

Habib Ibrahim

The Correspondence of Mūsā Ṭrābulṣī (1732–1787)

Early Arabic Printing in the East

Edited by
Ioana Feodorov

Volume 6

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The Correspondence of Mūsā Ṭrābulṣī (1732–1787)

Critical Edition, English Translation, and Introduction

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Preface

On July 13, 1724, Patriarch Athanasios III Dabbās of Antioch died; he had advised that his young protosynkellos, Sylvester the Cypriot, succeed him. Athanasios's supporters in Aleppo immediately sent envoys and funds to Constantinople to secure a *berat* for Sylvester. Meanwhile, the Capuchins and the Jesuits in Damascus rallied 400 signatories behind Sārūfīm Ṭānās, whom they consecrated as patriarch under the name “Cyril” on October 1, 1724. Concerned about “Latin deviation”, the Ecumenical Patriarch Jeremias III had already petitioned the grand vizier; on August 18/29, 1724, the Porte issued a *berat* instructing that the See of Antioch be given only to “an imperially trusted person who follows the ancient rite”, and expressly forbidding any local Syrian candidate. As a result, Sylvester, then residing on Mount Athos, was elected in Constantinople on September 24, 1724.¹

Sylvester stayed in the capital to secure French goodwill. During an audience on October 22, 1724, he assured Ambassador Jean-Baptiste Louis d'Andrezel that he would maintain peace if Latin missionaries ceased proselytizing among the Rūm.² Meanwhile, he sent Bishop Timotheos of Ḥamā as vicar (*wakīl*) to Aleppo and a *qabī* (kapıcı) to take control of Damascus.³ Cyril Ṭānās and his allies fled to Mount Lebanon.⁴ Gerasimus, bishop of Aleppo, was captured and exiled to Lemnos, and later to Mount Athos.

After arriving in Aleppo on November 9, 1725, Sylvester was welcomed as Athanasios's designated successor.⁵ However, his strictness quickly caused him to

1 These events are documented in various sources and recounted in different studies. Most recently, they were retold in B. Heyberger, “La division de l'Église d'Antioche dans son contexte local et global”, in B. Heyberger, Ž. Pasha, R. el Gemayel (eds.), *La division du patriarcat grec d'Antioche en 1724 et la construction des identités confessionnelles orthodoxe et catholique*, Rome, 2024 (henceforth Heyberger, “La division”), p. 49–61; M. Ṭipāu, *Sylvester of Antioch. Life and Achievements of an 18th-Century Christian Orthodox Patriarch*, Berlin/Boston, 2024 (henceforth Ṭipāu, *Sylvester of Antioch*), p. 42–45.

2 The detailed story of this meeting was retold by Ṭipāu, *Sylvester of Antioch*, p. 54–57.

3 Sylvester of Antioch, *Acts of the Church Synods Held in Constantinople*, București (Bucharest), Monastery of St Spyridon, 1747 (Vienna, Austrian National Library 30439-A ALT MAG), f. 109r; see <http://data.onb.ac.at/rec/AC10320457>.

4 See M. Brayk, *Tārīkh al-Shām (1720–1782)*, ed. Q. al-Bāshā, Harisa (Lebanon), 1930, p. 5; ‘Abd Allāh Ibn Ṭrād, *Mukhtaṣar tārīkh al-asāqifa allaḍīna ruqqū ri’āsāt al-kahanūt al-jalīla fī madīnat Bayrūt fī al-qarnayn al-thāmin ‘ashar wa-l-tāsi’ ‘ashar*, ed. N. Qā’idbay, Beirut, 2002 (henceforth Ibn Ṭrād, *Mukhtaṣar tārīkh*), p. 55.

5 Regarding the arrival of Patriarch Sylvester to Aleppo, see Ni’ma ibn Tūmā, *‘Ujālat rākīb al-tarīq li-man raḍīya bi-taqlīd al-talfīq*. This work was partially edited in Q. al-Bāshā, *Tārīkh ṭā’ifat al-rūm al-malakīya wa-al-ruhbānīya al-mukhalīṣīya*, vol. 2, Ṣaydā, 1939 (henceforth Ibn Tūmā, *‘Ujālat*

become estranged from the city. In eight months, he issued about fifty excommunications, compelled clergy to sign an anti-Latin profession of faith, prohibited the consumption of fish at Lenten banquets, and dispatched çavuşes to record which Orthodox individuals had attended the Corpus Christi service at the chapel of the Friars Minor on June 20, 1726.⁶

Sylvester's cultural policy was equally militant. He invited a master from Patmos, Kyr Iakobos, to establish a Greek school and enforced a strict anti-Latin profession of faith among the clergy, punishing those who resisted. He proscribed the veneration of saints promoted by the Latin missionaries, including Saint Joseph and Saint Elijah. He introduced theological reforms, including a more explicit affirmation of the Holy Spirit's role in the Eucharistic transformation.⁷ Muslim notables joined over 400 Rûm in suing him for extortion, and Timotheos, the bishop of Ḥamā, was subjected to corporal punishment for pawning an ecclesiastical plate. On August 19, 1726, Sylvester secretly escaped at night to Latakia, then to Tripoli, and clandestinely returned to Constantinople.⁸ The Aleppians likely emphasized that Athanasios Dabbās had showed greater tolerance in these specific areas, which fueled increased hostility in Sylvester. As a result, before leaving Aleppo, Sylvester proceeded to anathematize Athanasios Dabbās, a move that worsened the fervor among the Aleppians.⁹

Leaving Syrian land, Sylvester endured six long years, which included traveling to raise funds and provide support. The first three years were marked by confusion: the Patriarch could not return to his See because of the trial against him, yet the Catholics could not install Ṭanās because Sylvester had not been deposed. In this precarious situation, Sylvester appears to have stayed in Constantinople. In 1730, Sylvester began a series of journeys in preparation for his return, primarily to raise funds to repay the debts incurred during his dispute with the Catholics.

After wintering in Ioannina until February 1730, he traveled to the Romanian Principalities, where Prince Nikolaos Mavrokordatos of Wallachia hosted him and provided the urgent funds he needed. As the former first dragoman of the Ottoman Porte, the prince may have sent him back to Constantinople with strong letters of recommendation and pressed for the reopening of his case. These efforts appear to have influenced the Porte and facilitated Sylvester's return.¹⁰

rākib al-ṭariq, the part edited by Bāshā), p. 162. See also Brayk, *Tārīkh al-Shām*, p. 5–6; Ibn Ṭrād, *Mukhtaṣar tārīkh*, p. 60–61.

6 See Ṭipāu, *Sylvester of Antioch*, p. 58; Heyberger, “La division”, p. 53–54.

7 See Heyberger, “La division”, p. 53.

8 See Ṭipāu, *Sylvester of Antioch*, p. 64–65.

9 Nī'ma ibn Tūmā reminds Patriarch Sylvester of this incident in a reconciliation letter sent to him through Payas in 1751. See Ibn Tūmā, *Ujālat rākib al-ṭariq*, p. 166.

10 See Ṭipāu, *Sylvester of Antioch*, p. 78–82.

Meanwhile, the Aleppians petitioned to leave the Antiochene jurisdiction.¹¹ A firman of January 1727 transferred the city to the Ecumenical Patriarch and appointed a new bishop, Gregory, who arrived on June 16, 1727. Gregory withdrew in April 1730. The Aleppians petitioned to reinstate Gerasimos. In November 1732, an agreement was reached, Gerasimos was released, and the bishopric was transferred to Maximus Ḥakīm.¹²

This move came too late, as Sylvester entered Syria again toward the end of November that year and succeeded in reinstating a *wakīl*, Ḥabīb al-Aʿwar, in July 1733. From the correspondence we are publishing, we learn about the strategy he devised to ensure the necessary pastoral care for his widely spread patriarchate. He sent a deputation of deacons and laypeople – named in Letter 1 – probably led by his former secretary Sophronios of Kilis through Lebanon and Syria up to Adana (1733–1735); he himself led another group, accompanied by his newly appointed secretary Mūsā Ṭrabulsī, across Anatolia to Erzurum, Trebizond, the Georgian border, and Cappadocia (1735–1739).¹³ Afterwards, in 1740, they visited Mount Lebanon and Beirut, and established relations with the emirs Miḥim and Najm. In this way, Sylvester sought to reduce the influence of the Catholics who had found refuge on Mount Lebanon. In letters sent to the emirs the following year, he stressed how honored he was to have visited them and placed his *wakīl*, Miḥāʾil Tūmā, at their disposal.¹⁴ Sylvester remained at least until 1742 in Damascus, where he intended to celebrate Easter that year.¹⁵

11 See Brayk, *Tārīkh al-Shām*, p. 6.

12 On November 9, according to two documents preserved in the archives of the Propaganda Fide. See C. Walbiner, “An Internal Strife within the Early Melkite Catholic Church of Antioch: Ignatios of Homs Against Cyril Ṭānās and Maximos Ḥakīm”, in Heyberger, Pasha, el Gemayel (eds.), *La division du patriarcat*, p. 250–251. Niʿma ibn Tūmā believes that Sylvester is indirectly the reason for electing Maximus as bishop of Aleppo. The community desired the return of their Bishop Gerasimus, who had been exiled to Mount Athos. In response, a letter was sent from Constantinople, stating that Gerasimus would be released if they accepted the appointment of Maximus as their new bishop. Despite that, the Aleppians did not consider Maximus to be their legitimate bishop until Gerasimus officially resigned. Cf. Ibn Tūmā, *ʿUjālat rākīb al-ṭarīq*, p. 163.

13 Miḥāʾil Brayk recounts that after Patriarch Sylvester stayed in Damascus for a while, he fell into conflict with the Damascenes. A period of hostility, setbacks, and mutual complaints followed, with both the Catholic and Orthodox sides appealing to authorities and spending large sums of money. The situation resulted in no benefit; it did not improve, and hostility grew. This forced him to leave Damascus and travel through the territories of his patriarchate for a time until issues were resolved. He then returned to Damascus, where order was restored and his tenure proceeded peacefully. Cf. Brayk, *Tārīkh al-Shām*, p. 8.

14 See the letters in Appendix 3.

15 See Ṭipāu, *Sylvester of Antioch*, p. 88.

In 1744, Sylvester headed north again. In April, he was in Edirne on his way to Bucharest, capital of Wallachia.¹⁶ Prince Michael Racoviță welcomed him in Bucharest and Prince Ioan Mavrokordatos in Iași, capital of Moldavia, in June. He spent over a year in Moldavia, established an Arabic press at the Monastery of St Sabbas in Iași, and cleared long-standing loans (including 1,500 groschen to “sinior Lukakis” on February 11, 1745).¹⁷

While Sylvester was collecting funds in Iași, his rival Cyril Țănăs unexpectedly obtained an Ottoman *berat* in February 1745.¹⁸ Sylvester hurried to Constantinople from Galați; with the support of the grand dragoman, the Porte canceled Cyril’s patent by August 1745 and restored his status. He assigned Damascus to Metropolitan Nicephorus in 1746. He sent a *statikon* to Gennadius, bishop of Aleppo, who had allowed Catholics to pray in the Cathedral after the Orthodox, forbidding this practice.¹⁹

He then traveled across Wallachia from 1746 to 1748.²⁰ Sylvester succeeded in securing the Monastery of Saint Spyridon in Bucharest, establishing it as an endowment. It was there that genuine efforts were made to develop new type for the printing press.²¹ In letters and in the prefaces of the books printed in Iași and Bucharest, he insisted on the importance of this effort for pastoral care; some books were to be distributed free of charge, and others were to be sold at a low price, affordable to all the faithful. Technical issues were encountered, and new typefaces were cast.²² While awaiting the completion of this work, in October 1748, Sylvester left for Constantinople (Letter 64).

¹⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 88.

¹⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 90.

¹⁸ Mikhā’il Brayk asserts that Țănăs spent 32 days in the patriarchal See in Damascus. Contradicting him, the editor, in a footnote, adds that this is an “illusion” of the author because Țănăs did not have the time to reach Damascus. See Brayk, *Tārīkh al-Shām*, p. 12. It seems, though, that Brayk’s information is accurate because the *berat* of Țănăs was valid for almost six months, which we believe allowed him to reach Damascus. This is also confirmed by a letter of Fr. Rousset, September 15, 1750. See Țipău, *Sylvester of Antioch*, p. 93. For the date of the *berat*, see H. Çolak, “Speaking the Ottoman Language: The Schism of 1724 and the Ottoman Central Administration”, in Heyberger, Pasha, el Gemayel (eds.), *La division du patriarcat*, p. 122–124.

¹⁹ Regarding this *statikon*, Ni’ma ibn Tūmā sent a first letter, which is no longer preserved, to Sylvester in Constantinople. Later, he sent a second letter to Wallachia, likely around 1746/7, in which he described the effects of this *statikon* as being similar to the one sent with Timotheos, “which became the cause of hostility between you and the parishioners, who, because of him, were fined [by the governor]”. Cf. MS Beirut, Bibliothèque orientale Ar. 1825, f. 2v.

²⁰ See Țipău, *Sylvester of Antioch*, p. 97–100.

²¹ New insights on the history of this monastery were provided in Țipău, *Sylvester of Antioch*, p. 98–99.

²² This was an attempt to engrave new type by Abū Sha’r, as mentioned in the Letters 27 and 52.

Sylvester's proximity to the Ottoman administration in Constantinople initially secured him an advantage over the Catholics. However, a series of events left him outmaneuvered, pushed him back to Syria, and forced a change of strategy. Sophronios, formerly his deacon and secretary and, since 1741, bishop of Acre, charged with countering the growing Catholic influence in Sidon and Acre, was sent by Sylvester to Aleppo in 1750, but the Catholics forced him out of his See. Wary of polemics after nearly twenty years, Sophronios left for Constantinople in search of a quieter monastic life. Mūsa, Sylvester's secretary, then married and caring for his family in Damascus, was unwilling to undertake further travels. Yūsuf Mark was needed in Beirut, where Sylvester wanted to establish a printing press, in a city witnessing a marked growth in silk production in the 1750s. Therefore, the decision was made in September 1749 to head to his See.²³

Deeming it wise to make peace with the Aleppians before entering his See, Sylvester relied on the mediation of Mūsā Abusṭūlī (Apostoli?) of Payas; Aleppo was reconciled with the patriarch on May 30, 1751.²⁴ Sylvester re-entered Damascus in 1753.²⁵ Later, he visited Tripoli, where he remained at least until January 1754. According to Ibn Ṭrād, author of the Chronicle of the Beirut Orthodox Bishopric, this visit made the *Latinophrones* in Beirut “tremble”, and they abandoned the church that they had previously held.²⁶

Between 1754 and 1766, Sylvester's mobility appears to be limited, first by his desire to stay within his patriarchate and his See, and second, by two unfortunate events: the earthquake of 1759 and the plague of 1760.²⁷ In 1754, he prepared the Holy Chrism in Damascus, with two bishops, seventeen priests, and nine deacons present for the celebration. In May, he sent a letter to the bishop of Sidon providing instructions; the bishop promised to visit the patriarch as soon as he recovered (Letter 29). Sylvester seems to have been actively involved in rebuilding and embellishing churches. In 1756, he painted two or three large icons for the Orthodox Cathedral of Saint George in Beirut.²⁸ According to contemporary accounts, in 1757, he reconstructed the church entrance of the patriarchal residence in Damascus, which had been low and cave-like, raising and widening it and paving the area in front of the entrance. He renovated the outer church dedicated to Saints Cyprian

²³ See Ṭipāu, *Sylvester of Antioch*, p. 102.

²⁴ The details of the peace are retold in three letters from Ni'ma ibn Tūmā to Sylvester and Mūsā Abusṭūlī preserved in his work *ʿUjālat rākib al-ṭarīq*.

²⁵ See Ṭipāu, *Sylvester of Antioch*, p. 105.

²⁶ See Ibn Ṭrād, *Mukhtaṣar tārikh*, p. 63-65.

²⁷ One last trip to Constantinople may have taken place in 1765, as Ṭipāu has demonstrated. See Ṭipāu, *Sylvester of Antioch*, p. 114.

²⁸ See Ṭipāu, *Sylvester of Antioch*, p. 191.

and Justina, replacing its roof, adding seven stone arches, and raising the ceiling to make it more spacious, which transformed it into a beautiful church.²⁹ In the same period, he also built three arches for the church of Saints Cosmas and Damian.³⁰ Because these works were undertaken without permission, he was imprisoned along with his *wakīl* a year later.³¹ In 1759, he painted the mosaic of the church of the Forty Martyrs of Homs.³²

Lessons learned: to avoid new troubles and likely fatigue from travel, in 1757, Sylvester suggested that Aleppo be placed back under the Constantinopolitan jurisdiction, and at his recommendation, Philemon became its bishop.³³ Sylvester probably spent 1760 and 1761 in Damascus during the plague, as citizens were advised not to travel. In late March 1762, he consecrated Makarios Ṣadaqa as bishop of Sidon and Tyre, preparing him to succeed him. The shared desire of Sylvester and the Damascenes to establish an Arab patriarch was not realized, since the other bishops refused Sadaqa's candidate.

In February 1765, at the church of the Most Holy Mother of God in Damascus, Sylvester of Antioch, along with Makarios of Tyre and Sidon and Ierotheos of Ṣaydnāyā, consecrated Archimandrite Anthimos as bishop of Eirenoupolis.³⁴ Sylvester died on March 13, 1766, and a Greek bishop, Philemon of Aleppo, succeeded him. Aware of the bishops' refusal to consecrate Makarios Ṣadaqa as patriarch, the Damascenes decided to ask the Constantinopolitan synod to install Sophronios of Kilis, an Arab, who was then in Constantinople.³⁵ The bishops asked Sophronios to become patriarch of Antioch, but he refused and preferred to remain "in quiet places".

Governing largely from abroad, Sylvester relied on a multilingual circle. Along with the well-known Ilyās Fakhr, at least six other collaborators helped him administer the Apostolic See both when he was absent and present. He needed a *kātib* in Arabic and Ottoman Turkish (initially Sophronios of Kilis, then Mūsā Trābulṣī), a *kātib* in Greek (Basil); a *wakīl* (mainly Mikhā'il Tūmā); a *tarjumān* (Ilyās Fakhr); a Greek teacher (Iakobos of Patmos); and an Arabic teacher who also supervised the printing press (Yūsuf Mark). All are featured in Mūsā's correspondence that we are

29 See Brayk, *Tārīkh al-Shām*, p. 47.

30 *Ibidem*, p. 48.

31 *Ibidem*, p. 65. Even though Brayk indicates that this happened a year later, he places it in 1759.

32 See below, Ch. 1.2.4.

33 See A. Rustum, *The Church of the City of God Great Antioch*, vol. 3, 1453–1928 A.D., Beirut-Jounieh, 1988 (henceforth Rustum, *The Church of the City of God*), p. 155.

34 See Țipău, *Sylvester of Antioch*, p. 112–113.

35 According to Mikhā'il Brayk, before the Damascenes officially made their request on June 10, they received letters from the three patriarchs of Constantinople, Alexandria, and Jerusalem, stating that Philemon was consecrated patriarch. See Brayk, *Tārīkh al-Shām*, p. 81–82.

publishing here from a *unicum* preserved in the collection of the Syriac Orthodox Patriarchate, call number 300.³⁶ The collection offers new insights into the essential roles they played during Sylvester's time as patriarch.³⁷ These letters reveal how Sylvester and his collaborators governed the bishoprics listed in the *berat*: Antakya, Şam, Haleb, Trablusşam, Sayda, Beyrut, Ladikya, Payas, Adana, Ḥamā, Homs, Baalbek, Diyarbakır, Erzurum, Ahıska, Çıldır, and their dependencies (*tevâbi'i*).³⁸

Drawing upon the correspondence and a wide range of manuscripts, we produce the first comprehensive biographical account of this important yet overlooked figure of the 18th-century Orthodox intellectual elite. Our study significantly expands and refines the information provided by Ḥaddād regarding both Sophronios and Yūsuf Mark by examining manuscripts preserved in various libraries. This allows us to correct inaccuracies, contextualize their careers more fully, and uncover new aspects of their intellectual and ecclesiastical activity.

Sophronios of Kilis, who began his career as Sylvester's deacon and secretary, was among the most active figures in the Antiochian revival. Fluent in both Arabic and Greek, he was instrumental in translating key theological texts, correcting liturgical books, and circulating Orthodox apologetic works throughout the region. His collaboration with Iakobos was formative, and he eventually became one of the main channels through which Greek Orthodox teachings were transmitted into Arabic. In addition to his linguistic work, Sophronios was entrusted with extensive pastoral missions. He was dispatched across the patriarchate – especially to Sidon, Acre, and Aleppo – to consolidate the Orthodox presence and oppose the increasing influence of the Latin missionaries. His appointment as bishop of Acre and later as

36 See R. Haddad, "La correspondance de Trābulṣī, secrétaire du patriarche d'Antioche Sylvestre de Chypre", in P. Canivet, J.-P. Rey-Coquais (eds.), *Mémorial Monseigneur Joseph Nasrallah*, Damascus, 2006, p. 257–288 (henceforth Haddad, "La correspondance"). Recently, Ioana Feodorov re-examined the collection of letters to highlight two essential topics addressed within: the establishment of the Christian Orthodox Arabic press in Bucharest under the care of Patriarch Sylvester and his collaborators, and the cultural exchanges in which these Levantine Christians engaged both in learning foreign languages and in teaching Arabic in Bucharest. See I. Feodorov, *Arabic Printing for the Christians in Ottoman Lands. The East-European Connection*, Berlin/Boston, 2023 (henceforth Feodorov, *Arabic Printing*), p. 235–254.

37 A missing topic in the *Correspondence* is icon painting. Sylvester himself was an icon painter who donated more than twenty of his icons to churches in Lebanon and Syria after 1759. See Tîpău, *Sylvester of Antioch*, p. 249–270. An active painter during Sylvester's patriarchate was Ḥannā al-Qudṣī, who painted between 1734 and 1744 in Latakia. See Ray Jabre Mouawad, *İcônes et églises de Tripoli-Liban*, [Beirut], 2023. This was the same time and place where Yūsuf was active. For a list of the icons he painted, preserved in Latakia, see <https://home.balamand.edu.lb/english/ARPOA.asp?id=6743&fid=270&strPageName=Peintres> (last consulted 01.08.2025)

38 For a comparison between the places mentioned in the *berat* and the *Notitia* of Chrysanthos Notaras, see Çolak, *Relations*, p. 206.

patriarch of Constantinople (as Sophronios II) marked the culmination of a career rooted in intellectual discipline, church diplomacy, and personal asceticism.

Mūsā Ṭrābulṣī, the patriarch's longest-serving secretary and the central figure in this volume, was more than a scribe: he was a grammarian, a translator, and an administrator whose extensive correspondence reveals the internal workings of the Antiochian Church. His collection of letters and his works reflect a cultivated mastery of Arabic, deep familiarity with Ottoman Turkish, and a refined literary style, shaped by classical models. Mūsā traveled with Sylvester on arduous journeys across Anatolia and the Levant, collecting alms and consolidating ecclesiastical authority. He also translated complex texts – most notably the Arabic version of Judasz Tadeusz Krusiński, *Tārīkh al-suyyāh* – and compiled a handbook on Arabic epistolography.³⁹ In the 1750s, he was actively involved in the Beirut press and may have overseen its operations alongside Yūsuf Mark. After Sylvester died in 1766, Mūsā remained a respected elder in Damascus, engaged in ecclesiastical correspondence, manuscript endowment, and the supervision of younger clerics. The group of letters received by his literate friends – preserved quasi uniquely in the collection edited here – constitutes one of the most valuable surviving documentary records of the Antiochian Patriarchate in the 18th century.

Yūsuf Mark, a priest from Tripoli and a leading figure in the Antiochian literary revival, combined grammatical accuracy with pastoral engagement. Initially trained in Arabic grammar and rhetoric, he worked under the guidance of Ilyās Fakhr and collaborated with Sophronios to revise and refine Arabic translations of Greek texts. His ordination in 1743 marked his transition from scribe to priest. Between 1747 and 1749, he was stationed in Bucharest, where he supervised the typesetting and editing of several works at Sylvester's press. Later, in Beirut, he helped establish the third Orthodox printing press in the Levant and opened a school for Arabic and theological studies. His role in preparing the Psalter and the Horologion for publication demonstrates his concern for doctrinal accuracy and linguistic elegance. His letters – elegant, expressive, and rich in literary color – reveal a writer deeply dedicated to improving the quality and clarity of Orthodox

39 For *Tārīkh al-suyyāh*, see Judasz Tadeusz Krusiński, *Tārīkh-i seyyāh der beyân-ı zuhūr-i Aghvāniyān ve sebeb-i inhidām-ı binā-i devlet-i şāhān-ı Şāfeviyān / A History of the Traveler Describing the Emergence of the Afghans and the Reasons for the Destruction of the Foundations of the State of the Safavid Shahs*, translated by Ibrahim Müteferrika, Istanbul, 1142/1729. For the identification of the work, see Falāḥ Zayd Thwīnī Al-Mṭirī, “Kitāb *Mir’āt al-‘ibra fī ‘ajā’ib al-qudra li-Mūsā bin Jirjis abī Nawfal al-naḥawī al-Ṭrābulṣī* (1139 H/1727 M– t. ba’d 1186 H/1772 M)”, Master dissertation, Jordan: Jāmi’at al-bayt, 2019. For a description of the printed book, see O. Sabev, *The Müteferrika Press. Arabic Typography in an Ottoman Context*, Berlin/Boston, 2025, p. 94–98. The Arabic epistolography is examined in the present volume for the first time. See below, Ch. 1.1.1.2.

Arabic expression. Yūsuf was also a sought-after preacher and teacher, praised in contemporary sources as “the teacher of bibliophiles” and “glory of Arab writers”.

Kyr Iakobos of Patmos, often called the *Daskalos*, played a key role in the intellectual revival led by Sylvester. A learned monk from Patmos, Iakobos was invited to the Levant to teach Greek and serve as a spiritual guide for aspiring Orthodox clergy. More than just a grammarian, he was a liturgist and a preacher whose sermons, teachings, and translations helped reaffirm Orthodox identity in the face of Latin encroachment. His close collaboration with Sophronios introduced a method of carefully comparing Greek originals with Arabic translations – an approach that reshaped Antiochian textual practice. During his time in Tripoli and Damascus, he formed a circle of disciples and left a lasting influence on the emerging generation of Arabophone Orthodox scholars.

Ilyās Fakhr, the patriarch’s *tarjumān* and Mūsā’s maternal uncle, was crucial to the operation of Sylvester’s administration. A polyglot fluent in Arabic, Greek, and Ottoman Turkish, Ilyās combined political skill with literary expertise. As a dragoman, he acted as a liaison between the Patriarchate and the Ottoman authorities. He also served as a proofreader and adviser in preparing Arabic polemical and liturgical texts. He made sure that translations from Greek were not only doctrinally accurate but also idiomatically elegant – qualities especially important in a setting of interconfessional polemic. His editorial influence is clear in several polemical works written under his supervision and proofreading. Beyond texts, he provided theological guidance and logistical support to clergy across the Patriarchate. Ilyās’s roles as author, canonist, editor, educator, and strategist were vital in shaping the Orthodox literary and doctrinal stance during one of its most challenging times.

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1 Introductory Study

1.1 Major Figures in the Correspondence

Undoubtedly, the three central figures who emerge from this correspondence are Sophronios of Kilis, Yūsuf Mark, and Mūsā Ṭrābulṣī. While the surviving letters include exchanges addressed to Mūsā by both Sophronios and Yūsuf, the letters Mūsā sent to them have unfortunately not survived. Nevertheless, his role as the initiator and primary recipient of the correspondence makes him central to it.

When Rashīd Ḥaddād first uncovered this collection of letters and published a study on them, his primary focus was on reconstructing the historical backgrounds of Sophronios of Kilis and Yūsuf Mark.¹ However, there was no dedicated section on Mūsā Ṭrābulṣī, creating a gap in the literature regarding his life and importance. As we will show in this chapter, earlier references to Mūsā in modern scholarship have been few and incomplete.

Although a strictly chronological structure might have dictated beginning with Sophronios, who was the first to be involved as secretary of Patriarch Sylvester, then turning to Mūsā, and concluding with his later associate and friend Yūsuf, we have chosen instead to begin with Mūsā Ṭrābulṣī, the very reason this collection exists.

This decision stems from the nature of the source: the correspondence belongs to Mūsā, and it is through his effort to gather these letters that we access the larger network of collaborators. Mūsā is at the center of this collection of documents; Sophronios, Iakobos, Yūsuf Mark, and others appear in his circle as correspondents, mentors, or companions. Through this organized material, we gain the chance to reconstruct a forgotten chapter of the history of the Antiochian Orthodox Patriarchate.

1.1.1 Mūsā Ṭrābulṣī

1.1.1.1 Mūsā Ṭrābulṣī's Biography

Mūsā is part of the Nawfal family, as shown by his lineage “al-Nawfalī”, mentioned in Letter 33. The author points out that Mūsā's identity as a Nawfalī, or member of

¹ In his above-mentioned work signed Rachid Haddad, “La correspondance de Ṭrābulṣī secrétaire du patriarche d'Antioche Sylvestre de Chypre”, in P. Canivet, J.-P. Rey-Coquais (eds.), *Mémorial Monseigneur Joseph Nasrallah*, Damascus, 2006, p. 257–288.

the Nawfal family, is not just a name but an essential part of who he is, including his appearance, demeanor, and character.

In a colophon, he signs Mūsā son of Jirjis son of Mikhā'il son of Abū Nawfal, known as Ibn al-Naḥū al-Ṭrābulṣī.² This reveals the names of his father and grandfather, respectively Jirjis and Mikhā'il.³ The family is named after Nawfal, who is either Mūsā's great-grandfather or one of his ancestors. Mūsā also provides the name of his mother, Maryam.⁴

Maryam was the sister of Ilyās Fakhr, who served as the Logothetis of the Patriarchate of Antioch. Mūsā is identified as Ilyās Fakhr's nephew in Letters 13, 30, and 68. The two dragomans, Jirjis ibn Abī Nawfal and Ilyās Fakhr, could have been friends before they became brothers-in-law.

According to 'Īsā Iskandar al-Ma'lūf, the Nawfal family is believed to have originated from Ḥawrān or a nearby area close to Homs or Aleppo in Syria. Ya'qūb Nawfal, who helped al-Ma'lūf reconstruct the family's history, told him that Patriarch Gregory IV Haddad, then bishop of Tripoli, had conveyed to him information contained in an old document about a certain Nawfal from Anfeh, who donated or sold land to the Monastery of Balamand.⁵ This suggests the possibility of a migration of the family or some of its members to Anfeh, a small town near Tripoli. Drawing upon a range of other sources, al-Ma'lūf was able to identify the names of the brothers of Mūsā: Mikhā'il, Ḥannā, Buṭrus, 'Abbūd, Nawfal, and Wihba (?). Using a document dispatched by Patriarch Gregory IV on July 8, 1912, and other sources, al-Ma'lūf constructed the Nawfal family tree.⁶ Since he does not specify details about his sources, we will make an effort to provide pertinent information on this matter.

Mikhā'il wrote a reading note dated to 1720, which he signed in Latin letters as "Michele Naufel", preserved in MS Aleppo, Fondation Georges et Mathilde Salem

2 MS Khinshāra, Ordre Basilien Choueirite 175.

3 I believe that the reading note written on folio 487v of MS Balamand, Monastery of Our Lady 105, was written by Jirjis, Mūsā's father. In the same manuscript we find a note by his brother 'Abd al-Masīḥ.

نظر في هذا الكتاب الالهى العبد الفقير المقر بذنبه التائب الى ربه جرجس ولد ميخائيل الطبيب الطرابلسي اصلاً الارثوذكسي مذهباً وذلك نهار احد الشعنينة في اربعة عشر خلت من شهر نيسان من شهور سنة الف وسبعمئة وثمانية وعشرين سنة 1728 مسيحية

4 This information is derived from the colophon of the manuscript of Khinshāra and from a dedication note in a manuscript at the Monastery of Saint Thekla Ma'lūlā. For more details, see below.

5 Unfortunately, we could not find this document that should be preserved in the Archive of the Monastery of Balamand.

6 See 'Ī. al-Ma'lūf, *Tārīkh al-usar al-sharqīya, II. Lubnān al-shamāl*, ed. Fawwāz al-Ṭrābulṣī, Beirut, 2008 (henceforth *Al-Ma'lūf, Tārīkh al-usar*), p. 140.

470 (formerly Sbath 1305) (f. 167r).⁷ Al-Ma'lūf found in the Epistle of the Apostles a colophon stating that Mikhā'il ibn Jirjis Nawfal al-Ṭrābulṣī copied them in 1746.⁸

Nawfal is the copyist of MS Beirut, Bibliothèque orientale Ar. 259, which he began copying on January 11, 1747.⁹ The *laqab* “*al-ṭabīb*” in his name appears to be his own, rather than that of his father, Jirjis. This is also evident from the reading note in the MS Saint Petersburg D 226.¹⁰ Nawfal's interest in copying the MS Beirut Bibliothèque orientale Ar. 259, titled *Majmū' al-ḥikma* (Collection of Wisdom), is obvious. This manuscript contains recipes for distilling plants considered beneficial in treating various ailments. Nawfal informs us that he hastily completed the manuscript at a rate of two quires per day. However, only one quire has survived (8 folios). Nawfal is mentioned in Letter 10 sent by Yūsuf from Tripoli, in which Nawfal and his mother send greetings to Mūsā.

‘Abd al-Masīḥ, also known as ‘Abdūh, is mentioned in Letter 29 and has a reading note dated March 24, 1774, in MS Balamand, Monastery of Our Lady 105.¹¹

Buṭrus, another brother of Mūsā, traveled with Patriarch Sylvester to the Romanian Principalities, where he took on the responsibility of teaching Arabic to children from Wallachia. This is supported by Letter 54. In the absence of his brother, the secretary of the patriarch, he served as secretary for Patriarch Sylvester while in Bucharest in April 1747, as attested by the inscription on the Icon of Saint Spyridon drawn by Sylvester.¹² Buṭrus is also mentioned in a letter sent from Sylvester to Ilyās Fakhr, most probably from Bucharest.¹³ This letter is a reply to a letter received from Ilyās informing him about his arrival in Aleppo. The date is not provided, but it can be inferred that it was written at the earliest in 1747, the year of Ilyās Fakhr's resignation from his position as chief dragoman, his move to Tripoli, and then back

نظر في هذا الكتاب المبارك ميخائيل ابن جرجس الشهير بابن ابي نوفل الطرابلسي من طائفة الروم الارثوذكسيه 7 وذلك في سنة 1720 مسيحيه الموافق سنة 1132 للهجره [الامضاء] Michele Naufel.

8 See also Ḥ. al-Zayyāt, *Khazā'in al-kutub fi Dimashq wa-dawāḥithā fi arba'at ajzā'* *Dimashq wa-Ṣaydnāyā wa-Ma'lūlā wa-Yabrūd*, Damascus, 1982, p. 31.

9 تم بعون الله ما قد تيسر من مجموع الحكمة [...] على يد [...] نوفل بن جرجس المشهور بالنحو الطبيب منقول من 9 نسخة منتثرة قديمة سقيمة [...] وقد كتبت بغاية العجلة جداً كل يوم كراسين الابتداء نهار الأحد المبارك خلت إحدى عشر يوماً من شهر كانون الثاني افتتاح سنة مسيحية 1747 الموافق في 11 محرم الحرام. افتتاح سنة 1160 هجرية.

10 The following note is mentioned by al-Ma'lūf as being preserved in one of Balamand's manuscripts. It was probably communicated to him by Patriarch Gregory IV (1906–1928), who offered the manuscript to Tsar Nicholas (r. 1894–1917) in 1913 (*Tārīkh al-usar*, p. 139): هذا الكتاب: كتب بعد تصفحه في هذا الكتاب: المبارك العبد المذنب نوفل المتطبيب ابن جرجس النحوى الترجمان غفر الله له ولوالديه [...] 25 كانون الأول عيد الميلاد الالهى سنة 7266 ادم مسيحية 1758 [...].

11 نظر في هذا الكتاب الشريف وتامل معانيه العبد الحقير الذي ليس هو مستحق ان يذكر اسمه من كثرة ذنوبه واثمه عبد 11 المسيح ابن جرجس نوفل الطرابلسي وطناً والارثوذكسي مذهباً حرر ذلك في 24 من شهر اذار سنة 1774 مسيحية [...].

12 See Ṭipāu, *Sylvester of Antioch*, p. 263–264, 399.

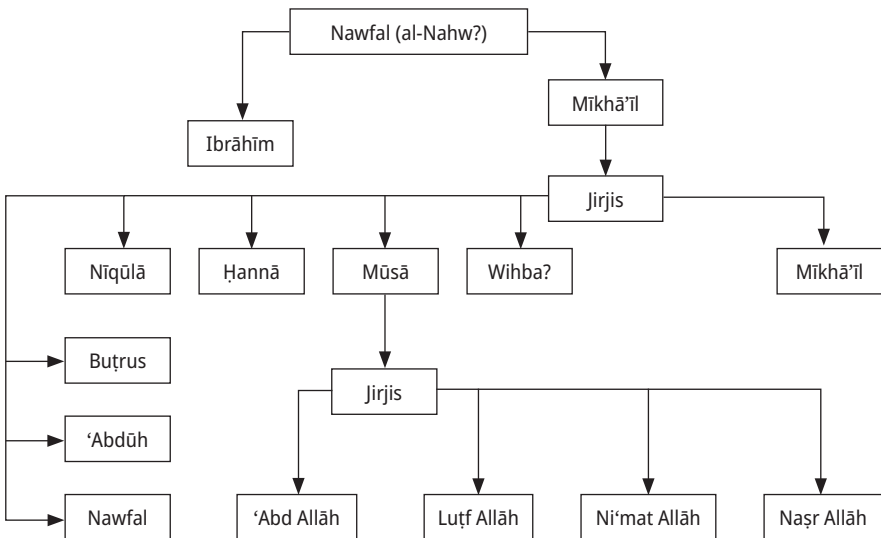
13 MS Ḥarīṣā, Saint Paul 210, f. 156v.

to Aleppo.¹⁴ The main reason for this letter is to ask the communities in Tripoli and Latakia to gather two or three purses, which was the remaining amount needed to run the printing press. The document related to al-Nawfal of Ya'qūb Nawfal from July 8, 1912, mentions Buṭrus.¹⁵ Ya'qūb Nawfal undoubtedly found this information in a manuscript to which we have no access.

Nīqūlā, to whom Mūsā sent a letter, is attested in Letter 46. Two sisters sent him greetings from Tripoli, as noted in Letter 10.

Furthermore, al-Ma'lūf provides details about another generation of the Nawfal family, beginning with Jirjis. Jirjis had four sons: Naṣr Allāh, Nī'mat Allāh, Luṭf Allāh, and 'Abd Allāh. The two oldest were secretaries, while the youngest two were copyists. The youngest, 'Abd Allāh, was born in 1793. Therefore, the oldest might have been born in the early 1780s, especially since we do not know how many sisters they had, and their father, Jirjis, was likely born in the 1750s or 1760s. We know from Letter 33 that Mūsā had a son named Jirjis. Since Mūsā entered matrimony ca. 1743 and had three other children besides Jirjis, who might have been the youngest, we are inclined to believe the two Jirjis Nawfal are the same person.

Tab. 1: Family Tree of Mūsā Nawfal



¹⁴ Regarding Ilyās Fakhr's resignation from his position as chief dragoman, his subsequent move to Tripoli, then back to Aleppo, see R. el Gemayel, *Ḥāšīyah Waḡīzah of Ilyās Fakhr. An Arabic Byzantine Antiochian Ecclesiology Responding to Uniatism*, Unpublished PhD thesis, 2014 (henceforth El Gemayel, *Ḥāšīyah Waḡīzah*), p. 123–124.

¹⁵ See al-Ma'lūf, *Tārīkh al-usar*, p. 140–141.

The years of birth and death of Mūsā are unknown but can be roughly estimated. Mūsā died after 1787, the date of the latest letter in our collection (Letter 34), and before 1791, when Niqūlā Zrayb bought one of his books, noting that the previous owner was “the late master Mūsā Nawfal the grammarian and secretary from Tripoli” (*al-muntaqil ilā raḥmatih ta‘ālā al-mu‘allim Mūsā Nawfal al-Naḥawī al-Ṭrābulī al-kātib*). From the Letter 68 dated November 29, 1732, mentioned above, we learn that he became Sylvester’s secretary that year. At this time, he was probably in his twenties and thus would have been born around 1710. Moreover, Mūsā, along with his friend Yūsuf, seem to have been colleagues in Tripoli, where they studied Arabic. Therefore, they might have been the same age. It can be argued that when, in 1742, Sylvester asked Yūsuf to come to Damascus to ordain him, Yūsuf was around 30 years old, the canonical age to become a priest (Letter 52).¹⁶ Mūsā would be in his 30s, too. Thus, we estimate these dates for Mūsā: ca. 1710–ca. 1790.

In 1732, Sylvester arrived in Damascus (Letter 12) after spending four years abroad. He appointed Mūsā as his secretary and sent Sophronios to Tripoli, where he met Iakobos of Patmos and became his close disciple. In Letter 68, Ilyās Fakhr expressed satisfaction with his nephew Mūsā, who was recently appointed secretary, although he believed his nephew still needs to improve in some areas. He advised him, for example, on how the layout of a letter sent on behalf of Patriarch Sylvester should be arranged, and promised to send him some specimens. In the same letter, he mentioned that Mūsā was paternally related to Patriarch Sylvester. However, this relation is not clarified.

In the first three years, Mūsā followed a daily routine in Damascus that included sending letters on behalf of the patriarch and teaching Arabic Orthodox boys as part of their training to become priests. Letter 13 is an emotional note in which Sophronios shares the contrast between his bad luck and his friend’s ease. While Mūsā enjoyed reading literary books in Damascus, he had to endure traveling. As a result, he started forgetting Arabic and did not improve his Greek as he wished. It was not long before he began his travels related to pastoral visits with the patriarch. While Sophronios was entrusted with visits to the region of Mount Lebanon (Rāshayyā, Beirut, etc.), Tripoli, and the northern parts of the patriarchate (mainly Antioch and Adana), Mūsā traveled with the patriarch to more distant places, such as Erzurum and Diyarbakır, fortifying the patriarchate and collecting

¹⁶ Although some exceptions were made during Sylvester’s late patriarchate for Makarios Ṣadaqa, who was slightly younger. Ṣadaqa notes in the manuscript of the Collection of E. Karam 6 that he was born in 1730 and was ordained as a priest in 1757, making him 27 years old at that time. See J. Nasrallah, *Catalogue des manuscrits*, vol. III, Beirut, 1961 (henceforth Nasrallah, *Catalogue des manuscrits*, III), p. 306–307.

alms.¹⁷ As early as December 27, 1735, Sylvester and his companions traveled by sea from Latakia to Cyprus, with the final destination being areas around Erzurum, such as Gümüşhane and Trebizond.¹⁸

It appears that when Sylvester and his companions left Cyprus in February 1736, they entered Anatolia through the port of Antalya, which is the closest port to Isparta and Akşehir that they visited, around May 1736.¹⁹ We do not know why Sylvester visited Isparta and Akşehir. It might be related to the inauguration of the Hagia Panagia church in Isparta, which is generally believed to have been built later, around 1750.²⁰ The patriarch may have changed the itinerary to increase the amount of alms he could receive, especially since his deacon Sophronios previously collected alms in the region of Northern Syria up to Adana.

This unusual itinerary does not clarify which route they took to Gümüşhane, where they arrived before July 5, 1736. On this date, Mūsā sent a letter to his friend Yūsuf from Gümüşhane. From a handwritten register of the church of Saint George in Gümüşhane, we learn that a *sakkos* was dedicated to this church in 1737 by Sylvester, patriarch of Antioch.²¹ Ṭipāu suggests that the patriarch arrived in Gümüşhane on December 24, 1736, and stayed until the end of July 1737.²² It was on July 17, 1737, that he ordained Makarios as bishop of Chaldia in the church of the village of Karmut in the province of Gümüşhane. Two bishops officiated alongside the patriarch; these were Azarias, bishop of Theodosiopolis, and Sylvester of Methone.²³

On August 21, Yūsuf sent a letter to Trebizond, and Mūsā replied from Erzurum on October 17. Yūsuf delayed his response until June 1738, when he sent his reply to

17 Makarios ibn al-Za'im recounts that when he became bishop of Aleppo, there was no bishop for Erzurum, Akin, Arztkan, Çemişkezek, al-Likh, and the surrounding villages. According to him, about five hundred Christian families still lived there, spread across a large area. For example, twenty families still resided in Çemişkezek. He visited them and appointed Dawūd as their bishop, who spoke their language, predominantly Armenian. See Nasrallah, *Catalogue des manuscrits*, III, p. 321. His successors took equal care of this bishopric.

18 The journey to Erzurum that Mikhā'il Brayk dates to 1730 could actually be from an earlier trip, because Brayk says Sylvester passed through the city while returning from Wallachia and Constantinople. See Brayk, *Tārīkh al-Shām*, p. 8. See also Rustum, *The Church of the City of God*, p. 146.

19 See Ṭipāu, *Sylvester of Antioch*, p. 84–85.

20 I was unable to find the source of this information shared on tourist websites online.

21 See E. Papastavrou, N. Vryzidis, "Sacred Patchwork: Patterns of Textile Reuse in Greek Vestments and Liturgical Veils During the Ottoman Era", in I. Jevtić, S. Yalman (eds.), *Spolia Reincarnated: Afterlives of Objects, Materials, and Spaces in Anatolia from Antiquity to the Ottoman Era*, Istanbul, 2019, p. 279–280.

22 See Ṭipāu, *Sylvester of Antioch*, p. 153–154.

23 *Ibidem*, p. 159. Makarios is mentioned in Letter 54 as residing at the Monastery of Saint Spyridon in Bucharest.

his friend in Erzurum.²⁴ This delay was probably caused by information from Mūsā to his friend, indicating that he would be away from Erzurum for some time. In fact, we know from another document that the patriarch and his companions visited Diyarbakır in 1739, where they likely also appointed a bishop.²⁵

That same year, the patriarch signed an inauguration document with the bishop of Trebizond and the bishop of Chaldia, establishing the bishopric of Akhaltzikhe in Georgia. This new institution was located in the same area as the mines of Ahtala and Alaverdi.²⁶ The patriarch spent Christmas that year in Gümüşhane.²⁷

From other documents, we learn about the different places the patriarch and his secretary visited during this trip. On February 1, 1739, Sylvester was in Caesarea of Cappadocia, where he signed a *homologia* to certify that Hatzi Spandonakis of Constantinople had lent him 1,400 groschen. He also sent letters to Gregory II Ghikas, to the metropolitan of Ungro-Wallachia, and to Metropolitan Ioannikios of Stavroupolis.²⁸ No doubt Mūsā was with the patriarch there. On August 19, 1739, toward the end of this first journey, Mūsā was in Ḥamā, where he received a new letter from Yūsuf (Letter 40).

During this trip, Mūsā seems to have consistently sent letters to Sophronios, but received no replies from him. From Letters 13 and 14, we learn that Mūsā only heard back from Sophronios again around August 1739. Most likely, this was after he had returned to Damascus.

Soon, a new journey started, and in 1740, Mūsā spent at least five months, from February to July, with Patriarch Sylvester in Beirut and its surroundings (Letters 41–46). During this trip, they visited Ḥaṣḥbayyā and Marj'yūn (Letter 15). Sylvester was trying to rally the Emirs against his rival Cyril Ṭanās, who was hiding in the region under their control, in a place where Ottoman authorities could not reach him. This trip is documented in two letters addressed to Miḥḥim al-Shihābī (1732–1753), emir of

24 The document presented by Ṭipāu, dated November 1, 1737, attests that Sylvester was in Trebizond, from where he sent a written *ὁμολογία* to Sinior Lukakis. This might mean that the patriarch traveled back and forth to Trebizond. See Ṭipāu, *Sylvester of Antioch*, p. 85–86.

25 Çolak states that three years after 1736, Sylvester appointed a bishop (or bishops) for the kazas of Diyarbakır, Çemişkezek, Ergani, Keban, and their dependencies. See Çolak, *Relations*, 208.

26 See A. Ballian, *Relics of the Past. Treasures of the Greek Orthodox Church and the Population Exchange. The Benaki Museum Collections*, 2011, p. 112.

27 See Ṭipāu, *Sylvester of Antioch*, p. 151. Ṭipāu assumes that Sylvester spent two Christmases (1735 and 1737) in Gümüşhane. This does not seem plausible, as on December 27, 1735, he was leaving Latakia for Cyprus, as mentioned above, based on Ṭipāu's documentation. We believe both documents refer to the same year, 1737.

28 See Ṭipāu, *Sylvester of Antioch*, p. 86.

Mount Lebanon and Najm, emir of Ḥāṣbayyā, sent in 1741 and preserved in MS Ḥarīṣā 210. The style of the two letters suggests that Mūsā wrote them.²⁹

Returning to Damascus, Mūsā appears to have been engaged in copying manuscripts. In April 1742, he finished a copy of Basil the Great's *Commentary on the Hexaemeron*.³⁰ That same year, although the exact date is unknown, he also copied the Psalms.³¹

In May of that year, Mūsā's uncle, Ḥannā Fakhr, passed away (Letter 18). On this occasion, Mūsā appears to have attended the funeral in Tripoli, and on his way back, he spent some time in Beirut either in June or July (Letter 19).

Before April 1743, he got married and decided to settle in Damascus (Letter 20). Unfortunately, during this time, Damascus experienced a severe outbreak of the plague, which was unfavorable for the newly married couple. Soon after, Sylvester believed it was wise to avoid staying in Damascus and depart for regions less affected by the disease. The plague caused the death of two priests in Damascus, and Mūsā was motivated to leave, as he informed Yūsuf in a lost letter to which we have the answer of the latter (Letter 10). Mūsā probably wanted to move along with his wife to Tripoli, his home city; however, he answered the call and joined the patriarch for another trip to Constantinople. As explained in Letter 10, Yūsuf Mark was initially scheduled to accompany the patriarch. However, he later declined, citing concerns about the risk of illness in colder regions. Since Sylvester planned to establish a printing press, he required a grammarian of the caliber of Mūsā or Yūsuf. When Yūsuf declined, Mūsā accompanied Sylvester. Subsequently, around December, Mūsā also departed Damascus and joined the patriarch in Aleppo (Letter 10).³² From there, the patriarch and his secretary traveled to Constantinople.

It was during this journey that Dimitrī Ṣabbāgh sent a letter to Constantinople, as mentioned in Letter 31. Not many details are known about his stay there. He

²⁹ See Appendix 3.

³⁰ We were unable to identify Mūsā's copy. This information comes from the MS Damascus, Greek Orthodox Patriarchate 179 (1827), a copy by Yūsuf ibn Mikhā'il Zrayq from Mūsā ibn Jirjis al-Naḥū's copy. Mūsā's copy might have burned in the 1860 fire. For the fire of al-Maryamiya, see L.T. Fawaz, *An Occasion for War: Civil Conflict in Lebanon and Damascus in 1860*, Berkeley/Los Angeles, 1994, p. 87. Regarding the stolen and retrieved books, we read in MS Damascus, Greek Orthodox Patriarchate 12: "The priest Yūhannā al-Ṭawā bought it with his own money, after it was stolen, and found it in the village of Mnīn [near Ṣaydnāyā]. In the crafts and maneuvers, we paid a price of 200 ghurush, as the price set was unusually high in 1863".

³¹ See al-Ma'lūf, *Tārīkh al-usar*, p. 139. Al-Ma'lūf does not specify the location of this manuscript, and we were unable to identify it.

³² It appears that Mūsā did not have the letter dated December 1743 before his departure. As a result, he did not include it in his collection, yet a subsequent copyist appended it.

likely examined the 16 books printed by Müteferrika between 1729 and 1742.³³ He became particularly interested in the Turkish Ottoman version of Judasz Tadeusz Krusiński's *Tārīkh al-suyyāh*, published by Ibrahim Müteferrika in Constantinople in 1729.³⁴ Being fluent in that language, as we will see below, he later translated this book into Arabic.

We have no information on whether Mūsā traveled further with the patriarch to Edirne, Iaşi, and back to Constantinople.

In any case, he was back in Damascus before September 28, 1746, when he signed the report sent to the patriarch of Constantinople regarding the conflict that arose between Sylvester's newly appointed vicar, Nicephorus, and the previous lay representative Mikhā'il (see Figure 14).³⁵ As the report indicates, the Holy Synod had sent another *wakīl*, Nicephorus, at Sylvester's request.³⁶ Mikhā'il did not seem to recognize the new *wakīl* and hid the *berat* and its duplicate sent to him. At the end of the report, we find the name of Mūsā (Μωησής γραμματεὺς τοῦ Ἀντιοχείας) as one of the signatories. We believe that this is Mūsā Ṭrābulṣī.³⁷ Taking advantage of the presence of another Nawfal, Buṭrus, Mūsā's brother, Sylvester could have sent his secretary to report to him about the *wakīl*, and address the rising conflict.

Soon after, Mikhā'il was compelled to leave Damascus. On August 11, 1747, he met Sophronios, a mutual friend of his and Mūsā's. Likely intending to ease the tensions that had previously arisen with Mūsā and Nicephorus, he praised both in these words: "and our dear friend al-Ḥājj Mikhā'il Tūmā, who, from the moment we met him, has continuously sung your praises and commended your service to the Apostolic See. According to him, without your support, the burdens of the vicar in Damascus [Nicephorus] would have multiplied". In a separate letter addressed to Nicephorus, Sophronios informed him about the struggles Mikhā'il was going through at the hands of the Latins for Orthodoxy, probably aiming to restore good relations with the religious authorities and maintain a positive image.

Other facts support this timeline. Mūsā must have arrived in Damascus before Yūsuf undertook his journey because, in a letter sent from Bucharest in November 1747, shortly after his arrival, Yūsuf mentions having sent two letters to Mūsā, presumably in Damascus, en route: one from Aleppo and the other from Constantinople. Moreover, after this date, Mūsā would again begin receiving letters

³³ See Sabev, *The Müteferrika Press*, p. 84–146.

³⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 94–98.

³⁵ See MS Ḥarīṣā, Saint Paul 210, f. 52r.

³⁶ See M. Brayk, *Al-ḥaqā'iq al-waḍiyya fī tārikh al-kanīsa al-anṭākiya al-urthūduksiya aw tārikh al-ābā' baṭārikat Anṭākiya*, ed. by S. Qab'īn, Egypt, 1903 (henceforth Brayk, *Al-ḥaqā'iq al-waḍiyya*), p. 66.

³⁷ This event is also reported in the documents of Mikhā'il Brayk.

from friends – for example, the one he received from Izmir in April (Letter 31). His friend Dīmītrī Šabbāgh complains that some time had passed since Mūsā's return to Damascus, and yet he still had not sent him a letter. When Mūsā returned, Dīmītrī was still in Beirut and had observed that others – both friends and non-friends – had received letters from Mūsā, while he had not.

Around October 5, 1749, both Sylvester and Mūsā sent letters to Sophronios (Letter 64). Sylvester has not yet returned to Damascus, and we do not know whether Mūsā sent the letter as a secretary or as a friend. Sylvester called Sophronios to Damascus to entrust him with his new mission to visit the parishes and preach the Orthodox faith to prevent conversions to Catholicism.

Around that time, the patriarch was also assisted by his deacon Yurghākī, to whom Mūsā copied Germanos Farḥāt's *Baḥṭh al-maṭālīb* in February 1750.³⁸ Yurghākī may have been secretary from 1750 to 1753, while Mūsā seemed to be managing the establishment of the printing press in Beirut along with Yūsuf Mark. This would explain Yurghākī's need for a book of grammar.

The presence of Mūsā along with Yūsuf Mark in Beirut best explains why they did not correspond during these three years. At the same time, Mūsā may have been managing silk production in Beirut. From Letter 29 we learn that, in 1754, Mūsā had some silk production near Beirut, which Yūsuf was handling. Mūsā likely left in 1753 and promised to meet his friend again for the harvest, presumably in June. It was during the 1754 silk season that the friends planned to meet, but the meeting did not take place. The friends also did not meet the following year when Yūsuf sent the product to his friend and inquired about its quality (Letter 61). In September, Mūsā confirmed the reception of the silk. We can also assume that Mūsā was ensuring the quality of the silk produced in the waqfs under the patriarchate.

³⁸ Again, in this context, the title 'deacon' should be understood as a servant of the church rather than as an ecclesiastical rank. In the correspondence, Yurghākī is mentioned twice as Kyr Yurghākī (post-scriptum of Letter 29 and Letter 35). Interpreting the post-scriptum of the letter, Haddad believes that it is Yūsuf who introduces Mūsā to Yurghākī in 1754. However, as we see in the colophon, Mūsā already knew Yurghākī in 1750. Here is the colophon of MS Khinshāra, Ordre Basilién Choueirite 175 (Figure 12):

وكان الفراغ من نساخته في أواخر شهر اشباط سنة 1750 مسيحية. ونقل عن نسخة مغلوطة غير مقسطة ولا معتدلة وأصلح حسب الممكن وهو برسم كنيسية ذي الذات الرضوية والصفات المرضية والنفحات الزكية والطلعة البهية الذي لا زالت الأقدام خداماً بخوابه والاسماع نظاماً لجواهره والطروس سواحل لزواجره بدر أفق السعادة نور روض المجادة، ناسج برود العقل بوشائح الأدب، نسج السندس بالذهب، مازج حكمة اليونان بفصاحة العرب مزج القند بالضرب، ذو الفضل النامي والقدس السامي، الشماس يورغاكى ابن أخى السيد البطريرك كيريو كير سيلبسترس الانطاكي الكلي الغبطة ونمقه بيده العبد الفقير إلى ربه أسير وصمة ذنبه موسى بن جرجس بن ميخايل ابن أبي نوفل المعروف بابن النجو الطرابلسي الأرثوذكسي الكاتب يومئذ بقلاية البطريركية بمدينة دمشق المحمية أحسن الله إليه وغفر له ولوالديه في سنة 1163 للهجرة.

From Letters 29 and 57, we learn that the two friends used to exchange other goods that were missing in either Beirut or Damascus. In 1754, Mūsā sent him a silk fabric (*kramsūtiyah*), likely made from the silk Yūsuf had sent. Perhaps Mūsā did not want his friend to pay for it, but Yūsuf insisted on paying and asked again about its price. He also sent him a pair of towels (Letter 29). Also, Mūsā sent some olives to Yūsuf to eat during Lent, and Yūsuf sent some fish (Letter 57).

In 1758, Mūsā apparently sent a letter to Yūsuf to inform him of his uncle Ilyās Fakhr's death. We believe the response to this letter is the one preserved in MS Greek Orthodox Diocese of Homs 37, f. 17v–18r (Appendix 2). On the same occasion, Mūsā received a letter from his friend Khalīl Šabbāgh. In this letter, Šabbāgh compares Ilyās to Elijah the prophet, who appointed Elisha as his successor. However, according to Šabbāgh, the actual Elijah (Ilyās Fakhr) did not reveal his successor, and he asks God that Mūsā be his successor.

Letter 55 is Mark's response to a letter Mūsā sent to him from Šaydnāyā. We date it to after 1748. Some clues about the timing include the fact that Yūsuf Mark was a priest, which suggests that the letter was written after 1743. Mūsā was not in Syria between 1743 and 1746, and therefore, a visit to Šaydnāyā is unlikely. Yūsuf Mark received two letters from Mūsā, one after the other, which could not have happened between 1746 and 1748 because Mark complained about not receiving any letters while he was in Bucharest.

There are no records of correspondence between the two men from 1759 to 1764. Therefore, less is known about Mūsā, who remained Sylvester's secretary until the patriarch died in 1766. As mentioned earlier, during this period, Sylvester was busy renovating the parishes, particularly after the heavy earthquake that struck Lebanon and Syria, especially in Damascus and Homs. We believe Mūsā spent his free time in Damascus copying manuscripts. We are only aware of the Book of the Prophecies, copied in August 1762, which was preserved at the School of Three Hierarchs in Beirut.³⁹

In late March 1766, Mūsā sent a letter written in Ottoman Turkish to Samuel, patriarch of Constantinople, informing him of the death of his master Sylvester. Samuel, who received the letter in late April, replied by announcing that Philemon, formerly bishop of Aleppo, had been appointed patriarch of Antioch and encouraged Mūsā to serve as secretary to the new patriarch. Whether Mūsā accepted remains uncertain, as Philemon's patriarchate was brief (1766–1767) and our collection does not include any correspondence from this period.

39 See Nasrallah, *Catalogue des manuscrits du Liban*, III, p. 277.

The collection does not include any letters from the first decade of Daniel of Chios's long patriarchate (1767–1791) before the conflict that arose between the patriarch and the Damascenes in 1776. When tensions with Daniel escalated, Mūsā wrote a letter to his friend Sophronios, then patriarch of Constantinople, explaining the nature of the conflict and seeking his intervention. In this context, our collection contains three letters by Athanasios al-Dimashqī Mukhalla', although these offer little insight into the specific reasons for the tensions.⁴⁰ However, Mikhā'il Brayk offers a clearer picture.⁴¹ He states that the main grievance against the patriarch was his practice of lending money at interest, which earned him a reputation as a usurious patriarch. According to Brayk, this provoked a prolonged crisis: for two years, the Damascenes held assemblies, exchanged letters, and quarreled among themselves to the point that no two could agree on a single course of action. Ultimately, Sophronios intervened by sending letters and proclamations, urging reconciliation. His mediation secured a settlement that was acceptable to both sides, thereby restoring peace and mutual understanding. This peace seems to have lasted until the end of Daniel's patriarchate. In the letter from Athanasios dated 1787, he speaks positively of Patriarch Daniel and laments that at an old age, he must endure travels.

Mūsā's participation in the event shows his engagement with ecclesiastical circles during this period, although probably not as a secretary. Additionally, in 1774, when he compiled a collection of specimens for use in ecclesiastical correspondence, he was probably training a young secretary. During this time, he copied and gifted manuscripts. In 1769, he copied the Horologion preserved in MS Joun, Saint Sauveur 1143.⁴² According to al-Ma'lūf, Mūsā's name appears in three other manuscripts. In 1772, he offered a manuscript containing the Letter of Cassianus of Rome, *Al-'ashā' al-rabbānī* of Eustratios Argentis, translated by Mas'ad Nashū, and

40 We examine these letters in the section dedicated to Athanasios, see below Ch. 1.2.4.

41 See Brayk, *Tārīkh al-Shām*, p. 107-108.

42 كان الفراغ من نساخة هذه السواقي المبارك نهار الاربعاء خامس شهر اب سنة تسع وستين وسبعماية بعد الالف للتجسد الإلهي الموافق لثلاثة عشر خن من ربيع الثاني لسنة ثلث وثمانين ومائة والفر للهجرة العربية سنة 7277 لادم سنة 1769 مسيحية 1183 ونمقتها بيده الفانيه من فاق <اه اللص والعشار والزانية العبد الاثيم >... موسى بن جرجس نوفل النحوي الطرابلسي <الفا>طن يومئذ بمدينة دمشق الشام وكتب <الكرسي>ي الرسولي الانطاكي ويسال كل من <يقع> على هذه السطور الحقيره بان يدعوا<له> ويذكره بالرحمة والغفران والعفو <ن من الرحيم الرحمن لانه على كل <شي قد>ير وبالاجابة جدير واليه المآب >...< فهو حسبنا ونعم الوكيل (Fig. 9).

the correspondence of Ilyās Fakhr and Sherman to the Monastery of Saint Thekla Ma'lūlā.⁴³ In 1782, he copied the *Book of the Divine Liturgies*.⁴⁴

In Letter 33, Athanasios confirmed the position Mūsā still held among the Damascenes in 1777, in his words, “[May the Lord] keep you for many years as an honor for the holy Antiochian throne and a guiding light for the Orthodox people, my blessed brothers and sisters”.

Mūsā died after receiving in 1787 the letter from Athanasios mentioned previously, and before 1791, when Niqūlā Zrayb bought his copy of Yūsuf Mark's *Durūr wa jalāl' li-fāqidī nūr al-'alā' bi-al-radd 'alā yūsuf Bābīlā*, copied in 1769 and preserved in the Greek Catholic Archbishopric in Baalbek (n. 30).⁴⁵

Although there are no direct records of Mūsā Ṭrābulṣī's formal education, his correspondence and literary work show a man deeply immersed in Arabic language and religious literature, influenced by the scholarly traditions of the Nawfal family. Several of his brothers participated in the intellectual and scribal arts, including Mikhā'il, who copied biblical texts and left reading notes in Latin script, and Nawfal al-Ṭabīb, who copied scientific texts such as *Majmū' al-ḥikma*, which covers medicinal recipes. Buṭrus, another brother, was active in teaching Arabic language to children while accompanying Patriarch Sylvester in Wallachia. Such family involvement suggests a household where education, particularly in Arabic and religious disciplines, was valued and cultivated.

Mūsā's personal literary preferences are clearly evident in the letters he received from his close friend Yūsuf Mark. Among the classical Arabic texts he asked Yūsuf to copy were grammatical and literary works by al-Ḥarīrī (d. 516/1122),

43 On Eustratios Argentis, see K. Ware, *Eustratios Argenti: A Study of the Greek Church under Turkish Rule*, Oxford, 1964; on Mas'ad Nashū, see Nasrallah, Haddad, *HMLÉM* IV.2, p. 219–223; for the endowment of the manuscript, see al-Ma'lūf, *Tārīkh al-usar*, p. 139. The Monastery currently has a collection of over 100 rare books, including both printed and manuscript items. The Saint Joseph Center – Balamand has digitized fifty of these. We were unable to identify the manuscript mentioned here among them. Fortunately, when al-Ma'lūf visited the Monastery, he took a photo of the dedication note that he later sent to 'Abd Allāh Ḥabīb Nawfal, who published its text in *Tarājīm 'ulamā' Ṭrābulus wa-udabā'ihā*, p. 40.

أوقف هذا الكتاب المبارك المتضمن رسالة أبينا الجليل في العلماء الأفاضل كاسيانوس الروماني وبعض فصول من تأليف العالم العلامة أوسطراتيوس الصاقزي في العشاء الرباني وبعض مجادلات جرت بين الشمس اليباس فخر لوغاتاتي الكرسي الانطاكي وأحد علماء الانكليز، العبد الفقير المسيء موسى بن جرجس نوفل النحوي الطرابلسي وقفا مؤبداً وحسباً مخلداً على دير القديسة اول الشهداء ثقل البتول في قرية معلولا في زمن رئاسة الأب الفاضل كريم الشمانل الخوري مخانيل الجزيل بره وذلك في سنة اثنين وسبعين وسبعمائة وألف للتجسد الالهي الموافق آخر شهر ربيع ثاني سنة ست وثمانين ومائة وألف هجرية عن روحه وروح والديه جرجس ومريم رحمهما الله تعالى.

44 See al-Ma'lūf, *Tārīkh al-usar*, p. 140. Unfortunately, al-Ma'lūf does not indicate the source of this information.

45 See Nasrallah, *Catalogue des manuscrits*, III, p. 20–21.

notably *Mulḥat al-i'rāb*, a didactic poem about Arabic grammar, and possibly *Maqāmāt*, which was popular in the Christian Arabic intellectual circles. His engagement with these works underlines not only his dedication to mastering Arabic grammar and style but also his intent to preserve and transmit these classical forms within the Arabic-speaking Orthodox community. Such efforts were not just literary; they played a polemical and pedagogical role, as Mūsā and his peers sought to refine Orthodox apologetics and liturgy in good Arabic, free from linguistic mistakes, a concern they often discussed in their letters (e.g., Letter 71).

In addition to his Arabic training, Mūsā had a strong command of Ottoman Turkish. Three key pieces of evidence support this. First, after his stay in Constantinople in the mid-1740s, he translated the Ottoman Turkish version of Judasz Tadeusz Krusiński's *Tārikh al-suyyāḥ* into Arabic, initially published by Ibrahim Müteferrika in 1729. This interest in translating a historical work not only reveals Mūsā's fluency in Ottoman Turkish but also his ability to understand and convey complex material from Turkish into Arabic. Second, in one of their exchanges, Yūsuf Mark explicitly asked Mūsā to include Ottoman Turkish equivalents in his Arabic grammar manual (Letter 51) – an acknowledgement of Mūsā's proficiency in both languages and his role in creating bilingual teaching materials. Finally, he addressed in 1766 a letter to Samuel, patriarch of Constantinople, in this language (Letter 67).

These details indicate that Mūsā's education was deeply rooted in Arabic religious and grammatical traditions. However, it also remained adaptable and multilingual, allowing him to serve the Antiochian Patriarchate as both secretary and grammarian. His training was not purely scholastic in a monastic sense, but rather practical, hands-on, and intellectually driven, enriched through correspondence, manuscript copying, translation, and polemical writing. Yūsuf Mark's request highlights the increasing importance of bilingual tools for Christian students navigating a multilingual Ottoman environment. At the same time, Mūsā's ability shows the sociocultural adaptability needed for a lay intellectual working across ecclesiastical, educational, and imperial spheres.

1.1.1.2 Mūsā Ṭrābulṣī's Works

Mūsā, along with his uncle Ilyās and his friends Sophronios and Yūsuf Mark, was involved in writing, translating, proofreading, and copying books with polemical content, especially against Catholics. They were entrusted with this task because of their knowledge of the Arabic language, which enabled them to produce accurate copies free of mistakes to avoid criticism from learned Catholics like 'Abd Allāh Zākhir (Letter 71). Mūsā seems to have authored two works, although neither explicitly mentions him. These are *Risāla 'abqariya*, addressed to Yuwākīm Muṭrān

in 1744, and *Ba'd dībājāt wa murāsālāt li-ajl manfa'at ṭālibihim*, a collection of specimens for letter writing. He also translated the Ottoman Turkish version of Judasz Tadeusz Krusiński's *Tārīkh al-suyyāh* (*The History of the Traveller*) into Arabic.

A *Risāla 'abqariya*

Yuwākīm Muṭrān, the author of *Ṣaḥīfat al-maḥū li-ṣaḥfat Ibn al-Naḥū* (*The Erasure Sheet Against the 'Page' of the Grammarian*), describes his work as a refutation of Ilyās Fakhr's nephew, who was a member of the Banū Nawfal, also known as Banū al-Naḥū. This nephew is undoubtedly Mūsā.⁴⁶ The date of composition is noted as the second week of Holy Lent 1744, in Beirut.

In the preface, Yuwākīm Muṭrān noted that Mūsā was not the first to oppose the Latins, likely in Arabic, and that the Catholics had refuted all of their works. Before him, Zākhir challenged the Letter of Gabriel of Philadelphia, the Letters of the Synods of 1723 and 1727, and the Letter of Ilyās Fakhr. The most recent work that Zākhir had not yet refuted is Eustratios Argenti's *On the Last Supper*, presumably in an Arabic translation. This work was translated into Arabic in 1740 and again in 1741/2.⁴⁷

The title that Mūsā gave to his work, partially preserved in the refutation, is: *Risāla 'abqariya*. Fragments from Mūsā's letter are preserved in the refutation. It seems that Mūsā's work was not very long; consequently, Muṭrān calls it *ṣaḥḥa*, 'the page'. However, the choice of *ṣaḥḥa* might have been a stylistic choice to rhyme with *Ṣaḥīfa*. In the central part of the text, when Muṭrān refers to Mūsā's work, he calls it *karrāsa* (quire) and, in one instance, refers to it as a second *karrāsa* in which Mūsā was defending his first paper. In the conclusion, he says that this is the refutation of the second work of Mūsā against him. He calls the first *al-wurayqa al-ūlā*, 'the first short paper'. This might mean that while the first work was one or two pages long, the *ṣaḥḥa* could have been at least eight pages. It is perhaps in 1742, while staying in Beirut for a short period (Letter 19), that Mūsā met Yuwākīm Muṭrān and had a discussion with him. Later, Muṭrān sent him a letter to which Mūsā replied.

46 'Isā Iskandar al-Ma'lūf had two copies of the work in his collection. These were call numbers 1213 and 1967. The MS 1967 is currently preserved at the American University of Beirut under call number 230 M99. Unfortunately, the location of MS 1213 is unknown. However, a note by al-Ma'lūf on page 4 of MS 1967 suggests that the refutation is addressed to an author from the Nawfal family known as Banū al-Naḥū, nephew of Ilyās Fakhr. This information appears in MS 1213. Since the location of the manuscript is not known to the present author, the reliability of al-Ma'lūf's account in this regard is accepted.

47 See below, Ch. 1.1.2.

B *Ba'd dībājāt wa murāsalāt li-ajl manfa'at ṭālibihim*

As a secretary, Mūsā gathered a variety of greeting formulas and forms, mainly from the correspondence he sent and received, to serve as an introduction to this art. He referred to it as *Ba'd dībājāt wa murāsalāt li-ajl manfa'at ṭālibihim* (*Some Ornate Introductions and Correspondences for the Benefit of Those Who Seek Them*). This collection is preserved anonymously in two manuscripts: Joun, Saint Sauveur 1517 (1774) and Greek Orthodox Diocese of Homs 37.⁴⁸ The manuscript of Homs is a copy of the one in Joun. This is evident because the copyist Jirjis ibn Ni'mat Allāh Ilyān (1814), arriving at the end, distracted, copied partially the original colophon where the name Mūsā ibn Jirjis Nawfal ibn al-Naḥū al-Ṭrābulṣi is provided (folio 72r).

Although the author remains anonymous, there is substantial evidence pointing to his identity. First, we consider the context in which it is kept. As mentioned, the manuscript contains two works. Along with the first work, *Ba'd dībājāt*, which we are considering to establish Mūsā's authorship, there is a second one, *Manāhij al-tawassul fi mabāhij al-tarassul* of 'Abd al-Raḥmān Bisṭāmī. Bisṭāmī's is a manual on epistolography. We cannot be sure that Mūsā used Bisṭāmī's specimens, as his letters to Yūsuf Mark and Sophonios are not preserved. However, as the correspondence shows, Yūsuf Mark uses it frequently. Therefore, Mūsā's interest in this work could be interpreted as either to use it himself as a specimen or to verify how his correspondents are using it. In addition to these initial hints, there is textual evidence. Some of the *dībājāt* are copied from letters that are preserved in the collection of letters we are editing. These are the indicated passages in Letters 20, 44, 45, and 72.

C Judasz Tadeusz Krusiński's *Tārīkh al-suyyāh*

One of Mūsā Ṭrābulṣi's most notable achievements is his Arabic translation of the Ottoman Turkish version of Judasz Tadeusz Krusiński's *Tārīkh al-suyyāh*. This work traveled through multiple languages and empires before reaching Mūsā. The original was written in Latin by the Polish Jesuit Krusiński (1675–1756), who spent nearly two decades in Safavid Iran as an interpreter and diplomat. A witness to the fall of the Safavid state and the Afghan occupation of Isfahan in 1722, Krusiński documented these events, aiming to inform European audiences about the shifting geopolitical landscape of the East.

⁴⁸ I came across the information about the manuscript of Joun in an unpublished handlist dated 10-10-2012. I am grateful to Fr. Makarios Haydamous, library curator of the Monastery, who shared with me the photos of folios 43v–45r, where we can read the colophon:

تم الكتاب والله المهيدي للصواب وعلقه بيده الفانيه العبد المفتقر الى ربه اسير وصممه ذنبه موسى بن جرجس نوفل النحوي الطرابلسي الأرثوذكسي وبسال من يتأمل في هذا الكتاب وينظر اليه ان يترحم عليه ويدعو له بالغفران ولوالديه ولكافة المسيحيين لانه سبحانه جلت الاوه وتقديست اسماءه ارحم الراحمين في سنة 1774 مسيحية الموافق سنة 1187 عريبيه في اشباط.

This Latin text was soon translated into Ottoman Turkish and printed in Istanbul in 1729 by the pioneering printer Ibrahim Müteferrika under the title *Tārīkh-i seyyāh der beyān-i zuhūr-i Afgāniyān ve sebeb-i inḥitāt-i Bānī-i devlāt-i Şafawīyān*. It was the third book printed in Müteferrika's press. It was intended to provide an instructive mirror for Ottoman leaders during a time of reform and reflection on the empire's fragility. The translation gained widespread recognition in Ottoman literary and bureaucratic circles, and it was likely during his stay in Constantinople (ca. 1745–1747) that Mūsā had access to the printed version.

The Arabic version produced by Mūsā, preserved under the title *Mir'āt al-'ibra fī 'ajā'ib al-quḍra* (*Mirror of Reflection on the Marvels of Divine Power*), is found in a unique manuscript now held at the Egyptian National Library and Archives in Cairo. There are two photographic copies of this manuscript kept at the American University of Beirut and the Library of the Arab League.⁴⁹ Mūsā clearly refers to the Müteferrika print edition, stating that the work was translated “from the Ottoman tongue” and praising its clarity and historical breadth. His translation, though faithful in structure, reflects his stylistic preferences and rhetorical flair.

What makes this translation particularly notable is that it falls outside the main religious or polemical agenda of Mūsā's works. Unlike his *Ṣaḥīfa 'abqariya* or his linguistic collections, this translation reflects a broader intellectual curiosity and engagement with contemporary history. It places Mūsā within a larger trend of Arab Christian speakers absorbing and sharing knowledge from Turkish and European sources. His decision to translate such a politically sensitive and diplomatically informed narrative also indicates his awareness of the Ottoman Empire's complex relationship with Iran, as well as his understanding of the importance of informing Arab Christian elites about regional affairs.

Stylistically, Mūsā's Arabic is rich, yet balanced. He avoids the elaborate *saj'* often seen in church-related letters, opting instead for clarity. The title he chose for the work, *Mir'āt al-'ibra fī 'ajā'ib al-quḍra*, aligns with his rhetorical instincts and religious worldview, framing the fall of dynasties and empire upheavals within a divine context. The very idea of *'ibra* (reflection or moral lesson) evokes a spiritual tone, emphasizing the tendency to present historical events as spiritual lessons.

In summary, Mūsā Trābulṣī's Arabic translation of *Tārīkh al-suyyāh* provides insight into the trans-imperial and multilingual nature of 18th-century Arab Christian intellectual life. It showcases his engagement with Ottoman print culture, his proficiency in Turkish and Arabic, and his involvement in the cross-cultural exchange of historical knowledge across linguistic, religious, and political boundaries.

49 See Al-Mḥīrī, *Kitāb “Mir'āt al-'ibra”*, p. ٥ (introduction).

1.1.2 Sophronios of Kilis

1.1.2.1 Sophronios of Kilis's Biography

Sophronios ibn ʿĪsa al-Kilzī signs as secretary and deacon to Patriarch Sylvester of Antioch in his Arabic translation of the letter of Meletius, the former bishop of Heraclea.⁵⁰ In the same manuscript, this translation is followed by another text concerning the *Sayings of the Pharisees against Jesus in the Synagogue*, where he signs as “Sophronios the deacon ibn ʿĪsa al-Kilzī” and notes that he translated it in Bucharest on June 20, 1730.⁵¹

This tells us that Sophronios originates from the city of Kilis in southeastern Turkey, near the Syrian border. His father's name was ʿĪsa. The title “deacon” in this context likely refers to his role as a servant of the Church, specifically his function as secretary of the Patriarch, rather than indicating a specific ecclesiastical rank, even though the ecclesiastical function should not be excluded.⁵² To distinguish the two roles, the ecclesiastical rank might be referred to as *shammās injilī*.

Sophronios's exact birthdate is unknown but he likely became a priest around the canonical age of 30, sometime between August 1740 (when he is still referred to as a deacon in Letter 14) and March 1741 (when he is referred to as a priest in Letter 15). Having accompanied Patriarch Sylvester as a secretary during his first trip to Greece and the Romanian Principalities between 1725 and 1732, it might be inferred that he was around 20 years old when the journey started. We understand his reference to his illness as related to age in the letter dated 1749 as exaggerated and poetic. He could have been in his forties. Therefore, we suggest he was born shortly before 1710, probably around 1705. He died while patriarch of Constantinople on October 19, 1780, at around 75 years old.

Before June 20, 1730, when he was in Bucharest, as mentioned earlier, there is no biographical information about Sophronios, unless it can be inferred that he, as a deacon and secretary of Sylvester, visited the places the patriarch visited, such as Ioannina in February of that year.⁵³ Consequently, the exact details of his education remain uncertain. However, we believe that Sophronios had a solid command of

50 See MS Khinshāra, Ordre Basilien Choueirite 569, f. 230v. Referring to this manuscript under call number Shuwair 148 (12), Nasrallah indicates the name of the father of Sophronios and that he was secretary of Sylvester. See Nasrallah, Haddad, *HMLEM* IV.2, p. 95.

51 See MS Khinshāra, Ordre Basilien Choueirite 569, f. 232r.

52 This information is also preserved in a marginal note of the preface of his book *Jalā' al-abṣār min ghishā' al-akdār* in MS Bibliothèque orientale Ar. 954, f. 2v, 956, f. 3v and MS Balamand, Monastery of Our Lady 171, f. 1v.

واما منشأه فكان محروسة كلس وفي ابتداءه كان شماساً لكبر سيليسترس البطريرك الانطاكي

53 For the date of this visit, see Țipău, *Sylvester of Antioch*, p. 78.

the Arabic language. This is clearly demonstrated by his stylistic ability to express his ideas visually, as shown by his letters written to Mūsā on topics like friendship and longing for a friend.

Furthermore, Haddad suggested that Sophronios was familiar with Ottoman Turkish, considering that Kilis was part of a multicultural environment influenced by Arab and Turkish cultures, and that he begins one of his letters with an Ottoman Turkish poem (Letter 3). He shows at least some knowledge of Ottoman Turkish, as evidenced in the collection of letters we are publishing, which explains why he was chosen as secretary by Sylvester.

Moreover, we believe there is another reason for his appointment. It can be hypothesized that Sophronios was in Athanasios Dabbās's circles. Supporting evidence is a saying of Dabbās, presumably from oral witness, that Sophronios heard and related in his work *Midrār sayl al-maṭar fī ṭaṭī nār al-maṭhar*.⁵⁴

It can be inferred that Sophronios learned Greek grammar while in the Romanian Principalities, at the request of the patriarch. A similar situation was observed in the case of Yūsuf Mark during his visit to Bucharest in 1747, when Sylvester instructed him to study Greek grammar at school (Letter 28).

It is likely that these early lessons inspired Sophronios to pursue formal training in Classical Greek, a skill he aimed to acquire after returning to Syria in 1732 (Letter 7).

It appears that Sophronios returned to Damascus from the Romanian Principalities in October 1732 with Patriarch Sylvester. He resigned from his position as secretary, in favor of Mūsā Ṭrābulṣī, and left, presumably to rest in a monastery and deepen his knowledge of Greek. On November 30, he was in Tripoli, where he composed a letter to Sylvester, requesting his prayers to aid his study of Greek literature (Letter 7). The purpose of this letter is unclear; it is uncertain whether Sophronios was informing the patriarch of his arrival in Tripoli or requesting his blessing to depart from the Antiochian lands to pursue his Greek classical studies. The motivations behind his visit to Tripoli remain unclear, as does the timing of his encounter with Kyr Iakobos of Patmos. Reading Letter 3, one becomes uncertain if Sophronios met the master during his visit to Tripoli or if this only happened on a later date (May 1733!). However, it is conceivable that Sophronios intended to meet Iakobos and hand him the amount of 130 piastres (γρόσια) he requested, as documented by Sylvester when tracking the school expenses from July 1728 to October

⁵⁴ See MS Bibliothèque orientale Ar. 957, f. 64r–65r.

وذلك، أَنَّ الأبَّ الجليل أثاناسيوس بطريرك مدينة الله العظمى أنطاكية، لما سُئِلَ عن هذه القضية، أي عن حالة أنفس الخطاة والصَّديقيْن بعد الموت، قيل القيامة، أين هي؟ فأجاب قائلاً هكذا: أَنّ ولا واحداً قط من الأباء والمُعَلِّمين، قال قولاً واضحاً لنا بتدقيق من أجل هذا الأمر، بل أننا قد تعلَّمنا من الأقوال الإلهية السَّيِّدِيَّة، المُقالَة من ربِّنا يسوع المسيح، بأنّ أنفس الصَّديقيْن، مع نفس اللّصِّ الصَّديق، هي في الفردوس [...].

1732. Additionally, Sylvester says that Iakobos expressed his desire to return to his homeland and receive an allowance of 1,200 piastres.⁵⁵

In the title Mūsā gives to Letter 5, he mentions the departure (*khurūj*) of Sophronios from Damascus in 1733, while in Letter 3, Sophronios states that on the sixth day after his departure (*khurūjī*) from Damascus on Thursday, May 8, he changed (*istabdal*) Damascus for Tripoli. This letter contains important information about the route Sophronios took to reach Tripoli and the length of the journey. He notes that the weather was stormy from Damascus to Baalbek, which was unusual for May, and Sophronios considered it to be divine retribution for his sins. Passing through Baalbek means he took the road toward Homs, and from there to Tripoli, unless there were shortcuts through the mountains that we are unaware of.⁵⁶ In total, it took six days to reach Tripoli.

