

**The Purpose of *Perichōrēsis*
in the
Polemical Works of John of Damascus**



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University of Oxford

**A thesis submitted for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
Trinity 2016**

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Abstract

John of Damascus was an early eighth century theologian in the Jerusalem Patriarchate. His family supplied financial administrators in Syro-Palestine for most of the seventh century, who were involved in surrendering Damascus to the Arabs if not also to the Persians. They thrived in the sectarian environment under the Umayyads. Numerous Greek *Lives* paint John in legendary terms; however, these are late and unreliable. I deconstruct the *Lives* decoupling his timeline from Byzantine Iconoclasm, arguing that there is no evidence and good reason to think that he did not leave the Arab administration because of vexed piety, persecution or administrative language change. Rather, focusing on the chronicler's treatment of John's family, I argue that John left office for his own reasons. I propose that John was instrumental in a *quid pro quo*: cathedral for patriarchate negotiation. Consequently, the Arabs built the Damascus Mosque on the site of the cathedral church of St John the Baptist, and the (dyothelite) Chalcedonian party moved to Jerusalem, where they reestablished the Jerusalem Patriarchate. Thus, I argue the context of John's polemical works is Jerusalem and patriarchal policy. Further, I argue that John was commissioned to produce something like 'proto-school' texts in the context of debate in the Anastasis with internal Maronite and external West and East Syrian interlocutors. Then I look at one example of John's theological creativity to show how this context impinged on his theological program. John appropriates Maximus the Confessor's term *perichōrēsis* and reduces its scope to the Incarnation while moving it into the doctrine of God for the first time. I show that he does this for polemical reasons in order to contravene each of his interlocutors with a simple biblical rhetorical model providing Chalcedonian monks in debate with a simple formula against better educated foes. This thesis demonstrates that reading John out of context fails to appreciate his creative response to these local exigencies.

To Karen

“As iron sharpens iron . . .”

Prov. 27:17

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Although these debts are many, remaining infelicities are my own.

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Abbreviations

Works of John of Damascus

John of Damascus. Eds. B. P. Kotter and R. Volk. *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos*. 8 vols. (PTS 7; 12; 17; 22; 29; 60; 61; 68; Berlin: De Gruyter, 1969, 1973, 1975, 1981, 1988, 2008, 2009, 2013).

<i>Aceph.</i>	<i>De natura composita contra acephalos. On the Composite Nature, Against the Acephali</i> (CPG 8051): Kotter iv [PTS 22], 409-17.
<i>Barb.</i>	<i>Laudatio s. Barbarae. Praise of St Barbara</i> (CPG 8065): Kotter v [PTS 29], 256-78.
<i>Dial.</i>	<i>Dialectica. Philosophical Chapters</i> (CPG 8041): Kotter i [PTS 7], 47-146.
<i>Expos.</i>	<i>Expositio fidei. On the Orthodox Faith</i> (CPG 8043): Kotter ii [PTS 12], 7-239.
<i>Ficus</i>	<i>Homilia in ficum arefactam. Homily on the Fig-Tree</i> (CPG 8058): Kotter v [PTS 29], 102-10.
<i>Fides</i>	<i>De fide contra Nestorianos. On the Faith, Against the Nestorians</i> (CPG 8054): Kotter iv [PTS 22], 238-53.
<i>Haeres.</i>	<i>Liber de haeresibus. On Heresies</i> (CPG 8044): Kotter iv [PTS 22], 19-67.
<i>Hypap.</i>	<i>Sermo in Hypapanten Domini. Homily on the Meeting of the Lord</i> (CPG 8066): Kotter v [PTS 29], 381-95.
<i>Ieiun.</i>	<i>De sacris ieiuniis. On the Holy Fasts</i> (CPG 8050): PG 95, col. 64-77.
<i>Imag. I-III</i>	<i>Contra imaginum calumniatores orationes tres. Three Treatises Against Those Who Attack the Icons</i> (CPG 8045): Kotter iii [PTS 17], 65-200. [aka <i>On Images</i> , thus the abbr. <i>Imag.</i>]
<i>Instit.</i>	<i>Institutio elementaris. Elementary Introduction</i> (CPG 8040): Kotter i [PTS 7], 19-26.
<i>Jacob.</i>	<i>Contra Jacobitas. Against the Jacobites</i> (CPG 8047): Kotter iv [PTS 22], 109-53.
<i>Manich.</i>	<i>Dialogus contra Manichaeos. Dialog Against the Manichees</i> (CPG 8067): Kotter iv [PTS 22], 351-98.
<i>Nestor.</i>	<i>Adversos Nestorianos. Against the Nestorians</i> (CPG 8053): Kotter iv [PTS 22], 263-88.
<i>Parall.</i>	<i>Sacra parallela. Hiera.</i> (CPG 8056): PG 95, col. 1040-588, 96 col. 9-442.
<i>Rect.</i>	<i>De recta sententia liber. On Right Thinking</i> (CPG 8046): PG 94,

1421-32. [NB: Kotter abbreviates *Sentent.*]

- Sabbat.* *Homilia in sabbatum sanctum. Homily for Holy Saturday* (CPG 8059): Kotter v [PTS 29], 121-46.
- Sarac.* *Disputatio Saraceni et Christiani. Dispute between a Saracen and a Christian* (CPG 8075): Kotter iv [PTS 22], 427-38.
- Transfig.* *Homilia in transfigurationem domini. Homily on the transfiguration of the Lord* (CPG 8057): Kotter v [PTS 29], 436-59.
- Trisag.* *Epistula de hymno Trisagio. Letter on the Trisagion Hymn* (CPG 8049): Kotter iv [PTS 22], 304-32.
- Volunt.* *De duabus in Christo voluntatibus. On the Two Wills in Christ* (CPG 8052): Kotter iv [PTS 22], 173-231.

Journals, Book Series, & Lexica

ACA	Ancient Commentators on Aristotle. 1987–. Ed. Richard Sorabji. (London: Bloomsbury Academic).
ACO	<i>Acta Conciliorum Oecumenicorum</i> . 1914–82. Ed. E. Schwartz. 4 Vols. (Berlin: de Gruyter).
Bauer	<i>A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature</i> . 2001. Ed. F. W. Danker and W. Bauer. (3 rd edn.; Chicago: University of Chicago Press).
BBTT	Belfast Byzantine Texts and Translations. 1991–. (Belfast: Belfast Byzantine Enterprises).
BHG	Bibliothecae Hagiographicae Graecae. 1895–. (Brussels: Society of the Bollandists).
CAG	Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca. 1882–1909. (Berlin: Reimer).
CC	Corpus Christianorum.
SG	Series Graeca. 1977–. (Turnhout: Brepols).
SL	Series Latina. 1953–. (Turnhout: Brepols).
CCT	Corpus Christianorum in Translation. 2010–. (Turnhout: Brepols).
CFHB	Corpus fontium historiae byzantinae. 1967–. (Berlin, Washington, D.C., Paris, and Vienna).
CPG	Clavis Patrum Graecorum. 1974–. (Turnhout: Brepols).
CSCO	Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium. 1903–. (Leuven: Peeters).
SA	Scriptores Arabici
SS	Scriptores Syri
DOML	Dumbarton Oaks Medieval Library. 2010–. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press).
DOP	<i>Dumbarton Oaks Papers</i> . 1941–. (Washington, D.C.).
GCS	Die Griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten drei Jahrhunderte. 1891–1995. (Berlin: Akademie).
GNO	<i>Gregorii Nysseni Opera</i> . 1958–2008. Ed. W. Jaeger. 8 Vols. (Leiden: Brill).
Lampe	<i>A Patristic Greek Lexicon</i> . 1961. Ed. G.W.H. Lampe. (Oxford: Clarendon).
LCL	Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
LSJ	<i>A Greek-English Lexicon with a Revised Supplement</i> . 1996. Ed. H. G. Liddell, R. Scott, et al. (9th edn. rev; Oxford: Clarendon).
MGH	Monumenta Germaniae Historica. 1826–. (Berlin and Munich).
AA	Auctores Antiquissima
OCT	Oxford Classical Texts. 1963–. (Oxford: Clarendon).

Origenes Werke	GCS. 1899–1968. Vols. 2, 3, 6, 10, 22, 29, 30, 33, 35, 38, 40, 41. I. 2: <i>Contra Celsum</i> I–IV. Ed. Paul Koetschau, 1899. II. 3: <i>Contra Celsum</i> V–VIII, <i>De oratione</i> . Ed. Paul Koetschau, 1899. III. 6: <i>Homiliae in Ieremiam, Fragmenta in Lamentationes</i> . Ed. Erich Klostermann, 1901 and Pierre Nautin, 1983. IV. 10: <i>Commentarius in Iohannem</i> . Ed. Erwin Preuschen, 1930. V. 22: <i>De principiis</i> . Ed. Paul Koetschau, 1913. VI. 29: <i>Homilien zum Hexateuch</i> . Ed. W. A. Baehrens, 1920. VII. 30: <i>Homilien zum Hexateuch</i> . Ed. W. A. Baehrens, 1921. VIII. 33: <i>Homiliae in Regn., Ez. et al.</i> Ed. W. A. Baehrens, 1925. IX. 35: <i>Homiliae in Lucam</i> . Ed. Max Rauer, et. al., 1931. X. 38: <i>Commentarius in Matthaeum II</i> . Ed. Erich Klostermann and Ernst Benz, 1933; Ursula Treu, 1976. XI. 40: <i>Commentarius in Matthaeum I</i> . Ed. Erich Klostermann and Ernst Benz, 1935. XII/1. 41/1: <i>Commentarius in Matthaeum III/1</i> . Ed. Erich Klostermann and Ernst Benz, 1941. XII/2. 41/2: <i>Commentarius in Matthaeum III/2</i> . Ed. Erich Klostermann and Ludwig Früchtel, 1955; Ursula Treu, 1968.
PG	<i>Patrologia Cursus Completus. Series Graeca</i> . 1857–66. Ed. J.-P. Migne et al. 161 vols. (Paris).
PMBZ	<i>Prosopographie der mittelbyzantinischen Zeit Online</i> . 2013. Based on both volumes of the print edition covering 641–1025 CE. Ed. R.-J. Lilie, M. A. Ludwig, B. Zielke, T. Pratsch, et. al., (Berlin-Brandenburgische Akademie der Wissenschaften; Berlin and New York: de Gruyter, print ed. 1998).
PO	<i>Patrologia Orientalis</i> . 1904–. (Paris).
PTS	<i>Patristische Texte und Studien</i> . 1963–. (Berlin).
SC	<i>Sources Chrétiennes</i> . 1942–. (Paris).
SCSO	<i>Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium</i> . 1903–.
Sophocles	<i>Greek Lexicon of the Roman and Byzantine Periods (From B.C. 146 to A.D. 1100)</i> . 1900. Ed. E. A. Sophocles. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons).
ST	<i>Studi e Testi</i> . 1900–. Vatican City.
Suda	<i>Suidae Lexicon</i> . 1971 reprint. Ed. A. Adler. 5 vols. (Lexicographi Graeci; Leipzig: Teubner, 1928–38).
TLG	<i>Thesaurus Linguae Graecae® Digital Library</i> . Ed. Maria C. Pantelia. (University of California, Irvine). http://www.tlg.uci.edu .
TTH	<i>Translated Texts for Historians</i> . 2005–. (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press).

Preface

Perichōrēsis is the patristic Greek concept that came to theologically describe the mutual indwelling of the Trinitarian Persons and before that the two natures (divine and human) in Christ. I first studied the term in my MDiv thesis, “*Perichōrēsis* in Recent Social Trinitarian Thought: Is There a Coherent Doctrine?” There I first met John of Damascus. I found no coherent doctrine of *perichōrēsis* but did find curious that John was treated in terms of his reception history. I wanted to know why he moved the term from Christology to Trinitarian thought before I asked what others did with it. In my MSt diss., “The Relationship between Trinitarian and Christological *perichōrēsis* in the Damascene’s *De fide orthodoxa*.” I deepened my focus on John’s dogma, and in this project, I try to situate John’s appropriation of *perichōrēsis* in his historical context now focused on his polemical works.

Following are two maps that frame the life of John of Damascus, whose dates are unknown but is generally recognized to have paralleled the Umayyad Caliphate.¹ Thus, the Arab expansion is the historical context of John’s life and context.

Following these maps is a large epigraph that inspires this study throughout. My aim is to situate John of Damascus in his local historical context and then to treat *perichōrēsis* as one innovation that results from that context. Thus, my project is interdisciplinary and in the end, I hope, better history will inform better theology.

¹ Hugh Kennedy, ed., (2012) “The Umayyad Caliphate circa 132/750,” in *Historical Atlas of Islam*. (Online ed. based on 2nd ed., 2002; Leiden: Brill). And, “The World on the Eve of the Muslim Conquests circa 600 A.D.,” Ibid.

<Map omitted due to copyright>

<map omitted due to copyright>

Melkite theology found its first and most authoritative exponent in the person of St John of Damascus (c. 655–c. 750). It was he who in the wake of the Sixth Ecumenical Council, Constantinople III (680–1), produced the masterly summary of Byzantine orthodox teaching in Greek under the title *Fountain of Knowledge* (Πηγή γνώσεως). In this work, and in all his works, all of them written in Greek in Jerusalem, St John set forth and defended the doctrines that in the ensemble composed the theological profile of the orthodoxy that the Melkites would so vigorously propound in Arabic, beginning already in the half century following his death. The most instructive feature in this connection, of St John's works taken altogether, is the fact that the overall pattern of his interests, as revealed especially by the particular adversaries and doctrines he is concerned to refute, demonstrates that his immediate theological and ecclesiastical near horizon was very much that of Jerusalem and the Christians in the world of Islam during his lifetime.

He was only tangentially concerned with the controversies that embroiled the world of Byzantium in the first half of the eighth century. In fact St John of Damascus's works were for a long time not well received in Constantinople, where in the eighth century he was considered to be 'Saracen minded'; it was not until well into the twelfth and thirteenth centuries that they found a welcome among the Byzantines at large. Failure to take seriously the immediate intellectual and cultural horizon of Jerusalem, within which St John actually composed his works, is a serious error of perspective that seems often to prevent even the most enthusiastic of his readers from recognizing the context in which his theological compositions found their first relevance.²

– Sidney H. Griffith

² Sidney H. Griffith (2006), "The Church of Jerusalem and the 'Melkites': The Making of an 'Arab Orthodox' Christian Identity in the World of Islam (750-1050 Ce)", in Ora Limor and Guy G. Stroumsa, eds., *Christians and Christianity in the Holy Land*, (Turnhout: Brepols), 175-204, 191-92.

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Faculty Abstract

The first aim of this study is to situate the eighth century theologian, John of Damascus, in his local historical context, because to date he has been treated in terms of his reception history. Thus, his theological acumen and creativity remain underappreciated. This allows the motivations for his theological rhetoric to come to the fore as a function of local exigencies, rather than treating him in terms of a reception history that idolizes him as a quintessential byzantine monk. Rather I argue that John is a constructive theologian, who pragmatically engaged actual interlocutors in the sectarian environment of early eighth century Jerusalem. Thus, my second aim is to treat one example of John's theological creativity to demonstrate that he is constructive and not merely derivative if studied on his own terms in his local historical context. This necessitates an interdisciplinary project that requires a largely historical approach (Part One of four chapters) with the last two chapters (Part Two) centered on John's polemical works as that part of his theological oeuvre most telling of his local context. Further, these final two chapters are focused on one example of his creative theological rhetoric in the service of his polemic demonstrating that it was clearly developed as a function of his local historical context. Thus, the two aims are interwoven: first I argue for a specific context of John's polemical works and then I argue that John's polemic develops as a function of that context.

Now John holds the singular distinction of being the last theologian to be held in both the eastern and western churches a 'doctor' of the church for his magisterial synthesis of the Greek theological tradition. In this capacity he is the principal mediator of the Greek theological tradition to the Latin West. Ironically such recognition has led to the assessment that he was a mere compiler or encyclopediast of the Greek tradition and thus theologically derivative and uninteresting, because at best he had a 'genius for selection' presenting no more than 'a mosaic of quotations'. Thus, even recent studies of John tend to be less than complementary. Nevertheless, since he never set foot in Byzantium but lived his entire life under the Umayyad caliphate, a growing voice has called for John to be treated in context rather than as a byzantine monk compiling a byzantine orthodoxy.

The primary problem is twofold. First, there remains the undue weight given to BHG 884, the Greek *Life* termed the 'official' life because it is almost exclusively relied upon by John's biographers. *Vitae* for John are abundant, but all are late and legendary, nevertheless, some scholars have continued to treat the 'official' life as if it had an

underlying historical basis while others admit this legendary character but still find it expedient to treat John in terms of his reception history. The second problem is Byzantine Iconoclasm. The underlying historical basis sought in BHG 884 was initially sought to keep John's timeline tied to that of Byzantine Iconoclasm, centered on the supposed edict of Leo III in 726 establishing iconoclasm as imperial policy. John was thus assumed to leave the Arab administration and move to the monastery of Mar Saba to write theology especially that in defense of icons. However, problems persisted and several biographers sought to shift John's move to an earlier Arab persecution, which remains the standard explanation today.

Based on BHG 884 biographers have reported that John was educated by a monk from Italy, whom his father had freed from the Arabs. And, although rising to high rank in the caliphal administration, Arab persecution convinces John to renounce this position. The legendary account asserts John was falsely accused by the caliph based on letters forged by Leo III and sent to the caliph to inform him of John's treasonous intent. The caliph has John's guilty writing hand severed but the virgin Mary restores it that night, the amazed caliph offers to restore John's position, who demurs out of pious desire to become a monk, ending up at the monastery of Mar Saba. Admitting the legendary nature of this story biographers have proposed that sometime between 717-725 (scholars vary on this) John left service because of Arab persecution, becoming a monk at Mar Saba where he wrote treatises in defense of icons and later the *Expositio fidei* (aka *On the Orthodox Faith*), eventually dying in that monastery about 749. Unfortunately, there is earlier evidence which makes it difficult to believe John was ever at Mar Saba or that he left service under duress. Further, this chronology retains tacit ties to Byzantine Iconoclasm, although it is not an issue in Jerusalem in the early eighth century. Finally this scenario fails to account for John's polemical works, implying untenably that they were largely undertaken while in caliphal service.

Part One Historical Setting is comprised of four chapters, the bulk of this thesis. Here I look closely at John's hagiography in order to deconstruct the saint and the chroniclers to paint a picture of the man and his family behind the fictional veneer. Nevertheless, my goal is not to correct his biography, being interested in only two questions: when did John leave Damascus and where did he go? Answers here will provide the context for his polemical works. Further, I treat John predominantly as a retiring Christian Umayyad administrator rather than as a quintessential byzantine monk, because it more accurately reflects the man and facilitates a reevaluation of John and his theological program. There is good evidence that John was a monk and a priest, but not the sort his hagiography pretends. In chapter one I contextualize the saint, deconstructing his hagiography in order to decouple his timeline from Byzantine Iconoclasm, and thus leaving open the date he left the Arab administration. I exploit several scholars who have worked on John's hagiography in order to outline the process of sainthood for John. I argue that it is a top down construction of Constantinopolitan iconophile propaganda, and that all information regarding John's piety is literary topoi. Finding

there is no underlying historicity to John's hagiography, I completely decouple John's biography from Byzantine Iconoclasm finding that his timeline cannot depend upon it.

In chapter two, I contextualize the man seeking to date John's move from Damascus to Jerusalem by turning to the chroniclers in order to paint a picture of John's family and their closeness to the Umayyads which makes it clear that John being forced from office under duress unlikely, and further, that the administrative position was so important to his family and the Chalcedonian leadership that he would not have left office without good reason. I argue that John is neither a conspirator, confessor, Sabaite nor ascetic as suggested by his hagiography, and that his elite education and Umayyad connections make it very unlikely he would have been forced from office under duress or because of language change, rather John's family and John held a key post important to the Chalcedonians and he may have spoken Arabic. I agree with Daniel Sahas that John left office for his own reasons, but not because of vexed piety, and I agree with Vassa Kontouma that he left in 705 in the company of John V, but not out of pious loyalty; these continue hagiographic piety tropes that do not reflect John and his family's wealth, power, and connections. John's reasons for leaving office in 705 must be sought elsewhere.

In the third chapter I elaborate a speculative proposal that considers John one of the key figures in Chalcedonian politics. The Umayyads had made several requests for the cathedral church of St John the Baptist in Damascus, which were consistently refused by the Christian community. The Umayyads ostensibly honored their refusal based on the surrender treaty for the city, which guaranteed the safety of its citizens and the integrity of its churches. However, in 705 the church was 'taken' by caliph al-Walid as later reported by several chroniclers when he renewed the request but was apparently insulted by the refusal. Nevertheless, although insulted, he inexplicably and concomitantly allowed what none of his predecessors had. In 705 he allowed a Chalcedonian to ascend the throne reestablishing the patriarchate in Jerusalem after a 67 year vacancy. Thus, ironically after the taking of the cathedral in Damascus, the Umayyads allowed for the first time a Chalcedonian patriarch to rule, an unprecedented event unaccounted for in the sources or modern scholarship. I argue that these two events are related as they result in the relocation of the Chalcedonian leadership from Damascus to Jerusalem. Thus, I propose a *quid pro quo*: cathedral for patriarchate, placing John at the center of the negotiation which results in his leaving office in order to orchestrate the reestablishment of the patriarchate.

In chapter four now finding John in the reestablished patriarchate in 705 perhaps the key player in that event, I argue that the context of his polemical works is thus patriarchal policy which seeks to consolidate control of the patriarchate, the holy places, and the Judean monasteries introducing his primary interlocutors. Sectarian demographics of the early eighth century are quite varied, including pagans, Jews, Jewish Christians, Manicheans, and various Christian sectarians. I argue that patriarchal policy would have to account for three primary interlocutors: internally the

Maronites, a Chalcedonian splinter party who rejected Maximus the Confessor, and externally two non-Chalcedonian sectarian groups, the West Syrian miaphysites and the East Syrian dyophysites. In this context I introduce John's polemical works in preparation for Part Two.

Having set the stage in Part One Historical Setting, establishing John's context and introducing his polemical works, I turn to one example of John's theological rhetoric in order to demonstrate how this local context influenced his theological creativity in the final two chapters. I argue that John's local context gave rise to John's theological polemic as an implementation of patriarchal policy meant to address these primary interlocutors while equipping Chalcedonian monks for debate with better educated sectarian interlocutors. Since John's polemical works are too large and diverse to treat in detail, I select one example of John's theological rhetoric that is often exploited by modern systematic theologians. This example is interesting because it shows that treating John in context shows actual development in his use of the Greek theological 'technical' term *perichōrēsis*.

In chapter five I outline the background of the term *perichōrēsis* in Gregory of Nazianzus and Maximus the Confessor, finding that neither developed it into a technical term. Gregory uses the term four times, once theologically. There may be synergies between his uses of the term, but there is no indication that he is adopting an explicitly Stoic philosophic background or developing a technical term. Maximus, on the other hand, picks it up and exploits it in his Christology, but also extends it to certain aspects of divine participation explaining both God's presence in creation as well as his work in deification. Yet neither does Maximus develop it into a technical term. Then in my final chapter, having placed John in the Anastasis in 705 and now having introduced the background to the term *perichōrēsis*, I explore John's unique and creative use of this term in his theological polemic finding it both develops and is used to contravene all primary interlocutors, both internal and external. Thus, confirming that its use and significance cannot be understood apart from his local context. I argue that he inherited it from Gregory and Maximus but actively modified it to suit local needs, while developing a simple rhetorical formula redeployable in polemic against several interlocutors whether internal or external.

Thus, the example I select is John's use of *perichōrēsis* in his polemic, looking for the reason why he moved it from Christology to his doctrine of God, i.e. his Trinitarianism. Perhaps John's most significant theological innovation is his redeployment of *perichōrēsis* from the natures of Christ to the Persons of the Godhead, i.e. from Christology to Trinitarian theology or in terms familiar to John, from *oikonomia* to *theologia*, where *oikonomia* can stand for the creation, providence and/or the Incarnation proper and *theologia* (theology proper) for the nature of the Godhead.

John understands the terminological impasse of post-Chalcedonian sectarian debate, and so develops a rhetorical strategy that repositions the debate in terms of Nicene

orthodoxy, common ground for all interlocutors. It was commonly accepted in late antiquity that the heavens (whether stars or divinities) influenced life on the ground, and Christians were no different. They simply restated this commonplace in terms they found acceptable: *theologia* informed *oikonomia*, i.e. the unknowable Godhead revealed himself in the Incarnation. John's interlocutors argued that the Nicene unitary Godhead was revealed in a unitary Christ, although they differed on how precisely the unitary Christ was constituted. John did not disagree with this, but stated that they had failed to fully account for Nicene orthodoxy, as it was not the unity of the Godhead that Nicaea preserved so much as the Trinitarian revelation of that unity. Thus, John redeployed *perichōrēsis* into his doctrine of God in order to argue that a perichoretic *theologia* required a perichoretic *oikonomia*, and thus it is not the 'unitariness' of Nicaea but the diversity in that unity that is central. I elaborate several additional aspects of John's rhetoric showing that his historical context and actual interlocutors greatly influence his theological and rhetorical strategy and thus conclude he cannot be fully appreciated without accounting for and situating him within this local historical context.

Introduction

Introduction to John of Damascus

John was born and raised at court in Damascus under Islam to a prosperous and powerful family, the Mansūrs. This is not a Greek name, but a local one, whether Syrian or Arab is unclear. John's grandfather had been commissioned by Maurice, Byzantine emperor (r. 582–602), to collect the taxes for the entire region of Syria, this was renewed under the emperor Heraclius (r. 610–41), after a brief period of Persian occupation (614–28). John's family was somehow involved, accounts vary, in the surrender of Damascus to the Arabs (in 634), and among those who considered this treachery, the taint on the family name was long remembered, e.g. by Eutychius, Melkite bishop of Alexandria, writing in the tenth century. This is important because John and his family are central to the formation of this very party, thus significant internal factionalism is evident early on. Nevertheless, John's father retained his position and is even reported to have been a very close friend of the caliph 'Abd al-Malik (r. 685–705). John himself, however, remains an enigma, about whom little is known for certain. But, this has not stopped scholars from relying on a late *Life* (BHG 884) of disputed authorship for details with which to embellish his life.³

According to this tradition, John is educated by a monk, Cosmas from Italy, whom his father freed from the Arabs. And, although rising to high rank in the caliphal administration, Arab persecution convinces John to renounce this position to become a

³ For example see the following brief articles on John of Damascus, which summarize his life in terms of BHG 884, even when acknowledging its legendary character: Alexander Kazhdan and Alice-Mary Talbot, eds. (1998), *Dumbarton Oaks Hagiography Database*, (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks), 53-54. Angelo Di Berardino, ed., (2000), *Patrology: The Eastern Fathers from the Council of Chalcedon (451) to John of Damascus (750)*, trans. Adrian Walford, (Institutum Patristicum Augustinianum: James Clarke), 228. Robert Volk (2000), "John Damascene", in Siegmund Döpp and Wilhelm Geerlings eds., *Dictionary of Early Christian Literature* (New York: Crossroad), 338-39.

monk of the Lavra of St Sabas, sometime between 717–25 (scholars vary) where he writes iconophile treatises in defense of icons and later the *Expositio fidei*, his classic dogmatic work, eventually dying in that monastery about 749. Unfortunately, there is earlier evidence which makes it difficult to believe John was ever at the Lavra of St Sabas or that he left service under duress. Further, this chronology hinges on that of Iconoclasm and fails to account for the vast majority of John's oeuvre, implying untenably that it was undertaken while in caliphal service or so late and in a remote monastic context so as to be compressed into the last twenty years of his life. Thus, although John is perhaps the most significant Greek theologian of the eighth century, very little is known about him, and what is put forth is based on a late fictional *Life*, which is undermined by earlier data.

Introduction to the Study of John of Damascus

The study of John of Damascus has centered on his complicated fictional hagiography, both his dogmatic and iconophile texts, his supposed anti-Islamic polemic, and his philosophic works. His hymnography is recognized to be important and prolific, but remains understudied. Further, his polemical works, however, are less than understudied, they remain almost completely ignored. They are John's most significant body of work that remains untranslated although now available in modern critical editions. Further, they are crucial to understanding John's cultural context as they speak to the cultural exigencies of his most important interlocutors. Below I segment the study of John into three phases, which I suggest characterize the studies in each period generally, without being dogmatic I intend only an expedient. Consequently, this schema is meant only to facilitate a brief summary presentation against which I will then characterize and justify my own study.

Phase 1: The history of dogma

This group of modern but pre-critical text studies is dominated by a very negative assessment of John's contribution and creativity. The result is the dismissal of even the possibility of development in John of Damascus. In 1862, F. Perrier, studying the life and work of John of Damascus, concludes, "His exaggerated respect for the writings and opinions of the authors who preceded him stifled every germ of independence and individuality. This same feeling also prevented him from being original, and made his work a clever and conscientious compilation."⁴ And, by 1882 J. Lupton advances nearly to *ad hominem*, when he writes, "I am not aware of any more serious charge that can be brought against him than . . . a tendency to over-credulity and superstition."⁵

Nevertheless, there was a more positive minority voice. For example, J. Langen in 1879 sensed some potential, when he wrote of John: "For he wanted to, could have, but was not allowed to provide something essentially new in the field of the Trinity and Christology."⁶ Further, Pope Leo XIII elevated John of Damascus to a 'Doctor of the Church' on August 9, 1890.⁷

Yet even with John's elevation, the critical assessment of Harnack would characterize scholarship from then on out. In the *History of Dogma* Adolf von Harnack writes:

In many respects the whole historical development of Dogma from the fourth century to John of Damascus and Theodore the Studite was simply a vast

⁴ "Son respect exagéré pour les écrits et les opinions des auteurs qui l'ont précédé a étouffé en lui tout germe d'indépendance et d'individualité. Ce même sentiment l'a aussi empêché d'être original, et a fait de ses ouvrages une savante et consciencieuse compilation." F. A. Perrier (1862), *Jean Damascène: Sa vie et ses écrits* (Strasbourg: Université of France), 33.

⁵ J. H. Lupton (1882), *St. John of Damascus*, (London: SPCK), 199, 209-10. Ostensibly a work of scholarship, the audience appears to be the church laity. Whatever the case, Louth's 2002 monograph on John obviates Lupton, consequently Louth will provide a modern, critical interlocutor where Lupton does not.

⁶ "Auf dem Gebiete der Trinitätslehre und Christologie etwas wesentlich Neues liefern, wollte, konnte, durfte er nicht." D. Joseph Langen (1879), *Johannes von Damaskus: Eine patristische Monographie*, (Gotha: Friedrich Andreas Perthes), 7.

⁷ Constantine N. Tsirpanlis (1984), "The Anthropology of Saint John of Damascus", *Greek Patristic Theology: Basic Doctrines in Eastern Church Fathers*, (New York: EO Press), 51-110, 13.

process of reduction, selection and definition. In the East we are no longer called upon to deal in any quarter with new and original matter, but always rather with what is traditional, derivative, and, to an increasing extent, superstitious.⁸

Harnack further qualifies John's work specifically: "If we compare, e.g., Gregory of Nyssa with John of Damascus it is easy to see that the former still really thinks independently, while the latter confines himself to editing what is given. It is above all clear that the critical elements of theology had been lost."⁹

Although Harnack's assessment would rule the consensus, a reassessment gradually took root. Thus, even though John was considered no more than a derivative compiler, it was his epitome of the Greek fathers that became authoritative. Thus in 1909 J. Bilz wrote, "The importance of St John of Damascus . . . seems to be justified in appreciation of his special presentation of the doctrine of the Trinity."¹⁰ And, by 1932 O. Bardenhewer, wrote of John, "It would be eminently erroneous to conclude that his faithful adherence to tradition and to the authority of the Greek fathers has detracted from his originality and independence. St John is, in reality a very capable systematizer."¹¹ Nevertheless, both Bilz and Bardenhewer still saw John only in terms of his reception history, i.e. how his epitome of the Greek fathers fit into the history of the dogma of the universal church.

⁸ Adolf Von Harnack (1972), *History of Dogma*, trans. Neil Buchanan et al., 7 vols. (Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith), vol 3, vii-viii.

⁹ Ibid., vol. 3, 156.

¹⁰ "Die Bedeutung des hl. Johannes von Damaskus, sein hohes Ansehen in der griechischen Kirche, deren Lehrentwicklung er durch sein Hauptwerk, die PN, zum Abschluß bringt und für die er immer der maßgebende Dogmatiker bleibt, sowie sein Einfluß auf die abendländische Scholastik, für die er Vermittler der griechischen Tradition und Vorbild in der Methode und dem systematischen Aufbau der Theologie wird, lassen es gerechtfertigt erscheinen, seine Trinitätslehre einer besonderen Darstellung zu würdigen." The emphasis is mine, to highlight the bit I quoted in translation. The rest suggests that Bilz still qualifies John's significance in terms of his reception in tradition, not as a function of his achievement in his own local historical context. Jakob Bilz (1909), *Die trinitätslehre des heiligen Johannes von Damaskus: Mit besonderer Berücksichtigung des Verhältnisses der griechischen zur lateinischen Auffassungsweise des Geheimnisses*, vol. 9, (Paderborn: Ehrhard und Kirsch), v.

¹¹ Baur (1951), 23n88.

Phase 2: Source history studies preparatory to the critical texts

This period is dominated by those authors affiliated with the Byzantine Institute of the Scheyern Abbey, Germany, publishing between 1951 and 1964: J. M. Hoeck, B. Studer, P. B. Kotter, K. Rozemond, and G. Richter.¹² This Institute was responsible for the research that made possible the production of the critical texts of works of John of Damascus. Hoeck provides a still useful discussion of works attributed to John of Damascus, their dates and manuscript tradition. Studer explored John's theological method. Kotter analyzed the transmission history of the *Expos*. Rozemond examined John's Christology and Richter the sources of the *Dialectica*. Unfortunately, these scholars only reinforced the pejorative consensus view of the previous period. For example, Studer concludes John is a mere compiler playing only a mediating role between East and West, and thus "can be granted no great place in the development of theology."¹³

This view that John is derivative and thus ultimately uninteresting although carried into this period was not universal. For example, although G. Richter claims that the *Dialectica* stands alone from the *Expos*. making no use of it,¹⁴ K. Oehler disagrees directly with Richter arguing that John brought philosophy and theology together in a new way such that John "broke the mold of the Church's tradition" that kept theology and philosophy separate.¹⁵ K. Oehler may have been encouraged by the 1958 work of Frederic Chase, who translated John's *Fount of Knowledge*, the trilogy of *On Heresies*,

¹² Johannes M. Hoeck (1951), "Stand und Aufgaben der Damaskenos-Forschung", *Orientalia Christiana Periodica*, 17: 5-60., Basilius Studer (1956), *Die theologische Arbeitsweise des Johannes von Damaskus*, (Etall: Buch-Kunstverlag); P. B. Kotter (1959), *Die Überlieferung der Pege Gnoseos des hl. Johannes von Damaskos*, (Etall: Buch-Kunstverlag); Gerhard Richter (1964), *Die Dialektik des Johannes von Damaskos: Eine Untersuchung des Textes nach seinen Quellen und seiner Bedeutung*, (Etall: Buch-Kunstverlag); Keetje Rozemond (1959), *La christologie de saint Jean Damascene*, (Etall: Buch-Kunstverlag).

¹³ Studer (1956), 134.

¹⁴ Richter (1964), 82.

¹⁵ K. Oehler, *Antike Philosophie und byzantinisches Mittelalter* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1969) at 295-296.

Dialectica, and *On the Orthodox Faith* (or *Expos.*), in which he nuances the pejorative view:

Most authorities are of the opinion that the Damascene succeeded quite well in keeping his promise to add nothing of his own, but this is not entirely true. *The Fount of Knowledge* not only contains much that is original and a fresh viewpoint on many things but is in itself something new. It is the first real *Summa Theologica*. Even the philosophical introduction is new, being the first attempt to present a complete manual of philosophy to serve as a basis for the study of Christian theology. The whole work is not a mere compilation; it is a new synthesis. It may be said, then, that although John of Damascus was undoubtedly sincere in his promise to add nothing of his own, he could not help injecting so much of himself as to be visible on almost every page.¹⁶

Chase's translation has been the standard English translation of the *Font of Knowledge* for over fifty years, yet it is now out of date as it was based on Migne's nineteenth century *Patrologia Graeca*, vols. 94-96, which reprinted Michael Lequien's (1661–1733) edition of John's works. Nevertheless, Chase inspired some to rethink the Damascene.

There are other works in this period not directly associated with the Byzantine Institute important for this study. The most important is the classic but now outdated monograph by G. L. Prestige (1936) *God in Patristic Thought*. Prestige is responsible for “nearly all the words of main importance for the doctrines of the Trinity and the Incarnation” in Lampe's *Lexicon* of which *perichōrēsis* is one.¹⁷ Prestige claims that *Perichōrēsis* is a Greek theological technical term for the ‘mutual indwelling’ (or ‘interpenetration’ or ‘coinherence’) of the Trinitarian Persons or the ‘interpenetration’ of the two natures in Christ, divine and human. Prestige's essay on *perichōrēsis*, this

¹⁶ Frederick H. Chase, Jr., ed., (1958), *Saint John of Damascus: Writings*, trans. Frederic H. Chase, vol. 37, (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America), xxv-xxvi.

¹⁷ G. L. Prestige (1964), *God in Patristic Thought*, (2nd edn.; London: SPCK), ix-x. and G.W.H. Lampe, ed., (1961), *A Patristic Greek Lexicon*, (Oxford: Clarendon), s.v. περιχωρέω and περιχώρησις. Regarding Prestige's role in the Lampe Lexicon, see (Ibid, v-vi), which lists as preparatory to the lexical entries both Prestige's monograph *God in Patristic Thought* and his essay on the topic: G. L. Prestige (1928), “Περιχωρέω and Περιχώρησις in the Fathers”, *Journal of Theological Studies*, 29: 242-52..

monograph and the entries in *Lampe* are all based on the same research.¹⁸ Prestige accepted Pseudo-Cyril as a source of John, which has been shown to be false, thus his conclusions beg re-evaluation.

Other works include J. Nasrallah (1950) on the time, life, and work of John of Damascus, and C. N. Tsirpanlis (1969) on John's theological anthropology, and representative dissertations by A. C. Iliescu (1939) and P. M. Baur (1951).¹⁹ Iliescu and Baur provide theses on the hypostatic union, before John and in John, and the theology of the *Expos.*, respectively. They are representative of theses in this period, reacting to the pejorative consensus by seeking to nuance it by suggesting John is derivative because that is his job—to recapitulate the Greek Fathers. For example, Baur exploits the minority voice in the prior period in quoting O. Bardenhewer (1932), who writes "It would be eminently erroneous to conclude that his [John of Damascus] faithful adherence to tradition and to the authority of the Greek fathers has detracted from his originality and independence. St John is, in reality a very capable systematizer."²⁰ Nevertheless, I will make only limited use of these authors, as they suffer from following Prestige especially on *perichōrēsis*, and thus assumed John adopted Pseudo-Cyril.²¹

Phase 3: Studies based on the critical texts

Studies which leverage the critical texts and analyze John's oeuvre remain non-existent, excepting one notable exception: certainly Andrew Louth's 2002 monograph stands out

¹⁸ Prestige (1928).

¹⁹ Monographs: Prestige (1964), Joseph Nasrallah (1950), *Saint Jean de Damas: Son époque, sa vie, son œuvre*, vol. 2, (Harissa, Lebanon: Imp. Saint Paul). Tsirpanlis (1984). And, dissertations: A.C. Iliescu, (1939), "The Dogmatic Implications of the Hypostatic Union with Special Reference to St. John of Damascus", 2 vols., DPhil Thesis. University of Oxford and Paul M. Baur, (1951), "The Theology of St. John Damascene's *De fide orthodoxa*", PhD Diss. The Catholic University of America.

²⁰ Baur (1951), 23n88.

²¹ Iliescu seems to follow Prestige completely on *perichōrēsis*, see Iliescu (1939), 182-195, 427-435, 452-453. Baur follows O. Bardenhewer in holding Pseudo-Cyril a source of John, as does Prestige, see Baur (1951), 22.

as the most significant modern work on John. However, Louth's project differs fundamentally from mine. He treats John in terms of his reception history, not in terms of his local historical context. Consequently, he sees John primarily in terms of his adoption and manipulation by Constantinopolitan churchman. Thus, although the scholarship is quite high it is fundamentally a confessional treatment of John and not an historical analysis.²² Another notable study of *perichōrēsis* in John is that of Richard Cross (2000), "Perichoresis, Deification, and Christological Predication in John of Damascus".²³ However, this study so thick with anachronism is of limited utility. Cross is interested in ascertaining the roots of the Lutheran Reformers use of the *communicatio idiomatum* in John, but reading John as a philosopher complains his language is "profligate." Further, he reads Pseudo-Cyril as a nominalist but John as not, thus Cross provides an erudite study if over nuancing John implying John himself is conflicted in regard to late antique universals.

Studies in the first two groups focused on a general assessment of John's work, usually if not exclusively in the context of historical dogmatics and the developing methodologies of the historical-critical method and source criticism. This analysis is and remains beneficial, for example, as a result of such study, the critical texts have enabled John's program to stand in relief to his sources. The old pejorative consensus was sure John said nothing of his own and was thus uninteresting. There has been, however, a consistent minority voice telling a different story, suggesting John has a

²² Confessional treatments can be informative when they reveal how a figure like John is received into a particular community as John was by the Constantinopolitan church and subsequently by the Latin West, and Louth is upfront about this and to be commended for it. Nevertheless, such treatments can fail, as Louth's has in my view, to treat the figure in terms of his local historical context. Andrew Louth (2002), *St. John Damascene: Tradition and Originality in Byzantine Theology*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

²³ Richard Cross (2000), "Perichoresis, Deification, and Christological Predication in John of Damascus", *Mediaeval Studies*, 62: 69-124.

creativity of his own. As might be imagined this third group contains more theses than monographs, as the critical texts have inspired new research.

An important impetus for this study was the dissertation by C. C. Twombly (1992) “*Perichōrēsis* and Personhood in the Thought of John of Damascus,” which Louth references.²⁴ Twombly explores the conceptuality of Chalcedon as the link between John’s Trinitarianism and his Christology, and Louth picks this up, but neither analyzes John’s local history, rhetoric or purpose much less look at his polemic. Thus, Twombly and Louth remain dialog partners where agreement or disagreement must be on a point by point basis, since our projects differ substantially.

There are also a few other related studies, e.g. Durand (2005), *The Perichoresis of the Divine Persons: Mutual Immanence, Reciprocity and Communion*, focuses on Trinitarian *perichōrēsis* and its reception in the West.²⁵ He covers its development and acknowledges the genesis of Trinitarian *perichōrēsis* in John of Damascus. Durand does not analyze, however, John’s context or rhetorical purpose in constructing a Trinitarian *perichōrēsis*. Durand’s interest is in the reception of John in the Latin West, consequently his study is of limited utility to this study. Others treat individual theological aspects of John’s work, but all generally suffer from one or both of two problems: 1) they accept Pseudo-Cyril as a source of John, and/or 2) they treat him theologically in isolation from his historical context. This does not mean that these

²⁴ This has recently appeared in book form. Charles C. Twombly (2015), *Perichoresis and Personhood*, (Eugene, OR: Pickwick). Another early inspiration was the unpublished dissertation: Elena Vishnevskaya, (2004), “Perichoresis in the Context of Divinization: Maximus the Confessor’s Vision of a ‘Blessed and Most Holy Embrace’”, PhD Diss. Drew University. This is summarized in her subsequent essay: Elena Vishnevskaya (2007), “Divinization as Perichoretic Embrace in Maximus the Confessor”, in Michael J. Christensen and Jeffrey A. Wittung, eds., *Partakers of the Divine Nature: The History and Development of Deification in the Christian Traditions*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic).

²⁵ Emmanuel Durand (2005), *La perichorese des personnes divines: Immanence mutuelle reciprocite et communion*, (Paris: Cerf). I looked at several other PhD studies. Those unpublished are grouped together in the bibliography.

studies are without value, for most these assumptions are inconsequential. It simply means they are of limited utility to this study. In sum, none of the current studies treat John in context or treat his rhetorical purpose in transferring *perichōrēsis* into his Trinitarian theology.

Further, although several of these modern studies rise above the pejorative past, they nevertheless, marginalize John's voice (now in terms of source criticism). Many assert John had a real skill for brilliant selection and restatement, but he had nevertheless inherited his Christology from Gregory of Nazianzus, Leontius of Byzantium, Maximus the Confessor and Pseudo-Cyril. But, V. Kontouma has shown that John does not depend on Pseudo-Cyril. And, a few, notably Louth, adopt Kontouma's position, but nevertheless, find John remains a compiler.²⁶ They simply laud him for being such.

Conclusion

The pejorative consensus position remains intact, although it has no serious proponents developing it of which I am aware. Although it promulgated this consensus, the Byzantine Institute has set the stage for the critical re-evaluation of John with the production of the critical texts of a major portion of John's oeuvre. The Byzantine Institute continues as a shadow of itself in the work of a small team led by Robert Volk, but whether it will continue beyond him is unknown. New work is being done in Paris on works of John preserved in Arabic, however, this too is of a philological nature and not related to the history of John himself. Thus, comparing and contrasting John with his sources to discern, understand and critique his achievement remains an understudied area. Further, as Sidney Griffith states, quoted for the epigraph to this study, John has yet to be studied in his local context.

²⁶ Durand accepts Kontouma's position. Twombly's recent publication accepts Kontouma's position.

Justification for this Study

Motivation

One of the motivations for this study is wrapped up in the recent so called Trinitarian renaissance and the work of various social Trinitarians. I first came across *perichōrēsis* obliquely when studying the theology of marriage. It was suggested that the ontology of the one-flesh union in marriage is informed by the concept of Trinitarian *perichōrēsis*.²⁷ This led to a thesis on social Trinitarianism, which introduced me to John of Damascus as the patristic source of *perichōrēsis*, only to find that the term was originally Christological.²⁸ However, after reading Louth's acceptance of Kontouma's argument and reviewing that argument for myself I found it obviated Prestige's position on Pseudo-Cyril. Most systematic theologians, however, were citing (still do) Prestige as an authority. Intrigued by Sidney Griffith's call to treat John in context, perplexed by Prestige's lasting authority, and fascinated by John's mysterious transferal of *perichōrēsis* from Christology to his Trinitarian thought, I undertook another thesis on John's use of *perichōrēsis* in his *Expos.*, where I discovered that W. H. C. Frend claimed that some of John's interlocutors had insisted their position was "a logical deduction from the doctrine of the Trinity."²⁹ These interlocutors presented their position in terms of rejection of the council of Chalcedon (451) but it was actually predicated on their understanding of the Nicene Creed. Thus, I was doubly intrigued to find late antique Christological differences still arising from differences on Nicaea. Thus, after two theses on John I was left only with more questions.

²⁷ See Gen 2:24, Mat 19:5-6, Mar 10:8, 1 Cor 6:16, and Eph 5:31.

²⁸ Scott Ables, (2009), "Perichoresis in Recent Social Trinitarian Thought: Is There a Coherent Doctrine?", MDiv Thesis. George Fox University, Portland, OR.

²⁹ W. H. C. Frend, *The Rise of the Monophysite Movement: Chapters in the Histories of the Church in the Fifth and Sixth Centuries* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), 288.

Personal motivations aside, there are two primary reasons justifying this project. V. Kontouma has shown that the genesis of Trinitarian *perichōrēsis* belongs to John, but no study has investigated the historical implications of this as such. Further, S. Griffith has clearly identified a lacuna in Damascene scholarship in that he has consistently been treated in terms of his Byzantine reception and not his local historical context. This is made all the more timely by the pressure the Eastern Christians of Syro-Palestine are under at the present time. Further, historical treatment is timely because Robert Volk's team is currently working on the Greek lives of John, thus placing John in context will help scholars appropriately evaluate the hagiographical lives when the critical texts are soon published. In the next two sections I will explore these two motivations in detail.

Watershed: Pseudo-Cyril is not a source of John

In 1604 J. Wegelin published a single manuscript titled *De Sacrosancta Trinitate*, and in 1638 it was published by Migne in the *dubia* of Cyril of Alexandria. In the twentieth century, based on parallels with John's *Expos.*, J. de Guibert asserted Pseudo-Cyril to be a source of John, and in the influential *God in Patristic Thought*, G. L. Prestige accepted that position and credited Pseudo-Cyril with the brilliant insight that transported *perichōrēsis* into the trinitarian sphere, which he then asserted was adopted wholesale by John of Damascus.³⁰ Subsequently, John's editor, B. Kotter, accepted Pseudo-Cyril as a source of John, as have many systematic theologians mining John.³¹

In 1995 the Pseudo-Cyril manuscript was analyzed by Vassa Kontouma (Conticello at the time), whose arguments were deemed by Andrew Louth in 2002 to be "absolutely

³⁰ Prestige (1964), 280-81.

³¹ Kotter, ii, xxix, lviii. Page xxix indicates he is following J. de Guibert and B. Fraigneau-Julien, and lviii gives the parallels.

compelling.”³² Since that time both Louth and Kontouma confirmed to me that they remain unaware of any challenges to her analysis.³³ Kontouma has shown that Pseudo-Cyril is not early but late, is not a source of, but lifted from John, and is not anonymous, but the work of a fourteenth century Orthodox author, Joseph the Philosopher (d. c. 1330).³⁴

Thus, regarding the use of the technical term *perichōrēsis*, John speaks for himself, and more focused study is warranted, because it is John himself who inherits Christological *perichōrēsis* and deploys it into his Trinitarianism. Therefore, focused analysis of John’s theological rhetoric will yield more than his sources (contra Ritter) and more than his synthesis (contra Studer), but the actual impetus for trinitarian *perichōrēsis* (contra Prestige).

Getting behind the tradition

A consequence of having little reliable data on John’s actual life and career is that legendary material has been added to it. Nevertheless, because the construction of John in his hagiography is successively more idealized, the picture given of John in the end is rather rosy. This colors the reception of John and contributes to the confusion of

³² Vassa Conticello (1995), “Pseudo-Cyril’s *De ss. Trinitate*: A Compilation of Joseph the Philosopher”, *Orientalia Christiana Periodica*, 61: 117-29. Note that Conticello was her married name, subsequently she used Kontouma-Conticello, and also publishes under Kontouma, her maiden/family name. Louth (2002), 87.

³³ Dr Erika Gielan, editor of Nicephorus Blemmydes and Josephus Rhacendytes’, *De virtute* (CCG 80) in private correspondence (dated 7 September 2013) has confirmed her familiarity and support of Vassa Kontouma’s analysis, and further notes it has also received support from “Michel Stavrou, who recently edited and translated the *De fide* (a.k.a. *Sermo ad monachos suos*) of Nicephorus Blemmydes: M. Stavrou, *Nicéphore Blemmydès, oeuvres théologiques. Tome 2. Introduction, texte grecque, traduction et notes*, (SC 558; 2013), 273-379.” Finally, it is worth noting her 1995 article has been translated into English without change to her argument: Vassa Kontouma (2015), *John of Damascus: New Studies on His Life and Works* (Aldershot: Ashgate Variorum), IV: 117-29.

³⁴ Also known as Joseph Rhakendytes (1280–1330). On Joseph see M. Treu, “Der Philosoph Joseph,” *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 8 (1899): 1-64, and R. Grisculo, “Note sull’ ‘Encyclopedica’ del filosofo Guiseppe,” *Byzantion* 44 (1974): 255-81. A year after the publication of Kotter’s critical edition, in 1974 D. Stiernon identified the *De sacrosancta Trinitate* as Joseph the Philosopher’s *De pietate* and then in 1982 that this was in part a compilation based on Nicephorus Blemmydes’ *Sermo ad monachos suos*. Conticello (1995), 119.

tradition for history or the conflation of the two. Andrew Louth's 2002 monograph on John emphasized "John the monk" and a "background of Palestinian monasticism," although these were welcome corrections to an over idealized portrait at the time. Louth nevertheless ignored the richness of the hagiography on John, citing only BHG 884 as witness to the 11th century reception of John as the "pre-eminent representative of the Byzantine theological tradition,"³⁵ and then treated John in terms of that reception.

The lack of data regarding his actual activities does make it difficult to distinguish him from a typical idealized exemplar, but there is always a gap between ideal and practice, which in this case obscures not only the quality of John's actual life as a monk, but the activities he undertook as one. Notwithstanding John's reception as an idealized monk in his byzantine reception, neither can John simply be treated as an idealized Palestinian monk. Further, John as a retiring administrator from the highest level of society would not be your average monk, but remain an elite member of society still capable of exerting immense influence and undertaking unilateral action no matter the vows he undertook.

The most basic ascetic practice enshrined in monastic life is renunciation of world, family and self. This, however, can mean vastly different things to those of different social strata. For example, to the poor entry into monastic life can be a step up in society—to be blunt, from squalor to comfort. The monastic rule generally requires renunciation coupled with obedience suggesting a regimented life, but this is misleading. Certainly monks could run afoul of the rule and be disciplined, but the rules differed somewhat from monastery to monastery and were applied to varying

³⁵ Louth (2002), 13, 16.

degrees (the point was disciplined spiritual growth not merely discipline). Thus, D. J. Chitty notes that at least in the early days, Pachomius, an early originator of Egyptian monasticism, discouraged monks to seek ordination, as it could lead to a love of command.³⁶ But, by the time of the Pachomian lives the growth of the communities required monk-priests, who came to be called hieromonks, and what is more, the firm renunciation of family ties in the beginning were being relaxed, as well.³⁷ In fact, H. Chadwick notes that these changes had by the early fifth century escalated to the point that monks ambitiously sought leadership positions they would have once only accepted in obedience to a superior.³⁸ Further, by the 11th century, R. Morris can write, “far from being the distant, solitary and unworldly figure of popular imagination . . . the Byzantine saint was an active participant in the affairs of the world. He was both ‘in the world’ *and* ‘of it’.”³⁹ If those monks who became saints were both ‘in and of’ the world, clearly any educated monk could engage in worldly activities. And, examples abound of monks who renounce the world only to engage in the same sorts of activities that their elite education entitled them, including the influencing of “imperial and government decisions”.⁴⁰ This is not to suggest an overall decline in monasticism, only that the ideal could be pursued while still engaging in the same business or intellectual activities appropriate to one’s education and social status whether tonsured or not.

³⁶ Derwas J. Chitty (1995, 1977, 1966), *The Desert a City: An Introduction to the Study of Egyptian and Palestinian Monasticism under the Christian Empire*, (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press), 23.

³⁷ Henry Chadwick (1981), “Pachomios and the Idea of Sanctity”, in Sergei Hackel, ed., *The Byzantine Saint: University of Birmingham Fourteenth Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies*, (London: Fellowship of St Alban and St Sergius), 11-24, 16.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Rosemary Morris (1981), “The Political Saint of the Eleventh Century”, in Sergei Hackel, ed., *The Byzantine Saint: University of Birmingham Fourteenth Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies*, (London: Fellowship of St Alban and St Sergius), 43-50, 43. The emphasis is hers. Her example saints are all monks.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

Without belaboring the point, I would suggest that John of Damascus has been read even by scholars as an over-idealized monk, which has obscured his backstory and thus his likely activities, and not in terms of his prosperous and powerful family, court education, and powerful posts within the caliphal administration that his family occupied for generations. Although there is a dearth of data on John himself, there is a fair bit on his family, not a lot, but enough circumstantial evidence to paint and propose a rather different picture of John's life.

Conclusion

In sum, the first phase of the study of John concluded he was important as a mediator of the Greek Fathers to the Latin West. John was considered derivative and thus to study his theological program was a waste of time, however, with the second group of studies, this began to change as he was credited with a brilliance at selection, restatement and even at providing a new synthesis. Nevertheless, the second group of studies continued to work under the assumption inherited from the first group that John said nothing of his own. With the production of the critical texts and the separation of John from his sources, the third phase began to see more progressive study of John, although this was dominated by Louth's monograph, which ostensibly recovered John as a monastic theologian only to hide him in his reception history.

Nevertheless, minority voices continue to challenge this consensus. S. Griffith contends situating John in his historical context is the key to getting behind the traditional reception of John, which is obscured by Byzantine appropriation, in order to reveal his theological program. Thus, doctrinal analysis can only produce an accurate picture of John's theological program if it admits a more studied historical approach is needed.

Consequently, a different sort of study is needed than heretofore known. In order to recover, or more precisely, in order to *begin* to recover, what John accomplished in terms of his immediate context, a new approach is needed. Too little is known of John's eighth century context and his body of work is too large for one project to correct this lacuna, I can at best hope to shed some light on this problem and provide one example of what addressing it might look like.

John of Damascus and his eighth century party in Damascus and Jerusalem are very little known, and yet John has authored a significant body of work, for which we now have critical texts but little or no information on their initial drafting, setting and purpose. I did not belabor the point, but should highlight that the production of the critical texts is a surpassing and ongoing achievement, e.g. the *Expos.* is known in over 700 manuscripts and two recensions requiring two stemmata; really the first watershed in Damascene studies, although V. Kontouma's contribution for the study of *perichōrēsis* remains the particular watershed enabling this study. We know something of how John's works were eventually received in Constantinople and later in the Latin West, but almost nothing about what motivated him on the ground and what his intentions might have been and how his works may have functioned in the context of their earliest audience. In short, what is needed is a considered deconstruction of his hagiography, a provisional reconstruction of his biography that places him in a rich local context rather than as an idealized monk who could live anywhere despite his context, and then and only then undertake to understand his theological program.

Introduction to this Project

The purpose of this thesis is to say something about John of Damascus as a man, who worked as an administrator, retired, and wrote theology. Why did he do that and under

what circumstances? I will approach the question in two distinct ways, historical first, and then doctrinal, focusing on his polemical texts. Scholarly focus on John's dogmatic theology has led to a sort of timelessness to the treatment nearly conflating John with his reception history. I will focus on John's polemical works because these are more grounded in his local circumstances and interlocutors. Clearly I cannot do justice to the greater part of John's theological program if spending a substantial part of my project on situating John historically; consequently, I will focus on just one example of John's constructive doctrine in order to show that his context matters to his theological program. John inherited Christological *perichōrēsis*, but he redeployed it into Trinitarian theology. Why did he do this? I will look at this transition in John in order to discern whether his polemic was indeed shaped by the local debate. My basic aim is to place John of Damascus in his eighth century Syro-Palestinian historical context and explain one example of his theological program as a function of that context. If successful it is proof of S. Griffith's admonition (in the epigraph) and thus encouragement to further research along these new lines, i.e. in both the history of the early eighth century and in how John's theological output was shaped by it.

Part One – The Historical Setting

In this section I argue that John's hagiography is legendary and cannot thus control his timeline; consequently, decoupling his biography from the narrative arc of Iconoclasm. Then I look at the chroniclers and attempt to reconstruct John, his family, and his times in terms that paint a more believable if ultimately conjectural picture. Finally, I analyze his reasons for leaving office finding that it cannot be due to duress, but for his own reasons. Further, I advance the speculative thesis that John was involved in secret negotiations that led to a *quid pro quo*, the cathedral of John the Baptist in Damascus for the reestablishment of the Jerusalem Patriarchate and moving the Chalcedonian

leadership from Damascus to Jerusalem. This explains circumstances that must be linked but have yet to be explained. Thus, I argue that the historical context of John's polemical works is the Anastasis and the implementation of patriarchal policy. Then I introduce John's interlocutors and his polemical texts, setting the stage for the analysis of his theological program in terms of his theological use of *perichōrēsis* in his polemic.

Part Two – Constructive Doctrine

Finally I turn to one example that shows John's local historical context was integral to his theological program. In late antiquity there was no patriarchal school in Jerusalem, thus no doubt the Chalcedonian leadership felt at a keen disadvantage given that their own monastic education could not be relied upon to produce a uniform educational experience. Further, the Chalcedonians were deeply divided over acceptance of Maximus the Confessor. Thus, the Chalcedonian monks were ill-equipped to debate those better trained. The West Syrians at the monastery of Qenneshre and the East Syrians at Nisibis had been training for generations, even producing commentaries on Aristotelian texts.

At the accession of John V (r. 705–35), reestablishing the Jerusalem Patriarchate (c. 705) after perhaps a seventy year vacancy, the Chalcedonians, who accepted Maximus the Confessor, had to do something dramatic. They needed to take charge of the Anastasis, the holy places, liturgy and festivals, while attempting to convince their own party of the orthodoxy of Maximus, normalize catechetical and theological education, and collect the required taxes for the Arabs. I argue that John of Damascus was central to this program. His hymns and sermons are all liturgical, his polemic and dogmatic have been described as catechetical, and thus I argue that he undertakes his polemic in

the service of developing patriarchal policy largely in the early phase of taking ownership, shake-up, and consolidation.

Consequently, one of John's aims was to produce polemical texts that taught monks persuasive rhetoric in the service of theological debate. Further, after Constantinople III (680–1) there was still no systematic and understandable presentation of Maximian Christology usable by monks in debate, although Maximian texts were circulating, thus another aim was to simplify Maximus for internal consumption.

Finally, my focus is how John of Damascus took up his commission, simplifying the Maximian tradition, when he introduced the Christological term *perichōrēsis* into his doctrine of God in order to show that two-nature Christology naturally follows from an orthodox doctrine of God. First, I introduce the term and discuss its development in Gregory of Nazianzus and Maximus the Confessor. Then I take it up in John's polemic. I will argue that John's theological reasoning was motivated by non-Chalcedonian claims with which John actually agreed, but from which, nevertheless, he creatively differentiated his position.

I will argue that John inherited the term from Maximus, but quickly limits its use not employing the full array of the Maximian application. John develops a simple rhetorical structure that contravenes both West and East Syrian positions. Thus, John simplifies Maximus but also extends him in a creative synthesis.

Now I turn to a list of technical terms to help clarify my presentation.

Technical Terms

Arabization Islamization	For the terms Arabization and Islamization I am following Sidney Griffith and Robert Hoyland. ⁴¹ Basically, Arabization stands for the gradual and sporadic process of conversion of both popular and administrative languages within the caliphate to the Arabic language (for this aspect of it some prefer the term Arabicization), but can also encompass Arab culture as distinct from nascent Islamic culture. This is most important herein related to theories that John left the administration as the language of record keeping changed to Arabic. Islamization refers to the gradual development of a distinct Islamic culture. This was primarily felt in early monumentalism, legal and exegetical (<i>kalam</i>) practices. There is a very complicated relationship between Arab and Islamic culture that remains understudied in the earliest period.
Byzantine	Byzantium was the pre-Christian name of Constantinople. Scholars have employed the adjective Byzantine to refer to the Eastern Roman empire that was predominantly Greek in culture covering roughly the period 330 (founding of Constantinople) to 1453 (the fall of Constantinople to the Ottoman Turks). ⁴² I use the term to indicate specifically Constantinopolitan political, cultural, and ecclesial hegemony as perceived by the frontier finding itself under Islam romanticizing its past. No imperial church is implied but a complicated potential for one as bishop and emperor as two suns locked in gravitational combat danced with one another, acting unilaterally always with the other in mind, but whenever they

⁴¹ Robert G. Hoyland (2015), *In God's Path: The Arab Conquests and the Creation of an Islamic Empire*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 213-27. Sidney H. Griffith (2011), "John of Damascus and the Church in Syria in the Umayyad Era: The Intellectual and Cultural Milieu of Orthodox Christians in the World of Islam", *Hugoye: Journal of Syriac Studies*, 11/2: 207-37, 208f.

⁴² For the Roman East vs. Roman West see respectively: Fergus Millar (2006), *A Greek Roman Empire: Power and Belief under Theodosius II (408-450)*, (Berkeley: University of California Press). John Moorhead (2013, 2001), *The Roman Empire Divided, 400-700*, (2nd edn.; Harlow, England: Pearson).

pressed their combined wills in uniform policy an imperial orthodoxy threatened.⁴³

dyothelitism This is a Greek theological term for two wills in Christ, divine and human. It arose as a theological response to monotheletism, i.e. one will in Christ after the union (in the Incarnation). It was promulgated by the Lateran Synod of 649 and then canonized at the third council of Constantinople (680–1).

East Syrian I use the terms East and West Syrian for John's primary non-Chalcedonian Christian sectarian interlocutors. East Syrian is used generally for those commonly but pejoratively referred to as Nestorian.⁴⁴ Other modern terms include: Church of the East and Assyrian Church. It was not until the ninth century that internal attitudes had shifted and the name 'Nestorian' was used positively by the Church of the East for itself.⁴⁵ I prefer the term East Syrian in order to oppose it to West Syrian, emphasizing simultaneously the religious, geographic and Syriac language split and the polarity of the two. There is a West and East Syrian dialect, and although sectarian adherents of either can be found either inside or out of Syria, their dominant educational strongholds are also opposed West and East. On this see herein Qenneshre (West Syrian educational stronghold) and Nisibis (East Syrian educational stronghold).

Maronite The sources use the term Maronite to refer to Syrian Chalcedonians who rejected Maximus the Confessor and his dyothelite theological claims.⁴⁶ The origin of the Maronites is unclear, but I take provisionally the split in the Chalcedonian party in c. 727 reported

⁴³ Averil Cameron discusses the relationship of religion and Byzantium as a methodological issue in Averil Cameron (2014), *Byzantine Matters*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press). See also Averil Cameron (2013), "The Cost of Orthodoxy", *Church History and Religious Culture*, 93/3: 339-61, Averil Cameron (2008), "Byzantium and the Limits of Orthodoxy", *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 154: 129-52.

⁴⁴ Sebastian Brock (1996), "The 'Nestorian' Church: A Lamentable Misnomer", in J.F. Coakley and K. Parry, eds., *The Church of the East: Life and Thought*, (Manchester: John Rylands University Library of Manchester), 23-35.

⁴⁵ Philip Wood, ed., (2013), *History and Identity in the Late Antique near East*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 57.

⁴⁶ This includes John of Damascus in *On Right Thinking*. *Rect.* at PG 94, col. 1432 C.

by Michael the Syrian to be when the Maronites came into being as distinct from the Chalcedonians who accepted Maximus.⁴⁷ Prior to this they could be referred to as ‘proto-Maromite’ but this is cumbersome, so I refer to them (anachronistically) as Maromite or use the theological designation directly, i.e. monothelite to indicate them. Other important dates would be 681 (they rejected the council of Constantinople III) or 685 when the Jerusalem church sent a delegation to Constantinople indicating their acceptance of Constantinople III (included Andrew of Crete, who later waffled on this issue, suggestive of the internal debate) or 686 when they may have elected their own bishop.

Melkite

On this term and ‘proto-Melkite’ see Sidney Griffith whose usage I generally follow.⁴⁸ In the early eighth century, however, the term is anachronistic; its earliest extant attestation appears to be the late eighth or early ninth century.⁴⁹ It is, however, the term applied to the heirs of the Chalcedonian dyothelites of Jerusalem of both John V and John of Damascus. Thus, Griffith uses ‘proto-Melkite’ which I follow, although I often just refer to them as Chalcedonian. They are also dyothelite which distinguishes them from other Chalcedonians, i.e. monothelites, those identified in the sources as Maronites. Treiger has recently asserted they self-identified on the basis of obedience to the heavenly King, not an earthly one.⁵⁰

⁴⁷ J.-B. Chabot, ed., (1901, 1899-1910), *Chronique de Michel le Syrien, patriarche jacobite d'Antioche (1166-1199)*, vol. 2, 5 vols. (Paris: Ernest Leroux), 492.

⁴⁸ Sidney H. Griffith (2001), “‘Melkites’, ‘Jacobites’ and the Christological Controversies in Arabic in Third/Ninth-Century Syria”, in David Thomas, ed., *Syrian Christians under Islam: The First Thousand Years*, (Leiden: Brill), 11-13.

⁴⁹ Sidney H. Griffith (2001), “‘Melkites’, ‘Jacobites’ and the Christological Controversies in Arabic in Third/Ninth-Century Syria”, in D.R. Thomas, ed., *Syrian Christians under Islam: The First Thousand Years*, (Leiden: Brill), 9-55, 12, 45.

⁵⁰ Alexander Treiger (2014), “Unpublished Texts from the Arab Orthodox Tradition (1): On the Origin of the Term “Melkite” and on the Destruction of the Maryamiyya Cathedral in Damascus”, *Chronos: Revue d'Histoire de l'Université de Balamand*, 29: 7-37, 8.

miaphysite	Although Fergus Millar does not favor this term, ⁵¹ it remains the current scholarly theological technical term for non-Chalcedonians who follow Cyril of Alexandria. ⁵² It is a modern neologism not occurring in any ancient text, thus it is meant to be theologically neutral, whereas the term ‘monophysite’, which does occur in the texts is always pejorative. Generally lower case refers to the theology, while upper case, Miaphysites, refers to all those non-Chalcedonians who followed Cyril of Alexandria (West Syrians, Egyptians, etc.).
monenergism	A Greek theological term for the theology of one <i>energeia</i> in Christ, variously translated as energy, activity, or operation. It was a common position in Syria in the seventh century and thus co-opted for imperial policy in attempts to reunite the non-Chalcedonians. It was quickly subsumed under monotheletism.
monotheletism	A Greek theological term for the theology of one will in Christ. It assumes monenergism, but is broader in scope. It became the chief plank in an imperial policy of reconciliation with the non-Chalcedonians, but both the Jerusalem and Egyptian churches had those who challenged it. Although briefly successful as a reunification policy the challenges to it could not be overcome and it was ultimately rejected at the third council of Constantinople (680–1) by the Chalcedonians although the West Syrians remained monothelite as did the Maronites (until much later).
Nisibis	A well-fortified city from the ninth century BC; it became an important center of Christianity from the fourth century, and became the intellectual and cultural center of the East Syrians from the fifth century when the school of the Persians relocated from Edessa to Nisibis c. 489 in Persian territory (30 km SE of Dara, a Roman fort

⁵¹ Fergus Millar (2013), “The Evolution of the Syrian Orthodox Church in the Pre-Islamic Period: From Greek to Syriac?”, *Journal of Early Christian Studies*, 21/1: 43-92, 52.

⁵² Dietmar W. Winkler (1997), “Miaphysitism: A New Term for Use in the History of Dogma and in Ecumenical Theology”, *The Harp*, X/3: 33-40.

and border town). The school incorporated like a monastery, and became a model for other East Syrian schools and an inspiration as far as Italy. A large percentage of East Syrians of note studied here.⁵³ By the early eighth century it had been the preeminent East Syrian educational institution for over 300 years.

oikonomia
theologia

These two terms are Greek theological terms which complement each other in patristic literature. Although *theologia* could early on stand for theology in general it came in late antiquity to stand for two things: 1) in non-patristic literature it stood for the study beyond Aristotle preeminently of Plato, 2) but in patristic literature it came to refer to God as uncreated, as opposed to all created being in the *oikonomia*, which stood for everything that was not God, his providence of it and especially his participation in it vis-à-vis the Incarnation. Thus, it was frequently used for either God's providential care of creation generally or the Incarnation specifically. In John of Damascus these terms are most often indicative of his doctrine of God (*theologia*)—for which I also use the term Trinitarianism—and Christology (*oikonomia*).

Qenneshre

A West Syrian monastery founded c. 530 by John bar Aphtonia on the eastern bank of the Euphrates across from Europos (now Jirbās). Between 591 and 708, the importance of Qenneshre as a center for the study of Syriac but especially of Greek becomes apparent in the sources with five of seven West Syrian patriarchs trained in Qenneshre. Luminaries include important translators of the Aristotelian commentary tradition: Severus Sebokht, Athanasius of

⁵³ Kristian S. Heal (2013), "S.V. Nisibis", *The Encyclopedia of Ancient History* (First edn.). On the fifth century school, see Adam H. Becker (2006), *Fear of God and the Beginning of Wisdom: The School of Nisibis and the Development of Scholastic Culture in Late Antique Mesopotamia*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press). Regarding the pre-history in Edessa and earlier and the anachronistic use of the term 'school' see the introduction in Adam H. Becker, ed., (2008), *Sources for the History of the School of Nisibis*, (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press).

Balad, George, bishop of the Arabs, and Jacob of Edessa, these last two were contemporaries of John of Damascus.⁵⁴

Syro-Palestine Finding a suitable geographic term is problematic. The role of John of Damascus in the caliphate no doubt carried responsibilities that mirrored the territorial claims of the caliphate. Nevertheless, the focus of this study is not the far flung reaches of the caliphate (see map) but the Christian confessionalism developing at its center, in Damascus and Jerusalem. Thus, I avoid vague modernist terms like Middle East or Near East, or restrictive terms like Syria or Mesopotamia or Levant—all of which are too easily conflated with the too modern or the too ancient. It could be argued that John’s religious interests include Egypt and so the use of the term Levant is justified, but I prefer to include Egypt by explicitly stating ‘Egypt’. The primary focus of John’s polemical oeuvre, our focus in this study, is his ecclesial and political interest in the survival of his minority party. The primary locus of this concern is Damascus, Jerusalem, and the Judean monasteries, thus I have settled on Syro-Palestine, which should be taken to mean Damascus and Jerusalem and their surrounding monastic communities, at times expansively inclusive of ‘Iraq’ or ‘Mesopotamia’ (both terms are found in the literature) though I will generally avoid either term.

theandric energy A neologism of Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite. It is a Greek theological term that describes Christ’s *energeia* translated variously as ‘energy,’ ‘activity,’ or ‘operation’. The term ‘theandric’ is a Greek portmanteau (blended) word made from two Greek words indicating the energy is at once both divine and human not one or the other but both at once.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ Jack Tannous (2013), “You Are What You Read: Qenneshre and the Miaphysite Church in the Seventh Century”, in Philip Wood, ed., *History and Identity in the Late Antique Near East* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 83-102, 83, 93-95.

⁵⁵ The term appears at the very end of Dionysius, *Epistle 4*. In Costache’s trans. “As for the rest, he [Christ] has not manifested the divine powers divinely nor also humanly the human characteristics, but as God-made-man accomplishing amongst us some new theandric energy (καινήν τινα τὴν θεανδρικήν ἐνέργειαν ἡμῖν πεπολιτευμένος). Doru Costache (2009), “St Dionysius the Areopagite, *Letter 4*”, *The*

Tradition or tradition Although modern notions vary greatly, I aim to follow a working definition adopted by the World Council of Churches in 1963. They define three distinct notions: The Tradition (w/capital T), tradition (uncapitalized), and traditions (plural).⁵⁶ The Tradition is a supra-historical, non-empirical notion commensurate with ‘The Church’ or ‘the people of God’ and thus beyond the bounds of critical historiography. On the other hand, ‘tradition’ (lowercase singular) is also the process, content and media of transmission where the past is renewed in the present and made available to an open future. This historical process may or may not result in change. Finally, ‘traditions’ (plural) are examples of tradition in specific communities through time.⁵⁷

West Syrian West Syrian is my general term for those John refers to as monophysite (one *physis* or nature of Christ after the union in the Incarnation) or Jacobite (as opposed to Egyptian monophysites, who are commonly terms *acephalos*=headless, i.e. they refuse the authority of the bishop) after Jacob Baradaeus (d. 578), who ordained so many priests he established a shadow hierarchy for the Miaphysites. The modern scholarly theological technical term for this group is miaphysite. Technically Maronites are West Syrian geographically, but I distinguish them as Maronite and keep West Syrian for the Miaphysites.



Voice of Orthodoxy, 31/7-9: 45-6, 46. G. Heil and A. M. Ritter, eds. (1991), *Corpus Dionysiacum II: Pseudo-Dionysius Areopagita. De coelesti hierarchia, De ecclesiastica hierarchia, De mystica theologia, Epistulae*, (Berlin: De Gruyter), 161.

⁵⁶ World Council of Churches (2013), “Who Are We?” <<http://www.oikoumene.org/en/who-are-we.html>>, accessed 28 March 2013.

