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A CHAPTER IN THE PRE-HISTORY OF THE
CHRISTOLOGICAL CONTROVERSIES IN ARABIC:
Readings from the Works of John Rufus

BY
Cornelia B. HORN

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INTRODUCTION

Two aspects in the life of the Church in Palestine in Late Antiquity are particularly important for studying the impact of the Christological controversies on subsequent theological discourse in Arabic. First, the fifth century A.D. witnessed a remarkable growth of monasticism in the Eastern Roman Empire. Second, many of those monks engaged in the struggles over how to express appropriately the fundamental doctrines of the Christian faith¹.

Palestine was one of the centers of the Eastern Roman world in which one most noticed both of these phenomena. The numbers of pilgrims to Jerusalem and the many Holy Places, which testified physically to the doctrinal truths of the life of Christ, increased in the fifth century. At the same time those pilgrims, who decided not to return to their home countries but live as ascetics close to the Holy Places, became more numerous. While pilgrims-turned-ascetics strove for holiness in a God-pleasing life of prayer, fasting, and deeds of mercy, some of them developed a keen sense of what could and could not pass as valid expressions of the Christian faith. In the immediate aftermath of the councils of Ephesus (A.D. 431) and Chalcedon (A.D. 451) disputes over what was in line with a tradition of right faith and practice gained momentum. These controversies first led to separate factions within the Church and eventually to separated Christian Churches.

When looking at the history of the Christological controversies in the provinces of *Palaestina* and *Arabia*², the separation between the Chalcedonian Orthodox Church (Melkite Church) and the anti-Chalcedonian Orthodox Church (Jacobite Church) is especially significant. Scholars are still far from understanding all the details of these struggles for allegiance among the various opposing groups. This article addresses one aspect in particular: the central role of Peter the Iberian and his disciples – especially John Rufus – in the establishment of an anti-Chalcedonian presence among the people of *Palaestina* and *Arabia* in the fifth century³. Irfan Shahîd assumed that the

1) Copyright 2005 Cornelia B. Horn. I wish to thank Theresia Hainthaler for helpful comments on earlier drafts of this work. As a token of my gratitude, this article is dedicated to her.

2) For a description of what is meant by *Arabia* as a province, see Alexander KAZHDAN, "Arabia, Province of", in *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium* 1 (1991), p. 147. Rudolf-Ernst BRÜNNOW and Alfred VON DOMASZEWSKI, *Die Provincia Arabia*, 3 vols. (Strasbourg, 1904-1909), remains the basic work on the province of *Arabia*.

3) Peter and John are the subject of two recent monographs. For Peter the Iberian, see HORN, *Asceticism*. For John Rufus, see Jan-Eric STEPPA, *John Rufus and the Worldview of Anti-Chalcedonian Culture* (Gorgias Press, Piscataway, NJ, 2002).

conversion of Arab tribes, particularly the Ghassânids, to anti-Chalcedonianism occurred in the course of the sixth century. The case of Peter the Iberian, as will be shown, allows one to correct this view and establish a fifth-century date for the Ghassânids' initial conversion to anti-Chalcedonianism.

Centrality of Monasticism in the Life of the Church in Palestine

From the middle of the fifth century onwards the Holy Land was a focus of interaction and struggle between anti-Chalcedonians and Chalcedonians⁴. Ascetics and monks gained prestige and influence in the life of the Church in Palestine. The clearest attestation to that is to be found in the Lives of the Monks of Palestine written by Cyril of Scythopolis (ca. 525-558 A.D.)⁵. Many of these ascetics participated actively in the Christological controversies.

In Palestine asceticism most strikingly impacted doctrinal formation and propagation. First, ascetics participated in the doctrinal struggles of the day. Second, ascetics spread the Christian faith in a given doctrinal formulation among the local population in the provinces of *Palaestina* and *Arabia*.

Since Cyril of Scythopolis wrote in the middle of the sixth century as a Chalcedonian monk at a time when the faith of Chalcedon seemed to have won the day in Palestine, one should not be surprised that his work does not provide much information about either history or influential figures of the rival anti-Chalcedonian movement. Even though Cyril supplies tidbits of interesting information about the Aposchists, as he prefers to call anti-Chalcedonians⁶, one has to turn to the works of John Rufus for a fuller account of anti-Chalcedonian monastic life and activities in the Holy Land in the fifth and early sixth centuries.

A. JOHN RUFUS AND HIS WORK

Most of the information about John Rufus derives from his own works.

4) In order to facilitate a less polemical and more conciliatory and ecumenical conversation between the members of these separate churches, scholars are becoming accustomed to naming the churches Chalcedonian and anti-Chalcedonian, and not Melkite or Jacobite/ Monophysite respectively. See, e.g., Theresia HAINTHALER, "Monophysitismus, Monophysiten", in *LTK* 7 (1998), cols. 418-421.

5) Edition of the Greek text by Eduard SCHWARTZ, *Kyriillos von Skythopolis*, in *TU* 49:2 (Leipzig, 1939). English translation: PRICE, *The Lives*.

6) See, e.g., his *Vita Euthymii*, pp. 47.8, 66.19, 66.26, 67.14 (PRICE, *The Lives*, p. 43 and pp. 63-64).

Rufus can rightfully be considered the most prominent Palestinian anti-Chalcedonian author of the late fifth and early sixth centuries⁷. Writing in Greek, Rufus gained literary fame for three works: (1) the *Vita Petri Iberi*, a biography of his teacher, abbot, and bishop⁸; (2) the *Plerophoriae*, a collection of 89 short chapters characterized as “testimonies and revelations”, which God gave to the anti-Chalcedonians regarding the transgression of the faith at the Council of Chalcedon⁹; and (3) the *De obitu Theodosii*, a short text on the lives of Theodosius and Romanus, two leading anti-Chalcedonian monks in Palestine¹⁰. All three works are preserved completely only in Syriac translation.

One first hears about Rufus at a time, when he studied law at the famous Law School in Beirut¹¹. From there he moved to Antioch, where Patriarch Peter the Fuller ordained him a priest some time between A.D. 476 and 477 and made him his syncellus, the monk who shared his monastic cell¹². When the anti-Chalcedonian Peter the Fuller was sent into a second exile in A.D. 477¹³, Rufus accepted an invitation to Maiuma, Gaza, by his old-time

7) For a long time, Rufus did not hold a place in the limelight of scholarly attention. As exception to this general statement one could only name the study of Eduard Schwartz “Johannes Rufus, ein monophysitischer Schriftsteller”, in *Sitzungsberichte der Heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften*, philosophisch-historische Klasse, Jahrgang 1912, 16. Abteilung (1912), pp. 1-28. More recently, however, see STEPPA, *John Rufus*.

8) *Vita Petri Iberi*, for a critical edition of the Syriac text accompanied by a German translation. A revised edition of the Syriac text accompanied by an English translation by Cornelia HORN and Robert R. PHENIX, Jr. is forthcoming in the Writings from the Greco-Roman World series (SBL/Brill).