In Letter 3, Sophronios reveals his intention to stay in Tripoli until he finds a ship bound for Cyprus or Constantinople, and then to other unspecified places left to the divine will. Subsequently, Sophronios may have submitted a request to travel abroad, possibly to Patmos with the master to attend a Greek school, to which Sylvester appears to have responded by summoning Sophronios to Damascus. There, the patriarch blessed him before he returned to Tripoli. There, Sophronios (and Iakobos!) worked to find a ship.

However, the ship was late and, during his stay in Tripoli, the plans seemed to have changed. Sophronios appears to be again involved in the affairs of the patriarchate. It is probable that because of the lack of maritime travel, the issue of the master's departure was revisited, and he remained in Tripoli for an additional year and four months before the school was relocated to Damascus because of the plague of February 1734. Sophronios gained significant intellectual stimulation from the master's teachings, becoming a disciple of Kyr Iakobos, likely motivated by the opportunity to further his education in the field of Greek literature. During his time in Tripoli, and likely as a consequence of his encounter with the master, Sophronios translated a pedagogical treatise from Greek into Arabic, entitled *Tuhfat al-bayān fī ādāb al-fityān min laṭā'if ba'ḍ 'ulamā' al-Yūnān* (Letter 8).⁵⁷ He left this work in the hands of the Metropolitan when he left Tripoli for the next pastoral mission.

55 See MS Ḥarīṣā, Saint Paul 210, f. 169r: ἐπιστρέφοντός μας ἀπὸ ξενιτεῖαν τοῦ ἐδώσαμεν ὄντος του ἐν Τριπόλει, γρ. ἑκατὸν τριάντα [...] καὶ ὅταν ἤθελε μισεύσει εἰς τὴν πατρίδα του διὰ τὸν κόπον του γρ. χίλια διακόσια.

56 See the map of سورية ولايتي (Syrian Province), dated 1913, in the David Rumsey Historical Map Collection, online at <https://www.davidrumsey.com/luna/servlet/detail/RUMSEY~8~1~367106~90134370:-Syrian-Province>.

57 See MS Damascus, Greek Orthodox Patriarchate 245; Beirut, Bibliothèque orientale Ar. 1402. The title is not provided. The work was identified in Haddad, "La correspondance", p. 261.

In August 1733, Sophronios was assigned a new task, to collect alms from the bishoprics. On August 15, he wrote to Mūsā from Rāshayyā (Lebanon), which is 60 km from Damascus (Letter 1). On August 31, he sent another letter from an unknown location, likely still near Beirut (Letter 2). In this letter, Sophronios told Mūsā that he was waiting for a response to his earlier message. We do not have details about the rest of the mission, but it was probably a short trip, covering only the Mount Lebanon area and Beirut. This can be inferred from Sophronios's words: "I intended to write you many letters, but the scarcity of paper has prevented me from doing so, because I neglected to take with me a sufficient supply for letters. Please forgive me if you can". The plan was likely to deposit the alms in Damascus before heading out on another mission to the northern parts of the patriarchate the following year.

According to the traveler Vassili Grigorovitch-Barski, in February 1734, a plague ravaged Tripoli and worsened daily. At that time, the teacher and the students became uncertain about what to do, and some parted ways, heading in different directions. Hearing about the situation, Sylvester wrote a letter to Iakobos of Patmos, asking him to come to Damascus with the remaining disciples. They were scheduled to arrive at the end of the Great Fast in Damascus. They arrived on the Great Thursday, March 22, and took part in the Washing of the Feet ritual.⁵⁸ Barsky says that in Damascus, he made little progress because of the turmoil between the Orthodox and Catholic communities. Along with his colleagues, they were in constant fear, afraid that they might suffer some sudden misfortune. They were hiding daily in the monasteries. This meant the school was hardly functioning, and only one disciple remained in the entire school, while the rest had been driven out. Seeing this, Sylvester sent the Daskalos throughout the Antiochian Patriarchate to preach and to strengthen the Orthodox. Barsky informs us that all these efforts were in vain. As a result, the number of Orthodox declined, while the Catholics multiplied.

The mission Sylvester entrusted to Iakobos allowed the Master and his disciple Sophronios to travel together to Adana via Antioch and Kilis, then return through Antioch and Latakia to Tripoli. On July 16, while they were en route to Adana and still in Antioch, they learned of the death of the deacon Ni'ma ibn Dib Ya'īsh, and they sent a letter of consolation to his father (Letter 6). This Ni'ma ibn Dib was probably one of Iakobos's disciples.

Iakobos might have had another motivation for this trip; he probably wanted to visit the historic pilgrimage sites of the Patriarchate of Antioch, where he had served for nearly ten years, before leaving. We know from other sources that he

58 See V. Grigorovitch-Barski, *Pérégrinations (1723–1741)*, traduit du russe par Myriam Odayski, Genève, 2019, p. 396.

completed this pilgrimage tour in Jerusalem the same year, and from there he traveled back to Patmos.

Between 1735 and 1739, we lose track of Sophronios. There are three possibilities: First, he visited the Trebizond region with Sylvester and Mūsā briefly, so no correspondence was needed. Second, he joined Iakobos in his pilgrimage to Jerusalem and stayed in a monastery to rest. In several letters, Sophronios expressed the fatigue he endured during his journeys and wished for all of this to end soon, so he could enjoy being retired in a peaceful place. The last possibility is that he is on a visit to Patmos (and Chios?) with his master Iakobos and comes back with him to open the Greek school in Jerusalem.

Around August 1739, he was in Jerusalem, where he received a letter from Mūsā through his uncle, Ilyās Fakhr (Letter 14). Sophronios replied to this letter but never received a response, and decided not to write to Mūsā anymore. It was in August 1740, more than a year later, that, at the courier's request, he agreed to write to him.

This mirrors another issue raised in March 1741. It appears that after deciding to join Iakobos in Jerusalem to establish a school, the plan was poorly received by his old friend Theodosius "the skilled teacher" and by Basil, presumably the Greek secretary of Sylvester. Theodosius "entirely abandoned us, denied our friendship, and raised his eyebrows at us", while in Basil's case, "his letters tell me one thing, but his actions arm against me". In Letter 1, written six years earlier, a deacon Theodosius was travelling with Sophronios, and Kyr Basil was at the patriarchal residence. We believe these are the same people. Very good friends, at the time, Theodosius, who joined Sophronios for the trip, sent greetings to Mūsā and to Kyr Basil, who assisted the patriarch in Damascus. It might mean that Sophronios understood Mūsā's silence in the same way.

We have shown Sophronios's mastery of Arabic and how he combined it with Greek knowledge, after spending several years with Daskalos Iakobos of Patmos. His words in Letter 13, "we have lost the slight proficiency we had in the Arabic language and are incapable of grasping the Greek treasures", should be seen as an expression of modesty. It appears that around 1739 he had a strong command of both languages, which led him to dedicate most of his time to proofreading Arabic texts and translating works from Greek into Arabic.

Between August 1739 and April 1743 (Letters 14 and 20), communication with Mūsā was intermittent. Mūsā occasionally sent letters to Sophronios inquiring about his health and updating him on his travels with the patriarch, and Sophronios replied to them. However, we know from various sources that Sophronios spent his time translating various anti-Latin works, likely influenced by Kyr Iakobos. At the end of June 1739, he finished translating *Περὶ τῆς ἀρχῆς τοῦ Πάπα ἀντίρρησεις*,

composed in 1671 by Nektarios, patriarch of Jerusalem (1602–1676).⁵⁹ He entitled it in Arabic *Kitāb jalā' al-abṣār min ghishā' al-akdār*. The location of the translation work is not specified, but it is undoubtedly Jerusalem.

At the beginning of 1740, he translated an anonymous work against the Purgatorium that he titled in Arabic *Sharḥ yasīr min ba'd 'ulamā' fī bāb nār al-maḥṭhar al-muḥḍath*.⁶⁰ Still referring to himself as a deacon in 1740, while staying with his master in Jerusalem, Sophronios translated an abridged catechism written by his master.⁶¹ In 1741 or 1742, he translated the Σύνταγμα κατὰ αἱρέσεων of Eustratios Argentis.⁶² As early as 1740, Mas'ad Nashū had translated into Arabic the same book.⁶³ A quick comparison reveals that the version Sophronios was translating had been altered in several places. This is likely because Argentis himself made corrections to his Greek text.

As a deacon, though the exact date is unknown, he translated the *In Historiam Melchisedec* (Hebrews 7:2–4) of Athanasios of Alexandria.⁶⁴ As he states in the colophon, he translated from the second volume of Athanasios's works, which were printed in both Greek and Latin. This is the 1698 edition of Paris.⁶⁵

Latin influence in Acre increased in the early 18th century, mainly because of Euthymius Ṣayfī, bishop of Sidon.⁶⁶ According to the traveler Vassili Grigorovitch-Barski, the patriarchs of Jerusalem, Dositheos and Chrysanthos Notaras, were often in conflict with Ṣayfī and had to take measures to prevent the Catholics from annexing Acre to Sidon.⁶⁷ As a practical move, Chrysanthos Notaras consecrated

59 See MS Balamand, Monastery of Our Lady 179, p. 9.

60 On the different revisions of this work and its attribution in later version to Nilus of Thessaloniki, see el Gemayel, *Ḥāshiyah Waḡīzah*, p. 153–155.

61 See MS Damascus, Greek Orthodox Patriarchate 213, f. 225v–257r. It was refuted by Zākhīr in his work entitled *al-Radd 'alā ta'līm dhawī al-infiṣāl wa-al-ṣadd*. It differs from the *Kitāb muqtaṣar al-ta'līm al-masīhī* included as an opening section in the Psalter of Beirut, printed in 1752.

62 The first part is preserved in MS Vatican, Sbath 245 (1742). In his *Fihris*, Sbath states that this work is preserved in the private collection of the heirs of Constantin Antāki in Aleppo. See Sbath, *Al-Fihris*, II, p. 55 [1557]. Unfortunately, this information cannot be verified since the collection is no longer accessible.

63 Both Arabic translations are earlier than the edition of the Greek text, published in Leipzig in 1760. Mas'ad's translation was published with linguistic corrections in Iaşi in 1747.

64 See MS Greek Orthodox Patriarchate 141 (1810), p. 212b–214. Nasrallah believed that a different Sophronios translated this work because he found it in some manuscripts of *al-Naḥla* by Makarios ibn al-Za'im (Nasrallah, *HMLEM* IV.1, p. 218). We believe it was included at a later date by copyists.

65 *Sancti patris nostri Athanasii archiep. Alexandrini opera omnia quae extant*, 2, p. 239–241.

66 Euthymius Ṣayfī, bishop of Sidon and uncle of Cyril Ṭanās, promotor of Catholicism in the Antiochian Patriarchate. See Nasrallah, *HMLEM* IV.1, p. 185–193.

67 See I. Feodorov, "Un observateur orthodoxe de Kiev face à la scission de l'Église Rūm d'Antioche (1726–1735): Vassili Grigorovitch-Barski", in Heyberger, Pasha, el Gemayel (eds.), *La division du patriarchat*, p. 453–454.

Photios 'Abd al-Nūr as bishop of Acre in 1713.⁶⁸ Recently, Photios of Acre has been identified with Photios of Jabal 'Ajlūn (r. 1687) based on a note by his disciple 'Īsā ibn Shāhīn, preserved in MS Saint Petersburg D 226.⁶⁹ If this is correct, Photios was moved from Jabal 'Ajlūn to Acre.

In 1714, Euthymius Ṣayfī and Cyril Ṭanās wrote to Pope Clement XI, recounting the actions taken against them by the Orthodox. To oppose the Patriarchate of Jerusalem, Ṣayfī and Ṭanās sent a second letter to Rome in 1716 claiming that the clergy of Acre had petitioned to leave the jurisdiction of Jerusalem and asking the pope to intervene with the King of France to facilitate this. That same year, Photios wrote a work titled *al-Ifshīn*, which scholars believe to be a treatise on the Epiclesis directed against the Latins.⁷⁰

The exact sequence of events is unclear. However, it seems that the Catholics succeeded neither in installing a pro-Latin bishop in Acre nor in detaching the city from the Patriarchate of Jerusalem. An Orthodox bishop must have existed during the three years of Ṣayfī's tenure (1717–1720). This can also be inferred from Barski's account of his visit to Acre in 1729, where he stated that the bishop of Acre always lived in the episcopal residence. Comparing this with his later account of Baalbek, it is evident that the situation in Acre was different. In Baalbek, the Catholics occasionally gained the upper hand, forcing the bishop to abandon his episcopal residence.

Unfortunately, Barski did not record the name of the bishop of Acre. Therefore, we do not know who the immediate successor of Photios before Sophronios was, if indeed there was one.

By 1738, just before Sophronios's enthronement, the number of Catholics in Acre had reached a peak of 7,526.⁷¹ Sophronios's involvement in anti-Latin literature was well known; he was urged to accept ordination as a priest and bishop to gain an official ecclesiastical rank, which would give him greater power to counter Catholic influence. An official status would allow him to interfere with the rulers, particularly with the ruler of Sidon and the emirs of Mount Lebanon. According to Panchenko (the source is not specified), in 1740, the patriarch of Jerusalem

⁶⁸ See Nasrallah, Haddad, *HMLÉM* IV.2, p. 201.

⁶⁹ See P. Ermilov, C. A. Panchenko (†), M. Bernatsky, "Gerasimos Palladas of Alexandria and the Eucharistic Disputes in the Church of Antioch (1701–1702)", in Heyberger, Pasha, el Gemayel (eds.), *La division du patriarcat*, p. 5. We can add another manuscript that preserves a note by the same disciple, MS Balamand, Monastery of Our Lady 105, 486v.

⁷⁰ See Nasrallah, Haddad, *HMLÉM* IV.2, p. 202.

⁷¹ See C. Zwierlein, "The European Merchant Nations and the Economic Dimensions of the 1724 Schism", in Heyberger, Pasha, el Gemayel (eds.), *La division du patriarcat*, p. 180, n. 9.

appointed Sophronios as bishop of Acre. Sophronios requested that his consecration be postponed for a year so that he might complete his studies with the Daskalos.⁷²

In March 1741, Sophronios was already a priest (Letter 15), and it is likely that his consecration as bishop occurred in October of the same year (Letter 21).⁷³ On that occasion, Patriarch Sylvester appears to have sent him a congratulatory letter through a certain Mūsā, who visited him in Ṣaydnāyā. The fact that the patriarch dispatched the letter while still in Ṣaydnāyā, rather than waiting until his return to Damascus, might suggest both the timing of the consecration and the ceremonial importance of the message. In this letter to the patriarch, Sophronios expressed both his deep filial affection and his sense of dependence on Sylvester's prayers and support. He described his new episcopate as one beset by "storms of daily persecution", which he implicitly linked to the broader struggle between the Orthodox and the Latins. The tone of the letter is one of reverence, encouragement, and a request for continued correspondence, revealing how closely Sophronios connected his own precarious position to the authority and moral strength of the patriarch of Antioch.

A second letter, written in January 1742 and addressed to his friend Mūsā Ṭrābulṣī, provides a more candid account of the daily struggles Sophronios faced during his first months in Acre. In it, he explains that the delay in his replies was not because of negligence but because he was overwhelmed by "excessive concerns and engagements" since taking on what he describes as a "very troubled bishopric". He details continuous battles – against "hostile outsiders" on one side and "deceitful deviants" on the other. A particularly revealing part is his account on the church in Nazareth, which had fallen into Catholic hands "by money" and was only returned to Orthodox use thanks to Sheikh Zāhir al-'Umar, who extracted eight sacks of money from the Greeks. Even after this expensive recovery, Sophronios laments that many of the faithful remained loyal to the Latins. He also notes that within two months of becoming bishop, he was unfairly fined five hundred piasters by a local sheikh, allegedly prompted by the Catholic faction.

From another letter, we learn that after the siege of Tiberias, which ended in December 1742, Sophronios visited the nearby villages affected by the conflict, especially those near Acre, offering condolences to the Orthodox Christians for the hardships they faced. Although the diocese's financial situation was terrible,

72 C. Panchenko, *Arab Orthodox Christians under the Ottomans: 1516–1831*, trans. B. Pheiffer Noble and S. Noble, New York, 2016, p. 471.

73 In early 1742, 'Abd Allāh Zākhir wrote a refutation of Sophronios's catechism and indicated that while the author was still a deacon when he wrote it, he was then a bishop in the eparchy of Jerusalem. See Nasrallah, Haddad, *HMLÉM* IV.2, p. 95.

with its income completely stopped because of plunder, destruction, and village burnings, Sophronios was less concerned about material losses. What troubled him more was the renewed activity of the pro-Latin faction in his diocese, whom he described as having hidden “in dens” during the siege, only to reemerge “like serpents” afterward to continue persecuting the Orthodox faith.

According to a note preserved in MS Ḥamaṭūra, Monastery of Our Lady 8, Sophronios collated the Arabic and Greek texts of the *Qundāq*.⁷⁴ This should have happened before 1745, when Sylvester printed the *Qundāq* in Iași (Moldavia).⁷⁵

There is no exchange of letters between Sophronios and Mūsā between April 23, 1743, when Sophronios congratulated his friend on his marriage (Letter 20), and August 11, 1747 (Letter 63). In the latter, Sophronios recalls the fact that Mūsā got married and, since that time, never corresponded with him, probably because he was taking care of the family. He also mentions the fact that Mūsā is not the secretary of the patriarch anymore since he left the patriarch, presumably in Constantinople, and settled in Damascus. The correspondence between the two men seems to be disrupted again, until Sylvester, preparing his return to his See, sent him a letter through his friend Mūsā.

However, we know that, between 1744 and 1748, Sophronios was still pursuing his primary task, which was pastoral care, trying to reduce the influence of the Latin. This can be inferred from the MS Cairo, The Franciscan Center of Christian Oriental Studies 170, which has preserved, among others, three polemical texts that can be attributed to Sophronios.⁷⁶ Although only the first is attributed clearly to him, scholars have found evidence to attribute them all to Sophronios. The texts come in a sequence (f. 163r–201v) and cover polemical topics, contradicting the Latins. To this, we add the evident proximity of the author of the third letter to Sidon. This letter, written in 1748, is a diatribe against a so-called patriarch who took Dayr al-Mukhalliṣ as See. Among others, this work discusses how the Catholics

74 We believe that this information is trustworthy. The copyist notes in the colophon: “The present copy of the Holy Qundāq was achieved on Saturday, the 3rd of the blessed month of July, by the hand of the copyist Neophytos, by name priest in the robe of a monk in the flourishing Monastery of Balamand. It was collated on the Greek by the Holy and of eternal memory Sophronios, patriarch of Jerusalem, previously in a printed edition, and we copied it as it was edited, without additions or omissions [...] in the Christian year 1815”. Thus, the attribution of the collation to Sylvester in the Preface of the edition needs to be understood as authoritative. Sylvester states that he revised it with the help of collaborators who knew both languages.

75 While this *Qundāq* is a copy of the version printed in the Romanian Principalities, the information regarding Sophronios can be linked to the *Qundāq* of Beirut printed around 1753. Unfortunately, the Beirut edition is lost and there is no way to verify whether the edition’s text was revised again.

76 See el Gemayel, *Ḥaṣīyah Waḡīzah*, p. 78.

mistreat their bishops, probably to say that they force the orthodox bishops to leave the bishopric because they have no money to survive. When in 1723 Athanasios Dabbas appointed Ignatius, disciple of Şayfī, as bishop, he saw in him a moderate and therefore acceptable Catholic.⁷⁷ Probably influenced by Sophronios, Ignatius rejected Catholicism. This can also be reflected in the measures taken by Sylvester in 1743 in the eparchy of Sidon to help the survival of their bishop, Ignatius.⁷⁸ He sent a *statikon* obliging the parish to dedicate half of the income to the bishop, and half to the priests, and one piastre from any ceremony for individuals (marriage, funerals, etc.), along with other benefits from different incomes. The author, presumably Sophronios, laments the Catholics' actions against their bishop. We know from other sources that in 1747, a new bishop, Jeremias, was consecrated for Sidon. At the time when the diatribe was written, the new bishop had not yet reached his See, or probably, he had not yet faced the same crisis as his predecessor. By April 1749, Jeremias faced the same situation and abandoned his See, as attested in a letter sent by Sylvester to the Emir Miḥim.⁷⁹

The first letter is, in fact, a treatise composed by Sophronios on the interpretation of the writings of the Fathers. Written at the request of his parishioners, it tackles the problem of patristic passages that seem to contradict Orthodox teaching. Throughout the work, one finds clear traces of his polemic against Catholics. The text is entitled *Sharḥ mukhtaṣar fī irshād wa-dalālat al-qārī' fī annahu kayfa yaqra' kutub al-ābā' al-qiddisīn*. As for the second text, it is a polemical treatise directed against the doctrine of papal infallibility. Bearing the title *Fī anna kathīrīn min al-bābāwāt akhta'ū fī al-imān al-urthūduksī al-qawīm al-ra'y wa-al-b'ḍ minhum ṣārū harāṭīqa*, it seeks to demonstrate that many popes erred in matters of Orthodox faith and that some even fell into heresy. To support his argument, the author marshals historical evidence drawn from the history of the papacy.

In 1750, Sophronios left Acre to assume his new mission in Aleppo. It seems that the Patriarchate of Jerusalem could not find a successor and soon consolidated its position in the city, managing to install a Catholic bishop within ten years. It was in Acre, in 1759, that Yuwākīm Muṭrān composed his work, *Qadh zinād fikrī fī dahḍ dalālat Ibn al-Makrī*. In the preface, Muṭrān states that he is refuting a treatise written by an ignorant man who copied passages from another treatise without establishing any connections between them. Around 1760, it seems that the Catholics managed to install the bishop of Şaydnāyā, Clement, as bishop of Acre. The monks of Dayr al-Mukhallis supported him. Around 1763, Ignatius Jarbū' was

⁷⁷ See Rustum, *The Church of the City of God*, p. 139.

⁷⁸ See MS Ḥariṣā, Saint Paul 210, f. 159v.

⁷⁹ *Ibidem*, f. 157v.

proclaimed the canonical bishop of Acre. These events can be inferred from the response to the priest Sābā Baḥūs, dated July 28, 1764.⁸⁰ Since then, there has been a long line of Catholic bishops of Acre.

On October 5, 1749, Sylvester sent a letter to Sophronios via Mūsā; he asked him to preach from parish to parish. Sylvester wanted to entrust Sophronios with the same mission that had previously been entrusted to his master, Iakobos. Sophronios was also informed that the bishop of Sidon, presumably Jeremias, would be sent to Aleppo (Letter 64).⁸¹ As previously mentioned, Jeremias was in a precarious situation as he was not accepted by the community in Sidon, primarily because he was Orthodox and Greek. Sylvester was therefore trying to find him a new bishopric in Aleppo to support him. In a letter sent to Ilyās Fakhr in Aleppo in 1750, Sylvester expressed that he had few options regarding the bishopric of this city.⁸² Sylvester received permission to retrieve Aleppo for his See, but he had no human or financial resources. The bishop of Latakia was amnesic, and the bishop of Akkar was incapable. Sylvester urged him to raise money in Latakia and Tripoli “for the sake of Aleppo”. Sylvester continued that the people of Latakia and Tripoli must understand that if Aleppo falls, all the cities will gradually fall.

However, Sophronios suggests that a better idea would be to send him to Aleppo instead of sending the bishop of Sidon. There might be another letter by Sophronios in which he provided his argument, but it is unfortunately lost. From other sources, we know that the patriarch accepted Sophronios’s suggestions and sent him to Aleppo, where he arrived one year later. The detailed story of Sophronios’s misadventure in Aleppo is told from the Catholic point of view by Ni’ma ibn Tūmā.⁸³

At an unknown time of the year 1750, probably while waiting for the *berat* to go to Aleppo, Sophronios translated from Arabic into Greek the Covenant of Muḥammad.⁸⁴

According to Ni’ma, Sophronios arrived at Aleppo on November 16, 1750. To avoid causing any disturbance, the Catholics paid 3,500 piastres to register his *berat*. Initially, Sophronios appeared to be indulgent towards them, “at least in appearance”. He tried to convince the less knowledgeable to abandon Catholicism. Ni’ma describes Sophronios’s behavior as “cloaked in hypocrisy, schism, deceit, and manufactured piety. He expressed his dissatisfaction with the harm to the flock and the

⁸⁰ See MS Ṣarbā (Jūniya), Ordre Basilien Alepin 1172.

⁸¹ On the ordination of Jeremias of Tyre and Sidon, see Țipău, *Sylvester of Antioch*, p. 94–95.

⁸² See Ms Ḥariṣā, Saint Paul 210, f. 143r.

⁸³ See the Annex to the edition of Brayk, *Tārīkh al-Shām*, p. 138–139.

⁸⁴ See O.-A. Negoitǎ, “Preliminaries on an Unknown Greek Translation of the Covenant of Muḥammad by Sophronios of Kilis”, *Scrinium* 9, 2023, p. 52.

actions of previous bishops, even denouncing Sylvester's behavior." Soon, the problems started when the bishop could no longer hide his dissatisfaction toward the priests and deacons who adhered to Catholicism. According to Ni'ma, the climax of the turbulence occurred on April 12, 1751, when Sophronios succeeded in imprisoning the Catholic clerics at the behest of the Pacha, despite claiming that he had not ordered it. They were released only after paying 15,000 piastres. The Catholics wrote a '*ard hāl*' (statement of the case) against Sophronios and managed to imprison him. On January 18, 1752, he was released, and he retired to Constantinople.

Sylvester wanted Sophronios to join him in Smyrna, but Sophronios chose to go via Patmos instead.⁸⁵ Until July 1753, Sylvester continued to try to resolve the Aleppians' issue with Sophronios, attempting to reinstate him as bishop without success. At various times, Sylvester insisted to his representative in Constantinople and to the patriarch of Constantinople that they needed to find a solution to the matter of Sophronios, at least until October.⁸⁶

It is noteworthy that even when the Aleppian managed to exile Sophronios from Aleppo, they still recognized his authority in the Orthodox church, especially when it comes to translating and correcting translations of liturgical texts. Therefore, during the debates between Catholics and Orthodox, Catholics referred to Sophronios as the one who taught them this interpretation. In the discussion on the Eucharist that took place in 1755 between the Catholic Arsāniyūs of Homs and Yūsuf Mark, the Catholic says:

We have thoroughly examined the Greek text, and we did not find in it the word '*wa-iṣna*' (and make) nor the word '*nāqilahumā*' ([by] changing them), nor 'change and transform them by Your Holy Spirit'. But, after the priest pronounces the dominical words, which are: 'Take, eat' and what follows it, 'and drink from it,' and what follows it. Then he says: 'As for this bread, it is the honored Body of Your Christ, and what is in this cup is the honored Blood of Your Christ, transformed and changed by Your Holy Spirit.' And thus did Metropolitan Sophronios interpret them.⁸⁷

Surely, unhappy, Mark criticizes the Greek knowledge of his adversary and how daring it is to attribute to this 'virtuous, knowledgeable, and hard-working man' such blasphemies. But Mark thinks that it is the only way to convince those who listen to his teaching by attributing the translation to Sophronios, and that, like all heretics when they wanted to prove their heresies, they attributed them to

⁸⁵ See Țipău, *Sylvester of Antioch*, p. 106.

⁸⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 108.

⁸⁷ This episode is preserved in Yūsuf Mark's *Al-qawl al-dāfin* under Question 8. See below Ch. 1.1.4.

virtuous masters. Then Mark talks about all the hardships of Sophronios in defending Orthodoxy, and all the time he asks him to translate Patristic passages to him.

In Constantinople, Sophronios probably chose to live in the Mega Reuma district. We find him there in August 1753, alongside Matthaïos, patriarch of Jerusalem. He took refuge when the pandemic ravaged the region.⁸⁸

On October 29, 1756, a new *berat* for Sophronios was issued, according to Ni'ma; however, Sophronios never showed up. He seems to be on retreat for the next fifteen years. We are not aware of any activity of composition or translation during the years 1756–1771.⁸⁹ He even refused to be Sylvester's successor in 1766. The only unmarried one of the three disciples in the orbit of Sylvester (along with Yūsuf and Mūsā), Sophronios was the natural candidate to become Sylvester's successor. However, in his will to avoid the disturbance of the Catholics, Sophronios refuses this position.⁹⁰

Five years later, he agreed to become patriarch of Jerusalem, serving as Sophronios V (1771–1775), succeeding Ephraim II (1766–1771). He was later chosen as patriarch of Constantinople, serving as Sophronios II from 1774 to 1780.

We know from the prefaces and colophons of the printed books that in Iași, in 1745, at the Monastery of Saint Sabbas, Sylvester printed the *Qundāq* (*Liturgikon*) and in 1746, he printed in 1,500 copies *Kitāb qaḍā' al-ḥaqq wa-naql al-ṣidq* (*Judgment of Truth and Conveyance of Honesty*) of Nektarios of Jerusalem, translated by Sophronios in 1733, and *Risāla mukhtaṣara fī al-radd 'alā 'adam ghalaṭ bābāwāt Rūmiya* (*Brief Epistle against the Pope's Infallibility*) composed by Eustratios Argentis. In February 1747, he printed *Kitāb al-'ashā' al-rabbānī* (*Book of the Lord's Supper*) composed by Argentis and translated into Arabic by Mas'ad Nashū. The typesetters were Mikhā'il al-mutawaḥḥid (the hermit or the monk) and Girgis al-shammās (the deacon).⁹¹

Later, the patriarch received the Monastery of Saint Spyridon in Bucharest, Wallachia, as a metochion dedicated to the Church of Antioch. He moved the

⁸⁸ See Țipău, *Sylvester of Antioch*, p. 107.

⁸⁹ Panchenko identifies the bishop Sophronios of Akkar who consecrated the priest Farah in Balamand as Sophronios of Kilis, which is most unlikely. See Panchenko, *Arab Orthodox Christians*, p. 238. This is clearly a confusion between عكا and عكار.

⁹⁰ Matthaïos, patriarch of Alexandria, reports in a letter dated April 29, 1766, that together with Samuel of Constantinople, Parthenios of Jerusalem, and other bishops present in Constantinople, they asked Sophronios if he wished to become patriarch of Antioch, but he refused.

⁹¹ Jirjis al-shammās is the copyist of MS Vatican, Sbath 438 in Wallachia on June 8, 1748. Later, he became a priest, and in 1770, he copied MS Damascus Greek Orthodox Patriarchate 71; in 1773, he copied MS Damascus Greek Orthodox Patriarchate 70 (completed on June 30) and 91 (completed on July 15). He might be the copyist of MS Vatican, Sbath 302 (1763), 303 (1770), and 404 (1770).

printing press there, but seeing that the type was by now damaged from all the prints they endured, he created new typefaces.

On August 11, 1747, Sophronios sent a letter to Mūsā expressing his happiness for the news of the establishment of the printing press (Letter 63), probably referring to the one in Iași and not the newly established one in Bucharest. He also expresses his will to translate the book entitled *Fī al-muḥāmāt ‘an al-īmān al-mustaqīm* (*In Defense of the True Faith*) to be printed in this press. This title is not preserved in manuscripts nor in print. Sophronios might have changed the title after translation to make it rhyme, or was advised to translate another book that was more needed.

While the printing press of Sylvester in the Romanian Principalities only printed one book to which Sophronios contributed, there are more contributions he made to Sylvester's press, which were printed in Beirut.

A few things are known about the history of the brief printing activity in Beirut.⁹² We believe the choice of the place to install it, as Beirut is not only related to the person of Yūnus Niqūlā, its sponsor and supervisor, who was also Sylvester's *wakīl* in Beirut. We think above all that the reason was that Beirut was under the authority of the Emirs and not the Ottomans. In this case, a figure like Yūnus Niqūlā, who had a good relationship with the Emirs, may have facilitated this. After all, it is through him that the Orthodox restored the Monastery of Mar Ilyās Shwayyā.

From the recent works of the TYPARABIC team, it is now known that at least three books were printed in this press. However, all these books reached us in very few copies. Printed in 1751, the *Abridged Horologion* is only known from a selling announcement on Ebay.⁹³

The recently discovered Psalter of Beirut, printed in 1751–1752, was corrected by Sophronios in response to a request by Yūsuf Mark, likely for publication in the recently established printing press of Bucharest, or that of Beirut.⁹⁴ Sophronios's preface indicates that Yūsuf Mark consulted him to offer his perspective on the translation of the Psalter, presumably the version printed by Athanasios Dabbās. Sophronios remarks that while his predecessors corrected certain mistakes through comparison with the Greek text, others remained uncorrected because of a lack of familiarity with Classical Arabic. This observation by Sophronios resonates with a similar sentiment expressed by Dabbās in his preface, where he states that he “roughly corrected it” (*iṣlāḥ^{an} mutawassiṭ^{an}*).

⁹² See Feodorov, *Arabic Printing*, p. 245–256.

⁹³ The Arabic title is: كتاب مختصر السواعي فرض العامي المشاعي طبع حديثاً; see Țipău, *Sylvester of Antioch*, p. 224–225.

⁹⁴ See Feodorov, *Arabic Printing*, p. 296–298.

As a result, he began a careful process of correcting the text, aiming to match the original as closely as possible. Deacon Ilyās Fakhr, the logothetes of the Antiochian Apostolic See, supervised this effort. During this process, he kept the phrases and words that show the linguistic features of earlier times, maintaining their form as seen in early copies. He removed anything that had been added, and restored all that was missing.

At the end of the edition, the editors [Sophronios and Yūsuf?] announce that the Commentary on the Psalter is being prepared for printing soon. We believe this Commentary is the one translated from Greek into Arabic by ‘Abd Allāh ibn al-Faḍl al-Anṭākī (11th century).⁹⁵ Interestingly, in 1753, the Catholic printing press of Khinshara printed a Commentary on seven psalms selected from Pierre Arnoud’s Commentary on the Psalms, translated by Zākhir in 1748.

Furthermore, the editors warn readers that they added the symbol “;” in both the current Psalter and in *Al-sawā’ī* (*Book of the Hours*), like in Greek, indicating that the sentence should be read with an interrogative tone. This may suggest that both Sophronios and Yūsuf were also involved in printing *Al-sawā’ī*.

About the sort of printing press, theories can be advanced. When the Latins took over the bishopric of Beirut, shortly before Sylvester arrived in 1753, they might have moved parts away. This could not be confirmed with the bit of information we have, though. Another possibility is that the remaining printing press tools and the books printed with them became unusable when the material was partially or fully damaged during the earthquake that hit Beirut on October 30, 1759.

In a recent article on Beirut during the schism, Philippe Asseily states that when the new church’s building was renewed after the earthquake of 1759, it fell on March 4, 1768, during the liturgy. The printing press housed in an adjacent building was damaged.⁹⁶ This theory, however, does not explain why the press’s activity stopped earlier. We know that in 1765, another Daskalos Theodosius was active in Beirut.⁹⁷ He collaborated with the bishop of Beirut at that time, Makarios Ṣadaqa, to translate Ēlias Mēniatēs’s *Homilies for the Great Lent* from Greek into Arabic.⁹⁸ According to Ibn Ṭrād, when Patriarch Daniel asked Makarios whether

⁹⁵ This Commentary is preserved in many manuscripts such as MS Sinai, Monastery of Saint Catherine Ar. 34, 65, 66 etc. For more information about it, see Roberts, *Reason and Revelation*, p. 36–37.

⁹⁶ See P. Asseily, “Beirut’s Rivalry: Intra Rum-Melkite Conflicts in the Eighteenth Century”, in Heyberger, Pasha, el Gemayel (eds.), *La division du patriarcat*, p. 230.

⁹⁷ Because of the lack of information about him, he was confused with Iakobos of Patmos by Sbath and Nasrallah. See Sbath, *Al-Fihris*, II, p. 21; Nasrallah, Haddad, *HMLÉM* IV.2, p. 218.

⁹⁸ The Greek title is: Διδαχαὶ εἰς τὴν Ἁγίαν καὶ Μεγάλην Τεσσαρακοστήν (*Teachings for the Holy and Great Lent of Forty Days*).

he would like to become bishop of Tripoli or Beirut, he chose Beirut for these reasons: the growing influence of the Latins in the presence of a Greek bishop; the parish needed an Arab bishop who could explain the truth to the community; in Beirut, there was freedom because it was under the Emirs, unlike Tripoli, which was governed by Ottoman rulers; this would give him more time for his pastoral duties.⁹⁹ In addition, along with Bishop Ioannikios, a Master of Theology, another master, Theodosius, deacon of Sylvester, originally from Aleppo, was installed in Beirut after Sylvester's death in 1766. At that time, Yūsuf was still active in Beirut. We believe that if the printing press were still functional, they would have collaborated to print new books. This did not happen because, we think, the printing press was already out of service.

1.1.2.2 Sophronios of Kilis's Works

We have presented most of Sophronios's works and translations in their context above. We provide here a summary list.

A Original Works

a) *Kitāb midrār sayl al-maṭar fī ṭaṭī nār al-maṭhar*, preserved in MS Vatican Sbath 259 (dated 1744).

b) *Jawāb Ṣufrūniyūs muṭrān 'Akkā ilā ahl Ḥayfā al-munshaqqīn*, preserved in MS Damascus, Orthodox Patriarchate 221.

c) *Aqwāl muṣarraḥa jaliya wāḍiḥa fī ri'āsāt al-bābā*, preserved in the same manuscript.

d) *Sharḥ mukhtaṣar fī irshād wa-dalālat al-qārī' fī annahu kayfa yaqra' kutub al-ābā' al-qiddīsīn*, preserved in MS Cairo, The Franciscan Center of Christian Oriental Studies 170.

e) *Fī anna kathīrīn min al-bābāwāt akḥṭa'ū fī al-īmān al-urthūduksī al-qawīm al-ra'y wa-al-ba'd minhum ṣārū harāṭīqa*, preserved in the same manuscript.

f) Diatribe against a so-called patriarch who took Dayr al-Mukhalliṣ as his See, preserved in the same manuscript.

g) *Maqāla wajīza fī bāb al-sab'at asrār*, once preserved at the School of the Three Hierarchs in Beirut.

⁹⁹ See Ibn Ṭrād, *Mukhtaṣar tārikh*, p. 123.

B Translations¹⁰⁰

a) *Kitāb qaḍā' al-ḥaqq wa-naql al-ṣidq*, translation of *De Artibus quibus missionarii latini...* of Nektarios Pelopidis (1602-1676), patriarch of Jerusalem.

b) *Kitāb jalā' al-abṣār min ghishā' al-akdār*, translation of Περὶ τῆς ἀρχῆς τοῦ Πάπα ἀντίρρησεις, composed in 1671 by the same Nektarios.

c) *Kitāb taqrīr sharḥ wajīz muqtaṣar fī al-radd 'alā al-ra'ī al-muḥdath bi-nār al-maṭhar* of Mark of Ephesos (1392-1444), Bessarion of Nicaea (1403-1472).

d) *Tatimmat al-maqāl* of Makarios of Patmos (1688-1737).

e) *Kitāb al-baḥth al-naḍīr fī māddat al-khamīr wa-al-faṭīr*, translation of Σύνταγμα κατὰ αζύμων of Eustratios Argentis.

f) *Ta'lim mukhtaṣar masīḥī*, translation of Iakobos of Patmos's *Catechesis*.

1.1.3 Yūsuf Mark

1.1.3.1 Yūsuf Mark's Biography

Yūsuf Mark is from Tripoli, as indicated by his *kunya* 'al-Ṭrābulṣī'. As shown above, he was likely born around 1705. In one colophon, he refers to his father as Yūsuf.¹⁰¹ Still a layman in 1725, he visited the Monastery of Balamand and left a reading note on the Book *Khalāṣ al-khaṭa'a*.¹⁰² The poetic way he formulates his note shows his knowledge of the Arabic language already at this stage. His interest in reading this book might be twofold: first, as an introduction to spiritual life, but also for the poetic preface that the translator Yūsuf al-Muṣawwir inserted in the middle of the Book.¹⁰³

Before 1737, he became a deacon and later lived in Latakia, where he worked as a tutor, probably teaching Arabic. In February 1740, Yūsuf said he wanted to leave Latakia after Easter because he could no longer support himself there. However, in July 1740, he was advised not to travel because of the disorder in the *miri* system (Letter 44). Yūsuf planned to go to Damietta, where Mūsā's uncle, Ḥannā Fakhr, was a well-known merchant; he needed a letter of recommendation from his uncle to stay safe. This shows the strong status of the Orthodox community through the al-Fakhr family in both Syria and Egypt.

¹⁰⁰ For a list of manuscripts, see Nasrallah, Haddad, *HMLÉM* IV.2, p.97–98.

¹⁰¹ MS Damascus, Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch 4, f. 169r. See Figure 15.

¹⁰² Agapios Monachos's Ἀμαρτωλῶν σωτηρία. See MS Balamand, Monastery of Our Lady 163 (1662), f. 143v.

¹⁰³ It is usually believed that al-Muṣawwir only translated the second part, which follows the preface. The title he provides to this part, like the whole preface, is written in *saj'*: *Kitāb al-farā'id al-liṭāf fī bāb sirr al-i'tirāf*. See MS Balamand, Monastery of Our Lady 163, f. 63v.

To assist him in overcoming his financial difficulties, Mūsā is believed to have enlisted Yūsuf Mark to help with the transcription of books. On June 29, 1740, Yūsuf Mark received from Mūsā a copy of the *Book that Clears the Sight from the Veils of Darkness*, which had been translated a year earlier by Sophronios and corrected by Ilyās Fakhr.¹⁰⁴ In July of the same year, Yūsuf promised to make two copies of this book, one for Ilyās Fakhr and the other for himself. Between July 1740 and June 1741, he relocated to Amyūn in the *qaḏā'* al-Kūra (χώρα), where he presumably completed his copy on June 20, 1741.¹⁰⁵ Among other duties, he had to teach Christian children at the episcopal residence (Letter 48). It was only in the spring of 1742 that he planned to move the family from Latakia to Tripoli.

In autumn 1742, Patriarch Sylvester requested Yūsuf's presence in Damascus to ordain him as a priest. Yūsuf requested that the consecration be postponed until the following spring, invoking the cold weather and health concerns (Letter 52). This request appears to have been granted by Sylvester. Consequently, Yūsuf's ordination as a priest did not take place until 1743. Following his ordination, Yūsuf paid a visit to Sophronios in Acre in April 1743 (Letter 20). The journey from Beirut to Acre was undertaken by sea. The same letter also reveals that Yūsuf departed Acre on April 23.

Yūsuf was ordained a priest to serve not only in the city of Tripoli but also in the surrounding area called al-Kūra in the eparchy of Tripoli. On May 25, 1744, he was in Amyūn, probably having taken it as his residential place, where he copied the MS Damascus, Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch 4.¹⁰⁶ This activity of copying manuscripts was probably sponsored by Sylvester, who sent 500 piastres in February 1745 for the expenses of 'our Marqus', presumably Yūsuf Mark.¹⁰⁷ This money could also have been sent to cover the expenses of Yūsuf's trip to Bucharest, which is described below.

Around 1746, he authored *al-Shuḏūr fī naqd haḏayān al-'adīm al-nūr* (*Collected Excerpts to Oppose the Delirium of the Lightless*), as hinted in Letter 56.¹⁰⁸ According to this letter, the treatise was a refutation of twelve objections (*i'tirāḏāt*) raised by a proponent of Latin doctrines against Gennadius, bishop of Aleppo

¹⁰⁴ This is a translation by Sophronios of Nektarios's *Περὶ τῆς ἀρχῆς τοῦ Πάπα ἀντίρρησις*, composed in 1671. See above Ch. 1.1.2.

¹⁰⁵ See MS Beirut, Bibliothèque orientale Ar. 955.

¹⁰⁶ Only the second part of the manuscript (f. 124r–169v) was copied by Yūsuf.

¹⁰⁷ See Ṭipāu, *Sylvester of Antioch*, p. 90.

¹⁰⁸ Gennadios also requested a refutation of the Catholic objections regarding the sacraments. As we mentioned before, this was the *Maqāla wajiza fī bāb al-sab'at asrār*, *A Short Treatise on the Seven Sacraments*, preserved at the School of the Three Hierarchs in Beirut. See Nasrallah, *HMLEM* IV.2, p. 99.

(r. 1746–1749).¹⁰⁹ Yūsuf wrote the book under the supervision of Ilyās Fakhr in the span of just 45 days. He was advised to remain anonymous for his own safety, fearing retaliation from segments of the Aleppian populace. Yūsuf intended to attribute the work to Gennadius himself, since the objections were directed against him.¹¹⁰ However, the question of authorship remained obscure for a time, and, because of unknown circumstances, the Daskalos claimed the treatise as his own.¹¹¹ Rachid Haddad identified this Daskalos with Iakobos of Patmos. However, we believe this Daskalos is Theodosius, also mentioned in the correspondence (Letters 15 and 51).¹¹² We also noted previously a similar tension with Sophronios.

According to Yūsuf, the Daskalos's only contribution was the collation of a passage from John Chrysostom in Arabic translation with the Greek original. It was only after Sophronios of Kilis arrived in Aleppo in 1750 that Yūsuf's authorship was acknowledged once again.

This episode offers valuable insight into the internal dynamics of the Orthodox ecclesiastical elite in mid-18th-century Syria. The letter reveals both the hierarchical tensions and how members of this elite evaluated one another's intellectual and moral standing. Expressing his anger over Theodosius's appropriation of the work, Yūsuf draws a sharp contrast between himself and the Daskalos, stating:

"If I were to make a comparison between you [Mūsā] and him [Theodosius], how stark the difference would be! And if you were to compare him to Bishop Sophronios, the disparity would also be evident. If he should align himself with Eustratios [Argentis] and his student, the Priest Mas'ad, how differently I would perceive their view of me from his! And the way in which he corresponds compared with other friends!"

This passage reflects not only the bitterness Yūsuf felt over the misattribution of his work but also the complex social fabric of the Orthodox scholarly elite

109 Neophytos Edelby reports that according to the register of the baptisms of Aleppo Gennadios arrived from Constantinople to Aleppo in April 1746. In 1749, Ibn Dīb became the representative of the patriarch in Aleppo, which means that the bishop was absent. Next year, Sophronios of Kilis arrived in Aleppo as the new representative. See N. Edelby, *Asāqifat al-Rūm al-malakīyīn bi-Ḥalab fī al-ʿaṣr al-ḥadīth*, Aleppo, 1983, p. 133. Sophronios does not seem to hold the title of bishop of Aleppo, probably because this is against the rules of the Church related to the transfer of bishops. Therefore, he is still called Sophronios bishop of Acre in the printed edition of the Psalter of Beirut in 1752.

110 Even though this information is provided in the letter, Haddad confused Gennadius for Sophronios, who is also mentioned in the letter. See Haddad, "La correspondance", p. 277. For an explanation, see the edition below.

111 See Haddad, "La correspondance", p. 277.

112 The same Theodosius promised Yūsuf to translate his *Book of Grammar* into Greek, and probably did not (Letter 51).

in the Patriarchate of Antioch and its broader network. His harsh comparisons between Theodosius, Mūsā, and Bishop Sophronios suggest a well-defined hierarchy of respect, intellectual competence, and loyalty. By contrasting Theodosius with figures like Eustratius and Mas‘ad, Yūsuf implies that while certain clergy members may have disagreed with him, their opposition was principled or at least respectful – unlike that of Theodosius, whose actions are presented as opportunistic and deceitful. The remark about “how he corresponds” hints at underlying tensions in written communication, perhaps alluding to sarcasm, veiled criticism, or lack of collegial tone in Theodosius’s letters. Altogether, the episode illustrates how authorship, attribution, and the politics of ecclesiastical reputation could become entangled in personal rivalries and theological polemics.

Sometime later, Yūsuf set out on a trip to the Romanian principalities to join Patriarch Sylvester. It seems that during this trip, Yūsuf also served as the patriarch’s secretary. This can be inferred from Letter 63, where it is said that Mūsā is not secretary anymore, and the title Mūsā provides to the letters of Yūsuf, where he calls him *al-kātib* (f. 30r). Between Mūsā’s departure and Yūsuf’s arrival, Buṭrus, the brother of Mūsā, seems to have served as secretary, as mentioned earlier. Yūsuf arrived in Bucharest undoubtedly after April 1747, probably in November (Letter 28), albeit with some delay, and remained there for nearly two years, until 1749. It is possible that “al-Khawāja Markū”, *wakīl* of Sylvester, with whom Ni‘ma ibn Tūmā sent a letter to Sylvester, is Yūsuf Mark.¹¹³ When Yūsuf arrived in Bucharest, the patriarch had already printed the Letter of the Synod of Constantinople of 1723.¹¹⁴ Sylvester requested him to write an opening formula (*ḥamdala*) for it and apologized for any misspelling (Letter 28).¹¹⁵ He also apologized for the quality of printing, which was due to the typesets being worn.

We mentioned above the works printed before the arrival of Yūsuf. These works wore out the type, and for this reason, the patriarch was engrossed in creating Arabic typesets at the Monastery of Saint Spyridon because the previous ones

¹¹³ This letter is mentioned in another one entitled: *Sūrat al-maktūb alladhī harrarnāhu lil-batriyark kīr Silfistrūs lammā kāna fī al-Walāh wa-kāna waqta’idhin mustawliyyan min qibalihi ‘alā madīnat Ḥalab Jannādyūs...*

¹¹⁴ The recently identified copy of Sylvester’s book contains the *Acts of Constantinople* of 1723, 1725 and 1727. The preface seems to be destined to introduce only the first letter. The other letters could have been printed after Yūsuf’s arrival.

¹¹⁵ //5r// والمأمول من محبتكم المسيحية بألا يكون بحكمكم في هذا المجموع لأجل تهذيب الإعراب وتركيبه وتزخرف اللفظ وتنميقه ولا في إملاء الحروف وتنقيفها، بل أمعنوا النظر في معاني الكلام ووضعوا مضمون القول الروحي وقصدوا، وإن وجدتم بعض الحروف مقطعة فأصلحوها، لأنها قديمة، والذي نقشها جاهل اللغة العربية، لكن بمئة تعالى وحيله الآن نقشنا أحرف جديدة وعن قريب – انشاء الله تعالى – نطبع بها كتب عديدة على نهج الصحة. وقد طبعنا هذا المجموع ليتوزع على المسيحيين مجاًلاً.

were worn. The Syrian printer Jirjis Abū Shaʿr, who had been generously compensated by both the patriarch and Prince Ioan Mavrocordat, had begun casting lead types for a new set of Arabic fonts. However, the conceived plan did not work, and Yūsuf informed his friend in Letter 54 that the type he produced was not useful. The work of Abū Shaʿr was a big failure, and the Patriarch, seeing that it was a waste of time to stay longer, set out for Constantinople in October 1748. The last letter that Yūsuf sent from Bucharest is dated March or April 1749 (Letter 27).¹¹⁶ He informed his friend that they had begun manufacturing the type for the new printing press: the iron engraving is now nearly finished, and they will soon proceed to the finer copper engravings. He hopes that “by the grace of He who dwells in heaven, it will make for a most suitable printing press. All we need is for the Creator to facilitate its installation in a quiet place, and for us to join you again and enjoy living among you”. He probably means by “a quiet place” Beirut, where the patriarch was planning to install it with the help of al-Shaykh Yūnus Niqūlā al-Jubaylī, whom we will introduce below.

Afterwards, he traveled back to Syria through Constantinople, where he met the metropolitan of Aleppo, Gennadius (Letter 56). Arriving in Aleppo, he clarified the authorship of *Al-Shuḍūr* with Sophronios and Theodosius. Awaiting the arrival of the printing press, he might have collaborated with Sophronios to correct the Psalter and the Horologion.

Yūsuf Mark's presence in Beirut between the years 1750 and 1770 coincided with a turbulent yet pivotal era in the history of the city's Orthodox community. His return from Bucharest marked not only a homecoming but also a strategic settlement in Beirut, likely at the instigation of Patriarch Sylvester, who was preparing the groundwork for an Orthodox printing press in the city. The endeavor was supported by prominent lay elites, foremost among them al-Shaykh Yūnus Niqūlā al-Jubaylī, a native of Jubayl, and longtime administrator and confidant of the Shihābī emirs.¹¹⁷ Yūnus, known for his administrative acumen and piety, emerges in contemporary chronicles as the primary sponsor of the press and a leading patron of Orthodox institutions in Beirut. His name, Yūnus, was printed on every book issued from the press, suggesting his direct and sustained involvement.

It is in this city of freedom, to repeat Makarios Ṣadaqa's words, that Yūsuf opened a school of linguistic and theological sciences in the 1750s.¹¹⁸ One of his stu-

¹¹⁶ On the fifth Sunday of the Holy Lent.

¹¹⁷ On the figure of Yūnus Niqūlā al-Jubaylī and the role he played for the Christian community of Beirut, see Ibn Ṭrād, *Mukhtaṣar tārikh*, p. 88–120. For the most important implications in the ecclesiastical life in Beirut, a resume is to be found in Asseily, “Beirut's Rivalry”, p. 227–234.

¹¹⁸ Referred to also in Panchenko, *Arab Orthodox Christians*, p. 472–473.

dents was the young Khawāja Mūsā Ṣadaqa, future bishop of the city. Ibn Ṭrād calls Yūsuf “the teacher of bibliophiles”, “the best of priests”, “luminary of the theological sciences”, and “Glory of Arab writers”.¹¹⁹ The school and the press likely shared not only sponsors but also intellectual ambitions: to reinforce the Orthodox identity in a city where Catholic influence was growing. The printing press of Beirut issued its first publication in 1751, titled *Mukhtasar al-Sawāʿī farḍ al-ʿammī al-mashāʿī* (Abridged Horologion for the Common Lay Pilgrim).¹²⁰ Later, a Psalter containing the *Taʿlīm Masiḥī* (Catechism) were printed in 1751–1752. The typeset bore a striking resemblance to that of the Aleppo press of Athanasios Dabbās, indicating a deliberate continuity in Orthodox printing culture.

Later, Sylvester may have supported Yūsuf Mark’s residence in Beirut, a city whose strategic and economic importance was growing amid Catholic efforts to assert control over its bishopric. The economic downturn of 1753 in inland Syria had prompted an influx of workers and merchants to Beirut, which was then a significant hub for the export and processing of silk from Mount Lebanon.¹²¹ As Letters 29 and 61 attest, Yūsuf was actively engaged in silk production and trade, a pursuit that likely combined personal motives with ecclesiastical obligations.

This connection to silk also recalls the activities of al-Shaykh Yūnus. A document published by Asad Rustum states that, in 1749, Yūnus paid 1,500 *qurūsh* to the Shihābī emirs Ismāʿīl and Ḥasan Abī al-Lamaʾ to recover the Monastery of Mar Ilyās Shwayyā, which had slipped from the community’s control.¹²² The agreement restored the monastery to Orthodox monks and required the emirs to protect the community and listen to its grievances. The case highlights the fragile legal standing of *waqf* (endowment) properties, which were often pledged or mortgaged in efforts to boost agricultural output and increase tax revenues. Identified in other sources as a site of silk production, the monastery exemplifies the interdependence of religious authority, land ownership, and economic strategy in 18th-century Beirut.

119 The translation of these titles is borrowed from Panchenko in the English translation by Brittany Pheiffer Noble and Samuel Noble.

120 See Ṭipāu, *Sylvester of Antioch*, p. 123, 388–389.

121 See A. Ismail, *Documents diplomatiques et consulaires relatifs à l’histoire du Liban*, vol. II, Beirut, 1975, p. 105–106. Philippe Asseily perceives these consequences as the result of Zāhir al-ʿUmar’s taking over Acre and his measures against French merchants in Sidon. See Asseily, “Beirut’s Rivalry”, p. 229.

122 See A. Rustum, “Mār Yūḥannā wa-Mār Ilyās wa-al-kathlaka fī al-Shuwayr”, *al-Nūr*, 6, 1962, p. 168–170. For an analysis of this document, see S. Slim, “L’enjeu des *waqfs* dans le conflit des monastères: Mār Yūḥannā al-Ṣābiḡ Choueir et al-Nabī Ilyās Ṣwayyā”, in Heyberger, Pasha, el Gemayel (eds.), *La division du patriarcat*, p. 397–400.

Shortly before Sylvester arrived in Syria in 1753, the Catholics gained full control of the Orthodox Church of Beirut and appointed a Catholic bishop to the see.¹²³ What happened to the printing press after that remains a mystery. Logically, one would expect Sylvester, who had encouraged its establishment in Beirut, to have ensured the continuation of its activities upon his arrival, especially since Yūsuf, who had supervised the press in Bucharest, was present in Beirut at the time. One theory is that, following the Catholic takeover, the authorities pressured Yūnus Niqūlā to withdraw his support for the press. But why would they do so, given that, unlike the Bucharest press, the Beirut press appears to have produced only liturgical books? Another possibility is that the Catholics transferred the press and its printed materials to locations under their control. However, none of the books printed in Beirut – rare as they are – have been found in Catholic convents, nor do any Orthodox sources mention such a transfer or express complaints about it. As a result, many aspects of the history of this printing press remain a mystery.

At that time, Yūsuf was in contact with Mas‘ad Nashū in Egypt (Letter 29). In 1754, the latter sent him a letter asking him for a list of the patriarchs of Antioch from the first until now because he is about to write a History (*Tārīkh ‘ajīb*). Having no access to such a list, Yūsuf asks his friend for help. Nashu informed Yūsuf that he will soon send him a collection of treatises concerning the Orthodox baptism and the invalidity of the Latin baptism, which he translated from Greek.

Around the same time, Yūsuf went to Ma‘lūlā to visit the Monastery of Saint Thekla.¹²⁴ On his way, he came across the Monastery of Saint Sergius and Bacchus of the same village, inhabited by Catholic monks. This was the occasion of the debate with the Catholics about the epiclesis. Yūsuf asked the monks represented by Arsāniyūs to provide him with their objections and promised to compose a lengthy treatise in which he refutes them. In the preface, he calls himself al-Ṭrābulṣī *aṣl^{an} wa-nisbat^{an}* (originally from Tripoli) al-Bayrūtī *mawṭin^{an} wa-baldat^{an}* (resident in Beirut) (f. 2v). This confirms that his travel to Syria was temporary. We analyse the content of this work below.

Following this period, an unfortunate earthquake struck Beirut and its church on October 30, 1759. We do not know the direct impact on Yūsuf’s primary activities, which included teaching, proofreading books to be printed, and taking care of the silk production. However, we know that despite these unhappy events, the

¹²³ See Rustum, *The Church of the City of God*, p. 150.

¹²⁴ In his work *Al-qawl al-dāfin li-i‘tirādāt Arsāniyūs al-zāfin*, he mentions Jibrīl, presumably Jibrīl Jilda. “Especially, their head Jibrīl the infamous, who used to disgrace us regarding the Holy Lent and was proud to say that the solution of fasting for the soul and body is unparalleled”. For more details on this work, see below.

controversy between Orthodox and Catholics still intensified in the following years, and Yūsuf became more involved than ever. In 1761, in Beirut, Yūsuf met Daskalos Papa-Ephraim, who was en route to Damascus.¹²⁵ He asked him to list all the heresies the Latins invented until that year.

The conflicts among the elders also affected the younger generation. As Yūsuf describes in the same Letter 35, six days before August 21, 1764, his son Mikhā'il was involved in an incident with an Aleppian boy who insulted the Patriarch Sylvester. An adherent to Catholicism, the Aleppian recited some verses from Niqūlā al-Ṣā'igh, famous for criticizing in his poems the Orthodox clergy. To this, Yūsuf's son replied by insulting the pope. A fight rose, and Yūsuf's son struck him with a staff. The location of this event is specified as the *qaysariya* of Shāhīn Talhūq. Though this *qaysariya* was not preserved until today, it is generally admitted that it was located in the surroundings of al-'Umārī Mosque. To solve the problem, the emir interfered and asked for fifty piastres as a bribe and twenty for the exile, presumably of the son. Awaiting the outcome, Yūsuf and his son were hiding.

This event is not attested elsewhere; therefore, we do not know how the problem was solved. However, it is one of the events when Sylvester would have interfered with the emirs through the elites of Beirut.

We previously discussed the incident related to the proofreading of the *Octoechos*. We suggest that this collaboration began when Theodosios was active in Beirut around 1765, probably after he translated the *Homilies* of Mēniatēs.¹²⁶ The main reason this project was abandoned is that Theodosios became amnesic before completing it. Despite tensions with Theodosios, Yūsuf supported him from his wage along with the bishop, presumably Makarios Ṣadaqa.

Yūsuf died in 1773 or 1774, during the Russo-Turkish War, when Russian troops occupied Beirut. According to Ibn Ṭrād, as cited by Panchenko, his body was carried from his home to the church in a solemn procession with lit candles.¹²⁷ Leading the procession was the cross, followed by priests wearing their epitachelion, then the metropolitan, accompanied by Russian officers, junior officers, and a crowd of Christians. With Mark's death, the Christian community lost a respected spiritual leader and a beloved writer.

¹²⁵ This work is preserved in MS Vatican, Sbath 275.

¹²⁶ See above, Ch. 1.1.2.

¹²⁷ See Ibn Ṭrād, *Mukhtaṣar tārikh*, p. 123–124.

1.1.3.2 Yūsuf Mark's Works

A *Al-Shudhūr fī naqḍ haḍayān al-‘adīm al-nūr* (Collected Excerpts to Oppose the Delirium of the Lightless)

This text is preserved in two manuscripts: Vatican, Sbath 258 (18th c.), and the private collection of the Anṭākī family.¹²⁸ The manuscript of the Anṭākī collection is inaccessible, and, unfortunately, in the only extant manuscript, the second page of the preface and a large part of the refuted text are missing. Therefore, we do not know the exact title. The one provided before the text (f. 1r) on a cover page could have been added by the scribe or owner and may be slightly different from the original. For more information, see above.

B Preface, Letter of the Synod of Constantinople, 1723

This preface, written on behalf of Patriarch Sylvester of Antioch, addresses the Orthodox clergy and faithful in the Arab East. It was created to accompany the edition of Letter of the Synod of Constantinople, 1723, which examined and condemned the teachings of the Latins. Sylvester warns that these individuals, although they claim to be Orthodox, are actually “deceivers whose doctrines deviate from the true Apostolic faith”. The preface affirms that their errors were judged according to Scripture, the holy canons, and the interpretations of both Eastern and Western saints.

At the end of the volume, anathemas are pronounced against those who followed these “false teachers”, whom Sylvester likens to “wolves in sheep’s clothing”. He exhorts all Orthodox Christians to hold fast to the true faith, the faith of the Fathers and of the seven ecumenical and local councils. The patriarchs of Constantinople, Alexandria, Jerusalem, and Antioch, he says, are united in confessing this same Orthodox faith and are prepared to defend it even unto death.

Sylvester also advises readers not to focus on the elegance or grammar of the text, which may contain stylistic imperfections because of the limitations of the original Arabic types, but instead to consider its theological content. He notes that new typefaces have been prepared and promises that more books will soon be printed. Finally, he affirms that this work was printed in Bucharest in 1747 and was intended for free distribution to the faithful.

¹²⁸ *Al-Fihris* 1786.

C *Al-qawl al-dāfin li-i'ṭirādāt Arsāniyūs al-zāfin*

In 1755, Yūsuf composed *Al-qawl al-dāfin li-i'ṭirādāt Arsāniyūs al-zāfin*, preserved in the unique MS Brummānā, Archdiocese of Mount Lebanon 4.¹²⁹ The work includes a preface, twelve chapters, of which ten are responses to Arsāniyūs's ten objections and two additional chapters where Yūsuf discusses different matters, and a final section that refutes Arsāniyūs's conclusion.

The preface recounts the incident that led Yūsuf to compose this treatise. During a visit to Ma'lūlā, he went to venerate Saint Thekla, "the first among the martyrs". While exploring the site of her miraculous escape through the split mountain, he noticed, at a height, a domed monastery dedicated to Saint Sergius.

Upon entering the church to admire its architecture, he was approached by the abbot, who invited him upstairs under the guise of hospitality. There, Yūsuf encountered a certain Arsenius from Homs, engaged in altering the text of the *Kondakion* of consecration, omitting or changing key liturgical phrases, particularly the invocation of the Holy Spirit during the Eucharist. Arsenius claimed that calling upon the Holy Spirit was unnecessary, as the priest's authority alone was sufficient, even if the priest were excommunicated or unworthy. He argued that his altered version corresponded to the Greek original, although he admitted ignorance of both Greek and Arabic grammar.

When Yūsuf rebuked him for these falsifications, which he considered not merely corruptions but blasphemies, Arsenius became visibly angry and embarrassed, attempting to justify himself with sophistic arguments. The situation escalated when the abbot and other monks, whom Yūsuf describes as morally and doctrinally corrupt, surrounded him with hostility. Quoting Psalm 21:17, he recalls feeling beset by "dogs" and "evil doers", and, fearing for his safety, he replied briefly and left the place, promising to send them a written reply.

He also accuses them of mocking the Great Fast, as did their leader Jibrīl Jilda, dismissing the need for communion under both species, and boasting of lax attitudes toward fasting.¹³⁰ Some claimed to be Greek, others French, seemingly to avoid accountability, but Yūsuf saw this as spiritual self-destruction.

Writing in *saj'* (rhymed prose), he makes his rival say the first verse from al-Mutanabbī's poem *Lā taḥsabū raqṣī baynakum ṭarab^m* but compares him to Herodias, who danced to bring death. Then, he modestly explains that because of his limited theological knowledge, he will refer to patristic citations and the work

¹²⁹ The date is not provided but it can be inferred from a historical event related to the Ethiopian Church which is dated by the author to "the previous year, 1754".

¹³⁰ Nasrallah identifies him with Jabbūr al-Jildī, the physician mentioned in the Anonymous history preserved in MS BnF Ar. 6538, f. 110r. Cf. Nasrallah, Haddad, *HMLÉM* IV.2, p. 287.

Mihakk al-ikhtibār. The work in question is Masʿad Nashū's *Homily for the first Sunday of the Holy Lent*, composed in 1750, to which Ilyās Fakhr added a preface and renamed it *Kitāb Mihakk al-ikhtibār fī bayān ḥaqq al-ʿitibār*.¹³¹ Ilyās Fakhr chose a title echoing Nashū's introduction, where he explains the need for a touchstone, *mihakk*, to distinguish the gold and the copper, the gold here representing the true One Catholic and Holly Apostolic Church. Yūsuf Mark refers to the same image.

Most of the pages of this work are biblical and patristic citations. This aligns with the Orthodox tradition, which prefers to cite Patristic texts, rather than innovating, which is risky. Despite that, the work has some originality, especially when the author eloquently introduced these citations, e.g., the case of a citation from John of Damascus:

And how clear and eloquent and how compelling, sound, and decisive are the words of Saint John of Damascus, son of Manṣūr, renowned for his noble virtue, the rare gem of Damascus and its offspring, the honor of the Eastern Church and the ornament of its scholars, the mouthpiece of the Fathers who spoke on theology, the elite among them, who gathered their opinions and distilled their mastery. For this glorious saint spoke on this sound doctrine with such clarity that no one could surpass it.

This is found in his fourteenth discourse...

وما أوضح وافصح | وإلى البيان الزم
وارجح | ما قاله القديس يوحنا الدمشقي ابن
منصور | ذي الفضل المشهور | نادرة دمشق
ومنهاها | وشرف الكنيسة الشرقية وزينة
علمائها | فم الآبا المتكلمين باللاهوت نخبهم |
الذي جمع أراوهم وبراعتهم | لأن هذا القديس
المجيد تكلم في باب هذا المعتقد السديد | قولاً
واضحاً ما عليه من يزيد |
وذلك في مقالته الرابعة عشر...

Yūsuf Mark deploys the *sajʿ*, which needs a sophisticated command of Arabic rhetoric, in the service of Christian theological argument. Through parallel structures, end-rhyme, and cumulative praise, he elevates his discourse and reinforces the authority of patristic sources. In the passage praising John of Damascus, Yūsuf layers honorifics, theological epithets, and rhythmic cadences, and positions the saint as a doctrinal authority. Through ornamental eulogy, he venerates the saint like an iconographer with an icon.

Besides its importance as a literary work, this piece is notable for preserving some significant information. As previously highlighted, an essential passage has been identified that defends Sophronios of Kilis and confirms his authority as a philologist of the Greek language, even among Catholics.

It is also relevant to mention at this juncture two other historical pieces of information preserved in chapter 12. The opponent of Yūsuf posited that most Christians worldwide currently adhere to Catholicism, a phenomenon that even

¹³¹ See el Gemayel, *Ḥāṣiyah Waḡīzah*, p. 258–260.

extends to Russia and the entirety of Syria's Christian population. Only three authors continue to defend Orthodoxy: Ilyās Fakhr, Eustratius Argentis, and Yūsuf. To challenge his claim, Yūsuf provides a detailed account of his travels to Wallachia, as well as another related to the history of the Ethiopian Church. Regarding the first, he asserted that during his journey from Aleppo, through Antioch, Payas, Adana to Constantinople, and subsequently onward to the Romanian Principalities, he did not encounter any individuals who adhered to Catholicism. This assertion is further corroborated by the observation that neither individuals residing to the east nor to the west of his trajectory exhibited any such religious affiliation. This enables us to partially reconstruct his journey from Aleppo to Bucharest.

Regarding the second point, Yūsuf adds other ethnicities that he did not encounter during his journey through the Romanian Principalities, such as the Ethiopians, and therefore he was not witness to their doctrine. However, he believed that their rejection of the Catholic doctrine was a well-known fact.¹³² He recalls that, in the previous year, the Ethiopian king, presumably Iyasu II (r. 1723–1755), had sent letters and envoys to Patriarch Matthaïos of Alexandria, requesting a metropolitan, two priests, and a teacher to guide his people back to their ancient, Orthodox faith. The patriarch responded by dispatching the requested clergy and teacher, who were met at the Ethiopian border with the highest honors by distinguished members of the royal court. According to Yūsuf, reports continued to reach the Alexandrian patriarch, confirming the success of the mission and the growth of the true faith in those lands. The reporter might be Mas'ad Nashū, at that time in Egypt, who was in contact with Yūsuf, as shown in the correspondence.¹³³

Stating in this context that all the books printed in the Ethiopian language to convert Ethiopians to Catholicism implies, even though not explicitly mentioned, that the books printed in Iași and Bucharest, and the ones he had supervised in Beirut, contributed to and helped preserving the Orthodox faith.

D Controversies with Yūsuf Bābilā

In 1763, Yūsuf Mark engaged in a debate with Jibrīl Jilda and Yūsuf Bābilā over issues dividing Orthodox Christians and Catholics. The story of the disagreement between the two Yūsufs goes like this: one day, Jibrīl Jilda insulted Orthodox priests in front of Yūsuf Mark. We do not know exactly what sparked the quarrel, but it was likely a dispute over the Filioque. During the incident, Yūsuf Mark asked him: "It is

¹³² On the short Franciscan mission in Ethiopia, 17 months in 1751–1752, see J.H. Arrowsmith-Brown (ed.), *Prutky's Travels in Ethiopia and Other Countries*, London, 1999.

¹³³ See above, Letter 29.

known and understood in both the Eastern and Western Church that the Father is the cause of the Son alone. Is the same cause also the cause of the Holy Spirit alone? We await your answer”.

Apparently, Yūsuf had asked Jilda the same question verbally before sending it to him in writing. This is inferred from Bābīlā's words, who said in his answer that he was aware of the question and had drafted a preliminary response before receiving it a second time through Jilda.

Unable to answer the question, Jilda sent it to Bābīlā, who then copied the same preliminary response he had drafted for him. According to Bābīlā, he did not bother to improve his response because he was unaware of who had asked the question. His response mainly addressed the types of “causes” according to Aristotelian philosophy. Yūsuf Mark was not pleased with Bābīlā's reaction, so he composed his first work against Bābīlā, entitled: *The Book of Establishing the Proof in Firm Faith: A Refutation of Jibrīl Jilda and His Teacher Father Yūsuf Bābīlā and the Sect of Tyranny*.¹³⁴

Bābīlā responded to this in 1764 by composing a work entitled: *An Explanation of the Doctrine Beyond Comprehension: Refuting the Answers of Father Yūsuf Mark*. This marked the first round of the controversy. After that, things are unclear, but it seems that one or two more rounds may have taken place. MS Dayr al-Mukhal-liṣ (Joun) 763 contains a response attributed to Yūsuf Mark, addressed according to the title to Yūsuf Bābīlā, and a reply to this response, which is anonymous but presumed to be by Yūsuf Bābīlā. The first is entitled: *Response to the Objector from Yūsuf Mark to Yūsuf Bābīlā*.

According to the author of the first response, he was replying to a brief treatise that begins with a syllogism and ends with another syllogism. The author he was responding to had agreed that the councils and the Fathers did not say that the Spirit proceeds from the Son. However, this silence does not imply rejection. None of these points relates to Bābīlā's treatise entitled *An Explanation of the Doctrine Beyond Comprehension*. Furthermore, the author of the reply to this response does not mention Yūsuf's name as he usually does but merely refers to him as “a Christian of our times”. This is surprising and makes us consider a second round of letters.

The entire controversy seems to be preserved in an inaccessible manuscript that was preserved in the bishopric of Baalbek, *Kitāb al-burhān al-jalī al-mu'tala li-daḥd ajwibat al-khūrī Yūsuf Bāb al-bīlā* (*The Book of the Manifest Proof, Elevated, for Refuting the Replies of Priest Yūsuf the Gate of Affliction*), and the copyist of the manuscript, as mentioned earlier, is Mūsā Ṭrābulṣī, who provided a second title to

134 *Kitāb iqāmat al-burhān fī sadīd al-īmān: radd 'alā Jibrā'il Jilda wa-mu'allimihi al-khūrī Yūsuf Bābīlā wa-shī'at al-tughyān*.

the book.¹³⁵ In Letter 35, sent to Mūsā in August 1764, Yūsuf thanks Mūsā for helping him copy his work against his opponent and for writing a preface that includes *al-Ḥamdala* and the following phrase: “Just as the Devil once hid in the serpent to wage war against the ancestors, so Bābīlā hid in his disciple, the son of Jilda, Jibrān, and began to wage war against the Church with his mouth and tongue, as if he were his tool”. Not finding this preface in any of the works mentioned above, I firmly believe it existed in this manuscript, which is seemingly a complete and revised version of the controversy copied by Mūsā in 1769.

1.2 Secondary Figures in the Correspondence

Along with the principal correspondents of Mūsā, his friends Sophronios (24/26 letters and one repeated) and Yūsuf (35 letters), we find some letters received from secondary figures: Ilyās Fakhr (2/4), Athanasios of Damascus (3 letters), Iakobos of Patmos (2 letters), Khalīl and his brother Dīmītrī Ṣabbāgh, and Samuel of Constantinople (1 each).

1.2.1 Ilyās Fakhr¹³⁶

Ilyās Fakhr (d. 1758), known as Ibn al-Fakhr al-Ṭarābulṣī, was a significant intellectual and religious figure of the 18th-century Orthodox Church. His life was marked by a shift from early sympathies with Catholic circles in Tripoli to becoming a leading advocate for the anti-Roman Orthodox cause. His involvement in theological controversies and his extensive network, which included Patriarch Sylvester, his nephew Mūsā, Sophronios of Acre, and Yūsuf Mark, positioned him as a central player in the struggle between Orthodox and Catholic factions in the Levant.

Born in a prominent Tripolitan family, Fakhr was initially engaged with the Catholic missionaries and the French consular circles. By the early 18th century, he had established himself as a respected scholar and translator. His early works included theological treatises commissioned by Catholic patrons, reflecting his engagement with the Latin Church. However, by the 1720s, his allegiances began to shift, coinciding with his move to Aleppo, where he became the dragoman of the British Consulate.

¹³⁵ See above, Ch. 1.1.1.

¹³⁶ Our note on Ilyās Fakhr mostly relies on the PhD thesis of Ronney el Gemayel, *Ḥaṣīyah Waḡīzah*, p. 85–126.

Multiple factors influenced Fakhr's transition from a Catholic sympathizer to an Orthodox polemicist. His growing exposure to anti-Roman arguments, coupled with the increasingly aggressive Latinization policies of the Catholic missionaries, led him to reconsider his stance. His close association with Patriarch Sylvester, who emerged as the leader of the anti-Roman Orthodox faction following the schism of 1724, reinforced this shift.

As a logothete and an intellectual, Fakhr played a crucial role in articulating and defending the Orthodox theological position. He became a prolific writer, producing treatises that countered Catholic claims, particularly on the issue of papal authority and the procession of the Holy Spirit. His collaboration with Sophronios of Acre and Yūsuf Mark was particularly significant in this regard. Together, they worked on translating and disseminating key Orthodox texts, such as Patriarch Nektarios's *Peri tēs archēs tou Papa*, which was rendered into Arabic as *Kitāb jalā' al-abṣār min ghishā' al-akdār*.

These translations were not merely linguistic exercises; they were strategic tools in the broader Orthodox resistance against Catholic encroachment. Fakhr was particularly meticulous about ensuring textual accuracy, emphasizing the need to preserve the integrity of patristic citations to pre-empt Catholic critiques. His letters to fellow scholars, including Mūsā Ṭrābulṣī, his nephew, reveal his deep concern over potential misrepresentations and his insistence on rigorous scholarship in defense of the Orthodox position.

Fakhr's ties to Patriarch Sylvester were both intellectual and personal. His nephew, Mūsā, served as the patriarch's secretary, further strengthening his connection to the anti-Roman leadership. Fakhr's role extended beyond scholarship; he actively participated in the political and ecclesiastical maneuvers that sought to consolidate Orthodox authority in Aleppo and beyond.

One of his most critical interventions came in 1731 when he presented the *berat* recognizing Sylvester's authority over the Rūm Archdiocese of Aleppo. However, the implementation of this decree was obstructed by Catholic factions, who leveraged their financial resources to bribe Ottoman officials. Despite such setbacks, Fakhr remained steadfast in his efforts to support Sylvester's position, providing intellectual and logistical support to the patriarch's administration.

Beyond his literary and diplomatic activities, Fakhr also played a tangible role in sustaining Orthodox religious life in Aleppo. In 1753, following the forced departure of Bishop Sophronios of Acre from Aleppo because of Catholic pressure, Patriarch Sylvester authorized the celebration of Orthodox liturgies in Fakhr's home. This decision underscored his status as a trusted figure within the Orthodox hierarchy and highlighted the crucial role he played in maintaining the continuity of Orthodox worship in times of crisis. His home became a sanctuary for Orthodox

clergy and faithful, reflecting his unwavering commitment to the preservation of the Eastern Christian tradition.

Fakhr's legacy lies in his tireless defense of the Orthodox Church against Latinization. His scholarly contributions, polemical writings, and active engagement in ecclesiastical politics made him a formidable figure in the 18th-century religious landscape of the Levant. His collaborations with Sophronios of Acre and Yūsuf Mark ensured that the Orthodox response to Catholic challenges was well-articulated and widely disseminated.

His work also provides valuable insights into the broader dynamics of Christian-Muslim relations in the Ottoman Empire. As a dragoman, he navigated the complex political terrain of consular and ecclesiastical rivalries, leveraging his position to advance the Orthodox cause. His ability to operate at the intersection of religious scholarship, diplomatic service, and community leadership makes him a key figure in understanding the intricate web of alliances and conflicts that shaped 18th-century Middle Eastern Christianity.

To sum up, Ilyās Fakhr was not merely a theologian or translator; he was a defender of the Orthodox identity at a time when external pressures threatened to fragment his community. His intellectual rigor, strategic acumen, and unwavering dedication to his faith ensured that the Orthodox tradition remained resilient in the face of formidable challenges.

1.2.2 Iakobos of Patmos¹³⁷

Iakobos of Patmos was an influential Orthodox scholar and educator in the 18th century. Born on the island of Patmos, he was profoundly shaped by the monastic and academic environment of the Monastery of Saint John the Theologian. Under the guidance of Makarios Kalogeras, a prominent Orthodox scholar and theologian, Iakobos became one of the leading figures in Orthodox education. His expertise in Greek philosophy, theology, and languages positioned him as a crucial asset to the Orthodox Church, particularly during a time of heightened missionary activity by Latin Catholic and Protestant groups in the Eastern Mediterranean.

Iakobos received his education at the renowned Patmian School, established in the early 18th century. This institution attracted students from across the Orthodox world, including the Balkans, Russia, and the Middle East. The curriculum focused

¹³⁷ For Iakobos's biography we have mostly relied on an unpublished partial Arabic translation of K. Karnapas, *Ιάκωβος ο Πάτμιος ως Διδάσκαλος εν τῷ Αντιοχικῷ και Ιεροσολυμιτικῷ θρόνῳ κατά τον ΙΗ΄ αἰῶνα*, Jerusalem, 1906.

on Greek and Latin grammar, philosophy, rhetoric, and theology, ensuring that its graduates were well-versed in the Orthodox intellectual tradition. Iakobos excelled in these studies and later became a teacher at the school, solidifying his reputation as a leading Orthodox scholar.

Sylvester of Antioch, who ascended to the patriarchal throne in 1724, faced significant challenges. The Latin missionary presence had led to a division within the Orthodox community, culminating in the establishment of the Melkite Greek Catholic Church. Determined to preserve and strengthen Orthodox identity, Sylvester sought scholars and educators who could reinforce Orthodox theological teachings and counter the influence of Latin and Uniate missions. Recognizing the need for a strong educational institution, he turned to the Patmian School for assistance in establishing Orthodox learning centers in his Patriarchate.

Responding to Sylvester's call, Makarios Kalogeras recommended Iakobos as the ideal candidate to spearhead Orthodox education in Antioch. In 1726, Iakobos arrived in Aleppo, a central intellectual and commercial hub within the Patriarchate of Antioch. His primary task was to establish a school that would provide Orthodox clergy and laity with theological and linguistic training, thereby countering the growing influence of Catholic missionaries.

Under Iakobos's direction, the school in Aleppo flourished, attracting students from various regions. The curriculum was modelled on that of the Patmian School, incorporating Greek language studies, patristic theology, and Aristotelian philosophy. Iakobos's ability to translate and adapt Greek theological texts into Arabic allowed him to make Orthodox teachings accessible to the local population. His work laid the foundation for a renewed Orthodox educational tradition in the region.

By 1728, political and religious opposition in Aleppo forced Iakobos to relocate to Tripoli, where he established another school. Supported by Sylvester and local Orthodox leaders, he continued his mission of providing high-quality theological education. His efforts, however, were not without challenges. Latin missionaries and local adversaries sought to undermine his work, leading to tensions that ultimately compelled him to leave the Patriarchate of Antioch in 1735.

Following his departure from Antioch, Iakobos was invited by Patriarch Meletios of Jerusalem to establish a higher theological school for the Brotherhood of the Holy Sepulcher. Arriving in Jerusalem in 1736, he founded an advanced theological school that educated Orthodox clergy in Greek and Arabic. He was assisted by his disciple Sophronios of Kilis. His work significantly contributed to the intellectual and theological resilience of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem, reinforcing Orthodox teachings at a time of growing external pressures from Latin and Protestant missions.

The exact date of Iakobos's death, September 20, 1765, is preserved in the MS Vatican, Sbath 264.¹³⁸

1.2.3 Khalīl and Dīmītrī Ṣabbāgh

In the collection of letters, we find two letters sent to Mūsā by Ṣabbāgh family members: Khalīl and Dīmītrī. While Khalīl is known from other sources, Dīmītrī is not known outside the correspondence.¹³⁹

Khalīl Ṣabbāgh left descriptions of two pilgrimages he undertook to some of the most celebrated monasteries of the Christian East: The Monasteries of Saint Catherine on Mount Sinai and Our Lady of Ṣaydnāyā. The first journey took place in 1753, when he accompanied Archbishop Constantine II of Sinai himself.¹⁴⁰ This privileged circumstance allowed him to visit all the sanctuaries at leisure and to record a vivid account of his stay among the monks of the monastery. His second journey, to Ṣaydnāyā, is recounted in the work *Riḥla ilā Ṣaydnāyā*, dated 1755.

We have noted earlier that Ṣabbāgh sent a condolence letter to his friend on Ilyās Fakhr's death, and his brother sent a follow-up regarding a matter that he wanted his friend to solve for him in Constantinople.¹⁴¹

1.2.4 Athanasios Mukhalla' al-Dimashqī

Athanasios Mukhalla' al-Dimashqī is the most recent figure featured in this collection, which includes three of his letters (Letters 33–35), and a fourth letter on behalf of Sophronios of Kilis, who was the patriarch of Constantinople at the time (Letter 66), all of which are connected to the tensions between the Damascenes and Patriarch Daniel of Chios (1767–1791) mentioned earlier.

