d'histoire chrétienne, *L'Orient Syrien* 8, 1963, 289-342.

Fraenkel S., *De Vocabulis in antiquis Arabum carminibus et in Corano peregrinis*, E.J. Brill, 1880.

Fowden G., *Empire to Commonwealth: Consequences of Monotheism in Late Antiquity*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1993.

Gabrieli F., 'Adī B. Zayd al-'Ibādī, *The Encyclopaedia of Islam* I, New Edition, H.A.R. Gibb, J.H. Kramers, E. Lévi Provençal, J. Schacht, Leiden, Brill, 1986, 196.

Gallo M., *Palestinese anonimo Omelia arabo-cristiana dell'VIII secolo*, trans., Collana di Testi Patristici 116, Rome, Città Nuova 1994.

Gardet, *L'Islam, religion et communauté*, Bibliothèque française de philosophie, Paris, Desclée de Brouwer, 1967.

Garland A.G., *An Arabic Version of the Gospel According to Mark*, Master of Arts diss., Catholic University of America, 1978.

Geerard, M., *Clavis Patrum Graecorum, III, Corpus Christianorum*, Turnhout, Brepols, 1980.

Gibson M., *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 Catharine on Mount Sinai with a treatise On The Triune Nature of God with translation, from the same codex*, London, Cambridge University Press Warehouse, 1899.

Glaser E., *Zwei Inschriften über den Dambruch von Marib, II, Mitteilungen der Vorderasiatischen Gesellschaft*, Berlin,, Wolf Peiser Verlag, 1897.

Graf. G., *Storia della letteratura araba cristiana, Volume II, tomo 1: gli scrittori melchiti, maroniti, nestoriani fino alla metà del XV secolo, Traduzione dal tedesco con addizione di numeri e titoli redazionali a cura di P. Pizzi*, Patrimonio Culturale Arabo Cristiano, 20, Bologna, Gruppo di Ricerca Arabo-Cristiana, 2018.

Graf G., *Verzeichnis Arabischer Kirchlicher Termini*, Louvain, *Corpus scriptorum Christianorum orientaliū / Subsidia*, 1954.

Graf G., *Geschichte der christlichen arabischen Literatur*, 5 Bde., Studi e Testi, 118, 133, 146, 147, 172, Città del Vaticano, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1944, 1947, 1949, 1951, 1953.

Graf G., *Die Schriften des Jacobiten Ḥabīb Ibn Ḥidma Abū Rā'īta*, CSCO, Vols. 130 and 131, Louvain, Belgium, Peeters, 1951.

Grand'Henry J., Christian Middle Arabic, in Kees Versteegh et al. (eds.), *Encyclopedia of Arabic Language and Linguistics*, Leiden, Brill, 2006, Vol. 1, 383-387.

Gregentius S., Nomoi Homeritatum Leges in J.P. Migne ed., *Patrologia Graeca cursus completus*, 86, vol. I, Paris, Petit-Montrouge Excudebatur et venit apud J.P. Migne editorem, 1865.

Gretseri J, Theodorus Abucara Carum Episcopus, in. J.P. Migne ed., *Patrologia Graeca cursus completus*, Vol. 97, Paris, Petit-Montrouge Excudebatur et venit apud J.P. Migne editorem, 1886.

Griffith S.H., *The Bible in Arabic: The scriptures of the "People of the Book" in the language of Islam*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2013.

Griffith S.H., The Syriac-Speaking Churches and the Muslims in the Medinan Era of Muhammad and the Four Caliphs, in D.W. Winkler, ed., *Syriac Churches Encountering Islam. Past Experiences and Future Perspectives*, Piscataway, NJ, Gorgias Press, 2010, 14-46.

Griffith S.H., *The Church in the shadow of the mosque Christians and Muslims in the world of Islam*, Princeton and Oxford, Princeton University Press, 2008.

Griffith S.H., From Patriarch Timothy I to Ḥunayn ibn Isḥāq: philosophy and Christian apology in Abbasid times; Reason, Ethics and Public Policy, in M. Tamcke ed., *Christians and Muslims in Dialogue in the Islamic Orient of the Middle Ages*, Beirut, Orient-Institut, 2007, 75-98.

Griffith S.H., Apologetics and Historiography in the Annals of Eutychius of Alexandria. Christian Self-definition in the world of Islam, in R. Ebied, H.G.B. Teule, ed., *Studies on the Christian Arabic Heritage. In Honour of Father Prof. Dr. Samir Khalil Samir S.I.*

at the Occasion of his sixty-fifth Birthday, Leuven, Paris, and Dudley, MA, Peeters, 2004, 65-89.

Griffith S., "Melkites, "Jacobites" and the Christological controversies in Arabic in third/ninth-century Syria, in D. Thomas ed., *Syrian Christians under Islam: The First Thousand Years*, Leiden, Boston, Köln, Brill, 2001, 9-55.

Griffith S.H., *A treatise on the Veneration of the Holy Icons Written in Arabic by Theodore Abu Qurrah, Bishop of Harran; translated into English, with Introduction and Notes*, Leuven, Belgium, Peeters, 1997.

Griffith S.H., From Aramaic to Arabic: the languages of the Monasteries of Palestine in the Byzantine and Early Islamic Periods, *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 51, 1997, pp.11-31.

Griffith S.H., The *Kitāb miṣbāḥ al-‘aql* of Severus ibn al-Muqaffa’: A Profile of the Christian Creed in Arabic in Tenth Century Egypt, *Medieval Encounters* 2, Brill, 1996, 15-42.

Griffith S.H., *Syriac Writers on Muslims and the religious Challenge of Islam*, Moran *Etho Series*, 7, Kottayam, 1994.

Griffith S.H., Eutychios of Alexandria on the Emperor Theophilus and Iconoclasm in Byzantium: A Tenth Century Century Moment in Christian Apologetics in Arabic, in *Arabic Christianity in the Monasteries of Ninth-Century Palestine*, Variorum collected studies series 380, Great Yarmouth 1992, IV 154-190.

Griffith S.H., Stephen of Ramalah and the Christian Kerygma in Arabic in Ninth-Century Palestine, in *Arabic Christianity in the Monasteries of Ninth-Century Palestine*, Variorum collected studies series 380, Great Yarmouth, 1992, VII 23-45.

Griffith S.H., *Theodore Abū Qurrah: The Intellectual Profile of an Arab Christian Writer of the First Abbasid Century*, Tel Aviv, Tel Aviv University, 1992.

Griffith S., The Apologetic Treatise of Nonnus of Nisibis, *ARAM* 3, 1991, 115-38.

Griffith S.H., Anthony David of Baghdad, Scribe and Monk of Mar Sabas: Arabic in the Monasteries of Palestine, in *Church History*, Vol. 58, 1, Cambridge University Press on behalf of the American Society of Church History, 1989, 7-19.

Griffith S.H., A Ninth Century Summa Theologiae Arabica, in S.K. Samir ed., in *Actes du Deuxième Congrès International d'Études Arabes Chrétiennes*, (Oosterhesselen, septembre 1984), 123-41, *Orientalia Christiana Analecta*, 226, Rome: Pontificio Istituto degli Studi Orientali, 1986.

Griffith S.H., The Gospel in Arabic: An Inquiry into its Appearance in the First Abbasid Century, *Oriens Christianus* 69, 1985, 126-167.

Griffith S.H., Ammār al-Baṣṭī's Kitāb al Burhān: Christian Kalām in the First Abbasid Century, *Le Muséon* 96, 1983, 145-181.

Griffith S.H., Ḥabīb ibn Ḥidmah Abū Rā'īṭah, a Christian mutakallim of the First 'Abbāsid Century, *Oriens Christianus* 64, 1980, 161-201.

Guidi I., Le traduzioni degli Evangelii in Arabo e in Etiopico, in *Atti della Reale Accademia dei Lincei*, vol. 4, Ser. 4, Roma, Tipografia della R. Accademia dei Lincei, 1888.

Gutas D., *Greek Thought, Arabic Culture: The Graeco-Arabic Translation Movement in Baghdad and Early 'Abbasid Society (2nd-4th/8th-19th Centuries)*, London, New York, Routledge, 1998.

Iskandar, A.Z. Ḥunayn the Translator, and Ḥunayn the Physician, in Gillispie, *Dictionary of Scientific Biography*, vol. 15, Suppl. 1, 1978, 234-49.

Hackenburg C., *An Arabic-to-English Translation of the Religious Debate between the Nestorian Patriarch Timothy I and the 'Abbāsid Caliph al-Mahdī*, Thesis, Graduate Program in Near Eastern Languages and Cultures, The Ohio State University, 2009.

Haddad R., *La trinité divine chez les théologiens arabes:750-1050*, 15, Paris, Beauchesne Religions, 1985.

Haddad W.Z., Continuity and Change in Religious Adherence: Ninth-Century Baghdad, in *Convention and Continuity: Indigenous Christian Communities in Islamic Lands; Eight to Eighteenth Centuries*, ed. M. Gerves and R.J. Bikhazi, 33-53, *Papers in Mediaeval Studies*, 9, Toronto, Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1990.

Hanna S., When Jesus speaks colloquial Egyptian Arabic: an incarnational understanding of translation, *Religion*, 49,3, 2019, 364-387.

Hanna S., *'Intāj al-ma'rifa wa tashkīl al-hawiyya fī tarjamatayn lil-kitāb al-muqaddas 'ila al-'arabiyya*, [Production and Identity Formation in Two Arabic Translations of the Bible], in Baker, Mona, ed. *Translation and the Production of Knowledge(s)*, Special issue of *Alif. Journal of Comparative Poetics* 38, 2018, 11–45.

Hanna S.'s *The Bible in Arabic: Questions on Translations of Sacred Texts*, lecture at the Catholic University of Milan, 18/19/2019.

Harnack A., *Die Mission und Ausbreitung des Christentums in den ersten drei Jahrhunderten* II, Leipzig, J.C. Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung, 1924.

Haywood J.A., *Arabic Lexicography, its History, and its Place in the General History of Lexicography*, Leiden, Brill, 1965.

El-Hibri T., *Reinterpreting Islamic Historiography. Hārūn al-Rashīd and the Narrative of the 'Abbasid Caliphate*, Cambridge-New-York, Cambridge University Press, 2004.

Hieronymus, *Vita S. Hilarionis*, *Patrologiae Latinae Tomus XXIII*, col. 41-42, ed. J.P. Migne, Paris, 1883.

Horovitz J., Jewish Proper Names and Derivatives in the Koran, *Hebrew Union College Annual*, II, Cincinnati, 1925.

Humbert J., *Guide de la conversation arabe, ou Vocabulaire Français.-Arabe, contenant les termes usuels, classés par ordre de matières, et marqués des signes-voyelles*, Vve Dondey-Dupré (Paris)&L. Hachette (Genève), 1838.

Hirschfeld H., *Beiträge zur Erklärung des Krān*, Leipzig, Otto Schulze, 1886.

Hunter E., Syriac Inscription from al Hira, *Oriens Christianus* 80, 1995.

Ḥusayn Ṭ., *Fi al-'adab al-Jāhiliyy*, Cairo, Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1927.

Ḥusayn Ṭ., *Fi al-shi'r al-Jāhiliyy*, Cairo, Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1925.

Al-Jallad A., The Linguistic Landscape of pre-Islamic Arabia, Context for the Qur'an, Ch. 7, in M.Shah, M.A.S. Abdel Halim ed., *The Oxford Handbook of Qur'anic Studies*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2020.

Jamme A., *La Dynastie Šarahbi'il Yakûf et la documentation épigraphique Sud-Arabe*, Istanbul, Nederlands, Historisch-Archaeologisch Institut in Het Nabije Oosten, 1961.

Al-Jawharī I., *Mu'jam Al-Šiḥaḥ*, ed. K.M. Shiḥā, Beirut, Dār al-Ma'rifa, 2005.

Jeffery A., *The Foreign vocabulary of the Quran*, Baroda, Oriental Institutes Baroda, 1938.

Jerome St., *NPNF2-06. Jerome: The Principal Works of St. Jerome*, in P. Schaff ed., M.A. Freemantle (Translator), New York, Grand Rapids, MI: Christian Classics Ethereal Library, 1893, 303-15.

