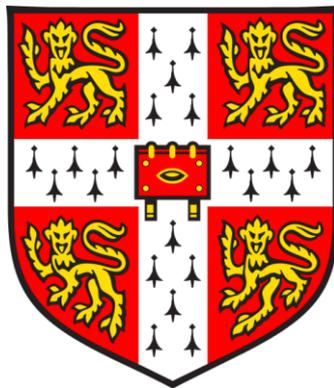


Doctrinal Controversy and the Church Economy of Post-Chalcedon Palestine



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ABBREVIATIONS

<i>AB</i>	<i>Analecta Bollandiana</i>
<i>ACO</i>	<i>Acta Conciliorum Oecumenicorum</i>
<i>BASOR</i>	<i>Bulletin of the American School of Oriental Research</i>
<i>BF</i>	<i>Byzantinische Forschungen</i>
<i>BHG</i>	<i>Bibliotheca Hagiographica Graeca</i> (ed.) F. Halkin, 3 rd Edition, <i>Subsidia Hagiographica</i> 47 (Brussels, 1957).
<i>Byz</i>	<i>Byzantion</i>
<i>BZ</i>	<i>Byzantinische Zeitschrift</i>
<i>CCT</i>	A. Grillmeier et al, <i>Christ in Christian Tradition</i> , 5 vols. (Oxford 1975- 2013).
<i>CI</i>	<i>Codex Iustinianus</i>
<i>CH</i>	<i>Church History</i>
<i>CPG</i>	<i>Clavis Patrum Graecorum</i>
<i>CSCO</i>	<i>Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium</i>
<i>CTh</i>	<i>Codex Theodosianus</i>
<i>DOP</i>	<i>Dumbarton Oaks Papers</i>
<i>GRBS</i>	<i>Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies</i>
<i>J. Nov</i>	<i>Justinian, Novellae Constitutiones</i>
<i>JECS</i>	<i>Journal of Early Christian Studies</i>
<i>JEH</i>	<i>Journal of Ecclesiastical History</i>
<i>JRA</i>	<i>Journal of Roman Archaeology</i>
<i>JRS</i>	<i>Journal of Roman Studies</i>
<i>JThS</i>	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
<i>LA</i>	<i>Liber Annuus</i>
<i>OCP</i>	<i>Orientalia Christiana Periodica</i>
<i>PG</i>	<i>Patrologia Graeca</i>
<i>PL</i>	<i>Patrologia Latina</i>
<i>PLRE</i>	A.H.M. Jones, J.R. Martindale, and R. Morris, <i>Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire</i> , 3 vols. (Cambridge 1971-1992).
<i>PO</i>	<i>Patrologia Orientalis</i>
<i>POC</i>	<i>Proche-Orient Chrétien</i>
<i>RB</i>	<i>Revue Biblique</i>

<i>REB</i>	<i>Revue des Études Byzantines</i>
<i>RHE</i>	<i>Revue d'Histoire Ecclésiastique</i>
<i>ROC</i>	<i>Revue de l'Orient Chrétiens</i>
<i>SC</i>	<i>Sources Chrétiennes</i>
<i>SP</i>	<i>Studia Patristica</i>
<i>TU</i>	<i>Texte und Untersuchungen der altchristliche Literatur</i>
<i>V. Abr.</i>	Cyril of Scythopolis, <i>Vita Abramii</i>
<i>V. Cyr.</i>	Cyril of Scythopolis, <i>Vita Cyriacii</i>
<i>V. Euth.</i>	Cyril of Scythopolis, <i>Vita Euthymii</i>
<i>V. Geo.</i>	Anthony of Choziba, <i>Vita Georgii</i>
<i>V. Jo. Hesych</i>	Cyril of Scythopolis, <i>Vita Iohannii Hesychastes</i>
<i>V. Mel. gr</i>	Gerontius, <i>Vita Melaniae Iunioris</i> , (Greek version)
<i>V. Pet.</i>	John Rufus, <i>Vita Petri Iberici</i>
<i>V. Sab.</i>	Cyril of Scythopolis, <i>Vita Sabae</i>
<i>V. Sev.</i>	Zachariah of Mitylene, <i>Vita Severi</i>
<i>V. Theod.</i>	Theodore of Petra, <i>Vita Theodosii</i>
<i>ZDPV</i>	<i>Zeitschrift des Deutschen Palästina-Vereins</i>

INTRODUCTION

‘Out of this came the ineffable union (*hē arrētos henōsis*), with the result that, through the formula ‘from two [natures],’ the formula ‘in two [natures]’ is also properly meant, and through ‘in two,’ ‘from two,’ and neither statement precludes the other... Still, men deem these things to be so different from one another, thinking this on account of some custom pertaining to the worship of God, or indeed through prejudice, that they show contempt for every kind of death, rather than submit to reality.’¹

The Fourth Ecumenical Council, held at Chalcedon in 451, began a period of extraordinary social and political crisis across the Eastern Mediterranean. In Palestine, as elsewhere, the centuries that followed were characterised by internecine conflict between local Christians persisting until the collapse of Roman authority in the region during the reign of the emperor Heraclius. The ‘Holy Land,’ however, is often accorded a special status in this controversy, an island of fervent support for Chalcedon in a Near East where attitudes were generally more mixed, a position commonly credited to the influence of the region’s monks. How disagreement over the Council became the cause of such enduring acrimony remains one of the great historiographical debates in the study of Late Antiquity. Since Edward Gibbon, historians have struggled to contextualise the origin of this unrest, ostensibly an argument between the proponents of rival, but also substantially identical, Christologies.

Mirroring the broader concerns of the intellectual climate in which it arose, a current of early-twentieth century scholarship once sought to present the emergence of the ‘miaphysite’ Churches of Egypt and Syria as nascent nationalist movements.² Following the dramatic explosion of interest in contemporary religion, however, pioneered by Peter Brown, A.H.M. Jones, and Henry Chadwick, among others, this argument was debunked and the fundamental ‘religious’ content of the controversy re-affirmed.³ Few today would question this assessment. Still contentious, however, is the question of what else may have acted to drive hostilities forward. When, in 1972, W.H.C. Frend began to call for an approach encompassing the broader social and economic conditions in which conflict over Chalcedon arose, the

¹ Evagrius Scholasticus, *Historia Ecclesiastica* 2.5 (ed. Bidez and Parmentier, p. 264): ...ἐξ ὧν ἡ ἄρρητος ἕνωσις, ὡς διὰ τῆς ἐκ δύο φωνῆς ἐνταῦθα νοεῖσθαι προσφόρως τὴν ἐν δύο, καὶ διὰ τῆς ἐν δύο τὴν ἐκ δύο, καὶ θάτερον τοῦ ἐτέρου μὴ ἀπολυμπάνεσθαι... Καὶ ὁμως οὕτως ἀλλήλων ἀπεσχοινίσθαι ταῦτα νομίζουσιν ἄνθρωποι, συνηθεία τινὶ περὶ τῆς τοῦ Θεοῦ δόξης, ἢ καὶ τὸ οὕτω βούλεσθαι προειλημμένοι, ὡς πάσης ἰδέας θανάτου περιφρονεῖν ἢ πρὸς τὴν τοῦ ὄντος ἰέναι συγκατάθεσιν.

² See, for instance: A.J. Butler, *The Arab Conquest of Egypt and the last thirty years of Roman Dominion*, (Oxford 1902); E.L. Woodward, *Christianity and Nationalism in the Later Roman Empire*, (London 1916); E.R. Hardy, ‘The Patriarchate of Alexandria: A Study in Nationalist Christianity,’ *CH* 15 (1946), 81-100.

³ H. Chadwick, ‘Eucharist and Christology in the Nestorian Controversy,’ *JThS* (new series) 2 (1951), 145-164; A.H.M. Jones, ‘Were ancient heresies national or social movements in disguise?’ *JThS* (new series) 10 (1959), 289-298; P. Brown, *Poverty and Leadership in the Later Roman Empire*, (Hanover, NH 2001), p. 107.

reaction was mixed.⁴ More recent studies have tended to promote an almost purely theological explanation for the violence which accompanied it. In outlining a new theory of ‘geo-ecclesiology,’ Philippe Blaudeau has echoed sentiments held by many in strongly repudiating any suggestion that the passion in evidence here can be taken to signify anything more than the extreme importance which contemporaries attached to matters of doctrine.⁵ Others might argue that, in any case, it is difficult to see beyond what Averil Cameron famously described as the ‘totalising Christian discourse’ of Late Antique literature.⁶ Contemporary accounts of doctrinal controversy, it is true, were almost exclusively produced by the same clerical and monastic groups most invested in its outcome. But the fact remains that within some of the highly-polemical narratives crafted by these writers, whether supporters or opponents of Chalcedon, a more nuanced picture of events emerges: an often sterile-seeming battle to promote a universal definition of the relationship between the human and divine in Christ is revealed to have been deeply affected by the material concerns of its participants.

This thesis explores this facet of the controversy which followed Chalcedon in one region of the Eastern Roman Empire: Palestine. In particular, it seeks to trace the role of the Late Antique Church Economy - the systems through which Christian institutions were financed and maintained - in shaping its depiction. To what extent did such ostensibly ‘worldly’ considerations influence accounts of Chalcedonian-‘Miaphysite’ conflict? Can this be seen to have distorted our understanding of these defining Late Antique disturbances? Such questions are important, not least in promoting a fuller appreciation of a period still commonly defined by the rise of Christianity. Each presents methodological challenges to the historian accustomed to approaching the study of the centuries that followed the conversion of Constantine through a lens of ‘religious revolution.’ In asking them, the intention is not to belittle religion’s transformative role in the transition from Classical Rome to medieval Byzantium. From what evidence survives of the complex local reception of the Council, however, it is possible to give a new reading to a range of texts, some rarely treated as anything other than devotional or theological works, but whose contents invite us to take a more holistic view.

The study of the Palestinian Church in this period is blessed by a wealth of available literary source material. Its history is well-documented, if often wrongly depicted merely as a sideshow to events in

⁴ W.H.C. Frend, *The Rise of the Monophysite Movement*, (Cambridge 1972), esp. pp. 50-103; idem. ‘Heresy and schism as social and national movements,’ in D. Baker (ed.) *Studies in Church History 9: Schism, Heresy and Religious Protest* (1972), 33-56.

⁵ P. Blaudeau, *Alexandrie et Constantinople (451-491), de l’Histoire à la Géo-Ecclesiologie*, (Rome 2006), pp. 1-4. Its title consciously evokes the strictly secular analysis of Egypt’s ecclesiastical politics formerly offered by Norman Baynes, which Blaudeau has strongly criticised: N.H. Baynes, ‘Alexandria and Constantinople: A Study in Ecclesiastical Diplomacy,’ *The Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 12 (1926), 145-156. By the same author: P. Blaudeau, *Le siège de Rome et l’Orient (448-536): étude géo-ecclesiologique*, (Rome 2012); idem. ‘Between Petrine Ideology and Realpolitik: The See of Constantinople in Roman Geo-Ecclesiology (449-536),’ in L. Grig and G. Kelly (eds.), *Two Romes: Rome and Constantinople in Late Antiquity*, (Oxford 2012), 364-384. See also: P. Bell, *Social Conflict in the Age of Justinian: Its Nature, Management, and Mediation*, (Oxford 2013), pp. 121-124.

⁶ Averil Cameron, *Christianity and the Rhetoric of Empire*, (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA 1994), pp. 21, 222.

Egypt, or Syria.⁷ Local reactions to Chalcedon are recorded in imperial legislation and epistolary collections, in the accounts, both of ecclesiastical historians, and of so-called ‘secular’ histories and chronicles. For our purposes, however, the most detailed are those supplied by writers engaged in the production of those most characteristic Late Antique texts: the *Lives* of the Christians saints and the *Acts* of the Church Councils. Closer examination of their works, especially, will be crucial to the analysis that follows.

In recent decades, each of these traditions has been the subject of extensive - in the case of hagiography, exhaustive - scholarly debate. To what extent details presented in either may be properly considered as ‘historical’ evidence remains a divisive issue. As modern studies become more sophisticated in their approach to these texts, so the challenge of how best to utilise their contents grows.⁸ We ought not to downplay the problems imposed by the conventions which governed their composition. Hagiographers, of course, were not historians by any modern definition. The editors of conciliar collections, meanwhile, are known for only generally providing a highly-sanitised portrayal of the proceedings they purported to record. In discounting the testimony of either, however, we risk depriving ourselves of the opportunity to study Chalcedon’s effects through the eyes of those most immediately involved in its reception. Worse, we could be accused of practising an unhelpful favouritism when it comes to assessing the value of Late Antique works whose separation by ‘genre’ can often be misleading. A proportionate approach is one that is alive to these deficiencies, without allowing issues of style to distract from the potential importance of these works to future scholarship. Of the usual criticisms made, most can as easily be levelled at other, more ‘reputable’ narratives. The picturesque imagery and frequent recourse to the miraculous regarded as problematic features of hagiography, for instance, were as much a hallmark of the allegedly sober, classicising histories produced by writers such as Procopius of Caesarea or Agathias of Myrina. Synodical records, for their part, were hardly unique in manipulating evidence to give a partisan view of contemporary ecclesiastical politics.

Our ability to critically evaluate the latter, in particular, is strengthened by a surge of interest in the last years resulting in the appearance of comprehensive commentaries, and the first English translations, of the majority of the Late Antique conciliar collections edited by Eduard Schwartz in his landmark *Acta Conciliorum Oecumenicorum*.⁹ Thanks to the monumental efforts of Richard Price and his

⁷ This subject regrettably receives little coverage, even in first dedicated study of Palestine in this period: H. Sivan, *Palestine in Late Antiquity*, (Oxford 2008).

⁸ For recent discussion, see: M. Van Uytvanghe, ‘L’hagiographie: un ‘genre’ chrétien ou antique tardif?’ *AB* 111 (1993), 135-188; idem. ‘L’origine et les ingrédients du discours hagiographique,’ *Sacris erudiri* 50 (2011), 35-70; R. Browning, ‘The ‘Low Level’ Saint’s Life in the Byzantine World,’ in G. Nagy (ed.), *Greek Literature IX: Greek Literature in the Byzantine World*, (Abingdon and New York, NY 2001) 223-234; T.D. Barnes, *Early Christian Hagiography and Roman History*, (Tübingen 2010); M. Hinterberger, ‘Byzantine Hagiography and its Literary Genres. Some Critical Observations,’ in S. Efthymiadis (ed.), *The Ashgate Research Companion to Byzantine Hagiography*, 2 vols. (Farnham 2014), 2.25-60.

⁹ R. Price and M. Gaddis, *The Acts of the Council of Chalcedon*, 3 vols. (Liverpool 2005); R. Price, *The Acts of the Council of Constantinople of 553*, (Liverpool 2009); idem. and P. Booth with C. Cubbitt, *The Acts of the Lateran Synod of 649*, (Liverpool 2014); Mary Whitby (ed.), *Chalcedon in Context: Church Councils 400-700*,

collaborators, texts which were once the preserve of a highly-specialist cadre of theologians and ecclesiastical historians have been rendered accessible to a wider scholarly audience, promoting, in turn, a greater recognition of the scope they offer for new insights into the social life of the Church as a central pillar of the Eastern Roman polity. For our purposes, especially crucial in this regard are the *Acts* of Chalcedon itself, though considerable attention will also be paid in the chapters that follow to the minutes of the Second Council of Constantinople, convened by the emperor Justinian in 553, and of the two synods held at Jerusalem and Constantinople during the same reign, in 536.¹⁰ The painstaking effort to record these meetings served to underline the depiction of their findings as definitive. To deprive potential critics of the ability to challenge their authority on procedural grounds, every detail of the Councils' business was allegedly preserved by attendant notaries, marking the major synods of the early Church as among the best-documented events of the entire pre-modern era, political embellishments and omissions notwithstanding. The value of the *Acts*, however, lies not just in the 'official' account they provide, but in their tendency, equally, to act as vehicles for the preservation of a rich seam of other, secondary material. A vital characteristic of all these texts is their incorporation of various letters, treatises, and memoranda which might otherwise be lost, but which their editors, aiming for completeness, carefully catalogued for posterity.

Inaugurated by Constantine at Nicaea in 325, the convocation of an Ecumenical Council was at once an extraordinary event in the life of the Church and a set piece in the projection of imperial power. Evoking the collegiate traditions of the first Christians, bishops from across the Roman world were summoned to deliver binding rulings on divisive questions which the emperors, through a desire for conformity, were anxious to resolve. In practice, of course, the outcome was rarely unanimity. The tensions inherent in an arrangement whereby the State assumed the power to enforce one interpretation of orthodoxy are obvious, even if, officially, Constantine and his successors could claim only to be enacting the will of the majority of the Councils' delegates. In fact, far from deferring to the spiritual authority of their bishops, emperors and their representatives were prone to interfere in virtually every aspect of these proceedings. Nowhere was this more apparent than at Chalcedon. In 451, a party of imperial commissioners appointed by the emperor Marcian insisted that debate be held according to a pre-approved agenda, whilst all the time maintaining that their only role was to facilitate consensus.

By necessity, any attempt to codify Christianity required that believers be able to answer categorically what is, in effect, the most essential question of the faith enshrined by the Apostles: who and *what* is Christ? Such certainty had often eluded earlier generations at the time when the Church had lacked universally-accepted systems of governance, or was driven underground, liable to persecution as the

(Liverpool 2011). This work continues, with the University of Bamberg's recently-announced project to translate the *Acts* of the 536 Synods of Constantinople and Jerusalem, incorporated by Schwartz into *ACO* 3.

¹⁰ On the latter, see: F. Millar, 'Rome, Constantinople and the Near Eastern Church under Justinian: Two Synods of C.E. 536' *JRS* 98 (2008), 62-82.

apparatus of an ‘illicit’ sect. In 325, the clear need for a definitive statement on Christ’s relationship with God had drawn Constantine and his bishops into an ongoing controversy generated by views associated with the Alexandrian presbyter Arius, which subordinated God the Son as a ‘created being’ to God the Father, designating the latter alone as eternal. Rebuking this position, the Council, in promulgating the Nicene Creed, enshrined Christ as consubstantial (*homoousios*) and coeternal with God, an uncompromising view which served only to reignite debate for decades to come. Amid the bitter recriminations that followed, dispute as to whether the two were identical, distinct, or merely ‘similar’ (*homoios*), refused to subside, the animosity in evidence increasingly fuelled by the competing ambitions of the major episcopal Sees. A second Ecumenical Council summoned to Constantinople in 381 by the emperor Theodosius worked to untangle the wreckage left by the First. However, the difficulties exposed by these events set the tone for subsequent meetings of the Church Fathers, the task of bringing unity to Christendom frequently derailed through the desire by one party of churchmen to gain supremacy over another.¹¹

The appearance of the rulings of the Council of Constantinople effectively ensured that subordinationist views were excluded from the Christian mainstream. By the early-fifth century, the focus of Christological debate had moved away from disputing these ideas. With the Nicene doctrines of consubstantiality and coeternity placed beyond reproach in 381, attention turned to refining the official understanding of precisely how the human in Christ interacted with the Godhead: the so-called ‘Natures debate,’ which rapidly emerged as a conflict between rival Alexandrian and Antiochene ‘Schools’ of Scriptural exegesis. The broad outline of the theological dimension of this rift is generally characterised as follows: the ‘Antiochenes,’ very loosely-speaking, were thought prone to emphasise the fullness of Christ’s humanity, inferring a practical distinction between this and His divinity, a position associated with the writings of Diodore of Tarsus and Theodore of Mopsuestia; the ‘Alexandrians,’ by contrast, were liable to stress the fundamental unity of the Natures, the human in Christ effectively subsumed by His divinity. Rarely, however, was this boundary so clear-cut in reality. Though for centuries theologians have poured over the surviving writings of protagonists on both sides, the degree to which a strictly-defined Christological stance ultimately determined membership of either remains doubtful. One fateful episode of 428 brought this conflict to a head. Mirroring the longstanding contest between the bishops of Egypt and the ‘Eastern’ Diocese of Oriens, antagonism between the ‘Schools’ erupted into a major crisis for the Church with the election that year of a Syrian monk, Nestorius, as Bishop of Constantinople. Soon after ascending the episcopal throne, Nestorius became entangled in a poisonous scandal regarding alleged remarks he had made repudiating the practice of referring to the Virgin Mary by the popular epithet *Theotokos*, or ‘God-Bearer,’ supposedly insisting that she only be acknowledged as *Christotokos*, the ‘bearer of Christ,’ instead. Whatever truth may have lain in these accusations, their

¹¹ Now see: C.R. Galvão-Sobrinho, *Doctrine and Power: Theological Controversy and Christian Leadership in the Later Roman Empire*, (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA 2013), esp. pp. 78-94.

effect was explosive. Quick to seize upon the incident was the Alexandrian patriarch, Cyril, who wasted little time in spearheading moves to orchestrate his colleague's removal.

Despite some initial resistance from the court of Theodosius II, the plot to overthrow Nestorius met with success. A consummate political operator, Cyril, in hounding his rival from office, can be seen to have followed an example set by his uncle and predecessor, Theophilus, who had himself played an instrumental part in unseating another 'Easterner,' John Chrysostom, from the See of Constantinople in 405. The Third Ecumenical Council, subsequently convened at Cyril's behest at Ephesus in 431, descended into farce as a party led by John of Antioch refused to recognise the Alexandrians' mandate. Arriving five days after the Council had begun, the Antiochene bishops boycotted proceedings before departing to organise a rival synod of their own elsewhere in the city. Dominated by Cyril, the 'main' Council predictably voted to condemn 'Nestorianism'; the Antiochenes' anathematised Cyril.¹² In spite of a Christological compromise later reached between the two parties, formalised in the *Act of Reunion* of 433, conflict resumed within a matter of decades. 449 saw a hugely controversial return to Ephesus for a second synod remembered by its opponents as the *Latrocinium* (the 'Robber Synod'), at which Cyril's successor, Dioscorus of Alexandria, set out to impress his will upon the Church even more decisively in reaction to the purported mistreatment of an ally, the Constantinopolitan monastic dissident, Eutyches. These last events, considered in detail below, formed the backdrop to the discussions held at Chalcedon two years later. The reading of the minutes of Ephesus II alone comprised the majority of the business of the Council's first session, its delegates tasked with salvaging the wider ecumenical project from the suspicion and hostility it had generated.¹³

If synodical records provide a guide to the high-level intrigue at the heart of the Christological controversies, then the *Lives* are normally thought to sit at the other end of the literary register: vernacular texts which reveal the impact of Chalcedon at a rustic or provincial level, evidence of the extent to which the issues raised at the Council had entered the collective consciousness of society's 'lower orders.' This view remains current, even if, as work by Peter Sarris has shown, the image of rural life depicted by hagiographers was often misleading, obscuring the power of traditional elites so as to demonstrate the unrivalled social authority claimed on behalf of their subjects.¹⁴ The 'Rise of the Holy Man,' the term first coined by Brown to describe the extraordinary pre-eminence attained by ascetics

¹² For the evolution of Cyril's Christology, see the classic: J.A. McGuckin, *Saint Cyril of Alexandria and the Christological Controversy*, (Leiden 1994); F. Millar, *A Greek Roman Empire: Power and Belief under Theodosius II*, pp. 157-167; T. Graumann, 'Theodosius II and the politics of the first Council of Ephesus,' in C. Kelly (ed.), *Theodosius II: Rethinking the Roman Empire in Late Antiquity*, (Cambridge 2013), 109-129.

¹³ For the Syriac Acts of Ephesus II see: J. Flemming (ed.), *Akten der Ephesinischen Synode vom Jahre 449: syrisch / mit Georg Hoffmanns deutscher Übersetzung und seinen Anmerkungen*, (Göttingen 1917); F. Millar, 'The Syriac Acts of the Second Council of Ephesus (449),' in *Chalcedon in Context*, Though as Price and Gaddis note, it seems that only an abbreviated version of the *Acts* is likely to have actually been read aloud to Chalcedon's delegates: Price and Gaddis, *Acts of Chalcedon*, 1.112.

¹⁴ P. Sarris, 'Rehabilitating the Great Estate: Aristocratic Property and Economic Growth in the Late Antique East,' in W. Bowden, L. Lavan and C. Machado (eds.), *Late Antique Archaeology II: Recent Research on the Late Antique Countryside*, (Leuven 2004), 55-71.

as mediators within the communities of the post-Constantinian East, without doubt, had a profound effect in shaping ‘popular’ attitudes towards the practice of Christianity.¹⁵ And yet in Palestine at least, the hagiographical works which describe this charisma would most commonly seem to have been written, less to chronicle the prowess of the region’s early ascetic pioneers, than to advance the political ambitions of their disciples, the majority originating from within a network of prominent local monasteries, long since established as major religious organisations in their own right.

Beginning in Egypt with Athanasius’ *Life of Antony*, the practice of recording the legends of noteworthy holy men and women had already spread to Palestine by the final decades of the fourth century. Whilst Eusebius of Caesarea, the emperor Constantine’s aide and one-time bishop of Palestine’s principle ecclesiastical See, had previously written to eulogise the Christians killed in the region during the Diocletianic Persecutions, it was not until ca. 390 and the appearance of Jerome’s *Life of Hilarion*, that a local tradition emerged to rival that already promoted by the Church of Alexandria.¹⁶ This latter text claimed to preserve the story of the ‘founder’ of Palestinian monasticism, said to have arrived from Egypt in the early 330s, before settling as a hermit in the vicinity of Thawatha on the Gaza Plain. Of the local *Lives* which survive, however, virtually all date to the centuries which followed Chalcedon. This context is crucial. In many cases, the continuing strife created by the Council not only provided a background to the events recounted; the conflict often appears to have provoked the composition of the texts in the first place.

It was Chalcedon’s opponents who first came to recognise what Bernard Flusin has described as the ‘propaganda’ value of *Lives* as tools of self-representation. This discovery may have occurred as early as 451 itself, the likely date for the composition of Gerontius’ *Life of Melania the Younger*, a work whose apparent response to contemporary ecclesiastical upheaval we will revisit in the chapters that follow. However, the apogee of this dissident literary activity can be located without difficulty roughly half a century later at Gaza during the tumultuous reign of the emperor Anastasius (491-518). Writing as part of the anti-Chalcedonian circle assembled around the charismatic ascetic leader and exiled Georgian prince Peter the Iberian, the gifted polemicists John Rufus and Zachariah of Mitylene sought to bolster their movement through the production of a series of highly emotive hagiographies, squarely aimed at discrediting its opponents. Originally composed in Greek, their works, which now only survive in Syriac, have lately served to provoke a radical re-evaluation of the history of the Palestinian Church,

¹⁵ Among Brown’s many contributions to the study of the ‘Holy Man,’ see especially: P. Brown, ‘The Rise and Function of the Holy Man in Late Antiquity,’ *JRS* 61 (1971), 80-110; idem, *The Cult of the Saints: Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity*, (Chicago, IL 1981); idem, *Society and the Holy in Late Antiquity*, (London 1982).

¹⁶ For a recent, comprehensive overview of the history of Palestinian hagiography, see: B. Flusin, ‘Palestinian Hagiography: Fourth-Eighth Centuries,’ in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Byzantine Hagiography*, 1.173-198.

as classically conceived.¹⁷ Recent studies by Cornelia Horn and Robert Phenix, Jan-Eric Steppa, Brouria Bitton-Ashkelony and Arieh Kofsky, among others, have succeeded in rehabilitating the anti-Chalcedonian monastic culture described by the Gazan authors as a movement of equal weight and standing to its Chalcedonian equivalent, which was only then beginning to take shape to the northeast.¹⁸

The powerful ascetic lobby subsequently formed by the Council's supporters had its home approximately eighty kilometres away, its focal point the rocky wilderness of the Judean Desert. For knowledge of its development, we are largely reliant upon the writings of a single-author: the prolific Justinianic-era hagiographer Cyril of Scythopolis. Cyril, whose *Lives* claimed to chronicle the emergence of a strictly 'orthodox' vision for religious life in this barren stretch of land, hemmed between Jerusalem and the Dead Sea, wrote as a member of the impressive monastic 'federation' founded by perhaps its greatest luminary, the Cappadocian holy man Sabas. Rarely do we see the full panoply of considerations weighing on ascetic authors more clearly than in these texts, the richness of their account having served to inspire a host of classic works on monasticism produced by Flusin, Derwas Chitty, Price, and John Binns, among others.¹⁹ Aside from immortalising Sabas, his teacher Euthymius, and five of their associates, the seven hagiographies comprising the collection offer an expansive view of Palestine's recent ecclesiastical history, to be regularly reviewed in the pages below. Their author's peerless status among contemporary Desert writers is clear, even if Cyril's once-sterling reputation for historical accuracy, as we shall see, can no longer be taken for granted.

Such dominance, nevertheless, must not be allowed to go unchecked. Though unsurpassed by rival local compositions, the 'Sabaite' *Lives*, as a project, can only truly be understood as part of a wider literary tradition. On closer examination, Cyril's writings can regularly be found in dialogue with these texts, provoking, but also reacting to the compositions of others. Immediately apparent is the close relationship between Sabas' biography and another Desert narrative, the *Life of Theodosius the Coenobiarch*, written by Theodore of Petra in the early 540s. In eulogising his monastery's founder, a prominent monastic pioneer whose period of activity roughly coincided with that of Cyril's forefather,

¹⁷ John Rufus, *Vita Petri Iberici*, ed. R. Raabe, *Petrus der Iberer: Ein Charakterbild zur Kirchen- und Sittengeschichte des 5. Jahrhunderts; syrische Übersetzung einer um das Jahr 500 verfassten griechischen Biographie*, (Leipzig 1895), repr. C. Horn and R.J. Phenix, *John Rufus: The Lives of Peter the Iberian, Theodosius of Jerusalem, and the Monk Romanos*, (Leiden 2008); idem. *Plerophoriae* ed. F. Nau, trans. M. Brière, 'Jean Rufus, évêque de Maïouma: Plérophories, c'est-à-dire témoignages et révélations,' *Patrologia Orientalis* 8.1 (1912); idem. *De obitu Theodosii*, ed. and trans. E.W. Brooks, *Vitae virorum apud Monophysitas celeberrimorum*, 2 vols. CSCO 6-7, 1.21-27, trans. 2.15-19; Zachariah of Mitylene, *Vita Severi*, ed. and trans. M-A. Kugener, 'Vie de Sévère par Zacharie le Scholastique,' *Patrologia Orientalis* 2.1 (1907).

¹⁸ J.E. Steppa, *John Rufus and the World Vision of anti-Chalcedonian Culture*, (Piscataway, NJ 2002); B. Bitton-Ashkelony and A. Kofsky (eds.), *Christian Gaza in Late Antiquity*, (Leiden 2004); idem. (eds.), *The Monastic School of Gaza*, (Leiden 2006); C. Horn, *Asceticism and Christological Controversy in Fifth-Century Palestine: The Career of Peter the Iberian*, (Oxford 2006).

¹⁹ D. Chitty, *The Desert a City: An Introduction to the Study of Egyptian and Palestinian Monasticism under a Christian Empire*, (London 1966); R. Price and J. Binns, *Cyril of Scythopolis: The Lives of the Monks of Palestine*, (Kalamazoo, MI 1990); J. Binns, *Ascetics and Ambassadors of Christ: The Monasteries of Palestine, 314-641* (Oxford 1994).

Theodore appears to have acted, in part, to frame his work as a challenge to the latter's disciples. In the aggressive promotion of its subject's role in upholding Chalcedon especially, the *Life of Theodosius* placed the Sabaites on the defensive, advancing claims to pre-eminence which Cyril would later be forced to dispute. This point-scoring emerges as part of a wider contest. Similar traces of friction can be detected in the partisan retelling of the region's monastic past provided by Paul of Elusa's *Life of the monk-bishop Theognius*, or the anonymous *Lives of the Desert abbots Chariton and Gerasimus*.²⁰ The specific concerns sustaining the competitive ascetic culture of the mid-sixth century need not unduly detain us here. But the highly-politicised character of these works serves to illustrate a broader point: for writers aiming to celebrate careers predominantly spent in pious seclusion, hagiographers were often strikingly attuned to the changeable religious climate of the world beyond the monastery gates. The keen awareness of outside events which underpinned the legends of Sabas or Theodosius emerges as a hallmark of this literature more generally, the political shrewdness of the Desert *Lives* reflected amid a second flowering of ascetic writing at Gaza, where a new generation of Chalcedonian authors now also emerged, vying for spiritual celebrity.

Where these new Gazan narratives differed from the writings of Cyril, Theodore, et al was in the relatively lacklustre treatment given to examining the reception of the Council and its consequences. Though careful to avoid any suggestion of heterodoxy following the aggressive enforcement of Chalcedon after 518, their authors, having personally played had little part in this 'victory,' largely neglected to dwell upon it. Nevertheless, the burning ambition of these coastal ascetics is clear, plainly betrayed by the anonymous compiler of the corpus of *Questions and Answers* attributed to the famous hermits Barsanuphius and John, whose work delivered an exhaustive avowal of his masters' accomplishments in a collection which blended hagiography with the older tradition of *Apophthegmata*, the accumulated 'sayings' of prominent religious elders. This vast anthology, claiming to preserve the two monks' replies to the religious enquiries of ordinary Christians, was visibly framed, at least in part, as a means by which to advertise the powerful local Monastery of Seridos, where the 'Great Old Men' had formerly resided. Similar aspirations are visible in the writings of another former pupil, Dorotheus, who now ventured to offer updated spiritual guidance to monks of his own.²¹ In later years, hagiography continued to serve as a vital means of expression to monastic communities, as public debate over Chalcedon reignited. The final chapter of this thesis will examine the seventh-century writings of the Palestinian monks embroiled in the dramatic events of the reign of the emperor Heraclius, when holy

²⁰ Theodore of Petra, *Vita Theodosii* ed. H. Usener, *Der Heilige Theodosios: Schriften des Theodoros und Kyrillos*, (Leipzig 1890), pp. 1-101; Paul of Elusa, *Vita Theognii* ed. J. van den Gheyn, 'Acta Sancta Theognii Episcopi Beteliae,' *AB* 10 (1891), 73-118; *Vita Charitonis* ed. G. Garitte, 'La vie premetaphrastique de S. Chariton,' *Bulletin de l'Institut historique belge de Rome* 21 (1940-1941), 1-50; *Vita Gerasimii*, ed. A. Papadopoulos-Kérameus, *Analecta Hierosolymitikes Stachyologias* 4 (1897), 175-84.

²¹ Barsanuphius and John, *Responsiones* ed. F. Neyt and P. Angelis-Noah, *Barsanuphe et Jean de Gaza: Correspondance*, 5 vols. Sources Chrétiennes 426-427, 450-451, 468, (Paris 1997-2002); Dorotheus of Gaza, *Instructiones* ed. L. Regnault and J. de Préville, *Dorothee de Gaza, Oeuvres Spirituelles*, Sources Chrétiennes 92 (Paris 1963); idem. *Vita Dositheii*, ed. Regnault and de Préville, *Dorothee de Gaza*, pp. 146-186.

biographies produced by the likes of John Moschus, Anthony of Choziba, or the anonymous author of the *Acts of Anastasius the Persian* reveal that the particularism of individual monastic orders could still exert a heavy influence in framing the Council's legacy, even among communities traditionally counted as some of its strongest proponents.²²

Scholars have referred to the presence in the so-called 'high' literature of this period of sentiments seemingly critical of a violent 'popular' obsession with Christology. Ascetics, even now, are credited with inciting this phenomenon, the remarks of aristocratic authors such as Procopius, Evagrius, or Socrates Scholasticus, invoked as evidence of the disdain with which an educated elite regarded the bloodthirsty rhetoric employed by holy men in their efforts to ferment disorder among the 'masses.'²³ The analysis above, however, should warn us against taking this snobbery too seriously. The range of motivations that seems to have inspired Palestine's monastic hagiographers suggests a more complex dynamic, even if some of the best-remembered episodes of conflict after 451 concerned the murderous behaviour of individual ascetic agitators and their followers. Recent advances in research must lead us to question how likely it is, in any case, that their actions should ever have met with widespread acclaim, even by the supposedly 'credulous' poor. For obvious reasons, militants on both sides of the doctrinal argument over Chalcedon were liable to cite widespread support among 'the people' for their particular standpoint. But in practice, it seems clear that many were still to be convinced. Work by Sarris, Phil Booth, Anthony Kaldellis, and Matthew Dal Santo has helped to shed light upon the existence of a 'hagiography of religious doubt,' in which Late Antique Christian authors attempted to combat the scepticism which commonly greeted the spiritual claims of holy men and their disciples.²⁴ Details presented in the *Lives* point to a similar diversity of opinion as to the importance of the theological distinctions which separated supporters and opponents of the decisions enacted in 451, prevalent among ascetics and laypeople alike.

To reiterate, this is not to deny in any way that the issues of faith under discussion here were real. The interest of this study is not in attempting to dispute this essential truth of the intra-Christian controversies of the fifth-seventh centuries; rather it seeks to place the Palestinian texts which describe

²² John Moschus, *Leimonarion* (PG 87:3.2852-3112); Anthony of Choziba, *Vita Georgii Chozibitae* ed. C. Houze, 'Sancti Georgii Chozebitae confessoris et monachi vita auctore Antonio eius discipulo,' *AB* 7 (1888), 97-144.; idem, *Miracula* ed. C. Houze, 'Miracula Beatae Virginis Mariae in Choziba eodem Antonio Chozibeta auctore,' *AB* 7 (1888), 360-370; *Acta Anastasii* ed. H. Usener, repr. B. Flusin, *Saint Anastase le Perse et l'histoire de la Palestine au début du VIIe siècle*, 2 vols., (Paris 1992), 1.41-91.

²³ See n. 1 above: Procopius, *De Bellis* 5.3.5-9; M. Gaddis, *There is no Crime for those who have Christ: Religious Violence in the Christian Roman Empire*, (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA 2005), esp. pp. 151-206; T. Gregory, *Vox Populi: Violence and Popular Involvement in the Religious Controversies of the Fifth Century, A.D.*, (Columbus, OH 1979), passim; cf. P. Bell, *Social Conflict*, p. 124.

²⁴ P. Sarris, M. Dal Santo, and P. Booth (eds.), *An Age of Saints? Power, Conflict, and Dissent in Early Medieval Christianity*, (Leiden 2011); M. Dal Santo, *Debating the Saints' Cult in the Age of Gregory the Great*, (Oxford 2012); A. Kaldellis, 'The Hagiography of Doubt and Scepticism' in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Byzantine Hagiography*, 2.453-477. For similar projects elsewhere in the ancient or medieval world, see: J. Arnold, *Belief and Unbelief in Medieval Europe*, (London 2005); T. Whitmarsh, *Battling the Gods: Atheism in the Ancient World*, (London 2015).

them within a fuller and firmer historical context. Nevertheless, it seems necessary to disavow the view which sees these conflicts as the product of a distinctive Late Antique *mentalité* given to speculation over the minutiae of doctrine for its own sake, an argument once traditionally tied to the negative appraisal of the ‘Byzantine’ psyche. No-one, of course, could accuse more recent attempts to promote an almost exclusively faith-based reading of seeking to propagate the latter. If anything, what emerges most strongly from these appeals is the desire to enable our sources to speak for themselves, free from modern prejudice. Even when couched in these terms, however, the idea that debate over Chalcedon’s theology was somehow conducted in isolation from the temporal concerns so clearly at play during the convocation of the Council itself seems implausible. In danger, simply, of misrepresenting events by another means, it is also at odds with a growing body of analysis to appear in the last decade, recognising similar outbreaks of unrest as products of their environment.

These were among the recent findings of Adam Schor’s ground-breaking work on the formation of the Antiochene ‘School,’ supported by the conclusions of Leslie Brubaker and John Haldon’s monumental survey of Byzantine Iconoclasm, and of Lesley Dossey’s reimagining of the Donatist controversy sparked in fourth-century North Africa.²⁵ They find an echo, in a Palestinian context, in Booth’s authoritative new overview of the careers of the seventh-century monks and staunch Chalcedonians, Moschus, Sophronius, and Maximus Confessor.²⁶ Through careful investigation, these and other treatments have sought to examine the processes which linked the evolution of these disputes to the broader contemporary landscape in which they occurred. No one feature of this landscape emerges to offer greater scope for this investigation in our period than the momentous development of Christian institutions as a focus of social and economic life.

In aiming to cast a similar, critical eye over the one-hundred-and-eighty-five years of public discourse separating the initial dissemination of Chalcedon’s rulings from the Arab conquest of Jerusalem in 636, the meteoric growth of Palestine’s Church Economy appears as a critical line of enquiry. Yet to pursue it requires us to look beyond the partial image of its rise recorded in our texts. Where possible, the balance of evidence compels us to supplement our author’s accounts following a method now commonplace elsewhere in the field, through an appeal to the archaeologically-based study of material culture. Few have embraced the material ‘turn’ in early medieval history more readily than students of Late Antiquity. Its proponents have acted to reveal a vast hinterland of contemporary life which our authors, through convention or disinterest, were often disinclined to discuss. Analysis by Chris Wickham, Bryan Ward-Perkins, Mark Whittow, Michael McCormick, Sarris, Jairus Banaji, Peregrine

²⁵ L. Brubaker and J. Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era, c. 680-850: A History*, (Cambridge 2011); A. Schor, *Theodoret’s People: Social Networks and Religious Conflict in late Roman Syria*, (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA 2011); L. Dossey, *Peasant and Empire in Christian North Africa*, (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA 2010).

²⁶ P. Booth, *Crisis of Empire: Doctrine and Dissent at the End of Late Antiquity*, (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA 2014).

Horden and Nicholas Purcell, to name but a few, has challenged the revisionist position current since Brown that the defining innovations of this period were mainly cultural.²⁷ Armed with an ever-growing corpus of evidence attesting, both to the scale and effect of the economic changes endured by Eastern Roman society, much of this work sets out to revisit an age-old concern: is the story of the world bequeathed by Constantine better-presented as one of ‘transformation’ or decline?²⁸ Whichever response to this question we prefer, the consequences of the accompanying shift in scholarly emphasis it has acted to foster are profound. The application of its findings to the treatment of the Church, however, and by extension, the clerical and monastic communities which governed its resources, still lags distantly behind.

This thesis does not pretend to offer a systematic solution to this problem. Nor perhaps should we aspire to find one. In practice, the preferred means by which to reconcile the different sources of knowledge available for Christian institutions of this period will vary from case to case, depending on the scope and quality of what they have left behind. In a broader sense, whilst it is hoped that Palestine’s experience might allow us to make some general observations as to how the physical imprint of the Late Antique Church can bring to life the social and economic commentary contained in its literature, the situation in the ‘Holy Land’ was clearly, in some respects, unique. We would not expect to find a similar pattern of relations replicated everywhere. In what follows, material evidence will serve, at points, to provide a frame of reference for our texts’ remarks; it will not be presented as somehow superior. Certainly, at no stage in this undertaking will our enquiry be guided by an assumption that the socio-economic ‘base’ of society at the time of the controversy over Chalcedon should be viewed as dictating its cultural and religious ‘superstructure.’ There is a vital distinction to be drawn between an analysis examining the interplay of the spiritual and non-spiritual in shaping these events, and one espousing a reductive form of economic determinism.

Fear of being seen to have fallen foul of this divide may partly explain the relative slowness with which scholars have come to consider these issues in greater depth. Clearly, such reticence is not for lack of information. In Palestine, the detailed investigation of ‘Byzantine’-era remains has a veritable history all of its own, dating to the initial development of archaeology as a modern academic discipline. Scholarly interest in this area owes its origin to a series of major topographical surveys conducted by the European powers in the second half of the nineteenth century.²⁹ Major expeditions by Swiss, French,

²⁷ C. Wickham, *Framing the Early Middle Ages: Europe and the Mediterranean, 400-800* (Oxford 2005); B. Ward-Perkins, *The Fall of Rome and the End of Civilisation* (Oxford 2006); J. Banaji, *Agrarian Change in Late Antiquity*, (Oxford 2001); P. Sarris, *Economy and Society in the Age of Justinian*, (Cambridge 2006) M. Decker, *Tilling the Hateful Earth: Agricultural Production and Exchange in the Late Antique East*, (Oxford 2009).

²⁸ Ward-Perkins, *Fall of Rome*, pp. vs. Now see: M. Decker, *The Byzantine Dark Ages*, (London 2016), esp. pp. 43-80. cf. J. Haldon, *The Empire That Would Not Die: The Paradox of Eastern Roman Survival, 640-740*, (Cambridge, MA 2016), pp. 3-10.

²⁹ T. Tobler, *Topographie von Jerusalem und seinem Umgebungen*, vol. 2 (Berlin 1854); M.V. Guérin, *Description géographique, historique et archéologique de la Palestine: III: Judée*, (Paris 1869); *I: Samaria* (Paris 1874).

and German orientalists were followed, in the 1870s, by the compilation of a comprehensive British gazetteer, *The Survey of Western Palestine*, published under the auspices of the Palestine Exploration Fund a decade later.³⁰ Of this report's two authors, one was famously a young Lord Kitchener, then a lieutenant in the British Army seconded for the duration of the project. These early forays provided the foundation for a steady stream of publications beginning during the period of the British Mandate, the pioneering work of Chitty and Michael Avi-Yonah serving to inspire an extraordinary wealth of research by Israeli archaeologists since the 1940s.

In the last decades, several attempts have been made to definitively catalogue these findings, even if the astonishing rate at which new sites are unearthed means that all are incomplete.³¹ Religious structures comprise the vast majority of these survivals by virtue of the quality of their construction, with other inventories focusing solely on ecclesiastical remains, most notably Asher Ovadiah's *Corpus of Israel-Palestine's 'Byzantine' churches and monasteries*.³² Given the romanticism which typically accompanied early Western scholarly encounters with the 'Near East,' it is not perhaps surprising that particular attention has been paid from an early stage to narrowing this project even further, inspiring similar landmark works exclusively dedicated to cataloguing the region's monasteries and hermitages. Once commonly perceived as exotic vestiges of a forgotten Christian past, no part of the 'Byzantine' archaeological record, in fact, has been subject to greater scrutiny. First attempted by Siméon Vailhé in the 1890s, the task of systematically itemising Roman Palestine's monastic ruins, again, has been pursued with renewed momentum following a spate of excavations primarily conducted in the Judean Desert by Yizhar Hirschfeld and Joseph Patrich, Leah Di Segni, Virgilio Corbo, Yoram Tsafrir, Yitzhak Magen, and others.³³ With each new piece of the puzzle completed as a result of these enquiries, further details emerge to support the image of a flourishing Church economy borne out by our sources, its footprint penetrating every corner of Roman Palestine's three provinces.

³⁰ C.R. Conder and H.H. Kitchener, *The Survey of Western Palestine*, vol. 2: *Samaria* (London 1882); III: *Judea* (London 1883).

³¹ C. Dauphin, *La Palestine byzantine: peuplements et populations*, 3 vols. (Oxford 1998); Y. Tsafrir, L. Di Segni, and J. Green, *Tabula imperii romani: Iudaea-Palaestina, Eretz-Israel in the Hellenistic, Roman and Byzantine Periods*, (Jerusalem 1994).

³² A. Ovadiah, *Corpus of Byzantine Churches in the Holy Land*, (Bonn 1970); A. Ovadiah and C. de Silva, 'Supplementum to the Corpus of Byzantine Churches in the Holy Land,' *Levant* 13 (1981), re-released 1984. See also: A.M. Madden, *Corpus of Byzantine Mosaic Pavements in Israel and the Palestinian Territories*, *Colloquia Antiqua* 13, (Leuven 2014). Noteworthy recent discoveries include a large monastery excavated at Hura in the Negev in April 2014 and an impressive church complex unearthed at Moshav Aluma in January 2015.

³³ S. Vailhé, 'Répertoire alphabétique des monastères de Palestine,' *ROC* 4 (1899), pp. 512-42; K. Marti, 'Die alten Lauren und Klöster in der Wüste Juda,' *ZDPV* 3 (1880) Tafel 1; Y. Hirschfeld, *The Judean Desert Monasteries in the Byzantine Period*, (New Haven, CT and London 1992); idem. 'List of the Byzantine Monasteries in the Judean Desert,' in *Christian Archaeology in the Holy Land, New Discoveries: Essays in Honour of Virgilio C. Corbo*, (eds.) G.C. Bottini, L. Di Segni, and E. Alliata, Franciscan Printing Press, Studium Biblicum Franciscanum (Jerusalem 1990), 1-90; J. Patrich, *Sabas – Leader of Palestinian Monasticism*, (Washington D.C. 1995).

Already, in 1981, the second edition of Oviadiah's *Corpus* had counted over three-hundred-and-sixty Christian institutions among its entries. A decade later Hirschfeld showed that, by the mid-sixth century, dozens of monasteries were operating in the Desert and its environs alone.³⁴ Wherever we look, we find a landscape littered with the remnants of this once-thriving world: whether in cities, where as studies by Haim Goldfus and Di Segni in Jerusalem, or by Gideon Foerster and Tsafrir in Scythopolis, have shown, churches and monasteries crowded the urban skyline; or in other tracts of wilderness and stretches of countryside.³⁵ From the Golan to the Sinai, the same picture of ubiquitous ecclesiastical and monastic development can be traced, as that seen in the agricultural heartlands of Samaria and the Galilee.³⁶ Even in the Negev Desert, situated at the furthest, arid extremity of empire, work by Pau Figueras has uncovered the tangible legacy of an impressive ascetic culture by surveying far-flung sites at Kibbutz Magen, Horvat So'a, Tel 'Ira, and Tel Masos.³⁷ One area to have proved largely immune to this analysis to date, of course, is Gaza, where present-day political instability continues to stymie the progress of research. Even here, however, there are early signs of the vibrancy already evident elsewhere. Working from the unpublished reports of Palestinian archaeologists active in the territory, and from earlier surveys carried out prior to the war of 1948, Hirschfeld identified fifteen probable monastic sites within the territory of Byzantine Gaza, radiating out in a broad circle from the coastal plain to the Negev fringe.³⁸ The resources required to achieve this dramatic refashioning of the built environment were immense, their management weighing heavily on the minds of the clerical and monastic communities it created.

The pages below will take a broadly chronological approach in examining potential connections between the material repercussions of this process and contemporary controversy over Chalcedon. The first chapter will explore this question in the context of the initial reception of the Council in Palestine,

³⁴ Hirschfeld, 'List of Monasteries,' passim.

³⁵ H. Goldfus, 'Urban Monasticism and Monasteries of Early Byzantine Palestine,' *ARAM* 15 (2003), 71-79; See also: Y. Tsafrir und G. Foerster. 'Urbanism at Scythopolis Bet Shean in the Fourth to Seventh Centuries,' *DOP* 51 (1997), 85-146; L. Di Segni, 'Monasteries in the Jerusalem Area in Light of the Literary Sources', in D. Amit, G.D. Stiebel and O. Peleg-Barkat (eds), *New Studies in the Archaeology of Jerusalem and its Region. Collected Papers*, (Ramat Gan 2009), 10-14.

³⁶ See for instance: M. Aviam and J. Ashkenazi, 'Rural Economy and Religious Interdependency in Late Antique Palestine,' *Vigiliae Christianae* 71 (2017), 117-133; I. Taxel, 'Rural Monasticism at the Foothills of Southern Samaria and Judaea in the Byzantine Period: Asceticism, Agriculture and Pilgrimage,' *Bulletin of the Anglo-Israel Archaeological Society* 26 (2008), pp. 57-73; Y. Hirschfeld, 'Deir Qal'a and the monasteries of western Samaria,' in J.H. Humphrey (ed.), *The Roman and Byzantine Near East*, vol. 3, *Journal of Roman Archaeology Supplementary Series* 49, (Portsmouth RI, 2002), 155-189; V. Tzaferis, 'The Early Christian Monastery at Kursi,' in Tsafrir (ed.), *Ancient Churches Revealed*, 77-79; idem. *The Excavations of Kursi-Gergesa*, 'Atiqot (English series) 16, (Jerusalem 1984).

³⁷ P. Figueras, 'Monks and Monasteries in the Negev Desert,' *LA* 45 (1995), 399-448; V. Tzaferis, 'An Early Christian Church Complex at Magen,' *BASOR* 258 (1985).

³⁸ Y. Hirschfeld, 'The Monasteries of Gaza: An Archaeological Review,' in *Christian Gaza in Late Antiquity*, 61-88; R. Gophna and N. Feig, 'A Byzantine Monastery at Kh. Jemameh,' *Atiqot* 22 (1993), 97-108. Hirschfeld did not believe it possible to identify the Late Antique Monastery of Hilarion, though an article has since appeared claiming to have done so: R. Elter and A. Hassoune, 'Le monastère de saint Hilarion à Umm el-Amr,' *Comptes-rendus des séances de l'Académie des inscriptions et belles-lettres* 148 (2004), 359-382.

when early resistance to its rulings resulted in the violent overthrow of the region's bishops. In the second, discussion moves to the complex religious politics of the decades that followed, whose outcome was to firmly establish the See of Jerusalem and its supporters as the fulcrum of 'Chalcedonian' Christianity in the Levant. The third chapter relates this development to a momentous shift in the way that local churches and monasteries were funded, whilst the fourth considers the circumstances which led the broad coalition of interests it assembled to subsequently splinter in dramatic fashion during the reign of the emperor Justinian, a period in which efforts to refine an official, state-sanctioned image of orthodoxy continued apace, encouraged by the court and its officials. In the fifth and final chapter, as already revealed, our study concludes by charting the diverse impact of the Church economy in moulding Palestinian views towards the controversy in the early-seventh century, a time in which the Holy Land's survival as part of the imperial *oikumene* was itself increasingly uncertain. In taking this expansive view of the material history of local, Late Antique debate on Chalcedon, the benefit is twofold: it enables us to treat the subject systematically, whilst providing an opportunity to chart in detail how matters developed over time.

Finally, some notes on terminology: Throughout this thesis, references to the 'Church economy' will be taken to refer to the material processes described above. This is as distinct from religious 'economy' (*oikonomia*) in the theological sense, the support for 'accommodation' of a range of doctrinal beliefs in the interest of ecclesiastical unity which, where discussed, will be clearly denoted.

Secondly, references to *Palestine* should be taken as a shorthand for the combined Roman administrative and ecclesiastical provinces of Palaestina Prima, Palaestina Secunda, and Palaestina Tertia, synonymous with the geographical area that became subject to the episcopal jurisdiction of the See of Jerusalem as a result of Chalcedon's reforms. This area does not include the neighbouring province of Arabia (Provincia Arabia) whose Church, though hardly impervious to events in Palestine, was subject to the authority of the bishops of Antioch.

Finally, in the chapters that follow, the principle term used to describe those who opposed the Council of 451 will be 'anti-Chalcedonian.' Following Horn, I regard this label as preferable to the theologically-charged descriptors, 'monophysite,' or less-polemically, 'miaphysite,' commonly employed by scholars to describe Chalcedon's detractors.³⁹ Readers may note that this position is at odds with Volker Menze's recent rejection of this term, which he regards as seeming to imply that the autonomous Syrian and Coptic churches, as they later developed, defined themselves in terms of opposition the Council itself, rather than its Christology.⁴⁰ His alternative nomenclature is 'non-Chalcedonian.' I regard this prohibition as unnecessary but also, in a sense, misleading. As the pages below will show, in Palestine 'the Synod' became a subject of invective in its own right, imbued with a significance that was often

³⁹ C. Horn, *Asceticism and Christological Controversy*, p. 8. Cf. D. Winkler, 'Miaphysitism: A new Term for Use in the History of Dogma and in Ecumenical Theology,' *The Harp* 10 (1997), 33-40.

⁴⁰ V. Menze, *Justinian and the Making of the Syrian Orthodox Church*, (Oxford 2008), p. 2ff.

more than strictly theological. Though the schismatic Egyptian Church hierarchy eventually came to accept the validity of Chalcedon's disciplinary rulings in the mid-sixth century, many of their predecessors clearly regarded the Council as anathema *in toto*. 'Non-Chalcedonian,' in this scenario, might more properly describe the position of the Church of the East, whose leadership did not participate in the debates of 451 itself at all.

CHAPTER 1

REAPPRAISING THE REBELLION AGAINST JUVENAL OF JERUSALEM ARISTOCRATIC PATRONAGE AND ‘ANTI-CHALCEDONIAN’ VIOLENCE, 451-453 CE

In 451, Chalcedon’s immediate effect in Palestine was to provoke a widespread rebellion against civil and ecclesiastical authority. For roughly twenty months, opponents of the Council defied both their bishop and the Roman state by occupying Jerusalem and establishing their own episcopate. As at Alexandria, where the deposition of the bishop Dioscorus had met with violent opposition, this Palestinian rebellion was apparently instigated by monks. Its primary target, however, was Juvenal, the bishop of Jerusalem, who had returned to his See as a supporter of the Council. Late Antique writers and modern historians agree that the local monastic party’s grievance with Juvenal was religious. Their rebellion has been consistently explained as the reaction of a band of ‘miaphysite’ extremists, outraged not only by the compromise outlined in Chalcedon’s Definition of Faith, but by their bishop’s unexpected betrayal of their Christological stance.⁴¹ This chapter will argue for an alternative explanation. It will suggest that the violence of 451-453 was motivated less by Christological allegiance, and far more by the threat which Chalcedon represented to a Church economy built on traditions of aristocratic religious patronage, than has generally been thought. It will seek to challenge the emphasis on ‘anti-Chalcedonianism’ itself as the crux of the conflict which erupted in Palestine and promote a different picture: one in which the personalities of Juvenal and his main local rival for religious authority, the empress Eudocia, are central.

I. Eudocia and Religious Power in Christian Palestine before Chalcedon

In seeking to understand the events of 451-453, it is necessary to trace a brief outline of the religious landscape of Christian Palestine in the preceding period. At the beginning of the fifth century, Palestine’s three provinces each had a metropolitan bishop residing in their territorial capital, organised according to Canons 4, 5, and 7 of the Council of Nicaea. The Church in Palaestina Prima, in which

⁴¹ For example: E. Honigmann, ‘Juvenal of Jerusalem,’ *DOP* 51 (1950), 247-262; Frend, *Rise of the Monophysite Movement*, pp. 89-92, 142, 149-152; P.T.R. Gray, *The Defence of Chalcedon in the East (451-553)*, (Leiden 1979), pp. 17-19; L. Perrone, *La Chiesa di Palestina e le Controversie Cristologiche, dal concilio di Efeso (431) al secondo concilio di Costantinopoli (553)*, *Testi e ricerche di Scienze religiose*, (Brescia 1980), pp. 89-103, esp. 97; A. Grillmeier, *Christ in the Christian Tradition*, 2.1, *From The Council of Chalcedon (451) to Gregory the Great (590-604)*, trans. P. Allen and J. Cawte, (London 1987), 98-105; Idem. with T. Hainthaler (eds.), *Christ in the Christian Tradition*, 2.3, *The Churches of Jerusalem and Antioch from 451-600*, (Oxford 2013), 5-166. J. Meyendorff, *Imperial Unity and Christian Division: The Church 450-680 A.D.*, (Crestwood, NY 1989), pp. 188-192; R. Price, Introduction, in *Acts of Chalcedon*, 1.51-53; Cf. F. Winkelmann, ‘Konzeptionen des Verhältnisses von Kirche und Staat im frühen Byzanz, Untersucht am Beispiel der Apostasia Palästinas (452-453),’ in V. Vavřínek (ed.), *From Late Antiquity to Early Byzantium*, (Prague 1985), 73-87.

Jerusalem was located, was led by a metropolitan at Caesarea Maritima, whilst the whole region, as part of the diocese of Oriens, fell under the primacy of the bishop of Antioch. On his election in ca. 422, Juvenal was a subordinate bishop in an ecclesiastical structure headed by the traditional centres of Roman civil government.⁴² Whilst Jerusalem could occasionally claim a special religious status within the wider Church, its efforts had yet to receive any formal recognition.⁴³ The first tentative attempts to give Jerusalem a jurisdiction of its own did not surface until 431, when Juvenal allied himself with Cyril of Alexandria in an attempt to undermine Antioch at the first Council of Ephesus.⁴⁴ Its position was only finally secured much later at Chalcedon.

In the same period up to 451, Palestine's monasteries received an influx of aristocratic and imperial patronage. Already a vibrant movement with an international character, local ascetic culture was now increasingly dominated by new communities founded by members of the Roman elite.⁴⁵ Aristocratic support for the Church in Palestine was commonly expressed in the early fifth century by the endowment of churches and monasteries. Communities like that established by Paula for Jerome at Bethlehem, by Poemenia and Rufinus, or by Melania the Elder on the Mount of Olives, inspired a number of similar institutions which appeared around Jerusalem in this period.⁴⁶ Cyril of Scythopolis records the appointment of priests to head churches and monasteries in the city which, like the contemporaneous *tituli* churches of Rome, were essentially in the gift of their patrons.⁴⁷ One such patron was Hikelia, a Roman governor's wife and deaconess, who commissioned the Kathisma church and monastery on the road leading from Jerusalem to Bethlehem.⁴⁸ Another was Bassa, proprietor of a women's monastery in the city and the shrine of St. Menas.⁴⁹ Her importance in the area is attested by a personal letter written to her by the empress Pulcheria in 453 asking that she use her influence to ensure monastic acceptance of Chalcedon.⁵⁰

⁴² Honigmann, 'Juvenal,' 209-210.

⁴³ *Ibid.* pp. 212-217; Meyendorff, *Imperial Unity*, pp. 54-57.

⁴⁴ ACO 1.1.3.18.30-19.1.

⁴⁵ As seen in the character of its leaders: For example, Euthymius and, later, Sabas (both originally from Asia Minor), Peter the Iberian, Jerome, Melania and Pinianus, and Isaiah of Scetis in Gaza (Egypt). Cyril of Scythopolis records only one of Euthymius' early followers as a native of Palestine.

⁴⁶ See: K.M. Klein, 'Do thy Good Pleasure unto Zion: The Patronage of Aelia Eudokia in Jerusalem,' in L. Theis, M. Mullett, and M. Grünbart (eds.), *Female Founders in Byzantium and Beyond*, *Wiener Jahrbuch für Kunstgeschichte*, 60/61 (2011/2012), 85-95, 92-94; H. Goldfus, 'Urban Monasticism and Monasteries of Early Byzantine Palestine,' *ARAM* 15 (2003), 71-79; L. Di Segni, 'Monasteries in the Jerusalem Area,' 10-14; R. Wilken, *The Land Called Holy: Palestine in Christian History and Thought*, (New Haven, CT 1992), pp. 152-153.

⁴⁷ *V. Euth.* 30, 35 (ed. Schwartz, pp. 49, 54); Brown, *Through the Eye of a Needle*, pp. 245-248.

⁴⁸ Theodore of Petra, *Vita Theodosii* (ed. Usener, pp. 13-14); Cyril of Scythopolis, *Vita Theodosii* (ed. Schwartz, p. 236)

⁴⁹ *V. Euth.* 30 (ed. Schwartz, p. 49); The remains of Bassa's monastery are believed to have been preserved within the Cathedral of St. James in Jerusalem's Armenian Quarter. See: W. Amerling, H. Cotton, L. di Segni, et al (eds.), *Corpus Inscriptionum Iudaeae/Palestinae*, vols. (Berlin 2012), 2.1.800.

⁵⁰ ACO 2.1.3.494-495. Di Segni suggests that Bassa may have been the wife of Flavius Caecina Basilius, Praetorian Prefect of the East: *PLRE* II, 216, 'Basilius 11.'

More powerful still than Bassa was Melania the Younger, a Roman aristocrat who had fled with her husband Pinianus to Palestine in the aftermath of the Visigothic sack of Rome in 410. Melania and Pinianus were members of a senatorial elite whose wealth must have exceeded that of any competing local patron. In an ‘age of gold’ eloquently described by Peter Brown, their appearance in Jerusalem brought with it a vast new source of income for religious enterprises.⁵¹ Melania’s *Life*, written by her acolyte Gerontius in the 450s, offers extraordinarily precise figures for the largesse distributed through the sale of her property in the West.⁵² These figures cannot, of course, be taken at face value. But there is little reason to suspect that Gerontius exaggerated the scale of her contribution. Melania’s role as a major monastic patron is not in doubt. Her arrival firmly established the Mount of Olives monasteries founded by her grandmother as the focus of an aristocratic ascetic culture, notable for its links to the ecclesiastical and imperial establishment.⁵³

These links were already firmly in place when the empress Eudocia first came to Palestine in 438. She had already encountered Melania in Constantinople at the wedding of Valentinian III and Licinia Eudoxia, when Melania had assisted her uncle Volusianus in his role as emissary of the Western Roman court.⁵⁴ Her personal acquaintance with Peter the Iberian who, as a Georgian prince, had been a hostage at the imperial palace, is well-attested in his *Life* by John Rufus. Rufus’ anti-Chalcedonian hagiography would later protest that Peter sought to avoid meeting Eudocia during their time together in Palestine.⁵⁵ But in this claim he surely protests too much. Writing in the 490s, when positions over Chalcedon were far more firmly entrenched than they ever could have been in 451, Rufus was hoping to disassociate his hero from a figure who had embraced the Council in her final years. Peter, who fell very firmly on Eudocia’s side in the subsequent battle with Juvenal, had surely become part of her circle.⁵⁶

Eudocia came to Palestine twice. Her initial, briefer stay in the region was followed by a permanent residence from 441 or 442. It is difficult to exaggerate her importance as a local religious figurehead in the period which followed. Despite her estrangement from Theodosius II, and a possible feud between Eudocia and the emperor’s sister Pulcheria, she was plainly allowed to retain her fortune and personal retinue. Establishing herself at Bethlehem, Eudocia was the focus of what was effectively an imperial court in miniature, surrounded by an array of officials, clerics, and clients.⁵⁷ This can surely only have had the effect of eclipsing every other religious authority in the region. Eudocia, as the scale of her

⁵¹ Brown, *Through the Eye*, pp. 294-300.

⁵² *V. Mel.* gr. 12, 15, 22, 35, 38 (ed. Gorce, pp. 148-152, 156-158, 172-174, 192-194, 198).

⁵³ *V. Pet.* 42-46 (ed. Raabe pp. 30-42).

⁵⁴ *V. Mel.* gr. 56 (ed. Gorce p. 238); Holum, *Theodosian Empresses*, 182-184.

⁵⁵ *V. Pet.* 71 (ed. Raabe, pp. 48-49).

⁵⁶ C. Horn, ‘Empress Eudocia and the Monk Peter the Iberian: Patronage, Pilgrimage, and the Love of a Foster-Mother in Fifth-Century Palestine,’ *BF* 28 (2004), 197-213.

⁵⁷ *V. Pet.* 131, 166, (ed. Raabe, pp. 96-97, 122-124) on Eudocia’s household, 122-123 (Phenix and Horn, pp. 178-182) for the Tribune Elias, a servant of the empress, who sheltered Peter the Iberian in his final years); *Plerophoriae* 20 (ed. Nau, pp. 39-43); *V. Euth.* 30, 35 (ed. Schwartz, pp. 47-49, 53-54); Chitty, *The Desert a City*, pp. 82-100; E.D. Hunt, *Holy Land Pilgrimage in the Later Roman Empire, AD 312-460*, (Oxford 1984), pp. 218-248.

largesse would show, could draw upon resources which very few non-imperial patrons could have rivalled. Her career as both a religious and a secular patron in Palestine is widely attested. Her extravagant donations to churches and monasteries were clearly remarkable, a point that was later conceded even by her religious critics.⁵⁸ Cyril of Scythopolis, who presented a somewhat unflattering view of Eudocia in his work of the 550s, nevertheless included a description of church-building activities so widespread that the empress struggled to complete all the projects before her death in 460.⁵⁹ Her religious foundations included the landmark Church of St. Stephen overlooking Jerusalem, a large hostel in the city and hospice dedicated to St. George, and a church of St. Peter, built near the monastery of Euthymius at Khan al-Ahmar.⁶⁰ Such was the scale of the empress' building campaign that John Binns has suggested that she intended her new Jerusalem 'to rival Constantinople in the grandeur of its monuments.'⁶¹ Konstantin Klein has argued that Eudocia's aim in augmenting the city's established corpus of religious sites was to secure her reputation as a 'Christian empress,' in spite of her isolation from the imperial court.⁶²

Outside the Church, Eudocia has been credited as a major cultural patron, cultivating an artistic circle at her palace in Bethlehem.⁶³ Whilst this image may rely somewhat upon the romantic tradition of depicting the empress as a passionate Athenian Hellenist, drawing on accounts such as that of John Malalas, members of the imperial family would normally be expected to patronise the arts as an expression of civic euergetism.⁶⁴ Her attempts at writing Christian Homeric verse, though they have failed to impress present-day classicists, surely at least demonstrate personal enthusiasm for traditional literature.⁶⁵ Significantly, she is also claimed to have rebuilt the walls of Jerusalem.⁶⁶ These last symbols

⁵⁸ Socrates, *Historia Ecclesiastica* 7.47 (ed. Hansen, p. 394); Evagrius, *Historia Ecclesiastica* 1.21 (ed. Bidez and Parmentier p. 29); *Plerophoriae* 11 (ed. Nau, p. 27); J. Binns, *Ascetics and Ambassadors of Christ: The Monasteries of Palestine 314-631*, (Oxford 1994), p. 86.

⁵⁹ *V. Euth.* 35 (ed. Schwartz p. 54). The Byzantine church historian Nicephorus Callistus would even later claim to able to put a figure on the cost of this generosity: an extraordinary 20,480 lbs. of gold: Nicephorus Callistus, *Historia Ecclesiastica* 14.50 (PG 146.124D).

⁶⁰ Cyril of Scythopolis, *Vita Johannes Hesychastes* 4 (ed. Schwartz p. 204); Y. Hirschfeld, 'A Church and Reservoir built by Empress Eudocia,' *LA* 40 (1990), 339-371.

⁶¹ Binns, *Ascetics and Ambassadors of Christ*, p. 88.

⁶² K.M. Klein, 'The Politics of Holy Space: Jerusalem in the Theodosian Era (379-457 CE),' in J. Weiss and S. Salih (eds.), *Locating the Middle Ages: The Spaces and Places of Medieval Culture*, Kings College London *Medieval Studies* 22, (London 2012), 95-107.

⁶³ K. Holum, *Theodosian Empresses*, pp. 219-221; *PLRE* 2.812, 'Orion 1'; J. Green and Y. Tsafirir, 'Greek Inscriptions from Hammat Gader: A Poem by the Empress Eudocia and Two Building Inscriptions,' *Israel Exploration Journal* 32 (1982), 77-96.