Athanasios was born in Damascus around 1750. He was the son of Mikhā'il Mukhalla', as can be inferred from his translation of *Al-būq al-injīlī*. Introducing himself, he says: "The priest Athanasios the monk son of Mikhā'il Mukhalla',

¹³⁸ See Sbath, *Bibliothèque*, p. 126.

¹³⁹ See Cheikho, *Catalogue des manuscrits des auteurs arabes chrétiens depuis l'Islam*, Beirut, 2000, p. 132; Graf, *GCAL* III, p. 159; Cheikho, "Mikhā'il al-Ṣabbāgh wa-usratuh", *al-Mashriq*, 1905, p. 26; Nasrallah, Haddad, *HMLÉM* IV.2, p. 303.

¹⁴⁰ The Arabic text was published in: Louis Cheikho, "Riḥlat Khalīl Ṣabbāgh ilā Tūr Sīnā", *al-Mashriq*, 7, 1904, p. 958–968, 1003–1013.

¹⁴¹ See above, Ch. 1.1.1.

Damascene by origin, the carpenter, he received the monastic schema in Sinai”.¹⁴² We have no information about his early years. His command of the Arabic language and engagement in church affairs suggest he had studied Arabic in ecclesiastical circles, probably with Mūsā Ṭrābūlsī. In his letters to Mūsā, he calls him “the father and the master”.

According to Joseph Zaytūn, Athanasios studied Greek with Dawūd al-Qusṭanṭīnī.¹⁴³

As mentioned, he received the monastic schema in Sinai. We do not know his monastic name before priesthood. In his *Histoire*, Nasrallah identifies him as Acacius al-Dimashqī, a monk in Sinai.¹⁴⁴ If this is correct, it should not be understood that Athanasios spent his monastic life in Sinai. We are aware that a *metochion* of the Monastery of Saint Catherine of Sinai was active in Damascus in the 18th century.¹⁴⁵ We learn from a manuscript preserved in Khinshara (OBC 868) that Yūsuf, son of Mikhā’il Mukhalla’, presumably the brother of Athanasios, copied a manuscript for Deacon Ioannikios, son of the priest Yūḥannā Khabbāz of Damascus. Ioannikios endowed the manuscript to the *Metochion* of Saint Catherine of Sinai in Damascus. Nasrallah associates the families Mukhalla’ and Khabbāz, saying that Khabbāz is a branch of the family.¹⁴⁶ Even though Nasrallah does not specify his source, it can be accepted that Ioannikios Khabbāz was a relative of Athanasios and Yūsuf.

Athanasios appears in the correspondence under the signature *Bābā* Athanasios al-Dimashqī. On April 21, 1776, writing from Jerusalem, he informed Mūsā Ṭrābūlsī that he had just received two of his letters, one by land and one by sea, accompanied by a letter from Patriarch Daniel of Chios (1767–1791). In his letter, Athanasios explained that he had wished to travel to greet the patriarch in person (*li-laṭm anāmilihi al-ṭāhira*) but was detained in Jerusalem by the “venerable fathers”, both out of affection and because they needed his assistance. They promised, however, to fulfill his wish and entrusted him to Kyr Anthimos, who renewed his promise but advised delaying the journey. This episode, later clarified by a letter from Sophronios (October 5, 1777), related to tensions between the Orthodox community of Damascus and Patriarch Daniel. Athanasios’s father, a notable of Damascus, had

¹⁴² See Kyr Makāriyūs, *Kitāb Al-būq al-injīlī*, vol. 1, Beirut, 1888, p. 2.

¹⁴³ See J. Zaytūn, *Al-āsiya masīrat qarn wa-nisf*, Damascus, 1993.

¹⁴⁴ Nasrallah, Haddad, *HMLÉM* IV.2, p. 195, 303-304. Acacius al-Dimashqī is the author of a description of Mount Sinai.

¹⁴⁵ The *Metochion* of the Monastery of Saint Catherine of Sinai in Damascus is attested for the first time in the 1220s. It seems that its activities stopped around 1238 and the monks and some of their belongings were transferred to Sinai. See H. Ibrahim, “Poimen al-sīqī moine copiste (fl. 1223-1237) et la cellule des moines sinaïtes à Damas”, *Parole de l’Orient*, 50, 2024, p. 93–129.

¹⁴⁶ Nasrallah, Haddad, *HMLÉM* IV.2, p. 195.

been tasked with delivering the community's report to his son, who was then to travel to Constantinople to present it directly to the Ecumenical Patriarch Sophronios II (Sophronios of Kilis). Anthimos, likely the future patriarch of Jerusalem (1788–1808), opposed this recourse to Constantinople and sought to resolve the matter locally, possibly also wishing to retain Athanasios in Jerusalem to help revise his own Arabic texts, such as *al-Hidāyat al-qawīmat* (1775) and, later, his *Commentary on the Psalms* (1778).¹⁴⁷ Athanasios also told Mūsā that he had been ordained priest at the church of the Holy Sepulcher shortly before April 1776, and that the new patriarch of Jerusalem, Abramios (†1787), though less learned than his predecessors Chrysanthos and Ephraim, was pious, austere, and a patron of letters.

Athanasios finally reached Constantinople in 1777, carrying the complaints from Damascus against Patriarch Daniel. In a rushed letter dated October 5, 1777, written the same day as Sophronios's own to Mūsā, he described a tense encounter with Patriarch Daniel, who had arrived in the city via Chios and was upset about the accusations. Sophronios, however, supported Athanasios's cause. He urged Mūsā to come to Constantinople in person as he had promised to. The letter also includes greetings to al-Maqdisī Abū Yūsuf Dīmītrī (Ṣabbāgh?), Deacon Girgis, Mūsā's son, and Deacon Yūsuf, Mūsā's son-in-law.

The last extant letter from Athanasios, now bishop of Homs, dated 25 June 1787, reports his arrival in his diocese at the start of Lent, a brief illness, and his preaching during the season. He inquired about rumors of Patriarch Daniel's departure from Damascus – news that proved true, as Patriarch Daniel had left the city a month earlier, never to return.

The activity of Athanasios in Homs is known from a historical work on Homs composed by Constantin son of David al-Ḥimṣī entitled *Kitāb tawārīkh Homs al-ʿādīya dākhilān wa-khārijān*.¹⁴⁸ This book is primarily an inventory of sacred artefacts that could be found in Homs in the years 1862–1863 when the book was written.¹⁴⁹

From the numerous objects endowed to the church of the Forty Martyrs in Homs we learn that, in 1759, Patriarch Sylvester together with his *wakīl*, Ilyās Sīyālāt, initiated an important phase of pastoral care for the parish. Sylvester devoted much

¹⁴⁷ Haddad, "La correspondance", p. 284, n. 31.

¹⁴⁸ He is better known for his illuminated manuscript of the *al-Nāmūs al-muqaddas al-sharīf wa-al-miṣbāḥ al-sāmī al-munīf* (a Canon Law Collection) preserved in MS Balamand, Monastery of Our Lady 196. See his biography by Ilyās al-Zayyāt, "Qusṭanṭīn ibn al-Khūrī Dāwūd al-Ḥimṣī, khattāṭ wa-muzakhrif 'āsha fī al-qarn al-tāsi' 'ashar", in *Kitāb al-nāmūs al-sharīf: Muqaddima wa-dirāsāt*, Beirut, 1991, p. 39–65.

¹⁴⁹ See MS BnF Ar. 5936. The author announces a more extensive version of the book entitled *Kitāb al-jughrafiya, The Book of Geography* (f. 9r, 14v, etc.)

time to decorating the church, painting its frescoes, and endowing to it a program of more than ten icons, as described by Constantin al-Ḥimṣī.¹⁵⁰ The most prominent was the fresco of the Mother of God [*Platytera*]¹⁵¹ *tôn Ouranôn*, which, according to the author, himself an artist, did not fully adhere to the established “principles of icon painting” (*usūl al-taṣwīr*).¹⁵² Ilyās Siyālāt and other parishioners offered liturgical vessels and utensils for the services.

When Athanasios succeeded to the episcopal throne of Homs, he continued this work of embellishment, focusing especially on the furniture of the church. In the beginning of the description of the furniture he endowed or commissioned for the church of the Forty Martyrs, Constantin does not avoid elogy. “Athanasios al-Dimashqī who was distinguished in languages (*bārīʿ fī ʿilm al-lughāt*), an erudite man in theology and [Christian] doctrine (*jahbaz fī ʿilm al-lāhūt wa-al-diyāna*), and conversant with the sacred texts of other faiths, who learned the Qurʾān by heart, and [was even known] to debate leading Muslim scholars in Homs.¹⁵³

So, Athanasios commissioned several remarkable pieces for the church. Among his works was a specially crafted bishop’s chair (*Kursī Yidak Ayman*), built by skilled carpenters brought from Constantinople. It was a solid walnut seat, adorned with a wooden crown and reached by two steps, used by the bishop during weekday services. Athanasios also installed two additional walnut chairs, richly carved with delicate motifs, for use inside and outside the sanctuary during vesting and liturgical processions.

The most celebrated of his commissions, however, was a monumental walnut throne placed beside the royal doors of the iconostasis, elevated on three marble steps sheathed in decorative fabric. Supported by carved lions entwined with serpents, flanked by cherubim and seraphim, and surmounted by a high crown adorned with angels playing trumpets, instruments, and holding doves, its intricate reliefs were all carved from the same wood. This extraordinary throne, dated 1787, had no equal in the churches of Syria, and Constantin remarked that even the patriarchal throne in Damascus, before its destruction in the massacre of 1860, could not rival it.

¹⁵⁰ Some of these are now preserved in the church of Saint George al-Ḥamīdiya, Homs; see Figures 48–53 in Ṭipāu, *Sylvester of Antioch*, p. 404–409.

¹⁵¹ This part was covered with lime during the restoration of the church, so the author did not reproduce it. See MS BnF Ar. 5936, f. 16r.

¹⁵² See MS BnF Ar. 5936, f. 15r.

¹⁵³ Constantin’s words echo Ibn Ṭrād’s: Athanasios was esteemed for his knowledge. Learned in sciences and philosophy (*ʿālim faylasūf*), Greek and Arabic, and good administrator (*qayyim*), called “the Star of the East” (*kawkab al-sharq*), and the philosopher of his time (*faylasūf al-dahr*). See Ibn Ṭrād, *Mukhtaṣar tārikh*, p. 149.

In the same year, Athanasios also commissioned a grand walnut ambo, reached by ten steps, for Gospel readings on Sundays and feast days and for the sermons of the bishop or priests. Circular in form and five-sided, its panels bore reliefs of Christ and the Four Evangelists, alongside ornamental carvings and birds. This ambo, like the thrones, was the work of master carpenters from Constantinople, funded from the church's own resources.

Through these commissions, Athanasios not only enriched the liturgical space of the church of the Forty Martyrs but also left a lasting artistic legacy, complementing and extending the pastoral and artistic vision initiated by Patriarch Sylvester.

We are tempted to see behind Athanasios's career the guiding hand of Mūsā Ṭrābulṣī. Recognizing Athanasios's potential, Mūsā may have encouraged him to pursue a path like that of Sophronios, in the hope that one day an Arab patriarch might occupy the See of Antioch. We hear echoes of this ambition in Athanasios's Letter 33, written from Constantinople. At the same time, in the company of Sophronios: "We ask the Almighty to grant patience to the Christians of Damascus and strengthen them in their faith, for they have endured not only persecution from the Greeks and the Catholics but now are also being attacked by those of their own kin and faith". Yet, once again, this plan came to nothing.¹⁵⁴

In the appendix to Brayk's *Al-ḥaqā'iq al-waḍīya*, we read that after the death of Patriarch Daniel in 1791, the metropolitans convened and elected Athanasios, bishop of Homs, as patriarch. However, the Patriarchate of Constantinople disregarded this election, asserting that "the sons of the Arabs do not know how to preserve their sound Orthodox faith". Instead, in 1792, it appointed one of its own bishops, Anthimos (or Euthymius) as patriarch of Antioch, providing him with imperial decrees (*awāmir 'ālīya*).¹⁵⁵ The source of this information, added by the editor Salīm Qab'īn, remains unknown.

Athanasios continued to serve as bishop of Homs until 1804, when he was transferred to the bishopric of Beirut. Ibn Ṭrād, who records this transfer, expresses a somewhat negative opinion of him.¹⁵⁶ According to Ibn Ṭrād, Athanasios put himself forward for the vacant see of Beirut following the death of Bishop Makarios Ṣadaqa. At that time, he had left Homs "out of fear of the authorities, being a man of wealth who loved prestige and worldly order".

In 1804, Athanasios departed from Homs. On his way, he celebrated Easter in Tripoli, where the local community warmly received him. He then proceeded to

¹⁵⁴ As mentioned in the preface, previous attempts were made with Sophronios of Kilis and Makarios Ṣadaqa.

¹⁵⁵ See Brayk, *Al-ḥaqā'iq al-waḍīya*, p. 68.

¹⁵⁶ See Ibn Ṭrād, *Mukhtaṣar tārikh*, p. 148-149.

Mār Ilyās al-Muḥayyīṭa, where prominent figures from Beirut and Mount Lebanon met with him and urged him to accept their diocese. They petitioned Patriarch Anthimos of Antioch in Constantinople, who issued a formal decree transferring him from Homs to Beirut. Athanasios was consecrated for Beirut in Damascus on July 20, 1804, by Metropolitan Barnabas, the patriarch's representative, assisted by two other bishops.

Nevertheless, according to Ibn Ṭrād, his relations with the clergy were strained because of "his harsh temper, love of worldly honor, and habit of hoarding wealth while claiming poverty". Despite these tensions, he enlarged the Beirut episcopal residence at his own expense. He left the church a library of about 160 Greek and Arabic volumes – many copied or translated by his own hand – including his Arabic version of *Evangelikē Salpinx* by Makarios Kalogeras.

In 1813, following Patriarch Anthimos's death, Athanasios aspired again to the patriarchal throne of Antioch. According to Ibn Ṭrād, "he relied on his wealth, learning, and reputation".¹⁵⁷ However, the Holy Synod of Constantinople elected instead Metropolitan Seraphim of Karyopolis, who was enthroned in Constantinople on August 10, 1813. Seraphim visited Beirut in December, then proceeded to Damascus, accompanied by Athanasios, whom he valued highly for his learning and bilingual proficiency. While in Damascus, Athanasios fell ill during Holy Week and died on Wednesday, April 8, 1814. According to Ibn Ṭrād, the Arab Orthodox Church mourned "the eclipse of this sun", the loss of a figure of exceptional erudition and eloquence.¹⁵⁸ Ibn Ṭrād complains that aside from the expanded episcopal residence and the library, Beirut retained little from the bishop's considerable personal fortune, which was claimed by his relatives, the patriarch [Seraphim?], and the Monastery of Saint Catherine on Mount Sinai.

1.3 Other Topics

1.3.1 Mīkhā'īl Tūmā¹⁵⁹

During Sylvester's extended absences, the Apostolic See was managed through *wikāla*. Although the standard practice was to appoint one or more vicar bishops, a practice seen in the early years of Sylvester's patriarchate, the position was soon

¹⁵⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 150.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 151.

¹⁵⁹ Cf. Nasrallah, Haddad, *HMLÉM* IV.2, p. 274–275; Nasrallah, "Shā'ir malaki majhūl min al-qarn al-thāmin 'ashar", *al-Masarra*, 1948, p. 273–281.

entrusted to a layman, Mikhā'il Tūmā, who held it for an exceptionally long time. As Mikhā'il Brayk, a contemporary witness, explains, the main duty of the vicar (*wakīl*) of Damascus was to oversee the patriarchal cell in the city. However, Tūmā, the longest-serving lay *wakīl* during Sylvester's patriarchate, broke this arrangement by overseeing the entire patriarchal See.

Before arriving in Damascus, Sylvester kept Leontius, who was formerly Athanasios Dabbās's vicar, as his representative there.¹⁶⁰ He also appointed another vicar bishop, Timotheos of Ḥamā, to oversee the eparchy of Aleppo. Timotheos arrived with a *statikon* from Sylvester, imposing strict measures on the Aleppians regarding their interactions with Catholic missionaries. Sylvester himself arrived in Aleppo on November 9, 1725, and enforced these restrictions. His strictness was poorly received, leading to lawsuits and ultimately forcing him, as noted earlier, to leave for Constantinople.

From Constantinople, Gregory was appointed vicar bishop and entered Aleppo on June 16, 1727, to oversee an eparchy that was then under the jurisdiction of the Patriarchate of Constantinople. He remained until April 1730, when he withdrew from the position. Meanwhile, in Damascus, the representative appears to have been a monk named Christophor.¹⁶¹ As Sylvester was still not authorized to re-enter Syria, the Catholics installed in Aleppo a pro-Latin bishop for a short time. When Sylvester returned, now holding a *berat*, he appointed Ḥabīb al-A'war as *wakīl* on July 20, 1733, though Aleppo remained under Constantinopolitan jurisdiction.

The start of Mikhā'il Tūmā's *wikāla* happened around the same time. This can be inferred from Brayk's information in 1764 that Mikhā'il Tūmā's *wikāla* lasted a little over 30 years. In any case, by July 25, 1735, he had assumed his position. This fact was confirmed by the French ambassador in Constantinople, who considered him the main cause of the difficulties faced by Catholic missionaries in the city.¹⁶²

When Sylvester departed for Cyprus on December 27, 1735, the missionaries exerted heavy pressure on the French ambassador to either have Cyrill Ṭanās appointed patriarch or ensure the exile of Mikhā'il Tūmā. The ambassador reported that he had obtained an order to arrest the *wakīl* but advised the consul in Sidon to persuade the missionaries not to enforce it, fearing that such an action might disturb public order.¹⁶³

In 1737, Mikhā'il Tūmā composed an Arabic document outlining the criteria for recognizing priests and laypeople as members of the Orthodox Church. The

¹⁶⁰ See Walbiner, "Die Bischofs- und Metropolitensitze", p. 64.

¹⁶¹ See Ṭipāu, *Sylvester of Antioch*, p. 74.

¹⁶² *Ibidem*, p. 85.

¹⁶³ *Ibidem*, p. 84.

document was implemented on behalf of the patriarch, who was not present at the time.¹⁶⁴ This could be indicative of the fact that, within a relatively brief period, he came to represent the entire Patriarchate.

As demonstrated in another document, the authority of Mikhā'il Tūmā over the Rūm in the patriarch's absence is evident. On July 20, 1737, Sim'ān al-Sim'ānī (also known as Assemani) composed a letter addressed to Mikhā'il.¹⁶⁵ In this letter, al-Sim'ānī asserted that Rome had not mandated alterations to the rite observed in other churches, as some, presumably the Rūm Catholics, were doing.¹⁶⁶

In January 1741, Mikhā'il was still serving as *wakīl*, as indicated in Sylvester's letters to the Emirs Miḥim and Najm (Appendix 3). The wording suggests that the Emirs already knew Mikhā'il at that time, and that Sylvester envisioned permanent collaboration through his representative. This may imply that Tūmā visited the Emirs in 1740 alongside the patriarch and his companions.

Sometime between May and July 1742, Mikhā'il was dismissed from his functions. In Letter 19, the priest Salāma is referred to as a *wakīl*. From the document mentioned above, we learn also that Ṣalībā ibn Yūsuf was appointed in Sidon in 1743.¹⁶⁷

However, very influential with the Ottoman rulers, Tūma soon secured another position, and he was recognized in 1743 as *muta'ahhid al-iltizām* (collector of farm taxes) of Nāḥiyat Rāshayyā.¹⁶⁸

Mikhā'il Brayk tells us that Tūma was reappointed as *wakīl* in 1743 by Sylvester before his departure to the Romanian Principalities and remained in this position until 1745, when the Catholics managed to imprison him and appoint a Catholic representative for a short time.¹⁶⁹

On May 25, 1746, Sylvester appointed a new representative in Damascus and its dependencies, Nicephorus of Payas (Letter 64).¹⁷⁰ More details can be found in an official petition preserved as a copy of the order sent to the governor, *mütevelli*, and *kadis* of Damascus, summarized by Çolak.¹⁷¹ In this petition, Sylvester requested the replacement of his representative Mikhā'il because he was not a clergyman

164 *Ibidem*, p. 86.

165 It is preserved in MS Jerusalem, Séminaire Saint-Anne 167.

166 The second letter preserved in this manuscript, written by an anonymous Rūm Catholic and addressed to Cardinal Vincenzo Petra (1662–1747), is a refutation of al-Sim'ānī's letter.

167 MS Ḥarīṣā, Saint Paul 210, f. 159v.

168 A copy of the document is posted on the Facebook page of Aldar Alsultaniyeh. The call number is not provided. The original seems to be preserved in the Archive of Constantinople.

169 Brayk, *Tārīkh al-Shām*, p. 11–12.

170 *Ibidem*, p. 19; for the exact date, see Çolak, *Relations*, p. 209.

171 See Çolak, *Relations*, p. 209.

and thus unfit to perform religious ceremonies. Consequently, Sylvester proposed appointing a cleric named Nicephorus instead. The duties of the new representative included not only tax collection and overseeing ceremonies but also enforcing conformity to the Greek Orthodox rite, reflecting the Anti-Catholic stance of the Patriarchate of Antioch. The Porte's approval of the petition reveals its support for this internal reorganization.

However, Mikhā'il Tūma was still active against Catholics in Jerusalem. Letter 61, dated August 1747, reports that Mikhā'il Tūma had problems with the representative of the Franks.

Probably at the same time or slightly later, Yūnis Niqūlā was appointed *wakīl* in Beirut, as we learn from two documents dated in 1749 preserved in MS Harisa 210.¹⁷² We mentioned above Sylvester's letter sent to the Emir Miḥim regarding the bishop of Sidon and Tyre, in which the *wakīl* of Beirut, Yūnus, is mentioned. After this letter, Sylvester or his secretary added a note that in April the same year, a letter was sent to Yūnus the *wakīl*.

In 1750, Nicephorus set out on a journey to Ḥaṣḥbayyā and Rāshayyā to collect alms; he appointed Mikhā'il Brayk as *wakīl* for a short time.¹⁷³

Mikhā'il Brayk mentions that in 1751 a conflict arose between the *wukalā'* and the *mutaqaddimīn* of the Rūm, because the Catholics used to make the Rūms pay penalties equally with the Catholics from which they were exempted earlier.¹⁷⁴ He sees this event positively as a divine providence to protect the Church and liberate it from the injustice (*jūr*) of the *ru'asā'*. In another work, he adds:

"For the rulers seized every chance to extort money: occasionally, they would arrest them [Catholics] and imprison them until they paid a ransom. Afterward, they would order them to return to obedience to Sylvester and to pray in the church. These Catholics would come back only to be mistreated again, suffering losses and expenses so great that only God knows their full extent. This had become a customary practice of the rulers, continued by their successors. It is estimated that over roughly twenty years, the rulers took about a thousand purses from the Damascenes. All of this was done in the name of enforcing the [Holy] word and for personal gain".

Reading between the lines, we see that Brayk believes three reasons lead to the mass shift to Catholicism. These are: Sylvester, despite his sanctity, was not a good administrator; *jūr al-wukalā'* (Mikhā'il Tūma and the vicar Nicephorus of Payas) *wa-al-ru'asā'* (Sylvester?), who wanted to enforce their authority; and the ability of

172 MS Ḥarīṣā, Saint Paul 210, f. 157v.

173 Brayk, *Tārīkh al-Shām*, p. 63.

174 *Ibidem*, p. 16, 19.

the Catholic missionaries to adapt their behavior depending on how the patriarch administered the patriarchate.¹⁷⁵

In 1758 or 1759, Patriarch Sylvester and his *wakīl* Mikhā'il Tūmā were arrested for having done construction works in Damascus without permission.¹⁷⁶ In 1761, Mikhā'il was replaced by Jirjis al-Ḥalabī. In 1762, Mikhā'il once again replaced Jirjis al-Ḥalabī for a year and a half before his death.¹⁷⁷

Brayk also reports that at that time, Mikhā'il served as *wakīl* for just over 30 years. When he was first appointed, his main role was to oversee the patriarchal cell and church during Sylvester's absence. Later, he managed all the affairs of the [Antiochian] Christians.¹⁷⁸

The scattered information regarding Mikhā'il Tūmā provided by Brayk that we gathered along with the other information as exposed above confirms Brayk's note that Tūmā was primarily assigned the *wikāla* of the patriarchal cell only, but he appointed himself *wakīl* of all the Antiochian Orthodox. Another *wakīl* could be appointed in other eparchies only when Tūmā was not a *wakīl*. We therefore know of Ṣalībā ibn Yūsuf in Sidon in 1743, Yūnus in Beirut in 1749, Ilyās Siyālāt in Homs in 1759, and Makarios Ṣadaqa, who was appointed bishop of Sidon and *waqīl* in 1763.

1.3.2 Sylvester's Printing Press

The story of Patriarch Sylvester's Arabic press at Saint Sabbas in Iași remains fragmentary. Thanks to the close reading of Sylvester's correspondence and the work of scholars such as Mihai Țipău, it is now possible to piece together a surprisingly detailed narrative. The Arabic expense register from Saint Sabbas, preserved for the year 1746, documents monthly costs for type-cutters, apprentices, repairs, and even binding, revealing the outlines of a functioning Arabic print shop in Iași, in Moldavia. From the outset, Sylvester's project appears both ambitious and technically hands-on. According to Țipău, Sylvester personally experimented with ink recipes and was involved in multiple aspects of the technical life of the press.

175 "And know that all of this was orchestrated by the Padres, who, when they saw weakness on the part of the patriarch, would tell them to openly declare their Catholic faith. But when they saw the patriarch grow strong, they would say to them: 'Be obedient to your patriarch, celebrate the liturgy in their churches, and confess to their priests. We have no difference whatsoever, except for what is incumbent upon you: refrain from eating fish during the Great Fast and on Wednesdays and Fridays; as for the Nativity Fast, fifteen days are sufficient; and the Apostles' Fast, twelve days' [...]"

176 See Brayk, *Tārīkh al-Shām*, p. 65.

177 *Ibidem*, p. 74.

178 *Ibidem*, p. 72–73.

Yet one of the most puzzling aspects of the story remains unresolved: the source of the Arabic type used in Iași. As Țipău notes, there is no surviving documentation that identifies where the original Arabic type came from, or who cast it. The colophons of printed books do name two individuals – Mikhā'il from Kūrat al-Dhahab, a monk, and Jirjis, a deacon – as typesetters or correctors, and Țipău has suggested that Deacon Jirjis may be the same as Jirjis Abū Sha'r, who appears in the correspondence. If this identification is correct, then it is possible that Abū Sha'r played a central role in creating the type used at Iași. Supporting this idea is a note in the letters that he was paid twice for his work: once by the voivode in Iași, and again later in Bucharest.

The correspondence itself, however, is often silent about this first Iași phase. This silence may be explained by the simple fact that Mūsā Ṭrābulṣī, the usual correspondent, was physically present with the patriarch in Iași during this time. If he had been in Damascus, his brother Buṭrus could have reported on developments at the press. However, since the extant letters from this early period are sparse and clearly incomplete, such updates may have existed but are now lost.

A clearer narrative only emerges after the press was moved from Iași to Bucharest. It is from this moment onward, beginning in 1747, that Yūsuf Mark becomes a central witness. His frequent letters chart both the technical setbacks and the institutional ambitions surrounding Sylvester's printing efforts.

In Letter 63 (August 11, 1747), we learn that Sophronios of Acre was translating *The Defense of the True Faith* specifically as a task for the newly established press. His knowledge of the press had come from Mūsā and al-Ḥājj Mikhā'il Tūmā – evidence that the news of the project had traveled beyond the Romanian Principalities, and was understood within the wider Orthodox world as a bold initiative led by the patriarch himself.

But this optimism was short-lived. In Letter 28 (November 21, 1747), Yūsuf Mark, newly arrived in Bucharest, reported that Patriarch Sylvester was directly supervising the casting of new Arabic type. The work was being undertaken by Jirjis Abū Sha'r and a companion, with hopes that the new typefaces would correct the defects of the first set. Just before this, they had completed printing the Letter of the Council of Constantinople, for which Yūsuf himself had composed the preface. However, the press soon fell silent. The abrupt halt to production was likely caused by the complete deterioration of the original Arabic typefaces, which had already been used in several large runs of up to 1,000 copies.

By mid-October 1748 (Letter 54), Yūsuf was still writing from Wallachia. He had now taken control of the operation. The previous effort – led by Abū Sha'r, whom Yūsuf now dismissively called Abū Barāqish – had failed entirely. All money, labor, and materials had been lost. The failure was blamed on Abū Sha'r's incompetence and treachery. In response, Sylvester withdrew his support, transferring

the machinery and remaining tools to Yūsuf, who was tasked with reorganizing the project, together with Monk Mikhāʾl and Deacon Parthenios.

In Letter 27 (spring 1749), Yūsuf updated Mūsā on the slow but steady progress of this new venture. By Easter, the iron type had been completed, and the team had moved on to brass plates. There was cautious optimism that printing would soon resume. Meanwhile, Abū Shaʿr – once a central figure in the project – was now entirely marginalized and held no position.

Taken together, these letters unfold the history of an ambitious but fragile project: from its hopeful beginnings in Iași, through the mechanical and organizational failures that brought production to a halt, to the frustrated attempt at revival in Bucharest, and the eventual reorganization under a new direction. Where official reports by Sylvester are absent or laconic, the correspondence supplies the missing voices: it names the craftsmen, records setbacks and accusations, and preserves the intentions and disappointments of those involved. Hopefully, more sources of this kind will come to light in the future, allowing us to complete the picture.

1.3.3 Arabic Eloquence and Classical Erudition in Mūsā Ṭrābulṣī's Letters

Until now, our focus has been mainly on the historical matters related to the Correspondence. However, it is essential to discuss the eloquence in Arabic that the authors of the letters demonstrate.

The earliest Christian work preserved, known as *On the Triune Nature of God or An Apology for the Christian Faith* and dated 755 or 788, demonstrates a proficient command of the Arabic language and a familiarity with the Qurʾān and Islamic terminology.¹⁷⁹ This remark is also applicable to authors from various Christian denominations. These authors are praised for having expressed the Christian Theology in Arabic, which helped both Christians and Muslims find common ground and define what distinguishes them in polemics and debates.¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁹ For an analysis of this work, see M. Swanson, “An Apology for the Christian Faith”, in S. Noble, A. Treiger (eds.), *The Orthodox Church in the Arab World, 700–1700: An Anthology of Sources*, DeKalb, 2014, p. 40–59.

¹⁸⁰ For the terminology used by early Christian authors, see R. Haddad, *La Trinité divine chez les théologiens arabes 750–1050*, Paris, 1985; N. Awad, *Orthodoxy in Arabic Terms. A Study of Theodore Abu Qurrah's Theology in its Islamic Context*, Boston/Berlin, 2015, p. 74–88.

In the Orthodox Church, in Jerusalem, in the 11th century, Sulaymān al-Ghazzī is known as the author of the first Christian religious poems.¹⁸¹ In Antioch, Yūḥannā ‘Abd al-Masīḥ and ‘Abd Allāh ibn al-Faḍl wrote prefaces in *saj’*.¹⁸²

This art experienced a boom in Christian communities during the late Ayyubid and early Mamluk eras. In the East Syriac Church, ‘Abdīshū of Nisibe wrote a version of the Gospels entirely in *saj’* in the year 1300.¹⁸³ In the Coptic milieu, rhythmic prefaces were added to a vast number of patristic texts, including even short ones, such as John Chrysostom’s homilies.¹⁸⁴ But these are not the only Christian productions. While a few Christian authors cultivated ornate *saj’* and stylistic sophistication, many Christian writings were composed in relatively simple Arabic, prioritizing clarity over rhetorical flourish.

However, it appears that Arabic literacy among Christians in Syria declined during the 14th to 16th centuries.¹⁸⁵ One work that might have employed exquisite language is the one that Constantin ibn Abū al-Ma‘ānī wrote around 1330, titled *al-Hādī fī fahm al-simādī*.¹⁸⁶ This work is unfortunately lost. Other works are rare

181 N. Edelby, *Sulāiman Al-Gazzi (Xe-XIe siècles)*, 3 vols., Rome, 1984–1986; S. Noble, “Sulayman al-Ghazzi”, in S. Noble, A. Treiger (eds.), *The Orthodox Church in the Arab World, 700–1700: An Anthology of Sources*, DeKalb, 2014, p. 160–170.

182 For more information on Yūḥannā ‘Abd al-Masīḥ, see our edition of his *Discourse on the Presentation of the Lady in the Temple* written in *saj’*: H. Ibrahim, “Yūḥannā ‘Abd al-Masīḥ al-Anṭākī - Discours sur la Présentation de la Vierge au temple”, *al-Mashriq*, 96, 2022, 1, p. 259–290, and 96, 2022, 2, p. 191–220; for more information on ‘Abd Allāh ibn al-Faḍl, see, for example, his preface to his translation of the book of Psalms edited in: A. Roberts, *Reason and Revelation in Byzantine Antioch*, p. 124–125. The influence of this preface on the one written by Athanasios Mukhalla’ for his translation *Al-būq al-‘injīlī* is especially notable in how he specifies that the reasons for translating this work are three and how he presents these reasons.

183 S. Khoury † (ed.), *L’Évangélaire arabe rimé de ‘Abdīshū de Nisibe (†1318)*, with a French introduction by Samir Khalil Samir, 2 vols., Beirut/Jounieh, 2007.

184 See H. Ibrahim, “Jean Chrysostome arabe: Histoire de la traduction et réception (1)”, *Chronos*, 40, 2019, nr. 29, 31, 34, and 147.

185 One becomes aware of this situation when examining Graf’s *GCAL* II and Nasrallah’s *Histoire* III.2 for the period between the 14th and 16th centuries. The differences in the quantity of Christian Arabic literature produced, compared to earlier and later periods, are evident. There are very few known authors, and when they are known, their periods of activity are roughly estimated. Nasrallah preserved the names of some Melkite poets and scientists; however, they did not produce any religious literature, and most of their works have been lost. To fill the gap, Nasrallah also provided the names of copyists who were active in the same period.

186 Nasrallah mentions this work under the name Abū al-Fatkh, which is the Arabic equivalent of Constantin, a *laqab* that explains Constantine’s success in war. For more details on this work, see Nasrallah, *HMLEM* III.2, p. 149–150.

and do not show exquisite language.¹⁸⁷ We mention the Homilies composed by Athanasios, patriarch of Jerusalem (r. 1460-1466?) and those of Daniel ibn al-Khaṭṭāb (ca. 1327–1382). It seems that during this period, Christian elites in the Monastic milieu preferred Syriac and Greek to Arabic. In this context, an interesting case is Makarios, bishop of Qāra (ca. 1429-1480), who translated from Arabic into Syriac liturgical texts and copied Syriac manuscripts.¹⁸⁸ In the Maronite milieu, Garshūnī was used.¹⁸⁹ In 1596, in his Syriac grammar, George Amira explained that since Christians lived among Muslims and shared Arabic with them, they chose to write their sacred texts in Syriac script to keep them inaccessible and safeguard the faith. Over time, many works – biblical, liturgical, grammatical, poetic, and scientific – were produced in this form. Thus, Garshūnī served both a protective and a cultural function, ensuring that Christian learning and identity remained distinct. This led to the printing of the first book, the Qozhaya Psalter, in the Ottoman East in Syriac and Garshūnī in 1610.¹⁹⁰

In the late 16th century, the arrival of the Jesuit missionaries favored the growth of manuscript production not only among communities that showed the will to become united with Rome, e.g., the Maronites, but also among the Orthodox, especially in the region of Tripoli, where a small activity of copying manuscripts was present and took advantage to develop.¹⁹¹ The Jesuits required manuscripts for the education of Christians they wished to bring to Rome, preparing them for the priesthood. Therefore, they commissioned or bought manuscripts written by David of Bṭurrām.¹⁹² These manuscripts were endowed to the School of the Maronites in Rome.¹⁹³

187 These homilies were printed by Athanasios Dabbās in Aleppo in 1711.

188 See Nasrallah, *HMLEM* III.2, p. 148 and 201.

189 See J. Moukarzel, “Maronite Garshuni Texts: On their Evolution, Characteristics, and Function”, *Hugoye*, 17, 2, 2014, p. 237–262.

190 See J. Moukarzel, “Le psautier syriaque-garchouni édité à Qozhaya en 1610. Enjeux historiques et présentation du livre”, *Mélanges de l'Université Saint-Joseph*, 63, 2010–2011, p. 511–566.

191 Earlier to this period, Mikhā'il ibn al-Māwardī, patriarch of Antioch (1523–1540), could have copied the works of John of Damascus, as we have shown in our PhD Thesis: Habib Ibrahim, *Jean Damascène arabe: édition critique des deux traités contre les Nestoriens*, École Pratique des Hautes Études, Paris, 2016, p. 86, 105–106.

192 On the MS Vatican Ar. 468 commissioned by Giovanni Battista Eliano, see A. Vaccari, “Una Bibbia araba per il primo Gesuita venuto al Libano”, *Mélanges de l'Université Saint-Joseph*, 10, 1925, p. 77–104.

193 See MS Vatican Ar. 436 (1581), 467, 468 (1578), and 472 (1560/1561).

This movement soon expanded into Damascus and Aleppo.¹⁹⁴ The initial phase mainly involved gathering available texts as patriarchs, bishops, and monks collected as much material as possible. Patriarch Karma aimed to produce texts such as the Bible, Synaxarion, Horologion, Leitourgikon, Typikon, and Euchologion in accordance with the Greek editions.¹⁹⁵ He also strove to have his corrected versions printed by the Propaganda Fide, though this effort was unsuccessful.

Makarios ibn al-Za'im, disciple of Karma, continued to advance his master's project. He first gathered more texts available in Arabic manuscripts. To provide but one example, in the domain of Hagiography, he collected more than 70 long hagiographical texts in a book called *al-Dūlāb (The Wheel)*.¹⁹⁶ The story of his travels, an interesting piece of literature, was written by his son, Deacon Paul ibn al-Za'im.¹⁹⁷

This movement created a need within the Christian communities in the Middle East to master the Arabic language. This can be inferred from the book *Baḥṭh al-maṭālib wa-ḥaṭhṭh al-ṭālib* written by Germanos Farḥāt, the Maronite bishop of Aleppo, in the early 18th century. Farḥāt dedicated much of his career to promoting Arabic among the Christians by producing manuals and grammars tailored to their needs. His book *Baḥṭh al-maṭālib wa-ḥaṭhṭh al-ṭālib* was widely used and copied by Maronite and Rūm communities. As mentioned, it was copied by Mūsā Ṭrābulṣī, who complained that the copy he had was full of mistakes and needed correction. This symbolizes a broader movement to demonstrate that Christians, too, were

194 For the Aleppian Scribes, see our articles: H. Ibrahim, "Marqus of Aleppo, a Seventeenth-Century Forgotten Scribe. Biography Reconstructed from the Colophons", in G. Kiraz, S. Schmidtke (eds.), *Literary Snippets: Colophons Across Space and Time*, Piscataway, 2023, p. 255–283; idem, "Talḡat an-nāsiḥ fils du prêtre Ḥūrān al-ḥamawī", *Chronos*, 39, 2019, p. 125–171.

195 For the works of Karma on the Gospels, see E. Dannaoui, "From Multiplicity to Unification of the Arabic Biblical Text: a Reading of the Rūm Orthodox Projects for the Arabization and Printing of the Gospels during the Ottoman Period", in D. Bertaina, S. Toenies Keating, M. N. Swanson, A. Treiger (eds.), *Heirs of the Apostles*, Leiden, 2018, p. 24–27; for more details on the Euchologion, see Charbel Nassif, *L'euchologe melkite depuis Malatios Karmé (†1635) jusqu'à nos jours: Les enjeux des évolutions d'un livre liturgique*, unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Institut Catholique de Paris, Paris, 2017; C. Nassif, "Autour de l'euchologe melkite de Malatios Karmé (†1635)", *Proche-Orient Chrétien*, 68, Beirut, 2018, p. 46–61; for more information on the Horologion, see A. Wade, "A Preliminary Comparison of the Horologion in Sinai Arabic 232 (13th c.) with the 1702 Edition of Athanasios Dabbās and the Earlier Version of Meletios Karma", in R.-A. Dipratu, S. Noble (eds.), *Arabic-Type Books Printed in Wallachia, Istanbul, and Beyond*, Berlin/Boston, 2024, p. 243–265.

196 For more details on this work, see H. Ibrahim, "Makarios ibn al-Za'im's *Book of the Wheel*", in Dipratu, Noble (eds.), *Arabic-Type Books Printed in Wallachia, Istanbul, and Beyond*, p. 307–331.

197 See I. Feodorov, *Paul of Aleppo's Journal*, Vol. 1: *Syria, Constantinople, Moldavia, Wallachia and the Cossacks' Lands*, Leiden, 2024.

heirs to the Arabic literary tradition, fully capable of mastering its grammar and drawing on its rhetorical richness.

In the 1730s and 1740s, the Orthodox and the newly formed Rūm Catholic community became entangled in fierce polemical exchanges. One central figure in this debate was ‘Abd Allāh Zākhīr, a printer and writer who, after leaving Aleppo, established the Arabic press in Dayr al-Shuwayr. His printed works promoted the Rūm Catholic viewpoint but also launched direct attacks on the quality of the Orthodox manuscript tradition. He accused the Rūm Orthodox of producing grammatically flawed, poorly translated, and theologically imprecise works. ‘Abd Allāh Zākhīr’s excellent command of Arabic is acknowledged by his rivals in Letter 71, which was either written by Sophronios or by Ilyās Fakhr. The Orthodox strived to publish all polemical texts free of mistakes.

A more thorough reading of the correspondence between Mūsā Ṭrābulṣī and his circle should consider this complex environment. The letters serve not only as evidence of intellectual friendships but also as demonstrations of linguistic skill in theological debates. Amid accusations and rivalry, these Orthodox authors aimed to showcase their command of Arabic through their correspondence itself. Their letters are filled with poetic quotations and classical references, and demonstrate grammatical accuracy.

The assessment of Sophronios and Yūsuf Mark, who authored most of the letters, varies. Both are creative, but in different ways. Sophronios leverages his knowledge of the Arabic language to craft an authentic text from start to finish, utilizing sophisticated vocabulary and numerous metaphors. He writes with intense emotion. Yūsuf Mark often repeats elegant letter openings and formulas from manuals, but he also shows creativity, especially when he writes entire letters in *saḡ’*.

The letters of Sophronios of Kilis (later bishop of Acre) addressed to his friend Mūsā Ṭrābulṣī present a compelling portrait of friendship in the early 18th-century Orthodox world. They reveal not only personal affection but also a profound theology of brotherhood where remembering a friend is closely linked to honoring one’s vocation. The correspondence shifts between warmth, reproach, lamentation, and comfort, providing a rare glimpse into how intellectual and pastoral bonds were nurtured, challenged, and maintained during difficult times.

For Sophronios, friendship is never just about sentiment. Instead, it manifests as a form of spiritual brotherhood, rooted in their shared struggle to defend Orthodoxy under difficult circumstances. He repeatedly calls Mūsā a “cherished brother” and emphasizes that their friendship offers comfort amid humiliation and poverty. “Even if I am here without companions”, he writes, “in your quarter I have friendship and remembrance”. Here, friendship is not simply personal comfort but a vital force that keeps Sophronios committed to his mission of debating with the Latins and defending the Church in Jerusalem.

A central theme in these letters is Sophronios's repeated criticism of Mūsā's silence. He often presents this as a betrayal of friendship: "Why did you keep your silence and tarry in your response? Perhaps you have abandoned our friendship because difficult circumstances have overcome me?" Elsewhere, he laments that although he has written several times, "only one letter from you has reached me. As for my other three letters, there has been no response". For Sophronios, friendship must be mutual and shown through letters; silence is seen not as a neutral lapse but as a wound. The act of writing serves as a test of loyalty.

Although these letters often carry a passionate tone, Sophronios derives his vocabulary of longing from Scripture and the tradition of lamentation. Separation from Mūsā is compared to Benjamin's grief for Joseph (*Genesis* 43:30) and to David's desire for the wings of a dove to escape and find rest (*Psalms* 55:6). In another passage, he wishes that paper itself could speak and witness his sighs and sorrows. Such intensity is not romantic, but biblical: it reveals how absence and longing are woven into the fabric of faithful friendship – a friendship shaped by suffering and tested by distance.

Perhaps the most profound statement comes when Sophronios turns the charge of forgetfulness into a reflection on identity and vocation. In response to Mūsā's suggestion that he has forgotten him, Sophronios insists:

"I implore you, by God, if my mind has darkened to such an extent that I forget you, then how could I possibly remember anyone? As an inevitable consequence, I would forget all things worthy of remembrance, and my mind would be devoid of pleasant [thoughts prepared for] debates, for which we now endure sleepless nights, extreme poverty, and total humiliation".

Here, the memory of the friend and the memory of the mission overlap. To forget Mūsā would mean losing awareness of the very debates and struggles that shape Sophronios's life. Forgetting a friend, then, is not merely social neglect; it is spiritual decay.

Finally, Sophronios expands his accusations into thoughts on the fragility of human friendship. "Please write to us now and let us know if you no longer wish to remember us", he warns, "so that we can sever our hopes from you as we have done with others. There is no good in a love that feels like an imposition; its troubles outweigh its joys". Elsewhere, he criticizes another correspondent for having "entirely abandoned us, denied our friendship, and raised his eyebrows at us. God will judge this haughty grandeur". For Sophronios, friendship that is not mutual is worse than all. The collection of letters becomes a reflection of loyalty and disloyalty, of endurance and abandonment.

In Sophronios's letters, friendship is not just private sentiment but a theological reality. It supports memory, grounds mission and reveals character. Silence is seen as betrayal; remembrance is honored as a sign of fidelity. Separation causes grief

but also provides an opportunity to express the depth of brotherhood in Christ. The letters thus demonstrate how 18th-century Orthodox intellectuals employed letter exchanges to establish a community of faith and memory, where the distinction between personal and pastoral love was intentionally blurred.

If Sophronios's letters pulse with emotional urgency, those of Yūsuf Mark radiate refinement and rhetorical craft. His correspondence with Mūsā Ṭrābulṣī demonstrates how eloquence, learning, and friendship were interwoven in the epistolary culture of the 18th-century Orthodox world. Yūsuf's creativity lies not so much in spontaneous outpourings as in the artful transformation of formulas, poetry, and sacred texts into letters that both console and instruct.

He frequently frames friendship in the language of abundance and beauty. Receiving a letter from Mūsā is likened to a healing encounter: "Your letter, rather, your noble and honorable image, reached me. What a letter it was, more delightful than a meeting! When the deserted embraces it, it extinguishes his torment. The pearls of its words, strung along chains of sincere affection, embody the fulfillment of desires and wishes". In another place, he confesses, "If you have abandoned me, I will not abandon you, and if you have indeed forgotten me, I will not forget you". For Yūsuf, silence does not end friendship; rather, it intensifies his obligation to remember, turning absence into an occasion for even greater displays of loyalty.

His letters abound in citations from Scripture. Confronted with plague, he exhorts: "Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself... until the indignation be overpast" (*Isaiah* 26:20–21). On the death of a bishop, he recalls the Psalmist: "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints" (*Psalms* 116:15).

Yet Yūsuf is equally at home citing poets and *maqāmāt*. Yūsuf Mark's texts are full of citations from poems by al-Mutanabbī, Abū Tammām, Ibn al-Fāriḍ, and Ṣafī al-Dīn al-Ḥillī, which are cited and reworked in rhetorical flourishes. His mastery of *saj'* stems from learning the *Maqāmāt* of al-Ḥarīrī, which are a recurring presence – especially *maqāmas* 36, 49, and 51 – woven into letters with a familiarity that suggests not only reading, but memorization and reuse, adding new ideas. He rebukes Mūsā with rhetorical balance: "My beloved, I have not ceased writing to you out of boredom, nor have I broken the bond of affection by my actions. But from my great longing for you I envied my letter for reaching you before me".

If Sophronios's language turns absence into lament, Yūsuf's turns it into ornament. His descriptions transform correspondence into a theater of eloquence. A letter is "like Moses restored to his mother, or Joseph's robe when it reached Jacob". The news of separation become "tears [that] flowed until he swam in their sea, and the periods of separation lengthened from months to years". Even reproach is couched in excess: "Neither the abundance of work nor other preoccupations

deterred me from corresponding with you... the burning desire to see your handwriting ignited in my heart”.

Beyond friendship, Yūsuf’s letters are a window into the intellectual practices of his milieu. He reports on copying, translating, and circulating texts. “As for *Mulḥat al-i’rāb*, I have completed the text, and it will soon reach you through His Eminence the bishop, so make it into one volume”. When rivals accused Orthodox scribes of incompetence, Yūsuf responded not with polemic but with precision: books must be recopied with vigilance so that “the book is not criticized”. For him, the act of writing – whether a letter or a manuscript – was both a gesture of friendship and a defense of communal reputation.

The letters also mirror the turbulent life of their author. At one point, Yūsuf writes from imprisonment: “Your letter reached me and alleviated my sorrow and distress... Indeed, I am indebted to your love for the remainder of my life and for eternity”. Elsewhere, he chronicles controversies over authorship, rivalries among scholars, and the establishment of printing presses in Wallachia. Friendship with Mūsā is never isolated from these broader struggles; rather, it is the medium through which Yūsuf shares news, seeks counsel, and sustains morale.

What emerges is a portrait of a man who lived through upheaval yet anchored himself in eloquence. If Sophronios defines friendship as spiritual brotherhood tested by silence, Yūsuf defines it as rhetorical abundance tested by distance. For him, memory is not only fidelity but also style: to remember a friend is to craft elaborate praise and to turn sorrow into poetry.

In conclusion, the correspondence provides insight into the Classical texts they studied during the curriculum and the works they developed an interest in during their careers. References to figures like Sībawayh, al-Mutanabbī, Abū Tammām, Ibn al-Fāriḍ, and Ṣafī al-Dīn al-Ḥillī, and to didactic works such as Farḥāt’s grammar or al-Ḥarīrī’s *Mulḥat al-i’rāb* are not uncommon. What emerges is a picture of an intellectual culture in which the correct use of Arabic was a priority. This attention to language extended to the physical production of texts. In reaction to the accusations brought by Zākhir and others, the Orthodox communities took special care to ensure that the manuscripts they copied were error-free. Together, Sophronios and Yūsuf show two complementary faces of 18th-century Orthodox intellectual life: one passionate and biblical, the other ornate and literary.

1.4 Codicology

1.4.1 General Aspects

The *unicum* we are studying is stored at the Syriac Orthodox Patriarchate in Damascus, under call number 300. Unfortunately, because of the ongoing events in Syria, we have not been able to examine the physical manuscript in person to provide a more detailed codicological description. Our analysis partly depends on the work of Rachid Haddad and mostly on our own review of digital reproductions of the part of the manuscript we are editing.

The manuscript is in octavo format (in-8°), roughly 20 × 15 cm. Haddad did not record the exact measurements when he examined the manuscript in 1969. It contains 94 folios and is written in black and red ink. The number of lines per page varies, ranging from 18 to 26. The manuscript is divided into ten distinct sections.

1. The Correspondence of Mūsā Ṭrābulsī that we publish here.
2. Decree of Sultan ‘Abd al-Majīd to the Orthodox Patriarch of Constantinople [Anthimos IV (1840–1841, 1848–1852)], dated March 1849.
3. *A Hundred Sayings of Wisdom*, which stops at Saying Number 80. Incipit:
الحمد لله الذي ارشدنا الى منهج العدالة برحمته... اما بعد فاني لما رايت كلام العارفين
Praise be to God, who has guided us to the path of justice through His mercy...
To resume: when I observed the words of those endowed with knowledge...
4. Life of Simeon Stylites by Theodoret of Cyrrhus.¹⁹⁸
5. Account of the Fall of Constantinople to Sultan Mehmet II (Muḥammad ibn Murād abū al-Faṭḥ).
6. Anonymous *Homily on the Epiphany*. Incipit:
الحمد لله البالغة كلمته السابغة نعمته
Praise be to God, whose Word is all-pervasive and whose blessing is all-encompassing.
7. An anonymous and acephalous work, recounting various historical events from the Umayyad and Abbasid periods.
8. Poem by Mikhā’il Ḥātim on the Ottomans, in 16 verses. Incipit:
تاريخ في دولة السلطان احمد خان
History of the reign of Sultan Ahmed I (Aḥmad Khān).
9. A few medical recipes.

¹⁹⁸ We edited this translation based on manuscript MS Sin. Ar. 423, f. 14r–25r in H. Ibrahim (ed.), *Yūḥannā ‘Abd al-Masīḥ († 11e s.). Ma’in al-ḥayāt al-markab al-sā’ir fī minā’ al-naḡāt autrement connu comme al-Dulāb*, vol. 1, Beirut, 2020, p. 79–90; see also H. Ibrahim, “Liste des Vies de Saints et des Homélies conservées dans les ms. Sināi arabe 395-403, 405-407, 409 et 423”, *Chronos*, 38, 2018, p. 50.

10. Excerpts from an anonymous work on war instruments and chemical science, illustrated with several geometric and mechanical drawings.

At the time Haddad examined the manuscript, the order of the folios was the same, at least for the part we are studying, as in the images we received. This order, as we will show below in our description, is not the original sequence. Haddad noted that this collection was transcribed by five different scribes, with scribe A being Mūsā Ṭrābulṣī himself.¹⁹⁹ However, it should be emphasized that variations in handwriting do not necessarily indicate the involvement of different scribes. Changes in script can result from several factors, such as the use of various writing tools or inks, variations in the scribe's level of care or attention, or the passage of time between writing sessions. A single scribe's handwriting may appear inconsistent across a manuscript depending on these materials and contextual conditions.

These observations also apply to Mūsā Ṭrābulṣī. When comparing the various surviving manuscripts written by him (see Figures 9–10), one notices significant differences in script. However, these differences are best understood not as evidence of multiple scribes but as reflecting the different circumstances under which he worked. Therefore, we cannot be certain which parts, where the script appears different, were written by Mūsā, nor can we determine exactly how many scribes contributed to the collection.

Therefore, instead of labeling the various hands as Scribe A–E, we will more carefully refer to them as Handwriting 1–5.

They are evidenced as follows:

Handwriting 1, folios 1r–8r; 11r–18v; 30r–37v; 41v–43r; 44r; 47v;²⁰⁰ 48r–48v.

Handwriting 2, folios 8v–9v; 20r–20v; 38r–38v; 40v–41r; 43v–45r.

Handwriting 3, folios 21r–29v; 46r–47r.

Handwriting 4, folios 39r–40r; 49r.

Handwriting 5, folios 45r–46r.

1.4.2 The Original Corpus (Handwriting 1)

The original corpus (Handwriting 1), presumably transcribed by Mūsā Ṭrābulṣī himself, only covers the period from 1732 to 1743. This matches the years when Mūsā served as secretary to Patriarch Sylvester, before they departed for Constantinople. From the letters, we learn that Mūsā was married before April 23, 1743. When Sylvester decided to leave for Constantinople and then continue to Moldavia, Mūsā,

¹⁹⁹ Haddad, “La correspondance”, p. 258.

²⁰⁰ Haddad swapped the pages 88 (f. 49r) and 91 (f. 47v).

now married, wished to step down from his position. However, he had no choice but to go with the patriarch, since Yūsuf Mark opposed the idea of making the journey.

This context helps explain why Letter 10, which was received in December 1743, shortly after their departure, was not copied by Mūsā (Handwriting 1), but instead appears later in the manuscript in a different script (Handwriting 2).

In its original form, this corpus consisted of four quires (possibly quaternions); only one quire remains as six scattered folios, which most likely made up the fourth quaternion, along with two now-missing folios. Folio 8 does not belong, as it might initially appear, to the first quire; instead, it is one of the misplaced folios. Neither the author, presumably Yūsuf Mark, nor the date (1743) fits the context of that section. It could be an error by the binder, who replaced what he thought was a missing folio from the first quire (containing seven folios) to complete a quaternion.

Therefore, the first part includes the letters of Sophronios from 1732 to 1743 (f. 1r–7v; 11r–18v). In this section, we find two letters from Kyr Iakobos of Patmos, which probably means that Sophronios himself wrote them at a time when Kyr Iakobos had not yet gained enough knowledge of the Arabic language. The second part consists of the letters of Yūsuf Mark from 1737 to 1743 (f. 30r–37v; 41v–43r; 44r; 8r).

It is worth noting that the letters are not arranged in strict chronological order, as mentioned earlier. Mūsā appears to have chosen what he considered the most eloquent letter (or letters) from each author to place at the beginning of each collection, even when it is not the first chronologically.

At the end of this initial collection, there was at least one letter from Ilyās Fakhr, Mūsā's uncle (dated 1732). R. Haddad attributed Letters 68–72 to Ilyās Fakhr.²⁰¹ For reasons explained in the edition, we believe that Letters 70–71 (on f. 48r–48v) may, in fact, have been written by Sophronios, and that this folio could originally have belonged to either the first or the second quire.

The letter attributed to Ilyās Fakhr is written on the verso, with the recto currently blank – or perhaps, initially on the recto with the verso left blank before binding. This layout could indicate either that a blank page was intentionally left for adding more of Yūsuf's letters later; or that the letter was intended to be the final item in the collection, uniquely authored by Ilyās Fakhr. If the first possibility is accepted, it may suggest that additional letters by Ilyās Fakhr – possibly covering two or three folios from the now-missing fourth quire – were lost.

Given the small number of letters by Ilyās Fakhr preserved in this corpus, their inclusion may have served as a supplement – perhaps intended to create a sense of symmetry with the two letters by Kyr Iakobos found in the first section.

²⁰¹ Not to forget that Letter 72 is written in a different handwriting.

The blank pages in the sections with Ilyās Fakhr and Yūsuf Mark's letters offer enough space – as we will discuss shortly – for adding more letters by other scribes or by Mūsā himself, especially those written in Handwriting 2. The same applies to folio 8, which we believe was originally part of the fourth quire. Unfortunately, we cannot get precise information about the scattered folios just from the scanned images. This issue needs to be addressed through direct examination of the manuscript itself.

The following table shows an approximate reconstruction of the original order of the folios.

Tab. 2: The Letters in Chronological Order

Folio number (Possibility 1)	Folio number (Possibility 2)	Quire
1–7 (+48?)	1–7; 11	1
11–18	48; 12–18	2
30–37	30–37	3
44; 41; 42; 8; 47 (+3 lost folios?)	44; 41; 42; 8; 47 (+3 lost folios?)	4

1.4.3 Additions (Handwritings 2–5)

As previously stated, Mūsā decided to step down from his role as secretary to Patriarch Sylvester in 1743, likely because he was unwilling to spend a long time away from his family. However, this probably did not take effect until after he returned from Constantinople in 1746. When Patriarch Sylvester went back to Damascus in 1753, Mūsā resumed his duties as the patriarch's secretary. At this time, he again started receiving letters from his friends, mainly Yūsuf but also Sophronios, and later Athanasios Mukhalla', probably a disciple of Mūsā.

This means that some of the newly added letters from 1746–1753 do not strictly align with the framing of the original collection's title, which presents the corpus as the correspondence of Mūsā solely in his role as secretary. However, most of the letters from this period relate to Mūsā's travels with the patriarch. Letters 26–28 and 54 are reports by Yūsuf on the progress of establishing the printing press, which was the primary goal of the patriarch's earlier journey to Constantinople. Letter 63 is a congratulatory message from Sophronios on the publication of the first printed books. In contrast, Letter 31 is a follow-up from Dīmītrī Šabbāgh regarding a matter he had previously asked Mūsā to address in Constantinople.

The letters from the period 1747–1787 were primarily added by two hands – Handwriting 2 and Handwriting 3. The order in which these two copyists worked has not yet been definitively determined. However, some evidence suggests that Handwriting 2 may have preceded the others. For example, on folio 46r, Handwriting

3 writes over a page already used by Handwriting 5, while the text in Handwriting 5 begins on folio 45r, a page previously copied by Handwriting 2. This might indicate the sequence was: 2, 5, 3. Nevertheless, it is also possible that Handwriting 5 simply filled a gap left by Handwriting 3 at the start of his text on folio 46r. This remains the only case where Handwriting 3 appears after Handwriting 5.

As the manuscript currently stands, the folios copied in Handwriting 3 – unlike those in Handwriting 2 – are mostly preserved together as a block (f. 21r–29v). These probably formed a separate quire, added after the four main quires, where two additional folios in Handwriting 3 are also present. Handwriting 4 (f. 39r–40r), which is inserted between two pages copied by Handwriting 3 (f. 38v and 40v), may have been written by the same copyist; however, the use of a different writing tool gives it a slightly different appearance.

Various theories have been proposed about who copied these letters. One such interpretation was provided by Ioana Feodorov, who noted that the teaching of Greek and Arabic appears repeatedly in the letters copied under Mūsā's supervision.²⁰² Leaders of the Antiochian and Wallachian churches encouraged young Christians to learn foreign languages that would help them in their future service to the Church. As part of their Arabic studies, students were asked to copy simple texts. This educational setting likely explains why some of the handwriting seems shaky, hesitant, or inaccurate.

1.4.4 Chronological Order of the Letters

To help readers navigate the collection more easily, we provide a chronological list of all the letters included. Because the letters in the manuscript are not arranged in order – likely due to transcription errors, later additions, or rearrangements by different copyists – this list is a helpful tool for understanding the historical flow of the correspondence. It allows us to trace the development of relationships, themes, and historical events as seen in the letters, from as early as 1732 to the last document received in 1787. This chronological index is based on the dates within the letters (when available), internal references, and paleographical clues. For undated letters, the suggested dates are approximate and derived from contextual evidence.

²⁰² Feodorov, *Arabic Printing*, p. 237.

Tab. 3: Reconstruction of the Original Order of Folios

Nr	folio	Date/Year	Month	Day	Author	Recipient
68	47v	1732	11	29	Ilyās Fakhr	Mūsā
7	6v–7r	1732	11	30	Sophronios (deacon)	Sylvester
12	11r–11v	1733	1		Kyr Iakobos	Sylvester
5	4r–5r	1733	[5?]		Sophronios	Mūsā
3	2v–3r	[1733]	[5]		Sophronios	Mūsā
1	1r–1v	1733	8	15	Sophronios	Mūsā
2	2r–2v	1733	8	31	Sophronios	Mūsā
6	5r–6r	1734	7	16	Kyr Iakobos	Dīb
4	3v–4r	[1734]	7?		Sophronios	Mūsā
8	7r–7v	1735	1	5	Sophronios	Nektarios
38	30v–31r	1737	8	21	[Yūsuf Mark (deacon)]	Mūsā
37	30r	[ca. 1737]			Yūsuf Mark	Mūsā
39	31r–31v	1738	6		[Yūsuf Mark]	Mūsā
40	31v–32r	1739	8	19	[Yūsuf Mark]	Mūsā
41	32v	1740	2	6	[Yūsuf Mark]	Mūsā
43	33r	1740	3	20	[Yūsuf Mark]	Mūsā
42	33r	[1740]	[3]	[18]	[Yūsuf Mark]	Mūsā
13	11v–12r	1740	4		Sophronios	Mūsā
44	33v	1740	5 or 6		[Yūsuf Mark]	Mūsā
45	34r	1740	6	29	[Yūsuf Mark]	Mūsā
46	34v	1740	7	27	[Yūsuf Mark]	Mūsā
14	12v	1740	8		Sophronios	Mūsā
47	35r	1741	3	9	[Yūsuf Mark]	Mūsā
15	13r–13v	1741	3		Sophronios (priest)	Mūsā
16	13v	[1741]	3 to 12		Sophronios (priest?/ Metropolitan?)	Mūsā
21	16r–16v	1741	11	5	Sophronios (Metropolitan)	Sylvester
62	44r	[1742]	[1?]		Yūsuf Mark (deacon?)	Mūsā
70	48r	[ca. 1741]			[Ilyās Fakhr or Sophronios]	Mūsā
71	48v	[ca. 1741]			[Ilyās Fakhr or Sophronios]	Mūsā
17	14r	1742	1		Sophronios	Mūsā

48	35v–36r	1742	3 or 4		[Yūsuf Mark]	Mūsā
65	46r–46v	[1742]	5		Sophronios	Mūsā
18	14v–15r	1742	5		Sophronios	Mūsā
19	15r–15v	1742	7		Sophronios	Mūsā
52	37r–37v	1742	10	5	[Yūsuf Mark]	Mūsā
22	17r–17v	1743	1		Sophronios	Sylvester
49	36r	[1743]	[ca. 4]		[Yūsuf Mark (priest)]	Mūsā
20	15v–16r	1743	4	23	Sophronios	Mūsā
24	18r–18v	1743	4	[23]	[Sophronios]	[Sylvester]
50	36v	1743	6		[Yūsuf Mark]	Mūsā
58	41v	[1743]	7	mid	[Yūsuf Mark]	Mūsā
59	42r	1743	8	mid	[Yūsuf Mark]	Mūsā
9	8r	1743	8	27	[Yūsuf Mark]	Mūsā
25	18v	[1743]	[ca. 8]		[Sophronios?]	Mūsā
60	42v–43r	1743	9		[Yūsuf Mark]	Mūsā
10	8v–9v	1743	12		[Yūsuf Mark]	Mūsā
23	17v	[ca. 1743]			[Sophronios]	[Sylvester]
51	36v–37r	[ca. 1743]			[Yūsuf Mark]	Mūsā
53	37v	[ca. 1743]			[Yūsuf Mark?]	Mūsā
31	24r–24v	1747	4	13	Dīmītrī Şabbāgh	Mūsā
63	44r–45r	1747	8	11	Sophronios	Mūsā
28	21r	1747	11	21	[Yūsuf Mark]	Mūsā
26	20r	1748	7	29	[Yūsuf Mark]	Mūsā
54	38r–38v	1748	10		Yūsuf Mark	Mūsā
27	20r–20v	1749	30		[Yūsuf Mark]	Mūsā
64	45r–46r	1749	11	5	Sophronios (Metropolitan)	Mūsā
72	49r	[ca. 1750]			[Ilyās Fakhr]	Mūsā
11	9v	[ca. 1750]			[Yūsuf Mark]	Mūsā
29	21v–22r	1754	[5]	[end]	[Yūsuf Mark]	Mūsā
57	40v–41r	[1754]			[Yūsuf Mark]	Mūsā
61	43v	1755	9	end	Yūsuf Mark	Mūsā
30	23v	1758			Khalīl Şabbāgh	Mūsā
55	39r	[ca. 1760]	5 or 6		[Yūsuf Mark]	Mūsā

36	29v	[1762]			[Yūsuf Mark]	Mūsā
56	39v–40r	[1762]			[Yūsuf Mark]	Mūsā
35	29r	1764	8	21	[Yūsuf Mark]	Mūsā
67	47r, 48v	1766	4	end	Samuel of Constantinople	Mūsā
32	25r–26r	1776	4	12	Papa Athanasios	Mūsā
33	26v–27v	1777	10	5	[Papa Athanasios]	Mūsā
66	46v–47r	1777	10	5	Sophronios of Constantinople	Mūsā
34	28r–28v	1787	60	25	[Papa Athanasios]	Mūsā

1.5 Rules of Edition and Translation

We have numbered the letters. When a letter has no title, but the author's identity is known, we have added a title with the author's name in square brackets [].

We included biblical references in square brackets [] within the text. We have aimed, as much as possible, to render the biblical quotations in English according to the King James Version. However, this was not always feasible, as the authors often quote the Bible from memory.

In the text, we show folio numbers as follows: //r// or //v//, with 'r' indicating recto and 'v' indicating verso. When a letter begins on a new page, we added the folio numbers at the end of the previous letter.

We have marked passages that are quotations from classical works or are repeated in other letters with curly brackets { }.

In the translation, we have provided the dates in the format: 'on the day of the month in the year'.

In the apparatus criticus, we labeled our manuscript as M.

We have standardized the Arabic text by adding missing diacritical dots: for example, on ة in feminine forms and on ى pronounced ī. Conversely, we removed the dots from ي when it is pronounced ā (*alif maqṣūra*).

We have standardized the spelling of *alif ṭawīla* and *alif maqṣūra*, e.g., كلا.

We have not changed the sentence structure to improve the style, but we have fixed certain grammatical forms, especially in the nominative and accusative plurals (where و becomes ي or ي becomes و).

We have deleted the tanwīn ^l in the case of *jarr* and *rafʿ*, e.g., واحدًا، جوابًا.

After *ghayr*, we have changed *naṣb* into *jarr*, e.g., غير متقلِّل.

We have corrected the declension of the "five nouns" (الأسماء الخمسة), e.g., أباك .

We have corrected the orthography of the *hamza*, e.g., ينأي (not ينئي).

In the letters of Sophronios and Athanasios of Damascus, we wrote digressions in parentheses (). We preserved these parentheses in the Arabic text and rendered them likewise in translation.

We have standardized the spelling of certain words with varying graphic forms, e.g., سنونو instead of صنونو.

We have restored the *alif* that is sometimes omitted in Middle Arabic verbs, e.g., طَرَّات.

We have deleted the final ي in verb in the *al-jazm* mood, e.g., اهد.

We have corrected *naṣb* into *rafʿ* after *lā al-nāfiya*, e.g., يَكْفُون.

We have corrected *naṣb* to *rafʿ* after a pronoun when it is not a case of *takḥṣiṣ*, e.g., مُرْتَبُوتُونَ.

We have supplied the missing *alif* in rare cases of plural verbs, e.g., تَقْطَعُوا.

In medieval Arabic, ظ and ض were sometimes interchanged; we have standardized their spelling, e.g., باهض.

We have removed the definite article *al-* and the pronoun suffix in cases of *iḍāfa* when it was clearly a scribal mistake, e.g., شوق القلب.

Transcription from the Arabic alphabet to the Latin alphabet follows the Library of Congress system, except for very few issues governed by the De Gruyter guidelines agreed for the *EAPE* series.

2 Arabic Edition of Mūsā's Correspondence

//1r//

نبتدى بعونه تعالى وحسن توفيقه بكتابة صور المكاتيب التي وردت إلينا من أدباء الأصدقاء وفُضلاء الخلان والرفقاء في زمن إقامتنا بخدمة الكتابة عند الأب السيد البطريرك كير كير سيلبسترس الكلّي الغبطة.

1. صورة مكتوب الشمس صفر ونويس الكلسي

إلى جناب الأخ المكرّم المحترم المبجل المفخّم الشمس موسى الأكرم، السلام لك من الرب.
إن كانت إذًا صيرورة انتزاحنا عنكم أثّت بنا إلى كميّة خمل وضّر هذه مقدارها، فكم بأولى وأقمن لنا أن تُسدى عزاء وسراء كينونة مُنادمتنا لكم، لا محالة. لكن إذًا هذا المُستعسر حالًا شفاهة، عمدتُ متحرّكًا بحركة ناشئة من سعي الصبوء، وتناولتُ كاغداً وقلماً لرقم من الأدعية أشداها وأعبرها إليكم، ولأفيدنكم بأن أوّلًا قد بلغنا راشيا بسلامة.

وأما من خصوص القيص وحرارة المهاليع المُستعيرة من الأكام السامية الوعة المناهج وعناء المساكنة وعدم السلوى وفقد التعاليم، وقبل وبعد اللامّة، جمّ التلهّف الكثير وتوق الغرام الغزير لرؤية وجهكم المفعمّ الأنس، ليت شعري من يمكنه أن يصفها. لكن فرمًا تزعمون قائلين: لي اضبط مهرّك عند العطف، وهلمّ احكّ لنا مُذيعًا بإشادات مُطربة، ودع عنك مثل هذه المُحزنة وإذاعتها الكيبوبة الإفادة. لكن هل يمكن كيان ضوء يفقد الزهرة والجبار؟ هكذا لعمرى ولا بغيبوبتكم عنّا وفقدكم يمكن حدوث شيء لدينا موموفاً. إذ كيف تتمّ الإطراب وموسى ليس، ملاتيوس ليس، ويوانيكويس ليس، الذين عدمهم فقط هو باعث كلّ عبوسة //1v// ومُكذّر كلّ رغد عيش.

قد توخّيتُ أرقم إليكم فرط إذاعات، لكن شخّ القرطاس قد صدّني عن تخويلكم ذلك، لأنّي سهوْتُ من أن أخذ معي جملة قراطيس أقلّمًا للمكاتيب. فليكن عفواً منكم لي إن أمكن.
قَبِلُوا أيدي السيّد الأمد والمولى المشاع بلثمة وضيعةً الذي نياي² لعمرى يومق أقمن له من صقيي، وأسرّوا إن جاز لديكم باتيان مكتوب منكم لنا، وليكن يتضمّن ضمنه إذاعة وإشادة كينونة شيوم تركيكيم الميمون لكي نقبّس، ونحن ههنا، من ألوية إشادة شذاه جذلاً ليس يسيراً.

من ههنا الشمس ثاودوسويس وخريسنطوس مع إبرهيم قطن يهدوك جزيل السلام، وإلى هناك نهدي السلام إلى كير فيلوثاوس المعلم، وكير باسيلويس وكير خريسطوفورس وكير كيرياكو وكير ايوانيس وكير نيقولا وكير يوانيس تبّاع البروطوسينكيلوس، وإلى الشمس لفرنديوس الأكرم، وإلى عيسى الطّبّاخ، وإلى بطرس البوّاب، وإلى خريسطوفاس، وإلى عزاريا الأقدس وإلى جميع الأحباء.
حُرّر عجلة جدّاً في 15 شهر آب سنة 1733 مسيحيّة، المحبّ الداعي لكم صفر ونويس الحقيّر. //2r//

1 M: + ذاك

2 It seems that this is the present participle of نأى ('to stay far from').

2. صورة مكتوب من الشمس [صفرونيوس] المذكور

إلى حضرة الأخ المكرّم الشمس موسى³ الطرابلسي النحوي، سلّمه الله تعالى، آمين.
 كالمقول لو لم أت بمفاتيح بدء رسل المكاتبات نحوكم لكان عسى لكم حجة. ليت شعري إذا أي حجة وعذر يمكنكم الانتساب إلى مهيع هذه المحجة إن كان وردكم إذ ذاك كتابي وبلغ ربوعكم. ناشدتم الله لم أفحتم ولم توشكوا بأجوبته. لكن ربّما تستنكفون منادمتي لاستيلاء الاقتار عليّ، فإذا لم أبرمت أفدي بلجاج ولحيتم أنفاً بتوخي مني لكم الإفادة عما يضحى هنا. لكن ذاك الهتاف غير خراس الزاعم بغيبوبة المرء عن الألاحظ بنأى⁴ وعن اللب. لعمري وقد بعن لكم ألا تنادموني إذ إني وقتنذ قد أسجيت في هوة الاقتار ومثوى هنّ البيادي والصحاري⁵، ومناسمة الأنام الغير متتعمين. وكيف ينتظم ذلك وأنتم قد أضحيتم ضمن المغاني والربوع المشيدة المتحلية بسخّ الرياح⁶ وبرونق البطش الأفعس؟ وخواصّ سجاياكم هي نيل الصلل السامية التي طالما قد جرّتها، وأنا لا بل وأضنكث وانتحلث وأترغث الألق بإذراف دموع الجدّ في السهاد بها.

لكن دغ حالاً أمسك مهري ههنا لئلا أستبين كمنترج عن دائرة التقوى، ولئلا أضطرّ القلم لرقم ما لا يصوّب لديكم سمعه، وأجعل طبق قولي برشق سهم إليكم منخذة من بدمر الجهابذة الشعار، لا لكي أخدشكم به، بل لكي آتي بكم لتذكروا مفاكهة المقة القديم زاعماً:

تراني مقبلاً إليك فتصدّ عني كأن الله لم يُغن سواك //2v//

سيغنييني الذي أغناك عني ولا فقري يدوم ولا غناك

وأما للشمس ملائوس الأخ الوفي المكرّم، والشمس لفرنديوس وفيلوثاوس ويوانيكوس، إدهم مني السلام. ولله دزهم كلّهم.

طرق مسمعا وفود الجاوش أحمد آغا إلى القلاية البطريركية العامرة. لعلّ ذلك يؤول إلى خير ونجاز صالح، ونرجو سماعها من بعد.

وعمركم طويل أبداً

في 31 من آب 1733

3. صورة مكتوب من الشمس [صفرونيوس] المذكور

دل صحيب اكر نزيدك اكر دور

اولور يارك خيالي ايله مسرور

السلام الوافر والشوق المتواتر يُهدى إلى حضرة الأخ الحبيب سي موسى النجيب من الوضيع الحقير الشمس صفرونيوس الداعي.

بالحقيقة إني أبداً لم أزل أبغي الطالع وأويل الحظّ الذي، منذ صغر سني للآن، لم يفتر من أن يُظهر نحوي الأسايب والكوارث دون بواقى الورى. لأنّ من جملة الأحزان المتواردة هنذا عليّ، وكيد الدهر الموبق المنهطل لديّ، قد أصابني ألم أنكل وأعضلّ، الذي هو فراقكم الوجيع المؤلم. (يا ليتة لا

3 The name is half crossed out.

4 M: يني

5 We are not familiar with these two words. Maybe البوادي والصحاري as opposed to الربوع المشيدة.

6 Two unfamiliar words that clearly rhyme with السحاري.

كان جرى)، لأنه قد سبب إلى أحفاني دموعًا، وإلى قلبي تحسُّرًا، وإلى أفكاري زفرات وتنهُدًا، وأدركني لعمرى حزنًا مُغشِيًا مَخِيلِي، الذي ما أدرك مثله قط، ولا إلى بنيامين //3r// فقد شقيقه الجميل يوسف [تكوين 34: 30].

وأنا الآن، إذ لم يُمكنني اقتناء جناحين كالحمامة، مثل الملك والنبي، لكي أطيّر [مزامير 55: 6] وأمهّد المسافات وأحضر لرؤيتكم الماثورة، يعوزني الآن يِنابيع دموع إرمياء المُحبّ العويل لكي أنعي حتّى الموت ذلّ شقوتي. ولو كان، لا محالة، للقرطاس نطقًا وحساسة، لكان أخبركم وما أخفى عنكم كميّة مبلغ الزفرات والحسرات التي هي في القلب مَنّي لفقدكم.

فمن ههنا نعلمكم، بإيجاز، أنّ في اليوم السادس بعد خروجي من دمشق نهار الخميس ثاني أيّار، استبدلنا دمشق بطرابلس وقبلنا مطرانها المُحتَرَم كير نكتاريوس أحسن قبول. وعندها مُهتَمِّين في أن نجد لنا وقوفًا مُنَوِّجَهَا إمّا لقبرس، إمّا للقسطنطينيّة، لتتوجّه به إلى حيث ما يشاء الله.

وصادفنا قدس سيّدنا الداكس ههنا وأظهر لي شروح المحبّة مع كلّ أهل طرابلس الذين لله درّهم، وطاب ثرى سلفائهم. ولكن عدم الفضة قد يضلكننا جدًّا الذي سوف البارئ تعالى يديّره بسياسته. ثمّ نعلمكم أن في الطريق أصابنا أمطار وعواصف كثيرة، إذ من دمشق إلى مدينة الشمس لم يكفّ عنّا الغيث والزوابع، وذلك من الذنوب والجرائم.

وبلّغوا سلامنا وبثّ أسواقنا إلى كلّ المحبّين، وعمركم يطول. //3v//

4. صورة مكتوب من الشّمس المذكور

إلى جناب حضرة فخر المكارم والأقران وزين الإخوة السُخندان⁷ الشّمس موسى المحترم، سلّمه الله تعالى.

من حين انتزاعي عنكم، أيّها الهامة النجبية، ليوم تاريخه، مكتوب⁸ واحد⁹ وفد إليّ منكم، وأمّا عن ثلاثة مكاتبي الأخرى، لم يرِدْ منكم جواب¹⁰ أو لتوانٍ بدا أو لعطبٍ أدركهم في المهيّع. لكن لعمرى إنّ صمتكم هو من التّواني وليس عجَب؛ إذ هذه من شؤون المحبّة التي هي من الناحية الواحدة عديمة الاستيثاق. إنّ السنونو¹¹ من عين طبعه، في ولوجه المغنى، يصدق بأنغام مُفرحة في أوّل الربيع، وعند خروجه من هناك، يصمت نائيًا عند الشتاء. هكذا فعلتم وأنتم؛ في الأوّل صدحتم لنا صدحًا كافيًا في مكتوبكم، لكن ثرى لم صمّتُ قليل صمت السنونو؟ لأن بعد ربيع مودّتنا، على حسب ظنّي، إنّه لم يبرح من بيننا. لكن أنا أتوسّل إليكم ألاّ تزدروا بمحبتى التي ربّما البعض يشتهونها (لكي أتجاسر بجهالة أن أقول). فمن بعد الآن دونك أن تكتب لي عن كلّ شيء، وبالأقمن عن صحّة مزاجكم اللطيف.

يومها موجودين في مدينة الله العظمى أنطاكية، ومنها مزعمين الذهاب لبّياس. أمّا من جهة الأتعاب التي نكادها، فحامل طروس الوداد أخونا الشّمس أمبروسوس سيخبركم عنها، مع ذلك يخبركم وعن عدم الفضة أيضًا، الذي نرجوكم أن تخلصوا الودّ نحوه كآخ روجي.

وأما من جهة الغرام واهتيام المحبّة والشوق الزائد الذي لنا نحوكم، //4r// الوقت يقصر بنا، بل ولا

⁷ An Ottoman word, equivalent to *adib* and *faṣīḥ* in Arabic.

⁸ مكتوبًا: M.

⁹ واحدًا: M.

¹⁰ جوابًا: M.

¹¹ السنونو: M.

قلم ولا لسان، حتّى لا عقل يمكنه أن يدرك ذلك أبداً. لعلّ ربّنا يمنّ علينا بلقائكم المأثور عمّا قليل، ربّما في شهر شباط¹².
كلّ الذين معنا يهدوكم جزيل السلام، وأهدوا منّا السلام الوافر إلى جميع ما تحوي دار البطريركة العامرة عموماً.
الداعي أخوكم صفرونيوس الشّمّاس

5. صورة مراسلة تعزية من الشّمّاس المذكور الجزيل الدراية قبل خروجه من دمشق في سنة 1733 مسيحية

إلى الأخ بالله الشّمّاس موسى المُكرّم، من الخلّ الوفيّ الوضيع صفرونيوس.
يا إخوة، لست أشاء أن يغيب عنكم أمر الراقدين، كي لا تحزنوا كما تحزن باقي الناس الذين لا رجاء لهم (بولص رسالة العبرانيين، إصحاح 6)
بالحقيقة، كما زعم الطوابان، الإناء المُنتخب، (أيّها الخلّ المُكرّم)، لست أشاء وأنا منك بأن تقطب هكذا مُعيباً على الراقدين كالذين لا رجاء لهم. ناشدتك الله لمّ قد أدركك هكذا وشيكا الضجر؟ لمّ عمّا قليل هكذا كدت الممل؟ أترأى تحزن مكتنباً لوفاة والدك المرحوم وانتقاله من الزرائلات الفانيات إلى الباقيات الراهنات؟ يا لهذا الزعم السخيف. أخبرني إنّ الذي تندبه وتنعيه (أي والدك) ترابيّ كان تُرى أم غير مائت؟ فمن البين أنّه كان إنساناً ترايباً. فإذا لرحلته من وطن النفي إلى الوطن الحقيقيّ أنت هكذا كتيب عديم السلوة.
كُفّ. كُفّ إذا 4v// واطرح عنك الهوداس السخيفة، وتشجّع وثاقاً بالله الذي نقله وينقلنا جميعنا بعده. علّك لا ترى كيف جميع الملوك والمُقتدرين والأنبياء والصديقين وكافة قطب الورى تجرّعوا كأس الجمام؟ فأبوك وأمك من أولّهم وأبدعهم؟ الله. وإلى أين ذهبوا؟ إلى الله. وها وأنت مُنتظر بعدهم، مثل الأنام، الوصول إليهم.

تأمل النبيّ القائل: مَنْ هو الإنسان الذي يحيى ولا يعاين الموت وينجي نفسه من يد الجحيم؟ [مزامير 88: 48] ثمّ يقول الحكيم: باطل الأباطيل والكلّ بطال فان. [جامعة 1: 2] ثمّ يقول داود: كلّ إنسان باطل [مزامير 39: 5]. فإن كنتُ تومق أباك¹³، أعط عن نفسه المغبوبة رحمت للمضنوكين بالفاقة، وقدم عنه قدّاسات في هياكل الله، لكي تسعفه في حالته المضارعة، ويتوهّل للشركة مع حزب القديسين في الزعم والخيرات. ولا تنذبه وتنعيه بالدموع كالجهال العديمي الخبرة. تأمل حالة ذلك الجهيز الشجيع والضرغام الكاسر أيوب كيف أنّه في قاع الحزن كان مُبتهجاً، وفي موج الشدائد كان غير مُتقلّب¹⁴، وفي ضنك المعاطب كان هادئاً. نفّوه إذاً معه بتلك النعمة اللذيذة المغبوبة وفلن: فليكن اسم الربّ مُباركاً من الآن وإلى الدهر. [أيوب 1: 21]

ألا ترى كيف الموت قد بسط حسامه وحسم كلّ قامة بشرية؟ لا يهاب ملكاً. لا يُكرّم فاضلاً. لا يخشى قدسياً. لا يرحم شاباً. لا يرثي لعريس¹⁵. لا يتمهل طفلاً. وعلى الإطلاق، يدرك كلّ سنّ وكلّ قامة، ويحصد بمنجله البتار حيوة البشر. كم وكم من جمهور الفلاسفة بلغ إلى غاية حكمة ومعرفة جمّة، وعند

12 M: اشباط

13 M: ابوك

14 M: متقلّباً

15 M: لعريساً

الموت بطلتْ كلَّ فطنة له.

