THE MARONITES IN HISTORY

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Matti Moosa

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To the memory of my beloved Father

ISHAQ MOOSA
(d. 1960)

A token of filial love

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Preface

WHO are the Maronites and what is their importance to the existence of the Lebanese Republic? The present crisis in Lebanon has raised questions about the Maronites and the role they play in the Lebanese community. The Maronites are Christians who by confession are Uniates or followers of the Roman Catholic Church. But what is the origin of the Maronite Church and community? What is the cultural heritage of this community, and how does it relate to other groups in the Middle East?

This book attempts to place the history of the Maronites in historical perspective. Maronites today suffer from a serious identity problem. They have not been able to decide whether they are descendants of an ancient people called the Marada (Mardaites) or Arabs or of Syriac-Aramaic stock. Unless the Maronites solve this identity problem their conflicts with other minority religious groups in Lebanon will never be remedied. In essence, this book is a study and analysis of the origin of the Maronites, indeed of their whole historical heritage, an examination based on ancient and modern sources written in many languages, many of which are still in manuscript form.

By faith, liturgy, rite, religious books, and heritage, the Maronites were of Syrian Orthodox (Jacobite) origin until the very end of the sixteenth century when they became ultramontane followers of the Roman Catholic Church. At this time, specifically under the Amir Fakhr al-Din

II al-Maʿni, Maronite patriarchs began to play a distinctive role in the internal affairs of Lebanon. In the latter part of the eighteenth century the Maronite Church and community gained increased influence when some of the ruling Shihabi Amirs were converted to Christianity and joined the Maronite Church. From the middle of the nineteenth century until the time of the late Patriarch Bulus Maʿushi (d. 1975), the temporal power of the Maronite patriarchs was manifested in the political affairs of Lebanon. Maronite patriarchs voiced their opinions on almost every issue. They came to be considered not only as the patriarchs and heads of their community but the "Patriarchs of Lebanon." Thus, to the Maronites, Lebanon and Maronitism became synonymous. Furthermore, the Maronites began to consider themselves as a unique community which by religion and culture was distinct from a predominantly Muslim Arab world. It is this concept of the exclusiveness of the Maronite Community which is the primary motive for the Maronites' quest for a distinct identity.

I believe that this history of the Maronite Church and community should be of great interest to church historians, theologians, and general readers who are concerned about the affairs of the Maronites and their relation to the present crisis in Lebanon. This volume provides background information on this crisis and serves as a guide for those interested in learning about the history of this unique Christian community in the Middle East.

I hope that this history of the Maronite Church will fill a gap in the history of the Eastern churches, a history little known in the Western world, and an area of historical research which cries for further cultivation.

I am grateful to Mary Ann Rosenfeld for editing this work. I am indebted to my colleagues Dr. Paul Peterson, Vice-President for Academic Affairs, Rev. Dr. Gerard Steckler, and Dr. Michael DiMaio for translating several Latin and Greek passages.

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Spring 1986 MATTI MOOSA

Introduction

ON EXAMINING the history of such Eastern Christian communities as the Nestorian, Chaldean, the Syrian Orthodox of Antioch, Syrian Catholic, Coptic, Armenian Orthodox, Rum Orthodox, and the Uniate Roman Catholic communities, the historian finds at his command a great number of primary and secondary sources in Greek, Latin, Syriac, Armenian, Coptic, Ethiopian, and Arabic. These sources deal with the different aspects of the history of these communities and their churches: dogma, unity and disunity, patriarchy, ritual, and liturgy. This is not so in the case of the Maronite community. Instead, there is a dearth of religious and historical literature except for the passing remarks made by non-Maronite historians who associate the Maronites with Monothelitism (the belief that in the Incarnation the two natures of Christ, the divine and the human, were united in one will and one energy) or their contact with the Crusaders. Both lay and ecclesiastical historians find to their bewilderment that prior to the seventeenth century, the Maronites had no written ecclesiastical history and no church historian of the like of Theodoret of Cyrus, Evagrius, Theophanes, Dionysius Tal Mahri, Michael the Great (the Syrian), or Bar Hebraeus. The one exception is a world history in Arabic by an early tenth-century writer known as Qays. This work began with the creation and ended with the reign of the Abbasid Caliph al-Muktafi (d. 908). The only writer to mention this history is the tenth-century historian Abu al-Hasan al-Mas'udi in his

Kitab al-Tanbih wa al-Ishraf (Book of Admonition and Supervision) (Cairo, 1938), p. 132. It is unfortunate that Qays's history is no longer extant. Not until the seventeenth century do we find for the first time an ecclesiastical and temporal history of the Maronites and their church. It is entitled *Tarikh al-Ta'ifa al-Maruniyya (History of the Maronite Denomination)* and was written by the Maronite Patriarch Istefan al-Duwayhi (d. 1704). Originally written in Garshuni (Arabic in Syriac letters), this history was edited by Rashid al-Khuri al-Shartuni and published in Beirut in 1890.

There are some Maronite sources written prior to the seventeenth century, but they do not specifically deal with the history of the Maronite community. Two of these date back to the eleventh century: *Kitab al-Huda* (Nomocanon), and the *Ten Treatises* by Tuma, Maronite bishop of Kfartab in north Syria. In essence, *al-Huda* deals with the rules of the Maronite Church, while the second source contains an apology for Monothelitism as a Maronite doctrine.

In the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries we find a Maronite apologetic, Jabra'il Ibn al-Qila'i (d. 1516), bishop of Nicosia, Cyprus, defending the "orthodoxy" of the Maronite Church against the charges of Monothelitism. What al-Qila'i meant by "orthodoxy" is the faith defined by the Council of Chalcedon (451) which became the faith of the Church of Rome. This faith emphasized that in the Incarnation the two natures of Christ, the divine and the human, were united in one person yet remained distinct after the union. This definition of the faith was rejected by the majority of church leaders in Syria and Egypt, who maintained that the logical outcome of the union of the two natures of Christ was not two distinct natures but One Incarnate Nature of the God Logos (the Word). Al-Qila'i's intention was to prove that the Maronite Church had always adhered to the faith of Chalcedon and that it had never deviated therefrom. In other words, al-Qila'i was the first Maronite in modern times to claim that the Maronite Church and the Church of Rome were of the same faith and that both were defenders of the Chalcedonian "orthodoxy." Al-Qila'i was also the first to write that Yuhanna (John) Marun, believed to have died in 707, was the first Maronite "Patriarch of Great Antioch"; he did so in his work entitled *Marun al-Tubani (Blessed Marun),* still in manuscript form (Vatican Garshuni MS. 640). Al-Qila'i provides information about the background of this John Marun, claiming him to be the son of Agathon and of Frankish origin. Later in the seventeenth century al-Duwayhi expands this story and goes a step further by making John Marun a nephew of Emperor Charlemagne. Al-Qila'i also wrote an ode in colloquial Lebanese Arabic enti-

tled *Madihat Kisrawan.* This ode is commonly referred to as the *Zajaliyya* because it is written in the Zajal meter, and some Maronites consider it a historical record of the Maronite Church from the fifth to the fifteenth centuries. While the *Zajaliyya* contains references to the Maronites and their church in the fifteenth century, it cannot be regarded as a record of the history of this church.