⁶⁴ For example, see: John Malalas, *Chronicle* 14.4 (ed. Thurn, pp. 273-274); Evagrius, *HE* 1.20 (ed. Bidez and Parmentier, pp. 28-29); or more broadly the romantic story her Athenian pagan upbringing and marriage to Theodosius.

⁶⁵ Alan Cameron, 'The empress and the poet: paganism and politics at the court of Theodosius II,' *Yale Classical Studies* 27 (1982), 217-289.

⁶⁶ John Malalas, *Chron.* 14.8 (ed. Thurn, pp. 277-278); Evagrius, *HE* 1.22 (ed. Bidez and Parmentier, pp. 32-33); Klein, 'Do thy good pleasure unto Zion,' 90.

of Eudocia's power in Palestine would come to assume great importance during her later conflict with Juvenal.

In this picture of the religious landscape of Palestine, and indeed Jerusalem, given by the Late Antique authors for the period before 451, Juvenal is often difficult to place. By the time of Chalcedon he was already a remarkably long-serving bishop, but his power over local affairs would seem to have been thoroughly displaced by Eudocia. Claudia Rapp has presented a compelling view of the means by which aristocratic patrons with sufficient financial means could essentially fulfil the roles expected of Late Antique bishops and acquire a similar status.⁶⁷ One particular episode might appear to confirm that Juvenal came to see much of his role usurped by Eudocia.

In May 438, John Rufus recorded that Cyril of Alexandria came to Jerusalem at Eudocia's request to consecrate the relics of St. Stephen in a new church financed by the empress. Whilst there, Rufus added that Cyril presided over a further ceremony for the consecration of relics of Persian martyrs and the Forty Martyrs of Sebasteia at Melania's nearby Mount of Olives monastery.⁶⁸ Gerontius, however, described a different ceremony, in which Stephen's relics were placed in a shrine built by Melania. Importantly, he also failed to mention Cyril. Elsewhere, Cyril of Scythopolis stated that Eudocia's church of St. Stephen was not completed until 460, and it is recorded that the empress returned to Constantinople with further relics of the Protomartyr, which Pulcheria deposited in a church in the capital dedicated to St. Lawrence.⁶⁹

In an article examining these conflicting accounts, Elizabeth Clark has suggested that Eudocia and Melania were engaged in a 'polite' competition for control of the relics of Stephen.⁷⁰ Whilst concluding that the outcome of this contest is unknown, Clark revealed clearly the vigorous claim of ownership over the relics expounded by the empress and her supporters. That Eudocia already sought to control the cult of Stephen on her initial visit to Palestine is surely evidence of a broader claim to local religious authority. Konstantin Klein has argued that she sought nothing less than to alter the 'sacred topography' of Jerusalem by introducing the practice of venerating saints' remains, which had previously been uncommon there.⁷¹ Most remarkable of all, however, is the effective exclusion of Juvenal from the discussion of the relics following the empress' arrival. Whoever eventually deposited Stephen's relics, the ceremony would clearly have been an auspicious event in the life of the local Church. Stephen was also a uniquely Jerusalemite saint, whose cult must surely have been of great interest to Juvenal.

⁶⁷ C. Rapp, *Holy Bishops in Late Antiquity: The Nature of Christian Leadership in an Age of Transition*, (Berkeley, CA 2005), pp. 215-226.

⁶⁸ *V. Pet.* 49-50 (ed. Raabe, pp. 32-34); *V. Mel.* gr. 58-59 (ed. Gorce, pp. 240-246) describes the same events but does not mention Cyril.

⁶⁹ Marcellinus Comes, *Chron.* 439 (ed. Mommsen, p. 17); Theophanes, *Chron.* AM 5945 (452/453). (ed. de Boor, p. 106).

⁷⁰ E.A. Clark, 'Claims on the Bones of Saint Stephen: The Partisans of Melania and Eudocia,' *CH* 51 (1982), 141-156.

⁷¹ Klein, 'Do thy good pleasure unto Zion,' 92-95.

However, whilst he was presumably present, it is Eudocia and Melania who dominated the scene as representatives of the local Church and monasteries. If Rufus is correct and Cyril had in fact come to Jerusalem for the ceremony, it was not to see Juvenal, but at Eudocia's invitation, to consecrate Eudocia's new church.

It would be wrong to dismiss Rufus and Gerontius' omission of Juvenal simply on the basis of their later opposition to him after Chalcedon.⁷² It is very likely that the *Life of Melania* deliberately treated him with silence, since he is never referred to by name in the work.⁷³ This is not the case, however, in Rufus' *Life of Peter the Iberian*, where Juvenal is regularly mentioned. The very idea that Gerontius could have plausibly excluded the bishop from the ceremonies suggests that he had not played a major role in them. It is additionally unclear that the remainder of the *Life of Melania* pursues the same agenda. Gerontius later depicts a scene where 'the bishop' is summoned to Melania's deathbed, and where she asks him to remain with her until the end.⁷⁴ Given the author's aversion to Juvenal it is odd that, if this was another bishop, the *Life* does not explicitly say so. There would surely be far greater reason to remove this potentially compromising episode from the *Life*, than there would be to alter the depiction of events a year before. An agenda to dismiss Juvenal's claims, which may well be prevalent throughout much of the *Life of Melania*, is not obviously present in its account of the ceremony. Rufus and Gerontius therefore probably give an accurate picture of the balance of religious authority in Jerusalem prior to Chalcedon. The few passing references to Juvenal's activities during this period in the much later, but sympathetic, work of Cyril of Scythopolis similarly seem to place him on the periphery of local events. This impression is all the more striking, given the detailed account of Eudocia's career in the same portion of Cyril's *Life of Euthymius*.⁷⁵

Seemingly unable to dominate affairs in his own see, Juvenal is much more clearly visible in his attempts to raise the prestige of his office abroad. His campaign to gain administrative power for Jerusalem over the three provinces of Palestine is well-attested in the surviving record of events at the first and second Councils of Ephesus, and was thoroughly traced by Ernest Honigmann in his biographical article. As was so commonly the case in the ecclesiastical politics of Late Antiquity, Juvenal exploited wider crises within the Church to advance his own position. Like many of his peers, his contribution to conciliar debate was visibly self-serving.

At earlier Councils, the bishop's predecessors had also sought to renegotiate their position within the episcopal hierarchy formalised at Nicaea. Their complaints, however, by comparison were relatively parochial. Traditionally, these had pressed for a reversal of the decision made in 325 to award Caesarea

⁷² Clark, 'Claims on the bones,' 153, 155.

⁷³ Honigmann, 'Juvenal,' 228.

⁷⁴ *V. Mel.* gr. 67-68 (ed. Gorce, pp. 264-268).

⁷⁵ *V. Euth.* 15, 16, 20 (ed. Schwartz, pp. 25-26, 33) for Juvenal; *ibid.* 27, 30, 35, (ed. Schwartz pp. 41-42, 47-49, 53-54) for Eudocia.

administrative authority over the Church in Palaestina Prima. Successive bishops of Jerusalem had argued that their city's Biblical pedigree was a stronger claim to metropolitan status.⁷⁶ Nicaea had, in fact, acknowledged Jerusalem's right to 'honorary precedence,' on account of its unique place in Christian history. But the Council saw no reason to make an exception to its general rule that ecclesiastical provinces should mirror the organisation of their secular counterparts. The Council of Constantinople later recognised Jerusalem as 'mother of the whole church.' This too was a purely honorific title. Unmoved, the city's bishops increasingly sought to circumvent their metropolitans altogether, accusing their counterparts in Caesarea of heresy and even occasionally rigging their election.

Already in the 360s, Cyril of Jerusalem had succeeded in having his nephew, Gelasius, installed as a stooge at Caesarea. From a letter of Theodoret of Cyrrhus, we learn that Juvenal's immediate predecessor, Praylius, later had an 'adulterer' (*digamos*) named Domninus consecrated as metropolitan in the late 410s.⁷⁷ Zeev Rubin has suggested that such cases are evidence of a gradual power shift within the Palestinian Church. He argues that by 451, Caesarea's 'secondary position' had 'become a matter of course.' This process, however, ought not to be overstated. In the decades prior to Chalcedon, it seems clear that the metropolitans continued to exercise many of their customary rights.⁷⁸ It was only with the next series of Councils, beginning in 431, that Juvenal was able to plausibly style himself as hierarch of the local Church. Even this was only possible because, for reasons that are unclear, neither Caesarea, nor for that matter, any of Palestine's metropolitan sees, sent a representative to Ephesus I or Ephesus II, where Juvenal acted as leader of the Palestinian delegation. Exploiting their absence, Jerusalem's bishop radically expanded his See's demands for greater recognition, voicing his dismay at existing arrangements before a cross-section of colleagues and imperial representatives.

Taking aim at Antioch, Juvenal now pressed for the creation of nothing less than an autonomous, Jerusalemite Church in the Levant. Zealously supporting Cyril of Alexandria against the 'Antiochene' party at Ephesus I, he demanded primacy over all three provinces of Palestine, but also Phoenicia I and II, and Arabia as well. But at this point, such demands amounted to little more than wishful thinking. Though glad of Juvenal's support, Cyril privately condemned him for his hubris.⁷⁹ His enthusiasm seems to have got the better of him again at Ephesus II in 449 where, in aggressive support of the Alexandrian position, Jerusalem's bishop was even prepared to call the controversial archimandrite Eutyches 'very orthodox.'⁸⁰

⁷⁶ Z. Rubin, 'The See of Caesarea in conflict with Jerusalem from Nicaea (325) to Chalcedon (451),' in A. Raban and K. Holum (eds.), *Caesarea Maritima: A Retrospective after Two Millennia*, (Leiden 1996), 559-576, 564-574.

⁷⁷ Though, as Rubin notes, this label may have been meant in an abstract sense: Rubin, 'The See of Caesarea,' 574.

⁷⁸ Rubin, 'See of Caesarea,' 574.

⁷⁹ Leo, *Letters* 119 (ed. Hunt p. 206).

⁸⁰ ACO 2.1.1.182.

Juvenal would regret this statement two years later. Formally condemned at Chalcedon, Eutyches had been deposed in 448 by Flavian of Constantinople on account of his extreme miaphysite beliefs. But in 449-50, Juvenal was willing to go to any lengths to demonstrate his support for the prevailing alliance between the imperial court and Eutyches' ally, Dioscorus of Alexandria, as a means of undermining Antioch's authority over Palestine.⁸¹ Remarkably, the Home Synod (*endēmousa sunodos*) of Constantinople rewarded his efforts in 450 by finally granting him nominal control over the three Palestines, Phoenicia I and II, and Arabia shortly before the death of Theodosius II.⁸² Jerusalem's victory, however, was too short-lived to effect any meaningful change. Antioch too secured rescripts defending its rights. Threatened with the likelihood of deposition under the new regime of Marcian and Pulcheria, Juvenal's position suddenly became insecure. In 451, he required a new strategy not only to preserve the tentative gains he had made after Ephesus II, but to avoid the loss of his See altogether.

Regardless of his formal status, however, the principle obstacle to Juvenal's effective control of the Palestinian Church remained Eudocia. Her dominance of the region's religious landscape is very likely to have provoked a personal rivalry between the empress and the bishop. Juvenal's actions at the Councils had proven his ambition and ruthlessness. His long-running campaign to undermine the standing of Antioch should therefore be seen alongside a parallel aim to match the power of the empress as his main competitor for local religious authority. Under Theodosius II, his efforts were necessarily constrained by Eudocia's status. It was clearly difficult for a bishop to directly challenge an Augusta and expect to come away unscathed. John Chrysostom's earlier confrontation with Eudoxia, or Nestorius' with Pulcheria, had made clear that it was extremely dangerous to question the orthodoxy of imperial interference in matters of religion.⁸³ The later failure of Chalcedonian texts to condemn Theodosius II for supporting either Nestorius, or Dioscorus and Ephesus II, may suggest that this principle remained unchanged long after the definitive acceptance of Chalcedonian doctrine by his successors.⁸⁴ Previous conflicts between bishops and the imperial court, even when they initially lacked any firm theological basis, had often inevitably assumed a religious character.⁸⁵ In this climate, it is not

⁸¹ For a recent summary of changing imperial attitudes towards Eutyches in these years, see: G.A. Bevan and P.T.R. Gray, 'The Trial of Eutyches: A New Interpretation,' *BZ* 101.2 (2009), 617-657, 654-655. Bevan and Gray have demolished the widely-held view that the court of Theodosius II supported Eutyches throughout this period, under pressure from his 'godson,' the chamberlain Chrysaphius. Cf. E. Schwartz, *Der Prozess des Eutyches*, Sitzungsberichte der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Philosophisch-historische Abteilung 5 (Munich 1929).

⁸² Honigmann, 'Juvenal,' 238; J.E. Steppa, *John Rufus*, pp. 1-3.

⁸³ Holum, *Theodosian Emperresses*, pp. 48-79, 147-175.

⁸⁴ For example: Evagrius, *HE* 1.10, 2.2 (ed. Bidez and Parmentier, pp. 17-18, 38-39); written in the 590s, squarely blames Chrysaphius for the Second Council of Ephesus; cf. *V. Euth.* 27 (ed. Schwartz, pp. 41-44), which blames Dioscorus, whilst making no mention of Theodosius II. One exception to this rule is found in Rufus, *Plerophoriae* 130 where the monk Basileios is seen to confront Theodosius and Eudocia for their support of Nestorius. Cf. E. Watts, 'Theodosius II and his legacy in anti-Chalcedonian communal memory,' in *Theodosius II*, 269-284.

⁸⁵ Socrates, *HE* 7.32-7.34 (Hansen pp. 380-384); M.V. Anastos, 'Nestorius was Orthodox,' *DOP* 16 (1962), 117-140.

surprising that Juvenal concentrated his efforts to win supremacy over Eudocia in Palestine on gaining greater recognition abroad, and not by attempting to impugn her orthodoxy.

This leads us to a final observation regarding Palestine's religious landscape before Chalcedon: the conspicuous lack of identifiable dispute over the conflict generated amid Nestorius' deposition in 529. There is no evidence that Juvenal and Eudocia stood in opposing Christological camps prior to the Council. In fact, there is no evidence that such camps existed. It is typically thought that this was because Palestinian Christians, Juvenal included, were united during these years in support of Cyril of Alexandria's belief in 'one incarnate nature of God the Word,' as outlined in his *Second Letter to Succensus*. However, on closer examination, there is ultimately little to suggest that the local Church was especially, closely engaged in the wider rift between 'Alexandrians' and 'Antiochenes,' emerging after 431.

We must assume that many in Palestine, as elsewhere, would have regarded the strongly-dyophysite doctrine associated with Nestorius as heterodox. Excepting Juvenal, however, none of their principle leaders were even present at the Councils convened to debate its Christological fallout. The questions addressed to Cyril in these years by the Palestinian deacon Tiberius suggest that at least some local monks were still preoccupied with earlier theological disputes, in this case regarding the shadowy doctrine of 'anthropomorphism.'⁸⁶ Hesychius of Jerusalem, the only known Palestinian theologian of this period whose works survive, would seem to have been aware of the Nestorian Controversy, but showed surprisingly little interest in debating its implications. In a recent article, Lieve Van Hoof, Panigiotis Manafis and Peter Van Nuffelen have sought to excuse the absence of this discussion from Hesychius' *Homilies* by pointing to the condemnation of the Antiochene writer Theodore of Mopsuestia contained in a series of what purport to be quotes taken from an *Ecclesiastical History* written by the Jerusalemite, quoted at the Second Council of Constantinople in 553.⁸⁷ The fact remains, however, that the Christological remarks that characterise the main body of his work elude easy identification with either side of the 'Natures' debate as normally understood. Whilst Lorenzo Perrone and Cornelia Horn, among others, have argued that the contents of Hesychius' writings broadly align with the Cyrillian position, as Klaudius Jüssen, and more recently Alois Grillmeier and Theresia Hainthaler, have shown, the formulae employed in the texts are unique, giving little suggestion that their creator intended to invoke the views of his more famous contemporary.⁸⁸ It seems highly improbable that other local texts discussed this subject in detail, but were never cited or mentioned in any of the subsequent

⁸⁶ Cyril of Alexandria, *Answers to Tiberius*, (ed. Wickham, pp. 137-139); F.M. Abel, 'Cyrille d'Alexandrie dans ses rapports avec la Palestine,' in *Kyrilliana: spicilegia edita Sancti Cyrilli Alexandrini, XV recurrente saeculo: études variées à l'occasion du XV^e centenaire de saint Cyrille d'Alexandrie (444-1944)*, (Cairo 1947), 203-230.

⁸⁷ L. Van Hoof, P. Manafis, and P. Van Nuffelen, 'Hesychius of Jerusalem, Ecclesiastical History (CPG 6582),' *GRBS* 56 (2016), 504-527.

⁸⁸ Perrone, *La chiesa*, pp. 67-72; Horn, *Asceticism and Christological Controversy*, p. 76. cf. K. Jüssen, *Die dogmatischen Anschauungen des Hesychius von Jerusalem*, 2 vols. (Münster 1931-34), 1.125-128, 151-160; *CCT* 2.3.51-64.

hagiographical tradition, either Chalcedonian or anti-Chalcedonian. Later, partisan writers such as Cyril of Scythopolis or John Rufus could certainly have been expected, not only to have known about them, but to have made use of any comments regarding the Council to full polemical effect.

II. Late Antique accounts of the Rebellion

As argued above, Eudocia's dominating influence over the Church in Jerusalem was well-established by 451. On her return to Palestine in 441 or 442, the empress essentially headed the local religious 'establishment,' supported by both the region's civil elite and the prestigious monastic communities endowed by aristocratic patrons like Melania. Juvenal, as bishop of Jerusalem, seems to have played a minor, if perhaps reluctant, part in this establishment before Chalcedon. Unable to match Eudocia, we find him listed among her clerical dependants, with one later chronicler even recording that Palestine's aspiring patriarch had a villa donated by the empress as his episcopal residence.⁸⁹ Solidly allied with Alexandria at Ephesus II, the Palestinian church displayed no sign of internal Christological strife before 451. Eudocia, as far as we are aware, failed to raise any concerns regarding the behaviour of Dioscorus and his henchmen in 449 and appears to have been reconciled to the new, official stance of the imperial government.

The extraordinary violence which followed Chalcedon therefore marks the Council out as a watershed. 451 sees a dramatic public shift in relations between Juvenal and Eudocia, but also Palestine's sudden emergence, for the first time, as an apparent hotbed of Christological conflict. The traditional narrative of the events of 451-453 has attributed both developments to religious sectarianism. Eudocia's role, in both the later Chalcedonian and anti-Chalcedonian traditions, was officially secondary. Her involvement in the anti-Chalcedonian cause is attributed to the persuasion of the official leader of the rebellion against Juvenal, the zealous monk Theodosius.⁹⁰ His followers, the Late Antique writers agree, were implacable opponents of the bishop because of Chalcedon's doctrine.

The body of evidence for the rebellion is complex and problematic. The earliest accounts of the violence of 451-453 are contained in a series of letters written to the monks of Jerusalem by Marcian and Pulcheria, and subsequently appended to the published *Acts* of the Council.⁹¹ Contemporaneous letters of Pope Leo I also describe events in Palestine.⁹² They are followed by an anti-Chalcedonian literature

⁸⁹ Nicephorus Callistus, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, 14.50 (PG 146.1239).

⁹⁰ Ps. Zach, *Chron.* 3.3 (ed Brooks 1.156-158); Theophanes, *Chronicle* AM 5945 (452/3), (ed. de Boor, pp. 106-107); Evagrius, *HE* 2.5 (ed. Bidez and Parmentier, pp. 51-53) avoids mention of Eudocia.

⁹¹ ACO 2.1.3.469-495; Selective translations may be found in: Price and Gaddis, *Acts of Chalcedon*, 3.104-192.

⁹² Leo, *Letters* 109, 123, 139; ACO 2.4.77, 91-93, 137-138.

on the rebellion which emerged during the reign of the emperor Anastasius (491-518).⁹³ Chalcedonian accounts of the same events subsequently appeared in the Palestinian hagiographies of Cyril of Scythopolis and the *Ecclesiastical History* of Evagrius (completed 593-594), which claimed to have drawn its account from Priscus of Panium.⁹⁴ A later notice on the rebellion also appears in the *Chronicle* of Theophanes, paraphrasing Evagrius.⁹⁵ There are unfortunately no references to these events in the surviving fragments of the earlier Chalcedonian *Ecclesiastical History* of Theodore Lector.

The sources agree on the cause and subsequent chronology of the rebellion. Juvenal attended the Council of Chalcedon with the Palestinian bishops, facing the threat of deposition on account of his association with Dioscorus of Alexandria at Ephesus II. To ensure that the synod fell into line with the new, anti-Alexandrian mood of the imperial court, Marcian and Pulcheria had appointed a panel of senior palace officials to chair its sessions and enforce a pre-approved agenda. In the record of the Council's first session, as recorded in the *Acts*, Juvenal can be seen mounting a galling, and frankly dishonest, defence of his actions at Ephesus. His claim to have played no significant role in the events of 449 drew a withering response from Dioscorus. Publicly disassociating himself from his former ally, Juvenal renounced his previous position and symbolically crossed the floor of the basilica of St. Euphemia, to sit with Alexandria's opponents. Dioscorus, who refused to attend the Council after its first session, was formally deposed during the third.⁹⁶ Juvenal was then formally readmitted and rehabilitated by the assembled bishops. The 'heresy' of the archimandrite Eutyches, whose conflict with Flavian of Constantinople was the original reason for the convocation of Ephesus II, was eventually anathematised. The Council famously also issued a new Definition of Faith which gave an official ruling on the relationship between the human and divine in the person of Christ, aimed at restoring consensus after the misgivings which had emerged over the Eutyches episode.⁹⁷

With Juvenal reinstated, the business of the Council moved to the resolution of several territorial disputes between major Sees. The most significant addressed Jerusalem's claims against Antioch. Under guidance from the imperial commissioners, the bishops agreed to grant Juvenal full control of the three provinces of Palestine, giving him precedence over the bishops of Caesarea, Scythopolis, and Petra. To placate Maximus of Antioch, however, Jerusalem was forced to renounce any claim to Phoenicia I and II, or Arabia.⁹⁸ But in spite of this concession, the scale of Juvenal's personal victory at Chalcedon was remarkable. He had not only succeeded in retaining his See, but his willingness to

⁹³ Ps. Zach, *Chron.* 3.3-3.5 (ed. Brooks 1.156-160); John Rufus, *Plerophoriae* 10 (Nau, pp. 22-27); *V. Pet.* 76-77 (ed. Raabe, pp. 50-53); *De obitu Theodosii* 9 (ed. Brooks, pp. 26-27); Severus of Antioch, *Cathedral Homily* 125 (ed. Brière, *Patrologia Orientalis* 29, p. 252).

⁹⁴ *V. Euth.* 27 (ed. Schwartz, pp. 41-44); Evagrius, *HE* 2.5 (ed. Bidez and Parmentier, pp. 51-53)

⁹⁵ Theophanes, *Chron.* AM 5945 (452/3), (ed. de Boor, pp. 106-107).

⁹⁶ ACO 2.1.2.237-238.

⁹⁷ For the full version of the Definition: ACO 2.1.2.324-326.

⁹⁸ ACO 2.2.2.20. As Price notes, Maximus appears to have been eager to reach a compromise with Juvenal. He was in danger of losing his see to his deposed predecessor, Domnus. The Council only later ruled in Maximus' favour during its tenth session: Price and Gaddis, *Acts of Chalcedon*, 2.245.

betray Dioscorus had been rewarded with final, definitive confirmation of Jerusalem's demand to exercise jurisdiction over Palestine. For the first time, Juvenal's claim to equal the dignity of the bishops of Rome, Constantinople, Alexandria, and Antioch had been recognised by the wider Church.

From the *Acts*, it is clear that the negotiations between Jerusalem and Antioch were conducted privately. When their outcome was reported during Chalcedon's seventh session, those present were simply asked to give their assent to an agreement which had already been reached. Once again, none of Palestine's existing metropolitans appear to have been present. The *Acts* explicitly state that Glycon of Caesarea was unable to attend the Council, possibly due to ill health, and was represented by a subordinate, Zosimus of Menois.⁹⁹ Richard Price suggests that Severian, then bishop of Scythopolis, was also absent.¹⁰⁰ Though listed among Chalcedon's signatories, Severian received no mention elsewhere in the *Acts*.¹⁰¹ Whether the more junior Palestinian bishops who were in attendance approved of Juvenal's new status is unclear. In any event, they found themselves targeted alongside him during the violence that followed.

No formal exposition of Jerusalem's new 'patriarchal' powers emerged in 451.¹⁰² Chalcedon's Canon 28 dealt only with the status of the see of Constantinople, authorising its bishop to ordain the metropolitans of Pontus, Asia, and Thrace. However later, Justinianic-era legislation strongly suggests that Antioch and Jerusalem had acquired similar powers over their respective territories.¹⁰³ The Council had sought to temper the rise of the major sees by ruling that metropolitans retained administrative authority over the Church in each province. But now effectively responsible for their subordinates' appointment, Jerusalem's bishops encroached upon many of their traditional rights. Since 325, these had included the convocation of local synods, and the consecration or veto of candidates for lower episcopal office. After Chalcedon, Juvenal wasted no time in exercising these powers himself. On his return in 453, the head of the Palestinian Church immediately convened a council of bishops from across all three of the region's provinces. His astute successors were gradually able to 'pack' the local episcopate with their supporters, the metropolitans, unable to take up office without Jerusalem's approval, appearing to offer little resistance.¹⁰⁴

The broader consequences of Juvenal's enhanced status will be discussed in further detail below, but it was at this point that rebellion began to ferment in Palestine. The monk Theodosius, who was present

⁹⁹ Price and Gaddis, *Acts of Chalcedon*, iii. 302-303. By 453, Glycon had been succeeded by Irenaeus: ACO 2.5.9. Irenaeus was a signatory to the letter issued by the Synod of Palestine, following Juvenal's restoration in 453; see also: Fedalto (ed.), *Hierarchia Ecclesiastica Orientalis*, 2.1014-1015. Cf. Rubin, 'See of Caesarea,' would seem not to have noticed this and believes Glycon to have been present.

¹⁰⁰ Price and Gaddis, *Acts of Chalcedon*, 3.195.

¹⁰¹ R. Price, 'Truth, Omission and Facts in the Acts of Chalcedon,' in *Chalcedon in Context*, 92-106.

¹⁰² As Honigmann argues, there is little reason to believe that Jerusalem's bishops were titled as 'patriarchs' as early as 451. However, the term remains useful as a shorthand to distinguish the occupants of the four principle sees of the East from other bishops.

¹⁰³ Justinian, *Novels* 123.3; A.H.M. Jones, *Later Roman Empire*, 2.893; Price and Gaddis, *Acts of Chalcedon*, i.

¹⁰⁴ See Chapter 2.

at the Council, is claimed to have returned to Jerusalem before the bishops' party after hearing the Chalcedonian Definition of Faith.¹⁰⁵ The sources agree that he then began to stir up opposition to Juvenal and Chalcedon among local monks.

It is clear that the disorder subsequently caused by opposition to Juvenal was widespread. The letters of Marcian and Pulcheria describe violence across the region perpetrated by Theodosius' supporters. Jerusalem's bishop was apparently unable to return to Palestine when a crowd of monks met his boat at Caesarea, preventing him from getting any further than the city's outskirts.¹⁰⁶ Elsewhere, rebels are variously accused of murdering Severian, the metropolitan of Scythopolis, of killing an unnamed deacon, and of even attempting to assassinate Juvenal himself.¹⁰⁷ Riots led by monks are attested at Ascalon and Gaza.¹⁰⁸ Theodosius is claimed to have taken the extraordinary step of seizing Juvenal's office and appointing his own bishops throughout Palestine, including Peter the Iberian to the See of Gaza's port, Maiuma.¹⁰⁹ The practice of appointing a parallel ecclesiastical hierarchy was unprecedented in the history of the Eastern Church, and out of keeping with the unionist ambitions of the anti-Chalcedonian movement as it later developed. Opponents of Chalcedon would refrain from consecrating their own bishops to occupied Sees until the reign of Justinian and the campaigns of John of Tella and Jacob bar 'Addai. That Theodosius is claimed to have done precisely that in 451-453 is symptomatic of the regional scale of the rebellion against Juvenal's episcopate.

Perhaps the most provocative act of the rebels, however, was their occupation of Jerusalem itself. Claiming custodianship of the Holy City, Theodosius's supporters are said to have closed its gates to Roman troops, releasing prisoners in imperial custody and, remarkably, manning the walls with their own forces.¹¹⁰ This was a clear act of defiance against the authority of the imperial government that risked retaliation. But it can also be seen as a sign of the rebels' confidence in the strength of their position. Indeed, excluding an ecclesiastical party apparently loyal to Juvenal, the Palestinian Church seems to have almost unanimously opposed him. In addition to Eudocia, Theodosius could count virtually every monastic leader in the region as a supporter. In Jerusalem and its environs, these included the abbots Gerontius, Melania the Younger's successor as head of the Mount of Olives monasteries, Gerasimus, founder of monasticism on the Jordan Plain, and Romanus, head of a prominent coenobium

¹⁰⁵ Ps. Zach. *Chron.* 3.3 (ed. Brooks 1.155-156); Theophanes, *Chronicle*, AM 5945 (452/3), (ed. de Boor, p. 107).

¹⁰⁶ Evagrius *HE* 2.5 (ed. Bidez and Parmentier, p. 52); Ps. Zach. *Chron.* 3.3 (ed. Brooks 1.157); *V. Pet.* 77 (ed. Raabe, pp. 52-53); *Plerophoriae* 10, 56 (ed. Nau, pp. 24-25, 111-113); L. Di Segni, 'Metropolis and Provincia in Byzantine Palestine,' in Raban and Holum (eds.), *Caesarea Maritima*, 587-589. Di Segni suggests that Juvenal was likely to have been alone at this point, as no other bishops are recorded as having disembarked with him.

¹⁰⁷ ACO 2.1.3, 483-486, 484.15-18.

¹⁰⁸ *Plerophoriae* 52 (ed. Nau, pp. 106-108); *V. Pet.* 78, (ed. Raabe, pp. 52-54).

¹⁰⁹ Ps. Zach. *Chron.* 3.4; (ed. Brooks 1.158-159); *V. Pet.* 79 (ed. Raabe, pp. 54-55).

¹¹⁰ ACO 2.1.3, 483-486.

outside the city.¹¹¹ In Gaza, they were joined by Peter the Iberian and the famous Egyptian holy man Isaiah.

Only Euthymius, the subject of Cyril of Scythopolis' sixth-century Chalcedonian hagiography, is claimed to have even passively opposed the rebellion. Having been approached by Theodosius' supporters, Euthymius is said to have withdrawn to Rouba, close to the Dead Sea, and remained there until after Juvenal's return.¹¹² There is, therefore, no evidence that even he played an active role in any opposition to Theodosius. Cyril's account was written roughly a century after the events it describes by an author eager to present his order's founders as champions of Chalcedonian orthodoxy. The story of the retreat to Rouba may well, in fact, have been a convenient device by which to explain Euthymius' failure to stand up for the Council. Whether or not this was the case, it is nevertheless clear from Cyril's account that there was no organised monastic opposition to the rebellion.

The sources agree that imperial and ecclesiastical control was only restored to Palestine in July 453. Juvenal returned accompanied by a body of Roman troops. Our picture of Theodosius' defeat, however, is somewhat confused. The anti-Chalcedonian sources speak of a 'battle' outside Neapolis, where troops killed a large number of monks opposed to Juvenal.¹¹³ A particularly graphic account has survived in the epitome of the *Ecclesiastical History* of Zachariah of Mitylene contained in the later *Chronicle* of Pseudo-Zachariah, where Juvenal is accused of personally ordering the monks' deaths: 'So he gave orders to the soldiers and the Samaritans, who beat and killed the monks, while they were singing... Some of the soldiers were moved with pity and wept; others of them and the Samaritans killed many monks, whose blood was shed upon the ground.'¹¹⁴

Whatever happened at Neapolis, Juvenal's second attempt to return to his See was successful. Theodosius fled to Sinai, where he seems to have been sheltered by local monks. A letter of Marcian to the local bishop Macarius demanded that he be handed over to the authorities.¹¹⁵ Theodosius' ultimate fate is unclear, though it is agreed that he was eventually apprehended and imprisoned. Pseudo-Zachariah claimed that he died in a cell containing 'caustic lime,' after being captured at the gates of Sidon and sent to Constantinople.¹¹⁶ John Rufus argued that he was captured on his way to enlist the support of Symeon Stylites and released on the accession of the emperor Leo, dying shortly afterwards.¹¹⁷

¹¹¹ *V. Euth.* 27 (ed. Schwartz, pp. 42, 44); *De obi. Theo.* 2 (ed. Brooks, p. 21).

¹¹² *V. Euth.* 27 (ed. Schwartz, pp. 44-45).

¹¹³ *Ps. Zach, Chron.* 3.5-6 (ed. Brooks 1.159-160); *Plerophoriae* 10 (ed. Nau, p. 24); Severus of Antioch, *Cathedral Homily* 125 (ed. Brière, PO 29, p. 252).

¹¹⁴ *Ps. Zach, Chron.* 3.5 (trans. Phenix and Horn, p. 120).

¹¹⁵ ACO 2.1.3.490-491.

¹¹⁶ *Ps. Zach, Chron.* 3.9 (ed. Brooks 1.161-163).

¹¹⁷ *De obi. Theo.* 4-6 (ed. Brooks, pp 22-24).

Whilst some of Theodosius' supporters made peace with Juvenal and accepted Chalcedon upon his return, Eudocia and her closest allies remained in staunch opposition to the bishop. These included Peter the Iberian and Gerontius, who penned the *Life of Melania* at some point during these years.¹¹⁸ Eudocia, as will be discussed below, later returned to communion with Chalcedon during negotiations for the release of her daughter and granddaughter from capture by the Vandals.¹¹⁹ The anti-Chalcedonian movement in Jerusalem appears to have declined with her conversion. Though still strong at Gaza, Peter the Iberian left Palestine for Egypt shortly afterwards. Even after conceding defeat, however, Eudocia was still able to marshal the resources needed to protect her clients and friends. The abbot Romanus, who had supported the rebellion, was saved by her patronage.¹²⁰ It was due to Eudocia's intercession, furthermore, that Peter himself had apparently been spared from any reprisals following Juvenal's return.

III. Deconstructing the Image of 'Anti-Chalcedonian' Violence

With few exceptions, modern studies have accepted a purely 'religious' explanation for the above events. Indeed, opposition to the Chalcedonian view of Christ presents itself as the obvious reason for the violence of 451-453. The monks and religious patrons of Palestine had backed Juvenal's stance at Ephesus II, turning against him when he adopted the opposite position at Chalcedon. Some supporters of the rebellion, such as Peter the Iberian, or the abbot Romanus, were never reconciled with the bishop, or the Council, after this betrayal. In their letters, Marcian and Pulcheria present the rebels' grievance in Christological terms, apparently confirming that Juvenal's detractors were galvanised by opposition to Chalcedon's Definition of Faith. Later Chalcedonian and anti-Chalcedonian hagiographies and ecclesiastical histories convey a strong sense that the events of 451-453 marked the beginning of a long-term rift between two communities, divided by their views on the relationship between God and man in the person of Christ.

The doctrinal controversy over Chalcedon lay in the Definition's claim that Christ exists 'in two natures' after the incarnation, following the wording of the *Tome* of Leo.¹²¹ Anxious to ensure Roman acceptance of the Council, the imperial commissioners had insisted that this formula be used, overruling objections raised by some of the assembled bishops.¹²² To them, this seemed to imply a break with the authoritative 'one nature' Christology which Cyril of Alexandria had outlined in the 430s. In fact, the Definition was conceived as a compromise between the 'Alexandrian' and 'Antiochene' views of Christ. Its doctrine

¹¹⁸ E.A. Clark, *The Life of Melania the Younger*, Introduction, (New York, NY 1984) pp. 20-21; Honigmann, 'Juvenal,' 228.

¹¹⁹ *V. Euth.* 30 (ed. Schwartz, p. 47).

¹²⁰ *De obi. Theo.* 9 (ed. Brooks, pp. 25-27).

¹²¹ ACO 2.1.324: ἕνα καὶ τὸν αὐτὸν Χριστὸν, υἱὸν, κύριον, μονογενῆ, ἐν δύο φύσεσιν ἀσυγχύτως, ἀτρέπτως, ἀδιαιρέτως, ἀχωρίστως γνωριζόμενον.

¹²² R. Price, 'Truth, Omission and Fiction in the Acts of Chalcedon,' 97.

contained elements of both, whilst strongly repudiating the extremes represented by Nestorius and Eutyches.¹²³ But in appealing to all sides in the fractious religious politics of the 450s, its wording was vulnerable to criticism from Dioscorus and his allies. Those disciplined at Chalcedon could call into question the legitimacy of the Council's rulings by casting themselves as doctrinal purists, dismissing its Christology as heterodox. To avoid this outcome, the committee of bishops appointed to draft the Definition had initially suggested that it use the more explicitly Cyrillian expression, 'from two natures.'¹²⁴ This proposal was ignored. Smarting from his treatment by the Council, Dioscorus assumed the mantle of Cyril's defender, labelling the text as 'Nestorian.'

Though unanimously approved by Chalcedon's remaining delegates, the Definition thus never served as the ecumenical document that its authors had envisaged.¹²⁵ The next century saw supporters and opponents of the Council spar over its Cyrillian credentials. But the letters of Marcian and Pulcheria present Juvenal's Palestinian opponents as adopting an especially severe doctrinal line on its teachings from the beginning. The imperial couple bitterly reproached the rebel leader Theodosius for claiming that Chalcedon had taught that 'two Sons, and two Christs, and two Persons should be worshipped.'¹²⁶ They accused him, in turn, of 'Eutychianism.' In a separate letter addressed to Palestinian monks, Pope Leo denounced their 'heretical perversity' in rejecting the Council. Providing a detailed explanation of Chalcedon's Christology, he expressed his hope that opposition would cease once its rulings were properly understood. But though taken as clear evidence of the rebellion's doctrinal character, these documents appear to give only a partial explanation of the events which led to Juvenal's removal.

As have been noted, Marcian and Pulcheria's letters were preserved as *actiones* inserted at the end of the Greek minutes of Chalcedon with other select documents, probably in 454.¹²⁷ Though claiming to address concerns raised by Juvenal's opponents, all clearly date to the period after his restoration. Published and circulated alongside the minutes a year later, the letters' inclusion was not coincidental. It would be naïve to assume, as some scholars have, that they act as a candid record of the private correspondence which took place between the Palestinian rebels and the palace. More reasonably, we must view them also as public propaganda, promoting adherence to Chalcedon by defaming and parodying its opponents.

The strident language used here was typical of imperial religious missives produced in this period. As Fergus Millar has shown, such texts were marked by their 'emotionality,' condemning 'heretics' in

¹²³ On this point especially, now see: P. Bell, *Social Conflict*, p. 172.

¹²⁴ i.e. ἐκ δύο φύσεων.

¹²⁵ Price and Gaddis, updating Schwartz' total, count 457 signatures appended to the Definition in the *Acts*, including those of 114 absent bishops. Dioscorus' Egyptian colleagues did not take part in Chalcedon's sixth session, in which the Definition was approved. Two other bishops, Eustathius of Berytus and Amphilochius of Side, claimed to have signed under duress: Price and Gaddis, *Acts of Chalcedon*, 2.207.

¹²⁶ E.g. ACO 2.1.3.492.16-17: σκυφαντεῖν οὐκ ἐπαύσατο σύνοδον ὡς δογματίσασαν δύο υἱοὺς καὶ δύο Χριστοὺς καὶ δύο πρόσωπα ὀφειλεῖν προσκυνεῖσθαι; 2.1.3. 485.31-32, 490.19-22, 494.10-12.

¹²⁷ ACO 2.1.3.xxi-xxii; Price and Gaddis, *Acts of Chalcedon*, 3.180.

outlandish terms. The letters written to the rebels carried the authority of an imperial edict, and there is little practical distinction to be drawn between the purpose of these texts and that of the more general ‘laws’ on heresy addressed to high civil officials by Marcian’s predecessor, Theodosius II.¹²⁸ In both cases, the full force of Roman legal rhetoric was employed to vilify those who did not adhere to a state-approved, Christian orthodoxy as irrational and extremist. Only a ‘wicked or mad person,’ Marcian claimed, could oppose the Council’s rulings.¹²⁹ The monk Theodosius was described by Pulcheria as ‘abominable and unholy,’ a ‘precursor of... the Antichrist.’¹³⁰

Both the emperor and empress attributed the vehemence of opposition to Juvenal to Theodosius’ charisma. The rebellion’s participants, otherwise, were depicted as ignorant and credulous, unable to grasp the terms of the Christological debate over Chalcedon for themselves. Marcian claimed that Jerusalem’s monks had exposed their own theological illiteracy in an earlier petition, addressed by their leaders to the imperial court.¹³¹ The emperor admitted that the rebels had anathematised Eutyches. But he professed his astonishment at their support for Theodosius, who had shown himself to harbour the same heretical opinions.¹³² The emperor chided Jerusalem’s monks for their infantile response to the Definition, remarking that, ‘you have shown that your souls are amazed when you hear of two natures, as if some novelty has been brought to your hearing,’ when in fact, they must surely have encountered similar language before.¹³³ The letters routinely refer the rebels as ‘simple,’ elsewhere describing Theodosius’ following as a ‘multitude of the deceived.’¹³⁴

This image, however, does not appear to fit with what is otherwise known of those involved in the Palestinian opposition to Chalcedon. Its supporters hardly seem to have been the ‘simple-minded’ zealots described above. The monastic communities established by Eudocia and Melania the Younger were clearly centres of a sophisticated Christian literary production, visited by some of the leading spiritual thinkers of their day, including Cyril of Alexandria and Evagrius of Pontus. The Mount of Olives monasteries had previously produced Palladius, author of the *Lausiac History*, and the anonymous author of the *Historia Monachorum in Aegypto*.¹³⁵ Gerontius’ *Life of Melania* seems to have existed in both Greek and Latin versions from an early date and circulated in the West.¹³⁶ This literary

¹²⁸ Millar, *Greek Roman Empire*, p. 151.

¹²⁹ ACO 2.1.3.488: τὸ δὲ ἐπιμένειν τοῖς παίσμασι καὶ τούτοις ἐπαγωνίζεσθαι καὶ σπουδάζειν κακῶ τὸ κακὸν ἐπισωρεύειν παμπονήρου τινὸς καὶ λίαν ἐξεσηκότες.

¹³⁰ ACO 2.1.3.494: ἐπειδὴ δὲ ἀνεφάνη ἐν τοῖς νῦν καιροῖς ὁ τῆς Σίμωνος πλάνης, μᾶλλον δὲ τοῦ ἀντιχρίστου πρόδρομος Θεοδόσιος...

¹³¹ ACO 2.1.3.487-488.

¹³² ACO 2.1.3.484. Though the emperor’s Fourth Edict on the Council later explicitly referred to Chalcedon’s opponents, in Palestine and Egypt, as ‘Eutychians and Apollinarians.’

¹³³ ACO 2.1.3.485: ἐπειδὴ δὲ δύο φύσεις ἀκούοντες θαμβεῖσθαι τὰς ὑμετέρας ψυχὰς ἐδιδάξατε ὡς τινος καινοφωνίας ταῖς ὑμετέρας ἀκοαῖς προσαγομῆς...

¹³⁴ ACO 2.1.3.490: ἐντεῦθεν τε ἑαυτῶ πλῆθος τῶν ἀπατηθέντων ἀθροίσας καὶ τὴν τῶν ἀφελῶν ὡς εἶπεν ἄγνοιαν κτησάμενος σύμμαχου τὴν Αἰλιέων κατατρέχει πόλιν... Similar language features throughout the letters.

¹³⁵ *Historia Monachorum in Aegypto*, ed. A-J. Festugière, *Historia monachorum in Aegypto, édition critique du texte grec, Subsidia Hagiographica* 34 (Brussels: Société des Bollandistes, 1961).

¹³⁶ Clark, *Life of Melania*, 1-24.

tradition strongly suggests that the monks who rebelled against Juvenal were in contact with Christian intellectuals across the Roman world, and as capable as anyone else of understanding the substance of Christological debate. It seems especially unlikely that Eudocia, herself an accomplished writer, would have been so easily beguiled by a monk whose career is barely attested prior to 451.¹³⁷

The empress, together with other prominent Palestinian figures, is alleged to have accepted Theodosius' claims against the Council at face value. But we should note that the arguments attributed to him were an obvious misrepresentation of the Definition's teachings.¹³⁸ Though its *Acts* were only circulated from 455, word from Chalcedon travelled quickly. In 451, news of Dioscorus' downfall had even reached Nestorius, then approaching death in exile at the Kharga Oasis. Eudocia and her circle, of course, were far better-placed to obtain firm evidence of the Council's doctrine. However, contrary to Theodosius' alleged complaints, the Definition had unequivocally rejected the notion of Christ having separable natures, and explicitly referred to 'one person.' If the renegade monk had brought evidence of Chalcedon's rulings with him – and we imagine that he must, if he hoped to induce powerful figures like Eudocia to take the extraordinary risk of rebelling against imperial authority – then this distinction would have been apparent immediately. Juvenal's opponents may well have regarded the 'in two natures' formula as heterodox, tacitly guilty of dividing the indivisible. But we cannot imagine that they would have been easily persuaded by Theodosius' version of events. To an educated audience, the allegation that the Council had inaugurated 'two sons, two Christs, and two persons' could only have been regarded as specious. Eudocia, moreover, had been among the original recipients of Cyril of Alexandria's Christological writings twenty years earlier and was, therefore, presumably well-qualified to appreciate the nuance contained in the Definition's wording.¹³⁹

This is not to argue that the supposed 'Nestorian' connotations of the language chosen by the imperial authorities somehow represented less of a problem to this Palestinian audience than contemporaries elsewhere. How Chalcedon's rulings fitted within the existing parameters of the 'Natures' controversy, naturally, emerged as the key issue in subsequent public debate over the Council here, as in the Empire's other Eastern provinces. Nevertheless, the scenario described by the imperial letters seems to simplify matters considerably. It is, of course, possible that the rebellion's prominent supporters went along with Theodosius' claims, knowing them to be exaggerated. But there is little to suggest that they ultimately shared his alleged, uncompromising views.

¹³⁷ Theodosius may be referred to in the surviving Syriac *Acts* of Ephesus II, J. Flemming (ed.), *Akten der Ephesinischen Synode vom Jahre 449: syrisch / mit Georg Hoffmanns deutscher Übersetzung und seinen Anmerkungen*, (Göttingen 1917), 130-131, as argued in Honigmann, 'Juvenal,' 249.

¹³⁸ In this, he appears to have been unique. Though Marcian's letter to the monks of Alexandria anathematizes the 'two sons, two persons' formula, it does not accuse the Egyptians of making similar claims about the Definition.

¹³⁹ ACO 1.1.1.73-74.

Juvenal's stance, as we know, changed from one of support for Dioscorus and Eutyches in 449, to acceptance of Chalcedon in 451. But the beliefs held by his opponents are often no easier to deduce. Like their bishop, many were prepared to alter their position as politics demanded. Eudocia had publicly opposed the Council in 451, but died in full communion with its supporters only nine years later. Once officially a Chalcedonian, she acted as patron to monastic communities on both sides of the Christological divide.¹⁴⁰ Among the other major figures of the rebellion, Bassa, Gerasimus, and Elpidius, abbot of the monastery of Passarion, also switched sides to accept Chalcedon early on. Others joined them over the course of next decades. Those who remained in opposition after Eudocia's conversion were virtually all either friends or clients of the empress. Of these, Peter the Iberian spent much of his subsequent career in Egypt. Our picture of his 'heroic' life spent in resistance to Chalcedon, as we shall see, is the product of John Rufus' highly-polemical work, written at least forty years later.¹⁴¹

In casting Theodosius as sole instigator the events of 451-453, the imperial letters conspicuously omit any mention of the role which Eudocia is known to have played in them. It is clear, however, that the empress and her wider circle were Theodosius' main supporters. Her involvement in the rebellion was elsewhere universally acknowledged in Late Antiquity, even if some Chalcedonian authors were anxious to downplay it. To Cyril of Scythopolis, she was 'the blessed Eudocia,' fully rehabilitated by her return to communion in 455. However, such remarks seem unable to disguise the fact that frequently it is the empress, and not Theodosius, who appears as the principle ringleader of opposition to Juvenal. Certainly, it is difficult to believe that the renegade monk had the power to unite such a wide body of local opinion behind the rebellion on his own. In Egypt, the uprising against Proterius had been led by supporters and clients of the deposed bishop Dioscorus, channelling the resources of his See against an outsider. Theodosius had no such resources, and must have been at least partly reliant on Eudocia's network of patronage to rally his support.

Eudocia could not have openly led the rebellion herself, since this would have entailed a public break with Marcian and Pulcheria. Such a move could only have been seen from Constantinople as a usurpation, unthinkable reckless for an imperial widow, even one with the resources which Eudocia had available to her. Courtly politics, equally, would seem to explain her removal from the 'official' narrative of the rebellion produced in the letters. If the imperial couple had chosen to expose Eudocia as an anti-Chalcedonian rebel, Marcian would have been forced to concede that he had failed, even to convince his own relations, that his religious policies were correct. This was surely unthinkable so soon after Chalcedon, whose authority within the Church was predicated by the emperor's unquestioned orthodoxy. The admission that discord existed within the imperial family, however, was also liable to raise more serious concerns regarding its stability. Theodosius II had earlier reacted furiously to a suggestion by Cyril of Alexandria that he had fallen out with Pulcheria, arguing that such rumours

¹⁴⁰ For Eudocia's patronage of the monastery of Euthymius, see chapter 3.

¹⁴¹ Cf. Frend, *Rise*, p. 153.

undermined the ruling dynasty.¹⁴² His successors had far greater reason to fear them. As Richard Burgess has evoked, Marcian's right to rule was still uncertain in 451, resting solely upon his marriage to Pulcheria. In 450, the strongest claim to the Eastern Roman throne had belonged to his Western counterpart, Valentinian III.¹⁴³ In this febrile context, acknowledging Eudocia's involvement in the rebellion against Juvenal risked generating more than just unwelcome scandal. Her stance was, in effect, a threat to the established order, calling into question the legitimacy of the imperial regime itself.

Nevertheless, for all their apparent anxiety to obscure the empress' part in the Palestinian rebellion, even the court and its supporters appear to have conceded Eudocia's role as the effective power behind it. In 453, Pope Leo wrote to Eudocia personally to ask for her assistance in bringing the conflict to an end.¹⁴⁴ Though careful not to directly accuse the empress of complicity in the violence of the last two years, Rome's bishop referred to the influence which she was known to have exerted among its perpetrators. Pulcheria too can be seen to have tacitly admitted her sister-in-law's position in writing to Bassa, a close associate of Eudocia, who later re-entered communion with Juvenal alongside her in 455.¹⁴⁵ With peace restored to Palestine in 453, the palace would seem to have sought to suppress this awkward history, the primitive extremism attributed to Theodosius exhibiting all the hallmarks of a caricature drawn to dismiss the rebellion as the work of a fanatic who had misunderstood Chalcedon's doctrine. From the details presented here, it seems clear that we must view this imperial account with some suspicion. Not only that, but we might also reasonably question the Christological label imposed upon the Palestinian rebels as a group, whose agenda, viewed in this light, seems less obviously religious.

Excepting the letters, no account of the rebellion as a Christological conflict emerged before the 490s, when a new generation of anti-Chalcedonian writers had come to present the decades after the Council in increasingly polemical terms. As has already been noted, Eudocia and her associates do not appear to have been motivated by doctrinal zeal. Marcian, as we have seen, was forced to admit that the rebels were not 'Eutychians.' Pope Leo, himself struggling with the terms of a theological debate largely conducted in Greek, confessed to Julian of Cos that he too was unsure as to the theological content of their complaints, and asked for clarification. Even leaving aside the speed with which most can be seen to have embraced Chalcedon retrospectively, the idea that Juvenal's opponents had rallied in defence of a closely-held theological principle appears to have been almost entirely lost upon most observers. Later anti-Chalcedonian tradition never eulogised Eudocia, as it would other erstwhile imperial allies such as Theodora, or even Theodosius II. The Syriac *Life* of the miaphysite radical Barsauma revealingly cast the empress as a dilettante, accused of obstructing its hero in his efforts to rid Palestine

¹⁴² Holum, *Theodosian Empresses*, p. 165; ACO 1.1.1.73-74.

¹⁴³ R. Burgess, 'The accession of Marcian in the light of Chalcedonian apologetic and monophysite polemic,' *BZ* 86.1 (1994), 47-68.

¹⁴⁴ ACO 2.4.77.

¹⁴⁵ V. *Euth.* 30 (ed. Schwartz, pp. 47-49)

of Judaism.¹⁴⁶ Elsewhere, the Constantinopolitan *Life of Daniel the Stylite*, written shortly after 476, conflated the violent events of 451-453, ostensibly a dispute over Christian doctrine, with a coterminous uprising by the Samaritans.¹⁴⁷ Gerontius' *Life of Melania*, perhaps the only literary product of the rebellion, contains no reference to Chalcedon, or its doctrine, at all.

This latter point is especially striking, given that Gerontius was one of the few prominent Palestinian ascetics active in the 450s to remain in opposition to the Council until his death.¹⁴⁸ Though Juvenal is pointedly omitted from the *Life*, we would surely expect its author, normally portrayed as a miaphysite rigorist, to at least mention the contentious Definition of Faith. That he did not, in a work which may well have been dedicated to the rebel bishop Theodosius, might suggest that Christology was not the sole basis of their shared opposition to Juvenal.¹⁴⁹ But what could have led powerful figures like Eudocia, Gerontius, or Peter the Iberian, to the anti-Chalcedonian cause, if not their faith? If the empress ultimately coordinated the rebellion and was not, as I have argued, a Christological sectarian, what then were her motives?

IV. Chalcedon and Eudocia

The answer to this question may well lie in the canons of Chalcedon. Through its various disciplinary rulings, the Council, in addition to placing Juvenal in overall charge of Palestine's Christians, had presided over a radical reform of ecclesiastical government. Granting the bishop substantial new powers to regulate the affairs, both of individual churches, and the region's burgeoning monastic movement, the effect was to significantly alter the balance of power between the See and the competing source of religious authority represented by Eudocia and her allies.¹⁵⁰ Canon 4 placed the monasteries of each see under the direct episcopal control of the local bishop, whilst Canon 3 officially forbade monks and priests to engage in secular business without episcopal approval.¹⁵¹ Monasteries were banned from managing or leasing property for profit, and henceforth only allowed to administer Church property, or even to care for the poor, under orders from their bishop. In Canon 7, clergy and monks were also

¹⁴⁶ *Life of Barsauma*, ed. F. Nau, 'Résumé de monographies syriaques,' *Revue de l'Orient Chrétien*, (2nd Series), 8 (18), (1913), 270-276, 379-389; 9 (19), (1914), 113-134 278-289; idem, 'Deux épisodes de l'histoire juive sous Théodose II (423-438) d'après la vie de Barsauma le Syrien,' *Revue des études juives*, 83 (1927), 184-206, 191.

¹⁴⁷ R. Lane Fox, 'The Life of Daniel,' in M.J. Edwards and S. Swain, (eds.) *Portraits: Biographical Representation in the Greek and Latin Literature of the Roman Empire*, (Oxford 1997), 175-225, 187.

¹⁴⁸ *V. Euth.* 45 (ed. Schwartz, p. 67).

¹⁴⁹ Clark, *Life of Melania*, 20-21, 24.

¹⁵⁰ See: P. L'Huillier, *The Church of the Ancient Councils: The Disciplinary Work of the First Four Ecumenical Councils*, (Crestwood, NY), pp. 206-328; D. Caner, *Wandering, Begging, Monks: Spiritual Authority and the Promotion of Monasticism in Late Antiquity*, (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA 2002), 235-241; Price and Gaddis, *Acts of Chalcedon*, 3.92-94; Gaddis, *There is no Crime*, pp. 317-327.

¹⁵¹ ACO 2.1.2.158.20-159.23.

formally barred from holding any form of public office.¹⁵² The Late Roman civil service, which paid salaries in gold currency, was one of the main avenues through which minor provincial figures could access the empire's monetary economy. The intention of Canon 7, therefore, was to further ensure monastic and clerical dependence on bishops as patrons by closing this potential stream of income. Canon 8 significantly added that the authority of bishops over monks and clergy extended to those employed in private religious institutions, such as almshouses, monasteries, and martyr shrines.¹⁵³ These rulings represented a very serious assault against the aristocratic tradition of religious patronage followed by Eudocia in Palestine.¹⁵⁴ They threatened to give effective control of the empress' foundations to Juvenal.

Juvenal's new authority over Palestine's three provinces alone would have significantly enhanced his standing as a religious patron. But the canons had effectively placed him in control of a vast portfolio of religious property spread across the region. The local Church appears to have grown increasingly wealthy through the proceeds of the pilgrimage trade during the later fourth century.¹⁵⁵ The network of monasteries dotted along the Jerusalem-Jericho road was a testament to the revenues that could be derived.¹⁵⁶ Churches across the Roman world were experiencing an influx of donations during this period, which may well have often constituted their main source of income.¹⁵⁷ As we have seen, the presence of Christianity's holiest sites had made Jerusalem an especially popular recipient of aristocratic largesse. Much of this income would previously have been divided between the bishop and his 'episcopal' churches, on the one hand, and private religious foundations such as St. Stephen's or the Mount of Olives monasteries, on the other.¹⁵⁸ Juvenal's new powers would have enabled him to overcome these haphazard arrangements, channelling donations and bequests into the coffers of the episcopate.

¹⁵² ACO 2.1.2.159.31-33.

¹⁵³ ACO 2.1.2.159.34-160.4.

¹⁵⁴ Chitty, *The Desert*, p. 88: 'We get the impression of a somewhat aristocratic monastic society regarding Juvenal as a parvenu.' Cf. Winkelmann, 'Konzeptionen des Verhältnisses,' 79.

¹⁵⁵ Jerome, *Epistula ad Pammachium* 11 (ed. Migne PL 23.371-412). The letter speaks of John's financial exploitation of the pilgrims. See also: E.D. Hunt, *Holy Land Pilgrimage*, pp. 137-142, 146-147, 151-152.

¹⁵⁶ Hirschfeld, *Judean Desert Monasteries*, pp. 55-58.

¹⁵⁷ A.H.M. Jones, 'Church Finances in the Fifth and Sixth Centuries,' *JThS* (new series) 11 (1960), 84-94; idem. *The Later Roman Empire, 284-602: A Social, Economic, and Administrative survey*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1964; repr. 1986), 2.894-910; Rapp, *Holy Bishops*, pp. 215-216; Brown, *Through the Eye of a Needle*, pp. 72-91.

¹⁵⁸ A.H.M. Jones, 'Church Finance in the Fifth and Sixth Centuries,' *JThS* (new series) 11 (1960), 84-94, esp. 88-94: Jones famously argued that Church income from donations was gradually supplanted during this period by that derived from ecclesiastical endowments. However, it is possible that Jerusalem, with its lucrative pilgrimage economy, marked an exception to this rule. For a classic argument for the central role of pilgrimage in the economy of Late Antique Palestine more generally, see: M. Avi-Yonah, 'The Economics of Byzantine Palestine,' *Israel Exploration Journal* 8 (1958), 39-51; J.P. Thomas, *Private Religious Foundations in the Byzantine Empire*, *Dumbarton Oaks Studies* 24, (Washington, DC 1987), pp. 14-37. Thomas considered it likely that private religious foundations were predominant by the beginning of the fifth century.

For generations, Bishops of Jerusalem had aspired to firmer control of their city's 'Holy Places.' Prior to Chalcedon, as we have seen, episcopal authority over many of these sites and the churches or monasteries which served them was only ever piecemeal. In 451, Juvenal had formally accepted primacy over Palestine 'in the name of the (Church of the) Resurrection.' Similar language appears as a common feature in the official correspondence of his successors. In styling themselves as the rightful custodians of these institutions, the bishops naturally appraised their value to the See in terms that were, overwhelmingly, spiritual. To contemporaries, however, such claims were difficult to untangle from a wider, concomitant debate over the status of religious real estate. This argument, as Gilbert Dagron has shown, had already erupted as a frequent cause of unrest among Christian leaders by the mid-fifth century, the covetous behaviour of John Chrysostom or Flavian of Constantinople in the capital fanning enraging monastic groups by threatening interference in the administration of their property.¹⁵⁹ The latter's concerns were already shared by Palestinian observers responding to the creeping proprietorial ambitions betrayed during the episcopate of John II of Jerusalem, fifty years prior to Chalcedon, whose coercive management of religious sites had given rise to bitter accusations of profiteering.¹⁶⁰

Those present at the Council anticipated that the new economic power afforded to bishops would be so great, that they mandated the appointment of stewards (*oikonomoi*) to oversee ecclesiastical finances.¹⁶¹ At the same time, Marcian insisted that the Church Fathers issue a further canon specifically forbidding episcopal simony.¹⁶² The enhanced power of the bishop as patron is evident in the decades after 451. Cyril of Scythopolis, in the *Life of Sabas*, described a religious landscape where the episcopate was the preeminent local source of patronage, Sabas' monastic enterprises, and those of Euthymius' other followers, often relying on the See for material support.¹⁶³ As another symptom of Juvenal's newfound status, 453 saw many of those involved in the rebellion who were unable to call on Eudocia's protection systematically persecuted for their role. Recent history had shown that wealthy Sees could pay to maintain large retinues of clerical and lay supporters, summoned to enforce their policies and intimidate opponents.¹⁶⁴ At the very least, they could afford to exert themselves through bribery or largesse.¹⁶⁵ Thus, as a consequence of Chalcedon's rulings, Juvenal not only achieved his demand for formal control of the Palestinian Church; by harnessing the proceeds of the region's buoyant Church economy, he was

¹⁵⁹ G. Dagron, 'Les moines et la ville: Le monachisme à Constantinople jusqu'au concile de Chalcédoine (451),' *Travaux et Mémoires* 4 (1970), 229-276, 261-275; Caner, *Wandering, Begging Monks*, pp. 234-241.

¹⁶⁰ Jerome, *Against John of Jerusalem*, (PL 23.355-396).

¹⁶¹ ACO 2.1.2.163.3-8. Its provisions were hardly stringent. *oikonomoi* were to be appointed by bishops from among their own clergy.

¹⁶² ACO 2.1.2.158.9-19.

¹⁶³ *V. Euth.* 40, 43; *V. Sab.* 19, 39 (ed. Schwartz, pp. 59-60, 62-64, 103-104, 129-130).

¹⁶⁴ The most famous being the notorious *Parabalani* of Alexandria. Their numbers were eventually limited by imperial legislation: *CTh.* 16.2.42 (ed. Mommsen and Meyer, pp.). Now see: G. Bowersock, 'Parabalani: A Terrorist Charity in Late Antiquity,' *Anabases* 12 (2010), 45-54.

¹⁶⁵ Cyril of Alexandria had once been notorious for using the wealth of his see to bribe imperial officials: ACO 1.4.224, 293.

also to target the very lay and monastic groups whose activities had long posed the greatest challenge to his authority. Rufus recounted the stories of Stephen, archdeacon of the Church of the Resurrection, and of Pelagius of Edessa, chased to the coast by Juvenal's enforcers, following his restoration.¹⁶⁶ Others, like the hermit Solomon, or Theodotus, a rebel bishop appointed by Theodosius, were driven from Palestine altogether.¹⁶⁷ The abbots Gerontius and Romanus were also briefly exiled, only permitted to return on terms agreed between Juvenal and Eudocia. Such was the overbearing nature of the bishop's rule in the Holy City itself that Romanus later relocated his entire monastery, abandoning a site in the diocese of Jerusalem for land the empress had donated at Eleutheropolis.¹⁶⁸ These later displays of episcopal power, surely impossible before 451, were symptoms of Chalcedon's success in curbing clerical and monastic independence.

The *Acts* of the Council do not record precisely when its canons were ratified. Discussion of their contents would seem to have taken place during unofficial sessions of the synod for which no written minutes survive.¹⁶⁹ We can be confident, however, that Chalcedon's blueprint for the effective subjugation of private religious foundations by the ecclesiastical hierarchy was unveiled at roughly the same time as the finalised version of the Definition of Faith. Three proposals were handed down by Marcian and presented during the Council's sixth session, later enshrined as canons 3, 4, and 20. Of these, two (canons 3 and 4) contained sweeping new restrictions on the use of church and monastic property. This was the same session at which the Definition was formally proclaimed and approved.

From details provided in the *Acts*, Judith Herrin has been able to show that the remaining canons were most likely arranged as part of another debate held immediately afterwards.¹⁷⁰ Even before this point, however, we must assume that many of those present already had at least some idea of what was intended. Chalcedon's schedule, vigorously enforced by the imperial commissioners, left little room for surprises. As Herrin has evoked, Marcian's representatives preferred only to bring matters to the floor, having already secured the support of delegates through backchannel agreements. Such extra-conciliar arrangements, as we have seen, were the mechanism through which both the Definition, and the plan to award Juvenal primacy over Palestine, were truly formulated, the official gatherings of the bishops serving merely to provide a theatrical rubber stamp to pre-approved decisions. Though obscure, the process by which the canons were ratified appears to have been similarly stage-managed. Even though the texts would later claim that Theodosius hastened to Palestine to incite rebellion against Juvenal upon

¹⁶⁶ *Plerophoriae* 2-6 (ed. Nau, pp.13-18).

¹⁶⁷ Evagrius, *HE* 3.6 (ed. Bidez and Parmentier, pp. 106); Ps. Zach, *Chron.* 5.5.d. (ed. Brooks 1.217-218). Elsewhere, Rufus appears to allude to a clampdown against anti-Chalcedonians at Maiuma, referring to 'orthodox' citizens driven from there to Ascalon following Juvenal's return: *Plerophoriae* 6 (ed. Nau, p. 18).

¹⁶⁸ Its previous site had been at Thekoa.

¹⁶⁹ Price and Gaddis doubt that this session took place at all. Price, however, since appears to have changed his mind: Price and Gaddis, *Acts of Chalcedon*, 3.92-93; cf. R. Price, 'Truth, Omission, Fiction,' 99, with n. 19.

¹⁷⁰ ACO; J. Herrin, 'The Quinisext Council (692) as a continuation of Chalcedon,' in *Chalcedon in Context*, 150-151.

hearing the ‘in two natures’ formula proclaimed from the ambo of the basilica of St. Euphemia, we can reasonably assume that by this stage word of the canons’ momentous ecclesiastical reforms had also begun to circulate.

Eudocia must have recognised that the provisions of the Chalcedonian canons spelt the end for her career as Palestine’s principle religious patron. Having been ostracised from the imperial court, the empress had successfully assumed a new position of spiritual leadership within the Palestinian Church. Now, the Council was poised to deny her even this. Her worst fears may well have been confirmed by further, menacing provisions for the punishment of any who refused to accept their bishops’ new powers. Canon 8 ordered the excommunication of any layperson who attempted to obstruct the episcopate in its oversight of almshouses, monasteries, or martyria, appearing to anticipate resistance from lay religious benefactors.¹⁷¹ Bishops were elsewhere awarded the exclusive right to try recalcitrant clerics and monks in ecclesiastical courts.¹⁷² These were not idle threats. As Juvenal’s return to Palestine with Roman troops and the violence in Alexandria would show, Constantinople was for a time prepared to ensure compliance to Chalcedon through force.

Like Melania before her, Eudocia had endowed churches and monasteries at great cost, in the understanding that they would remain as a testament to her career as a religious patron. Chalcedon demanded the surrender of her authority to Juvenal, under orders from her erstwhile rival, Pulcheria. It is the suggestion of this study that Eudocia instigated the rebellion against Juvenal in 451 in response to Chalcedon’s wide-ranging assault against the tradition of aristocratic religious patronage in Palestine. The extension of episcopal jurisdiction over the empress’ private religious foundations promised to undermine the prestige and autonomy of her dependents and to destroy her intended legacy. In response, she appears to have gathered together her clients and allied herself with Palestine’s great monastic houses. Ascetic leaders such as Gerontius, Elpidius, Romanus, and Gerasimus joined her cause in defence of the independence and livelihoods of their communities.

The anger of the wider monastic movement in Palestine after 451 is clear from Juvenal’s attempts to placate them upon his return with offers of reconciliation and an amnesty for former rebels.¹⁷³ The monk Theodosius seems to have been made titular leader of their cause, lending a more respectable religious character to what was largely a dispute over ownership. The decision to appoint Theodosius as an anti-bishop of Jerusalem and to replace the other Palestinian bishops with supporters of the rebellion, of itself, represented an extraordinary attempt to neuter the threat posed by the episcopate. The violence which followed was only clearly ‘anti-Chalcedonian,’ then, in the sense that its perpetrators were motivated by opposition to the Council.

¹⁷¹ ACO 2.1.2.159.34-160.4.

¹⁷² ACO 2.1.2.160.5-13, 161.25-28.

¹⁷³ ACO 2.5.9-29; John Rufus, *De. Obi. Theo* 9 (repr. Phenix and Horn, p. 296).

Eudocia may have compromised over the Definition of Faith. But she was not prepared to hand over control of her religious property. After 455, the empress embarked on a new round of church construction, leaving detailed instructions for the administration of her foundations on her deathbed five years later.¹⁷⁴ Her ‘conversion,’ when it came, coincided with the issue of a further law, in which Marcian specifically upheld the rights of wealthy women to act as church and monastic patrons.¹⁷⁵ The emperor now explicitly allowed for widows, nuns, and deaconesses to bequeath their property to churches, monasteries, or to individual priests and monks, free from interference by the authorities. This ruling ostensibly replaced an earlier constitution, in which Valentinian I had complained of attempts by clerics and holy men to cajole suggestable heiresses into donating their fortunes to religious causes, contrary to the wishes of their families.¹⁷⁶ The reappearance of this debate now, however, reveals that the activities of high-profile, female benefactors to the Church had become a live political issue once again. It is tempting to think of Marcian’s repeal, at least in part, as an effort to placate Eudocia and her supporters.

