

Anastasius of Sinai and the Fate of the Chalcedonian Church under the Umayyad Caliphate



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Short Abstract

This thesis examines for the first time the fate of the eastern Roman imperial church in Egypt after its severance from Constantinople in 642 during the Arab-Muslim conquests of the Middle East and North Africa through the lens of its principal witness, the monk, polemicist, and raconteur Anastasius of Sinai (d. after 701 CE). The ecclesiastical history of the Roman Near East after the Council of Chalcedon in 451 is often presented as a battle between the imperial center at Constantinople, for whom Chalcedon served as the official doctrinal policy of the Roman state, and the eastern provinces, which dissented from Chalcedon but which the state nevertheless imposed upon them, often by force. Consequently, the Arab-Muslim conquests are viewed as the rupture that enabled these regions to liberate themselves from the confessional constraints of the empire and fully embrace their true religious identity. I argue against conventional scholarly narratives that the imperial church remained a vital force in the region throughout the sixth century and seventh centuries until the 680s, and that the loss of eastern Roman political hegemony in the Levant did not immediately result in a triumphant confessional reversal. Unique features of Egypt's ecclesiastical structure, the Roman empire's own doctrinal politics, and the emergence of a new ruling dynasty in the caliphate slowly coalesced over the second half of the seventh century and reached a tipping point in 685, which reversed the Chalcedonians' dominance of Egypt's institutional church. Against standard views, I argue for an Egyptian context for Anastasius's writings, and explore their relevance for ecclesial and social history in this period. As our sole named Chalcedonian author whose works have survived from this period, Anastasius's corpus plays a crucial role in comprehending these critical changes, which reflect the emergence of a specifically Islamicate Christianity more broadly.

Long Abstract

This thesis examines for the first time the fate of the eastern Roman imperial church in Egypt after it had been severed from Constantinople in 642 during the Arab-Muslim conquests of the Middle East and North Africa through the lens of its principal witness, the monk Anastasius of Sinai (d. after 701 CE). Since the early sixth century, this church had been explicitly defined by its adherence to the Chalcedonian Definition set out at the Council of Chalcedon in 451, despite various forms of popular opposition to the council in the late antique and early medieval period. In particular, the sixth and seventh centuries saw the slow emergence of a dissident group of clerics and monastics who rejected Chalcedon, in Syria and Egypt above all. These groups operated for the most part on the fringes of Roman society, outside of the immediate zones of imperial influence, and though they remained marginal in the Roman period, they would eventually crystallize, in the Islamic period, into what are today recognized as the Coptic Orthodox Church and the Syriac Orthodox Church (for this period, they are referred to as the Theodosian church and the Jacobite church, after their founders). Both because of their identity as religious dissidents and because they came to dominate (among the eastern Christian churches at least) the religious landscape of the Levant throughout the Middle Ages, they have been a more attractive subject for religious historians to study. By contrast, the history of the imperial Chalcedonian church in Egypt has received much less attention for the Roman and post-Roman periods. Although it would eventually lose out to its anti-Chalcedonian rival in the medieval period, it nevertheless dominated the religious landscape of Egypt up to, and even beyond, the dawn of Islam. Moreover, it constituted the empire's only institutional church, was endowed with enormous patrimonies, and was deeply integrated into the governing structures of the empire; yet despite all this, it remains a

neglected topic of study among religious and political historians of late antiquity and the early middle ages.

This thesis redresses the imbalance by examining the institutional history of the imperial Chalcedonian church in Egypt as a subject worthy of study in its own right, first by charting out its evolution from ascendancy to disenfranchisement in the transition from Roman to Islamic hegemony, and second through the writings of the monk and raconteur Anastasius of Sinai, our sole Chalcedonian witness to the Egyptian church in the late seventh and early eighth centuries and a neglected figure among the church fathers. This confessional inversion reached its apex under the emergence of the Marwānid dynasty of the Umayyad caliphate, when control of Egypt's institutional church was taken from the Chalcedonians and handed over to the Theodosians and it is precisely at this period that the Anastasius of Sinai flourished in Alexandria and the new Arab-Muslim capital at Babylon-Fustāṭ. By examining Anastasius's writings from a political and ecclesiastical point of view, rather than from the perspective of historical theology, we are much better positioned to chart out what happened to the imperial church after the loss of Roman hegemony in Egypt.

The introduction sets the political and religious scene in the seventh century, and also establishes the *status quaestionis* on the works and biography of Anastasius and their relevance for the topic at hand. Chapter one then examines, in broad outline, the key political and ecclesiastical events that influenced the evolution of the imperial Chalcedonian church in Egypt throughout the sixth and early seventh centuries up to the year 642. In particular, it extends recent revisionist scholarship on the imperial church by pushing the argument that the emergent dissident groups were institutionally precarious further, arguing that the legal and economic structures of the Justinianic state in fact precluded the possibility of the formation of a rival church, in any true

institutional sense. Rather than retrojecting later Islamicate realities onto this earlier period (something which tends to be done in much scholarship on the Egyptian church), I emphasize the disparities between the institutional Chalcedonian church and the emergent (but often fractured) Theodosian church on its margins throughout this period, including its relative financial strength, its assimilation of the provincial aristocracy to its cause, its influence on the historic monastic federations of the region, as well as more basic information about what can be known of its episcopate and personnel. I argue that it is only by first understanding this longer-term perspective of Egyptian Chalcedonianism and its institutional strength to 642 that we can comprehend why Anastasius of Sinai emerged as the polemicist he did, for as we shall see in the next chapter, he was the principal witness to its decline.

Chapter two completes the longer-term history of the Chalcedonian Church of Egypt by examining the early Islamic period, between ca. 642 to ca. 750. Using a variety of sources (including Anastasius's own works, the Acts of the Sixth Ecumenical Council and the canons of the Quinisext Council, the *History of the Patriarchs of Alexandria*, and contemporaneous historiographical and hagiographical material in Coptic), I attempt to reconstruct what can be known of the church's structure, personnel, and centers of activity. I argue that the Chalcedonian church was structurally depleted at the highest levels (patriarch, bishops) after the conquest, and that two failures of leadership ultimately led to its demise: a failure to appoint a new patriarch, and a failure to secure patronage from Egypt's new Islamic elites over against its rival, the Theodosian church, who did. I contend that these factors, more so than traditional narratives which emphasize (in my view, incorrectly) numerical majorities of Miaphysites in Egypt, contributed to the changing ecclesiastical landscape after the Arab-Muslim conquests. The ascendancy of the Theodosian church as it became allied to the Marwānid state in the 680s resulted in a handover of

the institutional church from the Chalcedonians to the Theodosians. It was the bishops and monks who were most closely integrated into the court of the emir at Babylon-Fuṣṭāṭ that appear as Anastasius's bitterest enemies, and who thereby formed the focus of his writings. This overall period of ecclesiastical crisis, combined with the formidable ecclesial challenges posed by the Theodosians, set the stage for Anastasius's prolific literary activity as well as his travels and keen interest in Egypt.

Chapter three then turns to the works of Anastasius of Sinai proper, and to his magnum opus, the enormous christological handbook known as the *Hodegos* in particular, which offers us our best way in to the career of Anastasius in early Islamic Egypt. This text is deceptively difficult to approach, in part because it is not a single text – it is rather an onion-like series of many different texts pieced together by Anastasius toward the end of his *floruit*. Though rife with historical allusion, no consensus on when the individual constituent parts were written, and thus on when Anastasius was active in Egypt. Karl-Heinz Uthemann (the modern editor of the *Hodegos*) and Marcel Richard suggested a wide chronological range for the constituent parts of the *Hodegos*; namely, that they may have been written anywhere between the period of Persian occupation in the Near East at the beginning of the seventh century and the early eighth century. Based upon a close analysis of the text, however, I conclude that the majority of Anastasius's key works belong to or were redacted in the 680s and 690s, and to the political and ecclesiastical setting of the Marwānid caliphate. To this end, I argue for the importance of the Sixth Ecumenical Council and the governorship of 'Abd al-'Azīz (r. 685-705) as catalysts for Anastasius's polemical career, integrating Anastasius's writings within the proper context in which they emerged: that of the ascendant Theodosian church and the explosion of Coptic literature in the late seventh and early eighth centuries that attended it.

Chapter four focuses in on a series of religious disputations that Anastasius held with several key Theodosian clerics who were closely connected to its patriarch, recorded the Alexandrian disputations of the *Hodegos* (X.1-4) as well as Anastasius's own conception of the monk as disputant and polemicist. I argue that Chalcedonian polemics changed as a response to the loss of the Roman state's political and religious hegemony in Egypt after the Arab conquests. To this end, I demonstrate that the polemical strategies deployed by Anastasius in the Alexandrian disputations furnish us with examples of new developments in the nature of Greek dialogues and disputations, which emphasize theatrical deception, the use of tricks, and the emotive effects of publicly humiliating one's opponents over and above critical engagement with their theological arguments. These are contrasted with examples of rhetoric found in other seventh century Greek dialogues and disputations, especially christological ones like Maximus Confessor's *Disputation with Pyrrhus*. Building on chapter two, I argue that one context in which these developments may be read is that of patronage and the formation of new power relations in Egypt between church and state, a situation wrought by the confessional inversion initiated by the Marwānid caliph 'Abd al-'Azīz.

Building upon the seminal work of John Haldon, chapter five examines the key themes and problems found in the one hundred-and-three *Questions and Answers* of Anastasius. This text is a vital source for understanding the social history of the caliphate from the perspective of the Chalcedonian Christians (especially laypeople) who remained behind after the conquests. Here, I examine how Anastasius responded to the ideological reorientation that Chalcedonian Christians were forced into after the crises of the seventh century. At a time when their church was in decline and their rivals had usurped traditional claims to divine favor and the mediation of God's power in the temporal sphere, Anastasius developed an idiosyncratic understanding of providence and

divine power that enabled him to explain the ascendancy of the Theodosian church, the pressures of life under the Marwānid regime, and the decline and fracturing of the Chalcedonians without tacitly endorsing the view (doubtless held by his rivals) that their successes were evidence that they had been endorsed by God. Instead, Anastasius drew comfort from a broadly Aristotelian view of the universe, placing a greater emphasis on the unfolding of natural processes in the mundane sphere, but one which also informed his views on religious and political change, too. Through the natural mediation of divine providence, Anastasius could rationalize the changes that were taking place in the lives of everyday Egyptian Chalcedonians.

In the conclusion I recapitulate the major contributions of the thesis, arguing that a study of the Chalcedonian church of Egypt through the lens of Anastasius of Sinai's corpus not only fills in a lacuna of ecclesial and religious history, but illustrates how the various fates of the Christian confessions (Chalcedonian, anti-Chalcedonian) in different regions (Egypt, Syria, etc.) were interlocked at virtually every step. The different relationship that each confession had with the Marwānid state influenced both how individual churches related to each other as well as how any given confession related to the state itself. While it is common to speak of the pressures that 'Christians in the caliphate' faced, this thesis demonstrates that it is vital to qualify this further: in Egypt during the reign of 'Abd al-'Azīz, it was the Chalcedonians who truly faced pressure from the state, for the Theodosians had become, like the Chalcedonians of the Roman period before them, the 'state church' of Egypt. Consequently, the era between the Arab-Muslim conquests of the Near East and the 'Abbasid Revolution of 750 constitutes a vital period of church history in its own right, for it was in this century that the seeds of Islamicate Christianity familiar to later generations were sown. I therefore suggest that this thesis may serve as the first step towards a

broader, transregional and comparative study of the ecclesiastical history of the Marwānid caliphate, including Egypt, Palestine, Syria, Mesopotamia, and Armenia.

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When I applied for the DPhil in Late Antique and Byzantine History at Oxford in the autumn of 2019, I could not have imagined just how much my life would be transformed in the ensuing half a decade. Shortly after submitting my application, the world was hit by the Covid pandemic; shortly after the rise of Covid, my world would be rocked with the extraordinary news that my wife was pregnant with our first child. My daughter was born two weeks into the start of my DPhil program. Thus, when I first began my doctoral education in Michaelmas 2020, I was also learning how to be a father for the first time. Three years later, in June 2023, we welcomed a son into the world, and only two months ago, in August 2025, we welcomed our second son. Quite literally from start to finish, the last five years have been a lesson in learning how to balance care for this baby with care for my real babies, too.

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Abbreviations

The abbreviations used throughout the notes and bibliography in this thesis are as follows:

Primary Sources

Anastasius of Sinai, *Hodegos* = K.-H. Uthemann (ed.), *Viae Dux in Anastasii Sinaitae Opera CCSG* 8 (Turnhout, 1981).

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Life of Simeon of the Olives = R. Hoyland, S. P. Brock, K. B. Brunner, J. Tannous (trans.), *The Life of Simeon of the Olives: An Entrepreneurial Saint of Early Islamic North Mesopotamia* (Piscataway, NJ, 2021).

PO = B. Evetts, *History of the patriarchs of the Coptic Church of Alexandria*, PO 1.2 (part 1) and 1,4 (part 2) (1904), 99-214, 381-518; 5.1 (1910), 1-215. (Cited as Evetts, PO 1 or Evetts, PO 5)

PRLE = J. R. Martindale, *Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire*, 3 vols. (1971-1992).

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The Book of the Pontiffs = R. Davis (trans.), *The Book of the Pontiffs (Liber Pontificalis)* (Liverpool, 1989).

Ps.-Zachariah Rhetor, *Chronicle* = G. Greatrex et al (trans.), *The Chronicle of Pseudo-Zachariah Rhetor: Church and War in Late Antiquity* (Liverpool, 2011).

Journals and Book Series

<i>AB</i>	<i>Analecta Bollandiana</i>
<i>ACO</i>	E. Schwartz, ed., <i>Acta Conciliorum Oecumenicorum</i> (Berlin and Leipzig, 1914-82)
<i>AHC</i>	<i>Annuaire Historiae Conciliorum</i>
<i>BIFAO</i>	<i>Bulletin de l'Institut français d'archéologie orientale</i>
<i>BMGS</i>	<i>Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies</i>
<i>ByzF</i>	<i>Byzantinische Forschungen</i>
<i>BZ</i>	<i>Byzantinische Zeitschrift</i>
<i>CCSG</i>	<i>Corpus Christianorum Series Graeca</i>
<i>CCSL</i>	<i>Corpus Christianorum Series Latina</i>
<i>CQ</i>	<i>Classical Quarterly</i>
<i>CSCO</i>	<i>Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium</i>
<i>CSEL</i>	<i>Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum</i>
<i>DOP</i>	<i>Dumbarton Oaks Papers</i>
<i>GRBS</i>	<i>Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies</i>
<i>JEH</i>	<i>Journal of Ecclesiastical History</i>
<i>JJP</i>	<i>Journal of Juristic Papyrology</i>
<i>JECS</i>	<i>Journal of Eastern Christian Studies</i>
<i>JNES</i>	<i>Journal of Near Eastern Studies</i>
<i>JÖByz</i>	<i>Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinistik</i>
<i>JRS</i>	<i>Journal of Roman Studies</i>
<i>JTS</i>	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
<i>LM</i>	<i>Le Muséon</i>
<i>OC</i>	<i>Oriens Christianus</i>
<i>OCP</i>	<i>Orientalia Christiana Periodica</i>
<i>OLA</i>	<i>Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta</i>
<i>OLP</i>	<i>Orientalia Lovaniensia Periodica</i>
<i>P.Lond.</i>	<i>Greek Papyri in the British Museum</i> (London, 1893-)
<i>PG</i>	<i>Patrologia Cursus Completus Series Graeca</i> eds. J.-P. Migne et al., 161 vols. (Paris, 1857-66)
<i>PL</i>	<i>Patrologia Cursus Completus Series Latina</i> eds. J.-P. Migne et al., 221 vols. (Paris, 1844-1900)
<i>PO</i>	<i>Patrologia Orientalis</i>
<i>REB</i>	<i>Revue des Études Byzantines</i>

SLA *Studies in Late Antiquity*
TM *Travaux et Mémoires du Centre de Recherche d'Histoire et Civilisation Byzantines*
TTH *Translated Texts for Historians* (Liverpool, 1985-)
ZPE *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik*

Introduction

Anastasius of Sinai: Church Father?

The late seventh-century monk, polemicist, and raconteur Anastasius of Sinai (d. after 701) is perhaps unlikely to feature alongside Maximus Confessor (d. 662) or John of Damascus (fl. ca. 750) in lists of famed Chalcedonian fathers of the church.¹ Whereas both Maximus and John have cemented their places in ecclesiastical history through the ingenuity of their thought, their ability to synthesize and rearticulate in fresh terms the tradition that came before them in the face of contemporary political and theological issues, and their posthumous influence in eastern and western circles throughout the middle ages and modernity, Anastasius of Sinai has remained curiously absent from the perceived canon of patristic authors. In part, this can be explained by the fact that the precise contours of Anastasius's works remained hotly contested well into the second half of the twentieth century (and in some cases, into the twenty-first); and because, once their authenticity was established, critical editions of his texts only appeared slowly between the 1980s and 2000s. Indeed, as we shall see, we still await critical editions of Anastasius's *Hexaemeron*, homilies, and *Edifying Tales*, and most of his authentic texts have not yet been translated into a modern European language, save parts of the *editio princeps* of the *Edifying Tales* and the *Questions and Answers*. But it can also be explained by the fact that, unlike Maximus and John, Anastasius inhabited a world whose own ecclesiastical contours remained ill-defined.

¹ On Maximus's thought, see, A. Louth, *Maximus the Confessor* (London, 1996), and for his career, P. Allen and B. Neil, *Maximus Confessor and His Companions: Documents from Exile* (Oxford, 2002); see generally P. van Deun, P. Mueller-Jourdan (with B. Markesinis), 'Maxime le Confesseur' in C.-G. Conticello (ed.), *La Théologie byzantine et sa tradition, I/1: (Vie-VIIIe s.)*, (Turnhout, 2015), 375-514. On John of Damascus more generally, see A. Louth, *St. John Damascene: Tradition and Originality in Byzantine Theology* (Oxford, 2002). On the much-contested dates for the Damascene's biography, see, e.g., M.-F. Auzépy, 'De la Palestine à Constantinople (VIIIe-IXe siècles): Étienne le Sabaïte et Jean Damascène' *TM* 12 (1994): 181-218; the collected writings of Vassa Kontouma in V. Kontouma, *John of Damascus: New Studies on His Life and Works* (Leiden, 2015); and S.W. Anthony, 'Fixing John Damascene's Biography: Historical Notes on His Family Background' *J ECS* 23:4 (2015): 607-27.

Maximus, it would seem, ushers in the end of the patristic period proper: with his vast spiritual and ascetical writings, his indefatigable defense of dyenergist and dyothelete christology against imperial monenergism and monotheletism, and his eventual rehabilitation as a paragon of orthodoxy, the theological debates that embroiled the eastern Roman empire since the Council of Chalcedon in 451 seem to reach a kind of culmination. Although he was not mentioned at the Sixth Ecumenical Council of 680-1, and although the version of dyenergism-dyotheletism that it ratified looked rather like a distant cousin to his own, the reversal of imperial monotheletism in 681 had for all intents and purposes ended the wrangling over the precise relationship of what is human and what is divine in the person of Jesus Christ that is so marked a feature of the patristic church. Maximus could further boast of connections to Sophronius of Jerusalem and John Moschus, associates of key members of the imperial court at a time when the greatest threat to the Roman empire was still Sasanian Persia.

Likewise, John of Damascus inaugurates the next, medieval phase for the Chalcedonian church in the Middle East: that of the Melkites under the Umayyad and Abbasid caliphates. The Melkites, who owe the origins of their soubriquet (from the Semitic root *mlk*, ‘rule’) to the fact that they remained loyal, doctrinally, to the emperor and the imperial church headed at Constantinople, will be the first Christian group in the Islamicate world to adopt Arabic as their *lingua franca*, but even John’s own Greek writings have long contained a recognizably Islamic context, whether in his own writings on Islam (which treat it as a distinct religious tradition) or in his family’s role in the fiscal administration of the Marwānid state at Damascus. And though his *Fount of Knowledge* does deliberately synthesize many elements of the earlier patristic tradition, his contributions to the debate over the veneration of images, for example, place him in an intellectual culture whose features are clearly distinct from that of the Cappadocian Fathers, Cyril

of Alexandria, or even Maximus himself. With John, we encounter a recognizable predecessor to Theodore Abu Qurrah, as well as a participant in the debate over iconoclasm that will be endemic to the much-reduced borders of the eastern Roman imperial church in the eighth and ninth centuries. Indeed, John's own flourishing occurred after the medieval order of empire and caliphate had been cemented following the failed Umayyad siege of Constantinople in 717-8.

Anastasius of Sinai, however, occupied an epoch of transition that straddled both of theirs. He belonged to the liminal space between the death of the Roman-Persian world order and the crystallization of the Byzantine-Islamic world to come; an epilogue to the patristic period and a prologue to the medieval. This era of transition, roughly spanning the loss of Roman Syria, Palestine, and Egypt between 636 and 642 to the armies of the caliphate and the Constantinopolitan siege of 717-8, has been the focus of much recent scholarship on eastern Christianity. In particular, its contours have become an increasingly defined for those scholars whose primary concern has been the study of Severan Christianity in Syria and Egypt, i.e. those Christian communities who trace their doctrinal identity back to the figure Severus of Antioch (sed. 512-518, d. 538), the most consequential Miaphysite theologian and opponent of the Council of Chalcedon in the sixth century. Severus, along with all those bishops who formally rejected Chalcedon in the sixth century, were expelled from their sees upon the accession of the emperor Justin I (r. 518-527). In 536, following the ratification of Justin's expulsion of Severan bishops under his successor Justinian (r. 527-565), the new patriarch of Alexandria named Theodosius (sed. 535-566, a Miaphysite) joined Severus in exile at the imperial capital, where he spent the rest of his life. While there, Theodosius hatched a plan to allow an ecclesiastic named Jacob Baradeus (d. 578) to ordain new Severan bishops throughout Asia Minor, greater Syria, and parts of Arabia in secret; thus, the Severans of Syria came to be called Jacobites, and they took up residence in monasteries in places

where the influence of the imperial church was less felt.² At the end of his life, Theodosius likewise permitted the ordination of new Severan bishops for Egypt. The Theodosians thus took their name from Theodosius himself, although it is important to note that this epithet would only come to be used in the Islamic period as a self-identifier, e.g. in the biographies of the *History of the Patriarchs of Alexandria* edited by George the Archdeacon in ca. 715 and John of Nikiu's *Chronicle*.³

In Egypt, for instance, the institutional revival of the Theodosian church in the early Islamic period, together with the explosion of Coptic literature in the late seventh and early eighth centuries that attended it, has been explored in an expanding stream of monographs, articles, and doctoral theses on the formation of the 'Coptic church' in the Umayyad caliphate.⁴ Likewise, papyrologists—for whom abundant archives of Greek, Coptic, and eventually Arabic documents exist—have begun to explore the various roles that Christian monasteries played in the early Islamic world, whether as stakeholders in the fiscal administration of the caliphate, as locales for continued agricultural production and trade, or as participants in the production and circulation of books.⁵ This has also led to a fuller appreciation of the role that Christian administrators of varying

² E. Honigmann, *Évêques et évêchés monophysites d'Asie antérieure au VI^e siècle* (Louvain, 1951); V. Menze, *Justinian and the Making of the Syrian Orthodox Church* (Oxford, 2008).

³ B. Evetts, *History of the Patriarchs of the Coptic Church of Alexandria*, PO 1 (Paris, 1904), 383-518; id., *History of the Patriarchs of the Coptic Church of Alexandria*, Evetts, PO 5 (Paris, 1915), 1-215; H. Zotenberg, *Chronique de Jean évêque de Nikiou: texte Éthiopien* (Paris, 1883) with ET in R. H. Charles, *The Chronicle of John (c. 690 A.D.), Coptic Bishop of Nikiu: Being a History of Egypt Before and During the Arab Conquest, Translated from Hermann Zotenberg's Edition of the Ethiopic Version* (London, 1916), though I have relied throughout on the forthcoming translation of the new critical edition of John's *Chronicle* by Phil Booth, with gratitude. On terminology, I have referred to Egyptian Severans as Theodosians and Syrian Severans as Jacobites throughout this thesis.

⁴ I content myself here and throughout the introduction with citing only some of the most important studies on these wide-ranging topics, e.g. M. Mikhail, *From Byzantine to Islamic Egypt* (Bloomsbury, 2014), M. N. Swanson, *The Coptic Papacy in Islamic Egypt, Volume 2: The Popes of Egypt* (Oxford, 2010); P. Booth, 'Towards the Coptic Church: The Making of the Severan Episcopate' *Millennium* 14 (2018): 151-190; id., 'A Circle of Egyptian Bishops at the End of Roman Rule (c. 600): Texts and Contexts' *LM* 131:1-2 (2018): 21-72.

⁵ E.g., A. Boud'hors and C. Heurtel, *Les Ostraca Coptes de la TT29: Autour Du Moine Frangé*, 2 vols. (Leuven, 2010); P. Sijpesteijn, *Shaping a Muslim State: The World of a Mid-Eighth-Century Egyptian Official* (Oxford, 2013); C. Palombo, *The Christian Clergy's Islamic Local Government in Late Marwanid and Early Abbasid Egypt* (unpub. PhD Thesis, Princeton University, 2020); L. Berkes (ed.), *Christians and Muslims in Early Islamic Egypt* (Ann Arbor, 2022).

confessional stripes played in administering the Islamic state, and of the importance of episcopal leadership in the transition from Roman to Islamic rule.⁶

Likewise, large numbers of Christian texts in Syriac survive from named contemporaries of this period. This is especially the case for those which emanated from the circle of monks, bishops, and patriarchs connected to the Monastery of Qenneshre in North Syria, including such luminaries as Severus Sebokht (d. 666/7), Athanasius of Balad (d. 687), Jacob of Edessa (d. 708), and George of the Arab Tribes (d. 724). These figures, all of whom were either bi- or trilingual, are perhaps most famous for their contributions to the Greco-Syriac translation movement, and they contributed to the flourishing of the intellectual and cultural traditions of this period. Expending huge amounts of scholarly effort on the Greek philosophical and scientific traditions, their translations ultimately served a vital function in the transmission of Hellenic knowledge to the Islamic world, and thus to the formation of Arabic and Islamic philosophy in the ninth centuries and beyond.⁷ Relatedly, Syriac texts offer us a critical window through which some eastern Christians viewed emergent Islam (e.g. the works of Jacob of Edessa, the letters of the east Syrian catholicos Isho‘yahb III), and in some cases, it has been argued, acted as the vector within which the religious ideas and themes found in late antique Christianity influenced early Islamic thought, e.g. *tafsir* or *kalam*.⁸ We are also well served by a long tradition of ecclesiastical and secular

⁶ M. Mazolla, ‘Dhimmī Bishops in a Muslim Polity: Endurance and Adaptation of Syriac Episcopal Leadership in the Umayyad and Early Abbasid Periods’ *JNES* 83:2 (2024): 243-60; ead., ‘Diplomats and Betrayers: Christian Negotiators and the Confessional Rewriting of Surrender during the Islamic Conquest (634–642 AD)’ *Al-Masāq: Journal of the Medieval Mediterranean* 36:1 (2024): 78-104.

⁷ E.g., H. Hugonnard-Roche, *La logique d’Aristote du grec au syriaque: Études sur la transmission des textes de l’Organon et leur interprétation philosophique* (Paris, 2004); D. King, *The Earliest Syriac Translation of Aristotle’s Categories: Text, Translation and Commentary* (Leiden, 2010); and the collected essays in J. Watt, *The Aristotelian Tradition in Syriac* (London, 2019).

⁸ E.g., R. Hoyland, *Seeing Islam as Others Saw It: A Survey and Evaluation of Christian, Jewish, and Zoroastrian Writings on Early Islam* (Princeton, NJ, 1997); G. S. Reynolds, *The Qur’an and Its Biblical Subtext* (Abingdon, 2010); M. P. Penn, *Envisioning Islam: Syriac Christians and the Early Muslim World* (Philadelphia, 2015); J. Tannous, ‘Between Christology and Kalam? The Life and Letters of George, Bishop of the Arab Tribes’ (Piscataway, NJ, 2009) id., *The Making of the Medieval Middle East: Religion, Society, and Simple Believers* (Princeton, 2019).

chronicles in Syriac, whose sources in many cases stretch back to the period under discussion, and can therefore shed light on its persons and events.⁹

Thus, the Miaphysite Christian communities of Syria and Egypt have been at the center of much recent research on the late seventh and early eighth centuries, attracting attention in a variety of fields: ecclesiastical history, economic and administrative history, cultural and intellectual history, papyrology and Coptology, and, of course, religious history more broadly, whether inter-religious (Christians living under Islam) or intra-religious (Jacobites, Theodosians, etc.). While much work remains to be done, of course, their own fate and development after the loss of Roman, Chalcedonian hegemony has begun to be treated throughout a wide variety of literature.

Comparatively less attention, however, has been paid to the fate of the eastern Roman imperial church, that is, of Chalcedonian Christians, throughout the Near East in the decades that followed their severance from Constantinople. The omission is surprising, given the institutional vitality of the imperial church throughout the east at the dawn of Islam, thanks especially to the remarkable success that imperial monenergism had in reconciling many prominent Miaphysites to the Chalcedonian cause in the 630s, and to the reconstitution of Roman administration in the eastern provinces after the Last Great War of Antiquity.¹⁰ As we shall see, Chalcedonian Christians, especially in their monenergist-monothelete variety, remained a dominant force on the ecclesial scene of the early Islamic Near East; so too, features of early Islamic governance, such as the retainment of eastern Roman administrators for the fiscal and political administration of the caliphate (especially below the highest levels of government) contributed to the continued

⁹ P. Wood, 'Historiography in the Syriac-Speaking World, 300-1000' in D. King (ed.), *The Syriac World* (Abingdon, 2019), 405-21.

¹⁰ C. Hovorun, *Will, Action, Freedom: Christological Controversies in the Seventh Century* (Leiden, 2008); P. Booth, *Crisis of Empire: Doctrine and Dissent at the End of Late Antiquity* (Berkeley, CA, 2014); J. Howard-Johnston, *The Last Great War of Antiquity* (Oxford, 2021).

presence of likely partisans of the Chalcedonian cause throughout the Near East, which further enabled the durability of the Chalcedonian church in cities like Alexandria, Damascus, and Antioch. Yet beyond the acknowledgement of these features of early Islamic governance, very little has been said about the ecclesial and communal history of Near Eastern Chalcedonians on their own terms in the period between Maximus and John.

In part, we can explain this neglect through the tendency to retroject Islamicate realities into the earlier period. Given that the rise of Arab-Muslim hegemony across the Levant, the Middle East, and North Africa over the course of the seventh and eighth centuries at last put anti-Chalcedonians on a level (legal) ground with their Chalcedonian counterparts; and given that the various anti-Chalcedonian communions of Armenia, Syria, Egypt, Ethiopia, etc. will go on to develop fully-fledged communions in the Islamic period that remain recognizable to us today (and are further differentiated through their own linguistic traditions), there appears to be an underlying assumption that the Chalcedonians were never a serious force in the conquered regions, and, concomitantly, that the anti-Chalcedonians formed the ‘natural party’ of these regions. So too, Severan ecclesiastics and monks operated as religious dissidents, which has generally made them a more attractive subject to theorize. Consequently, the Chalcedonians of the Near East have had a more amorphous and neglected pre-history as a community in these regions as well. As a result, they tend to feature tangentially in grander narratives about the development of the Theodosian or Jacobite communions, rather than being studied on their own terms.

Most surprising of all is that this lacuna exists given the further fact that we possess, in the person of Anastasius of Sinai, a large corpus of Chalcedonian literature produced from within the caliphate that coincides exactly with the transitional generation in between Maximus the Confessor and John of Damascus. Indeed, the most recent scholarly monograph on the Melkite church during

this period, Krzysztof Kościelniak's *Between Constantinople, the Papacy, and the Caliphate: The Melkite Church in the Islamicate World, 634-969*, is emblematic of this problem: Kościelniak mentions the name of Anastasius of Sinai a mere two times, both in passing, dedicating no space to discussing his extant writings, or indeed to any of the texts of Chalcedonian provenance that date to the late seventh and early eighth centuries.¹¹ Until very recently, when scholars have brought Islamicate Chalcedonians like Anastasius of Sinai from the period ca. 642-718 more explicitly into the conversation, they have generally done so either from the perspective of the eastern Roman empire, or to explore questions about how eastern Christians viewed early Islam. The outstanding studies of John Haldon on the transformation of the empire in the seventh century, for instance, have made much use of the *Questions and Answers* of Anastasius of Sinai, but often by way of assimilating Anastasius to the eastern Romans who lived within the newly reduced borders of the empire, rather than as an Islamicate Christian.¹² Likewise, a variety of studies looking for evidence in eastern Christian sources for reconstructing information about the Arab-Muslim conquests or the doctrinal beliefs of the Arab-Muslims in the seventh century have come to utilize Anastasius's works at great length, but the very nature of this scholarship entails that his own works are not studied on their own terms, nor used to reconstruct the contexts within which they were composed.

The only sustained monograph on the works of Anastasius of Sinai was written in 2015 by Karl-Heinz Uthemann, the modern editor of Anastasius's theological works and his most

¹¹ K. Kościelniak, *Between Constantinople, the Papacy, and the Caliphate: The Melkite Church in the Islamicate World, 634-969* (Abingdon, 2022), 12, 102.

¹² J. Haldon, *Byzantium in the Seventh Century: The Transformation of a Culture* (1990), 324-375; id., 'The Works of Anastasius of Sinai: a Key Resource for the History of Seventh-Century East Mediterranean Society and Belief,' in *The Byzantine and Early Islamic Near East I: Problems in the Literary Source Material*, ed. A. Cameron and L. I. Conrad (Princeton, NJ, 1992), 107-147; id., *The Empire that Would Not Die: The Paradox of Eastern Roman Survival, 640-740* (Cambridge, MA, 2016), 79-119; cf. G. Dagron, 'L'ombre d'une doute: L'hagiographie en question, VIe-XIe siècle,' *DOP* 46 (1992): 59-68.

authoritative commentator: *Anastasios Sinaites: Byzantinisches Christentum in den ersten Jahrzehnten unter Arabischer Herrschaft*.¹³ Despite the subtitle, Uthemann's magisterial study dedicates almost no space to the question of ecclesiastical history or the position of Chalcedonian Christians more broadly in the first century of Islamic rule, focusing almost exclusively on theological and philological questions pertaining to Anastasius's texts, rather than on the contexts in which they were produced. It is a remarkable achievement of historical theology, but the Chalcedonian church itself lies beyond its scope.

The only exception to the foregoing is the recent 2022 thesis of Bastien Dumont, *La polémique chalcédonienne et l'émergence du nouvelle l'organisation de l'Eglise au Proche-Orient durant le premier siècle de la domination islamique (des années 660 à 710)*.¹⁴ This extensive doctoral thesis constitutes the first full-length study of the late seventh and early eighth centuries that integrates the writings of Anastasius of Sinai at length. Despite the title, however, ecclesiastical history proper is not the primary concern of Dumont's thesis. He rather focuses on the phenomenon of religious polemic from the perspective of the sociology of religion, and on how Christian elites utilized polemic against various perceived enemies (Jews, Muslims, heretical Christian groups) in the quest to construct and reinforce their own social identity in the early Islamic period. To that end, Dumont dedicates a huge amount of space to elucidating a taxonomy of genres and strategies of late ancient polemic, to discussing the various ends towards which these were used, who the intended audience of polemical texts were, and to understanding the thorny problem of the relationship of text to reality. The result is an impressive study of the 'discourse

¹³ K.-H. Uthemann, *Anastasios Sinaites: Byzantinisches Christentum in den ersten Jahrzehnten unter Arabischer Herrschaft* (Berlin, 2015). See also the collected essays in id., *Studien zu Anastasios Sinaites* (Berlin, 2017).

¹⁴ B. Dumont, *La polémique chalcédonienne et l'émergence du nouvelle l'organisation de l'Eglise au Proche-Orient durant le premier siècle de la domination islamique (des années 660 à 710)* (unpub. PhD thesis, Sorbonne University, 2022). I first gained access to Dumont's thesis in May 2023.

communities' that Islamicate Christians participated in and the discursive strategies that they deployed in order to construct them. This includes Anastasius of Sinai, but also prioritizes the categorization and study of the many anonymous polemical texts, often of an anti-Jewish variety, that have survived from the period ca. 660-710. Indeed, the study of Christian anti-Jewish polemic plays a large role in Dumont's thesis, for example, which (for reasons discussed below) does not feature at all in my own. Dumont is also not interested in the economic and legal perspective that animates my own study of the institutional history of the Chalcedonian church. For all these reasons and more, Dumont's excellent work on the sociology of Chalcedonian polemic functions as a complement to my own work on the institutional history of the Chalcedonian church; where there is overlap, I cite the relevant parts of his thesis, both in places where we agree on a given point and where we disagree.

This thesis, then, seeks to contribute to the ever-growing scholarship on eastern Christian history in the early Islamic world by exploring the following questions: What happened to the Chalcedonian church after the empire's loss of its eastern provinces to the armies of the Arab-Muslim caliphate, but before they had become the Melkites recognizable to us in the works of John of Damascus and Theodore Abu Qurrah? and How do the works of Anastasius of Sinai contribute to our knowledge of its fate? While the nature of our surviving evidence prevents us from attempting an exhaustive answer to this question, Anastasius's works occupy a central place in the quest to offer them answers, for the Sinaite is our only named Chalcedonian author during the late seventh and early eighth centuries whose works have survived. Not only is he our best way in to understanding the state of affairs that obtained after Islam's rise, but he (as we shall see) offers us a broad range of evidence at all levels of the Chalcedonian church. Anastasius was both a dynamic actor operating on behalf of the Chalcedonian church at the highest ecclesial and political levels

within the Umayyad caliphate as well as a pastor, close to simple believers and sensitive to the concerns of the Chalcedonian community more broadly.

By reading his works from the perspective of ecclesiastical history, we are better placed to begin offering answers to a series of more focused questions such as: What happened to the Chalcedonian episcopate and its patriarchs in the Near East, and how did they relate to the imperial center at Constantinople now that they lived outside the borders of the empire? Indeed, what happened to the institutional Chalcedonian church at large? How did Chalcedonians react to the Sixth Ecumenical Council of 680-1? More specifically, we can pursue answers to these questions by asking the following of Anastasius himself: What was it that prompted the production of Anastasius's literary career, and why are his works so focused on christological polemic? Why did he (and his circle) engage in public religious disputations, against whom did he do so, and why did he do so in the way that he did? To that end, how does he present himself as a Chalcedonian impresario in his writings, and what was his own relationship to the institutional church? How did he and his community interpret the crises that beset the Chalcedonian empire of east Rome more broadly throughout the seventh century, and how did he attempt to comfort those who struggled in the wake of their own church's decline? How do his works bear witness to the continued battles against anti-Chalcedonians?

To be clear, I do not here propose a comprehensive study on the person and thought of Anastasius, for his interests were varied, and some of his texts (particularly the exegetical ones, e.g. the *Hexaemeron*, the first two *Discourses on the Image and Likeness of God in Man*) have little bearing on the broader ecclesial questions with which I am here concerned.¹⁵ But I do attempt

¹⁵ C. A. Kuehn and J. D. Baggarly, SJ (ed. and trans.), *Anastasius of Sinai: Hexaemeron* (Rome, 2007); see now the virtually exhaustive study of this text in D. Zaganas, *L'Hexaemeron d'Anastase le Sinaité: Son authenticité, ses sources et son exégèse allégorisante* (Leiden, 2021). For the *Discourses*, see K.-H. Uthemann (ed.), *Sermones duo in*

to systematically explore his writings for what they can tell us about the fate of the Chalcedonian community after the rise of Islam, both by examining them on their own terms, and by attempting to place them within the broader ecclesial and political contexts within which they were produced. In order to do so, however, I have imposed certain constraints to keep this thesis focused and manageable.

First, by ‘the Chalcedonian church,’ I mean both the church as an institution, i.e. its clergy, episcopate, the buildings and patrimonies in their control, as well as the body of people who made it up, each of whom brought their own concerns and ideas to their identity as Chalcedonian Christians and sought to negotiate that identity in the midst of a changing world. Institutionally, as the state church of the eastern Roman empire, the Chalcedonians of the Near East enjoyed, until the mid-seventh century, the political and legal benefits of Roman hegemony that enabled them to flourish. They controlled the public churches found in each city, each with their own sizable endowments, and it was their bishop alone (as opposed to anti-Chalcedonian dissenters who claimed the title) that enjoyed the privileges and responsibilities of belonging to the curial class who ran the late Roman city, alongside urban prefects, prominent landowners, and members of the senatorial aristocracy. This was especially the case in the cities of the empire, but it also must have included other zones of imperial influence, too. Given the importance, then, of the fact that for centuries to be a Chalcedonian meant to be a member of an imperial church, it is of paramount importance to try to understand what happened to the institutional church when Roman political hegemony was lost and replaced by the new Arab-Muslim state.

At the same time, the church is more than just its institutional structures. The Chalcedonian laity have also left their mark on the surviving sources, albeit indirectly. While the career of

constitutionem hominis secundum imaginem Dei necnon opuscula adversus Monotheletas in Anastasii Sinaitae Opera CCSG 12 (Turnhout, 1985).

Anastasius of Sinai unfolded in a particular institutional and political context, it also unfolded among a particular group of people, many of whom looked to holy men like him for answers to pressing questions about their new lives in the caliphate. Those concerns are preserved in Anastasius's surviving collection of one-hundred-and-three *Questions and Answers*, and reveal not only the moods and attitudes of Chalcedonian Christians who were forced to undergo what John Haldon has referred to as a process of 'ideological reorientation,' but of Anastasius's own answers to that question.¹⁶ Thus, the fate of the institutional Chalcedonian church, the career of Anastasius of Sinai as its most prominent impresario, and Anastasius's responses to the concerns of other Chalcedonians regarding the fate of their church will be at the heart of this thesis.

Secondly, I have restricted myself to a study of the Chalcedonian church in Egypt. Though often treated (not unjustifiably) as a representative of Chalcedonian Christians in the Levant more broadly, a close look at Anastasius's works reveals that the primary theater for his career was Egypt, with Syria and Palestine occupying a marginal place in his writings. While the *coenobium* at Mt. Sinai to which Anastasius belonged technically lay in what had been Roman Third Palestine, and thus under the jurisdiction of the patriarchate of Jerusalem, virtually all of Anastasius's extant writings explicitly mention Egyptian Chalcedonians, especially at Alexandria and Babylon-Fustāt (the capital of Islamic Egypt and predecessor to Cairo), as the intended audience. Anastasius's chief concern was the Chalcedonian church of Egypt, and particularly those who lived at the centers of ecclesial and political power there.

Further, central to the history of the Chalcedonian church in Egypt during the seventh century was its own relationship with its rival, the dissident Miaphysite church of the Theodosians. While there were many Miaphysitisms, and consequently many anti-Chalcedonian communions

¹⁶ Haldon, *Byzantium in the Seventh Century*, 403-36.

that emerged in various places throughout the Roman Near East (Julianists, Tritheists, Barsanuphians, etc.), it was the Theodosian confession that established itself as the imperial church's most potent adversary over the course of the sixth and seventh centuries. But while eastern Roman political hegemony and the state's more or less successful enforcement of its doctrinal policy was replaced by the nascent caliphate's indifference to the confessional competition of Christians, the ecclesial dynamics of Egypt shifted in ways that would have profound consequences for Chalcedonians. Indeed, it was precisely in the 680s—the period of Anastasius's flourishing—that the confessional battle between Chalcedonians and Theodosians in Egypt reached its tipping point, wherein the latter at last managed to secure a new kind of imperial patronage that enabled their own institutional flourishing, something that had been the sole preserve of the Chalcedonians up until that point. The history of the Chalcedonian church in Egypt in the early Islamic period is thus intimately bound up with that of its principal rival throughout the sixth and seventh centuries.

Moreover, as we shall see, Anastasius was intimately familiar with several of the most important members of the Theodosian episcopate. Not only did they serve as his principal antagonists in his real-life disputations, but it was the Theodosians (and occasionally Gaianites, i.e. Miaphysite apthartists) against whom he composed his major works of polemic. This included members of the patriarchal entourage, like the bishop Gregory of al-Kaïs, as well as several others within that same circle who were also close associates of the governor of Egypt at this time, 'Abd al-'Azīz (r. 685-705). Many of these contemporaries are known from other sources, and in some cases have left us their own writings, meaning that we thus possess a corresponding source base against which we can meaningfully contextualize Anastasius's own writings. By contrast, we know next to nothing, for example, about the Chalcedonian church of Palestine in this same period,

because virtually nothing, save a few theological florilegia, has survived. As a result, the parallel development of the Theodosian church will be central to understanding both the fate of the church that Anastasius belonged to and the manner in which his career unfolded.

Third, I have generally sought to prioritize the works of Anastasius over against the smaller, anonymous texts of either Chalcedonian origin or possible Chalcedonian provenance that have survived from this period or are sometimes attributed to the period of his flourishing. This includes such texts as the *Doctrina Patrum* and related florilegia; the *Trophies of Damascus*, its heresiology, and the *Bonwetsch Dialogue* attached to it, as well as other anti-Jewish dialogues of possible Chalcedonian origin; and the ps.-Athanasian *Quaestiones ad Antiochum ducem*.¹⁷ Many of these texts will appear in one way or another throughout the course of my thesis, but they often serve a supplementary role, in part because they often by their nature shed only little light on the questions of this thesis. The *Doctrina Patrum*, for instance, is a lengthy christological florilegium produced at some point in the aftermath of the Sixth Ecumenical Council of 680-1 in order to defend Chalcedonian theology against its detractors, and worthy of further study and contextualization from the perspective of historical theology and cultural history. But by its nature, it has less to tell us about the Chalcedonian church than it does the content of christological debate as it unfolded in the late seventh century. Nevertheless, where it can be used for data on the history of the church, as in my second chapter, it will be. The same is true for anti-Jewish polemical texts, like the *Trophies of Damascus*, which likely emerged from Chalcedonian circles but again have less to tell us about the fate of the Chalcedonian church specifically. While it became more important than ever for Christians to find new ways to affirm the subordination of Jews after the defeat of the Christian Roman empire leveled the playing field between them, this very issue

¹⁷ For a full inventory of the texts of definite or potential Chalcedonian provenance in the period ca. 660-710, see the helpful list of Dumont, *La polémique chalcédonienne*, 45-84.

throws into relief the fact that the new relationship between Christians and Jews in the early Islamic state was not a concern unique to Chalcedonians, but rather one that posed a problem for Christians of all confessional stripes equally. In this respect, they are of little use for providing insight into developments within the Chalcedonian church specifically.

Relatedly, while Anastasius's *Questions and Answers* are treated at length in chapter five, I have also decided not to include an extensive treatment of the Ps.-Athanasian *Questions and Answers*.¹⁸ While this seventh- or eighth-century collection of *erotapokriseis* shows remarkable parallels with Anastasius's own *Questions and Answers*, to the point that most scholars assume a relationship of dependence one way or another, scholarship is nevertheless divided on which text preceded the other. Marcel Richard and Gilbert Dagron asserted Anastasian priority, while Joseph Munitiz argued that the lack of references to Islam or an Arab-Muslim political presence indicated that Anastasius used it as a template.¹⁹ There is no consensus yet. It also does not have a critical edition, and most Greek manuscripts of the text (dating to the tenth century, and thus older than the Arabic translations that have survived) contain only a small number of selected questions.²⁰

With these caveats in mind, then, my thesis proposes to explore the fate of the Chalcedonian church in Egypt through the lens of Anastasius of Sinai's extant writings and career.

¹⁸ The Greek text is preserved in *PG* 28, cols. 684-700.

¹⁹ M. Richard, 'Les véritables "Questions et Réponses" d'Anastase le Sinaïte,' *Bulletin de l'Institut de Recherche et d'Histoire des Textes* 14 (1967-69): 39-56; G. Dagron, 'Le saint, le savant, l'astrologue: Étude de thèmes hagiographiques à travers quelques recueils de «Questions et réponses» des Ve-VIIe siècle,' in *Hagiographie, cultures et sociétés, IV e -XII e siècles. Actes du Colloque organisé à Nanterre et à Paris (2-5 Mai, 1979)*, ed. E. Patlagean and P. Riché (Paris, 1981), 143-156; J. A. Munitiz, SJ (trans.) *Anastasios of Sinai, Questions and Answers* (Turnhout, 2011), 22.

²⁰ See the discussion in B. Roggema, 'The Integral Arabic Translation of Pseudo-Athanasius of Alexandria's *Quaestiones ad Antiochum Ducem*' in *Patristic Literature in Arabic Translation*, ed. B. Roggema and A. Treiger (Leiden, 2020), 15-52.

Chapter Outline

Given, then, the fact that the broader ecclesial and confessional history of Egypt sets the scene for the career of Anastasius of Sinai, this thesis will proceed accordingly. The first two chapters act as a diptych, setting out a history of the Chalcedonian church of Egypt in the sixth and seventh centuries from an institutional perspective. Anastasius wrote in a wide variety of genres: *erotapokriseis*, theological treatises, polemical tracts, exegetical commentaries, edifying tales, homilies. Yet an immediate question that confronts a reader of his texts is: Where are all the clergy? And in particular, where are the bishops? What happened, institutionally, to Chalcedonian structures of authority in Egypt after the Arab-Muslim conquests? Whether in his theological writings or in his *Edifying Tales* and *Questions and Answers*, the world that Anastasius inhabits is one utterly divorced from the institutional church more broadly. The question cannot be handwaved away by supposing that as a monk he must have preferred isolated contemplation in the desert – far from it. In the *Hodegos*, his magnum opus, Anastasius presents himself as a leader for the Chalcedonian church when no others can be found, often engaging in diplomacy or disputations with episcopal and monastic representatives of the Theodosian church, including in extremely high-profile affairs, such as a potential reunification of the Chalcedonian and Theodosian churches of Alexandria under a shared christological creed.²¹ He reveals that he spent much of his time searching through the theological libraries of Alexandria, including rummaging around its Chalcedonian cathedral church, the Kaisarion. Yet even at the Kaisarion, Anastasius only mentions a patriarchal librarian named Isidore, but no patriarch or other clergy. Certainly, no patriarch is in attendance when he debates with representatives of the Theodosian patriarch in the presence of the city's Augustalis in the district in which the Kaisarion was located, nor even when he debated with various Theodosians in the chancellery of the Kaisarion itself. Their absence in

²¹ K.-H. Uthemann (ed.), *Viae Dux in Anastasii Sinaitae Opera* CCSG 8 (Turnhout, 1981).

the *Edifying Tales for the Soul* is even more striking, given that Anastasius deliberately modelled his edifying stories on John Moschus's *Spiritual Meadow*, where one frequently encounters Chalcedonian monks becoming bishops, especially monks from Mount Sinai. The well-integrated ascetic world that stretched between Mount Sinai, the Judean desert monasteries, and the bishoprics of the Near East is nowhere to be found. How, then, do we explain the lack of an institution within which Anastasius operates and the leaderless landscape as it is presented in his writings?

I argue that this landscape is unintelligible without first appreciating the longer-term history of the Chalcedonian church in Egypt and its close connection to the eastern Roman state. The first chapter therefore examines the institutional development of the Chalcedonian church in Egypt from the age of Justinian to the dawn of Islam. While recent studies have shown that the rival Theodosian episcopate that emerged slowly in the late sixth century throughout the Egyptian countryside was far more precarious than scholars of the Theodosian church had at first supposed, this scholarship has been carried out in studies on the formation of the Theodosian church, with its state rival often relegated to the backdrop of the story. Indeed, the history of the Chalcedonian church in Egypt itself throughout the sixth and seventh centuries has usually not been taken up as a deliberate object of study. To that end, I extend some of this recent revisionist scholarship by offering a general history of the Chalcedonian church of Egypt on its own terms during this period, and argue further that this rival communion was not merely precarious, but that the legal and economic structures of the Justinianic state precluded the very possibility of a true shadow church being formed in opposition to the imperial church in any serious, institutional sense. At the dawn of Islam, there was only one true church in Egypt, and that was the official Chalcedonian state church, in spite of the claims made by later Severan sources.

Consequently, I note here that chapters one and two focus largely on the episcopate and, where possible, monastic communities, rather than on the laity. There are two reasons for this. First, the nature of our surviving evidence for church history in this period is almost entirely restricted to events surrounding high-profile bishops, patriarchs, and the imperial court. Our source base has little to no interest in the affairs of the average cleric or (non-elite) layperson except insofar as those affairs relate to those elites. And while one occasionally encounters concerns about mixed-confessional worship among the laity in some of our sources, most people likely worshipped at whatever church or shrine happened to be nearest them. The only exceptions were in larger urban centers, or among the (relatively small) class of highly mobile people in the empire; consequently, we cannot generalize this phenomenon as a model for religious identity in the empire more broadly. Second, the episcopate was intimately connected with the financial power of the church, for it was at the level of the episcopate that the church's patrimonies—one of the key sources for its revenue streams and ability to perpetuate itself as an institution—were administered. These patrimonies formed the lifeblood of a given church, enabling bishops to pay their clergy, maintain churches, and engage in charitable giving. Although they were not the only financial resource that could be tapped into within the Christian church more broadly—monasteries, too, owned land, workshops, etc., and engaged in economic production, as did private religious foundations—the combination of the episcopate's patrimonies and its backing by the eastern Roman state made the Chalcedonian church a formidable force in the life of the eastern provinces. Moreover, our anti-Chalcedonian sources for the sixth and seventh centuries demonstrate a preoccupation with the episcopate's control over churches and their patrimonies, which, I suggest, can serve as a proxy for understanding the relative institutional dominance of a confession and its patronage by the political elite (whether Roman or Arab-Muslim).

Chapter two picks up the story slightly before 642 (the capitulation of Alexandria to the Arab-Muslim armies), for it was in the wake of Roman victory over the Sasanians that Heraclius and his patriarchs had in the 630s reconciled many prominent Severans to the institutional church across the Near East through the promotion of the christological doctrine of monenergism (the single operation in Christ). I will then examine the processes which influenced the fate of this church, its structures of authority, and personnel in the Near East from the reign of Cyrus of Alexandria (sed. 633-639, 641-2) through to the caliphate of ‘Abd al-Malik (r. 685-705), when it lost its dominance. This will include Palestine and Syria, for reasons that will become clear, but will, like the previous chapter, focus particularly on Egypt. Here, I argue that two factors contributed to the waning of the Chalcedonian church of Egypt in the late seventh century. First, despite an initial policy of indifference towards the confessional infighting of Chalcedonian and anti-Chalcedonian Christians (which favored the still institutionally dominant Chalcedonians), the situation was reversed in the mid-680s when a new dynasty took the reins of the caliphate: the Marwānids. In particular, the Marwānid governor of Egypt, ‘Abd al-‘Azīz b. Marwān (r. 685-705), who was a half-brother to the caliph, took the bold move of patronizing the Theodosians at the expense of the Chalcedonians in Alexandria and beyond. This was the first time that state authorities of any kind had openly patronized the Theodosians over their rivals in the history of the Egyptian church, and it had the result of reversing the dominance of Chalcedonians over the institutional church of Egypt. Theodosians were allowed to build and endow their own churches, as well as claw back control over prominent churches and shrines of great antiquity from the Chalcedonians. These were in turn protected by the Marwānid state under ‘Abd al-‘Azīz and his Severan secretaries. Various sources in Arabic, Coptic, and Syriac reveal that at the heart of this change in confessional policy was the influence of the Edessan aristocrat and polymath Athanasius

bar Gumōye. Athanasius served as ‘Abd al-‘Azīz’s *chartouarios*, a lofty role within the administration that enabled him to influence the court of ‘Abd al-‘Azīz in ways that benefitted the Severan church to which he belonged. As we shall see, Anastasius of Sinai engaged in a disputation in Babylon-Fustāṭ with this same Athanasius, which, I argue in chapter three, prompted the production of the *Hodegos*. It was, in large part, its identity as an *imperial* church that contributed to the dominance of Chalcedonianism in Egypt; once this empire was in retreat, many of its distinct institutional advantages were lost. When the Islamic state came eventually to patronize its rival, the consequences were devastating.

The second factor was the Sixth Ecumenical Council (680-1), which was problematic from the perspective of Chalcedonians in the caliphate who were, I argue, almost entirely monenergist-monothelete. Constantinople’s abandonment of the single operation and will of Christ precipitated a schism between Chalcedonian Christians in Alexandria, leaving defenders of the council like Anastasius of Sinai (who were likely in the minority) in a difficult position. Thus, after demonstrating the monotheletism of the Chalcedonian church in the caliphate, I examine how the Sixth Council was received at Alexandria and Jerusalem, by assessing relevant evidence from Anastasius’s *Hodegos*, his *Third Discourse on the Image and Likeness of God in Man*, and two anonymous, anti-monothelete council synopses produced in the caliphate. Collectively, these demonstrate Anastasius’s continued connectivity with and loyalty to Constantinople, even at the cost of alienating him from his fellow Chalcedonians in the caliphate.

With the scene now set, I turn in the third chapter to the works of Anastasius of Sinai, and to the *Hodegos* in particular, which I argue best reveals his *floruit*. The *Hodegos* is an enormous handbook designed to train the next generation of Chalcedonian disputants in the art of debate against the Theodosians and Gaianites in Egypt. Karl-Heinz Uthemann once observed that it stands

out as the best way in to the theological thinking of Anastasius, and the same can be said for its relevance for understanding Chalcedonian ecclesiastical history in the early Islamic period, given that it is the text that contains the greatest number of allusions and references to his contemporaries and his own career. Yet be that as it may, the *Hodegos* itself is a particularly difficult text to understand, in part because it is not a single text. It rather consists of a patchwork of various texts that Anastasius had written all stitched together towards the end of the seventh century with some scholia inserted into the text, and no consensus has been achieved on the question of when these constituent parts were actually composed. Indeed, Uthemann suggested that we cannot know when *any* given text within it was originally composed. Instead, he offered a general range of 641 to ca. 701, when he presumed Anastasius to be close to death (on which see below); concomitantly, he argued that we can only know when the texts were redacted together in the form in which we possess them today, at the earliest in 686-9, and at the latest up to the moment of his death.

But as the previous chapter will have shown, the position of Chalcedonians in the caliphate changed dramatically throughout these decades, meaning that it matters a great deal whether we place Anastasius's period of literary activity closer to the capitulation of Alexandria in 642 or closer to the death of the consequential governor 'Abd al-'Azīz in 705. I suggest, in contrast to Uthemann and other recent commentators, that a close study of the constituent parts of the *Hodegos* together with its scholia and historical references demonstrates that the *Hodegos* as a whole was *composed*, not merely redacted, at the earliest in 686. I suggest further that one event that likely have prompted its production was Anastasius's debate in Babylon-Fuṣṭāṭ with Athanasius bar Gumoyē in 686, with Anastasius aware of the shifting tides against the Chalcedonians in the wake of his arrival. Anastasius was not merely a Chalcedonian who lived in the aftermath of the Arab-Muslim conquests and wrote various theological treatises against Severans that he decided to

gather together at the end of his life. Rather, his career emerged directly in reaction to the particular problems that the rise of the Marwānid caliphate and the ascendancy of the Theodosians had created for Chalcedonians. His texts are thus the product of a particular moment of ecclesial fracture and decline, and can be interpreted as a kind of Chalcedonian reaction to the concomitant explosion of new literature in Coptic that attends the newfound domination of the Theodosians in the late seventh and early eighth century, including the *Chronicle* of John of Nikiu, the *Life of Isaac of Alexandria* by Mena of Nikiu, and the biographies of Theodosian patriarchs assembled by George the Archdeacon at the Monastery of Macarius in Scetis. Somebody needed to step into the fray when all appeared lost.

Chapter four builds on chapter three by examining some of the particular rhetorical and disputational strategies that Anastasius memorialized within his *Hodegos* which, I suggest, bear witness to new developments in Chalcedonian polemics, influenced by the changed ecclesial circumstances in which they found themselves from 685. The centerpiece of the *Hodegos* constitutes Anastasius's accounts of four disputations he held with several key Theodosian bishops and monks, including Gregory of al-Kaiṣ, a close confidant of Athanasius bar Gumoyē and ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz and sometime patriarchal *locum tenens* appointed by the latter, and John the *higoumen* of the famed Ennaton Monastery, who was closely connected to the patriarchal inner circle and a top candidate to succeed the patriarch Isaac of Alexandria (r. 689-692) himself. While previous scholarship has focused on the prosopography of these debates, I focus on the disputational strategies that they celebrate. Despite Anastasius's renowned and learned opposition, he refused to present the best and most sophisticated arguments in favor of the Chalcedonian creed, and in fact makes clear to the reader that he sought less to persuade his opponents or impress his audience through clever refutations and more to expose them most effectively to public humiliation. Indeed,

Anastasius observes almost none of the refined conventions found in the dialogues and disputational texts that have survived from late antiquity.

One struggles to find parallels for these tricks and deceptions, which include Anastasius lying about his identity and using forged tomes, in the dialogue and disputation literature of the sixth and seventh centuries. They are nevertheless recounted with glee by him, and he emphasizes through scholia to his readers that they, too, ought to shame their Theodosian opponents in public through the same tactics. I suggest that the best way to understand Anastasius's disputational strategies is to place them within the contexts of the newfound patronage of the Theodosian church under 'Abd al-'Azīz and of the presence of simple believers in Alexandria. Under the new regime, Anastasius had little chance of persuading his episcopal opponents to join the Chalcedonian church, and so he recommended winning over the crowd instead, not through sophisticated chains of argumentation (which would have been difficult for simple believers to understand), but by engaging in stunts, tricks, and physical comedy that would have been much more effective in reaching them.

Having prioritized Anastasius's winning over of simple believers, I then turn in chapter five to his most sustained engagement with the concerns of those who, like them, constituted the Chalcedonian church more broadly. What did they think about the church's newfound state of affairs, and how did Anastasius attempt to explain it to them? Here, I focus especially on Anastasius's responses to questions of providence, causation, and the relationship of God to the mundane world, noting in what ways his own answers reflected a set of convictions about the relationship between God and the world that differed from the tendencies found among many of his contemporaries. Scholarship on the Theodosian church in the early Islamic period has emphasized the degree to which Theodosian elites sought to takeover the cult of saints in order to

endow themselves with greater spiritual authority (to complement their newfound ecclesial power). And in works like the *History of the Patriarchs of Alexandria*, Theodosian historians present their rise to power in 685 as the direct work of providence, with the hand of God behind many different decisions that led to their ascendancy. To that end, they sought to saturate the temporal world with divine power, whether expressed through the direct actions of God or through the power of the saints.

By contrast, Anastasius made the opposite move. Throughout the *Questions and Answers*, he offered his Chalcedonian readers a highly curtailed version of divine providence that explained the crises their church faced not as the result of divine intervention, but of the outworking of natural processes of causation. Indeed, in contrast to many contemporaries, Anastasius adopted a much more (though not completely) Aristotelian view of the universe, in which God left the affairs of the mundane world to the administration of nature and the four elements. The impression one gets from his responses is that one ought not to offer a religious or confessional interpretation of the crises of the seventh century, but take comfort in the fact that the mundane world operates according to its own logic, and that God is not truly upset with the orthodox. He thus rejects a hands-on approach to divine providence and historical causation. Anastasius's modified Aristotelianism also leads him to a hylomorphic understanding of the relationship between body and soul, which has the upshot of parochializing the Chalcedonian cult of the saints at precisely the same time that his confessional opponents were expanding their own and assimilating it ever more closely to their own identity as Egypt's predominant church.

Biography and Works of Anastasius of Sinai

Given the centrality of Anastasius of Sinai for understanding Chalcedonian church history in the early Islamic era, it is worth briefly summarizing the state of our knowledge regarding his biography and works.

As was mentioned above, certain texts that are primarily exegetical in nature (the *Hexaemeron* and the first two *Discourses on the Image and Likeness of God in Man*) have generally been set aside in this thesis. Six of his homilies survive, but for similar reasons do not feature heavily here, and in any case also have no critical editions – despite, or perhaps because of, their enormous manuscript traditions.²² We are left, then, with the texts generally attributed to him in scholarship for reconstructing his biography: the *Hodegos*, the third *Discourse on the Image and Likeness of God in Man*, the *Edifying Tales*, and the *Questions and Answers*.

Despite the fact that Anastasius has left us a rather large corpus of writings, some of which would become popular among eastern Christians, virtually no sources, whether Byzantine or Islamic, either contemporaneous with Anastasius or in the centuries following his death, offer us any biographical details regarding his life.²³ The only exception is the tenth-century *Synaxarium of Constantinople*, oft-cited in this connection in scholarship on Anastasius.²⁴ It memorializes him in the following manner:

April 21st: the memory of our God-fearing father Anastasius of Sinai. He, our holy father, who left behind the world and its affairs and took up his cross in accordance with the Lord's command, was

²² See the discussion of K. Terzopoulos, 'Exegetical and Rhetorical Appropriations of Scripture in the Homilies of Anastasius Sinaïta' *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses* 95:3 (2019): 439-504.

²³ On the false identification of Anastasius with Anastasius II of Antioch and the Armenian general Vahan made in the medieval era, see respectively Uthemann, *Viae Dux*, ccvi-ccxi and A. Binggeli, 'Anastasius of Sinai' in *Christian-Muslim Relations: A Bibliographical History, Vol. 1 (600-800)* eds. David Thomas and Barbara Roggema (Brill, 2009), 194. For a recent attempt to identify external sources for Anastasius's career, with little success, see D. Zaganas, 'Un inconnu de l'histoire? À la recherche des sources externes sur Anastase le Sinaïte' *OC* 105 (2022): 1-14.

²⁴ Binggeli, 'Anastasius of Sinai,' 194; Zaganas, 'Un inconnu de l'histoire?', 1; Dumont, *La polémique chalcédonienne*, 45.

tonsured and zealously followed Christ. Because he was a lover of greater trials of virtue, he came to Jerusalem and faithfully venerated the holy places. Drawn towards Mount Sinai, he ascended it and there, finding monks perfectly pursuing the ascetic way of life, he remained with them, submitting to them and serving. And when he had been restored to the heights of humility, he received gifts of knowledge and great wisdom. And he composed lives of the holy fathers and narrated edifying tales. He departed from this life in oldest age to the Lord.²⁵

Anastasius's birthplace is not given, and his career is primarily associated with Jerusalem and Mount Sinai – an association which has influenced modern scholarship, which often links him to 'Syro-Palestine.'²⁶ Among his writings, only the two collections of *Tales* attributed to him are listed. The 'lives of the holy fathers' probably refers to the first collection attributed to an Anastasius the Monk (*The Tales of the Sinai Fathers*), which commemorates the ascetic heroes of Mount Sinai in the late sixth and seventh centuries, while the 'edifying tales' refers to the second (*The Edifying Tales for the Soul*), which was written to encourage fellow Christians living under Arab-Muslim hegemony in the Near East. Perhaps due to the hagiographical nature of the work, most of his writings are absent from this commemoration.²⁷ In fact, however, the only real pieces of biographical information in the entry – Anastasius's association with Jerusalem and Mount Sinai

²⁵ See *Synaxarium mensis Aprilii*, cols 617-18 in H. Delehaye, *Synaxarium ecclesiae Constantinopolitanae (e codice Sirmondiano nunc Berolinensi)* (Brussels, 1902): Μνήμη τοῦ ὁσίου πατρὸς ἡμῶν Ἀναστασίου τοῦ ἐν τῷ Σινᾷ ὄρει. Οὗτος ὁ ἅγιος πατὴρ ἡμῶν καταλιπὼν κόσμον καὶ τὰ ἐν κόσμῳ καὶ τὸν σταυρὸν αὐτοῦ ἀναλαβὼν κατὰ τὴν κυριακὴν ἐντολήν, ἀποκειράμενος προθύμως ἠκολούθησε τῷ Χριστῷ. Μειζόνων δὲ ἀγῶνων τῆς ἀρετῆς ἐραστὴς γεγονώς, παραγίνεται εἰς Ἱεροσόλυμα καὶ τοὺς σεβασμίους τόπους πιστῶς προσκυνήσας κατασπασάμενος εἰς τὸ Σινᾶ ὄρος ἀνέρχεται κάκεισε μοναχοὺς εὐρῶν ἄκρως τὴν ἀσκητικὴν πολιτείαν μετιόντας, ἔμεινε μετ' αὐτῶν ὑποτασσόμενος αὐτοῖς καὶ ὑπηρετῶν. Ταπεινόφρων δὲ ἄγαν ἀποκαταστάς ἐδέξατο χαρίσματα γνώσεως καὶ σοφίας πολλῆς. Καὶ βίους πατέρων ἁγίων συγγραψάμενος καὶ ψυχοφελεῖς λόγους συνθεῖς, ἐν βαθυτάτῳ γήρᾳ πρὸς Κύριον ἐξεδήμησεν. NB that all translations of Greek, Syriac, and Latin are my own, unless stated otherwise. If translating a text in one of these languages for which no modern European translation already exists, I will provide the original text.

²⁶ This emphasis marks much of the older literature, e.g. Haldon, 'The Works of Anastasius,' 112-114 and A. Cameron, 'Cyprus at the Time of the Arab Conquests' *Επετερίζ της Κυπριακής Εταιρείας Ιστορικού Ι* (1992), 38, but it continues into recent scholarship, too; see e.g. the remark of B. Hansen, 'Making Christians in the Umayyad Levant: Anastasius of Sinai and Christian Rites of Maintenance,' *Studies in Church History* 59 (2023): 98: 'Anastasius of Sinai is an indispensable witness to the shifting fortunes of Christians in Syria-Palestine and the greater Levant during the second half of the seventh century.'

²⁷ Compare the panegyric and *vita* of Theophanes Confessor by Theodore the Studite and Methodios patriarch of Constantinople (843-847), respectively, which omit the writing of his *Chronicle* from their accounts of his life. C. Mango and R. Scott, *The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor: Byzantine and Near Eastern History AD 284-813* (Oxford, 1997), xlv-lix; A. Kazhdan, *A History of Byzantine Literature: (650-850)* (Athens, 1999), 216-218.

– can be gleaned from the contents of the *Edifying Tales* themselves. The *Synaxarium*, therefore, possesses no value as an independent witness to his life.

What then can we reconstruct of Anastasius's biography from his own corpus? Modern scholarship has generally looked first to these two collections of *Tales*. Following the work of François Nau, André Binggeli's 2001 thesis on the *Tales* argued that the first collection (the *Tales of the Sinai Fathers*) was redacted in ca. 660-670, at the death of John Climacus, whom the author personally knew.²⁸ Based on a statement in one of the tales from the second collection (the *Edifying Tales for the Soul*), as well as references to the Arab-Muslims raids on Cyprus in 649-650, he further argued that the author was originally from the town of Amathous on Cyprus, and that he left the island at some point after these raids and before the death of Climacus.

Karl-Heinz Uthemann (following some lines of investigation first set out by Chiara Faraggiana di Sarzana and Andreas Müller) has however convincingly shown that the *Tales of the Sinai Fathers*, attributed only to 'Anastasius the Monk' in the earliest manuscripts, cannot be attributed to the same Anastasius who composed the *Hodegos* and the *Questions and Answers*.²⁹ Based upon a detailed linguistic and prosopographical analysis of the text and its historical allusions, Uthemann demonstrated that it was almost certainly compiled during the period in which the Sasanians had occupied the Roman Near East, and thus could not date later than 629. The author claimed to know personally several of the key figures mentioned in the text, yet we know from other sources (in particular the *Spiritual Meadow* of John Moschus) that their *floruit* was the second half of the sixth and early seventh centuries, in some cases even stretching back to the 540s

²⁸ F. Nau, 'Le texte grec des récits du moine Anastase sur les saints Pères du Sinaï,' *OC* 2 (1902): 58-89; id., 'Le texte grec des récits utiles à l'âme d'Anastase (le Sinaïte)' *OC* 3 (1903): 56-90; cf. P. Canart, 'Une nouvelle anthologie monastique: le *Vaticanus graecus* 2592' *LM* 75 (1962): 109-129; A. Binggeli, *Anastase le Sinaïte: Récits sur le Sinaï et Récits utiles à l'âme: édition, traduction, commentaire*, 2 vols. (unpub. PhD Thesis, Sorbonne University, 2001).

²⁹ C. F. di Sarzana, 'Il Paterikon *Vat. gr.* 2592, già di Mezzoiuso, e il suo rapporto testuale con lo *Hieros. S. Sepulchri* gr. 113' *Bollettino della Badia di Grottaferrata, Nuova Serie* 47 (1993): 79-96; A. Müller, *Das Konzept des geistlichen Gehorsams bei Johannes Sinaïtes* (Tübingen, 2006), 38-43; Uthemann, *Anastasios Sinaïtes*, 367-463.

and 550s. Given the fact that Anastasius of Sinai was still active in the year 701 (see below), the identification between these Anastasii is impossible. Uthemann also persuasively argued against François Nau's proposal for a late date for John Climacus's death (ca. 660), which appears to be the central event of the collection and the reason for its compilation. As such, I accept that the *Tales of the Sinai Fathers* ought not to be included among the authentic works of Anastasius of Sinai, but was rather a collection composed by a homonymous monk prior to the reconstitution of Roman administration in the Near East following the conclusion to the Last Great War of Antiquity; as such, it cannot shed light on Anastasius's career. For the same reason, it will not feature in this thesis.

In contrast to the *Tales of the Sinai Fathers*, there is a scholarly consensus that the *Edifying Tales for the Soul* was written by Anastasius of Sinai, the author of the *Hodegos*. There are, however, some thorny issues with its textual transmission. Binggeli argued for an original collection of twenty-eight tales. But while the first twenty-three tales have come down to us, though in different sequences, in its two principal witnesses (the tenth-century codex *Vat. Gr. 2592* and the 1672 codex *Hierosolymitanus S. Sepulchri* 113, which is a copy of the ninth-century uncial *paterikon Athos Karakallou* 251, unfortunately mutilated today), the next five have a much murkier transmission history. For understanding the biography of Anastasius, these tales are potentially very important, because they contain some of the only autobiographical statements to be found in the entire Anastasian corpus. In them, the author claims to have come from Amathus, a town on the southern coast of Cyprus; to have gotten his start in the church as a priest under the then archbishop of Cyprus (left unnamed); to have personally known Leontius of Neapolis, the biographer of the Alexandrian patriarch John the Almsgiver; and to have remained on the island of Cyprus after the Arab-Muslim raids on it in 649 and 650.

Neither of these witnesses, however, contains all five tales, and as Uthemann has noted, various textual features within them cast doubt on their authenticity, like the separation of several tales by various bands within the manuscript (suggesting that the copyists viewed their authenticity as dubious); internal references to remarks made ‘above’ but with no antecedents to be found in the first twenty-three tales (such as a reference to a certain ‘Bonosus’ and to the existence of a sect of ‘Novatianists’ said to have come earlier in the collection); as well as issues with the author’s locale and age in the twenty-eighth tale, where he claims to be one of ‘the old men of the city’ of Amathus on Cyprus who witnessed the events of a past tale as they unfolded on Cyprus, despite the clear statements early in the collection that Mount Sinai was the place where the text was redacted.³⁰ Furthermore, the twenty-eighth tale claims that Amathus was the author’s homeland; however, Amathus had already appeared earlier as the setting for the seventeenth tale, yet no mention is made of it being the author’s homeland. Uthemann cast further doubt on Binggeli’s suggestion of an authentic nucleus comprising the first twenty-three tales by pointing out issues in the sequencing that had not been fully appreciated before, such as the existence of two prologues, one before the first tale, and the other at the beginning of the eighth, as well as issues with the numbering of tales fifteen through eighteen, the first three of which are also set on Cyprus and the fourth in Constantinople. In the end, he argued for a smaller nucleus of authentic tales in a different order than was reproduced in Binggeli’s edition, comprising tales 8-9, 1-7, 10-14, and then 19-22.

While we await a full critical edition to settle some of these matters in a more definitive manner, the textual issues as they stand are of a sufficient nature to cast doubt on the *Tales*’s usefulness for establishing Anastasius’s Cypriot origins. They do confirm that Anastasius had travelled throughout the Near East, at least to Jerusalem, Damascus, and throughout Egypt

³⁰ See the granular discussion of the manuscript tradition in Uthemann, *Anastasios Sinaites*, 463-582.

(Clysma and Babylon-Fustāt), and it is equally possible that he had been to Cyprus, too. As we shall see, we can also add Alexandria and Antinoë to the list of Egyptian cities Anastasius had visited, too. Beyond the foregoing, we do have at least one chronological marker found within one of the undisputed *Edifying Tales for the Soul* that offers what might be our earliest date for Anastasius's career. In the seventh tale, Anastasius warned that the present construction works taking place on the Temple Mount (taken universally in scholarship to refer to the Dome of the Rock) could never replace the Jewish Temple of God. To do so, he related a story of his own experiences while living at a monastery at the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem thirty years prior of other construction work overseen by demons. If we accept, with scholarship, that the construction of the Dome of the Rock prompted the redaction of this story, then we can posit both that Anastasius was active as a monk in Jerusalem in ca. 662, our earliest date for his career, and that the *Edifying Tales for the Soul* was compiled in the mid-690s. At the other end, the *Third Discourse on the Image and Likeness of God in Man* furnishes our latest date for his activity. Here, Anastasius states (strangely) that the Sixth Ecumenical Council held in 680-1 had pacified the wars between the empire and caliphate for the past twenty years. Even if 'twenty years' is taken as an approximation, we can nevertheless say that Anastasius was still active around the year 701.

Beyond these data points, we must look to Anastasius's other writings to establish his *floruit*, and to the *Hodegos* in particular. As was mentioned above and will be shown in detail in the third chapter, the historical allusions and references to the Theodosian church found within the *Hodegos* locate Anastasius's main period of polemical activity in the decade or so following 685, and have him operating primarily between Alexandria and the new Arab capital at Babylon-Fustāt. There are very few allusions to contemporaries beyond what we find in the *Hodegos*, but what can be found likewise points to an Egyptian context for Anastasius's activity. Further evidence for an

Egyptian context can be added by examining Anastasius's third *Discourse on the Image and Likeness of God in Man*, which takes as its opponents the Harmasites, a faction of monothelete Chalcedonians active after the Sixth Ecumenical Council in Alexandria known to us from the *Doctrina Patrum*.³¹ So too, in his *Questions and Answers*, he implies his presence in Egypt in Q. 65. Here, Anastasius explains why God permits the appointment of wicked emperors, governors, and bishops by emphasizing that the wickedness of political and ecclesial rulers is not always the result of God's own intervention. To do so, he uses the example of a wicked bishop elected in the city of Antinoë, whose election was allowed by God because of the wickedness of the city itself. Immediately after this story, he tells his reader not to worry should a wicked governor come to power, adding, 'Believe me when I say that even if the race of the Arabs departed from us today, at once tomorrow the Blues and Greens will raise themselves up and slaughter each other, [as also in] the East, Arabia, Palestine, and many other lands.'³²

In all, despite his primary place of association being Mount Sinai, Anastasius provides our clearest window not so much on Chalcedonian Christianity in Palestine or Syria, but on Egypt. Utheman's recent work on the *Tales* has opened up the possibility of reading of a completely new context for Anastasius's corpus, one which, I suggest, not only decouples him from Cyprus or Syria-Palestine but enables us to restore him to his proper context, that of the Sinai-Alexandria connection that he fostered. It was to the Egyptian Chalcedonian church that he dedicated virtually all of his works, appearing as a dynamic actor operating within in Marwānid Egypt. It was on their behalf that he defended its creed against the Theodosian church's elite bishops and monastics,

³¹ See ch. 2 *infra*.

³² Anastasius of Sinai, *Questions and Answers* 65.39-42: Καὶ πιστεύσατέ μοι λέγοντι, ὅτι σήμερον ἐὰν ἀπέλθῃ ἐξ ἡμῶν τὸ ἔθνος τῶν Σαρακηνῶν, εὐθέως αὖριον ἀνεγείρονται τὸ πρασινοβένετον, καὶ ἑαυτοὺς κατασφάζουσιν, ἡ Ἀνατολή καὶ ἡ Ἀραβία καὶ Παλαιστίνη, καὶ ἄλλαι πολλαὶ χῶραι.

skyrocketing his career from the monk's cell to the governor's court at Babylon-Fuṣṭāṭ, merely one degree of separation from the caliph himself.

Chapter One: The Chalcedonian Church of Egypt between Justinian and Heraclius

Introduction

At some point in the final decades of the seventh century, Anastasius of Sinai received a question from an unspecified person about a theological conundrum inspired by the situation that eastern Romans faced in the wake of the Arab-Muslim conquests of the Near East. ‘The Apostle says,’ they remark, ‘that *the powers* that are in the world *are instituted by God* (Rom. 13:1). Does it follow that every magistrate and emperor is appointed by God?’³³ – the implication being, of course, *even the bad ones*? Anastasius begins his response by citing Jer. 3:15 (‘I will give you rulers in accord with your hearts’), and continues,

[W]e say that some rulers and emperors are appointed by God since they are worthy of such an honour, while others in turn, though unworthy, are appointed by God’s permission or will with a view to the people who are worthy of their unworthiness. Now, listen to a few tales about these matters.³⁴

The first tale recounts, in brief, the rebellion of Phocas (*r.* 602-610), replete with venom for the usurper, though Anastasius also laces the account with the sarcasm characteristic of his style. When a downcast archimandrite of Constantinople asks God multiple times why Phocas was made emperor, an annoyed voice from heaven eventually replies, ‘Because I have not found anybody worse!’³⁵ The second, more relevant for our purposes, is worth reproducing in full:

³³ Anastasius of Sinai, *Questions and Answers* 65.1-3.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 65.5-10.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 65.19.

There was another city, one in the Thebaïd, that was very wicked and where all sorts of evil and irregular deeds were performed. One of the most abominable of the circus faction members in that city suddenly underwent a pseudo-conversion and went off, received the tonsure, and donned the monastic habit. However he did not cease to practice the same wicked acts as before. The bishop of the city happened to meet his end, and an angel of the Lord appeared to a certain holy man saying, ‘Go and prepare that city so that so-and-so of the faction members may be elected bishop.’ So the man went and did what he had been ordered. And when one of the faction members, or rather that particular faction member, had been elected, he began to conjure up images of himself and became very conceited. Then an angel of the Lord came to stand by him and said, ‘Why are you so proud and conceited? It is certain that you have not become bishop because you were worthy of the priesthood, but because this particular city deserves to have this sort of bishop!’³⁶

Though this is only a tale (διηγήσις) intended to edify his recipient, and its relation to reality is, to say the least, suspect, the ecclesiastical historian may be struck by the fact that when this Upper Egyptian city required the appointment of a new bishop, the role of the patriarch of Alexandria is completely absent: the city’s clergy did not assemble together with representatives of the laity to nominate a new bishop, and they did not present their nominee to the patriarch in Alexandria for confirmation, as would be custom.³⁷ In defiance of the ecclesiastical canons, none of the ordinary procedure was followed. Instead, an angel turns to a holy man who is tasked with preparing the city to elect its own bishop by itself. It might be that since Anastasius’ tale is meant to emphasize the wickedness of the city, we may interpret its election process in that same light: such an evil city might then be expected to circumvent the ordinary course of ecclesiastical procedure, and the

³⁶ Ibid., 65.20-33: Ἄλλη δέ τις πόλις ὑπῆρχε κατὰ τὴν Θηβαΐδα παράνομος καὶ πολλὰ μισὰ καὶ ἄτοπα διαπραττομένη, ἐν ἧ δημοτίῃ τις ἐξωλέστατος ἐξαίφνης τινὰ ψευδοκατάνυξιν κτησάμενος ἀπελθὼν ἐκάρη καὶ τὸ μοναχικὸν σχῆμα ἠμφιάσατο. Μέντοιγε τῶν πονηρῶν πράξεων οὐδαμῶς ἐπαύσατο. Συνέβη γοῦν τὸν ἐπίσκοπον τῆς πόλεως τελευτῆσαι, καὶ φαίνεται τινὶ ἀνδρὶ ἀγίῳ ἄγγελος Κυρίου λέγων· Ἄπελθε καὶ παρασκεύασον τὴν πόλιν, ἵνα τὸν δεῖνα ἀπὸ δημοτῶν χειροτονήσωσιν ἐπίσκοπον. Ἀπελθὼν οὖν πεποιήκε τὰ κελευσθέντα αὐτῷ. Χειροτονηθεὶς οὖν ὁ ἀπὸ δημοτῶν, μᾶλλον δὲ ὁ δημοτίης, ἤρξατο κατὰ διάνοιαν φαντάζεσθαι καὶ μεγαλοφρονεῖν· καὶ ἐπιστὰς αὐτῷ ἄγγελος Κυρίου λέγει· Τί ὑψηλοφρονεῖς καὶ μεγαλαυχεῖς; Ὅντως οὐχ’ ὡς ἅγιος τῆς ἱερωσύνης ἐγένου ἐπίσκοπος, ἀλλ’ ὅτι ἡ πόλις αὕτη ἀξία τοιούτου ἐπισκόπου ἐστίν.

³⁷ E. Wipszycka, *The Alexandrian Church: People and Institutions in The Journal of Juristic Papyrology: Supplements XXV* (Warsaw, 2015), 112-3.

lack of due process is part of the tale's irony. The cast of characters may perhaps serve the same end: it can be no coincidence that the man chosen to become bishop was no mere layperson, but a member of the circus-factions, who would have carried a particular connotation among Anastasius's audience.³⁸

More importantly, the tale of the wicked Theban city is worthy of our attention because it throws into relief the fact that, despite his far-ranging travels to major Chalcedonian centres throughout the Eastern Mediterranean, the world of Anastasius is one in which bishops of his own confession are simply absent. Egypt served as the primary setting of Anastasius's polemical career, yet the only bishops he ever mentions there are Miaphysites. This is even the case despite Anastasius's narration of his own visits to the Kaisarion, the Chalcedonian cathedral church of Alexandria, to debate with prominent Theodosian bishops.³⁹ The absence of their Chalcedonian counterparts is striking, not least because Egyptian sources do indicate that at least some Chalcedonian bishops were active in Alexandria, Babylon-Fuṣṭāṭ, and the Delta during the period of Anastasius' flourishing, and evidence from later Greek and Syriac sources attests to the continued presence of the Chalcedonian hierarchy in Syria and Palestine, too. How, then, should we understand the leaderless landscape presented tacitly within Anastasius's writings, and how did it inform the development of his own polemical career against Severan monks and bishops?