9) See *Plerophoriae*. For François N. Nau’s critical edition of the text, accompanied by Maurice Brière’s French translation. An English translation is in preparation.

10) See Ernest Walter BROOKS, *Narratio de obitu Theodosii Hierosolymorum et Romani Monachi auctore anonymo*, in *Vitae virorum apud Monophysitas celeberrimorum*, CSCO Scriptorum Syri, series tertia, tomus 25 (Paris and Leipzig, 1907), vol. 7 (textus), pp. 21-27, vol. 8 (versio), pp. 15-19, for a critical edition of the Syriac text together with a Latin translation.

11) See Paul COLLINET, *Histoire de l’École de Droit de Beyrouth* (Paris, 1925), for the still authoritative study on the subject.

12) See the following three relevant passages: *Vita Petri Iberi*, p. 79, *Plerophoriae*, p. 22, and Zachariah RHETOR, *Vita Severi*, pp. 86-87. For the later, see ZACHARIE LE SCHOLASTIQUE, *Vie de Sévère*, ed. by Marc-Antoine KUGENER, PO 2.1 (Paris, 1903), pp. 86-87.

13) *Vita Petri Iberi*, p. 81, *Plerophoriae*, p. 22. Three bishops are named as holding the see of Antioch during the time of Peter the Fuller’s exile from A.D. 477 to 485, namely John II (A.D. 478), Stephen II (A.D. 478-481), and Calendon (A.D. 481-485). Cf. lists of the patriarchs of Antioch in John Bagnell BURY, *History of the Later Roman Empire*, 2 vols. (London, 1923), and, depending upon Bury, Irfan SHAHĪD, *Byzantium 1989*, p. 554.

Law School friend Theodore of Ashkelon¹⁴, who had become a monastic disciple of Peter the Iberian¹⁵. Theodore talked about his spiritual father in such fervent words that Rufus felt a deep longing to get to know that holy man¹⁶. In or right after A.D. 481, Rufus left Antioch for Maiuma¹⁷, where Theodore introduced him directly to Peter. Rufus soon became a member of the inner circle of Peter's disciples, his close advisor, and even his travel companion. Until Peter's death in A.D. 491, Rufus would accompany the holy man on his journeys through the provinces of *Palaestina Prima*, *Arabia*, and *Phoenicia*. Afterwards Rufus inherited a share in the governance of Peter's monastery¹⁸ and probably became his successor as bishop of Maiuma, Gaza¹⁹. Rufus composed his works in order to assist his fellow anti-Chalcedonians in preserving the memory of their spiritual father and to strengthen them in their conviction of the evil, which the Council of Chalcedon supposedly had brought about. Rufus wrote about events in the Christological controversies over Chalcedon, which he himself had witnessed or about which he had learned directly from Peter.

John Rufus was of Arab background. A passage in the *Plerophoriae* indicates that his family was of Arab descent. The relevant section states that after his return to the see of Antioch Patriarch Peter the Fuller sent two messengers to Rufus in order to persuade him to leave the community of Peter the Iberian and return to Antioch²⁰. It was hard for Rufus to resist the messengers' efforts who "were striving with all means to take [him] away"²¹. His struggle was especially difficult since "those from *Arabia*, the ones belonging to [his] family and [his] kindred" had come along with the two and

14) *Vita Petri Iberi*, p. 81; see also Zachariah RHETOR, *Vita Severi*, pp. 86-87.

15) *Vita Petri Iberi*, p. 82.

16) On the conversion to the ascetic life of both Theodore of Ashkelon and a certain Abba John through Peter's example, see also *Vita Petri Iberi*, p. 78.

17) Rufus seems to have left Antioch by the time Calendion took over the patriarchal see of Antioch. See *Vita Petri Iberi*, p. 81. See also *Plerophoriae*, p. 89, in support of Rufus's disdain for Calendion.

18) Zachariah RHETOR, *Vita Severi*, p. 86, where John Rufus is also called "the great John". One of the four heirs, whom Peter explicitly set in as heirs to his monastery, was "Abba John" or "John the Canopite". John Rufus and John the Canopite are not to be identified with one another.

19) See, e.g., the title of the *Plerophoriae*.

20) *Plerophoriae* 22. The two messengers were Peter of Titopolis and Solomon the Armenian.

21) *Plerophoriae*, p. 22.

“were urging on [his] return to Antioch”²².

Without supplying further proof, Sauget and Orlandi speculated that the tribe, to which Rufus belonged, was from southern Palestine, “probably ... Ashkelon”²³. Any attempt at establishing Rufus’s provenance as Ashkelon, by way of his relationship with Theodore, is discouraged by the *Vita Petri Iberi*’s comment that Rufus’s brotherly love towards Theodore dated back to their time of studying together in Beirut²⁴. It seems more likely that his family belonged to one of the Arab tribes who had settled in the greater Antioch area, either in the metropolis of Antioch directly or along the oriental Roman *limes*. The presence of Arab tribes in the greater Antioch area is certainly attested to for the fifth century. Theodoret of Cyrrhus’s note on Simeon in his *Historia Religiosa*, a text composed in A.D. 444, for instance, mentions that members of Arab tribes were coming from the area to the pillar of Simeon Stylites for visits²⁵. Many of them, according to Theodoret, converted to Christianity²⁶. From his own perspective as a priest and ascetic, Rufus describes his relatives as “laypeople” and “ones who were thinking these things of the world”²⁷. It is unlikely that he used such words to indicate that his relatives were pagan. Although Rufus’s relatives were not members of the clergy as he was, it is quite likely that they were Christians.

In the *Plerophoriae* Rufus says that the relatives who visited him “came

22) *Plerophoriae*, p. 22.

23) Joseph-Marie SAUGET and Tito ORLANDI, “John of Maiuma (John Rufus)”, in *Encyclopedia of the Early Church*, vol. 1 (1992), pp. 445-446, here p. 445. Others accepted their assumption. See, e.g., Georg RÖWEKAMP, “Johannes Rufus”, in *Lexikon der Antiken Christlichen Literatur*, edited by Siegmund Döpp and Wilhelm Geerlings (Herder, Freiburg, Basel, Wien, 1998), pp. 356-357, here p. 356.

24) *Vita Petri Iberi*, p. 81.

25) Theodoret of Cyrrhus’s *Life of Simeon Stylites* is part of his *Historia Religiosa*. On Theodoret of Cyrrhus, by way of introduction, see Johannes QUASTEN, *Patrology*, vol. 3 (Christian Classics, Inc., Westminster, Maryland, 1994), pp. 536-554. The Greek text of the *Historia Religiosa* together with a French translation is to be found in Pierre Canivet and Alice LEROY-MOLINGHEN, *Histoire des moines de Syrie*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1977 and 1979). For a recent English translation of the *Historia Religiosa* see PRICE, *History*. For important studies on Antioch and the region of northern Syria consult George TCHALENKO, *Villages antiques de la Syrie du Nord*, 3 vols. (Paris, 1953-1958); John Hugo Wolfgang Gideon LIEBSCHÜTZ, *Antioch: City and Imperial Administration in the Later Roman Empire* (Oxford, 1972); and Pierre CANIVET, *Le monachisme syrien selon Théodoret de Cyr*, *Théologie historique* 42 (Paris, 1977).