Ibn Kabar, *Miṣbāh al-zulma fī idḍāh al-khidma*, Ṣamū'īl. ed., Cairo, Maktabat al-Kārūz, 1992.

Kashouh H., *The Gospels in Arabic: a comparative Edition of Thirteen Versions from before the 14th century*, I, H. Kashouh ed., 2021.

Kashouh H., *The Arabic Versions of the Gospels the manuscripts and their families*, Berlin, Walter de Gruyter, 2012.

Kashouh H., The Arabic Gospel Text of Codex Beirut, *Bibliothèque Orientale*, 430: Is it Recent or Archaic?, in *Parole de l'Orient*, 32, 2007, 105-121.

Keating S., Abū Rā'ṭa Al-Takrītī (D.CA 835): A Defender of the “People of Truth” Against Islam, in A. S. Ibrahim ed., *Medieval Encounters Arabic-speaking Christians and Islam*, Piscataway, Gorgias Press LLC, 2022, 201-232.

Keating S., The use and translation of scripture in the apologetic writings of Abu Raita al-Takriti, *The Bible in Arab Christianity*, David Thomas ed., Leiden, The Netherlands Brill, Vol VI, 2007, 257-274.

Keating S., *Defending the People of truth in the early Islamic period. The Christian apologies of Abū Rā'īṭah*, Leiden, The Netherlands, Brill, 2006.

Keating S., *Dialogue between Muslims and Christians in the Early 9th Century: The Example of Ḥabīb ibn Khidmah Abū Rā'īṭah al-Takrītī's Theology of the Trinity*, Phd diss., Catholic University of America, 2001.

Khalaf G., *'Aḍwā' 'ala tarjamat al-buṣṭānī-fāndāyk (al-'ahd al-jadīd)*, Beirut, Bible Society, 2009.

Al-Khalīl 'A.F., Kitāb al-'Ayn, eds. M. al-Makhzūmī & 'I. al-Sāmrā'ī , *Silsilatu al-ma'ājim wa al-fahāris*, Lebanon, Mu'assasat al-a'lamī lil-maṭbū'at, I-VIII, 199?

Khoury, R.G., Quelques réflexions sur la première ou les premières Bibles arabes, in T. Fahd ed., *L'Arabie préislamique et son environnement historique et culturel: actes du Colloque de Strasbourg, 24-27 juin 1987*, Leiden, Brill, 1989, 549-561.

Knutsson B., *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, Brill, 1974.

Kramers J.H., Naṣāra, *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, III, M.Th. Houtsma, A.J. Wensinck, T.W. Arnold, W.Heffening, E. Lévi-Provençal, Leiden, Brill, 1934, 848.

Kugener M.A., Nouvelle note Sur l'inscription trilingue de Zébed, in *Rivista degli studi orientali*, 1908, Vol 1, Fasc. 4, 583-584.

Ibn Jarīr Al-Takriti, Al-Murshid, *Catalogue des Manuscrits de Charfet*, Jounieh, Missionaries of Lebanon, 1937.

Lagarde de P., *Die vier Evangelien arabisch aus der Wiener Handschrift herausgegeben*, Leipzig, F A Brockhaus, 1864.

Lammens, Kuss Ibn Sā'ida, in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, M.Th. Houtsma, A.J. Wensinck, T.W. Arnold, W.Heffening, E. Lévi-Provençal, Vol. II, Leyden, Brill, 1927, 1161.

Lammens H., Un poète royal à la cour des Omiades de Damas I, in R. Graffin ed., *Revue de l'Orient Chrétien (1896-1946)*, Piscataway, Gorgias Press LLC, 2010, 325-355.

Lamoreaux, J. C., Theodore Abū Qurrah, in *Christian-Muslim Relations: A Bibliographical History, Vol 1 (600-900)*, in D. Thomas, and B. Roggema ed., *History of Christian-Muslim Relations II*. Leiden, The Netherlands, Brill, 2009, 439-491.

Lamoreaux J.C., The Biography of Theodore Abū Qurrah Revisited, *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 56, 2002, 25-40.

Landron B., *Chrétiens et musulmans en Irak: Attitudes Nestoriennes vis-à-vis de l'Islam*, Paris, Cariscript, 1994.

Ledit Ch.-J., *Mahomet, Israël et le Christ*, Paris, La Colombe, 1956.

Leeming, K., The Adoption of Arabic as a Liturgical Language by the Palestinian Melkites, *ARAM Periodical*, XV, 2003, 239-246.

Levin B., *Die griechisch-arabische Evangelien-Übersetzung. Vat. Borg. ar. 95 und Ber. orient. oct. 1108*, Uppsala, Almqvist & Wiksells Boktryckeri, 1938.

Levy-Rubin, M., *Non-Muslims in the Early Islamic Empire: From Surrender to Coexistence*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2014.

Levy-Rubin, M., Arabization versus Islamization in the Palestine Melkite Community during the Early Muslim Period in A. Kofsky - G. G. Stroumsa, ed., *Sharing the Sacred:*

Religious Contacts and conflicts in the Holy Land. First Fifteenth Centuries CE, Jerusalem, 1998, 149-162.

Lietzmann, H., & Hilgenfeld, H. (1908). Das Leben des Heiligen Symeon Stylites, *Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur*, 32,4 = R. 3, Bd. 2, H. 4, Leipzig, Hinrichs, 1908.

Macdonald D.B., Ibn Al-'Assāl's Arabic Version of the Gospels, in *Homenaje a D. Francisco Codera en su Jubilacion Del Profesorado: Estudios de Erudicion Oriental*, Zaragoza, Mariano Escar, Tipografo, 1904, 375-392.

Macdonald M.C.A., Ancient North Arabian, in R.D. Woodard ed., *The Cambridge encyclopedia of the world's ancient languages*, Ch. 16, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2004, 488-533.

Macdonald M.C.A., Reflections On the Linguistic Map of Pre-Islamic Arabia, *Arabian Archeology and Epigraphy*, Oxford, UK, Oriental Institute and Wolfson College, II, 2000, 28-79.

Majma' al-lugha al-'arabiyya bi al-Qāhira, *Al-Mu'jam al-Wasīt*, 'I. Muṣṭafa, 'A.Ḥ. Al-Ziyāt, Ḥ. 'Abd al-Qādir ed., Dār al-Da'wa, 1990.

Ma'lūf L., *Al-Munjid fi al-lugha al-'arabiyya al-mu'āšara*, Beirut, Dār al-Mashriq, 2000.

Ibn Manzūr, *Lisān al-'Arab*, VII, XII, Iran, Nashru 'adab al-ḥawza, 1984.

Al-Maqaṛī, A., *Greek English Arabic Dictionary, Qāmūs Yūnānī Injilīzī 'Arabi*, I Edition, Cairo, Dār majalla Marqus, 2021.

Al-Maqārī A., *Fihrs kitābāt 'Abā' kanīsat al-'Iskandaryya*, I, II, Maṭba'a al-Nubār, Cairo, 2012.

Al-Maqdisi, *Aḥsan al-Taqāsim fi Ma'rifat al-Aqālīm*, III, BCA, Leiden, Brill, 1877.

Margoliouth D., The Origins of Arabic Poetry, *Journal of The Royal Asiatic Society*, Cambridge University Press, 1925, 417-449.

Maṭar I., Thomson J.A., *Qāmūs al-Kitāb al-Muqaddas*, Cairo, Dār al-thaqāfa, 1994.

Masri P., *Maymar yuhakkiku 'annahu la yunkar lil-'ilah al-tajassud wa-al-ḥulūl li-Thāudhurus 'Abi Qurrah (nahū 830 m)*, Part II, Lebanon, Dār al-Mashriq, 2022.

Metzger M. Bruce, *The Early Versions of the New Testament. Their Origin, Transmission, and Limitations*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1977, 257-268.

Mikhail W.Y.F., *'Ammar al-Basri's Kitab al-Burhan: A. Topical and Theological Analysis of Arabic Theology in the Ninth Century*. Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Birmingham, 2013.

Mingana, A., *Timothy's Apology for Christianity*, Woodbrooke Studies 2, Cambridge, W. Heffer&Son Ltd, 1928, 1-162, 11-15.

Mingana A., *Syriac influence on the style of the Kur'ān*, Bulletin of The John Rylands Library, Manchester: University Press, Longsmans, Green & Co., London, England, Vol. 11, No.1, 1927, p.77-98.

Moawad S.Q., *Al-'Anajīl al-'Arba'a Tarjamat al-'As'ad Abī al-Faraj Hibat Allāh bin al-'Assāl*, Cairo, Madrasat al-'Iskandarīyya, 2014.

Ibn al-Muqaffa', S., *Al-Durr al-thamīn fi idāḥ al-dīn*, Cairo, Abnā' al-Baba Jirullus, 1971.

Ibn al-Muqaffa' S., *Miṣbāḥ al-'aql*, S. K. Samir ed., Cairo, Arabic Christian Tradition, 1978.

Nallino C.A., *Raccolta di scritti editi e inediti*, I, Roma, Ist. per L'Oriente C.A. Nallino, 1938.

Nau F., *Les Arabes chrétiens de Mésopotamie et de Syrie du VII^e au VIII^e siècle*. I, Paris, 1933.

Nau F., *Histoires d'Ahoudemmeh et de Marouta, Métropolitains jacobites de Tagrit et de l'Orient (VI^e et VII^e siècles)*, in *Patrologia Orientalis*, 3, 1909, 7-51.

Ibn al-Nadīm, *al-Fihrist*, Beirut, Dār al-Ma'rifa, 1978.

Nasrallah J. *Histoire du mouvement littéraire dans l'église melchite du Ve au Xxe siècle*, 4 vols., Louvain, Belgium: Peeters, 1979-89.

Nebes N., Stein P., Ancient South Arabian, Roger D. Woodard, *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of the World's Ancient Languages*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2004, 454-487.

Nestle E., *Bibelübersetzungen, arabische*, in *Realencyklopädie für Protestantische Theologie und Kirche*, 3rd edn, Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, vol. III, 1897, 90-95.

Newby, G.D., *A History of the Jews of Arabia: From Ancient Times to their Eclipse under Islam*, Columbia, University of South Carolina Press, 1988.

Newman N.A., *The Early Christian-Muslim Dialogue: A Collection of Documents from the First Three Islamic Centuries (632-900 A.D.). Translations with Commentary*, Hatfield, PA, Interdisciplinary Biblical Research Institute, 1993, 345-555.

Nielsen J.S., Samir K.S., *Christian Arabic Apologetics during the Abbasid period (750-1258)*, E.J. Brill, Leiden, 1994.

Noldeke Th., *Neue Beiträge zur semitischen Sprachwissenschaft*, Strassburg, Verlag Von Karl J. Trübner, 1910.

Noble S., Treiger A., eds, *The Orthodox Church in the Arab World*, DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 2014.

Nwyia P., Samir K.S., *Une correspondance islamo-chrétienne entre Ibn al-Munajjim, Ḥunayn ibn Ishāq et Qusta ibn Lūqā*, *Patrologia Orientalis*, no. 185, vol. 40, fasc. 4, Paris: Brepols, 1981.

Okada Y., *Early Christian architecture in the Iraqi south-western desert*, *Al-Rāfidān*, 12, 1991, 71-83

Parker D.C., *Codex Bezae: An Early Christian Manuscript and its Text*, Cambridge University Press, 1998.

Pellat Ch., Al-‘Ajjāj, *The Encyclopaedia of Islam, II ed.*, P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, W.P. Heinrichs ed., Vol I, Leiden, Brill, 1960, 207.

Perceval C., *Essai sur l’Histoire des Arabes avant l’Islam pendant l’Époque de Mahomet, et jusqu’à la réduction de toutes les tribus sous la loi musulmane*, I, Paris, Librairie de Firmin Didot Frères, Imprimeurs de l’Institut, 1847.

C. Peters, Grundsätzliche Bemerkungen zur Frage der arabischen Bibeltexte, *Rivista degli Studi Orientali* 20, 1942, 129–143.