If we wish to understand the unique setting of Anastasius's career—i.e., as a dyothelete monk polemicizing on behalf of the Chalcedonians in Umayyad Egypt—we must first comprehend his place within the Chalcedonian church more broadly, and I suggest that the events of the late

³⁸ On the circus factions in Late Antiquity, see the classic study of A. Cameron, *Circus Factions: Blues and Greens at Rome and Byzantium* (Oxford, 1976) and the more recent account of G. Dagron, *L'hippodrome de Constantinople. Jeux, peuple et politique* (Paris, 2011). On the socioeconomic role played by the factions in particular, see C. Zuckerman, 'Le cirque, l'argent et le peuple. À propos d'une inscription du Bas-Empire' *RÉB* 58 (2000): 69-96.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, X,2.7.182-190; X,4.1.5-6.

seventh century can only be understood within a longer term portrait of Chalcedonian ecclesiastical history, for it is this longer term picture that proves crucial to understanding the emergence of the Theodosian church as a rival and then successor to the Chalcedonians within Egypt's institutional church. In other words, we must first ask: what was the status of the Chalcedonian church in Egypt at the time of the Arab-Muslim conquests, and what happened to it in the decades that followed? Certainly, those loyal to Chalcedon existed in parts of the mid-eighth century and beyond, e.g., John of Damascus, Theodore Abū Qurrah, and others.⁴⁰ But this question has received comparatively little attention for the century in between the Arab-Muslim conquests and the 'Abbasid Revolution of 750, and for Egypt in particular, which was the primary scene of Anastasius of Sinai's career.

Thanks in part to the nature of the surviving sources, many scholarly accounts have broadly tended to treat Chalcedonianism as an imposition on Egypt from the imperial government based in Alexandria upon an otherwise recalcitrant Miaphysite population in the sixth and seventh centuries, even going so far as to refer to it as an 'ecclesiastical colonialism.'⁴¹ Consequently, the

⁴⁰ For a general introduction to this period, see S. H. Griffith, *The Church in the Shadow of the Mosque: Christians and Muslims in the World of Islam* (Princeton, 2010). On Theodore Abū Qurrah, see, e.g., J. Lamoreaux, 'Theodore Abū Qurrah and John the Deacon' *GRBS* 42 (2001): 361-86; id., 'The Biography of Theodore Abū Qurrah Revisited' *DOP* 42 (2002): 25-40; S. H. Griffith, 'The Monks of Palestine and the Growth of Christian Literature in Arabic' *SP* 25 (1988), 1-28; On John of Damascus, see, e.g., M.-F. Auzépy, 'De la Palestine à Constantinople (VIIIe-IXe siècles): Étienne le Sabaïte et Jean Damascène' *TM* 12 (1994): 181-218; A. Louth, *St John Damascene: Tradition and Originality in Byzantine Theology* (Oxford, 2002); S. H. Griffith, 'John of Damascus and the Church in Syria in the Umayyad Era: The Intellectual and Cultural Milieu of Orthodox Christians in the World of Islam' *Hugoye: Journal of Syriac Studies* 11:2 (2011): 207-37; the collected writings of Vassa Kontouma in V. Kontouma, *John of Damascus: New Studies on His Life and Works* (Leiden, 2015); and S. W. Anthony, 'Fixing John Damascene's Biography: Historical Notes on His Family Background' *J ECS* 23:4 (2015): 607-27.

⁴¹ E.g., A. Palmer, *The Seventh Century in the West Syrian Chronicles* (Liverpool, 1993), 159; M. Whitby (trans.), *The Ecclesiastical History of Evagrius Scholasticus* (Liverpool, 2000), 211 n. 32, speaking of the confessional makeup of Egypt after 536: 'Egypt, outside Alexandria and its immediate hinterland, remained under Monophysite control.' Cf. M. Mikhail, *From Byzantine to Islamic Egypt* (Bloomsbury, 2014), 55-8 who, despite reservations at 223 about the idea that the Arab-Muslims immediately handed over all churches in Egypt to the Theodosians after the conquest, still nevertheless presumes an anti-Chalcedonian majority in seventh-century Egypt throughout his book; M. N. Swanson, *The Coptic Papacy in Islamic Egypt, Volume 2: The Popes of Egypt* (Oxford, 2010), 4; cf. S. Davis, *The Early Coptic Papacy: The Egyptian Church and Its Leadership in Late Antiquity* (Oxford, 2005), 86: '...during much of the next two centuries, from 451 to 642, the Egyptian papacy was sharply contested between (at least) two parties. While the majority of the Egyptian bishoprics recognized Dioscorus and a line of anti-Chalcedonian successors as the

Arab-Muslim conquests—even if not welcomed by the anti-Chalcedonians of the Roman Near East—are viewed, at least for confessional purposes, as the rupture that enabled them to be liberated from the yoke of imperial Chalcedonianism. Much scholarship has therefore focused on the process by which dissident Miaphysites formed an alternative ecclesial hierarchy in the monasteries of the Egyptian and Syrian countryside during the sixth and early seventh centuries, especially since the Severans of Egypt (Theodosians) and of Syria (Jacobites) would go on to dominate these regions and form fully-fledged ecclesial institutions in the Islamic period.⁴²

A recent strand of scholarship on the Egyptian church, however, has problematized the conventional view, observing that although a rival Miaphysite hierarchy existed at certain moments, it was extremely fragile, geographically on the margins of the empire's cities, and had great difficulty in establishing a viable alternative church (often driven by factional infighting and theological controversy). So too, greater attention has been paid to the distortions found in many of the sources which narrate this emergent communion (often composed by partisans of the Severan cause after the events they purport to record) which downplay their marginality, and to the fact that there was no such thing as a unified 'Miaphysite church' in Egypt or Syria to compete with the institutional Chalcedonian church.⁴³ Moreover, this scholarship has demonstrated that the bishops who formed this novel, rural hierarchy were not bishops in any true sense. Despite their grand claims over urban bishoprics, for example, they almost never interact with their titular cities,

legitimate patriarchs, their validity was only infrequently recognized by the Byzantine (pro-Chalcedonian) church at Constantinople. Instead, the pro-Chalcedonians often chose to promote their own claimants to the episcopal throne in Alexandria, reinforcing their authority through state-sponsored military intervention.' Davis goes on to characterize this intervention as 'ecclesiastical colonialism,' thereby reinforcing the supposition that Chalcedonianism was alien and foreign to an essentially indigenous Egyptian Miaphysitism; see *ibid.*, 86.

⁴² Honigmann, *Évêques et évêchés*; V. Menze, *Justinian and the Making of the Syrian Orthodox Church* (Oxford, 2008).

⁴³ Wipszycka, *The Alexandrian Church*, 140-45; P. Booth, 'Towards the Coptic Church: The Making of the Severan Episcopate' *Millennium* 14 (2018): 151-190; *id.*, 'From Alexandria to Dvin: Non-Chalcedonian Christians in the Empire of Khusrau II,' in *Armenia through the Lens of Time: Multidisciplinary Studies in Honour of Theo Maarten van Lint*, ed. F. Alpi et al (Leiden, 2022), 83-101.

nor indeed seem to have *oikonomoi* to aid the administration of their see—a clear indicator of institutional impoverishment.⁴⁴ So too, as has been shown by scholars like Ewa Wipszycka and Lucy Parker, confessional differences were far from impermeable for people on the ground, with mixed-confessional sites of worship appearing in the sources (whether in churches or popular saints' shrines), meaning that even 'Miaphysite' saints' shrines were venerated by Chalcedonians (and vice versa).⁴⁵ Indeed, even in purportedly anti-Chalcedonian regions like Syria, confessional identity for the 'simple believers' was often ephemeral and activated in different contexts through code-switching, as Jack Tannous has demonstrated, a phenomenon which could even extend to local priests.⁴⁶ For all these reasons, Chalcedon was neither theologically alien nor institutionally marginal to Egyptian Christians, even as we must be wary of attributing a confessional identity to the 'average person' that they themselves might not have recognized.

In this chapter, I aim to extend this revisionist strand in scholarship in two ways. First, by examining the history of the Egyptian church in the sixth and early seventh centuries from the perspective of the Chalcedonians instead of the Miaphysites; and second, by emphasizing, beyond the institutional patterning of the two churches, the huge financial and legal disparities between them. For the precarity of the Theodosians in Egypt was enabled by the legal and economic structures of the Justinianic state, which by their nature precluded the possibility of two balanced, rival churches. One way that this asymmetry manifested itself was in Chalcedonian possession of

⁴⁴ Wipszycka, *The Alexandrian Church*, 141-2.

⁴⁵ E. Wipszycka, 'How Insurmountable Was the Chasm between Monophysites and Chalcedonians?' in *Beyond Conflicts: Cultural and Religious Cohabitations in Alexandria and Egypt between the 1st and the 6th Century C.*, ed. L. Arcari (Tübingen, 2017), 207-226; L. Parker, *Symeon Stylites the Younger and Late Antique Antioch: From Hagiography to History* (Oxford, 2022), 48-53, 126-134. I note, however, that evidence for mixed-confessional sites of worship tends to favor the hypothesis that Chalcedonians remained dominant: whether in Chalcedonian or anti-Chalcedonian sources, it is the Miaphysites who worship at shrines and churches controlled by or associated with Chalcedonians, and not the other way around. See, e.g., John of Ephesus, *Lives of the Eastern Saints* PO 17, 102; Sophronius of Jerusalem, *Miracles of Cyrus and John* 12.13-14; B. Evetts, *History of the Patriarchs of the Coptic Church of Alexandria* PO 1 (Paris, 1904), 471.

⁴⁶ J. Tannous, *The Making of the Medieval Middle East: Religion, Society, and Simple Believers* (Princeton, 2019).

prominent episcopal and public churches of great antiquity together with their endowments—an issue that preoccupied the Theodosians in the late seventh century, as will be shown in the next chapter—the implications of which I explore in greater detail here. Additionally, a variety of underexploited sources show that Chalcedonians had made serious inroads into Egypt’s monastic communities (traditionally considered a bulwark against Chalcedon) and among its provincial elites (too often viewed as naturally predisposed towards the Severan cause) throughout the sixth century, a process that there is no reason to doubt had continued into the early seventh. Such advantages were impossible for the Theodosians to replicate, which meant that assimilation to the imperial church, and not dissidence, was the likely tendency throughout this period.

This chapter, then, seeks to establish more clearly the disparity between Chalcedonians and Theodosians in Egypt up to the successive crises of the seventh century: the Last Great War of Antiquity, and the Arab-Muslim conquests of the Near East. For it is only by setting out the true nature of the confessional and ecclesial *status quo ante* that we can comprehend how, when, and why this situation was reversed in the early Islamic period, a process which catalyzed the lonely polemical career of Anastasius of Sinai.

Justinian and the Making of the Chalcedonian Church

With the accession of the emperor Justin I (r. 518-527), the uneasy *détente* over the authority of Chalcedon enshrined in the *Henotikon* from 482 was ended.⁴⁷ Abandoning the *via media* approach towards proponents and dissenters from Chalcedon that had marked the imperial position since then, Justin launched an opening salvo against the anti-Chalcedonians in the empire by ordering the deposition of Severus, patriarch of Antioch, the most influential opponent of Chalcedon in the

⁴⁷ P. Blaudeau, *Alexandrie et Constantinople (451-491): de l’histoire à la géo-ecclésiologie* (Rome, 2006).

sixth century and a key architect of Miaphysite theology, who in turn fled to the Ennaton Monastery in Alexandria for refuge.⁴⁸ In the *Henotikon*'s place, anti-Chalcedonian bishops in the Near East were pressured to submit to the *libellus* ('written confession') of pope Hormisdas in order to be reconciled to the Council of Chalcedon, an act which also required them to remove the names of anti-Chalcedonian bishops from their liturgical diptychs and eucharistic celebrations.⁴⁹ Some Miaphysite bishops yielded, but those who refused were exiled from their sees. Many, like Severus, journeyed to Alexandria and the Egyptian countryside. The effects of this decree in Syria are reflected in the *Life of John of Tella* by a certain Elias, who in 521/2 described the expulsion of Miaphysite bishops and monks thus: 'And so it happened in most of the cities: false shepherds [were exchanged] for true, the rapacious for the peaceful, heretical for orthodox bishops... from everywhere and from every mouth sounds of wailing were heard, goods and possessions were mercilessly plundered, and the people were taken captive through force and injustice.'⁵⁰ From 518, then, Miaphysite ecclesiastics across the eastern provinces were deprived of access to the institutional church, and those who did not convert were forced to retreat into rural monasteries far away from cities and the reach of the imperial government.⁵¹

The Miaphysite exile in the monasteries near Alexandria and beyond would prove significant for the history of later Egyptian Miaphysitism, as we are told in various sources that

⁴⁸ For an overview of Severus of Antioch's biography and selection of texts composed by him, see P. Allen and C. T. R. Hayward, *Severus of Antioch* (London, 2004), 3-29, and for Severus's theology more broadly, see the classic studies of J. Lebon, *Le Monophysisme Sévérien: étude historique, littéraire et théologique sur la résistance monophysite au concile de Chalcédoine jusqu'à la constitution de l'église jacobite* (Louvain, 1909); A. Grillmeier and T. Hainthaler, *Christ in Christian Tradition Volume 2/2: The Church of Constantinople in the Sixth Century* (Louisville, 1989), 21-175. For a study of Severus in context with other seminal Miaphysite voices, see R. C. Chesnut, *Three Monophysite Christologies: Severus of Antioch, Philoxenus of Mabbug, and Jacob of Sarug* (Oxford, 1976).

⁴⁹ This aspect has been best brought out by Menze, *Justinian and the Making*, 76-105, and Y. Moss, *Incorruptible Bodies: Christology, Society, and Authority in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley, CA, 2016), 99-133.

⁵⁰ E. W. Brooks, *Vitae virorum apud Monophysitas celeberrimorum I CSCO 25* (Paris: 1907), 56.

⁵¹ The best account of the rustication and development of the Miaphysites in this period remains Honigmann, *Évêques et évêchés*. For Syria in this period, see Menze, *Justinian and the Making*, and for Egypt, see Booth, 'Towards the Coptic Church.'

the meeting of so many Miaphysites led to doctrinal disputes and contributed to the formation of new varieties of Miaphysitism, each of which split from each other. Notably, the supporters of Severus clashed with supporters of Julian of Halicarnassus, a fellow Miaphysite who, in contrast to Severus, held Christ's body to be incorruptible by nature. In Alexandria, this division cleaved the next generation of Miaphysite clerics and bishops into two factions, as the supporters of Severus ordained for themselves a new patriarch named Theodosius, while the supporters of Julian in turn ordained their own patriarch named Gaïanus.⁵² Although Miaphysites had not yet formed a separate ecclesial institution, from the 530s onward Egypt was home to at least three factions: Chalcedonians (backed by the Roman state), Theodosians (followers of Severus), and Gaïanites (followers of Julian), each of whom vied for supremacy amongst Egyptian Christians.⁵³ It is important to recognize, at the outset, that there thus was no such thing as a single Miaphysite church or a single Miaphysite orthodoxy in the sixth and seventh centuries or beyond, but rather a series of Miaphysite factions, sometimes at war with each other more than with the Chalcedonians.⁵⁴

Bishops, Ecclesiastical Economy, and the Novels of Justinian

Justin's nephew and successor, Justinian I (r. 427-565), initially adopted a more conciliatory approach towards the eastern anti-Chalcedonians, with the aim of reconciling them to the imperial

⁵² A. Kofsky, 'Julianism after Julian of Halicarnassus,' in *Between Personal and Institutional Religion: Self, Doctrine, and Practice in Late Antique Eastern Christianity* ed. B. Bitton-Ashkelony and L. Perrone (Turnhout, 2013), 251-94; Moss, *Incorruptible Bodies*. Note, however, that John of Nikiu, *Chronicle* 92.2-3 has the reverse, with Gaïanus first elected patriarch and with Julian of Halicarnassus succeeding him, and Anastasius of Sinai, *Hodegos* XXIII.1.2-3sch has the split over apthartism occur between Severus and Gaïanus, not Severus and Julian. Like John of Nikiu, in heresiological lists at VI.2.12, VII.1.49, X,1.1.14, XIII.1.7, XIII.7.31, Anastasius either puts Gaïanus before Julian or lists him in place of Julian.

⁵³ Though, in later decades, further doctrinal experimentation resulted in even greater intra-Miaphysite divisions within Egypt, e.g. Tritheists, Barsanuphians, Agnoetae, and more. See Booth, 'Towards the Coptic Church' 172 n. 108 for literature.

⁵⁴ Booth, 'From Alexandria to Dvin,' 83-4.

Chalcedonian church.⁵⁵ In 531 he issued an edict granting the return of Miaphysite ecclesiastics from exile, though still forbidding bishops to return to their sees, which were firmly in the hands of Chalcedonians.⁵⁶ Over the next few years, Justinian pursued a policy of unity on the basis of the Theopaschite formula, staging conferences and synods with Miaphysite bishops in the hopes of bringing them back within the Chalcedonian fold.⁵⁷ These talks failed, however, and after further failures to treat with Severus and his allies in the capital, any prospects for an anti-Chalcedonian resurgence dissipated in 536 with the issuing of Novel 42.⁵⁸ This law promulgated the decisions of a *synodos endēmousa* ('home synod') of the same year in Constantinople (together with two sessions in Jerusalem) to depose Anthimus, a patriarch of Constantinople with Miaphysite sympathies, alongside three others, effectively halting Justinian's earlier attempts at reconciling Severus's faction to the Chalcedonian cause.⁵⁹ It also ratified Severus of Antioch's earlier deposition and reaffirmed the universal expulsion of bishops who rejected Chalcedon from their titular cities, including the Severan patriarch of Alexandria, Theodosius, who went into exile in Constantinople together with some of his bishops until the end of his life in 566, as well as some

⁵⁵ On the ecclesiastical politics of Justinian's reign, see e.g. H. Leppin, *Justinian: Die Christliche Experiment* (Stuttgart, 2011), P. Sarris, *Empires of Faith: The Fall of Rome to the Birth of Islam* (Oxford, 2011), chs. 4-6.

⁵⁶ Ps.-Zachariah Rhetor, *Chronicle* 8.5; Michael the Great, *Chronicle* 9.21.

⁵⁷ See e.g. the famous conference of 532, held in the imperial palace: S. Brock, 'The Conversations with the Syrian Orthodox under Justinian (532)' *OCP* 47 (1981): 87-121. For a recent interpretation of these conferences with the broader legal perspective in mind, see C. Humfress, 'Out of Time? Eternity, Christology, and Justinianic Law' in *Time, History, and Political Thought*, ed. J. Robertson (Cambridge, 2023), 36-53.

⁵⁸ Justinian, *Novel* 42.1. See also the chronology and reconstruction of circumstances surrounding this novel in F. Millar, 'Rome, Constantinople and the Near Eastern Church under Justinian: Two Synods of C.E. 536' *JRS* 98 (2008): 62-82.

⁵⁹ Cf. Honigmann, *Évêques et évêchés*, 142-54. On the councils of Constantinople and Jerusalem in 536, see esp. Miller, 'Rome, Constantinople and the Near Eastern Church under Justinian,' and more recently P. Brimiouille, *Das Konzil von Konstantinopel 536* (Stuttgart, 2020); M. Constantinou, 'Synodal Decision-Making Based on Archived Material: The Case of the *Endemousa* Synod of Constantinople 536' in W. Brandes, A. Hasse-Ungeheuer, and H. Leppin (eds.), *Konzilien und kanonisches Recht in Spätantike und frühem Mittelalter: Aspekte konziliarer Entscheidungsfindung* (Berlin, 2020), 81-105. For the acts of these synods see E. Schwartz (ed.), *Collectio Sabbaitica: Contra Acephalos et Origeniastas destinate, insunt acta synodorum Constantinopolitanae et Hierosolymitanae, ACO* 3 (Berlin, 1940).

prominent *higoumens*.⁶⁰ The rest retreated to rural monasteries throughout Egypt, Arabia, Syria, and Mesopotamia, mostly in difficult to access locations. In Theodosius's place, Justinian appointed Paul the Tabennesiote (sed. 538-540), a Pachomian monk and possible convert from Severanism to Chalcedonianism.⁶¹ Nevertheless, there was only one throne in Alexandria, and now it was in the hands of the emperor's Chalcedonian appointee. From this point on, no Theodosian or Jacobite bishop would be permitted to enter the city whose throne he claimed.

Concomitantly, and crucial for understanding the ecclesiastical politics of Alexandria and Egypt later in the seventh century, Novel 42 went further and legalized the targeted removal of churches (with their patrimonies) from those who adhered to anti-Chalcedonianism:

We also forbid everyone to receive these men; on the contrary, we decree that they are to eject them from the cities they are disrupting, in awareness of the penalties now contained in our divine constitutions, which attach the very buildings in which any such activity takes place, and the estate properties from which they are supplied with sustenance, to the most holy churches; they take them away from the owners, on the ground of their causing harm to the simpler folk, and put them, with justice, under the most holy orthodox churches.⁶²

At this point, it is worth briefly mentioning the structures of ecclesiastical economy, for in doing so, we will make much better sense of the preoccupation of our sources (especially anti-Chalcedonian ones) on the battle for control of churches in the sixth, seventh, and early eighth centuries and their relevance to the confessional balance of power.⁶³ In the eastern Roman empire,

⁶⁰ Wipszycka, *The Alexandrian Church*, 110, Booth, 'Towards the Coptic Church,' 154; E. R. O'Connell "They Wandered in the Deserts and Mountains, and Caves and Holes in the Ground": Non-Chalcedonian Bishops "In Exile" *SLA* 3 (2019): 436-471. On bishops not residing in their cities but in rural monasteries in Syria, see Honigmann, *Évêques et évêchés*, 173-4.

⁶¹ On Paul, whose short but infamous tenancy is memorialized in various accounts detailing his implication in a plot against an Alexandrian cleric, see Procopius of Caesarea, *Secret History* 27; Liberatus of Carthage, *Breviarium* 23; John of Nikiu, *Chronicle* 92.5; Ps.-Zachariah Rhetor, *Chronicle* 10.1.

⁶² Justinian, *Novel* 42.3.2.

⁶³ On ecclesiastical patrimonies and their crucial role in running late ancient churches, see E. Wipszycka, *Les ressources et les activités économiques des églises en Égypte du VIe au VIIIe siècle* (Bruxelles, 1972) for Egypt more

churches, monasteries, and shrines/*martyria* were endowed with patrimonies (e.g. land, estates, workshops from which rents and surpluses were drawn, even animals) whose revenues financed their upkeep and the everyday running, including the clergy's payroll, wax and oil for candles and lamps, and the necessities needed for life in a monastery. They thus constituted a given church or monastery's ability to perpetuate itself. Additionally, they received individual donations of moveable assets used in the actual celebration of the liturgy (e.g. plates, candleholders, vestments, books).

Churches, monasteries, and shrines could be either public or private.⁶⁴ Public churches were those of the institutional church, the official state church of the empire controlled by bishops in cities. In large cities, they included the cathedral church and its dependencies in the city (one assumes that most of the named churches of which we are aware in major cities constituted public churches), and in towns and villages, the principal churches at which the institutional church's presbyters and deacons celebrated the liturgy (in Egypt, called *katholikai ekklēsiai*, and in the Justinianic legislation, 'orthodox churches').⁶⁵ Public churches were often those of the greatest antiquity, prestige, and wealth, especially because people habitually donated plots of land or other assets to the institutional church upon their deaths. Over centuries, they had amassed huge concentrations of land, workshops, and other assets in the form of their various endowments. As

broadly. For Alexandria in particular, see ead., *The Alexandrian Church*, 107-237, 349-377. Though focused on the western provinces, the following studies are generally applicable to the east as well: P. Brown, *Through the Eye of a Needle: Wealth, the Fall of Rome, and the Making of Christianity in the West, 350-550 AD* (Princeton, 2012); and more recently, I. Wood, *The Christian Economy in the Early Medieval West: Towards a Temple Society* (Binghamton, NY, 2022). On the related question of the exploitation and alienation of ecclesial properties in the Justinianic age, see M. Farag, *What Makes a Church Sacred? Legal and Ritual Perspectives from Late Antiquity* (Berkeley, 2021).

⁶⁴ On the emergence of the distinction in the fourth and early fifth centuries, see K. Bowes, *Private Worship, Public Values, and Religious Change in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge, 2008).

⁶⁵ On *katholikai ekklēsiai*, see E. Wipszycka, *Alexandrian Church*, 108-110.

Ewa Wipszycka has noted, the church as an institutional unit was already the largest landowner in Egypt by the sixth century.⁶⁶

Importantly, these patrimonies did not attach to the person of the bishop, but to the episcopal seat. In other words, they were held *iure corporis* by the institutional church and administered at the level of the episcopate.⁶⁷ Because they had grown so large by the fifth century, the Council of Chalcedon in 451 required bishops to appoint an *oikonomos* ('steward'), drawn from the ranks of the clergy and arguably the most important member of a bishop's *curia*, to help manage them.⁶⁸ This meant that being a bishop—especially in the age of Justinian—involved more than just the celebration of the liturgy and the organization of charitable institutions (important as these were. Essential to the job was the administration managing large-scale estates of which he was landlord, an ever more important role in the sixth century, making him (and the church over which he was shepherd) intimately connected to the lives of those who leased church properties, worked church lands, and bought from church shops, and thus an integral part of the social tapestry of his diocese. He was thus assimilated to τὰ πρωτεῖα, i.e. those who played the 'leading roles' in running the late ancient Roman city, which included the *curia* and representatives of the provincial senatorial aristocracy.⁶⁹ So too, money flowed from the dioceses of the *chora* to the Alexandrian

⁶⁶ Wipszycka, *The Alexandrian Church*, 111. The developments in Egypt noted by Wipszycka were mirrored in the west, too: Brown, *Through the Eye of a Needle*, xi notes that by the late fifth century, the patrimonies of the bishop of Rome rivalled those of Italy's lay nobility. Ian Wood notes the generally accepted conclusion that the Christian church of the post-Roman West owned roughly one-third of cultivable land by the year 700, making it likely the largest institutional landowner in western Europe at this time. There are no such studies on the landowning capacities of the imperial church in the eastern empire in the seventh century.

⁶⁷ A. Steinwenter, 'Die Rechtsstellung der Kirchen und Klöster nach den Papyri' *Zeitschrift der Savigny Stiftung für Rechtsgeschichte, Kanonistische Abteilung* 50 (1930): 31-34; *Coptic Encyclopedia*, s.v. 'Dikaion.' On the distinction between a bishop's private wealth and the wealth of the church he administered, see C. Rapp, *Holy Bishops in Late Antiquity: The Nature of Christian Leadership in an Age of Transition* (Berkeley, 2005), 211-19.

⁶⁸ See Canon 26 of the Council of Chalcedon.

⁶⁹ P. Sarris, *Economy and Society in the Age of Justinian* (Cambridge, 2006), 155-59.

patriarchate as a matter of course, although some of this largesse was also redistributed as a kind of ecclesial donative whenever the patriarch visited one of his bishops.⁷⁰

As a general rule, churches owned more land than monasteries, and episcopal churches above all. These latter regularly rank among the major landowners of cities and towns in papyri, e.g., in P. Oxy. 16 2040 (566/7), which contains a list of cash contributions for a public bath limited, through a threshold, only to Oxyrhynchus largest landowners: the episcopal church, three *viri gloriosissimi* (and some of their heirs), and two *viri magnificentissimi*.⁷¹ However, according to canonical and imperial law, any monastery that lay within a bishop's diocese was placed under his jurisdiction, and was thus liable to be integrated, in legal, economic, and institutional terms, to the episcopate, though tensions between monastics and bishops doubtless remained.⁷²

Private (or proprietary) churches, monasteries, and shrines were those that had been founded by a private benefactor, usually a member of the aristocracy, and were often located on their estates.⁷³ Like public churches, they had their own assets, though they were often far less well-endowed than the former. Nevertheless, they were extremely numerous, because it was common for the provincial elite to exert their euergetism on their construction, and we can observe in various documents from towns like Oxyrhynchus and villages like Aphrodito and Temseu Skordon the 'mushrooming' of churches across the Egyptian *chora* by the sixth century, as Ewa

⁷⁰ R. Bagnall, *Egypt in Late Antiquity* (Princeton, NJ, 1993), 292-3; Wipszycka, *Alexandrian Church*, 109-111.

⁷¹ P. van Minnen, 'Church and Economy in the Egyptian *chora* in Late Antiquity' in *Himmelwärts und erdverbunden? religiöse und wirtschaftliche Aspekte spätantiker Lebensrealität*, ed. R. Haensch and P. von Rummel (Berlin, 2021), 383-393.

⁷² D. Caner, *Wandering, Begging Monks: Spiritual Authority and the Promotion of Monasticism in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley, CA, 2002), 206-12, 235-41; Booth, *Crisis of Empire*, 9-11.

⁷³ See Wipszycka, *Les ressources*, 29-32, 63-5, 74-5. The definitive study on private religious foundations for the eastern empire remains J. P. Thomas, *Private Religious Foundations in the Byzantine Empire* (Washington, D.C., 1987).

Wipszycka puts it.⁷⁴ Private benefactors were allowed to nominate their own clergy to staff them, although this became significantly more difficult during the age of Justinian, as we shall see below.

Let us return now to the relevant legislation. Novel 42 indicates that churches and their patrimonies that are found to be in Severan hands were to pass into Chalcedonian control. Yet as noted above, churches and their patrimonies were administered at the level of the episcopate; in this way, they were not ‘handed over’ from one to another in a literal sense. Thus, when a bishop of one confession (e.g., a Chalcedonian) replaced a bishop of another confession (e.g., a Severan), the properties which attached to that episcopal seat automatically came under the control of the new bishop. One might wonder, then, at the need for such a law in the first place.

One possible answer may lie in interpreting Novel 42 in the light of Novel 17, issued the previous year in April 535, which in part aimed at curbing the seizures of property on the grounds of ‘heresy-hunting’ throughout the provinces.⁷⁵ Recently, Walter Beers has provided a plausible context for this part of the law by pointing to the persecutions enumerated in the second part of John of Ephesus’s *Ecclesiastical History*, that is, the ‘quasi and extra-legal expropriation’ of properties made by Chalcedonians against Miaphysite clerics, monks, and their lay patrons in the 520s and 530s.⁷⁶ In other words, in the wake of the shift towards a more aggressive Chalcedonian religio-institutional policy during the reigns of Justin and Justinian, local elites (aristocratic and ecclesiastical) eager to enrich themselves attempted to seize control of land used for ‘heretical’

⁷⁴ Wipszycka, *Alexandrian Church*, 109.

⁷⁵ Justinian, *Novel* 17.11.

⁷⁶ W. Beers, ‘*The Tottering House of the World*’: *The Ruralization of the Miaphysite Church in the Works of John of Ephesus (c. 507–88 C.E.)* (unpub. PhD Thesis, Princeton, 2022), 169-181. For this period see also D. G. K. Taylor, ‘The Psalm Commentary of Daniel of Salah and the Formation of Sixth-Century Syrian Orthodox Identity,’ in *Religious Origins of Nations? The Christian Communities of the Middle East*, ed. B. ter Haar Romeny (Leiden, 2009), 79-83. We should, of course, remain cautious about persecuting narratives, especially in John of Ephesus. See e.g. P. Booth, ‘John of Ephesus: Historian on the Edge,’ (forthcoming) who offers a thoroughly revisionist account of the apologetic distortions found throughout John’s presentation of the emergent Severan communion in the eastern provinces within the third part of his *Ecclesiastical History*. We must therefore allow that similar distortions and exaggerations may have occurred in the second part of the *Ecclesiastical History*, as well as the *Lives of Eastern Saints*.

assemblies. But at this stage, the issue was less the economic deprivation of an alternative Miaphysite communion (doubtless a desirable goal for the imperial church, but for which in 535-6 it is still too early to speak) than it was the fact that provincial aristocrats taking matters into their own hands (and thereby enriching themselves further) stood at odds with Justinian's goal of weakening their hold on the machinations of local government and ability to evade taxes. Thus, *Novel 42* (of the following year) fixed the problem by not merely ordering provincial elites to desist from these seizures, but by providing a legitimate mechanism through which these seizures could be carried out by members of the imperial bureaucracy (including, by extension, the Chalcedonian bishops of the institutional church), thus directing those resources back into imperial coffers by bringing them 'under the most holy orthodox churches.'

This view may be strengthened when one considers that Justinian explicitly took aim at 'cases of unjust patronage' in *Novel 17*: 'You will allow no-one to exploit the livelihoods of others, to misappropriate estate properties which do not belong to them at all, to offer patronage to the detriment of others, or to pit their own strength against the public treasury in order to defraud it.'⁷⁷ Although this statute is concerned with the case of the landed estates, e.g. by preventing a *potestates* who sought to abuse or lower the social status of free persons by forcing them to become *coloni adscripticii*, it also contains relevance for the issue of ecclesial patronage networks.⁷⁸ For episcopal patrimonies were not the only source of income for a would-be church, although they must have constituted a critical source. Local elites could (and did) endow their own proprietary churches, monasteries, and local shrines with moveable and immovable assets that helped perpetuate the economic life of a dissident confession. Indeed, locals of varying degrees of wealth

⁷⁷ Justinian, *Novel 17.13*.

⁷⁸ P. Sarris, 'Aristocrats, Peasants, and the State in the Later Roman Empire' in *Staatlichkeit und Staatswerdung in Spätantike und Früher Neuzeti*, ed. P. Eich, S. S. Hofner, and C. Wieland (Heidelberg, 2011), 377-394.

habitually donated, often through wills, tracts of land or other goods to the local church, which is how the institutional church had become so wealthy over the course of centuries. For example, the famous seventh-century will of the Theodosian bishop Abraham of Hermonthis, based out of the newly-constructed monastery of Apa Phoibammon west of the city of Hermonthis, makes clear that he privately possessed his own assets and properties. Perhaps some of these he had owned already, but he also mentions estates and goods that he had acquired through pious donations, too, which he left to his successor (as abbot of the monastery, not as bishop), Victor.⁷⁹ So too, in the early seventh century, the shrine of saints Cyrus and John at Menouthis was endowed with estates stretching across the region of Mareotis that required the supervision of an *oikonomos*.⁸⁰

Thus, with episcopal patrimonies already under the control of the institutional church, Justinian aimed further at curtailing the influence of goods provided by local patrons, i.e. the provincial aristocracy, who could be diverted away from the institutional church and towards dissident Miaphysite monasteries by virtue of private donations or, again, to their own proprietary churches and monasteries which could then be staffed with Miaphysites. Indeed, between 536 and 546, Justinian issued a series of laws aimed at curbing the influence of patrons over proprietary churches and monasteries provincial support of dissident Severan clerics. Although Justinian, following Roman legal precedent, never sought to eliminate the category of private religious foundations altogether, he did seek to make it increasingly difficult to staff them with non-

⁷⁹ For the most recent re-edition and translation of the will, see now E. Garel, *Héritage et transmission dans le monachisme égyptien. Les testaments des supérieurs du topos de Saint-Phoibammôn à Thebes (P.Mon. Phoib.Test.)*, Bibliothèque d'études coptes 27 (Cairo, 2020); ET by L. S. B. MacCoull in J. P. Thomas and A. C. Hero (eds.), *Byzantine Monastic Foundation Documents: A Complete Translation of the Surviving Founders' Typika and Testaments* (Washington D.C., 2000), 55-58.

⁸⁰ J. Gasco, *Églises et chapelles d'Alexandrie byzantine* (Paris, 2020), 24-28; id., *Sophrone de Jérusalem: Miracles des Saints Cyr et Jean (BHGI 477-479)* (Paris, 2006), n. 8 (Christodoros). Archaeological studies on Lake Mareotis suggest that these estates were primarily vineyards. See L. Blue (ed.), *Lake Mareotis: Reconstructing the Past. Proceedings of the International Conference on the Archaeology of the Mareotic Region held at Alexandria University, Egypt, 5–6 April 2008* BAR International Series 2113 (Oxford, 2010); A. G. López, 'The Western Delta in Late Antiquity: History and Archaeology' *SLA* 7:3 (2023): 445-473.

Chalcedonians. Thus *Novel 57* (537) recognized the right of private benefactors to appoint their own clergy to their churches, but required that they first be approved by the local bishop, who could reject them and replace them with their own if found unsuitable – this law was extended in *Novel 67* (538) to ban the founding of private religious foundations without episcopal consent.⁸¹ In *Novel 58* (537), Justinian banned the construction of private oratories in the home, and restricted the practice of celebrating the liturgy within the home by only permitting clerics requiring prior approval from the bishop.⁸² This was extended to suburban holdings (*proasteia*) and estates (*choria*) in 545, in order to make the construction of any church or monastery a matter of public knowledge and scrutiny.⁸³ Failure to comply would result in the confiscation of the property upon which the church was located, whether house, suburban holding, or estate property, which in turn would be transferred to ‘the most holy church in the locality by the most God-beloved bishop, his steward, and the local holder of civil office.’⁸⁴ In 546, the power of the local bishop was extended to philanthropic institutions, too, endowing him with the ability to audit almshouses, hospices, hospitals, and other such ‘holy houses’ in order to ensure their proper running.⁸⁵

Justinian continued to expand the power of the Chalcedonian bishop over his diocese by extending his control to the monasteries within it, too. Although the nomination of a new abbot for a monastery was traditionally made by the community, the final approval was subject to the approval of the local bishop.⁸⁶ Although this rule was later eased, it demonstrates that the emperor sought to leave no stones unturned in establishing public and private religious life in the empire as Chalcedonian.⁸⁷

⁸¹ Justinian, *Novel 58.1*, 67.1-2, confirmed with further additions in *Novel 123.18* (issued 546).

⁸² *Ibid.*, 57.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 131.8, with Thomas, *Private Religious Foundations*, 42-3.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 123.23.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 5.9

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 123.34.

Other imperial decrees against Severanism can be found elsewhere in the Justinianic legal code and novels dating from this period, too: former legislation barring ‘heretics’ from holding public office was now extended to Severans (reinforcing the language of Novel 42 above, legally categorizing Miaphysites as heretics and not merely schismatics),⁸⁸ and in 541, wives of deceased Severans were excluded from the right of precedence above creditors when suing their ex-husbands’ estates for the return of their dowries.⁸⁹ In 542, Justinian promulgated a law which in part dealt with legally acceptable grounds upon which one could disinherit their children, and banned progenitors from instituting their own children as their heirs if they were found to be Severans (in addition to Jews, Nestorians, and other non-orthodox descendants).⁹⁰ If they had no children, this ban extended to their male or female next of kin.

Of course, the frequency with which Justinian had to repeat his condemnations suggests local contempt for the law. So too, the enforcement of laws against unregulated worship was not always possible: the monasteries to which many Miaphysite clerics retreated were located, intentionally, in areas beyond the easy reach of the state, like the Taurus mountain range, the Tur Abdin, and the hinterlands of Upper Egypt. At the same time, we need not assume that provincials were always eager to divert their patronage to alternative groups of Miaphysites. In fact, the wording of Novel 17 would seem to indicate that the opposite tendency had prevailed, at least in the early years of Justinian’s reign. Heresy-hunting could pay off.

⁸⁸ The former law can be found under Justin I, *Codex Justinianus* 1.5.12.6.

⁸⁹ Justinian, *Novels* 109.1-2.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 115.3.

Chalcedonian Aristocrats of Egypt

Even though private benefactors and their religious foundations formed an alternative mode of institution-building for dissident Severan clerics, it is important to remember that not all proprietary churches or monasteries were necessarily run by anti-Chalcedonians. For example, despite the fact that the church of St. Theodore in Oxyrhynchus was a private church owned by the prominent Apion family, between 25 Feb and 30 March 537 the city's bishop celebrated the eucharist there, for it had been incorporated into the stationary liturgy, i.e. it served as one of the many churches in the city in which he led urban liturgies on major feast days.⁹¹ It is difficult to imagine that the Chalcedonian bishop of Oxyrhynchus would have celebrated a major liturgy in a den of known Theodosian benefactors, only one year after the law banning Severanism from the empire's cities. Other Apionic churches appear in the calendar, too, indicating that they were closely integrated in the public liturgies of the institutional state church.⁹²

In fact, we know that in 537 the Apions were Chalcedonians. They were not, however, always so. Apion II (d. before 533) had been one of the dedicatees of Severus of Antioch's *Against Eutyches* in Constantinople between 508-510.⁹³ For reasons that are unclear, he was exiled by the emperor Anastasius I in 510, but in 518 was recalled by Justin I and appointed praetorian prefect of the East. Yet even after this, he seems to have remained a Severan for some time. This much is indicated by the testimony of his son, Strategius (the future consul and *dux Thebaidis*), regarding

⁹¹ *P. Oxy.* 11.1357, l. 65; A. Papaconstantinou, 'La liturgie stationaire à Oxyrhynchus dans la première moitié du 6^e siècle. Réédition et commentaire du POxy XI 1357' *RÉB* 54 (1996): 135-159, at 141. As Papaconstantinou notes, *ibid.* 143, it is possible that the bishop mentioned in *P. Oxy.* 11.1357 bishop was possibly Peter, the bishop of Oxyrhynchus, mentioned in a papyrus dating to 534: *PSI* III 216. On the Apions, see, e.g., J. Gascou, 'Les grands domaines, la cité, et l'État en Égypte byzantine (Recherches d'histoire agraire, fiscale et administrative)' *TM* 9 (1985): 4-90; R. Mazza, *L'Archivio degli Apioni: terra, lavoro e proprietà senatoria nell'Egitto tardoantico* (Bari, 2001); Sarris, *Economy and Society*, 29-49.

⁹² See discussion at Thomas, *Private Religious Foundations*, 86 n. 164.

⁹³ Zachariah of Mytilene, *Life of Severus of Antioch* 147 in S. Brock and B. Fitzgerald (trans.), *Two Early Lives of Severus of Antioch* (Liverpool, 2013), 93; *id.*, *Anonymous Life of Severus of Antioch* 43 [Brock and Fitzgerald 120]. See *PRLE* II, s.v. 'Apion 2.'

his father's conversion to Chalcedonianism, which is preserved in a Latin translation of a letter by Innocent of Maronea from 533 and read out at the Fifth Ecumenical Council. In it, Strategius remarks that his father had been persuaded to become a Chalcedonian by 'our emperors,' and thus in all probability it occurred between 527 and 533.⁹⁴

The list of proprietary churches, monasteries, and philanthropic institutions supported by the Apion family in Oxyrhynchus and its hinterland alone constituted 'a veritable ecclesiastical empire,' including forty-seven churches, eleven monasteries, three *xenodocheia*, two *martyria*, and one *nosokomeion*.⁹⁵ Although we do not have equivalent archives to compare with the Apiones, what does survive (e.g. at Aphrodito) suggests that extent of Apionic benefactions placed them in the high octane end of the upper elite of the Egyptian aristocracy.⁹⁶ Consider the case of their support of the monastery of St. Andrew in Oxyrhynchus, which received an annual donation of 1,112 *artabai* of wheat – the largest grant of any estate supported institution known in Byzantine Egypt.⁹⁷

Thus, the case of the Apiones constitutes important evidence that even in Middle Egypt, elite benefactors whose influence stretched to many churches and monasteries in both cities and the countryside were not merely members of the imperial church, but had even abandoned Miaphysitism and converted to the Chalcedonian cause under Justinian. Although we are not so fortunate in the case of other proprietary churches and monasteries to have their benefactors appear in the literary record – since the confessional identity of a church or monastery mentioned only in a document is, as a rule, absent – one must assume that Apions were not alone in this regard. It is

⁹⁴ ACO 4.2, 170.

⁹⁵ Thomas, *Private Religious Foundations*, 83.

⁹⁶ Ibid. On the relevant data for Aphrodito, see C. Zuckerman, *Du village à l'empire: autour du Registre fiscal d'Aphroditô (525/526)* (Paris, 2004); P. Ruffini, *Life in an Egyptian Village in Late Antiquity: Aphrodito Before and After the Islamic Conquest* (Cambridge, 2018).

⁹⁷ *P. Oxy.* 16.1911, ll. 147-53 with Thomas, *Private Religious Foundations*, 86-7.

also important to remember that most private monasteries would have contained only a few monks; as Thomas has noted, the case of the monastery of St. Andrew, with its annual donation of over 1,000 *artabai* of wheat was completely exceptional – even an annual donation of 400 *artabai* would have been out of reach ‘for all but the wealthiest private benefactors in Egypt.’⁹⁸

Although it was impossible for the imperial government to completely disenfranchise dissident Miaphysite clerics – and persecution (real or embellished) doubtless helped embolden their ranks – and although they must have had enough support to ensure their continued, if beleaguered existence, the networks and resources of Severan ecclesiastics and monks now forced into retreat in rural monasteries must have paled in comparison to the imperial church’s massive portfolio of properties and assets of various kinds that had accrued over centuries, now strengthened through the creation of a formidable legal apparatus complete with fiscal incentives for turning in religious dissidents – and, of course, for staying in the good graces of the imperial administration.⁹⁹

The Decline of Miaphysite Egypt

Throughout his exile in Constantinople from 536 to 565, Theodosius did not attempt to ordain a rival hierarchy of bishops to contest the institutional Chalcedonian church in Egypt, and we have little contemporaneous evidence to suggest that bishops loyal to him managed to hold onto urban sees after the expulsion of 536.¹⁰⁰ This posed a serious problem for the Severans of Egypt, insofar

⁹⁸ Thomas, *Private Religious Foundations*, 95.

⁹⁹ Walter Beers has used the phrase ‘subaltern’ to describe the existence of these disenfranchised, rusticated groups. See W. Beers, ‘A Miaphysite subalternity? John of Ephesus, the Jafnids, and the villages of the Ḥawrān,’ *TM* 26 (2022): 23-44.

¹⁰⁰ One counterexample is Theodore of Philae (r. 525-577), mentioned briefly below, whose long episcopate is known to us through inscriptions, but who appears to be exceptional, as the *Documenta ad origines Monophysitarum illustrandas* and related texts; see e.g. L. Lontie, ‘Un traité syriaque jacobite contre les partisans de Paul de Bēth Ukkāmē (564–581) (ms. British Library Add. 14.533, f. 172rob–176vob)’ *OCP* 63 (1997). For Theodore at Philae, see J. H. F. Dijkstra, *Philae and the End of Ancient Egyptian Religion: A Regional Study of Religious Transformation*

as the ecclesiastical structure of Egypt was unique: it had no metropolitans.¹⁰¹ This meant that the prerogative for appointing bishops – and thus the responsibility for ensuring the episcopate’s stability and existence – was held solely by the patriarch. Thus, during these decades, the Severan episcopate appears to have declined precipitously until the appointment of a new hierarchy in 577 under the Theodosian patriarch Damian which nevertheless resided in rural monasteries (on which more below). By contrast, evidence from various sources confirms the presence of Chalcedonian bishops throughout Egypt’s cities in the middle of the sixth century, and even points to the reconciliation of monasteries within and without cities in Upper Egypt, too.

The Enaton and the Pachomian Order

During the 540s, at least some monasteries within the monastic complex known as the Enaton (‘Ninth’, i.e. the ninth mile-post west of Alexandria along the Mediterranean littoral) had become Chalcedonians, as attested by Justinian I’s *Letter to the Monks in the Enaton of Alexandria*, in which the emperor congratulated some of them for rejoining the Chalcedonian church under the patriarch Zoilus (sed. 540-551), the successor to Paul the Tabennesiote.¹⁰² So too, Zoilus’s successor, Apollinarius (sed. 551-569/70) had been a Theodosian monk at the Monastery of Shalman within the Enaton and had evidently converted to Chalcedon at some point before his appointment as patriarch of Alexandria.¹⁰³ Although the Enaton is remembered in Severan

(298-642 CE) (Leuven, 2008), 305-38 and S. Moawad, ‘Christianity in Philae’ in *Christianity and Monasticism in Aswan and Nubia*, ed. G. Gabra and H. Takla (Cairo, 2013), 27-38.

¹⁰¹ Wipszycka, *The Alexandrian Church*, 127-69.

¹⁰² Justinian, *Letters to the Monks of the Enaton in Alexandria* in R. Albertella, M. Amelotti, and L. Migliardi (eds.), *Drei dogmatische Schriften Iustinians*, 2nd edn. (Milan, 1973), 6-78; Wipszycka, *Alexandrian Church*, 434-4; Booth, ‘Towards the Coptic Church,’ 159 n. 42. On the Enaton Monastery more generally, see J. Gascou, ‘Enaton, The,’ in the *Coptic Encyclopedia*, 954-58.

¹⁰³ John of Nikiu, *Chronicle* 92.5. John repeats the consecration of Apollinarius in a second account at 94.1-10, likely derived from a Gaianite source, where Apollinarius is called ‘the *qomos* [= *higoumen*] of the Enaton Monastery.’ See the discussion of F.-S. Yirga, ‘Apollinarios, the Chalcedonian Theodosian: Egyptian Religious Sectarianism in the *Chronicle* of John of Nikiu,’ *SLA* 6:3 (2022): 530-43.

literature as a safe haven from Chalcedonian persecution, the surviving evidence suggests it was more mixed, indicating that these conversions were not short-lived. The issue of Chalcedon likely divided its various coenobia and laurae, too, as it had elsewhere in Egypt in the years following Justinian's legislation against the Severans.¹⁰⁴ John Moschus had visited ascetics at the Enaton whose edifying tales he recorded in the *Spiritual Meadow*, including the same Monastery of Shalman, suggesting its Chalcedonian credentials had remained steady, as well as that of Tugara; further west, he had visited 'a distinguished Egyptian elder' at the Oktokaidekaton Monastery as well as an 'Abba Andrew,' suggesting a Chalcedonian presence there.¹⁰⁵ In the early seventh century, Moschus's disciple and future Chalcedonian patriarch Sophronius of Jerusalem (sed. 634-ca. 638) dedicated an anacreontic poem to the *higoumen* and *oikonomos* named Theonas of the Monastery of Tugara in the Enaton.¹⁰⁶ Another tale of Moschus's preserved in Paulus Evergetinus's *Synagōgē* has him and Sophronius at the Enaton.¹⁰⁷ So too, we are told in Sophronius's *Life* that the Chalcedonian patriarch of Alexandria, John the Almsgiver (sed. 608-619), had entrusted 'Ctesippus, the overseer of the monasteries of the Ennaton (Κτήσιππὸν τινα τοῦνομα, τὸν τὰ τοῦ Ἐννάτου μοναστήρια διέποντα)' with the task of organizing emergency relief to the clerics and monastics of Jerusalem after its siege by the Sasanians in 614.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁴ See S. Timm, *Das christlich-koptische Ägypten in arabischer Zeit. I (A–C)* (Wiesbaden, 1984), 837-840 and M. Ghattas, 'Towards the Localization of the Hennaton Monastery,' in *Christianity and Monasticism in Northern Egypt: Beni Suef, Giza, Cairo, and the Nile Delta*, ed. G. Gawdat and H. N. Takla (Cairo, 2017), 37-48 for references to the literature. There is evidence for even more doctrinal diversity, too, including the presence of Gaianites; see A. Łajtar and E. Wipszycka, 'L'epitaphe de Duḥēla SB III 6249: les moines gaianites dans les monastères alexandrins,' *JJP* 28 (1998): 67-9. The Jacobite bishops Thomas of Harqel and Paul of Tella resided in the Monastery of the Antonians at the Enaton between 615-617 as demonstrated by subscriptions to their biblical works undertaken there; see W. H. P. Hatch, 'The Subscription in the Chester Beatty Manuscript of the Harclean Gospels,' *HTR* 30 (1937): 141-55 and P. de Lagarde, *Bibliothecae Syriacae* (Göttingen 1892), 222 n. 54. See the discussion of Wipszycka, 'How Insurmountable?', 219-22 on the spectrum of doctrinal views at the Enaton.

¹⁰⁵ John Moschus, *Spiritual Meadow* 110, 145-6, 171, 177.

¹⁰⁶ Sophronius, *Anacreontics* 21 in Gigante 128]

¹⁰⁷ Paulus Evergetinus, *Synagoge* in *Συναγωγή τῶν θεοφθόγγων ῥημάτων καὶ διδασκαλιῶν τῶν θεοφόρων καὶ ἀγίων πατέρων*, ed. Makarios of Korinth and N. Hagiorites (Venice 1783), 850f.

¹⁰⁸ *Anonymous Life of John the Almsgiver* 9.13-14; Howard-Johnston, *The Last Great War*, 97.

In each case, there is no hint that these monks were heretics. These examples are striking especially given the fact that one of the monasteries within the Enaton complex had served as the patriarchal residence for the Theodosians Peter (sed. 576-77) and Damian (sed. 577-606), the latter famed for his consecration of new, rural bishops in 577 to rival the Chalcedonians in Egypt's cathedral churches. Thus, even the fashioning of a brand new Theodosian episcopate was undertaken in a monastic milieu that contained adherents to the Chalcedonian cause.

Given their close proximity to the Chalcedonian patriarch and *dux et Augustalis* of Alexandria, one might suspect that the Enaton Monastery was a unique case, i.e., as being particularly susceptible to imperial coercion. Nevertheless, we are fortunate to possess literary and documentary sources from the mid-sixth century that suggest loyalty to Chalcedon divided monasteries much further away from the reaches of imperial power, too. A corpus of hagiographical texts from the Islamic period, including two *Panegyrics on Abraham of Farshut*, a *Panegyric on Manasseh*, a *Panegyric on Macarius of Tkow*, and an entry in the Copto-Arabic *Synaxarium*, focus on the figure of Abraham of Farshut, a sixth-century anti-Chalcedonian archimandrite of the monastery of Pbow, who refused to accept Chalcedon under the reign of Justinian and was replaced at imperial command.¹⁰⁹ Pbow served as the head monastery of the entire Pachomian order, one of the largest such federations in Egypt which makes Abraham its chief *higoumen* one. Like Pbow, most of the order's monasteries were located in the Thebaid, save for the Metanoia Monastery in Canopus east of Alexandria.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁹ For the texts, see J. E. Goehring, *Politics, Monasticism, and Miracles in Sixth Century Upper Egypt* (Tübingen, 2012); D. W. Johnson, *A Panegyric on Macarius, Bishop of Tkôw, Attributed to Dioscorus of Alexandria* CSCO 415-416 (Louvain, 1980), and for discussion see J. E. Goehring, 'Remembering Abraham of Farshut: History, Hagiography, and the Fate of the Pachomian Tradition,' *J ECS* 14:1 (2006): 1-26; id. 'Constructing and Enforcing Orthodoxy: Evidence from the Coptic Panegyrics on Abraham of Farshut,' in *Heilige Berge und Wüsten. Byzanz und sein Umfeld. Referate auf dem 21. Internationalen Kongress für Byzantinistik London 21.-26. August 2006*, ed. P. Soustal (Vienna, 2009), 9-14; id. 'Monastic Stories: Hagiography and History in the Panegyrics of Abraham of Farshut' *Cistercian Studies Quarterly* 48:3 (2013): 285-98.

¹¹⁰ On the history of the Metanoia Monastery, see *Coptic Encyclopedia*, s.v. 'Metanoia, Monastery of the.'

In addition to the miracles performed by Abraham, one key episode of anti-Chalcedonian resistance is memorialized in each of the texts, though with disagreements on the details. A group of pro-Chalcedonian monks within the monastery of Pbow, led by a certain Pancharis, are said to have disputed with Abraham over his failure to accept the Council of Chalcedon despite a letter sent to the monasteries of Egypt by Justinian, demanding their adherence to the council.¹¹¹ After his refusal, they appealed to Constantinople, where they successfully secured an imperial summons for Abraham. When he appeared before the emperor Justinian and was asked to join the Chalcedonian church, he refused, and Justinian ordered the abbacy of Pbow to be handed over to Pancharis – in some accounts, forcibly through the persecution of local soldiers, and in others, with the soldiers merely looking on. Upon his installation, we are told, he expelled its remaining anti-Chalcedonian members. After his imperial audience, Abraham journeyed to the White Monastery of Shenoute, copied its canons out, and then experienced a divine vision instructing him to found his own monastery at Farshut. The sources therefore suggest that the machinations of Pancharis and his allies together led to an imperial takeover of the Pachomian order, which was resisted by Abraham's heroic refusal to capitulate, with the implication that Abraham's position was shared by the majority of monks within the monastic confederation.

The impressionistic account of Justinian's religious policies in general and in Egypt in particular gives us good reason to believe, against the suppositions of their editor, that these *Lives* were produced in the Islamic period at least in part to reinscribe a Severan identity to the Pachomian order through the figure of Abraham of Farshut (especially by associating him with the White Monastery of Shenoute, thus claiming uninterrupted continuity with both of Egypt's earliest

¹¹¹ Goehring, *Politics, Monasticism, and Miracles*, 73-119.

and most influential orders of coenobitic monasticism).¹¹² Although it is possible that pro-Chalcedonian monastics had used the emperor's religious policy as a pretext to usher in their own control of Egyptian monasteries, it is also possible that local interests on the ground, including the bishop and the provincial aristocracy, were implicated in control over the monastery in complex ways not likely to be revealed by hagiographic sources. The role of the army is also striking. Although there is no reason to think that Justinian sent out soldiers to persecute Severan monks in monasteries, a major advantage that Chalcedonians in the provinces surely possessed by upholding the official doctrinal policy of the empire was the ability to enforce orthodoxy through intimidation and control. The image of the looming retinue of soldiers watching over the installation of a Chalcedonian appointee of a significant monastery, though certainly convenient to the notion that Chalcedon was an alien imposition, is one that surely bears some relation to sixth-century reality. Beyond this, however, it seems likeliest to me that these descriptions of conspiracy and persecution conceal what must have been a genuine debate amongst pro- and anti-Chalcedonian monks in the Thebaid over their confessional identity, with the pro-Chalcedonians winning out.

Even if the details remain insecure, the Chalcedonian milieu at Pbow can be confirmed in a series of documents that illustrate the close collaboration of the Pachomian monasteries with the imperial government. Long ago, Roger Rémondon noted that monks from the Metanoia Monastery (part of the Pachomian confederation) in Canopus near Alexandria appeared in a dossier of papyri from Aphrodito throughout the 540s as both participants in and beneficiaries of the collection and shipment of the *annona civica* to Constantinople.¹¹³ These monks, called *διακονηταί*, assisted the

¹¹² Goehring, following D. W. Johnson, 'Anti-Chalcedonian Polemics in Coptic Texts, 451-641' in *The Roots of Egyptian Christianity*, ed. B. A. Pearson and J. G. Goehring (Philadelphia, 1986), 216-34, assumes sixth-century origins for these texts, but the manuscript tradition does not permit us so to speculate.

¹¹³ R. Remondon, 'Le monastere Alexandrin de la Metanoia était-il bénéficiaire du fisc ou à son service?' in *Studi in onore di Edoardo Volterra*, vol. 5, ed. (Milan, 1971), 769-81.

Byzantine state in the collection of the *annona* by sub-contracting out their boats to the state in exchange for the tax allowances the imperial government dispensed to the monastery. These διακονηταί even manned some of the boats that carried the *annona* to Constantinople itself. But Rémondon viewed this as an exceptional circumstance, made possible by the monastery's close proximity to Alexandria, and thus subject to its *dux et Augustalis* and its doctrinal influence. Jean Gascoü, however, in his re-edition of *P. Fouad 87* and discussion of other papyri related to the Monastery of Pbow, demonstrated that this symbiotic relationship extended to the entire Pachomian order by showing that the Monastery of Pbow in fact sub-contracted out its subsidiary monasteries throughout the Thebaid to the Byzantine state, in tandem with the *dux* and the local bishop,¹¹⁴ for the administration of the Byzantine army.¹¹⁵ By the seventh century, soldiers were attached to the church of Hermopolis and could even form part of the bishop's retinue.¹¹⁶

Although it is no great novelty to point out that the Byzantine state occasionally billeted soldiers in monasteries,¹¹⁷ the combination of evidence from the *Lives* of Abraham of Farshut and the papyri enables us to better appreciate the confessional aspect of this phenomenon in the age of Justinian: the Pachomian Confederation, which had become Chalcedonian, was both a tax beneficiary and tax agent of the Byzantine state in the sixth century.

¹¹⁴ See e.g. *P. Grenf.* II 388 (535, 550, or 565), which contains a receipt for payment of military supplies issued by the cathedral church of Apollonopolis Magna for the provisioning of 'Scythians' at the Monastery of Pbow.

¹¹⁵ J. Gascoü, '*P. Fouad 87*: Les monastères Pachômiens et l'état Byzantin,' *BIFAO* 76 (1976): 157-184.

¹¹⁶ See *P. Lond.* V 1783 with Gascoü, '*P. Fouad 87*,' 177 n. 2. *P. Lond.* V 1776 l. 1, contains an acknowledgement of a debt owed to 'the lord Victor the soldier (στρατιώτης) of the holy church of Hermopolis'; cf. *P. Lond.* V 1783 l. 5.

¹¹⁷ See e.g. R. Rémondon, 'Soldats de Byzance d'après un papyrus trouvé à Edfou,' *Recherches de papyrologie* 1 (1961): 41-93; H. Torp, 'Murs d'enceinte des monastères coptes primitifs et couvents forteresses,' *Mélanges d'archéologie et d'histoire* 76 (1964): 173-200; id., 'L'église dans la société égyptienne à l'époque byzantine,' *Chronique d'Égypte* 47 (1972): 264-5.

Egypt's Chalcedonian Episcopate

At the same time, since at least 518, Chalcedonian bishops had dominated the Egyptian episcopate. We know at least a few of their names. When Apollinarius attended the Fifth Ecumenical Council in Constantinople (553), he brought with him seven bishops from Egypt (Sergius of Cynopolis, Stephen of Clysmā, Theodore of Leontopolis, Theonas of Cusae, Bassus of Damietta, Procopius of Antinoë, and Helias of Diocletianopolis [= Qus]), as well as two from Libya (George of Ptolemais and Aemilianus of Antipyrgus).¹¹⁸ To these council attendees can possibly be added (with a slightly wider chronological scope) Menas of Hermopolis (556/7),¹¹⁹ John of Aphrodito (539/554),¹²⁰ an unnamed bishop of Tentyra (527-565),¹²¹ and Macarius of Apollonopolis Magna (late 6th/early 7th century).¹²² John of Ephesus also refers to a letter the emperor Justinian had sent to the Chalcedonian bishops of the Thebaid in 542.¹²³ A tale related by John Moschus mentions three bishops consecrated under Apollinarius: Zosimus of Babylon, and two unnamed bishops of Heliopolis and Leontopolis, the latter two being originally monks of Mt. Sinai.¹²⁴ Moschus also speaks of a contemporary *higoumen* at the Judean desert monastery of St. Sergius who 'later became bishop of Hermopolis in Egypt, which is on the border of the first Thebaïd.'¹²⁵ Although we do not have names for every see, the wide geographic dispersal of these bishoprics leaves us with no doubt that Egypt's cities had Chalcedonian incumbents; indeed, the bishop's vital function as a major landlord and stakeholder in the administration of the empire makes it impossible to suppose that any sees were vacant. In the seventh century, the *Tales of the Sinai Fathers* attributed to Anastasius of Sinai, but likely composed before 629, confirms the continued presence of a

¹¹⁸ E. R. Hardy, 'The Egyptian Policy of Justinian' *DOP* 22 (1968): 40; Booth, 'Towards the Coptic Church,' 159-60.

¹¹⁹ *BGU* 21 2890 l. 3.

¹²⁰ *P. Michael*. 41 l. 69.

¹²¹ *P. Cair. Masp.* 3 67298 l. 22.

¹²² *P. Gen.* 4 168 l. 1.

¹²³ John of Ephesus, *Ecclesiastical History* 3.4.6 [Payne Smith 251-2].

¹²⁴ John Moschus, *Spiritual Meadow* 124.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 182.

Chalcedonian bishop of Babylon, abba Theodosius the African, who was also drawn from the monastery of Mt. Sinai.¹²⁶

Although hitherto unremarked by specialists, more distant evidence indicates that Egyptian monasteries in both Lower and Upper Egypt also served as prisons of exile that were in the control of the emperor and local *duces*. At some point after 18 March 550, a certain Rusticus (nephew to pope Vigilius) together with a group of clergy and *defensores ecclesiae* in Rome were deposed for conspiring against pope Vigilius.¹²⁷ At the behest of Rusticus, and an otherwise unknown co-conspirator named Sebastian, they had feigned acceptance of Vigilius's *Iudicatum* of 548, a document in which he had condemned the Three Chapters (and which provoked a storm of opposition amongst some Latin-speaking Chalcedonians, particularly in North Africa), so as to undermine it throughout the western provinces of the empire. As Vigilius's letter has it, the pope waited patiently for Rusticus and Sebastian to repent for two years, but could delay no longer and issued the group deposition.

We are told in the sixth-century Latin chronicle by Victor of Tunnuna that, in the wake of the Fifth Ecumenical Council (which secured the condemnation of the Three Chapters), this same Rusticus and a certain Felix, abbot of the North African monastery of Gillitanum, were sent into exile in the Thebaid in Upper Egypt for their continued refusal to condemn the Three Chapters, together with their associates.¹²⁸ The following year, the bishop of Salona, Frontinus, was exiled to Antinoë in the Thebaid, and in 555, the bishops Victor of Tunnuna (the author of the *Chronicle*) and Theodore of Cebarsussi – who were already imprisoned in different monasteries in the west –

¹²⁶ Binggeli, *Anastase le Sinaïte*, I.28.

¹²⁷ The episode is narrated in a letter of pope Vigilius's read out at the seventh session of the Fifth Ecumenical Council in 553. The others are named: John, Gerontius, Severinus, Importunus, John, and Deusdedit. See *ACO* III.188-194 with R. Price, *The Acts of the Council of Constantinople of 553* (Liverpool, 2009), II.81-90.

¹²⁸ Victor of Tunnuna, *Chronicle*, s.v. anno 553 in T. Mommsen, *Chronica Minora saec. IV, V, VI, VII (II)*, Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Auctores Antiquissimi 11 (Berlin, 1894), 203.

were exiled to Alexandria. Victor tells us that they were ‘shoved into the prison of the fort of Diocletian after being confined in the praetorian prison,’ outside of the city’s eastern walls.¹²⁹ The following year, we are told that they were brought back to the *praetorium*. Here, they carried out theological discussions in the governor’s residence for fifteen days, after which they were sent to another term of imprisonment at ‘the monastery of the Tabennesiotes, which is at Canopus, twelve miles from the city of Alexandria,’ that is, the Metanoia Monastery.¹³⁰ In 562, Frontinus was transferred from Antinoe to Ancyra in Anatolia, and his ultimate fate is unknown. Two years later, Victor and Theodore were recalled to Constantinople and asked again to condemn the Three Chapters. When they refused, they were separated and exiled again into different monasteries in Constantinople. As we learn from his *Contra Acephalos*, composed between 553 and 564, Rusticus specifies that he had been sent to Antinoë, and in 564, was subsequently recalled to Constantinople, where his continued refusal to condemn the Three Chapters resulted in his permanent exile in the Monastery of the Sleepless Monks – an infamously ultra-Chalcedonian institution.¹³¹ It is not unreasonable to suppose, therefore, that his confinement in Antinoe, as in the Delta and Constantinople, was within a firmly Chalcedonian institution.

Thus, in the decades after the promulgation of Justinian’s Novel 42, not only had the institutional church of Egypt become Chalcedonian, so too had some of its most prominent monasteries, whether in the case of Chalcedonian laurae and coenobia at the Enaton complex, or

¹²⁹ Victor of Tunnuna, *Chronicle*, s.v. anno 555 in Mommsen, *Chronica Minora*, 204. Mentioned also by John of Nikiu, *Chronicle* 77.4: ‘[Diocletian] went down to the land of Egypt and he subjected it to him. As for the city of Alexandria, he destroyed it. He built a fortress to the east of the city and dwelt there for a long time, for he was not able to seize the city and to bring it under his power on this occasion.’

¹³⁰ Victor of Tunnuna, s.v. anno 556 in Mommsen, *Chronica Minora*, 204.

¹³¹ On Rusticus’s life and works, see S. Petri, *La Disputatio Contra Acephalos Di Rustico* (Pisa-Roma, 2010); for the text of *Contra Acephalos*, see S. Petri (ed.), *Rusticus Diaconus: Contra Acephalos* CCSL 100 (Turnhout, 2013), with Italian translation in ead. *Contro gli Acefali*, CCT 17 (Turnhout, 2013), 5. On the Monastery of the Sleepless Monks, see Caner, *Wandering, Begging Monks*, 228-35; P. Hatlie, *The Monks and Monasteries of Constantinople, ca. 350-850* (Cambridge, 2007), 70-1, 102-4, 112-14, 121-3.

the conversion of the Pachomian confederation in both Lower and Upper Egypt. By contrast, the Severan episcopate by the 560s had reached a nadir—Theodosius appointed no new bishops, with most having passed away in the interim.¹³² This portrait of Severan decline is confirmed in a series of documents, now extant in Syriac, known to us as the *Documenta ad origines monophysitarum illustrandas*, as well as a treatise preserved in MS BL Add. 14,533, and the third part of the *Ecclesiastical History* of John of Ephesus.¹³³ Both of these Severan sources detail the failed attempts of Theodosius and his (contested) successors to consecrate a new patriarch and new bishops in Egypt between the years 566 and 577, as the controversial figure of Paul the Black and the emergent Tritheist Miaphysite party fractured the Severan elite and beset them with infighting – even forcing them to appeal to the authority of the Chalcedonian patriarch of Antioch in order to adjudicate between them.¹³⁴ The situation was so dire that Jacobite bishops, led by Jacob Baradeus himself, adopted an accommodationist approach at Callinicum in middle to late 567 and accepted that Anastasius I of Antioch could become their patriarch because he, like them, was opposed to the Tritheists.¹³⁵ When the talks failed thanks to sabotage from certain monks allied to Paul the Black, prompting the patrician John (Justin II’s chief negotiator) to cross the Euphrates and return to Constantinople, the Jacobite bishops nevertheless followed after him and tried to make the union work again. These talks still failed, but the remarkable concession of being willing to make Anastasius their patriarch and reconciling themselves to Chalcedon shows how desperate things

¹³² Booth, ‘Towards the Coptic Church,’ 167-8.

¹³³ J.-B. Chabot (ed. and trans.), *Documenta ad origines monophysitarum illustrandas*, 2 vols, CSCO 17 and 103 (Paris 1907-1933); L. Lontie, ‘Un traité syriaque jacobite contre les partisans de Paul Bēth Ukkāmē (564-581) (ms. British Library Add. 14.533, f. 172r^ob-176v^ob)’ *OPA* 63 (1997): 7-51; John of Ephesus, *Ecclesiastical History* 3.4.

¹³⁴ J.-B. Chabot (ed.), *Documenta ad origines monophysitarum illustrandas*, 2 vols, CSCO 17 and 103 (Paris, 1907-1933) with A. van Roey and P. Allen, *Monophysite Texts of the Sixth Century* (Leuven, 1994), 267-303.

¹³⁵ A. Cameron, ‘The Early Religious Policies of Justin II,’ *Studies in Church History* 61 (1976): 51-67; P. Allen, ‘Neo-Chalcedonism and the Patriarchs of the Late Sixth Century,’ *Byzantion* 50:1 (1980): 5-17; S. B. Roggo, *The Conflict over the Patriarchate of Constantinople under Eutychios and John Scholastikos (552-582) and its Impact on Imperial Religious Policy* (unpub. PhD Thesis, University of Cambridge, 2022), 91-100.

had become even for the Jacobites, whose own network of monasteries and rival bishops in North Syria, Mesopotamia, and Arabia were better established in the late 560s than their co-confessionalists in Egypt.

Only with the accession of Damian in 577, who took up residence in one of the coenobia of the Enaton complex, were the Theodosians able to begin appointing new bishops for themselves in Egypt. Yet, as we shall see, despite the triumphant (and perhaps exaggerated) rhetoric surrounding Damian's creation of a new Theodosian episcopate, these 'bishops' could only claim the name. They did not exercise the functions of a Justinianic bishop, and remained marginal well into the seventh century.

The Ascendency of the Chalcedonian Church in Egypt before the Last Great War

Just a few years after the accession of the Damian and the rebirth of the Theodosian episcopate, the Chalcedonian Eulogius (sed. 580-607/8) was enthroned as patriarch of Alexandria.¹³⁶ In line with the pattern we have observed elsewhere, he is remembered as a persecutor by later Severan sources,¹³⁷ whereas Chalcedonian sources – including Eulogius's own correspondence with Gregory the Great – present him as a successful convertor of Severans and Gaïanites to the Chalcedonian cause.¹³⁸ These letters complement the portrait of Eulogius found in Photius's entry

¹³⁶ See now B. Roosen, 'Eulogii Alexandrini quae supersunt. Old and new fragments from Eulogius of Alexandria's *oeuvre* (CPG 6971-6979)' *Medioevo greco* 15 (2015): 201-240. See also the epigram attributed to Sophronius of Jerusalem which mentions Eulogius as patron of a newly constructed guest house (Εἰς τόπον ἐπιξενουμένων), in A. Cameron (ed. and trans.), 'The Epigrams of Sophronius' *CQ* 22:1 (1983): 290: 'Stranger, who formerly on your arrival by land or by sea wandered about with homeless feet, approach now and stay your steps here, where, if you wish to dwell, you will find a lodging all ready. If you want to know who built me, citizen, it was Eulogius, the good patriarch of Alexandria.'

¹³⁷ See e.g. Evetts, PO 1 478-9.

¹³⁸ On Eulogius's relationship with Gregory the Great, see the relevant letters in D. Norberg (ed.), *S. Gregorii Magni Registrum epistularum* CCSL 140-140A (Turnhout, 1982) with translation and commentary in J. R. C. Martyn (trans.), *The Letters of Gregory the Great* (Toronto, 2004); P. Booth, 'Gregory and the Greek East' in *A Companion to Gregory the Great*, ed. B. Neil and M. dal Santo and (Leiden, 2013), 109-25 and S. Lin, 'Ecclesiastical Networks and the Papacy at the End of Late Antiquity c. 550-750' (unpub. PhD Thesis, University of Manchester, 2018), 35-50, 59-61, 71-77.

on his *Defense of the Council of Chalcedon*, together with a series of three vignettes in John Moschus's *Spiritual Meadow* wherein Eulogius features and is explicitly associated with defending the Tome of Leo.¹³⁹ Papal relations with Eulogius extended beyond doctrinal matters, however: in the surviving letters of pope Gregory the Great we can glimpse the commercial interests of Alexandria's patriarch, for Eulogius frequently sent ships to Rome for the purchase of timber.¹⁴⁰

That the Chalcedonian patriarch of Alexandria was in control of a commercial fleet is confirmed in the *vitae* of Eulogius's successor, John the Almsgiver (sed. ca. 608-ca.619). John was a political appointee of the emperor Heraclius, charged with keeping the peace in Alexandria after his revolution against Phocas had transformed Egypt into a battleground between the emperor's right hand man, his cousin Nicetas, and Phocas's, the *comes Orientis* Bonosus.¹⁴¹ To this end, John's peaceable disposition and boundless charity to the denizens of Alexandria run like a thread throughout our primary source for reconstructing John's life, the combined *Lives of John the Almsgiver* by Moschus and Sophronius on the one hand and Leontius of Neapolis on the other.¹⁴²

In a seminal study of Leontius's *Lives* of Symeon the Fool and John the Almsgiver, Vincent Déroche drew attention to the striking role that the economy – and in particular what he calls the

¹³⁹ Gregory the Great, *Letters* 8.29; John Moschus, *Spiritual Meadow* 77, 146-8; cf. Sophronius of Jerusalem, *Miracles of Cyrus and John* 1, 8, 9, 62 in N. F. Marcos, *Los thaumata de Sofronio: Contribución al estudio de la 'Incubatio' Cristiana* (Madrid, 1975). On Eulogius's relationship with Gregory the Great in particular, see the relevant letters in D. Norberg (ed.), *S. Gregorii Magni Registrum epistularum* CCSL 140–140A (Turnhout, 1982) with translation and commentary in J.R.C. Martyn (trans.), *The Letters of Gregory the Great* (Toronto, 2004); see also P. Booth, 'Gregory and the Greek East' in *A Companion to Gregory the Great*, ed. B. Neil and M. dal Santo and (Leiden, 2013), 109-25 and S. Lin, 'Ecclesiastical Networks and the Papacy at the End of Late Antiquity c. 550-750' (unpub. PhD Thesis, University of Manchester, 2018), 35-50, 59-61, 71-77.

¹⁴⁰ Wipzsycka, *Alexandrian Church*, 215.

¹⁴¹ See Theophanes, *Chronographia* AM 6101 [= 608/609 CE] where he is called the κόμητα ἀνατολῆς. On the Egyptian conflict, see now the account of Howard-Johnston, *The Last Great War*, 49-60 with literature. Anastasius perhaps alludes to this conflict when he mentions "those bloody massacres [perpetrated] through Bonosus the executioner" in *Questions and Answers* 65.2. According to J. Munitiz, SJ, *Questions and Answers*, 177, this tale, which emphasizes the destruction of Bonosus, has no parallel in contemporary literature.

¹⁴² H. Delehaye, 'Une Vie inédite de Saint Jean l'Aumônier,' *AB* 45 (1927): 19-73; A.-J. Festugière and L. Rydén, *Léontios de Néapolis, Vie de Syméon le Fou et Vie de Jean de Chypre* (Paris, 1974).

‘miraculous economy’ – plays in Leontius’s *Life* of John.¹⁴³ Déroche argued that scholars must be cautious in approaching the *Life* for information about the economy of the Alexandrian patriarchate, because its miraculous logic – wherein God blesses the almsgiver with exponentially more money than he has given so as to be able to give even more in a virtuous circle – precludes us from drawing hard conclusions about the fiscal strength of the patriarchal treasury.

Nevertheless, despite the nature of John’s appointment and the ‘miraculous economy’ from which he draws his nearly infinite coffers, Ewa Wipszycka has shown that it is indeed possible to ascertain some information about the ‘income and expenses of the Alexandrian patriarchate and its interventions in the economic life of the city’ from this text, as well as more general *realia* about the Alexandrian patriarchate in the early seventh century.¹⁴⁴ For our purposes, the particularities regarding the expenditure of the patriarchal see matter less than the simple fact that, throughout the *Life*, John is in control of the fiscal assets and political/legal advantages that were the sole prerogative of the official, state-backed patriarch of Alexandria. To that end, the *Lives* of John the Almsgiver can illuminate, at least to some degree, the dominance that the institutional Chalcedonian church continued to enjoy in Alexandria.

In one tale, a ‘foreign captain’ who had gone bankrupt beseeches John for his help, and, after a few missteps, receives it when John appoints him a captain within the fleet of merchant ships owned by the Alexandrian patriarchate, which he sails to the British Isles and back, trading in cash and goods.¹⁴⁵ Similarly, in another tale, we learn of two more Gazelles that had been

¹⁴³ V. Déroche, *Études sur Léontios de Néapolis* (Uppsala, 1995), 238-54; cf. D. Caner, ‘Towards a Miraculous Economy: Christian Gifts and Material “Blessings” in Late Antiquity’ *J ECS* 14:3 (2006): 329-377.

¹⁴⁴ E. Wipszycka, *Alexandrian Church*, 214; cf. the remarks of R. Bagnall, ‘Models and Evidence in the Study of Religion in Late Roman Egypt’ in *From Temple to Church: Destruction and Renewal of Local Cultic Topography in Late Antiquity*, ed. J. Hahn, S. Emmel, and U. Gotter (Leiden, 2008), 26-7, who also suggests we require less caution than Déroche on economic figures in the *Lives*.

¹⁴⁵ Leontius of Neapolis, *Life of John the Almsgiver* 8 [Festugière and Rydén 353-4]. Though see the commentary of Wipszycka, *Alexandrian Church*, 233 n. 40 relating to the tin trade.

dispatched to ecclesial patrimonies in Sicily (probably owned by Rome and thus evidence for trade between the patriarchates, but possibly belonging to Alexandria) in order to collect wheat to help address a famine in Egypt which had been caused by an insufficient flooding of the Nile.¹⁴⁶ Elsewhere we learn how the ‘ships of his Most Holy church’ had suffered during a storm while trading in the Adriatic Sea and were forced to jettison some of their cargo, amounting to thirty-four *kentenaria* of gold—a huge amount. Their goods were significant, including ‘waterproof garments,’ and the vessels no less so, for there were ‘more than thirteen ships each carrying ten thousand artabas [of wheat].’¹⁴⁷ Even if, regarding the high numbers involved, we dismiss the hyperbole in these tales as standard fare from the hagiographer, these tales reinforce the powerful position of confessional enfranchisement that the Chalcedonian church, as the institutional church of the empire, enjoyed in early seventh-century Egypt, for it is extremely unlikely that ownership of an official merchant fleet could have been duplicated by the upstart Theodosian church in the decades since Damian’s patriarchate.

In another tale, mention is made of a member of the patriarchal curia called the Overseer of the Shops (τὸν ἐπάνω τῶν καπήλων), i.e., the taverns and various workshops owned by the Church from which it drew rent money.¹⁴⁸ In this vignette, John’s nephew is insulted by a local shopkeeper in the city (τινος τῶν τῆς πόλεως καπήλων), and so he comes to the episcopal palace in the hopes that the latter will punish him in retribution. John surprises him, however, when he instead shows favor to the shopkeeper, and orders the Overseer to ‘never accept from that shopkeeper either his customary gratuity, taxes, or the rent from his workshop’—the implication being that the patriarch would cover those expenses himself.¹⁴⁹ Although this shop was owned by

¹⁴⁶ Leontius of Neapolis, *Life of John the Almsgiver* 11 [Festugière and Rydén 359].

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid. 14 [Festugière and Rydén 363]; cf. Wipszycka, *Alexandrian Church*, 216.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

the Church, Leontius also seems to imply in this tale that John possessed power over an important secular official in this connection, the auditor (ὁ λογιστής) of Alexandria's marketplace. For before George realizes John's true aim, he hopes that, in response to the insult he suffered, the patriarch will have '[that particular shopkeeper] whipped and paraded through the streets by the auditor (for that is what they call the overseer of the marketplace [in Alexandria]).'¹⁵⁰

The Chalcedonian patriarch's prerogatives were not merely financial, of course, but also legal. We encounter the *defensor ecclesiae* (ὁ ἐκκλησιακδικός) throughout Leontius's text, an ecclesiastical official who bridged the gap between the imperial administration and the church.¹⁵¹ Modeled on their secular counterpart, the *defensor civitatis*, the *defensor ecclesiae* acted as a trained legal specialist responsible for the financial interests of the church (and who bore personal liability in various cases where the church's interests may have clashed with the fisc), and also functioned as clerical policemen. They embody this dual role in the *Life*, where they appear in three vignettes. In one, they assist John in the dispensation of justice at the *episcopalis audientia* for those who had been wronged in courts of law; in another, they are commanded by the patriarch to beat a monk accused of taking a prostitute as a wife; and in the last, they act as informants against a monk named Vitalius who evangelized in the city's brothels.¹⁵²

As Vincent Déroche points out, it is important to take these accounts with a grain of salt: despite the fact that imperial law did give the bishop of a city the right to offer clerics a hearing in the *episcopalis audientia* as a court of appeal, Leontius is concerned to paint John as the true arbitrator of Alexandria, and so the civil authorities barely intrude upon the narrative, even where

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ On the emergence of permanent *defensores ecclesiae* for the imperial church, see C. Humfress, 'A New Legal Cosmos: Late Roman Lawyers and the Early Medieval Church,' in *The Medieval World*, ed. P. Linehan and J.L. Nelson (London, 2001), 659-666, and on their appearance in Justinian's law code, see, e.g., Justinian, *Novels* 15, 17.7, 56.1, 86; *Edict* 13.10.

¹⁵² Leontius of Neapolis, *Life of John the Almsgiver* 4, 23, 28 [Festugière and Rydén 349, 373, 388].

we might expect them.¹⁵³ But even if his role is idealized in this *vita*, it is worth noting that John's *episcopalis audientia* could only function as a legitimate court of appeal in the city if it belonged to the legitimate patriarch of the city, i.e. the one whose decisions would be recognized and affirmed by the state. Leontius's *Life* cements the close intertwining of church and state further by relating how John became the ritual brother of Alexandria's *dux et Augustalis*, Nicetas, the emperor's cousin.¹⁵⁴

The *Lives* of John the Almsgiver also help shed light on the state of control over churches in the city of Alexandria, an issue which, as we shall see in the next chapter, Severan sources were preoccupied.¹⁵⁵ The earlier *vita* of John the Almsgiver by John Moschus and Sophronius tells us that upon his consecration as patriarch in ca. 608, he found only seven Chalcedonian churches in all of Alexandria adhering to the shorter, non-Theopaschite version of the prayer. Through his efforts, we are told, he increased the number of churches that used the short version to seventy.¹⁵⁶ The number seventy is noteworthy here, given that our surviving sources mention about sixty churches in the city of Alexandria.¹⁵⁷ Doubtless there were more than this, if we include proprietary churches and monasteries with chapels. But for our purposes, this anecdote – written by close associates of John himself – indicates that the public churches of Alexandria were in the control of the Chalcedonians, and likely had been since 536.

In addition to the perceptions of the hagiographers, further evidence for the domination of the institutional Chalcedonian church in Egypt survives in the episcopal archives of the

¹⁵³ Déroche, *Études*, 142-6.

¹⁵⁴ On John and Nicetas, see C. Rapp, 'All in the Family: John the Almsgiver, Nicetas, and Heraclius' *Néa Póμα: Rivista di Ricerche Bizantinistiche* 1 (2004): 121-34, and on the phenomenon of ritual brothers, (*adelphopoiēsis*), see ead., *Brother-Making in Late Antiquity and Byzantium: Monks, Laymen, and Christian Ritual* (Oxford, 2016).

¹⁵⁵ The theme reappears in Mena of Nikiu's *Life of Isaac*, on which see below, and also throughout the common source of Michael the Great, the anonymous *Chronicle to the Year 1234*, Theophanes Confessor, and Agapius of Manbij, often identified with the *Chronicle* of Theophilus of Edessa.

¹⁵⁶ *Anonymous vita* 5, ed. Deleheye.

¹⁵⁷ See now Gascou, *Églises et chapelles*.

