

WHAT HAPPENED TO THE MONOPHYSITE MONASTICISM OF GAZA?

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In the second half of the fifth century the region of Gaza became the center of anti-Chalcedonian resistance in Palestine, led by the famous figures of Gazan monasticism. Peter the Iberian and his circle and Abba Isaiah of Egypt led this resistance, supported primarily, it seems, by a network of Monophysite monasticism that had developed in the region. The story is relatively well known from the works of John Rufus, the disciple and biographer of Peter the Iberian, and Zacharias the Rhetor.¹ Although sparsely recorded in the sources, Chalcedonian monasticism presumably coexisted in the region alongside its anti-Chalcedonian counterpart, though it may have maintained a low profile during the period of Monophysite monastic ascendancy. While there are indications that anti-Chalcedonian monasticism in the region enjoyed considerable popular support among town dwellers—for example in Maiuma, Gaza, Ascalon, and Azotus²—there is no explicit evidence for a wide popular support among the rural population. In fact, it may be that this population was more inclined to support the hegemonic Chalcedonian camp or was perhaps simply disinterested in the Christological polemics of the time.

Following the death of Peter the Iberian and Abba Isaiah (491),³ Gazan anti-Chalcedonian monasticism was led by the followers recruited by Peter the Iberian from the Beirut circle of law students. Prominent in this circle was the famous Severus of Antioch, who became first a leader of anti-Chalcedonian Gazan and Palestinian monasticism, and consequently an outstanding leader of this camp in the empire. Zacharias, in his biography of his friend Severus, describes the successful efforts of Nephalius to oust anti-Chalcedonian monks from

¹ For this phase in the history of monasticism in the Gaza region see, B. Bitton-Ashkelony and A. Kofsky, "Gazan Monasticism in the Fourth-Sixth Centuries: From Anchoritic to Cenobitic," *Proche Orient Chrétien* 50 (2000), pp. 14-62 and bibliography cited there.

² Bitton-Ashkelony and Kofsky, "Gazan Monasticism," p. 41.

³ P. Devos, "Quand Pierre l'ibère vint-il à Jérusalem?" *Analecta Bollandiana* 86 (1968), p. 350.

their monasteries in the region and supplant them with Chalcedonians, a move that disturbed the atmosphere of coexistence between Monophysites and Chalcedonians in the region.⁴ But his success was short-lived and the situation was reversed through Severus' intimate relationship with Emperor Anastasius.⁵ The last available report of anti-Chalcedonian monasticism in the Gaza region seems to describe the time just before the ordination of Severus as patriarch of Antioch. We may assume that the hegemony of anti-Chalcedonian monasticism continued in the region until at least 518, when the Chalcedonian Emperor Justin ascended the throne following the death of Anastasius. The changing politico-ecclesiastical climate under Justin and his nephew Justinian led to expulsion of anti-Chalcedonian bishops and monks from Syria (525-531),⁶ and Palestinian anti-Chalcedonian abbots and monks were expelled to Egypt.⁷ It may be that this also spelled out the end of the monophysite monastic stronghold that had been formed in the southern coastal plain around Peter the Iberian and the members of his circle. The last and only notice regarding the fate of Peter the Iberian's leading monastery near Maiuma is the short note in passing by John of Ephesus: "...a great convent called that of father Peter the Iberian... was expelled with the rest, and came to the territory of Alexandria..."⁸

Our sources for the monasticism in the region in the period that follows derive primarily from two sources: first, the circle of Barsanuphius, John, and Seridus at Thabatha and their disciples who edited and transmitted the rich correspondence of Barsanuphius and John; and second, the circle of their disciple Dorotheus and his disciples, who transmitted his *Instructions* and letters and produced the *Life of Dositheus*.⁹ This monastic circle appears to have adopted a Chalcedonian stance.

⁴ *Vita Severi*, 100-103, ed. M. A. Kugener (PO 2, 1, Paris 1903); L. Perrone, *La chiesa di Palestina e le controversie cristologiche: Dal concilio di Efeso (431) al secondo concilio di Costantinopoli (553)*, Brescia, 1980, pp. 148-151.