26) THEODORET OF CYRRHUS, *Historia Religiosa, Vita Simeoni* 11. Cf. also Irfan SHAHĪD, *Byzantium 1989*, pp. 149-153.

27) *Plerophoriae*, p. 22.

together with” the two messengers who came from Antioch²⁸. While it cannot be excluded that his relatives could have come from anywhere north of Gaza, it is likely that they came from the Antioch area, especially since they were “agitated” and “urged” Rufus to return to Antioch²⁹. Perhaps his family wanted him to live closer to home and not far off in southern Palestine. He, however, preferred to stay in Palestine as a disciple of the great Peter the Iberian.

B. WHO WAS PETER THE IBERIAN?

Peter the Iberian was one of the key figures in the anti-Chalcedonian resistance in Palestine. Being the son of the king of Georgia, Peter had spent his youth as political hostage at the court of Theodosius II and Eudocia in Constantinople³⁰. Having entered onto the road of pilgrimage to Jerusalem in his late teenage years, he never returned to Constantinople but lived as a monk first in the Holy City and then in a monastic community in Maiuma, Gaza. In the tumultuous protests, which “the holy and zealous monks ... from *Arabia* and from Palestine”³¹ aroused against Bishop Juvenal of Jerusalem over his acceptance of the Council of Chalcedon in A.D. 451, Peter emerged as an influential participant³². Theodosius, the new anti-Chalcedonian bishop of Jerusalem, ordained him as anti-Chalcedonian bishop of Maiuma³³. When Juvenal returned to the see of Jerusalem with the help of imperial troops, Peter had to leave his flock in Maiuma and flee to Egypt in A.D. 453. He stayed there for about two decades.

By the time Rufus became personally acquainted with him, Peter had

28) *Plerophoriae*, p. 22.

29) *Plerophoriae*, p. 22.

30) *Vita Petri Iberi*, pp. 15-16. For a discussion of this early part of his life, see Cornelia HORN, “Befriending the Christian Romans or the impious Persians? – The *Vita Petri Iberi* on Byzantine-Georgian Relations in the Fifth Century AD”, unpublished manuscript of a paper presented at the Byzantine Studies Conference, University of Maryland (November, 1999). On the relationship between Empress Eudocia and Peter, see Cornelia HORN, “Empress Eudocia and the Monk Peter the Iberian: Patronage, Pilgrimage, and the Love of a Foster-Mother in Fifth-Century Palestine”, in *Byzantinische Forschungen* 28 (2004), pp. 197-213.

31) *Plerophoriae*, p. 25.

32) *Plerophoriae*, p. 56. On Peter’s role in that revolt, see HORN, *Asceticism and Christological Controversy*, ch. 2.

33) *Plerophoriae*, p. 25. For a study of anti-Chalcedonian asceticism in the Gaza area at the time, see Cornelia HORN, “Peter the Iberian and Palestinian Anti-Chalcedonian Monasticism in Fifth- and Early Sixth-century Gaza”, in *ARAM* 15 (2003), pp. 109-128.

returned to Palestine. Peter had gained a reputation as holy man among anti-Chalcedonians in Palestine and Egypt. What distinguished him in particular, according to Rufus, were his untiring efforts at spreading the anti-Chalcedonian faith wherever he went. In the *Vita Petri Iberi* Rufus tells that when Peter the Fuller and Paul of Ephesus were sent into exile, i.e., around A.D. 477 / 478,

“[t]he blessed Peter [the Iberian], dwelling [as a monk] in Palestine, was for everyone a support. In the likeness of the light of the sun, he was enlightening the souls of the orthodox, not only those in Palestine, but also in Egypt and everywhere else, for he did not allow them to be weary and depressed by the dark fog of ungodliness”³⁴.

1. Peter’s Activities in Eastern *Palaestina Prima* and *Arabia*

When Peter returned to Palestine after about two decades in Alexandria and Egypt, his behavior had changed. On earlier occasions Rufus presented him as an ascetic, who loved quietness and felt inadequate to address crowds of people. However, when Peter returned to Palestine he seemed to have acquired a strong desire both to share the anti-Chalcedonian faith with others and to enlarge and strengthen existing anti-Chalcedonian communities³⁵. Once Peter had resettled in Palestine, visitors came to him from everywhere. Rufus tells that “[Peter] was strengthening some, ... he was enlightening [others, and] was adding [them] to the orthodox [i.e., anti-Chalcedonian] church”³⁶. Many of the men and women, whom Peter instructed, joined the ranks of anti-Chalcedonian ascetics³⁷.

In the *Vita Petri Iberi* Rufus articulated one of the reasons why the holy man Peter, not long after he settled in Palaea, close to Ashkelon in western Palestine, began to travel extensively. Peter felt that God was calling him for the work of “preparing for the Lord a people, copious and zealous for good works”³⁸. In order better to pursue that task, Peter “frequently wandered from one place to another”³⁹, visiting the Gaza area and Maiuma, sites

34) *Vita Petri Iberi*, p. 81. For a fuller study of Peter the Iberian’s travels see also Cornelia HORN, “Weaving the pilgrim’s crown: John Rufus’s view of Peter the Iberian’s journeys in Late Antique Palestine”, in *The Journal of Eastern Christian Studies / Het Christlijk Oosten* 56.1-4 (2004), pp. 171-190.

35) *Vita Petri Iberi*, p. 77.

36) *Vita Petri Iberi*, p. 77.

37) *Vita Petri Iberi*, pp. 77-78.

38) *Vita Petri Iberi*, p. 78.

39) *Vita Petri Iberi*, p. 78.

around Caesarea Maritima and Jerusalem, and coming “as far as the places of *Arabia*”⁴⁰. Rufus summarized Peter’s activities in all those cities and regions, including *Arabia*, in the following way:

“To where the Spirit was calling and leading him, at every place he also bestowed grace to him, not only to perform healings and to chase away evil spirits, but also in the word and in the teaching and through many signs and wonders, so that everywhere through his coming he would establish flocks of believers, congregations of orthodox ones [i.e., anti-Chalcedonians], monasteries, and churches. And there was not a place to which he was going, in which he was not offering to the Lord the salvation of many souls, since he accepted the apostolic contest and course”⁴¹.