In a rare, revisionist account of the events of 451-453, Friedhelm Winkelmann once suggested that the furious response to Chalcedon in Palestine was emblematic of a wider rejection of the right of ‘the State’ to intervene in ecclesiastical affairs.¹⁷⁷ The evidence presented here, however, points to narrower concerns. Led by an empress, the Palestinian rebels displayed no obvious aversion to imperial involvement in Church politics. Rather than spurning the views of the palace, their leaders, on hounding Juvenal from office, had written directly to Marcian, seeking his approval. It was not the perceived encroachment of the court upon the traditional, sacred prerogatives of Church leaders which seems to have alarmed the bishop’s enemies, but rather the specific decision to grant the episcopate dominion over religious sites and institutions belonging to others. A final witness to the deep unease which this particular aspect of Chalcedon’s programme had generated locally can be located in the contemporary account of the *Life of Melania*, whose author went to such extraordinary lengths to project an idealised image of aristocratic largesse as monasticism’s lifeblood.

Gerontius’ hagiography has often puzzled scholars, disconcerted by its apparent, brazen celebration of earthly wealth. Throughout the text, Melania and her husband Pinianus are presented as archetypal monastic benefactors, an accolade based solely upon the enormous quantity of gold *solidi* supposedly transferred from their estates into the hands of religious institutions. The commemoration of this generosity serves as the primary focus for the *Life’s* retelling of the couple’s career, its author guilty of violating several core conventions of the hagiographic genre at once, not only embarking on a lengthy

¹⁷⁴ *V. Euth.* 35 (ed. Schwartz, pp. 53-54).

¹⁷⁵ Marcian, *Novels* 5, dated 22nd April 455. Property to be donated could be handed over through wills or codicils, but could also be placed in a trust fund during the lifetime of the donor.

¹⁷⁶ *CTh* 16.2.20

¹⁷⁷ Winkelmann, ‘Konzeptionen des Verhältnisses,’ 81. On the broader debate over the orthodoxy of imperial interference in doctrinal matters, see: Gaddis, *There is no Crime*, p. 327.

discussion of his subjects' finances, but frequently permitting this effort to distract from the appraisal of their ascetic achievements. Though Melania's personal transformation from noblewoman to impoverished nun is described in some detail, Gerontius' heroine is never presented as a spiritual authority in her own right. The *Life* neglects to credit its namesake with any memorable teaching on matters of faith. Her inexperience in dealing with basic tenets of the monastic life is laid bare in a famous chapter recounting a confrontation with an Egyptian hermit, Hephæstion. Ignoring the holy man's refusal to accept her money, Melania was said to have deposited a stash of gold coins in his cell regardless, prompting him to throw them in a river.¹⁷⁸ Gerontius' purpose, however, in portraying his patron in this light was not to somehow denigrate her memory. By drawing attention to Melania's ascetic inexperience, his aim was to underline a broader view: that the greatest service wealthy Christians could perform on behalf of the Church was to follow the advice of Augustine of Hippo, forsaking aimless almsgiving to the poor in favour of endowments for monasteries.¹⁷⁹

The timeliness of this appeal would seem remarkable, given recent events at Chalcedon. On closer inspection, however, Gerontius' message almost appears as a rallying cry, written on behalf of an entire monastic culture perceived to be under attack. If nothing else, the transmission history of the *Life* gives cause to suggest that efforts to publicise its conservative vision for a Church economy sustained by the sponsorship of the elite were underway from an early stage. Whilst the original language of the text is unknown, its rapid appearance in parallel Greek and Latin recensions has already been noted. On the basis of the liturgical practices described, Clark has argued that Melania's legend was intended for widespread circulation, most likely composed with a 'western' audience specifically in mind. If so, then the reverent depiction of aristocratic religious largesse found in Gerontius' hagiography would seem to have been addressed to a new generation of potential monastic patrons, now encouraged to emulate Melania's example by financially supporting the Holy Land's ascetics. The conspicuous silence on Chalcedon suggests an aim to move beyond the recent uncertainty generated by the Council, whose Christological dimension the *Life* entirely ignores.

The limited evidence available for the violence of 451-453 means that elements of the argument presented in this chapter are inevitably speculative. The role ascribed to doctrine in driving Juvenal's opponents, certainly, is much-reduced, when compared to previous assessments. In eschewing a mainly Christological explanation for the rebellion, however, the intention is not to cast doubt upon the religious sincerity of its participants. Nor is the argument extended here that there was no theological uproar against the Council, or that what happened in Palestine should automatically serve as a guide to understanding contemporaneous events at Alexandria, Antioch, or elsewhere. It is clear that Eudocia, Gerontius, and their allies were zealous Christians, whose impassioned defence of private religious

¹⁷⁸ *V. Mel.* gr. 38 (ed. Gorce, pp. 198).

¹⁷⁹ *V. Mel.* gr. 20 (ed. Gorce, pp. 107).

foundations was based, at least in part, on a shared belief in a specific model of spirituality.¹⁸⁰ At the same time, however, we ought not to underestimate the innovation represented by Chalcedon's disciplinary rulings. The canons of 451 cast a long shadow. For Leo Ueding, their contents served as the cornerstone of subsequent attempts to regulate monasticism, in particular - an abiding concern for civil and ecclesiastical lawmakers, as we shall see, in the centuries that followed.¹⁸¹ From this later tradition, it is clear that the Council's reception did not entail the lasting suppression of private churches and monasteries, in Palestine or beyond. Its provisions, however, do at least appear to have served to provoke an enduring, materially-focused debate as to the proper bounds of aristocratic and episcopal authority within the Church.

¹⁸⁰ Recent work by Peter Brown has carefully traced the religious motivation behind aristocratic donations to churches and monasteries in the centuries which followed the conversion of Constantine: Brown, *Eye of a Needle*, passim.

¹⁸¹ B. Granić, 'Die rechtliche Stellung und Organisation der griechischen Kloster nach dem Justinianischen Recht,' *BZ* 29 (1929-1930), pp. 6-34; L. Ueding, 'Die Kanones von Chalkedon in ihrer Bedeutung für Mönchtum und Klerus,' in A. Grillmeier and H. Bacht (eds.), *Das Konzil von Chalkedon, Geschichte und Gegenwart*, 2 vols. (Würzburg 1953), 2.569-676, 660-676.

CHAPTER 2

CONTESTING THE 'CHURCH OF THE BISHOPS': CONTROVERSY AFTER CHALCEDON, 453-518

If Juvenal's restoration to the See of Jerusalem in 453 marked a major set-back for Chalcedon's opponents in Palestine, 518 saw an event from which their movement would never fully recover. The accession to the throne that year of the Illyrian general Justin provoked a dramatic reversal in the imperial religious policy issued at Constantinople. Whereas Marcian's successors had previously sought to stifle debate over the Council, the new emperor was not only outspoken in support of its rulings; he quickly sought to enforce them. Whilst anti-Chalcedonian accounts of the persecution that followed are likely exaggerated, in Palestine, at least, the effects of this shift would seem to have been keenly felt.¹⁸² Epistolary evidence suggests that monastic leaders at Gaza, where Chalcedon's detractors were strongest, were compelled to flee to Egypt, the only region of the East left untouched by Justin's reforms.¹⁸³ This chapter traces the evolution of the controversy in the intervening decades, culminating in renewed doctrinal unrest during the reign of Justin's predecessor, Anastasius. At the turn of the sixth century, for the second time in less than seventy years, Palestinian Church officials and aristocratic laity came to blows over the rulings enacted in 451. Only in the very final stages of their confrontation, this chapter will suggest, did these groups come to assume strong Christological identities.

I. Violence and Moderation: Chalcedon in the Writings of Severus and Nephalius

We begin our analysis with a familiar scene. In 516, a second phase of violent local conflict over Chalcedon culminated in chaotic scenes at Jerusalem. That year witnessed the overthrow of another of the city's bishops, Elias, deposed on the orders of the emperor Anastasius. Elias had provoked the emperor by refusing to recognise Severus, the anti-Chalcedonian patriarch of Antioch. At the time of his departure, Jerusalem was the only major Eastern see still committed to Chalcedon's defence. Elias' allies had already been unseated. Flavian of Antioch and Macedonius of Constantinople, fellow supporters of the Council, were dismissed by Anastasius in 511 and 512. Jerusalem's bishop had at first succeeded in maintaining better relations with the imperial court, but his ongoing squabble with Flavian's successor exasperated the emperor and his advisors.

¹⁸² On the exaggerated account found in the John of Ephesus' *Lives of the Eastern Saints*, see: Menze, *Justinian and the Making*, pp. 111, 123-124.

¹⁸³ Severus of Antioch, *Sixth book of Letters* 1.55 (ed. Brooks, p. 183); John of Ephesus, *Life of John of Hephestu* (ed. Brooks, pp. 536-539). On the impact of Justin's policies, most notably the promulgation of the staunchly-Chalcedonian *libellus* of Pope Hormisdas, see: V. Menze, *Justinian and the Making*, pp. 18, 92-94.

After failing to bow to imperial pressure to heal this rift, Elias was imprisoned and exiled to Aila on the Red Sea.¹⁸⁴ Opponents of Chalcedon welcomed the news; none more so than Severus, who had tirelessly lobbied Anastasius in the hope of securing his removal. The extraordinary ill-feeling in evidence between the two bishops appears to have stemmed, in part, from events in Palestine eight years earlier. Prior to his election, Severus had been the abbot of an anti-Chalcedonian monastery at Maiuma on the Gaza plain. In 508, this was one of a number of ascetic communities targeted by a pogrom initiated in the region by the Nubian monk, Nephalius.¹⁸⁵ Elias' role in this attack is never explicitly revealed by our surviving sources. His involvement, however, is strongly suggested by the accounts of Severus' biographers. Scholars are inclined to doubt that Nephalius could have mounted his campaign without assistance from the Church authorities in Jerusalem.¹⁸⁶ Its victims, however, were in no doubt that the city's bishop was responsible for the violence that resulted.

Zachariah of Mitylene, in his *Life of Severus*, described how Nephalius had joined the 'clergy of Jerusalem,' before assembling a mob of thugs, recruited in the Holy City, to attack the Gazan monasteries.¹⁸⁷ The Anonymous *Life of Severus*, formerly attributed to John bar Aptonia, accused the Nubian of 'arming the bishops of the cities and the priests against the monks.'¹⁸⁸ Escaping Palestine, Severus travelled to Constantinople to seek redress. There he met with Zachariah, a Gazan lawyer and old friend, who was now the leading spokesman for Palestine's anti-Chalcedonians in the capital.¹⁸⁹ Zachariah had recently composed an *Ecclesiastical History* pressing their movement's claims, which he dedicated to the imperial chamberlain, Eupraxius.¹⁹⁰ With Eupraxius' help, he gained access for Severus to the palace.¹⁹¹ Within a short time, Nephalius had followed him there.

At Constantinople, the two monks continued their quarrel within earshot of the emperor and his advisors. Severus and Nephalius joined a growing number of churchmen converging on the capital,

¹⁸⁴ Present-day Eilat, where Elias died in 518: V. Sab. 60 (ed. Schwartz, pp. 161-162); J. Hillner, *Prison, Punishment and Penance in Late Antiquity*, (Cambridge 2015), p. 246.

¹⁸⁵ The classic scholarly treatment of this episode remains: C. Moeller, 'Un représentant de la christologie néochalcédonienne au début du sixième siècle en Orient: Néphalius d'Alexandrie,' *RHE* 40 (1944/5). See also: Perrone, *La chiesa*, pp. 148-151; CCT 2.1.273-274; A. Kofsky, 'Severus of Antioch and Christological Politics in the Early Sixth Century,' *POC* 57 (2007), 43-57.

¹⁸⁶ Perrone, *La chiesa*, 148-151; Horn, *Asceticism and Christological Controversy*, p. 109; Frend, *Rise*, p. 205; Steppa, *John Rufus*, p. 53; Kofsky, 'Severus of Antioch,' 46; F. Alpi, *La route royale. Sévère d'Antioche et les Églises d'Orient (512-518)*, 2 vols. (Beirut 2010), 1.44-45.

¹⁸⁷ Zachariah, *Vita Severi* 145-146 (ed. Kugener, pp. 103-104); Evagrius, *HE* 3.33 (ed. Bidez and Parmentier, p. 132).

¹⁸⁸ *Anonymous Life of Severus* 40 (ed. Kugener, p. 148). The attribution of the text to John is no longer secure. For discussion, now see: S.P. Brock, *Two Early Lives of Severos, Patriarch of Antioch*, (Liverpool 2013), pp. 24-25.

¹⁸⁹ Zachariah later became bishop of Mitylene on Lesbos and is recorded as having attended the Synod of Constantinople in this capacity in 536. It would seem that, by this point, he had switched allegiance to support Chalcedon. See: *ACO* 3.154.3, 159.35; P. Allen, 'Zachariah Scholasticus and the *Historia Ecclesiastica* of Evagrius Scholasticus,' *JThS* (new series) 32 (1980), 471-488, 471.

¹⁹⁰ Ps. Zach, *Chron.* 3.1.a (ed. Brooks 1.144); Martindale, *PLRE* 2 'Eupraxius,' p. 426.

¹⁹¹ *V. Sev.* 146 (ed. Kugener, pp. 104-105). Zachariah records that Severus' other sponsor was Clementinus, *consularis* and *patricius*.

many, like them, embroiled in bitter ecclesiastical rivalries, now almost universally couched in the language of Christology. Earlier that year, for instance, Anastasius had hosted the controversial Syrian prelate Philoxenus of Mabbug, the leader of a cabal of anti-Chalcedonian bishops opposed to the rule of Flavian of Antioch. The presence of this outspoken rebel leader had outraged the patriarch Macedonius, under whose aegis a host of florilegia began to circulate in the city offering a patristic defence of the Council's Definition of Faith.¹⁹² Flavian had once been Antioch's *apocrisarius*, or episcopal ambassador, to the imperial court. As patriarch, he maintained strong links with the capital, acting as a close associate to both Macedonius, and his predecessor, Euphemius. In spite of his decidedly lukewarm support for Chalcedon's teachings, Constantinople's church leaders now rallied to his defence.¹⁹³ Severus and Nephalius were soon immersed in this world of complex alliances, where doctrinal debate melded with the politics of personality. Each produced new theological pamphlets of his own accusing the other of heterodoxy.

To a Palestinian reader, however, the tenor of these texts must have come as something of a surprise. Their authors, as we have seen, had only just presided over a spate of intense violence between Christians at Gaza. But with an imperial audience firmly in mind, they now offered rival, theological blueprints for peace within the Church. Nephalius is credited with having written an *Apology* for Chalcedon, which claimed to have found direct precedence for the Council's Christology in the canon of the Church Fathers.¹⁹⁴ Our only detailed knowledge of its contents comes from Severus' rebuttal, of which only the second part survives.¹⁹⁵ This latter text, entitled simply *Ad Nephalius*, claimed to paraphrase the *Apology*, carefully reconstructing Nephalius' arguments in turn before dismissing them. The Egyptian monk's beliefs are only otherwise attested in the hostile reports of his opponent's hagiographers.

The *Apology*, from what we can tell, ventured little original theology of its own.¹⁹⁶ But its defence of the Definition, as reported by Severus, would seem to have been novel.¹⁹⁷ Charles Moeller was able to identify its author as a founding member of the so-called 'neo-Chalcedonian' school soon dominant among the Council's supporters, who proponents adopted the language of their 'miaphysite' critics to market themselves as faithful heirs to the teachings of Cyril of Alexandria. Nephalius had apparently conceded that the Christological formula adopted in 451 was poorly-worded. He claimed that the Definition had meant to propose a model of 'two united natures' in Christ identical in essence to Cyril's

¹⁹² Grillmeier, *CCT* 2.1.22.

¹⁹³ See, for instance: Theophanes, *Chron.* AM 6004 (ed. de Boor p. 164); Menze, *Justinian and the Making*, p. 16.

¹⁹⁴ *CPG* 6825; Moeller, 'Un Représentant,' 100-136; Gray, *Defence of Chalcedon*, 105-111.

¹⁹⁵ The first part of the *Oratio* only survives in fragments contained in John the Grammarian's *Apology for the Council of Chalcedon*: John of Caesarea, *Apologia Concilii Chalcedonensis*, (ed. Richard, pp. 22-26).

¹⁹⁶ Moeller, 'Un Représentant,' 79.

¹⁹⁷ Moeller, 'Un Représentant,' 136; Price, *Acts of Constantinople*, 1.73; Gray, *Defence of Chalcedon*, pp. 105-111.

belief in ‘one incarnate nature of God the word.’¹⁹⁸ His work appears to have found a ready audience in the capital. Patrick Gray has argued that its success is reflected in the savage treatment later accorded to Nephalius by our anti-Chalcedonian sources.¹⁹⁹ A series of texts followed in the wake of the *Apology* which echoed many of its arguments.²⁰⁰ These were naturally well-received by Macedonius and his subordinates, whose See owed its preeminent status to Chalcedon’s twenty-eighth canon.²⁰¹ They had no obvious effect, however, on Anastasius and his advisors.

The emperor, it seems, was sceptical that Chalcedon’s rulings could ever serve a basis for consensus. Like his predecessors, Anastasius had grown weary of debate over a synod which, since 451, had brought nothing but division.²⁰² Such doubts as to the Council’s efficacy were likely to have been compounded by recent events. From 502 to 506, Constantinople was embroiled in a damaging war against the Persian shah Kavadh, resulting in the temporary loss of much of Roman Mesopotamia.²⁰³ Modern studies have argued that this crisis provoked an ‘eastwards’ shift in religious policy, amid efforts to bolster the loyalty of the Empire’s border provinces. These were regions where the Council had proved to be especially divisive, whose religious leaders now exerted a powerful influence over opinion in the capital.

Severus took advantage of this fraught political climate, just as Nephalius struggled to overcome it. Antioch’s future bishop was quick to claim that his opponent had misread his patristic sources. He suggested that Nephalius’ Christology was confused. He dismissed its talk of two ‘united natures’ as absurd.²⁰⁴ But at the same time, Severus also devised a new doctrinal settlement of his own which betrayed a clear appreciation of imperial priorities, presenting Anastasius with a plan to further undermine Chalcedon’s standing without fundamentally disturbing the status quo. In 510, the emperor commissioned him to compose an official edict, the *Typos*, which gave an anti-Chalcedonian

¹⁹⁸ P.T.R. Gray, ‘The Legacy of Chalcedon,’ in M. Maas (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Justinian*, (Cambridge 2005), 215-238, 224-225.

¹⁹⁹ P.T.R. Gray, ‘The Sabaitic Monasteries and the Christological Controversies (478-533),’ in J. Patrich (ed.), *The Sabaitic Heritage in the Orthodox Church from the fifth century to the present*, (Leuven 2001), 237-244, 240.

²⁰⁰ These were the *Philalethes* and *Contra Impium Grammaticum*. It is unclear whether John of Caesarea, the grammarian in question, was named for Caesarea Maritima in Palestine, or Caesarea in Cappadocia.

²⁰¹ This, more properly, was an edict issued without having been debated by the Council’s delegates.

²⁰² That it was Anastasius’ ambition to find peace within the Church is generally agreed: Evagrius, *HE* 3.30 (ed. Bidez and Parmentier, pp. 125-126); P. Charanis, *Church and State in the Later Roman Empire: The religious policy of Anastasius the First, 491-518*, (Madison, WI 1939), pp. 37, 48; F. Haarer, *Anastasius I, Politics and Empire in the Late Roman World*, (Cambridge 2006), pp. 125-127, 160-161, 182-183; M. Meier, *Anastasios I, Die Entstehung des Byzantinischen Reiches*, (Stuttgart 2009), p. 218. Cf. J. Dijkstra and G. Greatrex, ‘Patriarchs and Politics in Constantinople in the Reign of Anastasius (with a Reedition of O.Mon.Epiph. 59),’ *Millennium* 6 (2009), 223-264, 234.

²⁰³ Procopius, *De Bellis* 1.7-9. This territory was later recovered, and a treaty signed, committing both parties to seven years of peace.

²⁰⁴ Severus, *Ad Nephaliium* 2.19, 25-27, 50. Severus considered it incoherent to talk of Christ as possessing ‘two natures in one person,’ united or not, since he argued that Cyril thought the terms *physis*, *prosopon*, and *hypostasis* to be synonymous. See: P. Allen and C.T.R Hayward, *Severus of Antioch*, (London 2004), 36-37.

interpretation of the *Henotikon* (or ‘Act of Union’) issued by the emperor Zeno in 482.²⁰⁵ For twenty-five years, Zeno’s edict had held the Empire’s major Sees in communion by avoiding any mention of the synod of 451. Without abandoning this agreement, the text’s official meaning was amended as a gesture of goodwill to bishops on the Eastern frontier. It was now to be read as condemning the ‘in two natures’ view of Christ, which Chalcedon had taken from the *Tome* of Leo. No requirement, however, was made at this stage for its signatories to anathematise the Council itself.

With Anastasius as his patron, Severus remained at Constantinople until 511. Whilst attached to the court, he published a range of further theological treatises, each of which built upon the arguments presented in his rebuttal to Nephalius. Whatever the reception of his opponent’s work, there can be little doubt that Severus was widely-acclaimed as a theologian during his lifetime, the architect and namesake of the syncretic belief system classically described by Joseph Lebon as ‘Severian monophysitism.’²⁰⁶ This, in its mature form, outlined a Christology which was barely distinguishable from that upheld by Chalcedon’s supporters, a reality that both sides were eventually forced to concede.²⁰⁷ As an overture to his opponents, Severus eventually spoke of Christ as possessing ‘two natures in thought,’ or ‘two natures in contemplation.’²⁰⁸ He pointedly condemned the perceived excesses of hard-line miaphysites like Sergius the Grammarian.²⁰⁹

There remained, of course, one clear distinction between Severus’ position and that of his Neochalcedonian contemporaries. Whilst both sought to render their Christology in language more acceptable to the other, neither was prepared to concede any ground over the fundamental question as to whether or not Chalcedon’s rulings were orthodox. For all their elaborate attempts to skirt this question, the Council’s supporters were unable to assent to any agreement which seemed to compromise the validity of its ‘in two natures’ formula. Nor were their detractors willing to abandon their call for the wholesale condemnation of the Definition of Faith. These limitations notwithstanding, however, the willingness of both sides to patiently address their opponents’ concerns seems firmly at odds with the violent events of 508. In a recent study, Pauline Allen and Robert Hayward have described Severus’ *Ad Nephaliium* as ‘polite and generally non-personal.’²¹⁰ Gray has referred to Nephalius’ *Apology* as ‘non-

²⁰⁵ C. Moeller, ‘Le Type de l’empereur Anastase I,’ *SP 3/TU 78* (1961), 240-247; V. Sev, 149, (ed. Kugener, pp. 108); Severus, *Sixth Book of Select Letters* 1.1 (ed. Brooks, pp.); CCT 2.1.275-276; Alpi, *La route royale*, pp. 1.47-48. The *Typos* only survives partially in Armenian translation.

²⁰⁶ 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); idem, ‘Le christologie du monophysisme syrien,’ in A. Grillmeier and H. Bacht (eds.), *Das Konzil von Chalkedon: Geschichte und Gegenwart*, (2 vols.), (Würzburg 1951), 2.425-580.

²⁰⁷ S.P. Brock, ‘Conversations with the Syrian Orthodox under Justinian (532),’ *OCP* 47 (1981), 87-121.

²⁰⁸ i.e. *Duo physeis en theoria* or *duo physeis kat’epinoian*: Lebon, ‘Le christologie,’ 525-527; Bell, *Social Conflict*, p. 169.

²⁰⁹ For in-depth discussion of Severus’ letters to Sergius, see: I. Torrance, *Christology after Chalcedon, Severus of Antioch and Sergius the Monophysite*, (Norwich 1988), pp. 16-34.

²¹⁰ Allen and Hayward, *Severus*, p. 39.

adversarial and irenic.²¹¹ It is difficult to reconcile this pacific image with the turbulent accounts of the Gazan pogrom. We struggle to see how Nephalius especially, apparently so willing compromise in his writings, could be so ruthless in his treatment of religious adversaries in the flesh.

It is possible that our anti-Chalcedonian sources gave an exaggerated account of the episode at Gaza in the hope of discrediting Nephalius. But this was not the first occasion on which the Egyptian monk had stood accused of fermenting religious unrest. Nephalius, it seems, had previously led an earlier revolt in the 480s against the Alexandrian patriarch, Peter Mongus. This campaign, however, was apparently conducted on behalf of a militant sect of anti-Chalcedonian purists opposed to the signing of the *Henotikon*.²¹² Evagrius would later attempt to place a sympathetic spin on these events by arguing that Nephalius had always been loyal to the Council, and had only broken with Peter because he anathematised it.²¹³ Historians, however, generally accept that he must have switched sides to support Chalcedon in the years leading up to 508. Gray has criticised suggestions that this ‘conversion’ may be seen to cast doubt upon the sincerity of the Christological beliefs later expressed in the *Apology*. As he rightly notes, two and half decades was a long time in the changeable religious climate of the period after 451.²¹⁴ It is one thing, however, to find a protagonist of these debates gradually alter his views in line with the shifting contours of debate. It is quite another, in the course a single career, to be accused of rallying violent extremists on both sides of the Christological divide. The erudition of the arguments made in the *Apology* would seem to preclude the idea that Nephalius was simply a mercenary with no firm doctrinal allegiance of his own. We struggle, however, to avoid the impression that there was an element of artifice to his measured literary debate with Severus.²¹⁵

There is little to suggest that Severus was any more committed to peace in reality than his opponent. As patriarch, he soon gained a reputation among Chalcedonians as a ‘tyrant-bishop,’ more inclined to persecute the Council’s supporters, than engage them in debate.²¹⁶ On the eve of his election, Antioch is claimed to have been consumed by violence as monastic henchmen summoned by Philoxenus fought with local residents loyal to Flavian.²¹⁷ Once in place, Severus was accused of driving dissenting suffragans into exile, the Palestinian monk John Moschus later preserving the colourful tale of his

²¹¹ Gray, ‘The Sabaite Monasteries,’ 240.

²¹² Ps. Zach, *Chron.* 6.1 (ed. Brooks, 2.4 -5). The *akephaloi*, or ‘headless ones,’ were so-named because they had no bishops on their side. For the evolution of this term, see: Lampe, *A Patristic Greek Lexicon*, ἀκέφαλος, p. 61.

²¹³ Evagrius, *HE* 3.22-23, (ed. Bidez and Parmentier, pp. 190-192). The claim that Peter anathematised Chalcedon at the same time as signing the *Henotikon* is widely-corroborated.

²¹⁴ Gray, ‘The Sabaite Monasteries,’ 240.

²¹⁵ *Anonymous Life of Severus* 40 (ed. Kugener, p. 149): accuses Severus of hiding his true ‘rage’ through fear of Anastasius.

²¹⁶ For the evolution of the Late Antique motif of the ‘tyrant-bishop’ see: Gaddis, *There is no Crime*, pp. 272-281.

²¹⁷ Evagrius, *HE* 3.32 (ed. Bidez and Parmentier, p. 131). cf. Ps. Zach. *Chron.* 7.10.c (ed. Brooks 2.51).

alleged attempts to poison Julian, the Chalcedonian bishop of Bostra.²¹⁸ We must be careful not to lend these clearly partisan accounts more credence than they deserve. But we may be confident that they were not complete inventions. Clear evidence survives of Severus inciting violence against opponents in letters of this period addressed to high-ranking military officials.²¹⁹ Ernest Honigmann may once have described Antioch's new bishop as 'peaceful, an enemy of violent solutions.'²²⁰ But by his own admission, Severus cultivated this image dishonestly.²²¹ Like Nephalius, he showed a propensity for violence which was often only loosely connected, if not at variance, with the 'compromise theology' set out in many of his writings.

This tension was evident from the moment of Severus' arrival at Constantinople in 508. Whilst overseeing the reform of the *Henotikon*, the dissident abbot had penned a series of letters to supporters outlining his intention to convince Anastasius to eventually replace it with a document explicitly condemning Chalcedon.²²² In the meantime, he gave backing to efforts by Philoxenus to unseat the Chalcedonian Patriarchs. The first victim of this campaign was Macedonius in 511. As early as 509, however, Philoxenus wrote to monastic allies in Palestine, detailing a plot to force the resignations of Flavian of Antioch and Elias of Jerusalem.²²³ The plan was to overwhelm the patriarchs at a synod of Eastern bishops, threatening them with deposition if they refused to anathematise the Council, knowing that if they did, their positions would become untenable. Flavian successfully evaded Philoxenus' attempts to corner him at a synod held in Antioch later that year.²²⁴ But when he later refused to sign the *Typos* which Severus had drafted at the Synod of Sidon in 511, Philoxenus complained to Anastasius. As a result, Flavian was banished to Petra, with Severus elected as his successor.

In less than four years, Severus had gone from a refugee to the holder of one of the highest ecclesiastical offices in the Eastern Roman Empire. But his purpose in coming to Constantinople had never been to unseat Flavian. His focus, at this point, remained firmly on events in Palestine. There is some suggestion that the triumphant abbot had already returned to Gaza when news of his election broke. Others suppose that he was en route to his monastery and forced to turn back. Even after taking office, Severus renewed

²¹⁸ Cyril, *V. Sab.* 56 (ed. Schwartz, pp. 147-148); Evagrius, *HE* 3.34 (ed. Bidez and Parmentier, pp. 132-133); John Moschus, *Leimonarion* 92; According to Evagrius, Julian of Bostra and Peter of Damascus were forced to seek refuge in Jerusalem.

²¹⁹ Severus, *Sixth Book of Letters* 1.9, 1.46; Bell, *Social Conflict*, p. 198; Alpi, *La route royale*, pp. 1.122-123.

²²⁰ E. Honigmann, *Évêques et évêchés monophysites d'Asie Antérieure au VI^e siècle*, (Leuven 1951), pp. 20-21. Cf. E. Stein, *Histoire du Bas-Empire*, (Paris 1949), 2.173-174.

²²¹ A. de Halleux, *Philoxène de Mabbog: sa vie, ses écrits, sa théologie*, (Leuven 1963), p. 69.

²²² Severus, *Sixth Book of Letters* 1.2; idem. *Letter to Hippocrates*, *PO* 12.320; idem. *Letter to Dioscorus II*, *PO* 12:324; *CCT* 2.1.280.

²²³ Philoxenus, *Letter to the Monks of Palestine* (ed. de Halleux, 'Nouveaux textes inédits de Philoxène de Mabbog: I: Lettre aux moines de Palestine –Lettre lumineuse au synodicon d'Éphèse,' *Le Muséon* 75 (1962), 31-62); D. Michelson, *The Practical Christology of Philoxenus of Mabbog*, (Oxford 2015), pp. 42-45.

²²⁴ Rival accounts of the events of the Synod survive: one is Philoxenus' letter, the other a letter of 515 written by Palestinian monks to Alcison of Nicopolis: *CCT* 2.1.271-272.

his complaints against the Chalcedonian Church leadership in Jerusalem. Prior to 516, we find him at among his most vindictive in the venomous quarrel with Elias briefly mentioned above.

II. Severus and the Deposition of Elias of Jerusalem

Severus certainly did not mince his words when asked to give his opinion of Jerusalem's bishop. Writing to monastic correspondents in Palestine, he derided Elias as 'weak' and 'unstable,' his failings so well-known that it was pointless to reiterate them.²²⁵ He was no less acerbic in responding to complaints by Cassian of Bostra that Elias had consecrated one of his clergy to the episcopate without permission. 'On the contrary,' Severus remarked, 'one ought to have been surprised if a man like that, in his faith and his character, had done anything canonical.'²²⁶ This loathing was reciprocated. Elias was visibly dismayed that a longstanding opponent of his rule should have acquired so much power. In 512, he refused to recognise Severus as Flavian's successor. Palestine's primate had only recently accepted the synodical letters of Timothy of Constantinople, appointed to replace Macedonius in a move regarded by many as uncanonical.²²⁷ But when Severus' letters arrived at Jerusalem for a second time, their couriers were chased from the city.²²⁸

Elias had emerged from the Synod of Sidon unscathed. But he seems to have anticipated that his rejection of Severus would be met with indignation in the capital. In the following year, he sent a delegation of supporters to Constantinople to reiterate his loyalty to the emperor.²²⁹ Jerusalem's representatives were led by Sabas, the desert abbot who later became the subject of the longest of the hagiographies written by Cyril of Scythopolis in the 550s.²³⁰ The *Life of Sabas* claims that its subject had been sent to seek 'peace' for the city and its bishop, then under attack as a result of slanders levied by his opponent.²³¹

According to Cyril, this mission was a success and Sabas returned home, having secured the goodwill of the court. The holy man was even said to have persuaded some of the Palestinian monks who had originally accompanied Severus to the capital to repent and re-enter communion with their patriarch.²³² By 515, however, several years of counter-manoeuvres by Severus had begun to take their toll. A letter

²²⁵ Severus, *Sixth Book of Letters* 1.42 (ed. Brooks, 1.133).

²²⁶ Severus, *Sixth Book of Letters* 1.47 (ed. Brooks, 1.144-145). Severus, in fact, was in no position to pass judgement here. See: P. Van Nuffelen and A. Hilken, 'Recruitment and Conflict in Sixth-Century Antioch: A micro-study of Select Letters 6.1.5 of Severus of Antioch,' *Zeitschrift für Antikes Christentum* 17 (2013), 560-575.

²²⁷ Though, it should be noted that Elias had apparently refused to accept that Macedonius' deposition itself was canonical.

²²⁸ Evagrius, *HE* 3.33 (ed. Bidez and Parmentier, p. 132); Cyril, *V. Sab.* 56 (ed. Schwartz, p. 149).

²²⁹ *V. Sab.* 50-55 (ed. Schwartz, pp. 139-148).

²³⁰ For the dating of Cyril's work see: B. Flusin, *Miracle et histoire dans l'oeuvre de Cyrille de Scythopolis*, (Paris 1984), pp. 32-35.

²³¹ *V. Sab.* 51 (ed. Schwartz, p. 143).

²³² *V. Sab.* 55 (ed. Schwartz, p. 147).

written by Palestinian monks that year to Alcison of Nicopolis described a campaign of intimidation directed against Chalcedonian bishops across the Levant, orchestrated from Antioch.²³³ At some point in the intervening period, Elias had been forced to defend his position again during a hostile synod chaired by Severus and dominated by his allies.²³⁴ But Anastasius, it would seem, was no longer in any mood to listen to Jerusalem's complaints. For three years now, Elias' refusal to recognise Severus had remained the primary obstacle to the emperor's ambitions for ecclesiastical unity. When imperial frustration at this impasse finally boiled over in 516, the See of Jerusalem was awarded instead to a local priest named John, the son of Marcian, bishop of Sebastia.

The *Life of Sabas* claimed that this appointment had been made after John agreed meet the emperor's demands that ties between the Sees be restored. Cyril alleged that the new patriarch had even offered to condemn the synod of 451.²³⁵ In the event, neither promise would ever be fulfilled. Jerusalem's supporters, still loyal to Elias, refused to consider any talk of reconciliation with the man responsible for his removal. Cyril and Theodore of Petra described the scene, as monks from the Judaeian Desert descended on the city to prevent John from betraying its tradition of support for Chalcedon.²³⁶ Each hagiographer assigned the leading role in the Council's defence to his subject; Cyril to Sabas, and Theodore to his monastery's founder, Theodosius the Cenobiarch.²³⁷ At the abbots' insistence, John was said to have dramatically renounced his earlier, anti-Chalcedonian remarks at a ceremony convened in the presence of Anastasius' nephew, Hypatius.²³⁸

The Desert authors disagree over key details of this episode. According to the *Life of Sabas*, John had already come to recognise the strength of local opposition to his actions and was preparing to make amends, when Anastasius, the *dux Palaestinae*, grew suspicious and imprisoned him.²³⁹ Whilst in gaol, Cyril claimed that the bishop received a visit from the governor of Caesarea, Zachariah, who warned him that, by condemning Chalcedon, he risked both stoking further unrest in the city and ensuring the hatred of its people.²⁴⁰ A plan was apparently devised, whereby John would trick the authorities into believing that he was prepared to publicly anathematise the Council, whilst secretly intending to condemn its opponents. Having been freed, the *Life* records that the bishop was seized by Sabas and

²³³ Evagrius, *HE* 3.33 (ed. Bidez and Parmentier, pp. 132-133).

²³⁴ Severus is known to have convened a synod at Antioch in 513, but scholars remain divided over whether he held a second synod at Tyre between 513 and 514/515. Andre de Halleux argued that these were same event, noting that the account of the Synod of Tyre found in *Book VII* of the *Chronicle* of Ps. Zachariah is virtually identical to Ps. Dionysius' account of the Synod of Antioch. Others maintain that there was a separate synod at Tyre. See: Ps. Zach, *Chron.* 7.10d, 12c (ed. Brooks, 2.51, 55-56); Theodore Lector, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, (ed. Hansen, p. 150); de Halleux, *Philoxéne*, p. 79ff; CCT 2.1.284-288.

²³⁵ *V. Sab.* 56 (ed. Schwartz, p. 150).

²³⁶ *V. Sab.* 56 (ed. Schwartz, p. 148-152); Theodore of Petra, *V. Theod.* (ed. Usener, p. 56-61). Theophanes, *Chronicle*, AM 6005, (ed. de Boor, pp.); Nicephorus Callistus, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, 16.34 (ed.)

²³⁷ Flusin, *Miracle et histoire*, pp. 98-99; Hombergen, *Second Origenist Controversy*, 123-129.

²³⁸ *V. Sab.* 56 (ed. Schwartz, pp. 151-152); G. Greatrex, 'Flavius Hypatius, *Quem vidit validum Parthus sensitque timendum*. An Investigation of his career,' *Byz* 66 (1996), 126-135.

²³⁹ *V. Sab.* 56 (ed. Schwartz, p. 150).

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

Theodosius and carried into the ambo of Eudocia's Church of St. Stephen. With the abbots stood on either side, John was said to have delivered a new confession of faith, declaring his belief in 'the Four Councils as the Four Gospels.'²⁴¹

Theodore placed this ceremony at the Church of the Anastasis. He argued that Theodosius devised the 'Four Gospels' slogan at a later date, with no mention of John as ever having used it.²⁴² But both accounts agree that, with the bishop overpowered, the abbots wrote to Anastasius to reaffirm Jerusalem's opposition to Severus and adherence to Chalcedon. The *Life of Theodosius* contains an abbreviated version of their petition, which survives in full in the *Life of Sabas*.²⁴³ Theodore pointedly removed Sabas' name from the list of authors included in its title.²⁴⁴ Nevertheless, the sections of the letter preserved by both authors are otherwise identical. In these, the Desert monks complained at length of Jerusalem's 'mistreatment' by the authorities. The letter's authors assured the emperor that they would sooner die, or see the Holy City consumed by fire, than betray their beliefs by accepting any ally of Severus as their bishop.²⁴⁵ Whether Anastasius had ever really pressed John to anathematise Chalcedon, however, is doubtful. Cyril, like the Constantinopolitan church historian Theodore Lector, painted the emperor as a miaphysite despot, unwilling to accept anything less than the Council's universal condemnation. In his dialogue with Sabas at Constantinople, the *Life* has Anastasius explicitly refer to an imperial decree in which he had ordered that Chalcedon be 'dissolved.'²⁴⁶ But no record of this law survives elsewhere. Nor does any such demand appear to have been made of Timothy of Constantinople, who remained a public supporter of the Council until his death in 517.

Almost a century later, the Chalcedonian church historian Evagrius looked back on Anastasius' reign as a period of relative religious tolerance. The emperor was praised for allowing individual sees to adopt different positions on the Council, even if this had produced a degree of confusion in Church affairs.²⁴⁷ Indeed, the abbots' letter of 516 appears to confirm that imperial policy at this point was still based upon the *Henotikon*, its doctrinal remarks closely paraphrasing the careful language of Zeno's edict to avoid any discussion of Chalcedon's Christology. Though the former text explicitly upheld the Council, Bernard Flusin has argued that its message was 'not borne of defiance.'²⁴⁸ If Theodore of Petra is to be believed, Anastasius responded to it favourably.²⁴⁹ The *Life of Theodosius* claims to preserve the

²⁴¹ *V. Sab.* 56 (ed. Schwartz, pp. 152).

²⁴² Theodore of Petra, *V. Theod.* (ed. Usener, p. 62).

²⁴³ *V. Sab.* 57 (ed. Schwartz, pp. 152-158); See also: B. Flusin, 'L'hagiographie palestinienne et la reception du concile de Chalcedoine,' in J.O. Rosenqvist (ed.), *LEIMON: Studies Presented to Lennart Rydén on His Sixty-Fifth Birthday*, (Uppsala 1996), 25-48, 28; L. Perrone, 'Four Councils – Four Gospels' – One Lord Jesus Christ. The Patristic Developments of Christology within the Church of Palestine,' *LA* 49 (1999), 357-396.

²⁴⁴ Theodore of Petra, *V. Theod.* (ed. Usener, p. 56).

²⁴⁵ *V. Sab.* 57 (ed. Schwartz, p. 157); Theodore of Petra, *V. Theod.* (ed. Usener, p. 60).

²⁴⁶ *V. Sab.* 52 (ed. Schwartz, p. 144.1-4).

²⁴⁷ Evagrius, *HE* 3.30 (ed. Bidez and Parmentier, p. 126).

²⁴⁸ B. Flusin, 'L'hagiographie palestinienne,' 28.

²⁴⁹ Theodore of Petra, *V. Theod.* (ed. Usener, pp. 60-61).

emperor's congenial reply, which, if authentic, contrasts dramatically with the letters which Marcian and Pulcheria had written to the Palestinian rebels of the 450s.

As an aide to Macedonius, Theodore Lector had particular reason to accuse Anastasius of tyranny, forced to accompany his patriarch into exile in 511. His *Ecclesiastical History*, as it survives, has the character of a political diatribe, its contempt for Anastasius only matched by that shown to Timothy who, in spite of his adherence to Chalcedon, stood accused, variously, of religious hypocrisy, avarice, and sexual impropriety.²⁵⁰ The text contrasted the new bishop's behaviour with that of Macedonius, who in spite of having collaborated with Anastasius himself to succeed the 'orthodox' Euphemius, was cast as a martyr for the Chalcedonian faith. The emperor, for his part, was denounced as an Arian and even a Manichaean.²⁵¹ Decades later, Cyril attempted to lionise Elias in similar terms. But the result was even less convincing. Alongside Theodore, Cyril argued that Jerusalem's bishop had been more proactive in resisting imperial policy than Flavian of Antioch. The *Life of Sabas* claimed that the emperor castigated Elias for leading Flavian astray by inciting him to defend the 'heresy of Nestorius.'²⁵² Theodore alleged that both bishops were summoned by Anastasius to an anti-Chalcedonian synod at Constantinople, but that Elias refused to attend.²⁵³ At Sidon, he was said to have rejected further imperial demands that the Council be condemned, 'with the result that the emperor was greatly angered.'²⁵⁴ All this, of course, begs the question as to why Anastasius deposed Flavian, and not Elias, later that year.

The *Life of Sabas*, at points, is almost theatrical in bemoaning the injustice dealt to Jerusalem by the events of 516. Cyril claimed that God had been so incensed by Elias' deposition, that he punished Palestine with five years of draught as a sign as of His displeasure.²⁵⁵ Nevertheless, the *Life* admits that the message which Sabas delivered to Anastasius on the bishop's behalf in 511 or 512 was one of cooperation with imperial policy. In a further scene in which the holy man is called upon to account for Elias' beliefs, Cyril has Sabas couch them in language which adhered so closely to the terms of the *Henotikon*, that Chalcedon received no mention at all.²⁵⁶

If anything, Jerusalem's supporters were forced to contend with persistent claims that Elias had publicly distanced himself from the Council's religious teachings in the years leading up to his removal. The monks who wrote to Alcison of Nicopolis in 515 complained of a forged letter attributed to the bishop,

²⁵⁰ Theodore Lector, *HE* (ed. Hansen, pp. 139-140); Michael Whitby, 'The Church Historians and Chalcedon,' in G. Marasco (ed.), *Greek and Roman Historiography in Late Antiquity, Fourth to Sixth Century A.D.*, (Leiden 2003), 449-495, 467-472.

²⁵¹ Theodore Lector, *HE* (ed. Hansen, pp. 448).

²⁵² *V. Sab.* 52 (ed. Schwartz, p. 143).

²⁵³ No record of this synod otherwise survives. It seems likely that Theodore was actually referring to the 509 Synod of Antioch, convened by Severus. See: *CCT* 2.1.272-273.

²⁵⁴ Theodore Lector, *HE* (ed. Hansen, p. 141).

²⁵⁵ *V. Sab.* 58 (ed. Schwartz, pp. 159-160).

²⁵⁶ *V. Sab.* 52 (ed. Schwartz, pp. 144).

circulated at Constantinople in the aftermath of the Synod of Sidon. In it, Elias was claimed to have written to Anastasius anathematising Chalcedon, in spite of his recent opposition to Severus and Philoxenus.²⁵⁷ According to Pseudo-Zachariah, Jerusalem's bishop went on to sign the Severan *Typos* which Flavian had rejected at the Synod of Tyre several years later.²⁵⁸ Theodore Lector, as we might expect, preserved a different story: one in which Elias upheld the Council, condemning Nestorius, Eutyches, and the Antiochene theologians Diodore of Tarsus and Theodore of Mopsuestia.²⁵⁹ Cyril, however, failed to corroborate this version of events. On meeting Anastasius, the *Life of Sabas* notes that its subject was reminded by the emperor that his bishop had previously written to profess that he no longer accepted 'what was done at Chalcedon, owing to the scandal that resulted from it.'²⁶⁰ Cyril did not deny this accusation. Elsewhere, he mentions the 'flattering and diplomatic' letters which Elias and Flavian had sent to Anastasius, in order to dissolve the meeting at Sidon.²⁶¹ John Binns has suggested convincingly that both passages refer to a single document, apparently the same text also cited by Theodore and Alcison's monastic correspondents.²⁶²

Thus, there is little to suggest that Jerusalem was embroiled in a feud with Anastasius and his advisors prior to Severus' election. Cyril makes clear that Elias still enjoyed friendly ties with the court in 512: so much so that Sabas departed Constantinople that year with two thousand *solidi* from the palace treasury.²⁶³ Theodore of Petra acknowledged that Theodosius the Cenobiarch too had previously accepted 'thirty pounds of gold' from Anastasius, but insisted that he gave this money to the poor.²⁶⁴ Nor were these the only members of Elias' entourage in receipt of the emperor's patronage. Paul of Elusa, another Desert writer of the mid-sixth century, recorded that Theognius, the Chalcedonian bishop of Betelia, was another.²⁶⁵ Local tradition elsewhere credited Anastasius with endowing the famous Monastery of John the Baptist on the banks of the River Jordan.²⁶⁶ This latter site became a major stop on the route between Palestine's 'Holy Places,' a key piece of the infrastructure serving a lucrative pilgrimage trade, from which the See of Jerusalem appears to have drawn much of its income.²⁶⁷ The sixth-century pilgrim Theodosius recorded that Anastasius had established a fund entitling each of its monks to an annual stipend.²⁶⁸ It is worth remembering that, whilst staying at the palace, Sabas had also

²⁵⁷ Evagrius, *HE* 3.31 (ed. Bidez and Parmentier, p. 129).

²⁵⁸ Ps. Zach, *Chron.* 7.10-12 (ed. Brooks 2.51-54-55).

²⁵⁹ Theodore Lector, *HE* (ed. Hansen, p. 135.26-29).

²⁶⁰ *V. Sab.* 52 (ed. Schwartz, p. 143.28-144.1).

²⁶¹ *V. Sab.* 56 (ed. Schwartz, p. 148).

²⁶² R. Price, *Cyril of Scythopolis, Lives of the Monks of Palestine*, (Kalamazoo, MI 1991), p.158 with n. 74.

²⁶³ *V. Sab.* 51 (ed. Schwartz, p. 143).

²⁶⁴ Theodore of Petra, *V. Theod.* (ed. Usener, pp. 132-133).

²⁶⁵ Paul of Elusa, *Vita Theognii* 11 (ed. Papadopoulos-Kerameus, p. 181).

²⁶⁶ The remains of the monastery are located at Qasr el-Yahud, traditionally identified as the location of Christ's baptism. Procopius of Caesarea reported that it was later expanded during the reign of Justinian: Procopius, *De Aedificiis* (ed. Dewing, pp.)

²⁶⁷ Avi-Yonah, 'Economics of Byzantine Palestine,' 39-51; E.D. Hunt, *Holy Land Pilgrimage*, pp. 218-248.

²⁶⁸ Theodosius, *De Situ Terrae Sanctae* 20 (ed. Geyer, pp. 24-27). The sum given to each of the brothers was six *solidi* per annum.

obtained for Jerusalem's major landowners, the Church among them, an exemption from the payment of the *descriptio superflua* (or *perissopraktia*), which required them to make up any shortfall in the amount of land tax collected in their district.²⁶⁹ Such generosity, aimed specifically at Elias and his staff, is difficult to fathom as a reward for the longstanding recalcitrance described above.

Cyril was adamant that Severus had created the crisis which led to Elias' downfall. The *Life of Sabas* denounced Antioch's bishop, not only as a 'destructive perverter of souls,' but as the 'author and perpetrator' of the controversy over Chalcedon itself.²⁷⁰ Moschus, writing almost a century after his death, referred to all anti-Chalcedonians as followers of 'the Severan heresy.' More so than any other of the Council's opponents, Severus was the focus of sustained invective in the writings produced by local authors in the decades that followed, ranked alongside Nestorius and Eutyches in the list of 'arch-heretics' most deserving of condemnation. This status, of course, in part reflects his towering contribution to Christological debate. Yet, for all their hyperbole, these hostile accounts shed light on a truth that is commonly overlooked: the aftermath of Nephalius' campaign of 508 is the first occasion on which we actually find Palestinian figures engaged in detailed debate over Chalcedon's religious teachings.

III. A New Chronology of Conflict

The previous chapter considered the problem of locating a clear Christological motive for the rebellion against Juvenal in 451. But, as has been hinted, no firmer evidence of a developed religious controversy over Chalcedon in Palestine emerges during the course of the decades that followed. It is clear that throughout these years a bitter schism divided local Christians, many of whom continued to reject the authority of the 'Chalcedonian' bishops of Jerusalem. But prior to Severus' arrival at Constantinople, our sources struggle to identify the doctrinal cause of this unrest. Though often highly-polemical, their accounts give often only the vaguest sense of its supposed, theological content. This discrepancy is perhaps starkest in the local hagiographies composed by Cyril and Peter the Iberian's biographer, John Rufus. Between them, these, our most detailed guides to events of this period, give sharply contrasting views of the decades after 451, similar only in their obvious bias. Rufus, whose writings were recently described by Jan-Eric Steppa as 'the most explicit propagandistic hagiography in Late Antiquity,' was actively involved in efforts to ferment anti-Chalcedonian feeling under Anastasius.²⁷¹ Daniël Hombergen has accused Cyril of deliberately misrepresenting (and perhaps

²⁶⁹ *V. Sab.* 54 (ed. Schwartz, pp. 145-147).

²⁷⁰ *V. Sab.* 57 (ed. Schwartz, pp. 154-155) Less congruously, the *Life of Sabas* refers to Severus the 'leader of the *Akephaloi*.' From 512-518, of course, Severus was a bishop. He died in communion with the anti-Chalcedonian patriarch of Alexandria, Theodosius, a loyal supporter. References to 'Severus akephalos' are common in later texts.

²⁷¹ Steppa, *John Rufus*, p. 168.

exaggerating) the Controversy, through a sixth-century concern to aggrandise the founders of his ‘Sabaite’ monastic order.²⁷²

Cornelia Horn recently described the virtual absence of ‘philosophical and systematic theological discussion’ in Rufus’ writings as ‘astonishing.’ Elsewhere, Steppa has noted that, where such discussion does occur in the *Life of Peter the Iberian*, or in Rufus’ ‘Book of Testaments,’ the *Plerophoriae*, it is usually limited to the ‘mere repetition’ of basic, anti-Chalcedonian formulae.²⁷³ Nor was Cyril ultimately any better-able to summon strong contemporary evidence of fanatical support for the Council’s religious teachings. The *Life of Euthymius* provides a summary of its subject’s Chalcedonian doctrine lifted directly from Justinian’s *Confessio Fidei*, incorporating extensive quotations from the emperor’s edict of 551.²⁷⁴ A subsequent chapter describing events at Chalcedon parrots the by-then official, Cyrillian interpretation of the Definition of Faith without making any further substantive comment.²⁷⁵

Flusin has warned of the danger which these retrospective narratives pose to our understanding of events prior to 508. Specifically, he complains of the ‘error of perspective’ created as a result of traditional scholarly reliance upon Cyril, whose works make no allusion at all to the literature only recently produced by Rufus and his allies.²⁷⁶ But our authors’ appropriation of past events was rarely seamless. One episode in particular would seem to betray its limits. On an unknown date between 479 and 482, an assembly of Palestinian monks was convened at the Monastery of Marcian on the outskirts of Bethlehem. Cyril, in the *Life of Euthymius*, tells us that its delegates had gathered to decide upon whether or not to ‘re-join the Church.’ Marcian was a leading opponent of Chalcedon. Those present shared his views, refusing until this point to acknowledge the authority of Juvenal or his successors. Describing the monks’ meeting, Cyril recounts that Marcian had advised them to ‘cast lots,’ one representing ‘the bishops,’ and the other ‘the monks.’ ‘If the lot should fall to the monks,’ he is claimed to have said, ‘let us remain where we are, but if it should fall to the bishops, then let us re-join the Church.’²⁷⁷ The monks having lost the bet, the *Life* records that Marcian’s followers, described throughout as *apostikistai*, or ‘separatists,’ proceeded straightaway to Jerusalem, where they were warmly received by the city’s then bishop, Martyrius.²⁷⁸ The resulting ‘union’ between Marcian and

²⁷² D. Hombergen, *Second Origenist Controversy*, passim.

²⁷³ Steppa, *John Rufus*, p. 157.

²⁷⁴ *V. Euth.* 26-27 (ed. Schwartz, pp. 40-44); Flusin, *Miracle et histoire*, pp. 74-76.

²⁷⁵ *V. Euth.* 27 (ed. Schwartz, pp. 43-44).

²⁷⁶ Flusin, ‘L’hagiographie palestinienne,’ 26.

²⁷⁷ *V. Euth.* 45 (ed. Schwartz, p. 67.2-6): ‘...καὶ τῷ ἀποτολικῶι ἀκολουθοῦντες ὑποδείγματι βάλλωμεν κλήρους ἐκ προσώπου τῶν ἐπισκόπων καὶ τῶν μοναχῶν καὶ εἰ μὲν ὁ κλήρος ἐπὶ τοὺς μοναχοὺς ἔλθῃ, μείνωμεν ὅπερ ἔσμεν· εἰ δὲ ἐπὶ τοὺς ἐπισκόπους, τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ κοινήσωμεν.’ Horn, *Asceticism and Christological Controversy*, pp. 146-150, suggests that this account was based on Acts 1:26.

²⁷⁸ *Ibid.* (ed. Schwartz, p. 67.6-9): ‘...καὶ τούτων οὕτως λεχθέντων ὁμονοήσαντες ἔβαλον τοὺς κλήρους καὶ ἔπεσεν ὁ κλήρος ἐπὶ τοὺς ἐπισκόπους· καὶ πληροφορηθέντες ἅπαντες ἐκ συμφώνου εἰς τὴν ἁγίαν πόλιν εἰσηλθόντες ἐκδεδοκότες ἑαυτοὺς τῇ πρὸς τὴν ἁγίαν ἐκκλησίαν ἐνώσει.’ For the use of *Apostikistai* as a term for Chalcedon’s opponents, see: Lampe, *Patristic Greek Lexicon*, ‘ἀποσχίστης,’ p. 215.

Martyrius was the first successful attempt to reintegrate Chalcedon's Palestinian opponents since Eudocia's conversion over twenty years earlier.²⁷⁹ To Cyril, it was nothing less than a miracle, reflective of God's desire for peace. But the *Life* strangely failed to dwell on its broader, religious significance in the ongoing Controversy over the Council and its rulings. With leading local opponents of Chalcedon assembled at Marcian's monastery, we would hope to receive some evidence of their religious grievance. The episode presented Cyril with an opportunity to pour scorn on their beliefs. But the *Life* gives no details of what we assume was the *doctrinal* settlement reached between the episcopate and Marcian's monastic dissidents. Like Eudocia and her associates before them, their dispute most visibly concerned the authority of the bishops of Jerusalem.

Fortunately, we have access to another account of the 'union,' written from the anti-Chalcedonian perspective. A brief description of Marcian's return to communion is found in Zachariah's *Ecclesiastical History*, as preserved in epitome by the *Chronicle* of Pseudo Zachariah. Its contents, however, only add to our confusion. For one thing, Zachariah describes Martyrius, and not Marcian, as a staunch anti-Chalcedonian, who 'preached to the people the true faith and condemned Nestorius and the Council of Chalcedon.'²⁸⁰ He presents the Union as an agreement by both parties to formally anathematise the Council and its doctrine. The contrast with Cyril's account could not be clearer. Zachariah's claims, however, have often been rejected as wilfully misleading. As heir to the ecclesiastical domain forged by Juvenal, Martyrius is surely very unlikely to have condemned Chalcedon outright. Nor if he had would we expect his stance to have otherwise gone unnoticed. Cyril reported that the bishop wrote to Zeno in the same period to demand punitive action against local 'separatists' for opposing his rule.²⁸¹ But more to the point, if Martyrius was, as Zachariah alleged, a committed doctrinal opponent of the Council, then why was an ostensibly like-minded monk such as Marcian not already in communion with him?

Zachariah went on to quote from what he claimed was an address by Martyrius, made to mark the occasion of the Union. Many scholars regard this document as a precursor to Zeno's *Henotikon*.²⁸² Like the *Henotikon*, it outlined an agreement based upon the common acceptance of the first three Ecumenical Councils.²⁸³ Teaching contrary to theirs was to be condemned, 'whether [it has arisen] at Rimini, Serdica, Chalcedon, or elsewhere.'²⁸⁴ However, unlike Zeno's edict, the text of Martyrius'

²⁷⁹ Referred to as the 'Second Union' by manuscripts of Cyril; the 'First' presumably followed Eudocia's conversion in 455. See: Chitty, *The Desert*, pp.; Perrone, *La chiesa*, pp. 127-141.

²⁸⁰ Ps. Zach. *Chron.* 5.6.a (ed. Brooks, 1.220).

²⁸¹ V. *Euth.* 43 (ed. Schwartz, pp. 62-63).

²⁸² Cf. H.C. Brennecke, 'Chalcedonense und Henotikon,' in J. van Oord and J. Roldanus (eds.), *Chalcedon: Geschichte und Aktualität, Studien zur Rezeption der christologischen Formel von Chalcedon* (Louvain 1998), 24-53, 47, with n. 117. Brennecke argues that there is no strong relationship between them.

²⁸³ For the full text of *Henotikon*, see: Evagrius, *HE*, 3.14, (ed. Bidez and Parmentier, pp. 111-114). For the Latin text: Liberatus, *Breviarium Causae Nestorianorum et Eutychianorum*, (ed. Migne *PL* 68.1023-1024).

²⁸⁴ Ps. Zach. *Chron.* 5.6.b. (ed. Brooks 1.221). This statement did not, of course, amount to an admission that Chalcedon's doctrine was contrary to that of the earlier Councils. Richard Price has argued that a similar clause

address, as Zachariah reports it, shows little regard for what we think of as the doctrinal sensitivities of Chalcedon's opponents.²⁸⁵ The *Henotikon* contained a clause condemning Nestorius and Eutyches. It endorsed the Twelve Anathemas of Cyril of Alexandria.²⁸⁶ Martyrius, by contrast, is not alleged to have offered any similar assurances to his Palestinian audience. Hanns Christoph Brennecke has gone so far as to claim that Zachariah's account of his address contains 'no Christological comment,' suggesting that Severus' ally had no better evidence for the Union as a doctrinal agreement than Cyril, writing half a century later.²⁸⁷ The *Henotikon* itself was later greeted with little fanfare in Jerusalem, in spite of its undoubted success in delivering the religious compromise to which Martyrius is said to have aspired.²⁸⁸ A series of theological treatises sometimes attributed to Marcian, meanwhile, give no hint of his opinion on Chalcedon, or the role which he is thought to have played in its reception.²⁸⁹

With the Union agreed, Marcian rose rapidly through the ranks of the Chalcedonian Church hierarchy. He died in 492 as an archimandrite, invested with authority over every monastery in Jerusalem and its environs.²⁹⁰ It seems odd to think that the episcopate should have entrusted such responsibility to a man it had only recently regarded as a hostile religious agitator. It is, perhaps, less surprising that Marcian accepted the offer. In his classic monograph on the Palestinian Church, Lorenzo Perrone has described the decades prior to Martyrius' death in 486 as an era of 'minimal Chalcedonianism,' in which Jerusalem's bishops maintained a stance of public ambiguity on matters of doctrine so as not to offend their monastic constituents.²⁹¹ Perrone argues that this eventually gave way to a policy of 'offensive Chalcedonianism' inaugurated by the patriarch Sallustius (486-494). But as we saw in case of Elias, there is little to suggest that later bishops held any stronger purchase on Chalcedon's doctrine than their predecessors. If there was a guiding principle to Jerusalem's policy throughout these years, it was to mimic whichever position on the Council was adopted by the imperial court. Alongside virtually every

found in the *Henotikon* was designed to reassure its opponents that the Council did not endorse the anti-Cyrrillian views of the 'Antiochene' bishops, Theodoret of Cyrrhus and Ibas of Edessa, who were reinstated in 451.

²⁸⁵ Perrone, *La chiesa*, pp. 127-139; CCT 2.1.252-253.

²⁸⁶ Evagrius, *HE* 3.14 (ed. Bidez and Parmentier, p. 113).

²⁸⁷ Brennecke, 'Chalkedonense,' 47, n. 117. Brennecke even suggests that the text's reference to 'Chalcedon or another synod' is a later addition. However, this is rejected by Blaudeau, *Alexandrie et Constantinople*, p. 265.

²⁸⁸ Letter of Martyrius to Peter Mongus, Ps. Zach, *Chron.* 5.12 (ed. Brooks, 1.237-238): It is thought that Martyrius' reluctance to celebrate the *Henotikon* was provoked by suspicion of its architect, Acacius of Constantinople: Greatrex, *Chronicle of Ps. Zachariah*, pp. 208-209, esp. 208 n. 165; Perrone, *La Chiesa*, p. 130.

²⁸⁹ For a summary of the debate surrounding Marcian's possible literary career, see: CCT 2.3.45, n. 209; Horn, *Asceticism*, pp. 99, 120; A. van Roey and J. Lebon, *Le moine Saint Marcien: Étude critique des sources*, (Leuven 1968); J. Kirchmeyer, 'Le moine Marcien (de Bethlehem?)' *SP* 5 (1962), 341-359; 'Le peri asketikou biou de l'abbé Marcien,' *Le Muséon* 75 (1962), 357-365; S. Brock, 'Review of J. Lebon, *Le moine Saint Marcien: Étude critique des sources*,' *JThS* 20 (1969), 646-649; M. Kohlbacher, 'Unpublished Greek Fragments of Markianos of Bethlehem (d. 492): An Edition in Progress,' *SP* 29 (1997), 495-500. Kirchmeyer originally suggested Marcian as the author of several works surviving in Syriac, a view later disputed by Joseph Lebon and Albert van Roey, but upheld by Sebastian Brock. It is unclear as to whether any of the texts date to the period after 451. Michael Kohlbacher's forthcoming edition will present a series of Greek fragments, preserved in the *Patrologia Graeca* under the name of 'Marcian the Monk,' whom he believes to have been Marcian of Bethlehem.

²⁹⁰ *V. Sab.* 30 (ed. Schwartz, pp. 114-115).

²⁹¹ 'Calcedonismo minimale.' Perrone, *La Chiesa*, pp. 138-139.

other Eastern bishop, Juvenal's immediate successor, Anastasius (458-478), wrote in support of Chalcedon in response to an inquiry held by the emperor Leo in 458. However, he later went on to add his signature to the *Encyclical* drafted in 475 by the imperial usurper Basiliscus, which explicitly condemned the Council's teachings. Later that year, Basiliscus issued a retraction, the *Anti-Encyclical*, as Zeno's armies marched on Constantinople. Awaiting the outcome of their impending confrontation, Anastasius appears to have prevaricated over whether or not to sign it.²⁹² We have already noted that Martyrius' policies were broadly compatible with the aims of Zeno's *Henotikon*. But Sallustius too appears to have followed this pattern, later accused of joining forces with Athanasius II of Alexandria to accuse Euphemius of Constantinople of 'Nestorianism.'²⁹³ This latter move, carried out in league with the Empire's highest-ranking anti-Chalcedonian cleric, was clearly intended to win the approval of Anastasius' court, at a time when the emperor and his advisers were scrambling for a pretext for justify Euphemius' removal. That Constantinople's bishop was a prominent fellow supporter of the Council appears to have mattered little.

It might be argued that, for many, the initial acceptance of Chalcedon was itself a statement of cooperation with imperial policy. We might even follow Gray's assessment that the Council's supporters, as a result, essentially lacked a firm doctrinal identity of their own prior to the advent, at the turn of the sixth century, of the 'Neochalcedonian' discourse briefly discussed above.²⁹⁴ In these circumstances, the pliant attitude of Jerusalem's bishops is perhaps easier to understand. But relative ambivalence towards Chalcedon's religious rulings was not solely the preserve of a local Church establishment, for whom the Council's appeal was as much political, as Christological. We find similar attitudes expressed where we might least expect them: at Gaza, home to Chalcedon's most outspoken Palestinian detractors.

Rufus, for one, vented his frustration at the failure of many of his contemporaries to appreciate the spiritual threat posed by the Council. The *Plerophoriae* is replete with threatening exhortations to its readers not to associate with 'the bishops' and their supporters, on which more below.²⁹⁵ Even the leaders of the local opposition to Chalcedon, as we have seen, were liable to switch allegiance with surprising frequency. It is worth reiterating that Marcian and his colleagues were the second major group to have done so in less than thirty years. Nor were they the last. Rufus openly conceded that others, like the abbot Romanus, had initially needed some persuading that the Council was heretical in the first place.²⁹⁶ One recension of the *Plerophoriae* records that Isaiah of Scetis, Peter the Iberian's right-hand man at Gaza, had professed that he personally saw no problem with the doctrine expounded

²⁹² Ps. Zach, *Chron.* 5.2.e, 5.5.b (ed. Brooks, 1.213, 219); Chitty, *The Desert*, pp. 95, 101-102, Perrone, *La Chiesa*, p. 126, Grillmeier and Hainthaler, *Christ*, 2.3.9.

²⁹³ Ps. Zach, *Chron.* 7.1.b (ed. Brooks, 2.20).

²⁹⁴ Gray, *Defence of Chalcedon in the East*, passim.

²⁹⁵ John Rufus, *Plerophoriae* 38, 80, 87 (ed. Nau, pp. 72-74, 136-137, 140-141); See also: Severus, *Select Letters*, 4.7, 4.9 (ed. Brooks, pp. 300, 304-306).

²⁹⁶ *Plerophoriae* 21, 25 (ed. Nau, pp. 42-47, 57-63).

in 451.²⁹⁷ Isaiah was said to have assured his petitioners that ‘The Council did nothing wrong, since you are good, you do good and believe well.’²⁹⁸ Rufus claimed that Peter was later forced to correct these sentiments, adding that ‘the old man lives in the heavens and does not understand the evil which was created on the occasion of the synod.’ That local Controversy over Chalcedon continued to draw much of its intensity from factors other than doctrine would seem to be confirmed by the description of Nephalius’ Gazan pogrom given by Zachariah’s *Life of Severus*.

This latter text, as we would expect, is sharply critical of the Egyptian monk, whom it condemns for abandoning his previous, anti-Chalcedonian beliefs and dividing ‘the one nature of our Lord Jesus Christ into two.’²⁹⁹ But following this brief doctrinal reproach, Zachariah appears to make a startling admission. On arriving at Gaza, the *Life* reports that Nephalius ejected Severus and his brothers, ‘with the help of the churches, using people who had always been peacefully disposed towards them, and who had thought the difference between them was [just] a fraternal quarrel.’ Remarkably, Zachariah adds that, until this point, Nephalius’ followers had ‘called them [the Gazan monks] ‘orthodox’ – that is, until the incitement against them just mentioned took place...’³⁰⁰ The violence of 508, he claims, was not the result of a longstanding local quarrel over the nature of the person of Christ. In fact, Zachariah appears to suggest that it was only in that year that the local schism over Chalcedon assumed a significant doctrinal dimension. Since Heinrich Bacht and Eduard Schwartz, ascetics have been credited with the leading role in stoking doctrinal tensions over the Council and its teachings.³⁰¹ But if the *Life of Severus* is correct, then firm Christological identities were only now beginning to crystallise in Palestine, even among those traditionally placed at the forefront of contemporary religious unrest. We have already observed the palpable disconnect between rhetoric and reality found in the works produced by Severus and Nephalius in the aftermath of these events, whose theological remarks are without precedent in any other Palestinian text.

The *Life* is our earliest witness to Nephalius’ campaign and the only one produced by a contemporary. The text is usually dated to the period of Severus’ tenure as patriarch of Antioch (512-518), or at the

²⁹⁷ Codex Parisinus Graecus 1596. Fol. 610-611, partly used by Nau, pp. 164-165. For discussion see: Blaudeau, *Alexandrie et Constantinople*, p. 275 with n. 136; Perrone, *La Chiesa*, p. 290. As Perrone notes, Isaiah’s *Asceticon*, a textbook on the monastic life produced in this period, makes no polemical comment against the Council: Perrone, *La Chiesa*, p. 290: ‘Non è una forzatura percepire qui l’eco del linguaggio monofisita, che denunciava l’«apostasia» perpetrata a Calcedonia. D’altra parte mancano i toni polemicici, che normalmente accompagnano tale accusa, e si preferisce richiamare l’esigenza della conversione. Ciò sembrerebbe designare una personalità, il cui spirito non è troppo affetto da zelo controversistico o dall’ossessione dell’eresia.’

²⁹⁸ Nau, p. 164; Chitty, *The Desert*, pp. 76-77.

²⁹⁹ *V. Sev.* 144 (ed. Kugener, p. 103).

³⁰⁰ *V. Sev.* 144 (trans. Brock, pp. 91-92).