⁵ *Vita Sev.* 103-111; Perrone, *La chiesa di Palestina*, pp. 151-153.

⁶ Ps. Zacharias, *HE* VIII. 5.

⁷ Severus, *Sixth Book of Letters* I.55, ed. E. W. Brooks, Oxford, 1902, p. 183.

⁸ John of Ephesus, *Lives of the Eastern Saints* (John of Hephæstopolis), ed. and trans. E.W. Brooks, PO 18, Paris, 1924, p. 527.

⁹ For a critical edition of the first 124 letters with English translation, see D. J. Chitty, *Barsanuphius and John, Questions and Answers*, PO 31/3, 1966. A new critical edition with French translation is F. Neyt, P. de Angelis-Noah, and L. Regnault, *Barsanuphe et Jean de Gaza, Correspondance*, SC 426-427, 450-451, 468, Paris, 1997-2002, henceforth *Questions and Answers*. For the Greek text, see also the edi-

Barsanuphius, John, and Seridus were active roughly between the third and fifth decades of the sixth century, and Dorotheus' activity continued in the second half of the sixth century. Thus hardly any time elapsed between the hegemony of the Beirut circle and the rise of Seridus' monastery.

At this point the question arises as to what could have happened to that tight anti-Chalcedonian monastic network. Were monasteries destroyed or abandoned? Were monks expelled—as implied by Severus and John of Ephesus—and supplanted by Chalcedonians? Did they perhaps accept Chalcedon, adapting to the new imperial ecclesiastical policy? Or did they go underground, adopting an outward Chalcedonian veneer.

Lacking virtually any evidence apart from the legacy of Seridus' monastery and Dorotheus' circle, we can only try and make deductions from the available sources. I would like to propose here the experimental speculative hypothesis that Barsanuphius and John, and perhaps even Dorotheus, were in fact something of crypto-Monophysites. Naturally, had their leanings been obvious, there would have been no need for any such speculation. We may also pose this issue in a negative way—namely, what substantive proof do we have for their supposed Chalcedonian stance? The answer to this question might prove inconclusive, but I would like to consider here possible positive arguments supporting this suggestion.

Thabatha, the birthplace of Hilarion, had already established certain anti-Chalcedonian connections in the previous generation. It is one of the recorded places where Peter the Iberian had established himself with his entourage at the invitation of a wealthy inhabitant of the town.¹⁰ We may thus deduce that an anti-Chalcedonian following existed among the population of the place prior to the establishment of Seridus' monastery.

The monastic legacy of Abba Isaiah—primarily in his *Asceticon*¹¹—is

tion of Nicodemus Hagiorites, Venice, 1816 (2nd rev. ed. corrected by S. N. Schoinas [Volos 1960]). For an earlier edition of the French translation, see *Barsanuphe et Jean de Gaza, Correspondance*, Recueil complet traduit du grec et du géorgien par les moines de Solesmes. Solesmes, 1993². For the works of Dorotheus and the anonymous vita of his disciple Dositheus see L. Regnault and J. de Prévile, *Dorothee de Gaza. Oeuvres spirituelles*, SC 92. Paris, 1963.

¹⁰ *Vita Petri Iberi* 101 (ed. R. Raabe, Leipzig, 1895).

¹¹ For the Greek edition, see Augoustinos Monachos (ed.), Jerusalem, 1911 (2nd ed., S. N. Schoinas, [Volos 1962]). For various versions of the Syriac text, see R.

central to the monastic teachings of Barsanuphius and John, as was amply demonstrated by François Neyt.¹² It can be argued, however, that the *Asceticon* lacks any explicit Monophysite content and could hence be easily adopted by Chalcedonians as well as later by Nestorians.¹³ Nevertheless it would seem that in the short interval following his death the image of Abba Isaiah as a prominent anti-Chalcedonian figure would have obstructed such an easy adoption of his authority—unless, of course, we reject the attribution of the *Asceticon* to Abba Isaiah of Gaza.¹⁴ Abba Isaiah's influence continued to the next generation; it is evident in the writings of Zosimas, who may be broadly associated with the Gaza monastic circle in its Chalcedonian phase and whose work influenced Dorotheus; it is also evident in the writings of the latter. Both these writers, however, in contrast to Barsanuphius and John, seem already hesitant to mention Isaiah by name; they merely quote or paraphrase him anonymously.¹⁵