In 1584 a Maronite school was founded in Rome to educate Maronite young men in the Roman Catholic faith. Some graduates of this school began the practice of writing in Latin about the origin of the Maronites, their names, and their church. Notable among these were Jabra'il al-Sihyuni (Gabriel Sionita, d. 1648), Ibrahim al-Haqillani (Abraham Ecchellensis, d. 1664), and Murhij Ibn Nirun al-Bani (Faustus Nairon, d. 1711), who more than any other Maronite endeavored to explain the name and origin of the Maronites. He wrote two books: *Dissertatio de origine nomine et religione Maronitarum* (Rome, 1679), and *Evoplia fidei catholicae romanae historico-dogmatica* (Rome, 1694). But no Maronite has written so thoroughly and systematically about the history of the Maronite Church and community as Patriarch Istefan al-Duwayhi, considered the first Maronite historian in modern times.

While al-Qila'i defended the orthodoxy (meaning adherence to the faith defined by the Council of Chalcedon) of the Maronite Church, Faustus Nairon was the first to assert that the term "Maronite" derived from the name of a fifth-century ascetic named Marun. To be sure, fifth-century historian Theodoret of Cyrus in his *Religiosa Historia,* which treats the life story of ascetics in his time, provided a short biography of an ascetic named Marun, although he had not met him. Beginning with Nairon, Maronite writers found in the name of this Marun a solution to their identity problem. Other Maronites maintain that the term "Maronite" derived from a monastery in Syria Secunda (that part of Syria which at the end of the fourth century A.D. included the towns of Apamea, Epiphania, Arethusa, and Larissa), the Monastery of Marun, but they fail to substantiate that this monastery is the one they claim to be the source of their church and community. However, Maronites like al-Duwayhi, insist that their church and community have their origin in a monastery situated on al-Asi (Orontes) River near the city of Hama in Syria, that the monks of this monastery upheld the orthodox faith (defined by the Council of Chalcedon), and that they had never deviated from it, denying that the Maronites were at any time Monothelites. Although some Maronites accept the fact that the Maronites were Monothelites, they give their Monothelitism a rather peculiar interpreta-

tion to make it appear to be in harmony with the faith of Chalcedon. Of these we may mention Maronite Bishop Yusuf Deryan, who admitted to Maronite Monothelitism in his book *Lubab al-Barahin al-Jaliyya 'an Haqiqat Amr al-Ta'ifa al-Maruniyya* (n.p., 1911).

In support of their claim of having always been adherents to the faith of Chalcedon, Maronites use as a basis for their argument a letter written in 517 and signed by clergymen from Syria Secunda and by the abbot of the Monastery of Marun. This letter was sent to Pope Hormisda, and charged Severus, patriarch of Antioch (d. 538) and his associate Peter, bishop of Apamea, with the massacre of 350 monks. Maronites claim that the victims were from the Monastery of Marun and were killed en route to the shrine of Saint Simon the Stylite, where they were slain because of their adherence to the faith of Chalcedon, and cite other letters written and signed by clergymen from Syria Secunda (including abbots of the Monastery of Marun) which charge Severus of Antioch and his associates with additional crimes. These letters were submitted to the council which met in Constantinople in 536 to condemn Severus and his associates. In sum, Maronites avow that they have perpetually upheld the faith of Chalcedon and that, on the basis of their faith, they were always united with the Church of Rome. For this reason they attempt to discredit those historians—especially tenth-century Sa'id Ibn Batriq (Eutychius), Chalcedonian patriarch of Alexandria, and twelfth-century William of Tyre—who charged the Maronites with Monothelitism. Historical fact, however, reveals that the earliest evidence of adoption of Monothelitism by the monks of the Monastery of Marun was recorded by ninth-century Dionysius Tal Mahri, Syrian Orthodox patriarch of Antioch (d. 845). Tal Mahri dates the Monothelitism of these monks to the years 629-630, at which time the Byzantine Emperor Heraclius imposed Monothelitism on the people of Syria.

Maronites further maintain that their patriarchate is the original patriarchate of Antioch and that John Marun was their first patriarch. They unanimously affirm that in 686, after the death of Theophanes, Chalcedonian patriarch of Antioch, John Marun was chosen for this position. However, they differ over who chose John Marun to be patriarch. Some claim that he was chosen by a delegate of Pope Honorius (d. 638) who happened to be in Syria in the seventh century. Apparently, this delegate examined John Marun's faith and, after finding it orthodox (Chalcedonian), took him to Rome where Pope Honorius ordained him a patriarch in 686. Realizing that Honorius, who died in 638, could not have ordained John Marun a patriarch in 686, al-Duwayhi maintained that it was Pope Sergius, not Honorius, meant in this context and that

the copyist must have mistaken Honorius for Sergius. Others claim that John Marun was chosen patriarch by the Mardaites' bishops. But who are these Mardaites? Maronites were unanimous on these Mardaites or Marada being a warlike people employed by the Byzantine emperors in the seventh and eighth centuries against the Umayyad armies which made incursions into Lebanon. Maronites add that they are descendants of these Mardaites. In other words, the Mardaites and the Maronites are one and the same people. According to this interpretation, it was the bishops of the Mardaites (that is, the Maronites) who chose John Marun and ordained him patriarch of Antioch. This claim has been defended by every Maronite, including the celebrated Joseph Assemani (d. 1768) in the first volume of his *Bibliotheca Orientalis*, but most tenaciously by Bishop Yusuf al-Dibs (d. 1907) in his *al-Jamiʿ al-Mafussal fi Tarikh al-Mawarina al-Muʾassal (Comprehensive Collections of the Authentic History of the Maronites)* (Beirut, 1905).

A contemporary Maronite writer puts forth several additional claims. In his *Traikh al-Mawarina al-Dini wa al-Siyasi wa al-Hadari (The Religious, Political and Cultural History of the Maronites)* 1 (Beirut, 1970), Rev. Butrus Daww portrays St. Simon the Stylite as a "disciple" of the fifth-century ascetic Marun and calls him a "Valiant Maronite," and the "fountainhead of heroism in the Maronite nation." More than any other Maronite, Daww theorizes on the concept of the "Maronite Nation" and the Maronite patriarchate, giving the impression that the Maronites were the cornerstone of both asceticism and Syrian nationalism, as well as the foci of Christianity and the Church of Antioch in the East. He endorses all of the claims made by previous Maronites and exerts considerable effort to amplify them. Maronite claims have been challenged by clergymen of the Uniate (Roman Catholic) churches in the East since the eighteenth century, but none has attempted to refute Maronite claims so thoroughly as Bishop Clement Yusuf Dawud of the Syrian Roman Catholic Church. Dawud wrote a monograph in Latin to challenge Maronite claims of perpetual orthodoxy (adherence to the faith of Chalcedon). This led Bishop Yusuf al-Dibs to write a book entitled *Ruh al-Rudud fi Tafnid Zaʿm al-Khuri Dawud (Summa Confutationum Contra Assertiones Sacerdotis Joseph David)* (Beirut, 1871) published in both Arabic and Latin, to refute Dawud's objections. In turn, Dawud devoted an entire manuscript, *Kitab Jamiʿ al-Hujaj al-Rahina fi Ibtal Daʿawa al-Mawarina* (completed in Mosul, Iraq, in 1873) in refutation of Maronite claims. The manuscript was later published in Leipzig in 1908, with the French subtitle *Recueil de Documents et de Preuves Contre la Prétendue Orthodoxie Perpétuelle des Maronites.*