⁵⁷ World Council Of Churches (1963), “The Report of the Theological Commission on Tradition and Traditions”, *Fourth World Conference on Faith and Order, Montreal, Canada 12-26 July 1963* (Geneva: World Council of Churches), 16-18.

Part I

Historical Setting

Precis

Part One situates John of Damascus in his historical background. Part Two will then look at one example of why treating John in terms of this historical background matters.

Chapter 1 unravels John's elevation in order to decouple his biography from a timeline associated with the narrative arc of Iconoclasm. Thus, the narrative and chronology of John's *Life* (BHG 884) is shown to be suspect, leaving open the date he left Damascus.

Chapter 2 looks at the data that can be known about John's biography more closely in order to 1) affirm John left Damascus in 705, not as late as 717–26 as previous scholarship has maintained, and 2) I begin to paint a picture of John's social situation.

Chapter 3 continues looking at additional strands of circumstantial evidence in order to make a speculative proposal that reinforces the conjecture that John left Damascus in 705 and went to Jerusalem. Analyzing the reestablishment of the Jerusalem Patriarchate, I argue that it was a *quid pro quo* for the taking of the cathedral of St John the Baptist in Damascus. I place John at the center of the secret negotiation for the reestablishment of the patriarchate and thus make him central to the implementation of its inaugural policy.

Chapter 4 exploits the previous three by introducing John's interlocutors and his polemical works in preparation for Part Two as a function of his role in patriarchal policy and what the priorities of that policy might be at the reestablishment of the

Jerusalem Patriarchate. This completes the picture of John's social situation bringing his theological program into focus as a function of patriarchal policy and thus local exigencies.

Part One thus sets the stage by deconstructing the saint, constructing the man, and placing him in Jerusalem at the reestablishment of the patriarchate in 705, decoupling John's timeline from Iconoclasm and setting the stage for an appreciation of John's polemic in the context of early eighth century Jerusalem and the reestablishment of the patriarchate as the proving ground for his theological oeuvre.

Sources

The primary sources for chapter one are both hagiographical (*vitae* mostly) and historical (chronicles mostly), including in chapter two a few travelogues. The *vitae* are late and the figures below separate those that matter to the discussion of John's biography from those that are even later, derivative and thus are not relevant to John's biography, adding nothing new.

The chronicles range from contemporary to late and from sympathetic to antagonistic, i.e. the authors are confessionally aligned and this comes through in both their selection of material and the manner in which they present it. On the other hand, this variation does support the notion that John's family, especially his father Sergius, who was a close friend of caliph 'Abd al-Malik, was so prominent that he gets a mention in a diversity of sources, whether sympathetic or not.

Phase	Date	Timeline for constructing the saint: St John of Damascus (JD)
Condemned	754	- John Condemned at Iconclast Council
Phase 1 Rehabilitate	787	- Nicaea II Lifts anathema of John, but mentions him only in one passage doing little to rehabilitate him
	by 807	- In Palestine, Stephen the Sabaite (the poet, d. 807) composes the <i>Canon of John Damascene and St Barbara</i>
	c. 809	- <i>Life of Stephen the Younger</i> BHG 1666 indicates iconophile party of Constantinople venerates JD
	late 8th or 9th cent.	- <i>Letter to Constantine Kaballinos</i> (CPG 8114), attrib to JD by Constantinopolitan Iconophiles (pseudopigraphic)
	810-15	- Theophanes' <i>Chronographia</i> speaks of JDs family as 'most Christian', JD as 'streaming w/gold' and a good teacher
Re-Condemned	c. 815-826	- Theodore the Studite (759-826) relies on JD without citing him by name
	815-42	- 2nd Iconoclasm, synod of Hagio Sophia (815) reinstates Heira 754 and JD's condemnation reaffirmed
	c. 815	- Nikephorus I of Constantinople (806-815) <i>Short History</i> says Iconoclasts (754-787) anathematized JD "ἐπ' ἀγορᾶς"
Phase 2 Elevation	c. 800-50	- <i>Sacra Parallela</i> illuminated w/JD haloed wearing monastic great <i>schema</i> - Parisin. gr. 932 (Palestine or South Italy)
	c. 815-21	- Mss. Parisin. gr. 1476 (c. 890, written in Rome) includes JD's <i>Homily on the withered fig tree</i> (CPG 8058)
	842-3	- <i>Letter to Emperor Theophilos</i> (CPG 8115) attrib to JD by Constantinopolitan Iconophiles (pseudopigraphic)
	842-3	- <i>Homily on those who have reposed in the faith</i> (CPG 8112) attrib to JD by Constantinopolitan Iconophiles (ps.)
	842-3	- <i>Life of the Melodists Cosmas and John Damascene</i> (BHG 394) (possibly in part the work of Michael the Synkellos)
	end 9th cent	- <i>The Brief Life</i> (BHG 885b) corrects anachronisms of BHG 394
	end 9th cent	- <i>Synaxarion of Constantinople</i> entry on JD (BHG 885c) prepared by order of Constantine VII Porphyrogenetos (913-59)
	9th-10th cent	- <i>Synaxaria & Typica</i> drop Stephen the Sabaite (the ascetic) and associate JD with Stephen the Sabaite (the poet)
Phase 3 Sainthood	2nd half 10th cent	- <i>Suda</i> entry on JD based on BHG 394 brief entry emphasizing his philosophic and especially poetic output
	976-1025	- <i>Life of our holy father John Damascene</i> (BHG 884) 'Official' <i>Life</i> by John III, Patriarch of Antioch (996-1021)
	976-1025	- <i>Menologion</i> of Basil II (976-1025) report on JD & Cosmas based on <i>Life of John</i> and <i>Life of the Melodists</i>
	9th-12th cent	- Two Cosmas' distinguished & related to JD, tutor and adoptive brother, one becomes bishop, poet and iconophile

Figure 1 – Timeline of sources used to construct the saint – St John of Damascus⁵⁸

⁵⁸ Compiled from the research of A. Kazhdan, M.-F. Auzépy, and V. Kontouma. References will be given as they are discussed. Pseudopigraphic works are possibly produced by the circle of Methodius, with the particular involvement of Michael the Synkellos as editor and/or author.

	Rome	Constantinople	Antioch			Jerusalem	Alexandria				
			Chalcedonian	West-Syrian	East-Syrian	Chalcedonian	Chalcedonian	non-Chalcedonian			
600-650	Gregory I 'the Great' (590-604)	Kyriakos (596-606)	Anastase II (598/9-609)	Vacancy 9 yrs (593-603)	Sabrisho (596-604)	Isaac (601-609)	Eulogus (581-608)	Damian (578-607)			
	Sabinian (604-606)	Thomas I (607-610)		Athanasius I (603-631)	Gregory I (605-609)	Zecharias (609-628)	Theodore Scriben (608-609)				
	Boniface III (607)						John III (610-619)	Anastasios (607-619)			
	Boniface IV (608-615)	Sergius I (610-638)	Vacancy 30 yrs (609-639)		Vacancy 19 yrs (609-628)						
	Deusdedit I (615-618)					Vacancy 2 yrs (628-630)		Andronicus (619-626)			
	Boniface V (619-625)					Modestus (630-631)					
	Honorius I (625-638)			John I (631-648)	Isho'yahb II (628-643)	cr. Sergius of Joppa (?-?)	Cryus (630/1-642)	Benjamin (626-665)			
	Severinus (640)	Pyrros (638-641)	Macedonius (639-649)			Sophronius (634-639)	George I (640/1)				
	John IV (640-642)	Paul II (641-653)	George I (?-?)								
Theodore I (642-649)	Pyrros (654)		Theodore (649-667)	Mar Imeh (644-650)	Vacancy 66 yrs (639-705)	Peter III (643/4-651)					
650-700	Martin (649-655)	Peter (654-666)				Isho'yahb III (650-660)	- Papal vicariae to the East (Antioch & Jerusalem) --Stephen of Dora (c. 647-?) --John of Philadelophia (c. 649-?) - nr. George, apocrisarius of Theodore and cr. of Jerusalem (at Constantinople III) - nr. Patriarch Theodore (after c. 680)	Vacancy 91 yrs (651-742)			
	Eugene I (654-657)		nr? Macarius I (?-681)								
	Vitalian (657-672)	Thomas II (667-669)		Severus bar Masqeh (668-683)		Georgius (660-680)				Agathon (665-681)	
	Deusdedit II (672-676)	John V (669-675)									
	Donus I (676-678)	Constantine I (675-677)									
	Agatho (678-681)	Theodore I (677-679)	nr? Theophanes (681-?)								
	Leo II (682-683)	George I (679-686)	nr? Thomas (?-685)			Vacancy 6 yrs (680-686)				John III (681-689)	
	Benedict II (684-685)			Athanasius II (of Balad, 684-687)							
	John V (685-686)		nr? George II (685?-702?)						Hananisho' I (686-700)		
	Conon (686-687)	Theodore I (686-687)								Isaac (689/90-692)	
Sergius I (687-701)	Paul III (688-694)		Julian II (687-708)				Simon I (692-700)				
700-750	John VI (701-705)	Calliniquis I (694-706)	Vacancy 40 yrs (702-742)		Vacancy 14 yrs (700-714)	John V (705-735)		Vacancy 4 yrs (700-704)			
	John VII (705-707)	Cyrus (706-712)							Alexander II (704-729)		
	Sisinnius (708)			Elijah (709-724)							
	Constance (708-715)	John VI (712-715)			Seliba-Zeka (714-728)				Cosmas (729-730)		
	Gregory II (715-731)	Germanus I (715-730)		Athanasius III (724-740)	Vacancy 3 yrs (728-731)						
	Gregory III (731-741)	Anastasius (730-754)		John II (740-754)					Theodore II (730-742)		
	Zachary (741-752)			Stephen III (742/3-744/5)					Pethian (731-740)	Vacancy (735-752)	Michael I (743-767)
750-800	Stephen II (752)		Theophylaktos (744-750)		Mar Aba II (741-752)		Cosmas I (742-768)				
	Stephen III (752-757)	Constantine II (754-766)	Theodore I (750/1-773/4)	Isaac (755)	Vacancy 2 yrs (752-754)	Theodore I (752-767)		Menas (767-775)			
	Paul I (757-767)	Nicetas I (766-780)			Surinus (754)	Vacancy 20 yrs? (767-787)					
	Stephen IV (768-772)				Jacob II (754-773)		Politien (768-813)	John IV (776-799)			
	Hadrian I (772-795)	Paul IV (780-784)		Athanasius Sandalaya (755/6-758/9)	Hananisho' II (773-780)						
	Leo III (795-816)	Tarasios (784-806)	Theodoret (by 787 - ?)	George (758-790)	Timothy I (780-823)	Elie II (787-797)					
				John of Callinicus (758/9-763/4)		Georges (?-807)		Mark II (799-819)			
			Job (813/4 - 844/5)	David of Dara (763/4-by 777)		Thomas (807-821)					
				Joseph (790-791/2)							
				Cyriakos (793-817)							

Figure 2 – Bishops and vacancies in late antiquity

Accurate bishop lists are quite difficult to find or generate; thus the Figure 2 must be seen as provisional. Its primary purpose is to highlight the vacancies of the patriarchal offices.⁵⁹

⁵⁹ cr.=caretaker, nr. = non-resident bishop.

I started with Grumel and then added information from other sources. See also on bishop lists generally Mango and Scott, eds. (1997), lxxi-lxxiii. On bishops of Rome see V. Grumel (1958) *La Chronologie*, (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France), 430-431. On bishops of Constantinople see Grumel (1958), 435. On bishops of Antioch (Chalcedonian and West Syrian) see Grumel (1958), 446-450, as corrected by Andrew Palmer (1993), *Seventh Century West Syrian Chronicles*, (TTH 15; Liverpool: Liverpool University Press). See also Wolfram Brandes (1998), “Die melkitischen patriarchen von Antiocheia im 7. Jahrhundert. Anzahl und Chronologie,” *Le Muséon*, 111/1-2: 37-57. On the East Syrians see Samuel H. Moffett (1998), *A History of Christianity in Asia: Vol 1, Beginnings to 1500*, vol 1, (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis), 119, 164, 233-234, 370, 392, 509. However, on the East Syrians before 645 see Wigram (1910) *Introduction to the History of the Assyrian Church*, (London: SPCK), xvii. See also on the East Syrians from Seliba-Zeka, Hage (1966), *Die syrisch-jakobitische Kirche in frühislamischer Zeit*, (Weisbaden: Otto Harrassowitz). On Jerusalem see G. Fedalto (1983), “Liste vescovili del patriarcato di Gerusalemme - I. Gerusalemme e Palestina prima, II. Palestina seconda e Palestina terza,” *Orientalia Christiana Periodica*, 49: 5-41, 261-83. G. Fedalto (1988), *Hierarchia Ecclesiastica Orientalis: Series Episcoporum Ecclesiarum Christianarum Orientalium*. 2 vols. (Padova: Messaggero), but on Sophronius see Mango and Scott, eds. (1997), 469n1, 472n2, lxviiff. I am also in debt here to Marek Jankowiak for allowing me to see research on the period after Sophronius. On bishops of Alexandria (Chalcedonian and Coptic) see Mango and Scott, eds. (1997), 442-445. Here I owe thanks to Phil Booth for challenging discussion. John VI, bishop of Constantinople, was monothelite until the accession of emperor Anastasius (4 June 713) when he became dyothelite, as reported by the *The Book of Pontiffs*, no 91. See Raymond David, ed. and trans. (2007), *The Lives of the Eighth-Century Popes (Liber Pontificalis): The Ancient Biographies of Nine Popes from AD 715 to AD 817*. (Revised edn., TTH 13; Liverpool: Liverpool University Press), 3n8. Palmer notes that prior to the West Syrian bishop of Antioch, John I (631-648), was Athanasius I, ‘the Cameldriver’ (603-631), who was preceded by a 9 year vacancy (occurs prior to period of the figure). Palmer (1993), xlvi. Finally, regarding the Chalcedonian bishop of Alexandria, see Mango and Scott, eds. (1997), 578n3 who indicate, “There had been no proper Melkite patriarch of Alexandria since Peter III (643/4–651),” thus, reinforcing the long Chalcedonian vacancy in Egypt.

Chapter One – Contextualizing the Saint

Introduction

Having introduced my project, Part One will provide the historical background necessary to place John in Jerusalem in 705 at the reestablishment of the Jerusalem Patriarchate after a lengthy vacancy. First, I deconstruct the saint, St John of Damascus, and second, painting a picture from the limited evidence (mostly from the chroniclers), I look at John as a man of his historical context. Although liberal use of circumstantial evidence must be made, I will argue that enough is available to contextualize John sufficiently to provide the *Sitz im Leben* of his theological program as being the Anastasis of the reestablished Jerusalem Patriarchate. Thus, patriarchal policy is most likely the context of John's polemical works.⁶⁰

Chapter One analyzes the hagiographical *Lives* of St John of Damascus and their reception, and then deconstructs the saint's elevation in an effort to recover any historical material. My aim is to reveal that the sainthood of John of Damascus, however warranted his veneration may be, was at least accelerated by if not a function of the Constantinopolitan court and its desire for peace in the wake of Byzantine Iconoclasm and the subsequent 'Triumph of Orthodoxy,' which established an iconophile orthodoxy. Oddly enough this is necessary to situate John in his local Syro-Palestinian context. Methodologically this is akin to what Averil Cameron describes as

⁶⁰ *Sitz im Leben* is a technical term in biblical criticism, which identifies the sociological context of a passage deemed critical for its interpretation. Here I use the term to imply that proper interpretation must account for those aspects of John's actual historical social context that motivated John's theological program, so it is that bit of the historical context that most impinges on and motivates John.

distinguishing the “is” and the “ought” of Byzantine history. She writes, “there is such a wealth of normative and ‘official’ discourse that historians should immediately assume a gap between that and what actually happened.”⁶¹ Discerning that gap for John of Damascus between the saint and the man is the aim of this chapter and the primary result will be to decouple John’s biography from a timeline tied to Byzantine Iconoclasm, which has been the traditional scholarly position for too long.

Marie-France Auzépy summarizes this state of affairs, warning, “John of Damascus is an enigma for the historian: we know his works, which are considerable and make him the last Father of the Church, but we know barely anything of the man himself, for whom only late and fictionalized *Lives* remain.”⁶² This has resulted, as Vassa Kontouma emphasizes, in a “fierce debate that involves patrologists, Byzantinists and Orientalists,” regarding John’s biography.⁶³ My efforts here are provisional, given that critical texts of the *Lives* are forthcoming.⁶⁴ Nevertheless, having an accurate text is unlikely in my view to substantially change the outcome of my analysis, because the hagiography will likely remain fictional. For example, the analysis of Ilse Rochow on the manuscript tradition of the ‘Legend of the Severed Hand’, to be discussed below with other legendary accretions in the saint’s life, clarifies a great deal, but in the end the legend remains fictional.

⁶¹ Cameron (2008), 132.

⁶² Marie-France Auzépy (2015), “From Palestine to Constantinople (Eighth-Ninth Centuries): Stephen the Sabaite and John of Damascus”, in Scott. F. Johnson, ed., *Languages and Cultures of Eastern Christianity: Greek*, (Aldershot: Ashgate Variorum), 399-442, 410.

⁶³ Vassa Kontouma (2015b), “John of Damascus (c. 655–c. 745)”, *John of Damascus: New Studies on His Life and Works*, (Aldershot: Ashgate), 1-43, 3.

⁶⁴ The work on the critical texts of John of Damascus of the Byzantine Institute at the Scheyern Abbey, Germany, is being continued under the direction of Robert Volk at the Commission for Greek and Byzantine Studies of the Bavarian Academy of Sciences. In personal correspondence with Dr. Robert Volk (dated 17 Oct 2014 and 5 Oct 2015) he indicates work continues. He and three additional philologists are working on critical texts of John’s *Sacra Parallela* and both the Greek *Vitae* (BHG 884 and others) and the Arabic *Vita*. He anticipates publication of this research beginning in 2018 in DeGruyter’s PTS series.

Many scholars, including Andrew Louth in his landmark 2002 monograph on the saint, are content to acknowledge the lack of historical material in the *Lives* of the saint.⁶⁵ My project, however, contends that the man, John of Damascus, cannot be understood on his own terms, unless considerable effort is made to understand him in terms of the exigencies of his local Chalcedonian community under Umayyad rule. This chapter will consider the *Lives* in relation to one another, showing what each adds to John's biography based primarily on the research of Alexander Kazhdan, Marie-France Auzépy and Vassa Kontouma. In drawing together their recent research, I will argue from their combined cases to conclusions beyond their individual positions. First, I show that their work delimits the relevant source texts to those prior to the 12th century, then I trace the exploitation and elevation of John to distinguish historical from legendary material.

Further, reading John as the quintessential iconophile monk in the Byzantine tradition lends itself to evaluating John in terms of a controlling narrative of Byzantine Iconoclasm. Nevertheless, once the hagiography is deconstructed and shown to be largely fictional, the basis for dating John's move to Jerusalem to correspond to Iconoclasm disappears. Further, once the overarching narrative of Iconoclasm is left aside, and John is found to be in Jerusalem prior to Byzantine Iconoclasm, iconoclasm itself as the principle motivation for John's theological program must also be jettisoned.⁶⁶

⁶⁵ Louth (2002), 16-17. "... the Greek *vita* is worthless as a historical source for the life of John."

⁶⁶ I am not of course arguing that John had nothing to say about Iconoclasm only that if my argument for moving the date of John's leaving Damascus is as early as I argue, then his three orations against iconoclasm will be found to be much later in his theological program than held by some scholars, so they could not play a central role in his theological program, however important they may have been in his reception history and sainthood.

The two figures (Figure 1 and Figure 2) will be referred to in the analysis that follows.

Figure 1 provides a timeline showing the progression of John's veneration, elevation and sainthood, if interrupted by condemnation. The deconstruction of John's sainthood will essentially construct this diagram as we go. Figure 2 will become important in chapters three and four, and although the names and dates are notoriously difficult to pin down, the exercise is invaluable because getting a focused picture of the vacancies is invaluable to my analysis.

Delimiting the Many Lives of John of Damascus

It is not known whether John liked cats, but it is common knowledge that cats have nine lives. Although ubiquitous references to the 'official' *Life* [BHG 884] suggest that one life enjoys recognition and sanction, this turns out to be no more than the reception history of the saint within church tradition and not a function of an increasingly reliable historical or scholarly analysis. Consequently, it is less well known that John too has at least nine lives as seen in the following table.⁶⁷

⁶⁷ Figure 3 – The Many *Lives* of John of Damascus gives the Date of the work, its Origin (place of authorship), and Title. Where the dates are contested, I discuss this in the analysis below, but in short on the dating I am largely following V. Kontouma. The bibliography supplies additional details in some cases, but it should be noted that most of these are unedited, and thus the dates must be provisional. The Figure 1 – Timeline of sources used to construct the saint – St John of Damascus delineates these *Lives* in the context of other documents that gave rise to John's sainthood. Finally, there are both Georgian and Armenian Lives, but these probably offer no new historical data, as these appear to be translated from known Greek or Arabic works. On this see, Kontouma (2015b), 5-6.

Date	Origin	Title
By 807	Palestine	<i>The Canon of John Damascene and St Barbara</i>
842–3	Constantinople	<i>The Life of the Melodists Cosmos and John</i> . [BHG 394]
842–3	Constantinople	<i>The Brief Life of John of Damascus</i> . Rec. A [BHG 885b]
end 9 th cent.	Constantinople	<i>The Brief Life of John of Damascus</i> . Rec. B [BHG 885c]
10 th cent.	Antioch	A lost Arabic Life ⁶⁸
976–1025	Antioch	<i>Life of our holy Father, John Damascene</i> . [BHG 884]. ⁶⁹
c. 1084–85	Antioch	<i>Arabic Life</i> by Michael (al-Simʿānī) of St. Symeon's ⁷⁰
c. 1156	Constantinople	<i>The Life of our holy and god-bearing Fathers, the brothers, John Damascene and Cosmas</i> . [BHG 395]
12 th cent.	Constantinople	<i>The Life of John of Damascus Athensiensis</i> . [BHG 884a]
By 1324	Constantinople	<i>Panegyric on John Damascene</i> [BHG 885]
13 th cent.	Constantinople	<i>The Life of Kosmas the Hymnographer</i> . [BHG 394b]
13 th –14 th cent.	Constantinople	<i>The Life of Kosmas the Hymnographer</i> . [BHG 394a]
1665	Antioch	<i>The Names and Lives of the Fathers and Doctors of the Church and the Melodists</i> [Arabic] ⁷¹

Figure 3 – The Many Lives of John of Damascus

This traditional paint by numbers presentation makes John into the retrospective orthodox champion of Nicaea II (787) and thus, the quintessential iconophile monk, yet that council hardly mentions him.⁷² Recent research, however, points in a different direction. These *Lives* as well as the ‘official’ *Life*, are mostly the product of a Constantinopolitan milieu (see the figure above), and if viewed in this light paint quite a

⁶⁸ Known only from a passage in the prologue of the later Arabic *Life* of the monk Michael of St Symeon near Antioch, which suggests an Arabic source was consulted, but the truth of this or the extent to which it was used cannot be determined. G. Graf's German translation of Michael's Arabic *Life* provides the following from the prologue, which I have translated from his German: "I heard only a few things *Nachrichten* about him and found memories of him very brief, which are written in a number of notices *Nachrichten* by contemporary fathers, which are quite fragmentary." "ich hörte über ihn nur vereinzelte Nachrichten und fand nur sehr kurz gefaßte Erinnerungen an ihn, die in einer Anzahl von Nachrichten zeitgenössischer Väter aufgeschrieben und gleichmäßig zerstückelt sind." G. Graf, "Das arabische Original der Vita des hl. Johannes von Damaskus," *Der Katholik* 93 (1913), 164-90, 320-31, 170. See also, Vassa Kontouma (2015a), "John III of Antioch (996-1021) and the *Life of John of Damascus* (BHG 884)," *John of Damascus: New Studies on His Life and Works*, (Aldershot: Ashgate), 1-26, 24-25.

⁶⁹ This is the 'official' *Life* on which the Byzantine cult is based. The text itself claims to be based on an Arabic original; however, this is not the same Arabic text currently extant by Michael of St Symeon, and thus remains theoretical. Further, the hypothetical existence of an Arabic original, however, contributes significantly to its air of authority, thus it is easily overrated.

⁷⁰ Alexander Treiger (2013), "Michael Al-Simʿānī: The Arabic Vita of St. John of Damascus," in David Thomas and Alex Mallett, eds., *Christian-Muslim Relations. A Bibliographical History. Volume 5 (1350-1500)*, vol. 5 (Leiden: Brill), 655-64. The text implies dependence on an earlier Arabic source. It is not known if this is the same lost Arabic source of BHG 884.

⁷¹ By Makarios Za'im, Melkite Patriarch of Antioch. For bibliography see Kontouma (2015b), 4-5, 5n15.

⁷² I do not intend to suggest there is anything inherently wrong with the reception of John as a saint. Only that a reading that deemphasizes the Constantinopolitan reception and manipulation of John's story facilitates the analysis of John's theological program in terms of local exigencies in Palestine, i.e. John's own priorities, rather than those of Constantinopolitan Iconophiles.

different picture. Those which appear to have an Antiochene provenance can also be seen as within the re-Byzantinization project of Constantinople (more below).

M.-F. Auzépy has shown that the iconophile party in Constantinople promoted saints to further their cause through a process of substitution that employed a ‘pairing principle’. It turns out that John of Damascus was central to certain of these efforts during the third phase of his elevation and sainthood (see Figure 1 – Timeline of sources used to construct the saint – St John of Damascus). Two Palestinians were promoted in Constantinople on different occasions, although they were not previously venerated in Palestine, as part of a process that elevated them in conjunction with John of Damascus.

M.-F. Auzépy summarizes this process:

In both cases, the same method was employed, the substitution of a character for another one, under the same name. . . . In the twelfth century, at the latest, the circle is closed, all the Palestinian celebrities under the Isaurians are reconciled, attributed to the Lavra [the monastery of Mar Saba], connected together by family ties and an unfailing attachment to this institution, unanimous in the defense of the cult of icons against the heretic tyrants.⁷³

Auzépy identifies an important process here, but my primary consideration is with its implications for the recognition of John’s sainthood.⁷⁴ First, regarding the twofold

⁷³ Auzépy (2015), 435. The Isaurian dynasty: Leo III (716–40), Constantine V (740–75), Leo IV (775–80), and Constantine VI (790–97).

⁷⁴ The identification of the saints is not relevant to my argument, but the process of pairing is interesting. In short, Cosmas the hymnographer, otherwise unknown, becomes associated (‘paired’) with John as younger brother and also at Mar Saba, replacing (‘substitution’) Cosmas the tutor (position on icons unknown), just as Stephen the Sabaite the poet/hymnographer (PMBZ #6912; At least five Stephens are known to be associated with Mar Saba and their complete identification as distinct individuals is not assured) became John’s nephew at Mar Saba, replacing Stephen the Sabaite the ascetic (PMBZ #6983/corr; See also s.v. Stephen the Sabaite in the *Dumbarton Oaks Hagiography Database*, 93–94). Auzépy suggests his iconophile sympathies were questionable. Auzépy (2015), 407. In both cases, Stephen and Cosmas become orthodox iconophiles by their association with John and Mar Saba, i.e. being ‘paired’ with John. Auzépy suggests this is related to Palestinian liturgical influence on Constantinople, but it may also figure in an effort to tie John to Mar Saba. At this stage of my argument though the relevant take-away is that John is by now clearly a saint, a champion of iconophile orthodoxy. Further, it should be noted that M. Jugie had previously noted with considerable skepticism that it is only this *Life* which first associates Cosmas the Melodist (future bishop of Maïouma) with John of Damascus. Martin Jugie (1924), “La vie de saint Jean Damascène”, *Échos d’Orient*, 23/153: 137–61, 141. Regarding John’s dedication of his *Dialectica* to Cosmas, bishop of Maïouma, 1) a close personal relationship is not indicated, and 2) this dedication is not attested prior to the tenth century, on this see Alexander P.

substitution and the identification of those four saints, suffice it to say that Auzépy shows two cases where someone with iconophile sympathies is substituted for another with the same name in the liturgical tradition in order to ‘normalize’ the cult into an iconophile tradition, thus shaping Orthodox church tradition.⁷⁵ That tradition is being rewritten is germane in the main but my primary point here is that Auzépy clearly states, “in the twelfth century, at the latest, the circle is closed.” Thus, second, the elevation of these saints includes their association with the saint, John of Damascus, who acts as guarantor of their iconophile orthodoxy. Consequently, I take the twelfth century as the *terminus ante quem* for John’s sainthood because as an iconophile saint he now acts, in two different cases, as guarantor of the orthodoxy of others.

Thus, based on Auzépy I ignore texts beyond this date in the deconstruction of John’s sainthood. Not only for external reasons, but these texts can also be ignored for internal reasons as well. In the analysis of V. Kontouma they are derivative, merely repeating material from earlier texts. These include all those Kontouma dates between the 12th and 15th centuries (see Figure 4 below). Consequently, by combining the research of Auzépy and Kontouma, I conclude that the texts pertinent to the constructive elevation of the saint, St John of Damascus, include only those of the figure above (see Figure 1): Those texts below in Figure 4 – Late derivative texts irrelevant to John’s biography or sainthood can thus be safely ignored.

Kazhdan and S. Gero (1989), “Kosmas of Jerusalem: A More Critical Approach to His Biography”, *Byzantinische Zeitschrift*, 82/1-2: 122-32, 123, 31. Thus, it may be a later interpolation.

⁷⁵ Church Tradition or Tradition I treat as synonyms and is comprised of various ‘traditions’ (distinguishing upper from lower case ‘t’), thus Tradition is mystical and in certain ways undefinable (not to say entirely opaque to analysis), whereas ‘traditions’ are strands within Tradition that are objects of history and thus subject to historical analysis. See World Council of Churches (1963).

Date	Derivative Lives
12 th cent.	BHG 884a – <i>The Life of John of Damascus Athensiensis</i> . unedited, recasts BHG 394 to emphasize Cosmas
c. 1156	BHG 395 – <i>The Life of our holy and god-bearing Fathers, the brothers, John Damascene and Cosmas</i> . By John Merkouropoulos (fl. 1156)
13 th cent.	BHG 394b – unedited, <i>The Life of Kosmas the Hymnographer</i> .
by 1324	BHG 885 – <i>Panegyric on John Damascene</i> by Grand Logothete Constantine Akropolites (d. 1324)
13–14 th cent.	BHG 394a – unedited, <i>The Life of Kosmas the Hymnographer</i>
1665	[Arabic] <i>The Names and Lives of the Fathers and Doctors of the Church and the Melodists</i> by Makarios Za'im, Melkite patriarch of Antioch

Figure 4 – Late derivative texts irrelevant to John's biography or sainthood⁷⁶

Now John's fortunes in Constantinople fluctuated with those of the iconophile party (see Figure 1 phases 'Condemned' and 'Re-Condemned'). He was condemned at the iconoclast Council of Hieria in 754, in the middle of the First Iconoclasm (726–87), which was reversed at Nicaea II (787), but then recondemned with the Second Iconoclasm (814–42) at the council in the Hagia Sophia in 815, and finally the condemnation was lifted permanently with the 'Triumph of Orthodoxy' in 843.⁷⁷

Regardless of the vagaries of iconophile blessedness in this period, John was initially remembered in Palestine but his fortunes quickly surged in Constantinople.

Nevertheless, his veneration was complicated by his direct condemnation of the emperor in his second oration *On Images*⁷⁸—extremely rare in the Byzantine Empire—coupled with his subsequent imperial condemnation by Constantine V at the Iconoclast Council of Hieria (754) in which he received, including that for 'plotting against the

⁷⁶ Data from Kontouma (2015b), 20–22.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 6, 8.

⁷⁸ John refers to the emperor as a pirate and suggests at some length that God will rend the kingdom from him for usurping the pastoral office of bishops in *On Images* II, 12. For English trans. see Andrew Louth, ed., (2003), *Three Treatises on the Divine Images*, trans. Andrew Louth, (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press), 68–69.

emperor', a quadruple anathema.⁷⁹ His advocates had to overcome these impediments to his veneration.

Delimiting a Rubric: The Long Shadow of the 'Official' Life

In 1993 A. Kazhdan noted that in 1929 M. Jugie argued that BHG 884 was the oldest biography of John of Damascus but M. Gordillo demurred prioritizing BHG 885b; however, in 1950 J. Nasrallah again prioritized BHG 884 and in 1951 J. M. Hoeck concurred in a now classic article still relevant as the only place with any information on the relative dates of John's works.⁸⁰ This represents the current and fragile state of affairs with its overreliance on BHG 884. For example in 1967 C. Tsirpanlis succinctly stated the matter:

Until recent times, all biographies and monographs on St John were based on the Greek *Vita* [BHG 884] of John of Jerusalem as their principal source. Modern research has done much to sift historical truth from legend. M. Jugie summarizes all data concerning the Damascene, which are known with certainty, in the following brief statement: St John is a descendent of a distinguished Christian family of Damascus in Syria; he was a priest and a monk at the Laura of St. Sabas near Jerusalem, he became a prominent figure in the iconoclastic controversy, as a preacher, he enjoyed a far-reaching reputation, and has left us numerous scholarly works which witness to his encyclopedic erudition. All other data must rest on conjectures.⁸¹

However, even this more recent statement of Tsirpanlis must be modified, i.e. 'sifted historical truth' resulting in 'all data known with certainty' needs revision. Thus, because "all biographies and monographs" were based on BHG 884 it acquired the status of the 'official' *Life* and the other lives disfavored as prone to anachronism were often ignored. Perhaps the prime example of this is the much lauded 2002 study of A.

⁷⁹ Regarding John's supposed 'plot' and its deleterious effect on his elevation see Auzépy (2015), 421-22, 40. See on this also Kontouma (2015b), 11.

⁸⁰ Kazhdan and Gero (1989), 127, Martin Jugie (1929), "Une nouvelle vie et un nouvel écrit de saint Jean Damascène", *Échos d'Orient*, 28/153: 35-41, 38f, Mauritius Gordillo (1926), *Damascenica: 1. Vita Marciana 2. Libellus orthodoxiae*, 62f, Nasrallah (1950), 6. Hoeck (1951), 7.

⁸¹ Tsirpanlis (1984), 55-56.

Louth, which omits any discussion of the many *Lives* of John obliquely referencing only BHG 884.⁸² Thus, in spite of the research of Kazhdan, Auzépy, and Kontouma some continue to rely on the hagiographical BHG 884 for the biography of John; opposed to this, I adopt the following for reasons that will become evident. Further, worth highlighting up front to set the tone of what follows, I adopt the following key points:

From A. P. Kazhdan:⁸³

- Several Cosmases have had their biographies tampered with in the tenth century
- The association of Cosmas and John of Damascus is late and untrustworthy

From M.-F. Auzépy:⁸⁴

- Constantinopolitan iconophiles tampered with the biographies of homonymous Stephens and Cosmases in order to present iconophile saints in a liturgical ‘purge’

From V. Kontouma:⁸⁵

- The oldest *Life* is BHG 394 which is part of a dossier of iconophile texts
- The likely author of BHG 884 was not John of Jerusalem but John of Antioch
- The *Canon of John Damascene and St. Barbara* holds the oldest most reliable biographical data on John dating from the early ninth century

Kontouma builds on Auzépy who builds on Kazhdan, so I am really dependent on a school of thought culminating in Kontouma, which represents either a minority position or the new consensus depending on how one assesses these challenges to the positions

⁸² Louth (2002), 6. Louth provides no references to any *Life* of John in his bibliography, not even the referenced BHG 884 (he gives the PG reference at 16n2), preferring apparently to point the reader to others who discuss John’s biography at 5n4, and while implying BHG 884 is the *only* vita on page 16 (“the Greek vita of St John Damascene”).

⁸³ Kazhdan and Gero (1989).

⁸⁴ Auzépy (2015). This article was first published in French as Marie-France Auzépy (1994), “De la Palestine à Constantinople: Etienne le sabaïte et Jean Damascène”, *Travaux et Mémoires* 12: 183-218.

⁸⁵ On the dating of BHG 394 see Vassa Conticello (2000), s.v. “Jean Damascène”, in R. Goulet, ed., *Dictionnaire des philosophes antiques*, (Paris: Éditions du centre national de la recherche scientifique), 989-1012. On the authorship of BHG 884 see Vassa Kontouma-Conticello (2010b), “Jean III d’Antioche (996–1021) et la vie de Jean Damascène (BHG 884)”, *Revue des études byzantines*, 68: 101-14. On Pseudo-Cyril, covered in my introduction, see Conticello (1995). All three articles are republished (the French in English trans.) in Vassa Kontouma, ed., (2015), *John of Damascus: New Studies on His Life and Works*, (Aldershot: Ashgate).

of the twentieth century. The aim of building on their position is to show that John's sainthood was constructed from propaganda, thus the historicity underlying his hagiography must be closely questioned. Consequently, building on the research of these scholars, I will evaluate John's sainthood in terms of his exploitation in three phases of rehabilitation and elevation.

The First Phase of Rehabilitation and Exploitation

Remembered at Home and Afar

After writing his oration *on Images* (CPG 8045)⁸⁶ John soon came to the attention of the Constantinopolitan elite, who were divided on the issue of icons. He must have made quite an impact because the patriarch Germanus I of Constantinople lost his job and was condemned at the Iconoclast Council (754), but the emperor was not satisfied to merely anathematize John, who was privileged to receive a quadruple anathema, perhaps a sort of 'hate speech' record if you will.⁸⁷ This would become a significant impediment to John's future veneration and elevation. Rescinded at the iconophile Council of Nicaea II (787)⁸⁸ it would be reinstated with the Second Iconoclasm and

⁸⁶ John wrote three versions of this oration: *On Images I-III*. See Kotter, iii. Usually dated after 726 to the early 730s, e.g. see Louth ed., (2003), 10. However, this is disputed. Some argue for a date in the late 740s or early 750s. See Leslie Brubaker and John F. Haldon (2011), *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era C. 680–850 : A History*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 46. Further, L. Brubaker notes that the evidence for Leo III's iconoclasm has been shown to be later interpolations, and Haldon states, "there is not a jot of evidence for an iconoclast edict issued by Leo III in the 720s". Leslie Brubaker (2012), *Inventing Byzantine Iconoclasm*, (London: Bristol Classics; Bloomsbury Academic), 27-29, John F. Haldon (2007b), "Iconoclasm in Byzantium: Myths and Realities", 2. P. Speck also proposes a date under Constantine V: Paul Speck (1981), "Anlass Und Datierung Der Bilderschriften Des Johannes Damaskenos", *Artabados, der rechtgläubige Vorkämpfer der göttlichen Lehren*, (Bonn: Rudolf Habelt), 179-243.

⁸⁷ Mansi, XIII, 357; 356D. See Kontouma (2015b), 6. The iconophile Nicephorus I, Patriarch of Constantinople, was forced to abdicate (815) after another iconoclast council (in the Hagia Sophia) opened the Second Iconoclasm. Dated to the 780s by C. Mango, Nicephorus' *Brief History* records that "John of Damascus in Syria, surnamed Mansour [Manšūr]" (also Germanus and George, all anathematized at the iconoclast council in the Hieria in 754) was anathematized 'in public' suggesting the iconoclasts wanted to make an example of him. Cyril Mango, ed. and trans., (1990), *Nikephoros Patriarch of Constantinople, Short History: Text, Translation and Commentary*, (Washington, D.C: Dumbarton Oaks), 12, 144-45.

⁸⁸ Mansi, XIII, 357; 400C

may have precipitated the first *Life* (BHG 394) in an attempt to assure iconoclasts of his piety as will be seen below.

Because of his orations *On Images* I-III, John's theological authority was recognized and exploited under the First Iconoclasm. He appears to have been exploited through the pseudopigraphical attribution of a number of pro iconophile tracts probably written under Constantine V (r. 741–45), including the *Against the Iconoclasts* (CPG 8121), the *Letter to Constantine Kaballinos* (CPG 8114), and possibly the *Letter to the Emperor Theophilos* (CPG 8115).⁸⁹ This shows the willingness of the iconophiles in Constantinople to construct an image of John useful to their party. With the end of the First Iconoclasm the iconophile party remembered John with fondness in the *Life of Stephen the Younger* (BHG 1666, c. 809)—"Having been named . . . by us holy and inspired."⁹⁰—, but no doubt primarily as the author of the iconophile tracts noted above.

There was a concomitant attempt to remember John in the East. Some notices in the chronicles survived, were collected and appear in this period in the Constantinopolitan chronicle of Theophanes, dating to c. 810–15.⁹¹ For example, Theophanes preserves that John's father was "most Christian" and John was named *Chrysorrhoeas* "streaming w/gold" for his teaching and preaching.⁹² Robert Hoyland reconstructs Theophanes'

⁸⁹ Auzépy prefers the earlier date, although Kontouma suggests CPG 8114 was edited c. 842-3. Auzépy (2015), 411. Kontouma (2015b), 7. Either date is additive to my thesis, because both show the exploitation and elevation of John by Constantinopolitan iconophiles.

⁹⁰ In Greek, ὁ παρὰ τοῦ τυράννου τούτου Μανσοῦρ ἐπονομασθεὶς, παρ' ἡμῖν δὲ ὅσοις καὶ θεοφόρος. BHG 1666. Marie-France Auzépy, ed., (1997), *La vie d'Étienne le jeune par Étienne le diacre*, (Aldershot: Ashgate), 126.

⁹¹ Cyril Mango and Roger Scott, eds. (1997), *The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor: Byzantine and near Eastern History Ad 284-813*, trans. Scott Roger, (Oxford: Clarendon Press). On the hypothetical lost eastern source used by Theophanes and others and possibly identified with Theophilus of Edessa's *Chronicle*, see Robert G. Hoyland, ed., (2011), *Theophilus of Edessa's Chronicle: And the Circulation of Historical Knowledge in Late Antiquity and Early Islam* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press), 5-10.

⁹² Mango and Scott, eds. (1997), AM6183, AM6221.

eastern source as that of Theophilus of Edessa (and a continuator for the 740s–80s), whom the earliest references, e.g. Dionysius of Tell Maḥrē, identify as Chalcedonian.⁹³

It is thus important to weigh carefully what Theophanes records, because the eastern source appears to mention John's father but not John himself.⁹⁴ Yet there is one entry that names John in Theophanes, but names him incorrectly. Thus, it may have been inserted by Theophanes himself. Further, just prior to this another entry suspiciously suggests Leo III is "Saracen-minded" and the progenitor of iconoclasm (AM 6218).

The entry on John in full [AM6221, 728/9]:

And in Damascus of Syria there shone forth in his life and discourse John of the Golden Stream, son of Mansour, a presbyter and a monk, a most excellent teacher. Now Leo ejected Germanus, who was subject to him, from the episcopal throne, while Gregory [Bishop of Rome] reproved him openly in his widely known *Letters*, and John together with the eastern bishops, subjected the impious man to anathema.⁹⁵

There is no record of a synod that year, nor any such letters, thus this notice may be referring to iconophile forgeries, and thus imply an early attempt by iconophiles at constructing the history and tradition they desire.⁹⁶ To call Leo III "Saracen-minded" recalls the iconoclast anathema of John (Iconoclast Council, 754), which may be iconophile rhetoric turning the tables.

Nevertheless, John was remembered in Palestine in the late eighth or early ninth century. John was remembered by Stephen the Sabaite (the poet, d. 807), who wrote the *Canon of John Damascene and St Barbara*.⁹⁷ But, just as the eastern source ignored John, so another prominent Sabaite, Stephen the Sabaite (the ascetic, d. 794) has no

⁹³ Hoyland ed., (2011), 6n17. Bar Hebraeus (13th cent. theologian and chronicler), however, considered him Maronite. This explains ignoring John but not favorable reports on John's father.

⁹⁴ The Maronite predilection for monotheletism and disapproval of Maximus the Confessor will be discussed below.

⁹⁵ Mango and Scott, eds. (1997), AM6221.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 566n7, 566n8.

⁹⁷ *Menaia* published for 4 Dec. See E. Follieri, *Initia hymnorum*, vol. I (ST 211; Vatican: 1960), 433, 1. 12-33.

respect for John's piety, ignoring him when recounting Sabaite luminaries.⁹⁸ This mixed-bag will continue in the East, for example, Eutychius, Melkite Patriarch of Alexandria (r. 933-940), rather than venerating John, recalls him and his family only as traitors.⁹⁹

Nevertheless, it seems the iconophiles of Constantinople had found their champion. For although his condemnation was reinstated at the beginning of the Second Iconoclasm (815–43) at the council in the Hagia Sophia, Theodore the Studite (759–826) cites John without naming him.¹⁰⁰ This is not unusual in this period, as authors frequently make use of others without citation. Here, however, it is likely indicative of John's shifting fortunes and Theodore's astute political acumen. Nevertheless, it was politically expedient to exploit John through his elevation because only someone of impeccable orthodoxy without ties to either party could stand as arbiter, and John, monk and priest, extraordinary preacher and hymnist of the Holy City, fit the bill like no other.¹⁰¹ Notwithstanding the mixed-bag in the East regarding Melkite memory of John, his shifting fortunes in Constantinople were tied-up with iconophile aspirations.

In sum, after the close of the First Iconoclasm and the victory of Nicaea II (787), the iconophiles were willing to venerate their heroes, including John of Damascus, who in this early period, shows up in both the *Canon of John Damascene and St Barbara* in

⁹⁸ More will be made of these two Stephens below. The ascetic, PMBZ #6983/corr., b. 724/5–d. 794, and the other, a poet, PMBZ #6912, b. unknown–d. after 797/8, possibly as late as 807. Kontouma prefers 807 without comment. Kontouma (2015b), 7. Regarding the absence of John among Mar Saba luminaries, see Auzépy (2015), 408.

⁹⁹ Michael Breydy, ed., (1985), *Das Annalenwerk des Eutychios von Alexandrien: ausgewählte Geschichten und legenden Kompiliert von sa'Id Ibn Baṭrīq um 935 A.D.*, (Leuven: Peeters), 116-17.

¹⁰⁰ Kontouma (2015b), 8.

¹⁰¹ Speculative beyond the scope of this thesis, I would suggest for further research that had John given more space to icons in his *Expos.* he may not have been the reconciliatory candidate both sides eventually took him to be. About three pages are given to the saints and relics and three more to images, and nothing is said against the emperor in *Expos.* chapters 88 and 89 respectively. Further, with only Basil and Scripture cited there is no florilegium of disputable texts to deal with as with the *Orations*. Thus, the *Orations on Images* could be marginalized during the 'Triumph of Orthodoxy' while John's homiletic, hymnographic and dogmatic works emphasized bringing out his monastic piety, precisely what was needed to act as a reconciliatory figure.

Palestine and in the Constantinopolitan *Life of Stephen the Younger*. Unfortunately, this first phase of elevation after Nicaea II was dampened by the reinstated condemnation of the Second Iconoclasm; nevertheless, as the negative memory seemed to take hold in Palestine, so the iconophiles in Constantinople like Theodore the Studite remembered John quietly.

The Earliest and Best Information on John

Crucial to the biography of John, V. Kontouma contends that it is in this period that the most reliable information about John is preserved, and that Stephen's *Canon*, the most significant source and from Palestine, itself holds much of what will be echoed in later sources. Kontouma claims that from the *Canon* for the biography of John of Damascus:¹⁰²

- He was of royal stock
- He abandoned riches, pleasures, and honors
- He gave his goods to the poor, to live in the desert in poverty and asceticism
- He was a sage who practiced philosophy
- He distinguished himself in the doctrines of God and Christ
- He distinguished himself by his teaching of these doctrines
- He established orthodox dogma and the hymnographic tradition of the Church
- He was a man of action who combatted Manichaeans, non-Chalcedonians (West and East Syrians) and Iconoclasts¹⁰³

¹⁰² Kontouma (2015b), 7.

¹⁰³ In my view the omission of Islam here is a significant matter for further research. Although an argument from silence carries little weight, I suggest this comports with the evidence of the chroniclers and recent research. In the chroniclers John's father was a friend to caliph 'Abd al-Malik, and John himself seems to part on good terms with the Umayyad caliph suggesting anti-Islam polemic unlikely. Further, John's authorship of various anti-Islam tracts is disputed, including *On Heresies*, chapter 101 (on Ishmaelites). If this is true it is likely that John authored nothing against Islam, providing additional support for a positive relationship with the Umayyad court. Regarding the disputed authorship see Hoeck (1951), 23-24. Kotter, iv, 5, 420-21. Kontouma (2015b), 32. Kontouma reads Kotter as indicating *Disputatio christiani et saraceni* (CPG 8075) is spurious, but I read him as a bit more optimistic: dubious (see p. 421). Others affirm John's authorship, see Paul Khoury (1957-58), "Jean Damascène et l'islam", *Proche-Orient Chrétien*: 7, 44-63; 8, 313-39; Daniel J. Sahas (1972), *John of Damascus on Islam: The Heresy of the Ishmaelites*, (Leiden: Brill); Daniel J. Sahas (1984-1985), "John of Damascus on Islam Revisited", *Abr-Nahrain*, 23: 104-18; Daniel J. Sahas (1992), "The Arab Character of the Christian Disputation with Islam: The Case of John of Damascus (ca. 655–ca. 749)", in B Lewis and F. Niewöhner, eds., *Religionsgespräche im Mittelalter*, (Otto Harrasowitz), 185-205; Peter Schadler, (2011), "Christian Heresiological Discourse and Islam: John of Damascus and the Last Heresy", DPhil Thesis. University of

Some of this can be discounted as literary *topoi*, i.e. poetic (or hagiographical) commonplace or convention, especially the material related to John's life as a monk. This is not to suggest John was not a monk, only that these achievements are commonly claimed for any pious monk.¹⁰⁴ Further, if they were more than literary they would suggest intimate personal knowledge of John's character, and there is simply no evidence for this level of information about him. Finally, neither is there any evidence (of which I am currently aware) suggesting the Manšūr family is of 'royal stock'; this may be hyperbole for their great social status.¹⁰⁵

If V. Kontouma is correct about the *Canon* and this list is the earliest and best evidence for John's biography, then this list provides an excellent foil with which to examine the data provided by later *Lives*, the chroniclers and by John himself. However, certain aspects of John's elite education, his acquaintance with philosophy, and his oeuvre will be the focus in my later analysis, so related points (sage, doctrine, teaching) will be left aside for now.

The Second Constructive Phase: The 'Triumph of Orthodoxy'

In the first half of the ninth century John appears in an artistic miniature in a manuscript of the *Sacra Parallela*.¹⁰⁶ It is not known if this manuscript originates in Palestine or in the community of émigré monks (likely fleeing the Arabs) in southern Italy, although

Oxford. However, S. Gero is not convinced by Sahas' (1972: 64-66) defense of John's authorship of *On Heresies*, chapter 101. Stephen Gero (1973), *Byzantine Iconoclasm During the Reign of Leo III with Particular Attention to the Oriental Sources*, 61.

¹⁰⁴ Further, John was not a typical monk given his elite background. John is briefly contrasted with Stephen the Sabaite (the ascetic) in Auzépy (2015), 408. "... Stephen did not consider John as being part of his spiritual lineage. If he was not, the information provided by the *Life of Stephen the Sabaite* on the practice of hermits exposes the fact that Stephen and John, coming from two different backgrounds, had chosen paths that had very few chances of crossing."

¹⁰⁵ John of Damascus is thought by most to be of local Syrian stock, on which more later. On the importance of Syrians to the political landscape of the 7th and 8th centuries, see John F. Haldon (2007a), "'Citizens of Ancient Lineage . . .': The Role and Significance of Syrians in the Byzantine Elite in the Seventh and Eighth Centuries", in Wout Jac. Van Bakkum et al., eds., *Syriac Polemics: Studies in Honour of Gerrit Jan Reinink*, (Leuven: Peeters), 91-102.

¹⁰⁶ *Parisin. gr.* 923. Kontouma (2015b), 8. It seems to me that Kontouma is following Weitzmann here.

Kurt Weitzmann makes a good argument for a Palestinian origin during the Second Iconoclasm.¹⁰⁷ John is depicted haloed but without a turban in what may be the earliest extant icon of John.¹⁰⁸

Connections if any between the early cases of apparent veneration remain unclear.

John's fortunes, however, took a decided turn with the arrival in Constantinople of certain Palestinian monks, Michael the Synkellos (761–846) and the brothers Grapti in 813.¹⁰⁹ Ostensibly on a mission from the patriarch of Jerusalem to Rome, they were detained as iconophiles indefinitely in Constantinople. Their 'mission' appears to be a polite smokescreen for an actual disagreement with Thomas, Patriarch of Jerusalem (807–21).¹¹⁰ This comports well with what may be a consensus among specialists of Arab Christianity. A. Treiger quotes S. Griffith as summarizing the field on this issue: "Iconodule propagandists seem to have been responsible for much of the 'news' of Jerusalem in Constantinople in the first half of the ninth century, and they seem to have fabricated a good bit of it."¹¹¹ Consequently, Treiger suggests the Greek *Life* may have been "written by a Palestinian émigré monk in Constantinople."¹¹² As it turns out, V. Kontouma provides a compelling case for something quite similar involving the production of a iconophile dossier at the behest of Methodius, who was familiar with the émigré community.

¹⁰⁷ Kurt Weitzmann (1979), *The Miniatures of the Sacra Parallela: Parisinus graecus 923*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press), 25. As the largest extant illuminated Greek mss.—nearly 400 folios—, *Parisinus Graecus* 923 would have been quite expensive to produce; thus, it is interesting to speculate who might have underwritten such an expense. John's family's wealth was able to educate and place two Patriarchs on the throne in Jerusalem in this period: Sergios ibn Manṣūr (Sergius I, 843–59) and ʿIlīyyā ibn Manṣūr (Elias III c. 878–907).

¹⁰⁸ Kontouma (2015b), 8. This may actually be the only icon of John without a turban.

¹⁰⁹ On Michael the Synkellos see Mary B. Cunningham, ed., (1991), *Life of Michael the Synkellos: Text, Translation and Commentary*.

¹¹⁰ Auzépy (2015), 430–32.

¹¹¹ Treiger (2013), 659.

¹¹² Ibid.

Michael the Synkellos had collaborated with Methodius (Patriarch of Constantinople, 843–47) in the past, and he renewed this collaboration in Constantinople from 813. Shortly after their renewed acquaintance, at the resurgence of iconoclasm Methodius went to Rome (815–21). Upon his return Methodius endured arrest and exile, but under Theophilus (829–42), he was returned to the imperial palace, under surveillance as a potential iconophile conspirator.¹¹³ It turns out that Methodius was Sicilian, born and raised, so he may have developed some familiarity with (perhaps openness to) Greek monks from Palestine, since many migrated ahead of the Arabs to southern Italy. In any case, while in Rome during the Second Iconoclasm, he was close to the Pope and among other things, he “was dedicated to the collection and drafting of saints’ lives and the writing of manuscripts.”¹¹⁴ His *Menologion*, written while in Rome (815–21), contains a copy of John’s *Homily on the withered fig tree* (CPG 8058), and it identifies John as “a monk and priest in the patriarchal church of the Anastasis in Jerusalem.”¹¹⁵ Consequently, upon his return to Constantinople in 821, Methodius was likely quite familiar (if not already) with the name John of Damascus.

During the Iconophile party’s negotiations with Theodora in 842, the pseudopigraphic attribution to John of Damascus of the *Homily on those who have reposed in the faith* (CPG 8112), adequate for iconophiles, would be useless for convincing the iconoclasts in Theodora’s circle, who considered John a condemned traitor.¹¹⁶ Thus, Kontouma asserts that “it was therefore urgent to rehabilitate the historical figure of JD [John of Damascus] in the eyes of the Court – and vice versa, one could finally build on this situation to formalize JD’s entry into Byzantium. This was the primary role of the first”

¹¹³ PMBZ #4977. Marie-France Auzépy (2002), s.v. “Methodius of Constantinople”, in André Vauchez ed., *Encyclopedia of the Middle Ages*.

¹¹⁴ PMBZ #4977: “In Rom widmete sich Methodios der Sammlung und Abfassung von Heiligenviten und dem Schreiben von Codices.”

¹¹⁵ Kontouma (2015b), 9.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 11.

of many lives of John of Damascus: the *Life of the Melodists Cosmas and John Damascene* (BHG 394), which Kontouma contends is “directly connected” to the previously mentioned *Homily* and thus, the “primary document from this period.”¹¹⁷ Thus, the construction of John of Damascus as a saint as a function of the negotiations leading up to the so called ‘Triumph of Orthodoxy’ accelerates in order to rehabilitate him in the eyes of iconoclasts close to the negotiations. He was already useful in bringing hardline iconophiles to the table, but now he pacifies iconoclasts as well in order to forge a compromise, thus before he was ever a theological bridge-figure between East and West his sainthood was likely constructed to provide a political bridge between hardline iconophiles and iconoclasts in Constantinople in order to prepare the so called ‘Triumph of Orthodoxy’.

In sum, Michael the Synkellos drafted texts at the behest of Methodius meant to satisfy the parties involved in the negotiations with Theodora, who required the posthumous absolution of her husband, the deceased iconoclastic emperor Theophilos. Kontouma writes that the *Homily* was put forward with other texts all meant to convince “the most intransigent of the iconophiles of the orthodoxy, or at least the feasibility κατ’ οἰκονομίαν [as an accommodation], of such an absolution” of Theophilos. The two central texts, the *Homily on those who have reposed in the faith* (CPG 8112), “one of the only Byzantine texts to hold open the possibility of a remission of sins after death” (probably based on Latin literature on purgatory translated into Greek c. 800), and the other: the *Life of the Melodists Cosmas and John Damascene* (BHG 394) – the first attributed to John of Damascus to secure its orthodoxy and the second assuring iconoclasts of John’s piety. A third text, *Letter to the Emperor Theophilos* (CPG 8115),

¹¹⁷ Ibid. The previous dates for BHG 394 were 815 to 1156 (the resumption of iconoclasm and a citation by John Merkouropoulos respectively). Ibid., 11n51. But against these dates V. Kontouma offers a compelling argument, first showing that BHG 884 cites it, and second placing it in the period 842–43 in the run-up to the ‘Triumph of Orthodoxy’. Ibid., 11-16.

was meant to tie John to Theophilos.¹¹⁸ All of these were authored or edited by the circle of Methodius, possibly by Michael the Synkellos.¹¹⁹ Thus, the elevation of John of Damascus was complete and the saint well on his way.

The research of Auzépy, regarding a pattern of constructing saints by associating them with John, and Kontouma, regarding the creation of a dossier of texts to further the aims of the iconophiles leading up to the ‘Triumph of Orthodoxy,’ suggests to me that John’s sainthood was a ‘top-down’ construction by the iconophile party, rather than an organic ‘bottom-up’ recognition by the laity. In any case, the saint John of Damascus began to take shape from the ‘Triumph of Orthodoxy’ (843).

Unfortunately, the hagiographic rehabilitation and elevation of John in BHG 394 (the first life) followed the norms of ascetic and monastic piety without regard for historical accuracy. It was so rife with anachronism that not only biographers avoided it, but the church would later forbid the public reading of it as noted above.¹²⁰ It had done its job in bringing the two sides together, intransigent rigorist iconophiles and iconoclasts who naturally distrusted the traitor of the empire, John of Damascus.

Three more works in this period would tinker with the life of John, attempting to fix some of the anachronisms of BHG 394: 1) dated to the late ninth century, the *Brief Life* (BHG 885b), 2) dated to the first half of the tenth century and probably based on the *Brief Life*, the *Synaxarion* of Constantinople (10th century) has an entry on John (BHG 885c) and the *Menologion* of Basil II (10th–11th century) has an entry too, and 3) dated to the second half of the tenth century and also based on BHG 394 and shifting the

¹¹⁸ CPG 8115, pseudopegraphically attributed to John, but dating to 836 was a reworking of the *Letter of the Three Eastern Patriarchs to Emperor Theophilos* probably by Michael the Synkellos as part of the “dossier” needed to rehabilitate Theophilos. Ibid., 9. On the *Letter of the Three Eastern Patriarchs to Emperor Theophilos* and its relationship to CPG 8115 see J. A. Munitiz et al., eds. (1997), *The Letter of the Three Patriarchs to Emperor Theophilos and Related Texts*, (Surrey, UK: Porphyrogenitus).

¹¹⁹ Kontouma (2015b), 9 (CPG 8115), 9-10 (CPG 8112), 11-14 (BHG 394).

¹²⁰ Ibid., 11.

focusing to John’s literary output avoiding the anachronisms, the *Suda* dedicates an entry to John:

John, the Damascene, surnamed Mansour, a most eminent man, second to none among any of those radiant in learning. There are a great many books of his, especially philosophical ones. Both selected parallels of divine Scripture and sung canons, both iambic and prose. Also, flourishing at John’s time, was Cosmas from Jerusalem, a man of genius, who also breathes out wholly harmonious music. Indeed, the sung canons of both John and Cosmas have received no comparison, nor should they to the end of our life.¹²¹

Note that John is still just a man in this entry but now competing with the saint John of the *Synaxarion*. His polemical works are at best veiled in the “many books” reference and possibly the reference to “philosophy” would include theological works, not just the *Dialectica*. The *Suda*, however, emphasizes John’s liturgical poetry pairing him with Cosmas—another case of the ‘pairing principle’ noted above—, suggesting that John is making liturgical inroads in Constantinople, also an indication of his increasing elevation. Finally, it is worth noting that based on this entry’s reference to “many books” perhaps it can be said that John’s corpus or a good part of it has made its way to Constantinople by the tenth century.¹²² In sum, select *synaxaria* and *menologia* have

¹²¹ A. Adler, ed., (1928–38, reprinted 1971), *Suda Lexicon*, 5 vols. (Leipzig: Teubner), iota 467.

“Ἰωάννης ὁ Δαμασκηνός, ὁ ἐπικληθεὶς Μανσοῦρ, ἀνὴρ καὶ αὐτὸς ἐλλογιμώτατος, οὐδενὸς δευτεροῦ τῶν κατ’ αὐτὸν ἐν παιδείᾳ λαμπρῶν. συγγράμματα αὐτοῦ πάνυ πολλὰ καὶ μάλιστα φιλόσοφα· εἰς τε τὴν θεῖαν γραφὴν Παράλληλοι κατ’ ἐκλογὴν, καὶ οἱ ἁσματικοὶ κανόνες, ἱαμβικοὶ τε καὶ καταλογάδην. συνήκαζε δ’ αὐτῷ καὶ Κοσμάς ὁ ἐξ Ἱεροσολύμων, ἀνὴρ εὐφυνέστατος καὶ πνέων μουσικὴν ὅλως τὴν ἐναρμόνιον. οἱ γοῦν ἁσματικοὶ κανόνες Ἰωάννου τε καὶ Κοσμά συγκρίσιν οὐκ ἐδέξαντο οὐδὲ δέξαιτο, μέχρις ἂν ὁ καθ’ ἡμᾶς βίος περαιωθῇσεται.”

¹²² Michael the Synkellos and the brothers Grapti arrived in Constantinople in 813. C. Mango finds P. Alexander compelling when he asserts the ‘scholastic’ phase of iconophile polemic begins in the period 810–14 and soon thereafter with direct use of the *Dialectica* of John of Damascus by Patriarch Nicephorus (806–15), but was entirely absent during the first iconoclasm, such that Mango asserts: “it would seem, therefore, that the handbooks of logic, like the *Dialectica* of John Damascene, did not reach the capital or, at any rate, did not exert much influence there until about the year 800.” Cyril Mango (1991), “Greek Culture in Palestine after the Arab Conquest”, in G. Cavallo et al., eds., *Scritture, libri e testi nelle aree provinciali di Bisanzio atti del seminario di Erice, 18-25 Settembre 1988*, (Spoleto: Centro Italiano di Studi sull’Alto Medioevo), 149-60, 158-59. Further, Mango highlights that Michael was both educated in Jerusalem and resident as synkellos in the Spudaioi monastery connected to the Anastasis, both of which would provide him with likely access to the works of John of Damascus, *ibid.*, 154. Consequently, I would suggest that Michael the Synkellos probably either brought John’s books with him or was at least a decisive catalyst in their promotion in Constantinopolitan iconophile circles upon his arrival in 813.

entries for John, but the *Menologion* of Symeon Metaphrastes (fl. 982) did not, however, shortly after the tenth century John and entries based on John's authority begin to be added to the Metaphrastic hagiographies as well.¹²³ Again, it seems John's fortunes were surging in this period.

To conclude this period of constructive exploitation and elevation, by the end of the eighth century John was being remembered in Palestine, by the early ninth he had begun to be venerated by iconophiles in Constantinople, and by the tenth and eleventh he appeared as a saint in certain *synaxaria* and *menologia*. The period of the mid-ninth century appears to be decisive (loosely 813–43 weighted to the latter half of that period), and although the evidence is ultimately circumstantial, the period 842–3 and the events leading up to the 'Triumph of Orthodoxy' is, I suggest, the locus of the invention of the saint John of Damascus.¹²⁴ In my view this is the inevitable conclusion from combining the research of Auzépy and Kontouma, even if they are less than explicit in drawing some of it out. Now I turn to the next phase, which assures John's sainthood with a 'metaphrastic' life worthy of a Constantinopolitan iconophile saint.

Phase 3: Sainthood

Re-Byzantinizing Antioch with an 'Official' Life

When the Byzantines recaptured Antioch in 969, they gradually installed a new hierarchy, not of untrusted local Arab Christians, but of trusted Constantinopolitan Greeks, who engaged in a program of 're-Byzantinizing' the patriarchate.¹²⁵ V.

Kontouma contends that John, "Syrian by birth and Greek by culture, immediately

¹²³ Kontouma (2015a), 2.

¹²⁴ I am here extending the analysis of V. Kontouma, who following J. Hoeck and M. Le Quien, contends that the letter was attributed to John of Damascus pseudopigraphically, and the *Homily on those who have reposed in the faith* (CPG 8112), is actually by Michael the Synkellos, who wrote it to meet the requirement of empress Theodora that iconoclasm would end only with the post-mortem absolution of her husband, Theophilus. On this see Kontouma (2015b), 9-11.

¹²⁵ Ibid., 17; Kontouma (2015a), 11.

seemed a symbol” of this policy.¹²⁶ The new patriarch, John III Polites was chartophylax of the Hagia Sophia before 996. The office of chartophylax is well known; it includes “the functions of archivist and librarian for the patriarchate and, as such, those of authenticating and validating documents required for conciliar or synodal debates.”¹²⁷ He also kept the patriarchal seal and managed the patriarch’s correspondence; in sum, the chartophylax is “one of the highest dignitaries of the Great Church, after the patriarch.”¹²⁸ Further, John III, Patriarch of Antioch (996–1021), was not only highly educated but V. Kontouma suggests he may have when younger worked “as part of the team” assembled by Symeon Metaphrastes, who engaged in the systematic editing of over one hundred *Lives*—his team worked in the imperial chancellery where John III Polites would have frequent occasion to be—in order to bring them up to date with much higher literary standards.¹²⁹ Whether this is actually the case or not, Kontouma is clear that John III of Antioch’s qualifications to write a hagiographic life to Metaphrastic standard is completely reasonable.

However, other Johns, all patriarchs of Jerusalem,¹³⁰ are often proposed as the author of what would become known as the ‘official’ *Life* of John of Damascus, the *Life of our Holy Father John Damascene* (BHG 884). But this *Life of John* is clearly metaphrastic.¹³¹ None of the proposed Johns of Jerusalem though is known to possess such credentials, and the earlier would make composition contemporaneous or prior to

¹²⁶ Kontouma (2015b), 17.

¹²⁷ Kontouma (2015a), 9.

¹²⁸ Ibid. Great Church is another term for the Hagia Sophia, perhaps recalling an earlier name, but now often also evoking its ecumenical status in Orthodoxy today.

¹²⁹ Ibid., 15. On Symeon Metaphrastes and his project see Christian Høgel (2002), *Symeon Metaphrastes: Rewriting and Canonization*, (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press). And specifically on liturgical texts see Christian Høgel (2003), “Hagiography under the Macedonians: The Two Recensions of the Metaphrastic Menologion”, in Paul Magdalino, ed., *Byzantium in the Year 1000*, (Leiden: Brill), 217-32.

¹³⁰ Two John’s of Jerusalem have been proposed as authors of the *Life of John* (BHG 884): John VII of Jerusalem (964-966), and John VIII of Jerusalem (1098–1106/7).

¹³¹ Kontouma (2015a), 13-21.

Symeon Metaphrastes, thus it would be very unlikely to find these editorial methods on exhibit in Jerusalem in the tenth century (John VII of Jerusalem, 964–66), and the other option (John VIII of Jerusalem, 1098–1106/7) is too late, as several manuscripts of this “official” *Life of John* date to the same period.¹³² Consequently, following the analysis of V. Kontouma:

The *Life of John* makes perfect sense if we approach it as a composition from the year 1000, prepared in Antioch by a highly accomplished rhetorician, trained in the techniques of hagiographic metaphrasis practiced in Constantinople, a man who had every interest in winning the support of Arabic-speaking Melkites but also in orientating the Greek-speaking military toward a culture that is one of peacetime. Its author could be none other than John III Polites.¹³³

Thus, the hagiography of St John of Damascus is shown to be the product of state propaganda, whether as the dossier enabling the ‘Triumph of Orthodoxy’ or the ‘re-Byzantinizing’ policy of the (Byzantine) patriarch of Antioch. As such its historiographic value must be realistically subject to an hermeneutic of suspicion. Consequently, establishing the place, date and authorship of the *Life of John* (BHG 884) allows for the reevaluation of any historical details drawn from the *Life of John* in the light of the ‘re-Byzantinizing’ state project of the patriarch of Antioch as well as its literary dependence on past *Lives*.

In the light of so many *Lives* of John of Damascus, the notion of an ‘official’ *Life* begs the question: Why is BHG 884 considered the ‘official’ *Life* in the face of so much competition from other material? If Kontouma is correct in her proposal to re-date BHG 394, then perhaps the church’s own judgement regarding it and the two abortive

¹³² Kontouma (2015b), 18-19. A. Treiger (alone ?) also suggests John VI of Jerusalem (r. c. 838–42) as a potential candidate but does so without accounting for the metaphrastic characteristics of BHG 884, so it seems unlikely. Treiger (2013), 659.

¹³³ Kontouma (2015a), 26. I have summarized Kontouma’s analysis. She adduces many other points in favor of John III of Antioch, including that the earliest manuscripts attribute the *Life of John* to him (pp. 4-6), and that prior to 1933 he was relatively unknown, and has only from 1998 been known with any precision (pp. 7-8).

attempts to correct its obvious anachronisms (BHG 885b and 885c) stands for the tradition as a whole prior to BHG 884. Dated to c. 1360 a manuscript of BHG 394 introduces the text with the following warning: “None of the readers are to recite this text, since it is altogether false, voicing nothing true. For just as if someone anoints the lip of the cup with honey but the inside is full of arsenic poison, so it is also with this treatise.”¹³⁴ Thus, BHG 884 stands as something of a watershed in the veneration of the saint.

BHG 884 seems to function in two ways: first, the saint’s cult is based on it, and second, both the church and scholarship long considered it the oldest most reliable source of information on John’s biography.¹³⁵ In fact, although Andrew Louth states (referring to BHG 884) that “the Greek *vita* is worthless as a historical source” he then states that “recent accounts of John have been much less dismissive of the Greek *vita*,” citing as examples Nasrallah and Sahas, but this must surely be discounted for two reasons: 1) there is much more recent scholarship than these two examples (1950 and 1972 respectively), e.g. Treiger and Kontouma cited above; and 2) Joseph Nasrallah for example held that the Arabic *Life* of Michael of St. Symeon was the exemplar of BHG 884, but by 1972 this was recognized as improbable.¹³⁶ D. Sahas, counseling caution overall, wrote, “The Vita [BHG 884] must be used with caution. It is obvious it was not meant as a historical document.”¹³⁷ In sum, V. Kontouma concludes that the

¹³⁴ Τοῦτον τὸν λόγον μηδεὶς τῶν γραμματέων ἀναγνώτω· ἐπεὶ σύμπας ψευδὴς ἐστὶ μηδένα ἀληθὲς φθεγγόμενος· ὥσπερ γάρ ἂν εἴ τις τὸ τῆς κύλικος χεῖλος χρίσῃ μέλιτι, τὸ δ’ ἐντὸς ἔχει φαρμάκου ἀρσενικοῦ μεστόν, οὕτως καὶ οὗτοσι ὁ λόγος ἔχει. *Chalcens. Panaghia* 1 f. 108^v–21. On this see Kontouma (2015b), 11.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 18. Kontouma (2015a), 3.

¹³⁶ Nasrallah (1950), 1.

¹³⁷ Louth (2002), 15, 15n41. Nasrallah (1950), 1. Sahas (1972), 35. Against Sahas and perhaps in favor of Louth’s assessment is Sahas’ seeming willingness to assume an underlying historicity to what he admits are accounts recorded in “legendary form”. Sahas, 1972: at 43.

untrustworthy biography given by BHG 884 should be referred to as the “legendary portrait.”¹³⁸

Summary Outline of BHG 884 (PG 94, 429-89)

Andrew Louth, while admitting that the ‘official’ *Life* of John is “worthless as a historical source” provides an alternative hermeneutic, when he writes:

As is the case with much hagiography, if we cease to regard this *vita* as a kind of window, opening out on to the historical landscape of John’s life, and instead see it as a mirror in which later attitudes to John, and indeed to Christian sanctity as such, are reflected, then it becomes not only interesting, but even informative.¹³⁹

The summary below of BHG 884 will be used to draw out the conclusions of M.-F.

Auzépy and V. Kontouma and others in order to deconstruct John’s biography.

In the ‘official’ *Life*, John was . . .

- 1) Raised at the caliphal court in Damascus by a pious family involved in fiscal administration who would not, for example, allow John to participate in court hunting trips (PG 94, 429-36);
- 2) Educated to a very high level by a slave named Cosmas, who bemoaning his regret at failing to pass on his learning, was purchased by John’s father for his son and another adoptive Cosmas from Jerusalem (436B-49B);
- 3) Promoted to *prōtosymboulos* when his father died, thus following his grandfather and father into fiscal administration;¹⁴⁰
- 4) Mutilated for treason as the result of the scheming of the Byzantine Emperor, after which he begged the caliph for his hand and laying prostrate before the virgin all night was healed, thus exonerated before the caliph, he was allowed to retire (449C-60C);
- 5) Distributed his riches to the poor and resided in monastic seclusion at the monastery of Mar Saba near Jerusalem where he died at 104 having proved his

¹³⁸ Kontouma (2015b), 2.

¹³⁹ Louth (2002), 16-17.

¹⁴⁰ *Prōtosymboulos* is an anachronistic Greek administrative term prevalent at the time of authorship (c. 10th century) meaning ‘first counselor’, but not current in the early eighth century. This would probably have been read by the *Life*’s readers as a promotion over John’s father and was thus meant to cast him in terms current readers would understand but also as part of his veneration in Constantinople.

virtue and written many works of outstanding beauty and wisdom (460D-84C).¹⁴¹

On the ‘official’ *Life* George Metallidis, in his 2003 dissertation on John of Damascus supervised by A. Louth, reiterates, “as we have said, the Greek *Vita* is mainly a hymn to three events of St John’s life, that is his very strong education, his monastic virtues and his action against iconoclasm.”¹⁴² Other breakdowns are possible but focusing on these three ‘events’ from a historical perspective are useful to my analysis. In particular, his monastic virtue does not result in liquidating his assets like the evangelist (tax-collector) Matthew, but more likely result in underwriting the reestablishment of the Jerusalem Patriarchate and the financial management of the pilgrimage trade. Further, iconoclasm shall be seen to be too late to affect his program in Jerusalem and thus does not drive his timeline as previously thought. Thus, a more historical focus will bring the historical figure out of the hagiographical shadows where spiritual insight is often the truth of choice rather than the facts of history.¹⁴³

Based on the foregoing analysis, new information about John can be discerned at three historical points:

- 1) The *Canon of John Damascene and St Barbara*, Palestine, end of the 8th century
- 2) The dossier enabling the “Triumph of Orthodoxy”, Constantinople, 842-843¹⁴⁴
- 3) The *Life of our Holy Father John Damascene* (BHG 884), Antioch, c. 1000

¹⁴¹ For BHG 884 see PG 94: 429-90. See similar summaries at Treiger (2013), 657-58, Kontouma (2015b), 2-3, Louth (2002), 17-18, Auzépy (2015), 418-19.