Theodosians Abraham of Hermonthis and Pesynthius of Koptos, both of which, unfortunately, lack a proper critical edition.¹⁵⁸ They offer us unparalleled access to the workings of the rural, Severan episcopate in the Thebaïd during the period ca. 590 to ca. 630. As Ewa Wipszycka and Phil Booth have argued, their contents suggest that the bishops belonging to the episcopate formed by Damian in 577 continued to be rusticated throughout Egypt's countryside.¹⁵⁹ Although there is no room here to examine the documents in detail, even a cursory reading of the archives reveals two remarkable facts about Abraham and Pesynthius: first, they virtually never interact with their titular cities; and second, they never mention an *oikonomos*, the right-hand man of the bishop and administrator of the church's patrimonies, suggesting that in spite of donations to Abraham, the Theodosian church of Hermonthis had remained rather impecunious.¹⁶⁰ Instead, the vast majority of documents constitute communiqués with clerics or administrators in villages outside of cities and various rural monasteries under their jurisdiction (in the case of Pesynthius, sometimes outside of his jurisdiction), where the penalty of being excommunicate (*apoklēros*) is wielded liberally for moral issues and, in particular, sexual sins. This means that Abraham and Pesynthius testify not only to the continued rustication of Theodosian bishops from 577 well into the seventh century, but (as our discussion about the public churches and their properties shows) that they also had remained institutionally and financially impoverished, as well.

Renate Dekker has argued that these archives illuminate the inner-workings of day-to-day life for ordinary bishops in the Thebaïd, but the unique ecclesial context in which they arose means that we must be cautious in universalizing their experiences.¹⁶¹ On the contrary, the overwhelming

¹⁵⁸ On the archives see R. Dekker, *Episcopal Networks of Authority in Late Antiquity: Bishops of the Theban Region at Work* OLA 264 (Leuven, 2018).

¹⁵⁹ Wipszycka, *Alexandrian Church*, 141-2; Booth, 'Towards the Coptic Church,' 171-80.

¹⁶⁰ Wipszycka, *Alexandrian Church*, 34-41.

¹⁶¹ See Booth, 'Blood of Christ: Eucharist, Excommunication, and Ecclesiogenesis in Byzantine Egypt' (forthcoming) for a more cautious approach.

number of letters concerned with moral purity appears to be a strategy of confessional distinction, deliberately constructed to endow the new episcopate with spiritual authority in contrast to its established Chalcedonian counterpart. For example, as Phil Booth has noted, it is striking that in *P.Pisentius* 10 and *P.Mon.Epiph.* 133 the Theodosian patriarch of Alexandria himself, along with several bishops from other dioceses, are intimately involved in the punishment of individual Theban monks who had committed minor transgressions, convening tribunals to judge their fates.¹⁶² One wonders if they were able to dedicate so much time to micromanagement because they had little else to do.

A further indication of how marginal these Severan bishops were can be found in two more seventh-century documents: *P.KRU.105*, in which the citizens of the nearby village of Jême approved the decision to found the monastery of Apa Phoibammon and give its monks the right to elect its own abbot, and *P. Lond. I.77*, the will of Abraham of Hermonthis, most recently edited by Esther Garel.¹⁶³ *P.KRU.105* bears witness to patriarch Damian's request that Abraham move his episcopal residence to a more accessible location, and he evidently chose to establish Apa Phoibammon within the ancient temple complex of Hatshepsut (Deir el-Bahari) in the Western Theban necropolis. Abraham was the beneficiary of *P.KRU.105*, as he became its first abbot, while at the same time establishing it as his episcopal residence in capacity as bishop. It is noteworthy that Abraham's episcopal residence was moved from one (apparently remote) monastery to a different (less remote, but still in the rural hinterland) monastery. At no point in time was Abraham's episcopal residence located within a city; in this, his fate mirrored that of the Theodosian patriarch, whose episcopal residence was the monastery of the Enaton west of

¹⁶² Booth, 'Blood of Christ,' 14-15.

¹⁶³ The seminal study of Abraham's will was that of M. Krause, *Apa Abraham von Hermonthis: Ein oberägyptischer Bischof um 600*, (unpublished PhD thesis, Humboldt-Universität, Berlin, 1956) but see now Garel, *Héritage et transmission* (*op. cit.* n. 29) for the most recent and authoritative work, with re-edition and literature.

Alexandria. If bishops from locales as disparate as Alexandria, Hermonthis, and Koptos could not take possession of their sees within their titular cities, there is little reason to suppose that many others were more fortunate.

In the famous will of Abraham of Hermonthis contained within *P. Lond.* I.77, Abraham bequeathed his episcopal residence, the monastery of Apa Phoibammon, together with all of his private possessions (moveable and immoveable assets), to his *syncellus* Victor, who succeeded him as abbot.¹⁶⁴ This text has been much commented on. For our purposes, this will (the only text in his archive composed in Greek) is notable because of its list of signatories, which are not fellow Theodosians, but rather clerics from the Chalcedonian cathedral church of Hermonthis and local notables, including a member of the city's curial class (ὁ πολιτευόμενος). In order to legitimize the transfer of property, Abraham required members of the official state church and the city's *curia* to stand as witnesses – thus implying that he understood the legal precarity of his position in the eyes of the law. It is possible that the will belies a *quid pro quo*, with the Chalcedonians ceding the rural monastery of Apa Phoibammon in exchange for some other favor. It is also possible that the episcopate was not viewed as a particular threat to the Chalcedonians. In any case, Abraham's will offers us evidence that the economic and financial position of the new episcopate and its associated monasteries was highly precarious, both in its striking signatories, and in its evident desire to ensure institutional continuity in landowning and leadership. This document, therefore, may serve as a microcosm of the phenomenon we have been describing: although local dynamics might vary, the situation as a whole demonstrates that the Chalcedonians remained not only institutionally dominant, but also legally and financially dominant in unmatched ways as well,

¹⁶⁴ Not his successor as bishop, who is listed as a certain Moses in the Moir-Bryce diptych, now held in the British Library. See W. E. Crum, 'A Greek Diptych of the Seventh Century,' *Proceedings of the Society of Biblical Archaeology* 30 (1908) 255-65; id., 'The Bishops named in Mr Bryce's Diptych,' *Proceedings of the Society of Biblical Archaeology* 31 (1909).

with the Theodosians even forced to rely upon Chalcedonian bishops to resolve controversies within their own church and for establishing their basic legal standing in their own wills.

Conclusion

Although, as has been pointed out, there is a relative explosion in Severan literature in the late sixth century as the new, rival church began to consolidate under the patriarchate of Damian, we must not be misled by this evidence into assuming that once the new Severan hierarchy was ordained, it had become the dominant force on the Egyptian ecclesiastical scene, or was even waiting to become this. Although rival bishops existed, rival churches – in the proper sense – did not. At an institutional level, Egypt remained a single church in the hands of Chalcedonian bishops, backed by the force of the state and in a position of unparalleled financial and legal strength. Though we do not have evidence for most bishoprics (as we do not for their Severan counterparts), there is little reason to believe that any sees were in the hands of the Theodosians.

What I wish to stress here is not that all of Egypt had become Chalcedonian after Justinian's slew of pro-Chalcedonian legislation – it certainly was not. Imperial legislation and the financial incentives for reconciling oneself to the official doctrinal policy of the state, though powerful tools in the hands of the administration and church, were not sufficient to secure the loyalties of every place. Damian's bishops, after all, had to come from somewhere. Rather, I have endeavored to show that despite the fact that Egypt, like other parts of the empire, was divided by Chalcedon, and despite the emergence from the 570s of an alternative Theodosian episcopal hierarchy in Egypt's countryside, there is little reason to believe that the institutional, Chalcedonian church of Egypt, around which such huge economic and legal power was aggregated, was deterred from the domination of its cities and other zones of imperial influence beyond them. Adherence to Chalcedon had even permeated some of Egypt's monasteries (traditionally considered a bulwark

against Chalcedonianism), including certain coenobia and laurae at the Enaton complex and the Pachomian confederation, with the latter being closely integrated into the administration of the state and its military throughout the Nile Delta and Valley. Even some of its most prominent provincial elites had joined the Chalcedonian cause, too.

Despite the pressures of the Sasanian occupation of Egypt (619-629), for which we know almost nothing about the fate of the church save that the Persians did not permit the appointment of new Theodosian (and presumably, Chalcedonian) bishops, there is little reason to believe that this dominance had abated after the restoration of Roman rule.¹⁶⁵ For the success of imperial monenergism had, from 633, strengthened the institutional Chalcedonian church even further, resulting in the reconciliation of many more Theodosians to Chalcedon, as well as the establishment of a unionist episcopate under the leadership of the emperor's chosen patriarch, Cyrus, that stretched from Alexandria to Antinoë. As we shall see in the next chapter, however, despite the endurance of this episcopate in the first decades of Islamic rule, political and religious developments in Constantinople and Damascus in the 680s would lead to its fracturing and decline, and thus to the polemical career of Anastasius of Sinai.

¹⁶⁵ *Copto-Arabic synaxarium*, ed. Basset, PO 3, 490; with P. Booth, 'Egypt Under the Sasanians: Tolerance, Continuity, Stability?' in *TM 26* (Paris, 2022): 250.

Chapter Two: Alexandria between Monotheletes and Marwānids

Introduction

In the 13th century, the West Syrian historian and maphrian Gregory bar Hebraeus (1225/6-1286) observed the following of the Chalcedonians who lived in the Near East after the Last Great War of Antiquity (603-629): ‘While just a little earlier they were mocking us [*sc.* Severans] because of the Tritheists who separated from us and immediately went extinct, they [now] slide down from one pit to another.’¹⁶⁶ The ‘pit’ of which he speaks is the doctrinal formula known as monenergism, i.e. the belief in the single operation in Christ (and from ca. 638 its companion formula, monotheletism, i.e. the single will), which formed the centerpiece of the emperor Heraclius’s accommodationist ecclesial policy at the conclusion to the Last Great War. This move towards rapprochement met with remarkable success throughout the restored provinces of the Near East; in Egypt, particularly, it was enshrined in the Pact of Union of 633, promulgated under the Chalcedonian patriarch Cyrus of Alexandria (sed. ca. 630-642), and had the effect of reconciling huge numbers of Theodosians to the imperial church. This Chalcedonian monenergist communion comprised the institutional church that the Arab-Muslims encountered when, only a few years later, they swept over the eastern provinces, and as we shall see, continued to dominate the ecclesial politics of the caliphate for decades to come.

Bar Hebraeus’s remark is, then, slightly out of place, coming as it does in his vignette on the Jacobite patriarch of Antioch Theodore (sed. ca. 650-665). But it perfectly describes the situation that prevailed in the period of Anastasius of Sinai’s *floruit*, i.e., the 680s and 690s, when dual crises dovetailed to fragment the Chalcedonian community of Egypt: the Sixth Ecumenical

¹⁶⁶ Translation adapted from M. Mazzola, *Bar ‘Ebroyo’s Ecclesiastical History: Writing Church History in the 13th Century Middle East* (unpub. PhD Thesis, University of Ghent, 2018), 249.

Council of 680-1, which, in condemning monotheletism, unraveled the very foundation upon which the Chalcedonian unionist church had been based for half a century; and the emergence of the new ruling dynasty in the Umayyad caliphate, the Marwānids (r. 684-750), who broke with the ecclesial *status quo* established at the beginning of Islamic rule by restoring the Theodosian patriarch to Alexandria for the first time since the exile of Theodosius himself in 536.

With the advent of Islam, however, comes an appreciable decline in our evidence base for reconstructing the fate of Chalcedonian Christians in Egypt. Indeed, we know of no named Egyptian Chalcedonian authors whose works have survived in this period save Anastasius of Sinai. By contrast, the 690s and beyond saw an explosion of new Severan literature produced in Egypt for the first time since the late sixth century, as Marwānid rule created the conditions for the revitalization of the Theodosian episcopate. Unfortunately, however, what survives focuses almost exclusively on Alexandria and the new Arab-Muslim capital at Babylon-Fustāṭ. Although these texts cannot give us the same kind of insight into the institutional church of Egypt as the sources for the sixth and early seventh centuries, they nevertheless display the same preoccupations that were explored in the first chapter: control over the episcopate and its churches, and confessional patronage. Because of the nature of our surviving sources, then, the first part of this chapter will also include material on the fate of Chalcedonians in Syria which I suggest can, in some respects at least, shed light on the Egyptian situation by proxy.

Thus, this chapter examines a series of developments that ultimately led to the decline of the Egyptian Chalcedonian church in the second half of the seventh century: the revitalization of the Chalcedonian episcopate under imperial monenergism and the failure of the Arab-Muslim conquests to effect a triumphant return of Severan bishops to their titular cities; the loss of a Chalcedonian patriarch resident in Alexandria for nearly a century after 651, resulting in the slow

attrition of the Chalcedonian episcopate there; the rejection of the Sixth Ecumenical Council at Alexandria by its Chalcedonian clerics; and lastly, the rise of Marwānid rule in Egypt from 685, and the decision of the emir ‘Abd al-‘Azīz’s to patronize the Theodosian church to the detriment of its Chalcedonian rival. This series of reversals, after a century and a half of dominance, helps explain the leaderless landscape presented within our lone Chalcedonian figure at the end of the seventh century, Anastasius of Sinai, for it was an image likely not of his own making. His isolated polemical career instead mirrored the waning power of his church.

The Chalcedonian Monenergist Episcopate of the Near East

At the conclusion to the Last Great War of Antiquity, with Roman victory over the Sasanian empire secured, Heraclius remained in the eastern provinces for some time as he oversaw the reconstitution of Roman administration in the regained provinces, including proposals for ecclesial reunion with the anti-Chalcedonian dissidents of Syria, Armenia, and Persia.¹⁶⁷ In addition to earlier overtures made during the war, a new series of meetings was held between the emperor and key anti-Chalcedonian ecclesiastics, including with the east Syrian catholicos Isho‘yahb II on behalf of the Sasanian empress Boran (ca. summer 630); the Jacobite metropolitan of Edessa, Isaiah, and the Jacobite patriarch of Antioch, Athanasius Gamolo (between 629 and 630); and the Armenian catholicos Ezr after the return of True Cross (631).¹⁶⁸ Where Heraclius’s venture for reunion arguably found its greatest success, however, was in Egypt.

With the East restored to the empire, Heraclius appointed Cyrus, formerly bishop of Phasis on the Black Sea, to the position of *locum tenens* (‘caretaker’) of the Alexandrian throne, and

¹⁶⁷ J. Howard-Johnston, *The Last Great War of Antiquity* (Oxford, 2021), 321-359.

¹⁶⁸ Isho‘yahb II: *Chronicle of Seert* 93 [Scher 557-9]. Isaiah and Athanasius: Michael the Great, *Chronicle* 11.5. Ezr: Ps.-Sebēos, *History* 41. See Booth, *Crisis of Empire*, 200-208 for discussion of these unions with additional literature.

elevated Modestus (an ascetic who had served as *locum tenens* to the patriarch Zachariah while the latter was in exile during the Persian occupation) to the position of patriarch of Jerusalem. The throne of Antioch had remained vacant since the murder of the Chalcedonian patriarch Anastasius II in 609 – perhaps, at this stage, intentionally so, as a bargaining chip with which to entice the Jacobite leadership in Syria and Mesopotamia.¹⁶⁹

The Egyptian Church in the Days of Benjamin of Alexandria

A few years after his accession to the throne, at Alexandria in June 633, Cyrus accomplished what none before him had been capable of: the reunion of the Theodosians in Alexandria to Chalcedon. The details of this union are recorded in a dossier of texts including Cyrus's correspondence with Sergius, the patriarch of Constantinople, which were preserved in the acts of the Sixth Ecumenical Council (680-1).¹⁷⁰ It was based upon nine theological 'chapters, the most important of which enshrined the monenergist formula that secured the unity of Christ within the minds of Theodosians: 'one and the same Christ and Son performed things befitting God and things human by means of a single theandric operation, according to Dionysius among the saints.'¹⁷¹

In his subsequent report to Sergius, the patriarch of Constantinople (sed. 610-638), Cyrus noted that 'all the clerics' of the Theodosians in Alexandria, together with 'those who are notable in public and military service, and again those who pay into the public coffers, stretching into the thousands... partook of God's spotless mysteries with us' in the Chalcedonian cathedral church

¹⁶⁹ On the career of Cyrus of Alexandria, see now P. Booth, 'The Last Days of Cyrus, Patriarch of Alexandria († 642)' *TM 20* (Paris, 2016): 509-558.

¹⁷⁰ This correspondence, together with Sergius's correspondence with pope Honorius and the emperor Heraclius's *Ekthesis*, were translated separately as a self-standing dossier in P. Allen, *Sophronius of Jerusalem and Seventh-Century Heresy: the Synodical Letter and Other Documents: Introduction, Texts, Translations and Commentary* (Oxford, 2009), 159-217, on the basis of the critical edition by R. Riedinger, *Concilium universale Constantinopolitanum tertium*, ACO ser. 2.2 (Berlin, 1990-2).

¹⁷¹ Allen, *Sophronius of Jerusalem*, 171-3 [Riedinger 598].

on the basis of this monenergist confession of faith.¹⁷² The success of this union prompted the contemporary Theodosian patriarch, Benjamin (sed. 626-665), to take flight into Upper Egypt, with warnings to his bishops to do the same. This reconciliation, however, was not limited to Alexandrian clerics: later Severan sources, like the *History of the Patriarchs of Alexandria* (henceforth *HP*), report with bitterness that ‘a countless number of the orthodox went astray,’ including the bishops Victor of the Faiyum (Arsinoe) and Cyrus of Nikiu.¹⁷³ Strikingly, it also succeeded in reconciling Severan monasteries, apparently on a large scale, to Chalcedon, as both the Coptic *Life of Samuel of Kalamon* and the *HP* claim that monks throughout Egypt had communed with Heraclius under duress.¹⁷⁴

These texts present the communion as the result of imperial persecution, but as has been shown, these allegations are in all probability later inventions that sought to conceal the thoroughness of monenergism’s success in Egypt and the embarrassment of Benjamin’s failure to prevent the union from occurring.¹⁷⁵ For our purposes, what is most interesting is the claim of the *HP* that after the union, Heraclius established a new, monenergist Chalcedonian episcopate throughout Lower, Middle, and part of Upper Egypt:

Heraclius appointed bishops throughout the land of Egypt, as far as the city of Antinoe, and tried the inhabitants of Egypt with hard trials, and like a ravaging wolf devoured the reasonable flock, and was not sated. And this blessed people who were thus persecuted were the Theodosians.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷² Allen, *Sophronius of Jerusalem*, 175 [Riedinger 592].

¹⁷³ Evetts, PO 1 491.

¹⁷⁴ Evetts, PO 1 497-8; Isaac the Presbyter, *Life of Samuel* 9 [Alcock 9].

¹⁷⁵ P. Booth, ‘Images of Emperors and Emirs in Early Islamic Egypt’ in *The Good Christian Ruler in the First Millennium: Views from the Wider Mediterranean World in Conversation*, ed. P. Forness, A. Hasse-Ungeheuer, H. Leppin (Berlin, 2021), 397-420.

¹⁷⁶ Evetts, PO 1, 490-492.

Although it is difficult to comprehend why the episcopate stretched only to Antinoe (as the cases of Abraham of Hermonthis and Pesynthius of Koptos demonstrate, Chalcedonian bishops had certainly been resident in cities south of Antinoe in the preceding decades), the impression of the *HP* is that after the Last Great War, Heraclius had revitalized the imperial church under the banner of monenergism and, in the process, reconciled Theodosians at all levels to the Chalcedonian church: bishops, priests, and monks.

When the Arab-Muslim general ‘Amr b. al-‘Ās captured Egypt in 642, however, the loss of Byzantine rule did not result in the triumphant return of the Theodosians to their titular cities. Although John of Nikiu and the *HP* relate that ‘Amr had recalled Benjamin from his supposed exile, with the implication that he was at last free to administer his church without the kind of interference that had prevailed under the Byzantine empire. Benjamin nevertheless made the notable decision to establish the Monastery of Metras as his episcopal residence, and not a church within the city—as if nothing had changed. The exact whereabouts of this monastery are unknown, but it is probably to be connected to the shrine of dubious orthodoxy dedicated to the Alexandrian martyr mentioned by Sophronius of Jerusalem and the anonymous *Life of John the Almsgiver*, located east of the city beyond the Sun Gate.¹⁷⁷ Monenergism’s success is the rationale given for this choice: ‘for all the churches and monasteries which belonged to the virgins and monks had been defiled by Heraclius the heretic, except this monastery alone.’¹⁷⁸ Certainly, he did not make the Kaisarion (Alexandria’s cathedral church) his residence, for it was still in Chalcedonian hands in the days of Anastasius of Sinai (ca. 681-5).¹⁷⁹ Nor did he establish his patriarchal residence at

¹⁷⁷ Evetts PO 1, 498. It is possible that the monastery of Metras is to be connected to the *martyrion* and church of Metras near Alexandria, mentioned by Sophronius of Jerusalem in the *Miracles of Cyrus and John* and his *Life of John the Almsgiver*, see J. Gascou, *Églises et chapelles d’Alexandrie byzantine: recherches de topographie culturelle* (Paris, 2020), 87-9.

¹⁷⁸ Evetts, PO 1, 498.

¹⁷⁹ Anastasius of Sinai, *Hodegos* X,4.5-6; cf. X,2.7.187-190.

the church of the Angelion, which from 685 Theodosian sources claimed as their cathedral church stretching back to the days of Justinian, although it had never been used as such before. The establishment of a new regime therefore did not effect a confessional handover of any kind, meaning that the *status quo ante* from the days of Byzantine rule remained in effect: the Theodosian patriarch was still prevented from taking up residence in the city of Alexandria.

Indeed, another major episode in the *HP*'s biography of Benjamin bears witness to his failure to best the Chalcedonians in the battle for control over Alexandria's churches. The *HP* claims that after capturing the city of Alexandria, the armies of 'Amr b. al-'Aṣ 'destroyed its walls, and burnt many churches with fire.'¹⁸⁰ Among the latter, they had incinerated the prestigious Church of St. Mark-by-the-Sea, which contained the relics of St. Mark, Alexandria's apostolic saint. Like the other churches of Alexandria at the time of the conquest, this church was in the hands of the Chalcedonians. In the wreckage, a naval officer who served under the *dux* Senouthius (later called 'the Christ-loving *dux*') discovered that the shrine which held the relics of St. Mark had been disturbed by plunderers, although the relics themselves remained miraculously intact. This officer proceeded to 'put his hand into the shrine, and there he found the head of the holy Mark, which he took,' leaving the rest of the body behind.¹⁸¹ He then returned to his ship secretly and stored the head of St. Mark there. Later, the night before the fleet of 'Amr b. al-'Aṣ was to set sail for Libya, Benjamin was greeted by a dream of St. Mark: 'On that night, the father saw in his dream a man in shining garments, clothed in the raiment of the disciples, who said to him, "Oh my beloved, make a place for me with thee, that I may abide therein this day, for I love thy dwelling."¹⁸² The next day, when the *dux* Senouthius, who had curiously joined the army of 'Amr,

¹⁸⁰ Evetts, PO 1 494.

¹⁸¹ Evetts, PO 1 495.

¹⁸² Evetts, PO 1 498.

began to set sail together with him, his ship refused to leave the harbor of Alexandria. Despite the efforts of the army and the public of Alexandria, we are told, no attempt could make it move, save when the prow was turned toward the city, to which it began to speed involuntarily. Senouthius ordered his sailors to present their baggage in order to see if they had anything within their possession that could be causing this marvel, and during the investigation, the aforementioned officer revealed the head of St. Mark. At once, then, the *dux* brought it to the patriarch Benjamin, together with a large sum of money and instructions to rebuild the church of St. Mark that his army had destroyed. At this, we are told that Benjamin ‘made a chest of plane wood with a padlock upon it, and placed the head therein; and he waited for a time in which he might find means to build a church.’¹⁸³

Despite this, however, and despite the ideal terms in which ‘Amr and Benjamin relate throughout the narrative (‘Amr asks for Benjamin’s prayers in return for security; Benjamin prays for ‘Amr and respects his authority), Benjamin never rebuilt the church.¹⁸⁴ As we shall see, it will not be until the patriarchate of John III (sed. 681-689) over forty years later that a church of St. Mark is renewed for the Theodosians, but only after the emergence of Marwānid rule in 685. Indeed, as Philippe Luisier has shown, this entire vignette is a later invention designed to explain an inconvenient fact: that the Chalcedonians had retained control of the original church of St. Mark by-the-Sea, in whose shrine the body of St. Mark was kept.¹⁸⁵ The accusation that the Arab-Muslims had burned the church down is, furthermore, contradicted by the *Chronicle* of John of

¹⁸³ Evetts, PO 1 500.

¹⁸⁴ On the ‘Amr-Benjamin paradigm and its reworkings in later Theodosian material, see M. N. Swanson, *The Coptic Papacy in Islamic Egypt, Volume 2: The Popes of Egypt* (Cairo, 2010), 6-11.

¹⁸⁵ P. Luisier, ‘Il culto di San Marco ad Alessandria fino al XV secolo’ in *San Pietro e San Marco: Aspetti, Luoghi della Santità e della Agiografia tra Oriente e Occidente*, ed. S. B. Gajano, P. Tomea, L. Caselli (Trieste, 2012), 37-67. Later accounts like the pilgrimage of Bernard the Monk (ca. 870) say that the body of St. Mark remained in the Church of St. Mark-by-the-Sea until the arrival of the Venetians in the early ninth century, when they were said to have taken it back to Venice. See J. Wilkinson, *Jerusalem Pilgrims Before the Crusades* (Warminster, 2002), 262.

Nikiu, whose account of the capitulation of Alexandria to ‘Amr portrays a peaceful transfer of power after negotiations with Cyrus, and concludes with the following:

‘Amr became stronger every day in every action. He collected the tribute which they had set, but he took none of the property of the churches. And he did no pillage and no plunder, and he guarded them throughout all (his) days.¹⁸⁶

Admittedly, this gloss is intended to contrast ‘Amr with Cyrus of Alexandria and the emperor Heraclius, the putative persecutors, in order to present a vision of the ideal relationship between the new rulers and the church, as in the *HP*.¹⁸⁷ John is elsewhere critical of ‘Amr, and understandably so, because the conquests are not presented in Theodosian sources as a welcome reprieve from the empire but rather a consequence of its sins. Nevertheless, there is no hint in John’s version of Alexandria’s surrender that the conquerors had inflicted damage on any churches or other ecclesial properties. Thus, for our purposes, the tales surrounding the relics of St. Mark and the Church of St. Mark-by-the-Sea serve to illuminate the fact that the Chalcedonians also remained in control of one of Alexandria’s most prestigious, ancient, and liturgically important churches. There is little reason to believe that this hold did not extend to Alexandria’s other principal churches, if not all of them.

What, then, of the Chalcedonians themselves? Although our evidence is slight until we get to the works of Anastasius of Sinai, what does survive suggests that they had remained a significant presence in Egypt through to the eighth century, and that they had remained committed to monenergism. After establishing himself at the Monastery of Metras, Benjamin is said to have bestowed his care ‘night and day upon the conversion of those members of the Church who had

¹⁸⁶ John of Nikiu, *Chronicle* 121.3.

¹⁸⁷ Booth, ‘Images of Emperors and Emirs,’ 410.

been separated from her in the days of Heraclius; and no other business made him neglect that.¹⁸⁸

Despite this, he only achieved mixed results:

So likewise the bishops, who had denied their faith, he invited to return to the orthodox creed; and some of them returned with abundant tears; but the others would not return through shame before men, that it should be known among them that they had denied the faith, and so they remained in their misbelief until they died.¹⁸⁹

Monenergism thus appears to have been durable, spanning even into the early Islamic era of Benjamin's patriarchate. Even the drastically changed political circumstances were not a sufficient reason to effect large-scale reconversions to the Theodosian church.

Strikingly, beyond the later tales detailing his reconsecration of the Monastery of St. Macarius in Scetis, we know almost nothing of how Benjamin occupied himself in the remaining twenty-three years of his patriarchate following the conquest. One fragmentary festal letter, preserved in P. Köln V 215, can potentially be attributed to Benjamin due to its placement of Easter on 12 April, and thus must have been composed either in 663 or 674 (if the latter, it would fall under Agathon). What survives of this letter includes material addressing the doctrines of monenergism and monotheletism, suggesting that Chalcedonian monenergists had indeed remained a problem for Benjamin's church well into the second half of the seventh century.¹⁹⁰ Indeed, the *HP* suggests that Agathon (sed. 665-681) and John III continued working to reconcile existing monotheletes back to the Theodosian hierarchy, and the Coptic *Life of Isaac* (sed. 689-692) has its eponymous protagonist re-baptizing monotheletes, too.¹⁹¹ Furthermore, the second

¹⁸⁸ Evetts, PO 1, 498.

¹⁸⁹ Evetts, PO 1, 497.

¹⁹⁰ See U. Hagedorn and W. Hagedorn, 'Monotheletisch interpretierte Väterzitate und eine Anleihe bei Johannes Chrysostomus in dem Kölner Osterfestbrief (P. Köln V 215)', *ZPE* 178 (2011): 143-157; Booth, 'Images of Emperors and Emirs,' 408.

¹⁹¹ Evetts, PO 5 4-5, Mena of Nikiou, *The Life of Isaac* 65.

successor of Isaac, Alexander II (sed. 705-730) has left us a nearly complete festal letter preserved in BKT VI 5 (P. 10677) dated either to 713, 719, or 724 on the basis of its announcement of Easter on 16 April, in which the latter set out the orthodox (i.e., Severan) interpretation of the Dionysian ‘single theandric operation.’¹⁹² In his *Third Discourse on the Image and Likeness of God in Man* (written 701), Anastasius of Sinai presents the monotheletes as ubiquitous:

Through their [*sc.* monotheletes] nonsense and calumnies, they harmed people, divided churches, threw countries into disorder, insulted the faith, severed priests [from their churches], led monks astray, defiled magistrates, shook up everything; in every city, village, and province they effected mistreatments, afflictions, excommunications, banishments, and condemnations, such as even the Arians did not against the church, because they have such hatred against us as they do not have even against Jews or Samaritans or Manichaeans or pagans or apostates. Instead, they choose to associate and dwell together with those who bow down to idols rather than us, who speak of two properties indivisibly in Christ; and elect to pray together with Jews rather than us, who confess a divine and human will and operation in Christ indivisibly...¹⁹³

Later, Theophanes Confessor tells us that at the time of Cosmas, under whom the Chalcedonian patriarchate of Alexandria was restored in the 740s, he ‘together with his flock reverted to orthodoxy from the monothelete heresy which had prevailed from the time of Cyrus, bishop of Alexandria under Heraclius.’¹⁹⁴ Without dwelling on the details of this Cosmas here, such evidence

¹⁹² L. S. B. MacCoull, ‘The Paschal Letter of Alexander II, Patriarch of Alexandria: A Greek Defense of Coptic Theology under Arab Rule’ *DOP* 44 (1990): 27-40.

¹⁹³ Anastasius of Sinai, *Third Discourse on the Image and Likeness of God in Man* 2.19-33: Δι’ ὄντων φλυαριῶν τε καὶ συκοφαντιῶν ἔβλαψαν λαούς, ἔσχισαν ἐκκλησίας, ἐτάραξαν χώρας, ἐνύβρισαν τὴν πίστιν, ἱερεῖς ἀπέσχισαν, μονάζοντας ἐπλάνησαν, ἄρχοντας ἐμίαναν, τὰ πάντα ἐσάλευσαν, πᾶσαν πόλιν, πᾶσαν κόμην, πᾶσαν ἐπαρχίαν διωγμούς ποιήσαντες, αἰκισμούς, ἐτασμούς, ἀφορισμούς, ἐξορίας, καταδίκας οἷας οὐδὲ Ἄρειανοὶ κατὰ τῆς ἐκκλησίας, μῖσός τε τοιοῦτον πρὸς ἡμᾶς ἔχοντες, οἷον οὐδὲ πρὸς Ἰουδαίους ἢ Σαμαρείτας ἢ Μανιχαίους ἢ Ἕλληνας ἢ ἀποστάτας ἔχουσιν, αἰρούμενοι δὲ μᾶλλον συνδυάζειν καὶ συναυλιζεσθαι τοῖς τὰ εἰδῶλα προσκυνοῦσιν ἢ ἡμῖν τοῖς τὰς δύο Χριστοῦ ιδιότητας ἀδιαιρέτως λέγουσι, καὶ συνεύχεσθαι μᾶλλον σὺν Ἰουδαίοις ἐκλεγόμενοι ἢ σὺν ἡμῖν τοῖς ὁμολογοῦσιν ἐν Χριστῷ θεῖαν τε καὶ ἀνθρωπίνην ἀδιαιρέτως θέλησίν τε καὶ ἐνέργειαν, μὴ βουλόμενοι.

¹⁹⁴ Theophanes, *Chronicle* AM 6234 [De Boor 416; Mango and Scott 577, translation slightly altered].

as we have consistently points to a significant presence of Egypt's monenergists over a century after Cyrus had sealed the Pact of Union in 633.

Christians in Syria after the Rise of Islam: A Context for Egyptian Chalcedonianism

Although it is clear that the advent of the caliphate did not result in the return of the Theodosian patriarch to Alexandria, our Egyptian sources provide no reason as to why this was the case. But because our sources—both Chalcedonian and Theodosian—are generally silent on the fate of the Egyptian episcopate in between the years 642 and 685, it is worth turning to Syria, for the confessional situation appears to have unfolded in very similar ways there. Given the general evenhandedness with which the conquerors related to the conquered in the decades following the conquest, the situation of the Syrian episcopate can, in certain ways at least, serve as a proxy for understanding what happened in Egypt during these decades.

Following on earlier overtures during the Last Great War, in 631 Heraclius met with the Jacobite patriarch of Antioch, Athanasius Gamolo, together with twelve of his bishops to discuss the prospect of ecclesial union. After a failure to reconcile the Jacobites to the imperial church through a confession of the single operation and (anachronistically) will, Michael the Great tells us that Heraclius launched a persecution against the Syrians, threatening that whoever did not accept Chalcedon would have 'his nose and ears cut off, and his house plundered.'¹⁹⁵ The consequence, we are told, was that 'most of monks adhered to the council [of Chalcedon],' including 'the monks of Beth Maron, Hierapolis, Homs, and the southern regions, [who] showed their malice: most of them adhered to the Council [of Chalcedon] and seized most of the churches

¹⁹⁵ Michael the Great, *Chronicle* 11.3 in J.-B. Chabot, *Le Chronique de Michel le Syrien*, 4 vols. (Paris, 1899-1910). For Michael's *Chronicle* I cite the section numbers of Chabot.

and monasteries.’¹⁹⁶ As in the Egyptian sources, accusations of persecution (out of step with the spirit of monenergism) and the mention of a single will (which was not part of the debate prior to ca. 638) at once alert us to the possibility that Michael’s source has deployed a persecuting narrative to distort the success of monenergism.

Indeed, a comparison of Athanasius’s twelve suffragans at the meeting of 631 (‘Thomas of Palmyra, Basil of Homs, Sergius of ‘Ars, John of Cyrus, Thomas of Hierapolis, Daniel of Harran, Isaiah of Edessa, Severus of Qinnestrin, Athanasius of Arabissus, Cosmas of Epiphania in Cilicia, and Severus of Samosata’)¹⁹⁷ with the mere four living Jacobite bishops anathematized by Sophronius of Jerusalem in his *Synodical Letter* of 634 (‘[I anathematize] Benjamin of Alexandria and the Syrians John and Sergius and Thomas and Severus, who are still living their accursed life and warring madly against pious belief’)¹⁹⁸ leads one to believe that many of Athanasius’s key bishops had, like Victor of the Faiyum and Cyrus of Nikiu in Egypt, been reconciled to the imperial church. This would explain the references to the loss of Hierapolis and Homs above, as well as Michael’s later assertion that the Jacobites had lost Edessa and Harran, too:

The principal churches (ܡܪܘܡܝܢܐ ܕܗܘܪܝܢ) that were seized from us and given to the Chalcedonians remained theirs, since when the cities submitted to the Arabs, they let every confession keep whatever places of worship were in their hands (ܡܘܨܝܪܐ ܕܡܫܝܚܐ ܕܡܘܨܝܪܐ ܕܡܘܨܝܪܐ ܕܡܘܨܝܪܐ). At this time, we lost the great church (ܕܘܪܘܫ ܕܗܘܪܝܢ) of Edessa and the church of Harran.¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁶ Ibid. On earlier attestations of Chalcedonianism at the Monastery of Beth Maron (ca. 590) preserved in BL Add. MS 12,155, see J. Gribomont, ‘Documents sur l’Église maronite,’ *Parole de l’Orient* 5:1 (1974): 102-3.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid., 11.5.

¹⁹⁸ Sophronius of Jerusalem *Synodical Letter* 2.6.2 [Allen, 144-6]

¹⁹⁹ Michael the Great, *Chronicle* 11.3.

Although the silence of our sources means that we cannot determine if *all* the cathedral churches of the Near East remained in the hands of Chalcedonians for centuries, we can at least infer that Edessa and Antioch were in the early eighth century. The colophon to the well-known Syriac Melkite manuscript BL Or. 8606, dating to 723, lists ‘John, the metropolitan of this same city [*sc.* Edessa]; the God-loving and chaste Cyrus, priest and *oikonomos*; Simon, the second priest,’ as well as a certain ‘Yannai, priest and *higoumen* of the House of the Image of our Lord, and Jannai, priest and *chartouarios* of the same holy church’ along with many other clerics, including the heads of the Greek and Syriac choirs.²⁰⁴ Although Chalcedonian and Jacobite sources each claim that they alone were in possession of the authentic relic, the latter housed the *mandylion* in a baptistery constructed by Athanasius bar Gumoyē, the Edessan aristocrat and famous patron of the Severans in Syria and Egypt, who is said to have skillfully stolen it from the Chalcedonians and created a duplicate, leaving the latter with a forgery.²⁰⁵ By contrast, Michael the Great lists the Jacobite bishop of Edessa for 723 as Constantine, Jacob of Edessa’s disciple and successor.²⁰⁶ He administered the Jacobite throne between 708 and at least 726, where his subscription appears in a joint statement of faith issued by the Armenian and Jacobite churches at the Council of Manzikert

²⁰⁴ As Jack Tannous demonstrated, however, the exemplar from which this manuscript was copied was of monenergist provenance; see J. Tannous, ‘In Search of Monotheletism’ DOP 68 (2014): 52-3.

²⁰⁵ For Athanasius’s duping of the Chalcedonians of Edessa, see Michael the Great, *Chronicle* 11.16. This baptistery was possibly connected to the Church of the Theotokos, see *Chronicle to 1234* 1.295: ‘In the city of Fustāt, in Egypt, he [*sc.* Athanasius] built two grand and beautiful sanctuaries, and in Edessa renovated the splendid sanctuary of the Mother of God and another glorious building for the baptistery.’ For discussion of the sources and Athanasius’s connection to the *mandylion*, see M. Mazzola and P. van Nuffelen, ‘A Lost Source for Syriac Christianity in the Umayyad Era: the Ecclesiastical History of Daniel Son of Moses of Ṭur ‘Abdin (8th c.)’ in *Revue d’histoire ecclésiastique* 118:3-4 (2023): 508-18, esp. at 517.

²⁰⁶ Michael the Great, *Chronicle* 11.17, 20. Constantine was also the dedicatee of Jacob’s *Hexaameron*, which opens with a dialogue between the two of them; see J.-B. Chabot (ed.), *Iacobi Edesseni Hexaameron, seu in opus creationis libri septem* CSCO 92 (1928).

in 726.²⁰⁷ The ‘House of the Image of our Lord’ of BM Or. 8606 must, then, have been located within the old cathedral church of Edessa, over which the Chalcedonians had retained control.²⁰⁸

At Antioch, the confessional situation mirrors that of Alexandria perfectly. We are told that Julian’s successor, Elias (sed. 708/9-724), was consecrated in his own monastery in the year 708-9 (‘Year 1020 of the Greeks’) after having served as bishop of Apamea for eighteen years, yet according to Michael the Great, he was only allowed to re-enter the city of Antioch in the year 720-1:

In the first year of king Yazid (r. 720-724), which is the year 1032 of the Greeks [= 720-1], Mar Elias entered Antioch, accompanied by monks and clerics with honour and pomp, where he consecrated a new church that had been built by him. This happened two-hundred and three years after patriarch Mar Severus had left that city, and none of our orthodox patriarchs had entered it since then, except Mar Elias, who entered it at that time, during the reign of the *Tayoye*.²⁰⁹

Despite Antioch being under the control of the caliphate for over eighty years, the Jacobite patriarch of Antioch himself had been unable to take up residence in his city—a situation paralleled exactly in Egypt during the patriarchates of Benjamin, Agathon, and (for the first part, at least) John III. Indeed, Theophanes Confessor notes that in the year 741-2, ‘the most holy see of Antioch had been vacant for forty years (for the Arabs forbade that a patriarch should be appointed there),’

²⁰⁷ Michael the Great, *Chronicle* 11.20. On the council, see P. Cowe, ‘Doctrinal Union or Agreement to Disagree? Armenians and Syrians at the Synod of Manazkert (726 CE)’ in *Bridging Times and Spaces Papers in Ancient Near Eastern, Mediterranean and Armenian Studies Honouring Gregory E. Areshian on the occasion of his sixty-fifth birthday*, ed. P. S. Avetisyan and Y. H. Grekyan (Oxford, 2017), 61-84.

²⁰⁸ BL Or. 8606, fol. 140v with R. W. Thomson, ‘An Eighth-Century Melkite Colophon from Edessa’ *JTS* 10 (1962): 252. On the *mandylion*, see A. Cameron, ‘The History of the Image of Edessa: The Telling of a Story,’ *Harvard Ukrainian Studies vol. 8: Okeanos: Essays presented to Ihor Ševčenko on his Sixtieth Birthday by his Colleagues and Students*, ed. C. Mango and O. Pritsak (Cambridge, MA, 1983), 80-94; M. Guscini, *The Image of Edessa* (Leiden, 2009).

²⁰⁹ Michael the Great, *Chronicle* 11.17, 19. NB that Chabot has amended the text here; the manuscript reads ‘in the year 1035 of the Greeks.’

at which point they allowed the consecration of a certain Stephen, a Syrian monk.²¹⁰ Although there is little reason to believe Antioch had seen a resident Chalcedonian patriarch since the central decades of the seventh century, even if we took Theophanes's chronological reckoning at face value, then the Jacobite patriarch had *still* been prevented from returning to the city of Antioch even when there was no Chalcedonian patriarch in residence.²¹¹ It is also notable that Elias presided over the construction of a new Jacobite church in the city. Michael the Great's *Chronicle* later notes that Chalcedonians remained in control of several churches in Antioch in the early ninth century, including the 'Great Church' (i.e. the cathedral church), the Church of St. Cassian, and the Church of the Theotokos, which they are known to have controlled prior to the conquests.²¹² It is therefore possible that Elias, unable to take control of the ancient cathedral, had to construct a new church to serve as his patriarchal residence.

A detail from Michael's well-known account of the monothelete and dyothelete Chalcedonians of Aleppo in 727 mentions another Chalcedonian incumbent. It was in this year that Michael claims the Chalcedonians of Syria were introduced to dyotheletism for the first time after Byzantine prisoners of war were resettled throughout the region (stating clearly that prior to this year, the Chalcedonians of Syria had remained thoroughly monenergist-monothelete).²¹³ In the new situation, they could not agree on their confession of faith and therefore divided their church in half and (for a time, at least) co-celebrated eucharists. The *Chronicle* records the following:

²¹⁰ Theophanes Confessor, *Chronicle* AM 6234 [De Boor 416].

²¹¹ On the absence of a Chalcedonian patriarch in Antioch in the seventh century, see W. Brandes, 'Die melkitischen Patriarchen von Antiocheia im 7. Jarhundert: Anzahl und Chronologie' *LM* 111:1-2 (1998): 37-57.

²¹² Michael the Great, *Chronicle* 12.20. On these churches, see W. Mayer and P. Allen, *Churches of Syrian Antioch (300-638)* (Leuven, 2012), 52-55, 68-80, 107-109.

²¹³ Michael the Great, *Chronicle* 11.20; see J. Tannous, 'Search,' 49-58 for Syrian monotheletism more broadly.

The congregation of Aleppo split into two halves: one sided with their bishop, who was a partisan of the Monastery of Beth Maron, while the other sided with the Maximianists. They fought over their great church, which was built by Acacius [bishop] of Aleppo (sed. ca. 378-433), for each faction desired it.²¹⁴

For our purposes, this story is doubly important: it not only indicates that the Chalcedonian bishop of Aleppo was a monothelete, but it also indicates that the Chalcedonians had retained control of the ‘great church’ of Aleppo at least up to the year 727.

The foregoing references suggest that at least in several Syrian *metropoleis*, the Arab-Muslim conquests also did not effect a triumphant return of the Severans, for nearly a century after the Syrian episcopate had fallen into the hands of the Chalcedonians, the cathedral churches of Antioch and Edessa (even with no patriarch in residence) had remained in their control—and possibly other key provincial cities too, especially those lamented explicitly by Michael the Great and the *Chronicle to 1234*, like Hierapolis, Homs, Harran, and Aleppo.²¹⁵ To these could potentially be added Apamea, too, for the author of the colophon to BM Or. 8606 was a certain ‘Constantine, deacon and disciple of George (may he be held in pious memory), archbishop of

²¹⁴ Michael the Great, *Chronicle* 11.20.

²¹⁵ An ‘apologia’ by Jacob of Edessa against the ‘Chalcedonian clerics of Harran’ from his diaconate (thus before 684) existed in the now-lost MS Seert 69, which suggests a significant Chalcedonian presence in that city in the second half of the seventh century; see A. Baumstark, *Geschichte der syrischen Literatur, mit Ausschluss der christlich-palästinensischen Texte* (Berlin, 1922), 254. Two fragments of this apologia appear to survive in Syriac and Karshūni translation in a Karshūni letter composed by the east Syrian catholicos Makkīkha I (sed. 1092-1110) in Cambridge Add. MS 2889, fols. 272b-273b. Additionally, a circle eighth-century Chalcedonian authors connected to Harran’s bishopric are mentioned by the Jacobite bishop Elias, some of whose works have survived in fragmentary form: George, bishop of Martyropolis; Constantine, bishop of Harran; and the later Leo, syncellus to a bishop of Harran. See A. van Roey, ‘Trois auteurs chalcédoniens syriens: Georges de Martyropolis, Constantin et Léon de Harran’ OLP 3 (1972): 125-153. A Syriac manuscript of possible Chalcedonian milieu, containing a translation of Anastasius of Sinai’s *Homily on Psalm 6*, has also survived from this period at Martyropolis, *Sin. syr. 56* with *membra disjecta* in BM Or. 8858; see G. Kessel, ‘*Membra disjecta sinaitica IV: Fragments of Three Syriac Manuscripts* (Sin. syr. 41, syr. 49, and syr. 56),’ *LM* 137:1-2 (2024): 121-28 (NB I am unconvinced by Kessel’s suggestion that the replacement of the name ‘Maurice’ with ‘Justinian’ in the Anastasian homily point towards a Severan milieu). I also note that the late-eighth/early-ninth century Theodore Abū Qurrah was said to be the Chalcedonian bishop of Harran; see Michael the Great, *Chronicle* 12.8.

Apamea, the city of Syria.’²¹⁶ Although we do not know this George’s circumstances vis-à-vis his (unknown, but presumably existent) rival Severan incumbent, it is noteworthy that the Monastery of Beth Maron lay within the jurisdiction of Apamea, suggesting that the region had remained a Chalcedonian stronghold.²¹⁷ These particular bishoprics are especially striking, because Antioch, Edessa, Hierapolis, and Apamea were each the metropolitan cities of the Roman provinces of Syria I, Osrhoene, Euphratensis, and Syria II, respectively, and thus most of greater Syria, minus the province of Mesopotamia (headquartered at Amida) – leaving us with a confessional map exactly as the *Chronicle to 1234*’s version of Dionysius had claimed. Thus, with active metropolitans, the Chalcedonians within Syria could continue to ordain new bishops for themselves throughout their jurisdictions, even with no patriarch resident in Antioch at this time. Even though very few texts produced by Syrian Chalcedonians themselves have survived from this period, the continued production of Jacobite polemical treatises against them in the early eighth century by the circle of Jacob of Edessa, George of the Arab Tribes, and John the Stylite of Litarba, as well as another burst in surviving disputational material (treatises, letters, florilegia, etc.) from the late eighth and early ninth centuries, suggests that they had remained a fixed feature of the religious landscape.²¹⁸

With this information now established, it is worth circling back to the case of Benjamin in Egypt. Michael’s claim should apply to the Egyptian church as well, for it explains why it was the case that the Theodosian patriarch was prevented from taking up residence in Alexandria even

²¹⁶ Thomson, ‘Melkite Colophon,’ 254.

²¹⁷ The Jacobite patriarch Elias had served as metropolitan of Apamea for eighteen years prior to his consecration in 708-9, and it is difficult to imagine he would have failed to ordain a successor. NB that a George of Apamea is mentioned for the year 711/12 in Theophanes Confessor, *Chronicle* AM 6204 [De Boor 382]: ‘George, the bishop of Apamea, was transferred to Martyropolis.’ No reason is given for the transfer of see.

²¹⁸ See E. Fiori, ‘A Geological Approach to Syriac Miaphysite Christology (Sixth–Ninth Centuries): Detours of a Patristic Florilegium from Antioch to Tagrit’ in *Florilegia Syriaca: Mapping a Knowledge-Organizing Practice in the Syriac World* ed. E. Fiori and B. Ebeid (Leiden, 2023), 186-227. An excellent catalogue of the major surviving Chalcedonian works produced in Syriac after the rise of Islam can be found in J. Tannous, ‘Byzantine Syriac: Language and Religious Communities in the Middle East,’ in *Worlds of Byzantium: Religion, Culture, and Empire in the Medieval Near East* (Cambridge, 2024), 404-37.

after the armies of ‘Amr b. al-Āṣ had subjugated Egypt and freed it from the legal and political hegemony of the Byzantine empire. Above, we mentioned the *HP*’s claim that Benjamin made the Monastery of Metras his patriarchal residence because ‘all the churches and monasteries which belonged to the virgins and monks had been defiled by Heraclius the heretic, except this monastery alone.’²¹⁹ While it is likely true that monenergism remained dominant on the confessional scene of Alexandria and probably elsewhere in Egypt, too, the Syrian parallels suggest that he was also compelled to do so thanks to the political decision-making of the nascent caliphate, prioritizing continuity over rupture, and thus of respecting the ecclesial *status quo ante*, leaving prominent urban churches (and their patrimonies) in Chalcedonian hands.

Just as the Arab-Muslims had retained Byzantine administrators after the conquests to ensure continuity in landholding and administration—given their fiscal competence and long experience—there is little reason to believe that they had drastically altered the episcopate of the institutional church, either, which at the moment of the conquests was largely in the hands of the Chalcedonian monenergists.²²⁰ Indeed, as indicated in chapter one, because the church was the major landowner in the new territories of the caliphate, and these lands were administered *iure corporis* at the level of the episcopate, one can readily appreciate why it would have been imprudent to hand control of the institutional church and its principal churches (with their huge endowments) back to the much more marginal Severan bishops who, in most cases at least, likely

²¹⁹ Evetts, PO 1, 498.

²²⁰ See P. M. Sijpesteijn, ‘New Rule over Old Structures: Egypt After the Muslim Conquest’ in *Regime Change in the Ancient Near East: From Sargon of Agade to Saddam Hussein*, ed. H. E. W. Crawford (London, 2007), 183-200; ead., ‘Loyal and Knowledgeable Supporters: Integrating Egyptian Elites in Early Islamic Egypt’ in *Empires and Communities in the Post-Roman and Islamic World, c. 400–1000 CE*, ed. W. Pohl and R. Kramer (Oxford, 2021), 329-359. Beyond the evidence for Byzantine administrators (who were in all probability partisans of the Chalcedonian cause) that is well known in Egypt, Jacob of Edessa (d. 708), George of the Arab Tribes, and the *Life of Simeon of the Olives* speak of Chalcedonian political officials as if they were a regular feature of life in the Middle East. See Jacob of Edessa, *Replies to Addai* nos. 56-7; George of the Arab Tribes, *Letter to the Deacon Barhadbshabba*, preserved in BL Add. MS 12,154 fol. 237v; *Life of Simeon of the Olives* 40 [Hoyland et al 112].

had no experience managing large-scale patrimonies, and at any rate had not been integrated into the running of empire in the same way that their Chalcedonian counterparts had – even if they had accumulated assets of their own over the years. In the same way, it is precisely this same logic that explains the preoccupation of our Severan sources for this period with control over the great churches of Alexandria, Antioch, and other major urban churches, both in the Syrian texts discussed above and in the later Egyptian narratives to be discussed below. To be in control of a city’s principal church(es) was not only a signal of symbolic prestige and the ability to publicly celebrate the liturgy (important though this might be); it was to control and manage the huge wealth concentrated in them, which in turn enabled one’s own confession to flourish to the detriment of their rivals.

The Alexandrian Patriarchate between the Rise of Islam and the Sixth Ecumenical Council (642-681)

As mentioned above, the evidence for Syria after the Arab-Muslim conquests can shed some light on the confessional situation in Egypt, insofar as Alexandria—and presumably other cities—continued to lay in Chalcedonian hands beyond 642. But this is where the similarities end. For crucially, unlike the patriarchate of Antioch, Egypt had no metropolitans, which meant that the prerogative for keeping the episcopate alive was held solely in the hands of the patriarch, who alone could ordain new bishops. In chapter one, we saw how this unique jurisdictional situation led to the steep decline of Severan bishops in Egypt during the thirty-year long exile of Theodosius of Alexandria. The same rules applied to the Chalcedonian patriarchate of Alexandria in the early Islamic period, too. Although as noted above, our evidence base for events in Egypt in the second half of the seventh century is much more restricted, there is good reason to believe that the Egyptian Chalcedonian church faced a similar decline.

After the death of Cyrus of Alexandria and prior to the imperial army's retreat to Cyprus, John of Nikiu's *Chronicle* records that a deacon named Peter was consecrated patriarch by Theodore, the Augustalis (prefect) of Alexandria, and Constantine, the commander-in-chief of the Roman military in Egypt, on the feast of Theodore of Shotep (= July 642).²²¹ The rubrics found in the *Chronicle* of Theophanes Confessor and the *Chronography* of Nicephorus I, Patriarch of Constantinople (9th c.) confirm Peter's appointment, and he is also mentioned in the tenth-century *Annals* of Eutychius of Alexandria.²²² Thus, a variety of sources agree upon his appointment, but these remain bereft of any detail, and, unfortunately, at variance with one another regarding key data points. In the lists of Theophanes, his reign is said to have lasted nine years after the death of Cyrus, after which the patriarch of Alexandria is dropped from the chronicle's rubrics for the remainder of the text. Nicephorus simply gives Peter ten years after Cyrus.²²³ Eutychius erroneously places the election of Peter in the fourth year of the Caliph 'Uthmān (ca. 648) and notes that he reigned for nine years, which would place his death ca. 657.²²⁴ As Adolf Jülicher noted, the discrepancies over Peter's years as patriarch stem from our sources' ignorance regarding the date of Cyrus' death, the latter's brief deposition and replacement by George ca. 640-1, as well as the duration of the throne's vacancy, and lastly with how each author reconciles the chronology

²²¹ John of Nikiu, *Chronicle* 120.71. The final years of patriarch Cyrus of Alexandria's career have proved complicated to reconstruct. For the most thorough treatment, see P. Booth, 'The Last Days of Cyrus, Patriarch of Alexandria († 642) in *TM* 20 (Paris, 2016): 509-558.

²²² For the two recensions of the *Annals*, see L. Cheikho (ed.), *Eutychii Patriarchae Alexandrini: Annales* CSCO 50-51 (Beirut-Paris, 1906-1909) [Antiochian] and M. Breydy, *Das Annalenwerk Des Eutychios Von Alexandrien. Ausgewählte Geschichten Und Legenden Kompiliert Von Sa'id Ibn Batriq Um 935 A.D* CSCO 471-472 (Leuven, 1985) [Alexandrian]. Following M. Conterno, 'The Recensions of Eutychius of Alexandria's Annals: MS Sinae 582 Reconsidered' *Adamantius* 25 (2019): 383-404 and R. Hoyland, 'Eutychius of Alexandria, Muslim Sources, Christian Arabic Historiography' in *The Historian of Islam at Work: Essays in Honor of Hugh N. Kennedy*, ed. M. van Berkel and L. Osti (Leiden, 2022), 386-390, I accept that the Alexandrian recension is an abbreviation of the original version of the *Annals*, while the 'Antiochian' recension published by Cheikho largely represents Eutychius's original text. My English translations derive from the Italian translation of B. Pirone, *Gli Annali di Eutichio, patriarca di Alessandria (877 - 940)* (Jerusalem, 1987).

²²³ C. de Boor (ed.), *Nicephori archiepiscopi Constantinopolitani opuscula historica*, (Leipzig, 1880), 129.16.

²²⁴ Eutychius of Alexandria, *Annals* [Pirone 347].

(implicit or explicit) of their sources to their own chronological system.²²⁵ The sources at least agree that he reigned for either nine or ten years after Cyrus, so that in the absence of other evidence we can tentatively place his death ca. 651-2.

Like his predecessor, Cyrus, Peter was a monothelete. This is confirmed in two letters of pope Martin I, composed in Greek and attached to the end of the Greek version of the acts of the Lateran Synod of 649, and in the *Annals* of Eutychius where he is called a ‘Maronite.’²²⁶ In letters to John of Philadelphia (Amman, Jordan) and the patriarchates of Antioch and Jerusalem, pope Martin condemned Peter as a false bishop alongside Macedonius (the monothelete patriarch of Antioch who had apparently been elected after 639), claiming that Peter ‘agrees in thought and doctrine with the heretics,’ and that his election was ‘improvised’ and invalid according to ecclesiastical procedure (a common accusation made of monothelete bishops in Palestine, too).²²⁷ Both are anathematized together with the usual monothelete suspects (Theodore of Pharan, Cyrus of Alexandria, and the three Constantinopolitan patriarchs, Sergius, Peter, and Paul) and associated with Heraclius’s *Ekthesis* of 636 (promulgating monotheletism as the christological doctrinal of the empire) and Constans II’s *Typos* of 648 (banning discussion on the operations and wills of Christ, but viewed by dyotheletes as a failure to condemn heresy).

Beyond these references, we know nothing else of Peter’s tenure in Alexandria, though if the notice in the *Chronicle* of John of Nikiu that he was appointed in Alexandria is accurate, it seems reasonable to infer that he was resident there until his death ca. 651-2. After Peter, however, the patriarch of Alexandria drops out of the rubrics of Theophanes and Nicephorus, as well as the

²²⁵ Note that I rely upon the older, but still unsurpassed, date-list for Alexandrian patriarchs given by A. Jülicher, ‘Die Liste der alexandrinischen Patriarchen im 6. und 7. Jahrhundert’, in *Festgabe von Fachgenossen und Freunden Karl Müller zum siebzigsten Geburtstag dargebracht*, ed. K. Müller (Tübingen, 1922), 7-23, at 20.

²²⁶ Eutychius of Alexandria, *Annals* [Pirone 347].

²²⁷ PL 87 160B-C (‘ὡσπερ οὖν καὶ τὴν Πέτρου τοῦ ὀνομασθέντος αὐτοῖς καὶ ἀναπλασθέντος ἐπισκόπου Ἀλεξανδρείας’); 178C-D (‘Μακεδόσιον τὸν αἰρετικὸν, ὃν τινα παρὰ κανόνας ἑαυτοῖς ἀνεπλάσαντο ψευδῶνυμον Ἀντιοχείας ἐπίσκοπον οἱ ῥηθέντες αἰρετικοὶ, καθάπερ οὖν καὶ Πέτρον τῆς Ἀλεξανδρέων ἐσχεδίασαν’).

narrative of Eutychius. From this point, we have no evidence that any Chalcedonian patriarch was resident in Alexandria until the second quarter of the eighth century. There, the sources present the return of the Chalcedonian patriarch explicitly as a restoration. The only evidence we possess for the intervening period comes in the acts the Sixth Ecumenical Council (680-1) and the so-called Quinisext Council (691-2), where multiple Constantinopolitan caretakers are mentioned over a period of roughly thirty years.²²⁸

The first, a certain Theodore, is said to have participated in his capacity as *locum tenens* of Alexandria in the synod which met at Constantinople in 662 to condemn Maximus Confessor.²²⁹ The events of this synod are recalled in the eighth session of the Sixth Ecumenical Council by the Chalcedonian patriarch of Antioch, Macarius (sed. before 669-681, though he never stepped foot in Antioch itself), the leader of the monothelete party at the Sixth Council.²³⁰ According to his testimony, Peter the Patriarch of Constantinople (sed. 654-666), Macedonius the Patriarch of Antioch (Macarius's predecessor, sed. after 639-after 662), and the Alexandrian *locum tenens* Theodore are all said to have condemned Maximus' doctrine, along with other bishops 'who were present with them' in Constantinople, together with the Senate.²³¹ When this Theodore was appointed caretaker of the throne is unknown, but, in all likelihood, he was appointed and resident in Constantinople, for reasons that will become clear momentarily.

At this point, our evidence jumps to the lists of bishops who were present at the Sixth Ecumenical Council itself. At some point after 662 and before 680, this Theodore must have died, since at the Sixth Council we find in attendance a certain Peter, who is also called *locum tenens* of

²²⁸ On the Sixth Council see now H. Ohme, *Das 6. Ökumenische Konzil von Konstantinopel (680/681)* (Berlin, 2025).

²²⁹ *Concilium universale Constantinopolitanum tertium*, ed. R. Riedinger, *ACO* ser. 2.2 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1990-2), i.230.

²³⁰ Eutychius of Alexandria, *Annals* [Pirone 347].

²³¹ *ACO* 2.2 i.230.

the Alexandrian throne. He attended every session of the council, and kept the ‘caretaker’ designation all the way throughout. A decade later, present at the Quinisext Council of 691/2, Peter is called the bishop of Alexandria in the subscription list following its canons.²³² Indeed, all of the eastern Patriarchates (Antioch, Alexandria, and Jerusalem) are listed at the Quinisext as bishops, not as caretakers.

The reason for this change may be divined from the eighteenth, and final, session of the Sixth Ecumenical Council (September 681). The subscriptions to the council which follow the *logos prosphynetikos*, addressed to the emperor at the close of the final session, conclude with the signatures of the eastern patriarchs. Alexandria is still represented by its *locum tenens* Peter, and Jerusalem by its *apocrisarius* George, as in the first session. At the very end, however, a short note is appended, relating that copies of the council Acts together with the signature of the emperor Constantine IV ‘to the five patriarchal thrones as follows,’ including

the throne of the holy Resurrection of Christ our God, that is, Jerusalem, whose *locum-tenency* is held by Theodore the most God-beloved presbyter, through George, presbyter and monk of Sebasteia, who later became patriarch of Antioch.²³³

This note was appended to the Acts by the deacon and *chartophylax* Agathon, in his re-edition of the council acts after the reign of Philippikos Bardanes (r. 711-713), who had temporarily reinstated monotheletism as the official doctrine of the imperial church and had ordered the destruction of the copy of the Acts held in the imperial palace.²³⁴ In 713, Agathon made new copies

²³² A. R. Flogaus, C. R. Kraus, and H. Ohme (eds.), *Concilium Constantinopolitanum a. 691/2 in Trullo habitum (Concilium quinisextum)*, ACO ser. 2.2 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2013), 62.7-8: Πέτρος ἀνάξιος ἐπίσκοπος τῆς Ἀλεξανδρέων μεγαλοπόλεως ὀρίσας ὑπέγραψα.

²³³ ACO 2.2 ii.830.13-16: Τῷ ἀποστολικῷ θρόνῳ τοῦ ἀγίου εὐαγγελιστοῦ Μάρκου τῷ τιμωμένῳ ἐν τῇ Ἀλεξανδρέων μεγαλόλει διὰ Πέτρου τοῦ θεοφιλεστάτου πρεσβυτέρου μοναχοῦ καὶ τοποτηρητοῦ.

²³⁴ See now Ohme, *Das 6. Ökumenische Konzil*, 557-62.

from the version preserved in the patriarchal library, and added the note (hence the gloss that George of Sebasteia had later become patriarch of Antioch). It thus appears that in the wake of the Sixth Ecumenical Council, either the emperor Constantine IV (r. 668-685) or Justinian II (r. 685-695, 705-711) had made the decision to elevate the caretakers of the eastern patriarchates to the position of bishop, or to appoint a new bishop in their stead.

However, we have good reason to believe that these appointments were made in Constantinople and not in a local election, for a careful examination of the *Präsenzlisten* and the subscriptions to the council demonstrate the promotion of a new patriarch of Antioch while the Sixth Ecumenical Council was still in session. After the condemnation of patriarch Macarius of Antioch at the end of the eighth session (7 March 681), the patriarch of Antioch disappears from the *Präsenzlisten* from sessions nine through thirteen, until we encounter him again at the beginning of the fourteenth session (15 April 681): ‘Theophanes, most august and holiest archbishop of *Theoupolis* Antioch.’²³⁵ It seems highly unlikely for an election to have been held in the ensuing thirty-nine days in Antioch in the middle of a major council at the capital, and so we must assume that the appointment was made in Constantinople. This Theophanes then attended the remaining sessions of the council, and is found in the subscription list to the council at its conclusion, though it appears that he must have died sometime between the Sixth Council and the Quinisext Council since George, as we just saw, succeeded him as patriarch. In any case, there is no reason to believe that Peter’s appointment process was different.

To the foregoing must be added the statement of Euty chius of Alexandria regarding the long vacancy of the Alexandrian throne:

²³⁵ *ACO* 2.2 ii.630.1. Brandes, ‘Die melkitischen Patriarchen,’ 52 identifies this Theophanes with the monk named Theophanes who was presbyter and *higoumen* of a Sicilian monastery called *Baōn* (*ACO* 2.2 i.502.1-2).

from the time that the patriarch George had fled from Alexandria to Constantinople, in the third year of the caliphate of Omar ibn al-Khattab, until Cosmas became patriarch of Alexandria, in the seventh year of the caliphate of Hisham, the see of Alexandria had been without a Melkite patriarch for ninety-seven years.²³⁶

Leaving aside the chronological details of the caliph 'Umar's reign (his third year was actually 637/8, but George was replaced by Cyrus in 641) and of Cosmas's appointment (which is dealt with below), Eutychius's impression is that no Chalcedonian patriarch had sat upon the throne in the near century between the rise of Islam and the late Umayyad period. A variety of other sources that mention the attendance of eastern patriarchs at the Sixth Ecumenical Council say the same. Michael the Great asserted, 'Because no bishops from Syria, Palestine, Egypt, or Armenia attended, they invited a person named Peter and offered him the seat of the patriarch of Alexandria. They seated another person in the place of the bishop of Jerusalem.'²³⁷ The same is true for Latin sources, like the *Liber pontificalis*, which in its notice on Pope Leo II (*r.* 17 August 682 to 3 July 683), describes the papal reception of the Sixth Council as follows, with Alexandria and Jerusalem bereft of patriarchs:

He [i.e. Leo II] received the acts of the sixth holy synod written in Greek; this was recently celebrated by God's providence in the imperial city, within the royal palace called Trullus, with the pious and clement emperor Constantine attending in his official capacity, and with him the legates of the apostolic see, two patriarchs, of Constantinople and Antioch, and 150 bishops.²³⁸

The 13th century *Treasury* of Theognostus recounts the same, remarking that 'the sees of Alexandria and Jerusalem were vacant at the time because the Muslims held those provinces.

²³⁶ Eutychius of Alexandria, *Annals* [Pirone 370].

²³⁷ Michael the Great, *Chronicle* 11.12.

²³⁸ *The Book of the Pontiffs* 82.2 [Davis 76].

However, there were legates and representatives from both places at the Council.²³⁹ These impressions are also confirmed by the Acts of the council themselves. For the acclamations held at the end of the sixteenth session of the council celebrate the patriarchs of Constantinople, Rome, and Antioch, but not Jerusalem or Alexandria.²⁴⁰

There is also evidence from within Egypt to suggest that Euty chius's statement was correct for the period following Peter of Alexandria. In the *HP*'s biographies between the exile of Theodosius in 536 and Cyrus of Alexandria's surrender of the city to the armies of the caliphate in 642, the primary antagonist of the Theodosian patriarch (or clerics, where the patriarch is not in Egypt) is always the Chalcedonian patriarch who was resident in Alexandria. The last instance of this struggle is between the Theodosian Benjamin and the Chalcedonian Cyrus. As we shall see in greater detail below, this changes in the second half of the seventh century with Benjamin's successors Agathon (sed. 665-681) and John III (sed. 681-689), where it is rather the Chalcedonian prefect of Alexandria who is said to persecute successive Theodosian patriarchs, as well as a prefect of the Mareotis region, west of Alexandria. This is also the case in Mena of Nikiu's *Life of Isaac* (sed. 689-692), which was composed sometime in the late seventh and early eighth centuries. In its account of the early career of Isaac in the monasteries of Scetis during Benjamin's patriarchate, the latter fears above all that the 'authority' (ἐξουσία) at Alexandria, referring to the civil administration, would threaten Scetis, where the Theodosian stronghold in Lower Egypt had evidently come to be centered.²⁴¹ Indeed, no Chalcedonian patriarch appears to be mentioned in any of the literature connected to the patriarchates of the later seventh century Theodosian church.

²³⁹ J.A. Munitiz (ed. and trans.), *The Treasury of Theognostos* in CCT 16 (Turnhout, 2013), XIV.6.2.

²⁴⁰ *ACO* 2.2, 702. The patriarch of Jerusalem was evidently resident in his see.

²⁴¹ Mena of Nikiu, *Life of Isaac* 48.

Notably, Anastasius of Sinai himself knew no patriarch of Alexandria in this same period. As noted in chapter one, he never mentions Chalcedonian bishops in Egypt throughout his writings, despite his being a dyothelete Chalcedonian monk who spent years as a public disputant on behalf of the Chalcedonian church in Alexandria. This is even the case despite his own intimate familiarity with the *Kaisarion*, the Chalcedonian cathedral church of Alexandria, in the years ca. 681-685.²⁴² Indeed, he only mentions two Chalcedonians in Alexandria: the Augustalis, who is in all likelihood the same prefect of Alexandria mentioned by the *HP*; and a certain ‘lord Isidore,’ who served as the ‘head librarian of the patriarchate.’²⁴³ The only reference to the Augustalis comes as follows:

When they had approached the Augustalis, they began to petition him, seeking to debate with us concerning Christ. And, sending out a dispatch, he summoned us lawfully to the *praetorium*. And his attendants related to us, ‘Some Theodosian bishops appeared, seeking to settle the score with you concerning the faith in the presence of the Augustalis.’ So, once we had arrived and been seated, the Augustalis said, ‘When these bishops heard about the disturbances between the church and the Theodosians, they came here, seeking to debate with your holiness.’²⁴⁴

He seemingly functioned as the highest authority to whom the Theodosian bishops and higoumens could appeal when they wanted to engage in a public debate with a representative of the Chalcedonians in Alexandria. They do not seek out Anastasius directly, but rather approach the

²⁴² For this date see ch. 3 *infra*.

²⁴³ Anastasius of Sinai, *Hodegos* X,2.7.8-9: Καὶ ἐν πολλῇ ἀθυμίᾳ ἡμῶν ὄντων ἐξήγαγεν ἡμῖν ὁ κύρις Ἰσίδωρος ὁ βιβλιοφύλαξ τοῦ πατριαρχείου βιβλὸν ἔχουσαν ἀνόθευτον τὴν τοιαύτην χρῆσιν (‘While we were greatly discouraged, lord Isidore the head librarian of the patriarchate produced a book containing the citation [we were looking for] uncorrupted.’) Augustalis: P. Booth, ‘Debating the Faith in Early Islamic Egypt’ *JEH* (2019): 695-96, 698.

²⁴⁴ Anastasius of Sinai, *Hodegos* X,3.1.9-19; Οἵτινες παραγενόμενοι πρὸς τὸν αὐγουστάλιον ἐπρωτῶν αὐτὸν ἐπιζητοῦντες ἡμῖν διαλεχθῆναι περὶ Χριστοῦ. Καὶ ἀποστείλας μετεστείλατο ἡμᾶς γνησίως ἐν τῷ πραιτωρίῳ· οἱ δὲ παραγενόμενοι ἀπήγγειλαν ἡμῖν ὡς ὅτι «Ἐπίσκοποι τινες παρεγένοντο θεοδοσιανοὶ ἐπιζητοῦντες περὶ πίστεως συνᾶραι λόγον μεθ’ ὑμῶν ἐπὶ τοῦ αὐγουσταλίου». Παραγενομένων οὖν ἡμῶν καὶ καθεσθέντων λέγει ὁ αὐγουστάλιος· «Ἀκούσαντες οἱ ἐπίσκοποι οὗτοι τὰ κινήθοντα μεταξύ τῆς ἐκκλησίας καὶ τῶν Θεοδοσιανῶν παρεγένοντο ἐπιζητοῦντες διαλεχθῆναι τῇ ὁσιότητι ὑμῶν.»

Augustalis first, who could compel him to come in order to engage in further theological disputation – and must, therefore, have been viewed as the *de facto* leader of the Chalcedonians in Alexandria. Anastasius even held a debate with a prominent member of Agathon’s curia, George ‘the Locksmith,’ in the chancellery of the *Kaisarion*, yet there is no mention of a patriarch in attendance.²⁴⁵

It thus appears that the Chalcedonian church of Egypt had been left without a patriarch in residence since the death of Peter of Alexandria ca. 651-2. Unlike in Syria, this must have presented a major problem for Egyptian Chalcedonians: without a patriarch in residence, and with no metropolitans to appoint new bishops, the episcopate would be left to atrophy. The canonical appointment of a new patriarch required three bishops, yet no evidence has survived to suggest that this happened. Chalcedonians appear to have perpetuated their existence throughout the second half of the seventh century, probably thanks to the advantages they possessed in controlling the public churches and their patrimonies, the attrition of the episcopate must nevertheless have presented a serious problem. Constantinople sought a solution to this problem by sending Peter of Alexandria to take up his see after the Sixth Ecumenical Council, though with disastrous consequences. At any rate, the confessional situation had been reversed: like the Theodosians throughout the central decades of the sixth century, the Chalcedonians were bereft of a patriarch.

The Egyptian Reaction to the Sixth Ecumenical Council

Having established that the Chalcedonians retained control of key bishoprics throughout the Near East in the early decades of Islamic hegemony; that they were, by and large, monotheletes; and that they lacked a patriarch in Alexandria after 651-2, it remains to be seen what happened in the

²⁴⁵ Anastasius of Sinai, *Hodegos* X,4.1.1-6.

wake of the Sixth Ecumenical Council, which in a single stroke reversed decades of imperial support for monenergism-monotheletism.

The acts of this council record that after its conclusion, copies of the acts were sent ‘to the apostolic throne of St. Mark the Evangelist that is honoured in the Great City of Alexandria through Peter, the priest, monk, and *locum tenens*.’²⁴⁶ Peter had evidently journeyed to Alexandria to deliver the news and to take up his see. But was he able to take up residence there between his attendance at the Sixth Ecumenical Council and the Quinisext Council? Although the acts do not tell us what happened next, a few precious references to the Alexandrian doctrinal scene in this period survive that betray a plausible sequence of events.

One piece of evidence comes in the *Doctrina Patrum*, a late seventh/early eighth century anthology of patristic citations that contains an interpolated version of Sophronius of Jerusalem’s *Synodical Letter*.²⁴⁷ The catalogue of heretics, given at the end of the letter, is copied faithfully except at its end, where the interpolator also included those who were anathematized at the Sixth Ecumenical Council. In addition to these, the compiler added a new name to the list: Harmasius. It reads,

Cyrus, the most lawless adulterer of Alexandria, Theodore of Pharan, Sergius of Constantinople, and Honorius of Rome, the founders and advocates of monotheletism; Pyrrhus, Paul, and Peter of Constantinople, the successors to the [patriarchal] throne of the imperial city and guardians of impiety who battled amongst themselves and against the truth; Macarius of Antioch and Stephen, his disciple and teacher of madness; Polychronius, the new Simon Magus; and Harmasius, who up to the present moment battles against the truth in Alexandria, as well as the heretics and enemies of orthodoxy with him who are honored with Saracen insolence.²⁴⁸

²⁴⁶ *ACO* 2.2 ii.830.8-10.

²⁴⁷ F. Diekamp, *Doctrina Patrum de Incarnatione Verbi* (Münster, 1907), 271-2.

²⁴⁸ *Doctrina Patrum* 35.6-16 [Diekamp 271]: Πρὸς τούτοις ἀνάθεμα ἔστωσαν Κύρος ὁ τῆς Ἀλεξανδρέων μοιχὸς ἀθεσμότητος, Θεόδωρος Φαρανίτης, Σέργιος Κωνσταντινουπόλεως, Ὀνόριος Ῥώμης, οἱ τῆς τῶν Μονοθελητῶν

This Harmasius – or rather, his followers – are named twice in the *Hodegos*, both times coming in scholia which were added to the text in or after 692, and twice in the *Six Chapters against the Monotheletes*, a polemical work appended to Anastasius’s *Third Discourse on the Image and Likeness of God in Man*, dated to 701, and dedicated to polemicizing against their faction.²⁴⁹ The first reference in the *Hodegos* is attached to a passage wherein Anastasius recapitulates Sophronius of Jerusalem’s position on the operations of Christ, comparing it to a citation from Cyril of Alexandria (‘some of the Savior’s sayings are befitting God, while others are befitting man, and the others occupy a middle order’). After offering a series of polemical questions aimed at Theodosians, Anastasius had later added in a scholion, ‘Question them in this way, and accommodate our argument thusly according to the immediate purpose: against the Jacobites focus on nature, but against the Harmasites, focus on the theandric operation.’²⁵⁰ The second scholion is appended to a passage commenting upon the Cappadocian Fathers’ (from a much later perspective, controversial) usage of analogies of mixture to understand the relation of Christ’s humanity and divinity, where he enjoins his reader to ‘Raise these arguments as *aporiai* against the Harmasites too.’²⁵¹

Thus, it seems probable that when Peter arrived with copies of the acts of the Sixth Ecumenical Council – which, in condemning monotheletism, unraveled the very foundation upon which Egypt’s united Chalcedonian church had been based for half a century – he was there

αίρέσεως ἀρχηγοὶ καὶ συνήγοροι, Πύρρος, Παῦλος, Πέτρος οἱ τῆς μὲν βασιλίδος πρόεδροι, τῆς ἀσεβείας δὲ πρόβουλοι, ἑαυτοῖς καὶ τῇ ἀληθείᾳ μαχησάμενοι, Μακάριος Ἀντιοχείας καὶ Στέφανος ὁ τούτου μαθητῆς καὶ τῆς ἀπονοίας διδάσκαλος, Πολυχρόνιος ὁ νέος Σιμών μάγος καὶ ὁ κατὰ τὴν Ἀλεξανδρείαν μέχρι νῦν τῇ ἀληθείᾳ μαχόμενος Ἀρμάσιος οἱ τε σὺν αὐτῷ αἰρετικοὶ καὶ τῆς ὀρθοδοξίας πολέμοι σαρακηρικῶ φρυάγματι σεμνονόμενοι.

²⁴⁹ See Anastasius, *Capita vi adversus Monotheletas*, 10.1.44 (γινῶτε, ὃ οἱ τῆς Ἀρματικῆς ὀρχήστρας θυμελικοὶ παῖδες) and 10.5.8 (Οἶμαι συγγνώμην εἶχον παρὰ θεοῦ οἱ τῆς Ἀρματικῆς θυμέλης παῖδες, εἰ ἀπηνουῶντο μᾶλλον καὶ παρητοῦντο ὁμολογεῖν ἐν Χριστῷ).

²⁵⁰ Anastasius of Sinai, *Hodegos* XIII.6.18-20.

²⁵¹ *Ibid.*, XIII.9.91.

rejected by the clerics who refused to abandon monotheletism, headed by this Harmasius. Although what happened next is not entirely clear, it is possible that Peter had returned to Constantinople, where he remained in residence. An imperial *keleusis* of Justinian II sent to pope John V (though received in Rome after his death) describes a meeting in February 687 of many leading civil and military officials that confirmed the decisions of the Sixth Ecumenical Council. This letter has usually been studied with reference to Byzantine policy in Italy,²⁵² but it contains a fleeting reference to others who were in attendance at this meeting:

But soon we brought our holiest fathers and most blessed patriarchs with the *apocrisarius* of your blessedness, and the holiest senate and likewise the metropolitans and bishops loved by God, who reside here in the royal city...²⁵³

We do not know which patriarchs were present, of course, but the plural form here indicates that it must have included at least one of the eastern patriarchs besides the Constantinopolitan. It is possible to rule out the patriarch of Jerusalem, for the *Life* of Andrew of Crete by Nicephorus the Patrician suggests that in contrast to the caretakers/patriarchs of Antioch and Alexandria at the council, Theodore, the patriarch of Jerusalem at this time, was indeed resident in Jerusalem, where he personally oversaw the early monastic career of Andrew of Crete.²⁵⁴ This impression is confirmed by the acts of the Sixth Council themselves, for Theodore is the only eastern

²⁵² See e.g. J. Herrin, *The Formation of Christendom* (London, 1987), 280-282, and A. J. Ekonomou, *Byzantine Rome and the Greek Popes: Eastern Influences on Rome and the Papacy from Gregory the Great to Zacharias, A.D. 590-752* (Lanham, MD, 2007), 219-220; Ohme, *Das 6. Ökumenische Konzil*, 521-44.

²⁵³ ACO 2.2 ii.886.17-20: 'sed mox adduximus nostros patres sanctissimos ac beatissimos patriarchas cum uestrae beatitudinis apocrisario et sanctissimum senatum ueram etiam deo amabiles metropolitans et episcopos, qui hic in regiam urbem commorantur.'

²⁵⁴ A. Papadopoulos-Kerameus, *Ανάλεκτα Τεροσολυμιτικής Σταχυολογίας V* (St. Petersburg, 1888), 171-2: '[Andrew] was received by Theodore, who at that time was patriarch, and is now of blessed memory, and he was tonsured and assigned to the holy register [...] Because the aforementioned patriarch of Jerusalem marveled at his temperance and his grace and fairness towards all, towards the end of his life, he summoned Theodore, his most God-devoted *oikonomos*, and he charged him not to handle any ecclesiastical matter after his death without the opinion and counsel of this pious and God-devoted man, but to do everything with his approval.' On the biography of Andrew of Crete, see M.-F. Auzépy, 'La carrière d'André de Crète' *BZ* 88 (1995): 1-12.

patriarch/caretaker who had sent his own apocrisiarius to the council rather than attended himself.²⁵⁵ We are left, then, with only the Antiochian and the Alexandrian patriarchs.

Peter's appointment in Constantinople, his return to the capital after a failed attempt to persuade the Chalcedonians of Alexandria to recognize the council, and his continued residence there would make good sense of the evidence as it survives from Alexandria. As we have already seen, Anastasius of Sinai knew no patriarch of Alexandria in the period 681-685, nor did any of the Theodosians whose work has survived during the second half of the seventh century. If Peter, who was listed as already holding the position of *locum tenens* of Alexandria at the start of the council on 7 November 680, had either been resident in his see before the council started or had been successful in taking up his see afterwards, it is not unreasonable to suppose that he should be mentioned either in Anastasius's public disputations in Alexandria (one of which is said to have gathered the clergy of the Chalcedonians and each anti-Chalcedonian faction in and around Alexandria in addition to 'the chief magistrates and those who administer the city'), or in Anastasius's mentions of his various trips to the *Kaisarion*, or in contemporary Theodosian sources.²⁵⁶ Instead, we only hear of an Augustalis, who guarded the interests of the Chalcedonian church in Alexandria. Yet as we shall see, even this powerful lay protector will come to be reconciled to the Theodosians.

²⁵⁵ See *ACO* ii.830.13-16: '[Copies of the acts were sent] to the throne of the Holy Resurrection of our God, that is, Jerusalem, of which Theodore the most God-beloved presbyter held the caretaker-ship, through George the presbyter and monk of Sebasteia, who later became patriarch of Antioch.'

²⁵⁶ Magistrates and civil authorities: Anastasius, *Hodegos* X,1.1.49-53: Καὶ δὴ μετὰ μίαν ἡμέραν δημοσίως ἐπὶ τῶν πρωτεύοντων καὶ τὴν πόλιν διοικούντων συνηθροίσθημεν καὶ λαὸς πολὺς, τῆς τε καθολικῆς ἐκκλησίας ὁ κληρὸς καὶ πάσης ἐτέρας πίστεως καὶ κοινωνίας Θεοδοσιανῶν τε καὶ Γαϊανιτῶν καὶ <Σεμιδαλιτῶν>.

The Rise of the Marwānids and the Return of the Theodosians

This urban prefect plays a prominent role in the biographies of Benjamin's successors, Agathon (sed. 665-681) and John III (sed. 681-689), where he is presented as a persecutor of both patriarchs during the reign of the caliph Yazīd I (r. 680-3), and is specifically said to have worked towards keeping the patriarch out of the city of Alexandria. It is with these biographies that the *HP* becomes much more detailed, for they occurred during the lifetime of their compiler, George the Archdeacon, who was a disciple of John III and notary to Simon (sed. 692-701). George compiled the biographies of the Theodosian patriarchs from Cyril (sed. 412-444) to the first decade of Alexander II (sed. 705-730) in ca. 715 at the monastery of St. Macarius in Scetis. It is also around this time that the *Life of Isaac* by Mena of Nikiu was composed; Mena was the chronicler John of Nikiu's successor and appointed to his see ca. 697-700, and wrote the *Life* shortly after this.²⁵⁷ George the Archdeacon and Mena of Nikiu were thus contemporaries of Anastasius of Sinai and eyewitnesses to events in Alexandria during the 680s and 690s.

According to the *HP*'s biography of Agathon, 'in those days, Alexandria was governed by a man whose name was Theodore, who was a chief among a congregation of the Chalcedonians, and was an opponent of the orthodox Theodosians.'²⁵⁸ The *HP* implies that he was appointed during the reign of the caliph Yazīd (r. 680-683), for we are told that he bribed the latter for jurisdiction over Alexandria and its nearby districts independent of the oversight of the emir at Babylon-Fustāt, and has him persecuting both Agathon and John III.²⁵⁹ The *HP* then asserts that Theodore increased the poll-tax burden of the Theodosian patriarch and his dependents to the sum of 7,000 *denarii* each year, in addition to other taxes. He also continued to exercise his authority to prevent the Theodosian patriarch from entering the city and taking up residence in Alexandria

²⁵⁷ See Booth, 'Images of Emperors and Emirs,' 413 n. 78 for the date.