Peters F.E., *The Arabs and Arabia on the Eve of Islam, The formation of the classical Islamic World*, London, Taylor&Francis, III, 1999.

Philostorgius, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, in J.P. Migne ed., *Patrologia Graeca cursus completus*, Vol. 65, Paris, Petit-Montrouge Excudebatur et venit apud J.P. Migne editorem, II, III, 1864.

Polliack M., *The Karaite Tradition of Arabic Bible Translation: A Linguistic and Exegetical Study of Karaite Translations of the Pentateuch from the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries C.E.*, Leiden, Brill, 1997.

Pratt G.D., ed., *The Character of Christian-Muslim Encounter; Essay in Honour of David Tomas*, Leiden, Brill, 2015.

Prokop, *Perserkrige I*, O. Veh ed., *Werke*, III, Munchen, 1970.

Putman H., *L'Église sous Timothée I, (780-823): étude sur l'église nestorienne au temps des premiers 'Abbāsides: avec nouvelle édition et traduction du dialogue entre Timothée et al-Mahdī*, Beirut, Dar al-Mashriq, 1975.

Qusṭanṭin B., *Mayāmir Thāwudūrus Abi Qurrah usquf Ḥarrān, aqdam ta'līf 'arabī naṣrānī*, Beirut, Al-Fawā'id, 1904.

Rabin C., *Ancient West-Arabian*, London, Taylor's Foreign Press, 1951.

Rabin C., Arabiyya. *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, II ed., P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, W.P. Heinrichs ed., Vol. 1, Leiden, Brill, 1960, 561-567.

Riad E., Studies in the Syriac Preface, *Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, Studia Semitica Upsaliensia* 11, Uppsala: Uppsala University; Distributed Almqvist & Wiksell International, Stockholm, *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 121 (2), 1988, 313-314.

Roberts B.J., *Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart: Handwörterbuch für Theologie und Religionswissenschaft*, 3rd edn, Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1957.

Robin C., Les Langues de la Péninsule Arabique in C. J. Robin ed., *L'Arabie antique de Karib'il à Mahomet. Nouvelles données sur l'histoire des Arabes grâce aux inscriptions*, in *Revue du Monde Musulman et de la Méditerranée*, 61, Aix-en-Provence, Édisud, 1991, 89-111.

Roey Van A., *Nonnus de Nisibe, Traité apologétique: Étude, texte et traduction*, Bibliothèque du Muséon, 21, Louvain, Belgium, Peeters, 1948.

Rothstein G., *Die Dynastie der Lakhmiden in al-Hira. Ein Versuch zur arabisch-persischen Geschichte zur Zeit der Sasaniden*, Berlin, Verlag von Reuther&Reichard 1899.

Rubenson S., The Transition from Coptic to Arabic, *Égypte/Monde arabe*, 27-28, 1996, 77-92.

Rubenson S., Translating the Tradition: Some Remarks on the Arabization of the Patristic Heritage in Egypt, *Medieval Encounters* 2.3, 1996, 4-14.

Rufin, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, Th. Mommsen ed., *Griechische christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten drei Jahrhunderte*, IX, XI, Leipzig, J.C. Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung, 1908.

Ibn Sallām, *Ṭabāqāt al-shhu'arā'*, M.M. Shākir ed., Cairo, Dār al-Ma'ārif lil-ṭibā'a 1952.

Samir K.S., *Ruolo culturale dei cristiani nel mondo arabo*, Roma, Edizioni Orientalia Christiana, 2007.

Samir K.S., Al-Jadīd fi sīrat Thāwadūrus Abī Qurrah wa-āthārihi, *Al-Mashriq* 73, 1999, 417-449.

Samir K.S., The earliest Arab Apology for Christianity (C. 750), in *Christian Arabic apologetics during the Abbasid period (750-1258)*, Leiden, The Netherlands, Brill, 1994.

Samir K.S. La version arabe des évangiles d' Al-As'ad Ibn al-'Assāl," *Parole de l'Orient* 19, 1994, 441-551.

Samir K.S., Une apologie arabe du christianisme d'époque Umayyade?, in: Samir Khalil Samir ed., *Actes du troisième congrès international d'études arabes chrétiennes*, Louvain-la-Neuve, septembre 1988, in: *Parole de l'Orient* 16, (1990-1991) (paru en 1992) 85-106.

Samir K.S., Arabic Sources for Early Egyptian Christianity, The Roots of Egyptian Christianity, in B.A. Pearson and J.E. Goehring ed., (Studies in Antiquity&Christianity), Philadelphia, Fortress Press, *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 1986, 82-97.

Samir K.S., La somme des aspects de la foi: Oeuvre d'Abū Qurrah?, in Actes du Deuxième Congrès International d'Études Arabes Chrétiennes, Oosterhesselen, septembre 1984, S.K. Samir ed., 93-121, *Orientalia Christiana Analecta*, 226, Roma, Pontificio Istituto degli Studii Orientali, 1986.

Samir K.S., Note sur les citations bibliques chez Abū Qurrah, *Orientalia Christiana periodica* 49, Roma, Pontificio Istituto degli Studii Orientali, 1983, 184-91.

Sartre M., *Bostra. Des origines à l'Islam*, Bibliothèque Archéologique et Historique/ Institut français d'archéologie du Proche-Orient, 117, Paris, P. Geuthner, 1985.

Sartre M., Trois études sur l'Arabie romaine et byzantine, in *Revue d'Études Latines*, Bruxelles, Latomus, Vol 178, XIII, IGLS, 1982.

Sbath P., *Vingt Traités Philosophiques et Apologétiques d'Auteurs Arabes Chrétiens du IX au XIV siècle*, Cairo, H. Friedrich et Co, 1929, 111-122.

Scher A., Histoire Nestorienne, *Patrologia Orientalis* VII, Paris, Firmin-Didot et C Imprimeurs-Éditeurs, 1911, II, 144

Scherer J., Entretien d'Origène avec Héraclide, in *Sources Chrétiennes*, 67, Paris, Éditions du Cerf, 1960.

Segal J.B., *Edessa the blessed city*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1970.

Shahīd I., Al-Massīhiyyat Qabla Zuhūr al-Islām, in *Al-Massīhiyyat 'abra Tarīkhiha fī al-Mashriq*, Beirut, Majlis Kana'is al-Sharq al-Awsat, 2001a, 429-465.

Shahīd I., Nushū' al-Kanīsat al-Mashriqiyya wa Turāthiha, al-Qarn al-Khāmis - al-qarn al-Thamin, *Al-Massīhiyyat 'abra Tarīkhiha fī al-Mashriq*, Beirut, Majlis Kana'is al-Sharq al-Awsat, 2001b, 219-233.

Shahīd I., *Rome and the Arabs, a prolegomenon to the study of Byzantium and the Arabs*, Washington D.C., Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 1984a.

Shahīd I., *Byzantium and the Arabs in the Fourth Century*, Washington D.C., Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 1984b.

Shahīd I., *Byzantium and the Arabs in the Fifth Century*, Washington D.C., Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 1984c.

Shahīd I. *Byzantium and the Arabs in the Six Century*, II, Washington D.C., Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 1984d.

Shahīd I., *The Martyrs of Najran New Documents*, Subsidia Hagiographica, n°49, Bruxelles, Société des Bollandistes, Georgetown University, 1971.

Shawqi Ḍayf, Al-‘aṣr al-jāhiliyy, in *Tārīkh al’adab al-‘arabyy* I, ed. XI, Dār al-Ma’ārif, 2011.

H.H. Pope Shenuda III, *Al-lahūt al-muqārin*, I, Cairo, Al-kulleya al-‘iklīrikiyya lil-aqbāt al-‘urthūdhuksiyya, V print, 1996.

Sidarus A.Y., From Coptic to Arabic in the Christian Literature of Egypt, *Coptica*, 12 2013, 35-56.

Smith R.P., *A compendious Syriac Dictionary*, J. Payne Smith (Mrs Margoliouth) ed., Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1903.

Smith E.-Van Dyck C., *Brief documentary history of the translation of the Scriptures into the Arabic language*, Beirut, Syria, Printed for the Syria Mission, American Presbyterian Mission Press, 1900.

Socrates Historia Ecclesiastica, in *Patrologia Graeca cursus completus*, Vol. 67, ed. J.P. Migne, Paris, VIIIV, 1864.

Sozomenus, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, in J.P. Migne ed., *Patrologia Graeca cursus completus*, Vol. 67, Paris, Petit-Montrouge Excudebatur et venit apud J.P. Migne editorem, VI, 1864.

Sozomenus, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, *Griechische christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten drei Jahrhunderte*, J. Bidez, G.C. Hansen, Akademie-Verlag, 1960, VI, 38.

Sprenger A., *Das Leben u.d. Lehre des Mohammad*, Berlin, Nicolatsche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1861.

Stroumsa S., *Philosophy as Wisdom: On the Christians' Role in the Translation of Philosophical Material into Arabic*, in H. Ben-Shammai, Sh. Shaked, S. Stroumsa ed., *Exchange and Transmission across Cultural Boundaries: Philosophy, Mysticism and Science in the Mediterranean World*, Jerusalem, Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 2013, 276-293.

Suermann H., *Copts and the Islam of the Seventh Century*, in E. Grypeou, M. Swanson, D. Thomas, ed., *The Encounter of Eastern Christianity with Early Islam, The History of Christian Muslim Relations 5*, Leiden-Boston, 2006, 95-109.

Swanson M., *An Apology for the Christian Faith*, in ed. S. Noble and A. Treiger, *The Orthodox Church in the Arab World, 700-1700, an anthology of sources, NIU Series in Orthodox Christian Studies*, Northern Illinois University Press, 2014, Chapter 1, 40-59.

Swanson M., *Apologetics, catechesis, and the question of audience in "On the Triune Nature of God" (Sinai Arabic 154) and three treatises of Theodore Abū Qurrah*, in M. Tamcke ed., *Christians and Muslims in dialogue in the Islamic Orient of the Middle Ages*, Beirut, Orient-Institut, Würzburg, Ergon Verlag in Kommission, 2007.

Swanson M., *Beyond Proof-texting: Approaches to the Qur'ān in some early Arabic Christian Apologies*, *The Muslim World*, 88, No.3-4, 1998.

Swanson M., Some Considerations for the Dating of Fīṭaṭliḩ Allāhal-wāḩid (Sinai ar.154) and al-Ĝāmi‘wuġūhal-iṡmān (London, British Library Or. 4950), *Parole de l’Orient*, 18, 1993, 115–41.

Swanson M., Are Hypostases Attributes: An Investigation into the Modern Egyptian Christian Appropriation of the Medieval Arabic Apologetic Heritage, *Parole de l’Orient* 16, 1990-91, 239-50.

Al-Ṭabari, *Tafsīr Al-Ṭabārī*, VI, Turāth al- Islām, M.M.. Shaker, A.M. Shaker ed., Cairo, Dār al-Ma’ārif, 1958.

Tannous J.B., Arabic as Christian language and Arabic as the language of Christians, in A. S. Ibrahim ed., *Medieval Encounters Arabic-speaking Christians and Islam*, Piscataway, Gorgias Press LLC, 2022, 1-93.

Tarras, P. The Spirit Before the Letter: Theodore Abū Qurra’s Use of Biblical Quotations in the Context of Early Christian Arabic Apologetics, in M.L. Hjālm (ed.), *Senses of Scripture, Treasures of Tradition: The Bible in Arabic among Jews, Christians and Muslims*, Leiden, Brill, 2017, 79-103.

Tartar G., *Dialogue islamo-chrétien sous le calife al-Ma’mūn; les épîtres d’al-Hashimī*, 2 vols, Combs-la Ville, Centre Évangélique de Témoignage et de Dialogue, 1982.

Taylor, D.G.K., Syriac Lexicography, in Sebastian P. Brock et al. ed., *The Gorgias Encyclopedic Dictionary of the Syriac Heritage*, Piscataway, NJ, Gorgias Press LLC, 2011, 391-393.

Terian A., *The life of Mashtots’ by his disciple Koriwn: Translated from the classical Armenian with introduction and commentary*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2022.

