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"ELIAS GEVERI OF DAMASCUS" IN RUSSIAN STUDIES OF CHURCH HISTORY: A WITNESS TO THE TWO-FINGER SIGN OF THE CROSS IN A MEDIEVAL TREATISE ON DENOMINATIONS OF SYRIAN CHRISTIANITY

The cultural heritage of Middle-Eastern Christianity was so influential in the rest of the Christian world that it frequently attracted the attention of scholars studying particular church traditions. It is not surprising, therefore, that Middle-Eastern Christian practices became an intriguing subject for historians of the origins of the Russian "Old Believers," a movement which itself frequently referred to some Middle-Eastern Christian practices as proofs of the truthfulness of its own tradition. One such episode invoking early Middle-Eastern evidence for making the sign of the cross deserves a special inquiry.

In 1847, in the *Colloquia of the Imperial Society for Russian History and Antiquities* at the University of Moscow, Philaret Gumilevskiy (1805–1866), who was then the bishop of Riga, published his study *The Worship of the Russian Church in the Pre-Mongolian Period*.[1] Concerning the various ways of making the sign of the cross, bishop Philaret cited a Middle-Eastern Christian author who had touched on the subject in his treatise: "The Nestorian author Elias of Damascus who lived in the late ninth century, intending to reconcile the Syrian Monophysites with the Orthodox and the Nestorians, wrote as follows: 'As to the fact that they do not agree with each other in making the sign of the cross, this is not an obstacle at all. Some of them, for instance, make the sign of the cross with *one finger* and move the hand from the left side of the body to the right. Others do it with *two fingers*, and do so from the right side to the

(1) Филаретъ [Гумилевскій], еп. Рижскій, "Богослуженіе Русской Церкви до монгольскаго времени" [Divine service of the Russian Church before the Mongols' time], *ЧИОИДР*, 7 (1847), с. 1–42.

left… Jacobites sign themselves with *one finger*. By making the sign of the cross with *two fingers*, from right to left, Nestorians and Melkites (Orthodox) confess the faith that the divinity and the humanity <of Christ> were united while on the cross' (Assemani Bibl. Orient, T. 3, pt. 2, p. 383)."[2] This testimony was taken, as the author clearly indicated, from the famous encyclopedic work of the Maronite scholar Joseph Simon Assemani (1687–1768), the *Bibliotheca orientalis*, even though the reference provided was imprecise, and the other part of the *Bibliotheca orientalis* where Assemani had discussed this passage in more detail along with the parallel Arabic quotations, was not referenced at all.[3]

This testimony, introduced by bishop Philaret into Russian studies of Church history, drew both criticism and lively interest.[4] In 1870, archimandrite Nikanor (Brovkovich) (1826/7–1890/1), subsequently archbishop of Kherson and Odessa, published his study, entitled *The Church of St. Sophia in Constantinople: A Witness to the Ancient Orthodox Sign of the Cross*. Being an expert in Latin and a polemicist, he enthusiastically translated and commented on the quotations from the treatise *De concordia Fidei* "by Elias of Damascus, Metropolitan of the Nestorian community," found in Assemani's *Bibliotheca orientalis*.[5] Following Assemani's account, Nikanor wrote, "Who was this Elias of Damascus? … Elias ... nicknamed *Geveri* (*Гевери*), the Nestorian bishop of Jerusalem, was ordained metropolitan of Damascus by the patriarch John on the 15th of July of the year 1204 of the Greek era (i.e. since Alexander the Great), <corresponding to the year> 893 of the Christian

(2) Филаретъ, еп. Рижскій, "Богослуженіе Русской Церкви", p. 31, n. 2. Italics in the original.

(3) The correct reference is: t. 3, pt. 2, 388 and t. 3, pt. 1, pp. 513–516.

(4) The critics regarded the testimony as an argument in favour of the Old Believers. See *Letter* 84 (especially its postscript) in *Письма Филарета, Архіепископа Черниговскаго, къ А. В. Горскому* [*Letters of Philaret, Archbishop of Chernigov, to A. V. Gorsky*], Москва, 1885, с. 216–217; Е. Голубинскій, "Къ нашей полемикѣ съ старообрядцами" [Concerning our polemics with the Old Believers], *ЧИОИДР*, 3/214 (1905), с. 246.

(5) Никаноръ [Бровковичъ], архим., "Цареградская церковь святой Софіи — свидѣтельница древле-православнаго перстосложенія" [Constantinople's church of Saint Sophia — the witness of the Old Orthodox arrangement of fingers], *Православный собесѣдникъ, издаваемый при Казанской Духовной Академіи*, 3 (1870), с. 189–202. Nikanor's reference, like that of bishop Philaret, is to the second part of the third volume of the *Bibliotheca orientalis*, but he adds another reference — to the more detailed description of the treatise in the first part of the third volume of the *Bibliotheca orientalis*.

era..."[6] Thus, owing to archimandrite Nikanor, "Elias Geveri" (*Илія Гевери*) became a reality in Russian studies of Church history.[7]

N. Th. Kapterev (1847–1918) further developed the testimony and wrote the following in his study *The Patriarch Nikon as a Reformer of the Church and His Opponents*, published in 1887 in the *Orthodox Review*: "This very important witness to making the sign of the cross with two fingers by the Greeks <sic! — *N. S.*> is provided by the Nestorian metropolitan Elias Geveri, who lived in the late ninth and early tenth century."[8] He corrected the reference supplied by bishop Philaret, but nevertheless overlooked the more detailed account of the treatise *De concordia Fidei* provided by Assemani in the first part of the third volume of his *Bibliotheca orientalis*.