¹⁴² George Metallidis, (2003), “The Chalcedonian Christology of St John Damascene: Philosophical Terminology and Theological Arguments”, PhD Diss. University of Durham, 37.

¹⁴³ Not that the two are mutually exclusive, but it seems to me that until the facts of history are given full weight spiritual truth is more spiritual than true.

¹⁴⁴ Including at least the texts: *Letter to the Emperor Theophilos* (CPG 8115), *Homily on those who have reposed in the faith* (CPG 8112), and the *Life of the Melodists Cosmas and John Damascene* (BHG 394). Kontouma (2015b), 9-12.

These three documents or dossiers are the products of particular historical situations. Following recent research, it seems the latter two are the product of iconophile aspirations. Consequently, in my view the saint, John of Damascus, was constructed from the top-down as a product of Constantinopolitan politics. Neither Auzépy nor Kontouma can connect the *Canon* with the later Constantinopolitan iconophile propaganda, so it may stand not only as the earliest but as the most independent witness we have to John's biography.¹⁴⁵

Finally, the initial veneration of John in Palestine seems not to have survived the competing ire of those who blamed John's family for the surrender of Damascus. Nevertheless, the repeated appropriation of John by Constantinopolitan iconophiles as a counter to the first and second iconoclasm resulted in a top-down constructed veneration eventually resulting in the Saint, John of Damascus. Ironically, it is probably the extreme nature of Constantine V's quadruple anathema in response to John's implying the emperor pirated the episcopal office that created an arch-villain capable of thwarting an emperor that raised John's profile such that the iconophiles could exploit him in the first place. In conclusion, John's veneration, elevation and sainthood progressed through three distinct phases. There was a top-down construction by the Constantinopolitan iconophile elite evident in these phases. Ultimately the 'legendary portrait' tying John to Byzantine Iconoclasm as part of this construction must be subject to a strict hermeneutic of suspicion having important implications for John's timeline.



¹⁴⁵ I noted above that I take the *terminus ante quem* for John's sainthood to be the 12th century use of Saint John as guarantor of the holiness of others. Without a connection to the elevation and veneration in Constantinople, it does not seem appropriate to suggest the *Canon* is integral to this process of elevation; consequently, the *terminus post quem* should begin with the pseudopigraphic attribution to John by iconophiles in Constantinople of the initial dossier of texts exploiting John, i.e. the *Letter to Constantine Kaballinos* (CPG 8114), etc. c. late 750s. This again suggests the unusual magnitude of the iconoclast condemnation of the Hiera in 754 provided in John the perfect candidate for iconophile exploitation and thus the process of appropriation, veneration and elevation began.

Chapter Two – Contextualizing the Man

Introduction

Vassa Kontouma has argued that John of Damascus was so close to John V that he accompanied him to Jerusalem out of pious loyalty at the reestablishment of the patriarchate in 705 and was with him at his death in 735. After looking at the chroniclers, I will conclude that John had much more compelling reasons to accompany John V to Jerusalem in 705 than loyalty. Then I turn to the isolation of the Syro-Palestinian Chalcedonians in Damascus themselves, showing how the reestablishment of the patriarchate was the context of the greater part of John's theological program especially his polemical works. Then I turn to the eighth century milieu to flesh out John's background in terms of the on-going sectarian Christological debate of his era while also looking at who were his actual interlocutors since they were not iconoclasts in Constantinople.

Although John was initially remembered in Palestine, local veneration did not take hold probably because of a competing tradition that held John's family hostage to the notion that they were traitors, giving up Damascus to the Arabs. In the previous chapter we saw that through a long process of appropriation the iconophile party in Constantinople adopted John, putting him forth with a dossier of supportive texts as the quintessential monk full of ascetic virtue. In Constantinople, in the face of iconoclast opposition, John was elevated and his sanctity eventually accepted. Unfortunately, this appropriation in Constantinople also confused and obscured the history of the man

himself. Deconstructing the saint below, however, I will put the Constantinopolitan appropriation of John in perspective, allowing us to get behind the hagiographic presentation to unravel its historiographical bias towards the narrative arc of Iconoclasm.

Focusing on the chroniclers even though the direct evidence for John is slight facilitates building a different picture of John. If full weight is given to John's Syro-Palestinian context—looking away from the drama of Iconoclasm in Constantinople to Damascus, Jerusalem, the Umayyad Caliphate, and the reestablishment of the Jerusalem Patriarchate—then the evidence, however slim, begins to fit a more coherent picture. This model is provisional to be sure, but my goal is more modest than a biography. Rather, a historical model much closer in both time and place that situates John in his context, accounting for when and why he left Damascus, and determining where and why he went, is what I hope to produce in order to contextualize John's polemical works.

Further, accounting for John's circle in terms of their own interests and exigencies has more explanative power and coherence than one based on the manipulated reception in far off Constantinople. The Syro-Palestinian context is subordinate in the traditional account of John's life, which prioritizes him as the pious iconophile monk who reunites church factions in Constantinople. But if his Syro-Palestinian context is brought to the fore then more plausible explanations can be given that decouple his timeline from Iconoclasm and situate him at home and answer these basic but critical questions. Answering these questions is critical for establishing the actual context of John's polemical works as well as the overall thrust of his theological program, because it is this context that roots his motivation and shapes his output.

The primary reason for John's retirement proposed by most scholars based on the 'official' *Life* (BHG 884) was the supposed iconoclasm of Leo III, but this has been disputed, and thus many have opted to hold on to the narrative and timeline of BHG 884 as though it were merely exaggerated proposing John left because of religious persecution, attempting to keep the overall timeline of the BHG 884 narrative as intact as possible. Nevertheless, as scholarship has steadily eroded the historical credibility of BHG 884, the credibility of Leo III's iconoclasm in general and not just an edict of 726, and lately the dating of John's *On Images I-III* has been credibly pushed into the 740s, thus retaining any dating related to the chronology of BHG 884 has become increasingly difficult. V. Kontouma has proposed there was no reason for John to remain in Damascus beyond 705. If she is correct, surely there is more to it than his close relationship with his spiritual mentor, than the pious loyalty she has intimated? One does not leave positions of power hereditarily held for generations and through multiple regimes without very good reasons. Nevertheless, apart from the scant philological evidence she provides little insight into this question and pious loyalty looks suspiciously tendentious, a simple expedient exploiting the recent position of Daniel Sahas (discussed below).

The most prevalent position of those tied to BHG 884 is that John left Damascus based on Arab persecution with the more recent proposals focused on persecution under Umar II (717–20). But, even this adjustment does not enjoy universal support. John left Damascus for reasons, according to Daniel Sahas, "primarily personal," writing that John retired, "out of his own choice to follow a life of complete devotion."¹⁴⁶ Contra Sahas, however, who has given up on dating based on persecution but nevertheless remains convinced that BHG 884 is 'true' at some historical level that ties John's

¹⁴⁶ Sahas (1972), 45.

biography to its timeline in some amorphous way, I do not believe John left Damascus because his vexed piety could not take it anymore. He is not that sort of monk who would throw aside family, wealth, power and its clear benefits to the Chalcedonian leadership, besides, doing so and remaining on close terms with that leadership is practically oxymoronic. The little we know suggests a family and man too astute for that. Nevertheless, I do want to explore the notion that John may have had his own reasons for leaving when he did. I propose to test Kontouma's theory by looking at the chroniclers for evidence of two kinds: 1) Did John leave Damascus under duress (persecution or force of another kind)? And, 2) Is John, however pious, first and foremost an elite educated administrator, like his father and grandfather before him? This data will be presented to show that persecution models tied to BHG 884 are unsustainable, that John left Damascus for his own reasons, and likely went to the Anastasis in Jerusalem and not to Mar Saba (as Sahas and others assume).

Deconstructing the Saint

The last chapter identified three historical moments when new data about John was most likely to become available for his biography. Since I am not proposing a new biography, but focused on questions related to why and when John left Damascus and where he went and why, I want to look at certain aspects of his *Lives* that are relevant to these questions. The *Lives* invent certain miracle stories to provide their Constantinopolitan audience with proof of John's piety; consequently, they are written to evoke ideals current to their audience and not necessarily to John. Three episodes from the tradition of John's sainthood (i.e. a synthetic view of all lives taken together) are of particular importance: 1) The miracle of the severed hand, and 2) the expedient of finding Cosmas to educate John, and 3) John's humiliation at the hands of his jealous

Sabaite mentor. Each of these episodes has a literary purpose, which will be unpacked below.

Neither Conspirator nor Confessor

The most important and probably the earliest episode introduced into the life of John is the ‘legend of the severed hand’. This miracle episode in its various forms and its reception history has been studied by Ilse Rochow.¹⁴⁷ V. Kontouma highlights the significance of Rochow’s study, which demonstrates that anachronistic later accounts were corrected to implicate Leo III (716–40) rather than his son, Constantine V (740–75). Kontouma has cited this as part of the evidence for re-dating BHG 394 (implicates Constantine V) prior to BHG 884 (implicates Leo III, thus has the later version of the legend).¹⁴⁸ Rochow dates the legend to the early to mid-ninth century, which comports with Kontouma’s theory that BHG 394 was drafted as part of the dossier of the ‘Triumph of Orthodoxy’.

This miracle story serves as the logical basis for John becoming a monk, denigrating the iconoclast emperor, who has falsely implicated John in a conspiracy. The caliph responds by cutting off the offending hand, and John lies all night before an icon of the Virgin Mary, who restores his hand. The caliph repents in amazement, allows the pious John to retire, thus proving that the scheming iconoclast emperor is lower than the repentant infidel.

V. Kontouma points out that the legend has a rhetorical purpose: It justified the existence of the *Letter to Constantine Kaballinos* (CPG 8114) and echoes the language of the anathema from the Iconoclast Council that charged John with conspiracy,

¹⁴⁷ Ilse Rochow (2007), *Die Legende von der abgehauenen Hand des Johannes Damaskenos*, (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang).

¹⁴⁸ Kontouma (2015b), 12. Other evidence is internal; Kontouma gives two examples of where BHG 884 cites BHG 394. On the early vs late versions of the legend, see Rochow (2007), 362-3.

countering it and elevating John to a ‘confessor’ at the same time. The ‘official’ *Life* by utilizing the later version of the legend pushes the events it purports to cover from Constantine V back to the reign of Leo III, thus having John leaving the Umayyad administration after Leo’s supposed invention of iconoclasm (c. 726) usually corrected by modern scholars to coincide with the persecution of Hisham (c. 717–20), on which more below.¹⁴⁹ Consequently, there is no actual historical basis for this date as it is based on a literary fiction meant to rehabilitate John in the eyes of iconoclasts who considered him a traitor as a result of the iconoclast anathema.¹⁵⁰ Thus, John is in fact neither absolved of conspiracy nor made a confessor. The condemnation by the iconoclasts charging John with conspiracy was likely a slander meant to acknowledge his high ranking administrative position in the caliphal administration.¹⁵¹

Neither Sabaite nor Ascetic

Second, John of Damascus is said to be a monk of Mar Saba first in BHG 884, thus it is a very late tradition; nevertheless, the harsh treatment of his Sabaite mentor works to vet John’s credentials by ensuring his elite education has not tainted his piety. V.

Kontouma argues that what is known about John can be found in the 8th century *Canon*

¹⁴⁹ Kontouma (2015b), 3, 15-16.

¹⁵⁰ Although the miracle of the severed hand is legendary it does convey some astonishing information. Apparently, not only was the construction of a saint within the purview of the Constantinopolitan elite, but that elite was happy to think even emperors capable of the forgery of international correspondence in order to falsely implicate those with whom they disagreed. However, exploring the possibility of an Isaurian smear campaign that invented Leo’s iconoclasm is beyond the scope of this thesis and thus a matter for further research. Modern researchers have indicated doubt regarding at least Leo’s early iconoclasm. For example, see the informally published essay on-line where John Haldon (Princeton), to put it colloquially, ‘let’s his hair down’: “But it has been increasingly recognised – and demonstrated – that the Byzantines were as adept at ‘spin’ as modern politicians are frequently accused of being, so that Byzantine writings on iconoclasm might therefore be seen as a particularly problematic body of primary sources. . . . the church responded with the first canonical legislation concerning religious imagery at a council held in Constantinople in 692; a generation later, in the 720s, various churchmen condemned the holy portraits, and, ultimately, iconoclasm was officially declared in 754 (there is not a jot of evidence for an iconoclast edict issued by Leo III in the 720s, and virtually none for Leo III himself being an iconoclast).” Haldon (2007b), 1-2.

¹⁵¹ Another possibility is that the conspiracy noted by the iconoclast council in the Hieria was that of the tradition relayed by the Melkite Patriarch Eutychius that John’s family were traitors for handing over Damascus. However, I am not aware of any evidence for this tradition prior to Eutychius’ report, much less that it was known in Constantinople, although this is not much of a stretch.

of *John Damascene and St Barbara* written by Stephen the Sabaite (the poet). Yet the sabaite *Canon* makes no mention of John as a sabaite. Further, Michael the Synkellos, also a sabaite, a key figure in the circle of Methodius and the iconophile dossier of the ‘Triumph of Orthodoxy’ did not connect John to Mar Saba in the several works he edited related to John. Further, both R. Hoyland and M.-F. Auzépy point out the oddity that John is completely “absent from an early ninth-century list of past Mar Saba luminaries” offered by Michael the Sabaite.¹⁵² M. Jugie in his analysis of the *Lives* of John found being a monk of Mar Saba difficult to square with several passages in John’s own writings, where he speaks of preaching, the care of souls, and the authority of the patriarch.¹⁵³ Thus, this tradition is also likely a literary fiction.

Stephen the Sabaite in the *Canon* relates that John died in Persia, and Michael the Synkellos, also a sabaite and the editor (if not author) of BHG 394, adds nothing, while the subsequent *Brief Life* (BHG 885b) ostensibly correcting anachronisms in BHG 394 moves John’s death to Damascus.¹⁵⁴ Finally, not until John III of Antioch (BHG 884), is John introduced as a monk of Mar Saba, two hundred and fifty years after John and against the unanimous testimony of previous sabaite hagiographers of John. This new association with Mar Saba was likely invented by the Constantinopolitan John III of Antioch in order to disassociate John from his activities in Jerusalem, emphasizing ‘the Damascene’ in neutral territory shifting him to Mar Saba, enhancing his appropriation by the re-Byzantinization program of John III for the reacquired Antioch.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵² Robert G. Hoyland (1997), *Seeing Islam as Others Saw It: A Survey and Evaluation of Christian, Jewish and Zoroastrian Writings on Early Islam*, (Princeton, NJ: Darwin press), 483. Auzépy (2015), 422.

¹⁵³ Jugie (1924), 145, 47.

¹⁵⁴ Kontouma (2015b), 16.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 19-20.

Later in Constantinople, sometime in the 12th to 15th century, however, BHG 394a introduces the twin claims that John is buried at Mar Saba and that the ‘official’ *Life* (BHG 884) is authored by John of Jerusalem. V. Kontouma interprets this: “In our view these two details attest chiefly to the desire to appropriate JD’s reputation for the monastery of St Sabas [Mar Saba], a desire which could only grow during the Latin occupation of the Holy Land, during which time the *hegumen* of St Sabas (in the absence of the patriarch) became the leader of the Greek Orthodox communities of Palestine.”¹⁵⁶ Finally, it seems that reports of John’s relics at Mar Saba occur only after the appearance of these texts.¹⁵⁷ Thus, sans any positive evidence other than the bold claims of the later *Lives*, there is no evidence to believe John was ever a resident monk at Mar Saba.

There is evidence, however, that places John at two other monasteries: 1) Methodius of Constantinople between 815–21 composed a *menologion* in Rome, and V. Kontouma notes that the best witness to it is *Parisin. gr. 1476* (dated c. 890) which in both the title and towards the end of the *Homily on the Withered Fig Tree* (CPG 8058) indicates that it is “by our holy father, John, monk and priest of the Holy Anastasis of Christ our God,” which is also included in the title retained by John’s editor, B. Kotter.¹⁵⁸

Kontouma confidently concludes, based not only on this manuscript evidence, but also internal analysis that John “was therefore a monk and priest in the patriarchal church of the Anastasis in Jerusalem, a detail that we have been able to confirm with recourse to his homiletic and hymnographic works.”¹⁵⁹ Sidney Griffith argues that John “remained

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., 22. Mar Saba is also referred to by its founder St Sabas.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., 22n119.

¹⁵⁸ Kotter V, at 102 on the basis of this same manuscript.

¹⁵⁹ Kontouma (2015b), 9. On this see, Vassa Contoumas-Conticello, (1996), “La ‘Source de connaissance’ de Jean Damascène (ca. 650–ca 750). Traduction française et commentaire des livres I (Dialectica) et III (Expositio fidei)”, PhD Diss. University of Paris-IV Sorbonne, xviii-xxxvii. Elsewhere she gives two examples of such: *Homily for the Dedication of the Anastasis* (CPG 8095) and the *Canon*

in the bishop's service, among the so-called 'spoudaioi', the ever vigilant and studious monks of the church of the Anastasis in Jerusalem."¹⁶⁰

Moreover, in the title to John's *Homily on the Dormition of the Virgin Mary* (BHG 1114) in *Vaticanus graecus 2081* (10th cent.) John is identified as a monk of the Old Laura (aka the monastery of Souka or St Chariton).¹⁶¹ The homilies of John on the dormition of Mary are thought to be later works of John, thus it is possible that this is the location in the desert to which John 'retired' after leaving Jerusalem.¹⁶²

Consequently, the odds of John being a resident monk of Mar Saba are unlikely, while the evidence that he was resident at the Anastasis and that he eventually retired to Chariton (thin as it is) is better. Finally, it is very unlikely John was the sort of monk he is presented as in his *Lives*. John was elite, born and bred, not an ascetic. There is no evidence that he renounced his family, wealth or circle of connections, nor that he liquidated his assets as the Apostle Matthew did as indicated by the council of Nicaea II

for the Dedication of the Anastasis (*Menaion of September*, September 13th) Vassa Kontouma-Conticello (2010c), "Vie de Jean Damascène", *Jean Damascène: La foi orthodoxe*, (Paris: Cerf), 11-30, 17. See also Michel Van Esbroeck (1997), "Le Discours De Jean Damascène Pour La Dédicace De L'anastasis", *Orientalia christiana periodica*, 63: 53-98. Van Esbroeck discusses favorably John's authorship for CPG 8095.

¹⁶⁰ Griffith indicates he is also following here M.-F. Auzépy. Sidney H. Griffith (2016), "The Manṣūr Family and St. John of Damascus: Christians and Muslims in Umayyad Times", in Antoine Borrut and Fred M. Donner, eds., *Christians and Others in the Umayyad State*, (Chicago, IL: The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago), 29-51, 35. S. Griffith has maintained his tentative acceptance of this position since at least 2006: Griffith (2006), 193. On the monastery within the Church of the Anastasis having in c. 800 about 150 staff including 9 presbyters and 41 monks see Hugh Kennedy (1986), "The Melkite Church from the Islamic Conquest to the Crusades: Continuity and Adaptation in the Byzantine Legacy", *The 17th International Byzantine Congress Major Papers*, (New Rochelle, NY: Aristide D. Caratzas), 325-43, 329.

¹⁶¹ Kontouma (2015b), 20. Kontouma here notes Kotter "too hastily" conflates the "Old Laura" here with the "Great Laura" (aka Mar Saba). Chariton is just as suitable, housing scholarly monks engaged in translation from Greek to Arabic in the eighth century and tantalizingly identified as the place where Maximus the Confessor was educated and thus possibly a center of dyothelite Chalcedonianism. Yizhar Hirschfeld (2000), "The Monastery of Chariton Survey and Excavations", *Liber Annuus*, 50: 315-62, 319-20. Griffith (2011), 216. Sebastian Brock (1984), "An Early Syriac Life of Maximus the Confessor", *Syriac Perspectives on Late Antiquity*, (London: Variorum Reprints), 314-46, 315, 21.

¹⁶² John's more recent editor R. Volk indicates the sermons on the dormition are "regarded as a work of J.'s old age." Volk (2000).

(787).¹⁶³ These things will be discussed further below. Stephen the Sabaite (the ascetic), who knew both the monastery of Mar Saba and the Anastasis and those who inhabited them, did not see fit to mention John, nor did John appear in the later list of Sabaite luminaries by another Sabaite. The hagiographic evidence for John's legendary piety appears to be literary topoi even hagiographic fiction. The 'man of action' found in the *Canon* is a monk of a different sort, not one based on ascetic withdrawal and poverty. Thus, although John was both a monk and a priest, in the end John is likely neither a Sabaite nor an ascetic, i.e. the sort of monk traditionally presented in hagiographic literature.

Neither Brother nor Tutor

Third, although the Mar Saba tradition is introduced only with the late 'official' *Life* (BHG 884), Cosmas is introduced early on in BHG 994, which is the earliest *Life* in Kontouma's dating. Multiple Cosmases complicate matters and I rely primarily on the collaboration of Alexander Kazhdan and S. Gero to untangle them.¹⁶⁴ There are two Cosmases in John's life: Cosmas of Maiuma (PMBZ #4089) and Cosmas, John's tutor (PMBZ #4097). The first is styled John's friend, adopted brother, collaborator and fellow Sabaite by his biographer, Th. E. Detorakes, but Kazhdan and Gero (who note that others also) have found Detorakes' analysis unconvincing, finding the evidence too contradictory and noting an evolution in its development more literary than literal.¹⁶⁵ An anonymous teacher appears first in the hagiography of Cosmas not John, but develops into a significant learned monk by the time of BHG 884. Kazhdan and Gero are unclear on the development of the legend as they have no criteria for the relative

¹⁶³ M. van Esbroeck in a recent proposal speculates that the passage from Nicaea II (787) that mentions John's piety in terms of the Apostle Matthew (a tax collector), thus he liquidated his assets and entered the monastic life. Van Esbroeck suggests that this passage may be based on a past *Life* of John. His position will be explored below. See Esbroeck (1997).

¹⁶⁴ Kazhdan and Gero (1989).

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., 122, 28.

dating of the hagiography, but Kontouma, based on placing BHG 394 early, which names the tutor Cosmas, suggests the conflation of at least three different Cosmases in the construction of this legend.¹⁶⁶ Whatever the case, this story is unlikely to be historical.

V. Kontouma suggests that Cosmas of Maiuma features in John's *Life* in order to "establish spiritual paternity between the three great *hagiopolite* composers": Andrew of Crete, Cosmas the Melodist, and John of Damascus, while also bringing Cosmas into the iconophile camp.¹⁶⁷ Further, the only positive evidence from John himself is problematic: the dedication to Cosmas of the *Dialectica*,¹⁶⁸ which is probably a late interpolation according to Kazhdan and Gero,¹⁶⁹ thus the 'pairing principle' at work elsewhere is likely at work here too.¹⁷⁰

This does not, however, explain why the tutor of Cosmas of Maiuma shows up in John's hagiography (as another Cosmas no less!). The explanation is probably best understood in two parts: first, both the Arabs and the Byzantines took captives and resettled them, thus the enslavement of captives by the Arabs was not unheard of, but naming him Cosmas, although this was a common name in this period, seems little more than a literary faux pas.¹⁷¹ Second, A. Louth suggests it explained John's classical education to those later consumers of his hagiography, who found it unfathomable.¹⁷²

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., 128-29, Kontouma (2015b), 15.

¹⁶⁷ Kontouma (2015b), 15.

¹⁶⁸ Kotter, i, 51.

¹⁶⁹ Kazhdan and Gero (1989), 123.

¹⁷⁰ Kontouma (2015b), 15.

¹⁷¹ The PMBZ lists nearly 400 Cosmases or Kosmases, many of which are in this period.

¹⁷² Louth (2002), 19. Louth suggests it was the Christian Arabs who felt the need to justify John's education, but this seems unlikely to me, as Louth himself notes elite education continued even under the Arabs. It is more likely that the hagiography explained John's education for a Constantinopolitan milieu, which found the elite education of provincials (whether under the Arabs or not) inexplicable.

As Andrew Louth notes, elite education continued under the Arabs in the seventh century, and there is no reason to suppose it waned under the Umayyads. Thus, no such invention is needed to explain John's education, because a tradition of elite education was maintained in Syro-Palestine heading into and through-out the Umayyad caliphate, including the local education of such luminaries as Sophronius, John Moschus, Maximus the Confessor, and Michael the Synkellos. Further, contemporaries of John of Damascus from the major confessional divisions of the church still had access to a classical education, e.g. Andrew of Crete (Chalcedonian bishop and sometime monothelite, d. 740) and Jacob of Edessa (West Syrian bishop, d. 708), Hananisho I (or Ḥenān-īshō', East Syrian bishop, d. 700/1) to name but a few.¹⁷³ Noteworthy, of these contemporaries of John (who remained under Arab rule, Andrew did not), all translated Aristotle. I will argue below that this impinged greatly on John's theological program. Thus, additional discussion of education will feature in a later chapter.

For now suffice it to say M. Mavroudi extending the research of P. Lemerle indicates that "wherever the study of Greek continued in Muslim lands, it was pursued roughly through the same curricula that were in place before the Islamic conquest."¹⁷⁴ Further, because John's education was local and not imported, it implies locally available resources.¹⁷⁵ More on local educational resources later, but here it is helpful to

¹⁷³ Andrew of Crete is an interesting parallel to John as he was born of a wealthy family in Damascus and then a monk of the Anastasis, whose elite education soon resulted in being entrusted with economic affairs and in 685 he was part of a delegation sent to Constantinople to indicate that Jerusalem complied with the council of Constantinople III (680–81). A. Berardino indicates that the information on Andrew is known only from the tenth century. This suggests comparison to John may be fruitful, but I am aware of none and this must be kept for further research. See Berardino ed., (2000), 161. Berardino omits Ḥenān-īshō' I, on whom see William Wright (1894), *A Short History of Syriac Literature*, (London: Adam and Charles Black), 181-82.

¹⁷⁴ Maria Mavroudi (2015), "Greek Language and Education under Early Islam", in Behnam Sadeghi et al., eds., *Islamic Cultures, Islamic Contexts: Essays in Honor of Professor Patricia Crone*, (Leiden: Brill), 295-342, 323.

¹⁷⁵ Contemporaries of John were translating certain logic works of Aristotle in Syro-Palestine into Syriac, thus manuscripts were available beyond mere compendia. And, although quite late, another example might be the tenth century monastic library of St Symeon's near Antioch, which was a center of literary

highlight that introducing Cosmas as tutor is no more than a literary device to convince Constantinopolitans that the ‘hicks’ in Syria could indeed miraculously produce an intellectual of sufficient caliber to warrant their attention. Consequently, both traditions are legendary, and thus, Cosmas is neither brother nor tutor of John.

In sum, the *Lives* of John of Damascus make claims that 1) John is no conspirator contra the Iconoclast Council, but a confessor blessed by the Virgin Mary, that 2) he is a Sabaite and a quintessential monk, and that 3) he is a hymnographer with Cosmas, classical trained (by another Cosmas), but all of these stories are found to be literary fictions. They may paint the sort of person the byzantine hagiographers wished to portray, but they say next to nothing about John himself as an actual historical person.

When & Why did John Leave Damascus?

Did Persecution Force John’s Hand?

The standard biographies of John, all based on the ‘official’ *Life*, would have John in Damascus until his conspiracy with Leo resulted in mutilation and restoration, convincing the caliph to allow his departure usually just after 726.¹⁷⁶ Some modern scholars amend this to an earlier date recognizing that John could not have been in Damascus as late as 726.¹⁷⁷ V. Kontouma summarizes this modern consensus view calling it the “legendary portrait.”¹⁷⁸ It opts for John leaving Damascus as the result of

activity which including the translation of John of Damascus into Arabic. Kontouma notes that the library is referred to as “vast.” Kontouma (2015a), 22.

¹⁷⁶ An earlier *Life*, BHG 394, portrayed the conspiracy as with Constantine V (740-775), thus having John in Damascus in the early 740s, but this anachronism was recognized as offensive even by the Byzantines and ostensibly corrected by the *Brief Life* (BHG 885b) to the reign of Leo III (716-740), having John leaving Damascus after 726, which was retained by the ‘official’ *Life*, BHG 884. On this see Kontouma (2015b), 15-16.

¹⁷⁷ Earlier acceptance of the timeline of the Greek *Life* (BHG 884) is exemplified in Adrian Fortescue (1908), “Chapter VII St John of Damascus (D. C. 754)”, *The Greek Fathers*, (London: Catholic Truth Society), 202-48, 223.

¹⁷⁸ On this “legendary portrait” see Kontouma-Conticello (2010c), 12-13. In brief, this “legendary portrait” maintains, “Following the harassments of the Christians of Damascus, he left his place of birth along with his adopted brother Cosmas, future bishop of Maiuma, for the monastery of St Sabas in Palestine, where he took the monastic habit in the years 717-20.” Kontouma (2015b), 3.

the ‘harassment’ of Christians under caliph ‘Umar II (717–20).¹⁷⁹ Often cited as authorities on John’s biography, M. Jugie and J. Nasrallah hold such positions. They seem to accept a basic underlying historicity to BHG 884, while admitting John could not have been in Damascus still after 726, thus they rely on this elastic compromise suggesting John left office during the persecution of ‘Umar II.¹⁸⁰

For example, J. Nasrallah claims:

Besides John himself was soon to be a victim of the harassment of the new regime. The Caliph [Umar] established a law making it impossible for Christians to access government offices with high charges unless they apostatize. The saint, ordered to choose between his faith or his situation, did not hesitate a moment: He resigned from office, distributed his wealth to the poor and wishing to leave forever a region that reminded him of memories of his happy youth and the splendor of a great life, he went knocking on the door of the Lavra of St. Sabas. The monastery continued to exert a strong attraction for the Syrian temperament in love with the monastic ideal.¹⁸¹

Clearly J. Nasrallah is here predisposed to see John as a quintessential monk, portraying him as leaving Damascus because his ascetic piety finally got the better of him.

Nasrallah offers no actual evidence for the date 717–20. Further, M. Jugie suggests that John left office either in 711 or 717, outlining the various persecutions, but summarizing this way, “If he had not already done it in 711, therefore, it was this year, 717, ordered to deny his faith, our saint abandoned an office that previously allowed

¹⁷⁹ Kontouma-Conticello (2010c), 12.

¹⁸⁰ Nasrallah (1950), 74–75. Jugie (1929), 38.

¹⁸¹ Nasrallah (1950), 75. “D’ailleurs Jean ne devait pas tarder à être, lui-même, victime des vexations du nouveau régime. Le calife porta une loi établissant l’impossibilité pour les chrétiens d’accéder aux hautes charges civiles du Gouvernement, à moins d’apostasier. Le saint, mis en demeure de choisir entre sa foi ou sa situation, n’hésita pas un seul instant: Il se démit de ses fonctions, distribua ses biens aux pauvres et, voulant s’éloigner pour jamais d’une région qui lui rappelait les souvenirs de son heureuse jeunesse et les fastes d’une vie large, il s’en alla frapper à la porte de la laure de St-Sabas. Ce monastère continuait à exercer une forte attraction sur les âmes syriennes éprises de l’idéal monastique.” Prohibitively high fees to access government services could be avoided by converting to Islam. The nature of this harassment is thus overstated by Iliescu, who concludes it forces John from office: Iliescu (1939), 149.

him to be useful to his brothers.”¹⁸² Neither scholar seems overly wed to the date, nor offers any evidence for it. Each seems, however, to offer it in an attempt to maintain a chronology that comports however loosely with BHG 884. This position is quite common with other scholars, who follow this basic pattern for example both C. N. Tsirpanlis and R. Le Coz.¹⁸³ Most recently, but equivocating on this issue, A. Louth is no real help, he seems to suggest he would not be opposed to a date as early as 706.¹⁸⁴

D. Sahas, however, gives an interesting twist to this scenario. While he discusses John’s biography in terms of his relationship to iconoclasm and in reference to BHG 884, he agrees that the chronology must be amended. He proposes that John must have left by the beginning of Hisham’s reign in 724, but not because of persecution. Sahas affirms rather, “this argument [basing John’s leaving on persecution] is hardly convincing, because the unfavorable situation for Christians started long before . . . we think the motives of John of Damascus for retiring . . . are primarily personal, out of his own choice to follow a life of complete devotion, although the political situation in Damascus, as well as that in Byzantium may have played a role in his decision.”¹⁸⁵ All these dates are offered provisionally without any evidence, and Sahas has finally admitted Arab persecution does not even provide good circumstantial evidence, opting rather for “personal reasons” perhaps informed by the “political situation”. Neither am

¹⁸² Jugie (1924), 149. “S’il ne l’avait déjà fait en 711, ce fut donc en cette année 717, que notre Saint, mis en demeure de renier sa foi, abandonna une fonction qui lui avait permis jusque-là d’être utile à ses frères.”

¹⁸³ For example, C. N. Tsirpanlis follows Jugie, suggesting 710. Tsirpanlis (1984), 59. See also Raymond Le Coz (1992), *Jean Damascène: Écrits sur l’islam, présentation, commentaires et traduction*, (Paris: Cerf), 54-55. Le Coz indicates John left office rather than convert to Islam under Umar II (717–20), writing, “The date of his departure is not known, but he must have left Damascus during the caliphate of ‘Umar II. About forty years old, John would have joined the monastery at the latest in 720.” (“La date de son départ n’est pas connue, mais il a sans doute quitté Damas pendant le califat de ‘Umar II. Jean aurait donc rejoint le monastère au plus tard pendant l’année 720, âgé d’environ quarante ans.”)

¹⁸⁴ Louth (2002), 6. Louth suggests two dates in contiguous sentences: “perhaps in the second decade of the eighth century, John resigned from his post in the administration at Damascus, and became a monk in Palestine It seems not unlikely that this took place in 706, when, under Caliph al-Walīd, the changeover from Greek to Arabic in the Umayyad civil service finally took place.”

¹⁸⁵ Sahas (1972), 44-45.

I convinced that persecution provides any impetus for John to leave office, but neither am I convinced his piety got the better of him. Finally, there is an additional reason to reject the notion that John left office because of persecution. The recent research of Luke Yarbrough regarding state employment of non-Muslims concludes that both Umayyad and Abbasid rulers continued to hire non-Muslims “at all levels of administration,” the accounts of persecution being either later interpolations or otherwise not credible.¹⁸⁶

If anything is accomplished by the philological work of Auzépy and Kontouma and the deconstruction above it is that any historiographic material in BHG 884 specifically, and the Greek *Lives* generally, is largely a pious fiction, and cannot be assumed to rely on an underlying historiographic tradition. Nasrallah’s position tacitly confirms this by offering no evidence for his date, and Sahas’ in abandoning dating based on persecution altogether, which Yarbrough’s analysis rationalizes, thus following Kontouma’s 705 or Louth’s 706 date looks just as likely as any other.

Some may argue that it is unfair to question the underlying historiographical basis of BHG 884 because it was authored by John of Jerusalem with access to locally derived traditions sourced in an Arabic *Vita*. Unfortunately, the authorship is disputed (and rejected above), and even if there is an underlying Arabic *Vita*, to argue it provides an inherent historiographical basis to BHG 884 is an argument from silence, since if this *Life* ever existed it is lost.

Did John Leave under Duress?

Regarding the Manṣūr family being close to the Umayyads, Theophanes’ *Chronicle* preserves a notice from an eastern source regarding the desire of ‘Abd al-Malik to

¹⁸⁶ Luke Yarbrough (2012), “Upholding God’s Rule: Early Muslim Juristic Opposition to the State Employment of Non-Muslims”, *Islamic Law and Society*, 19: 11-85, 11-13, 68-69.

remove columns from a church in Jerusalem in order to repair a temple in Mecca, but he is persuaded by John's father to request these columns from Justinian instead.

John's father was able to successfully dissuade the caliph from a local acquisition to making an international request from an enemy, because according to the chronicler, he "was treasurer and stood on close terms" with 'Abd al-Malik.¹⁸⁷ Further, this is all the more telling because the same notice indicates renewed hostilities: "In this year Justinian foolishly broke the peace" with 'Abd al-Malik, while a related entry in another eastern chronicle indicates that 'Abd al-Malik retaliated by raiding Byzantine territory.¹⁸⁸ This "close" relationship must have been close indeed; however, it goes back even further.

John's grandfather was considered "a known friend of the *Ṭayyāyê* [Arabs]."¹⁸⁹ And, even prior to Arab rule, J. Moorhead, following Balādhurī, indicates "Mu'awiya's family, like so many in Arabia, had been connected with Syria prior to Islam. His father had traded there and owned a village south of Damascus prior to the Islamic period, and he himself had succeeded his brother as governor of the town."¹⁹⁰

Consequently, it is very likely he at least knew of the Manṣūr family by reputation as tax collectors in Damascus, and thus significant that he retained John's grandfather in his administration. Further, he even arranged for his son Yazīd to be a companion of John's father. S. Griffith notes, "Sarjūn ibn Manṣūr came into particular favor during

¹⁸⁷ Mango and Scott, eds. (1997), 510 [AM6183]. R. Hoyland suggests this lone notice may derive from Theophilus of Edessa's *Chronicle* or may have been inserted by his continuator and used by Theophanes, but was omitted by other dependent eastern chroniclers, namely Dionysius of Tell Mahrē, precisely because it cast Sergius, John's father, in a good light. Hoyland ed., (2011), 187, 310.

¹⁸⁸ The same notice [AM6183] in Theophanes indicates Justinian broke the peace, and the corresponding notice in the *Anon. Chron. to 1234*, given (and translated) by Hoyland, indicates 'Abd al-Malik responded with a raid. Hoyland ed., (2011), 187.

¹⁸⁹ *Anon. Chron. to 1234*, J.-B. Chabot, (CSCO 109, SS 56; 1937), 194. Either John's father or grandfather if not both were involved in the surrender of Damascus; accounts are not clear.

¹⁹⁰ Moorhead (2013, 2001), 241.

the lifetime of ... Yazīd I (r. 680–83). Reports even speak of Sarjūn and the Christian court poet Akḥṭal as Yazīd's table companions from his youth.¹⁹¹

Finally, all of the sons of 'Abd al-Malik would rule: al-Walīd I (r. 705–15), Sulayman (r. 715–17), Yazīd II (r. 720–24), and Hisham (r. 724–43), and John grew up at court with them. Thus, it is quite possible that John was educated with one or more of them.¹⁹² Consequently, given John's family's acquaintance with the Umayyad dynasty generally, John's father's close friendship with 'Abd al-Malik in particular, and the likelihood of John's own acquaintance with 'Abd al-Malik's sons, Umayyad persecution or other pressure on the Manṣūr family or John himself such that he would leave office without an event of sufficient magnitude and publicity that the chroniclers would have recorded it seems unlikely, especially given that his family was hated by some in his own party. There is simply nothing in the record of sufficient magnitude or closeness to John's family to account for his leaving office under duress.

Regarding the administrative language switch to Arabic, a late ninth century Arabic chronicler recounts that 'Abd al-Malik ordered the change, negotiating a paid test project that took one year to complete before presenting the results to John's father. However, the implementation must have been less than total because the account does not indicate that John's father was out of work, only that he suggested to other clerks they should start looking for work elsewhere.¹⁹³ Further, 'Abd al-Malik's son and successor, al-Walīd I, issued a similar edict, but the chronicles differ, having it in either

¹⁹¹ Griffith (2016), 6-7. On this Griffith relies on the following: Henri Lammens (1908a), "Études sur le règne du calife omaïyade Mo'awia Ier; Troisième série, la jeunesse du calife Yazid Ier", *Mélanges de l'université saint-Joseph Beyrouth*, 3: 143-312. Henri Lammens (1908b), "Le califat de Yazid Ier", *Mélanges de l'université saint-Joseph Beyrouth*, 3: 401-92. Henri Lammens (1914), "Le chantre des omiades: Notes biographiques et littéraires sur le poète arabe chrétien Aḥṭal", *Journal Asiatique*, 4, 11th series 94-176, 93-241, 381-459.

¹⁹² Sahas suggests John was educated with at least Yazid II. Sahas (1972), 40, 40n3.

¹⁹³ Al-Balādhurī (2002; reprint 1916), *The Origins of the Islamic State: Being a Translation from the Arabic Accompanied with Annotations*, trans. Philip Khūri Ḥitti, (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias), 301.

706/7 (Theophanes), 707/8 (*Anon. Chron. 1234*), or 710 (Michael the Syrian).¹⁹⁴ The conversion is apparently on-going because even the Abbasids make abortive efforts, expelling clerks working in Greek from government chanceries in c. 758/9 and calling them back in frustration.¹⁹⁵ Finally, there is also good evidence that John himself was able to speak Arabic. S. Griffith notes John is of local stock and possibly Arabic himself: “In all likelihood, given the evidence of their name, the Manṣūr family was of Aramaean, maybe even Arab stock. . . . Clearly, the Manṣūrs were an indigenous family.”¹⁹⁶ Thus, given that John’s father was a table companion of Yazīd, and close friend of ‘Abd al-Malik, and that John was raised at court (not to mention his familiarity with certain Quranic passages), it seems quite likely that John had a working knowledge of Arabic and would be comfortable in the administration no matter the language, Greek or Arabic. Consequently, it is quite unlikely that John would be compelled to leave Damascus based on a change in language in government generally or even specifically in the chancery. Therefore, the reliance on persecution or for language change in the chancery as motivation for John to leave Damascus is found unconvincing when examined in light of the evidence in its local context. Thus, it is unlikely that John left office under duress.

Other Possible Drivers: Family Matters

Now I turn to three additional points regarding John’s family discernable from the chroniclers: wealth, network, and piety, which provide evidence for his strategic position in Damascus, which suggest that leaving office would be a very difficult decision.

¹⁹⁴ Mango and Scott, eds. (1997), 524 [AM6199]. *Anon. Chron. to 1234*, J.-B. Chabot, (CSCO 109, SS 56; 1937), 233. Andrew Palmer (1993), *The Seventh Century in the West-Syrian Chronicles*, 209. Michael the Syrian, *Chronicle*, XI, 17. Chabot ed., (1901, 1899-1910), 481.

¹⁹⁵ Mango and Scott, eds. (1997), 596 [AM6251]. Hoyland ed., (2011), 306.

¹⁹⁶ Griffith (2016), 4.

The Manṣūr Family's Wealth

So if neither Arab persecution nor a change in language was likely to trigger John's move to Damascus, what might be the reason? Turning to the three points noted above, first, the Manṣūr family's wealth was immense. V. Kontouma notes that the earliest extant evidence for John is a comment in a Syriac source describing him as "singular in your acquisitions" (*egregius in parte vestra*).¹⁹⁷ And following the precarious Greek *Life* she suggests, "It should be particularly noted here that, according to the testimony of the *Life of John* (PG 94, 437 D), the Manṣūrs owned considerable properties in Judaea and Palestine."¹⁹⁸ If their property was predominantly south of Damascus in Judaea and Palestine it would make moving to Jerusalem a natural thing to do, rather than towards Antioch, a point I will develop in the next chapter, but here I simply wish to draw out that family business interests would naturally incline toward Jerusalem if this datum can be trusted.

M.-F. Auzépy highlights an important notice in a West Syrian source that provides no little insight into the Manṣūr family wealth. The West Syrian, Athanasius, from Edessa, who 'Abd al-Malik entrusted with his younger brother, Abd-al-Aziz, held the same position in Egypt as John's father did in Damascus. This notice recounts how John's father warned the caliph about Athanasius, who then upon entertaining Athanasius confiscated a portion of his assets. Auzépy affirms, "On this occasion the wealth of Athanasius is described and is said to be immense One can assume, even if the

¹⁹⁷ Kontouma (2015b), 4. V. Kontouma indicates there is nothing precluding this evidence being dated prior to 843. The source she notes is edited by A. Van Roey, ed., (1985), *Epistula apologetica Eliae ad Leonem syncellum harranensem*, (Leuven: Peeters), vol. 470, 69. This is possibly the same Elias who converted from dyophysitism to miaphysitism, became bishop of Antioch, and for whom the *Jacob* was requested. See Kotter, iv, 100. W. Wright suggests it may have been written in his episcopate; his accession was in 709 (d. 724), thus it could have been written between 710–20. William Wright (1894), *A Short History of Syriac Literature*, (London: Adam and Charles Black), 161–62.

¹⁹⁸ Kontouma (2015b), 29n149. "ἦν δέ ἄλλην εἶχε κτήσιν ἀκίνητον· πλείστη δὲ τούτῳ ἐτύγγανεν κατὰ τὴν Ἰουδαίαν καὶ Παλαιστίνην".

Jacobites [West Syrians] do not say anything on this matter, that Sergius' [John's father] wealth was similar."¹⁹⁹ Here is an extended quote by A. Palmer of this incident:

Indeed, it was in the reign of 'Abd al-Malik that Athanasius Bar Gümōyē of the city of Edessa became rich and famous. 'Abd al-Malik was informed of his reputation as an intelligent man, well trained in the scribal skills, and he summoned him to Damascus, where he made him the guardian of his younger brother 'Abd al-'Aziz, whom he had made, still a child, the emir of Egypt. He commanded that Athanasius should be not only his scribe, but the manager of his affairs and that authority and administrative direction should be his, while 'Abd al-'Aziz should have the nominal power. So it came about that the distinguished Athanasius ruled Egypt and assigned taxes throughout the land. His sons were put in charge of the region of Gunada, though he sent his eldest son, Peter, to maintain and manage his possessions in Edessa. It is said that, apart from the generous income and privileges which he enjoyed from the King, his sons also had a publicly acknowledged right to one denarius every year from each man drawing wages in the army. This army was 30,000 strong and the period during which they stayed in Egypt was twenty-one years.

Athanasius himself was not only wise but also strictly Orthodox. He had great respect for the hierarchy of the Church and he built new churches and renovated old ones, as well as distributing alms abundantly to the orphans and the widows. He collected gold and silver like pebbles and he had four thousand slaves, all bought out of his own purse, besides grand houses, villages, various estates and gardens worthy of a king. In Edessa he had three hundred shops and nine inns. In the Egyptian city of Fustāt he erected two temples and he renovated the glorious temple of the Mother of God in Edessa and another splendid building, to be a baptistery. For this building he built reinforced canals of water, exactly as Bishop Amazonius had done in the great and ancient church of Edessa. He also revetted the walls of it with marble and adorned it with gold and silver.

When 'Abd al-'Aziz died in Egypt, Athanasius set off on the journey home. The caravan of his household and his sons, his possessions, his slaves and his vast wealth arrived at Damascus and filled with envy the secretary of 'Abd al-Malik at Damascus, Sergius, son of Mansūr, a Chalcedonian, who said to the king, 'Bar Gümōyē has clawed in the contents of all the vaults in Egypt.' But 'Abd al-Malik gave Athanasius a serene reception, only remarking pleasantly to him, 'We deem it unjust that all this wealth should belong to a Christian, so give us a part of it and keep a part for yourself.' So the king took a great deal away from him, but what Athanasius was left with was more than enough.²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁹ Auzépy (2015), 414n95.

²⁰⁰ Palmer (1993), 202-04. Palmer translates from the *Anon. Chron. to 1234.*, J.-B. Chabot, (CSCO 109, SS 56; 1937), 229-30. S. Brock dates the *Anon. Chron. to 1234* to the first half of the thirteenth century; however, this notice also appears in the 12th century chronicle of Michael the Syrian, and Palmer

Clearly this account is tendentious, reported by a West Syrian about a West Syrian against a hated Chalcedonian, Sergius, son of Maṣṣūr, John's father. Nevertheless, it is not the detail that matters here, but the magnitude of the wealth which is exaggerated but not entirely without basis. Michael the Syrian, for example, records that Athanasius placed one of his sons in the administration of Egypt under him, and for over twenty years he was entitled to collect one dinar from each of 30,000 soldiers in Egypt.²⁰¹

Thus, if Auzépy is correct and the Maṣṣūr family "wealth was similar," even in the neighborhood of this magnitude, John's grandfather, father and his own position in the caliphal administration would have been of strategic importance to the creation, management and retention of such wealth.

I would argue that this story is at least indicative of the magnitude of John's family's wealth, and that consequently John would not have left office unless he had a good reason to; however, when he did, heading toward Jerusalem makes sense if that is where the bulk of the family's real assets were. Further, it is clear that with this level of wealth John would have the means to do just about anything imaginable. Thus, Nicaea II's claim that he liquidated his assets among the poor cannot be the full story, nor the interpretation of it by M. van Esbroeck, because the liquidation of such immense wealth would require the founding of monasteries, the refurbishment of churches, and all many of noticeable public works for which there is no trace in the sources. But neither can the traditional humble and secluded monastic retirement do justice to John's wealth and power. John's biographers have not disputed his wealth, but neither have they quantified it, and thus I suggest they have failed to properly consider its implications.

contains it is based on the lost chronicle of Dionysius of Tell Maḥrē (d. 845), which pushes it back considerably.

²⁰¹ Michael the Syrian, *Chronicle*, XI.16. Chabot ed., (1901, 1899-1910), 475.

The Manṣūr Family's Network

Second, there is more to be said regarding the Manṣūr family's connections and power.

Three generations at court exposed the close personal ties that the Umayyads and the Manṣūrs enjoyed, however complex their relationship was due to their differing religious commitments. This suggested it unlikely that John would be forced out of office. Further, it would not make sense to walk away from three generations of being the most powerful Chalcedonian Christians within the Arab empire, however, small their party. In fact, the smallness of their party makes that position of power all the more valuable.

I suggest the Jacobite bishop, Michael the Syrian, has given us a valuable clue to the power politics on the ground in Syria that was missed by J.-B. Chabot and Mango and Scott. Theophanes gives notice that Peter, “the most holy metropolitan of Damascus” was mutilated and exiled by the caliph, and Mango and Scott note that Michael the Syrian's parallel notice is in error, “wrongly calling [Peter] Chalcedonian patriarch of Syria” following Chabot who simply notes, “The author is confused. This is Peter, Metropolitan of Damascus.”²⁰² However, Michael the Syrian's notice actually says, “In the year 1056 [=AD 743/4; Theophanes has it at 741/2], al-Walīd king of the Arabs, ordered the tongue to be cut of the patriarch, who the Chalcedonians established in Syria, and he was exiled to Yemen.”²⁰³ This is only an error if read in terms of imperial control; however, a more nuanced reading would take into account the patriarchal vacancies at the time of Peter's exile in Antioch (c. 40 years), Jerusalem (c. 10 years—since the death in 735 of John V), and Alexandria (c. 90 years) viewed from the

²⁰² Mango and Scott, eds. (1997), 577, 78 appar. crit. g [AM6234]. *Anon. Chron. to 1234*. J.-B. Chabot (CSCO 109, SS 56; Paris, 1937), 245, 21-4, has only an unnamed Chalcedonian bishop of Damascus.

²⁰³ “En l'an 1056, Walīd, roi des Taiyayê, ordonna de couper la langue au patriarche que les Chalcédoniens avaient établi en Syrie, et il fut exilé dans le Yémen.” and J.-B. Chabot's note: “L'auteur a fait une confusion. Il s'agit de Pierre, métrop. de Damas; cf. Theoph., ad ann. 734.” Michael the Syrian, *Chronicle*, Ed. J.-B. Chabot, 4 vols. (Paris, 1899–1910), vol 2, 506, 506n8.

perspective inside Syria. Surely, while the Manṣūr family had the ear of the caliph, the Chalcedonian Metropolitan of Damascus was the de facto Chalcedonian “patriarch of Syria” as the Jacobite bishop indicated. The Jacobite bishop, an enemy of the Chalcedonians, is simply acknowledging that the seat of Chalcedonian power in Syria at that time was indeed in Damascus.²⁰⁴ Thus, I would argue that employment in the caliphal administration was no doubt of significant importance to the Chalcedonian hierarchy.

Corroborating evidence of this is seen in that shortly after this incident, both Antioch and Alexandria were allowed Chalcedonian patriarchs, ending lengthy vacancies. The caliph appears magnanimous, but I suspect his motive is political. This was probably meant to move the Chalcedonian leadership back out of Damascus where it may have tended to return after the death of John V, and by allowing patriarchs in Antioch and Alexandria, the caliph appeared generous while also weakening the Chalcedonians for a time by splitting their power base—whether it had returned to Damascus or remained in Jerusalem.²⁰⁵ Thus, it seems quite likely that the Manṣūr family had strong connections to the Chalcedonian church and its leadership in Damascus both before and after John V. Once again, this suggests a move out of Damascus would be a significant decision for John.

Finally, over a century later the Manṣūr family would field not one, but two patriarchs of Jerusalem under the Abbasids, suggesting the change of regime was not the end of their important heritage: Sergios ibn Manṣūr (Sergius I, 843–59) and ʿĪliyyā ibn Manṣūr

²⁰⁴ For another example of imperial vs local control in the frontier, see Hoyland’s argument for a more nuanced reading of Ghassanid ‘rule’ (power) in the rural areas of Syria even in the outskirts of Damascus denied by Fergus Millar as impinging on imperial rule. Robert Hoyland (2009), “Late Roman Provincia Arabia, Monophysite Monks and Arab Tribes: A Problem of Center and Periphery”, *Semetica et Classica*, 2: 117-39, 119.

²⁰⁵ Not to mention this would stir-up Christian ecclesial politics in the region generally, potentially disrupting the non-Chalcedonians as well.

(Elias III c. 878–907).²⁰⁶ Consequently, it is unlikely that John liquidated the Manṣūr assets, if a century later the family can still educate its children to an elite level and have not one but two of its sons elected patriarch of Jerusalem. Thus, it seems clear that John had the means, his family’s immense wealth, to make the move from Damascus to Jerusalem, and even some motive vis-à-vis the possibility of family property holdings in Judaea and Palestine. But, there was perhaps a more personal motive in his relationship with John V but was it sourced in personal piety as Kontouma or Sahas intimate?

The Manṣūr Family’s Piety

Third, John indicates that his relationship to John V is very close.²⁰⁷ There are three autobiographical statements by John that suggest he was very close to John V. One short passage is very telling: “Who knows the mind of His Beatitude, Patriarch John, better than I? No one. Who—I speak the truth—never breathed a word of doctrine that he did not entrust to me as to [his] disciple.”²⁰⁸ Further, Kontouma highlights that the Manṣūr family is described by Theophanes as *χριστιανικωτάτη* or “most Christian”.²⁰⁹ Based on his close personal relationship to John V, Kontouma concludes that John, “Probably accompanied the patriarch at the time of his enthronement in Jerusalem in 705.”²¹⁰ Consequently, John had at least two motives to leave Damascus, his family’s property holdings and his personal connection to John V. The former only suggests that

²⁰⁶ On these two Manṣūr Patriarchs see L. Cheikho et al., eds., *Eutychii patriarchae alexandrini annales: pars posterior* (Paris: Poussielgue & Harrassowitz, 1909) at 61-62, 69. The Patriarch names and dates are from V. Grumel (1958), *La Chronologie*, (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France), 452.

²⁰⁷ Kontouma (2015b), 24-29.

²⁰⁸ Ibid., 24. The quote is taken from the *Letter on the Hymn of the Trisagion*. Kotter, IV, 329, 13-15. “Τίς γὰρ οἶδε τοῦ μακαριωτάτου Ἰωάννου τοῦ πατριάρχου νόημα ἐμοῦ πλέον; Οὐδεὶς. Ὅς, ἵνα τάληθές εἶπω, οὐκ ἀνέπνευσε πνοὴν δογματικὴν πρόποτε, ἢν ἐμοὶ ὡς μαθητῇ οὐκ ἀνέθετο.”

²⁰⁹ Ibid., 8. Mango and Scott, eds. (1997), 510 [AM 6183]. The English translation of V. Kontouma’s article is misleading, suggesting “most Christian” occurs in each entry related to John. This is not true, it occurs only in the first and is specifically speaking of his father. “Théophane parle de la famille des Manṣūr, qualifiée de *χριστιανικωτάτη*, aux années 691, 730, 734, 742, et 754.” Kontouma-Conticello (2010c), 992.

²¹⁰ Kontouma (2015b), 24.

moving toward Jerusalem was apropos, but the second, suggests for Kontouma that his loyalty to John V would entail he accompany him at his enthronement thus leaving Damascus. However, it is unclear to me how piety alone, whether family or personal, would warrant such a move. John's family commitments in Damascus were strategic, and certainly he could serve John V better by shielding him from enemies from his high ranking position in Damascus.

Consequently, if a chronology of persecution is rendered unlikely as the deconstruction of the *Lives* renders their underlying historicity suspect, so too does the Manṣūr family wealth, network, and piety make leaving a strategic blunder. Further, concomitant with these are their close ties to the Umayyads and their position as a resource for the Chalcedonian leadership, thus further suggesting that leaving office out of mere pious loyalty very difficult to justify. Moreover, the long process of administrative language change and John's likely familiarity with Arabic make being forced from office unlikely. Demonstrably immense wealth and powerful connections to the Arabs and Chalcedonians suggest that if and when John left office it was for solid reasons that would benefit his family and the Chalcedonian leadership. Thus, his close tie to John V suggests a reason to leave, but an insufficient one as pious loyalty could not outweigh his family and larger confessional commitments. Another more compelling reason must be sought. Nevertheless, there he could shine as a preacher and teacher as the superlatives "Streaming with Gold" and "excellent teacher" suggest, taking up residence in or near the Anastasis as the manuscript tradition actually witnesses, providing a context for his reputation to appropriately develop, so Kontouma's timing seems apropos if her reasons inadequate.

Recently Proposed Alternatives

Two recent proposals that of M. van Esbroeck and that of S. W. Anthony are potentially on the face of it counter-factual to my argument, but if dealt with here will actually be additive to my thesis.²¹¹

The Proposal of M. van Esbroeck

M. van Esbroeck reads the ‘legend of the severed hand’ as indicating John refused caliphal service altogether and entered the monastic life as early as 692 (soon after the death of his father). He finds corroboration in the passage from the iconophile council of Nicaea II (787) that mentions John’s piety and his desire to follow the example of Matthew (a tax collector), liquidating his assets and entering the monastic life. Van Esbroeck goes so far as to suggest that the basis for this passage is probably a past *Life* of John. This is in my view speculation based on late and tenuous information.

Nevertheless, it does show a willingness to abandon the timeline of the narrative and its tie to Iconoclasm in favor of the legendary piety of John. But in trading chronology for holiness as historical distillate, van Esbroeck abandons one problematic chronology for another.

While remaining within the framework of the ‘legendary portrait’, he willingly departs from the consensus-chronology. He seems to want to maintain an underlying historicity to the Greek *Lives* in order to emphasize John’s piety. He argues from the *Homily for the Dedication of the Anastasis* (CPG 8095)²¹² coupled with an analysis of Nicaea II (787) that John left Damascus refusing to follow his father into administrative service

²¹¹ Esbroeck (1997). Sean W. Anthony (2015), “Fixing John Damascene’s Biography: Historical Notes on His Family Background”, *Journal of Early Christian Studies*, 23/4: 607-27.

²¹² CPG 8095 is attributed to John of Damascus and only available in Georgian manuscripts. Esbroeck discusses the possible transmission history. Esbroeck (1997), 53-54.

after his death (taken to be in the early 690s), and becoming a priest in the Anastasis by 692 was resident at Mar Saba thereafter.²¹³

Van Esbroeck argues that the dedication homily was delivered in the Anastasis after the death of John's father sometime between 690 and 692.²¹⁴ The importance of his position lies in that it shows that leaving Damascus early is now a possibility even within the framework of the 'legendary portrait'. Further, van Esbroeck is very clear that although this text is deeply theological and delivered in public, John makes references to icons without making any reference whatsoever to iconoclasm; this lends weight to my assertion that iconoclasm was not a driver of John's early theological program. This serves van Esbroeck, however, by disengaging John from the chronology of the Greek *Life*.

There are, however, problems with van Esbroeck's analysis.²¹⁵ His focus is on analysis of these texts in order to verify attribution to John, and his dating proposal is consequent to this. My focus will be only the two important aspects of his analysis that impinge on my own: 1) Did John follow his father into administrative service? And, 2) Could John have left Damascus early enough to be a priest in the Anastasis by the early 690s? Establishing when John left Damascus is crucial to establishing the basis for his theological program, and thus integral to my thesis. Putting John of Damascus in Jerusalem so early would tend to shift his works earlier by at least ten years removing them from the reestablishment of the patriarchate, which I will argue is their context.

²¹³ Ibid., 69-70. The relevant texts are *Homily for the Dedication of the Anastasis* (CPG 8095) and the *Canon for the Dedication of the Anastasis* (*Menaion September*, 13 September).

²¹⁴ Ibid., 70.

²¹⁵ Van Esbroeck puts the death of John's father at 690 (p. 68), but he was known to be active in 690/1. This, however, only pushes van Esbroeck's timeframe out a year or two but does not otherwise change it. It is not known when John's father died, but is generally assumed to be in the 690s. On John's father, Sergius, being active in 690/1 see Mango and Scott, eds. (1997), [AM 6183], 510. See also Hoyland ed., (2011), 187.

As noted van Esbroeck is working within the ‘legendary portrait’ framework. He admits that the story of the severed hand being placed in the context of Leo III renders the dating within the entire ‘official’ Greek *Life* (BHG 884) suspect, nevertheless he discounts this concern because the story is only repeating a theme already established in the *Life*, i.e. John’s legendary piety. Thus, for van Esbroeck the chronology may be suspect but not John’s pious motivation. Consequently, he argues that John’s piety requires his refusing to enter administrative service and entering the monastic life as early as possible.²¹⁶ He corroborates this via the passage from the iconophile council of Nicaea II (787) that mentions John’s piety and his desire to follow the example of Matthew (a tax collector), liquidating his assets and entering the monastic life. Van Esbroeck suggests that the basis for this passage is a past *Life* of John based on the notes on three manuscripts containing John’s homily (CPG 8095) dated to between the 12th and 16th centuries.²¹⁷ This is just too late and too tenuous to be convincing and there is no evidence that Nicaea II’s comments are based on a prior *Life* or that these aspects of the *Lives* are historical. Further, I have already argued that John’s (family’s) wealth so immense that its liquidation would show up in the sources.

If deconstructing the saint forces decoupling John’s leaving date from any conspiracy theory it also decouples it from hagiographic concerns for ascetic piety. Van Esbroeck’s position requires John to become either a monk and priest virtually upon his father’s death or to be such prior to his father’s death. There is no evidence, however, of John being a monk and priest prior to his father’s death. Van Esbroeck seems to favor John’s ascetic piety over historical concerns, allowing him to decouple John’s move from Damascus to Jerusalem from any supposed conspiracy theory, while

²¹⁶ Esbroeck (1997), 67-68.

²¹⁷ As evidence he refers to notes on manuscripts BDT, which date from between the 12th and 16th century. Ibid., 53, 69n42.

retaining and then prioritizing the literary *topoi* associated with ascetic piety, but it is precarious to date based on literary *topoi*.

The Proposal of S. W. Anthony

In another potentially counter-factual argument, S. W. Anthony also prioritizes the Iconoclastic Council (754), contending that its misinterpretation has led to misunderstanding John's paternity. He argues that Sarjūn ibn Manṣūr (aka Sergius in Greek) is not John's father, but grandfather, and that Manṣūr ibn Sarjūn (son of Sergius) is not John, himself, but his father, recognized by Anthony but unrecognized by all previous historians. He proposes this new person to solve confusing references in the Arab and Greek historical sources. First, Anthony proposes in sources he himself readily acknowledges are tendentious and confused on John's family an inexplicable precision that reveals a new person heretofore completely missed between John and Sergius, John's newly proposed father, previously undetected: Anthony argues Sergius is not John's father but grandfather. Second, it makes John much younger than previously thought, introducing new problems into his biography.²¹⁸ For example, if he is active into the 760s as Anthony suggests, why is John, who had vehemently opposed the iconoclastic emperor as an ecclesial pirate in three rewritten orations against iconoclasm, go suddenly silent after his condemnation in 754?

Anthony prioritizes the explanation of Theophanes that Manṣūr is only John's family name, and thus, according to Anthony, not his pre-monastic given name. Anthony asserts:

If one accepts that 'Manṣūr' was both John Damascene's ancestral name and the name of his father, an Umayyad scribe, then one has a plausible explanation for how the iconoclastic synod could use the name 'Manṣūr' to

²¹⁸ Anthony (2015), 627.

simultaneously refer to John unambiguously and to denigrate him as ‘the foul-named’ and ‘Saracen-minded’ in the iconoclastic anathemas.²¹⁹

Thus, Anthony’s argument hinges on taking the name Manṣūr in the sources to be both an ancestral name and the name of his (newly proposed) father, but there is no reason to do this; it explains nothing while introducing more problems. The straightforward explanation both in this text and in others is that Manṣūr is both John’s ancestral name and his given name; thus, explaining the confusion in later sources that refer to his grandfather, father and himself as Manṣūr, so there is no need to invent another person. Thus, Anthony fails to explain why both Theophanes and the iconoclast council’s use of Manṣūr must be explained as a reference to another person.

In another example, Anthony makes much of the confused and tendentious nature of the *Arabic Life*,²²⁰ which refers to John’s father as Manṣūr and confusingly states John is the son of Manṣūr ibn Sarjūn, giving John’s name as Yūḥannā ibn Manṣūr ibn Sarjūn, which is actually no one’s name but a confused version of John’s name with his monastic and given names given as if they were two people.²²¹ This implies to Portillo and Anthony follows that John (Yūḥannā) is son of Manṣūr. Thus, Anthony proposes that Manṣūr ibn Sarjūn is John’s father, when in fact it is John himself.²²² Anthony previously noted there are generally two options for the use of Manṣūr in the sources: as an ancestral or family name or as being named after his grandfather according to aristocratic tradition.²²³ Anthony’s solution, however, fails to substantiate how in this

²¹⁹ Ibid., 621.

²²⁰ Constantin Bacha, ed., (1912), *Mikhā’il Al-Sim’ānī, biographie de Saint Jean Damascène: Texte original arabe*, (Harissa: Imprimerie Grecque Melchite de Saint Paul). For translation see, Rocio D. Portillo (1996), “The Arabic Life of St. John of Damascus”, *Parole de l’Orient*, 21: 157-88. On this text see also, Treiger (2013).

²²¹ Portillo (1996), 158.

²²² Anthony (2015), 608. Anthony is apparently following Portillo (1996), 159.

²²³ Anthony (2015), 620. The second option has it that if John’s family followed Byzantine aristocratic tradition as his father’s eldest son John would have inherited the given name Manṣūr from his grandfather. On this custom see, Jane Baun (2013), “Coming of Age in Byzantium: Agency and

case additional precision entails the use of Manṣūr for not three but now four persons:

1) the person promoted by the emperor Maurice (John's grandfather or great-grandfather per Anthony), 2) for Sarjūn ibn Manṣūr (John's father, Sergius or per Anthony, John's grandfather), 3) for John himself, and 4) now a new person per Anthony, John's supposed father, Manṣūr ibn Sarjūn. Further, although admitting the sources are confused, he proposes a solution that requires these texts to adopt a uniform vocabulary, when it is much simpler to explain the confusion through use of both solutions simultaneously, i.e. the sources refer to John and his father by their family name, and John by his monastic, family, and given names, because the sources are in fact confused.

The Manṣūr Family's Service

I have highlighted these two proposals because they raise important issues for my thesis: first, is the family connection between Manṣūr, Sergius and John sustainable? And second, did John enter administrative service? Contra S. W. Anthony, John can be argued to be the son of Sergius and grandson of Manṣūr, and against M. van Esbroeck John can be shown to have entered caliphal service, hinting that he might be a different sort of monk than typically thought.

Anthony has highlighted the confused paucity of evidence regarding John's family and his caliphal service, but while confirming that Manṣūr ibn Sarjūn succeeded his father in caliphal service, he has not proven that Manṣūr ibn Sarjūn is not himself, John of Damascus. There is simply no reason to invent another person between John and Sergius. The confusion in the sources is just that, confusion; there is no hidden and uniformly applicable precision as Anthony proposes.

Authority in Rites of Passage from Infancy to Adulthood", in Pamela Armstrong, ed., *Authority in Byzantium*, (Aldershot: Ashgate), 120. And, Friedhelm Winkelmann (1987), *Quellenstudien zur herrschenden Klasse von Byzanz im 8. und 9. Jahrhundert*, (Berlin: Akademie).

In sum, exercising these two recent proposals as potentially counter-factual to my argument has actually shown by their failure to be additive to my thesis. John is in fact neither the pious monk of Nicaea II who did not succeed his father, nor the son of another Christian Umayyad scribe too pious to succeed his father. Thus, John neither left Damascus just after his father's death entering Mar Saba c. 692 without serving the caliph nor after the demise of the (newly invented) son of Sergius, leaving Damascus later but still without serving the caliph and active into the 760s. On the contrary no one disputes that John followed his father and grandfather into the financial administration of the caliphate contra both van Esbroeck and Anthony, thus there is no reason to believe he left Damascus as early as van Esbroeck nor as late as Anthony claims.²²⁴ So, when did John leave Damascus?

So, When did John Leave Damascus?

So, if not, as the *Lives* would have it, in the reign of Constantine the V or after Leo III's iconoclastic 'pronouncements' c. 724–6²²⁵ or in one of the Arab persecutions, especially that of 'Umar II in 717–20, as in the scholarly proposals seen above, which attempt to keep an underlying historiographic basis for John's hagiography, when did John leave Damascus? And, if not because of persecution, as maintained by M. Jugie²²⁶ and J. Nasrallah,²²⁷ did he have his own reasons: personal piety as suggested by D.

²²⁴ On John's service to the caliphate, see Philip K. Hitti, *The History of the Arabs*, (10th ed.; London: MacMillan), 499. Sahas argues that John's grandfather served the governor, Yazīd b. Abu Sufyān, and upon his death was promoted by Mu'āwīya I (661–80), and that John's father practically inherited this position upon his grandfather's death, thus it is likely that John too would be trained for and inherit the position from his father, however, although the sources testify to John's grandfather and father in caliphal service, there does not appear to be direct evidence for John's service of which I am aware, but neither is there good reason to deny it. See also Sahas (1972), 26–27.

²²⁵ Mango and Scott, eds. (1997), 558 [AM 6217], 558n1. It was, however, not until 730 that Leo convened the *silentium* at which Germanus either resigned or was deposed based on his refusal to adopt Leo's policy. Ibid., 563–66 [AM6221].

²²⁶ Followed by C. N. Tsirpanlis, as noted above.

²²⁷ Followed by R. Le Coz as noted above.

Sahas and M. van Esbroeck or loyalty to his spiritual mentor, John V, as suggested by V. Kontouma?

These positions have relied on BHG 884 either for chronology or piety, tacitly assuming a tie to Iconoclasm or at least an idealized monasticism. Several scholars have attempted correcting the timeline by suggesting Arab persecution provided John's motivation for leaving Damascus. Most settled on Caliph 'Umar II (717–20) as the likely timeframe for John to leave office, but no one has offered more than conjecture for their position.

Recognizing this state of affairs, V. Kontouma turns away from this scenario and focuses on the philological evidence, suggesting moving away from BHG 884. Exploiting the recent scholarship of A. P. Kazhdan, S. Gero, and M.-F. Auzépy, she has proposed that a dossier of texts published in the run up to the 'Triumph of Orthodoxy' provides the primary locus of the invention of the saint, John of Damascus. This demonstrates the genesis and legendary character of BHG 884. From internal evidence of John's own writings she concludes that his relationship with John V was likely the deciding factor and that the comments about John liquidating his assets like the tax-collector Matthew at Nicaea II may be an illusion to or at least apropos of his underwriting the reestablishment of the Jerusalem Patriarchate c. 705. She is, however, quite circumspect in her assertions. Nevertheless, quoting V. Kontouma at length will set the stage for the next chapter: although I do not agree that mere pious loyalty can adequately account for John's decision to leave office, I follow her in as much as John left in 705 and her hint that his financial backing would prove decisive is worth further exploration. Thus, this summary positions me for the next chapter, in which I propose why I think John left Damascus at this time:

As an adult, and before his father's death, JD [John of Damascus] followed him in his administrative responsibilities. He probably kept that office until the death of Caliph 'Abd al-Malik (ob. 705), with whom his father was very close. . . . It seems that JD had no reason to prolong his stay in Damascus beyond 705. It is in fact in this year that 'Abd al-Malik's successor confiscated the Cathedral of St John the Baptist in Damascus, the cultural center of Syro-Palestinian Chalcedonianism, to replace it with the great Umayyad mosque. And, it was also in the same year that the restoration of the patriarchate of Jerusalem, vacant for 67 years, took place. John V, who was close to the Damascene, occupied this see. As it appears from his works, JD followed the patriarch in his chief activities, which enable us to conjecture that he remained in Jerusalem throughout this period. The affirmation of the Council of Nicaea II [787], according to which he distributed his great wealth to the poor 'like the evangelist Matthew', can also take a more pragmatic sense in this context. In these difficult days for Syro-Palestinian Christianity, the backing that Manṣūr, a powerful, rich and well educated man, could provide toward the restoration of the patriarchate, would have been decisive.²²⁸

Thus, V. Kontouma states that John left office to follow his spiritual father at the demise of the Chalcedonian 'headquarters' in Damascus to help finance and support the reestablishment of a new 'headquarters' in Jerusalem with the re-vitalization of the long vacant patriarchate. A closer look at various data from the chroniclers has afforded additional insight, verifying that John of Damascus did indeed have motive, means and opportunity to leave Damascus in 705, that it was not under duress due to Byzantine iconoclasm, Arab persecution, or a vexed personal piety, and that as V. Kontouma suggests, he left with John V to help in the reestablishment of the Jerusalem Patriarchate.

In sum, as elaborated above, first, the Manṣūr family wealth was immense. Second, the family was well connected both in being close to those Umayyads in power and also in themselves occupying prominent positions of power. Third, John's relationship to John V of Jerusalem is very close. And, fourth, John's reputation makes more sense in the context of the Anastasis than anywhere else (monastic seclusion makes no sense).

²²⁸ Kontouma (2015b), 29.

There is no evidence that BHG 884 provides a viable timeline, however, options like these remain tenacious, either based on Iconoclasm or corrected to some period of Arab persecution.²²⁹ Clearly, there is a desire to preserve certain features of the fictional *Lives*. Having looked at the chroniclers, I can now articulate several additional reasons why it is unlikely that John was forced from office under duress:

- 1) The changes in government service requirements, especially the switch from Greek to Arabic in the chancery, were gradual, because edicts that appear absolute recur in the sources generations apart, so they cannot be as definitive as they sound, and further they are likely later interpolations. Further, John may have spoken Arabic as a native Syrian, but even more so since he was apparently initially educated with ‘Abd al-Malik’s sons, who would have been taught in Arabic.
- 2) The Manṣūr family in general, John’s father in particular, and probably John by extension being raised at court with four of ‘Abd al-Malik sons who would all rule (between 705 and 743) was very close to the Umayyads.
- 3) The Manṣūr family wealth was immense ensuring it would be an important factor in John’s decision. Further, he could not have liquidated their assets as some suggest because the family very likely educated and fielded two subsequent patriarchs in Jerusalem.
- 4) If I am correct to assert that the Jacobite bishop, Michael the Syrian, in referring to Peter, as the ‘Chalcedonian patriarch of Syria’ was not simply mistaken as Chabot, Mango and Scott suggest, but that he is indeed highlighting that the Damascus

²²⁹ This state of affairs is no doubt related to the lack of critical texts for the many *Lives* of John of Damascus, and the concomitant lack of relative dating. V. Kontouma has proposed new dating and shown the locus of John’s sainthood to be directly related to the dossier of texts promoting the ‘Triumph of Orthodoxy’. Critical texts are forthcoming (BHG 394 from 2018 per John’s current editor, Robert Volk), thus enabling additional corroborating research, which may confirm certain aspects of V. Kontouma’s position.