³⁰¹ H. Bacht, ‘Die Rolle des orientalischen Mönchtums in den kirchenpolitischen Auseinandersetzungen um Chalcedon (431-519),’ in Grillmeier and Bacht, *Das Konzil*, 2.292ff. Schwartz famously described anti-Chalcedonianism as ‘Mönchreligion’: E. Schwartz, ‘Johannes Rufus, ein monophysitischer Schriftsteller,’ *Sitzungsberichte der Heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften*, Philosophisch-historische Klasse 16 (Heidelberg 1912), pp. 1-28.

latest, to the early 520s.³⁰² Zachariah's objective in writing it was not to relate the story of what had happened in 508, but to defend his friend from accusations of paganism.³⁰³ Edward Watts has suggested that it was produced in a hurry, as evidenced by its clumsy recycling of an earlier, separate biography of the anti-pagan agitator, Paralius.³⁰⁴ Alan Cameron has argued that Zachariah's attempts to deny for Severus a pagan past which he himself admitted inevitably render his account untrustworthy.³⁰⁵ But this feature of the text seems to have had little bearing on its account of intra-Christian violence at Gaza, which almost appears as an afterthought. There is no clear reason as to why Zachariah should have sought to play down the religious motives of Nephalius' associates, if he considered them to be heretical. Rather, in his rush to eulogise Severus, he seems to provide an account largely free of the ideological embellishments later found in the *Anonymous Life*, or in the works of Rufus and John of Ephesus. With all this in mind, it seems reasonable to tentatively suggest a new chronology of events, with the violent Palestinian conflict over Chalcedon's *doctrine* seen, essentially, as a development of the final decade of the reign of Anastasius.

³⁰² For the later dating, see: E. Watts, 'Winning the intercommunal dialogues: Zacharias Scholasticus' Life of Severus,' *J ECS* 13 (2005), 437-464, 461. Cf. R.A. Darling Young, 'Zacharias, The Life of Severus,' in V.L. Wimbush (ed.), *Ascetic Behavior in Greco-Roman Antiquity: A Sourcebook*, (Minneapolis, MN 1990), 312-328, 312.

³⁰³ Severus had only converted to Christianity as an adult in 488 and became a monk in 491.

³⁰⁴ E. Watts, *Riot in Alexandria: Tradition and Group Dynamics in Late Antique Pagan and Christian Communities*, (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA 2010), pp. 265-268.

³⁰⁵ Alan Cameron, *Wandering Poets and Other Essays on Late Greek Literature and Philosophy*, (Oxford 2015), p. 149.

Another saw the Apostle Paul admonish a crowd of bishops, proclaiming that ‘not one of you has been found to be pure.’³⁰⁸

Horn has argued that scenes such as these reflect an enduring debate among ascetics as to the potential threat which greater engagement with the Church authorities posed to their independence.³⁰⁹ Gazan anxiety at this prospect contrasted sharply with the position taken by Cyril, whose writings Flusin has described as nothing short of episcopal ‘propaganda.’ Steppa regards this disparity as evidence of a conflict between ‘two divergent and competing monastic cultures,’ wedded to ‘completely incompatible conceptions of authority.’³¹⁰ Placing strictly doctrinal considerations to one side, scholars tend to imagine that the ‘independence’ sought by ascetics was conceived of in terms of religious praxis. Phil Booth, more recently, has revealed that throughout the decades after 451, significant tensions remained between the ‘discordant sacramental and ascetical imperatives’ of monastic life, as monks attempted to reconcile the institutionalised existence prescribed for them by the bishops with the ‘individualist’ traditions which many had inherited from their forebears.³¹¹ Whilst undoubtedly present, however, such concerns rarely appear foremost among the complaints of Chalcedon’s Palestinian opponents. The monasteries led by Peter the Iberian, Gerontius, and Romanus were already highly-organised, coenobitic communities, every bit as institutionalised as their Chalcedonian counterparts. Their members willingly received the sacraments from brethren ordained for this very purpose.³¹² We might recall that Peter was consecrated as bishop of Maiuma during the rebel episcopate of Theodosius. There is some suggestion that Rufus may even have inherited this title following his master’s death in 491.³¹³

The Gazan authors cautioned that ascetics who collaborated with the episcopate were liable to share God’s punishment for its ‘apostasy.’ But more immediately, they sought to dispel the allure of the material support which bishops, as patrons, could offer to holy men and their supporters. The *Plerophoriae* contrasts its depiction of Gaza’s thriving monastic culture with a description of the ruined state of Juvenal’s former monastery at Siloe.³¹⁴ Paraphrasing Isaiah 13:20, Rufus claimed that this site had been rendered uninhabitable on account of its links to the bishop, at a time when Palestine was awash with successful new ascetic enterprises. Elsewhere, Zachariah’s *Ecclesiastical History* includes

³⁰⁸ *Plerophoriae* 60 (ed. Nau, pp. 118-119). See: Booth, *Crisis of Empire*, p. 40.

³⁰⁹ Horn, *Asceticism and Christological Controversy*, p. 216.

³¹⁰ Steppa, *John Rufus*, pp. 111, 114.

³¹¹ Booth, *Crisis of Empire*, pp. 8-10.

³¹² Though Peter himself was said to have refused to perform the Eucharist, having been ordained against his will by Juvenal’s nephew, Paul of Maiuma, *V. Pet.* 79 (ed. Raabe, pp. 54-55); Booth, *Crisis of Empire*, 42.

³¹³ Rufus is named as ‘Bishop of Maiuma’ in the title of the surviving manuscripts of the *Plerophoriae*. For discussion, see: Horn, *Asceticism and Christological Controversy*, p. 38; Steppa, *John Rufus*, p. 18.

³¹⁴ *Plerophoriae* 16 (trans. Nau, pp. 32-33). ‘In truth, Juvenal was the companion of Judas, as the blessed Dioscorus said of him; this is why this place inherited the curse of Judas and it is subject to what the inspired scripture has said, ‘that you home will be desert and that there will be nobody to inhabit your tents.’”

a vignette in praise of the hermit Solomon, who was said to have publicly rejected an offer of money from Juvenal, before pouring a pile of ashes over his head.³¹⁵

Such anecdotes, however strident, would be difficult to read as presenting an over-arching, theological rejection of the principle of episcopal government *per se*. Instead, whilst inevitably impugning their enemies' beliefs, we find a movement whose attacks against 'the bishops' were focused primarily on reducing their standing as rival religious benefactors. We might better understand the cause of this anxiety by returning again to Cyril's coverage of the 'Union' of ca. 479. It was more than a lack of identifiable Christological content, it appears, which set this agreement apart from that which supporters and opponents of Chalcedon across the East had entered by signing the *Henotikon*. Crucially, unlike their cousins in Egypt or Syria, Marcian of Bethlehem and his followers had emerged from their pact having fully embraced the material patronage of the 'Chalcedonian' episcopate.

Marcian's appointment as archimandrite in 492, briefly referred to above, was only the final stage of a fruitful career forged after the union in the service of the bishops. The reward for his compact with Martyrius, it would seem, was the comfortable life of a senior Church functionary. The *Life of Sabas* contains a scene in which an angel appeared to chide the abbot for his prosperity.³¹⁶ According to Cyril, in these years Marcian and his brothers were so well-provisioned that they were tasked with supplying the struggling cenobia of the Judaeian Desert plateau.³¹⁷ Little wonder then that Chalcedon's opponents were at pains to diminish the appeal of friendly relations with Martyrius or his successors. Such deals had the capacity to destroy their movement entirely. In agreeing to the Union, Marcian had not so much compromised with Martyrius, as actively betrayed his fellow monks. Cyril noted that it was as a direct result of the abbot's 'conversion' that the bishop was able to round up other, more recalcitrant monastic dissidents and drive them into exile.³¹⁸

The episcopate had compelling reason to seek to reach an understanding in ca. 479. At the start of Martyrius' tenure, its position was the weakest it had been since 453. On his election in 478, the *Life of Euthymius* records that Jerusalem's bishop had been the target of an attempted coup, staged by veterans of the rebellion against Juvenal.³¹⁹ This new unrest had apparently been led by Gerontius, still then abbot of Melania the Younger's monasteries on the Mount of Olives. Fearing a repeat of the chaos created during the anti-episcopate of Theodosius, Cyril explained that it was this episode that had prompted Martyrius to petition Zeno, complaining of the 'separatists'' violent conduct. The *Life* implies that Gerontius had acted out of a lust for power, exploiting the instability created by the death of the bishop Anastasius in a daring bid to seize the episcopal throne for himself. We ought, however, to

³¹⁵ Ps. Zach. *Chron.* 3.8.a. (ed. Brooks, 1.161).

³¹⁶ *Ibid.*

³¹⁷ *V. Sab.* 27 (ed. Schwartz, pp. 111-112).

³¹⁸ *V. Euth.* 45 (ed. Schwartz, p. 67).

³¹⁹ *V. Euth.* 43 (ed. Schwartz, pp. 62-63).

situate this campaign too within a context of ongoing bargaining between the See and leading monasteries. The insurrection itself seems to have represented the breakdown of an earlier deal reached with Martyrius' predecessors. Though briefly exiled from Palestine following Juvenal's restoration, Rufus, as we have seen, admitted that Gerontius had soon returned as part of an agreement brokered by the empress Eudocia.³²⁰ From this point until the attempted putsch of 478, he had apparently resumed his role as an episcopal archimandrite, serving alongside Marcian's former master, Elpidius, whose career is likely to have served as an example to both men of the opportunities open to monastic leaders willing to exploit the controversy over Chalcedon to their advantage.³²¹

Elpidius had entered communion with the 'Chalcedonians' alongside Eudocia in 455, having previously sided with Theodosius. Like the empress, he seems to have excelled at obtaining generous terms from the See as the price of his support. Immediately reinstated as archimandrite, the holy man also succeeded in reserving the office for his successors. Cyril recorded that leadership of the city's monks subsequently passed to Elpidius' followers, Lazarus and Elias, signalling the monastery's enduring position at the centre of local Church politics.³²² Marcian's decision to abandon Gerontius in favour of similar concessions would suggest that there were many among the region's dissident ascetic leadership who took a similar, transactional approach to relations with the episcopate, regardless of the potential doctrinal implications. The same concerns over prestige and monastic livelihood that had led many of these holy men to balk at the expanded powers handed to Juvenal in 451 seem to have propelled some to reconcile with his successors. Cyril depicted a movement distracted from its duties by the pursuit of material gain. The *Life of Euthymius* complained that monastic discipline in Jerusalem had suffered in these years, its archimandrites preferring to 'devote themselves to worldly interests and profits.'³²³ Its author failed to elaborate on what exactly he meant by this assertion. We can, however, at least be clear that when Rufus and his colleagues at Gaza, where episcopal influence in Palestine was weakest, wrote to wavering allies invoking the language of patronage, they did so knowing that their appeals were couched in terms that all would understand.

What emerges here is an image of the two sides in the Palestinian conflict over Chalcedon, less as developed confessional communities, than associations largely founded upon mutual self-interest. Far from representing an impassable divide, it seems clear that the distance between them could often be relatively easily traversed – for a price. Such a view might seem unduly cynical at first glance. The pattern of relations visible from the analysis above, however, broadly aligns with that unearthed by the

³²⁰ *De obitu Theodosii* 9 (ed. Brooks, pp. 25-27).

³²¹ *V. Euth.* 45 (ed. Schwartz, p. 67); See also: *De Obitu Theod.* 10 (ed. Brooks, p. 27).

³²² *V. Sab.* 30 (ed. Schwartz, p. 115) Scholars have suggested that Elpidius was responsible for the 'urban' monks of Jerusalem proper, and Gerontius for the 'rural' monastic population of the surrounding region. Later, Cyril recorded that Sabas was appointed as 'archimandrite of the hermits,' and Theodosius the Cenobiarch as 'archimandrite of the coenobia.' Elpidius had inherited his position from Passarion. Passarion was later venerated in local anti-Chalcedonian tradition: *V. Pet.* 52 (ed. Raabe, p. 35).

³²³ *V. Euth.* 30 (ed. Schwartz, p. 115).

recent study of religious controversy elsewhere in Late Antiquity, most notably Adam Schor's investigation of patronage relations in shaping the Christological landscape of early-fifth century Syria. Schor's work has challenged traditional ideas of the process by which monks and churchmen came to construct competing, doctrinal alliances. Embarking on a close reading of the letters of Theodoret of Cyrrhus through the lens of modern 'social network' theory, it proposes a radically innovative view of the formation of the exegetical 'School of Antioch,' arguing that membership was not determined primarily by common beliefs, but a similar nexus of socio-economic concerns to that described above.

The Christological slogans employed in Theodoret's correspondence, it is suggested, were partly envisaged to serve as social 'cues,' intended to foster a greater sense of community among churchmen who knew each other firstly as friends and patrons, clients and colleagues. For Schor, the social conventions of patronage which bound the School's supporters are visible, even in the substance of 'Antiochene Christology' itself.³²⁴ 'Through each episode of conflict,' he argues, 'doctrinal arguments grew more intertwined with the social performances of clerical leaders... By 449 the conflict was more than a mismatch of Christologies. It was a clash of socio-cultural communities.'³²⁵ Admittedly, we lack the material to fully apply these controversial findings to events in Palestine, from where no epistolary collection to rival Theodoret's survives.³²⁶ However, the broader notion of a 'socio-doctrinal network,' as conjured here, seems to resonate with our knowledge of the local factions involved in the schism which followed Chalcedon. Aside from the parallels already identified, both groups exhibited clear similarities to Schor's Antiochenes. Like Theodoret and his circle, theirs may be thought of as 'regional' movements with clear geographical centres of power, whether at Gaza or Jerusalem and its surroundings. Whatever their public stance on the Council, they too, it appears, were able to accommodate a range of opinion on matters of doctrine in practice. More important than the question of classification, however, is the value of this comparison in prompting us to think more deeply of the mechanics which underpinned the formation of our Palestinian 'networks.' Might the prosopographical details contained in our sources allow us to build a more detailed picture of the concrete processes by which their members were recruited and retained?

II. Jerusalem's 'Desert City'

For the Council's supporters, as we have seen, the emergence of a 'Chalcedonian' group identity was indelibly linked to the rapid growth of monasticism in the Judaeian Desert. The resulting revolution in ascetic culture had a decisive effect, permanently tipping the balance of power within the Palestinian

³²⁴ Schor, *Theodoret's People*, pp. 181-190.

³²⁵ *Ibid*, p. 196.

³²⁶ This, of course, is not to say that such collections did not exist. Severus' correspondence alone is imagined to have been vast, though virtually all of the fraction which survives is addressed to non-Palestinian figures.

Church in favour of the episcopate. Whatever the narrative excesses later committed by Cyril of Scythopolis and Theodore of Petra, the results of this shift were readily apparent by 516. Jerusalem's Gazan opponents could only watch that year as the Desert monks successfully defied the authority of both Severus and the Anastasian court, thwarting the dissidents' greatest hope of recapturing the See in decades.

The origin of this movement, however, was less straightforward. If his hagiographer is to be believed, Palestine's new monasticism owed its belligerent 'orthodoxy' to the legendary exploits of one man: the Armenian monk and Desert abbot Euthymius, whose single-handed defence of Chalcedon, mounted in the face of widespread criticism, Cyril claimed to chronicle in the early 550s. By Cyril's day, of course, the battle for Chalcedon had largely been won. In the decades that followed Juvenal's restoration, Euthymius' followers were instrumental in transforming the Desert into the centre of a thriving ascetic milieu, whose principle patrons were the bishop's successors. That the holy man's disciples, however, presiding over a radically enlarged monastic lobby, found common cause with the bishops, was no coincidence. Their cooperation reflected the reality that episcopal support was responsible for driving much of this expansion.

Prior to 451, we know of only six monasteries active in the Desert. By the mid-sixth century, this number had risen by more than tenfold. In addition to the seventy-three monastic sites identified by Yizhar Hirschfeld as active in the Justinianic era, others attested in our literary sources have yet to be identified.³²⁷ Cyril, as noted above, was a monk of perhaps the most successful of these communities, the cluster of ascetic institutions established by Euthymius' disciple, Sabas. When charted on a map, these new foundations formed a circle around the site of the Late Antique Monastery of Euthymius at present-day Khan al-Ahmar.³²⁸ We assume that Chalcedon's doctrine, or more precisely, the legacy of Euthymius' bravery in defending it, served as the original basis for the enduring partnership between the See of Jerusalem and its monastic clients. When analysed in detail, however, the *Life* is unable to sustain this narrative. The text, instead, appears to betray its author's difficulty in confronting an awkward truth: that prior to Euthymius' death in 473, close relations with the bishops held little appeal for the holy man and his followers. Aided throughout these years by the patronage of others, the monks were subject to a range of influences, not all of whom initially welcomed the Council with open arms.

Euthymius is credited with having established three monasteries in the Desert in the early decades of the fifth century. These, it appears, were the first new foundations in the region since the advent of local ascetic life by Chariton, a wandering ascetic from Iconium, who tradition held to have organised a community of hermits at the spring of 'Ein Fara in the early 330s. According to the anonymous sixth-century *Life of Chariton*, within a matter of years the *laura* of Pharan had spawned satellite monasteries

³²⁷ Hirschfeld, 'List of Byzantine Monasteries,' 1-90.

³²⁸ For example, see: Y. Hirschfeld, 'Euthymius and his Monastery in the Judean Desert,' *LA* 43 (1993), 339-357, 348, fig. 3.

at Douka and Souka, the latter already known to later generations as the ‘Old Laura’ by the time Euthymius and his disciples set out to emulate it. Predictably, the precise date at which at these first monks had settled in the Desert is shrouded in legend. The *Life of Chariton* claimed that all three sites had been consecrated by the bishop Macarius, who occupied the See of Jerusalem from 314 to c.335, but elsewhere alleged that its hero had suffered persecution at the hands of the emperor Aurelian. As Gerard Garitte and Leah Di Segni have observed, it is difficult to see how both claims can be true. Aurelian died in 275. His appearance here seems to have been added in an effort to create a historical pedigree for Chariton to rival that of Hilarion, eulogised by Jerome as the first Palestinian ascetic.³²⁹ In any case, Euthymius’ first monastery marked a break with what had gone before, abandoning the eremitic traditions of these early pioneers in favour of the institutionalised, coenobitic monastic model more recently popularised by his compatriot, Basil of Caesarea. Named for the holy man’s companion Theoctistus, according to Cyril, the experiment began in 411 with the creation of a coenobium in the ravine of the Wadi Muqallik, accessed by a path running south-east of the Adummim Ascent on the Roman road between Jerusalem and Jericho.³³⁰ The development of the other Euthymian monasteries soon followed, with all three supposedly active by the end of the 420s.

These latter communities were a coenobium at Caparbaricha and the ‘Laura of Euthymius,’ whose chapel, Cyril tells us, was consecrated by Juvenal on May 7th 428.³³¹ At this stage, however, the Church authorities only feature peripherally in the *Life’s* account. Cyril revealed that Euthymius’ early career had been mainly shaped by patronage from another source: the local Arab chieftain Peter-Aspebet and his descendants. Formerly a vassal of the Sasanians, Aspebet had been stationed in Palestine as a Roman *phylarch* (*phylarchos tōn Sarakēnōn*).³³² Irfan Shahîd thought it likely that he had previously defected from the rival, pro-Sasanian Arab confederacy headed by the Lakhmids.³³³ Euthymius, the *Life* claims, had first come to the tribal leader’s attention by miraculously healing Aspebet’s son, Terebon, of paralysis. Marvelling at the holy man’s abilities, Cyril recorded that the phylarch and his followers demanded to be baptised as Christians, their leader receiving the name of ‘Peter’ as a mark of his conversion.³³⁴ In return, the *Life* records that Peter-Aspebet paid for the construction of the Monastery of Theoctistus, dispatching his brother, Maris, to serve as one of its monks. According to Cyril, it was Peter too who later induced Euthymius to move again to settle his eponymous Laura.³³⁵

³²⁹ G. Garitte, ‘La vie prémétaphrastique,’ 1-50; L. Di Segni, ‘The Life of Chariton,’ in V.L. Wimbush (ed.), *Ascetic Behaviour in Greco-Roman Antiquity*, (Minneapolis 1990), 393-424. Moreover, as Di Segni notes, that there is no other evidence to show that Aurelian was ever a persecutor of Christians.

³³⁰ *V. Euth.* 8 (ed. Schwartz, pp. 15-16); For the monastery’s location and remains, see: H. Goldfus, B. Arubas, and E. Alliata, ‘The Monastery of St. Theoctistus (Deir Muqallik),’ *LA* 45 (1995), 247-292.

³³¹ *V. Euth.* 16 (ed. Schwartz, pp. 25-27); Chitty, *The Desert*, p. 84.

³³² *V. Euth.* 10 (ed. Schwartz, pp. 18-19).

³³³ For Peter-Aspebet and his family, see: *PLRE* II, ‘Aspebetus’; I. Shahîd, *Byzantium and the Arabs in the Fifth Century*, (Washington 1989), pp. 40-45; R. Génier, *Vie de Saint Euthyme le Grand*, (Paris 1909), pp. 94-117.

³³⁴ *V. Euth.* 10 (ed. Schwartz, pp. 19-21).

³³⁵ *V. Euth.* 15 (ed. Schwartz, p. 24).

Positioned to the northwest of the Monastery of Theoctistus, the Laura's site at Khan al-Ahmar occupied a commanding position close to the Jerusalem-Jericho road, overlooking the Desert's southern reaches. The *Life* reports that Peter funded its initial construction, before later agreeing to pay for the chapel briefly mentioned above.³³⁶ Unlike earlier Euthymian foundations, this was nominally an eremitic community. But as others have noted, the Laura's location surely precluded any realistic prospect of ascetic seclusion. Cyril later sought to dispel this impression, arguing that, at the time of the monastery's construction, the area 'was remote and difficult to access.'³³⁷ The road to Jericho, however, was already a well-established pilgrimage route in the 420s. A miracle story contained in the *Life* even appears to concede this point, reporting that, on one occasion, four hundred Armenian pilgrims had visited the monastery in a single day.³³⁸ Peter's plans for the site, however, had apparently never envisaged that its monks should live in solitude. After convincing Euthymius to settle there, Cyril recorded that the phylarch and his entourage established themselves in an 'encampment,' or *Parembolē*, built in the immediate vicinity.³³⁹

Far from the makeshift structure its name may suggest, the *Life* makes clear that Peter intended for this encampment remain as a permanent feature of the Desert landscape. Remarkably, at the phylarch's behest, Euthymius was said to have petitioned Juvenal to consent to the creation of a 'Diocese of the Parembolē,' with Peter as its bishop.³⁴⁰ Euthymius and his brothers supplied its clergy. In the decades that follow, we struggle to draw a clear, institutional distinction between the Parembolē and the Euthymian monasteries. Peter's relatives came to hold key positions in both.³⁴¹ When Peter's son, the then phylarch Terebon, was later imprisoned by Antipatrus, bishop of Bostra, as a punishment for his corrupt business dealings, it was Euthymius who interceded on his behalf.³⁴² At points Terebon's close involvement in the monasteries' affairs became a source of tension. Elizabeth Fowden has traced Cyril's account of the apparent controversy created by his unwelcome interference in their liturgy.³⁴³

On his death in 485, Cyril's *Life of Cyriacus* notes that Terebon's fortune was split between the monasteries of Euthymius and Theoctistus, provoking an unseemly squabble as to which foundation ought to receive the greater share. Cyril claimed that this dispute resulted in a permanent split between the Euthymians, after which the two communities were governed separately.³⁴⁴ Prior to this, however, he noted that both were part of one estate, administered by a single steward. Among its assets, we are

³³⁶ *V. Euth.* 16 (ed. Schwartz, p. 26).

³³⁷ *V. Euth.* 14 (ed. Schwartz, pp. 23-24).

³³⁸ *V. Euth.* 17 (ed. Schwartz, p. 27); See also: M.E. Stone, 'Holy Land Pilgrimage of Armenians before the Arab Conquests,' *RB* 93 (1986), pp. 93-110.

³³⁹ *V. Euth.* 15 (ed. Schwartz, pp. 24-25).

³⁴⁰ *Ibid.* (ed. Schwartz, p. 25).

³⁴¹ *V. Euth.* 36, 47 (ed. Schwartz, pp. 55, 68).

³⁴² *V. Euth.* 34 (ed. Schwartz, pp. 52-53).

³⁴³ E. Key Fowden, *The Barbarian Plain: Saint Sergius between Rome and Iran*, (Berkeley, CA 1999), p. 164-165, 167; *V. Euth.* 28 (ed. Schwartz, p. 45).

³⁴⁴ *V. Cyr.* 6-7 (ed. Schwartz, pp. 225-227).

told, were substantial agricultural holdings in the surrounding countryside and a pilgrim hostel in Jerusalem. Following the schism of 485, the *Life of Cyriacus* claims that Paul, abbot of the Monastery of Theoctistus, built a tower to divide lands which were formerly held in common before paying the monks of Khan al-Ahmar 200 *solidi* as compensation for their half of the hostel.³⁴⁵ These actions seem to have carved up an expansive monastic property formerly centred on the Parembole.

It was previously thought that Peter's encampment was situated roughly three kilometres south of the path between the Euthymian monasteries at present-day Bir Za'rah.³⁴⁶ But in 1992, an article by Ofer Sion relocated its remains to Khirbet Handumah, a site much closer to Khan al-Ahmar, and positioned just to the south of the path itself.³⁴⁷ Sion's survey of Khirbet Handumah revealed a fortified site, incorporating a tower not dissimilar to that later commissioned by Paul. Cyril notes that the Euthymians' property was also enclosed by a perimeter fence, which had to be re-routed following the discord created by Terebon's will.³⁴⁸ Previously these measures, it seems, had given physical expression to the proprietary claims of Peter and his family.

By having himself consecrated as its bishop, Peter had secured a partial recognition of the encampment's existence as a political unit, thereby confirming his rights as its owner. But the creation of the 'Diocese of the Parembole' added a further layer to the elaborate mechanisms of control which the phylarch and his descendants had established over Euthymius and his followers. The Euthymian priests stationed at Khan al-Ahmar and Khirbet Handumah were now officially his subordinates, liable to be disciplined, paid, or even deposed, according to his wishes, in line with the canons of the Council of Nicaea. Peter joined Juvenal in his capacity as bishop at Ephesus I in 431. His successors, Auxolaus and John, were in attendance at Ephesus II and Chalcedon.³⁴⁹

Hirschfeld has spoken in detail of Khan al-Ahmar's 'topographical advantages.'³⁵⁰ Aside from its proximity to the road, the site stands at the head of the paths by which access was gained to the Desert's south and east.³⁵¹ The plain of Adummim has been identified the terminus of the 'Sugar and Salt Road' running between Jerusalem and Qumran on the Dead Sea, which may partly survive in the form of the path which linked Khan al-Ahmar to the Monastery of Theoctistus.³⁵² By pressing Euthymius to settle

³⁴⁵ Ibid. (ed. Schwartz, p. 226.).

³⁴⁶ J.L. Féderlin, 'Les campements des Arabes chrétiens des 'parembolis' du desert de Jérusalem (cinquième et sixième siècle),' *La Terre Sainte* 24 (1907), pp. 177-184; Y. Hirschfeld, 'Survey and Excavations in the Region of the Euthymius Monastery,' *Hadashot Arkheologiyot* 86 (1986), 42-44.

³⁴⁷ O. Sion, 'A Monastic Precinct at Khirbet Handumah?' *LA* 42 (1992), 279-287, 280, fig. 1.

³⁴⁸ *V. Cyr.* 7 (ed. Schwartz, pp. 226-227).

³⁴⁹ *V. Euth.* 27 (ed. Schwartz, p. 41).

³⁵⁰ Hirschfeld, 'Euthymius and his Monastery,' 345.

³⁵¹ *V. Euth.* 44 (ed. Schwartz, pp. 65-66); *V. Sab.* 26, 27 (ed. Schwartz, pp. 110-112). Whilst a further desert route between Jerusalem and the Wadi Kidron was developed following the establishment of the Great Laura of Sabas in 483, there is little to suggest that this would have had any significant impact on traffic passing the better-connected monastery of Euthymius. J. Patrich, *Sabas – Leader of Palestinian Monasticism*, pp. 54-55.

³⁵² M. Har-El, 'The Route of Salt, Sugar and Balsam Caravans in the Judean Desert,' *GeoJournal* 2 (1978), 549-556; O. Sion, 'An early Route in the Northern Judean Desert,' *Hadashot Arkheologiyot* 97, 58. Cf. J. Taylor and

where he did, Peter had placed this vital junction in the region's systems of transport and exchange under the control of a religious institution which he effectively managed. Fowden has drawn parallels between the practices which Cyril described at the Laura with those in evidence at the so-called 'tribal churches' patronised by the powerful Ghassanid phylarchs to the north.³⁵³

Whether or not we accept this comparison, it is tempting to think that Euthymius' final foundation originated as a proprietary monastery in all but name. By the time of Terebon's bequest, however, it seems clear that the phylarchs' influence over Khan al-Ahmar had already begun to wane considerably. We might suppose that this diminished status was the result of a broader shift in patronage relations begun with Juvenal's return in 453. The *Life*, however, points to interference from another source. Indeed, Cyril revealed the Parembolē's main competitor for influence in the Desert in the years immediately after Chalcedon was not the episcopate, but rather its erstwhile enemy, Eudocia.

Eudocia was said to have first come in search of Euthymius in the months leading up to her conversion to Chalcedon in 455. The *Life* claims that no less an authority than Symeon Stylites had directed the empress to speak with holy man, promising that Euthymius' 'orthodox' teachings would finally convince her to renounce her support for the Council's opponents.³⁵⁴ The text records that a meeting with the holy man eventually took place in a tower that Eudocia had constructed on the nearby summit of Jebel Muntar. Determined to avoid any further disruption to his monks' ascetic regime, Euthymius is said to have informed the empress that there would be no further contact between them.³⁵⁵

Eudocia, however, for her part, does not appear to have understood this message. Later that year, the empress celebrated her 'conversion' by showering the Euthymians with honours. Cyril reported that among the beneficiaries was the monk Gabriel, appointed by Eudocia as archdeacon of the Church of St. Stephen. She was said to have arranged for another brother, Chrysippus, to become a priest of the Church of the Resurrection.³⁵⁶ Eudocia's ally Bassa selected Andrew, the brother of Euthymius' eventual successor, Stephen, as superior of the shrine of St. Menas.³⁵⁷ These appointments, however, marked only the beginning of the empress' largesse. Undaunted by the holy man's alleged rejection of her philanthropy, Cyril recorded that Eudocia soon returned to Desert to begin work on a new complex of religious buildings. Centred on a church dedicated to St. Peter, the *Life* disclosed that the site of this project was situated at a distance of only 'twenty stades' from the monastery at Khan al-Ahmar.³⁵⁸

S. Gibson, 'Roads and Passes Round Qumran,' Reports, *Palestine Exploration Quarterly* 140 (2008), pp. 225-227. Taylor and Gibson doubt the road's existence, though a road matching this description is found in Josephus.

³⁵³ Fowden, *Barbarian Plain*, p. 164.

³⁵⁴ *V. Euth.* 30 (ed. Schwartz, pp. 47-48).

³⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁵⁶ *V. Euth.* 30 (ed. Schwartz, p. 49).

³⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁵⁸ *V. Euth.* 35 (ed. Schwartz, pp. 53-54).

Located by Hirschfeld at Qasr ‘Ali, St. Peter’s stood adjacent to the Jerusalem-Jericho road, built on higher ground so as to loom over both the monastery and the Encampment.³⁵⁹ Cyril notes that, on coming to inspect the progress of the site, Eudocia was able to ‘look down’ across the plain of Adummim to observe the monks’ activities. Hagith Sivan has claimed that the empress intended her new complex to ‘augment’ the Monastery of Euthymius.³⁶⁰ In spite of the holy man’s refusal to be seen with her, the *Life* records that Eudocia sought to arrange a second meeting with Euthymius in 459, shortly prior to her death. Cyril, however, is adamant that *this* meeting never occurred.³⁶¹

The *Life* claims that its hero’s strict asceticism discouraged any contact with the outside world, let alone with a woman. But Cyril’s insistence on this point is less than convincing. He acknowledged that Euthymius had already agreed to meet with Eudocia at least once before. By his own admission, many of the holy man’s followers had come to be counted among the empress’ clients. The *Life* notes that Eudocia intended to mark the completion of St. Peter’s with a substantial donation to its subject, suggesting a role for the Euthymian monks in its administration. In rebuffing the empress in 459, Euthymius was alleged to have told her that he no longer wished to benefit from her patronage, saying ‘do not persist in remembering me, whether by word or in writing, that is to say concerning giving and receiving [of money].’³⁶² It is more likely that the *Life* sought to downplay any suggestion of closeness between them on political grounds. In the staunchly-Chalcedonian context of the mid-sixth century, Cyril could hardly have been expected to boast of his own order’s descent from ascetics linked to Eudocia, given her well-documented role, analysed above, in the rebellion of 451.

If Cyril is correct, then we can date the point at which the episcopate finally attained mastery over the Euthymians to January 20th 473. Euthymius’ death had occurred earlier that day. The *Life* records the bishop Anastasius arrived at the monastery to take charge of his funeral arrangements, accompanied by a retinue of dignitaries and imperial troops.³⁶³ Cyril reported that Anastasius personally presided over his hero’s burial, before appointing the deacon Fidus to oversee the construction of an elaborate tomb for him beneath the Laura’s church. Under Fidus’ supervision, work soon also began on the much larger project to redevelop the monastery from a laura to a coenobium, again with funds donated by the bishop.

Cyril argued that Euthymius had left instructions for the conversion of the monastery in his will.³⁶⁴ He argued that Fidus received a vision, in which the holy man had revealed his plans for its future. But it

³⁵⁹ *V. Euth.* 35 (ed. Schwartz, p. 53); Y. Hirschfeld, ‘A Church and Reservoir built by Empress Eudocia,’ *LA* 40 (1990), 339-371; cf. M. von Riess, ‘Das Euthymiuskloster, die Peterkirche der Eudokia und die laura Heptastomos in der Wusta Juda,’ *ZDPV* 15 (1882), 212-226.

³⁶⁰ Sivan, *Palestine in Late Antiquity*, p. 214. Much of Sivan’s accompanying argument, that Eudocia acted as a mediator between the supporters and opponents of Chalcedon in 451-453, however, remains problematic.

³⁶¹ *V. Euth.* 35 (ed. Schwartz, p. 53).

³⁶² *V. Euth.* 35 (ed. Schwartz, pp. 53.23-24). ἐμοῦ μνημόνεῦσαι μήτε ἐγγράφως μήτε ἀγράφως, περὶ δόσεως λέγω καὶ λήψεως.

³⁶³ *V. Euth.* 40 (ed. Schwartz, pp. 60-61).

³⁶⁴ *V. Euth.* 43 (ed. Schwartz, pp. 62-65).

seems clear that, in reality, the redevelopment of Khan al-Ahmar was a project undertaken by the See to underline episcopal claims of authority over the site and its inhabitants. Having wrested control of Euthymius' funeral rites, Anastasius set about reforming the community which he had founded, so that it was easier to regulate. At the same time, no expense was spared in transforming the monastery itself to act as a potent symbol of Jerusalem's power. With little regard for its occupant's ascetic tastes, the *Life* notes that Anastasius had ordered Euthymius' final resting place to be adorned with marble and silver from the episcopal treasury.³⁶⁵ The reconstruction of Khan al-Ahmar was not completed until 483. To mark this occasion, the bishop Martyrius supposedly arrived to re-consecrate the monastery in another lavish ceremony, which was now presented with a generous cache of martyrs' relics to be deposited under its altar.³⁶⁶

Though Cyril cast Jerusalem's takeover of the monastery as consensual, the *Life's* retelling struggles to disguise what we might otherwise regard as an aggressive act of episcopal expansionism. Here again, the monastery's location is likely to have played a key part in the bishops' considerations. Control of Khan al-Ahmar was crucial to Jerusalem's vision for a loyal monastic network, centred on the Desert. Any suggestion that the See's involvement was borne of a longstanding, theological alliance with the Euthymians is undermined by details given elsewhere in the text. Cyril notes that Euthymius had previously sought to distance himself from Anastasius, as he had Eudocia, only encountering the bishop by necessity at the funeral of Theoctistus.³⁶⁷ But unlike Eudocia, it seems clear that Anastasius was forced to wait until after Euthymius' death before attempting to intervene in his monastery's affairs. Perhaps hoping to derail the episcopate's designs for his order, Cyril recorded that the holy man had previously offered Anastasius stewardship of the Monastery of Theoctistus, but that the bishop had refused him.³⁶⁸

Modern studies have argued that Euthymius' standoffishness was in reaction to Anastasius' ambivalent position on Chalcedon's doctrine. Cyril, however, could ultimately marshal little evidence to show that the monks of Khan al-Ahmar in this period were any more committed to the Council's defence. In 449, whilst under Euthymius' instruction, Auxolaus, bishop of the Encampment, had given his assent to the rulings of Ephesus II.³⁶⁹ Cyril admitted that the monastery had given refuge to Domnus of Antioch, deposed that same year for defending Ibas of Edessa, whose hostility to Cyril of Alexandria had provoked widespread censure across the East.³⁷⁰ A former Euthymian, Domnus was later rehabilitated at Chalcedon. But as Price and Gaddis note, he remained 'in disgrace,' having previously attempted to

³⁶⁵ *V. Euth.* 42 (ed. Schwartz, pp. 61-62).

³⁶⁶ *V. Euth.* 44 (ed. Schwartz, p. 66). The martyrs in question were Tarachus, Probus, and Andronicus, all alleged victims of the Diocletian persecutions.

³⁶⁷ *V. Euth.* 33, 36 (ed. Schwartz, pp. 52, 54-55).

³⁶⁸ *V. Euth.* 36 (ed. Schwartz, p. 55).

³⁶⁹ *V. Euth.* 27 (ed. Schwartz, p. 41).

³⁷⁰ Ibas' letter to Mari the Persian would later come to serve as one of the 'Three Chapters' condemned at the Second Council of Constantinople in 553. See below.

strike a deal at Ephesus with Dioscorus, agreeing to the deposition of ‘orthodox’ colleagues in the hope of retaining his position.³⁷¹ Cyril, of course, sought to distance Euthymius himself from these controversial figures. Yet in seeking exonerate his hero, he was forced acknowledge the more ambivalent attitudes prevalent among his followers. When Stephen of Jamnia and John, bishop of the Encampment, returned to Khan al-Ahmar in 451 to report Chalcedon’s findings, the *Life* concedes that Euthymius was forced to reassure them that they had acted correctly in assenting to its rulings.³⁷² Cyril, as we saw above, had no original statement of his hero’s Chalcedonian beliefs to quote from and could offer only a paltry defence for the holy man’s subsequent decision to absent himself from ecclesiastical politics entirely during the rebellion against Juvenal by Eudocia and her associates.

Working with such unpromising material, the author of the *Life* could be forgiven for appearing to exaggerate the role of dyophysite Christology whilst crafting his foundational myth of the enduring alliance between the episcopal authorities and Desert monasteries. After all, it was to this relationship that the Sabaite order owed its origin, and which Cyril himself, monastic author and son of the episcopal treasurer of the See of Scythopolis, personally embodied.³⁷³ On departing Khan al-Ahmar, Sabas is said to have founded his ‘Great Laura’ in the Wadi Kidron in 483.³⁷⁴ He died in 532, the *Life of Sabas* records, having established no fewer than seven laurae and coenobia in the Desert, two outside it. Paraphrasing Athanasius’ *Life of Antony*, Cyril lauded his forefather’s achievement in ‘turning the Desert into a city,’ an effort which the text reveals was not without its difficulties.³⁷⁵ The success of this programme, however, was as much a testament to the bishops’ aggressive management of local monks, as proof of ascetic fortitude. By forcefully promoting a handful of monastic subordinates, Sabas included, Jerusalem carefully channelled the growth of their movement after 473. The See had invested much of the raw material required to ensure the success of Sabas’ endeavours in terms of food and labour. It had also expended considerable political capital in supporting him. Cyril highlighted several occasions, in particular, on which Elias of Jerusalem had intervened decisively in the Sabaites’ affairs, insisting that their abbot remain in post after many of the brothers had rejected him.³⁷⁶ This regulatory agenda had another, more menacing side; for all the favour shown to key subordinates, the episcopal authorities were quick to suppress what they saw as unauthorised ascetic activity in the Desert. Throughout the *Life of Sabas*, attempts by monks to leave the *Laura* and strike out on their own were deliberately frustrated. When a breakaway community of Sabaite monks was formed at the Laura of Heptastomos, Cyril claimed that Elias had hired a party of workmen to demolish it.³⁷⁷

³⁷¹ Price and Gaddis, *Acts of Chalcedon*, 2.310-311.

³⁷² *V. Euth.* 27 (ed. Schwartz, p. 41).

³⁷³ *V. Sab.* 75 (ed. Schwartz, pp. 180).

³⁷⁴ *V. Sab.* 16 (ed. Schwartz, pp. 99-101).

³⁷⁵ *V. Sab.* 37 (ed. Schwartz, pp. 126.5): ἐπολίσθη ἡ ἐρημος. This phrase was taken from Athanasius’ *Life of Antony*. See: Flusin, *Miracle et histoire*, p. 185.

³⁷⁶ *V. Sab.* 35 (ed. Schwartz, p. 122).

³⁷⁷ *V. Sab.* 39 (ed. Schwartz, p. 130).

We find evidence of similar coercive practices, so clearly at odds with the often-autarkic traditions of early monasticism, enacted in the city of Jerusalem itself. In 494, a year after Sabas and Theodosius the Coenobiarch's appointment as joint-archimandrites by the bishop Sallustius, the *Life* notes that Elias had established a monastery at the Tower of David to house a lay fraternity of *spoudaioi*, or 'zealots,' enlisted to oversee the management the Holy Places, an organisation, which as Sophrone Pétridès and Peregrine Horden have shown, was in essence a militia in the mould of the notorious *parabalani* earlier raised by the bishops of Alexandria.³⁷⁸ A grateful Sabas not only went on to represent Elias before Anastasius at Constantinople in 511 or 512; he later served as Jerusalem's ambassador to the court of Justinian, sent by the bishop Peter to renegotiate Palestine's tax obligations in the aftermath of the Samaritan revolt of 529.³⁷⁹ For his supporters, such close cooperation must only have seemed natural, as the boundary between the episcopate and its Desert clients continued to blur.

This phenomenon was in evidence as early as 431, when Juvenal selected the Euthymian monks Stephen and Cosmas to become deacons of the Church of the Resurrection.³⁸⁰ The recruitment of their brothers began in earnest, however, within months of Euthymius' death. The future bishops Martyrius and Elias, both then members of Khan al-Ahmar, were appointed by the bishop Anastasius as priests of the same Church the following year.³⁸¹ Chrysippus, the Euthymian monk previously appointed to this role by Eudocia, meanwhile, was elevated to the more senior office of 'Guardian of the Cross' (or *staurophylax*), responsible for administering the Jerusalemite cult of the True Cross, whose relic was among the See's most prized possessions, replacing Cosmas, who now rose to become bishop of Scythopolis.³⁸² The next decades saw former Desert monks elected to suffragan Sees across Palestine, among them Theodore of Petra, Stephen of Jamnia, Theognius, and the latter's hagiographer, Paul of Elusa. John of Thebes (also known as John the Chozibite), abbot of the Monastery of the Mother of God at Choziba in the Wadi Qilt, is found in 518 as Metropolitan of Caesarea.³⁸³ Representing, in effect,

³⁷⁸ The *spoudaioi* (σπουδαῖοι – lit. 'serious ones') were originally attached to the Church of the Anastasis. Cyril, *V. Sab* 31 (ed. Schwartz, p. 116); S. Pétridès, 'Le monastere des Spoudaei à Jérusalem et les Spoudaei de Constantinople,' *Échos d'Orient* 4.4 (1900-01), 225-231; Idem, 'Spoudaei et Philopones,' *AB* 7 (1904), 341-348; E. Patlagean, *Pauvreté économique et pauvreté sociale à Byzance, 4e-7e siècles*, (Paris 1977), pp. 192-193; P. Horden, 'The Confraternities in Byzantium,' in W.J. Shiels and D. Wood (ed.), *Voluntary Religion*, (Oxford 1986), 25-45. It has recently been argued that they administered sites elsewhere in Palestine under Jerusalem's orders. See: M. Aviam and J. Ashkenazi, 'Late Antique Pilgrimage Monasteries in Galilean Loca Sancta,' *LA* 64 (2014), 559-573. And indeed the *philoponoï* ('lovers of toil'), a quarrelsome religious association of Alexandrian students, of which Severus and Zachariah were formerly members.

³⁷⁹ *V. Sab.* 71-73 (ed. Schwartz, pp. 173-178).

³⁸⁰ *V. Euth.* 20 (ed. Schwartz, pp. 32).

³⁸¹ *V. Euth.* 37 (ed. Schwartz, pp. 55-56).

³⁸² For the office of *staurophylax* and the development of the cult of the True Cross at Jerusalem, see: A. Frolov, *La relique de la vraie croix. Recherches sur le développement d'un culte*, Archives de l'orient chrétien 7 (Paris 1961); M. van Esbroeck, 'Jean II de Jérusalem et les cultes de S. Étienne, de la Sainte-Sion et de la Croix,' *AB* 102 (1984), 99-134; S.H. Griffith, 'The Signs and Wonders of Orthodoxy: Miracles and Monks' Lives in Sixth-Century Palestine' in J.C. Cavadini (ed.), *Miracles in Jewish and Christian Antiquity: Imagining Truth*, (Notre Dame, IN 1999), 139-168.

³⁸³ *V. Sab.* 61 (ed. Schwartz, p. 162); Evagrius, *HE* 4.7 (ed. Bidez and Parmentier, pp. 157-158). For John's possible identification with the target of the *Contra Impium Grammaticum*, see chapter 5.

the final realisation of the maximalist vision for a 'Jerusalemite' Church first set out by Juvenal at Ephesus I, this gradual reorientation of monasticism towards the episcopate triggered a return to open hostilities with Chalcedon's opponents, culminating in the attacks of 508. On a closer reading, however, the *Life of Euthymius*' account seems to jar with the traditional view of the process by which there emerged a dominant, 'Chalcedonian' faction within the Palestinian Church. It was not the natural affinity of fellow-believers, it would appear, which underpinned the Euthymians' eventual partnership with the See of Jerusalem. Cyril's own account appears to suggest that the close relationship that developed between them was, instead, the outcome of a contest between rival religious patrons for control of Khan al-Ahmar. The bishops succeeded in securing the monastery's lasting allegiance, where others had failed, by outspending and outmanoeuvring their competitors. Cultivated from the beginning as episcopal dependants, the communities established by Euthymius' successors would come to vocally champion the Council upon whose rulings Jerusalem's authority was based.

III. Peter the Iberian and the Twilight of 'Aristocratic' Monasticism

There was, of course, to be no such happy outcome for the dissident monastic circle celebrated by Rufus. But at Gaza too, the 490s were a time of reorganisation, as a new generation of anti-Chalcedonians adapted to the growing self-confidence of the Council's supporters. With Peter the Iberian's death in 491, leadership of their cause fell to his disciples. Reinvigorated through their efforts, local opposition to the bishops persisted, still a cause of sufficient concern to warrant Nephalius' eventual, violent intervention. Yet for all the upheaval, in one vital respect, this was a movement whose outlook remained substantially unchanged. Permeated just as strongly by the rhythms of the Church economy as asceticism in the Desert, anti-Chalcedonian sentiment in this period continued to be tied to the defence of the same, aristocratic religious culture earlier prized by Eudocia and her contemporaries. Among the young, well-educated, sons of the provincial gentry who now assumed command of the Gazan monasteries, the importance of maintaining the social conventions upon which this culture rested was paramount. Its influence was striking, even if the survival of local opposition to Chalcedon itself cannot simply be ascribed, as Derwas Chitty once suggested, to the innate 'conservatism' of the wealthy.³⁸⁴

For Severus, Rufus, Zachariah, and their comrades, nevertheless, it was the benefit of affluence which enabled this resistance to go on. In its genteel, Gazan manifestation, anti-Chalcedonian monasticism prospered, where elsewhere in Palestine it had faltered, through the continuing support of the region's leading citizens, tied to an enduring belief in the possession of private religious foundations as integral to notions of aristocratic self-identity. This precept was at the core of the ascetic model disseminated

³⁸⁴ Chitty, *The Desert*, p. 74; Steppa, *John Rufus*, p. 20.

by Peter, the elitist attitudes which underpinned it reflected in the holy man's choice of successors. Before fervent opposition to the bishops, or reputed ascetic prowess, what initially brought Rufus and his colleagues together was a privileged upbringing. All were former classmates, having first met whilst students of the prestigious law schools of Beirut and Alexandria. The expectation, naturally, had been that each would embark upon a respectable career in legal practise. Zachariah would later claim that he had only been prevented from joining the others in embracing the monastic life, as he had hoped, by the demands of his aristocratic father, who insisted that he put this expensive education to good use.³⁸⁵ Severus was eventually able to persuade his relatives to indulge his desire to emulate Peter's example following a series of disastrous early ascetic adventures, purchasing a monastery close to his late mentor's with funds from his parents, named in our sources as prominent landowners in Pisidia.³⁸⁶

At Gaza, Severus was joined by Rufus, a native of the province of Arabia, and by Theodore of Ashkelon, another Beirut alumnus who succeeded Peter in 491 as superior of his monastery at Maiuma. In spite of having failed to follow this same path himself, it was Zachariah who served as the vital link with Peter; as the son of one of Gaza's premier families, he claimed to have known the exiled Georgian prince since childhood. In an episode recently, thoroughly studied by Horn, Rufus recorded that Peter had personally recruited Severus to the anti-Chalcedonian cause, having been introduced by Zachariah during a visit to Beirut in ca. 485.³⁸⁷ Following the holy man's death, his pupils presided over the elaborate arrangements outlined in his will, briefly recounted in Zachariah's *Life of Severus*, which appointed Theodore as one of four official heirs to Peter's estate and as joint-abbot of the Maiuma community alongside another disciple, John, formerly a member of the famous Alexandrian monastery at Canopus.³⁸⁸

Perhaps the greatest inheritance our subjects received from Peter, however, aside from his anti-Chalcedonianism, was a distinctly patrician interpretation of the ascetic calling. Rufus appears to concede that, even after receiving the monastic habit, his hero had retained many of the trappings of his former life as a favourite of the imperial court. Peter's status as a secular magnate, moreover, would seem to have been little-affected by his refusal to accept the rulings issued in 451, appearing to contradict the extravagant claims of persecution by Chalcedon's supporters elsewhere paraded in the *Life* and *Plerophoriae*. The latter text, especially, is replete with emotional accounts of the hardships endured by the holy man and his comrades, complemented by what Horn has revealed as the *Life's* attempt to depict its subject as imitating Christ in his suffering on behalf of the faith.³⁸⁹ What is immediately clear, however, from Rufus' hagiography is that Peter was not a pariah, but remained an immensely powerful figure in the decades after Chalcedon. In these years, the leader of Gaza's

³⁸⁵ *V. Sev.* 133 (ed. Kugener, p. 95).

³⁸⁶ *V. Sev.* 137 (ed. Kugener, p. 97); *Anonymous Life of Severus* 37 (ed. Kugener, p. 145).

³⁸⁷ *V. Pet.* 152 (ed. Raabe, p. 114).

³⁸⁸ *V. Sev.* 121 (ed. Kugener, pp. 86-87).

³⁸⁹ Horn, *Asceticism and Christological Controversy*, esp. p. 338; CCT 2.3.153.

recalcitrant monks, we are told, continued to style himself as Bishop of Maiuma.³⁹⁰ Though Peter had responded to Juvenal's return in 453 by abandoning Palestine for Egypt, the details of this second 'exile,' as the *Life* presents them, seem only to underline the considerable political resources he still had at his disposal. Far from shunning the limelight, once in Alexandria, we find him at the centre of the much-publicised anti-Chalcedonian coup d'état which followed the murder of the patriarch Proterius, even appearing as one of the 'bishops' responsible for the subsequent consecration of Timothy Aelurus.³⁹¹ By ca. 475, Rufus recorded, Peter was back in Gaza, having recently completed the second of two lengthy sojourns in the wealthy Middle-Egyptian metropolis of Oxyrhynchus.³⁹² Rather than return to his monastery, however, the *Life* reports that the holy man spent the bulk of his remaining years touring the estates of prominent friends, lodging with civic magistrates and receiving delegations of well-wishers in each town.³⁹³

Though feats of ascetic heroism do still feature in these later chapters of Rufus' hagiography, Peter's disciple was often unable to disguise his master's lingering position as a celebrated figure of Levantine high society. Moreover, where such an agenda can be detected, it is frequently undermined by the *Life's* determined bragging, vaunting its subject's extensive social connections in an effort to evoke the depths of opposition to Chalcedon among the respectable elite. Readers could almost be forgiven for confusing the text's account of its subject's activities in these years, at times, for a social diary, the story of the fight against the Council told through a string of engagements with high-profile landowners and public officials. Whilst touring Phoenicia, for instance, Rufus recorded that Peter had been hosted for a period by the *comes* Aspringius in Tripoli, before later staying on the 'suburban estate' of Maximus 'the magistrate' at Arca. The class-based traditions of hospitality described here seemingly transcended more recent divisions over Christian doctrine; the *Life* notes that, on the same trip, Peter had even briefly lodged with the Chalcedonian bishop of Orthosias, though the text claimed that this particular visit ultimately had to be cut short out of respect for the holy man's host, understandably uneasy at receiving at a guest who styled himself as a rival, seditious episcopal authority.³⁹⁴ Generally speaking, however, Rufus' hero could hardly be said to have suffered from a shortage of invitations. Some reveal a lifestyle few would associate with that of a monk. On one occasion, the *Life* recalled that Peter had escaped the oppressive heat of the coast by summering with another magistrate, Elias, at Beth Tafsha in the hills above of Jerusalem, a location renowned for its 'pleasant air.'³⁹⁵ Startlingly, the Gazan lawyer

³⁹⁰ For example, in: *V. Sev.* 106, 117 (ed. Kugener, pp. 78, 83).

³⁹¹ *V. Pet.* 91 (ed. Raabe, pp. 63-67); Severus, *Sixth Book of Letters* 2.3 (ed.). For the most recent discussion of Timothy's consecration, see: Y. Moss, *Incorruptible Bodies: Christology, Society, and Authority in Late Antiquity*, (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA 2016), pp. 52-57. On the decadent reputation of his patriarchal court, see: C. Haas, 'Patriarch and People: Peter Mongus of Alexandria and Episcopal Leadership in the Late Fifth Century,' *J ECS* 1 (1993), 297-316, 298-299.

³⁹² On Oxyrhynchus in this period see: Sarris, *Economy and Society*, passim.

³⁹³ *V. Pet.* 106 (ed. Raabe, pp. 78-79).

³⁹⁴ *V. Pet.* 141, 146 (ed. Raabe, pp. 105-106, 109-110).

³⁹⁵ *V. Pet.* 133 (ed. Raabe, p. 98).

Dionysius was said to have spent three hundred gold coins entertaining him for three years on his estate at Magdal Tutha.³⁹⁶ Even this regime, the text notes, proved sufficiently exhausting for Peter to later suspend his activities temporarily, travelling to the hot springs of Livias in the province of Arabia to recuperate.³⁹⁷

Nowhere in this packed itinerary do we find any record of a visit to the monastery at Maiuma. The *Life* records that Peter eventually died as he had lived: in comfort on a private estate at Jamnia, formerly owned by Eudocia.³⁹⁸ This appraisal of the exiled prince's lengthy ascetic career may seem uncharitable. The purpose, however, in highlighting Peter's reluctance to abandon the life into which he was born is not to disparage him, but rather to stress the extent to which these social origins continued to define the monastic circle he had founded. Whatever the broader decline of their movement, we can, at least, be confident that Gaza's anti-Chalcedonians were not the enfeebled group that Rufus spasmodically depicted. Led by scions of the Empire's governing class, not only were they better-able to resist the growing predominance of the Jerusalem episcopate and its allies than others, even almost briefly defeating it in 516, but the vision of the religious life offered here was one remarkably at ease in its relationship to the wider, cultural traditions of the coastal aristocracy.

Gaza's verdant hinterland was, of course, a world away from the barren wilderness of the Judaeen Desert, a thriving commercial centre famed throughout the Empire for its cultural vibrancy and profitable wine trade.³⁹⁹ Yet even in this environment, Peter's followers were unusual in their uninhibited enthusiasm for ideas and institutions to which ascetics were normally, at least, publicly indifferent, if not more often openly hostile. This discrepancy is particularly striking from the evidence of close collaboration between the Gazan monks and senior representatives of the city's venerable 'secular' education system. Trained to favour pious 'simplicity' over immersion in the Classical canon, ascetics of this period were more commonly prone to approach such learning with suspicion, an attitude of mistrust only compounded by the obvious pagan origin of the Hellenistic curriculum. Cyril, for instance, commented proudly in the *Life of Sabas* that the only literary education he had received was in Scripture.⁴⁰⁰ Sabas himself was claimed to have revelled in his 'rustic' reputation. Peter's successors, however, it is clear, had no such qualms. On closer inspection, their monasteries appear as almost an extension of same thriving social and intellectual milieu made famous in these years by Gaza's curial laity. Severus and his friends came to prominence in a period which coincided with the region's broader flourish as a bastion of elite culture, and the golden age of the so-called 'Gaza School' of rhetoric, of

³⁹⁶ *V. Pet.* 137 (ed. Raabe, pp. 100-101).

³⁹⁷ *V. Pet.* 116 (ed. Raabe, p. 86).

³⁹⁸ *V. Pet.* 166 (ed. Raabe, pp. 122-123).

³⁹⁹ Jerome, *Vita Hilarionis* 25-27 (ed.); Isaiah of Scetis, *Ascetic Discourses* 12 (ed. Regnault, pp.); S.A. Kingsley, 'The Economic Impact of the Palestinian Wine Trade in Late Antiquity,' in S.A. Kingsley and M. Decker (eds.), *Economy and Exchange in the East Mediterranean during Late Antiquity. Proceedings of a Conference at Somerville College, Oxford - May 29th, 1999*, (Oxford 2001), 44-68.

⁴⁰⁰ See, for instance: *V. Euth.* 1 (ed. Schwartz, p. 6).

which Zachariah was a prominent member. The erudite lawyer's works are known to have extended from hagiography and ecclesiastical history to Neoplatonist philosophy, their author counted by scholars today as the third member of a literary 'Gazan triad,' alongside the sophists Procopius and Aeneas. The anti-Chalcedonian texts produced by Zachariah and Rufus, more generally, may be considered as constituting part of what Flusin has described as 'une littérature savant,' a realisation that continues to fuel a range of theories identifying one or other of Gaza's monastic leaders as the true author of the monumental spiritual *Corpus* thought to have circulated amongst them, once falsely attributed to Dionysius the Areopagite.⁴⁰¹

Zachariah's fragmentary *Life* of Peter's monastic ally, Isaiah of Scetis, speaks of its subject's close correspondence with Aeneas. Speculation persists that Zachariah and Procopius of Gaza were brothers.⁴⁰² Thus, as for Schor's Antiochenes, or Jerusalem's alliance with Euthymius' disciples, the links between Peter's successors and their contemporaries were sustained, at base level, by a complex web of personal relationships. Unlike other ecclesiastical networks, however, theirs appears as only part of a broadly-based resurgence in local aristocratic culture founded upon elementary bonds of shared social class. If this essential truth is visible from the personal profiles of Gaza's anti-Chalcedonian leaders, it can also be seen to have infected the philosophy of their movement in its dealings with the civil and ecclesiastical authorities. The works of the region's non-monastic authors were aggressively imbued with the values and prejudices of the Late Roman nobility, the elegant Greek compositions of Procopius' pupil, Choricus, a testament to the confidence with which his peers upheld their position in society.⁴⁰³ More strident still were the views expressed by the Palestinian historian Procopius of Caesarea, another likely student of the Gazan masters, whose snobbish account of the reign of Justinian laid bare elite disdain in the mid-sixth century for the humble origin of the Empire's ruling dynasty. The author of the *Anecdota* was famously caustic in his treatment of a government whose policies he regarded as an affront, writing in response to the perceived encroachment of patricians' rights by the palace. Procopius' complaints against the emperor, significantly, would include the charge that Justinian's regime had tolerated the rapacious behaviour of overreaching churchmen anxious to acquire the property of wealthy landowners by stealth.⁴⁰⁴ In 491, a similar reaction, rooted in the defence of elite privilege, can be seen to have acted upon Peter and his followers, in responding to the seemingly limitless ambition of Juvenal's successors.

⁴⁰¹ Flusin, 'L'hagiographie palestinienne,' 32. For the various attributions of this title to Peter, see: E. Honigmann, *Pierre l'Iberien et les écrits du Pseudo-Denys l'Areopagite*, (Brussels 1952); M. van Esbroeck, 'Peter the Iberian and Dionysius the Areopagite: Honigmann's thesis revisited,' *OCP* 59 (1993), 217-227.

⁴⁰² Horn, *Asceticism and Christological Controversy*, pp. 156-157; Brock, *Two Early Lives of Severus*, p. 17.

⁴⁰³ Choricus of Gaza, *Opera* (eds. R. Foerster and E. Richtsteig), (Stuttgart 1972); F-M. Abel, 'Gaza au VI^e siècle d'après le rhéteur Chorikios,' *RB* 40 (1931), 5-31.

⁴⁰⁴ Procopius, *Anecdota* 13.4-7, 28.2-15 (ed. Dewing, pp. 156-158, 326-332).

The parallels between Peter and Eudocia's final years are clear. Whilst Rufus' hero may have demonstrated little desire to personally inhabit his monastery in his old age, in death he jealously guarded the power to determine the Maiuma community's future. Leaving aside the complex testamentary arrangements already highlighted above, his plans for the site were of a scale to rival even the empress' keen eye for posterity. According to the *Life*, on Peter's instructions, the monastery was redesigned to pivot around its founder's tomb.⁴⁰⁵ Rufus recorded that, at the same time, its monks began construction of a strong ring of walls encircling it: a measure which, as Horn remarks, would seem to have been undertaken less to shield the brothers from temptation, than to safeguard their assets from outsiders.⁴⁰⁶ These details would seem to confirm that, if aristocratic pretensions had helped to determine the shape of monastic development at Gaza, then the reverse was also true. The mode of life at Maiuma, as depicted here, was broadly identical to that of the classic 'proprietary churches' of the high medieval West, the so-called *Eigenkirche* made famous by Ulrich Stutz, whose complex role in the projection of lordly power was the subject of the more recent, magisterial survey of Susan Wood.⁴⁰⁷ From details provided by Rufus, Horn has argued convincingly that the Maiuma complex's primary purpose had always been to serve as its founder's final resting place, with space apparently reserved for Peter's future monument during the construction of its church, planned to be placed alongside the remains of a celebrated local martyr, Victor.⁴⁰⁸ In the decades prior to his death, the *Life* records that the monastery's members were required to recite daily prayers of intercession for the exiled prince and his relatives in their liturgy.⁴⁰⁹ In granting the bishops the custodianship of churches and monasteries in 451, Chalcedon had sought to reinforce a general principle that the moveable and immovable property held by Christian institutions was to be regarded as inalienable. As Bernard Stolte has shown, its canons conferred upon monasteries the legal designation of *res sacrae*, which churches had enjoyed since the time of Constantine, rendering them *extra commercium* and, by definition, ownerless.⁴¹⁰ Peter, however, clearly saw the complex at Maiuma as his to bequeath. With no blood heirs to inherit, he transmitted the monastery, nevertheless, like any other private possession.

The diligence with which these arrangements were made was surely, in part, a reflection of the circumstances in which this handover took place. With the new regime of Anastasius still an unknown quantity in 491 and years away, in any case, from the open antagonism with Jerusalem analysed above, the exiled prince's followers presumably knew better than to count upon the court or its representatives to enforce their master's will, the apparent fortification of the site their means by which to ensure that

⁴⁰⁵ *V. Pet.* 191 (ed. Raabe, pp. 143-145).

⁴⁰⁶ *Ibid.* Horn, *Asceticism and Christological Controversy*, p. 211.

⁴⁰⁷ On *Eigenkirche* or *ecclesia propria* see: U. Stutz, *Ausgewählte Kapitel aus der Geschichte der Eigenkirche und ihres Rechtes*, (Weimar 1937); *idem.* *Die Eigenkirche als Element des mittelalterlich-germanischen Kirchenrechts*, (Darmstadt 1964); S. Wood, *The Proprietary Church in the Medieval West*, (Oxford 2006).

⁴⁰⁸ Horn, *Asceticism and Christological Controversy*, p. 207.

⁴⁰⁹ *Ibid.* p. 17, interpreting *V. Pet.* 6 (ed. Raabe, p. 5).

⁴¹⁰ B. Stolte, 'Law for Founders,' in M. Mullett (ed.), *Founders and Re-founders of Byzantine Monasteries*, Belfast Byzantine Texts and Translations 6.3 (Belfast 2007), 121-139, 126.

its contents were respected. But on closer inspection, Peter's concerns appear as broadly representative of a wider cultural backlash. Rufus' hero, it is true, was among only a small minority of his class to have personally embraced asceticism, at least officially, but his efforts to ensure the integrity of his monastic estate find a common echo in the actions of contemporaries. Cyril, as we have seen, recorded that Eudocia had left analogous instructions for her religious properties in 460, the phylarch Terebon for the Euthymian monasteries in 485.⁴¹¹ Such practices, in fact, appear to have been replicated at every level of ascetic society in this period, the belligerent proprietary strategies of the elite most likely serving as a source of inspiration to others. The evidence provided by Egyptian papyri includes the noteworthy case of the community of St. Phoibammon near Hermonthis in the Thebaid, whose superiors, by means of wills and other writs, aggressively asserted their personal ownership of their monastery's property, the testament of the abbot Abraham (d. 620s) promising legal action against any who attempted to countermand its author's wishes.⁴¹² Detailed work by Artur Steinwenter unearthed a wider corpus of documents mimicking these pronouncements, in which even the mud-built cells and sparse belongings of individual monks were ceremoniously bequeathed to their companions.⁴¹³

So hotly contested were efforts to curtail these traditions of autonomy, Rufus related, that some owners would sooner see their foundations closed than tolerate outside interference in their affairs. Such was the case, related in the *Plerophoriae*, of the aristocratic siblings Urbicia and Euphrasius, named in the text as the joint-proprietors of a monastic community founded in the vicinity of Melania the Younger's ascetic retreat on the Mount of Olives. Euphrasius had courted controversy, the text related, by offering sanctuary to Epiphanius of Pamphylia, a prominent opponent of Chalcedon previously driven from his see for failing to acknowledge the retraction of Basiliscus' *Encyclical*.⁴¹⁴ Rufus alleged that, in response, the bishop Martyrius had instructed the archdeacon of the Church of the Resurrection to deliver an ultimatum, informing Epiphanius that, since that monastery in which he had settled was subject to the See of Jerusalem's jurisdiction, he had no option but to enter communion with its occupant should he wish to remain there. Epiphanius, as expected, refused this demand, a move which the *Plerophoriae* claims prompted the episcopate to make good its threats and arrange for his removal. But his hosts, it appears, proved so unwilling to tolerate this violation of their domain that an exasperated Martyrius had Urbicia and Euphrasius expelled from the city alongside him.⁴¹⁵

⁴¹¹ *V. Euth.* 35 (ed. Schwartz, pp. 53-54).

⁴¹² *P. Lond.* I.77 (ed. Kenyon 1.231-236), trans. L.S.B. MacCoull, *The Testament of Apa Abraham*, in J. Thomas and A. Hero (eds.), *Byzantine Monastic Foundation Documents: A Complete Translation of the Surviving Founders' Typika and Testaments*, Dumbarton Oaks Studies 37 (Washington 2000); M. Krause, 'Die Beziehungen zwischen den beiden Phoibammon-Klöstern auf den thebanische Westufer,' *BSAC* 27 (1985) 31-44; idem, 'Die Testamente der Äbte des Phoibammon-Klosters in Theban,' *MDAI Kairo* 25 (1969), 57-69; A. Steinwenter, 'Die Rechtsstellung der Kirchen und Klöster nach den Papyri,' *Zeitschrift der Savigny-Stiftung für Rechtsgeschichte. Kanonistische Abteilung* 50 (1930), p. 1-50.

⁴¹³ A. Steinwenter, 'Byzantinische Mönchtestamente,' *Aegyptus* 12 (1932), 55-64.

⁴¹⁴ *Plerophoriae* 44 (ed. Nau, pp. 94-97); Horn, *Asceticism and Christological Controversy*, p. 270.

⁴¹⁵ For discussion, see: Horn, *Asceticism and Christological Controversy*, p. 106.

When considered in light of the legal material already highlighted, such details appear as further evidence of a climate in which Chalcedon's prohibition against the private ownership of religious foundations was rarely respected, at times still fiercely resented. But whilst much of the investment made in Christian institutions can be readily attributed, as Peter Brown has shown, to a wider spiritual awakening among an aristocracy determined to safeguard its place in heaven, perhaps a truer measure of its practical importance is the degree to which the possession of churches and monasteries had come to impact upon the everyday, material processes on which the elite's hegemony was based.⁴¹⁶ Details contained in the imperial legislation of this period, preserved during the Justinianic codification of Roman law in the 520s-530s, show monasteries in particular as the focus of a complex mesh of social and economic practices from which proprietors drew considerable temporal benefits, presumably only strengthening their attachment to the properties in their care. Though visible throughout the latter part of the fifth century, the tensions inherent in these relations would seem to have come to a head during the reign of Anastasius, whose government's ingrained aristocratic sympathies historians have long acknowledged.

In the seventh of his *Novellae Constitutiones* (or 'new laws'), issued in 535, Justinian reintroduced stringent rules prohibiting the alienation of church and monastic property, whilst also abolishing a previous law of Anastasius which had sought to relax a general ban on transactions of this kind formerly issued by the emperors Leo and Anthemius in 470.⁴¹⁷ Condemning his predecessor's ruling as 'in every way unsatisfactory,' the emperor complained that Anastasius' reforms had allowed for the widespread misuse of religious properties by private individuals, not least in Egypt, where monasteries, it was claimed, were being bought and sold on the open market. Justinian made clear that this 'terrible offence' (*deinon plēmnelēma*), which had since spread to other regions of the Empire, had been committed in the pursuit of personal profit. To counter its appeal, *Novels 7* promised to institute heavy financial penalties against proprietors who had benefitted through these or similar arrangements:

'We have become aware of a terrible offence being committed in Alexandria and Egypt, and also now in some other regions under our dominion: namely that some are having the temerity to sell, exchange or give away even holy monasteries themselves, in which an altar has been consecrated, the divine liturgy has been celebrated just as it customarily takes place in most holy churches, the divine scriptures have been read, the mystery of the Holy Communion has been administered and the monastic life has been lived. These monasteries have thus been converted from a sacred character, beloved of God, into the form of a private dwelling. We absolutely forbid this to happen in future. We allow no-one at all to commit this sin, and we declare that what is taking place is in every way invalid. We sentence the recipient to forfeiture of the values; we punish the seller with both forfeiture of the property and loss of the price, which we assign to the most holy church of the locality and to the local

⁴¹⁶ Brown, *Through the Eye of a Needle*, passim.

