

The heritage, and legacy, of the *doyen* of the patrimony of Arabic Christianity

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From Washington to Rome, Arab Christians in the “West” not infrequently hear the questions, “You are Christian? Since when?” Their interlocutors are surprised to learn that today’s Egyptian, Jordanian, Syrian, Palestinian, Lebanese and Iraqi Christians have ancient traditions, extending to the first Christian centuries. This tendency of Europeans or Americans to associate “Arab” with “Muslim” has a long history also within Islamic tradition. For example, a well-known prophetic ḥadīth (saying attributed to Muḥammad) goes as follows: “It has been narrated by ‘Umar b. al-Ḥaṭṭāb that he heard the Messenger of God (may peace be upon him) say: ‘I will expel the Jews and Christians from the Arabian Peninsula and will not leave any but Muslims.’”¹ Although the Christians of the Arabian Peninsula² may not have survived much past the seventh century of the Common Era, by the middle of that century three of the Apostolic Sees (Jerusalem, Antioch and Alexandria) came to be within the

¹ English translation in MUSLIM, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*. Eng. trans. ‘A. Ṣiddīqī (Beirut: Dār al-‘Arabiyya, 1990), III, p. 965 [ḥadīth no. 4366].

² See the extensive, multi-volume work of Irfan SHAHĪD, *Byzantium and the Arabs* (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 1984-), on the presence of Christians in Arabia from the fourth to the seventh centuries of the Common Era, and the extent of pre-Islamic Arab Christianization. A concise overview is found in Robert HOYLAND’s *Arabia and the Arabs. From the Bronze Age to the coming of Islam* (London: Routledge, 2001).

Arab-ruled lands. This set the stage for a gradual “Arabization” of the ancient Christian communities on the eastern shores of the Mediterranean³ – communities that have survived until the present day. The dispersion of large numbers of these Arab Christians (caused by various historical factors⁴) has led to concern for the preservation of their intellectual and spiritual heritage.

The preservation of the heritage is a desideratum not only for Arab Christians themselves, but also for anyone with an interest in Muslim-Christian relations. For, we may learn from the past and derive hope for the future from the history of the variety of Christians who have come to speak Arabic. A majority of the “Arab/Islamic” world, at least until the Crusades, Christians continued to develop their own intellectual traditions, adopting the language of their new overlords. And, despite attempts as attested in the so-called “Covenant of ‘Umar”, to separate Muslims from their non-Muslim neighbors⁵, Christian writings from the Arab (and Islamic) world evidence an intimate familiarity with the lore and thinking of Muslims. Muslims, particularly in the ‘Abbāsid times (750-1258 CE), demonstrate an equally accurate knowledge of the varieties of Christianity found in their midst⁶.

³ The persistence of North African Christianity into the Islamic era is not as well attested as its eastern counterpart, and is in need of further study.

⁴ The Crusades, the era of Capitulations (not excluding certain policies of the Counter-Reformation) and the colonial period are particularly noteworthy in this respect. For an overview of the socio-political and ecclesiastical history of Christian communities in the Arabic speaking world, see, e.g., Robert BETTS, *Christians in the Arab east: A political study* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1978); Ch. FRAZEE, *Catholics and sultans: The Church and the Ottoman Empire 1453-1923* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1982); Kenneth CRAGG, *The Arab Christian: A history in the Middle East* (London: Mowbray, 1992); Georges C. ANAWATI, *al-Masīḥiyya wa-l-ḥaḍāra al-‘arabiyya* (Cairo: Dār al-Thaqāfa, 1992²); Andrea PACINI (ed.), *Comunità cristiane nell’islam arabo: La sfida del futuro* (Turin: Edizioni della Fondazione Giovanni Agnelli, 1996).

⁵ For classic discussions of the situation of non-Muslims in the Islamic world, see A.S. TRITTON, *The caliphs and their non-Muslim subjects: A critical study of the Covenant of ‘Umar* (repr. London: F. Cass, 1970, 1930¹) and A. FATTAL, *Le statut légal des non-musulmans en pays d’Islam* (Beirut: Impr. Catholique, 1958).