Although Dawud's work is the most comprehensive book written in the Arabic language in refutation of Maronite claims, the author neglects the most important Maronite claim, the Chalcedonian "orthodoxy" based on the letters signed by abbots of the Monastery of Marun which charge Severus, patriarch of Antioch, and Peter of Apamea with killing 350 monks. In only one place, however, and only in a footnote, Dawud mentions the letter of the clergymen from Syria Secunda to Pope Hormisda. He does so not to challenge the charge against Severus but only to demonstrate that the monks of the Monastery of Marun were using the Trisagion (the hymn of thrice holy, that is, Holy Thou art God, Holy Thou art Mighty, Holy Thou art Immortal, have mercy upon us), with the phrase "Thou who wast crucified for us," which the Church of Rome considers as "heretical." He concludes that the monks of Marun who used this phrase were not orthodox (Chalcedonians).

These, then, are the claims Maronites made to establish a legitimate foundation for their church and community. However, certain aspects of Maronite interpretation of history are open to question, particularly the claim that their church is "the Church of Antioch," the claim to Chalcedonian orthodoxy, and the identity of John Marun. Furthermore, due to political and communal reasons throughout their history, Maronite writers have endeavored to establish an organic tie with the Church of Rome which has led them to substantial historiographical revisionism and reinterpretation particularly in recent centuries. Such revisionism, in a communal sense, was also a quest for distinct identity. This quest by the Maronites for a distinct identity continues until this day.

I

Origin of the Term Maronite

THE TERM Maronite poses a problem of identity. Despite the fact that today in Lebanon and other parts of the world the name Maronite is applied to a large Christian denomination affiliated with the Church of Rome, since the fifteenth century this sect has endeavored to find a legitimate derivation as a separate entity from the rest of the Eastern churches. Several questions enter into the quest for identity: whether a church by this name existed from antiquity; whether its name was taken from an individual or monastery; and when and how this denomination became affiliated with the Church of Rome. Maronite writers have offered essays to consider these questions, but the simplest answers are often in conflict.

The eleventh-century Maronite writer Tuma (Thomas), bishop of Kfartab, in his *Ten Treatises,* states that the term Maronite derived from *Maran,* a Syriac term meaning "Our Lord Jesus Christ," and that *Maran* was the name of a monastery after which the Maronites were named.[1] This opinion is also held by Jabra'il Ibn al-Qila'i, Maronite bishop of Nicosia (d. 1516), whose belief was that the name Maronite was derived from the Syriac *Morio,* meaning Lord (Christ).[2] Maronite writer Murhij Nirun al-Bani (Faustus Nairon, d. 1711), however, was of the opinion that the term Maronite (in Syriac, *Moronoye*), as Tuma had believed, came from the Monastery of Marun named after a fifth-century ascetic, and became commonly applied to anyone who followed the faith of the

monks of the Monastery of Marun (which was also the affirmed faith of the Council of Chalcedon). He also points out that before the end of the seventh century the Maronites were called Mardaites or Marada but after that time were called Maronites.[3]

But no Maronite writer has attempted more carefully the explanation of the origin and derivation of the term Maronite than the Maronite Patriarch Istefan al-Duwayhi (d. 1704). He devoted two chapters to this subject in his history of the Maronites entitled *Tarikh al-Ta'ifa al-Maruniyya* (Beirut, 1890). Al-Duwayhi considered both the ideas of Maronite and non-Maronite sources and sifted the evidence offered by both. He discredited the claims of those who maintained that the Maronites were named after Marun, a fifth-century Syrian monk, and he rejected the statement of the tenth-century Malkite (Chalcedonian) patriarch of Alexandria, Sa'id Ibn Batriq (Eutychius d. 941), that the Maronites derived their name from a monk named Marun in the time of the Byzantine Emperor Maurice (582—602). This latter Marun was a Monothelite who, because he held that in Christ there was but one will and one voluntary operation, is considered a heretic by Maronites. He also gives good reason for rejecting the opinions of such Latin scholars as Baronius and such Maronites as al-Sihyuni (Gabriel Sionita, d. 1648), who believed that the Maronites were named after a town called Marun in the village of Antioch.[4] Perhaps al-Duwayhi was anxious to discredit this Marun for less than objective reasons since he is especially keen in his book to exonerate his own community and church from any taint of the Monothelite "heresy." At the same time he does not agree with al-Qila'i, who defended the opinion that the term Maronite derived from the Syriac term *Morio,* "The Lord." Al-Duwayhi holds that the monastery in Syria was named after Christ and that the Maronites took their name from this monastery.[5] Al-Duwayhi states, however, that the term *Morio* (Lord) is correct only insofar as it indicates the correctness of the faith of the Maronites. In other words, the Maronites and their monastery were so named because of their "orthodox" faith in terms of the formula defined by the Council of Chalcedon in 451, which states that the two natures of Christ, the divine and the human, were united in one person but remained separate in their union.[6] Al-Duwayhi also favors another opinion which is "in harmony with the tradition of the Maronite Church and approved by the Church of Rome as evidenced by the Maronite prayer books."[7]—an opinion advanced by al-Qila'i that the Maronites were named after the pious Marun, "Patriarch of Great Antioch." This is confusing, for al-Qila'i also writes that the Maronites

derived their name from the term *Morio,* the "Lord Christ," which indicates that their monastery was also known by this name. The confusion notwithstanding, if, by the monastery *"Morio,"* al-Qilaʿi was referring to the traditional Monastery of Marun, his allegation becomes the more incredible since historians accept the claim of some Maronites that this monastery was built in the fifth century on the river al-Asi (Orontes) in Syria, and the pious Marun who allegedly became the "first Patriarch" of the Maronites lived in the second half of the seventh century and died in 707. Moreover, al-Qilaʿi is wrong in calling this man, "Marun." We shall see that his fellow Maronites claim that their first patriarch was a monk at the Monastery of Marun, but his name was Yuhanna (John) and that he became the first patriarch of the Maronites in the early seventh century. He was called Marun after the name of the monastery.