In the eighth volume of his *History of the Russian Church* that appeared in 1877,[9] Makary Bulgakov, the metropolitan of Moscow and Kolomna (1816–1882), wrote that "Elias Geveri, the Nestorian metropolitan of Damascus (since AD 893), previously the Nestorian bishop of Jerusalem, argued in his treatise that all three Christian divisions or communities in Syria — the Jacobites, the Nestorians, and the Melkites — allegedly agree with each other in matters of faith and are at variance only in the ways in which they express their faith." Thereafter, he reproduced the aforementioned testimony concerning the ways of making the sign of the cross.[10]

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(6) Никаноръ, архим., "Цареградская церковь святой Софіи", с. 190. Italics in the original.

(7) Archimandrite Nikanor's study was reprinted as part of his book *О перстосложеніи для крестнаго знаменія и благословенія. Бесѣда Никанора, Архіепископа Херсонскаго и Одесскаго* [*Concerning the arrangement of fingers for making sign of the cross and blessing*], Санкт-Петербург, 1890.

(8) Н. Ѳ. Каптеревъ, "Патріархъ Никонъ, какъ церковный реформаторъ и его противники" [The Patriarch Nikon as a Reformer of the Church and His Opponents], *Православное обозрѣніе*, 1 (1887), с. 348.

(9) "Жизнеописание Высокопреосвященного Макария, Митрополита Московского и Коломенского" [Biography of Most Eminent Makarius, Metropolitan of Moscow and Kolomna], in Макарий (Булгаков), Митрополит Московский и Коломенский, *История Русской Церкви* [History of the Russian Church], кн. 1, Москва, 1994, с. 29.

(10) *Исторія Русской Церкви Макарія, Архіепископа Литовскаго и Виленскаго* [*History of the Russian Church by Makarius, Archbishop of Lithuania and Wilno*], кн. 3, т. 8, Санкт-Петербург, 1877, с. 103–104. The reference here is again to the second part of the third volume of the *Bibliotheca orientalis*. After

We find the usual references to "the Nestorian metropolitan Elias Geveri" and to his account of the various ways of making the sign of the cross also in the studies of other distinguished Russian historians of the Church, such as P. S. Smirnov (1861–after 1917)[11] and E. E. Golubinskiy (1834–1912),[12] who referred to bishop Philaret's *The Worship of the Russian Church in the Pre-Mongolian Period*, as well as in more recent research carried out by Russian scholars.[13]

Let me now focus on the original Middle-Eastern source containing the testimony, so significant for all those studying Russian Christianity and especially the Old Believers movement, which always insisted that the two-finger sign of the cross is a crucially important token of their faith.

The Book of the Concordance of Faith (*Kitāb iğtimāʿ al-amāna*) is extant in the following two recensions:

(1) the recension of the Bodleian Library manuscript (16th century; MS Ar. Uri 38 / Huntington 240; fol. 119v–124v), which was published by Gérard Troupeau in 1969.[14] It was written, as the editor remarks, in an oriental Egyptian Arabic script ("écriture orientale (Égypte)"),[15]

(2) the recension of the Vatican Library manuscript, dating to AD 1692 (1103 Anno Hegirae, 2003 Anno Graecorum) — Vat. ar. 657, fol. 4v–15r.[16] This second recension was described and presented in

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that, the correct pages of the first part of the volume are given, but the part of the volume still remains unspecified.

(11) П. Смирновъ, "О перстосложеніи для крестнаго знаменія и благословенія" [Concerning the arrangement of fingers for making sign of the cross and blessing], *ХЧ*, 2 (1904), с. 219–220.

(12) Е. Голубинскій, "Къ нашей полемикѣ съ старообрядцами," с. 158.

(13) See, for example, Б. А. Успенский, *Крестное знамение и сакральное пространство: Почему православные крестятся справа налево, а католики — слева направо?* [*Sign of the cross and sacred space: Why Orthodox make the sign of the cross from the right to the left, and the Catholics — from the left to the right*], Москва, 2004, С. 61 (сн. 16–17), 65–66 (сн. 23).

(14) G. Troupeau, "Le livre de l'unanimité de la foi de ʿAlī ibn Dāwud al-Arfādī," *Melto*, 5:2 (1969), pp. 197–219; repr. in G. Troupeau, *Études sur le christianisme arabe au Moyen Âge*, (Variorum Collected Studies Series, CS515) Aldershot-Brookfield, 1995, no. XIII, pp. 201–219.

(15) Troupeau, "Le livre de l'unanimité de la foi," p. 197, n. 1.