Ever since Rufus had joined Peter in or after A.D. 481, he had accompanied the holy man on his travels. One assumes that Rufus, most likely being a native Arab, would have served Peter well as a guide, particularly on their visits to the areas in *Arabia*, where Rufus may have had greater knowledge of the terrain and possibly also was able to communicate with the local population more easily. Peter spoke Georgian and Greek⁴². Whether he knew Coptic is not certain, but not impossible, given his long sojourn in Egypt and Alexandria⁴³. Peter as well as Rufus may have had some facility in Syriac and/or Christian and Jewish Palestinian Aramaic⁴⁴, yet it was probably not Rufus himself, who translated the *Vita Petri Iberi* into Syriac⁴⁵. If one as-

40) *Vita Petri Iberi*, p. 78.

41) *Vita Petri Iberi*, p. 78.

42) Georgian was Peter’s mother tongue. *Vita Petri Iberi*, p. 11 refers to his nurse praying in Georgian in the boy’s presence and Peter seemed to have understood and remembered her words. If Peter had not received already some training in Greek as a very young boy in Georgia, he likely acquired a thorough command of Greek in Constantinople.

43) The extant fragments of a Coptic version of the *Plerophoriae* could point to a collection of these stories composed by Peter, which Rufus later would have reworked and enlarged. See Walter Ewing CRUM (ed.) *Theological Texts from Coptic Papyri* (Oxford, 1913), pp. 62-64; several publications by Tito Orlandi listed in IDEM, “John of Mayuma”, in *The Coptic Encyclopedia* 5 (1991), p. 1366; discussion in HORN, *Asceticism and Christology Controversy*, chapter 1. It cannot be excluded that Peter could have composed an original version of the *Plerophoriae* in Coptic.

44) According to the Georgian “Life of Peter the Iberian”, Peter received at least some training and education in Syriac/Aramaic during his stay in Jerusalem. See M. Nicolas MARR, “Ckhovreba Petre Iverisa”, in *Pravoslavnyi Palestinskii Sbornik* 47, 16, 2 (St. Petersburg, 1896), p. 11, end of section 13; in Ieane LOLASHVILMA, *Areopagetuli krebuli: dionise areopageli da Petre Iberieli dzvelkartul mcarlobali: gamosatcemat* (Tbilisi, 1983), pp. 117-158; the corresponding section carries the number seven.

45) The translation of Rufus’s works from Greek into Syriac may have to be seen as oc-

sumes that among the local population in the relevant areas at least some were capable of understanding Greek⁴⁶, it seems even more likely that people who acquired facility in Greek through a course of higher education would themselves be bilingual in Greek and Syriac. Nowhere in his works does Rufus mention the use of any translators, who would have facilitated communication with the local population. Yet wherever they went they had numerous encounters with local people.

2. Peter's Travels to *Arabia*

Shortly after his initial arrival in Jerusalem in the late 430s or early 440s, Peter undertook a pilgrimage to Mount Nebo. The trip could be counted as a first journey to *Arabia*. In the later part of his life, Peter had different reasons for going into the territory of *Arabia* a second time, namely his poor health. Describing the second journey Rufus says that

“[o]nce it pleased the blessed one also to go to the areas of Arabia, on account of his weakness namely, so that he would bathe in the hot spring, which is in Livias, the one which is called ‘of Saint Moses’”⁴⁷.

From intensive practice of asceticism, Peter's health had deteriorated over time. His body, as Rufus witnessed, “had vanished” and “only that skin ... was being spread out over the dried-up bones, and that [skin] was very thin”⁴⁸. Perhaps Peter also had contracted a disease since he was vomiting together “with blood and torn material”⁴⁹ the food, – eggs and vegetables⁵⁰–, which he had tried to eat. While Peter was concerned about his health, God, according to Rufus, had his own reason for sending Peter to Livias in the area between *Palaestina Prima* and *Arabia*. Rufus states that “God ... called

curing at the same time, at which Severus of Antioch's works, particularly his *Cathedral Homilies*, were translated for an anti-Chalcedonian audience that found itself in growing opposition to a Greek-speaking Chalcedonian imperial Church.

46) John Moschus in his *Pratum Spirituale*, preserving several accounts of monks in Palestine in the late sixth and early seventh century, records an encounter between Abba Nicholas and three Saracens, one of whom spoke Greek and could thus communicate with Abba Nicholas. Cf. John MOSCHUS, *Pratum Spirituale* 155 (English translation in John WORTLEY, *The Spiritual Meadow of John Moschos*, Cistercian Studies Series 139 [Cistercian Publications, Kalamazoo, Michigan, 1992], p. 129).

47) *Vita Petri Iberi*, p. 83.

48) *Vita Petri Iberi*, p. 83.

49) *Vita Petri Iberi*, p. 83.

50) *Vita Petri Iberi*, p. 84.

his servant there for the catch and the salvation of many souls”⁵¹.

Peter quit bathing in the spring after only one day, since he felt the water was too cold and was unprofitable for his health. Of much greater importance than the waters was that when

“[Peter, Rufus, and Peter’s other followers] came to Livias, ... many ran there from the nearby region of *Arabia*, especially from among the first men and the magistrates of the city of Madaba and from other places, for the news concerning him had hurried ahead. He called [on] all of them, who were anxious to be blessed and to enjoy his grace”⁵².

Peter became the center of attention for many people from the neighboring areas of *Arabia*. His fame as a holy man had spread among them and they desired to receive his blessings.

Peter seemed to have been in lively exchange with the local population and “the ones who came from *Arabia*”⁵³. Everyone knew that he had come to the hot spring because of his health, but that he also needed to move on because the hot spring’s waters had offered no help. From their familiarity with the area “the ones who came from *Arabia*” knew of “another hot spring in their [own] place”, named Ba’ar, and recommended it to Peter as “very hot and useful”⁵⁴. The crowds from *Arabia* were “compelling him to use it”, as Rufus said⁵⁵. With a sense that God would work miracles through him and that many conversions to the anti-Chalcedonian faith could follow, Peter “readily obeyed ... [since] he knew for what reason he was called to there by God”⁵⁶.

a. *Peter in Madaba*

After a second visit to Mount Nebo, Peter and his disciples came to Madaba, a city located in the province of *Arabia*⁵⁷. At the time of Peter’s

51) *Vita Petri Iberi*, p. 84.

52) *Vita Petri Iberi*, p. 84.

53) *Vita Petri Iberi*, p. 84.

54) *Vita Petri Iberi*, p. 85.

55) *Vita Petri Iberi*, p. 85.

56) *Vita Petri Iberi*, p. 85.