Theodoret, C., *Historia religiosa, Clavis patrum graecorum* (CPG) 6221, IV, VI, XXVI, (Consulted on documentacatholicaomnia.eu).

Thomas D. ed., *The Bloomsbury Reader in Christian-Muslim Relations, 600-1500*, London, New York, Bloomsbury Academic, 2022.

Thomas D., *Christian Doctrines in Islamic Theology*, Leiden, Brill, 2008.

Tolan J., The Pact of ‘Umar, in D. Thomas, B. Roggema ed., *Christian-Muslim Relations: A Bibliographical History: Volume 1 (600–900)*, Leiden: Brill, 2009, 360–66.

Toury G., *Descriptive translation studies and beyond, Revised Edition*, Amsterdam, Philadelphia: John Benjamins Pub. Co., 2012.

Toury G., A Handful of Methodological Issues in DTS: Are They Applicable to the Study of the Septuagint as an Assumed Translation?, in *Bulletin of the International Organisation for Septuagint and Cognate Studies*, Vol. 39, 2006, 13-25.

Treiger A., From al-Biṭrīq to Ḥunayn: Melkite and Nestorian Translators in Early ‘Abbassīd Baghdad, *Mediterranea, International journal on the transfer of knowledge*, 7, 2022, 142-181.

Treiger A., New Works by Theodore Abū Qurra, Preserved under the Name of Thaddeus of Edessa, in *Journal of Eastern Christian Studies*, 68/1–2 (2016), 1–51.

Tregelles S.P., Arabic Versions, in *A Dictionary of the Bible Comprising its Antiquities, Biography, Geography, and Natural History*, 2nd edn, London: John Murray, vol. III, 1893, pp.1614-1616.

Tritton A.S., The Bible text of Theodore Abu Kurra, in *Journal of Theological Studies*, Vol. 34, 1933, 52-54.

Troupeau G., Le rôle des syriaques dans la transmission et l'exploitation du patrimoine philosophique et scientifique grec, *Arabica*, 38/1, 1991, 1-10.

Vollandt R., *The Status Quaestionis of Research of the Arabic Bible*, Munich, Ludwig-Maximilians Universität, 2018.

Vollandt R., Arabic Versions of the Pentateuch A Comparative Study of Jewish, Christian, and Muslim Sources, *Biblia Arabica*, Leiden, Boston, Brill, 2, 2015, 281-317.

Von Hainthaler T., *Christliche Araber vor Dem Islam Verbreitung und konfessionelle Zugehörigkeit : eine Hinführung*, Peeters, Leuven, Paris, Dudley, MA, 2007.

Von Hainthaler T., *Al-mas̄hiyyūn al-'Arab qabla al-'Īslām*, L. Fāyid (translator), Cairo, Dār al-Nashr al-'Usqūfiyya, 2019

Al-Ḥamawī Y., *Mu'djam al-buldān*, II, Beyrouth, Dar Bayrouth&Dar Sader, 1956.

Wacquant L.J.D., Toward a Social Praxeology: The Structure and Logic of Bourdieu's Sociology, in P. Bourdieu and L.J.D. Wacquant (ed.), *An Invitation to reflexive Sociology*. Cambridge, Polity Press, 1992, 1-60.

Watt M., Two interesting Christian-Arabic Usages, in H.H. Rowley, P.R. Weis, *Journal of Semitic Studies*, Volume 2, Issue 4, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1957.

Wellhausen J., *Reste arabischen Heidentums: Gesammelt und erläutert*, Berlin, Boston, De Gruyter, 1897.

Wellhausen J., *Skizzen und Vorarbeiten*, III, Berlin, Georg Reimer, 1884.

Young M.J.L.- Latham J.D., - Serjeant R.B., eds., *Religion, Learning, and Science in the 'Abbasid Period*, Cambridge, Cambridge History of Arabic Literature, 1990, 446-460.

Zaki V., *The Pauline Epistles in Arabic, Manuscripts, Versions, and Transmission*, *Biblia Arabica*, Leiden, The Netherlands Brill, 8, 2021.

Zaki V., *Al-As'ad Hibat allāh ibn al-'Assāl: His Contribution to the Formation of New Identity of Copts in Egypt Through His Critical Translation of the Gospel of Luke*, Master thesis, Evangelical Theological Seminary in Cairo, 2011.

Al-Zamakhsharī 'U., *Asās al-Balāgha*, M.B. Al-Sūd ed., Beirut, Dār al-Kutub al-'ilmiyya, I, 1998.

Zanola, M.T., *Che cos'è la terminologia?*, Roma, Carrocci editore, 2018.

Zanola M.T., *Arts et Métiers au XVIII^e siècle, études de terminologie diachronique*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 2014.

Coptic Christian Books

Bustān al-ruhbān, Muṭrāniyya Banī Swīf wa al-Bahnasā, Lajna al-tahrīr wa al-Nashr, 1968.

Al-Thalathatu al-quddasāt, Dayr al-sayyida al-'adra' (Al-Muḥarraḡ), IV ed., 2006.

Al-'Abṣalmudiyya al-sanawiyya al-muqaddasa, Dayr Al-sayyida al-'Adhra' Baramūs, Ed. II, Dār Nūbār lil-ṭibā'a, 2007.

Al-khūlājy al-muqaddass wa khidmat al-shammas, Shubra, Maktabat al-maḥabba, Cairo, 2008.

Al-Maḡārī I., *Bustān al-ruhbān, Wādī al-Naṭrūn*, Dār Majallat Marqūs, 2013.

Bibles

Al-Kitāb al-Muqaddas, al-tarjama al-‘arabiyya al-mushtaraka, Lebanon, Bible Society, 2020.

Al-Kitāb al-Muqaddas, Arabic New Van Dyck Bible, Dār al-kitāb al muqaddas fi al-sharq al-‘awsat, Fourth edition fourth print 2009.

Holy Bible, New King James English Version, Bible Societies, 1982.

Oline Sources:

The Doha Historical Dictionary of Arabic (thedohadictionary.org)

Encyclopédie de l’Islam, II édition (brillonline.com)

The Encyclopaedia of Islam: An Anthology in Arabic Translation Online (<https://referenceworks.brillonline.com/browse/the-encyclopaedia-of-islam-an-anthology>)

Lisān al-‘Arab, Ibn Manẓūr App

Hans Wehr App

Al-Mukhassas, Ibn Sidah (shamela.ws)

Qur’an English Translation (quran.com)

PAVONE, Platform of the Arabic Versions of the New Testament (<https://pavone.uobdh.org/>)

Penrice Dictionary App

Al-Mazhar fī ‘ulūm al-lughā wa Ānwā‘iha, Al-Siyūfī (shamela.ws)

Kitāb al-iqtirāḥ fī ‘Uṣūl al-Naḥw, Al-Siyūfī (shamela.ws)

Sinai Manuscripts Digital Library (<https://sinaimanuscripts.library.ucla.edu/>)

Taj al-‘Arus, Al-Zabidi M. (shamela.ws)

Coptic Hymns: tasbeha.org and CopticReader App

www.aldiwan.net

Claremont Coptic Encyclopedia (<https://ccdcl.claremont.edu/digital/collection/cce>)

Coptic Orthodox Church Heritage www.st.takla.org

Virtual Hill Museum & manuscript Library (<https://www.vhmmml.org/readingRoom>)

Manuscripts:

Ar. Vat. 13

Beirut, B.O. Or. 430

Sinai Ar. 70
Sinai Ar.

Appendix 1²⁹⁵

Matthew 2:2-6	<p><i>Int.-conf.</i> وقالوا: "أين هو المولود، ملك اليهود؟ رأينا نجمة في المشرق فجئنا لنسجد له" وسمع الملك هيرودس فاضطرب هو وكل أورشليم. فجمع كل رؤساء الكهنة ومعلمي الشعب وسألهم: أين يولد المسيح؟ فأجابوا: في بيت لحم اليهودية لأن هذا ما كتب النبي: يا بيت لحم، أرض يهوذا، ما أنت الصغرى في مدن يهوذا لأن منك يخرج رئيس يرعى شعبي إسرائيل.</p>
MS 154 (f. 119a)	<p>وقالوا انه قد ولد فيكم ملكا عظيم قد راينا نجمة في المشرق فجيئنا نسجد له بهدايا معنا فبلغ شانهم هيرودس ملك بنى اسرايل فافزعه ذلك وسال احبار اليهود اين يولد المسيح اذا جا فقالوا له في بيت الحيم كما قال الله على لسان نبيه ميكا وانت بيت الحيم لا تكونى حقيرة في سلطان يهوذا لانه يخرج منك ريس وهو يرعى امة اسرايل ومخرجه من قبل ايام الدهر.</p>

²⁹⁵ Parentheses indicate a lack of understanding of or an indecipherability in the manuscripts.

<p>Vat. Ar. 13 (f. 1v)</p>	<p>وقالت اين () هو المولود لانا راينا نجمه في المشرق، واتينا لنسجد له فسمع () الملك فذعر وجميع اهل اورسليم معه فجمع جميع عظاما () وكتبه الشعب فاقبل يسلمهم ويقول لهم اين يولد المسيح قالوا له في بيت لحم يهوذا هاكذي هو مكتوب في النبي (انك) انت () لحم يهوذا لست بنا قصه في ملوك يهوذا وسيخرج منك ملك () هو يرعا الاسرايل شعبي.</p>
<p>Beirut B.O. Or, 430 (f. 3r-3v)</p>	<p>قايلون اين ملك اليهود الذي ولد () راينا نجمه في المشرق وقد جئنا لنسجد له فلما سمع هيروودس الملك قلق وجميع اورشليم معه فجمع جميع عظاما الكهنة وكتبه الامه وجعل يسالهم اين يولد المسيح فاما هم فقالوا في بيت لحم يهوذا هكذا كتب في النبي وانت ايضا يا بيت لحم يهوذا ما انت بناقص في ملوك يهوذا لأنه يخرج منك ملك يرعى شعبي اسرايل.</p>
<p>Sinai Ar. 70 (f. 4v)</p>	<p>وقالت اين ملك اليهود المولود لانا ابصرنا كوكب في المشرق وجئنا نسجد له فسمع هيروودس الملك وفزع وجميع اروسليم معه جمع جميع رويس الكهنة ومعلمي الامه فسالهم اين يولد المسيح فقالوا له في بيت لحم ايهوذا لانه كذلك هو مكتوب في النبي انت يل بيت لحم ايهوذا ليست بنا (قصه) في ملوك ايهوذا لانه منك يخرج ملك وهو يرعا شعبي اسرايل.</p>

Sinai Ar. 72 (f. 3v-4r)	<p>قاييلين اين ملك اليهود المولود لانا قد راينا نجمة في المشرق و جينا لنسجد له فلما سمع هرودس الملك تقلقل كل اروسلم معه وانه جمع كل روس الكهنة وكتاب الشعب فجعل يستخبرهم اين يولد المسيح وانهم قالوا في بيت اللحم اليهوديه لانه هكذا هو مكتوب في النبي و انت يا بيت لحم ارض يهودا ليست بصغيره في ملك يهوذا منك يخرج في قايد الذي هو شعبي اسرايل.</p>
Matthew 3:11	<p><i>Int.-conf.</i> وأما الذي يجيء بعدي فهو أقوى مني وما أنا أنا أهلا لأن أحمل حذاءه. هو يعمدكم بالروح القدس و نار.</p>
MS 154 (f. 133b)	<p>الذي ياتي على اثرى من لست له اهل ان اخلع قبال نعليه هو يعمدكم بروح القدس ونار.</p>
Vat. Ar. 13 (f. 3r)	<p>الذي ياتي بعدي. هو اقوا مني ذلك الذي لست باهل ان انزع شسع حذاه هو يعمدكم بروح القدس وبالنار.</p>
Beirut B.O. Or, 430 (f. 5r)	<p>الذي ياتي بعدي فهو اقوى مني ذلك الذي لست اهلا ان حل سيرو جوايد صفيه. هو يعمدكم بروح القدس والنار.</p>
Sinai Ar. 70 (f. 5v)	<p>والذي ياتي بعدي اعز مني الذي لست اهلا ان اخلع حذاه هو يعمدكم بروح القدس وبالنار.</p>
Sinai Ar. 72 (f. 5r)	<p>والذي ياتي خلفي فانه اقوا مني الذي ليست باهل ان احمل حذاه هو يصبغكم بروح القدس والنار.</p>

Matthew 5:17	<i>Int.-conf.</i> لا تظنوا أنني جئت لأبطل الشريعة وتعاليم الأنبياء: ما جئت لأبطل بل لأكمل.
MS 154 (f. 117b)	لم اتى لاهدم مثله موسى ولاكن اتمها.
Vat. Ar. 13 (f. 4v)	لا تظنون اني انما جيت انقض الناموس والانبيا لم ات لابطلها بل لاكملها.
Beirut B.O. Or, 430 (f. 7v)	لا تظنوا اني انا جيت لأقض التوراه والانبيا لم ات لأقض بل لاكمل.
Sinai Ar. 70 (f. 7r)	لا تظنوا اليه حيث ان احل الناموس او الانبيا لم أجي ان احل ولكن أن ()
Sinai Ar. 72 (f. 6v)	لا تظنوا اني جيت احل الناموس او الانبيا لم اتى احل لكني (اتم).