⁶ Cf., e.g., the fifth/eleventh century ‘Abd al-Jabbār b. Aḥmad AL-HAMDHANI (al-Qāḍī)’s *Tathbīn dalā’il al-nubuwwa* (Beirut: Dār al-‘Arabiyya lil-Ṭibā’a wa-l-Nashr wa-l-Tawzī’, 1966-) for a noteworthy example of this familiarity; Gabriel Said REYNOLDS, *A Muslim*

Perhaps the most important element in the study of the Christian Arab patrimony is an awareness of this diversity. A map of the Christian patriarchs in the Arabic-speaking world⁷ immediately demonstrates their complexity. For, not only are there churches who trace their divisions to Christological controversies in the fifth century (especially centering on the Council of Chalcedon), each of these churches has a portion that today is in communion with the Roman See. And there are Christian communities who share an understanding of the nature of Christ, but whose linguistic and cultural heritage is diverse (e.g. the Copts and Syrian Orthodox). But, since the seventh century, their common experience as religious minorities in the Arabic-speaking Islamic world has defined their theological expression: thus, the “challenge” of Islam may be seen as a thread that unites these diverse entities. For, all of these Christian communities came to adopt the language of the Qurʾān in their vernacular, as well as in their theological writings. But, while able to speak in the language of the “Arabs,” they also retained their theological heritage – be it Syriac, Greek or Coptic.

As the assortment of essays in this *Festschrift* demonstrates, acquaintance with the Christian Arabic heritage enriches the classical western view of the “Arab” and “Christian” worlds, breaking down stereotypes, and opening the doors to new ways of thinking. Muslims and Christians, be they Arabic-speaking or not, would do well to follow the lead of those of their predecessors who were willing and able to articulate the faith of the other in terms with which that other would agree. The volume under discussion here is unique in that it highlights the accomplishments of the Christian Arab patrimony as a *living* tradition, rather than as a well-preserved artifact stored in the museum of historical memory. That this can be done is in no small part due to the efforts of a single individual, Fr. Samir Khalil Samir, S.J.

theologian in the sectarian milieu. Abd al-Jabbar and the critique of Christian origins (Leiden: Brill, 2004); cf. also Jane Dammen McAULIFFE, *Qurʾānic Christians. An analysis of classical and modern exegesis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991) for an overview of classical Muslim exegetical opinions on Christians (and Christianity), in the light of Qurʾānic allusions to them.

⁷ Cf., e.g., the maps at the end of Andrea PACINI (ed.), *Comunità cristiane nell'islam arabo...*

The man

For the past half a century or so, Samir Khalil Samir, S.J., has devoted himself to the study of the Christian and Arabic patrimony. His efforts have cultivated –in students, colleagues, friends, and the scholarly community at large– a deep appreciation of Christianity, both eastern and western, and the Arabic heritage, both Christian and Muslim. His CV gives one an idea of the range of his accomplishments: numerous publications –among them articles, edited works and translations⁸– as well as the institution of a journal, a series, conferences and academic networks. But his untiring devotion, his labor of love, and the gratitude felt by the beneficiaries of his work – these elude anyone who simply peruses a CV. And these are what this *Festschrift* captures.

Fittingly presented to Fr. Samir at the VII Congress for Christian Arab Studies in September 2004, the combined efforts of Rifaat Ebied and Herman Teule have brought together the works of scholars from around the globe in what will prove to be an invaluable addition to the shelves of any student of the Christian Orient. Rather than having been constrained to write on a single theme, the contributors cover a range of topics, among which are “Coptic Arabic apocalypses,” “a Melkite witness to the Mamlūk capture of Tripoli,” the late Michel van Esbroeck’s piece on an apocryphal account of the apostles Peter, John and Paul, and “an Arabic Muslim quotation of a biblical text.”