57) *Vita Petri Iberi*, p. 85. See, e.g., the remark in Eusebius’s *Onomastikon*, and in Jerome’s Latin translation thereof. Edited by Erich KLOSTERMANN, *Eusebius Werke, Das Onomastikon der Biblischen Ortsnamen*, GCS 3 (Leipzig, 1904), p. 128, sect. 278. Jerome’s Latin translation (GCS 3, p. 129, section 138) reads: *Medaba usque hodie urbs Arabiae antiquum nomen retinens iuxta Esebon*.

visit to Madaba, “the area was afflicted by a great lack of rain”, which put all life at greatest risk of death from thirst⁵⁸. Rufus indicates that the people of Madaba asked Peter to come to their city, because they expected that he would be able to help them⁵⁹. And sure enough, the rain miracle happened. Rufus recounts:

“When we journeyed on the way and came near to the borders of the city, the sky itself suddenly covered over [with] clouds, thunders sounded, flashes of lightening went out, and all of this abundance of rain, rather, however, a blessing from God, descended and watered that whole area so that we were in peril of being imbued on the way, all the water reservoirs, however, those of every [private household] and those of the public, would be filled from the blessing. They would restore the fruits to life in a single short moment”⁶⁰.

The inhabitants of Madaba, greatly amazed and overjoyed, ran out to meet Peter “with fear, trembling, joy, and eulogies, while they were kissing and embracing him”⁶¹.

Skilfully, Rufus combines themes from the Old and the New Testament when he elaborates upon what happened to the inhabitants of Madaba, both in a physical and in a spiritual sense. Rufus reports that they called Peter “a second Elijah and Moses”, whom he resembled in producing water for quenching the people’s thirst⁶². Yet Rufus composed his text in such a way that an attentive listener or reader also would be inclined to see Peter as surpassing Old Testament figures. Rufus states that Peter’s visit to Madaba took place shortly before Pentecost. He says explicitly that “[i]t was, however, also that time which made that wonder great, for it was a few days before Pentecost”⁶³. Then Rufus continues by saying,

“[t]herefore they had hurried to him in this way with affection and faith and they were listening to his God-inspired teachings, so that many from among them were readily obedient to the preaching of the orthodox faith.

58) *Vita Petri Iberi*, p. 89.

59) *Vita Petri Iberi*, p. 89.

60) *Vita Petri Iberi*, pp. 89-90.

61) *Vita Petri Iberi*, p. 90.

62) In 1 Kings 18, Scripture reports that at a time of lack of rain the prophet Elijah prayed and the heavens opened again after having remained closed for three years. Exodus 17 recounts how Moses brought forth water from a rock to save those at peril from thirst. In the eyes of the inhabitants of Madaba Peter clearly stood in line with these two great Old Testament prophets and wonderworkers.

63) *Vita Petri Iberi*, p. 90.

Together with their children and their wives they also would become our associates and fellow brothers in the faith and zealous ones for the perfection of the church'⁶⁴.

Once the eyes and ears of the people were opened through their experience of the miracle of water raining down on them, their hearts and minds also were opened to receive Peter's anti-Chalcedonian preaching. Many of them became anti-Chalcedonians. Although Rufus does not expressly draw a parallel, his portrayal of what happened through Peter evokes the prophecy and the events accompanying the apostle Peter's speech in front of the multitudes at Pentecost. With the waters which God was pouring out over the people of Madaba in the long-awaited rain, God seems at the same time to have poured out his Spirit over them in order to open their hearts for the words Peter the Iberian was preaching. As much as the apostle Peter's audience in the *Acts of the Apostles* responded to his words⁶⁵, so also did the people of Madaba convert to the anti-Chalcedonian faith through Peter the Iberian's preaching. All the essential elements found in the *Vita Petri Iberi* seem to have their model in the *Acts of the Apostles*: the apostle Peter's quote of Joel's prophecy that in the last days God would pour out his spirit over all flesh, Peter's proclamation of the essential doctrines of the Christian faith, the promises given to the audience and their children, their conversions, their becoming members of the Christian community, and their holding on to the community and the teachings proclaimed to them. It seems clear that in Madaba, in the province of *Arabia*, Rufus saw that Peter was being commissioned to preach and gain many for the anti-Chalcedonian faith.

b. Peter at Ba'ar

From Madaba, Peter and his disciples moved on to visit the hot spring of Ba'ar at the eastern shore of the Dead Sea⁶⁶. A large crowd of people, including many of the inhabitants of Madaba, the rulers of Madaba, and many

64) *Vita Petri Iberi*, p. 90.

65) Cf. Acts 2.14-42.

66) Christa Clamer, researcher at the Department of Archaeology at the École Biblique et Archéologique, Jerusalem, studied the geography and archaeology of the hot springs of Ba'ar. She generously shared her insights with me before publication of her work. See now Christa CLAMER, "The Hot Springs of Kallirrhoe and Baarou", in *The Madaba Map Centenary 1897-1997: Travelling Through the Byzantine Umayyad Period*, eds. Michele PICCIRILLO and Eugenio ALLIATA, Studium Biblicum Franciscanum, Collectio Maior 40 (Jerusalem, 1999), pp. 221-225.

from among the soldiers stationed in the area, accompanied them⁶⁷. Based on the *Notitia Dignitatum*⁶⁸, which in its account of the Eastern part reflects the status of the army of the Roman Empire between A.D. 395 to 413⁶⁹, and which lists for the province of *Arabia a cohors tertia felix Arabum, in ripa Vade Afaris fluvii in castris Arnonensibus (Or. XXXVII)*, one may conclude that if not all, then at least some of the soldiers stationed in the area, which Peter visited, were of Arab origin⁷⁰. The people, who accompanied Peter to Ba'ar at that occasion, did not hope for rain through the intercession of the saint. Rather they expected that through Peter's presence they could overcome "the desolation of the place and [the] fear" and "the boiling of the air and the heat", which usually rendered the place inaccessible for those seeking the pleasures of a bath there⁷¹. Rain miracles in such hot climates are a common means of authenticating a spiritual leader's divine commission. One can find them also on the Chalcedonian side⁷².

67) According to *Vita Petri Iberi*, p. 92, the name of the river running through the valley at Ba'ar was Arnon. In their entry under "Arnon", Eusebius and Jerome indicate the presence of soldiers in the area. Raabe was the first to refer to this information in application to the present context. Cf. EUSEBIUS, *Onomastikon*, section 212 (GCS 3, p. 10) and JEROME, *Onomastikon*, section 86 (GCS 3, p. 11).

68) *Notitia Dignitatum*, ed. Otto Seeck (Berlin, 1876). For a useful discussion of the *Notitia Dignitatum* see JONES, *The Later*, pp. 1417-1450; see also the entry "Notitia Dignitatum", in *Pauly's Real-Encyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaften* 17 (1939), cols. 1077-1116.

69) JONES, *The Later*, p. 1421.

70) Irfan SHAHĪD, *Rome and the Arabs; A Prolegomenon to the Study of Byzantium and the Arabs* (Washington, DC, 1984), p. 62, notes, that the soldiers in this unit were "definitely Arab". For the use of native troops in the Roman army in that area see Rudolf-Ernst BRÜNNOW, "Die Kastelle des Arabischen Limes", *Florilegium ou recueil de travaux d'érudition dédiés à Monsieur le marquis Melchior de Vogüé* (Paris, 1909), pp. 65-77, here p. 76. See SHAHĪD, *Rome and the Arabs; A Prolegomenon*, p. 63, n. 42, for further references relevant for an in-depth study of the issue, which cannot be pursued here.