In his *Bibliotheca Orientalis* (1, 507) celebrated Maronite writer Joseph Assemani notes that Istefan al-Duwayhi and Faustus Nairon claim that the Marada (Mardaites of Theophanes) were called Maronites in the year 694 because they followed John Marun, the "first Patriarch of the Maronites." A similar observation was made by the author of the Maronite book *al-Huda* (Nomocanon), who stated "the Maronite denomination is attributed to Marun Yuhanna [sic], the patriarch of great Antioch."[8] Assemani disputed these opinions and maintained that the Maronites were called by this name in the seventh century, not after Yuhanna Marun who became their "first Patriarch" in that century, but after the fifth-century ascetic, Saint Marun. He states: "The Lebanese dropped the name Mardaites and were called Maronites after Marun whose famous monastery was built near Hama. Their Patriarch Yuhanna [John] was also called after this monastery."[9]

From this statement we learn that before the seventh century the Maronites were called Mardaites named Maronites, and when they chose a monk named Yuhanna from the Monastery of Marun to be their patriarch, they dropped the name Mardaites and adopted the name Maronites. According to Assemani, the term "Maronite" did not indicate a well-defined group or community prior to the seventh century. Thus there is no difference between Assemani's opinion and that of al-Duwayhi and Faustus Nairon. In at least one important aspect—whether the Maronites were called by this name after a fifth-century saint, Marun, or after a monastery named after this saint, or after the seventh-century monk, Yuhanna Marun, as al-Duwayhi claims—the fact is that, according to Assemani, the Maronites were not known by this name before the seventh century, but were called Mardaites. These Mardaites

were not even originally a religious sect as were the Arians or the Nestorians, but rather a militant people who were employed by Byzantine rulers to fight the Arabs.

Another interesting theory is that of Bishop Yusuf al-Dibs (d. 1907), who tried to establish the term "Maronite" on a purely theological basis. He states that in the fifth century in Syria, when a growing number of "heretics" began to persecute the "Catholics," the disciples of Saint Marun defended the "Catholic" faith against its opponents. The result was that those who accepted the "Catholic" faith through the efforts of the disciples of Marun were "contemptuously called Maronites by their opponents who rejected the Catholic faith."[10]

What al-Dibs meant by the "Catholic" faith in this context is the formula "line" of the Church of Rome as well as that of those churches which accepted the councils' edicts. Al-Dibs's attempt to establish the origin of the Maronite Church and community on the basis of dogmatic disputes which divided the church into opposing camps contradicts the theory of al-Duwayhi and Assemani that the Maronites were called Mardaites before the seventh century, implying as it does that all the people of Lebanon were Maronites from the time of the fifth century. Further, according to al-Dibs, in the seventh century these Maronites rebelled against both the Arabs and the Byzantine Emperor Justinian II, Rhinotmetus (685–695). Because of this action, their enemies as well as their neighbors called them Marada, or Mardaites meaning "rebels."[11] Obviously, al-Duwayhi and Assemani affirm that from the fifth century the people of Lebanon were called Mardaites, but that this name was dropped in the seventh century and the name Maronite was adopted. Disputing this, al-Dibs claims that the Maronites were known by this name since the fifth century, but in the seventh century because of their rebellion they were referred to as Mardaites.[12]

From the foregoing we may deduce the following: some Maronite scholars have attempted to attribute the origin of the name of their church and community to at least two Maruns, one an early-fifth-century ascetic and saint, the other a late-seventh-century monk surnamed Yuhanna (John) Marun who became their first patriarch. They further claim that the Maronites were called Mardaites but dropped this name in the seventh century in favor of the name Maronites. Others claim that their name derives from a monastery named after the fifth-century Marun. Al-Dibs, on the other hand, believes that the Maronites were called by this name from the fifth century but, because they rebelled against the Byzantine state in the seventh century, they were called Mar-

daites or Marada. All claim that the Maronites adhered to the "Catholic" faith, the faith of the Church of Rome. We shall see later that these claims have no historical foundation.

2

The Identity of the Ascetic Marun

WHO WAS the first Marun and what was his relationship with the Maronites? Most Maronite writers claim that the first Marun was a fifth-century ascetic who was also the "Father of the Maronite nation." They support their claim by referring to two sources from the first half of the fifth century. One of these sources is a letter which the celebrated Saint John Chrysostom presumably wrote to the Marun from his place of exile in Armenia.[1] In this letter, addressed to "the ascetic priest Marun," Chrysostom expresses his friendly feelings toward Marun and his wish to correspond frequently which was prevented by the difficulty of finding letter carriers. He earnestly inquires about Marun's health and closes by asking Marun to pray for him.

Unfortunately, the letter is not dated. This fact has caused Maronite writers to speculate about its date. Some have claimed that it was written either in 404 or 405, while others thought it was written between 404 and 407, the year John Chrysostom died. A contemporary writer, Yusuf Muzhir, set the date of this letter in the year 414.[2] This is obviously in error since Chrysostom could not have written a letter seven years after his death. Muzhir makes yet another incredible claim in order to prove that Marun's faith was that of a true "Catholic" and not a "Monothelite heretic." The two friends, John Chrysostom and the ascetic Marun, he claims, were adherents to the Council of Chalcedon, whose definition of faith they vigorously defended. This is impossible, since the

Council of Chalcedon met in 451, many decades after the deaths of both Chrysostom (407) and Marun, whose death most probably occurred in 410.[3]

The letter in question was addressed to a certain "Marun the Ascetic" without further identification. It was the custom of the early church fathers to address their letters to individuals identifying them by church rank or function. This letter attributed to Chrysostom could have been written to any one of several ascetics named Marun who lived in Syria during the fifth century.[4] What really refutes the letter as evidence, however, is its language, which is so generalized and superficial that it could never have been written by Chrysostom, a distinguished Biblical scholar and orator. Chrysostom refers to Marun as a priest, and there is no evidence that the fifth-century ascetic Marun had ever held such a church office. Even if we agree with Maronite writers that this Marun was a friend of John Chrysostom, it proves only that Chrysostom had an ascetic and pious friend named Marun; beyond their alleged friendship we know nothing about this Marun, his activities, or his fame as a great ascetic. Indeed, the letter is so dubious that even al-Duwayhi could not determine the origin of any possible relationship between Chrysostom and Marun. He could not find recorded evidence of any kind. He does speculate, however, that Chrysostom might have been the schoolmate of Marun in Antioch before both took up the ascetic life, or that when Chrysostom occupied the Patriarchal See of Constantinople he paid a visit to Syria to admonish those who worshipped the sun, and he may have met Marun and they became friends.[5] Obviously, such speculations are of little historical value.

The second source which Maronite writers cite to substantiate their claim that the fifth-century Marun was the "Father" of their church and community, and the same Marun associated with John Chrysostom, is the *Religiosa Historia* by Theodoret, bishop of Cyrus (d. 458). Theodoret was a student of the theological school of Theodore of Mopsuestia (d. 427) and a strong opponent of Saint Cyril, patriarch of Alexandria, champion of orthodoxy at the Council of Ephesus (431).[6] A product of the theological school of Antioch and much influenced by the teaching of Theodore of Mopsuestia, Theodoret became very active in the heated controversy between Nestorius, his close friend, and Cyril. In doing so, he vehemently championed the heresy of the former, although he was forced to condemn Nestorius at the Council of Chalcedon in 451.