(16) For the description of the manuscript, see A. Mai, *Scriptorum veterum nova collectio e Vaticanis codicibus edita*, t. 1–10, Romae, 1825–1838, t. 4 (1831), p. 583 (No. DCLVII / A.53).

excerpts by Assemani in his *Bibliotheca orientalis*.[17] The Vatican manuscript contains the text of the *The Book of the Concordance of Faith* written in Garshūnī, i.e. in Arabic transcribed into Syriac script (Eastern Syriac script, in this case).[18] The present author has recently published a critical edition of the Garshūnī recension.[19]

The first part of the third volume of the *Bibliotheca orientalis* ("De Scriptoribus Syris Nestorianis") presents *The Book of the Concordance of Faith* as a treatise by "Elias the Nestorian metropolitan of Jerusalem and Damascus," ("Elias Hierosolymæ & Damasci Nestorianorum Metropolita"). In this section, Assemani presented some excerpts from the treatise[20] re-transcribed into the Arabic script. While doing the reversed transcription, he introduced some changes in the text. One can assume that these changes were triggered by his discomfort with the East-Syriac script of the manuscript as well as with some elements of the Iraqi

(17) J. S. Assemani, *Bibliotheca Orientalis Clementino-Vaticana*, t. 1–3, Romae, 1719–1728, t. 3:1 (1725), pp. 513–516.

(18) Д. А. Морозов, "Каршӯнӣ: сирийская письменность в арабохристианских текстах" [Karšūnī: Syriac script in Christian Arabic texts], in *Пятые чтения памяти профессора Николая Федоровича Каптерева. Россия и православный Восток: новые исследования по материалам из архивов и музейных собраний. Москва, 30–31 октября 2007 г. Материалы* [*Fifth Conference in the memory of Professor Nikolai Kapterev. Russia and Orthodox East: new research of materials from archives and museum collections. Moscow, October 30–31, 2007. Materials*], Москва, 2007, c. 70–72. See also his important forthcoming article "Каршуни" (*Karšūnī*), in *Православная Энциклопедия* [Orthodox Encyclopedia]; A. Mingana, "Garshūni or Karshūni?" *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* (1928), pp. 891–893; F. Briquel-Chatonnet, "De l'intérêt de l'étude du garshouni et des manuscrits écrits selon ce système," in *L'Orient chrétien dans l'empire musulman: Hommage au professeur Gérard Troupeau* (Studia arabica III), Versailles, 2005, pp. 463–475. For specific characteristics of the Eastern ("Chaldean") Garshūnī see H. Ram, *Qiṣṣat Mâr Êlîîâ (Die Legende vom Hl. Elias). Als Beitrag zur Kenntnis der arabischen Vulgär-Dialekte Mesopotamiens nach der Handschrift Kod. Sachau 15 der Königl. Bibliothek zu Berlin herausgegeben, übersetzt und mit einer Schriftlehre versehen*, Inaugural-Dissertation, Leipzig, 1906.

(19) Н. Н. Селезнев, "Западносирийский книжник из Арфāда и иерусалимский митрополит Церкви Востока. «Книга общности веры» и ее рукописная редакция на каршуни" [A West-Syrian bookman from Arfād and the East-Syriac Metropolitan of Jerusalem. "The Book of the Concordance of Faith" and Its Manuscript Recension in Garshūnī], *Символ* 58: *Syriaca & Arabica* (2010), c. 34–87, 45–72 (text in Garshūnī), c. 73–87 (Russian translation).

(20) Fol. 4v:4, fol. 4v:10, fol. 7r:17–7v:12, fol. 13v:11–14r:2, fol. 10v:4–10v:10, fol. 10v:10–11r:16, fol. 11r:16–12r:5, fol. 12v:2–12v:17.

dialect[21] which had crept into the text. Both were equally unfamiliar to the Maronite author whose own dialect was Lebanese, and whose usual Syriac script was the West-Syriac *serṭō*. The Vatican manuscript has a note in the introduction (fol. 4[v]:2), saying that *Elias al-Ǧawharī*, the metropolitan of Jerusalem, re-wrote or copied (*nasaḫa-hu*) the treatise that follows. Assemani latinized "al-Ǧawharī" (i.e. "the Jeweller", probably a reference to the family business) as *Geveri*, a possible Italian transcription of the name. Afterwards, archimandrite Nikanor phonetically transcribed this word into Cyrillic as *Гевери*, according to the normal for Russian scholars German or Polish-like pronunciation of Latin words. In this form — *Гевери* — the name was adopted into Russian scholarly literature. Assemani's attribution of the *Book of the Concordance of Faith* to "Elias Geveri, the Nestorian metropolitan" was uncritically taken over by bishop Philaret and subsequent Russian historians. Neither Assemani nor later scholars discussing the subject took notice of the the Garshūnī version's indication that it was merely *copied* (rather than composed) by Elias al-Ǧawharī.

In the text of the Bodleian Library the treatise is attributed to ʿAlī ibn Dāwūd al-Arfādī. It is worth mentioning that in his catalogue of the Bodleian Library, Joannes Uri (1726–1796) omitted the reference to the *Book of the Concordance of Faith* as part of the manuscript Ar. Uri 38 / Huntington 240.[22] Presumably because of this, neither did Georg Graf (1875–1955) mention ʿAlī ibn Dāwūd al-Arfādī as the author of the *Book of the Concordance of Faith* in his monumental *Geschichte der christlichen arabischen Literatur*, but, following Assemani, placed the treatise in the section on "Elias (Ilīyā) al-Ǧawhari von Jerusalem und Elias von Damaskus."[23]

An Arabic-speaking medieval Coptic author Muʾtaman (ad-Dawla) ibn al-ʿAssāl (13th century)[24] prepared a synopsis of the *Book of the Concordance of Faith* in the eighth chapter of his *Summa of the Foundations of Religion and of the Traditions (lit. What was Heard) of Reliable Knowl-*

(21) E.g., fol. [4]v:4 and fol. 12v:13–15.