Although the *Asceticon* of Abba Isaiah deals primarily with issues of monastic guidance and spirituality, it also includes discussion of a theorizing nature that supplies something of an ideological framework for his monastic teachings. One such discussion involves his concept of nature and counter-nature as a tool for understanding our existential predicament in the state of counter-nature and the ideal of restoring the original human nature of Adam in paradise through the imitation of Christ, who had overcome the state of counter-nature. In Abba Isaiah's articulation of this concept there is a distinct absence of the two natures terminology, and its Monophysite implications were noted

Draguet, *Les cinq recensions de l'Asceticon syriaque d'abba Isaïe I–IV*, CSCO 289–90; 293–94. Louvain, 1968. For the Coptic fragments, see A. Guillaumont, *L'Asceticon Copte de l'abbé Isaïe*, Cairo, 1956. For an enlarged French translation of the text, see L. Regnault and H. de-Broque, *Abbé Isaïe, Recueil ascétique*, Abbaye de Bellefontaine, 1985³.

¹² F. Neyt, "Citations 'Isaïennes' chez Barsanuphe et Jean de Gaza," *Le Muséon* 84 (1971), pp. 65–92.

¹³ D.J. Chitty, "Abba Isaiah," *Journal of Theological Studies* 22 (1971), p. 70; A. Guillaumont, "Une notice syriaque inédite sur la vie de l'abbé Isaïe," *Analecta Bollandiana* 67 (1949), p. 360.

¹⁴ René Draguet contested the accepted attribution of the *Asceticon* to Abba Isaiah and attempted to attribute most of the text to another, earlier Isaiah, who is mentioned in the *Apophthegmata*. This is, in fact, the central claim of his study (R. Draguet, "Introduction au problème," CSCO 293, 1968); however, his claims are refuted by Regnault and Chitty. See L. Regnault, "Isaïe de Scété ou de Gaza? Notes critiques en marge d'une Introduction au problème isaïen," *Revue d'ascétique et de mystique* 46 (1970), pp. 33–34; Chitty, "Abba Isaiah."

¹⁵ See Regnault, "Isaïe de Scété ou de Gaza?"

by Hermann Keller.¹⁶ The Monophysite implications of this concept become clear, as does Abba Isaiah's avoidance of the two natures terminology. A diphysite doctrine would render meaningless the central Christian dogma according to Abba Isaiah and empty ascetic life of its purpose. Now this concept of nature and counter-nature and its terminology—shown to be based on Monophysite assumptions—was adopted by Barsanuphius, albeit without elaboration in the existing correspondence,¹⁷ and was further adapted by Dorotheus to his special emphasis on obedience in his theology of monastic life.¹⁸ The overall impression is that this monastic circle proudly regarded itself as heir to the monastic legacy of Abba Isaiah, despite his anti-Chalcedonian background.

The correspondence of Barsanuphius and John generally reflects the legacy of Abba Isaiah also regarding their negative attitude to theology.¹⁹ The principle is that dabbling in theology can only confuse the believer and introduce heretical thoughts into his mind. The study of theological issues should therefore be exclusively reserved for the experienced and perfect ascetic. This position is in fact compatible with the anti-intellectual tendency of Barsanuphius and John, who essentially objected to the study not only of non-Christian literature but all Christian literature as well, excluding the *Apophthegmata* and the Scriptures. Even independent study of the Scriptures was considered likely to inject dangerous heresy into the hearts of believers unfamiliar with its spiritual interpretation.²⁰ Thus the clear tendency of Barsanu-

¹⁶ On Abba Isaiah's concept of nature and counter-nature see A. Kofsky, "Aspects of Sin in the Monastic School Gaza," in *Transformations of the Inner Self in Ancient Religions*, J. Assmann and G. G. Stroumsa (eds.), Leiden, 1999, pp. 421-437. For its Monophysite implications see H. Keller, "L'abbé Isaïe," *Irénikon* 16 (1939), p. 125. For a theological profile of Abba Isaiah, see L. Perrone, *La chiesa di Palestina*, pp. 286-295.