⁴¹⁷ *J. Nov.* 7.11 (ed. Schoell and Kroll, pp. 48-64); *CI* 1.2.17, 1.2.14 (ed. Krueger, 2.13-14); See also: *CI* 1.5.10. This second law of Leo, issued between 466 and 472, forbade the sale of rural estates containing churches to members of heterodox sects, but placed no similar proscription on other sales. See: Thomas, *Private Religious Foundations*, p. 39.

monasteries. They are to see to the restoration of the wrongly alienated property to its monastic character. A hypothec secured on it is not to stand, either: that, too, is to be invalidated, and the monastery restored to its sacred ministry.⁴¹⁸

In an effort to combat the same phenomenon, Leo and Anthemius' law had limited the right that individuals could claim over lands in the possession of 'the Church' to one of temporary usufruct, ruling that any previous deal which exceeded these terms was to be rendered null and void.⁴¹⁹ Clearly, however, the emperors' words had had little effect. Our sources allude to the continued existence of a Palestinian trade in religious property throughout this period, even prior to Anastasius' programme of liberalisation. Zachariah, as we have noted, recorded that Severus had 'purchased' his monastery on arriving at Gaza in the early 490s.⁴²⁰ Analogous details are given in Rufus' story of Urbicia and Euphrasius in Jerusalem. Two points of significance emerge from this analysis: firstly, that such a market even existed should serve as final confirmation, if any were needed, that the Gazan circle's possessive treatment of its monastic property drew upon attitudes which were widely held; but secondly and perhaps, more significantly, the complaints raised in *Novels 7* went on to target a broader panoply of schemes facilitated by the private ownership of religious foundations, through which benefactors could feasibly exploit the separate legal identity of churches and monasteries, harnessing the economic privileges awarded them to their own material advantage.

In fact, for almost a hundred years, public disquiet over this issue had been building. The mid-fifth century Egyptian monk and prolific letter-writer Isidore of Pelusium had earlier railed against patricians whom he accused of enriching themselves whilst pretending to have disposed of their wealth through charitable donations to ascetics and 'the poor' for whom they laboured. Rather than following Christ's exhortation to his apostles to sell their belongings for the benefit of those with nothing, some of the elite, Isidore alleged, were guilty of the opposite: taking from the destitute what was rightfully theirs by means of secretly sequestering funds they had formally given as alms.⁴²¹ The imperial laws, however, seem to make clear that a far better way for many donors to make use of religious foundations to hide

⁴¹⁸ Ibid. (ed. Schoell and Kroll, p. 61.12-35). trans. Sarris (forthcoming): 'Ἐπειδὴ δὲ ἔγνωμεν δεινὸν τι πλημμέλημα γινόμενον παρά τε Ἀλεξανδρεῦσι καὶ Αἰγυπτίοις, ἤδη δὲ καὶ ἐν τισιν ἐτέροις τῶν ὑπερκῶν τόποις, τὸ τινὰς θαρρεῖν αὐτὰ δὴ τὰ εὐαγῆ μοναστήρια πωλεῖν ἢ δωρεῖσθαι (ἐν οἷς θυσιαστήριόν τε καθιδρύθη καὶ ἱερὰ γέγονε λειτουργία, ἰποῖαν εἰωθὸς ἔστιν ἐν ταῖς ἀγιωτάταις ἐκκλησίαις γίνεσθαι τῶν τε θείων ἀναγιγνωσκομένων γραφῶν τῆς τε ἱερᾶς καὶ ἀρρήτου μεταδιδομένης κοινωνίας, μοναχικὴ τε ἐκεῖσε γέγονεν οἴκησις), ὥστε αὐτὰ μεταβαλεῖν ἐξ ἱεροῦ καὶ θεοφιλοῦς σχήματος εἰς ἰδιωτικὴν διαίταν τε καὶ κατάστασιν, τοῦτο παντελῶς τοῦ λοιποῦ γίνεσθαι κωλύομεν, οὐδενὶ τῶν πάντων ἐφιέντες ταῦτα ἐξαμαρτάνειν· ἀλλὰ καὶ τὸ γινόμενον ἄκυρον πᾶσιν ἀποφαίνομεν τρόποις καὶ τῶν τιμημάτων ἔκπτωσιν ἐπιθέμεν τῷ λαβόντι καὶ τὸν πιπράσκοντα ζημιοῦμεν τῇ τε τοῦ πράγματος ἐκπτώσει τῇ τε τοῦ τιμήματος ἀπολείᾳ, τῇ κατὰ τὸν τόπον ἀγιωτάτη ἐκκλησία καὶ τοῖς κατὰ τόπον εὐαγέσι μοναστηρίοις ταῦτα προσνέμοντες. ὥστε αὐτοὺς προνοεῖν τοῦ τὸ κακῶς ἐκποιθῆν αὐθις εἰς μοναχικὸν ἐπανάγειν σχῆμα. μηδὲ τῆς ὑποθήχης τῆς ἐπὶ τούτοις ἐρρωμένης, ἀλλὰ καὶ αὐτῆς ἄκυρουμένης καὶ τοῦ μοναστηρίου πάλιν τῇ ἱερᾷ προσκυρουμένου λειτουργία.

⁴¹⁹ *CI* 1.2.14.9 (ed. Krueger, 2.14).

⁴²⁰ *V. Sev.* 137 (ed. Kugener, p. 97); *Anonymous Life* 37 (ed. Kugener, p. 145).

⁴²¹ See, for instance: Isidore of Pelusium, *Letters*, 490, 296 (*PG* 78 449A.341C-D); P. Evieux, *Isidore de Péluse* (Paris 1995), p. 50; R.D. Finn, *Almsgiving in the Later Roman Empire: Christian Promotion and Practice*, 313-450, (Oxford 2006), pp. 119-121. The numberings given here follow Evieux's reordering of the collection.

their wealth was through ‘gifts’ of land. An undated law of the emperor Zeno required those wishing to bestow real estate for the future site of a church or monastery to ensure that the result was the successful creation of an institution that was properly constructed and endowed. Part of the rationale behind this ruling, it seems, was to relieve bishops and their *oikonomoi* from having to underwrite the finances of sites with no income of their own. But in promulgating it, the palace also appears to have written in response to a practice whereby landowners would assign land for this purpose without ever actually building anything.⁴²² Justinian subsequently complained of a further offence arising from Anastasius’ constitution in which donors, by exploiting the instrument of emphyteusis, could continue to administer property officially transferred to monastic ownership as if nothing had changed. In such cases, it appears that benefactors were legally able to take out a perpetual lease entitling the holder and his and her heirs to annual payments of rent, in addition to any profits made from the premises in question:

‘These people have now also turned their attention to emphyteuses, and those in charge of what was formerly the property of the most holy great church have greatly reduced the value of its real income by granting concessions to the emphyteusis-holders. As a result, we have, in one of our constitutions, limited the duration of the emphyteusis to three holders: the recipient, and two others in succession. This we have allowed in the case of property belonging to the most holy church, as well; but we have legislated that a concession made for contingent circumstances should not exceed one-sixth. This is because we have found that contracts have been being drawn up, by some, in such extravagant and impious terms that not even a one-sixth share has been left for the most holy church, all the rest having been granted as a concession to the emphyteusis-holder.’⁴²³

Since Constantine’s conversion, Christian institutions had enjoyed a range of valuable tax exemptions. Though Church lands were liable to pay the land tax (the *tributum soli*) as normal, their inhabitants were exempt from the poll tax (the *tributum capitis*), the priests and monks responsible for their assets also relieved from contributing to the regular sums raised by local administrations to finance public works projects.⁴²⁴ For a period, religious foundations and their ‘agents’ had even been among the privileged few excused from payment of the *chrysargyron* (or *collatio lustralis*), a much-maligned tax on trade first levied by Constantine that Anastasius would abolish, though this right was later revoked in 360, a reflection perhaps of the losses incurred by the fisc through its failure to target businesses

⁴²² *CI* 1.2.15 (ed. Krueger 2.14).

⁴²³ *J. Nov.* 7. Preface (ed. Schoell and Kroll, pp. 51.10-21). trans. Sarris (forthcoming): Ἦδη δὲ καὶ εἰς ἐμφυτεύσεις εἶδον καὶ ἠλάττωσαν πολλῶν τὸ ποσοῦν τῆς ἀληθοῦς προσόδου τοῖς ἐμφυτευταῖς χαπιζόμενοι οἱ τῶν πραγμάτων πρώην τῆς ἀγιατάτης μεγάλης ἐκκλησίας προστάντες. Ὡστε ἡμᾶς ἐν τινὶ τῶν ἡμετέρων διατάξεων ὀρίσαι μὲν ἄχρι προσώπων τριῶν τὴν ἐμφυτευσιν γίνεσθαι, τοῦ τε λαμβάνοντος καὶ δύο διαδόχων ἐτέρων, τοῦτο καὶ ἐπὶ τοῖς τῆς ἀγιωτάτης ἐκκλησίας πραγμασι γίνεσθαι συγχωρήσαντες, μὴ περαιτέρω δὲ τῆς ἑκτῆς μοίρας συγχωρεῖσθαι τοῖς ἐμφυτευταῖς διὰ τὰς τυχερὰς περιστάσεις νομοθετήσαντες. ἐπειδὴ περ ἐμανθανομεν οὕτως ἐκκεχυμένως τε καὶ ἀσεβῶς παρὰ τινῶν γίνεσθαι τὰ συμβόλαια, ὡς μὴδὲ τὴν ἑκτην καταλιμπάνεσθαι τῇ ἀγιωτάτῃ ἐκκλησίᾳ μοῖραν, τῶν λοιπῶν ἅπαντων τῶ ἐμφυτευτῇ κεχαρισμένων. On the widespread use of *emphyteusis* as a mechanism by which to assert ownership over Church property, see: Jones, *Later Roman Empire*, 810ff; M. Kaplan, *Les hommes et la terre à Byzance du VIe au XIe siècles*, (Paris 1992), p. 166.

⁴²⁴ On this subject, see: C. Dupont, ‘Les privileges des clerics sous Constantin,’ *REH* 62 (1967), 729-52; T.G. Elliott, ‘The Tax Exemptions granted to Clerics by Constantine and Constantius II,’ *Phoenix* 31 (1978), 326-36; Thomas, *Private Religious Foundations*, pp. 5-36.

operating from within monastic or ecclesiastical estates.⁴²⁵ Throughout Late Antiquity, nevertheless, religious properties continued to enjoy further immunity from the imposition of extraordinary levies raised in times of emergency, a considerable burden to taxpayers during a period which, as evoked by Mischa Meier, was beset by frequent ‘catastrophes,’ both whether natural and man-made.⁴²⁶ Once established, any subsequent donations of private wealth to churches or monasteries could be bestowed tax-free and had the added advantage, prior to Justinian’s reforms, of not needing to be declared: a legal peculiarity originally intended to encourage early Christian philanthropy, but which now served to prompt an avalanche of benefactions. A further law of Justinian had sought to limit payments of this kind to 500 solidi, anxious to control a vast, unregulated transfer of gold into the hands of churches and monasteries that Brown has eloquently characterised.⁴²⁷ It seems clear from the emperor’s remarks that this process had represented more than simply an outpouring of extravagant charitable feeling.⁴²⁸

In acknowledging the prevalence of this expropriation by the wealthy, we need not necessarily also subscribe to Justinian’s harsh assessment of the motivations which lay behind it. For all the righteous indignation expressed in *Novels 7*, we should remember that the behaviour condemned in its provisions was not only based upon longstanding custom: at the time of writing, it was also perfectly legal. The emperor’s attempts to depict these activities as somehow incompatible with true Christian devotion, moreover, ought to be taken lightly. The charge of hypocrisy levelled here is not one which many of those involved are likely to have recognised. As products of an elite culture reliant, to some extent, upon relationships of patronage that were normally calculated to the benefit of both client and sponsor, for most aristocratic proprietors, the material dividends offered through association with clerical and monastic communities must only have seemed a natural reward for their generosity.⁴²⁹ The sanctimonious language of the law, meanwhile, did little to disguise Justinian’s own, palpable anxiety for the contents of the public purse, the emperor’s tightening of the rules which governed the ownership of churches and monasteries part of a broader campaign to limit systemic tax avoidance by the rich spearheaded throughout the 530s-540s by the Praetorian Prefect of the East, John the Cappadocian.⁴³⁰ Nevertheless, the fact remains that any attempt to curb the operation of private religious foundations in this period was recognised, in practice, as targeting the powerful interests which lay behind them. This maxim was as true in 535, as it had been in 451. By the same token, Anastasius’ permissive attitude towards the economic management of Christian institutions can be counted among a suite of reforms to

⁴²⁵ *CTh* 16.2.15: revoked clerics’ exemption from the *Chrysargyon*, granted by *CTh* 16.2.10, insisting that they must pay the tax on any lands they owned, whilst also explicitly preventing them from placing the lands of others in their name for the purpose of avoiding it.

⁴²⁶ *CTh*. 16.2.40; *Sirmondian Constitutions* 11; M. Meier, *Das andere Zeitalter Justinians: Kontingenzerfahrung und Kontingenzbewältigung im 6. Jahrhundert n. Chr.* (Göttingen 2003), pp. 656-670.

⁴²⁷ *CI* 1.2.19, 1.2.22 (ed. Krueger, p.16).

⁴²⁸ Thomas, *Private Religious Foundations*, pp. 57-58.

⁴²⁹ See, for instance, the elaborate patronage relations revealed by the letters of Quintus Aurelius Symmachus, as classically treated by John Matthews.

⁴³⁰ Bell, *Social Conflict*, pp. 91-93; Hillner, *Prison, Punishment and Penance*, p. 180.

the Late Roman economy underway at the close of the fifth century, seemingly intended to strengthen the emperor's appeal to the elite groups which formed the primary base of his support.

Widely praised as an astute administrator of the Empire's public finances, Anastasius' style of government found common favour with traditionalists. But his policies appear to have met with particular approval among the aristocracy at Gaza. As testament to their enthusiastic reception by provincial leaders, the aged emperor was the subject of at least two panegyrics locally produced in these years, one written by Procopius, the other by the grammarian and zoologist Timotheus. According to the later Byzantine chronicler George Cedrenus, the latter had been composed explicitly in thanks for the abolition of the *chrysargyron*, almost certainly a major boon to the principle citizens of maritime, mercantile centres like Gaza, who were now also relieved, following Anastasius' creation of a professionalised corps of tax collectors (the *vindices*), from the onerous burden of supervising the process of revenue gathering on behalf of the State themselves.⁴³¹ Elsewhere, the emperor's currency reforms had significantly widened the aristocracy's access to money, dramatically increasing the number of coins in circulation and stabilising their value. Anastasius' decision to turn a blind eye to the exploitation of religious properties would seem to have been instigated on similar grounds, appealing to instincts which, even if only of marginal importance to Peter and his disciples, were central, nonetheless, to the origin of the monasticism they and Eudocia had adopted on arriving in Palestine, in the style of their mutual forebear, Melania.

In his recent, magisterial survey of early Christian attitudes to wealth, Brown has spoken in detail of the circumstances which had previously led Melania and her husband Pinianus to dramatically renounce their vast personal wealth, retiring to Jerusalem after almost a decade spent antagonising friends and family through ostentatious giveaways of land.⁴³² There is, however more to this story than first meets the eye. The watershed moment in the couple's tale as our sources depict it, when the pious disposal of their property first began, calls to mind many of the same material objectives later condemned by Justinian and his advisors. From details given by Gerontius and the *Lausiaca History* of Palladius, we learn that the original decision to sell their estates had coincided with a series of bitter property disputes over the control of ancestral lands located in the city's *suburbium*, waged in the years prior to the Visigothic sack of Rome in 410. The *Life of Melania* depicts the objections raised to the sale as efforts by sybaritic relatives to frustrate its heroin in the pursuit of her holy objectives. As a result, Melania was said to have approached her friend Serena, the wife of the general and Western Roman warlord, Stilicho, to request that the properties in question be formally designated as part of the imperial *res privata* in the hope of expediting matters.⁴³³

⁴³¹ George Cedrenus; *CI* 11.1 (ed. Krueger, p. 428); Haarer, *Anastasius I*, pp. 185-190, 199-202.

⁴³² Brown, *Through the Eye of a Needle*, pp. 297-300.

⁴³³ *V. Mel.* gr. 11-13 (ed. Gorce, pp. 146-154).

A convincing reappraisal of this episode by Geoffrey Dunn, however, has questioned Gerontius' retelling of these events. Dunn situates Melania and Pinianus' renunciation, following Claudian, amid a broader effort by Western aristocrats to part with their assets. The intention, he believes, was for leading families to conserve their wealth by disposing of lands under threat as a result of the Visigoths' advance.⁴³⁴ With an attack on Rome itself now imminent, the knowledge that a levy on senatorial estates would almost certainly have to be raised to pay the invaders to leave presumably factored in their reasoning. Certainly, the haste with which the couple attempted to sell their suburban properties drew ire from their peers. Embittered by Melania and Pinianus' apparent lack of solidarity, the senate's officers turned on them in 408, following the downfall of Serena's husband Stilicho. With their powerful allies gone, Gerontius reported that the Prefect Pompeianus had sought to make an example by threatening the wholesale confiscation of Melania and Pinianus' lands to satisfy a bribe demanded by the Visigothic king Alaric, whose forces now had the city under siege.⁴³⁵ This scheme was only thwarted by Pompeianus' murder shortly afterwards.

Dunn has accounted for Serena's original involvement in the sale by suggesting that she struck a deal with Melania earlier that year whilst scrambling to raise a similar sum aimed at inducing Alaric to turn back. Before marching on Italy, the Visigothic king had demanded four thousand pounds of gold in payment for defending the Western Empire's interests in Illyria. Dunn considers it likely that Serena had lent on Melania to contribute to this fund, promising to countermand the senate and its leaders and assist in the disposal of her assets in exchange. The empress, however, faced a greater obstacle to any such arrangement in her cousin, the Western emperor Honorius, who responded on learning of her approach to Alaric by ordering her execution. At this point Melania and Pinianus are accused of having attempted to mask the entire enterprise by vaunting their alleged, ascetic ambitions.⁴³⁶ At the very least, whatever the claims of self-denial proffered by the *Life*, when analysed in detail, the couple's abnegation appears as highly selective. Only in Italy do Melania and Pinianus seem to have parted with a significant portion of their land holdings.⁴³⁷ As Dunn has shown, Gerontius admitted that they remained in possession of extensive estates elsewhere, even after settling in Jerusalem in 417.⁴³⁸ Crucially for our purposes, the proceeds from family land that was sold were transferred almost entirely into the hands of a string of newly-established private religious foundations.⁴³⁹ The *Life*, as Dunn notes, made 'much mention of Melania and Pinianus endowing monasteries but little about giving alms to the poor.'⁴⁴⁰

⁴³⁴ G. Dunn, 'The Poverty of Melania the Younger and Pinianus,' *Augustinianum* 54 (2014), 93-115, 101, 103-106; Claudian, *De Bello Gothico* 217-226 (ed. Hall, pp. 247-248).

⁴³⁵ See also: Matthews, *Western Aristocracies*, p. 290; Clark, *Life of Melania*, p. 107.

⁴³⁶ Dunn, 'The Poverty of Melania,' 106: 'Stories of their long ascetical desire might have been created or expanded in an attempt to disguise their unpleasant associations: better to be an extreme Christian rather than a collaborator with a fallen figure with foreign connections!'

⁴³⁷ *Ibid.* 114-115.

⁴³⁸ *V. Mel.* gr. 34-35, 37 (ed. Gorce, pp. 190-194, 196).

⁴³⁹ On the economic profile of Melania's property more generally, see: P. Sarris, 'The Origins of the Manorial Economy: Insights from Late Antiquity,' *English Historical Review* 119 (2004), 279-311.

⁴⁴⁰ *V. Mel.* gr. 20 (ed. Gorce, p. 170); Dunn, 'The Poverty of Melania,' 108.

Citing advice from Augustine of Hippo already mentioned above, its author, as we know, subscribed to the view that the former represented a more worthwhile contribution in support of the Church's activities. The details preserved by Gerontius, however, seem to confirm that the couple's 'offering to God' served the added purpose of shielding a sizeable segment of their property, should their political fortunes deteriorate further.

The security afforded here is likely to have held some appeal to fellow political outcasts like Peter or Eudocia. If nothing else, Melania and Pinianus' attempt to forge a legacy based on the accumulation of monastic property underlines the role which its ownership increasingly played as a touchstone of curial status. Their entourage can only have learned by their example. The Gazan movement founded by Peter, arguably the couple's greatest admirer, steadfastly preserved this tradition, even if its members could hardly be characterised merely as fixated with the control of 'sacred' real estate.

Opposition to the Council of 451 and the possession or membership of private religious foundations were never synonymous. Even in broader terms, to describe anti-Chalcedonianism as an 'elite movement,' in Palestine, or elsewhere, ignoring the doctrinal grievances raised by Rufus, Severus, or Zachariah, would clearly be reductive. Nevertheless, when charting the survival of resistance to the bishops of Jerusalem, the aristocratic anxieties examined above seem all-pervasive. Not only was it in this environment that local hostility to the Council first formed; its peculiarities can be traced in the evolving conduct of Chalcedon's detractors. With Anastasius' decision to further facilitate the exploitation of churches and monasteries, removing many of the restrictions which governed their economic use by the wealthy, a second iteration of the aggressive anti-Chalcedonianism seen in 451 gained traction among the coastal elite. This, as we have seen, was tied to the promotion of a highly-possessive model of monasticism, conceived of in terms staunchly hostile to 'the bishops,' in a region from which the Church authorities appear to have been almost entirely excluded.

Now able to draw on ascetic support of its own, Jerusalem seems to have responded to this growing provocation in 508 by dispatching Nephalius to destroy its rivals' Gazan powerbase. It was in the aftermath of this violent campaign that the Chalcedonian Controversy appears to assume a far greater doctrinal quality in Palestine, the strident language of the texts produced by Severus, Rufus, and Nephalius defaming their opponents, firmly, as heretics, if sometimes struggling to describe the alleged, theological basis of their dispute. Yet even after the definitive restoration of episcopal power in the region after 519, evidence of continued resistance to the official ecclesiastical hierarchy by local aristocrats remains. The *Questions and Answers* collection associated with the Gazan hermits Barsanuphius and John contains a series of letters chronicling the popular overthrow in this period of the city's 'hated' bishop by powerful figures within his flock, indicted on charges of 'avarice.'⁴⁴¹

⁴⁴¹ Barsanuphius and John, *Resp.* 793 (ed. Neyt, *SC* 468.254). For questions of dating, see: F. Neyt, *Barsanuphe et Jean de Gaza: Correspondance*, Sources Chrétiennes 426, (Paris 1997), pp. 33-34.

‘Relying upon his wealth,’ the letters alleged, this same churchman had travelled to Constantinople, garnering enough support at court to be formally reinstated, but was ultimately prevented from returning to office by the sudden death of ‘the emperor,’ whose identity is never revealed.⁴⁴²

As Francois Neyt argued in his recent edition of the *Questions and Answers*, the reference to an imperial death must date this episode to either 518 or 527.⁴⁴³ Jennifer Hevelone-Harper recently assumed the ruler in question to have been Anastasius, but gave no clear reason as to why it could not have been Justin, who died only nine years later.⁴⁴⁴ In fact, it seems unlikely that Anastasius should have intervened in support of one of Jerusalem’s suffragans so soon after John III’s public rejection of imperial policy in 516. Letters describing the subsequent election of a new bishop contain a lengthy, sycophantic profession of loyalty to the ‘patriarchs’ of Jerusalem, evidence, it seems, of a coercive religious climate that could only have been inaugurated at Gaza following Justin’s expulsion of leading local dissidents.⁴⁴⁵ As Volker Menze has shown, this process did not begin in earnest elsewhere in the East until 521 or 522.⁴⁴⁶

A date of 527 would explain Constantinople’s reluctance to force Gaza’s Christians to take their erstwhile leader back. The early years of the reign of Justinian were marked by renewed attempts to improve relations with opponents of Chalcedon, culminating in a series of meetings with Syrian dissidents in 532. At Gaza, however, an easier solution soon presented itself. By 536, relations between the Gazan Church and local elite were immeasurably improved, following the election of a new bishop, the aristocratic Marcian. There followed a remarkable shift in the depiction of the See by the region’s authors. Marcian was lauded in two lengthy encomia produced by Choricus.⁴⁴⁷ As Timothy Barnes has demonstrated, it was also in these years that literary efforts to rehabilitate the local episcopate as an institution began to appear via the publication of Mark the Deacon’s *Life of Porphyry*. This latter text sought to raise the profile of the See of Gaza, claiming to chronicle the leading role its legendary first occupant had played in defeating Levantine paganism.⁴⁴⁸

Taken together, these later events seem to reveal a Gazan Church politics still strongly influenced by a need to placate aristocratic aggression. On matters of doctrine, once again, local writers had relatively little to say. Barsanuphius thought it necessary to make obvious his obedience to Jerusalem’s bishop,

⁴⁴² Barsanuphius and John, *Resp.* 802 (ed. Neyt, SC 468.262); J. Hevelone-Harper, *Disciples of the Desert: Monks, Laity, and Spiritual Authority in Sixth-Century Gaza*, (Baltimore, MD 2005), 108-111.

⁴⁴³ Neyt, *Correspondance*, SC 468.25-32.

⁴⁴⁴ Hevelone-Harper, *Disciples of the Desert*, pp. 110-113.

⁴⁴⁵ Barsanuphius and John, *Resp.* 793, 794, 803 (ed. Neyt, SC 468.).

⁴⁴⁶ Menze, *Justinian and the Making*, pp. 111, 123-124.

⁴⁴⁷ See: J. Ashkenazi, ‘Sophists and Priests in Late Antique Gaza according to Choricus the Rhetor,’ in *Christian Gaza in Late Antiquity*, 195-208.

⁴⁴⁸ Barnes, *Early Christian Hagiography*, pp. 260-283. Barnes’ findings have been echoed by Anna Lampadaridi in the commentary accompanying her new edition of the *Life of Porphyry*: A. Lampadaridi, *La conversion de Gaza au christianisme: la vie de S. Porphyre de Gaza par Marc le Diacre (BHG 1570)*, *Édition critique, traduction, commentaire* (Brussels 2016).

but apparently saw little reason to give any accompanying endorsement of Chalcedon's religious rulings. The theological remarks which are found in the *Questions and Answers* are brief and vague enough to have generated a host of interpretations, some wildly contrasting.⁴⁴⁹ Far clearer are the parallels between the situation described at Gaza, and the contemporary record of economic antagonism between senior clergy and wealthy laity reported in Procopius of Caesarea's *Anecdota*.⁴⁵⁰ In the same text, we find a reference to the 'unparalleled' wealth that had formerly been stored in the religious properties of 'heretical' sects, now dispersed as a result of Justinian's reforms.⁴⁵¹

The contents of the emperor's legislation show that the enforcement of Chalcedon begun with his uncle's accession had no more resulted in the demise of proprietary religious patronage, than the initial proclamation of the Council had in 451. But its short-term impact upon Palestine's Church economy is strongly suggested by *Novels* 40, a further Justinianic law of 538 drafted following a petition by Eusebius, presbyter and keeper of the plate (*keimēliarchēs*) of the Hagia Sophia in Constantinople, acting on behalf of the Church of the Resurrection.⁴⁵² The treasurer's mission was to secure an exemption from the ban on alienations issued in *Novels* 7, allowing the See of Jerusalem to sell a portfolio of rental property it had acquired thirteen years earlier. In recounting this appeal, however, Justinian also referred to a previous agreement Eusebius had brokered which had first enabled the See to acquire these buildings, appearing to indicate a seismic shift in episcopal finances at the beginning of the 520s.

According to *Novels* 40, Eusebius had succeeded in raising a loan of 380 pounds of gold to fund this original investment, 'part of which he piously collected, providing for the other part to be borrowed by the god-beloved steward (*oikonomos*) of the ... Holy Anastasis.'⁴⁵³ This, we are told, had delivered an annual income of 'roughly thirty pounds of gold,' intended to provide a reliable source of support for the episcopate and its dependents.⁴⁵⁴ The text makes clear that the entire scheme had sought to alleviate the economic pressures placed on Jerusalem's bishops in the context of a growing pilgrimage trade. But the enormous scale of these measures, publicly transacted with little concern for the discretion with which Church leaders normally conducted similar business, points to something rather more drastic. A compelling explanation for a recent spike in the See's financial liabilities would be the effect of Justin's expulsions, well underway by 523. The sudden requirement to subsidise the host of formerly-private

⁴⁴⁹ For instance, Hevelone-Harper recently argued that Barsanuphius was a committed Chalcedonian: *Disciples*, p. 110. Aryeh Kofsky has claimed that the Gazan hermits were 'crypto-miaphysites': A. Kofsky, 'What happened to the Monophysite Monasticism of Gaza?' in *Christian Gaza in Late Antiquity*, 183-194.

⁴⁵⁰ Procopius, *Anecdota* 13.4-7, 28.2-15, (ed. Dewing, pp. 156-158, 326-332).

⁴⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 11.13-19 (ed. Dewing, pp. 134-136).

⁴⁵² *CI*. 1.5.19. Further restrictions were later imposed in 542: *J. Nov.* 115.3 (ed. Schoell and Kroll, pp. 537-546).

⁴⁵³ *Ibid.* (ed. Schoell and Kroll, p. 259.16-21): ἴσχυσε τριακοσίων ὀγδοήκοντα χρυσίου λιτρῶν ὀνήσασθαι πρόσοδον τριάκοντα μικρῶ πλεῖον ἢ ἔλαττον χρυσίου λιτρῶν, τὰ μὲν τῶν χρημάτων ἀθροίσας εὐσεβῶς, τὰ δὲ καὶ δανείσασθαι παρασκευάσας τοὺς θεοφιλεστάτους οἰκονόμους τῆς εἰρημένης ἁγίας Ἀναστασεως.

⁴⁵⁴ Following A.H.M. Jones, Peter Sarris has noted that this sum equates to an annual return of roughly eight percent, the maximum rate of interest allowed for commercial loans: Sarris, *The Novels of the Emperor Justinian*, (forthcoming).

churches and monasteries newly-vacated by the likes of Severus' exiled Palestinian correspondents can only have added considerably to the burden of episcopal administration.⁴⁵⁵

The evidence presented in this chapter serves to promote a fuller image of the 'Chalcedonian Controversy' in Palestine. The result evokes an understanding of this phenomenon, from its origin, as more than just a clash of rival doctrines. Seen in all its true complexity, it was also effectively a conflict between two competing conceptions of the Church economy, prosecuted by participants frequently guided by concerns far broader, and often more 'worldly,' than traditional studies have generally allowed. This tension does not provide the *explanation* for the long-running discord generated by the Council. But in Palestine, at least, it does appear to have informed it. For modern readers unable to account for the enduring power of a debate whose terms might often seem so impossibly remote, this realisation may serve to comprehensively dispel the notion that Late Antique Christians were somehow any more naturally disposed to dispute the minutiae of doctrine than others. For the Palestinian partisans in the struggle over Chalcedon, a dispute waged primarily in the language of Christology had long since carried a range of meaning beyond its strict, theological interpretation.

⁴⁵⁵ *J. Nov.* 40.1.25-26 (ed. Schoell and Kroll, p. 259): ἐπίθυμοῦσιν ὠνήσασθαι οἰκήσεις ἐκκλησιαστικὰς χρυσίου πολλοῦ.

CHAPTER 4

JERUSALEM UNDER JUSTINIAN

The previous chapter examined the role of material concerns in framing tensions over Chalcedon in Palestine in the decades prior to decisive events of 518. But even with the defeat of Severus and his party that year, theological consensus proved elusive. Within a generation of its triumph, the ‘Chalcedonian’ alliance assembled to defend Elias of Jerusalem had splintered. The monasteries of the Judean Desert, once at the vanguard of efforts to defeat the Council’s opponents, succumbed to infighting, as the wider Palestinian Church entered a period of profound institutional crisis. Fought amid the reception of the wide-ranging religious reforms enacted by the court of the emperor Justinian, this new phase of conflict between ascetics, as before, was couched in the language of doctrinal controversy. With all the parties involved agreed upon the fundamental orthodoxy of Chalcedon, however, the parameters of debate shifted; its focus now became the extent to which monks adhered to the precise interpretation of the Council’s rulings favoured by the imperial authorities. As Justinian and his officials attempted to promote doctrinal conformity with ever-greater zeal, Desert monks and their representatives converged on Constantinople, each claiming to provide evidence of the heresy allegedly practiced by their rivals. This chapter will ask how the court came to drive the monastic competition which underpinned this antagonism. It will suggest that the draw of financial support by the Justinianic state may have helped to inspire some of the dubious doctrinal slurs exchanged by its participants.

I. Palestine and the Second Origenist Controversy

To observe this contest at its ugliest, we return to the mid-sixth century writings of Cyril of Scythopolis. On 21 February 555, two years after the close of the Fifth Ecumenical Council in Constantinople, the *Life of Sabas* announced the definitive end to a ‘war against piety,’ which had gripped the Palestinian Church for over twenty years.⁴⁵⁶ Its author claimed to have been among a group of one hundred and twenty monks dispatched that day by the bishop of Jerusalem, Eustochius, to resettle a monastery forcibly vacated by a party of ‘Origenists,’ whose beliefs the Council had condemned.⁴⁵⁷ Now officially anathema, the text relates that this latter group had only recently presided as the dominant faction in local Church politics. In 544, the Origenists had apparently succeeded in electing one of their number, Macarius, to Jerusalem’s episcopal throne. Cyril records that Macarius had been removed under orders from Justinian in 552, following complaints by the monks of the ‘Great Laura’ of Sabas, who conspired

⁴⁵⁶ *V. Sab.* 90 (ed. Schwartz, p. 200.3-4.). For date, see: E. Stein, ‘Cyrille de Scythopolis à propos de la nouvelle édition de ses oeuvres,’ *AB* 62 (1944), 169-186, 174-176; Hombergen, *Second Origenist Controversy*, p. 88.

⁴⁵⁷ *V. Sab.* 90 (ed. Schwartz, p. 198).

to have their own candidate, Eustochius, installed as his replacement. Twelve months later, with the Council's backing, the new bishop and his allies extended their campaign to target his predecessor's 'heretical' associates.

A recent monograph by Daniël Hombergen has skilfully evaluated Cyril's coverage of what scholars now call the 'Second Origenist Controversy,' chronicled in chapters eighty-three to ninety of the *Life of Sabas*.⁴⁵⁸ It seems necessary here, however, to reiterate the extraordinary bitterness of this struggle, as the text describes it. For one thing, the main protagonists of these events were all well-known to each another. In fact, the Controversy was said to have emerged from within the 'Sabaite' federation of monasteries founded by Cyril's hero in the decades prior to his death in 532. As such, its participants, in addition, were all nominally 'Chalcedonian' Christians, though Cyril would later allege the Origenists had only ever advocated this position insincerely.

The *Life* makes clear that their dispute was borne of a long history of discontent within the Sabaite ranks. Its roots may be linked to an earlier outbreak of internal dissent, orchestrated by monks whom Cyril claimed were opposed to their abbot on account of his 'boorish' demeanour.⁴⁵⁹ The text notes that, in an effort to address this criticism, the bishop Sallustius had forced Sabas to accept ordination as a priest in 491, but that this gesture had failed to satisfy the holy man's critics. Within a matter of years, opposition to his leadership had resurfaced. Cyril presented the story of the next decades as one of continuing strife. Faced by forty dissenting monks, he alleged that Sabas was eventually forced to abandon the Laura for the region of Scythopolis, an event which Hombergen dates to between 501 and 503.⁴⁶⁰ There followed a second period of exile at Nicopolis, the text notes, before he was able to return, brandishing a sternly-worded letter of rebuke addressed to his followers by the bishop Elias.

In the meantime, Cyril remarked that some disaffected monks had attempted to convince Jerusalem to appoint a new superior for the monastery, alleging that Sabas was not at large, as was thought, but in fact had been eaten by lions. So divisive a figure had the holy man become that in the aftermath of his return, the Laura's members split. The *Life* relates that those no longer able to tolerate its founder's rule left to establish a community of their own on the former site of the anti-Chalcedonian monastery of Romanus, near Thekoa. It was here, in what quickly became known as the 'New Laura,' the text claims, that the first signs of 'Origenism' were detected. The members of this breakaway community struggled

⁴⁵⁸ Hombergen, *Second Origenist Controversy*, esp. pp. 65-88. Prior to this, the classic study of the Controversy was that of Franz Diekamp: F. Diekamp, *Die origenistischen Streitigkeiten im sechsten Jahrhundert und das fünfte allgemeine Konzil*, (Münster, 1899). The 'First' Origenist Controversy had reached its peak in Palestine and Egypt at the turn of the fifth century. For this, see the excellent study by Elizabeth Clark: E.A. Clark, *The Origenist Controversy: The Cultural Construction of an Early Christian Debate*, (Princeton, NJ 1992).

⁴⁵⁹ *V. Sab.* 19 (ed. Schwartz, pp. 103-104). On the evolution of opposition to Sabas more generally, now see: B. Flusin, 'Saint Sabas: un leader monastique à l'autorité contestée,' in A. Camplani and G. Filoramo (eds.), *Foundations of Power and Conflicts of Authority in Late-Antique Monasticism, Proceedings of the International Seminar, Turin, December 2-4, 2004, Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta 157* (Leuven 2007), 195-216.

⁴⁶⁰ *V. Sab.* 32 (ed. Schwartz, p. 117); Hombergen, *Second Origenist Controversy*, p. 69.

to maintain their independence. Citing humanitarian concerns, Cyril recorded that Sabas had quickly succeeded in re-establishing control over their affairs. When Paul, an agent of the Great Laura appointed as their abbot, abandoned his office prior to 516, the *Life* notes that his successor, Agapetus, found a clandestine cell of four Origenists operating within the monastery, led by a Palestinian monk named Nonnus.⁴⁶¹ Cyril claimed that this group was expelled, only to be readmitted five years later, by which time both Elias and Agapetus had died, and the incident had been forgotten.

We next hear of Nonnus and his associates in the context of the story of Sabas' journey to Constantinople in 531. The *Life* reports that among the holy man's companions was one of Nonnus' followers, a 'Byzantine' named Leontius, publicly condemned for 'holding the opinions of Origen.'⁴⁶² The focus of the *Life's* invective now shifted to Leontius, credited with stoking much of the conflict that followed. Sabas died in 532. Nonnus' party were said to have publicly revealed themselves for the first time shortly afterwards. In detailing their heretical beliefs, Cyril's *Life of Cyriacus* maintained two theological criticisms in particular, referring to views attributed to the Origenists' namesake, the third-century theologian and Neoplatonist, Origen of Alexandria, and his students, Evagrius of Pontus and Didymus the Blind. These concerned the doctrines of the pre-existence of souls, and of *apokatastasis*, or 'universal restoration,' a belief in the eventual salvation of all rational beings, the Devil included, both allegedly accepted by the Sabaites' opponents.⁴⁶³ By Cyril's account, such views were soon predominant, not only among the 'more learned' members (the *logiōteroi*) of the New Laura, but of the monasteries of Firminus and Martyrius as well.⁴⁶⁴

In 536, the Origenist leadership was said to have gathered in Constantinople. Leontius, who had remained in the capital throughout this period, was joined by two other prominent members of the group, Domitian and Theodore Ascidas, arriving to attend the first of two synods convened that year to anathematise leading anti-Chalcedonian dissidents. They departed, Cyril alleged, having succeeded in securing the favour of the court. The *Life* states that it was on Leontius' recommendation that Domitian became bishop of Ancyra that year, with Ascidas appointed to the prestigious See of Caesarea-in-Cappadocia.⁴⁶⁵ If the text is to be believed, this was also the point at which tensions over Origenism first erupted into violence. Cyril reported that the Sabaites' new leader, Gelasius, had prompted this escalation by publicly reading aloud from the anti-Origenist writings of Antipatrus of Bostra. In response, Leontius, on briefly returning to Palestine, was alleged to have led a mob into the Desert with the intention of destroying the Great Laura, only to be thwarted, the *Life* claims, by the appearance of

⁴⁶¹ *V. Sab.* 36 (ed. Schwartz, p. 124).

⁴⁶² *V. Sab.* 72 (ed. Schwartz, p. 176).

⁴⁶³ *V. Cyr.* 11-15 (ed. Schwartz, pp. 229-232).

⁴⁶⁴ *V. Sab.* 83 (ed. Schwartz, p. 188). For the site of the Laura of Firminus at present-day Wadi Suweinit, see: A. Desreumaux, J.B. Humbert and E. Nodet, 'La laure de Saint-Firmin – 1978,' *RB* 85 (1978), 417-419; J. Patrich, 'Wadi Suweinit,' *ESI* 2 (1983); J. Patrich and R. Rubin, 'Les grottes de el-'Aleiliyat et la laure de Saint-Firmin. Des refuges juifs et byzantins,' *RB* 91 (1984), 381-388.

⁴⁶⁵ *V. Sab.* 83 (ed. Schwartz, p. 189).

an impenetrable fog sent by God to protect it.⁴⁶⁶ With Nonnus and his associates in the ascendant, Peter, the then bishop of Jerusalem, was said to have taken matters into his own hands, secretly dispatching a *libellus* decrying their behaviour to Menas of Constantinople.⁴⁶⁷

Cyril alleged that it was in response to this petition that Justinian issued his *Edict against Origen* of 543, with the result that the Origenist monks were deprived of orthodox communion.⁴⁶⁸ Not even this, however, would seem to have hindered their advance. The *Life* reports that before the *Edict* could take effect, Leontius had died in Constantinople and Theodore Ascidas replaced him as the Origenists' principle representative at court. There followed another dramatic reversal in the group's fortunes, with Ascidas emerging as a senior advisor to the emperor on matters of ecclesiastical policy. The text credits Caesarea's bishop with forcing Peter into issuing an embarrassing public retraction of his earlier, anti-Origenist remarks.⁴⁶⁹ It was Ascidas too, the *Life* reports, who contrived to have Macarius installed as his successor. Following a second attempted assault against the Great Laura, Cyril claimed that Gelasius travelled to the capital in order to complain of the harassment being directed against his brethren, but was turned away from the gates to the palace on Ascidas' instructions.⁴⁷⁰

Yet, whilst the Origenists' victory must now have seemed complete, their dominance was to be short-lived. The *Life* reports the rapid overthrow of George, a henchman of Ascidas imposed as Gelasius' replacement, the latter having died whilst making the arduous journey back to Palestine on foot. To complicate matters further, the text records that in 548 a schism took place among the Sabaites' opponents between a party of *protoktists*, whose name implies a belief in Christ's superiority over other pre-existent souls, and the *isochrists*, seen by Hombergen as a more 'radical' Origenist faction, apparently so-called for their view that *apokatastasis* would result in all beings becoming equal to Christ.⁴⁷¹ The *Life* claims that Conon, the new abbot of the Great Laura, took advantage of this strife to ally with the *protoktists* against Ascidas, whom Cyril placed on the side of the *isochrists*. Thus he succeeded, the text declares, where Gelasius had failed, in bringing to Justinian's attention the abuses committed by his order's enemies, at which point the emperor set in store the chain of events which led to the definitive, universal condemnation of Origenism at the Council of 553.⁴⁷²

It is only natural, in these circumstances, to think of the commentary supplied by the *Life's* final chapters as describing a struggle of crucial import to the history of Christian doctrine. Cyril, of course, offered himself as an invaluable guide to the most serious controversy to engulf the Eastern Church since the fallout from Chalcedon. After all, the threat of Origenism had provoked sufficient concern at court to

⁴⁶⁶ *V. Sab.* 84 (ed. Schwartz, pp. 189-190).

⁴⁶⁷ *V. Sab.* 85 (ed. Schwartz, pp. 191-192).

⁴⁶⁸ ACO 3.189-214.

⁴⁶⁹ *V. Sab.* 86 (ed. Schwartz, p. 183).

⁴⁷⁰ *V. Sab.* 88 (ed. Schwartz, p. 196).

⁴⁷¹ Hombergen, *Second Origenist Controversy*, p. 86 n. 140; Booth, *Crisis of Empire*, p. 18.

⁴⁷² *V. Sab.* 90 (ed. Schwartz, p. 198); Evagrius, *HE* 4.38 (ed. Bidez and Parmentier, pp. 186-187).

warrant direct imperial intervention twice in less than a decade. But what the text fails to acknowledge is that, even in 553, the conflict it describes was overshadowed by other, more pressing theological concerns. As Hombergen notes, the decision to condemn Origen's teachings was barely even a sideshow at Constantinople II: its omission from the Council's *Acts* suggests that the bishops hardly discussed it. Justinian, in a letter issued to coincide with the promulgation of its canons, explicitly referred to Origenism as a Palestinian problem practised by 'some monks in Jerusalem,' but gave no indication of its prevalence elsewhere.⁴⁷³ As is clear from the *Acts*, the main event in 553 was the effort to find a lasting solution to the parallel controversy over the so-called 'Three Chapters,' now a source of growing friction between Constantinople and the Popes in Rome. Nominally at stake were the reputations of three Antiochene theologians of the fifth century, subject to varying degrees of anathema since 544/545 on account of their hostility to Cyril of Alexandria. That year, Justinian had promulgated an edict condemning the person and writings of Theodore of Mopsuestia, Theodoret of Cyrrhus' anti-Cyrrillian writings, and Ibas of Edessa's letter to Mari of Nisibis. Western bishops had reacted angrily, leading to a confrontation between the emperor and Pope Vigilius, who was eventually brought to Constantinople under threat of force in 547, remaining as Justinian's prisoner.

In 451, Chalcedon had rehabilitated the Chapters' authors. For its opponents, this detail had long served as proof of the Council's 'Nestorian' agenda. It is traditionally thought that, in targeting their authors, Justinian sought to make a concrete concession to anti-Chalcedonian opinion. But as Richard Price has recently argued, it is more likely that the emperor's purpose, in reality, was to enable supporters of the Council to better-combat their criticisms, delivering greater internal cohesion to the Chalcedonian cause by removing any residual taint of Nestorianism from its teachings.⁴⁷⁴ In any case, the *Life of Sabas'* account is a distortion. Far more troubling, however, is the evidence that Cyril deliberately misattributed to the Palestinian Origenists beliefs they did not hold. As Hombergen as shown, the Sabaite author's claims against his brothers' enemies ought to be viewed with caution. Indeed, on a closer examination, the characterisation of the Origenists found in the *Lives* may be seen as fundamentally misleading.

Discussion of this question centres on the historical person of Leontius, now commonly identified by scholars with Leontius of Byzantium, the author of several extant theological treatises thought to date to the mid-sixth century. It is generally agreed that Leontius of Byzantium, in turn, should be distinguished from another theologian, Leontius of Jerusalem, and from Pseudo-Leontius, author of the anonymous heresiological treatise *De Sectis*.⁴⁷⁵ Recent research has suggested that these latter two were not active until a later date, in contrast to the classic argument made by Friedrich Loofs, who believed all four Leontii to be one and the same person.⁴⁷⁶ However, as Brian Daley has shown, of the three

⁴⁷³ Hombergen, *Second Origenist Controversy*, p. 301.

⁴⁷⁴ Price, *Acts of Constantinople*, 1.74.

⁴⁷⁵ M. Richard, 'Léonce de Byzance était-il origéniste?' *RÉB* 5 (1947), 31-66.

⁴⁷⁶ See, for instance: D. Krausmüller, 'Leontius of Jerusalem, a Theologian of the Seventh Century,' *JThS* 52 (2001), 637-667; U.M. Lang, 'The Date of the Treatise *De Sectis* Revisited,' *Orientalia Lovaniensia Periodica*

works which can reasonably be attributed to Leontius of Byzantium, none shows any sign of the esoteric beliefs accredited to the Palestinian Origenists by Cyril.⁴⁷⁷ In fact, Hombergen, following André Guillaumont, has argued that the ‘Origenist’ label applied to them was itself a misnomer.⁴⁷⁸ The specific offences detailed appear, in large part, to have originated not in Origen’s writings, but in the *Kephalaia Gnostica* of his pupil, Evagrius.⁴⁷⁹

In labelling the *Lives*’ account as untrustworthy, scholars have argued that Cyril presents in theological terms what was really a Controversy over the spiritual and intellectual freedom of monks. Even this much, however, is difficult to determine. On the basis of analysis of Leontius’ writings, some have suggested that it was the emphasis on personal spiritual development in Evagrius’ works that appealed, and not necessarily his statements on doctrine.⁴⁸⁰ What is clear is that the *Life of Cyriacus*’ sketch of the Origenists’ beliefs was itself taken almost entirely from the anathemas issued by the Council of 553, thus providing little insight into the movement’s original aims.⁴⁸¹ Yizhar Hirschfeld suggested that the meagre physical remains of the New Laura might indicate that its members were engaged in the puritanical rejection of what he describes as the ‘materialist’ monasticism favoured by Sabas and his followers, characterised by social engagement and the accumulation of property.⁴⁸² But the Origenists, as we have seen, were no less involved than their opponents in the high-level ecclesiastical politics of their era. Their leaders, moreover, can hardly be said to have shunned the opportunity to command the considerable resources administered by the major episcopal Sees which Ascidas and his colleagues had set out to dominate.

All this, of course, leaves to one side the question of what it was that caused conflict over Origenism, seemingly long-dormant, to erupt with such spectacular force in Palestine during the first half of the sixth century. Why now? The *Questions and Answers* literature associated with the Gazan hermits Barsanuphius and John appears to confirm that, prior to 543, even the more radical points of theology attributed to the works of Origen, or Evagrius, were viewed with relative nonchalance. In response to a

29 (1998), 89-98. Cf. F. Loofs, *Leontius von Byzanz und die gleichnamigen Schriftsteller der griechischen Kirche*, TU 3 (Leipzig 1887).

⁴⁷⁷ B. Daley, ‘The Origenism of Leontius of Byzantium,’ *JThS* (new series) 17 (1976): 333-369. Cf. D. Evans, *Leontius of Byzantium: An Origenist Christology*, (Washington, D.C. 1970); I. Perczel, ‘Pseudo-Dionysius and Palesinian Origenism,’ in *The Sabaitic Heritage*, 261-282; idem. ‘Finding a place for the Erotopokriseis of Pseudo-Caesarius: A New Document of Sixth-Century Palestinian Origenism,’ *ARAM* 18-19 (2006-7), 49-83.

⁴⁷⁸ A. Guillaumont, *Les ‘Kephalaia Gnostica’ d’Évagre le Pontique et l’histoire de l’origénisme chez les Grecs et chez les Syriens*, (Paris 1962).

⁴⁷⁹ For discussion, see: Booth, *Crisis of Empire*, pp. 18-22.

⁴⁸⁰ Hombergen, *Second Origenist Controversy*, pp. 208-252; Binns, *Ascetics and Ambassadors*, pp. 206-207; A. Louth, ‘The Collectio Sabbaitica and Sixth-Century Origenism,’ in L. Perrone (ed.), *Origeniana octava: Origen and the Alexandrian Tradition = Origene e la tradizione alessandrina. Papers of the 8th International Origen Congress, Pisa, 27-31 August 2001*, 2 vols. (Leuven 2003), 2.1167-1175, 1174-1175.

⁴⁸¹ Flusin, *Miracle et histoire*, pp. 81-83; Hombergen, *Second Origenist Controversy*, pp. 255-287; Booth, *Crisis of Empire*, p. 20.

⁴⁸² Y. Hirschfeld, ‘The physical structure of the New Laura as an expression of controversy over the monastic lifestyle,’ in Patrich (ed.), *The Sabaitic Heritage*, 323-345.

petition from local monks who had learned of the trouble now being stirred over the reception of Origenist writings in the Desert, Barsanuphius stated that it was a matter of personal preference, as to whether or not ascetics chose to read them.⁴⁸³ Whilst acknowledging that Evagrius' works contained heretical ideas, he noted that many were able to place this facet of the texts to one side and still draw inspiration from their teachings:

‘Do not accept doctrines of this kind, but read of him [Evagrius], if you wish, that which benefits the soul, according to the parable of the Gospel concerning the net, where it is written that, ‘They gathered the good things into the basket, the bad they threw away.’ You must also do the same.’⁴⁸⁴

II. Desert Hagiography as Monastic Propaganda

For one thing, the allegations made against the Palestinian Origenists surfaced amid a period of extraordinary competition between local monks. The mid-sixth century, as we know, witnessed the emergence of a burgeoning tradition of hagiographical writing in the Desert, produced by ascetic authors determined to outdo one another in each establishing their community's special claim to sanctity. The Sabaites, though arguably most successful in this regard, were relative latecomers to the field. Paul of Elusa and Theodore of Petra had already circulated their laudatory *Lives* of Theognius and Theodosius the Cenobiarch before Cyril had even begun to embark on a similar project to eulogise his order's founders. Yet the latter's work, when it appeared, was firmly imbued with the same propagandist impulse evident in the writings of his contemporaries. Its author shared their desire to enumerate the failings of potential ascetic rivals.

In total, seven *Lives* are safely attributed to Cyril. The majority, as we have seen, were marked by a flagrant agenda to promote the interests of his brethren. Aside from the hagiographies of Sabas and Euthymius, between them representing the bulk of his endeavours, a further five texts have survived, dedicated to Theognius and Theodosius, the Sabaites John the Hesychast and Abraamius of Cratea, and the Euthymian monk Cyriacus, who emerged as an ally of the Great Laura in the struggle against the Origenists. John especially appears as a formative influence over Cyril, eulogised for his role as spiritual advisor to the young monk as he prepared to embark on his monastic career. With John's death in 559, the events recorded in the collection draw to a close, generally thought to indicate that its author's own demise followed shortly afterwards.⁴⁸⁵

⁴⁸³ Now see: D. Hombergen, ‘Barsanuphius and John and the Origenist Controversy,’ in B. Bitton-Ashkelony and A. Kofsky (eds.), *Christian Gaza in Late Antiquity*, (Leiden 2004), 173-181.

⁴⁸⁴ Barsanuphius and John, *Resp.* 602 (ed. Neyt, SC 451, p. 812): Τὰ μὲν δόγματα τὰ τοιαῦτα, μὴ δέχου, ἀναγίνωσκε δὲ αὐτοῦ, εἰ θέλεις, τὰ πρὸς ὠφέλειαν ψυχῆς, κατὰ τὴν παραβολὴν τὴν ἐν τῷ Εὐαγγελίῳ περὶ τῆς σαγήνης, ὡς γέγραπται ὅτι <<Τὰ μὲν καλὰ εἰς ἀγγεῖα ἔβαλον, τὰ δὲ σαπρὰ ἔξω ἔρριψαν.>> Οὕτω καὶ σὺ ποίησον.

⁴⁸⁵ G. Garitte, ‘La mort de S. Jean l’Hésychaste d’après un texte géorgien inédit,’ *AB* 72 (1954), 75-84; Flusin, *Miracle et histoire*, p. 32. Flusin has suggested that the *Lives* of Cyriacus, Theodosius, Theognius and

The Sabaite biographies of Theodosius and Theognius, by contrast, are brief and, seemingly, perfunctory.⁴⁸⁶ The details given in the former are, in addition, somewhat at variance with those preserved in the rival account of Theodore of Petra. That Cyril could not afford to ignore their subjects' accomplishments entirely seems clear if, as Bernard Flusin has argued, his intention was to write a grand 'Monastic History' on the model of that produced in Syria by Theodoret a century earlier.⁴⁸⁷ Both holy men, however, remain firmly at the periphery of this vision; at no point were their exploits allowed to distract from those of Sabas and his associates. With this in mind, it may not surprise us to note that others have argued, albeit unsuccessfully, for the expansion of Cyril's accepted canon to include a further text: an anonymous *Life of Gerasimus* notable for its reverent treatment of Euthymius.⁴⁸⁸

A study by Henri Grégoire was the first to seriously dispute this identification, which has since been roundly dismissed by Flusin.⁴⁸⁹ Central to discussion of the authorship of the *Life of Gerasimus* is the status of three chapters of the text also found in a version of the *Life of Euthymius*, preserved in the ninth-tenth century manuscript *Codex Sinaiticus graecus 524*.⁴⁹⁰ Flusin believes this section to have been the work of one of Gerasimus' followers, retrospectively inserted into the *Life of Euthymius* to remedy Cyril's neglect in failing to sufficiently expound on the holy man's achievements. He argues persuasively that the *Life of Gerasimus* itself followed afterwards, a melange of material partly derived from Cyril, which was later amended to include information on its subject first related in the *Leimonarion* of John Moschus.⁴⁹¹

By this assessment, the Sabaite author's connection to the text was only second-hand. But if Flusin is correct, then here, once again, we encounter evidence of the deep-seated rivalry which underpinned the production of the Desert hagiographies. Gerasimus' followers refused to allow him to be upstaged. Elsewhere, the author of the anonymous mid-sixth century *Life of Chariton* claimed that he had only written in response to the spate of local hagiographical compositions recently penned by others. Given the power of these works as monastic tools of self-presentation, it is perhaps only natural that the appearance, after 543, of Theodore's *Life of Theodosius* prompted a flurry of similar literary activity by monks for whom the project of commemorating past heroes was as much an opportunity to advertise the prowess of their present-day descendants. What distinguishes the Desert hagiographies from others of this period is the brazenness with which their authors pursued this agenda. Here we are confronted

Abraamius were probably completed after the *Life* of John, but acknowledges that this is impossible to demonstrate with any degree of certainty: *Ibid*, p. 34.

⁴⁸⁶ Cyril, *Vita Theodosii* 4 (ed. Schwartz, p. 239); *idem. Vita Theognii* (ed. Schwartz, p. 243). Cyril's *Life of Theognius* is so short that it contains no chapter divisions.

⁴⁸⁷ Flusin, *Miracle et Histoire*, pp. 67-70.

⁴⁸⁸ *Vita Gerasimii* (BHG 693), (ed. Papadopoulos-Kérameus, *Analecta Hierosolymitikes Stachyologias*, 4.175-184).

⁴⁸⁹ H. Grégoire, 'La vie anonyme de S. Gerasime,' *BZ* 13 (1904), 114-135; Flusin, *Miracle et histoire*, pp. 35-40. Cf. Binns, *Ascetics and Ambassadors*, pp. 47-49.

⁴⁹⁰ Flusin has provided an edition and translation of this section in: *Miracle et histoire*, pp. 228-231.

⁴⁹¹ *Ibid*. p. 40.

by an entire monastic literature unashamedly written less to benefit its readers' spiritual wellbeing than to proffer conflicting ascetic claims to pre-eminence.

In the second chapter of this thesis, we had cause to note the spiteful omission of Sabas from Theodore's account of the events of 516. Elsewhere, we saw the *Life of Chariton's* implausible attempts to cast its subject as a Christian confessor of such pedigree that his sufferings were even said to predate the Diocletianic Persecution whose Palestinian victims were famously honoured in the mid-fourth century by Eusebius of Caesarea. But it was Cyril who went furthest to remind his readers of his brother's superior credentials. Much has been made an episode of the *Life of Sabas* claiming to recount a conversation between its subject and Theodosius, in which Sabas is seen to belittle his rival as 'only the *hegumen* of children, whereas I am the *hegumen* of *hegumens*.'⁴⁹² Cyril alleged that this comment had been made 'in affection,' that Theodosius had taken it in jest.⁴⁹³ But as André-Jean Festugière first observed, time and again, the *Life* disparages Theodosius' followers, presented throughout as the Sabaites' subordinates.⁴⁹⁴ Flusin has noted that Cyril even sought to evoke their inferiority at an institutional level, with membership of their monastery presented as little more than a stepping-stone for those aspiring to ascetic maturity in Sabas' Great Laura.⁴⁹⁵

Hombergen points to this exchange as evidence of antagonism in the Desert between 'cenobites and anchorites,' each vying for recognition as the senior branch of the local monastic movement.⁴⁹⁶ But whilst questions of orthopraxy naturally feature prominently in saints' *Lives*, whether of this period, or any other, we must be careful to avoid a reading which takes their authors' claims too literary. Though Cyril would later forcefully proclaim the superiority of the eremitic life, it is clear that, in practice, attitudes among the Sabaites were more mixed. Of the communities founded by Sabas, half were, in fact, cenobia.⁴⁹⁷ Cyril appears to suggest that the mode of life adopted at each site was determined as much by geography, as by any orthopraxic imperative. Elsewhere, Joseph Patrich has described the

⁴⁹² *V. Sab.* 65 (ed. Schwartz, p. 166.24-25): κύρι ἀββᾶ, σὺ μὲν παιδίων ὑπαρχεις ἡγούμενος, ἐγὼ δὲ ἡγουμένων εἰμι ἡγούμενος.

⁴⁹³ *Ibid.* (ed. Schwartz, p. 167.1-2): ὁ λόγος οὗτος ἐμοὶ φανήσεται, ἀλλὰ καὶ λίαν ἡδυτατος· πάντα γὰρ οἶσει φιλία καὶ πάσχουσα καὶ ἀκούουσα.

⁴⁹⁴ A-J. Festugière, *Les moines d'Orient*, 3.3 (Paris 1961), 85.

⁴⁹⁵ Flusin, *Miracle et histoire*, pp. 145-148.

⁴⁹⁶ E.g. Hombergen, *Second Origenist Controversy*, pp. 117-119.

⁴⁹⁷ Namely the monasteries of Castellion, the Scholarius, Mikron, (or the 'small coenobium'), and Spelaion. See: *V. Sab.* 27, 28, 37, 38 (ed. Schwartz, pp. 110-113, 126-129). For individual sites, see: D.J. Chitty and M. Marcoff, 'Notes on Monastic Research in the Judean Wilderness, 1928-29' *PEFQS* 1929, 167-178; G.R.H. Wright and J.T. Milik, 'The Archaeological Remains at el-Mird in the Wilderness of Judaea,' *Biblica* 42 (1961), 1-21; Ovadiah, *Corpus*, pp. 111-112; Ovadiah and de Silva, *Supplementum*, p. 149; J. Patrich, 'The Sabaite Monastery of the Cave (Spelaion) in the Judean Desert,' *LA* 41 (1991), 429-448. Aside from the Great Laura and, intermittently, the New Laura, the other Sabaite laurae were the Monasteries of Jeremias, Heptastomos (Khirbet Jinjas) and Zannus. See: *V. Sab.* 39, 42, 74 (ed. Schwartz, pp. 129-130, 132, 179); J. Patrich, 'The Sabaite Laura of Jeremias in the Judean Desert,' *LA* 40 (1990), 295-311; Y. Hirschfeld, 'The Laura of Heptastomos,' in G. C. Bottini, L. Di Segni and L. Chrupalca (eds.), *One Land - Many Cultures: Archaeological Studies in Honour of Stanislaw Loffreda OFM*, (Jerusalem 2003), 189-203.

‘composite’ communities, part *laura*, part *cenobium*, common in the Desert throughout this period.⁴⁹⁸ Prominent among these were the monasteries of Choziba, Gerasimus, and Calamon. As Cyril readily acknowledges, ‘cenobites’ and ‘anchorites’ had acted in unison to defend their patron, the bishop Elias, in 516. With Sabas and Theodosius as joint-archimandrites, the Desert monasteries had long accommodated a range of lifestyles, with no suggestion of any long-entrenched antipathy between their adherents.

It seems clear that the praxic divisions described by the *Life of Sabas* were, therefore, a more recent development. Instead of marking a traditional cleavage between local monks, then, we find debate whose roots, like those of the contemporary conflict over Origenism, appear to lie in the religious politics of the mid-sixth century. In these years, even monasteries that had once been allies traded insults. Relations between the Sabaites and the Origenists, of course, were fraught from the beginning. Theirs too, however, was a dispute with a clear, institutional dimension.

Cyril’s account of this confrontation dwelt on what he claimed were salient points of theological, as well as spiritual, divergence between the Desert monasteries. But his purpose in outlining these, it appears, was in practice no different from that of his contemporaries, more concerned to highlight their competitors’ behavioural deficiencies. Emerging as a product of the rancorous schism between the Great Laura and the New Laura, this was a conflict which remained, in large part, a struggle between two monastic houses. Of central importance to the Origenists throughout was the destruction of the Great Laura. Victory was only declared by their opponents in 555, once every last member of the New Laura had been banished and their monastery placed under Sabaite control. Cyril acknowledged that this antipathy predated the development of a dispute over ‘Origenist’ ideas. The *Life of Sabas*, as we have seen, presents the original cause of the unrest which led to the founding of the New Laura as a purely disciplinary matter. But in speaking of the conflict, even in its latter stages, in terms of controversy ‘over Origenism’ at all, we appear to be at risk of falling into a political trap. The discrepancies upon which Cyril’s testimony relies would suggest that his theological criticisms of the New Laurites and their allies were, in fact, part of a broader ascetic tit-for-tat, responding to charges of a similar nature levelled by his order’s opponents.

Hombergen argues that a glimpse of these may be found in the *Life’s* misrepresentation of Constantinople II. In seeking to present the Council’s sole business as the condemnation of Origenism, Cyril, he suggests, attempted to obscure the awkward fact that his brothers had also faced unwelcome scrutiny in the years leading up to 553, regarded as sympathetic to the authors of the Three Chapters.⁴⁹⁹ Certainly, his works are at pains to stress the Sabaites’ compliance with imperial policy on

⁴⁹⁸ J. Patrich, ‘The Cells (ta kellia) of Choziba, Wadi el-Qilt,’ in G.C. Bottini, L. Di Segni, and E. Alliata (eds.), *Christian Archaeology in the Holy Land, New Discoveries. Essays in Honour of Vigilio C. Corbo OFM*, (Jerusalem 1990), 205-226, 206.

⁴⁹⁹ Hombergen, *Second Origenist Controversy*, pp. 201-205, 317.

this matter, as it stood in the 550s. In casting Sabas himself, in particular, as an outspoken opponent of Theodore of Mopsuestia, he has even been accused of attempting to retroject the Council's rulings into the *Life's* account of events prior to the holy man's death in 532, over a decade before the Chapters' initial condemnation.⁵⁰⁰ At this point Theodore, Theodoret and Ibas were all still widely respected in Chalcedonian circles. Aside from resistance in the West, many Eastern bishops were initially inclined to view the anathemas pronounced against them as an attack on Chalcedon itself, among them Sabas' ally, Peter of Jerusalem. On leaving for Constantinople, however, Cyril claimed that Gelasius had ordered his monks not to allow any follower of Theodore to join the Great Laura in his absence, since 'our sainted father Sabas despised him alongside Origen.'⁵⁰¹ A scene set during Sabas' own visit to the capital in 531 has the holy man issue a stinging rebuke against a group of disciples accompanying him on Peter's embassy to Justinian who had apparently been found 'agreeing with Theodore of Mopsuestia whilst arguing with the *aposthists*.'⁵⁰²

Cyril insisted that his hero had expelled these men from his company and left them behind in Constantinople on returning to Palestine later that year. So indignant was Sabas at their behaviour, he claimed, that the aged abbot urged the emperor to issue stringent new decree, further condemning the 'heresy of Nestorius.'⁵⁰³ But it is difficult to see what purpose the inclusion of this material in the *Life* was meant to serve, if not to combat hostile claims that such beliefs were rife among the holy man's disciples. Hombergen has argued convincingly that Cyril sought to present the Great Laura and its satellites as a moderate 'third party,' standing between the extremes represented by the Origenists, on the one hand, and pro-Chapters 'Nestorians' on the other.⁵⁰⁴ But it was not the Sabaites who had instigated efforts to suppress the latter, as the *Life* attempts to insinuate. In fact, the principle leader of the party eventually successful in pressing for the Chapters' censure at court was none other than their enemy, the 'Origenist' ringleader Theodore Ascidas.

This is not to seek to downplay the significance of the historic debate over the legacies of Theodore, Theodoret and Ibas briefly treated above, flaring intermittently since the 430s. Price has reminded us that it would be reductive to ascribe its resurgence, even in our period, to events in Palestine, let alone the agency of one man.⁵⁰⁵ Our sources, nevertheless, agree on the central role which Ascidas played in persuading Justinian that the time was right to settle the matter definitively. As punishment for his role in this affair, Caesarea's bishop was eventually excommunicated by Vigilius in 551 or 552. According to Liberatus of Carthage, Ascidas had prejudiced Justinian against Theodore of Mopsuestia on account

⁵⁰⁰ Ibid. pp. V. *Sab.* 72, 74, 87 (ed. Schwartz, pp. 176, 179, 194); Ibid. 176-179.

⁵⁰¹ V. *Sab.* 87 (ed. Schwartz, p. 194).

⁵⁰² V. *Sab.* 72 (ed. Schwartz, p. 176.8-9).

⁵⁰³ V. *Sab.* 52 (ed. Schwartz, p. 143).

⁵⁰⁴ Hombergen, *Second Origenist Controversy*, p. 190.

⁵⁰⁵ Price, *Acts of Constantinople*, 1.18-20.

of the Antiochene author's harsh appraisal of Origen's theology.⁵⁰⁶ But the immediate context for this incitement was the humiliation of the anti-Origenist edict of 543, which the Sabaites had a heavy hand in inspiring. The furore subsequently generated over the Chapters, it would seem, was the New Laura's revenge. Cyril's anxiety to vigorously disavow any connection with the texts, appearing over a decade later, strongly suggests that his brothers were among the original targets of the intrigues wrought by Ascidas and his associates.

The indictments raised as part of this process played on a range of issues as-yet unresolved amid efforts to strictly define the Chalcedonian faith. It would be wrong to discount their theological substance as of only marginal significance to our enquiry. How else could the charges raised by the Sabaites and their opponents have gained such traction in the capital, or have come to be regarded as so damaging in the first place, if not because they captured the genuine concerns of co-religionists, whether in Constantinople or at home? At the same time, however, it is difficult to avoid the view that, within a context of 'Neo-Chalcedonian' consensus, both groups actively manufactured fresh religious controversy before the imperial court as a means of undermining their institutional rivals.