Theodoret was a learned man, a recognized theologian, and a prolific writer. His *Religiosa Historia* contains an account of about thirty

ascetics and anchorites, with some of whom he was personally acquainted. Included in the book is the austere life of a certain ascetic named Marun.[7]

The importance of Theodoret's account of Marun is that it is the only source which describes the ascetic life of someone named Marun. Theodoret was a contemporary of Marun, and there is no reason to discredit his account of him, despite the fact that he had no personal contact with him and only knew of Marun from Jacob, one of his followers. Theodoret tells us that when Marun decided to live a life of austerity, he climbed to the top of a mountain in the district of Cyrus where there was an abandoned pagan temple. He dedicated this temple to the worship of God and visited it frequently. Close by he built a crude hovel which, however, he inhabited only briefly. Within a short time he became known for his austerity, piety, and healing power, which later attracted people from all over Syria. Because of his reputed divine power, it was rumored that even devils shunned his presence. When he died his devotees fought for possession of his body, whose fate was finally decided when one of the contending groups was able to capture it and build a temple over its burial site. Theodoret states that even in his time the people continued to celebrate the memory of Marun.[8]

Theodoret never mentions the date of Marun's death or whether he himself ever visited the site of his burial. The biography of Marun is very brief and, when compared with his biographies of Saint Simon the Stylite or even Jacob, a follower of Marun, it is rather insignificant. He affords Marun no special place or excellence in the austere life practiced by thousands of monks and holy men from the western Egyptian desert to Mesopotamia.

The history of asceticism in the first few centuries of the Eastern church includes celebrated men such as Pachomius, Antonius, Eugene, Macarius, Saint Ephraim, Saint Simon the Stylite, Saint Barsauma (the chief of the anchorites), Saint Mattai (Matthew of Abjershat, whose monastery stands near Mosul, Iraq, until this day), and many others. But except for Theodoret's brief account about Marun, nothing else is known about him in spite of the claim of most Maronite scholars that this fifth-century ascetic is the "Father" of their denomination. Characteristic of this claim is the inclusion of the probably imaginary picture captioned "Saint Marun, Father of the Maronite Denomination"[9] in al-Duwayhi's history. Bishop Yusuf al-Dibs opens his introduction to *al-Jamiʿ al-Mufassal:* "Therefore, we begin the history of the Maronites by discussing Saint Marun, who is considered the Father and patron of this denomination."[10]

Theodoret's account of Marun indicates that he was one of a host of monks and anchorites in Syria in the fourth and fifth centuries, and, as already pointed out, nothing in his work suggests that Marun had achieved such a high degree of piety as to gain him the eminent position attributed to him by later Maronite writers. While al-Duwayhi makes him the "head of all ascetics and monasteries in the district of Cyrus," a contemporary Maronite writer, Rev. Butrus Daww, goes even a step further by claiming that he was the "head of a distinct school of asceticism."[11]

Through misinterpretation of sources, Daww, citing A. J. Festugière, *Antioche Païenne et Chrétienne*, concludes that Marun was the first in Syria to practice living in the open, exposed to the harshness of the elements,[12] and that some anchorites in the district of Cyrus in northern Syria adopted this mode of living, particularly the stylite monks who chose to live on top of pillars, the most famous of whom was Saint Simon the Stylite (d. 459). Daww states that Festugière considers Saint Simon a disciple of the school of ascetism established by Marun.[13] This theory considering Marun the founder of an "ascetic school" which gave rise to a more rigid asceticism lacks historical substantiation. The point Festugière is probably trying to make is that the ascetic manner of living in the open or on top of a mountain may have led some anchorites to take to living on the tops of pillars, although this, too, is a matter of conjecture. He states:

> A l'extreme opposé des reclus, voici les moines qui vivent en plein air: "Hypèthres," Si l'on puet dire, en empruntant ce terme à la langue des architectes. Les stylites sont du nombre, mais ils ne diffèrent pas essentiellement des moines qui, avant eux, étaient tenus Juchés sur des sommets, ou ils vivaient à ciels découvert. Les stylites sont l'une des espèces des "hypèthres", et ne se distinguent des autres que parce qu'ils sont montés encoure plus haut, et dès lors sont plus exposés et aux regards des hommes et aux intempéries de l'air.

After citing in the same paragraph the names of these recluses, Festugière continues:

> Le fondateur de cette vie "hypèthre" . . . semble y avoir été un certain Maron qui eut beaucoup de disciples, entre autres Jacques et Limnaius: celui-ci se rendit auprès de Marón exactement au meme temps que Jacques.[14]

Festugière establishes no association between the ascetic Marun and Simon the Stylite, nor does he even allude to the latter. Daww uses

the observation above out of context to establish his point that Saint Simon the Stylite was a "pioneer Maronite." He states:

> This great saint is one of the valiant pioneer Maronites. He began to practice asceticism following the Maronite manner after he was expelled from the Monastery of Talʿada . . . Desiring to achieve the highest state of asceticism, he first lived in the open like St. Marun, then moved to the top of a column. Thus, Maronite asceticism was the highest point of his life, as it was the highest point of monastic life as Festugière has maintained.[15]

There is no historical evidence to support this statement. There are two Syriac biographies of Saint Simon the Stylite, together with the accounts of him by Theodoret and Evagrius, none of which mentions Marun or alludes to any relationship between him and the stylite. Furthermore, it is hardly possible that such a relationship could have escaped the attention of Theodor Nöldeke, the eminent Orientalist who has definitively written about the lives of several Syrian saints, including that of Saint Simon the Stylite.[16] Yet Daww claims that not only Saint Simon the Stylite but all the stylite monks were "disciples of Marun."[17] Daww also seems irrelevant when he relates the influence of Saint Simon the Stylite on the "Maronite nation" and Maronite history:

> St. Simon the Stylite had a profound impact on Maronite history and spiritual Maronites. This saint was and still is the fountainhead of heroism in the Maronite nation attested to by the great number of pious men who were motivated to imitate his ascetic life. His spirituality has become an essential element in the Maronite spiritual well-being.[18]

This judgment is without historical ground and depends once more on Festugière, who merely tried to establish the fact that the monastic manner of living in the open begun by Marun may have led other anchorites to live in the open or on top of pillars rather than in cells.[19] The association of the Stylite saint with the "Maronite nation" is historical fantasy.

We have seen that Theodoret mentions no association between Saint Simon the Stylite and the ascetic Marun. Nor does Cosmas, the biographer of Saint Simon, mention any such relationship. Cosmas does say that many pagan people from Mount Lebanon visited the saint and complained to him about evil creatures or wild beasts attacking and devouring people. These wild creatures ravaged homes, snatched children and infants from their mothers' bosoms and killed them. The saint told them that God had delivered them to the beasts because they had forsaken Him, and that they should ask their own gods to deliver them.

Still, the people tearfully imploring, Cosmas continues, the saint finally relented, telling them he would pray for their deliverance if they would promise to forsake the worship of false idols and return to the Christian God. This they promised to do. The saint then instructed them to place on the border of each village four stones, each engraved with three signs of the cross, and to wait for three days. When this was done and the beasts returned and saw these stones, as the story goes, some of them ran away howling and crying, "Woe upon thee, Simon, what hast thou done to us." The people of Mount Lebanon received baptism and accepted Christianity through this miracle wrought by Saint Simon.[20]

Obviously, this apocryphal tale has no relation to the Maronites, their history, or their conversion to Christianity. It does not show that Saint Simon preached Christianity in Lebanon as claimed by some Maronite writers,[21] nor does it indicate that there was a Maronite community in Lebanon in the fifth century.