أواه. أواه منك، يا أيُّها الموت. ترى إلى أين نهرب نحن الأنام من يدك؟ لأنتك في الأوطان وفي الصحاري، وفي الغابات وفي الأكمام، وفي كلِّ موضع أنت مُنتظَر //5r// استعداد وعزم لحسم قوام البشر. لكن من حين ابن الله عُلق على خشبة الصليب، وانحدر إلى الجحيم، وخُلصَ الجنس البشري، أضحي الموت هزوة وسخرية¹⁶ عند المؤمنين. لأن كم من الشهداء والقديسين ازدروه وتهانونوه، كونه لهم نقلة وانتقالاً من حال إلى الحال الأفضل، وشربوا رآجه بكلِّ فرح وحبور، وهتفوا بنعمة إشعياء العظيم الصوت القائل: أين شوكتك يا موت؟ وأين قوتك يا جحيم؟ [كورنثوس 51: 55؛ أنظر هوشع 13: 14] وها ربنا له المجد يقول: إن من يسمع كلامي ويؤمن بمن أرسلني، انتقل من الموت إلى الحياة [يوحنا 2: 5]؛ فإذا والدك ليس قد مات إن كنت تصدِّق قول المسيح، بل انتقل إلى الحياة. فإن كان حياً لم تكيه وتنعيه؟ ألعنك تريد أن يموت ولا يحيا؟ فإذا أنت هو على هذا النحو غير مُتيقن بقول المسيح السيد الغير الكاذب الذي له المجد إلى الأبد، آمين.

6. صورة مكتوب مرسول من العالم العلامة والجهيد الفهامة الأنبا ياكوبس المتوحد في الكهنة البارزين، الذي من جزيرة بطمن، إلى الخواجة ذيب يعيش يعزّيه لفقد ولده نعمة الله

وبعد الذي نعرّف به محبّبتكم هو أنّه حزّن عظيم قد أصابني في القلب حين سمعتُ برفود ولدكم المأثور الشمس نعمة. وليس أتّي توجّعُ لأجله بالفكر فقط، بل وأهمّلتُ دموغاً أيضاً. لأنّ الوصيّة هي رسوليّة ومُختصّة في خواصّ الطبيعة: الحزن مع الحزاني،¹⁷ والفرح مع الفرحين، والبكاء مع الباكين¹⁸ [رومية 12: 15]. لكن تذكّر فضائل ذلك الغني¹⁹ هي التي طرحت عني سريعا الحزن والغمّ، بما أنّ، حسبما تحقّق لديّ، أنّي ما عرفْتُ ولا رأيْتُ في هذا الإقليم شاباً آخر عفيفاً وعاقلاً زود عن هذا، ولا زود حسن عبادة، سلامياً مُحبّاً للغرباء ووديعاً، بشوشاً مثله، وخصوصاً عدمه للكبرياء //5v// والمجد الفارغ. أزهار هذه الفضائل التي كانت له قد عزّرتني جداً إذ تأملت أن لم يصِر له ظلم²⁰ أصلاً حين قضى نحبّه، وهو مزهراً²¹ بهذا المقدار من زهر الفضائل العبيدة الرائحة الذكيّة. ووصل إلى الحياة الأبدية الغير المانتة.

تأمل لي ههنا وحضرتكم في هذا القول الذي أقوله بمثل، وهو أنّه من هو الذي يسير في سفينته في وسط لجة مُعطية جداً بهذا المقدار من الأمواج والزوابع وتلاطم هيجان الغمر العاصف، ويثلب ويضجر من الريح المُوافق له الذي يفضي إلى الميناء الهادي من الاضطراب؟ من هو ذاكَ الرجل الضالّ والشايت في البلاد الغربية، وبشناً ويمقت الدليل الذي يأتي به إلى وطنه السالم؟ من هو الذي يكون مطروحاً في سجن مُننٍ مُظلم، ويثلب الذي يعتقه ويخلّصه منه؟ وهذه الحياة الحاضرة تُرى أليست هكذا هي كحبس مُننٍ مُظلم، وبحر جزيل الهيجان والأمواج، وغربة فاقدة العزاء والسلوى؟

لأجل هذا الأنبياء والرسل كانوا يطلبون الانعتاق من مثل هذا السجن الكائب. ماذا كان يطلب ذلك السعيد بولص عظيم الرسل سوى أن ينحلّ من ههنا ويكون مع المسيح؟ ماذا كان يلتمس الملك في

16 M: وصخره

17 M: الحزانا

18 M: الباكين

19 It seems that the original word was الفتى.

20 M: ظلماً

21 M: مزهراً

الأنبياء داود سوى أخرج من الحبس نفسي [مزامير 142: 6]؟ مَنْ هو الذي كانوا يحتسبونه سعيداً العلماء اليونانيين سوى ذلك الذي كان يموت شاباً؛ الذين كانوا يحتسبون²² الإسكندر سعيداً جداً ليس لأجل أنه تمكّن وقهر المسكونة كلّها، ليس لأجل أن سجدت لأقدامه ملوك الأرض أكثرهم، بل لأجل أنه مات شاباً قبل أن تعثر به أمراض الشيخوخة، قبل أن تدهمه اغتيالات الأعداء وعدم ودّ المحبين، قبل أن يدركه انقلاب سعد الغرّ والمملكة العادم الثوب (!)²³ لأجل هذا ومعلمين الكنيسة ليس يسمّون //6r// طويل العمر ذاك الذي يعيش أدوار سنين كثيرة، بل ذاك الذي في سنين قليلة يكمل فضائل جزيلة، لأنّه زعم قضى تحبه في زمن يسير، فاستكمل سنيناً كثيرة لأنّ نفسه كانت مَرْضِيّة للربّ. هذه وغيرها تذكّروها أنتم واطرحوا عن أنفسكم كافّة الأشياء المَحزنة الكائبة، واشكروا الربّ المحبّ البشر نهاراً وليلاً، الذي حسب فضيلة كلّ واحد يمنحه حداً وزماناً لحيوته.

هذه الأقوال أكتبها إليكم من أنطاكية، وحين بمئة الله تعالى أصل إليكم سأقول لكم غيرها كثيراً بواسطة الكلام الحيّ الخارج من الشفاه. إنّما وأنتم عزّوا وسلّوا والدّة المرحوم بحسب القوة، لأنّ جنس النساء هو حنون جداً ومتّري وسريع الانعطاف والميلان إلى الحزن والدموع، وأهدوها منّي جزيل البركة والنعمة بالربّ، ومثل ذلك إلى سليلكم الصغير الحبيب ديمتريوس وجميع من يحويه منزلكم العامر عموماً كبير مع صغير والبركة عليكم ثلثاً وثلاثاً.

خَرَر في 16 تمّوز سنة 1734 مسيحية //6v//

7. صورة مكتوب من الشماس صفرونيوس إلى الأب السيّد البطريك كير سيلبسترس الأنطاكي

إلى قدس أب الآباء الجليل وراعي الرعاة النبيل سيّدنا البطريك الأنطاكي كير كير سيلبسترس الجزيل الغبطة والفاق الاحترام دام قدسه.

لا لسان يقدر أن يصف ولا قلم يقدر أن يحزّر ولا (أتجاسر أن أقول) عقل يمكنه، لعمرى، أن يدرك عظم تفاهم الشوق المفرط الذي قد اعتراني الآن للنظر إلى هامتك الشريفة المؤقّرة يا أجلّ البشر جلالاً. ولذلك فقد اضطرّني الوقت الآن لكي أتفوّه بتلك الكلمات الداوئية قانلاً: كما يشاق الأهل إلى يناعيع المياه كذلك تنوق نفسي إليك [مزامير 41 (42): 1]. وكنتُ إذاً الآن قد أوثر أن تكون لي جناحين كالحمامة لكي أطير بسرعة وأقطع وشيكاً مدى المسافة التي هي بيني وبينكم، وأبادر محاضراً لمعاينة ذاتكم المحفوظة من الله. لكن إذ قد عجزتُ عن مثل هذه المنة التي تعلق وتسمو قدرتي، قد ألجئتني إذاً الضرورة أن أحرّر لفضلكم السامي هذه الرسالة الوضيعة لكي أتّي، بركاكة لساني العاجز، أمدح سدة علوكم البذيل (أيّها الفائق المديح).

ولئن كنتُ بفضل عن مؤازرة الفقهاء المنطقيين²⁴ أنا لست بكفو لتفخيم شأنكم السامي قدرًا، لأن كما أنّ الربيع هو البهيّ في أربعة فصول السنة، هكذا وغبطتكم قد تفوق شرقاً وجلاً وبهاء فيما بين أربعة رؤساء كهنة كنيسة الله المقدّسة الشرقيّة، وكما أنّ الشمس تفوق على القمر والكواكب ضوءاً وحرارة، هكذا وطوبانيّكم قد تفوق حرارةً وفضلاً على كافّة رؤساء كهنة عصرك، وكما أنّ جلد السماء يحوي فيه كافّة صنوف الكواكب مع الشمس والقمر، على هذا الحذو وأنّت يا أيّها الجلد الناطق قد تحوي فيك كافّة صنوف مجمّع الفضائل بأسرها //7r// مع العمل والتعليم.

22 M: يحسبوا

23 الثبوت Probably.

24 M: المنطقيين

فإذاً حذرًا لنألا أسهب مُطنبًا الخطاب بعدم تمييز، وأتهور في خطر الزلل والغلط لعدم معرفتي. ههنا أمتسك عن المفاوضة وأوجه لجناب غبطتكم صنوف الأدعية السنّية مع جزيل السجّات العبدية، مُلتَمِسًا من فضلکم بأن تطلبوا إلى الله تعالى لأجلي لكي يسهّل لي بأيسر مرام قبول التعاليم اليونانية، ولا تهملوني دائماً من بركاتكم وإعلام أخبار صحّتكم الماثورة، والأمر أمرکم ودمتم ودام لكم البقاء سرمدًا. حُرّر في 30 شهر تشرين الثاني سنة 1732 مسيحية من طرابلس الشام.

8. صورة مكتوب من الشّمس المذكور إلى مطران طرابلس كير نكتاريوس تعزية وتهنئة

<غ>بّ تقبيل أيدي وأقدام قدس السيّد المُحتَرَم الجليل المقام سيّدي المطران <كير نكتاريوس الفائق الإكرام دام قدّسه، أمين.

<أ>لمعروض بين أيدي قداستكم السنّية وهو أنّنا يوم تاريخه أنّنا إلى مدينة اللاذقية <من جمع نورية بلاد أدنة وبياس وأنطاكية وإدلب. وشاهدنا في اللاذقية قدس الأب السيّد البطريرك الكليّ الغبطة. وبعد تاريخه بكم يوم قُصدنا، نتوجه مع معلّنا الداكسالكس إلى محروسة طرابلس الفحاء ونجتمع، أعلّ، مع قداستكم السعيدة.

فالمأمول من نباهة شرفكم ألا تُخرجوا هذا الداعي من فيض مُخيلتكم العجبية. ثمّ قد سمعنا في يوم واحد خبرين مغا. فالواحد مُوجب²⁵ للفرح والابتهاج، والآخر باع²⁶ للحرز والاكنتاب. ففي الأوّل فرحنا لفرحكم وابتهجنّا لراحتكم ونيل مقصودكم الجليل، وفي الثاني اغتمنا لعبوستكم جدًّا وتوجّعنا لما بدى لُقديسكم من الحزن والكآبة، أي برفود أخيكم الشيخ أنطونيوس. لكنّي لست أحزن لأجل ثقله ذلك المرء الحزوم، لأنّه ترك الفانيات وبلغ الباقيات //7v// لكنّي أحزن على حزنكم لأجله كون الجوانح الشقيّة لم تنزل تضطرم وتلتهب مُشتعلة بنيران التحنّن الطبيعيّ.

فبالحقيقة، قد ينبغي لكلّ مدينة طرابلس أن تستدعي كلّ كورة وبلد لئشاركها في الحزن على فقْد هذه الوردّة العبيرة الأراج التي قد انتثرت من ربوعها، وتنوح على مثل هذا الفاضل الفطون الذي قد عدّمته من حيّها لأنّه كان في جنسكم الشريف المُشرف بجلّ رئاسة الكهنوت كزينة وسوسنة ووردة ذكيّة الرائحة، وكان يعطرّ ويطيّب جميع من يقترب إليه بطيوب تقويماته وفضائله إذ أنّه كان نموذجًا وقُدوة صالحة لكلّ نوع فضيلة إن قلّت عقلًا أو تهذيّبًا أو بتوليّة أو سجايا حميدة أو تواضعًا. فجميع ذلك كنّت تجده في شخص هذه النفس الفطونة.

فطوبى له إذ أنّه خلّص من أمواج هذا الدهر وبلغت سفينته إلى ميناء السلامة الهادئة، كما يقول الحكيم بأنّ الصديق إذا قضى نحبّه، في الراحة يكون [حكمة 4: 7]. ثمّ يقول نُؤل واختار لنألا تغيّر الرذيلة فهمه أو يطغي الغشّ نفسه [حكمة 4: 11].

فالمرجوّ من قدّسكم ألا تحزنوا على نقلته لأنّنا كلّنا مُزْمعين الذهاب إلى هذا المقرّ والطريق. وأهدوا من فمكم البركة وميّ السلام والتعزية إلى أخيه جبرائيل، وابنه الحبيب الشّمس ميخائيل، وإلى كلّ من يلود بقُدّسكم.

ثمّ المرجوّ بأنّ تحترصوا على الأدبيّات التي ترجمناها من اليونانيّ إلى العربيّ، لأنّنا أبقيناها عند قدّسكم حين سافرنا لنألا تضيع وتصبعب علينا ترجمتها ثاني مرّة. وتقبيل أيديكم ثانيًا وثالثًا.

في 5 كانون الثاني سنة 1735 مسيحية. //8r//

25 M: موجبًا

26 M: باعًا

9. [من يوسف مرك]

من الداعي المُعترف بعجزه وقصره إلى من عُقدت عليه الخناصر من علماء عصره، وانعطفت عليه الأوامر من فضلاء شامه ومصره، وفاق بالكمال على أهل الزمان بأسره، أخي بالله وبالروح ولدي وفلذ كبدي وروحي التي في جسدي، المنوّه باسمه في الأعلى، دامت له المعالي.

غِبْ أداء الدعاء بالبقاء وقرب الاجتماع وإبلاغ الثناء بما يعجز عن تحرير عشره اليراع. المعروض هو أنّه في أبرك وقت وأسعده ورد إليّ كتابكم أمّكم الله وأسعده، آمين.

وما أنهيته من انتقال المرحوم المُطوّب الذكر المطران كيرلس الإسكندرونيّ فهي إشارة تُغني عن التصريح لنّلا يعيش بين أهالي أبرشيّته، نُقِلَ واختلّس لنّلا تغيّر الرذيلة فهمه أو يطغي الغشّ نفسه [حكمة 4: 11]. وانتقال مثل هذا المطوّب كريم بين يديّ الربّ [مزامير 116: 15] كَقَوْلِ النَّبِيِّ دَاوُدَ.

وأما من جهة ظهور إشارة الطاعون بنواحيكم، فالاحتجاب والنقلة إلى غير مكان أولى وعين الصواب. ولا يخفاكم قول إشعياء النبيّ إذ يقول: انطلق يا شعبي، وادخلْ مَدْعَكَ، وأغلقْ بابك، واستترْ قليلاً حتّى يَمِرَّ غضب الربّ [إشعياء 26: 20-21]. وقوله تعالى: إذا ضاقت بكم قرية فانتقلوا إلى أخرى. فولا بأس من التوجّه نحونا لنشرّفونا ديك (!) ونفرح فيكم.

قد وصل إليّ الكرّاس المنسيّ والشعاريّ، فجزئيّتم خيرًا ووَقَيْتُمْ ضيرًا. ولم يزل نترقّب حضور باقية المصالح وباقي القول.

سنة 1743 في 27 آب. //8v//

10. [من يوسف مرك]

سليل آل الفخر وذخيرة من زخر، مَنْ بلغ من الكمال أسنائه، ومن الجمال أبهائه، ومن الحظّ أعلاه، ومن المنطق أحلاه، المُكْرَمُ الشَّمْسُاسُ موسى، لا زالت البركات تحفّه كَلِيَّاتُهُ وَجَزَ نِيَّاتِهِ²⁷، ووقاية الله تحرسه في جميع ساعاته وحرركاته، وما فتى علّم علّمه مرفوعًا أبدًا، ونيل مجده منصوبًا بخفض العداء، ولا برحّت أقلامه لأفعال الشكّ جازمة ولأعدائه متعيّنة ولارائه لازمة، وأدام تعريفه بالعطف والصلة، وماتر مكارمه مُتَّصِلَةً لا مُنْفَصِلَةً، آمين.

فبينما أنا مُشتغل بتلاوة الأدعية الصالحة، الناطق بها كلّ عضو وجارحة، وترادف التضرّع في الصلوات والذكران في القداسات، إلّا وقد وفد إليّ كتابكم بل مثالكم الكريم الواجب التكريم. فيا له من كتاب أشهى من اللقاء، إذا ضمّه المهجور يطفئ التباغ. دُرّر ألفاظه منظومة في أسلاك خالص الوداد، مُتضمّنة بلوغ الأمانى والمُراد. فلما نُشِرت علينا من طيب عبير ألفاظه تلك الروائح، التي تمسك بطيب نشرها كلّ غاد ورائح، برّد ما كان عندنا بعض²⁸ الوجد وتحركّ الشوق، بما لم يكن في الوسع والطوق، وخاب أُملي بالاجتماع بكم ههنا، وصار برقي خُلب، وتحقّقْتُ //9r// سفركم إلى حلب، ومنها إلى حيث يكون قدس سيدنا البطريرك الكبّيّ الغبطة، فمدحنتُ سعيكم المشكور وعزمكم المبرور، أعادكم الله إلينا سالمًا.

تمّ فيكم قَوْل بعضهم: "تُحِبُّ الصالحين وأنت منهم، رفيق القوم يلحق بالجماعة. وتبغض مَنْ بضاعته المعاصي، حماك الله من تلك البضاعة".

27 M: جزياته

28 Perhaps he means بعد، 'after'.

وأما أنا الجبان المُتواني، قد طلبني المُشار إليه كثيرًا ولا وحي بمواعيد بهيَّة، ومن خوفي من العناء وشدة برد تلك البلاد اعتذرت ومغيبت²⁹. حتَّى وبعد مجيء سليمان ابن أخي الخوري سلامة، كرَّر عليَّ المطالب وامتنعنَّ ليَنتم فيَّ قول القائل: "أحبَّ الصالحين ولستَ منهم، لعلِّي أنال منهم شفاعَة. وأبغض من بضاعته المعاصي، ولكنِّي شريك في البضاعة".

وقد أحزنتني رقاد الكاهنين اللذين قضيا نخبهما بسهام الطاعون وشدة الوباء بدمشق بعد سفر سيدنا الكلي الغبطة. أسأله تعالى يخلصكم من اغتياله، ويخرجكم من دمشق سالمين، ويرجعكم لوطنكم غانمين بما أنه سمع الطالبين.

وقد كنتُ أوَّل إرسال كتبي وكتاب خالك المُستخرج بل المؤلف حديثًا صحبة³⁰ القفل مع مكتب منكم، فجاء القفل وما جاءني كتب ولا مكتوب //9v// فبقيتُ في وجد لأجلكم. وبهذه الأيام الكثيرة الأمطار صار يتعذر مجيئهم، ولكن على الله التدبير.

بلغ دعائي إلى شقيقكم ومن يكون بحكم. وأما أخيك³¹ نوفل وشقائقكم وكافة أهلكم يسلمون عليكم، وسيدنا المطران وكافة الكهنة يهدونكم الدعاء وجزيل البركات، ولدي مخايل يقبل أيديكم، ووالدتي داعية لحضرتكم، والبركة عليكم. حُرر في كانون الأول سنة 1743.

11. [من يوسف مرك؟]

إلى حضرة أعزَّ الأولاد الروحيين والإخوان الصادقين الشَّماس موسى المُكرَّم. بارَك الربَّ الإله عليه نفسًا وجسدًا، وعلى حريمه ولده وسائر تصرُّفاته، أتمَّ³² البركات السموية، أمين. المنهي هو أنه قد تبادت المدة ولم أرَ منكم مكتوبًا مع أنني لم أقطع مكاتبي إليكم مُتواردة من كلِّ جانب من الطرق والبلدان، وعدم الجو >اب< ما هو شرط الإخوان والخدان. فإن كنتُ سلوئنا فأنا لا أسل >وك<، وإن كنت نسيئتي فأنا لا أنساك، بل أزيد في مدحك وثنا >نك<. وقد وفقتُ على ما وردت به الكتب المبشرة والأنباء المُبهجة... //11r//

29 Perhaps a copyist's mistake: تغيبت, 'was absent' or 'did not come'.

30 M: صحبت

31 The paper is torn here.

32 M: اثم

12. صورة المکتوب المرسل من الحکیم بابا یعقوب الکاهن المُتوحد من طرابلس إلى البطريرک کیر سیلبسترس للشام بهنيّه بدخوله إليها

إلى قُدس السيد الكلّي الغبطة الجزيل القداسة بطريرك مدينة الله العظمى أنطاكية وسائر المشرق كيريو كير سيلبسترس كآب ومولى مؤقّر، نسدي له سجوداً عبدياً.

المعروض هو أنّه قد وافى إلينا مکتوبكم المؤقّر وقيلنّه، ومنه علّمث بخصوص ولوجكم الباذخ الكائن بدخولكم إلى دمشق الشام، وسموّ مصافت النظام الحاصل إذ ذاك لغبطتكم، والمجد الشامخ الذي كما بلغنا من كثيرين بأنّه ما جرى مثل هذه الرسوم والإطباب أصلاً للذين كانوا قبلكم وسلفائكم. وهذا على ما أظنّ أنّه عربون شرفكم عند الله الذي عنايته تعالى ألهمت كافة الرهط والجموع وأنهضتكم لاستقبالكم. ولعمري، كما يلوح لي، إنّ المجد الكائن لغبطتكم بدخولكم لدمشق قد يفوق وينوف عن المجد والعزّ الباذخ الذي كان جرى للقديس أثناسيوس بولوجه الإسكندرية، كما قد يحزّر ذلك في مرثاه له فم وفخر المتكلمين باللاهوت. فإذا، وهذه قد جرّث أيضاً تنوف عن تلك. فإذا، لهذا السبب وأنا قد أبجلّك مع جملة وامقيك، وأرتكض كداود آخر تجاه تابوتك الإلهي، مُعطفاً الجلال مع عنان القول والفكر إلى دمشق، لكي تفاقم سرورها وأفراحها بواسطة فم أهاليها وسكانها لا بل مع ذلك الإناء المُنتخب قانلاً: إفرحي بالربّ يا مدينة دمشق. إفرحي لأنّ قد حان وحضر علّة وباعث فرحك. إفرحي لأنّك قد حويت³³ الآن كالعروس زينتك وجمال بهائك³⁴، وطرحت³⁵ عنك خلقان الذلّ والمسكنة واليتم. إفرحي لأنّك احتملت³⁶ وصبرت³⁷ على امتحانات وتجارب جمّة التي أنهضها عليك عابدو³⁸ التّنين. إفرحي الآن واطربي مُرتكضة لأنّك قد فقت³⁹ مُنيقة باقي بلاد سوريا ليس لأجل //11v// خصب أثمارك، ليس لأجل غروصك وأشجارك الفائح ذكيّ عبيرها، ليس لأجل أنهارك المُلقّبين من القدماء بالمجاري الذهبية، ولقبك المسماة عند ذوي الأدب خُبة شام، بل لأجل ولوج راعيك المُشابه المسيح إليك. فإذا، سوف لا يغادرُك أيضاً مُهملة، بل يُحامي ويُغازي عنك مُكافحاً إلى أن يحنّ ويحمل مُفسدي ومُضلي قاطنك، وبيعنهم إلى الهرب والفرار، ويستأصل منك جميع الأشرار والمُلتوين⁴⁰ والذين يُخفون شكل الذنب بحملان الغنم [متى: 7: 51]، وكالمقول: يرعى أبناءك⁴¹ بمراع النقيّ والورع، ويُجرّهم أدوية ومشروبات العقاقير الخلاصية. وهذه قد تكفّك لإظهار أفرحي معك وباقي القول.

في شهر كانون الثاني افتتاح سنة 1733.

33 M: حويتي

34 M: بهاوك

35 M: وطرحتي

36 M: احتملت

37 M: وصبرتي

38 M: عابدي

39 M: فقتي

40 M: الملتوين

41 M: ابناوك

13. صورة مكتوب من الشمساس صفرونيوس

فخر الأخدان الفخام، عروة الأصدقاء الكرام، الأخ المأثور إليه بالمهام، الشمساس موسى الأكرم، حفظه الله حفظاً جيداً على الدوام.

غِبْ بَثْ لواعج الشوق إليكم ونشر إعلام التوق لديكم.

المعروض هو أنه وصلني مكتوبكم الكريم المستوجب التكريم. فلما أعلمني بصحة وجودكم السامي، صافحته جزءاً عن التعبير بالأفراح. ولا تظن أن قولي هذا هو على سبيل الهزل والإنشراح، لأن لو كان يمكنكم من البعد تروني وتسمعونني، لكنكم مدى الوقت لا تسمعون مني إلا تنهّدات وزفّرات، وتغزّل بذكركم وحسرات. وبئسما نسيتموني في مكتوبكم إلى نسيان ذكركم، لأنني بهذا المقدار أتذكركم كلّ وقت، حتّى أتجاسر بثقة وأقول المقال من الملك في الأنبياء وقتاً ما لأورشليم قبل سبئها بأن إن أنا //12r// نسيتمكم تنساني يميني إلخ [مز امير 137: 5] يا للعجب من هذا الوهم.

ناشدكم الله إذا كان عقلي أظلم بهذا المقدار حتّى أتى أنساكم، ثرى بعدكم لمن يجب لي أن أتذكّر؟ لا محالة عندها يقدح الأمر بي حتّى أنسى كلّ شيء يستوجب الذكر، وأضحى مُقَرّ المُخَيّلة من كلّ منظرية حميدة التي لأجلها نعاني الآن سهر الليالي، والفقر الأقصى، والذلّ الكليّ الممزوج بالعار، والمسكنة. ومع هذا كلّ لا أبالي من ذلك، بل مُقْتَبِعاً أحفظ الفكر بان، ولئن كنْتُ ههنا مُقَرّاً من الأخدان، إلا أن في حيكم لي وداد وذكرا.

قد ذكرتم لي في مكتوبكم بأنكم شيعتم لي غيره عدّة مكاتيب، لكن يا صاح لم يصل لي إلا واحد⁴² لا غير، وهو المؤجّه على يد حضرة خالكم الكليّ الإكرام كير الياس، فخر المصر الشاميّ، ونخبة الحزب الأرثوذكسيّ السامي، لكنني أعترف لكم بربوات نعم، كونكم مع ثبوتكم في ذروة المراتب الشاهقة تفتقدون بمكاتيبكم للمُنحطّين في وهاد التهور. ولله دركم على تنميق الخطوب بنشر عقودكم الأدبيّة، وتحليها بأثواب الألقاب والغرائب اللغويّة، فضلاً عن حُسْن مدِّ يراعكم السيال، ونسقم نسج المعاني بشروح جسان وطوال.

ولعمري هذا ثمرة انعكافكم على تلاوة الكتب الأدبيّة، وتبحّركم بسهر الليالي في مناظرات المطالع الكناسيّة.

أما نحن ربّاً لنا أضغنا ما كان باليد من الحساسة اليسيرة في اللغة العربيّة، وقصرنا عجزاً عن إدراك الدُرّ اليونانيّة، وبواجب أصابنا ذلك كون الحكمة والدراية كما يقول سليمان الحكيم لا تسكن أبداً في القلوب الخبيثة مثل قلبنا، لكنّها تطلب مُستحقّيتها لتستريح عندهم مثلكم. بل المأمول أن تشملوا ضعفنا بشمائل سماحكم المُعتاد، ولا تقطعوا عنّا إعلام صحّتكم الكريمة. ودام لكم البقاء وثبوت الكرم بالارتقاء وباقي القول.

خَرَر في أواخر شهر نيسان سنة 1740. //12v//

14. من الشمساس المذكور [صفرونيوس]

صفوة الإخوان الكرام، زبدة الأخدان الفهام، الشمساس موسى الأكرم، سلّمه الله تعالى، وأبقاه البقاء الصالح.

غِبْ إهداء جزيل التسليم بفرط التكريم،

المنهى هو أنّه مرّت علينا أكثر من سنة ولم نَرَ من جنابكم كتابًا ولا خطابًا. وما ندري ما الذي أشغلكم هكذا بالكليّة عَنّا. البائن فَرَطٌ وتبدّد من فكركم ذكرنا، واشتغلتم بأمر أشغلتكم عن مفاوضات، وبصمّكم هذا تعفون منّا، على كلّ حال ربّما رغبة لمدارة خواطر ما. بل أكتبُ لنا الآن وعرفنا أنّك من بعد الآن ما عدت تتذكّرنا حتّى نقطع ومن حضرتمك الأمل كما قطعناه من غيركم.

لأنّ لا خير في محبة اغتصم <أب>، همومها أكثر من أفرحها. والعارف لا يُعرف. ولولا زكاوة ليكم لما استعملنا الرموز والتلويحات معكم، إنّما نوصيكم أنّ حامل أحرف الوداد كان سمع منّي أنّي محبكم منذ القديم، فالتمس منّي إليكم رسالة. إن كنّ حقيقيّا محبكم، أظهروا ذلك بالفعل لمراعاته. ماذا وإلا إكرامًا لمحبة الغرباء المفروضة على الكافّة، أظهروا له عين البشاشة.

كلّ الموجودين عندكم من الكهنة والشمامسة والرهبان والعلمانيّين، نهديهم جزيل السلام الأخوي.

خُرّر في أوائل شهر آب سنة 1740. //13r//

15. من المذكور [صفرونيوس] وهو قسّ

أعظم ما يكون من السلام الأخوي والإكرام المُخلص نخصّ به حضرة الأخ الشّمس [موسى]⁴³ الأكرم. سلّمه الله تعالى وأباه.

غِبّ إسداء التّكريم والتّعظيم إلى حضرتمك الكريمة ذات السجايا الأديبة، المناقب الذهبيّة، المعروف هو أنّي مذ أنف قد أيسنت من مكاتبتكم، لأنّ جواب مكاتبي المرسولة إليكم سابقًا مرّ عليها ينوف عن تسعة أشهر وما أتت. ومرار عدّة كنّ أقتنع بصمتكم عن الاعتفاء والإعراض عن المكاتبة أيضًا. فالآن، حمدًا لله تعالى، في هذه المدّة، بغتة، أتاني مكتوبكم ولكّنه مديد التاريخ، لأنّه يحكي تسطيره قبل دخولكم حاصبيّا ومرجعيون، ولذلك لم يُطرب القريحة لقدمه وفوته وإذاعته عن أشياء بانّته، لكنّه أيضًا ليس بالكليّة عديم السلوة. فمن حيث أنّ الوقت لم يمنحنا فرصة للإسهاب، وقد يقتضي على تهنّات وتسليمات ليس فقط بين المُحبّين، بل وبين ألقمًا يكونوا متعارفين، لأجل هذا كدّين واجب علينا نقول لكم: كلّ سنة وأنتم سالمين، خريستوس أنستي، لكم وإلى المرء السُخندان الفصيح الخطيب الباهر، والمُعَلِّم الماهر الأنبا ثاودوسوس وإلى الأخ المُكرّم الحبيب الحاج باسيليوس. وقد كان أجل قصدي أكتب لهما مكاتيب، لكنّ الأوّل منهما بالكليّة هجرنا وجحدّ ودادنا ورفع الحواجب علينا. لله درّه على هذه الألبّه الباذخة والزهوة الشامخة. عسى يتذكّرنا وقتًا ما ويترك عنه مداراة تلك الخواطر التي لأجلها ينفر مؤانستنا، ويتحقّق أنّ نهاية القصد من رعايته لها لا ينتج له لا أجرًا فيما بعد ولا ثوابًا وقتيًّا. وأمّا الثاني فإنّه بالفم يكاتبني بشيء //13v// وأيديه تتسلّح عليّ. ولأجل ذلك هذا الرجل الأليق به أن يَدُم ويُسنى من أن يؤانس. لأنّ الكتاب قد يتلبّ آله الشرّ، ولذلك الحيّة ازْدَجَرَت لكونها حصلت آله لِمَن صارَتْ له. ولن هذه الحالة من غير أن نؤملها طرأت⁴⁴ علينا منهما، ولكن أهدهما من القبلّة الأخويّة مع المصافحة.

وأنّت أيّها الأخ، لا تبرح من أن تكتب لنا دائمًا عن أخبار صحّة مزاجك الشريف، واهدي⁴⁵ منّا السلام إلى كلّ المُحبّين، ودام لكم البقاء.

خُرّر في آخر آذار سنة 1741 في أورشليم المقدسة

43 In this letter and several others, there is an empty space for the name.

44 M: طرت

45 M: واهدي

16. من المذكور [صفرونيوس]

إِنَّ الصَّحَّةَ هِيَ الْمَأْثُورَةُ جَدًّا بَيْنَ الْأَنْعَامِ، وَبِالْخَاصَّةِ لِلْعِلِيلِينَ ذَوِي الْأَوْصَابِ. وَلَعَمْرِي إِنَّ دَكَمَ هُوَ لَمْوَمُوقَ لَدَى الْوَرَى، وَبِالْحَرِيِّ لِي أَنَا الْمَوْصُوبُ بَدَاءَ افْتِرَاقِكُمْ، الْوَجِيعُ. أَوَاهُ لِي. يَا لَيْتَنِي مَا كُنْتُ عَرَفْتُكُمْ مِنَ الْأَزَلِّ، وَلَا كَانَ وَمَقَمُكَ تَأْسَى فِي لَبِّ جَنَانِي. وَكَأَيُّوبَ آخِرَ لَقْدَ أَتَفَوَّهَ بِغَرَامِكُمْ زَاعِمًا: لَيْتَ يَوْمًا فِيهِ زَكَنْتُكُمْ لَا كَانَ، وَلَا أَشْرَقَتْ فِي بَرُوجِ الْعَلَاءِ مَطْلِيَّةٌ شَمُوسُهُ، وَلَا وَلَجَ الْجَبَّارُ فِيهِ سَائِرًا فِي أَفْقِ أَلْقِ مَهْبِيعِ سَيْرِ دُورِيَّةِ كَرَّتِهِ، إِذْ كَانَ بَاعَثَ كَابَتِي الْمُضَارَعَةَ، هُوَ أَسْ وَمَقَمُكَ السَّالِفُ الْإِبْتِدَاءَ وَالْمُسْتَعْرِ الْأَدَاءَ. بَخْ بَخْ لِرُؤْيَتِكُمُ الْكَرِيمَةَ. أَوَاهُ لَوْ كَانَتْ قَرِيبَةً سَقِيًّا سَقِيًّا لِمَلَاقَاتِكُمُ الشَّرِيفَةَ. يَا لَيْتَهَا كَانَتْ وَنِيفَةً وَبَاقِي الْقَوْلِ. //14r//

17. الحقيير صفرونيوس مطران عكة

النعمة الإلهية تبارك على محبة ولدنا الروحاني الشماس المكرم. بارك الرب الإله عليه نفسًا وجسمًا أتم البركات السماوية.

المنهي لمحبتكم أن سبب عاقتي كل هذه المدة عن المكاتبة ليس هو النسيان، بل إفراط الاهتمام والانشغال بالمصائب والمهمات المرتكبة إيانا. لأن ربما طرق مسامعكم تقلب الأحوال التي صرنا فيها. ومن حين دخلنا هذه الأبرشية المنتحلة الحال بكل الوجوه والأحوال، لم نتفرغ أبداً من الجهادات والمناصبات، تارة قبالة المناصبين الأغيار، وتارة تجاه ذوي المخال والمنحرفين عن الطريق القويمية. هذا وناهيك عن أمر كنيسة الناصرة التي استظهروا عليها البادية بقوة المال، واختطفوا نصارتنا خداعاً ومكرًا واحتيالاً. وبالجهد الجهد عند محيي حنانيا الترجمان لعكا، استرجعنا الكنيسة فقط لا غير بعد أن أخذ الشيخ ضاهر العمر ثمانية أكباس من الروم. هذا والنصارى بقوا⁴⁶ في مذهب الإفرنج، ومثل هذه المصائب لم تزل كل يوم تفاجئنا، حتى أتني في عكة بمدة شهرين تجرمت بمبلغ خمسمائة غرش لرجل شيخ يُقال له الشيخ محمد العلي من غير سبب ولا علة، إنما كل ذلك من حركات الجماعة الكالوكيين (!) الذين لا يكفون⁴⁷ عن محاربتنا سرًا وجهًا. فالبارئ تعالى ينصفنا منهم. هذه الوقائع التي تعيقنا عن المكاتبة للخلان. فلذلك نرجو منهم عن ذلك صفحا وسماحا. ثم نهدي البركة إلى محبة أخيك المقدسي ميخائيل المكرم وأهل بيته، وإلى كل المحبين. وباقى القول. حُرر في أواسط كانون الثاني سنة 1742 في عكة. //14v//

18. صورة مكتوب من المطران [صفرونيوس] المومأ⁴⁸ إليه

النعمة الإلهية تبارك على محبة ولدنا الروحي الشماس الكاتب المكرم. بارك الرب الإله عليه نفسًا وجسمًا، وأرشده إلى كل عمل صالح، أمين.

وبعده، المنهي لمحبتكم أنني كثير الشوق إليكم، ومكاتبتكم وصلثني وأوردت لكم الجواب، لكن البائن أشغلكم الدهر بمصائبه عن مكاتبتني، وربما لتفاقم الحزن المفرط الذي قد حكمت بركاد خالك المرحوم

46 M: بقوا

47 M: يكفوا

48 M: المومى

حنًا فخر، لأنَّ هذا الخبر قد أفضّل قلبنا عند الاستماع. وبالحقيقة إنَّ عمود كبير وركن أبناء الكنيسة الأرثوذكسيين كان ذاك المُنتجَح في كلِّ الديار المصريّة. لكن ماذا وكيف المُمكن نحزن الدهر كلّهُ عليه، ألا إنَّ بولص العظيم الصوت يصرخ علينا ألاّ على الراقيين كما يحزن بقيّة الناس الذين لا رجاء لهم؟ [1 تسالونيكية 4: 13] وكفى كلّ جواب لأنّ الذي صعدَ إلى السماء الثالثة لم يقرّر ذلك عبثًا، بل لعلِّمه نياح الراقيين وخلصهم من كآبة الجسد الكثيف الذي نحن مُرتبطون⁴⁹ به، وبلوغهم إلى نيل عربون الحياة الأبدية بعد الموت، أو عزّ إلينا ألاّ نحزن عليهم. وإنّ حزننا يكون كمقدار حزن الربِّ على صديقه العازر بدموع قليلة لا غير. ومثلّكم لا يفتقر إلى تذكرة مثل هذه الأقوال بما أنكم، منذ نعمة أظفاركم، قد تمهّرتُم بمُدارسَةِ الكتاب الإلهيِّ خصوصًا في خدمتكم لسيدنا البطريرك الجزيل الغبطة. لأنّ حطكم ظهر مغبوطًا من كلّ جهة، كالقائل طوباهم الذين يخدمون الطوباويين.

وإن سألتم عنّا، لله الحمد، طيِّبين بخير، ليلاً ونهارًا في مُراسدة أعداء الله الخارجين المُرتعشين. واصل إليكم //15r// الخوري عبد المسيح حامل الحروف رجل أرثوذكسيّ مُعتزّ، مهذَّب الوُحلا، تقّي السيرة، وقع في محنة، وتجرّم بمبلغ دراهم تحت أغراض مُضادّي الإيمان، والان قاصد فضلكم لُتُخرجوا له من طرف سيدنا البطريرك إسطاكيون ليجمع له صدقة من البلاد الأنطاكية. ولله دركُم إذا ما خاب قصده فيكم وباقي القول.

في آخر أيّار 1742 في عكة.

19. غيره أيضًا من المُشار إليه [صفرونيوس]

المُنهي لعلم محبّتكم هو أنّه في أبرك الأوقات وصلني مكتوبكم المُرسَل لي صحبة حامله أبروسيوس، وفرحنا لصحة سلامتكم واعتدال مزاج وجودكم، لا سيّما وعلى اقترابكم إلينا إلى بيروت. وقُلْتُ: يا ليت تُستقرّبون⁵⁰ الموضع وتقدّمون⁵¹ الخطوات إلينا لينفرج قلبي برؤيتكم من الكرب، ويبتهج مُرتكضًا بالطرب كليلة الهلال عند العرب. لأن طالت الفرقة الدافعة، ومضت الفؤاد الحرقّة الواقعة، ولم أزل أوعد القلب بالتلاق بمئة المُتعالى الخلاق.

وكنّت أود كثيرًا ملاقاتكم لكي أعزيكم أيضًا فمّا بإزاء فم على وفاة أخوالكم المُنتقلين، وهما حنّا ويعقوب المرحومين. ونرجو من الهمة النشيطة والفتنة الوقادة المُحيطة ألاّ تحزنوا عليهما كما تحزن باقي الناس الذين لا رجاء لهم [1 تسالونيكية 4: 13]. وبهذا كفاية لمثلّكم المُتأدِّبين منذ نعمة الأظفار، في درس الكتاب الإلهيِّ الليل والنهار.

ثمّ من مدّة جمعة جاء إلينا راهب يُسمّى سمعان طرابلسي، أخبرنا عن حاله أنّه انتزع من رقة بايسيوس السيناويّ، لكن فيما بعد جاءنا مكتوب من الخوري سلامة، الوكيل المُكرّم، يتضمّن الوعيد الشديد والتهديد الشديد على الشخص المذكور من سيدنا البطريرك //15v// لأجل أسباب مُوبة. ففحصناه ولم نجد من ذلك عنده شيئًا. المرّجُو أن تستعطوا خاطر سيدنا البطريرك الكليّ الغبطة عليه ليرجع الراهب لمحلّ خدمته، حذرًا لئلاّ يُصيبه عطب⁵² من الاضطهاد والشتات ههنا وهنا. وفي همّتكم البركة. وناهيك من مصيبة حامل مكتوبكم إلينا والعائل تكفيه الإشارة.

49 M: مرتبطين

50 M: تستقرّبوا

51 M: وتقدّموا

52 M: عطبًا

وباقى القول.
حُرِّرَ في أواسط تمّوز سنة 1742 في عكّة.

20. غيره أيضًا [من صفرونيوس]

بينما نحن موجودون في غمّ وحسرات من جهات عدّة، أعني لاضطراب الكنيسة المقدّسة وارتجاجها من هَجان المشاقين عليها في هذه البلاد الكثيرة القلق والاضطراب، ولأجل معيشتنا المُرّة بين الخارجين عن الإيمان المستقيم الذين غلظت قلوبهم وأعناقهم، وكالعجلة الحروثة كسروا نير المسيح وألقوه عنهم، وضمّوا أعناقهم لنير الدجال ضدّ المسيح الذي هو أسقف رومية أركون الكبرياء والحجرة الشيطانية. قولنا بينما نحن في مثل هذه الأحوال مُتعربين، وإذا بسفينة سعيدة الحمل أتت إلينا من بيروت وقد ساقطها إلينا أرياح المحبة، وهبّ في قلوبها نسيم الوداد الخالص. فلما بلغت الميناء العكّي استوضحت أنّها مُسبّبة لنا كلّ فرح، لأن فيها جاء إلينا القسّ يوسف مركّ المُتشرطن جديداً من قُدس سيّدنا البطريرك الأنطاكي كير سيلبسترس الكلّي الغبطة، مع الشمّاس سليمان ابن أخي الخوري سلامة مُحبّكم. فلا تسأل عن الفرح والتعزية العظمى التي حصلت لنا بمجيئها، لأنّ قلماً ومداداً لا يمكنهما [أن] يحصيا ذلك. ومنهما يُلغنا عن صحّة سلامتكم، وأنكم بمئة ربّنا طيّبين بخير ومُشاقين لمُكاتبتنا.

//16r// ومع هذا قد اقترنتم بزيعة ناموسية، فتزايد حينئذ ابتهاجنا لذلك، ودعينا لكم، وتحركنا للحين لتسفير هذا المكتوب إليكم، لكي أوّل نهنيكم بالفصح المجيد، خريسطوس انستي، سنين عديدة؛ ثمّ {ولنبارك لكم في زيجتكم، جعلها الله عليكم مباركة، ويعطيكم نسلًا صالحًا، وتتدفّق عليكم الخيرات الكثيرة، لتكونوا ملجأً وستراً للمحزونين، وعينًا للأعمى، وثوبًا للعراة، وتشبع النفوس الجائعة من مواثيقكم⁵³ وخيركم. فعليكم من الآن فصاعدًا المُثابرة على الصلوات وأعمال الفضائل والصدقة وبقية الفضائل الحميدة. ومثلكم لا يحتاج لتنبيه، وكفاكم نصائح الأب الأقدس سيّدنا البطريرك الكلّي الغبطة الذي نهدي لغبطته تقبيل الأيدي باحترام، والقسّ يوسف المذكور مع الشمّاس سليمان نجار يسلمان عليكم، ونهار تاريخه هما متوجّهان إلى بيروت ونحن مُكتئبون جدًّا لفرقتهم. فالمرجوّ لا تقطعوا⁵⁴ عنا إعلام سلامتكم وثُهدوا منّا البركة إلى كلّ المُحبّين أجمع، والبركة عليكم ثانيًا وثالثًا.
حُرِّرَ في 23 نيسان سنة 1743 في عكّة.

21. من الأب المطران [صفرونيوس] المُوما⁵⁵ إليه إلى السيّد البطريرك كير سيلبسترس الأنطاكي

إنّ الألسن الفصيحة والألباب البليغة والحاذة، لعمري، لا يمكنها بحسب الواجب أن تذيع وتخبر بعظم الاشتياق الذي لي نحو غبطة قداستكم الأبوية، ولا سيّما في أواخر الشهر الماضي من المكتوب الذي شرّقتُموني به صحبة موسى ثماري عند مروره على غبطتكم من دير صيدنايا المقدّس. وعند تلاوتي إيّاه، استوعب قلبي أفراحًا لا تُوصف، وتذكّرت الأيام القديمة والسنين الماضية، وكنت أتردّد بتلك

53 This part is also present in MS Greek Orthodox Diocese of Homs 37, on f. 24r.

54 M: تقطع

55 M: المومى

الكلمات الداوذية القائلة: مَنْ يعطيني أجنحة كالحمامة لأطير [مزامير 55: 6] واصلاً إليكم //16v// وأقبل تلك الراحة الأبوية وأستمد منها البركات القدسية؟

بل المأمول من قُدسكم أن طالما نحن موجودون في هذه الأطراف، ومكتنفون بزوايا الاضطهادات اليومية لا تبرحوا من أن تسألوا ضعفنا بالبركات والتشديدات الروحانية، لا سيما بالدعوات المُستجابة بما أن من الواضح أن صلواتكم هي مُتجَنِّحة القبول لدى الثالوث المغبوط لأجل أعراق جهاداتكم الصنديدية عن الأمانة القويمة الأرثوذكسية، وبالْحَقِيقَةُ إِنَّ صرامة الجهاد هي لأمر باهظ⁵⁶. كما من الاضطهاد الجزئي الطارئ علينا في هذا الطرف نتَحَقَّقُ شِدَّةَ الكَلْبِ الذي لم يبرح على غبطة قُدسكم الرسولي كُلِّ هذه المدة الذي من جهته أَصْحَبْتُم بِالْجِهَادِ أَثْناسيوس آخر وإغناطيوس، بل وبطرس وبولص آخر مزبئين ليس قطباً من أقطار الأرض بمفرده، بل كجبار سريع الجري في سيره قد شعثتم كافة الأمصار الرومية والشرقية، ثم والجنوبية مع الشمالية مُتَهَلِّلِينَ في جري سعيكم بقطع مسافات الأجرام المُدلهمة من الضلال الغربي البهيبي والنفاق الأثراكي الوحشي والغباوة البربرية. فذلكل تتمتعون بإكليل المُجازاة يوم نيل الجوائز السماوية.

ثم نهدي بواسطة نغمتكم القدسية أوفر السلام والبركات لحضرة الحاج باسيلوس، الكاتب المُكْرَم والولد الأكرم موسى الكاتب، وكلَّ المُختصين بخدمة غبطة قداستكم الكريمة. والمَرَجُّو من كَرَمِ هَمَّتكم عدم انقطاع المُكاتبة لأجل اطمئنان⁵⁷ خاطر على صَحة وجودكم الشريف، وارتشاف البركات من عين قُدسكم المنيف، وأطال الله تعالى بقاءكم.

تحريراً في 5 من شهر تشرين الثاني سنة 1741 مسيحية من أسكلة عكة. //17r//

22. صورة مكتوب آخر من قُدس الأب الأكرم كير صفرونيوس مطران عكة إلى قُدس البطريرك كير سيلبسترس الأنطاكي

بعد تقبيل الأيدي الكرام بفَرَطِ التوقير والاحترام، العبد قد ينهي لدى مولاه الرفيع الشأن بأن في أبرك الأوقات ورد إليه مكتوبكم الخطير. ولكن عند وصوله إليه كان يومئذ مُتَرَدِّداً خارجاً في القرى المحيطة بعكة، لأجل تعزية المسيحيين الأرثوذكسيين على هذه النوايا القادحة التي أَلَمَّتْ بهم هذا العام من طوارئ هذه الحوادث في حصار طبرية، والمخاوف والأراجيف المُتراكمَة الَّتِي استحوذَتْ على هذه البلاد كما لا يَخْفَى عن قُدسكم ذلك. ومن حضرة المَقْدِسِي فرح الصرّاف والمَقْدِسِي ميخائيل الكاتب المُكْرَمين، قد بلغكم كُلُّ شيء بالتصريح، لأجل ذلك جزافاً هو بأن نعيد الشرح ونقلق أَسْماعكم الهادئة بمثل هذه الأحاديث.

إنّما من جهتنا في الأمور العالمية قد صار لنا تلاف كُلِّي في تعطيل مدخول الأبرشية كُلِّها، لكثرة النهب وخراب وحرق القرى، لكن لا أبالي بالكَلْبَةِ عن هذه الأحوال، إنّما كان كُلُّ أَمَلنا في هذه الأمور أن ينحطم شأن أعداء الله المُنشقين، لأنهم كُلُّهم اختفوا في الأوكار لما كان الحرب والحصار، وبعد مرور ذلك خرجوا كالأفاعي من أوكارهم وابتدأوا أيضاً في اضطهاد الإيمان. فربُّنا يُبِيدهم من الأرض وَيَحَقِّقُ ذِكْرهم، لأنهم بيت ممر كما قال عنهم النبي.

وياً للعب كيف تراهم قَوِيَّون عند الحُكَّام والمشايخ، وفجورون في الاحتيالات الشيطانية، وعلى كُلِّ حال، إنّ أركون هذا العالم قد يوازرهم على تلاف أنفس الناس كُلِّ يوم بالهلاك الأبدي. وأمّا جماعتنا

56 M: باهض

57 M: اطمئنان

الأرثوذكسيون⁵⁸ هم بمئة الله تعالى الآن، مُنتبهين ولم يهلك منهم إلّا ابن الهلاك [يوحنا 17: 12] الذين لأجل أغراض خبيثة أو شرور يتحرّكون من تلقاء الحجرة //17v// للذهاب نحو المارقين أولئك. فلأجل هذه النوائب وما يشبهها قد نحتاج إلى موازنة صلواتكم المُقدّسة، لا لنا نحن، لا لنا بل لأجل سلامة الكنيسة وكفّ نهضات الهرطقة المُرتعشين عنها.

أما عن ذواتنا نحن، فلا يهْمنا بالكليّة. بل يا ليتنا نُماتُ كلَّ يوم كالغنم للذبح عن الرأي الأرثوذكسيّ، إنّما ليخلصوا أبناء جنسنا المسيحيّين هؤلاء الذين افترسهم العدوّ بحبائله. وقد يستبين لي صواباً أن تتفق غبطتكم مع الأورشليميّ والإسكندرّيّ والقسطنطينيّ الكليّ قدسهم، ويصير تدبير عالميّ يقيم ورفع كم نفر من أشبه هؤلاء القوم أعداء الله إلى النفي والسبيّ، وتغاروا كغيرة فنحاس وموسى والباس الغيور، لتملوا أيديكم بركة للرّب وليتأدّبوا البيّنة، لأنّ بغيّهم قد زاد جدّاً بالفجور الكليّ لا سيّما ههنا، لأنّ المُنشقين عندنا هم أشرّ من كافّة مُرتعشين هذه البلاد والأقاليم العربيّة.

والمرجوّ عدم المُواخذه بكثرة الكلام وباقي القول.

حُرّر في أوائل شهر كانون الثاني سنة 1743 مسيحيّة من أسكّة عكّة، إلى سنين عديدة تكونوا سالمين وتعيدوا هذه المواسم الإلهيّة بالفرح والسرور إلى أعوام كثيرة مديدة.

23. [من صفرونيوس إلى سيلبسترس]

قد بلغنا أنّ لسبب قولي لغبطتكم في المكتوب السالف إنّ عندي كتب ردّ على أعداء الله المُرتعشين، وإن شئتم لئُرسل لطرفكم الخطير منها قد حصل عند قدسكم غيظاً⁵⁹ علينا لذلك، واحتسبتم قولنا هذا افتخاراً منا. فعجبنا⁶⁰ لذلك كون لم يخامر فكري مثل هذا الوهم أصلاً، كما يعلم فاحص القلوب والكليّ⁶⁰. فلذلك نرجوكم العفو والصفح عما صدر منا بغير معرفة، والدعاء. //18r//

24. [من صفرونيوس إلى سيلبسترس]

وبعده المعروف على جناب قدسكم السعيد أنّي، قبل هذا المكتوب، أرسلت لغبطتكم مكتوبين ولم يرتدّ عليّ جواب لعدم استحقاقي لذلك. وأنا في جهاد عظيم ليس لأجل عدم مكاتيب غبطتكم إليّ فقط، لكنّي حذرٌ⁶¹ الحذر الكليّ لئلاّ يكون خاطركم ثقيلًا عليّ من جهة ما، أو من خبر كاذب بلغكم إيّاه أحد الحساد، لا سيّما كان كلّ قصدي في هذا القرب أن أحضر لدمشق ليس لسبب آخر إلّا لتقبيل أيديكم الكريمة، لكن صار لي عائق أعاقني عن ذلك.

⁵⁸ M: الأرثوذكسيين

⁵⁹ M: غيضا

⁶⁰ M: الكلا

⁶¹ M: حذراً

وقد حضر لعندي لِعَكة، في يوم أحد ثوما، أولادكم الروحانيون⁶² القس يوسف مرك الطرابلسي صحبة الشماس سليمان نجار وأناس⁶³ كثير⁶⁴ بمجيهما⁶⁵ إلينا، وارتشفنا منهما أخبار صحة مزاجكم الكريم. وبعد ما أقاما عندنا كم يوم، توجّها بِدُعائكم إلى بلادهم سالمين.

وإن سألتم عن أحوال هذه البلاد، فهي لم تزل مُضطربة من أمواج وزوابع المذهب السيئ البابوي. إنّما لله الحمد كلّ فريق استقرّ على جِدة. ومن حين صلواتكم المقدّسة أدركتُنا، ما عاد أحد الأرثوذكسيين أصحابنا زاغ عن الصواب، ولا من الزائغين أحد ارتجع إلينا. إنّما لم يبرحوا كلّ حين يمتحنوننا هم باعتراضات وسؤالات مُنتصرة لرئاسة أركون الظلام، كوكب الصبح المُتكلّم بالتجديف على العليّ. فنطلب من قُدسكم أن تمدّونا بالمساعدة بطلباتكم الغير مردودة عند الله، لنلّا نفتخر أعداء الله وكنيستة علينا. وليس قُصدنا في كلّ حين إلّا دعائكم المُقدّس والافتقاد بمكاتيب غبطكم //18v// لتكون لنا سلوة في الأحران.

ثمّ واصل لقُدسكم مع حامل أحرف العبوديّة زنبيل داخله سمك مُدخّن. تَصِلُكم بالخير وتقبلوها منّا كما قبِلَ الربّ فلسّي الأرملة.

نُهدي السلام بواسطة فمكم إلى المُختصّين بخدمتكم، وإلى اليازيجي الشماس موسى وللشماس ثوما المُكرّمين. ودام لكم البقاء. حُرّر في أواخر نيسان سنة 1743، في عكا.

25. [من صفرونيوس]

"إن كان الأموات، أقول كما قال واحد من الشعراء، في القبر يلبسون ثوب النسيان، لكن أنا هناك لستُ أنسى صديقي". وما أعلم يا صاح لمن يستحقّ يُقال هذا الشعر من أشيلافس الجبّار إلى بطركلس صديقه، أو منّي أنا إليكم. لأنّ محبّتي إليكم كثيرة هي، كما هو مُحقّق عندكم، تفوق كلّ محبة منذ البدء إلى هذا الزمان، وبغير يمين مغروسة في أعماق قلبنا. وهي عندنا أعظم من كنوز الملك كيرس الذائع الصيت. هذا وإن صدّقت سكوت يسير، لا تظنّ أن هو فعل كسل أو نسيان محبة، وليس خافٍ عنكم انقطاع الطريق. وكيف يمكن المحبة القديمة تُنسى؟ نحن، كما قلنا أعلاه، إذا اتفق ووصلنا ليس إلى أقطار المسكونة فقط، بل أجسر وأقول، حتّى إلى النّـدار< ليس أنسى⁶⁶ محبّتكم، لكن دائماً أحفظها غير مُفترقة من بالي، حتّى ولا نسيان ولا مكان ولا سنين ولا بعد أزمنة قادرة أن تمحها من كتاب عقلنا. محبّتكم هي بان. محبّتكم هي شوقنا. كلّ فرحي وكلّ سروري هي محبّتكم. لأجل هذا أفرح، ومن فرحي أصبر من شيء إلى شيء، شاكر الربّ الذي أوهبني مُحبّاً مثل حضرّتكم.

ولكن أنا هكذا ماذا أصابني يا صاح فرح أزيد من فرح الأوّل، سمعْتُ صوتاً بغتة مثل طير الإله قد وصل إليّ ونعمّ بنعمة لذيذة بفرحكم المُضطرب الصيت ليس يمكنها أن تكذب⁶⁷ //20r//

62 M: الروحانيين

63 M: واناسا

64 M: كثيرًا

65 M: بمجيهما

66 M: انسا

67 The end is missing. According to the catchword, the next page, which is missing, should have started with لاننا.

26. [من يوسف مرك، ناقص البداية]

بديع وألفاظ مُنقَّحة وغريبة وقوافٍ كلّها نخب. فله در نفثات فيك فما أعذبها، وذكاوة ذهنك فما أذكى لهبها. إلّا أنّك يا حبيب قد أسرُفتُ في مدحك لي حتّى قد أشرفتُ منك على ذروة الهجاء، أنا منه على شفا جُرفٍ هاد. لأنّك أركبتني في غير سرجي. ولكن كما أظنّ خمر محبّتك لي أسكرتك حتّى فُتّ معي الحدود، وفلّدتني بأشرف العقود. وأنا أستغفر الله من قوله تعالى: الويل لكم إذا قال الناس فيكم قولاً حسناً [لوقا 6: 26].

أمّا إن سألتم عن أحوال سيّدنا الكلّيّ الغبطة، لله الحمد أشغاله بهذه البلاد كلّها تمّت، وأمّس تاريخه حضرة غريغوري بك المُحترم أخبره أنّه يبعثه ثالث عيد نياح السيّدة وكماله القول. الداعي لكم المُحبّ القديم الخوري يوسف مرك. في 29 تمّوز 1748.

27. [من يوسف مرك]

إلى جناب منّ بالروح ولدي⁶⁸ بل شقيقي وفلذ كبدي، الشّمس موسى⁶⁹ المُكرّم، بارك الربّ الإله عليه وعلى حريمه وولده وسائر تصرّفاتِه أتمّ البركات الرسوليّة، آمين.

فلما طال الانتظار إلى استماع أخباركم، واضطرم سعيّر شوق⁷⁰ القلب إلى مُشاهدة رسم بنانكم، لم يصدّني فرط الأشغال والأفكار عن مُكاتبتكم والسؤال عن خاطركم، بل وشرعْتُ أهنّكم بورود هذا العيد المجيد والفصح الجديد المُسفر عن صبح مُحيا قيامة المسيح وانبعائه الصحيح. فلا //20v// زلّتم لأمثال أمثاله عاندين، ولأعدانكم كاندين، وبالفضائل السنّيّة ناميين وناجين. جعل الله هذا العيد القادم عليكم سعيداً⁷¹ ولا زلّتم تتلقّون أمثال أمثاله في كلّ عيش رغيد بعمر مديد، آمين.

أمّا من جهة المطبعة التي باشرنا بنقش أحرفها بمئة الله تعالى، قبل الفصح المجيد، يخلص نقش الحديد وبعده نُبائير بدقّ النحاسات، وبمئة الساكن في السموات تطلع أنسب المطبوعات، فما يعوزنا سوى تيسير البارئ بنصدها بمكانٍ هادٍ، والاجتماع بكم وتوفيق مُساكنتكم.

أبو براش قد ألبسه الخذلان ثيابه، ونفض عليه الأدبار ترابه، ونبّذه الإقبال وراء ظهره، ونظر إليه الزمان بمؤخّر عينه، وهو بالقسطنطينيّة أخص من النمر بكرمان، وأصْبَح من الورد في شهر رمضان، وأثقل من الفرو في حزيران، هكذا أكون مصارع البغي والعدوان وحصائد النّهت والبهتان.

أهدوا منّي البركة إلى ولدكم ومن عندكم، وإلى من يسأل عنّا. وأمّا مخانيل الراهب تلميذكم يسلم عليكم والبركة تكون أبداً حالة عليكم والدعاء.

خُرّر نهار الأحد الخامس من الصوم المُقدّس من بكورشنت سنة 1749. //21r//

68 M: Above the line.

69 M: Above the line.

70 M: الشوق

71 M: سعيد

28. [من يوسف مرك]

إلى حضرة فخر الأولاد الروحانيين وعين الأحباب الأكرمين، الشَّماس موسى الأكرم، بارك الربّ الإله عليه وعلى حريمه وسائر تصرُّفاته أتمّ البركات السمويّة، أمين.

المنهي هو أنّه سابقًا ولاحقًا أرسلنا إليكم مكاتيب من حلب ومن إستانبول، وعرفناكم أنّ مكاتيبكم المرسولة عن يد الخوري ميخائيل الأدنى ما وصلتْ هي، ولا غَدْنَا رأينا غيرَها من جنابكم.

وقد وصلنا بالسلامة إلى مدينة بوكريشت، وحظينا بتقيل أيدي سيّدنا البطريرك الكليّ الغبطة، ورأينا قُدسه مُباثِر في نقش أحرف للمطبعة غير تلك الأحرف أرفع منها عن يد جرجس أبو شعر ورفيقه. وقبل تاريخه، تَمَّموا طبع الرسالة المرسولة من مجمع القسطنطينيّة. وأنا عملتُ لها فاتحة حَمْدَلَة، واعتزّزْتُ عنهم في عدم الإملاء كما أمرني سيّدنا البطريرك الكليّ الغبطة. ولَمَّا تَمَّموها أبطلوا المطبعة.

وبتاريخه، تَمَّموا نقش الأحرف الجديدة، وابتدوا في سكِّها، ربَّما على الصوم الكبير تدور.

وأما أنا، في أوّل صوم الميلاد، أرسلني سيّدنا إلى مدرسة الغراماتيكيّ اليونانيّ لأكون رفقة الشماس برثانيوس الأدنى أتعلّم، وأرسلَ لي أربعة أولاد ولاهية من الذين يُقرِّهم أخوكم بطرس لأقرِّهم الجروميّة العربيّة. نسألُكم الدعاء.

وسيّدنا البطريرك الكليّ الغبطة، لله الحمد بغاية الصخّة، وله في تلك البلاد جاه عظيم، والجميع، سيّما الأعيان، ما ينقطعون من التردّد إلى مكانه، رجال ونساء، لينتاركو من قداسته، ويستميحوا دعاءه. وأما محبّة حضرة البك المُحترم له، حفظه الله تعالى، لا تُقدَّر كميّتها. وفي كافّة الأحاد والأعياد المُميّزة الأنافل [!]، يدعوهُ ليقُدّس له ويحضر قدّاسه. هذا ما رأيناه.

وقبل دخولي إلى بوكريشت، كان دُفق على المدينة المذكورة جَراد لا تُقدَّر كميّتها. فالتَمَسَ حضرة الكير المُحترم من سيّدنا المُؤمّا⁷² إليه ليصلّي على ماء، وينضح على المكان الذي يوجد فيه الجراد. فلمّا صلّى طرد بصلاته جميع⁷³ الطيار والزحاف من كلّ مكان، بعدما كان الطيار يغطّي عين الشمس والزحاف يتعرّم على الأرض مقدار ذراع واحد كما أخبروني. واستمرّ بطرده من مكان إلى مكان، ومن قرية إلى قرية، مقدار شهر. لما رأوا هذا العجب أهالي تلك البلاد ازدادت أمانتهم به. هذا ما عندنا من الأخبار أخبرناكم بها.

الشَّماس برثانيوس يُقرّكم مزيد السلام، ويسأل خاطرُكم الكريم، ومُمتلئ أمرُكم بمحبّة أخيك بطرس المتّصلة منكم إليه ومن عدم كتابته لكم مكتوبًا وخجله منكم شاركني بهذا المكتوب الخ.

خُزّر في 21 تشرين الثاني، دخول السيّدة إلى الهيكل – كلّ سنة وأنتم سالمون – سنة 1747، من بوكريشت. //21v//

29. [من يوسف مرك]

إلى جناب فخر الأبناء الأكرمين وعين الأحياء الصادقين، عزيزي وروحي الشَّماس موسى الأكرم، بارك الربّ الإله عليه وعلى حرمة وأولاده وسائر تصرُّفاته أتمّ البركات السماويّة، أمين.

المنهي هو أنّه بينما أنا ملُتّه بالادعية الصالحة الناطق بها كلّ عضو وجارحة إلّا وقد وفد إليّ مكتوبكم الجليل الواجب التقبيل والتبجيل، فقرّأته وفهمته وحمدتُ الله تعالى على صحّة مزاجكم، وبقي

72 M: المومي

73 M: جميعه

معلومنا وصول السمك إليكم وإلى قُدُس سَيِّدِنَا البطريرك الكَلِّي الغبطة، فُقِّدُسُهُ ما عَرَّفَنِي بوصوله. فُلَيْكُنْ سَالِمًا. وقد واصلتُني الرزمة، فأوصلتُ لمطران صيدا الرسول له ومكتوبه وقرأته عليه وأفهمته مضمونه. والمذكور بتاريخه مريض، لكنه أتجه للعافية، وكما لاح لي له خاطر بالمجيء إلى عندكم لأجل الاجتماع بقُدُس البطريرك الطوبوي.

ثمَّ قد وصلني ما تفضَّلتم به وهو زوج المناشف. فيا أخي وابني الحبيب، أنت سابقًا ولاحقًا مُتَفَضِّل عليّ، وأنا ما كان يسمح لي الزمان ولا يمكنني أكافيك، ولا لي قدرة إلا بالدعاء والذكران بالقداسات التي أسأل الله أن يقبلها مِنِّي.

وكنْتُ أومل اجتماعكم كما وعدتموني في موسم الحرير، لا سيَّما أنَّ الموسم السنة، كما يقولون، طَيِّب. فالآن عرفتموني أَنَّهُ صار لكم إلزام، ورجعتم إلى المكتب الذي أسأل الله تعالى أن يخلصني وإياكم منه ويبدله في غير مكسب، فقد قطعْتُ الرجاء والتهب الشوق في الحشا.

وكذلك واصلتُني الكر مسوَّية وبقي معلومي ثمنها جزاكم الله عَنَّا خيرًا، ووُفِّقْتُمْ ضيْرًا، ونستكثر خيركم عن المناشف، فلا زلُّم مُتَفَضِّلِينَ على المُحِبِّين والداعين.

وسابقًا وصلني مكتوبكم، وضمنه مكتوب لصهركم المقدسي جرجس أرسلناه له. كذلك مكتوب أخيك عبده أرسلناه عن يد قريبنا حنَّا بسترس. جاءني مكتوب من الخوري مسعد من مصر يطلب مِنِّي جريدة أسماء البطارقة الذين تسمَّوا كرسِي أنطاكية، من أوَّل بطريرك لتاريخه، لأنَّه مبتدئ في تأليف تاريخ عجيب جدًّا. فالمرجُو تبحثوا لنا عن المطلوب، لأنَّه لا بدَّ يوجد عندكم، واكتبوه وأرسلوه لنا للرسله له. وعن قريب، يجيني منه مجموع في شرف معموديتنا وإبطال معمودية الإفرنج، أرسله إليه البطريرك الإسكندريّ من القسطنطينية //22r// باللغة اليونانية، وهو ترجمها إلى العربية ومادحها كثير [!]⁷⁴ ويرسل غيرها نعرفهم عنه رار [!]⁷⁵. قضى هذا الغرض وباقي القول والسلامات إلخ.

حُرِّرَ يوم الخميس الصعود سنة 1754. فلا زال سعدكم في صعود وضدكم في خُفُص وخمود. وبتاريخه مُتَوَجِّه إليكم قريبًا وحبيبنا كير يور غاكي يوحشنا ويأنسكم. وقد جدَّد مَضُض جرح فراقكم فامرَحوا وانشرَحوا باجتماعه، ربَّنَا يبيقيكم وإياه ويجمعكم عليه في خير وسلامة.

سنة 1754 //23v//

30. صورة مكتوب من بعض مكاتبات الخَلِّ النبيل المقدسي خليل ابن الصباغ الشامي ذي الأصل

إلى جناب حضرة الأخ الوحيد والخلِّ الفريد، الشَّمَّاس موسى المُكْرَم، دام بقاءه ومن كلِّ سوء نَجَاه. غبَّ التحية والسلام بجزيل الإفراط مع كثرة الأشواق الدائمة التي لا تُحاط لمُشاهدة طلعنكم واستماع أخبار سلامتكم البهية، لا زالتُ بعون الله وحرصته مَحْمِيَّة.

وإلى غير ذلك، لا يخفاكم أمر المصيبة العظيمة التي دهمَّتْنا بضياح المركب العظيم المشحون من كافة البضائع، والمُفْعَم من جميع المنافع، وغرقه عند إيصاله المينى، الذي صار سببًا لأتاعب الحاضرين فيه والغائبين عنه، أعني به انتقال المرحوم خالكم المُطَوَّب الذكر، الحَسَنُ الثَّناء، إلياس فخر، لأنَّه شابه بسنَّه المركب العظيم المُتَرَّعة فيه كافة الخيرات وأصناف العلوم وجزيل المنافع الجسيمة من الجواهر الثمينة التي لن يساويها شيء في القيمة.

74 The word is partially lost because of a wrong cut during the restoration of the manuscript.

75 Idem.

هذا المغبوط من الله، بأفعاله وأقواله، الذي شابه المُعلِّمين الإلهيين والآباء القديسين في سيرته وسريرته، وضاهى إيلياس في غيرته وحرارته، قد أفقدنا الزمان بانتقاله وأزعجنا بانفصاله. فبِحَيْفٍ عليه مدى الزمان، وبِأَسْفاٍ عليه بِنُطْأُلِ الأوان. لأنَّه كان شجرة مغروسة في بيت الله يأكل من أثمارها سائر المازين، ويقطف من بالغ عنقودها كافة المسيحيين.

قد كان فريد عصره، ووحيداً في فخره. فاق سالفه باتعابه وحكمته، وأيد الأقطار المشرقية بأقواله وحسن سيرته، وزين كنيسة المسيح في أعرافه وأتعابه وعظاته وجميل مؤلفاته. فطوباه وسعيدا ما له من الذخيرة الصالحة المُخبَّأة، الذي نحوه قال الرسول الإلهي بأنَّه أكمل سعيه، وحفظ إيمانه، وسار ليأخذ جزاءه من ذلك الحاكم العدل [2 تيموثيوس 4: 7-8] مع بقية محبيه من الأكلة الغير الفانية [1 كورنثوس 9: 25] في ذلك اليوم الرهيب، ليشهر فضله ويزيد شرفه ويوضح فخره بتلك اللذة التي لا تزول، والمسار التي لا تحول. ولكن بما أنَّ الحكيم يقول: الصديق إذا مات خَلَفَ تَأْسُفاً عليه [أمثال 11: 3]، ونحن لهذا متأسفون. لأنَّه بعد ارتقائه لم يظهر لنا أليشع تلميذه كما فعل ذاك وقتاً ما. فنسأل الإله الذي اختاره من كنيسته بأن يُظهر لنا خليفته بارسال الروح الذي كان عليه، ليكون تعزية به للشعوب. ولكن رجاءنا به سبحانه بأنَّه لا يهمل شعبه ولا يخلف بوعد كنيسته، أنه يجعلكم خليفة له في أعرافه وأتعابه بميِّه وكرمه. وأنتم حياتكم تكن باقية. وربنا يعوضنا جميعاً عن فرقته، لأنَّ من طبعه الجود والكرم، وهو قادر أن يُقيم من الحجارة أولاداً لإبراهيم [متى 3: 9].

فانظر يا أخي إلى زماننا هذا، الذي أزه فيه هذان المُعلِّمان الجليلان أفسرنا تيوس المُطوَّب الذكر والمرحوم خالكم العظيم الاسم والثناء، وفيه قد مرَّ عليهما المنون وشربا فيه كأس الجمام. فنسأله تعالى يغمرهما برحمته ويرتّبهما بزمرة، أمين. <وب> اقي الكلام.

في سنة 1758 //24r//

31. [من ديمتر أخو خليل صباغ]

إلى جناب حضرة الأخ الأعزَّ المظنون به جلاً صادقاً، الشَّماس موسى المُكرَّم، حَفَظَهُ اللهُ تعالى. غِبَّ إبلاغ تحيات وافية وتسليمات صافية لتلك الذات المأنوسة لا زالت من الأسواء محروسة، وإن تفضّلتم وعن خليلكم الباقي سألتكم، فهو بمئة الله تعالى وبركة دعاكم ودعاء وصلوات ذاك الطوبان الجزيل الغبطة بخير وسلام، غير أنَّ أحواله ما خفت جنابكم بهذه المدّة، وتغرّبه إلى إزمروني، وما لقيه من مُكابدة الأهوال ومخاوف جمّة من مخاوف البحر بمخاطر الموت وبعده حصوله في البلدة المذكورة المضروبة بمصيبة الغلاء الشديد، ولم يزل لتاريخه. وغير ذلك حصوله في مصاعب شتى التي تُوجب انفصال روحه من جسمه وهي تغرّبه عن أوطانه، ومنع مشاهدته جُلَّانه وتغرّبه من مُجالسة أصدقائه⁷⁶ وأخذانه، وانصرافه عنهم وانقطاع عنه رسائلهم. ولن يكفي هذا، بل الخلان الذي كان يرجو دوام صحبتهم وتزايّد حرارة مودّتهم، قد سلب منها وبقي خائباً من الأصدقاء البعيدين والقريبين، ومن قدمت محبتهم والحديثين. ففي هذه الحالات التي لحقت، والمصائب التي شملت، كيف ترى بعدها يكون حاله؟ فالعدو حين رأى حاله رثى له، وخلّاه ما أحد منهم صفاً له. فمثل أخوتكم⁷⁷ كان يحدث عنها أن محبتكم مستديمة، وعلى حالي القرب والبعد مستقيمة. ولم يشعر بأن محبتكم يكون فروغها قبل الغير، وذلك أنه حين كان هذا المُحبِّ في بيروت مُقيماً، وبلغه قدوم خوتكم إلى أوطانكم من الغير، ونظر كتبكم مُتصلة إلى الغريب والقريب،

76 M: اصدقاء

77 M: خوتكم

أخذة العجب من هذا، فكتب لكم كتابين يذكركم بالود القديم، وينبيه حرارة المحبة التي خدمت عنكم، فلم يأتيه ولا منكم يسير الخطاب، مع أنكم تفهمون قصده دوام صحتكم وخلود سلامتكم، ولكي يحيط علماً عن صحة مزاجكم وعن سلامة السيد الكلبي الطوبى. ثم لثخبروه كيف فعلتم بالتمسك الذي أرسله إليكم ضمن كتبكم إلى محروسة القسطنطينية. فمن هذه المذكورات وبسببها، كتب لكم وانتظر جوابكم لا بقصد آخر.

لأنه حيف على أسوار عظيمة مبنية من المحبة تُهدم بوقت يسير وتُنقض⁷⁸ بالآلة التكسير. لأن ظنه في بُعد مسافته وبوجود الحجاب الذي منع مشاهدته أن إذا الإخوان انتهى ما عندهم، فعندكم لا ينتهي وانصرف ما عندهم //24v// فعندكم لا ينصرف. ولكن المرء في كل وقت لا ينال ما قد يروم، وتجري الرياح بما لا تشتهي السفن، لزم الأمر أنه حرّر لحوّركم هذه الحروف ليكون إذ بقي شيء من المحبة ولو شرارة يقدّها ويعملها لهيباً مشتعلة بالمحبة، كما كانت، وإن لم يكن بقي ولا أثر يسير، فلن يحصل في تكليفكم في جوابه مشقة جزية. ولكن الرجاء بجلوه سبحانه وتعالى رجوع اللقاء.

وإن يكن لذنب جرى ومنع مكاتيبكم، فلا يُعتبر بما أنّه بشر – فسبحان من هو تعالى المُنزّه عن الخل والزلل – فتعزّفه به كي يخصم ذاته بذاته. فيكفي عذابه من الزمان بهذه النعوت المرقومة أعلاه التي أصابته. لأنّه قط لم توجد في جسم بشري ويستديم حياً. لأنّ نعيم العالم وسروره هي مشاهدة الأحباب، دوام مُجالستهم، سماع لذيذ مُسامرتهم، وإذا بعدوا اتّصال رسالاتهم، فهي بعينها قد تغزّب عنها هذا الأخ وتُعزّي منها هذا الخلّ، وسلبت عنه هذه المسرات. فمن حيث أن ذلك كذلك، فما كان يجب بحوّركم أن تكونوا مع الزمان عليه.

القصد من همة الأخ ألا تخرجوا هذا المُحب من خاطركم الشريف باتّصال مُشرفاتكم عن يد جناب خالك المكرم، أم إن كان أحداً مُحبّ لحوّركم في القسطنطينية ترسلوها له وتحثّه بإرسالها إليه، لأنّه كثير الظمأ إلى ذاك الماء العذب، وثخبروه عن أحوالكم وعن أحوال دمشق وعن المسيحيين، وكيف سلوكهم مع قُدس حضرة الوكيل، وكذلك عن أخبار الكلبي الغبطة لأنّه بلغني أنه توجه إلى البغدان، ولست أعلم إن يكن صدقاً أم خلافاً⁷⁹. كذلك تخبروني عن التمسك الذي أرسلته إليكم، إن كنتم أخذتموه من الشّماس سيميون، أم باقى عنده، وإن يكن ما دفعه لكم يرسلون⁸⁰ لي التمسك عن يد جناب خالك المُحترم.

وبلّغوا منّي جزيل السلام لحضرة أخيك المكرم سي ميخائيل، وإلى كافة المُحبّين والخَلان ومن يسأل عنا. والله تعالى يحفظكم.

الداعي لكم الحاج ديمتر أخي خليل صباغ.

حرّر في 13 شهر نيسان جمعة الكبيرة – حبيتم لأمثالها – من إزمير سنة 1747. //25r//

32. [من أنثاسيوس الدمشقي]

النعمة الإلهية والبركة السماوية تكونان حالّتين على نفس وجسد من تفرّد بحُسن الخصال وتوحّد بأنواع الكمال، الشيخ الفاضل الخبير والمُعَلِّم الكامل التحرير، ذي الشَّيْم الحميدة والأخلاق الرضوية السعيدة، الوالد المكرم الجليل سي موسى المُفخَّم الأثيل، بارك الربّ الإله عليه وعلى أهالي منزله ومن ينتمي إليه باتّام البركات السماوية، وأسبل عليه سُدُل الوقاية الربّانية، وكلاه من كلّ النوائب والمحن السماوية

78 M: تنقض

79 M: خلافاً

80 M: يرسلوا

والأرضيّة، وأجزل لديه إنعامه الفائقة الإلهيّة، بشفاعه سيّدتنا والدة الإله البتول النقيّة، وجميع قديسيه تعالى وأصفيائه الذين فازوا بذروة الرتب الفردوسيّة، أمين.

عَبَّ إهداء البركات اللاتقة والأدعية القلبية الفائقة، مع إبلاغ كثرة الأشواق الغزيرة الوافرة وعظم الاتواق الكثيرة الفاخرة، إلى مُشاهدة طلعتكم الزاهرة وسماع لذيذ ألفاظكم الباهرة،

المنهي لسامي جنابكم أنّه بينما نحن متلهّفون لاستماع إعلام صحتكم السارّة ومترقّبون ورود رسالة منكم تطمئننا على محبتكم الباردة، ففي وقت أسنى وساعة حُسنى، وفد إليّ طرس مودتكم الجليل المُستوجب التكريم والتبجيل الذي هو عن طريق البرّ، وبعده وصلني أيضًا مکتوبكم الآخر المُرسَل قبله عن طريق البحر، فسررتُ بعذوبة دُرر مباتيهما ومعانيهما، وارتحتُ من الفكر والقلق اللذين كنت أعانيهما، إذ قد طمّنتاني على صحتكم المَرغوبة، وأنبياني بدوام سلامتكم وعافيتكم المطلوبة، وأطرباني بما حوينا من عذب ألفاظهما الدرّيّة المحبوبة، فرفعتُ يدي الضراعة والابتهال إلى المُنفرد بعظم الجلال المُتعال، ملتئمًا من جوده الشامل العميم، وكرّمه السابل الجسيم، أن يديم لي محبتكم زمانًا مديدًا، ويفسح بأجلكم دهرًا مزيدًا، ولا يسوني بجنابكم ما تعاقب المَلوان وشعشع النيران.

ولكن من حيث أنّ الكآبة هي شقيقة اللذة، وأينما ذهبتُ فإنّها تسارع مُحاضرة معها، فقد طرقتني أنا أيضًا هذه الغمّة ولم تغادرُ حُبوري أن ينتهي إلى الغاية (ولئن كان ليس له حدٌ ولا غاية)، إذ قد أخبرتموني بما أنتم به من الأكدار وما حاق بكم من صروف الدهر الغدار بوفاة الأخ الجليل عمّن المقدسيّ ميخائيل، وليس أنّ كربي وغمّي لفقدّه إذ كان، لعمري، لم يُفقد بل وُجد، كونه ارتحل من الأتراح إلى الأفراح، وانتقل من الأنصاب //25v// والأوصاب إلى الأطراب والأطناب، إنّما كربي هو لغمّكم وحزني لاكتئابكم، لأنكم ولئن كنتم موقنين بذلك كاملنا إلّا أنّ الطبيعة لا بدّ ما تطلب حقّها. فزجرو⁸¹ محبتكم أن لا تطلقوا لها العنان، بل قديموا لجلاله تعالى الشكر مدى الممان، واحمدوه بالفؤاد واللسان، على ما صنع مع المرحوم من الإحسان لسابق علمه أن ثمّ له أفضل من هنا.

فنسأله تعالى، الذي بيده نسمة كلّ، أن يربّب نفسه مع الآباء القديسين وينّحه في أقداره السرمديّة مع الأبرار والفانزين في جنّات النعيم وأحضان أب الآباء إبراهيم. وأمّا أنتم، فيسَلِّم لنا حياتكم ويطيل بقاءكم ويفرحنا بسلامتكم ولا يسوّنا بكم، ويُنذّي التهاب فؤادكم بندا تعزيته الإلهيّة، ويمنحكم نعمة الصبر الكليّة، ويجعلها خاتمة المصائب وعاقبة النوائب، بما أنّه سميع مجيب، وليس يخيب مُستجيب.