²⁵⁸ Evetts, PO 5 5.

²⁵⁹ Booth, 'Debating the Faith,' 698.

by issuing a command to kill the patriarch if he was seen anywhere within the city. We are also told, in somewhat vague terms, that by the end of Agathon's life,

Theodore the Chalcedonian laid his hand on everything, so that they did not find even bread to eat on the day of the patriarch's death; for he set his seal on all that belonged to Agathon, and on all that they had.²⁶⁰

However the 'seal' is to be understood (perhaps the seizure of moveable assets acquired by the patriarch and his entourage?) these passages underscore the perception—from a Theodosian author close in time to the events narrated—that the Theodosians of Alexandria at the advent of Marwānid rule were in dire economic and institutional straits. Even if these hardships have been exaggerated in order to be contrasted with the reversals that are narrated next, the disenfranchisement and marginalization presented throughout the biographies of Benjamin, Agathon, and the first part of John III's patriarchate perfectly accords with the confessional situation stretching all the way back to the age of Justinian.

At some point after the death of Agathon, Theodore himself died. Under Agathon's successor, John III, the *HP* records that Theodore's son had been reconciled to the Theodosian cause: 'His son was appointed governor instead of him, and became like a son to our father Abba John, for he had confidence in him and love for him. Thus the Father Patriarch led him like a son.'²⁶¹ The timing of both Theodore's death, his son's succession, and then the latter's conversion to Theodosianism is chronologically ambiguous in the text. Although this passage is set towards the beginning of John III's biography (implying that it occurred early in John III's career as patriarch), the text immediately proceeds to report, erroneously, that upon the enthronement of

²⁶⁰ Evetts, PO 5 11.

²⁶¹ Evetts, PO 5 10.

John III in 681, a Tiberius (which must refer to David, the son of Heraclius) was murdered, and that a certain ‘Augustus’ (who must be Constans II, r. 641-668) succeeded him. Under this ‘Augustus,’ we are told that Maximus Confessor was exiled, and that shortly thereafter, the former ‘went to Sicily after a time, and was killed there like a slaughtered victim by one of his two attendants.’²⁶² The successor of Constans II is then listed as Justinian II (r. 685-695, 705-711), completely skipping over the reign of Constantine IV (r. 668-685). It is thus safe to say that the chronological details of this section are not totally secure, as the compiler of the *HP* sought to telescope the entirety of the monenergist-monothelite controversy under a single notice. As we shall see below, there is some reason to believe that this reconciliation occurred later.

In 685, the fortunes of the Theodosians shifted dramatically. In this year, ‘Abd al-Malik b. Marwān (r. 685-705) became caliph at Damascus. Upon his accession to the throne, he appointed his half-brother, ‘Abd al-‘Azīz, to the governorship of Egypt at the capital of Babylon-Fuṣṭāṭ, who brought along with him his tutor, the wealthy Jacobite aristocrat Athanasius bar Gumoyē, to be the emir’s second-in-command.²⁶³ Athanasius would be appointed *chartouarios* of the *dīwān* of Babylon-Fuṣṭāṭ—the highest post within the fiscal administration of the Islamic state in Egypt after the emir himself, responsible not only for the collection of taxes but also their redistribution. Along with him was appointed another Theodosian secretary, the Egyptian Isaac, who had formerly served as a notary in the Shubra, roughly six miles north of the emir’s capital.²⁶⁴ Dionysius of Tell-Mahre’s *Chronicle* alleges that ‘Abd al-Malik commanded Athanasius not merely to act as ‘Abd al-‘Azīz’s *chartouarios*, but to be ‘the manager of his affairs, and that

²⁶² Evetts, PO 5 10-11.

²⁶³ Michael the Great, *Chronicle* 11.16; *Chronicle to 1234* I.294-5. On Athanasius bar Gumoyē’s career, see M. Debié, ‘Christians in the Service of the Caliph: Through the Looking Glass of Communal Identities’ in *Christians and Others in the Umayyad State*, ed. A. Borrut and F. M. Donner (Chicago, 2016), 54-61 and Booth, ‘Debating the Faith,’ 699-702.

²⁶⁴ Evetts, PO 5 9, 12.

authority and administrative direction should be his.’²⁶⁵ Although this claim is disputed—the Tell-Mahre family was linked by marriage to the bar Gumoyē family, and Dionysius might be suspected of embellishing his own ancestors deeds—it is difficult to explain the sudden reversal of Theodosian fortunes apart from positing that Athanasius wielded an immense amount of influence at the court of the emir.

From this point on in the Theodosian narratives, Athanasius and Isaac appear in both the *HP* and the contemporaneous *Life of Isaac* by Mena of Nikiu as confessional champions for the Theodosians. Thanks to their rise—and in particular that of Athanasius—our sources point to two related developments: the return of properties to the Theodosians in Alexandria and the establishment of their own new ecclesial foundations; and the emergence of a relationship of patronage between the Theodosian patriarch and the emir. According to the *HP*’s biography of John III, after the appointment of Athanasius and Isaac, the Theodosian patriarch managed to claw back the properties that had been plundered earlier by Theodore the Chalcedonian:

And when Abd al-Aziz became governor of Egypt, the Father Patriarch wrote from Alexandria to Misr [*sc.* Babylon-Fuṣṭāṭ] to the two scribes who presided over his divan, to make known to them what had been done concerning the seal, which was set upon all the places, and the trouble with the misbelieving Chalcedonians from which he was suffering. Thereupon the said scribes sent messengers to Alexandria with instructions that the seal should be broken in the places named, and that all the property of the Church should be delivered to the Father Patriarch.²⁶⁶

It is notable that Theodore the Chalcedonian’s ‘seal’ is only broken with the rise of ‘Abd al-‘Azīz and not earlier. If he had been able to ‘set the seal’ of his own accord, why would his son—who had, as the *HP* tells us, converted to Theodosianism—not have been able to undo it of his own

²⁶⁵ Palmer, *Seventh Century*, 202.

²⁶⁶ Evetts, PO 5 12.

accord, too? We should, perhaps, then, locate the reconciliation of Theodore the Chalcedonian's son to Theodosianism around the same time as the arrival of 'Abd al-'Azīz and Athanasius bar Gumoyē. Indeed, a major reversal is associated explicitly with the rise of the Marwānid governor and is consonant with a similar account in the *Life of Isaac*:

It happened in those days that the king sent for the archbishop to meet with him. Indeed, he used to do this very often, bringing the archbishop to him because of the affection he had for him. The name of that king was Abd al-'Aziz, and he was also called the Emir. As secretaries he had two pious men—Athanasius and Isaac, together with their sons—and the *praetorium* was full of Christians. In fact, when he first came to Egypt, he had tried to do evil to the churches—he had broken the crosses and done great evil to the archbishop—but God, who had punished Pharaoh of old, also put fear into this other in a dream, saying, 'Be careful how you treat the archbishop', and he came to love him as an angel of God.²⁶⁷

In saying that under Athanasius and Isaac 'the *praetorium* was full of Christians,' Mena means that the Theodosians had at last found partisans for their own confessional cause in the upper-level civil administration of Egypt including, one might assume, the Augustal prefect at Alexandria, son of Theodore the Chalcedonian. Indeed, from this point onward, the Alexandrian prefect never appears as a persecutor, but rather an ally to the Theodosian church.

The *HP* underscores this point by next narrating the death of the last prominent Chalcedonian administrator in the region of Alexandria, a certain Theophanes, governor of Mareotis, after the reversal of the 'seal.' This Theophanes was the brother-in-law to Theodore the Chalcedonian and, the *HP* notes that he had become the 'leader of the heretics' after the death of

²⁶⁷ Mena of Nikiu, *Life of Isaac* 65.

the latter, and tried to use his authority to harass John III during ‘Abd al-‘Azīz’s first trip to Alexandria in 685.²⁶⁸ It relates,

Much shame and sorrow came to the heretics from this [*sc.* the restoration of Theodosian property], and more to those who had accused him [*sc.* John III] than to any other, and especially to Theophanes the governor of Maryūt. For in those days the Amir arrested him suddenly, and delivered him to the secretary, who sent him to prison, and afterwards put him to death after severe torments. And he went to Hell.²⁶⁹

Again, the role of the secretary is prominent; it is he who, with ‘Abd al-‘Azīz, removes obstacles to the flourishing of the Theodosian church in Alexandria.

Indeed, the next vignette cements the newfound restoration of the Theodosians by narrating the long-awaited return of the Theodosian patriarch to the city of Alexandria. After Theophanes’s death, ‘Abd al-‘Azīz is said to have issued a decree

throughout the city [of Alexandria] that none should address the patriarch except with good words nor say any evil of him, and that none should hinder him in what he desired, nor in going out of the city nor coming into it.²⁷⁰

The ability of the Theodosian patriarch to freely enter the city of Alexandria marks, in narrative terms, the restoration of the Theodosian church to equal footing with its Chalcedonian counterpart. Indeed, the accessions of future Theodosian patriarchs will henceforth become public affairs, as in the case of Simon I (sed. 692-701), who was enthroned at the Angelion church to scenes of rejoicing.²⁷¹ The emir had become the antithesis of Theodore the Chalcedonian, and indeed all the

²⁶⁸ Evetts, PO 5 13.

²⁶⁹ Evetts, PO 5 18.

²⁷⁰ Ibid.

²⁷¹ Evetts, PO 5 29.

Chalcedonian prefects and patriarchs who had contributed to the marginalization of the Theodosian patriarch up to that point.

The desire of John III, we are told, was to finish the work that Benjamin was supposed to have started, and to construct a church of St. Mark for the Theodosians. This was achieved with the help of the ‘magistrates and believing scribes,’ who

assisted him also in the rebuilding of the church of the glorious martyr and evangelist Saint Mark; and he completed it in three years with every kind of decoration, and bought for it house-property in Misr and in Maryût and in Alexandria. And he built a mill to grind wheat into flour for making biscuit, and a press for linseed oil, and many houses which he settled upon the church of the holy Saint Mark.²⁷²

As indicated above, this was not the Church of St. Mark-by-the-Sea, but rather a second church dedicated to St. Mark located by one of the city’s southern gates.²⁷³ And, of course, the *HP*’s narrative had earlier implied that it was *Benjamin* who had been given the funds to restore this church, though for reasons that are not explained in the text, he was unable. For our purposes, this vignette testifies to two important facts: first, that the Theodosians had finally reestablished a cultic connection to St. Mark within the city of Alexandria only from 685; and second, that they had begun to endow their new church with estates in Alexandria and Babylon-Fustât.

Their position in Alexandria would improve even further upon the accession of John III’s successor, Isaac, who successfully petitioned Athanasius bar Gumoyē to fund the restoration of the Angelion church—originally a meeting place for Theodosian clerics outside the city walls in the district τὰ Ἀγγέλων in the sixth and early seventh centuries, and now claimed as their cathedral

²⁷² Evetts, PO 5 18.

²⁷³ This church is also mentioned by John of Nikiu during the civil war of Heraclius; see id. *Chronicle* 108.8: ‘But Nicetas opened the second gate which was at the church of St. Mark the Evangelist.’ See Luisier, ‘Il culto,’ 54-8 for discussion.

church—‘for it was ready to fall down on account of its great age, and by the grace of God he rebuilt it and adorned it with great beauty.’²⁷⁴ The *HP* records a similar series of events: Isaac is said to have repaired

the great church of the Holy Mark, when its walls were sloping in, and he also renewed the episcopal residence [i.e. the Angelion]. And by his means the liturgies in the churches of the orthodox, where they could not be performed before, were restored.²⁷⁵

As noted above, the Angelion was not actually the Theodosian episcopal residence in the sixth and seventh centuries, on account of the fact that the patriarch was prevented from taking up residence in Alexandria. The transformation of this space into an episcopal residence, though, precipitated the first public gathering of ‘The One Hundred’—probably the synod of all Theodosian bishops in Egypt plus those in Libya and the Pentapolis—‘for none of the archbishops before him had been able to do this because of the enemies of our faith.’²⁷⁶ Thus, the state of the churches of St. Mark and the Angelion mirrored that of the Theodosian church at large: long decayed, but at last restored to glory. Isaac further constructed, at ‘Abd al-‘Azīz’s behest, a patriarchal residence at his new town of Ḥulwān, south of the Babylon-Fustāt, whence the latter ruled after 691. The existence of this church is confirmed in the archaeology of Ḥulwān.²⁷⁷

Likewise, it is only after these accounts of restoration that named Theodosian bishops appear in the Severan sources for the first time since the defection of Victor of the Faiyum and Cyrus of Nikiu to monenergism in the 630s. The *HP* and the *Life of Isaac* mention Gregory of al-

²⁷⁴ Mena of Nikiu, *Life of Isaac* 67.

²⁷⁵ Evetts, PO 5 18-19.

²⁷⁶ Mena of Nikiu, *Life of Isaac* 67.

²⁷⁷ P. Grossmann, *Christliche Architektur in Ägypten* (Leiden, 2002), 417-19.

Kais, James of Shubra,²⁷⁸ John of Nikiu, John of Xoïs, Theodore of Metelites, and Zachariah of Xoïs. Moreover, as Phil Booth has observed, along with this new circle of bishops came an explosion of Coptic literature after decades of hiatus since its last major burst in the late sixth century. There too, the production of new literature was also associated with newfound stability in the episcopate thanks to Damian's election and his establishment of a new episcopate. The texts that survive from the late seventh and early eighth centuries include homilies, hagiographies, and historiographical works from the pens of precisely our patriarch and these named bishops, including John III, John of Nikiu, Zachariah of Xoïs, and, of course, Mena of Nikiu and George the Archdeacon, who were themselves connected to the patriarch's entourage.²⁷⁹

Thus, it was only with the rise of 'Abd al-'Azīz and Athanasius bar Gumoyē that the Theodosian church had been restored to Alexandria (and to equal footing with their confessional rivals), and the policy respecting the ecclesial *status quo ante* that had favored the Chalcedonians reversed. Not only had they begun constructing/renovating their own places of worship freely, but they also appear to have encroached upon Alexandria's Chalcedonian churches in the ensuing decades. Although we have no data to draw from in the case of Egypt's other cities, it seems likely that any restrictions placed upon the ability of the Theodosians to hold urban liturgies would also have been eased. This reestablishment had, however, come at a price. The patronage and protection

²⁷⁸ Although when he is first mentioned he is called James of Arwat, George the Archdeacon later explains that the name Shubra and Arwat refer to the same place; see Evetts, PO 5 82.

²⁷⁹ Texts of John III: A. van Lantschoot, *Les Questions de Théodore: texte sahidique, recensions arabes et éthiopienne* (Vatican City, 1957); J. Drescher, *Apa Mena: a selection of Coptic texts Relating to St. Menas* (Cairo, 1946), 73-96; U. Zanetti, *Saint Jean, higoumène de Scété (VII siècle): vie arabe et épitomé éthiopien* (Brussels, 2015). John of Nikiu: H. Zotenberg, *Chronique de Jean, évêque de Nikiou* (Paris, 1883). Zachariah of Xoïs: M. S. A. Mikhail and T. Vivian, *The Holy Workshop of Virtue: the Life of John the Little by Zacharias of Sakhā* (Collegeville, MN, 2010); homilies *On the Ascent of our Lord to Jerusalem, On Jonah, and On the Holy Family*, see H. De Vis (ed.), *Homélies coptes de la Vaticane II* (Louvain, 1990), 5-57 and S. Davis, 'Ancient sources for the Coptic tradition' in *Be Thou There: the Holy Family's Journey in Egypt*, ed. G. Gabra (Cairo, 2001), 151; and lost texts described in U. Zanetti, 'Le Dossier d'Abraham et Georges, moines de Scété', in *Monachismes d'Orient: images, échanges, influences: hommage à Antoine Guillaumont* ed. F. Jullien and M.-J. Pierr (Turnhout 2011), 227-338. See Booth, 'Debating the Faith,' 702-3.

of the emir came at the cost of conceding control over the election process of the patriarch to the emir at Babylon-Fuṣṭāṭ, although in the *HP* this interference is often portrayed as the product of divine intervention.

For example, at John III's death, Gregory of al-Kaïs, John of Nikiu, and James of Shubra, together with 'the secretary who was commissioner for the city [of Alexandria]' organized an election and chose a certain George, deacon of Xoïs, to ascend the throne. The *HP* notes, however, that they had made this decision 'without consulting the emir 'Abd al-'Azīz.'²⁸⁰ This is the first time in the narrative where such a consideration is mentioned. While attempting to rush the process of George's consecration in Alexandria, Gregory and the others were prevented from doing so by an archdeacon whose name, notably, was Mark. This Mark reprimanded them for hurrying George's election along without due recourse to the canonical requirement that he be enthroned on a Sunday in the presence of the whole city. The *HP* then offers the following gloss: 'Now this was God's command, that he might promote that man whom he had chosen at first, namely Abba Isaac, the monk.'²⁸¹ After this, certain attendants of 'Abd al-'Azīz appeared to escort George to the emir for confirmation. Upon their arrival at the capital, 'Abd al-'Azīz noted that their new appointee was not Isaac, and he grew 'angry and cancelled George's appointment, and commanded them to appoint Isaac. And the thing was from God. So the bishops took him, and ordained him, and he sat upon the patriarchal throne for three years.'²⁸² The image here is striking: the Islamic emir is the conduit through which the divine plan is achieved, thanks in part to the cooperation of an archdeacon named Mark—not the leaders of the Theodosian church itself, whose choice was evidently at odds with God's.

²⁸⁰ Evetts, PO 5 22.

²⁸¹ Evetts, PO 5 23.

²⁸² Evetts, PO 5 23-4.

A similar theme emerges in the election of Isaac's successor, Simon I (sed. 692-701), where the Theodosians had selected John, *higoumen* of the Ennaton Monastery to be their next patriarch. According to the *HP*, when they presented him to 'Abd al-'Azīz at the capital, the emir initially inclined towards him, but a bishop at the assembly spoke against John. The Theodosians then selected Simon, his disciple, and when 'Abd al-'Azīz asked if they were certain, they replied, 'Verily the man whom we chose we brought before thee; but the matter belongs to God, and in the second place to thee.'²⁸³

To be certain, the emirs at Babylon-Fuṣṭāṭ are not presented in Severan sources in exclusively positive terms, and it would be wrong to oversimplify the nature of their relationship. Prior to his reconciliation with John III, 'Abd al-'Azīz had banned images of crosses, and even after their friendship had formed, he forbade the Theodosian patriarch to interfere with episcopal elections outside of Egypt, with severe consequences for failure to comply. So too, different Marwānid governors had different relationships with the Christian populations they ruled: the *HP* claims that later emirs of Babylon-Fuṣṭāṭ would enact various persecutions against Christian communities at large (including the Theodosians), especially pertaining to taxation. Christians of any confessional stripe remained, after all, second-class citizens in religious terms within the Islamic state. Despite all this, the Theodosian church had found an ally in 'Abd al-'Azīz, perhaps especially because of the influence of Athanasius bar Gumoyē at court, which resulted in the restoration of their communion to equal footing with that of their Chalcedonian rivals for the first time in their history.

²⁸³ Evetts, PO 5 29.

The Decline of the Chalcedonian Church of Egypt

As has been pointed out above, this restoration came at a time when the Chalcedonian patriarchate had been vacant for decades, and the Chalcedonian church at Alexandria had decided to sever itself from the authority of Constantinople. Thus, concomitant with the rise of the Theodosians went the fading of the Chalcedonians from the Alexandrian ecclesial scene. Anastasius of Sinai—who was himself an opponent of those Alexandrian Chalcedonians that rejected the Sixth Ecumenical Council, and thus belonged to an even further minority—has left us no indication in his extant texts that he returned to Alexandria after his debates there in the period 681-685 (although it is of course possible that he did), and beyond him we have no surviving Chalcedonian literature from Egypt in the first half of the eighth century, save perhaps one anonymous dialogue known to scholarship as the Bonwetsch Dialogue. This text was attached to the more famous anti-Jewish dialogue entitled the *Trophies of Damascus*, and depicts a Chalcedonian polemicist disguising himself as a Miaphysite monk in order to expose a famous Severan stylite as an incompetent theologian of Christ's natures.²⁸⁴ Beyond its ecclesiastics, according to the *HP* and the *Life of Isaac*, Alexandria's civil administrators had become partisans of the Theodosian cause, and as we shall see shortly, there is reason to believe that their control over its churches had slipped, too.

Between the career of Anastasius of Sinai (*fl.* 680-701) and the restoration of the Chalcedonian patriarchate under Cosmas at the end of Umayyad rule (ca. 740), we hear of only two Chalcedonian figures, both of whom are rather suspect. The *HP* relates how, in the aftermath of Leontius's revolt against Justinian II (695), 'Abd al-'Azīz called 'the magistrates of every province' to Hulwan, the new city south of Babylon-Fuṣṭāṭ which he made his residence, together with 'the people of Alexandria and the bishops and the Muslims, that he might make known to them the disaster of the Romans.' Evidently, the emir's attendants explained that the instability at

²⁸⁴ The so-called Bonwetsch Dialogue and its relation to Anastasius of Sinai's milieu is dealt with in chapter four.

the Byzantine court was due to their theological errors and disagreements, with ‘Abd al-‘Azīz rebuking ‘their want of agreement in the doctrines of religion.’²⁸⁵ As a result, we are told that he summoned a bishop from the primary confessional factions—the patriarch Simon I, ‘Theophylact (leader of the Melkites),’ ‘Theodore (chief of the Gaianites),’ and ‘George, the Barsanuphian’—and asked each of them, ‘Of these three bishops, which is nearest to thee, and whom does thy soul receive?’²⁸⁶ Successively, Theophylact, Theodore, and George each claimed that they were closest in doctrine to the Theodosians, whereas Simon rejected each of them, and proclaimed that he excommunicated them ‘by writing and by word of mouth’ and condemned anyone who associated with them.²⁸⁷

Our second figure bears the suspicious name of Onopes (‘Ass’s face’) and appears in a very short vignette found within the *HP*’s biography of Alexander II (sed. 705-730). According to it, this Onopes together with a fellow conspirator is said to have bribed the caliph al-Walid b. ‘Abd al-Malik (r. 705-715) with one thousand dinars to make him patriarch of Alexandria. Having succeeded, he returned to Alexandria and briefly ‘opposed the right faith and derided Abba Alexander, especially when he was enduring trials at that time.’²⁸⁸ Onopes was, however, rejected by the populace, and as quickly as his patriarchate began, it ended with him begging Alexander II for forgiveness and reception into the Theodosian church, which the latter did magnanimously. Although the historicity of this episode is doubtful it nevertheless points to the perception that the Chalcedonians were no longer dominant on the confessional scene of Alexandria, and further confirms the view that after Peter, the successor to Cyrus of Alexandria, the Chalcedonian patriarchate had been vacant.

²⁸⁵ Evetts, PO 5 35.

²⁸⁶ Ibid.

²⁸⁷ Evetts, PO 5 36.

²⁸⁸ Evetts, PO 5 66.

Both the bishop Theophylact and this Onopes seem dubious: they are otherwise unattested, and exist in the narrative of the *HP* only as a foil to the holiness and authority of the Theodosian patriarch. Theophylact assimilates himself to a Theodosian and proclaims his love for Simon I, while Onopes assumes the position of a supplicant to the patriarch and converts to Theodosianism after his botched attempt at usurping him. It is of course possible that some Chalcedonian bishops had survived into the late seventh century – they are mentioned in other texts that emanate from the circle of the Theodosian patriarch at this time, such as the Coptic *Controversy of John*, which depicts a debate at the court of ‘Abd al-‘Azīz between the Theodosian patriarch John, a Jew, and a Chalcedonian. Although the account is fictional, its setting and cast of characters must at least have been viewed as realistic. But the evidence otherwise suggests that these cases were more exception than rule.

Indeed, the more serious case of Cosmas of Alexandria, whose consecration is described in both pro- and anti-Chalcedonian sources as a restoration of the Chalcedonian patriarchate in Alexandria after a long period of absence, signals how far the Chalcedonian church in Egypt had declined during the years of Marwānid rule. As noted above, Theophanes Confessor states that in 741/2, Cosmas ‘together with his flock reverted to orthodoxy from the monothelete heresy which had prevailed from the time of Cyrus, bishop of Alexandria under Heraclius.’²⁸⁹ This is not

²⁸⁹ Theophanes, *Chronicle* AM 6234 [Mango and Scott 577, translation slightly altered]. It seems indisputable that the Chalcedonian patriarchate had been restored under a certain Cosmas in the second quarter of the eighth century. See Eutychius, *Annals* [Pirone 370]: ‘In the seventh year of the caliph Hisham was appointed Cosmas patriarch of Alexandria, who sat for twenty-eight years’; Michael the Great, *Chronicle* 11.21: ‘In that year [= 727] died Alexander, patriarch of Alexandria, who was succeeded by Cosmas, who lived a short period and then departed this life’. The dates are irreconcilable, and Michael presents him ambiguously as a successor to a Theodosian who died shortly after his enthronement. However, his appearance in a unique notice in Theophanes’s *Chronicle* dating to 762/3 gives slight preference to Eutychius’s account of his twenty-eight year reign: ‘A certain Cosmas surnamed Komanites, bishop of Hama (Epiphaneia), in the region of Apamea in Syria, on being accused by the citizens of Hama before Theodore, patriarch of Antioch, concerning the alienation of sacred objects, and being unable to make them good, renounced the orthodox faith and gave his adherence to Constantine’s heresy against the holy icons. By common consent, Theodore, patriarch of Antioch, Theodore of Jerusalem and Cosmas of Alexandria, together with their suffragan bishops, unanimously anathematised him on the day of holy Pentecost after the reading of the holy Gospel, each in his own city.’ Theophanes, *Chronicle* AM 6255 [Mango and Scott 600]. I also note that for Michael, the supposed introduction

confirmed anywhere else, but it does concur with the evidence from Syria that many Near Eastern Chalcedonians had remained monothelete well into the eighth century. Of more interest are the remarks of the Chalcedonian patriarch Eutychius of Alexandria and the *HP*'s unusually vivid and detailed biography of the Theodosian Michael I (sed. 743-767), whose compiler claims to have been an eyewitness to the events surrounding Cosmas. Eutychius states that 'The Melkite Christians in Alexandria were praying in the church of St. Saba because the Jacobites had seized all the other churches in the city.'²⁹⁰ This situation, we are told, prompted Cosmas, 'who was uneducated and could neither read nor write,' to petition the caliph Hishām b. 'Abd al-Malik (r. 724-743) at Damascus for the return of some of their churches. The caliph then wrote to the governor of Egypt ordering the return of churches 'that were in the hands of the Jacobites... to the patriarch Cosmas, together with all that had belonged to them. Cosmas then took the churches from the Jacobites, including the church of the *Kaisarion* (al-Qaysāriyyah).'²⁹¹ As also mentioned above, Eutychius explained that this situation occurred because the Chalcedonian patriarchate had been vacant for ninety-seven years since the conquest of Egypt, which enabled the Theodosians to 'take possession of all the churches of Egypt and Alexandria.'²⁹² He further claims that they took control over the episcopate, too:

In addition, as the inhabitants of Nubia needed bishops, the patriarch of the Jacobites began to ordain bishops for them, and the Nubians became Jacobites also after then, and every time the bishop died in any city in Egypt, the patriarch of the Jacobites appointed another, so that all of Egypt, from the Upper to the Lower, became Jacobite.²⁹³

of dyotheletism to the Chalcedonians of Syria and the accession of Cosmas as patriarch of Alexandria are both said to have occurred in the year 727.

²⁹⁰ Eutychius, *Annals* [Pirone 370].

²⁹¹ *Ibid.*

²⁹² *Ibid.*

²⁹³ *Ibid.*

Although we cannot be sure, Eutychius here offers us a plausible account of how the Chalcedonians might have lost control of the Egyptian episcopate after the death of Peter theorized above, i.e., through attrition and entropy. Upon the death of an incumbent, the Theodosian patriarch appointed a bishop of his own, something the Chalcedonians were canonically unable to do without a patriarch. Although we cannot be certain if these appointees were able to take up this seat right away—it is impossible to know if the situation which prevailed in the Alexandrian churches also occurred in the *chora*, although for the period before 685 it is not improbable—it is reasonable to suppose that the advent of Marwānid rule accelerated this process.

The *HP*'s biography of Michael I depicts a very similar situation. Here, it is claimed that Chalcedonians had petitioned the caliph to allow them to consecrate Cosmas as their patriarch, 'a man who made needles in the market-place.'²⁹⁴ As in Eutychius's account, Cosmas is presented as a simpleton who came to be at the center of Chalcedonian efforts to regain control over churches and their patrimonies in Alexandria. At one point, when the Theodosians were evidently petitioning the caliph Marwān II (r. 744-750) for funds to repair their own churches, 'the friends of Theophylact the Chalcedonian, who was also called Cosmas,' said to him,

'Verily there are many churches of ours in Egypt, of which the Theodosians, that is to say the Copts, took possession, when the government of the Romans was overthrown; and now we have no church there. We beg the prince to write for us to Egypt, and send by us letters commanding that the church of Saint Menas at Mareotis be handed over to us, so that we may communicate there.' For that church was famous for many miracles, and had been endowed with property in many places. So Theophylact [= Cosmas] took to Abd al-Malik, son of Musa, son of Nasir, letters which directed him to settle the dispute between the Jacobites and the Chalcedonians, and ordered that the truth concerning the founders of that church should be ascertained, and that it should be handed over to them.²⁹⁵

²⁹⁴ Evetts, PO 5 105.

²⁹⁵ Evetts, PO 5 120.

Upon reading these letters, the emir ordered Cosmas and Michael I to his palace at Babylon-Fuṣṭāṭ, together with some of their suffragans, to argue on behalf of the merits for each confession. The Chalcedonians, we are told, bribed the undersecretary for the *dīwan*, so that when Michael I presented various documents to prove the Theodosian claim on the shrine (presented as long and detailed in contrast to that of the Chalcedonians), they were rebuffed. In the midst of this stalemate, a new, and evidently more virtuous head of the *dīwān* was appointed, to whom Michael I re-presented his documents with greater success. This administrator offered the Chalcedonians one last chance to produce documents proving their claim to the shrine of Abu Mena. According to the *HP*, foreseeing their defeat, Cosmas and one of his bishops, Constantine, made a deal with representatives of Michael I (including the author of his biography) to reunite the Chalcedonians to the Theodosian church under a Miaphysite confession of a single nature in Christ. The rest of the narrative details Cosmas's concern with his place within the Theodosian hierarchy and the slow acceptance of him and Constantine by the other Theodosian bishops, with the church of Abu Mena ultimately remaining in Theodosian hands.

The case of Cosmas is a curious one, beset with difficulties of various kinds. In addition to the chronological issues, Cosmas is presented as a defender of Chalcedonian interests with no indications of unorthodoxy by Eutychius (even managing to resecure the former Chalcedonian cathedral church), whereas the *HP* narrates his failure to steward Chalcedonian interests, resulting in the loss of the church of Abu Mena to the Theodosians, and indeed his capitulation to the Theodosian creed. Cosmas is also presented as having suffragan bishops by the *HP*, although it is unclear where they came from, and only one is named. No Chalcedonian bishops are mentioned in the biographies stretching from Benjamin to Michael I (save the shadowy Theophylact and the pseudo-patriarch Onopes) until they suddenly appear in the latter's *vita*, and while we would not

expect to find a Theodosian narrative acknowledging the existence of rival bishops, the later Chalcedonian patriarch Eutychius also indicates that the Chalcedonians had utterly faded from the episcopate in the years between the conquests and the accession of Cosmas.

In spite of these difficulties—which need not detain us here—a general picture of Chalcedonian decline can nevertheless be excavated from these sources. First, in each account, no Chalcedonian patriarch sits upon the throne of Alexandria until Cosmas, whom the Egyptian sources (together with Theophanes) place in the years prior to the ‘Abbasid Revolution of 750. Second, the Chalcedonians of Alexandria are marked by their desperation to regain control over churches that had been lost to the Theodosians over the course of Marwānid rule, and in particular, over churches with large patrimonies from which they could draw revenues to sustain their confession. And finally, concomitant with the patriarchal vacancy and the loss of control over Alexandrian churches, the Chalcedonian episcopate appears to have declined precipitously under Marwānid rule.

Conclusion

I return to the tale narrated by Anastasius of Sinai at the beginning of chapter one. There, he described ‘a city of the Thebaid’ with a wicked bishop, a former leader of the circus factions, whose appointment God allowed as a punishment for the wickedness of the city itself. Above, we noted how unusual the mention of a bishop was for his corpus. Let us return, then, to Anastasius’s conclusion. He remarks (with another subtle hint of his Egyptian locale):

Wherefore, beloved, whenever you see that some unworthy and wicked person is either emperor or ruler or archpriest, do not marvel, but know and believe precisely that it is because of our crimes that we are handed over to such tyrants. Yet not even then do we abstain from evil, but even as we are in the midst of oppressions, we continue to practice wicked deeds. Trust

me when I tell you that if the race of the Saracens departed from us today, immediately tomorrow the Blues and Greens would arise and kill each other; the same would happen in the East [*sc.* Syria-Mesopotamia], Arabia, Palestine, and many other lands.²⁹⁶

Although Anastasius here deploys a familiar theological *topos* (the ‘sins of the Chosen People’), having now sketched out the fate of the Chalcedonian church in Egypt in the late seventh and early eighth centuries, it is tempting to read this tale in the twin lights of the monothelete defection from Constantinople in 681 and the Theodosian restoration and takeover of the episcopate that commenced from 685, in which ‘wicked bishops’ in prominent cities had doubtless become a feature of life for dyothelete Chalcedonians like him. In fact, Anastasius’s example of the Theban city is striking, because he had himself visited the capital of the Thebaid, Antinoë, at some point in order to debate with a Jewish sophist named Kollouthos, as he tells us in his *Hodegos*.²⁹⁷ He must, then, have been familiar with the Chalcedonian scene in Upper Egypt – or at least, what existed of it by the late seventh century.

Indeed, elsewhere Anastasius appears to have distanced himself from great churches, the likes of which were probably in either monenergist-monothelete or Theodosian hands by the end of his career in the early eighth century. When asked, ‘Where is it most useful to offer money: to a church, or to the poor and needy?’ he advised against the former in favor of the latter.²⁹⁸ ‘Sometimes’, he admits, it might be appropriate ‘to give money to impoverished churches,’ but only to those ones: ‘for whoever gives to wealthy churches does not know what afterwards

²⁹⁶ Anastasius of Sinai, *Questions and Answers* 65.34-43: Διὸ ἀγαπητέ, ἡνίκα ἴδης ἀνάξιόν τινα καὶ πονηρὸν ἢ βασιλεῖα ἢ ἄρχοντα ἢ ἀρχιερέα, μὴ θαυμάσης, ἀλλὰ μάθε καὶ πιστεῦε ἀκριβῶς, ὅτι διὰ τὰς ἀνομίας ἡμῶν εἰς τοιοῦτους τυράννους παρεδόθημεν, καὶ οὐδὲ οὕτως τῶν κακῶν ἀπέστημεν, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐν μέσῳ τῶν θλίψεων ὑπάρχοντες τὰ πονηρὰ ἔργα διαπραττόμεθα. Καὶ πιστεύσατέ μοι λέγοντι, ὅτι σήμερον ἐὰν ἀπέλθῃ ἐξ ἡμῶν τὸ ἔθνος τῶν Σαρακηνῶν, εὐθέως αὐρίον ἀνεγείρονται τὸ πρασινοβένετον, καὶ ἑαυτοὺς κατασφάζουσιν, ἢ Ἀνατολὴ καὶ ἢ Ἀραβία καὶ Παλαιστίνη, καὶ ἄλλαι πολλὰι χῶραι.

²⁹⁷ *Id.*, *Hodegos* XIV.1.37-8.

²⁹⁸ Anastasius, *Questions and Answers* 58.1-2: Ποῦ συμφέρει προσφέρειν τὰ χρήματα, ἐν ἐκκλησίᾳ ἢ εἰς πτωχοὺς καὶ δεομένους;

becomes of whatever is stored up there. For many churches that gathered [funds] insatiably and failed to administer them well were later plundered by the barbarians.’²⁹⁹

Yet, it is precisely at this moment of ecclesial crisis and decline that Anastasius of Sinai appears to have reached his *floruit*. As we shall see, his major writings date to the period ca. 685-701, including his *magnum opus*, the *Hodegos* (686-692), and the *Edifying Tales for the Soul* (mid-690s). This can be no coincidence. Anastasius’s literary career coincided exactly with the explosion of Coptic literature made possible by ‘Abd al-‘Azīz’s rise, and should, in fact, be viewed as part and parcel of that same explosion. For it was against the new circle of bishops *higoumens* connected to John III, his successors, and the court of the emir at Babylon-Fustāṭ that the Sinaite disputed at greatest length. It is to this polemical career that we now turn.

²⁹⁹ Ibid., 58.7-11: Πλὴν ἔστι τόπος καὶ τόπος, ὅτε ὀφείλομεν καὶ εἰς πτωχὰς προσφέρειν ἐκκλησίας· ὁ γὰρ εἰς εὐπόρους ἐκκλησίας διδὼν οὐκ οἶδε τί μετὰ ταῦτα γίνονται τὰ συναγόμενα ἐκεῖ. Πολλοὶ γὰρ ἐκκλησίαι ἀπλήστως συνάξασαι, καὶ μὴ καλῶς αὐτὰ διοικήσασαι, ὕστερον ὑπὸ βαρβάρων ἐπραιδεύθησαν.

Chapter Three: Rereading the *Hodegos*

Introduction

The modern editor of Anastasius of Sinai's surviving works, Karl-Heinz Uthemann, once observed that 'the best way into the theological thinking of Anastasius of Sinai (as moderns put it) is through the *Hodegos*.'³⁰⁰ To this we could add that it is also the best way into understanding the world that he inhabited, in both geographical and chronological terms. The *Hodegos* is Anastasius's *magnum opus*. Its aim is to provide the reader with a vast polemical handbook for use against various Egyptian Miaphysites (Theodosians and Gaianites, as well as lesser sects like Acephali, Tritheists, and Barsanouphians) in religious disputations, grounded in the tradition of Neochalcedonianism, i.e., the official doctrinal approach of the eastern Roman imperial church from the age of Justinian I (r. 527-565) onwards, which sought to demonstrate the compatibility of Cyril of Alexandria's single-nature christology (the position taken up by Miaphysites) with the two-natures christology of the Chalcedonian Definition.³⁰¹ It also contains some of the clearest allusions to the realia of his world, including not only his primary places of association, but also the identities of the confessional foes who drove him to write down his theological polemic in the first place. The obvious questions to ask, then, are: When was the *Hodegos* composed, and who/what prompted its composition?

They are, however, deceptively difficult to answer, because the text as it is now accessible to us is not an organic whole: it is rather a confusing compilation of several pre-existing,

³⁰⁰ Uthemann, *Anastasios Sinaites*, 17.

³⁰¹ The most authoritative works on Neochalcedonianism remain those of Grillmeier and Hainthaler: A. Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition: Reception and Contradiction: The Development of the Discussion about Chalcedon from 451 to the Beginning of the reign of Justinian*, vol. 2/1 (Atlanta, 1987); A. Grillmeier and T. Hainthaler, *Christ in Christian Tradition: The Church of Constantinople in the Sixth Century*, vol. 2/2 (Atlanta, 1995). See also R. Price (ed.), *The Acts of the Council of Constantinople of 553* (Liverpool, 2009), 59-75; B. Daley (ed.), *Leontius of Byzantium: Complete Works* (Oxford, 2014), 1-78. For Anastasius's theological thinking, Uthemann, *Anastasios Sinaites*, 1-332 is unsurpassed.

independent texts written by Anastasius which he then, evidently very quickly, redacted into a single work towards the end of his life (Uthemann calls it a ‘Gesamtwerk’).³⁰² This has led certain readers to disparage it: Alexander Kazhdan, for example, described its chapters as ‘arranged in a somewhat haphazard sequence... with many repetitions.’³⁰³ Although scholarship has generally come to agree that it reached its final form at some point in the late 680s and 690s, there is very little agreement on when its constituent parts were composed, or if it is even possible to date them in the first place. Its most authoritative commentator, Uthemann, has suggested that its individual textual units (except for those with explicit chronological markers) could have been composed at any point spanning the conquest of Egypt in 642 to Anastasius’s death after 701. Moreover, much less attention has been paid to the equally important question of *why* Anastasius began to write down theological polemic at all.

Following my reconstruction of the broader ecclesiastical situation in Egypt in the last chapter, I aim to show here that the same forces which led to the crumbling of the Chalcedonian church in Egypt in the 680s also catalyzed the literary career of Anastasius of Sinai. Based upon a careful reading of the internal textual clues and following upon recent work on the prosopography of Anastasius’s polemical opponents, I suggest that it was *composed*, rather than merely redacted, at the earliest in 686. If my reconstruction of the processes that led to its current, edited form is correct, then I will have shown that Anastasius’s *Hodegos*—and in all probability the majority of his surviving writings—was written in response to the restoration of the Theodosian church under Marwānid patronage. Anastasius was not therefore an itinerant Chalcedonian who variously polemicized against Miaphysites throughout the Near East for over half a century after the Arab-Muslim conquests. He was rather the prime ideological foe of the circle of Theodosian bishops,

³⁰² Uthemann, *Viae Dux*, ccvi-ccxviii and *Anastasios Sinaites*, 23; see p. 8 *infra*.

³⁰³ A. Kazhdan, *A History of Byzantine Literature (650-850)* (Athens, 1999), 78.

higoumens, and administrators that aggregated around the emir ‘Abd al-‘Azīz, combatting their renewed vitality at a time when his own church faced the specter of decline.

The Date of the *Hodegos*

In 1958 the French manuscript specialist Marcel Richard suggested (using the edition published by Jakob Gretser, SJ in 1606) that the *Hodegos* was the product of two redactions: one dating to after 641, in which Anastasius had compiled various anti-monothelete and anti-miaphysite writings he had composed during the period 635-640, and one dating to after the Sixth Ecumenical Council of 680-1, when he added further works and *scholia* to the text.³⁰⁴ Richard based the dating of his first redaction on a disputation in Alexandria that Anastasius participated in under the auspices of an Augustalis, supplemented by references to the circus factions in his *Questions and Answers*, and to what Richard calls a ‘general atmosphere’ of monotheletism.³⁰⁵ Both the title ‘Augustalis’ and the presence of Blues and Greens required, to Richard, the context of Roman rule rather than Arab-Muslim. He fixed the second redaction on the basis of the mention, in a scholion, of the ‘followers of Harmasius,’ against whom Anastasius directs his reader to engage in debate by utilizing his own interpretation of Ps.-Dionysius the Areopagite’s notion of the theandric operation.³⁰⁶ As noted in the previous chapter, this heretical group is only known through one other source: an interpolated version of Sophronius of Jerusalem’s *Synodical Letter* preserved in the *Doctrina Patrum*, which added to Sophronius’s letter a list of condemnations of those anathematized at the Sixth Ecumenical Council, together with ‘Harmasius, who up to the present

³⁰⁴ Richard, ‘Anastase le Sinaïte,’ 29-42; Gretser’s edition was reprinted in *PG* 89, ed. J.-P. Migne (Paris, 1865), 35A-310C.

³⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 39.

³⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 30-33; Anastasius, *Hodegos*, XIII.6.20, 9.91.

has been combatting the truth in Alexandria, and the heretics and enemies of orthodoxy with him who are adorned with Saracen insolence.³⁰⁷

In 1981, Karl-Heinz Uthemann developed Richard's position, though without endorsing his theory of two redactions separated by fifty years.³⁰⁸ Instead, he suggested that the various independent textual units of the *Hodegos* may have been composed at any point between the end of 641 (the date he took to be the end of Cyrus of Alexandria's patriarchate) and 686-689, his *terminus post quem* for the compilation of the *Hodegos*, at which point they were likely redacted into a single whole.³⁰⁹ Uthemann arrived at the latter date on the basis of a *scholion* found within book XV. The heading to that book refers to the 'sixth festal letter... of the current bishop of the Theodosians in Alexandria.' Uthemann took the 'sixth festal letter' to be that of Agathon (r. 665-681), and therefore dated the original composition of book XV to 671, since the heading requires that the anonymous patriarch there be alive at the time of its composition.³¹⁰ The *scholion* added to it reads thus:

Five years ago, John the bishop of the Theodosians, in his two festal letters set out the following pronouncement: 'Everything which is affirmed in Christ is also affirmed of the Father and the Holy Spirit.' And after we had attacked the first letter, he set forth the same things again in the subsequent year.³¹¹

This reference is crucial for dating the *Hodegos*, for the only candidate that this could refer to in the seventh century is John III, the Theodosian patriarch of Alexandria from 681-689. Uthemann

³⁰⁷ F. Diekamp, *Doctrina Patrum de Incarnatione Verbi* (Münster, 1907), 271: και ὁ κατὰ τὴν Ἀλεξανδρείαν μέχρι νῦν τῆ ἀληθείᾳ μαχόμενος Ἀρμάσιος τὸ ἀκάθαρμα οἱ τε σὺν αὐτῷ αἰρετικοὶ καὶ τῆς ὀρθοδοξίας πολέμοι σαρακηνικῶ φρυάγματι σεμνυνόμενοι.

³⁰⁸ Uthemann, *Viae Dux*, ccxi-ccxviii.

³⁰⁹ On the chronological difficulties of reconstructing Cyrus of Alexandria's later career, see now P. Booth, 'The Last Days of Cyrus, Patriarch of Alexandria († 642)' *TM* 20 (Paris, 2016): 509-558.

³¹⁰ Richard took it to be written by Agathon's predecessor, Benjamin (r. 627-665), see M. Richard, 'Anastase le Sinaïte, l'*Hodegos*, et l'Monothélisme,' *RÉB* (1958): 35.

³¹¹ Anastasius, *Hodegos*, XV.16-20.

insisted, in the first place, that the John of the scholion and the bishop of the chapter heading must be different people, and, as with the chapter heading, that John must be alive at the time of the writing of this *scholion*. He thus reasoned that the earliest date at which one of John III's festal letters could be said to have been composed 'five years ago' was 686, and the latest, 689.³¹² To Uthemann, however, this *scholion* could only bear witness to the *Hodegos*'s *terminus post quem*, not its *terminus ante quem*, for he insists that the composite nature of the text means we cannot know when a *scholion* was added to a given part of it.³¹³ Conceivably, he argues, any given *scholion* may have already been attached to a text before that text was redacted into the *Hodegos*, and he leaves the date of its final form an open question until Anastasius's death around 701 (on which see below).³¹⁴ Although in his 2015 monograph, Uthemann acknowledged that the earliest firm date for Anastasius's biography was ca. 660, he did not modify the original dating scheme found in his critical edition.³¹⁵ Thus, on his reading, the entire process by which the *Hodegos* came about must have looked like this:

1. Production of individual texts (at any point between 641 and 686-689)
2. *Scholia* added to individual texts at a later date, then leaving these texts alone (at any point after a text is written and up to 686-689)
3. Multiple independent texts with original scholia combined and redacted into the *Hodegos* (at the earliest in 686-689, at the latest in 701)
4. New *scholia* potentially added even after redaction (at the latest in 701)

³¹² Uthemann, *Viae Dux*, ccxvii; *ibid.*, *Anastasios Sinaïtes*, 34, 151-154.

³¹³ Uthemann, *Anastasios Sinaïtes*, 23.

³¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 24.

³¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 11. In the *Edifying Tales for the Soul* 7, Anastasius relates an autobiographical tale, remarking, 'Thirty years ago, I was dwelling in the Holy City on the Mount of Olives while the Capitolium [i.e. the Temple Mount] was being excavated by a multitude of Egyptians,' and at its conclusion says, 'I consider it necessary to mention these things on account of those who think and say that the Temple of God is being built now in Jerusalem.' Scholarship on the *Tales* generally interprets the 'Temple of God' as the Dome of the Rock (completed ca. 692), thus placing Anastasius in Jerusalem ca. 660.

Uthemann thus opted for a single redaction of the *Hodegos* at the earliest in 686-689, but allows that Anastasius may have added scholia after this redaction.

A third hypothesis regarding the *Hodegos*'s structure was presented within a 2001 thesis on Anastasius's *Edifying Tales* by André Binggeli.³¹⁶ Binggeli modified both Richard and Uthemann's positions by arguing for two redactions of the *Hodegos*, like Richard, and by positing a redaction of the *Hodegos* after 686-689, like Uthemann, but interpreting the scholion of book XV in a completely different light to them both. While Richard and Uthemann insisted that John III must have been alive at the time of the scholion's composition, and that he must be distinguished from the 'current bishop of the Theodosians in Alexandria' in the chapter heading, Binggeli instead saw the scholion as a commentary expanding upon the chapter heading, contending that the two referred to the same person. On his reading, when Anastasius had originally composed book XV of the *Hodegos* and sent it to its recipient (Binggeli views it as a self-standing 'opusculum'), there was evidently no need to specify who the current Theodosian patriarch of Alexandria was, for his response would have been composed immediately after his sixth festal letter had been published. But when book XV was later compiled together with other texts and redacted into the *Hodegos*, and thus intended for a wider audience, it became necessary to explain the circumstances surrounding the allusion in the chapter heading, for at this point John III was dead and a new patriarch, Isaac (r. 689-692), had ascended the Alexandrian throne. Hence the addition of the scholion, which clarifies who exactly the 'present bishop of the Theodosians' was when book XV was originally composed.³¹⁷ Binggeli's reassessment therefore results in a more precise dating of the *Hodegos*'s redaction, for John III was consecrated patriarch in January

³¹⁶ Binggeli, *Anastase le Sinaïte*, 341-344.

³¹⁷ This, additionally, constitutes a stronger argument for the originality of the chapter headings as currently present in the *Hodegos*.

681, meaning that his sixth festal letter would have been published in the spring of 686. Thus, the scholion of book XV, referring to ‘five years ago,’ must have been added ca. 691-692 (since the scholion mentions the festal letter of the following year, too). Unfortunately, Binggeli’s reflections on the constitution of the *Hodegos* were limited only to the question of the final redaction of the text, and not to the question of the composition of the *Hodegos* as a whole. Thus, Uthemann’s view—that the constituent parts *Hodegos* had been written anytime between the 640s and the 680s, and potentially even beyond—has prevailed in scholarship.

Binggeli’s interpretation of the scholion of book XV, which I accept here, demonstrates that different configurations of the text’s composition and chronology will result in vastly different understandings of Anastasius’s career. According to Uthemann’s reading, book XV of the *Hodegos* must have been composed in the early 670s, whereas in Binggeli’s, it must have been composed at the earliest in 686 – two dramatically different settings in the ecclesial history of Egypt, separated by the Sixth Ecumenical Council of 680-1 and the rise of the Marwānid dynasty in the Umayyad caliphate in 685, which, as we have already seen in the last chapter, had disastrous consequences for the Chalcedonians in Alexandria. It is therefore critical to distinguish, where possible, between when a text was originally composed and when the whole was redacted into the form we possess today, for allusions to contemporaries in the main body of the text rather than, say, in the scholia (depending upon how one understands the process of adding scholia to the text), can greatly alter the dating of those parts, and consequently transform our understanding of how Anastasius’s career unfolded.

Up to this point, the discussion in scholarship has largely revolved around the scholion of book XV and establishing a *terminus post quem* for the final redaction of the *Hodegos*. Although certain problems surrounding the *Hodegos*’s compilation remain intractable, much can still be said

about it. We can only proceed, however, by trying to disentangle three major problems that confront us: the composite nature of the text and its redaction(s); the division of the text into ‘chapters’ according to its table of contents; and the relationship of the scholia to the main text. Combining these factors with the prosopographical clues found in the text will enable us, I suggest, to better comprehend the contours of the *Hodegos*, and to show, *pace* Uthemann, that much of it, if not all, was composed specifically in reaction to the ascendancy of the Theodosian church under Athanasius bar Gumoyē and ‘Abd al-‘Azīz.

The Overall Structure of the *Hodegos*

The best way into understanding these problems is by beginning at the end, for Anastasius explains his process of compiling the *Hodegos* in its concluding lines. It is worth quoting in full:

We exhort those who chance upon this book in future to forgive us for the very many corrections or repetitions in it. For the ceaseless nature of our deficiencies prevented us from making it to our liking. For it should have been necessary for the teachings of Christ [in it] to be sketched out beforehand and corrected and composed in lines, then in this form to be written out beautifully. But the carelessness and idleness of our co-confessionals has not procured the proper love of labor and zeal in these matters. For this reason, we set it out in this format by seizing the quire instead of a codex. And if, as is likely, we have spoken unfittingly in word or thought, we ask forgiveness. For God alone is infallible. In addition to all these things, we entreat the future copyist to set out also the *scholia*, and to note carefully the accents and periods and commas and mistakes. For, one time, some idiots copied our dogmatic tome and, out of ignorance, filled it with blasphemies.³¹⁸

³¹⁸ Anastasius, *Hodegos* XXIV.1.123-140: Παρακαλοῦμεν τοὺς μέλλοντας ἐντυγχάνειν τῇ βίβλῳ συγγνώμην ποιήσασθαι ἐπὶ ταῖς πλείσταις ἐν αὐτῇ διορθώσεσιν ἢ ταυτολογίαις· τὸ γὰρ ἀδιάλειπτον τῶν ἀσθενειῶν οὐ συνεχώρησεν ἡμῖν ἐν αὐτῇ καταθυμίῳσιν πράξει. Ἔδει γὰρ τὰ τοιαῦτα Χριστοῦ δόγματα προσχιδεῦσθαι καὶ διορθοῦσθαι καὶ στιχίζεσθαι καὶ εἶθ’ οὕτως καλλιγραφεῖσθαι· ἀλλὰ τὸ ράθυμον καὶ ὀκνηρὸν τῶν ἡμετέρων συμφρόνων οὐ τὴν πρέπουσαν φιλοπονίαν καὶ σπουδὴν ἐν τοῖς τοιοῦτοις κέκτηται. Διὸ ἀντι σχεδους τὴν τετράδα κατέχοντες οὕτως ἐξεθέμεθα. Εἰ δὲ καὶ ὡς εἰκὸς τινὶ λόγῳ ἢ νοήματι οὐ πρεπόντως εἰρήκαμεν, συγγνώμην αἰτούμεθα· μόνος γὰρ ἄπταιστος ὁ θεός. Πρὸς τούτοις πᾶσι δυσωποῦμεν τὸν μεταγράφειν μέλλοντα παραθέσθαι καὶ τὰ σχόλια, σημειώσασθαι δὲ ἐπιμελῶς καὶ τοὺς τόνους καὶ τὰς στιγμάς καὶ ὑποστιγμάς καὶ τὰ σόλοικα· καὶ γὰρ ἄλλοτε τινες ἰδιῶται μεταγράψαντες ἡμῶν δογματικὸν τόμον ἐξ ἀγνοίας βλασφημιῶν αὐτὸν ἐπλήρωσαν. Curiously, Uthemann

Anastasius refers to the *Hodegos* as a book (ἡ βίβλος), indicates the rushed nature of its compilation, and exhorts the reader to take account of the scholia attached to it. As Uthemann has rightly argued, this conclusion makes it clear that Anastasius did not compose the entire text from scratch and in one go. Instead, due to external pressures of some sort – whether an illness (τὸ ἀδιάλεπτον τῶν ἀσθενειῶν) or a desire for haste from his co-confessionals (τὸ ῥάθυμον καὶ ὀκνηρὸν τῶν ἡμετέρων συμφρόνων) – he ‘seized the quire,’ i.e., he compiled previous of his writings together. The term ‘quire’ (ἡ τετράς) evidently denotes the original format on which the pre-existing texts within the *Hodegos* had been composed, i.e., they were arranged on four leaves (of parchment or papyrus) which, when folded, would make bundles of eight each. We do not know how many quires the *Hodegos* originally totaled. Although Anastasius refers, at three points, either backwards or forwards to material on different quires, these references do not help us calculate the total number.

The same references are, however, noteworthy because they reveal Anastasius’s original organizational scheme for the *Hodegos*, which evidently was not by chapter, but by quire number:

1. I.1.61-63: ‘...just as Ammonius did against Julian of Halicarnassus, an objection which you will find recorded in the twenty-first quire.’
2. XVII.1.54-55: ‘The rest lies in the final quire.’
3. XXI.1.5-6: ‘As in our second disputation against them (it lies above in the thirteenth quire), we shall speak briefly.’

Indeed, on this basis, Uthemann rightly suggested that the table of contents using chapter numbers (α’, β’, γ’ etc.) found at the beginning of the *Hodegos* was not original to the text but was added

throughout his monograph refers to this paragraph as a scholion, but there is no indication in the text that it was. On ‘Our Pronouncement,’ cf. *Hodegos* I.2.

afterwards, perhaps by a disciple, in order to facilitate easier reading of the text. Yet, somewhat confusingly, Uthemann bases his own (theoretical) configuration of the various parts of the *Hodegos* on that very same table of contents, and even transposed its chapter numbers into the main text.

In my view, it seems more prudent to approach the *Hodegos* on the basis of its own internal headings – which do not correspond exactly to those given in the table of contents, and which I regard as more original – letting their structure and content guide our conclusions regarding the relation of its various parts to one another, even if in certain respects those conclusions must remain provisional. One unresolvable issue is that some of these internal headings do not appear free from later tampering: internal heading 18 glosses ‘the exegete,’ while internal heading 37 seems to be a gloss on the contents of the book, explaining it by using the phrase ‘he says.’ But because we cannot get any further behind, so to speak, the transmission of these internal headings, I have decided not to dwell further on these two cases.

Below, I have set out two tables: Table One contains two columns in which are set the table of contents added to the beginning of the *Hodegos* (left), and the internal headings within the *Hodegos* that I have identified (right), while Table Two contains Uthemann’s configuration of the individual textual units that make up the *Hodegos*:

Table One

Table of Contents ³¹⁹	Internal Headings ³²⁰
1. α' Προθεωρία κατ' ἐπιτομήν, ὧν δεῖ ἐξασκεῖν τὸν περὶ πίστεως θεοῦ λαλεῖν καλῶς βουλόμενον	1. Σὺν θεῷ. Προγυμνασία κατ' ἐπιτομήν ὀμματίζουσα τὸν φιλόπονον, περὶ ὧν δεῖ πρὸ πάντων ἐξασκεῖν καὶ τὴν εἶδησιν ἔχειν·
2. β' Ὅροι δογματικοὶ κατὰ τὴν ἐκκλησιαστικὴν παράδοσιν	2. Ἐκθεσις ἐν ἐπιτομῇ περὶ πίστεως.
	3. Σὺν θεῷ. Προθεωρία τῆς ὑποθέσεως τῶν ὄρων τῆς βίβλου, ἧς ἡ ἐπωνυμία λέγεται Ὁδηγός.
	4. Σὺν θεῷ. Ὅροι διάφοροι κατὰ τὴν παράδοσιν καὶ πίστιν τῆς ἁγίας καθολικῆς ἐκκλησίας λεγόμενοι, συλλεγέντες ἀπὸ τε Κλήμεντος καὶ ἐτέρων ὁσίων πατέρων, οὓς δεῖ πρὸ παντὸς ἐτέρου μαθήματος ἐκστηθίζειν τὸν τῆ βοήθεια τοῦ θεοῦ προῖστασθαι τοῦ λόγου τῆς εὐσεβείας βουλόμενον.
	5. Ἀνατροπὴ καὶ καθαίρεσις τοῦ πολυθρυλήτου προβλήματος πάντων τῶν Μονοφυσιτῶν τοῦ φάσκοντος, ὡς οὐκ ἔστι φύσις ἀνυπόστατος.
[Scholion] ³²¹	[Scholion]
3. γ' Προοίμιον πρὸ τῆς πραγματείας	6. <u>Ἀναστασίου ἐλαχίστου μοναχοῦ πόνημα περὶ πίστεως ὀρθοδόξου ἀνθολογηθὲν ἐκ τῶν ἁγίων γραφῶν καὶ διδασκάλων.</u>
4. δ' Ἐξήγησις κατ' ἐπιτομήν περὶ τῶν αἰρέσεων τῶν ἐξ ἀρχῆς ἕως Νεστορίου καὶ Σεήρου	7. Κεφάλαια, ἅπερ ὀφείλει ἀποβάλλεσθαι καὶ ἀναθεματίζειν πρὸ τῆς διαλέξεως ὁ ὀρθόδοξος, ἠνίκα μέλλει πρὸς Θεοδοσιανούς ἢ Γαϊανίτας συναίρειν περὶ πίστεως λόγον.
5. ε' Περὶ τῶν ἁγίων συνόδων (no equivalent in the internal headings)	8. Ἐν ὀνόματι τοῦ πατρὸς καὶ τοῦ υἱοῦ καὶ τοῦ παναγίου καὶ ζωοποιοῦ πνεύματος. <u>Ἀναστασίου ἐλαχίστου πρεσβυτέρου τοῦ ἁγίου ὄρους Σινᾶ <ἐπιστολῆ>³²² περὶ πίστεως τῆς οἰκονομίας Χριστοῦ τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ πρὸς τὴν ἁγίαν καθολικὴν ἐκκλησίαν τὴν ἐν Βαβυλῶνι γραφεῖσα αἰτησαμένων τουτὶ τῶν ἐν αὐτῇ φιλοχρίστων καὶ ὀρθοδόξων ἡμῶν ἀδελφῶν.</u>
6. ζ' Πόθεν τὴν ρίζαν ἔχει τὸ δόγμα Εὐτυχοῦς καὶ Σεήρου	9. Τὸ πόθεν ἡ μονόφθαλμος Σεήρου πίστις ἐβλάστησεν.

³¹⁹ Anastasius, *Hodegos, conspectus* 1-77.

³²⁰ Compare the table of headings set out by Uthemann, *Viae Dux*, ccxiv-ccxvi. Some of these may be up for debate—in particular, nos. 5 and 30, which are clearly distinct in the text but may have originally belonged to the same textual unit as the one which precedes them.

³²¹ I have only noted this scholion in this outline due to its importance for understanding the composition of the *Hodegos*, cf. n. 28 below.

³²² Uthemann has supplied ἐπιστολή as an implied noun to match the feminine participle γραφεῖσα, but there is no noun in the text.

<p>7. ζ' Απόδειξις, ὅτι ἀπεβάλετο Σευήρος τοὺς ἁγίους πατέρας καὶ ἐνομοθέτησεν ἀκύρους εἶναι τὰς χρήσεις αὐτῶν</p> <p>8. η' Απόδειξις ἐκ παλαιᾶς καὶ καινῆς διαθήκης καὶ ἀπ' αὐτοῦ Μωϋσέως καὶ Σολομῶντος, ὅτι οὐ ταῦτὸν ἡ φύσις καὶ τὸ πρόσωπον</p> <p>9. θ' Ὅμοίως παράστασις ἐκ τῆς ἐν Νικαίᾳ ἁγίας συνόδου, ὅτι οὐ ταῦτὸν <ή> φύσις, ἦγουν ἡ οὐσία, καὶ ἡ ὑπόστασις, ὡς Σευήρος νομίζει</p> <p>10. ι' Διήγησις διαλέξεων τεσσάρων, ὧν ἐδογματίσαμεν ἐν Ἀλεξανδρείᾳ μετὰ τῶν Θεοδοσιανῶν καὶ Γαϊανιτῶν, ἐν αἷς ἠλέγξαμεν αὐτούς, ὅτι, ἐὰν ταῦτὸν ἐστι φύσις καὶ ὑπόστασις, Νεστοριανοὺς ποιοῦσιν ὅλους τοὺς ἁγίους πατέρας, καὶ αὐτὸν τὸν ἅγιον Κύριλλον. Ἐν ᾧ καὶ περὶ τῆς μιᾶς τοῦ θεοῦ λόγου φύσεως τῆς σεσαρκωμένης</p> <p>11. ια' Παρασημείωσις περὶ τῆς φωνῆς τῆς λεγούσης τὰς φύσεις ὑποστάσεις, πόθεν αὕτη;</p> <p>12. ιβ' Περὶ τοῦ σωτηρίου πάθους τοῦ Χριστοῦ, καὶ περὶ τοῦ ἁγίου, ἀθάνατος ὁ σταυρωθεὶς</p> <p>13. ιγ' Συζήτησις περὶ τῶν χρήσεων τῶν πατέρων, ὧν προφέρουσιν ἡμῖν οἱ σευήρου κατὰ τῆς συνόδου Χαλκηδόνας, καὶ ἐπίλυσιν αὐτῶν εὐσεβῆς</p>	<p>10. Απόδειξις, ὅτι ἀπεβάλετο ὁ δυσσεβῆς Σευήρος τοὺς ἁγίους πατέρας.</p> <p>11. Απόδειξις ἐκ παλαιᾶς καὶ καινῆς διαθήκης, ὅτι οὐ ταῦτὸν φύσις καὶ πρόσωπον.</p> <p>12. Περὶ φύσεως καὶ ὑποστάσεως· ἐκ τῆς ἁγίας συνόδου τῆς ἐν Νικαίᾳ.</p> <p>13. Ὁ σκοπός, ὃν ἐδογματίσαμεν πρὸς τοὺς ἑτεροδόξους ἐν Ἀλεξανδρείᾳ.</p> <p>14. Ἐτέρα διάλεξις.</p> <p>15. Ἔτερος πάλιν τρόπος, δι' οὗ συνήραμεν πρὸς τοὺς αὐτοὺς Θεοδοσιανούς κατὰ παρουσίαν τοῦ αὐγουσταλίου ἐπὶ δημοσίᾳ ἀκοῆς καὶ τῆς πόλεως.</p> <p>16. Ἔτερος πάλιν σκοπὸς διαλέξεως, ὃν συνήραμεν πρὸς τοὺς αὐτοὺς ἑτεροδόξους ἐν Ἀλεξανδρείᾳ, λέγω δὴ πρὸς Γεώργιον τὸν πρεσβύτερον καὶ λογογράφον τῆς ἐκκλησίας αὐτῶν τὸν λεγόμενον Κλειδοποιόν.</p> <p>17. Περὶ τῆς φωνῆς τῆς λεγούσης «μίαν τοῦ θεοῦ λόγου φύσιν σεσαρκωμένην», ἣν ἄνω καὶ κάτω προφέρουσιν ἡμῖν οἱ αἰρετικοί.</p> <p>18. Κεφάλαιον, ἐν ᾧ σημαίνει ὁ ἐξηγητὴς, πόθεν ἐρρέθησαν τῷ διδασκάλῳ αἱ φύσεις ὑποστάσεις.</p> <p>19. Περὶ τοῦ σωτηρίου πάθους Χριστοῦ καὶ ὅτι Θεοπασχίται εἰσιν οἱ λέγοντες τὸ Ἅγιος, ἀθάνατος ὁ σταυρωθεὶς καὶ παθών.</p> <p>20. Χρήσεις ἐκ πολλῶν ὀλίγαι, ἃς προφέρουσι Θεοδοσιανοὶ καὶ Γαϊανῖται ἀγωνιζόμενοι παθητὸν σὺν τῇ σαρκὶ δεῖξαι καὶ τὸν ἐν αὐτῇ ἀπαθῆ θεὸν λόγον.</p> <p>21. Ἀνάκρισις ἥτοι συζήτησις καὶ γυμνασία ὀρθοδόξου καὶ ἀκεφάλου περὶ τινῶν χρήσεων, ὧν προφέρουσιν ὡς ἐκ τῶν ἁγίων πατέρων πᾶσαι αἱ αἱρέσεις αἱ ἀθετεῖν βουλόμεναι τὴν ἔνσαρκον οἰκονομίαν τοῦ Χριστοῦ, λέγω δὴ αἱ ἀπὸ Οὐάλεντος, καὶ Μάνεντος, καὶ Μαρκίωνος, καὶ καθεζῆς, ἕως Εὐτυχέως, καὶ Διοσκόρου, καὶ</p>
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<p>14. ιδ' Ἀμμωνίου Ἀλεξανδρέως κατὰ Μονοφυσιτῶν</p> <p>15. ιε' Ἔτερον κεφάλαιον κατὰ τῆς νέας αὐτῶν ἑορταστικῆς</p> <p>Doxology</p> <p>16. ις' Εἰς τὸ ἐν Χριστῷ κατοικεῖ πᾶν τὸ πλήρωμα τῆς θεότητος, ἐρμηνεῖα εὐσεβῆς</p> <p>17. ιζ' Ἀπόδειξις ὅτι οὐ συνεσαρκώθη τῷ υἱῷ ὁ πατήρ, ἢ τὸ ἅγιον πνεῦμα</p> <p>18. ιη' Κατὰ τῶν κακῶς ἐπὶ Χριστοῦ λαμβανόντων τὸ ὑπόδειγμα τοῦ ἀνθρώπου</p> <p>19. ιθ' Κεφάλαιον μιανοῦ Παυλιανιστοῦ</p> <p>20. κ' Κεφάλαια συλλογιστικὰ κατὰ Σευηριανῶν ἀφρόνων</p> <p>21. κα' Ἔτερον κεφάλαιον σύντομον, ἐν ᾧ ἀπόδειξις, ὅτι οὐ δεῖ ἀλληγάλλως μεταλλάττειν τὰ δόγματα</p>	<p>Σεήρου, καὶ Θεοδοσίου, καὶ Γαϊανοῦ, τῶν μίαν λεγόντων φύσιν τῆς σαρκὸς καὶ τῆς θεότητος τοῦ Ἐμμανουήλ.</p> <p>22. Ἀμμωνίου πρεσβυτέρου Ἀλεξανδρείας ἐκ τοῦ Πρὸς τὰς αἱρέσεις Εὐτυχοῦς καὶ Διοσκόρου λόγου ιε'.</p> <p>23. Περὶ τῆς ἑορταστικῆς, μᾶλλον δὲ θρηνητικῆς, ζ' ἐπιστολῆς τοῦ νῦν ἐπισκόπου τῶν Θεοδοσιανῶν ἐν Ἀλεξανδρείᾳ τῆς πεμφθείσης ἐν Βαβυλῶνι</p> <p>Doxology</p> <p>24. Σευηριανοῦ ἐπισκόπου Γαβάλων εἰς τὸ ἀποστολικὸν λόγιον τὸ περὶ Χριστοῦ φάσκον, ὅτι Ἐν αὐτῷ κατοικεῖ πᾶν τὸ πλήρωμα τῆς θεότητος σωματικῶς.</p> <p>25. Ἀπορία, μᾶλλον δὲ ἀπόρροια, Σευηριανοῦ πρὸς τὴν καθολικὴν ἐκκλησίαν.</p> <p>26. Κεφάλαιον περὶ τοῦ ὑποδείματος τῆς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου κατασκευῆς καὶ συνθέσεως καὶ ὅτι κακῶς αὐτὸ νοοῦσιν οἱ Σεήρου σύμφρονες βουλόμενοι ἐκ δύο μερικῶν καὶ ἀτελῶν φύσεων μίαν φύσιν εἶναι τῆς θεότητος καὶ τῆς ἀνθρωπότητος τοῦ Χριστοῦ κατὰ τὸ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου παράδειγμα.</p> <p>27. Ἀντίθεσις κακοτρόπου Παυλιανιστοῦ πρὸς Σευηριανὸν προφέροντα κατ' ἰσότητα τοῦ Χριστοῦ εἶναι τὴν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου σύνθεσιν.</p> <p>28. Ἀπορίαι συλλογιστικαὶ πρὸς τοὺς αὐτοὺς ἀκεφάλους κατὰ πεῦσιν καὶ ἀπόκρισιν περὶ τῆς ἀρρήτου ἐνώσεως τοῦ Χριστοῦ διὰ τὸ λέγειν αὐτοῦς, ὅτι μετὰ τὸ γενέσθαι τὴν ἑνωσιν οὐκέτι δυνατὸν λέγειν δύο φύσεις.</p> <p>29. (no corresponding heading)</p> <p>30. Ἀνατροπὴ τῆς ματαίας καὶ δυσσεβοῦς ἐκθέσεως καὶ νομοθεσίας Σεήρου, ἧς πρὸς Νηφάλιον καὶ ἄλλους τινὰς ἐξέθετο λέγων...³²³</p>
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³²³ NB that Anastasius connects this to the main text by adding ὅτι after λέγων.

<p>22. κβ' Κεφάλαια γραφικὰ ἀπορηθέντα ἡμῖν ὑπὸ ἀπίστων. Καὶ Ἀνδρέου Νεστοριανοῦ κεφάλαιον</p> <p>23. κγ' Κατὰ Γαϊανιτῶν ἐν ἐπιτομῇ</p> <p>24. κδ' Ἐκ τοῦ ἁγίου Διονυσίου ἀπόφασις φάσκουσα, ὅτι «κατ' οὐδένα τρόπον ἐκοινωνήσεν ὁ πατήρ ἢ τὸ ἅγιον πνεῦμα τῇ τοῦ λόγου σαρκώσει εἰ μὴ τῇ εὐδοκίᾳ μόνῃ». Τοῦτο δὲ παρεθέμεθα διὰ τὸ φάσκειν Σευῆρον συσσεσαρκῶσθαι τῷ υἱῷ τὸν πατέρα καὶ τὸ ἅγιον πνεῦμα</p> <p>First doxology Second doxology Conclusion</p>	<p>31. Ἀνακεφαλαίωσις κατ' ἐπιτομὴν δηλοῦσα τὸν σκοπὸν τοῦ ἐξηγητοῦ, ὅπως φρονεῖ τὴν οἰκονομίαν τοῦ Χριστοῦ.</p> <p>32. Προεξήγησις τοῦ σκοποῦ τῶν ἐξῆς ὑποτεταγμένων κεφαλαίων.</p> <p>33. Σκοπὸς διαλέξεως πανοῦργος πρὸς τοὺς κακούργως διαστρέφοντας καὶ παρερμηνεύοντας τὰς εὐαγγελικὰς καὶ πατρικὰς περὶ Χριστοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμῶν γραφάς.</p> <p>34. Ἀνδρέου Νεστοριανοῦ κεφάλαιον.</p> <p>35. Περὶ πίστεως Γαϊανιτῶν.</p> <p>36. Διάλεξις Γαϊανίτου καὶ ὀρθοδόξου γενομένη ἐν Ἀλεξανδρείᾳ.</p> <p>37. Ἐπίλυσις ἣτοι ἀνατροπὴ τῆς τῶν Μονοφυσιτῶν προτάσεως τῆς λεγούσης, ὅτι «Εἰ τελεία θεότης ἐστὶν ἡ σαρκωθεῖσα τοῦ θεοῦ λόγου ὑπόστασις καὶ ἐν αὐτῇ ὁρᾶται πᾶν τὸ πλήρωμα τῆς τριάδος, εὐρίσκονται πάντα τὰ ἐν τῷ υἱῷ ὁμολογούμενα ἐν τῇ οἰκονομίᾳ, ταῦτα τῇ πάσῃ τριάδι προσαπτόμενα, εἴτε δύο φύσεις, εἴτε θελήσεις, εἴτε ἐνέργειαι. Οἱ δὲ μὴ οὕτω φρονοῦντες εὐρίσκονται, φησί, διδόντες τῇ ἁγίᾳ τριάδι τρεῖς μὲν φύσεις ἰδικάς, μίαν δὲ κοινήν.»</p> <p>First doxology Second doxology Conclusion</p>
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Table Two³²⁴

Uthemann's Configuration of the <i>Hodegos</i>'s Constituent Parts
<p>1. Books I-II: Rules of Engagement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a. I: Portrait of the ideal disputantb. II: <i>Liber de definitionibus</i>
<p>2. Books III-X,5: the 'fundamental part' of the <i>Hodegos</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a. III: a preface to this sectionb. IV-VII: a synopsis of heresies and councils, leading into the rise of Severus of Antioch and his christologyc. VIII-IX: on the relation of the ontological terms 'nature' and 'person'd. X,1-X,4: records of religious disputations in Alexandriae. X,5: on Cyril of Alexandria's formula 'One Enfleshed Nature of God the Word'
<p>3. Books XI-XII: two supplements to the fundamental part</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a. XI: an explanation of the compatibility of Cyril of Alexandria's formula 'One Enfleshed Nature of God the Word' with Chalcedonb. XII: On the 'Theopaschite' addition to the <i>Trisagion</i>
<p>4. XIII-XIV: a treatise on the preservation of human nature in Christ's incarnation and in human deification</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a. XIII: On contested patristic citations relevant to Christ's assumption of flesh and our deificationb. XIV: Commentary on Ammonius of Alexandria on the flesh of Christ
<p>5. XV-XXIV: two dossiers and an appendix</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a. XV-XVII: the first dossier, on the subject of the Incarnationb. XVIII-XIX: the second dossier, on the analogy of body and soul in humanity for the two natures of Christc. XX-XXIII: various addenda to what has been saidd. XXIV: supplement to the first dossier and conclusion of the <i>Hodegos</i>

³²⁴ Following Uthemann, *Anastasios Sinaites*, xv-xvii.

There are a few observations to be made. First, the chapter titles from the table of contents do not often match the headings in the main body of the text, usually because they expand upon them; moreover, they often subsume multiple headings under the same chapter when it is not clear that they are intended to be read that way. For example, the very first chapter division describes the first three headings as a ‘Brief foreword,’ while the first heading itself speaks only of a ‘Brief training.’ The table of contents has split books VI and VII into two, but there is no corresponding chapter heading – in fact, the first sentence of book VII and the last sentence of book VI are actually two clauses of the same sentence. In one instance (book XXI), there is no corresponding heading for the chapter title, and a glance at the content suggests rather that it originally belonged to the textual unit preceding it (book XX). What is more, its description in the table of contents seems off, since the text is composed (as the right column indicates) of various chapters (κεφαλαία) which, compared to other textual units within the *Hodegos*, amount to a sizeable chunk of text and not, as the chapter heading indicates, one ‘brief chapter.’

Second, the internal headings of the *Hodegos* bear diverse titles. Many are entitled a demonstration (ἀποδείξις), a purpose (σκόπος), a chapter (κεφαλαίον), or by the topical signifier ‘On...’ (περὶ...), but there are others, too: a work (πόνημα), a subversion (ἀνατροπή), a summary (ἀνακεφαλαίωσις), a training (σύζησις), a disputation (διάλεξις), a difficulty (ἀπορία), a pre-training (προγυμνασία), a training (γυμνασία), a solution (ἐπιλύσις), a pre-explanation (προεξήγησις), etc. In general, Anastasius does not use consistent terminology to describe works he has written, which often makes it difficult to determine whether these descriptors refer to self-standing, independently produced works, or to subheadings within a single work. The *Hodegos* also contains references to other works that have not survived. In book IV, he tells us that he has ‘composed at great length a treatise (συντάγμα)’ against Nestorius, to which he refers

his readers; in book VIII, he refers to his ‘Apologetic Tome to the People (ἀπολογήτικος τόμος πρὸς τὸν λαόν)’; in book XXII, he refers to ‘our Pronouncement (τῆσδε ἡμῶν ἐκθέσεως); and, as seen above, he mentions a ‘dogmatic tome’ (δογματικὸς τόμος) he had composed in the conclusion to the *Hodegos*.³²⁵

Third, doxologies appear in the text at two separate points: at the end of book XV, and at the end of book XXIV. Curiously, the latter contains two doxologies in a row.

Fourth, and most notable for our purposes, in the headings to books III and IV, (I have underlined them in table one), Anastasius is named, first as a monk (with no affiliation), and then as a presbyter of Mount Sinai.³²⁶ These are unique amongst all of the headings, and look more like proper titles to be distinguished from the other headings (or sub-headings) for individual works/sections within the text. The titles read:

III: A work (πρόνημα) by Anastasius the lowliest monk on the orthodox faith which anthologizes from the holy Scriptures and teachers.³²⁷

IV: In the name of the Father and the Son and the All-Holy, Lifegiving Spirit. A [letter] by Anastasius, lowliest presbyter of the holy Mount Sinai, on faith in the economy of Christ the Son of God, to the holy catholic church in Babylon-Fustāt, composed at the request of our Christ-loving and orthodox brothers in it.³²⁸

The first introduces a work (πρόνημα) ‘on the orthodox faith,’ and the second introduces a work ‘on faith in the economy of Christ the Son of God’ – both rather broad subjects which could be said to encapsulate the whole gamut of christology. Yet the position of the second title at the head

³²⁵ Anastasius, *Hodegos*, IV.128-130; VIII.2.16; XXII.1.22; XXIV.139-140.

³²⁶ Cf. *ibid.* X,3.37 where he identifies himself, within the dialogue of the third disputation, as ‘Anastasius, monk of holy Mount Sinai.’

³²⁷ *Ibid.*, III.8-10.

³²⁸ *Ibid.*, IV.1-7.

of book IV would seem to limit the *πόννημα* to just the material in book III. This nevertheless seems an inappropriate description, since the content of book III—which describes itself as a brief introduction to what follows it together with a small ‘chapter’ (κεφαλαίον) that any would-be Chalcedonian disputant must anathematize at the beginning of his debate with a Theodosian or a Gaïanite—hardly justifies the grand title.³²⁹ How, then, should we understand the relationship between these two titles, the rest of the internal headings, and the doxologies?

***Hodegos* IV-XV: Anastasius’s Apologia to Babylon-Fustāt**

In his 1981 edition of the *Hodegos*, Karl-Heinz Uthemann included an essay on the ‘Literary Peculiarity’ of the *Hodegos*, wherein he briefly touched upon a hypothesis set out by Stergios N. Sakkos in his 1961 monograph, *Περί Αναστασίων Σιναιτών*.³³⁰ Sakkos argued that the *Hodegos* was indeed a compilation, but of various works from different authors each named Anastasius that had become confused in the manuscript tradition and accrued over the centuries to the much shorter, ‘authentic’ *Hodegos* over the centuries (sometimes referred to as the *Ur-Hodegos*). Sakkos considered the authentic *Hodegos* to stretch from books III to XV, arguing that the *πόννημα* in book III’s heading referred to an independent work stretching all the way to book XV, on the basis that book XV ends with a doxology—the only one in the *Hodegos* apart from those at the very end of the work. Sakkos further cemented his position by pointing to the presence of a scholion appended to the beginning of book III, which presumes a completed work. It reads:

³²⁹ The ‘chapter’ is only two short paragraphs in length, and requires the Chalcedonian disputant to anathematize, in order, Nestorianism; those who do not accept the hypostatic union in Christ; those who do not interpret the formula *one incarnate nature of God the Word* ‘as the holy Cyril interpreted it’; those who say that Christ’s two natures were not human and divine, but male and female; those who say that Christ’s divine nature was separated from his body on the cross or in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea; those ‘who do not confess the body and blood of God which we receive’; and finally, those who deviate from the faith of Nicaea I, Constantinople I, Ephesus I, and Chalcedon, together with a list of patristic authorities culminating in Cyril of Alexandria. See Anastasius, *Hodegos* III.2.1-32.

³³⁰ Stergios N. Sakkos, *ΠΕΡΙ ΑΝΑΣΤΑΣΙΩΝ ΣΙΝΑΪΤΩΝ* (Thessaloniki, 1964), 108ff; Uthemann, *Viae Dux*, CCVII.

Scholion: We exhort those who chance upon the book in any way also to read the attached scholia in the passages. And if, as is likely, the book contains a few errors, we ask for forgiveness. For when one is expounding offhand, oftentimes while he is caught up in his thoughts and hurrying to jot them down, he ignores gaffes and punctuation.³³¹

Although Uthemann disproved Sakkos's general thesis of various Anastasii, and demonstrated that the whole of the *Hodegos* belongs to one and the same author, he appears to have partially adopted Sakkos's schematization. For Uthemann also saw in these chapters what he calls the 'fundamental part' of the *Hodegos*; though in his case, he delimited it to books IV-X,5, viewing books XI-XII as two independent additions (Nachträge) intending to supplement the material in X,1-5, and books XIII-XIV as a separate 'treatise' (Abhandlung) on the preservation of human nature in Christ and of individual human natures in deification.³³² As noted in Table 2 above, Uthemann contended that book XV formed the beginning of a separate work, a dossier stretching from XV-XVII, on the subject of the Incarnation.³³³

Sakkos, I suggest, was on the right track, albeit for different reasons. I think it better to suppose, with Sakkos, that the doxology at the end of book XV marks the end of a major textual unit – *pace* Uthemann, for whom it sits awkwardly in the middle of a putatively self-standing dossier. Irrespective of genre, virtually every complete textual unit within Anastasius's other writings concludes with a doxology of a kind similar to that found in XV, a fact which lends great credence to Sakkos's theory.³³⁴ On the other hand, it is better to suppose, with Uthemann, that this

³³¹ Anastasius, *Hodegos* III, 1.1-8: Σχόλιον. Παρακαλοῦμεν δὲ τοὺς ἐντυγχάνοντας τῇ βίβλῳ ἐκ παντὸς τρόπου ἀναγινώσκειν καὶ τὰ κατὰ τοὺς τόπους παρακείμενα σχόλια. Εἰ δὲ καί, ὡς εἰκός, καὶ βραχέα τινὰ σόλοικα ἔχει ἢ βίβλος, συγγνώμην αἰτοῦμεν· ὁ γὰρ αὐτοσχεδίως ἐκτιθέμενος, πολλάκις ἔχων τὸν νοῦν αὐτοῦ ἐν τοῖς νοήμασι καὶ σπεύδων ταῦτα σημειοῦσθαι, περιφρονεῖ τῶν σολοίκων καὶ τῆς στίξεως.

³³² Uthemann, *Anastasios Sinaites*, 35-71, 85-107.

³³³ *Ibid.*, 107-174.