71) *Vita Petri Iberi*, pp. 90-91.

72) In Cyril of Scythopolis's accounts of the lives of Palestinian monks rain miracles and miracles involving the provision of water in times of a drought appear almost as a staple element of the local hagiography. At several instances Cyril tells how the prayers of the monks Euthymius, Sabas, and Cyriacus let rainwater pour down or provided drinking-water in the desert. For Euthymius, see CYRIL OF SCYTHOPOLIS, *Vita Euthymii*, pp. 38-39.16, 57-57.10, 65.9-66.18, 94.20-95.1 (PRICE, *Lives*, pp. 34-35, 53-54, 62-63, 103); for Sabas, see CYRIL OF SCYTHOPOLIS, *Vita Sabae*, pp. 101.6-101.19, 167.3-169.25 (PRICE, *Lives*, pp. 110, 176-179); and for Cyriacus, see CYRIL OF SCYTHOPOLIS, *Vita Cyriaci* 232.27-233.3 (PRICE, *Lives*, p. 256). Cyril explicitly states that "God ... [was] working such miracles through his saints" (CYRIL OF SCYTHOPOLIS, *Vita Euthymii* 57.10 [PRICE, *Lives*, p. 54]), strengthening thus the

Leaving Ba'ar after the feast of the Ascension, Peter and his disciples returned to Madaba⁷³. Rufus describes the short journey almost like a triumphal procession:

“[N]ot only the people of the city [i.e., Madaba], but also of the villages and of the farms on the way were going out with joy and faith to the meeting [with the saint], were running to him, and were receiving a blessing, and especially because they heard those wonders, which had happened in the valley”⁷⁴.

Back in Madaba, Peter lodged with his disciples at the house of “Moses, the magistrate, a believing man and a wise orthodox one”⁷⁵. In Rufus’s parlance this is a way of saying that Moses was a fellow anti-Chalcedonian.

3. Working Miracles Among the Saracens

During Peter’s second stay in Madaba, the miracles, which happened upon his intercession, concentrated on a particular theme: that God can give fertility and offspring to parents, who for years were trying in vain to conceive children.

The first miracle benefited Qaiuma, a soldier, and his wife. Rufus tells:

“While we were entering the city, however, a man in the rank of the soldiers, whose name was Qaiuma, who was sterile or who had a barren wife, wherefore [they] did not have children, while he approached us, was asking us to make supplication to the blessed one to pray over them that they would have children”⁷⁶.

Qaiuma approached Peter and heard from him the comforting words: “Our Lord, Jesus Christ, will be with your seed”. Despite his amazement, Qaiuma “received the word in faith”, as Rufus points out, and subsequently he “received such a great fruit of the blessing that toward the end he would be the father of many children”⁷⁷. A similar miracle blessed a young couple with long-awaited offspring⁷⁸.

credibility of the teachings of the Chalcedonian monks, whose lives Cyril described.

73) *Vita Petri Iberi*, p. 94.

74) *Vita Petri Iberi*, p. 94.

75) *Vita Petri Iberi*, p. 94.

76) *Vita Petri Iberi*, p. 94.

77) *Vita Petri Iberi*, p. 94.

78) Rufus reports that a husband «hated his wife and was chasing her away... and was not seeing her [again]». The concerned father of the wife asked Peter to admonish his daughter's husband to be reconciled with his wife and take her back, even though the marriage had

It was important for Rufus to emphasize that Peter's prayers interceded successfully on behalf of childless parents in many such cases, both in the areas of *Arabia* and elsewhere⁷⁹. Yet, since Rufus lists testimonies to this kind of miracle explicitly for the area of Madaba in *Arabia*, one is led to assume that such miracles especially were instrumental for Peter in gaining the hearts of the local population.

From among the few accounts witnessing to contacts between Christian monks and Saracens or Arabs, several attest to miracles related to the conception of children. One finds examples in Sozomen⁸⁰, Theodoret of Cyrrhus⁸¹, and Cyril of Scythopolis⁸². From early Christian and particular early monas-

been without children up until then. When Peter met with the young husband and "was admonishing and persuading him like a father, «the young man wept, but seemed unable to do what was requested. Yet when he heard Peter say to him», «If you decided thus because you desired children, obey me, my son. Reverence my white hair! Accept the intercession and take your wife [back]! And I trust in the Lord that he is fulfilling your desire to the fullness», he put his trust in the saint and obeyed. And he was not disappointed. Rufus states, that «afterwards he had such a great number of children that he would be the father of nine children, seven male and two female». Cf. *Vita Petri Iberi*, p. 95.

79) *Vita Petri Iberi*, pp. 94-95.

80) In his *Ecclesiastical History* Sozomen tells how the Saracens became Christians when their phylarch Zocomus and all his tribe converted and were baptized. Zocomus was childless, but brought his complaint to the attention of a certain monk, who was greatly celebrated. Sozomen reports that «[t]he monk desired Zocomus to be of good cheer, engaged in prayer on his behalf, and sent him away with the promise that, if he would believe in Christ, he would have a son. When this promise was confirmed by God, and when a son was born to him, Zocomus was initiated, and all his subjects with him». SOZOMEN, *Ecclesiastical History* VI.38 (NPNF, 2nd series, vol. 2, pp. 374-375, here p. 375). Also note the discussion of the section in SHAHĪD, *Byzantium 1989*, pp. 3-4.

81) In his account of the life of Simeon the Stylite in the *Historia Religiosa* THEODORET OF CYRRHUS tells that "the queen of the Ishmaelites was sterile but longed to have children". When she had sent messengers to Simeon, her wish was granted and she gave birth to a son, for whom once more she requested and obtained special blessings from the saint. See THEODORET OF CYRRHUS, *Vita Simeon Stylites*, in *Historia Religiosa* 26.21, English translation in Robert DORAN, *The Lives of Simeon Stylites*, Cistercian Studies Series 112 (Kalamazoo, Michigan, 1992), p. 81. Note also the account of "a queen of the Arabs, who was sterile", and who "came to him begging that she might bear children", contained in certain of the Greek manuscripts and the Latin tradition of the *Vita Simeonis Stylites* by ANTONIUS. See DORAN, *The Lives of Simeon Stylites*, Appendix C, pp. 225-226.

82) In Cyril of Scythopolis's *Vita Euthymii* one reads that "Terebôn the Saracen, despite taking a wife from his own tribe and living with her for a long time, had no child, since she was barren". Terebôn went with his wife to the monk Euthymius and asked for his prayers. When Euthymius "recogniz[ed] their faith, [he] sealed them three times with the sign of the

tic literature one gains the impression that in accounts of miracles worked for the benefit of so-called Saracens or Arabs a holy man's intercessory prayer for the conception of children by an infertile couple plays a central role. Commenting on such a miracle, the church historian Sozomen explicitly stated that "among the Saracens ... it was accounted of great importance to have children"⁸³. In a culture in which it is considered necessary for survival to have offspring, miracles that assist in remedying that need are powerful witnesses in the proclamation of the Christian faith. In such situations it does not matter what the particular dogmatic affiliation of the person's confession of faith is.