Matthew 6:9-13	<i>int.conf.</i> أبانا الذي في السماوات، ليتقدس اسمك ليأت ملكوتك لتكن مشيئتك في الأرض كما في السماء. أعطنا خبزنا اليومي، واغفر لنا ذنوبنا كما غفرنا نحن للمذنبين إلينا، ولا تدخلنا في التجربة، لكن نجنا من الشرير.
MS 154 (f. 113a)	ابونا الذي فى السما يتقدس اسمك تاتى ملكوتك تكون مسرتك كما فى السما كذلك فى الارض رزق كفاف يوم بيوم فاغفر لنا ذنوبنا كما نغفر نحن لمن يذنب الينا ولا تدخلنا الى البلايا رب ولاكن خلصنا من الشيطان من اجل ان لك الملكوت العزة والحمد الى دهر الدهرين امين.

Vat. Ar. 13 (f. 6r-6v)	ابانا الذى فى السما تقدر اسمك باى ملكوتك تكن مشيتك كما هي فى السما كذلك فلتكن فى الارض ارزقنا من الخبز حاجة يومنا واغفر لنا ذنوبنا كما انا قد غفرنا للمذنبين الينا ولا تدخلنا فى التجارب والبلايا - بل خلصنا من الشيطان المحال لان لك القوه والملكوت والمجد الى الابد الابدين.
Beirut B.O. Or, 430 (f. 9v-9r)	ابانا الذى فى السماوات ليقدر اسمك لتات ملكوتك لتكن مشيتك كما فى السما كذلك فى الارض ارزقنا خبز حاجتنا اليوم واغفر لنا ذنوبنا كما انا نحن قد غفرنا للمذنبين الينا ولا تدخلنا التجارب لكن نجنا من الحبيث من اجل ان لك الملك والقوة والتسبحة الى ابد الابدين.
Sinai Ar. 70 (f. 8v)	ابونا الذى فى السما يقدر اسمك ياتي ملكك تكون مسرتك كما فى السما وفى الارض اعطينا خبز قوتنا ليومنا هذا واترك لنا ذنوبنا مثلما نترك () ولا تدخلنا فى التجربة ولكن خلصنا من الحبيث لان الملك والعز والتسبحة لك الى ابد الابدين.
Sinai Ar. 72 (f. 8r)	ابونا الذى فى السما يقدر اسمك تاتي ملكوتك تكون مسرتك كما فى السما وعلى الارض خبزنا كفافنا اعطنا اليوم واترك لنا كمثل ما نترك نحن لغر ما () ولا تدخلنا فى البلوا ولكن نجينا من الشرير.
Matthew 10:16	<i>Int.-conf.</i> ها أنا أرسلكم مثل الخراف بين الذئاب.
MS 154 (f. 112a)	قال لهم المسيح انى ارسلكم اليوم كغنم بين الذياب.

Vat. Ar.13 (f. 14v)	ها انا ارسلكم كالبهم بين الذياب.
Beirut B.O. Or, 430 (f. 16r)	هانذا مرسلكم مثل الحملان بين الذياب.
Sinai Ar. 70 (f. 12v)	هذا انا ارسلكم كالخرفان بين الذياب.
Sinai Ar. 72 (f. 12v)	انا ابعثكم مثل الغنم بين الذياب.

Matthew 10:18-19	<i>Int.-conf.</i> يسوقونكم إلى الحكام والملوك من أجلي لتشهدوا عندهم وعند سائر الشعوب. فلا تهتموا حين يسلمونكم كيف أو بماذا تتكلمون، لأنكم ستعطون في حينه ما تتكلمون به. فما أنتم المتكلمين بل روح أبيكم السماوي يتكلم فيكم.
MS 154 (f. 112a)	وساتساقوا الى ملوك الدنيا وذوى السلطان فلا يهتمكم ما تتكلموا به فان الروح الذى ارسل اليكم هو يتكلم في افواهكم.
Vat. Ar. 13 (f. 14v)	ويدفعونكم الى الحكام والملوك من اجل اسمي للشهادة عليهم وعلى الشعوب فاذا اسلموكم لا تهتموا كيف تتكلمون او بما () تحتجون ولستم انتم المتكلمين بل روح ابيكم تنطق على السننكم.
Beirut B.O. Or, 430 (f. 16r)	وسيقدمونكم امام الحكام والملوك من اجلي للشهادة لهم ولللامم فمتى ما يسلموكم فلا تهتموا كيف او ماذا تقولون لانكم ستلقنون في تلك الساعة ما تنطقون به وذلك انكم لستم الناطقين كى روح ابيكم تنطق فيكم.

Sinai Ar. 70 (f. 12v-13r)	يسلمونكم الى القضاء ويعذبونكم كنايسهم ويقدمونكم بين يدي الروس والملوك من اجلي لشهاده عليكم وكل الامم () سلموكم فلا تهتموا كيف او ماذا تكلموا ولكنكم تعطوا في تلك الساعة ما تكلموا به ولستم انتم الذين تتكلمون لكن روح ابوكم تكلم فيكم.
Sinai Ar. 72 (f. 12v)	انهم سايسلموكم الى () وفي جماعاتهم تجلدوكم والى قواد وملوك تقدموا من اجل الشهاده لهم والامم فاذا اسلموكم فلا تهتموا كيف او ماذا تكلموهم ستعطوا في تلك الساعة ما تتكلموا ليس انتم المتكلمين لكن ابوكم المتكلم فيكم.

Matthew 11:6	<i>Int.-conf.</i> وهنيئاً لمن لا يفقد إيمانه بي.
MS 154 (f. 122b)	طوبى لمن لم يشك بي.
Vat. Ar. 13 (f. 15v)	طوبيا لمن لم يشك في امري.
Beirut B.O. Or, 430 (f. 17v)	طوبى للذى لا يفتتن فى.
Sinai Ar. 70 (f. 13v)	وطوبيا للذي لا يشك في.
Sinai Ar. 72 (f.13v)	طوبيا لمن لم يشك في.

Matthew 3:17/ 17:5	<i>Int.-conf.</i> هذا هو ابني الحبيب الذي به رضيت / هذا هو ابني الحبيب الذي به رضيت فله اسمعوا.
MS 154 (f. 132a - 133b)	هذا ابني الحبيب الذى به شيت اياه فاسمعوا/هذا ابني الحبيب الذى به سررت اياه فاطيعوا.

Vat. Ar. 13 (f. 3r - 28r)	هذا ابني الحبيب الذي به سررت / هذا ابني الحبيب الذي به سررت اياه فاطيعوا.
Beirut B.O. Or, 430 (f. 5r - 29r)	هذا ابني الحبيب الذي به سررت / هذا ابني الحبيب الذي به سررت له فاسمعوا.
Sinai Ar. 70 (f. 6r - 21r)	هذا ابني الحبيب الذي به سررت / هذا ابني الحبيب الذي به سررت ايا اسمعوا.
Sinai Ar. 72 (f. 21r)	هذا هو ابني الحبيب الذي به سررت / هذا هو ابني الحبيب الذي به سررت له فاسمعوا.

Matthew 20:28	<i>Int.-conf.</i> ويفدي بحياته كثيرا منهم.
MS 154 (f. 118a)	واجعل نفسى فدا عن كثرة.
Vat. Ar. 13 (f. 33v)	وان يبذل نفسه عن خلاص الناس.
Beirut B.O. Or, 430 (f. 34v)	ليبذل نفسه خلاصا بدل الكثيرين.
Sinai Ar. 70 (f. 24v)	ويبذل نفسه فدا بدل لكثيرين.
Sinai Ar. 72 (f. 25r)	وجعل نفسه فدا عن كثيرين.

Matthew 21:7-9	<i>Int.-conf.</i> وجاء بالأتان والجحش. ثم وضعا عليهما ثوبيهما، فركب يسوع. وبسط كثير من الناس ثيابهم على الطريق، وقطع آخرون أغصان الشجر وفرشوا بها الطريق. وكانت الجموع التي تتقدم يسوع والتي تتبعه تهتف: المجد لابن داود تبارك الآتي باسم الرب.
----------------	--

MS 154 (f. 128b)	<p>ودخل المسيح حين دخل بيت المقدس قاعد على اتان يوم الشباشت وتلقوه بنى اسرايل بشجر الزيتون وقلب النخل مع نسايمهم وبتيمهم فسبحوا له الاطفال والمراض وقالوا الشعنان لابن داود مبارك الذي جا ملكا لاسرايل.</p>
Vat. Ar. 13 (f. 34r-34v)	<p>اتيا () لعبروا الجحش فوضوا على الجحش ثيابهم وركبه ايسوع و()المحافل () على الطريق له واخرون () جعله يقطعون الغصان من الشجر و() على الطريق اجلا لا له وجعلت المحافل التي تسير امامه وخلفه توقيرا له ينادون و يقولون الخلاص والمجد لابن داود تبارك الاتي باسم الرب المجد في العلاء.</p>
Beirut B.O. Or, 430 (f. 35r)	<p>وجاء بالاتان والجحش ووضعوا ثيابهم على الجحش ثم ركب ايشوع وكل الجموع كانوا يفرشون ثيابهم في الطريق واخرون كانوا يقطعون الاغصان من الاشجار ويلقونها في الطريق فاما الجموع الذين كانوا يمضون امام ويتبعون اثره فكانوا يصحون ويقولون اوشعنا لابن داوود مبارك الاتي باسم الرب.</p>
Sinai Ar. 70 (f. 25r)	<p>واتيا بالاتان والجحش ووضعوا على جحش ثيابهم وركب عليه يسوع وكثرة الجموع كانوا يفرشون ثيابهم على الطريق واخرون كانوا يقطعون اغصان الشجر ويلقون في الطريق والجموع الذين كانوا يمشون () يصرجون ويقولون المجد لابن داود ومبارك الذي ياتي باسم الرب.</p>

Sinai Ar. 72 (f. 25r-25v)	<p>وقرب الاتان والعفوا ووضعوا ثيابهم عليهما وجلس يسوع عليهما وان الجماعة الكثيره فرشوا اثيابهم في في الطريق واخرين كانوا يقطعون اغصان الشجر ويفرشوه في الطريق وان الالجماعة المتقدمة معه والى تلخفه يصيحوا ويقولوا اوسنا لابن داود تبارك هو الذي باسم الرب.</p>
---------------------------	---