Cyril's comments on Theodore of Mopsuestia make clear that his brothers felt no loyalty to the great Antiochene theologian whose beliefs they were said to share. As Price has shown, there is nothing to suggest that Ascidas was any more of an Origenist in reality than Leontius.⁵⁰⁷ Following Macarius' removal in 552, Theodore, the bishop of Scythopolis and former abbot of the New Laura, even penned a passionate *Libellus against the Errors of Origen* in an effort to finally quash the Sabaites' allegations.⁵⁰⁸ Proceeding to vocally support the anathemas enshrined at Constantinople II, his work acts as final confirmation, if any were needed, that the image of a 'war' over doctrine depicted by our authors was largely fantastical. Its terms appear as a symptom, and not the cause, of the antipathy which permeates the Desert hagiographies more broadly, produced amid a widespread deterioration in relations between monasteries which cannot be attributed to misgivings over long-dead theologians alone.

III. Constantinople and the Desert City

If no immediate, over-arching explanation for this ill-feeling is forthcoming, of one thing, at least, we can be clear: it was the court which served as the arbiter of Palestine's monastic feuding. In a process with clear parallels to the earlier conflict between Jerusalem and Severus of Antioch, the outcome of

⁵⁰⁶ ACO 2.5.140.

⁵⁰⁷ Price, *Acts of Constantinople*, 2.273-274.

⁵⁰⁸ Theodore of Scythopolis, *Libellus de Erroribus Origenianis*, (PG 86.231B-236B). Theodore's election occurred in ca. 548. For dating, see: P. Rorem and J.C. Lamoreaux, *John of Scythopolis and the Dionysian Corpus: Annotating the Areopagite*, (Oxford 1998), p. 27.

the Second Origenist Controversy, as we have seen, was largely decided in the audience chambers of the palace. The desire to solicit imperial approval thus presumably played heavily on the minds of Cyril and his contemporaries. But at points, such was the emphasis placed on evoking Justinianic policy in their works, that the doctrinal remarks made in the texts almost appear as secondary, adapted to serve in a contest for the affections of the emperor and his officials.

Such practices might already be seen in the laborious profession of support for the condemnation of Chapters found in the *Life of Sabas*. But as Flusin has argued, Cyril's insistence on this point is only one example of a broader narrative campaign apparently intended to endear the Sabaites to Justinian and his advisors. Whether in parroting the anathemas issued in 553, or in adapting the *Confessio Fidei* of 551 to provide a summary of the beliefs allegedly held by Euthymius, Cyril carefully and deliberately recycled a range of religious rulings emanating from the court in an effort to project an image of perfect conformity to a particular, imperially-sanctioned brand of Neochalcedonian 'orthodoxy.'⁵⁰⁹ His efforts appear to have been foreshadowed by Theodore, in the *Life of Theodosius*. In each case, political considerations can be seen to have subverted the Desert hagiographers' accounts of the monastic world in which they lived, obscured by a screen of relentless enthusiasm for Justinian's reforms. Both writers, we know, were aggressive in crediting their brothers with leading the defence of the faith from the machinations of the emperor's predecessor, Anastasius.

A tradition of snobbery based on the perceived inferior quality of his work has ensured that a detailed investigation of the precise doctrinal terminology used by Theodore has yet to appear.⁵¹⁰ Even a cursory analysis of the *Life of Theodosius*, however, finds evidence of a mind no less attuned to the nuances of contemporary Christological politics than Cyril's. As Festugière observed, the text appears to date to the period which immediately followed the edicts of the mid-540s. Theodore deftly navigated the provisions of both rulings, seemingly unfazed by the prominence attained by their architects at court. Theodosius' hagiographer reminded his readers that, in common with the Sabaites, his hero too had long denounced Origen for polluting the Christian faith with 'the demonic beliefs of the Greeks' (*ta hellēnika kai daimoniōdē dogmata*).⁵¹¹ Dirk Krausmüller, meanwhile, has identified elaborate patterns of assonance contained in the *Life*, formulated, he believes, to 'target the 'Nestorian' belief in an

⁵⁰⁹ Flusin, *Miracle et histoire*, pp. 73-76.

⁵¹⁰ See, for instance, the preface to Festugière's French translation of the *Life of Theodosius*: 'Trois raisons m'ont conduit à joindre au texte de Cyrille cet insipide morceau de rhétorique. La première et la principale est le désir que le dossier des moines de Palestine soit complet. En second lieu, dans la fatras de considérations pieuses, qui fait le fond de ce discours, on découvre cependant quelques données historiques, dont l'une au moins, la réponse de l'empereur Anastase à Sabas et Théodosios, est un document important. Enfin, il m'a semblé utile de donner un exemple d'une sorte de littérature qui encombre l'hagiographie ancienne et qui fait mieux apprécier, par contraste, la candeur et la précision du récit de Cyrille.'

⁵¹¹ Theodore, V. *Theod.* (ed. Usener, p. 70.7-12). κατ' ἐξαιρέτων δὲ τὴν Ὀριγένους τοῦ ἐπαράτου ἐβδελύττετο ἀσέβειαν, ὅτι περ καθὼς μύρω βόρβορον, οὕτω τῷ καθαρῷ και εὐώδει τῶν ἀποστόλων κηρύγματι | τὰ Ἑλληνικὰ και δαιμονιώδη φύρων ἐγκατέμιξε δόγματα.

autonomous human nature in Christ.⁵¹² Thus the vicious monastic infighting responsible for the edicts, Theodore implies, had only served to reaffirm beliefs his brothers had always held. Elsewhere, he appears to embark on an elaborate defence of Chalcedon couched in the theopaschite language favoured by Justinian as the most likely means of finding agreement between the Council's supporters and opponents.⁵¹³

In espousing the belief that 'one of the Trinity had suffered,' the emperor had faced criticism from some on the Chalcedonian side for using a formula which seemed to them to imply a degree of unity between the human and divine natures in Christ tantamount to miaphysitism, a charge which Justinian strongly denied. Drawing on Cyril of Alexandria's *Second Letter to Nestorius*, he responded to this allegation by arguing that, in his view, it was only in his humanity that Christ had suffered, that the Godhead remained impassible, and that this distinction, in turn, served to reaffirm the 'in two natures' Christology enshrined in 451.⁵¹⁴ Over time, this argument grew in acceptance among Eastern bishops and was forcibly reiterated at Constantinople II. But we seem to find a particularly effusive apology for the emperor's position in the *Life of Theodosius*, framed in language which echoed the contents of Justinian's letter to Pope John II, a document of such importance to the broader imperial theological project that it received the force of law in 534. In a prolonged digression, Theodore scoffed at any suggestion of a link between theopaschitism and the belief that 'Christ's Godhead and his humanity... are comprised of only one nature.'⁵¹⁵ He argued that to hold these views in tandem was, in fact, impossible since 'the Godhead... did not suffer by any means, for the divine is impassible in every respect.'⁵¹⁶

Nevertheless, it was Cyril who went furthest in seeking to establish his brothers' Justinianic credentials. The Sabaite author's efforts extended beyond mimicry of the emperor's statements on faith, at times even appearing to emulate his civil legislation as well. From 535 to 546, Justinian had promulgated a series of *Novels* seeking to provide wide-ranging instructions for the organisation of ascetic communities. Their contents gave official guidance for the first time on matters as diverse as the design of monastery buildings, the conduct of abbatial elections, and the rules governing monks' interaction with laypeople. Together, they envisaged a highly-prescriptive monasticism, thoroughly subordinated

⁵¹² D. Krausmüller, 'Theotokos - Diadochos,' in A. Louth and A. Casiday (eds.), *Byzantine Orthodoxies: Papers from the Thirty-Sixth Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies, University of Durham, 23-25 March 2002*, (Aldershot 2006), 35-54, 52-53.

⁵¹³ *CJ* 1.1.6 (ed. Krueger, pp.7-8); *Chronicon Paschale*, (ed.) – trans. Whitby and Whitby, pp. 129-130.

⁵¹⁴ *CJ* 1.1.8 (ed. Krueger, pp.10-12).

⁵¹⁵ Theodore, *V. Theod.* (ed. Usener, p. 65.23-66.6.): τί οὖν τὸ συμβαῖνον αὐτοῖς ἐντεῦθεν ἀσέβημα; [τὸ] τὸν ἀπαθῆ θεὸν λόγον εἰς οἰκείαν, τὸ γε ἦκον εἰς αὐτούς, παθεῖν φύσιν. εἰ γὰρ μιᾶς φύσεως ἢ Χριστοῦ κατ' αὐτούς θεότης καὶ ἀνθρωπότης ὑπάρχει, φύσει δὲ καὶ οὐ κατὰ φαντασίαν ὁ Χριστὸς δεκτικὸς γέγονε θανάτου, φύσει ἄρα θεότητος καὶ ἀνθρωπότητος τὸν διὰ σταυροῦ ὑπομεμένηκεν θάνατον.

⁵¹⁶ *Ibid.* (ed. Usener, p. 66.11-14): εἰ γὰρ καὶ κατ' οὐσίαν ἢ Χριστοῦ θεότης τῇ ἰδίᾳ πασχούσῃ ἦνωτο σαρκί, ἀλλ' εἰς ἰδίαν φύσιν ἔπαθεν αὐτὴ τὸ παράπαν οὐδεν. τὸ γὰρ θεῖον πάντῃ ἀπαθές.

to the rule of the Church authorities.⁵¹⁷ Further elaborating on Chalcedon's attempts to mitigate the problem of ascetic 'rebellion,' Justinian's reforms aimed to cloister monks wherever possible, ordering them to live under the constant supervision of their peers. Traditionally, scholars have been sceptical as to the extent to which the onerous model of orthopraxy they outlined was ever enforced.⁵¹⁸ We doubt that any of their provisions were universally effective. Cyril's *Lives*, however, seem to bear a noticeable imprint of the *Novels*' rulings, echoing not just the letter, but also the spirit of the law with regards to ascetics, as the emperor had ordained it.

Traces of this influence may be seen in the collection's account of life in the Sabaite monasteries. Sabas himself was depicted as the archetypal Justinianic monk who, like Euthymius before him, shared the emperor's concerns for the maintenance of ascetic 'purity.' However, Cyril was also careful to demonstrate his brothers' compliance with some of the more specific demands made by the court. In *Novels* 5 of March 535, for instance, Justinian had ordered that candidates seeking admittance to the ascetic life must undertake a three-year noviciate. In keeping with this ruling, the *Life of Sabas* described at length how its subject had constructed a 'Small Coenobium,' established for this very purpose.⁵¹⁹ The daily routine of all Sabaite communities was apparently the same as that prescribed by *Novels* 133 of March 539, in which the emperor had ordered that monks must remain locked behind their monastery's gates, living a communal life, engaged at all times in either prayer, or manual labour.⁵²⁰

The most decisive evidence of a relationship between the *Novels* and the *Lives* appears in the account of Sabas' visit to Constantinople in 531. In scenes claiming to recount a series of conversations between Justinian and the holy man, the *Life of Sabas* appears to paraphrase language found in the imperial laws, effectively using its subject as a mouthpiece to quote back to the emperor his own legislation. One such incident, which sees Sabas present a number of requests for financial assistance to Justinian on behalf of the Church of Jerusalem, has him withdraw to one side and occupy himself with prayer, as the emperor and his courtiers decide upon whether or not to grant them. When one of Sabas' followers upbraids him, demanding that he intervene to ensure that his petition is accepted, the holy man is said to have rebuffed him, remarking, 'Those men are doing their work, child. Therefore let us do ours!'⁵²¹

⁵¹⁷ Primarily: *J. Nov.* 5, 7, 9, 79, 123, 133 (ed. Schoell and Kroll, pp. 28-35, 48-64, 91, 388-390, 593-625, 666-676).

⁵¹⁸ On the reception of Justinian's monastic *Novels* and their place in the broader history of Late Roman monastic legislation, see: B. Granić, 'Die rechtliche Stellung,' 6-34; C. Frazee, 'Late Roman and Byzantine Legislation on the Monastic Life from the Fourth to Eighth Centuries,' *CH* 51 (1982), 263-279; A. Sterk, *Renouncing the World Yet Leading the Church, The Monk-Bishop in Late Antiquity*, (Cambridge, MA 2004), pp. 163-177; B. Lesieur, 'Le monastère de Séridos sous Barsanuphe et Jean de Gaza: Un monastère conforme à la législation impériale et ecclésiastique?' *RÉB* 69 (2011), 5-47; D. Neary, 'The Image of Justinianic Orthopraxy in Eastern Monastic Literature,' *J ECS* 25 (2017), 119-147.

⁵¹⁹ *V. Sab.* 28 (ed. Schwartz, p. 113); Flusin, *Miracle et histoire*, pp. 137-154.

⁵²⁰ *V. Sab.* 8 (ed. Schwartz, p. 92); cf. *J. Nov.* 133 (ed. Schoell and Kroll, pp. 666-676).

⁵²¹ *V. Sab.* 73 (ed. Schwartz, p. 178): ἐκεῖνοι, τέκνον, τὸ ἴδιον ποιοῦσιν· ποιήσωμεν καὶ ἡμεῖς τὸ ἡμέτερον.

This, as Phil Booth has noted, is one of several points at which Cyril appears to mimic Justinian's broader 'political philosophy,' as outlined in the fifth chapter of *Novels* 133:

'For if these men [the monks] offer prayers to God on behalf the State (*politeia*) with clean hands and pure spirits, evidently the armies will be successful and the cities will prosper (how could the greatest peace and good order not exist, when God is kindly and gracious?), and the earth will bear us its fruits and the sea will give us its own goods, these prayers uniting the benevolence of God to the benefit of the entire State.'⁵²²

On more than one occasion, the *Life of Sabas* couches its subject's appeal to the emperor in language reminiscent of this passage. Cyril recorded that, on receiving what he had asked for, Sabas' prayers had secured 'two victories' for the Empire of such magnitude that Justinian's achievements had exceeded those of all previous emperors.⁵²³ As a result, he claimed, Rome had come to command 'half of the land and the sea.'⁵²⁴ It may be that the Sabaite hagiographer simply shared the court's ambition for a strong, theologically-unified Christian *oikumene*. Evidence from elsewhere in the East, moreover, may suggest that Constantinople was better-able to monitor the reception of its laws than we might otherwise imagine.⁵²⁵ One potential high-profile victim of Justinian's monastic reforms was the prominent Egyptian abbot Abraham of Farshut, whose deposition for 'defying the emperor' led to the collapse of the famous monastic 'federation' founded in the fourth century by Pachomius.⁵²⁶ John of Ephesus described how the Syrian monk and anti-Chalcedonian agitator Z'ura, condemned alongside Severus of Antioch in *Novels* 42 in 536, had originally come to Constantinople to complain of 'abuses' which, on a closer reading, appear to be connected to the local enforcement, the previous year, of the orthopraxic provisions contained in *Novels* 5.⁵²⁷ Details found in the recently-discovered Petra Papyri suggest that laws of this period came into force, at even Palestine's farthest reaches, within a year of their promulgation in the capital.⁵²⁸ But it is hard to see why it should have so been important for Cyril to be seen to adhere to their contents so closely if, as some have argued, his works were solely intended to be read within the Sabaite order. His efforts, moreover, surely went beyond what was required to mount a superficial show of loyalty to an overbearing State.

⁵²² *J. Nov.* 133.5 (ed. Schoell and Kroll, p. 674.8-16): εἰ γὰρ ἐκεῖνοι καθαραῖς ταῖς χερσὶ καὶ γυμναῖς ταῖς ψυχαῖς τὰς ὑπὲρ τοῦ πολιτεύματος εὐχὰς προσάγειεν τῷ θεῷ, πρόδηλον ὡς καὶ τὰ στρατεύματα ἔξει καλῶς καὶ αἱ πόλεις εὐσταθήσουσι (θεοῦ δὲ ἴλεώ τε καὶ εὐμενοῦς καθεστῶτος πῶς οὐκ ἔσται πάντα μεστὰ πάσης εἰρήνης τε καὶ εὐνομίας;) καὶ ἡ γῆ τε ἡμῖν οἶσει καρποὺς καὶ ἡ θάλαττα τὰ οἰκεῖα δώσει, τῆς ἐκείνων εὐχῆς τὴν εὐμένειαν τοῦ θεοῦ πρὸς ἅπασαν τὴν πολιτείαν συναγωγῆς. See also: Booth, *Crisis of Empire*, p. 17; Millar, 'Two Synods,' 63.

⁵²³ *V. Sab.* 74 (ed. Schwartz, p. 178. 19-27).

⁵²⁴ *V. Sab.* 74 (ed. Schwartz, p. 178. 27-29).

⁵²⁵ Cf. Lesieur, 'Le monastère de Séridos,' esp. 46-47.

⁵²⁶ Now see: J.E. Goehring, *Politics, Monasticism, and Miracles in Sixth Century Upper Egypt, A Critical Edition and Translation of the Coptic Texts on Abraham of Farshut*, Studien und Texte zu Antike und Christentum 69 (Tübingen 2012), pp. 72-109.

⁵²⁷ John of Ephesus, *Life of Z'ura* (ed. Brooks, pp. 18-35) cf. *J. Nov.* 42 (ed. Schoell and Kroll, pp. 263-269); cf. H. Leppin, 'Power from Humility: Justinian and the Religious Authority of Monks,' in A. Cain and N. Lenski (eds.), *The Power of Religion in Late Antiquity*, (Farnham 2009), 155-164.

⁵²⁸ A. Arjava, 'Law and Life in the sixth-century Near East,' *Acta Byzantina Fennica* 2 (2003-2004), 7.

Instead, it is tempting to think that Cyril wrote with an official audience also in mind. Recent work on the manuscript tradition of the *Lives* by István Perczel, in fact, has uncovered evidence to suggest that he may even have originally intended his works for consumption in the capital.⁵²⁹ Perczel has identified two versions of the texts: the ‘atticising’ Greek tradition upon which Schwartz based his critical edition, and a lower-register original, preserved in an early Syriac translation. The former, he argues, is the product of a process of refashioning undertaken by a later generation of ‘Constantinopolitan metaphrasts.’ Yet for this to have happened, then, as Perczel notes, the *Lives* must already have come into circulation in the city previously. The sycophancy with which Cyril appears to have recycled Justinian’s statements on religion would seem to make most sense if we tentatively date this initial reception to shortly after the late 550s, when the collection was first completed.

Such an argument cannot, of course, be proven with any degree of certainty. But the idea that Cyril may have thought of his writings, in part, as a means by which to curry favour with the court cannot be discounted. That the Palestinian Church as a whole was engaged in a similar effort is strongly attested elsewhere in the *Acts* of the two synods held in 536 at Jerusalem and Constantinople. These reveal the true extent of contact between the region’s monks and the imperial elite, if anything, to have been even greater than that described in the *Life of Sabas*. At the same time, the *Acts* themselves may suggest that the clamour to impress the imperial authorities was not solely the preserve of ascetics. In this, it seems, Cyril and his contemporaries were simply following an example set by their episcopal superiors.

Though largely neglected by scholars, the *Acts* of 536 claim to record a crucial watershed in the formulation of Justinian’s religious policy. A recent article by Fergus Millar has provided a thorough overview of the political backdrop to the events which they describe. Until now, the emperor had prevaricated over how best to tackle the problem of anti-Chalcedonian intransigence. In 532, Justinian had presided over a series of meetings attended by both Chalcedonian bishops and prominent members of the Council’s Syrian opposition, but apparently terminated proceedings before any meaningful compromise between them could be reached.⁵³⁰ The next years saw him pursue an increasingly erratic course in promoting ecclesiastical unity, punctuated by threats of persecution and offers of accommodation to anti-Chalcedonians, the latter culminating with a visit to Constantinople by Severus, invited to the capital in 535 as the emperor’s honoured guest.⁵³¹ 535 was also marked by election of a

⁵²⁹ I. Perczel, ‘Hagiography as a historiographic genre: from Eusebius to Cyril of Scythopolis and Eustratius of Constantinople,’ paper delivered at the ‘Christian Hagiography between Empires (4th-8th centuries)’ conference in Budapest, October 2014, and to be published in a conference volume by Peeters. Its findings will form part of a broader study of the Syriac Cyril in his forthcoming book: idem, *Origénistes ou théosophes? Histoire politique d’un mouvement doctrinal des Ve-VIe siècles*, (Paris, Les belles lettres forthcoming).

⁵³⁰ For a full overview of these talks, for which records from both delegations survive, see: S.P. Brock, ‘The conversations with the Syrian Orthodox under Justinian (532),’ *OCP* 47 (1981), 87-121.

⁵³¹ Millar, ‘Two Synods,’ 70.

new bishop of Constantinople, Anthimus, who was soon himself the subject of controversy, having allegedly renounced Chalcedon under Severus' guidance.

Objections by Eastern Chalcedonians to this apparent thaw in relations between the court and their opponents had already reached the ears of Pope Agapetus when the Roman pontiff arrived in the city shortly afterwards as the leader of an embassy sent by the Ostrogothic king Theodahad. With Justinian's forces poised for an imminent invasion of Italy, Agapetus' outspoken opposition to Anthimus posed a major political obstacle to imperial plans for the smooth reintegration of the West. Scholars point to these strategic considerations as partly responsible for the new, hard-line approach to anti-Chalcedonianism which led to the convocation of the synods of 536. Anthimus had already been driven from office by May that year, when the first session of the Synod of Constantinople was opened. Between the conclusion of this Synod, and the beginning of the Synod of Jerusalem on 19th September, Justinian promulgated *Novels* 42, which anathematised the former patriarch alongside Severus and Z'ura, and was later inserted into the *Acts*.⁵³²

It is not, perhaps, surprising to find Palestinian figures involved in these manoeuvres, given the identity of those condemned. Mindful of the events of 516, local Christian leaders could only have greeted the prospect of Severus' potential rehabilitation with apprehension. A list of delegates placed at the beginning of the proceedings of the first session of the Synod of Constantinople records three Palestinians as in attendance: Domnus, bishop of Maximianopolis in Palaestina Secunda, Anastasius of the island of Iotabe, nominally part of Palaestina Tertia, and Sabinus, 'the deacon of the [Church] of the Resurrection of Christ our God, representing Peter, the most holy patriarch of the Jerusalemites.'⁵³³ But as the text makes clear, this group represented only a fraction of the total regional presence in the capital. The synod's first order of business, the *Acts* reveal, was to allow the admittance of eighty-seven monks into the council chamber, among them seventeen Palestinians; fifteen from the Desert.⁵³⁴ What's more, the text claims that far from merely, passively observing debate as it unfolded, these ascetics had an active role in shaping its agenda.

Incorporated by Schwartz into the third volume of his *Acta Conciliorum Oecumenicorum*, the text of the *Acts* opens with the minutes of the fifth session of the Synod of Constantinople before moving abruptly to the Synod of Jerusalem, where the minutes of the first four sessions of the former are quoted, allegedly verbatim.⁵³⁵ As in the *Acts* of 451 or 553, throughout the collection, conciliar proceedings are interspersed with additional quotations taken from earlier documents. These included a series of petitions drafted in the months leading up to the first meeting in Constantinople by Eastern clerics and

⁵³² ACO 3.119-123.

⁵³³ ACO 3.126.33-34, 127.33-34: Σαβίνου διακόνου τῆς ἁγίας Χριστοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμῶν Ἀναστάσεως πληροῦντες τὰς ἀποκρίσεις Πέτρου τοῦ ὀσιωτάτου πατριάρχου Ἱεροσολύμων.

⁵³⁴ ACO 3.128-130; See Appendix B.

⁵³⁵ Millar, 'Two Synods,' 72-74.

ascetics ‘resident in the city,’ pressing for firm action to be taken against Severus and Anthimus. As Millar has remarked, Palestinians feature prominently among their signatories, with no fewer than thirteen monks from the Desert alone listed as having subscribed to a letter addressed to Agapetus prior to the Pope’s death in April, a month before the synod began.⁵³⁶

Even the larger monastic group who were eventually admitted to take part in the council, the *Acts* acknowledge, were there to represent other ascetics following its proceedings from outside the palace walls.⁵³⁷ More of their names appear if we consult the lists of signatures appended to two *libelli* said to have been sponsored by the abbot of the Constantinopolitan Monastery of Dalmatius, Marianus, read out during the synod’s fifth session. The first was addressed to Justinian himself in the name of Marianus, the monasteries subject to his jurisdiction as the capital’s archimandrite, and ‘those present in [the city] from the Desert of Jerusalem, archimandrites and monks, as well as those of Syria Secunda, the holy Mount Sinai, and the three Palestines.’⁵³⁸ Of its ninety-seven signatories, twenty-eight were Palestinian. A second, longer ‘Libellus of the monks to the patriarch Menas,’ addressed to Anthimus’ successor, carried one hundred and thirty-nine signatures, many secured by Photeinus, the bishop of Chalcedon.⁵³⁹ We find the same twenty-eight Palestinian monks listed here, as above.

We will return to the precise composition of this group below. But its prevalence in the ‘official’ record of events in 536 is striking. Only in the aftermath of the Persian and Islamic invasions of the seventh century, when a large number of Palestinians appeared as refugees in Rome, are so many local ascetics found to have decamped en masse abroad. But if the *Acts* are testament to the veracity of Cyril’s depiction of the region’s monks as regular visitors to Justinianic court, they also betray the same fawning support for the emperor’s policies visible in the Desert hagiographies. If anything, the text as we have it was most likely produced as a means by which to convey Jerusalem’s faithful reception of rulings adopted in the capital under imperial supervision. Nowhere is this ambition more clearly spelled-out than in a lengthy speech attributed to Peter of Jerusalem among the council’s closing remarks:

‘Since we possess these things that were expressly enacted at the imperial city and we regard as correct and canonical all that has been published on account of Anthimus, as well as the order approving his summons, and the kindness henceforth shown to him, having observed the appointment of the destructive Anthimus we happen

⁵³⁶ Millar, ‘Two Synods,’ 74-76.

⁵³⁷ ACO 3.130.33-34: οἱ πάντες πράττοντες ὑπὲρ τε ἑαυτῶν καὶ τῶν οἰκείων μοναστηρίων καὶ πάντων τῶν ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ τῆς ἁγίας πόλεως μοναχῶν: ‘These men all act on behalf of their own monasteries and of all the monks in the desert of the Holy City.’

⁵³⁸ ACO 3.32.17-22: Βασιλεῖ θεοφιλεστάτῳ καὶ πανευσεβεστάτῳ Ἰουστινιανῷ αὐτοκράτορι αὐγουστῳ δέησις καὶ ἰκεσία παρὰ Μαρριανοῦ ἐλέει θεοῦ πρεσβυτέρου καὶ ἀρχιμανδρίτου μονῆς Δαλματίου τοῦ μακαριωτάτου καὶ ἐξάρχου τῶν εὐαγῶν μοναστηρίων τῆσδε τῆς πόλεως καὶ ἀρχιμανδριτῶν τῶν αὐτῶν εὐαγῶν μοναστηρίων καὶ τῶν ἐν αὐτῇ ἐνδημούντων ἀπὸ τῆς ὑπὸ τὰ Ἱεροσόλυμα ἐρήμου ἀρχιμανδριτῶν καὶ μοναχῶν καὶ τῆς δευτέρας Συρίας καὶ τοῦ ἁγίου ὄρους Σινᾶ καὶ τῶν τριῶν Παλαιστινῶν.

⁵³⁹ See, for instance: ACO 3.47.70: Ἰωάννης ἐλέει θεοῦ πρεσβύτερος καὶ ἀρχιμανδρίτης τῆς εὐαγοῦς μεγάλης μονῆς τῶν Ἀκοιμήτων τῆς ὑπὸ Φωτεινὸν τὸν ὀσιώτατον ἐπίσκοπον τῆς Χαλκηδονίων λαμπρᾶς μητροπόλεως ὑπέγραψα.

to agree with [the views] that were well conceived by Agapetus of pious and blessed memory and expressed by Menas the most holy patriarch of the imperial city and by the righteous synod convened by him, *following also in the ratification of the sacred and imperial law with regards to these matters*, we accept the deposition of Anthimus since his appointment to the arch-priestly and queenly throne has been found contrary to the hallowed canons and visible proof has since been supplied of his ill-believing and unrepentant character...⁵⁴⁰

The Synod of Jerusalem, it appears, served no real purpose, other than as a platform for local Church officials to declaim at length their agreement with Justinian's removal of Anthimus. Peter, styled grandly as 'his High priesthood,' assumes centre stage, cast in the role of the emperor's dutiful servant. Millar has spoken of the floridly-written announcement which marks the beginning of the recorded transactions of the council, which refers to the Holy City by its archaic Roman title of 'the metropolis of Colonia Aelia.'⁵⁴¹ The brief account of the synod which follows, unsurprisingly, has only praise for the findings of its predecessor, recently convened in 'the imperial city' (*hē basilis polis*). There is nothing to suggest that the image given here in some way misrepresents the views of Palestine's Church hierarchy, for whom Anthimus' survival was an unwelcome prospect. But whilst the *Acts* of 536 claim to preserve, line for line, the remarks of the synod's participants, like any conciliar collection, the text is, in fact, clearly the product of careful editing. How closely the finished work resembled what was actually said at the council, however, is in a sense less important than the fact that this effort was ever undertaken in the first place.

The *Acts* survive as part of a compendium which Schwartz dubbed the 'Collectio Sabbaitica' on account of its focus on Palestinian affairs. This, he believed, was likely to have been produced within one of the Desert monasteries shortly after 543, since it also contains a copy of Justinian's edict against Origen.⁵⁴² Whether the *Acts* themselves had circulated separately beforehand is unclear. But whoever was responsible for arranging these conciliar records in their current form was presumably either present in Jerusalem in 536, or else acting under instruction from those who were. Even leaving aside the highly reverential treatment of its bishop, the actual business transacted in the Holy City, though given pride of place in the text, could scarcely otherwise have warranted such attention. By the mid-sixth century, provincial gatherings of this kind would routinely meet to ratify decisions reached in Constantinople.

⁵⁴⁰ ACO 3.187.26-36. Italics my own: ταῦτα τὸν κατὰ τὴν βασιλίδα πόλιν πεπραγμένων διαρρήδην ἐχόντων καὶ ἡμεῖς ὀρώντες ὀρθῶς τε καὶ κανονικῶς πάντα ἐπὶ Ἀνθίμῳ προεληλυθότα καὶ τὴν τὸν κλήσεων ἐπαινέσαντες τάξιν καὶ τὴν ἐντεῦθεν ὑπηργμένην αὐτῷ φιλανθρωπίαν, κατεγνωκότες δὲ καὶ τῆς ὀλεθρίας Ἀνθίμου ἐνστάσεως σύμψηφοι γινόμενοι τοῖς εὐ διατετυπωμένοις ὑπὸ Ἀγαπητοῦ τοῦ τῆς ὀσίας καὶ μακαρίας μνήμης καὶ τοῖς ὀρισμένοις παρὰ Μηνᾶ τοῦ ἁγιωτάτου πατριάρχου τῆς βασιλίδος πόλεως καὶ τῆς παρ' αὐτοῦ ἄθροισθείσης εὐαγεστάτης συνόδου, ἀκολουθοῦντες δὲ καὶ τῇ περὶ τούτων κυρώσει τοῦ θείου καὶ βασιλικοῦ νόμου προσιέμεθα τὴν ἐπὶ Ἀνθίμῳ καθαίρεσιν ὡς καὶ τὴν ἀρχὴν παρὰ τοὺς ἱεροὺς εἰσφρήσαντι κανόνας τῶν ἀρχιερατικῶν τῆς βασιλίδος θρόνων καὶ ἐναργεστάτην ὑστερον τῆς αὐτοῦ κακοπιστίας καὶ ἀμεταμελήτου γνώμης παρασχομένοι ἀπόδειξιν...

⁵⁴¹ ACO 3.123.17-18.

⁵⁴² ACO 3.x-xi.

Even by the standards of the time, the Jerusalem synod convened by Peter was a particularly fleeting affair. No mention of either council held in 536 appears in the *Acts* of Constantinople II.

Any attempt to explain the energy invested to mark the occasion simply as an expression of Chalcedonian triumphalism is difficult to sustain. As the previous chapter noted, a similar gathering had taken place in Jerusalem in 518, summoned to endorse the council held in Constantinople at which Severus was first deposed and driven into exile.⁵⁴³ Cyril, as we have seen, claimed that John III of Jerusalem was so delighted by *its* findings, that he sent Sabas to report news of them to his suffragans in something resembling a victory procession.⁵⁴⁴ To our knowledge, however, no attempt was made to commemorate even this episode by way of a specially-commissioned conciliar collection. Such was the obsequiousness which Justinian appears to have inspired. It seems clear that competition for the emperor's favour in Palestine was intense. The *Lives*, moreover, suggest that such concerns had a role in framing the tensions between the Desert monasteries highlighted above. But how might we account, more generally, for the extraordinary servility in evidence among the region's religious establishment, unlike anything commanded by imperial regimes previously? Why were so many local ascetics, in particular, determined to risk entanglement with a court whose recent intervention in matters of faith had been marked by such volatility?

IV. A Church in Crisis

To pose this question is not to suggest that it carries a straightforward answer. It seems only sensible, however, that we might seek to relate the unprecedented outpouring of support for the Justinianic regime seen in our sources to the broader political climate in which they were written. Genuine delight in Jerusalem at the strongly Chalcedonian tenor of the new emperor's reforms undoubtedly played a part in this rapturous reception. But the political manoeuvring begun with Sabas' embassy in 531, crucially, also coincided with a period of remarkable social and economic crisis in Palestine, gravely damaging to ecclesiastical finances in particular.

The crisis had begun two years earlier. Its catalyst was another eruption of religious violence: in this case a seismic revolt by the Samaritans, beginning in Palestine's rural north. What sparked this disturbance is unclear. Christian writers, as we might expect, were more concerned to castigate its perpetrators than offer an objective appraisal of their behaviour.⁵⁴⁵ The revolt was the latest in a string of incidents which had pitted the Samaritans against the organs of a Christian State. As recently as 484,

⁵⁴³ *V. Sab.* 60-61 (ed. Schwartz, pp. 161-163).

⁵⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴⁵ The version of John Malalas' *Chronicle* preserved in the tenth-century *Excerpta Historica* of Constantine Porphyrogenitus would claim that the Samaritans had reacted angrily to a local custom, whereby Christian children would ritually stone their houses after Mass on Sunday: *Excerpta de insidiis* 44 (ed. de Boor, p. 171).

violence had flared following the construction of a church dedicated to the Theotokos by the emperor Zeno on Mount Gerizim, sacred in Samaritan tradition as the true location of the original temple of Yahweh.⁵⁴⁶ Where the events of 529 differed from these earlier confrontations was in the magnitude of the destruction caused. To observers, the bloodbath in which the revolt had ended was shocking, even by the standards of the time. John Malalas spoke of as many as twenty thousand Samaritans killed in a single encounter with imperial forces led by Theodore, the *dux Palaestinae*. He alleged that a further fifty thousand were displaced, with twenty thousand children seized by Arab confederates loyal to Constantinople and led off into slavery.⁵⁴⁷ Procopius of Caesarea gave a total of one hundred thousand dead.⁵⁴⁸ Modern estimates of the casualties involved have varied. Procopius' claims were largely accepted by Claudine Dauphin, but rejected by Michael Avi-Yonah in favour of an even greater figure (300,000).⁵⁴⁹ Whichever of these numbers we accept, however, the result is the same. The devastation described can only have taken a significant toll on wider Palestinian society.

Aside from loss of life, our sources measured the impact of the events of 529 by the damage they had caused financially. Procopius was particularly concerned to highlight the revolt's effect on the region's thriving land economy. Malalas complained that the Samaritans had 'set fire to many estates,' a fact explicitly confirmed by Cyril's *Life of Sabas*.⁵⁵⁰ But it was a shortage of labour created in the wake of the uprising which would seem to have caused the greatest hardship. The Samaritans traditionally constituted a major part of Palestine's agricultural workforce, so much so that Procopius, in the *Anecdota*, repeatedly referred to the revolt's participants as 'farmers' (*georgoi*).⁵⁵¹ With their deaths, the text complains, some of the 'best-quality land in the world' was left untended, resulting in ruin for its Christian owners, who could no longer afford to pay their taxes.⁵⁵²

It seems clear that one of the landowners worst-affected by this upheaval was the Church. Cyril reported that Peter had originally dispatched Sabas to meet with Justinian in 531 to negotiate relief for Palestine I and II from the land tax, to which the bishop was a major contributor. Whilst the remains of relatively few Christian religious institutions of this period have been unearthed in the Samaritan heartland, recent archaeological research has confirmed that many of the neighbouring districts affected by the revolt were areas of considerable monastic and ecclesiastical landholding.⁵⁵³ The loss of income derived from

⁵⁴⁶ Procopius, *de Aedificiis* 5.7.5-9 (ed. Haury, repr. Dewing, pp. 350-352); Malalas, *Chron.* 15.8 (ed. Thurn, p. 382).

⁵⁴⁷ Malalas, *Chron.* 18.35, 54 (ed. Thurn, pp. 447, 455).

⁵⁴⁸ Procopius, *Anecdota* 11.29 (ed. Haury, repr. Dewing, p. 138).

⁵⁴⁹ For discussion, see: R. Pummer, *Early Christian Authors on Samaritans and Samaritanism, Texts, Translations, and Commentary*, (Tübingen 2002), p. 261.

⁵⁵⁰ Malalas, *Chron.* 18 (ed. Thurn, pp.); *V. Sab.* 70 (ed. Schwartz, pp. 172-173).

⁵⁵¹ Procopius, *Anecdota* 11.27, 29 (ed. Haury, repr. Dewing, p. 138).

⁵⁵² *Ibid.* 11.30 (ed. Haury, repr. Dewing, p. 138).

⁵⁵³ See, for instance: N. Carmin (ed.), *Churches and Monasteries in Samaria and Northern Judea*, (Jerusalem 2012); I. Taxel, 'Rural Monasticism,' 57-73; Y. Hirschfeld, 'Deir Qal'a,' 155-189. For a recent survey of the area of Samaritan settlement in Palestine during this period, see: S. Dar, 'Archaeological Aspects of Samaritan

this property could not have come at a worse time, further exacerbating the strain placed on Jerusalem's episcopal treasury as it struggled to fund the reconstruction of churches and monasteries damaged by the rebels amid their descent.

For Cyril, the targeting of these symbolic structures was deliberate, a concerted campaign of destruction fuelled by religious hatred. The *Life of Sabas* accused the Samaritans of desecrating countless holy sites, even murdering Maronas, the bishop of Neapolis, together with his clergy.⁵⁵⁴ We ought, of course, to treat such claims with care, if we are to avoid a reading which only plays to prejudices of our authors.⁵⁵⁵ But the *Life* provides a remarkably detailed picture of the difficulties posed by the episode to Peter's administration. Even allowing for rhetorical embellishment, the range of material support allegedly requested from the court on the bishop's behalf is startling.

Not content with having secured the tax remission sought by his episcopal patron, Sabas was said to remain at court for a number of days, pressing for the adoption of a range of measures aimed to alleviate the dire conditions endured by the 'diminished and ravaged Christians of Palestine.'⁵⁵⁶ Cyril claimed that the holy man successfully lobbied Justinian for funds to rebuild the region's damaged religious institutions. But Peter had apparently also envisaged that additional resources might be diverted from the fisc to underpin a variety of other projects, whose cost the episcopate could no longer bear. As one of his appeals, Sabas allegedly asked the emperor to endow a hospital in Jerusalem 'for the care of sick foreigners.' In the same meeting, Cyril claimed that his hero beseeched Justinian to ensure the completion of the Church of the Mother of God in the city, whose foundations had originally been laid by the bishop Elias. It seems clear that both requests were intended to help rebalance the See's accounts. Construction of the pilgrim hospital especially was expected to save Jerusalem's bishop a small fortune. No doubt owing in large part to the sheer number of visitors which the city was accustomed to receive, Cyril claimed that the court thought it necessary to allocate this new foundation the considerable sum of 1850 *solidi* a year, simply to pay for its upkeep.⁵⁵⁷ Triumphantly unveiled in 543, the *Nea Ekklesia* of the *Theotokos*, meanwhile, would serve as a potent public symbol of the emperor's generosity to the 'Holy Places,' celebrated by an elaborate dedicatory inscription and eulogised in Procopius' *Buildings*.⁵⁵⁸ But if the *Life* is correct, then Justinian had only ever become

Research in Israel,' in D.M. Gwynn and S. Bangert (eds.), *Religious Diversity in Late Antiquity*, (Leiden 2010), 189-200.

⁵⁵⁴ *V. Sab.* 70 (ed. Schwartz, pp. 172-173).

⁵⁵⁵ On the all-pervasive anti-Semitism of Palestinian Christian literature in this period, building in the seventh century, see: D.M. Olster, *Roman Defeat, Christian Response, and the Literary Construction of the Jew*, (Philadelphia, PA 1994); Averil Cameron, 'Blaming the Jews: The Seventh-Century Invasions of Palestine in Context,' in *Travaux et Memoires* 14, *Melanges Gilbert Dagron*, (Paris 2002), 57-78.

⁵⁵⁶ *V. Sab.* 72 (ed. Schwartz, p. 175.11-12).

⁵⁵⁷ *V. Sab.* 73 (ed. Schwartz, p. 177).

⁵⁵⁸ Procopius, *De Aedificiis* 5.6 (ed. Haury, repr. Dewing, pp. 342-348). For a detailed guide to the archaeology of the site, see: Y. Tsafir, 'Procopius and the Nea Church in Jerusalem,' *Antiquité Tardive* 8 (2000), 149-164. The Church is also famously shown on the Madaba Map.

involved in its affairs in response to the emergency which the revolt had created in Jerusalem's episcopal finances.

Of the 1300 pounds of gold coin which the emperor had allegedly remitted from Palestine's tax obligations, Cyril recorded that virtually all (1200) were deducted from the dues owed by Jerusalem's province, Palestine I, so parlous was the state of its economy.⁵⁵⁹ In order 'to rescue the bishops,' the *Life* notes that Justinian had appointed two local churchmen to tour the area, inspecting claims of damage to churches and monasteries and calculating the cost of restoring them, now to be raised from the public purse, or else from the sale of Samaritan property overseen by the *comes* Stephanus.⁵⁶⁰ Not even this, however, would seem to have satisfied the financial demands placed on Peter and his staff. As a final request, Cyril reported that Sabas had asked the emperor for 1000 solidi to pay for the construction of a fortress (*kastron*) to be positioned at the mouth of the Wadi Kidron as a defence for the Great Laura against any repeat of the violence of 529.⁵⁶¹ The *Life*, however, complains that this money had been misappropriated by the See. The Sabaite abbot Melitas was accused of handing it to Peter through 'disinterest or naivety' in economic matters.⁵⁶² To Cyril's obvious dismay, the bishop had neglected to return it.

We cannot externally verify the figures presented here. But that the Church of Jerusalem looked to the court for urgent financial support in the early 530s is not in doubt. Even ignoring the fanciful dialogue between Sabas and Justinian related in the *Life*, the broader, lamentable state of Palestine's Church economy in these years would seem to be confirmed by further details contained in the emperor's legislation. The previous chapter briefly referred to *Novels* 40, the law issued in 538 to permit the Church of the Resurrection to alienate ecclesiastical property. The purpose of this ruling, as we saw, was to raise additional capital for the See of Jerusalem by enabling the sale of housing owned by the Church to wealthy laymen. The *Novel's* preface, however, contains an invaluable summary of the circumstances which led Peter to seek this special dispensation. Justinian, as we saw, couched the decision to grant it in the language of Christian charity, citing the 'enormous expenses' incurred by Jerusalem in tending to the needs of an 'infinite' number of pilgrims.⁵⁶³ But the emperor could not deny that he had also been compelled to act by more immediate concerns: namely the looming crisis brought about in Palestine by Peter's struggle to overcome his Church's mounting debts.

Justinian, as we saw, had previously enlisted the help of the Constantinopolitan Church treasurer Eusebius to spearhead efforts to reform Jerusalem's episcopal finances, purchasing the housing as a

⁵⁵⁹ *V. Sab.* 75 (ed. Schwartz, pp. 181-182).

⁵⁶⁰ *V. Sab.* 73 (ed. Schwartz, p. 177.9-10).

⁵⁶¹ *V. Sab.* 72 (ed. Schwartz, p. 175).

⁵⁶² *V. Sab.* 83 (ed. Schwartz, p. 188).

⁵⁶³ *J. Nov.* 40. preface (ed. Schoell and Kroll, p. 259).

means of sustaining the See and its dependents.⁵⁶⁴ He justified its sale in 538 by noting that the income derived had now come to exceed the original investment, prompting the Church's creditors to demand their money back. In response, Justinian claimed that Eusebius had hit upon a potentially-lucrative solution. The churchman, it was claimed, had 'unexpectedly found another means of providing the money,' by realising that the properties he had acted to secure, if sold, would find a ready market among the wealthy, who 'wish to buy, at great cost, housing belonging to the Church, so as to reap the benefit of living [in close proximity to the Holy Places],' but had been made wary of such arrangements by the emperor's other rulings.⁵⁶⁵ The *Novel* presents the disposal of the housing as too great an opportunity to miss. But what its drafters struggled to explain was the urgency with which the Jerusalem episcopate had sought to reorder its finances, still less the palace's willingness to sanction it. What the law presents as fortuitous coincidence must have been, in reality, an act of economic necessity. The court was surely loathed to undermine its own stringent rules on the use of religious property, enshrined only three years earlier in *Novels* 7.

These complex negotiations formed the backdrop to the events recorded in *Acts* of 536, in which Palestine's religious leadership had played so conspicuous a part. It is tempting to think that the search for a favourable outcome to Jerusalem's renewed appeals for assistance may have had some bearing on the depiction of its position both at the time, and as later projected in the texts. For the monks and priests in Peter's entourage, however, the prospect of their bishop's return to solvency was not the only material incentive to applaud the imperial authorities. Aside from the allowances made in *Novels* 40, our sources credit Justinian, in addition, with a programme of direct state investment in the material fabric of the region's holy sites of a kind not seen since the reign of Constantine I.

Much has been made of the emperor's generosity in this regard. It has become common to depict Justinian as responsible for a pronounced mid-sixth century spike in the number of churches and monasteries founded or repaired in areas under Peter's jurisdiction. In identifying three phases in the construction of Palestine's Late Antique Christian institutions, John Binns, for instance, has argued that 'by far the most productive' was precipitated by Justinian's accession.⁵⁶⁶ An exhaustive epigraphic survey by Leah Di Segni has marked the decades after 527 as the apogee of all religious building activity in the 'Byzantine' Holy Land.⁵⁶⁷ Following Hirschfeld, the idea that Justinian should be thanked for rejuvenating local ascetic culture especially has found particular favour among archaeologists, with

⁵⁶⁴ Ibid. (ed. Schoell and Kroll, p. 259.16-21): ἴσχυσε τριακοσίων ὀγδοήκοντα χρυσίου λιτρῶν ὀνήσασθαι πρόσδοον τριάκοντα μικρῶ πλείον ἢ ἔλαττον χρυσίου λιτρῶν, τὰ μὲν τῶν χρημάτων ἀθροίσας εὐσεβῶς, τὰ δὲ καὶ δανείσασθαι παρασκευάσας τοὺς θεοφιλεστάτους οἰκονόμους τῆς εἰρημένης ἁγίας Αναστασεως.

⁵⁶⁵ *J. Nov.* 40.1.25-26 (ed. Schoell and Kroll, p. 259): ἐδίδαξέ τε ἡμᾶς, ὡς οἱ δανεισται τὰ οἰκεία λαβεῖν ἐπιζητοῦσι, καὶ ὡς ἕτερον εὔρε παράδοξον πόρον...ἐπιθυμοῦσιν ὀνήσασθαι οἰκήσεις ἐκκλησιαστικὰς χρυσίου πολλοῦ.

⁵⁶⁶ Binns, *Ascetics and Ambassadors*, p. 89.

⁵⁶⁷ L. Di Segni, 'Epigraphic documentation of building in the provinces of Palaestina and Arabia, 4th-7th c.,' in J.H. Humphrey (ed.), *The Roman and Byzantine Near East II: Some Recent Archaeological Research*, *Journal of Roman Archaeology Supplementary Series* 31, (Portsmouth, RI 1999), 149-178.

recent surveys having unearthed a range of structures, such as the vast cistern of Bir el-‘Uneiziya, close to Monastery of Chariton at Souka, or the ‘fortress monastery’ of Deir Qala in western Samaria, whose monumental size and high-quality construction are typically seen as further evidence of imperial patronage.⁵⁶⁸ We might hesitate to endorse some of these findings, let alone any argument which posits the Justinianic era as an ascetic ‘golden age.’ The scale of building work in evidence may simply reflect the breadth of destruction wrought by either the Samaritans, or any other of the various natural or political disasters visited upon Palestine subsequently. With the promulgation of *Novels* 40 a resurgence in activity by private religious patrons is attested, visible in the elaborate donor inscriptions of the ‘Monastery of Lady Mary’ at Scythopolis, or in the remarkable floors mosaics of the Kissufim church in the Negev.⁵⁶⁹ These reservations notwithstanding, however, there can be little doubt that the court’s contribution was also substantial. It was the monks, moreover, who appear to have gained the most from its support.

Cyril’s depiction of Justinian’s liberal sponsorship of Sabas and his followers may be suspect. But the majority of the building works in Palestine securely attributed to the emperor were indeed monastic. Procopius gave a list of fourteen monasteries in the region of Jerusalem ‘restored’ on imperial instructions.⁵⁷⁰ Thirteen others were said to have received minor improvements courtesy of the court, mainly in the form of new wells. Aside from the *Nea*, itself home to a newly-established community of holy men, arguably the flagship Justinianic project in all of Palestine’s three provinces was the present-day Monastery of St Catherine’s on Mount Sinai, completed after 548.⁵⁷¹ Without wishing to overstate the reach of imperial resources, it seems clear that these benefactions, in turn, represented only part of a wider influx of funding arriving from Constantinople. Other figures at court soon followed the emperor’s lead. Prominent among them were a group of imperial women whom Cyril claimed had hosted Sabas in 531. The *Life of Sabas* records that the empress Eudocia’s great-granddaughter Anicia Juliana had bequeathed a portion of her estate to establish a monastery on the Jordan Plain as a resting home for her household eunuchs.⁵⁷² With echoes of Eudocia’s own fraught journey to the Holy Land a century earlier, the text notes that Anastasia, the wife of Pompey, a nephew of the emperor Anastasius

⁵⁶⁸ Hirschfeld, *Judean Desert Monasteries*, pp. 63-65; idem, ‘Deir Qala,’; Magen, ‘The Monastery of Martyrius,’ 175-185. We might also note that the tallest point of the present-day monastery of Mar Saba is known as the ‘Justinian Tower.’ An inscription attributing its construction to the emperor appears to date to a later period, but it may be possible that its name serves as a folk memory of his generosity. See: Patrich, *Sabas*, pp. 63-67.

⁵⁶⁹ G.M. Fitzgerald, *A Sixth Century Monastery at Beth-Shan*, (Philadelphia 1939); R. Cohen, ‘A Byzantine Church and its mosaic floors at Kissufim,’ in Tsafir (ed.), *Ancient Churches Revealed*, 277-282. The Kissufim mosaics show two female benefactors, named as Kaliora and ‘the lady Silthous’ liberally dispensing gold coin to pay for the church’s construction.

⁵⁷⁰ Procopius, *De Aedificiis* 5.9 (ed. Haury, repr. Dewing, pp. 356-358).

⁵⁷¹ Ibid. 5.8 (ed. Dewing, pp.); I. Ševčenko, ‘The Early Period of the Sinai Monastery in the light of its Inscriptions,’ *DOP* 20 (1966), 255-264.

⁵⁷² *V. Sab.* 69 (ed. Schwartz, p. 171).

executed by Justinian following the Nika Riot in 532, had left the capital to live as a nun in a cell on the Mount of Olives, presumably bringing with her further sums to be devoted to ascetic activities.⁵⁷³

In theory, the demand for such support ought to have diminished over time. But in Palestine, the opposite was more likely true. Having overhauled the See of Jerusalem's accounts in 538, that same year, in *Novels* 67, Justinian strengthened earlier rulings mandating bishops to ensure that every monastery in their diocese was provided with a regular income, sufficient to its needs.⁵⁷⁴ The litany of problems faced by Peter, even after the measures contained in *Novels* 40 had been unveiled, however, make it difficult to believe that Palestine's primate could ever have been reasonably expected to fulfil this obligation. The monastic communities described by the Desert hagiographers were large, the apparatus needed to maintain them considerable and, above all, expensive. Theodore described the Monastery of Theodosius in the decades following its founder's death in 529 as a vast complex, incorporating four chapels, two infirmaries, and 'workshops of every kind.'⁵⁷⁵ The Sabaites, as we know, administered a sprawling monastic fiefdom which encompassed not only their *laurae* and cenobia, but hostels and guesthouses in Jerusalem and Jericho as well. The New Laura, we are told, was not of the same scale. Hirschfeld even saw the 'modest' techniques employed in its construction as evidence of a philosophical rift with the Sabaites, whose material culture he judged to be significantly richer. Nevertheless, the community established by Sabas' detractors was large. We may recall that Cyril claimed that no fewer than one hundred and twenty monks were needed simply to re-occupy the site in 555 to deter its former residents from returning. Whilst investigating the Laura's remains at Bir el Wa'ar, Hirschfeld himself announced the discovery of a sizeable complex of buildings, cisterns, and farming plots, however crudely-fashioned he ultimately judged these structures to be.⁵⁷⁶ For such institutions, the philanthropy of the court must have held a special appeal as the economic aftershocks of the revolt lingered. Over time, it may even have come to represent a vital lifeline amid the renewed chaos which accompanied the first wave of the 'Justinianic Plague,' whose terrible local impact was recently reaffirmed in a study by Nancy Benovitz.⁵⁷⁷

Benovitz' analysis of dated Palestinian epitaphs has recorded a sharp rise in deaths to coincide with the advent of the plague in 541. Procopius reported that, by the time the disease reached Constantinople a

⁵⁷³ Both women were allegedly part of a circle cultivated by Sabas during his stay in the capital: *V. Sab.* 53 (ed. Schwartz, p. 145). Anastasia was also a correspondent of Hormisdas: *Collectio Avellana* 157, 165, 180 (ed. Guenther, pp.); *PLRE* 2:76-77, 'Anastasia 3.'

⁵⁷⁴ *J. Nov.* 67 (ed. Schoell and Kroll, pp. 344-347).

⁵⁷⁵ Theodore of Petra, *V. Theod.* (ed. Usener, pp. 34, 40-41, 45-46). Cyril's *Life of Theodosius* attributed the improvement of these buildings after 529 to funds supplied by the brother of the monastery's abbot, Sophronius, the patrician Mamas, who had made his fortune in Constantinople as a senior palace functionary: Cyril, *V. Theod.* 5 (ed. Schwartz, p. 240).

⁵⁷⁶ Hirschfeld, *Judean Desert Monasteries*, pp. 36-38; Idem, 'Physical Structure of the New Laura,'. Hirschfeld counted over forty cells among the Laura's remains, though it seems that many of these could have accommodated several monks at a time.

⁵⁷⁷ N. Benovitz, 'The Justinianic Plague: evidence from the dated Greek epitaphs of Byzantine Palestine and Arabia,' *JRA* 27 (2014), 487-498.

year later, ‘all mankind was nearly eradicated.’⁵⁷⁸ Peter Sarris has identified the drastic response of the imperial government in a range of legal and monetary reforms initiated in its wake.⁵⁷⁹ Mischa Meier has highlighted the disease’s enduring cultural legacy, visible, he suggests, in the growing religiosity and ‘liturgification’ of Roman society.⁵⁸⁰ If some doubt the severity of the outbreak, in Palestine, at least, symptoms of its power are ubiquitous.⁵⁸¹ By their own admission, the region’s monks were as vulnerable to its immediate effects as anybody else. Cyril records that, during the panic that followed, his hero Cyriacus was compelled to return to the monastery of Chariton to reassure brothers traumatised by the ‘great and terrifying mortality’ outside.⁵⁸² At Gaza, Barsanuphius received a letter from the hermits of Thawatha, begging him to protect them by standing as a barrier between the living and dead.⁵⁸³ More significant for our purposes, however, is that with the spread of the disease, any prospect of a short-term revival in Palestine’s fortunes faded. In July 536, a month after the conclusion of the Synod of Constantinople, Justinian, in *Novels* 103, had ordered the radical overhaul of civil and military government in the region, in the hope that the apparatus of state would prove to be more resilient in future.⁵⁸⁴ These measures, of course, had not anticipated the arrival of a pandemic to claim the lives of somewhere between a third and a half of the population.

With no respite from such misfortune in sight, the spectre of economic misery haunted Palestine for the duration of the Justinianic era. As Karl Leo Noethlichs has shown, the continued fragility of local commerce is attested in imperial law as late as the early 570s.⁵⁸⁵ The intervening decades had seen further agitation by the Samaritans. The court, however, unlike previously, proved unable to respond to

⁵⁷⁸ Procopius, *De Bellis* 2.22 (ed. Haury, repr. Dewing, 1.450).

⁵⁷⁹ P. Sarris, ‘The Justinianic Plague: Origins and Effect,’ *Continuity and Change* 17 (2002), 169-182, 178.

⁵⁸⁰ M. Meier, ‘The ‘Justinianic Plague:’ The economic consequences of the pandemic in the eastern Roman empire and its cultural and religious effects,’ *Early Medieval Europe* 24 (2016), 267-292, esp. 288-290.

⁵⁸¹ Jean Durliat and Clive Foss, among others, have argued that there is little in the wider archaeological record of the sixth-century East to match the apocalyptic imagery of the plague found in our literary sources: J. Durliat, ‘La peste du VI^e siècle: Pour un nouvel examen des sources byzantines,’ in V. Kravari, C. Morrison, and J. Lefort, (eds.), *Hommes et richesses dans l’empire byzantin*, (Paris 1989-1991), 107-119; cf. Y. Tsafir and G. Foerster, ‘Urbanism at Scythopolis-Bet Shean in the fourth to seventh centuries,’ *DOP* 51 (1997), 85-146; H. Kennedy, ‘Justinianic Plague in Syria and the Archaeological Record,’ in L.K. Little (ed.), *Plague and the End of Antiquity: The Pandemic of 541-750*, (Cambridge 2007), 87-98, 92. See also the famously moving accounts of Evagrius and John of Ephesus: Evagrius, *HE* (ed. Bidez and Parmentier, pp.); John of Ephesus, *HE* 3 (ed. Brooks).

⁵⁸² *V. Cyr.* 10 (ed. Schwartz, p. 229.1-4): ποιήσας τοίνυν εἰς Σουσακεῖμ ἔτη ἑπτὰ ἐν ταῖς ἡμέραις τῆς μεγίστης καὶ φοβερωτάτης θνήσεως οἱ τῆς λαύρας τοῦ Σουκᾶ πατέρες τὸν ἐπικείμενον φόβον δεδιότες κατήλθον ὁμοθυμαδὸν μετὰ λιτῆς καὶ πολλῆ τῆ παρακλήσει χρηζάμενοι ἀνήγαγον αὐτὸν ἀπο Σουσακεῖμ εἰς τὴν λαύραν.

⁵⁸³ Barsanuphius and John, *Resp.* (ed. Neyt, pp.); For discussion, see: Hevelone-Harper, *Disciples*, p. 52.

⁵⁸⁴ *J. Nov.* 103 (ed. Schoell and Kroll, pp. 496-500); P. Mayerson, ‘Justinian’s Novel 103 and the Reorganization of Palestine,’ *BASOR* 269 (1988), 65-71. The first holder of this office was one Stephanus, who might perhaps be identified with the *comes* mentioned above: *Ibid.* 70. On Stephanus, see also: K.G. Holum, ‘Flavius Stephanus, Proconsul of Palestine,’ *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 63 (1986), 231-239. Authority was placed in the hands of a newly-created proconsul based at Caesarea, who assumed full tax-raising powers and the command of a special, ‘auxiliary’ force of troops specifically tasked with preserving public order.

⁵⁸⁵ K.L. Noethlichs, ‘Jews, Heretics or Useful Farm Workers? Samaritans in Late Antique Imperial Legislation,’ in J. Drinkwater and B. Salway, *Wolf Liebescheutz Reflected: Essays presented by colleagues, friends and students*, *Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies Supplement* 91 (London 2007), 57-65.

this recalcitrance with force. Such leniency, Noethlichs argues, is proof of a stalled recovery; it seems clear that the authorities could no longer afford to antagonise a group whose labour was simply now too valuable.⁵⁸⁶ Even a second revolt in 556, staged in partnership with the Jews, met with little of the heavy-handed official response seen in the aftermath of 529.⁵⁸⁷ It would be hard to overstate the sensitivity of Christian institutions to these troubles. The monasteries of the Desert, as we have seen, were no exception. A close examination of the texts produced by Cyril and his contemporaries finds a heavy emphasis placed on questions of monastery finance. Betraying little of the embarrassment with which it was customary for ascetics to broach such matters, theirs was a world in which monasteries were regularly shown to fail through lack of funds, where the means of support made available to their members were carefully catalogued for posterity.⁵⁸⁸ The desire by monks to preserve their way of life would seem to account for some of the fervent local acclaim which greeted Justinian at a time when the emperor, through his patronage, had emerged as a pre-eminent supporter of the Palestinian Church. It now remains to establish what, if anything, specifically may have linked the contest for Constantinople's affections to the Second Origenist Controversy.

V. The Rise of the Palestinian Rigorist

For this, we must return for a final time to the *Acts* of 536. Whatever Cyril's claims to the contrary, it seems clear that the council held in the imperial city that year marked a seminal moment in the development of antipathy between the 'Origenists' and their opponents. It was only afterwards, the *Life of Sabas* relates, that the first public allegations of Origenism were aired. Cyril's suggestion that the controversy had already been raging for at least four years previously seems unlikely. As Andrew Louth has shown, the *Acts* make no mention of it, throwing into question the Sabaitic version of events.⁵⁸⁹ Given that among those present in Constantinople were several figures later named as part of the Origenist high command, it seems extraordinary, as Louth notes, that this subject should never have arisen at any point in the subsequent course of discussion. Cyril, we know, was especially resentful of the honours granted to Theodore Ascidas and his colleagues following their appearance in the capital. Perhaps less obvious is that the *Life's* depiction of the membership of the Origenist movement as a whole reads almost like a roll call of the Desert monks in attendance for the synod's proceedings.

Cyril, as we saw above, had spoken of a broad coalition of support for the Origenists centred on the New Laura, and Monastery of Martyrius, and the Laura of Firminus. The attendance lists preserved in

⁵⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁸⁷ When Justin II threatened a return to the persecution of an earlier period in *Novels* 145 of 572, he was specifically forced to moderate his plans to exempt those Samaritans still working the land: *J. Nov.* 144 (ed. Schoell and Kroll, pp. 709-710)

⁵⁸⁸ In Cyril's case, amounting to no fewer than forty-five references to gifts by thirty-seven individual monastic patrons. See Appendix A.

⁵⁸⁹ A. Louth, 'The Collectio Sabbaitica,' 1173.

the *Acts* appear to confirm that these institutions, between them, supplied the majority of the monastic delegation from the Desert admitted during the council's first session. Seemingly corroborating the *Life's* account, Leontius and Ascidas are listed as two of five New Laurites 'resident in the city.' Five monks from the Monastery of Martyrius are named, led by their abbot Domitian, presumably the last of the three Origenist leaders identified by Cyril as future bishop of Ancyra.⁵⁹⁰ The Sabaites, by comparison, were poorly-represented. The *Acts* record that only two had arrived in Constantinople, the same number of delegates attributed to Firminus' laura and the 'Monastery of the Towers' on the Jordan Plain. Cassianus, Sabas' successor as abbot of the Great Laura appears with only one companion, a monk named Sabbatius. Though four monks of Theodosius are also found in the lists, the 'Origenist' monasteries appear to have dominated throughout. It was their leaders, of course, who benefited most from the synod, departing in receipt of high Church office. The *Acts*, however, seem to show that the Sabaites' rivals made use of their numerical advantage from the very beginning. In a move that was sure to raise eyebrows in the Great Laura, the text presents Leontius as the leader of the entire Palestinian delegation, introduced as 'topotērētēs of the whole Desert.'⁵⁹¹ Cassianus, meanwhile, appears to have been demoted from his customary rank of archimandrite, acknowledged in the *Acts* only as the 'priest of the laura of Sabas.'⁵⁹²

To the Sabaites, who regarded the New Laura as subject to their authority, this reversal must have been galling. Just as vexing, surely, however, were the material advantages which their former brethren and their allies had obtained through the aggressive self-promotion seen above. As the New Laurites came to power at court, assuming command of major Sees both in and outside Palestine, the Monastery of Martyrius underwent a dramatic transformation. The result was to create the largest complex of its kind in the region, luxuriously appointed in materials normally beyond the means of ascetic communities, among its facilities a refectory decorated with Proconnesian marble and, remarkably, a bathhouse. For Yitzhak Magen and Rina Talgam, who excavated the site in the early 1980s, funding for this expansion could only have come from one source: Justinian. Whether or not we accept this argument, the boon enjoyed by the major players at the synod, having captured the emperor's attention, was presumably readily apparent to all. Could jealousy be partly to blame for the subsequent decision to smear the 'winners' of 536 as heretics? What the *Life* portrays as the discovery of an 'Origenist' conspiracy, at times, seems more like an effort to discredit a group whose lucrative newfound influence at court the Sabaites fiercely resented.

That Cyril and his brothers were not above such tactics is illustrated amply by their past behaviour. We saw in the previous chapter how Sabas and his followers had actively sought to control the development of the local monastic movement, channelling its growth through the creation of a Sabaite 'federation,'

⁵⁹⁰ ACO 3.130.70,81-83.

⁵⁹¹ ACO 3.130.24: Λεόντιος μοναχὸς καὶ ἡγούμενος καὶ τοποτηρητῆς τῆς ἐρήμου πάσης.

⁵⁹² ACO 3.130.20: Κασσιανὸς πρεσβύτερος τῆς λαύρας τοῦ μακαρίου Σάββα.

whilst ruthlessly suppressing any community founded as an offshoot of the Great Laura contrary to its founder's wishes. This project, which relied upon their leader's status as 'archimandrite of the anchorites,' had shown little regard for the common custom whereby charismatic monks would normally seek to strike out on their own, abandoning the confines of the mother-house to cultivate a reputation as teachers. Having previously followed this path himself, Sabas repeatedly denied it to others. The *Life of Sabas*' subsequent comments on Theodosius show the lengths to which the holy man's disciples were prepared to go to target more established rivals. In each case, the ordinary rhythms of ascetic life became a source of angst for an order preoccupied with safeguarding its resources.

Our sources seem to imply that similarly mercenary considerations were in play with the appointment of Eustochius as bishop of Jerusalem in 552. For all the talk of restoring the Holy City's orthodoxy, for its new bishop, Cyril and his brothers had selected a candidate whose only qualification, it seems, was financial acumen, honed during a career spent as financial administrator of the See of Alexandria.⁵⁹³ Clearly, Palestine's new primate was no enthusiast for the finer points of Chalcedonian doctrine. In 561, as Michel van Esbroeck discovered, Justinian rebuked him for continuing the anti-Chalcedonian practice of celebrating Christ's Nativity on January 6th.⁵⁹⁴ Tellingly, however, the Sabaites' nominee was most derided by other monks. The broader unpopularity of Eustochius' rule among ascetics was visibly linked to his heavy-handed treatment of the Great Laura's competitors. The immediate, material dimension of this struggle for supremacy was reemphasised with remarkable clarity in 555. Having wrested control of the episcopate from the 'Origenists,' the Sabaites, as we know, would use their power to physically divest the New Laura of its land and possessions, promptly enriching themselves in the process. Cyril lauded these dubious gains, boasting that, '[God] has driven them [the *nealauritai*] from our presence and enabled us to take up residence in their quarters. He has awarded the fruits of their labour to us.'⁵⁹⁵

Details supplied in the *Ecclesiastical History* of Evagrius Scholasticus suggest that this incident was part of a wider campaign. Though clearly the most egregious of the abuses committed during the Sabaites' hegemony, the actions approved by Eustochius at the New Laura find a parallel elsewhere in the text's complaints of intimidation by the bishop directed towards the Monastery of Seridos in Gaza. Evagrius claimed that Eustochius had dispatched troops to Gaza to break open the cell of the hermit Barsanuphius, who had not been seen for a number of years, but whose famous letters of advice

⁵⁹³ *V. Sab.* 90 (ed. Schwartz, p. 198).

⁵⁹⁴ On this episode, see: M. van Esbroeck, 'La lettre de l'empereur Justinien sur l'Annonciation et la Noël en 561,' *AB* 86 (1968), 351-371; idem, 'Encore la lettre de Justinien,' *AB* 87 (1969), 442-444. As van Esbroeck notes, there was a clear Christological dimension to this difference in practice, with the custom of marking the Nativity on the date of the Epiphany a statement of the essential unity between the human and divine natures in Christ. Chalcedonians, by contrast, were expected to celebrate the birth of the human Jesus separately on December 25th.

⁵⁹⁵ *V. Sab.* 90 (ed. Schwartz, pp. 200.12-14): ἐξέβαλεν αὐτοὺς ἀπὸ προσώπου ἡμῶν καὶ κατεσκήρωσεν ἡμᾶς ἐν τοῖς σκηνώμασιν αὐτῶν καὶ τοὺς πόνους αὐτῶν κατεκληρονόμησεν ἡμᾶς.

continued to be issued to petitioners. The bishop was said to have accused the ‘Great Old Man’s’ disciples of writing these themselves.⁵⁹⁶ Efforts to prove this claim were dashed, the text relates, by the appearance of a miraculous fireball which prevented Eustochius’ henchmen from gaining entry to the cave where Barsanuphius was said to reside. But behind this story lurks the clear implication of another attempt to justify the harassment, and possible intended dispossession, of a prominent community of Palestinian ascetics on grounds of alleged misconduct.