(22) J. Uri, *Bibliothecæ Bodleianæ codicum manuscriptorum orientalium, videlicet Hebraicorum, Chaldaicorum, Syriacorum, Æthiopicorum, Arabicorum, Persicorum, Turcicorum, Copticorumque catalogus*. Pars prima, Oxonii, 1787 [Ar. Chr.], p. 34.

(23) G. Graf, *Geschichte der christlichen arabischen Literatur*, Bd. 1–5 (ST, 133), Città del Vaticano, 1944–1953, Bd. 2, S. 132–133.

(24) About him see Graf, *Geschichte der christlichen arabischen Literatur*, Bd. 2, S. 407–414.

edge (*Maǧmūʿ uṣūl ad-dīn wa-masmūʿ maḥṣūl al-yaqīn*). In the subtitle he gave to the section, he indicates that he reproduces a treatise of "Elias, the metropolitan of Jerusalem, on the same subject, entitled <*The Book*> *of the Concordance of Faith and the Brief Exposition of Religion*, and it is <also> said that this <treatise> is <by> ʿAlī ibn Dāwūd."[25] Ibn al-ʿAssāl, evidently, was aware of both attributions, and he duly provides both in mentioning the author of the *Book of the Concordance of Faith*. While exploring the *Summa of the Foundations of Religion* in the Vatican and Paris manuscripts (Vat. ar. 103, fol. 91v–94 and Paris, BNF ar. 200, fol. 63–65v), Gérard Troupeau misinterpreted this double ascription as a claim that Elias of Jerusalem was indentical with ʿAlī ibn Dāwūd and remarked that he found this alleged identification (in actual fact, never made by Ibn al-ʿAssāl) rather improbable.[26]

Concerning ʿAlī ibn Dāwūd al-Arfādī, Troupeau indicates that he is "completely unknown in the history of Christian Arabic literature" ("totalement inconnu dans l'histoire de la littérature arabe chrétienne") and surmises that he was a Syrian, since the village Arfād which provided ʿAlī ibn Dāwūd with his *nisba* (a name indicating the place of origin) was located, according to the geographical dictionary of Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī (1179–1229), near ʿAzāz north of Aleppo.[27] Sidney H. Griffith could not find any definite information about al-Arfādī, either, and consequently characterized the author as "the shadowy ʿAlī ibn Dāwud al-Arfādī, of uncertain date and denomination."[28] Troupeau suggests that the author of the *Book of the Concordance of Faith* belonged to the West-Syriac ("Jacobite") community on the ground of his analysis of the contents of the treatise: al-Arfādī's accounts of the "Nestorians" and the "Melkites" are rather brief, whereas his descriptions of the views of the "Jacobites" are more detailed and are placed at the end of each comparative section. Moreover, he characteristically emphasizes the significance of the "oneness of Christ."[29] Troupeau also

(25) A. Wadi [=W. Abullif], B. Pirone, "al-Muʾtaman Abū Isḥāq Ibrāhīm Ibn al-ʿAssāl," *Maǧmūʿ uṣūl al-dīn wa-masmūʿ maḥṣūl al-yaqīn. Summa dei principi della Religione* (SOC; Monographiae, 6a–9), Cairo, Jerusalem, 1998, vol. 1, SOC, 6a, pp. 187–192.

(26) Troupeau, 1969, p. 198.

(27) Ibid.

(28) S. H. Griffith, *Church in the Shadow of the Mosque: Christians and Muslims in the World of Islam*, Princeton, Oxford, 2008, p. 142.

(29) Troupeau, 1969, p. 199.

argued for the eleventh century as the probable period of al-Arfādī's life and *floruit*, but did not furnish any substantial evidence in support of this suggestion. He further remarks that al-Arfādī was probably the author of another treatise — *On the Verity of the Gospel* (*Kitāb fī ṣiḥḥat al-Inǧīl*) — referenced by the author himself in the section of the *Book of the Concordance of Faith* discussing the Gospels.[30]

Assemani suggested to identify Elias al-Ǧawharī with Elias ibn ʿUbayd who first occupied the episcopal see of the Church of the East in Jerusalem and was then elevated to the metropolitan see of the same Church in Damascus.[31] This identification was based on ʿAmr ibn Mattā's report about the patriarch of the Church of the East John (*Yuwānīs*) who "in the middle of Tammūz <July> of the year 280 of the Hiǧra, i.e. the year 1204 of the Seleucid era <AD 893> <...> on the day of his own ordination, ordained Elias ibn ʿUbayd, the bishop of Jerusalem, as the metropolitan of Damascus."[32] The suggested identification would become impossible if we assume that al-Arfādī lived in the eleventh century, as suggested by Troupeau, along with the additional witness of the Vat. ar. 657, according to which Elias al-Ǧawharī only "copied" the *Book of the Concordance of Faith*. It should also be noted that Troupeau's suggestion was based on his evaluation of the Bodleian Library text, which had undoubtedly undergone a later editing; hence, Troupeau's conclusion can be subject to revision. It may be added to our survey that "Elias, the bishop of Jerusalem" is also known as the author of the *Book of Casting Away the Sorrows* (*Kitāb fī tasliyat al-aḥzān*) published by the Italian orientalist Giorgio della Vida (1886–1967),[33]

(30) Troupeau, 1969, p. 199.

(31) Assemani, *Bibliotheca Orientalis*, t. 3:1, p. 513; See also Graf, *Geschichte der christlichen arabischen Literatur*, Bd. 2, S. 132.