Chalcedonians held real power, because of the Manṣūr family position at court, then this is a significant reason why it is unlikely John would leave office under duress or for merely personal reasons—the stakes were simply too high for both his family and his family's support of the Chalcedonians.

5) Although it is unlikely John's piety was vexed by Umayyad religious convictions, especially when raised in a context of Christian sectarianism, his loyalty to his spiritual mentor, John V, may have provided some motivation to leave Damascus, but I am not convinced it would have been enough to walk away from his family commitments, i.e. wealth maintenance, power politics, and ecclesial advantage in Damascus.

In sum, based on the foregoing analysis I follow V. Kontouma that John likely followed John V to Jerusalem in c. 705. However, I am not convinced this was merely a function of his loyalty to John V, which is clearly a factor but not decisively so in my view. His family's wealth, power, and position in Damascus and close relationship with the Umayyad caliphs could not afford his loss, unless offset by clear gains. An additional catalyst was needed.

Conclusion

In the previous chapter I found that John's sainthood was a function of ecclesial politics and imperial policy, and that there is no underlying historicity to the *Lives* of John, thus John's timeline should not be seen in relation to that of Byzantine Iconoclasm. Thus, the Greek *Lives* of John provide no basis for knowing when he left Damascus for Jerusalem, and the date for this 'retirement' must be sought elsewhere.

In this chapter I evaluated evidence for John and his family. Although direct evidence for John himself is slight, there is enough regarding him and his family in my view to

paint a picture of his family in Damascus. I found John and John's family were likely on very close terms with the Umayyads and thus unlikely to leave power in Damascus under duress. Further, I found that the consensus that he left in 717–20 based on Arab persecution and tied to the hagiographic tradition must be re-evaluated. V. Kontouma rejects the 'legendary portrait' of the hagiographic tradition, suggesting rather that based on autobiographical evidence that John was close to John V and thus probably accompanied him to Jerusalem c. 705 since there was no reason to stay in Damascus beyond that date. While following her in the main, I disagree that there was nothing to keep him in Damascus beyond 705, suggesting his family wealth and connections to the Chalcedonian party provided plenty of reason to keep the status quo. Consequently, I find that she fails to offer a truly compelling reason to justify John's decision to leave Damascus, thus jeopardizing her proposal that he accompanied John V in the reestablishment of the Jerusalem Patriarchate.

Nevertheless, after discussing the immense wealth of John's family, it became clear he could leave on his own terms, but this was limited by the fact that both his family and the Chalcedonian leadership benefited greatly from his high position in the caliphate. Thus, it seems to me the decisive catalyst must somehow be the reestablishment of the Jerusalem Patriarchate itself. John must have been convinced that serving his family as an elite monk of the Anastasis of a newly reestablished patriarchate would allow him to serve personal, family and Chalcedonian 'proto-Melkite' interests at the same time. But, what convinced him that this was the case?

In the next chapter I look at the isolation of the Jerusalem Patriarchate in order to nuance John's motivation, proposing that John was instrumental in the negotiation of the move of the 'proto-Melkite' leadership from Damascus to Jerusalem. John's

centrality to this significant move would allow him to work for family, Chalcedonian and caliphal interests, finally providing adequate motivation for John to decide to leave the administration.

Then in the final chapter (of Part One) I put the Jerusalem Patriarchate and John in context by looking at their interlocutors. Then I introduce his polemical works in preparation for Part Two Constructive Doctrine.



Chapter Three – *Quid Pro Quo*

Introduction

John of Damascus as a historical figure was introduced above after deconstructing his hagiographic biography. Although the historical evidence is quite limited, there was enough to decouple John's biography and timeline from the meta-narrative of Iconoclasm. Thus, scholars need no longer strain to shoe-horn John's dates into this narrative. Consequently, John's own history, however minimal the data, suggests, as I have argued, that he left the Umayyad administration and followed John V to the Anastasis at the reestablishment of the Jerusalem Patriarchate. Nevertheless, there is compelling additional evidence that makes this scenario all the more likely. In this chapter, I will argue that John was integral to secret negotiations with the caliph that provided for a *quid pro quo*: giving up the cathedral of St John the Baptist and moving the 'headquarters' of the Chalcedonian 'proto-Melkites' out of Damascus in exchange for the elevation of John V and the reestablishment of the Jerusalem Patriarchate in 705.

The Umayyads had never before allowed any Chalcedonian bishop a patriarchal throne in Antioch, Jerusalem or Alexandria, but now, suddenly and without explanation in the sources, John V is enthroned in Jerusalem. Why the sudden Arab volte-face? How could this happen?

Below I endeavor to paint a picture in terms of Christian and Muslim pilgrimage and surrender treaties of the Arab conquest in order to contextualize one event of singular

importance: a watershed in Melkite identity formation. The temporal proximity of the so called seizure of the cathedral of St John the Baptist in Damascus and its conversion into the Great Mosque of Damascus with the reestablishment of the Jerusalem Patriarchate, both requiring the relocation of the ‘proto-Melkite’ Chalcedonian leadership, can be neither a mere coincidence nor the sad result of Christian arrogance and Muslim vindication. I propose a causal link, an actual behind the scenes secret negotiation with an actual *quid pro quo*—cathedral for patriarchate.

No other explanation has been offered. The only obvious explanation, pure chance, is implausible, for reasons outlined below. Further, chance fails to explain the improbable timing of temporally coincident events that are of linked importance. This complex of events is a significant watershed, having huge implications for Melkite identity and John’s theological program, while also potentially challenging what Sidney Griffith terms the twin processes of Islamization and Arabization, seemingly inaugurated with inexorable focus for example in the building of the Dome of the Rock, completed only a decade prior.

Christian Pilgrimage Results in Inter-Confessional Debate

Visiting local shrines is perhaps a universal feature of religious experience from antiquity, no less so in the Eastern Mediterranean. Naturally after the legalization of Christianity, Christians began to openly travel further afield in order to visit shrines of increasing importance and power. The reinterpretation of the Old Testament in terms of the New in typologies and spiritual readings fueled pilgrimage by providing a means not only to visualize but to experience the biblical stories at first hand by retracing the

steps of the ancient holy men and women.²³⁰ The communion of local saints fueled a desire to meet the saints of old at their shrine in the Holy Land. Peter Brown contends that in late-antique society Christianity was felt precisely in terms of its “shrines and relics.”²³¹ In fact, he claims that although in the West holy sites were co-opted by the bishops this did not happen in the East. However, early eighth century Jerusalem may be a special case, perhaps the exception that proves the rule. In his classic work on Latin Christianity, *The Cult of Saints*, he writes:

The joining of the ecclesiastical hierarchy of western Europe to the tombs of the dead set the medieval Catholic church apart from its Byzantine and Near Eastern neighbors—Christian, Jewish, and Muslim. In Western Europe, the power of the bishop tended to coalesce with the power of the shrine. Elsewhere, the shrine tended to go its own way. The great Christian shrines and pilgrimage sites of the eastern Mediterranean and the Near East—even Jerusalem—were never mobilized, as they came to be in the West, to form the basis of lasting ecclesiastical power structures.²³²

Whatever their relation with the ecclesiastical hierarchy, the Christian Mediterranean and its extensions to the east and northwest came to be dotted with clearly indicated loci where Heaven and Earth met. The shrine containing a grave or, more frequently, a fragmentary relic, was very often called quite simply, “the place”: *loca sanctorum*, ὁ τοπος. It was a place where the normal laws of the grave were held to be suspended. In a relic, the chilling anonymity of human remains could be thought to be still heavy with the fullness of a beloved person.²³³

No doubt one of the reasons for this was because Antioch, Jerusalem and Alexandria were lost to Byzantium, and thus their bishops could no longer operate in this way.

Clearly the heights of joy and depths of despair at discovery, loss, and recovery of the cross of Christ suggest at least the potential for things to have worked out in the East as

²³⁰ Georgia Frank (2000), *The Memory of the Eyes: Pilgrims to Living Saints in Christian Late Antiquity*, (Berkeley: University of California Press), 10, 29. G. Frank argues for three general principles (she terms these “tendancies or impulses”) at work in Christian pilgrimage: exoticism, the desire to know the “marvels of distant lands”; sensory engagement, the conviction that the senses could perceive the divine presence; and biblical realism, a “desire to participate in sacred moments from the biblical past.”

²³¹ Peter Brown (1981), *The Cult of the Saints. Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity*, (University of Chicago Press), 12.

²³² *Ibid.*, 9-10.

²³³ *Ibid.*, 10-11.

they did in the West.²³⁴ However, the centrality of Jerusalem to pilgrimage may have been an exception giving rise to a similar dynamic.²³⁵ I would argue that Jerusalem is the exception, its bishops acting much as Brown suggests. The bishops of Jerusalem accrued power through the promotion of the holy sites, and the preservation of the holy sites in Jerusalem was canonized both at the councils of Nicaea and Chalcedon, where Jerusalem was elevated in honor and then recognized as a patriarchate due largely to the recognition of the holy sites.

Pilgrimage to Jerusalem sky-rocketed after Helena discovered the True Cross and Constantine enshrined it in the purpose built Anastasis, so much so that bishops everywhere lamented. For example, Gregory of Nyssa in *On Pilgrimages* complains that there are better and more shrines in Cappadocia and that travel to Jerusalem is unnecessary. The church of the Anastasis, known in the West as the Holy Sepulchre, housing both the cross and the tomb of Christ, was the ultimate destination. Pilgrimage continued; it could be slowed by bishops and war, but it proved unstoppable.

The unique position of Jerusalem and its holy places was recognized as early as the Council of Nicaea (325), which elevated Aelia (Jerusalem) in honor, while preserving its subordination to the Metropolitan of Caesarea and the patriarch of Antioch, keeping ecclesial power aligned with the imperial. Henry Chadwick finds in this elevation the beginning of bishops of Jerusalem attempting to elevate her to a patriarchate.²³⁶ Such ambition and political savvy coalesced in Juvenal, active at the councils of Ephesus I (431), Ephesus II (439) and Chalcedon (451), at which he finally achieved his goal. He

²³⁴ That is, once outside Constantinople and the immediate purview of the Byzantine emperor, where the Patriarchs tended to accrue secular powers in ways analogous to that of the Roman pontiff where imperial power was weak.

²³⁵ Zeeb Rubin (1999), "The Cult of the Holy Places and Christian Politics in Byzantine Jerusalem", in Lee I. Levine, ed., *Jerusalem: Its Sanctity and Centrality to Judaism, Christianity and Islam*, (New York: Continuum), 151-62.

²³⁶ Henry Chadwick (1960), "Faith and Order at the Council of Nicaea: A Note on the Background of the Sixth Canon", *Harvard Theological Review*, 53: 171-95, 174.

initially won independence for Jerusalem from Antioch at Ephesus II, but this was challenged at Chalcedon, and a private agreement between Juvenal and the patriarch of Antioch was worked out and then sanctioned by the Council. When all was said and done, the Patriarchate of Jerusalem was official, finally creating the Pentarchy of Rome, Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch and Jerusalem.²³⁷

With Persian rule the East Syrians returned to Palestine and with the Arab conquest the West Syrians assumed control of Antioch. As non-Chalcedonians they had mixed feelings regarding the recognition of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem, and the Arabs had not allowed a successor to Sophronius, the Patriarch of Jerusalem, who had surrendered Jerusalem to the Arabs. Although the patriarchate was vacant, not all was lost. The Chalcedonians under the Umayyads were denied their patriarchs in Antioch, Jerusalem and Alexandria, and their situation in Syro-Palestine would be dire, except that they had the caliphal ear in Damascus. A prominent administrator, a Chalcedonian survivor, remained in Damascus, Sergius ibn Manṣūr, the father of John of Damascus. His influence at court is probably all that stood between the Chalcedonians and their enemies. Apparently unable to wrest control of Jerusalem from the Chalcedonians, the more radical non-Chalcedonians also protested pilgrimage, but to no avail. The non-Chalcedonians considered sharing the liturgy (the Eucharist) or just communing with the holy martyrs in the presence of Chalcedonians a spiritual taint, and thus counseled

²³⁷ Ibid., 184-85. The agreement was ratified in the session on October 26, 451, for which see Richard Price and Michael Gaddis (2007, 2005), *The Acts of the Council of Chalcedon*, 3 vols. (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press), vol II, 244-45. Price and Gaddis note that neither Juvenal nor Maximus the bishop of Antioch were in strong personal positions, so the acceptance of their compromise, which arguably still violated the canons of Nicaea, was *mutatis mutandis* down to “the status of Jerusalem as the cradle of the church and a great centre of pilgrimage.”

against pilgrimage but to no avail.²³⁸ Patricia Horn highlights the significance of their dilemma:

The sincere anti-Chalcedonian living at a holy place had to choose between giving up his or her veneration of the holy place or accepting to share liturgical space and thus not being able to completely break communion with Chalcedonians in order to continue venerating at the holy places. That dilemma shows that the holy places had gained theological weight as proof for Christological doctrines.²³⁹

Horn affirms that hospitality offered to pilgrims included discussion and debate over “the proper confession of the faith,” thus theological debate was used to encourage pilgrims which shrines to visit, when to visit, how to worship at them, etc., all to avoid the spiritual taint of Chalcedonian or non-Chalcedonian control of the holy site as the case may be.²⁴⁰

Thus, pilgrimage continued as an actual practice even after the Arab conquest, and no destination was more sought than Jerusalem, the Holy City, especially the locations of Christ’s crucifixion and burial, both venerated within the church of the Anastasis.²⁴¹ Pilgrimage from outside the Arab world may have slowed, but some of these losses were offset by those once exiled from Byzantium. As the Arabs absorbed territories once divided between Byzantium and Persia, both West and East Syrian Christians (rejected by the councils at Chalcedon and Ephesus respectively) once again had access to Syro-Palestine and Jerusalem. Despite the efforts of their more proactive leadership, pilgrims journeyed to Jerusalem, and there they debated their faith.

²³⁸ Cornelia B. Horn (2006), *Asceticism and Christological Controversy in Fifth-Century Palestine: The Career of Peter the Iberian*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 244, 322. See also on the centrality of Jerusalem pilgrimage Jan-Eric Steppa, ed., (2002), *John Rufus and the World Vision of Anti-Chalcedonian Culture*, (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press), 244.

²³⁹ Horn (2006), 322.

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 294.

²⁴¹ On pilgrimage as a *topos* especially among Syriac authors see Brouria Bitton-Ashkelony (2010), “From Sacred Travel to Monastic Career: The Evidence of Late Antique Syriac Hagiography”, *Adamantius*, 16: 353-70, 357.

Muslim Pilgrimage under the Umayyads

Archeological surveys of roads leading to and from Jerusalem and Sinai show pilgrimage routes dotted with monasteries, suggesting a strong connection to the regional economy.²⁴² The Umayyads as local Arabs were probably well aware of the dependency of pilgrimage on local monasteries, but if not, surely they were made aware by the existing administrators they co-opted, who were intimately familiar with the economics of the region. The sources of the first two centuries of Islamic rule, routinely accused the Umayyads of “conspicuous consumption,” continually recounting fiscal issues—money: how to get it, extort it, hide it, spend and display it.²⁴³ Thus, the fiscal aspects of pilgrimage would not escape Umayyad notice.

Further, pilgrimage was not a uniquely Christian phenomenon in Syro-Palestine. Muslims went on pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina. In Mecca they worshiped at the Ka’ba—the most holy shrine in Islam—and in Medina they could visit Muhammad’s mosque which contained his tomb. Caliph ‘Abd al-Malik (r. 685–705) concerned that pilgrims were being unduly influenced by his rival in Mecca is reported by Ya‘qūbī (874) to have forbidden pilgrimage to Mecca.²⁴⁴ Probably to provide an alternative, ‘Abd al-Malik, made a substantial offer to acquire the cathedral of St John the Baptist in Damascus, but was refused by local Christians just as they had refused a previous

²⁴² Itamar Taxel (2009), *Khirbet Es-Suyyagh: A Byzantine Monastery in the Judaean Shephelah*, (Tel Aviv: Emery and Claire Yass Publications in Archaeology), 68-69.

²⁴³ Robert Hillenbrand, “Umayyad and early Abbasid courtly lifestyles: the evidence of palaces,” Colloquium on the Umayyad Qṭūr: New Perspectives, University of Oxford, 25-26 October 2013.

²⁴⁴ K. A. C. Creswell (1989, 1958), *A Short Account of Early Muslim Architecture*, (revised and enlarged by J. W. Allan; Aldershot, UK: Scolar Press), 19. Stetkevych writes, regarding the building of the Dome of the Rock, “I believe it is also certainly correct to understand ‘Abd al-Malik’s Jerusalem project as, on the one hand, a contingency plan (including redirecting the Islamic pilgrimage to Jerusalem) for temporary use until the Zubayrids were defeated, or even for permanent use as the cultic site of a second Islamic state with its administrative capital at Damascus (à la Mecca and Medina) if he could not prevail against them.” Suzanne P. Stetkevych (2016), “Al-Akḥṭal at the Court of ‘abd Al-Malik: The *Qaṣīda* and the Construction of Umayyad Authority”, in Antoine Borrut and Fred M. Donner, eds., *Christians and Others in the Umayyad State*, (Chicago, IL: The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago), 129-55, 131.

request by Mu‘āwiyah, governor of Syria (640–80), who became the first Umayyad caliph in Damascus (r. 661–80).²⁴⁵ ‘Abd al-Malik, however, had a more developed policy of Islamization and Arabization than his predecessors, which included consolidating multiple imperial languages (Greek and Persian) into Arabic, striking his own coinage, and if he could not enlarge the mosque in Damascus, he made a monumental statement no one (Jew, Christian or Muslim) could ignore. He commissioned what would become one of Islam’s holiest monuments within sight of the church of the Anastasis—the most holy Christian pilgrimage site.²⁴⁶

The Dome of the Rock (completed in 691–2)²⁴⁷ is one of the chief examples of ‘Abd al-Malik’s Islamization policy. It preserves and commemorates what came to be known as Mohammed’s night journey to heaven. Not only did it provide a pilgrimage site within his territory, it also served to display his wealth and power to Byzantine ambassadors, having been built using the church of the Anastasis as a model, copying and offering Muslim alternatives to several aspects of the Christian holy sites.²⁴⁸ Constantine himself had commissioned the church of the Anastasis, and Abd ‘al-Malik thought to rival him, copying many of its features. He built on top of the Jewish temple mount, one of the largest and holiest sites available (its antiquity meant it transcended merely ‘Jewish’ holiness and was respected as such by all). He could very well have thought to suggest that as Christianity replaced Judaism with the destruction of the temple and the construction of the Anastasis, Islam now replaced Christianity.²⁴⁹ This mentality likely

²⁴⁵ Al-Balādhurī (2002; reprint 1916), 191–92.

²⁴⁶ Robert Hoyland remarks that Jerusalem and the Temple Mount were considered holy (of “cultic significance”) by the Muslims based on both Muslim and non-Muslim sources, see him also on the twin processes of Islamization and Arabization: Hoyland (2015), 213–27.

²⁴⁷ Creswell (1989, 1958), 35–36.

²⁴⁸ Ibid., 20, 36–37.

²⁴⁹ I have in mind here what Guy Stroumsa calls the “*praeparatio islamica*”, i.e., “the ways in which what would become central tenets of the new religion were already incipient in late antique patterns of thought and behavior.” If Stroumsa is right, ‘Abd al-Malik probably considered Islam a superior conceptualization of what Jews and Christians already saw in the Hebrew Scriptures, suggesting that as

saw Judaism, Christianity and Islam as closely related competitors. The Anastasis had stared down upon the ruined temple mount, but when finished the Dome of the Rock dominated the skyline—it still does.

Upon his death, his son and successor, al-Walīd I (r. 705–15), continued his father’s policies. He also made another offer for the cathedral of St John the Baptist in Damascus, and was likely refused but accounts vary.²⁵⁰ In any event he acquired the site and built the Great Mosque of Damascus, which immediately became a central Muslim pilgrimage site. The Great Mosque, even after the Abbasid revolution would remain the standard against which all other mosques were measured. F. B. Flood summarizes al-Walīd’s singular achievement with the construction of the Great Mosque:

... marks a watershed in the development of the city. The construction of the Damascus mosque not only irrevocably altered the urban landscape of that city, inscribing upon it a permanent affirmation of Muslim hegemony, but by giving the Syrian congregational mosque its definitive form it also transformed the subsequent history of the mosque in general.²⁵¹

This construction project defined al-Walīd’s caliphate. The citizens felt and murmured regarding the drain on the treasury, and al-Walīd supervised construction over his entire reign (r. 705–15). Nevertheless, the question remains, why was al-Walīd successful here where both Abd ‘al-Malik and Mu‘āwiyah were not? Both previous caliphs were substantially more accomplished and influential. Why is the origin of this important

Christianity built on and replaced Judaism, so Islam Christianity. Guy Stroumsa, “Athens, Jerusalem and Mecca: the Patristics Crucible of the Abrahamic Religions,” *Crucible of the Abrahamic Religions Seminar*, University of Oxford: Michaelmas, 2012; originally, delivered at the Church of Saint Mary the Virgin, Jerusalem, IAPS: Summer, 2011.

²⁵⁰ Al-Balādhurī (2002; reprint 1916), 191-93. Hoyland gives a different notice for the same event apparently originating with the reconstructed source of Theophilus of Edessa and reproduced by the chronicles of Theophanes Confessor, Michael the Syrian, Agapius of Menbidj, and the *Anon. Chron. to 1234*. Hoyland ed., (2011), 199-200.

²⁵¹ Finbarr Barry Flood (2001), *The Great Mosque of Damascus: Studies on the Makings of an Umayyad Visual Culture*, (Leiden: Brill), 104.

and central monument, holy site, and Muslim pilgrimage destination shrouded in mystery?

Surrender Treaties and the so called Pact of Umar

Robert Hoyland argues that the “old idea” that the local population welcomed the invading Arabs is just wrong, even if it remains a commonplace in modern scholarly literature.²⁵² He argues that the success of the Arab conquest hinged on “a conciliatory attitude” and “tax exemption”.²⁵³ This state of affairs was no sea change but the clever exploitation of Roman and Persian ideals in the form of generous surrender treaties. Of course Hoyland does not entirely discount the standard tropes: the Roman and Persian empires had indeed exhausted themselves on each other and both the West and East Syrian non-Chalcedonians had been persecuted by Chalcedonian authorities. But he is quick to point out that the non-Chalcedonians were wont to note the indiscriminate slaughter of the Arabs, and that the Christian Arab mercenaries relied on so heavily by both Persian and Roman forces largely defected to the Muslim Arabs after the Battle of Yarmuk (636).²⁵⁴

This “conciliatory attitude” and “tax-exemption” manifested itself in various ways, including the use of spies and guides compensated by tax-exemption and war booty. Further, they exploited the ancient Middle Eastern custom of suzerainty treaties adopted and exploited by both the Byzantines and Persians.²⁵⁵ The Arabs, according to Hoyland, “made heavy use of agreements to respect life, property, and customs in return for submission and tribute.”²⁵⁶

²⁵² Hoyland (2015), 97.

²⁵³ Ibid.

²⁵⁴ Ibid., 95, 97.

²⁵⁵ Ibid., 96.

²⁵⁶ Ibid.

Hoyland notes that the Ninth-century Muslim chroniclers attempted to normalize this practice in simplified terms: convert, surrender, and pay poll-tax or die in battle, but that in actuality enough earlier “non-standard reports” survive to paint a more varied picture.²⁵⁷ Thus, although the ‘Pact of Umar’ may be largely the result of this process of legal refinement and historical revisionism, nevertheless, there were numerous actual surrender treaties noted by the chroniclers. Making sense of these treaties gave rise to and shaped the later tradition eventually resulting in the legendary ‘Pact of Umar’. This steady process of formation suggests that these treaties were of great legal significance in Islamic jurisprudence. By looking at these varied reports, the significance of the surrender treaties comes to the fore. Both Jerusalem and Damascus in particular had treaties that provided for the preservation of life and property, especially their churches.

The treaty related to the surrender of Jerusalem, reportedly negotiated in 638 by Sophronius, Patriarch of Jerusalem, with Umar I (r. 634–44) himself is of special significance. Sophronius probably heard that Damascus had surrendered under treaty and was spared, and thus he pressed for the same terms and to surrender to Umar himself, and this treaty in time then became the basis for various legendary accretions termed the ‘Pact of Umar’, no doubt because Umar had a stellar reputation as a just man and even as a juror.²⁵⁸

The developing Islamic jurisprudence that evolved into the ‘Pact of Umar’ listed and protected the status of the *dhimmis*—Christian, Jew, Samaritan, Magian, and Sabian, termed the “people of protection”. A. S. Tritton gives several forms of the covenant or pact of Umar in his classic study, highlighting several treaties for Damascus, but also

²⁵⁷ Ibid., 96-97.

²⁵⁸ On desiring the same terms as Syrian towns see Al-Balādhurī (2002; reprint 1916), 214. Al-Balādhuri does not indicate the bishop nor name Sophronius as the one who capitulated, but Theophanes does, see Mango and Scott, eds. (1997), [AM 6127], 471.

noting that the laws developed and generalized from these treaties were largely complete by 815. He discusses several treaties for Damascus, each protecting property (churches). He summarizes by saying, “no one knew what the covenant of Umar was, and that any collection of peace terms might be glorified with his name.”²⁵⁹

Thus, both Jerusalem and Damascus surrendered and were protected by treaty, so Christians could continue to govern themselves, their property and churches were protected, and they could worship as they were accustomed. However, limitations also existed from place to place, prohibiting the building of new churches or repairing the old, sometimes one or more churches were initially confiscated for Muslim use.

Nevertheless, if later the Arabs confiscated churches unlawfully they could be forced under their own rules to return them, and al-Balādhurī reports several examples of this, one in Damascus.²⁶⁰ In this example, Caliph ‘Umar II (r. 717–20) is reported to have responded to an inquiring Muslim regarding a disputed church, “If it is included in their covenant, thou has no claim on it.”²⁶¹ This report precedes a longer report regarding the cathedral of St John the Baptist in Damascus, and may serve to establish ‘Umar II’s credentials regarding his fair interpretation of the Damascus surrender treaty, and thus his ability to judge disputes just as his namesake had.

Then al-Balādhurī (d. 892) reports that Mu‘āwiyah, governor of Syria (640–80) and then the first Umayyad caliph in Damascus (r. 661–80), and his successor, (fifth Umayyad caliph) ‘Abd al-Malik (r. 685–05) both made unsuccessful offers to acquire the cathedral of St John the Baptist in Damascus to increase the size of the mosque

²⁵⁹ A. S. Tritton (1970, 1930), *The Caliphs and Their Non-Muslim Subjects: A Critical Study of the Covenant of ‘Umar*, (London: Frank Cass), 4-12.

²⁶⁰ Al-Balādhurī (2002; reprint 1916), 190.

²⁶¹ Ibid.

there.²⁶² Both offers were rejected by the local Christian leadership, both men apparently respecting the treaty rights of the Christians. However, ‘Abd al-Malik’s son and successor, al-Walīd (r. 705–15) made the same request after his father’s death. He was initially refused just as before, but al-Balādhurī reports that he was insulted by the refusal and growing indignant proceeded to confiscate the church. Surprisingly, there is no record of complaint by the Christians as in the example above where the protected church in Damascus no less was returned to the Christians.

Nevertheless, al-Balādhurī recounts that some Christians did eventually bring a complaint to a successor caliph, ‘Umar II (r. 717–20), just over a decade later, who probably had no first-hand knowledge of al-Walīd’s actions.²⁶³ ‘Umar honored the treaty as he had in the past complaint (also in Damascus, recounted above), instructing the cathedral be returned, but when the citizens of Damascus hesitated, two Muslim canonists negotiated a substantial settlement with the Christians, pleasing ‘Umar: “They then came to the Christians and proposed to turn over to them all the churches of al-Ghūṭah that had been taken by force and were in the hands of the Muslims, provided they give up the church of St John and cease to assert their claim on it. The Christians rather seemed to favor the proposition and consented to it.”²⁶⁴ Al-Balādhurī (d. 892) of Persian stock, writing nearly two centuries after these events in Abbasid Baghdad from sources dated to the mid-9th century, has collected accounts which suggest two things: 1) the original acquisition of the cathedral of St John the Baptist was contested and of concern to both Christians and Muslims, and 2) later Muslim historians were compelled to provide an etiological account of the just acquisition of the site to ensure the Great

²⁶² This was noted in the previous section, see footnote 250. Ibid., 191-92. See also, Henri Lammens (1930), *Études sur le siècle des omayyades*, (Beirut: Imprimerie Catholique), 269-304. Flood (2001).

²⁶³ ‘Umar II, son of the governor of Egypt, was al-Walīd’s cousin, and thus unlikely to have had first-hand knowledge of court intrigue in Damascus itself.

²⁶⁴ Al-Balādhurī (2002; reprint 1916), 192.

Mosque of Damascus, one of their holiest sites, was not somehow tainted by controversy.

This, however, leaves the real details of the acquisition unknown, and it seems unlikely they were ever documented, if within a decade a sizable ransom could be raised to satisfy both Christian and Muslim complaints of injustice. Nevertheless, perhaps an explanation is possible by stepping back and looking at related events?

The Isolation of the Syro-Palestinian Chalcedonians

Whether Rome or Constantinople, the West remained interested in Jerusalem, but their efforts at involvement by the beginning of the eighth century were largely reduced to pilgrimage. Their involvement, however attenuated, was quite probably misdirected as far as the Chalcedonians in Damascus were concerned. Rome exploited their past relationship with Sophronius by continuing to appoint papal *vicarii* in Palestine, who attempted to ordain bishops to counter the non-Chalcedonians, but these were looked on with suspicion by the local Chalcedonians.²⁶⁵ And, Constantinople appointed non-resident care-taker bishops, who participated in councils in Constantinople, but who played little or no role in the local Chalcedonian church in the three patriarchates of Antioch, Jerusalem and Alexandria (more on this below). Further, both the West and East Syrian churches, neither accepting the council of Chalcedon (451) on which the independence of Jerusalem depended, treated Jerusalem as part of the Patriarchate of Antioch, and thus under their respective non-Chalcedonian bishop of Antioch. Yet the Arabs allowed Jerusalem to remain under the control of the Chalcedonians, probably as a political wedge used to threaten the dominant non-Chalcedonians, particularly the West Syrians, who had the only patriarch recognized by the Arabs. The political

²⁶⁵ Richard Price (2014), *The Acts of the Lateran Synod of 649*, (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press), 397.

strategy was simple: the Arabs kept the imperial church, i.e. the Chalcedonians, weak by denying them a patriarch in the three sees Antioch, Jerusalem and Alexandria. They split the non-Chalcedonians by allowing the Copts in Alexandria and the West Syrians to control their respective Christian communities, and marginalized the East Syrians who were dominant in Persia, but now the West Syrians controlled Mesopotamia, simultaneously allowing the East Syrians access to Jerusalem but forcing their interests even further east. The Chalcedonian minority was used at the top to provide the Arabs with knowledgeable administrators while also used as a wedge with which to threaten either side with the increased losses in Jerusalem.

The Arab conquest and subsequent Umayyad policy had from the start denied the Chalcedonian (imperial) church its patriarchal thrones in Antioch, Jerusalem and Alexandria. Further, the death of Sophronius—elevated to the patriarchal throne at the beginning of 634, surrendered Jerusalem to the Arab prince Umar in February 638, and died on March 11 of either 638 or 639—left the throne vacant under the Umayyads.²⁶⁶ But, then for no apparent reason Arab policy did a volte-face, and they allowed the patriarchal throne in Jerusalem, vacant then for 67 years, to be filled by John V. Why? The chroniclers no matter their language or religious commitment are most unusually silent on this. Further, there is neither lament from the non-Chalcedonians or self-congratulation among the Chalcedonians themselves; thus, there is complete silence on this significant event.

Rome Otherwise Occupied

Rome, prevented by the Arabs from official intervention in the Holy Land in the early eighth century, was not disinterested or unaware. The Latin Christian pilgrims Arculf

²⁶⁶ On the impact of the invasions on Sophronius see David Olster (1994), *Roman Defeat, Christian Response and the Literary Construction of the Jew*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press).

(c. 680) and Willibald (c. 754) are reported to have gone throughout the Holy Land as no doubt others did, and the Roman hierarchy however informally no doubt debriefed them.²⁶⁷ Arculf appears to have journeyed with relative ease but by the mid-eighth century Willibald beset by delays was even briefly detained by the Arabs as a spy, which suggests that pilgrims could be viewed as agents of foreign powers.²⁶⁸

By the early eighth century the Lombards reached the zenith of their power wedging themselves between Rome and Rome's traditional northern allies the Franks. The aggressive Lombards eventually captured Ravenna in 754, and Rome's overtures to the Franks, rejected by Charles Martel were eventually accepted by his successor, Pepin, on the condition that the Pope recognize him "as the Christian ruler in the West" and offer some guarantee that his sons would succeed him.²⁶⁹ The Pope agreed, finding the authority he needed in the forged *Donation of Constantine*.²⁷⁰ These tensions, however, which kept Rome's focus away from Palestine, were exacerbated and framed by the weak papal leadership heading into the eighth century:

In the history of the Church the pontificate of Gregory the Great [590–604] was of immense importance; but after him the papacy enjoyed little popularity and exerted little influence, which illustrated the need for a strong personality in an office which was not of itself capable of commanding obedience and respect. There were twenty popes in the century from 604 to 701 and few lived long enough to have any lasting effect. By the turn of the century Gregory's pontificate was a distant memory and the popes were struggling to keep control even of Rome itself.²⁷¹

²⁶⁷ For English translation see Palestine Pilgrims' Text Society (1895), *The Library of the Palestine Pilgrims' Text Society*, trans. James Rose Macpherson et al., vol. 3, 10 vols. (London: Palestine Pilgrims' Text Society).

²⁶⁸ The deterioration of Mediterranean travel conditions encountered by pilgrims including Willibald are discussed by J. Moorhead. Moorhead (2013, 2001), 291-93.

²⁶⁹ J. Derek Holmes and Bernard W. Bickers (2002, 1992, 1983), *A Short History of the Catholic Church*, (Revised edn.; London: Burns & Oates), 54.

²⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 55.

²⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 52.

Nevertheless, however preoccupied with developments in the West, Rome was not only debriefing pilgrims but Pope Martin after the Lateran Synod of 649 appointed bishop John of Philadelphia as papal *vicarius* in the patriarchates of Jerusalem and Antioch, but nothing is known of his work.²⁷² Later the *Liber Pontificalis* reports that Pope Gregory II (715–31) made repairs to “the holy Jerusalem church,” showing awareness and even that involvement was still possible, if at reduced levels.²⁷³

Thus, as far as the Chalcedonian leadership in Damascus was concerned, and indeed, throughout the life of John of Damascus, not only was the leadership of Gregory the Great a distant memory, but Rome itself was present only indirectly through Latin pilgrims willing to report back, the occasional *vicarii* attempting to appoint Chalcedonian bishops with limited or no success, and financial help for repairs of a few holy sites and churches. There was, however, to my knowledge no communication with the Chalcedonian leadership in Damascus by Rome.²⁷⁴

Constantinople Gives Up

Rome may have been squared off against the Lombards at the beginning of the eighth century, but Constantinople appears to historians to have a “relatively peaceful internal government” and was “moderately successful” at holding its own against the Arabs.²⁷⁵ Further, Chalcedonians appeared to maintain some tacit connection to Constantinople. Bernard Flusin maintains that “links with Constantinople, however, even if difficult,

²⁷² Thanks to Marek Jankowiak for sharing an unpublished paper on the Patriarchate of Jerusalem with me for this information. Further, note that John of Philadelphia was replacing the overzealous Stephen of Dor, who may have soured many on John of Philadelphia’s papal mission.

²⁷³ *Liber Pontificalis* 91.8. For English translation see Raymond David, ed., (2007, 1992), *The Lives of the Eighth-Century Popes (Liber Pontificalis): The Ancient Biographies of Nine Popes from Ad 715 to Ad 817*, (Revised edn.; Liverpool: Liverpool University Press), 8.

²⁷⁴ Earlier but perhaps indicative of the situation, Pope Martin wrote letters to the Jerusalem and Antioch patriarchates after the Lateran Synod of 649. He did not communicate with Damascus, and even rebuked Panteleon, a cleric in Jerusalem, defending his policy of appointing bishops in these areas. Thus, it seems to me that John’s family and the Damascus leadership they supported were indeed a minority party, who seem not to be recognized by Rome.

²⁷⁵ John F. Haldon (1997), *Byzantium in the Seventh Century: The Transformation of a Culture*. (Revised edn.; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

were not definitively interrupted”.²⁷⁶ Thus, in spite of the preoccupations of Byzantine politics Constantinople did not remain unaware of developments among Chalcedonians under Arab rule. Although pilgrimage from outside the Umayyad caliphate had slowed, it did not cease. Official communications seem to be lacking here too, just as with Rome; nevertheless, hagiographical sources indicate that even semi-official embassies, however muted, did take place. For example, in 685 Andrew of Crete, who at the time was a monk of the monastery associated with the church of the Anastasis, “was part of a delegation sent to Constantinople to express the adhesion of the church of Jerusalem to the decision of the Sixth Ecumenical Council (680–1).”²⁷⁷ Thus, whether it was the result of continued pilgrimage or even semi-official delegation, Constantinople and the Chalcedonians seemed to maintain some awareness of each other’s affairs. Thus, with this ‘peace’ between the Byzantines and the Arabs, the Chalcedonians may have felt a status quo developing that would leave them even more isolated.

Further, it would be misleading to read the bishop lists in Figure 2 above as though there were Chalcedonian bishops present in Antioch after the Arab conquest.

Anastasius II was probably killed in 609 by a Jewish mob during the Persian invasion of Cappadocia, and he was not replaced.²⁷⁸ Antioch was captured by the Arabs without a capitulation treaty in 636/7.²⁷⁹ It seems that not until 742 did the Arabs allow the election of a local resident patriarch (Stephen III, r. 742/3–44/5).²⁸⁰ Further, Wolfram Brandes confirms that the Chalcedonian patriarchs of Antioch between Anastase II and

²⁷⁶ Bernard Flusin (2011), “Palestinian Hagiography (Fourth-Eighth Centuries)”, in Stephanos Efthymiadis, ed., *The Ashgate Research Companion to Byzantine Hagiography: Vol 1 - Periods and Places*, (Aldershot: Ashgate), 199-226, 215. See also Auzépy (2015).

²⁷⁷ Berardino ed., (2000), 161. Note that Andrew of Crete was raised in Damascus and educated in Jerusalem at the Anastasis, thus suggesting the centrality of the Anastasis and the Damascus elite rather than Mar Saba in the late seventh century.

²⁷⁸ Mango and Scott, eds. (1997), [AM 6100-01], 424-425, murder by soldiers in 610 is also possible, 427n3.

²⁷⁹ Ibid., [AM 6129], 473.

²⁸⁰ Ibid., [AM 6234], 577.

Stephen III listed in the figure above were non-resident Constantinopolitan appointees, which means from 609 to 742 there was no resident Chalcedonian patriarch in Antioch most likely because of either Persian or Arab policy.²⁸¹

In 692 Justinian II hosted within the imperial palace the Quinisext Council at which he ensured Constantinopolitan equality with Rome was reassured, but Rome rejected the canons of the council. Justinian had ordered the Pope's arrest, but failing this was ousted in a coup in 695, in which he was mutilated and banished. Further, upon the death of George in 702, caretaker bishop of Antioch at the Quinisext Council, Constantinople seems to have stopped appointing caretaker bishops for Antioch. Given this the Damascus Chalcedonian leadership probably saw the Byzantine and Arab collusion in 703 and 704 against the Armenians as an additional sign of a new status quo in favor of the Arabs (isolating them even more), especially with the "continuous loss of frontier districts" to the Arabs.²⁸² Worse, the vengeful return of Justinian II in 705 resulted in a "reign of terror and revenge" that included the blinding of Callinicus, Patriarch of Constantinople, suggestive of the unilateral actions of Justinian's religious policy in his previous tenure.²⁸³ He did not forget, raining vengeance on his enemies at his return in 705 in spite of the city being ravaged by plague.²⁸⁴ Consequently, the "relative peace" was giving way to circumstances no doubt increasingly perceived as detrimental by the distant minority under Arab rule.

Rome's rejection of the Quinisext Council canons and subsequent blinding of the patriarch by the vengeful Christian emperor no doubt left a deep impression of eschatological import on the small and beleaguered community of Chalcedonians in

²⁸¹ Brandes Wolfram (1998), "Die melkitischen patriarchen von Antiocheia im 7. Jahrhundert. Anzahl und Chronologie", *Le Muséon*, 111/3-4: 37-57.

²⁸² Haldon (1997), 76.

²⁸³ Ibid., 77.

²⁸⁴ Ibid., 73-77.

Damascus. They probably wondered in the first years of the eighth century if they had any friends left in the world, and thus their isolation was never more tangible.

The Isolated Chalcedonians Implode: The Maronite Schism

Butros Dau, Maronite historian, is quick to point out that the Chalcedonian patriarchs of Antioch after the Persian invasion and Arab conquest were all appointed by and remained resident in Constantinople, and none ever set foot in Antioch, thus failing to perform their pastoral duties.²⁸⁵ This led the Maronites *inter alia* to elect their own bishop (ostensibly as Patriarch of Antioch in 686 and possibly named John Maron).²⁸⁶ Perhaps a better reason was the friction over Maximus and his doctrine between the Chalcedonians. Maronite misgivings no doubt festered from the failure of the ‘Heraclian unions’²⁸⁷ based on monenergist policy in the early 630s. These unions foundered when opposed by Sophronius and Maximus the Confessor, whom the Maronites rejected. The Maronite misgivings would have flared after the third Council of Constantinople (680–1)²⁸⁸ confirmed Maximus’ doctrine of two operations and wills. With monotheletism repudiated in 680–1 the Maronites in Syro-Palestine apparently lost enough ground that the Jerusalem church sent a delegation to Constantinople to indicate their support in 685.²⁸⁹ Thus, the Maronites were probably refusing to admit defeat and accept dyotheletism by hunkering down with a bunker mentality electing their own bishop in 686 in order to survive.

²⁸⁵ Butros Dau (1984), *History of the Maronites: Religious, Cultural and Political* (Lebanon: B. Dau), 204-06. B. Dau’s apologetic aims will be briefly noted in a subsequent chapter.

²⁸⁶ Ibid., 206. This is disputed and probably etiological.

²⁸⁷ Phil Booth (2014), *Crisis of Empire: Doctrine and Dissent at the End of Late Antiquity*, (Berkeley: University of California Press), 200-08. A more succinct treatment of Sophronius’ and Maximus’ opposition is found in Pauline Allen, ed., (2009), *Sophronius of Jerusalem and Seventh-Century Heresy: The Synodical Letter and Other Documents - Introduction, Texts, Translations, and Commentary*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

²⁸⁸ Regarding the split over 1) rejection of Maximus the Confessor; 2) rejection of the sixth council of Constantinople (681) and 3) acceptance of the changes to the Trisagion, see Palmer (1993), 25-27.

²⁸⁹ Siméon Vailhé (1902), “Saint André de Crète”, *Échos d’Orient*, 5/6: 378-87, 381.

Whatever the precise justification or action of the Maronites, electing their own bishop would have had significant repercussions for Chalcedonianism in Syro-Palestine. It would effectively divide the Chalcedonians, and this was probably along doctrinal lines, i.e. over their rejection of Maximus and his two wills in Christ. The Chalcedonians in Damascus accepted Maximus and his doctrine, but the Maronites did not. However, with Maximus vindicated if not quite rehabilitated, followed by the Jerusalem church's embassy, the Maronites appear to have elected their own bishop, no doubt of great concern to the dyothelite Chalcedonians in Damascus and Jerusalem. According to Michael the Syrian (d. 1199), as late as 746 the Maronites still refused to capitulate to dyotheletism even under Arab pressure, electing their own patriarch of Antioch again, rejecting the dyothelite successor to Stephen III, Theophylactos, who was approved by the Arabs.²⁹⁰ Thus, the on going Maronite 'schism' would have certainly been an important issue for the reestablished Jerusalem Patriarchate.²⁹¹ Consequently, both the failed interventionist policies of Rome and Constantinople and the internal division of the Chalcedonians in Syro-Palestine resulted in further isolation of the supporters of Maximus.

Identity Preservation Requires Decisive Action

Closer to home, however, Jerusalem under Arab rule seemed to be on its own. The West Syrian bishop of Antioch may have considered Jerusalem within his jurisdiction, but it is unclear how much if any control he had over Jerusalem and the holy sites.²⁹² In

²⁹⁰ Chabot ed., (1901, 1899–1910), vol. II, 511.

²⁹¹ Michael the Syrian reports a Maronite schism in 727, to be looked at below, but whether electing a bishop in 686 or another event in 727, Maronite intra-sectarian rejection of Maximus would remain a central issue for the Jerusalem Patriarchate.

²⁹² The dynamics were complicated, because Jerusalem was initially under Caesarea, which was the metropolitan city of Palestina Prima and in the orbit of Antioch. Their roles were reversed when Jerusalem was elevated at the synod of 449 which the West Syrians accepted but Chalcedonians rejected, but then the Chalcedonians accepted a compromise at Chalcedon, which the West Syrians rejected. So

part this was no doubt because Damascus, ostensibly within the purview of the bishop of Antioch, remained firmly Chalcedonian.²⁹³ The Chalcedonians, however, had their own bishop of Antioch, George II (c. 685–c. 702). Ostensibly autonomous as patriarch, nevertheless, he was probably not entirely autonomous with respect to the Chalcedonian leadership in Damascus, because he had probably fled to Constantinople at some point if indeed he was ever resident at all. The ties of the Christian community in Damascus to the caliphate seem to have made it somewhat independent. Further, ostensibly the Arab preference for the non-Chalcedonian leadership made any connection of the Damascene Chalcedonians to Constantinople tenuous if not dangerous. The confusion in this period regarding the Chalcedonians and the rival bishops of Antioch is summarized by J. Haldon:

There is some evidence that the Chalcedonian clergy – including the patriarchs – did continue to reside in their sees in the areas taken by Islam from the 640s, attending the sixth ecumenical council and the Quinisext Council, although the first unequivocal evidence suggests that it was finally only in 742 that the Chalcedonian patriarch of Antioch was allowed to take up his position, although the skeleton of a Melkite Church subsisted throughout the intervening years; and it was only in 706 and 744 that Chalcedonian patriarchs were elected once again in Jerusalem and Alexandria respectively.²⁹⁴

This confusion is borne out by the bishop lists in the figure above, noting that the dates for the Chalcedonian bishops given for Antioch in the seventh century after the Arab conquest are not known with any certainty.²⁹⁵ Further, when George II of Antioch died in 702 he was not replaced, neither locally—probably prohibited by the caliph—nor

the West Syrian stance towards Jerusalem was potentially unstable. On this see Price and Gaddis (2007, 2005), vol. 2, 244.

²⁹³ The West Syrians had monasteries in and around Damascus, but the Chalcedonians controlled the cathedral and the powerful Manṣūr family controlled taxation and had the ear of the caliph, yet the Chalcedonians remained a minority.

²⁹⁴ Haldon (1997), 288.

²⁹⁵ See the Figure 2 – Bishops and vacancies in late antiquity, noting that the Chalcedonian vacancy after George II in Antioch would last 40 years.

from Constantinople with another caretaker bishop, resulting in a long vacancy.²⁹⁶

Neither was the East Syrian bishop, Hananisho I (686–700) replaced on his death, resulting in a fourteen year vacancy not filled until 714.²⁹⁷ Consequently, a lack of residency and the poor attestation of these bishops, suggests a certain weakness to their rule. Nevertheless, H. Kennedy maintains that “throughout the early Islamic period, Antioch remained, as it had in Byzantine times, the most important center of [‘Proto-’] Melkite Christianity in northern Syria.”²⁹⁸ This was because of the Greek cultural hold on the large metropolitan area, and thus, the Chalcedonians in Damascus would feel the loss in Antioch as strategic even if the bishop had been non-resident.

On the other hand, the Chalcedonians in Damascus had a strategic advantage over the Patriarch of Antioch in the close ties of the Manṣūr family with the Umayyad caliphate. This relationship began with the negotiated surrender of Damascus to the Arabs in which the Manṣūr family appears to have played a central role, and reached its zenith with caliph ‘Abd al-Malik (685–705), who was “very friendly” with his finance minister, Sergius ibn Manṣūr, the father of John of Damascus.²⁹⁹ On this basis it is

²⁹⁶ On the other hand, if the Maronites did elect their own patriarch in the late seventh century, this action could be the catalyst that convinces Constantinople of the futility of appointing non-resident bishops for Antioch. Then the vacancy after George may have then convinced the Chalcedonians in Damascus that Syria was lost to them, and since they were outnumbered by the West Syrians even around Damascus, perhaps they took this as a queue to negotiate a move to Jerusalem.

²⁹⁷ See Figure 2. It is also important to note that although Antioch was the patriarchate, the actual sphere of activity between each confession differed. Antioch as a Roman imperial city was always a center of Greek culture and thus the Chalcedonians were always strong in the city, however, the West Syrians dominated the countryside. The East Syrians, when eventually expelled from the Byzantine Empire after Ephesus (431), moved the patriarch (termed ‘catholicos’) to the capital of the Persian Empire, Seleucia-Ctesiphon, to cultivate patronage, and later under Timothy I (780–823) to Baghdad for the same reason. G. Troupeau indicates that the independence of the East Syrian hierarchy was recognized in the early 4th century by a letter from the western (Byzantine) bishops to the Catholicos Baba (310–329), suggesting that an ‘arms-length’ working relationship was maintained. Gérard Troupeau (1993), “Églises et chrétiens dans l’Orient musulman”, in Gilbert Dagron et al., eds., *Évêques, moines et empereurs (610–1054)*, (Paris: Desclée), 375-456, 438.

²⁹⁸ Kennedy (1986), 333.

²⁹⁹ Mango and Scott, eds. (1997), [AM 6183], 510. Further, there is also evidence that even the grandfather of John of Damascus was considered “a known friend of the *Ṭayyāyē* [Arabs]” by an anonymous West Syrian chronicler. See *Anon. Chron. to 1234.*, J.-B. Chabot, (CSCO 109, SS 56; 1937), 194.

generally assumed that the de facto ‘headquarters’ of the Chalcedonian camp shifted from Antioch to Damascus early on under the Arabs.³⁰⁰ Thus, the cathedral church of Damascus, the church of St John the Baptist, was very likely the strategic center of Chalcedonian operations in Syro-Palestine, covering the patriarchates of both Antioch and Jerusalem.

No doubt giving ever greater consideration to the growing nature of the litigious nature of early Islamic culture under the Umayyads, the Chalcedonian leadership in Damascus would have been very sensitive to any claims made to Jerusalem and the holy sites by the West Syrian bishop of Antioch, who might attempt to press pre-Chalcedonian canonical rights to the holy city.³⁰¹ In short, Jerusalem was previously under the metropolitan of Caesarea, who was under Antioch, and Damascus as well was a metropolitan under Antioch, but there was no bishop in Caesarea at this time according to G. Fedalto, so at the death of the Chalcedonian bishop of Antioch, the West Syrian bishop of Antioch could press for control of Jerusalem, although whether he actually did so is not known.³⁰² Thus, the deaths of these bishops in the early eighth century, leaving only the West Syrian bishop of Antioch in place resulted in shifts in the balance of power (or at least the threat of such) in the region of Syro-Palestine. This no doubt was a cause of great anxiety for the Chalcedonian leadership in Damascus, fearing the loss of control of the holy sites in Jerusalem and their attendant revenue.

³⁰⁰ Antioch’s control of Syria may have been previously weakened during Persian rule. The one constant throughout the political upheaval in Syria of the seventh century was the control of the tax collection by John’s family, thus their power in Damascus preceded Arab rule.

³⁰¹ I will develop this litigious nature below as it relates to the legendary Pact of Umar, however, the byzantine mind, ready to negotiate, is delineated in George C. Maniatis (2011), “The Centrality of the Contract in the Process of Economic Exchange in Byzantium”, *Byzantinische Zeitschrift*, 104/2: 665-704. I am not suggesting a surrender treaty is a business contract, only that synergies exist between the two, e.g. although contracts are generally between equals, whereas surrender treaties are not, nevertheless the ‘aggressive negotiating’ mindset going into each and the provisions of each are very similar with perhaps the more usual business contract informing the rare occasion when one has to surrender to a foreign power.

³⁰² Giorgio Fedalto (1983), “Liste vescovili del patriarcato di Gerusalemme - I. Gerusalemme e Palestina prima; II. Palestina seconda e Palestina terza”, *Orientalia Christiana Periodica*, 49: 5-41, 261-83, 30.

Further, Alexandria was also controlled by a non-Chalcedonian bishop. R. Hoyland notes that the non-Chalcedonians had established an independent hierarchy prior to the Arab conquest, thus whether in Antioch or Alexandria they were poised to take the initiative. Thus, Hoyland summarizes, “they were well placed to take advantage of the virtual self-rule that the Arabs expected of them.”³⁰³ This no doubt directly reflected the Arab association of the Chalcedonians with the imperial church in Constantinople, further isolating the Chalcedonians under Arab rule from the Byzantine and Latin churches. In fact, in Alexandria there was no Chalcedonian bishop from Peter III (643/4–51) until Cosmas I (742–68), a vacancy of nearly one hundred years.³⁰⁴ More germane, however, by 702 and the death of the Chalcedonian bishop of Antioch, the Chalcedonian vacancy in Alexandria was already over fifty years in the making. Thus, the Chalcedonian leadership in Damascus at the death of George II was completely isolated with three patriarchates vacant and little prospect of filling them.

Consequently, its ties to the caliphate were more important than ever. In fact, given that Rome rejected the Quinisext Council’s canons and Justinian embarked on a “reign of terror and revenge,” the Chalcedonian leadership in Damascus could easily feel it alone preserved orthodoxy, but teetered on the precipice, and thus must act decisively to preserve its isolated minority community as the sole conservators of orthodoxy.

Consequently, although pilgrimage continued in spite of Arab rule, growing preoccupations consistently turned Rome and Constantinople’s attention elsewhere. This coupled with ecclesial vacancies and politics all conspired against Chalcedonian interests threatening their survival. The Chalcedonian leadership had no choice but to take decisive action or face inevitable decline. The obvious choice was to press for the

³⁰³ Hoyland (2015), 161.

³⁰⁴ There was probably, nevertheless, a shadow hierarchy maintained in order to at least collect taxes, which would have been collected and paid by the patriarch recognized by the Arabs.

immediate replacement of George II, Patriarch of Antioch, as Antioch was a Chalcedonian stronghold in Syria. Besides, to make a pitch for Alexandria – the one time ‘breadbasket’ of the Byzantines – would be risky given the long vacancy and the continued perception of its strategic significance. Further, it was so far away it would risk weakening their position in Damascus and certainly the loss of influence in Antioch, which could not be tolerated. Thus, securing Antioch must have loomed large to the Chalcedonian leadership, and naturally the caliph would expect them to bargain for the replacement of George II. However, Antioch would prove impossible!

The Chalcedonians faced two fundamental problems resulting from the death of George II. With only the West Syrian patriarch active it is likely that, first, Chalcedonian monasteries would assert their authority and without the moderating force of a patriarch they would act unilaterally, perhaps even with monks occasionally degenerating into thuggery. Second, old disagreements within the Chalcedonian camp itself surfaced risking schism between their monastic communities.³⁰⁵ The Maronites had already divided the Chalcedonians in Syro-Palestine by electing their own bishop, which no doubt would make controlling the area around Antioch difficult if not problematic.

If the Chalcedonian patriarchs of Antioch were not resident these problems had probably already arisen to some degree, and the death of George II only exacerbated them rather than giving rise to them. The Chalcedonians in Damascus faced serious challenges to their authority. They were certainly not universally recognized, as the Maronites rejected their leadership by a schismatic election. Thus, the Chalcedonians

³⁰⁵ Many Chalcedonians for example were tempted to adopt the West Syrian changes to the Trisagion hymn in the liturgy, “who was crucified for us”. For those who addressed the hymn to the Trinity this was heresy amounting to the crucifixion of the divine nature, but for those who addressed it to the Son it was a welcome addition. A. Louth summarizes these concerns and notes that Syrians were conflicted on this issue. John of Damascus addresses this issue in more than one place, but especially in a letter answering a monastic query concerned about division on this issue: *Epistle on the Thrice-Holy Hymn* [CPG 8049]. Kotter, iv, 304-32. On the controversy and John’s response see, Louth (2002), 163-64.

had several practical problems: they could negotiate a replacement with either the Arabs or Constantinople or both. But, all scenarios had associated risks. Constantinople might appoint one themselves or simply refuse to recognize the local appointee. If Constantinople did appoint another and the Chalcedonians recognized him, they could run afoul of Arab suspicions. On the other hand, whoever appointed him his efforts would be mitigated if not hamstrung by internal Chalcedonian schismatics. These political considerations were no doubt endlessly debated by the leadership in Damascus.

In sum, the pressures outlined above: 1) the attenuation of Constantinopolitan and Roman involvement in Syro-Palestine to a reduced pilgrimage; 2) the ecclesial and resultant monastic chaos caused by long vacancies; 3) internal rifts within the Chalcedonian ranks, and also 4) since Antioch was without a surrender treaty it would leave them subject to confiscation. This would all demand the action of the Chalcedonian leadership. The Maronites seem to have responded by electing their own bishop, and the Damascus Chalcedonian leadership benefitting from a surrender treaty would recognize the added risk of relocating to Antioch without one. Then, catalyzing the situation to unbearable heights, the death of the Chalcedonian and East Syrian bishops of Antioch within two years of each other shifted the balance of power to the West Syrian bishop of Antioch forcing the Chalcedonian leadership to take preemptive action to avert the possible take-over of Jerusalem and its holy sites. Seeking patriarchs for either Antioch or Alexandria, however, most likely proved too risky if not already politically impossible.

Therefore, I propose that this situation could lead to only one logical outcome. The Chalcedonians in Damascus sought to reestablish the Jerusalem Patriarchate. The Chalcedonians must have realized that being deep in Arab territory and inland,

Jerusalem was not a military asset of the same character as Antioch or Alexandria, but with continued pilgrimage the possession of the holy sites would entail an income and thus the survival of Chalcedonian orthodoxy, and also being subject to a surrender treaty they would be afforded similar protections enjoyed in Damascus. But, after decades of vacancy, why would the Arabs allow the minority Chalcedonian party to suddenly reestablish the patriarchate?

Quid Pro Quo: Cathedral for Patriarchate

In the light of so much circumstantial evidence I am convinced that Sidney Griffith has provided what I believe to be a programmatic statement. Speaking both to the centrality of Jerusalem and the holy sites, as well as to the consequent motivation for the Chalcedonian Christians to work to maintain their control of the Anastasis, rather than seek control of Antioch or Alexandria, S. Griffith argues:

In the early years of Umayyad times, all of these ecclesial communities had interests in the Holy Land. The see of Jerusalem, with its single officially ‘Chalcedonian’ hierarchical establishment, nevertheless remained the pilgrimage center for all Christians and under Muslim rule Syrian and Armenian ‘Jacobites’ and ‘Nestorians’ were a notable presence in the environs of the church of the Anastasis, the Holy Sepulchre. Here the adherents of all the principal confessional allegiances met and often argued their respective cases.³⁰⁶

Having outlined the dire situation of the Chalcedonians headquartered in Damascus at the beginning of the eighth century and in the previous chapter the life of John of Damascus as most likely placing him in Jerusalem for the reestablishment of the Jerusalem Patriarchate and the elevation of his spiritual mentor, John V, I return to the question raised above: after long decades of vacancy, why would the Arabs allow the

³⁰⁶ Griffith (2011), 214.

minority Chalcedonian party to lay claim to Jerusalem and the holy sites in the dramatic action of reestablishing the patriarchate?

If no Chalcedonian patriarch was resident in Antioch since the Persian conquest, there was, as the Maronites complained, effectively over 100 years of vacancy. Further, the Chalcedonian vacancy in Alexandria was over 50 years in the making by the early eighth century (and the Arab resolve would play out in Egypt for decades more). Even if the Maronite claims are discounted, their dislike of and conflict with other Chalcedonians over Maximus is too well attested to ignore, thus if not actual schism, certainly they represent a divisive tendency among West Syrian Chalcedonians.

Finally, even if there was some level of support from the Damascus Chalcedonian leadership for the non-resident Byzantine appointed care-taker bishops of Antioch, the failure to appoint a replacement after the death of George II, would certainly catalyze the crisis. Thus, there are multiple and good reasons to suppose the situation dire.

More to the point though, the Umayyads had not allowed Sophronius (d. c. 638) to be replaced in Jerusalem even though he surrendered under treaty. Yet treaty enforcement was a growing mark of Islamic jurisprudential pride. Further, their program of Islamization and Arabization demonstrably accelerated with the building of the Dome of the Rock and the consolidation of administrative languages. Consequently, allowing the reestablishment of the Jerusalem Patriarchate, right in the middle of their program to laud Islam as the final (even eschatological) replacement to Judaism and Christianity by visibly taking over Jerusalem, just does not make sense and demands an explanation.

Perhaps the Umayyads did not want all forms of decline equally. Perhaps they saw the future of Jerusalem in terms of a new sort of pilgrimage, a financial vehicle meant to milk Christians while strangling them by strengthening their weakest members to

ensure the inner divisions were exacerbated, showing off the new Islamic centrality in a vitalizing of Islamic pilgrimage while tolerating Christian pilgrimage? Known for their conspicuous consumption the Umayyads might well think, “Why stop what can be taxed?”³⁰⁷

Considering the financial advantages of continued pilgrimage, who better to give control but the Christian taxman, Manṣūr ibn Sarjūn, aka John of Damascus. John’s family was well known to the Umayyad caliphs, responsible for tax collection for generations, apparently with extensive family property holdings in Palestine, and as leaders among the minority Chalcedonians in Damascus, they were in a unique position to negotiate a significant trade. Further, the Umayyads had voiced interest in the cathedral of St John the Baptist on two previous occasions, but had honored the Christian refusal because of their treaty protection. Having the cathedral change hands, the patriarchate reestablished, and John’s retirement from a lucrative and influential position in order to move to Jerusalem, all at the same time is a coincidence of cosmic proportions. Such serendipity boggles the mind. These coterminous events simply must be related to each other.

Admittedly there is (and probably never will be) direct evidence for a secret negotiation that exchanges the cathedral for the patriarchate. But, that is the nature of secret negotiations, especially one that is in the interest of both parties to keep secret. The

³⁰⁷ For example, Y. Hirschfeld categorizes the monasteries of Palestine and the Judean Desert into four types: urban, rural, pilgrimage and desert, noting that pilgrimage routes were favored for imperial investment in the fourth and fifth centuries. There were two subcategories of pilgrimage monasteries: smaller ones along the way, acting as road-stations, and larger ones at journey end. Yizhar Hirschfeld (2006), “The Monasteries of Palestine in the Byzantine Period”, in Ora Limor and G. Guy Stroumsa, eds., *Christians and Christianity in the Holy Land: From the Origins to the Latin Kingdoms*, (Turnhout: Brepols), 401-19. Further, I. Taxel has shown that monasteries near pilgrimage routes to and from Jerusalem were a vital factor in Palestine’s economy. Itamar Taxel (2008), “Rural Monasticism at the Foothills of Southern Samaria and Judaea in the Byzantine Period: Asceticism, Agriculture and Pilgrimage”, *Bulletin of the Anglo-Israel Archaeological Society*, 26: 57-73, 58, 65, 67. Itamar Taxel (2009), *Khirbates-Suyyagh: A Byzantine Monastery in the Judean Shephelah, Salvage Excavation Reports* 6, (Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University), 68-69.

ninth century Melkite bishop and chronicler Eutychius disparaged the Manṣūr family for surrendering Damascus, demonstrating the mixed reception among their own constituency the family held. This explains for example why no one who knew better offered to correct the fiction of the offended al-Walīd taking it. The Manṣūr family and the newly reestablished patriarchate would lose all credibility with the Maronites and other Chalcedonian monasteries if they were tied to such a negotiation, giving up Damascus all over again.

Further, al-Walīd could not risk fomenting civil war being seen to undermine his father's policy that gave rise to the building of the Dome of the Rock, which no doubt a public recognition of the exchange would engender. Allowing the Christians to reestablish and trumpet the Jerusalem Patriarchate could have raised concerns that the Umayyads were further shifting Muslim pilgrimage to Damascus and the Damascus Mosque. Following his father and the Dome of the Rock, al-Walīd built the Damascus Mosque on the cathedral site. It would indeed become a significant pilgrimage destination and was no doubt intended to ensure pilgrims could stay in Syro-Palestine, thus mitigating the influence of Mecca and powerful enemies to the south. But, al-Walīd needed to avoid the perception that he was actually undermining his father by raising the status of Christians in Jerusalem at the expense of Mohammed, vis-à-vis his night journey commemorated in the Dome of the Rock.

In sum, I would suggest that the coincidence of these events cannot be left unexplained by mere serendipity, but must be seen together in causal terms. The stakes were too high for all parties. If there was a *quid pro quo* as I suggest the negotiation would be necessarily secret and involve a minimum of players. John's family is the key. They (alone?) had the motive, means and opportunity. By such a deal they could hand the

Chalcedonians their best chance for survival, no small claim given their dire situation. They had the means: they were in the position to convince or even force them to accept it. Further, their immense wealth meant they could underwrite the costly reestablishment of the patriarchate as well as provide the technical expertise to manage the pilgrimage sites to ensure a ready cash flow for both the Arabs and the Chalcedonians. This is a unique combination of means, which virtually guarantees their involvement in, if not their control of, the situation. Finally, they had opportunity: with the death of John's father and then Abd al-Malik, al-Walīd was poised for a dramatic change, typical at regime change.³⁰⁸ He wanted a significant win to consolidate his position. Taking the cathedral would help him to consolidate his position as rightly guided caliph, making a significant claim to religious leadership. Further, if John left at this time, it would allow a Muslim to manage the treasury which would be focused on the mosque build for a decade as its primary project. Thus, although we may never know with certainty, I propose that a *quid pro quo* is the best explanation if not the only adequate explanation of these strangely coinciding events.

Conclusion

In Part One I have deconstructed the saint to find the man. First, primarily following M.-F. Auzépy, A. P. Kazhdan, and S. Gero on hagiography related to John of Damascus and V. Kontouma with specific regard to John's complicated *Lives*, I exploited their work to show that it entails the decoupling of John's timeline from that of the meta-narrative of Byzantine Iconoclasm allowing the more natural early date for his retirement and move to Jerusalem. The evidence from the chroniclers then, however

³⁰⁸ I grant the possibility that the ground may have been prepared by Abd al-Malik and John's father, given the closeness of their long relationship. Further, the possibility that al-Walīd unilaterally forced the exchange on the Chalcedonians is possible, but seems less likely given the close relations between the two families.

sparse, makes the most sense when seen in terms of John retiring and moving to Damascus in support of his spiritual mentor, John V, at his enthronization in Jerusalem about 705, but not out of pious loyalty. John did leave office for his own reasons, but they were much bigger than personal loyalty born of piety, rather John had a strategic role to play.

And, finally, in this chapter, looking at the situation in Syro-Palestine from the perspective of pilgrimage, Islamization, surrender treaties and the isolation of the Chalcedonians in Damascus in respect of their dire ecclesial situation, I proposed that the reestablishment of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem and the relocation of the Damascene Chalcedonians to the Anastasis was the result of a secret negotiation most likely between John of Damascus and al-Walīd in a *quid pro quo* exchange for the cathedral of St John the Baptist, the ‘headquarters’ of the Damascus Chalcedonians.³⁰⁹

I am under no illusions that these intrinsic historical considerations can decide the matter sans direct evidence, but taken together they are suggestive of a connection between these two historical events. To consider them unrelated beggars belief; to allow the reestablishment of the patriarchate at the same time the cathedral church in Damascus is ‘confiscated’ requires an explanation. Whether John, his family, or the Damascene Chalcedonians are involved in a secret negotiation or not, these two events provide the perfect context for John’s decision to leave both Damascus and civil service and move to Jerusalem and take up clerical service beyond V. Kontouma’s simple claim that there was nothing to keep John in Damascus after 705 given his loyalty to his spiritual mentor, John V. I argue that the evidence I have outlined has greatly enriched

³⁰⁹ Thus, I think V. Kontouma’s insight that John could have underwritten the reestablishment of the patriarchate compelling. Further, though, it also suggests that John’s priesting was not only in the service of enabling the best use of his education, training, and rhetorical skills, but also to provide him the freedom of movement he needed to be effective. It also probably served to further shelter his assets as monks and priests were not initially taxed in the same way as others.

the context of her claim making it much more plausible even if my *quid pro quo* proposal is ultimately unprovable; nevertheless, it remains a theoretic possibility for which more circumstantial evidence could be found.

My proposal is important because it explains the relationship between significant historical events previously unexplained, offering an historical model for future testing. Tantalizingly contiguous events are causally related in my proposal: the so called ‘seizure’ of the cathedral of St John the Baptist in Damascus, the inexplicable Arab volte face allowing the establishment of a Chalcedonian patriarchate, and the relocation of the Damascene Chalcedonian party to Jerusalem with its quiet, long, but undocumented reign of John V, and of course, John leaving office and relocating himself.

However, even if my proposal is found unconvincing, the circumstantial evidence arrayed in its support is still that of the early eighth century of John of Damascus, in Jerusalem, at the Anastasis, in support of John V, and thus in the end the nexus of these events is the context, I argue, for John’s theological career. Therefore, John’s theological output must be viewed in the context of Chalcedonian patriarchal policy responding to local exigencies, and not to the distant concerns of Byzantium.

This historical model provides a context in which the arguments of Sidney Griffith for the centrality of Jerusalem to John’s theological program finally get some traction, for example S. Griffith asserts:

The most instructive feature . . . of St John’s works taken altogether, is the fact that the overall pattern of his interests, as revealed especially by the particular adversaries and doctrines he is concerned to refute, demonstrates that his immediate theological and ecclesiastical near horizon was very much that of Jerusalem and the Christians in the world of Islam during his lifetime. . . . Failure to take seriously the immediate intellectual and cultural horizon of Jerusalem, within which St John actually composed his works, is a serious

error of perspective that seems often to prevent even the most enthusiastic of his readers from recognizing the context in which his theological compositions found their first relevance.³¹⁰

Further, S. Griffith highlights that the Jerusalem church of the Anastasis hosted continual debates between monks on theological issues.³¹¹ Thus, it seems it is not only patriarchal policy at the reestablishment of the patriarchate in general but the intra-confessional theological debate in the Anastasis in particular, that is the proper *Sitz im Leben* of John's theological program, without which a proper interpretation of John's theological polemics (perhaps his entire oeuvre) would be impossible. In the next chapter I shall turn to John's interlocutors to flesh this out in the context of policy and polemic.



³¹⁰ Griffith (2006), 191-92.

³¹¹ Griffith (2011), 214.

Chapter Four – Policy and Polemic

Introduction

So far I have made the case that John of Damascus left Damascus c. 705 with John V as a key player in the reestablishment of the Jerusalem Patriarchate. However, this was not as his subordinate retainer, either obedient to his spiritual mentor out of pious loyalty, vexed by Arab impiety, or as a repentant tax collector as implied by Nicaea II. Once the lack of underlying historicity to John's hagiography is exposed, any ties to Byzantine Iconoclasm or the various literary topoi of piety are found to be fictional, especially when John and his family are considered in the light of their wealth, power, and close relationship with the Umayyads. John himself may or may not have been pious, we do not know, but he went to Jerusalem for personal reasons that centered on his family's wealth and power, which coincided with the needs of the declining Chalcedonians in Damascus.

In 705 with the reestablishment of the patriarch, the nascent 'proto-Melkites' finally have a bishop. Whatever nominal control of the Jerusalem church they had had before, now they were in a position to consolidate and enforce their influence and control of the holy sites and of the liturgy of the Anastasis, the so called 'mother of all churches', the very center of the Christian world, and could finally forge a religious policy capable of ensuring their survival. The operative question for this chapter is how does the

Jerusalem Patriarchate respond given this new situation to the external drivers that impinge upon it?

Although John V reigned for thirty-five years, virtually nothing is known about him or his rule. What we have are the works of John of Damascus crafted in this volatile period of nascent ‘proto-Melkite’ identity formation and survival. Controlling the holy sites and the liturgy in Jerusalem would bring these dyothelite Chalcedonians from Damascus in direct control of the associated revenue, another boon to their survival and another good reason for John’s assistance as a professional financier. John V, however, would implement policy to consolidate control and bring doctrinal and liturgical uniformity to his see, and in my view it is John of Damascus, who would be one of the key players in the implementation of that policy.

Patriarchal policy no doubt intended a decisive response to confessional interlocutors. I will argue that John’s polemical works can be seen as proto-school texts meant to bring confessional uniformity to the Chalcedonian community in the Jerusalem Patriarchate, now tacitly enforceable at least internally through the power of the bishop, but externally through the renewed vigor of persuasive rhetoric styled on and sourced in John’s polemic.

Confessional Competitors Raise the Bar

I previously argued that the vagaries of shifting ecclesial politics impinged on the Chalcedonians in Damascus such that the rising fortunes of the West Syrian patriarch required a response. With the death of George II, Chalcedonian Patriarch of Antioch (d. c. 702, resident or not), the East Syrian vacancy from c. 700, and the four year vacancy in Alexandria, filled by another non-Chalcedonian (Alexander II, r. 704–29) by ‘Abd al-Malik just prior to his own death in 705, the political-ecclesial pressures on the

small Chalcedonian leadership in Damascus would be enormous. These deaths and vacancies no doubt stirred Chalcedonian aspirations, realistic or not. All this was previously discussed, and I argued tensions were high, and a Chalcedonian response was thus required, nevertheless, besides these immediate political catalysts there remained just under the surface other longer term and more systemic issues.

Sectarianism grew out of conciliar divides and failed reconciliation, leaving West and East Syrian at odds and eventually monothelite and dyothelite Chalcedonian as well. These dogmatic divisions, however, were often incomprehensible to most Christians, because it took an elite education to understand the philosophical-theological arguments involved. Few were sufficiently educated to understand much less enter these debates, thus gradually liturgical differences were used to distinguish the various sectarians. Each confession developed and maintained educational standards and centers that came to be identified with them. Thus, one of the long term systemic issues that impinged on the Chalcedonians was the development of curricula and liturgies within these competing schools. Failure to respond in kind risked losing the ability to effectively differentiate from the West and East Syrians, and confessional identity was becoming crucial to survival.

Sectarianism under the Umayyads

Umayyad disinterest in the internal affairs of their subjects meant religious communities ran themselves, but more importantly the magnetism of the Holy Land drew back the disenfranchised. No longer divided by a hostile border, the ancient roads between Mesopotamia and Syro-Palestine were once again well-used, facilitated by the freedom of movement within Arab territory. The imperial church could no longer enforce its will in Syro-Palestine, as the (geopolitically and ideologically) marginalized, once pushed out of Byzantium, cut-off from Jerusalem, now returned as their mettle

strengthened and the magnet of the holy sites inexorably drew them back to the center of the world and the ‘mother of all churches’.³¹² This included pagans and pagan practices by Christians as noted in the canons of the Quinisext council (692) as well as the local canons of Jacob of Edessa and George of the Arabs.³¹³

Guy Stroumsa indicates that ‘Manichaean’ was a term reduced to opprobrium for miaphysites, used for example of Samaritans when compelled to Chalcedonianism preferred to become miaphysite instead.³¹⁴ Denied their earliest mission field in Palestine by the Byzantines, Manichaeans, once concentrated in Mesopotamia, were by then at large in Persia, but now could move throughout Arab territory.³¹⁵ And, so they returned (if they had entirely gone) to Palestine and were thus again more than mere bogey.