¹⁷ *Questions and Answers* 245.

¹⁸ Kofsky, "Aspects of Sin," pp. 435-436.

¹⁹ See Abba Isaiah, *Asceticon* 26, 18. This tendency was in fact expressed already by Zeno, an older contemporary of Isaiah in the region of Gaza (*Apophthegmata*, alph. Zeno 4).

²⁰ *Questions and Answers* 469. A layman asked if it was beneficial to tell many stories from the Bible and the lives of the ascetics. He was answered that the great virtue was silence, but due to our weakness one may talk about that which invigorates the soul, namely, the *Apophthegmata*, whereas Scripture may be dangerous for the unenlightened in their spiritual interpretation of it. See also *Questions and Answers* 697. This was apparently also the stance of Abba Isaiah. See *Asceticon* 30, 4, in statements ascribed to Poimen, one of the prominent figures of the *Apophthegmata*. Thus alongside a certain intellectual openness Abba Isaiah also expresses an anti-intellectual tendency (*Asceticon* 1, 6). On the danger inherent in the study of Scripture, see also *Apoph.* alph.

phius and John, at least regarding laymen and ordinary monks, was to perpetuate happy ignorance. It seems, however, that this attitude to theology reflects not merely a negative approach motivated by fear of doubt and heresy; it may also indicate a quietist monastic tendency eschewing any judgment of the other.²¹ This tendency is reflected in the position that one should not be hasty even in the condemnation of heretics.²²

From the consultation with Barsanuphius and John regarding the Origenist controversy of the sixth century we can glean something of their essential attitude to theology. While condemning Origenist concepts Barsanuphius had hardly addressed them, nor had he elaborated his objections beyond ultimately rejecting them and reiterating the necessity to focus on the study of the *Apophthegmata*.²³ He emphasized, though, that it was not important whether these views had been right or wrong, and that all, including Barsanuphius himself, should not be preoccupied with them; what was important was to concentrate on examining their emotions (ἐρευνᾶν τὰ πάθη), weeping, and feeling compunction (κλαῦσαι καὶ πενθῆσαι).²⁴ The crux of Barsanuphius' stance was that preoccupation with these matters caused only harm and confusion. Even the saints did not have a full understanding of the divine mysteries. His general approach to theology is summed up in his instruction to focus on the struggle against the passions, for which we would all have to account on the Day of Judgment, whereas we would not be examined concerning these matters of theology, whether we had studied them or not.²⁵ We may say, then, that Barsanuphius'

Amoun 3; D. Burton-Christie, *The Word in the Desert: Scripture and the Quest for Holiness in Early Christian Monasticism*, Oxford, 1993, pp. 154-157. For anti-intellectual bias in the *Apophthegmata* see P. Rousseau, "The Spiritual Authority of the Monk-Bishop: Eastern Elements in Some Western Hagiography of the Fourth and Fifth Centuries," *Journal of Theological Studies* n.s. 22 (1971), p. 385; Despite the overall anti-intellectual trend, certain relations between Barsanuphius and John's circle and intellectual circles have continued, reflected in the correspondence with anonymous teachers of philosophy, though not on philosophical issues (*Questions and Answers* 664-666, 778), and in the arrival at the monastery of educated monks such as Dorotheus.

²¹ On this monastic virtue in the *Apophthegmata* see G. Gould, *The Desert Fathers on Monastic Community*, Oxford, 1993, pp. 123-132.

²² *Questions and Answers* 699.

²³ *Ibid.*, 600.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 603. On the monastic ideal of compunction (πένθος), see I. Hausherr, *Penthos: The Doctrine of Compunction in the Christian East*, Kalamazoo, 1982.