³³⁴ See Anastasius, *Hodegos* XV.95-6, XXIV.91-92, 120-1; *id.*, *Sermo I in constitutionem hominis secundum imaginem Dei*, 6.53; *id.*, *Sermo ii in constitutionem hominis secundum imaginem Dei* 4.62; *id.*, *Capita vi adversus*

textual unit began with book IV, rather than III, on the basis of the different titles found in their headings.³³⁵ That book IV was originally a long theological text is underscored by its formulaic introduction, which is explicitly modeled on the prologue to John's Gospel:

In the beginning was God, and God was in the beginning, and [he existed] even before a beginning without beginning. God always was, is, and will be. I speak of God the holy and consubstantial and uncreated Trinity of Father and Son and Holy Spirit.³³⁶

Understood in this way, books IV-XV simply *are* the text that Anastasius sent to Babylon-Fustāt (which is, again, stated in book IV's internal heading), *pace* Uthemann, who argues that Anastasius only included the beginning of a letter he once sent to Babylon-Fustāt on heresies, covering just part of the content of books IV and V, before inserting a new series of different, independent texts after it.³³⁷ Not only is the doxology at the end of XV the only one in the *Hodegos* not found at its conclusion, but Babylon-Fustāt bookends this textual unit, being explicitly mentioned in the headings of IV and XV (= internal headings 8 and 23). And if we view book XV as the conclusion to a text Anastasius had sent to Babylon-Fustāt that began in book IV, then we can better explain

monotheletas 10.5.122-3; id., *Edifying Tales* II.28.12-13. On the doxology of the *Capita*, which serves to conclude *Sermo iii* as well, see below. The end of each book of the *Hexaemeron* contains a doxology because it was delivered in parts to its recipient, either in written or homiletic form, probably the latter; see Anastasius, *Hexaemeron*, 1.842-3, 2.231-2, 3.566, 4.998-9, 5.388, 649, 7a.525-6, 7b.825, 8.540, 9.904-5, 10.784-5, 11.1208-10, 12490-3. The doxologies which conclude some of the *Edifying Tales*, which serve as a response to the Islamic *shahada* in the tales which relate to Muslim persecution of Christians, will be discussed below, see ch. 2 *infra*. The only doxology in the *corpus Anastasianum* which does not appear to mark the end of a textual unit is found in Anastasius, *Capita vi adversus monotheletas*, 9.2.22-27.

³³⁵ NB that a similar reading of the *Hodegos*'s fundamental part has been adopted by Dumont, *La polémique chalcédonienne*, 51-56, though Dumont fails to cite Sakkos's hypothesis and Uthemann's explicit mention of it in *Viae Dux* ccvii. Dumont, however, follows Uthemann's dating of this textual unit and of a single redaction of the *Hodegos*, and reads the heading of book XV as referring to the Severan patriarch Agathon, thus dating the whole to the 670s (*contra* Binggeli).

³³⁶ Anastasius, *Hodegos* IV.8-11: Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ θεός, καὶ ὁ θεὸς ἦν ἐν ἀρχῇ καὶ πρὸ ἀνάρχου ἀρχῆς· ἦν ἀεὶ καὶ ἔστι καὶ ἔσται ὁ θεός. Θεὸν δὲ λέγω τὴν ἀγίαν καὶ ὁμοούσιον καὶ ἄκτιστον τριάδα πατρὸς καὶ υἱοῦ καὶ ἁγίου πνεύματος.

³³⁷ The argument is strange, given that it presupposes knowledge of the full letter, even though its logic requires that the full letter remains unknown to us. See Uthemann, *Anastasios Sinaites*, 36f. On the relation of books IV and V to the semi-Anastasian text, *Synopsis de haeresibus et synodis*, see K.-H. Uthemann, 'Die dem Anastasios Sinaites zugeschriebene *Synopsis de haeresibus et synodis*,' *AHC* 14 (1982): 58-94.

why, in the heading to book XV, Anastasius singled out Babylon-Fustāt as the recipient of John III's sixth festal letter – an otherwise strange addition, since a patriarch's festal letter would have been sent to all the bishoprics in Egypt.

Further, book XV is unlike anything that comes before it: it is not a work of theology proper, but instead depicts a choreographed stage-play in which Anastasius assumes the role of conductor, leading his audience through a series of chants that serve to conclude the attack on Severanism set out in the foregoing books. Based upon its own content, it would make little sense as a standalone piece – much less a response to a patriarch's festal letter – and, as noted earlier, the doxology at its end prevents us from viewing it as the introduction to a new dossier stretching to book XVII. It appears rather to be a theatrical conclusion to the text which began in IV, reminiscent of Anastasius's characteristic sarcasm and flair for the dramatic found throughout these books.³³⁸ Moreover, its first sentence ('But why, again, do those who speak with us teach one nature in Christ as dogma?') makes little sense if viewed as the start of an independent work, for this language instead implies a continuation from book XIV.³³⁹

Relatedly, it is difficult to see why Uthemann viewed books XI, XII, and XIII-XIV as separate texts composed independently of one another, as well as from IV-X,5 on the one side and XV on the other.³⁴⁰ Books X,5 and XI certainly form a coherent unit. In these, Anastasius defends his Neochalcedonian interpretation of key christological formulae that were precisely the subject of the foregoing material: on the one hand, Cyril of Alexandria's 'One enfleshed nature of God the Word,' and on the other, the shared principle 'There is no nature without a hypostasis.' In book XI, Anastasius explicitly states that he set out the present chapter 'So that no one in the present or

³³⁸ On which see ch. 5 *infra*.

³³⁹ Anastasius, *Hodegos* XV.4-5.

³⁴⁰ He rightly, however, viewed XIII-XIV as a single unit rather than as two books (as the later TOC has it): the heading to XIV is exactly the same in kind as the ten sub-headings which make up XIII.

in the future may think that we have gone mad and agree with Nestorius and impiously confess two persons or hypostases in Christ,' on the basis of what was said in X,5 and in the disputational accounts.³⁴¹ Since there is no indication in the text itself that books X,1-X,5 were originally five chapters belonging to the same book, it is probably better to view X,1-X,4 as one coherent unit (given that each sets out a different debate between Anastasius and an opponent) and the material following it as a logical extension of it.

Although the subject matter changes as we turn to book XII, there is reason to believe that it, too, belonged to an original textual unit stretching back to book IV. For its introduction contains a reference back to material found in books VIII and X,1 ('καθὼς καὶ ἤδη προεῖπον') on the utility of live demonstrations and the problem of textual falsification in the use of public debate, thus implying a unity between them.³⁴² The same is true for the connection between book XII and book XIII, for after the opening paragraph of book XIII (which expands upon the sub-heading), Anastasius clearly refers back to book XII, whose subject was the Trisagion: 'Now, so that I may again take up the discourse concerning the passion of Christ and their [*sc.* the Miaphysites'] Trisagion hymn.'³⁴³ And, of course, the introduction to book XV clearly presupposes the existence of book XIV at the moment when it was written, as was noted above.

Beyond these textual relations, though, a single theme unites the content of books IV-XV: Anastasius's Neochalcedonian interpretation of the christological dictum 'There is no nature without a hypostasis.'³⁴⁴ These books form a long defense of the logic of hypostasis (as understood

³⁴¹ Anastasius, *Hodegos* XI.3-6.

³⁴² *Ibid.*, VIII.5.125 and X,1.1-13. It is possible, as Uthemann suggests in the *apparatus criticus* to the edition of the *Hodegos*, that Anastasius could also be referring back to the remark at I.1.28, but this creates far more problems than solutions, among them losing the ability to explain the presence of the scholion at the head of book III. I think it better to view the remark in book I as a principle derived from the material found in the rest of the *Hodegos*.

³⁴³ *Ibid.*, XIII.1.50-51.

³⁴⁴ I restrict myself here only to explicit mentions of the formula: VI.2.16; VIII.2.84, 5.81; IX.2.51; X,1.2.63, 102, 196; X,2.1.12; X,4.1.7.

by Chalcedonians) against the Severan single-nature christology, conceding (with Severus of Antioch's criticism of Chalcedon) that although natures only exist as instantiated in persons, a single hypostasis is capable of instantiating more than one nature – in other words, the notion of *enhypostatic* nature developed by Chalcedonian theologians in the sixth century, which allowed them to explain how Christ could possess both one hypostasis and two natures.³⁴⁵ Anastasius's defense of his interpretation crescendos in the Alexandrian disputations, and is followed by X,5-XIV, which collectively serves as an extension of the argument, concluding with the theatrical images and doxology of XV.

As I mentioned above, Uthemann believed that the various texts making up the *Hodegos* could have been composed at any point between 641 and 686/689. Yet, there is another detail associated with the references to Babylon-Fustāt in the headings to IV and XV that can help us tighten not just the dating of the redaction, but the dating of the *composition* of IV-XV, which helps cement the hypothesis that these books should be viewed as a single unit composed at the same time and not as a patchwork of pre-existent texts. In books VI and X,2 Anastasius refers to a certain Athanasius, qualified in VI as Athanasius 'the notary,' with whom he held a debate in Babylon-Fustāt; indeed, in both cases, he is explicitly identified with the new Arab-Muslim capital.³⁴⁶ This Athanasius has been identified with the prominent Edessan aristocrat and secretary Athanasius bar Gumoyē, who became chief secretary (*chartouarios*) of the Egyptian *dīwan* under its governor, 'Abd al-'Azīz (r. 685-705), a position which has become accepted in scholarship at large, and defended at greatest length most recently by Phil Booth.³⁴⁷ In 685, Athanasius was called

³⁴⁵ See B. Gleede, *The Development of the Term ἐνυπόστατος from Origen to John of Damascus* (Leiden, 2012), 45-138.

³⁴⁶ Anastasius, *Hodegos* VI.1.120; X,1.2.36.

³⁴⁷ On the identity of Anastasius's Athanasius and Athanasius bar Gumoyē, see Binggeli, *Anastase le Sinaïte*, 343-344; Debié, 'Christians in the Service of the Caliphate,' 64; Uthemann, *Anastasios Sinaïtes*, 9-10, 41; J. Mabra, *Princely Authority in the Early Marwānid State: The Life of 'Abd al-'Azīz ibn Marwān* (Piscataway, NJ, 2016), 94-

by the caliph ‘Abd al-Malik (r. 685-705) to his court in Damascus, whereat he was appointed secretary and tutor (كاتب) to the caliph’s younger half-brother ‘Abd al-‘Azīz when the latter was appointed governor of Egypt in 685. As we saw in the last chapter, he headed the *dīwan* at Babylon-Fuṣṭāṭ together with another Miaphysite secretary named Isaac and expended great energy patronizing the Severan church of Egypt.

Phil Booth notes that the mentions of Athanasius in the main body of this section help explain the qualification found in the heading to book XV that John’s festal letter ‘had been sent to Babylon’ (τῆς πεμφθείσης ἐν Βαβυλῶνι) in the heading to book XV, for ‘one suspects... that at the time of the festal letter of 686, Anastasius was himself at the Arab capital, there to debate the eminent *chartoullarios* Athanasius, no doubt in the presence of ‘Abd al-‘Azīz.’³⁴⁸ For our purposes, it also offers us a precious clue as to the date of *Hodegos* IV-XV’s composition. Because Athanasius took up his position in Babylon-Fuṣṭāṭ in 685, this then becomes the *terminus post quem* for those parts of the *Hodegos* which mention him – in this case, books VI, and X,1, and if we follow Booth’s interpretation of the heading to XV, then it seems reasonable to apply it to the latter too. Crucially, Athanasius is mentioned in the *main body* of the text at X,1, and not merely in a scholion, which implies that both book VI and X,1 must have been *composed*, not merely redacted, after 685. Consequently, we ought to view the entirety of IV-XV as having been composed after 685, too.

The Alexandrian disputations (X,1-X,4) furnish us with further reasons for associating this text with the Marwānid era. As noted in the previous chapter, Anastasius of Sinai engaged in four debates in Alexandria with the Theodosians. The first three disputations, Anastasius tells us, all

95; Booth, ‘Debating the Faith,’ 699-702; Dumont, *La polémique chalcédonienne*, 2, 54, 61, 65-67. He is also mentioned in *P. Lond.* IV 1447 ll. 139-140, 144, 189, 191-2 (685-705).

³⁴⁸ Booth, ‘Debating the Faith,’ 702.

occurred within quick succession of each other (likely the fourth as well, though this is less clear). The third one occurred, as its internal heading tells us, under the auspices of the Augustalis ‘in the presence of a public audience and the city.’³⁴⁹ Anastasius’s opponents included ‘some bishops who thought they were learned, among whom was also the Cynopolite,’ and that the debate came about because these latter petitioned the Augustalis for a rematch after they had lost the first two disputations. This Augustalis, moreover, is presented as a Chalcedonian, for after sending out a summons for Anastasius to appear at the *praetorium*, he told the latter, ‘When these bishops heard about the disturbances between the church and the Theodosians, they came here, seeking to debate with your holiness.’³⁵⁰ As Phil Booth has shown, the reference to a bishop nicknamed ‘the Cynopolite’ must refer to the famed Theodosian bishop Gregory of al-Kaïs [= Cynopolis in the Delta], whose career spanned several Theodosian patriarchates in the late seventh and early eighth centuries stretching from Agathon to Alexander II. Because Anastasius presents the Augustalis as a Chalcedonian, Booth has demonstrated that our likely *terminus post quem* for the four disputations is 680, because we know of a Chalcedonian Augustalis named ‘Theodore the Chalcedonian’ in the *HP* who was appointed in 680 under the caliph Yazīd I (r. 680-3) and is said to have persecuted the patriarchs Agathon and John III.³⁵¹ Moreover, as I argued in the last chapter, although this Theodore’s son (who also served as the Augustalis of Alexandria) was reconciled to Theodosianism in the 680s, this does not appear to have occurred until at least 685 as well, providing us with our *terminus ante quem*.

What is significant for us at this point is the reference to ‘the Cynopolite,’ for Gregory’s period of flourishing comes in the period 685-705, where he is mentioned multiple times assisting

³⁴⁹ Anastasius of Sinai, *Hodegos* X,3.1.2-3: κατὰ παρουσίαν τοῦ αὐγουσταλίου ἐπὶ δημοσίας ἀκοῆς καὶ τῆς πόλεως.

³⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, X,3.1.17-19: «Ἀκούσαντες οἱ ἐπίσκοποι οὗτοι τὰ κινήθεντα μεταξὺ τῆς ἐκκλησίας καὶ τῶν Θεοδοσιανῶν παρεγένοντο ἐπιζητοῦντες διαλεχθῆναι τῇ ὀσιότητι ὑμῶν.»

³⁵¹ Evetts, PO 5 5.

the Theodosian patriarch and serving as head of the synod to replace patriarchs when they die. He was evidently close to ‘Abd al-‘Azīz in his later days, for the emir enlisted him to oversee a raft of new building projects at his new capital in Ḥulwān, and also appointed him as *locum tenens* for the Theodosian patriarchal throne during the vacancy between Simon I (sed. 692-701) and Alexander II (sed. 705-730).³⁵² This appointment is the last time he is mentioned in the text. We must assume that Gregory had achieved great prominence at the time when this section of the *Hodegos* was written, perhaps in connection with the court of ‘Abd al-‘Azīz, for Anastasius’s use of the moniker ‘the Cynopolite’ presumes that his audience would readily recognize the contemporary to which he referred.

There is another prosopographical clue that links the disputations to this period, as well, that has been hitherto unremarked by specialists. The second disputation is said to have been held at ‘the public arsenal,’ i.e., the imperial arms factory that was also located in the same district as the Kaisarion church, and thus, we may suppose, with the sanction of the same Augustalis.³⁵³ Anastasius’s two opponents included ‘Gregory *Nystazōn* the Syro-Egyptian minded’ and ‘their great and mighty one, like he who is called the champion of the Danaans, John the monk who is called “of Zuga” of the *Oktokaidekaton* Monastery,’ and later in the disputation both are referred to as ‘the eminent ones’ among the Theodosian elite.³⁵⁴ Although this Gregory *Nystazōn* (‘the Drowsy’) is unknown, John the Monk’s sobriquet ‘of Zuga,’ allows us to identify him. In the conclusion to the *HP*’s biography of Isaac, we learn of a dispute that occurred after his death in

³⁵² Evetts, PO 5 42, 49.

³⁵³ Arms factory: Anastasius of Sinai, *Hodegos* X,1.1.3-4: συνήχθησαν εἰς διάλεξιν ὁμοίως ἐν τῇ φαύρικῃ τῆ δημοσίᾳ (‘They were brought together to a disputation likewise at the public arsenal’); cf. A. Martin (ed. and trans.), *Histoire «acéphale» et index syriaque des lettres festales d’Athanasie d’Alexandrie* SC 317 (Paris, 1985), 148: *fabrica dominica quae dicitur Cesarium*. Gascou, *Églises et chapelles*, 49.

³⁵⁴ Anastasius of Sinai, *Hodegos* X,2.1.4-9: Ἐν ᾧ συλλόγω συνῆλθεν καὶ ὁ πολὺς αὐτῶν καὶ μέγας ὡσπέρ τις λεγόμενος τῶν Δαναῶν πρόμαχος, Ἰωάννης ὁ μοναχὸς ὁ λεγόμενος τοῦ Ζυγαῖ, ὁ τοῦ ὀκτωκαιδεκάτου. Παρῆν δὲ σὺν αὐτῷ καὶ Γρηγόριος ὁ Νυστάζων ὁ Συρραϊγύπτιος τὸν νοῦν.

692 regarding his successor between two factions in the city, the clergy of the church of St. Mark and the clergy of the Angelion Church. The faction representing the Angelion, the *HP* tells us, ‘said with regard to John, the Hegumen in the Monastery of Al-Zajāj, which is called in Greek *To Enaton*, that he was worthy of this office, because he was a learned man and a writer, and he was also godfather to the government-secretary (*katīb*),’ while others ‘spoke of a man whose name was Victor, Hegumen of the Monastery of Taposiris, who was also an excellent person.’³⁵⁵ While neither man ultimately became patriarch, the *HP* notes that the Arabic nickname for the Enaton Monastery was the Monastery of *al-Zajāj* (الزجاج), i.e., ‘of the Glassblower.’ The Syriac word for ‘glassblower’ is related: *zguḡāyā* (ܙܘܕܝܐ). Anastasius’s nickname for John, ‘of Zuga’ (τοῦ Ζυγᾶ), should therefore be understood as a reference to this nickname for the Enaton, taking the simple meaning here ‘of the glass,’ lacking the *nomens agens* sense of the word in Arabic.

But the passage still presents us with a problem, for Anastasius refers to this John as belonging to the Oktokaidekaton Monastery. However, in a scholion to book twenty-three of the *Hodegos*, Anastasius recounts very briefly the well-known schism that took place between Severus of Antioch and Julian of Halicarnassus over the corruptibility of Christ’s body while they were at the Enaton Monastery (like John of Nikiu, however, he swaps Gaïanus for Julian of Halicarnassus). But he locates it at a moment ‘when they lived together in the Oktokaidekaton of Alexandria.’³⁵⁶ This mistake is striking, because it means in all probability that he had never visited the Enaton Monastery, and that at the time of his writing, it had lost its Chalcedonian communities. This, in turn, suggests that the relationship of easy access between its monasteries and Alexandria, such as

³⁵⁵ Evetts, PO 5 25.

³⁵⁶ Anastasius of Sinai, *Hodegos* XXIII.1.2-4: Σευῆρος καὶ Γαϊανὸς ὁμόφρονες τὸ πρὶν ἐτύγγανον καὶ ἐν τῷ ἅμα ἐν τῷ ὀκτωκαιδεκάτῳ Ἀλεξανδρείας διῆγον. Cf. John of Nikiu, *Chronicle* 92.2.

can be found in Sophronius of Jerusalem and John Moschus in the first half of the seventh century, has been inverted.

Although Anastasius is incorrect, it is notable that he is incorrect in a consistent way: for whatever reason, the two monasteries appear to have been conflated in his mind. Thus, I propose that this John, ‘the monk who is called “of Zuga” of the Oktokaidekaton Monastery’ is one and the same John the *higoumen* of the Enaton, a member of the patriarchal inner circle and erstwhile candidate for patriarch himself. Indeed, this would greatly complement Anastasius’s exalted description of him as a latter-day Achilles, one which again implies he was already a well-established figure within the Theodosian elite.

Anastasius’s primary disputational opponents, then, constituted precisely the same circle of Theodosian elites whose *floruit* was catalyzed by the rise of ‘Abd al-‘Azīz and Athanasius bar Gumoyē, and who dominated the Theodosian ecclesial and monastic scene in the Delta in the following decades: Gregory of al-Kaīs, John the *higoumen* of the Enaton Monastery, and, of course, Athanasius bar Gumoyē himself. Thus, although the possible date range for the four Alexandrian disputations in *Hodegos* X,1-X,4 is ca. 680-685, it seems likelier that they occurred closer to 685 than to 680.³⁵⁷ This would also make Anastasius’s debate with Athanasius bar Gumoyē in 686 fit more naturally within the sequence of events, coming soon after these earlier debates with the other celebrated and influential members of the Theodosian elite. Presumably, with newfound influence at court, they appealed to Athanasius and ‘Abd al-‘Azīz to help rid them of this meddlesome monk and priest.

³⁵⁷ *Pace* Booth, ‘Debating the Faith,’ who places them in the period ca. 680-2.

One final word on this textual unit (IV-XV) is in order. Throughout this section, I have referred to it in generic terms as a ‘text,’ deliberately so. This is because the original heading to book IV reads:

In the name of the Father and the Son and the all-holy and life-giving Spirit. Anastasius, humblest presbyter of the holy mountain of Sinai, on faith in the economy of Christ, the Son of God, written to the holy catholic Church in Babylon at the request of our Christ-loving and orthodox brothers in it.³⁵⁸

In the critical edition of the text, Karl-Heinz Uthemann inserted the feminine noun ἐπιστολή (‘letter’) before ‘On faith in the economy of Christ,’ because the phrase ‘written to the holy Catholic Church in Babylon’ begins with a dangling feminine participle, γραφεῖσα. Hence, Uthemann not unreasonably supplied a feminine noun to match a feminine participle. Given, however, the nature of the text and its extremely long length, it seems impossible that what we have here is a letter.

Although we cannot know what Anastasius might have intended to complete the sense of γραφεῖσα, I suggest that we fix the participial problem by inserting ἀπολογία (‘defense’), for the content of books IV-XV seem to constitute by and large a defense of Anastasius’s theology. Indeed, Anastasius associates some of the material found in *Hodegos* IV-XV with exactly this genre. After establishing, in book VIII, that the key christological terms ‘nature’ and ‘person’ do not mean the same thing – an important vanguard action anticipating the Theodosian tactic of associating Chalcedon with Nestorianism – Anastasius mentions his lost ‘Apologetic Tome to the People’:

³⁵⁸ Anastasius, *Hodegos* IV.1-7: Ἐν ὀνόματι τοῦ πατρὸς καὶ τοῦ υἱοῦ καὶ τοῦ παναγίου καὶ ζωοποιοῦ πνεύματος, Ἀναστασίου ἐλαχίστου πρεσβυτέρου τοῦ ἁγίου ὄρους Σινᾶ <ἐπιστολή> περὶ πίστεως τῆς οἰκονομίας Χριστοῦ τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ πρὸς τὴν ἁγίαν καθολικὴν ἐκκλησίαν τὴν ἐν Βαβυλῶνι γραφεῖσα αἰτησαμένων τουτὶ τῶν ἐν αὐτῇ φιλοχρίστων καὶ ὀρθοδόξων ἡμῶν ἀδελφῶν.

We have also spoken about this in the *Apologetic Tome* to the people, and I have not forgotten it. But because I am describing an ulcer and chronic rot, and an abscess that has spread and produced a foul smell, above all in the sewers and canals of the Egyptian countryside, one must not hesitate from speaking about these matters again, so that by inverting the words of holy Scripture we might persuade the foolish that ‘nature’ and ‘person’ do not mean the same thing.³⁵⁹

Here, Anastasius assumes that the readers of the ‘apologia’ to Babylon are familiar with it, and indicates that material found at least at this point of the *Hodegos* risks duplicating what he has set out in the Tome. Although we cannot be sure to what the defense refers (was it a defense of Chalcedon, a la Eulogius of Alexandria’s *apologia* on behalf of Chalcedon, or was it a defense of his own position?), it occurs in a book dedicated to refuting the Severan accusation that Chalcedonians affirmed two persons in Christ, thereby polemically associating them with Nestorians.

Throughout books IV-XV, Anastasius takes great pains to distance himself from accusations of Nestorianism. Book V, a brief synopsis of the ecumenical councils, together with book VI, a short history of heresies, both contain insinuations that Chalcedon did not divide Christ into two persons, while VII constitutes Anastasius’s first salvo against Severus of Antioch on this topic where he distances himself from a two-person christology multiple times. He further spends nearly half of book VIII trying to show why Severus of Antioch’s equivocation of ‘person’ and ‘nature’ actually renders *him* a Nestorian, and not the Chalcedonian tradition. In the first Alexandrian disputation (book X,1), Anastasius extends this logic to the entire Severan tradition

³⁵⁹ Anastasius, *Hodegos* VIII.2.16-24: Καὶ εἶρηται μὲν ἡμῖν περὶ τούτου καὶ ἐν τῷ *Τόμῳ τῷ ἀπολογητικῷ* πρὸς τὸν λαόν, καὶ οὐκ ἐπελαθόμεν. Ἀλλ’ ἐπειδὴ περὶ ἔλκους καὶ σηπεδόνοιο χρονίας λαλῶ καὶ σύριγγος νομῆν καὶ δυσωδίαν ποιήσαντος (καὶ μάλιστα ἐν τοῖς ὑπονόμοις καὶ διώρυξιν τῶν ἱεροσολυμῶν καὶ αἰγυπτιακῶν χωρῶν), οὐκ ὀκνητέον πάλιν περὶ τῶν αὐτῶν εἰπεῖν, καὶ μάλιστα, ἵνα τὰς ἀντιστροφὰς τῶν λέξεων ποιήσαντες ἐκ τῆς ἱερᾶς γραφῆς τοὺς ἄφρονας πείσωμεν, ὅτι οὐκ ἔστι ταῦτόν φύσις καὶ πρόσωπον.

by presenting a distorted florilegium which replaces patristic citations from pre-Chalcedonian authorities including the phrase ‘two natures’ with ‘two persons,’ in order to demonstrate that Theodosians, rather than Chalcedonians, make all of the church fathers out to be Nestorians. This, in fact, turns out to be one of Anastasius’s proudest moments:

When we had presented and interpreted these and many other expressions of the holy fathers in relation to the written agreement, [saying] that nature and person mean the same thing—and then according to this, your [*sc.* Theodosian] law, all those blessed fathers are convicted as asserting two persons in Christ, and thereby being Nestorian-minded—all of our opponents remained speechless, silent, muzzled, beside themselves, astounded, puzzled. For they did not speak, they were not changed, because they were put to shame before all the people of the church, who, while clapping, said to all of them, ‘If nature is person, then raise and burn the holy fathers who have spoken of two natures in Christ! But if nature and person are not the same, the Council of Chalcedon is blameless when it speaks of two natures united in one person of Christ.’³⁶⁰

Moreover, in book XI, Anastasius explicitly wards off fears that his understanding of the two natures of Christ might result in a tacit Nestorianism. He opens the section thus: ‘So that no one in the present or in the future may think that we have gone mad and agree with Nestorius, and impiously confess two persons or hypostases in Christ, it is necessary to state the reason for which such an expression [*sc.* ‘two natures in Christ’] was spoken.’³⁶¹ Although other Chalcedonian authors certainly argued against Nestorians, this degree of pre-emption and anxiety is unusual.

³⁶⁰ Anastasius, *Hodegos* X,1.3.1-14: Ταύτας δὴ καὶ ἑτέρας πλείους φωνὰς τῶν ἁγίων πατέρων κατὰ τὸν γραφέντα τύπον προαγαγόντων ἡμῶν καὶ ἐρμηνευόντων, ὅτι ἡ φύσις πρόσωπόν ἐστι—καὶ λοιπὸν κατὰ τοῦτον ὕμῶν τὸν νόμον ἅπαντες οὗτοι οἱ μακάριοι πατέρες τὰ Νεστορίου φρονούντες ἐλέγχονται ὡς δύο πρόσωπα ἐν Χριστῷ φάσκοντες—ἔμειναν ἅπαντες οἱ δι’ ἐναντίας ἐννεοί, ἐσίγησαν, ἐφιμώθησαν, ἐξέστησαν, κατεπλάγησαν, ἠπόρησαν· οὐ γὰρ ἐλάλησαν, ἠλλοιώθησαν, ὅτι ἠσχύνθησαν παντὸς τοῦ λαοῦ τῆς ἐκκλησίας οἶονε κροτοῦντος καὶ πρὸς ἅπαντας αὐτοὺς λέγοντος· «Εἰ ἡ φύσις πρόσωπόν ἐστιν, ἄρον, καῦσον τοὺς ἁγίους πατέρας δύο φύσεις εἰρηκότας ἐν τῷ Χριστῷ. Εἰ δὲ οὐκ ἔστιν ἡ φύσις πρόσωπον, ἀνέγκλητός ἐστιν ἡ σύνοδος Χαλκηδόνας δύο εἰποῦσα ἠνωμένας φύσεις ἐν μιᾷ ὑποστάσει Χριστοῦ.»

³⁶¹ Anastasius, *Hodegos* XI.3-6: Ὅπως δὲ μή τις τῶν καθ’ ἡμᾶς ἢ μεθ’ ἡμᾶς δόξη μανέντας ἡμᾶς τὰ Νεστορίου φρονεῖν, καὶ δύο πρόσωπα καὶ ὑποστάσεις ἐν Χριστῷ ὁμολογεῖν ἀσεβῶς, ἀναγκαῖον τὸ εἰπεῖν τὴν αἰτίαν, δι’ ἣν ἐρρήθη ἡ τοιαύτη φωνή.

If the suggestions given above are accepted, I contend that we ought to view the fundamental part of the *Hodegos* as constituting books IV-XV, and that we consider it a kind of apologia, rather than a letter, composed in the wake of Anastasius's defeat by Athanasius bar Gumoyē in Babylon-Fustāt in 686. This apologia had followed upon Anastasius's *Apologetic Tome to the People* at large, and was intended for other Chalcedonian disputants in the Egyptian capital with the aim of showing them how to debate with Theodosians while also avoiding accusations of Nestorianism. This *Apologia to Babylon*, then, forms the core part of the *Hodegos*, the first in a series of concentric circles which will ultimately make up the text that we have today.

If my hypothesis regarding the configuration of the 'fundamental part' of the *Hodegos* is correct, then the implications for dating it are considerable. For on this reading, the chronological implications of book XV's scholion need not be restricted to just book XV. Instead, it would indicate that this entire section of the *Hodegos* (IV-XV) was *composed* at the earliest in 686, not merely redacted. The additional evidence collectively points in the same direction, including the position of the doxology at the end of book XV; the scholion's clarification that the 'current bishop of the Theodosians in Alexandria' was John III; the mentions of Athanasius bar Gumoyē in the main body of books IV and X,¹; the debates with Gregory of al-Kaïs and John *higoumen* of the Ennaton Monastery; and the fact that this unit begins with an internal heading in which Anastasius entitles the work with his own name (IV). This entire textual unit, then, forms the core part of the *Hodegos*, and was prompted by the rise of the Marwānids, the ascendancy of the Theodosian church, and Anastasius's own interactions at the governor's court with Athanasius bar Gumoyē, and not, *pace* Uthemann, either under patriarch Agathon in the early 670s or at any earlier point back to 641. It was also likely composed at the coenobium on Mt. Sinai, given Anastasius's self-identification in the heading to IV and in one of the Alexandrian disputations as a monk and

presbyter of Mt. Sinai. This core constitutes the first in a series of concentric circles which will ultimately make up the text that we possess today.

The First Redaction: The *Ponēma* on the Economy of Christ

Thus the fundamental part of the *Hodegos*. But what about the *Ponēma*, which is referenced in the heading to book III? To which parts of the *Hodegos* can it refer? Although there are fewer clues here, there are a number of reasons to posit it as the first stage of redaction – the second concentric circle, to continue the analogy above – in what will ultimately become the *Hodegos*.

As noted above, book III, like book IV, opens with a unique title in which Anastasius gives his name to a distinctive work: ‘The *Ponēma* of Anastasius, the lowliest monk, on the orthodox faith which anthologizes from the holy Scriptures and fathers.’³⁶² So too, as Uthemann has observed, the procedures described in the scholion appended to book III (prior to its internal heading) and the conclusion to the *Hodegos* refer to different literary processes. For the sake of ease, I reproduce them here:

Hodegos III.1-8: Scholion: We exhort those who meet with the book by any way to also read the attached notes in the passages. And if also, as is likely, the book contains a few errors, we ask for forgiveness. For when one is expounding offhand, oftentimes while he his thinking among his thoughts and hurrying to jot them down, he ignores gaffes and punctuation.³⁶³

Hodegos XXIV.122-124, 131-140: We exhort those who happen to come across this book to forgive us for the many corrections [needed] or repetitions in it. [...] Wherefore we set it out in this format, by seizing the quire instead of [composing] a codex. And if, as is likely, we have spoken

³⁶² Anastasius, *Hodegos* III.1.9-11: Ἀναστασίου ἐλαχίστου μοναχοῦ πόνημα περὶ πίστεως ὀρθοδόξου ἀνθολογηθὲν ἐκ τῶν ἁγίων γραφῶν καὶ διδασκάλων.

³⁶³ Ibid., III.1-8: Σχόλιον. Παρακαλοῦμεν δὲ τοὺς ἐντυγχάνοντας τῇ βίβλῳ ἐκ παντὸς τρόπου ἀναγινώσκειν καὶ τὰ κατὰ τοὺς τόπους παρακείμενα σχόλια. Εἰ δὲ καί, ὡς εἰκός, καὶ βραχέα τινὰ σόλοικα ἔχει ἡ βίβλος, συγγνώμην αἰτοῦμεν· ὁ γὰρ αὐτοσχεδῖως ἐκτιθέμενος, πολλάκις ἔχων τὸν νοῦν αὐτοῦ ἐν τοῖς νοήμασι καὶ σπεύδων ταῦτα σημειοῦσθαι, περιφρονεῖ τῶν σολοίκων καὶ τῆς στίξεως.

unfittingly in word or thought, we ask forgiveness. For God alone is infallible. In addition to all these things, we entreat the future copyist to set out in addition the scholia, and to note carefully the accents and colons and semi-colons and gaffes. For also, one time, some idiots copied our dogmatic tome and, out of ignorance, filled it with blasphemies.³⁶⁴

That the former is found in a scholion and the latter in the main body of text strengthens this view. The scholion assumes a self-standing, completed work ('We exhort those who chance upon this book...') and is positioned at the beginning of book III rather than at the beginning to the surviving work as a whole (i.e. book I), where one might otherwise expect it. Although Uthemann distinguished between two literary processes in these passages, he stopped short of saying that they represent two different redactions of the *Hodegos*.³⁶⁵ But it must presuppose two different redactions, otherwise the position of the scholion makes no sense. Moreover, book III itself possesses the only other unique title in the *Hodegos*, in addition to book IV. As mentioned above, book III itself cannot be a self-standing work. For this title assumes that what follows constitutes a large anthology-esque work, but book III itself is one of the shortest in the *Hodegos*; and in any case, its content is explicitly framed as a prologue to what comes next. We thus have the start of our second of three concentric circles, but where should we place its end?

As noted above, there are three passages in the *Hodegos* which contain internal reference markers to other parts of the text: twice in the main body (in books I and XXI) and once in a scholion (book XVII). Uthemann brushed off the significance of these references, suggesting that

³⁶⁴ Ibid., XXIV.122-124, 131-140: Παρακαλοῦμεν τοὺς μέλλοντας ἐντυγχάνειν τῇ βίβλῳ συγγνώμην ποιήσασθαι ἐπὶ ταῖς πλείσταις ἐν αὐτῇ διορθώσεσιν ἢ ταυτολογίαις· [...] Διὸ ἀντὶ σχεδὸν τὴν τετράδα κατέχοντες οὕτως ἐξεθέμεθα. Εἰ δὲ καὶ ὡς εἰκὸς τινὶ λόγῳ ἢ νοήματι οὐ πρεπόντως εἰρήκαμεν, συγγνώμην αἰτούμεθα· μόνος γὰρ ἄπταιστος ὁ θεός. Πρὸς τοῦτοις πᾶσι δυσωποῦμεν τὸν μεταγράφειν μέλλοντα παραθέσθαι καὶ τὰ σχόλια, σημειώσασθαι δὲ ἐπιμελῶς καὶ τοὺς τόνους καὶ τὰς στιγμὰς καὶ ὑποστιγμὰς καὶ τὰ σόλοικα· καὶ γὰρ ἄλλοτε τινες ἰδιῶται μεταγράψαντες ἡμῶν δογματικὸν τόμον ἐξ ἀγνοίας βλασφημιῶν αὐτὸν ἐπλήρωσαν.

³⁶⁵ Uthemann, *Anastasios Sinaites*, 33.

they were originally scholia that had somehow worked their way into the main body of the text.³⁶⁶ This theory fails to convince, not least because it would also throw into question the survival of any given scholion in the text. For one would have to explain why *these* scholia as opposed to any of the others were deprived of their place in the margins. Indeed, the very fact that one of these internal references *does* occur in a scholion and not in the main text would seem to contradict this hypothesis, suggesting that all should be viewed as part of the final redaction of the text. Finally, an argument against the other aspect of Uthemann's theory of scholia – that they could have been added at any point in time to any of its independent textual units long prior to and separate from the redaction of the *Hodegos* – is that Anastasius never added scholia to any of his other surviving texts. If it were normal for him to add scholia to his original, independently produced works before sending them out, why are there none in the *Hexaemeron* or the *Edifying Tales* or the *Sermones* and anti-Monothelite works?³⁶⁷

As a general principle, then, there seems no reason to separate the addition of scholia from the process of redacting the material. In other words, it makes more sense to postulate that scholia were added to independent textual units at the moment when those texts were compiled together, and not earlier. We ought therefore to maintain a careful distinction between the main body of the text and its scholia – the latter having been added at a later point in time relative to the composition of the former. Accordingly, we can begin to discern how the books of the *Hodegos* outside of the apologia (IV-XV) relate to each other: wherever an internal reference marker based upon the quire is found, we should interpret it as belonging to the final redaction of the text. Thus, book I could not coherently refer forward to a twenty-third quire, nor book XXI back to a thirteenth quire, if

³⁶⁶ The same applies to the conclusion itself, which he repeatedly calls a scholion in spite of the fact that there is no reason to view it so on textual grounds. Uthemann, *Anastasios Sinaites*, 215ff.

³⁶⁷ On the scholia on the first two *Sermones* preserved only in codex *Laurentianus* VIII, 1, which are not original to Anastasius, see Anastasius, *Sermones*, CLIIff.

these books were not part of the final redaction of the text. This suggests that books I-II and the material at least from book XXI.3 onward (where the last internal reference marker is found) should belong to a separate, final redaction. Concomitantly, because the internal reference marker within book XVII to the ‘final quire’ is found in a scholion – not part of the main body of text – it should be the case that the Πόνημα originally ended somewhere between books XVII and XXI.3.

This interpretation is not entirely without problems, however, and it is at this point that we must become more circumspect. For where in turn should we place the end of the *Ponēma*? Unfortunately, it is impossible to determine its conclusion, and unlike with the text to Babylon-Fustāt, we have no doxology to guide our assessment. There is one ideal candidate to place a major textual division, in between the end of book XXI and the beginning of XXII, but this unfortunately occurs after the internal reference marker at XXI.3. Though not a doxology, XXI.4 comprises a confession of faith made by Anastasius in order to defend himself from accusations of Nestorianism on account of ‘what has been said above’ (τῶν ἔμπροσθεν εἰρημένων), and its heading is called ‘a brief summary’ (ἀνακεφαλαίωσις κατ’ἐπιτομήν), an appropriate description for a conclusion.³⁶⁸ Further, book XXII’s heading seems to introduce a new, composite textual unit taking us to the end of the work: ‘Pre-exegesis of the purpose of the remaining attached chapters’ (Προεξήγησις τοῦ σκοποῦ τῶν ἐξῆς ὑποτεταγμένων κεφαλαίων).³⁶⁹ We can, then, only speculate. Nevertheless, any alternative configurations of this textual unit must grapple with the positioning and content of the scholion appended to book III as well as the position of the internal reference markers delineated above, which imply a self-standing work to be distinguished from that set out in books I-II and the books between XXI.3 to XXIV. Even if we cannot know where the *Ponēma* ended, we thus know that it must have ended at some point between XVI and XXI.3 The alternative

³⁶⁸ Anastasius, *Hodegos*, XXI.4.1-4.

³⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, XXII.1.1-2.

set out by Uthemann—to assume that the internal textual markers were originally scholia that somehow made their way into the main text—creates more problems than solutions.

The *Ponēma* of Anastasius of Sinai on the orthodox faith therefore incorporated his *apologia* to Babylon-Fustāt (IV-XV), and added an unknown number of supplements to it, before culminating at some point before book XXI.3. Because the *Ponēma* begins with a scholion exhorting the reader ‘also to read the attached scholia,’ it seems reasonable to infer that the scholia now found in books IV-XV—including the crucial scholion of book XV (on John III’s festal letters)—were added at the moment when the *Ponēma* was redacted. If so, we may cautiously point towards a *terminus post quem* of 691-692 for the *Ponēma*.

The Second and Final Redaction: The *Hodegos*

We are left, then, with books I-II and the material coinciding roughly between books XXI and XXIV, which I suggest were added together to the *Ponēma* in a final stage of redaction to form the third of our series of concentric circles. This section contains the fewest details which help us reconstruct its composition, and so requires the greatest circumspection.

It is worth restating that the scholion at the head of book III indicates that books I-II were not originally part of the *Ponēma* and were added at a later time, and that the conclusion to the *Hodegos* in book XXIV (found in the main body and not in a scholion) points to a different process of composition than that indicated for the *Ponēma*. That book XXIV must belong to a separate redaction can also be supported by the internal reference marker of book XVII, already mentioned above. In book XVII, Anastasius responds to a Severan difficulty (ἀπορία) set for Chalcedonians around the exegesis of Colossians 2:17: ‘In him dwells the fullness of the Godhead bodily.’ Here, he poses a common Severan objection to Chalcedonianism: if the Holy Trinity is one divine nature, and this nature is preserved complete in the incarnate hypostasis of the Son, then it follows that

the whole Trinity – as opposed to just the Son – became incarnate in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. After giving his response to this aporia, the book ends with a scholion that reads: ‘In the final quire lies the rest.’³⁷⁰ The final quire mentioned in this reference does seem to correspond to the final quire of the *Hodegos*, for the internal heading of book XXIV reads:

A solution, or rather a subversion, of the proposition of the Monophysites which asserts, ‘If the incarnate hypostasis of God the Word is perfect divinity, and in him is seen all the fullness of the Trinity, [then] everything which is confessed in the Son in the economy will be found attached to the whole Trinity, whether two natures, or wills, or operations. But those who do not think so will be found,’ he says, ‘positing three individual natures and one common [nature] to the Holy Trinity.’³⁷¹

Anastasius, moreover, refers back to book XVII in the opening line: ‘We spoke about this a little bit earlier.’³⁷² Book XXIV—and the rest of the material outside of the *Ponēma*, however one wants to delineate it—was therefore added to the *Ponēma* with the intention of crafting a fuller disputational manual for aspiring Chalcedonian disputants.

Book I.1 comprises a set of rules for the reader to memorize, and I.2 a statement of faith on the orthodox way to speak of two wills or operations in Christ; the only place in the *Hodegos* where monotheletism is taken up. I.3 constitutes the introduction to book II, the *Liber de definitionibus*: definitions of key terms for use in religious disputations. Collectively, these books form a new introduction to the entire text as it survives, conceived of as a propaedeutic for the

³⁷⁰ Anastasius, *Hodegos*, XVII.54-55.

³⁷¹ Anastasius, *Hodegos*, XXIV.1-9: Ἐπίλυσις ἥτοι ἀνατροπὴ τῆς τῶν Μονοφυσιτῶν προτάσεως τῆς λεγούσης, ὅτι «Εἰ τελεία θεότης ἐστὶν ἡ σαρκωθεῖσα τοῦ θεοῦ λόγου ὑπόστασις καὶ ἐν αὐτῇ ὁρᾶται πᾶν τὸ πλήρωμα τῆς τριάδος, εὐρίσκονται πάντα τὰ ἐν τῷ υἱῷ ὁμολογούμενα ἐν τῇ οἰκονομίᾳ, ταῦτα τῇ πάσῃ τριάδι προσαιπτόμενα, εἴτε δύο φύσεις, εἴτε θελήσεις, εἴτε ἐνέργειαι. Οἱ δὲ μὴ οὕτω φρονούντες εὐρίσκονται, φησί, διδόντες τῇ ἁγίᾳ τριάδι τρεῖς μὲν φύσεις ἰδικάς, μίαν δὲ κοινήν.»

³⁷² *Ibid.*, XXIV.10: Εἴρηται μὲν οὖν ἡμῖν πρὸ βραχέος βραχέα περὶ τούτου.

would-be disputant to memorize before proceeding to theological material proper.³⁷³ They include rules to follow when approaching a public religious debate, as well as essential tips and tricks for the beginner to use in order to avoid being duped by their opponents. In addition, the etymologies of book II form an elementary education in using grammar to one's advantage in christological debate. It is worth noting that most of Anastasius's 120 definitions are derived from a single source: the *Etymologikon* by Orion of Thebes, a fifth-century Egyptian grammarian who taught the famed Neoplatonist philosopher Proclus in Alexandria – a work he had perhaps found rummaging through Alexandria's libraries.³⁷⁴

As noted above, books XXII-XXIII are a sort of hodge-podge of supplementary material, filling in perceived gaps found in what came before. Book XXII focuses on certain exegetical issues raised by non-Christians and Nestorians, whereas book XXIII is dedicated to Julianism, i.e. the Miaphysite confession following Julian of Halicarnassus that held the body of Christ to be incorruptible (in contrast to Severianism). Book XXIV, as already noted, supplements book XVII on the problem of individual natures in Trinity and economy, and contains the conclusion to the whole work. Again, it is worth restating, *pace* Uthemann, that because the concluding paragraph of the *Hodegos* describing its compilation ('ἀντὶ σχεδούς τὴν τετράδα κατέχοντες οὕτως ἐξεθέμεθα') is found in the main body of the text and not a scholion, it bears witness to a final stage of redaction in the text.

In view of the foregoing, I suggest that we can discern three textual phases within the *Hodegos*:

³⁷³ Anastasius, *Hodegos*, I.1.1-3: Προγυμνασία κατ' ἐπιτομὴν ὀμματίζουσα τὸν φιλόπονον, περὶ ὧν δεῖ πρὸ πάντων ἐξασκεῖν καὶ τὴν εἶδησιν ἔχειν.

³⁷⁴ See the textual apparatus running throughout book II of the *Hodegos*, as well as the *index fontium* under Orion's name: Anastasius, *Viae Dux*, 434-435. For Orion's text, see F. W. Sturz, *Oriones Thebani etymologicon* (Leipzig, 1820), and, more generally, see Uthemann, *Anastasios Sinaites* 197 n. 3 for bibliography.

1. The composition of Anastasius's *Apologia to Babylon* (Books IV-XV). This constitutes the core part of the *Hodegos*, from which the rest has been built out (composed after 686)
2. The first redaction of the *apologia* with additional textual units into a *Ponēma* on the orthodox faith, appended with a new introduction. (Books III, XVI-XVII, ending somewhere between XVIII and XXI.2) To this he added scholia (redacted and probably composed after 691-2)
3. The redaction of the Πόνημα with additional textual units, internal reference markers, and further scholia, thus creating the *Hodegos* (books I-II, beginning somewhere between XVIII and XXI.2-XXIV) (redacted after 691-2, books I, XXII-XXIV possibly composed after 692, book II unknown)

This configuration would not contradict the process of compilation mentioned in the *Hodegos*'s conclusion, for on my reading, 'by grabbing the quire instead of the codex' (ἀντὶ σχεδούς τὴν τετραδίον κατέχοντες) would refer not to Anastasius compiling every single individual textual unit into the *Hodegos* in one go, but rather, it would refer to the process of compiling additional material to the Πόνημα, itself a pre-existing work. That being said, we cannot rule out that some of the last books to be compiled were actually composed by Anastasius at the moment of its final redaction, like books I, XXI, and XXIV, given the fact that they contain internal reference markers. So too, the redactions were of much larger textual units than Uthemann had previously supposed.

Finally, there is a discrepancy within the scholia of the *Apologia to Babylon* (IV-XV) that may shed light on the process by which Anastasius had added scholia to his different redactions of the text. For, as mentioned above, in a scholion added to the first Alexandrian disputation, Anastasius tells us that he wrote this section of the *Hodegos* from memory while in the desert and deprived of access to a theological library with the books needed to check his readings of key patristic citations. Consequently, in that same scholion he summons 'those who are furnished with patristic books which are genuine – if something odd is mentioned in the present citation – to

correct this afterwards.³⁷⁵ Yet the vast majority of the scholia found in the next disputation (X,2) offer precisely this: full citations of the author and particular work of each entry in the florilegium.³⁷⁶ This leaves us with two options. Either we must admit that not all of the scholia are original to Anastasius (some having been added by a later reader), or that, when Anastasius added the scholia to the florilegium of X,2, he did so in a locale that had the books he lacked while in the desert. Uthemann has convincingly demonstrated that the scholia go back to the text's archetype, and so the former seems less probable.³⁷⁷ If we follow the second option, then we may be able to strengthen the hypothesis that the *Hodegos* underwent two redactions. The scholion of X,1 reveals a first redaction, wherein Anastasius is in the desert without the requisite books, requesting his reader to fact-check them, and the scholia of X,2 reveals a second, wherein Anastasius has access to a theological library and could fact-check his citations for himself. It is impossible to say where this may have been, but it could be either at Mt. Sinai or in Alexandria itself. Given Anastasius's frequent mentions of his activity in the libraries of Alexandria – in particular the patriarchal library of the Kaisarion, to which he had access and with whose staff he was intimate – and the fact that the *Hodegos* is clearly a work intended for Egyptian Chalcedonians, it is possible that he redacted the *Ponēma* and added its last scholia in Alexandria.³⁷⁸ This need not contradict his identification as a monk of Mount Sinai in the title to the Πόνημα, which surely remained his primary place of association.³⁷⁹ It is also possible that Anastasius had travelled to the monasteries of Palestine, for the existence of the *Doctrina Patrum*

³⁷⁵ Anastasius, *Hodegos*, X,2.2.200-203.

³⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, X,2.5.30, 40; 7.87-89, 98-100, 104-105, 112-113, 114-116, 118-120, 122-125, 129-131, 133, 135-137, 138, 142-143, 146-147, 151-154.

³⁷⁷ Uthemann, *Anastasios Sinaites*, 4 n. 2, 274-277

³⁷⁸ He nowhere alludes to the use of libraries outside of Alexandria, though doubtless Mt. Sinai had a serious library. See Anastasius, *Hodegos*, X,1.1.8-9, 2.16-17; X,2.7.187-189; XXII.5.26-29.

³⁷⁹ Compare the third Alexandrian disputation, where Anastasius (in person at the debate) identifies himself as a monk of Mount Sinai; *Hodegos* X,3.37-40.

– which, as we saw in chapter two, was composed by a fellow Chalcedonian dyothelete, possibly of Anastasius’s same milieu – presupposes a vast theological library.

In summary, there is no reason to take a wide view of the composition of the independent textual units that make up the *Hodegos* (namely, at any point between 641 and 686/689), or that all of the independent textual units within the *Hodegos* were redacted at one and the same time between 686/689 and 701. Rather, such clues as we have point us to a period of 686 for the composition of many parts of the text, and to two further redactions after this: the first occurring c. 691-2, and the second at some point between then and Anastasius’s death c. 701. Although we cannot rule out that some parts of the *Hodegos* were composed before 686 and incorporated at those later stages, there is sufficient reason to believe that many of the texts post-date it. Uthemann’s insistence that the scholia could have been added at any time to each independent textual unit is considerably weakened by the internal reference markers found in books I, XVII, and XXI, and also by the nature of the different set of scholia within the Alexandrian disputations. On the other hand, Binggeli’s theory that they were all added in one go in c. 691-692 fails to adequately explain how the conclusion to the *Hodegos* relates to the scholion of the third chapter and the scholion of X,1, each of which seems to describe instead different processes of literary production at different moments of time, and how both of these relate to the conclusion to the *Hodegos*.

Conclusion

The *Hodegos*, therefore, is in its totality an onion-like text, consisting of a core, the *Apologia to Babylon*, and two further layers: first, the *Ponēma* on the economy of Christ, which expanded and clarified some of the ideas presented in the *Apologia*, and second, the *Hodegos*, which added

together a variety of texts to the *Ponēma* that fully fleshed out Anastasius's christological thinking, so as to present its readers with a wide-ranging disputational handbook for any would-be Chalcedonian disputant in Egypt. It is the *Hodegos* which, in this onion-like state, has come down to us today.

If my hypothesis is accepted, it has the result of significantly clarifying the contours of Anastasius's career: although the changed circumstances wrought by the rise of Islamic political hegemony must have influenced him as a polemicist more broadly, the more urgent circumstance that prompted the production the *Hodegos* was the arrival of 'Abd al-'Azīz together with his *chartouarios*, the Severan Athanasius bar Gumoyē, to govern Egypt, as well as Anastasius's likely defeat at the latter's hands in a high-profile christological debate. Anastasius was a dynamic actor of Marwānid Egypt, travelling between the Kaisarion in Alexandria, the court of the emir at Babylon-Fustāt, and even (as we saw in the last chapter) Antioe in the Thebaid. His contemporaries were not Benjamin and Agathon, but rather the same elite Theodosian patriarchs, bishops, and monastics who flourished under the patronage of 'Abd al-'Azīz. Indeed, though it is rare to see them treated together, it is not at all improbable that John of Nikiu, another member of the patriarchal inner circle of John III and author of the well-known *Chronicle*, was one of the nameless bishops who, along with Gregory of al-Kaīs, debated with Anastasius at Alexandria. Far from being an assortment of various texts composed between the 640s and 680s, then, the *Hodegos* was the product of the Marwānid caliphate and the ascendancy of the Theodosian church, which created the conditions both for the zenith and the nadir of his polemical career. In the next chapter, we will examine how these circumstances influenced the development of Anastasius's polemical strategies within the *Hodegos* itself.

Chapter Four: Disputations and Deceptions

ODYSSEUS: Son of a noble father, I too when I was young had a tongue that was inactive but an arm that was active; but when I come to put it to the proof, I see that it is the tongue, not actions, that rules in all things for mortals.

NEOPTOLEMUS: Then what are you telling me to say except lies?

ODYSSEUS: I am telling you to take Philoctetes by a trick (δόλω).

NEOPTOLEMUS: But why must I take him by a trick rather than by persuasion? [...] Do you not think it a shameful thing (αἰσχρὸν) to tell lies?

ODYSSEUS: Not if the lie brings us salvation!’

- Sophocles, *Philoctetes* 96-102, 107-8³⁸⁰

Introduction

The opening scene of Sophocles’s *Philoctetes* contains a short dialogue between Odysseus and Neoptolemus, the son of Achilles, revolving around the themes of deceit and shame. The Trojan seer Helenus, son of Priam, who was captured by the Greeks during the siege of Troy, had prophesied that the city would not fall without the aid of the archer Philoctetes and the bow of Heracles, now in his possession. Philoctetes, however, had been abandoned by the Greeks ten years earlier on the desert island Lemnos while the rest of the armada sailed to Troy. He had suffered a snake bite after accidentally stumbling onto a sacred precinct on the island of Chryse, besetting him with an agonizing wound that would not heal. When the fleet stopped at Lemnos, his cries, we are told, greatly disturbed the encamped soldiers, such that the Greeks decided to sail to Troy without him. Odysseus himself had carried him to a nearby cave, leaving him for dead. But now that they required his aid, Odysseus was faced with the tricky task of enlisting the help of a Philoctetes bent upon revenge for his marooning – against Odysseus above all. To pry the bow from him, Odysseus devised one of the tricks (δόλος) for which he is most famous in the *Odyssey*,

³⁸⁰ Adapted from H. Lloyd-Jones, *Sophocles: Antigone, Women of Trachis, Philoctetes, Oedipus at Colonus* LCL 21, (Cambridge, MA, 1994), 265-7.

according to which Neoptolemus would feign desertion from the Greek army due to their failure to give him the slain Achilles' arms (they had, in fact, gone to Odysseus, whom Neoptolemus is supposed to hate the most).³⁸¹ After gaining his trust under these false pretenses, so the plan goes, Neoptolemus and Odysseus could retrieve the bow and finally conquer Troy. Upon learning of the plan, Neoptolemus opposes it on the basis that resorting to trickery and deceit is shameful (αἰσχρός); he would rather, he tells us, take the bow in an honorable manner, by force. The dialogue, then, focuses on the question of whether it is better to conjure up a ruse or deceit – a shameful act – in order to reap future glory. Odysseus exclaims, 'Give yourself to me for a few hours of shamelessness (ἀναιδές), and later for the rest of time be called the most dutiful of mortals!' and in the end, the young Neoptolemus is persuaded to go along.

Deceit is, to say the least, not typically counted among the Christian virtues. In the seventh century, the monk Maximus Confessor (*d.* 662) associated it above all with the Devil and the Fall. 'He is a thief,' he writes regarding Satan to his disciple Thalassius, 'since he stole paradise from Adam by means of deceit (δόλω).'³⁸² Here, he is followed by Anastasius of Sinai in his anagogical exegesis of the creation story: 'For just as it is written that Adam was deceived by deceit (δόλω), so also Judas carried out his betrayal by means of deceit (δόλω) and a kiss.'³⁸³ Throughout John Climacus's *Ladder of Divine Ascent*, deceit is exclusively associated with the Devil and those whom he inspires to prevent monks from completing all the steps of the ascetic journey.³⁸⁴ Conversely, in a variety of Christian literature, Isaiah 53:9 ('They made his grave with the wicked

³⁸¹ Homer, *Odyssey* 9.19-24: 'I am Odysseus, son of Laertes, renowned among all men for ploys, and my fame meets the sky.' (εἶμι Ὀδυσσεὺς Λαερτιάδης, ὃς πᾶσι δόλοισιν ἀνθρώποισι μέλω, καί μευ κλέος οὐρανὸν ἵκει).

³⁸² Maximus Confessor, *Responses to Thalassios* Q. 62.9 in *St. Maximos the Confessor: On Difficulties in Sacred Scripture: The Responses to Thalassios* trans. Fr. Maximos Constat (Washington, D.C., 2018); see also Q. 41.2 for the devil's deceit as ἀπατής.

³⁸³ Anastasius of Sinai, *Hexaameron* 7a.289-290.

³⁸⁴ John Climacus, *Ladder of Divine Ascent* 3 in PG 88, 665A-669B *et passim*.

and his tomb with the rich, although he had done no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth’) featured prominently as a Christian proof-text for Christ’s sinlessness.³⁸⁵

In eastern Roman historiographical literature from this period, deceit is also associated with barbarian trickery in contrast to Roman integrity, especially Persians. According to Theophylact Simocatta, it is a paramount trait of the overthrown shahanshah Khusrau II (who initially lied to the emperor Maurice about handing over Martyropolis to the Romans in his first embassy of 590), and of the Persian people at large: ‘for the Persian nation is worthless and from the outset their life is one of treachery (δόλος), humbug, and boasting.’³⁸⁶ Both of these approaches to deceit dovetail in the poems of George of Pisidia, e.g. *On the Persian Expedition* and *On the Avar War*, where the Persians are associated with low cunning (πανουργία), tricks (δόλοι), and deceitful counsels (τὰ λοξὰ ταῦτα τοῦ δόλου βουλεύματα).³⁸⁷ As in Maximus, the tricks furnished by the ‘barbarian mind’ find their ultimate source in the Devil, who is likened to a fox, and a central theme of *On the Avar War* is the tricks deployed at each stage in the siege of Constantinople, whether in battle or diplomacy.³⁸⁸ The devil, described as the ‘counselor of trickery’ (ὁ τῶν δόλων ἐκεῖνος ἦν βουληφόρος), takes the place of wily Odysseus, ‘the wanderer of old,’ between the Avar Scylla and Persian Charybdis.³⁸⁹

Although accusations of textual forgery are rife in Christian disputational literature from the sixth and seventh centuries, acts of outright deception and trickery are fairly uncommon. Like

³⁸⁵ See e.g. *Chronicon paschale*, 290; Antiochus Monachus, *Pandects*, 40.27-29; Sophronius of Jerusalem, *Homily* 2.16 in J. Duffy (ed. and trans.) *Homilies of Sophronios of Jerusalem* (Cambridge, MA, 2020), 39.

³⁸⁶ Theophylact of Simocatta, *History* 4.13.1 in M. Whitby and M. Whitby (trans.), *The History of Theophylact Simocatta: An English Translation with Introduction and Notes* (Oxford, 1986), 120; cf. *ibid.*, 4.15.13 in Whitby and Whitby, *The History of Theophylact Simocatta*, 127.

³⁸⁷ George of Pisidia, *On the Persian Expedition* 3.137-225 in A. Pertusi, *Giorgio di Pisidia. Poemi. I. Panegirici epici* (Ettal, 1959).

³⁸⁸ George of Pisidia, *On the Avar War* 113-121, cf. 348-80 in M. Whitby, ‘George of Pisidia’s poem *On the Avar War* (*Bellum Avaricum*): Introduction and Translation’ in *TM* 26 (2022): 526, 535-6.

³⁸⁹ *Ibid.* 207-8 [Whitby 529].

their ancient philosophical predecessors, Christians in late antiquity utilized the dialogue form to define and reinforce theological orthodoxy, as well as to model the ideal manner in which theological disagreements could be resolved.³⁹⁰ Sophisticated chains of argumentation were deployed in order to persuade one's opponents, whether in disputations against Manichaeans, Jews, non-Nicenes, or non-Chalcedonians, in Greek, Syriac, and Latin.³⁹¹ As Alberto Rigolio has observed, theological disputations of this kind embodied 'the cultural conventions and refinements that late antique men and women expected from such events' together with 'the fundamental view that religious differences could be solved in the context of a public debate.'³⁹² Naturally, the aim of these debates was persuasion. In order to truly stamp out heresy, major patristic authorities like Gregory of Nazianzus, for example, held it to be crucial that free, rational assent be given by one's opponents thanks to the rigor of one's argumentation alone, even when more forceful alternatives—like coercion through imperial persecution—were on the table.³⁹³ Likewise, in his *On Lying*—written in response to a question about whether it is permissible to tell lies in order to infiltrate a heretical community and bring them to orthodoxy—Augustine of Hippo declared that lies may never be used, even if purely instructive, to bring someone to the knowledge of truth, such that 'one who is presenting, discussing, or preaching on eternal matters, or even one who is narrating or explaining temporal affairs pertaining to the establishment of religion and piety, may... never lie about them.'³⁹⁴

³⁹⁰ A. Cameron, 'Disputations, Polemical Literature and the Formation of Opinion in the Early Byzantine Period' in *Dispute Poems and Dialogues in the Ancient and Mediaeval Near East: Forms and Types of Literary Debates in Semitic and Related Cultures*, eds. G. J. Reinink and H. L. J. Vanstiphout, *OLA* 42 (Leuven, 1991), 91-108. On this culture of disputation in the late ancient world more broadly, see R. Lim, *Public Disputation, Power, and Social Order in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley, 1995).

³⁹¹ A. Rigolio, *Christians in Conversation: A Guide to Late Antique Dialogues in Greek and Syriac* (Oxford, 2019).

³⁹² Rigolio, *Christians in Conversation*, 38.

³⁹³ Gregory Nazianzus, *Carmen de vita sua* 1280-1304 in C. Jungck, *Gregor von Nazianz, De vita sua: Einleitung, Text, Übersetzung, Kommentar* (Heidelberg, 1974), 116. See also P. van Nuffelen, *Penser la tolérance durant l'Antiquité tardive. Les conférences de l'Ecole pratique des hautes études* (Paris, 2018), ch. 2.

³⁹⁴ Augustine of Hippo, *De Mendacio* CSEL 41 (Vienna, 1800), 436-7: ut ad eam ipsem licet igitur uel dissertori ac disputatori atque praedicatori rerum aeternarum uel narratori aut pronuntiatori rerum temporalium ad aedificandam

It is thus striking that one encounters a radically different attitude to deceit and trickery in the context of public religious disputations throughout Anastasius's *magnum opus*, the *Hodegos*. As was shown in the chapter three, this text is an intricate disputational handbook for Chalcedonians, in which Anastasius offered various models, strategies, and arguments for his disciples to emulate in debates against the Egyptian Miaphysites of the Marwānid caliphate. It is saturated with the dialogue form, and in particular with what we might call christological *progymnasmata*, i.e. real and imagined dialogues whose arguments his readers are to study and use at the right time in a debate with an opponent.³⁹⁵ The longest and most celebrated within the text are Anastasius's records of the disputations he held with high-profile Theodosians in Alexandria ca. 680-5. Each dialogue is included so as to memorialize a different σκόπος ('goal'), i.e. a particular strategy to be used for achieving the ideal outcome of winning in debate against the Theodosians. Strikingly, the 'goals' set out in the first three debates celebrate a particular use of deception in order to embarrass one's opponents, with the aim of maximizing their public scorn and shame.

When set against the backdrop of the other seventh century authors listed above, or other Chalcedonian examples like Maximus Confessor's *Disputation with Pyrrhus* (which reads like an ordinary Platonic dialogue), the disputational strategies pursued in the *Hodegos* seem rather idiosyncratic; arguably, even, condemned by luminaries such as Augustine and Gregory of Nazianzus. But, as was argued in chapter two, Anastasius's polemical career emerged in the milieu of Chalcedonian decline and Theodosian ascendancy at the advent of Marwānid rule. The

religionem atque pietatem pertinentium... mentiri autem numquam licet. See P. van Nuffelen, 'Prepared for All Occasions: The *Trophies of Damascus* and the *Bonwetsch Dialogue* in *Dialogues and Debate from Late Antiquity to Byzantium*, ed. A. Cameron and N. Gaul (Abingdon, 2017), 72 and E. T. Hermanowicz, 'Augustine on Lying' *Speculum* 93:3 (2018): 699-727.

³⁹⁵ In addition to the dialogues preserved in *Hodegos* X,1-X,4, see the dialogues embedded in e.g. *Hodegos* XII, XIII, XX, XXIII, in addition to the widespread use of the related form of question-and-answer *passim*.

emphasis on using tricks in debates makes much more sense when placed in this context, for the loss of Byzantine political hegemony and the Marwānid patronage of the Theodosians must have catalyzed new developments in the nature of Chalcedonian disputations. Islamic elites were likely indifferent to the christological minutiae that divided Christian confessions from each other, and the Theodosians had from 685 gained the patronage of the emir's court, such that the goalposts must have shifted for Chalcedonians who wanted to achieve 'victory' in a debate. In these new circumstances, Anastasius sought to demonstrate superiority of his christological confession less by means of traditional dialectic than by maximizing the public humiliation of his opponents.

Indeed, it can be no coincidence that Anastasius produced his *Hodegos* at roughly the same time as new fictional dialogues featuring Christians of various confessions and Islamic emirs began to emerge in the caliphate, like the *Disputation of John and the Emir* and the *Controversy of John*.³⁹⁶ Yet in neither of these texts do we encounter the use of deception or tricks. Although Anastasius's writings are certainly not free from embellishment, the *Hodegos* is of greater value than the idealized portraits of debate found in these fictional dialogues at least insofar as it claims to give accounts of real-life debates and provides us, beyond these, with the actual intellectual content on which disputants focused their attention in preparation for debate and the strategies that they thought best to use in them.³⁹⁷

To be sure, there is more to the polemical strategy of Anastasius of Sinai than just the use of tricks in debates, as Bastien Dumont has shown in his meticulously researched thesis on the role of polemical discourse in the construction and transformation of social and religious identity in

³⁹⁶ A. Cameron, 'New Themes and Styles in Greek Literature,' in *The Byzantine and Early Islamic Near East: Problems in the Literary Source Material*, ed. A. Cameron and L. Conrad (Princeton, NJ, 1992), 98-99.

³⁹⁷ D. G. K. Taylor, 'The Disputation Between a Muslim and a Monk of Bēt Ḥālē: Syriac Text and Annotated English Translation' in *Christsein in der islamischen Welt: Festschrift für Martin Tamcke zum 60. Geburtstag*. Ed. S. H. Griffith and S. Grebenstein (Wiesbaden, 2015), 187-242. H.G. Evelyn-White, *The Monasteries of the Wadi 'N Natrûn, Part I: New Coptic Texts from the Monastery of Saint Macarius* (New York, 1926), 171-6.

Chalcedonian texts from the late seventh and early eighth century Near East.³⁹⁸ But much of the content of the *Hodegos*'s christological polemic recapitulates the scholastic debates of earlier centuries that had continued to define the contours of theological debate between Chalcedonians and Severans. In other words, the particular arguments and points of debate do not appear to have changed drastically since the days of Severus of Antioch and Leontius of Byzantium, even as individual problems gained or lost currency within later debates.³⁹⁹ Where Anastasius differs from his contemporaries and those who came before is not so much in content as in form, and it is this aspect that I think is more clearly linked to the changing institutional circumstances in which Chalcedonian Christians found themselves. As the formation of new power and patronage relations among Egyptian Christians developed in the Marwānid era, it engendered corresponding shifts in their polemical strategies.

This chapter thus aims to chart out those unconventional strategies as memorialized within the four disputations that Anastasius held with key Theodosians at Alexandria in the period ca. 680-685. First, I examine the role of shame in prose disputations from late antiquity, together with Anastasius's own reflections upon the most relevant rhetorical strategies in the *Hodegos* for shaming an opponent in debate. Next, I set out the key features of the Alexandrian disputations themselves, highlighting Anastasius's uses of deception throughout, before turning to an analysis of them in the broader context of late ancient christological dialogues. In particular, I suggest that the *Hodegos* furnishes us with evidence for new developments in Chalcedonian disputational literature and the use of the dialogue form in the early Islamic period that bear witness to the difficulties made possible by Chalcedonian decline and Theodosian ascendancy. Instead of setting

³⁹⁸ Dumont, *La polémique chalcédonienne*.

³⁹⁹ See e.g. the case of the revived interest in christological questions that emerged during the late sixth-century 'Probus affair' in eighth-century Syrian Miaphysite circles as reconstructed in Fiori, 'A Geological Approach to Syriac Miaphysite Christology,' 186-227.

out detailed, technical arguments against his opponents in public debates as many sixth and seventh-century Chalcedonian disputants did, Anastasius emphasized the use of tricks, ruses, and deception in order to heap as much public scorn on his opponents as possible. Although he developed careful and minute arguments against Severanism and Julianism elsewhere in the *Hodegos*, Anastasius does not prioritize them in his accounts of his debates at Alexandria. While we cannot definitively answer the thorny question of whether Anastasius's representations of the debates perfectly corresponded to the reality on the ground (although there seems little reason to doubt that the debates did, in fact, occur), they nevertheless clearly represent the ideal mode of disputation recommended by Anastasius to his audience. For that reason, they are crucial for helping us understand what he viewed as most essential for a would-be Chalcedonian disputant operating in Marwānid Egypt; namely, that performance, shaming, and popular assent were vital to disputational success. With the caveat that we of course cannot assume as simple correspondence to reality, and conceding that Anastasius's version of events likely covered up any embarrassments suffered by himself, I proceed by treating them as a more-or-less accurate representation of the modes of disputation that Anastasius sought to idealize for his readership, and thus a more-or-less accurate representation of what he himself attempted in them. By way of conclusion, I suggest that the reason for this was that Anastasius viewed the persuasion of his high-profile opponents to be something of a non-starter; instead, his deceptions were designed to impress the crowd. To that end, I suggest that Anastasius was concerned with the conversion of 'simple believers,' but not through philosophical argumentation as such. Instead, the superiority of Chalcedon was demonstrated to the average person through the embarrassment of its detractors.

Shame, Performance, and Disputational Personae

Before we can comprehend Anastasius's preferred rhetorical strategies, a word is in order about the use of shame in prose dialogues and disputations and about some of Anastasius's other favored stratagems; in particular, *prosopopoeia*, which is related to trickery in somewhat complex ways.

Often signaled by the *topos* of reducing one's opponent to silence, shame is a standard feature of literary dialogues and prose disputations, signaling the defeat of an opponent. For our period, it is best attested in polemical works against Jews during the sixth and seventh centuries.⁴⁰⁰ Thus, in the *Dialogue of Timothy and Aquila* (ca. second half of the sixth century), after the Christian interlocutor introduces a proof-text from the book of Daniel that stuns his Jewish interlocutor, we read in the final chapter:

And the Jew remained silent as if for an entire hour, not speaking.

The Christian said to him, 'Have you understood all these things, oh man of God?'

The Jew said: 'I have.'

The Christian said: 'What do you think about this?'

The Jew said: 'You have persuaded (ἐπεισας) me in every way in respect of truth...'⁴⁰¹

It is also found in Anastasius's own writings. In book six of the *Hexaemeron*, he interrupts his commentary of Gen. 1:26 ('Let us make man in our image and likeness') to note its usefulness in debates with Jews. He tells his reader that he once presented this verse, complete with trinitarian interpretation, to a 'Hebrew,' and that he has held many, often spur-of-the-moment, disputations

⁴⁰⁰ Y. Papadogiannakis, 'Shaming an Opponent in Debate: The Polemical Use of Emotions in Some Anti-Jewish Dialogues' in *Jewish-Christian Disputations in Antiquity and the Middle Ages: Fictions and Realities*, ed. S. Morlet (Leiden, 2019), 143-156; cf. Dumont, *La polémique chalcédonienne*, 162-4, 172-3, 238-40, 272.

⁴⁰¹ R.G. Robertson, *The Dialogue of Timothy and Aquila: A Critical Text, Introduction to the Manuscript Evidence, and an Inquiry into the Sources and Literary Relationships* (Cambridge, MA (Diss.), 1986), 57.1-5. For the date, see V. Déroche, 'La polémique anti-judaïque au VI^{ème} et VII^{ème} siècle: Un memento inédit; Les Képhalaia' *TM* 11 (1991): 276, though with the reservations of S. Morlet, 'The *Dialogue of Timothy and Aquila*: A Catechetical Handbook?' in *Ancient and Medieval Disputations between Jews and Christians: Fiction and Reality* (Leuven, 2018), 63-96.

with them. When his Jewish interlocutor responded by saying that the divine king could, like any king, use the royal plural, Anastasius countered,

‘Why then does God never appear to use the expression *Let us make* before the creation of man in any act whatsoever, saying it only regarding man and again after regarding his wife, when he said, *Let us make a helper for him?*’ To this, there was no word from the Jew, nor again a counterargument.⁴⁰²

This *topos* also occurs in the mid-sixth century *Disputation with a Manichaean*, which claims to record a series of four staged disputations (ἡ διάλεκτος) held in 527 at imperial command between Photinus, ‘a champion of the Manichaean faith,’ and the East Syrian philosopher and theologian Paul the Persian. On the fourth and final day of debate, with Paul having successfully answered all of Photinus’ questions, we learn that ‘growing silent, the Manichaean did not answer.’⁴⁰³ Likewise, John of Ephesus’s *Life* of the famed Persian disputant Simeon of Beth Arsham—who is celebrated for his ability to ‘inflict shame’ on the ‘Nestorians’—recounts a debate he held with the east Syrian catholicus Babai (sed. 497-502/3) in the presence of a *marzban*, through whom Simeon transmitted aporetic questions that Babai could not answer. The first debate culminates thus: ‘when the catholicus received the questions put by the *marzban*, with the whole assembly of his bishops, they closed their lips and hung their heads, and could not utter a word.’⁴⁰⁴

We also find it deployed in a Coptic disputational text set in the Marwānid era, the *Controversy of John*, which portrays a debate at the court of the governor ‘Abd al-‘Azīz (r. 685-705) between a Jew, a Chalcedonian, and the Theodosian patriarch John III (sed. 681-689) over

⁴⁰² Anastasius of Sinai, *Hexaameron* 6.379-384 in *Anastasius of Sinai: Hexaameron* ed. and trans. C. A. Kuehn and J. D. Baggarly, S.J., *OCA* 278 (Rome, 2007).

⁴⁰³ *Disputationes Photini cum Paulo* 529A in *PG* 88. See S. N. C. Lieu, *Manichaeism in the Later Roman Empire and Medieval China* (Tübingen, 1992), 211-15.

⁴⁰⁴ E. Brooks, *John of Ephesus: Lives of the Eastern Saints I PO* 7 (Paris, 1923), 151.

the true religion. This debate arose after a certain Jewish man had died without any heirs, so that his estate passed into the treasury in Babylon-Fustāt. Among his property was found a fragment of the True Cross in a casket of gold and silver, which John III wanted to preserve. When, however, the emir demanded three thousand *dinars* for it, John III asked him how many thieves he had condemned to death since becoming governor of Egypt, and how much he valued the ‘crosses whereon the thieves were hanged.’⁴⁰⁵ When the emir replied that they were worthless and good only for burning, John III asked, ‘If it was a thief whom the Jews killed, then why dost thou demand these three thousand gold pieces for this little piece of wood,’ and ‘why, o King, was not this (cross) burnt, if it was a thief who was hanged thereon?’⁴⁰⁶ At this, ‘the Governor was silent for a long time, not knowing what to reply. But when he recovered himself, he said: “Verily I am like a dumb man before thee.”’⁴⁰⁷

Shame can be demonstrated in other ways, too. In the conclusion to Maximus Confessor’s *Disputation with Pyrrhus*, which claims to record a real-life debate between Maximus and the deposed monothelete patriarch of Constantinople Pyrrhus held at Carthage in 645, the latter is finally persuaded that monenergism is untrue, and admits to Maximus:

In truth, the investigation into the operations has shown the one operation to be absurd, no matter which way it is spoken of with respect to Christ. I ask forgiveness both for myself and for my predecessors. For we were led to these absurd thoughts and reasonings out of ignorance. I implore you to find a way that this alien absurdity might be destroyed, and the memory of my predecessors preserved.⁴⁰⁸

⁴⁰⁵ *Controversy of John* fragment 3 [Evelyn-White 175].

⁴⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰⁸ Maximus Confessor, *Disputatio cum Pyrrho*, PG 91 352C: Ἐπ’ ἀληθείας, καὶ ἡ περὶ τῶν ἐνεργειῶν ζήτησις ἄτοπον ἔδειξε τὴν μίαν ἐνέργειαν, καθ’ οἷονδὴποτε τρόπον ἐπὶ Χριστοῦ λεγομένην. Ἀλλὰ συγγνώμην αἰτῶ καὶ ὑπὲρ ἑαυτοῦ, καὶ τῶν προλαβόντων. Ἐξ ἀγνοίας γὰρ εἰς τὰς ἀτόπους ταύτας ἐξηνέχθημεν ἐννοίας καὶ ἐπιχειρήσεις, καὶ παρακαλῶ εὐρεῖν τρόπον, ἵνα καὶ ἡ ἐπίσακτος αὕτη ἀτοπία καταργηθῇ, καὶ ἡ μνήμη τῶν προλαβόντων φυλαχθῇ.

In the case of both Pyrrhus and the fictional Jewish interlocutor of the *Trophies of Damascus*, the defeated opponent signals that they have been persuaded thanks to the argumentation of the author. Though these are doubtless rhetorical embellishments, they nevertheless signal to their readers certain expectations about the nature and ends of rational debate, where the defeated party experiences shame but may nevertheless be reconciled to his opponent, embracing the orthodoxy of the author.

In Anastasius's *Hodegos*, however, shame is not merely a motif, tacked on at the end of a dialogue or perceived in passing as an indicator of triumph by such *topoi* as silence or by a statement of conversion. Instead, it functions as the primary goal of disputation from the outset. Anastasius intentionally foregrounds shaming in his manual of disputational rules found in the first book of the *Hodegos*. This book functions as an introduction to the foundations of religious disputation. At its opening, he epitomizes what he considered the most important rules of engagement to be for debating with heretics and non-Christians.⁴⁰⁹ Entitled 'A brief, preparatory training revealing to the *philoponos* what one must train in and possess the form of knowledge of before all else,'⁴¹⁰ the first section lists them in bullet-point form. It will suffice to cite the first few here:

⁴⁰⁹ A *philoponos* was a member of a lay religious confraternity devoted to monastic and ecclesial service, either as a lay representative connected with a monastery, or as part of a guild in service to the patriarchal *curia* to help with liturgical services, e.g. in lighting the candles. Space does not permit to us to further investigate the identity of Anastasius' *philoponoi*, though it appears that they could fit either category; perhaps the former is more likely. For *philoponoi* in general, see E. Wipszycka, 'Les confreries religieuses en Egypte chrétienne' in *Proceedings of the XIIIth International Congress of Papyrology* (Toronto, 1970), 511-524; for *philoponoi* as lay representatives of monasteries engaged in disputations in Alexandria during the sixth century, see E. J. Watts, *Riot in Alexandria: Tradition and Group Dynamics in Late Antique Pagan and Christian Communities* (Berkeley, 2010), 127-8.

⁴¹⁰ Anastasius, *Hodegos* I.1.1-3: Σὺν θεῷ. Προγυμνασία κατ' ἐπιτομὴν ὁμματίζουσα τὸν φιλόπονον, περὶ ὧν δεῖ πρὸ πάντων ἐξασκεῖν καὶ τὴν εἶδησιν ἔχειν.

One must first of all possess a blessed life and the indwelling Spirit of God.⁴¹¹

One must know the [philosophical/theological] definitions by heart, especially the more necessary ones.⁴¹²

One must know with precision the thoughts of one's opponent, and to look closely into their writings – for often, we can put them to shame (καταισχύνειν) by them.⁴¹³

Do not forget this either: whenever we constrain the opponent through a question, he will struggle to change the conversation to another question, which you must not allow.⁴¹⁴

One must, prior to the discussion, demand an oath from one's opponent, because, once we know his own [view], he does not treat any word that he speaks with disdain.⁴¹⁵

Shame is already given prominence here, appearing as the third rule in Anastasius's list. Perhaps surprisingly, he does encourage his *philoponoi* to read the works of Miaphysites, but only to scrutinize them for details which they may exploit to the end of shaming them.

Although shame is not explicitly mentioned in the second rule, he expands upon it later in book II, where he provides the reader with his list of essential philosophical definitions (à la Anastasius I of Antioch's *Philosophical Chapters* and the first part of John of Damascus's *Fount of Knowledge*) and there shows its relevance shaming an opponent in debate.⁴¹⁶ The most fundamental tool in the toolkit of any would-be disputant, he insists, is the ability to discriminate between the definitions of key terms according to a threefold pattern: asking, 'what is X?', 'what is X's etymology?', and 'In how many senses can X be conceived?'.⁴¹⁷ The one who 'learnedly uses the definitions,' we are told, 'will easily be able to reduce rhetors and those cunning in words to silence in debates. For whenever he is asked, 'What is *logos*?' and 'For what purpose is it called

⁴¹¹ Ibid., I.1.4-5: ὅτι δεῖ προηγουμένως βίον σεμνὸν καὶ τὸ πνεῦμα τοῦ θεοῦ ἔνοικον ἔχειν.

⁴¹² Ibid., I.1.6-7: ὅτι δεῖ τοὺς ὄρους καὶ μάλιστα τοὺς ἀναγκαιοτέρους ἐπίστασθαι ἐκ στήθους·

⁴¹³ Ibid., I.1.8-10: ὅτι δεῖ γινώσκειν κατὰ ἀκρίβειαν τὰ φρονήματα τῶν ἐξ ἐναντίας καὶ ἐγκύπτειν ταῖς τούτων γραφαῖς· πολλάκις γὰρ ἐξ αὐτῶν αὐτοὺς καταισχύνειν δυνάμεθα·

⁴¹⁴ Ibid., I.1.36-40: Μὴ λανθάνετω δὲ ἡμᾶς μηδὲ τοῦτο· ὅτι, ἐπὰν στενώσωμεν δι' ἐρωτήσεως τὸν δι' ἐναντίας, ἀγωνίζεται πρὸς ἑτέραν ἐρώτησιν μετενέγκαι τὸν λόγον, ὅπερ οὐ δεῖ ἀνέχεσθαι·

⁴¹⁵ Ibid., I.1.41-43: ὅτι χρὴ πρὸ τῆς διαλέξεως ἀπαιτεῖν ὄρκον τὸν ἐξ ἐναντίας, ὅτι οὐ καταπατεῖ τὸ ἴδιον συνειδὸς ἐν οἰωδήποτε ῥήματι, ᾧ λαλεῖ·

⁴¹⁶ Anastasius, *Hodegos* II; K.-H. Uthemann, 'Die "Philosophischen Kapitel" des Anastasius I. von Antiochien (559-598),' OCP 46:2 (1980): 343-360.

⁴¹⁷ E.g. Anastasius, *Hodegos* II.1.26-7: Τί ἐστὶν ὄρος; καί, Κατὰ τί εἴρηται ὄρος; καί, Ὅσαχῶς νοεῖται ὁ ὄρος;

logos?' and 'In how many ways is *logos* conceived?', the opponent, when he is at a loss to pronounce the definitions, is put to shame in what follows as not knowing anything.'⁴¹⁸

Similarly, another of Anastasius's rules for debate is 'One must also know the chronographers, both that this father lived at such a time, and when was such and such a heresy.'⁴¹⁹ In book V, Anastasius signaled to his readers that knowledge of the distinction between hypostasis and ousia set out at the Council of Nicaea (and its development by the Cappadocian Fathers), as well as (erroneously) its condemnation of 'Sabellius the Libanian who asserted there to be one hypostasis of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,' is essential to 'heaping shame upon the Theodosians and Jacobites, who say that essence, i.e. nature, and hypostasis are the same, as we are about to show [i.e. in his accounts of the Alexandrian disputations].'⁴²⁰

Concomitant with the capacity to deploy flurries of questions about philosophical definitions is the strategy of using 'practical demonstrations' in debates:

The modes of debate are two: the one through written demonstrations, the other through practical proofs, the latter being both stronger and truer. For, perhaps, the words of their writings are also falsified. Hence it is to be seen that if you bring forward a citation to your opponent, at once he also produces a variant citation. Both the Jew and the heretic do this.

⁴¹⁸ Anastasius of Sinai, *Hodegos* II.1.40-6: ὁ φιλοπόνως πρᾶττων τοὺς ὄρους ῥήτορας καὶ δεινοὺς πολυλόγους δυνήσεται εὐχερῶς ἐν ταῖς διαλέξεσιν ἀποστομίζειν. Ἐπὶν γὰρ ἐρωτηθῆ, «Τί ἐστι λόγος;» καί, «Κατὰ τί εἴρηται λόγος;» καί, «Ὅσαχῶς ὁ λόγος;» καὶ ἀπορήσει εἰπεῖν τοὺς ὄρους ὁ δι' ἐναντίας, καὶ ἐν τοῖς λοιποῖς λοιπὸν καταισχύνεται ὡς μηδὲν ἐπιστάμενος. Cf. Jacob of Edessa, *Memorandum* (ὑπομνήστικον) to *Thomas the Stone-Cutter* preserved in BL Add. MS 12,172 fols. 77b-78a, where Jacob utilizes a similar strategy, in which he refuses to answer theological questions raised by certain Nestorian monks until they first answer five riddle-like questions. In each question, Jacob gives the definition of essential philosophical terms for use in christology (like 'essence,' or 'property'), but without the word itself, which he asks the Nestorians to surmise.