ثمّ أعلم محبتكم أنّ المكتوب الذي تفضّلتم به عن يد والدنا، باسم الجزيل القداسة، قد وصلنا وأثرنا أن نتّم قصدا ونذهب للثمّ أنامله الطاهرة، فلم يدعنا الآباء الأفاضل أوّلًا لزيادة ودادهم لنا، ثانيًا لوفور احتياجهم إلينا. ومع ذلك وعدونا أن يكملوا إرادتنا ووصّوا فينا كبر أنثيموس الجزيل طهره. والمذكور أيضًا وعدنا كوعدهم واستقام في أنّه يبذل معنا كلّ جدّه وجهده، وزعم: إن لم أقمّ لك بوعدِي، فانطلق حيث شئت. فلذلك رضخْتُ لكلّامهم كونهم ترجّوني بذلك بنوع الرجاء، وحفظتُ المكتوب المزبور عندي إلى محلة. فأرجوه تعالى بدعاكم يقدّم ما فيه الخير.

ثمّ لا يخفاكم قبل تاريخه بنعمة الروح الكليّ قدسه، المانح المواهب قد ارتقيت إلى درجة الكهنوت السامية الشرف داخل هيكل القيامة المقدّسة الكليّ الوفار. وأنا مُقيم لحضرتكم على وظيفة الدعاء كالواجب.

ثمّ إن سألتم عن أحوالي، فإنّي بصحة من نِعَم العالي. دامتُ شاملة محبتكم مدى الأيّام والليالي. ثمّ من خصوص الأخبار بهذا الطرف كثيرة، ولكنّها ليست أكيدة كلّها، إنّما ما تأكّد منها هو أنّه في أوّل الصوم المُقدّس حضر الحيّ [!] آخر اسمه يواني إلى المُتملّكة، وحصل له إكرام جزيل من أكابر المملكة ودوي الرتب العالية بولائم //26r// واحتفال كليّ، وكان دخوله بموكب عظيم جدًّا كالمُلوّك وأخذ سرايا

بالأجرة وقصر بقا⁸² وصار الاتفاق فيما بين الفريقين أن تدفع الدولة العليّة كلّ سنة مائة كيس دراهم، وما دام ذلك واصل فالصلح موجود، ومتى انقطع فيتجدد الحرب. والآن حاصلة عداوة وبغضة عظيمة فيما بين جنس الروم والمسكوب كما عاينّا: أوّلاً كونه ما عمل ولا مُفيدة واحدة سوى خراب المسيحيين وأخذ أموالهم، وثانيًا أنّه صار عنده فساد فظيع كالأمم، ولكن ما نعلم إن ذلك أكيد أم لا. وما عدا ذلك فالأحوال الآن هنالك هادئة راقية، والمسيحيون في رعاية عظيمة. وعلى موجب الكلام الشائع أن كلّما أخذه من البلاد دفعه إلى الدولة العليّة، ولم يبقَ معه سوى بلاد القرم. فرَبَّنَا يسمعنّا وإياكم خيرًا. هذا ما كان أبديّناه لجزيل مودتكم. ثمّ نهتكم بقيامة ربّنا وإلهنا ومخلصنا يسوع المسيح قائلين: خريستوس انستي سنؤكم عديدة وأيامكم نهية سعيدة، وتعيدون هذا العيد الشريف الفصح المنيف إلى أعوام مديدة مقرونة بالصحة والعافية والعيشة الرغيدة، أنتم وأنجالكم المحروسين ومن يلود بكم وتودون، وكلّ عام وأنتم طيّبون.

خُرّر في 12 شهر نيسان 1776.

ولا بدّ علّمتم بمن صار بطريكرًا على كرسي أورشليم المقدّسة، وهو كير أفرام يوس الجزيل القداسة والمذكور، ليس هو مثل المطوّبين الذكر السالفين، الذين كانوا قواعد البيعة بالفلسفة مثل خريسانثس وأفرام وغيرهم، ولكنّه ذو سيرة صالحة جدًّا بالصوم والصلوة والتّقشّف، مُحبًّا للعلماء ومُكرّمًا إياهم. فرَبَّنَا يجعله طويل العمر وينفعنا بصلح دعاه.

وبعد السلامات، قدّس مُعلمنا كير أنثيمس يهديكم البركة والدعاء. ونعمة ربّنا يسوع المسيح تكون حالة عليكم والبركة تشملكم ثانيًا وثالثًا.

المُحبّ الداعي لجنايبكم بابا أنثاسيوس الدمشقي. //26v//

33. [من أنثاسيوس الدمشقي من القسطنطينيّة]

اللودعيّ البليغ الألمعيّ الفصيح، فخر الفحاء وثناءها، وذخر جَلِّق وثناءها، المُعلّم الأكمل صفةً وموصوفًا، موسى النوفليّ كنيّةً وتحقيقًا، بارك الربّ الإله عليه وعلى قرينته وأنجاله وكلّ من ينتمي إليه، وأسبغ جزيل إنعامه عليه، بشفاعه الملاذ المتواسيطة لديه وجميع أوليائه، آمين. غِبْ إهداء تحيات عاطرة يتضوّع شذاها، وتسليمات فاخرة شاع في الأنام نذاها، مع إبلاغ الأشواق الوافرة، والاتواق المتكاثرة إلى مُشاهدة طلعتكم البهيّة ورؤياكم السنيّة، حفّظها ربّ البريّة ووقاها من كلّ بليّة.

المعروض لدى يديّ بلاغتم أنّه في أسعد وقت وأحمد ساعة وصلّني طرس مودتكم، واتلذذتُ بجميل خطابكم، وإذ سرّرتُ بإعلام صحّتكم، قدّمتُ لجلاله تعالى الحمد الوافر على حُسن عافيتكم وطيب أوقاتكم. فأسأله — عزّ شأنه على الدوام — يُسمعنّي عنكم الأخبار المُسرّة المُنْزّهة عن كلّ سوء ومُضرة، ويحفظكم إلى أعوام مديدة شرفًا للكرسيّ الأنطاكيّ المقدّس، وبصرًا لأبناء الأرثوذكسيّين إخواني المُباركين، تعاهدكم الربّ الإله برأفته، وأسدلّ عليهم ظلّ عنايته.

ثمّ كلّ ما ذكرتم صار معلومي، لا سيّما من خصوص التشويش الصائر والاضطراب الحاصل بخصوص مُحبّ الاضطراب. والحال أنّه (كما تفيد بلاغتم) إن لم يمّت الإنسان دفعةً فما يحيى أبدًا، وإن لم يصدر الخراب فما يحدث العمار. ولكن هذه الأمور كلّها تعود إلى من هو فوق الكلّ، فنسأله يوقّها إلى أحسن مألٍ وخير حال.

⁸² The top part of the paper was cut off during the binding, so we are not sure of the reading of these words. We think وقصر is ومص and واحد lost its points.

ثمَّ لَا بَدَّ بَلَّغَكُمْ حضور المذكور إلى هذا الطرف في أواخر شهر آب، ومُواجهتي له والكلام الذي جرى بيني وبينه. ومن تلك الساعة ما واجهتهُ لأنَّه رجل مُعزَّر وجماعته أبلغ، وكلٌّ من تصرَّف معهم فسيحصل نظيرهم. ولكن لسْتُ أعتب عليه من قبل كلامه معي، لأنَّه إن كان مُستشيطاً غضباً على أهالي دمشق، ويطلب أوضاعهم، ويهجو خصالهم لكتابتهم في حقِّه عرضاً، فكم بالحري يكون عليّ إذ قد بلغه كلٌّ ما صنَرَ //27r// مَنِّي في حقِّه.

(ولكن بموجب الدِّمَّة من غير زيادة) قبل أن يحضر من شبو⁸³ وحَتَّى الآن لم أكف — بعونه تعالى — من مدح مناقبه. وقد كانت له نيَّة (كما تكلم بذلك قدام أناس ونقلوه لي) أن يادى إليّ بما هو معتاد بهذا الطرف كما تعلمون. ولكن الربَّ الذي يخالف مؤامرات الرؤساء لم يمكنه من مرامه، إذ كان عالماً أنَّ غيرتي هذه ليست إلَّا لكنيسة المقدَّسة، لكنَّه جعله أن يأتي من صافز ويلقيني في مغنى حضرة الأُمجد المُحترَّم — حِفْظَه الله — والتجنِّي الذي صدر منه بهذا الطرف والتقيد الذي قاومته به كثير قد شرحتُ بعضه إلى حضرة المقدسيِّ المُكرَّم — من هناك تقفون على جليته. ونؤمل أنَّه بواسطة همته وغيرته الحارَّة، يحصل خلاص إلى هذا الكرسيِّ المُقدَّس، وينعتق من العبوديَّة في زمانه، وربِّنا يعطيه يد معونة ويؤازره في كلِّ أموره.

أيضاً قد صار معلومي المكاتيب التي حضرت من طرابلس وأخبروكم بما كان عندهم من البطريرك. والحال أنَّ أحدهم أرسل مكتوباً إلى البطريرك وعرفه به (كما أخبرني بذلك بابانيكيفورس ابن الباشه) أنَّ أهل دمشق أرسلوا إلينا يعاتبونا من جرى العرض الذي أعطيناك إياه. فنحن استخفينا عقولهم بهذا وما أرسلنا لهم جواباً. فما نعلم إن كان هذا النقل صحيحاً أم بخلاف. كان يجب عليهم إذا شهدوا فيه بخلاف الدمشقيين يقولوا إنَّه أقام عندنا ثلاثين يوماً فقط لكي يخلصوا دَمَتَهُم ويشهدوا عن الثلاثين يوماً فقط، لا⁸⁴ عن تسع سنوات. الغاية أنَّ قضية هذا الرجل صارت الآن محكَّاً، وعُرف بها العاقل من الجاهل والغيور من الهامل. وكلٌّ ينال الأجرة حسب النية والنصب. وما من أحد يكفل إن لم يجاهد بفقرض الجهاد. فنسأله تعالى يمنح الصبر إلى مسيحيِّ دمشق ويثبتهم في إيمانهم، لأنَّه ما كفاهم الاضطهاد الذي حاق بهم من الروم والكوالكة، حتَّى يُحاربوا أيضاً من أبناء جنسهم ومذهبهم عينه، ويعطيهم عوض صبرهم الفرج والتعزية بجوده وكرمه.

ثمَّ ما ذكرتموه من خصوص المرء الذي حضر صحبتنا، حقاً أنَّي استغربته جدًّا وما كان أُملي منه أن ينكر كلَّ ما أسديتُ له من الإكرام إلى أنَّي خدمته بنفسي وقَدَّمته على ذاتي، ومع هذا جميعه ليس أنَّه ما //27v// شكر بل وذمَّ أيضاً. نعم، لو أنَّي أكون موجوداً في مكان يخصني وحدي لكنَّ ترخُّباً به وجالسته معي كما كان في دمشق. وأمَّا الآن فموجود في بيتٍ غريبٍ ومعِي واحد آخر، أَقِيمُكُنِي أن أخذ معي اثنين؟ ولكن كثرَ الله خبره. وإن شكَّكُم بشيء ممَّا عرَّفُكُم فهاكم تابعنا جرجس برصون يخبركم بكلِّ ما كان. وكان يجب الآن أن أصرف وجهي عنه كلياً إذ اتَّضح عديم الشكر، ولكن إكراماً لمحبتكم وللواجب عليّ، ها قد أبديتُ له محبةً مُجدَّدة أوفر من الأولى، وواسيته بما أمكنني.

يكون معلومكم هذا ما كان أنبئتُ به بنيةً بلاغتكُم. والرجاء اتِّصال كتبتكم الكرام إليّ لأكون بها مُطمئناً على سلامتكم.

وأهدوا مَنِّي البركة والدعاء مع أكيد السلام الوافر إلى أعزَّ المُحبِّين المقدسيِّ أبو يوسف ديمتري المُكرَّم، ومثله إلى ولدكم المحروس الشماس جرجس وإخوته، ولسائر أهالي منزلكم العامر، وكذلك إلى مُحبِّنا الأخ الأكرم صهرك الشماس يوسف الكلِّي الورع ووالده المُكرَّم وكلِّ من يسأل عنَّا عموماً. والله تعالى يحفظكم ويديم بقاءكم إلى أعوام عديدة.

83 M: شبير

84 M: لان

حُرِّرَ عجلة في 5 تشرين الأول، سنة 1777.
واصلكم طيِّهَ مكتوب من قُدُس الكَلْبِي القداسة جواب مكتوبكم. تقفوا عليه في خير. وعرفونا وصوله مع إعلام وأخبار صحتكم. وإن عملتم التعبة واحتلمتم المشقة اليسيرة وحضرتم لهذا الطرف — كما عرفت المقدسي — فيكون أحسن من إرسال مكتوبكم إذ إنِّي أشاهدكم وأتأسس بكم، وأستريح أنا وبلاغتكم من التعب والعناء. وأجركم إن شاء الله تعالى غير ضائع جسدياً وروحياً مع استيفاء الثواب الكامل من مُعطي الأجر — له المجد — وهو يَقْوِيكم.
ثمَّ أعرفكم آتِي لَمَّا حُرِّرت مكتوبكم الذي من قبل الكَلْبِي القداسة وقرأه، عتب عليّ لكوني ما عرفتكم بوصول مكتوبكم الأوَّل الذي بخصوصي، فقلت لَقُدْسِه أَنه سهى عليّ. وحقاً إنَّ الفكر إذ ذاك كان مشغولاً، فأرجو جنابكم العفو والسماح. //28r//

34. [من أنثاسيوس الدمشقي]

النعمة الإلهية والبركة السماوية تكونا حَالَتَيْن على نفس وجسد الابن الروحي الأريحي، بل الوالد والمُعَلِّم اللودعي سي موسى الحبيب الأكرم، بارك الرب الإله عليه وعلى حريمه وأولاده وسائر تصرفاته الروحية والجسدية، أتم البركات السموية، آمين.
غِبْ إهداء البركة والدعاء لمحبتكم والسؤال عن أحوال صحتكم الماثورة وسلامتكم المُبْدَى للودعيتكم الخطيرة، إن سألتكم عتاً — فله تعالى جزيل الشكر والمنة يومئذ موجودون بصحة وسلامة — دامت سابعاً على ذاتكم الكريمة — لا نكف رافعين أكف الضراعة والابتهال إلى إلهنا ذي الجلال، أن يصون محبتكم بهدوء البال وحسن الحال مع نوال كافة الآمال. نسأله تعالى يقبل دعانا والسؤال بما أَنه المُستجيب المُتعال.
ثمَّ لا يغني عن محبتكم وصولنا سابقاً لهذا الطرف بالسلامة، واجتماعنا بأولادنا المسيحيين وعظمة الفرح الذي حصل لنا ولهم روحياً وجسدياً والأمور — لله الحمد — جارية الآن على أفضل حال وأحسن منوال.
ونحن، من جهتنا، محتسبون⁸⁵ ذاتنا أننا الآن أوَّل ما عرفناهم وهم أيضاً كذلك. ومن ثمَّ، فالمحبة والسلامة والألفة شاملة الجميع عموماً بتنازلنا مع كلِّ على هواه، لكي نريح الكلَّ إن أمكن بإسعاد العناية الإلهية. وإن كان يوجد واحد أو اثنين لم يريدوا أن ينتقلوا عن عزمهم المألوف، فالله بنير عقولهم.
وقد كان أقصى مرادنا حالما حضرنا نحزّر لمحبتكم لتطمئنوا⁸⁶ علينا، وكما يقتضيه الحق الواجب لأننا لا يمكننا ننسى جسيم فضلكم ولذيق خطابكم، ولا سيما في تلك الساعة الزهيدة الأخيرة. غير أنَّ العائق ليس هو سوى بسبب انحراف مزاج اعترانا مدة كم يوم، وبعده اشتغلنا بإيفاء ما علينا لأولادنا المسيحيين من الوعظ والتعليم في أيام هذا الصيام الذي يُعاد عليكم بالصحة والعافية إلى سنين كثيرة. لأنَّ الأرض البائرة، كما تقيدون، تقتضي إلى تكرار كريها بالسكة دفعات غزيرة، والأمل بالإله الذي ينمي أَنه لا يذهب التعب فارغاً. فنسأله تعالى يجعل النهاية إلى خير.
ثمَّ قد بلغنا أمر توجُّه قُدُس الطوباني من طرفكم، لكن إلى الآن لم نعلم أين مقرُّه //28v// ولا ما هو قصده. وقد اغتممنا لذلك على تعبه عند شيخوخته. ولكن هذه هي حركات المخال الذي نرجوه تعالى ينجزنا من فخاخه، ويوصلنا إلى ميناء الهادي بصحة وسلام.

85 M: محتسبين

86 M: لتطمئنا

فهذا ما كان الآن بالاختصار. فإن سَنَحَ في خاطر الشريف تحرير جواب مُنيف، ولو كان مُختَصَرًا، فالتعزية الناتجة منه ليست بسيرة. ولكم الفضل بذلك كما وبغيره. نسأله تعالى على الدوام يجعلنا مُطمئنّين⁸⁷ عليكم، ولا نسمع عنكم إلّا ما يسرّ خاطرنا ويقرّ ناظرنا، بما أنّه أكرم مسؤول⁸⁸. نهدي البركة والدعاء إلى أنجالكم المحروسين، وأهل منزلكم العامر عمومًا، ومن يسأل عَنّا من المُحبّين. ونعمة ربّنا يسوع المسيح مع بركة حقارتنا تشملك سَرمَدًا، آمين.
خُرّر في 25 حزيران سنة 1787. //29r//

35. [من يوسف مرك]

إلى جناب فخر الأبناء الأحباب، الابن الروحي الأكرم، وروح رُوحِي المكرم، المعلم موسى المُحتَرَم > بارك الربّ الإله عليه وعلى أولاده وحرمة وسائر تصرّفاتِه أتمّ البركات السُمويّة، آمين. والمعروض هو أنّه بينما⁸⁹ أنا مُنحصر من غدرات الدهر، وأنا في حَيْس وقَهَر، إلّا وقد وافاني كتابكم وأزال عني الغمّ والحُصر، وحمدتُ الله بصحّتكم وسلامتكم ووزير محبّتكم التي فيضانها كالنهر، وإفضالكم عليّ شهر بعد شهر. بل إنّي صرّْتُ ممنونًا لمحبّتكم طول عمري وإلى الدهر: أوّلًا، الذي أرسلتموه لي كان سبب شفاي من مرضي. وثانيًا، صرّْتُ لي مُساعد في نساخة مُؤلّفي على ضديّ. ثالثًا، ذكرّتمُ تعملوا للمؤلّف حَمْدَلَة وهذه غاية قصدي، وتكون تتضمّن: "كما أنّه في القديم اختفى إبليس في الأفغوان ليحارب الجَدّ، إنّ هكذا بابيلا اختفى في تلميذه ابن الجلدة جبران وطفق يحارب الكنيسة بغمه واللسان، كآته آلة له". رابعًا، استعطف خاطر سيّدنا البطريرك إلى سفري. خامسًا، فيما تحقّق عند قُدّسه بواسطتكم تعبي ونصبي. سادسًا، عدم إهمالي بالردّ على أعداء الكنيسة بغاية الجَدّ والجهد. سابعًا، صار معلومًا عند غبطته الغرام في محبّتي لقُدّسه ووذيّ. فمن أين لي أن أفي ما عليّ من الدين لمحبّتكم يا حبيبي وفلذ كبدي؟ سأذكركم وأدعو لكم في صلواتي وقُدّاساتي ما دمْتُ حيًّا. وأوصيْتُ بالشكر من بعدي. بتاريخه حرّرتُ لقُدّس سيّدنا البطريرك مکتوبًا، وشرحتُ لقُدّسه ما وقع فيما بين ابني وواحد شقيّ حليبي، ولأجل أنّه كان يهجو سيّدنا البطريرك في أشعار الخوري نقولا الحلبي الهالك، ما احتمل ذلك ابني. انتهزهُ ليسكتّ فما سكت، وسبّ سيّدنا البطريرك وابني سبّ البابا وضربه بعصا الزوند في قيساريّة الشيخ شاهين تلحوق فانجرح، وأخذ شهود في أنّه جرحه بسكين وسبّ الأمير حسين مُتسلّم البلد يومئذ، وهو أخو الأمير منصور. وطلّعا معه بيت يارد ناس موارنة، وأرشوا الأمير ليمسك ابني ويضره ويرجمه، فما وقع ابني ولا أنا. والان صار لنا سِتّة أيّام مخبيين، والتفتيش واقع علينا. والان طالب الأمير خمسين غرش بلصة وعشرين تسفير، وما ندرى ما تكون الغاية نسألكم الدعاء. وبقيّة الخبر أقرّوه من مکتوب سيّدنا البطريرك، ومن مکتوب سيّدنا المطران كير مكاربوس، وقبّلوا لنا أيديهم.

87 M: مطمئنين

88 M: مسؤول

89 M: فيبينما

وأهداء البركة إلى يورغاكى، والقلب ما هو فاضى لأكتب له مكتوبًا يليق بجنابه. وكذلك نهدي البركة إلى حضرة عمّه المُحتَرَم المقدسيّ أبي نوفل وأولاده وأهل بيته، وفي وقت مُناسب تنوبوا عنيّ تقبيل أيدي قُدُس سيّدنا البطريك كيريو كير سيلبسترس الكليّ الغبطة مع عدّة مطانيات لُقُدُسِه. وُدُتم.

حرّر في 21 آب 1764. //29v//

36. [من يوسف مرك]

فخر الأبناء الفخام، عزيز الأحباء الكرام، الابن الروحيّ الأريحيّ، ونور عينيّ وروح روحيّ، الشّمس الأكرم، بارك الربّ الإله عليه وعلى حرمة وابنته ولذيه، وسهّل ما يعسر لديه، وكان له لا كان عليه، آمين.

أما بعد، فإن سألتم عن أشواقنا إليكم لا توصف، والثناء عنكم⁹⁰ ألذّ من النسيم والطف. وفي أبرك وقت وصل إلينا عزيز مكتوبكم، وأروينا الظمأ من لذيذ خطابكم، وحمّنا الله تعالى في بصحة مزاجكم. وقد وصل إلينا عيّنة القرّة المرسولة هديّة. صانكم الله من كلّ آفة وبلية. ومن حيث أنّ عندنا مثل هذه معدومة، أرسلوا إلينا الوقية المطلوبة. وقد يوجد فيها ملبح وعاطل، فباشر ذوقها ولا تماطل. وإن صارت ملبحها وقيتين أرسلهما، صانكم الله من الضرر والشين، ولكم بذلك المنة الكبرى وأعظم دين. وعرفنا إلى من ندفع ثمنها ولكم علينا منّتها.

مكتوب المقدسيّ خليل صباغ المرسول قبل هذا المكتوب وجّهناه إليه، والآن ذاكر لنا عن مكتوب المذكور فما وصل إلينا سواه. وذكرتم إن كان الداصكالس تمّم تصحيح الأخطويخس على اليونانيّ. بأعظم بليّة وهو أنّه، من مدّة ثلاثة أشهر، واقع في داء النسيان، فما عاد يدري إن كان نائمًا أو يقظان. وأنا لأجله في أعظم أحزان، مع أنّي كنّث قائمًا بخدمته ومشتهيًا كيفه، في حال وجوده في بيروت وفي مكته في بيروت وفي مكته في الدير، فضلًا عن مُدارة سيّدنا المطران الذي لم يعزّ نفسه عنه ولم يقطع عنه الخرجيّة التي أشاركه بها بقدر إمكاني. وقبل تاريخه وجّهناه إلى الدير لعله يفرج. فالآن جاء منه مكتوب يسأل متى طلع إلى الدير ومتى وصل، ولماذا طلع إلى الدير وما هو سبب طلوعه، ولما يخلص الغذاء ينسى إن كان تغدًا، ولما يجيء من الحّمّام كان يقول مرادي أروح للحّمّام. صار لي أيام كثيرة ولا تسأل عن حاله. ربّنا يلطف به ويشفيه. نهار تاريخه أرسلنا إليه أنا وسيّدنا المطران مكاتيب وبعض لوازم. أرسلنا نسليّه ونكلّفه لطلب ما يحتاجه من لوازم وخرجيّة بقدر ما يشتهي. وإنّه لو عاد بفرد في الأوضة وحده ويغلق عليه الباب كعادته وغير ذلك. ربّنا يشفيه من هذا الداء، ببركات صلوات سيّدنا القديس كيريو كير سيلبسترس الكليّ الغبطة. فإن أمكن تستمحو له الدعاء من قدسه ولنا جميعًا. ولا تقطعوا عنيّ إعلام سلامتكم. فإن أمكنكم تعرّفوني كميّة الجرم الذي تجرّموه البادية حتّى طلعوا من السجن ولكم المنة. وأهدوا منّا البركة إلى أولادكم ووالدتهن ومن يلوذ بكم والدعاء. //30r//

90 Usually, the verb أتى is used with the preposition على. The use of عن seems to be incorrect.

صور مكاتيب وردت إلينا من الخُلّ الوفيّ والصديق الصفيّ الشمّاس يوسف مرك الطرابلسيّ الكاتب

37. [أولى رسائل يوسف مرك]

يقبل الأرض مشتاق بكلّ فم
ولو قدرت على الإتيان زرتكم
وكان ذاك قليلاً في محبتكم
فخر أمثاله وزين أقرانه، الشقيق الشقيق، الحميم العظيم [موسى]، جليل القدر والتكريم، أعزه الله.
فأول ملاك⁹¹ كان شاقاً البحر لي يتضمّن سرور بني إسرائيل عن يد موسى، وكان يتضمّن قول بعضهم:

ورد الكتاب، فسرني لما بدا
فكأنه موسى أعيد لأبيه
وكننت له كقول بعضهم:

كنت إليّ ترغب في حضوري
فقبلت الكتاب وقلتُ سمعاً
وأيضاً قلّة مكاتيبني لجنايكم سبب ركائة لفظي ولكن أنت
يا من نتائج فكره
ما مثل قولك للذي
ولي أن أقول:

يا من تقصّر عن مدا
ما مثل قولك للذي
ه خُطّي مجازيه⁹² وتضعف
أضحى يُحاجيك أكفف أكفف. //30v//

38. صورة مكتوب من المذكور [يوسف مرك] أرسله إلى طرابزون

إلى جناب حضرة الأخ العزيز المُكرّم والخذن المُفخّم، حرسه الله تعالى، آمين.
غيب إهداء ما ينبغي من الإكرام إلى حضرتكم المأنوسة، لا زالت بعناية الله محروسة،
المعروض هو أنه في أطيب وقت وأشرف ساعة ورد إليّ عزيز كتابكم المُحرّر في 5 تمّوز من بلاد
معادن كموشخان الناضج في فوائده كالعنقود المُكتنز البالغ، الزكيّ في لذّته وحلاوته، خالٍ من المرارة
والحموضة. يا له من ينبوع مُندفق بغزارة! كيف قد يروي ويجعل المُستقين⁹³ منه إليكم يتحكّمون! فأيّ
أثمار قد يستقطف حامل تلك الطروس الحيّة المُتنفّسة؟ لأنني عند تلاوتي أقواله كنّ أنظر ذاتي كالمرأة
الفاجرة الكثيرة الكلام والمُبتلى بها ذاك الرجل الحكيم [أمثال 5 و7]. فقد أترع قلبي فرحاً لا يوصف
بإيضاحه لي طروس صخّة مزاجكم الكريم، وعنوان حيّكم المفرط إذ كنت ساعتئذ متلهّفاً بما يفوق
الوصف لاستنشاق نسيم أخبار صخّة سلامتكم السنيّة. وصار لي كالعالم الهادئ يُنبئني كيف تتوجّهون

91 M: ملاكاً

92 Usually, خُطّي مجازيه in the edited texts.

93 M: المستقون

كموسى يقود الشعب الإسرائيلي الضالّ. فأشكر جدًّا جدًّا فضل وداد جواحكم الأخويّة، لأنّكم مع كيانتكم بهذا المقدار من المهمّات الصارمة المتكاثرة والأسفار مع الأسطاط المتداولة المتوافرة، لم تعرضوا متغافلين عن افتقادكم الإخوان والمُحيين.

فهذا قد حرّرتُ لكم هذه الرسالة الوضيّة<عِة>⁹⁴ وهي مُخصّبة ومُرشّحة بالأعراق؟ لأنّ كيف ليس ذلك إذ إنّني مُرسلها إلى رجل خصيص مثل هذا؟ لأنّ قولي بالنسبة إليّكم كمُقابلَة وانتساب الباعوضة إلى الفيل. لأجل هذا قد ارتعدتُ خائفًا وأرهب وجلًا مُفتكرًا وحاسبًا النهار الذي عتيد أن تصرّح بالمطالعة فيه. وسبب تسطيره لأبّين لكم لواعج الشوق والغرام المُضطرم //31r// بسعير ألّذي يعتريني يوميًّا فيومًا لفرقتكم الوجيعه، يا أجلّ الأحبّاء والخلائن. فلذلك كنت أشتهي، كالقول الداوديّ، أن يكون لي جناحان كالحمامة لكي أتطير [مزامير 6: 55] وارداً إلى منهل رؤيتكم العذبة وأرتجع عائداً. لكن بما أنّ هذا غير مُمكن، هلّم بنا أيّها الهامة السنيّة نتخاطب من بعد بالرسالات، ونروي بالمُكاتبة ظمًا التلهّف الذي لا يمكن أيضًا الآن نبرّده بالمُناظرة وجهًا بآزاء وجه كما منذ أنف. في 31 آب 1737.

39. غيره مرسل [من يوسف مرك] إلى بلاد أرض روم

إلى جناب حضرة الأخ العزيز الأمد والودود الأوجد، حفظه الله تعالى وأبقاه جميل البقاء. غِبّ أكرم تحيات تُضيء نورًا، وأعظم تسليمات تفوح عبيرًا، عن خاطر صفا وعاطر وفي،⁹⁵ يسوق من لطائف الثناء إلى تلك الذات الكريمة والسجايا الحميدة، لا زالت إلى كلّ أمل واصله وإلى أشرف المعالي حاوية. المنة لله تعالى الذي وهب للطبيعة البشريّة عقلًا ونطقًا، وأيّد لي بالوحد يحفظوا المحبة وبالأخر يبيّنوها وبالأيدي يتمنّوا بها. ومن بعد، إذ إنّ هذه النعمة ليست صغيرة من لدنه تعـ[إلى] قد منحّت لنا كقول القديس غريغوريوس كوكب نبيصص وهو "أن يبيّنوا الناس خفايا أفكارهم بالمُكاتبات"، قد وردت إليّ عزيز مشرفتك المُحرّرة في 17 تشرين من بلاد أرض روم، فسُررتُ بها غاية السرور، وشفّت منّي ما في الصدور، وأرّوت منّا الفؤاد الغليل وكأنتها عافية أهديت إلى عليل، لأنّي كنت يومها طريح الفراش، فلمّا قرأتها ذهبت عني الهلع وتناساني الوجع. لأنّني كنت متلهّفًا لاستماع أخباركم السارة كاشتياق الأيل إلى ينابيع المياه [مزامير 1: 24]، لكن ما كان ينبغي لك أيّها الخدن الأكرم أنّك بهذا الحدّ تتسلّح علينا وتحرّبنا باللغة والقلم معًا بهذا المقدار من حسن الألقاب وبلاغة //31v// الأعراب وفصاحة التلخيص.

ألعلّ غيبيّ عنكم بأننا قليلون الخبرة في هذا الباب؟ أعساك ظنّنت أنّك قد تتفاوض مع الحريري حتّى إنك أطلّقت الجواد هكذا في ميدان هذا الفنّ؟ لأنّي عند مطالعتي كتابكم واستماعي تنميق خطابكم، اندهشتُ مُتَحَيّرًا وبهتتُ بالفكر مُتَدَيّرًا، حتّى أنّي شجّعْتُ تلك الشجعة الحريريّة قائلاً: {الله درك ما أغزر وبلك}. وأقول أيضًا: فدتك الروح يا من أنت فيها وفيًا، حلّ في أوج الوفاء أخي خلّ السموأل مع شريح. {فكلّ الصيد في جوف الفراء}.

بل أنتم لا تقطعوا عني مكاتيبكم، وحاربوني فيها أبدًا هذا الحرب السعيد، وأفدوني إعلام صحّتكم واستماع أخباركم في أيّ مكان وبلدة، "وليس على الله بمُستكر أن يجمع العالم في واحد". أسأله تعالى

94 The final letter(s) is (are) missing. It could be الوضيّة , but the meaning would be unclear.

95 M: وفا

يجمعنا بكم في خير وسلامة. وإني أسجد بورع لدى قُدُس سَيِّدنا البطريرك المثلَّث الغبطة، تنوبوا عني بتقبيل أيديه. وسلّموا لي على مَنْ يتبع قُدُسه.
خُرّر ثاني أحد العصرة سنة 1738 مسيحية.

40. مرسل [من يوسف مرك] إلى حمّاه

خطّاط سجّلات الحلّ والربط، بفصاحة النطق وبلاغة الخطّ، الأخ الأكرم، الشّمّاخ< المُفخّم، دامت له المعالي.

عَبّ أركى سلام تُشرق ببلاغته الكواكب، وتُزهر وتروق بفصاحته الأغصان، وتثمر لتلك الذات السنيّة ذات الأخلاق الرضيّة.

المنهي هو أنّه قد زفن ماء الرّحوض< وغرّدت أطيّاره أشجاعاً وألحاناً، وتضاحكت أزهاره مُفترّة أنوعاً وألواناً، فقد< حث<: ولم؟ فقيل لي: كتاب أتى اسم كاتبه ماء. فشعرتُ إحساساً أنّها رسالة موسائيّة مُؤشّدة< بالفاظ لغويّة. فأخذتُ أتوسّم في حقائقتها وأستوضح دقائقتها وأزجّ بفكري في لجة> //32r// بحرّها الزاخر الذي ليس له أوّل ولا آخر، لعلّي أحظى بذُرّها وأفوز بغُرّها، و«لعلّي»⁹⁶ لا أنقع صدّي ولا أجد في سُري هُدى. فاعترفتُ حينئذٍ بأنّي لسْتُ من خيالة هذا الميدان، ولا لي في عقد هذه العقدة يدان، وقد بلغني أنّ الطائر الخارج عن لغته لُحان، فرأيت الصبر عنها أحمد ولو لم أحمد، وقلت لصاحبي:

{يا باري القوس برياً ليس يحسنه ألا تظلم القوس أعط القوس باريها}

فمهلّت جواباً إلى حين لأجتنّي منها الرياحين إلّا وقد بلغني أنّ الأب بابائناوفاني الذي كان أنفاً أقنوم صيدنايا مُباشر بكتّابة مكتوب يلتمس من قُدُس سَيِّدنا البطريرك الكليّ الغبطة دستوراً في مكّثه باللائقيّة فصل الشتاء، لأنّ سفره إلى القسطنطينيّة قد تعرّض. فبادرتُ إحضاراً في رقم هذه الرسالة الوضيعة الخادمة من قريحة جامدة، لأنّ الذي وصفته لي فهو لك، والذي نسبته لك فهو لي، وليس هذا إلّا من شيم الفضل والأدب كما يقول الذهبيّ فمه، ولو كان البعض يفرّون من المديح اللائق بهم من قبل ورعهم، لكن النفس من ذاتها تطيب وتبتهج بذلك لعلّهما ما هي عليه. وأنا أسامر النفس التي تلتذّ بحقيقة المقال، ولست أقول هدراً ومحال.

ومن جهة ملحّة الإعراب، تَمَمْتُ المتن يصلكم صحبة سَيِّدنا المطران، تجعله مجموعاً واحداً. لأنّ مع الشرح يتكرّر المتن، أيضاً تجعل المتن الثاني مع الشرح مجموعاً آخر لخفة حملة وسرعة حفظه غائباً من غير كتاب وباقي القول.

ودام لكم البقاء والتكريم وسموّ الدرجات والتفخيم.

خُرّر في 19 آب سنة 1739 مسيحية. //32v//

96 This word was cut off during the binding.

41. [من يوسف مرك]

مُحَرَّر الأمر والنهي المكين المُسَلِّمان من فمه العزيز لهامة الحواريين الأخ الأجل، الشَّماس [موسى] العليّ المحلّ، دام بقاءه.

المئة لله تعالى الذي وهب للطبيعة البشرية عقلاً ونطقاً وأيدي لكي بالواحد يحفظون المحبة وبالأخر يبيتونها وبالأيدي يتمتعوا بها ولو من بعد. وإذ إنّ هذه النعمة ليست حقيرة ولا صغيرة، من لدن الله قد مُنِحَتْ لنا نقول غريغوريوس كوكب نيصص وهو [أن] يظهروا الناس خفايا أفكارهم بالمكاتبات. نشكره تعالى على إيمانه، قد وصل إليّ كتابكم العزيز وأشفيتُ جرح قلبي النزيز، واستوعبتُ حبوراً لا يرام بإطلاعي على معنى الكلام. لأنكم ذكرتم بأنكم قد رسلتم لي كتاباً جواب ما التمسثته ودليل ما ابتغيته> وطلبته. ولم يصلني، ولكن أيقنتُ بكتابكم على موجب خطابكم، ولو لم يصل إليّ عافاكم الله وحيّاكم، وبما أنني كنتُ واجداً عليكم بسبب ذلك، أرجوكم صفحاً وعفواً. لأن شرط المحبة خلوص النية، وصدق اللسان سلامة الإنسان.

قد أرسلتُ لنباهتكم مكتوباً صحبة القسّ عبد الله الشغري، وأيضاً متن ملحّة الإعراب لعلهم يكونان⁹⁷ وصلاً إليكم وتشرّفان بمطاعتكم، وإن شاء الله تعالى لما ترسل لي الكتب التي أوعدتموني بها مع بعض المسودات اللازمة لي، سأرسل وأنا لكم شرح الملحّة الحريرية مع متنها المُندرج فيها ثانياً. ولم أزل ثابتاً على قدم الخدمة لصفاء ذككم. وإن أمكن تعجلوا عليّ بارسالهم، لأنني مع مشيئة الله عزمْتُ على التوجّه إلى الديار المصرية لأنّ مدخولي من المكتب قوي قلّ، والأعيان أكثرهم يوعدونني بالوعد الفارغ. لذاكم السبب، إن شاء الله تعالى قبل عيد الفصح، يكون توجّهي، وإلا بعد الفصح، مشيئة الله تكون.

نسألكم الدعاء.

حُرّر في 6 شهر اشباط سنة 1740. //33r//

42. [من يوسف مرك]

رَقَام سجلات الحلّ والربط التي لم يُفْت⁹⁸ فعلها قطّ، الأخ العزيز، الشَّماس [موسى] الأكرم، أبقاه الله تعالى.

غِبْ إِذْءَء سلام رَكَّتْ بطيب المسرة نفحاته وَرَهَتْ في رياض البشر لمحاته، وأزهي تحيات أشرقَتْ في سماء الإقبال شمسوها وبدورها، وفاح في الخافقين نُسرها وعبيرها، لدى حضرة المُشار إليه أعلاه. المنهي هو أنّه قد أرسلتُ⁹⁹ لنباهتكم مكتوبين، الأول صحبة قسّ شغري، وبرفقته الملحّة الحريرية، والثاني رسلته لطرابلس عن يد أحد المُحبين الصادقين عَرَفْنُهُ يرسله لجنايبكم لبيروت، وهو صفة لواعج الشوق المضطّر في سويد القلب. لعلهما يكونان¹⁰⁰ وصلاً لكم في أوقات المسرات، وتكونون¹⁰¹ مشيعين لنا جوابهما مع المُلتمس من خوتكم. لأننا لم نزل مقيمين بمحروسة اللاذقية، وإن صار لنا حال بجمعة

97 M: يكونا

98 M: يفتي

99 M: رسلت

100 M: يكونا

101 M: وتكونوا

الفصح من المعاش من أجرة الأولاد ربّما نستقيم كما كُنّا في الأول. ماذا وإلا بعد الفصح، مع مشيئة الله، نسافر لدمياط، فإذا صحَّ سَفَرُنَا ربّما يلزمنا لحضرة خالكم الخواجة حنّا فخر توصاه بحسن النظر من اغتيالات المُعْتَدِينَ وسطوة المُتَحَكِّمِينَ فقط. فإذا كُنْثَيْتَ له مكتوبًا ورأيتَ وجه مُناسِبة، تُوصِيه في. ومن ميل شرح الملحّة لتاريخه ما نجز، لأنّه تُعَدَّر من فرط البرد الذي حصل بهذه السنة وتفاقم الأمراض المُستَحْوَذة عليّ. أشكره تعالى على امتنانه.

43. [من يوسف مرك]

فمن حيث أنّ اشتياقي إليكم لا يُرام، ومحبتّي نحوكم هي عظيمة-الاهتمام، لم أزل كلّما صادفتُ واحدًا ذاهبًا لنواحيكم-أشيع لحوّثكم صحبته مكتوبًا عاجلاً. فلمّا كان بعد تاريخه بيومين، نسّم روح شذا عطر كتابكم بناحية الجنوب ونمّ- أريج طيبة بربوعنا فنعش القلوب. ففضاته (!) رأيتمكم فُتْنَم معي الحدود بإطناط المديح الذي إليكم يعود.

وأما ملتسمي من صداقة محبّتكم لاح لي أنّهم يمتدّوا بالوعد، وأخشى أن يصحّ سفري ويتنعم بهم الغير.

وها أنا مُقيم لجمعة الثانية بعد الفصح، لأنظر لأيّ حال اتفق ومشيتته تعالى تكون. ثم ألقى ذاتي ساجداً لقدس السيد المطران كير يوانيكوس فرع الدوحة الطاهرة الذكيّة مع تقبيل أيديه النقيّة.

في 20 آذار سنة 1740. //33v//

44. [من يوسف مرك، مرسل] إلى بيروت

من به يروق الزمان ويعكر، ويقبل الحظّ ويدبر، الأخ الأكرم الشّمس [موسى] المفخّم، دام مُكرّمًا. {غِبّ زواهي زواهر تحيات تغدو وتروح وبواهي بواهر، تسليمات منها أريج المسك يفوح وأثنية كزهر الروض تتأرج وأدعية كآتها أنهار دجلة تتموج، لتلك الذات السنّية والأخلاق الرضيّة}، صانها الله من كلّ آفة وبلية.

المنهي إليكم والمعروض لديكم هو أنّه في أوقات السرور تشرّفُ بالمتشور وحصلت في عيش رغيد وحبور، لا سيّما بحوزتي الكرايس الثلاث ذات السطور، فغردت نثرهم ونظمهم وطوبت نفسي لحصول قسمهم. فكان رقامهم يأنسني بخطابه، ويثلو عليّ نقوشات أقلامه، ويوضح لي دُرر كلامه. فخلت أنّي في جنان عليين حاصلاً بتقليب أغصان الياسمين وأسْتَنْشَق نسيم ورد أو رباحين. وقد بلغني الخير المحمود والطول المعهود الذي صنعتومه مع الرئيس داود، بل معي أنا وإخراجكم له أسطاتيكونين أحدهما رومي والثاني عربيّ. فأشكر إحسانكم جدًّا جدًّا، وأحمد تمام سعيكم الصالح بل حظكم الفالح وحسن الحاظكم لقصد المُحبّين.

أما سفري من هذه البلاد قد تُعَدَّر الآن بخصوص اليَسَق على من يسافر من اللاذقية لعدم نظام الميري، ولكن لما يسهل الله في إطلاق سبيل أهل البلد بالسفر إلى حيث يشاؤون¹⁰² أسافر وأنا ومشيتته الله تكون.

ثمّ الواصل إليكم شرح ملحّة الإعراب صحبة قدس سيّدنا المطران نيكيفورس. أرجوكم عدم المؤاخذه في أنّها كتابة ولد، لكنّ مقابلة عن يدي ومضبوطة على النسخة الأصلية. وسبب كتابتها للولد لأنني يومها كنت مريضاً. يكون عنزي مقبولاً عندكم. وقد يشقّ علينا فراق سيّدنا المطران ووحشتنا له، وبتاريخه مُتوجّه نحوكم ليأنسكم. وإن شاء الله تكون موجّهاً لنا بقية الكتب التي أوعدتنا بها، ولا تؤخّر¹⁰³ علينا رسالاتكم السارة وباقي [القول].

حرّر ثاني أحد الأباء الذي قبل العنصرة، سنة 1740. //34r//

45. [من يوسف مرك، مرسل] إلى بيروت

شفاء القلوب لقاء المحبوب
 سببويه زمانه، الفائق على أقرانه، الأخ الأكرم الشّمس [موسى] المُفخّم، صانه الله تعالى.
 {غَبَّ إهداء السلام المسكيّ الختام والتحيّة العنبريّة المشام} وفرط الشوق والغرام لمشاهدتكم على الدوام،
 المنهي هو أنّه في أبرك وقت وأشرف ساعة وصل إليّ عزيز مشرفتمكم، وهنأت قلبي بصحّتكم وصدق مودّتكم، لا سيما قد زادني أفراح، ونبذ عن غمّي الأتراح، باعتناق راحتيّ معشوقهما سفر السلاح مزيل الشكّ والمزاح، مركز الحقّ والصلاح بعقريّة شهادته الصّاح، فريد بالأدهار، مُهلّهل لحُكم الفجار، مُوطّد رعاية الأربعة الأحبار، يدعو لأخذ التار بالصارم البتار، كتاب جلاء الأبصار من غشاء الأكدار. فحمدتُ سعيكم بإرساله بهذه الأيّام. عافاكم الله وحيّاكم وسمى حظكم وأعلاكم. وقد حدّرتني بالاحتراس عليه من العطب، وتغيير الإملاء والغلط، لنألا يعتريه العيب. فإني حدّر غاية الحدّر، والتكلان على الله مُعين البشر. وأشرّتم ألا أنسيخه للأولاد لأنّ شغلهم بغير إسداد، ولكن أنسخه أنا. فنعما رأيتم. ولكن فهل لظام يكره الماء العذب أو لمشتاق يصمّ أذنيه عن خبر غُرب، وبالحرّي جدّاً أنّه مُزيل جهل هذا الزمان مُظهر الحقّ والبيان؟

شعر

{فالعلم كالحقّ موجودين من أزل والجهل كالإثم موصوفين بالعدم
 من يعدم العلم يظلم عقله أبداً ونراه أشبه بالحيوان والنعم}
 فها إنني، نهار تاريخه، قد أرسلتُ إلى خالكُم مكتوباً، وأعلّمته بوصول الكتاب إليّ، وإنني مُستعِدّ لنساخته. فلا¹⁰⁴ تؤخّر¹⁰⁵ عني ما أوعدتنني من الكتب الموجودة عندكم، ولكم منّي اغترافات الشكر بما سلف وازدلف، وباقي القول.

حرّر في 29 حزيران سنة 1740. //34v//

103 M: تاخر

104 M: Above the line.

105 M: تاخر

46. [من يوسف مرك]

إلى جانب حضرة الأخ المُكْرَم والخليل المُفَخَّم، الشَّمَس [موسى] الأكرم، دام الله تعالى بقاه.
 غِبَّ التَّحِيَّةَ والتَّسْلِيمَ بِقَرطِ التَّكْرِيمِ والتَّعْظِيمِ، ودعاء لا يخفى عن العليم.
 لحضرتكم المُنْهَى هو أنه، في أُبْرَكَ وقتٍ وأشرف ساعة، وصل إليَّ عزيز كتابكم، وأروِيْتُ ظمأي
 من لَذِيذِ خطابكم، وحمدتُه تعالى بِصَحَّةِ مزاجكم.
 ومكتوب أخيكم الخواجة نقولا سَلَمْتُهُ بيده.
 وسابقاً رسلْتُ لحضرتكم مكتوباً وعَرَفْتُكُمْ بِوصولِ كتابِ نكتاريوس إليَّ، والآن مُباشِر في نسختين
 عنه، واحدة لخالكم الأكرم والأخرى لي. أسأله تعالى التَّيسِيرَ، لأنَّه على كُلِّ شيءٍ قدير وبالإجابة جدير.
 وإِنِّي غير مُتَنَاسٍ الكُتُبَ التي أوعدتُموني بِإرسالها، وغير مُتَوَانٍ عَمَّا حَذَرْتُموني منه من غلط
 الإِملاء والإِعْراب لِئلاَّ يُعَابَ الكتاب. فلا تَقْطَعْ عَنِّي رسالات الأَحباب، لأنَّه من عَيْنِ الصَّوابِ الإِشْفاء
 بِالْجَوَابِ.
 وسَلِّمْ لي على جميع الأهل والأحباب. ودام لكم البقاء والسَّمْوُ والارتقاء.
 في 27 تَمَوز سنة 1740. //35r//

47. [من يوسف مرك، من <أميون> إلى دمشق]

أخا الأَصْفِيَاءَ وسميَّ الأنبياء، الأخ العزيز الشَّمَس [موسى] المُكْرَم، دام رِقاؤه ومن كُلِّ سوءِ حرسه
 ونَجَّاه.
 غِبَّ إهداء التَّسْلِيماتِ البَهِيَّةِ والتَّحِيَّاتِ السَّيِّئَةِ، وأفضل الدَّعواتِ المَقْبُولَةِ المَرْضِيَّةِ،
 المعروف لديكم هو أَنَّهُ هذا ثالثُ مكتوبٍ مُرْسَلٍ إليكم، ولم أَرِ مِن نِّبَاهتكم جواب. ويومئذ كُنْتُ في
 إِشْغَالٍ واضطراب، ولكن لَمَّا رَأَيْتُ حَامِلَهَا مُتَوَجِّهاً نحوكم، انتَهَزْتُ الفُرْصَةَ وحَزَرْتُ لكم هذه العَبُودِيَّةَ
 لِأَسْأَلَ عن خَاطِرِكُمْ. لِأَنِّي كما قال بعضهم:
 {ما كنتُ بِالْمَنْظُورِ أَقْنَعُ مِنْكُمْ، وَلَقَدْ قَنَعْتُ الْيَوْمَ بِالْمَسْمُوعِ}
 وأبْلَغُ من ذلك عَدَمَ مَكَاتِيْبِكُمْ بِتِلْكَ المُدَّةِ حَتَّى الْآنَ.
 {وأنا عِنْدِي مِنَ الشَّوْقِ والتَّلَهُفِ ما لا يَصِفُهُ الوَاصِفُونَ، ولا تَبْعِرُ عَنْ حَقِيقَتِهِ العَارِفُونَ.
 مِنَ الغَيْبَةِ عَنِ المُشَاهَدَةِ قَدْ أَحْرَقَ الْقَلْبُ بِالنَّارِ، وَلَمْ يَبْقَ لَهُ مَعَ ذَلِكَ قَرَارٌ، وَقَفَّدَ التَّجَلُّدُ وَالْإِصْطِبَارُ،
 قَانِلاً أَمَّا اللَّيْلُ وَأَطْرَافُ النَّهَارِ}
 فَكَمَا أَنِّي مُحَافِظٌ عَلَى مَوَدَّتِكُمْ فَلَا يَكُونُ الْهَجْرُ مِنْكُمْ بِهَذَا الْمَقْدَارِ
 {عَبْدٌ عَلَى حَالَةٍ تَبْقَى مَوَدَّتُهُ طُولَ الزَّمَانِ وَإِنْ حَالَتْ بِهِ الْحَالُ
 وَإِنْ يَكُنْ نَقَلُوا عَنِّي الْكَلَامَ إِلَى عُلُومِكُمْ كَذَبُوا مَا الْعَبْدُ قَوْلًا}
 هَذَا وَإِنِّي أَنْهِيَ الْمَقَالَ وَأَخْتِمُ الْكَلَامَ بِالدَّعَاءِ إِلَيْكُمْ وَالسَّلَامِ.
 حَزَرَ فِي 9 أَذَار سنة 1741. //35v//

48. [من يوسف مرك، من <أميون> إلى دمشق]

مِنَ الْمُحِبِّ بِلَا عِلَّةٍ وَعَلِيهِ الْبَيِّنَةُ وَالْأَدْلَةُ، مَدَّةَ حَيَاتِهِ وَعَمْرَهُ، بَلْ عَمَرُ زَمَانِهِ وَدَهْرِهِ، لَيْسَ لِسُلُوتِهِ مِنْ سَبِيلٍ
 إِذْ هُوَ مِنَ الْمُحَالِ وَالْمُسْتَحِيلِ،

إلى من ذاته الشهية ألطف من النسيم، وأعذب من التنسيم، وألذ من العافية للسقيم، وصفاته المحمودة أعطر من مسكٍ مرّت به الصبا، وأبهج وأملج من عهد الشبيبة وريعان الصبا، التي يعجز عن وصفها البارِع البليغ ويستشفى باستماعها من ساعته المُصاب والذليع، المُهتَم بالسيرة الحسنة والمُتخلِّق بالأخلاق الدميّة المُستحسنة، أعني به أخي وفلذ كبدي وروحي التي في جسدي، العزيز الأكرم الشّمس موسى، يسرّ الله مرّاه بما يشاء، وصان نفسه من كلّ بؤس وأسا.

وبعد فإنّ مننّكم بالسؤال عن الحال، فالحمد لله على سائر النعم والأحوال. نهدي إليكم التحية السنّية، ونبيّ الأشواق والأثواق العذرية، مُقيمين في طرابلس الفيحاء تحت نظر الدستور الرفيع والحصن الشامخ الذروة المنيع، السيّد البطيريك كيريو كبير سيلبسترس الكليّ الغبطة، مُتصرّفين في درس أولاد المسيحيّين في نفس قلّية المطرنيّة. وأظهر لي المطران كير نكتاريوس وسم البشاشة وأنواع المعروف، وكلّما نشاهده من معروفيه يستقيم ثابتاً بنظر قدّس سيّدنا البطيريك بموجب همّتكم العليّة، كما هو معلوم عندي. وبتاريخه، هممت في نقل العيال من اللانقية إلى طرابلس. نسأله تعالى التمام إلى خير.

وبينما نعطّر الأوقات بذكر مآثركم، إلّا وقد ورد إليّ كتابكم الكريم الواجب التقبيل والتفخيم، ففضّضناه وقرّأناه وفهمنا بما فيه وفهمناه. فإذا هو ينطق بأنواع المحبة والسرور، ويترجم عمّا تطمئنّ إليه الأنفس وتنتشرح له الصدور. لا جرم أن فاح ممّا انطوى عليه شذا //36r// العبير المنشور. فيا له من كتاب كان أشهى من اللقاء. إذا ضمه المهجور يُطفئ التياغه. ثرّ ألفاظه منظومة في أسلاك خالص الوداد، مُضْمّنة بلوغ الأمانى والفراد. فلما نُسرت علينا، من طيب عبير ألفاظه تلك الروائح التي تمسك بطيب نشرها كلّ غاد ورائح، برّد ما كان عندنا من بعض حرارة الشوق، وحصل لنا من السرور والابتهاج ما لم يك في الوسع والطوق، وشكرنا الله تعالى على ما أنتم عليه من الصّحة والسلامة، وعلى ما أولاكم من الدعة والكرامة، وسألناه — ولا نسال سواه سبحانه — أن يديم عليكم جزيل نعيمه، وأن يوالي عليكم غزير كرمه، آمين.

ومن جهة المُكاتبة، فأنت اقتصرْتَ لا أنا، ولكن محبّتك لم يترح كما كانت وتزداد كلّما عتقت كالخمر الجيّد والعسجد المُجرب تزداد رونقاً وطيباً. ولا تظنّ أنّي ملثت ولا فترت كما قال بعضهم:

{أحبابنا لم أقطع الكتب عنكم ملالا
ولا نقض المودة من فعلي
ولكنني من عظم شوقي إليكم
حسدتُ كتابي كيف يلقاكم قبلي}
هذا
{وَدُمّ سالمًا ما حرّكت نسمة الصبا
غصونًا عليها ساجعات الحمام}
وباقى القول والسلام.
حرّر في نهار الأربعاء الثالثة من الصوم، سنة 1742 مسيحية.

49. من المذكور بعد مجيئه إلى الشام وارتسامه قسّاً على يد البطيريك كير سيلبسترس الكليّ الغبطة

قرّة العيون وثمرّة الفؤاد وفخر الأحياب السامي الجنب، الشّمس [موسى] المُفحّم، دام مُكرّماً وعليه البركات سرمدًا.

غِبّ أداء الدعاء وواجبات الشكر والثناء إليكم،

المنهي إليكم هو أنّه، نهار تاريخه، بلغنا مدينة بيروت بغاية الصّحة والسلامة، واجتمعنا في الأقارب والمحبّين، وهم بغاية الصّحة، يقرّوكم جزيل السلام. ولكن نحن بحالة بسبب فراقكم، ولكن الذي أمر بالفراق يمنّ علينا بالتلاق قريب لا بعيد، بما أنّه على كلّ شيء قدير. وخلاصة الكلام من قلبكم تَقَمُّوا ما هو كمين في قلبنا. //36v//

50. غيره أيضاً [من يوسف مرك]

عمدة أرباب الكمال، حاوي نوعي التحرير والإفضال، حضرة فلذ الكبد الشماس المكرم، دام مؤيداً مباركاً، أمين.

عَبَّ ما يدي ما فُرض عليه من الأدعية الصالحة، الناطق بها كلُّ عضو وجارحة¹⁰⁶، مَنْ بذيل أوصافكم مُتمسِك، وبطيّب ريا ذكركم مُتعطّر ومُتمسِك¹⁰⁷،
ينهي إليكَ – بئ الله تعالى غزير إنعامه وبركاته عليك – هو أنّه سابقاً حرّرتُ لجنابكم مكتوباً، وإلى قُدس سيّدنا البطريك الكليّ الغبطة مكتوباً، وأيضاً من سيّدنا المطران مكاتيب إلى قدس سيّدنا البطريك الجزيل الطوباء، وباقي القول.
في أحد جميع القديسين، سنة 1743.

51. غيره [من يوسف مرك]

إلى جناب حضرة الأخ بالله، والولد الروحيّ الشماس [موسى] المكرم، صانه الله تعالى وأسبغ عليه جزيل بركاته.

عَبَّ إِذَاء الدعاء العارج في معارج القبول، وألوية الثناء الدارجة إلى مناهل الوصول إليكم، المنهى هو أنّه قد طالّت المدة وما رأينا منكم مكتوباً، لا سيّما جواب مكاتيبنا التي أرسلناها لكم سابقاً ولاحقاً على وجه بيروت، ولا أرسلتم¹⁰⁸ لنا المصالح التي أوصيناكم عليها. فهذا بخلاف المأمول. وكما هو معلوم أنّ محبتكم صادقة خالية من الرياء، ولكن من تمادي الزمان وانقطاع مكاتيبكم، كادت تزلّ خطواتي. فإن شاء الله تعالى تكونوا راسلين لنا مكتوباً بهذا القرب، مع المصالح والكراريس اللاتي جمعناها ضدّ المُعترض للمرحوم المطران المتنيح، لأننا قصدنا ننظمهم ونضمّهم كتاباً واحداً لننفع الأرثوذكسيين ومهينين¹⁰⁹ غير شهادات ندخلها في الكتاب.

ولا بدّ ما تعرّفني إن كان الشماس ثودوسي متقيداً بترجمة كتابي إلى اليوناني أو الروميّ الدارج، لأجل نفع أولاد المسيحيين الراغبين //37r// تعليم هذه اللغة. وإن شاء الله يبرز القول فعلاً وتضع فيه اللغة التركيّة كما وعدتني. وها كتاب المقامات الحريريّة واصل إليكم عن يد صهركم الخواجة جرجس يعيش. وما يلزم نوّكد عليكم في التقيد بكتابته وإرساله إليّ عاجلاً، وباقي القول.

106 Cf. 'Abd al-Bāsiṭ al-Unsī, *Abda' al-asālib fī inshā' al-makātīb*, Beirut, 1331 H [1913], p. 35. We do not know what the source of this sentence is.

107 This resembles an anonymous poem reported in 'Abd al-Ghanī al-Nābulī's *Kitāb nafaḥāt al-azhār 'alā nasamāt al-aṣḥār fī madḥ al-nabī al-mukhtār*, Damascus, 1882, p. 53:

فهو الذي بغرى محاسن ذكراكم مُتمسِك، وبطيّب ريا مدحكم مُتعطّر مُتمسِك
'He is the one clinging to the beauties of your remembrance, perfumed by the sweet scent of your praise, [and] holding fast'.

108 M: ولارسلتم

109 M: مهابين

52. غيره [من يوسف مرك]

عمدة أرباب الكمال، حاوي نوعي التحرير والإفضال الأخ الصدوق والخليل الشفوق، الشَّماس [موسى] المُكْرَم، دام بقاءه.

{غِبْ سلام ممزوج بالشوق والغرام، مُرتبط بأسباب المحبة على الدوام، لا انقضاء لمدده¹¹⁰ ولا انقطاع لمدده، يهديه من سالت مدامعه حتى سبح في بحرهما وعام، وطالت عليه أزمنة الهجر ما بين شهور وأعوام. كيف لا¹¹¹ والداعي المنسوب في بودقة الانقطاع مسكوب، ومع ذلك فهو باسط أكف الابتهاال إلى ذي الجلال، أن يعيد لنا طوال سعود هيكل ذي الفضائل والأفضال، مَنْ تَقَفْ بساحة براعته فحول الرجال. مَتَّعَ الله الأَحَبَّة بطول بقائه، وأشغَلَ ألسنة الأهل بجميل ثنائه، ونواظر العافين ببهي سَنائه، آمين. المعروف لديكم هو أنه نضرب صفحاً عن عدم المُكاتبة من جنابكم، وتلهفي إلى استماع عذوبة خطابكم، وأرجوكم بأن يكون حُسن نظركم في استجلاب خاطر سيّدنا البطريرك الكَلِّي الغبطة عليّ، ويسمح لي في مرور هذه الشتويّة، لأنَّ الوقت ما يناسبني. كما أنّي مُعتذر لقدسه في العرض الذي راسله له، فأخشى لنألا يتغلّظ خاطره عليّ ولا يقبل عذري. أرجوكم بأن تساعدوا في قبول العذر واجتلاب خاطره عليّ. وبإحداً إن قرأت مكتوبي المرسول له، لأنَّ الأمر كما هو مُحَرَّر فيه من مانع الجريمة وضعف الجسم وتسجّس الفكر وأيام البرد. //37v// وأيضاً أنا أعرف ذاتي أنّي لستُ بمُستحق لهذه الموهبة، ولكن بما أنّ فم سيّدنا نفّوه بها أقول، كما قال بعض التلاميذ الصيّادين: "بكلمتك يا سيّدنا ألقى الشبكة" [لوقا 5: 5] التي كلّ مدّتها ما صيّدت شيئاً من الفضائل، بل صفرة خاوية منها مُتمرّغة في حماة الرذائل وأدرانها. ففسألكم الدعاء. حُرّر في 5 تشرين الثاني سنة 1742.

53. غيره [من يوسف مرك]

{سقى الله أرضاً نور وجهك شمسها
وروى بقاءاً جود كفك غيثها
إلى جناب حضرة أعزّ الإخوان والأحباب والأبناء الروحيين، النجاس الشَّماس المُكْرَم، أسبغ الله تعالى عليه جزيل النعم والبركات.
غِبّ التحيّات الزكيّة والنفحات البهيّة والأشواق العذريّة، وصالح الطلبات الليليّة والنهاريّة، المنهي إليكم، بارك الربّ الإله عليكم، هو أنّه في أسعد الأوقات وصلني طرس محبّتك وحمّدته تعالى على صحتكم وسلامتكم، والكراريس وصلوا سالمين. جزاكم الله عناً خيراً ووُفّيتم ضيراً. كذلك اطمئنّا على وصول كتاب المقامات إليكم سالمًا من العطب. عسى تعملوا همةً بنساخته وإرساله إلينا كما عرّفتم. وقد وصلت اللعبة وضمنها الثلاث سلطانيّات الصيني سالمات العطب. فلا زلتم منهل القاصة (!). ولكن ما عرّفتموني ثمنهم. نرجوكم تعرّفوني ثمنهم، لأن يلزمني غير مصالح، وأحشم خلوص المحبة (!)

¹¹⁰ This should be corrected to لأمده.

¹¹¹ We do not know the author of this sentence. See M. A. el-Tantavy, *Traité de la langue arabe vulgaire*, Leipzig, Vogel Fils, 1848, p. 152, where the sentence is also present.

¹¹² Poem attributed to Šafī al-Dīn al-Ḥillī (1278–1349).

أقصدكم بهم. فإذا عاملتني هذا العمل تصدّني عن قضاء أغراضي، فيحصل لي خسارة لا مكسب. المراد تعرّفني عن كلّ شيء ترسله لي.
ولك منّي اغترافات الشكر والدعاء. أشركم ما دمْتُ حيًّا، وإن أمت أوصيْتُ بالشكر من بعدي.¹¹³
//38r//

54. [من يوسف مرك]

إلى جناب فخر الأحباب، ولدي الروحيّ وفلذ كبدي الشّمّاس [موسى] المُكرّم، بارك الربّ الإله عليه وعلى حريمه وولده وسائر تصرّفاتِه أتمّ البركات السماويّة، آمين.
المنهي هو أنّه سابقاً ولاحقاً أرسلْتُ لحضرتكم مكاتيب عدّة، تهنئة بمولودكم، وأخبرْتُكم عن كامل الأخبار. وطالت المدة ولم أرَ من محبّتكم جواباً ولا خطاب. جعل الله المانع خيراً.
فنخبركم أنّي ماكُتٌ في بلاد الولاة لأقف على نقش مطبوعة جديدة، لأنّ تلك المطبوعة التي كان واقفاً على نقشها أبو شر العديم البرّ، بل أبو براقش باسمه الجديد، طلعت سقط ما تنتفع، وراح كلّ ذلك التعب والمصرف بئسما. فلمّا لاحظ سيّدنا البطريرك الكلّيّ الغبطة أنّه ما ينتفع بشيء، ووقف على خيانتة وسفاهته وشقاوته التي كان يسترها بتصنّعاته، رفع يده من المطبوعة، وسلّمني جميع آلاتها وأدواتها، وأبقاني في بكوريشْت مع ميخائيل الراهب والشّمّاس برثانيوس، وخادم من أهل البلد في الدير الموقوف جديداً للكرسيّ الأنطاكيّ الرسوليّ، وصار ثاؤفاني الشّمّاس قسيساً رئيس الدير. وأيضاً مكث في الدير مطران آخر كبير مكاريوس.

وأما سيّدنا الموماً إليه الكلّيّ الغبطة، بتاريخه، مُتوجّه إلى القسطنطينيّة وبرفقته أبا براقش، والآن عمال يقع على أقدام سيّدنا البطريرك الكلّيّ الغبطة ويبيكي ويشكي حتّى لا يخرج من بابه بعد أن ظهرت خيانتة وقبح شقاوته وأظهر قباحته //38v// وشتمته وتهديده بالشكوى على سيّدنا المُشار إليه إلى الدولة العليّة، وما رضي منه بأربعمائة وعشرين غرشاً نقد غير البخاشيش والحوائج التي أخذها سابقاً من قُدسه ومن حضرة البك، وغير التي أخذها من ياش، فضلاً عن الذي كان يزوّده في دفاتره إلّا بواسطة الحاج جبرائيل العشيّ بعد مدة أيّام. وكتبت له صورة تمسك كتب عليه لسيّدنا البطريرك بخلوصه منه. والآن مُراد سيّس ما ظهر ويتلافى ما بدر. ولكن ما كُتِب فقد كُتِب كقول بعضهم: كم تستر الحيلة وأمرك ظاهر، وكم تدّعي حقّاً وحقّاً¹¹⁴ باطل.

ولكن سيّدنا البطريرك بتاريخه بدأ يندبه لبكائه المُصنّع، خائف لا يدخل عليه دجلة لعلمي برقة قلبه وحنوّ لبّه، وفي القسطنطينيّة ما أدري ما يجري. وما ظهر من قبح شيمه وأطواره أخوك¹¹⁵ بطرس يعزّفكم عنه فرداً فرداً.

نسأل الله تعالى المعونة ببنّيم ما باشرنا به، ونسأل محبّتكم صلح الدعاء. ولو كان لي حظّ لكنّتم موجودون بهذه البلاد برفقتي، لكن ربّنا يوفّق الاجتماع في البلاد العربيّة بما أنّه على كلّ شيء قدير وبالإجابة جدير.

أهدوا منّا البركة والدعاء إلى ولدكم العزيز وإلى والدته. وأما أخيك [بطرس] وميخائيل الراهب والشّمّاس برثانيوس يقرّوكم جزيل السلام والدعاء. سيّدنا البطريرك يهدكم البركة ويسأل خاطركم.

113 Adapted from Şafi al-Dīn al-Hillī.

114 M: Marg.

115 M: أخيك

خُرّر في أواسط نشرين الأوّل، الداعي لكم الخوري يوسف مرك، سنة 1748. //39r//

55. [من يوسف مرك]

إلى جناب فخر الأبناء وعين الأحباب، الابن الروحيّ الأريحيّ وشقيق روحي الشّمس المَحْتَرَم، فلا زالت البركات والنعم سابعة عليه وعلى حرمة ولديه وما يؤثّرهُ وتصنع يداه¹¹⁶، آمين.
غِبْ إهداء دعوات موسومة ببناء الإخلاص، وأثر نثر الجواهر المُرشَّح بالاختصاص إلى من تَقْتَلُ القوافي على تحيُّلاته، وتزدهم المعاني في تفكُّراته، لا زالت المعارف ساطعة من فمه والعوارف هائلة من قلمه، أعني به حضرة المُشار إليه بأعاليه، لا برحت بالمسرة أيّامه ولياليه.
فإن سألتم عن {الشوق الأعظم بما لا يحيط بوصفه قلم¹¹⁷،

{فالمعروض بعد الدعاء المفروض هو¹¹⁸ أنّه¹¹⁹ وبينما نحن بالدعاء مُشتغلين وبالتّائي، فبعد ورود مكتوبكم الأوّل ورَدَ الثاني، فقرأتهما وفهمتُ المعاني، وحمدتُ ربّاً شَرَفَ دمشق وتلك المغاني، وخصّكم دون غيركم بما شاء بالإنشاء والخطّ والحظّ والمباني والمعاني. قد وصل مقطف ابن عفيف فلا زلتُم في أجر منيف.

وأشركم بأنكم برفقة شبيبتكم فخر الإخوان بزيارة سيدنايا، ذاك المقام الشريف، فطرت بالقلب إليكم، وحصلتُ بالعقل مع العيال والأولاد جملة لديكم. ومن أين لنا أن يتيسّر هذا التوفيق، ونسعد أيضاً بزيارة تلك الطاقة المُشرّفة، وبحضرتكم وذاك الأخ الشقيق الرفيق. فعسى تكونوا تذكروننا كما نذكركم.
فنسأله تعالى أن تكونوا دائماً بشفاعة من أنتم في حماها بالرفاهية والأفراح ناجيين من المُكدرات والأبراج. فهنئكم بصعود ربنا إلى السموات، وإرسال الروح القدس على التلاميذ. فلنكنّ عليكم هذه الأعياد المباركة وكلّ عيد إلى زمان مديد، آمين.

خُرّر نهار خميس الصعود. فلا زلتم في صعود وصعود >

الـ{خوري يوسف مرك} < //39v//

56. [من يوسف مرك]

كتابي أرسلوه إلى يد خالكم المقدسيّ عن يد وثيقة
فمن جهة وقوف الداكلس على كتابي، فبعد الآن ما يساعنا الوقت للرجاء وبهتة المطالبة، لا سيّما أن رجاءه لا يُرجا والعدول عنه اتّجه بقطع النظر عما تَرَجَّيْتُهُ ووانسئته وواردته من جهة تعليم نسخة¹²⁰
الأكطويخس ولّجه عليّ بطلب نسخة اللحنين، وإرسالي له إيّاهم قبل أن أتّم نساختهم وعدم إرساله إليّ غيرهم، وادّعاءه بكلّ موضع بكتاب الشذور أنّه تأليفه، وأنا مدّع كاذب مع أنّي بمناظرة خالكم وتقديمه

116 M: يديه

117 Adapted from Aḥmad al-Maḡarrī (1584–1631). See *Nafḥ al-ṭib min ghuṣn al-Andalus al-raṭīb*, vol. 1, ed. Iḥsān ‘Abbās, Beirut, Dār Ṣādir, 1968, p. 27.

118 M: بهو

119 We believe this sentence was mistakenly copied before the previous one. We have moved it to restore the meaning.

120 M: نسخت

إليّ ما لزمني من الكتب الموجودة عنده أصرّفتُ الخمسة وأربعين يومًا من مشرقها إلى مغربها لم أعط¹²¹ لنفسي راحة، وهو لم يمدّد إليّ يدًا. وكيف يكون ذلك والاعتراض مضى عليه شهران، والمطران يتدخّل عليه وهو ينفر من بين يديّ؟ غير أنّي احتجّجْتُ أن أقف على شهادة من الدّر المُنتخب هل هي هكذا في اليونانيّ، فبعد توّسّلات كثيرة مع أيّامها، منّ عليّ بمطالعتها وكتبنا صحتّها وأظهر لي خللها. ولولا استميله بذلك فما كان يمنّ ولا بمطالعة تلك الفقرة.

لا سيّما أنّي، أوّلاً، ما نسبتُ الكتاب لي، ولا جعلتُ لي فيه اسمًا حذرًا من إضرار أهالي حلب الذي كدّث أقع فيه وأعدم حياتي في الطريق كما عرّفني المطران شفاهاً في القسطنطينيّة، وثانيًا نسبته للمطران لكون الاعتراض //40r// كان مُختصّاً به. إلّا أنّه لما قدم المطران صفرونيوس إلى حلب وأوقفه عليه خالكم، فأمر أنّه يُنسب لي ويُكتب باسمي نسبة صحيحة بشهادة خالكم باتّعاي. فعندها أرسل إليّ خالكم مكتوبًا وعرّفني أنّه كتب اسمي فيه ونسبه إليّ، لأن لا المطران ولا غيره شاركني بتأليفه. وقال هذا من الواجب، كما أشار به المطران كير صفرونيوس وشرع يأخذ خاطري بأنّي لا أواخذه بهذا. ولو[لا] المطران صفرونيوس كان يتمّ الكتاب منسوب للمطران جناديوس كما عملته.

ولما رجعتُ من القسطنطينيّة، أخبروني في طرابلس واللاذقية بدعواه بتأليف الكتاب، وأنا لم أعاتبه بشيء من هذا قطّ، بل بالصدّ زدّث في محبّته وودّه كما ترون حتّى الآن. ولم أرَ منه إلّا مثل هذا الكبير والإعجاب والتشامخ على الأحباب. فليكنّ له الإله مُعطيًّا غفورًا. فإذا قرئتُ حضركم معه فكيف بيان الفرق، وإن ماثلته للمطران صفرونيوس باين¹²² مقدار التفاوت¹²³، وإن وقف في صفّ أوستراتيوس وتلميذه الخوري مسعد، فكيف أرى نظرهما إليّ ونظره، وبقيّة الأحباب كيف مكاتبته ومكاتبته. فكما تحسن عندكم إذا أكملنا كتاب بغية المراد وفي نقض المواد أرسل له مكتوب رجاء بمطالعتة والخير يكون. //40v//

57. [من يوسف مرك، من بيروت]

{عمدة البلغاء والمُتكلّمين، كنز النُحاة والمُعرّبين}¹²⁴، وقُدوة المُعلّمين والأقرب بالفضل من المُقرّبين، الشّمّاس (موسى الأكرم)¹²⁵ لا زال في كلّ عصر وأوان مُكرّم، وفي الفضائل ورضى الله معزّم، وفي البركات مع حرّمته وأولاده مُنعم،

غيب إهداء الدعاء الذي تبتغيه و{سلام تبرز ضمائر الشوق من توضيح مسالك معانيه، وتظهر عوامل الغرام من معربات مُعانيه، يهديه محبّ انتصبتُ محبّته بين الورى على التمييز، وارتفعتُ مودّته بماضي عهدكم لأنّه يرى أنّ العهد عزيز. مُحبّ مبتدأ أحواله لا يعرب عنها الخبر، وأفعال أشواقه لا يحكيها إلّا مَنْ له خبر، وحروف غرامه لا سبيل إلى توضيح معانيها إلّا لمُعانيها، ولو معن غاية الإمعان والنظر،

121 M: اعطي

122 M: باي

123 M: التفاوت

124 From *Badi' al-inshā' wa-al-shifāt*, p. 28.

125 M: Above the line.

المولى الذي رفع الله مقامه حتّى انخفض¹²⁶ بالإضافة إليه كلّ مقام، ونصب له أعلام العلوم والظرافة حتّى جزم كل أحد أنّه علم الأفراد ومعرفة الأعلام، المُتميّز بلُطفه على مضارع ماضى الأيّام، والمنعوت بعطفه على جميع الأنام¹²⁷،

المعروض هو أنّه بعدما أرسلتُ إليكم جواب الحساب، وأنّه ما بيننا خلاف ولا انقلاب، ومهما تروه هو عين الصواب، إلّا وقد وَرَدَ إليّ عزيز الكتاب. صانكم الله من الأوصاب. ووصل معه المزاميرات¹²⁸ العشرة وورقة الحباب والشالة وعلبة الشراب. فمن جهة ما أرسله طبيب الأوصاب فمن غير إرسال مرارة الغراب فلا يرسل لي حساب، ولا يلدّ على خاطري كتاب إلّا مثل ذاك الكتاب الذي أرسله إليّ حَسَنَ الخطّ //41r// والإعراب. أهوده منّي البركة وخاطبه هذا الخطاب.

عرَفْتُكم بوصول الزيتون وطلَبْتُ منكم مقداره لأجل الصوم – فلا زلُّم مُتَنَزِّهين¹²⁹ عليّ عن المذمّة واللوم – وأن ترسله إلينا أخضر وإن أرسلتم البلوصفة ووعاء السمك وصار لنا غيره نرسله ويحضر. وقد بلغنا اجتماعكم بفخر الأحباب والرفقاء الخواجة موسى صدقة، فنحن بانتظاره ليمرق علينا مَرَقَة، لأننا نعلم أنّه ما له عن بيروت فرقة. لا سيّما الآن الفول كثير زائد المرقّة، ويؤكل باليد لا يؤكل بالمعلقة.

أهوده منّا البركة، وإلى ولدكم المحروس من الله، صانه الله، وإلى والدته وشقيقته، لا سيّما إلى أحيكم الأكبر وولده العزيز ووالدته، وإلى بقية الأحياء بوجه العموم، لا سيّما إلى الشّمس داوود الذي أنا لأجل ولده المفقود في أبحار غموم، ربّنا يسألُيه ويرفع عنه الهموم.

أولادي ووالدتهم يقبلون أيديكم، وصهرنا وإخوته يسلمون عليكم ويسألون خاطركم والبركة عليكم. قبل تاريخه، جاءنا مكاتيب من مصر ودمياط أخبروني بمجيء البطريرك الإسكندريّ إلى الإسكندرية، وجايب معه سندات ومكاتيب في سوء حال أهل البيغي والفرية، وأرسل مكاتيب إبراهيم كيخية وبقية الحكّام مع وكيله من الإسكندرية. فلمّا سمعوا الباباستية وقعوا كعادتهم على المشايخ الأزهرية. فذهبوا إلى إبراهيم كيخية فصَدَّهم قائلاً: ما يمكني أخالف الأوامر العلية السلطانية. وأرسل يجيب البطريرك في رأي من الإسكندرية. وعن قريب نسعى ما يحلّ بهم من الرزية.

هذا ما عدنا من الأخبار. صانكم الله من كلّ بلية. //41v//

58. [من يوسف مرك، من بيروت]

من المُجِبِّ بلا علّة، وعليه البينة والأدلة مدّة حياته وعمره بل زمانه ودهره، إلى مَنْ ذاته ألطف من النسيم وأعذب من التنسيم، وصفاته المحمودة أعطر من مسك مرّت به الصبّا، المُتخلّق بالأخلاق الذميمة المُستحسنة، راعي العقل الرجيج واللسان الفصيح، نُؤله مُرادَه وحفظ ذاته وكبت حسّاده،

126 M: انخفض

127 From *Badi' al-inshā' wa-al-ṣifāt*, p. 14–15. Slight differences: معنياه vs. معانيه; معن vs. معن; مبانیه vs. معانيه; ماضى vs. ماضى; باصله vs. بلطفه; السعادة والسيادة vs. العلوم والظرافة; مولانا فلانا من vs. الذي

128 We believe this is a scribal error. The book in question is: المزامير والتسبيحات العشرة، Psalms and ten Canticles.

129 M: منترهين

فلما وصلني الكتب الكرام الصادرة عن حلم سيادة طوبانيته الرحيمة وغازير خوتكم الكريمة، فانصرمت عني سحابة كل شبهة وارتوت من فحوى جليل خطابها كل عنوبة، فأنثيت لكم جزيل الدعاء وكثير الحمد والثناء. وكان وصولها ليدي في أوائل تموز. فواصلكم داخله عبودية لسيادة قدس طوبانيته. تطالعوا عليها بخير. وقبله في أواسط حزيران، بعثت لجنابكم كتاباً، وفيه ما يغني عن إعادة شرحه. فأرجوكم تعلموني وصلكم أم لا.

وفي هذا الطرف محبتينكم العزاز الشيخ أبو مراد والشيخ أبو فارس رحال يهدونكم¹³⁰ جزيل التحيات الرائقة وصافي التسليمات الفائقة.

ثم لا تنسني من شهى كتابك ولذيت خطابك، وتعرفني بأدنى تلويح ماذا جرى¹³¹ بالراهب المرسل نحوكم من بيروت. //42r//

59. [من يوسف مرك، من بيروت]

لمحبة ذي الجنب العزيز الأهميم، والخل الوفى الأكرم سي [موسى] المكرم، دام وجوده وأبقاه ومن كل سوء حفظه ونجاه.

عقب ذلك باعث تسطيره إفراط الأشواق ووفور الاشتياق لنيل باهي مرقوماتكم الفاخرة ومسطراتكم الباهرة، مستنمراً بها صحة أخباركم السارة وكيفية أحوالكم في هذه المدة البارحة، وذلك لكوني بعثت لمودتكم خاصة رسالة في أواسط حزيران، وبعدما بلغني شريف بركة قدس طوبانيته وعزيز طرس جنابكم في أوائل تموز، فبعدما أنثيت لكم جزيل الحمد والثناء، أرسلت لكم مرقوماً وداخله عرض لقدس طوبانيته في أواسط تموز وفيها ما يغني عن إعادة شرحه. وإلى الآن لم يأتني من لديكم أدنى علم أو إشارة إن كان وصلوكم أم لا. فلذلك حصل لي غم ليس ببسير، فلعل المانع إلى خير.

فالمرجو إذ¹³² من عالي همتمكم وسوابق إفضالكم، بأن تكلفوا عطر الخاطر وتعرفني بأدنى إشارة ورسالة ذات ألفاظ مختصرة (لأنني عارف بتواتر أشغالكم المتكاثرة)، فأولاً لكي أتيقن من فحواها صحة سلامتكم، وثانياً عن حقيقة وفود مسطراتي لديكم أم لا. فإن كانت ما وصلت لا سيما معروض سيادة طوبانيته، فأعود إليه بالعدر مستعطفًا أيضاً.

وأما انتقال المطران المرحوم فقد كلف فؤادي جداً. فربنا يحصيه بزمرة الأبرار ويطيل بحياتكم إلى مديد سنين وأدهار.

وأهد متي جزيل السلام إلى فلان وفلان، وعمركم بطول المرور مديد قرون وأعوام.

<في أواسط آب> سنة 1743. //42v//

60. [من يوسف مرك]

لمحبة الخل الفريد الوفى الأهميم، والأخ الصدوق الأكرم، من بويده أنا دائماً مغرم، ذاك المضاهي لموسى اسماً وعزماً، دام مكرماً وبالعر مؤيداً.

130 M: يهدوكم

131 M: جرا

132 M: Above the line.

فأما من حيث أنّ تخايل مأنوس طلعتكم وبارع مودتكم أمام عمق بواطن عينيّ أمدًا، وغرام سالف مقتكم ضمن غور فوادي أبدأ، وغزير اشتياق مُعانيّة بهجة مأنوس صورتكم سرمدًا، وكلم مُهتد بُد بلاغة نباهتكم لم يزل للّبي مُعذّبًا، فربّما وقلّبكم يشهد بغير ريبّ بذلك، ولكن فلا زلتُم بقدرة البارئ محفوظين وبستره مُصانين.