²⁵ *Questions and Answers* 604.

principal attitude to theological issues is negative. He regards theology as inessential to the ideal Christian way of monastic life, focused as it is on the continual process of self-examination and repentance. Moreover, dabbling in theology distracts the mind, sets obstacles, and invites demonic machinations. Yet at the same time it appears that Barsanuphius himself was well versed in the important writings of the Church Fathers and in mainstream theological issues. The positions of Barsanuphius and John were generally orthodox, although it seems that their essential attitude to theology generated a tolerant stance toward those holding non-orthodox theological views. In fact, as far as I can tell, the Council of Chalcedon is never mentioned in the correspondence, a fact that seems true also of the writings of Dorotheus, though this fact by itself does not amount to much. The Council of Nicaea—mentioned once in the correspondence—is, according to John, the foundation of the Christian faith.²⁶ But here too it is questionable whether a hidden Monophysite stance can be discerned in this outwardly general and orthodox statement. I would suggest that the outwardly tolerant and quietist attitude of Barsanuphius and John—who avoided theological controversy, in contrast to the zealous involvement of many monks and monastic leaders in the Christological polemics and ecclesiastical power struggles of the day—may in this case also stem from their peculiar position as crypto-Monophysites.²⁷

Two letters in the correspondence reflect the reality of religious persecution.²⁸ One is seemingly addressed to John by Monophysite laymen fearing persecution following a forthcoming ordination of certain clergymen who had opposed the ecclesiastical position of the emperor. They sought John's advice regarding the best course of action in face of the anticipated persecution.²⁹ If identification of the petitioners as Monophysites is valid, it may further enhance the impression of a neutral stance—possibly even crypto-Monophysite sentiments—on the part of the two Old Men. This impression can be seen as further strengthened by Barsanuphius' correspondence with Peter, the

²⁶ Ibid., 701.

²⁷ For further discussion of Barsanuphius and John's attitude to theology, see A. Kofsky, "The Byzantine Holy Person: The Case of Barsanuphius and John of Gaza," in *Saints and Role Models in Judaism and Christianity*, M. Poorthuis and J. Schwartz (eds.), Leiden, 2004.

²⁸ *Questions and Answers* 702, 786.

²⁹ Ibid., 786.

Patriarch of Jerusalem (524-552), who during much of the time span covered by the correspondence may have entertained Monophysite leanings—at least until 536, when he was forced to cut his ties with the Monophysites and denounce them.³⁰ This is virtually all I have been able thus far to squeeze out of the monastic sources of Gaza in support of my experimental hypothesis.

But our story is not yet quite ended. Sophronius in the seventh century and Theodore of Studios (759-826) at the beginning of the ninth might offer some further assistance with the question under discussion here. The catalogue of heretics and heresies in the synodical epistle of Sophronius lists both Peter the Iberian and his associate (συνόμιλος) Isaiah among Monophysite leaders. They are followed by Severus of Antioch and a series of Monophysite personalities including a certain Dorotheus.³¹ Further down, Sophronius offers a list of heresies among which he seems to lump together a few appellations assigned to various Monophysite factions: Eutychians, Acephaloi, Barsanuphians, Isaiahns, Agnoetae,³² and Jacobites.³³ For the limited purpose addressed here it is of interest to know exactly who the Monophysites Isaiah, Barsanuphius, and Dorotheus were that Sophronius had in mind. The first mention of Isaiah seems quite clearly to refer to Abba Isaiah of Gaza, the famous companion of Peter the Iberian, though it might allude to a different Monophysite Isaiah.³⁴ But is Abba Isaiah also the eponym of the group that Sophronius called Isaiahns? And is Sophronius' Dorotheus to be identified with the protagonist of Gazan monasticism or with some other Dorotheus? And what about Barsanuphius? According to the sixth century heresiograph Liberatus, the appellation Isaiahns was given to a splinter group of followers of

³⁰ Perrone, *La Chiesa di palestina*, pp.195-201.

³¹ *Epistula Synodica*, PG 87, 3192B-C.