Stroumsa argues real Manichaeans were indeed present in Syro-Palestine in the sixth century.³¹⁶ It seems past estimates of the Christian conversion rate in Syro-Palestine may apply to the towns but not the countryside which converted at a much slower rate.³¹⁷ For example, the Ziphaeans (probably Bedouins west of the Dead Sea) adopted Manichaeism and the Ghassanid’s (Syrian Arab tribe aligned with Byzantium), who

³¹² I do not mean to imply the existence of an actual ‘imperial church’ but use it as short-hand for the collusion of patriarch and emperor in Constantinople in the use of force to ensure combined religious and political aims. The holy sites quickly gave rise to the notion of the Holy Land, and Jerusalem had a long Jewish tradition as the center or naval of the world taken over into Christian tradition, giving rise especially to the Anastasis in the popular imagination as the ‘mother of all churches’. On the transformation of Palestine into the ‘Holy Land’ and the genesis of the notion of the ‘mother of all churches’ see for example, Lorenzo Perrone (2006), “Rejoice Sion, Mother of All Churches”: Christianity in the Holy Land During the Byzantine Era”, in Ora Limor and G. Guy Stroumsa, eds., *Christians and Christianity in the Holy Land: From the Origins to the Latin Kingdoms*, (Turnhout: Brepols).

³¹³ Jack Tannous, (2010), “Syria between Byzantium and Islam: Making Incommensurables Speak”, PhD Diss. Princeton University, 267.

³¹⁴ Guy G. Stroumsa (1985), “Gnostics and Manichaeans in Byzantine Palestine”, *Studia Patristica*, 18/1: 273-78, 276.

³¹⁵ Ibid., 275.

³¹⁶ Ibid., 276. Samuel Lieu notes that their communities were small and spread throughout Palestine such that centralized authorities had difficulty enforcing anti-Manichaean laws. Samuel N. C. Lieu (1992), *Manichaeism in the Later Roman Empire and Medieval China*, (2nd edn.; Tübingen: Mohr), 194.

³¹⁷ Doron Bar (2003), “The Christianisation of Rural Palestine During Late Antiquity”, *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 54: 401-21.

adopted miaphysitism in large numbers, apparently also had a proclivity for Manichaeism, which may show an inclination among the indigenous of Syro-Palestine for dualist purity sectarianism.³¹⁸

Moreover, in the Persian Empire Christian sectarians had learned to coexist with Zoroastrians as well as Buddhists and Manichaeans and now this diverse group had access to Syro-Palestine.³¹⁹ Near north Mesopotamian Harran, just south of Edessa, which Michael the Syrian indicates was occupied by a Chalcedonian bishop from the days of Heraclius, Manichaeans apparently lived openly with an active community throughout the 8th and 9th centuries.³²⁰ Consequently, pagan but especially Manichaean polemic in the late seventh and early eighth century would have had a certain currency for a bishop of Jerusalem familiar with Syrian Manicheans and aware of them now around the Dead Sea if not also in the Judean Desert.³²¹

Not only pagans, but Jews and Samaritans also had a continuing presence in Palestine throughout Byzantine, Persian and Arab hegemony. Doron Bar states unequivocally, “Moreover, vast areas of rural Palestine, such as Galilee and Samaria, had an absolute

³¹⁸ Stroumsa (1985), 276n33. See also on the Ziphaeans located west of the Dead Sea, Lieu (1992), 194.

³¹⁹ Philip Jenkins (2008), *The Lost History of Christianity: The Thousand-Year Golden Age of the Church in the Middle East, Africa, and Asia--and How It Died*, (New York: Harper-Collins), 46, 67-68. See also chapter one, “The Myth of Zoroastrian Intolerance” in Richard E. Payne (2016), *A State of Mixture: Christians, Zoroastrians, and Iranian Political Culture in Late Antiquity*, (Oakland, CA: University of California Press). And also A. V. Williams (1996), “Zoroastrians and Christians in Sasanian Iran”, in J.F. Coakley and K. Parry, eds., *The Church of the East: Life and Thought*, (Manchester: John Rylands University Library of Manchester), 37-53.

³²⁰ Wolfgang Wassilios Klein (1991), *Die Argumentation in den griechisch-christlichen Antimanichaica*, (Wiesbaden, Germany: Otto Harrassowitz), 231. Chabot ed., (1901, 1899–1910), 493.

³²¹ Pope Gregory II (715–731), probably indicative of concern for refugees from North Africa generally, warned even the remote Germanic tribes against Crypto-Manichaean Christians. Moorhead (2013, 2001), 245. This suggests further that the Manichaean diaspora probably followed that of other displaced minorities fleeing the violence of Persian and then Arab conquest and subsequent persecution (however sporadic and isolated). It might be thought that the wider the diaspora the less of an issue it would be in Palestine, but I would argue rather that this only contributes to a tipping-point of awareness catalyzing the immediacy of the issue.

Jewish or Samaritan majority.”³²² He perhaps overstates the case, but Averil Cameron has surveyed the evidence (literary, epigraphic and archeological) and concluded that there was a substantial Jewish presence in Syro-Palestine in the seventh century with no reason for this to change even to the Crusades,³²³ and further, she notes that Tiberias (city on southwest edge of the Sea of Galilee) remained the center of Jewish learning throughout the Umayyad period.³²⁴ In fact, she finds Jews in many cities of Palestine including Ptolemais (Akko), Caesarea, Sykamina (Sycmania), Sepphoris, Lod (Lydda), Gaza, and Scythopolis, thus if anything, showing a preference for Galilee and the Coastal Plane.³²⁵

Finally, Moshe Gil zeroes in on Damascus and Jerusalem to remark on the presence of Jews in the early Islamic period.³²⁶ There is good reason to believe that in spite of the Jerusalem surrender agreement, the Arabs allowed a small number of Jews to live in Jerusalem itself.³²⁷ Consequently, given the continuing Jewish presence in Syro-

³²² Bar (2003), 405. Bar is less than clear on the dates here, but his thesis is that these communities were present throughout the fourth to six centuries and Christian conversion happened at a much slower pace in the countryside. Thus, it seems reasonable to expect these communities to be present in the Umayyad period. Further, many Jews supported the Persians, but they figure only infrequently in the Muslim accounts, and the Samaritans, however, fought on the side of the Byzantines against the Arabs. Robert Schick (1995), *The Christian Communities of Palestine from Byzantine to Islamic Rule: A Historical and Archaeological Study*, (Princeton, NJ: Darwin Press), 80. Thus, both communities, used to foreign domination, continued to demonstrate resilience in the face of change thus arguing for their respective continuity through the Persian and then the Umayyad period.

³²³ Averil Cameron (1994), “The Jews in the Seventh Century Palestine”, *Scripta Classica Israelica*, 13: 75-93, 92.

³²⁴ Ibid., 85.

³²⁵ Ibid., 84-85.

³²⁶ Moshe Gil (1996), “The Authorities and the Local Population”, in Joshua Prawer and Haggai Ben-Shammai, eds., *The History of Jerusalem: The Early Muslim Period (638–1099)*, (New York: New York University Press), 101-20, 105. See also, Gil’s other essay in the same volume: Moshe Gil (1996), “The Jewish Community”, in Joshua Prawer and Haggai Ben-Shammai, eds., *The History of Jerusalem: The Early Muslim Period (638–1099)*, (New York: New York University Press), 163-200.

³²⁷ Milka Levy-Rubin (2009), “Were the Jews Prohibited from Settling in Jerusalem? On the Authenticity of Al-Ṭabarī’s Jerusalem Surrender Agreement”, *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam*, vol. 36 (Jerusalem: The Institute for Asian and African Studies, The Hebrew University), 63-81. Hoyland gives evidence from a Jewish source dated to c. 950 that the Jews were allowed by the Arabs to live and practice their religion in Jerusalem. Hoyland (1997), 127-28.

Palestine, anti-Jewish polemic might be considered a priority for the reestablished Jerusalem Patriarchate.³²⁸

Not only Jews but Jewish-Christians had always been present in Palestine and probably Jerusalem through the fifth century and probably throughout the Byzantine and into the Islamic period. They viewed themselves as being in direct line with the ‘mother church’, but the hierarchy had remained ambivalent towards them.³²⁹

Scholars differ, however, on how close Christians and Jews lived,³³⁰ but it seems clear from recent research that Christianity was largely an urban phenomenon in late antiquity, penetrating the countryside more slowly than previously thought.³³¹ D. Bar argues that it was by the end of the sixth century—one hundred years later than previous scholarship proposed—that Christianity had any significant penetration into the countryside of Palestine through a program of monastic ‘evangelism’, whereby small monasteries were ‘planted’ near villages.³³² Clearly no matter the penetration rate, the continued presence of Manichaeans, Jews, Samaritans and no doubt other minority groups, meant the countryside remained contended space in the Umayyad period. Further exacerbating this situation, Arab control of the cities—garrisons enforced treaties strictly limiting new construction of churches *inter alia* with the concomitant processes of Arabization and Islamization taking ownership of public space—meant that Christians had to fight for converts in smaller and smaller pastures further and further afield. Thus, for this reason also, although monasticism and pilgrimage

³²⁸ Robert Schick notes that violent outbreaks subsided under the Umayyads between Jews or Samaritans and Christians, but a hostile undercurrent remains detectable in the hagiography. Schick (1995), 110.

³²⁹ Guy G. Stroumsa (1989), “Religious Contacts in Byzantine Palestine”, *Numen*, 36/1: 16-42, 27.

³³⁰ A. Cameron considers the onus to be on those who argue for separate communities. Cameron (1994), 85.

³³¹ Doron Bar (2005), “Rural Monasticism as a Key Element in the Christianization of Byzantine Palestine”, *Harvard Theological Review*, 98/1: 49-65.

³³² *Ibid.*, 61, 64-65.

continued if reduced under the Umayyads, monasteries competed for association with smaller and smaller towns and villages, while continuing to service pilgrims.³³³

In the midst of this competition for the countryside, Christological differences divided West and East Syrians from each other as well as from the Chalcedonians, who were themselves divided. This gave rise to polemic among the elite but led to confusion in the countryside among priests incapable of understanding the Christological esoterica that divided them. Village priests complained of common folk switching allegiance for convenience sake,³³⁴ and often wrote to their more learned compatriots to get answers and direction.³³⁵ Thus, in sum, the competition in the countryside only intensified under the political indifference of the Umayyads, who largely ignored rival sectarian competition.

Elite polemic resulted in a focus on their respective schools, which became critical according to Jack Tannous, arguing that what was needed to move from identity to ‘church’, what I call a ‘confessional identity’, was a curriculum of study that would create a distinctive leadership.³³⁶ Thus, this distinctive leadership marshaled their country priests with distinctive “chanting and hymnody,”³³⁷ teaching the locals to differentiate sectarians based on liturgical differences, rather than on doctrine (Christology), so sectarians gradually became confessions identified by their liturgies or

³³³ Schick (1995), 96-97.

³³⁴ Tannous (2013), 87.

³³⁵ Basic incomprehension regarding Christological esoterica and the consequent disloyalty of the laity gave rise to all sorts of questions on practical matters. For example, questions included: Can we marry, bury, commune and re-baptize *those others*? Ibid., 101.

³³⁶ Ibid., 96.

³³⁷ Tannous (2013), 93.

in Tannous' terms, they became distinctive 'churches'. The elite distinguished doctrine and the locals distinguished liturgies (or 'church services' in modern terms).³³⁸

Consequently, the competing schools of the West and East Syrians steadily produced well trained monks, priests and bishops. The minority Chalcedonians, however, found it difficult to compete, because their monastic education could not be trusted to deliver a uniform educational response either doctrinally or liturgically, putting their monks at a distinct disadvantage.³³⁹ If they could not hold their own in confessional debate and were of mixed opinion regarding both doctrine and liturgy with no patriarch to unify them the Chalcedonians would find their hold on the holy sites weakened putting in jeopardy their control of the Anastasis itself.³⁴⁰ Thus, as distinctive liturgies began to make themselves felt in identifiable confessional affiliation however nominal, this could only result in additional pressure on the Chalcedonians.³⁴¹

The history of the Chalcedonians in the late seventh and early eighth century is obscure.

It seems both the Melkites and the Maronites begin to emerge in this period as

³³⁸ The development of distinctive liturgies in this period is an active area of research beyond the scope of this project. A classic entrée (now in English) is Anton Baumstark (2011), *On the Historical Development of the Liturgy*, (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press). Baumstark's theory that liturgy has diverse sources (private, public, synagogue, etc.), that cities influence its development regionally (Constantinople, Antioch, and Jerusalem), that major cities influence each other (Constantinople and Jerusalem notably), and especially that the top-down influence of ecclesiastical elites fits in the main the dynamic in the Syro-Palestine area under the Umayyads as briefly described by Jack Tannous.

³³⁹ See the Maronite schism discussed in a previous chapter. In short the Maronites were Chalcedonian monothelites, thus differing from other Chalcedonians doctrinally, and they accepted the changes to the Trisagion rejected by the Damascene Chalcedonian leadership, thus they also differed liturgically.

³⁴⁰ J. Binns argues that presiding at the liturgy in the Anastasis was crucial for the credibility of the Patriarch. Thus, by extension if there was no patriarch it would be crucial to the party who tacitly claimed control of the Anastasis. John Binns (1996), *Ascetics and Ambassadors of Christ: The Monasteries of Palestine, 314-631*, (Oxford: Clarendon), 198.

³⁴¹ The Trisagion hymn became a focal point of sectarianism especially between the West Syrians and the Chalcedonians, as some Syrian Chalcedonians (Maronites) adopted the version of the West Syrians (Miaphysites). The Chalcedonian version dominated the churches of Jerusalem, Antioch and Edessa, and John's father, Sergius ibn Manšūr, enforce the Chalcedonian version on the churches of Damascus and Emesa, according to Michael the Syrian, so this issue was of some importance to the Chalcedonians. Chabot ed., (1901, 1899–1910), 492-93. S. Brock argues that longstanding differences in interpretation, at first tolerated regional variations, calcified into ecclesial slogans: Sebastian Brock (1985), "The Thrice-Holy Hymn in the Liturgy", *Sobornost*, 7/2: 24-34.

confessionally distinct entities. Maronite history is particularly contested;³⁴² however, their mutual history in this period of formation, where the terms ‘proto-Maronite’ and ‘proto-Melkite’ are probably apropos if cumbersome, is important for understanding the Syro-Palestinian confessional context in the early eighth century.³⁴³ Although I remarked briefly on the schism within the Chalcedonian camp in the previous chapter, it is now time to discuss in more depth the differences between the Chalcedonians.

Recent scholarship has argued that much of Syria was monothelite prior to any such imperial policy, that both monenergism and monothelism were live options among Chalcedonians of Syro-Palestine and so it was for this reason exploited as a potential olive branch to non-Chalcedonians in Armenia, Egypt and Syria.³⁴⁴ It was briefly successful but floundered on the resolve of Sophronius and Maximus, who rejected this policy on doctrinal grounds.

Bar Hebraeus (d. 1286) writes, “All the Greeks used to confess one will and one activity until the time of Maximus, a monk, Theodore, the Harranian [sc. Theodore Abū Qurra] and John Damascene”.³⁴⁵ Michael the Syrian (d. 1199) claims that all Syria was

³⁴² Maronite historians often write with apologetic aims. For example, see Dau (1984). Also ideological but with improved scholarship is Paul Naaman (2011), *The Maronites: The Origins of an Antiochene Church - a Historical and Geographical Study of the Fifth to Seventh Centuries*, (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press). For an historical treatment see: Harald Suermann (1998), *Die Gründungsgeschichte Der Maronitischen Kirche*, (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag).

³⁴³ Michael the Syrian and other chroniclers use the term Maronite anachronistically as their early history is fraught with etiological hagiography, nevertheless it is convenient to gloss ‘proto-Maronite’ as Maronite if the anachronism is recognized in this early period of identity formation. The same applies to the Melkites, as Sidney Griffith has proposed ‘proto-Melkite’ but here too, once the anachronism is recognized Melkite becomes rhetorically convenient. I have attempted to avoid the anachronism by using the general term Chalcedonian as an aggregate term.

³⁴⁴ Booth (2014), 200f. Regarding the success of Heraclius’ reunification program based on monenergism, Booth writes, “The Heraclian program of doctrinal reunification, then, was comparable to the triumph over Persia in its ambition, scope, and success.” (Ibid., 208).

³⁴⁵ Translation and reference (“the text is from Base IV of Bar Hebraeus’ *Mnārat Qudshē*.”), Jack Tannous (2014), “In Search of Monothelism”, *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 68: 29-67, 34. On the Melkite Theodore Abū Qurra (d.c. 830) see Griffith (2001), 38f.

once monothelite³⁴⁶ and recognized the Maronites to be influential Chalcedonians who rejected Maximus, i.e. were monothelites.³⁴⁷ In recent research, Sidney Griffith, summarizing the chroniclers on this, declares it “abundantly clear” that there were a significant number of monothelites in Syria in the late seventh and early eighth century based on a number of texts published by Sebastian Brock.³⁴⁸

Further, the Maronites debated the non-Chalcedonian West Syrians before Mu‘āwiya (c. 659), winning financial concessions for themselves, which probably means for the Chalcedonians in general.³⁴⁹ Nevertheless, they had such trouble worshipping in

³⁴⁶ Chabot ed., (1901, 1899–1910), 492–93. For English translation see Tannous (2014), 34. The old consensus had it that monenergism and monotheletism were failed inventions of political compromise, but this view has been challenged, successfully in my view. On this see the recent summary by Jack Tannous: *ibid.* Beyond the scope of this project, I would speculate that the crucial missing link to the invention and rise of at least monenergism is the interpretation of the ‘theandric’ energy of Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite after the *Corpus Dionysiacum* successfully withstood challenges to its authenticity and was subsequently universally adopted in the East after its presentation at the imperial meeting in Constantinople with non-Chalcedonians (led by Severus of Antioch) in late 534 through the condemnation of Severus in mid-536. On Severus and these talks see Pauline Allen and C.T.R. Hayward (2004), *Severus of Antioch*, (London: Routledge), 29. Thus, I suspect the nexus of theological debate on Dionysius’ theandric energy in Syro-Palestine from 536 to the early 630s when it was picked up by Sergius and Heraclius for use in their reunification policy is the locus of at least monenergism among both Chalcedonians and non-Chalcedonians. For example, István Perzel notes that the first Greek commentary on Dionysius appears from John of Scythopolis in Palestine (c. 536–48, though notably he was resident in Constantinople) and the first Syriac translation soon after 536 by Sergius of Resh’aina and then it was retranslated by Phokas (c. 684/5). István Perzel (2009), “The Earliest Syriac Reception of Dionysius”, in Sarah Coakley and Charles M. Stang, eds., *Re-Thinking Dionysius the Areopagite*, (Chichester, UK: Wiley-Blackwell), 27–41, 28–29. Consequently, discussion of Dionysius must have remained important among both non-Chalcedonian and Chalcedonian circles. It should be noted that even as late as c. 628–630 Maximus the Confessor in his early *Ambigua* 3 (to John) wrote favorably of “the one and unique operation,” on which see under the *Ambigua* to John in Marek Jankowiak and Phil Booth (2015), “A New Date-List of the Works of Maximus the Confessor”, in P. Allen and B. Neil, eds., *Oxford Handbook of Maximus the Confessor*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 19–83. I mention this here, because the importance of Dionysius for John will become apparent below.

³⁴⁷ Chabot ed., (1901, 1899–1910), 493.

³⁴⁸ Griffith (2001), 13.

³⁴⁹ *Maronite Chronicle* 644+ Palmer (1993), 30. J. Tannous citing Gribomont, who suggests the ‘debate’ was probably about churches, i.e. the West Syrians wanted Mu‘āwiya to return the churches lost after Heraclius turned them over to the Chalcedonians, suggests the monothelites may have been the most important Chalcedonian group in Damascus, however, this is probably anachronistic, because, although Maximus was still alive, he was being actively courted by imperial monothelites, so the monothelite position was still imperial policy, not yet condemned, and thus probably a live option even for supporters of Maximus. Further, any overt support for Maximus by his supporters in Palestine could play into the hands of papal representatives, who had repeatedly attempted to appoint dyothelite uniate bishops, which many Chalcedonians in Palestine mistrusted. On the chaos in Palestine after the death of Sophronius and Rome’s failed attempt to assert control by creating a uniate dyophysite hierarchy see Price (2014), 397. I would speculate that after Constantinople III (680–81) Syro-Palestinian confidence in dyophysite Chalcedonianism strengthened and thus the Maronites were eventually the last remaining monothelite

Aleppo with supporters of Maximus the Confessor (also Chalcedonians) the Arabs had to mediate by forcing a church split enforced by armed guards. Apparently frustrated the locals soon ran the Maronites out of town.³⁵⁰ The chronicler suggests the insults that flew were based on doctrinal differences with the Maronites calling their fellow Chalcedonians ‘Maximianists’, i.e. supporters of Maximus the Confessor’s dyotheletism.³⁵¹ But, it may also have related to liturgical differences, as the Maronites used the same expanded Trisagion as the West Syrians, which the Chalcedonians in Damascus and Jerusalem rejected.³⁵² The trial (655) and subsequent death of the bishop of Rome, Martin (c. 655/6), followed by the trial and exile of Maximus the Confessor (tried 655) no doubt fueled monothelite aspirations in Syro-Palestine. Now legates from Constantinople joined by those from Rome courted his turn to monothelitism, claiming they were joined in union with Alexandria and Jerusalem.³⁵³ Perhaps this period was one of turmoil among the Chalcedonians of Syro-Palestine as the monothelite faction seemed to have the upper hand, except that John’s family had the ear of the caliph. As news of the death in 662 of the Confessor spread, no doubt Maronites celebrated. Thus, from 662 monothelites would likely attempt to consolidate their position, but were just as likely blocked from Damascus with John’s family perhaps playing a decisive role.

holdouts, thus Michael the Syrian (and others) write anachronistically of all monothelite Chalcedonians as Maronite.

³⁵⁰ Chabot ed., (1901, 1899-1910), 495.

³⁵¹ Ibid., 495-96.

³⁵² Michael the Syrian reports that the schism of 727 among the Chalcedonians was centered on the doctrine of Maximus and “on account of the phrase ‘who was crucified’,” i.e. the addition to the Trisagion. Ibid., 492. This had been a long standing dispute. John of Damascus accredits the miaphysite Peter the Fuller (d.c. 489, following Theophanes) with the addition “who was crucified for us,” which he considered theopaschite. Sophronius, Patriarch of Jerusalem, in his *Letter to Arcadius of Cyprus* (CPG 7636) rejects the extension to the Trisagion. Allen ed., (2009), 22. Constantinople addressed the Trisagion to the Trinity, thus adding “who was crucified for us” was problematic, but for others, primarily miaphysites and monothelites in the environs of Antioch and Syria, who addressed it to the Son, it was probably meant to be prophylactic against Nestorianism. S. Brock covers the scriptural basis for both positions envisioning possible modern rapprochement in Brock (1985).

³⁵³ Pauline Allen and Bronwen Neil, eds. (2002), *Maximus the Confessor and His Companions: Documents from Exile*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 24.

The tables turned when Constantinople officially repudiated monotheletism at the Sixth Ecumenical Council (680–1) and deposed Macarius, the caretaker bishop of Antioch, for monotheletism.³⁵⁴ Siméon Vailhé reports that the Chalcedonians in Jerusalem received this news with joy and in c. 685 sent a delegation to Constantinople to indicate their acceptance of the council.³⁵⁵ This delegation probably also represented ‘Abd al-Malik’s peace treaty; his accession occurred in Apr-May of 685 and the treaty seems to have been finalized in July 685 and the delegation took place according to Vailhé that fall.³⁵⁶ This combined ecclesial and political mission would have been a coup for the Melkite party against the Maronites. Thus, even though they probably felt little sympathy for the deposed non-resident caretaker bishop, Macarius, the monothelites in Syria would have been dumbstruck at their reversal of fortune and the rising fortunes of the Melkites on the tail of ‘Abd al-Malik’s accession. Perhaps exhibiting something of a ‘bunker’ mentality with local hostilities unabated, the Maronites (as noted above) may have elected their own bishop after this—perhaps in response to or anticipation of the Jerusalem delegation. Doctrinally they were being isolated, but in 692 they received a blow to the heart when the Quinisext council canon 81 forbade any addition to the Trisagion, thus not only doctrinally but liturgically they were cut-off now from Constantinople. Thus, from the 630s the Maronites were aligned with Constantinople and the minority dyophysite Chalcedonians isolated, but from 680 it seems the fortunes of the minority improved dramatically at the expense of the Maronites to the point of getting the attention of the West Syrian chroniclers.

³⁵⁴ Michael the Syrian reports, “The monks of Beit Maron and the bishop of this monastery, and others, did not accept this view; but most city dwellers and their bishops accepted it.” He says this after noting Sergius ibn Manṣūr (John’s father) had enforced Chalcedonian dyotheletism (and the shorter Trisagion) on Damascus and Emesa, which he probably undertook in the same period that Jerusalem sent their pro-Constantinople III delegation, i.e. c. 685. Chabot ed., (1901, 1899–1910), 492-93.

³⁵⁵ Vailhé (1902), 381.

³⁵⁶ This could explain the delay in the delegation. Mango and Scott, eds. (1997), 503 [AM 6176n1]. Vailhé (1902), 381.

Miaphysites, whether West Syrian or Egyptian,³⁵⁷ were well aware of the monothelite discussion among Chalcedonians, as the chronicler, Michael the Syrian, reports. Based on an earlier report by Dionysius of Tell Maḥrē (d. 845), Michael reports repeated conflicts between the Maronites and other Chalcedonians and finally that a schism arose between them in 727.³⁵⁸ Although Michael gives no cause for the schism he clearly indicates the nature of the division is the dyotheletism of Maximus and the rejection of the addition to the Trisagion. Thus, it appears that the wounds of 680 and 692 had long festered.

Sidney Griffith at a loss to explain the schism for which Michael offers no apparent reason speculates that it may have been “the intellectual campaign, of which John of Damascus was so prominent a part, was itself the decisive factor ...”.³⁵⁹ Further, I suspect that Michael reports schism for rhetorical reasons, not because there was an abrupt break.³⁶⁰ His report is given in two columns, which functions to compare the break down in the Chalcedonian camp with the reconciliation among the non-Chalcedonians. Thus, it seems to me that he seeks to accentuate the differences between the Chalcedonians as evidence of their mutual heterodoxy from his West Syrian perspective. This is all the more rhetorically damaging to the Chalcedonians because the Armenians were potentially still in communion with the Maronites based on the Heraclian *Pact of Union* (CPG 7613 Suppl).³⁶¹ The Armenians may have been

³⁵⁷ My thanks to Marek Jankowiak for pointing out that a papyrus Paschal letter (P. Berol. 10677) dating to 713 or 719 of Alexander II, Coptic Patriarch of Alexandria (non-Chalcedonian, r. 704–29) suggests that the Egyptian miaphysites were also aware of monothelite discussion among dyotheletes rather than ignoring it.

³⁵⁸ Chabot ed., (1901, 1899-1910), 492.

³⁵⁹ Griffith (2001), 16.

³⁶⁰ The Armenian recension in Bedrosian’s English trans. dates the agreement to 724 but omits reference to the schism. Robert Bedrosian, ed., (2013), *The Chronicle of Michael the Great, Patriarch of the Syrians*, (Long Branch, NJ: n.p.), 140. This suggests to me additional evidence that Michael’s presentation is rhetorical and not event based.

³⁶¹ Allen ed., (2009), 170, 72 [Greek]; 71, 73 [English]. This is the formalized version of what Heraclius had confessed earlier in 630 in Syria when denied the Eucharist by the West Syrians, but afterwards was

abandoning their former monenergist position of which Allen and Neil write, “The monenergist compromise succeeded in uniting the Armenian church with imperial ‘orthodoxy’ in 630, and also had limited success in the churches of Syria and Mesopotamia.”³⁶² Thus, Michael in this coordinated presentation shows that Chalcedonian infighting results in ‘schism’ while the irenic search for truth in scripture and tradition among the West Syrians results in the Armenians leaving the Chalcedonian camp and coming over to theirs. Consequently, the bottom line is that the divisions among the Chalcedonians were sufficiently apparent to the West Syrian chronicler to be rhetorically useful.

Later the Maronites would seem to ignore the election of Stephen III, Chalcedonian Patriarch of Antioch (accession 742/3), for with his death and the accession of Theophylact bar Qanbara, they were targeted but managed to withstand the persecution.³⁶³ And, when the Arabs later sanctioned coercion the Chalcedonians still failed to heal the schism.³⁶⁴ Thus, the long term division both doctrinal and liturgical resulting in permanent schism, ultimately led to completely separate confessional identities in the mid-eighth century.³⁶⁵ Consequently, at its reestablishment in 705 the Jerusalem Patriarchate would be highly motivated to present a doctrinal and liturgical profile that, while remembering Sophronius and Maximus, could potentially reconcile schismatic Maronites.

accepted by the Maronites and others including the Armenians, although Michael the Syrian (a West Syrian miaphysite) does not mention them. Michael reports that Heraclius confessed: “two natures united in Christ, one will and one operation, ‘according to Cyril’”. Chabot ed., (1901, 1899–1910), 412.

³⁶² Allen and Neil ed., (2002), 11.

³⁶³ Chabot ed., (1901, 1899–1910), 511. Theophanes calls him Theophylaktos (see AM 6236).

³⁶⁴ Ibid.

³⁶⁵ It may be testimony to the deep feelings between the two parties that not until the Crusades did the Maronites reconcile with Chalcedonians who supported Maximus, ironically not those of Syro-Palestine, but those of Rome. Further, some consider this the true birth of the Maronites, thus much of the history important for John is not of the Maronites per se but a schismatic Chalcedonian group that could be termed ‘proto-Maromite’ much as John’s party is termed ‘proto-Melkite’.

Regarding a distinctive Chalcedonian liturgy in Jerusalem, Andrew Louth makes an interesting suggestion. He notes that three contemporaries associated with the invention of the canon: John, Andrew of Crete and Cosmas the Hymnographer, may all have been from Damascus and that rather than looking to one alone we should look to their ‘circle’ for the invention of the canon.³⁶⁶ The biography of Cosmas and his association with John, however, were previously shown to be late and legendary by Kazhdan and Gero,³⁶⁷ so the real focus is on John and Andrew who are known Damascenes,³⁶⁸ but not associated with each other, writing their canons in different places. Consequently, any common influence must be sought in Damascus. This raises the possibility of Arab poetic influence on this ‘circle’ in Damascus. It is not known if Stephen knew the prominent Christian Arab poet al-Akḥṭal at the Umayyad court, but John and his family did know and associate with him.³⁶⁹ Susan Stetkevych writes that al-Akḥṭal is often lauded as the greatest of the Umayyad court poets and significant in Arab literature generally and his poetry “ceremonially enacts the allegiance of the subject to the ruler, and the legitimate exercise of power by that ruler.”³⁷⁰ Thus, without suggesting the nature of any influence, although it seems to me that this sort of poetry might be adaptable to the divine liturgy, I would suggest only that court poetry in Damascus was of a sufficiently high standard to inspire the invention of the canon by a ‘circle’ that

³⁶⁶ Louth (2002), 254-57.

³⁶⁷ Hoyland’s assessment of Kazhdan and Gero on Cosmas is summary: “There is no real information on Cosmas until the tenth century by which time it is legendary.” Hoyland (1997), 108n89.

³⁶⁸ Derek Krueger (in dialog with Mary Cunningham) writes of Andrew’s *Great Canon*, “it seems more likely that Andrew wrote not for a purely monastic audience, but for a congregation of clerics and laity assembled for the liturgy in major urban churches.” Derek Krueger (2013), “The Great Kanon of Andrew of Crete, the Penitential Bible, and the Liturgical Formation of the Self in the Byzantine Dark Age”, in Brouria Bitton-Ashkelony and Lorenzo Perrone, eds., *Between Personal and Institutional Religion: Self, Doctrine, and Practice in Late Antique Eastern Christianity*, (Turnhout: Brepols), 57-97, 62. Further, A. Louth admits of the kontakion which the canon supplanted, “the first form of liturgical poetry to develop in the byzantine world emerged, not in the monastic office, but in the services of the great city churches, in the so-called Cathedral Office.” Louth (2002), 253. These two points in mind are much more suggestive of the constant flow of pilgrims and monks in the Anastasis than the remove and isolation of a rural monastery as the context for John’s hymnography.

³⁶⁹ Sahas (1972), 38-39. Robert Hoyland, however, urges caution regarding making too much of this data. Hoyland (1997), 482.

³⁷⁰ Stetkevych (2016).

included John if not also Andrew and possibly the Christian Arab poet, al-Akhṭal in this period. This is important because John's hymns (canons) will become central to the reestablished Jerusalem Patriarchate's liturgy with its constant stream of pilgrims both religious and lay.

In sum, all these potential sectarian interlocutors would impinge on the Chalcedonian leadership, some more than others. When they transferred to the Anastasis in 705 certain doctrinal and liturgical issues were no doubt at the top of the list. Further, M. Levy-Rubin argues, "there was little difference between the distribution of Palestine's Christian community throughout the country in the early Muslim period and in the preceding Byzantine era. The Judean Mountains, the coastal plains and the southern coast remained the most densely populated dioceses."³⁷¹ These Christians would naturally look to the Patriarch of Jerusalem for guidance, once he entered the Anastasis and took charge. Consequently, Patriarch John V at the reestablishment of the Jerusalem Patriarchate would need to address a ready audience regarding the developing confessionalization of Christian sectarianism in Syro-Palestine through a program that clearly articulated a Chalcedonian position. This program would no doubt target those who questioned his commitment to Maximus the Confessor and the shorter Trisagion, issues that divided his own party, while also facing the challenge of West and East Syrian interlocutors and to a lesser extent others (pagans, Jews, Jewish Christians, Manichaeans), and all this must be done delicately before their Umayyad masters, who could just as easily take it all away. The patriarchate of John V would be one of the most significant of either the seventh or eighth centuries, reigning for thirty-five years. The only patriarch to exceed this was in Egypt and long dead, the non-

³⁷¹ Milka Levy-Rubin (2003), "The Reorganisation of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem During the Early Muslim Period", *ARAM*, 15: 197-226, 218. This is based on her analysis of the *Taktikon* c. 880 and related documents from the sixth century.

Chalcedonian, Benjamin (r. 626–65). John V's reign was all the more significant for being the first and during his entire reign the *only* resident Chalcedonian patriarchate active under Umayyad rule. His reign and attendant theological and liturgical program were so significant Sidney Griffith implies they were foundational to the identity formation of the Melkites. From the reestablishment of the patriarchate they began to distinguish themselves from the Syrian monothelites especially the Maronites who would prove irreconcilable. Griffith implies all this when he writes:

Perhaps it is not farfetched to suggest that the intellectual campaign, of which John of Damascus was so prominent a part, was itself the decisive factor which precipitated that movement among the Syrian Chalcedonians which seemed to the 'Jacobite' chronicler [Michael the Syrian] to have reached the proportions of a schism among them by the year 727. One may therefore take it that the first third of the ... eighth century was the time within which the consolidation of the 'Maximianist' movement within the Chalcedonian Christian community in the Islamic world came insistently to 'Jacobite' notice, by reason of its high public profile The Jerusalem patriarchate was in fact the heart of the 'Melkite' church.³⁷²

The 'Perfect Storm' of Philosophic Resource

The West and East Syrians had a long tradition of excellent education. Their respective schools, however, had a common progenitor. After the council of Ephesus (431) the 'school of the Persians'³⁷³ in Edessa was eventually closed in 489 for persistent 'Nestorianism' by emperor Zeno.³⁷⁴ At this some of the scholars moved back across the Persian border to Nisibis,³⁷⁵ but for others the monastery of Qenneshre became a center of learning.³⁷⁶ In short, these schools became rivals, theologically divided by the council of Ephesus. Qenneshre grew to such importance that almost all West Syrian scholars were trained there in the seventh and eighth centuries, and in the period 591 to

³⁷² Griffith (2001), 16.

³⁷³ Care must be taken to avoid anachronism, as the term 'school' should not be taken in its modern institutional sense—more below.

³⁷⁴ On the closure of the school of the Persians at Edessa see chapter one of Arthur Vööbus (1965), *History of the School of Nisibis*, (Louvain: Secrétariat du Corpus SCO).

³⁷⁵ On the school at Nisibis see the classic work by Vööbus, *ibid.* And more recently, Becker (2006).

³⁷⁶ The monastery is located on the east bank of the Euphrates across from Europos.

708 five of seven West Syrian patriarchs of Antioch were trained at Qenneshre, including the Jacobite bishop Julian II (r. 688–708), who reigned in the period leading up to and including the reestablishment of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem.³⁷⁷ For the East Syrians the school at Nisibis likewise remained central.

The term ‘school’ in this context can be misleading. A. H. Becker cautions that schools ranged “from gatherings in local churches for the elementary study of scripture to informal study circles which met in specific locations within monasteries to independent institutions with a multi-tiered hierarchy of offices, where students engaged in a detailed study of biblical exegesis and acquired an acquaintance with Aristotelian logic.”³⁷⁸ The particulars of Becker’s study are focused on Nisibis but his more general statements, as this one, have wider application in my view bearing on the monastic education available in Syro-Palestine in the sixth-eighth centuries generally. Consequently, this definition of ‘school’ applies generally to West Syrian and Chalcedonian schools as well.

Further, both of these rival schools, the West Syrian at Qenneshre and the East Syrian at Nisibis, were strongly influenced by the Aristotelian commentary tradition in Alexandria, and thus adopted and translated into Syriac Aristotelian texts as part of their curricula.³⁷⁹ In fact, the best Syriac translation of Aristotle’s *Categories* was by Jacob

³⁷⁷ Julian belong to the monastery of Qenneshre and was probably resident there as Patriarch. Forbidden by the Arabs from entering Antioch, it was common practice for West Syrian patriarchs to remain in their monasteries. Bas Ter Haar Romeny, ed., (2008), *Jacob of Edessa and the Syriac Culture of His Day*, (Leiden: Brill), 83n3.

³⁷⁸ Becker (2006), 1-2.

³⁷⁹ East Syrians adopted them later, having a stronger anti-philosophy wing to their party. On the Syriac commentary tradition see Sebastian Brock (1993), “The Syriac Commentary Tradition”, in Charles Burnett, ed., *Glosses and Commentaries on Aristotelian Logical Texts: The Syriac, Arabic and Medieval Latin Traditions*, (London: The Warburg Institute, University of London), 3-18.

of Edessa (d. 708) probably at Qenneshre, a contemporary of John of Damascus.³⁸⁰

Regarding Jacob's significance Jack Tannous writes, "Jacob studied at Alexandria, translated Aristotle and the Bible, wrote on scientific matters in his *Hexaemeron*, composed a chronicle, wrote extensively on canon law and was responsible for the beginnings of Syriac grammar; Baumstark compared him to no less a figure than Jerome."³⁸¹ An East Syrian near contemporary, Sylvanus of Qardu (first half seventh century), provided scholia on the *Categories* and possibly other works of Aristotle. By 705 there was quite a history of translation of Aristotle into Syriac and these were not the only contemporaries of John of Damascus active in rival schools.³⁸² Thus, the translation of Greek texts into Syriac was actively developing a philosophic lexicon in the seventh and eighth century, gradually improving the logic of their polemic.³⁸³

There is no reason to suppose John would not have been aware of these competitors.

Now conflict with Persia probably brought an end to the philosophic schools in Alexandria in the early seventh century, although teaching survived at some level as contemporaries of John of Damascus still went to Alexandria to study, but the commentary tradition had ceased either by the Persian or finally by the Arab conquest. Thus, it is possible that instructors from these schools drifted into Syria given the freedom of movement within Arab territory just as new pilgrims moved about within Syro-Palestine so too could have displaced philosophers looking to carry on their

³⁸⁰ On Jacob (biography and as historian, jurist, exegete, grammarian, translator, philosopher and liturgist) see Romeny ed., (2008). On his bibliography see Dirk Kruisheer (1998), "A Bibliographical *Clavis* to the Works of Jacob of Edessa", *Hugoye: Journal of Syriac Studies*, 1/1: 35-56.

³⁸¹ Tannous (2010), 169.

³⁸² On translation of Greek philosophic texts into Syriac see Brock (1993). On the development of Syriac translation technique through the seventh century see Sebastian Brock (1983), "Towards a History of Syriac Translation Technique", in René Lavenant, ed., *Third Symposium Syriacum 1980*, (Rome: Pontifical Institutum Studiorum Orientalium), 1-14.

³⁸³ Daniel King (2011), "The Genesis and Development of a Logical Lexicon in the Syriac Tradition", in Josef Lössl and John W. Watt, eds., *Interpreting the Bible and Aristotle in Late Antiquity: The Alexandrian Commentary Tradition between Rome and Baghdad*, (Aldershot: Ashgate), 225-57, 234-35.

livelihood.³⁸⁴ Glanville Downey gives numerous examples of students and teachers moving in and out of Syro-Palestine.³⁸⁵ Further, it is known that Greek philosophic texts survived because they were being copied and translated especially in West Syrian monasteries. For example, the letters of Timothy I, Patriarch of the East Syrians (r. 780–823), encouraged subordinates to seek them out on the sly (they might deny an East Syrian patriarch).³⁸⁶

Also potentially contributing to the availability of Greek philosophic texts in Syro-Palestine were the Athenian philosophers returning from self-exile in 532. The whereabouts of the Athenian philosophers, who went to Persia after the ‘closure’ of the philosophic school in Athens (529) remains unsolved.³⁸⁷ Their leader, Damascius, went to Ctesiphon in Persian Mesopotamia and may have returned to Emesa in Syria soon after the peace accord of 531 with his six companions dispersing, four of whom were Syrian and so they may have returned home to the greater Syro-Palestine region to begin teaching on their own.³⁸⁸ Further, this influx of philosophers (no doubt with personal libraries in tow) may have provided the impetus needed for the unknown author Pseudo-Dionysius, who is known to depend on Proclus, a prominent Athenian

³⁸⁴ R. Sorabji implies that from the mid-sixth century Christians headed the Alexandrian school, afterwards the Christian philosophers, David and Elias both reduced their commentaries to the logic curriculum that interested students from Syro-Palestine. Richard Sorabji (2004), *The Philosophy of the Commentators, 200–600 AD: A Sourcebook, Volume 3: Logic and Metaphysics*, (London: Duckworth), 11.

³⁸⁵ Glanville Downey (1958), “The Christian Schools of Palestine: A Chapter in Literary History”, *Harvard Library Bulletin*, 12/3: 297-319.

³⁸⁶ On this see Sebastian Brock (1999), “Two Letters of the Patriarch Timothy from the Late Eighth Century on Translations from the Greek”, *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy*, 9: 233-46.

³⁸⁷ Edward Watts (2005), “Where to Live the Philosophical Life in the Sixth Century? Damascius, Simplicius, and the Return from Persia”, *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies*, 45: 285–315, 305-06. Watts notes that anti-Pagan laws in 531 were also a factor, as the school was not closed by the government but abandoned by the philosophers, who found its continued operation impossible.

³⁸⁸ Damascius of Syria the head of the school in Athens went to the Persian (Sassanid) capital Ctesiphon with six other philosophers from the academy, Simplicius of Cyrene, Eulamius of Phrygia, Priscian of Lydia, Hermias and Diogenes of Phoenicia and finally Isidore of Gaza. Only Damascius and Simplicius are otherwise known. Five of the seven academy philosophers mentioned by the ancient historian Agathias were Syriac in their cultural origin: Hermias and Diogenes (both from Phoenicia), Isidorus of Gaza, Damascius of Syria, Iamblichus of Coele-Syria and perhaps even Simplicius of Cilicia. See, *ibid.*, 307, 09, 10, 11.

philosopher in the period prior to the Athenian exile and whose works the exiles may have brought with them.³⁸⁹

Thus, the commentaries of Jacob of Edessa and his contemporaries were far from being one-offs done in a philosophic-backwater. There remained a robust decline, i.e. the advanced education available in Athens and Alexandria was no longer available, thus there was real decline in philosophic commentary, yet the possible gathering of remaining resources, teachers and texts, in Syro-Palestine meant that this decline was not necessarily immediately felt in Syro-Palestine, which may have actually benefited from it. Cyril Mango, confronting the overall decline of education and literary culture in Constantinople in the eighth century, examines and affirms the “surprising vitality of Greek culture” in Syro-Palestine in the eighth century.³⁹⁰ Thus, Syro-Palestine seems to have benefited from a ‘perfect storm’ of philosophic decline. The consequent detritus resulted in an influx of highly educated teachers and whatever texts they brought with them, first in the sixth century with the demise of Athens and again in the seventh with that of Alexandria.

Further, a tradition was developing in Syria of education in the local vernacular, Syriac. Sergius of Reshaina (d. 536) translated the *Categories* into Syriac, designing a curriculum appropriate for monks, who needed logic to find the true sense of scripture when virtue escaped them.³⁹¹ However, Daniel King indicates that not until Jacob of Edessa does logic begin to show up in polemic if only indirectly.³⁹² Nevertheless, he argues that Syrian schools adopted the Alexandrian Aristotelian commentary tradition’s

³⁸⁹ Ibid., 309. For Dionysius’ dependence on Proclus and bibliography see Berardino ed., (2000), 45-46.

³⁹⁰ Mango (1991), 149, 59.

³⁹¹ John W. Watt (2011), “From Sergius to Mattā: Aristotle and Pseudo-Dionysius in the Syriac Tradition”, in Josef Lössl and John W. Watt, eds., *Interpreting the Bible and Aristotle in Late Antiquity: The Alexandrian Commentary Tradition between Rome and Baghdad*, (Aldershot: Ashgate), 239-57, 244, 59.

³⁹² Daniel King (2013), “Why Were the Syrians Interested in Greek Philosophy?”, in Philip Wood, ed., *History and Identity in the Late Antique near East* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 61-81, 76.

pedagogical models including the introductions to philosophy and the *Organon*, thus Aristotle was in the air and becoming common cultural property.³⁹³ Curricula common to the West and East Syrian traditions in this period can be approximated, giving some idea of what the Patriarch of Jerusalem faced. Jack Tannous suggests a basic Syrian education consisted of Syriac translations of suitable texts, and the Chalcedonians would have followed suit in Greek:³⁹⁴

Level 1: All suitable boys (the poor to be subsidized by the church) – letters and basic grammar, Psalms, lectionary, and learning to sing the ‘simple service’

Level 2: Suitable boys who could hold a tune – Level 1 plus learn to chant the lectionary

Level 3: Future priests – Level 2 plus New Testament, Old Testament, the doctors of the church, and their commentators

Level 4: The elite clergy (East Syrian) – Level 3 plus the commentaries of Theodore of Mopsuestia, the works of Aba Isaiah, Mark the Monk, Evagrius, Gregory of Nazianzus, Basil, Palladius, the ‘Sayings of the Fathers’ and the *Book of Heraclides*

or

Level 4: The elite clergy (West Syrian) – Level 3 plus Athanasius, Basil, Gregory of Nyssa, John Chrysostom, Cyril of Alexandria, Severus of Antioch, Ephrem, Philoxenus, and Jacob of Sarugh

Tannous notes that levels one to three probably do not differentiate the Syrians.³⁹⁵ The more eminent doctors prior to the council of Ephesus are largely shared by all traditions. But, at level four specific West and East Syrian proclivities begin to emerge. Also, by ensuring nearly all young men could be trained to understand and sing the

³⁹³ Ibid., 78.

³⁹⁴ Tannous (2013), 96-98.

³⁹⁵ Levels 1-3 offer an essentially modified *enkyklios paideia* (standard education, probably basic grammar, rhetorical and possibly introductory philosophic training) designed to meet the reduced needs of its confessional goals. The Christianization of classical education is a complicated topic. On this see Guy G. Stroumsa (2012), “Scripture and Paideia in Late Antiquity”, in Maren R. Niehoff, ed., *Homer and the Bible in the Eyes of Ancient Interpreters*, (Leiden: Brill), 29-41. On Andrew Louth’s use of this term for John of Damascus to include his theological training see, Louth (2002), 6, 7n20.

‘simple service’, the Syrians began the process of distinguishing themselves based on the liturgy. The importance of the changes to the Trisagion take on new significance in this environment. Consequently, the works of John of Damascus begin to look less the isolated Byzantine theological treatise and more like the expedient local response they were, including John’s letter on the Trisagion. J. J. van Ginkel asserts, “Far more prominent in Jacob’s [of Edessa] work are the other Christian communities. In several letters theological ‘ammunition’ for future debate is handed out to the correspondents.”³⁹⁶ Thus, although Chalcedonian education probably looked much the same at level one, at two and three the liturgy began to differ, and level four was probably a mixed bag reflecting the doctrinal divergence within the Chalcedonian party; nevertheless, John’s theological program included providing polemical works to equip Chalcedonian monks, just as Jacob had equipped his. For example, Maximus the Confessor was clearly an authority for John but most certainly not for those Chalcedonians who preferred monotheletism. John’s oeuvre in fact begins to look integral to a patriarchal program geared to enforce uniformity on those monasteries within her orbit, while addressing basic issues of identity formation, doctrinal and liturgical in contradistinction to West and East Syrian programs with similar intent.

These rival schools, if not providing sufficient warrant for re-founding the vacant patriarchate on their own, clearly required a compelling response from a sitting patriarch. Rebuilding the patriarchate would be partially in terms of these rival schools, which fueled the intellectual elite of the competing West and East Syrian mission. But, given the apparent absence of patriarchal archives for this period, it is difficult to know precisely how John V responded. Nevertheless, the Jerusalem Patriarchate did respond,

³⁹⁶ Jan J. Van Ginkel (2005), “History and Community. Jacob of Edessa and the West Syrian Identity”, in Van Ginkel et al., eds., *Redefining Christian Identity: Cultural Interaction in the Middle East since the Rise of Islam*, (Leuven: Peeters), 67-75, 71.

if much of that response is lost then the patriarchal response should be sought in and reconstructed from the extant works of John of Damascus.

Patriarchal Policy: Curricular Expediency

Late antique Jerusalem resisted identity formation because of its cosmopolitan nature, according to Guy Stroumsa. This had implications for basic institutions; he writes, “The varied ethnic origins of the Christian elites may also account for the noticeable absence of a local theological school. Jerusalem remained too cosmopolitan in character to permit the development of a tradition of its own.”³⁹⁷ This is probably also because its Jewish-Christian roots were abandoned early by the wider gentile church, thus the hierarchy remained embarrassed and annoyed by its Jewish-Christian community that clung to its roots in Jerusalem. Further, it only attained full status as a patriarchate with Chalcedon. Thus, pilgrims and the Christian elite that constantly came and went in the fourth and fifth centuries brought their own identity and left with it as tourists do everywhere. Further, with the twin processes of Arabization and Islamization claiming public space, as with the recent completion of the Dome of the Rock, the Holy City seemed to hunker down as its respective communities turned inward. With the Arab conquest the pace of pilgrimage slowed and Christian sectarians were reduced to rhetorical violence. For Christians the ‘mother of all churches’ remained central if less accessible, but for the Chalcedonian sectarians who had maintained control of it after the conquest, the reestablished patriarchate shifted the balance of power between their internal factions. The Chalcedonian infighting between dyothelites and monothelites was decided by the Arabs in favor of the dyothelites centered in Damascus. Having been granted additional authority in the reestablished

³⁹⁷ Stroumsa (1989), 19.

patriarchate, the Anastasis would develop into the central hub of a dyothelite Chalcedonian network, later termed Melkite by its adversaries. Ironically, their support of Maximus and his imperial condemnation may have played a role in convincing the Arabs to allow a dyothelite patriarch to ascend the throne, seemingly no longer an imperial proxy. In the early years of John V (r. 705–35), the internal division over Maximus the Confessor would remain a central concern, as would the educational challenge brought by the West and East Syrian schools.

Education in the Patriarchate of Jerusalem

Something changes on the ground in the eighth century with the patriarchate's reestablishment. Robert Schick reports that Michael the Synkellos (born c. 761) "could still grow up and receive a proper Greek education in grammar, rhetoric, philosophy, poetry and astronomy in the patriarchal school of his native Jerusalem."³⁹⁸ Schick clearly overstates the case as there is no evidence in this period or that which follows for a formal educational institutional in Jerusalem. However, Andrew of Crete was sent to Jerusalem for an education in the late seventh century, so a certain level of education was available in Jerusalem by near contemporaries.³⁹⁹ Consequently, if we take Schick's 'school' in terms discussed earlier, there could have been various masters in or associated with the Anastasis allowing for a monastic formation much as was had in Qenneshre or Nisibis, although it clearly remained modest never attaining to their levels or fame. Consequently, I would like to propose that John's corpus acted as 'proto-school' texts, not replacing secular learning as Michael the Synkellos would still receive in the next generation, but John's texts would act as benchmarks for patriarchal initiatives: theological, liturgical, homiletic and exegetic. This is not a new proposal per

³⁹⁸ Schick (1995), 99. See Cunningham, ed., (1991), 46,8 (text), 47,9 (trans.).

³⁹⁹ Vailhé (1902), 380. According to his hagiography Andrew was educated in his own country then taken by his parents at the age of 14 or 15 to the Anastasis, where arrangements were made for him to become a monk and continue his education, and after which he was entrusted with economic affairs. See also Berardino, ed., (2000), 161-63.

se; however, past proposals have only vaguely remarked on John's works, superficially noting their dialog or other structure, but none have situated John in the Anastasis at the reestablishment of the patriarchate, thus contextualizing his entire theological program as opposite identifiable interlocutors.⁴⁰⁰

Others have argued that John of Damascus was the 'mouthpiece' of John V. For example, Frederick Chase writes of John's *On Images*, "From the tone of these discourses and from what Theophanes says, it would seem that John was acting as the mouthpiece not only for John of Jerusalem but for all the bishops of the East beyond the territories of the Greek emperor."⁴⁰¹ Of course John was not speaking for any but his own party, and in speaking for John V he spoke only for the bishops in the patriarchate. Theophanes reports John was known for his eloquence and teaching: "rightly surnamed the Golden Stream because of the golden gleam of spiritual grace that bloomed both in his discourse and his life . . . the new teacher of the church."⁴⁰² Theophanes was a Constantinopolitan iconophile, so this is an early acknowledgement of John's theological authority. Nevertheless, given the dearth of material from the patriarchate in this period, which is a significant lacuna given John V's thirty year reign; John of Damascus' large corpus is the only explanation (and the theological foundation) for the formation of a distinct (if still future) Melkite identity. Perhaps John V commissioned John of Damascus to revive the doctrinal program of his patriarchal predecessor, who also hailed from Damascus, Sophronius, and who also had a theological protégée and

⁴⁰⁰ For example, Peter Schadler in his recent thesis on John of Damascus wrote regarding John's dogmatic masterpiece, the *Fount of Knowledge* (a composite work comprised of the *De Hieresibus*, *Dialectica*, and the *Expositio fidei*), that it could have been intended as a "text book in a course of study". Schadler (2011), 61. Andrew Louth suggests John's *Expos.* looks like monastic catechesis. Andrew Louth (2007), "St John Damascene as Monastic Theologian", *Downside Review*, 125/440 (July 1): 197-220.

⁴⁰¹ Chase ed., (1958), xiii.

⁴⁰² Theophanes' *Chronicle*, AM 6234. Mango and Scott, eds. (1997), 578. Later Theophanes refers to John as a "venerable teacher", AM 6245. Ibid., 592.

lieutenant in Maximus the Confessor. In any case, the theological and liturgical issues that divided the Chalcedonians were now front and center. Sophronius had lost control of episcopal ordinations in his own patriarchate, failing to stop monothelite appointments.⁴⁰³ Although it seems likely that if Andrew of Crete was sent on mission to acknowledge Constantinople III in c. 685 from the Anastasis, then the dyothelite Chalcedonian party kept some sort of control of the Anastasis, but with a patriarchal accession, monothelite sympathizers would be targeted and dyothelite control consolidated.⁴⁰⁴

After the reign of John V there was confusion at his passing and the See left vacant once again.⁴⁰⁵ Greek continued, but Michael the Synkellos is known to have translated Theodore Abū Qurra's Arabic into Greek at times. Thus, the switch to Arabic had begun in earnest by the mid eighth century, perhaps even in the winter of John's life. However, Sidney Griffith argues that Melkite Arabic texts are derivative, lacking in "theological and philosophical richness and elegance characteristic of the Greek of John of Damascus."⁴⁰⁶

The Failure of Clarification

If his patriarch commissioned John to address these challenges—especially that of internal disagreement over Maximus the Confessor and that of rival schools—John would have to address the philosophical richness of their respective thought. He needed to decide how much philosophy and what sort he needed. This was not straightforward, as there were also differences of opinion on the proper place of pagan thought internal

⁴⁰³ Price (2014), 397.

⁴⁰⁴ Pope Theodore (r. 642–49) had first instructed Stephen of Dora to depose monothelite bishops in Palestine, and then Pope Martin (r. 649–55) instructed John of Philadelphia to appoint dyothelite bishops in Syria and Palestine. Neither effort was successful, both uncanonical and likely unwelcomed by the local Chalcedonian leadership. Ibid.

⁴⁰⁵ Jerusalem seems to be vacant once again 735–45. Subsequent Patriarchs of Jerusalem include Theodore (745–70), Elias II (770–97), George (797–807), Thomas I (807–20). There does not seem to be any data regarding a patriarchal school in their reigns either.

⁴⁰⁶ Griffith (2006), 197.

to his party. An elder contemporary of John, Anastasias of Sinai, who was a dyothelite Chalcedonian same as John, continued the anti-philosophy trope common among many theologians in late antiquity. He was more interested in exposing Aristotle's *Categories* as the root of West Syrian error.⁴⁰⁷ John, however, ignores this trope, selectively accepting philosophy or more precisely that bit that was useful in debate, Aristotelian logic.⁴⁰⁸

This is consonant with the late antique engagement of Christians in philosophical discourse. David Runia in analyzing the reception of Aristotle in the Greek Church Fathers, argues that reception was slowed by his constant association with heresy, because he was perceived by the Fathers to be “too human, too worldly, too subtle” and thus what was needed was for it to be “adapted, above all Neoplatonized.”⁴⁰⁹ Ironically this was conveniently accomplished by an enemy of Christianity, Porphyry (d. 305); whose approach so effectively harmonized Aristotle with Plato that a revolution in late antique curricula resulted.⁴¹⁰ Aristotle was to be studied for earthly wisdom and Plato for heavenly, i.e. study of the ‘lesser mysteries’ led to the ‘greater mysteries’ and eventual to the One.⁴¹¹

⁴⁰⁷ *Viae dux*, 6.2.1-17. K.-H. Uthemann, ed., *Anastasii Sinaitae: Viae dux*. (CCSG 8; 1981). The *Doctrina Patrum*, a popular florilegium known to Anastasius and John, preserves passages from the anonymous *De sectis*, which quotes Gregory of Nazianzus against Aristotle. See Franz Diekamp, Basileios Phanourgakis, and Evangelos Chrysos, eds. (1981, 1907), *Doctrina Patrum de incarnatione Verbi: Ein griechisches florilegium aus der Wende des 7. und 8. Jahrhunderts*, (2nd edn.; Münster: Aschendorff), 217-18, II. Diekamp, 217-218, II.

⁴⁰⁸ John slips into old patterns once in his polemic in the *Contra Jacobitus* 10.13 (Kotter, iv, 113). He disparages his opponents as posing Aristotle the thirteenth apostle.

⁴⁰⁹ David T. Runia (1989), “Festugiere Revisited: Aristotle in the Greek Patres”, *Vigiliae Christianae*, 43/1: 1-34, 25-26.

⁴¹⁰ To further the irony, Porphyry was born in Tyre in Phoenicia, and possibly Syrian, because his given name was ‘Malcus’, the Syriac word for ‘king’. This is the same Syriac word from which we get ‘Melkite’. Regarding his harmonization of Aristotle with Plato, R. Sorabji laconically states, “Porphyry’s intervention was decisive.” Richard Sorabji, ed., (1990), *Aristotle Transformed: The Ancient Commentators and Their Influence*, (London: Duckworth), 2.

⁴¹¹ Garth Fowden (2014), *Before and after Muhammad: The First Millenium Refocused*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press), 132-33. Sorabji ed., (1990), 5.

Philosophy and theology in late antiquity were closely related enterprises.⁴¹² Both Christians and pagans read philosophic texts theologically. Not only did philosophers, whether Christian or pagan, write commentaries on the works of Plato and Aristotle, but both saw their work as religious and in competition.⁴¹³ For example, Chrysostom and his congregation in Antioch knew Christianity to be what was referred to as the ‘true philosophy’. In a sermon on Ephesians, Chrysostom refers to a local holy man, a hermit from the desert, saying, “I mean Julian [Saba], that admirable man. He was a rustic man, humble and from the humble. He was completely unacquainted with the external [i.e. non-Christian] *paideia*, but rather completely filled with unfeigned philosophy (φιλοσοφίας).”⁴¹⁴ Thus, these closely related enterprises inherited the same basic education adapting it to their specific needs. Late antique education quickly settled on the *Organon*, a collection of Aristotle’s logical works, as propaedeutic to the ‘greater mysteries’ of Plato, which Christian monastics conveniently swapped out for confessional authorities, and thus the level four variations outlined above.⁴¹⁵

⁴¹² An informative survey of the relationship between philosophy and religion from antiquity to late antiquity can be found in Philip Merlan (1963), “Religion and Philosophy from Plato’s *Phaedo* to the Chaldaean Oracles”, *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 1/2: 163-76. For an example of philosophy as the handmaid of theology see H. R. Drobner, ‘Gregory of Nyssa as Philosopher: *De anima et resurrectione* and *De hominis opificio*’, *Dionysius*, New Series 18/December (2000), 69-101. Hanson notes both that there was no distinction as today between theology and philosophy (or psychology, physics, mathematics, and medicine) and thus all Greek writers were more or less indebted to Greek philosophy, so while not canceling the biblical background it certainly influenced a theologian’s outlook. R. P. C. Hanson (1988), *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God: The Arian Controversy 318-381*, (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark), 858-59.

⁴¹³ See Kotter, i, 56f, 3.1-65 = γ’ Περὶ φιλοσοφίας, 136f. For John “The love of God, therefore, is the true philosophy,” (ἡ οὖν ἀγάπη ἢ πρὸς τὸν θεὸν αἰτὴ ἐστὶν ἢ ἀληθὴς φιλοσοφία) (Kotter, i, 56, 3.26-27). See also, V. Kontouma-Conticello and C. G. Conticello (2009), “Philosophie Et Théologie À Byzance”, in Philippe Capelle-Dumont and Olivier Boulnois, eds., *Philosophie Et Théologie Au Moyen-Âge. Anthologie-Tome II*, (Paris: Cerf), 43-61. On the religious texts of pagan philosophers, see *inter alia* Syrianus, *Pythagoras and Plato with the Chaldean Oracles*, Proclus *Platonic Theology*, and *Commentary on the Chaldean Oracles*, Porphyry *Against the Christians*, and Iamblichus *On the Mysteries of the Egyptians or Theurgy*. Finally, it is especially important to realize (as all philosophic texts) Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* was read in late antiquity as a religious text.

⁴¹⁴ PG 62, 153, 18-21. On Julian Saba see, Sidney H. Griffith (1994), “Julian Saba, ‘Father of the Monks’ of Syria”, *Journal of Early Christian Studies*, 2/2 Summer: 185-216.

⁴¹⁵ The *Organon* came to be a standard collection of Aristotle’s works which included the *Categories*, *On Interpretation*, *Prior Analytics*, *Posterior Analytics*, *Topics*, and *Sophistical Refutations*. To this was prefixed two works the *Prolegomena to Philosophy* and the *Isagoge* as an introduction to philosophy and

Eventually even Christians, however, wrote philosophical texts, such as Nemesis' *On the Nature of Man*, appealing to pagan and Christian alike. Thus, Tertullian's oft quoted third century dictum, "What has Athens to do with Jerusalem," by the sixth century looks more like quibbling siblings than anything else.⁴¹⁶ But John's references to Aristotle are devoid of the polemic common to other late antique theologians, thus he seems to consciously avoid the tact (-lessness) of Anastasias. Further, John refers to Socrates some thirty-two times, whereas mention of Socrates is very rare in all other Greek theologians after Chalcedon.⁴¹⁷ Consequently, John seems quite open to philosophy as a tool, thus the retired administrator will exploit every tool in the implementation of patriarchal policy, and by the early eighth century, John of Damascus would articulate that philosophy was the 'handmaiden' of theology, when justifying his philosophic appropriation in the *Dialectica*: "it is also fitting for the queen to be waited upon by certain handmaidens."⁴¹⁸ Thus, rather than the Greek milieu common to Byzantium, John seems to be responding to local Syriac competitors who are actively translating Aristotle, even if John's milieu is still a local culture conversant in Greek.

logic. See Jonathan Barnes (2003), *Porphyry: Introduction*, trans. Jonathan Barnes, (Oxford: Oxford University Press), xv. And, Sorabji ed., (1990), 5.

⁴¹⁶ Tertullian, *On the Prescription of Heretics*, 7.9. CPL 5; CC SL, 1 (R.F. Refoulé, 1954): 187-224. Tertullian lamented, "Wretched Aristotle! who established for them the dialectic art, so ingenious in the construction and refutation of propositions, so crafty in statements, so forced in hypotheses, so inflexible in arguments, so laborious in disputes, so damaging even to itself, always reconsidering everything, so that it never treats thoroughly of anything at all." (7.6) And a few lines later, "What then hath Athens in common with Jerusalem? What hath the Academy in common with the Church? What have heretics in common with Christians? Our principles are from the 'Porch' of Solomon, who himself handed down that the Lord must be sought in simplicity of heart. Away with those who bring forward a Stoic or Platonic or dialectic Christianity." (7.9-11). The translation is Bindley's. T. H. Bindley (1914), "On the Testimony of the Soul and on the 'Prescription' of Heretics", (London: SPCK), 35-96.

⁴¹⁷ Michael Frede (2006), "The Early Christian Reception of Socrates", in Lindsay Judson and Vassilis Karasmanes, eds., *Remembering Socrates: Philosophical Essays*, (Oxford: Clarendon), 188-202, 195, 201.

⁴¹⁸ Chase ed., (1958), 9. "Πρέπει δὲ καὶ τῇ βασιλίδι ἄβραις τιςὶν ὑπηρετεῖσθαι." *Dialectica*, 1.57-58. Chase has rendered the Greek ὑπηρετεῖσθαι 'handmaiden'. A more grammatical rendering might be, "It is appropriate also for the queen to be served by certain favorites." This notion of philosophy as the 'handmaiden of theology' (*ancilla theologiae*) can be traced back to Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata*, 1.5. On this see Albert Henrichs (1968), "Philosophy, the Handmaiden of Theology", *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies*, 9/4: 437-50.

Further, Christopher Stead has pointed out that rising Aristotelianism had left Nicaea incoherent by providing two definitions of *ousia*, “which distinguished between the individual and the species”. This created a theological problem, which Stead goes on to summarize: “if *homousios* is understood as implying ‘same individual’, the [Nicene] Creed seems to be declaring the Father, Son and Spirit are one Person, not three. But if it implies only ‘same species’, it gives no sufficient expression of divine unity.”⁴¹⁹

This disparity and the subsequent reception of Nicaea led *inter alia* to schism, first at Ephesus and then at Chalcedon. Here the point is that theologians often failed to define their terms so Christology in late antiquity had suffered a terminological impasse.⁴²⁰

This problem, beginning with the failure to define *ousia*, continued as key terms in the Christological debate were not defined uniformly. This gave rise to sectarian collections of definitions used in theological debate.⁴²¹ Definitions had been collected from antiquity and by Christians as early as Clement of Alexandria, and this practice was accentuated by continuing Christological controversy throughout late antiquity, thus not even Anastasius of Sinai could escape this tendency, as he defines some thirty or so terms in his *Hodegos (Viae Dux)*.⁴²² John, however, seems to have exceeded all others, counting some two hundred definitions.⁴²³ Although John is clearly in the Maximian trajectory, equating *ousia* with *physis*, *hypostasis* with *prosopon*, and he defined *enhypostatin*, *diaphora*, and *idion* among other terms necessary for

⁴¹⁹ Christopher Stead (1994), *Philosophy in Christian Antiquity*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 161.

⁴²⁰ Out of scope here, it is interesting to speculate that as translation into Syriac of Greek texts progressed and a philosophical vocabulary was developed, it seems possible that the terminological problems may have been ‘encoded’ into the language, possibly calcifying the debate making rapprochement ever more difficult.

⁴²¹ A. Louth discusses the research on this. Louth (2002), 42-45. Although I shall argue John goes far beyond his contemporaries with the *Dialectica*, John’s terminology by modern philosophers is still found wanting too, e.g. Richard Cross laments, “John’s terminology is profligate, and carelessly used.” Cross (2000), 97.

⁴²² Christiane Furrer-Pilliod (2000), *Οροι Και Υπογραφα: Collections alphabétiques de définitions profanes et sacrées*, (Città del Vaticano: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana), 29, 35.

⁴²³ *Ibid.*, 34-35, 38-40.

Christological debate as Maximus had done, he far exceeded what Maximus' circle had collected.⁴²⁴ Yet more definitions was not the solution and John knew it.

Laying a Foundation

The doctrinal implications of first Persian and then Arab attacks on Christian Empire were inescapable. Losses to heretics challenged the notion that one God, one Christ, one emperor and one empire were the proper reflection of the divine order common to late antique Byzantine self-understanding. Thus, motivated to reconcile with Eastern Christians in the face of Arab aggression, Constantinopolitan political vision crafted a compromise that required *akribeia* (doctrinal precision) to give way to *oikonomia* (doctrinal accommodation), but as Phil Booth argues, Sophronius and his lieutenant, Maximus the Confessor were opposed to doctrinal compromise for political ends.⁴²⁵ The compromise was initially centered on doctrinal discussions regarding one or two *energeiai*, energies or activities, in Christ, but soon included the notion of one or two wills as well. These ideas had been discussed in Syro-Palestine perhaps with the advent of Dionysius the Areopagite's 'theandric energy' recently translated into Syriac. Thus, the legacy of this controversy would be felt anew in the Anastasis as intra-confessional debate between the monothelite and dyothelite Chalcedonians threatened the peace of the church once again. John's philosophical appropriation and theological articulation would have to be sufficiently nuanced to assuage lingering fears over the 'traitor' Maximus if the Maronites were to be kept at the table.⁴²⁶

⁴²⁴ Respectively οὐσία, φύσις, ὑπόστασις, πρόσωπον, ἐνυπόστατον, διάφορος, ἴδιος, for which see PG91.149-152.

⁴²⁵ Booth (2014), 218-19. *Oikonomia* can be understood two ways in this study: 1) as here, doctrinal accommodation, and 2) as the Divine dispensation covering Providence in Creation generally and especially the Incarnation as the microcosm of God at work in the world. This second will be picked up later and discussed in more depth. On the first, Booth gives some bibliography. On the second, see Gerhard Richter (2005), *Oikonomia: Der Gebrauch des Wortes Oikonomia im neuen Testament, bei den Kirchenvätern und in der theologischen Literatur bis ins 20. Jahrhundert*, (Berlin: de Gruyter).

⁴²⁶ This distaste comes out clearly in the polemical Syriac *Life of Maximus* of Maronite provenance. See Brock (1984).

After the Arab conquest leveled the playing field, the tradition of collecting definitions picked back up fueled by interlocutors reengaged in Christological debate. Further, as late antique philosophy declined with the demise of the Aristotelian commentary tradition in Alexandria for example, lists of definitions and compendia of important or popular works (possibly abridged) were compiled of the extant commentaries in order to extract the minimum needed. Christians followed suit, generating lists of definitions or creating logical compendia, such as the circle of Maximus the Confessor. They preserved some fifty definitions of key theological terms; this is a significant but not unparalleled collection. Further, now attributed to either Maximus or his circle is the compendium *Additamentum* 34, which “is a collection of excerpts from lectures on the *Isagoge* of Porphyry and Aristotle’s *Categories*.”⁴²⁷ This compendium strongly suggests the connection of Maximus to the Alexandrian school.⁴²⁸ After perhaps a century of this, John of Damascus edited the *Dialectica*, which was much more than just a list of terms, more than a compendium, but a complete if minimal handbook of logic, which could be studied for more than definitions, but also for a basic understanding of how the words were to relate to one another as it restated the *Isagoge* and *Categories*, not merely excerpting them. The difference is that an excerpt might act as notes to the original, but John’s *Dialectica* provided a replacement sufficient to the needs of monks with their reduced requirements.

In his philosophic works, of which the *Dialectica* is the foremost, John of Damascus is compiling the thoughts of both the Fathers and the ‘external’ philosophers. C.

Erismann suggests Christians initially rejected Aristotelian logic but gradually came to

⁴²⁷ Jankowiak and Booth (2015), 23, 72.

⁴²⁸ Ibid., 72.

accept it, as epitomized in John.⁴²⁹ The evidence suggests an uneven process of sporadic grudging acceptance tempered by polemical *ad hominem*, as seen in John's contemporary Anastasias and the late antique florilegium known to John, the *Doctrina Patrum*, which still displays the trope of disparaging Aristotelian logic.⁴³⁰ Further, even the irenic borrowing of aphorisms and the cherry picking of definitions from classic and philosophic authors by the circle of Maximus the Confessor is recognized but eclipsed by John's adaptation of the introductory logic curriculum in the *Dialectica*, baptizing Aristotelian logic into a handbook. John is selective, however, taking from the compendia (or originals) only that part corresponding to Porphyry's *Isagoge* and Aristotle's *Categories*.⁴³¹

Logical compendia then, normally portrayed over against full commentary in terms of decline, might indeed be reevaluated in terms of school epitomes for lower-level students, suggesting that access to philosophic commentaries probably continued, seen not only in compendia but providing texts for the Syro-Palestinian translation efforts, first via Syriac and later in Baghdad directly from Greek. As the example above noted, the East Syrian Patriarch Timothy I had subordinates search out originals such as Nemesius' *On the Nature of Man* and scholia on any of the *Organon* including the *Poetics* in West Syrian monasteries where they were preserved.⁴³² Consequently, it is quite likely that John of Damascus would have produced the *Dialectica* within a relatively rich educational environment rather than in a poor one.

⁴²⁹ C. Erismann, 'A World of Hypostases: John of Damascus' Rethinking of Aristotle's Categorical Ontology', *Studia Patristica*, 50 (2011), 269-287 at 271.

⁴³⁰ F. Diekamp (ed.), *Doctrina Patrum De Incarnatione Verbi* (Münster, 1907) at 217 II.

⁴³¹ Louth, *St. John Damascene: Tradition and Originality in Byzantine Theology* at 40, Richter, *Johannes von Damaskos: Philosophische Kapitel* at 75-76. For Maximus on aphorisms see PG 91.817-28, and on definitions see PG 91.149-53, 213-16, 260-8.

⁴³² Brock (1999), 236, 37.

Further, the *Dialectica*, rather than the end of a process of the collection of definitions and philosophic compendia, staving off a decline in a philosophic-vacuum, may have been produced by John in terms of an active educational agenda, opportunistically leveraging the recent influx of philosophers and philosophic texts. Thus, it seems clear that the highest levels of education were likely readily available to John in Damascus, even if they were in decline elsewhere, Syro-Palestine was the short-term beneficiary. The Abbasid successor state would exploit this same richness in Baghdad in the next century.⁴³³

Andrew Louth has argued that John was little more than a compiler of the *Dialectica*,⁴³⁴ but it seems to me the highly edited text may reflect an active ‘classroom’ rather than constant borrowing from compendia. In fact, in some of his most highly edited material in John’s philosophic works generally and the *Dialectica* specifically, that on genus and species, the differences between texts suggest an editorial plan, i.e. programmatic intent. John crafted a new tradition by incorporating the philosophic into the patristic, offering a rapprochement contra the anti-philosophy trope common in patristic heresiology. Whether, as K. Oehler states, John “broke the mold” of the church’s tradition of keeping theology distinct from philosophy may be an overstatement, but if not John is clearly harmonizing to a new level.⁴³⁵

In another philosophic work, the *Institutio elementaris*, John specifically introduces genus and species as part of a process to canonize a logic that distinguished and preserved the patristic separation between the created and uncreated, not exclusive of

⁴³³ On the ninth century renaissance centered on translation activity in Baghdad, see Fowden (2014).