وبعد، فالمنهي لمودتكم على سبيل الإذاعة بأنّه قد وصلني شهيّ مُسطرّاتكم وعزيز عذب خطابكم بتاريخ أوّل أيلول، التي طردت عن ناحيتي كلّ كدر. وكرغت من منهل وفودها رايق زلال أخباركم السارة مُرتويًا، بل مُنتسِمًا هبوب أريج عطر نفحاتها مُتوافرًا، واكتفيتُ بها عن كافّة ما حرّزته لكم سابقًا، ليس عن التي صحبة معروض طوبانيّته والتي قبل طرس مودتكم الذي بالثامن من العشرة الثالثة من آب، بل وعن التي أرسلتها لمحبتكم وَاغالتها أيدي بعضهم وما بلغتكم. وحمدتُه جلّ شأنه وثناه على دوام تأييدكم وصحّة وجودكم.

خلا قد تكَوّرَتْ جدًّا بسبب هجوع الأب المُحبّ لله والزائد الإكرام ولكن كيف العمل؟ البقيّة بأعماركم. ثمّ فأرجو نباهتكم أنّه ولا بأس إن عرّفتُموني أيضًا وعن كيفيّة أحوال قُدس سيادة طوبانيّته الآن، لكي دائماً أزداد طربًا باطمئنانيّته، وذلك بعد السجدة الحضيضيّة على الأقدام<43r// السديّة، وقبلة الأيدي الطاهرة القدسيّة، كوني الآن، بحمده تعالى ونظر قُدسه المُستطاب وبركة دعاء قُدسه المُستجاب، بغاية الصحّة وفي قبول عند بعضهم المُحبّين.

ولا تسأل عمّا يظهره لي أبو مراد من الودّ العجيب والإسعاف بلطف الخطاب والأنس الفريد، حضورًا وغيابًا. وأما الأخ الحبيب الشّمس رَحال الاذنب [!] محبّكم النّجيب، ليس هكذا فقط بل وأضاف إلى ذلك فائقًا الجزء الأفضل، أي الفعل الأكمل غاية والأجمل نهاية، بما أنّه المرء الشّجاع بل الفريد عصره الوديع، وقد تكفّل بي وحده مُهتّمًا وبجميع ما يقوم بأوْدَى مُتقيّدًا، من مسكن وغيره دائماً، وجاعل منزلتي عنده بالحريّ ولده العزيز منزلة أخصّ مَنْ يودّوه ويرتاحون إليه مع أنّه على الدوام لم يزل إيناع مودته لي إيناعًا جديداً وإزهارها حديثاً. فربّنا يَمُنّ عليك وعليه بكلّ صالحة. وكافتهم عموماً يبلّغوكم جزيل التّحيّات الرّائقة والتّسليمات الفارقة. <43v//

61. [من يوسف مرك]

إلى أكمل حضرة أشرقَتْ شمس إسعادها في مطالع الكمال، وأورقتْ غروس إمدادها في رياض الكرم والإقبال، الشّمس موسى، وتكاثرت فضائلها فتعاظمت فواضلها، جناب حضرة الابن الروحيّ الأريحيّ الأوحد، مورد الوزاد ومكمد الحساد، بارك الربّ الإله عليه وعلى حرّمته ولديّه، وكان له لا كان عليه، أمين. أمّا بعد، هو أنّه (في أبرك وقت قد وصل إلينا كتابكم، وأروينا الظّمأ من لذيذ خطابكم، وحمدناه تعالى بصحّة)¹³³ مزاجكم التي هي غاية الإرب ونبل الطلب، وبقي معلومنا وصول الحرير إليكم، وأنّه صار طبق مرامكم وكذلك إن شاء الله يجيء علم ثمنه حسب مرادكم. وبقي معلومنا أنّ أخانا الخوري ميخائيل ما راد يأخذ ثمن¹³⁴ اللطر، فكثّر الله خيره وخيركم. فصرنا ممنونين له بهذه وغيرها. ربّنا بقدرنا على مكافأته بالخير وبقيكم وإياه كلّ ضير. وبقاء معلومنا والخير يكون.

خَرّر في أواخر أيلول سنة 1755.

الداعي لكم الخوري يوسف مرك. <44r//

133 M: Marg.

134 M: Above the line.

62. من المذكور [يوسف مرك] أيضاً

غِبَّ إهداء أسنى التحية والتسليمات الزكية ووصف الأشواق القلبية،
المنهى إليكم هو أنه في أبرك الأوقات وأبهج الساعات وصل كتابكم وسرّني لذيد خطابكم وإعلام
صحّة أخباركم، فشكّرتُ الله تعالى المّنان الذي أنتم بالسرور والاطمئنان، لأنّ هذا مأمولنا وغاية
مسؤولنا¹³⁵. والمكاتيب التي ضمنه وصلّت ووجّهناها لمحلّها.
والمُراد من بعد اليوم عدم إمساك مكاتيبكم إلينا، المُنيئة بأخباركم السارة وأحوالكم العامرة. ونبلّغ
مزيد السلام الوافر لكلّ من حوى مقام قدّس سيّدنا ومن سأل عنا. وفي هذا الطرف الخال وأخيكم وأولاد
الخالة وجميع الأهل والأقارب يسلمون عليكم، وطال عمركم.

63. [من صفرونيوس]

الحقير صفرونيوس أسقف عكا
البركة والنعمة تحلّ على محبة المُحبّ والولد الروحيّ الشّماس موسى الأكرم وعلى حريمه وأولاده
وسائر تصرّفاتِه.
نُعرّف محبّتكم أنّه وصل إلينا مکتوبكم المُرسَل صحبة الياقجي المُكرّم سليمان غاصر¹³⁶ وفرحنا
على سلامتكم. وقبل محبته إلينا كنّا كثيرين الأشواق إليكم، لأنّ من مده مديدة سمعنا عنكم أنكم تزوّجتم
وانتزحتم عن خدمة سيّدنا البطريرك الوافر الطوبى، وأنكم //44v// في دمشق الشام مقيمون.¹³⁷ وكنا
نتوقّع يوماً فيوماً سبب تجديد المُراسلات كالأوّل، وافتقاد ترقيم تلك المحبة القديمة التي قد تهلّلت
المباني وتقوّضت عما قليل من الصمت المُستمر. وأنتم على ما أظنّ قد أشغلكم عنا الاهتمام بالزوج
والبيت والأولاد.
وأما نحن، نغمّرت أفكارنا في لجة هموم خدمة الوكالة الكثيرة الاضطراب. فنسأله تعالى عزّ
وجلّ أن يمنّ علينا بالانعتاق والخلاص من هذه الأتعاب الباطلة، لنقف على ذاتنا ولنترّم مباشرة الهدوء
والسكون في الأشياء النافعة للنفس، لنترجم لكم كتاب **في المحاماة عن الإيمان المستقيم**، ونقدّمها هدية
للمطبعة المُنشأة جديداً بهمة سيّدنا البطريرك¹³⁸ الجزيل الطهر والقدس. وقد فرحنا جدّاً عند استماعنا
بشّريها من فم حضرة مُحبّكم وصديقنا الحاج ميخائيل توما المُكرّم، الذي من حين اجتمعنا بحضوره،
لم يزل يُكرّر لنا المدائح حضرتكم ونصوح خدمتكم للكرسيّ الرسوليّ، حتّى أنّ على قوله لولاكم لكان
تضاعف تعب المطران الوكيل بدمشق. فله درّكم، وحيّاكم الله، رعا فاكم، ولا //45r// عاش من يشناكم،
وأجاركم من مكائد الأصداد الذين يوتّرون قسيّهم بأمرٍ مُرّ على كافتنا.
وقد كتبنا لحضرة قدّس أختينا ومطران <بياس كير نيكيفورس المُحتَرَم بالروميّ عما وقع بين
ميخائيل توما وبين وكيل الإفرنج وعن غير ذلك. ربّما يعرف محبّتكم بذلك.

135 M: مسيولنا

136 M: + صر

137 M: مقيمين

138 M: البرطريرك

نهدي البركة إلى كلِّ ما يحويه منزلكم العامر من الأهل والأولاد، وإلى حضرة أخوكم¹³⁹ المُكرَّم وإلى الحاج حنّا وإخوته.
ومن عندنا حضرة الداسكلس والآباء، مع الحاج ميخائيل توما والحاج اليازجي والحاج فرح الصيرفي، والبقية يهدونكم¹⁴⁰ السلام. والبركة عليكم جزيل ثانياً وثالثاً.
حُرّر في حادي عشر آب 1747.

64. [من صفرونيوس]

الحقير صفرونيوس مطران عكة
النعمة الإلهية والبركة السماوية تستقرّ حالة على محبة ولدنا الروحاني، بل مُحِبِّنا الحَقَّاني، الشَّماس موسى المُكرَّم، بارك الربَّ الإله عليه وعلى حريمه وأولاده وكافة تصرّفاتِه أتمَّ البركات السماوية، آمين.
في الخامس [من] شهر تشرين الثاني وصل إلينا مكتبكم المُحرَّر في الخامس من تشرين الأول، ففرحنا به غاية الفرح لكونه لم يكن مبثُراً إيانا بصحة سلامتكم فقط، التي كنّا مُتلهِّفين باستيقاظ منذ حين لاستماعها، بل ومصحوب أيضاً بمكتوب قُدس الأب العام والسيد الهام، أفندينا الجزيل الغبطة والاحترام، البطريرك الأنطاكي الطوباني. فلذلك، حين وصولها إليّ، مع أنّي منذ أربعة //45v// أشهر كنت¹⁴¹ عليل الجسم وطريحاً على مضجع المرض، لسنتُ أعلم كيف انتعشت قواي الحظيطة من الأكدار ونفسي المدقّرة بدقر الهفوات والأوزار، وتذكّرتُ تلك الأيّام القديمة والسنين الماضية التي كان بها شملنا مُجمِعاً وخطابنا بغير واسطة مُستمعاً، والعمر زهواً والسير رهواً. وأمّا الآن كلَّ ذلك عبّر كالمنام وأضغاث أحلام، والكبر أدرك والشيب هجم والمرض أصرم. وقد يسوغ لي الصراخ مع القائل: أيّامي قد فنيّت كالدخان وعضامي في مثل المقلّا قد قَلِبَتْ [مزامير 102: 3]، ولا سلامة في عظامي¹⁴² من وجه خطاياي التي تعالت فوق رأسي مثل حمل ثقيل خبيث [مزامير 37: 4-5] مُعدّ للحريق الأبديّ، إن لم يترأّف الربّ عليّ. فيا ليت قبل انقضاء الحياة يتسهّل لنا إعداد زيت قليل للمصباح المُطفأ¹⁴³ لكيلا نلثب خارج الباب عند مجيء الختن المشاق إليه المحبوب جدّاً [أنظر متى 25: 1-13] الذي حلاوة مشاهدته هي ملكوت السماء والابتعاد منه هو الهلاك الأبديّ.

ثمّ سيّدنا البطريرك في مكتبه يوعز إليّ بالذهاب إلى كرسيّه لأطوف من مكان إلى مكان للتعليم. فهذا الشيء أنا أحبّ أن أفعله، لكن من يطيق كلّ حين أسهم رؤساء كهنة الأبرشيات وغيرتهم. لو أنّ غبطته عوض مطران صيدا كان يوجّهني لحلب لحين مجيئه السعيد إليها، هذا الرأي كان الأصوب على ما أرى. لكن البائن لم يشأ الربّ ذلك، فلذلك لم يلهمه إليه. وواصلكم جوابه ترسلوه لُقُدُسِه. فالبركة عليكم والدعاء.

نهدي القبلّة الأخويّة والأشواق الرائقة الوافية إلى قُدس أخينا كير نيكيفورس الوكيل مطران بيباس، كذلك وإلى حضرة المقدسيّ ميخائيل توما وأخيه حنّا وصهرهما، وإلى كلّ المُحِبِّين جميعاً، وإلى المُعلِّم

139 M: اخوتكم

140 M: يهدونكم

141 M: Above the line.

142 M: عضامي

143 M: المطفأ

داود مسلمونه قريبكم //46r// المقدسي. ومن عندنا المحبين كلهم مع الداصكالس معلنا يهدونكم البركة والسلام والدعاء.
حُزِرَ في الخامس من تشرين الثاني سنة 1749، في أورشليم المقدسة.

65. [من صفرونيوس]

الحقير صفرونيوس مطران عكة وما يليها
النعمة الإلهية تبارك على محبة ولدنا الروحي الأكرم الشماس موسى اليازيجي المكرم. بارك الرب
الإله عليه نفساً وجسماً، وأرشدته لكل عمل صالح.
وبعده، المُنهي لمحبتكم أني كثير الأشواق إليكم، ومكاتيبكم السابقة¹⁴⁴ وصلتني وأوردت إليكم
الجواب، لكن البابين أشغلكم الدهر بمصائبه عن مكاتيتي، ولربما لتفاقم الحزن المفرط الذي حكم برقاد
خالكم المرحوم حناً فخر، لأن هذا الخبر قد أقفل قلبنا عند الاستماع. وبالحقيقة إن عمود كبير وركن أبناء
الكنيسة الأرثوذكسيين كان ذاك المُنتج في كل الديار المصرية. لكن ماذا¹⁴⁵ المُمكن نحزن الدهر كله
عليه إلا أن بولص العظيم الصوت بصرخ علينا ألا نحزن على الراقيين كما يحزن بقية الناس الذين لا
رجاء لهم [1 تسالونيكية 4: 13]. وكفى كل جواب لأن الذي صعد إلى السماء الثالثة لم يقرر ذلك عبثاً، بل
لعلمه نياح الراقيين وخلصهم من كآبة الجسد الكثيف الذي نحن مرتبطون به، وبلوغهم إلى نيل عربون
الحياة الأبدية بعد الموت أو عز إلينا¹⁴⁶ ألا نحزن عليهم. وإن حزننا يكون كمقدار حزن الرب على صديقه
ألعازر بدموع قليلة لا غير.
ومثلكم لا يفتقر إلى تذكرة مثل هذه الأقوال بما أنكم، منذ نعومة أظفاركم، قد تمهّزتم بمُداسة الكتاب
الإلهي، خصوصاً في خدمتكم لسيدنا البطريرك الجزيل الغبطة، لأن حظكم ظهر مغبوطاً من كل جهة،
كالقائل طوباهم الذين يخدمون الطوبانيين.
وإن سألتكم عنا، لله الحمد، طيبون بخير. ليلاً ونهاراً في مرصدة أعداء الله الخارجين المُرتعشين.
واصل إليكم {حامل الأحرف الخوري عبد المسيح أرثوذكسي مُعتبر¹⁴⁷ مهذب الأخلاق تقّي السيرة،
وقع في محنة وتجرّم أكثر من خمسمائة غرش تحت أغراض مُضادي الإيمان، والآن قاصد فضلكم
لتخرجوا //46v// له إسقاطيون من قداسة البطريرك ليجمع له صدقة من البلاد الأنطاكية. لله دركم إذا
ما خاب قصده فيكم، بل تكون له النصره والجبر الكلي من همّتكم عند سيدنا البطريرك، وتوصوا فيه
حضره الوكيل المُحترم المقدسي ميخائيل والصراف المقدسي فرح وكل المحبين.
ونُهدي البركة للمذكورين، سيّما إلى حضرة أخيك المقدسي ميخائيل الأكرم، وكذلك إلى حنا أخي
الوكيل، وكل إخوته والمحبين، والبركة عليكم.

[أيار 1742]

¹⁴⁴ This word is omitted in Letter 18.

¹⁴⁵ The word وكيف is added to Letter 18.

¹⁴⁶ M: Above the line.

¹⁴⁷ This sentence is present in Letter 18 but the word order is different.

66. [من صفرونيوس]

صفرونيوس، برحمة الله تعالى، رئيس أساقفة مدينة القسطنطينية، رومية الجديدة، والبطريرك المسكوني النعمة الإلهية والبركة السماوية تحلّان على نفس وجسد ولدنا الروحي الشماس كير موسى اللوذعي المكرّم. بَارَكِ الربّ الإله عليه وعلى حرّمته وأولاده ومن ينتمي إليه باتّام البركات السماوية، وصانه من كلّ المخن والنوائب، وأسبل عليه سدول النعم والمواهب، بشفاعاة والدّة الإلهة مريم ملاذّ البشر، من مرّ بِيهِ الخلاص من عدنها ودَحَر، وجميع القديسين، آمين.

سبب تحرير طرس البركة لمحبتك، أيّها البليغ، المأثور أوّلاً إهداء البركة إليك والسؤال عن أحوال سلامتك، وثانيًا للعلم بنوّتك الروحية بأنّا لم نفتأ¹⁴⁸ على الدوام سائلين عن صحتك وعافيتك، طالبين من جلّاله تعالى حفظك ووقايتك ونجاتك من كلّ سوء وأذية نفسانية جسدية. نسأله تعالى يجعل دعاءنا بك مقبولا وبالإجابة موصولا.

وفيما نحن مواظبون على هذا الدعاء لمودّتك، ورد إلينا مكتوبٌ محبتك وحمدناه عزّ شأنه على صحتك. وقبّله أيضًا، وصلنا العرض العموميّ من المسيحيّين عن يد ولدنا الروحيّ بابا أناسيوس. وكلّ ما شرحت علمناه وما أشرت فهمناه. حقّا قد رثينا لمصيبتكم، ورقينا لحالك، وفهمنا كلّ ما نالك أوّلاً من مكتوب محبتك، والعرض ثانيًا من تعريف ولدنا الروحيّ المرقوم. وقد أليستنا الكآبة حداد الغمة والكره، إذ قد طرق مسامعنا ما كان خلاف الأرب. ولكن نسأل الله تعالى يجعل نهاية الأمور خيرًا.

ثمّ من جهة العرض، أبقيناه عندنا لكي نقرأه على مجمعنا المقدّس، وحينئذ نعمل كلّ ما يلهمنا إليه الروح القدس. وإنّما نوصي أولادنا الروحيّين المسيحيّين المباركين بأن يُطيلوا أناتهم ويصبروا يسيرًا لأنّهم دائماً في //47r// بالنا، وما يمكننا نتخلّى عنهم أبداً البتّة. ومهما اتّفق عليه المجمع المقدّس سنعرّفهم به. يكون ذلك معلومك.

فأهدهم منّا أجمعين البركة والدعاء، ونعمة ربّنا يسوع المسيح تكون حالة عليك سرمدًا، والبركة تشملك مع الدعاء ثانيًا وثالثًا.

حرّر في خامس تشرين الأوّل سنة 1777 الهنديكيون الحادي عشر، والإمضاء بالرومية.

67. صورة مكتوب صموئيل البطريرك القسطنطيني الجزيل القداسة

صموئيل، برحمة الله تعالى، رئيس أساقفة القسطنطينية، رومية الجديدة، البطريرك المسكوني النعمة الإلهية والبركة السموية تحلّ وتبارك على محبة جسد ونفس ولدنا الروحيّ الكاتب المكرّم موسى، بارك الربّ الإله عليه وعلى حريمه وأولاده وكافة تصرّفاتة أتمّ البركات السموية، ثمّ نعرّف محبتكم أنّه، في أواخر نيسان، وصل إلينا مكتوبكم المحرّر باللغة التركية في أواخر شهر آذار، المتضمّن تخبيرًا لنا بوفاة وانتقال أخينا وشريكنا في خدمة الأسرار الإلهية المرحوم الدائم الذكر البطريرك الأنطاكي كيريو كير سيلبيسترس الجزيل الغبطة من دار الفناء إلى دار البقاء في اليوم الثالث عشر من شهر آذار. ولما طرق ذلك سماعنا شقّ علينا جدًّا، واشتملنا من الحزن والغم ما لا يُوصف لفقده وانتقاله. فالربّ إلهنا ينيّحه مع الصديقين في الأخدار السماوية، وبمنحك عمراً طويلاً وصحةً سلامية، ويوفّق لنا أيضًا كلّ ما يؤل للخلاص والمنفعة لشعبه وكنيستة الجامعة المقدّسة الرسولية.

وبعد وقوفنا على فحوى مكتوبكم ومكتوب الوكيل المُكْرَم ولدنا الروحيّ الحاج جرجس، للحين شَمَرْنَا عن ساعد العزم والهمة بالمشورة والفحص، صحة أَخُوْنَا المشارِكَيْن لنا في خدمة الأسرار الجزيلة، غبتهما ماثاوس البطريرك الإسكندريّ وبرثانيوس البطريرك الأورشليميّ، وبقية الإخوة مطارنة المجمع القسطنطينيّ المقدّس، في باب انتخاب شخص مُوافق نافع لهذا الكرسيّ الأنطاكيّ المقدّس الرسوليّ، بجدّ وفحص كما هو الواجب علينا من الحماية والمناضلة عن الكنيسة المقدّسة. فوقع الانتخاب على أَخينا مطران حلب المكرم كير فيليمن، واثّذب لهذه الخدمة البطريركيّة. {ولنا أمل بالله تعالى وعزّ 149 أنّه يسلك مع الكافة بسلامة ومحبة، كما سلك سابقاً مع أهل حلب بمؤانسة وهدوء. فلذلك علمنا محبتكم بذلك لقطع وقمع كلّ اضطراب وقلق يُحتمل وقوعه، فتكونوا وأنتم أيضاً مع الوكيل المومّ 150 إليه جيورجيوس 151 عاكفين على الاهتمام بما يؤول إلى نفع هذا الكرسيّ}. 152 //48r// 153 ومُقيدين بخدمتكم وكتابتكم، وأهدوا منّا جزيل البركات والنعم إلى أولادنا جماعة الكهنة الأرثوذكسيّين وسائر جماعة المسيحيّين عموماً. واصلهم من طرفنا مكتوب بركة ليُقرّ 154 عليهم قاطبة في محروسة دمشق وبقية الكنائس في هذا الصدد.

ومن ههنا الإخوة جميعاً يهدوكم ولهم البركة والنعمة، ومناً أيضاً ثانياً وثالثاً. حُرّر في أواخر شهر نيسان في جمعة الذاكينيسمو المقدّسة. كلّ سنة وأنتم سالمين. سنة 1766 مسيحية، ست وستين وسبعمائة وألف. وغيره روميّة من بطاركة القسطنطينية ما حرّرها في هذا المجموع. //47v//

68. <صورة مكتوب> 155 كير إلياس فخر لو غوثاتي الكرسيّ الأنطاكيّ

غِبْ إبلاغ السلام التامّ بمزيد العزّ والإكرام، المنهّي هو أنّه وصلني سلامك في مكتوب قدس سيّدنا البطريرك الكلّيّ الغبطة، وصار معلومي أنّك مُقيّد في خدمة قدّسه بالكتابة، ونظرْتُ كتابتكَ، وعجبنِي منك الخطّ والنصّ. بارك الله. حيّاك الله. وقد فرحتُ كثيراً بخدمتك عند سيّدنا الكلّيّ الغبطة. إن شاء الله تعالى تستفيد من قدّسه شرقاً وسيرةً حسنةً ومعرفّةً، وتصير جِراق. وقدّسه قريب والدك بالقرابة الطبيعيّة، فما يحتاج لك توصية في خدمة قدّسه، والسلوك في طريق الاستقامة، وكنتم أسرارهِ، والمُراقبة لله في السرّ والعلن وباقي القول. ثمّ يا ولدي لما تكتب مكاتيب سيّدنا البطريرك الكلّيّ الغبطة، أمسيكها من فوق شويّة أقلّه من نصف الورقة والتوقيع فوقانيّ، أي اسم البطريرك، اجعلْهُ سطر مُتّصل غير مُنفصل في الوسط تحت "المجد لله دائماً".

149 This word is not clear.

150 M: المومي

151 Previously written جرجس

152 Written vertically in the left margin.

153 At the bottom of f. 48r, we read: كماله مكتوب البطريرك صموئيل الكرسي المقدّس; this is the continuation of Patriarch Samuel's letter.

154 M: ليقرى

155 A whole line – at least eight words – is missing because the page was cut during binding.

وكنْتُ أودُّ أن يكون لي تأليف بقربك لأعلمك قواعد الكتابة وفنَّ الإنشاء، لأنَّ على ما لاح لي أنَّ فيك قابليَّة واستعداد لذلك بالقوَّة، ولكن ربَّما أُعمل لك بعض إنشاءات¹⁵⁶ لازمة لك. سلِّم لنا على جميع من في خدمة سيِّدنا البطريرك الكليِّ الغبطة. سطر في 29 تشرين الثاني سنة 1732 مسيحية.

69. [من صفرونيوس؟]

وبلغني أنَّ سيِّدنا مراده بنسخ كتاب نكتاريوس عند واحد في ذلك الطرف، ولكن يا ولدي يلزم أنَّك أنت تلاحظه وتوعيه، لأنَّ مثل هؤلاء جهال اللغة ويجهلون جهلهم، لأنَّهم من عدم معرفتهم في اللغة والإملاء يكتبون¹⁵⁷ بخلاف ما يوجد قدامهم في النسخة، ويظنون¹⁵⁸ أنَّهم ما كتبوا خلافها. مثلاً يكتبون¹⁵⁹ عوض التاء الممدودة تاء مربوطة، وعوض المربوطة ممدو <دة>، وعوض المؤمنين مؤمنون أو عوض المؤمنين <ون> مؤمنين، وما شاكل ذلك. فهذا خلاف المع <نى>. فيصير كلَّ تعبنا سدى¹⁶⁰ ضائع. إفهم هذا و <ما> يحتاج لك توصية فيه. //48r//

70. [من صفرونيوس؟]

قد وقفتُ على أوراق الشقيِّ أمبروسيوس الأيوسطاتييس، أي الرافض الديانة المارق. واعتذاره من جهة كتابي هو كذب، لأنني أرسلته إليه إلى بيت ذيب الإدليي في حلب، موضع الذي كان نازلاً فيه، وثاني يوم سألتُه عنه، فقال إنَّه وصلني. المراد تكتب له هذا بعينه، ولكن هو كاذب ولا يُصدِّق منه بكلامه. فإن كان أبقاه عندهم يُعرِّفنا حتَّى نطلبه منهم. والذي كتب لكم إياه عن صحَّة كهنوته، وأنَّه ما عرِّي من الكهنوت، نعم، صحيح، ولكن ليس له التصرُّف به ما لم يُنبَّ توبة نصوحة، ويعمل قانونه كما يأمر به القديس باسيليوس الكبير، ليس كقانون الجماعة المحدثين. وإن كان شَبَّه ذاته ببطرس الرسول الذي جدد سيِّده وبعده ندم فصار هامة الرسل وصخرة الإيمان، ولكن¹⁶¹ ذلك لما ندم وبكى بكاء مرّاً على سقطته، فما هرب إلى رؤوس الجبال واختفى، لكنَّه جاهر بالأمانة وطاف بالكراسة في المسكونة، وصار مقدام الرسل وإمامهم، وأخيراً قضى نحبه بالشهادة. وداود أخطأ¹⁶² وبكى على خطيئته المضاعفة، وكان يواضع بالصوم ذاته، وضعف من أكل الزيت والصلوات المُتواترة، حتَّى أنَّه صار نبيّاً، فاستحقَّ أن يقول الربُّ عنه: إنني وجدت قلب داود مثلي قلبي [أعمال 13: 22، أنظر 1 صموئيل 13: 14]. وقال: إنني لا أخرب هذه المدينة من أجلي ومن أجل داود عبيدي [إشعياء 37: 35]. المراد هذا وما أشبهه أكتب له ونَبِّههُ. //48v//

156 M: إنشاءت

157 M: يكتبوا

158 M: ويظنوا

159 M: يكتبوا

160 M: سدا

161 M: Above the line.

162 M: اخطى

71. [من صفرونيوس؟]

من جهة كتاب المرحوم نكتاريوس المطوّب الذكر الذي ترجمناه إلى العربيّ، إن كان يلزم هناك لأجل مقاومة الأضداد أبقيه. ماذا وإلا شاور قُدُس سيّدنا البطريك وأرسله إلى اللاذقية ليد يوسف مرك، ولكن أرسله مع أحد عليه الاعتماد. ولا بدّ ما تأخذوا نسخة عن كتاب نكتاريوس الصغير الذي ترجمناه سابقاً المرسوم بـ **قضاء الحق ونقل الصدق** لأنّه فيه فوائد بالردّ على الأضداد من جهة المعمودية والشرطية وغير أسرار وبعض عوائدهم الرديئة. وقد أشرت بأنّ قُدُس سيّدنا البطريك مراده يعطيه لأحد النساخ هناك بأنّه يأخذ عليه نسخة لأنك أنت مشغول. فبا ولدي، نخاف عليه من التحريف لأنّ مثل أولئك النساخ هم مستاخ جاهلين ما يدركون الإملاء وقواعد العربية على صحتّها، فيروح تعبي سدّي¹⁶³ لأنّهم جهال وجهلهم مُرْكَب، أي أنهم جاهلون جهلهم، مثلاً عوض التاء الممدودة يكتبوا تاء مربوطة التي هي الهاء، وعوض ما يجب أن يُكتب المؤمنون فيكتبوا المؤمنين. وبعبس ذلك عوض ما يكتبوا المؤمنين فيكتبوا المؤمنون وما يشبه ذلك. فإذا وقف على ذلك أحد من الأضداد فيهزأون¹⁶⁴ بنا ويُفند الكتاب لأجل سوء الإعراب. لا سيّما في ذلك الجانب ابن زاهر الحلبيّ له اطلاع تامّ في قواعد العربية والنحو، وهم يدققون¹⁶⁵ على مثل هذا. فإن كان أنت تدبر بالك وترشد الناسخ وتحرصه مليح على مُراعاة مثل هذه الأمور، ولا بأس ربّما إذا نبّهته مليح يحترص على حفظ ذلك والخير يكون. والدعاء. //49r//

72. [من يوسف مرك؟]

إلى حضرة الولد العزيز الشّمس موسى المُكرّم، سالّمه الله تعالى، غيّب السلام التّامّ بمزيد العزّ والإكرام، المنهى هو أنّه من مدّة مديدة ما عدتْ نظرتْ منك مكتوباً¹⁶⁶. جعل الله المانع خيراً. وأمّا من جهتي، يا ولدي، صرتُ أنا عاجزاً من كثرة الكتابة وانحطاط القوى وقلة البصر. وفي هذا الوقت، يا ولدي، أصابنا رشفة من سهام الأيّام في قَدّ بديعة بنت خالك في سنّ سبع سنوات. توقّت ليلة أحد الفصح المقدّس بعد أن كابدتْ مرضة عظيمة في وجع الذبحة، شكل خوانيق في سبت الألام. تألمتْ مع السيّد المسيح وماتتْ معه يوم السبت. فلا تسأل يا ولدي عن تكدر عيشنا وحزننا عليها وأسف قلوبنا، لأنّها كانت بنت صالحة مؤدّبة¹⁶⁷ دينيّة. وبأ لها من فجعية وجيعة بفقد بهجة قلبنا بديعة السمعية المطّبعة. ولكن لنا رجاء بالله أنّها تكون قد بلغتْ بيعة الأبيكار المكتوبين في السماوات، سامعة لألحان المُعيّدين هناك.

إنّ الفجيعة بالرياض نواظرا لأشدّ منها في الرياض دوابلا فربّنا يعوّض والديها بأخيها وأختها ومن يأتيهما بعدهم. فالحمد لله تعالى على حالتي السّراء والضّراء. أمر الله على الرأس والعين. الربّ أعطى والربّ أخذ. فليكن اسمه مُباركاً إلى الأبد. [أيوب 1: 21]

163 M: سدا

164 M: فيهزأون

165 M: يدققوا

166 M: مكتوب

167 M: مادبه

3 English Translation of Mūsā's Correspondence

//1r//

We shall begin, with the help of the Almighty God and His good guidance, to write down copies of the letters that have come to us from literate friends, distinguished companions, and dear associates during our service as secretary under the guidance of His Holiness Patriarch Kyr Kyr Sylvester.

1. Copy of a letter from the Deacon Sophronios of Kilis

To the honorable, respected, revered, and cherished brother Deacon Mūsā, the most honorable, peace be upon you from the Lord.

If it so happened that our separation from you has brought us to such a state of lethargy and harm, how much more appropriate and fitting for us to partake in the solace and joy of meeting with you? It undoubtedly would be. However, this not being possible in person, I was struck by a rising motion from the fires of longing, and I took a pen and paper to write down some heartfelt prayers and convey them to you, and to inform you, firstly, that we reached Rāshayyā in safety.

As for the sweltering heat and the blazing warmth of the lofty and rugged paths of the hills, the hardship to [find] companions, the absence of solace, and the lack of guidance – before and after these fearful things – we eagerly yearn to see your radiant and joyful countenance; such that no one could possibly describe. But perhaps you might say: “Set aside your lamentations. Instead, bring us praise and commendations, and dispense with such sorrowful and tiresome matters.” Yet, can there be light without Venus¹ and Orion? Upon my life, it is not possible that any touching event can occur in your absence. For how can happiness arise when Mūsā, Meletius, and Ioannikios are not here; the ones whose absence causes every discomfort //1v// and misery?

I intended to write to you many letters, but the scarcity of paper has prevented me from doing so, because I neglected to take with me a sufficient supply for letters. Please forgive me if you can.

Kiss the hands of His Eminence, the majestic and lord of all; a humble kiss to him, to whom my distance is indeed preferred to my closeness. If possible, hasten to send me a letter that proclaims and pays tribute to the well-being of your noble constitution. This way, even from here, we can collect enormous joy from the plentitude of your sweet fragrance.

1 Known to be the third brightest object seen in the sky, after the sun and the moon.

From here, Deacon Theodosius and Chrysanthos, along with Ibrāhīm Qaṭsh, extend to you abundant greetings. And we send our greetings to Kyr Philotheos the teacher, Kyr Basil, Kyr Christophoros, Kyr Kīryākū², Kyr Ioannis, Kyr Nicholas, Kyr Ioannis Tabā³ the Protosyncellus, the beloved Deacon Laurentius, 'Isā the cook, Peter the gatekeeper, Christophas, the holy Azarias, and to all our [other] loved ones.

Written in haste on the 15th of August, in the year 1733 AD, by the humble Sophronios, who loves you and prays for you. //2r//

2. Copy of the letter from the aforementioned Deacon [Sophronios]

To the honorable Deacon Mūsā of Tripoli, the grammarian (*al-Naḥawī*), may God protect him, Amen.

As the saying goes, if I had not begun this correspondence with you, it might have been a reason for you [to hold me to account]. If only I knew then what excuse or justification you could claim for following this wide path when my letter reached you and arrived in your lands.⁴ By God, I beseech you: why did you keep your silence and tarry in your response? Perhaps you have abandoned our friendship because difficult circumstances have overcome me? Why, then, were you so insistent that I make efforts to inform you what is going on here? Nevertheless, that expression does not deceive when it says, 'Absent from sight, absent from the heart.' Indeed, you might consider abandoning my friendship, for at this time I am struggling in the abyss of concerns, the yearning abode of the desert and wilderness, and the company of people who are not accustomed to ease. How could that be in order, while you reside in a house surrounded by family and magnificent landscapes, ornamented by flowing streams and the brilliance of invincible power? Your natural traits have been endowed with the noblest features, from which you have consistently benefited. I, meanwhile, have been wearied and emaciated, my eyes filled with the earnest tears from sleepless nights.

But let us leave this aside for now, so that I do not appear as one who has strayed from the circle of righteousness. Let the pen not be compelled to write

² We prefer to transliterate this name because we are not sure of its exact form. It could be Cyriacus, as Haddad suggests ("La correspondance", p. 261). However, this is intriguing because it would be the only noun in the genitive case.

³ We adopt here Haddad's reading ("La correspondance", p. 261). Another possibility would be تَبَاع ('followers of').

⁴ Probably referring to the popular saying: عذر أقبح من ذنب, "an excuse worse than the offense".

something that may not be well received by you. Instead, I shall throw my words as an arrow directed toward you, sent out from the fortress of eloquent poets not to wound you but to remind you of an ancient love, proclaiming:

'You see me approaching you, yet you turn away from me

As if God has enriched only you. //2v//

The One who enriched you will enrich me,

And neither my poverty nor your wealth will last forever.'⁵

As for Deacon Meletius, honorable and loyal brother, and Deacon Laurentius, and Philotheos and Ioannikios: convey my greetings to them. May God bless them all.

We have heard news of the arrival of Çavuş Ahmed Agha at the prosperous patriarchal residence. Hopefully, this will give rise to good and fruitful outcomes. We look forward to hearing about it afterwards.

I wish you a long life as always.

[Written on] the 31st of August 1733.

3. Copy of a letter by the aforementioned Deacon [Sophronios]

May the best of friends be near
may happiness and joy abound⁶

Abundant peace and continuous yearning are extended to our dear and noble brother Mūsā from the humble Deacon Sophronios, who prays for him.

In truth, I have never stopped desiring a brighter future, and I lament the fate that, since my youth until now, has not ceased to bring hardships and disasters my way, myself alone among humankind. For among the series of sorrows that have befallen me and the relentless misfortunes that have poured upon me, none has caused me deeper and more grievous pain than the excruciating separation from you. Oh, how I wish it had never happened! It has brought tears to my eyes, regret to my heart, sighs to my thoughts, and filled my life with unimaginable sorrow, such that no one has ever experienced, not even Benjamin //3r// when he lost his beautiful brother Joseph [*Genesis* 43:30].

And now, as I lack the wings of a dove to fly like the king and prophet [David], [*Psalms* 55:6], to make the distances shorter, and reach you, I am in need of the tears of Jeremiah, lover of mourning, to lament my wretchedness until death. If only

⁵ A poem attributed to Ibn al-Fāriḍ.

⁶ In Ottoman Turkish.

paper could speak and feel, it would tell you without concealment the number of sighs and sorrows that reside in my heart because of your absence.

From here, I briefly inform you that on the sixth day after leaving Damascus, on Thursday the 2nd of May, we arrived in Tripoli and were kindly received by its honorable bishop, Kyr Nektarios. At that point, we were concerned with finding a ship⁷ heading either to Cyprus or to Constantinople, so we could go wherever God willed.

We encountered there the holy lord Daskalos, who showed me the joys of love along with all the people of Tripoli, truly blessed by God, and whose forefathers' land shall be abundant. Though a lack of silver might be a great concern for us, the Creator, Most High, will manage it with His economy.

I further inform you that on the way we were struck by heavy rain and thunderstorms. For from Damascus to the City of the Sun [Baalbek] the downpour and storms did not cease as a result of our sins and transgressions.

Please convey our greetings and deepest longing to all our loved ones, and long may you live. //3v//

4. Copy of a letter from the aforementioned Deacon [Sophronios]

To the esteemed one, pride of nobles and peers, adornment of enlightened brothers, the honorable Deacon Mūsā, may God Almighty preserve him.

Since I departed from you, O noble and esteemed one, to the present day, only one letter from you has reached me. As for my other three letters, there has been no response from you, perhaps because of a delay or damage en route. Yet I assure you that if your silence is due to hesitation, then this will not come as a surprise, for this is a matter of love which is, from one side, unsure. The swallow, upon entering the orchard in early spring, sings joyfully, but falls silent in winter when it departs. Such have you been: at first, you sang to us sufficiently in your letters, but why did you then fall silent before the season of the swallow? For the spring of our friendship, in my opinion, has not yet ended. But I beseech you not to despise my love, which some – I daresay – may long for. Henceforth, do not refrain from writing to me concerning every matter, especially the well-being of your pleasant temperament.

⁷ Haddad reads the word *wuqūf*, unfamiliar in Arabic, as 'a ship'. See Haddad, "La correspondance", p. 260.

Today we are present in Antioch, the great city of God, and from here we plan to proceed to Payas⁸. As for the hardships we endure, our dear brother Deacon Ambrosius, bearer of loving letters, will inform you about them, including [our] lack of silver. We hope you will treat him in a brotherly spirit.

With respect to the love, care, and overwhelming longing we have for you, //4r// time is not sufficient [to express it], and neither pen nor tongue, nor even intellect, can fully comprehend it. Perhaps our Lord will bless us with a longed-for meeting with you shortly, possibly in February.

All those with us send you abundant greetings, and from us, we extend abundant peace to all members of the patriarchal residence.

Yours, your brother, the Deacon Sophronios.

5. Copy of a letter of condolence from the aforementioned deacon, the knowledgeable one, before his departure from Damascus in the year 1733 AD

To the beloved brother in God, the honorable Deacon Mūsā, from your humble and faithful brother, Sophronios.

'I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others who have no hope' (*Hebrews* 6).⁹

Indeed, as the blessed, the chosen vessel, says, O honored brother, me neither, I do not wish you to be melancholic and gloomy over the departed, like those who are without hope. By God, I beseech you: why have you been so quickly overwhelmed by sorrow? Why, in such a short while, have you grown so weary? Are you depressed over the passing of your honorable father, as he transitioned from this fleeting, worldly life to the eternal one? What a foolish assumption! Tell me, was the one you lament and mourn for (that is, your father) made of clay, or was he eternal? Evidently, he was made of clay. His journey from the land of exile to the real homeland thus leaves you desolate and without comfort!

Cease, then, //4v// cast aside these absurd assumptions, and be encouraged and confident in God, who has taken him and will take us all after him. Do you not see how all the kings, the mighty, the prophets, the righteous, and all leaders of the world have drunk from the cup of death? Who gave birth to and created your father and mother? God. And where have they gone? To God. Likewise, here you are, like all humankind, waiting to join them.

⁸ A municipality and district of Hatay Province, Turkey.

⁹ The correct reference is *1 Thessalonians* 4:13.

Reflect on the words of the prophet: 'What man is he that liveth, and shall not see death? Shall he deliver his soul from the hand of the Gehenna?' [*Psalms* 89:48]. The wise man says: 'Vanity of vanities; all is vanity' [*Ecclesiastes* 1:2]. And David says: 'Every man is [altogether] vanity' [*Psalms* 39:5]. So, if you love your father, offer supplications on his behalf to relieve those in need, and present offerings for him in the temples of God, so that you may assist him in his actual state and qualify him to share with the saints in blessings and goodness. Don't lament and mourn for him with tears like the ignorant and inexperienced. Contemplate the condition of that heroic and courageous man and fierce lion, Job: how he was joyful even in the depths of sorrow, untroubled in the waves of adversity, and tranquil in the face of ruin. Therefore, join him in that delightful and comforting melody and say: 'Blessed be the name of the Lord from this time forth and forevermore' [*Job* 1:21].

Do you not see how death extends its sword and cuts down every human stature? It does not spare kings, does not honor the virtuous, does not fear saints, does not show mercy to the young, does not mourn grooms, does not wait for children. Indeed, it seizes those of every age and stature, reaping the harvest of human life with its sharpened scythe. Many are the philosophers who reached the pinnacle of wisdom and knowledge, yet whose intelligence became futile at the time of their death.

Alas! Alas for you, O death! To where can we humans escape from your clutches? For you are present in lands and deserts, in forests and plains, in every place, ready //5r// and determined to claim the lives of human beings. But since the Son of God was hung on the cross and descended into hell for the salvation of humanity, death has become a mockery for believers. For many martyrs and saints have despised and scorned it, considering it a transition and advancement from one state to a better one, drinking its bitter cup with joy and delight, and chanting with the voice of the great Isaiah: 'O death, where is thy sting? O Gehenna, where is thy victory?' [1 *Corinthians* 15:55; see also *Hosea* 13:14]. And now, our Lord – to whom be glory – says: 'He that heareth My word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, he passed from death unto life' [*John* 5:24]. Therefore, if you believe in Christ's word, your father did not die but passed from death unto life. And if your father is alive, why do you weep and mourn for him? Do you wish for him to die and not live? Then you are not confident in the words of Christ the Lord, the truthful and glorious One, who is everlasting. Amen.

6. Copy of a letter from the knowledgeable scholar and sage, the blessed Anba Iakobos, the hieromonk from the island of Patmos, to Khawāja Dhīb Ya'īsh, offering condolences for the loss of his son Ni'mat Allāh

Let it be known that my heart felt great sorrow when I heard about the passing of your son, the revered Deacon Ni'ma, and I did not grieve only in thought, but also in tears. For the commandment is apostolic and deals with the qualities of human nature: sorrow with those who mourn, joy with those who rejoice, and tears with those who weep [*Romans* 12:15]. However, remembrance of the virtues of that rich man [young man?] quickly dispelled my sadness and grief, as I have never known of or witnessed in this region a youth as virtuous, intelligent, devoted to worship, peaceful, welcoming of strangers, kind, and cheerful as himself, and, in particular, devoid of pride //5v// and vainglory. The flowers of these virtues – which he possessed in abundance – greatly comforted me, as he suffered no injustice whatsoever when he met his fate. He blossomed with the sweet scent of noble virtues and reached eternal life that does not perish.

Reflect for a moment on the examples that I shall present to you here. What man sails a ship amidst such furious waves, storms, and surges of the tempestuous sea and is vexed by and decries the gentle winds that push him towards the harbor of tranquility? What lost and bewildered man in a foreign land would detest and despise the guide that leads him back to the safety of his homeland? What man imprisoned in a dark, oppressive dungeon blames the one who sets him free and rescues him? Does the present life not resemble such a dark prison, an immense sea of turmoil, a foreign land devoid of consolation and solace?

For this reason, the prophets and messengers sought deliverance from this grim prison. What did the blessed Apostle Paul, the great apostle, seek except to depart from here and be with Christ? What did the king and prophet David request other than: 'Bring my soul out of prison' [*Psalms* 142:6]? Who did the Greek scholars consider more blessed than one who dies at a young age? They found Alexander to be extremely fortunate, not because he conquered and dominated the entire world, nor because the kings of the earth bowed at his feet, but because he died young, before the diseases of old age overtook him, before the hate of his enemies befell him and the affection of his loved ones waned, and before he experienced the upheavals of fortune and the fleeting glory of kingship. On account of this, the teachers of the Church do not deem //6r// a long-lived one him who has lived for many years, but the one who, in a short span of time, has exhibited many virtues. For it is said: he passed away at a young age, yet he achieved [what others will achieve in] many years, as his soul was pleasing to the Lord. Remember these things and cast away all sorrowful and oppressive thoughts from your hearts, and

thank the Lord, the Philanthrope [Most Generous], Who measures out to each one his portion and time of life.

I write these words to you from Antioch and, God willing, when I visit you in person, I will speak much more from my lips.¹⁰ Console and comfort the mother of the deceased as much as your strength allows, for the female nature is highly compassionate and prone to grief, and quick to turn to sadness and tears. Bestow upon her abundant blessings and grace from me in the Lord, and likewise to your beloved son Dimitrios and everyone in your blessed household, both old and young. Blessings upon you all, again and again.

Written on the 16th of July, in the year 1734 AD. //6v//

7. Copy of a letter from the Deacon Sophronios to the father Kyr Sylvester, patriarch of Antioch

To the holy father of fathers, the honorable shepherd of shepherds, our lord Kyr Kyr Sylvester, patriarch of Antioch, may his grace and esteem be abundant and lasting.

No tongue can describe, no pen can write, and – I dare say – no mind can comprehend the profound and excessive longing that now grips me to gaze upon your noble and venerable countenance, O, most exalted of humans. Time has thus compelled me now to voice these Davidic words, saying, just as the deer longs for the streams of water, so does my soul long for you [*Psalms* 42:1]. How I wish I had wings like a dove, so I could swiftly fly and traverse the distance between me and you, hastening to meet you, O preserved by God. However, since I am incapable of fulfilling such a wish that exceeds and surpasses my power, I have been compelled by necessity to compose this humble letter to your highness. By my stiff and helpless tongue, I praise the threshold of your exalted rank (O, most praiseworthy one).

Despite being assisted by philosophers and grammarians, I am not qualified to exalt your esteemed stature. For, just as spring is the most beautiful of the four seasons of the year, so does your eminence exceed in honor, majesty, and splendor among the four heads of the priests of the Eastern Holy Church. And just as the sun surpasses the moon and the stars in light and warmth, so does your blessedness surpass in warmth and excellence all the bishops of your time. And just as the sky encompasses all kinds of planets, along with the sun and the moon, you, O, zenith of the intellect,¹¹ hold within you all kinds of virtuous qualities, along //7r// with deeds and teachings.

¹⁰ Literally, 'coming out from the lips.'

¹¹ *Al-naṭīq* (λογικός), in comparison with the sky.

I must therefore proceed with caution, lest I become overly verbose in my address, or rash in the peril of error and misunderstanding because of my lack of knowledge. At this point, I will abstain from dialogue and direct my humble words towards Your Grace, with sincere supplications and abundant prostrations, seeking your favor to implore the Sovereign God on my behalf to facilitate the easiest acceptance of Greek teachings. Do not forget me in your blessings and keep me informed of your health. All is in your hands; may you endure and be everlasting.

Written on the 30th of November, in the year 1732 AD, from Tripoli in *al-Shām* [Greater Syria].

8. Copy of a letter from the aforementioned deacon offering condolences and congratulations to the venerable bishop of Tripoli, Kyr Nektarios

[We] kiss the hands and feet of His Grace, the honorable and esteemed lord, our Bishop Kyrios Nektarios, the highly honorable, may His Holiness endure, Amen.

We wish to inform Your Grace that, on this date, we came to the city of Latakia, which collects the Easter duty (alms) of Adana, Payas, Antioch, and Idlib. In Latakia, we met His Holiness the most reverend Patriarch and, after a few days, we intend to go with our instructor the Daskalos¹² towards the well-guarded city of Tripoli the Fragrant, where we hope to meet with Your Grace. It is hoped that your noble generosity will not exclude this suppliant from the richness of your remarkable mind.

We have learned of two pieces of news on the same day, one eliciting joy and celebration, the other sorrow and distress. With the first, we rejoiced for your happiness and were delighted with your ease and the fulfillment of your high aim. With the second, we were deeply saddened by your grief and melancholy because of the passing of your brother, the honorable Sheikh Antonios. Yet, I do not grieve the departure of that noble and virtuous man, for he has left the transient world and reached the everlasting one. //7v// I do, however, grieve for your sorrow, as the bonds of brotherhood do not cease to ignite and burn with the flames of natural compassion.

In truth, the entire city of Tripoli should summon every region and town to share in mourning the loss of this fragrant and splendid rose, which sent forth its perfume from its lands, and in lamenting the departure and loss of this virtuous and intelligent man. For within your noble lineage, honored by presidency of the priesthood, he resembled a jewel, a lily, and a redolent rose, who perfumed and enriched all who approached him with the goodness of his virtues. He was an example and

¹² Kyr Iakobos of Patmos.

a model for every type of virtue, whether in intellect, refinement, chastity, benevolence, or humility. All this could be found in the person of this virtuous soul.

Blessed is he, for he has escaped the waves of this era, and his ship reached the peaceful harbor of salvation. As the wise one says: 'When a righteous man dies, he will be at rest' [*Wisdom* 4: 7]. Then he says: 'He was taken away and chosen lest wickedness should alter his understanding, or deceit beguile his soul.' [*Wisdom* 4: 11].

So, we hope that Your Grace does not grieve for his passing, for we are all destined to reach this place and path.

May your mouth bestow blessings. For my part, convey my greetings and condolences to his brother Gabriel and his beloved son the Deacon Mikhā'il, and to all who seek refuge in Your Grace.

In addition, please take care of the literature which we translated from Greek to Arabic and which we left with Your Grace when we traveled, so that it does not get lost and present difficulties for us to translate again. I kiss your hands over and over.

Written on the 5th of January, in the year 1735 AD. //8r//

9. [Letter from Yūsuf Mark]

From the supplicant who acknowledges his weakness and shortcomings to the one considered exemplary among the scholars of his era, and upon whom the commands of the distinguished and eminent of Syria and Egypt have been placed, excelling in perfection over the people of all time, my brother in God and my son in spirit, dearest to my heart, spirit within my body, mentioned in name above, may honor endure for him.

After invocations for [your] long life, our imminent meeting, and the imparting of my praise – not even a tenth of which the reed pen can convey – I inform you that, at the most blessed of times and in the happiest of states, I have received your letter, may God grant you happiness, Amen.

With regard to your news of the passing of the honored Bishop Cyril of Alexandretta, it need not be said that this was a sign that he should not live among the people of his diocese; 'Yea speedily was he taken away, lest that wickedness should alter his understanding, or deceit beguile his soul.' [*Wisdom* 4: 11]. The passing of such an honored person is 'precious in the sight of the Lord' [*Psalms* 116: 15], as the Prophet David said.

As for the signs of the spread of the plague¹³ in your vicinity, retreating and relocating to another place is preferable and is the right course of action. Do not forget the saying of the Prophet Isaiah: 'Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast' [*Isaiah* 26:20-21]. And the words of the Sovereign God: 'If you feel hardship in one town, move to another'.¹⁴ So, there is no harm in heading towards us, to honor us with your presence and allow us to rejoice.

I have received the missing quire and the insignias;¹⁵ may you be rewarded with goodness and be protected against harm. We still look forward to the arrival of the remaining items and correspondence, etc.

[Written] in the year 1743, on the 27th of August. //8v//

10. [Letter from Yūsuf Mark]

To the descendant of the family of pride, a treasure among those who have reached the pinnacle of knowledge, most radiant beauty, greatest in fortune, and sweetest in speech, the honored Deacon Mūsā. May blessings perpetually adorn his entirety and his features and may God's protection guard him in every moment and deed. May the flag of his knowledge always be raised high, and the splendor of his achievements be enhanced by the diminishing of hostility. May his pen never cease in its conviction against heretical deeds, in its transcendence of his enemies, and in steadfastness in his beliefs. May his praise remain associated with goodness and affection, and his generosity never cease. Amen.

While I was occupied with reciting righteous supplications, uttered by every limb and organ, and repeating entreaties in prayers and remembrances in holy liturgies, your letter, rather, your noble and honorable image, reached me. What a letter it was, more delightful than a meeting! When the deserted embraces it, it extinguishes his torment. The pearls of its words, strung along chains of sincere affection, embody the fulfillment of desires and wishes. When the fragrance of its words spread to us, those scents that entice every passerby,¹⁶ the ardor and longing that I felt beyond measure and power were cooled. My hopes of meeting you

¹³ For an eyewitness account of the plague that hit Syria in 1743, see A. Russell, *The Natural History of Aleppo, and Parts Adjacent*, London, 1756, p. 197–200. The plague also caused the death of two priests mentioned in the following letter.

¹⁴ Probably referring to *Luke* 9: 5.

¹⁵ He probably means the verses of poems.

¹⁶ Literally, 'everyone who comes and goes'.

receded, and my thunderstorm quelled¹⁷ when I learned about //9r// your journey to Aleppo and from there to wherever our lord, the most blessed patriarch, will be. I praised your commendable effort and your determined resolution. May God return you safely to us.

In you, these words were fulfilled: 'You love the righteous, and you are one of them. The companion of a people follows the congregation. And you detest those whose merchandise is disobedience. May God protect you from that merchandise'.¹⁸

As for myself, the coward who hesitates, the aforementioned [patriarch] sought me many times and extended to me noble appointments. However, fearing the hardship and the extreme cold of those lands, I excused myself and stayed back. Even after the arrival of Sulaymān, son of the Priest Salāma's brother, he insisted on me, but I declined, thereby fulfilling the saying: 'I love the righteous, though I am not one of them; perhaps I may attain their intercession. I detest those whose merchandise is disobedience, but I am a partner in their merchandise'.¹⁹

I was saddened by the passing of the priests who succumbed to the arrows of the plague, and the severity of the epidemic in Damascus after the departure of His Holiness the Patriarch. I ask the Almighty God to deliver you from being killed and bring you out of Damascus to your homeland safe and victorious, for He is the Hearer of supplicants.

I had hoped that you would send my books and your uncle's newly translated—or rather, newly composed—book with the return [messenger], along with a letter from you. The return [messenger] arrived, but without any books or letters, //9v// so I remained longing for your sake. During these endlessly rainy days it became difficult for them to get here, but God is the Best Planner.

Please convey my regards to your two brothers and anyone who is present in your neighborhood. Your brother Nawfal, your sisters, and all your relatives send you greetings. Our lord the bishop and all the priests extend their prayers and abundant blessings to you. My son, Mikhā'il, kisses your hands, and my mother prays for you. Blessings be upon you.

Written in December 1743.

¹⁷ See al-Maydānī, *Majma' al-amthāl*, Proverb 102.

¹⁸ This is the response to al-Shāfi'ī's assertion cited a few lines later, attributed to his disciple Ibn Ḥanbal.

¹⁹ This is al-Shāfi'ī's assertion to which his disciple Ibn Ḥanbal responds.

11. [Letter from Yūsuf Mark (?)]

To the most esteemed spiritual son and truthful brother, the honorable Deacon Mūsā. May the Lord God bestow the most perfect heavenly blessings upon him in soul and body, and upon his wife, his children, and all his endeavors. Amen.

It has been a while since I received any written communication from you, even though I have not ceased sending you regular letters from all sorts of places, roads, and lands. This lack of response is not in accordance with the principles of brotherhood and friendship. For if you have abandoned me, I will not abandon you, and if you have indeed forgotten me, I will not forget you, but further praise and honor you. I have learned from the joyful news and reports...²⁰ //11r//

12. Copy of the letter sent by the wise Aba Iakobos the Hieromonk from Tripoli to Patriarch Kyr Sylvester in Damascus, congratulating him on his arrival

To His Holiness the most blessed, Kyrios Kyr Sylvester, patriarch of the great city of God Antioch and all the East. As a revered father and master, I offer him my humble and obedient prostrations.

We wish to inform you that we have received your esteemed letter, from which we learned of the grandiose ceremony that took place upon your entry into Damascus, and the grandeur of the order and the high honor prepared for your eminence at that time. As we have heard from many, such customs and ceremonies were not witnessed before, for your predecessors. This, in my opinion, is a token of honor for you from the Almighty, whose care elevated and inspired the multitudes, making them welcome you. Upon my life, it seems that the glory that accompanied your entry into Damascus surpasses the glory and honor that befell Saint Athanasios of Alexandria upon his arrival there, as described in his funeral eulogies related through the mouth and honor of the theologians [Saint Gregory the Theologian]. [Your entry] exceeds even this. For this reason, I venerate you along with your admirers and, following in the footsteps of David, dance before your divine ark. I furnish this glory with the eloquence of speech and thought, [proceeding] to Damascus to enhance its joy and celebrations through the words of its inhabitants and its people. Further still, with the chosen vessel I say: 'Rejoice, O city of Damascus, rejoice, for [the time] has come and the one who is the cause and source of your joy has arrived. Rejoice, for you are now adorned like a bride with

²⁰ The end is missing. The expression "different roads and lands" may be referring to his trip to Wallachia in 1747. See Letter 28. F. 10r–10v are blank.

the beauty of your radiance. You have cast away the worn-out clothes of disgrace, humiliation, and orphanhood. Rejoice, for you have borne and endured numerous trials and tests, which the worshipers of the Dragon raised against you. Rejoice now and be glad, for you have surpassed the other lands of Syria, not for the sake of //11v// your abundant fruits, nor for your vineyards and fragrant trees, nor for your rivers, known in ancient times as the Golden Streams [Chrysorrhoeas], and your title bestowed by the authors, 'the Hollow Land [Coele] of Fragrances', but for the entry of your shepherd, like Christ, into you. Thus, he will not abandon you but will protect and fight for you tirelessly until he drives away and expels the ones who corrupt and misguide your inhabitants, and send them fleeing, and exterminate from you all the wicked and deceitful ones, those who hide their wolfish nature in the form of sheep [*Matthew* 7: 15]. As the saying goes: 'He will tend to your children with the pastures of piety and righteousness, and he will administer to them the remedies and healing potions of salvation'. This, along with the rest of the letter, should suffice to express my joy for you, etc.

[Written] in January, beginning of the year 1733.

13. Copy of a letter from Deacon Sophronios

[To] the pride of honorable companions, pillar of dear friends, honorably dutiful brother, Deacon Mūsā the noble, may God always keep him well.

After conveying [our] ardent sentiments and longing for you,

I wish to inform you that I have received your esteemed and praiseworthy letter. When it informed me of the health of your eminence, I greeted it joyfully for this news. Do not think that what I say is to make light of or entertain, for if you could see and hear me from a distance, you would have heard only sighs, groans, admiration and lamentation when I speak of you. How wrongly you have attributed to me in your letter the act of forgetting you! For I remember you to such an extent that I dare to confidently quote the words from the Book of the King and Prophet to Jerusalem before its exile: 'If I //12r// forget you, may my right hand forget me, etc.' [*Psalms* 137:5]. What an extraordinary delusion!

I implore you, by God, if my mind has darkened to such an extent that I forget you, then how could I possibly remember anyone? As an inevitable consequence, I would forget all things worthy of remembrance, and my mind would be devoid of pleasant [thoughts prepared for] debates, for which we now endure sleepless nights, extreme poverty, and total humiliation, accompanied by disgrace and distress. Yet, despite all this, I do not care; rather, I am convinced that I should preserve the thought that, even if I am here without companions, in your quarter I have friendship and remembrance.

You mentioned in your letter that you have sent me several letters, but alas, only one has reached me: that directed by the venerable hand of your honorable uncle, Kyr Elias, pride of Syria and peak of the exalted Orthodox party. Yet, I acknowledge your abundant blessings, for while you are among the highest ranks in society, through your letters you still show your concern for those in the lowest state of recklessness. By God, you have excelled in eloquent speech by scattering your literary necklaces and clothing them in the robes of titles and linguistic wonders, not to mention the gracefulness of your flowing pen and embroidering of meaning with elegant and extensive rhetorical explanations. Indeed, this is the fruit of your dedication to studying literary works and your late-night immersion in the debates of the Church leaders.

As for our woeful fate, we have lost the slight proficiency we had in the Arabic language and are incapable of grasping the Greek treasures. This has righteously affected us because wisdom and knowledge, as Solomon the Wise says, never dwell permanently in wicked hearts such as ours. They find solace in worthy vessels, just like you.

It is hoped that you will compensate for our deficiencies with the virtues of your habitual tolerance. Please do not sever our connection with your esteemed news, and may your well-being endure, along with your generosity and elevation, etc.

Written in late April, in the year 1740. //12v//

14. From the aforementioned Deacon [Sophronios]

[To] the finest²¹ of esteemed brethren, the essence²² of honorable brothers, Deacon Mūsā the noble, may God grant him health and lasting goodness.

After extending greetings with the utmost respect and deepest submission,

We wish to inform you that it has been more than a year since we last received any letter or message from you. We wonder what has kept you so entirely distant from us. It seems that our memory has faded from your thoughts, and that you have been occupied with matters that have diverted your attention from us. And with this silence of yours, you distance yourself from us, perhaps to conceal certain thoughts. Please write to us now and let us know if you no longer wish to remember us, so that we can sever our hopes from you as we have done with others. There is

21 Literally: 'cream' (fig.)

22 Literally: 'butter' (fig.)

no good in a love that feels like an imposition; its troubles outweigh its joys. The one who knows needs not be known.

If not for the subtlety of your intellect, we would not have used symbols and signs with you. We advise you that the bearer of affectionate words heard from me that I have loved you for a long time and thus sought from me a letter addressed to you. If you truly love us, then demonstrate it in your actions so they can be observed. Otherwise, in honor of the love of strangers expected of all, show him a cheerful countenance.

To all those in your presence – priests, deacons, monks, and laymen – we send our warm fraternal greetings.

Written in early August, in the year 1740. //13r//

15. From the aforementioned [Sophronios], after his priestly ordination

We extend the warmest of fraternal greetings and sincerest respect to the honorable brother and deacon. May God grant him health and enduring wellness.

Following my veneration and glorification of your esteemed self, adorned with literary eloquence and golden virtues, I inform you that I have despaired from corresponding with you for some time, as a response to my previous letters to you was missing for nine months.²³ Several times, I convinced myself from your silence to turn away from seeking further written communication. However, by the grace of God, I unexpectedly received a letter from you recently, which predates your arrival in Ḥaṣbayyā and Marj'yūn. It thus did not cause delight as it is old and recounts events that have passed. Nevertheless, it is not entirely devoid of consolation. Given that time has not allowed us the opportunity for a detailed response, and that it is fitting to send congratulations and regards not only to friends but also to acquaintances, we therefore say to you: 'May you be well every year, Christ is risen'. This message extends to the enlightened writer and eloquent and distinguished speaker, the skilled teacher Anba Theodosius, and to the esteemed and beloved brother, Ḥājj Basil. I had intended to write letters to both of them, but the former entirely abandoned us, denied our friendship, and raised his eyebrows at us. God will judge this haughty grandeur and lofty conceit. Perhaps he will think of us someday and desist from concealing those ideas for which he shuns our companionship, and he will realize that his harboring of them will not yield any reward or recompense in the future, nor any immediate benefit. As for the latter, his letters tell me one thing, //13v// but his actions arm against me. It is thus more appropriate for this man of

²³ He is probably referring to Letters 13 and 14.

dignity to be reprimanded and chastised than to be offered companionship. For the [Holy] Book reprimands the instrument of evil; thus was the serpent reprimanded for becoming such an instrument. Even if we did not expect this behavior of them, then we still confer on them a brotherly kiss and handshake.

And you, my brother, do not cease to write to us about the news of your noble disposition's health, and convey our greetings to all the beloved ones.

May your well-being endure.

Written in late March, in the year 1741, in Holy Jerusalem.

16. From the aforementioned [Sophronios]

The state of healthiness is highly valued among mankind, especially for the ailing who bear afflictions. So it is that²⁴ your companionship is esteemed among people, and particularly myself as I suffer from the agonizing affliction of your absence. Oh, how I wish I had never known you from the beginning, and that your love had never taken root in the depths of my heart. Like another Job, I would describe my love toward you with the words: 'I wish the day when I knew you never were, that the sun had not shined with its radiant rays, and that Orion had not entered it, traveling in a bright sky of clarity with the regularity of its cyclic course, for the cause of my ongoing sorrow is my love toward you, which began long ago and continues to burn brightly.' How wonderful it would be to see you! Oh, if only that day of noble meeting were near; may God grant it. How I wish it were near, etc. //14r//

17. [From] the humble Sophronios, bishop of Acre

May divine grace be bestowed upon our beloved spiritual son, the honorable deacon. May the Lord God bestow abundant heavenly blessings upon him in soul and body.

I must explain to your beloved self that the reason for my prolonged lack of correspondence is not due to forgetfulness but rather to excessive concerns and engagements that have occupied us. You may have heard about the changes in circumstances that we have experienced. Since we entered this very troubled bishopric, we have been constantly engaged in various struggles and hostilities. At times, we must deal with hostile outsiders, and at other times, with the deceitful and deviants from the righteous path.

²⁴ Literally, '[I swear] by my life'.

This is not to mention the situation of the church in Nazareth, which was taken over by the padres²⁵ by virtue of money, winning over our Christian brethren through deceit and trickery. Once Ḥanāniyā the interpreter arrived in Acre, we were only able to regain the church through persistent efforts, after Sheikh Ḍāhir al-'Umar²⁶ took eight sacks of money from the Greeks. Nevertheless, the Christians remain in the confession of the Franks, and such troubles continue to plague us daily. In the space of two months in Acre, I was unjustly fined five hundred piasters to the profit of a certain sheikh called Muḥammad al-'Alī. [This was] without cause or reason, but rather solely through the actions of the Catholic faction who persistently opposes us, both covertly and openly. May the Almighty deliver us from them. These are the circumstances that have hindered our correspondence with our beloved ones. We therefore request from them forgiveness and understanding in this matter.

We extend our blessings to the beloved brother and honorable Jerusalemite Mikhā'īl and his household, as well as to all those who hold us in their hearts, etc.

Written in mid-January, in the year 1742, in Acre. //14v//

18. Copy of a letter from the aforementioned bishop [Sophronios]

May divine grace bless our beloved spiritual son, the honorable deacon and secretary. May the Lord God bless him in soul and body, and guide him in all righteous deeds, Amen.

I wish to inform you of my deep yearning for you; that your letters have reached me, and I have sent you responses. However, it appears that you have been occupied with the trials of life, preventing you from corresponding with me. Perhaps the excessive sorrow over the passing of your esteemed uncle Ḥannā Fakhr contributed to this, as this news deeply affected us all. Truly, this deceased man was a pillar and a cornerstone among the children of the Orthodox Church in Egypt. But how and why should we mourn forever? Does the great-voiced Paul not cry out to us not to 'sorrow, even as others which have no hope' [1 *Thessalonians* 4:13]? Suffice it to say that He who ascended to the third heaven did not ordain this in vain. Rather, for his knowledge of the repose of the departed and their liberation from the woes of the dense body in which we are bound to attain eternal life after death,

²⁵ I.e., Latin missionaries.

²⁶ Ḍāhir al-'Umar al-Zaydānī (1689/90–August 21 or 22, 1775), ruler of Galilee starting in the 1730s until his death. He was also beylerbey of Sidon from 1771 to 1775.

he instructed us not to grieve for them. Our sorrow should be like the sorrow of the Lord for His friend Lazarus, with but a few tears.

You do not need further reminding of these words, given your diligent study of the Divine Scriptures from your young age, especially in your service under the auspices of our lord, the honorable patriarch. Your good fortune is evident from all sides, as in the saying: 'Blessed are those who serve the blessed.'

If you inquire about us, praise be to God, we are well, vigilant day and night in the face of God's enemies, the dissenters and the heretics.

//15r// The Priest 'Abd al-Masīḥ [Christodoulos], a respected Orthodox man, polite in his words and virtuous in his conduct, will come to you bearing these letters. He has fallen into a predicament and was fined a sum of money through the accusations of enemies of the faith. Now, he seeks your assistance to issue him a *statikon* from our patriarch so he can collect alms for himself from the lands of Antioch. May God bless you if his request to you is granted, etc.

[Written at the] end of May, in the year 1742, in Acre.

19. Another letter from the aforementioned [Sophronios]

I wish to inform your beloved self that at the most opportune time I received your letter, sent with its bearer Ambrosius.²⁷ We rejoiced at your well-being, the balance of your temperament, and particularly your proximity to us in Beirut. How I wished that you could consider how close you were and come to us, relieving my heart from sorrow and making it leap for joy like the night of the crescent moon for the Arabs.²⁸ For the painful separation has lasted long, and the burning anguish of the heart endures, yet I continue to reassure my heart through the anticipation of meeting you, by the grace of the Mighty Creator.

I was eager to meet you and offer condolences regarding the passing of your departed uncles, Ḥannā and Jacob. We hope that your active spirit and discerning wisdom will prevent you from grieving for them as others who are without hope do [1 *Thessalonians* 4: 13]. This [biblical verse] should suffice for individuals like you who have been well educated in the study of the Divine Scriptures from a young age.

A week ago, a monk named Simon from Tripoli came to us. He informed us that he had left the company of Paisius of Sinai, but later we received a letter from the

²⁷ Probably the same Ambrosius mentioned in Letter 4 as Ambrosius the deacon, with whom Sophronios had sent letters to Mūsā in 1734.

²⁸ The sighting of the crescent moon marks the end of fasting and the beginning of Eid for the Muslims.

Priest Salāma, the honorable representative (*wakīl*), containing severe threats and strong warnings from our patriarch //15v// against the aforementioned individual, and indicating grave causes. However, after examining him, we found nothing of that sort. We kindly request that you intercede with our patriarch on his behalf so that the monk may return to his place of service, fearing that he might be subject to persecution and expulsion here and there. May blessings accompany your efforts.

This is not to mention the misfortune of the one who has brought your letter to us. A sign is enough to the wise,²⁹ etc.

Written in mid-July, in the year 1742, in Acre.

20. Another letter from Sophronios

We find ourselves in the midst of worries and distress from various directions, mainly due to turmoil in the Holy Church and its agitation by schismatics in these greatly troubled lands, and because of our modest living among those who have strayed from the right faith, whose hearts and necks have hardened. They have broken Christ's yoke, casting it aside, and have surrendered their necks to the yoke of the deceiver and Antichrist, who is the bishop of Rome, the archon of haughtiness, and the arrogant, diabolical throat.³⁰ While we were experiencing such upsetting circumstances, a merry ship arrived from Beirut. It was steered to us by the winds of love, and in its hold was the pure breeze of affection. When it reached the port of Acre, we found it a source of great joy because it brought to us Father Yūsuf Mark, newly ordained by our Most Holy Kyr Sylvester, Patriarch of Antioch, and the Deacon Sulaymān, the son of the Priest Salāma's brother.³¹ Do not even ask of the great joy and consolation that this brought us, for neither pen nor ink can render it. Through them, we were informed of your well-being, that you are in good health, by the grace of our Lord, and that you eagerly await our correspondence.

//16r// Moreover, [we have learned that] you entered into holy matrimony, which only increased our joy, and we prayed for you. And we were immediately moved to write this letter to you, firstly to wish you a blessed Easter, Christ is Risen, for many years; and secondly, to bless your marriage. May God make it fruitful, granting you righteous offspring. May He shower you with abundant blessings to

²⁹ Paraphrase of the well-known verse: *إِنَّ الْبَلِيْبَ مِنَ الْإِشَارَةِ يَفْهَمُ*, "The wise understand with a mere hint".

³⁰ Which means that he speaks in the name of the devil.

³¹ Salāma Najjār was priest in Beirut in April 1749, when he received Patriarch Sylvester's letter. See MS Ḥariṣā, Saint Paul 210, f. 157v.

become a refuge and shelter for the afflicted, a light for the blind, and a covering for the naked. May hungry souls be satisfied from your tables and goodness.³²

From now on, we expect your perseverance in prayers, virtuous deeds, charity, and all other noble virtues. Someone like you does not need reminding; the teachings of our Holy Father, His Holiness the Patriarch, are sufficient for you. We respectfully kiss the hand of His Holiness and convey greetings from the aforementioned Priest Yūsuf, along with Deacon Sulaymān Najjār. On the day of this letter, they are headed to Beirut, and we are deeply saddened by their departure. Please do not refrain from keeping us updated on your well-being. Extend our blessings to all your loved ones, again and again.

Written on the 23rd of April, in the year 1743, in Acre.

21. From the aforementioned father and Bishop [Sophronios] to His Beatitude Kyr Sylvester, patriarch of Antioch

Eloquent tongues and articulate and sharp intellects cannot adequately convey the magnitude of longing I have for Your paternal Beatitude, especially after the letter with which you honored me, brought by Mūsā Thamārī³³ after he visited Your Beatitude at the Holy Monastery of Ṣaydnāyā toward the end of last month. Upon reading it, my heart was filled with indescribable joy, and I recalled the old days and years gone by. I recited the words of David, saying: 'Who gives me wings like a dove to fly away and be at rest?' [*Psalm* 55:6]. I would fly to you, //16v// kiss those paternal hands, and draw from them holy blessings.

What we hope from Your Holiness is that as long as we are in these confines, surrounded by the storms of daily persecution, you do not cease to bestow your blessings and spiritual support, and especially your prayers. For it is evident that your prayers are favorably received by the Most Holy Trinity as a reward for your steadfast and fearless struggles in the name of the righteous and Orthodox faith, and, truly, the rigor of our struggle is a precious matter. Moreover, through the limited persecution that has befallen us in this region, we have come to understand the intensity and totality of that which Your Holiness has endured throughout this

³² This reflects the tradition of the Christians of Damascus to feed the poor on the day of their wedding. Against this tradition, Mikhā'il Brayk tells us that, in 1747, a well-known Christian – whose name Brayk does not mention – was so mean that he asked the *tūfekçi* (gunman) to send the poor away on his wedding day, and paid him one piastre. This became a new tradition, and the price of the service increased each time because it became a trend (Brayk, *Tārīkh al-Shām*, p. 15).

³³ This could also be translated as 'my [spiritual] fruits'.

period. Through this struggle, you have become another Athanasios or Ignatius; even another Peter or Paul. You have adorned not just one pole of the earth but, like the illustrious Orion³⁴ traversing at high speed, you shined upon the entire Roman and Eastern domains. Moreover, the southern and northern regions rejoice in your stride traversing the galaxies darkened by the beastly errors of the West, taming the wild Thracian hypocrisy, and quelling barbaric ignorance. You will thus be adorned with the crown of reward on the day of conferring celestial rewards.

We offer our sincerest salutations and blessings through your sacred voice and extend our greetings to al-Ḥājī Basil, the honorable scribe, and the esteemed son Mūsā the scribe, and all those involved in serving Your Beatitude's eminence.

We kindly request that you do not cease to correspond with us for the sake of our peace of mind regarding your honorable well-being, and so that we may drink from the fountain of your munificent blessings. May God grant you long life.

Written on the 5th of November, in the year 1741, in Ascalon, Acre. //17r//

22. Copy of another letter from the holy father and bishop of Acre, Sophronios, to His Beatitude Kyr Sylvester, patriarch of Antioch

After respectfully kissing your noble hands, this servant wishes to inform Your Eminence that, at the most opportune time, your invaluable letter reached me. However, on the day it arrived, I was in the villages surrounding Acre, offering condolences to the Orthodox Christians for the various calamities which they have faced this year, such as the urgent incidents of the siege of Tiberias, along with the mounting fears and adversities that have befallen this region.³⁵ Your Eminence is undoubtedly aware of these events, as they have been reported in detail by the honorable Jerusalemites Farah al-Ṣarrāf and Mikha'il the scribe.³⁶ It is thus futile to repeat these descriptions and to disturb your calm ears with such reports.

As for our worldly matters, we have experienced a complete cessation in the income of the entire eparchy because of widespread plunder, destruction, and the burning of villages. Nevertheless, I do not concern myself much with these events. Our only hope in these matters is that the enemies of God, who have scattered,

³⁴ Or, perhaps, 'any constellation'.

³⁵ This is a reference to the first siege of Tiberias launched by Sulaymān Bāshā al-'Azm, Governor of Damascus (1741–1743), against Ṣāḥir al-'Umar, the Tiberias-based *multazim*. It lasted from September 3 to December 1742; cf. A. H. Joudah, *Revolt in Palestine in the Eighteenth Century: The Era of Shaykh Zahir al-Umar* (2nd ed.), Piscataway, NJ, 2013, p. 37.

³⁶ This is probably the same Mikha'il al-Ṭabīb, copyist of Sophronios's translation of the Σύνταγμα κατὰ ἀξίμων of Eustratios Argentis. See MS Vatican, Sbath 245, f. 107r.

may be defeated. They all hid in dens when the war and siege took place, but later emerged like serpents from their dens, resuming their persecution of the faith. May our Lord exterminate them from earth and wipe out their memory, for they are a deceitful house, as the Prophet said of them.

How astonishing that they appear strong before rulers and elders, and depraved in their diabolical schemes. Regardless, the archon of this world supports them every day in their endeavor for the eternal perdition of souls. As for our Orthodox community, by the grace of God they are now awake 'and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition' [*John* 17:12]; those who, out of malicious or evil purposes, move of their own accord //17v// towards those heretics. Due to these afflictions and the like, we require the support of your holy prayers – not for us, but for the safety of the Church and to curb the activities of the heretics who have strayed far from it.

As for ourselves, we do not care in the slightest. We wish that every day we could be like sheep ready for slaughter in the cause of the Orthodox faith. Only this way will the children of our Christian race, who have been devoured by the enemy, be saved. Therefore, it is my sincere hope that Your Beatitude, along with the patriarchs of Jerusalem, Alexandria, and Constantinople, will coordinate worldwide to suppress and send certain of these people, who are enemies of God, to exile and captivity. Be as zealous as Phinehas, Moses, and Elijah the Zealot in filling your hands with blessings for the Lord and disciplining the rest, for their rebellion has been aggravated by total debauchery, particularly here, because the schismatics among us are worse than all other dissidents in these lands and the Arab regions.

Please excuse the verbosity of my message, etc.

This was written in early January, in the year 1743, in Ascalon, Acre.

I wish you many years of health and happiness, and I pray that you will celebrate these holy seasons with joy and delight for many more years to come.

23. From Sophronios to Sylvester³⁷

We have learned that my statement to Your Beatitude in the previous letter – that I have books which rebuke the heretic enemies of God and that, if you wish, we can send some of them to Your Eminence – has made Your Holiness angry with us, as you considered our words to be boastful. I was taken aback by this, for such an illusion never crossed my mind, as the One who examines hearts and minds knows. We therefore request your forgiveness and pardon for what we unknowingly expressed. Greetings. //18r//

37 Written vertically to fill the rest of the page, without a title.

24. [From Sophronios to Sylvester]

After [extending my praise and greetings], I wish to inform Your Holiness that I sent two letters to Your Beatitude before this one, and that there was no response, because of my unworthiness. I am currently engaged in a great struggle, not only for a lack of correspondence from Your Beatitude but also for my efforts to avoid burdening you with anything, including false news spread by certain malicious individuals, especially seeing as my sole intention was to come very soon to Damascus to kiss your venerable hands. However, certain obstacles have prevented me from doing so.

On the Sunday of Thomas,³⁸ your spiritual sons, the Priest Yūsuf Mark of Tripoli and the Deacon Sulaymān Najjār,³⁹ visited me in Acre, and many others too, after their arrival. We inquired at length about your well-being and, after staying with us for a few days, the two returned safely, with your prayers, to their homeland.

Should you wonder about the situation in these lands, they are still in turmoil because of the waves and storms provoked by the papal schism. Praise be to God, each faction has settled down individually. Since your holy prayers reached us, none of our fellow Orthodox brethren have strayed from the path, and none of the misguided have returned to us. They occasionally challenge us with objections and questions, upholding the archon of darkness, Lucifer, and blaspheming the Almighty. We therefore ask Your Beatitude to assist us through your undenied appeals before God, so that the enemies of God and His Church may not boast at our expense. Our sole intention is to ask for your holy prayers and to receive your letters //18v// of consolation in times of sorrow.

I send you a basket of smoked fish with the carrier of letters of servitude, hoping it reaches you well. Please accept it from us, as the Lord accepted the widow's two mites. We extend our greetings through you to those dedicated to your service, and to the honorable Deacon Mūsā the scribe and the esteemed Deacon Thomas. May you live long.

Written in late April, in the year 1743, in Acre.

³⁸ This is the Sunday after Easter.

³⁹ He might be the same Sulaymān (Dī)mitrī Najjār, who wrote two copies of the *Octoechos*. One is MS Brummānā, Church of the Prophet Isaiah 4 (1797), while the second is a partial copy, MS Balamand, Monastery of Our Lady 200, dated '17_' (f. 178v). Sulaymān unfortunately forgot to provide the year. Nasrallah also mentions a copy of the same book by the same copyist, dated in the same way, '17_', preserved at the School of the Three Hierarchs in Beirut (*Catalogue des manuscrits*, III, p. 281). As this collection is now lost, the copy mentioned by Nasrallah could be the same as the one in Balamand.

25. [From Sophronios]⁴⁰

'If the dead, I would say as one poet once said, wear the garment of forgetfulness in the grave, even there, I shall not forget my friend.'⁴¹ Who deserves to be told these verses, I wonder? Patroclus by his friend Achilles the Mighty, or you by me? For my love for you is great, as you know; greater than any love from the beginning of time until now, deeply rooted in our hearts, not planted by hand. It is more precious to us than the treasures of the renowned King Cyrus.

Even if a brief silence occurs, do not assume it signifies indifference or forgotten love, for you are well aware that the path is severed. How can an ancient love be forgotten? As we said above, if it so happens that we reach not only the end of the inhabited world but – I dare say – the fire, I shall not forget your love, and it shall always remain intact in my mind. Neither forgetfulness nor place nor years nor the passage of time can erase it from the book of our mind. Your love is manifest. Your love is our longing, my every joy and delight. For this reason, I rejoice, and from my joy, I find patience in everything. I thank the Lord who has bestowed upon me one as dear as you.

But now, what has befallen me, my friend? My joy is even greater than before. I suddenly heard a voice, calling out to me like a bird of God, and a melody ablaze with your familiar joy; a melody that does not lie.⁴² //20r//

26. [From Yūsuf Mark, the beginning is missing]

... exquisite words, refined expressions, unique phrases, and selected rhymes. God blessed the breath of your mouth, how sweet it is, and the brilliance of your mind, how sharp its flame. Yet, my beloved, you have lavished your praise upon me so much that I almost gained ridicule; I am on the edge of a precipice because you have made me ride without a saddle. But as I suspect, the wine of your love for me made you inebriated to the point that you crossed the boundaries and adorned me with the noblest of necklaces. I seek forgiveness from God Almighty who says: 'Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you!' [*Luke* 6:26].

As for the condition of our lord His Holiness, he has fully accomplished all his tasks in these lands, thanks be to God. Yesterday, his honorable lordship, Gregory

⁴⁰ This seems to be a letter from Sophronios.

⁴¹ 'Though the dead forget their dead in the House of Death, I will remember, even there, my dear companion', cf. Homer, *Iliad*, Book 22.

⁴² F. 19r–19v are blank.

Bek [Ghikas], informed him that he is allowing him to leave on the third anniversary of the Dormition of Our Lady, etc.

From the one who prays for you, your old beloved,
The Priest Yūsuf Mark,
[Written] on the 29th of July 1748.

27. [From Yūsuf Mark]

To him who is my son in spirit, a brother to me and the apple of my eye, the honorable Deacon Mūsā, may the Lord God bestow upon him, his wife, his children, and all his deeds complete apostolic blessings. Amen.