⁴¹⁹ Anastasius, *Hodegos* I.1.34-6: Δεῖ καὶ τοὺς χρονογράφους ἐπίστασθαι, καὶ τὸ κατὰ ποίους καιροὺς οὗτος ὁ πατήρ, καὶ πότε ἡ δεῖνα καὶ ἡ δεῖνα αἵρεσις ἦν.

⁴²⁰ Anastasius, *Hodegos* V.1.18-24: Κατέκρινε δὲ καὶ Σαβέλλιον τὸν Λιβυκὸν φάσκοντα μίαν ὑπόστασιν εἶναι πατὸρ καὶ υἱοῦ καὶ ἁγίου πνεύματος, τρεῖς ὑποστάσεις κηρύξασα ἢ αὐτὴ θεόφρων σύνοδος, μίαν δὲ οὐσίαν. Ἐξ ἧς μάλιστα καὶ ἔστι καταισχύναι τοὺς Θεοδοσιανοὺς καὶ Ἰακωβίτας ταυτὸν λέγοντας εἶναι τὴν οὐσίαν ἧτοι φύσιν καὶ τὴν ὑπόστασιν, καθὼς μέλλομεν δεῖξαι.

Therefore, let the one who is able [to argue] through practical demonstrations be armed the more against his opponents.⁴²¹

In a disputational culture rife with accusations of textual falsification, Anastasius notes that a more effective means of winning a debate includes the use of practical demonstrations.⁴²² By ‘practical demonstrations’ Anastasius here means the use of illustrations. For example, in book twelve of the *Hodegos*, Anastasius relates that the best rhetorical ‘arm’ with which to refute Theopaschitism is through using an icon of Christ’s crucifixion. He repeats his earlier injunction about practical proofs (‘So then, the heretics and unbelievers are more thoroughly put to shame through practical things’) and tells us that on one occasion debating with Theodosians and Gaïanites (Egyptian Severans and Julianists, respectively), he noticed his opponents endeavoring, by means of scriptural citations, ‘to show that the divine Word was passible and mortal together with his own flesh.’⁴²³ But with little headway being made in the debate, he realized that a change in tactic was necessary. ‘We no longer dealt with them through words,’ he recounts, ‘but through practical figures and illustrations, and we sketched upon a tablet the crucifixion of the Master and an inscription that we shall draw after the citations.’⁴²⁴ After listing some of the common scriptural

⁴²¹ Ibid., I.1.27-34: Σκοποὶ διαλέξεώς εἰσι δύο, ὁ μὲν διὰ γραφικῶν ῥήσεων, ὁ δὲ διὰ πραγματικῶν παραστάσεων, ὃς καὶ ἰσχυρότερος καὶ ἀληθέστερός ἐστι· τὰ μὲν γὰρ ῥήματα τῶν γραφῶν ἴσως καὶ ὑπονοθεύονται. Ὅθεν ἔστιν ιδέσθαι, ὅτι, <εἰ> χρῆσιν προφέρεις τῷ δι’ ἐναντίας, κάκεινος εὐθέως ἑτέραν χρῆσιν προφέρει, καὶ ὁ αἰρετικός, καὶ ὁ Ἰουδαῖος· ὅθεν ὁ δυνάμενος διὰ πραγματικῶν ἀποδείξεων μᾶλλον ὀπλιζέσθω πρὸς τοὺς ἐναντίους.

⁴²² For the phenomenon of forgery in Christian late antiquity more generally, see W. Speyer, *Die literarische Fälschung im heidnischen und christlichen Altertum ein Versuch ihrer Deutung* (Munich, 1971), esp. 218-303; in the seventh century specifically, see S. Wessel, ‘Literary Forgery and the Monothelete Controversy: Some Scrupulous Uses of Deception’ *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies* 42 (2001), 201-220.

⁴²³ Ibid., XII.1.24-27: ὡς εἶδομεν αὐτοὺς ἐκ τοῦ σκοποῦ τῶν χρήσεων, ὧν προέφερον, ἀγωνιζομένους παθητὸν δεῖξαι καὶ τὸν θεὸν λόγον καὶ θνητὸν μετὰ τῆς ἰδίας αὐτοῦ σαρκός

⁴²⁴ Ibid., XII.1.27-30: οὐκέτι λοιπὸν διὰ ῥημάτων, ἀλλὰ διὰ πραγματικῶν σχημάτων καὶ ὑποδειγμάτων πρὸς αὐτοὺς ἐχρησάμεθα ἐν πυξίῳ τινὶ διαχαράξαντες τὴν τοῦ δεσπότου σταύρωσιν καὶ τινὰ ἐπιγραφὴν, ἣντινα μετὰ τὰς χρήσεις διαγράφομεν. On this passage, see A. Kartsonis, *Anastasis: The Making of an Image* (Princeton, NJ, 1986), 40-67; L. Brubaker and J. Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era c. 680-850* (Cambridge, 2011), 60.

prooftexts that Theodosians and Gaianites procure in such debates over Christ's passion, he repeats,

since we wanted to record as if on a stele (στηλιτεύειν) the malice and poison hidden within their soul(s), we no longer prepared ourselves for battle with them through words and texts, but rather through practical means with a model and an actual (ἐνυπόστατος) figure, by means of which, once they had been sufficiently put to shame, they were stopped in their tracks. For as I said before, we formed an image of the honored cross on a tablet together with an inscription, and, setting our finger upon it, we cross-examined them. And the inscription read 'God the Word, rational soul, and body.'⁴²⁵

At once, the verb στηλιτεύειν points to a public context, suggesting that live illustrations were used in front of a crowd as a tactic aimed in part at rendering technical christological argumentation comprehensible to the laity, in addition to being a clever way of constraining his opponents by forcing them to choose from pre-selected options. Anastasius then asks his opponents which of the three in the inscription died on the cross, and 'together the heretics were finally put to shame and said, "The body of Christ died."' In response, he asks, "His soul did not die?" and they replied, "Heaven forbid!"⁴²⁶ Rather than stopping here, however, Anastasius immediately launches into an eristic diatribe, beginning with, 'Then, with a jest and turning our nose up at them, we said, "Are you not ashamed that you call his soul, which was created by him, impassible and immortal, while you call the divine Word who created it *Holy, immortal one who suffered and died for us*, thereby insulting the creator over what was created?' Anastasius then repeats the phrase 'Are you not

⁴²⁵ Ibid., XII.3.4-12: βουλόμενοι ἡμεῖς τὸν δόλον καὶ τὸν ἰὸν τὸν κεκρυμμένον ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ αὐτῶν στηλιτεῦσαι οὐκέτι ῥηματικῶς καὶ γραφικῶς πρὸς αὐτοὺς παρεταξάμεθα, ἀλλὰ πραγματικῶς διὰ παραδείγματος καὶ σχήματος ἐνυποστάτου, ἐν ᾧ καὶ ἰκανῶς καταισχυθέντες ἐνετράπησαν. Ὡς γὰρ προεῖπον, ἐν πυξίῳ τινὶ τὸν τίμιον σταυρὸν μετὰ καὶ ἐπιγραφῆς τινος ἐξετυπώσαμεν καὶ τὸν δάκτυλον ἐπιτιθέντες διηρωτῶμεν αὐτούς. Ἦν δὲ ἡ ἐπιγραφή· «Θεὸς λόγος καὶ ψυχὴ λογικὴ καὶ σῶμα».

⁴²⁶ Ibid., XII.3.24-28: Ταῦτα ὑφ' ἡμῶν ἐρωτηθέντες ὁμοῦ καὶ ἐσχάτως αἰσχυθέντες οἱ αἰρετικοὶ λέγουσι· «Τὸ σῶμα ἀπέθανε τὸ τοῦ Χριστοῦ.» Λέγομεν πάλιν πρὸς αὐτούς· «Μὴ ἀπέθανε ἢ ἐνεκρώθη ἢ ἔπαθεν ἢ ψυχὴ αὐτοῦ;» Λέγουσιν ἐκεῖνοι· «Μὴ γένοιτο.»

ashamed?’ a dozen more times with related questions. The chapter ends after this diatribe, and the responses of the Severan and Gaïanite interlocutors are not given. Although he had already won the debate and gotten his opponents to admit that only Christ’s body had died and not the Word in itself, Anastasius continued to berate them to underscore his victory. He notes that he did so intentionally to humiliate them, later stating that whenever Egyptian Miaphysites would ‘set forth to us a number of tortured little words and extracts and fragments of citations... we would put forward the said honored cross and the three-worded inscription on it against them as an invincible trophy, satirizing and chirping at them.’⁴²⁷

Finally, another essential stratagem for Anastasius is *prosopopoeia*, i.e., impersonation, or the assumption of a persona in the midst of debate. It is listed as one of the other ‘rules’ from book I:

We must be on guard against every Monophysite and candidly anathematize whoever does not confess Christ to be true God. And so we make our own a Jew’s persona or that of Paul of Samosata, and demand from him what is clear from this, that Christ is the Most High God, just as Ammonius did against Julian of Halicarnassus.⁴²⁸

In the *Hodegos*, the assumption of a disputational persona is indicated by the phrase *οἰκειοποιεῖσθαι πρόσωπον*. It was a widely practiced rhetorical device in the *progymnasma* of the imperial period, but also in Christian texts of late antiquity, where the student ‘was asked to produce an imitation of someone speaking in a particular situation emphasizing the character

⁴²⁷ Ibid., XII.4.6-8, 15-17: Πάλιν γάρ, ἥνίκα ἡμῖν τὰ χρησίδια καὶ ῥησίδια καὶ κλεψύδρια προεβάλοντο [...] ἡμεῖς τὸν προκείμενον τίμιον σταυρὸν καὶ τὴν ἐν αὐτῷ τρισάκνυμον ἐπιγραφὴν κατ’ αὐτῶν εἰς τρόπιον ἀήτητον προεβάλομεθα, διακωμωδοῦντες αὐτοὺς καὶ τερετίζοντες.

⁴²⁸ Ibid., I.1.57-62: ὅτι δεῖ ἡμᾶς προασφαλιζεσθαι τὸν Μονοφυσίτην, καὶ ἀναθεματίζειν εἰλικρινῶς τὸν μὴ ὁμολογοῦντα θεὸν ἀληθινὸν τὸν Χριστόν, εἶθ’ οὕτως οἰκειοποιεῖσθαι πρόσωπον Ἰουδαίου ἢ τὸ τοῦ Σαμοσατέως Παύλου, καὶ εἰσπράττειν αὐτὸν τὸ πόθεν δῆλον, ὅτι θεὸς ὕψιστός ἐστιν ὁ Χριστός, καθὼς ὁ Ἀμμώνιος πεποίηκε πρὸς τὸν Ἀλικαρνασέα.

and/or emotion of the impersonated person.’⁴²⁹ In our context, it was used when an impasse was reached in an argument, e.g. over disagreements in terminology. One interlocutor would announce to their opponent that they intend to assume a disputational persona in order to clarify a line of argument under consideration. They, in turn, argue from the perspective of that persona until stated otherwise. To make the strategy more effective, this persona is often an imaginary interlocutor whom both participants would consider heretical; hence Anastasius’s mention of a Jew’s persona or that of Paul of Samosata, whom his Miaphysite opponents would also oppose. Indeed, this is the tactic at play in the citation given later in the *Hodegos*. Anastasius quotes at length an otherwise unattested dialogue between an Ammonius and Julian of Halicarnassus regarding the corruptibility of Christ’s body, in which he praises Ammonius for opting to assume a disputational persona.⁴³⁰ Because Ammonius, ‘the most experienced of all the exegetes,’ knew that Julian was ‘running towards appearance and illusion’ regarding Christ’s body, he chose to ‘mortify the Halicarnassens by subduing him with this method – he took up and adopted the persona of Paul of Samosata.’⁴³¹ After stating Julian’s views in brief, Ammonius tells Julian precisely how he will proceed in response:

‘Look, I am assuming and taking up the Samosatans’ persona, or rather, the persona of the unbelieving Jew Philo the philosopher.’ For he [*sc.* Philo] also engaged in a refutation against Mnason the apostolic disciple concerning Christ’s divinity at that time, and he began to cross-examine Mnason, saying...⁴³²

⁴²⁹ Rigolio, *Christians in Conversation*, 19.

⁴³⁰ It is tempting to identify this Ammonius with the famed Alexandrian Aristotelian and associate of John Philoponus; see Zaganas, *L’Hexameron d’Anastase le Sinaïte*, 93-4. If so, this disputation may have occurred ca. 518-526, between the schism of Severus and Julian and the publication of Damascius’s *Life of Isidore*, by which point he appears to be dead.

⁴³¹ Anastasius, *Hodegos* XIII.10.1-5: Καὶ γὰρ καὶ ὁ περὶ πάντα πολυπειρότατος τῶν ἐξηγητῶν Ἀμμώνιος ὁ Ἀλεξανδρεὺς τούτῳ τῷ τρόπῳ τὸν Ἀλικαρνασέα χειρωσάμενος ἐθανάτωσεν. Ἀναλαβὼν γὰρ καὶ προσποιησάμενος τὸ τοῦ Σαμοσατέως πρόσωπον, ὡς εἶδε τὸν Ἰουλιανὸν εἰς δόκησιν καὶ φαντασίαν τρεπόμενον

⁴³² Ibid., XIII.10.18-22: ἰδοὺ οἰκειοῦμαι καὶ ἀναλαμβάνω πρόσωπον τοῦ Σαμοσατέως, ἢ μᾶλλον ἀπίστου Ἰουδαίου Φίλωνος τοῦ φιλοσόφου. Καὶ οὗτος γὰρ πρὸς Μνάσωνα τὸν ἀποστολικὸν μαθητὴν ἀντίρρησιν τότε περὶ τῆς Χριστοῦ

At this point in the act, ‘Philo’ launches into a diatribe against Mnason, deploying a profusion of questions stacked one on top of the other, and the rhetorical intent becomes clear: Ammonius’s aim was to demonstrate Julian’s guilt by association, for the arguments that Julian used to support his apthartodocetism were the very same ones that Jews use to reject Christ’s divinity. There is no response by Julian given in the text; the reader is left to imagine his shame and defeat at having been lumped in with Christ’s rejection by the Jews.

This same tactic is deployed in the *Bonwetsch Dialogue*, a christological dialogue of the late seventh century which imagines an encounter between a Chalcedonian monk who pretends to be a Gaianite and a Jacobite stylite. Throughout the dialogue, the false Gaianite accuses the stylite of latent Chalcedonianism. At a certain point, the Jacobite tires of being polemically referred to as a Chalcedonian, and says, ‘See then, I’ll take up the person of the Synodites or the Chalcedonians, and meet you.’⁴³³ Later, after dropping the persona, he explains that he did so in order to demonstrate the falsity of apthartism:

But since it is a habit for the heretics, if we speak of or raise citations of the fathers, at once to introduce some of their own and say that they are of the select fathers of the holy church—either they interpret them just as they wish, or often they battle full knowledge—, for this reason I was forced to show to you the persona of the Chalcedonians, and call their savage teachers holy, so I might teach you no longer to fantasize about Christ.⁴³⁴

ποιούμενος θεότητος διηρώτα τὸν Μνάσωνα λέγων. For the connection between Jew and heretic espoused here, see, A. Cameron, “Jews and Heretics: A Category Error?” in *The Ways that Never Parted: Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* eds. Adam H. Becker and Annette Yoshiko Reed (Tübingen, 2003), 345-360.

⁴³³ *Bonwetsch Dialogue* 39 [Bonwetsch 133]: ἰδοὺ ἀναλαμβάνω τὸ πρόσωπον τῶν συνοδιτῶν ἡγουν Χαλκηδονιτῶν καὶ εὖ μάλα προσαπαντήσω σοι.

⁴³⁴ *Bonwetsch Dialogue* 69 [Bonwetsch 144]: ἀλλ’ ἐπειδὴ ἔθος τοῖς αἰρετικοῖς, ἐὰν εἴπωμεν ἢ ἐνέγκωμεν χρήσεις πατέρων, εὐθέως καὶ αὐτοὶ εἰσφέρουσι τινῶν αἰρετικῶν καὶ ὀνομάζουσιν αὐτάς τῶν ἐγκρίτων διδασκάλων τῆς ἀγίας ἐκκλησίας ἢ τὰς ὑφ’ ἡμῶν προβληθείσας καθὼς βούλονται ἐρμηνεύουσι, πολλάκις δὲ καὶ ἐν γνώσει μάχονται, καταπατοῦντες τὸ ἴδιον συνειδός. Διὸ ἠναγκάσθην πρὸς σέ, ὦ ἀδελφέ, τὸ πρόσωπον τῶν Χαλκηδονιτῶν ἀναδέξασθαι καὶ ἀγίους καλεῖσαι τοὺς ἀγρίους αὐτῶν διδασκάλους, ὅπως πείσω σε μηκέτι φαντασίαν ἐπὶ Χριστοῦ φαντάζεσθαι.

This is exactly how Anastasius of Sinai speaks of the problem of textual falsification and the need for practical demonstrations, though here it is applied not to the use of images in debate but to the assumption of disputational personae. Importantly, prosopopoeia of this kind does not amount to a trick, because (whether in the case of Ammonius's use of Philo's persona or the stylite's use of a Chalcedonian persona) the speaker announces that they are going to adopt this persona to their opponent ('ἰδοὺ, ἀναλαμβάνω πρόσωπον...') because they have reached an impasse in the argument, and they deliberately choose a persona whom both interlocutors would consider an enemy to strengthen the rhetorical effect. The speaker does this to set a particular line of argument under critical scrutiny from a different angle in order to shed new light on the places where he and his opponent disagree.

While shame had long been part of the dialectical culture of the ancient world, in the Christian texts of late antiquity it tended to have an ornamental function, signifying, often through the *topos* of silence, that one's opponents had been defeated. One often shamed one's opponents through legitimate strategies of debate through assimilating them to a heretic, especially through the use of prosopopoeia, besting them through one's arguments. By contrast, shame is anything but ornamental for Anastasius: his own reflections on the art of debate consciously foreground it. The best presentation of the art of shaming one's opponents is to be found, however, not in the use of prosopopoeia or in the other rules laid out in book I of the *Hodegos*, but instead in the tricks and deceptions found in Anastasius's retellings of the Alexandrian disputations.

The Alexandrian Disputations

The First Disputation

Each disputation, found in book ten of the *Hodegos*, is arranged in such a way as to illustrate a different disputational purpose or mode (σκόπος) one can adopt in debate with Miaphysites in order to dispel particularly troublesome points raised by them. The first account (*Hod.* X,1) revolves around a citation of Cyril of Alexandria's *Scholia on the Incarnation* that was used by Severans to equate the terms hypostasis and nature: 'For the natures, that is, the hypostases, remained unconfused [after the union].'⁴³⁵ Both Miaphysites and Chalcedonians adhered to the Aristotelian principle that universals subsist only in particulars, which in sixth and seventh-century christology resulted in the formula 'There is no such thing as a nature that is not hypostatized,' i.e. that every nature or essence subsists only in an actual hypostasis or person.⁴³⁶ Thus, Severans argued that the Chalcedonian commitment to recognizing two natures in Christ after the union (in contrast to their own single-nature christology, hence *mia-physis*) resulted in Nestorianism, i.e. as really saying that Christ existed in two persons rather than one after the union. Unlike earlier Chalcedonian luminaries like Leontius of Byzantium and Leontius of Jerusalem—who simply argued that in this case Cyril's use of the term hypostasis as a gloss for 'nature' required that it mean 'a subsistent reality' (τὸ ὑφεστηκέναι), rather than an 'individual person' (πρόσωπον)—Anastasius privately doubted the veracity of this citation.⁴³⁷ However, rather than take the interpretive approach of the Leontii, or to contest its authenticity, he deployed a trick, which in turn led to the first disputation:

⁴³⁵ Cyril of Alexandria, *Scholia on the Incarnation* 11.

⁴³⁶ The related formulation, used slightly more often by Anastasius of Sinai, is 'There is no such thing as a person-less nature (οὐκ ἔστι φύσις ἀπρόσωπος). On the formula, see e.g. B. Daley, "'Richer Union'": Leontius of Byzantium and the Relationship of Human and Divine in Christ,' *Studia Patristica* 24 (1993): 239-265; C. Erismann, 'Non est natura sine persona: The Issue of Uninstantiated Universals from Late Antiquity to the Early Middle Ages' in *Methods and Methodologies: Aristotelian Logic East and West, 500-1500*, ed. M. Cameron and J. Marenbon (Leiden, 2011), 75-91.

⁴³⁷ Anastasius, *Hodegos* X,1.1.3-13, 2.161-4.

When, as I said before, I was in Alexandria and had seen their mad purpose – because no one [there] sees in accordance with God but rather in opposition to the church – and hearing a certain prophet say *to be shrewd with the crooked* [Ps. 18:26], in an act of pious trickery, I said in private to the heretics: ‘As the truth testifies, it is unacceptable, either in heaven or upon earth, for a nature to be recognized or named unless it also has a person. But what can we do, since the saying *two natures and one person in Christ* has been introduced as a custom by the church? If, however, you do not force me to anathematize a bishop or a council, we [will] subscribe together to the following shared definition: *Where a nature has been named, it follows that it also signifies a person. For there is no such thing as a nature without a person.* And, after we subscribe to this, you’ll also get possession of a copy of the agreed statement. Equally [between us] an accommodation will come about, and the holy churches will be united.’⁴³⁸

Here, Anastasius approaches ‘the heretics’ in private, and pretends to be a theological accommodationist eager to reunite the Theodosians and Chalcedonians (and claiming the authority to represent the Chalcedonian church of Alexandria in the serious matter of ecclesial reunification). He proposed to do so on the basis of the logical principle that all sides of the debate over Chalcedon shared by conceding the Severan interpretation of it in return for not having to formally anathematize Chalcedon itself or other Chalcedonian champions. Relishing in their ignorance, Anastasius remarks that because they were unaware ‘of the cunning of my act,’ they went ahead and subscribed to this formula of reunion.⁴³⁹ He justifies this deception by slightly altering the sense of Psalm 18. While the original says of God, ‘with the with the pure you show yourself pure;

⁴³⁸ Anastasius, *Hodegos* X,1.1.23-39: Γενόμενος γοῦν, ὡς προσεῖπον, ἐν Ἀλεξανδρείᾳ καὶ ἰδὼν τὸν μάταιον αὐτῶν σκοπόν, ὅτι οὐδὲν κατὰ θεόν, ἀλλὰ πρὸς ἀντιπάθειαν τῆς ἐκκλησίας ὄρᾳ, ἀκούσας προφήτου τινὸς λέγοντος τὸ μετὰ στρεβλοῦ διαστρέφειν, ἐν ὑποκρίσει τινὶ εὐσεβοῦς πανουργίας κατ’ ἰδίαν λέγω πρὸς τοὺς αἰρετικούς· «Ὡς ἡ ἀλήθεια μαρτυρεῖ, τῶν οὐκ ἐνδεχομένων ἐστὶν οὔτε ἐν οὐρανῷ οὔτε ἐπὶ γῆς γνωρισθῆναι ἢ πάλιν ὀνομασθῆναι φύσιν, ἐὰν μὴ πάντως ἔχη καὶ πρόσωπον. Ἀλλὰ τί ἔχωμεν ποιῆσαι, ὅτι συνήθεια παρέδραμε τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ τὸ λέγειν δύο φύσεις ἐν Χριστῷ, ἐν δὲ πρόσωπον; Πλὴν ἐὰν μὴ ἀναγκάζητέ με ἀναθεματίσαι ἐπίσκοπον ἢ σύνοδον, συνυπογράφομεν κοινῶς ὀρίζοντες, ὅτι ἐνθα ὀνομάσθη φύσις, πάντως ὅτι καὶ πρόσωπον σημαίνει· οὐκ ἔστι γὰρ φύσις ἀπρόσωπος. Καὶ τοῦτο ὑπογραφόντων ἡμῶν κρατεῖτε καὶ ὑμεῖς τὸ ἴσον τοῦ συνδοκτικοῦ στοιχήματος· καὶ ἴσως γίνεταί τις οἰκονομία, καὶ ἐνοῦνται αἱ ἄγιοι ἐκκλησίαι.»

⁴³⁹ *Ibid.*, X,1.40: Ἀγνοήσαντες οὖν τὸ πανοῦργον τοῦ δράματος.

and with the crooked you show yourself shrewd,’ Anastasius reads it as a prophetic command, giving himself license to engage in deception towards a pious end – much like Odysseus.

At this point, the plot thickens, for Anastasius immediately reveals the rest of his plan to the reader and how he had intended to deceive them from the beginning. Prior to this ‘performance’ (δραματουργία) with the Theodosians, he had already gathered diverse books from patristic authorities who lived before Chalcedon, with the majority being ‘from the Theodosians themselves’ and Cyril above all, in which he had ‘excerpted the citations of the holy fathers which call the flesh of Christ a nature, and wrote these out clearly in a tome,’ which he would deploy to their detriment.⁴⁴⁰ His purpose (σκόπος) thus seems to be to expose the fact that were one to accept a simple equation of natures and hypostases, far from exposing Chalcedonians alone to the charge of Nestorianism, it would actually result in a *reductio ad absurdum* by rendering all the church fathers who lived before the Council of Chalcedon (who exclusively comprise the list of citations in the florilegium) to be Nestorians.

On the following day, Anastasius tells us that the entire city of Alexandria, including its chief civil administrators and ecclesiastics, gathered publicly in order to witness the reunion of the churches, only for him to singlehandedly sabotage it:

And after one day, we were gathered together publicly in the presence of the chief magistrates and those who administered the city, a great crowd, and the clergy of the universal church and of every other faith and communion of Theodosians and Gaianites and Barsanuphians. Then, they read aloud the document that says *Every nature which is named in Christ signifies a person*, and I, bringing out their books, began to read aloud in the presence of all the appended citations, and first of all those of the holy Cyril, on whom they think to depend above all.⁴⁴¹

⁴⁴⁰ Ibid., X,1.1.43-48: Πρὸ γούν τῆς τοιαύτης δραματουργίας καὶ ὑπογραφῆς ἤμην προσυλλέξας βίβλους ἐκ διαφόρων προσώπων, τὰς δὲ πλείους ἐξ αὐτῶν τῶν Θεοδοσιανῶν, καὶ παρεξενέγκας τὰς χρήσεις τῶν ἁγίων πατέρων τὰς ὀνομαζούσας φύσιν τὴν σάρκα τοῦ Χριστοῦ καὶ ταῦτα ἐν τόμῳ καθαρογραφήσας.

⁴⁴¹ Ibid., X,1.1. 49-58: Καὶ δὴ μετὰ μίαν ἡμέραν δημοσίως ἐπὶ τῶν πρωτευόντων καὶ τὴν πόλιν διοικούντων συνηθροίσθημεν καὶ λαὸς πολὺς, τῆς τε καθολικῆς ἐκκλησίας ὁ κληρὸς καὶ πάσης ἐτέρας πίστεως καὶ κοινωνίας

The description of this gathering is extremely similar to that found in Cyrus of Alexandria's Pact of Union in 633, which celebrated a genuine reunion of the Theodosian church in Alexandria under the Chalcedonian patriarch.⁴⁴² It would be difficult to overstate the size or importance of a gathering like this. Prior to any kind of official dialoguing, Anastasius tells us that he deliberately misled the Theodosians into thinking that he was honest about seeking ecclesial reunification, and then led them into a trap in order to expose them publicly as condemning each of the 'select and approved fathers,' whose orthodoxy was unimpeachable, as Nestorian heretics. He never had any intention to engage in earnest dialogue about the 'no such thing as nature except in a person' principle, but conjured up a way to humiliate them in front of the magistrates of the city.

At this point, Anastasius begins reading to the crowd the first citation of his florilegium (from Cyril of Alexandria's *Letter to the Bishops of the East*), which says that it was common for some of the 'evangelical and apostolic sayings concerning the Lord' to be attributed by the church fathers sometimes to the one person of Christ, and other times, to his two natures. Immediately after he finishes, he remarks, 'At once I said to them, "As with respect to two natures, that is, two persons: for there is no nature (οὐκ ἓν φύσις) which does not [also] signify a person,' substituting the form ἓνι for ἔστι, adding further to the performative dimension of the ruse in adopting, it appears, an Alexandrian accent.⁴⁴³ Anastasius proceeds to do the same for every citation in the

Θεοδοσιανῶν τε καὶ Γαϊανιτῶν καὶ <Σεμιδαλιτῶν>. Εἶτα ὑπαναγινώσκεται τὸ ἔγγραφον τὸ λέγον, ὅτι «Πᾶσα φύσις ὀνομαζομένη ἐν Χριστῷ πρόσωπον σημαίνει» καὶ ἐξενέγκας τὰς βίβλους αὐτῶν ὑпанέγγων ἐπὶ πάντων τὰς ὑποτεταγμένας χρήσεις, καὶ πρό γε πάντων τὰς τοῦ ἁγίου Κυρίλλου, εἰς ὃν μάλιστα καὶ ἀποκρέμασθαι νομίζουσιν.

⁴⁴² Cyrus of Alexandria, *Second Letter to Sergius* [Allen 175]: 'For this I make clear—that all the clergy belonging to the teaching of the so-called Theodosians in this Christ-loving city of Alexandria, together with those who are illustrious in public office and in the military, and in addition those, running into thousands, who pay public tax, on the third day of the month of June were united to our most holy, catholic church of God, and partook with us of the undefiled mysteries of God.'

⁴⁴³ Ibid., X,1.2.6-8: Λέγω εὐθέως πρὸς αὐτούς· «Ὡς ἐπὶ δύο φύσεων, τουτέστι δύο προσώπων· οὐκ ἓν γὰρ φύσις μὴ σημαίνουσα πρόσωπον, καθὼς ὑπεγράψαμεν.»

florilegium, reading the text out in the original, and then adding the substitution of ‘persons’ for ‘natures.’ ‘Once we had presented and had interpreted these and many other expressions of the holy fathers in relation to the written agreement,’ he tells us, the success of his trick became clear, both to his opponents and to the crowd who had gathered to celebrate the ill-fated union:

All of our opponents remained speechless, silent, muzzled, beside themselves, astounded, puzzled. For they did not speak, they were not changed, because they were put to shame (ἡσχύνθησαν) before all the people of the church, as if clapping, and saying to all of them, ‘If nature is person, raise up [and] burn the holy fathers who have spoken of two natures in Christ. But if nature is not person, the Council of Chalcedon is blameless when it speaks of two natures united in one person of Christ.’⁴⁴⁴

Soon after, the crowd again cried out ‘in the unlearned dialect of the Alexandrians’ a second chant, that if nature and person mean the same thing, Cyril of Alexandria himself ought to be raised and burned to death first before all the other Theodosians, given that he affirmed in the *Scholia* ‘the natures of Christ remained unconfused.’ They conclude, ‘But if nature does not equal person, then you vainly utter nonsense against the church by asserting that it is.’⁴⁴⁵ In contrast to the *topos* of shame as silence as seen above in the *Dialogue of Timothy and Aquila*, the *Controversy of John*, or in Anastasius’s own dialogue with a Jew in the *Hexaemeron*, there is nothing subtle about their embarrassment. He piles on synonyms for their humiliation, and the crowd is deliberately brought

⁴⁴⁴ Anastasius, *Hodegos* X,1.3.6-14: ἔμειναν ἅπαντες οἱ δι’ ἐναντίας ἐννεοί, ἐσίγησαν, ἐφιμώθησαν, ἐξέστησαν, κατεπλάγησαν, ἠπόρησαν· οὐ γὰρ ἐλάλησαν, ἠλλοιώθησαν, ὅτι ἡσχύνθησαν παντὸς τοῦ λαοῦ τῆς ἐκκλησίας οἰοῦντι κροτοῦντος καὶ πρὸς ἅπαντας αὐτοὺς λέγοντος· «Εἰ ἡ φύσις πρόσωπον ἐστίν, ἄρον, καῦσον τοὺς ἁγίους πατέρας δύο φύσεις εἰρηκότας ἐν τῷ Χριστῷ. Εἰ δὲ οὐκ ἔστιν ἡ φύσις πρόσωπον, ἀνέγκλητός ἐστιν ἡ σύνοδος Χαλκηδόνας δύο εἰποῦσα ἠνωμένας φύσεις ἐν μιᾷ ὑποστάσει Χριστοῦ.»

⁴⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, X,1.3.15-21: Καὶ πάλιν τὴν αὐτὴν φωνὴν ὁ ὄχλος ἀναλαμβάνων τῇ Ἀλεξανδρέων ἰδιωτικῇ διαλέκτῳ ἐπιχωριάζων ἔκραζεν· «Εἰ ἡ φύσις πρόσωπον δηλοῖ, ἄρον, καῦσον πρὸ πάντων τὸν ἅγιον Κύριλλον τὸν λέγοντα· Ἀσύγχυτοι μεμενήκασιν αἱ Χριστοῦ φύσεις. Εἰ δὲ οὐκ ἔστιν ἡ φύσις πρόσωπον, μάτην φλυαρεῖτε κατὰ τῆς ἐκκλησίας φάσκοντες τὴν φύσιν πρόσωπον.» It is not clear whether ‘the unlearned dialect,’ or ‘the language of the country’ refers to two separate things (e.g. an Alexandrian dialect of Greek vs. Coptic) or if the latter is a restatement of the former. See J.-L. Fournet, *Alexandrie: une communauté linguistique? Ou la question du grec Alexandrin* (Cairo, 2009) and Dumont, *La polémique* 124 n. 52.

to bear on their shame through the use of chanting. We are then told that the crowd developed a third chant, after having shouted at the Theodosians ‘for a sufficient amount of time.’ They formed the following ‘worthy proclamation’: ‘Give it to the Theodosian and Gaianite, if he seeks something, and at once it will be destroyed,’ which Anastasius explains to mean that the simplistic conflation of nature and person is ‘shameful’ because it requires one either to affirm that ‘the holy fathers are Nestorians, or to confess that the Council of Chalcedon is blameless for preaching two natures hypostatically united in Christ.’⁴⁴⁶

It is intriguing to note that this formula of victory is very similar to that expressed in a contemporaneous anti-Jewish dialogue, the *Trophies of Damascus*, between a Christian monk and a group of Jews, to which (as was noted above) was attached the *Bonwetsch Dialogue*. Likewise dating to the final third of the seventh century, and set (dramatically) in Damascus, the final chapter records the victory of the Christian monk over the Jew thus:

When the Jews heard this and more, they were ashamed, silent, muzzled, shaken, stupefied, puzzled, they blushed, changed for the worse, they hastened [to leave], they did not stay, they fled as if chased by fire, they fell around like drunkards, all their wisdom dissipated, they were all undone; some were silent, some were whispering, some were groaning, and still others were saying, ‘Adonai, has the abba won?’⁴⁴⁷

⁴⁴⁶ Ibid., X,1.3.22-29: Ταῦτα βοῶντες ἐπὶ ὄρας ἰκανὰς καὶ προλόγιν ἀξιάκουστον ἐτύπωσαν οἱ αὐτόθι λέγοντες· «Δὸς τῷ Θεοδοσιανῷ καὶ Γαϊανίτῃ, εἴ τι ζητεῖ· καὶ εὐθέως ἀπόλλυται», τουτέστι κατὰ τοῦ αὐτοῦ, ὅτι ἡ φύσις πρόσωπον σημαίνει, καὶ διὰ ταύτης τῆς φωνῆς καταισχύνεται ἀναγκασόμενος ἢ τοὺς ἁγίους πατέρας Νεστοριανοὺς ἀποδείξει, ἢ τὴν σύνοδον Χαλκηδόνος ἀνέγκλητον ὁμολογῆσαι κηρύξασαν δύο φύσεις καθ’ ὑπόστασιν ἠνωμένας ἐν Χριστῷ.

⁴⁴⁷ *Trophies of Damascus* 7.1 in G. Bardy, *Les Trophées de Damas: Controverse judéo-chrétienne du VIIe siècle*, PO 15 (Paris, 1927), 274-5: Ταῦτα καὶ τούτων ἕτερα ἀκούσαντες οἱ ἰουδαῖοι ἠσχύνθησαν, ἠσύχασαν, ἐφμώθησαν, ἐσαλεύθησαν, ἐσκοτίσθησαν, ἠπόρησαν, ἠρυθρίασαν, ἠλλοιώθησαν, ἔσπευσαν, οὐκ ἀνέμειναν, ἔφυγον ὡς ὑπὸ πυρός διωκόμενοι... Cf. *Hodegos* X,1.3.6-10: ἔμειναν ἅπαντες οἱ δι’ ἐναντίας ἐννεοί, ἐσίγησαν, ἐφμώθησαν, ἐξέστησαν, κατεπλάγησαν, ἠπόρησαν· οὐ γὰρ ἐλάλησαν, ἠλλοιώθησαν, ὅτι ἠσχύνθησαν παντὸς τοῦ λαοῦ τῆς ἐκκλησίας.

The *Trophies* concludes with the mass conversion of the protagonist's Jewish interlocutors, their baptism and trinitarian profession of faith, and even their kissing of the interlocutor, before concluding with a brief doxology. No such conversion is found in Anastasius's disputation. Rather, the role of the crowd serves the most important function, for their chanting and mantra-making secure Anastasius's victory.

The Second Disputation

The second, and by far longest, dispute of the quartet (X,2) occurred in quick succession after the first. In response to his stunt, Anastasius's opponents had evidently left Alexandria, regrouped, and sought another public debate with him. This time, they met at the 'public arsenal'; in all probability, located in the Kaisarion district of Alexandria where the Chalcedonian cathedral church was located. According to Anastasius, the Theodosians brought their most celebrated disputants: 'their great and mighty one, like he who is called the champion of the Danaans, John the monk "of Zuga"' and 'Gregory "the Drowsy," the Syro-Egyptian-minded.' With them came the general public of Alexandria as well as 'the clergy, for such a council was held at an appointed time and publicly proclaimed.'⁴⁴⁸

As noted in the last chapter, Anastasius's opponents here include John the Monk identified as John the *higoumen* of the Enaton Monastery, who is likened to Achilles, and a certain Gregory 'the Drowsy.' Although we cannot be sure, it seems that Anastasius is making fun of Gregory, because 'the Drowsy' (*Nystazōn*) sounds just like Gregory of Nyssa (*Nyssa*). As noted in the last chapter, the presence of John 'of Zyga' is very striking, because it means that Anastasius had

⁴⁴⁸ Anastasius, *Hodegos* X,2.1.4-10: Ἐν ᾧ συλλόγῳ συνήλθεν καὶ ὁ πολὺς αὐτῶν καὶ μέγας ὡσπέρ τις λεγόμενος τῶν Δαναῶν πρόμαχος, Ἰωάννης ὁ μοναχὸς ὁ λεγόμενος τοῦ Ζυγᾶ, ὁ τοῦ ὀκτωκαιδεκάτου. Παρῆν δὲ σὺν αὐτῷ καὶ Γρηγόριος ὁ Νυστάζων ὁ Συραιοῦπιος τὸν νοῦν, εἶτα καὶ ὁ δῆμος σὺν τῷ κλήρῳ· ἦν γὰρ ἀπὸ συνταγῆς καὶ προδηλώματος τὸ τοιοῦτον συνέδριον. On the public arsenal, see Gascou, *Église et chapelles*, 49.

garnered the attention of representatives from the highest level of the Theodosian church. Their disputation shares many of the same features as the first, including Anastasius's presentation of it as a high-stakes gathering. The topics of discussion, among other christological problems, included the same citation of Cyril which featured in the first disputation. John and Gregory repeat the assertion that Cyril's equation of nature and hypostasis requires that the Chalcedonian Definition affirm two persons in Christ after the union. In response, Anastasius foreshadows the fact that he would later adopt 'a mode of villainy,' and turned to the crowd. Facing them, he launches into an overwhelming barrage of some dozen or so arguments beginning with 'If the Severans say X, I will say Y,' lacing many of his points with sarcasm and mockery. Once he had finished delivering this line of attack, he tells us that he 'turned back and looked upon John the monk' and remarked:

What shall you say to this, oh philosopher? *The hypostases of Christ remained unconfused*, the God-bearing Cyril cried out, as you testify. Do you accept that no unconfused natures remained in Christ? Do you accept the hypostases and deny the natures? Your beliefs are truly funny and an impenetrable myth.⁴⁴⁹

Soon after, he repeats, 'Truly, again I say, your objections to us are more worthy of laughter than any play or orchestra from the courtesans of the stage.'⁴⁵⁰

The sarcasm continues throughout the rest of his responses. Elsewhere, he says to John, 'After he said these things, with grinning face, I replied...',⁴⁵¹ and after acknowledging where he believes that he and the Theodosians differ on their definition of hypostasis, he plays to the crowd:

⁴⁴⁹ Ibid., X,2.3.17-23: Καὶ ἐπιστραφεὶς καὶ ἀποβλέψας πρὸς Ἰωάννην τὸν μονάζοντα λέγω· «Τί λέγεις πρὸς ταῦτα, ὃ φιλόσοφε;» Ἀσύγχυτοι μεμενήκασιν αἱ Χριστοῦ ὑποστάσεις, ὁ θεόφρων Κύριλλος βοᾷ, ὡς μαρτυρεῖς· καὶ σὺ οὐδὲ φύσεις καταδέχῃ ἀσυγχύτους μεμενηκέναι ἐν Χριστῷ; Τὰς ὑποστάσεις δέχῃ καὶ τὰς φύσεις ἀρῆσαι; Ὅντως γέλωσ τὰ καθ' ὑμᾶς καὶ μῦθος πλατύς.

⁴⁵⁰ Ibid., X,2.3.28-30: Ὅντως, πάλιν λέγω, σκηνῆς ἀπάσης καὶ ὀρχήστρας καὶ θυμελικῶν ἐταιριδίων καταγελαστότερα τὰ καθ' ὑμᾶς.

⁴⁵¹ Ibid., X,2.3.74-5: Ταῦτα αὐτοῦ εἰρηκότος μειδιῶν τῷ προσώπῳ λέγω πρὸς αὐτόν.

‘I said these things while turning my nose up with mockery and solemnity at John the monk.’⁴⁵² At this point, Anastasius relates that he turned towards ‘the people of the church’ and joked, ‘By your love, when the Severans hear *hypostases in Christ*, I reckon they have in mind the hypostases of material or created things,’ such that ‘whenever they hear *natures*, they consider these to be something shameful and absurd: the genitalia of men and women.’⁴⁵³ One can clearly see how important the performative dimension of the debate was in Anastasius’s telling, as he was unable to resist the opportunity to use lewd humor to win over the crowd.

Once he realized that John and his side were ‘vexed and greatly exasperated at what had been said,’⁴⁵⁴ he then launched into the main act of this disputation, with yet another pre-meditated act of deception revolving around a false tome, which I quote in full:

Indeed, after these and many other things had been said in the council, and because I had discovered long ago through various experiences that those who are Severan-minded thoroughly devote themselves to the blessed Cyril, and always bring and produce his citations, whereas they do not have the greatest experience of the other blessed fathers, a few days before the debate I heard that the Theodosians had summoned their eminent leaders (I mean John and Gregory) in order to be marshalled against us. So, after I had been seated, I composed a dogmatic tome under the name of Flavian, bishop of Constantinople, who was murdered by Dioscorus because he confessed in Christ two natures united indivisibly in one composite hypostasis. In this tome, with great precision, I kept the purpose and intention of the holy fathers unchanged, while changing their speech a little through slightly different words that are equal in meaning.⁴⁵⁵

⁴⁵² Ibid., X,2.3.135-6: Ταῦτα μυκτηρίζων ἐμβριθῶς πρὸς Ἰωάννην τὸν μονάζοντα εἶπον.

⁴⁵³ Ibid., X,2.3.135-4.8: Ταῦτα μυκτηρίζων ἐμβριθῶς πρὸς Ἰωάννην τὸν μονάζοντα εἶπον. Καὶ ἀποστραφείς πρὸς τὸν λαὸν τῆς ἐκκλησίας εἶπον· «Μὰ τὴν ἀγάπην ὑμῶν, ἀκούοντες ὑποστάσεις ἐν Χριστῷ οἱ ἀπὸ Σευήρου, νομίζω, ὑποστάσεις τινῶν χρημάτων ἢ κτημάτων ἐννοούμενοι, τούτου χάριν ἀφόβως καὶ ἀπαρτηρήτως αὐτὰς κηρύττουσι καὶ ὁμολογοῦσιν. Ἐπὰν δὲ ἀκούσωσι φύσεις, αἰσχρὰ τινα καὶ ἄτοπα νομίζουσι ταῦτας εἶναι, τὰ μόρια τὰ συνουσιαστικὰ τῶν σωμάτων τῶν ἀνθρωπίνων καὶ γυναικείων.

⁴⁵⁴ Ibid., X,2.7.26-7: Ἀχθομένων οὖν καὶ λίαν δριμυττομένων ἐπὶ τοῖς λεγομένοις Ἰωάννου καὶ τῶν σὺν αὐτῷ ἑτεροδόξων...

⁴⁵⁵ Ibid., X,2.7.46-62: Τούτων δὴ καὶ ἐτέρων πλείονων ἐν τῷ συνεδρίῳ εἰρημένων, ἐκ παλαιᾶς καὶ διαφόρου πείρας ὑπάρχον, ὅτι ἄνω καὶ κάτω τῷ μακαρίῳ Κυρίλλῳ σχολάζουσιν οἱ τὰ Σευήρου φρονοῦντες καὶ ἄνω καὶ κάτω τὰς αὐτοῦ χρήσεις φέρουσι καὶ ἀποφέρουσι, τῶν δὲ λοιπῶν μακαρίων πατέρων οὐ πλείστην πείραν ἔχουσι, πρὸ μικρῶν ἡμερῶν

Within this fake tome, Anastasius recorded various non-controversial patristic citations from pre-Chalcedonian church fathers (e.g. Irenaeus of Lyons, Ambrose of Milan, John Chrysostom, etc.) whom John and Gregory would otherwise accept as orthodox, changed one or two words ever so slightly (e.g. using the word ‘passion’ instead of ‘cross’), but attributed all of them to Flavian of Constantinople. If they condemned the tome, Anastasius could prove that they did so not because they had carefully examined the orthodoxy of the texts and found them wanting, but simply because they reflexively anathematized Chalcedonian thinkers. In so doing, he sought to expose them as careless theologians, undermining their claims to authority in interpreting the patristic tradition.

In a scholion appended to this part of the text, Anastasius both encourages his disciples to imitate this trick and offers a pre-emptive defense of it, no doubt aware that it was likely perceived as illegitimate by others. ‘We set these things out,’ he writes, ‘so that the *philoponoι* may use them in the same way against their opponents. For even the blessed Paul knew how to use the same tactic, and for this reason said to some, *I took you by means of a trick* (δόλω) [cf. 2 Cor. 12:16].’⁴⁵⁶ In classic Anastasian fashion, this is also a distortion, because in context Paul says rather the opposite. Against accusations that Paul (and later, his disciple Titus) had been a burden to the Corinthians, he says,

τῆς διαλέξεως ἀκούσας, ὅτι τοὺς ἀκρέμονας καὶ ἐξάρχους αὐτῶν μετεστείλαντο—λέγω δὴ τὸν Ἰωάννην καὶ Γρηγόριον—οἱ Θεοδοσιανοὶ πρὸς τὸ ἡμῖν παρατάξασθαι, καθεσθεὶς συντέταχα τόμον δογματικὸν ὡς ἐξ ὀνόματος Φλαβιανοῦ τοῦ ἐπισκόπου Κωνσταντινουπόλεως τοῦ φονευθέντος ὑπὸ Διοσκόρου διὰ τὸ ὁμολογεῖν ἐν Χριστῷ δύο ἠνωμένας ἀδιαίρετως φύσεις ἐν μιᾷ συνθέτῳ ὑποστάσει. Ἐν ᾧ τόμῳ τὸν μὲν σκοπὸν καὶ τὸ φρόνημα τῶν ἁγίων πατέρων μετὰ πολλῆς τινος τῆς ἀκριβείας ἐφύλαξα, μικρὸν δὲ τὰς αὐτῶν ῥήσεις δι’ ἐτέρων τινῶν ἰσοδυνάμων λέξεων ὑπαλλάξας τέθηκα.

⁴⁵⁶ Ibid., X,2.7.76-79: Σχόλιον. Ταῦτα ἐκτιθέμεθα, ἵνα τῷ αὐτῷ τρόπῳ κέχρηται οἱ φιλόπονοι κατὰ τῶν ἐναντίων. Ἐπεὶ καὶ ὁ μακάριος Παῦλος οἶδε τῷ τοιοῦτῳ τρόπῳ χρῆσασθαι· διὸ καὶ ἔλεγε πρὸς τινάς, ὅτι Δόλω ὑμᾶς ἔλαβον.

I did not burden you. But, crafty person that I am, did I take you in by deceit? Did I take advantage of you through any of those whom I sent to you? I urged Titus to go and sent the brother with him. Titus did not take advantage of you, did he? Did we not conduct ourselves with the same spirit? Did we not walk in the same footsteps?⁴⁵⁷

Thus, Paul used the term ‘trick’ rhetorically, and actually condemned deception in the very passage Anastasius cited to sanction it.

After reading out the false tome to John and Gregory—as the reader might guess—the reaction was predictable:

When the tome containing these things had been read, both John and Gregory loathed, repudiated, and anathematized what had been written in it. And after the cursing and anathematizing, we brought forward into their midst the books of the holy fathers from which all the citations that were in the tome originated. For we had them there prepared and at hand, and the proof of each citation indicated. And when we demonstrated from their very own books that they did not curse and anathematize Flavian, but the holy fathers, the small crowd finally arose, insulting [them] and wanting almost to stone them. Such was the scandal and shame which both John and those with him suffered publicly.⁴⁵⁸

The conclusion to this disputation underscores again the nature of the public humiliation and shame to which Anastasius wanted to expose his opponents, with the crowd again serving to validate Anastasius’s defeat.

⁴⁵⁷ 2 Cor. 12:16-18.

⁴⁵⁸ Ibid., X,2.7.161-173: Ταῦτα δὴ τοῦ τόμου περιέχοντος καὶ ἀναγνωσθέντος ἐβδελύξαντο, ἀπόσαντο, ἀνεθεμάτισαν τὰ ἐν αὐτῷ γεγραμμένα ὃ τε Ἰωάννης καὶ Γρηγόριος. Καὶ μετὰ τὸ καταράσασθαι καὶ ἀναθεματίσαι προηγάγομεν εἰς μέσον τὰς βίβλους τῶν ἁγίων πατέρων, ἐξ ὧν ὑπῆρχον πᾶσαι αἱ χρήσεις αἱ ἐν τῷ τόμῳ ὑπάρχουσαι· εἶχομεν γὰρ αὐτὰς αὐτόθι μετὰ χειρᾶς ἠὺτρεπισμένας καὶ ἐκάστης χρήσεως τὸ ἐλέγχειν δεδηλωμένον. Καὶ ὅτε ἀπεδείξαμεν ἐκ τῶν ἰδίων αὐτῶν βιβλῶν, ὅτι οὐ Φλαβιανόν, ἀλλὰ τοὺς ἁγίους πατέρας κατηράσαντο καὶ ἀνεθεμάτισαν, ἀνέστη ὁ λεπτὸς δῆμος ἐσχάτως ἀτιμάζων καὶ σχεδὸν λιθοβολῆσαι αὐτοὺς θέλων. Οὗτος ὁ θρίαμβος καὶ ἡ αἰσχὺνη, ἦν καὶ Ἰωάννης καὶ οἱ σὺν αὐτῷ δημοσίως ἔπαθον.

The Third and Fourth Disputations

The last two disputations are much shorter, with each offering different models for shaming one's opponents. In the third, entitled 'Another purpose towards which we debated the same Theodosians before the Augustalis in the presence of a public audience and the city,' Anastasius begins his narration by briefly recounting the conclusion of the last debate. 'Since the heretics had been sufficiently and unambiguously put to shame on account of the show (δραματουργία) that we had laid on for them,' he tells us, and

they no longer had anyone at all to open their mouth against those of the catholic church, they sent a dispatch out into Egypt, summoning some bishops who seemed to be well-versed in Scripture, among whom was also the Cynopolite.⁴⁵⁹

The prosopography is notable here: as noted in the last chapter, this 'Cynopolite' must refer to the eminent bishop Gregory of al-Kaïs, later appointed to the position of patriarchal *locum tenens* by 'Abd al-'Azīz himself. Anastasius's tricks had garnered the attention of the Theodosian top brass, who decided that it was worth deploying a member of the patriarchal inner circle to deal with him.

Anastasius then reports that this group of bishops had petitioned the Augustalis to arrange another debate with him. Evidently consenting, we are told that the Augustalis sent out his own dispatch of his own attendants and summoned him to the *praetorium* – that is, to the Augustalis' own residence in Alexandria. When his attendants had found Anastasius (whose own location is undisclosed), they conveyed the Theodosian bishops' request to 'discuss the faith with you in the

⁴⁵⁹ Ibid., X,3.1.4-9: Ἰκανῶς τοίνυν καὶ ἀναμφιβόλως καταισχυθέντων τῶναίρετικῶν ἐκ τῆς γεγενημένης αὐτοῖς ὑφ' ἡμῶν δραματουργίας, καὶ μηκέτι ὅλως ἐχόντων πρόσωπον διᾶραι τὸ στόμα αὐτῶν πρὸς τοὺς τῆς καθολικῆς ἐκκλησίας, ἀποστείλαντες ἐν Αἰγύπτῳ μεταστέλλονταί τινας ἐπισκόπους, οὓς ἐδόκουν γραφικοὺς ὑπάρχειν· ἐν οἷς ἦν καὶ ὁ Κυνωπολίτης.

presence of the Augustalis.⁴⁶⁰ Once Anastasius had arrived to the *praetorium* and was seated before the civil authorities, the Augustalis is supposed to have said, ‘When these bishops heard of what had been set in motion between the church and the Theodosians, they arrived, seeking to debate with your holiness.’⁴⁶¹ Anastasius then notes that once the Augustalis had finished his statement, the bishops began to complain to the civil authorities about Anastasius, ‘and to accuse me, as if somehow I had disturbed the city and the people and their church.’⁴⁶² He had, of course, been doing precisely that, as he clearly indicated throughout the text. If indeed the first two meetings were intended to be something like church councils (as implied by Anastasius) aiming at the reconciliation the churches, one can understand why the Severans would grow frustrated and report Anastasius to the secular authorities for refusing to cooperate in good faith.

In response to these accusations, however, Anastasius claims to have initiated his next ruse, and like the first disputation, this one contains another false subscription. ‘Since I perceived,’ he tells us,

their naivety and witlessness through their words, I said to them in a gentle voice and with a smile, ‘Venerable fathers, have you ever seen me, or met with me, or heard my faith or my thought from my own mouth?’ And they answered, ‘No.’ ‘Then, fathers,’ I said, ‘listen to my faith. And I hope to God that it pleases you greatly, and that you don’t find any fault in me.’⁴⁶³

⁴⁶⁰ Ibid., X,3.1.12-15: οἱ δὲ παραγερόμενοι ἀπήγγειλαν ἡμῖν ὡς ὅτι «Ἐπίσκοποι τινες παρεγένοντο θεοδοσιανοὶ ἐπιζητοῦντες περὶ πίστεως συνᾶραι λόγον μεθ’ ὑμῶν ἐπὶ τοῦ αὐγουσταλίου.»

⁴⁶¹ Ibid., X,3.1.15-19: Παραγενομένων οὖν ἡμῶν καὶ καθεσθέντων λέγει ὁ αὐγουστάλιος· «Ἀκούσαντες οἱ ἐπίσκοποι οὗτοι τὰ κινηθέντα μεταξύ τῆς ἐκκλησίας καὶ τῶν Θεοδοσιανῶν παρεγένοντο ἐπιζητοῦντες διαλεχθῆναι τῇ ὁσιότητι ὑμῶν.»

⁴⁶² Ibid., X,3.1.18-22: Εἶτα ταῦτα τοῦ ἄρχοντος εἰρηκότος ἤρξαντο λαλεῖν οἱ ἐπίσκοποι καὶ κατεγκαλεῖν μοι ὡς δῆθεν ταράξαντος τὴν πόλιν καὶ τὸν λαὸν καὶ τὴν ἐκκλησίαν αὐτῶν.

⁴⁶³ Ibid., X,3.1.23-31: Αἰσθόμενος οὖν ἐκ τῶν λόγων αὐτῶν ἐγὼ τὸ ἀμύητον καὶ τὸ ἀσύνετον αὐτῶν λέγω πρὸς αὐτοὺς πραεῖα καὶ μειδιῶσα τῇ φωνῇ· «Καλόγηροι πατέρες, ἐωράκατέ μέ ποτε ἢ συνετύχετε πρὸς με ἢ ἀκηκόατε τῆς πίστεώς μου ἢ τοῦ φρονήματός μου ἐκ τοῦ στόματός μου;» Καὶ ἀποκριθέντες λέγουσιν· «Οὐχί.» «Οὐκοῦν, πατέρες, εἶπον, ἀκούσατε τὴν πίστιν μου. Καὶ ἐλπίζω εἰς τὸν θεόν, ὅτι πάνυ ὑμῖν ἔχει ἀρέσαι καὶ οὐχ εὐρίσκετε παντοίαν αἰτίαν ἐν ἐμοί.»

So that his reader might not mistake his polite speech for genuine thoughtfulness, Anastasius immediately notes in an aside to the reader: ‘I said these things out of a desire to reveal and record the poison that was hidden in their hearts to everyone, as well as their whole church.’⁴⁶⁴ Then, taking a piece of papyrus and a pen from the notaries who attended the Augustalis, Anastasius tells us that he wrote down the following confession: ‘I, Anastasius, monk of the holy mountain of Sinai, confess that the same divine Word who was born of God the Father before all ages was also crucified and buried and suffered and rose.’⁴⁶⁵ He notes in the text that he intentionally did not mention the crucial qualification ‘in the flesh,’ and thus attempted to trick the bishops into affirming that the divine nature itself had suffered on the cross. Then, we are told,

I stood up and handed it over to them—they read it, admired it, and agreed [with it]. When, then, I saw that they admired it, I said, ‘If I’m right that you think the same, subscribe to it: and immediately I will commune with you,’ for it was Sunday, about the third hour. They took it and subscribed. And I took the papyrus after their subscription, drew near to the one who seemed to be wisest of them, touched his beard gently with my hand, and said, ‘*Christ suffered in the flesh*, you Theopaschite, and not in divinity!’⁴⁶⁶

After calumniating the Theodosians for unwittingly pronouncing that the divine nature suffered, Anastasius remarks that he did so ‘in my desire to lay bare to all the blasphemy in your soul,’ and that after they realized that they had been duped, ‘as if sobered up from drunkenness, they put up a great struggle to take away the papyrus from me.’ Anastasius prevented them from doing so, and

⁴⁶⁴ Ibid., X,3.1.32-34: Ταῦτα δὲ εἶπον βουλόμενος πᾶσι φανερῶσαι καὶ στηλιτεῦσαι τὸν ἰὸν τὸν ἐγκεκρυμμένον ἐν τῇ καρδίᾳ αὐτῶν καὶ πάσης τῆς ἐκκλησίας αὐτῶν.

⁴⁶⁵ Ibid., X,3.1.34-40: Καὶ λαβὼν χάρτην καὶ καλαμάριν παρὰ τῶν παρεστώτων νοταρίων τῷ αὐγουσταλίῳ ἔγραψα οὕτως· «Ἐγὼ Ἀναστάσιος μοναχὸς τοῦ ἁγίου ὄρους Σινᾶ ὁμολογῶ, ὅτι αὐτὸς ὁ θεὸς λόγος ὁ γεννηθεὶς ἐκ θεοῦ πατρὸς πρὸ πάντων τῶν αἰώνων αὐτὸς ἐσταυρώθη καὶ ἐτάφη καὶ ἔπαθε καὶ ἀνέστη.»

⁴⁶⁶ Ibid., X,3.1.44-51: Ὡς γοῦν εἶδον αὐτοὺς ἐπαινέσαντας λέγω· «Ἐὰν οἶδα, ὅτι οὕτως φρονεῖτε, ὑπογράψατε· καὶ εὐθέως συγκοινωνῶ ὑμῖν.» Ἦν γὰρ κυριακὴ τῶν ἡμερῶν ὡσεὶ ὥρα τρίτη. Ἐδέξαντο καὶ ὑπέγραψαν. Καὶ λαβὼν τὸν χάρτην μετὰ τὴν ὑπογραφὴν, πλησιάσας τῷ δοκοῦντι εἶναι σοφωτέρῳ αὐτῶν καὶ ἡρέμα τῇ χειρὶ ἀψάμενος τοῦ πώγωνος αὐτοῦ εἶπον· «Χριστοῦ παθόντος σαρκί, ὃ Θεοπασχίτα, καὶ οὐ θεότητι.»

‘shouted in the presence of all, “I will not give this up until I hand it over to Christ against you on the day of judgement.”’⁴⁶⁷

In spite of accusations that he had disturbed the city, Anastasius seems to have doubled down on his preferred tactics. Like the first disputation, this one involves a written subscription of faith, a promise of communion, and the presence of the public. Anastasius’s aim is clear: he tricked his opponents into subscribing to a so-called Theopaschite creed by pretending to share some of their Miaphysite principles, thereby catching them out in the presence of one of Egypt’s most important civilian officials, and showing that Miaphysitism, when taken to its logical extent (or taken carelessly), leads one to affirm Theopaschism. Moreover, Anastasius’s touching of his opponent’s beard to spring his trap was also intended to heap shame upon them. It finds an echo in a notice from the year 727 in Michael the Great’s *Chronicle*. After (largely dyothelete) Byzantine prisoners of war had been resettled in Aleppo in this year, a dispute broke out between them and their monothelete Chalcedonian counterparts in Aleppo.⁴⁶⁸ These two factions had fought over possession of the city’s cathedral church, we are told, even to the point of mob violence. The local emir’s solution to this problem was to divide the church in two by erecting a wooden barrier down the middle, granting the eastern half to the monotheletes and the western half to the dyotheletes. His solution, however, failed. During masses (which were conducted at the same time) each group would raise their voices over the other; some would throw away the other side’s liturgical vessels; and some ‘without shame held the beard of the bishop and spat in his face,’⁴⁶⁹ an action presented by Michael as the climax of ecclesiastical strife.

⁴⁶⁷ Ibid., X,3.1.53-62: Βουλόμενος γὰρ γυμῶσαι πᾶσι τὴν ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ ὑμῶν βλασφημίαν γυμνὴν θεότητα τοῦ θεοῦ λόγου ἔγραψα ἐν τῇ τοῦ χάρτου ὑπαγορίᾳ οὔτε σαρκὸς μνημονεύσας, οὔτε ἐνανθρωπήσεως, οὔτε τόκου τοῦ ἐκ τῆς ἁγίας παρθένου.» Ὡς γοῦν ταῦτα ἀκήκοαν, ὥσπερ ἐκ μέθης ἀνανήψαντες πολλὰ ἠγωνίσαντο τὸν τοιοῦτον χάρτην ἀναλαβεῖν παρ’ ἐμοῦ. Ἐγὼ δὲ ἐπὶ πάντων ἀνεβόων, ὅτι περ «Οὐ δίδωμι τοῦτον, ἕως ἂν προσενέγκω αὐτὸν τῷ Χριστῷ καθ’ ὑμῶν ἐν ἡμέρᾳ κρίσεως».

⁴⁶⁸ Michael the Great, *Chronicle* 11.20.

⁴⁶⁹ Ibid.

The final disputation (X,4) is the shortest. This one appears disconnected from the other three, which apparently formed a series of disputes all in quick succession. The setting is also different to the others: rather than taking place in public, it takes place in private, in the ‘chancellery of the Kaisarion,’ that is, the Chalcedonian cathedral church in Alexandria.⁴⁷⁰ Anastasius relates that he held this debate with a ‘George, the presbyter and registrar of their church, who is called “The Locksmith”’ and an implied audience of others, presumably clerics.⁴⁷¹ Here, Anastasius takes a different tack in reply to the objection that affirming two natures after the union necessitates an affirmation of two hypostases in Christ as well. He responds, unexpectedly to his opponents, ‘What is the truth harmed, even if we speak of two hypostases in Christ? For a hypostasis is not a person.’⁴⁷² Since, he says, ‘yet again they did not realize our purpose, that we say these things as to criminals deceitfully (ὡς κακούργους πανούργως), and not in truth,’ they pushed back on Anastasius’s response and brought forth citations from the church fathers and Cyril, arguing that a hypostasis is a person.⁴⁷³ When, Anastasius tells us, his opponents established and agreed with him that hypostases and persons were the same, he pointed out that their earlier affirmation, equating hypostasis and nature as found in the citation from Cyril’s *Scholia on the Incarnation* (‘The natures, that is, the hypostases, remained unconfused’), required them to affirm two hypostases after the incarnation. Anastasius concludes by retorting, ‘Why do you fight with Nestorius, since you agree with him?’ and emphasizing that it is by using ‘this mode that the heretics are more readily put to shame.’⁴⁷⁴

⁴⁷⁰ Anastasius, *Hodegos* X,4.1.5: Συγκαθεζομένων ἡμῶν ἐν τῷ σημειογραφείῳ τοῦ Καισαρίου.

⁴⁷¹ Ibid., X,4.1.1-4: Ἔτερος πάλιν σκοπὸς διαλέξεως, ὃν συνήραμεν πρὸς τοὺς αὐτοὺς ἑτεροδόξους ἐν Ἀλεξανδρείᾳ, λέγω δὴ πρὸς Γεώργιον τὸν πρεσβύτερον καὶ λογογράφον τῆς ἐκκλησίας αὐτῶν τὸν λεγόμενον Κλειδοποιόν.

⁴⁷² Ibid., X,4.1.13-15: Πρὸς ταῦτα πάλιν ἡμεῖς: «Τί γὰρ παραβλάπτεται ἡ ἀλήθεια, κἂν εἰπῶμεν δύο ὑποστάσεις ἐν τῷ Χριστῷ; Οὐκ ἔστι γὰρ πρόσωπον ἢ ὑπόστασις.»

⁴⁷³ Ibid., X,4.1.16-18: Ἀγνοήσαντες οὖν τὸν ἡμέτερον σκοπὸν πάλιν, ὅτι ὡς κακούργους πανούργως καὶ οὐ κατὰ ἀλήθειαν λέγομεν ταῦτα.

⁴⁷⁴ Ibid., X,4.1.38-9, 48-9: Καὶ εἰ ταῦτα οὕτως, τί μάχεσθε Νεστορίῳ τὰ Νεστορίου φρονούντες; [...] Διὰ τοῦτου τοῦ τρόπου συντομωτέρως οἱ αἰρετικοὶ αἰσχύνονται.

By way of conclusion, let us summarize some of the key features throughout these accounts as Anastasius presents them: of the four disputations, three (1, 2, 3) were held in high-profile public gatherings and two (1, 2) resemble or are explicitly called church councils – and in the case of the first disputation, an ‘ecumenical’ council insofar as every Christian group to be found in Alexandria had their own representatives in attendance. Three (1, 2, 3) contain an audience of the general public and secular elites (explicitly stated or implied), the most notable of whom are the chief magistrates and administrators of Alexandria (1) and the Augustalis and his entourage (3). These same three are all organized around acts of deception, in which Anastasius gleefully recounts his opponents ignorance, which have the result of exposing his opponents to shame in highly public settings, underscored either by the Alexandrian public’s chanting and threats (1), their desire to stone members of the Theodosian patriarch’s entourage (2), or the embarrassment of bishops signing a problematic creed and struggling to recapture it from Anastasius in the presence of the Augustalis (3).

The Ends of Debate: Persuasion or Performance?

As Alberto Rigolio’s recent catalogue of sixty surviving Christian dialogue texts between the second and late fifth centuries has shown, dialogue and debate were an integral part of late ancient Christian culture, and were utilized towards a variety of ends.⁴⁷⁵ Unlike the perhaps more genteel conventions of the Platonic dialogue, Christians used the dialogue form in part to help construct and reinforce boundaries, whether of identity (e.g. against Jews) or doctrine (against heretics), and with these higher stakes came the increasing use of invective. Majaistina Kahlos has noted that the use of insults or depreciating nicknames was common in Christian discourse in a way that was not

⁴⁷⁵ Rigolio, *Christians in Conversation*, 8-16

in ancient dialogues.⁴⁷⁶ Paulinus of Nola, for example, referred to various Platonizing views as the prattling of old wives' tales; and elsewhere Augustine speaks of the stupidity (*stultitia*) of pagan philosophy. Derision of opposing views is indeed a feature of certain modes of Christian discourse, especially in discursive contexts where salvation was felt to be at stake. Thus, extreme forms of polemic and invective are often found in anti-Jewish dialogues; especially in the early Islamic period, where Christians were concerned to find ways to reaffirm the permanent subordination of Judaism to Christianity in a context where they were treated on much more even grounds.⁴⁷⁷

But we also need not push this observation too far: where vitriol is found, it is often found in fictitious dialogues designed to be read by an in-group, where it was much easier to lambast one's opponents in explicitly derogatory terms. When we turn to accounts of debates that scholars believe to have some historical basis, it is difficult to find the harsh invective and deception of the kind memorialized by Anastasius of Sinai, even if accusations of heresy abound. When one turns to the argumentative techniques represented in the accounts of church councils, for example, certain distinctive features do jump out, like the use of chants, both to denigrate the opposition and to proclaim the orthodoxy of a certain disputant's position. But even here, the argument unfolds rather in the mode of a courtroom, as Caroline Humfress has shown in great detail, with the bishops present cross-examining their opponents in front of banks of stenographers and witnesses.⁴⁷⁸ While the tone can become hostile, it nevertheless proceeds according to a professionalized model of forensic questioning rooted ultimately in the ancient legal system, without room for the kinds of tricks used by Anastasius.

⁴⁷⁶ M. Kahlos, *Debate and Dialogue: Pagan and Christian Cultures c. 360-430* (2007), 72-5.

⁴⁷⁷ Dumont, *La polémique chalcédonienne*, 261-99.

⁴⁷⁸ C. Humfress, *Orthodoxy and the Courts in Late Antiquity* (Oxford, 2007).

Moreover, not all Christian elites placed a premium on invective, and some outright condemned it alongside the use of cheap tricks, deeming the humiliation of one's enemies to be beneath a Christian debater, whose goal ought to be persuasion. In addition to his preference for persuasion over imperial force, Gregory of Nazianzus condemned the disputational culture of his day both for its excessiveness and hostility, denouncing those who were like 'promoters of wrestling-bouts in the theaters, not even the sort of bouts that are conducted in accordance with the rules of the sport (κατὰ νόμους) and lead to the victory of one of the antagonists, but the sort which are stage-managed to give the uncritical spectators visual sensations and compel their applause.'⁴⁷⁹ In other words, the exact strategies used by Anastasius. Moreover, as Richard Lim has pointed out, Basil of Caesarea himself complained of loaded questions 'that demanded a yes-or-no response,' in which any failure to respond with one or the other 'would render him an object of ridicule.'⁴⁸⁰ The use of bait-and-switch questions and of playing to the crowd for cheap points were therefore criticized by two of the Cappadocian Fathers, whose own style would go on to influence Byzantine writing considerably, both theologically and in terms of style.

Even where we might expect a greater emphasis on humiliation of the opponent and shame (that is, in obviously fictional dialogues), many do not take this tact, as in Anastasius's *Hodegos*. The christological disputations of this period rather contributed to the emergence of what Brian Daley has called 'Byzantine scholasticism,' given their highly dialectical nature grounded in the use of Aristotelian logic, and thus to what Averil Cameron has called the 'increasing technologization' of debate in the sixth century and beyond.⁴⁸¹ In other words, far from focusing

⁴⁷⁹ Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oration 27.2* in L. Wickham, *On God and Christ: The Five Theological Orations and Two letters to Cledonius* (Crestwood, NY, 2022), 25-6.

⁴⁸⁰ R. Lim, 'Religious Disputation and Social Disorder in Late Antiquity' *Historia: Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte* 44:2 (1995): 226.

⁴⁸¹ B. Daley, 'Boethius' Theological Tracts and Early Byzantine Scholasticism,' *Mediaeval Studies* 41 (1984): 158-191; A. Cameron, *Dialoguing in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge, MA, 2014), 11.

attention on the performative dimension of debate, Chalcedonian disputants of this period sought to craft ever more technical and subtle arguments that parsed out in greater detail the philosophical and theological differences between Chalcedonian and Miaphysite understandings of key terms like ‘hypostasis,’ ‘nature,’ and ‘property.’ Leontius of Byzantium, for instance, wrote many of his theological works against the Severans in the dialogue form, and although these were intended to be read by fellow Chalcedonians, in none of them does he play to a fictive crowd or suggest the use of tricks to shame his opponents, even as he criticized their views at length. His works more closely resemble the refined style of a Platonic dialogue, and even if the outcome is predetermined, he makes clear that his aim is the persuasion of his opponents, not their humiliation. He concludes his most critical treatise against the Nestorians thus:

If, in any case, we manage to persuade you with all of this, and you change your mind, even at this late hour, honoring the truth before persons, all the better—thanks be to God! But if not, we will shed tears for you, since you deserve laments and wailing, but we will let ourselves depend upon God.⁴⁸²

One struggles to find a similar sentiment in Anastasius’s own disputations.

The same is true of John the Grammarian of Caesarea’s fictitious *Disputation with a Manichaeon*, which sticks to technical arguments and eschews the kind of sarcastic rhetoric found in Anastasius’s texts, even though it would have been easy to insert it for the amusement of his Christian audience. This dialogue concludes with an exhortation for the conversion of the opponent by cleverly playing upon Manichaean motifs: ‘Do not, therefore, transpierce yourselves or others with the teachings of impiety; instead, by running towards the light of the truth, purify your souls of the darkness of ignorance. For it is through freewill and not natural necessity that we humans

⁴⁸² B. Daley, SJ, *Leontius of Byzantium: Complete Works* (Oxford, 2017), 449.

produce heretical thinking in ourselves.’⁴⁸³ Likewise, Anastasius I of Antioch’s *Disputation between an Orthodox and a Tritheite*, which claims to be an account of a dialogue the patriarch held with certain Tritheist clerics in Jerusalem recorded ‘for the exercise of any who might encounter it’ (πρὸς γυμνασίαν τῶν ἴσως ἐντυγχανόντων), totally lacks vitriol or shaming. Both interlocutors speak in even turns of one or two lines each, and unlike Anastasius’s Alexandrian disputations, the text permits only one non-dialectical ‘example’ (παράδειγμα) outside of Scripture, which is the classic one of the relationship between universal and particular human nature in ‘Plato’ and ‘Simon.’ Despite the title’s mention of Tritheism, most of the text is concerned with Chalcedonian opposition to Miaphysitism in general, of which the Tritheist subvariant is dealt with towards the end. It departs from its focus on technical argumentation only at the end, where the author offers a simple confession of the faith of the Orthodox interlocutor, whose final sentence concludes:

For in teaching the unmixed union and that from which Christ exists, we also flee from division and confess one and the same [Christ], having been strengthened by faith and contending against heretics who dare to divide or attempt to confuse or invent fantasies or otherwise fail to confess the true and natural manifestation of his passions.⁴⁸⁴

Given that dialogue texts composed from within the empire in the sixth and seventh centuries do not seem to value deceptions or harsh derision in order to shame opponents, how are we to explain their outsized role in Anastasius’s writings?

⁴⁸³ John the Grammarian of Caesarea, *Disputatio cum Manichaeo* 65 in M. Richard, *Iohannis Caesariensis presbyteri et grammatici opera quae supersunt* CCSG 1 (Turnhout, 1977), 128: Μη οὖν ἑαυτοὺς τε καὶ ἐτέρους τοῖς τῆς ἀσεβείας περιπεῖρετε δόγμασιν, ἀλλὰ προσδραμόντες τῷ φωτὶ τῆς ἀληθείας, τὸν ζόφον τῆς ἀγνοίας ἐκκαθάρατε τῶν ψυχῶν. Αὐτεξουσιότητι γὰρ καὶ οὐκ ἀνάγκη φύσεως ἀνθρώποι τὸ δοκοῦν ἐν αἵρέσει ποιοῦμεθα.

⁴⁸⁴ Anastasius I of Antioch, *Dialexis* I.70 in S. N. Sakkos, *Ἀναστασίου Α΄ Ἀντιοχείας ἅπαντα τὰ σωζόμενα γνήσια ἔργα* (Thessaloniki, 1976), 105: ἔνωσιν γὰρ ἀκραιφνή δοξάζοντες καὶ τὰ ἐξ ὧν ἔστιν ὁ Χριστὸς οἶδαμεν καὶ τὴν διαίρεσιν φεύγομεν καὶ ἕνα καὶ τὸν αὐτὸν ὁμολογοῦμεν, πιστεῖ κρατυνόμενοι καὶ κατὰ τῶν αἰρετικῶν ἀγωνιζόμενοι, τῶν διαιρεῖν τολμώντων ἢ συγγέειν ἐπιχειρούντων ἢ φαντασίαν τερατευομένων ἢ οὐχ ὁμολογούντων τὴν ἀληθῆ καὶ φυσικὴν τῶν παθημάτων ἀνάδειξιν.

One answer, I suggest, can be found in the presence of the crowd. The presence of the crowd has always served an important rhetorical function in debates, whether through chanting at church councils (as mentioned above), or serving to mark the embarrassment of an interlocutor in a debate. In the Syriac account of the conference of 532 between Chalcedonians and Miaphysites, for example, the author notes that after the Chalcedonians unsuccessfully tried to argue that the Council of Chalcedon had never approved Ibas of Edessa's *Letter to Mari*, 'they were unable to offer any defence for this manifest wickedness, with the result that the shame of their denial was apparent to the auditor and to all those who were present.'⁴⁸⁵ But while the audience plays a more or less passive role in the conference of 532—this is the only place where they are mentioned in the Syriac account—the crowd appears in Anastasius's disputations multiple times, taking an active role in the proceedings. Indeed, it is for them, and not so much the bishops and monks in front of Anastasius, that his tricks are performed. Their comic and embarrassing nature suggests that Anastasius's disputational aim was less to persuade his opponents and more to humiliate them in front of a crowd of simple believers.

Indeed, with a view towards the Syriac sources of the sixth and seventh centuries in particular, Jack Tannous has located the role of Christian dialoguing and disputation (among other phenomena) in Umayyad society within the context of confessionalization and the need for sociological differentiation between various Christian groups whose lives were closely intertwined.⁴⁸⁶ In a world dominated by low levels of literacy, the leaders of Christian communities developed educational institutions to meet the needs of those clergy (in many cases simple

⁴⁸⁵ Brock, 'Conversations with the Syrian Orthodox,' 102.

⁴⁸⁶ Tannous, *The Marking of the Medieval Middle East*, 160ff. See also id., 'You Are What You Read: Qenneshre and the Miaphysite Church in the Seventh Century' in P. Wood (ed.), *History and Identity in the Late Antique Near East* (Oxford, 2013), to be read alongside Daniel King's contribution in the same volume, 'Why Were the Syrians Interested in Greek Philosophy?', 61-82.

believers themselves) who would spend much of their time evangelizing, catechizing, and preaching to the ‘average’ person. In particular, Tannous assumes (in addition to the elite dialogues and disputations with which this chapter has been concerned) the existence of a multiplicity of ‘lower-level arguments, disputes, debates, and doctrinal wrangling going on,’ and that in order to distinguish one’s own views amid ‘low-level inter-confessional sniping, one had to be dialectically well equipped.’⁴⁸⁷ To this end, he argues, a variety of strategies were adopted to aid this process, including the translation of philosophical texts from Greek into Syriac (Aristotelian logic above all), the formation of educational curricula, in particular at West Syrian monasteries like Qenneshre, and also the founding of other kinds of schools throughout Near Eastern villages by various anti-Chalcedonian clerics, too. In the context of the emergence of different eastern churches along christological lines, then, disputations and the development of various argumentative techniques that would go on to be displayed within them were oriented ‘below’ towards simple believers within the intense competitions for new adherents to one’s own confession.

Tannous’ focus on the competition for simple believers is the appropriate context in which to read the *Hodegos*’s Alexandrian disputations. But in this case, Anastasius’s method for winning over adherents to the Chalcedonian cause was virtually the opposite of his Syriac counterparts: rather than utilizing his erudition to demonstrate the superiority of the Chalcedonian viewpoint, Anastasius deployed certain performative tricks and rhetorical stratagems that would have been much more accessible to the ‘average’ person than refined, technical argumentation. There is little genuine attempt to grapple with arguments put forward by the other side. Rather, these strategies were deployed by and large to produce an emotional effect within the audience, like indignation,

⁴⁸⁷ Tannous, ‘You Are What You Read,’ 96.

derision, or laughter. Hence the focus on concocting situations wherein Anastasius could, through the use of unexpected tricks, physical comedy or lewd jokes, most effectively expose his opponents to embarrassment and shame.

Consider the performative spectacle of Anastasius's use of ready-made florilegia and tomes, for instance: after getting his Theodosian opponents to sign certain fake confessions or condemning the false 'Tome' of Flavian of Constantinople, Anastasius could pull the rug out from underneath them by brandishing the authority of the book and showing that they had not actually read the church fathers all too carefully in the first place. One need not actually understand the theological arguments present in the treatises and letters excerpted to recognize the embarrassment of being shown up publicly in this way. The deceptive strategy of falsifying patristic citations or inventing fake texts was thus given legitimacy, not because it could actually have persuaded, e.g., Gregory of al-Kaïs, but because it was always intended to rile up and win over the crowd.

Framing the *σκόποι* of the Alexandrian debates with reference to the crowd also helps explain Anastasius's deeper forms of deception, as when he lied about his identity in private to the Theodosians before the first debate, feigning an accommodationist desire to achieve reunion with them. As he relates it, this strategy required him to pretend to be someone he was not for a period of multiple days in order to convince them of his genuineness. He did this to get them to show up to a high-profile public meeting so that he could spring an embarrassing trap on them. Not only are deception and trickery of this kind unparalleled in earlier christological dialogue and disputational material—I cannot think of a single instance wherein a disputant used false pretenses in order to assemble a unionist synod with the sole aim of scuppering it—but it only makes sense if he was doing it all for the crowd of onlookers all along. At the end of the first and second debates, he recounts with undisguised glee the emotions of the crowd and how they led them to confirm his

victory. After the Theodosians remained ‘stunned, puzzled, and astounded’ at Anastasius’s trick, Anastasius remarks that they could not speak ‘because they were put to shame before all the people of the church,’ who, like Anastasius himself, clapped at them and sarcastically telling them to burn all of the church fathers who spoke, in any way, of two natures in Christ – completely ignoring, of course, the context in which statements about Christ’s two natures may have occurred.⁴⁸⁸ The crowd then gets involved two more times: first, to shout ‘If nature means person, before all else Cyril of Alexandria who said *The natures of Christ remained unconfused*’; and second, to create a ‘worthy proclamation... *Give to the Theodosian and Gaianite if he seeks something, and at once it is destroyed.*’⁴⁸⁹

In Anastasius’s version of the debate, the crowd actually speaks more than any of his Theodosian interlocutors, and they do so in ‘the unlearned dialect of the Alexandrians.’ This is quite different to what we saw in the Syriac account of the conference of 532, for example, where the crowd acknowledged the weakness of the Chalcedonians’ argument somewhat in passing, never themselves getting involved in the debate but remaining spectators. Moreover, in that case, the audience was composed of the educated elite: various *synkelloi* of the patriarch as well as a patrician who oversaw it. But here, the crowd forms simplistic theological slogans that they can shout at the Theodosians which, again, completely circumvent the actual arguments Miaphysites raised about the relationship between nature and person. At the conclusion to the second debate, (which occurred at the public arsenal) after Anastasius had embarrassed John ‘of Zyga’ and Gregory by getting them to condemn his fake ‘Tome’ by Flavian of Constantinople (in actuality containing innocent citations of the church fathers), he concludes the debate by telling us that ‘the little people finally arose, insulting them and wanting almost to stone them. Such was the scandal

⁴⁸⁸ Anastasius, *Hodegos* X,1.3.6-14.

⁴⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, X,1.3.1-30.

and shame which both John and those with him suffered publicly.’⁴⁹⁰ By ‘little people’ evidently is meant the simple believers who were in the audience, whose rage was ignited not by subtle theological argumentation but trickery.

To these we could add Anastasius’s tactic in the third disputation, which, although it occurred within the chambers of the *praetorium*, involved another physical stunt and another deception. After perceiving the ‘naivety and witlessness’ of his opponents (a different set of Theodosian bishops who evidently did not know Anastasius), he took a sheet of papyrus and a pen from the banks of notaries and signed an over simplistic and easily exploitable confession of faith for them to agree to, which he tells us he did ‘out of a desire to reveal to everyone and to record the poison that was hidden in their and their whole church’s heart.’⁴⁹¹ After revealing that he had gotten them to affirm that the divine nature had suffered, they struggled to snatch the papyrus away from Anastasius. Unable to do so, we are told, Anastasius held it just beyond their reach and ‘cried out in the presence of all’ that he would keep it as a sort of trophy to hand it over to Christ on the Day of Judgement.

In addition to the deceptions and public nature of the shame that Anastasius sought to bring about in his opponents, it is also worth considering in greater detail the physical and comic dimension of his debating strategies, too, which doubtless for Anastasius added a more dramatic dimension. For example, during the second disputation, Anastasius joked that the Theodosians wrongfully equivocated on how the word ‘nature’ was used depending upon the context: when Cyril used it, they claimed that it referred to ‘existence’ (ὕπαρξις), but that ‘the natures which Chalcedon proclaimed with respect to Christ happen to be the natures of the winds that blow, or

⁴⁹⁰ Ibid., X,2.7.161-173.