(32) H. Gismondi, *Maris, Amri et Slibae de patriarchis Nestorianorum commentaria* / Ex codicibus Vaticanis edidit ac latine reddidit Henricus Gismondi, Romae, 1896–1899, pars II, pp. 80–81 (Ar. text), pp. 46–47 (Lat. tr.); В. В. Болотов, *Изъ исторіи Церкви сиро-персидской* [*From the History of the Syro-Persian Church*], Санкт-Петербургъ, 1901, с. 120/1190.

(33) G. Troupeau, *Catalogue des manuscrits arabes*. Première partie: manuscrits chrétiens. Tt. 1–2, Paris, 1972–1974, t. I, 176 (N° 206:1); G. Levi della Vida, "Il conforto delle tristezze *di Elia al-Ǧawhari (Vat. ar. 1492)*," in *Mélanges Eugène Tisserant* (ST, 232), Città del Vaticano, 1964, vol. 2: *Orient chrétien*, pt. 1, pp. 345–397.

and that Assemani also attributed a *Nomocanon Arabicus* to "Elias Geveri".[34]

Troupeau characterized the Vatican recension as being an abridged one ("une recension abrégée"),[35] but in actuality the problem of the relationship between the two manuscripts containing the treatise in question is more complex. First of all, the Vat. ar. 657 witnesses to evident omissions in the text of the Bodleian Library manuscript, despite the fact that the latter recension was characterized by Troupeau as "complete" ("une recension complète")[36] — for example Vat. ar. 657, fol. 8v:13–15 and Vat. ar. 657, fol. 9r:1 are lacking in the Bodleian Library manuscript. Second, it is obvious that the Bodleian library text, in comparison to that of the Vatican, looks stylistically edited. Thus, the literary particle *qad* is more frequently used in the Bodleian Library text than in the Vatican text.[37] Since one can hardly imagine that these particles would be systematically removed for the sake of "abridgement," it stands to reason that the Bodleian Library text *added* the particles to improve the style. It should be noted that a very similar sort of editing is evident in yet another treatise that the same Bodleian Library manuscript contains: *The Treatise on the Union* by Ibn aṭ-Ṭayyib (fol. 104r–105r), when it is compared with the other recension of the work (Vat. ar. 145, fol. 67v–71v).[38]

When compared with the two manuscripts mentioned above, the synopsis made by Muʾtaman ibn al-ʿAssāl presents readings characteristic of the same branch of the manuscript tradition of the *Book of the Concordance of Faith* to which the text of the Bodleian Library belongs. It is curious, however, that the Coptic encyclopedist omitted the paragraph devoted to the various ways of making the sign of the cross. Only towards the end of his synopsis, Ibn al-ʿAssāl remarks that "the Jacobites made the sign of the cross from the left side to the right, and the others made it in the opposite way." He explains that he "did

(34) Assemani, *Bibliotheca Orientalis*, t. 3:1, pp. 513–514. See also Graf, *Geschichte der christlichen arabischen Literatur*, Bd. 2, S. 133–134.

(35) Troupeau, 1969, 198.

(36) Ibid., p. 197.

(37) Cf. Vat. ar. 657, fol. 5r:15, fol. 7v:16–17, fol. 8v:1, fol. 10r:11, fol. 13r:5.

(38) See various readings indicated in G. Troupeau, "Le traité sur l'Union de 'Abd Allāh ibn al-Ṭayyib," *Parole de l'Orient*, 8 (1977–1978), 141–150; repr. in: G. Troupeau, *Études sur le christianisme arabe au Moyen Âge*, Essay VII. The Vatican version of this text was also alleged to have numerous omissions, but in actuality has no evident textual defect.

not indicate this because it was widely known and because both ways were equally acceptable, and the subject was trivial."[39]

In conclusion, let us consider again the role of bishop Philaret in introducing the Middle-Eastern Christian material to Russian historical studies. What was his motivation in exploring Assemani's *Bibliotheca orientalis* and digging out the testimony of a virtually unknown Syrian author to the early practice of a two-finger sign of the cross, even though this was to subject him to much criticism?

His interest in the Christian Orient was not accidental. Thus, for instance, in his letters he is known to have valued the heritage of Syriac Christianity so highly that he became suspicious of Slavonic translations made from Greek. Thus, in his letter to the archpriest Alexander V. Gorskiy (1812–1875)[40] dated December 14, 1852, he wrote: "The Fathers of the Church, especially St. Ephrem the Syrian, are truthful guides. By the way, when will St. Ephrem's Commentaries on the Holy Scripture be translated <into Russian>? I so much wish I could see then in a Russian translation!"[41] In his letter of February 4, 1853, he wrote: "The works of St. Ephrem are my favourite hymns, his commentaries are jewels! Were you embarrassed by the discrepancy between the Slavonic and the Syriac texts? Did you try to reconcile them <in your translation>? It is pitiful, if you changed the meaning of the Syriac text just to make it conform to the abomination of the printed Slavonic <translations> ("чтобы только согласить его съ безобразіемъ печатной славянщины").[42] It is therefore not surprising to find a Russian translation of the *Testament of St. Ephrem* made *from Syriac* in the list of bishop Philaret's publications.[43] In his introduction to this transla-

(39) Wadi-Pirone, *Maǧmūʿ uṣūl al-dīn wa-masmūʿ maḥṣūl al-yaqīn*, vol. 1, SOC, 6a, 192.