It is hard to believe that such a wide range of topics could pertain to the interests of a single individual. But Samir’s untiring devotion to the furtherance of an understanding of the Christian Arab heritage is nothing if not comprehensive. For his desire to advance the current state of knowledge of this patrimony extends beyond the confines of his native Egypt, indeed beyond the borders of the Arabic speaking world. Whether at a conference in Cairo or a reception in Rome, be his language French, English, Italian or Arabic, Samir does indeed speak “from the heart” [xii] when he expounds upon the heritage of Arabic speaking Christians – in philosophy, theology, literature, codicology, history, as well as critical

⁸ Pages 316-344 of the volume under review contain a comprehensive bibliography of SAMIR’s works.

editions of Christian Arabic works. And his interest is not confined to the Christians of his native Egypt. Rather, Copts, Melkites (Rūm Orthodox), Syrians – east and west, and even the Latin Christian heritage, all have occupied his mind and heart. And, lastly, he refuses to limit himself to the *Christians* within the Arabic speaking world: elements of the Islamic heritage, particularly those areas in which Christians and Muslims have interacted, have been subject to his scrutiny.

And, Samir's desire for scholarly perfection is not limited to his own work. In their biographical note [ix-xii], Ebied and Teule paint a picture of a man with a passion for scholarship, but a passion that is not limited to the improvement of his own work. As any student who has crossed paths with him could attest, he is a veritable walking encyclopedia for extant Christian Arabic manuscripts (having edited many of them himself). And he is more than willing to share his knowledge. That sixteen scholars from around the world have contributed to this volume is proof enough of the esteem in which he is held, and the extent of his influence.

The scholarly *isnāds* that trace themselves to Samir, directly or tangentially, now comprise more than one generation. While a single-volume *Festschrift* could not contain contributions from all those who have been influenced by Samir, the editors have chosen the topics wisely and well. The essays are topically arranged: Copts, Melkites, West Syrians, East Syrians, and Islam, each of which is an area near to Samir's heart. Reflective of Samir's own ability to talk with both scholars and "lay" persons, the articles are written with varying levels of accessibility for the general readership. For example, the works of Sidarus ("L'Oeuvre philologique copte d'Abū Shākir ibn al-Rāhib [XIIIe s.]") and Monferrer-Sala ("An Arabic-Muslim quotation of a biblical text: Ibn Kathīr's *al-Bidāya wa-l-nihāya* and the construction of the Ark of the Covenant") demonstrate in an exemplary fashion the philological expertise that is the bedrock of Christian Arab studies – but linguistic analysis, by its very nature, is highly technical and not every reader will have the training needed to fully appreciate the nuances of the argumentation.

While not everyone has the requisite academic preparation to engage themselves in all the various areas of study represented in this volume, the desideratum for scholars who share Samir's passion has perhaps never

been more pressingly felt than in the present moment. As modern technology, political designs, socio-economic desires and human curiosity bring the four quarters of the globe in closer proximity than ever before, the urgent need to understand our neighbors (which term no longer designates only the peoples of areas whose borders are contiguous) becomes increasingly apparent. This volume that is dedicated to the Arab Christian patrimony contains essays in English, French and German (with sometimes substantial examples from the original [Arabic]), which will enhance its ability to inform Euro-Americans of the Arab Christian patrimony. And, like both the contributors and the man to whom this *Festschrift* has been offered, the essays themselves will prompt further scholarship.