If such was the intention of the broader Sabaite crusade against Origenism, then the charges levelled against Leontius, Ascidas, Domitian et al were seemingly well-pitched. By invoking the ghost of Origen, their Sabaite accusers were able to exploit imperial anxieties in their unusual choice of indictment. Booth has recently related the hardening of attitudes towards ‘Origenist’ beliefs in Palestine during the Justinianic era to the arrival in Jerusalem in ca. 510 of Stephen bar Sudaili, a follower of Evagrius of Pontus condemned by Philoxenus of Mabbug for expounding many of the same beliefs later credited by Cyril to Leontius.⁵⁹⁷ In Stephen’s case, however, this Evagrian inheritance extended beyond the notional pursuit of greater spiritual freedom highlighted above, manifesting itself instead in a marked suspicion of participation by ascetics in the formal disciplinary structures of the Church, as represented by the receipt of the Eucharist from clerics. Booth detects a response to this intransigence in the interest shown by the Palestinian bishop John of Scythopolis in the works of Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, whose *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* had argued that true spiritual perfection could only be attained by monks who acknowledged the unquestionable, superior authority of bishops and priests.⁵⁹⁸ Cyril, as we have seen, was anxious to stress that the Sabaites, of course, had always assiduously respected this principle. But in appearing to suggest that their opponents did not, the *Lives*, here again, seem to pitch their complaints to an imperial regime that had only recently issued stringent new rulings on precisely this subject. In this context, for one Chalcedonian monastic order to accuse another of ‘Origenism’ might be seen imply more than heterodoxy. It was also, in effect, an allegation of opposition to the entire vision for the ascetic life outlined in the *Novels*.

The hostile reaction of contemporaries to the brazenness with which the Sabaites had pursued this agenda is revealed in the events of the following decade. Not only did rival saints’ *Lives* now appear contesting their claims to ascetic pre-eminence; in 563 or 564, roughly five years after Cyril’s account ended, Eustochius was deposed and the ‘Origenist’ Macarius returned to the episcopal throne.⁵⁹⁹ The later *Chronicle* of Theophanes attributed Eustochius’ downfall specifically to his role in sanctioning the Sabaite takeover of the New Laura.⁶⁰⁰ Evagrius, writing in the 590s for Gregory, the patriarch of

⁵⁹⁶ Evagrius, *HE* 4.33 (ed. Bidez and Parmentier, p. 182).

⁵⁹⁷ Booth, *Crisis of Empire*, pp. 24-26; Philoxenus of Mabbug, *Letter to Abraham and Orestes*, (ed. and trans. Frothingham).

⁵⁹⁸ Booth, *Crisis of Empire*, pp. 25-32.

⁵⁹⁹ Evagrius, *HE* 4.39 (ed. Bidez and Parmentier, p. 190); Victor of Tunnuna, 168; M. van Esbroeck, ‘L’homélie de Pierre de Jérusalem et la fin de l’origénisme palestinien en 551,’ *OCP* 51 (1985), 33-59, 57-59.

⁶⁰⁰ Theophanes, *Chron.* 6060 (ed. de Boor, p. 242)

Antioch, had referred to this event without ever suggesting that doctrine had played a part in Jerusalem's decision. Though once a desert monk himself, his episcopal patron does not appear to have corrected him. Local church and monastic figures would seem to have responded by using the Sabaites' own tactics against them, painting Eustochius as an obstacle to Justinian's latest theological reforms. Following a passage of Eustratius' *Life of Eutychius*, Ernst Stein argued that crucial to this latter campaign were the actions of an unnamed bishop of Joppa, who succeeded in persuading the emperor that Jerusalem's bishop was determined to frustrate his final scheme for unity over Chalcedon.⁶⁰¹

In the last years of his reign, Justinian had sought to divide the Council's opponents by seeking common ground with the followers of Julian of Halicarnassus, a leading anti-Chalcedonian theologian who had earlier gone into schism with Severus of Antioch over the doctrine of *aphartodocetism*, a belief in the total incorruptibility of Jesus' body. This idea, borne of the broader debate over theopaschitism, was one which the 'Severans' rejected, but whose reception served to reemphasise the essential closeness of the Chalcedonian and anti-Chalcedonian positions. As Justinian prepared to issue an edict upholding the Julianists' stance, his own bishops rebelled, leading to the deposition of Eutychius, the patriarch of Constantinople. Stein's view is that Eustochius' detractors exploited this crisis to dispose of their prelate as well. Elsewhere, though, we encounter the extraordinary claim that Eustochius, like Macarius before him, was actually indicted on charges of Origenism.⁶⁰² If this is true, then the very doctrinal slurs which the Sabaites had employed against their rivals for decades would seem to have come back to haunt them. In any case, we seem to find the language of religious controversy serve time and again as a political weapon, wielded by clerical and monastic parties vying for dominance amid the fraught conditions prevalent after 529.

From the religious politics of the mid-sixth century emerged the abiding *topos* of the Palestinian holy man as Chalcedonian rigorist. The writings of the Desert hagiographers served to cement this tradition, thought to have culminated a century later in the seditious activities of Sophronius and Maximus Confessor.⁶⁰³ Tales of their founders' illustrious exploits combined with present-day complaints over heresy to present the Desert monks as peerless guardians of orthodoxy. Even among scholars, this reputation persists. Flusin has spoken of a 'monachisme palestinien' defined as much by shared dyophysite theology, as by geography.⁶⁰⁴ Our authors' accounts, however, should serve as a reminder of the extent to which the official heresiological discourse of this period was open to abuse. If Justinian

⁶⁰¹ Eustratius, *Life of Eutychius* 33-36 (PG 89.2314-2316); Stein, *Histoire du bas empire*, 2.685:

⁶⁰² Nicephorus, *Breviarium* (ed. de Boor, p. 126); CCT 2.3.10-11. John of Ephesus claimed that Eustochius was eventually murdered by one of his slaves in ca. 580: John of Ephesus, *HE* 3.35 (ed. Brooks, *CSCO* 105, pp. 167-168).

⁶⁰³ We might note that even Maximus was later subject to accusations of 'Origenism,' made by the author of the hostile Syriac *Life of Maximus*, the monothelite George of Resh'aina. See: *Syriac Life of Maximus* (ed. Brock, p. 302); Flusin, *Anastase le Perse*, 2.53-54; P. Mueller-Jourdan, 'The Foundation of Origenist Metaphysics,' in P. Allen and B. Neil (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Maximus the Confessor*, (Oxford 2015), 149-163.

⁶⁰⁴ Flusin, *Anastase le Perse*, 2.59.

and his advisors were guilty of ‘reshaping’ what Price has termed the ‘malleable past’ of the Christological controversies for political reasons, so too were Cyril and his contemporaries.⁶⁰⁵ But whilst the emperor’s abiding goal remained one of lasting peace, in Palestine groups with an active interest in prolonging the continued disquiet over doctrine subverted it for their own gain. Their example serves as a powerful corrective to the view which sees the doctrinal controversies of Late Antiquity as elevated above ‘profane’ concerns, which balks at any suggestion of a role for social or material factors in determining their outcome. The history of relations between the Sabaites and New Laurites appears to show that, if anything, such considerations could even function as the mainstay of the intercommunal strife upon which these disputes were based. The theology in which the Desert monks had couched their quarrel, as we have seen, proved to be remarkably adaptive. More consistent were their spokesmen’s efforts to secure their orders’ future, prosecuted with whatever means they had at their disposal.

⁶⁰⁵ R.M. Price, ‘The Second Council of Constantinople (553) and the Malleable Past,’ in *Chalcedon in Context*, 117-133.

CHAPTER 5
 CONTROVERSY AND CALAMITY: DEBATING DOCTRINE ON THE EVE OF THE ISLAMIC
 CONQUESTS
 (614-636 CE)

In this final chapter, discussion of the Church economy's role in the Palestinian reception of Chalcedon arrives at its logical endpoint. Having traced the evolution of material responses to the Council during the tumultuous century that followed its convocation, it now remains to test whether attitudes had changed by the close of the Christian era, when the Eastern Empire in the Levant faltered militarily, inaugurating a settlement between secular and ecclesiastical power radically different to that which had gone before. The Arab conquests of the 630s marked a definitive break in the close relations with Constantinople that served to inform much of the doctrinal intrigue encountered in the course of this study, whilst also physically fragmenting a Christian *oikumene* upon whose unity the material success of the region's churches and monasteries had traditionally, partly relied. By this point, Palestine's religious establishment had already endured over two decades of war against another enemy, Sasanian Iran. In this febrile climate, public disagreement over Christology resurfaced yet again, itself a reflection of the existential challenges faced by the Empire and its subjects. And yet, this chapter will argue, even in these extraordinary circumstances, evidence emerges of behaviour familiar to us from the analysis above. In fact, it will suggest that, for some monastic communities, the urgent requirement to overcome these conditions gave rise to perhaps the strongest expressions we have seen of clerical and monastic disinterest in the theological debate surrounding Chalcedon beyond its temporal application.

I. Palestine and Doctrinal Politics in the Reign of Heraclius

The very final years of Roman rule in Palestine are arguably the best-studied of any in the centuries that followed the conversion of Constantine. The early-seventh century remains the subject of considerable attention among scholars interested, not only in the circumstances which led to the region's conquest by Persian and Arab invaders, but also the role of its ascetics in leading opposition to the religious policies of the embattled court of the emperor Heraclius. Discussion of the latter has generally focused upon the activities of what Phil Booth has called 'the Moschan circle,' the arch-Chalcedonian monastic clique led by John Moschus, his disciple Sophronius, and Sophronius' disciple, Maximus Confessor. Sophronius and Maximus were instrumental in frustrating efforts to promote the imperially-sponsored doctrines of *monenergism* and *monothelism*, conceived by Heraclius and his patriarch, Sergius of Constantinople, as a final Christological compromise between the official ecclesiastical hierarchy and its anti-Chalcedonian detractors. The emperor had already secured a series of startlingly successful

Church unions, restoring communion between factions long at odds over the Council's teachings.⁶⁰⁶ Neither Heraclius nor his successors, however, were ultimately able to successfully counter the dissent which Sophronius and Maximus incited against them.

The complex history of this, the last iteration of controversy over Chalcedon to grip a united Eastern Empire, is now well-known and I do not propose to offer a new analysis here of events recently, thoroughly surveyed by Booth, Marek Jankowiak, Jack Tannous, and Richard Price, among others.⁶⁰⁷ No study of the Late Antique Church in Palestine, however, can conclude without referring to the details of this struggle, whose outcome is commonly thought to confirm the region's status as an enduring focus of Chalcedonian fundamentalism.

In fact, Moschus and his successors spent most of their careers in exile from Palestine. As the political climate in the region deteriorated prior to the Persian invasion of 613, Moschus and Sophronius abandoned their posts at the Desert monastery of Theodosius for Egypt. The 610s found them resident in Alexandria, where they soon became attached to the court of the city's Chalcedonian patriarch, John the Almsgiver.⁶⁰⁸ Subsequent travels took in Cyprus, North Africa, and, eventually, Rome, where Moschus died in ca. 633, having recently completed his 'Spiritual Meadow,' or *Leimonarion*, a vast anthology of tales aiming to chronicle the diversity of ascetic life, as lived by contemporaries in Greece, Asia Minor, Egypt, and the Levant. Sophronius did eventually return to Palestine later that year to oversee his master's burial. On arriving in Jerusalem, however, his plans were delayed by the sudden appearance of a new threat: the conquering army of a nascent Islamic caliphate. In ca. 634, the elderly monk was recruited to serve as the city's bishop, a post he appears to have retained until his own death roughly four years later, having famously presided over Jerusalem's surrender to the forces of the Caliph Umar.⁶⁰⁹ For his part, Maximus, generally now identified as a native of Ḥesfin in the Golan, remained in the West, spending most of the next decades actively fuelling further ill-feeling between Constantinople and a staunchly dyothelete Papacy.⁶¹⁰

⁶⁰⁶ For these, now see: M. Jankowiak, 'Essai d'histoire politique du monothélisme à partir de la correspondance entre les empereurs byzantins, les patriarches de Constantinople et les papes de Rome,' Unpublished PhD thesis (Paris and Warsaw 2009), pp. 63-65, 75-79, 83.

⁶⁰⁷ J. Tannous, 'In Search of Monothelism,' *DOP* 68 (2014), 29-67; R. Price, 'Monothelism: A Heresy or a Form of Words?' *SP* 48 (2010), 221-232; idem. with P. Booth and C. Cubbitt, *The Acts of the Lateran Synod of 649*, (Liverpool 2014). See also: M. Jankowiak, 'The Invention of Dyophysitism,' *SP* 63 (2013) 335-342.

⁶⁰⁸ Whose exploits the two monks chronicled in a *Life* later adapted and supplemented by Leontius of Neapolis: H. Chadwick, 'John Moschus and his friend Sophronius the Sophist,' *JThS* (new series) 25 (1974), 50-51; C. Mango, 'A Byzantine Hagiographer at Work: Leontius of Neapolis,' in I. Hutter (ed.), *Byzanz under der Westen*, (Vienna 1984), 25-41; V. Déroche, *Études sur Léontios de Néapolis*, (Uppsala 1995), 37-95, 117-136.

⁶⁰⁹ Whether Umar arrived to receive the city's capitulation in person is disputed by our sources: Howard-Johnston, *Witnesses to a World Crisis*, p. 380; D.J. Sahas, 'The Demonizing Force of the Arab Conquests: The Case of Maximus (ca. 580-662) as a Political "Confessor,"' *Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinistik* 53 (2003), 97-116.

⁶¹⁰ These details of the holy man's origins are provided by the hostile, but seemingly more trustworthy Syrian *Life of Maximus*, though this text also claims that Maximus returned to the East following the Persian War. The

Already prior to his election as Patriarch, Sophronius had emerged as an outspoken critic of the Heraclian church unions. These had restored communion between Constantinople and the anti-Chalcedonians of Armenia, as well as the so-called ‘Nestorian’ Church of the East in Persia.⁶¹¹ In 629 or 630, the emperor had attempted, though ultimately failed, to reach agreement with the anti-Chalcedonian Patriarch of Antioch, Athanasius I Gammolo, ‘the camel driver.’⁶¹² Heraclius’ greatest diplomatic triumph, however, came in June 633 with the conclusion of a *Pact of Union* signed by representatives of the Chalcedonian and anti-Chalcedonian hierarchies in Egypt.⁶¹³ It was this event which seems to have spurred Sophronius into action. Sergius later recorded that Moschus’ disciple had intervened in an effort to disrupt proceedings at Alexandria and in the capital, voicing opposition to the monenergist language favoured by the *Pact’s* adherents, which spoke of Christ as possessing a ‘single operation’ (*mia energeia*), as a means of avoiding dispute as to whether he existed ‘in’ or ‘from’ two natures.⁶¹⁴

A subsequent agreement between Sergius and Sophronius led to the publication in August that year of the *Psēphos*, a document in which the patriarch forbade any further discussion of operation(s). Sophronius too appears to have temporarily agreed to hold his peace. But in the *Synodical Letter*, issued to mark his accession to the episcopate, Jerusalem’s new bishop specifically wrote to uphold two operations as a necessary corollary of the Chalcedonian Definition.⁶¹⁵ The *Syriac Life of Maximus* records that Sophronius was subsequently censured by his episcopal colleagues at a Church council held on Cyprus in 636.⁶¹⁶ Jankowiak has argued that from this gathering emerged the first draft of the *Ekthesis* issued by Sergius in 638, which repeated the *Psēphos’* prohibition of talk of operations, but spoke of Christ as possessing a single will (*thelēma*) instead.⁶¹⁷

This latter doctrine, monothelism, became the focus of an increasingly bitter schism between the palace and the Church in Rome, which had previously assented to monenergism. Under the influence of Maximus and his supporters, the position of the popes now moved to one of open defiance of imperial policy, culminating in the convocation of the Lateran Synod in 649, whose rulings anathematised any who adhered to the monothelete position. Maximus himself would seem to have been among the authors

later Greek *Life of Maximus*, by contrast, cast its subject as a Constantinopolitan aristocrat. See: Booth, *Crisis of Empire*, pp. 143-145.

⁶¹¹ Jankowiak, ‘Essai d’histoire politique,’ pp. 75-83; Booth, *Crisis of Empire*, pp. 200-202

⁶¹² For the dating of this episode, see: Jankowiak, ‘Essai d’histoire politique,’ p. 65.

⁶¹³ *Pact of Union*, (ed. Riedinger, p. 594); Jankowiak, ‘Essai d’histoire politique,’ p. 89.

⁶¹⁴ Sergius of Constantinople, *First Letter to Honorius*, (ed. Riedinger, p. 538). Though the extent to which monenergism itself actually served as the basis of these agreements is disputed. See: C. Lange, *Mia Energeia: Untersuchungen zur Einigungspolitik des Kaisers Heraclius und des Patriarchen Sergius von Constantinopel*, (Tübingen 2012), pp. 534-540, 616, 623-628; Cf. Jankowiak, ‘The Invention of Diophysitism,’ esp. 340-342.

⁶¹⁵ Sophronius, *Synodical Letter* 2.3 (ed. Allen, pp. 96-114).

⁶¹⁶ Described by Booth as a ‘quasi-ecumenical’ Council: Booth, *Crisis of Empire*, p. 239.

⁶¹⁷ Jankowiak, ‘Essai d’histoire politique,’ pp. 149-160; For the text of the *Ekthesis*, see: ACO (second series) 1.156-162.

of this synod's *Acts*, originally composed, as Rudolf Riedinger showed, in Greek.⁶¹⁸ In 647 or 648, Constans II attempted to reinstate the moratorium on doctrinal discussion via the publication of a new edict, the *Typos*.⁶¹⁹ But advocates of 'two wills' refused to be silenced, even after Maximus and his ally, Pope Martin, had been placed on trial in Constantinople. In 662, Sophronius' pupil received a sentence of mutilation and exile to Lazica, where a recalcitrant Maximus died shortly afterwards.⁶²⁰ Two more decades passed before the Constantinopolitan Church finally, officially condemned monothelitism at the Sixth Ecumenical Council, convened in the capital in November 680.

Scholars often note with surprise the speed with which these arguments came to subvert the centuries-old controversy over Chalcedon. By way of explanation, as Booth observes, many have emphasised the novelty of the doctrine espoused by Heraclius and his advisors, accused of conjuring the monenergist and monothelete formulae as a matter of political expediency.⁶²¹ In a radical departure from this widely-held belief, Tannous, following work by Sebastian Brock and Milka Levy-Rubin, recently advanced the opposite view: that monothelitism had until now represented the default position among Chalcedonians, and that it was, in fact, the dyotheletes who were guilty of innovation by challenging traditional orthodoxy.⁶²² He argues that this essential truth has been overlooked, thanks in part to the comprehensive destruction of monothelete texts in the aftermath of Constantinople III.

The discussion of 'operations' in Christ, at least, was nothing new. Though dyothelete leaders could only later summon sparse evidence of support for their position in the canon of the Church Fathers, on the subject of *energeia* patristic authors had had considerably more to say.⁶²³ As Booth has argued, the Heraclian court did not, therefore, 'invent' monenergism, though its members clearly seized upon the opportunity for a change of emphasis in the interminable debate over Chalcedon's legacy. Nor, as he has shown, were Sophronius, Maximus and their followers implacably opposed to this endeavour from the beginning. Their dissidence took shape only gradually, in response to what must rank as the real revolution of their time: the cataclysmic 'crisis of empire' to which both writers were witnesses. The disasters which beset Heraclius' reign appear to have invited speculation from some that God had withdrawn His protection from the Romans in response to the emperor's reforms.⁶²⁴

⁶¹⁸ R. Riedinger, 'Zwei Breife aus den Akten der Lateransynode von 649,' *Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinistik* 29 (1980), 37-59; idem. 'Sprachschichten in der lateinischen Übersetzung der Lateranakten von 649,' *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte* 92 (1981), 180-203.

⁶¹⁹ *Record of the Trial of Maximus* 6 (ed. Allen and Neil, p. 60).

⁶²⁰ Anastasius Apocrisarius, *Letter to Theodosius* 4 (ed. Allen and Neil, pp. 176-178); *Dispute at Bizya* 17 (ed. Allen and Neil, p. 118); Theophanes, *Chron.* A.M. 6160; *Greek Life of Maximus* (Recension 2), (PG 90.104D-105C).

⁶²¹ On the discussion of Christ's operation(s) by earlier authors, see recently: C. Hovorun, *Will, Action and Freedom: Christological Controversies in the Seventh Century*, (Leiden 2008), pp. 5-52.

⁶²² Tannous, 'In Search of Monothelitism,' 30-31; S.P. Brock 'The Thrice-Holy Hymn in the Liturgy' *Sobornost* 7 (1985), 24-34; M. Levy-Rubin, 'The Role of the Judaeon Desert Monasteries in the Monothelite Controversy in Seventh-Century Palestine,' in *The Sabaite Heritage*, 283-300.

⁶²³ Booth, *Crisis of Empire*, pp. 188-200.

⁶²⁴ *Ibid.* pp. 223-224.

It seems that opinion in Palestine was divided over whether or not to embrace the new spirit of reconciliation sweeping the Eastern Church. Recent studies have speculated as to the existence of a local schism between a group of Chalcedonian rigorists which included Sophronius, and a party led by the *topotērētes* Sergius of Joppa, a Heraclian appointee who governed the See of Jerusalem following the death of the patriarch Modestus in 630.⁶²⁵ At the Lateran synod of 649, Sophronius' ally, the Palestinian bishop and dyothelete, Stephen of Dora, complained that Sergius' rule had been illegitimate, since it had only been ordained 'by secular authority.'⁶²⁶ Jankowiak has suggested that, prior to Sophronius' election, opponents of imperial policy organised themselves around a 'parallel hierarchy' led by one John *Cyzicinus*, who appears in the letters of Maximus, and who might perhaps be identified with a figure of the same name mentioned in Moschus' *Meadow* as the abbot of a monastery on the Mount of Olives.⁶²⁷ Whether or not we accept this claim, further references to uncanonical appointments during Sophronius' tenure seem to hint at lingering tensions.⁶²⁸ In advancing her view that monenergism and, later, monothelete sympathisers were in the majority in Palestine, Levy-Rubin points to efforts by Sergius' supporters to murder Stephen, in response to his appointment as papal vicar to the region by Pope Martin.⁶²⁹ Tannous, on the basis of information provided by John of Damascus, claims that conflict between these rival factions may even be detected within the Monastery of Euthymius at Khan al-Ahmar, where the abbot Anastasius is alleged to have fought to maintain the use of the 'monothelete' version of the Trisagion.⁶³⁰

It has become customary to situate this antagonism within a broader philosophical divide visible throughout the period of this study: a struggle between the Chalcedonian proponents of theological 'precision' (*akribeia*) and those who favoured greater accommodation, 'economy' (*oikonomia*) in the doctrinal sense, on matters of Christology for the sake of unity.⁶³¹ The contested Palestinian reception of Heraclius' reforms, it is true, in common with Zeno's *Henotikon* or the response to Justinian's theopaschite initiative, would appear to have been shaped, at least in part, by these conflicting ideas

⁶²⁵ Cf. Levy-Rubin, 'The Role of the Judaeian Desert,' 296. All place Sergius' period of office after Sophronius' death.

⁶²⁶ ACO (second series) 1.46. Cf. C. von Schönborn, *Sophrone de Jérusalem: Vie monastique et confession dogmatique*, Théologie Historique 20 (Paris 1972), pp. 89, 174. Schönborn depicted Sergius' party as an unofficial 'pseudo-hiérarchie monothelite.'

⁶²⁷ Ἰωάννης ὁ Κυζικηνός. Jankowiak, 'Essai d'histoire politique,' pp. 114-119 cf. Booth, *Crisis of Empire*, pp. 168-169; K. Rozemond, 'Jean Mosch, patriarche de Jérusalem en exil (610-634)' *V Chr* 31 (1977), 60-67; idem, 'La lettre De hymno trisagio de Damascène ou Jean Mosch, patriarche de Jérusalem,' *SP* 15 (1984), 108-111. Rozemond's view is that Maximus' letters addressed to 'the archbishop John' are evidence that Moschus served as bishop of Jerusalem in exile prior to Modestus.

⁶²⁸ Pope Martin, *Letter to John of Philadelphia* (PL 87, p. 159).

⁶²⁹ Levy-Rubin, 'The role of the Judaeian Desert,' 298.

⁶³⁰ As Tannous notes, the longer version of the hymn, containing the controversial *staurotheis* clause introduced by Peter Mongus, was favoured by both Monotheletes and Miaphysites. But John specifically complains that, by using it, his readers risked turning into 'Maronites.' Tannous, 'In search of Monothelism,' 57; John of Damascus, *Epistula de hymno trisagio* 5.32-34 (ed. Kotter 4.313).

⁶³¹ Jankowiak, 'Essai d'histoire politique,' p. 138; Booth, *Crisis of Empire*, pp. 218-219; H. Ohme, 'Oikonomia im monenergetisch-monotheletischen Streit,' *Zeitschrift für Antikes Christentum* 12 (2008), 308-343, esp. 325-332.

over how best to enact God's will. It might be tempting to think of the clamour for *oikonomia* expressed by the architects of the seventh-century Church unions, in particular, as driven by an agreeable pragmatism. As several studies of recent years have shown, however, theirs was a stance grounded just as firmly in the language of Biblical hermeneutics as their opponents,' squarely presented as an appeal to Christian virtue. A detailed investigation, nevertheless, reveals the extent to which both arguments had only recently come to be thoroughly subordinated to more practical concerns arising from the decades of upheaval begun in 613. For Palestinian Christians battling to save their imperilled institutions nearly two hundred years after Chalcedon, the reaction, in fact, was commonly one of marked indifference towards the terms of a debate whose continuing significance does not appear to have been recognised by all.

II. Countering Christological Apathy: Moschus versus Rufus

Throughout the preceding chapters, we have encountered evidence of the ambivalence with which even some comparatively central figures in the struggle over the Council of 451 interacted with its theology. Until now, however, relatively little attention has been paid to those for whom the outcome of this conflict was largely an irrelevance: the sizeable segment of Late Roman opinion which, ignoring the demands of propagandists for either side, appears to have viewed the Controversy over Chalcedon with comparatively little interest. Though barely represented in the overwhelmingly partisan literature written to chronicle these events during Late Antiquity, such sentiments, nevertheless, were a persistent cause of dismay for our authors, who commonly complained of the Christological *apathy* shown by their contemporaries, no less prevalent in the seventh century than the middle of the fifth. This problem appears as a particular frustration for the hard-line Palestinian Chalcedonians active at the beginning of the 630s, featuring heavily in Moschus' *Meadow*. By means of colourful anecdotes, Sophronius' master offered a vision of Christian society at once nostalgic, but also disapproving. Written before misgivings over monenergism had spilled out into the public domain, the collection betrays the holy man's clear concern, already fully-formed, that the exclusivist definition of orthodoxy he extolled to his disciples no longer commanded the attention of many of their peers.

Such criticism, of course, was hardly without precedent. At first glance, some might question the broader significance of the *Meadow's* remarks; the text's complaints, it could be argued, were standard fare for monastic authors of this period, rooted in an ascetic culture obliged to indulge in Christological hair-splitting as almost a matter of course. The best comparison that we can draw, however, with Moschus' misgivings from the texts we have already met gives cause to reconsider this opinion. For all its obvious differences, significantly, the *Meadow* displays the same dogged preoccupation with the maintenance of doctrinal purity as that found in evidence, a century earlier, in John Rufus' *Plerophoriae*. The 'Proofs' supplied by the latter, as we have seen, were often so concerned to reiterate

basic tenets of anti-Chalcedonian dogma that they are difficult to place, if not as a rebuke to readers thought to be wavering in their commitment to the cause. These efforts, we know, occurred against the backdrop of a broader cultural malaise affecting the Palestinian opposition to the Council, plagued beyond its Gazan headquarters by a spate of high-profile defections. But the fundamental fears expressed here would seem to find an echo in Moschus, the persistence with which both writers sought to press the matter of doctrine such that we might reasonably question its importance to either's co-religionists.

With nothing to suggest that the author of the *Meadow* was aware of his anti-Chalcedonian predecessor, the parallels between their works appear as all the more striking. At odds over so much, these two Palestinian writers were united in bemoaning wider society's refusal to take the controversy generated by the Council seriously. In the *Plerophoriae* ominous portents of Chalcedon's heresy are found in a string of natural disasters and in terrifying visions attributed to a host of senior monastic figures, now all posthumously recast as allies of Rufus and his brothers. Most striking of all, however, is the determined agenda visible in the text, briefly recounted in the chapters above, to discourage friendly interaction with the Council's supporters. Much of this campaign, as Booth has shown, focused specifically on disparaging the benefits of the Chalcedonian sacraments.⁶³² By denying the validity of the Eucharist, in particular, when celebrated by clergy loyal to Jerusalem, Rufus' aim was to scare his audience away from participating in rites he depicted as a threat to their salvation, veering, at times, from the dour to the faintly comic. As a symptom of His displeasure, for instance, the Gazan author alleged that God was in the habit of the disrupting the Chalcedonian mass by making the bread used in the ceremony go stale and turning the wine sour.⁶³³ One of the more spectacular scenes within the *Plerophoriae*, by contrast, claimed to preserve the testimony of a female opponent of the Council said to have received an expansive vision of two altars: one vast, but dark, where an enemy bishop was presiding over the consecration of the host; the other small, but brightly-lit, where Christ himself, in the form of a child, was dispensing the anti-Chalcedonian Eucharist.⁶³⁴

When combined with a series of further stories praising ascetics for boycotting holy sites also frequented by the Council's supporters, such episodes appear as a spirited exhortation not to mix with those on the other side of the Christological divide.⁶³⁵ Less clear are the grounds for Rufus' belief that it was necessary to embark upon such an elaborate defence of this principle, if the Palestinian opposition to Chalcedon had ever really been as puritanical as he otherwise insisted. A similar anxiety seems to permeate the *Meadow*. Resorting to many of the same drastic, exclusionary tactics trialled in the *Plerophoriae*, Moschus too invoked tales of divine intervention as proof of the need to safeguard the

⁶³² Booth, *Crisis of Empire*, pp. 38-41.

⁶³³ *Plerophoriae* 66 (ed. Nau, pp. 52-54).

⁶³⁴ *Plerophoriae* 86 (ed. Nau, p. 78).

⁶³⁵ Booth, *Crisis of Empire*, pp. 39-40; Horn, *Asceticism and Christological Controversy*, pp. 304-331.

faith from the evils of the ‘Severan heresy,’ God himself depicted as physically preventing anti-Chalcedonians from contaminating orthodox places of worship. One report told how Gebemer, the Severan *dux Palaestinae*, had been driven from the entrance of a church by the spectre of a charging ram, conjured to prevent him from corrupting the rituals taking place within.⁶³⁶ Elsewhere, the Severan *patrikia* Cosmiana was allegedly refused the right to pray in the sanctuary of her church by a furious *Theotokos*.⁶³⁷ The collection’s remaining chapters repeatedly ridiculed any suggestion of equivalence between the religious practice of these two communities. Booth has demonstrated that the *Plerophoriae*’s attempts to tout the unique benefits of the anti-Chalcedonian Eucharist find a particularly effusive parallel in the *Meadow*, couched in imagery outlandish, even by comparison with the anecdotes above. So powerful were the life-giving properties of the orthodox sacrament, Moschus reported, that word had reached him of an incident in which a portion of the consecrated host had miraculously sprouted roots whilst concealed in a box, hidden by a beleaguered supporter of the Council fearful of his heretical employer.⁶³⁸ A particularly vivid section of the text gives a brief biography of the Cypriot monk Isidore, a reformed anti-Chalcedonian who, prior to entering the monastic life, had once attempted to strangle his wife for taking communion with their orthodox neighbour. Amid eye-catching scenes, Moschus recounted how Isidore had forced his wife to spit the offending morsel of bread from her mouth, only to see it struck by lightning as it landed on the ground, proving its exalted status.⁶³⁹

Each new episode of this kind served to reinforce the *Meadow*’s caricatured depiction of anti-Chalcedonians as feeble-minded. Of those that feature in the collection, most appear as unsympathetic aristocrats, the majority women, characterised as blindly attached to a doctrine whose crimes they do not comprehend. Once again, however, it seems clear that the principle targets of the robust rhetoric witnessed here were members of Moschus’ own communion, censured for fraternising with non-believers. Sophronius’ master pointedly condemned the more permissive attitudes held by ordinary, nominally-Chalcedonian, Christians towards their supposed doctrinal adversaries. With characteristic theatricality, other parts of the collection explicitly dwelt on this concern. As a cautionary tale for his readers, the holy man gave the example of a Syrian moneylender resident in Constantinople who received a visit from a monk, informing him that his brother had committed adultery with the daughter of an innkeeper. Confounding our expectations, however, the text caveats this revelation by explaining that the ‘adultery’ in question was of a spiritual nature; having recently returned home to administer the family property following the death of their parents, the brother, it transpires, was in fact guilty of taking communion with a group of Severan monks, whose namesake the *Meadow* derides as ‘a tavern-keeper

⁶³⁶ *Leimonarion* 49 (PG 87:3.2904C-2906A).

⁶³⁷ *Leimonarion* 48 (PG 87:3.2904A-B).

⁶³⁸ *Leimonarion* 79 (PG 87:3.2936C-2937C).

⁶³⁹ *Leimonarion* 30 (PG 87:3.2877B-2879A).

(*kapēlos*) indeed.⁶⁴⁰ Crucially, Moschus conceded that the young man in question had committed his offence ‘unaware that this was wrong.’⁶⁴¹ In this, it appears, he was not alone. A similar moral can be drawn from the *Meadow*’s story of an itinerant ascetic allegedly in the practice of receiving communion at whichever church happened to be nearest whilst on the road, regardless of its doctrinal affiliation.⁶⁴² This brother too, Moschus alleged, was chastised for his behaviour, confronted by an angel who demanded to know whether he wished to be buried ‘according to the rite of Egypt,’ or that of Jerusalem. Significantly, it was not until a colleague reproached him for failing to ensure that the services he had been attending were orthodox, the text notes, that the monk remembered to worship only in churches where ‘all four Councils’ were celebrated.⁶⁴³ In both cases, the scourge of Christological apathy appears as as great a threat to the practice of ‘true’ Christianity as heterodoxy, if not more dangerous, simply because those it affected were otherwise expected to keep the orthodox faith alive.

The carelessness attacked here ought to be distinguished from the considered, theologically-grounded support for Christological ‘accommodation’ described above. The premise upon which the *Meadow*’s warnings rely, instead, is one of widespread disregard for the boundary between Chalcedonians and anti-Chalcedonians, which partisans like Moschus and Rufus were so anxious to enforce. No one, of course, could confuse the collection’s allegorical treatment of this issue for documentary evidence of the broader balance of opinion among Eastern Christians on the eve of the monenergist controversy; the only contemporary views reliably captured in the *Meadow* are its creator’s. Indeed, even here there are limits to what we can say in the absence of a critical edition of Moschus, now in preparation for over forty years.⁶⁴⁴ But equally, it is difficult to ignore the text’s concerted calls for a return to the confessional divisions of the past. Hyperbole notwithstanding, its complaints are startling. In a break with what Booth has revealed as the unusually inclusive vision of widespread Christian virtue found in much of the collection, the *Meadow*, moreover, situates them within a broader narrative campaign aiming to expose the lax religious observance, not just of laypeople, but even of ‘orthodox’ clerics and monks, criticised for not only failing to recognise heresy, but even unknowingly consulting heretical texts when ruling on matters of doctrine.⁶⁴⁵

⁶⁴⁰ *Leimonarion* 188 (PG 87:3.3065B-3068A, 3068A): Τότε συνήκεν ὁ μείζων ἀδελφός, ὅτι τοῦτο ἦν τὸ πορνεῦσαι αὐτον ὅτι τὴν ἁγίαν καθολικὴν Ἐκκλησίαν εἴασεν, εἰς τὴν αἵρεσιν Σεβήρου τοῦ Ἀκεφάλου τοῦ ὄντος καπλήλου, ἔπεσεν, καὶ κατησχύνθη, καὶ τὴν εὐγένειαν τῆς ὀρθῆς κατεμόλυνεν πίστεως.

⁶⁴¹ *Ibid.* (PG 87:3.3065D): Οὐδεν οἶδα ἄτοπον διαπραξάμενος, εἰ μὴ ὅτι μοναχοὺς εὗρον εἰς τὴν κώμην ἡμῶν τοῦ δόγματος Σεβήρου, καὶ ἀγνοῶν εἰ κακόν ἐστιν, ἐκοινῶνον αὐτοῖς.

⁶⁴² *Leimonarion* 178 (PG 87:3.3048C-3049-A).

⁶⁴³ *Ibid.* (PG 87:3.3048): Μηκέτι δόξῃ σοι ἔξωθεν τῆς ἁγίας καθολικῆς καὶ ἀποστολικῆς Ἐκκλησίας κοινωνίῃσαι, ἔνθα ὀνομάζονται αἱ ἅγιοι τέσσαρες σύνοδοι...

⁶⁴⁴ With over one hundred manuscript witnesses to the *Leimonarion*, this enormous project was begun by Philip Pattenden in the 1970s. See: P. Pattenden, ‘The Text of the Pratum Spirituale,’ *JThS* (new series) 26 (1975), 38-54; *idem.* ‘The Editions of the Pratum Spirituale,’ *SP* 15 (1984), 16-19; *idem.* ‘Some Remarks on the Newly Edited Text of the ‘Pratum’ of John Moschus,’ *SP* 18 (1989), 45-51.

⁶⁴⁵ Booth, *Crisis of Empire*, pp. 130-131.

In a seventh-century context, efforts to make sense of Christianity's defeat by the 'godless' Sasanians commonly ascribed blame for the failure of Roman arms to the sinfulness of the Empire's subjects. Palestinian authors, we know, were especially fond of this device, employed by Sophronius and the Sabaite monk Strategius, among others, in an effort to explain the apparent, shocking withdrawal of divine favour from Jerusalem's inhabitants heralded by the Persian sack of the city in 614. But the *Meadow's* complaints, it seems, were also borne of personal experience. If nothing else, Moschus had presumably encountered the errant practices he described first-hand whilst resident at the Egyptian healing shrine of Menouthis, where supporters and opponents of Chalcedon are known to have worshipped in tandem.⁶⁴⁶

If Rufus' explosively bitter portrayal of the Council's reception had earlier coincided with the Palestinian opposition to Chalcedon's rapid descent into obscurity, then Moschus too may have come to consider himself the spokesman for an increasingly embattled cause. Among the Palestinian monastic authors active in the aftermath of the Roman re-conquest of the region prior to Sophronius, his appears as effectively a lone voice in its insistence that renewed energy be spent reopening old, Christological wounds. In stark contrast to their predecessors, whose polemical talents we explored in the previous chapters, the monks of the Judaeen Desert who remained behind to weather the challenges brought by the Persian occupation were less outspoken. Even among the Sabaites, the literary heirs to Cyril of Scythopolis, the depiction of longstanding doctrinal opponents was mixed, at times surprisingly positive. We have already suggested that Moschus' contemporaries might have been forgiven for thinking that more pressing issues required their attention than Christology. For a comprehensive view, however, of the role of geopolitics in promoting this realisation, we need only look to the corpus of texts produced in these years by the members of the Great Laura and its satellites. Of these Sabaite authors, one we have already met: the monk Strategius, whose graphic lament *On the Fall of Jerusalem* is commonly cited as indicative of the trauma inflicted by the tumultuous events of Heraclius' reign. Among his brothers, others were engaged in the production of more traditional monastic literary forms, but anxious, nevertheless, to have their say too on the effect of recent events in reframing Palestine's Church politics.

III. Cyril's Successors: Seventh-Century Sabaites on Chalcedon

These latter works vary markedly in tone when recounting Jerusalem's efforts to recover from its ordeal. The existential introspection found in Strategius is mirrored in the writings of one colleague, the ascetic encyclopaedist Antiochus. More positive was the anonymous hagiographer of the recently-martyred Christian convert Anastasius the Persian, whose Sabaite identity was reaffirmed in the seminal study of

⁶⁴⁶ It was here that Sophronius produced his *Miracles of Cyrus and John*: Booth, *Crisis of Empire*, pp. 54-55, 87-88.

Bernard Flusin. Each account, however, attests to the suffering endured by Sabas' disciples in the course of the preceding decades, as the peace of the Judaeen Desert was shattered by the threat of enemy action. The story of their survival, as told by our authors, is certainly dramatic, beginning even before the Persian assault on Jerusalem itself. Antiochus, in his *Letter to Eustathius*, claimed that an initial raid on the Great Laura had taken place 'a week before the capture of the Holy City' in 614, perpetrated by Arab tribesmen loyal to the Persian shah, Khusraw II. The attackers were said to have 'plundered all the vessels of the [monastery's] church,' with the result that 'the majority of the fathers immediately fled.'⁶⁴⁷ A small number of monks, designated in the text as 'the perseverant servants of Christ' (*hoi karterikoi douloi tou Christou*), had apparently refused to be cowed, 'not wishing to abandon the place.' But Antiochus acknowledged that these brothers were subsequently killed during a second incursion, mounted by a further party of raiders supposedly in search of hidden monastic treasure (*chrēmata*).⁶⁴⁸

The devastating impact of these events upon the Laura's surviving members is plain to see. Dramatically disrupting the ascetic observance of the order Sabas had founded, their effect was to temporarily uproot the community from its traditional base in the Wadi Kidron. The *Letter* records that forty-four ascetics were murdered in the massacre, their remains discovered when the Sabaites' abbot, Nicodemus, briefly returned from hiding in Arabia to survey the damage caused by the invaders.⁶⁴⁹ But having overseen the burial of the victims with help from the church authorities in Jerusalem, Antiochus related that neither Nicodemus, nor his followers, could be persuaded to resettle their monastery. Ignoring repeated calls to stay by the future patriarch Modestus, then empowered as *topotērētes*, following Khusraw's abduction of the official patriarch, Zachariah, the brothers were said to have scattered in flight once again, as rumour broke of a new 'barbarian' offensive poised to engulf the Desert and its environs:

'Swayed by his [Modestus'] address we stayed in the Laura for two months. But having heard again that the barbarians were approaching, we fled to a monastery named for the *abba* Anastasius close to the holy city, which was twenty stades away, where nobody was living at that time. And having spent two years in this place, again we were called upon by ... Modestus to return and to inhabit our own place. Thus, having been persuaded by his good advice, we returned and inhabited the Laura immediately, but some [returned] a little more slowly out of fear of our proximity to the Saracens, whilst others remained in this monastery under our most holy *hegumen* Justin...'⁶⁵⁰

⁶⁴⁷ Antiochus, *Epistula ad Eustathium* (PG 89.1424B): 'Ἐπελθόντων γὰρ τῶν Ἰσμηλιτῶν τῇ Λαύρα πρὸ μιᾶς ἑβδομάδος τοῦ παραληφθῆναι τὴν ἁγίαν πόλιν, καὶ πάντα τὰ τῆς ἐκκλησίας ἱερὰ σκευὴ διαρπασάντων, τὸ μὲν πλῆθος τῶν Πατέρων παραχρῆμα ὑπανεχώρησεν.

⁶⁴⁸ Ibid. ἀπέμειναν δὲ οἱ καρτερικοὶ δοῦλοι τοῦ Χριστοῦ ἐν τῇ Λαύρα, μὴ βουλόμενοι καταλιπεῖν τὸν τόπον.

⁶⁴⁹ According to Leontius of Neapolis' *Life of John the Almsgiver*, the same Nicodemus was also involved in negotiating for the release of prisoners captured by the Persians.

⁶⁵⁰ Antiochus, *Ep.* (PG 89.1425A-B): Εἰζαντες οὖν τῇ παραινέσει αὐτοῦ ἐμείναμεν ἐν τῇ Λαύρα ὡς ἐπὶ δύο μῆνας. Καὶ πάλιν ἀκοῆς βαρβαρικῆς γενομένης φοβηθέντες κατεφύγομεν εἰς μοναστήριον πλησίον τῆς ἁγίας πόλεως, ὡς ἀπὸ σταδίων εἴκοσι, λεγόμενον τοῦ ἀββᾶ Ἀναστασίου, μηδένα τὸ τηκαῦτα ἔχον. Καὶ ποιήσαντες ὡς δύο χρόνους ἐν αὐτῷ, πάλιν παρεκαλούμεθα ὑπο τοῦ εἰρημένου ὀσιωτάτου Μοδέστου ἐπανελθεῖν, καὶ οἰκῆσαι εἰς τὸν τόπον ἡμῶν. Πεισθέντες οὖν τῇ ἀγαθῇ αὐτοῦ συμβουλίᾳ, οἱ μὲν παραχρῆμα ἐπανήλθομεν, καὶ οἰκήσαμεν εἰς τὴν Λαύραν, τινὲς δὲ καὶ μικρὸν βραδύτερον φόβῳ τῶν γειτνιόντων ἡμῖν Σαρακηνῶν, τινὲς δὲ

Thus, in the aftermath of 614, the Sabaites split into two parties. Some, including Antiochus, appear to have returned to the Laura. Their leaders, at least, seem to have preferred the comparative safety of the Monastery of Abba Anastasius. It was to here too, we are told, that Modestus dispatched the recently-baptised Persian soldier Magoundat, who now also took the name Anastasius and was admitted to the ascetic life by Justin ‘in the eighth indiction of the most pious and Christian Heraclius, the tenth year of his reign’ – that is to say, 620.⁶⁵¹ The *Acts of Anastasius* report that their subject spent seven years in residence at the monastery prior to his eventual apprehension by the occupiers in September 627.

Anastasius the Persian’s persecution was depicted in the *Acts* as the final set piece of the Sabaites’ agony, culminating in martyrdom close to Khusraw’s palace at Dastgerd in January 628, only months before the war was ended.⁶⁵² With the Shah’s defeat, the surviving members of Jerusalem’s religious establishment lost little time in alerting the wider *oikumene* to the horrors they had witnessed on behalf of the faith. Sabas’ disciples were at the forefront of this effort, initially promoted in conjunction with Modestus and his entourage. Of their writings, the *Acts* are the most securely dated. Carmela Franklin and Paul Mayvaert were able to identify a phrase in the early Latin translation of the text which seems to preserve a marginal note by the hand of Modestus himself, purporting to date to the period of his short-lived episcopacy in 630.⁶⁵³ The *topotērētes* is known to have been elevated to the See of Jerusalem by Heraclius prior to the emperor’s triumphal visit to the holy city in March that year, arriving to preside over the restoration of the relic of the True Cross, which had previously been taken as spoils by the Persians from the Church of the Anastasis.

Flusin has convincingly shown that a further component of the Greek dossier on Anastasius, the so-called *Translatio Reliquiarum* describing the return of the saint’s remains to Palestine, was produced between 631 and 632.⁶⁵⁴ For his part, Strategius’ account would seem to have been pulled together from what James Howard-Johnston recently described as an ‘amalgam’ of material, some of which appears to date to the years immediately after the sack of 614.⁶⁵⁵ The text as it survives, however, is clearly the product of editing undertaken following Heraclius’ visit, as evidenced by a document inserted at the end of the main narrative which refers, both to this event, and to Modestus’ death shortly afterwards. Antiochus’ case is perhaps the most complex. No date is given for the completion of his major work, a collection of one-hundred-and-thirty homilies known as the *Pandects*, which, like the *Meadow*, still

καὶ ἐν αὐτῷ τῷ μοναστηρίῳ ἀπεμείναμεν ἅμα Ἰουστίνῳ τῷ ὀσιωτάτῳ αὐτῶν ἡγουμένῳ... For commentary on this section, see: Flusin, *Anastase le Perse*, 2.177-179.

⁶⁵¹ *Acts of Anastasius* 11 (ed. Usener, repr. Flusin, 1.53).

⁶⁵² *Acts of Anastasius* 40 (ed. Usener, repr. Flusin, 1.87).

⁶⁵³ C. Franklin and P. Mayvaert, ‘Has Bede’s Version of the ‘Passio S. Anastasii’ Come Down to Us in ‘BHL’ 408?’ *AB* 100 (1982), 373-400: ‘ego Modestus indignus archiepiscopus Hierusolime sanctae dei civitatis.’

⁶⁵⁴ Flusin, *Anastase le Perse*, 1.9.

⁶⁵⁵ Howard-Johnston, *Witnesses to a World Crisis*, p. 165. The Arabic preserves an abbreviated form of the text, though with some glaring variations from the Georgian. Both were edited and translated into Latin by Gerard Garitte: G. Garitte, *La Prise de Jérusalem par les Perses en 614*, CSCO 202-3, *Scriptores Iberici* 11-12 (Leuven 1960); idem. *Expugnationis Hierosolymae A.D. 614 Recensiones Arabicae*, CSCO 340-1 and 347-8, *Scriptores Arabici* 26-9 (Leuven 1973-4).

awaits its critical edition. The text is prefaced by what purports to be a letter addressed to its intended recipient, Eustathius, the abbot of a monastery in the region of Ancyra, who was said to have requested Antiochus to provide him with a condensed florilegium of Scriptural quotations on matters pertaining to the monastic life, suitable for use whilst on the run from the ‘Chaldean’ invaders. Appended is an emotional *Confession* beseeching God’s mercy in light of recent events.⁶⁵⁶ The rawness with which the *Letter* describes the Sabaites’ ordeal has led some to assume Antiochus’ writings to have been completed ca. 620. But as Booth has argued, a hostile reference to Athanasius Gammolo in the *Pandects*’ final chapter must surely date the collection to after 629 and Heraclius’ abortive Antiochene union.⁶⁵⁷

A persistent attempt to downplay the significance of this flurry of literary activity ought to be resisted. Previous efforts to identify the disparate monastic compositions described above as the work of a single, prolific Sabaite author, in particular, have so far proven to be groundless. Much speculation has surrounded the potential relationship between the Georgian version of Strategius and a series of Greek fragments included in the *Patrologia Graeca* attributed to an ‘Antiochus,’ which appear to contain several details in common, prompting suggestions of a link between the former and the author of the *Pandects*.⁶⁵⁸ From this developed the habit of ascribing both works to ‘Antiochus Strategius,’ or even ‘Antiochus Strategos,’ a figure for whom no other evidence exists, described by Glen Bowersock as an ‘unfortunate hybrid’ whose identification appears to rely solely upon texts which are ‘demonstrably not the same source.’⁶⁵⁹ Flusin has criticised a similar agenda to name Antiochus as the author of the *Acts*, citing fundamental inconsistencies between the information supplied by the collection and what is otherwise known of the Sabaite monk’s career.⁶⁶⁰ It seems clear, therefore, that we are dealing here with the output of a productive literary milieu, rather than the *oeuvre* of a ‘lost’ monastic polymath. Efforts by Paul Speck, meanwhile, to cast the *Acts* as one of a series of texts from this period heavily interpolated after 843 with details added during the post-Iconoclast era have since been robustly criticised, advancing a view generally now regarded as unsafe.⁶⁶¹ Their credentials intact, our sources have much to reveal of their authors’ seventh-century mindset besides the scars of war. On closer examination, they seem to betray a marked shift in narrative emphasis from the time of Cyril and his contemporaries. Notably lacking is the feverish appetite for theological conflict analysed in the last chapter. Whereas the Sabaites of the mid-sixth century, as we saw, had been able to turn even the

⁶⁵⁶ Antiochus, *Exomologesis*, (PG 89.1849C-1856C).

⁶⁵⁷ Booth, *Crisis of Empire*, p. 204. Cf. Patrich, *Sabas*, pp.; Olster, *Roman Defeat*, p. 92.

⁶⁵⁸ PG 86:2.3222-3223.

⁶⁵⁹ G.W. Bowersock, ‘Polytheism and Monotheism in Arabia and the Three Palestines,’ *DOP* 51 (1997), 1-10, 9-10.

⁶⁶⁰ Flusin, *Anastase le Perse*, 2.189-190.

⁶⁶¹ P. Speck, *Beiträge zur Thema byzantinische Feindseligkeit gegen die Juden in frühen siebten Jahrhundert nebst einer Untersuchung zu Anastasios dem Perser*, *Varia* 4 (Bonn 1997); cf. A. Külzer, Review of ‘Byzantinische Feindseligkeit,’ *BZ* 91 (1998), 583-586; G. Dagron and V. Déroche, *Juifs et chrétiens en orient byzantin*, (Paris 2010), pp. 8-16.

slightest potential doctrinal provocation to their political advantage, their successors, at this crucial stage, displayed only a limited appreciation of issues which would once have taken centre stage in similar Desert writings.

The cavalier attitude shown to Christological sensitivities in parts of the Anastasian Dossier, in fact, could only have scandalised this earlier generation. So relaxed was the author of *Acts* in his approach to past doctrinal intrigue, more generally, that he chronicled the Persian martyr's story ostensibly unafraid of committing arguably the single greatest religious taboo shared by Chalcedonians at that time, cheerfully describing friendly relations between his brothers and the hated 'Nestorians,' from whom Cyril had been so anxious to distance the Great Laura only eighty years before. A leading role in the legend of Anastasius was allotted to the Persian ('Nestorian') Catholicos of the East, depicted as a faithful ally to Jerusalem in its struggle to repatriate the saint's relics, actively enlisted to help with this process by the Sabaites' abbot Justin. According to the *Translatio*, a monk of the Great Laura who had previously followed Anastasius to Dastgerd later returned together with a Persian bishop named Elias to retrieve the former's body, which by this point had already been interred in a monastery close to Khusraw's former palace dedicated to the famous Roman soldier-saint, Sergius.⁶⁶²

Further details related in the text make clear that this was a non-Chalcedonian ascetic community subject to the rule of the Church in Ctesiphon. The Catholicos himself was said to have become involved when the monks of Sergius refused to hand over the remains, citing fears that the saint's removal would endanger the fragile peace only recently secured in the region by the withdrawal of Roman arms. But even amid the coverage of this altercation, no allusion was made to the exotic beliefs ostensibly professed by Anastasius' original guardians. With remarkable nonchalance, the *Translatio* went on to describe how the Catholicos had personally acted to ensure the relics' safe passage to Palestine, where, following a comprehensive tour of the region, Anastasius' body was restored to the monastery of Abba Anastasius in November 631.⁶⁶³ Such warmth, we could argue, need not necessarily imply a break with committed support for Chalcedon; the Church of the East, after all, had entered communion with Constantinople as a consequence of the Sasanians' defeat. The close cooperation with its members attested in the *Translatio*, however, is shown to date to before this agreement. Similarly friendly was the common interaction with Christian Persian officials depicted in the *Acts*, routinely portrayed as pious fellow-believers, notable for their attempts to alleviate the holy man's suffering. In each case, the amicable links described suggest a partnership based on something more than the formal pact of toleration inaugurated by the court, extending well beyond anything demanded by Heraclius and his advisors.

⁶⁶² *Acts of Anastasius* 43 (ed. Usener, repr. Flusin, 1.89); *Translatio* 2 (ed. Flusin 1.99-101).

⁶⁶³ *Translatio* 5-6 (ed. Flusin 1.103-107).

That such efforts were judged appropriate speaks volumes as to broader religious climate prevailing in Palestine at this time. The aggressive point-scoring between Chalcedonians and anti-Chalcedonians, or even between rival Chalcedonians, that would surely once have deterred the author of the Anastasian dossier from relating these events does not appear to have posed much of a risk now. Like many of their compatriots, within a matter of decades, prominent Sabaites would make their way to Rome, where some appear to have embraced the staunchly rigorist, dyophysite faction assembled around Maximus. The *hegumen* of ‘the Laura of Sabas’ appears as a signatory to the *Acts* of the Lateran Synod in 649. The appearance of a monastery dedicated to ‘San Saba’ at Rome on a site which some believe Moschus to have once inhabited suggests that others had made this journey with him.⁶⁶⁴ Even the head of Anastasius himself was said to have been moved to the eternal city in the aftermath of the Arab conquests. At this stage, however, we seem to find little echo among the Sabaite leadership that compiled the Dossier of the deeply conservative Christological opposition to Heraclius’ policies beginning to be voiced by Sophronius.

Antiochus’ furious rejection of Athanasius Gammolo, we would think, provides a powerful counterblast to this view. But even when railing against the latter’s offences, the author of the *Pandects* was shown to possess a broader commitment to the pursuit of the Chalcedonian controversy which would certainly have been judged deficient by the standards of the Justinianic era. The collection’s coverage of the discord over the Council is limited to this angry polemic, appearing in the *Pandects*’ final chapter, ‘On the Kingdom of Heaven’ (*peri basileias ouranōn*). It was here, with extreme venom, that Antiochus denounced the anti-Chalcedonian leader as a ‘precursor of the Antichrist,’ labelling him an exponent ‘of the doctrines of Apollinarius, Eutyches, Severus and Jacob [bar Addai].’⁶⁶⁵ No detailed critique of this heresy, however, was offered to rival those supplied by Cyril, or even, more recently, by Moschus. It might be argued that this was unnecessary: that, by the time of writing, the terms of the controversy were so well-known as to hardly bear repeating. Even so, the *Pandects*’ treatment of Chalcedon seems unusually lax. The collection’s only other remarks on the Council’s opponents feature in what it claimed was a comprehensive list of heretics located at the end of the same chapter, where a rather perfunctory-seeming group of anti-Chalcedonian leaders is found, riddled with errors and clumsily arranged out of chronological sequence:

‘...Dioscorus, Theodosius [of Alexandria], Gaianus, Timothy Aelurus, Peter [Fuller] who added the *staurotheis* to the Trisagion, Peter Mongus, Severus Acephalus, Soterichus from Cappadocian Samaria, Philoxenus of the

⁶⁶⁴ J.-M. Sansterre, *Les moines grecs et orientaux à Rome aux époques byzantine et carolingienne (milieu du VIe s.– fin du IXe s.)*, 2 vols., (Brussels 1983), 1.22-30; R. Coates-Stephens, ‘S. Saba and the Xenodochium de via Nova,’ *Rivista di Archeologia Cristiana* 83 (2007), 223-256.

⁶⁶⁵ *Pandects* 130 (PG 89.1844C-D). A full translation of this section may be found in: Booth, *Crisis of Empire*, p. 204.

city of Hera [Hierapolis-Mabbug], Amphilochius the Pisidian, Jacob the Syrian, and Julian [of Halicarnassus].

And anyone who is of the same sort as them.⁶⁶⁶

As Jankowiak has pointed out, no mention was given here to the still then-unfolding dispute over monenergism.⁶⁶⁷ This omission is not perhaps surprising, if we consider the broader climate in which Antiochus and his brothers were writing, when Jerusalem had once again become a focus of imperial attention, regaining its totemic status within the Eastern Rome in a context of fresh, empire-wide ‘renewal.’ When evaluated as a corpus, the Sabaite texts betray a keen awareness of this political background, their authors’ desire to manipulate it often plainly visible in a manner reminiscent of Cyril’s *Lives* of Sabas or Euthymius. In his celebrated survey of Anastasius’ legend, Flusin argued that the Sabaites ‘promoted the birth and diffusion’ of the cult of their Persian brother at Modestus’ behest, aiming to capture the mood of the newly-reconstituted *oikumene*.⁶⁶⁸ Antiochus’ savage criticism of Gammolo, it would appear, was prosecuted with the same objective in mind. The rebel bishop’s demand to be elevated to the vacant, ‘official’ See of Antioch, in Chalcedonian hands since the reign of Justin I, represented not only an unwelcome distraction, but a serious threat to any competing, Jerusalemite scheme to lobby for imperial favour, emerging just at the moment when the *topotērētes* and his supporters sought to capture it. Such a break with over a century of ecclesiastical convention, moreover, must have seemed to many less an act of ‘accommodation,’ than a blueprint for anti-Chalcedonian supremacy: one which threatened Modestus and his circle with prolonged political isolation.

In the end, the failure of Heraclius and Athanasius to agree terms prevented the Antiochene ‘union’ from coming to pass. Discussions between the anti-patriarch and the court, it appears, had finally broken down during a face-to-face meeting at Hierapolis-Mabbug where it became clear that Gammolo still harboured some reservations towards Heraclius’ unionist ambitions.⁶⁶⁹ Having allegedly agreed to some form of Christological compromise with Chalcedon’s supporters, Athanasius, potentially mindful of how this news was likely to be received by his subordinates, fell back on his promise. Our sources agree that a subsequent, heated exchange with the emperor culminated in the leader of Syria’s anti-Chalcedonians refusing him communion.⁶⁷⁰ By contrast, the author of the Anastasian Dossier was

⁶⁶⁶ *Pandects* 130 (PG 89.1843B): ὄτινι ἔπεται Διόσκορος, Θεοδόσιος, Γαϊανός, Τιμόθεος ὁ Αἰλουρος, Πέτρος, ὁ τὸ, ὁ σταυρωθεὶς, εἰς τὸ Τρισάγιον ἐπινοήσας, Πέτρος ὁ Μουγγός, Σευῆρος ὁ Ἀκέφαλος, Σωτήριχος, ἐκ Σαμαριάς Καππαδοκίας, φιλόξενος Ἱερᾶς πόλεως, Ἀμφιλόχιος ὁ Πισίδης, Ἰάκωβος ὁ Σῦρος, καὶ Ἰουλιανός· καὶ εἴ τις κατ’ αὐτοὺς τοιοῦτος. Amphilochius of Side (in Pamphylia), present at Chalcedon, later claimed to have been forced to sign the Definition of Faith under duress, but seems to have been confused here with Amphilochius of Iconium, which was in Pisidia, a fourth-century bishop and correspondent of the Cappadocian fathers. Soterichus of Caesarea-in-Cappadocia was prominent Chalcedonian at odds with Severus, on whom, see: Menze, *Justinian and the Making*, pp. 34-42.

⁶⁶⁷ Jankowiak, ‘The Invention of Dyophysitism,’ 341-342.

⁶⁶⁸ Flusin, *Anastase le Perse*, 2.15, 191-193.

⁶⁶⁹ Theophanes, *Chron.* A.M. 6121 (ed. de Boor, p. 329); Michael the Syrian, *Chron.* 11.1-2 (ed. Chabot 4.403-408).

⁶⁷⁰ Michael the Syrian, *Chron.* 11.3 (ed. Chabot 4.408-410); *Anonymous Chronicle to 1234* 103 (ed. Chabot 1.238); *Chronicle of Seert* 88 (ed. Scher, pp. 544-545).

effusive in his praise for ‘our most pious Christian emperor Heraclius’ whose visit to Jerusalem in 630 forms the crescendo of the collection’s account. The first chapter of the *Translatio* enthusiastically recounts this event, proclaiming that ‘never before, in the memory of men, had the emperor of the Christians come to Jerusalem, only our most serene and all-pious *basileus* came, together with the life-giving Cross of the Saviour.’⁶⁷¹ Referring to the restoration of the True Cross, it remarks that ‘he [Heraclius] brought this about in a manner worthy of him, honouring that which was held in reverence (*timōn ton tetimēkota*) and erecting in its proper place that which safeguards the *oikumene*.’⁶⁷²

Palestine’s Christian leaders could have been forgiven for thinking that such fulsome support for the emperor’s programme was warranted, given some of the controversies which seem to have discredited Modestus’ predecessors. Though little is known of Jerusalem’s ecclesiastical history in this period, what references there are to the city’s bishops prior to 614 are uniformly negative. Letters addressed by Gregory the Great to the patriarch Zachariah’s forebear, Isaac of Jerusalem, repeatedly allude to a local power struggle between the See and the staff of the *Nea Ekklesia*, appearing to rebuke its occupant for allowing such petty administrative rivalries to distract from his duties as custodian of Christianity’s most sacred sites.⁶⁷³ According to Anastasius of Sinai, Isaac’s predecessor, Amos, had been a particularly contentious figure, so disdainful of ascetic devotion, it was alleged, that he had once dressed a pig in the monastic habit.⁶⁷⁴ It is in response to these repeated missteps that we might locate the furious condemnation of blasphemous ‘priests’ found in the same text, placed in the mouth of John of Heptastomos, a Sabaite monk whom Strategius alleged was murdered shortly afterwards.⁶⁷⁵ More serious, however, was the likely effect of the scandals involving the bishops in straining relations with the court. In the final years of the reign of the emperor Phocas, Isaac had clashed with the imperial regent Bonosus, sent to subdue a local rebellion roughly coterminous with Heraclius’ campaign to usurp the throne in Constantinople. The Georgian Strategius reported that, amid the reprisals that followed, Bonosus had accused the Palestinian Church of complicity in the unrest, nearly murdering its leader in a fit of rage.⁶⁷⁶ We know that Phocas had Isaac deposed in 609, with Zachariah dispatched directly from the capital to replace him.⁶⁷⁷ This history of opposition to the former emperor might be assumed, ordinarily, to have stood in Jerusalem’s favour following Heraclius’ own accession a year later, when a comprehensive project of *damnatio memoriae* was enacted against the previous occupant of the palace and his advisors. But by the same token, Zachariah’s status as a Phocan appointee is unlikely to have

⁶⁷¹ *Translatio* 1 (ed. Flusin 1.101.8-9): Μηδενὸς γὰρ χριστιανῶν βασιλέων Ἱεροσολύμοις ἐπιδημῆσαι μνημονευομένου, αὐτὸς μόνος ὁ γαληνότατος καὶ πανευσεβῆς ἡμῶν βασιλεὺς σὺν τῷ ζωοποιῷ σταυρῷ τοῦ σωτῆρος παραγέγονεν...

⁶⁷² *Ibid.* (ed. Flusin 1.101.11-12): ...ἀξίως γε αὐτοῦ καὶ τοῦτο διαπραξάμενος, τιμῶν τὸν τετιμηκότα καὶ τοῖς ἰδίοις τόποις ἐγκαθιδρύων τὴν τῆς οἰκουμένης ἀσφάλειαν.

⁶⁷³ Gregory the Great, *Letters* 119.

⁶⁷⁴ Anastasius of Sinai, *Tales*, (ed. Nau, pp. 33-34)

⁶⁷⁵ Strategius, *On the Fall* 6.5-11, 13, (ed. Garitte 2.12-13).

⁶⁷⁶ Strategius, *On the Fall* (Georgian Version) 4.7, (trans. Garitte 2.04).

⁶⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

endeared him to the new emperor's entourage.⁶⁷⁸ In any case, as Flusin has shown, other details provided by Strategius point to the patriarch's later role as effective leader of a Palestinian 'party of peace,' active in pressing for terms with the Persians in 613, amid the desperate scramble to save the Empire's Levantine provinces.⁶⁷⁹ Even if Zachariah's questionable background had failed to elicit suspicion from Heraclius until now, reports of these latter activities, carried out in defiance of calls by compatriots to stand and fight the invaders, are certain to have been poorly-received in Constantinople, even potentially regarded at one point as evidence of treason.

Resonating firmly with the triumphalist rhetoric now emanating from the court, Anastasius' legend travelled widely. As testament to the enthusiasm with which his cult was received in Constantinople, the story of the tragic Persian martyr, whose fate gave credence to Heraclius' claims to have secured a lasting victory for Christianity, whilst symbolising the barbarity of its enemies, was soon reworked into a formal encomium by George of Pisidia, destined for delivery before the emperor.⁶⁸⁰ Most likely through the agency of Theodore of Tarsus, word of Anastasius' exploits famously spread as far as Northumbria, where Bede would later claim to have accessed and 'improved' a deficient Latin translation of the *Acts*.⁶⁸¹ But in broadcasting their response to the extraordinary events of Palestine's recent history, the Sabaites had also, in a sense, reverted to their familiar role as literary spokesmen for the See of Jerusalem, their fortunes heavily intertwined, as before, with the promotion of their order's traditional, episcopal benefactors.

To say that Modestus is likely to have approved of this effort would surely be an understatement. At times, the Sabaite texts read almost like hagiography, written to eulogise the *topotērētes* before a wider audience. The intended message was plain: not only had Palestine remained a loyal redoubt of Christian Rome for all these years; it was Modestus who had acted to ensure this status in the face of Sasanian tyranny. Few could fail to be struck by the extravagant acclaim lavished on Jerusalem's caretaker-bishop in the *Letter to Eustathius*, where Modestus was credited with single-handedly resurrecting monastic life in the Desert following the invasion. In the aftermath of the Arab raid on the Great Laura, the text depicts Zachariah's replacement as personally washing and enshrouding the remains of the Sabaite dead because the abbot Nicodemus had 'fainted.'⁶⁸² 'By the grace of God and the zeal of our ... most holy father Modestus,' Antiochus claimed, 'the other monasteries of the desert are also [now] inhabited.'⁶⁸³ This, the *Letter* suggests, was only a small part of a wider programme, whereby Modestus

⁶⁷⁸ Worth noting is the murder of Theodore, the pro-Phocan Patriarch of Alexandria, by Heraclius' supporters: Booth, *Crisis of Empire*, p. 50.

⁶⁷⁹ Flusin, *Anastase le Perse*, 2.147.

⁶⁸⁰ George of Pisidia, *Encomium on Anastasius the Persian* (ed. Flusin, 1.189-259); Mary Whitby, 'Defender of the Cross: George of Pisidia on the Emperor Heraclius and his Deputies,' in idem (ed.), *The Propaganda of Power: The Role of Panegyric in Late Antiquity*, (Leiden 1998), 247-270.

⁶⁸¹ See, for instance: C.V. Franklin, 'Theodore and Passio S. Anastasii,' in M. Lapidge (ed.), *Archbishop Theodore: Commemorative Studies of his Life and Influence*, (Cambridge 1995), 175-203, 188-189.

⁶⁸² Antiochus, *Ep.* (PG 89, 1424C-D).

⁶⁸³ Antiochus, *Ep.* (PG 89, 1425D-1427A).

had personally restored the region's 'Holy Places.' 'Since ... Modestus not only took care of the monasteries of the desert,' Antiochus claimed, 'but of the city and all its environs too, God guiding him in everything. For this man, as truly our new Bezalel or Zerubbabel, having been filled with the Holy Spirit, also raised the majestic churches of our saviour Jesus Christ that had been burnt.' The text goes on to give a list of the sanctuaries rebuilt, including the Churches of the Resurrection, the Ascension, and 'the Holy Spring' of the *Probatika*.⁶⁸⁴

Modestus' role in these events is widely-corroborated, including, notably, by Strategius.⁶⁸⁵ His depiction in both the latter's *On the Fall of Jerusalem*, and in the Anastasian Dossier more broadly, is as Heraclius' partner in the project of salvaging imperial pride, appearing alongside the emperor in scenes where he is lauded for having preserved Jerusalem's sacred topography.⁶⁸⁶ Antiochus, however, also paired this praise with a wide-ranging, theological defence of the beleaguered structures of ecclesiastical governance whose maintenance Modestus had sought to ensure in Zachariah's absence. The *Pandects*' repeated emphasis on the supremacy of the episcopate, though hardly novel, is striking. Given its author's stated desire only to incorporate material judged to be essential to a monk's education, the message of loyalty conveyed here stands out, appearing to be based, at least in part, upon the Sabaites' continuing, close connection to Palestine's church leaders.