³² On the identity of the Agnoetae see P. Schaff, "Agnoetae," in *Dictionary of Christian Biography*, Boston, 1877, vol. 1, p. 62.

³³ *Ep. Syn.*, PG 87, 3193C.

³⁴ The Eutychian bishop Isaiah of Hermopolis in the 470s, mentioned by Zacharias Rhetor, is a possible candidate (*Historia Ecclesiastica* 4, 12, ed. E.W. Brooks, CSCO 83, Louvain, 1919). Another possible candidate is an Isaiah who, according to Liberatus, has contended for the patriarchate of Alexandria following the death of Peter Mongus (477-490). See Liberatus, *Breviarium causae Nestorianorum et Eutychianorum*, 18, PL 68, 1029A. And the Monophysite "pseudo-bishop" Isaiah, whose maneuvers are recounted in detail by Severus, may also be considered. See Severus, *Sixth Book of Letters* II.3, pp. 231-257.

a certain Monophysite Isaiah, who contended for the patriarchate of Alexandria in succession to Peter Mongus.³⁵ But I would suggest that it might as well refer to Abba Isaiah of Gaza. Similarly, the title Barsanuphians may refer to a certain eponymous bishop who may have headed a Monophysite splinter group whose appellation later derived from him, as is claimed by Timotheus Presbyter³⁶ and by the eleventh century Coptic historian Mawhub b. Mufarrij of Alexandria (c. 1025-1100). These Barsanuphians may have been a splinter group that developed among the Acephaloi adversaries of Peter Mongus and the *Henoticon* of Emperor Zeno (482) in the time of Damian, the Coptic patriarch of Alexandria (578-607). Centered at Fustat at the beginning of the ninth century they reunited with the Coptic church under Patriarch Mark II of Alexandria (799-819).³⁷ But again, I would suggest that Sophronius' Barsanuphians may allude to Barsanuphius of Gaza rather than to the obscure Barsanuphius of the time of Patriarch Damian. The appearance of the two titles—i.e., Barsanuphians and Isaiahns—consecutively in Sophronius' list may further hint to a possible connection between them in Sophronius' mind,³⁸ though admittedly if the title Barsanuphians alludes to the above Egyptian group, then the title Isaiahns may equally refer to the other obscure Monophysite Egyptian faction. The name Dorotheus appears in Sophronius' list in a sequence of sixth-century Egyptian Monophysite figures. Hence a possible candidate for his identification may be the Dorotheus mentioned by Theophanes as a Monophysite bishop who was unlawfully ordained by the Theodosian faction in Alexandria—namely, the opponents of the party of Julian of Halicarnassus.³⁹ A less likely candidate is Dorotheus of Thessalonica (515-520). We should not entirely rule out, however, a possible identification of Sophronius' Dorotheus with Dorotheus of Gaza, especially if the guiding principle in Sophronius' list was chronological rather than geographical, which indeed seems to be the case. In fact, the Egyptian Dorotheus of Theophanes and Dorotheus of Gaza were practically contemporaries.

³⁵ Liberatus, *Brev.* 18, PL 68, 1029B; Timotheus Presbyter, *De Receptione Haereticorum* 14, PG 86, I, 45.

³⁶ *De Recept. Haeret.* 13.

³⁷ *History of the Patriarchs of Alexandria* (erroneously attributed to Severus b. al-Muqaffa' [d. after 987]), ed. B. Evetts, PO 1 (1907), 474-475; PO 10 (1917), 410-415.

³⁸ This sequence appears, however, also in Timotheus Presbyter, *ibid.*

³⁹ Theophanes, *Chronicle*, AM 6057 (564/5 C.E.).