Matthew 22:42-44	<p><i>Int.-conf.</i> ما قولكم في المسيح؟ ابن من هو؟ قالوا له ابن داود. قال لهم: اذا، كيف يدعوه داود ربا، وهو يقول بوحى من الروح: قال الرب لربي: اجلس عن يميني حتى أجعل أعداءك تحت قدميك.</p>
MS 154 (f. 115b)	<p>وقال لهم ما ظنكم بالمسيح ابن من هو قالت اليهود هو بن داود فقال لهم المسيح كيف تنبا داود النبى بروح القدس على المسيح قال الرب لربى اجلس يمينى حتى اضع اعداك تحت منصب قدميك.</p>
Vat. Ar. (f. 38r-38v)	<p>وقال ما الذى تقولون فى المسيح وابن من تدعمون انه قالوا اله ندعمو انه ابن داود قال لهم يسوع وكيف ادن اسمه داود بالروح ونبوته ربا وقد قال في ذلك ان الرب قال لرب اجلس عن يمينى حتى اضع اعداك موكبا تحت قدميك.</p>
Beirut B.O. Or. 430 (f. 39r)	<p>وقال لهم ماذا تقولون في المسيح ابن من هو قالوا اله ابن داود قال لهم وكيف يدعوه داود بروح ربا لانه قال القدس الرب لربى اجلس عن يمينى حتى اضع اعداك تحت قدميك.</p>

Sinai Ar. 70 (f. 27r-27v)	سألهم يسوع فقال ماذا تقولوا من جل المسيح بن من هو قالوا له بن داود فقال لهم وكيف داود بالروح يدعوه رباه قال ان لربه اجلس عن يميني حتى اضع اعداك تحت قدميك.
Sinai Ar. 72 (f. 27v)	سألهم يسوع قايلًا ماذا تظنوا في المسيح بن من هو قالوا له بن داود قال لهم يسوع فكيف يسميه داود بالروح ربه قايلًا قال الرب () اجلس عن يميني حتى اضع اعداك تحت (موكا) قدميك.
Mark 1:40-41	<i>Int.-conf.</i> وجاءه أبرص يتوسل إليه فسجد وقال له: إن أردت تطهرتني. فأشفق عليه يسوع ومد يده ولمسه وقال له أريد، فاطهره.
MS 154 (f. 124b)	ثم لقي المسيح أيضا ابرص فقال له الابرص رب ان شئت فانك تستطيع ان تطهرني من برصي فقال المسيح قد شئت فتطهر في مكانه.
Beirut B.O. Or, 430 (f. 55v)	فاقبل اليه ابرص وخر على رجليه وجعل يطلب اليه ويقول له ان تشا فانت قادر على تطهيري فاما ايشوع فرحمه وبسط يده فدنا منه وقال انا اشا فاطهر.
Sinai Ar. 70 (f. 37v)	فاتاه ابرص فخر بين يدي رجليه وكان يطلب اليه ويقول ان شئت تستطيع تنقيني فرحمه يسوع وبسط يده ومسه وقال فاني أشا تنقا.
Sinai Ar. 72 (f. 38r)	فاتى اليه ابرص فسجد له على ركبتيه وساله قايلًا فانك ان شئت يا رب فانك تستطيع ان تشفيني وان يسوع تحن عليه ومد يده ومسه قايلًا قد شئت فاشفع.

<p>Mark 2:5-9;12</p>	<p><i>Int.-conf.</i></p> <p>...قال للكسيح: يا ابني مغفورة لك خطاياك.⁶ وكان بين الحضور بعض معلمي الشريعة، فقالوا في أنفسهم: ⁷”كيف يتكلم هذا الرجل كلاما كهذا؟ فهو يجدف! من يقدر أن يغفر الخطايا إلا الله وحده؟“⁸ وعرف يسوع في سره أفكارهم، قال لهم: ”ما هذه الأفكار في قلوبكم؟⁹ أيما أسهل: أن يقال لهذا الكسيح: مغفورة لك خطاياك، أم أن يقال له: قم واحمل فراشك وامش؟...¹² فقام الرجل وحمل فراشه في الحال وخرج بمشهد من الحاضرين.</p>
<p>MS 154 (f. 123b)</p>	<p>فقال له المسيح غفرت لك خطاياك فقالت الاحبار والذين حوله من يستطيع ان يغفر الخطايا الا الله وحده قال لهم المسيح يا معشر الاحبار ايهم ايسر ان اقول غفر لك خطاياك او اقول ايه المقعد قم احمل سريرك واذهب الى بيتك... فقام المقعد بين يديهم فحمل سريره وانطلق الى اهله كما امره المسيح فلم يستطيع احد منهم ان يجاوبه بكلمة.</p>

Beirut B.O. Or, 430 (f. 56r-56v)	<p>فلما ان رأى اشوع ايمانهم قال لذلك المقعد يابنى مغفورة لك خطاياك وكان هناك بعض الكتبة وال() له جلوسا فجعلوا يردون في قلوبهم ما بال هذا يتكلم بالافترا من يقدر ان يغفر الخطايا الا الله الواحد فاما ايشوع فعلم في () انهم يردون هذا في انفسهم وقال لهم لما تردوا هذا في انفسكم ايما ايسر ان يقال للمقعد مغفورة لك خطاياك او يقال قم احمل سريرك وامش فقام من سعته وحمل سريره جاههم اجمعين حتى انهم باجمعهم تعجبوا وسبحوا الله اذ يقولون ما رأينا قط هكذا.</p>
Sinai Ar. 70 (f. 38r)	<p>قال لذلك المخلع اليه قد غفرت لك خطاياك وكان تمر ناس من المعلمين والفرسين جلوسا فتفكروا في قلوبهم ما هذا الجداف الذي يتكلم هذا من يقدر يغفر الخطايا الا الله وحده فعرف يسوع بروحه ان ذلك يتفكروا هاولاء في انفسهم وقال لهم () تفكروا ذلك في قلوبكم ايتها اهون ان اقول للمخلع مغفورة لك خطاياك ام اقول قم احمل سريرك وامش. وقام من ساعته وحمل سريره وخرج وهم يبصروه اجمعين.</p>
Sinai Ar. 72 (f. 38v)	<p>قال للمخلع متروكة لك خطاياك فكان هناك اناس من الكتاب جلوس فتفكروا في قلوبهم ما هذا التجديف الذي يتكلم هذا هكذا من يقدر ان يغفر الخطايا الا الله وحده. ومكانه علم يسوع بروحه انهم هكذا يتفكروا انفسهم فقال لهم لماذا تتفكروا في قلوبكم ايهما ايسر ان نقول للمقعد متروكة لك خطاياك ام اقول قم فادفع سريرك وامشي. ومكانه قام ورفع السرير وخرج قدام كلهم حتى انهم بهتوا.</p>

Mark 7:32-33	<i>Int.-conf.</i> فجاؤوا إليه بأصم منعقد اللسان وتوسلوا إليه أن يضع يده عليه. فابتعد به يسوع عن الجموع، ووضع أصابعه في أذني الرجل وبصق ولمس لسانه.
MS 154 (f. 124a)	ثم لقي مصاب اصم اخرس فوضع اصبعه على اذنه ويزق على لسانه.
Vat. Ar. 13 (f. 58r)	() اخرس طلبوا اليه ان يضع عليه يده فر() به من الجمع و() اصابعه في اذنيه و() على لسانه.
Beirut B.O. Or, 430 (f. 66v)	فاتوه باصم اخرس وجعلوا يطلبون اليه ان يضع يده عليه فاجتذبه من الجمع وحده فالقى اصابعه في اذنيه وبصق ودنى من لسانه.
Sinai Ar. 70 (f. 45r)	واتوه باصم واحد اخرس وطلبوا اليه ان يضع عليه يده وقاده وعزله من الجماعة واخذه ووضع اصابعه على اذنيه وبصق وقرب الى لسانه.
Sinai Ar. 72 (f. 45v-46r)	فقربوا له اخرس (لجلاج) فطلبوا اليه لكي يضع عليه يده فاخذه من الجماعة في خلا وجعل اصبعه في اذنه وبسق ومس لسانه.

Mark 16:15-16	<i>Int.-conf.</i> أذهبوا إلى العالم كله واعدوا البشارة إلى الناس أجمعين. كل من آمن ويتعمد يخلص، ومن لا يؤمن يهلك.
MS 154 (f. 135a-135b)	أخرجوا في الدنيا كلها ونادوا ملكوت السما في الأمم وتوبة على اسمي واعدوهم باسم الأب والابن وروح القدس فمن آمن واعد فقد خلس ونجا وغفر له ومن كفر لم يعمد فقد حق عليه الهوان والندامة.
Beirut B.O. Or, 430 (f. 84r)	انطلقوا الى العالم كله ونادوا ببشرى في جميع الخليقة فالذي يؤمن ويصطبغ يحيى والذي لا يؤمن يشجب.
Sinai Ar. 70 (f. 55v)	وقال لهم في الدنيا (جمعا) واكرزوا بشرى في جميع الحلو والذي يؤمن ويتعمد يعيش والذي لا يؤمن يخاب.
Sinai Ar. 72 (f. 57v)	انطلقوا الى كل العالم واكرزوا الانجيل في كل الخليقة ومن يؤمن ويعتمد يخلص.

Luke 1:34-35	<i>Int.-conf.</i> فقلت مريم للملاك: كيف يكون هذا وأنا عذراء لا أعرف رجلا؟ فأجابها الملاك: الروح القدس يحل عليك، وقدرة العلى تظلك، لذلك فالقديس الذي يولد منك يدعى ابن الله.
MS 154 (f. 110b)	فقلت مريم اين يكون لى ولد ولم يمسنى بشر قال جبريل روح الله عليك تنزل وقوة العالى فيك تحل والذى يولد منك مقدس ابن العالى يسمى.
Beirut B.O. Or, 430 (f. 86r)	فقلت مريم للملك كيف يكون هذا ولم اعرف رجلا اجاب الملاك وقال لها روح القدس ياتي وقوة العلى تحل عليك من اجل هذا فان ذلك يولد منك هو قدوس وابن الله يدعى.

Vat. Ar. 17/18 (p.154)	قالت مريم للملك: كيف يكون لي هذا، وما مسني بشر أفضى؟ قال لها روح القدس أتى، والأيد حال عليك من الأعلى فمولودك كائن طهرا، وابن الله يدعى.
Sinai Ar. 70 (f. 57v)	وقالت مريم للملاك وكيف يكون ذلك وأنا لم أعرف رجل فاجابها الملاك وقال روح القدس تاتي عليك وقوه الاعلا تحل بطن من جل () الذي يولد منك قديس هو.
Sinai Ar. 72 (f. 58v)	فقال مريم للملاك كيف يكون لي هذا اذ لم أعرف رجل اجاب الملاك فقال لها روح القدس ياتي عليك وقوة العلى تظلك لذلك المولود القدوس بن الله يدعا.

Luke 2:10-14	<i>Int.-conf.</i> فقال لهم الملاك: ”لا تخافوا! ها أنا أبشركم بخبر عظيم يفرح له جميع الشعب: ولد لكم اليوم في مدينة داود مخلص هو المسيح الرب. وإليكم هذه العلامة: تجدون طفلا مقمطا مضجعا في مذود“. وظهر مع الملاك بغتة جمهور من جند السماء يسبحون الله ويقولون: ”المجد لله في العلى، وفي الأرض السلام للحائزين رضاه.
MS 154 (f. 118b-119a)	فقال لهم ابشركم اليوم بفرح عظيم هو فرح للامم عامة انه اله ولد لكم اليوم مسيح رب في مدينة داود وهى بيت الحيم وهذه الاية لكم انكم تجدون غلاما في المهد فبينما الملك يبشرهم سمعوا صوت جنود الملائكة بكثرة يسبحون ويقولون تسبحة لله العلى وعلى الارض السلم وفي الناس المسرة الصالحة.