4. Peter as a Missionary Among the Arabs

Monks and ascetics bore the role of being God's mediators, whose prayers met the needs of common folks. As noted at several occasions above, throughout his account of Peter's travels in the areas of eastern *Palaestina Prima* and *Arabia* Rufus inserted remarks showing that Peter was active as a missionary among the people in those areas. Through his miracle-working he gained their ear, for example, in Madaba, where the men of the city came "for converse" and "for honoring and reverencing him"⁸⁴. Peter gained new converts and strengthened those who already adhered to the anti-Chalcedonian faith, for example in Batmin, east of the Jordan, where he "perfected the congregation, and blessed the place and its inhabitants"⁸⁵. Even though Peter had not intended to turn his journey in search for healing from the hot springs of *Arabia* into a missionary adventure, Rufus understood that such had been God's plan for Peter.

C. ANTI-CHALCEDONIAN INFLUENCES IN *PALAESTINA PRIMA* AND *ARABIA*

Missionary activity of monks among the people in the provinces of *Palaestina* and *Arabia* is attested to for the time prior to Peter's journeys to *Arabia*. Jerome gives an account of how in the mid-fourth century A.D. the

cross, also touching the woman's womb, and said to them, 'Depart rejoicing in the Lord; for behold, in his love for men he bestows on you three male sons'". The couple trusted in Euthymius's words, returned home, and as promised became parents of three sons. CYRIL OF SCYTHOPOLIS, *Vita Euthymii*, p. 23 (PRICE, *Lives*, p. 32).

83) SOZOMEN, *Ecclesiastical History* VI.38 (NPNF, 2nd series, vol. 2, pp. 374-375, here p. 375).

84) *Vita Petri Iberi*, p. 96.

85) *Vita Petri Iberi*, p. 96.

monk Hilarion traveled through Elusa, a city in the north-western Negev, which belonged to the province of *Palaestina Tertia/Salutaris*, and preached to the city's inhabitants, including many Saracens⁸⁶. At that time Elusa was still a cult center of Venus/Lucifer⁸⁷. Upon receiving prayers and blessings from Hilarion many of the Saracens became Christians and insisted that Hilarion designate the space for a Church to be built in their city as well as mark the pagan priest of Elusa with the sign of Christ, i.e., the Cross⁸⁸. Despite their initial conversion, however, the inhabitants of Elusa did not abandon their veneration of Venus/Lucifer, but continued it until long after Hilarion's death (A.D. 371)⁸⁹.

For the impact of Christianisation in the province of *Arabia*, one relies on accounts of the church historians Theodoret of Cyrrhus, Sozomen, and Socrates⁹⁰. According to them, a Saracen monk, Moses, converted many to Christianity.

In order to understand Peter's missionary activities among the people in eastern Palestine and among the Saracens in the province of *Arabia* more fully, one has to look at his efforts as those of an anti-Chalcedonian monk and ascetic. In this regard the following observations are of interest and suggestive.

If one pays attention to the spread of anti-Chalcedonian monasteries throughout Palestine as attested to in Rufus's works for the late fifth and early sixth centuries, one notices in particular (1) the concentration of anti-Chalcedonians in several cities along the Mediterranean coast with a particular focus on the greater Ashkelon/Gaza area; (2) a considerable anti-Chalcedonian presence among the ascetics in the Holy City, where, for the 480s⁹¹, Rufus attests to "a great congregation of orthodox [i.e., anti-

86) Jerome, *Vita Hilarionis*, PG 23.29-54.

87) DEVREESE, *Le Christianisme*, pp. 235-251, here p. 237.

88) JEROME, *Vita Hilarionis*, PG 23.42 CD. DEVREESE, "Le Christianisme", p. 237, n. 2, also mentions that Hilarion's name was found in several inscriptions from the Negev.

89) DEVREESE, *Le Christianisme*, p. 237, n. 3, refers to Epiphanius's account of the ongoing celebration of the feast of Venus in *De Haeresibus* 51.22, 6-11. The critically edited text is to be found in Karl HOLL, *GCS* 31 (1922), pp. 284-286.

90) THEODORET OF CYRRHUS, *EH* IV.20 (NPNF, 2nd series, vol. 3, pp. 125-126); SOZOMEN, *EH* VI.38 (NPNF, 2nd series, vol. 3, pp. 374-375); SOCRATES, *EH* IV.36 (NPNF, 2nd series, vol. 2, p. 116).

91) Particularly in the year, in which Peter the Fuller returned from exile, reoccupied the patriarchal throne of Antioch, and sent his synodal letter to Martyrius of Jerusalem. Cf. *Plerophoriae* 22.

Chalcedonian] fathers, [who] had a monastery and cells of quietness”⁹²; and (3) several sites inhabited by anti-Chalcedonians in the area somewhat north of Jerusalem and into Samaria⁹³.

In the *Plerophoriae* Rufus tells that a certain Abba Paul founded a coenobium for men and women in the village of Gantha, located about fifteen miles north of Jerusalem⁹⁴. Abba Paul was a native of Gantha. The village first belonged to Empress Eudocia, then after her death, to the Church of Jerusalem. All his life, Abba Paul was held in highest esteem by the local population, by Empress Eudocia, and even by Chalcedonian clerics because of his virtuous and exemplary ascetic life. Rufus described Abba Paul as “the father of a great assembly of monks”, who finally also “became priest of the church of the village”⁹⁵. Abba Paul and Peter the Iberian were in closest communion with one another. Rufus, on his part, portrayed Abba Paul as a committed anti-Chalcedonian⁹⁶. Rufus indicated that at the time he was writing the *Plerophoriae* in the early sixth century the village of Gantha was one of the centers of anti-Chalcedonian believers⁹⁷.

For the province of *Palaestina Prima* one knows of only very few monasteries, for which one can demonstrate settlement by Arabic-speaking ascetics⁹⁸. The one, which is best known and which moreover allows some identifi-

92) *Plerophoriae*, p. 22.

93) For previous thoughts on this matter consult William H. C. FRENCH, *The Rise of the Monophysite Movement; Chapters in the History of the Church in the Fifth and Sixth Centuries*, (Cambridge, 1972), pp. 151-154; Claudine M. DAUPHIN, *La Palestine byzantine: Peuplement et Populations*, BAR International Series 726, vol. I: Text (Archaeopress, Oxford, 1998), pp. 264-267.

94) *Plerophoriae*, p. 20.

95) *Plerophoriae*, p. 20.

96) *Plerophoriae*, p. 20.

97) In *Plerophoriae* 10 Rufus states that in the village of Gantha one preserved a basket full of those hail-stones, which had rained down on all of Palestine as a gloomy sign of the evil coming upon the world with the decisions of the Council of Chalcedon.