It is true that Christianity found its way into Lebanon after the first century, but the Christian church did not establish a strong foothold in that country until the fourth century. Christianity spread very slowly, especially in the mountainous areas, where paganism was strong and was not put on the defensive till the time of the Emperor Julian the Apostate (361–363).[22] The people who were attacked by beasts and appealed to Saint Simon for deliverance were most likely pagans from the mountainous region of Lebanon. Theodor Nöldeke's statement that, "it is probable the Maronites are the descendants of the converts who accepted baptism after Simon's intercession, as they believed, had freed them from the ravages of wild beasts," is speculation and lacks historical evidence.[23]

Daww not only tries to make Saint Simon the Stylite a disciple of Marun, indebted to Marun for his mode of asceticism, but also claims that the great church structure built on the site where the stylite lived and the monasteries in its vicinity were Maronite, that is, under Maronite jurisdiction and authority.[24] He avers that in the fifth century the Church of Antioch was divided into two groups: the Chalcedonians and the Monophysites, the latter rejecting the edicts of the Council of Chalcedon. This is true, but Daww continues that this church was divided once more in the first half of the eighth century between the Malkites, the Church of Antioch, which accepted the Council of Chalcedon, and the Maronites. After this division, the church of Saint Simon, as well as the monasteries in its vicinity remained Maronite. He writes:

> Before the division, the Chalcedonian segment of the Church of Antioch, particularly the one whose language was Syriac, was under

> the leadership of the Monastery of Marun, and consequently the Chalcedonian monasteries and churches whose language was Syriac followed the lead of the Monastery of Marun in their defense of the Chalcedonian formula of faith.[25]

Daww's statement lacks historical substantiation particularly in that the Chalcedonian segment of the Church of Antioch was divided into Maronite and Malkite. The Church of Antioch was divided for the first time in the sixth century into two separate groups, the Monophysites "Jacobites" and the Chalcedonian "Malkites." As shall be seen later, the Maronites only became a separate denomination in the eighth century.

3

The Monastery of Marun

THERE IS NOTHING in available ancient sources to indicate the name and location of the place where the ascetic Marun lived. However, one might be tempted, upon reading Theodoret, to conclude that he lived in the vicinity of Cyrus in what was then known as Syria Prima, many miles to the northeast of Antioch. The failure to identify this place caused the Maronites to speculate as to its whereabouts, as did their sympathizers. The Maronite Bishop Pierre Dib states that Marun lived on top of a mountain near Apamea in Syria Secunda, an area far distant from Cyrus.[1] Others claim that Marun lived in a cave near the source of the river Orontes (al-Asi) close to the Hirmil in Lebanon; they cite as evidence the name of the cave known until this day as the cave of Marun.[2]

Father Henri Lammens speculates that Marun lived on top of one of the mountains on the road to Aleppo southeast of Cyrus, although he fails to cite the exact location of this mountain.[3] Bishop Yusuf al-Dibs, following Assemani, states that the monastic abode of Marun was situated on the bank of the Orontes River in al-Rastan, somewhere between Hims and Hama.[4] Anyone who is familiar with the geography of Syria will recognize that al-Rastan (Arethusa) was situated on the Orontes, south of Hama and miles away from Cyrus in the farthest north of Syria.[5]

Al-Duwayhi maintains that Marun lived in al-Qurushiyya (the district of Qurush-Cyrus-in-Syria Prima) and that he had identified the name of the mountain on which Marun lived. This mountain, it should be remembered, was first mentioned by Theodoret, who did not identify its name or location. Al-Duwayhi, while still a priest, delivered in Aleppo two sermons in which he identified the mountain on which Marun lived as "Mount Olympus,"[6] but offers no explanation of what he meant by "Mount Olympus." The Reverend Butrus Daww has attempted to identify this "Mount Olympus." He writes that al-Duwayhi often confuses and changes both proper and geographical names, one of which was "Mount Olympus." He says that taking into consideration the distortion of names due to the constant change of language and to copying errors, this "Mount Olympus" of al-Duwayhi is none other than Jabal Simʿan or Qalʿat Simʿan (The Mountain of Simon), fifteen kilometers south of Aleppo.[7] This Jabal Simʿan is the same mountain on which Saint Simon the Stylite lived. After his death in 459, at the site of his mountain grave, was built a magnificent church, of which only ruins remain and among which the pillar on which Saint Simon lived is still visible.[8] Daww elaborates, stating that the "Olympus" of al-Duwayhi is a distortion of *Nabu* or *Yanbu* (in Syriac), which al-Duwayhi mistook for "Olympus." He quotes Charles S. Clermont-Ganneau, who asserts that Jabal Simʿan was formerly known as Jabal Nabu (the Mountain of Nabu). It was called Nabu after a pagan idol worshipped by the inhabitants of a nearby village which had become known as Kfarnabu (that is the village of Nabu).[9] In time the people called the mountain the same name. Daww is not only certain that Jabal Simʿan was formerly called Nabu, but that Marun lived in the village of Kfarnabu and that the temple of Nabu is the same temple averred by Theodoret to have been converted by Marun into a church.[10] Surely, Theodoret, bishop of Cyrus, was familiar with the towns and villages of his diocese and would have mentioned Kfarnabu if he knew or even if he heard that Marun lived there. The assertion that "Olympus" is a distortion of Nabu, and that this mountain is the same Jabal Simʿan named after the celebrated Saint Simon the Stylite, is in the face of the evidence, difficult to sustain. Indeed there is nothing to substantiate that the ascetic Marun ever lived in a village named Kfarnabu. Such a finding by Daww not only contradicts the account of Theodoret, who states that Marun lived in the open and not in a village, but also contradicts the conclusions of ancient Maronite commentators. The various conclusions of later Maronites, in their attempts to identify the exact name and location of Marun's habi-

tat, arise from the fact that there is no historical evidence. In fact, this uncertainty led to an even graver error in relation to the exact location of the monastery built after Marun's death and named after him. Once more we must refer to Theodoret.

In his brief account of Marun, Theodoret never mentioned the exact place where Morun lived or the date of his death. All that he related was that after Marun's death a fight erupted among the people over his body. Those of the nearby villages finally drove away others and claimed it. They built an enormous temple over the remains of their hero which is in use to this day in honor of his virtuous life.[11] Theodoret does not identify the village whose inhabitants won the fight over Marun's body, nor does he inform us about the place where the body was taken and a large temple built. This gave rise to much specious speculation.