Beirut B.O. Or, 430 (f. 87r-88v)	<p>فقال لهم الملاك لا تخافوا فاني هانذا ابشركم اليوم بفرح عظيم يكون لجميع العالم لانه قد ولد لكم اليوم مخلص الذي هو الرب يسوع في مدينة داوود وهذه لكم اماره تجدوا طفلا ملفوفا في خرق موضوعا في مذود فترأ مع الملاك بقنة جنود كثيرة من جنود السماء يسبحون الله ويقولون التسبحة (لله) في العلا وعلى الارض السلام والرجا الصالح للناس.</p>
Vat. Ar 17/18 (p. 162)	<p>قال لهم الملاك "لا تخافوا فإني مبشركم بسرور مجل الدنيا، وإنه أكبر ولقد ولد لكم اليوم مخلص، وهو المسيح السيد في قرية داود والمكفر، وهذه العلامة لكم: أن سوف تجدون طفلا، لف في ذعالب، وهو في آري مغدر. وترأت مع الملاك جنود كثرت من السماء، إذ يسبحون الله قالوا: الحمد لله في على وعلى الأرض السلام وللناس نعم الرجا.</p>
Sinai Ar. 70 (f. 59r)	<p>فقال لهم الملاك لا تخشوا (لان) أبشركم بفرح كبير يصير لجميع اهل الدنيا قد ولد لكم اليوم مخلص وهو رب مسيح في مدينة داود وهذه اية لكم انكم تجدون طفلا ملفوفا في خرق موضعا في مذود فتروا (بيت) فجا مع الملاك اجناد كثيره من اجناد السما يسبحون الله ويقولون التسبحة لله في العلوا والسلام على الارض والرجا.</p>

Sinai Ar. 72 (f. 60r)	<p>فقال لهم الملاك لا تفزعوا هوذا انا ابشركم بفرح عظيم يكون لجميع الشعب لانه ولد لكم اليوم مخلصا الذى انه هو المسيح الرب في مدينه داود وهذه لكم علامه انكم تجدون صبي ملفوف موضوع في مذود وبيغته كان مع الملاك كثرة اجناد سماوية يسبحون الله ويقولون التسبيح لله في العلوا وعلى الارض السلم وفي الناس المسره.</p>
Luke 6:9-11	<p><i>Int.-conf.</i> فقال لهم يسوع: "أسألكم: أيحل في السبت عمل الخير أم عمل الشر؟ إنقاذ نفس أم إهلاكها؟" وأجال نظره فيهم جميعا وقال للرجل: مد يدك! فمدها، فعادت يده صحيحة. فملأهم الغضب وتشاوروا كيف يفعلون بيسوع.</p>
MS 154 (f. 124a-125a)	<p>فقال لهم يسوع ماذا ينبغي ان يعمل يوم السبت خير يعمل ام شر نفس تحيا ام تهلك قالوا بل نعمل خيرا في السبت وتحيا نفس قال لهم المسيح صدقتم ثم قال للذى يابسة يده لك اقول ابسط يدك فبسطها فاذا هى مثل يده الاخرى فعجب من راه من بنى اسرائيل.</p>
Vat. Ar. 13 (f. 79v-80r)	<p>قال لهم ايسوع انى اسلكم ما الذى يحل في السبت العمل به افعل الخير ام الشر احيا نفس ام اتلافها وهلاكها. (ثونطر) اليهو اجمعو وقال له لل الرجل ابسط يدك فمد يده فاستوت كصا () فاتلوا عنه ذلك () وجعلوا ايشا ورون () مع بعض يقولون ما اله () له و(تعولونه) به.</p>

Beirut B.O. Or, 430 (f. 96v)	قال لهم ايشوع انكم ماذا يحل ان يعمل في السبت الخير ام الشر احيا نفس او تهلك فت () فيهم باجمهم وقال له (حرر) يدك واستوق مثل صاحبها فاما هم فافتلادوا حدا وجعل () يكلم بعضا ان ما الذى تصنعون بايشوع.
Vat. Ar 17/18 (p.188)	وقال لهم عيسى: أسألکم ما الحل في السبت للجاهدين؟ أخير يبغى، / أم الشر للصانعين؟ أنفس تمنح بحياة، أم تهلك في المهلكين؟ وكان إليهم من الناظرين. وقال للكانع: ابسط يدك. فبسطها، فاستوت كشمال يمين وكظهم حسد دفين، وأقبلوا فيما بينهم يتشاورون، ماذا بعيسى يفلون.
Sinai Ar. 70 (f. 63v)	قال لهم يسوع اسلكم ماذا يحل في السبت يصنع خير او شر تحيا نفس وا تهلك. ونظر اليهم اجمعين فقال له ابسط يدك وبسط وصاحت يده مثل صاحبها فامتلا حسدا وكلموا بعضهم بعضا ماذا يصنعو ايسوع.
Sinai Ar. 72 (f. 65r)	فقال لهم يسوع اسلكم شي هل يحل في السبوت يصنع خير ام شر تخلص نفس ام تهلك. فالتفت الى كلهم بغضب وقال له ابسط يدك وانه بسط يده فصلحت مثل الاخرى وهم امتلوا جهل وكانوا يتكلموا بينهم ماذا يصنعو ايسوع.
Luke 7:28	<i>Int.-conf.</i> أقول لكم: ما ولدت النساء أعظم من يوحنا.
MS 154 (f. 132a- 132b)	امين امين اقول لكم انه ليس هو مما ولدت النساء اعظم من يحيى بن زكريا المعدادان.
Beirut B.O. Or, 430 (f. 100r)	فاقول لكم انه ما هو ما من نبى اعظم من يحيى الصابغ.

Vat. Ar. 17/18 (p. 204)	ما كان فيمن ولدت النساء من الأنبياء أكبر من الصبوغ يحيى.
Sinai Ar. 70 (f. 66r)	واخبركم انه ليس بني في اولاد النساء اعظم من يحنا المعمد ().
Sinai Ar. 72 (f. 67r)	واقول لكم انه ليس في موالد النساء بني أعظم من يحنا المصبغ.

Luke 11:10	<i>Int.-conf.</i> فمن يسأل ينال، ومن يطلب يجد ومن يدق الباب يفتح له.
MS 154 (f. 103a)	من يسأل يعطى ومن يلمس يجد ومن يستفتح يفتح له.
Beirut B.O. Or, 430 (f. 110v)	لان كل من يسأل ياخذ والذي يطلب يجد والذي يقرع يفتح له.
Vat. Ar. 17/18 (p. 243)	فالسائل يرتقد، والطالب يجد، والطارق على فتح يزد.
Sinai Ar. 70 (f. 71v)	سالوا فتعطوا اطلبوا فتجدوا اضربوا ويفتح لكم.
Sinai Ar. 72 (f. 73v)	سلو فتعطوا اطلبوا تجدوا اقرعوا يفتح لكم.

Luke 24:49	<i>Int.-conf.</i> فأقيموا في مدينة أورشليم إلى أن تحل عليكم القوة من العلى.
MS 154 (f. 112a)	اقعدوا في بيت المقدس حتى تلبسون القوة من السما.
Beirut B.O. Or, 430 (f. 140r)	فاما انتم في مدينة اورشليم حتى تدعو القوة من العلو.
Vat. Ar. 17/18 (p. 345)	فأقيموا في مدينة البيت المقدس، إلى أن تتسربلوا الأيد من العلاء.
Sinai Ar. 70 (f. 88r)	فأقيموا في اروشليم المدينه حتى تلبسوا قوه عوناً من السما.
Sinai Ar. 72 (f. 91v)	فاجلسوا في مدينة اروسلم حتى تلبسون قوه من العلوا.

John 1:23	<i>Int.-conf.</i> ”صوت صارخ في البرية قوّموا طريق الرب.
MS 154 (f. 132b)	انا صوت النادى في القفر يسروا طريق الرب وسهلوا سبيله.
Beirut B.O. Or, 430 (f. 141v)	انا الصوت الذي يهتف في البريه أن (يسهلوا) طريق الرب.
Sinai Ar. 70 (f. 88v)	انا صوت ينادي في البرية هيووا طريق الرب.
Sinai Ar. 72 (f. 92r)	(أنا) صوت ينادي في البرية هيووا طريق الرب.

John 1:29-31	<i>Int.-conf.</i> وفي الغد رأى يوحنا يسوع مقبلا إليه، فقال: ها هو حمل الله الذي يرفع خطيئة العالم. هذا هو الذي قلت فيه: يجيء بعدي رجل صار أعظم مني، لأنه كان قبلي. وما كنت أعرفه.
MS 154 (f. 133b-134a)	فلما كان من غد ان هو بالمسيح فقال هذا حمل الله الذي ينزع خطايا العالم هذا الذي قلت لكم انه ياتي على اثرى وهو بين يدي لانه كان من قبلي وانا لم اكن اعرفه.
Beirut B.O. Or, 430 (f. 142r)	واليوم الذي بعده نظر يوحنا إلى ايشوع مقبلا إليه وقال هذا خروف الله الذي يحمل خطية العالم هذا ذلك الذي قلت أنا عليه انه بعدي وصل وكان قبلي لانه اقدم مني.
Sinai Ar. 70 (f. 88v)	فاجابهم يحنا وقال انا اصبغ بالما وبينكم قايفا الذي لا تعرفوه هذا الذي ياتي خلفي وصار امامي.
Sinai Ar. 72 (f. 92r)	(هنا هو خروف الله الذي يرفع خطايا العالم) هو الذي قلت انا من اجلى لانه قبلي كان)

John 3:5	<i>Int.-conf.</i> أجابه يسوع: "الحق الحق أقول لك: ما من أحد يمكنه أن يدخل ملكوت الله إلا إذا ولد من الماء والروح."
MS 154 (f. 131b/134b)	وقال امين امين اقول لكم انه لا يدخل ملكوت السما الا من ولد من ما وروح / وقال امين امين اقول لكم انه من لا يولد من ما وروح لا يدخل ملكوت السما.

Beirut B.O. Or, 430 (f. 144v)	أجاب ايشوع وقال له الحق الحق أقول لك ان الانسان ان لم يولد من الماء والروح لا يقدر ان يدخل ملكوت الله.
Sinai Ar. 70 (f. 90v)	وقال له امين امين اقول لك انه ان لم يولد الانسان من الماء والروح لا يقدر يدخل ملك الله.
Sinai Ar. 72 (f. 93v)	امين اقول لك ان من لم يولد من الماء والروح ليس يستطيع ان يدخل ملك الله.

John 5:6-9 (f. 123a)	<i>Int.-conf.</i> فقال له: "أتريد أن تشفى؟ فأجابه المريض: "ما لي أحد، يا سيدي،... ⁸ فقال له يسوع: "قم واحمل فراشك وامش". فتعافى الرجل في الحال، وحمل فراشه ومشى.
MS 154 (f. 123a)	وقال له اتريد ان تبرا قال له المقعد نعم اى رب فانى ضايع ليس لى احد قال له المسيح قم فاحمل سريرك وانقلب الى بيتك فقام المقعد بامر المسيح فحمل سريره وانقلب الى بيته.
Beirut B.O. Or, 430 (f.149r)	فقال له اتحب ان تبرا اجاب ذلك المريض وقال نعم يا سيدي () ليس لي انسان اذا تحرك الماء يلقيني في البرية...قال له ايشوع قم احمل سريرك وامش.
Sinai Ar. 70 (f. 92v-93r)	وقال له تحب ان تبرا فاجاب المريض وقال نعم يا رب لكن ليس لي انسان اذا تحرك الماء يلقيني في المعمودية...قال له يسوع قم احمل سريرك وامش. ومن ساعاته برى ذلك الرجل فقام وحمل سريره ومشى.

Sinai Ar. 72 (f. 96v)	فقال له أتحب ان تكون () اجابه المريض يا رب ليس لي انسان اذا تحرك الما () حي في البركه...قال له يسوع قم احمل سريرك وانطلق. ومكانه يرى الانسان فرفع سريره وذهب.
-----------------------	---

John 5:39	<i>Int.-conf.</i> تفحصون الكتب المقدسة، حاسبين أن لكم فيها الحياة الأبدية.
MS 154 (f. 103a)	تدبرون الكتب فانكم تجدون فيها الحياة الدائمة.
Beirut B.O. Or, 430 (f. 150v)	فتشوا الكتب التي بها ترجون ان لكم حياة الابد.
Sinai Ar. 70 (f. 93v)	فتشوا الكتب التي تظنون ان لكم فيها الحياه الدائمة.
Sinai Ar. 72 (f. 97r)	فتشوا الكتب التي تروا ان لكم فيها حياة داهرة.