The work

The first three contributions illustrate the complexity of the Christian Arab patrimony in Egypt alone, by focusing on three discrete elements thereof: linguistic (Arabic and Coptic), inter-religious (Christian and Muslim), and intra-religious (Copt and Syrian Orthodox).⁹ The opening essay, “Oeuvre philologique copte d’Abū Shākir ibn al-Rāhib,” by Adel Sidarus, is a comprehensive presentation of a thirteenth century work *in Arabic* on Coptic philology – “the only work out of the entire medieval Coptic linguistic production that can be dated so precisely” [1]. Elements of the Arabic text, sometimes accompanied by a French translation, are provided. It is followed by Harald Suermann’s “Koptische arabische Apokalypsen,” which provides an overview of the diverse ways in which Copts have used apocalyptic literature to interpret the Arab reign (as a satanic reign; as punishment of Christian sins –such as the deviation from “orthodoxy”– etc.). Among the literature discussed are the Vision of Daniel, the Apocalypse of Pseudo-Athanasius, and those of Shenūda and Samuel of

⁹ Although there is no English contribution on Copts in the *Festschrift*, an example of the scholarly interest in the Coptic heritage among Anglophones (which is due in no small part to the efforts of Fr. SAMIR) is the recent work of Jason R. ZABOROWSKI: *The Coptic martyrdom of John of Phanijōit: Assimilation and conversion to Islam in thirteenth-century Egypt* (Leiden: Brill, 2004). This third volume in the series “History of Christian-Muslim relations” is very much in the tradition of SAMIR, as it contains an edition of the Coptic text, with an introduction and translation in English.

Qalamūn. It is intriguing to note that this literature survives in both Coptic and Arabic – although frequently the authors would lament the increasing hegemony of the Arabic language, and the loss of Coptic, particularly in the liturgy. The final Coptic contribution is that of Johannes den Heijer: “Les patriarches coptes d’origine syrienne.” Here, the interaction –in the late sixth to twelfth centuries– between the Copts and their brethren in the Syriac Orient, the Syriac Orthodox, is highlighted.

As evidenced by this third essay, the Copts have not been the only Christians in the Arabic speaking world to contend with the Islamic challenge and Arabization. For the Syrians, both west and east, Chalcedonian and non-Chalcedonian, have also come to express themselves in the idiom of the Qur’ān.

The first Christians to do so were the “Melkites” – or Rūm Orthodox, i.e. those Christians who accepted the first six ecumenical councils of “Roman/Byzantine” Orthodoxy, but lived in the Semitic Orient (which roughly corresponds to the area between present-day Saudi Arabia and Turkey, from the Mediterranean to the Iranian-Iraqi border). Sidney Griffith’s “Apologetics and historiography in the annals of Eutychios of Alexandria: Christian self-definition in the world of Islam” open the second section of this *Festschrift*. Noting that three of the four notable “historians” among the Arabic-writing Christians before the Crusades were Melkites, Griffith proceeds to examine the work and life of the first of these Christian Arab historians. He explores the “doctrinal, apologetical, and cultural considerations that first led Eutychios to compile the first edition” [66] of these annals through an examination of his life and times (877-940 CE) and the form and composition of the work itself. This is followed by another such monograph: Mark Swanson’s “Solomon, bishop of Mount Sinai (late tenth century AD)”. Here, “a portrait emerges of a priest who was concerned to build a library of Arabic-language Christian books of the highest quality, and to make them available to those who could read them with profit” [93] – much like Samir himself, as Swanson notes.¹⁰ Swanson provides (in Arabic, accompanied by an

¹⁰ Here it should be emphasized that the various conferences and publications that owe their inspiration to SAMIR are all devoted to the promulgation of a knowledge of the Arab