After waiting for news from you for a long time, the burning desire to see your handwriting ignited in my heart. Neither the abundance of work nor other preoccupations deterred me from corresponding with you, to inquire about your well-being and send you my wishes for this blessed feast and the new Easter that brings forth the dawn of Christ's true resurrection. Thus, //20v// you celebrate it again and again, vanquishing your enemies and thriving with virtuous deeds. May God make this upcoming feast a joyful one for you, and may you likewise celebrate other feasts in all the pleasant days of your long life. Amen.

As for the printing press, for which we started engraving typefaces, by the grace of God, before this glorious Easter, the iron engraving is almost complete, and after that, we will begin with the fine copper engravings. By the grace of He who dwells in Heaven, it will make for a most suitable printing press. All we need is for the Creator to facilitate its installation in a quiet place, and for us to join you again and enjoy living among you.

As for Abu Barāqish, humiliation has clothed him,⁴³ retrogression (*al-idbār*) has shaken its dust upon him,⁴⁴ accession (*al-iqbāl*) has abandoned him behind his back, and time has looked upon him with disdain. He is cheaper in Constantinople than dates in Kerman, more insignificant than roses in the month of Ramadan,⁴⁵ and heavier than fur in June. This is the outcome of oppression and aggression, the harvest of deception and falsehood.

⁴³ According to Muslim spirituality, human life is a cycle of accession/abundance (*iqbāl*) and retrogression/need (*idbār*), in both of which men should comply with the will of God.

⁴⁴ Expression meaning 'refused him'.

⁴⁵ Perhaps the author is referring to the quantity of rosewater that is sprinkled on doorsteps and across gardens throughout the days of the month of Ramadan.

Please convey my blessings to your son and those who are in your presence, and to anyone who inquires after us. Mikhā'il the monk, your disciple, sends his regards. May blessings forever be upon you, along with our prayers.

Written on the fifth Sunday of the Holy Lent, from Bucharest, in the year 1749.
//21r//

28. [From Yūsuf Mark]

To the honorable spiritual son and most esteemed and beloved Deacon Mūsā, may the Lord God bestow upon him, his wife, and all his deeds complete heavenly blessings. Amen.

We wish to inform you that we previously and continually sent you letters from Aleppo and Istanbul, informing you that the letters sent to us by the hand of the monk Mikhā'il the younger had not arrived, and that we had not received any other from you.

We have safely reached the city of Bucharest and have had the privilege of kissing the hands of His Holiness, the all-honorable Patriarch [Sylvester]. We saw that His Holiness has started engraving new type for the printing press produced by Jirjis Abū Sha'r and his companion, better than the previous ones. Prior to this date, they completed the printing of the Letter of the Council of Constantinople.⁴⁶ I composed an opening text for it and apologized for any misspelling, as ordered by His Holiness the Patriarch. Once they finished it, they shut down the printing press. Today, they finished engraving the new typefaces and began casting them; perhaps it will be running during Lent.

As for myself, at the beginning of the Nativity Fast, His Holiness sent me to the Greek grammar school to learn alongside Deacon Parthenios the younger. He sent me four Wallachian children, students of your brother Buṭrus, to teach them Arabic grammar. We request your prayers [in this endeavor].

His Holiness, the all-honorable Patriarch – God be praised – is in excellent health, and he enjoys great respect in these regions. All the people, particularly the dignitaries, men and women, visit him frequently to receive his blessings and seek his intercession. The love of the respectful Bek,⁴⁷ may God protect him, for him is

⁴⁶ Translated into Arabic by Athanasios Dabbās. Only one copy of this book has been identified by the TYPARABIC project team (see Feodorov, "Sylvester of Antioch's Arabic Books Printed in 1747 at Bucharest", p. 6, 18–27). It is preserved in the Austrian National Library and belonged to Giovanni Marghich. We are preparing a new edition of this Arabic book.

⁴⁷ He means Constantin Mavrocordat.

beyond measure. On every Sunday and special movable feast,⁴⁸ he invites him to celebrate the liturgy for them and to attend his Divine Liturgy. This is what we have observed.

Before my arrival in Bucharest, a swarm of locusts descended upon this city, and their numbers were beyond estimation. The venerable revered lord asked His Holiness⁴⁹ to consecrate water and sprinkle it on the places where the locusts were present. When he prayed, he expelled all the locusts from the area, both flying and crawling. As I was informed, the flying locusts had been [so dense as to] cover up the sunlight, while the crawling locusts were piled up the height of a cubit on the ground. He continued to drive them away from place to place and from village to village for about a month. When the people of those lands witnessed this miracle, they held him in great esteem. This is what news we have for you.

Deacon Parthenios sends you his warmest regards, asking for your satisfaction and adhering to your commands, accepted through his love of your brother Buṭrus. As he did not write to you himself and felt bashful, he joins me in sending this letter, etc.

Written on the 21st of November, [on the feast of] the Presentation of the Lady to the Temple – may you continue to be well – in the year 1747, from Bucharest. //21v//

29. [From Yūsuf Mark]

To the esteemed and revered son, most truthful dear one, my cherished and my soul, Deacon Mūsā the most honorable, may the Lord God bestow upon him, his wife, his children, and all his endeavors the most complete heavenly blessings. Amen.

I wish to inform you that, while my every joint and limb was immersed in uttering righteous prayers, your noble letter arrived, to which is due all respect and veneration. I read it, understood its contents, and thanked the Lord for your well-being. We understand that the [basket of] fish reached you and His Holiness the all-honorable Patriarch, though he did not inform me of its arrival (let it be safe). I have received the package and passed it on to its recipient the bishop of Sidon, along with the letter, which I read out and explained to him. The bishop is presently unwell, though he is improving. As I understand, he is willing to come to your location to meet with the blessed Patriarch.

⁴⁸ The word *انقلاب* does not exist in Arabic. The root *نقل* means 'to move'. I therefore think that the author is creating a word to render a liturgical terminology.

⁴⁹ Literally, 'our Lord'.

Moreover, I have received the pair of towels that you sent. Dear brother and beloved son, you have always been generous towards me, and my conditions were never favorable to repay your kindness. I could only do so through prayer and remembrance during the Holy Liturgies, which I pray God accepts from me. I had hoped we could meet during the silk season, as you promised, especially as they say that this year is a favorable season. Now you have informed me that you have an obligation for which you must return to the office, of which I pray to God that He relieves us and replaces it with something more profitable. My hope has been dashed and my yearning has intensified to the point that it burns within me.

I have received the silk fabric,⁵⁰ and I still await information as to its cost. May God reward you with goodness and protect you from harm. Our thanks to you extend much further than the towels, for you are continually gracious to your loved ones and those who pray for you.

I previously received another letter from you, in which there was a letter to your son-in-law, the Jerusalemite George, which we have also sent to him. We also sent the letter for your brother 'Abduh with our relative Ḥannā Bustrus⁵¹. I received a letter from the Priest Mas'ad from Egypt, requesting a list of the patriarchs who have occupied the See of Antioch, from the first patriarch until the present. He is in the process of composing a remarkable chronicle, and therefore we ask you to search for the relevant information, which is almost certainly accessible to you, and write it down and send it to us so we can pass it on to him. Soon, I will receive a collection [of treatises] from him concerning the righteousness of our baptism and the invalidity of the Frankish baptism. The patriarch of Alexandria sent it to him from Constantinople //22r// in Greek, and he translated it into Arabic and greatly praised it. Perhaps you know more about it. With this, I conclude my words and greetings, etc.

Written on Thursday of the Ascension, in the year 1754. May your happiness continue to increase, and your hardships dissipate.

As of this date, our dear and beloved relative Kyr Yürghākī is on his way to you. We will miss him while you enjoy his company. The pain of separation from you is renewed but rejoice [for now] and be happy with his arrival. May our Lord keep you both safe and bring you together in wellness and peace.

[Written in] the year 1754.⁵² //23v//

50 See كُرْمَسُوت in R. Dozy, *Supplément aux dictionnaires arabes* II, p. 460.

51 Ḥannā Bustrus received a letter of congratulation for the marriage of his son Mikhā'il from Patriarch Sylvester in April 1749. See MS Ḥariṣā, Saint Paul 210, f. 157v.

52 F. 22v–23r are blank.

30. Copy of a letter from the noble friend Khalīl the Jerusalemite, ibn al-Ṣabbāgh, originally from Damascus

To the unique brother and exceptional friend, the honorable Deacon Mūsā, may he live long and be protected from all harm.

We extend abundant greetings and good wishes with the ever-heartfelt longing to see your face and hear the delightful news of your well-being which, with the help and guardianship of God, remains protected.

Aside from this, the dreadful catastrophe that befell us, with the loss of the great ship laden with goods and all other kinds of assets, cannot have escaped your notice. It sank when it reached the port, which was greatly troubling to both those who were onboard and those who were not. I refer here to the passing of your esteemed uncle of good memory and praise, Ilyās Fakhr. For he resembled in his course a great ship carrying all kinds of blessings, realms of knowledge, important benefits and precious jewels of immeasurable value.

We suffer and bemoan the loss of this blessed man of God in action and words, who emulated the divine teachers and holy fathers in his life and conduct, and resembled Elijah in his zeal and ardor. What a pity for the passage of time, what sorrow for him as the days go by! Truly, he was a tree planted in the house of God, whose fruits all passersby could partake of, and all Christians would pick from its ripe clusters.

He was unique in his time and exceptional in his pride, surpassing his predecessors through his efforts and wisdom. He strengthened the Eastern lands with his teachings and exemplary life. He adorned the Church of Christ with his sweat, his labors, his sermons, and the beauty of his writings. He is blessed and fortunate for the precious treasure which was reserved for him, to whom the holy apostle says: 'He has finished his course, has kept his faith, and now departed to claim his reward from the righteous Judge' [2 *Timothy* 4:7-8], along with the rest of his beloved ones, who partake in the imperishable crowns [1 *Corinthians* 9:25] on that dreadful day. There, he will display his virtue, increase his honor, and magnify his pride with those delights that never diminish and rewards that never waver.

However, since the wise said: 'When a righteous man dies, he leaves regret behind him' [*Proverbs* 11:3], we are indeed saddened, for after his [Fakhr's] ascent, he did not show us his successor, Elisha, as [the prophet Elijah] did before him. We beseech God, who chose him from His Church, to reveal to us his successor through the sending of the Spirit that rested upon him, so this can be a consolation to the nations. Our hope is that God the Exalted will not forsake His people or break His promise to His Church, and that He will make you His successor in race and labor, out of His grace and generosity. May your life continue to endure, and may our Lord

compensate us all for his departure, as He is munificent and generous by nature, He who is 'able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham' [*Matthew* 3:9].

Look, my brother, to this era of ours in which two revered teachers – Eustratios [Argentis], of blessed memory, and your late uncle of great honor and praise – flourished. In this time too, death has befallen them both, and they have drunk from the cup of demise. We beseech the Almighty to envelop them in His mercy and unite them with His assembly. Amen, etc. [Written] in the year 1758. //24r//

31. [From Dīmītrī, brother of Khalīl Šabbāgh]

To the most esteemed brother and trustworthy friend, the honorable Deacon Mūsā, may God protect him.

[We] extend abundant greetings and sincere regards to this cherished being; may you remain well protected from misfortune.

If you should kindly inquire after your eternal friend, he is, by the grace of God and the blessing of your prayers and those of the exceedingly blessed and revered [patriarch], in good health and peace. However, his situation has not been concealed from you during this time; his journey to Izmir and the numerous hardships and fears he faced, including the dangers of death at sea and, following that, his arrival in the aforementioned town, which is afflicted by severe inflation, and where he has been staying to the present day. He has also encountered difficulties that have caused his soul to separate from his body. These include being taken away from his homeland, prevented from seeing his family, and unable to be in the company of or correspond with his friends and close companions. As if this were not enough, he was also robbed of the endurance of friendship and growth of affection which he had hoped for. He remains without any friends – distant or close, old or new. What, then, do you make of his state after such events and calamities have befallen him?

When the enemy saw his condition, he pitied him, yet none of his friends stood by him. He used to say about you, brother, that your love is everlasting, whether you are near or far. He never thought that your love would die before that of the others. This was when your beloved resided in Beirut, and he learned from others of your arrival in your homeland, my brother, and he saw letters from you addressed to both close and distant friends. This intrigued him, and he wrote two letters to you, reminiscing about your past friendship and rekindling the warmth of a love that had diminished. Yet he did not receive any response from you, even though you understood that his intention was to wish you continued health and everlasting well-being, and to inquire about the state of your health and the well-being of the most holy master [the Patriarch]. Moreover, he wished to know what you did regarding the

written commitment⁵³ he sent to you with your letters to Constantinople. It was in view of these circumstances and this aim that he waited for your answer.

What a pity for great walls built on love to be so easily brought down and dismantled by a tool of destruction. For his belief, owing to his distant state and the veil that prevented him from being seen, is that when what brothers have comes to an end, that which you have does not, and when what they have departs, //24v// that which you have remains. However, a person does not always attain what he wishes, and winds do not always blow as the ships desire.⁵⁴ Therefore, it was necessary for him to write these words to you so that if any spark of love remains, it may ignite into the blazing flame of affection that it once was. But if there is no trace left, you will not face any significant difficulty in responding to him. However, by the grace of God Almighty, we hope for a reunion.

If any misdoing occurred that prevented your correspondence, do not take it to heart, for he is only human – glory be to the One who is free from flaws and errors – and inform him so that he may reconcile with himself. The torment that he has endured because of that described above will suffice, for no human body can endure such pain and remain alive. The joys of life are in seeing loved ones, being in their constant company, hearing their sweet conversations, and receiving their letters whenever they are away.

If they withhold their communication, this in itself can separate them from a brother, strip them of a friend, and deprive them of these joys. Seeing as this is the case here, you, O brother, should not have allowed time to turn you against him.

The intention of this brother is that you do not banish him from your noble thoughts, and that you continue to send your honorable messages through your esteemed uncle. If you have a cherished person in Constantinople, please send messages through him and urge him to send them on, for he greatly thirsts for that sweet water. You should also inform him about your situation and that of Damascus, the Christians there, and how they behave with the honorable representative (*wakīl*). Inform him too about the news of the Patriarch; I heard that he went to the lands of Bughdān [Moldavia], though I do not know if this is to be believed. Send me news of the written commitment I sent: if you received it from Deacon Simon, or if it remains with him. If he did not give it to you, then send it to me by the honorable hand of your respected uncle.

⁵³ We do not know what sort of commitment he refers to. See Haddad, "La correspondance", p. 283.

⁵⁴ Paraphrase of the famous verse attributed to al-Mutanabbī:

ما كلَّ ما يَتمنى المرء يدركه ... تجري الرياح بما لا تشتهي السفن

'Not everything a person wishes for can be attained ... the winds blow contrary to what the ships desire'.

Pass on my heartfelt greetings to your esteemed brother Mikhā'il, and to all loved ones, friends, and anyone who enquires about us. May God Almighty protect you.

The one who prays for you, al-Ḥājj Dīmītr[i], brother of Khalīl Ṣabbāgh.

Written on the 13th of April, Good Friday – may you live to celebrate it again and again – from Izmir, in the year 1747. //25r//

32. [Athanasios al-Dimashqī]

Divine grace and heavenly blessings be upon the soul and body of the one who is unique in excellent qualities and exceptional in the various forms of perfection, the virtuous sheikh, expert, and perfect teacher, distinguished by his noble character and virtuous, blessed ethics, honorable father, the admirable, esteemed and praiseworthy Mūsā. May the Lord God bestow the most perfect heavenly blessings upon him and his family. May He shower him with divine protection, safeguarding him from all heavenly and earthly trials. May He grant him exceptional divine grace through the intercession of Our Lady, the Mother of God and Pure Virgin, and all the saints and chosen ones of the Almighty who have risen to the highest ranks of paradise. Amen.

[We] extend sincere blessings, heartfelt prayers, abundant longing, and profound anticipation to behold your radiant countenance and to hear your pleasant and magnificent words.

We wish to inform you that, while we were eagerly awaiting news of your well-being and anxiously anticipating a letter from you reassuring us of your devout love, at a most auspicious time and favorable hour the letter⁵⁵ of your esteemed affection, sent by land, arrived and, soon after, another one sent earlier by sea. The sweetness of their content filled me with joy, and I felt relieved from the worries and anxieties that had been weighing on me through news of your desired well-being and your longed-for health, and through my delight in your precious and cherished words. I thus raised my hands in prayer and supplication to the One who possesses great majesty and exalted highness, imploring His all-encompassing goodness and all-embracing generosity to grant me the longevity of your love and to extend your life even longer. May He keep you safe and sound for us as long as night follows day and the moon follows the sun.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ The word طرس also means 'palimpsest', probably referring to the use of a recycled support on which Mūsā wrote his letter.

⁵⁶ We translated the words ملوان and نيران explicitly.

However, since sorrow is the sister of pleasure and wherever one goes, the other hastens to accompany it, I have also been struck by grief, preventing my joy from reaching its fullest extent (although it knows no limit or end). You informed me of the troubles that have befallen you and the adversities of this treacherous world with the passing of our esteemed brother, our uncle Mikhā'il, the Jerusalemite. My sorrow and grief are not due to his loss, for indeed, in my view, he is not lost but rather found, as he has journeyed from sorrow to joy and transitioned from suffering //25v// and pain to delight and celebration. My sorrow is instead for your grief, and my sadness for your distress, for even though you are aware of this – as we hope so – the [human] nature inevitably demands its due. So, we hope that your love will not allow it [nature] to control you, but rather, offer gratitude to the Almighty at all times, and praise Him with heart and tongue for the benevolence He showed the deceased through His knowledge that he would gain something much greater [in Heaven] than that which he had here.

We thus ask the Almighty, in whose hands all souls lie, to place him among the holy fathers and to grant him rest in the eternal dwellings with the righteous and the blessed, in the gardens of paradise and the embrace of the father of fathers, Abraham. As for you, may He preserve your life, prolong your days, bring us joy through your well-being, and not deprive us of your presence. May He soothe the burning of your heart with His divine comfort, grant you the grace of complete patience, and make this the end of your sorrows and the conclusion of your trials, for He is the All-Hearing, the Responder, and does not disappoint those who seek Him.

Let it be known to your beloved self that the letter that you kindly sent through our father, on behalf of His Holiness, has reached us. We resolved to fulfill our wish to go and kiss his pure hands, but our noble fathers, first, out of their great affection for us and secondly, out of their need for us, did not permit us to go. Nevertheless, they promised to fulfill our desire and entrusted our matters to the purest Kyr Anthimos. He also promised us as they did and assured us that he would exert all his effort and diligence on our behalf. He even said: 'If I do not fulfill my promise to you, then go wherever you wish'. Thus, I agreed with their words, as they begged this of me in hope and earnestness. I have kept the aforementioned letter with me for the time being, and I hope, with your prayers, that God will bring forth what is good.

Furthermore, it should be known to you that, by the grace of the Holy Spirit, the Giver of Gifts, I was elevated to the honorable rank of priesthood within the sacred and revered church of the Holy Sepulcher. I remain steadfast in fulfilling the duty of praying for your eminence.

As for my condition, if you should inquire about it, I am in good health, by the grace of the Almighty. May your love endure through days and nights.

With regard to other news from here, there is much to share, but not all of it is certain. I know that when the Holy Fast began, a certain individual by the name of Yuwānī⁵⁷ arrived in the Imperial [City of Constantinople]. He received a gracious reception from the dignitaries and high-ranking officials of the Empire. //26r// His entry was accompanied by a grand procession, much like that of kings, and he took up lease of a *saray* and a palace. An agreement was reached between both parties that the Sublime [Ottoman] State would pay one hundred money bags per year and, as long as this continued, peace would prevail. If the agreement were to break, then war would be resumed. As we witnessed, there is at present great enmity and hatred between the Greeks and the Russians. First, [this] holds no advantage or benefit for anyone, only the ruin of the Christian people and the confiscation of their wealth. Secondly, corruption has reached an unbearable level, even akin to other nations – though whether this is for certain or not, I cannot say. Yet, aside from this, a tranquil and peaceful state now prevails. The Christians are under great protection and, according to recent news, all the lands which he [Yuwānī] conquered have been returned to the Sublime State, except for Crimea.⁵⁸ We hope that the Lord will bring good news to our ears. This is what we wanted to share with you.

We congratulate you on the Resurrection of our Lord God and Savior Jesus Christ. May your years be numerous, your days joyful, and may you celebrate this honorable Easter for many years to come in health, happiness, and prosperity, along with your beloved and protected children, as well as those whom you love and who seek refuge with you. May you be well every year.

Written on the 12th of April 1776.

You should also be aware that holy Kyr Abramius⁵⁹ is now patriarch of the Holy See of Jerusalem.⁶⁰ He is not like previous patriarchs of blessed memory, whose

57 This is most probably Ivan Abramovich Gannibal (1735–1801), who was a distinguished Russian naval commander. He played a key role in the 1770 capture of the Ottoman fortress of Navarino and later oversaw the founding of the city of Kherson in 1778. Gannibal received several imperial honors and reached the rank of *général en chef* before retiring in 1784.

58 The agreement between the Ottoman Empire and the Russian Empire was that the Ottomans would pay three installments: the first in early January 1775, the second in January 1776, and the third in January 1777. According to a document that dates from September 1776, published by Ertan Ünlü, only the first installment was fully paid, toward the end of 1775. See Ertan Ünlü, “Küçük Kaynarca Sonrası Osmanlı-Rus Müzakerelerinden Bir Kesit: 1776 Tarihli Mükâleme Belgesi”, *Belgeler*, 42, 2023, p. 290. Was the first installment paid to Ivan Gannibal in 1775, thus indicating that Athanasios is relating events from the previous year? This is possible.

59 Abramius II was patriarch of Jerusalem from June/July 1775 to November 1787.

60 Athanasios, the author of this letter, translated in 1780 Makarios Kalogeras's book *Ευαγγελική Σάλπιγξ*, 1765. The Arabic title is *Al-Baḡ al-Injīlī*. In the preface of his translation, Athanasios

philosophy rendered them pillars of the Church, such as Chrysanthos,⁶¹ Ephraim,⁶² and others. Instead, he is known for his very pious way of life, characterized by fasting, prayer, and asceticism. He is a lover of scholars and treats them with great respect. May our Lord grant him a long life and may he benefit us through his righteous prayers.

In addition to our greetings, our teacher, Kyr Anthimos, wishes to convey to you his blessings and prayers. May the grace and prayers of our Lord Jesus Christ be upon you, and may His blessings encompass you again and again.

From the one who cherishes and prays for you, Papa Athanasios of Damascus.
//26v//

33. [Papa Athanasios from Constantinople]⁶³

[To] the eloquent, sharp-witted, articulate, and distinguished one, pride and honor of the Fragrant City [*al-Fayḥā*]⁶⁴ and treasure and excellency of Damascus [*Jillaq*],⁶⁵ the most perfect master (in name and in practice), Mūsā al-Nawfalī,⁶⁶ may the Lord God bless him, his wife, his children, and all those belonging to him, and bestow abundant blessings [upon him] through the intercessions of the Fortress who mediates [on our behalf] to Him and all His saints. Amen.

[We] extend fragrant greetings that spread their scent and distinguished salutations whose dew has sprinkled among the people, and [our] deep longing and heartfelt desire to see your radiant and splendid countenance – may the Lord of creation preserve and protect it from all calamities.

I wish to inform your eloquence that at the happiest moment and most auspicious hour, I received a letter filled with your kindness and was delighted by your beautiful words. As I was glad to hear of your well-being, I offered abundant thanks to the Almighty for your good health and the pleasant times you enjoy. I ask Him – may His glory be everlasting – to let me hear joyful news from you, free from any

indicates that Abramius encouraged him to translate this work. Athanasios wrote an introduction to the translation that is preserved in the MSS, after the preface. See, e.g., MS Greek Orthodox Diocese of Homs 23.

61 Chrysanthos Notaras was patriarch of Jerusalem from February 1707 to February 1731.

62 Ephraim II was patriarch of Jerusalem from 1766 to April 1770. He is the author of the Greek preface of the Εὐαγγελικὴ Σάλπιγξ and the biography of Makarios Kalogeras.

63 Athanasios is the author; cf. Haddad, “La correspondance”, p. 283–284.

64 This word, meaning ‘the fragrant city’, is the epithet of Tripoli, the native city of Mūsā.

65 Another name for Damascus.

66 ‘Nawfal’ means ‘generous and beautiful’.

evil or harm, and to keep you for many years as an honor for the holy Antiochian throne and a guiding light for the Orthodox people, my blessed brothers and sisters. May the Lord God watch over them with His compassion and shadow them with His care.

I am now aware of all that you informed me, especially the disturbances and troubles caused by the one who loves to create discord.⁶⁷ The reality is – as your eloquence has said – if a man does not die once, he will not live forever, and if there is no destruction, there will be no rebuilding. However, all these matters are ultimately under the control of the One who is above every being, and we ask Him to guide [us] to a better outcome.

You were most likely informed of the presence of this individual in these parts toward the end of August, and of my confrontation with him and the conversation that took place between us. Following this, I did not confront him, because he is a respected man and his group is influential. Everyone who interacts with them will find their match. However, I do not blame him for what he had to say to me because, if he can express anger towards the people of Damascus, criticize their conditions, and disparage their qualities after they wrote a petition against him, how much more angry will he be with me after he has heard what I had to say //27r// against him?

But (as my conscience attests, without exaggeration) even before he came from Chios⁶⁸ and up until now, I have not ceased – with God's help – to praise his virtues. He had the intention (as he mentioned in the company of people who later relayed it to me) to cause me harm⁶⁹ in the usual manner, as you know. However, the Lord, who thwarts the schemes of leaders, did not allow him to achieve his goal, as He knew that my zeal is solely for His Holy Church. Instead, He made him come from Sāqiz [Chios] and meet me at the residence of a most glorified and respected man, may God preserve him. I have explained in part to the honorable Jerusalemite man⁷⁰ the accusations that this individual levelled against me and the rebuttals with which I resisted him – from this, you will understand the situation more clearly. And we hope that through his efforts and fervent zeal, this holy seat will be delivered from bondage during his time, and that our Lord will grant him a helping hand and support him in all his endeavors.

67 As Haddad pointed out, the person referred to is the patriarch of Antioch, Daniel of Chios (1767–1791). See Haddad, "La correspondance", p. 285.

68 The copyist wrote 'Shūr'.

69 The usage of the verb اذى with the preposition الى is incorrect. Perhaps the copyist misunderstood the verb.

70 Haddad identifies him with Jirjis Barṣūn, mentioned later in the letter. See "La correspondance", p. 285.

I have also become aware of the letters that arrived from Tripoli informing you of the situation with the Patriarch. It appears that someone sent a letter to the Patriarch informing him (as Papa Nicephorus,⁷¹ the son of the pasha, told me) that the people of Damascus sent a complaint to us about the petition we gave you. We took little notice of such notions and did not send them a response. I am not certain whether this report is accurate [or not]; if they had seen in it something contrary to the people of Damascus, they should have reported that he stayed with us for only thirty days, to clear their conscience, and testified to those thirty days only, not nine years. In brief, the matter concerning this man has now become apparent, revealing the wise from the foolish and the zealous from the indifferent. Everyone will receive their reward in accordance with their intentions and efforts. No one will be crowned unless they struggle with the necessary effort [*Philippians* 3:14; 1 *Corinthians* 9:25]. So, we ask the Almighty to grant patience to the Christians of Damascus and strengthen them in their faith, for they have endured not only persecution from the Greeks and the Catholics but now their own relatives and co-religionists are also fighting against them.

May He, in His goodness and generosity, grant them relief and comfort in place of their suffering.

As for what you mentioned about the person who accompanied us, I am indeed very surprised. I never expected him to deny all the kindness I showed him, to the point where I served him myself and placed him above myself. Despite all this, not only did he fail to express //27v// gratitude but he also criticized me. Yes, if I were in a place that belonged to me alone, I would have welcomed him and sat with him as I did in Damascus. But now I am staying in the house of another and have someone else with me. How can I take two people with me? May God increase his goodness. If you should doubt anything of which I have informed you, then address our follower, Jirjis Barṣūn, who can tell you everything that happened. I should have completely turned away from him by now since his ingratitude has become

71 From MS Vatican, Sbath 133, we learn that in 1778 Papa Nicephorus was in Constantinople with Patriarch Daniel of Chios. There, he found the manuscript MS Vatican, Sbath 133, with an Aleppian enemy of our millet', presumably a Rūm-Catholic Aleppian. Together with MS Sbath 133, Papa Nicephorus bought other manuscripts that the Aleppian claimed the Muslims had stolen during the war. He dates his note May 1779. As the manuscript was copied in 1774, the war in question might have been the Ottoman–Iranian War of 1775–1776. Papa Nicephorus also bought in Constantinople MS Damascus 211 from *al-aghyār*, 'those who are different'. The note is again dated May 1779. We understand that both books were bought from the same man. In the same manuscript, there is a note by 'Isā Iskandar al-Ma'lūf identifying Nicephorus as the brother of Athanasios, which is clearly a wrong identification, since Athanasios calls him, in the letter, 'the son of the pasha'.

evident. But out of respect for your love and my duty, I have shown him renewed kindness – even greater than before – and consoled him as much as I could.

This is what I convey in response to your eloquent letter. I ask that you continue to correspond with me to assure me of your well-being.

Send my blessings, prayers, and heartfelt greetings to our beloved, the honorable Abū Yūsuf Dīmītrī, and equally to your son, the honorable Deacon Jirjis, and his brothers, as well as all the residents of your noble household. Send my greetings also to our dear brother, your most virtuous and pious brother-in-law Deacon Yūsuf, and his honorable father, as well as to everyone who inquires after us. May God preserve and keep you safe for many years.

Written in haste on the 5th of October, in the year 1777.

Attached is a letter from His Holiness in response to your letter, which [I hope] will find you well. Please inform us of its arrival along with news of your well-being. If you can bear a little effort and endure the minor inconvenience of coming here in person, as I mentioned to the Jerusalemite, it would be better than sending your letter. That way, I can see you, enjoy your company, and we can both find relief from our fatigue and exertions. Your reward – God willing – will be granted both physically and spiritually with the full recompense from the Giver of Rewards, glory be to Him, and this will strengthen you.

I also inform you that when I composed your letter on behalf of His Holiness and he read it, he reproached me for not informing you about the arrival of your first letter which was regarding me. I explained to His Holiness that it had slipped my mind, and that my thoughts were preoccupied at the time. I ask for your pardon and forgiveness. //28r//

34. [From Athanasios al-Dimashqī]

Divine grace and heavenly blessings be upon the soul and body of the spiritual son, the sagacious father and master, most honorable and beloved Deacon Mūsā, and [upon] his wife, his children, and all his spiritual and physical deeds. May all heavenly blessings be complete, Amen.

After extending blessings and prayers, and inquiring about your health and well-being, we inform your esteemed wisdom that should you inquire after us – praise and thanks be to God – we are, as of this day, in health and security; long may this continue for your noble self. We constantly raise our hands in supplication and prayer to our God, the Glorious One, to grant you peace of mind, well-being, and the fulfillment of all your hopes. We ask Him to accept our supplications and requests, for He is the Responsive and Sovereign God.

You may well be aware of our safe arrival in these parts and our meeting with our Christian children, which caused us immense joy, both spiritually and physically. Matters, thank God, are progressing well and better than expected.

For our part, we realize that we have only just now come to know them, and likewise they us. Therefore, love, peace, and harmony must prevail as we humbly accommodate each one according to his way, so that we might – with God's grace – if possible, win them all. If there are one or two who are unwilling to change their usual resolve, then may God enlighten their minds.

Our utmost desire when we arrived was to write to you so that you could be reassured of us, as is rightly due, for we cannot forget your immense kindness and the sweetness of your speech – especially during that brief yet cherished last moment. The only obstacle to [our] writing sooner was an illness that affected us for several days, after which we were busy fulfilling our duties to our Christian children, preaching and teaching during this fasting season, which we pray brings you health and well-being for many years to come. As you mentioned before, barren land requires frequent plowing, and we hope through God, who grants growth, that our efforts will not be in vain. We pray that the outcome will be good.

We have also been informed of the departure of the venerable Patriarch from your side, but we still do not know where he is currently residing //28v// or what his destination is. We are saddened by his hardship at his old age, but these are the games of the devil, from whose traps we pray that God will deliver us and bring us safely to the harbor of tranquility. This, in brief, is all [we wished to say] for now. Should it occur to your noble mind to send a response, even if brief, the comfort it would bring us would not be insignificant: you would be showing us great favor in this, as you did in other matters. We continually ask God to keep us reassured about you and to hear nothing but what pleases our hearts and brings joy to our eyes, for He is the most generous among those beseeched.

We send blessings and prayers to your well-protected children, the residents of your blessed household, and all the beloved who inquire about us. May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, along with our humble blessings, envelop you eternally, Amen.

Written on the 25th of June, in the year 1787. //29r//

35. [Letter from Yūsuf Mark]

To the pride of beloved sons, most esteemed spiritual son, my soul, the revered master Mūsā <...>,⁷² may the Lord God bestow upon him, his children, his wife, and all his deeds the most complete heavenly blessings, Amen.

I wish to inform you that while I was besieged by the treacheries of life, imprisoned and oppressed, your letter reached me and alleviated my sorrow and distress. I praise God for your well-being, safety, and the abundant love you have shown me, which flows like a river, and your kindness which overwhelms me month after month. Indeed, I am indebted to your love for the remainder of my life and for eternity [for the following]:

1. That which you sent me was the reason for my recovery from my illness.
2. You assisted me in copying my work against my opponent.
3. You mentioned working on the opening formula (*ḥamdala*) for this text, which is my ultimate goal. It should include: 'Just as the Devil once hid in the serpent to wage war against the ancestors, so Bābīlā hid in his disciple, the son of Jilda, Jibrān, and began to wage war against the Church with his mouth and tongue, as if he were his tool'.⁷³
4. You sought the favor of our lord Patriarch regarding my journey.
5. Through you, His Holiness became aware of my exertion and hardship.
6. I have not neglected to respond to enemies of the Church with the utmost seriousness and effort.
7. His Holiness has come to know of my passionate love and loyalty to him.

How can I repay the debt of love I owe you, my dear and cherished one? I will remember you and plead for you in my prayers and liturgies for as long as I live, and I have instructed that thanks be given after I am gone.

As of this date, I have written a letter to our lord Patriarch, recounting to His Holiness what happened between my son and a rogue from Aleppo. As he mocked our lord Patriarch in the verses of the damned priest, Niqūlā [al-Ṣā'igh] of Aleppo, my son could not bear it. He reprimanded him to make him stop, but he did not, and he insulted our lord Patriarch. My son then insulted the Pope and struck him [the rogue] with a staff in the *qaysāriyat* [bazaar] of Sheikh Shāhīn Talhūq, injuring

⁷² The lower part of three words is still visible. These words were cut off during binding so that they are not readable anymore.

⁷³ A work by Yūsuf Mark entitled *Kitāb Iqāmat al-burhān fī sadīd al-īmān: radd 'alā Jibrā'il Jilda wa-mu'allimihi al-khūrī Yūsuf Bābīlā wa-shī'at al-ṭughyān*, composed in 1763–1764, is preserved in different manuscripts, along with its refutation by Yūsuf Bābīlā, entitled *Sharḥ al-'aqīda al-'adīmat al-dark bi-daḥḍ ajwibat al-khūrī Yūsuf Mark*. See MS Aleppo, Greek Catholic Archdiocese 53, and, probably, also MS Aleppo, Maronite Archdiocese 1194.

him. Witnesses claimed that my son wounded him with a knife and insulted the Emir Ḥusayn, the governor of the land at that time, who is the brother of the emir Maṣṣūr.⁷⁴ People from the Maronite Yārid family then accompanied him [the rogue] to bribe the emir to capture, beat, and stone my son. But neither my son nor I were caught. It has now been six days since we went into hiding, and the search is ongoing. The emir is now demanding fifty *quruṣ* as a bribe and twenty for [my] exile, and we do not know what the outcome will be. We ask for your prayers. For the rest of our news, read the letter to our lord Patriarch and the letter to our lord Bishop Kyr Makarios,⁷⁵ and kiss his hands for us.

Send my blessings to Yūrghākī, for I am not in the right mind to write him a letter appropriate to his status. We also send blessings to his honorable uncle, the Jerusalemite Abū Nawfal, his children, and his household. When the time is right, please kiss the hands of our lord Patriarch Kyr Kyr Sylvester, His Beatitude, on my behalf, along with several prostrations. May you stay well.

Written on the 21st of August 1764. //29v//

36. [From Yūsuf Mark]

To the pride of sons, dearest of the noble and beloved, the esteemed spiritual son, the light of my eyes and the soul of my soul, the most honorable deacon, may the Lord God bless him, his wife, his daughter, and his two sons. [May He] make the difficult easy for him, and may he own without ever being in debt, Amen.

If you should inquire as to our longing for you, words cannot describe it; our praise for you is sweeter and kinder than the breeze. At the most opportune time, your dear letter reached us and quenched our thirst with the sweetness of your words. We thanked God Almighty for your good temperament.

We received the gift of a sample of cinnamon. May God protect you from all harm and adversity. Since we do not have such a thing here, send us an *uqīya*⁷⁶ as

74 The closest source to that period, *Kitāb al-ghurar al-ḥisān fī akhbār ābnā' al-zamān* (ca. 1800) of Emir Ḥaydar Aḥmad al-Shihābī, talks about two brothers of Miḥmīn the Emir, Maṣṣūr and Aḥmad (ed. Rustum and al-Bustānī, p. 59 sq.). We did not encounter in this source the name Ḥusayn. See also W. Harris, *Lebanon: A History, 600–2011*, New York, 2012, p. 119.

75 This should be Makarios Ṣadaqa, a former student and friend of Yūsuf, mentioned in Letter 57 by his lay name Mūsā Ṣadaqa. In 1763, Makarios was appointed as bishop of Sidon and *wakīl*. Sylvester intended to appoint Makarios in his place as patriarch of Antioch, but the bishops did not accept him.

76 A historical unit of weight in Arabic. It is the equivalent of ca. 200 g in Lebanon, Palestine and Syria.

requested. Seeing as it could be either good or bad [in quality], you should taste it without delay. If it turns out to be good, send us two *uqīya*. May God protect you from harm and unpleasantness, and may you be the beneficiary of the utmost grace and credit. Let us know who to repay for it; we are most grateful to you.

We sent on the letter addressed to the Jerusalemite Khalīl Šabbāgh that we received before this, and now you have informed us about a [second] letter to the aforementioned, though we have not received it. You asked whether the Daskalos has completed the collation [Arabic translation] of the *Octoechos*⁷⁷ with the Greek. [We are] in great trouble,⁷⁸ for it has been three months since he succumbed to the ailment of forgetfulness, and he no longer knows whether he is asleep or awake. I feel deeply saddened for him, even though⁷⁹ I was serving him and eager to see him in a good mood whenever he visited Beirut, while he was staying in Beirut and during his stay at the monastery. This is in addition to the care shown by our lord the bishop toward him, who continued to pay him a salary that I shared with him [the bishop, paying] as much as I could. We also directed him to the monastery in the hope that he might recover. Yet now he sends us a letter inquiring as to when he departed for the monastery, when he arrived, and why he went there. When he finishes eating, he forgets whether he has had lunch, and when he returns from the bathroom, he says: 'I intend to go to the bathroom'. This has been going on for many days; do not even ask about his condition. May the Lord have mercy on him and heal him.

On the same date as his letter, I and our lord the bishop sent him some letters and supplies. We sent him [a letter of] consolation and entrusted him to request whatever he needed in terms of supplies and necessities. When he returns [from the monastery], he locks himself alone in a room, as is his usual habit. May the Lord heal him of this ailment through the blessings and prayers of our Lord the Holy Kyrios Kyr Sylvester, the most reverend. If possible, please request his prayers for him and for all of us. Do not cease to inform me of your well-being. If possible, could you inform me of the amount of the bail that the Padres [missionaries] paid to be released from prison? We would be most grateful for that. Extend our blessings and prayers to your children and their mother, and to whoever seeks refuge with you. //30r//

⁷⁷ *Book of the Eight Tones*: A liturgical book containing prayers for each weekday in eight tones. Each week a different tone is used in sequence; after the eighth tone, the cycle returns to the first.

⁷⁸ The answer is not clear. We do not understand whether Theodosius finished the correction or not. But it seems he did not.

⁷⁹ The author probably wanted to say مع ذلك, 'even in this situation'.

Copies of letters that we received from the loyal and pure friend, the Deacon and writer Yūsuf Mark the Tripolitan⁸⁰

37. [First letter from Yūsuf Mark]

An eager man kisses the soil⁸¹ with his whole mouth | one considered among the followers and servants.

If I could come to you, I would visit you | walking on my head, not on my feet.⁸²

That would be little in comparison to my love for you | and I swear by God, it would not cause me any pain.

Pride of his peers and jewel of his contemporaries, a dear brother and a great friend, highly esteemed and honored by God.

The first angel parted the sea for me, bringing the joy of the children of Israel through the hands of Mūsā. He evoked the words of a certain [author]: 'I received the letter which pleased my heart and dispelled its sadness. It was like Moses had been restored to his mother, or Joseph's robe when it reached Jacob'.⁸³

I became to him as a certain [poet] described: you have written to me longing for my presence, and the lord of bounty's call is answered. I accepted the letter and said: 'I hear and obey [you], my lord, and I am at your service'.⁸⁴

Moreover, my infrequent correspondence with your Excellency is due to my verbal clumsiness, yet you:

[You] whose thoughts produce [words] like ready coins,

What compares to saying to a man you teased with riddles: 'He met with a gift!'⁸⁵

And I must add:

[You] from whose capability a rival's steps stop far too short,

⁸⁰ Here starts the second group of letters from the original collection.

⁸¹ This first part of the verse is a quotation from Ibn al-Wardī's poem.

⁸² This verse is a paraphrase of al-Ḥallāj's poem.

⁸³ This is a paraphrase of the story of Ni'ma and Naomi from the *Thousand and One Nights*:

ورود الكتاب فلا عدمت أناملاً | كتبت به حتى تضمخ طيباً
فكان موسى قد أعيد لأمه | أو ثوب يوسف قد أتى يعقوب

Rendered in a poetic way, slightly different than Arabic, in Burton's translation:

"Thy note came: long lost fingers wrote that note, * Till drop they sweetest scents for what they wrote: | 'Twas Moses to his mother's arms restored; * 'Twas Jacob's eye-sight cured by Joseph's coat!'" See Richard Burton (trans.), *The Book of the Thousand Nights and a Night: A Plain and Literal Translation of the Arabian Nights Entertainments*, t. 4, London, Burton Club, 1885, p. 14.

⁸⁴ This couplet was written by Ṣafī al-Dīn al-Ḥillī (1276–1349).

⁸⁵ Al-Hariri, *Maqāmāt*, n. 36.

Which compares to what you say to him who joins you in riddles: 'Hold off!
Hold off!'⁸⁶ //30v//

38. Copy of a letter from the aforementioned [Yūsuf Mark] that he sent to Trebizond

To the esteemed and honorable brother and revered friend, may God watch over him, Amen.

After offering the reverence due to Your esteemed Excellency, which remains guarded by the watchful eye of God,

I wish to inform you that, at a most favorable time and noble hour, your dear letter reached me, dated the 5th of July, from the land of metal,⁸⁷ Gümüşhane, mature in its benefits like a grapevine bearing its fruits, pure in flavor and sweetness, free from bitterness and acidity. What a bountiful spring it is! How can it quench those who drink from it and guide them to your judgment? What fruits are ready to be plucked by the bearer of these living and breathing tidings?

For when I read his words, I saw myself as the talkative adulteress who led the wise man astray [*Proverbs* 5 & 7]. My heart overflowed with indescribable joy upon receiving your letter: an embodiment of your noble spirit and an expression of your overwhelming love. I cannot tell you how eagerly I was waiting to breathe in the fragrant news of your robust health and sound well-being. It felt like a peaceful sign showing me your path, like Moses leading the lost Israelites. I am deeply, profoundly grateful for this abundant brotherly love and compassion, for you, amidst your many burdensome duties and extensive travels, did not forget the longing of your brothers and admirers.

I have thus composed this humble letter for you, which [my] sweat has poured into, for how could it not be so when it is destined for such a unique person as you? My words to you are like comparing a mosquito to an elephant; I trembled in fear and awe just thinking about and calculating the day when you would start reading it.

My reason for writing to you is to highlight the wonders of longing and love kindled //31r// by the flames that consume me day by day with your painful separation, O dearest beloved and companion. Thus, I longed, in the words of David, to have wings like a dove so I could fly away [*Psalms* 55: 6], visit the pure spring of your presence, and return. But since that is not possible, let us, O noble and sublime

⁸⁶ *Idem*.

⁸⁷ This is a translation of the Greek name *Argyrópolis* and the Turkish name *Gümüşhane*, which means 'the city of silver'.

one, converse through letters, quenching the thirst of longing which we cannot currently alleviate through direct interaction and face-to-face meetings as before.

[Written on] the 31st of August 1737.

39. Another letter [from Yūsuf Mark] sent to the lands of Erzurum

To the esteemed and beloved brother, the most glorious and affectionate, may God Almighty protect him and grant him a beautiful life.

[We] extend the noblest and most illuminating greetings and the sincerest regards, spreading the fragrance of a pure and loyal heart, and lavishing the finest praise upon this noble soul, upon the esteemed traits that remain a beacon of hope and the loftiest of virtues. [This] is by the grace of God Almighty, who endowed human nature with reason, speech, and hands, so that by the first, they can preserve love, by the second, express it, and by the last, enjoy it.

Given that this grace granted us is not insignificant, and that, as St. Gregory of Nyssa said, 'People ought to reveal the secrets of their thoughts through correspondence', I [wish to inform you that] I received your esteemed letter written from the lands of Erzurum on the 17th of October.⁸⁸ I rejoiced greatly upon receiving it and it healed [the pain] in my chest. Our eager heart was quenched as though it were a remedy given to a patient, for I was confined to my bed on that day. When I read it, my anxiety dissipated and my pain was forgotten, as I had been eagerly awaiting your joyful news, like a deer longing for streams of water [*Psalm* 42:1]. However, most honorable friend, it is not fitting that you should arm yourself against us and wage war on us with your words and pen to this extent, using such eloquent titles, grammatical //31v// precision and concise explanations.

Perhaps you forgot that we have little experience in this field. Did you think that you were debating with Al-Ḥarīrī⁸⁹ when you released your stallion into the arena of this art? For when I read your letter and listened to your eloquent speech, I was astonished and bewildered in thought. I was so impressed that I recited

⁸⁸ He does not specify whether it is *tishrīn al-awwal* (October) or *al-thānī* (November). In this case, it is presumably *tishrīn al-awwal*.

⁸⁹ Al-Ḥarīrī (1054–1122) was a scholar of the Arabic language. He is famous for his *Maqāmāt*. In other letters, Yūsuf reports that he copied *al-Maqāmāt* 49 and 51.

Al-Ḥarīrī's rhymed verse:⁹⁰ 'Blessed are you, how abundant your harmfulness!'⁹¹ To this I add: 'My soul is your ransom, you who possess loyalty in its highest form'. And: 'You have reached the pinnacle of faithfulness, my brother, like Al-Samaw'al who sacrificed his son Sharīḥ'.⁹² 'For any prey will do in times of need'.⁹³

Do not cease to send me your letters and engage in this blessed war against me. Keep me informed of your well-being and share news about yourself from any place or town, for 'it is not beyond God to bring the world together as one'.⁹⁴ I beseech Him to unite us with you in wellness and safety. I bow respectfully before His Holiness our Patriarch, the Triune Glory. Kiss his hands on my behalf and convey my regards to those who follow him.

Written on the second⁹⁵ Sunday of Pentecost, in the year 1738 AD.

40. Letter [from Yūsuf Mark], sent to Ḥamā

[To] the writer of decisive and binding records, eloquent in speech and artful in script, the honorable brother and revered deacon, may his virtues endure.

After [extending] the most fragrant greetings, whose eloquence illuminates the stars, whose clarity and fluency make the branches blossom, bloom, and bear fruits for this exalted self of noble nature and gracious character,

Let it be known that the water of the meadow danced, its birds sang musically and melodiously, and its flowers bloomed in all types and colors. When I asked why, I was told that a letter had arrived, its author a fountain [of linguistic expressions].⁹⁶

⁹⁰ We believe that شجع in this context is a scribal error, therefore read it as سجع. However, this reading is still problematic because we have not found the complete rhymed verse in Al-Ḥarīrī's work.

⁹¹ This citation from *Al-Maqāma al-dīnāriya* expresses the capacity of a poet to praise and criticize the same thing (in this case, two twin dinars).

⁹² Al-Maydānī, *Majma' al-amthāl*, n. 4432. Al-Samaw'al is known for his loyalty to Imru'u al-Qays who handed him the armors of Kinda's kings. He chose his son Sharīḥ's death over handing the armors to al-Ḥārith, king of al-Ḥirā.

⁹³ Al-Maydānī, *Majma' al-amthāl*, n. 3010.

⁹⁴ Abū Nuwās said this in praise of Faḍl ibn Rabī', so the conversation is about the singular individual who represents everyone, because he embodies all virtues and merits. Yūsuf Mark seems to be saying that all the virtues of previous authors were collected in Mūsā.

⁹⁵ It is not clear whether this is the next day – that is, Monday of the Pentecost – or the second Sunday.

⁹⁶ We believe the ء in ماء was mistakenly added and thus the word should be corrected to ما to rhyme with لم. In both cases, we do not know what he is referring to. Is he comparing Mūsā to the flowing water? Or is he saying that the name of the correspondent is not written?

I sensed that it was a message in the spirit of Mūsā, embellished with linguistic gems. I began to contemplate its truths, inquire about its details, and immerse my thoughts in the depths //32r// of its rich sea that has neither beginning nor end. {Perhaps I might catch its pearls and gems, or perhaps I will not quench my thirst nor find any guidance during my nocturne walk}.⁹⁷ At that moment, I confessed that I am neither a knight in this arena, nor do I have any skill in fastening its knots. Likewise, I was told that a bird singing a melody that is not its own⁹⁸ lacks harmony,⁹⁹ so I thought that dodging it is praiseworthy, even if praise does not find me. I told my companion: 'If you wish to make a bow but lack the skill, do not ruin the bow – leave it to a master bowyer'.¹⁰⁰

I thus delayed my response until I could pluck the beautiful flowers [of your letter]. News then reached me that Father Papa-Theophanis, who was previously *economos* of Şaydnāyā, was about to write to His Holiness the supreme Patriarch to request permission to stay in Latakia¹⁰¹ during the winter, as his journey to Constantinople was hindered. I therefore took the initiative to conjure up this humble and modest letter from a languid mind. For the praise you give me descends from you, and the praise I give you, from me.¹⁰² This is simply virtue and etiquette, as Chrysostom says: 'Even though some may flee from deserving praise due to their righteousness, the soul itself approves and rejoices in it, knowing what it truly is'.

I converse with the soul that delights in the truth of the discourse, and I say this not out of vanity or emptiness.

As for *Mulḥat al-i'rāb* [*The Beauties of Grammar*], I have completed the text and it will soon reach you through His Eminence the bishop, so make it into one volume. Given that the text is repeated in the Commentary,¹⁰³ make the second text, together

97 Adapted from Al-Ḥarīrī's *al-Maqāma al-raqtā'*: *فَقُلْتُ: آتِيهِمَا لَعَلِّي أَنْقَعُ صَدَى. أَوْ أَجِدُ عَلَى النَّارِ هُدًى*. We believe the new word *سري* used instead of *ناري* is the *maṣdar* of *سرى*, which means 'to walk at night'.

98 Using a different language than its own.

99 These are three popular proverbs. The most common way to say the last one is: طائر يغرد خارج السرب ('a bird singing outside the flock').

100 Attributed to Al-Ḥuṭay'a (7th c.)

101 Yūsuf Mark was in Latakia too. This is confirmed by Letter 42, where he says that until that day he was still there. Cf. Haddad, "La correspondance", p. 270.

102 The common proverb *الكلام صفة المتكلم* 'Speech is an attribute of the speaker', comes from Ibn Taymīya's *Kitāb majmū' al-rasā'il wa-al-masā'il*, vol. 3, ed. M. Riḍā, s. l., s. d., p. 163.

103 Haddad thinks that this Commentary is the work composed by Yūsuf that he mentions in Letter 49. Thus, Haddad dates Letter 49 to 1740. However, we think that this Commentary is Al-Ḥarīrī's famous commentary on his work, *Mulḥat al-i'rāb*. We also think that the work mentioned in Letter 49 is a later project that was accomplished in 1742 or 1743.

with the Commentary, another volume, rendering it lighter to carry and quicker to memorize without the need for another book, etc.

May your presence, your honor, your rank, and your veneration endure forever.

Written on the 19th of August, in the year 1739 AD. //32v//

41. [From Yūsuf Mark]

[To] the inscriber of orders and prohibitions transmitted by His¹⁰⁴ noble mouth to the head of the Apostles, most splendid brother and eminent deacon, may he live long.

{Praise be to God Almighty, who endowed human nature with reason, speech, and hands, so that by the first, they can preserve love, by the second, express it, and by the last, enjoy it. This grace is neither insignificant nor small in the eyes of God and was granted to us by Him in order that, as Gregory the Star of Nyssa said, people reveal the secrets of their thoughts through correspondence}.¹⁰⁵ We thank the Almighty for His favor.

Your noble letter reached me, which healed the wound of my heart and caused me joy that words could not possibly express. Since you mentioned that you had sent me a letter in response to what I requested and as guidance for what I sought (it did not reach me, but I am certain of your letter based on your communication, and even so, may God keep you safe and bless you), and since I felt some resentment toward you because of this [not receiving a letter], I ask for your forgiveness and pardon, for the condition of love is the sincerity of intention, and the truth of speech is the goodness of a person.

I have sent Your Eminence a letter through Deacon ‘Abd Allāh al-Shaghri, as well as the text of the *Mulḥat al-i'rāb* [*The Beauties of Grammar*]. They will hopefully reach you and bring you the honor of reading them. When you send me the books that you promised – God willing – along with some necessary drafts, I will send you the Commentary of Al-Ḥarīrī's *Mulḥat* and the text embedded within it as a second section. I remain committed to serving your faithful love. If possible, please expedite their delivery, for I have resolved, with God's will, to travel to the Egyptian lands, as my income from [this] office is meager and most of the notables have given me only empty promises.

For this reason – God willing – I plan to leave before Easter. If not, it will be after Easter, may God's will be.

¹⁰⁴ We think this is a reference to Jesus Christ.

¹⁰⁵ This section matches Letter 39 almost exactly.

We ask for your prayers.

Written on the 6th of February, in the year 1740. //33r//

42. [A letter from Yūsuf Mark]

[To] the writer of decisive and binding records, which he had never done before, the dear brother and honorable esteemed deacon, may God Almighty preserve him.

[We] extend our greetings, adorned with the fragrance of joy and illuminating human minds with their brightness, and [our] salutations, shining like suns and moons in the sky of prosperity and diffusing their radiance and fragrance among the two horizons in the presence of the one mentioned above.

I wish to inform Your Eminence that I have sent two letters. The first one, containing Al-Ḥarīrī's *Mulḥa*, was by the hand of Deacon [ʿAbd Allāh] al-Shaghri, and the second one I sent to Tripoli by the hand of a sincere admirer whom I advised to send it on to you in Beirut. This is an expression of the ardor of the longing which burns in the depths of my heart. Hopefully, both letters will reach you during joyful times and you will send us a response to them, along with the materials requested from you, my brother.

Up to now, we have been residing in the vicinity of Latakia. If our situation improves due to the income we expect to receive during the Holy Week from our students' payments, perhaps we will remain as we were before [teaching here in Latakia]. If not, then after Easter, with God's will, we will travel to Damietta. Once our journey is confirmed, we may require a [letter of] recommendation from your uncle Khawāja Ḥannā Fakhr to avoid the dangers of murderous and oppressive individuals. If you write to him and see a suitable opportunity, do recommend me to him.

Regarding the Explanation of *Al-Mulḥa*, to this date it is not yet accomplished. Unfortunately, it was postponed because of the severe cold this year and my increasing affliction with various illnesses. I thank the Almighty for His blessings.

43. [Another letter from Yūsuf Mark]¹⁰⁶

Given my longing for you, which knows no bounds, and my immense affection for you, whenever I encounter someone heading to your vicinity, I send with them a

¹⁰⁶ Written vertically in the margin. The structure of the text leaves no doubt that this is a new letter, even though the opening was not copied.

brief letter to you. When, two days from its date,¹⁰⁷ the fragrance of your letter wafted from the direction of the south¹⁰⁸ and the scent of its goodness spread throughout our region, [our] hearts were invigorated. I read it and realized that you had surpassed the limits in lauding me with praise, praise that descends from you.

As for the things that I requested from your faithful beloved, I understand that I will not get these soon. I fear that my journey [to Damietta] will be confirmed and that others will benefit from them.

I will now remain until the second week after Easter to assess the situation, may God's will be.

I prostrate myself before the holiness of His Grace, Bishop Kyr Ioannikios [of Beirut], the branch of the pure and lofty perfumed tree, and kiss his pure hands.

[Written] on the 20th of March, in the year 1740. //33v//

44. [From Yūsuf Mark] to Beirut

To the one through whom time can be both amiable and unkind, through whom fortune both comes and goes, the most noble and revered brother and ever honorable Deacon [Mūsā].

{[We] extend many splendid greetings and fragrant salutations that come and go with the scent of musk, and praises as sweet as garden flowers, and prayers that flow like the rivers of the Tigris to that noble and well-mannered person},¹⁰⁹ may God protect him from every harm and affliction.

I wish to inform you that in joyful times I had the honor of receiving your letter. This brought me immense pleasure and happiness, especially as I received the three manuscript quires.¹¹⁰ I sang their prose and poetry and felt blessed to have a part of them. It was as if their writer was interacting with me, reciting the strokes

¹⁰⁷ This probably means that the previous letter was written on March 18.

¹⁰⁸ This means that the letter came from Beirut, which is more to the south of Latakia than Damascus. We know from the previous letter that Mūsā spent some time in Beirut. Ioannikios, mentioned later in the letter, is probably the bishop of Beirut (1732–1774). See Nasrallah, Haddad, *HMLĒM* IV.2, p. 194–195, 122. One of Sylvester's disciples, Ioannikios was also originary from Cyprus. He was one of his deacons during his journey back from Constantinople and probably earlier in the Romanian Principalities. Sylvester consecrated him bishop of Beirut while still in Erzurum, on his way back to Damascus, around 1732 (?). See Brayk, *Sharṭūniyāt allaḏīn tamaḏhabū awwalan bi-maḏhab al-Lātīniyī*. He is also attested in the renovation of the Monastery of Mar Ilyās Shwayyā after the earthquake that hit the Middle East in 1759.

¹⁰⁹ We find this praise in MS Greek Orthodox Diocese of Homs 37, f. 12r.

¹¹⁰ Literally, 'with their lines'.

of his pen and elucidating the pearls of his words. I felt as if I were in the gardens of 'Alīyūn,¹¹¹ turning over the branches of jasmine trees and inhaling the fragrance of roses or other perfumed flowers. I also heard about your commendable and characteristic good deed in favor of chief¹¹² Dāwud, and thus in my favor, by providing two certificates (*statikon*), one in Greek and the other in Arabic. I am very grateful for your kindness and applaud your successful efforts and keen attention to the needs of your loved ones.

As for my departure from this country, it is currently difficult because of travel restrictions from Latakia, as the *miri* [land] system is lacking here.¹¹³ However, when God eases the way for the people of this land to travel freely, I will travel as well, God willing.

Additionally, you will soon receive the Commentary on *Milḥat al-i'rāb*,¹¹⁴ sent with His Holiness Bishop Nicephorus. Please excuse that it was copied by a child. For, despite that, I reviewed it myself and compared it to the original copy. The reason it was copied by a child is that I was ill at the time. I hope that my apology is acceptable to you.

We are saddened by the departure of His Holiness the Bishop, and we miss him dearly. He is now headed your way to keep you company.

God willing, you will send us the rest of the books you promised. Do not delay [in sending] us your cheerful messages, etc.

Written on the day after the Sunday of the Fathers that precedes the Pentecost, in the year 1740.¹¹⁵ //34r//

111 This is one of the Qur'ānic names for Heaven or Paradise.

112 Haddad understands the word *ra'īs* as 'supérieur' (head of a monastery?), p. 272. As we are not sure who this Dāwud is, we prefer to use the general word 'chief'.

113 As early as 1728, concerns about the safety of travel to and from Latakia were already being voiced. In his reports, the French consul in Tripoli described Latakia as an "outlaw port", warning that French captains who called there were at the mercy of freebooters and pirates. See Stefan Winter, *A History of the 'Alawis from Medieval Aleppo to the Turkish Republic*, Princeton and Oxford, [2016], p. 138.

114 On this work, see Letters 39–41.

115 May or June 1740.

45. [From Yūsuf Mark] to Beirut

The healing of hearts is the meeting of the beloved.

To the Sibawayhi¹¹⁶ of his time, surpassing his peers, the most honorable brother and revered deacon, may God protect him.

{After extending musk-scented peace and amber-fragranced greetings}¹¹⁷ and conveying the utmost longing and desire to see you always,

I wish to inform you that at the most blessed time and the most honorable hour, I received your precious letter. My heart rejoiced at your well-being and sincere friendship, especially since it brought me immense joy and dispelled my sorrow by the delight of holding in my hands the book of *Al-Silāḥ* [*The Weapon*], which casts away doubt and jest and establishes truth and righteousness with its accurate and ingenious proof. It stands unique through the ages, overthrowing the judgments of tyrants, reinforcing the guardianship of the four patriarchs, and calling for justice with the sharp sword.¹¹⁸ It is the *Jalā' al-abṣār min ghishā' al-akdār* [*Book that Clears the Sight from the Veils of Darkness*].¹¹⁹ I appreciated your effort in sending it at such times. May God bless you and elevate your fortune and prominence. You advised me to handle it with care, to avoid any damage or errors or alterations to its orthography, and thus to prevent its succumbing to any errors. I will be extremely cautious, relying on God, Helper of Mankind. You also suggested that I should not give it to children for copying, because their work is full of errors, but I better copy it myself. Your advice is excellent. Yet can the thirsty scorn at fresh water, or can the yearning avert his ears from wonderful news, which will likely remove the ignorance of this time, thus exposing truth and clarity?

Poem:

{Knowledge and truth have existed eternally,
While ignorance, like sin, is characterized by nonexistence.
Whoever lacks knowledge, his mind always darkens,
And we see him resemble animals and beasts}.¹²⁰

¹¹⁶ Sibawayhi was a prominent Persian grammarian in Basra in the 8th century, author of the first book on Arabic grammar. His renowned work, commonly referred to as *Al-Kitāb*, 'The Book', is a seminal five-volume commentary on the Arabic language.

¹¹⁷ This expression is included in MS Greek Orthodox Diocese of Homs 37, f. 13v.

¹¹⁸ This could be a longer version of the shorter title that follows, or just a piece of praise written by Yūsuf.

¹¹⁹ This is a translation by Sophronios of Kilis of Nektarios's *Περὶ τῆς ἀρχῆς τοῦ Πάπα ἀντίρρησεις*, composed in 1671. For more information, see the introductory study.

¹²⁰ From the poem of Germanos Farḥāt: *اللّٰهُ قَدْ خَلَقَ الْإِنْسَانَ مُرْتَسِمًا بِشَبْهِهِ*, 'God created man, imprinted with His likeness'.

On the same day as this letter, I sent a message to your uncle informing him of the arrival of the book and my readiness to copy it. Do not delay in sending me the books you promised, and you have my deepest gratitude for what has passed and what is yet to come, etc.

Written on the 29th of June, in the year 1740. //34v//

46. [From Yūsuf Mark]¹²¹

To the esteemed and honorable brother and revered companion, the most noble deacon, may God Almighty preserve him.

After extending greetings and salutations with the utmost respect and reverence, and prayers known to the All Knowing,

I wish to inform your esteemed self that at the most blessed time and noble hour, your dear letter reached me, and I quenched my thirst with its delightful content, praising the Almighty for your well-being.

I have personally handed your letter to your brother Khawāja Niqūlā.

Previously, I sent you a letter informing you that Nektarios's book had arrived. I am now working on making two copies of it: one for your esteemed uncle and one for myself.¹²² I pray to God for ease, as He is capable of all things and worthy of answering prayers.

I have not forgotten the books you promised to send me, and I am diligently mindful of your warning about spelling and grammatical errors, so that the book is not criticized. Do not cease to send me letters from our beloved, for it is indeed right to heal with responses.

Give my regards to all family and loved ones. May you continue to have long life, honor, and prosperity.

[Written on] the 27th of July, in the year 1740. //35r//

121 This letter had a title indicating the place from which it was sent but it was cut off during the binding. Yūsuf was most probably still in Latakia, while Mūsā was in Beirut. This letter is related to Letters 67–68 where Mūsā is requested to send the books of Nektarios to a good scribe, namely Yūsuf.

122 One of these two copies (MS Beirut, Bibliothèque orientale 955) was identified by Haddad, p. 272, n. 17. Another copy by Yūsuf, not mentioned in this correspondence, is the *Tuhfat al-yad* (A Handcrafted Masterpiece) of Ilyās Fakhr, composed in 1728 and preserved in Damascus, MS Greek Orthodox Patriarchate 4 (1744), copied in Amyūn near Tripoli. It was probably written at the request of Mūsā for his friend Khalil Šabbāgh, the first owner of the manuscript that same year (see Letter 30).

47. [From Yūsuf Mark], from Amyūn¹²³ to Damascus

[To] the brother of the Apostles¹²⁴ and the namesake of prophets, the dear brother and honorable esteemed deacon, may his rank always increase, and may he be protected and delivered from all harm.

After extending bright salutations, splendid greetings, and the most agreeable and pleasing prayers,

I wish to inform you that this is the third letter [I have] sent to you, and I have yet to see a response from your noble self. Today I have been preoccupied and troubled, but when I saw the letter-bearer heading towards you, I seized the opportunity and wrote you this humble letter to inquire about your well-being. As it was once said:

{The mere sight of you was not enough for me, but today I am content with [just] hearing about you}.¹²⁵

Moreover, up until now your letters have not reached me, {and I am filled with a longing and yearning that cannot be described by any observer, nor can its truth be expressed by any knowledgeable person. Not seeing you has set my heart ablaze, leaving it restless and without resolve, bereft of all patience and endurance, repeating day and night}.¹²⁶

As I am steadfast in my affection for you, do not let our estrangement be so prolonged.

{A servant who remains loyal throughout time, * even if circumstances change, and if it was reported that I said anything against you, * they lied, for a servant is not one to talk}.¹²⁷

With this, I conclude my message and end my words by extending prayers and peace to you.

Written on the 9th of March, in the year 1741. //35v//

123 In the al-Kūra region near Tripoli.

124 In a specific context like this, أصفياء could mean 'the chosen disciples of Christ'. However, أصفياء could also mean 'chosen friends'.

125 See Biṣṭāmī, *Manāḥij al-tawassul*, Al-laṭīfa 13.

126 Adapted from Biṣṭāmī, *Manāḥij al-tawassul*, Al-laṭīfa 15.

127 See Biṣṭāmī, *Manāḥij al-tawassul*, Al-laṭīfa 13.

48. [From Yūsuf Mark], from Amyūn to Damascus¹²⁸

From the one who loves unconditionally, of which the proof will endure throughout his life, age and era, having no way to forget him, as it would be impossible and inconceivable, to the one whose delightful essence is gentler than the breeze, sweeter than any scent, and more wonderful than health to the sick, whose commendable qualities are more fragrant than musk carried by the wind, and merrier and smoother than the prime of youth – qualities that even the most eloquent cannot describe – and whose presence heals the afflicted and the distressed, who strives for good conduct and who embodies the finest manners and virtues. I mean my brother, the apple of my eye¹²⁹ and the soul within my body, the noble and most honorable Deacon Mūsā. May God fulfill his desires and protect him from all misery and sorrow.

Should you inquire about my state, [I would say] praise be to God for all His blessings and [favorable] conditions. We send you our noble greetings and express our pure longing and yearning while residing in the city of Tripoli the Fragrant under the care of the esteemed and lofty stronghold, His Beatitude Patriarch Kyrios Kyr Sylvester. We are presently engaged in teaching Christian children at the episcopal residence. Bishop Kyr Nektarios has shown me warmth and various acts of kindness, and everything we observe from his generosity is firmly established in the eyes of His Holiness the Patriarch, in accordance with your lofty efforts, as I know. As of this date, I have been planning to move the family from Latakia to Tripoli. We ask the Almighty for a successful outcome.

While we were delighted in recalling your noble deeds, your esteemed letter arrived, which deserves to be kissed and revered. We opened it, read it, and understood its contents. It spoke of various kinds of love and joy and conveyed what calms the souls and gladdens the hearts, exuding the fragrance //36r// of sweet perfume. {What a letter it was, more cherished than a meeting! When the deserted embraces it, it extinguishes his torment. The pearls of its words, strung along chains of sincere affection, embody the fulfillment of desires and wishes. When the fragrance of its words spread to us, those scents that entice every passerby, the flames of longing that I felt were cooled},¹³⁰ and we experienced joy and delight beyond measure and power. We thanked God for your health and safety and for the peace and honor bestowed upon your children, and we asked Him – and no one else,

¹²⁸ The title was nearly cut off entirely during the binding. We can still make out a little from the lower part of the letters. While Damascus is almost certainly correct, Amyūn is less certain.

¹²⁹ Literally, 'a part of my liver'; an expression used to describe children in Arabic writings.

¹³⁰ This passage is almost identical to that in Letter 10.

praise be to Him – to perpetuate His abundant blessings and generous grace upon you. Amen.

As for [our] correspondence, it was you who limited it, not I. Yet your love has not waned; [it is] as it always was and increases over time like a fine aged wine and refined gold, gaining in splendor and sweetness. Do not think that I have grown weary or bored, as some have said:

'My beloved, I have not ceased writing to you out of boredom
nor have I broken the bond of affection by my actions

But from my great longing for you

I envied my letter for reaching you before me'.¹³¹

[And] with that:

Remain well as long as the breeze stirs branches where doves sing.¹³²

Peace be upon you, etc.

Written on the third Wednesday of Lent, in the year 1742 AD.

49. From the aforementioned [Yūsuf Mark], after his arrival in Damascus and his priestly ordination at the hands of the most blessed Patriarch Kyr Sylvester

[To] the joy of the eyes, the fruit of the heart, and the pride of the beloved, the honorable Deacon [Mūsā], may he be honored and blessed forever.

After offering prayers and due thanks and praise to you, we wish to inform you that, as of today, we have arrived in the city of Beirut, in the best of health and safety. We have reunited with relatives and loved ones, who are in excellent health and send you their warmest greetings. We are, however, in a state [of distress] because of our separation from you, but He who decreed our separation will grant us a reunion soon, as He is capable of all things. In brief, understand from your heart what is hidden in ours. //36v//

¹³¹ We do not know who the author of this poem is. The earliest testimony that we found is in Muḥammad Ḥusayn Khān's *Riyāḍ al-firdaws (The Gardens of Paradise)*, Lakhna'u, Naval Kišor, 1866, p. 42.

¹³² Attributed to Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm al-'Imādī (1664–1723).

50. Another letter [from Yūsuf Mark]

[To] the highest among those who possess perfection, the one who embodies both eloquence and generosity, the apple of the eye, the honorable deacon, may he remain supported and blessed, Amen.

After performing the obligatory sincere prayers for you, uttered by every limb and organ, while clinging to the hem of your virtues and inhaling the sweet scent of your remembrance,

I wish to inform you – may God Almighty bestow abundant grace and blessings upon you – that I have previously sent you a letter, as well as a letter to our most blessed Patriarch. Additionally, letters from our master the bishop have been sent to our most blessed and reverend Patriarch, etc.

[Written] on the Sunday of All Saints, in the year 1743.

51. Another letter [from Yūsuf Mark]

To the esteemed brother in God and spiritual son, the honorable Deacon [Mūsā], may God Almighty protect him and bestow upon him abundant blessings.

After offering prayers that ascend to the heights of acceptance and praise that reaches its intended destination¹³³ to you,

We wish to inform you that a long time has passed since we received any letters from you, especially in response to the letters that we sent to you previously via Beirut, nor have you sent us the items that we requested. This is contrary to what we expected. As known, your love is sincere and free from hypocrisy, but due to the passage of time and the cessation of your letters, my steps have nearly faltered. God willing, you will soon send us a letter along with the requested items and the booklets we collected against the opponent of the late bishop, as we intend to arrange and compile them into a single book for the benefit of the Orthodox. We are also preparing other testimonies to include in the book.

Please let me know if Deacon Theodosius¹³⁴ is working on translating my book into [Classical] Greek [*al-yūnānī*] or spoken Greek [*al-rūmī al-dārij*] for the benefit

¹³³ Probably inspired from the title of Ibn al-Jawzī's book: معارج القبول بشرح سلم الوصول, *The Ascents of Acceptance: A Commentary on the Ladder of Attainment*.

¹³⁴ This is probably the same deacon Theodosius who helped Sylvester to correct the Canon law collection (*Al-Nāmūs al-sharīf*), proofread and copied by Ilyās Fakhr, which is preserved in Beirut, MS Bibliothèque orientale 517. See the colophon on f. 176r. He is referred to as the Daskalos in other letters.

of the Christian youth¹³⁵ interested //37r// in learning this language. God willing, this will be accomplished, and you will add a Turkish translation to it as you promised me. Al-Ḥarīrī's *Maqāmāt* will reach you through your brother-in-law¹³⁶ Khawāja George Yaʿīsh. We urge you to copy it and send it to me promptly, etc.

52. Another letter [from Yūsuf Mark]

[To] [the highest among those who possess perfection, the one who embodies both eloquence and generosity],¹³⁷ sincere brother and compassionate friend, the revered deacon, may his life last long.

[We] extend greetings infused with longing and passion, ever bound by the bonds of love, without end to its duration or its length, from one whose tears flowed until he swam in their sea and for whom the periods of separation have lengthened from months to years. How could it not be so when the one who prays for you is [abandoned] in the crucible of detachment? Yet [he] continues to extend his hands in supplication to the Almighty, asking Him to return to us the stars of fortune in the temple of virtue and grace, the one who has educated many outstanding men in the field of his expertise. May God grant his beloved prolonged enjoyment of his presence, engage the tongues of the people in his praise, and bless the eyes of those who seek refuge with the splendor of his radiance, Amen.

Setting aside the absence of letters from yourself and my yearning to hear the sweetness of your words, I request that you kindly use your good influence to gain the favor of our most blessed Patriarch on my behalf, so that he permits [my] lack of attendance this winter, as the timing is not suitable for me. I have also apologized to His Holiness in the report I sent to him and, fearing that he might become upset with me and reject my excuse, I seek your help in ensuring that my apology is accepted and that I regain his favor. It would be most helpful if you could read the letter that I sent him because the matter is, as I have described it, stemming from the obstacles of illness, physical weakness, mental stress, and cold days. //37v// I also know myself well enough to recognize that I am not worthy of this honor, but since our master has spoken of it, I say, as one of the fishermen disciples said: 'At your word, I will let down the net' [Luke 5:5], which has so far caught nothing of virtues,

¹³⁵ This expression could simply mean 'the Christians'. Yūsuf Mark is probably following the example of Germanos Farḥāt, who composed a simplified book of Arabic grammar for Christians (*Baḥṭh al- maṭālib wa-ḥaṭḥ al-ṭālib*).

¹³⁶ Or son-in-law.

¹³⁷ Same as in Letter 50.

but remains barren, wallowing in the mire of vices and their filth. I therefore ask for your prayers.

Written on the 5th of November, in the year 1742. //37v//

53. Another letter [from Yūsuf Mark]

May God water the land where your face is the sun and bless the country where you are the full moon in the sky. May He drench the earth with the generosity of your hand, for in every region, the raindrops of your bounty are felt.

To the esteemed presence, most beloved among brothers, friends, and spiritual sons, the honorable deacon, may God bestow upon him abundant blessings and grace.

After extending pure greetings, fragrant scents, sincere yearnings, and earnest prayers by night and day,

I wish to inform you – may the Lord bless you – that at the happiest of times, I received your letter of affection and praised the Almighty for your health and safety. The quires also arrived safely. May God reward you generously and protect you from harm. We are also reassured by the safe arrival of the *Maqāmāt* book, free from any damage. I hope you will make an effort to copy it and send it back to us, as I mentioned to you. The box containing the three Chinese bowls also arrived safely without any damage. You remain a source of nourishment for those in need. However, you did not inform me of their price. Please let me know their cost, as I require other items and am hesitant to impose on your kindness. If you treat me this way, it hinders me from fulfilling my needs, and results in loss rather than gain. I request that you inform me [about the price] of everything you send to me.

You have my deepest thanks and prayers. ‘I will thank you for as long as I live, and if I die, I have instructed others to continue the gratitude on my behalf’. //38r//

54. [From Yūsuf Mark]

To the pride of the beloved, my spiritual son and apple of my eye, the honorable deacon, may the Lord God bestow heavenly blessings upon him, his wife, his son, and all his deeds, Amen.

I wish to inform you that I previously sent you several congratulatory letters for the birth of your child, telling you all the news. However, a considerable amount of time has passed since I have received any response or communication from your beloved self. May God turn into good that which obstructs you.

I inform you that I have been staying in the land of Wallachia, overseeing the establishment (*naqsh*¹³⁸) of a new printing press, with [newly-]carved type. The previous printing press, for which the depraved Abū Sharr, or rather, Abū Barāqish, under his new name, had carved the type turned out to be useless, and all the effort and expense which had gone into it were in vain. When His Holiness the Patriarch realized that it was of no use, and after discovering his (Abū Barāqish's) treachery, foolishness, and misdeeds, which he had concealed through his pretenses, he [the Patriarch] withdrew his involvement in the printing press. He handed over all its machinery and tools to me and left me in Bucharest with the monk Mikhā'il and the Deacon Parthenios, along with a local servant, in the monastery newly established under the Antiochian Apostolic See. The Deacon Theophanis became abbot of the monastery, while another bishop, Kyr Makarios,¹³⁹ also took up residence in the monastery.

As for His Holiness the most venerable, he traveled to Constantinople accompanied by Abū Barāqish, who fell at the feet of his holiness, weeping and lamenting, so that he would not expel him after discovering his disloyalty and the ugliness of his deeds. This is in addition to the vileness and obscenity that he showed, //38v// and his threat to complain about His Holiness to the Sublime State. He was dissatisfied with the four hundred and twenty piasters [that he had received] from him, not to mention the gratuity (*bakhshish*) and expenses previously given to him by His Holiness and the esteemed Bek, and what he had taken in Iași, and that which he added to his ledgers a few days later through the intervention of al-Ḥājī Gabriel al-'Ashshī. I wrote him a copy of a document from His Holiness stating that he did not require [his services] anymore. Thus, his intention is now to conceal what has been revealed and evade what has been exposed. Yet, what is written is written; as some said: 'How much treachery you try to hide while your situation is apparent, and how much you claim righteousness while your right is invalid'.¹⁴⁰

However, His Holiness the Patriarch has since begun to lament his feigned tears, and I fear that he [Abū Sha'r] might deceive him, knowing the delicacy of his heart and his deep compassion. I do not know what will happen in Constantinople.

138 Literally, 'sculpting', 'carving'.

139 On Makarios, see Țipău, *Sylvester of Antioch*, p. 159.

140 Mark paraphrases the poem: *كَمْ تَسْتَرِ الْبَلْوَى وَسِرَّكَ ظَاهِرَ كَمْ تَدْعِي حَقًّا وَحَقَّكَ بَاطِلًا*, 'How much affliction you try to hide while your secret is exposed; how often you claim a righteousness while your right is invalid'. See Ibn Farḥūn al-Qaysī, *Al-Zāhir fī bayan mā yujtanab min al-khabā'ith al-ṣighār wa al-kabā'ir*, ed. Muḥammad Ismā'il, Beirut, 1997, p. 11. The same paraphrase is found in Sophronios's preface to his translation of Nektarios's *Περὶ τῆς ἀρχῆς τοῦ Πάπα ἀντίρρησεις*. See MS Beirut, Bibliothèque orientale Ar. 955, f. 5r.

Your brother Buṭrus¹⁴¹ can tell you one by one what ugly traits and behavior he revealed.

We ask God Almighty for assistance in completing what we have started, and from your beloved self we ask good prayers. Had I been more fortunate, you would have been with me in these lands. May our Lord facilitate [our] meeting in the Arab lands, for He is capable of all things and can answer [all] pleas.

Convey blessings and prayers on our behalf to your dear child and his mother. Your brother [Buṭrus], the monk Mikhā'il, and the Deacon Parthenios send you abundant [wishes of] peace and prayers. His Holiness the Patriarch sends you blessings and inquires after your well-being.

Yours, the Priest Yūsuf Mark. Written in mid-October, in the year 1748. //39r//

55. [From Yūsuf Mark]

To the pride of sons and treasure of the beloved, the cherished spiritual son and soulmate, the honorable deacon, may blessings and grace continue to be upon him, his wife, and his two children, and all that he desires and creates with his hands, Amen.

[We] extend prayers marked by the sincerest of praise and the distinct and precious essence of he whose rhymes overcome his poetic visions and whose contemplations overflow with meaning. Let knowledge always shine from his mouth and wisdom flow from his pen. I mean the person addressed above, may his days and nights be filled with joy.

Should you inquire after the greatest longing to which no pen can do justice, the matter – following the obligatory prayers – is that while we were engaged in prayer and praise, your second letter arrived, shortly after the first. I have read them both, understood their contents, and praised the Lord who honored Damascus and its surroundings and favored only you with the [gifts of] composition, penmanship, fortune, [textual] structure and meanings. The collection of Ibn 'Afīf¹⁴² has arrived, may your lofty rewards continue.

You mentioned that you, accompanied by your best man and esteemed brother, are visiting the revered residence of Ṣaydnāyā. My heart soared to you, and in my mind, my children and all my family were together there with you. How could we

¹⁴¹ That Mūsā has a brother called Buṭrus is attested in different sources. See our introductory study.

¹⁴² Ibn 'Afīf is most probably the poet Muḥammad ibn Sulaymān, known also as Shābb al-Ẓarīf (1263–1289).

be blessed with such success and visit that honored place with you, and be a companion to you and that dear brother? May you remember us as we remember you.

We ask the Almighty to always keep you in the intercessions of those whose protection you seek, in comfort and joy, free from troubles and adversities. We congratulate you on our Lord's Ascension to the Heavens and the sending of the Holy Spirit to the disciples. May these blessed holidays and every holiday be upon you for many years to come. Amen.

Written on Ascension Thursday. May you continue in prosperity and ascension.
<The Priest Yūsuf Mark>.¹⁴³ //39v//

56. [From Yūsuf Mark]

Send my book to your uncle the Jerusalemite¹⁴⁴ by reliable hands.

Concerning the Daskalos's review of my book, from now on we have no time for hope and futile demands, especially since his hope is in vain and he has deviated from what I had hoped and expected from him regarding the annotation of the *Octoechos* manuscript.¹⁴⁵ He insisted on receiving a copy of the two tones, and that I send them to him before completing their transcription, without sending me any others. Moreover, he claims at every mention of the book *Al-Shudhūr* [*The Excerpts*]¹⁴⁶ that it is his composition, accusing me of lying [regarding my authorship], even though I have spent [working on it] forty-five days from sunrise to sunset, without rest, and under the supervision of your uncle who provided me with the necessary books, while he [the Didaskalos] did not lend a hand. How can this be when two months have passed since the objection [against Gennadius], and he has managed to avoid the bishop, who asked him about it many times?¹⁴⁷ Moreover,

¹⁴³ The end is unfortunately lost, and thus the date.

¹⁴⁴ Haddad identified the uncle in question as Ilyās Fakhr, who was both a co-sponsor and revisor of the polemical books that were copied by Yūsuf. In this particular instance, the term "al-Maqdisī" is employed, as we previously explained, to denote the fact that he had undertaken a pilgrimage to the Holy Land.

¹⁴⁵ On the progress of the *Octoechos* revision, see Letter 35.

¹⁴⁶ This is the book *Al-Shudhūr fī naqd hadhayān al-'adīm al-nūr* preserved in MS Vatican, Sbath 258. See our introductory study.

¹⁴⁷ In this context, the interpretation of the phrase يتدخل عليه is challenging, and the identity of the bishop in question remains ambiguous. The issue under discussion is rooted in the fact that Iakobos resided in Jerusalem after the year 1740. In that place, he was in close proximity to his disciple Sophronios, who subsequently assumed the role of bishop of Acre. Consequently, it would be a more tenable hypothesis to posit that the bishop who commissioned the Daskalos to compose the refutation of the objection was Sophronios. This has led to a confusion in Haddad's study, where he

when I needed to verify whether a testimony from the *Al-Durr al-Muntakhab* [Selected Pearls]¹⁴⁸ was correctly translated from the Greek [original], he granted me the opportunity to review it after many days and much pleading, and we accurately corrected it and exposed its flaws. Had I not succeeded in persuading him, he would not have reviewed that paragraph.