⁴⁹¹ Ibid., X,3.1.32-34.

the genitalia of camels and mules.’⁴⁹² After shocking his interlocutors with this reference, he remarks to the reader, ‘I said these things while turning my nose up with mockery and solemnity at John the monk.’ Immediately, then, he tells us that he drew the crowd into the debate in a more explicit way. After turning his back to John and Gregory and moving towards the crowd, he said,

By your love, when the Severans hear of hypostases in Christ, I reckon that they have in mind hypostases of material/concrete and created things! For this reason they proclaim and confess them fearlessly and carelessly. But whenever they hear ‘natures,’ they think these to be something shameful and wicked, the parts which procreate in the bodies of men and women.⁴⁹³

One assumes that Anastasius included this remark with the hope that the audience would erupt in raucous laughter. Anastasius thus used physical comedy and lewd jokes to shame his opponents, assimilating the Theodosians to simpletons who think about various forms of genitalia, and doing so with an upturned nose and well-timed turns to face the crowd and double down on the joke. Relatedly, he elsewhere likened Theodosian christology to crass forms of entertainment: ‘Truly again I say, your beliefs are more comical than any play or orchestra, as well as the courtesans of the stage.’⁴⁹⁴

He also idealized the use of physical comedy in the third disputation at the Augustalis’s *praetorium*. At the moment when he exposed his enemies’ Theopaschism once they had signed Anastasius’s confession, he tells us that he drew near ‘to the one who seemed to be the wisest of

⁴⁹² Ibid., X,2.3.129-134: Ἀλλὰ τάχα τοῦτο βούλεσθε πρὸς ἡμᾶς εἰπεῖν, ὅτι αἱ μὲν φύσεις καὶ ὑποστάσεις, ἃς εἶπεν ὁ ἅγιος Κύριλλος, ὑπάρξεις σημαίνουσι, καὶ ἀνέγκλητός ἐστιν· αἱ δὲ φύσεις, ἃς ἡ Χαλκηδὼν ἐπὶ Χριστοῦ κηρύττει, φύσεις τινὲς ἀνέμων φυσῶντων, ἢ καμῆλων καὶ ἡμιόνων φυσικὰ μόρια τυγχάνουσιν.»

⁴⁹³ Ibid., X,2.3.135-4.8: Ταῦτα μυκτηρίζων ἐμβριθῶς πρὸς Ἰωάννην τὸν μονάζοντα εἶπον. Καὶ ἀποστραφείς πρὸς τὸν λαὸν τῆς ἐκκλησίας εἶπον· «Μὰ τὴν ἀγάπην ὑμῶν, ἀκούοντες ὑποστάσεις ἐν Χριστῷ οἱ ἀπὸ Σευήρου, νομίζω, ὑποστάσεις τινῶν χρημάτων ἢ κτημάτων ἐννοούμενοι, τούτου χάριν ἀφόβως καὶ ἀπαρατηρήτως αὐτὰς κηρύττουσι καὶ ὁμολογοῦσιν. Ἐπὰν δὲ ἀκούσωσι φύσεις, αἰσχρὰ τινα καὶ ἄτοπα νομίζουσι ταύτας εἶναι, τὰ μόρια τὰ συνουσιαστικὰ τῶν σωμάτων τῶν ἀνθρωπίνων καὶ γυναικείων.

⁴⁹⁴ Ibid., X,2.3.28-30: Ὅντως, πάλιν λέγω, σκηνηῆς ἀπάσης καὶ ὀρχήστρας καὶ θυμελικῶν ἐταιρίδων καταγελαστότερα τὰ καθ’ ὑμᾶς.

them, touched his beard gently with my hand, and said “Christ suffered *in the flesh*, you Theopaschite!”⁴⁹⁵ Grabbing the beard of one’s opponent was viewed as humiliating in Byzantium, something done only by ne’er-do-wells. John Kekaumenos, for instance, writes the following:

Don’t play around with a fool; he will insult you, and perhaps even seize your beard, and consider how great the disgrace for you will be. If you allow him [to do this], everyone will laugh; but if you strike him, you will be criticized and reviled by everyone.⁴⁹⁶

In the *Hodegos*, Anastasius just is Kekaumenos’s beard-grabbing fool.

Finally, in case the accounts of the disputations were not clear enough, Anastasius explicitly told his readers to replicate his strategies. For example, at the moment when he sprung his false ‘Tome’ of Flavian of Antioch, he inserted the following scholion: ‘We set these things out so that the *philoponoι* may use them in the same way against their opponents. For even the blessed Paul knew how to use the same tactic, and for this reason said to some, “I took you by means of a deceit.”⁴⁹⁷ At this point, it is worth turning very briefly again to the *Bonwetsch Dialogue*, which also utilizes strategies of deceit, though to a lesser degree than Anastasius.⁴⁹⁸ Here, a Chalcedonian monk sought to engage in debate with a famed Jacobite stylite, and did so by ‘taking along with him certain other men of the world, zealots and most pious, and dressed

⁴⁹⁵ X,3.1.60-2: Καὶ λαβὼν τὸν χάρτην μετὰ τὴν ὑπογραφὴν, πλησιάσας τῷ δοκοῦντι εἶναι σοφωτέρῳ αὐτῶν καὶ ἡρέμα τῇ χειρὶ ἀψάμενος τοῦ πάγωνος αὐτοῦ εἶπον· «Χριστοῦ παθόντος σαρκί, ὃ Θεοπασχίτα, καὶ οὐ θεότητι.

⁴⁹⁶ John Kekaumenos, *Recommendations and narrations* §155 ll. 18-21 in *Cecaumeni Strategicon et incerti scriptoris de officiis regis libellus*, ed. B. Wassiliewsky and V. Jernsted (St Petersburg, 1896), 63: μετὰ ἄφρονος μὴ παιζῆς· ὑβρίσει γάρ σε καὶ ἴσως κρατήσει καὶ τῆς γενειάδος σου, καὶ σκόπησον πόση αἰσχὺνη σοι ἔσται. καὶ εἰ μὲν ἑάσεις αὐτόν, πάντες γελάσουσιν, εἰ δὲ τύψῃς αὐτόν, παρὰ πάντων μεμφθήσῃ καὶ λοιδορηθήσῃ. See the discussion of this text in P. Magdalino, ‘Tourner en dérision à Byzance,’ 56.

⁴⁹⁷ Ibid., X,2.7.76-79: Σχόλιον. Ταῦτα ἐκτιθέμεθα, ἵνα τῷ αὐτῷ τρόπῳ κέχρηται οἱ φιλόπονοι κατὰ τῶν ἐναντίων. Ἐπεὶ καὶ ὁ μακάριος Παῦλος εἶδε τῷ τοιοῦτῳ τρόπῳ χρήσασθαι· διὸ καὶ ἔλεγε πρὸς τινὰς, ὅτι Δόλω ὑμᾶς ἔλαβον.

⁴⁹⁸ For an examination of the various arguments in the text, see Dumont, *La polémique chalcedonienne*, 162-5, 173-4, 189-6, 221-3.

them in the habits of monks.’⁴⁹⁹ The stylite himself, however, did not realize that they were secretly Chalcedonian laypeople. At this point, then, the characters of the dialogue adopt the disputational personae of various ‘heretics’ in order to prove either Julianism or Severanism wrong – and to that end, the dialogue as a whole reads like a kind of school exercise, a ‘christological *progymnasma*’ like that mentioned above. It is only at its conclusion that the Chalcedonian reveals ‘with grinning face and voice’ that he was a Chalcedonian all along. Our author tells us that the stylite, ‘as if in deep slumber and long sleep, remained outside himself, speechless, mouth agape, mute, confounded, struck, confused, utterly panic-stricken and completely silent. The verbose one was voiceless, the philosopher dumb, and the guide blind.’⁵⁰⁰ Although the stylite did not himself convert, we are then told that the Chalcedonian journeyed to Damascus and ‘again feigned’ with the ‘Gaïanites of the city’ with greater success, where they communed with him.

Given the views of Nathanael Bonwetsch and Gustave Bardy that the dramatic setting of the *Trophies of Damascus* (ca. 680) ought to apply to the *Bonwetsch Dialogue* too, we appear to have a christological dialogue from the late seventh or early eighth century that shares many features found in the *Hodegos*.⁵⁰¹ Was its author an anonymous disciple of Anastasius of Sinai, one of the *philopoi* to whom his *magnum opus* was dedicated—or possibly the other way around? Although we do not have the space to explore the question here, it is interesting to consider that the dramatic setting for the text is the deserts of Arabia outside of Damascus. Peter van Nuffelen saw in Damascus and the introduction’s description of the stylite as a ‘Galatian’ a veiled

⁴⁹⁹ *Bonwetsch Dialogue 2* in N. Bonwetsch, *Ein antimonophysitischer Dialog* (Berlin, 1909), 124: συμπαραλαβὸν μεθ’ ἑαυτοῦ ἄνδρα ἐτέρου κοσμικοῦ, ζηλωτὰς καὶ εὐλαβεστάτου, μοναχικὸν αὐτοῦ περικείμενος σχῆμα.

⁵⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 71-2 [Bonwetsch 145-6]: μειδιῶντι τῷ προσώπῳ καὶ ἀστεία τῇ φωνῇ [...] Ἦτι τούτων λαλουμένων ὁ στυλίτης ὥσπερ ἐν κάρῳ βαθεῖ καὶ ἐν ὕπνῳ πολλῶ χρονισθεὶς ἐμεινεν ἐξεστηκῶς, ἐνεὸς, κεχηνώς, ἄναυδος, συγκεχυμένος, ἡλλοιωμένος, ὄλωσ καταπλαγείς, ὄλωσ ἐσιώπησεν, ὁ πολύλαλος ἄλαλος, ὁ φιλόσοφος ἄσοφος, ὁ ὁδηγὸς τυφλὸς γενόμενος. Cf. Anastasius of Sinai, *Hodegos* X,2.3.74-5 (grinning face); *ibid.*, X,3.1.23-31 (charming voice); *ibid.*, X,1.3.6-14 (long description of stupefied Severan).

⁵⁰¹ Bonwetsch, *Ein antimonophysitischer Dialog*, 154; G. Bardy, *La Trophees de Damas: controverse judéo-chrétienne du VIIe siècle* PO 15 (Paris, 1920), 175-; Dumont, *La polémique chalcedonienne*, 66-8.

reference to St. Paul's conversion experience, and assumed that its place of composition was Syria.⁵⁰² But it is also worth considering the possibility, because Damascus was the capital of the Umayyad Caliphate and the deserts of Arabia the lands from which Islam sprang, that the dramatic setting is the deliberate product of a Chalcedonian author polemically associating Severanism with Islamic hegemony. Moreover, throughout the dialogue the author refers to Severans and Julianists as 'Theodosians' and 'Gaianites,' terminology which would rather point to an Egyptian provenance. It is therefore just possible that the unholy alliance between Theodosian patriarch and Marwānid emir in Alexandria and Babylon-Fuṣṭāṭ that dominated Anastasius of Sinai's career is also being refracted through this *mise-en-scène*. In any case, it is striking that the only other example of such deception in debate that we have originates from a Chalcedonian operative in the Umayyad caliphate.

Conclusion

One last question remains: why choose to demonstrate Chalcedon's superiority through performative tricks rather than sophisticated argumentation? In other words, why did Anastasius utilize strategies that would persuade his audience rather than the bishops and monks with whom he actually debated? Although we cannot be totally sure, these idiosyncrasies must be related to the historical circumstances in which Anastasius polemicized: that of the Chalcedonian church's decline in Alexandria and the Theodosian church's rise.

While we cannot date these disputations with any more precision than the period ca. 680-685, there are two offhand comments in the first and second disputations that lead one to believe that they occurred at a time when the Chalcedonians of Alexandria were under particular pressure,

⁵⁰² Van Nuffelen, 'Prepared for All Occasions,' 68.

perhaps with the sense that the writing was on the wall for them. The first disputation begins abruptly, without any context, save that Anastasius was in Alexandria and remarked that he had seen ‘their mad aim’ and that ‘no one there sees in accordance with God, but in antipathy to the church.’⁵⁰³ It is not clear what ‘their mad aim’ refers to, but whatever it was prompted Anastasius to attempt his rather desperate fake reunion trick. In the second disputation, while contesting John and Gregory’s interpretation of Cyril’s phrase ‘The natures, that is, the hypostases, remained unconfused,’ Anastasius confidently declares their inability to understand it by suggesting that ‘the holiest chiefs of Alexandria used such a phrase on account of the stealthy dragons of complete confusion who are now in it,’ with a statement that the phrase was deliberately ambiguous and could only properly be understood by Chalcedonians.⁵⁰⁴ Though sparse, both of these remarks point to a recent change in the city’s ecclesial situation.

I suggest that we read these comments, and thus also the disputational strategies memorialized by Anastasius, in the light of the Theodosian church’s ascendancy thanks to Athanasius bar Gumoyē and ‘Abd al-‘Azīz in 685 – especially since the composition of this very part of the *Hodegos* appears to have been prompted by Anastasius’s own debate with Athanasius at ‘Abd al-‘Azīz’s court. At a time when the Chalcedonian church was under intense pressure and had virtually no chance of winning support from the Arab-Muslim authorities, Anastasius sought to win over simple believers to the Chalcedonian cause through deception, trickery, and comedy, strategies that were put towards the end of maximizing the public humiliation and embarrassment of the Theodosian elite when they had at last secured institutional enfranchisement. In this regard,

⁵⁰³ Anastasius of Sinai, *Hodegos* X,1.1.23-4: Γενόμενος γοῦν, ὡς προεῖπον, ἐν Ἀλεξανδρείᾳ καὶ ἰδὼν τὸν μάταιον αὐτῶν σκοπόν, ὅτι οὐδὲν κατὰ θεόν, ἀλλὰ πρὸς ἀντιπάθειαν τῆς ἐκκλησίας ὄρᾳ

⁵⁰⁴ *Hodegos* X,2.3.83-89: Πρὸς τοῦτο ἀποκριθεὶς εἶπον, τοῦ θεοῦ περὶ ἡμῶν τῶν τῆς καθολικῆς ἐκκλησίας κρεῖττόν τι προβλεψαμένου καὶ πραγματευσαμένου, ἵνα οἱ τῆς Ἀλεξανδρέων ἀγιώτατοι πρόεδροι τὴν τοιαύτην εἴπωσι φωνὴν διὰ τοὺς νῦν ἐν αὐτῇ ἐμφωλεύσαντας τῆς παντοίας συγχύσεως δράκοντας.

Anastasius came to celebrate precisely the kind of bait-and-switch techniques condemned by Basil of Caesarea and to conjure his own disputations that were ‘stage-managed to give the uncritical spectators visual sensations and compel their applause’ that Gregory of Nazianzus loathed. His tricks and public spectacles serve as vivid illustrations of the fact that Chalcedonianism was no longer dominant on Egypt’s ecclesial scene, and that in this new era of even more intense religious competition, Chalcedonians needed to modify their strategies in order to win over new adherents – and perhaps even to change the definition of what counted as a victory.

Chapter Five: Medicine for the Soul in a Changing World

Introduction

Although Anastasius of Sinai dedicated much of his time to the production of treatises primarily aimed at refuting his theological opponents, it would be misleading to overemphasize the polemical side of his *oeuvre*. When we turn to the other great texts he produced – namely, the *Questions and Answers* and the *Edifying Tales for the Soul* – we encounter a very different Anastasius: one who sought not merely to tear down his confessional or religious rivals, but to build up his own church.

And while the *Edifying Tales* provided models of Christian heroism to encourage his audience to persevere in the midst of Islamic domination, it is in the *Questions and Answers* that Anastasius was at arguably his most pastoral. Here, he responded directly to the moral and theological questions and concerns from ordinary people, fellow monastics, and clergymen. When one examines them in their totality (numbering one hundred and three responses) one is struck, in addition to the standard fare of monastic *responsa* dealing with questions of biblical exegesis, by a major question which unites much of the collection; namely: how can one reconcile belief in a providential God with the crises that have dominated the Christian Roman empire – and now their remnants in the caliphate – for over a century? John Haldon has noted that the questions asked in this collection are essential for understanding the process of ‘ideological reorientation’ that eastern Christians underwent from the mid-sixth century onwards, as uncertainties and change took root in the empire and its former territories, and that now reached their climax with the rise of Islam and the loss of the Near East to the nascent caliphate.⁵⁰⁵ So too, Anastasius’s answers are equally

⁵⁰⁵ The literature discussing the shift in moods, attitudes, and beliefs brought about by the historical changes of the sixth and seventh centuries is now vast – I cite here the most important general studies relevant for Anastasian scholarship on the *Questions and Answers*; others, more topical studies on the relevant questions will be cited below.

significant. When viewed from the perspective of the other kinds of textual production then current amongst eastern Christians, they stand out for their varying degrees of dissidence from popular views on the crucial question of how divine power is manifested in the temporal sphere.⁵⁰⁶

As we have already seen, two crucial contexts for the composition of Anastasius's polemical works were the defeat of the Christian Roman empire at the hands of an emergent, rival monotheism (Islam), and the Marwānid state's establishment of the Theodosians as guardians of the institutional church in Egypt.⁵⁰⁷ Moreover, as the Theodosian church gained the ascendancy, it also attempted to endow itself with new spiritual authority: this was achieved through the episcopate's increased focus on the sacraments and their ability to differentiate Severans from Chalcedonians, and by composing new hagiographical texts intending to refashion its identity as a 'martyr' church in continuity with pre-Constantinian Christianity. By appropriating many key figures of the Great Persecutions for itself and elevating lesser known ones, the Theodosians revitalized its cult of saints and placed it at the center of its confessional identity.⁵⁰⁸ This emphasis

See G. Bardy, 'La littérature patristique des *Quaestiones et Responsiones* sur l'Écriture Saint,' *Revue Biblique* 42 (1933): 339-342; M. Richard, 'Les véritables "Questions et Réponses" d'Anastase le Sinaïte,' *Bulletin de l'Institut de Recherche et d'Histoire des Textes* 14 (1967-69): 39-56; G. Dagron, 'Le saint, le savant, l'astrologue: Étude de thèmes hagiographiques à travers quelques recueils de «Questions et réponses» des Ve-VIIIe siècle,' in *Hagiographie, cultures et sociétés, IV e -XII e siècles. Actes du Colloque organisé à Nanterre et à Paris (2-5 Mai, 1979)*, ed. E. Patlagean and P. Riché (Paris, 1981), 143-156; J. Haldon, *Byzantium in the Seventh Century: The Transformation of a Culture* (1990), 324-375; Id., 'The Works of Anastasius of Sinai: a Key Resource for the History of Seventh-Century East Mediterranean Society and Belief,' in *The Byzantine and Early Islamic Near East I: Problems in the Literary Source Material*, ed. A. Cameron and L. I. Conrad (Princeton, NJ, 1992), 107-147; G. Dagron, 'L'ombre d'une doute: L'hagiographie en question, VIe-XIe siècle,' *DOP* 46 (1992): 59-68; V. Déroche, 'Pourquoi écrivait-on des recueils de miracles? L'exemple des miracles de saint Artémios,' in *Les saints et leur sanctuaire à Byzance: Textes, images et monuments* (Paris, 1993), 95-116; J. Haldon, 'Supplementary Essay' in *The Miracles of St. Artemios: A Collection of Miracle Stories by an Anonymous Author of Seventh-Century Byzantium*, ed. V. S. Crisaffuli and J. W. Nesbitt (Leiden, 1997), 33-56; J. Haldon, *The Empire that Would Not Die: The Paradox of Eastern Roman Survival, 640-740* (Cambridge, MA, 2016), 79-119.

⁵⁰⁶ As noted by M.-H. Congourdeau, 'Médecine et théologie chez Anastase le Sinaïte, médecin, moine et didascale,' in *Les Pères de l'Église face à la science médicale de leur temps*, ed. V. Boudon-Millot and B. Pouderon (Paris, 2005), 289.

⁵⁰⁷ See ch. 2 *infra*.

⁵⁰⁸ A. Papaconstantinou, 'Historiography, Hagiography, and the Making of the Coptic "Church of the Martyrs" in Early Islamic Egypt' *DOP* 60 (2006): 65-86; F. Krueger, 'Der Patriarch, der Mönchsheilige und der Engel des Altars: Eucharistische Visionen im koptisch-literarischen Dossier Benjamins I. von Alexandria und verwandten kirchenhistorisch-biographischen Werken' in *Pharaohs, monks and scholars: On the pilgrimage through 5000 years*

on locating access to the holy in the living dead was paralleled within the eastern Roman empire by the continued production of hagiographies that emphasized the dispensation of miraculous healing by saints at their shrines, often through incubation.⁵⁰⁹ The anonymous *Miracles of Artemius*⁵¹⁰ and Andrew of Crete's *Miracles of Therapon*⁵¹¹ built upon an earlier hagiographical tradition which emphasized the miraculous healings and personal intercessions of saints, like the *Miracles of Cosmas and Damian*,⁵¹² Sophronius of Jerusalem's *Miracles of Cyrus and John*,⁵¹³ and the two collections of the *Miracles of Demetrius*,⁵¹⁴ amongst others. By contrast, Chalcedonians who remained in the caliphate, and were caught between the dual crises of Islamic hegemony and Severan ecclesial authority, were forced to articulate a new vision of where true holiness could be found.

But as both Theodosians within the caliphate and Chalcedonians within the empire responded to the crises of the seventh century by saturating the temporal world with divine power, Anastasius contributed to this broader debate by opting for the opposite approach – that is, by retracting access to the holy in certain significant ways, and by distancing God from the affairs of the temporal world in certain respects.⁵¹⁵ This retraction took two closely related forms: first, in a tendency to naturalize historical causation and change in most cases, particularly in cases about death, illness, natural disasters, and even certain kinds of political and military change; and second, to criticize institutions that sought to mediate God's providential care for the earth, in part by

of Egyptian history across three continents Heike Behlmer on the occasion of her 65th birthday, ed. D. Atannasova, F. Feder et al (Wiesbaden, 2023), 461-87; Booth, 'Blood of Christ,' (forthcoming).

⁵⁰⁹ Haldon, 'Supplementary Essay,' 54.

⁵¹⁰ Crisafulli and Nesbitt, *The Miracles of St. Artemios*.

⁵¹¹ L. Deubner (ed.), *De incubatione capita quattuor* (Leipzig, 1900), 120-134.

⁵¹² L. Deubner (ed.), *Kosmas und Damian: Text und Einleitung* (Leipzig, 1907).

⁵¹³ Marcos, *Los Thaumata de Sofronio*.

⁵¹⁴ P. Lemerle (ed.), *Les plus anciens recueils des Miracles de saint Démétrius* (2 vols, Paris, 1979-81).

⁵¹⁵ On the eastern Roman empire of the seventh century as characterized by an 'overproduction of the holy,' see P. Brown, 'Eastern and Western Christendom in Late Antiquity: A Parting of the Ways,' in *Studies in Church History* 13 (1976): 11.

marginalizing the intercessory role of saints and their cults in favor of viewing divine power as the sole preserve of God.

In spite of Anastasius's repeated protestations that nothing occurs without God's foreknowledge or providence, Vincent Déroche has noted how he went out of his way to emphasize the 'autonomy of the world': a world that is almost mechanistic, ordered in its outlines by God and subject to his occasional miraculous interventions, but otherwise left to its own devices and subject to the vicissitudes of nature.⁵¹⁶ In his excellent research on the *Questions and Answers*, Gilbert Dagron concluded that Anastasius's insistence upon a natural mediation of divine providence, particularly through his high view of Galenic medicine, was a way of 'saving what could be saved of a cultural heritage by marking out the legitimate domain of secular science' after nascent Islam had defeated the empire.⁵¹⁷ But as Daniel King has argued in a contemporaneous and parallel situation—that of the translation of Greek scientific and philosophical texts in seventh century Syria—claims that the first generations of Christians living under Islamic hegemony sought to preserve this knowledge for special reasons generally tend to fall flat.⁵¹⁸ As we shall see, Dagron's assertion seems to misread the ends to which Anastasius deployed this knowledge, which he nowhere presents as requiring saving.⁵¹⁹

Instead, the function of his emphasis on naturalism served a more immediate and pressing purpose: it enabled him to explain the changes and crises of the seventh century without having to sacrifice his belief in the ultimate providence of God or, conversely, to concede that the domination

⁵¹⁶ V. Déroche, review of *Anastase le Sinaïte: Trois homélies suivies de Questions et Réponses spirituelles et pastorales choisies. Introduction et notes* by H. Nicholas, *Revue de l'histoire des religions* 1 (2017): 163.

⁵¹⁷ Dagron, 'L'ombre d'une doute,' 63; cf. Haldon, 'The Works of Anastasius of Sinai,' 137-8.

⁵¹⁸ King, 'Why Were the Syrians Interested in Greek Philosophy?', 61-82.

⁵¹⁹ The scholarship on the Syriac translation movement is enormous; for an overview, see S. P. Brock, *From Ephrem to Romanos. Interactions between Syriac and Greek in Late Antiquity* (Abingdon, 1999); E. Villey (ed.), *Les sciences en syriaque*, *Études syriaques* 11 (Paris, 2014); E. Fiori and H. Hugonnard-Roche (eds.), *La philosophie en syriaque* (Paris, 2019).

of his Muslim and Severan enemies was a sign that they had acquired divine favour. Said otherwise, it was a way for Anastasius to rationalize these crises without conceding that they occurred through God's will or design, while at the same time preserving God's omnipotence and foreknowledge intact. But to do so, he had to radically alter what that providence looked like. In this respect, Anastasius sought less to preserve a tradition of knowledge viewed as distinct from theological concerns than he aimed to deploy them both in pursuit of an interpretive prism that could reassure his Chalcedonian audience that God had not abandoned them, even in the midst of the pressures created by Theodosian supremacy and Islamic hegemony.

This chapter will therefore examine Anastasius's thinking about providence and causation throughout his *Questions and Answers*. In particular, I will examine how Anastasius's views on a seemingly disparate range of topics – the etiology of disease, the nature of the soul, the cult of saints, medicine, predestination – collectively emerge from a more fundamental set of convictions about the nature of God's activity in a world dominated by traumatic change, and thus of Chalcedonian Christians' place in it.

Diagnosing the Cause: Naturalism and Divine Action

In his third *Discourse on the Image and Likeness of God in Man* (701), Anastasius sketched out a theology of history based upon traditional assumptions about the role of the divine in human affairs that were fundamental to the moral universe of the eastern Roman empire in order to explain the rise of Islam and defeat of the empire.⁵²⁰ This was the classic view that the health and harmony of the state was bound up with the emperor's position as protector of the church and guarantor of

⁵²⁰ The most authoritative discussion of this text is found in H. Ohme, 'Die Bedeutung der Geschichtstheologie im monenergetisch-monotheletischen Streit des 7. Jahrhunderts' *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche* 112:1 (2015): 27-61.

orthodoxy. Indeed, he even preferred a medical metaphor for his interpretation of the rise of monotheletism and the sickness of the empire, likening heresy to ‘pestilential diseases’ and his own task as theologian to that of a wise and learned doctor who first diagnoses the ‘material causes’ of the disease carefully before concocting an antidote.⁵²¹ Thus, God had sent the ‘desert-dwelling Amalek’ against the empire for its sins – in this case, for successive emperors’ failure to preserve orthodoxy by endorsing monotheletism.⁵²² The cure was to be found – as it had in the days of Constantine IV and the Sixth Ecumenical Council – in understanding monothelete theology and then refuting it.

Had Anastasius been writing in Constantinople, this may have been enough to reassure his audience that the body politic had been restored to good health. But for Chalcedonians living in the caliphate – and thus still under the hegemony and pressure of that latter-day Amalek – the situation was quite different. Thus, Anastasius was asked more pointedly, ‘Regarding all the evil things which the Arabs have done against the lands and peoples of the Christians – were they carried out against us entirely according to the command and approval of God?’ To this, Anastasius responded, ‘Not in *every* way,’ and in so doing, set out a more complex response on the rise and effects of Arab-Muslim hegemony on the populations of the Christian east than he had in his third *Discourse*.⁵²³ Although God certainly handed over the empire to be chastised for the sin of monotheletism, he is careful to point out that the punishment went far beyond the crime: ‘May we never say that God compelled them to throw down and trample the holy body and blood, or the relics of his holy apostles and martyrs,’ or to ‘defile the altars of God and the holy places,’ or to ‘force unwilling female ascetics with many years of virginity into marriage,’ among other

⁵²¹ Anastasius of Sinai, *Discourse on the Image and Likeness of God in Man* III.4, 6: τὰς αἰτιοποιούσας ὕλας ... τὰς λοιμώδεις νόσους.

⁵²² *Ibid.*, III.85-6: καὶ θᾶπτον ἀνέστη ὁ ἐρημικὸς Ἀμαλῆκ ἡμᾶς τὸν λαὸν τοῦ Χριστοῦ.

⁵²³ Anastasius, *Questions and Answers* 101.1-3.

abominations.⁵²⁴ In response, he drew an analogy between ancient Israel and the Assyrians, on the one hand, and the empire and caliphate on the other, saying that just as Israel had been ‘handed over to the Assyrians for their chastisement,’ and the Assyrians had mistakenly ‘thought that God had handed the Jews over to them for destruction,’ the latter proceeded to ‘treat them harshly and remorselessly,’ just as the Arab-Muslims had done with the Christians of the eastern Roman empire.⁵²⁵ As such, God wiped out the Assyrians for their mistreatment of his chosen people, a fate which will also come to the Arab-Muslims. The reader is thus advised to focus their anger where it truly belongs: not on God, but on Islamic overreach, for which they ‘await the ultimate punishment.’⁵²⁶

The logic of divine punishment was not restricted to the macro-level of empire, though. In the symbolic universe of eastern Roman Christians, it operated at the level of day-to-day life, too. Thus, a major concern for ordinary people was how and to what extent this logic applied to the causation of sickness, disease, plague, and, more generally, death of all kinds. Accordingly, concerns about these topics occupy a large share of the questions that Anastasius was posed.⁵²⁷ When an illness of the body arose, or a plague, or the sudden death of a loved one, one might reasonably ask: Is this a punishment for sin? Does it come from God or the devil? As we shall see, the ‘both/and’ tendency to affirm and deny providential causation that marked Anastasius’s approach to the conquests also tends to inflect his answers on these quotidian matters, where he walks a tightrope between affirming God’s ultimate control over human destiny (by affirming changeable terms of life in exceptional cases), and reassuring his audience that God generally does

⁵²⁴ Ibid., 101.4-13.

⁵²⁵ Ibid., 101.16-20.

⁵²⁶ Ibid., 101.35-6.

⁵²⁷ They are the most common after questions of biblical exegesis, appearing explicitly or implicitly in QQ. 16, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 33, 35, 42, 49, 66, 79, 81, and the logistical implications of the position Anastasius took in them can be felt in various other questions, too.

not interfere in the course of everyday life (virtually always the case regarding the causation of sickness and disease, but true of most instances of death, too).

Before we turn to Anastasius's answers, it is worth saying a word about the broader context in which discussions about sickness, death, and healing occurred. The practice of medicine from the second century onward was heavily influenced by the Hippocratic corpus as interpreted by Galen, who located the cause of illness in purely naturalistic/materialist terms by relating it to the imbalance of humors (blood, yellow bile, black bile, and phlegm), and to the role that climate and diet played in influencing them.⁵²⁸ Amongst Christians, attitudes towards secular medicine were not necessarily negative: elite bishops and ascetics resolved to demonstrate their mastery of pagan *paideia*, which included the Greek medical and scientific tradition, even as they ordered it towards Christian ends. This approach can be observed to varying degrees throughout late fourth century church fathers: for example, in the long chapter dedicated to anatomy and physiology in Gregory of Nyssa's treatise on theological anthropology, *On the Human Image of God*;⁵²⁹ in the synthesis of Galen, Plato, and Aristotle with Christian notions of divine providence and the soul in Nemesius of Emesa's *On the Nature of Man*;⁵³⁰ and, more practically, in the establishment of *nosokomeia* and *ptochotropheia* by John Chrysostom and Basil of Caesarea, both in urban contexts (Constantinople) and in monasteries.⁵³¹ Likewise, Byzantine medicine in the seventh century and

⁵²⁸ See the collected essays from the *Dumbarton Oaks Symposium on Byzantine Medicine* in *DOP* 46 (1984); P. Bouras-Vallianatos and S. Xenophonto (eds.), *Greek Medical Literature and Its Readers: From Hippocrates to Islam and Byzantium* (Abingdon, 2018); P. Bouras-Vallianatos (ed.), *Brill's Companion to the Reception of Galen* (Leiden, 2019), esp. chs. 1-7.

⁵²⁹ Gregory of Nyssa, *On the Human Image of God* 30.1 in J. Behr (ed. and trans.), *Gregory of Nyssa: On the Human Image of God* (Oxford, 2023), 305.

⁵³⁰ D. L. Dusenbury, *Nemesius of Emesa on Human Nature: A Cosmopolitan Anthropology from Roman Syria* (Oxford, 2021).

⁵³¹ T. S. Miller, *The Birth of the Hospital in the Byzantine Empire* (Baltimore, 1985), 25-6.

beyond remained indebted to the basically Galenic outlook in its diagnostics and suggestions for treatment.⁵³²

At the same time, however, Christians also appealed to non-naturalistic categories for discerning the cause of disease. Some of Basil of Caesarea's remarks in the *Longer Rules* are emblematic of the approach that both ascetic and hagiographical discourses from the fourth century onward tended to emphasize: although sicknesses certainly *are* generated naturally through an imbalance of humors, and although the medical art is a gift from God not to be spurned or replaced, certain physical illnesses and diseases may also be the result of an imbalance in the soul, of *pathos* and sin, possibly even sent by God himself, whose cure physicians can only search for in vain.⁵³³ Though generally favourable towards the use of secular medicine where deemed appropriate, Basil emphasized, 'Not all sicknesses for whose treatment we observe medicine to be occasionally beneficial arise from natural causes, whether from faulty diet or from any other physical origin. Illness is often a punishment for sin imposed on us, in order to lead to our conversion.'⁵³⁴ Indeed, within the context of Christian monasticism – which also emerged over the course of the fourth century – illnesses might even be viewed not as a problem to be solved but as a potential mode of ascetic purification, an opportunity to bear with suffering in the ultimate quest for union with God.

⁵³² See O. Temkin, *Hippocrates in a World of Pagans and Christians* (Baltimore, 1991); P. Bouras-Vallianatos, 'Galen in Byzantine Medical Literature' in *Brill's Companion to the Reception of Galen*, ed. P. Bouras-Vallianatos and S. Xenophonto (Abingdon, 2018), 86-110; for the influence of Galen beyond the world of medicine, see D. Stathakopoulos, 'Galen in Non-medical Byzantine Texts, 600-1453' in *ibid.*, 140-159.

⁵³³ For a general approach to the spiritualization of illness, especially in an ascetic context, see A. Crislip, *Thorns in the Flesh: Illness and Sanctity in Late Ancient Christianity* (Philadelphia, 2013), and the recent contributions found in S. R. Holman, C. L. de Wet, and J. L. Zecher (eds.), *Disability, Medicine, and Healing Discourse in Early Christianity: New Conversations for Health Humanities* (Abingdon, 2024). Cf. Sophronius of Jerusalem, *Miracles of Cyrus and John* 21.1-2 on a certain Stephanie: 'Her disease was terrible, beyond understanding and language. For it was not natural, as the great many illnesses are which arise from excessive humors, or are engendered by other symptoms, to which the body was necessarily allotted after the transgression in Paradise. Instead, it came from certain people who acquired a godless disposition through their superstition (περιεργία) and depravity, and who wickedly aspired to bring wanton harm to their fellow man.'

⁵³⁴ Basil of Caesarea, *Longer Rules* 55.4 in M. M. Wagner, OSC, *Basil of Caesarea: Ascetical Works* (Washington, D.C., 1962), Basil distinguishes six categories of causation, of which three come from nature, and three from sin. See J. L. Zecher, *Spiritual Direction as a Medical Art in Early Christian Monasticism* (Oxford, 2022), 251-53.

This was still the case in the seventh century for Maximus Confessor, who, when asked about the meaning of Jesus's teaching that blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is an unforgiveable sin, charted out multiple 'paths of forgiveness' for sin, including one in which God providentially administers 'misfortunes, pains, and diseases' to the sinner: 'for he does not know that through these things God cleanses him.'⁵³⁵ So too, as Susan Ashbrook Harvey noted, there are times in writers like Palladius and John Moschus where bodily illness is even to be taken as a token of spiritual health.⁵³⁶

These notions also had clear implications for the question of terms of life, a subvariant of the broader debate around predestination, God's foreknowledge, and the degree to which he intervened in history. If one accepted that there were non-natural causes of illness – whether of demonic or divine origin – one also accepted that there were non-natural causes of death. Did God then appoint certain people to die at specific times? What about instances of mass deaths, like the slaughter of whole towns during a siege, or innocents who perished due to a plague – did God intend these people to die in this manner and at this time, too, and if so, why? If, on the other hand, one argued that there were no fixed terms of life at all, would not one be bound to the conclusion that God does not truly control the destiny of the world he created and deprive him of his own providence? Thus, all questions about disease and illness were entangled with more fundamental convictions about death and the nature of God's activity in the world.⁵³⁷

⁵³⁵ Maximus Confessor, *Quaestiones et dubia* 189.29-31 in J. H. Declerk (ed.), *Maximi Confessoris Opera: Quaestiones et dubia* CCSG 10 (Turnhout, 1982), 130.

⁵³⁶ S. A. Harvey, 'Physicians and Ascetics in John of Ephesus: An Expedient Alliance,' *DOP* 28 (1985): 90.

⁵³⁷ The most thorough discussion of this debate in Byzantium is found in D. Krausmüller, 'Affirming Divine Providence and Limiting the Powers of Saints: the Byzantine Debate about the Term of Life (6th-11th Centuries)' *Scrinium* 14 (2018): 392-433; see also the earlier contribution of J. A. Munitiz, 'The Predetermination of Death: The Contribution of Anastasius of Sinai and Nikephorus Blemmydes to a Perennial Byzantine Problem,' *DOP* 55 (2001): 9-20.

Non-naturalistic causes of sickness and disease required non-naturalistic cures, and arguably the most important alternative site to discover them was at the shrines of saints. Healing saints therefore dominated the eastern cult of saints between the fifth and seventh centuries, and their cures were enshrined in a wide variety of hagiographical sources.⁵³⁸ Although all the authors of these sources shared the aforementioned two-tiered aetiology of disease, attitudes towards the incorporation of Hippocratic medicine varied, ranging from outright hostility to peaceful coexistence on the ‘ladder of resort,’ in which the saints were appealed to only after one had exhausted the capacities of secular doctors.⁵³⁹ Examples of other disagreements, like the social class or location over which a particular saint has jurisdiction, or what the supplicant must first do in order to be granted healing, also abound. Thus, as Phil Booth has recently argued, each collection of miracle stories ‘is not some neutral or transparent guide to the basic functioning of a particular shrine, but an artful construct which makes particular choices in how it represents the cult which it describes.’⁵⁴⁰ This observation applies all the more for collections of questions and answers (ἑρωταπόκρισεις), whose less formal mode was unconstrained by the conventions of other literary genres and enabled spiritual leaders to respond more directly questions surrounding specific cases. One might also extend this observation by noting that in choosing to write in the hagiographic mode at all one is implicitly participating in the debate around the causes and cures of disease, for in promoting the miraculous healings wrought by the saints at their shrines, one adopts a particular stance about their origins and the dispensation of divine power within the

⁵³⁸ See Déroche, ‘Pourquoi écrivait-on...?’ , and more recently P. Booth, ‘Between Texts and Shrines in the Greek Cult of Saints (5th-7th Centuries) in *Culte des saints et littérature hagiographique: accords et désaccords*, ed. by V. Déroche, B. Ward-Perkins, and R. Wiśniewski, (Leuven, 2020), 23-38. For the west, see the classic study of P. Brown, *The Cult of Saints: Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity* (Chicago, 1981). On Byzantine hagiography more generally in this period, see S. Efthymiadis (ed.), *The Ashgate Research Companion to Byzantine Hagiography: Volume I: Periods and Places* (2011), esp. ch. 2.

⁵³⁹ P. Horden, ‘Saints and Doctors in the Early Byzantine Empire: The Case of Theodore of Sykeon,’ in *The Church and Healing*, ed. W. J. Sheils, *Studies in Church History* 19 (Oxford, 1982), 1-13.

⁵⁴⁰ Booth, ‘Between Texts and Shrines,’ 24.

temporal sphere. Thus, while a debate amongst literate elite Christians existed about the extent to which Hippocratic medicine could be endorsed in the context of the saints' cults – in particular in ascetic and hagiographical discourses – no one seems to have doubted that both miraculous healings and medicine belonged in the same conversation regarding one's therapeutic options.

It is thus remarkable that Anastasius, who was himself both hagiographer and ascetic, dedicated most of his responses in the *Questions and Answers* to problematizing this two-tiered etiology: first, by restricting the category of supernatural causes for disease and death through emphasizing their rarity in favour of naturalistic explanations, particularly regarding questions of illness and disease, and to lesser extent, death. Let us begin with Q. 28, which contains the longest response to these questions given by Anastasius, comprising a virtually self-contained treatise. Although the original question was restricted to the topic of death, throughout his response Anastasius provides us with his clearest and most developed argumentation for his fundamental approach to questions of disease, too.⁵⁴¹ The question to which Anastasius responded here opens with the following assertion:

The entire human race is alarmed when it sees all the frightful and astonishing things that have occurred regarding the deaths of human beings. Thus, we beg, if it is possible, to know even partially why it is that so many people, whether rulers or emperors who are evil and often teachers of evil doctrines, heresies, and impieties, who harm practically the whole world, often live to old age, and are adorned with a long life to the detriment of many souls and peoples,

⁵⁴¹ In Q. 16 on the question of terms of life (to which we shall return), Anastasius promised his respondent that he would dedicate a separate work (ἐν ἰδίᾳ ἐκθέμεθα) to expounding at greater length 'why the just live short lives, and why sinners have long lives, and what are the ways in which children die, and what is a natural death, and what is a death brought about by God, and why some die suddenly at the table or on the road, or why some die while they happen to be in the bathtub without a will, and again why other pious people who promise to construct shrines or other deeds that are beneficial to the soul, depart to the Lord before their fulfillment.' Given the near identical correspondence with Q. 28.3, it is probable that Q. 28 constitutes that separate work.

whereas other pious people, who proclaim every virtue and piety throughout the world, and who bring many souls to salvation, live short lives and die in their youth.⁵⁴²

The questioner goes on to report with particular outrage cases where pagans who sincerely intended to join the church died one or two days before their baptism and were sent to Gehenna or, in the reverse situation, cases of pious people who ‘for fifty or eighty years shone forth through deeds and wonders in holiness’ succumbed to heresy and, shortly thereafter, ‘died in their sins.’⁵⁴³ So too, they mention the case of ‘A powerful and impious man, falling ill or departing for war, resolved within himself that if he returned victorious, or rose from his sick-bed, he would shut the churches and open the temples of idols.’⁵⁴⁴ Upon his return, he fulfilled his vow. I note quickly that the accusation of ‘shutting the churches’ is one that Anastasius elsewhere makes against the rulers of the caliphate; it is thus likely that the premise of this question was inspired by the problem of Islamic hegemony.⁵⁴⁵ Indeed, the questioner concludes:

It is possible to see a thousand such like things occurring each and every day, and for this reason the pagans, puzzled, thought that the world was not governed by providence (ἀπρονοήτος). So too, the faithful often have doubts in their souls about the just judgement of God. They dare not

⁵⁴² Anastasius, *Questions and Answers* 28.1-12: Θαμβεῖται πᾶσα ἡ τῶν ἀνθρώπων φύσις, πολλὰ φοβερὰ καὶ κατάπληκτα ἐπὶ τοῖς θανάτοις τῶν ἀνθρώπων ὁρᾶσα γινόμενα· διὸ παρακαλοῦμεν εἰ δυνατὸν κἂν ἐκ μέρους μαθεῖν, τί δήποτε πολλοὶ τῶν ἀνθρώπων, ἢ καὶ ἀρ-χόντων, ἢ καὶ βασιλέων, πονηροὶ ὄντες, καὶ πονηρῶν πολλακίς μαθημάτων καὶ αἰρέσεων καὶ ἀσεβειῶν διδάσκαλοι, καὶ πᾶσαν σχεδὸν τὴν οἰκουμένην καταβλάπτοντες, πολυχρόνιοι ἐπὶ πολὺ γίνονται, ἐπ’ ἀπωλεία πολλῶν ψυχῶν καὶ λαῶν τὸ μακροχρόνιον κομισάμενοι, ἕτεροι δὲ εὐσεβεῖς καὶ πᾶσαν ἀρετὴν καὶ θεοσέβειαν τῷ κόσμῳ κηρύττοντες, καὶ αἴτιοι πολλῶν ψυχῶν εἰς σωτηρίαν γινόμενοι, ὀλιγοχρόνιοι βιοῦσι καὶ ἐν νεότητι τελευτῶσιν.

⁵⁴³ Ibid., 28.12-18: Ἄλλοι δὲ πάλιν ἐξ Ἑλλήνων βαπτισθῆναι βουλευσάμενοι πρὸ μιᾶς πολλακίς ἢ καὶ δευτέρας ἡμέρας τοῦ βαπτισθῆναι καὶ σωθῆναι ἐτελεύτησαν ἐν ταῖς ἰδίαις ἀμαρτίαις, ἀπελθόντες ἐν Γεέννῃ· ἕτεροι δὲ ἐπὶ πενήκοντα ἢ καὶ ὀγδοήκοντα χρόνους σημείοις καὶ τέρασι διαλάμπαντες ἐν ἀγιότητι, εἶτα εἰς αἵρεσίν τινα ἢ πορνείαν ἐμπεσόντες, εὐθέως ἀπέθανον ἐν κακοῖς καταληφθέντες.

⁵⁴⁴ Ibid., 28.19-23: Καὶ ὁ μὲν δυνάστης καὶ δυσσεβῆς ἀσθενεῖα περιπεσὼν, ἢ ἐν πολέμῳ ἀπελθὼν, συνετάξατο καθ’ ἑαυτόν, ὅτι περ ἐὰν μετὰ νίκης ὑποστρέψῃ, ἢ τῆς κλίνης ἐξαναστῆ, κλείσει μὲν τὰς ἐκκλησίας, ἀνοίξει δὲ τοὺς τῶν εἰδώλων ναοὺς, καὶ ὁ ταῦτα βουλευσάμενος ἐξῆσε καὶ τὰ εἰδωλεῖα ἤνοιξεν.

⁵⁴⁵ Cf. *ibid.*, 101.31-2.

express this to anyone: only that deep down, they are scandalized, and consumed within their hearts.⁵⁴⁶

This question contains many threads, but each points to two basic claims: namely, that pious people die unjustly while impious people flourish, and that because of this, there is reason to doubt that divine providence rules the world. The premise is very similar to that of Q. 101, mentioned above. Although debates about the nature of providence are perennial, these debates took on a new meaning and urgency for eastern Christians like Anastasius and his correspondents in an Islamicate context.

After waxing poetic about the many mysteries of creation which God has not revealed to human beings, Anastasius ups the ante: he notes that many others have raised similar problems too, like ‘why a pious man died suddenly while walking on the road, or another gave up his spirit in the bathtub, or another while drinking at his table,’ or why ‘someone else, after having been rightly ordained to the priesthood and able to save souls, died the third day on the job without any prior sickness.’⁵⁴⁷ He then sets out the fundamental premise upon which he will build the rest of his argument:

⁵⁴⁶ Ibid., 28.30-35: Καὶ ἕτερα δὲ μυρία τοιαῦτά ἐστι καθ’ ἡμέραν ιδέσθαι γινόμενα, δι’ ὧν οἱ μὲν Ἕλληνες ἀποροῦντες ἀπρονόητον εἶναι τὸν μενα, δι’ ὧν οἱ μὲν Ἕλληνες ἀποροῦντες ἀπρονόητον εἶναι τὸν κόσμον ἐνόμισαν, οἱ δὲ πιστοὶ πολλάκις δισταγμὸν τινα εἰς τὴν τοῦ Θεοῦ δικαιοκρισίαν κατὰ ψυχὴν ἔχοντες, τινὶ μὲν τοῦτο ἐξείπειν οὐ τολμῶσι, μόνον δὲ ὅτι ἔσωθεν ἔσω σκανδαλιζόμενοι τὴν καρδίαν κατακαίονται. Cf. Q. 85, asking what chance (τύχη) is, to which Anastasius responded that it was a word used by ‘pagans’ to describe the ‘government of the world without providence’ (τύχη δὲ ἐστὶν ἀπρονόητος κόσμου διοίκησις), whereas Christians confess in contrast that God ‘governs and foreknows everything’ (Ὁ δὲ Χριστιανὸς Θεὸν ὁμολογεῖ διοικοῦντα καὶ προνοοῦμενον ἀπάντων). On the various differences of the terms in classical antiquity, see Ps.-Plutarch, *On Fate*. Anastasius is using a commonplace; cf. John Chrysostom, *Homilies on the Letter to the Ephesians* 19; Ps.-Justin, *Questions and Responses* 124. Opinions differed on the origins of this view: John Malalas, *Chronicle* 2.14, quoting Cephalion attributed it to Teirisiās the Boeotian philosopher, whereas Theophilus of Antioch, *Ad Autolycom* 3.3, 3.7 attributed it to Pythagoras.

⁵⁴⁷ Ibid., 28.73-74, 77-79: τίνος χάριν ἀνήρ ὅσιος περιπατῶν ἐν ὁδῷ ἄφνω ἐτελεύτησεν, ἕτερος ἐν βαλανείῳ ὁμοίως τὴν ψυχὴν παρέδωκεν, ἕτερος ἐν τραπέζῃ τὸ ποτήριον δεξάμενος, σὺν αὐτῷ καὶ τὸ ποτήριον τοῦ θανάτου ἔπιεν, ἄλλη γυνὴ τίκτουσα, ἄλλη ἐν τῷ θαλάμῳ ἀγνή καὶ παρθένος τῇ ὥρᾳ τοῦ γάμου καὶ τῆς χαρᾶς ἐτελεύτησεν, ἄλλος εἰς ἱερωσύνην δικαίως προχειρισθεὶς καὶ ψυχᾶς δυνάμενος σῶσαι τῇ τρίτῃ ἡμέρᾳ μὴ νοσήσας ἀπέθανεν;

In the beginning, when God made the heaven and the earth and the sea and this whole visible creation, he fashioned it wondrously out of four elements, as I have already mentioned before: fire, water, air, and earth, from which both our body and the bodies of animals are composed. Therefore God gave to these four elements, as if they were generals and charioteers, just as he wished, [the ability] to control and guide and pilot the nature that had been born and established from the bodies out of which they were composed, as if they were fathers [of it]. Hence it is also possible to observe that in all cases every earth-born body and plant and animal and everything that is ensouled or soulless is led and made and changed and destroyed and softened, or is animated and vivified, or corrupted, in accordance with the mixture of the climates and the elements.⁵⁴⁸

Anastasius here underscores that the natural elements out of which all bodies are composed (whether human beings, plants, animals, or rocks) are influenced by the environment to generate all physical states. They are likened to generals, charioteers, and fathers – in other words, the physical elements of one’s body are the ones truly in charge.

Anastasius is not merely recapitulating the biblical notion that humanity was created out of the dust of the earth, for he immediately connects this point to the moral premise of the original question: ‘But if you think to doubt what has been said, tell me, why is it that very often plagues chance upon animals, birds, and the fish of the sea, who never sin against God?’⁵⁴⁹ If one accepts that schools of fish can be devastated by plague, then it follows that the true origin of plague cannot be found exclusively in morality or religious observance. Nevertheless, Anastasius seems aware that he risks sliding into a kind of deistic view of God, who creates the world but then abandons it

⁵⁴⁸ Ibid., 28.82-94: Ἐν ἀρχῇ ποιήσας ὁ Θεὸς τὸν οὐρανὸν καὶ τὴν γῆν καὶ τὴν θάλασσαν καὶ πᾶσαν ταύτην τὴν ὀρωμένην κτίσιν, ἐκ τεσσάρων στοιχείων αὐτὴν παραδόξως κατεσκεύασε, καθὼς καὶ ἤδη προλαβὼν εἶπον, ἐκ πυρὸς καὶ ὕδατος καὶ ἀέρος καὶ γῆς, ἐξ ὧν καὶ τὸ σῶμα καὶ ἡμῶν καὶ τῶν ζῴων σύγκειται. Δέδωκεν οὖν ὁ Θεὸς τοῦτοις τοῖς τέσσαρσι στοιχείοις, ὥσπερ τισὶ στρατηγοῖς καὶ ἠνιόχοις, καθὼς αὐτὸς βούλεται, διοικεῖν καὶ ἄγειν καὶ κυβερνᾶν τὴν ἐξ αὐτῶν, ὡς ἐκ πατέρων τινῶν γεννηθεῖσαν καὶ κατασκευασθεῖσαν, τῶν σωμάτων φύσιν. Ὅθεν καὶ ἔστιν ιδέσθαι αἰεὶ πάντα τὰ ἐπίγεια σώματα καὶ φυτὰ καὶ ζῷα καὶ πᾶν ἔμψυχόν τε καὶ ἄψυχον πρὸς τὴν τῶν ἀέρων καὶ στοιχείων κρᾶσιν ἀγόμενα καὶ ποιούμενα καὶ μεταποιούμενα καὶ ἀπαλυνόμενα, ἢ ψυχούμενα καὶ ζωογονούμενα ἢ φθειρόμενα.

⁵⁴⁹ Anastasius, *Questions and Answers* 28.95-97: Εἰ δ’ ἀμφιβάλλειν δοκεῖς τοῖς εἰρημένοις, εἰπέ μοι, πόθεν πολλάκις θανατικὰ συμβαίνει τοῖς ζῴοις καὶ τοῖς πετεινοῖς καὶ τοῖς ἰχθύσι τῆς θαλάσσης τοῖς μηδὲν πρὸς Θεὸν ἀμαρτήσασιν;

to a mechanistic, self-contained process of historical unfolding absent his own will or providence. So he insists that the ‘piloting’ elements do what they do according to God’s decree:

having its composition from the same elements as those out of which the animals are constituted, as I think, by a divine and primeval command, is administered and led by the elements as if they were its parents, and so grows, lives, falls ill, and dies through God’s ordinance (λόγῳ Θεοῦ). And by ‘life’ and ‘death’ I mean the natural composition of union and separation from the elements through divine power.⁵⁵⁰

However, though Anastasius clearly wants to reassure his reader of the divine origin and providential ordering of all things in nature, he remains rather ambivalent on how these two levels actually relate to one another in practice. Thus, later he will say that

God has in an essential manner implanted in our nature, through his benevolent and foreknowing power, generation through flesh, that is, composition out of the elements through God’s power, and so too dissolution and departure from life. Thus, whenever you see certain impious people growing exceedingly old, while certain pious people die at a young age, do not think inappropriate things about God: know rather that divine providence has arranged the nature and mixture of the elements and climate to order and guide every visible nature of animals, birds, fish, and human beings in the generation, dissolution, and mortality of their bodies, in accordance with his inclination.⁵⁵¹

⁵⁵⁰ Ibid., 28.100-106: ἐκ τῶν αὐτῶν στοιχείων τὴν σύστασιν ἔχον ἐξ ὧν καὶ τὰ ζῷα συνέστηκεν, ὡς ἐμοὶ δοκεῖ, θεία καὶ ἀρχεδότῳ προστάξει, ὑπὸ τῶν στοιχείων ὡσανεὶ τινῶν γεννητόρων αὐτοῦ, λόγῳ Θεοῦ διοικεῖται καὶ ἄγεται, καὶ αὖξει καὶ ζῆ καὶ νοσεῖ καὶ τελευτᾷ· ζωὴν δὲ καὶ τελευτὴν λέγω, τὴν θεία δυνάμει φυσικῶς ἐκ τῆς τῶν στοιχείων ἐνώσεως ἢ διαίρεσεως συνισταμένην.

⁵⁵¹ Ibid, 28.196-206: τῇ πανταγὰθ καὶ προνοητικῇ αὐτοῦ δυνάμει ὁ Θεὸς οὐσιωδῶς ἐντέθεικε τῇ ἡμετέρῃ φύσει καὶ τὴν διὰ σαρκὸς γέννησιν, τὴν ἐκ στοιχείων δυνάμει Θεοῦ συνισταμένην, ὁμοίως καὶ τὴν διάλυσιν καὶ ἀποβίωσιν· οὐκοῦν ὀπιηνίκα ἴδης τινὰς μὲν ἀνθρώπους ὑπεργηρῶντας ἀσεβεῖς ὄντας, τινὰς δὲ θεοσεβεῖς ὀλιγοχρονοῦντας, μηδὲν ἀπρεπὲς περὶ Θεοῦ ἐνοήσης, μαθὼν ὅτι τῇ τῶν στοιχείων καὶ ἀέρων φύσει καὶ κράσει οἰκονόμησεν ἢ τοῦ Θεοῦ πρόνοια διοικεῖν καὶ κυβερνᾶν, κατὰ τὴν αὐτοῦ ῥοπήν, πᾶσαν ὀρωμένην κτηνῶν τε καὶ πετεινῶν καὶ ἰχθύων καὶ ἀνθρώπων φύσιν καὶ γέννησιν καὶ διάλυσιν καὶ σωμάτων θνήσιν.

But this is just a restatement of the earlier ambiguity. How exactly does the divine will—variously described as a ‘primeval command,’ an ‘ordinance of God,’ ‘a benevolent and foreknowing power,’ and an ‘inclination’—govern the mundane affairs of nature while at the same time bestowing this same power to the order of nature itself in the form of the elements? Is it not the vicissitudes of nature and the seemingly unjust misfortunes it produces in people that precisely constitutes the theological issue at stake?

In order to clarify things, Anastasius quickly illustrates the relationship of the two by saying that one can observe in nature that ‘whenever corruption emerges around the liquid element, a multitude of fish spontaneously die,’ and that this continues into each of the elements: beasts perish when corruption comes to the dryness of the earth, birds die when it comes to the cold element in the air, and humans die by the plague when ‘the element of fire blazes too hot.’⁵⁵² Nevertheless, even if one accepts the physiological reasoning behind why it is humans die from the plague in the manner that they do as presented here by Anastasius, this does not seem to solve the theological problem that the existence of plague poses to God’s benevolence and care for individuals, especially as set out by Anastasius’s questioner. Moreover, Anastasius introduces the term *αὐτομάτως* here to describe the spontaneous deaths of fish in ‘corrupted’ water, and suggests that human deaths due to plagues fall under the same category. But appealing to natural spontaneity in the event of disease is an idiosyncratic move, to say the least, when one is attempting to defend God’s providence in the difficult pastoral context of responding to a questioner who is beginning to express doubts about God’s care for individuals, with apparent torment and despair. In any case,

⁵⁵² Ibid., 28.206-211: Ὅθεν ὀρθῶμεν, ὅτιπερ ἡνίκα περὶ τὸ ὑγρὸν στοιχεῖον ἢ φθορὰ γένηται, θνήσκουσιν ἰχθύων αὐτομάτως πλήθη· ὅτε δὲ περὶ τὸ τῆς γῆς ξηρὸν, πίπτουσι τὰ κτήνη. Ἐὰν δὲ τὸ τοῦ ἀέρος ψυχρὸν πλεονάσῃ, φθείρει τὰ πετεινά· εἰ δὲ τὸ τοῦ πυρὸς ὑπερζέσει στοιχεῖον συνειδήσει τοῦ ποιητοῦ, τελευτῶσιν ὑπὸ θανατικοῦ οἱ ἄνθρωποι. An anonymous text called *An interpretation of the elements of the human body*, found in J. L. Ideler, *Physici et medici Graeci minores* (Berlin, 1841), 301-2, contains an almost exact parallel of this passage and the previous one. The author is unknown, but it is perhaps an earlier medical work. Anastasius introduces this passage as ‘Listening to the holy voice of the father of fathers teaching that...’ but I can find no patristic referent.

we already see at work here Anastasius's striking insistence that divine providence has arranged (οἰκονομέω) things such that the affairs of the mundane world are governed and guided by the 'nature and mixture of the elements and climate,' so that it is ultimately the ordinary sequence of natural causation, rather than any particular divine intervention, that explains why bad things have happened recently to Christians in the world.

Anastasius's cosmos thus begins to look rather like a Christianized version of Aristotle's natural teleology, i.e., where both the order of nature and God are understood as final causes, and that nature does not operate according to necessity or chance. While Aristotle was resoundingly condemned by most late antique Christians for the view that emerged from this, i.e. that the mundane world is not governed by divine providence but rather by nature, Anastasius seems much more open to synthesis.⁵⁵³ To some extent, Anastasius's view here bears some similarity to that expressed by Aristotle's most famous expositor, Alexander of Aphrodisias, in the latter's *On Fate*: 'We see that the body, through being like this or like that in nature, is affected both in disease and in death in accordance with its natural constitution, but not of necessity; for treatments and changes of climate and doctors' orders and advice from the gods are sufficient to break such a pattern.'⁵⁵⁴ While it is difficult to find an exact parallel to Anastasius's view as set out in the *Questions and Answers*, it does have some overlap with ideas found in John Philoponus's commentary on Aristotle's *Physics* II.8, wherein Philoponus modified Aristotelian arguments about natural necessity by replacing necessity with providence. Having established that nature operates teleologically (i.e. as a final cause), Aristotle argued, for example, that rain occurs by 'necessity' (ἀναγκή), since water, which evaporates because of heat, grows cold once it rises upwards and

⁵⁵³ M. Edwards, *Aristotle in Early Christian Thought* (Abingdon, 2019), 35, 38, 44-7, 57, 78-80, 132.

⁵⁵⁴ I. Bruns, *Alexandri Aphrodisiensis praeter commentaria scripta minora* (Berlin, 1892), 170; ET from R. W. Sharples, *Alexander of Aphrodisias: On Fate* (London, 1983), 47. Cf. Athanasius of Alexandria, *Preparation for the Gospel* 15.5.

then falls down again, thus accidentally causing grain to grow or be destroyed (if in excess). In reaction to this example, Philoponus will repeat Aristotle's wording almost verbatim but replace the word 'necessity' with 'providence' (πρόνοια) and asks 'whether a thing, in general, is generated accidentally by providence or, in general, is harmed by providence.'⁵⁵⁵ He answers in the affirmative: providence generates rain, and the growth or destruction of the grain occurs accidentally, because as a general rule, 'if providence governs the world, nothing comes to be by chance or as it happens, but all things [come to be] for the sake of some good, nor indeed does providence do anything accidentally... Consequently, providence is beneficial to all things in itself, but it sometimes happens that we are affected in this or that way because of our own value.'⁵⁵⁶

Though this is slightly different to the divine providence with which Anastasius imbues nature insofar as Philoponus will connect it to how the motion of the celestial sphere(s) produces the cyclical motion of the atmospheric elements (i.e., various environmental conditions) Philoponus's notion of the 'providence of nature' as a cosmic good offers us a strikingly similar paradigm to that set out in the *Questions and Answers*, and thus offers us a potential context in which to read Anastasius's remarks.⁵⁵⁷ For even though he does not use the exact same wording, Anastasius also views the generation of physical states in the body as occurring thanks to a providentially ordered mixing of the climate ('airs') and the four elements that generates a wide variety of accidental physical states; and as we shall see, environmental conditions will play an

⁵⁵⁵ Vitelli, *Ioannis Philoponi In Aristotelis Physicorum libros tres priores commentaria* (Berlin, 1887), 312: καὶ εἰ ὄλως γίνεται τι κατὰ συμβεβηκὸς ὑπὸ τῆς προνοίας ἢ ὄλως βλάπτεται τι ὑπὸ τῆς προνοίας, ἄξιον ζητήσαι. See further discussion in G. R. Giardina, 'Providence in John Philoponus' *Commentary on Aristotle's Physics' Chōra* 13 (2015): 149-172.

⁵⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 312-13: φαμὲν οὖν προνοίας διοικούσης τὸ πᾶν μηδὲν κατὰ τύχην μηδ' ὡς ἔτυχε γίνεσθαι, ἀλλὰ πάντα ἀγαθοῦ τινος ἕνεκα, μηδὲ μὴν τὴν πρόνοιαν ποιεῖν τι κατὰ συμβεβηκὸς ... ὥστε ἢ μὲν πρόνοια καθ' αὐτὸ πάντα εὐεργετεῖ, συμβαίνει δὲ διὰ τὴν ἡμετέραν ἀξίαν τοίως ἢ τοίως ἡμᾶς πάσχειν.

⁵⁵⁷ Giardina, 'Providence in John Philoponus,' 170.

important role in later responses. Though we cannot pursue the connections between Philoponus and Anastasius of Sinai any further here, it is possible that Anastasius had encountered Philoponus's works in Alexandria; it is also worth noting that Anastasius and Philoponus will also, from some of these shared presuppositions, come to adopt the Aristotelian view (controversially, from a Christian perspective) that the soul generally remains inactive when separated from the body after death, to the detriment of the cult of saints (explored below).

Shortly after this remark, Anastasius admits that at least with respect to some deaths, exceptions can be found to the foregoing, particularly regarding certain events in Scripture in which God directly intervenes into the natural order in moments critical for salvation history, as in the deaths wrought by the Flood or the deaths of the firstborn sons of Egypt.⁵⁵⁸ On rare occasions, this extends to non-biblical figures, as when God permitted the death of the emperor Maurice for salvific purposes by allowing him to be handed over to Phocas as recompense for his sins, or of an anonymous anchorite who died after committing a small fault, and 'through his painful death requited for it and departed from life completely purified.'⁵⁵⁹ Indeed, in other questions (29 and 89) where Anastasius is asked about specific examples of deaths suffered by Christians, Anastasius's constant refrain is either that 'the ways and judgements of God are many and varied' or 'Scripture says *the judgments of God are not to be searched out, and his paths are not to be tracked down.*'⁵⁶⁰ As in Q. 28, he allows the occasional (mostly scriptural) exception, but

⁵⁵⁸ Ibid., 28.114-121: Ὁμοίως καὶ ζωῆς δύο εἶναι διαφορὰς ἐπιστάμεθα, μίαν μὲν τὴν κατὰ κοινοῦ φυσικῶς, ὡς πολλάκις εἶπον, προνοία Θεοῦ διὰ τῆς τῶν στοιχείων εὐτάκτου καὶ εὐκράτου διοικήσεως συνισταμένην, ἑτέραν δὲ τὴν θεοδώρητον, λέγω δὴ τὴν ὑπὸ Θεοῦ χαριζομένην, οἷα ἦν ἡ Ἐζεκίου μετὰ τὴν νόσον ζωὴ τῶν πεντεκαίδεκα χρόνων, καὶ ἡ Λαζάρου μετὰ τὴν ἀνάστασιν, καὶ ἑτέρων τοιούτων.

⁵⁵⁹ Ibid., 30.13-17, 33-37. On later views of the emperor Maurice, see P. Schreiner, 'Der brennende Kaiser: Zur Schaffung eines positiven und eines negativen Kaiserbildes in den Legenden um Maurikios,' ed. T. Olajos, *Byzance et ses voisins. Mélanges à la mémoire de Gyula Moravcsik* (Szged, 1994), 25-31.

⁵⁶⁰ Ibid., 29.4-6: Ὅτι μὲν καθά φησιν ἡ Γραφή, Ἀνεξερεύνητα τὰ κρίματα τοῦ Θεοῦ εἰσι, καὶ ἀνεξιχνίαστοι αἱ ὁδοὶ αὐτοῦ, δῆλον·; 89.7-9: Πολλοὶ καὶ διάφοροί εἰσιν οἱ τρόποι καὶ τὰ κρίματα τοῦ Θεοῦ, δι' ὧν ἀπολύονται οἱ ἄνθρωποι ἐκ τῶν τοιούτων θανάτων.

the thrust of his response is to reassure his questioner that the violent deaths suffered by Christians were not proof that they were impious. Throughout each of these questions, however, Anastasius is at pains to emphasize that these deaths are truly exceptional. After listing them, he immediately states: ‘Our present discussion, however, does not concern these rare prolongations and diminutions of life and death by God in certain cases, but rather about the bodily life and death which is common to the whole race endowed with human nature.’⁵⁶¹ The point of emphasis, again, is that the reader ought not read direct interventions by God into most cases of Christian death.

After this, Anastasius goes on to recapitulate some of the points he just made, emphasizing the importance of the role of nature in the regulation of the temporal world. After restating the notion that God endowed ‘the nature of every created thing with the ability to actualize its own operation,’ he remarks that ‘this same one also endowed the elements, in accordance with his providence and knowledge and inclination (ρόπή), with the ability to govern the generation and growth and life and death of our bodies.’⁵⁶² Again, it is the elements, though grounded somehow in God’s providence, that possess the ability to govern the physical states of humanity. This is made even more explicit when Anastasius applies a term, ροπή (whose semantic range embraces ‘inclination,’ ‘weight,’ ‘decisive moment’), that had previously been used only of God himself as a synonym for his providence and foreknowledge, to a natural operation within the human body:

For at the hour and decisive moment (ρόπή) when the warm and life-giving operation of the blood, for whatever reason, leaves the body, immediately that person dies, in so far as the body

⁵⁶¹ Ibid., 28.134-138: Ἄλλ’ οὐ περὶ τούτων ἡμῖν νῦν τῶν σπανίων ὑπὸ Θεοῦ ἔν τισι προσθηκῶν καὶ ὑφαιρέσεων ζωῆς καὶ θανάτου ὁ λόγος ἐστίν, ἀλλὰ περὶ τῆς κατὰ κοινου ἐν ὄλω τῷ γένει τῆς τῶν ἀνθρώπων φύσεως ζωῆς τε καὶ τοῦ θανάτου τῶν ἡμετέρων σωμάτων.

⁵⁶² Ibid., 28.252-257: ὁ πάντων δημιουργὸς καὶ ποιητὴς Θεός, ὁ ἀπ’ ἀρχῆς δοὺς ἐκάστη φύσει τῶν κτισμάτων τὴν οἰκείαν ἐνέργειαν ἐνεργεῖν, αὐτὸς δέδωκεν καὶ τοῖς στοιχείοις, κατὰ τὴν αὐτοῦ πρόνοιαν καὶ γνῶσιν καὶ ροπήν, διοικεῖν τὴν τῶν ἡμετέρων σωμάτων γέννησιν τε καὶ αὔξησιν καὶ ζῶην καὶ τὸν θάνατον.

is composed out of the elements, and is given life and dissolved by a divine power through them.⁵⁶³

‘For whatever reason’: although these operations are clearly God-given, Anastasius places his stress predominately on the role of the four elements in the generation of the possible physical fates that human bodies can undergo. In fact, providence itself is only ever defined in terms of natural operations at the elemental level. In effect, Anastasius espouses a theory of modified Aristotelianism. Whereas Aristotle generally (though not always) attributed the regulation of mundane affairs to nature and not to divine providence, Anastasius seems to assert that nature just is the mechanism by which God providentially regulates mundane affairs.⁵⁶⁴ This circular logic applied above all to the etiology of sickness and disease:

So it is that sometimes people die during plagues thanks to a chronic illness, at other times a fever, at other times chronic trembling, and at yet other times pleurisy depending on the movement of the climate and of the elements, and on the elevation and declination of certain places and lands. None of this occurs outside of the knowledge of God – heaven forbid! – yet it is due to the movement and administration and operation of the elements, which has been granted by him from the beginning.⁵⁶⁵

⁵⁶³ Ibid., 28.259-264: Καθ’ ἣν γὰρ ὄραν καὶ ῥοπήν, ἢ θερμὴ καὶ ζωογονικὴ τοῦ αἵματος ἐνέργεια ἐκ τινος αἰτίας ἐκλείπει ἐκ τοῦ σώματος, εὐθέως ἀποθνήσκει ὁ ἄνθρωπος ὡς ἐκ τῶν στοιχείων τὸ σῶμα συγκείμενος, καὶ ὑπὸ θείας δι’ αὐτῶν δυνάμεως ζωοποιούμενος καὶ λυόμενος.

⁵⁶⁴ I borrow the phrasing of this sentence from the excellent discussion of Aristotle in Nemesius of Emesa’s *On the Nature of Man* found in Edwards, *Aristotle*, 132.

⁵⁶⁵ Ibid., 28.284-290: Καὶ ποτὲ μὲν λοιμικῆ νόσῳ, ποτὲ δὲ πυρεκτικῆ, καὶ ἄλλοτε δι’ ἐκβρασμοῦ καὶ ἄλλοτε πλευριτικῆ διαθέσει οἱ ἄνθρωποι ἀποθνήσκουσιν ἐν τοῖς θανατικοῖς κατὰ τὴν τοῦ ἀέρος καὶ τῶν στοιχείων κίνησιν καὶ πλεονασμὸν καὶ ἔλλειψιν τῶν τόπων καὶ τῶν χωρῶν, οὐκ ἐκτὸς μὲν γνώσεως τοῦ Θεοῦ, ἀπαγε, ὅμως διὰ τῆς ἀρχεδότου παρ’ αὐτοῦ τῶν στοιχείων κινήσεως καὶ διοικήσεως καὶ ἐνεργείας.

Anastasius expands on the causes of pleurisy at 28.305-310: ‘Death from pleurisy testifies to this [point]. For those who suffer from this condition, whether they are impious or will become pious, die painlessly while eating, drinking, and talking. For the pleuritic disease is constituted out of the cold element, which quickly suppress the vital heat of the blood, and thus effect a less painful separation of the soul from the body.’

And although Anastasius earlier set out some exceptions to this rule regarding particular deaths, he also argued in another response that human deaths are so closely connected to natural causes that the Devil himself is able to deduce when one's death is nearing by conducting scientific experiments, like a nearly infallible doctor:

In my opinion, because Satan is a fine and incorporeal spirit, he understands and can diagnose in a manner surpassing all medical knowledge the powers and operations of human beings, as well as the increases and diminishments of the life-giving operation of the body through the condition of the blood: and on this basis he is able to estimate, though approximately and not with perfect accuracy, the death of a human being.⁵⁶⁶

Although he is careful always to insert a quick reference to providence or foreknowledge when describing evils suffered in the temporal sphere, Anastasius never truly clarifies the precise reasons why God's providential ordering of things has resulted in the particular sequence of events as they actually occurred historically. Nemesius of Emesa (who would exert huge influence on later Christian views of providence) had no problem assigning particular spheres of control to humans and to the control of providence, and, as with many other early Christian thinkers, sharply condemned Aristotle for his view that 'nature is divine' (θεῖαν φύσιν οὐσαν): 'For providence decides on our being rich or not and being healthy or not, while [human] intelligence can bring about neither of these, and nor can nature, as Aristotle believes [it can].'⁵⁶⁷ Thus, it is providence and *not* nature (in the Aristotelian sense) that determines one's bodily condition, whereas in Anastasius it is always providence *through* nature. Indeed, Nemesius and, nearer to Anastasius,

⁵⁶⁶ Ibid., 79.15-20: Οὐκοῦν ἐμοὶ δοκεῖ, ὅτι πνεῦμα λεπτὸν καὶ ἀσώματον ὑπάρχων ὁ Σατανᾶς, ἐπίσταται καὶ διερευνᾷ ὑπὲρ πᾶσαν ἰατρικὴν ἐπιστήμην ἀνθρώπων τὰς δυνάμεις καὶ ἐνεργείας, καὶ τοὺς πλεονασμοὺς καὶ τὰς ἐλλείψεις τῆς ζωτικῆς τοῦ σώματος, διὰ τοῦ αἵματος τῆς ὑπάρξεως· κάκειθεν λοιπὸν στοχαστικῶς, ἀλλ' οὐκ ἀκριβῶς τεκμαίρεται τοῦ ἀνθρώπου τὴν τελευτήν.

⁵⁶⁷ Nemesius of Emesa, *On the Nature of Man* 43 in R. W. Sharples and P. J. van der Eijk (trans.), *Nemesius: On the Nature of Man* (Liverpool, 2008), 212.

Maximus Confessor only speak of the knowledge of providence as naturally implanted within human nature insofar as ‘we immediately take refuge with the divine and with prayers, as if nature led us untaught to its aid’ whenever we are ‘in the grip of necessity.’⁵⁶⁸ To be clear, it is not providence itself but only the knowledge of its existence that is implanted naturally in humans, and nowhere do they assert that it is implanted in nature itself, i.e. the four elements.

But even though his reasoning borders on the circular at many points, I suggest that it was deliberate. By developing, with studied ambiguity, a theory of providence (and by consequence the divine will) mediated almost exclusively through chains of natural causation, Anastasius could reassure his audience that the ultimate fate of the universe was in God’s hands, while at the same time insisting that God was not to blame when evil things happened to ordinary people. Indeed, Anastasius generally insisted that ordinary people ought not to look for religious explanations (including their piety or lack thereof) when illness, plague, or death strikes. Although many other Christians, of course, ascribed natural causes to many sicknesses and diseases, what sets Anastasius apart is the ambiguity with which he envisions the precise relationship between providence and nature, the extent to which he emphasized the latter as the prime explanatory cause for mundane affairs, and thus the fact that God remained, functionally, much more remote than his readers’ questions presuppose.

Sickness, Death, and Terms of Life

Throughout the rest of his response, Anastasius links his thoughts about the providential role of the four elements producing death in the body to the broader debate in Byzantium over predestined

⁵⁶⁸ Nemesius of Emesa, *On the Nature of Man* 43 [Sharples and Van der Eijk 217]; Maximus Confessor, *Ambigua to John* 10 [Constas 317] quotes this statement of Nemesius and then adds in loose paraphrase ‘it [i.e. providence] does this without any prior instruction, as if it were pushing us towards God, whenever it leads us to seek salvation through prayer when we are beset by sudden, unforeseen emergencies and crises.’

terms of life, attested first in Theophylact Simocatta's dialogue *On Predestined Terms of Life*. A debate had arisen around the meaning of a citation from Basil of Caesarea's homily, *That God Is Not the Author of Evil*. In it, Basil asserted, 'Deaths are brought on when the terms of life have been fulfilled, which the just judgement of God has fixed for each one from the beginning, given that God foresaw from afar what would be profitable for each one of us.'⁵⁶⁹ In his dialogue, Theophylact laid out the key biblical arguments for either a fixed or changeable term of life. His own view likened advocates of a strict understanding of fixed terms to fatalism, and of a changeable term to advocates for atheism, and so he attempted to find a *via media* between these two extremes. He thus argued that 'it is of our own free choice that there ensue for us both length of life and the curtailment arising from death... life does have predestined terms inasmuch as, being children of earth, to earth we shall all go when we make our departure; but supplementation or abridgement is superimposed upon men's lives because of either virtue or vice in their souls.'⁵⁷⁰

Anastasius half-agrees. In Q. 16, he briefly remarked, 'In reply to those who quote the great Basil as speaking of a predetermination of life, we shall say this: the predetermination of which this father spoke was the divine saying, *You are dust and to dust you shall return*.'⁵⁷¹ But he does not believe that humans possess the innate ability to prolong their years through virtuous behavior. If they could, then why is it, he asks in Q. 28, that 'in certain lands they [*sc.* people] are healthy and long-living, while others are sickly and brief? Why are some places habitually subjected to

⁵⁶⁹ Basil of Caesarea, *That God is Not the Author of Evil*, PG 31 333B: Θάνατοι δὲ ἐπάγονται, τῶν ὄρων τῆς ζωῆς πληρωθέντων, οὓς ἐξ ἀρχῆς περὶ ἕκαστον ἐπηξεν ἡ δικαία κρίσις τοῦ Θεοῦ, πόρρωθεν τὸ περὶ ἕκαστον ἡμῶν συμφέρον τοῦ Θεοῦ προβλεπομένου.

⁵⁷⁰ C. Garton and L. G. Westerink (ed. and trans.), *Theophylactus Simocattes: On Predestined Terms of Life* (Buffalo, 1978), 25.

⁵⁷¹ Anastasius of Sinai, *Questions and Answers* 16.53-56: Πρὸς δὲ τοὺς ἀνθρώπους τοὺς λέγοντας τὸν μέγαν Βασίλειον προορισμὸν ζωῆς λέγοντα, ἐκεῖνο ἐροῦμεν, ὅτι προορισμὸν ὁ πατήρ εἶπε τὴν θείαν ἀπόφασιν τὴν λέγουσαν, Ὅτι γῆ εἶ καὶ εἰς γῆν ἀπελεύση.

plagues, while other lands full of impious nations never seem to experience plague at all?’⁵⁷² The best way to begin answering questions like these, we are told, is to consider the following hypothetical: suppose there were a city in a land far away full of lawless, immoral pagans, ‘utterly ignorant of what God is,’ who worship stones, wooden things, flies, and monkeys. Would we not still observe, in that hypothetical city, that its inhabitants – though all of them be ‘unholy and wicked’ – would still die at various times and conditions of their lives? Some after a few days of their birth, others after a hundred years; some in good health, and others in distress and suffering; some ‘prolific and others infertile,;’ some dying ‘while walking around, and others after chronic illness’; so on and so forth.⁵⁷³

The religious and moral quality of a nation or an individual is divorced from the events of their day-to-day lives, including diseases and death. Of course, nothing comes about without God’s foreknowledge or sustaining power, Anastasius is ever quick to comment, but the key to understanding the plights experienced by Christians over the course of the seventh century is to be located rather in the ordinary course of nature. Should a prolongation occur (and these are rare), it comes from God alone, for his own reasons. But Anastasius emphasizes that one must be careful in making even this argument, for if one affirmed that God did predetermine the years of everyone’s life, ‘God would then be found to be himself the one who causes wars, something that

⁵⁷² Ibid., 28.138-141: Πῶς ἔν τισι μὲν χώραις ὑγιεινὰ ταῦτα καὶ πολυχρόνια γίνονται, ἐν ἄλλαις δὲ νοσερὰ καὶ ὀλιγοχρόνια; Καὶ πῶς τι νες μὲν τόποι συχνῶς θανατικὰ ὑφίστανται, ἄλλαι δὲ χῶραι ἐθνῶν ἀσεβῶν οὐδ’ ὅλως θανατικοῦ πείραν γινώσκουσιν;

⁵⁷³ Ibid., 28.149-168: Καὶ ὅπως σαφεστέρα καὶ πιστοτέρα ἢ διάγνωσις καὶ ἡ ἀπόδειξις τῶν προκειμένων ζητημάτων Θεοῦ χάριτι γένηται, ὑποθόμεθα πόλιν τινὰ ἢ χώραν ἀσεβῆ καὶ παράνομον, πᾶσαν τῷ διαβόλῳ λατρεύουσαν, καὶ ὅλως τί ἐστὶ Θεὸς μὴ γινώσκουσαν, ἀλλὰ λίθοις καὶ ξύλοις μυσεροῖς καὶ μυΐαις καὶ πιθήκοις προσκυνούσαν καὶ λατρεύουσαν. Εἰπέ μοι λοιπὸν σὺ ὁ λέγων προορισμὸν τῆς ζωῆς ἐκάστου ἀνθρώπου προγεγραμμένον παρὰ (155) Θεῷ πρὸς τὸ συμφέρον, πῶς καὶ διὰ τί τινες τῆς ἀσεβοῦς πόλεως ἐκείνης, οἱ μὲν ἑκατονταετείς τελευτῶσιν, οἱ δὲ πενηκονταετείς, οἱ μὲν ἄτεκνοι, οἱ δὲ πολύτεκνοι, οἱ μὲν περιπατοῦντες ἀποπνέουσιν, οἱ δὲ πολυνοσοῦντες, ἕτεροι δὲ ἐπὶ πέμπτην πολ. λάκις ἢ καὶ δεκάτην ἡμέραν ψυχομαχοῦντες καὶ ταραττόμενοι οὕτω τοῦ σώματος χωρίζονται, ἄλλοι δὲ εἰρηναίως καὶ γαληνῶς τὴν ψυχὴν παραδίδωσιν; Εἰπέ μοι λοιπὸν σὺ, πάντων αὐτῶν ἀσεβῶν καὶ πονηρῶν ὄντων, πόθεν τινες αὐτῶν ὑγιεῖς τὸν ἅπαντα χρόνον διήξαν, οἱ δὲ νοσεροὶ καὶ πολυπαθεῖς, καὶ οἱ μὲν πολύτεκνοι, οἱ δὲ ἄτεκνοι, καὶ οἱ μὲν περιπατοῦντες ἀπέθανον, οἱ δὲ ἐπὶ χρόνον νοσήσαντες, καὶ οἱ μὲν ἑκατονταετείς, οἱ δὲ διακοσιονταετείς, καὶ ἄλλοι νήπιοι καὶ ἕτεροι θηλάζοντες τοῦ βίου ἐπορεύθησαν;

is too absurd to even be thought.⁵⁷⁴ In stark contrast to the examples of Maurice and the anchorite given elsewhere, he here asks why it was that God refused to truncate the lifespans of Judas Iscariot or Julian the Apostate, ‘so that they might have been saved prior to their destruction?’⁵⁷⁵ Instead, it makes the most sense to say that ‘the limit which exists for each human [life] is not some kind of predetermined number of years; instead, it just is the will and command of God, who transfers a man out of life when and how he commands.’⁵⁷⁶ And again: ‘it is best to say that the limit of each life just is the incomprehensible command of God.’⁵⁷⁷ Even if Anastasius rejected a fixed term for human life, he nevertheless appears to have attempted to find a *via media* with those who accepted it. This opinion put him at odds with his near contemporaries, the patriarch Germanus of Constantinople, who had written his own dialogue *On Predestined Terms of Life*, as well as Maximus Confessor and John of Damascus, each of whom defended a fixed term of life.⁵⁷⁸ Indeed, Germanus had specifically named and refuted Anastasius and Theophylact Simocatta’s particular interpretation of Basil’s words (i.e. that it refers to natural death of human beings described as dust returning to dust in Genesis 3) and he had also rejected a version of the argument made earlier by Anastasius that the plagues of animals could provide insight into the problem of fixed terms of lives for human beings.⁵⁷⁹ Whereas Germanus focused on what made humanity different to the other created animals, emphasizing the uniqueness of the *imago Dei* and its relevance for

⁵⁷⁴ Ibid., 16.10-11: εὐρεθήσεται ὁ Θεὸς καὶ τοὺς πολέμους αὐτὸς ποιῶν, ὅπερ ἄτοπὸν ἐστὶ κἂν ἐννοῆσαι τοῦτο.

⁵⁷⁵ Ibid., 16.19-23: διὰ τί προγινώσκων τὴν ἀποστασίαν Ἰουλιανοῦ τοῦ παραβάτου καὶ τὴν ἄρνησιν Ἰούδα τοῦ Ἰσκαριώτου, μὴ μᾶλλον κολοβωτέραν αὐτοῖς προώρισε καὶ προέπηξεν ζωὴν, ἵνα πρὸ τῆς ἐαυτῶν ἀπωλείας ἀποθανόντες ἐσώθησαν; Cf. *ibid.* 30.13-37 on the emperor Maurice and the anonymous anchorite.

⁵⁷⁶ Ibid., 16.4-7.

⁵⁷⁷ Ibid., 16.30-1. Cf. Theophylact Simocatta, *On Predestined Terms of Life*, 25: ‘Well then, life does have predestined terms inasmuch as, being children of earth, to earth we shall all go when we make our departure.’