⁴³⁴ Louth (2002), 41.

⁴³⁵ Klaus Oehler (1969), *Antike Philosophie und byzantinisches Mittelalter*, (Munich: Beck), 295-96.

biblical claims, but rather in terms of them.⁴³⁶ John was an author who nuanced the presentation of genus and species beyond any concern of the Aristotelian commentary tradition. He showed how creation mirrored the Creator, how genus and species explained Genesis.⁴³⁷

Consequently, in the service of curricular expediency John went beyond lists of definitions and wrote philosophic works in order to provide the patriarchate with a philosophic foundation on which to build a curriculum capable of competing with both West and East Syrian translation efforts by bypassing the commentary tradition and developing his own handbook of logic, the *Dialectica*.

John's Policy Implementation: Polemics

John V consolidated control of the Anastasis by implementing policy to ensure his confessional objectives both doctrinal and liturgical. These policies would address the competing West and East Syrian schools by implementing new educational goals ensuring a curriculum that matched his dyothelite Chalcedonian doctrinal convictions. Further, these policies would ensure a uniform liturgical presentation in the patriarchate and the holy sites it controlled. No doubt he intended that these doctrinal and liturgical goals would be met in the Anastasis and then extended to the Judean monasteries ensuring a uniform dyothelite Chalcedonian confessional profile.

I suggest that John's oeuvre is best understood as implementing these policy goals particularly as they were initiated in the Anastasis. Unfortunately, I do not have the space to investigate this claim for John's entire corpus. M.-F. Auzépy has remarked that the Greek *Lives* account for much of John's output but his polemical works are

⁴³⁶ Scott Ables (2015), "John of Damascus on Genus and Species", in Mikonja Knežević, ed., *The Ways of Byzantine Philosophy*, (Alhambra, CA: Sebastian Press), 271-87.

⁴³⁷ *Ibid.*, 283-84.

noticeably absent. The emphasis is on his hymns and iconophile treatises, and she suggests this list seems like what partisans would take to Constantinople.⁴³⁸ Further, Andrew Louth acknowledges that John is actually best known for his hymnody outside the West, intimating his hymns are better known in the East.⁴³⁹ It is notable as well that the preserved works are for major feasts, which would be especially important in the context of a cathedral church, especially the Anastasis with its constant flow of pilgrims.

Louth writes, “all John’s homilies were delivered in a specific liturgical context.” And, a little later he adds, “All the extant homilies of the Damascene were preached on particular liturgical occasions.”⁴⁴⁰ Louth suggests that these homilies were delivered in a monastic context: “If John was indeed a hieromonk in Palestine, the presumption is that these homilies were delivered as part of the monastic round of services.”⁴⁴¹ But, Louth admits preaching was within the remit of abbots and John was not an abbot.⁴⁴² It seems simpler to propose that John’s sermons were delivered related to feasts and delivered in the Anastasis or perhaps at a local church commemorating a holy site with an associated feast day. Louth’s preoccupation with John’s monasticism though insightful fails in my view to adequately account for the unique dynamic of pilgrimage and how it would impinge on the cathedral services in the Anastasis, itself housing Golgotha, the True Cross and the tomb, not to mention the other combined church-holy sites in Jerusalem all within the purview of the patriarch.⁴⁴³ Further, Louth notes that it is very odd that John’s sermons appear to be written down before delivered contrary to

⁴³⁸ Auzépy (2015), 419.

⁴³⁹ Louth (2002), 252.

⁴⁴⁰ Ibid., 224.

⁴⁴¹ Ibid., 227.

⁴⁴² Ibid.

⁴⁴³ It is a homily in fact, the *Homily on the Withered Fig Tree* (CPG 8085), which preserves as retained by his editor, B. Kotter, “By our holy father John, monk and priest, of the holy Anastasis of Christ our God.” Kotter, v, 102.

standard rhetorical practice. It seems to me though, that if John were the ‘mouthpiece’ of John V, he may have indeed written them down and discussed them with John V to ensure his liturgical stamp. Further, because they were liturgically based it seems likely they were delivered more than once and perhaps by more than one person in more than one location if meant for feast days with celebrations at multiple locations in Jerusalem, thus it seems reasonable to suppose that John wrote them down and/or modified them given the thirty year reign of John V.⁴⁴⁴ In short, John’s hymns and sermons are quite likely written with the Anastasis and its pilgrims in mind probably largely after he entered the Anastasis but this is not absolute. Thus, the locus of the bulk of John’s output is likely the Anastasis and its hustle and bustle, not an isolated monastic cell.

Regarding Auzépy’s point implying a limited reception of the polemical works, I would add that this is probably because they were highly context specific. This quality actually makes them ideal candidates for investigation as good indicators of John’s local focus as a function of patriarchal response to local interlocutors. Hymns and sermons relevant to the liturgy have a timeless quality, thus their relevance elsewhere and else when, but the polemical works are situated in time and place—not to suggest they are easily placed or dated. Thus, John’s polemical works are those most indicative of patriarchal policy in regards to doctrinal interests, whereas the liturgical works (hymns and sermons) would be better candidates related to the spiritual landscape related to pilgrimage among other things. Consequently, my focus will be only his polemical works, because these are the works most relevant to his time at the Anastasis in terms of his doctrinal response to the sectarian community and its confessional challenges.

⁴⁴⁴ This would also account for features like self-references as an ‘old man’ or iconophile statements. Louth (2002), 226-27.

The *Opera Polemica* of John of Damascus

The edited *Opera Polemica* of John of Damascus contains eight works largely engaging the Christology of his sectarian interlocutors both internal and external.⁴⁴⁵ These include three anti-West Syrian (non-Chalcedonian, miaphysite), two anti-East Syrian (non-Chalcedonian, dyophysite), and one each anti-Manichaean, anti-monothelite, and anti-Islamic works. Noticeably absent is any anti-Judaica,⁴⁴⁶ thus I speculate that the few anti-Jewish comments that Louth detects in John's sermons are probably in fact targeted at Jewish-Christians in his audience.⁴⁴⁷

Other polemical works include the *On Heresies* and *On Images* I-III.⁴⁴⁸ *On Heresies* will not be in view as it is largely prolegomena to the polemical works proper, although tangential are the uniquely preserved extracts of John Philoponus, a miaphysite philosopher with whom John takes particular issue.⁴⁴⁹ John's *On Images* I-III, although polemical, deal with iconoclasm which is much later than the reestablishment of the patriarchate and thus not a focus in this early period. Further, the *Debate between the Christians and the Saracens*, since it is not relevant to the example I have selected, I have left unresolved my reservations regarding its authenticity. J. M. Hoeck considers

⁴⁴⁵ These are edited in a modern critical edition, see Kotter, iv.

⁴⁴⁶ Spuriously attributed to John, but now edited, for the *Responsio ad Iudaeos* (CPG 8092), see J. H. Declerck, ed. *Anonymus dialogus cum Iudaeis saeculi ut videtur sextii*. (CCG 30; Turnhout: Leuven, 1994). Further, Hoeck and CPG judge spurious the *Responsio ad Iudaeos* (Armenian, unedited, CPG 8092). Hoeck (1951), 24. Hoeck (on the next page) gives one more spurious work omitted from CPG: *Orationes adversus Iudaeos* (apparently mentioned by Allatius in his Prolegomena under no. 84, PG 94. 191), which remains unedited as far as I know.

⁴⁴⁷ Louth remarks that the sermons themselves contain little detectable polemic, stock pericopes include the Jew who tried to touch Mary's bier, the attempt to rebuild the temple, exegesis of the parable of the vineyard, could all be taken as familiar tropes that separate flesh and spirit, i.e. the heard-hearted false Jews vs. those who are circumcised in the heart, the true Jew. This would be in keeping with a continual focus on pilgrims, thus I suspect it would be a mistake to take them as tacit evidence for a veiled but formal anti-Judaica. Louth (2002), 229.

⁴⁴⁸ *On Heresies*. Kotter, iv, 19-67. *On Images* I-III. Kotter, iii, 65-200.

⁴⁴⁹ *On Heresies* preserves two fragments of John Philoponus (a sixth century Alexandrian miaphysite philosopher) from the original Greek of *The Arbiter* (CPG 7260), which is otherwise lost (a Syriac translation of the whole is extant). See Uwe Michael Lang (2001), *John Philoponus and the Controversies over Chalcedon in the Sixth Century: A Study and Translation of the Arbiter*, (Leuven: Peeters), 20-21.

it dubious but Sahas and others authentic.⁴⁵⁰ In short, I have difficulty with John's authorship of an anti-Islamic polemic for two reasons: 1) it would compromise John's family's close relationship with the Umayyad caliphs on a personal level, and 2) it would risk the independence of the patriarch and thus his entire party. The risk would be especially acute if there were a secret negotiation that secured the reestablishment of the patriarchate.⁴⁵¹ If John did write such works, I suspect he would not have done so until after the death of John V and John's second retirement away from Jerusalem; however, I suspect John did not write such works, but may have taught such quietly, and thus any notes of his or others of his lectures may have been exploited at a later date.⁴⁵²

There may be other authentic polemical works of John. J. M. Hoeck lists thirty-seven dogmatic and polemic works in his combined list. Excluding these eight as well as the other dogmatic and polemical texts edited by Kotter, Hoeck's list still includes maybe

⁴⁵⁰ Hoeck (1951), 23-24. Sahas (1972), 102. Although Sahas himself admits, "Even if the text . . . does not come from his own hand, its content is a product of his thought." Hoyland summarizes: Griffith assigns it to Theodore Abū Qurra, and Glei and Khoury ascribe it to John the Deacon, student of Abu Qurra, but Sahas and La Coz think it authentic. Hoyland (1997), 489-90.

⁴⁵¹ For example, regarding *On Heresies* ch. 101, which condemns Islam, Vassa Kontouma writes that it "could not have circulated for long unbeknownst to the Caliph." Kontouma (2015b), 27. The caliph could react precipitously in such cases, as in the case of Theodore (possibly John's uncle) in 734/5, who was exiled or Peter, bishop of Damascus, who was mutilated and exiled in 741/2 both members of John's circle and a poignant reminder of the risks involved in anti-Islamic polemic. Mango and Scott, eds. (1997), 569, 77. However, even more to the point and timely, c. 715 Peter of Capitolias was executed for public anti-Islamic statements by al-Walīd, both acquaintances of John of Damascus, and John felt strongly enough regarding the tragedy to write a *Passion* considered authentic, but interestingly paints al-Walīd not unfavorably, giving Peter every chance to recant, "You are free to recognize as God Jesus, who is a man and a servant of the Creator, but why insult our religion and call our peaceable Prophet master of error and father of deception?" Hoyland (1997), 356. As a work of John see Hoeck (1951), 35, no 80.

⁴⁵² Hoyland is unconvinced of the authenticity of *Sarac*, though admitting it may be based on John's teaching. Hoyland (1997), 489-90. Further, Lamoreaux recounts the issues and summarizes the conclusions resulting from the recent (after Hoyland, 1997 and Kotter, iv, 1981) critical text, which attributes the work to John the Deacon a disciple of Abū Qurra. John C. Lamoreaux (2002), "The Biography of Theodore Abu Qurrah Revisited", *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 56: 25-40, 33. See also R. Glei and A. Th. Khoury, eds. and trans. (1995), *Johannes Damaskenos und Theodor Abu Qurra: Schriften zum Islam*, (Würzburg: Echter) at 86.2.

seventeen additional works, most of dubious authenticity.⁴⁵³ Thus, the precise extent of John's contribution is unknown. Nevertheless, the seven edited texts (the eight less the work on Islam) provide a significant entrée to John's polemic as it relates to his theological program in the context of the reestablishment of the Jerusalem Patriarchate and within the Anastasis.

In Part II Constructive Doctrine I will focus on John's polemical texts; however, to facilitate my analysis there it would be helpful to have a date-list of John's polemical works in order to understand their relationship to each other. This will be provisional, because no one has been able to provide a date-list for John's corpus or even the polemical works.⁴⁵⁴

There is minimal prosopographical data to help date the polemical works and for several works there is none. The anti-Manichaean work is contra actual Manichaeism, known to be present in Syro-Palestine, but it is not known for whom it was written.⁴⁵⁵ It seems to rely on scripture more than the *Dial.* so it seems to be early, perhaps written in Damascus as a sort of theological resume. Further, the *Against the Nestorians* is also simple in argument relying more on scriptural and patristic authorities than on the *Dial.*, with no occasion for writing indicated, so I place it in Damascus or quickly after moving to Jerusalem.⁴⁵⁶

The *Against the Jacobites* (West Syrian miaphysites) was requested by Peter II, (Chalcedonian) metropolitan of Damascus, to be sent to the West Syrian bishop of

⁴⁵³ Hoeck (1951). His combined list includes the dogmatic *Dial.*, *Expos.*, *Instit.*, and *Rect.*, with all but the last being edited by Kotter. His list also includes the polemical *Haeres.* and *Imag. I-III*, which are edited by Kotter as well.

⁴⁵⁴ This includes John's editor, B. Kotter. Kotter, iv, at 101 (*Jacob.*), 156 (*Volunt.*), 234 (*Fides*), 256 (*Nestor.*), 290-291 (*Trisag.*), 334 (*Manich.*), 400 (*Aceph.*), 420-21 (*Sarac.*).

⁴⁵⁵ Kotter indicates a minority consider it contra all dualist systems, but he seems to follow Beck in not taking it contra Paulicians, but true followers of Mani. Kotter, iv, 334.

⁴⁵⁶ Kotter, iv, 256. Kontouma (2015b), 39.

Dara.⁴⁵⁷ This Peter was apparently exiled c. 741/2.⁴⁵⁸ Kotter seems to think that it was written while John was under the authority of Peter, thus written in Damascus prior to leaving office.⁴⁵⁹ Further, an early date is suggested by internal evidence: 1) He implies he has written an entire treatise on the term ‘nature’,⁴⁶⁰ which may suggest an early form of the *Dial.*, and Kotter also notes that the early manuscripts were not divided into chapters implying a lack of structure unlike the *Dial.*, yet John exploits this early work to define some basic terms (*ousia* and *hypostasis*);⁴⁶¹ also 2) the bulk of the treatise is basic and repetitive made up of simple syllogistic statements involving argument from scripture and patristic statements accompanied by a long florilegium. It is noteworthy that this treatise, *Jacob.*, and the *Trisag.* are the only two polemical works with florilegia.⁴⁶² I agree that this text is early, as the style is immature, and it is aware of the terminological impasse but does not yet exploit the *Dial.* beyond a few key terms, arguing from scripture and patristic authorities.

Nevertheless, Kotter remained under the spell of the ‘official’ Greek *Life* and its chronological tie to Byzantine Iconoclasm, thus for Kotter anything prior to 717 (even 725) is ‘early’ and thus in Damascus. Rather, I argue that John is in Jerusalem by 705, thus it is John’s family’s standing and his personal influence with John V that engender the request from Peter.⁴⁶³ Further, I suspect the florilegium is the result of John’s newly acquired access to the patriarchal library coupled with the necessity of providing

⁴⁵⁷ Kotter, iv, at 101, 109. “A tome by John, humble monk of Damascus, on behalf of Peter, the most holy bishop of Damascus, to the so called bishop of Dara, the Jacobite”. The same Peter requested another work, authentic but not edited by Kotter, *On Right Thinking* (CPG 8046).

⁴⁵⁸ Theophanes, *Chronicle*, AM 6234. Mango and Scott, eds. (1997), 577. Hoyland discusses the interrelatedness of this account to others. Hoyland (1997), 354f.

⁴⁵⁹ Kotter, iv, at 101.

⁴⁶⁰ *Jacob.* 2. Kotter, iv, at 110.

⁴⁶¹ Kotter, iv, at 103.

⁴⁶² Excepting the *Imag. III* which engages a florilegium. This, however, may be because iconoclasts had already engaged such, so it was likely a matter of parity than personal style and proclivity.

⁴⁶³ Peter’s accession date is unknown, but if his exile is dated to c. 743 he has a questionably long reign. See Hoyland above footnote 458.

convincing material for catechetical purposes prior to finding his own voice and authority. Consequently, I provisionally place the *Jacob*. in the Anastasis soon after 705 rather than in Damascus as Kotter does.

the *Letter on the Trisagion Hymn* responds to a request to rule on the disputed additions to the Trisagion hymn at the monastery of Euthymius,⁴⁶⁴ which is about 10 km outside Jerusalem, and the *Institutio elementaris* is also in response to a query by the otherwise unknown John, Bishop of Laodicea. V. Kontouma argues that *Trisag.* is produced in the ensuing chaos after the death of John V. On the other hand, if we are to see John V's reign as an "efflorescence" of nascent Melkite thought, as S. Griffith argues,⁴⁶⁵ and thus identity formation, then the chaos caused by John V's accession and the ensuing consolidation would be a better candidate for its *Sitz im Leben* than after his death in my view. The provenance of these two works is not after John V's death, but at the beginning of his reign, during its consolidation phase when he would seek to bring a uniform liturgy to the Anastasis and the Judean monasteries. John of Damascus would be at this time establishing his authority as the 'mouthpiece' of the patriarch.

Consequently, I place these two works in the first five years of the reestablishment of the patriarchate during its 'management shake-up', if you will, as surely questions on the Trisagion are more apt at the beginning of John V's long reign than 35 years later. How could these monasteries not know his position (whether John of Damascus' personally or as proxy for John V) after John V's long reign?

On the Faith, Against the Nestorians is not merely a rewrite of *Against the Nestorians*, but a different work. Further, it is noticeably more mature, argued in the context of the *Dial.*, with more sophisticated arguments, but quoting scripture and patristic authorities

⁴⁶⁴ *Trisag.* Kotter, iv, at 290-91.

⁴⁶⁵ Griffith (2011), 223.

to a lesser degree than the earlier work. Consequently, I tentatively place it in the Anastasis but after the consolidation, perhaps in the period c. 710–20, even if this assumes that the *Dial. brevior* has been drafted by this time.⁴⁶⁶

On the Two Wills in Christ is a work for internal consumption directed at monothelites within John's own party. It is tempting to date it in relation to the brief revival of monothelitism by Philippicus (r. 711–13), who sought to reverse the council of Constantinople III. However, unless a reference to this external driver can be found in the text, and I am unaware of any to date, then internal reasons for its drafting must be sought. The maturity of the style in regards especially to the theological argument noticeably exceeds the two works placed in Damascus, and it is also argued in a context aware of the *Dial.* Its real significance, however, lies in its considered awareness of Maximus the Confessor and its treatment of his argument. John simplifies Maximus especially on the gnostic will, and seems to be reformulating Maximus for internal consumption, attempting to bring the Maronites on board. Consequently, I place this work in the Anastasis, after the consolidation, possibly motivated by resurgent monothelite aspirations, thus dating it provisionally to c. 715–20. However, I will reconsider this dating later based on my analysis of John's polemic.

On Composite Natures, Against the Headless is difficult to date as it lacks datable external references and is short so its argument and rhetoric are difficult to judge. Nevertheless, there is no reason to date it outside John V's reign (r. 705–35). Its short and dense focus on composite natures offers no scripture but confines the argument to the context of the *Dial.* for its philosophic background and the theological argument is

⁴⁶⁶ The *Dial.* is known in two recensions, short (*Dialectica brevior*) and long (*Dialectica fusior*). Both are John's and the longer (68 chapters) is an edited version of the former (50 chapters) that is unfinished. For discussion see Louth (2002), 41f. Kotter's edition presents both versions edited together as one text. Kotter, i, 47-146.

driven in terms of Gregory of Nazianzus and Cyril of Alexandria, both explicitly named more than once. It reads like a position paper and could thus be appropriate only for advanced students familiar with its background or perhaps as a baseline of the patriarchal position against the West Syrian philosophical argument. Further, its argument seems more confident than that of the *Jacob.*, which addresses composite natures (section 24 and following), but does so in terse simple syllogistic, rather than a studied argument with clear philosophic background. Consequently, I place it after the *Jacob.*, but fairly early probably worked out in conjunction with his drafting of the early form of the *Dial.*

Based on the above very limited data and analysis I propose the following provisional date-list covering only the eight polemical texts of the edited *Opera Polemica* of John of Damascus:

Partial Date-List

Early (in Damascus, c. 690–705)

Against the Nestorians

Against the Manichaeans

After entry into the Anastasis c. 705

Against the Jacobites [c. 705–10]

Letter on the Trisagion Hymn [c. 705–10]

On Composite Natures, Against the Headless [c. 705–15]

On the Two Wills in Christ [c. 710–20]

On the Faith, Against the Nestorians [c. 710–25]

After the death of John V c. 735

Dispute between a Saracen and a Christian [dubious]

In sum, John's polemical texts were probably for internal consumption, as polemic might suggest, thus they are representative of his work in the Anastasis as focused on both internal and external interlocutors. G. Stroumsa refers to the interlocutors of polemical texts as the "demonized other," which may be true generally, but this does

not seem to capture the full dynamic of lively intellectual debate among pilgrims and confessional competitors in John's immediate context.⁴⁶⁷ Sidney Griffith acknowledging that confessional competitors were often present arguing their respective cases in the church of the Anastasis writes, "No doubt an important part of his polemical purpose in this enterprise would have been to provide a debater's arsenal of arguments."⁴⁶⁸ Consequently, I suspect most of these texts are to be dated in the early consolidation phase of the reestablishment of the patriarchate, especially concerned with normalizing relations, doctrine, and liturgy within their own party, while addressing the immediate threat of well-trained interlocutors among the West and to a lesser extent the East Syrians.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have divided this project in two. In the first half I have looked at John's historical background, arguing in Part I that his timeline is not driven by Byzantine Iconoclasm, that he left office on his own terms, and that he was crucial to the reestablishment of the Jerusalem Patriarchate. In this chapter, I introduced John's primary interlocutors, who all had a stake in the holy sites and their administration. I looked at the available education and decided that in the face of universal decline, Syro-Palestine uniquely benefited, and thus John had an unusually rich environment to draw from. Then I turned to the patriarchate in 705 introducing John's philosophic appropriation and polemical works as a function of John V's (educational, doctrinal and liturgical) policy. Part II Constructive Doctrine will now shift gears, having placed John in context, I will examine one example of his theological polemic, which will

⁴⁶⁷ Stroumsa (1989), 21.

⁴⁶⁸ Griffith (2006), 195. Griffith (2011), 214.

show how this particular context impinges on John, and thus show that John cannot be properly understood merely in terms of his reception history.



Part II

Constructive Doctrine

Precis

Part I looked at the historical background in order to establish the setting. I deconstructed the saint John of Damascus and constructed a picture of the man, who became instrumental in the reestablishment of the Jerusalem Patriarchate situating his oeuvre largely in the early period of consolidation as John V normalized the doctrinal and liturgical profile of the patriarchate. I argued that patriarchal policy would have entailed the development of a curriculum that addressed the West and East Syrian schools at Qenneshre and Nisibis. John responded with polemical texts, the seven authentic texts edited by Kotter were discussed and provisionally dated.

That concluded the predominantly historical portion of this project, now in Part Two I turn to one theological example meant to demonstrate that this context impinged on John's theological rhetoric and that he creatively responded. Below I introduce the theological term *perichōrēsis*, covering its genesis in Gregory of Nazianzus, its flowering in Maximus the Confessor, and its constructive restatement in John of Damascus.

Sources

The primary sources for Part Two are largely theological texts of Gregory of Nazianzus, Maximus the Confessor and John of Damascus. Many of the texts are available in modern critical editions; those that are not are usually taken from Migne.

Key Passages

#	Date	Word	Reference	Migne	Domain	Usage
GN 1	late 373 or early 374	περιχωρεῖ	<i>Or. 17 Ad ciues Nazianzenos</i>	PG 35, 972	Cosmology	flux
GN 2	374	περιχωρεῖ	<i>Or. 18.42 Funebis in patrem</i>	PG 35, 1041	Cosmology	life/death (flux)
GN 3	379	περιχωρεῖ	<i>Or. 22.4 De pace 2</i>	PG 35, 1136	Cosmology	unsatisfying satiety (flux)
GN 4	383	περιχωρουσῶν	<i>Ep. 101.31 Ad Cledonius</i>	PG 37, 181C	Christology	Two Natures
MC 1	628-34	περιχωρήσαντος	<i>Amb.lo. , Sec 7, par 12, ln 17</i>	PG 91, 1076 C	Soteriology	Human
MC 2	628-34	περιχώρησιν	<i>Amb.lo. , Sec 17, par 8, ln 14</i>	PG 91, 1228 C	Cosmology	Intelligibles
MC 3	628-34	περιχωρήσας	<i>Amb.lo. , Sec 41, par 5, ln 13</i>	PG 91, 1307 B	Soteriology	Human
MC 4	628-34	περιχωρήσασαν	<i>Amb.lo. , Sec 42, par 5, ln 26</i>	PG 91, 1320 B	Soteriology	Human
MC 5	634-5	περικεχώρηκεν	<i>Amb.Th. , Sec 5 ln 153</i>	PG 91, 1053 B	Christology	Two Natures
MC 6	before c. 633/4	περιχώρησις	<i>Q.Thal. , Sec 59 ln 126</i>	PG 90, 608 D	Soteriology	Human
MC 7	before c. 633/4	περιχώρησις	<i>Q.Thal. , Sec 59 ln 126</i>	PG 90, 608 D	Soteriology	Human
MC 8	before c. 633/4	περιχώρησις	<i>Q.Thal. , Sec 39, Schol. 2</i>	PG 90, 393 C	Cosmology	Virtue
MC 9	before c. 636	ἀντιπεριχώρησιν	<i>Schol in DA Com.Div.Nam. 5, sec 8</i>	PG 4, 328 A	Christology	Two Natures
MC 10	before c. 636	περιχωρουσῶν	<i>Schol in DA Ep. 4</i>	PG 4, 533 C	Christology	Two Natures
MC 11	c. 640	περιχωρήσας	<i>Opusc. 4</i>	PG 91, 60 B	Christology	Two Natures
MC 12	c. 640-1	περιχωρήσει	<i>Opusc. 7</i>	PG 91, 88 A	Christology	Two Natures
MC 13	641	περιχώρησιν	<i>Opusc. 20 (dated after Op. 7)</i>	PG 91, 232 A	Christology	Two Natures
MC 14	after 641	περιχώρησιν	<i>Opusc. 16</i>	PG 91, 189 D	Christology	Two Natures
MC 15	after 641	περιχωρήσει	<i>Opusc. 16</i>	PG 91, 208 A	Christology	Two Natures
MC 16	c. 655	περιχωρήσασα	<i>Disp. Pyrrh. [Db]</i>	PG 91, 320 D	Soteriology	Human
MC 17	c. 655	περιχώρησιν	<i>Disp. Pyrrh. [Db]</i>	PG 91, 337 D	Cosmology	Intelligibles
MC 18	c. 655	περιχωρήσεως	<i>Disp. Pyrrh. [Db]</i>	PG 91, 345 D	Christology	Two Natures
MC 19	after 655	περιχώρησις	<i>Dial.Theod.Bith. No. 21 [Db]</i>	PG 90, 157 D	Christology	Two Natures

Figure 5 – Relevant texts in Gregory & Maximus⁴⁶⁹

⁴⁶⁹ The table is arranged chronologically; dates follow Jankowiak and Booth (2015). Domain is the context and Usage how it is applied, i.e. what is interpenetrated.

#	Date	Word	Work	Reference	Domain	Usage
[JD 1]	[Db] In Anastasis?	περιχώρησις	<i>Frag.phil.</i> (Oxon. Bod. Auct. T.1.6) Sec 6, 9	6.9 (1:158)	Cosmology	Def. of Union
[JD 2]	[Db] In Anastasis?	περιχώρησις	<i>Frag.phil.</i> (Oxon. Bod. Auct. T.1.6) Sec 9, 34	9.34 (1:162)	Cosmology	Def. of Union
[JD 3]	In Anastasis	περιχώρησις	<i>Dial. (brev)</i> Sec 48, 106	(brev) 48.106 (1:136)	Cosmology	Def. of Union
[JD 4]	In Anastasis	περιχωρήσεως	<i>Transfig.</i> Sec 2, 49	2.49 (5:438)	Christology	Antidosis
[JD 5]	In Anastasis	περιχώρησιν	<i>Sabbat.</i> Sec 18, 10	18.10 (5:129)	Christology	Two Natures
[JD 6]	c. 705 - 715	περιχώρησιν	<i>Aceph.</i> Sec 4, 12	4.12 (4:413)	Theologia	Three Hypostases
[JD 7]	c. 705 - 715	περιχώρησιν	<i>Aceph.</i> Sec 4, 18	4.18 (4:413)	Christology	Two Natures
[JD 8]	c. 705 - 715	περιχωροῦσιν	<i>Aceph.</i> Sec 9, 39	9.39 (4:417)	Christology	Two Natures
[JD 9]	c. 705 - 710	περιχωροῦσιν	<i>Jacob.</i> Sec 52, 35	52.35 (4:127)	Christology	Two Natures
[JD 10]	c. 705 - 710	περιχώρησιν	<i>Jacob.</i> Sec 52, 35	52.35 (4:127)	Christology	Antidosis/Deification
[JD 11]	c. 705 - 710	περιχώρησιν	<i>Jacob.</i> Sec 78, 38	78.38 (4:135)	Theologia	Three Hypostases
[JD 12]	c. 705 - 710	περιχώρησιν	<i>Jacob.</i> Sec 81, 32	81.32 (4:139)	Christology	Antidosis
[JD 13]	c. 710 - c725	περιχώρησιν	<i>Fides</i> Sec 36, 2	36.2 (4:249)	Theologia	Three Hypostases
[JD 14]	c. 710 - c725	περιχώρησιν	<i>Fides</i> Sec 36, 4	36.4 (4:249)	Christology	Two Natures
[JD 15]	After 726	περιχωρήσεως	<i>Imag.</i> I Sec 1,21,61	1.21.61 (3:109)	Christology	Two Natures
[JD 16]	Late	περιχώρησις	<i>Dial. (fus)</i> Sec 65, 106=[JD 3]	(fus) 65.106 (1:136)	Cosmology	Def. of Union
[JD 17]	Late	περιχωρεῖ	<i>Parall.</i>	PG 95, 1124 A	Cosmology	All Things
[JD 18]	In Anastasis	περιχώρησιν	<i>Rect.</i>	PG 94, col. 1424 AB	Theologia	Three Hypostases

Figure 6 – Relevant texts in the non-dogmatic works of John of Damascus⁴⁷⁰

⁴⁷⁰ There is no current date-list of the works of John of Damascus, thus the dates are conjectural and are not in date order. The reference is Section.Line (Volume:Page) of the modern critical edition if that is available.

#	Date	Word	Work	Reference	Domain	Usage
[JD 20]	c. 710 - 720	περιχώρησιν	<i>Expositio fidei</i>	8.263 (2:29)	<i>Theologia</i>	Three Hypostases
[JD 21]	c. 710 - 720	περιχώρησιν	<i>Expositio fidei</i>	14.13 (2:42)	<i>Theologia</i>	Three Hypostases
[JD 22]	c. 710 - 720	περιχώρησιν	<i>Expositio fidei</i>	47.77 (2:115)	Christology	Two Natures
[JD 23]	c. 710 - 720	περιχώρησιν	<i>Expositio fidei</i>	48.40 (2:117)	Christology	Two Natures
[JD 24]	c. 710 - 720	περιχωρούσας	<i>Expositio fidei</i>	49.7 (2:118)	<i>Theologia</i>	Three Hypostases
[JD 25]	c. 710 - 720	περιχωροῦσιν	<i>Expositio fidei</i>	49.27 (2:119)	Christology	Two Natures
[JD 26]	c. 710 - 720	περιχωρεῖν	<i>Expositio fidei</i>	51.57 (2:126)	Christology	Two Natures
[JD 27]	c. 710 - 720	περιχώρησις	<i>Expositio fidei</i>	51.58 (2:126)	Christology	Two Natures
[JD 28]	c. 710 - 720	περιχωρεῖ	<i>Expositio fidei</i>	51.59 (2:126)	Christology	Two Natures
[JD 29]	c. 710 - 720	περιχώρησιν	<i>Expositio fidei</i>	52.20 (2:127)	Christology	Two Natures
[JD 30]	c. 710 - 720	περιχώρησιν	<i>Expositio fidei</i>	59.46 (2:146)	Christology	Two Natures
[JD 31]	c. 710 - 720	περιχώρησιν	<i>Expositio fidei</i>	61.9 (2:155)	Christology	Two Natures
[JD 32]	c. 710 - 720	περιχωρήσεως	<i>Expositio fidei</i>	63.9 (2:160)	Christology	Two Natures
[JD 33]	c. 710 - 720	περιχωροῦσαι	<i>Expositio fidei</i>	81b.9 (2:181)	Christology	Two Natures
[JD 34]	c. 710 - 720	περιχωροῦσι	<i>Expositio fidei</i>	variant of 81b.9	Christology	Two Natures
[JD 35]	c. 710 - 720	περιχώρησιν	<i>Expositio fidei</i>	91.12 (2:212)	<i>Theologia</i>	Three Hypostases
[JD 36]	c. 710 - 720	περιχωρήσεως	<i>Expositio fidei</i>	91.53 (2:214)	Christology	Two Natures
[JD 37]	c. 710 - 720	περιχώρησιν	<i>Expositio fidei</i>	91.58 (2:214)	Christology	Two Natures
[JD 38]	c. 710 - 720	περιχώρησις	<i>Expositio fidei</i>	91.59 (2:214)	Christology	Two Natures
[JD 39]	c. 710 - 720	περιχωρῆσαι	<i>Expositio fidei</i>	91.60 (2:214)	Christology	Two Natures
[JD 40]	c. 710 - 720	περιχωροῦσα	<i>Expositio fidei</i>	91.61 (2:214)	Christology	Two Natures
[JD 41]	c. 710 - 720	περιχώρησιν	<i>Expositio fidei</i>	91.62 (2:214)	Christology	Two Natures

Figure 7 – Relevant texts in the dogmatic *Expositio fidei* of John of Damascus

Chapter Five – *Perichōrēsis* in Gregory and Maximus

Introduction

One of the primary aims of this thesis is to show how the context in which John of Damascus worked mattered to his theological program, especially in his understudied polemical works. Having covered the historical and intellectual background necessary, I can now begin to couch John's oeuvre in that context. Of course treatment of even John's theological program much less his oeuvre is well beyond the scope of this thesis. Consequently, I have largely limited my inquiry to the polemical works while selecting one significant case of constructive theological development, because it is particularly important for modern systematic theology. In this chapter I introduce the history of the theological usage of the term *perichōrēsis*, and in the next I look at John's use of that term in his polemical works now situated in the reestablished patriarchate.

The theological use of the term *perichōrēsis* basically stands for the 'interpenetration', 'co-inherence' and/or the 'mutual indwelling' of the divine Persons of the Trinity in modern systematic theology, but it originally stood for the mutual relation or 'interpenetration' of the two natures, divine and human, in Christ.⁴⁷¹ It began its theological career in Christology, but eventually found a home in Trinitarian theology—delineated in the next chapter. As noted in the introduction, based on the watershed research of V. Kontouma, Pseudo-Cyril, thought to be a source of John of

⁴⁷¹ These are grammatical translations of the term, but as a term expressing a concept it can, for example, stand for "intimate communion," of the two natures in Christ, of the three Persons in the Godhead, and in modern systematic application "sacramental marriage" and even in ecclesiology. On this see Michael G. Lawler (1995), "Perichoresis: New Theological Wine in an Old Theological Wineskin", *Horizons*, 22: 49-66. Regarding modern studies of the term see below footnote 582.

Damascus, was discovered to be a late compilation based on John of Damascus.⁴⁷² This was important because G. L. Prestige, in his now classic work, *God in Patristic Thought*, had credited Pseudo-Cyril with the brilliant—calling him “an accomplished and truly profound thinker”—transferral of the term *perichōrēsis* from Christology, where Prestige thought it badly placed, to Trinitarianism, where Prestige contended it made an excellent home.⁴⁷³

I am interested in the theological development of the term in John of Damascus as an example of how his local context impacted his theological program. Before I can treat the term in John though, I must delineate in Gregory of Nazianzus and Maximus the Confessor the theological background of the term as John inherited it, so this chapter should be viewed as additional background for the next on John.

Gregory of Nazianzus (329/30–90/1) was extremely well educated not stopping with grammar and rhetoric, but continued with philosophic studies (ten years in Athens). He was ordained (361) and presided as patriarch at the Council of Constantinople (680–1). Origen was a very strong influence and John McGuckin writes of Gregory’s regard for Origen in glowing terms.⁴⁷⁴ I offer an extended quote from McGuckin that summarizes Gregory’s philosophic acumen and sources, but also suggests something more:

In terms of his philosophic influence he was, much in the tradition of Origen, a pragmatic eclectic; giving pride of place to biblical revelation and the sense of an inherited Christian tradition (both seen through the perspective of a Platonically influenced metaphysic), but combining in a particularly visible manner, the Aristotelian categories (used to such effect, for example, in the *Five Theological Orations*), Neo-Platonic resonances, and definite traces of Cynic and Stoic elements in his thinking; such as can be discerned also in the great Origen. The sum of philosophical influences, in fact mirrors those of his greatest theological mentor. And while the metaphysical sweep of Origen’s

⁴⁷² Conticello (1995).

⁴⁷³ Prestige (1964), 280. See also, Prestige (1928).

⁴⁷⁴ John A. McGuckin (2001), *St. Gregory of Nazianzus: An Intellectual Biography*, (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press), 97, 151.

speculative mind is broader and greater than that of Gregory, the capacity to synthesize and relate, discriminate and combine, a variety of ideas and theses is no less apparent in Gregory than Origen. That was to be his greatest contribution to the history of Christian ideas: his synthetic ingenuity.⁴⁷⁵

I propose this quote as programmatic for the *project* on which Gregory, Maximus the Confessor and John of Damascus are all engaged. Pragmatic, eclectic, seen through a Platonically influenced metaphysic, using Aristotle’s *Categories* “to such effect”, all resulting in “synthetic ingenuity” beyond their peers.⁴⁷⁶

Maximus the Confessor (c. 579/80–662), admitted at a young age (10?) to the Palaia Laura (aka the monastery of Chariton also called Souka) was apparently resident until he fled the Persian invasion (actually very little is known of this period including his education, a lacuna of some forty years). By the early 630s he was a disciple of Sophronius, who would become Patriarch of Jerusalem in 634 and surrender Jerusalem to the Arabs in 637, then in 645 Maximus debated Pyrrhus, one time monothelite Patriarch of Constantinople, and was then in Rome and influential at the Lateran Synod of 649, subsequently arrested (c. 653) and tried (655), Maximus died in exile (662).⁴⁷⁷ His career can be roughly divided into early (pre-controversy), mid (escalating controversy, peaking with the debate and synod) and late (trial and exile) phases. The clear catalyst launching Maximus from monastic obscurity on to the theological stage was his teaming up with Sophronius and then assuming his intellectual mantle in response to monenergism and monotheletism, instrumental first in the very public

⁴⁷⁵ Ibid., 57–58.

⁴⁷⁶ I use the term ‘project’ here for the ethos captured by this quote in terms of Gregory’s oeuvre but applicable in my view to Maximus and John as educated, Syro-Palestinian, theological successors to one another, so it is a statement both synthetic and diachronic, if anachronistic as an external label; nevertheless, I contend it accurately characterizes the situation as a whole.

⁴⁷⁷ This chronology follows that preferred by the recent *Oxford Handbook of Maximus the Confessor*. See Jankowiak and Booth (2015). See also the sensitive reassessment of the sources by a historian, Booth (2014), 143–55. For a summary of the older tradition, based solely on the Greek *Vita*, and a brief discussion of the hostile Syriac *Vita*, see Andrew Louth (1996), *Maximus the Confessor*, (London: Routledge).

defeat of Pyrrhus, and then instrumental in the anathematization of imperial policy at the Lateran Synod of 649.⁴⁷⁸ No doubt a generation later when another disciple and Patriarch of Jerusalem stood up against imperial policy (iconoclasm), the parallels were lost on no one.

Classically Speaking—*Status Quaestionis*

In short, the classic position outlined by G. L. Prestige, has been rebuffed by recent scholarship. However, that analysis is not without its own problems. Consequently, although I too take issue with Prestige's analysis, I also differ from those scholars who have taken issue with his analysis. Prestige analyzed both the verb *perichōreō* and its cognate noun *perichōrēsis* in research he undertook starting in late 1921 for a proposed lexicon of Patristic Greek covering nearly all words important for the Trinity and Christology of which he subsequently published the two works under consideration here: his 1928 paper and 1936 monograph.⁴⁷⁹ These publications were based on lexicon slips manually compiled, thus a number of important references were missed.

Prestige found Christological *perichōrēsis* in Gregory and Maximus to be a metaphor, “the two opposites are revealed as complementary sides of a single concrete object by the rotation of that object,” but Maximus extends the metaphor such that “the two natures reciprocate not merely in name, as with Gregory, but in practical effect and operation.”⁴⁸⁰ Thus, Maximus per Prestige, “had in mind a *reciprocation* of joint activity” of the natures or their activities, but clearly not “a static condition of mutual fusion or permeation”.⁴⁸¹ Thus, according to Prestige Maximus avoids miaphysitism, but since John of Damascus, according to Prestige, completely misunderstood

⁴⁷⁸ See the overview of the period after Chalcedon in Allen ed., (2009), 3-34.

⁴⁷⁹ These are Prestige (1928). And, Prestige (1964). On this see *ibid.*, ix-x. And, the proposed lexicon was that of Lampe and on Prestige's work see also Lampe ed., (1961), v-vi.

⁴⁸⁰ Prestige (1928), 243.

⁴⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 248.

Christological *perichōrēsis* in Gregory and Maximus, John turned *perichōreō* into the process of union rather than the result, and thus could hardly avoid a “practical” miaphysitism.⁴⁸² Some still assume this point of view.⁴⁸³

According to Prestige the meaning of *perichōrēsis* as employed in the Christology of Gregory and Maximus was “something quite different from co-inherence.”⁴⁸⁴ This suggests to me that Prestige is allowing the modern notion of ‘co-inherence’ in modern Trinitarianism to control his reading of its development even in Christology. This initial use according to Prestige was not intended to explain the union of the two natures, but rather it meant no more than “reciprocity of action,” explaining the “singleness of action and effect” springing from the two natures.⁴⁸⁵ In Gregory’s use of *perichōrēsis* in *Epistle 101* he speaks of a *perichōrēsis* of the divine and human names of Christ. Prestige wrote this applied to the names alone, as a metaphor for the reciprocity of action, but a contemporary, August Deneffe, disagreed, noting the difficulty in finding a German phrase to cover both the names and the natures, but still using German *durchdringen* for Greek *perichōreō*, which typically translates “pervade, permeate or interpenetrate.”⁴⁸⁶

Modern critics of Prestige also take issue; H. A. Wolfson, Richard Cross, Verna Harrison, and Michael Lawler all disagree finding Gregory meant by this that the

⁴⁸² Ibid., 243-44.

⁴⁸³ Reading conference papers affirming John of Damascus use of *perichōrēsis* in Christology, I have been pressed on this very point. Further, Paul Fiddes in passing once suggested to me that modern western systematic theologians ignore Christological *perichōrēsis* because it was found wanting by the definitive analysis of W. Pannenberg. See Wolfhart Pannenberg (1968), *Jesus-God and Man*, trans. Lewis L. Wilkins and Duane A. Priebe, (Philadelphia: Westminster).

⁴⁸⁴ Prestige (1964), 291. Gregory of Nazianzus employed the verb *perichōreo*, Maximus, while adopting Gregory’s use, is to be credited with first use of the noun *perichōrēsis*.

⁴⁸⁵ Prestige (1928).

⁴⁸⁶ August Deneffe (1923), “Perichoresis, Circuminessio, Circuminsessio. Eine terminologische Untersuchung”, *Zeitschrift für Katholische Theologie*, 47: 497-532, 501.

perichōrēsis of the names was consequent on that of the natures.⁴⁸⁷ Keetje Rozemond, who has written on Christology in John of Damascus, is explicit on Gregory in *Epistle* 101: the natures interpenetrate and Prestige is wrong.⁴⁸⁸ Finally, the grammatical analysis of Peter Stemmer highlights that the subject of the *perichōrēsis* is not perfectly clear, but nevertheless concedes the simplest reading (against Prestige) is to take both the names and the natures as subject, even if this makes for a difficult reading (more below).⁴⁸⁹

The Weakness of Past Critique

The critique of Prestige's position is usually undertaken in two modes: 1) re-reading the same texts more generously, and 2) re-reading them in the light of research on the philosophic background. However, there are some additional issues to be noted. First, of course Prestige was under the false impression that Pseudo-Cyril was a source of John of Damascus, but so were a number of his critics.⁴⁹⁰ This was one of the major motivations for this project, because it finally attributes the genesis of Trinitarian *perichōrēsis* to John of Damascus, making this study timely.

Second, there are several references which were not part of Prestige nor his critics' analysis, who primarily reassessed those Prestige found as noted in the chart. This suggests a more thorough reading of Maximus in particular is due, and with the wealth of recent scholarship on Maximus it is timely to undertake this now. Thus, not only do missing references raise the possibility of selective analysis, but the terse analysis

⁴⁸⁷ Prestige (1928), 243. Prestige (1964), 292-93. Harry A. Wolfson (1956), *The Philosophy of the Church Fathers, Vol 1: Faith, Trinity, Incarnation*, vol. 1, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press), 421-22. Cross (2000), 87. Verna Harrison (1991), "Perichoresis in the Greek Fathers", *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly*, 35: 53-65, 55. Lawler (1995), 50.

⁴⁸⁸ Rozemond (1959), 30.

⁴⁸⁹ Peter Stemmer (1983), "Perichorese. Zur Geschichte eines Begriffs", *Archiv für Begriffsgeschichte*, 27: 9-55, 16.

⁴⁹⁰ The following accepted Pseudo-Cyril as a source of John of Damascus: *ibid.*, 21-22. Wolfson (1956), 422-23. Harrison (1991), 53. Lawler (1995), 50. Cross (2000), 72, 74. On the other hand A. Deneffe, seems to avoid the issue. Deneffe (1923).

Prestige gave the passages in Maximus almost guarantees less than a full grasp of Maximus' complex thought. Therefore, some attention to the wider concerns within Maximus is needed to ensure a reading comports with his overall thought. For example, when Maximus speaks of deification, Prestige renders *perichōrēsis* "revelation," reducing deification to a purely cognitive process of increasing awareness. Yet he even admits the temptation to take the word in a more active sense, but rejects this because it would indicate that the humanity "penetrates, attains to, is even absorbed into the deity," which Prestige finds untenable.⁴⁹¹

Finally, the universal complaint by Prestige's critics is his insufficient engagement with the philosophic background of *perichōrēsis*. Critics A. Deneffe, H. A. Wolfson, and P. Stemmer, have delineated a Stoic background.⁴⁹² For Prestige reciprocal interpenetration (a central feature of Stoic mixture theory) is just not possible.⁴⁹³ Yet Harrison notes that even creatures are said by Maximus to penetrate the divine from below.⁴⁹⁴ Nevertheless, Prestige sums up his assessment of Christological *perichōrēsis* by writing, "the term is merely an unnecessary technicality which adds no fresh idea to Christological thought, but is extremely liable to be misleading."⁴⁹⁵ I suggest that his lack of engagement with the philosophic background overall, and thus failing to treat Gregory, Maximus and John in terms of their intellectual milieu has led Prestige himself to significantly misunderstand *perichōrēsis* in Gregory, Maximus and John. On the other hand, the so called Stoic background is not definitive for two reasons discussed below.

⁴⁹¹ Prestige (1928), 246.

⁴⁹² Deneffe (1923). Wolfson (1956), 418-32. Stemmer (1983). Deneffe's article was potentially available to Prestige, but he indicates no awareness of it.

⁴⁹³ Prestige (1964), 293.

⁴⁹⁴ Harrison (1991), 58.

⁴⁹⁵ Prestige (1964), 296.

Outlining the use in Gregory, I then turn to Maximus and look at his Christological use, his wider uses, and briefly note that he does not apply it directly to the Trinity to prepare for John's constructive introduction of the term into Trinitarianism.

Background

First Theological Use vs. Red Herrings

First theological use of *perichōrēsis* is attributable to Gregory of Nazianzus.⁴⁹⁶ Some, however, point to Athanasius,⁴⁹⁷ Hilary of Poitiers,⁴⁹⁸ Gregory of Nyssa⁴⁹⁹ (and others⁵⁰⁰), but these are red herrings. Typically what happens is a late antique discussion of John 10:30, “I and the Father are one,” or of the various ‘in-ness’ passages, e.g. John 10:38, “the Father is in me and I am in the Father,” is labeled *perichōrēsis*, anachronistically reading the modern theological use of the term without proper regard for its development, which results in a sort of historical Presentism. This

⁴⁹⁶ See Wolfson (1956), 421. Harrison (1991), 53. Prestige (1964), 291. Thomas F. Torrance (1996), *The Christian Doctrine of God, One Being Three Persons*, (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark), 102. Prestige notes a contemporary use by Macarius of *perichōreō* in a theological context, but it is not used in a technical sense. Prestige (1928), 242. Macarius the Egyptian, *On Patience and Discretion*, PG 34 869 A Κύκλω γάρ τῆς καρδίας τὸ κάλυμμα τοῦ σκότους περιχωρεῖ, τοῦ πυρὸς For the veil of darkness encircles round the heart. *Kuklos* here interacts with *peri*, see LSJ s.v. κύκλος.

⁴⁹⁷ T. F. Torrance admits first theological use in Gregory of Nazianzus, but does not hesitate to declare, “Undoubtedly. . . Athanasius . . . provided the theological basis for the doctrine of coinherence.” Athanasius deepened and refined the doctrine of the *homoousion*, going beyond the communication of distinctive properties of the divine Persons to complete ‘coinherence’, although he did not provide a technical term for ‘coinherence’. In my view Torrance reads too much into Athanasius, failing to account for Athanasius’ well known indifference to technical terminology. Torrance (1996), 168-69.

⁴⁹⁸ Acknowledged by Prestige, who asserts there is no evidence for it. Prestige (1964), xxxii.

⁴⁹⁹ Gregory of Nyssa uses the verb five times, but none can be taken to be used in a theological technical sense; in fact, all seem to be used in relation to *kuklos*, thus meaning around or cycle. Most occurrences deal with the cycle of life. D. F. Stramara noting this indicates that *perichōrēsis* can be used of Gregory of Nyssa only anachronistically. Daniel F. Stramara, Jr (1998), “Gregory of Nyssa’s Terminology for Trinitarian Perichoresis”, *Vigiliae Christianae*, 52/3 August: 257-63, 257-58. See *Contra Eunomium*, bk 1 chptr 1 sec 95 ln 8; *Dialogus de anima et resurrectione*, vol 46 p 113 ln 23 (PG 46, 113B); *Apologia in hexaemeron*, p 96 ln 4 and p 108 ln 27 (PG 44 96A and 108B); *Oratio funebris in Flacillam imperatricem*, vol 9 p 485 ln 8.

⁵⁰⁰ However, others are less nuanced. For example, Swinburne distinguishes *perichōrēsis* of natures in Christ and *hypostases* in the Trinity, finding the *later* in Gregory of Nazianzus, who used the term only Christologically once as noted. Richard Swinburne (1994), *The Christian God*, (Oxford: Clarendon), 209n20. Millard Erickson suggests first use by Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite (*On Divine Names* 2.4), but no form of *perichōrēsis* occurs in *On Divine Names*. Millard J. Erickson (1995), *God in Three Persons: A Contemporary Interpretation of the Trinity*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books), 229.

results in cherry-picking Patristic passages and reading the term into them.⁵⁰¹ Further, false etymologies are not uncommon, usually suggesting either a Trinitarian ‘dance’⁵⁰² or a specific (almost intentional) semantic progression: common use, philosophical technical use, and theological adaptation extended with the use of the prefix *peri* to emphasize the idea of completion. In sum, common *chōreō* meaning “have room, contain,” became philosophic “to coextend or proceed through one another,” which was co-opted by theologians and extended to mean “to completely mutually penetrate one another at all points.”⁵⁰³ In my view these are forms of etymologizing, and thus problematic in the proper analysis of the development of the term. I contend more weight must be given to any relevant literary context and cultural background to determine its meaning.

Finding first use in Gregory of Nazianzus is, however, not as simple as it seems. First, the context is that of Christology not Trinitarian thought, and second, the meaning suggested comports with his previous uses, thus it is probably not being used as a technical term. It would be highly unusual to deploy a word once as a technical term without explanation and without using it again. Peter Stemmer agrees, writing “Gregory of Nazianzus carries the verb *περιχωρεῖν* into theological language. Of

⁵⁰¹ One author who distinguishes the conceptual content from the technical term is J. N. D. Kelly, although in my opinion his wording invites being taken in an anachronistic sense when applying the term “co-inherence” to Basil’s reference to the “in-ness” language of the gospel of John. J. N. D. Kelly (1978, 1958), *Early Christian Doctrines*, (5th edn.; New York: Harper), 264-65.

⁵⁰² The two Greek words: *περιχωρέω* and *περιχορεύω* have in the past been inadvertently conflated. The second can be rendered ‘dance’, the first, the term under consideration here, cannot. This is not to deny the possibility of an appropriate application of ‘dance’ as a metaphor describing what Trinitarian *perichōrēsis* might mean, but rather is to explicitly deny that that metaphor is invoked automatically, because *perixoreuō* is the wrong word. For two telling examples of this error see: William J. Hill (1982), *The Three-Personed God*, (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press), 272. And, John A. McGuckin (2004), s.v. “Perichoresis”, *The Westminster Handbook to Patristic Theology* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox).

⁵⁰³ For example, Richard Cross’ philosophic analysis exposes a much more complex background involving not only Stoic but Aristotelian mixture theory both mediated through Neoplatonic theories of divinization. Cross (2000), 71-72, *et passim*.

course, he used it only once christologically and there rather casually, certainly not with the intention to introduce a new theological term.”⁵⁰⁴

Nevertheless, although Prestige contends *perichōrēsis* does not mean “interpenetration” until John of Damascus (and that by mistake), Verna Harrison notes, “a majority of scholars differ with Prestige and see *perichōrēsis* as meaning ‘interpenetration’ from the beginning of its use as a theological term, a view with which I agree.”⁵⁰⁵ But, in Prestige’s favor, Stemmer noted that the word is quite rare in non-Christian literature, the noun only found once (in Anaxagoras), where it means “rotary motion.”⁵⁰⁶ Thus, if it meant interpenetration in its first theological use, there should be some evidence in Gregory that he is either departing from normal usage or it should mean roughly what it meant on past occasions.

The Philosophy of Mixture in Late Antiquity

Further, Harrison notes that “[August] Deneffe and many other researchers have linked *perichōrēsis* to the Stoic concept of mixture, *κρᾶσις δι’ ὅλων*, which means a complete mutual interpenetration of two substances that preserves the identity and properties of each intact.”⁵⁰⁷ Harry Wolfson, along the same lines, explains this succinctly:

Accordingly, when the Fathers speak of the *perichōrēsis* of two things into one another they mean thereby the same as when the Stoics speak of the mutual coextension (*antiparektasis*) of two things into one another at all points. The prefix *peri* in *perichōrēsis* is thus to be taken to stand for the phrase ‘at all points’ (*δι’ ὅλων*) used by the Stoics in their definition of mixture, its use in this connection being not in the sense of ‘around’ but rather in the sense of ‘beyond measure’, ‘very’, ‘exceeding’. An accurate translation

⁵⁰⁴ Stemmer (1983), 15. “Gregor von Nazianz führt das Verb *περιχωρεῖν* in die theologische Sprache ein. Freilich verwendet er es nur ein einziges Mal christologisch und da eher beiläufig, sicher nicht in der Absicht, einen neuen theologischen Terminus einzuführen.”

⁵⁰⁵ Harrison (1991), 54.

⁵⁰⁶ Stemmer (1983), 10-11. This is no longer accurate as TLG searches now reveal more occurrences. However, use is still rare, and whether Gregory or Maximus were aware of any of these uses is a research project in itself.

⁵⁰⁷ Harrison (1991), 54.

of *perichōrēsis* would therefore be a ‘penetration at all points’ or a ‘total penetration’ or a ‘thorough penetration’.⁵⁰⁸

With over a decade of philosophic education in both Alexandria and Athens, Gregory would have been acquainted with at least the rudiments of Stoic philosophy, including the background Wolfson has laid out.⁵⁰⁹

I want to conclude by proposing that if Gregory’s single use cannot be proven to import this Stoic background it seems at least in passage [GN 4] below to be redolent of it.

Certainly Gregory’s philosophic education would make him aware of these possibilities, but I suspect he was more interested in going beyond Athanasius by adapting Origen, not in Stoic philosophy per se. For example, Origen uses the phrase δι’ ὅλων κειρωρικῶς, which can be translated ‘pervades’.⁵¹⁰ Consequently, although this terminology may be of Stoic provenance (as Prestige’s critics contend), Gregory may have taken it from Origen. Further, Prestige’s critics may in fact be too quick to point to Stoic provenance, because Stemmer’s one rare use in Anaxagoras is no longer the case. Actually some thirty occurrences of both the noun and verb are identifiable in Anaxagoras (fl. 5th cent. BCE) and his commentator, Simplicius (fl. 6th cent. CE); thus, the meaning ‘rotate’ with a philosophic pedigree is possible, but probably does not support Prestige’s position, since any rotation would be interpenetrative just as the Stoic cosmic Mind pervaded and ordered the cosmos, i.e. as in the rotation of the heavens.⁵¹¹

⁵⁰⁸ Wolfson, 420.

⁵⁰⁹ On Gregory’s educational chronology see Rosemary Radford Ruether (1969), *Gregory of Nazianzus: Rhetor and Philosopher*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press), 18-19, 169-74.

⁵¹⁰ Origen, *Orat.* 27, 8. *Origenes Werke*, vol. II: 367.13-368.19.

⁵¹¹ Anaxagoras, a pre-Socratic philosopher, taught “a physical theory of ‘everything-in-everything’”. Simplicius commenting on Anaxagoras proves his theory was known in the sixth century, thus it is possible Gregory could have known of it in the fourth. Further, there is a fourth century anonymous scholion on a text of Gregory of Nazianzus discussing Anaxagoras by name, so he was known in theological circles. Patricia Curd, (Winter 2015 Edition), s.v. “Anaxagoras”, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2015/entries/anaxagoras/>, accessed variously. Thus, contra Prestige’s critics, there appears to be a philosophic background extending beyond the Stoics back to Anaxagoras (5th cent. BCE). His use of the terms *perichōreō* and *perichōrēsis* initially described the

Thus, in my view Gregory may not have meant ‘interpenetration’ in an explicit and philosophically nuanced manner, but rather in terms of his rhetorical training and poetic ability, he nuanced the common usage within the philosophic community for a theological purpose, not fully embracing a specific philosophic background per se.⁵¹² It would be Maximus, rather, who would see the possibility in Gregory’s use, and in an act of constructive theology, think through the philosophic background and exploit it. Though, Maximus too would show restraint in adopting an explicit philosophic background.

Perichōrēsis in Gregory of Nazianzus

Below I give all four occurrences of περιχωρέω in Gregory, followed by discussion.

[GN 1], dated to late 373 or early 374.⁵¹³

Καὶ τοῦτο ἴσον ἢ ἀνισότης ἔχει, τὴν περὶ
πάντα μεταβολήν. Περιχωρεῖ γὰρ τὰ
πάντα ῥαδίως, καὶ μεταχωρεῖ, καὶ
ἀντικαθίσταται· ὥς αὔραις εἶναι μᾶλλον
πιστεύειν καὶ γράμμασι τοῖς καθ’ ὕδατος,
ἢ ἀνθρώπων εὐημερία.

*Indeed, the one constant is inconsistency
itself: everything is subject to change. All
things effortlessly slip into a circular
pattern: when one moves on another takes
its place, so that we may rather put our
faith in the breezes of the air or in words
written on water than in human*

motion of the cosmic Mind in the ordering and formation of matter. The term may have initially described the circular movement of the cosmic spheres, but he probably did not intend the movement of Mind to be circular in all cases, because the initial movement (if rotation) described something that was also interpenetrative. Everything was in everything and Mind moved throughout. Thus, the dichotomy that scholarship has proposed between ‘rotate’ and ‘interpenetrate’ is really a false dichotomy; the term probably encompasses both notions at the same time. This is a matter for further research. For texts on Anaxagoras see, H. Diels and W. Kranz, 1952. *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, vol. 2, (6th edn.; Berlin: Weidmann): 32-44. on Simplicius see, H. Diels, 1882. *Simplicii in Aristotelis physicorum libros octo commentaria*, 2 vols, (CAG 9). For a translation of Simplicius see, Pamela Huby and C. C. W. Taylor, eds. and trans. (2014), *Simplicius on Aristotle Physics 1.3-4*, (London: Bloomsbury Academic). And, Han Baltussen et al., eds. and trans. (2014), *Simplicius on Aristotle Physics 1.5-9*, (London: Bloomsbury Academic).

⁵¹² McGuckin finds Gregory in the tradition of Origen, well acquainted with and often quoting from the philosophic tradition, and commends his “synthetic ingenuity” while finding clear Neoplatonic “resonances and definite traces of Cynic and Stoic elements in” Gregory’s thinking. McGuckin (2001), 57-58.

⁵¹³ PG 35, 972 A.

Oration 17.4, *Ad ciues Nazianzenos* happiness.⁵¹⁴

The one parity in disparity is change in all things. For all things readily give way, change places, and are replaced, ... [my alternate trans for italicized text]

[GN 2], dated to 374.⁵¹⁵

ΜΒ'. Οὐχ ἡ αὐτὴ φύσις, ὧ μῆτερ, Θεοῦ καὶ ἀνθρώπων· μᾶλλον δὲ ὅλως τῶν θείων καὶ τῶν ἐπιγείων. Παρ' ἐκεῖνοις μὲν τὸ ἄτρεπτον καὶ ἀθάνατον, αὐτοῦ τε τοῦ εἶναι, καὶ τῶν ὅσα τοῦ εἶναι· τῶν γὰρ παγίων τὰ πάγια. Τὰ δὲ ἡμέτερα πῶς ἔχει; (1041) Ῥεῖ τε καὶ φθείρεται, καὶ ἄλλοτε ἄλλην λαμβάνει μεταβολήν. **Ζωὴ γοῦν καὶ θάνατος, ταῦθ' ὅπερ λέγεται, πλεῖστον ἀλλήλων διαφέρειν δοκοῦντα, εἰς ἄλληλα περιχωρεῖ πως καὶ ἀντικαθίσταται.** Ἡ μὲν γὰρ ἐκ φθορᾶς ἀρχομένη τῆς μητρὸς ἡμῶν, καὶ διὰ φθορᾶς ὁδεύουσα τῆς αἰ τοῦ παρόντος ἐκστάσεως, εἰς φθορὰν καταστρέφει τὴν τοῦ βίου τούτου κατάλυσιν· ὁ δὲ τῶν ἐνταῦθα κακῶν ἀπαλλαγὴν ἔχων, καὶ πρὸς τὴν ἄνω πολλακίς μετὰ των ζωὴν, οὐκ οἶδα εἰ κυρίως προσαγορεύοιτο θάνατος, . . .

Oration 18.42, *Funebris in patrem*

42. Mother, the nature of God and human beings is not the same; indeed divine and earthly things are altogether [different].

Divine things possess unchangeableness and immortality, both in being and in consequences. For stable things are of stable things. But, what do we have? Both flux and corruption, undertaking change at one time or another. **Indeed life and death, as they are called, apparently so different, interpenetrate, perhaps even opposing, one another.** For the one, beginning from the corruption of our mother and traveling through corruption, i.e. the constant vanishing of the present, it finishes its journey in corruption, i.e. the dissolution of this life. But the other, which is a release from the evils of this life, and often translating us to the life above, I do not know if it is properly called death, . . .

Life and death, as they are called, apparently so different, are in a sense resolved into, and successive to, each other.⁵¹⁶ [Alternate trans.]

⁵¹⁴ Trans. by Martha P. Vinson (2004), *St. Gregory of Nazianzus: Select Orations*, (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press), 88-89.

⁵¹⁵ PG 35, 1041 A.

⁵¹⁶ An alternate translation (for the emphasized bit) from Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, eds. (reprint 1988?-1991?, 1886-1890), *Cyril of Jerusalem; Gregory Nazianzen*, vol. VII, (Grand Rapids, MI: Christian Classics Ethereal Library), 499. This shows that Prestige's position is not an innovation; there are antecedents, as this late 19th century translation shows.

[GN 3], dated to 379.⁵¹⁷

καὶ οἱ τοῦ Λόγου, τοσαύτης ἐσμὲν σιγῆς, ἢ ἀλογίας, ἢ παραπληξίας, ἢ, οὐκ οἶδ' ὅ τι καὶ ὀνομάσω, μεστοί· ὥστε τροφῆς μὲν, καὶ ὕπνου, καὶ ᾠδῆς κόρος ἐστὶ, καὶ τῶν αἰσχίστων, ὡς λέγουσι· καὶ πλησμονὴ πάντων, οὐ τῶν ἀλγεινῶν μόνον, ἀλλ' ἤδη καὶ τῶν ἡδίστων, καὶ πάντα εἰς ἄλληλα **περιχωρεῖ** τε καὶ περιτρέπεται· ἡμῖν δ' οὐδεὶς ὅρος τοῦ βάλλειν καὶ βάλλεσθαι, οὐ τοῖς ἐτεροδοξοῦσι μόνον, καὶ κατὰ τὸν τῆς πίστεως λόγον διεστηκόσιν (ἦττον γὰρ ἂν ἦν ἀλγεινὸν, καὶ ὁ ζῆλος, ἀπολογία πραγμάτων ἐπαινουμένων, ἐὰν ἐν ὅροις ἰστῇται)· ἤδη δὲ καὶ τοῖς ὁμοδόξοις, καὶ πρὸς τοὺς αὐτοὺς, καὶ ὑπὲρ τῶν αὐτῶν στασιάζουσι (τοῦτο γὰρ τὸ μοχθηρότατον, ἢ ἐλεεινότατον).

Why are we, people of the Word, so silent, irrational or mad or full (I do not know at all what to call it); the result is a glut of food, sleep and song, even of shameful things, as they say; and satiated with all things, not only the painful, but also the pleasurable, and all things both **completely giving way** to and turning away from each other; And with us there is no limit to the giving and taking of blows, not only among the heterodox (for, if it stood within limits, the rivalry would be less painful, being the defense of a laudable cause), but even nowadays among those who are of one mind, striving against the same people and in the same cause (for this is what is most irksome and most to be pitied).

Oration 22.4, De pace 2

[GN 4], dated to 383.⁵¹⁸

(30) Τὸ γὰρ «Ὁ δεύτερος ἄνθρωπος ἐξ οὐρανοῦ», καὶ «Οἷος ὁ ἐπουράνιος, τοιοῦτοι καὶ οἱ ἐπουράνιοι», καὶ «Οὐδεὶς ἀναβέβηκεν εἰς τὸν οὐρανόν, εἰ μὴ ὁ ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ καταβὰς ὁ Υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου», καὶ εἴ τι ἄλλο τοιοῦτον, νομιστέον λέγεσθαι διὰ τὴν πρὸς τὸν οὐράνιον ἔνωσιν, (31) ὥσπερ καὶ τὸ «διὰ Χριστοῦ γεγονέναι τὰ πάντα» καὶ «κατοικεῖν Χριστὸν ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις ἡμῶν», οὐ κατὰ τὸ φαινόμενον τοῦ Θεοῦ, ἀλλὰ κατὰ

For “The second man is from heaven”⁵¹⁹ and, “As is the heavenly man, so are those who are of heaven”⁵²⁰ and, “No one has ascended into heaven, except he who came down from heaven, the Son of Man,”⁵²¹ and if there are any other such statements, they must be understood to be said on account of the union with the heavenly, just as, “All things came to be through Christ,”⁵²² and “Christ dwells in our hearts,” are not according to the appearance of

⁵¹⁷ Justin Mossay and Guy Lafontaine, eds. (1980), *Grégoire de Nazianze: Discours 20-23*, (Paris: Cerf), 226. PG 35, 1136 line 18.

⁵¹⁸ *Epistle 101*, 30-32. Paul Gallay, ed., (1974), *Grégoire de Nazianze: Lettres théologiques, introduction, texte critique, traduction et notes*, (Paris: Cerf), 36-68.

⁵¹⁹ 1 Cor 15:47.

⁵²⁰ 1 Cor 15:48.

⁵²¹ See John 3:13.

⁵²² See John 1:3.

τὸ νοούμενον, κίρναμένων ὥσπερ τῶν φύσεων, οὕτω δὴ καὶ τῶν κλήσεων καὶ **περιχωρουσῶν** εἰς ἀλλήλας τῷ λόγῳ τῆς συμφυΐας. (32) Εἴ τις εἰς ἄνουν ἄνθρωπον ἤλπικεν, ἀνόητος ὄντως ἐστὶ καὶ οὐκ ἄξιος ὅλως σῶζεσθαι. **Τὸ γὰρ ἀπρόσληπτον, ἀθεράπευτον**· ὃ δὲ ἦνεται τῷ Θεῷ, τοῦτο καὶ σῶζεται.

God, but to perception, because just as the natures mix so too do the names also **interpenetrate** one another on the basis of their [organic] unity. If anyone has trusted in a mindless man, he is really silly, and not altogether worthy to be saved. **For that which he has not assumed he has not healed**; but that which is united to God, that is also saved.

Epistle 101.31 line 5, Epistulae (theologicae)

Gregory's Use of the Term

These four passages comprise Gregory's use of *perichōrēsis*; he employs the verb περιχωρέω in only two forms: three times as περιχωρεῖ and once (the theological occurrence) as περιχωρουσῶν. In short, if aiming for grammatical translations, following lexicons like the LSJ, translators can translate these occurrences in terms of circular or reciprocating motion. Indeed, Prestige considered occurrences [GN 2-4] to mean “reciprocate,” or “interchange” but not “to interpenetrate” saying that “the word clearly implies an interchange produced by the revolution of successive cycles.”⁵²³ I contend, however, a closer reading of the context suggests something else is more appropriate.

Gregory's father died in the spring of 374. With Basil attending the funeral Gregory gave *Oration 18*.⁵²⁴ Sometime earlier he had delivered *Oration 17*. In 379 Gregory went to Constantinople and gives *Oration 22*. And in 383, after being bishop of Constantinople for two years and being involved at the council of Constantinople in 381, he retires for health reasons, writing *Epistle 101*. Thus, the four occurrences span

⁵²³ Prestige (1964), 291-92. Prestige did not treat passage [1].

⁵²⁴ McGuckin provides a chronology of Gregory's life and Ruether provides a chronology of his works. See McGuckin (2001). And, Ruether (1969).

nearly a decade, beginning with the deaths of his father and mother and ending with his political failure as the not so healthy onetime bishop of Constantinople.⁵²⁵

Closer reading of the context suggests Gregory is not thinking strictly in terms of revolution or rotary motion. In [GN 1] *Oration* 17 (373/4 CE) Gregory notes, “Everything is subject to change,” a commonplace of Greek philosophy for the sensory world. The translation provided by M. P. Vinson, while adequate, insufficiently accounts for this philosophic background by subordinating the verbs, suggesting a cycle. My alternative translation renders the three coordinated verbs in terms of flux, better accounting for the notion that all things are subject to change. Further, it is important to note that G. L. Prestige and his critics ignored or overlooked this example, which is unfortunate because it appears somewhat programmatic regarding Gregory’s milieu.

In [GN 2] this funeral address (*Oration* 18, 374 CE) Prestige sees an alternating cycle of life and death, but Gregory is clearly speaking of their mutual presence: we are born in corruption, live in corruption, and end in dissolution finally to be released and translated to the life above.⁵²⁶ Gregory is preaching what every pastor says at a funeral, the dearly departed have gone ahead to a better life. Interpreting this as an alternating life and death with release to new life fails to account for Gregory’s poetic use of corruption in terms of the clear Neoplatonist and now Christian background. He is invoking the notion that life is lived in the midst of sin (death), while concomitantly

⁵²⁵ Gregory’s mother died within six months of his father, his brother Caesarios died in 368 and his sister Gorgonia in 369 or 370. Thus, he lost four family members within six years, 368-374. The chronology is from McGuckin, vii-xi. McGuckin notes (vii, n1) that his dates for the letters and orations follow the “pioneering scholars: Sinko, Gallay, and Bernardi.” These dates were then compared to Ruether, 178-180. Ruether’s chronology indicates *Oration* 18 was given in the spring of 374, *Oration* 22 in summer of 379 in Constantinople, and *Epistle* 101 in summer of 382. Ruether notes (178) that she is following P. Gallay’s chronology in *La vie de s. Gregoire de Nazianze* (Paris, 1943), 252-253.

⁵²⁶ V. Harrison asserts that Prestige sees “an alternation between life and death” when Gregory’s point is actually to show their presence in each other, not a simple cycle. Harrison (1991), 56.

evoking the Neoplatonist notion that souls must rise above this so called life to find true life (in heaven).

In [GN 3] the second of three orations on peace, *Oration 22* (379 CE, five years later), Gregory speaks of ‘satiety’. Michael Lawler summarizes Gregory as arguing “that all things co-inhere in or make room for one another (*perichōrei*) and are converted into one another.”⁵²⁷ This translation suggests a final stasis, and thus totally misses the point of the flux of this life below where nothing is resolved as opposed to the perfection of the life above. Gregory is here, once again, invoking the flux of the sensory world. There is no final stasis, but rather the flux of Constantinopolitan politics where all things are wanted, had, and opposed by the same group, even the same person. Metaphorically he speaks of the “pat on the back with one hand and the knife in the other,”—a simultaneous turning toward and away from.

Written contra Apollinarianism, in [GN 4] *Epistle 101* (381 CE, two years later), Gregory crystallizes what would become his soteriological axiom—What he has not assumed, he has not healed—denying the Apollinarian claim that Christ had no human soul or mind but was simply the Logos in a ‘meat sack.’ Gregory shows how the language of Scripture predicates of the human Christ things true only of the pre-existent Son, as in “All things were made by Christ” and “Christ dwelleth in your hearts.”⁵²⁸ Prestige contends Gregory is predicating this interchange of the names alone and not the natures, but although this is grammatically possible, it cannot be Gregory’s intent. Peter Stemmer notes that the construction could have either the names, the natures, or both as the subject of *περιχωρουσῶν*, but that the simplest reading would read both as

⁵²⁷ Lawler (1995), 50.

⁵²⁸ John 1:3 and Eph 3:17.

subject even if it is difficult to see how names interpenetrate.⁵²⁹ This is further borne out by the context. First, Gregory clearly predicates whatever happens with the names as analogous to what happens with the natures: “just as the natures so too the names” (ὥσπερ τῶν φύσεων, οὕτω δὴ καὶ τῶν κλήσεων). Second, the word for mixture here (κίρναμένων) would clearly evoke on a popular level the mixing of water and wine, which would not connote to anyone reciprocation or the metaphor of a revolving solid object as Prestige contends, and may even as Prestige’s critics suggest imply a Stoic philosophic background.⁵³⁰ Third, Gregory’s argument is clearly demonstrating that two natures can coexist in the same physical space, whether it is a human person or the world itself within a few lines of [GN 4] writing:

[GN 4b]

(36) Ἀλλ’ ἤρκει, φησὶν, ἡ θεότης ἀντὶ τοῦ νοῦ. Τί οὖν πρὸς ἐμὲ τοῦτο; Θεότης γὰρ μετὰ σαρκὸς μόνης οὐκ ἄνθρωπος, ἀλλ’ οὐδὲ ψυχῆς μόνης, οὐδὲ ἀμφοτέρων χωρὶς

τοῦ νοῦ, ὃ καὶ μᾶλλον ἄνθρωπος. Τήρει οὖν τὸν ἄνθρωπον ὅλον καὶ μῖζον τὴν θεότητα, ἵνα με τελέως εὐεργετῇς.