English translation) the six notices from Solomon of which he is aware. Barbara Roggema's contribution ("King parables in Melkite apologetic literature") elucidates the various religious issues with which Melkite apologists dealt, and provides a close analysis of their stylistic and rhetorical devices. She stresses that, while "Melkite apologists picked the fruits of their choice from the Qur'ān, [...] methodologically they did not yield to its commandments" [131].¹¹ Ray Jabre-Mouawad's presentation of the poem composed by the thirteenth century Melkite, Sulaymān al-Ashlūḥī, on the occasion of the Mamlūk capture of Tripoli (27 April 1287) throws the complexity of the inter-confessional relationships in the medieval Syrian Orient into stark relief. This poem exists in three, later, *karshūnī* manuscripts (Arabic written in the Syriac alphabet), all of which have been transmitted by Maronites¹²! In "Un témoin melkite de la prise de Tripoli par les Mameluks (27 avril 1297)," Jabre-Mouawad furnishes us with the manuscript history of the text, and demonstrates the poem's significance: it testifies to an established Melkite presence in Tripoli at the time of the "Frankish" kingdom of the late 1200s [139] and also to a positive sentiment towards these Franks, at least among some [147]. He also provides a critical edition of the Arabic [149-156], accompanied by a French translation [157-161]. Carsten-Michael Walbiner's "'...und um Jesu willen, Schickt sie nicht Ungebunden!' Die Bemühungen des Meletius Karma (1572-1635) um den Druck arabischer Büchen in Rom" illustrates another aspect of the history of European interactions with Christian Arabs: namely, those of Rome and Oriental Christians during the

Christian patrimony, as the "Biographical Note" of Ebied and Teule clearly demonstrates [ix-xii].

¹¹ Again, Anglophones will be pleased to know that an English translation of many of the works of Theodore ABŪ QURRA [fl. early ninth cent. CE], one of the earliest "Melkite" writers, is in production by John LAMOREAUX, as part of Brigham Young University's "Middle Eastern Texts Initiative": *Theodore Abū Qurrah* (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 2005). And even here Fr. SAMIR appears: Lamoreaux acknowledges a debt of gratitude to Samir for an edited text of ABŪ QURRA, an Italian translation of which was produced by Paola PIZZI (*La libertà. Teodoro Abū Qurrah* [Turin: S. Zamorani, 2001]).

¹² For an overview of the history of the Maronites, cf., e.g., P. DIB, *Histoire de l'église maronite*, Eng. trans. S. Beggiani (Detroit: Maronite Apostolic Exarchate, 1971).

Counter-Reformation.¹³ As with the Coptic contributions, those on the Melkites attest to the intricate web of interactions that exist among the various Christian communities of the Arabic speaking world, and show how these relationships are not confined to the Christians of the Islamic world: they extend to Europe. Nor are they confined to Christians; rather, there is a rich heritage of Christian-Muslim interaction, which is perhaps most clearly evidenced in the legacy of the Melkites – the first Christians to write in Arabic.

But the Rūm Orthodox (and Maronites) are not the only Syriac Christian communities in the Islamic world¹⁴. Spanning the west and east Syrian heritage, the Syrian Orthodox (“Jacobites” or “Monophysites” to their detractors) have a particularly intricate relationship with their Muslim overlords. With two contributions that touch on the Christian philosopher, Yahyā b. ‘Adī (d. 974 CE), Samir’s *Festschrift* reminds us of the role played by Arabic-speaking Christians in the preservation of Greek learning. For, at the behest of the early ‘Abbāsīd caliphs in Baghdad, Arabic-speaking Christians were employed to translate tomes of Greek learning into Arabic. These Arabic translations would, in the next

¹³ Rome and Oriental Christians, particularly those who speak Arabic, have a continuous, but under-studied history. Although the Crusades are the most intensely studied instance of their interactions, the Maronites, Melkites and Nestorians all have had historical encounters with Rome independent of the Crusades and the Counter-Reformation (cf., e.g., POPE INNOCENT III’s controversial “confirmation” of Maronite union with Rome in the Bull “Quia divinae sapientiae” of 4 January 1216; the “Melkite” Theodore ABŪ QURRA’s position on the role of the Bishop of Rome in his discussion of conciliar theology in S. GRIFFITH, “What has Constantinople to do with Jerusalem? Palestine in the ninth century: Byzantine Orthodoxy in the world of Islam,” in L. BRUBAKER (ed.), *Byzantium in the ninth century: Dead or alive?* [Aldershot: Ashgate, 1998], pp. 181-194; and, on a fascinating episode in Roman-Nestorian interactions, J.A. MONTGOMERY [trans.], *The history of Yaballaha III, Nestorian patriarch, and of his vicar, Bar Sauma, Mongol ambassador to the Frankish courts at the end of the thirteenth century* [New York: Columbia University Press, 1927]). Additionally, the Oriental Christian presence at the mid-fifteenth century Council of Florence is in need of further study, as most discussions focus on the Greek-Latin interactions there (cf. J. GILL, *The Council of Florence* [Cambridge: University Press, 1959]).