⁵⁷⁸ C. Garton and L. G. Westerink (ed. and trans.), *Germanos: On Predestined Terms of Life* (Buffalo, 1979). Maximus and John: Krausmüller, ‘Affirming Divine Providence,’ 416.

⁵⁷⁹ Garton and Westerink, *Germanos*, 17: ‘But the passage is not meant by Basil in the way your side thinks. Rather, by the completion of terms he meant man’s returning to the earth, since it is herein that an end overtakes those who were determined at the outset by God, that is, “Earth you are, and to earth you shall depart.”’ This comment is made by “B,” i.e. the opponent of the orthodox position defended by Germanus, whose own views are given by the persona “A.” On death in animals, see *ibid.*

understanding the evils that befall human society, Anastasius emphasized humanity's similarity to the animals and their materiality. These differences of emphasis are revealing of their respective author's convictions about what factors are most important when judging the problem of evil and its causation.

Although these debates about providence, fate, and terms of life pre-existed the rise of Islam, they were not divorced from religious debates with Arab-Muslims, either. The belief in the predestination of all either to salvation or damnation is explicitly linked with Arab-Muslims in Q. 99, where the statement, 'Whom God wishes to save is saved, and whom God destroys is destroyed,' is said to be given by 'some people who turn away from God and the holy Church along with this race [*sc.* the Arabs of Q. 98].'⁵⁸⁰ In predictable fashion, Anastasius responds, 'It seems to me, as I think it also seems to God, that not even Satan himself would dare to say "Whom God wishes, he saves, and whom he wishes, he destroys," but just as in matters concerning Christ the demons are more pious than the Arabs – for they confess him to be the Son of God – so also [they are more pious] in this teaching, too.'⁵⁸¹ After exegeting Romans 8:29 ('Those whom [God] foreknew, he predestined') with reference to a long series of scriptural examples, he concludes by contending that the view mentioned in the question renders God unjust: 'for if [in this circumstance] he destroyed the sinner, why did he sent him to hell? At the same time, God will be shown to be a respecter of persons, since he saves some and destroys others. But this is not so, may it never be!'⁵⁸²

⁵⁸⁰ Ibid., 99.1-3: Τινὲς ἀποστάντες ἐκ τοῦ Θεοῦ καὶ τῆς ἀγίας ἐκκλησίας μετὰ τοῦ ἔθνους τούτου λέγουσιν, ὅτι Ὅν θέλει ὁ Θεὸς σωθῆναι, σφύζεται, καὶ ὃν ὁ Θεὸς ἀπόλλει, ἀπόλλεται.

⁵⁸¹ Ibid., 99.9-13: Ἐμοὶ δοκεῖ, ὡς νομίζω δὲ καὶ τῷ Θεῷ, ὅτι οὐδ' αὐτὸς ὁ Σατανᾶς τολμήσει εἰπεῖν, Ὅν θέλει ὁ Θεός, σφύζει, καὶ ὃν θέλει, ἀπόλλει, ἀλλ' ὥσπερ καὶ εἰς τὰ κατὰ Χριστὸν εὐσεβέστεροι τῶν Ἀράβων εἰσὶν οἱ δαίμονες, Θεοῦ Υἱὸν αὐτὸν ὁμολογήσαντες, οὕτω καὶ ἐν τῷ δόγματι τούτῳ.

⁵⁸² Ibid., 99.70-73: εἰ γὰρ αὐτὸς τὸν ἀμαρτωλὸν ἀπόλεσε, διὰ τί αὐτὸν ἐν τῇ κολάσει ἐκπέμπεται; Ἄμα δὲ καὶ προσωπολήπτης φανήσεται ὁ Θεός, ὡς τοὺς μὲν σώσας, τοὺς δὲ ἀπολέσας. Ἄλλ' οὐχ' οὕτως, μὴ γένοιτο.

Perhaps more significantly, the Qur'an itself demonstrates an interest with the problem of premature death, too. Long ago, Roger Paret noted that *surat* 18 ('The Cave') contained a series of stories drawn from or reflecting the broader milieu of eastern Christian and rabbinic exegesis on this subject.⁵⁸³ In particular, the text contains a story about Moses who is brought on a journey by an angel of God, but given explicit instructions not to ask any questions about what he sees. The angel then goes on to perform various deeds that initially appear to be cruel and unjust – with Moses forgetting his promise not to question things each time, to the annoyance of the angel – but which, it is later revealed, were all done for the greater good. In one instance, the angel drills a hole in a boat that belonged to the poor, but this was done to prevent a king coming to seize it by force; and in another, a young boy is slain in cold blood, but this was done because his parents were Believers 'and we feared lest he should involve them in wrongdoing and disbelief.'⁵⁸⁴ Lastly, they chanced upon a town which offered no hospitality to the angel and Moses. In spite of this, the angel repaired one of their broken walls. This was done, we are told, because within it lay a treasure belonging to two orphan boys, whose father was righteous, and whom the Lord wanted to see inherit it once they reached maturity. Paret noted the existence of a parallel in one of the tales attributed to John Moschus in the *Spiritual Meadow* and other hagiographic texts, where an angel performs deeds in front of a hermit that on the surface appear to be evil and unjust, but were actually commanded by God through his foreknowledge in order to prevent a greater evil from occurring, as well as in Rabbinic exegesis, which features Elijah undergoing a similar experience.⁵⁸⁵ Each of these tales represents a strand of thinking that sought to preserve God's

⁵⁸³ R. Paret, 'Un parallèle byzantin à Coran XVIII, 59-157' *RÉB* 26 (1968): 137-159. For a recent interpretation of 'The Cave,' see R. Durmaz, *Stories between Christianity and Islam: Saints, Memory, and Cultural Exchange in Late Antiquity and Beyond* (Berkeley, CA, 2022), 66-89, with literature.

⁵⁸⁴ Qur'an 18:71-76, 78-81.

⁵⁸⁵ Paret, 'Un parallèle byzantin,' 140-141.

foreknowledge *and* minute interventions in the world – not merely allowing an early death for some greater good, but commanding the killing of individual people to prevent future, worse consequences from happening.

It is possible that Anastasius is weighing in on debates both in nascent Islam and eastern Christianity more broadly about divine action by carefully treading a fine line: on the one hand, affirming the omnipotence and foreknowledge of God in the wake of a rival monotheism that did the same, but on the other, evacuating that conviction of much of its content by emphasizing that divine action in the world was relatively rare, and that most deaths were the result of natural processes rather than divinely-ordained interventions. If Anastasius emphasized the direct interventions of God in the world too much, he likely risked legitimizing the Islamic view that Roman defeat and the subordination of Christians in the Near East was a sign of God's endorsement of Islam.

This tendency can be discerned in Q. 26, which concerns the prevalence of disease among Christians vis-à-vis non-Christians. The questioner asked, why is it that 'among us Christians, more so than any other unbelieving nations, there are far more often cases of skin disease, leprosy, gout, and epileptics, and those who suffer from other diseases?'⁵⁸⁶ Catching the underlying concern of the question (i.e., why do Christians suffer from disease more than Muslims?), Anastasius drew his examples from Aila, a port city on the Gulf of Aqaba between the Sinai Peninsula and Arabia, as well as 'the Arabs' more generally. He first downplays the standard response:

Concerning this matter, some have thought to say that God allowed such diseases among us because he loves us, but this defense is not acceptable to everyone. So in my opinion, it is

⁵⁸⁶ Ibid., 26.1-4: Πόθεν ὀρώμεν παρ' ἡμῖν τοῖς Χριστιανοῖς ὑπὲρ ἄλλα τινὰ ἔθνη ἄπιστα πολλοὺς πολλακίς κελεφούς καὶ λεπρούς καὶ ποδαλγούς καὶ ἐπιληπτικούς καὶ ἄλλαις τισὶ νόσοις κατεχομένους;

because of race (γένος) and the climate, and to a diet that is overly variegated and liquid, and to excessive wine and gluttony.⁵⁸⁷

The inhabitants of Aila never experience gout, he says, nor do the Arabs, ‘who keep to a much drier diet, and in any case are a race from a desert and dry climate,’ and so they have much fewer lepers, physically handicapped, and even, he says, ‘demoniacs (δαιμονιῶντας)’ – a striking point, given the fact that Anastasius polemically associated Arab-Muslims with demons throughout the *Edifying Tales for the Soul*.⁵⁸⁸ The reverse point, he asserts, can be seen ‘in the race of Jews, who keep to a luxurious, meat-filled, fermented diet with much wine,’ and so ‘have even more lepers, gout-sufferers, and demoniacs than we do.’⁵⁸⁹ The environment might even dictate propensities for sin, in kind and degree, depending upon one’s geographic location: ‘there are lands which produce warmth in the body because of heat, the climate, the waters, or pestilence, as in Egypt, Ethiopia, or Jericho (the region around Gomorrah); and again, there are races (γένη) which are more sordid or licentious, either from habit or some other essence or cause, like the Persians or the Assyrians.’⁵⁹⁰

The logic is the same in Q. 28: it is not thanks to the piety of any group of people that they avoid the plague; rather,

it is because of these movements and inundations and diminutions and mixtures and properties of the elements that, through the providence of God, certain lands never experience the plague,

⁵⁸⁷ Ibid., 26.5-9: Περὶ τούτου ἔδοξάν τινες λέγειν, ὅτι ὡς ἀγαπῶν ἡμᾶς ὁ Θεὸς τὰ τοιαῦτα πάθη συνεχώρησεν ἐν ἡμῖν, ἀλλ’ οὐ πᾶσιν ἐστὶ δεκτὴ ἢ ἀπολογία αὐτῆ· οὐκοῦν ἐμοὶ δοκεῖ, ὅτι καὶ ἐκ γένους, καὶ ἐξ ἀέρων, καὶ ἐκ διαίτης πολυποικίλου καὶ καθύγρου καὶ πολυοινίας καὶ πολυφαγίας.

⁵⁸⁸ Ibid., 26.10-11, 16-19. See Anastasius, *Edifying Tales for the Soul* 3, 6, 7, 13, 14. On this association see B. Flusin, ‘Démon et Sarrasin. L’auteur et le propos des *Diègēmata stèriktika* d’Anastase le Sinaïte’ *TM* 11 (1991): 381-409.

⁵⁸⁹ Ibid., 26.12-16: Καὶ γὰρ καὶ αὐτοί, τρυφηλῆς καὶ πολυκρέου καὶ πολυοίνου καὶ πολυζώμου διαίτης τυγχάνοντες, πολλοὺς καθ’ ἡμᾶς, τάχα δὲ καὶ ὑπὲρ ἡμᾶς, κελεφούς καὶ ποδαλγούς καὶ δαιμονιῶντας ἔχουσιν.

⁵⁹⁰ Ibid., 35.7-12: Εἰσὶ γὰρ καὶ χῶραι ἐκ θερμότητος ἀέρων ἢ καὶ ὑδάτων καὶ φθορῶν τὰ σώματα ἐκθερμαίνουσαι, ὥσπερ Αἴγυπτος καὶ ἡ Αἰθιοπία καὶ Ἰεριχὼ Γομορρίτης ἐνορία· εἰσὶ δὲ πάλιν καὶ γένη, ἢ καὶ ἐκ συνηθείας ἢ καὶ ἐξ ἐτέρας οὐσίας καὶ αἰτίας, ῥυπαρότερα καὶ ἀκολαστότερα ὡς τὰ Περσῶν καὶ Ἀσσυρίων.

often because they come from drier, pure, unpolluted, and health-bringing climates and waters.⁵⁹¹

Indeed, he continues, ‘If this is not the case, you tell me: why did God instruct humans in the medical art, and prepare beforehand herbs and all other kinds of therapeutics? Hence, as I really think (ὅθεν καθάπερ ἔγωγε οἶμαι), doctors frequently save people from death, through God’s providence.’⁵⁹² Here, Anastasius appears to elevate the importance of doctors in treating a disease over against undue speculation about whether or not God ultimately caused it, and he uses an unusually emphatic phrase to do so. Usually, when offering an opinion, Anastasius simply says ‘As I think’ (ὡς ἔμοι δοκεῖ); here, his formulation perhaps suggests that he was defending a view that he knew may be met with some pushback. As we shall see, it will not be the last time he did so.

Anastasius then proceeds to illustrate this point by speaking, somewhat oddly, about the key role that ‘philosophers and professors of medicine (ιατροσοφισταί)’ play as advisers to ‘expert and established slave-traders’ regarding

the qualities of the climate and the elements in different lands, and from what land one must buy slaves (σωματία) that were due to be resold in the east, so that they might not immediately die, and in turn from what land those for the north. And so on, they began to investigate all the lands, as they had learned from experience that there were climates and lands and waters that would quickly destroy the bodies [of the slaves] who had been brought there from other lands.⁵⁹³

⁵⁹¹ Ibid., 28.212-216: Διὰ ταύτας οὖν λοιπὸν τὰς τῶν στοιχείων προνοία Θεοῦ κινήσεις καὶ πλημμύρας καὶ ἐλαττώσεις καὶ κράσεις καὶ ποιότητας, τινὲς χῶραι ἀπείρατοι θανατικοῦ τυγχάνουσι, ξηροτέρων πολλάκις καὶ καθαρῶν καὶ ἀρρύπων καὶ ὑγιοποιῶν ἀέρων καὶ ὑδάτων ὑπάρχουσαι.

⁵⁹² Ibid., 28.227-231: Εἰ δὲ μὴ ταῦτα οὕτως, εἰπέ μοι, τίνας χάριν ὁ Θεὸς τὴν ἰατρικὴν ἐπιστήμην τοὺς ἀνθρώπους ἐσόφισε καὶ τὰς βοτάνας καὶ τὰ εἶδη πάντα θεραπευτικὰ προηυτρέπισεν, ὅθεν καθάπερ ἔγωγε οἶμαι, καὶ σφύζουσι πολλάκις Θεοῦ προνοία οἱ ἱατροὶ ἐκ θανάτου ἀνθρώπων;

⁵⁹³ Ibid., 28.232-240: Ἀμέλει γοῦν οἱ τῶν ἀρχαίων σωματεμπόρων ἐπιστήμονες ἐπυνθάνοντο τοὺς φιλοσόφους καὶ ἱατροσοφιστῶν τοὺς ἐπιστήμονας εἰς ἀκρίβειαν αὐτοῖς διαγγέλλειν τὰς ποιότητας τῶν ἀέρων καὶ τῶν στοιχείων τῶν

He further illustrates this point by relating a personal tale of his own travels to the Dead Sea in Palestine, where he observed the physiology of the slaves there and claims to have discussed it with the administrators of the caliphate's state farms. 'I discovered,' he said, 'that all the prisoners of the state seed-fields/farms (τῶν κατασπορῶν τοῦ δημοσίου) were from Cyprus. And when I wondered at this and asked the reason why, the administrators of the estates there gave me this answer: "The climate here will not tolerate the bodies [of slaves] save those from Cyprus. For," he said, "oftentimes after captives have been sent here from various lands, in only a short time, they have perished and died.'⁵⁹⁴ I note here that Anastasius is remarkably nonchalant about state-sponsored slavery in this passage, given that part of the *Edifying Tales for the Soul* was dedicated to stories about the plight of Christians who were captured, enslaved, and persecuted by Arab-Muslims.⁵⁹⁵ So too, some of the questions Anastasius was asked revolved around how Christians ought to react when they themselves were captured or enslaved.⁵⁹⁶

χωρῶν, καὶ ἐκ ποίας γῆς δεῖ ὀνήσασθαι τὰ εἰς ἀνατολὴν ὀφείλοντα μεταπιπράσκεσθαι σώματα καὶ μὴ ταχέως ἀποθνήσκειν, ἐκ ποίας δὲ πάλιν τὰ εἰς βορρᾶν· καὶ οὕτω καθεξῆς περὶ πασῶν διηρώτων τῶν χωρῶν, ὡς ἐκ πείρας μαθόντες εἶναι τινὰς ἀέρας καὶ χώρας καὶ ὕδατα συντόμως φθείροντα τὰ ἐξ ἐτέρων χωρῶν μετακομιζόμενα ἐκεῖσε σώματα.

⁵⁹⁴ Ibid., 28.244-251: εὗρον πάντας τοὺς αἰχμαλώτους Κυπρίους τυγχάνοντας τῶν κατασπορῶν τοῦ δημοσίου· κάμοῦ θαυμάσαντος καὶ τὴν αἰτίαν ἐρωτήσαντος, οἱ τὰ αὐτόθι διοικοῦντες ταύτην πρὸς με τὴν ἀπόκρισιν δέδωκαν, ὅτι οὐ προσδέχονται οἱ ἐνταῦθα ἀέρες ἕτερα σώματα, εἰ μὴ τὰ ἀπὸ Κύπρου· καὶ γὰρ φησι πολλάκις πεμφθέντων ὧδε ἐκ διαφόρων χωρῶν αἰχμαλώτων, ἐντὸς ὀλίγου χρόνου ἐφθάρησαν καὶ ἀπέθανον.

⁵⁹⁵ See e.g. Anastasius of Sinai, *Edifying Tales for the Soul* 8.8-11: 'Because of my life's uncertainty, I am interested in collecting only those [stories] that might intensify the faith of Christians and provide great encouragement to those of our brothers who are captives'; *ibid.*, 19.4-5, which concerns an anonymous Christian who sold himself into slavery in order to rescue 'a prisoner who was tormented and punished terribly by those who owned him'; *ibid.*, 21.1-3, which concerns the fate of an older slave named Euphemia, whose master was 'an exceedingly impious Saracen woman who dwelt in Damascus at the palace of the holy Cyprian' that tried to prevent her from receiving communion by giving her two hundred lashes each time she went to church; and *ibid.*, 22.1-2, which concerns the martyrdom of George the Black, who was 'a slave of a Saracen in Damascus,' and who refused to join his master at the mosque, leading to his gruesome death.

⁵⁹⁶ E.g., Anastasius of Sinai, *Questions and Answers* 76.1-2: 'As we see some women who go astray while they are also slaves in captivity, what is one to say about them?'; *ibid.*, 87.1-4: 'If I am subjected to slavery or prison, and I am not able, as and when I would wish, to take time in church or to fast and practise night-vigils, how can I be saved and gain the remission of sins?'

God, the Human Condition, and the Mundane

With this established, Anastasius dedicated the concluding sections of his response to various examples illustrating how the individual elements operate in tandem with the environment in order to generate various physical states. ‘It is for this reason that some children die,’ he remarks, ‘and for this reason also that some fetuses in the womb die, through a natural cause and an antipathy of an element. When the vital and warm operation of the blood weakens and fades, it is no longer capable of generating life in the body for long.’⁵⁹⁷ As seen above, he particularly emphasizes problems with the blood: ‘many cases of deadly diseases are due to an increase of the blood’ he insists, which can be proven through the examination of the humors found in a body during an autopsy.⁵⁹⁸ From this point, however, he launches into an enormous list of natural explanations for various sicknesses, diseases, and problems with the human condition, including why it is that some people die on the road or at their table;⁵⁹⁹ why pious youths and impious elders alike die;⁶⁰⁰ why it is that, ‘through the mixture and administration and disposition (αἰτία) and incompatibility (διαφορά) of the elements’ that ‘some people, though saintly’ die ‘only after many hours or even days agony,’ while ‘others who are wicked are separated from their bodies quite peacefully and harmlessly;⁶⁰¹ why some die who anticipated doing both good and evil acts;⁶⁰² why, when plague

⁵⁹⁷ Ibid., 28.265-269: διὰ τοῦτο τινα καὶ ἔμβρυα τελευτῶσι κατὰ τινα φυσικὴν στοιχείου αἰτίαν καὶ ἀντιπάθειαν, ἀσθενησάσης καὶ ἐκλειψάσης τῆς ζωτικῆς καὶ θερμῆς τοῦ αἵματος ἐνεργείας, καὶ μὴ ἰσχυσάσης ἐπὶ πολὺ ζωογονῆσαι τὸ σῶμα.

⁵⁹⁸ Ibid., 28.320-323: Ὅθεν καὶ ἐὰν ἀνασχίσης τὸν νῦν ἀποθανόντα ἄνθρωπον, τὰ μὲν τρία στοιχεῖα τοῦ φλέγματος καὶ χυμοῦ καὶ χολῆς εὐρήσεις ἐν τῷ σώματι, αἷμα δὲ οὐχ’ εὐρήσεις.

⁵⁹⁹ Ibid., 28.273-274: διὰ τοῦτο ἄλλοι ἐν τραπέζῃ τελευτῶσι.

⁶⁰⁰ Ibid., 28.280-281: Καὶ διὰ τοῦτο τινες εὐσεβεῖς τὰ τέκνα συντόμως θάπτουσι, τινῶν δὲ ἀσεβῶν τὰ τέκνα πολυχρονούσιν.

⁶⁰¹ Ibid., 28.300-305: Φασὶ δὲ τινες, ὅτι τῷ αὐτῷ τρόπῳ, τουτέστι τῇ κράσει καὶ διοικήσει καὶ αἰτία καὶ διαφορᾷ τῶν στοιχείων, οἱ μὲν πολλάκις ἐπὶ πλείστας ὥρας ἢ καὶ ἡμέρας ψυχομαχοῦντες, ὅσοι ὄντες, οὕτω τὴν ψυχὴν τοῦ σώματος ἀπορρήσσουν, οἱ δὲ πάλιν πονηροὶ ὄντες εἰρηναίως πως καὶ ἀσιάντως τοῦ σώματος χωρίζονται.

⁶⁰² Ibid., 28.273-276: διὰ τοῦτο τινες ἀσεβεῖς ὑπεργηρῶσι, διὰ τοῦτο τινες εὐσεβεῖς ὀλιγοχρονούσι, διὰ τοῦτο τινες ἀγαθοποιῆσαι σκεψάμενοι οὐκ ἔφθασαν, ἀλλὰ προεφθάσθησαν, διὰ τοῦτο καὶ τινες ὅσοι παραπεσόντες ἀπέθανον.

strikes a city, the infants of it may die but if it strikes another city the adults may die, or perhaps just the women or just the elderly;⁶⁰³ why chronic illness kills some people and lung infections others (something that occurs with God’s knowledge and can be attributed to the ‘primeval movement and administration and operation of the elements from God’);⁶⁰⁴ why some pious women are infertile while impious ones are ‘prolific’;⁶⁰⁵ why, due to ‘some such natural and God-created sequence and cause found within bodies,’ some women may successively marry ten husbands and bury them one after the other, ‘because she was found to have been of a very fierce and efficacious humour and seed,’ and so too for men who outlive many wives;⁶⁰⁶ why the sun has the energy to heat and burn, the moon the power to illumine the night, the earth the ability to produce vegetation, the plants the ability to bear fruit, and animals the ability to copulate;⁶⁰⁷ why ‘in such and such a God-fearing land there are constant plagues, while in another pagan region no pestilence ever shows itself;⁶⁰⁸ why people have the personality types and temperaments that they are born with;⁶⁰⁹ and even why people have foul moods in the mornings: ‘Consider that at the start of the day, as it is the bile that comes into action at once very early, we humans are bad-humoured

⁶⁰³ Ibid., 28.281-284: διὰ τοῦτο ἐν αὐτῇ μὲν τῇ πόλει, θανατικοῦ γενομένου, τὰ παιδία τελευτῶσιν, ἐν ἐτέρᾳ δὲ πόλει οἱ τέλειοι, καὶ πάλιν ἐν ἄλλῃ αἱ γυναῖκες καὶ οἱ γέροντες.

⁶⁰⁴ Ibid., 28.284-290: Καὶ ποτὲ μὲν λοιμικῇ νόσῳ, ποτὲ δὲ πυρεκτικῇ, καὶ ἄλλοτε δι’ ἐκβρασμοῦ καὶ ἄλλοτε πλευριτικῇ διαθέσει οἱ ἄνθρωποι ἀποθνήσκουσιν ἐν τοῖς θανατικοῖς κατὰ τὴν τοῦ ἀέρος καὶ τῶν στοιχείων κίνησιν καὶ πλεονασμὸν καὶ ἔλλειψιν τῶν τόπων καὶ τῶν χωρῶν, οὐκ ἐκτὸς μὲν γνώσεως τοῦ Θεοῦ, ἅπαγε, ὅμως διὰ τῆς ἀρχεδότου παρ’ αὐτοῦ τῶν στοιχείων κινήσεως καὶ διοικήσεως καὶ ἐνεργείας.

⁶⁰⁵ Ibid., 28.291-293. Δι’ ἧς πάλιν ὡς ἐμοὶ δοκεῖ, πολλάκις καὶ τινες γυναῖκες εὐσεβεῖς στεῖραι εὐρίσκονται, καθάπερ ἡ Σάρρα καὶ Ρεβέκκα καὶ Ἄννα, τινὲς δὲ πάλιν ἀσεβεῖς πολύτεκνοι.

⁶⁰⁶ Ibid., 28.293-299: τάχα δὲ τολμῶ λέγειν, ὅτι κατὰ τινὰ τοιαύτην φυσικὴν καὶ θεόκτιστον ἀκολουθίαν καὶ αἰτίαν τῶν σωμάτων, πολλάκις γυνὴ δέκα ἀνδράσι συζευχθεῖσα κατὰ πρόσβασιν πάντας αὐτοὺς ἔθαψε, δριμυτάτου τινὸς καὶ δραστηρίου εὐρεθεῖσα χυμοῦ καὶ σπορᾶς. Ὡσαύτως καὶ ἀνὴρ ἐκ τῆσδε τῆς αἰτίας πολλάκις κατὰ πρόσβασιν ἐνοθεῖς γυναιξὶ τὰς πάσας ἔθαψεν.

⁶⁰⁷ Ibid., 28.342-349: Καὶ ὥσπερ δέδωκεν ὁ Θεὸς ἄνωθεν καὶ ἀπ’ ἀρχῆς, τῷ μὲν ἡλίῳ τὴν θερμαντικὴν καὶ καυστικὴν ἐνεργείαν, τῇ δὲ σελήνῃ τὴν νυκτίφωτον δύναμιν, τῇ δὲ γῆ σπερμογονικὴν αὐξήσιν, τοῖς δὲ φυτοῖς τὴν καρποφόρον τελείωσιν, τοῖς δὲ ζώοις τὴν διὰ συνουσίας σύστασιν, καὶ ἐκάστη ἀπλῶς φύσει τὴν οἰκείαν ἐνεργείαν, οὕτω δέδωκε καὶ τοῖς στοιχείοις τὴν τῶν σωμάτων, ὡς ἐμοὶ δοκεῖ, κατὰ τὴν αὐτοῦ γῶσιν, πρὸς ζωὴν καὶ θάνατον, διοίκησίν τε καὶ κυβέρνησιν.

⁶⁰⁸ Ibid., 28.358-360: εἴτα ἐν ταύτῃ μὲν τῇ θεοσεβεῖ χώρᾳ ἀδιάλειπτα θανατικά γινόμενα, ἐν ἐκείνῃ δὲ τῇ ἐλληνικῇ ἐνορίᾳ οὐδέποτε λοιμικὸν καταφθάνοντα.

⁶⁰⁹ Ibid., 27.1-41.

and more quick-tempered in the mornings. Then after we have eaten and partaken of a moderate quantity of wine, we find ourselves better disposed and kindlier of soul.’⁶¹⁰

The list is, by design, overwhelming and anticipates the full range of potential theological explanations for events, and in their place, offering naturalistic answers. Anastasius even insists that ‘In my opinion, whenever any land preserves its food stocks and seeds for a long time, it follows that it can also preserve the human bodies there, and vice versa.’⁶¹¹ As a Christian monk, it is no surprise that Anastasius had in some of his responses emphasized the mysteries of the divine plan for humanity’s salvation and that there were, both in Scripture and in his own world, instances where God might alter the term of one’s life in order to bring about a greater benefit through his own foreknowledge of events. What is noteworthy, however, is the fact that this view seems to have played a relatively minor role within his general understanding of human affairs. Most of his efforts went towards de-theologizing death, sickness, and suffering, divorcing them from the religious beliefs and attitudes of individuals, and in so doing, developing a less immanent model for divine action in the world. This was, I suggest, not merely Anastasius offering some opinions on debates about providence, but a deliberate move inspired by the Arab-Muslim conquests and disenfranchisement of the Chalcedonian church in Egypt: by distancing God from the temporal sphere of historical causation in the realm of ordinary life, Anastasius sought to preserve God’s righteousness and omnipotence at a time when it was likely called into question by many eastern Christians. To keep God as far away from the successes of the caliphate and the

⁶¹⁰ Ibid., 81.51-56: ὄρα γὰρ ὅτι ἀρχομένης μὲν τῆς ἡμέρας, ἐπειδὴ εὐθέως ἡ κίνησις τῆς χολῆς πρωΐας εἰώθει γίνεσθαι, πικρότεροι καὶ ὀξύτεροι οἱ ἄνθρωποι τὰς πρωΐας ὑπάρχομεν, εἶτα γεύομενοι τροφῆς, καὶ οἴνου συμμέτρου μεταλήψεως, ἀγαθότεραν τότε καὶ ἡμερωτέραν τὴν ψυχὴν ἔχομεν.

⁶¹¹ Ibid., 28.276-79: Δοκεῖ γάρ μοι, ὅτι πᾶσα χώρα πολυχρόνια φυλάττουσα τὰ βρώματα καὶ τὰ σπέρματα, πάντως ὅτι καὶ τὰ ἀνθρώπινα σώματα αὐτῆς, ὡσπερ καὶ τὸ ἐναντίον.

‘impious’ was a way of potentially giving comfort to a community now under unprecedented pressures.

That Anastasius’s preference for naturalistic etiologies was a view unlikely to be shared by his contemporaries can be discerned in the anxiety that colors the end of his treatise set out in Q. 28. Aware of how much it sounds like he has evacuated the providence of God of much of its content, he anticipates potential accusations of fatalism and determinism by saying, ‘The carping listener should not inveigh against what has been said, supposing that we are introducing doctrines of spontaneity (αὐτοματισμός) and fate (εἰμαρμένη) through what has been said.’⁶¹² Mindful of the idiosyncratic nature of his position, and in spite of the fairly clear sense of certainty that Anastasius has shown throughout his lengthy discussion, he insists that what he set out was argued ‘not in an overly-certain way, nor polemically, but in a didactic manner and conjecturally, timidly asking forgiveness of those wiser than us, so that they may complete our inadequacies.’⁶¹³ Nevertheless, he concludes, ‘It is absolutely necessary that we understand... that whenever you see’ countless injustices and sufferings occurring to Christians in the world,

you do not tremble, nor do you let any unseemly or blasphemous thing cross your mind about God, knowing carefully from what has just been said that all these and such like things are not brought about without the knowledge of the all-seeing and all-knowing demiurge. Nevertheless, they all happen through no other way than by the primeval, God-given, and well-disposed government, order, and natural administration of the God-created elements.⁶¹⁴

⁶¹² Ibid., 28.324-26: Ἀλλὰ μὴ καταδράμη τοῖς εἰρημένοις ὁ φθονερός ἀκροατής, νομίσας ἡμᾶς αὐτοματισμὸν καὶ εἰμαρμένην διὰ τῶν εἰρημένων παρεισάγειν· Cf. Theophylact Simocatta, *On Predestined Terms of Life* III [Garton and Westerink 25]. An interest in the connections between the climate and the zodiac can be observed in some close contemporaries of Anastasius, e.g. Severus Sebokht. See O. Défaux, ‘Sévère Sebokht, *Lettre sur les climats*: édition et traduction de la première partie’ *Semitica et Classica* 16 (2023): 215-29.

⁶¹³ Ibid., 28.369-374: Πλὴν οὐχ’ ὀριστικῶς, οὐδὲ ἐριστικῶς, ἀλλὰ γνωμικῶς καὶ εἰκαστικῶς εἰρήκαμεν, δυσωποῦντες τοὺς γνωστικωτέρους συγγνώμην διδοῦντας ἀναπληρεῖν τὰ ἡμῶν ὑστερήματα.

⁶¹⁴ Ibid., 28.362-68: ἀπλῶς ὀπηνίκα ταῦτα καὶ τὰ τοιαῦτα φοβερά καὶ παράδοξα θεάση γινόμενα, μὴ θαμβηθῆς, μηδὲ μὴν ἀπρεπές τι ἢ βλάσφημον περὶ Θεοῦ ἐννοήσης, μαθῶν ἀκριβῶς ἐκ τῶν προειρημένων, ὅτι πάντα ταῦτα καὶ τὰ τοιαῦτα οὐκ ἐκτὸς μὲν τῆς παντεπόπτου καὶ προνοητικῆς τοῦ δημιουργοῦ διαπράττονται γνώσεως, ὅμως οὐχ’ ἐτέρῳ

Thus, Anastasius prefers, perhaps unusually so for a Christian monk, to explain the immediate causes of hardship, change, and suffering for Chalcedonian Christians by mediating divine providence through nature itself. In one sense, Anastasius adopted an Aristotelian view of the cosmos, insofar as he preferred to interpret misfortunate events within the mundane sphere in naturalistic terms. In another sense, of course, he flatly contradicts Aristotle's conception of God as a final, rather than an efficient, cause, in which nature rules the mundane sphere and God the supramundane, by positing instead a system which collapses the two – as any Christian would. Indeed, he is otherwise hostile to Aristotle, and in his *Hodegos* makes clear that he does not believe Aristotelian categories are appropriate for christology (in this he is rather different to Philoponus, the philosopher-grammarian who commented upon Aristotle and self-consciously relied on his logic).⁶¹⁵ But however curious it might seem, it was precisely by offering this *via media* (and thus making providence more closely integrated into the natural world) that Anastasius sought to *distance* God from mundane affairs, by explaining that the causes for most forms of hardship, suffering, and change were not the product of his deliberate choice to punish Chalcedonians or reward their enemies, or even to reward Chalcedonians and punish their enemies, but rather nature working in a fallen world.

τινὶ τρόπῳ, ἀλλὰ διὰ τῆς τῶν θεοκτίστων στοιχείων ἀρχεδότου καὶ θεοδότου εὐτάκτου κυβερνήσεως καὶ τάξεως καὶ φυσικῆς διοικήσεως.

⁶¹⁵ See the various insistences that the church does not interpret christological terms in an Aristotelian way but according to its own rules in Anastasius of Sinai, *Hodegos* VI.2.15-47, VIII.1.12 and 5.113, XXIII.5.17. See the discussion of this point in Erismann, 'Non est natura sine persona,' 88-9 and Uthemann, *Anastasios Sinaites*, 191-2.

Discovering the Cure: The Soul between Shrines and Surgeons

An obvious implication of Anastasius's convictions about theological naturalism and theories of causation is a very high appreciation for 'natural' cures, i.e., Hippocratic medicine, and a correspondingly Aristotelian understanding of the relationship between soul and body. Nowhere is this better expressed than in a short tale Anastasius appended to Q. 26:

A short time before the capture of Cyprus [by the Arab-Muslims, 649-650 CE], a man who was a philosopher and iatrosophist visited the martyr's shrine of St Epiphanius. Upon examining the crowd of sick people, he said that, with God's aid, he could cure some of them through a certain diet, by cleaning their nostrils, and by bleedings. And indeed, after undertaking these things at the command of the archbishop, he cured most of them.⁶¹⁶

In this vignette, the cult of the saints, the efficacy of secular medicine, as well as views about the ideal relation between healing saints, secular doctors, and the role of the church in mediating between them, all converge.

The tale centres around an iatrosophist, i.e. a professor of medicine, whose profession Anastasius viewed highly. This was not necessarily a view shared by all: in late antiquity, iatrosophists often 'were targets for the traditional attack on sophists in general, which branded them as being good with words but useless in action.'⁶¹⁷ As John Duffy has pointed out, one of the other rare positive views of iatrosophists in the seventh century comes in George of Pisidia's

⁶¹⁶ Ibid., 26.30-36: Καὶ γοῦν πρὸ ὀλίγου χρόνου τῆς ἀλώσεως Κύπρου παραγενάμενός τις φιλόσοφος καὶ ἱατροσοφιστὴς ἐν τῷ μαρτυρίῳ τοῦ ἁγίου Ἐπιφανίου, καὶ θεωρήσας τὸ πλῆθος τῶν πασχόντων, ἔλεγε δύνασθαι τῇ βοηθείᾳ τοῦ Θεοῦ τινὰς ἐξ αὐτῶν διὰ διαίτης τινὸς καὶ διὰ ῥινῶν καθαρσίων καὶ ἀφαιμάξεων ἰάσασθαι· καὶ δὴ κατὰ κέλευσιν τοῦ ἀρχιεπισκόπου ἐπιχειρήσας, τοὺς πλείστους ἰάσατο.

⁶¹⁷ J. Duffy, 'Byzantine Medicine in the Sixth and Seventh Centuries: Aspects of Teaching and Practice,' *DOP* 38 (1984): 23; cf. O. Temkin, 'Byzantine Medicine: Tradition and Empiricism,' *DOP* 16 (1962): 102 discussing Eunapius of Sardis's portrait of the Alexandrian iatrosophist Zenon: 'There was no separation between medicine and surgery, but there was a potential separation between dialectic and practical ability.' On iatrosophists in the educational curriculum at Alexandria generally, see P. E. Pormann, 'Medical Education in Late Antiquity: From Alexandria to Montpellier', in H. F. J. Horsmanshoff in collaboration with C. R. van Tilburg (ed.), *Hippocrates and Medical Education: Selected Papers Read at the XIIth International Hippocrates Colloquium, Universiteit Leiden, 24-26 August 2005* (Leiden, Brill, 2010), 419-441.

Expeditio Persica, where he likens the emperor Heraclius – having triumphantly subjected the Sasanians to defeat – to an iatrosophist who admirably combines practice and theory together – a combination, ‘we may suppose... that could not be taken for granted.’⁶¹⁸ Infamously, Sophronius of Jerusalem dedicated a chapter of the *Miracles of Cyrus and John* to lambasting the famed iatrosophist Gesius, who, we are told, successfully practiced Hippocratic medicine on all but himself.⁶¹⁹ In an almost perfect reversal of Anastasius’s story, this iatrosophist was unable to cure an affliction in his upper back through secular medicine, forcing him to beg for help from the saints Cyrus and John at their shrine – a particularly embarrassing concession, for in Sophronius’s telling, Gesius had boasted that technical medicine could cure all ailments. His healing was miraculously granted, but only after the saints had commanded him to wear a donkey’s saddle and proclaim his own stupidity in broad daylight around their shrine, and after delivering their own bitter invective against the practice of Hippocratic and Galenic therapeutics. The result is the ultimate subordination of technical medicine to the cult of the saints.

By contrast, in Anastasius’s tale, the iatrosophist is lauded for his ability to correctly diagnose the cause of illnesses at the shrine of St. Epiphanius and indeed, validated by the archbishop, who orders him to undertake his suggested course of Galenic treatments. Despite the pluralism of therapeutic options on offer in eastern Roman society at this time, it is perhaps unusual to see the different worlds of the iatrosophist and saint’s cult dovetail so seamlessly in the writings of a holy man. Some have sought to explain this close integration, especially in the light of his preference for a naturalistic etiology to the detriment of the ascetic tendency to theologize illnesses, by suggesting that Anastasius had trained as a doctor before becoming a monk, and that this tale

⁶¹⁸ Duffy, ‘Byzantine Medicine in the Sixth and Seventh Centuries,’ 23.

⁶¹⁹ Sophronius of Jerusalem, *Miracles of Cyrus and John* 30, in Marcos, ‘*Los Thaumata de Sofronio*,’ 304-5; cf. Booth, *Crisis of Empire*, 66-7. On Gesius, see E. Watts, ‘The Enduring Legacy of the Iatrosophist Gessius’, *GRBS* 49 (2009): 113-33.

is a veiled autobiographical reference.⁶²⁰ While medical training is not out of the question—Anastasius seems to claim familiarity with the process of performing an autopsy in Q. 22—it was not necessary to become a doctor to gain medical knowledge in late antiquity, especially if one had access to texts. As mentioned above, Gregory of Nyssa demonstrated deep knowledge of physiology and anatomy through the use of medical books in his *On the Human Image of God*, but there is little reason to believe that Gregory had ever trained as a doctor. In the sixth century, it was possible to attend the lectures of an iatrosophist in sixth-century Alexandria without ever engaging in medical practice itself, and although we lack direct evidence outside of the writings of Paul of Aegina (whose date of flourishing is itself disputed), it is not unreasonable to suppose that one could continue to audit the lectures of an iatrosophist in late seventh-century Alexandria, too. Anastasius also had close personal knowledge of Alexandria’s libraries, and Jacob of Edessa journeyed to Alexandria to undertake philosophical training, which indicates that it remained a desirable location for the pursuit of Greek paideia.⁶²¹ And manuscript from the Sinai New Finds and the Syriac Galen Palimpsest suggest that Mount Sinai, Anastasius’s primary place of affiliation, was a site where medical texts flourished between the fifth and the ninth centuries.⁶²²

However he gained his medical knowledge, in the tale of the iatrosophist at the saint’s shrine Anastasius clearly weighed in on the debate on the proper relations between the spheres of natural and supernatural healing. In contrast to Sophronius of Jerusalem and the author of the *Miracles of Artemius*, who sought to emphasize the superior skill of the saints over against their

⁶²⁰ E.g., Munitiz, *Questions and Answers*, 92, 135.

⁶²¹ Michael the Great, *Chronicle* 11.15; Chabot, *Jacobi Edesseni Hexaemeron*, 278-357. Jacob personally testifies to having spent time in Egypt where he witnessed Muslims praying towards Mecca, which is possibly to be connected to his journey to Alexandria, in BL Add. MS 12,172, fol. 124a. See P. Crone and M. Cook, *Hagarism: The Making of the Islamic World* (Cambridge, 1977), 173 n. 30 for translation.

⁶²² N. Afif et al, ‘The Syriac Galen Palimpsest: A Tale of Two Texts’ *Manuscript Studies* 3:1 (2018): 110-54; G. Rossetto, ‘Classical Texts among the Palimpsests of the Monastery of St. Catherine (Sinai): An Overview,’ in *New Light on Old Manuscripts: The Sinai Palimpsests and Other Advances in Palimpsest Studies*, ed. C. Rapp et al (Vienna, 2023), 55-71.

Hippocratic rivals, Anastasius negotiated their relationship in more subversive ways. Although the attitude of the iatrosophist and archbishop is one of collaboration, this tale seems less concerned with advocating for harmony between doctor and saint than in indicating that supplicants would, perhaps even in most cases, be better served heading to the doctor's office than awaiting the saints' miraculous intercession. And although the archbishop is endowed with the authority to command the iatrosophist, neither he nor the shrine's attendants were able to perceive the true nature of the disease; further, his own role in the story amounts only to endorsing the views of the iatrosophist, licensing his use of secular medicine and therapeutics. The silence of the saints throughout the tale is perhaps meant to confirm this.

One explanation for this depiction of the doctor at the saint's shrine can be found in Anastasius's views on the nature of the soul and its post-mortem activity. Closely related to questions of disease, terms of life, and death was the problem of the fate of the soul after the death of the body – and thus, of the nature of the soul itself. In Q. 19, Anastasius was asked, 'All men thirst, as if for a little water, to learn and know exactly what the soul of man is: what it is made of, when and whence it was composed, how it operates within the body, and where it proceeds after its separation from the body.'⁶²³ After again reminding his reader not to pry into matters on which Scripture is silent, Anastasius argues that the soul is what is made in the image of God (Gen. 1:26), a position which he had set out at length in the *First Discourse on the Image and Likeness of God in Man*.⁶²⁴ The soul's relation to the body, we are told, bears a similarity to God's relation to

⁶²³ Anastasius, *Questions and Answers* 19.1-5: Διψᾶται παρὰ πᾶσιν ἀνθρώποις ὡς ὕδωρ μικρὸν τοῦ μαθεῖν καὶ ἀκριβῶς γινῶναι τί ἐστὶ ψυχή ἀνθρώπου, καὶ ποία ἐστὶ, καὶ πόθεν συνίσταται, καὶ πότε, καὶ πῶς ἐν τῷ σώματι ἐνεργεῖ, καὶ ποῦ μετὰ τὸν χωρισμὸν τοῦ σώματος πορεύεται.

⁶²⁴ K.-H. Uthemann (ed.), *Sermones duo in constitutionem hominis secundum imaginem Dei necnon opuscula adversus Monotheletas* in *Anastasio Sinaitae Opera* CCSG 12 (Turnhout, 1985).

creation. Just like God, the invisible soul's existence is made manifest through its visible operations:

So also does our invisible soul, made *in his image*, make manifest its own operations through its own visible body, like a kind of cosmos, in the brain above what is called the *ouraniskon*⁶²⁵ [roof of the mouth], as a type of God who is above the heavens, possessing as its commander (ἡγεμών) the mind (νοῦς), which orders and guides the body as if it were a kind of earthly cosmos. Wherefore if a man at any time appears to receive a violent blow against his head, immediately his mind suffers and can no longer make judgements or remember as he did before.⁶²⁶

To this end, Anastasius argued that the various parts of the soul are activated through physical correlates within the body, without which the soul could do nothing:

The soul activates its rational operation (τὸ λογιστικόν) through the heart, the concupiscent operation (τὸ ἐπιθυμητικόν) through the liver, the capacity for humor (τὸ μειδιαστικόν) through the spleen, the respiratory operation through the lungs, the generative operation (τὸ γόνιμον) through the kidneys, the irascible (τὸ θυμικόν) through the blood, the knowing (τὸ γνωριστικόν) through the eyes, and the operation of speech (τὸ λαλητόν) through the tongue, so that when the latter is cut out, one can no longer speak.⁶²⁷

Elsewhere, as Marie-Hélène Congourdeau has shown, Anastasius's views on the endowment of human bodies with souls both in the *Questions and Answers* and in his *Second Discourse on the*

⁶²⁵ A play on words between 'roof of the mouth' (οὐρανισκός) and 'heaven' (οὐρανός).

⁶²⁶ Anastasius, *Questions and Answers* 19.35-40: οὕτω δὴ καὶ ἡ κατ' εἰκόνα αὐτοῦ ἀόρατος ἡμῶν ψυχὴ διὰ τοῦ ἰδίου αὐτῆς τοῦ ὀρωμένου σώματος, ὡσπερ κόσμου τινός, τὰς οικείας ἐμφανίζει ἐνεργείας, ἐν μὲν τῷ ἐγκεφάλῳ ἄνωθεν τοῦ λεγομένου οὐρανίσκου, εἰς τύπον Θεοῦ τοῦ ὑπεράνω τοῦ οὐρανοῦ, ἔχουσα τὸν ἡγεμόνα νοῦν διοικοῦντα καὶ κυβερνοῦντα ὡς γηγενῆ τινα κόσμον τὸ σῶμα.

⁶²⁷ Ibid., 19.44-50: Τὸ δὲ λογιστικὸν πάλιν ἡ ψυχὴ διὰ τῆς καρδίας ἐνεργεῖ, τὸ δὲ ἐπιθυμητικὸν διὰ τοῦ ἥπατος, τὸ δὲ μειδιαστικὸν διὰ τοῦ σπληνός, τὸ δὲ ἀναπνευστικὸν διὰ τοῦ πνεύμονος, τὸ δὲ γόνιμον διὰ τῶν νεφρῶν, τὸ δὲ θυμικὸν διὰ τοῦ αἵματος, τὸ δὲ γνωριστικὸν διὰ τῶν ὀφθαλμῶν, τὸ δὲ λαλητὸν διὰ τῆς γλώττης· διὸ καὶ τεμνομένης αὐτῆς οὐκέτι ὁ ἄνθρωπος λαλεῖν δύναται. Cf. ps.-Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oration Against the Astronomers* PG 36, 675-678, which is the only text I can find that parallels this taxonomy.

Image and Likeness of God in Man comes from Gregory of Nyssa, which he then develops towards distinctly Chalcedonian ends – a move also shared by Maximus Confessor.⁶²⁸

From the next part of his answer, however, it is clear that however much Anastasius derived his theological anthropology from Gregory of Nyssa, he appears to have departed from his Neoplatonic understanding of the soul’s uncircumscribed post-mortem activity in favour of a modified hylomorphism:

When it – I mean the soul – is separated from the whole body, it can no longer operate what it used to operate through the parts of the body: it cannot speak, remember, decide, desire, reason, feel anger, or gaze. Rather, it exists immortal in itself, abiding in a kind of anxiousness (ἐν συννοίᾳ τινὶ), awaiting the retrieval of its own body uncorrupted, and then can accomplish incorruptible operations in that body.⁶²⁹

Moreover, he sides with the Greek medical tradition over against Gregory by adopting an encephalocentric view of the *hegemonikon* by making mind (νοῦς) within the brain the ‘commander’ of soul, over against Gregory’s refusal to identify the *hegemonikon* with any part of it.⁶³⁰ And although he adopts the Galenic and Platonic view, against the Peripatetics, that different parts of the soul are activated through their organic correlates, he also departs from Galen (and by extension, Aristotle) by locating the rational operation (τὸ λογιστικόν) in the heart, not the brain.⁶³¹

As both Gilbert Dagron and Nicholas Conostas noted, and Matthew Dal Santo developed at great length, Anastasius’s views on the post-mortem inactivity of the soul shares much in common

⁶²⁸ Congourdeau, ‘Médecine et théologie chez Anastase le Sinaïte,’ 287-298.

⁶²⁹ Ibid., 19.51-57: Οὐκοῦν ὡσαύτως καὶ χωριζομένης αὐτῆς, λέγω δὴ τῆς ψυχῆς, ἐξ ὅλου τοῦ σώματος οὐκέτι δύναται τι ἐνεργεῖν ὧν ἐνήργει, διὰ τῶν μορίων τοῦ σώματος, οὐ λαλεῖν, οὐ μνήσκεσθαι, οὐ διακρίνειν, οὐκ ἐπιθυμεῖν, οὐ λογίζεσθαι, οὐ θυμοῦσθαι, οὐ καθορᾶν, ἀλλ’ ἐν συννοίᾳ τινὶ καθ’ ἑαυτὴν ὑπάρχει ἀθάνατος διαμένουσα, ἄχρις ἂν πάλιν τὸ οἰκεῖον σῶμα ἀπολαβοῦσα ἄφθαρτον, ἀφθάρτους λοιπὸν καὶ τὰς ἐν αὐτῷ ἐνεργείας ἀποτελεῖ.

⁶³⁰ Cf. Gregory of Nyssa, *De hominis opificio* 12.1-3 in Behr, *Gregory of Nyssa*, 189-193.

⁶³¹ The best discussion of Gregory of Nyssa’s position on the *hegemonikon* vis-à-vis classical scientific and philosophical traditions can be found in S. Wessel, ‘The Reception of Greek Science in Gregory of Nyssa’s “De hominis opificio”’ *Vigiliae Christianae* 63:1 (2009): 24-46.

with the position refuted in the late sixth century by Gregory the Great in his *Dialogues* and Eustratius of Constantinople in his *On the State of Souls After Death*.⁶³² In these texts, Gregory and Eustratius defended the view of the post-mortem activity of the soul in general, and of the veracity of the appearances of saints at their shrines, who appear of their own accord in their own subjectivity, over against those who rather viewed them as phantasms. Constan and DalSanto associate this view with a resurgence of Aristotelian rationalism in the sixth century, whether localized to the philosophical and medical curriculum in Alexandria or more broadly throughout the cities of the empire. Although both sides of this debate ultimately viewed all post-mortem appearances and miraculous healings as made possible ultimately through God's own power, the disputed point was the subjective reality of the saints in their purported appearances at their shrines. Was there a middle level of divine power accessible below God but above the earth, so to speak? Was the temporal world subject to an oversaturation of divine power as mediated by the stratum of saints?

This position, though not becoming mainstream, nevertheless continued to exert influence into the seventh century. In his *Letters* 6 and 7, Maximus Confessor took up a similar defense of the activity of the soul after death on the grounds that many monasteries in Palestine had been infiltrated by the view that the soul ceased to operate after the body's death.⁶³³ As a onetime resident of a monastery on the Mount of Olives (ca. 660), it is possible that Anastasius had picked this view up there. Yet Anastasius did not exactly replicate the position of Eustratius, Gregory,

⁶³² P. van Deun (ed.), *Eustratii Presbyteri Constantinopolitani: De statu animarum post mortem*, CCSG 60 (Turnhout, 2006); GA. De Vogüé (ed.) and P. Antin (trans.), *Grégoire le Grand: Dialogues*, 4 vols., SC 251, 260, 265 (Paris, 1978-80); Dagron, 'L'ombre d'une doute,' 61-4; N. Constan, 'An Apology for the Cult of Saints in Late Antiquity: Eustratius Presbyter of Constantinople, *On the State of Souls after Death*,' *J ECS* 10 (2002): 267-85; M. Dal Santo, *Debating the Saints' Cult in the Age of Gregory the Great* (Oxford, 2012), 343-56.

⁶³³ Maximus Confessor, *Letters* 6 and 7, PG 91 424D-440C; D. Krausmüller, 'Christian Platonism and the Debate about Afterlife: John of Scythopolis and Maximus the Confessor on the Inactivity of the Disembodied Soul,' *Scrinium* 11 (2015): 242-60.

and Maximus's opponents either. After describing the post-mortem inactivity of the soul, he qualifies his earlier statements:

But these things were said by us concerning those who died in their sins: the souls that have acquired the Holy Spirit, as if they were his own body and instrument, in my opinion, are full of rejoicing through his illumination even after death, and mentally worship God through reason, and intercede on behalf of others, as we learn from the Scriptures.⁶³⁴

Nevertheless, Anastasius immediately adds a further qualification still:

To be sure, it is right to know that all the visions that occur at the shrines or tombs of saints are accomplished through the holy angels at the command of God. For how, since the resurrection of bodies has not yet occurred, and the bones and bodies of the saints still lie scattered about, is it possible for them to be seen as whole and complete men, often appearing armored on horseback? If you think to refute this, then you tell me, how Paul, Peter, or any other apostle or martyr, being one single person, is often seen at the same time in many different places? Not even an angel can be found in different places at the same time, or in different lands. Only God, the uncircumscribed, can do this.⁶³⁵

The skeptical characterization of saints appearing armored on horseback is found exactly in Eustratius's *On the State of Souls After Death*, where the argument is put into his opponent's mouth.⁶³⁶ As Matthew Dal Santo has shown, the parallels are so close that it is almost like

⁶³⁴ Ibid., 19.58-63: Ἀλλὰ ταῦτα μὲν ἡμῖν εἴρηται περὶ τῶν ἐν ἀμαρτίαις τελευτώντων, ἐπεὶ αἱ τὸ Πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον κτησάμεναι ψυχαί, ὡσανεὶ σῶμα καὶ ὄργανον αὐτοῦ γενόμεναι, ἐμοὶ δοκεῖ, ὅτι διὰ τῆς ἐλλάμψεως αὐτοῦ καὶ μετὰ θάνατον εὐφραίνονται, καὶ Θεὸν λόγῳ νοεῶς δοξολογοῦσι, καὶ ὑπὲρ ἄλλων πρεσβεύουσιν, ὡς ἐκ τῶν Γραφῶν μανθάνομεν.

⁶³⁵ Ibid., 19.64-75: Εἰδέναι μέντοι προσήκει, ὅτι πᾶσαι αἱ ὀπτασίαι αἱ γινόμεναι ἐν τοῖς ναοῖς ἢ σοροῖς τῶν ἁγίων δι' ἀγγέλων ἁγίων ἐπιτελοῦνται κατ' ἐπιτροπὴν Θεοῦ, ἐπεὶ πῶς δυνατόν, μήπω τῆς ἀναστάσεως τῶν σωμάτων γεγενημένης, ἀλλ' ἐτι τῶν ὀστέων καὶ τῶν σαρκῶν τῶν ἁγίων διεσκορπισμένων, εἶδῃσθαι τούτους ἤδη ὀλοκλήρους ἄνδρας, πολλάκις ἐφ' ἵππους καθωπλισμένους ὀπτανομένους; Εἰ δὲ ἀντιλέγειν νομίζεις, εἰπέ μοι σύ, πῶς εἰς ὑπάρχων Παῦλος, ἢ Πέτρος, ἢ ἄλλος ἀπόστολος, ἢ μάρτυς, κατ' αὐτὴν τὴν ὄραν πολλάκις ἐν πολλοῖς τόποις ὀπτάνεται; Οὔτε γὰρ ἄγγελος δύναται ἐν διαφόροις τόποις ἐν αὐτῇ τῇ ῥοπῇ, ἢ ἐν διαφόροις χώραις εὐρίσκεσθαι, εἰ μὴ μόνος ὁ ἀπερίγραπτος Θεός.

⁶³⁶ Eustratius, *On the State of Souls After Death* ll. 2000-13: 'But perhaps they propose another problem for us, namely: "How do the disembodied souls of the saints sometimes appear arrayed in armour, even with other figures, or horses

Anastasius had read Eustratius's dialogue and decided to adopt most of the positions put into the mouth of the heretic.⁶³⁷ Moreover, this view is also one shared by John Philoponus, in his commentary on Aristotle's *De Anima*: 'From where do shadowy phantoms appear at graves?' he wrote. 'For clearly the soul has neither assumed a definite form nor is wholly visible.'⁶³⁸ And while Anastasius does not explicitly accept Philoponus' later distinction between pneumatic and luminous souls (which enabled him to postulate some kind of continued psychological activity in the soul after death), Q. 19 assumes some kind of distinction, for Anastasius also wanted to affirm some kind of continued mental activity in the minds of saints after death.

The rest of the response is concerned with re-emphasizing, on this basis, that the Psalms and other Scriptural passages prove that when 'the soul has been separated from the body it is deprived' of reasoning (*διαλογίζομαι*), memory (*μυμήσκω*), prayer (*εὔχομαι*), or ability to recognize other people as individual subjects – the latter being something, he ventures, that will not be possible even after the resurrection of the body.⁶³⁹ Again, reflecting the same anxiety found at the conclusion to Q. 28, he explains his decision to use Scriptural examples 'so that some might not think us to have taken up medical myths.' This line is revealing: in pre-empting accusations of purely naturalistic explanations for the body-soul, he associates medical philosophy with a more pronounced Aristotelian approach to nature, the soul, and betrays his own preference for it.

In this response, Anastasius here attempts a *via media* between various strands of thought on the saints' cult, the nature of the soul, and its post-mortem fate. First, he advocates for a two-

or other identifying features, if they now exist naked and bodiless?"; ET from Dal Santo, *Debating the Saints' Cult*, 141.

⁶³⁷ Dal Santo, *Debating the Saints' Cult*, 141, 343-48.

⁶³⁸ John Philoponus, *De Anima* 19.27-9; ET from P. J. van der Eijk, *Philoponus: On Aristotle On the Soul 1.1-2* (London, 2005), 34-5.

⁶³⁹ For discussion, see D. Krausmüller, "'At the resurrection we will not recognise one another": Radical Devaluation of Social Relations in the Lost Model of Anastasius' and Pseudo-Athanasius' Questions and Answers,' *Byzantion* 83 (2013): 207-27.

tiered fate for souls after the death of the body. Ordinary people experience a modified version of ‘soul sleep,’ a view that is usually associated with the East Syriac tradition at this point in, while holy men and women become ‘instruments of the Holy Spirit’ and can experience a kind of mental joy and even intercede on behalf of others.⁶⁴⁰ Second, because of how closely intertwined the soul is to its body, souls cannot exist in definite locations after death, with the soul awaiting reconnection with its body. In two other questions (QQ. 20 and 23), Anastasius was asked explicitly where the souls of the just and unjust go after death. He demurs about the precise location, though he insists that they are real places. Just souls go to Paradise, but where exactly this is cannot truly be known, whereas the souls of the unjust go to Hades, which is ‘a place that is the lowest of the lowest underworlds.’⁶⁴¹ Both await their ultimate fates there. The upshot, in Q. 19, is that all souls – even those of saints – cannot truly appear at shrines or in various other places where people claim they have visions of them. In doing so, he sets himself quite at odds with more mainstream theories of saints’ relics, as defended in classic texts like Gregory of Nyssa’s *On the Soul and Resurrection*.

At the same time, Anastasius accepts that visions of saints at shrines *can* occur, but insists that these are angelic phantasms wrought by divine power and not true appearances of saints.⁶⁴² Strikingly, this was a position that had been refuted by several seventh century hagiographers who came to deliberately distinguish the roles of saints and angels.⁶⁴³ When these occur, then, the supplicant should not be impressed with the holiness of the saint so much as feel grateful that God

⁶⁴⁰ F. Gavin, ‘The Sleep of the Soul in the Early Syriac Church,’ *JAOS* 40 (1920): 103-120; Dal Santo, *Debating the Saints’ Cult*, 237-320.

⁶⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 20.21-22: ὁ δὲ Ἄδης τόπος ἐστὶ κατώτατος τῶν κατωτάτων καταχθονίων.

⁶⁴² A view paralleled in the writings of his contemporary Isaac of Nineveh; see P. Bedjan, *Mar Isaacus Ninevita*, ‘*De perfectione religiosa*’ (Paris-Leipzig, 1909), 381, and A. J. Wensinck (trans.), *Mystic Treatises by Isaac of Nineveh* (Amsterdam, 1923), 255-256. For discussion see V. Baranov, ‘“Angels in the Guise of Saints”: A Syrian Tradition in Constantinople’ *Scrinium* 12 (2016): 5-19.

⁶⁴³ Dal Santo, *Debating the Saints’ Cult*, 220-1.

himself has decided to bestow a miraculous cure upon him or her. Though outside of the context of the cult of saints, Anastasius elsewhere displayed caution when asked about the validity of dreams in similar terms:

Solomon said, *Dreams excite fools* (Sir. 34:1), and for this reason we urge you neither to believe in them nor accept them, lest the demons find a pretext for leading us into error, to which some have been subjected. Nevertheless, they often come about through the thoughts and deeds which we had during the course of the day. They are brought about from demons, from the phantasms of one's stomach (γίνονται καὶ ἀπὸ στομάχου φαντασία), and also from God: for oftentimes the holy angels guide or frighten us through dreams.⁶⁴⁴

There are parallels here with his views on the visions of saints at their shrines. In both cases, Anastasius accepts what must have been the mainstream position on their efficacy and reality, but cautions against overinterpretation, offering a naturalistic explanation for their occurrence (and thus dismissal), or he qualifies it by replacing its ordinary actors with angels.

Conclusion

In the *Miracles of Cyrus and John*, Sophronius staged a debate between the eponymous saints and angels of God over the soul of a certain presbyter named George, who had died due to a plague. We are told that George had passed 'when the terms of his life had been completed.'⁶⁴⁵ Though dead, he nevertheless opened his eyes and saw angels carrying his soul up to heaven to be reunited

⁶⁴⁴ Ibid., 72.1-11: Εἶρηται μὲν τῷ Σολομῶντι, ὅτι ἐνύπνια ἀναπτεροῦσιν ἄφρονας, καὶ διὰ τοῦτο παραγγελλόμεθα μὴ πιστεύειν, μὴ δὲ καταδέχεσθαι αὐτά, ἵνα μὴ ἄδειαν ἐντεῦθεν οἱ δαίμονες λαβόντες, πλανήσαντες ἀπατήσωσιν ἡμᾶς, ὅπερ τινὲς ὑπέμειναν. Ὅμως συμβαίνουσι τὰ ἐνύπνια πολλάκις ἐκ τῶν πράξεων ἢ λογισμῶν ἡμῶν, ὧν ἐν ἡμέρᾳ ἔχομεν. Γίνονται δὲ καὶ ἀπὸ δαιμόνων, γίνονται καὶ ἀπὸ στομάχου φαντασία, γίνονται καὶ ἀπὸ Θεοῦ· πολλάκις γὰρ οἱ ἅγιοι ἄγγελοι δι' ἐνυπνίων ὀδηγοῦσιν ἢ ἐκφοβοῦσιν ἡμᾶς. On the 'phantasms of one's stomach,' an ascetic trope, cf. Basil of Caesarea, *Letters* 22.42-3 ('[A monk] must not be misled by a full stomach, on account of which nocturnal phantasms occur');

⁶⁴⁵ Sophronius of Jerusalem, *Miracles of Cyrus and John* 51.102-3; a direct quotation of Basil of Caesarea, *That God is Not the Author of Evil* PG 31 333B.

with God. Along the way, however, Cyrus and John interrupted them and asked them to hand George over to them. The angels informed the saints that they were duly obeying the command of God, but that they would wait and allow them to make a second appeal to God for George's soul. Their request was granted, and he was given twenty additional years. When he died again at the end of that period, Cyrus and John successfully petitioned again for an even further prolongation of his life.⁶⁴⁶

In this vignette, God had already decreed the number of years of George's lifespan, but in the end yielded to the wishes of the saints. Like Anastasius, Sophronius had rejected the view of fixed terms of life, but unlike the Sinaite, he depicted the temporal sphere as saturated with potential mediators of divine power in the form of the saints, who can bypass angels to commune with God directly and, should he grant it, dispense his power in accordance with their own wishes. This conception of providence is completely absent in Anastasius's *Questions and Answers*. Whether in his views on the mundane world (disease, plague, death, political and religious persecution) or the supramundane world (divine providence, dreams, visions, and the intercession of the saints' cult) Anastasius held to an image of the cosmos which at once evacuated the 'middle space' between heaven and earth of potential conduits of divine power and, at the same time, increased the distance between God and temporal affairs. Even though he accepted changeable terms for the human lifespan, he emphasized the rarity of actual occasions where God permits this, a point driven home by the huge amount of space dedicated to describing the various possible natural causes of death (even for the pious and spiritual elite), most often connected with the failure of blood to operate correctly in the body.

⁶⁴⁶ Ibid., 51.102-108.

In each case, Anastasius's worldview was informed by principles that map on best to the views of Aristotle and the Greek medical tradition on the nature of the cosmos and the body. Of course, some of these elements—such as a belief in the four elements, or in the efficacy of technical medicine—were part and parcel of late ancient eastern Roman society more broadly, in the same way that the theories of universal gravitation and general relativity are accepted features of our own age, without requiring us to identify ourselves as Newtonians or Einsteinians.⁶⁴⁷ But what is noteworthy about Anastasius's responses is how and to what end he chose to deploy these principles or allow them to inform his view of the relation between body and soul, the saints' cult, and etiology. In many instances, his views are either explicitly or implicitly connected to the problems of Arab-Muslim domination, the new position of Christians vis-à-vis their Islamic rivals, and the consequences of Byzantine defeat in the minds of eastern Christians. And of course, a major concern found throughout most of Anastasius's writings was the more localized decline of the Chalcedonian church at the hands of its rival, the Theodosians. In between questions on disease, plague, and empire, Anastasius was asked about how uneducated people might confute heretics who approach them about their faith. In response, Anastasius told them to learn from a 'brief disputation that occurred in Alexandria a short while ago,' in which various Severans, Gaianites, and Barsanouphians ganged up upon someone who was uneducated and poor in speech. The knock-down argument that this person gave was to establish that just as an emperor would only confide his most important treasures to his most trusted advisors, God has shown that the Chalcedonians are his most favored Christians, because the Chalcedonians still remained in control of several key churches of the Holy Land, as well as Mount Sinai, and not the Severans.⁶⁴⁸ Conspicuously, no Egyptian churches were mentioned. Indeed, the Theodosians were not only

⁶⁴⁷ Edwards, *Aristotle*, 78.

⁶⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 69.3-7: Περὶ τούτου ἄκουσόν τινος διαλέξεως συντόμου γεναμένης ἐν Ἀλεξανδρείᾳ πρὸ ὀλίγου χρόνου.

expanding ecclesially, but as we saw above, were appropriating the dominant modes of ecclesial mediation in the form of the saints' cult – and they did so at a time when the leading protagonist of the Chalcedonian church in Egypt was effectively unraveling it.

By insisting upon naturalistic explanations for the phenomena of sickness, disease, plague, and even death, he limited the potential avenues by which God interacted with the world – in particular, a constant refrain throughout his responses is the rejection of the idea that God punishes individuals with sickness, plague, or death for their piety or lack thereof. This aversion to the tendency to over-theologize mundane affairs helped ward off concerns that the Arab-Muslim conquests and suffering of Christians were proof of God's preference for Islam, and that the Theodosians were now in the ascendant, but it also manifested in Anastasius's preference for technical treatments of these various maladies, seen especially in the provocative story of the iatrosophist at the saints' shrine. Indeed, the problems must have been acute for Anastasius: not only had God evidently permitted the Arab-Muslim conquests, but he had also allowed the Theodosians to flourish, meaning that the logic of divine retribution for Christian sins could not have applied in his situation. In a recent doctoral thesis, David Gyllenhaal has exhaustively gathered in one place and categorized the strategies that Christians from the fourth to the eighth century used to respond to crises and collective trauma.⁶⁴⁹ He argues that the Christians of late antiquity generally relied upon three biblical paradigms for interpreting crisis: the chastisement narrative (in which God punishes the Chosen People for their sins), the refining narrative (in which God permits misfortune to the Chosen People as a test), and the apocalyptic narrative (which points to the imminence of the eschaton in one's own day). From these, there emerged two particular views on divine providence: imperial providentialism, in which the emperor's personal piety and

⁶⁴⁹ D. Gyllenhaal, *Collective Trauma and Divine Providence in Christian Late Antiquity* (unpub. PhD Thesis, Princeton University, 2022).

role as guardian of orthodoxy could stem the tide of trauma and crisis on behalf of his subjects, and pastoral providentialism, in which the blame lay with ordinary Christians and their sins, which bishops and priests used as a launchpad for calls to collective repentance and petitionary prayer.

By and large, none of these strategies are utilized in the *Questions and Answers*. By contrast, the naturalization of historical and etiological causation enabled Anastasius to keep the eastern Roman symbolic universe of God's care for Chalcedonians and ultimate power over temporal affairs from fracturing beyond repair, even if it required him be more remote than some of Anastasius's contemporaries preferred. Many adopted the line that the sufferings of Christians had occurred as divine retribution for the sins of Christians, as in the Syriac *Life of Maximus Confessor* or John bar Penkayē's *Book of Main Points*; others 'domesticated' the conquests by locating them within the scheme of biblical precedents, like the *Chronicle to 705*; while still more responded by writing apocalypses and insisting that the disasters that had befallen Christians signaled God's imminent return, as in the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius*.⁶⁵⁰ While Anastasius partially adopted a similar approach in the *Third Sermon* (though with the crucial difference that the Sixth Ecumenical Council had already satisfied God's wrath, and that things were supposedly looking up for dyothelete Chalcedonians), his much more sustained and pastoral writing reveals a steadfast conviction that in the matter of world-historical affairs, the course of nature was proceeding ordinarily.

⁶⁵⁰ See the discussion of these texts in M. P. Penn, *Envisioning Islam: Syriac Christians and the Early Muslim World* (Philadelphia, 2015), as well as P. J. Alexander, *The Byzantine Apocalyptic Tradition* (ed. D. deF. Abrahamse) (Berkeley, CA, 1985).

Conclusion: Towards an Ecclesiastical History of the Post-Roman Near East

When the Marwānid caliph ‘Abd al-Malik inherited the reins of power from his father, Marwan I (r. 684-5), in Damascus in 685, he spent most of the first decade of his regency fighting a civil war against a rival claimant to the throne, the Companion of the Prophet Ibn al-Zubayr (r. 683-692), based out of the Prophet’s hometown, Mecca. This succession crisis fractured the various regions of the caliphate for seven years, until the Marwānids at last bested the Zubayrids in 692. ‘Abd al-Malik’s work, however, had only just begun; for although he had won the war, he now needed to win the peace. In the following years, he launched a series of administrative, military, fiscal, and religious reforms aimed at unifying the vast territory over which he was now sole ruler, at once reintegrating the rebellious provinces and cementing the Islamic identity of the caliphate.

These reforms included the centralization of the army; the Arabicization of the fisc; increased attention to the tax liability of the subject populations; and the Islamization of the empire’s visual culture, including the striking of new, aniconic and anti-Trinitarian coins, as well as the construction of the Dome of the Rock on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem.⁶⁵¹ In Egypt more specifically, papyrologists have pointed to further innovations in this period, including the emergence of Arabic names for pagarchs (thereby signaling the potential displacement of the class of Christian administrators with whom we are familiar in the second half of the seventh century); the tightening of control over free movement; and the use of corvée labor into which Christians were conscripted.⁶⁵² Through these reforms, the Marwānid state under ‘Abd al-Malik introduced

⁶⁵¹ M. Bates, *Islamic Coins* (New York, 1982); M. Milwright, *The Dome of the Rock and its Umayyad Mosaic Inscriptions* (Edinburgh, 2016); E. Garosi, ‘Imperial Arabic: Some Notes on Visual Symbolism,’ in *Christians and Muslim in Early Islamic Egypt*, ed. L. Berkes (Ann Arbor, 2022), 13-32.

⁶⁵² Sijpesteijn, *Shaping a Muslim State*, 115-216; see the collected essays in A. DeLattre, M. Legendre, and P. M. Sijpesteijn (eds.), *Authority and Control in the Countryside: From Antiquity to Islam in the Mediterranean and Near East (6th-10th Century)* (Leiden, 2018).

a much more clearly defined imperial and religious identity recognizable to all denizens of the caliphate, differentiating Muslim from Christian in starker terms than had heretofore been the case.

With the increasing Islamization of the empire, the looming specter of apostasy to Islam became ever more visible. To that end, religious historians have often focused on how the Marwānid reforms—especially visible to us in the coinage and the Dome of the Rock—increased the pressures on the conquered to assimilate or convert. We can indeed begin to discern this tendency in the works of some eastern Christian figures during this period, and it is perhaps this same phenomenon that animated the production of new apocalyptic literature.⁶⁵³ These concerns are found across eastern Christian literature more generally, and they are especially prominent in the *Hodegos* and the *Edifying Tales* of Anastasius of Sinai, as I have shown elsewhere.⁶⁵⁴ But although these reforms, at both the political and religious levels, resulted in a significantly more unified Islamic state, their effects must have been felt unevenly across the Christian populations of the empire. We do not, for example, observe the same fear of apostasy in contemporaneous Theodosian literature. In fact, we find quite the opposite: at the very moment when Anastasius of Sinai was lamenting the imprisonment of Chalcedonian Christians at Babylon-Fuṣṭāṭ, George the Archdeacon and Mena of Nikiu set about exalting its governor ‘Abd al-‘Azīz as the true Roman emperor their church had always longed for but never had.⁶⁵⁵ The close relationship between governor and patriarch was rehearsed and celebrated in a variety of texts produced in the age of ‘Abd al-‘Azīz, beginning with Egypt’s first Arab governor ‘Amr b. al-Āṣ and the patriarch Benjamin, who provide the literary template for a reality that was realized only from 685. Theodosian patriarchs are granted unparalleled access to the court of the Muslim emir: they eat at

⁶⁵³ See the relevant entries of Hoyland, *Seeing Islam as Others Saw It*.

⁶⁵⁴ P. Ulishney, ‘New Evidence for Conversion to Islam in Anastasius of Sinai’s *Hodegos*’ *DOP* 79 (2024): 29-48.

⁶⁵⁵ Booth, ‘Images of Emperors and Emirs,’ 414, pointing out that the Coptic word used by Mena of Nikiu to describe ‘Abd al-‘Azīz (*p-rro*, ‘the king’) was the former designation of the Roman emperor.

his table, reside in their own palaces at his headquarters in Ḥulwān, and travel to and from Alexandria under the protection of a veritable praetorian guard. Moreover, ‘Abd al-‘Azīz’s prime minister himself was a Severan Christian, not a Muslim. It is hard to imagine a different interpretation of the reign of the Islamic governor than between Anastasius of Sinai and George the Archdeacon.

We ought, therefore, to be cautious when we speak of the pressures that ‘Christians in the caliphate’ faced in the first century of Islam. This unevenness in the Christian sources from Egypt attunes us to the fact that confessional dynamics influenced the relationship of conquered and conqueror as much as the policies of the conquered did. ‘Christians’ were less the subject of persecution in early Islamic Egypt than were Chalcedonians, and to that end, one could argue that the disenfranchisement of Egyptian Chalcedonians—a potential fifth column for the prime ideological foe of the caliphate, the eastern Roman empire—belonged to the Marwānid reforms just as much as any fiscal or administrative policy did. Indeed, by taking the history of the Egyptian Chalcedonian church in the early Islamic period as a subject worthy of study on its own terms, and not simply as an ornament to the full realization of Severan church’s process of ecclesiogenesis, we are immediately confronted with the reality that the ecclesial history of the Marwānid caliphate was much more complex than many of our standard narratives have supposed.

This thesis has provided a first step towards understanding those complexities better by integrating the works of Anastasius of Sinai within the study of the ecclesiastical history of early Islamic Egypt. It did so by interpreting his relevant texts both diachronically and synchronically, arguing that his career as a polemicist could not be understood apart from the longer-term history of the imperial church in the sixth and early seventh centuries, nor from the closely related fate of the Chalcedonians’ most serious rival in Egypt in this same period, the emergent but marginalized

Theodosian church. In chapter one, we saw how important the imperial and political context was for understanding the ecclesial *status quo* of Egypt at the dawn of Islam. For all the grand claims of Severans to various bishoprics throughout the Near East in the sixth and early seventh centuries, there remained only one true church, the institutional church of the empire, and this church was Chalcedonian. This single institutional church would dominate the cities of the empire and other zones of imperial influence, steadily strengthening throughout the sixth century thanks to the legal and economic advantages it possessed by virtue of being the imperial church, which could not be replicated by dissidents to the imperial doctrinal position.

All the same, empire was a double-edged sword for the Chalcedonian church: as an imperial church, it owed its flourishing in part thanks to the legal and economic structures of the Roman state, which could successfully suppress the formation of a serious institutional rival to it, even if dissident communions formed on its edges in the provinces. But when this state apparatus and the security that flowed from it were lost, the institution became vulnerable, especially as a new imperial and religious power emerged that relegated Christians of all stripes to the position of second-class citizens, as we saw in chapter two. While the economic and administrative advantages that had accrued to the Chalcedonians in places enabled them to continue to perpetuate their control over the traditional institutions (e.g. its prominent position in cities, a wealthy episcopate, public churches), the emergence of a new imperial dynasty willing to lend patronage to its rival would have devastating consequences.

In Egypt, the situation was even more dire than elsewhere, because the unique ecclesiastical structure of the Alexandrian patriarchate—having no metropolitanate—meant that the prerogative for sustaining the episcopate, and thus the church as an institution, was solely in the hands of the patriarch. With no patriarch in residence after Peter of Alexandria's presumed death in 651-2, and

with no class of metropolitans to secure the ordination of new bishops, the Chalcedonian episcopate slowly declined over the second half of the seventh century, generating a vacuum of power in the cities. The problems grew worse from within the Chalcedonian fold with the Sixth Ecumenical Council of 680-1, because the council's decision to reverse its support for monenergism and monotheletism resulted in a schism between Alexandrian Chalcedonians (and presumably those in the chora) who accepted or rejected Constantinople's decisions. The evidence that we possess suggests that the majority of Chalcedonians in the caliphate remained monothelete, thereby placing Anastasius of Sinai – a defender of Constantinople's decision – in an even smaller minority than before.

The final blow to the traditional, late antique version of the Chalcedonian church of Egypt, understood as the sole institutional church rather than as one independent church among others, then came with the arrival of Egypt's new emir, 'Abd al-'Azīz b. Marwān, and his Severan secretary Athanasius bar Gumoyē, in 685. By extending patronage to the Theodosians, who claimed to constitute the only authentic church of Egypt (and perhaps had the benefit of possessing no doctrinal loyalty to Constantinople, unlike Chalcedonians like Anastasius), the imperial tide had turned against the Chalcedonians. In the same way that throughout the sixth century political pressures would likely have encouraged assimilation to the imperial church throughout the general population, the Marwānid patronage of the Theodosians to the detriment of their rivals seems to have produced the same effect. We saw this in the steady loss of Alexandria's prominent churches, in the hands of Chalcedonians until the advent of the Marwānids, to the Theodosians over the late seventh and early eighth centuries, resulting in the astonishing claim that by the 740s the Chalcedonians had even lost their cathedral church. While Chalcedonians did not disappear overnight, of course, the Theodosians under 'Abd al-'Azīz succeeded in inaugurating the

confessional inversion that placed them in control of Egypt's institutional church and the Chalcedonians on the margins.

It was thus in this period that we can observe the seeds of the Islamicate ecclesial order, though perhaps not yet brought to full fruition. The Sixth Ecumenical Council was a major test for figures like Anastasius of Sinai: What did it mean to be a church no longer within the borders of the Roman empire but nevertheless still loyal to the doctrinal authority of Constantinople? While this question is never given a definitive answer in his works, as the ambivalences between his account of the monothelite controversy compared to his general views on divine providence showed, Anastasius nevertheless remained committed to doctrinal policy of the empire, even if he struggled to articulate why the orthodoxy of Constantinople had not yet resulted in the defeat of the Islamic empire. For others, including Anastasius's foe Harmasius, the Sixth Ecumenical Council secured the legacy of the Arab-Muslim conquests, for in rejecting Constantinople, the monothelite Chalcedonians of Alexandria (like the Maronites of Syria) had become a truly Islamicate church.

It was in the context of these new ecclesial developments and the vacuum that Chalcedonians now faced that the monk Anastasius of Sinai stepped into the fray as a self-proclaimed defender of his church. The final three chapters of the thesis, each in their own way, examined the contributions of Anastasius to our understanding of the position that dyothelete Chalcedonian Christians held in the new world order. Although we must always be careful to not tacitly accept Anastasius's presentation of events, his writings are of unique importance insofar as they constitute the only first-person voice from within the Egyptian Chalcedonian church by a contemporary of the late seventh and early eighth centuries. His writings thus enable us to glimpse an insider's perspective on the how the religious playing-field of Egypt evolved in the early

Marwānid state. This thesis contributed in the first place to our knowledge both of the period and of Anastasius's individual works by arguing that his polemical texts (and thus his polemical career) were the product of the aforementioned changes that took root from the advent of the Marwānids in Egypt from 685, including the composition of his magnum opus, the *Hodegos*. Paying careful attention to the huge ecclesial developments in Egypt between 642 and 685 meant reading the career of Anastasius of Sinai as the product of confessional inversion achieved by Athanasius bar Gumoyē, 'Abd al-'Azīz, and the Theodosian patriarchs of their day.

The thesis also highlighted for the first time the idiosyncrasy of Anastasius's disputational strategies found within that text, which took on new importance in an age where Chalcedonians were shut out from imperial patronage and had to rely on other avenues, like high-profile public disputations, to make their case to the public at large. While confessional champions had long been debating various christological topics, Anastasius's preferred strategies for debate were based less in a long tradition of sophisticated late antique argumentation and more in the new, pressurized conditions that put Chalcedonians on the back foot. Perceiving that simple believers would be less swayed by refined technical arguments and more by performance, he emphasized tricks, deception, and shame in ways that other Chalcedonian disputants had not in the centuries before him in an attempt to win them over.

Finally, we examined Anastasius's responses to broader questions raised by fellow members of the Chalcedonian church regarding the fate that they had suffered. Anastasius's responses tend to surprise: while it is possible to discern, especially in his *Third Discourse on the Image and Likeness of God and Man*, the late antique principle that the orthodoxy of the state (and particularly that of the emperor) is responsible for the woes of Near Eastern Christians, this response clearly was not sufficient to describe the many woes that Chalcedonian Christians faced

in their new day-to-day life in the caliphate. Throughout his *Questions and Answers*, in which we get to hear Anastasius respond to the concerns of real people, he took a different tack. Although he still accepted that God handed the Romans over to the Arab-Muslims ‘for their sins,’ he also painted a picture for his correspondents of the relationship between the mundane and supramundane world in which God was responsible for the sustenance and ultimate fate of the mundane, but otherwise mediated his providence through natural causation, largely leaving the world to its own devices in the day-to-day. Though not an Aristotelian properly so called, Anastasius curiously sought to caution his readers against over-theologizing their sufferings in ways that marked him out from many of his contemporaries. In so doing, he could perhaps explain the discrepancy between the fact that the Sixth Ecumenical Council had already required for the sins of the empire that there had still been no improvement in the position of the Chalcedonian subjects still living in the caliphate. If anything, it had cemented the presence of the Islamic empire, and with that empire’s patronage of the Theodosian church and the latter’s takeover of the institutional church, thereby enabling Theodosians to make claims of divine favor and to the mediation of divine power in their liturgies and through their saints much more effectively than the Chalcedonians could. The tension with which he held these beliefs animates the *Questions and Answers*, but in so doing, Anastasius ultimately sought to bring his audience comfort amid their tribulations.

While conventional accounts have tended to focus on Anastasius’s itineracy or ability to speak for Christians at large under Islam, this thesis has returned him to his rightful place as a defender of the Chalcedonian church under the dramatic conditions that marked its experience under Marwānid Egypt: rupture, fracture, and decline. At the same time, we have also had occasion to see that the situation of Chalcedonians varied regionally, as in Syria, where the Chalcedonian

church was able to perpetuate its episcopate and retain a stronger presence in its great cities than in Egypt. Given the degree to which Egyptian Chalcedonianism was intimately bound up with that of its Theodosian rival, it follows that Syrian Chalcedonianism must have been entangled with its Jacobite rival, too, and vice versa. We must, then, ask the same institutional and ecclesial questions of the Severan churches of Egypt, Syria, and Armenia, as well as the East Syrian church throughout the caliphate, too. None of these churches developed in isolation from one another, nor was this development disconnected from the collective inheritance that Christian Rome had passed down to them. To understand any one of them fully, we must try to understand them all in a transregional and comparative perspective. Together, their complex and interrelated evolution was rooted in the shared context of Marwānid rule, which more than anything else gave shape to this period.

By reading the works of Anastasius of Sinai in the light of Egyptian ecclesiastical history and the history of the Marwānid state, with its own complex set of relationships to the various Christian groups it ruled, we are better positioned to move from writing the history of the Chalcedonian church of Egypt to writing the ecclesiastical history of the post-Roman Near East at large. For it was across this formative period that the permanence of the transition to Arab-Muslim rule began to be felt more keenly by Christian communities and their leaders, and when the seeds of the ecclesiastical landscape familiar to future generations were first sown. We are thus better able to appreciate the fact that the decades between Maximus Confessor and John of Damascus were no mere transitional period to be passed over, but that they constituted an important era of church history in their own right, with dynamics, tensions, and pressures unimaginable to Maximus, and soon anachronistic to John. For these years oversaw nothing less than the birth of Islamicate Christianity, and Anastasius of Sinai as both a principal witness to, and leading protagonist within, that decisive moment.

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