In his homily 'On the Ordination of Clergy' (*peri diatagēs klērou*), Antiochus reaffirmed the need for strict ecclesiastical hierarchy. 'It follows for priests to become imitators of their archpriests,' the Sabaitic author wrote, summoning a range of quotations taken from the Pauline letters to describe the unique attributes enjoyed by those entrusted with the power of the bishops.⁶⁸⁷ A subsequent chapter 'On Showing Deference to Priests' (*peri tou aideisthai hierois*) appears to contain echoes of Pseudo-Dionysius in its insistence on the principle outlined in its title.⁶⁸⁸ In another, lengthy passage 'On Archpriesthood' (*peri archierōsunēs*), Antiochus restated his view of bishops as 'the highest of all men,'

⁶⁸⁴ Antiochus, *Ep.* (PG 89.1427A). Biblical tradition credits Bezalel with the construction of the Ark of the Covenant, Zerubbabel with laying the foundations of the Second Temple.

⁶⁸⁵ Strategius, *On the Fall* 24 (ed. and trans. Garitte 2.55); Leontius of Neapolis, *Life of John the Almsgiver* 18 (ed. Festugière, p. 365); Ps. Sebeos, *Armenian History* 35-36 (trans. Greenwood, pp. 70-76); *Palestinian-Georgian Lectionary* (ed. Garitte, 110-111). For further accounts, see: Booth, *Crisis of Empire*, p. 98.

⁶⁸⁶ Strategius, *On the Fall* 24 (ed. and trans. Garitte 2.55); *Translatio* (ed. Flusin 1.101).

⁶⁸⁷ *Pandects* 123 (PG 89.1817C-1820C).

⁶⁸⁸ *Pandects* 124 (PG 89.1820C-1824B); A Louth, 'The Reception of Dionysius up to Maximus the Confessor,' *Modern Theology* 24 (2008), 573-583. Virtually all research into Antiochus to date has been concerned to identify the various sources quoted in the *Pandects*, which rarely carry any attribution. See: S. Haidacher, 'Nilus-Exzerpte im Pandektes des Antiochos' *Revue Bénédictine* 22 (1905), 244-250; G. Bardy, 'Antiochus de Saint-Sabas' *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité* 1 (1937), 701-702; J. Kirchmeyer, 'Une source d'Antiochus de Saint-Sabas (Pandectes, c. 127-128),' *OCP* 28 (1962), 418-421; Kohlbacher, 'Unpublizierte Fragmente,' 153; P. Mayerson, 'Antiochus Monachus' Homily on Dreams: An Historical Note,' *Journal of Jewish Studies* 35 (1984), 51-56; I. Papadogiannakis, 'An Education through Gnostic Wisdom, The Pandect of Antiochus as *Bibliothekersatz*,' in P. Gemeinhardt, L. Van Hoof and P. Van Nuffelen (eds.), *Education and Religion in Late Antique Christianity: Reflections, Social Contexts and Genres*, (Routledge 2016), 60-71.

whose ‘prerogative’ is ‘to be seated close to God and to be the first illuminated by his theophany.’⁶⁸⁹ Here we seem to encounter views reminiscent of the highly ‘sacramentalised’ asceticism identified by Booth in the writings of the Moschan Circle. But unlike their compatriots abroad, Modestus and his allies refused to allow misgivings over doctrine to disrupt their plans for Jerusalem’s resurgence.

We may be confident that it was *this* enterprise, and not the dogged defence of Chalcedon, that most preoccupied the *topotērētes* and his supporters. Modestus, it seems, was not only keen to cooperate with Heraclius; his appeals for financial relief on behalf of the Holy City would seem to have found their way to Christian hierarchs across the East, whatever their official Christological position. One such letter, addressed to the anti-Chalcedonian Catholicos of Armenia, Komitas, is preserved by Pseudo-Sebeos.⁶⁹⁰ A missive attributed to the exiled patriarch Zachariah, in return, warned his Palestinian congregation and their acting leaders to prioritise faith over the pursuit of worldly profits, remarks seen by some as a criticism of his stand-in’s fundraising activities.⁶⁹¹ The Georgian Strategius noted that Modestus’ death only months into his own reign as bishop, supposedly the result of poisoning, occurred whilst en route to Damascus, having allegedly travelled in the hope of soliciting further material assistance from Christians there.⁶⁹²

This analysis need not be seen to support the now-discredited view of the Persian invasion as resulting in the near-total collapse of the Palestine’s ‘Byzantine’ Church Economy. But even if the once-dominant idea that the early-seventh century marked a definitive break in the material culture of Christianity in the Southern Levant has largely fallen from favour with scholars, it would be wrong to suggest that the short-term effect of this turbulence was anything other than disastrous. It has long been assumed that the enormous figure of over sixty-six thousand, presented in the Georgian version of Strategius as the number of Christians killed by the sack of 614, is vastly-inflated.⁶⁹³ More recently, Gideon Avni has argued that evidence of the destruction of major landmarks, even those explicitly mentioned in our sources, is missing from Jerusalem’s archaeological record, pointing to the rapid reconstruction of the city’s principle churches.⁶⁹⁴ Daniel Reynolds has claimed that the vitality of Palestinian monasticism in the early Islamic period may be taken to show that rumours of *its* demise

⁶⁸⁹ *Pandects* 122 (PG 89.1812A): Ἔστιν μὲν οὖν ἡ ἀρχιερωσύνη περιεκτικὴ, κατὰ τὸν τῆς παραδόσεως λόγον, τῶν κατὰ ταύτην ἀπάντων ἱερῶν πραγμάτων τάξιν ἔχουσα, τὴν πασῶν ὑψηλοτέραν, τὸ περὶ Θεὸν ἀμέσως ἰδρῦσθαι, καὶ τὰς πρώτας παρ’ αὐτοῦ θεοφανίας ἐκλάμπεσθαι.

⁶⁹⁰ Ps. Sebeos, *Armenian History* 35 (trans. Thomson, pp. 70-72).

⁶⁹¹ These details are found in a letter found in the *Patrologia Graeca* prefacing what purports to be an account of Zachariah’s captivity in Persia, the *De Captivitate Persica*. Only the letter itself, however, can be attributed to the patriarch with any degree of confidence: Zachariah of Jerusalem, *Epistula ad Hierosolymitas*, (PG 86:2.3228-3233); Howard-Johnston, *Witnesses to a World Crisis*, p. 167.

⁶⁹² Strategius, *On the Fall* 24 (ed. and trans. Garitte, 2.55); Eutychius, *Annals* (Alexandrian Recension) (ed. Breydy, p. 130): also refers to this incident but places Modestus’ death later. For discussion, see: Booth, *Crisis of Empire*, p. 186; Jankowiak, ‘Essai d’histoire,’ 119.

⁶⁹³ Strategius, *On the Fall*, (ed. and trans. Garitte). For discussion, see: Flusin, *Anastase le Perse*, 2.175-176.

⁶⁹⁴ G. Avni, ‘The Persian Conquest of Jerusalem (614 C.E.): An Archaeological Assessment,’ *BASOR* 357 (2010), 35-48.

must also be treated with caution.⁶⁹⁵ And yet as Avni has conceded, the immediate, human cost of the conquest was clearly severe, as can be seen from the presence of multiple mass grave sites dated to this period, hastily arranged in the hinterland beyond Jerusalem's walls. The later recovery of ascetic life in the region, moreover, cannot disguise the systemic decline of Judaeen Desert monasticism uncovered by Yizhar Hirschfeld. Of the many monasteries thought to have been operating at the height of the movement, only a handful would seem to have survived the 630s. Among the casualties was the Monastery of Martyrius at Ma'ale Adummim, which numismatic evidence suggests was destroyed in 614 and never subsequently rebuilt.⁶⁹⁶

One community which would seem to have fared better was the Great Laura's historic competitor, the Monastery of Theodosius, still apparently active when Sophronius arrived there with Moschus' remains in ca. 633. The future patriarch and his master aside, the prominence attained by its members in the ecclesiastical politics of this period has led Flusin to speculate that the setbacks endured by the Sabaites allowed the Theodosian monks to supplant them as principle representatives of Palestine's benighted monastic movement abroad. Only their abbot, he notes, appears in the attendance lists contained in the *Acts* of the Lateran Synod designated by the title of 'archimandrite,' an honour seemingly now denied to the leader of Sabas' disciples.⁶⁹⁷ Certainly, the Theodosians retained some influence in the decades that followed; the monastery's abbot, George, is later found in correspondence with Pope Martin. Modestus, it should be noted, was formerly superior of the same community himself. However, even if Theodosius' followers somehow later came to formally outrank the Sabaites in Rome, the writings produced by the latter strongly attest to the Great Laura's enduring position at the heart of Palestine's religious establishment, at least in the early 630s. It is Antiochus and his brothers, moreover, whose works appear to better-capture the mood in Jerusalem following Heraclius' re-conquest. What emerges from a close examination of these texts is evidence of a prevailing religious climate somewhat at variance with the rigorist position for which Sophronius, and later, Maximus, are famous.

There is nothing to suggest that Modestus' circle was philosophically committed to the principle of *oikonomia* any more than that they were proud monenergists. The easy interaction with one-time heretics described in our sources suggests, not that Jerusalem's religious leaders had made a conscious effort to forget the Christological disputes of the past, but that the subject of Chalcedon had effectively fallen by the wayside when required to compete against the material anxieties generated by almost fifteen years of war: less a mark of tolerance, than a reflection of true priorities. Elsewhere, however, the legacy of the Persian occupation was to provoke a reaction yet more at odds with the classic view of the Late Antique ascetic as consummate religious agitator. For some monks, the result was a growing

⁶⁹⁵ D. Reynolds, 'Monasticism in early Islamic Palestine: contours of debate,' in R. Hoyland and M. Legendre (eds.), *The Late Antique World of Early Islam: Muslims among Christians and Jews in the East Mediterranean*, (London 2016), 339-391.

⁶⁹⁶ Flusin, *Anastase le Perse*, 2.21-22 with n. 30.

⁶⁹⁷ Flusin, *Anastase le Perse*, 2.22-23.

sense of frustration with, even alienation from, those who continued to insist on debating points of doctrine when so much else was at stake.

IV. Rejecting Controversy: The Writings of Anthony of Choziba

For this, we turn to the writings of one final Palestinian ascetic which, though almost certainly unknown to the Moschan circle, are likely to have met with particular disapproval from Sophronius and his followers. Anthony, a member of the celebrated monastery of the Mother of God at Choziba in the Wadi Qilt, produced a pointedly dissonant account of this period to that preserved by the future patriarch, related in two works: a short collection of miracle tales attributed to his community's patroness, the *Theotokos*, and a laudatory *Life of George of Cyprus*, its abbot at the time of the Persian invasion. Referring to ecclesiastical appointments made during Modestus' episcopate, the *Life of George* appears as yet another literary product of the early 630s.⁶⁹⁸ As others have noted, the absence of any allusion to the subsequent Arab invasion of Palestine renders highly unlikely the suggestion that this unusually candid hagiography could have been completed at any point later than 634. Less originally, Anthony's unsparing depiction of his brothers took aim at what it saw as the moral failings responsible for Christianity's misfortunes. George's hagiographer, however, notably failed to include the shortage of doctrinal zeal highlighted by others in this category, preferring instead to belittle reports of this problem as conceited and counter-productive.

The Choziba texts have traditionally drawn unfavourable comparison with earlier Desert hagiographies, none more so than Cyril's.⁶⁹⁹ That little interest has attached itself to considering their theological remarks is in part a reflection of the low esteem in which they have long been held. Flusin was especially damning in his appraisal when comparing Anthony's talents to those only recently displayed by the author of the *Acts of Anastasius*.⁷⁰⁰ The prevailing scholarly approach to the *Life of George* has been to echo his characterisation of the text as a typical, if unremarkable, product of its time, ignoring the idiosyncrasies central to its message. This is not to deny that Anthony was profoundly affected by the events he had witnessed. As David Olster has shown, the *Life* voices many of the same critical fears expressed by Sophronius or Antiochus, casting the Persian occupation as God's punishment for impiety.⁷⁰¹ But whilst the Choziba texts are rarely treated as anything other than secondary evidence of

⁶⁹⁸ For Modestus' appointment of Anthony's mentor, Dorotheus as *staurophylax*, see: *V. Geo.* 4 (ed. Houze, p. 115).

⁶⁹⁹ Binns, *Ascetics and Ambassadors*, pp. 53-55.

⁷⁰⁰ Flusin, *Anastase le Perse*, 2.48, arguing that the *Life of George* 'est une production médiocre, mais saine, de l'hagiographie monastique: malgré le pauvre talent de son auteur, un Chypriote à l'esprit confus, peu maître de sa langue, elle est cependant bien enracinée dans l'époque, dont elle reflète, parfois curieusement, la vie troublée et les angoisses.'

⁷⁰¹ D. Olster, 'The Construction of a Byzantine Saint: George of Choziba, Holiness, and the Pilgrimage Trade in Seventh-Century Palestine,' *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 38 (1993), 309-322, 309-312; idem. *Roman Defeat*, pp. 79-92.

this broader, melancholy outlook, their author, in common with Moschus, was ultimately more concerned to paint a detailed picture of local ascetic life prior to its destruction. To date, little attention had been paid to this feature of Anthony's work either, but a closer reading suggests that it was crucial to his purpose as a writer.

Though rarely easy to historicise, these reminiscences can be combined with information gleaned from other sources to give a general outline of the monastery's past. In addition to brief remarks by Cyril, references to Choziba appear in a range of works produced from the sixth to seventh centuries, recorded by Moschus, Evagrius, and the *Life of Theodore of Sykeon*. Anthony claimed to preserve the legend of its founding in the fifth century by a group of Syrian hermits resident in the caves of the Wadi Qilt.⁷⁰² We know that the community was active by the reign of the emperor Anastasius from the widely-attested career of its then-abbot, John of Thebes, briefly alluded to above as a member of the Chalcedonian faction assembled around Elias, the bishop of Jerusalem.⁷⁰³ John, also known as John the Chozibite, as we saw, was a contemporary of Sabas and Theodosius. Whilst lesser-known, his elevation to the See of Caesarea by 518 - then still a hugely prestigious posting within Palestine's Church hierarchy - points to his order's equal, if not superior, standing at the time. The *Life of Sabas* records that it was John who received and disseminated news of the Council's formal acclamation by the emperor Justin in 518.⁷⁰⁴ Speculation persists that he may have been the same 'John of Caesarea' condemned in writing by Severus, though at this point our evidence runs dry.⁷⁰⁵ We next hear of the monastery from Anthony, and from the roughly contemporary account of the *Life of Theodore*, whose subject was alleged to have stayed with the monks decades earlier whilst on pilgrimage to the Holy Places.

Late Antique Choziba's physical remains were largely destroyed during the construction of the present-day monastery of St. George, one of a number of ancient ascetic sites reoccupied in the later-nineteenth century by the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem. First settled in 1879, the latter spoliated its 'Byzantine' predecessor's remains. Our knowledge of the original monastery's archaeology, therefore, depends upon the few areas of the complex that survive, and on the accounts of travellers who visited prior to its redevelopment.⁷⁰⁶ From what evidence there is, however, we might judge Anthony to give an accurate picture of the site in his period. The Choziba texts describe what Joseph Patrich has termed a 'composite institution' consisting, in this case, of a central cenobium known as the *kastron* and a cluster of hermit cells to the east. The latter, known simply as *ta kellia* - 'the Cells' - were located and

⁷⁰² *Miracles* 5-6 (ed. Houze, pp. 366-369).

⁷⁰³ Evagrius, *HE* 4.7 (ed. Bidez and Parmentier, pp. 157-158); *V. Sab.* 61 (ed. Schwartz, pp. 162-163).

⁷⁰⁴ *V. Sab.* 61 (ed. Schwartz, pp. 162-163).

⁷⁰⁵ See: S. Vailhé, 'Jean le Khozibite et Jean de Césérée,' *Échos d'Orient* 6 (1903), 107-113; Menze, *Justinian and the Making*, p. 41.

⁷⁰⁶ Accounts of Choziba by medieval travellers include those of the Georgian-Palestinian Lectionary, John Phocas (12th Century), and the Russian abbot Daniel, who visited in 1106. For an overview of these, see: J. Patrich, 'The Cells (*ta kellia*),' 206.

extensively surveyed by Patrīch in the 1980s. Other survivals include a further complex of cells located in the cliff face directly above the present-day monastery, and three separate burial caves, one containing over two hundred dated funerary inscriptions first published by Alfons Maria Schneider, the vast majority from the sixth and seventh centuries.⁷⁰⁷ Some name figures who appear to match characters in Anthony's *Life of George*.

From the *Life*, we learn that Choziba too had been evacuated in 614. Anthony vividly described the moment at which his hero had first come to learn of the Persian advance on Jerusalem, revealed in terrifying scenes as the abbot and his followers were travelling on the road to Jericho. This expedition, it is alleged, was organised after George received instructions from God, ordering him to proceed there so that he might 'behold the works of men.'⁷⁰⁸ The text's depiction of this episode is difficult, the enemy's arrival heralded by the appearance, in the sky, of a party of warring 'Indians.' Turning away from the miraculous drama unfolding above, Anthony claimed that George soon realised that the city itself was under attack, urging his disciples to save themselves and scatter:

'When he lifted his eyes to the sky he saw that it was filled with Indians, who were clashing as if in battle. And the ground shook and quivered beneath him. The brothers said to him: 'Come on, father, let us go to the city! Why do you stand for so long looking at the sky?' And with tears and dejection he said to them. 'Let us flee, brothers, and turn back! Do you not see and perceive the earth shaking?' And having said these things, he suddenly saw some armed men (*armatōmenoi*) riding out of the city on horseback, and other young men on foot, and boys wearing thigh-armour and carrying spears in their hands, running around in this manner hither.⁷⁰⁹

A subsequent passage of the *Life* relates that, amid the confusion that followed, the Chozibites dispersed: some, like the Sabaites, escaped to Arabia; others sought sanctuary in nearby caves, or found refuge with the monks of the Laura of Calamon. One group, including George, was said to have hidden in a gorge, only to be taken prisoner. Fortunately for Choziba's abbot, their captors were moved to mercy more easily than some of their compatriots. Anthony reported that the holy man was eventually released on account of his pitiful appearance.⁷¹⁰ After briefly staying in Jerusalem, the text notes that its

⁷⁰⁷ A.M. Schneider, 'Das Kloster der Theotokos zu Choziba im Wadi el Kelt,' *Römische Quartalschrift für christliche Altertumskunde und für Kirchengeschichte* 39 (1931), 297-332; O. Meinardus, 'Laurae and Monasteries of the Wilderness of Judaea,' *LA* 15 (1965), 220-250, 241-242; Hirschfeld, *Judean Desert Monasteries*, pp. 136-137.

⁷⁰⁸ *V. Geo.* 7 (ed. Houze, p. 128): καὶ γέγονε φωνὴ πρὸς αὐτόν· Κάτελθε εἰς Ἱεριχῶν, καὶ θεωρεῖς τὰ ἔργα τῶν ἀνθρώπων.

⁷⁰⁹ *Ibid*: Ἀνατείνας δὲ τὸ ὄμμα εἰς τὸν ἀέρα θεωρεῖ τοῦτον τινῶν Ἰνδῶν πεπληρωμένον, καὶ συγκρουόντων ὡς ἐν πολέμῳ· καὶ ἡ γῆ δὲ ἐσαλεύετο καὶ ὑπέτρεμεν ὑποκάτω αὐτοῦ. Λέγουσιν αὐτῷ οἱ ἀδελφοί· Δεῦρο, πάτερ, εἰσέλθωμεν εἰς τὴν πόλιν· τί ἔστηκας τοσαύτην ὥραν εἰς τὸν ἀέρα θεωρῶν; Ὁ δὲ μετὰ δακρύων καὶ κατηφείας λέγει αὐτοῖς· Φύγωμεν, ἀδελθοὶ καὶ ὑποστρέψωμεν. Ἦ οὐχ ὄρατε καὶ αἰσθάνεσθε τὴν γῆν σαλευομένην; Καὶ ταῦτα εἰπόντος αὐτοῦ, ἰδοὺ ἄφνω ἐκ τῆς πόλεως ἐξῆλθον ἑφίπποι τινες ἀρματωμένοι, καὶ ἄλλοι νεανίαί τινες πεζοί, καὶ παῖδες παραμήρια φοροῦντες, καὶ λόγχοι ἐν ταῖς χερσίν αὐτῶν, περιθέοντες ὧδε κάκεισε.

⁷¹⁰ *V. Geo.* 7 (ed. Houze, p. 130): Τὸν ἅγιον δὲ Γεώργιον ἰδόντες ἀκτῆμονα καὶ πάνυ ἰσχνὸν καὶ εὐλαβῆ, ἡσθέντες τὴν αὐτοῦ πολιτείαν, μᾶλλον δὲ καὶ ὑπὸ Θεοῦ κινηθέντες, δόντες αὐτῷ ἀρτοφόριον μεστὸν ψωμίων καὶ βαυκάλιον ὕδατος, ἀπελυσαν εἰπόντες. 'Observing the holy George to be poor, completely withered, and devout, they were delighted by his manner, and having been stirred by God, they gave him a bread basket full of morsels and a *baukalion* of water and ordered him to be freed.'

subject returned to his post in time to tonsure its author, who had initially intended to enrol as a monk at Raithou in the Sinai, but was unable to travel there as a result of the Persian advance.⁷¹¹ Yet the familiarity of this backdrop contrasts sharply with Anthony's depiction of the *mode* of ascetic life interrupted at Choziba in 614. Apparently dispensing with the usual hagiographical obligation to extol his brothers' orthopraxy, the *Life and Miracles*' account is laden with reports appearing to question their spotless reputation. The refreshing honesty encountered here might, at first glance, lead us to consider Anthony's work as unvarnished, when compared to the propagandist output of the Sabaitic hagiographers. But the openness with which the Choziba texts described potential transgressions committed by George's disciples was such that we can only assume that the effect was deliberate. The *Life and Miracles*, in fact, make clear that their author was acutely aware of his brothers' many shortcomings. The texts, at points, are fiercely critical of their mistakes.

It should be noted that Choziba is perhaps most famous among scholars today for its policy of allowing women to stay within its walls as paying guests, a custom unique in the Desert and one which was certainly at odds with local tradition.⁷¹² Anthony, in fact, appears to have been anxious to defend this practice, in spite of the obvious conflict implied with traditional ascetic norms. Cyril, we might recall, had once been able to justify Euthymius' refusal to meet with the empress Eudocia on the grounds that monks must never interact with women. The *Meadow* is replete with tales of ascetics corrupted after failing to take this prohibition seriously. Anthony, however, claimed that Choziba had been granted a special exemption from this rule by no less an authority than the Mother of God herself. The *Miracles* record that the Virgin had once ordered a wealthy *patrikia* to stay at the monastery to cure her of a mystery illness, establishing a mode of hospitality still honoured at the time of writing.⁷¹³ We find four women named among the occupants of the burial cave mentioned above.⁷¹⁴

Olster has suggested that the admission of women was a reflection of the 'hard times' facing the Desert monasteries in an era of declining revenues, provoked by the invasion.⁷¹⁵ On numerous occasions, however, Anthony referred to other questionable practices at Choziba for which he offered no defence. Both the *Miracles* and the *Life*, for instance, refer to drunkenness among the monks and their visitors, as if almost routine. The latter recalled an occasion on which burglars had been able to enter the monastery unchallenged because the brother posted as its doorkeeper had become inebriated and fallen asleep whilst on duty.⁷¹⁶ One of the more dubious feats attributed to the Virgin in the *Miracles*

⁷¹¹ *V. Geo.* 7 (ed. Houze, p. 131).

⁷¹² See for instance: D. Krueger, 'Mary at the Threshold: The Mother of God as Guardian in Seventh-Century Palestinian Miracle Accounts,' in L. Brubaker and M. Cunningham (eds.), *The Cult of the Mother of God in Byzantium* (Farnham 2011), 31-38.

⁷¹³ *Miracles* 1 (ed. Houze, pp. 360-363).

⁷¹⁴ Schneider, 'Das Kloster,' Inscriptions no. 16, 39, 103, 197. These record the burials of Makaria (16), Juliana (39), Maria Tharsikia (103), and Anastasia the Deaconess (197).

⁷¹⁵ Olster, 'The Construction,' 322.

⁷¹⁶ *V. Geo.* 6 (ed. Houze, p. 126).

celebrated the survival of the uncle of the Roman monk Vitalius, who had become so drunk whilst staying at Choziba, that he subsequently woke up in the middle of the Jerusalem-Jericho road, having to be rescued by the monastery's mule-driver the following morning.⁷¹⁷

Other sections of the *Life* continued in a similar vein, appearing to call into question the Chozibites' commitment to key aspects of the ascetic ideal. In one passage, their leaders were shown to be content to bestow the monastic habit upon men who had no intention of joining the monastery, in clear violation of the rulings against ascetic 'wandering' codified at Chalcedon and in Justinian's *Novels*, but also those issued by noted monastic authorities as diverse as Basil of Caesarea and Rabbula of Edessa. Anthony recalled that he had originally been inducted as a monk by George alongside an unnamed companion, who then proceeded to depart from Choziba immediately to continue his devotions elsewhere. Perhaps sensing the young novice's surprise that such behaviour was tolerated, the *Life* notes that its author's ascetic guide, the senior monk Dorotheus, had turned to Anthony afterwards, telling him not to 'believe that the place is what is required to be a monk, it is the way of life.'⁷¹⁸ This, of course, was a statement which many would have rejected.

These details alone might normally be thought sufficient to dispel even the strongest reputation for ascetic discipline. Strikingly, however, the *Life* also delighted in accusing the Chozibites of greed. Anthony claimed that the *Theotokos* had once tricked the monks by appearing at monastery's gates disguised as a beggar woman, only to be rejected after requesting an audience with its abbot, who claimed to be too busy to see her. Shamefully, the text notes that Choziba's *hegumen* subsequently made himself available immediately when the mysterious visitor suddenly produced a bag of sixty gold coins. The purpose of her visit, Anthony makes clear, was to admonish his brothers for their habit of pandering to wealthy travellers and neglecting poorer pilgrims. 'For this,' we are told, 'was our most praise-worthy mistress making right their [the monks'] actions, as this holy place is a shelter for the poor and for strangers, and not just a hostelry for the rich.'⁷¹⁹ Repeatedly alluding to the monastery's precarious finances, the *Life* had George pointedly remind his disciples that none of them had come to the Desert to lead 'a luxurious life,' with the clear insinuation that some, at least, had previously harboured this ambition.⁷²⁰

No convincing argument has yet been offered to explain Anthony's motive in including this material. We cannot imagine that he was oblivious to the embarrassment that it was likely to cause. Olster has convincingly argued that the *Life* was intended to be read within Choziba; the *Miracles* conceived as a

⁷¹⁷ *Miracles 2* (ed. Houze, p. 363).

⁷¹⁸ This maxim acts as something of a pithy slogan in the Greek: *V. Geo.* 8 (ed. Houze, p. 131): Τέκνον, μή νομίσης ὅτι ὁ τόπος ἐστὶ ὁ ζητούμενος τῶ μοναχῶ, ἀλλ ὁ τρόπος.

⁷¹⁹ *V. Geo.* 6 (ed. Houze, p. 125): Ἦν γὰρ ἡ εὐλογημένη δέσποινα, διοπθουμένη τὴν ἐργασίαν αὐτῶν, ὅτι ὁ τόπος ὁ ἅγιος οὗτος τῶν πτωχῶν καὶ τῶν ξένων ἐστὶν ἀναπαυστήριον, καὶ οὐ τῶν πλουσίων μόνον ἀπαντητήριον.

⁷²⁰ *V. Geo.* 10 (ed. Houze, pp. 340-341).

pamphlet to advertise the monastery to outsiders.⁷²¹ However, we must wonder how well-received the former is likely to have been by the monks. It is not, of course, unusual to hear a monastic author inveigh against avarice. But Anthony here appears to condemn real abuses committed by his companions. Perhaps most damning of all is a chapter of the *Miracles* describing the loss of Choziba's most famous attraction, a miraculous stream of healing oil formerly said to have emanated from the tomb of the monastery's Syrian founders. The text relates that the oil had stopped flowing following an incident in which one of the monks had clumsily disturbed the stone which covered the tomb, spraying the holy fluid across the room, before draining the rest away in anger.⁷²² For Anthony, its disappearance signified the withdrawal of the founders' favour, the spillage of the oil representing only the latest example of a broader tendency by the brothers to treat 'the saints' with 'derision' (*kataphronēsis*) and 'indifference' (*rhathumia*).⁷²³

A clue to the purpose of these compromising anecdotes would seem to be revealed in the *Life's* final chapters. In a series of long digressions, claiming to preserve George's ascetic teachings, Anthony took aim at what he called the 'evil speculating spirit' (*touto to pneuma to theōrētikon tēs planēs*) which had taken hold, not just at Choziba, but among all of what he described as 'this wretched generation.'⁷²⁴ The *Life* denounced the 'hypocrisy' of monks and laypeople consumed by quarrels, but who failed to observe their ascetic obligations, or correct the sacrilegious behaviour which had brought God's wrath down upon them in the first place. His brothers' many failings, it would appear, were enumerated to illustrate this point.

The *Life* voiced its author's anger at Christians' seemingly endless capacity for factional discord. Such conflict, it claimed, now served to undermine hopes for a lasting Roman recovery, even distracting from the liturgy in Church, with worshippers acting 'as if in the theatre or at a game, fearlessly pursuing our fights before God.'⁷²⁵ 'Since this delinquent speculative spirit,' the text remarked, 'refuses to give peace and quiet to those in its thrall, not during the [reading of the] psalms, nor during the liturgy, nor whilst sleeping, nor does it grant any kind of respite at all, but it constantly fashions fantasies and erroneous speculative frenzies (*maniai*) against our neighbour.'⁷²⁶

Anthony acknowledged the fundamental danger of heterodoxy. But the Choziba texts appear to take for granted the admixture of doctrinal opinion which Moschus and Rufus had been so desperate to prevent.

⁷²¹ Olster, 'The Construction,' 320.

⁷²² *Miracles* 6 (ed. Houze, pp. 368-369).

⁷²³ Ibid. (ed. Houze, p. 369) Τοῦτο δὲ ὅλον γέγονεν, ὡς οἶμαι, πρόφασις, ἐπειδὴ λοιπὸν ἐν πολλῇ καταφρόνησει καὶ ῥαθυμίᾳ προσηρχόμεθα τοῖς ἁγίοις.

⁷²⁴ *V. Geo.* 10 (ed. Houze, p. 350): Οὐδὲ τοῦτο τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ θεωρητικὸν τῆς πλάνης ἡσύχιαν καὶ ἀναπαυσιν ἐνδιδόναι ἀνεχεται τοῖς ὑπ' αὐτοῦ κεκρατημένοις. For previous discussion, see: T. Vivian and A.N. Athanassakis, *The Life of Saint George of Choziba and the Miracles of the Most Holy Mother of God at Choziba*, (San Francisco, CA 1994), p. 48.

⁷²⁵ *V. Geo.* 10 (ed. Houze, pp. 342-343).

⁷²⁶ Ibid.

The *Miracles* express their author's view that it was perfectly acceptable for those not in communion with the 'orthodox,' Chalcedonian Church to stay at Choziba if it provoked them to change their minds, as in the case of the *patrikia* sent there by the Mother of God.⁷²⁷ Even among the monastery's members, the *Life* suggests, a range of theological opinion could be found. But the texts' view of how best to deal with the potential challenges arising from this arrangement differed dramatically from that espoused in the *Meadow*. When one of Choziba's monks was accused of making unspecified heterodox remarks, Anthony, rather than calling for the errant brother's expulsion, claimed to have simply avoided him.⁷²⁸

What are we to make of this appeal to quiet, so clearly at variance with the monastic hysteria over doctrinal 'pollution' to which we are better-accustomed? Rowan Greer suggested that Anthony's campaign against 'speculation' may refer to the obsessive preoccupation with spiritual self-improvement ostensibly favoured by the 'Origenists,' whose chequered Palestinian past was explored in the previous chapter.⁷²⁹ We might, however, wonder whether George's biographer had a more recent target in mind: namely the trouble being wrought by contentious sectarianism of the type promoted by Moschus and his disciples. The Choziba texts' appearance roughly coincided with Sophronius' high-profile efforts to derail the Alexandrian Church union of 633. Anthony's complaints of unwelcome religious antagonism would certainly seem to chime much more closely with these events, than with the contemplative, even introverted, model of asceticism associated with the followers of Evagrius of Pontus. In any case, here we observe an ascetic author who entirely dismissed the pursuit of further controversy over doctrine as tiresome. More importantly, Anthony rejected this particular pastime as less an obligation, than a hindrance to the practice of the true monastic life.

V. Doctrinal Controversy and Church Economy on the Eve of the Islamic Conquests

The attitudes expressed in these concluding remarks could not be further from those more generally evoked in the Desert literature encountered during the course of this study. And yet Anthony was as much a part of this ascetic tradition as any of the authors cited above, himself belonging to a monastic community with impeccable Chalcedonian credentials. In tenor alone, his works are testament to the variety of ascetic voices audible in the Levant on the eve of the Islamic conquests. Any attempt to locate the despondency evident in the texts, meanwhile, within the conventional image of the Controversy over Chalcedon –even, perhaps, as an ironically aggressive avowal of *oikonomia* – rings hollow. The broader social commentary which accompanied the Choziba texts' complaints, it is true, reveals Anthony to have had more in common with some of his fellow hagiographers than simply a shared exposure to the precarity of contemporary monastic life. But where agreement with other writers can

⁷²⁷ *Miracles* 1 (ed. Houze, pp. 360-363).

⁷²⁸ *V. Geo.* 9 (ed. Houze, pp. 142-143).

⁷²⁹ R. Greer, Introduction, in Vivian and Athanassakis, *The Life of Saint George*, iii.

most readily be found is in a common view that the most important crisis facing the Church was material. Like Antiochus, or the author of the *Acts of Anastasius*, George's biographer plainly regarded the goal of rebuilding Palestinian society as vastly superior to that of enforcing doctrinal conformity. In Anthony's case, however, the lack of interest shown in controversial religious themes by comparison was not, apparently, borne of neglect, but a positive judgement that such matters were at risk of becoming a frivolous distraction from more important work.

Acknowledging the prevalence of economic discussion in the texts, Olster has been quick to defend the author of the *Life* and the *Miracles* from being characterised as grasping or mercenary. Anthony, he insists, was not a 'huckster' who thought of his monastery as a 'roadside attraction.' The Choziba texts' account, however, he concedes, reminds us that 'human nature often mixes spiritual and material into an indistinguishable amalgam.'⁷³⁰ But more so, perhaps, than at any point in the Late Antique past, it seems clear that the material dimension of the narrative contained in these works gave shape to their spiritual remarks. The essential fact of early seventh-century life, as Anthony depicts it, can be summarised in a single line. Pausing to reflect that even Choziba's caper bushes had now ceased to bear fruit, George's biographer remarked that this setback was only to be expected, since, 'now the earth is barren and wicked men and murderers walk upon it.'⁷³¹ Symptoms of the monastery's financial difficulties as a result of this disaster are everywhere. In one passage of the *Life*, Anthony related that its members had recently run out of funds to purchase grain, their abbot forced to dispatch brothers to Jerusalem and Jericho in search of relief.⁷³² In pointedly upbraiding the Chozibites for prioritising material wealth, the *Theotokos* tellingly was said to have taunted them that for this reason 'you justly lack money.'⁷³³

Such details, once again, would seem to defy attempts to distract from the scale of the challenges imposed on ascetics in particular by the political revolutions charted above. Scholarly opinion, however, remains divided as to whether the economic difficulties experienced during the decades after 614, in fact, represented only the nadir of a longer-term decline in monastic fortunes, the structures of institutionalised giving upon which Desert life had long been based having already largely disintegrated. Flusin has spoken of local monasticism in these years as a movement past its prime, though fails to elaborate precisely on what he sees as the cause of its stagnation.⁷³⁴ Others reject this view. But even among those wary of subscribing to the image of qualitative decay drawn here, there is a recognition that the final decades of the sixth century were a disorienting time for Palestine's monks. As Booth has noted, Moschus' work appears to suggest that, by the turn of the seventh century, the movement's focal point had shifted to the Jordan Valley, a move he relates to a concomitant change in patterns of monastic

⁷³⁰ Olster, 'The Construction,' 322.

⁷³¹ *V. Geo.* 9 (ed. Houze pp. 142-143).

⁷³² *V. Geo.* 6 (ed. Houze, p. 136).

⁷³³ *Ibid.*

⁷³⁴ Flusin, *Anastase le Perse*, 2.39-45.

income, the small offerings of individual pilgrims replacing an earlier reliance on aristocratic largesse, or funding by the Church and civil authorities. Olster has argued that the importance of such donations is attested by an inscription unearthed at Choziba, commemorating the generosity of the monastery's countless, anonymous benefactors.⁷³⁵ In these circumstances, we might better understand the hostility with which Anthony had reacted to the use of divisive religious rhetoric liable to deter some former visitors from returning.

In a recent study on the 'limits of the heresiological ethos' in Late Antiquity, Michel-Yves Perrin has argued that, already in the third century, the strict doctrinal demands of bishops and priests had tended to falter when confronted by the material 'necessities of life.'⁷³⁶ A similar case can be made for the seventh-century refashioning of the 'Natures Controversy' in Palestine. In their clamour to avoid further socio-economic uncertainty, the Sabaites, as we have seen, would seem to have regarded this fresh outbreak of Christological disturbance with relative disinterest: Anthony, for his part, with dismay and apparent incomprehension. Considering the origin of these responses, we might forgive Moschus his apparent pessimism, as illustrated above, for the future of the rigorist 'monachisme palestinien' portrayed in the writings of his mid-sixth century predecessors. Such feelings presumably serve to account for some of the intense animosity subsequently in evidence between Sophronius' allies and the party of political conformists which seems to have gathered around the *topotērētes* Sergius of Joppa.

Though several recent studies have used writings of this period to variously speak of dyothelete, or monothelete, 'majorities' in Palestine, there is little to be gained from this discussion of demography. The paucity of the evidence available for the doctrinal conflicts begun in the early 630s is such that we struggle to decipher the basic outline of key events in their reception, let alone the relative size of the local parties involved. On one thing, however, we can be clear: just as throughout the course of this study, here we encounter a range of religious figures who viewed their interaction with these debates through a heavy materialist lens, whose attitude to the Chalcedonian controversy and its derivatives, more so even than that of previous generations, was heavily impacted by the physical environment in which they lived. Rather than serving to question the undoubted significance of the seventh-century backlash against Heraclian 'accommodation,' this judgement might help to place the activities of Moschus' disciples and their enemies in greater perspective. Given the multifaceted nature of the unrest begun in 451, we would hardly expect to see this outrage replicated everywhere. But for the first time in our analysis, the intrusion of outside events into monastic literature in some cases very nearly succeeded in eclipsing ecclesiastical debate over the person of Christ entirely.

The previous chapter explored the elaborate strategies through which Palestine's ascetics had once attempted to subvert the controversy over Chalcedon for their own material gain. Here we seem to have

⁷³⁵ Olster, 'The Construction,' 318.

⁷³⁶ M.-Y. Perrin, 'The Limits of the Heresiological Ethos in Late Antiquity,' in D. Gwynn and S. Bangert (ed.), *Religious Diversity in Late Antiquity*, (Leiden 2010), 199-228.

come full circle from this position, Anthony's spirited repudiation of factionalism advocating peace between Christians for what emerge as virtually identical reasons. What matters is the extent to which, in each case, the discussion of what we are accustomed to regard as fundamental articles of faith was adapted, or indeed jettisoned, to service the requirements of clerical and monastic groups consumed by the task of navigating the ebb and tide of the Eastern Roman Church Economy. Even as, in some quarters, Palestinian monks were arming themselves for a final, to the minds of some modern commentators, futile, conflict over monenergism, among their colleagues there were others who neglected even to feign an interest in this or previous episodes of Christological intrigue, no longer believing its pursuit to deliver tangible, temporal benefit.

CONCLUSION

A few short years before Evagrius Scholasticus penned the exasperated words of rebuke quoted at the open to the preface of this thesis, another church historian was concluding his own account of intra-Christian conflict post-Chalcedon. Like Evagrius, John of Ephesus wrote with the benefit of a lifetime spent at the forefront of this struggle. The third and final part of John's Syriac *Ecclesiastical History*, however, was produced in very different circumstances to that of his Antiochene contemporary. Written to chronicle a new phase of hardship for anti-Chalcedonians begun in 571, sparked by an abrupt reversal in religious policy at the court of Justin II, its author claimed to have finished the text whilst languishing in gaol.⁷³⁷ Though originally a tripartite work covering the rise of Christianity from its earliest origins, only this portion of the *History* survives intact, its purpose to decry the intolerance alleged to have characterised the decades that followed the death of Justinian. We have no reason to question the truthfulness of the image of personal suffering related here. From the remainder of John's work, however, it is clear that the difficulties encountered by its author in his final years tell only half the story. As a leading representative of Chalcedon's opponents, the Mesopotamian had long been forced to tread carefully in his dealings with the palace. But for much of his career as a dissident churchman, John had prospered through close collaboration with the hated, 'synodite' State.

In his landmark hagiographical anthology, the *Lives of the Eastern Saints*, John complained bitterly of the savage treatment meted out to his compatriots by the Chalcedonian authorities, beginning under Justin I. Part Two of the *Ecclesiastical History*, as partially preserved in the accounts of Michael the Syrian and Pseudo-Dionysius of Tel Mahre, speaks of a further crescendo of conflict affecting its author's native Amida, initiated at the beginning of the 540s by the combative local bishop and enforcer of Chalcedon, Abraham bar Kayli.⁷³⁸ As Volker Menze has shown, the text's emotive depiction of these events shows signs of embellishment; on closer examination, the persecution of Syrian anti-Chalcedonians in this period appears as rather more limited and sporadic than the *Lives* suggest.⁷³⁹ However, even if the litany of violence recorded here did represent the experience of some, certainly, it was not John's. In fact, as Abraham and his superior Ephrem, the Chalcedonian patriarch of Antioch, began their notorious 'descent to the east,' our author was embarking on a similar campaign of religious persecution in Asia Minor. In 541 or 542, John travelled from Constantinople to oversee the forced

⁷³⁷ John of Ephesus, *Historia Ecclesiastica* 3.2.50.

⁷³⁸ Pseudo-Dionysius of Tel Mahre, *Chronicle* 3 (ed. Chabot, pp. 38-39); Michael the Syrian, *Chronicle* 9.26, (ed. Chabot 2.223-4). See: Harvey, *Asceticism and Society*, p. 63.

⁷³⁹ Menze, *Justinian and the Making*, pp. 110-111.

conversion of local ‘pagans’ to Christianity. Whether or not this mission had originated as an ‘official’ operation conducted on behalf of the court, it was soon embraced by Justinian and his advisors.⁷⁴⁰ By 546, we find John back in the capital, presiding over what J.B. Bury once described as an anti-pagan ‘inquisition’ targeting members of the city’s ruling class.⁷⁴¹ We can be confident that part of the impetus for the resulting purge of ‘illustrious persons’ was political, alerting us to its perpetrator’s status as the emperor’s trusted lieutenant.⁷⁴²

We gain little sense of this cosy relationship from the *Lives*. But it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that John was guilty, at the very least, of a certain sleight of hand. Cooperating with the imperial government at the Greek-speaking court in Constantinople, he condemned its religious policies to his Mesopotamian readers in Syriac. As an author, he warned his *Eastern* audience in the strongest terms never to compromise their faith, whilst appearing to have spent much of his career in the capital doing precisely that. A charitable view might seek to attribute the cause of this apparent doublethink to the stifling effect of the authoritarianism of which John was both an agent and, ultimately, a victim. A parallel could be made here with the recent literary career of Procopius of Caesarea, who famously complemented his sober, official account of the military campaigns of Justinian with the *Anecdota*, a private, inflammatory text condemning the emperor and his entourage.⁷⁴³ In places, the *Lives of the Eastern Saints* is just as critical. It author’s position as a leading beneficiary of the court’s religious policies, however, poses a problem to this analysis. Rarely, in fact, do we observe the skill with which, for a time, this luminary of the anti-Chalcedonian cause appears to have exploited the idiosyncrasies of the debate surrounding the Council to further his own ends.

John’s achievement in establishing productive relations with Justinian was greeted enthusiastically by his coreligionists. Craving acceptance by the imperial authorities, their leaders, delighted by the court’s support for his activities in Asia Minor, inducted him into their ranks. The Mesopotamian already held the distinction of having been ordained by John of Tella in 529. But his growing standing within the movement reached its climax in 558, when Jacob bar Addai consecrated him as anti-Chalcedonian bishop of Ephesus.⁷⁴⁴ A titular appointment specially created for John, this title carried enormous symbolic significance, nevertheless, given the city’s role as a venue for past conciliar debate. But by offering himself to serve as a bridge between the anti-Chalcedonians and a formerly-hostile State, this enterprising churchman succeeded in extracting generous terms from both. There can be little doubt

⁷⁴⁰ Ibid. pp. 262-265. Menze suggests that the conversion programme began as a ‘private’ mission, initiated by John himself, before becoming a ‘joined effort’ with the court.

⁷⁴¹ Ps. Dionysius, *Chron.* 3 (ed. Chabot, pp. 76-77); J.B. Bury, *A History of the Later Roman Empire*, (2 vols.), (London 1923), 2.368.

⁷⁴² Though as Peter Bell has noted, we should not necessarily assume that the accusations of ‘paganism’ made were totally without basis: Bell, *Social Conflict*, pp. 240-246.

⁷⁴³ On the complex relationship between Procopius’ disparate works, see especially: G. Greatrex, ‘The Composition of Procopius’ Persian Wars and John the Cappadocian,’ *Prudentia* 27 (1995), 1-13.

⁷⁴⁴ John of Ephesus, *HE* 3.3.37 (ed. Brooks, p. 171); Menze, *Justinian and the Making*, p. 261.

that John had profited enormously from his association with Justinian, the proceeds of his work as ‘converter of the pagans’ serving to finance the construction of a miniature ecclesiastical empire established in his name, comprising over a hundred churches and a dozen monasteries. The task of eradicating paganism was a massive undertaking but also, as Menze has noted, a paid profession.⁷⁴⁵ John himself boasted of the substantial personal wealth he had come to enjoy, having delivered approximately 70-80,000 former pagans into the light of Christianity.⁷⁴⁶

In the story of his subsequent, spectacular fall from grace, it was the loss of this property which angered our author the most. In recounting the suffering John had endured after 571, Part Three of the *Ecclesiastical History* insinuated that jealousy on the part of the capital’s established ecclesiastical leadership was largely to blame for turning the palace against him. Central to the text’s depiction of this persecution is a lengthy passage decrying the confiscation of a monastery at Sycae used by John as his headquarters, seized by the Chalcedonian patriarch of Constantinople, John III Scholasticus. The monastery, we learn, was once a villa donated for the anti-Chalcedonian’s use by Justinian’s imperial chamberlain, Callinicus. The bishop was accused of instigating the campaign against John in hope of obtaining the deeds to the site, thereby dispossessing the Mesopotamian as its rightful owner. Noting that control of the monastery was to be passed to members of the Chalcedonian communion, our author bitterly denounced him. But his principal objection to its expropriation was on grounds of cost. Having received the villa from Callinicus, John bemoaned the fact that he had ‘spent a significant sum of money’ on improving it.⁷⁴⁷ Refusing to hand over the deeds, he was driven from the capital, only returning after the bishop’s death. The argument, however, did not stop there. The *Ecclesiastical History* reveals that following a brief hiatus, John received renewed demands that he relinquish any documents relating to the site from the See’s new occupant, the reinstated former patriarch Eutychius. It was his failure to comply with this ultimatum, the text acknowledges, which led to his imprisonment.

In his characteristic maladroitness, our author disclosed that he had sought to talk his way out of this predicament by claiming that the deeds themselves were of no legal value. As the site in Sycae was still a private dwelling at the time of Callinicus’ donation, John reminded his opponents, the document drawn up made no reference to a monastery. The bishops, he argued, therefore had no right to lay claim to his estate.⁷⁴⁸ Part Three of the *Ecclesiastical History* records that this tactic was successful, the episcopal authorities were forced to end their occupation of the site and retreat from Sycae in embarrassment. John, however, continued to dwell on the negative effect the episode had had upon his finances. Unable to confiscate his property, Eutychius, he complained, had acted to deprive him of his customary share of the public grain dole, a privilege which John professed to have purchased at a cost

⁷⁴⁵ Menze, *Justinian and the Making*, p. 257.

⁷⁴⁶ Ps. Dionysius, *Chron.* 3 (ed. Chabot, p. 77).

⁷⁴⁷ John of Ephesus, *HE* 3.2.41 (ed. Brooks, p. 90-91).

⁷⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

of ‘three hundred darics.’ It would be no exaggeration, in fact, to say that Ephesus’ anti-bishop characterised the entire ordeal as a battle to safeguard his assets. John lamented his ‘misfortune’ at having enabled his enemies by designating the Sycae villa as a monastery in the first place. That possession of the site was, in effect, the crux of their dispute seems clear. The text reported that Euty chius only, finally consented to its author’s release on the condition that the property was surrendered. Preoccupied by this materialist conflict, John was seemingly too distracted to summon his usual, melancholic rendering of the controversy over Chalcedon as a catalogue of religious violence visited upon orthodox Christians by their synodite oppressors. In contrast to the rampant Christological partisanship which marked the *Lives of the Eastern Saints*, discussion of the Council’s theology barely receives a mention.

In common with so many of the figures encountered above, John’s impression of the battles in which he fought provides a challenge to scholars seeking to portray them as largely unconnected to the social and economic interests of their participants. In a sense, his career encapsulates the extent to which the two were intertwined, echoing key findings of the analysis above. The focus of this thesis has been to expose a heavy thread of materialism woven through the history of the Chalcedonian Controversy in Palestine. Its central contention is that this essential element of the debate which followed the Council of 451 has been understated, or largely overlooked in favour of the conventional view of a dispute waged almost solely over doctrine.

The chronological approach taken above allows us to argue with confidence that the latter model never applied to the Late Antique reception of Chalcedon in the ‘Holy Land.’ From its earliest beginnings, the unrest generated by the Council in Palestine had always carried another dimension. Originating in the rebellion against Juvenal of Jerusalem in 451, the local anti-Chalcedonian resistance viewed the requirement to respond to the material ramifications of its reforms alongside any misgivings over the ‘in two natures’ Christology enshrined in Chalcedon’s Definition of Faith. The Council’s divisive vision for a Church economy controlled by the episcopate had a clear role in subsequently shaping the intra-Christian factionalism observed in the decades that followed; its development into a fully-fledged battle for the faith only appears to have followed afterwards. Suggestions that contemporaries were uniquely exercised by the theological content of this dispute are further undermined by the knowledge that, with the decline of local opposition the Council, Chalcedon’s Palestinian supporters later employed the same exclusionary rhetoric, couched in charges of heresy, against one another. A major goal of our investigation has been to examine in depth the complex narrative motivations of the mid-sixth century hagiographers of the Judae an Desert monasteries, whose work remains the primary vehicle through which historians must access key details of the Council’s local aftermath. The result has been to reveal how the popular image of Palestine’s monks as staunch proponents of Chalcedon emerged in response to the financial hardships of the Justinianic era. Anxious to distinguish themselves in the eyes of the court, Cyril of Scythopolis and his competitors depicted a movement characterised by total obedience

to the religious policies of an imperial elite upon whose goodwill their imagined future prosperity depended. No longer subject to the same political considerations, their descendants active in the seventh century were often more restrained.

For readers accustomed to traditional depictions of the Controversy, this summary of events might seem disjointed. But the alternative appraisal of its perpetrators' actions, as outlined here, ought not to be seen as lacking coherence. On closer examination, each of the reactions described above can be linked to an enduring source of anxiety for clerics, monks, and the laity whose patronage so often shaped their activities: the complex business of safeguarding the financial affairs of the Christian institutions to which they were attached. This impulse was itself the product of a momentous process of change to rival the theological developments of this period in its wide-ranging impact: the unprecedented wealth of resources, cultural and material, invested in these religious organisations by Late Antique society. With attention turning to this process once again, partly in response to the latest work of Peter Brown, its consequences are only now beginning to be fully understood. In the pages above, contemporary concern for the physical capital placed in churches and monasteries has taken a number of forms, witnessed in the spirited defence of the economic independence of private religious foundations by their owners, or the elaborate fundraising strategies employed by ascetics themselves. In each case, however, the root of this disquiet was the same. The haphazard evolution of the Eastern Roman Church economy before and after 451 gave rise to countless instances of conflict between Christians, as Constantine's successors struggled to define its position in relation to the broader systems of production and exchange operating around it.

The result of this realisation should not be to exchange one exclusivist argument for another. A fundamental part of the position adopted in this study has been to stress that the material effects of Chalcedon cannot be taken in isolation from the theological wrangling provoked by its rulings, or vice versa. In marking a radical departure from the current, prevailing assessment of the Council's meaning to Late Antique observers, the issue is not to assess whether Christology really *mattered* to contemporaries. Clearly it did. To say that our Palestinian actors, like John, possessed a more practical view of the Controversy than some would allow is not to deny or diminish the very real emotion felt by others when contesting these basic matters of doctrine. Nevertheless, the evidence presented in the preceding chapters gives cause to doubt the extent to which such feelings were ever truly responsible for the cross-generational turmoil we have witnessed. Often the most ferocious instances of violence encountered were only loosely connected, led by individuals who exhibited a limited interest in the nuances of doctrinal debate, or whose grasp of the issues at stake has emerged as defective. Local clerical and monastic leaders who did understand the theology of Chalcedon are found to have manipulated it, as John had, in search of material advantage, striking when we think of the reverence in which the subject of Christ's person is thought to have been held. In instances where the maintenance of a strict Christological position and the socio-economic interests of our subjects came into conflict,

there was generally little contest. The practice of the former was compromised to accommodate the latter.

Where does this leave the study of ‘religious controversy’ in the Christian Eastern Roman Empire? If nothing else, the aim of this thesis has been to argue that many of the assumptions upon which treatments of this issue typically rely are unsound. Though rightly regarded as a central development of its era, its emphasis has been to move away from the exceptionalist portrayal of the spate of theologically-charged disorder seen in these years as stemming from a passion peculiar to the outlook of early Christians. Instead, it has sought to promote the idea of a phenomenon that was deeply influenced by factors we might reasonably regard as perennial sources of uncertainty for all pre-modern cultures. The hope is that this analysis will bring us closer to realising an ambition that has long been held by modern commentators: the ability to approach the combatants on their own terms. If, as part of this effort, we must ensure that contemporary debate over Christology is taken seriously and not misrepresented as somehow masking ‘real’ concerns, then, as others have noted, we must also challenge the reverse. Historians should reject the superficial characterisation of those involved as incapable of interacting with the terms of this discussion through anything other than overwhelming piety.

Chalcedon’s aftermath in Palestine shows that the reality was much more complicated. At the very least, it offers a spirited challenge to the classic argument once articulated by Robert Markus, that the story of Late Antiquity was that of the gradual triumph of the ‘sacred’ over the ‘secular.’⁷⁴⁹ The evidence presented in these chapters points to the inadequacy of this dichotomy, whilst revealing the extent to which non-religious factors continued to impact the formation of the Church’s dogma. Various routes emerge through which we might explore this avenue further. The confluence of theological and material activity we have traced did not begin in 451, even if events that year compounded it. For all the elements which make the ‘Holy Land’ a special case among the Eastern Roman provinces, the scope exists to apply these findings to settings across the wider *oikumene*, as John’s example ably illustrates. Such an effort is likely to substantially redraw the imagery associated with this period today. The reinterpretation recommended here seeks to accelerate its progress.

⁷⁴⁹ R.A. Markus, *The End of Ancient Christianity*, (Cambridge 1990), esp. p. 228. cf. É. Rebillard, *Christians and Their Many Identities in Late Antiquity, North Africa, 200-400 CE*, (Ithaca, NY and London 2013), *passim*.

APPENDIX A

Monastic Patrons and Proprietors in the *Lives* of Cyril of Scythopolis*Life of Euthymius*

Name	Date	Reference	Details given
Maris	ca. 411	<i>V. Euth.</i> 10	Gives 'all his wealth' for building and extension of the monastery of Theoctistus at Deir Muqallik. (ed. Schwartz, pp.).
Peter-Aspebetus	ca. 421	<i>V. Euth.</i> 15	Pays for construction of monastery of Euthymius at Khan al-Ahmar. (Schwartz, pp.).
Peter-Aspebetus	420s	<i>V. Euth.</i> 16	Pays for extension of monastery of Euthymius. (Schwartz, pp.).
Eudocia	ca. 455	<i>V. Euth.</i> 30	Appoints Euthymian monks to administer private foundations. Builds tower overlooking Khan al-Ahmar at Qasr Ali. (Schwartz, pp.).
Bassa	ca. 455	<i>V. Euth.</i> 30	Appoints Euthymian monk, Andrew, as superior of the shrine of St. Menas. (Schwartz, pp.)
<i>Eudocia</i>	459	<i>V. Euth.</i> 35	Offers to make donation to Euthymius. Constructs nearby church and monastery of St. Peter. (Schwartz, pp.).
Martyrius (later bishop of Jerusalem)	ca. 465	<i>V. Euth.</i> 32	Founds monastery at Ma'ale Adummim. (Schwartz, pp.).
Elias (later bishop of Jerusalem)	ca. 465	<i>V. Euth.</i> 32	Founds monasteries. (Schwartz, pp.).
Anastasius (bishop of Jerusalem)	473	<i>V. Euth.</i> 40	Constructs burial vault of Euthymius. (Schwartz, pp.).

<i>Fidus</i> (deacon, later bishop of Dora)	ca. 478-482	<i>V. Euth.</i> 43	Oversees conversion of Khan al-Ahmar into a coenobium. Likely to have been funded by the episcopate. (Schwartz, pp.).
Melania the Younger	420s-430s	<i>V. Euth.</i> 45	Founds double-monastery on Mount of Olives. (Schwartz, pp.).
Caesarius	ca. 511	<i>V. Euth.</i> 47	Makes large payment to monastery at Khan al-Ahmar and promises annual payment subsequently. (Schwartz, pp.).
Stephen (abbot)	ca. 511	<i>V. Euth.</i> 47	Donates family fortune to monastery at Khan al-Ahmar. (Schwartz, pp.).
<i>Caesarius</i>	ca. 534	<i>V. Euth.</i> 48	Presumably pays off earlier debt. Receives relic of the cross as a gift. (Schwartz, pp.).
Unnamed woman of Bêtaboudissae	Unknown (6 th c)	<i>V. Euth.</i> 54	Provides annual festal meal for the monastery at Khan al-Ahmar. (Schwartz, pp.).
Romanus	Unknown (6 th c)	<i>V. Euth.</i> 57	Pays for festival dedicated to Euthymius. (Schwartz, pp.).

Life of Sabas

Name	Date	Reference	Details given
Four unnamed Saracens	478	<i>V. Sab.</i> 15	Provide Sabas with food. (Schwartz, pp.).
<i>Unnamed donors</i>	ca. 483	<i>V. Sab.</i> 18	Pay for building and maintenance of Great Laura. (Schwartz, pp.).
Martyrius (bishop of Jerusalem)	491	<i>V. Sab.</i> 19	Donates relics to Great Laura for consecration of monastery church. (Schwartz, pp.).

Sophia (mother of Sabas)	491	V. Sab. 25	Leaves inheritance to Sabas. He uses this to pay for a guesthouse and gardens in Jericho, and a guesthouse in the Laura. (Schwartz, pp.).
Elias (bishop of Jerusalem)	494	V. Sab. 31	Builds episcopal monastery in Jerusalem. (Schwartz, pp.).
Anonymous Donor	494	V. Sab. 31	Provides funds for purchase of land in Jerusalem, which is used for a hospice for foreign monks. Also funds two hospices for monastery of Castellium, one in Jerusalem, one in Jericho. (Schwartz, pp.).
<i>Theodulus and Gelasius</i>	ca. 501	V. Sab. 32	Brothers credited with assisting with the construction improvements at the Great Laura. Described as ‘architects,’ but unclear if this is meant literally. (Schwartz, pp.).
Marcianus	ca. 510	V. Sab. 37	Donates ‘many offerings’ for the Monastery to the Cave. (Schwartz, pp.).
Zanagôn	ca. 510	V. Sab. 37	Donates land for the Monastery of Heptastomos. (Schwartz, pp.).
Elias (bishop of Jerusalem)	ca. 510	V. Sab. 37	Appoints Sabaite monks to senior roles in Church of Jerusalem. (Schwartz, pp.).
<i>Zannus and Benjamin</i>		V. Sab. 42	(Schwartz, pp.).
Anastasius I	511/512	V. Sab. 51	Gives 1,000 Solidi to Sabas during interview at Constantinople. (Schwartz, pp.).
Anicia Juliana	511/512	V. Sab. 53	Regularly receives Sabas in Constantinople. Unclear if she makes a donation at this stage. (Schwartz, pp.).
Anastasia, wife of Pompeius	511/512	V. Sab. 53	Regularly receives Sabas in Constantinople. Later retires to set up a monastery on the Mount of Olives. (Schwartz, pp.).

Anastasius I	512	<i>V. Sab. 54</i>	Gives 1,000 further Solidi to Sabas on his departure from Constantinople. (Schwartz, pp.).
Hypatius	516	<i>V. Sab. 56</i>	Gives 100 pounds of gold coin to Sabas. Gives a further 100 pounds of gold coin to each of the churches of the three main churches of Jerusalem. (Schwartz, pp.).
Anicia Juliana	ca. 527/528	<i>V. Sab. 69</i>	Dies in Constantinople. On her death, her eunuchs are sent to Palestine with funds to establish a monastery. (Schwartz, pp.).

Justinian I	531/532	<i>V. Sab. 73</i>	Makes several significant donations to Palestinian church following Samaritan Revolt of 529. Pays for construction of hospital in Jerusalem with an annual allotted income of 1,850 Solidi. Pays for completion of the Nea Ekklesia. Donates 1,000 Solidi to Sabas for forts to protect desert monasteries. (Schwartz, pp.).
Unnamed brothers of Burirai	unknown	<i>V. Sab. 79</i>	Pay for public festival and provide free lodging to Sabaite monks travelling on business. (Schwartz, pp.)
Unnamed Saracen	unknown	<i>V. Sab. 81</i>	Donates small annual offering of gold coin. (Schwartz, pp.).

Life of John the Hesychast

Name	Date	Reference	Details Given
John the Hesychast	471	<i>V. Jo Hesych. 2</i>	Founds church and monastery at Nicopolis in Armenia. (Schwartz, pp.).
Eudocia	unknown	<i>V. Jo Hesych. 4</i>	Founds hospice and monastery of St. George in Jerusalem. (Schwartz, pp.).

Marcianus	492/3	<i>V. Jo Hesych. 5</i>	Provides monasteries of Sabas with food and supplies. (Schwartz, pp.).
Aetherius	unknown (after 509)	<i>V. Jo Hesych. 15</i>	Distributes large sums to Palestinian monasteries. (Schwartz, pp.).
Parents of Cyril	unknown	<i>V. Jo Hesych. 20</i>	Make an annual donation to the monasteries of Sabas. (Schwartz, pp.).
<i>Basilina</i>	unknown	<i>V. Jo Hesych. 23-24</i>	Wealthy follower of John, who persuades her nephew to accept Chalcedon. Cyril does not state whether she gave money to him. (Schwartz, pp.).

Life of Cyriacus

Name	Date	Reference	Details Given
Terebôn	485	<i>V. Cyr. 6</i>	Leaves large sum in his will to the monastery of Theoctistus (Deir Muqallik) and the monastery of Euthymius (Khan al-Ahmar). (Schwartz, pp.).

Life of Theodosius

Name	Date	Reference	Details Given
Hicelia	ca. 455	<i>V. Theod. 1</i>	Finances the construction of the Kathisma Church outside Jerusalem. (Schwartz, pp.).
Acacius	ca. 479	<i>V. Theod. 3</i>	Pays for the construction of Theodosius' coenobium at Deir Dosi and continues to send a 'large sum' annually. (Schwartz, pp.).
Mamas	unknown (between 529 and 542)	<i>V. Theod. 5</i>	Official at the court of Anastasius and brother of the abbot Sophronius. Funds improvement and enlargement of the monastery. (Schwartz, pp.).

Life of Theognius

Name	Date	Reference	Details Given
Flavia	454/455	<i>V. Theog.</i>	Founds monastery of the Mount of Olives and pays for construction of a Church of St. Julian. (Schwartz, pp.).

Life of Abraamius

Name	Date	Reference	Details Given
John	unknown	<i>V. Abr. 2</i>	Founds monastery at his parents' tomb in Cratea. (Schwartz, pp.).
Abraamius	unknown (after 515)	<i>V. Abr. 6</i>	After becoming bishop of Cratea, funds the construction of many churches and monasteries. (Schwartz, pp.).

APPENDIX B

PALESTINIAN DELEGATES AND SPECTATORS AT THE SYNOD OF CONSTANTINOPLE (536 CE)

i) Palestinian monks admitted to the First Session of the Synod of Constantinople (536)

(Translated from: ACO 3.128-130)

‘And both Theodore the abovementioned tribune-notary and *referendarius* of our god-protected emperor, and Marianus the god-beloved presbyter and *hegumen* of the monastery of Dalmatius of holy memory and exarch came in, and together with them the presbyters and archimandrites of the blessed monasteries [present] in this imperial city:

...

- 70. Dometianus, presbyter and archimandrite of the monastery of the blessed Martyrius
 - 71. Hesychius, presbyter and archimandrite of the monastery of the blessed Theodosius
 - 72. Cassianus, presbyter of the *laura* of Sabas
 - 73. Cyriacus, presbyter and *hegumen* of the [monastery of] towers of the Jordan
 - 74. Nestabus, presbyter of the *laura* of blessed Firminus
 - 75. Terentius, presbyter of the New Laura
 - 76. Leontius, monk and *hegumen* and *topotērētēs* of the whole Desert
 - 77. Traianus, presbyter of the [monastery of] towers of the Jordan
 - 78. Polyuctus, deacon of the monastery of *abba* Theodosius
 - 79. Theodore, deacon and monk of the New Laura
 - 80. Cyricus, deacon and monk of the same New Laura
 - 81. Anastasius, deacon of the monastery of the blessed Martyrius
 - 82. Mamas, monk of the same monastery
 - 83. John, monk of the same monastery
 - 84. Julianus, monk of the monastery of *abba* Theodosius
- These men all act on behalf of their own monasteries and of all the monks in the desert of the Holy City.

...

- 86. Theonas, presbyter of Mount Sinai and *apocrisarius* of both the mountain and the church of Pharan and *laurae* of Raithou, representing all the monks of that place.
- 87. Strategius, deacon and monk of the monastery of the blessed John, representing all the monks of Scythopolis.’

ii) Palestinian signatories to the *Libellus* of Marianus, addressed to the Emperor Justinian

(Translated from: ACO 3.32-38)

‘To the god-beloved and all-pious emperor Justinian, *autocrator* and *augustus*, entreaty and supplication by Marianus, by God’s mercy presbyter and archimandrite of the monastery of the most blessed Dalmatius and exarch of the blessed monasteries of this city and archimandrite of the same holy monasteries, and by those present in [the city] from the Desert of Jerusalem, archimandrites and monks, as well as those of Syria Secunda, the holy Mount Sinai, and the three Palestines:

67. I, Hesychius, by God's mercy presbyter and monk of the monastery of the blessed Theodosius, having been requested, have subscribed, acting also on behalf of the desert surrounding the Holy City.
68. I, Dometianus, ... presbyter and archimandrite of the monastery of blessed Martyrius ... have subscribed
69. I, Cassianus, ... presbyter of the laura of blessed Sabas ... have subscribed
70. I, Cyriacus, ... presbyter and archimandrite of the laura ... have subscribed
71. I, Nestabus, ... presbyter and monk of the laura of the blessed Firminus ... have subscribed
72. I, Terentius, ... presbyter of the New Laura ... have subscribed
73. I, Traianus, ... presbyter of the [monastery] of the towers that are in Jordan ... have subscribed
74. I, Leontius, ... monk ... have subscribed
75. I, Theodore, ... deacon and monk of the New Laura ... have subscribed
76. I, Cyricus, ... deacon and monk of the New Laura ... have subscribed
77. I, Polyeuctus, ... deacon and monk of the monastery of the blessed Theodosius ... have subscribed
78. I, Anastasius, ... deacon and monk of the monastery of the blessed Martyrius ... have subscribed
79. I, Nikon, ... deacon and monk of the monastery of the blessed Theodosius ... have subscribed
80. I, Mamas ... monk of the monastery of the blessed Martyrius ... have subscribed
81. I, Julianus ... monk of the monastery of the blessed Theodosius ... have subscribed
82. I, John ... monk of the monastery of the blessed Theodosius ... have subscribed
83. I, Sabbatius, ... monk of the laura of the blessed Sabas ... have subscribed
84. I, Martyrius, ... monk of the New Laura ... have subscribed
85. I, Basileus, ... monk of the Jordan ... have subscribed
86. I, Theodore, ... monk of the laura of the blessed Firminus ... have subscribed
87. I, Theonas, ... presbyter and apocrisarius of the holy Mount Sinai and the desert of Raithou and the holy church of Pharan have subscribed

...

90. I, Cosmas, a monk by God's mercy, having been requested, have subscribed also on behalf of all the monks in Palaestina Prima.
91. I, Strategius by God's mercy deacon and monk, having been requested, have subscribed also on behalf of all the monks in Palaestina Secunda.
92. I, Salamines by God's mercy presbyter and hegumen, having been requested, have subscribed also on behalf of all the monks in Palaestina Tertia.
93. I, Elias, by God's mercy deacon and monk, having been requested, have assented also on behalf of all the monks in Augustopolis in Palaestina Tertia.
94. I, Anastasius, by God' mercy, having been requested, have assented also on behalf of all the monks of Petra in Palaestina Tertia.
95. I, Photeinus, by God's mercy monk of the monastery of St Stephen of Maoza Jamnia in Palaestina Prima, having been requested, have assented also on behalf of the monks in this place.
96. I, John, by God's mercy presbyter and monk, having been requested, have assented also on behalf of all the monks of Aila in Palaestina Tertia.

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