Theodoret referred to a temple and not to a monastery, and it is certain that he knew the difference between the two. Unfortunately, Maronite writers from the time of the seventeenth century have erroneously interpreted Theodoret, especially al-Duwayhi. Though al-Duwayhi recognized that Theodoret mentioned neither the name nor the place where this temple was built, he conjectured that Theodoret was referring to the "temple which the people of Hama built on the Orontes River, somewhere between that city and Hims." He concluded that this temple became the renowned "Monastery of Marun."[12]

But al-Duwayhi is inconsistent on this point. In one instance he states that the "people of Hama" carried off the body of Marun and built a temple which later became a great monastery on the site of its burial, while in another he states that the "people of both Hims and Hama" were the ones who did so.[13] In fifth-century Byzantine Syria, Hims and Hama were by no means to be identified with the obscure villages mentioned by Theodoret. Both were ancient cities which achieved prominence in the Roman empire and were significant urban communities with large populations.[14]

It is more logical to infer from Theodoret's account that the inhabitants of the most heavily populated nearby village carried off the body of Marun to their village and built a temple in his honor. If the place was Hama, Theodoret would have said so. So we have no alternative but to infer from Theodoret that the village was in the district of Cyrus between Hims and Hama in what al-Dibs believes to be al-Rastan.

Al-Duwayhi emphasizes that this Monastery of Marun was one of several known by the same name. This is correct, but there is no evidence that these monasteries were named after Marun, including as al-

Duwayhi claims, the monasteries named Marun near Constantinople and Damascus. There is evidence that there was more than one monastery known as Marun in the vicinity of Hama.[16] Elaborating on Theodoret's account of Marun and quoting the Latin writer Bagius, Assemani in his *Bibliotheca Orientalis* (1, 497) is of the opinion that the Monastery of Marun was located on the Orontes River between Hims and Hama. This is the same observation which had been made earlier by al-Duwayhi. We know that in Syria Secunda in the fifth and sixth centuries there were more than one ascetics named Marun: the Marun with whom Severus, patriarch of Antioch, communicated; another with whom Jacob of Sarug communicated; and still another Marun of Any-Zarba, to whom Philoxenus of Mabug wrote a letter.[17]

Assemani bases his opinion on the fact that two representatives of the Monastery of Marun attended the Fifth Council which Emperor Justinian I convened in 553. They carried with them a letter which they had signed on behalf of the monks of that monastery; it was addressed to the emperor and to Menas, patriarch of Constantinople. These two delegates presented themselves as the representatives of the Monastery of Saint Marun, "chief among the monasteries of Syria Secunda."[18] This may be true and does not question the existence of a monastery bearing the name of Marun; the question is whether this monastery is the same one built by the ascetic Marun's followers who allegedly carried off his body to a place between Hims and Hama, and whether this monastery became "chief" among all the monasteries of Syria as well as the stronghold for the defense of the Council of Chalcedon. This letter of the two delegates, if historically authentic, does not prove that this monastery is the one Maronites claim to be the Monastery of Marun, from which they attempt to trace their name and origin.

Theodoret never mentioned that the followers of Marun ever left the vicinity of Cyrus to build a monastery or monasteries in or near Apamea in Syria Secunda. He relates, however, that two followers of Marcianus of Cyrus, in Syria Secunda, Eusebius and Agapetus, had built monasteries in Apamea.[19] Father Lammens suggests the possibility that the disciples of Marcianus, who were originally from Cyrus, were the ones who built a monastery named for Marun. But since this contradicts Theodoret's account, Lammens's suggestion is hard to take seriously.[20]

While the majority of Maronites fix the location of the monastery of their Marun between Hims and Hama, Rev. Daww confronts us with a new theory about the location of the Monastery of Marun. He cites

Yaqut al-Hamawi (d. 1229), who, in his *Muʿjam al-Buldan*, twice mentions a monastery called Murran. Yaqut states that in his time the people visited the tomb of the Umayyad Caliph Umar Ibn Abd al-Aziz, located on a mountain called Dayr (monastery) Murran, overlooking the town of Kfartab.[21] In another place Yaqut states that this Dayr Murran is located on the mountain which overlooks Kfartab near al-Maʿarra and is believed by the people to enshrine the tomb of Caliph Umar Ibn Abd al-Aziz.[22]

Daww also cites Ibn Abd al-Haqq (d. 1308), who made a compendium of Yaqut's *Muʿjam al-Buldan* entitled *Marasid al-Ittilaʿ fi Asma al-Amkina Wa al-Biqaʿ*, but Ibn Abd al-Haqq adds nothing new to Yaqut's statement about the location of the Monastery of Murran. However, he states that he visited the site and inquired of the inhabitants of al-Maʿarra the location of the tomb of the Caliph Umar Ibn Abd al-Aziz. He was told that the monastery which enshrines the tomb is known as the Nuqayra (Nikirta) Monastery, from which Daww concludes that it is probably the Monastery of Murran.[23]

Though there is nothing in this observation to indicate that the Dayr (monastery) Murran is the Monastery of Marun, Daww is sure that the two monasteries are one and the same.[24] This contradicts the Maronites' claim that the location of the Monastery of their Marun is al-Rastan between Hims and Hama in Syria Secunda while the towns of al-Maʿarra (Maʿarrat al-Nuʿman) and Kfartab are many miles away in northern Syria. Furthermore, no Maronite has ever claimed that their Monastery of Marun enshrines the tomb of the Umayyad Caliph Umar Ibn Abd al-Aziz. Thus Daww contradicts both his predecessors by boldly affirming that "this is the location of the prominent Monastery of Marun, which played an important role in the history of the Church in Syria and was the origin and the nucleus of the Maronite Church."[25] He also contradicts the fourteenth-century writer Ibn Mahmud al-Katib al-Dimashqi who states that the Monastery of Murran was situated outside the city of Damascus.[26]

Daww quotes al-Masʿudi to show that the Monastery of Marun is situated near the Urnut (Orontes) River east of Hama and Shayzar (Larissa),[27] but Hama and Shayzar are many miles south of al-Maʿarra and Kfartab. Daww's citing of al-Masʿudi defeats his purpose because al-Masʿudi clearly states that the tomb of the Caliph Umar Ibn Abd al-Aziz was in the Monastery of Simʿan (Simon) in the province of Hims near the district of Qinnesrin.[28] This also contradicts Yaqut's statement that the caliph was buried in Dayr Murran.

We have seen that the Maronite Patriarch Istefan al-Duwayhi, interpreting Theodoret's account of Marun, states that the inhabitants of Hama carried off the body of the ascetic and built a temple on its burial ground at the bend of the Orontes River, which became in a short time a great monastery accommodating eight hundred monks.[29] This view is supported by other Maronites, including Assemani. Yet Daww also indicates that the Byzantine Emperor Marcian, who came to power in 451, built the Monastery of Marun. He cites Abu al-Fida (d. 1331) who, in his *al-Mukhtasar fi Akhbar al-Bashar*, relates that Marcian succeeded Theodosius II and reigned seven years. A year after assuming power he built the Monastery of Marun in Hims.[30] Daww conjectures that because this monastery was built by the emperor it was destined to occupy "first place" among the monasteries of Syria Secunda. He is emphatic that one of the reasons which motivated the emperor to build this monastery was "the role which the Maronites began to play in leading the Syriac-Aramaic segment of the Syrian people."[31]