¹⁴ See the collection of essays in D. THOMAS (ed.), *Syrian Christians under Islam: The first thousand years* (Leiden: Brill, 2001).

centuries, be translated into Latin, beginning in Spain.¹⁵ Emilio Platti's "Yaḥyā ibn 'Adī. Réflexions à propos de questions du Kalām musulman" illustrates the close interface between Islamic "dialectical theology" (*ilm al-kalām*) and Christian Arabic reflections on God. While similar concepts were discussed in Christian and Muslim circles (free will vs. predestination; the nature of the creator), there were often differences about the proper terminology to employ. Since these arguments persist to this day, elements in this discussion (such as *iktisāb*, or the "acquisition" of acts) are particularly apropos for a *Festschrift* for Samir, as the latter "always wishes to underline the relevance of the theological thought of the ancient Christian Arab writers for contemporary thought" [178].¹⁶ The other contribution on Yaḥyā's thought is C. Baffioni's "The concept of 'nature' in Yaḥyā ibn 'Adī (A comparison with the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā')." In yet another example of the degree of intellectual exchange among the various confessions within the Arabic-speaking Islamic world, this examination is undertaken to explore the possible Greek roots of the concept of "nature" found in works of the (Muslim) "Brethren of Purity." This examination of ontology and cosmology in fourth/tenth century Arabic thought leaves us with the conclusion that Jews, Christians and Muslims benefited from the religiously diverse environment: while the minorities did indeed acquire the culture of the dominant community, they also influenced that culture's further development.

Sebastian Brock's "A neglected witness to the east Syriac New Testament commentary tradition: Sinai, Arabic MS 151" illustrates the degree of interaction that existed among the various Syriac traditions within the Arabic speaking Islamic world. Brock highlights the ecumenical aspect of this manuscript, as a "work whose contents probably derive entirely from exegetical tradition of the church of the East [. . .] but which was collated

¹⁵ Cf. Dimitri GUTAS, *Greek thought, Arabic culture: The Graeco-Arabic translation movement in Baghdad and early 'Abbāsīd society (2nd-4th/8th-10th centuries)* (London: Routledge, 1998) for an overview of this "translation movement."

¹⁶ In addition, SAMIR produced an edition of Yaḥyā's discussion on the oneness of God (*Maqāla fī l-tawḥīd*). Yet another work of Yaḥyā's has been edited by SAMIR, the *Tahdhīb al-akhlāq* ("Reformation of Morals"). Sidney GRIFFITH's 2002 English translation of this text is the first volume of Brigham Young University's "Eastern Christian Texts" series.

and perhaps further annotated by a Syrian Orthodox [...] and was then used in Melkite circles..." [215]. Possibly because of its geographic distance, the "Church of the East" ("Nestorians" to their detractors) is, for westerners, perhaps the least well-known element of Arab Christianity¹⁷. Tracing its official break from "the West" to 486 CE¹⁸, this Church is commonly known to western Church historians for its missionizing efforts in China, and its interactions with the Mongols. Among the Christians in the Arabic-speaking world, there has been a much more sophisticated level of knowledge of, and interaction with, their eastern brethren. For example, in Baghdad alone, Rūm Orthodox, Syrian Orthodox and the Church of the East coexisted under the 'Abbāsid caliphs. And, no less than their "western" counterparts, Arabic-speaking members of the "Church of the East" expressed their theology in Arabic while in dialogue with Muslims.