98) The situation in *Palaestina Tertia* seems to have been different. In the northern Negev one has found ruins of churches and monasteries with Arabic inscriptions. DEVRESSE, “Le Christianisme”, basing his considerations mainly on calendars and systems of dating, claimed that Christian influence on this area came not from Palestine, also excluding the greater Gaza area, but rather from the east, from *Arabia*. However, even if one limits one’s considerations to Hilarion’s influence on the population of Elusa, as referred to above, it is difficult to see why there should not also have been influence from other ascetics living in the Gaza area. In the present case one may think in particular of the sizable anti-Chalcedonian ascetic community living in the Gaza area in the fifth and early sixth centuries.

cation as to the doctrinal inclination of its inhabitants, is Dayr ‘Arabi. One finds the remnants of Dayr ‘Arabi (grid coordinates 151/157) in close vicinity to the above-mentioned Gantha (grid coordinates 159/155)⁹⁹, which at least until the early sixth century A.D. was home to a large anti-Chalcedonian community and coenobium. In the same area one also has to look for two monasteries which Shahîd and others before him called Dayr Ghassâneh and Dayr ‘Amr. Dayr Ghassâneh was only about twenty miles north-west of Jerusalem¹⁰⁰, Dayr ‘Amr being even closer to the Holy City¹⁰¹. W. F. Albright visited the site of Dayr Ghassâneh in 1923 and confirmed it as a place inhabited by Ghassânids¹⁰².

The Ghassânids were a nomadic tribe from Yemen that had moved into and settled in the areas along the oriental Roman *limes*, having as one of their centers the area east of Byzantine *Gaulanitis*, i.e., the Golan Heights. It is known that over time most of the Ghassânids became anti-Chalcedonian. The Ghassânid ruler Harith ben Djabala, collaborating with Empress Theodora, the anti-Chalcedonian wife of Justinian I, achieved the consecration of two anti-Chalcedonian bishops for Asia from the hands of the Patriarch of Alexandria: Jacob Baradaeus became anti-Chalcedonian Bishop of Edessa and Theodore was appointed anti-Chalcedonian Bishop of Bostra. Subsequently, “Monophysite Christianity met with wide acceptance in Arabia”¹⁰³.

Shahîd attempted to date the conversion of Arab tribes, particularly the initial conversion of the Ghassânids to Christianity and subsequently to anti-Chalcedonian Christianity¹⁰⁴. In his efforts, he pointed to the early sixth century, the last decade of the reign of Anastasius, when the emperor

99) These grid coordinates are derived from Yoram TSAFRIR, Leah Di SEGNI, and Judith GREEN, *Tabula Imperii Romani – Iudaea Palaestina – Eretz Israel in the Hellenistic, Roman and Byzantine Periods, Maps and Gazetteer* (The Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, Jerusalem, 1994).

100) According to Irfan SHAHÎD, *Byzantium 1995*, vol. 1, part 2, p. 766, both of these monasteries could have been inhabited by Ghassânids.

101) See Map VI in SHAHÎD, *Byzantium 1995*, vol. 1, part 2, p. 1031.

102) William Fox ALBRIGHT, “Archaeological and Topographical Explorations in Palestine and Syria”, in *Bulletin of the American School of Oriental Research* 49 (1933), pp. 23-25. See the discussion of Dayr Ghassâneh in Irfan SHAHÎD, *Byzantium 1995*, vol. 1, part 1, pp. 654-655; for an approximate location of Dayr Ghassâneh see Shahîd’s Map VI in SHAHÎD, *Byzantium 1995*, vol. 1, part 2, p. 1031.

103) DAUPHIN, *Jewish*, pp. 129-142, here pp. 130-132.

104) SHAHÎD, *Byzantium 1995*, vol. 1, part 2, pp. 693-715 (chapter on the reign of Anastasius).

“openly championed the Monophysite cause”¹⁰⁵, and to massive anti-Chalcedonian missionary efforts by Severus of Antioch and Philoxenus of Mabbug¹⁰⁶. Shahîd showed the likely influence of Ghassânids on Najrân and made it plausible that the first anti-Chalcedonian bishop of Najrân, Paul I, received episcopal consecration from the hands of Philoxenus of Mabbug¹⁰⁷.

CONCLUSIONS

Admittedly, Severus of Antioch spent formative years of his ascetic career in Palestine and some link between him and the community surrounding Peter the Iberian can be established. Yet both with Severus of Antioch and Philoxenus of Mabbug one has reached the sixth century and with Philoxenus’s ordination of Paul I for Najrân one is in the deep south of *Arabia*. It seems that one can push back the initial conversion of Arab tribes to anti-Chalcedonianism further back and identify a concrete person in this process. Based on the information and the observations gathered from the works of Rufus detailed above, one should correct the picture in support of Dauphin’s thesis that “[t]he Ghassanids had become Monophysite Christians sometime in the late fifth century converted by travelling monks”¹⁰⁸. Dauphin does not point to any specific monk. With Peter the Iberian, however, as he emerges from Rufus’s works, particularly the reports about his travels to *Arabia*, one has the perfect example of an influential travelling monk, who spread the anti-Chalcedonian expression of the Christian faith among the native population in eastern Palestine and the border zone between *Palaestina* and *Arabia* in the late fifth century. The fact that an Arab and Ghassânid monastery is attested to in the immediate neighborhood of an earlier large anti-Chalcedonian coenobium, with which member’s of Peter’s circle entertained contact, seems to be a welcome, supportive piece of evidence, conveniently illustrating the remarkable influence of early Palestinian anti-Chalcedonian ascetics on the local Arab and Ghassânid populations.

105) SHAHÎD, *Byzantium 1995*, vol. 1, part 2, p. 695.

106) SHAHÎD, *Byzantium 1995*, vol. 1, part 2, pp. 695-699; on Severus of Antioch’s mission to the Lakhmid King Mundjir in A.D. 513 in an attempt to convert him to anti-Chalcedonianism see SHAHÎD, *Byzantium 1995*, vol. 1, part 2, p. 695 and pp. 706-709; on Philoxenus of Mabbug see also SHAHÎD, *Byzantium 1989*, pp. 373-376.

107) According to Shahîd, Simon of Beth Arshâm indicates in one of his letters that he was Paul I, who is to be considered as the first Monophysite bishop of Najrân. Simon/Paul had received consecration as bishop from the hands of Philoxenus of Mabbug and died as martyr in Zafâr around 520. See SHAHÎD, *Byzantium 1989*, pp. 374-376 and p. 511.

108) DAUPHIN, *Jewish*, p. 130.

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Department of Theological Studies
 Saint Louis University
 3800 Lindell Boulevard
 Saint Louis MO 63108 - U.S.A.
 Tel.: 1-314-977-2876
 Fax: 1-314-977-2947
 E-mail: horncb@slu.edu

Cornelia HORN