A charge was brought against Theodore of Studios (759-826) by a certain Pamphilus "from the East" for admitting the heretics Isaiah, Barsanuphius, and Dorotheus as orthodox. He fervently defended himself by distinguishing three orthodox leaders with the names Isaiah, Barsanuphius, and Dorotheus, to whom he added a fourth, a Dositheus, from their heretical namesakes anathematized by Sophronius.⁴⁰ He repeated this defense in a testament to his disciples that was later quoted as an introduction to the manuscripts of Dorotheus.⁴¹ The persons mentioned were apparently held in high esteem in Byzantine monastic circles and were especially venerated by Theodore. The above Barsanuphius and Dorotheus were undoubtedly the two familiar monastic leaders who had bequeathed their writings to the Byzantine monastic tradition. Theodore's Isaiah, however, was obviously not the Monophysite holy man Abba Isaiah of Gaza but most likely the Isaiah of the *Apophthegmata*, apparently identified by him with Isaiah of the *Asceticon*, as distinct from Isaiah of Gaza, regardless of the possibility of their being one and the same.⁴² But the fact that there was such an attack on these three figures clearly indicates that Theodore's Isaiah was identified by some with Abba Isaiah of Gaza—or perhaps with some other obscure Monophysite Isaiah—and that Barsanuphius and Dorotheus of Gaza were also considered among certain circles to be Monophysite heretics, or were at least regarded with suspicion. This identification was based on—or at least supported at that time by—Sophronius' above-mentioned catalogue of heretics and heresies.⁴³ In other words, Sophronius' Barsanuphius and Dorotheus, and probably his Isaiah as well, were now understood to be the historical monastic leaders of Gaza. Is it possible that we may have here a certain notion regarding our protagonists that goes back to Sophronius himself and perhaps even to their own time? Theodore claimed that this question

⁴⁰ *Ep.* 34 (to Pope Leo III [795-816]), PG 99, 1028A-B; Regnault and de Préville, *Dorothee de Gaza*, pp. 107-109.

⁴¹ PG 99 1816B; Regnault and de Préville, *Dorothee de Gaza*, pp. 91-92; 107-109. See also Neyt, Introduction, 24-25. Here Theodore added to the list two persons, Mark and Hesychius, the latter probably to be identified as Hesychius of Jerusalem (d. after 451), who may have sympathized with the anti-Chalcedonians (John Rufus, *Plerophoriae* 10) and was accused posthumously of Monophysite leanings, see B. Baldwin, "Hesychios of Jerusalem," in *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, Oxford, 1991, Vol. 2, p. 925.

⁴² Regnault, "Isaïe de Scété ou de Gaza?"

⁴³ PG 99 1028A-B; PG 99, 1816B.

was investigated by Patriarch Tarasius of Constantinople (784-806) and other authorities and that the three in question were proven orthodox, and in fact had had three heretical namesakes. Who these three namesakes were we are not told. Theodore further declared that he had found nothing impious in their teachings.⁴⁴ But this, admittedly, is exactly the reason for their admission. We have seen earlier how Abba Isaiah's writings could be adopted by the monastic tradition and παιδεία of both Chalcedonians and Nestorians; and this could have been even more easily achieved by Barsanuphius and Dorotheus, who were apparently regarded by most Byzantine ecclesiastics as Chalcedonians.

To sum up this short foray into speculative history, I would suggest that what took place in the monastic circle of Barsanuphius, John, Seridus, and Dorotheus— and perhaps in other Monophysite monastic centers in the Gaza region—as a reaction to the changing political ecclesiastical climate in the empire and in the region, was a transformation into a kind of crypto-monophysitism, adopting a Chalcedonian or neo-Chalcedonian veneer, and retreating to a monastic life of quietist piety and theological tolerance. These monastic circles continued to cherish the monastic legacy of Abba Isaiah, which was virtually free of any distinct traces of monophysitism, despite his reputation as a Monophysite holy man. The success of their dissimulating tactics can be seen in their reception into mainline Byzantine monastic orthodoxy. But the memory, or suspicion, of their Monophysite sympathies or crypto-monophysitism persevered into the ninth century. I am well aware that my tentative exercise in reconstruction leans heavily on circumstantial evidence and interpretive speculations that may be easily demolished. But I hope that cumulatively it may offer at least some plausibility for the scenario I have proposed.

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⁴⁴ PG 99, 1816B.

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