(37) Ἀλλ’ οὐκ ἐχώρει, φησί, δύο τέλεια. Οὐδὲ γάρ, εἴπερ σωματικῶς σκοπεῖς. Ἀγγεῖον γὰρ μεδιμναῖον οὐ χωρήσει

διμέδιμνον, οὐδὲ σώματος ἐνὸς τόπος δύο ἢ πλείω σώματα·

(38) εἰ δὲ ὡς νοητὰ καὶ ἀσώματα, σκόπει ὅτι καὶ ψυχὴν καὶ λόγον καὶ νοῦν καὶ

(36) But holding out, he [the Apollinarist] says, the divinity took the place of the mind. Then, how does this touch me? For divinity with flesh alone is not a human being, nor with soul alone, nor with both apart from mind, which is even more human. Keep then the whole human being mingling the divinity too, so that you may fully benefit me.

(37) But, he asserts, he cannot contain two perfect [natures]. Not if you [only] look corporally. For a bushel measure will not hold two bushels, nor will the space of one body hold two or more bodies.

(38) But, if he [the Apollinarist] considers intelligible and incorporeal things, then

⁵²⁹ Stemmer (1983), 16. Prestige avoids the problem by saying only the “names reciprocate”, but this ignores Gregory’s clarifying discussion regarding intellectual existences occupying the same space.

⁵³⁰ Prestige (1928), 243. Further, the word *συμφυῖας* (translated ‘organic unity’) can connote a unified substance like the knitting of broken bones, which the translation ‘connaturality’ (favored by some) conveys to me, except that Gregory also acknowledges the fundamental incompatibility of the natures as he discusses in the next section, so I have opted for ‘organic unity’.

Πνεῦμα ἅγιον ὁ αὐτὸς ἐχώρησα καὶ πρὸ ἐμοῦ τὸν Πατέρα καὶ τὸν Υἱὸν καὶ τὸ ἅγιον Πνεῦμα ὁ κόσμος οὗτος, τὸ ἐξ ὁρατῶν λέγω καὶ ἀοράτων σύστημα. (39) Τοιαύτη γὰρ ἡ τῶν νοητῶν φύσις, ἀσωμάτως καὶ ἀμερίστως καὶ ἀλλήλοις καὶ σώμασι μίγνυσθαι.	this same world system (I mean the system of things seen and unseen) contained soul, reason, mind, and Holy Spirit, and before me the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. (39) For such is the nature of intelligible things, they can mingle both with one another and with bodies, incorporeally and indivisibly.
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*Epistle 101, 36-39.*⁵³¹

Here Gregory makes it clear that all the properties inherent to each nature remain intact and are not obliterated, but become somehow predicable of each other: “Because just as the natures mix so too do the names also interpenetrate one another in their principle of [organic] unity,” as translated above in [GN 4].⁵³²

Every Word a Weapon

I would like to draw further attention to Gregory’s rhetoric. Gregory over about ten years employs *perichōreō* four times, the last christologically, the others in ostensibly non-theological contexts. Four occurrences provide scant data to mount an argument for conceptual development. On the other hand, as an elite rhetor Gregory does appear to consciously employ this word. Note that the contexts of the non-theological occurrences are still redolent of the Christian Neoplatonism that divides reality into heaven and earth, into divine things “unchangeableness and immortality” and human “flux and corruption” (*Oration 18*)—the “everything is subject to change” of *Oration 17*. Further, both orations 17 and 18 employ ἀντικαθίσταται, while 18, 22 and *Epistle 101* dropping it introduce εἰς ἄλληλα, thus it appears that Gregory is refining a specific conceptual use. *Oration 17* has Περιχωρεῖ γὰρ τὰ πάντα ῥαδίως, καὶ μεταχωρεῖ, καὶ

⁵³¹ Gallay ed., (1974), 52. This passage is taken soon after the axiomatic quote, “What he has not assumed he has not healed,” and is integral to the attending argument of passage [GN 4]. Ibid., 44.

⁵³² John McGuckin notes that Gregory is here describing the “deification of human existence.” McGuckin (2001), 393. Verna Harrison argues that the “interchange of names is grounded ontologically in the mutual interpenetration of natures.” Harrison (1991), 55. Both have overstated the case, but clearly their positions are based on Gregory intending interpenetration with an assumed Stoic background.

ἀντικαθίσταται· but *Oration* 18 streamlines keeping just two verbs while introducing the prepositional phrase to reinforce them: εἰς ἄλληλα περιχωρεῖ πῶς καὶ ἀντικαθίσταται. Then in *Oration* 22: πάντα εἰς ἄλληλα περιχωρεῖ τε καὶ περιτρέπεται· he coordinates with a different verb, keeps the prepositional phrase, and although “all things” has returned this is in the context of the infighting of factions in Constantinopolitan politics. This verbal coordination is fine in these contexts, because the flux of this world does result in self-opposition, but once he gets to *Epistle* 101 *perichōreō* stands alone suggesting that the coordinated verbs in all three prior cases were used to introduce some form of opposition, whereas in this final occurrence the union submits of two natures and thus all the names apply equally without any opposition or flux. Thus, the words for opposition now dropped, and kept are just the principle of union (τῷ λόγῳ τῆς συμφυΐας). Consequently, it seems to me that all occurrences do suggest interpenetration (contra Prestige), but by default this tells of the context of the flux of this world. Therefore, there is no specifically Christian deep theological ontology here (contra the critics of Prestige) just that of the Neoplatonic background well known by the elite educated Gregory, who is also a deeply committed Christian, who could have all he needed from Origen (as Christian Neoplatonist).

Further, Gregory’s theological use of this term does not map directly into the theoretic options of mixture theory, so proposing a Stoic background is problematic. While comporting with a Stoic background contra the Aristotelian one assumed by Prestige, Gregory does not simply adopt the Stoic solution. He is close to the Stoic view that implies mutual penetration and retention of properties, but it is also analogous of the Aristotelian view regarding a dominant subject. Yet it is different from the Stoic view in that the human and divine are inseparable, and different from the Aristotelian in that the human and divine do not form a *tertium quid* nor does the dominate divinity

obliterate the humanity but divinizes it.⁵³³ Thus, the background is clearly that of mixture theory *in general* with the attendant terminology and imagery, yet the synthesis is uniquely Gregory's, so he cannot be said to be deploying either an Aristotelian (contra Prestige) or a Stoic solution (contra Prestige's critics).⁵³⁴ Finally, given the syncretism of late antique philosophy—there were no pure Platonists, Aristotelians or Stoics in the fourth century, much less in the seventh when we get to Maximus where the real application of the term takes place—Gregory cannot be slighted either for not clearly adopting a given background or for adopting and shaping the terminology to his needs, whether had from his philosophic education or knowledge of Origen.

In the end though, Gregory refused to extrapolate this concept further. His goal was to oppose heterodoxy; orthodoxy preserved, Gregory refused to speculate. Although there appears to be some conceptual development, this may really just tell of the different arenas in which Gregory is employing the term, i.e. in his Christological use there was no need for terms of opposition. Four uses simply provide too little data to make a case for the introduction of a theological technical term. Thus, as I initially quoted Stemmer saying that Gregory introduced his Christological use of *perichōreō* “rather casually, certainly not with the intention to introduce a new theological term.”⁵³⁵ I agree for two additional reasons. First, Gregory himself seems to actually eschew technical terms (perhaps following Athanasius) as he indicated shortly before [GN 4]: “For both [natures] are one in their combination, God being made a human being, and the human being was deified *or however one should express it.*” (*Epistle* 101.21, italics mine).

Second, there are passages where Gregory could have introduced the term or developed

⁵³³ Regarding divinization in Gregory's Christology see Vishnevskaya (2007).

⁵³⁴ Prestige (1964), 292-93. Torrance (1996), 170. Both deny human penetration into the divine. However, I am nuancing Wolfson who invokes the Stoic background and considers Gregory to have included the idea of the human interpenetrating the divine, although this is not strictly possible on the Stoic model which required separability of the combined ingredients.

⁵³⁵ Stemmer (1983), 15. See the footnote above for the fuller quote and the German.

it but did not, e.g. in his fourth theological oration, the second on the Son, delivered in Constantinople towards the end of the ten year period discussed above but before *Epistle* 101, he says, “And this is the cause of the error of the heretics – their joining of these two names [God and Father], which are interchanged because of the union of the natures [in Christ].”⁵³⁶ Thus, it seems clear that Gregory, however brilliant, did not so much introduce a theological technical term as unwittingly provide Maximus a manner of speaking he found felicitous.

Maximus the Confessor not only adopted Gregory’s usage, but appears to have taken as programmatic the notion that “intellectual existences . . . can mingle with one another and with bodies, incorporeally and invisibly”.⁵³⁷ Thus, Maximus the Confessor extends Gregory’s rhetoric and fleshes out what this passage means in terms of *perichōrēsis*, not only introducing the noun but extending it to all aspects of reality as the passage implies: Cosmology, Christology and deification, but not as we shall see, into the doctrine of God or *theologia*, where it remained conspicuously absent.

Perichōrēsis in Maximus the Confessor

There are too many occurrences of *perichōrēsis*, whether verb or noun, in Maximus to analyze every passage in detail, but neither is it necessary to be exhaustive, because Maximus does use the term in clearly defined and limited ways; thus, selective exegesis will be sufficient. Maximus follows Gregory even programmatically adopting *perichōrēsis* into what Gregory had called the “system of things visible and invisible.” Indeed, according to Aidan Nichols, it is the doctrine of Gregory from which Maximus

⁵³⁶ Stephen Reynolds (2011), *Gregory of Nazianzus: Five Theological Orations—Translated with Introduction and Notes*, (Trinity College, University of Toronto: Estate of Stephen Reynolds), 79. See *The 4th Theo. Orat. (Orat. 30)* 8.4-7: “καὶ τοῦτο ἐστὶν ὃ ποιεῖ τοῖς αἰρετικοῖς τὴν πλάνην, ἢ τῶν ὀνομάτων ἐπίζευξις, ἐπαλλαττομένων τῶν ὀνομάτων διὰ τὴν σύγκρασιν.”

⁵³⁷ This is taken from the tail end of passage [GN 5] above, and is referenced there. *Epistle* 101, 39.

starts, and as Prestige notes, Maximus “cherished a most profound regard” for the writings of Gregory.⁵³⁸ Prestige suggests that Maximus found *perichōreō* in Gregory, and Lars Thunberg notes that he must have adopted it from Gregory’s *Epistle* 101 (noted above).⁵³⁹ In fact, Prestige contends that the noun *perichōrēsis* “does not seem to occur at all until Maximus.”⁵⁴⁰ The verb used once christologically by Gregory, becomes much more prominent in Maximus, who has also introduced the noun to Christian theological discourse. This is no doubt because Christological debate remained at the center of Maximus’ life: including his mentor Sophronius’ rejection of monothelite policy, his own monothelite debate with Pyrrhus, the former bishop of Constantinople, his role in the Lateran Synod (649) rejecting monotheletism, and his trial and exile for rejecting imperial monothelite policy.⁵⁴¹ Thus, with Christology at the center, following Gregory of Nazianzus, Maximus adopted *perichōreō* and extended it into a Christian vision encompassing things “visible and invisible.”

Inheritance

G. L. Prestige concludes that the meaning of the verb in Maximus cannot mean “interpenetrate” but rather means “interchanged” or “become reciprocal” because “no one ever had the hardihood to suggest that the human nature is capable of interpenetrating the divine; the process, where it is alleged, is always in the opposite

⁵³⁸ Aidan Nichols (1993), *Byzantine Gospel: Maximus the Confessor in Modern Scholarship*, (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark), 66. Prestige (1928), 243.

⁵³⁹ Lars Thunberg (1995), “‘Circumincision’ Once More: Trinitarian and Christological Implications in the Age of Religious Pluralism”, *Studia Patristica*, 29: 364-72, 365. Prestige (1928), 243.

⁵⁴⁰ Prestige (1964), 291. See also on a possible prior use of the noun in Gregory of Agrigento, depending on his dates, in Stemmer (1983), 17. Prestige’s unqualified claim should be viewed within the scope of his inquiry, i.e. the words used in the development of the doctrine of God, etc (as noted above). The TLG makes searching much easier, and occurrences of the noun do exist, e.g. in Anaxagoras (fifth century BCE) and in Simplicius (sixth century CE), which suggest the philosophic background could be broader than Stoic physics.

⁵⁴¹ Maximus’ early life is disputed based on a Greek *Vita* that places him in Constantinople of aristocratic parents and a Palestinian *Vita* that places him in Palestine of disreputable parents. On this see the discussion with bibliography and on Maximus’ career in Booth (2014), 142-55. I tentatively follow Booth in these matters for two reasons germane to this study: 1) the educational opportunities in Syro-Palestine were more than adequate to account for Maximus’ training, and 2) his Palestinian origin better accounts for both his theological interests and importance to John of Damascus.

direction, and that for reasons sufficiently obvious.” Per Prestige the metaphor is still that of Gregory: “the two opposites are revealed as complementary sides of a single concrete object by the rotation of the object,” however, there is some development in Maximus, as “the two natures reciprocate not merely in name as with Gregory, but in practical effect and operation.”⁵⁴² Thus, Prestige finds the meaning of the noun to be “reciprocity of action” in Maximus, employed to explain the single operation of the two natures in the one Christ.⁵⁴³ He finishes his analysis by noting that “the idea in the background is simply the metaphor of rotation.”⁵⁴⁴

Thus, for Prestige the development in Maximus is an addition to Gregory, not a development within Maximus’ thought. Further, Prestige assumes Maximus has read Gregory as he has, i.e. if the names reciprocate, now in Maximus the wills do (reciprocate in practical effect and operation), and thus Prestige finds *perichōrēsis* in Christology can be taken to be monenergist.⁵⁴⁵ Prestige asserts this is the sum of Maximus thought on *perichōrēsis*. This is, however, very unlikely, because Maximus’ early thought on the monenergist crisis develops even to the point of later retracting or at least qualifying earlier statements that could be taken in a monenergist sense. One striking example of this is the passage [MC 1], which Prestige passed over.⁵⁴⁶

⁵⁴² Prestige (1928), 243. Further, it should be noted that Prestige appears not to have had the advantage of Polycarp Sherwood (1952), *An Annotated Date-List of the Works of Maximus the Confessor*, (Rome: Herder). The preface to the 1952 second edition of *God in Patristic Thought* is dated 1950, and no mention is made of Sherwood. Consequently, on this basis alone Prestige’s analysis of Maximus’ development is suspect.

⁵⁴³ Prestige does not explain why the two natures require a ‘single operation’ when Maximus himself spent a good deal of time and effort arguing for two operations in Christ.

⁵⁴⁴ Prestige (1964), 294.

⁵⁴⁵ Prestige here argues for in Maximus precisely what Maximus rejects, ironically he will also argue that John’s position tends to miaphysitism the position John argues against. This in itself is a red-flag that modern theological assumptions may be anachronistically getting in the way.

⁵⁴⁶ Numbered per the table above. Maximus was apparently pressed regarding the potential monenergist reading of the phrase “through all there is only one sole energy, that of God and those worthy of God, or rather of God alone, who in a manner befitting his goodness wholly interpenetrates (περιχωρήσαντος) all who are worthy.” from *Amb.Io.* 7 (3 in Eriugena’s edition) dated to 628-34 was “retracted” (per Jankowiak and Booth) or at least qualified (per Conostas) in *Opusc.* 1 (PG 91 33 AB), which is dated to

Consequently, the following passages will show Maximus inherits *perichōreō* from Gregory and uses it much more often than Gregory. Contra Prestige Maximus argues that the natures interpenetrate. Thus, Maximus follows Gregory, next I will demonstrate conceptual development, just not in terms of the Trinity, Prestige's primary interest, but rather in terms of Maximus' interests.

Passage [MC 10]:

Οὐ κατὰ Θεὸν τὰ θεῖα δράσας.
Οὐ κατὰ Θεὸν μὲν ὁρᾶσαι τὰ θεῖα
λέγει τὸν Χριστὸν, ὅτι μετὰ σαρκὸς
καὶ οὐ γυμνῇ τῇ θεότητι· ὁμῶς δ' οὐ
θεῖα· οὔτε τὰ ἀνθρώπινα κατ'
ἄνθρωπον· ἐν ἐξουσίᾳ γὰρ θεϊκῇ, ὅτε
ἐδούλετο, διδοὺς καιρὸν τῇ σαρκὶ τὰ
ἑαυτῆς ἐνεργεῖν· ὁμῶς δ' οὐ
ἀνθρώπινα. Τὸ δὲ ἀνδρωθέντος δηλοῖ
τὸ ἐνανθρωπήσαντος. Οὕτω γὰρ ἡμῖν,
ἡγουν δι' ἡμᾶς, ἐπὶ γῆς δηλαδὴ,
πεπολιτευμένος, ἔδρασεν, ὥς
πρόκειται, τὰ θεῖα καὶ τὰ ἀνθρώπινα.
Σημειῶσαι δὲ τὴν ὑπερφυῖ καὶ
ἄφραστον τοῦ Κυρίου ἔνωσιν, ὅτι οὐ
κατὰ Θεὸν τὰ θεῖα ἔδρασεν, (ἦν γὰρ
καὶ Θεός). Ὅθεν θαυμαστῶς ὁ θεῖος
Γρηγόριος ὁ θεολόγος φησί,
Κιρναμένων, ὥσπερ τῶν φύσεων,
οὕτω δὴ καὶ τῶν κλήσεων καὶ
περιχωρουσῶν εἰς ἀλλήλας τῷ λόγῳ
τῆς συμφυῖας.

Max. Scholia in DA, Ep. 4⁵⁴⁷

He did not do divine things by virtue of being God.

He says that Christ did not see divine things divinely, because it was with the flesh not by his bare divinity. Thus [he saw] divine things in both ways. Nor did he see human things humanly, for it was in divine power when he acted the part of a slave, having given opportunity to the flesh to do what pertained to it. For in his divine power, when he served, his activity was given with joy in the flesh. Thus, likewise human things. And, the term 'become male' indicates the term 'become human'. For just as to us, that is for us, who was clearly placed as a free citizen on earth, he accomplished, as appointed, divine and human things. Note well the beyond nature and marvelous union of the Lord, because he did not do divine things by virtue of being God (for he was also God). For which reason the divine Gregory, the Theologian, admirably says, "Just as the natures so too the names, when mixed and **interpenetrating** into one another by reason of their union."

643-46. See Jankowiak and Booth (2015), 29. Trans. Nicholas Constatas, ed., (2014), *On Difficulties in the Church Fathers: The Ambigua*, 2 vols. (Cambridge: MA: Harvard University Press), vol 1, 91, 480n16.

⁵⁴⁷ PG 4, 445C. Scholarship has shown that many of Maximus' scholia on the Areopagite are actually by John of Scythopolis. This passage, however, seems to be by Maximus according to Rorem and Lamoreaux. See the Appendix Collation of the Scholia, which gives only 533.1 S/G[2-4], not paragraphs 533.2-3, which may be a mistake, because Rorem and Lamoreaux offer a translation of 533.2 and 533.3 suggesting it belongs to John of Scythopolis. Nevertheless, the bit quoted here falls within the omitted section of their translation indicating it is not by John and thus retained for Maximus. Paul Rorem and John C. Lamoreaux (1998), *John of Scythopolis and the Dionysian Corpus: Annotating the Areopagite*, (Oxford: Clarendon), 253, 64f.

In [MC 10] Maximus picks-up Christological *perichōrēsis* from Gregory of Nazianzus, who in *Epistle 101* uses it of the names (and as argued of the natures) of Christ. The scholion on Dionysius the Areopagites’ *Epistle 4*, explains that Jesus is a man just like any other, but he is also beyond human beings. He performs divine acts and human acts, but no longer as God alone, and not as merely a man, but somehow, as *both at the same time*, thus he performs divine acts humanly and human acts divinely, and Dionysius refers to this as a ‘new theandric activity’.⁵⁴⁸ Maximus interprets this in terms of Gregory, naming him explicitly and citing *Epistle 101*. Clearly Maximus is interpreting the Areopagite’s ‘new theandric activity’ in terms of the union of the two natures based on Gregory’s *Epistle 101*. However, the argument does not turn on an alternation between Jesus acting as God and then as Man, as Prestige suggests, but rather as doing human or divine things as the God-Man: “he did not do divine things by virtue of being God”. For *perichōrēsis* to mean ‘reciprocate’ or ‘revolve’ would require that Jesus act sometimes as God to do divine things and sometimes as Man to do human things, alternating between the two, and this is precisely what Maximus (and Gregory) reject. Maximus interprets the ‘new theandric activity’ as Jesus acting, whether doing human or divine things, as both God and Man at the same time. Thus, ‘interpenetrate’ is the only meaning that Maximus could intend. Consequently, when Prestige argues Maximus is not using *perichōrēō* to refer to the interpenetration of the natures he is wrong.

Passage [MC 5]:

“Καί ὑπὲρ ἄνθρωπον ἐνήργει τὰ
ἀνθρώπου,” κατ’ ἄκραν ἔνωσιν δίχα
τροπῆς συμφυεῖσαν δεικνὺς τῇ θεϊκῇ

“And in a manner beyond man, He does the
things of man,” according to a supreme
union involving no change, showing that the

⁵⁴⁸ This was crucial because his miaphysite interlocutors interpreted this to be ‘one theandric activity’.

δυνάμει τὴν ἀνθρωπίνην ἐνέργειαν,
ἐπειδὴ καὶ ἡ φύσις ἀσυγχύτως ἐνωθεῖσα
τῇ φύσει δι' ὅλου περικεχώρηκε, μηδὲν
ἀπόλυτον παντάπασιν ἔχουσα, καὶ τῆς
ἡνωμένης αὐτῇ καθ' ὑπόστασιν
κεχωρισμένον θεότητος.

Amb.Th. 5.14 PG 91, 1053 B⁵⁴⁹

human energy is naturally conjoined with the
divine power, since the [human] nature,
united without confusion with the [divine]
nature, is completely penetrated (δι' ὅλου
περικεχώρηκε) [by it], having nothing at all
which is absolute [i.e. discrete] and separate
from the divinity which is united with it
according to *hypostasis*.⁵⁵⁰

This early passage [MC 5] exhibits several aspects of how Maximus extends Gregory into the Dionysian vision: First, he uses the *di' holou* (δι' ὅλου) language as previously noted. Second, when he says, “in a manner beyond man,” he is using one of Dionysius’ favorite prepositions (*hyper* ὑπέρ), while also keeping within the orbit of Gregory, alluding to doing the things of man as God, invoking Gregory’s *Epistle 101* and its exchange of names based on the interpenetrating natures. Third, Christ acts “according to a supreme union,” clearly the use of the perfect περικεχώρηκε implies the interpenetration (of the natures) in Christ is complete and the union is not only in view contra Prestige, but fully formed.⁵⁵¹ Consequently, when Prestige argues that Maximus “always calls the process a *perichōrēsis* of the two natures ‘to’ (εἰς or πρὸς) one another, never a *perichōrēsis* ‘in’ (ἐν) one another or ‘through’ (διὰ) one another,” I suspect he is preoccupied with a concern of modern systematics that ‘co-inherence’ be a state that the Godhead is in from eternity, and thus misses both the patristic and philosophic background Maximus is adapting.⁵⁵² It is clear in [MC 5] that Maximus thinks of the two natures in a completed ‘perichoretic’ union, and it should be noted that no prepositions are used contra Prestige.

⁵⁴⁹ Nicholas Constas, ed. (2014), *On Difficulties in the Church Fathers: The Ambigua, Maximus the Confessor*, vol. 1 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press), 44-45.

⁵⁵⁰ Translation based on N. Constas. *Ibid.*, 45.

⁵⁵¹ On the apparent one-sidedness of the penetration see Thunberg, *Microcosm*, 25.

⁵⁵² Much more will be made of the prepositions in John of Damascus below.

Thus, clearly Maximus interprets Gregory to mean that natures interpenetrate and they do so “completely” with no part “remaining separate”. What’s more, Maximus interprets Dionysius in terms of this insight from Gregory, but more importantly, as interpenetrating one another in a completed union. Maximus will creatively develop this inheritance from Gregory and Dionysius as he fleshes out the implications.

Finally, Passages [MC 5] and [MC 10] occur fairly early in Maximus’ career at the beginning of the monenergist debate.⁵⁵³ Prestige cites [MC 10] and argues for a background in Leontius of Byzantium, who used the same term, *antiperichōrēsin*. Prestige contends that [MC 10] controls the meaning of *perichōrēsis* in Maximus’ usage.⁵⁵⁴ This is very unlikely for a number of reasons. First, Prestige admits this is likely an interpolation. Now it does not occur in this form before Maximus except once in Plutarch used non-theologically.⁵⁵⁵ Thus, given its rarity and the rarity of its cognates any interpolator probably meant, as Prestige himself claims, what the word already meant in Gregory and Maximus, which Prestige’s critics and I have shown to be interpenetration. In any case, as a one-off it cannot be used to control the reading of Maximus if based on Maximus, because that would be circular reasoning. Moreover, the scholia on Dionysius, authored during or just after the *Ambigua to John* (concerned with difficult passages in Gregory and Dionysius), clearly put Gregory and Dionysius in the frame not Leontius.⁵⁵⁶ Second, *antiperichōrēsin* as a one-off is never again used in Maximus, whereas, *perichōreō* is used in the scholia on Dionysius, citing Gregory by

⁵⁵³ The monenergist crisis breaks out in 633, and open opposition to monotheletism in 640. [MC 5] and [MC 10] date to 634-5 and before 636 respectively, thus they occur in the early phase of the monenergist crisis. On this see Jankowiak and Booth (2015), 45.

⁵⁵⁴ Prestige (1928), 247. And, Prestige (1964), 292.

⁵⁵⁵ *Plu.Ages.* 39.5.1. B. Perrin, ed., (repr. 1968; 1917), *Plutarch’s Lives*, vol. 5, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press), 2-112. Further, this is the only citation listed by the LSJ and means “move round in turn or in opposition”.

⁵⁵⁶ This scholion is provisionally retained to Maximus, as no other scholiast uses the term *perichoreō* that I am aware of, and it is not reserved to John of Scythopolis based on the collation and translation of the scholia of John by Rorem and Lamoreaux (1998).

name and quoting him in passage [MC 10] above, thus it is a much better candidate for programmatic use.⁵⁵⁷ Consequently, the background here is Gregory of Nazianzus not Leontius of Byzantium, and thus, Maximus has indeed inherited *perichōrēsis* from Gregory, and it means ‘interpenetration’.

Vision

Maximus the Confessor on the road from monk to confessor, responding to imperial policies first of monenergism and then of monotheletism, developed a Christology so expansive that it situated soteriology cosmologically. In his classic work on Maximus, Hans Urs von Balthasar claims the “central point of Maximus’ thought” is the “reciprocity” between the mystical and conceptual. Von Balthasar contends that for Maximus, “a synthetic understanding of Christ became a theodicy for the world: a justification not simply of its existence but of the whole range of its structures of being,” which by virtue of the “hidden immanence of the pre-incarnate Word (Logos) in all the intelligible structures (*logio*, λόγοι) of the world” Maximus’ Cosmology explained everything in terms of a “final synthesis of Christ”.⁵⁵⁸ In the recently published *Oxford Handbook on Maximus the Confessor*, Torstein Tollefsen flatly states that for Maximus Christ is the “metaphysical and ontological centre of the total cosmos.”⁵⁵⁹ Lars Thunberg, however, reminds us that in addition to this metaphysical view Maximus never loses sight of the *Definition* of Chalcedon and employs its language repeatedly.⁵⁶⁰ Thus, Maximus keeping Chalcedon in the fore fashions a

⁵⁵⁷ I lack the space to develop the point, but would like to suggest that Maximus may have dropped this form in favor of *antidosis*, after only using it once, introducing a dual construction that clarified his meaning, e.g. διὰ τὴν ἄκραν τούτων αἰς ἄλληλα περιχώρησιν τε καὶ ἀντίδοσιν. *Opusc.* 16 189D. This would suggest that he was using the prefix ‘anti’ in the sense of ‘exchange’ to indicate the mutuality of the penetration rather than in the sense of ‘alternate’ to mean ‘revolution’ as Prestige claims.

⁵⁵⁸ Hans Urs Von Balthasar (2003, 1988 [German, 3rd Ed.]), *Cosmic Liturgy*, trans. Brian E. Daley, (San Francisco: Ignatius Press), 65-66.

⁵⁵⁹ Torstein T. Tollefsen (2015), “Christocentric Cosmology”, in P. Allen and B. Neil, eds., *Oxford Handbook of Maximus the Confessor*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 307-21, 307.

⁵⁶⁰ Lars Thunberg (1995), *Microcosm and Mediator: The Theological Anthropology of Maximus the Confessor*, (2nd edn.; Chicago: Open Court), 21.

cosmological vision that starts and ends with the Incarnation, while weaving ontology throughout. In doing so, he deploys the terms *perichōreō* and *perichōrēsis* in several contexts, which I will look at below.

But first, it is important to note that Maximus speaks of two different but related things that must be distinguished to properly grasp what he means when he uses the terms *perichōreō* and *perichōrēsis*: 1) the procession and return of all things from and to God from (2) the concomitant principle that God is in all things as their cause by virtue of the *logoi* of being. These are two different (if closely related) things: procession and return and causal participation—these can be thought of as *being* diachronically and synchronically related respectively.

Now Maximus could talk about both in the same breath. For example, in his *Ambigua to John*, Maximus contends that “God brought beings into existence out of nothing,” and that the reasons and principles of those beings, which are “the many *logoi* are one Logos, seeing that all things are related to him without being confused with him.”⁵⁶¹ Continuing a bit later Maximus further argues that it is because the *logoi* of being are both from and in God that “He recapitulates all things (τὰ πάντα ἀνακεφαλαιούμενον)⁵⁶² in Himself, for it is owing to Him that all things exist and remain in existence, and it is from Him that all things came to be in a certain way and for a certain reason, and ... they participate in God.”⁵⁶³ Maximus explicitly follows and names Dionysius here.

Thus, Maximus is arguing that the *logoi* are in and from God and how “God is manifested and multiplied in all things,”—this is causal participation, i.e. the Creator

⁵⁶¹ *Amb.Io.* 7.15; PG 91 1077C. Trans. by Constanas ed., (2014), 95.

⁵⁶² See Eph 1:10. “εἰς οἰκονομίαν τοῦ πληρώματος τῶν καιρῶν, ἀνακεφαλαιώσασθαι τὰ πάντα ἐν τῷ Χριστῷ, τὰ ἐπὶ τοῖς οὐρανοῖς καὶ τὰ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς ἐν αὐτῷ.”

⁵⁶³ *Amb.Io.* 7.16; PG 91 1080B. Trans. by Constanas ed., (2014), vol 1, 97.

participates in his creation. Maximus then alludes to the “recapitulation of all things in him” suggestive, according to Nicholas Conostas of the “recapitulation of all things in Christ” (Eph 1:10)—this is the procession and return. Thus, Maximus is interpreting Dionysius by extending Gregory into a cosmological vision of all created things, encompassing both procession and return in an act of creation that continues in eventual restoration, while remaining present in and to every created thing along the way.

Torstein Tollefsen sees Proclus in the background here, a pagan Neoplatonist philosopher to whom Dionysius seems indebted. Regarding this cosmology Tollefsen writes, “In this scheme, creatures are set within a provident arrangement of creation and salvation in order to be perfected.”⁵⁶⁴ Consequently, deification becomes one of the primary ways Maximus extends the use of *perichōreō* and *perichōrēsis* in his soteriology, but he centers it Christologically, thus cosmology, Christology and soteriology are intimately related and *perichōrēsis* plays an important role in each. Consequently, Maximus has exploited Gregory’s assertion (see [GN 4b] above) that “intelligible and incorporeal things can mingle with one another and with bodies” as in the world simultaneously containing and interpenetrating one another: “soul, reason, mind and Father, Son and Holy Spirit,” (*Epistle* 101, 38-39) by fleshing out what this means for cosmology, Christology and soteriology.

The above summary of Maximian scholarship is intended to be non-controversial in order to offer a baseline with which to discuss Maximus’ use of *perichōreō* and *perichōrēsis*.⁵⁶⁵ Consequently, I will now focus on the breadth of Maximus’ use of *perichōrēsis* and *perichōreō* in his cosmology, and then turn to his Christology, and end with his soteriology. Then after laying out the limits of Maximus’ usage, I will have the

⁵⁶⁴ Tollefsen (2015), 103.

⁵⁶⁵ I do not mean to suggest there is consensus on the details so much as to suggest my sketch sufficiently delineates approaches prominent in the scholarly literature on Maximus such that I can now discuss Maximus in these terms.

needed background to assess its use and development in John of Damascus in the next chapter.

Cosmology: [GN 1-3 and 4b; MC 2, 8 and 17]

Maximus has inherited *perichōreō* from Gregory of Nazianzus, *Epistle* 101, as well as his argument that the intelligible and incorporeal Divinity can occupy the same space as any corporeal body [GN 4b], which he recognizes has broad implications.

[MC 2]

Τίς πρὸς ἄλληλα τῶν ἐναντίων εἰς ἑνὸς κόσμου
σύστασιν ὁ δεσμός, καὶ τῆς εὐτάκτου τε καὶ
ἀφύρτου κινήσεώς τε καὶ διοικήσεως ὁ τρόπος;
Τίς πάλιν τῶν καθ' ἡμᾶς σωμάτων ἢ τῶν
ἐναντίων κατὰ τὴν κρᾶσιν διὰ συνθέσεως
συμπλοκή, τὰ διεστῶτα κατὰ τὴν φύσιν εἰς
φιλικὴν συνοικίαν ἐνάγουσα καὶ τῇ μεσότητι τὸ
ἐν τοῖς ἄκροις αὐστηρὸν τιθασσεύουσα, καὶ
χωρεῖν δι' ἀλλήλων ἀλυμάντως
παρασκευάζουσα καὶ ταύτην ποιουμένη τῶν
συνθέτων συντήρησιν, τὴν τῶν ἄκρων κατὰ τὴν
κρᾶσιν εἰς ἄλληλα περιχώρησιν, καὶ πῶς
ἕκαστον τούτων ἐστί, καὶ τί ἐστί, . . .

Amb.Io. 17.8; PG 91, 1228 C

[MC 17]

Καὶ ἐπὶ τοῦ κατὰ προφορὰν δὲ λόγου ὡσαύτως,
καὶ τὴν ἐγκειμένην τῷ λόγῳ ὁρῶμεν ἔννοιαν,
καὶ τὸν ὑποκείμενον τῇ ἐννοίᾳ λόγον, καὶ τὴν
αὐτῶν δι' ὅλου εἰς ἄλληλα περιχώρησιν· καὶ
οὔτε τῇ διαφορᾷ αὐτῶν τὸ διάφερον τῶν
προσώπων συνεισάγεται, οὔτε τῇ ἄχρᾳ ἐνώσει
τὸ συγκεχυμένον. Τί δ' ἂν τις εἴποι καὶ περὶ
τῆς πεφυρακτωμένης μαχαίρας, οὐχ ἦττον τῶν
φύσεων, τουτέστι τοῦ πυρὸς καὶ τοῦ σιδήρου,
καὶ τὰς αὐτῶν φυσικὰς ἐνεργείας, τὴν καὶ οὖν
φημι καὶ τὴν τομὴν, σωζούσης, καὶ διὰ πάντων
ἅμα, καὶ ἐν ταυτῷ, ταύτας ἐνδεικνυμένης; Οὔτε

What is the bond that brings opposites
together united into one world, and the mode
of unmixed and well-ordered motion and
administration? Again, what of our own
bodies, the intertwining of opposites mingled
through composition, bringing those things
that stand apart by nature into friendly
community and cultivating the discipline of
the extremes in the mean, and preparing to go
through one another unimpaired and
producing this preservation of the things in
composition, the **interpenetration** of the
extremes in the mixture into one another,
and what each of these [components] are, and
what it [the whole thing] is, . . .

Just so with the spoken word, we discern in
the word the implied thought, and in the
thought the subordinate word, and their
complete mutual **interpenetration**; and the
difference of the persons is not brought
together by their difference, nor in
uselessness made one confused thing. What
is one to say also about the blade that is put
in the fire, which no less than the natures
(that is the fire and the iron) preserves their
natural energies, I mean the burning and the
cutting, and displays them in all

γὰρ ἡ καὺσις αὐτῆς, τῆς τομῆς ἄφετός ἐστι μετὰ
τὴν ἔνωσιν, οὔτε ἡ τομὴ τῆς καύσεως· καὶ οὔτε
διὰ τὸ διττὸν τῆς φυσικῆς ἐνεργείας, δύο
εἰσάγει τὰς πεπυρακτωμένας μαχαίρας· οὔτε
διὰ τὸ μοναδικὸν τῆς πεπυρακτωμένης
μαχαίρας, τῆς αὐτῶν οὐσιώδους διαφορᾶς
φύρσιν ἢ σύγχυσιν ποιεῖται.

Disp.Pyrrh. PG 91, 337 D

circumstances and in the same act? For its
burning is not free from cutting after the
union, nor is the cutting from burning, nor is
it true that the twofold natural activities
indicate two daggers have been heated-up,
nor because the individual heated dagger
makes a mixture or confusion of their
essential differences.

Recognizing the cosmological background in Gregory's passages [GN 1-3] highlights the significance of Maximus' cosmological use: three clear occurrences [MC 2, 8, and 17] spread throughout his career, and covering the mutual interpenetration of the intelligibles. Passage [MC 2] speaks of the union of soul and body, [MC 8] interprets the light (of Genesis) as the container of virtues, and [MC 17] talks about the relation of thought and spoken word. All of these are predicated on intelligible being (Gregory's "intellectual existences" [GN 4b]), whether soul, virtue, or thought, and its ability to contain and be contained by a body (human body, sun, spoken word), or at least actualized as embodied in the real world (spoken word is uttered from a body). Thus, Maximus exploits Gregory's use of *perichōrēsis* and his outlook on the intelligibles in [GN 1-3, 4b] as cosmological warrant; thus, interpreting [GN 1-3] in pseudo-theological terms—in late antiquity philosophical world view and theology are part and parcel of the same intimately related reality.

This suggests further that seeing the background in Gregory only in terms of [GN 4] is too narrow, and that the Stoic background assumed by Wolfson and the other critics of Prestige is too narrow as well. Maximus is clearly interpreting Gregory in terms of Gregory's wider use [GN 4b], and thus recognizing the Neoplatonic (possibly mediated through Origen) background. It is even possible that Maximus is aware of Simplicius'

discussion of Anaxagoras.⁵⁶⁶ Thus, rather than first use being Christological, the first use in Gregory and the controlling use in Maximus is really the cosmological use, which is itself theological (both because philosophy and theology were not completely separate activities and because Providence ruled cosmology for both Gregory and Maximus) and which informs the Christological and subsequent soteriological uses.

Christology: [GN 4, MC 5, 9-15, 18 and 19]

Now, this ground was prepared above: the passages [GN 4, MC 5, 9 and 10] were discussed in relation to Maximus' adoption of *perichōreō* from Gregory [GN 4 and MC 10] and his scholia [MC 5 and 10] on Dionysius' interpreting "a new theandric energy [or 'activity']" in part through the adoption of certain Dionysian language (covered above) concerned Christology. I showed how Maximus extended Gregory into the Dionysian vision, reading and claiming both for the Chalcedonians. Yet these early examples do not settle the matter, as they are soon found insufficient to the needs of Maximus' polemic.

Joining Sophronius in the early 630s Maximus quickly enters the fray of escalating theological polemics. The initial burst of seven occurrences of *perichōreō* and *perichōrēsis* occur in this early phase (c. 633) of the controversy in two works: four in the *Ambigua ad Iohannem* and three in *Quaestiones ad Thalassium*. Interestingly none of the seventeen earlier works (fourteen epistles, *Expos. in Psalmum LIX*, *Liber asceticus*, and *Capita de caritate*) use either term, thus perhaps meeting up with Sophronius and his disagreement with the *Pact of Union* was one of the motivating factors in Maximus' formulation.⁵⁶⁷ With the escalation of controversy, Maximus can

⁵⁶⁶ As noted in an earlier chapter, Simplicius among others may have returned to Syro-Palestine after leaving Persia, raising the bar on philosophic education in the region for a time.

⁵⁶⁷ Dates of works follow Jankowiak and Booth (2015). The *Pact of Union* (CPG 7613) was an agreement between Alexandrian Miaphysites and Constantinople (dyophysites) to which Sophronius took

be seen to shift his focus, in terms of the use of these terms, from Soteriology (and Cosmology to a lesser extent), thus, with [MC 1-8] the spread is cosmology (2), soteriology (5), Christology (1), but with the escalation of controversy there is a complete focus on Christological use (seven occurrences) with [MC 9-15].⁵⁶⁸ Consequently, looking at examples in this period of escalating Christological controversy should best demonstrate Maximus' Christological use of these terms.

[MC 9 and 10 are above] so below are the remaining passages from this period.

[MC 11]

εἰ καὶ ταύτην μετ' ἐκείνων ἀπάντων
ἐθέωσε, πυρακτωθέντος δίκην σιδήρου,
πᾶσαν θεουργὸν ἀποφήνας, ὡς διόλου κατ'
ἄκρον αὐτῇ περιχωρήσας διὰ τὴν ἔνωσιν·
καὶ ἔν μετ' αὐτῆς ἀσυγχύτως κατὰ τὴν
αὐτὴν καὶ μίαν ὑπόστασιν γεγονώς.

If this with all of them was deified, as iron when heated, showing all deified, as very thoroughly interpenetrating it, because of the union, having also become one with it without confusion in one and the same *hypostasis*.

Opusc. 4 PG 91, 60 B

[MC 12]

παρέστησε ταύτας ἡνωμένας διόλου τῇ
πρὸς ἀλλήλας συμφυΐα καὶ περιχωρήσει· ὡς
μίαν διὰ τὴν ἔνωσιν αὐτοῦ τε τοῦ Λόγου καὶ
τὴν παναγίας αὐτοῦ σαρκὸς δεῖκνυσθαι τὴν
ἐνέργειαν·

He [Christ] proves them [the divine and human will] to be thoroughly united by their mutual interpenetration and [organic] union, showing that the energy is one because of the union of the Word himself to his holy flesh.⁵⁶⁹

Opusc. 7 PG 91, 88 A

[MC 13]

... ὁ διδάσκαλος, μίαν εἶπεν ἐνέργειαν, διὰ
τὸ μηδὲν θεῖον ἢ ἀνθρώπινον κεχωρισμένως
ἐπιτελεῖσθαι, ἀλλ' ἐξ ἐνὸς καὶ τοῦ αὐτοῦ
συμφυῶς ἅμα καὶ ἡνωμένως προάγεσθαι,
κατὰ τὴν ἐν τούτοις ἐνιαίαν περιχώρησιν·

The Teacher said, "One activity," to be complete, because there is not one separate divine or human [activity], rather [the activity] organically and unitedly proceeds simultaneously from

issue, resulting in an immediate revision. This revision, termed the *Psephos* (in CPG 7606), outlawed discussion of one or two activities (or two at odds wills) in Christ, to which Pope Honorius responded (CPG 9375) using monothelite terminology exacerbating the controversy.

⁵⁶⁸ The four additional uses [MC 16-19] are in works of dubious attribution and the *Dial.theod.Bith.* is clearly post trial, so not in this period. The *Disp. Pyrrh.* has one occurrence of each type so Christology would still be dominant.

⁵⁶⁹ Slightly modified from Louth (1996), 201.

οὐ μὴν γε διὰ τοῦτο εἶπε μίαν αὐτοῦ κατ' ἰδιότητα φυσικὴν τὴν οὐσιώδη ἐνέργειαν·

Opusc. 20 PG 91, 232 A

one and the same [Christ] according to the unitary interpenetration in these. Surely he did not mean by this His one essential activity as a natural property.

[MC 14]

Αὐτοῦ γὰρ ὑπάρχει, καθάπερ καὶ τοῦ πυρὸς ἡ τομὴ, διὰ τὴν ἄκραν τούτων εἰς ἄλληλα περιχώρησιν τε καὶ ἀντίδοσιν·

Opusc. 16 PG 91, 189 D

For he exists, just like the cutting of the fire, through the complete mutual exchange with and interpenetration into one another.

[MC 15]

Εἰ γὰρ ἐπὶ τὸν αὐτὸν καὶ τοῦ αὐτοῦ ταύτας οὐκ ἔλεγον καὶ ἀνέφερον, καὶ τῇ πρὸς ἀλλήλας δι' ὅλου περιχωρήσει συμφυεῖσας ἀλλήλαις, καὶ καθ' ἑνωσιν τὴν ἀδιάσπαστον ἐν αὐτῷ σωζομένας, καὶ πρὸς αὐτοῦ, κατ' ἄλλο μέντοι καὶ ἄλλο κινουμένας ἐνοειδῶς, ...

Opusc. 16 PG 91, 208 A

For if they did not speak and predicate these (*energeis*) with respect to the same subject and of the same subject, as being connatural with one another by their complete mutual interpenetration, and being preserved in him by an unbreakable union, and by him also, yet exercised unitedly in one way and in another.

These five passages from the *Opuscula* of Maximus show some advancement over the earlier *Ambigua*. Some features are retained: both noun and verb are used as well as the δι' ὅλου borrowed from Dionysius [MC 15] if contracted to διόλου [MC 11 and 12], but he also shows signs of broadening beyond Dionysian terminology: using ἄκραν [MC 14] for the completeness of the penetration. These passages also show a more considered use, both denser and riper. Used previously by Maximus the metaphor of fire and iron is extended in [MC 11 and 14] to describe an exchange (ἀντίδοσις) of properties while preserving the integrity of the underlying natures.⁵⁷⁰ Further, *perichōrēsis* has been applied to the activity (ἐνέργεια) before when discussing

Dionysius' "theandric activity", to show the oneness of the activity as indicative of the

⁵⁷⁰ The introduction of the term ἀντίδοσις *antidosis* or 'exchange' in passage [MC 14] and a few similar passages in Maximus may be the beginning of the terminological formalization that will result in the Latin technical phrase '*communicatio idiomatum*'. The *antidosis* is picked up by John of Damascus, and his use no doubt contributes to its formalization, but that is a matter for further research being out of scope here.

one person of Christ, but now Maximus goes deeper; no longer satisfied with the potentially monenergist reading, he combines *perichōrēsis* of the natures with the iron and fire metaphor to show that the activities in the one person are dual, just as the activities of the heated sword both cut and burn simultaneously [MC 14], predicated of the mutually interpenetrating natures, so there is no doubt: There are two natures in Christ, but the union means Christ acts ‘theandrically’, i.e. the operations, divine and human, are simultaneous and united in a theandric activity. Noticeably absent though is any explicit reference to the two wills. There are passages in Maximus that discuss the ‘theandric energy’ using the iron and fire analogy which use neither term *perichōrēsis* nor *antidosis*. Such suggest the development of *perichōrēsis* is sporadic rather than regular (rather telling against its development as a technical term). Further, I am not aware of any passage not even in the *Disputation with Pyrrhus* in which Maximus explicitly coordinate the two wills with *perichōrēsis*, such will have to wait for John of Damascus as seen in the next chapter.

However, these advances are not without limits. Maximus remains shy of overt philosophic terminology in Christological predication, using only once in [MC 13] “His one essential activity as a natural property” (ιδιότητα φυσικὴν τὴν οὐσιώδη ἐνέργειαν), perhaps the most philosophically redolent passage involving *perichōrēsis* in Maximus. Although ‘activities’ are in view here and Maximus is denying the possibility of ‘one activity’, he is denying it as a function of single nature vis-à-vis miaphysitism by using the notion of essential (οὐσιώδη) property. Further, grammatically he has not settled on a particular construction: [MC 11] has no *pros*, *eis* or *en*, [MC 12 and 15] has *pros*, [MC 13] has *en*, and [MC 14] has *eis*. Thus, whether static or dynamic, movement or no, Maximus has not put a stake in the ground. Thus, *perichōrēō* and *perichōrēsis* have a philosophic background, but Maximus is not

applying it with any force, and thus it seems doubtful that he is consciously employing these terms as technical terms, even if there is some development in his use of them; this development is more a function of the development of his Christological argument than any development in his use of these terms as technical terms.

Deification: [MC 1, 3, 4, 6, 7 and 16]

As noted above, the soteriological use of these terms was prevalent in the early Maximus, but the Christological use eventually moved to the fore as a function of Maximus' polemical need. I treat it last not because it is less important than the other two, but because it is logically consequent on the other two. Most useful in expressing this aspect of Maximus' use of these terms is chapter 59 of the *Questions to Thalassius* [MC 6 and 7] with two uses and an explanation of how deification works. This is prefaced by a short passage that clearly shows the human nature penetrating the divine.

[MC 3]

ὅλος ὅλῳ περιχωρήσας ὁλικῶς τῷ Θεῷ, καὶ
γενόμενος πᾶν εἴ τί πέρ ἐστιν ὁ Θεός, χωρὶς
τῆς κατ' οὐσίαν ταυτότητος

Amb.Io. 41.5 PG 91, 1307 B

... the whole [person] wholly
interpenetrating God entirely, and
becoming everything that God is,
without, however, identity in essence.⁵⁷¹

[MC 6 and 7]

Σωτηρία δὲ τῶν ψυχῶν κυρίως ἐστὶ τὸ
τέλος τῆς πίστεως· τέλος δὲ πίστεως ἐστὶν ἡ
τοῦ πιστευθέντος ἀληθείας ἀποκάλυψις·

ἀληθείας δὲ τοῦ πιστευθέντος ἐστὶν
ἀποκάλυψις ἡ κατὰ ἀναλογίαν τῆς ἐν
ἐκάστῳ πίστεως ἄρρητος τοῦ
πεπιστευμένου **περιχώρησις· περιχώρησις**
δὲ τοῦ πεπιστευμένου καθέστηκεν ἡ πρὸς
τὴν ἀρχὴν κατὰ τὸ τέλος τῶν
πεπιστευκότων ἐπάνοδος· ἡ δὲ πρὸς τὴν

Surely the salvation of souls is the
consummation of faith. And, the
consummation of faith is the true
manifestation of what has been believed.

And, the true manifestation of what has
been believed is the inexpressible
interpenetration in proportion to the
faith of each believer. And, the return to
the origin in the consummation of what
has been believed sets up the

⁵⁷¹ Trans. (modified) Conostas ed., (2014), vol. 2: 109.

οικείαν ἀρχὴν κατὰ τὸ τέλος τῶν
πεπιστευκότων ἐπάνοδος ἐστὶν ἢ τῆς
ἐφέσεως πλήρωσις· ἐφέσεως δὲ πλήρωσις
ἐστὶν ἢ περὶ τὸ ἐφετὸν τῶν ἐφιεμένων
ἀεικίνητος στάσις· ἀεικίνητος δὲ στάσις
ἐστὶν ἢ τοῦ ἐφετοῦ διηλεκτικῆς τε καὶ
ἀδιάστατος ἀπόλαυσις· ἀπόλαυσις δὲ
διηλεκτικῆς καὶ ἀδιάστατος ἢ τῶν ὑπὲρ φύσιν
θεῶν καθέστηκε μέθεξις·

μέθεξις δὲ τῶν ὑπὲρ φύσιν θεῶν ἐστὶν ἢ
πρὸς τὸ μετεχόμενον τῶν μετεχόντων
ὁμοίωσις· ἢ δὲ πρὸς τὸ μετεχόμενον τῶν
μετεχόντων ὁμοίωσις ἐστὶν ἢ κατ’
ἐνέργειαν πρὸς αὐτὸ τὸ μετεχόμενον τῶν
μετεχόντων δι’ ὁμοιότητος ἐνδεχομένη
ταυτότης· ἢ δὲ τῶν μετεχόντων ἐνδεχομένη
κατ’ ἐνέργειαν δι’ ὁμοιότητος πρὸς τὸ
μετεχόμενον ταυτότης ἐστὶν ἢ θέωσις τῶν
ἀξιουμένων θεώσεως·

Q.Thal. 59 PG 90, 608D

interpenetration of the believer. The return to one’s own origin in accordance with the consummation of what has been believed is the fulfillment of desire, and the ever-active repose in the object of desire is the fulfillment of desire. The eternal and uninterrupted enjoyment of [this] object is the ever-active repose. [This] eternal and uninterrupted [enjoyment] has entailed the participation in supernatural divine things.

The assimilation of the participant to the things participated in is the participation in supernatural divine things. The assimilation of the participants with the things participated in is through likeness and according to activity. And this sameness of the participants with the thing participated through likeness and according to activity is the deification of those who are worthy of deification.

The primary difference between Christological and human *perichōrēsis* is that Christ has divine and human *natures* in “perichoretic” union from the moment of incarnation, whereas, human beings are not born deified but are so “in proportion to [their] faith,” thus growing or declining in their identification with and participation in God vis-à-vis embracing the divine activity (ἐνέργεια). Maximus here indicates that the believer ascends to God according to their faith, participating in and becoming like the divine in a movement of “ever-active repose.” This is a clear advance on Gregory of Nazianzus. The interpenetration of divine and human in Christ as in any believing human being is complete with the difference noted above, importantly though, human beings can in participatory faith penetrate the divine by embracing the divine activity and experience union with God.

Thus, for Maximus *perichōrēsis* now characterizes realities at all levels (cosmologically, Christologically, and soteriologically). Cosmologically, the Logos and the *logoi* mean God is immanent within all creation interpenetrating it and willing its perfection. Christologically, the interpenetration of divine and human in Christ initiates the healing of human nature. And, finally, soteriologically, deification (θεώσις) of human beings as they participate in God by faith results in “ever-active repose” in the object of faith: God. Thus, the primacy of divine agency in *perichōrēsis*—in eternally conceiving the *logoi*, creating them from nothing, fixing the brokenness of human nature in the Incarnation, and enabling human participation in the fight against that brokenness—does not obviate the human penetration into the divine, it enables it.

Horizon

Maximus has shown real development in his use of the terms *perichōreō* and *perichōrēsis*. He clearly extends the Christological use beyond Gregory of Nazianzus. Gregory focused on the interpenetration of the natures as the cause of the consequent mutual predication of attributes, necessarily salvific, in order to address Apollinarianism. Maximus adopts his use and extends it with Dionysian vocabulary, while addressing pressing theological questions. Maximus answers these questions with a theological vision encompassing cosmology, Christology and soteriology.

Maximus also shows internal development in his use of these terms. His early use focused on deification, but later use shifted to Christology. Further, with this shift to Christology comes a considered use of the popular metaphor involving fire and iron usually in terms of a heated sword. Maximus as other Chalcedonians employed the analogy to explain the preservation of the natures and their essential properties in their union in Christ: the heated sword does not stop being a sword nor become fire. In the

Opuscula looked at above Maximus extends this by noting that the activities of cutting and burning also interpenetrate, thus a heated knife cuts and burns simultaneously, preserving not only the natures and their essential properties but the activities associated with these.

Certain caveats, however, are observable, because there are identifiable limits to what Maximus achieved in regards to his use of these terms. I will identify two limitations in order to set the stage for looking at the use of these terms in John of Damascus, having seen how they are used and their limits. First, the interlocking system that Maximus envisions involving: cosmology, Christology and soteriology with interpenetration at all levels of reality, is limited to created reality, i.e. the broader *oikonomia*. His basic agreement with Dionysius regarding the apophatic nature of the mysteries and the Godhead specifically means Maximus' Trinitarianism is devoid of any application of these terms. Thus, *theologia* proper, the theology of the Godhead, is not developed in Maximus with respect to the use of these terms. This may be a function of his polemical environment, but as we shall see, John of Damascus takes a different view.

Second, Hans Urs von Balthasar on Christology in Maximus cautions, "Since the Confessor's terminology is more variable than his basic intuitions, I am suspicious of an overly philological approach to this subject."⁵⁷² I agree. Although I have shown that there was some development in the use of the terms *perichōreō* and *perichōrēsis* within Maximus, not merely an advance over Gregory, neither has become a true technical term for Maximus.⁵⁷³ If they had garnered technical meaning and importance as key terms, surely his interlocutors would have pressed him for an explanation and possibly

⁵⁷² Von Balthasar (2003, 1988 [German, 3rd Ed.]), 27.

⁵⁷³ In distinguishing words and terms I am relying on the chapter "Coming to Terms" with an author in the classic text Mortimer J. Adler and Charles Lincoln Van Doren (1972, 1940), *How to Read a Book: The Classic Guide to Intelligent Reading*, (Revised edn.; New York: Touchstone).

even coopted the term and employed it with corrective meaning, but neither is evident. This must mean their meaning was sufficiently clear from their usage, so nothing too specialized could have been intended. Nor does Maximus refer to either *perichōreō* or *perichōrēsis* in a short-hand manner, encapsulating a complex of concepts as would be typical of a technical term, rather he almost always varies his ‘formulation’ in important ways. But, perhaps most importantly, Maximus and his disciples collected lists of definitions of key terms, including essence, nature, *hypostasis*, property, individual, will, operation, and others, but neither term appears as a head-word, nor does either figure in the definition of union or any other term in these lists.⁵⁷⁴ Thus, however central to Maximus’ theological program these two terms were, they were not highlighted as such nor did anyone else notice to the point of asking for clarification.

Conclusion

Maximus the Confessor developed a theological vision by extending Gregory of Nazianzus in his interpretation of Pseudo Dionysius the Areopagite. This theological vision encompassed cosmology, Christology and soteriology. His deployment of the two cognate terms *perichōreō* and *perichōrēsis* is in the service of his polemic and seems to center on the notion of participation, whether in cosmology God’s continuing participation in an on-going creative act via his *logoi* or in every creature’s participation in God via their natural response (*logoi*) to this creative act. This is not possible though

⁵⁷⁴ Lists of definitions frequently include key terms like *hypostasis*, *ousia*, union, etc. but never *perichōrēsis* or *perichoreo*. For example, see *Opusc.* 14=PG 91, 149B-153B, date: before 633/4 (def. of theological and Christological terms); *Opusc.* 18=PG 91, 213A-216A, c. 634/5 (12 def. of union); *Opusc.* 26=PG 91, 276A-280B, c. 649 (def. of will, nature, essence, individual, hypostasis); *Opusc.* 27=PG 91, 280B-285B, c. 649 (def. of operation); *Opusc.* 17=PG 91, 212C-D, c. 626 (def. of distinction); *Opusc.* 21=PG 245D-257D, c. 633 or c. 645/6 (def. of quality, property and difference); there are others and there is a large literature on these. See for example Mossman Roueché (1974), “Byzantine Philosophical Texts of the Seventh Century”, *Jahrbuch der österreichischen Byzantinistik*, 23: 61-76, Mossman Roueché (1980), “Middle Byzantine Handbook of Logic Terminology”, *Jahrbuch der österreichischen Byzantinistik*, 29: 71-98, Peter Van Deun (2000), “L’unionum Definitiones (Cpg 7697, 18) Attribué À Maxime Le Confesseur : Étude Et Édition Du Traité”, *Revue des études byzantines*, 58: 123-47, Furrer-Pilliod (2000).

without Christ's Incarnation and the attendant deification of his human nature. Because soteriology for Maximus presupposes Christological *perichōrēsis*, the early uses in cosmology and soteriology show Maximus has fully invested in Christological *perichōrēsis* as the primary mechanism that describes what happens to the natures in a hypostatic union, although not so much so that *perichōrēsis* becomes a technical term.

Following the critics of Prestige, I have demonstrated that both Gregory and Maximus meant interpenetration from the start, but contra their critics, their use must be seen as eclectic and not specifically Stoic. Gregory has used the term throughout in terms of interpenetration and in terms of a neoplatonically informed world-view. Further, Gregory's use and Maximus' inheritance is uniquely theologically with elements drawn from Neoplatonism, Stoicism, and Aristotelianism. Thus, continuing to identify a Stoic background is reductionist and should be abandoned.

Further, it is clear that these terms are not technical terms for either Gregory or Maximus. Maximus was never challenged or questioned regarding their use, whether by friend or foe, never defined them formally or used them in the definitions of key terms. Further, he varied the constructions in which they were used, and never used them in a conceptually abbreviated manner. It must be concluded, therefore, that for Maximus these terms, however useful or even central, are not theological technical terms.

Finally, the combative Maximus, sure of his orthodoxy, never sought to justify his position, only to polemicize its correctness in ever increasing detail and depth.

However, for whatever reason, he excluded the Trinity from this perichoretic vision, content to defend his Chalcedonian stand-point on the centrality of Christ in two

natures, thus *perichōrēsis* was a matter for *oikonomia* at all levels but it was completely absent for Maximus from *theologia*.



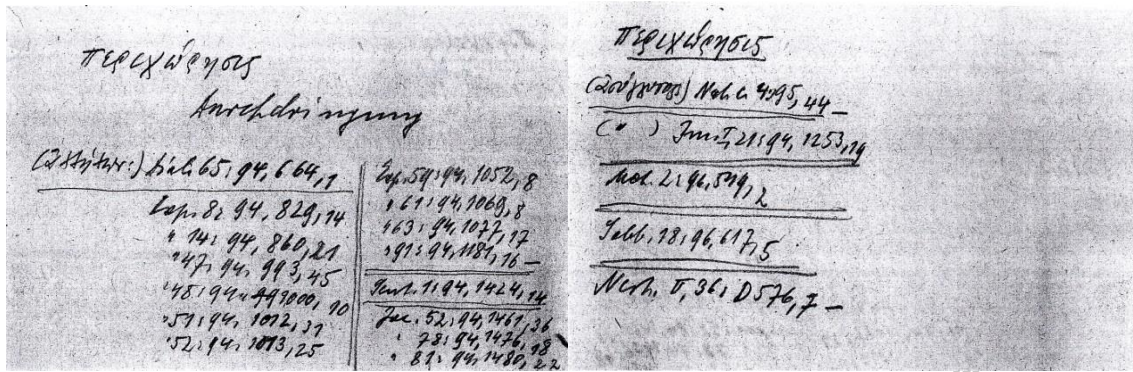


Figure 8 – Professor Dölger's word index card for περιχώρησις⁵⁷⁵

Chapter Six – *Perichōrēsis* in John's Polemic

Introduction

B. Kotter's indexes, the editor of John of Damascus, show that Gregory of Nazianzus is referenced more than twice as often as any other authority. Further, Maximus the Confessor shows up prominently being referenced both directly and also indirectly via the *Doctrina Patrum*.⁵⁷⁶ Thus, for the particular passages I will consider here, John's sources squarely situate him in the tradition of both Gregory and Maximus. Although John is working with the Christology of Gregory and Maximus, Prestige contends that John entirely missed the meaning of *perichōrēsis* in them, inventing the meaning 'penetration.' Prestige termed this John's "Christological indiscretion," and suggested

⁵⁷⁵ "A useful tool was (and sometimes it is still today) the word index of John Damascene, extracted from Migne's *Patrologia Graeca* by Professor Dölger at the very beginning of the institute's activity. As an attachment I send you the scanned slip containing 'perichōrēsis'; the most occurrences are in PG 94." Dr. Robert Volk, Personal Correspondence to Scott Ables (17 Oct 2014). R. Volk speaks of the Byzantine Institute of the Scheyern Abbey, which began work on the critical texts of John of Damascus after Vatican II (early 1960s). To him, my thanks.

⁵⁷⁶ Kotter, ii, 248-58. Louth (2002), 89-91. Also see Louth's discussion of the *Doctrina Patrum* relative to the *On Heresies*, pages 54-55; and also on the importance and provenance of the *Doctrina Patrum* see Ken Parry (1996), *Depicting the Word: Byzantine Iconophile Thought of the Eighth and Ninth Centuries*, (Leiden: Brill), 148. For the *Doctrina Patrum* itself see Diekamp, et. al., eds., (1981, 1907).

it made it difficult for John to avoid miaphysitism, because it would inevitably lead to the absorption of the humanity by the divine nature.⁵⁷⁷ In the previous chapter I showed that neither Gregory nor Maximus meant ‘rotation’ as Prestige argued, but rather ‘penetration’. Thus, if this is a difficulty for John he has inherited it on good authority.

Further, Prestige argued that John’s use of *perichōrēsis* risked two related problems. First, Prestige argued that Christological *perichōrēsis* in John is one-sided as it was initiated by the divinity, and that this risked the absorption of the humanity, “positively tending to” miaphysitism. Second, if outright miaphysitism did not result, this one-sidedness risked a psychological problem, thus tending to Apollinarianism as well.⁵⁷⁸ Consequently, I will look closely at John’s Christological use of *perichōrēsis* finding that Prestige got it wrong on both counts. Prestige has entirely misunderstood Gregory, Maximus and John. Further, I will show that John deployed Maximus in a limited manner in the service of internal debate with members of his own party (monothelites termed Maronites in the sources even by John), thus clearly avoiding any psychological problem.

Further, by comparing John’s use of *perichōrēsis* in his dogmatic work with his polemical, I will endeavor to ascertain development in his use of *perichōrēsis* as he engaged his interlocutors. Prestige worked under the mistaken assumption that John adopted *perichōrēsis* from Pseudo-Cyril, but this is not the case, so he did not look for or expect development in John. We now know Pseudo-Cyril is a late compilation based on John, thus it was John himself who moved *perichōrēsis* from Christology to Trinitarian theology. Nevertheless, modern scholarship often assumes first Trinitarian

⁵⁷⁷ Prestige (1928), 243-44.

⁵⁷⁸ Ibid., 250-51. Wolfson confirms this reading of Prestige. Wolfson (1956), 424.

use to be in John’s *Expos.*, however, first use is to be found earlier in John’s understudied polemical works. By looking at John’s rhetoric I will show that John develops his use of *perichōrēsis* in the service of his engagement with his interlocutors both West and East Syrian as well as internal monothelites. A beneficial, although necessarily provisional, aspect of delineating development will be to suggest relative dating for the works in which *perichōrēsis* occurs.⁵⁷⁹

This chapter sketches just one example of how the reestablishment of the Jerusalem Patriarchate, while being squeezed both geographically and theologically by West and East Syrians, led John of Damascus to focus on the local survival of the Chalcedonian community through the simplification of Maximus the Confessor in order to deliver a more compelling Chalcedonian Christology. John was not moving *perichōrēsis* away from Christology by moving it to his Trinitarian thought. John crafts his Christology from the Nicene Creed, the *homoousios*, and God as revealed in the *oikonomia*, i.e. both as Christ and Trinity. Thus, for John *theologia* informs *oikonomia*, so *oikonomia* becomes revelatory of *theologia*.

The Use of Perichōrēsis in John’s Polemic

Now Maximus the Confessor was found difficult to understand, even confusing to elite theologians, much less the Chalcedonian monks, who engaged in debate in the Anastasis with anti-Chalcedonians, whether West or East Syrian not to mention their own brethren who specifically rejected Maximus. For example, Andrew Louth describes Photius (810–91) as “immensely learned” and cites him as describing Maximus as “unclear and difficult to interpret.”⁵⁸⁰ Further, the chroniclers are clear that

⁵⁷⁹ Dating based purely on internal theological criteria is risky, but sans other criteria it is better than nothing, and provides a basis for further analysis.

⁵⁸⁰ Andrew Louth (1996), *Maximus the Confessor* (London: Routledge), 81.

Maximus divided the Chalcedonians, but John V accepted him and thus it looks like John of Damascus set out to simplify Maximus, perhaps making him more palatable for his own party by making him more useful in debate.⁵⁸¹ This is perhaps the earliest considered reception of Maximus and thus deserves our careful consideration as well. Further, John is in some sense continuing the rehabilitation of Maximus through his positive reassessment and presentation of Maximus' dyothelite Christology. I will focus on this one example, because the transferal of *perichōrēsis* from Christology to Trinitarian theology provides a beautifully succinct microcosm of how John's interlocutors, both internal and external, impinged on him as he implemented John V's patriarchal policy.

It will become clear that John simplified Maximus with a carefully limited presentation of his theological vision coupled with a brilliant extension of his terminology in order to present a coherent synthesis relevant to both the internal Chalcedonian discussion and the external debate with both West and East Syrian interlocutors. Concern with external interlocutors will weigh most heavily while John's dialog with internal interlocutors seems to escalate; I suspect the brief revival of monothelitism under Philippicus (Byzantine emperor, r. 711–13) was a decisive turning point in John's recapitulation of Maximus. If so, it could explain any advance in John's anti-monothelite argument.

As discussed the term '*perichōrēsis*' stood first for the 'interpenetration' of the divine and human natures in Christ but starting with John of Damascus for the

⁵⁸¹ See Palmer (1993), xxx, 25–6, 29, 81. After Maximus the Confessor's theology was vindicated at Constantinople III (680–81), he appears to have still divided the Chalcedonian camp especially in Syria, and thus John of Damascus as an early interpreter should perhaps be read as 'rehabilitating' Maximus within the Chalcedonian party.

‘interpenetration’ in one another of the divine Persons of the Trinity.⁵⁸² John has adopted the term ‘*perichōrēsis*’ from Maximus, who had adapted it from a single theological occurrence in Gregory of Nazianzus. In the previous chapter I delineated how Gregory used it of the names of Christ, and Maximus took him to mean that the underlying divine and human natures in Christ ‘interpenetrated’. By combining his use of *perichōrēsis* with the language of Pseudo-Dionysius, Maximus extended Gregory in order to speak of a ‘complete penetration’.

Now for Maximus (and the Greek patristic fathers generally) the uncreated-created divide was comprised of the Divinity alone as *theologia* over against the Creation where all else resided in the *oikonomia*, represented in microcosm by the Incarnation. However, I noted Maximus broadened the terminological use of *perichōrēsis* to stand for how the uncreated Divinity is present within and sustains creation. John adopts a modified Maximian *perichōrēsis*, focusing on the *oikonomia* in its narrower aspect, the Incarnation itself, while boldly extending Maximus by exporting *perichōrēsis* into *theologia*. This would be risky for the average monk, but John is not a typical monk.⁵⁸³

Raised at court with ‘Abd al-Malik’s sons, all four of whom would become Umayyad caliphs, John followed his father and grandfather into the upper levels of the

⁵⁸² Most modern studies of the term start with the two following works: G. L. Prestige (1928), “‘*Perixoreo*’ and ‘*Perixoresis*’ in the Fathers”, *Journal of Theological Studies* 29: 242-52, and G. L. Prestige (1964), *God in Patristic Thought* (2nd edn; London: SPCK). Prestige’s analysis remains important because it is the source of the definition of the term in Lampe’s *Lexicon*. However, Prestige has been challenged on two points not often recognized by modern studies which rely on him: 1) he wrongly defines the term as ‘reciprocate’ and 2) he accepted (the consensus at the time) that Pseudo-Cyril was a source of John of Damascus. The first is shown not to be the case by investigating the philosophical background of the term: On this see, Harry A. Wolfson (1956), *The Philosophy of the Church Fathers*, vol 1: *Faith, Trinity, Incarnation*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press), 418-428. The second was shown not to be a source but a late compilation based on John of Damascus as discussed above leading up to footnotes 32 and 33.

⁵⁸³ On education in late antiquity see Edward Watts (2012), “Education: Speaking, Thinking, and Socializing”, in Scott Fitzgerald Johnson, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of Late Antiquity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 467-86. Although John was educated to elite level, the average rural monk was no more than literate. On rural monks see Jacob Ashkenazi (2014), “Holy Man Versus Monk—Village and Monastery in the Late Antique Levant: Between Hagiography and Archaeology”, *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, 57: 745-65. Pilgrims too poor to return home often staid in the Holy Land and became monks; these were often not educated to elite levels.

administration.⁵⁸⁴ This was only possible because of his elite education and political acumen, which equipped him to revise and extend Maximus in this new political and polemical context.

Contrasting John and Maximus

Texts

Type	Maximus the Confessor	John of Damascus
Trinitarian	0	9
Christological	10	25
Other	9	5

Figure 9 – Count of occurrences of *perichōrēsis* in Maximus and John

The table above is the result of comparing the key passages of Maximus and John (see the above tables of key passages beginning with Figure 5 – Relevant texts in Gregory & Maximus). I surveyed Maximus finding ten Christological passages and the remaining nine dealt with divine participation generally or deification specifically, but none were Trinitarian. Thus, Maximus reserves *perichōrēsis* for the *oikonomia* but quite broadly.

Comparing this to John, I find that only the four passages in the philosophic works deal with union generally but none deal with the *oikonomia* broadly, a favorite of Maximus. Of the thirty-five remaining nine are Trinitarian and twenty-five are Christological, but notably John has completely dropped the Dionysian ‘wholly in one another’ language that Maximus was noted to favor, even though Dionysius remains a favorite authority on *theologia* for John.⁵⁸⁵ Further, John for *perichōrēsis* noticeably limits the Maximian *oikonomia* to the Incarnation and extends use of the term into *theologia*. Thus, John’s usage is rooted in Maximus, but is quite selective. Further, this early Maximian use develops as John shapes his theological presentation to meet local polemical needs.

⁵⁸⁴ Growing up at court at the same time as the sons of ‘Abd al-Malik, it seems likely John of Damascus was at least acquainted with them if not educated along-side them, all of whom would rule: al-Walīd I (r. 705–15), Sulayman (r. 715–17), Yazid II (r. 720–24), and Hisham (r. 724–43).

⁵⁸⁵ Kotter’s indexes show Pseudo-Dionysius is a favorite of John. It is not only here, however, that John drops Dionysian language in his doctrine of God. See Louth (2002), 95.

Passage [JD 4]:

Καὶ θεοῦ μὲν τὰ ἀνθρώπινα γίνεται,
ἀνθρώπου δὲ τὰ θεῖα τῷ τρόπῳ τῆς
ἀντιδόσεως καὶ τῆς ἐν ἀλλήλοις
ἀσυγχύτου περιχωρήσεως καὶ τῆς
καθ’ ὑπόστασιν ἄκρας ἐνώσεως·

Transfig., 2.47-49⁵⁸⁶

The human things happen of God and
the divine things of the man in the
manner of the exchange, the
unconfused mutual interpenetration,
and the supreme union according to
the hypostasis.

Christological *perichōrēsis* appears in two sermons and the usage looks very Maximian.

Both deal with what would later be termed the *communicatio idiomatum*, the communication of properties from each nature to the one person of Christ—technically the natures remain unchanged but they communicate their properties to the *hypostasis*—thus, Christ can act as both God and a man at the same time. For example in passage [JD 4], a sermon on the transfiguration of Christ, the “manner of the exchange” (the Greek form of the formalized Latin *communicatio idiomatum*) allows Christ as a man to act as God while also as God to act as a man.

Nevertheless, John does move *perichōrēsis* into *theologia* in two other texts. This advance decidedly distinguishes John from Maximus, and may be the first cases of Trinitarian *perichōrēsis* in the Patristic record; nevertheless, John has not yet subordinated his Christological use to that in *theologia*. These two texts are in John’s *Contra Jacobitas* [JD 11] and his *De recta sententia liber* [JD 18]. But finally in the *De fide contra Nestorianos* [JD 13] and the *Contra Acephalos* [JD 6] two passages addressed to the same East and West Syrian interlocutors, John clearly subordinates *oikonomia* to *theologia*.⁵⁸⁷ These two passages clearly claim that a dyophysite

⁵⁸⁶ See Kotter, v, 436-459.