He explains that the majority of the Christians in Syria from apostolic times to the beginning of the fifth century were city dwellers whose culture and language were Greek. From the fourth century on, however, the message of the Gospel spread among the villages and country people, who were Syriac by language and culture and comprised the majority of the inhabitants. Thus, Daww reasons, by their conversion to Christianity through the efforts of the Maronite monks, "the balance turned in favor of the Aramaic segment of the population of Syria under the leadership of the monks." He concludes that for this reason the Emperor Marcian built the monastery in order to win the monks to his side, that is, to support the Council of Chalcedon which he had called, and to prevent the Syrian people under the influence of Maronite monks from "switching to Monophysitism," which was becoming popular among the Syrians.[32]

Another opinion advanced by Daww as to why Marcian built the Monastery of Marun on that particular spot is its proximity to the desert where the pagan Bedouins lived. It was an important mission of the evangelical Christians to convert the Bedouins to Christianity, to civilize them, and to integrate them into the Roman empire.[33]

Abu al-Fida derives his information from the history of Abu Isa Ahmad Ibn Ali al-Munajjim entitled *Kitab al-Bayan 'an Tarikh Sinii Zaman al-'Alam 'ala Sabil al-Hujja wa al-Burhan*.[34] Thus Abu al-Fida is the only writer whose work is extant to claim that the Emperor Marcian built the Monastery of Marun, and his information is secondhand. What makes us believe that Abu al-Fida's claim is extremely weak is that no

other source has ever mentioned that the Emperor Marcian was the one who built the Monastery of Marun.[35]

Even on this point it is difficult to agree with Abu al-Fida that the Emperor Marcian built the Monastery of Marun. He may have confused Marcian with the Emperor Justinian I, whom we learn from Procopius (Book 5, Chapter 8) had renovated the Monastery of Marun. Procopius's observation is of no great help since he does not identify which Monastery of Marun was being renovated by Justinian. Be that as it may, Daww's deduction concerning reasons for which Marcian built the Monastery of Marun are historically unfounded.

Abu al-Fida's belief that the Emperor Marcian built the Monastery of Marun, and which belief Daww follows, contradicts the theory held by some Maronites, especially Istephan al-Duwayhi, that the inhabitants of "Hims and Hama" had built this monastery.[36] Even more confusing is Abu al-Fida's assertion that the Monastery of Marun was situated in Hims. Father Lammens realized that the problem of the identity of the Monastery of Marun became greater "if we fixed the location of the Monastery of Marun in Hims."[37] He believes that this monastery was located not in Hims, nor halfway between this city and Hama, but on the Orontes River, a short distance to the north beyond Hama. He tends to believe that al-Masʿudi, in his book *al-Tanbih wa al-Ishraf,* is not too far from the truth when he states that this monastery was located to the east of Shayzar (Larissa) near the Urnut (Orontes), which is the river of Hims and Hama.[38]

Lammens introduces another source which he believes is more authentic in determining the location of the Monastery of Marun. He refers to the Reverend François Nau, who determined that the Monastery of Marun was "near Apamea in the Orontes valley."[39] To further substantiate his thesis Lammens, like many Maronite writers, refers to the massacre of 350 monks from the Monastery of Marun on their way to visit the shrine or the monastery of Saint Simon the Stylite. (Lammens's source here is a letter he claims was addressed by the monks of Marun to Pope Hormisda in 517). Because of this incident Lammens concludes that the relationship between the monks of Marun and those of Saint Simon the Stylite must have been strong and, consequently, the two monasteries were located close to each other. However, Lammens is not sure how far these two monasteries were from each other.[40] He states that one could reasonably object that the distance between the two is still too far to allow any easy communication. Consequently, Lammens concludes, "it is obvious that the Monastery of Marun was located farther north according to the evidence produced."[41] The basis of his claim—that

350 massacred monks came from there—together with his thesis of the proximity of the Monasteries of Marun and Saint Simon is tenuous and unconvincing.

Lammens's indecisiveness in determining the origin of the Monastery of Marun is reflected in his serious consideration of the possibility that the Monastery of Marun was built near Apamea by Agapetus, the follower of Marcianus. He recognizes Rev. F. M. Jullien as the originator of this idea and states that there is no reason to deny Jullien's theory that Agapetus was the one who built the Monastery of Marun, since a study of geographical sites in Syria does not refute this idea.[42] In a geographical sketch of the life of Saint Marun, Lammens clearly states that Marcianus, a follower of Marun, sent one of his disciples, Agapetus, to build monasteries in the district of Apamea in Nikirta, a rather large town, and that this Agapetus built two monasteries in or near the city.[43] The name of one of these monasteries is not known to us, but the other was named after the celebrated Saint Simon the Stylite.[44] There is no evidence that the other of these monasteries was named after Marun.

There is still another theory about the identity of the Monastery of Marun, advanced by the Jesuit Father Martinus, who devoted most of his life to the study of Lebanon and its history. Martinus states that it is not improbable that a priest—the ascetic Marès (or Mari in the Greek), who lived in the district of Apamea and to whom Saint John Chrysostom addressed a letter, is the Marun to whom Chrysostom also addressed another letter. Martinus hypothesizes this because of the similarity of the spelling of the two names. Marès or Mari held joint abbacy with a certain Simon (not the Stylite already mentioned) of a monastery named Simon and was the founder of the monastery which later came to be known as the Monastery of Marun or Mari. Martinus admits, however, that substantiating historical evidence is lacking, concluding that it is probable that people did not distinguish between the ascetic Marun and his follower Marcianus, who is referred to in some sources as Marian.[45] Father Lammens does not agree with Martinus that Marès and Marun might be identical, but he does concur that there is a similarity between the names Marcianus and Marian. He conjectures that, because of Marcianus's fame as a saintly person, his contemporaries built a church in his name. Father Lammens asks if it is not possible, therefore, that some of Marcianus's followers who came to Apamea built a monastery to honor him there. If this were true, the problem of the identity of the Monastery of Marun would be solved, and it would become evident that one of the monasteries in Apamea was named after Marun, who died and was buried in the district of Cyrus in Syria Prima. However, Lam-

mens seems to obviate these considerations in holding to the opinion that from the beginning of the sixth century the Monastery of Marun was known only by that name.[46]

Several conclusions may be deduced from the foregoing opinions and speculations. The evidence addressed by Maronites and those who support their claims that there existed in the fifth century in Syria Secunda a Monastery of Marun whose monks were Chalcedonians, is untenable. Maronites (and others) cannot even agree on who built the Monastery of Marun or its exact location. Most of the evidence they do produce has no historical foundation. Historical fact does indicate, however, that there were several monasteries named Marun in Syria, but not that they were named after the particular ascetic Marun. More important, available evidence does not support the claim that there was a Maronite community in Syria before the seventh, or even eighth century. While historical evidence does support the thesis that the pious anchorite named Marun lived, died, and was buried in the district of Cyrus in northern Syria, there is nothing to indicate that this Marun ever founded a religious community or inspired the name Maronite. Further, there is no evidence that he or his followers ever built a monastery in his name. Those Maronites who describe their ascetic Marun as "the Father of the Maronite Nation" do so from the totally sentimental predisposition rather than assert it as a claim derived from objective fact.