John 9:2-3 ; 6-7	<i>Int.-conf.</i> فسأله تلاميذه: "يا معلم، من أخطأ؟ أهذا الرجل أم والداه، حتى ولد أعمى؟" فأجاب يسوع: "لا هذا الرجل أخطأ ولا والداه. ولكنه ولد أعمى حتى قدرة الله وهي تعمل فيه." ⁶ قال هذا وبصق في التراب، وجبل من ريقه طينا ووضع على عيني الأعمى وقال له: "اذهب واغتسل في بركة سلوام" ... فذهب واغتسل، فأبصر.
------------------	---

MS 154 (f. 124a)	<p>فسال الحواريون للمسيح اى رب من اخطا هذا ام والديه لانه ولد اعمى فقال المسيح لهم لم يخطى هذا ولا يخطى والديه ولاكن لتستبين اعمال الله به. فدعاه المسيح فبزق على الارض وصنع طينا فلطخ به عيني الاعمى وقال اذهب الى عين الشيلوع فاغتسل فيها فايتك ساتبصر فانطلق الاعمى فاغتسل في عين الشيلوع فرجع يبصر.</p>
Beirut B.O. Or, 430 (f. 160r)	<p>فساله حواريوه وقالوا يا معلمنا من الذى اخطى هذا ام ابواه حتى ولد اعمى قال لهم ايشوع لا هو اخطى ولا ابواه لكن ليرى فيه أعمال الله. فلما قال هذه الاقاويل تفل على الارض وجبل من تفلته طينا وطلى به عيني ذلك الاعمى وقال له انطلق فاغسلهما بالشيلوع فانطلق فغسلهما وجا بصيرا.</p>
Sinai Ar. 70 (f. 98v)	<p>وقالوا لهم يا معلم من اخطا هذا ام اباه ليولد اعما. قال لهم يسوع لا هو اخطا ولا اباه ولكن لكيما ان ترا فيه اعمال الله. وحين قال ذلك بصق على الارض وجبل طينا من بصاقه ولطخ عيني ذلك الاعما وقال له انطلق اغسل في مصبوغية سلوان. فذهب وغسل وجا يبصر.</p>
Sinai Ar. 72 (f. 102r-103v)	<p>فساله () وقالوا له من اخطا هذا ام ابوايه انه ولد اعما. اجاب يسوع فقال لا هذا اخطا ولا ابويه ولكن لتظهر فيه اعمال الله. فلما قال هذا بصق في التراب وصنع من التراب طين ومسح بالطين عينيه وقال له اذهب واغتسل في بركة سلوان الذى يفسر المرسل فذهب واغتسل وجا يبصر.</p>

John 10:38	<i>Int.-conf.</i> وإذا كنت أعملها، فصدقوا هذه الأعمال إن كنتم لا تصدقوني، حتى تعرفوا وتؤمنوا أن الآب في وأنا في الآب.
MS 154 (f. 111a)	قال المسيح لبني اسرايل ان لم تومنوا لى فاومنوا لعملى الذى اعمل.
Beirut B.O. Or, 430 (f. 163r)	وان كنت اعمل ايضا وان (ابيتم) تصدقوني فصدقوا الاعمال.
Sinai Ar. 70 (f. 100r)	فان انا عملت (واباييه) لا تصدقوا فالاعمال صدقوا
Sinai Ar. 72 (f. 104v)	فان كنت اصنع فلا تصدقون فصدقوا بالاعمال.

John 11:25-26	<i>Int.-conf.</i> أنا هو القيامة والحياة. من آمن بي يحيا وإن مات. وكل من يحيا مؤمنا بي لا يموت أبداً.
MS 154 (f. 122b)	وقال ايضا انا النور والحياة والقيامة من يومن بى فقد عبر من الموت الى الحياة الدائمة.
Beirut B.O. Or, 430 (f. 164v)	انى انا البعث والحياه ومن امن بي وان مات فانه يحيى ومن كان حيا فامن بي لم يمت الى الابد.
Sinai Ar. 70 (f. 101r)	انا القيامة والحياه ومن امن بي ان مات يعيش وكل حي يومن بي لايموت ابدا.
Sinai Ar. 72 (f. 105r)	انا هو القيامة والحياه من امن بي وان مات فيحيا وكل من كان حي ويومن بي فليس يموت الى الدهر.

Appendix 2

Mt 2:2-6

قائلين: "أين هو ملك اليهود المولود؟ لأننا رأينا نجمة في المشرق ووافينا لنسجد له" 3 فلما سمع هيرودس الملك اضطرب وجميع إيروشليم معه 4 . وجمع كل رؤساء الكهنة وكتبة الشعب، واستخبر منهم: "أين يولد المسيح؟" فقالوا له: "في بيت لحم يهوذا. لأنه مكتوب في النبي هكذا: وأنت يا بيت لحم، أرض يهوذا لست بصغيرة في ولايات يهوذا، منك يخرج مدبر، الذي يرعى شعبي إسرائيل".

Mt 3:11

والذي يأتي بعدي هو أقوى مني، ولا أستحق أن أحمل حذاءه. فهو يصبغكم بروح القدس وبالنار.

Mt 3:17

هذا هو ابني الحبيب الذي به سررت.

Mt 5:17

لا تظنوا أنني جئت لأنقض الناموس أو الأنبياء. لم آتٍ لأنقضها، بل لأكملها.

Mt 6:9-13

أبانا الذي في السموات ليتقدس اسمك، ولتأت ملكوتك، ولتكن مشيئتك كما في السماء وعلى الأرض. خبزنا غدا أعطناه اليوم. واغفر لنا ما يجب علينا، كما غفرنا نحن لمن لنا عليه. ولا تدخلنا التجارب، بل نجنا من الشرير. لأن لك الملك والقدرة والمجد إلى الأبد حقا.

Mt 10:16

هأنذا أرسلكم مثل خراف بين ذئاب.

Mt 10:18 -19

ويقدمونكم إلى ملوك وولادة من أجلي، شهادة لهم وللأمم. فإذا أسلموكم، فلا تهتموا أن كيف أو بماذا تقولون، فإنكم ستعطون في تلك الساعة ما تتكلمون به.

Mt 11:6

فطوبى لمن لا يشك في.

Mt 17:5

"هذا هو ابني الحبيب الذي سرت به نفسي. إياه أطيعوا".

Mt 20:28

يبدل نفسه خلاصاً لكثيرين.

Mt 21: 7-9

جاء بالأتان والجحش، وجعلوا ثيابهم فوقهما وجلس فوقهما. وأكثر الجموع فرشوا ثيابهم في الطريق، وآخرون قطعوا أغصانا من الشجر وبسطوها في الطريق. والجموع السائرون أمامه والسائرون وراءه كانوا يصرخون قائلين: "أوشعنا لابن داود. مبارك الآتي باسم الرب. أوشعنا في الأعلى".

Mt 22: 42-44

وقال: "ماذا تظنون من أجل المسيح، ابن من هو؟" قالوا له: "هو ابن داود." قال لهم يسوع: "فكيف داود بالروح سماه ربي، قائلاً: قال الرب لربي: اجلس عن يميني حتى أضع أعداءك تحت أسفل قدميك".

Mk 1:40-41

فجاء إليه أبرص، طالب إليه، وجاث له على ركبتيه قائل له: "يا رب، إن كنت تشاء، فأنت قادر على تطهيري" فتحنن عليه يسوع، وبسط يده، ومس وقال له: "أنا أشاء، فاطهر."

Mk 2:5-9

فلما رأى يسوع إيمانهم، قال لذلك المخلع: "يا بني، خطاياك مغفورة لك." وكان هناك قوم من الكتبة جلوساً، فكانوا يفكرون في قلوبهم: "لماذا يفترى هذا هكذا؟ من يقدر أن يغفر الخطايا إلا الله الواحد وحده؟" وللوقت علم يسوع بروحه أنهم يفكرون هكذا في بواطنهم. فقال لهم: "لماذا تفكرون بهذه في قلوبكم؟ أيما أسهل، أن يقال للمخلع: مغفورة لك خطاياك، أو أن يقال: قم فاحمل سريرك واذهب؟"

Mk 7:32-33

فجاؤوا إليه بأخرس أصم، وسألوه أن يضع يده عليه. فأخذته على حدة من الجمع، وألقى أصابعه في أذنيه، وتقل، ومس لسانه.

Mk 16: 15-16

وقال لهم: "اذهبوا إلى العالم كله، وعلى كل حال بشروا بالإنجيل لجميع الخليقة. فمن يؤمن ويصطبغ، يخلص. ومن لا يؤمن فسيدان.

Lk 1:34

فقال مريم للملاك وقال لها: "كيف يكون لي هذا وإنني لم أعرف بعلاً؟"

Lk 2 :10-14

فقال لهم الملاك: "لا تخافوا، فإني هأنذا أبشركم اليوم بفرح عظيم. وهذا يكون لجميع الشعب. لأنه قد ولد لكم اليوم مخلص، الذي هو المسيح الرب، في مدينة داود. وهذه علامة لكم، أن تجدوا طفلاً ملفوفاً، موضوعاً في مذود." وبغته كان مع الملاك كثيرون من جنود السماء يسبحون الله وقائلين: "المجد لله في الأعالي، وعلى الأرض السلام، وفي الناس المسرة».

Lk 6:9

فقال لهم يسوع: "أنا أسألكم: هل يحل فعل الخير في السبت أم فعل الشر؟ أتخلص نفس أم تهلك؟" فسكتوا

Lk 7:28

" أقول لكم: إنه ليس أحد في مواليد النساء بأفضل من يوحنا المعمد. فأما الأصغر منه في ملكوت السموات فهو أعظم منه."

Lk 11:10

لأن كل من يسأل، يأخذ. ومن يطلب، يجد. ومن يقرع يفتح له.

Lk 24:49

وأنا أرسل موعد أبي عليكم. واجلسوا أنتم في مدينة إيرושليم إلى أن تلبسوا القوة من العلي.

Jn 1:23

فقال: "أنا الصوت الصارخ في البرية. قوموا طريق الرب، كما قال إشعياء النبي."

Jn 1:29- 31

وفي الغد رأى يسوع آتياً إليه، فقال: "هذا حمل الله الذي يحمل خطايا العالم." هذا هو الذي قلت أنا من أجله: إنه لآت بعدي رجل، وكان قبلي، لأنه كان أقدم مني أيضاً. وأنا لم أكن أعرفه، لكن ليظهر لإسرائيل. من أجل هذا جئت أنا لأعمد بالماء"

Jn 3:5

أجاب يسوع وقال: "الحق الحق أقول لك: إن لم يولد الإنسان من الماء والروح، فلن يمكنه أن يدخل ملكوت الله."

Jn 5 :6-9

فلما رأى يسوع هذا راقداً، وعلم أن له سنين كثيرة، فقال له: "أتريد أن تيرأ؟" أجاب المريض وقال: "يا رب، ليس لي إنسان حتى إذا تحرك الماء يلقيني في البركة. فإلى أن أجيء أنا، ينزل قبلي آخر." فقال له يسوع: "قم. فاحمل سريرك وامش." فللوقت برأ الرجل، وحمل سريره ومشى. وكان ذلك اليوم سبتاً.

Jn 5:39

فتشوا في الكتب التي تظنون أنتم أن تكون لكم فيها حياة أبد، فهي تشهد من أجلي.

Jn 9: 2-3

فسأله تلاميذه قائلين: "يا رابي، من الذي أخطأ؟ أهذا أم أبواه؟ فإنه ولد أعمى." فأجاب يسوع: "لم يخطئ، لا هذا ولا أبواه، لكن لكي تظهر فيه أعمال الله.

Jn 9:6-7

قال هذه، وتفل على الأرض، وجبل من تفلته طيناً، وطفى به عيني الأكمه، وقال له: "اذهب فاغسل وجهك في بركة سيلوحا" – التي ترجمتها "المبعوثة". فذهب وغسل وجهه، فجاء مبصراً.

Jn 10:38

وإن كنت أصنعها، وكنتم لي لا تصدقون، فصدقوا الأعمال، لكي تعلموا و تعرفوا أنني أنا في أبي و أبي فيّ.

Jn 11:25-26

قال لها يسوع: "إني أنا هو القيامة والحياة، فمن يؤمن بي، وإن مات، فهو يحيا. وكل من هو حي ويؤمن بي، فلن يموت إلى الأبد. أتؤمنين بهذا؟"