Firstly, I did not attribute the book to myself, nor did I put my name on it, to avoid being harmed by the people of Aleppo, for I nearly got harmed and lost my life on the road, as the bishop informed me in person in Constantinople. Secondly, I attributed it to the bishop because the objection //40r// was particularly directed at him. However, when Bishop Sophronios arrived in Aleppo and your uncle informed him about it, he ordered that it be attributed to me and copied in my name, as it was rightfully supported by your uncle's testimony of my efforts. Your uncle then sent me a letter informing me that he had written my name on it and attributed it to me because neither the bishop nor anyone else participated in its composition. He said Bishop Kyr Sophronios had advised this as necessary, reassuring me that he was not to blame for it. Had it not been for Bishop Sophronios, the book would have remained attributed to Bishop Gennadius, as I had done.

When I returned from Constantinople, I was informed in Tripoli and Latakia about his [the Didaskalos's] claim to have authored the book, and not once did I reproach him for this. On the contrary, I increased my love and affection for him, as you can see even now. Yet, all I have seen from him is arrogance, pride, and disdain for the loved ones. May God be gracious and forgiving to him. If I were to make a comparison between you and him, how stark the difference would be! And if you were to compare him to Bishop Sophronios, the disparity would also be evident. If he should align himself with Eustratios and his student the Priest Mas'ad, how differently I would perceive their view of me from his! And the way in which he corresponds compared with other friends! You can feel it yourselves. Once we complete the book *The Desired Matter and Refutation of the Subjects*,¹⁴⁹ send him a letter to request that he review it, and may goodness prevail. //40v//

stated that the objection was written against Sophronios, consequently identifying the anonymous bishop as Sophronios, while Yūsuf clearly names him Gennadius. It is evident that the author of the letter clearly distinguished between two different bishops: Sophronios is addressed by his name, while Gennadius is designated as 'the Bishop'.

148 *Al-Durr al-muntakhab* is a selection of homilies by John Chrysostom printed in Aleppo by Athanasios Dabbās in 1707. In his aforementioned work, which is preserved in MS Vatican, Sbath 258 and refers to the Greco-Latin Paris edition in 8 volumes (f. 13r), Yūsuf proves that the Catholics had altered the text of *Al-Durr al-Muntakhab*. For this reason, he checked the Greek text.

149 The book *Bughyat al-murād wa fī naqd al-mawādd* is not found in any manuscript. As Yūsuf is requesting that Mūsā sends a letter to his uncle to read the book, he could be referring to a book

57. [From Yūsuf Mark, Beirut]

To the dean of eloquent speakers and orators, the treasure of grammarians and philologists, the model of teachers and most virtuous among the distinguished, the most noble Deacon Mūsā, may he remain honored in every age and era, excelling in virtues and divine grace, and blessed in every way, along with his wife and children.

[We] present worthy prayers and salutations through which the depths of longing are revealed in strands of meaning and acts of passion are manifested in the one who feels it, sent from he whose love rises up among mankind with distinction, and whose affection is elevated by the enduring bond of your friendship – a bond which he considers most precious. [He is] a lover whose feelings are not a subject to be defined by predicates, nor his acts of passion conveyed except by those who have experienced it. The character of such love can only truly be understood by those who have suffered it, even if it were to fall under intense scrutiny.

To the leader whose status God has elevated above all others, who has been adorned with the banners of knowledge and refinement to the extent that everyone acknowledges he is the science of everyone and the knowledge of the learned, distinguished by his grace with the passing of days and defined by his kindness to all people.¹⁵⁰

I wish to inform you that after sending you the account statement, which confirms that there is no disagreement or reversal between us and whatever you see is entirely correct, I have received your dear letter. May God protect you from ailments. Along with it came the [Book of] Psalms and ten [Canticles],¹⁵¹ the document of friendship,¹⁵² *Al-Sha'la*,¹⁵³ and a jar of syrup. As for the physician, he should not send me a bill without having sent me the bitterness of the crow¹⁵⁴ and nothing

written (or translated) by Ilyās Fakhr that he had corrected. This could be Ilyās Fakhr's refutation of a pro-Latin work he previously translated, which was transmitted under the title: *'Aqd al-ittihād fī sharḥ wa-tafsīr al-khams al-mawādd*.

150 The play of words using all grammatical cases – *rafʿ*, *naṣb* and *jazm* – cannot be rendered in English.

151 We believe this is a scribal error. The book in question is: *المزامير والتسبيحات العشرة*, *Psalms and Ten Canticles*. In the Christian Orthodox liturgy, these are the Songs of Moses, Deborah, Hannah, Isaiah, Hezekiah, Jonah, and Habakkuk.

152 Probably a scribal error.

153 He could be referring to the traditional cloth called by this name.

154 In Arabic literature, the crow's gallbladder is considered a treatment for the eyes, among other benefits. See, e.g., ʿIsā Ibn ʿAlī, *Book on the Useful Properties of Animal Parts*, Lucia Raggetti (ed.), Berlin/Boston, 2018, § 59.8, p. 378.

delights me more than a letter which is as beautifully written //41r// and grammatically correct as his. Convey to him my blessings and this message.

I informed you of the arrival of the olives and requested the [same] quantity from you for fasting – may you remain free from blame and reproach – and that you send us green ones. If you send *al-balūṣqa*¹⁵⁵ and the fish container and we receive others, then we will send them back to you.

We heard about your meeting with the esteemed and beloved friend, Khawāja Mūsā Ṣadaqa. We are waiting for him to pass by us for we know that he never leaves Beirut,¹⁵⁶ especially now that the fava beans are plentiful and can be eaten by hand without a spoon.¹⁵⁷

Convey to him our blessings, and to your son whom God protects, to his mother and sister, and especially to your elder brother and his dear son and his mother. [Convey our blessings also] to the rest of the loved ones, particularly Deacon David, for whom I am amidst the sea of sorrows for his lost son. May our Lord console him and alleviate his distress.

My children and their mother kiss your hands, and our son-in-law and his brothers send their regards and pray for your well-being and blessings upon you.

Prior to today, we received letters from Egypt and Damietta informing us of the arrival of the Patriarch of Alexandria in this city, bringing with him decrees and letters about the dire situation of the perpetrators of falsehood and wickedness. He sent letters to Ibrāhīm Kaykhīya¹⁵⁸ and the rest of the rulers through his representative (*wakīl*) in Alexandria. When the Papists heard, they approached the sheikhs of the Al-Azhar Mosque. They [then] went to Ibrāhīm Kaykhīya, who turned them away, saying: 'I cannot contradict the sublime orders of the sultan', before sending [someone] to consult with the patriarch in Alexandria.¹⁵⁹ Soon we shall hear what misfortune befalls them.

This is what news we have. May God protect you from all calamities. //41v//

155 This word is unknown. Haddad mentions the olives and the fish but does not speak about *al-balūṣqa* (p. 278–279). It might mean 'a recipient'.

156 This could also mean that he frequently visited Beirut.

157 This could be a popular proverb at that time.

158 On this person, see Jirjī Zaydān, *Tārīkh Miṣr al-ḥadīth*, t. 2, p. 50–54. According to Zaydān, he was assassinated in 1168 A.H. (October 1754–October 1755). Haddad believed this letter to have been written in ca. 1755, which coincides with this period.

159 This obscure sentence was ignored by Haddad, who summarized as follows: 'A pursuit of the Catholics is on the horizon'.

58. [From Beirut]¹⁶⁰

From the one who loves unconditionally, of which the proof will endure throughout his life, age and era, to the one whose presence is gentler than the breeze and sweeter than perfume, whose praiseworthy attributes are more fragrant than musk carried by the wind, adorned with the most graceful and commendable morals, endowed with sound judgment and eloquent speech, may his wishes be fulfilled, his person preserved, and his enemies subdued.¹⁶¹

When the esteemed letters, originating from the grace of His Holiness and your generous brotherhood, reached me, every cloud of doubt was dispelled, I was refreshed by the essence of their profound message in all its sweetness, and I offered my abundant prayers, praise, and gratitude to you. They reached my hands in early July. Enclosed within [this letter] is my submission to His Holiness, which [I hope] you will find in good order. Earlier, in mid-June, I sent you a letter which contains enough to obviate the need for further explanation. I therefore ask you to inform me whether it has reached you or not.

From these parts, your dear friends al-Shaykh Abū Murād and al-Shaykh Abū Fāris Raḥḥāl¹⁶² send you many serene greetings and pure salutations.

Do not forget to provide me with your delightful letters and charming messages and humor me with the slightest hint of what happened with the monk sent to you from Beirut. //42r//

59. [From Yūsuf Mark, Beirut]

To the dearly cherished, beloved, most gracious and loyal friend, the honorable [Mūsā], may his presence endure, and may he be preserved and delivered from all evil.

We wrote this out of [our] extreme longing and abundant desire to receive your splendid and radiant letters, which benefit us with your good news and state of affairs in recent times. This is because I sent you a letter especially for your affection in mid-June, and after I received the noble blessing of His Holiness and your esteemed letter in early July – after expressing much praise and gratitude to you – I sent you another letter and enclosed within it a declaration to His Holiness, in mid-July,¹⁶³ which contains enough to obviate the need for further explanation.

¹⁶⁰ We understand from the next letter that it was sent in mid-July 1743.

¹⁶¹ The beginning of this letter is similar to that of Letter 46.

¹⁶² Probably the same deacon Raḥḥāl from Letter 58.

¹⁶³ Referring to the previous letter.

Until now, I have not received the slightest indication from you as to whether they reached you or not. This has caused me considerable distress, though perhaps this obstacle is for the best.

I therefore kindly request from your esteemed self and your acknowledged virtuosity that you take the time to inform me, with the slightest indication or a brief message (as I am aware of your many pressing engagements), firstly of your well-being, and secondly whether my letters have reached you. If they have not, especially the declaration to His Holiness, I will return an apology to him and seek his forgiveness.

The passing of the late bishop has deeply affected my heart. May our Lord count him among the righteous and grant you a long life for many years and ages.

Convey my warmest regards to so-and-so and so-and-so,¹⁶⁴ and may your life continue through the years and decades.

[Written in] <mid-August>,¹⁶⁵ in the year 1743. //42v//

60. [From Yūsuf Mark]

To my beloved, unique and loyal friend, the truthful and honorable brother, of whom I am ever fond, resembling Moses in name and determination, may you remain honored and supported by dignity.

As for the fact that I perpetually picture your pleasant profile and remarkable friendship from the depths of my eyes, and that the deep longing for our past love is forever embedded in my heart, and the intense desire to see the joy of your agreeable face remains eternal, and the wound left by the sword of your eloquence continues to torment my heart: perhaps your heart bears witness to this, without a doubt. May you always be preserved by the power of the Creator and protected by His veil.

I wish to inform you of the arrival of your delightful letter, dated the first of September, which dispelled all my sorrows. I drank deeply from the refreshing spring of your good news and inhaled profusely the fragrant scent of its breeze, finding it more satisfying than all that I had written to you before. [These consisted] not only of the one accompanying the missive to His Beatitude and the one before your letter dated the 8th of the third decade¹⁶⁶ of August, but also the one which

¹⁶⁴ The names are not provided.

¹⁶⁵ This was cut during binding.

¹⁶⁶ Presumably the 28th.

did not reach you, as it was intercepted¹⁶⁷ by someone. I praised the Almighty and thanked Him for your continued support and good health.

I was, however, greatly saddened by the repose of the God-loving and most revered father.¹⁶⁸ But what can be done? May his memory remain with you.

I hope you will also inform me of the current condition of His Beatitude, so that my joy may increase with the reassurance of his well-being, after offering a profound bow at his sacred feet //43r// and a kiss for his pure and holy hands. I am now, thanks to God and the esteemed gaze of His Beatitude and the blessing of his received prayers, in excellent health and on good terms with loved ones.

You cannot imagine the remarkable affection and assistance that Abū Murād shows me, with his pleasant conversation and unique presence, whether in person or at a distance. As for the dear brother Deacon Raḥḥāl al-Adhīb, your noble beloved, not only does he do all this, but he also adds the best part, which is the most complete and beautiful deed of being a remarkable soul, unique in his gentle nature. He has taken it upon himself to care for all my needs, dutifully attending to my residence and other requirements, treating me as his dear son among those he cherishes and is most comfortable with, while his affection for me continues to blossom and flourish. May our Lord grant you and him all that is good.

Everyone sends you the best of greetings and finest of regards. //43v//

61. [From Yūsuf Mark]

To the most complete presence, whose suns of fortune have shone brightly on the horizons of perfection, and whose seeds have blossomed in the gardens of generosity and prosperity, the Deacon Mūsā. His virtues have multiplied, and his bounties have magnified: the unique and munificent spiritual son, the destination of visitors, and the source of envy. May the Lord God bless him, his wife and his two children, and may he possess without ever being in debt,¹⁶⁹ Amen.

It was at the most blessed time that your letter reached us. We quenched our thirst with the sweetness of your message, and we praised God for your well-being, which is the highest aim and noblest request. We are now aware that the silk has reached you and has met your expectations, and we hope, God willing, that the details of its price will be pleasing to you. We are also aware that our brother, Father Mikhā'il, did not want to take payment for the incense. May God increase his

¹⁶⁷ Literally 'assassinated by someone's hands.'

¹⁶⁸ From Letter 9 we learn that the person in question is Bishop Cyril of Iskenderun (Alexandretta).

¹⁶⁹ This expression is also used in Letter 35.

and your goodness. We are grateful to him for this and other things. May our Lord enable us to repay him with goodness and protect you and him from all harm.

Written in late September, in the year 1755.

Yours, Father Yūsuf Mark. //44r//

62. From the aforementioned [Yūsuf Mark] as well

After extending the finest greetings and purest salutations with heartfelt longing,

I wish to inform you that in the most blessed times and happiest hours, your letter arrived, and I was delighted by the pleasant content of your message and the good news of your well-being. I thanked the gracious God that you are happy and at peace, as this is our hope and utmost prayer. The enclosed letters [also] arrived and were sent to their intended recipients.

Henceforth, do not refrain from [sending us] letters informing us of your good news and prosperous conditions. We extend abundant and additional greetings to all those in the esteemed presence of our master and to those who inquire after us. From this side, your uncle, your brother, your cousins, and all the family and relatives send their regards to you. May your life be prolonged.

63. [From Sophronios]

[From] the humble Sophronios, bishop of Acre.

May blessings and grace descend upon my beloved and spiritual son, the honorable Deacon Mūsā, and upon his wife, his children, and all his endeavors.

We wish to inform your beloved self that your letter reached us through the honorable Yāqjī Sulaymān Ghāṣir. We rejoiced at your safety, having been eager to hear from you, for some time ago, we had heard that you had married and retired from the service of our much-blessed master the Patriarch, and that you //44v// were residing in Damascus, Syria. Day after day, we were hoping to renew our correspondence as before, missing the warmth of that old love, as the foundations had been shaken and were on the point of collapse after such a long silence. It seems that your focus has been diverted towards your spouse, household and children.

As for us, our thoughts have been immersed in the tumultuous concerns of serving as representative [of the Church]; we beseech the Almighty to grant us the liberation and relief from these futile burdens. We hope to regain the composure and tranquility to engage in matters beneficial to the soul, so we are able to translate the book entitled *In Defense of the True Faith* for you, and to present it as a gift [task] to the printing press that was recently established through the efforts of our

most pure and holy master the Patriarch. We were delighted when we heard this good news from the mouth of your beloved and our dear friend al-Ḥājj Mikhā'il Tūmā, who, from the moment we met him, has continuously sung your praises and commended your service to the Apostolic See. According to him, without your support, the burdens of the representative vicar (*muṭrān wakīl*) in Damascus would have multiplied. May God bless you and keep you safe, and guard over [the words of] your mouth. May those who harm you //45r// live not, and [may He] protect you from the machinations of enemies who are stringing their bows with a substance that is bitter to all of us.

We have written in Greek to His Eminence, our dear and esteemed brother Bishop Kyr Nicephorus of Payas, about the matter between Mikhā'il Tūmā and the representative (*wakīl*) of the Franks, and other matters that you are aware of.¹⁷⁰

We send blessings to everyone in your prosperous household, including the children and [the rest of] the family, as well as to your honorable brothers and to al-Ḥājj Ḥannā and his brothers.

From here, the Daskalos and the fathers, along with al-Ḥājj Mikhā'il Tūmā, al-Ḥājj al-Yāzījī, al-Ḥājj Farah al-Ṣayrafī and the rest offer you peace. Blessings be upon you twice and thrice.

Written on the 11th of August, 1747.

64. [From Sophronios]

[From] the humble Sophronios, bishop of Acre,

May divine grace and heavenly blessings rest upon our beloved spiritual son, indeed our true beloved, the honorable Deacon Mūsā. May the Lord God bestow upon him, his *ḥarīm*,¹⁷¹ his children and all his endeavors the fullest heavenly blessings, Amen.

On the 5th of November, we received your letter written on the 5th of October. We were immensely delighted at it, not only because it informed us of your health and well-being, which we had eagerly waited for some time, but also because it was accompanied by a letter from the holy Father of all, most esteemed Lord, and highly revered Effendi, the blessed Patriarch of Antioch. Even though I had been ill and bedridden for four //45v// months, upon receiving [the letter], my weakened body and spirit burdened by faults and sins were somehow revitalized. I remembered those old days and past years when we were united and spoke directly; when life

170 Probably بِعَرَفَ : 'he may inform you about'.

171 Referring to his mother and wife, or his wife and daughter.

was joyous, and we moved about freely. But now, all that has passed like a dream or a vision of the night.¹⁷² Old age has caught up, grey hairs have appeared, and sickness has set in. I should cry out with the psalmist: 'My days are consumed like smoke, and my bones are burned as in a hearth' [*Psalm* 102:3], and 'There is no health in my bones because of my sins, which have risen above my head like a heavy burden' [*Psalm* 38:4-5], destined for eternal fire if the Lord does not have mercy on me. Oh, that before the end of life we might prepare a little oil for the extinguished lamp, so that we do not remain outside the door when the long-awaited and beloved bridegroom arrives [*Matthew* 25:1-13], whose delightful presence is the Kingdom of Heaven, and from whom separation is eternal destruction.

Our patriarch instructed me in his letter to go to his See in order to travel around teaching. This is something I would willingly undertake, but who can constantly bear the arrows of the archbishops and their jealousy? If His Eminence had directed me to Aleppo, until his happy arrival there, rather than the bishop of Sidon, this would, in my view, have been the best course of action. Yet evidently, the Lord did not will it and thus did not inspire him to do so. Enclosed you will find his response that you should send to His Eminence. Blessings and prayers be upon you.

We send brotherly kisses and ample, heartfelt greetings to our esteemed brother Kyr Nicephorus, representative [of the patriarch] and bishop of Payas, as well as to the esteemed Mikhā'il Tūmā the Jerusalemite, his brother Ḥannā, their brother-in-law, and all our beloved. Additional greetings to your relative, the teacher Dawūd Musalmūna, //46r// the Jerusalemite. All the beloved here, along with our master the Daskalos, send you blessings, peace, and prayers.

Written on the 5th of November, in the year 1749, in Holy Jerusalem.

65. [From Sophronios]¹⁷³

[From] the humble Sophronios, bishop of Acre and its surroundings.

May divine grace bless our beloved spiritual son, the honorable and esteemed Deacon and secretary Mūsā. May the Lord God bless him in soul and body, and guide him in all righteous deeds, Amen.

I wish to inform your beloved self of my deep yearning for you; that your letters have reached me, and I have sent you responses. However, it appears that you have been occupied with the trials of life, which prevented you from corresponding

¹⁷² 'Aḡhāth ahlām', see Qur'ān, *Sūrat Yūsuf* 44.

¹⁷³ Haddad mentions that this letter is the same as Letter 18. Nevertheless, we have preserved the ending of the letter here, as well as some details that were omitted in the first instance.

with me. Perhaps the excessive sorrow over the passing of your esteemed uncle Ḥannā Fakhr contributed to this, as this news deeply affected us all. Truly, this deceased man was a pillar and a cornerstone among the children of the Orthodox Church in Egypt. But how and why should we mourn forever? Does the great-voiced Paul not cry out to us not to 'sorrow, even as others which have no hope'? [1 *Thessalonians* 4:13] Suffice it to say that He who ascended to the third Heaven did not ordain this in vain. Rather, for his knowledge of the repose of the departed and their liberation from the woes of the dense body in which we are bound to attain eternal life after death, he instructed us not to grieve for them. Our sorrow should be like the sorrow of the Lord for His friend Lazarus, with but a few tears.

You do not need further reminding of these words, given your diligent study of the divine Scriptures from your young age, especially in your service under the supervision of our lord, the honorable patriarch. Your good fortune is evident from all sides, as in the saying: 'Blessed are those who serve the blessed'.

If you inquire about us, praise be to God, we are well, vigilant day and night in the face of God's enemies, the dissenters and the heretics.

The Priest 'Abd al-Masīḥ [Christodoulos], a respected Orthodox man, polite in his words and virtuous in his conduct, will come to you bearing these letters. He has fallen into a predicament and was fined a sum of money, over five hundred piasters,¹⁷⁴ consequent to accusations from enemies of the faith. Now, he seeks your assistance to issue //46v// to him a *statikon* from our patriarch so he can collect alms for himself from the lands of Antioch. May God bless you if his request to you is granted, {and may he find complete assistance and support through your diligence before our master the patriarch. Please recommend him to the esteemed representative (*wakīl*), the honorable Mikhā'īl¹⁷⁵ the Jerusalemite, the money changer (*al-ṣarrāf*) Farah the Jerusalemite, and all the beloved ones.

We send blessings to those mentioned, especially to your honorable brother Mikhā'īl the Jerusalemite, as well as to Ḥannā, the brother of the representative, and all his [other] brothers and loved ones. Blessings be upon you all.} ¹⁷⁶

[Written in May, 1742].¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁴ This sum is not indicated in Letter 18.

¹⁷⁵ On Mikhā'īl the *wakīl*, see our introductory study.

¹⁷⁶ This passage is not present in Letter 18.

¹⁷⁷ The date is preserved in Letter 18.

66. [From Sophronios]

[From] Sophronios, by the mercy of God archbishop of the city of Constantinople, the New Rome, and Ecumenical Patriarch.

May divine grace and heavenly blessings descend upon the soul and body of our spiritual son, the honorable and sagacious Deacon Kyr Mūsā. May the Lord God bestow upon him, his wife, his children, and all who belong to him the fullest heavenly blessings, protect him from all tribulations and adversities, and shower him with abundant grace and gifts through the intercession of Mary Mother of God, the refuge of humankind through whom the source of salvation traversed,¹⁷⁸ and all the saints. Amen.

The reason for issuing this blessed letter to you, O eloquent one, is firstly to extend our blessing to you and to inquire as to your well-being, and secondly to inform you, our spiritual son, that we continually ask about your health and well-being, praying to the Almighty for your protection, preservation, and deliverance from all harm and physical or spiritual injury. We ask the Almighty to accept and answer your prayers.

While we were diligently praying for your affection, we received your beloved letter and praised the Almighty for your health. Before that, we also received the general petition from the Christians through our spiritual son, Father Athanasios. We have understood everything that you described and have grasped your perspective. Indeed, we sympathized with your misfortune and felt for your condition, as we comprehend everything that you have endured, first from your beloved letter, and secondly from the report of our aforementioned spiritual son. Your sorrow and grief have filled us with sadness, as we have heard news contrary to our wishes. However, we ask God Almighty to make the outcome of matters favorable.

Regarding the petition, we have kept it with us to read to our Holy Synod, and then we will act according to that which the Holy Spirit inspires us to do. However, we advise our blessed spiritual children, the Christians, to be patient and endure a little longer because they are always in //47r// our thoughts, and we can never abandon them. Whatever the Holy Synod decides, we will inform them. Let this be known to you.

Send our collective blessings and prayers to them and may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ always be upon you. Blessings be upon you with [our] prayers twice and thrice.

Written on the 5th of October, in the year 1777, the eleventh indiction. Signed in Greek.

178 Play on words: مَرِيَمَ and مَرِيَمَ.

67. Copy of a letter from His Holiness Samuel, patriarch of Constantinople

[From] Samuel, by the mercy of God archbishop of Constantinople (the New Rome), and Ecumenical Patriarch.

May divine grace and heavenly blessings descend upon and bless the beloved body and soul of our spiritual son, the honorable secretary Mūsā. May the Lord God bless him, his *ḥarīm*, his children, and all his endeavors with the fullest heavenly blessings.

I wish to inform your beloved self that in late April we received your letter of late March, notifying us in Turkish of the passing and departure of our brother and companion in the service of the divine mysteries, the ever-remembered and blessed Kyrios Kyr Sylvester, patriarch of Antioch, from the mortal world to the eternal one, on the 13th of March. When this news reached our ears, we were deeply upset and overwhelmed with indescribable sorrow and distress at his loss and departure. May our Lord God lay him to rest alongside the righteous in the heavenly abode, grant you a long life and health, and guide us in all that leads to the salvation and benefit of His people and His holy, universal, and Apostolic Church.

After understanding the content of your letter and the letter from the esteemed representative (*wakīl*), our spiritual son al-Ḥājj George, we immediately set to work with determination and diligence, consulting and examining along with our two brothers who share in the service of the divine mysteries, His Beatitude Matthaïos, patriarch of Alexandria, and His Beatitude Parthenios, patriarch of Jerusalem, as well as the other bishops of the Holy Synod of Constantinople, to elect a suitable and beneficial person for this Holy Apostolic Antiochian See, as it is our duty to protect and struggle for the Holy Church. The choice fell upon our brother, the esteemed bishop of Aleppo, Kyr Philemon, and he was appointed to the patriarchal office. We hope in God Almighty and His glory that he will conduct himself with peace and love, in the spirit of warmth and calmness he previously showed the people of Aleppo. We thus inform your beloved self of this to prevent and suppress any potential disturbances or concerns, so that you and the aforementioned representative George may focus on what benefits this See //48r// and remain dedicated to your service and secretarial office. Extend from us abundant blessings and grace to our children the Orthodox priests and all the Christian people in general.

We send also a letter of blessing regarding this matter, to be read to them collectively in Damascus and other churches.

Here, all the brothers send you blessings and grace, and from us as well, twice and thrice.

Written in late April, during the Holy Week of Diakainesimos¹⁷⁹ – may you be safe every year – in the year 1766 AD.¹⁸⁰

Other letters in Greek from the Patriarchs of Constantinople were not included in this [Mūsā's] collection. //47v//

68. <Copy of a letter from> Kyr Ilyās Fakhr, Logothetes of the Antiochian See

After extending perfect greetings with the utmost glory and honor,

I wish to inform you that I received your greetings in a letter from His Holiness the Patriarch, and it became known to me that you are engaged in serving His Holiness as a secretary. Having seen your work, I found your hand and text most agreeable. May God bless you and preserve your life.

I was very glad of your service to His Holiness. God willing, you will benefit from His Holiness in honor, good conduct, and knowledge, and you will become a disciple.¹⁸¹ His Holiness is a relative to your father by natural kinship, so there is no need for recommendations for serving His Holiness, walking in the path of righteousness, preserving his secrets, and being mindful of God in private and public, etc.

My son, when you write letters on behalf of His Holiness the Patriarch, distance them a little from the top, at least from the middle of the paper, and the upper signature – I mean, the Patriarch's name – make it a continuous line, not an interrupted one in the middle, under the phrase 'Glory be to God always.'

I wish I could be near you to teach you the rules of writing and the art of composition, for it seems to me that you possess the potential and readiness for it, but perhaps I will prepare some useful specimens for you.

Extend my greetings to everyone serving His Holiness, the most blessed Patriarch.

Written on the 29th of November, in the year 1732 AD.

¹⁷⁹ Εβδομάδα Διακαινησίμου: Renewal Week is the period of seven days beginning on Easter Sunday and continuing up to the following Sunday, which is known as the 'Sunday of Thomas'.

¹⁸⁰ The date is also written in full letters.

¹⁸¹ An Ottoman Turkish word borrowed from the Persian چراغ, meaning 'apprentice' or 'pupil'.

69. [From Sophronios]¹⁸²

I have learned that our master [Patriarch Sylvester] intends to have the book of Nektarios copied by someone in that region, but my son, you need to supervise and guide him. People like them are ignorant of the language and of their [own] ignorance.¹⁸³ Due to their lack of knowledge of the language and spelling, they write differently from what is in front of them in the original copy, thinking that they have not made any mistakes. For example, they might write a tied *tā'* (ٲ) instead of an extended *tā'* (ت), or an extended *tā'* instead of a tied *tā'*, or المؤمنين ['the believers', Accusative] instead of المؤمنون ['the believers', Nominative], and vice versa, or similar errors that change the meaning. Thus, all our efforts will be wasted. Understand this well, and you will require no further recommendation in this matter. //48r//

70. [From Sophronios]¹⁸⁴

I have reviewed the papers of the miserable Ambrosius the apostate, enemy of the faith and heretic. His excuse regarding my book is a lie, because I sent it to him at the house of Dhīb al-Idilbi in Aleppo where he was staying, and when I asked him about it the next day, he said it had arrived. I need you to write to him exactly this but know that he is a liar and cannot be trusted. If he kept it with them [at the house of Dhīb al-Idilbi], let us know so we can retrieve it from them.

Regarding what he wrote to you concerning the validity of his priesthood and that he was not stripped of it: yes, that is true, but he cannot exercise it unless he truly repents and performs his penance as prescribed by St. Basil the Great, not according to the rules of the community of innovators [in faith]. He likened himself to the Apostle Peter, who denied his Lord and then repented and became the chief of the Apostles and Rock of the Faith. However, Peter repented and wept bitterly for his fall; he did not flee to the mountain tops and hide. Instead, he professed his faith openly and traveled the inhabited world preaching, becoming the leader of the apostles, and finally died a martyr. David sinned and wept for his double sin, humbling himself with fasting, weakening himself from not consuming oil and constant prayer, until he became a prophet. Thus, he deserved to have the Lord speak of him: 'I have found David's heart after My own heart' [Acts 13:22; see 1 Samuel 13:14]. He

¹⁸² Written by the same hand, but vertically and without a title.

¹⁸³ What he would call in Letter 71 'a twofold ignorance'.

¹⁸⁴ Without any title or greetings, a new letter starts here.

also said: 'I will not destroy this city for My own sake and for My servant David's sake' [*Isaiah* 37:35]. [You must] similarly write to him and admonish him. //48v//

71. [From Sophronios]¹⁸⁵

Regarding the book by the late Nektarios of blessed memory, which we translated into Arabic, if it is needed over there for countering adversaries, then keep it. Otherwise, consult with His Holiness the Patriarch and send it to Latakia to Yūsuf Mark, but send it with someone reliable. Be sure to take a copy of the small book by Nektarios that we previously translated, entitled *Qaḍā' al-ḥaqq wa-naql al-ṣidq* [*Judgment of Truth and Conveyance of Honesty*],¹⁸⁶ for it contains [texts] beneficial for refuting the adversaries regarding baptism, ordination, and other sacraments, as well as some of their vile rituals.

You mentioned that His Holiness the Patriarch intends to give it to one of the scribes there to make a copy because you are busy. However, my son, we fear it may be altered, as such scribes are distorters¹⁸⁷ and ignorant, and do not understand the correct spelling and rules of Arabic, which would make my efforts useless. Indeed, their ignorance is twofold, for they ignore their ignorance. They write a tied *tā'* (ة) instead of an extended *tā'* (ت), or المؤمنين [‘the believers’, Accusative] instead of المؤمنين [‘the believers’, Nominative]. Conversely, they write المؤمنون when it should be المؤمنين and other similar mistakes. Should one of the adversaries notice this, they will mock us and discredit the book because of its poor grammar. On the other side, Ibn Zākhīr al-Ḥalabī is particularly well-versed in Arabic grammar and syntax, and they scrutinize such matters closely.

If you oversee the scribe and ensure he pays careful attention to these matters, there should be no cause for concern. Perhaps if you alert him properly, he will take care to be consistent, and the result will be good. Prayers. //49r//

¹⁸⁵ Haddad believes that this letter was written by Ilyās Fakhr, which has led to confusion about the authorship of the book mentioned here, traditionally attributed to Sophronios in the manuscripts. It has been suggested that Ilyās Fakhr heavily revised Sophronios's translation and subsequently attributed the new version to himself. However, we see no reason to attribute this letter to Ilyās Fakhr.

¹⁸⁶ The original Greek title of this book, composed in 1671, is: Περὶ τῆς ἀρχῆς τοῦ Πάπα ἀντίρρησεις.

¹⁸⁷ The word ‘*mussākh*’ was used by Germanos Farḥāt at the end of his introduction to *Baḥṭh al-maṭālib*:

احذر يا من دُعيت إلى نسخ هذا المؤلف من أن تُحَرِّف عباراته، ولو لم تفهمها لأنك دُعيت لأن تنسخ لا لأن تفسخ
Beware, you who have been called upon to copy this work, lest you alter its phrases, even if you do not understand them, for you were called to copy, not to distort.

72. [From Yūsuf Mark]¹⁸⁸

To the dear esteemed son, the honorable Deacon Mūsā, may God bless him.

After extending perfect greetings with the utmost glory and honor,

I wish to inform you that it has been a long time since I received a letter from you. May God have prevented it for good reasons. As for me, my son, my condition has worsened because of frequent writing, diminished strength, and poor eyesight.

In recent times, my son, we were struck by one of life's arrows with the loss of your maternal uncle's daughter Badī'a at the age of seven. She passed away on the night of Easter Sunday, after enduring a severe illness with angina-like symptoms on Holy Saturday. She suffered with the Lord Jesus Christ and died with him on Saturday. Do not ask, my son, about the sorrow and grief we feel, for she was a good, well-mannered, and devout girl. Oh, what a painful calamity it is to lose the joy of our hearts, Badī'a, the obedient and attentive one. However, we have hope in God that she has reached the church of the firstborn whose names are written in the Heavens [*Hebrews* 12:23], listening to the hymns of the celebrants there.

Calamity in green gardens is more intense than in arid gardens.¹⁸⁹

May our Lord compensate her parents with her brother and sister and those who will be born after them. Praise be to God in both times of joy and sorrow. God's will is accepted without question. 'The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away'. Blessed be His name forever. [*Job* 1:21]

188 Haddad attributes it to Ilyās Fakhr. The same specimen was used for the death of Jacob, son of the author of a letter preserved in MS Greek Orthodox Diocese of Homs 37, f. 21v-22r (dated August 13, year not mentioned).

189 This verse from the letter M of Abū Tammām's 'Chapter of Lamentations' in his *Dīwān* is also a selected verse in the 'Chapter of Lamentations' of *Ḥamāsāt al-ẓurafā'* by al-Zawzanī (d. 1093/1094)..

Addendum 1

Letter of Condolence on the Death of Ilyās Fakhr

The collection of letters includes a condolence letter addressed to Mūsā by Khalīl Šabbāgh for the death of Ilyās Fakhr, which occurred in 1758. The possible author of the current letter is Yūsuf Mark, who, through his proximity, might have sent a letter to his friend for a reason that prevented him from attending the funerals, or simply anticipated his participation in them. In different letters, Yūsuf designates Mūsā as a brother (*ukhūwatukum*, Letters 42–43), even after he became a priest. We exclude Sophronios because we believe he would have addressed him only as a spiritual son. We do not rule out other friends like Dīmītrī Šabbāgh who also addresses Mūsā as a brother (*ukhūwatukum*, Letter 31). Dīmītrī was in Izmir in 1747.

Greek Orthodox Diocese of Homs MS 37, f. 17v-18r

المنهى لعلم أخوتكم المكرمة، أنني بينما أنا ملتئ بالأدعية //18r// الصالحة، الناطق بها كل عضو وجارحة، وأكابد أليم الفراق والأشواق، وأعلل القلب بالأمني والتلاق، وفد إليّ كتابكم الكريم المستوجب التفخيم، وبعدما فضضته اغتممت جداً لأنه أولاً أخبرني بانحراف مزاجكم عن الاعتدال، فأنحرفت معه حينئذ أفكاري إليكم، واعتدل لساني بالدعاء لكم، وبقي خاطري عندكم، أسأل الله تعالى أن يشفيكم ويعافيك، ولا يسئونا فيكم، ويلحظكم بعين عنايته ويقيكم/ وثانياً أنبأني بفقد نادرة الزمان، وأعجوبة الأوان، الذي فاق بفصاحته(ه) سبحانه¹ بالانشاء والبلاغة والبيان، أعني الخال المقدسي أبو فخر الفاضل العالم العامل، طراز المجالس والمحافل، فخر الأعراق والأصايل، حقاً لقد أظلمت الدنيا لفقده، وخلت ربوع الفضائل من بعده،
فكل معدوم سواه مشبه ولكل مفقود سواه نظير

To inform your honorable brotherhood,

While I was deeply engaged in offering righteous prayers—performed with every limb and faculty of my body—and enduring the pain of separation and longing, comforting my heart with hopes of reunion, your noble letter, most worthy of respect, reached me.

After unsealing it, I was deeply distressed because it first informed me of the imbalance in your health. As soon as I read this, my thoughts immediately turned to you, my tongue was moved to pray for you, and my heart remained with you. I pray to God Almighty to heal you, grant you well-being, spare us from sorrow about you, and watch over you with His divine care.

1 He is Ṣaḥbān Wā'il ibn Zafar, an eloquent Arab and an orator whose eloquence and rhetoric are proverbial.

Secondly, your letter brought the heartbreaking news of the loss of a rare gem of his time, a marvel of his age, whose eloquence surpassed Suhbān in rhetoric, mastery of composition, and clarity of expression – I mean the esteemed uncle Abū Fakhr al-Maqdisī, a virtuous, scholarly, and dedicated man, the ornament of gatherings and assemblies, the pride of noble lineages and ancestral heritage.

Truly, the world has darkened with his passing, and the realms of virtue are left desolate in his absence.

Everything that is lost has a counterpart, but he alone has no equal.²

2 Slightly paraphrased verse from al-Mutanabbī's poem: غاضت أنامله وهن بحور.

Addendum 2

Letter of Congratulations on Mikhā'il's Birth

Even though this is intended as an example of how to write a congratulatory message for a newborn, it contains very specific information. The newborn's name is Mikhā'il. The father chose this name for his son after the Archangel because the baby was born on this special day [November 8]. However, the father worries that the author's brother might be unhappy to share the same name. Knowing that both Mūsā's brother and Yūsuf's son are called Mikhā'il, we believe this is Mūsā's congratulation letter and a response to Yūsuf's concern.

We present the text of this letter from MS Greek Orthodox Diocese of Homs MS 37, f. 24r-24v, along with an English translation.

تهنئة أخرى بمولود //24v//

الذي نخبر به خوتكم لا أخبرتم بمكروه، وهو أنه سابق تاريخه في أبرك وقت ميمون، وأبهج زمن بالسعد مقرون، وصلني مكتوبكم، وسررت بعلم صحة سلامتكم، التي هي غاية القصد والمرام، وبغية المستهام، لا سيما قد حصل عندي غاية السرور، والفرح الموفور، بالغلام الذي رزقتموه، وذكرتم بأنكم دعيت اسمه ميخائيل، لكونه وُلد نهار عيد رئيس الملائكة الجليل، وخطر في ضميركم خاطر لنلا يتغير أو يندقر خاطر الأخ المكرم المقدسي ميخائيل، لسبب تسمية المولود بهذا الاسم الشريف الذي تلوح منه امارات السعد، فلا يخطر ببالكم شيء من هذه الظنون، لأن الاخ المشار إليه لما بلغه ذلك انسَ جدًا بغاية ما يكون، ومن واجب الضرورة أن تدعوا مولودكم باسم القديس الذي وُلد يوم عيده النفيس، ربنا بشفاعته زعيم الملائكة يحرسه ويثبته، ولا يسببكم فيه، ويجعله نسلًا صالحًا، وغلًا ناجحًا، ويقر عينكم به ويفرحكم بعرضه.

هُنَّيتُ بَابِنِ قَدْ أَتَاكَ مَبَارَكَا

وَنَهْن فِيهِ بِالْعَا فِي رَشْدِه

فَالسَّيْفُ يَزْهَرُ رَوْنَقًا بِصْقَالِه

إِنْ جَالَ مَاءُ فَرْنَدِه فِي حَدِه

Another [Letter of] Congratulation on the Newborn

We inform you, brother – hoping you never receive distressing news – that before this date, at the most blessed and auspicious time, the happiest moment filled with fortune, I received your letter and was delighted to learn of your well-being, which is the goal and cherished desire. My joy was further heightened, and my happiness multiplied, upon hearing about the son you have been blessed with. You mentioned naming him Mikhā'il, as he was born on the feast day of the great Archangel. A thought crossed your mind, worrying that our esteemed brother, Mikhā'il al-Maqdisi, might be affected by this choice of name. Let no such thoughts

trouble you, for when the aforementioned brother heard the news, he was greatly pleased, beyond measure.

It is only necessary that you name your newborn after the saint whose feast day he was born on. May our Lord, through the intercession of the Chief of the Angels, protect him, raise him well, and not cause you grief concerning him. May He make him a righteous child, a successful young man, bringing you joy and granting you the delight of his marriage.

You have been blessed with a son, congratulations to you!

Rejoice in him as he matures and thrives.

The sword shines with a bright polish

When the water at its edge flows along its blade.¹

¹ This poem was composed by Jarmānūs Farḥāt, *Dīwān*, ed. Saʿīd al-Khūrī al-Shartūnī, Beirut : al-Maṭbaʿa al-kāthūlikīya lil-abāʾ al-yāsūʿiyyīn, 1894, p. 181.

Addendum 3:

Two Letters from Sylvester of Antioch to the Emirs of Mount Lebanon

The two letters reproduced here (along with their English translation) were sent from Sylvester, presumably composed by his secretary Mūsā, to the Emirs of Mount Lebanon. These include a letter to Miḥim al-Shihābī, Emir of Mount Lebanon, and another to Emir Najm of Ḥāṣbayyā, sent in 1741 and preserved in MS Ḥariṣā, Saint Paul 210.

Letter 1:

أوحد الأمراء >الامير نجم المكرم<
غب ابلاغ جواهر التحيات > والتـسليمات العاطرة <...> على كل خير وسلامة وبعده نعرف
حضرتمكم ونو<...> أنا كثيرون الشوق <ومن> حين قدمنا الى بلادكم العامرة وحظينا بموانستكم ورؤيتكم
الفـخرة ونحن<
مقيمون لجنابكم على وظيفة أداء الدعاء آناء الليل وأطراف النهار.
<وانقطاع> المكاتبـة لحضرتكم في كل هذه المدة ليس هو من نسيان أو اهمال <بل> بدخولنا محروسة
دمشق انشغل فكرنا قليلاً في قضى اغراض <الرعية>.
وان سألتم عن أحوالنا قلله الحمد والمنة ميسرة على ما في خاطر وزود <...>
طرف حضرة افندينا وإلى الشام الدستور المكرم ومن اعيان البلد <...>
بشرف علمكم ولا يصير مؤاخـذة بابطاننا عن المكاتبـة لجنابكم لأننا معاذ الله ان <يكون ذلك>
النصارى الروم نسال الله تعالى بان يديم لنا بـقاكم ويخـدل اعداكم ويحفظ <بلادكم> عامرة بحسكم
على الدوام ودمتم بالعز والبقاء
ثم المرجو لا تخرجونا من <خاطركم الكريم بارسال> مكاتيب اعلام سلامتكم لننسر بورودها
ثم واصلكم مكتوب الى جناب حضرة <...> الامير ملحم فالمرجو بان تكلفوا خاطركم وترسلوه داخل
مكاتيبكم لحضرته وتبلغوه <...> من جنابه الجواب وليس قصدنا بهذا الا اتصال المحبة وتشبيـد ا<...>
بلغوا منا الثنا والدعا الى مخاديمكم العزاز والى من يلود بجنابكم وفي هذا <لجناب> يقبل ايديكم <...>
يصل الى حصيبيا يحضى بمطالع افتخار الامراء ال<كرام> جناب حضرة محبنا الامجد الامير
نجم المكرم

To the Most Noble of Princes, the Honorable Emir Najm,

After conveying the pearls of greetings and the fragrant salutations upon your person, we inform Your Excellency that we remain in great longing for you.

And since we arrived in your flourishing lands and had the honor of your esteemed company and noble presence, we continue to uphold our duty of offering prayers for Your Excellency, night and day.

The interruption in correspondence during this period was not due to forgetfulness or neglect. Rather, upon our arrival in the well-guarded city of Damascus, our minds were preoccupied for a time with attending to some issues.

If you inquire about our well-being, praise be to God, everything is going as hoped, and our affairs are progressing smoothly. We have sent the necessary correspondence to our esteemed Effendi in Damascus and to the noble leaders of the city, in accordance with your knowledge and instructions.

We apologize for the delay in writing to Your Excellency, as we would never want such a delay to be caused by negligence. We pray that God Almighty prolong your presence among us, defeat your enemies, and keep your lands prosperous through your leadership.

Furthermore, we kindly ask that you remember us in your honorable thoughts and send letters informing us of your well-being, so we may rejoice upon receiving them.

Additionally, we sent Your Excellency a letter addressed to the Honorable Emir Miḥim. We kindly ask that you include it in your correspondence to him and ensure you receive a reply from his esteemed self. Our only goal in doing this is to strengthen bonds of affection and reinforce our connection.

Express our gratitude and prayers to your cherished attendants and to all those who seek shelter under your noble protection.

With this, we kiss your hand.

May this letter reach Ḥaṣḥbayyā, where it will be honored by the noble sight of the most distinguished princes, our most beloved and illustrious lord, the honorable Emir Najm.

Letter 2:

<افتخار الأمراء الكرام ذو القدر والاحترام جناب صفرة افندينا الامير ملحم المحترم حفظه
غب اهداء الاثنية اللاتفة المستطابة والأدعية الصالحة المستجابة المعروض من هذا المحب
المخلص والداعي المتخصص وهو اننا من حين خروجنا من مدينة بيروت وقدمنا الى محروسة دمشق
الشام لم يخرج ذكركم السعيد من خاطرننا بل على الدوام مقيمين لحضرتكم >على< وظيفة اداء الدعاء
بأن يديم لجنابكم العز والبقاء ويمنحكم الله تعالى مزيد السعادة والنصر والاتقاء.
ولا يُحسب عند حضرتكم بان سبب >اب> طائنا عن المكاتبة لسعادتكم من اهمال او نسيان معاذ الله
تعالى من ذلك وخصوصاً قبل الان لما كنا عند حضرة خالككم المكرم الامير نجم >في بلاد حصيبيا<—
قطعنا ذكركم وثناكم بالخير وجنابه. ربنا يحفظكم ويحفظه عمل لنا اكرام زائد وحصل لنا منه جبران
خاطر كلي.

يكون بشريف والمأمول من حضرتكم الشريفة وشيمكم الحميدة ألا تخرجونا من خاطركم الكريم
كما اننا نحن لم ننساكم من صالح الدعاء وألا تقطعوا عنا مشرفاتكم الكريمة لننسر بورودها وأن تشملوا
جماعتنا النصارى الروم الذين تحت حكمكم بحسن انظاركم

ولكم العز والبقاء والدعاء.
 بلغوا <منا> نداء وزيد الدعاء إلى حضرة أخوكم وأولادكم الأمراء الكرام ولجميع من يلود بجنابكم
 الكريم والدعاء.
 حضر في هذا الجانب وكيلنا المعلم <ميخائيل> ثوما يقبل ايديكم الكرام.
 حرر في سنة ١٧٤١ مسيحية في ١٤ من شهر كانون الثاني
 ان شاء الله تعالى يشرف بقاء أوجد الأمراء أمجد الكبراء الفخام جناب حضرة ملحم المكرم حفظه
 الله تعالى وأبقاه.

The pride of the noble princes, of high rank and esteem, His Excellency our Effendi Prince Milhim, the honored and protected,

After offering the appropriate praise and sincere, heartfelt prayers from this devoted and loyal well-wisher, we inform Your Excellency that ever since we left the city of Beirut and arrived in the well-guarded Damascus of al-Shām, your blessed memory has never left our thoughts. We continually fulfill our duty of praying for your continued honor and longevity, asking God Almighty to grant you increased happiness, victory, and protection.

Please do not think that our delay in writing to Your Excellency comes from neglect or forgetfulness – God forbid! Especially earlier, when we were in Ḥaṣḥbayyā with your esteemed uncle, the honorable Emir Najm, we never stopped mentioning you with benevolence and praise before him. May our Lord protect both you and him. He honored us with the utmost generosity, bringing us great satisfaction and comfort.

We sincerely hope that Your Noble Excellency, reflecting your admirable qualities, will remember us kindly, just as we have not forgotten you in our heartfelt prayers. Likewise, we ask that you do not withhold your esteemed letters from us, so we can rejoice upon their arrival. Furthermore, we humbly request that you extend your benevolent attention to our Rūm Christian community under your leadership.

May you stay in honor and prosperity, blessed by our prayers.

Please extend our gratitude and additional prayers to your esteemed brother, your noble sons, the honorable princes, and everyone seeking refuge under your noble protection.

Our representative, Mikhā'il Tūmā, arrived in our region, and he humbly kisses your noble hands.

Written in the year 1741 AD, on the 14th of January.

God willing, [this letter] will be honored to be received by the Most Eminent of Princes, the Most Distinguished among the Honored, His Excellency the Honorable Milhim, May God Preserve and Sustain Him.

Addendum 4:

Sophronios of Kilis's Note on the Maronites and the Catholics

In his translation of *Syntagma kata azýmōn* (Σύνταγμα κατά αζύμων) by Eustratios Argentis, Sophronios included a note stating that the Maronites and Catholics who debated with him in Jerusalem and Acre used arguments similar to those refuted by Argentis. In the margin, Sophronios added, in his own handwriting, an instruction to the copyists not to include his note in the main body of the text but rather in the margin, as it was his own addition. We have copied and translated the text from MS Vatican, Sbath 245, f. 97v–98r (Figure 13).

a) Marginal note:

<هذه الاسطر ههنا
>اضف<تها من عندي لاجل
>...<ل صارت بيننا
>...<وله وكان يتفاخر
>بالا<باطيل لا غير لكن
>اف<ضل ان تحذف
>من<الوسط ولا حاجة عنا اليها

I added these lines myself, and they are my own, written during our debates when he was boasting only about falsehoods. I prefer they be removed from the main text – there's no need for them.

b) Strikethrough text:

وهذه النتائج الباطلة والتمويهات الواهية مرار عديدة قد اعترضوني بها في مجادلاتهم معي في اورشليم وعكة وغير أماكن وذلك عند ضيقهم وترتيب تبكيت بدعهم من الكتاب الإلهي يهربون ملتجئون إلى الاختراعات الناشئة عن الأوهام البشرية الباطلة وبهذا المقدار يتفاخرون بها حتى أنهم يفضلوها على الكتاب الإلهي وأقوال الآباء الإلهيين والمجامع كما قال لي في عكة واحد منهم له عندهم كرامة ما لكونه من شيعة الموارنة اندس في مذهبهم //98r// وذلك حين قررت له بعض اعتراضات في الرد عليه لأجل القول في انبثاق الروح الكلي قدسه من اقنوم الاب وحده لم يستح ولا خشي هذا الخير من جزم القول الباهض لكنه تفاخر متباهياً بقوله إن مذهب المسيحيين البابستيين لا يحتاج إلى اثباته شهادات من الكتاب والآباء والمجامع المقدسة بل يكفي أن كل أحد من عقله ومجرد تميزه فقط أن يعتقد ويقنع بأن يرى أن الروح القدس ينبثق ومن الابن ومثل ذلك في بقية الاعتقادات الأخرى. وأما أنا عن أقواله هذه لا يهمني أبداً الحال أن أجابه بل فليتأمل كل مسيحي أرثوذكسي عظيم هذا التجديف الغربي ويجاوب عنه كما يراه صواباً.

These false conclusions and weak sophistries were used against me many times during debates in Jerusalem, Acre, and other places. Whenever they were backed

into a corner and their heresies were refuted by divine Scripture, they would flee and seek refuge in inventions born of vain human imagination. They boasted of these so much that they preferred them even to divine Scripture, the sayings of the Holy Fathers, and the [ecumenical] councils. One of them, who held a position of some esteem among them because he belonged to the Maronite sect but had infiltrated their Latin doctrine, said this to me in Acre. This was when I presented him with certain objections in response to his claim, and proved that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the hypostasis of the Father alone. He neither blushed nor feared making such a grievous statement. Instead, he proudly and arrogantly declared: "The doctrine of the Papist Christians does not require proof from Scripture, the Fathers, or the holy councils. It is enough for anyone, using reason and unassisted discernment, to believe and be convinced that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Son as well as from the Father – and likewise for the rest of the doctrinal points".

As for me, I was not at all concerned with responding to such statements. Instead, let every Orthodox Christian consider the severity of this Western blasphemy and respond as he sees fit.

Abbreviations

BnF = Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France.

CEDRAC = Centre de documentation et de recherches arabes chrétiennes de l'Université Saint-Joseph.

Chronos = Chronos. Revue d'histoire de l'Université de Balamand, al-Kurah.

EAPE = *Early Arabic Printing in the East*, De Gruyter, series editor Ioana Feodorov.

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Figures



Fig. 1: First letter of the collection, by Sophronios of Kilis.

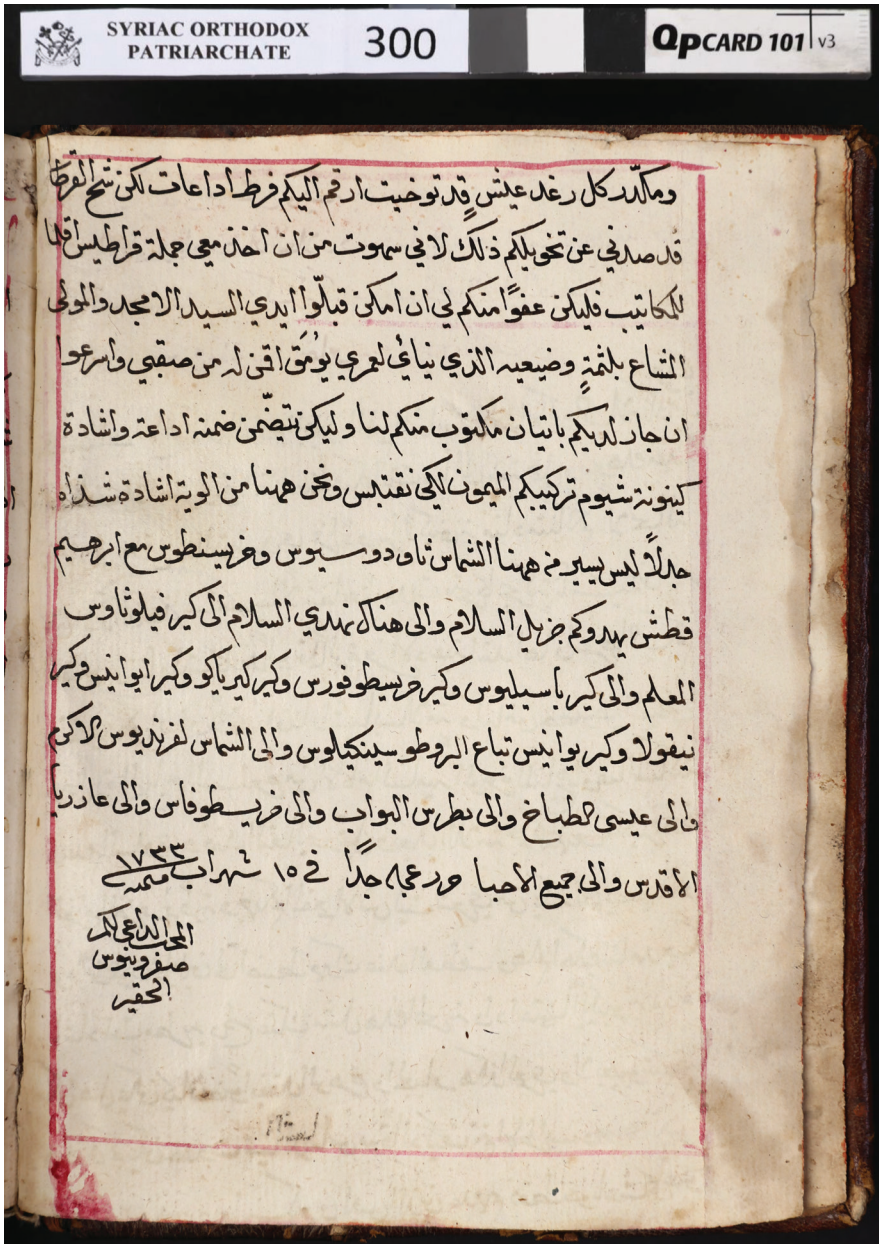


Fig. 2: The concluding words of the first letter by Sophronios of Kilis.



Fig. 3: Second part of the collection, first letter, by Yūsuf Mark.



الى حرم فخر الاولاد الروحانيين وعين الاحباب الازميين التماسي بوسي الازم
 برك الرب الاله عليه وعلى عروبه وسائر نسله اتم البركات كسوة ادين
 لمهي هوانه سابقا ولا حقا ارسلنا اليكم مكاتيب من حلب ومن استبا بول وعرفناكم ان
 مكاتيبكم المرسولة عن يد المحوري مخايل الودفي ما وصلت هي ولا عدنا رايها غيرها
 من جنابكم وقد وصلنا بالسلامة الى مدينة بوكريشت وحظينا بتقبل ايدي سيدنا
 البطريرك الكلي القبطه وراينا قدسه مباشر في نقش احراف للطبعة غير تلك الاخر
 ارفع منها عن يد جرجس البوشعر ورفيقه وقبل تاريخه تموا طبع الرسالة المرسولة من
 مجمع القسطنطينية وانا علت لها فاحله واعذرت عنهم في عدم الاملاء كما امر في
 سيدنا البطريرك الكلي القبطه ولما تموها ابطلوا للطبعة وبنار يخيه تموا نقش الاخر
 الجديد وابتدوا في سكها رجا على مصوم تكس يدور واما انا في اول صوم الميلاد
 ارسلنا سيدنا الى معمرة القرامايتي اليوناني لاكون برفقة الكنايس برنابوس الودفي
 انقلهم وارسل في اربعة اولاد ولاهيه من الذين يقرهم اخوكم بطرس لافريم ابحر وسية معمرة
 فكم الدعا وسيدنا البطريرك الكلي القبطه المحرر بانه الصخر وله في تلك البلاد جاه
 عظيم والجميع سبوا الاعيان ما يقطعوا من التردد الى مكان رجال وبالنسبة لكونهم
 وبشما يجراداه واما محبة خضر البك المحترم له حفظه الله نعم لا نقدر كتبها وفي كافة
 الزهاد واولاد عباد الميزة الا فقل يدعوه ليعتد له ويحضر قدسه هذا ما رايناه وقبل
 دخولنا الى بوكريشت كان دوق على المدينة المذكورة جراد لا نقدر كتبها فالتفت خضر البك
 المحترم من سيدنا لومي كيم ليعطي على ماء وينفخ على المكان الذي يوجد فيه الجراد
 فلما صلي طرد بصلاته جميعه الطيار والرخاف من كل مكان بعيدا كان الطيار ينفي عن الشجر
 والرخاف يتفرم على الارض مقدار ذراع واحد كما اخبروني واستمر بطرده من مكان الى
 مكان ومن قربة الى قربة مقدار شهر لما راوا هذا العجب اهل الى مكان الميلاد ازدادت
 امانتهم به هذا ما عدنا من الاخبار اخبرناكم بها الكنايس برنابوس يقر بكم مزبديك ام
 وبسال خاطركم الكريم وفتنل امركم بحجة اخوكم بطرس المتصله منكم كنية ومن عدم كتابته
 لكم مكتوبيا ونحمله منكم شاكركم بهذا المكتوب الخ جرد في نشره في اثنائي دخول كسديع
 له الهيكل كل سنة وانتم سالون سنة ١٧٤٧ م بوكريشت

Fig. 4: Letter by Yūsuf Mark sent from Bucharest, November 21, 1747.

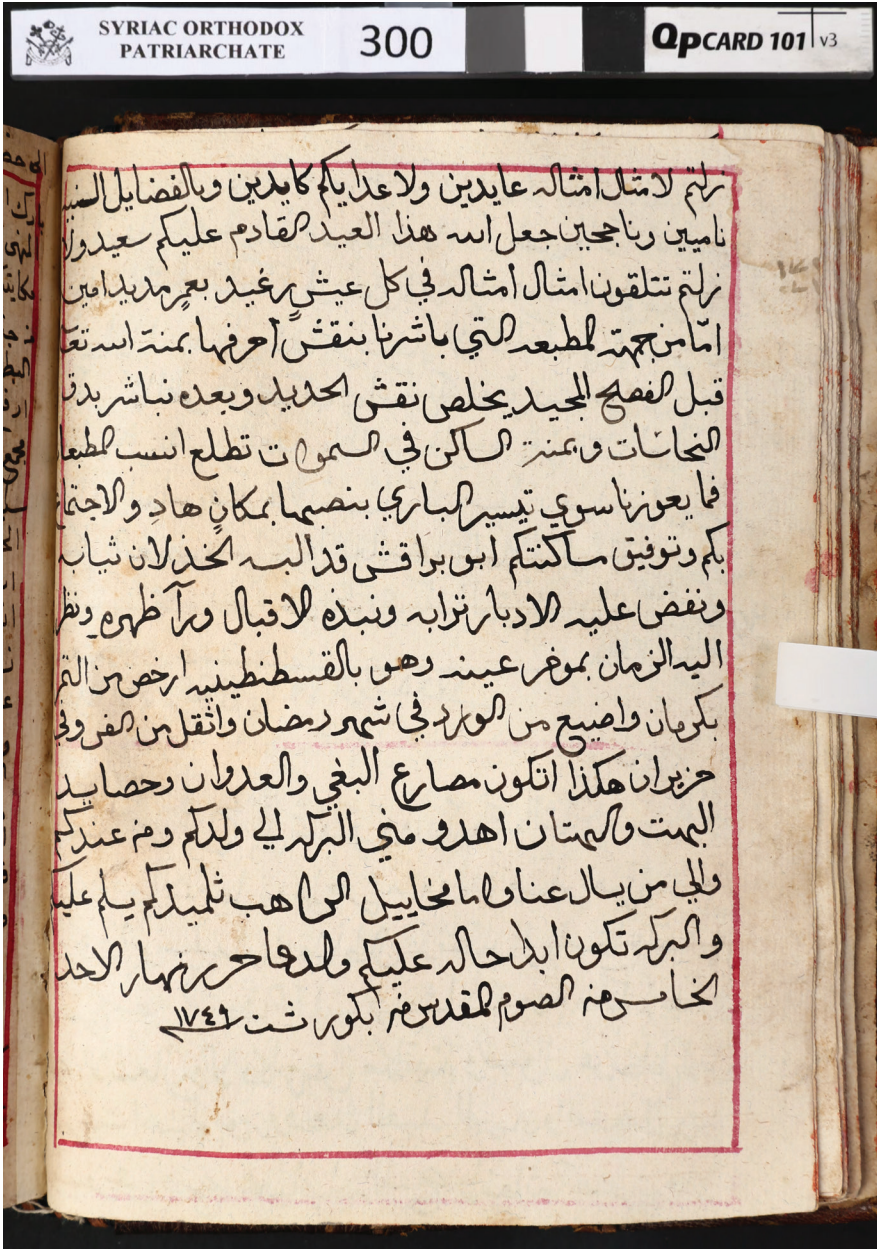


Fig. 5: Another letter from Bucharest, regarding the printing press, Spring 1749.

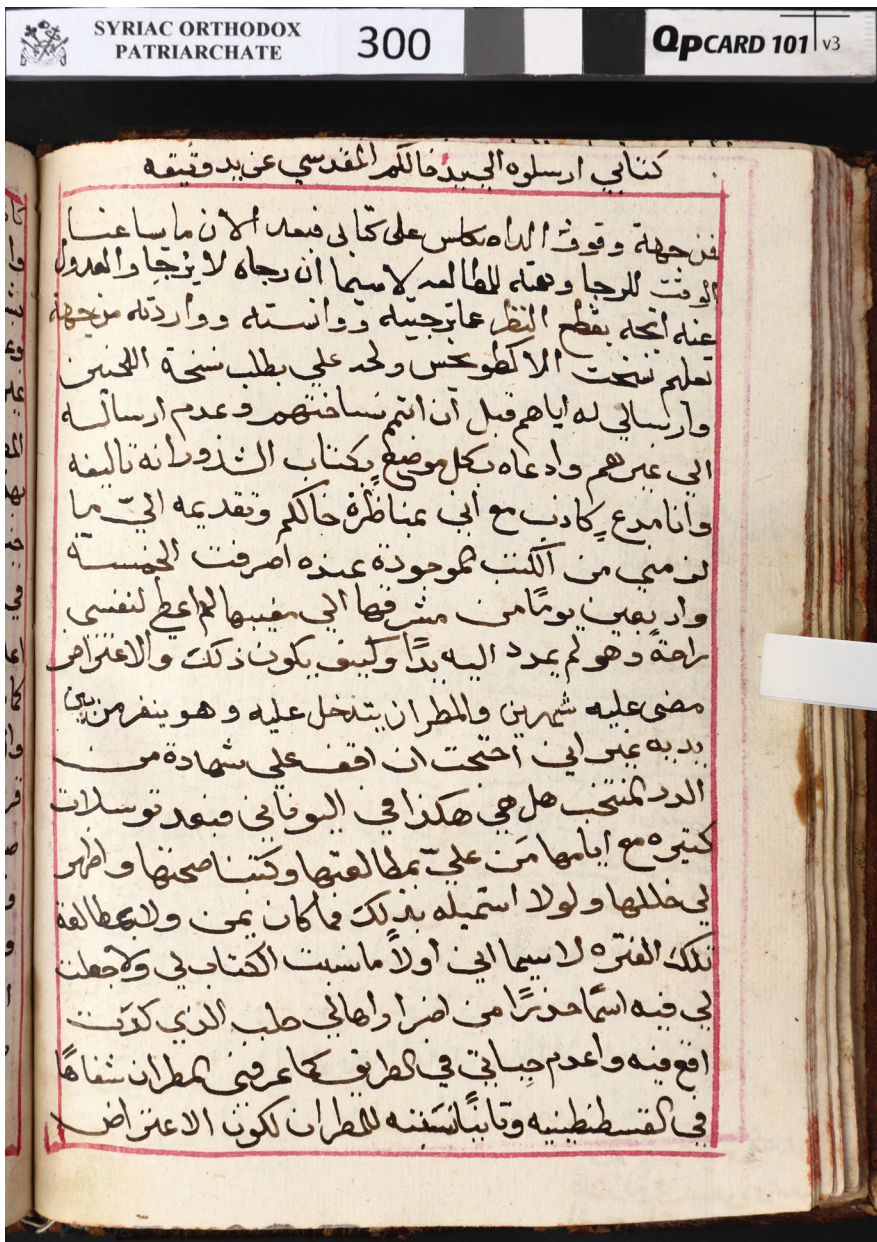


Fig. 6: Another letter by Yūsuf Mark, in a different handwriting.

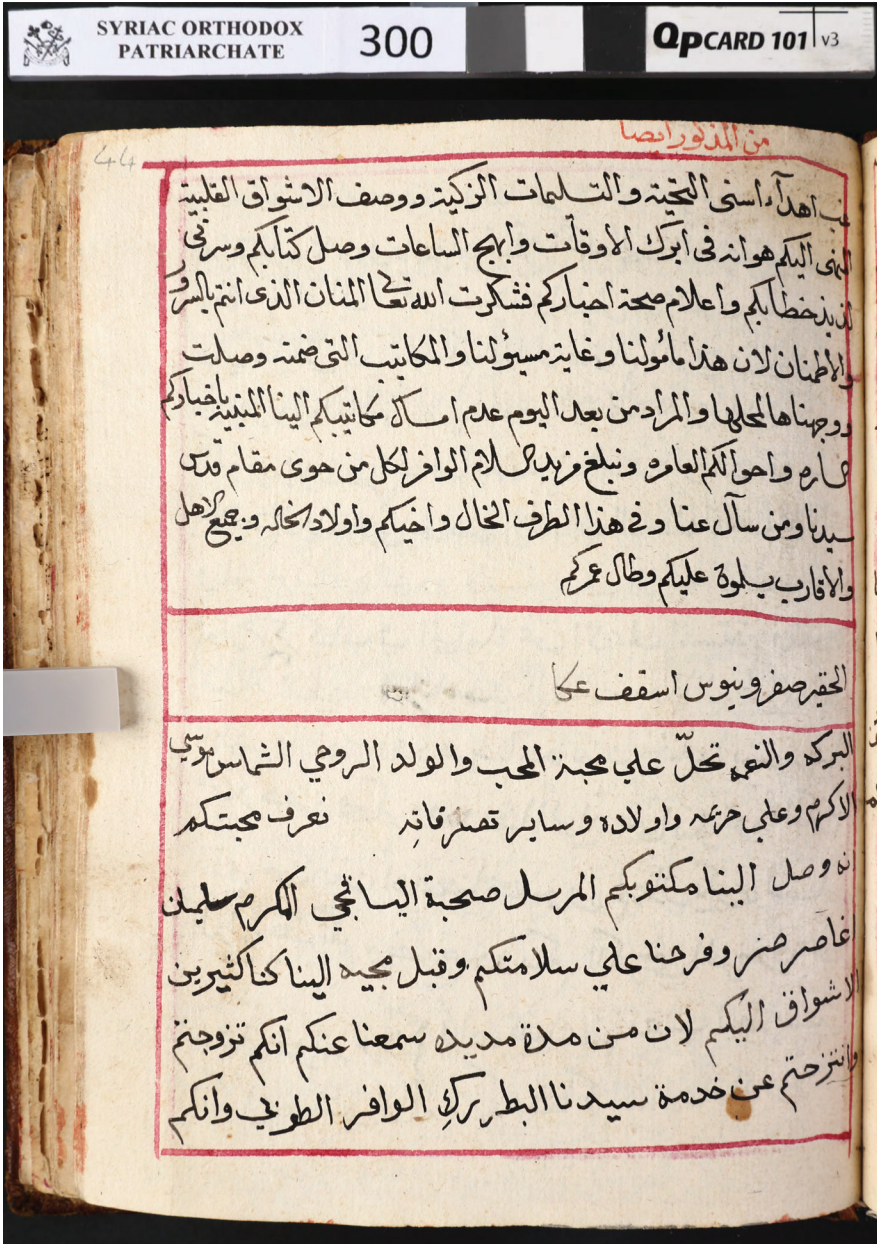


Fig. 7: The second letter by Sophronios of Kilis, in a different handwriting.



Fig. 8: MS Joun, Couvent Saint-Sauveur 1143, title page of the Horologion, handwriting of Mūsā Ṭrābulṣī.

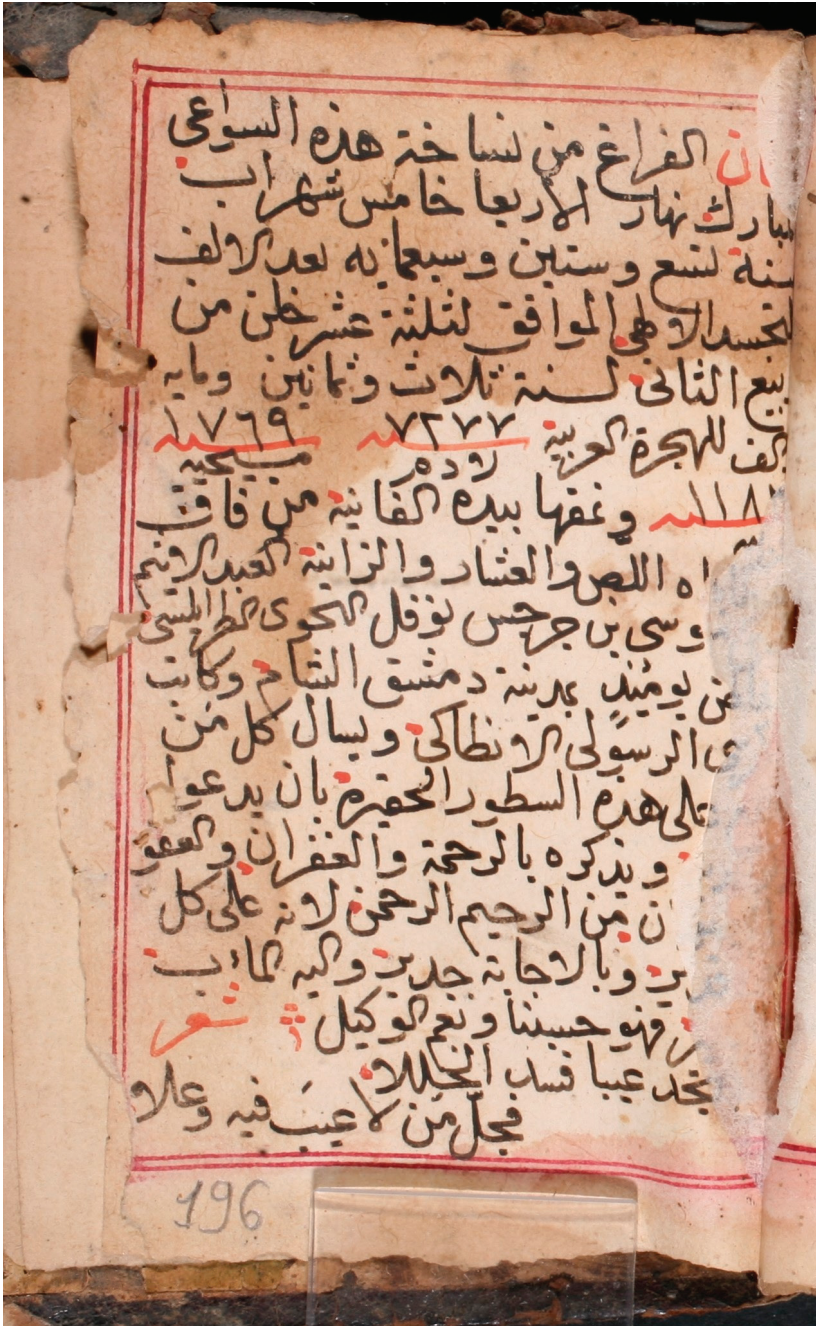


Fig. 9: Same manuscript, colophon of the Horologion.



Fig. 10: MS Joun, Couvent Saint-Sauveur 1517, colophon of Badī' al-inshā'.



Fig. 11: Homs, Greek Orthodox Diocese of Homs 37, copy of Mūsā's colophon.

وكان الفراغ من تاخته في اواخر شهر شباط سنة ١٧٥٠
 ونقل عن نسخة مغلوطة غير مقسطة ولا معتدلة واصح حسب المكن
 وهو برهم كتيبة ذي الذات الوضيه ووصفات لموضيه وفتحها
 لوكيه وطلعة لمهيه لذي لا زالت لا قلام خداما جواهرهم ولا سماع
 نظاما الجواهرهم وطردهم سواحل لوزاخرهم يد رافق لسعاده نور
 روض المجاده تاج برود لعقل بوشياح لادب شيخ لسندس بالذهب
 مانع حكمة لليونان بفصاحة لعرب مزج لعقد بالضرب ذو لفضل
 لنامي ولقد رگامى لشماس بورغاكى ابن اعني سيد لبطرك
 كير يوكير سيلستوس لظاكي لكالى لعنطه ونفقه لعبد لعنطه لاربه
 اسير وصفه ذنبه موسى بن جرجس بن فيخايل ابن ابي نوفل لعروف بابن لشيخ لطرلسي
 له رثود كسى الكاتب بوفيد بقلانية لبطركه بدينه دمشق لحيه احسن له لمه وعفرا
 ولوالديه صلح ٢ ١١٦٣ للهجرة

Fig. 12: Khinshāra, Ordre Basilien Choueirite 175, colophon of *Baḥṭh al-maṭālib*.

كل حين وبغير ضرورة ينبغي ان يعمدوا العلمانيين اولادهم اترى الذي يعمل مثل هذا
 التعليم هل كان يجتنب عند اللاتنيين بانه قويم الرأي صادق ام هرطوقي لمجد
 ان الاطفال لاجل الضرورة قد يتناولون من الخاس فقط. ولاجل
 الضرورة البعض من المرفضا يتناولون الخبز المقدس فقط بغير الدم الرهيب. وعن ضرورة
 كثيرين ايقايد ركههم الموت بغير اعتراف ولا قربانه ولا زيت مقدس ولا ميرن وغير
 اشيا مثل هذه كثيرة تحدث لاجل الضرورة بل الذي يجاسر عليها وعلى مجاوزة الشرايع
 والنواميس المألوفة بغير ضرورة قد يحسب بمنزلة هرطوقي ويدان ويلقى من الكنيسة
 الجامعة الرسولية المقدسة كمعتدي الشريعة والمجد منافق. نتيجة الباسطياني اذا
 هذه القائلين بهاتان الشي الصابرة واحدة وفي بعض الاحيان قد يمكن ان يصير مرار
 كثيرة وفي كل حين هي كاذبة جهارا وباطلة عيانا وهذه النتيجة الباطلة السفطية
 قد يرون ان يجادعون ويفعلون الاعبياء الاميون ليس فقط في هرطقة وبدعة فطيرم
 بل وفي كل بدعة اخرى غير هذه اخترعها حديثا هذه السايح الباطلة والتمويهات
 الواهية مرار عديدة قد اعترفوني بها في مجادلاتهم معي في اورشليم وعكا وغير ما كن
 وذلك عندهم فيقتنهم وتنسب تبليكات بدعهم من الكتاب الالهى يهربون ملتجئون
 الي الاختراعات الناشئة عن الالهام البشرية الباطلة وهذه المقدار يتناخرون
 بها حتى انهم يفسلوا على الكتاب الالهى واقرال الابا الالهيين والجامع كاتالى
 في في عكا واحد منهم له عندهم كرامته ما الكون من شيعته المتوارثة اندس في بدعهم
 ووسط ولا حجة فيها

وذلك

Fig. 13: MS Vatican, Sbath 245, handwriting of Sophronios of Kilis in the margin.

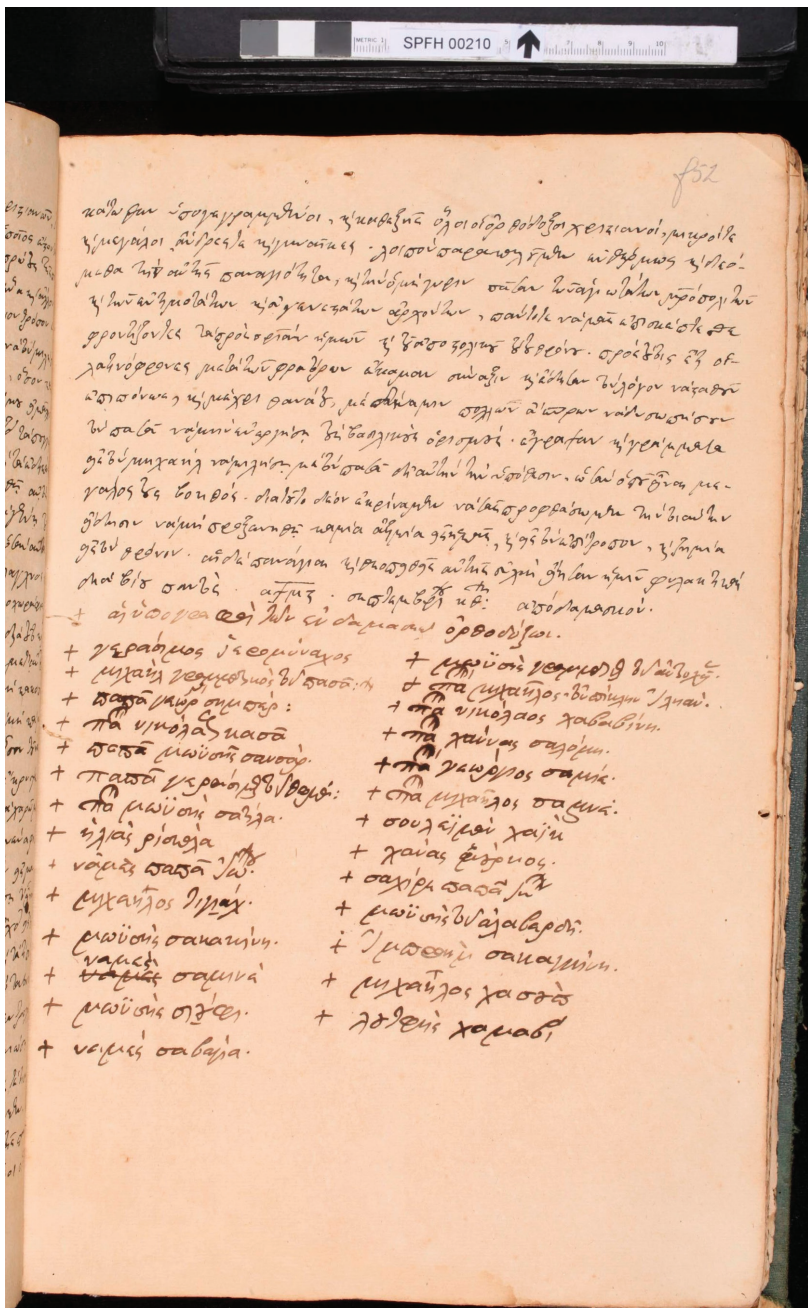


Fig. 14: MS Ḥarīṣā, Société des Missionnaires de Saint Paul 210, copy of the Damascenes' report against Mīkhā'īl Tūmā with the signature of Mūsā, secretary of the Patriarch of Antioch.

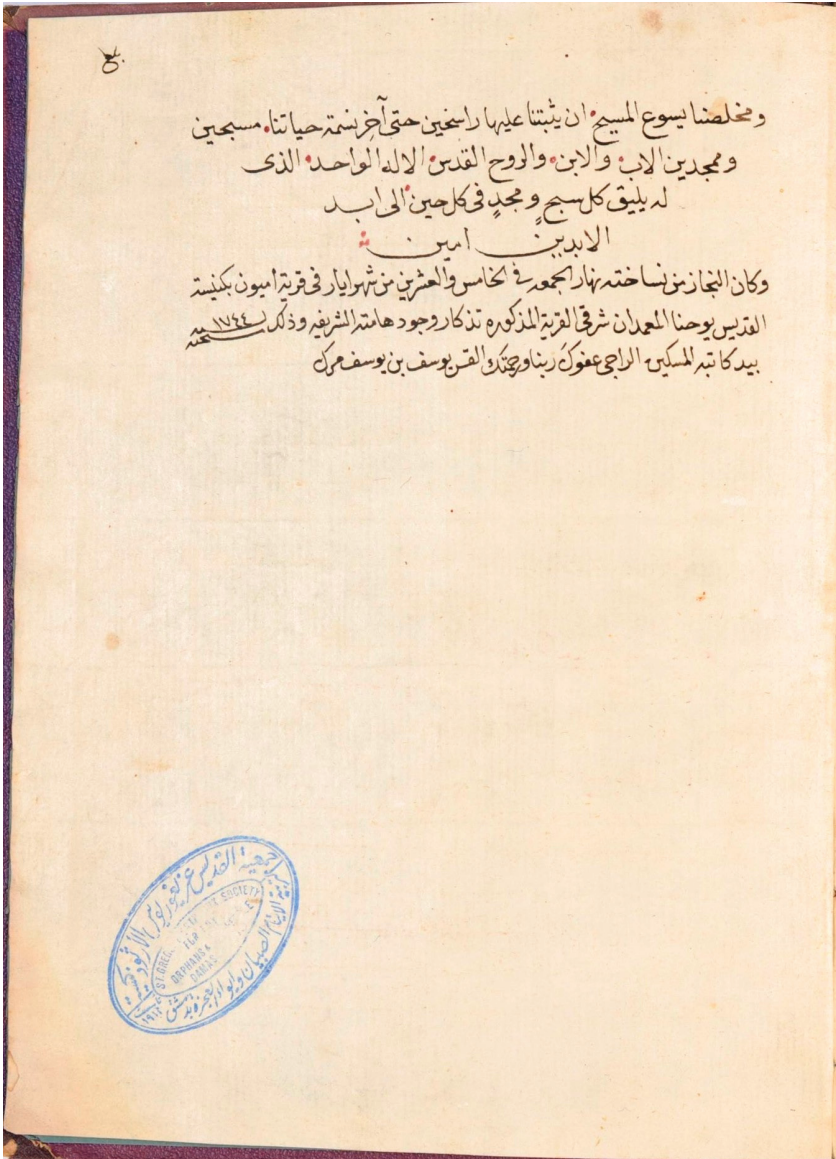


Fig. 15: MS Damascus, Greek Orthodox Patriarchate 4, handwriting of Yūsuf Mark.

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