(40) Геннадий (Гоголев), архим., С. В. Рижский, А. А. Турилов, "Горский Александр Васильевич," in *Православная Энциклопедия* [*Orthodox Encyclopedia*], Т. XII, Москва, 2006, с. 149–152.

(41) *Письма Филарета, Архіепископа Черниговскаго, къ А. В. Горскому*, С. 268. It was Aleksandr Kirillovich Sokolov (1818–1884) who was responsible for the translations of St. Ephrem's works from Syriac. He worked at the Moscow Theological Academy. About him see *Д. Д.* Языков, *Обзоръ жизни и трудовъ покойныхъ русскихъ писателей* [*A survey of lives and works of the late Russian writers*], вып. 4, Санкт-Петербург, 1888, с. 81.

(42) Ibid., с. 270.

(43) *Русские писатели-богословы: историки Церкви, исследователи и толкователи Священного Писания. Биобиблиографический указатель* [*Russian*

tion, he remarks: "The translation from the Greek version was published in the *Christian Reading* (27/1827). If the reader wishes to see the advantage of the original <i.e. Syriac> text, he should only compare the initial lines of the translation presented here with the translation published in the *Christian Reading*. The author of the Greek version, wishing to make it clearer, made additions and alterations, sometimes very unfortunate."[44] Bishop Philaret's special interest in Syriac literature is also evident in his three-volume *Historical Studies of the Fathers of the Church*.[45] In view of the foregoing discussion, one can conclude that the scholarly circle of bishop Philaret and archpriest Alexander V. Gorskiy, who worked at the Moscow Theological Academy, was an important point in the development of Syriac studies in Moscow.[46]

The introduction of the *Book of the Concordance of Faith*, which also provides a useful summary of the treatise, and the chapter discussing the various ways of making the sign of the cross are presented below in an English translation prepared by Nikolai N. Seleznyov in consultation with Dmitry A. Morozov.

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theologians: Church historians and Biblical scholars]. 2nd ed., Москва, 2001, с. 171. In his letter of May 5, 1843, bishop Philaret wrote concerning his work on the translation of the "Syriac Ephrem." See *Письма Филарета*, с. 119. In the same letter, he mentioned "Hoffmann's Syriac Grammar" [i.e. Andreae Theophili Hoffmanni... Grammaticae Syriacae Libri III, Halae, 1827], to which he probably owed his knowledge of Syriac (Ibid.).

(44) Филаретъ, Архіеп., "Завѣщаніе Св. Ефрема" [The Testament of St. Ephrem], *Черниговскія епархіальныя извѣстія. Прибавленія*, 1 (март, 1862), С. 1, n. 1.

(45) Филаретъ, Архіеп. Черниговскій и Нѣжинскій, *Историческое ученіе объ отцахъ Церкви* [Historical research on Church Fathers], t. 1–3, Санкт-Петербург, 1859.

(46) Syriac studies in Moscow probably began with the famous Lutheran pastor Johann Ernst Glück (1652–1705) who opened his school there in 1703. The pastor's son Christian Bernard Glück was appointed to teach Syriac as well as Hebrew, Chaldean, and Greek. See Н. И. Веселовскій, "Свѣдѣнія объ оффиціальномъ преподаваніи восточныхъ языковъ въ Россіи" [Information on teaching Oriental languages in Russia in the official institutions], in *Труды третьяго международнаго съѣзда орьенталистовъ в С.-Петербургѣ 1876 = Travaux de la troisième session du Congrès international des orientalistes. St.-Pétersbourg 1876*, t. 1, Санкт-Петербург, 1879–1880, с. 208.

Introduction
(Vat. ar. 657, fol. 4v:1–6v:7)

In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate, from Whom we seek help. We <begin> transcribing the book which was copied by the learned, respectable holy father, pure, worthy, spiritual Mār Elias of the Lord, al-Ǧawharī, the metropolitan of the noble Jerusalem (*al-Quds*), the earthly throne of God, pastor of pastors of Christians and leader of those washed clean with the water of baptism, may his prayer embrace us and all the faithful. Amen.

This[47] book is about the concordance of faith, the origin of religion, and the pride of orthodoxy[48] ⟨of the Syrians named Nestorians, Melkites, and Jacobites; a treatise of saint Mār Elias, may God sanctify his pure spirit and have mercy upon us according to his prayer. Amen.⟩[49]

⟨Mār Elias⟩[50] said: **1**[51]**.** When I looked at the magnificence of the Christian faith[52] <from the point of view of> the truthfulness of the faith in God — Who is Great and Glorious! — [53] the appropriately celebrated services[54] to the Creator of ⟨heaven⟩[55] and earth, and of what is upon ⟨it⟩,[56], [57] according to the law of guidance commanded by the Merciful Creator,[58] propagated[59] throughout the Orients of the earth and its Occidents,[60] among the peoples and nationalities scattered over remote countries and all the lands, <while> every nation among them

(47) Absent (*abs.*) in Troupeau's edition (T).

(48) T added (*add.*): glorious.

(49) T: *abs.*

(50) T: ʿAlī ibn Dāwūd al-Arfādī, prosperous in God and a slave of obedience to Him.

(51) Paragraph numbers follow Troupeau's edition.

(52) T *add.*: and found it brilliant.

(53) T *add.*: pure faith.

(54) T *add.*: proper.

(55) T: heavens.

