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UNPUBLISHED TEXTS FROM THE ARAB ORTHODOX
TRADITION (4): CANONICAL RESPONSES OF THE
PATRIARCH MARK III OF ALEXANDRIA TO THE
ABBOT GEORGE OF DAMIETTA

ALEXANDER TREIGER¹

Abstract

The fourth instalment in the “Unpublished Texts from the Arab Orthodox Tradition” series makes accessible a neglected document from the Orthodox Christian tradition in Arabic: canonical responses of the Chalcedonian Orthodox patriarch Mark III of Alexandria (r. ca. 1180-ca. 1209) to his spiritual son George, the abbot of the monastery of St. Jeremiah near Damietta. The article includes an edition and an English translation of this text.

Résumé

Le quatrième article de la série « Textes inédits de la tradition arabe orthodoxe » rend accessible un document négligé de la tradition chrétienne orthodoxe en arabe : les réponses canoniques du patriarche chalcédonien orthodoxe Marc III d’Alexandrie (r. ca. 1180-ca. 1209) à son fils spirituel Georges, l’abbé du monastère de saint Jérémie près de Damiette. Cet article comprend une édition et une traduction anglaise de ce texte.

The purpose of the present article—the fourth instalment in the “Unpublished Texts from the Arab Orthodox Tradition” series—is to make accessible a neglected document from the Orthodox Christian tradition in Arabic: canonical responses of the Chalcedonian Orthodox (in medieval terminology: Melkite) patriarch Mark III of Alexandria (r.

¹ Dalhousie University.

ca. 1180-ca. 1209) to his spiritual son George, abbot of the monastery of St. Jeremiah near Damietta.² This document has received no attention in Georg Graf's *Geschichte der christlichen arabischen Literatur* (Graf 1944-1953), Joseph Nasrallah's *Histoire du mouvement littéraire dans l'Église melchite* (Nasrallah 1979-2017), or, for that matter, any other survey of Arabic Christian literature known to me (on Mark III of Alexandria, cf. Panchenko & Moiseeva 2016). Nor is it mentioned in any study of the only other collection of canonical responses associated with Mark of Alexandria (in which, however, the patriarch is the inquirer rather than the responder): *Canonical Questions by the Patriarch Mark of Alexandria* (discussed in Section 5 of the Introduction below).

In short, the document presented herein appears to be completely unknown. Its significance lies in the fact that it sheds light on the history of the Chalcedonian Orthodox Church in Egypt—a subject that has been unduly neglected in modern scholarship (see, however, Skreslet 1987; Youssef 2009; and the relevant sections of Nasrallah 1979-2017 and Mikhail 2016). This makes the below presentation and discussion of Mark of Alexandria's canonical responses all the more worthwhile.

Mark of Alexandria's canonical responses to George of Damietta are preserved in the *unicum* seventeenth-century manuscript Beirut, Bibliothèque Orientale 477 (fols. 119v-127r / pp. 238-253).³ Before proceeding to an edition and translation of this text, a discussion of a few points of interest is in order.

The Monastery of St. Jeremiah

As mentioned above, Mark of Alexandria's letter is addressed to his spiritual son George, abbot of the Monastery of St. Jeremiah near Damietta. What do we know about this monastery? Leaving aside other monasteries with the same name (Timm 1984-2007: III 1342-1347, 1413-1414), we shall focus on those medieval sources, which clearly

² For the earlier instalments of the series, see Treiger 2014, Treiger 2016, and Treiger 2018 (reviews: Panchenko 2014 and Panchenko 2019).

³ I am deeply grateful to the Hill Museum & Manuscript Library (HMML) in Collegetown, MN for facilitating online access to images of this manuscript.

specify that they are discussing the Monastery of St. Jeremiah in the vicinity of Damietta.

Other than Mark of Alexandria's text, there seem to be only two such sources. First, consideration should be given to the Arabic *Life of St. Jeremiah* preserved in the Antiochene Menologion (Sinai ar. 405, fols. 131r-140v—see Sauget 1969: 386-394; edition and translation: van Esbroeck 1998)⁴ and at least two other manuscripts.⁵ This document points to a monastery named after St. Jeremiah that was to be established “in the region of Manuf to the west from (+the city of) Damietta” (في ناحية منف غربي (+مدينة) دمياط)—this expression appears twice: Sinai ar. 405, fol. 133v and 139r; cf. Sauget 1969: 389; van Esbroeck 1998: 15, 22, 26, 34). Further down in the same text, St. Jeremiah speaks about himself as “dwelling in the desert of Manuf” (في بَرِيَّةِ مَنْف—Sinai ar. 405, fol. 140r; cf. Sauget 1969: 391; van Esbroeck 1998: 23, 35).

As demonstrated by Sauget (who relied on earlier studies by Hermann Zotenberg), the toponym “Manuf” was associated with the name of the Egyptian hermit Jeremiah already in the *Chronicle* of the Monophysite author John of Nikiou (written, presumably, in Coptic ca. 700 AD, but preserved only in Ethiopic). In John of Nikiou's text, however, “Manuf” seems to have referred to Manūf al-‘Ulyā (the present-day Menuf, some 20km west of Banhā)—a town in the Upper Delta, far removed from Damietta (Sauget 1969: 392-394; cf. Timm 1984-2007: IV 1575-1585). It therefore follows—though Sauget does not state this explicitly—that the specification “to the west from Damietta” was added by the Melkite author of the *Life of St. Jeremiah* (presumably, in its lost Greek version that underlies the Arabic), who, being familiar with the Melkite monastery named after St. Jeremiah west of Damietta chose to “relocate” St. Jeremiah there, while keeping the old toponym “Manuf.” We may even hypothesize that the Melkite author of the lost Greek version of the *Life of St. Jeremiah* was himself a monk at the Monastery of St. Jeremiah in the vicinity of Damietta. This, however, is far from certain. Whatever the case might be, the

⁴ On the Antiochene Menologion, see Treiger 2017b; Ibrahim 2018; Treiger 2020. Contrary to Treiger 2017b, the Antiochene Menologion is to be dated to the early eleventh century. Habib Ibrahim's edition of an abridged version of the Antiochene Menologion is in press.

⁵ Paris, BnF ar. 281, fols. 207v-229r; Beirut, Bibliothèque Orientale 625, pp. 361-372.

specification “to the west from Damietta” must have been introduced by someone who was aware of the existence of a Melkite monastery there.

The *Life of St. Jeremiah* can thus serve as an independent confirmation for the historical existence of that monastery. Because the Arabic version was produced, in all likelihood, in the early eleventh century (it must have been translated into Arabic specifically in order to be incorporated into the Antiochene Menologion), the underlying Greek version must have been older than that—datable to the tenth century at the latest. This, therefore, provides us with solid evidence that the Melkite Monastery of St. Jeremiah in the vicinity of Damietta was already in existence towards the end of the first millennium AD.

The second medieval source that mentions the Monastery of St. Jeremiah west of Damietta is the *History of the Patriarchs of Alexandria*. This famous Copto-Arabic historical work provides an account of the Crusaders’ attack on Damietta that took place on Monday, 14 Bašans 927 AMart / 24 Dū l-Qa‘da 607 AH (both dates converge neatly to 9 May 1211, indeed a Monday). On this day:

there arrived at Damietta (Dumyât) eighteen ships of the Franks (al-Afranġ) (with) military equipment. And they descended at the Monastery of Jeremiah (Irmyâ) which belongs to the Melchites (al-Malakîyin [*sic*]), which is near to Damietta (Dumyât) the distance of a parasang (farasanĥ [*sic*]), on the side of the western shore, the shore of Bûrah and al-Ĥaîrah [*sic*; the Arabic text has الحيرة]. ... They had been equipped from Acre (‘Akkâ), and they came from it, (and) they descended at the mentioned monastery. And their leader and their commander was a man called Count Aflank. And there disembarked from the ships one hundred knights (horsemen) and a thousand men. They divided into two halves: fifty knights (horsemen) and five hundred men went to al-Ĥaîrah [*sic*; the Arabic text has الحيرة]. They killed and they took captives from its inhabitants, men and women, (and) they pillaged it and they burned it with fire. And fifty knights (horsemen) went to Bûrah, (and) they killed and they took captives from it, men and women (Khater & Khs-Burmester 1970: 193; cf. the Arabic original on p. ١١٥).

This document provides additional confirmation, first, that there was a monastery named after St. Jeremiah west of Damietta and, second, that it was indeed a Melkite monastery. We learn also that it was located at a distance of one *farsah* (ca. 5.5 km) from the city, i.e., probably just north of the modern Kafr al-Baṭṭīh.⁶ No damage to the monastery is reported in the above passage.⁷ We should, therefore, assume that it continued to exist at least for some time after 1211. Its subsequent fate is unknown.

Mark of Alexandria's Knowledge of Greek

On several occasions in the letter, Patriarch Mark displays his knowledge of Greek. In Chapter 3, §6, he discusses a “complete liturgy,” i.e., the kind of liturgy during which the Holy Gifts are transformed into Christ's Body and Blood. To bring the point home, he mentions the term تالين (i.e., τέλειον, “complete”) employed to characterize this type of a liturgy (in contradistinction to the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts).

The second relevant instance appears in Chapter 10, §28. Mark of Alexandria discusses the liturgical term παραμονή (Arabic: برمون, برامونة, etc.), which refers to the day preceding a great feast, on which strict fast is appointed and a vesperal liturgy is celebrated (unless the παραμονή falls on a Saturday or a Sunday, in which case the liturgical rubrics are different) (Getcha 2012: 130-132, 137-138, 296; cf. Graf 1954: 19). In common terminology, the term παραμονή refers to the eve of Christmas (24 December) and the eve of Theophany (6 January), though Mark of Alexandria applies the term to two other occasions when a vesperal liturgy is prescribed, namely Holy Thursday and Holy Saturday.