Gérard Troupeau's piece ("Note sur deux versions arabes de l'entretien du Catholicos Tomothée I avec le Calife al-Mahdi") demonstrates both this communal overlap, and the care that must be taken when working with manuscripts. A not uncommon theme in Christian Arabic apologetics is to have a doctrinal debate between a Christian religious leader and Muslims before (and, sometimes, with) the caliph. Dialogues of this sort (in which the Christian invariably bests his Muslim opponent[s]) are attributed both to the Nestorian Catholicos Timothy I (d. 823 CE) and the Melkite Bishop of Ḥarrān, Theodore Abū Qurra (d. ca. 830 CE)¹⁹ – although in the courts of different caliphs. By a close comparison of two parts of a Paris manuscript (Paris 215) with two separate editions of Timothy's debate,

¹⁷ The recent work of R. LE COZ, *L'Eglise d'Orient: Chrétiens d'Irak, d'Iran et de Turquie* (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1995), is therefore particularly welcome.

¹⁸ It was in this year, at the Council of MAR ACACIUS at Bayt 'Edrai, the Church of the East adopted the [non-Chalcedonian] position that the two natures (human and divine) are contained in *two* hypostases within the one person of Christ (see J.B. CHABOT, *Synodicon orientale au recueil de synods nestoriens* [Paris, 1902], pp. 55 and 302 for the Syriac original, and French translation, of this doctrinal formulation).

¹⁹ Cf. S. GRIFFITH, "The monk in the emir's majlis. Reflections on a popular genre of Christian literary apologetics in Arabic in the early Islamic period," in H. LAZARUS YAFEH et al. (eds.), *The majlis. Interreligious encounters in medieval Islam*. Studies in Arabic language and literature 4 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1999), pp. 13-65.

Troupeau demonstrates that Paris 215 contains 2 versions of Timothy's debate – even though the manuscript attributes one of these to Abū Qurra.

Another problem that arises when dealing with such texts is the question of the original language. In “Joseph II, Patriarch of the Chaldeans (1696-1713/4), and the *Book of the Magnet*, first soundings,” Herman Teule demonstrates how this problem can be approached through his examination of a work that “enjoyed great popularity in Chaldean²⁰ circles up to the beginnings of the 20th century” [221]. Composed at a time in which Italian and French Capuchin monks were an active presence in Amid, the *Book of the Magnet* (also called “The learned teacher of the eager Christian”) is reflective of an adoption of Latin devotions and spirituality, sometimes at the expense of the Oriental spiritual traditions [cf. 237]. Teule convincingly and masterfully demonstrates the multitude of layers involved in linguistic –and conceptual– analysis of texts that survive in multiple languages. He also includes (in English translation) the table of contents of the *Book of the magnet*, as well as a list of catalogues of manuscripts that reference the works of Joseph II. The contribution of the late Michel van Esbroeck (“Un apocryphe apocryphe sur les apôtres Pierre, Jean et Paul dans le ms. Mingana 40, pièce 30”) presents another modern piece, an “apocryphal apocrypha” – a work from the late nineteenth century that wishes to present itself as pertaining to the early Christian period. Written in *karshūnī*, the text is here presented in an Arabic edition, and is accompanied by a French translation and van Esbroeck's justification of his dating.

While many of the previous works touch on issues of Christian-Muslim debate, the final two contributions (Juan Pedro Monferrer-Sala's “An Arabic-Muslim quotation of a biblical text: Ibn Kathīr's *al-Bidāya wa-l-nihāya* and the construction of the Ark of the Covenant” and David Thomas' “A Mu'tazilī response to Christianity: Abū 'Alī al-Jubbā'ī's attack on the Trinity and Incarnation”) demonstrate this inter-religious dimension most explicitly. Through an intensive philological analysis of a biblical quotation found in the Arabic work of one of the foremost Muslim