(56) In the MS used by Troupeau: in them [i.e. in the heavens].

(57) T *add.*: ornated with beloved knowledge.

(58) T *add.*: rich.

(59) T: being spread.

(60) T *add.*: and its remotest, and its nearest, manifestly, abundantly.

is proud of what it has of the Christian religion,[61] common for all ⟨upon the earth⟩,[62] and of <its own> confession[63]; then I saw that a situation inspired by the devil[64] overtook some <of> these peoples, and consequently, there happened a divergence[65] of some of them from the others following the way of passion ⟨opposed to the mind⟩,[66] and so they split into many divisions of which one could speak for long. But even if they do, all their multiplicity aside, agree[67] in opinions and differ from each other in passions, they are reducible to three divisions (*firaq*), for they ascend to three denominations (*maḏāhib*) as their roots,[68] namely ⟨the division of the Nestorians, the division of the Melkites, and the division of the Jacobites⟩; everything that exists apart from these three communities (*al-milal*)[69] are <in fact> divisions which ⟨originate⟩[70] from them and are reducible to them, as are the Maronites, the Isaacians, and the Paulinians,[71] and other <divisions> of the Christian religion apart from them. I found that every one of these three aforementioned communities has <its own> ignoramuses, and every <community> has its own troublemakers and squabblers, and that every community[72] defames those who contradicts it<s position>, accusing them of disbelief, impiety, and departure from the faith, and they curse the <supposed> disbelief of each other.

(61) T *add.*: and rejoice at what it has.

(62) T *abs.*

(63) T *add.*: in the truthful Gospel which is the principle of religion, and a part of faith, and the light of truth.

In the synopsis of Muʾtaman ibn al-ʿAssāl: in the Gospel, the truthfulness of which is strong.

(64) T *add.*: cursed.

(65) T *add.*: and mutual disagreement.

(66) T: which passes [limits] the minds / which infects minds.

(67) T: mutually part with [each other]; Troupeau translates in French: "elles s'écartent."

(68) T *add.*: and they are an offshoot of them.

(69) T *add.*: besides these.

(70) T: because they take/originate from them.

(71) This is the reading of T; the Garshūnī text reads: *al-qawlāniyya.*

(72) In the MS used by Troupeau: people.

When I thoroughly considered this and examined it as it should be examined,[73] I found no difference between them which would entail contradictions in what concerns the religion and the faith and saw no <situation> among them where someone's faith would refute someone else's, and someone's views would deny another's views, **2.** (but they all)[74] come together in their faith and in the principles of their preaching to the (pure Gospel),[75] which (God sent down)[76] and which the leaders of the truthful way — the righteous apostles, i.e. the disciples of our Lord Jesus Christ — passed on to them. (I found no one who would disagree with anyone else in his testimony to the truthful Gospel, <for there is> no one)[77] who adds <anything to it> or takes anything away <from it>, but they all read (the Holy Gospel, the Epistles[78] of Paul),[79] our Lord's and (Saviour's)[80] apostle, which are fourteen epistles that prove the Gospel, (and also the Book of Acts),[81] and they all agree in accepting this and assert[82] the truthfulness of this. And since the Gospel is the principle of religion, and <the Book of the Epistles of> Paul is its proof, and the <Book of the> Acts is a witness to it, then there is no[83] difference between them, nor any contradiction, for their faith is right in <what is considered to be right in> religion.

(73) T: *metathesis* looked through the pages as it should be looked through the pages.

(74) T: because they.

(75) T: the truthful Gospel of God.

(76) T *abs*.

(77) T: When looked through the pages of what these three communities had from the Gospel, I did not find in what they have anything concerning which anyone would disagree with any other.

(78) T *abs.*

(79) In the synopsis of Muʾtaman ibn al-ʿAssāl: the Gospel and the apostles' sayings.

(80) T *abs.*

(81) T: When I considered this, I found in it no disagreement with any other community, either [by way of] addition, or [by way of] taking away. I also examined the Book of Acts and that of the epistle [of Paul] and the catholic [epistles] of the disciples of Christ our Lord, and while comparing them with each other I found neither any addition to what others have, nor any taking away from it.

(82) T: obey.

(83) T: I did not find.

On the Sign of the Cross
(Vat. ar. 657, fol.10v:10b–11r:16a)

7. Concerning their divergence in making <the sign of> the cross,[84] some of them make <the sign of> the cross with (one finger),[85] beginning from (the left side <and going> to the right, while others do it with two fingers, beginning from the right side <and going> to the left)[86]. This circumstance does not[87] imply any division, but is of the same kind[88] as what I wrote on <the subject of> one nature versus two natures, because the Jacobites make <the sign of> the cross with one finger, beginning from the left side <and going> to the right, thus pointing to (the faith in the one Christ who, while on)[89] the Cross, saved them by his crucifixion <and led them> from the left side, which is the <side of> sin, to the right side, which is the <side of> forgiveness. Then, when the Nestorians and the Melkites make <the sign of the cross> with two fingers, beginning from the right side <and going> to the left, they mean[90] that the divinity and the humanity <of Christ> were together on the Cross, (because the salvation <was achieved> through this, and <consequently> there appeared)[91] faith from the right side[92], and disbelief was banished from the left side,[93] which is delusion. This is a subject in which there is no difference that would necessarily make

(84) T: sign (*išāra*) of the cross; in the synopsis of Muʾtaman ibn al-ʿAssāl: sign (*rašm*) of the cross.