What is interesting here is how Patriarch Mark explains the etymology of the term παραμονή. In actual fact, παραμονή means “abiding in expectation” (from the verb παραμένειν), referring here to the practice of keeping a strict fast and other liturgical observances on

⁶ Kafr al-Baṭṭīh seems to be identical to Būra mentioned in the above passage (Timm 1984-2007: I 448).

⁷ Contrary to Timm 1984-2007: II 533, who argues that the monastery was destroyed (*zerstört*) in that same attack—this is, obviously, a misreading.

the day preceding a feast. Mark of Alexandria, however, seeks to derive it—with an impossible metathesis of the “μ” and the “ν”—from the adjective *παράνομος* (“contrary to the law”). This is why he glosses the term as “outside the law” (*ḥāriḡ al-nāmūs*) or “contrary to the custom” (*ḥilāf al-‘āda*). This clearly shows the limitations of Patriarch Mark’s knowledge of Greek. While he probably knew enough Greek to be able to say prayers and celebrate the liturgy in Greek when having the book to hand, his active knowledge of Greek (and of Greek grammar in particular) must have been less than perfect.

Despite this, however, Mark of Alexandria seems to enjoy using such relatively rare Arabic Christian terms of Greek origin as *اكتيريات* (Gr. *εὐκτήρια*, “oratories, chapels”), *كيميتر* (Gr. *κομητήριον*, “cemetery”), and *طاقوس* (Gr. *τάφος*, “tomb, sepulchre”)—curiously, all of them in a single paragraph (Chapter 4, §9).

Liturgical Peculiarities, References to the Canons of the Apostles and to the Typikon

It may be useful to call attention to some liturgical peculiarities reflected in Mark of Alexandria’s letter—all of them important to the reconstruction of the worship in the Chalcedonian Orthodox Church of Alexandria prior to Byzantinization (on Byzantinization, see Galadza 2018, which, however, focuses on the Patriarchate of Jerusalem).

1. Patriarch Mark argues that Wednesdays and Fridays throughout the year are days of strict fast (no food is allowed till the ninth hour, i.e., 3pm, and only one Lenten meal is consumed in the evening). This regulation is, of course, in line with traditional Orthodox understanding of fasting, though it is rarely observed as strictly in modern times.

2. He also assumes that liturgies are celebrated only on Saturdays and Sundays. Mid-week liturgies are to be celebrated only when there is a special feast or commemoration. This is different from contemporary Byzantine (and modern) practice according to which liturgies are prescribed (at least, in principle) for every single day of the year with the exception of weekdays during the Great Lent⁸ and a few

⁸ For Wednesdays and Fridays of the Great Lent, Thursday of the fifth week of Lent, Holy Monday, Holy Tuesday, and Holy Wednesday—and for any other occasion a polyeleos-rank feast falls on a weekday in Lent—the Liturgy of the Presanctified

other occasions (such as the Wednesday and Friday of Cheesefare week).

3. Mark of Alexandria argues that there are, consequently, no Apostle and Gospel readings appointed for weekdays, but only for Saturdays, Sundays, and feasts. This reflects a particular stage in the development of the lectionary system, which is indeed attested in Arabic lectionaries (Turnbull 2019).

4. Patriarch Mark is, however, aware of the fact that in certain other locations (“imperial monasteries” and “cathedrals in the great cities,” as he puts it), such as Hagia Sophia in Constantinople and the patriarchal cathedrals of Antioch and Jerusalem which he specifically mentions,⁹ the liturgy is celebrated every day. He provides the following explanation for why such frequent celebration is permitted: “[O]ne of the holy emperors is accountable for this; he pleaded with the Holy Synod regarding this, until the latter permitted that there should be a place, if he so desires, where the faithful could celebrate and the righteous could rejoice” (Chapter 11, §29). This is clearly in reference to the Byzantine emperor Constantine IX Monomachos (r. 1042-1055), who in 1044 allocated funds to the clergy of Hagia Sophia in order to have the Divine Liturgy celebrated daily (Galadza 2018: 131). Mark of Alexandria may have been made aware of this during his visit to Constantinople in 1195 (on which see Section 5 below).

5. Mark of Alexandria argues that when funerals need to be celebrated on fasting days (including Wednesdays and Fridays), this is done on specially designated altars in the cemetery chapels and in sepulchres rather than in the churches (Chapter 4, §9).

6. It is significant that Mark of Alexandria nowhere mentions a Liturgy of Presanctified Gifts, even though there are numerous occasions in his letter where it would have been natural for him to do so.¹⁰ It would thus seem that the Liturgy of Presanctified Gifts was not

Gifts is prescribed in Byzantine and modern practice. (On Annunciation, if it falls on a weekday in Lent, the Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom is served.)

⁹ Curiously, he also mentions his own patriarchal cathedral in Alexandria; however, this must be a mistake—otherwise Mark’s argument for the impermissibility of everyday liturgical celebration would hardly make sense.

¹⁰ It is true that, as mentioned above, on one occasion Patriarch Mark mentions a “complete liturgy”—a term which presupposes the existence of an “incomplete” one, i.e., the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts. Yet, it remains the fact that not even there

celebrated at the Patriarchate of Alexandria in his time. This means that the recently discovered manuscript of liturgical rubrics for the Presanctified Liturgy of St. Mark (Mikhail 2015) reflects a rather limited phenomenon, perhaps confined to a specific monastic community (possibly, Egyptian monks resident at Sinai).

7. As mentioned above, Mark of Alexandria applies the term *παράμωνή* not only to the eve of Christmas (24 December) and the eve of Theophany (6 January), but also to two other occasions when a vesperal liturgy is prescribed: Holy Thursday and Holy Saturday.

8. When Mark of Alexandria lists the fast-free weeks, he mentions only the Paschal week and the week after Pentecost (but not the period between Christmas and Theophany and not what is called in Byzantine rite the “week of the Publican and the Pharisee”). This reflects the liturgical calendar of the Church of Alexandria prior to Byzantinization.

9. Mark of Alexandria strongly opposes the practice of “frequent communion” on the ground that it is “contrary to the practice of the entire Christian community, contrary to the stipulations of the religious law concerning the care one is to exercise when partaking, contrary to the practice of the Holy Fathers of old, contrary to what is required by the decrees of nature¹¹ except from time to time, and contrary to the practice of the Holy Fathers of old Basil, Gregory, and other teachers of the universe and pastors of the flock, because they did not have such audacity either in deed or in word” (Chapter 9, §22). In the history of the Orthodox Church in Byzantium, frequent communion was promoted by St. Theodore the Studite, and it was under the Studite monks’ influence that daily liturgy became more common, and, as a result, the longer Liturgy of St. Basil was gradually replaced in Constantinople, on most days, by the shorter Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom (Galadza 2018: 131). We can see that from the perspective of the Alexandrian hierarch, the practice of frequent communion constituted an unwelcome liturgical innovation.

is the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts mentioned, and the term “complete liturgy” seems to be borrowed wholesale from a Byzantine Greek source.

¹¹ Mark of Alexandria’s reference to the “decrees of nature” (*aḥkām al-ṭabī‘a*) is, admittedly, somewhat unclear. Perhaps he has in mind ritual purity of the communicants (i.e., that one should not receive Communion after sexual relations, that women should not do so during the menstrual period, etc.).

Patriarch Mark's argumentation is strewn with references to, and citations from, the Canons of the Apostles. I have systematically compared his citations to the two Arabic translations of the Canons of the Apostles of which I am aware (preserved in the tenth-century manuscript London, BL Or. 5008 and the thirteenth-century Sinai ar. 390, among others). It would seem that the translation used by Mark matches neither of these two translations, and on occasion it appears that he had recourse to an unknown commentary on the Canons. This subject needs to be investigated further (cf. Darblade 1946; Jarawan 1969; Kaufhold 2012).

The same is true of Mark of Alexandria's references to the Typikon (Chapter 3, §6; Chapter 5, §13). It is unclear which version of the Typikon Patriarch Mark had at his disposal and whether it was in Greek or in Arabic. Whatever the case might be, this was clearly a pre-Sabaite version, as the Sabaite Typikon does not seem to have spread among the Melkite communities of the Middle East before the thirteenth century (Lüstraeten 2017; on Macarius of Sinai's thirteenth-century references specifically to the Sabaite Typikon, see Treiger 2017a). Moreover, the Church of Alexandria, being the most remote from Constantinopolitan influence, was, most likely, the last to adopt it.

Ibn al-Muhaddab and a Manuscript of Theodoret

In Chapter 9, §23 of his letter, Mark of Alexandria refers to the *Life of St. Maris*, which, according to him, appears as “No. 19 in the book of Theodoret.” The reference is clearly to Theodoret of Cyrus' *History of the Monks of Syria*, which indeed contains a vita of St. Maris (though in the Greek original it appears as No. 20). This reference is all the more remarkable as we do not have a complete Arabic version of Theodoret's *History of the Monks of Syria*, but only a number of scattered lives whose relationship to Theodoret's text remains, for the most part, uncertain (Graf 1944-1953: I 366-367, II 71, 493).¹² Mark of

¹² Théodoret de Cyr 1977-1979: I 63 refers to “une traduction arabe de certaines Vies de l'*Histoire Philothée* (Vies de Maron, Jacques de Cyrrestique, Syméon Stylite, Marana et Cyra, Vie de Palladios remaniée) ... dans le manuscrit de Jérusalem: *S. Marc 38A : 1732*, daté de 1178.” There are multiple mistakes in the above statement (some of which have been corrected in Outtier 1984: 75-76). The vitae it mentions are simply those referenced in Graf 1944-1953: I 367. The manuscript in question is, in

Alexandria's testimony would thus seem to confirm the existence of an integral Arabic version of this text.¹³

Significantly, Mark of Alexandria mentions that he borrowed a copy of this book from Ibn al-Muḥaḍḍab. The reference is clearly to As'ad ibn Muḥaḍḍab, known as Ibn Mammātī (ca. 1149-1209), the chief secretary at the Ayyūbid court and a distinguished writer and poet (Atiya 1986). Though he hailed from a Coptic family from Asyūt, already his father became a Muslim. It is certainly remarkable that a high-ranking Muslim official (albeit of Christian descent) had rare Christian books in his library, which he would be willing to lend to the Melkite patriarch.

The Council at Hagia Sophia

In Chapter 9, §26, Mark of Alexandria makes reference to:

the book which has reached us from the Holy Synod [that took place] in the City of God Constantinople and in our Great Church Hagia Sophia, for they say: "Everyone who justifies himself and claims that he is worthy [of receiving Communion] every day we consider a liar as long as he bears a body, for even if this should happen to be true on one occasion, this would not be true on others."

fact, Jerusalem, St. Mark 199A (originally part of the same manuscript as 199B; both 199A and 199B were numbered "38" by Baumstark and Graf). It dates to 1732-1734, not to 1178; though it was translated into Arabic (Garšūnī) from a Syriac manuscript (Damascus, Syrian Orthodox Patriarchate 12/17-12/18) dating to 1178/9 (though, as Outtier 1984: 76 notes, Sebastian Brock has re-dated it to 1184/5). More significantly, the Jerusalem manuscript does not, in fact, contain most of the vitae mentioned—there is no trace there of a *Life of Maron*, a *Life of Marana and Cyra*, a *Life of Palladios*! The only vitae it contains which are perhaps related to Theodoret's *History of the Monks of Syria* are the *Life of Julian Saba* (fols. 180r-185r / 182r-187r) and the *Life of St. Symeon Stylite* (fols. 194r-224r / 196r-226r)—see Baumstark & Graf 1913: 315; Macomber 1995: 108, under Nos. 23 and 25. However, as Graf mentions elsewhere (Graf 1944-1953: I 367), while pointing to another manuscript of the *Life of Julian Saba* (Šarfeh syr. 11/6, No. 29, a 17th-century Garšūnī manuscript), "die Uebereinstimmung mit dem Text bei Theodoret ... [ist] ungewiss."

¹³ It would seem unlikely that Patriarch Mark is referring to a Greek manuscript of Theodoret, because—as discussed below—it was owned by a Muslim secretary (albeit of Coptic origin).

This must refer to the response by the Holy Synod of Constantinople to Mark of Alexandria's canonical questions, which he submitted in person during his visit to Constantinople in February 1195.¹⁴ Mark of Alexandria's canonical questions are preserved in Greek in two redactions: the one with responses by, most likely, John Kastamonites (Gedeōn 1915; Katsaros 1988: 307-344—I shall call this version “JK”); the other, heavily revised, with responses by Theodore Balsamon (Viscuso 2014—I shall call this version “TB”) (for a general discussion, see Grumel 1939; Noble 2016).

Indeed, one of Patriarch Mark's questions (No. 25 in JK; No. 17 in TB [No. 16 in the *Patrologia Graeca* reprint]) concerns frequent communion (though in TB the question is revised and other matters are discussed as well—Viscuso 2014: 86-88). Because JK is likely to reflect the original version of Mark of Alexandria's question, and because Gedeōn's edition of JK is not easily accessible and, moreover, it has not been translated into any other language, I reproduce the Greek text (Gedeōn 1915: 181) and provide my own English translation of this question and the answer, according to JK.

ΚΕ'. Ὁφείλουσι μεταλαμβάνειν καθ' ἡμέραν οἱ ὄντες ἐν ἐξομολογήσει ἄνδρες, γυναῖκες, μοναχοὶ καὶ λαϊκοὶ, ἢ οὐ;

Λύσις. Οὐχ ἅμα τῇ ἀπλῶς ἐξομολογήσει ἐξ ἀνάγκης ἔπεται καὶ ἡ ἀξία τῆς ἀγίας μεταλήψεως ὑποδοχή· ἀλλ' ἔστι μὲν καὶ αὕτη μέγα τι ἐκ τῶν ψυχικῶν φαρμάκων ἀλεξιφάρμακον, πλὴν διακρίνειν δεῖ τὰ ἐξηγορευμένα· ἔστι γὰρ πολλάκις τὸ ξυμπεσὸν ἀνεπιτίμητον καὶ οὐ κωλύει τὴν ἀγίαν μετάληψιν, ἄλλο δὲ δεῖται ἐπιτιμίων μετρίων, καὶ οὐδὲ ἡ ἀγία κοινωνία εὐκαιρος· ἕτερον ἔχει παῖσμα μέγα, καὶ εἰσιν ἐν τούτῳ καὶ τὰ ἐπιτίμια μεγάλα καὶ χρόνια, καὶ καθαρτήριοι τόποι ζητητέοι· ὁ τοῦ προσκλαίοντος, κατὰ τὸν ἔξω τῆς ἐκκλησίας περίβολον, ὁ τοῦ ἀκροωμένου, κατὰ τὰς πύλας, ὁ τοῦ ὑποπίπτοντος,

¹⁴ Interestingly, the date (which appeared in Mark's initial query and is cited in the heading of Theodore Balsamōn's responses) is given according to the Melkite Incarnation era as “February 1203 [AInc],” which corresponds to 1195. On the Melkite Incarnation era, see Samir 1987. For some details of Mark of Alexandria's visit to Constantinople, see Viscuso 2014: 13-14. Famously, Mark of Alexandria wished to celebrate the Divine Liturgy of St. Mark (or St. James) at Hagia Sophia, but was prevented from doing so by the Patriarch of Constantinople.

κατὰ τὰ ὀπίσθια τοῦ ἄμβωνος, καὶ ὁ τοῦ συνεστῶτος, καθ' ὃν μετὰ τῶν πιστῶν μὲν διόλου συνίσταται, οὐ μὴν δὲ κοινωνεῖ καὶ τῶν θείων ἁγιασμάτων, ἕως οὗ ὁ ὠρισμένος τῶν ἐπιτιμιῶν χρόνος πέρας λήψεται. Οὐκ ἀρκοῦσα τοίνυν ἐπὶ τῶν ἐφαμάρτων καὶ εἰς βάθος σπιλοποιῶν ἢ ἐξομολόγησις μόνη, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐργασίας χρεῖα ἀναλόγου τῆ ποιότητι τοῦ ἁμαρτήματος· τότε δὲ οὐκ ἀπαιτητέα ἢ ἐργασία ἡνίκα ὁ ἄνθρωπος τελευτᾷ· τηρικαῦτα γὰρ παρὰ τῶν πατέρων συγκεχώρηται, ἐλέει τοῦ φιλανθρώπου Θεοῦ, μεταλαμβάνειν τῶν ἀχράντων μυστηρίων, ἵνα ἔχη τοῦτο ἐφόδιον.

No. 25: Should men, women, monks, and laymen who attend confession receive Communion every day or not?

Solution: Worthy reception of Holy Communion does not necessarily follow from just the fact of confession. Though [confession], too, is a great medication among the remedies for the soul, in addition it is necessary to examine what has been said [at confession]. Oftentimes, there is a transgression which requires no *epitimia* [=corrective sanctions], and it does not prevent [one from receiving] Holy Communion. Another [transgression] requires moderate *epitimia*, and so Holy Communion is inappropriate at the time. Another transgression contains a major fall, in which case major and long-lasting *epitimia* apply, and places for purification need to be sought out: for those weeping [over their sins]—in the courtyard outside the church; for the hearers—at the gates; for the prostrators—at the back of the ambo; for the costanders—at the place where they stand with the faithful throughout, but certainly do not partake of the Divine Sanctified Elements until the time defined by the *epitimia* comes to an end.¹⁵ Thus, confession alone is not sufficient in the case of sinners and serious wrongdoers, but it requires action analogous to the quality of the sin. Action is not demanded when the person is dying, for at that time he is allowed by the Fathers to partake of the spotless Mysteries, so as to have this as provision for the journey [i.e., for the afterlife].

As we see here, the learned Byzantine canonist does not, in fact, address the main point of Mark of Alexandria's question: whether or not frequent communion is permissible. Nor does Theodore Balsamōn

¹⁵ Hearers, prostrators, and costanders are the usual three degrees of penitents (Mihai 2014: 332, s.v. "Penance, degrees of").

address this point head-on, though he refers to it obliquely in the following words:

[a]s many who by the purity of life made the way of divine communion smooth for themselves shall receive freely, for they do not at all treat this casually, since they understand the sublimity of grace and the greatness of the Mystery (Viscuso 2014: 86; cf. Greek text in *PG*, vol. 119, col. 1048C; vol. 138, col. 968C).

This seems to suggest that there is no obstacle to frequent communion, provided one has made the way for it “smooth” for oneself (i.e., by confession and absence of any *epitimia*) and provided, of course, one does not think light of Christ’s Body and Blood.

Where, then, does the statement *against* frequent communion, which Mark of Alexandria cites in Chapter 9, §26, come from? According to him, it comes from the book which contained the decision taken by the Holy Synod at Hagia Sophia. If so, we must conclude that neither JK nor TB contains that decision, at least as it was communicated in writing to Mark of Alexandria. JK and TB are, then, just the “expert opinions” of two eminent Byzantine canonists regarding Mark’s questions. Only the preface of the synodal decision seems to be preserved (as the heading of TB—see Viscuso 2014: 65-66; cf. 14); additionally, we now have what seems to be a small fragment of it cited by Mark of Alexandria in Arabic.

This fact helps date Mark of Alexandria’s letter to George of Damietta: it must surely have been written after Patriarch Mark’s visit to Constantinople on the one hand and before his death on the other, i.e., after 1195 and before ca. 1209.

Edition and Translation

The edition below faithfully reproduces the text as it appears in Beirut, Bibliothèque Orientale 477, without attempting to “correct” numerous deviations—whether morphological or syntactical—from Classical Arabic usage (for a description of these peculiarities, see Blau 1966-1967). However, in the few cases where the spelling is too idiosyncratic and would be unrecognizable to the modern reader (e.g.,

due to alteration between ض and ظ), the spelling has been normalized, while the manuscript reading is relegated to the apparatus. Occasionally, the Classical Arabic spelling is provided in the apparatus for clarity. The *hamzas* are absent, except when they are present in the manuscript. The distinctions between final ة/ة and final ي/ي are observed even when absent in the manuscript. Asterisks indicate emendations to the text. Question marks indicate that the reading and/or translation of a word or passage are uncertain. The punctuation, occasional vocalization, and division into paragraphs are my own.

(١١٩ب) بسم الله الخالق الحي الناطق

نبتدي بعون الله نكتب جواب الولد الحبيب انبا جرجس رئيس دير ارميا

<١> وصل كتابك، يا ولدي الحبيب انبا جرجي، الاول والثاني، وانت تسال فيهما عن ترك المطانيات يوم الجمعة الكبيرة والجمعة بعد الخمسين وعن ترك القداسات في يومي الاربعاء والجمعة طول السنة ما خلنا من تذكارات مية او عيد مجيد وعن قانون ثمانية من قوانين الرسل فيمن يخدم القداس كان مع غيره من الكهنة في ايام التلاميذ، وقانون تسعة بعده فيمن كان يحضر^{١٦} خلفهم القداس من المومنين على يديهم ولا يتقرب منهم، وغير ذلك مما طلبت تفسيره.

<٢> ولم اكتب اليك حتى الآن جواب عن كلما سالته ليس لانني اهملتك ولا غفلت عن جوابك، الرب يعلم، وكيف ذلك والاجر والمنفعة لي فيه، والجواب يلزمني عند | (١٢٠أ) اليوم اكثر من امس، وانا، يا ولدي، رجوت الاجتماع بك والحديث معك مشافهة ليكون ذلك انفع لك وابلغ من المراسلة، والرب يسهله قريب برحمته، وقد رايت ان اكتب اليك الآن بكلام قليل فيما سالت عنه لتستدل به على الكثير، واجعل لك ذلك فصول ليسهل عليك، ان شا الله.

الفصل الأول

<٣> اعلم، يا ولدي، اولاً ان الاصوام في العتيقة والحديثة هي دليل الاحزان والنوح والبكا على الخطايا، ويتبع ذلك ترك القداسات كما ترى ذلك عياناً في كل عام ايام الاربعين المقدسة خلا ايام الحدود والسبوت لانهما عيدين مستميين (?) في مدار السنة، وقد امرنا^{١٧} بحفظهما وتعيدهما دائماً من قوانين الرسل وخلفائهم معلمي الكنيسة الذي وضعوها بروح القدس الحال عليهم بعليّة صهيون، فافهم ذلك، ان شا^{١٨} الله. | (١٢٠ب)

¹⁶ MS: يحظر.

¹⁷ MS: اوامرنا.

¹⁸ MS: انشا.

الفصل الثاني

<٤> واعلم ايضاً، يا ولدي، انّ الفطور وخدمة القدّاسات هي علامة الافراح، وانت تجد ذلك مسطور في قوانينهم هكذا: "من لا يشاهد القدّاسات وياكل اللحم ويشرب النبيذ ويفرح في الاعياد الدسوتيكاً فهو محروم"، ولهذا تجد*^{١٩} ايام الخمسين كلّها والحدود والسبوت في مدار السنة من مبتدى^{٢٠} دين النصرانية قد رتبت الابا كلّ يوم ابسطولس وانجيل واوجبت خدمة القدّاس فيهم فريضة على ساير المومنين دون غيرهم من باقي ايام السنة، اذ كانت عندهم ايام افراح وابتهاج وتهليل خالية من الاصوام وعمل المطانيات.

<٥> كلّ هذا، ايّها الولد الحبيب، انت تعلمه وغيرك من المومنين وتراه عياناً وتسمعه كلّ عام مشافهة في كنيسة الله المقدّسة الارثوذكسية دون غيرها من الكنايس، الا انّ اكثر الناس لا يجعلون بالهمّ | (١٢١ أ) لحسن هذا النظام والترتيب الموضوع لهم بروح القدس لكثرة اشغالهم عنه بامور العالم الفانية، فاعلمه ان شا الله.

الفصل الثالث

<٦> ولما كانا يومي الاربعاء والجمعة يومين محزنة عند المسيحيين لعظم ما جرا فيهما وقد افرضت التشريعة على ساير المومنين صومهما دائماً الى الساعة التاسعة بحرم قاطع، فصار ترك القدّاسات فيهما وساير الافراح اولى^{٢١} من غيرهما متى خلبا من عيداً وتذكّار، اذ كان القدّاس الكامل المسماً بالرومية "تاليون" في كتاب التبييكن لا يحلّ بعد الساعة السادسة ولا يجوز، بل من الساعة الثالثة الى السادسة لا غير، وهي الساعة التي يوكل فيها القرايين ولا يواخر بعدها، وانت تجد ذلك مكتوب في قوانين الرسل ايضاً، هكذا يجب على المومنين ان يقيموا الصلاة والقدّاس في يومي السبت | (١٢١ ب) والاحد الساعة الثالثة، وهي الساعة التي حلّ عليهم فيها روح القدس في شبه ألسنة نارية، وهكذا جرت*^{٢٢} عليه سنة الكنيسة بعدهم من خلفاهم وحتّى الآن، فافهمه ان شا الله.

الفصل الرابع

<٧> فاما عن يومي الاربعاء والجمعة فقالوا<١> فيهم هكذا: "يجب على كلّ المومنين ان يصوموهما الى الساعة التاسعة ويحزنوا فيهما وقياموا الصلاة في تاسع ساعة من النهار"، ولم يقولوا "ويقيموا مع القدّاس" كما قالوا في يومي السبت والاحد حسبما الهمهم روح القدس الهابّ فيهم، فلهذا السبب لم ترتب الابا بعدهم وحتّى الآن القدّاس في يومي الاربعاء والجمعة لأنهم لم يروا خدمته في الساعة التاسعة ولا جعلوه فريضة واجبة في هذه اليومين المحزنة مثل يومي السبت والاحد، <٨> بل افرضوا فيهما الصوم خاصة الكافية الى الساعة التاسعة

¹⁹ نجد: MS.

²⁰ مبتدأ: Classical Arabic.

²¹ اولا: MS.

²² اجرة: MS.

والحزن | (١٢٢) والكآبة وملازمة الصلاة وعمل المطانيات، وأما القداس فلا، ولا شي من الافراح، اللهم ألا يحضر^{٢٣} فيها عيد مجيد، فإن حضور العيد يستغرق اليوم، وكذلك تذكارات الموتى في أيام تذكاراتهم وبخوراتهم والقداسات على الجنائز لضرورتهم، فإنها تستغرق اليوم متى اتفق ذلك فيه.

<٩> ولهذا تقدم الروم القداس في الاكثريات^{٢٤} وعلى المذابح المفردات عند الكيميتير^{٢٥} اعني به الطافوس^{٢٦} وعند مدافن الموتى بغير جمع ولا تعييد في هذا اليومين، والهياكل الكبار التي تكون في الاوساط مغلقة لا يجتمع اليها احد، <١٠> لأن هذه اليومين تجري عند الارثوذكسيين خلواً من عيد او تذكار يتفق فيهما مجرى ايام الاربعين الصوم المقدسة ولا يستجيزو <١> اكل شي من الزفورات اصلاً والمتحرزين في الدين ياكلوا فيهما اكلة واحدة | (١٢٢ب) ومن لا يطيق ذلك واكل دفعتين ما عليه لوم وهو بعد صايم على حكم شريعتنا المسيحية متى تحرز فيهما من اكل الزفر وقد تخلص من الحرم لأن هذا هو الصوم العام المفروض على الكل والممكن فعله وتكميله للقوي منهم والضعيف حتى لا تبقى^{٢٧} حجة لاحد في ترك الاجتهاد والتحفظ، <١١> والصوم والتقشف في هذه اليومين طول السنة فريضة على ساير المومنين وذلك بحرم قاطع، ومن كمل فيه الصوم الى عشية عن الخبز فهو رجل كامل وصايم الصيام التام، فافهمه ان شا الله تعالى.

الفصل الخامس

<١٢> فاما ترك عمل المطانيات في الجمعة بعد الخمسين فلائها جمعة فرح وتهليل وابتهاج وتمجيد بحلول روح القدس، ويوكل فيها خاصة الزفر يومي الاربعاء والجمعة مثل الجمعة بعد الفصح الى احد مار توما لأن هذه الجمعيتين | (١٢٣) ايامهما كلها حدود واعياد تفرح اهل الكنيسة فيهما بقيامه الابن وحلول روح القدس، <١٣> وهما اعظم من بقية ايام الخمسين اذ لا فرق عندنا بين الابن والروح القدس في الجوهر والازلية مع الاب، وانت تجد ذلك في تيبكيون الكنيسة وقانون الاعتراف عن تادرس القديس رئيس الاسطوديون ويوحنا القديس الصوم تلميذ غريغوريوس الكبير حسبما قبلوا من الرسل خلفاهم معلمي الكنيسة بالهام روح القدس، اعلم ذلك.

²³ يحظر: MS.

²⁴ Gr. εὐκτήριον (oratory, chapel).

²⁵ Gr. κοιμητήριον (cemetery). For another occurrence of this term in an Arabic Christian text, see, e.g., Treiger 2018: 23, n. 98.

²⁶ Gr. τάφος (tomb, sepulchre). In Arabic Christian liturgical usage current among the Copts, the term is sometimes used to designate the funeral office or the burial. See: https://st-takla.org/Coptic-Faith-Creed-Dogma/Coptic-Rite-n-Ritual-Taks-Al-Kanisa/Dictionary-of-Coptic-Ritual-Terms/5-Coptic-Terminology_Sein-Shein-Saad-Daad-Tah-Zah/Tafoos.html.

²⁷ يبقى: MS.

الفصل السادس

<١٤> فامّا ترك عمل المطانيات يوم خميس الكبير باكر والجمعة الكبيرة في ساير كنايس الارثوذكسيين وذلك بعد انقضا المزامير وتليها وحضور قراءة الاناجيل وتليها فهو لانّ القانون المقدّس ايضاً يامرنا نحن المومنين في هذه الجمعة كلّها ولا سيّما هذا اليوم العظيم كمثل | (١٢٣ب) يوم الصليبوت ان يمزج*^{٢٨} حزنا فيه بالفرح كمن له رجا خلاص ولا يحزن بالكليّة كمن لا له رجا ولا خلاص، <١٥> وينعكف فيه على القراءة والسماع وتلاوة الكتب الالهية لكشف اسرار هذا المذهب المقدّس وتبينه لكلّ لنعرف حقيقة من هو الذي صلّب ومات عنّا فيه وقام اليوم الثالث حيّ من الموتى، فهو تعليم ومحاوراة ومناظرة كايّام الكرازة والانداز قبل التعيّد والطاعة والاجابة.

<١٦> فلهذا يجب فيه السماع والتفهّم للمقولات واعتماد الجمع عليها واشغالهم بها دون غيرها من الفرائض، وحسنّ بالكهنة في كنايسهم الشاهد بهذا الرسم والدرس فيه لتنبية خواطرهم وكلّ شعورهم*^{٢٩} كما قد نعاين ذلك دائماً في كلّ عام، فلهذا تركت اهل الكنيسة فيه عمل المطانيات وسط الجمع*^{٣٠} وواظبت^{٣١} على ما سواه ممّا تقدّم شرحه، <١٧> فامّا المنفرد | (١٢٤أ) بنفسه فليس له ترتيب ولا نظام^{٣٢} اذا كان لا يراه احد ولا ينظر هو الى احد سوى الربّ الذي التجا اليه ووهب نفسه له، وانت تجد ذلك منصوص (?)*^{٣٣} عن اقليمس تلميذ بطرس، فاعلمه ان شا^{٣٤} الله.

الفصل السابع

<١٨> فامّا عن قانون ثمانية للرسل في تناول القربان فهو مبين في الفصل بعينه أنّه قيل: "بسبب امتحان كلّ من خدم القدّاس من الكهنة وقدّس القربان مع كاهن غيره في ذلك الزمان لينفي الشكّ عن الجماعة بسبب القسيس الذي قدّس معه ليلاً يعتقدوا فيه انّ امانته بعد ردية في القربان ونيتّه مائلة الى ذبايح الاصنام التي الفها"، ولا تحتاج الى تفسير خارج عنه، <١٩> وقد كان مثل هذا يعرض لكثير من المومنين في ايّام التلاميذ رسل ربّنا يسوع المسيح، وبعد قبول كثيرين المعمودية والكهنوت منهم | (١٢٤ب) يشكّوا في القربان والامانة والدين ويعودوا الى ضحاياهم الصنمية والسنة الردية، فاعلمه ان شا الله.

²⁸ MS: تمزج.

²⁹ MS: شعوبهم.

³⁰ MS: الجمعة.

³¹ MS: وواظبت.

³² MS: نضام.

³³ MS: منصوص.

³⁴ MS: انشا.

الفصل الثامن

<٢٠> فامّا قانونهم التاسع فأنّه ايضاً قيل لتجربة ساير المومنين عندما كانوا غرس جديد وبسرّ القربان جاهلين والايامن غير عارفين فارادوا الرسل التلاميذ تجربتهم وامتحانهم في ذلك الزمان، والآن بنعمة الله فكلّ المومنين الحاضرين^{٣٥} القدّاس والغايبين عنه ومن تقرب منهم ومن لا يتقرب امانته واحدة صحيحة ونيّته سالمة، <٢١> وقد فزع ان يعلم حقيقة هذا السرّ وعظم شأنه واستخفت^{٣٦} نفسه دونه ولم يبق لامتحانهم حاجة اذ كلّ منهم عارف بما يلزم من تكرمة جسد سيّدنا المسيح ووقاره وكيف يجب عليه ان يتهيأ لآخذه متى اراده، ولو كان الامر بخلاف هذا على كثرة المومنين الآن لمّا | (١٢٥أ) تخلّص احد من الرعيّة ولا الكهنة بالكليّة اذ لا يمكن الكاهن امتحانهم لكثرتهم، فافهمه ان شا الله.

الفصل التاسع

<٢٢> فامّا فساد^{٣٧} راي من يتناول جسد ربّنا يسوع المسيح في زماننا هذا كلّ يوم فهو واضح بيّن من جهات كثيرة لآئه بخلاف ما ساير ملل النصرانيّة عليه وبخلاف ما تضمّنته الشريعة في التحرز لآخذه وبخلاف سنّة الابا القدّيسين الاولين وبخلاف ما توجه احكام الطبيعة الا من حين الى حين <و> بخلاف سنّة الابا القدّيسين الاولين فاسيليوس وغريغوريوس ونظراهم^{٣٨} من معلّمي المسكونة مدبّري الرعيّة فانهم لم يتجاسروا على ذلك فعلاً ولا قولاً.

<٢٣> فامّا القدّيس مارس ففي ما يذكره خبره وسيرته انه مكث سبعة وثلاثين سنة في مكان حبس نفسه فيه لم يستمع فيها قدّاس ولا | (١٢٥ب) تقرب فربان، وهذا الخبر هو التاسع عشر من كتاب تاوضوريّس وتجده عند ابن المهذب متى طلبته لآئه مالكة وهو عندي عارة، متى وجدته رسول ثقة انفذته له، وان صنعت خيراً مع نفسك ومن يسمعك قريت^{٣٩} الكتاب جميعه فانك تنتصح به، <٢٤> ومريم المصرية تجدها اقامت اربعة عشر سنة في برية القدس ما تقربت الى ان دنت وفاتها من يد القدّيس زوسيماس، وغير هولاي من القدّيسين كثيراً مثلهم كما يذكر سيرهم والكنيسة تمدح عملهم هذا وتفتخر بهم.

<٢٥> وما اعتقد ان احد منّا نحن الخطاة بعدهم^{٤٠} استحق ان يكون مثلهم ولا فاز بالصواب دونهم ولا نظر ذلك احداً ممّن له ادنا عقل وانما يفعل من يفعل هذا الا جسارة منه وقحة وتكبر على الله ومراية الناس اذ يتناول السراير المقدّسة في كلّ يوم لهلاك | (١٢٦أ) نفسه، <٢٦> وهو كذاب كما ذكر كتاب المجمع المقدّس الواصل الينا من مدينة الله القسطنطينية وكنيستها

³⁵ MS: الحاظرين.

³⁶ MS: واستحقّ.

³⁷ MS: فسد.

³⁸ MS: ونظرائهم. Classical Arabic: ونضراهم.

³⁹ MS: قرأت. Classical Arabic: قريت.

⁴⁰ MS: adds ما after بعدهم.

العظمى اجيا صوفيا لآتهم قالوا: "كلّ من يزكي نفسه ويدعي أنّه مستحقّاً كلّ يوم فهو عندنا كاذب ما دام لا يلبس جسد وان اتفق ذلك في حين ما يتفق له في غيره"، فافهمه ان شا⁴¹ الله.

الفصل العاشر

<٢٧> فأمّا ان احتجّ عليك احد بقدّاس البرمونات الاربعة وهي ليلة الميلاد وليلة الغطاس وليلة خميس العهد وليلة سبت النور فاعلم ان الكنيسة رتبت ايضاً هذه الاربعة ايام بروح القدس معما رتبته دون غيرها لاسباب كانت من الله فيها: ليلة الميلاد لظهور النجم وليلة الغطاس لآته كان ليل عندما ظهر فيه روح القدس بشبه حمامة وليلة الخميس الكبير لاجل العشا السري وليلة سبت النور فحلولة على المقبرة، <٢٨> وليس | (١٢٦ب) يجري باقية ايام السنة مثل هذه الاربعة ايام اذ ليلها ونهارها يدعا في الشريعة نهاراً ولذلك سمّوا برامونة الذي تفسيره "خارج الناموس" او "خلاف العادة"، فاعلمه ان شا الله.

الفصل الحادي عشر

<٢٩> وان احتجّ عليك احداً ببعض الاماكن المقدّسة او من الديارات الملوكية والكنائس الجامعة في المداين الكبار مثل كنيسة اجيا صوفيا وكنيسة انطاكية والاسكندرية والقيامة لانّ فيهم قدّاس لا ينقطع كلّ يوم، فعرفه انّ بعض الملوك القديسين تسبّب في ذلك وسال المجمع المقدّس فيه حتّى افسح له ان يكون موضع ان اراد لآبتهاج المومنين وفرح الصديقين، <٣٠> وكلّ يوم تغلق الابواب هناك وتفتح بعد قراءة الازما (٤) مثل يوم الفصح ولا يتصلّا عندهم اصلاً في الاوساط بتلك المواضع ساعات ولا مزامير | (١٢٧أ) ولا يُتلا فيها شيئاً من القوانين التي نتلوها نحن المومنين في كنايسنا طول السنة، وليس هذا فريضة من الشريعة واما هذا من فضل سعادة هذا المذهب وقيام مناره.

<٣١> ومعما تقدّس هذه المواضع الكبار الجليّة كلّ يوم لا يتقرّبوا فيها كلّ يوم اهلها ولا يقدّس كاهنهم كلّ يوم، لانّ الكنيسة فيها مرتّبين سبع جُمع دايرة كما رسمت القوانين لكلّ جمعة سبعة كهنة عدد ايام الجمعة ليخدم كلّ يوم كاهن وخلفاه⁴² التي هم حاشيته وفي حيزه شمامسة وبودياقونين واغنسطيين وبصلّتين،*⁴³ فاعلمه ان شا الله، ولربنا السبح والمجد والعظمة الى دهر الدهرين، آمين.

<٣٢> ممّا كتبه مرقص المسكين صغير المسيحية الحقير في البطاركة الاسكندرية الى تلميذه انبا جرجس بنغر ضمياط، غفر الله لمن كتب ولمن قرأ ولمن قال آمين.

⁴¹ انشا: MS.

⁴² وخلفاؤه: Classical Arabic. وخلفيه: MS.

⁴³ ومصليين: MS.

Translation

**(119v) In the name of God—the Creator, the Living, the Rational⁴⁴
With God’s help we begin copying the response to the beloved child
Abba George, the abbot of the Monastery of [St.] Jeremiah**

<1> Your letter[s], my beloved son Abba George, have arrived: both the first and the second. In them, you inquire about [the reason why] there are no prostrations on the day of Great Friday and during the week⁴⁵ following Pentecost and [why] there are no liturgies on Wednesdays and Fridays throughout the year except if there should be a commemoration of a deceased person or a glorious feast. [You also inquire] about Canon Eight of the Canons of the Apostles concerning someone who concelebrated a liturgy with another priest in the days of the Disciples; about Canon Nine, the one immediately following, concerning someone among the faithful who after them⁴⁶ attends a liturgy served by them and does not take communion from them; and about other matters that you have asked to explain.

<2> I have not written a response to you until now concerning all that you have asked about—not because I have neglected you or have forgotten to respond to you. The Lord knows [this]! How could this be the case when I am the one who would be rewarded by, and benefit from, this! I am even more obligated to provide a response | **(120r)** now [lit.: today] than I was before [lit.: yesterday]. I had been hoping, my child, to meet with you and speak with you in person, because this would have been more beneficial for you, and the message would have been better conveyed this way than through correspondence. May the Lord make this possible soon by His mercy! I have decided to write to you now with some brief remarks concerning what you have asked about, so that from them you may draw conclusions about much more.

⁴⁴ This is a characteristic Christian *basmala*: the three qualities of God—Creator, Living, and Rational—allude to the three hypostases of the Trinity: the Father, the Holy Spirit, and the Son (in this order).

⁴⁵ The word *ġum’a* can mean both “Friday” and “week,” and in this sentence it happens to be used in these two different senses in close succession.

⁴⁶ The referent of the pronominal suffix in *ħalfahum* is unclear. It can perhaps be taken to refer to the Apostles.

I shall divide [my response] into chapters, so as to make it easier for you, God willing.

Chapter One

<3> First of all, my child, you should know that in the Old and the New [Testaments] the fasts are a sign of sorrows, lamentation, and weeping over sins. In accordance with this, liturgies are not celebrated [on fasting days], as you can observe yourself every year during the Holy Forty-Day [Lent] except on Sundays and Saturdays, for these two are feasts appointed (?) throughout the year. We have been commanded to observe and celebrate them always by the Canons of the Apostles and of their successors, the teachers of the Church,⁴⁷ who wrote them down by the Holy Spirit, Who descended upon them in the Upper-Room of Sion.⁴⁸ Please understand this, God willing. | (120v)

Chapter Two

<4> You should also know, my child, that abstention from fasting and celebration of liturgies is a sign of rejoicing. You shall find this recorded in their canons as follows: “Whoever does not observe the liturgies, [does not] eat meat, [does not] drink wine, and [does not] rejoice in the feasts of the Lord, let him be banned.”⁴⁹ This is why you

⁴⁷ The reference is to Canon 64 of the Apostles: “If any Clergyman be found fasting on Sunday, or on Saturday with the exception of one only [i.e., Holy Saturday], let him be deposed from office. If, however, he is a layman, let him be excommunicated” (Arabic translations: London, BL Or. 5008, fols. 6v-7r: أيما رجل من الكهنة وُجد يصوم يوم | واحد فليقطع من درجته أي احد من الكهنة: والسبت او الاحد ما خلا سبتاً واحداً في السنة وهو يوم السبت الكبير المقدس والعلمانيين استعمل الصوم يوم السبت او يوم الاحد ما خلا سبتاً واحداً في السنة وهو يوم السبت الكبير المقدس —خاتمة جمعة الألام الشريفة فليقطعوا—in both translations this is numbered as “Canon 59”).

⁴⁸ The reference is to the descent of the Holy Spirit, when the Apostles were assembled in the “upper-room” (ὑπερῶον) on the day of Pentecost. Cf. the title of the Canons of the Apostles in Sinai ar. 390, fol. 162v: وهذه هيه (!) الابسولسات المذكورة الذي وضعتها التلاميذ وقوانينهم الذي اخبر بها اقليمنطس وهي الذي اجتمعوا الرسل ورتبوا بتأييد الروح القدس، عددها اثنين وثمانين قانوناً، عندما كانوا بعليّة صهيون، ورتبوا ذلك ترتيباً بيتاً.

⁴⁹ The reference is to Canon 53 of the Apostles, which, however, does not mention attendance of a liturgy: “If any Bishop, or Presbyter, or Deacon, on the days of feasts will not partake of meat and wine, because he loathes these things, and not on account of asceticism, let him be deposed from office, on the ground that he has his own conscience seared and has become a cause of scandal to many” (Arabic translations:

shall find that for each of the Fifty Days [from Pascha to Pentecost] and for every Sunday and Saturday throughout the year—but not for any other days of the year—from the beginning of the Christian religion the Fathers have arranged for each day [readings from] the Apostle and the Gospel and have appointed a liturgy to be served on these [days] as an obligation for all the believers. This is because they considered these days to be days of rejoicing, festivity, and celebration on which there are no fasts and no prostrations.

<5> You and the other faithful know all this, beloved child. You see it yourself and hear it proclaimed every year in the Holy Orthodox Church of God, but not in the other churches. The majority of people, however, do not bring to mind | **(121r)** the beauty of this order and of this arrangement appointed for them by the Holy Spirit—they are too busy to do this because of their preoccupation with the passing affairs of this world. Please know this, God willing.

Chapter Three

<6> Wednesdays and Fridays are sorrowful days for the Christians, because of the grave events that took place on them.⁵⁰ The religious law has prescribed that one must always fast on these two days to the ninth hour⁵¹—under the threat of a decisive ban. This is why abstention from liturgies and other festivities is more appropriate for these two days—as long as they are free from any feast or commemoration—than for other days. According to the Book of Typikon, the complete liturgy, which is called in Greek τέλειον [“complete”],⁵² is not allowed or

London, BL Or. 5008, fol. 6r: أيما رجل اسقف او قسّ او شماس لم ياكل اللحم ويشرب الخمر في أيام الاعياد فليقطع من الكنيسة لانه كان سبباً لفساد الناس اذا لم يكونوا رهباناً لم ياكلوا اللحم ويشربوا الخمر في أيام الاعياد السبديّة والمواسم الارثوذكسية فليقطعوا من بيعة الله المقدسة لانهما صارا سبباً لفساد المومنين وتابعين لماني عدوّ الله—in both translations this is numbered as “Canon 48”; notice the reference to Manichaeism in the second translation, absent in the Greek text of the canon!).

⁵⁰ I.e., the betrayal of Judas and the crucifixion, respectively.

⁵¹ I.e., until 3pm.

⁵² Complete liturgy (τελεία λειτουργία) is one which includes an Anaphora, during which the Holy Gifts are transformed into Christ’s Body and Blood (on this term see, e.g., Galadza 2018: 97). The liturgies of St. John Chrysostom and St. Basil (and in Egyptian and Palestinian usage of the time: the liturgies of St. Mark and St. James) are complete liturgies—in contradistinction to the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts.

permitted after the sixth hour,⁵³ but [is to be conducted] only between the third and the sixth hours,⁵⁴ at which time, and no later, the Holy Offerings are to be consumed. You find this written in the Canons of the Apostles, too. This is why the faithful are to conduct prayer and the liturgy on Saturdays | (121v) and Sundays at the third hour⁵⁵—the hour during which the Holy Spirit descended upon [the Apostles] in the likeness of fiery tongues [cf. Acts 2:3-4]. This is how the practice of the Church has been after them, under their successors and to this day. Please understand this, God willing.

Chapter Four

<7> Regarding Wednesdays and Fridays, the [Apostles] say in [their canons] as follows: “All the faithful are required to fast on these two [days] to the ninth hour;⁵⁶ they must remain sorrowful during them, and must conduct prayer at the ninth hour of the day.”⁵⁷ They did not say “conduct [prayer] *with the liturgy*,” as they said concerning Saturdays and Sundays in accordance with the inspiration by the Holy Spirit, Who blows in them. It is for this reason that the Fathers after them and to this day have not prescribed a liturgy on Wednesdays and Fridays. This is because they did not see fit to serve it at the ninth hour,⁵⁸ so they did not make it a necessary obligation for these two sorrowful days, as they did for Saturdays and Sundays. <8> On these two [days], on the other

⁵³ I.e., 12 noon.

⁵⁴ I.e., between 9am and 12 noon.

⁵⁵ I.e., 9am.

⁵⁶ i.e., 3pm.

⁵⁷ The closest reference seems to be Canon 69 of the Apostles: “If any Bishop, or Presbyter, or Deacon, or Subdeacon, or Anagnost, or Psalt fails to fast throughout the forty days of Holy Lent, or on Wednesday, or on Friday, let him be deposed from office. Unless he has been prevented from doing so by reason of bodily illness. If, on the other hand, a layman fail to do so, let him be excommunicated” (Arabic translations: London, BL Or. 5008, fol. 7r: *أيما رجل من الكهنة لم يصوم (!) صوم الاربعين والجمعة والاربعاء فليقطع من درجته الا ان يكون منعه من ذلك مرض او ضعف ظاهر، فان كان علماني ايما كاهناً لم يصوم (!) الصوم الكبير اربعين يوماً والاربعاء والجمعة فليعتزل على الدوام مثل سنة الكنيسة الذي رسمناها فليقطع من درجته الا ان يكون منعه مرض جسدي او علة ظاهرة على الدوام مثل سنة الكنيسة الذي رسمناها فليقطع من درجته الا ان يكون منعه مرض جسدي او علة ظاهرة فليفرز*—in both translations this is numbered as “Canon 64”). Mark of Alexandria may be referring to some interpretation of this canon.

⁵⁸ I.e., 3pm.

hand, they have prescribed fasting to the ninth hour⁵⁹ as a sufficient characteristic, along with grief, | **(122r)** mourning, standing in prayer, and making prostrations, but not the liturgy, and no rejoicing—unless, of course, there should occur a glorious feast. The occurrence of a feast takes over the day; similar is the case with commemorations of the dead on the days of their commemorations, of the burning of incense for them, and of the liturgies served on funerals on account of their necessity, for these, too, take over the day when they occur.

<9> For this reason on these two days [i.e., Wednesdays and Fridays] the Rūm [i.e., Melkites] serve liturgies in the chapels and on separate altars by the cemetery, by which I mean the sepulchre[s], and near the places where they bury the dead, without an assembly and without a celebration, while the big temples stand closed in between [the offices], with no one congregating there. <10> This is because among the Orthodox these two days are treated in the same way as the Holy Forty Days of Lent—unless a feast or a commemoration happens to fall on them. No animal products are permitted on these days, and those who are careful about their religious observance consume only one meal a day. | **(122v)** Those incapable of doing so, who eat twice, are, however, not censured, because in the judgment of our Christian religious law they are still considered to be fasting, as long as they take care not to eat animal products. [In that case] they are not subject to a ban, because this is the general [i.e., minimal] fasting required of everyone, and it is possible to do and accomplish [this minimum] for both the strong and the weak. Therefore, no one has an excuse for failing to make an effort and to be observant. <11> Fasting and asceticism on these two days throughout the year is an obligation for all the faithful under the threat of a decisive ban. Whoever has kept the fast until evening without [even as much as eating] bread is a perfect man, who has accomplished a perfect fast. Please understand this, God willing.

Chapter Five

<12> As for why one does not do prostrations during the week after Pentecost, this is because this is a week of rejoicing, exaltation, festivity, and glorification on account of the indwelling of the Holy

⁵⁹ I.e., 3pm.

Spirit. During this [week] animal products are specifically eaten on Wednesday and Friday, as they are during the week from Pascha to St. Thomas Sunday.⁶⁰ This is because all the days of these two weeks | **(123r)** are [i.e., have the status of] Sundays and feasts, during which the people of the Church rejoice in the Resurrection of the Son and in the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. <13> These two [weeks] are greater than the remainder of the Fifty Days [between Pascha and Pentecost]. This is because for us there is no difference between the Son and the Holy Spirit with regard to [Their] essence and [Their] co-eternality with the Father. You will find this in the Typikon of the Church, in the Canon of Confession by St. Theodore the abbot of Studion and by St. John the Faster, disciple of Gregory the Great,⁶¹ in accordance with what the teachers of the Church, who are the successors [of the Apostles], received from the Apostles by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Please know this.

Chapter Six

<14> As for why one does not do prostrations on Great Thursday in the morning⁶² and on Great Friday in any of the Orthodox churches, namely after the completion of the Psalms and their sequence (?) and after attendance of the reading of the Gospels and their sequence (?),⁶³ this is because the sacred canon commands us, the faithful—during this entire week, and especially on this prominent day, this | **(123v)** being the day of Crucifixion—that our grief should be mixed with joy, [for we should be] as those who have a hope of salvation, and that we should not grieve completely as those who have neither hope nor salvation. <15> On this day we ought to devote ourselves to reading,

⁶⁰ The Sunday after Pascha.

⁶¹ St. John the Faster was patriarch of Constantinople in 582-595. St. Gregory the Great was Pope of Rome in 590-604. Before becoming Pope, in 579-585, Gregory had been an *apocrisiarius* (papal legate) at the imperial court in Constantinople, which is where he met John the Faster. During Gregory's papacy, he severely criticized Patriarch John on several occasions, among other things for the latter's use of the title "ecumenical patriarch." On Arabic collections of penitential canons ascribed to Theodore the Studite and John the Faster, see Graf 1944-1953: I 609-612.

⁶² Though the text briefly mentions Holy Thursday, the remainder of the chapter seems to focus on Holy Friday.

⁶³ The reference might be to the Royal Hours of Holy Friday.

listening, and recitation of the Divine Scriptures, so as to have the mysteries of this sacred confession revealed and clarified to all, so that we may know Who it is in reality Who was crucified and died for us on this day and rose alive from the dead on the third day. This [practice?] is a teaching, a dialogue, and a disputation similar to the days of preaching and warning—[which come] before celebration, obedience, and response.⁶⁴

<16> For this reason on this day everyone ought to listen and understand the [Divine] Sayings, to ponder on them and preoccupy oneself with them rather than with the other observances. The best among the priests in their churches is he who keeps this prescription and this lesson on this day, so as to awaken [his flock's] consciousness and all their feelings, as we always observe [to be the case] every year. For this reason on this day the people of the Church refrain from doing prostrations whilst among the congregation and devote themselves to other [practices]—those that have been explained above. <17> As for a solitary [monk], | (124r) he has no [mandatory] sequence [of prayers] and no [established] order, for no one sees him, nor does he look to anyone except the Lord, with Whom he has found refuge and to Whom he has given over his soul. You will find this recorded (?) on the authority of Clement, Peter's disciple.⁶⁵ Please know this, God willing.

Chapter Seven

<18> Turning now to Canon Eight of the Apostles regarding receiving Communion, it is clarified in that same chapter, where it says: “in order to test every priest who serves the liturgy and sanctifies the Offering with another priest at that time, so as to remove the community's doubt concerning the priest with whom he concelebrated, so that they do not believe about him that his faith regarding the Offering is still deficient and that his intention leans towards idol sacrifices to which he is

⁶⁴ I have translated this sentence literally, but I must admit that it is not entirely clear. Its overall meaning seems to be that on Holy Friday reflection on the Scriptures takes precedence over ritual observances.

⁶⁵ The Canons of the Apostles are believed to be transmitted by Clement of Rome. Cf. the title of the Canons of the Apostles in Sinai ar. 390, fol. 162v: (و)هذه هي (!) الابسطولسات المذكورة الذي وضعتها التلاميذ وقوانينهم الذي اخبر بها اقليمطس وهي الذي اجتمعوا الرسل ورتبوا بتأييد الروح القدس، عددها اثنين وثمانين قانوناً، عندما كانوا بعليّة صهيون، ورتبوا ذلك ترتيباً بيناً

accustomed.”⁶⁶ You do not need any explanation beyond that. <19> Such things often happened to many of the faithful in the days of the Disciples, the Apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ. After they received baptism and [were ordained to] the priesthood, many of them | (124v) had doubts regarding the Offering, the faith, and the religion and returned to their idol sacrifices and evil practice[s]. Please know this, God willing.

Chapter Eight

<20> Turning now to Canon Nine [of the Apostles], it was also proclaimed in order to test all the faithful at a time when they were still new shoots ignorant of the Offering and ill-informed about the faith.⁶⁷ At that time the Apostles and the Disciples wanted to test them and to put them to a trial. Presently, however, by the grace of God all the faithful—those who attend the liturgy and those who are absent, those who receive Communion and those who do not—have one and the same sound faith and unblemished intention. <21> They have been

⁶⁶ Canon 8 of the Apostles reads as follows: “If any Bishop, or Presbyter, or Deacon, or anyone else in the sacerdotal list, fail to partake of communion when the oblation has been offered, he must tell the reason, and if it is good excuse, he shall receive a pardon. But if he refuses to tell it, he shall be excommunicated, on the ground that he has become a cause of harm to the laity and has instilled a suspicion as against the offerer of it that the latter has failed to present it in a sound manner” (Arabic translations: London, BL Or. 5008, fol. 2r: أيما اسقف او قس او شماس او رجل من خدم المذبح لم يذبحوا فيأخذ القربان في المجمع اذا صنع القداس فليخبر بعذره وعلته فان هو لم يفعل فليجتنب ويُنفا لانه يصير غير علة الشك في امر الكاهن الذي قدس ويخبر بفعله ذلك ان الكاهن لم يقدس بنية صادقة ولا بامانة صحيحة اي اسقف او قس او شماس او رجل من خدام الكنيسة لم يقف ياخذ القربان مع الجماعة: Sinai ar. 390, fol. 164r: في وقت تمام القداس لعله يحتج بها فليختبر وليتظر عذره فان اتا في ذلك بعلة توجب بسط عذره في تلك الدفعة لا غيرها فليصفح عنه وان هو تعلل في ذلك وكانت له بذلك عادة فليجتنب وليقطع لانه يصير شك للجماعة وشبهة للكاهن الذي قسم وقدس معه السرير المحيية انه لم يخدم معه بنية صادقة وان المقدس ايضاً اعني به القس الذي (قدس القربان انه لم يقدس بنية صادقة ولا بامانة صحيحة). Mark of Alexandria is obviously citing a more extended version or interpretation of this canon.

⁶⁷ Canon 9 of the Apostles reads as follows: “All those faithful who enter and listen to the Scriptures, but do not stay for prayer and Holy Communion must be excommunicated, on the ground that they are causing the Church a breach of order” (Arabic translations: London, BL Or. 5008, fol. 2r: أيما رجل من المومنين دخل الكنيسة في صلاة القداس فسمع الكتب، ثم لم يصبر حتى يفرغ من الصلاة فيتقرب فيلقا من الكنيسة لانه اسد سنة الكنيسة أيما رجل من المومنين دخل الكنيسة وحضر في وقت القداس فسمع الكتب المقدسة، ثم لم يصبر حتى تفرغ الصلاة والقداس ويتقرب القربان فلينفا من الكنيسة لانه اسد السنة وتهاون بمقامه ووقوفه امام (الملك السماوي).

eager to learn the true meaning and exalted character of this mystery and have humbled themselves before it, so that there remains no need to test them. Every single one of them knows what he needs to know regarding how to pay respect and give glory to the Body of our Lord Christ and how one ought to prepare to partake of It when one wishes to do so.⁶⁸ Were the case to be different, because of the current abundance of the faithful | **(125r)** no one of the flock would be saved, and not even the priests in their entirety, for it is impossible for the priest to test them [all] because of their great number.⁶⁹ Please understand this, God willing.

Chapter Nine

<22> Regarding the opinion of those who, in our time, partake of the Body of Our Lord Jesus Christ every day, it is evident and obvious that this is wrong for many reasons. It is contrary to the practice of the entire Christian community, contrary to the stipulations of the religious law concerning the care one is to exercise when partaking, contrary to the practice of the Holy Fathers of old, contrary to what is required by the decrees of nature except from time to time, and contrary to the practice of the Holy Fathers of old Basil, Gregory, and other teachers of the universe and pastors of the flock, because they did not have such audacity either in deed or in word.⁷⁰

<23> Besides, concerning St. Maris—his story and his vita state that he spent thirty-seven years in one place in which he secluded himself. During this time he neither attended a liturgy nor | **(125v)** received Communion. This story is No. 19 in the book of Theodoret.⁷¹ You can find this [book] with Ibn al-Muhaddab if you ask for it—for he is its

⁶⁸ Curiously, Mark of Alexandria mentions only the Body of Christ, but not His Blood. Same phenomenon below (Chapter 9, §22).

⁶⁹ Mark of Alexandria argues that this canon is no longer applicable.

⁷⁰ Mark of Alexandria argues that none of the early Fathers practiced or preached frequent communion.

⁷¹ The *Life of St. Maris* appears as No. 20 in the Greek text of Theodoret of Cyrus' *History of the Monks of Syria* (PG, vol. 82, col. 1429-1432; critical edition: Théodoret de Cyr 1977-1979: II 64-69).

owner, while I have it on loan.⁷² When I find a trustworthy messenger, I will send it [back] to him. Please do yourself and those who listen to you a favour and read this entire book, for you shall find good advice in there. <24> Mary the Egyptian, too, spent fourteen years in the desert of Jerusalem without taking Communion until the time when her death was near—[only then did she receive Communion] at the hands of St. Zosimas.⁷³ There are many similar saints, as mentioned in their vitae, and the Church praises their accomplishment and takes pride in them. <25> I do not believe that anyone of us sinners after them has been worthy of becoming like them or has hit the mark better than them; nor does anyone who has the least amount of understanding think that. So whoever does this [i.e., practices frequent Communion], does so out of insolence and impudence, pride before God, and ostentation before the people, for he receives the Holy Mysteries every day unto his own perdition. | (126r) <26> He is therefore a liar, as mentioned in the book which has reached us from the Holy Synod [that took place] in the City of God Constantinople and in our Great Church Hagia Sophia, for they say: “Everyone who justifies himself and claims that he is worthy [of receiving Communion] every day we consider a liar as long as he bears a body, for even if this should happen to be true on one occasion, this would not be true on others.” Please understand this, God willing.

Chapter Ten

<27> Someone might raise an objection [to the above statement that there can be no liturgy after the sixth hour] based on the [fact that such a] liturgy [is served] on the four *paramonai*, namely the night of Christmas,⁷⁴ the night of Theophany,⁷⁵ the night of the Thursday of the

⁷² As‘ad ibn Muḥaddab, known as Ibn Mammātī (ca. 1149-1209)—the chief secretary at the Ayyūbid court and a distinguished writer and poet.

⁷³ The *Life of St. Mary the Egyptian* was composed by St. Sophronius of Jerusalem. In medieval and modern Orthodox practice, it is read annually during Matins on the Thursday of the fifth week of Lent. However, according to the Greek text of her vita, St. Mary of Egypt spent forty-seven years in the desert.

⁷⁴ Though Mark of Alexandria does not say this explicitly, the reference seems to be to the day before Christmas (24 December)—not to the feast day itself.

⁷⁵ Though Mark of Alexandria does not say this explicitly, the reference seems to be to the day before Theophany (6 January)—not to the feast day itself.

Covenant,⁷⁶ and the night of the Saturday of Light.⁷⁷ You should know that it is by the Holy Spirit that the Church has appointed [evening liturgies for] these four days and not for others, together with everything else It has arranged—and this for reasons [i.e., miraculous events] from God: on the night of Christmas because of the appearance of the star; on the night of Theophany, because it was night when the Holy Spirit appeared in the likeness of a dove;⁷⁸ on the night of Holy Thursday on account of the Last Supper; on the night of the Saturday of Light on account of its descent upon the Tomb. <28> The | (126v) rest of the days of the year do not follow the same pattern as these four, for [on these four days] both night [hours] and day [hours] are called “day” in the religious law. It is for this reason that they are called *paramonai*, which translates as “outside the law” and “contrary to the custom.”⁷⁹ Please know this, God willing.

Chapter Eleven

<29> Someone might raise an objection [to the above statement that there are days when no liturgy is celebrated] based on some of the holy places, or imperial monasteries and cathedrals in the great cities, such as the church of Hagia Sophia [in Constantinople], the church of Antioch, [the church of] Alexandria, and [the church of] the Resurrection [i.e., the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem], for in these places liturgy is served continuously every day. Please let this person know that one of the holy emperors is accountable for this; he pleaded with the Holy Synod regarding this, until the latter permitted that there should be a place, if he so desires, where the faithful could celebrate

⁷⁶ i.e., Holy Thursday. It is called the Thursday of the Covenant, because on this day Jesus established His new covenant with the disciples during the Last Supper (cf. Luke 22:20: “This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you” and 1 Corinthians 11:25: “This cup is the new covenant in My blood” and the words of the Institution in the Anaphoras of the Divine Liturgies of St. John Chrysostom and St. Basil).

⁷⁷ i.e., Holy Saturday. It is called the Saturday of Light, because on this day the holy light (Gr. τὸ ἅγιον φῶς, Ar. *al-nūr al-muqaddas*, in English often called “holy fire”) descends at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem (Skarlakidis 2015).

⁷⁸ I am not sure why Mark of Alexandria believes Christ’s baptism took place at night.

⁷⁹ On this fanciful etymology, see Section 2 of the Introduction above.

and the righteous could rejoice.⁸⁰ <30> Every day the doors there are locked; they are opened [again] after the reading of *al-azmā* (?),⁸¹ as on the day of Easter. In these places, there are no prayers at all in between [the offices]—neither the Hours, nor Psalms; | **(127r)** nor do they chant any of the canons which we, the faithful, chant in our churches throughout the year. This [practice, i.e., serving a liturgy every day] is not an obligation grounded in the religious law; rather it is meant to provide an additional blessing [lit.: happiness] to this confession and to bolster its profile [lit.: exalt its lighthouse].

<31> Besides, even though these great and exalted places have a liturgy every day, the people there do not receive Communion every day; nor do their priests serve a liturgy every day. The church [services] there are arranged into cycle[s] of seven weeks, and the canons have appointed for each week seven priests, [according to] the number of the days of the week. Each day a particular priest does the services, together with his deputies, who are his attendants and are under his authority: deacons, subdeacons, readers, and chanters. Please know this, God willing. Praise, glory, and majesty be to our Lord unto the ages of ages, Amen.

<32> This belongs to what the poor Mark, the least among the Christians and the wretched among the patriarchs of Alexandria, wrote to his disciple Abba George in the port-city of Damietta. May God forgive the scribe, the reader, and those who say “Amen.”

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⁸⁰ This is a reference to the Byzantine emperor Constantine IX Monomachos (r. 1042-1055); see Section 3 of the Introduction above.

⁸¹ This term seems to transliterate the Greek ᾄσμα (“song”), in which case it may refer to the “sung office” (ᾄσματικὴ ἀκολουθία) of the Hagia Sophia cathedral in Constantinople (cf. Getcha 2012: 40-42).

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