⁵⁸⁷ *Aceph.* is as *Jacob.* also an anti-miaphysite polemic. Usually taken to be indicative of certain Egyptian miaphysites, Michael the Syrian indicates that these held influence among West Syrians as well, although this may be a fine point. It suffices that *Aceph.* as anti-miaphysite seems to be an advance on *Jacob.* On Egyptian miaphysite influence north of Syria, see Chabot ed., (1901, 1899-1910), 493.

Christology results from a properly understood *theologia*, and it is this usage that fully anticipates the use in the *Expositio fidei*, consequently I give them both in full.

Passage [JD 6]:

ὥσπερ γὰρ ἐπὶ τῆς ἁγίας τριάδος αἱ τρεῖς ὑποστάσεις ἀδιαρέτως ἅμα καὶ ἀσυγχύτως ἦνῶνται—ἀδιαρέτως μὲν διὰ τε τὸ μοναδικὸν τῆς φύσεως καὶ τὴν ἐν ἀλλήλαις ἀσύγχυτον περιχώρησιν, ἀσυγχύτως δὲ διὰ τὴν ὑποστατικὴν διαφορὰν ἥτοι τὸν τῆς ὑπάρξεως τρόπον, τὸ ἀγέννητόν φημι καὶ τὸ γεννητόν καὶ τὸ ἐκπορευτόν—καὶ ὁ ἀριθμὸς τῶν ὑποστάσεων οὐκ εἰσάγει διαίρεσιν, **οὕτω καὶ** ἐπὶ τῆς τοῦ θεοῦ λόγου σαρκώσεως αἱ δύο φύσεις ἀδιαρέτως ἅμα καὶ ἀσυγχύτως ἦνῶνται—ἀδιαρέτως μὲν διὰ τε τὸ μοναδικὸν τῆς ὑποστάσεως καὶ τὴν ἐν ἀλλήλαις τῶν φύσεων ἀσύγχυτον περιχώρησιν, ἀσυγχύτως δὲ διὰ τὴν οὐσιώδη διαφορὰν, τὸ κτιστὸν λέγω καὶ τὸ ἄκτιστον, τὸ θνητὸν καὶ τὸ ἀθάνατον, τὸ περιγραφτὸν καὶ ἀπερίγραφτον καὶ τὰ τοιαῦτα—καὶ ὁ ἀριθμὸς τῶν φύσεων οὐκ εἰσάγει διαίρεσιν.

Aceph., 4.10-21⁵⁸⁸

JUST AS in the holy Trinity, the three *Hypostases* are at the same time united without division or confusion – “without division,” because of both the oneness of the nature and the unconfused mutual interpenetration, and “without confusion,” because of the hypostatic difference or the mode of being (I mean the unbegotten, begotten and the procession) – and the number of the *Hypostases* does not lead to division, and SO ALSO in the incarnation of the Word of God, the two natures are at the same time united both without division or confusion – “without division,” because of both the oneness of the *hypostasis* and the unconfused mutual interpenetration of the natures, and “without confusion,” because of the essential difference (I mean the created and uncreated, the mortal and immortal, the circumscribed and uncircumscribed, and things like these) – and the number of the natures does not lead to division.⁵⁸⁹

Passage [JD 13]:

Ὡσπερ ἐπὶ τῆς ἁγίας τριάδος αἱ τρεῖς ὑποστάσεις διὰ τὴν φυσικὴν ταυτότητα καὶ τὴν ἐν ἀλλήλαις περιχώρησιν εἰς θεὸς εἰσὶ τε καὶ λέγονται, **οὕτως** ἐπὶ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ αἱ δύο φύσεις διὰ τὴν ὑποστατικὴν ταυτότητα καὶ τὴν ἐν ἀλλήλαις περιχώρησιν εἰς υἱὸς εἰσὶ· τὸ γὰρ υἱὸς ὑποστάσεώς ἐστι καὶ οὐ φύσεως.

JUST AS in the holy Trinity, the three *Hypostases* are called and are one God, because of both their identity of nature and their mutual interpenetration, SO in our Lord, Jesus Christ, the two natures are called and are one Son, because of both their identity of *hypostasis* and their mutual interpenetration, for the term “Son” is of the *hypostasis* and not the nature.⁵⁹¹

⁵⁸⁸ See Kotter, iv, 412-413.

⁵⁸⁹ Translation and emphasis mine.

Fides, 36.1-5⁵⁹⁰

In Passage [JD 6] John finally coordinates *oikonomia* as a function of *theologia*, contravening the West Syrian position, and in Passage [JD 13] using the same rhetorical structure John’s argument contravenes the East Syrian position. Here John has not only extended Maximus with Trinitarian *perichōrēsis* but he has consciously subordinated his Christological *perichōrēsis* directly to his Trinitarian *perichōrēsis* in a coordinated rhetorical structure. He does this by updating Maximus while essentially hiding him within Gregory of Nazianzus, as the universal authority accepted by all his interlocutors and who first employed the term, in order to address his non-Chalcedonian interlocutors, whether West or East Syrian.⁵⁹² In these two passages John clearly makes the *oikonomia* mirror *theologia* in a simple but subtle rhetoric. It is important to note that both of these works are revisions to previous works, which do not use *perichōrēsis* in this manner.⁵⁹³ But, why does John revise his polemic by extending Maximus in this way, what purpose is worth the risk of contaminating the uncreated-created divide?

⁵⁹¹ Translation and emphasis mine.

⁵⁹⁰ See Kotter, iv, 249.

⁵⁹² Chalcedonians in Syro-Palestine were divided over the acceptance of the third council of Constantinople (680–1). M. Jankowiak exploring the development of monotheletism in the Greek evidence argues that dyotheletism is actually a younger sibling to monotheletism, which was exploited as a unionist option because it already existed in some form in Greater Syria in Marek Jankowiak (2013), “The Invention of Dyotheletism”, *Studia Patristica* 63: 335–42, 342. And, on the Chalcedonian split in Syria over Constantinople III into ‘Maronites’ and ‘Melkites’ see Palmer (1993), xxx, 25–6, 29, 81. For a brief summary of this material as related to John of Damascus see Marie-France Auzépy (2015), “From Palestine to Constantinople (Eighth–Ninth Centuries): Stephen the Sabaite and John of Damascus” in *Languages and Cultures of Eastern Christianity: Greek*, ed. Scott. F. Johnson (Aldershot: Ashgate Variorum), 399–442, 414–5. An excellent introduction to the persistence of monenergism and monotheletism in Syria can be found in Jack Tannous (2014), “In Search of Monotheletism”, *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 68: 29–67. Tannous contends this persistence may be a function of the relationship between *lex orandi* and *lex credendi*, i.e. that worship practice influenced belief.

⁵⁹³ The two miaphysite polemical works appear targeted to two different groups, the longer *Jacob*. at the West Syrians and the short *Aceph*. at the Egyptians (although there were supporters of this position in Syria as well), but the two contra East Syrian polemical works appear to be early and simple (*Nestor*.) and later and complex (*Fides*) editions of (possibly at base) the same work.

Before analyzing that question below, there is another interesting contrast between John and Maximus. John's polemical work *On the Two Wills in Christ* (abbr. *Volunt.*) does not employ *perichōrēsis*, even though it is arguably John's longest polemical piece and is known in two (slightly different) recensions, thus showing that it has probably been edited, perhaps by John himself.⁵⁹⁴ There is no indication of when or for whom it was written, and the argument is clearly informed by Maximus without naming him.

Nevertheless it appears to follow a pattern.

The argument is developed from scripture and the Fathers with possible reliance on *Dial.* and *Instit.* but this could also be reliance on the sources from which John would draft these works. Rather than targeting a specific audience, here John is variously contra all major interlocutors, East and West Syrian and Maronite even if the Maronites seem most apropos. Thus, the lack of *perichōrēsis* and the lack of his coordinated parallel structure contra both East and West Syrians noted above suggests this treatise was written prior to the development of these features of John's theological argument. Further, the treatise seems unaware of resurgent monothelite policy under Philippicus (r. 711–3), given John's outspoken response to imperial iconoclasm, it seems reasonable to conclude this treatise was prior to that period.

Perusing the apparatus and the text of *Volunt.* it becomes clear that John is not quoting from the *Dial.* or the *Instit.* so much as sharing material with *Rect.*, his confession of faith for repentant Maronites, and the *Jacob.*, which is contra the West Syrians, while relying mostly on scriptural and patristic argumentation. This seems to be a pattern with John. In one set of texts he focuses on scripture and patristic argumentation and in another related set he shifts to more philosophic argumentation. For example, V.

⁵⁹⁴ See Kotter, iv, 177-189. Sections 4-8 are given in two columns. See also Louth (2002), 167. Only the *Manich.* exceeds it in length.

Kontouma notices this very tendency when comparing two related works contra the East Syrians: *Nest.* (scriptural and patristic argument) and *Fides* (much more philosophical).⁵⁹⁵

This total lack of *perichōrēsis* in *Volunt.* is in stark contrast to John’s dogmatic statements on the two wills in *Expos.* In the *Expos.* John coordinates wills and operations just as he has previously coordinated the natures using precisely the same ‘coordinated’ rhetorical structure we saw above. Just as the Trinitarian Persons interpenetrate, so too do the natures, and now just as the natures, so too the wills and operations interpenetrate, but not yet here in *Volunt.*; we must wait for *Expos.* 59. This is especially odd because John has adopted Maximus’ Christology and his use of *perichōrēsis*, so its lack in the one particularly Maximian work on the two wills suggests John’s adoption of *perichōrēsis* at all is quite stunning, and suggests a catalyst.

Further, in *Volunt.* the Dionysian theandric energy is discussed twice but in neither case is *perichōrēsis* used to explain the meaning of this important phrase, but both times it is discussed in his *Expos.* it is in terms of a *perichōrēsis* of the natures.⁵⁹⁶ Further, in both discussions of the theandric energy *perichōrēsis* has become integral to its explanation. The following two passages provide examples of John’s explanation of the wills and energies as well as his interpretation of theandric energy using *perichōrēsis* and his by now well tested rhetorical structure.

Passage [JD 30]:

Ὡςπερ γὰρ τὰς φύσεις ἡνωμένας
γινώσκομεν καὶ τὴν ἐν ἀλλήλαις ἐχούσας
περιχώρησιν καὶ τὴν τούτων διαφορὰν
οὐκ ἀρνούμεθα, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἀριθμοῦμεν καὶ

For JUST AS we acknowledge that the
natures have united and that they have
their interpenetration in one another and
not denying their difference, but we also

⁵⁹⁵ Kontouma (2015b), 39.

⁵⁹⁶ *Volunt.* 42.31 and 44.1. See Kotter, iv, 228-229. The comparison passages in *Expos.* are given below.

ἀδιαρέτους αὐτὰς γινώσκομεν, οὕτω καὶ
τῶν θελημάτων καὶ τῶν ἐνεργειῶν καὶ τὸ
συναφὲς γινώσκομεν καὶ τὸ

διάφορον ἐπιγινώσκομεν καὶ ἀριθμοῦμεν
καὶ διαίρεσιν οὐκ εἰσάγομεν.

Expos. 59.45-49⁵⁹⁷

number and acknowledge them indivisible,
SO ALSO we acknowledge the connection
of the operations and wills and we
acknowledge the difference and we
number without also introducing
difference.

Passage [JD 32]:

Ὁ μακάριος Διονύσιος «καινὴν τινα
θεανδρικήν ἐνέργειαν» φήσας τὸν
Χριστὸν «ἡμῖν πεπολιτευμένον», οὐκ
ἀναιρῶν τὰς φυσικὰς ἐνεργείας μίαν
ἐνέργειαν ἐκ τε τῆς ἀνθρωπίνης καὶ τῆς
θείας γεγενημένην φησίν—οὕτω γὰρ ἂν
καὶ μίαν φύσιν εἴποιμεν καινὴν, ἐκ θείας
τε καὶ ἀνθρωπίνης φύσεως γεγενημένην·
«ὧν γὰρ ἡ ἐνέργεια μία, τούτων καὶ ἡ
οὐσία μία» κατὰ τοὺς ἁγίους πατέρας—,
ἀλλὰ θέλων δεῖξαι τὸν καινὸν καὶ
ἀπόρρητον τρόπον τῆς τῶν φυσικῶν τοῦ
Χριστοῦ ἐνεργειῶν ἐκφάνσεως τῷ
ἀπορρήτῳ τρόπῳ τῆς εἰς ἄλληλα τῶν
Χριστοῦ φύσεων περιχωρήσεως
προσφόρως καὶ τὴν κατὰ ἄνθρωπον αὐτοῦ
πολιτείαν ξένην καὶ παράδοξον καὶ τῇ
φύσει τῶν ὄντων ἄγνωστον καὶ τὸν
τρόπον τῆς κατὰ τὴν ἀπόρρητον ἔνωσιν
ἀντιδόσεως·

....

Ὡςπερ γὰρ τῶν φύσεων τὴν ἔνωσιν καὶ
τὴν

φυσικὴν διαφορὰν ἐπιστάμεθα, οὕτω καὶ
τῶν φυσικῶν θελημάτων τε καὶ

ἐνεργειῶν.

Expos. 63.1-12, 17-19⁵⁹⁸

When the blessed Dionysius said that
Christ performed for us “a certain new
theandric energy,” he was not removing
the natural operations, saying there has
come about one operation from both the
human and divine—for so then we might
say one new nature has come about from
both divine and human nature. “For those
things of one operation, there is also one
essence,” according to the holy fathers—,
rather he wanted to show suitably the new
and mysterious manner of the
manifestation of the natural operations of
Christ in the mysterious manner of the
interpenetration of the natures of Christ
into one another and the strange and
remarkable life he lived as a man and as
the nature which is unknowable and the
manner of the exchange according to the
mysterious union.

....

JUST AS we have known the union and
the natural difference of the natures, SO
ALSO [we have known] both the natural
operations and wills.

⁵⁹⁷ See Kotter, ii, 146.

⁵⁹⁸ See Kotter, ii, 160-61.

From these two passages it is clear that John has advanced beyond his usage in *Volunt.*, but more importantly he has gone beyond Maximus, whose scholion on Dionysius’ theandric energy was looked at above [MC 10]. Maximus in two places acknowledges the *antidosis*, i.e. the *communicatio idiomatum*, but although explicit regarding the natural operations he only at best implies the wills, so John has couched his polemic in terms of a simplified but extended Maximus clarifying his position by explaining that within the theandric energy the *antidosis* or *communicatio* of the union of the natures encompasses both the united operations and wills. He can now offer the Chalcedonian dyothelite monks a uniform rhetoric that in one simple conceptual formula contravenes Maronites as well as West and East Syrians. Using *perichōrēsis* and a simple rhetorical structure: “Ὡςπερ . . . οὕτω καὶ, he has equipped monks for debate with any of their primary interlocutors.

Further, he has avoided fancy rhetorical features and opted instead for a biblical formula. Whether he has it from Paul is difficult to say, but clearly John’s formula looks just like Paul’s in Rom 5:18-19 for example: “Therefore just as (ἄρα οὖν ὥς) one man’s trespass led to condemnation for all, so also (οὕτως καὶ) one man’s act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all. For just as (ὥςπερ γὰρ) by the one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners, so also (οὕτως καὶ) by the one man’s obedience the many will be made righteous.” Thus, John’s presentation was catechetical in its biblical ease avoiding charges of rhetorical esoterica or pagan philosophy, while offering a uniform rhetoric of persuasion serviceable for monks in debate against any of their primary interlocutors.

Having compared John’s use of *perichōrēsis* to that of Maximus, below I will analyze John’s overall approach in terms of his polemic as a response to his local interlocutors, and then treat the development of *perichōrēsis* in his polemic and note any implications.

Analysis

Both John’s interlocutors, West and East Syrian, had argued against the Chalcedonians that *oikonomia* mirrored *theologia*, arguing that their position was “a logical deduction from the doctrine of the Trinity,”⁵⁹⁹ essentially claiming that the Nicene *homoousios* of the Godhead (a unitary *theologia*) required a unitary *oikonomia*. This is related to how the uncreated-created divide is handled and the West and East Syrians handled it somewhat differently. For the West Syrians, who followed Cyril of Alexandria as interpreted by Severus of Antioch, this resulted in a divine-human Christ of one nature in hypostatic union—the divinity as second Person of the Trinity assumed the attributes of humanity without change—for the East Syrians, on the other hand, following Theodore of Mopsuestia the uncreated Christ must be distinct from the created Jesus to avoid confusing or mixing the uncreated divine nature and the created human nature, resulting in two distinct natures—and so *hypostases* because *hypostasis* and *physis* remained synonymous—in prosopic union.

Thus, J. Pelikan highlights that while the East Syrians affirmed Nicaea, they rejected as incoherent a hypostatic union.⁶⁰⁰ Further, Pelikan singles out Jacob of Edessa (640-708), who followed Severus of Antioch and was a contemporary of John of Damascus, as emblematic of West Syrians and who argued that the *homoousios* of Nicaea “was proof that the one incarnate Logos was the proper subject of all Christological

⁵⁹⁹ W. H. C. Frend (1972), *The Rise of the Monophysite Movement: Chapters in the Histories of the Church in the Fifth and Sixth Centuries* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 288.

⁶⁰⁰ Jaroslav Pelikan (1977), *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine*, vol. 2, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press), 39-41.

predications.”⁶⁰¹ Consequently, both West and East Syrians confessed the Nicene *homoousios*, but both considered its language sacrosanct such that it held a generative principle that a unitary *theologia* required a unitary *oikonomia*; they just had different ways of respecting the uncreated-created divide.

Further, West and East Syrians, argues S. Brock, rejected the Council of Chalcedon (451)—other reasons, political and ecclesial, notwithstanding—because of terminological differences that had for them rendered Chalcedon's Definition incoherent. I would suggest that these terminological differences arose in part because of their different treatment of the Nicene Creed noted above. For example, Brock cites the East Syrian Catholicos Iso'yarb II (628–46) against the Chalcedonians: “their terminology cannot stand up, as Nature and Scripture testify: for in these, many *qnome* [=hypostasis in Syriac] can be found in a single ‘nature’, but that there should be various ‘natures’ in a single *qnome* has never been the case and has not been heard of.”⁶⁰² Thus, Brock highlights that for the East Syrians, “if you speak of two natures, this necessarily implies two *qnome* [=hypostases].” This explains why they opted for a prosopic union, since two distinct natures required two *hypostases*.

The West Syrians, Brock continues, understand the terminology in a similar manner but start from a different assumption: “Severus [of Antioch] makes the same sort of point, but taking as his starting point the one *hypostasis*: if you speak of one *hypostasis*, this implies one nature.”⁶⁰³ This explains, on the other hand, why they opted for one nature, because they had a prior commitment to Cyril's (singular) hypostatic union.

⁶⁰¹ Pelikan, (1977), 52.

⁶⁰² Sebastian Brock (1972), “The ‘Nestorian’ Church: A Lamentable Misnomer” in *The Church of the East: Life and Thought*, ed. J. F. Coakley and K. Parry (Manchester: University Library of Manchester): 23-35, 24.

⁶⁰³ Ibid, 25. The ‘one *hypostasis*’ and the subsequent ‘one nature’ are allusions to the union by *hypostasis* (or hypostatic union) and ‘*mia physis*’ of Cyril of Alexandria respectively, which were central concepts for Severus of Antioch and the West Syrian miaphysites he represented.

Consequently, both West and East Syrians, although accepting the Council of Nicaea and the distinction between *ousia* (as the common divinity) from *hypostasis* (as the particular Persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit) in the Godhead, did not maintain this distinction outside the Nicene Creed. Consequently, for West and East Syrians *ousia* and *hypostasis* remained synonyms with overlapping semantic ranges, which had consequences for related terms.

Chalcedonians, however, had adopted this bifurcation of synonyms in what scholars would come to call the 'Cappadocian Settlement' not only in the Creed, but as a generative principle that applied in both *theologia* and the *oikonomia*. This would give rise to what some scholars call the 'Chalcedonian Logic' which was the specific application of this principle to the language of Christology. Thus, the Chalcedonian Definition would yield a Christ, "acknowledged in Two Natures (*phyesin*) . . . concurring into One Prosopon and One Hypostasis; not . . . divided into Two *Prosopa*, but One and the Selfsame Son . . ."⁶⁰⁴ The Definition separates nature (*physis*) from *prosopon* and *hypostasis*. This implies that nature (*physis*) is to be associated with *ousia* but not *hypostasis* just as in the Creed and now also in the *oikonomia* as Incarnation.

This is precisely what East Syrian Catholicos Iso'yarb II complained, "many hypostases can be found in a single nature," but not vice-versa, as "Nature and Scripture testify". Thus, when the East Syrians (and the West Syrians were the same) treated the Creed in terms of 'Nature' they meant the common notions universally accepted, which in late antiquity meant the Aristotelian notions of species and individuals. That is, a species (a particular *ousia*) was present in its many individuals (each particular *hypostasis*). Thus,

⁶⁰⁴ T. Herbert Bindley and F. W. Green, eds. (1950), *The Oecumenical Documents of the Faith*, (4th rev. edn.; London: Methuen), 193 (Greek), 235 (English).

they took the divine *ousia* to be generic,⁶⁰⁵ and that the divine Persons or *hypostases*, were the particulars. John does not disagree with this, for example in his *Instit.*, he states: “each species is one nature, such as all men are one nature,” and “Each man is a *hypostasis* different from the remaining men, and each ox is a *hypostasis* and each angel is a *hypostasis*.”⁶⁰⁶ In spite of this common ground, however, John still disagreed with both his West and East Syrian interlocutors by accepting the asymmetry of *physis* and *hypostasis* outside the Creed. For John, however, this also had implications for the relationship of *theologia* to *oikonomia*. The East and West Syrians had argued that *oikonomia* mirrored *theologia*, and thus a unitary *theologia* required a unitary Christ. They just differed on how to treat this in terms of the uncreated-created divide and their mutual desire to keep the Divinity untainted.

I propose that John structured his argument so that his Christology would also follow logically from his Trinitarianism just as his Syrian interlocutors had, thus he agrees that creation mimics or reveals the Creator, and so he agrees that the *oikonomia* mirrors *theologia*. For John, however, this held an entirely different emphasis. For John, *theologia* was just as unitary as it was for his interlocutors, but rather than mirroring a unitary *theologia* solely in terms of this unitary-ness—realized in either West Syrian hypostatic or East Syrian prosopic union both protecting the uniqueness of each nature based on a prior commitment to a largely Aristotelian notion of Nature as the common intellectual property of late antiquity—the Incarnation for John actually mirrored the Trinitarianism of the Creed, i.e. not just *theologia*, but the *revealed theologia*. John

⁶⁰⁵ Some like John Philoponus would take the Aristotelian implications to the extreme and thus posit three concrete particulars (the divine essence is individuated and no longer common in each *hypostasis*) in the Godhead, leading to charges of tritheism by his own miaphysite party, both West Syrian and Egyptian. On this see Lang (2001). For discussion of the wider tendency even among Chalcedonians to see the *ousia* as generic following the common tenets of a widely influential Aristotelianism in late antiquity, see Prestige (1964), 265f.

⁶⁰⁶ *Instit.*, 1.16-17, 2.4-6. See Kotter, i, 21.

himself found corroboration in scripture for (Aristotelian) Nature as commonly understood, recounting the Genesis creation account in terms of genus and species.⁶⁰⁷ For example, “All things, however many came to be by one command of God, are of one genus, as for example God commanded that there be fish, and there came into being many different [kinds of] fish. All fish are of one genus, but each of the different fishes is a species.”⁶⁰⁸ But, this commitment to Nature manifest in a unitary *theologia*, was properly subordinated to scripture by recognizing that the *oikonomia* revealed a triune *theologia* of Father, Son, and Spirit.

For John this resulted in a parallel rhetorical structure: the : Ὡςπερ . . . οὕτω καὶ , which I have often translated “Just as . . . so also,” emphasized in my translations. In my view, John is attempting to provide a biblical rhetoric (down register if you will) that is easily reproducible by catechumens and/or monks training to hold their own in debate. Thus, the revealed Trinitarian *theologia* of the Nicene Creed reveals for John a *perichōrēsis* of the *Hypostases*, which results in and logically requires a *perichōrēsis* of the two natures in the Incarnation. This is of course for John in keeping with the Chalcedonian Definition, but he is clearly moving the dialog back to Nicaea, hiding the extended Maximian *perichōrēsis* in the authority of Gregory of Nazianzus and invoking Nicaea to engage his interlocutors on common ground. Thus, this clever if over-simple rhetorical structure allowed John to interpret the Creed to contravene both sets of interlocutors, while affirming Chalcedon, and later tying in Maximus’ dyotheletism with the same structure for an anti-Maronite rhetoric in the *Expos*.

This may seem speculative to some as recent scholarship has focused so much attention on “After Chalcedon” this and “After Chalcedon” that. Shifting the debate back to

⁶⁰⁷ *Instit.* 7 “On Genus and Species”. See also Ables (2015).

⁶⁰⁸ *Instit.* 7.63-66. See Kotter, i, 25.

Nicaea, however, is probably not as revolutionary as it might seem. The Chalcedonian Definition itself situates itself and the theological dialog at that time in terms of Nicaea. The very next sentence beyond that quoted above (“acknowledged in Two Natures”) is quite telling in this regard: “even as from the beginning the prophets have taught concerning Him, and as the Lord Jesus Christ Himself hath taught us, and as the Symbol [i.e. the Nicene Creed] of the Fathers hath handed down to us.” After this the entire final section lauds Nicaea, decries any change to the Creed, and specifies that it is the sole arbiter and entry to the faith for any who should desire. Thus, Nicaea as an interpretive lens remains central to the late antique theological program and Christological debate even if Chalcedon is the proximate cause fomenting sectarian disagreement (and so much scholarship).

John's rhetoric turned the argument from a unitary *theologia* on its head, without actually disagreeing with it, claiming his interlocutors fundamentally misunderstood the proper emphasis of the Nicene *theologia*. Although it was indeed a unity and simple, nevertheless God revealed himself as Triune. One aim of Nicaea was certainly to preserve monotheism, but a concomitant aim was to declare the deity of Christ in the most absolute terms. The result was not just the preservation of monotheism but the opening of a door previously unknown. The one God had revealed himself as Triune, thus opening the door to the notion of shared being. John more than his interlocutors caught a glimpse of this. Where Maximus had speculated that mutual interpenetration characterized all aspects of reality, John realized this had implications for the Divine Persons, whose intra-trinitarian relations are thus the paradigm for the interpenetration of not just God and Nature in the *oikonomia* conceived broadly, but also in the natures of the God-Man, Jesus Christ in the *oikonomia* conceived most specifically. Thus, *oikonomia* does mirror *theologia*, just not in the way his interlocutors claimed. They

were not wrong so much as they lacked the vision of Maximus and John. Therefore, just as the three Divine Persons mutually interpenetrated one another, so also the natures of Christ interpenetrated one another. Thus, a 'perichoretic' *theologia* required a 'perichoretic' (or dyophysite) *oikonomia*. John simplifies the Maximian presentation while crafting a more palatable polemic that would be more useful to Chalcedonian monks standing toe to toe with interlocutors in the Anastasis daily. He does this with an artful rhetorical structure that relies on Maximus without naming him, may be bible-based, yet goes conceptually beyond Maximus, contravening not only the monothelite interlocutors of Maximus, but both East and West Syrians. John crossed the uncreated-created divide to show just how the Maximian *perichōrēsis* was properly seen as sourced from uncreated *theologia* and thus providing the blue-print(s) (*logos/logoi*) not just for God's providential presence in all things (*oikonomia* broadly) but particularly in the Incarnation (*oikonomia* narrowly conceived). Consequently, John was the first to transfer the term into *theologia* as an interpretation of and consequent on the Nicene *homoousios*.

The Implications of Development

The difference between the liturgical sermons [JD 4] and [JD 5] with the two quoted passages, that contra East Syrian [JD 6] and contra West Syrian [JD 13], where John first coordinates his Christological *perichōrēsis* with his Trinitarian *perichōrēsis* is telling. The sermons show John adopting the Maximian Christological *perichōrēsis* and the other two show John extending this into *theologia* introducing Trinitarian *perichōrēsis* clearly going beyond any use of Maximus. The use in the sermons may be very early, perhaps soon after John entered the Anastasis, because he would likely be tasked to draft sermons soon after entry given his rhetorical and poetic skills. In fact,

A. Louth remarks, “all the extant homilies of the Damascene were preached on particular liturgical occasions.”⁶⁰⁹ Thus, it may be significant that although theologically rich none of John’s extant sermons preserve a case of Trinitarian *perichōrēsis*, suggesting that these Christological uses may preserve very early use.

Further, regarding the two Trinitarian cases quoted, I noted that these were in texts contra interlocutors John had also addressed in other works, but in which he introduced Trinitarian *perichōrēsis* but not yet coordinated it with the *oikonomia*, thus it seems to me that given the significance of this change in usage it is indicative of conceptual and theological advance. If this holds then the following temporal relationships between the texts are probable.

	Maximian (earlier)	Trinitarian	Coordinated (later)
Liturgical	<i>Transfig.</i> 2.49 [JD 4] <i>Sabbat.</i> 18.10 [JD 5]		
Maronite		<i>Rect.</i> PG 94, 1424AB [JD 18]	
West Syrian		<i>Jacob.</i> 78.38 [JD 11]	<i>Aceph.</i> 4.12 [JD 6]
East Syrian			<i>Fides</i> 36.2 [JD 13]

Figure 10 – Temporal relationships based on use of *perichōrēsis* in John’s corpus

There are additional reasons for suggesting development between the two pair of polemical works. Both *Jacob.* and *Rect.* are written either at the behest of Peter, bishop of Damascus in the case of *Jacob.* or for someone under his jurisdiction (*Rect.* appears to be for a Maronite convert).⁶¹⁰ It seems to me that the longer John was in Jerusalem the less likely he would write on someone else’s behalf excepting the patriarch, John V. In fact, in *Rect.* he writes, “O noblest of the Fathers and most holy Chief Shepherd of the shepherds. . . . I shall become your subordinate to command. . . . I know the ties between us are strained because of me, but I have obeyed because if you loosed upon the earth, out of heaven it shall be loosed. See, your subject is here, ready and

⁶⁰⁹ Louth (2002), 231.

⁶¹⁰ Based on the addressees of the works. See Kontouma (2015b), 26-27.

willing.”⁶¹¹ If this is written to/for Peter perhaps John's new role and a shifting of the leadership to the Anastasis has strained relations with those who remain in Damascus. In any case, this is an important witness to John's recognition of the Maronites as a monothelite Chalcedonian sub-party, which requires a confession of faith upon repentance. Further, the *Jacob.* arguments are mostly from scripture and it is one of the few works with a florilegium attached. Further, the *Jacob.* contains John's only disparaging remark about Aristotle. Thus, it was likely it was written before he drafted and taught the *Dial.* Taken with the apparent conceptual advance in his use of *perichōrēsis*, this additional evidence argues for an early date prior to John stepping up his philosophic game as it were. The pattern in John's thought noted above, where some works make more use of arguments from scripture and the Fathers and other related works make less relying more on logic exploiting the *Dial.*, may be a principle that can be exploited to help date his works in relation to each other.

Based on this observation, I suggest two working assumptions: 1) John's use of *perichōrēsis* advances and 2) early works depend on simple arguments based on scripture and patristic authorities while later rely more on his philosophic works. If this is sustained and the above temporal positioning of the six texts in the figure hold, then it seems worthwhile to extend this method to the other polemical works.

The *Manich.* does not employ *perichōrēsis* and uses simple arguments from scripture and the Fathers, thus it is probably early. Because it addresses none of the primary interlocutors directly, but in addressing Providence, predestination and good and evil it may act as a sort of theological resume for John, thus it may have been written while in

⁶¹¹ Translation mine. *Rect.* PG 94, col. 1421 A (from the *prooimion*).

Damascus, serving to bring John's theological talent to the attention of the Chalcedonian leadership.

Contra the East Syrians are the two polemical works: *Nest.* and *Fides.* The *Nest.* does not employ *perichōrēsis* and uses simple arguments from scriptural and patristic authorities, thus it too appears to be early. The *Fides* is a complete revision which makes use of John's philosophic works and both *perichōrēsis* and the coordinated rhetorical formula so it would be later than the *Nest.*

Finally, the *Trisag.* also does not employ *perichōrēsis* but makes heavy use of scripture and patristic authorities. Kotter and V. Kontouma state that *Trisag.* was written after John V's death, thus after 735.⁶¹² V. Kontouma argues that this best fits the "chaos that likely erupted at the patriarch's death," and "a climate of instability and infighting amongst the Chalcedonians of Palestine . . ."⁶¹³ However, its focus on scriptural and patristic authorities suggest an earlier date. I would argue that the chaos Kontouma notes is not that after John V's death, but that of the move into the Anastasis in the first place. After a significant vacancy and a virtual split between the dyothelite and monothelite Chalcedonians, a new patriarch would have his work cut out to bring order. The *Trisag.* is addressed to the archimandrite of the Jordan, thus he has authority over Chalcedonian monasteries in that area, so he is not challenging John after the death of the patriarch, as though this divergent liturgical practice had been ongoing for the thirty year reign of John V, but he is writing at the beginning inquiring what practice to enforce. Further, it would be a very strange reversal for John to draft the *Trisag.* without any reference to Trinitarian *perichōrēsis* much less his most mature form of argument, and yet hold extensive and repeated discussion regarding the three divine

⁶¹² Kotter, iv, 292. Kontouma (2015b), 24-25.

⁶¹³ Ibid.

hypostases being one God. Further, it makes sense very early because John's father was known to enforce his party's version of the Trisagion in Damascus and other cities, thus it was likely a 'hot button' topic for John's party. Further, because the Maronites and West Syrians utilized the lengthened Trisagion, addressing this issue as soon as they entered the Anastasis would have been formative for liturgical practice at all the holy sites and Judean monasteries. The *Trisag.* even includes short passages on the appropriate forms of troparion, thus the argument is not only theological but keeps the actual liturgy in view. Thus, I provisionally date the *Trisag.* relative to other works that do not make use of *perichōrēsis*.

Having outlined the relative dating of the eight polemical works, based on the development of John's overall argumentative strategy and his developing use of *perichōrēsis*, I can propose a matrix relating these eight polemical works, showing the relationship to the *Transfig.*, *Sabbat.*, *Dial.*, *Instit.*, *Expos.*, and the *Rect.* Basically at some point John's argumentative strategy shifts and he relies less on scripture and patristic authorities and more on his philosophic works. I suspect the initial works were somewhat successful at consolidating control of the Anastasis and the holy sites, but that they soon floundered against the superior education of the West and East Syrian monks. The West Syrians in particular were perhaps the most difficult, as Jacob of Edessa was translating the *Categories* into Syriac in this same period. Further, another potential catalyst may have been the resurgent monotheletism with the policy changes of Philippicus (r. 711–13).

Whatever the case, I would like to propose a fuller table extending that above and correcting the provisional partial date-list given in an earlier chapter:

Other	Maronites	W Syrians	E Syrians	Events	<i>perichōrēsis</i>
<i>Manich.</i>				Damascus (< 705)	None
	<i>Trisag.</i>			Anastasis (> 705)	None
	<i>Volunt.</i>		<i>Nest.</i>		
<i>Sabbat.</i>					Christological
<i>Transfig.</i>					Christological
<i>Instit.</i>					
<i>Dial.</i>	<i>Rect.</i>				Trinitarian
		<i>Jacob.</i>			Trinitarian
				Philippicus (711-713)	
		<i>Aceph.</i>	<i>Fides</i>		Coordinated
<i>Expos.</i>	<i>Expos. 59</i>				Coordinated+
<i>Imag. I-III</i>				Iconoclasm (c. 730)	
<i>Sarac. [Db]</i>				John V († 735)	

Figure 11 – Date-List of polemical works based on the development of *perichōrēsis*

There are a couple final points to make regarding this matrix. If I am correct in thinking that the initial slate of publications ran out of steam after the consolidation of the patriarchate, John then began work on the *Dial.* in earnest giving rise to Trinitarian *perichōrēsis* in *Rect.* and *Jacob.* as he thought through the issues probably raised in debate with the West Syrians in particular given their somewhat more advanced philosophic awareness. Further, if resurgent monotheletism was indeed a catalyst to a reappropriation of Maximus and increased philosophical acumen, then *Expos. 59* appears to benefit as well as the now coordinated presentation of Trinitarian and Christological *perichōrēsis* in reworked polemic for the West and East Syrians respectively (*Aceph.* and *Fides*). Without more information it is difficult to date these works, and the relative dating I am suggesting must be provisional based primarily on the advance of only one theological concept even if arguably John’s most important constructive theological contribution. They all seem redolent of the early reestablished patriarchate to me, however, this itself is a function of the circumstantial case I have made for the foment leading up to and resulting from the reestablishment. John’s use of *perichōrēsis* does seem to advance through five distinct phases: from none, to

Christological, to Trinitarian, to coordinated, to folding in the wills and energies, but even if this is sustainable it is a meager basis for relative dating much less a date-list. Nevertheless, I would suggest it is a solid basis upon which to start. The data must be assessed, a model proposed, and subsequently investigated. Looking for other forms of theological development sans externally verifiable historical contacts (preferred for dating) would continue to at least order the works of John's corpus relative to each other.

The Purpose of Perichōrēsis in the Polemic of John of Damascus

Although Arab policy appeared to favor anti-Chalcedonians as Byzantine prophylactic in Syria and Egypt, nevertheless, they allowed the reestablishment of the Jerusalem Patriarchate in 705. We can tell that John of Damascus exploited an elite education in the service of persuasive rhetoric from his texts, and I have argued that this was in the service of patriarchal policy in the wake of the reestablishment of the patriarchate especially in an initial period of consolidation as John V made his authority felt, thus, first equipping Chalcedonian monks for debate in the Anastasis, but second also normalizing the liturgy and catechetical curriculum in the Judean monasteries. Maximus the Confessor was difficult for many to understand, but John of Damascus restated him in simplified terms, making him relevant to average monks in theological debate through a developing rhetoric of *perichōrēsis*, attempting to reconcile the Maronites while staving off the well educated West and East Syrians with a creative and adaptive theological argument.

John limited Maximian *perichōrēsis* to the Incarnation while extending it into *theologia*. In his apparently early sermons (*Transfig.* and *Sabbat.*) his use of *perichōrēsis* was rudimentary, closely mirroring that of Maximus although adapted

(dropping Dionysian language), and simplified (restricting the *oikonomia* to the Incarnation). John, however, soon exported the Maximian use into *theologia* (*Rect.* and *Jacob.*) seeing its promise in Trinitarian theology. This was intended to simultaneously render Maximus more palatable to Chalcedonians wont to reject him (as in *Rect.* a statement of faith for a repentant Maronite) and to contravene anti-Chalcedonian Christological claims, especially among the West Syrians (as in *Jacob.*). At some point John decides that the materials he has access to, lists of definitions and compendia of various commentaries, is no longer adequate, no doubt feeling the pressure from West Syrians like Jacob of Edessa and George of the Arabs both of whom were involved in translating parts of Aristotle's *Organon* into Syriac while also developing a Syriac philosophic vocabulary. This was followed by a coordinated rhetoric that furthered the explanative power of John's theological rhetoric but it did not occur over night. It had developed with each subsequent text gradually becoming more sophisticated. Thus, John was more than a compiler with a genius for selection, but he grew as a theologian responding to challenges within his local environment.

John probably restricted his adoption from Maximus to Christological *perichōrēsis*, because that was authorized by Gregory of Nazianzus, whose authority was universally acknowledged, while ensuring his own subtle introduction of *perichōrēsis* into *theologia* avoided even indirect dependence on patristic authority to ensure his interlocutors could not contend his interpretation was at fault, not to mention the rhetorical suicide of naming Maximus directly, an authority for none but the dyothelites of his own party. Assiduous comparison to Patristic sources was common in order to validate quotations and context in florilegia, and since no one had previously used *perichōrēsis* of *theologia*, it would have been difficult to appeal to Patristic authority directly. Thus, John, avoiding the appearance of yet another neo-Chalcedonian

innovation, couched Trinitarian *perichōrēsis* directly in terms of Nicaea (and below I will show that it was also in biblical terms).⁶¹⁴

John couched his subtle introduction of *perichōrēsis* into *theologia* in terms of Nicaea because the last thing he needed was another neo-Chalcedonian innovation. For John the Nicene *homoousios* was meant not merely to preserve monotheism and thus a unitary *theologia*, but rather God as Triune, revealed in scripture as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and thus for John the *homoousios* preserved a perichoretic *theologia*. Therefore, rather than requiring 'one nature after the union' as the West Syrians did or a 'prosopic union' as the East Syrians, John argued that the *homoousios* of Nicaea preserved a perichoretic *theologia*, and would thus require a perichoretic *oikonomia*, i.e. a Chalcedonian (dyophysite and dyothelite) Christology.

Further, it seems surprising at first that John does not couch his coordinated presentation of Trinitarian *perichōrēsis* authorizing his Christological *perichōrēsis* in syllogistic terms, but rather uses the simple formula: Ὡςπερ . . . οὕτω καὶ. I would suggest that John is doing this for a couple of reasons. First, couching it in syllogistic would over complicate it for catechetical purposes. Dan King argues that logic was not coopted directly into theological argument, rather if it showed up at all it was as the consequence of adoption in non-polemical educational curricula, and Jack Tannous sees this adoption as resulting in the use of logic in theological debate and confessional identity formation.⁶¹⁵ King argues philosophy among sectarians was reduced to name dropping, that public debate was not won based on the accuracy of syllogism. This is true but beside the point. Tannous is right that philosophy influenced curricula and thus debate, however, 'dumbed down' it was it still played a crucial role. Scholars have

⁶¹⁴ See on this the section on *theologia* in *Expos.*, 8.253-65 and 14.11-6. Kotter, ii, 29, 42.

⁶¹⁵ See King (2013). And, Tannous (2013).

periodically complained of the simplistic use of philosophy made in John's polemic, which might be accurate if assessing John as a philosopher, but seems unreasonable to me if John is considered a theologian and his texts are considered 'proto-school' texts preparing monks with minimal training for debate.⁶¹⁶ However, there is a second, potentially more important reason. This is more intuition than proposition, but it seems to me relevant to John's aims if they are indeed cataphetical as I have argued.

John provides a clue to this as his favorite authority (Kotter's indexes of patristic authorities make this clear) on *theologia* is Dionysius, who articulated for John the distinction between kataphatic and apaphatic theology. John risked violating the uncreated-created divide by introducing *perichōrēsis* into *theologia*, but one of the ways he preserved their separation was by not resorting to Aristotelian syllogism in comparing them. It was widely held that the harmonization of Plato and Aristotle was predicated on the realization that Aristotle was for the 'earth below' and Plato for 'heaven above', so Aristotle's domain was the created realm, while Plato's was the uncreated realm of *theologia*. Thus, using syllogism to argue from *theologia* to the *oikonomia* would probably be seen as odd, raising 'red-flags'. Rather the proper way to view the relationship between the upper realm of *theologia* and the lower realm of the *oikonomia* was by analogy, because to use syllogism smacked of certainty and pride, whereas analogy allowed for mysticism and an apaphatic humility. Thus, just as the educated knew Aristotle was for the 'earth below' and Plato for 'heaven above', Christians taking these ideas over in reflection on Rom 1:20 agreed with the philosophic commonplace that effects should mirror their causes, and thus the earth

⁶¹⁶ I have already noted the philosopher, Richard Cross', analysis of John, who finds, "John's terminology is profligate, and carelessly used." Cross (2000), 97.

below should mirror the heavens above.⁶¹⁷ This is parallel to the apophatic gap between uncreated and created, which thus requires the humility of analogy rather than the certainty (arrogance) of syllogism, so John employed a simple biblical rhetoric that Paul had used to explain Christ’s role in salvation (Rom. 5) to relate *theologia* and *oikonomia*, arguing the former is perichoretic thus the later is best explained in the same terms. Thus, he could keep his argument cataphetical without getting too philosophically sophisticated, keeping in mind that expedience was a priority.

Training monks to ‘own’ the holy places as quickly as possible by holding their own in debate would be one goal of patriarchal policy consolidating control with a stop-gap educational objective. The polemical works conceived and executed in the service of patriarchal policy were quite possibly the proving ground of the dogmatic synthesis that John developed. Louth suggests that dating the *Expos.* is tied to when John became a monk, and its manuscript tradition indicates that it initially circulated as 150 chapters, a popular monastic format.⁶¹⁸ Further, Louth finds attractive V. Kontouma’s suggestion that the *Expos.* may be modeled on the Eucharistic prayers.⁶¹⁹ If these suggestions are right, the reestablished patriarchate, patriarchal policy and the liturgy of the Anastasis make an excellent location for the production of the *Expos.*⁶²⁰

In sum, the purpose of *perichōrēsis* in John’s polemic is to provide a uniform biblical rhetoric that encompasses all his primary interlocutors, Maronite, West and East Syrian

⁶¹⁷ Joseph Koterski (1999), “The Aristotelian Heritage of John of Damascus,” in Brendan Sweetman, ed., *The Failure of Modernism: The Cartesian Legacy and Contemporary Pluralism*, (The American Maritain Association), 58-71, 59.

⁶¹⁸ Andrew Louth (2003), “The Pege Gnoseos of St John Damascene: Its Date and Development,” in C. Dendrinos and J. Chrysostomides, eds., *Porphyrogenita: Essays on the History and Literature of Byzantium and the Latin East in Honour of Julian Chrysostomides*. (Ashgate), 335-40, 337-338.

⁶¹⁹ Louth (2002), 89n9.

⁶²⁰ On catechetical teaching aids in general and the influence of John V’s catechetical innovations on ninth century Constantinople in brief, see J. A. Munitiz (1988), “Catechetical Teaching-Aids in Byzantium,” *Kathegetria*. (Camberly, Surrey, UK: Porphyrogenitus), 69-83, 72.

showing that Nicaea still controls, but *theologia* reveals a triune God and this complexity is mirrored in the *oikonomia*; consequently, his Christology is perichoretic encompassing even the energies and wills of the two natures in Christ. The most likely provenance in my view for this progressive advancement is the reestablishment of the patriarchate, the consolidation of the holy places and the attendant liturgy, and the daily debate in the Anastasis between interlocutors. John's decisive theological program provided in this one constructive doctrine such a thorough synthesis of the Greek patristic authorities it was his theological vision that was passed on to Constantinople and the West.

Catachetical Coda

John's polemical works are of course prior to the *Expos.* which is considered a late and mature work.⁶²¹ Nevertheless, looking at John's use of *perichōrēsis* in the *Expos.* will bring into sharper relief his use in the polemical works. V. Kontouma has argued that John probably did not die leaving his works in an incomplete state, but that they were edited by someone else after his death.⁶²² Further, A. Louth has also argued that the full tri-partite form of the *Fount of Knowledge* (*Dial.*, *Haeres.*, and *Expos.*) was not John's original intention, rather he circulated it initially in 150 chapters (50 of the *Dial. brevior*, the original short version, and 100 of the *Expos.*). This 150 chapter version is well attested in the manuscript tradition and thus Louth suggests indicative of an early and wide circulation.⁶²³ Taken together these two points suggest that John developed the *Dial.* and *Expos.* for early circulation, which comports well with my contention that the context for its initial distribution was to the monasteries under the Jerusalem

⁶²¹ Although this must be seen in the light of Louth's contention that its dating is more contingent on when John became a monk than anything else, and thus a date early in John V's reign is possible.

⁶²² Kontouma (2015b), 30.

⁶²³ Louth (2003), 338.

Patriarchate as a catechetical, i.e. 'proto-school' text, meant to normalize the curriculum.⁶²⁴ This would not only be meant to provide a uniform Christology for monks in debate, but a uniform dyothelite Christology for those Chalcedonians still reluctant to accept Maximus.

I have already noted that it was in the *Expos.* that John folded into his formula the two wills and energies, thus finally making his presentation of *perichōrēsis* complete, contravening the Christology of all primary interlocutors, Maronite, West and East Syrian. However, in the *Expos.* John extends his other interests as well. His polemical use of *perichōrēsis* is not just polemical, but John also employs *perichōrēsis* at the heart of his dogmatic theology. In the *Expos.* John employs *perichōrēsis* twenty-one times, four of which are Trinitarian; That is more than all the polemical occurrences combined, and matches the four previous Trinitarian polemical uses of *perichōrēsis*. More significantly though, John continues to deepen his presentation by adding more layers. First, however, it is important to note that John's very first occurrence in the *Expos.* of *perichōrēsis* (8.256) is of Trinitarian use and he squarely situates it in Nicene terms, naming both Sabellius and Arius whom his Trinitarian *perichōrēsis* contravenes. Thus, he continues to coordinate his use and presentation not only against modern interlocutors but against old bogies. This serves, however, to ensure John's theological presentation is situated in Nicene terms and not merely taken as another 'after Chalcedon' Chalcedonianism.

Therefore we do not speak of three gods, the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, but rather one God, the Holy Trinity, ascribing to one Cause the Son and the Spirit, neither by merging nor fusion according to the coalescence of Sabellius—for they are united, as we have declared, not by pouring together,

⁶²⁴ In a more recent essay A. Louth has found the *Expos.* looks like monastic "catechesis" born of Christian worship, which I suggest comports best with my contention that John is at work as a monk for monks (as Louth seems to suggest) but as a monk in the Anastasis with Christian pilgrimage in view as well as catechumens, whether monastic or not. See Louth (2007), 201-02.

but by cleaving to one another; and they interpenetrate one another apart from any coalescence and confusion—and neither by changing nor by dividing up the essence according to the division of Arius. For indivisible in things divided, if it must be said concisely, the Divinity just like three suns cleaving to one another without interval, being both one tempering and union of light. *Expos.* 8.258-67.

Second, not seen in the polemical use of *perichōrēsis*, in the *Expos.* John not only continues his use of analogy via his formula: Ὡςπερ . . . οὕτω καὶ, but couches *perichōrēsis* in the biblical “in-ness” language of the Gospel of John, essentially presenting *perichōrēsis* as an interpretation of John 14:10, which he quotes: “I am in the Father and the Father is in me.” This “in-ness” is explicitly noted six times in the gospel (10:38; 14:10, 11, 20; 17:21, and 23). In John’s four occurrences of Trinitarian *perichōrēsis* in the *Expos.*, he invokes John 14.10 in three of them.⁶²⁵ His third occurrence is without reference to John 14:10, because it is the crux passage in which he presents his coordinate Christological *perichōrēsis* as authorized by the analogy of Trinitarian *perichōrēsis*.⁶²⁶ Thus, as John’s philosophical reflection had given rise to his understanding of *perichōrēsis*, he continues to fold it into a biblical theology. Further, it is interesting to note that although John is careful to couch his theological speculation in biblical terms, neither is he shy about extending the biblical warrant. For example, the “in-ness” language of the gospel is confined to the relation of Father and Son, the Spirit having not yet been given is thus not mentioned in terms of the “in-ness” of Father and Son. However, in conjunction with the four occurrences of Trinitarian *perichōrēsis* in the *Expos.* after quoting John 14:10 at 8.256 (and again at 91.12), John

⁶²⁵ See *Expos.* 8.256, 14.14-15, 91.12; respectively see Kotter, ii, 29, 42, 212.

⁶²⁶ This question was raised in my MDiv thesis and a focus of my MSt Diss. and thus the core of the motivation for my study of the polemical works.

goes beyond the evangelist by explicitly stating in 14.14-15 that the Son and Father are in the Spirit and vice a versa.⁶²⁷

Third, there is one more aspect of John’s presentation of *perichōrēsis* in the *Expos.* worth mentioning, although this is also experimental, needing further research. In the passage quoted above the bit set off in the middle contra both Sabellius and Arius John says, “for they are united, as we have declared, not by pouring together, but by cleaving to one another; and they interpenetrate one another apart from any coalescence and confusion” (ἐνοῦνται γάρ, ὡς ἔφημεν, οὐχ ὥστε συγχεῖσθαι, ἀλλ’ ὥστε ἔχεσθαι ἀλλήλων· καὶ τὴν ἐν ἀλλήλαις περιχώρησιν ἔχουσι δίχα πάσης συναλοιφῆς καὶ συμφύσεως. *Expos.* 8.262-4). The word translated ‘cleaving’ is *exesthai* and the term *exousi* is superfluous (in English) and left untranslated.⁶²⁸ Both these terms are, however, from Greek *exo* or ‘to have’, thus a more grammatical translation may bring out a philosophic aspect of John’s rhetoric: “For they are united, as we have declared, not so as to be poured together, but so as to have one another, and having their interpenetration into one another without any coalescence and confusion.” I want to draw attention to John’s use of ‘having’. He makes the point in the extended quote (from 8.258-67 above) that the Son and the Spirit are from one Cause, meaning the Father. I think he is here (with his use of ‘having’) explicitly avoiding the introduction of another ‘relation’ between the Trinitarian Persons. This becomes more explicit in another passage:

Just as we confess one nature in the divinity, we affirm three actually existing Persons. We also declare all things, both of nature and being, simple, and we acknowledge the distinction between the Persons only in the three properties:

⁶²⁷ Υἱὸς γὰρ ἐν πατρὶ καὶ πνεύματι, καὶ πνεῦμα ἐν πατρὶ καὶ υἱῷ, καὶ πατὴρ ἐν υἱῷ καὶ πνεύματι, μηδεμιᾶς γινομένης συναλοιφῆς ἢ συμφύσεως ἢ συγχύσεως. “For the Son is in the Father and the Spirit, and the Spirit in the Father and the Son, and the Father is in the Son and the Spirit, [and] there is no confusion, mixing, or merging.” *Expos.* 14.14-15. Kotter, ii, 42.

⁶²⁸ This is my trans., but for example, Chase also leaves it out. Chase (1958), 187.

being uncaused and fatherhood, the being caused and sonship, and the being caused and proceeding. But, we understand that they are inseparable even indivisible from one another, not only having united but also interpenetrating one another without confusion, indeed having united without confusion (for they are three, if also united), while inseparably distinguished. For even if each has caused itself to subsist that is to say each Person is perfect and has its own personal property, indeed each possessed a different manner of being, besides they are united in both essence and natural properties, not to stand apart nor to go out from the Person of the Father, but they are one God even as it is said. *Expos.* 49.1-13

The Trinitarian relations were long agreed to be singular as John affirms. He states these in terms of the one Cause: “being uncaused and fatherhood, and being caused and sonship and being caused and proceeding.” The causal relations are another way of saying what he says elsewhere (see [JD 6] above): “I mean the unbegotten, begotten and the procession.”⁶²⁹ In these passages and others he is quite careful to say that the divine Hypostases ‘have’ their *perichōrēsis* in one another, either explicitly using ‘*exo*’ (as previously in *Expos.* 8) or indirectly through use of the aorist participle (as in the passage above), thus he is careful not to imply the addition of a new property either to the divine *Hypostases* here or elsewhere in Christological passages between the natures (as this would introducing a change to them). The Father, Son, and Spirit are related to each other as being unbegotten, begotten and proceeding respectively.

What John is doing (if he is ‘doing’ something) along the lines I have suggested is not entirely clear, although as indicated I suspect it has something to do with the nature of predication and not wanting to introducing another ‘relation’ but instead introducing a ‘having’ (which is also termed a ‘state’). Thus, it seems (sans further research beyond the scope of this project) that John is thinking in terms of state change, just as you can say certain things of Christ before the union, some after the union and others after the

⁶²⁹ Passage [JD 6] given above is of *Aceph.* 4:10-21 with trans. The quote is of *Aceph.* 4:13-14.

resurrection.⁶³⁰ Perhaps of significance he does use it explicitly in eight passages. Two of these are the same passage in the *Dial.* (both the short and long recensions), so he seems firm in keeping it. In this passage (these two passages) John is defining the union by composition, i.e. the sort of union he believes happens in the perichoretic union of the Trinitarian Persons in the one God or the two natures in the one Christ. John defines the union by composition by analogy to the union of body and soul. Being in the *Dial.*, defining a union by composition, and being retained in the longer recension, suggests that it is somewhat programmatic for John.⁶³¹ Here the soul 'has' its own body. There is a large literature on the soul and body in late antiquity, not to mention its use in Christological analogy, but space constraints prohibit investigation here.⁶³² Nevertheless, I suggest that John's use of 'having' in terms of his presentation of *perichōrēsis* could be a fertile research question.

Conclusion

In short, John has employed *perichōrēsis* from Maximus but in a modified and developing form over numerous polemical texts, culminating in a thorough dogmatic appropriation. He has made it simple to understand, while exporting it into *theologia*. He has couched it in biblical terms and situated it in terms of Nicene orthodoxy and not merely as polemic for Chalcedon. He may also be articulating it in terms of analogy rather than syllogism avoiding charges of sophistry (Aristotelianism), but on the other

⁶³⁰ John discusses this at length in *Expos.* 91.

⁶³¹ *Dial.* 48.106 *brevior* = 65.106 *fusior*. See Kotter, i, 136.

⁶³² Further, there is another possibility. Aristotle's top ten genera, his *Categories*, are substance, quantity, quality, relation, where, when, position, having, doing, or being-done-to. Barnes (1984), 1b25-2a4. These are known to John and repeated at *Dial.* 21 *brev.*=36 *fus.* Kotter, i, 104. For English see Chase (1958), 61. Space does not allow analysis, but it seems possible that John wanted to avoid 'relation' per se, as it admits of 'more or less' and is thus more ephemeral, and could then be perceived as introducing a property into the Godhead, whereas 'having' or state change, is more permanent suggesting an on/off quality. Thus, John may have considered it not a property but a state, i.e. a mode of being. I am not aware of any research on this aspect of John's use of *perichōrēsis*, and so whether John is engaging a specific Aristotelian category or not is an area for future research.

hand, he may be presenting it in terms of an appropriate Aristotelian 'category', i.e. as a certain class of predication from the *Categories*, that of 'having' explicitly avoiding the category of 'relation'. If this is accurate he seems to be consciously avoiding the possibility of predicating *perichōrēsis* as another 'relation' and thus avoiding the introduction of another property between the three divine *Hypostases* or even between the Christological natures, although admittedly these last two possibilities bear further research. My focus has been on showing John's developing presentation of *perichōrēsis* in his polemic, and I have argued that its development is indeed a function of his local context.



Conclusion

The primary aim of this study was to situate John of Damascus in his historical context and then treat one example from his theological program to see if his local context made a difference and whether John could thus be viewed as a constructive theologian rather than merely as a compiler within the Byzantine theological tradition. I found that his context did make a difference especially in his polemical works. The one example was his use of *perichōrēsis* in his theological polemic. By looking at his use of *perichōrēsis* I found that it developed in sophistication as John responded to patriarchal policy that no doubt mandated a response to certain primary local interlocutors. In short, I concluded that John is a constructive theologian responding to exigencies on the ground in his local context and thus, further study is warranted along these lines.

S. Griffith provided significant motivation for this study and this was encapsulated in the epigraph, integral to the preface and frontispiece maps, which framed this study. The epigraph quoting S. Griffith encouraged the consideration that John's interests were those of his local context and not Byzantium in which John never lived and whose interests were remote and ancillary to local concerns. A small part of the epigraph restates the heart of the presupposition that motivated and framed this study:

The most instructive feature in this connection, of St John's works taken altogether, is the fact that the overall pattern of his interests, as revealed especially by the particular adversaries and doctrines he is concerned to refute, demonstrates that his immediate theological and ecclesiastical near horizon was very much that of Jerusalem and the Christians in the world of Islam during his lifetime.

I chose to focus on the polemical works as they seemed most indicative of John's local concerns and thus his 'adversaries', being contingent on his context while contra

specific local interlocutors, whereas the usual focus on his dogmatic works has produced flat synthetic studies. These treat John in timeless terms more as a function of his reception history. They tended to flatten his entire oeuvre into a synthetic whole taking John as the epitome of the Greek fathers and thus finding him merely a compiler who said nothing new.

On the other hand, I chose to focus on his use of *perichōrēsis* in his polemical works not only because I thought they would be more redolent of local concerns, but also to counter the specific treatment of John in recent research. First, I find A. Louth's treatment of John in his 2002 monograph traditional but historically unsatisfactory and G. L. Prestige's treatment of *perichōrēsis* in John was predicated on the false premise that Ps Cyril was a source of John. Louth admits John's hagiography worthless for history and that he should be treated in context, but then proceeds to suggest that treating John in terms of his reception history is quite appropriate as it then comports better with Byzantine tradition. No doubt this greatly influenced the title: *St John Damascene – Tradition and Originality in Byzantine Theology*. Louth is writing about a saint in the tradition not a person who wrote theology in Palestine. This is not a problem except that Louth's treatment is too often read as history, thus conflating tradition and history in confessional terms that no longer leaves room for John as a historical person to emerge.⁶³³

Leonard Prestige's classic, *God in Patristic Thought*, remains influential, although important aspects of it are now known to be based on false premises. V. Kontouma in 1995 showed that the Pseudo-Cyril text, that Prestige took as the progenitor of the revolutionary Trinitarian *perichōrēsis*, was in fact a late compilation based on John of

⁶³³ There is nothing wrong with confessional readings; they are simply another form of history from a particular point of view. I want to suggest, however, that some read confessional history such that there is no longer room for other points of view, and this is to be avoided.

Damascus. Thus, John did not inherit *perichōrēsis* as Prestige assumed from a mysterious sixth century author but invented it himself. Further, Prestige was responsible for the research for most of the words related to the doctrine of God in Lampe's *Patristic Greek Lexicon*, including *perichōrēsis*. More recent research has shown that Prestige was wrong not only on the provenance but even regarding the definition of Christological *perichōrēsis*, nevertheless, his conclusions have been preserved in the *Lexicon* and thus remain an authority.

Consequently, treatment of *perichōrēsis* in John is timely because these recent studies either assume John inherited the term adding nothing or treat him in terms of his reception history rather than in terms of his local context. Thus, I chose to focus on John's polemical works as most indicative of John's response to his local context and interlocutors, and I selected *perichōrēsis* as a theological example in that context (a sort of 'control variable' if you will) to observe John's response to his local context measuring how he used the term with various interlocutors. Thus, my thesis was twofold. First, does situating John in his context matter to reading him as a theologian? Although past analysis has charged John with saying nothing new in general, in terms of *perichōrēsis*, in fact, he was thought to inherit the only significant development to dogma in late antiquity by an anonymous author (Ps. Cyril), i.e. the capstone Trinitarian term: *perichōrēsis*. Thus, no development in John's use of this term was expected or sought. Yet John only inherited the Maximian Christological use of the term; he himself transported it into his Trinitarianism. Why and on what terms did John do this? Thus second, my thesis question was, does situating John in his historical context matter to his development of Trinitarian *perichōrēsis* in his polemical works? This led to a fruitful study by which I was not disappointed.

Summary

I undertook in the first four chapters, *Part One: Historical Setting*, taking up the lion's share of this study, to place John in his local historical context. In *Part Two: Constructive Doctrine*, I looked at the development of *perichōrēsis* and John's exploitation of it in his polemic as a function of that context. In sum, I concluded that treating John in context does matter, and his use of *perichōrēsis* does develop as a function of that context.

Previous scholarship was mixed on when John left Damascus and where he went once he left. This mixed 'consensus' if that is the right word, had John leaving Damascus somewhere about 726 or earlier in 717 based on either iconoclasm or persecution respectively. John supposedly then went to the Mar Saba monastery in the Judean Desert. In the first chapter I deconstructed John's sainthood in order to understand how better to treat his hagiography as a source of historical data. This enabled me to make some sense of John's hagiography by distinguishing the earlier from the later material. A number of late works were found to be derivative and thus useless for adding new historical information. Finding almost all biographers relied nearly exclusively on the 'official' Greek *Life* (BHG 884), which painted John in legendary terms as an idealized Byzantine monk, I concluded that John's biographers had over relied on this material. Further, this made relying on his hagiography as a basis to reconstruct John's timeline impossible, requiring that John's timeline be decoupled from Byzantine Iconoclasm. Byzantine Iconoclasm was simply too late and not of sufficient interest among local interlocutors in the early eighth century to affect either John's decision to leave office and Damascus or to affect his theological program, excepting of course the very late orations *On Images* I-III.

In the second chapter, I painted a picture from the chroniclers regarding John and his family, answering two crucial questions, when and why did John leave Damascus? Basically I found that John was neither a conspirator nor a confessor as his hagiography contended, rather this resulted from Constantinopolitan propaganda, whether iconoclast or iconophile. Further, I concluded that John was unlikely to leave office under persecution. The usual reasons posed, purging Christians from office or changing the language from Greek to Arabic, were sporadic and repeated throughout the Umayyad period even into the Abbasid period, and these 'edicts' seldom resulted in identifiable or lasting change. Historically these look very similar to Christian 'edicts' against paganism, now known to be only sporadically enforced in the frontier. Further, John's close family relationship with the Umayyad elites, especially the family of 'Abd al-Malik, make it very unlikely he would be forced out of office. Further, there is even the possibility that John knew Arabic as he was of either Arab or Syrian extraction and seems to have been raised at court and initially educated with several of 'Abd al-Malik's children (four of whom would become caliph during John's life-time). I collected the meager evidence for John's family's wealth, power, and connections and conclude these all point to John leaving office not under duress but of his own free will. V. Kontouma has suggested there was nothing to hold John in Damascus after the death of 'Abd al-Malik and thus he probably followed John V out of loyalty to Jerusalem, where he was allowed to reestablish the patriarchate. She bases this on a few internal statements by John about John V, but offers no real constructive reasoning for this claim nor any analysis of its implications.

Tacitly accepting Kontouma's 705 date as a hypothesis, in the third chapter I focused on where John went and why, proposing a radical new thesis that explains the concomitant loss of the cathedral of John the Baptist in Damascus and the

reestablishment of the Jerusalem Patriarchate as a *quid pro quo* resulting from a secret negotiation in which John played a central role, thus going beyond Kontouma's suggestion of mere loyalty to John V with a speculative thesis. Although no explanation as far as I am aware has been advanced to explain the loss of both cathedral and the reestablishment of the patriarchate as events much less as concomitant events, I argue the two events must be tied together, because they both result in the apparent transferal of the Chalcedonian leadership in Damascus to Jerusalem with the reestablishment of the patriarchate, vacant for well over half a century. The Arabs had forbidden a pro-Byzantine patriarch in all their territory, thus the reestablishment of the patriarchate in Jerusalem is a significant event that begs explanation. To continue to ignore the concomitant nature of these events even with the dearth of evidence just does not make sense even if the constructive model I have proposed must remain provisional and speculative. Further, to propose as Kontouma and others do that John left out of piety or loyalty fails to do justice to the value of his administrative position to both his family and the Chalcedonian leadership. Thus, there must have been a significant agreement that assured John and his family that his assets and influence would not come to nothing at such a change.

In chapter four I return to straightforward analysis of John's polemical works to validate whether such interlocutors were indeed detectable in the early eighth century, thus circumstantially validating that if John was in Jerusalem after 705 then the polemical works would make sense in that context. Further, I found that the confessional competitors involve elite levels of education raising the bar for the Jerusalem Patriarchate. I found that John's polemical works do make sense as 'proto-school' texts which were intended to prepare monks to hold their own in debate with their interlocutors, and that John's polemic was most likely in the service of explicit

patriarchal policy meant to address these concerns. Nevertheless, this remains conjectural as there is very little evidence regarding the provenance of these works. However, differentiating John's polemical works based on a basic principle—early works rely on scriptural and patristic authorities and later on philosophic argument—allowed me to provisionally date them in general terms, i.e. in relation to one another. Basically John's works can be shown to employ arguments of two basic types: those in which scriptural and patristic authorities dominate and those in which more philosophic concerns dominate. John cannot be shown to develop an anti-philosophy trope, and he developed his own logic handbook, the *Dial.* Thus works showing decided philosophic argument are taken to be later, i.e. after the *Dial.*, and the others, which rely on scriptural and patristic authorities, are taken to be earlier. This principle can be seen at work in texts against the same interlocutors, thus showing one to be earlier than the other as for example the *Nest.* and *Fides.* This set the stage for analysis of John's theological use of the term *perichōrēsis*.

In *Part Two: Constructive Doctrine* I shift from historical to theological analysis. In the penultimate chapter of this thesis, chapter five, I looked at the genesis of *perichōrēsis* in Gregory of Nazianzus and its development in Maximus the Confessor. In chapter six, the final chapter, I looked at John of Damascus and the use of *perichōrēsis* in his polemical works and finally, just briefly at his dogmatic use of the term in order to throw the polemical use into starker relief, while turning up additional avenues for future research.

Maximus the Confessor developed a compelling theological vision by extending the one theological use of *perichōrēsis* in Gregory of Nazianzus, encompassing cosmology, Christology and soteriology. This vision included the deployment of *perichōrēsis* in

terms of participation, whether cosmological, i.e. in God's on-going creative act or soteriological in every creature's participation in God. But, this is only possible through Christ's Incarnation and the attendant deification of his human nature by its *perichōrēsis* with the divine nature.

Following the critics of Prestige, I have demonstrated that both Gregory and Maximus meant interpenetration from the start, but contra these critics, his use must be seen as eclectic and not specifically Stoic. Gregory and Maximus' use of *perichōrēsis* is uniquely theologically with elements drawn from Neoplatonism, Stoicism, and Aristotelianism. Thus, continuing to identify a Stoic background is reductionist and should be abandoned.

Further, it is clear that *perichōrēsis* is not a technical term for either Gregory or Maximus. Gregory's four uses (three general and one theological) are too few to mount a case for technical use. Maximus was, moreover, never challenged or questioned regarding its use, never defined the term formally, or used it in the definitions of other key terms. Further, he varied the constructions in which it was used, and never used it in a conceptually abbreviated manner as is common with technical terms. It must be concluded, therefore, that for Maximus *perichōrēsis*, however useful or even central, is not a theological technical term.

Finally, the combative Maximus, sure of his orthodoxy, never sought to justify his position, only to polemicize its correctness in ever increasing detail and depth.

However, he excluded the Trinity from this perichoretic vision, content to defend his Chalcedonian stand-point on the centrality of Christ in two natures, thus *perichōrēsis* was a matter for *oikonomia* at all levels but it was completely absent for Maximus from *theologia*.

Then in the final chapter I turned to John's use of *perichōrēsis* in his polemical works. Having set up the historical background in Part One, finding that the background was the reestablishment of the Jerusalem Patriarchate from 705, and then in Part Two, chapter five finding that the theological background of the term *perichōrēsis* was mostly in Maximus the Confessor, who used it widely of the *oikonomia* but did not use it at all in *theologia*. I found in chapter six that John employed *perichōrēsis* from Maximus but in a modified form which he then developed further.

John's party was split by Maximus and challenged by external interlocutors both West and East Syrian. The West Syrians rejected the Council of Chalcedon (451), following Severus of Antioch, while the East Syrians, themselves rejected by the council of Ephesus (431), rejected the Council of Chalcedon following the Christology of Theodore of Mopsuestia. A third party, the Maronites, accepted Chalcedon, but rejected Maximus and his dyothelite Christology. Thus, John's party was the minority Chalcedonian party following Maximus based in Damascus, and challenged by both internal and external interlocutors.

John simplified the Maximian vision, reducing his initial use of *perichōrēsis* to the *oikonomia* as Incarnation proper, dropping the cosmological and attenuating the soteriological. John extends *perichōrēsis*, however, into *theologia*, where Maximus had not used it. John's polemical works show a progression of use, thus John's thought appears to have developed. First, probably prior to his polemical works, John employs *perichōrēsis* in Maximian terms Christologically in two liturgical sermons. Then it shows up in his polemical works, where he subsequently introduces it into his trinitarianism. John's trinitarian use starts simple and isolated but then modulates into a coordinated rhetorical structure in which he uses the *perichōrēsis* of the Divine Persons

in *theologia* to authorize Christological *perichōrēsis* of the divine and human natures in Christ. Further, he has avoided fancy rhetorical features and opted instead for a biblical formula that mirrors Paul's rhetoric in Romans 5: Ὡςπερ . . . οὕτω καὶ, ("Just as . . . so also,"). "For just as (ὥςπερ γὰρ) by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so also (οὕτως καὶ) by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous (Rom 5:19)." Thus, John's presentation was catechetical in its biblical ease avoiding more complicated rhetorical patterns his monks were probably not capable of deploying with confidence, while offering a uniform rhetoric serviceable for monks in debate against any of their primary interlocutors.

This coordinated rhetorical structure shows that John agrees with his interlocutors that the creation mirrors the Creator, thus the *oikonomia*, *theologia*, but John differs from his interlocutors in that in the *oikonomia theologia* is revealed as Father, Son and Spirit, thus the Incarnation cannot reflect a unitary *theologia*, but must reflect a perichoretic Trinitarian *theologia*, resulting in a perichoretic dyophysite Christology rather than a Christology based on a unitary *theologia*, whether West or East Syrian in make-up. John here is re-centering the debate in Nicene terms moving it away from the purely Chalcedonian terminological impasse with which his interlocutors were mired. Thus John's use of *perichōrēsis* progresses from simple reduced Maximian Christological use, to Trinitarian, to a coordinated polemic, which contravenes both external interlocutors West and East Syrian.

Then I briefly contrast this with his use in his dogmatic work *Expos. (On the Orthodox Faith)*. John there couched *perichōrēsis* in biblical terms using John 14:10 "I am in the Father and the Father is in me" as biblical warrant for his use of *perichōrēsis* and continues to deepen it in terms of Nicene orthodoxy contrasting Sabellius and Arius in

terms of it, while also deepening its pro-Chalcedonian use by explaining the Maximian dyotheletism in terms of it, thus here even the wills and energies are perichoretic, and John now contravenes even internal Maronite interlocutors. Thus, all three primary interlocutors are handled with the same rhetorical presentation of *perichōrēsis*.

Implications

Clearly there is very little historical evidence on which to write John's biography.

Thus, I have avoided such, and answered only specific questions about John from the evidence even if circumstantial: When and why did John leave Damascus? And, where did he go? I answer these questions placing John in Jerusalem in 705 as a crucial player in the reestablishment of the Jerusalem Patriarchate, and thus most likely implementing patriarchal policy in order to establish control of the patriarchate and the churches and monasteries in its orbit. Placing John in Jerusalem rather than Mar Saba provides a vibrant context for his polemic that the gestation period of humiliation and non-writing of the Greek *Life* simply does not explain.

Further, placing John in Jerusalem in 705 and making him integral to the ensuing disruption of the status quo and subsequent consolidation suggests that his sermons, polemic, philosophic and dogmatic works were all drafted prior to about 720. Thus, it seems to me that the two big catalysts are the initial reestablishment of the patriarchate with its inevitable shake-up and the only other significant event in the period, the resurgence of monotheletism in 711–13.

West Syrian chronicler Michael the Syrian records that the Maronites split from the Chalcedonians in c. 727, while curiously, Theophanes first reports in 728/9 on John, "And in Damascus of Syria there shone forth in his life and discourse John ... a most excellent teacher." Thus, if internal friction between Chalcedonians in the 720s was

sufficient to come to the attention of the West Syrian chronicler, I argued that resurgent monotheletism in the early 710s would have been a significant catalyst as division in John's party would have flared-up. Louth judges *On the Two Wills in Christ* one of John's most popular polemics given its wide manuscript distribution.⁶³⁴ Further, I have dated it early because it contains no *perichōrēsis* yet engages topics that John did use *perichōrēsis* for elsewhere. Thus, resurgent monotheletism in 711–13 could have been the catalyst that inspired John to cover the wills and operations in the *Expos.* in terms of *perichōrēsis*, which suggests an earlier date for the *Expos.* than previously advanced.

Further, by following the progression of John's thought on *perichōrēsis* I was able to propose a chart outlining this development suggesting date-relationships between the polemical works and some of the sermons, philosophic and dogmatic works. Much more work needs to be done on this prior to a date-list being proposed, but this seems to me to be a constructive step in that direction.

John may have been an encyclopediast, a compiler, may have constructed florilegia and compendia, but nevertheless, this is now no reason to assert him less than interesting and unimportant for the development of theology as his use of *perichōrēsis* shows ample creative application on the ground in polemic as he engaged local interlocutors both internal and external in his historical context.



⁶³⁴ Louth (2002), 166.

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