²⁰ The designation for those of the Church of the East in union with Rome. Although Pope Julius III proclaimed the first ‘Patriarch of the Chaldeans’ in 1553, a variety of factors prevented this church's firm establishment prior to the early 1800s.

thinkers of the classical period, Monferrer-Sala makes the case that Syriac was the original language of the biblical quotation used by Ibn Kathīr (d. 774/1373). As this would reject a Latin, or Greek, or even Hebrew version of the Bible known to Ibn Kathīr's source of biblical material, this thesis could greatly enhance our understanding of the transmission of the Bible in Arabic, as well as the nature of Christian-Muslim interactions in the classical period of Islamic civilization. Finally, David Thomas' analysis of a [heterodox] Muslim refutation of key Christian doctrines highlights the major trends in Muslim reactions towards Christianity, from the third/ninth century – up until the present day, among which is “a growing confidence in Islam as the embodiment and summation of truth that can deal with contenders from outside on terms dictated by itself” [313]. And, as Arabic-speaking Christianity is arguably the “outsider” with which Islam has the longest and most intimate history, a fuller knowledge of the Christian Arab patrimony has never been more urgently called for than at the present moment. This *Festschrift* to the man who has devoted his life to promoting knowledge of, love for, and interest in the Christian heritage of the Arabic-speaking world is a fitting response to that call.

Technical details

Finally, a word must be said about the technical aids that complement, and enhance, the vision of the editors and the efforts of the contributors.

A comprehensive and extensive set of indices is a desideratum for any work that contains such disparate topics between its covers. Fortunately, the present volume contains three excellent indices: “Index of Names and Works”; “Index of Geographical Names”; and “Index of Manuscripts.” As it is a rare and difficult thing to find useful indices, here the editors have done remarkably well, since all three are pertinent both to the work and the interests of those likely to access it.

Secondly, a few of the articles are accompanied by illustrations that enhance the presentation. These plates (present in the contributions of Sidarus and Swanson), which show the manuscripts referenced in certain of the pieces, demonstrate in a tangible way the materials with which scholars of the Arab Christian patrimony work.

The dual language ability evidenced in the preparation of the manuscript is another commendable feature. While the Arabic (right to left) ordering is suppressed in favor of the left-to-right orientation of the text, the Arabic (and other non-Roman scripts) are neatly incorporated to the text as a whole. And, the transliteration appears to be quite faithful to the original language(s) throughout – another no mean feat, especially given the multitude of languages in which the articles are written. Anyone familiar with the differences among French, English and German transliteration systems for Arabic (and the multitude of systems within any one language) will fully appreciate the careful editorial attention needed to achieve such a clean text (E. Platti's contribution is an especially noteworthy example).

The final attribute that should be noted is the full bibliography of Samir's works – most suitably rounding off the work. The range of topics and sheer number of works explain why nearly all of the essays in the *Festschrift* could not but allude to him. Even the works that are only tangentially related to Samir's interests cannot help but cite him in a footnote, so all-encompassing has been his influence.

The only lacunae that strike the reader are 1) the dearth of any discussion of the contributors to the *Festschrift* and 2) a comprehensive bibliography of works cited in the individual articles. The former is somewhat rectified by the fact that all of the pieces indicate the author's current geographical locale, or institutional affiliation. And, concerning the latter point, relevant secondary bibliographic material is contained in the footnotes for the various chapters, and a few of the individual contributions have discrete bibliographies (Sidarus' bibliography being one, Teule's appendix of manuscript catalogues being another, Monferrer-Sala's list of abbreviated titles, the third). As can be seen, however, these minor discrepancies do not detract from the work as a whole.

In conclusion, by including a wide array of topics, the editors have avoided the temptation to produce either an overly-technical volume or an overly-general one. Rather, they have succeeded in creating a work that has something for everyone who has an interest in the Christian Arab patrimony. Furthermore, the careful scholarship and engaging presentations will engender in the initiate to the subject an appreciation of

the efforts of Fr. Samir and those who are in his line, as well as a desire to follow in their footsteps.