(85) T: two fingers.

(86) T: the right side [and goes] to the left side, and someone from them does it with one finger and begins from the left side [and goes] to the right side.

(87) T: contradiction.

(88) Following the reading of Troupeau's edition.

(89) These words are absent from the manuscript on which Troupeau's editionis based, but are present in his edition. Most likely, they were lifted from the fragment of the Vatican text reproduced in Assemani's *Bibliotheca orientalis*, though Troupeau makes no reference to it.

(90) In the Garshūnī manuscript: faith [then crossed out:] thus from the right side.

(91) T: without division, and that the salvation was manifested.

(92) T *add.*: which is the right way.

(93) T: to the side.

a violator[94] <of any particular custom> impious, because the meaning[95] of the faith is one.

SUMMARY

In studies of the history of the Old Believers movement, written by Russian historians, one frequently comes across references to the medieval treatise by "Elias Geveri, the Nestorian Metropolitan," that contains a testimony to the two-finger sign of the cross current in his time among the Melkites. The treatise is known in two recensions, only one of which belongs to "Elias Geveri" (i.e. al-Ǧawharī), while the other, probably the original one, is attributed to ʻAlī ibn Dāwūd al-Arfādī. This article offers a critical study of the source on which these references are based and surveys its textual history with a view to defining its role in Russian studies of Church history.

(94) T: contradicting him.

(95) The reading of Troupeau's edition.

Society of Byzantine and Slavic Studies
St. Petersburg

SCRINIUM

Journal of Patrology, Critical Hagiography and Ecclesiastical History

Volume 9

Patrologia Pacifica Tertia

Selected papers presented at the Seventh Asia-Pacific Early Christian Studies Society Annual Conference (Luce Center, Presbyterian College and Theological Seminary, Seoul, South Korea, July 5–7, 2012) and Other Patristic Studies

Edited by
Pauline Allen, Vladimir Baranov, and Basil Lourié

Gorgias Press
2013

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ВГ	*Волшебная гора*
ЖМНП	*Журнал Министерства народного просвещения*
ПС/ППС	*(Православный) Палестинский сборник*
ТОДРЛ	*Труды Отдела древнерусской литературы*
ХВ	*Христианский Восток*
ЧИОИДР	*Чтения в Императорском обществе истории и древностей Российских*
AAH	*Acta Antiqua Hungarica*
AB	*Analecta bollandiana*
ACW	Ancient Christian Writers
AK	Arbeiten zur Kirchengeschichte
BBTT	Belfast Byzantine Texts and Translations
BETL	Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium
BSAC	*Bulletin de la Société d'Archéologie Copte*
Byz	*Byzantion*
BZ	*Byzantinische Zeitschrift*
BHG	F. Halkin, *Bibliotheca Hagiographica Graeca*, 3 vols. (SH, 8a), Bruxelles, 1957; idem, *Novum Auctarium BHG* (SH, 65), Bruxelles, 1984
CAG	Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca
CCSG	Corpus Christianorum. Series Graeca
CCSL	Corpus Christianorum. Series Latina
CPG	M. Geerard, *Clavis Patrum Graecorum.* 4 vols., Supplementum (CCSG), Turnhout, 1973–1998
CSCO	Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium
DOP	*Dumbarton Oaks Papers*
ECF	The Early Church Fathers
ECS	Eastern Christian Studies
HTR	*The Harvard Theological Review*
JBL	*Journal of Biblical Literature*
JECS	*Journal of Early Christian Studies*
JJS	*Journal of Jewish Studies*
JSP	*Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha*
LCL	Loeb Classical Library

Mansi	J. D. Mansi (ed.), *Sacrorum Conciliorum Nova et Amplissima Collectio*, t. I sqq., Florentiae, Venetiis, 1759 sqq.
Mus	*Le Muséon: Revue d'études orientales*
OC	*Oriens Christianus*
OCA	Orientalia Christiana Analecta
OCP	*Orientalia Christiana Periodica*
OECS	Oxford Early Christian Studies
OJC	Orientalia Judaica Christiana
OLA	Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta
OrChr	Orientalia Christiana
PG	J. P. Migne (acc.), *Patrologiae cursus completus. Series graeca*, tt. 1–161, Parisiis, 1857–1866
PL	J. P. Migne (acc.), *Patrologiae cursus completus. Series latina*, tt. 1–225, Parisiis, 1841–1864
PO	Patrologia Orientalis
PTS	Patristische Texte und Studien
RÉB	*Revue des études byzantines*
SA	Studia Anselmiana
SBLAM	*Society of Biblical Literature Annual Meeting*
SC	Sources chrétiennes
Scr	*Scrinium. Revue de patrologie, d'hagiographie critique et d'histoire ecclésiastique*
SEA	Studia Ephemeridis Augustinianum
SH	Subsidia Hagiographica
SOC	Studia Orientalia Christiana
SP	*Studia Patristica*
ST	Studi e testi
STAC	Studien und Texte zu Antike und Christentum
TCH	Transformation of the Classical Heritage
ThH	Théologie historique
ThS	*Theological Studies*
TM	*Travaux et Mémoires du Centre de Recherche d'Histoire et Civilisation byzantines*
VC	*Vigiliae Christianae*
VC Supp.	Supplements to *Vigiliae Christiana*
VT Supp.	Supplement to *Vetus Testamentum*
WBS	Wiener byzantinische Studien

WMANT	Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament