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Winning the Intracommunal Dialogues: Zacharias Scholasticus' Life of Severus

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Elements of Zacharias Scholasticus' *Life of Severus* are often used selectively to document pagan-Christian religious interactions in late antiquity, but the text itself is poorly understood. This is particularly problematic for a thirty-page section of the biography in which Severus goes unmentioned and much detail is given about the conversion of a young pagan student named Paralius. Zacharias' habitual republication of earlier works suggests that this segment of the *Life of Severus* was originally published separately to perform a specific, protreptic function for Christian students of the 490s. When he reused this text in the *Life of Severus*, Zacharias placed this specific narrative in a broader context designed to respond to attacks on Severus. Nevertheless, modern historians of religion need to use the information contained in this section of the *Life of Severus* with a full awareness of its original, rather limited, polemic intent.

Zacharias Scholasticus' *Life of Severus* has been utilized to great advantage by a wide range of scholars of late antiquity.[1] Among its collection of anecdotes are particularly resonant pictures of the complicated relationship

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1. The standard edition of the text is that of M. A. Kugener (Zacharias of Mytilene, *Vie de Sévère*, *PO* II [Paris, 1907], rev. ed. [Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 1971]). The references to the text will refer to the pagination of Kugener's first edition. Like most of Zacharias' anti-Chalcedonian writings, the *Vit. Sev.* was composed in Greek but preserved in a later Syriac translation. The translations of Zacharias' works vary in their faithfulness to the Greek originals. In the case of his *Ecclesiastical History*, the text was translated and epitomized in 569 with other materials added in during this process (P. Allen, "Zachariah Scholasticus and the *Historia Ecclesiastica* of Evagrius Scholasticus," *JTS* 31 [1980]: 471–73). The text of the *Life of Severus*, by contrast, shows no signs of such dramatic alteration when it was translated into Syriac. The text as we have it now is likely quite close to Zacharias' final Greek text.

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between Alexandrian intellectual paganism and traditional Egyptian religion,[2] the difficulties of religious conversion in late antiquity,[3] and elite conceptions of magic.[4] The text also gives one a glimpse into the peculiar world of rhetorical and philosophical students in Alexandria, law students in Berytus, and extremely well-educated ascetics in Palestine.[5] Despite (or, perhaps, because of) the text's abundance of first-hand discussion of late antique religious practice, few appraisals of the entire text have been attempted.[6] Nevertheless, the *Life of Severus* is very much a literary product designed to respond to a series of tensions within both an Alexandrian intellectual community and the larger anti-Chalcedonian community of the eastern Mediterranean world. A proper appraisal of the intended functioning of the text within this context is essential to any understanding of the information it provides.

This paper places the *Life of Severus* within its appropriate literary and historical context. This assessment will begin with a description of the text itself. Zacharias recounts events that take place in three settings: the pagan-run rhetorical and philosophical schools of Alexandria, the law schools of Berytus, and the Palestinian ascetic environment within which Severus began his career as a Christian philosopher. Although Severus is put forth as a unifying personality, Zacharias is curiously hard-pressed to make the Alexandrian section of this work focus upon Severus at all. Indeed, the most prominent figure in the Alexandrian section is a Christian convert named Paralius. This suggests that the Paralius section may have been an earlier, independent composition.

The second section of this paper further examines this peculiarity and places it within the context of Zacharias' larger corpus of writings. Zacharias wrote a series of texts while he was a student in Berytus during

2. *Vit. Sev*. 14–45. See D. Frankfurter, "The Consequences of Hellenism in Late Antique Egypt: Religious Worlds and Actors," *Archiv für Religionsgeschichte* 2 (2000): 185–92.

3. *Vit. Sev*. 14–37, 48–65. See, for example, F. Trombley, *Hellenic Religion and Christianization, c. 370–529,* vol. 2 (Leiden: Brill, 1993–4), 4–51.

4. *Vit. Sev*. 57–74.

5. When the evidence of the *Vit. Sev.* is considered alongside notices in the *Plero*. of John Rufus (e.g. *Plero*. 70, 73), it reveals a group of Palestinian law students who were intimately linked to anti-Chalcedonian ascetic culture. On this, see J. E. Steppa, *John Rufus and the World Vision of Anti-Chalcedonian Culture* (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2002), 19–21.

6. Note, however, J. M. Blázquez, "La vida estudiantil en Beyrouth y Alejandría a final del siglo V según la Vida de Severo de Zacarías Escolástico. Paganos y Cristianos (I–II)," *Gerión* 16 (1998): 415–36; *Gerión* 17 (1999): 519–30. These studies are more a summary discussion than an attempt at an integrative understanding of the text.

the late 480s and early 490s. These were all slightly retouched and reissued when Zacharias was living in Constantinople in the late 510s and early 520s. Zacharias' relatively clumsy efforts to fold the Paralius materials into the *Life of Severus* are paralleled by his similarly careless efforts at redacting two of his other works that were originally published in the 480s or 490s.

The third section shows how, if the Paralius materials are an earlier composition, Zacharias' description of pagan-Christian interactions must not be understood simply as a portrait of events in the past. Instead, they should be seen as a part of an ongoing conflict about the validity of pagan practices and pagan oral traditions within the Alexandrian intellectual environment.

The final section turns back to the redacted text and discusses the possible contribution that the revised Paralius materials could make in a new literary context. It will be proposed that the *Life of Severus* responded to accusations against Severus that came from supporters of Julian of Halicarnassus and circulated among anti-Chalcedonian exiles residing in Egypt in the 520s. Zacharias' association of Severus with Paralius was designed to give Severus a specifically Alexandrian Christian identity that would help him to build support for his position within the province. This context helps to explain Zacharias' decision to write a text like this and allows one to appreciate his reasons for including the earlier Alexandrian material.

THE *LIFE OF SEVERUS* AS A LITERARY COMPOSITION

The *Life of Severus* is the modern name for the work that Zacharias entitled "a history of the deeds of the life of holy Mar Severus."[7] While the text bears some striking formal resemblances to fifth- and sixth-century biographies, it is far from clear that Zacharias intended for the work to be received as a biography.[8] Instead, he frames it as a defense of Severus' character against a recently published pamphlet that alleged that he had conducted pagan sacrifices while a student in Berytus.[9]

7. ܬܘܒ ܬܫܥܝܬܐ ܕܕܘܒܪܐ ܕܚܝܘܗܝ ܕܩܕܝܫܐ ܡܪܝ ܣܘܝܪܐ

8. See, for example, the comments of R. A. Darling Young, "Zacharias: The Life of Severus," in *Ascetic Behavior in Greco-Roman Antiquity*, ed. V. Wimbush (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990), 312–13.

9. "The slanderer attacked him not only on the basis of his way of life and conduct, but also because formerly he worshipped evil demons and idols" (*Vit. Sev.* 9; translations from the *Life of Severus* will be taken from Kugener's text and French translation, excepting where I indicate the abridged translation of R. A. Darling Young or my own translation).

The work itself is made up of four sections. It begins with a brief and (presumably) fictitious dialogue between Zacharias and an unnamed associate in which Zacharias learns about the pamphlet and the slanders it contains. The next section turns to Severus' early life, family background and rhetorical education in Alexandria. Zacharias focuses primarily on the Alexandrian experiences. He describes how a fellow student predicted that Severus would become a great bishop, he introduces a group of Alexandrian *philoponoi* (Christian students like Zacharias who also had ties to the anti-Chalcedonian monastery of Enaton), and he recounts a series of events involving a student named Paralius.[10]

Zacharias then shifts settings to Berytus, the location of Severus' legal study. Here too, Zacharias focuses upon a group of students with close ties to anti-Chalcedonian Palestinian monasteries, a group Severus joined part of the way through law school. Some of these students were former Alexandrian *philoponoi* and all worked to bolster the religious enthusiasm of their fellow students while combating pagan influence in the law schools. Collectively, they provided peer-directed religious instruction and led raids against pagans suspected of magical activity within the schools of Berytus.

The final section of the text focuses upon the fate of these students after graduation, with particular emphasis placed upon Severus' own decision to forego his law career and join a Palestinian monastery. Zacharias then concludes by discussing Severus' role in arguing against the actions of Elias, the Chalcedonian patriarch of Jerusalem, and describing Severus' ultimate selection as patriarch of Antioch.[11]

From this basic outline, one can begin to see how Zacharias structured his defense of Severus. In essence, Zacharias evokes his memories of his own student days in which he and his *philoponoi* brethren mixed academic study with engagement in the broader anti-Chalcedonian ascetic

10. *Vit. Sev*. 24. The *philoponoi* were a group of laymen whose members were of high social rank and likely functioned as a liaison between the bishop, his lay congregation, and local ascetic groups. This group and its program within the schools will be discussed in more detail below. For more on the functions of the *philoponoi* see C. Haas, *Alexandria in Late Antiquity: Topography and Social Conflict* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 238–40. Also E. Wipszycka, "Les confréries dans la vie religieuse de l'Égypte chrétienne," in *Proceedings of the Twelfth International Congress of Papyrology*, ed. R. Samuel (Toronto, 1970), 511–25; S. Pétrides, "Spoudaei et Philopones," *EO* 7 (1904): 341–48; and P. J. Sijpesteijn, "New Light on the *Philoponoi*," *Aeg* 69 (1989): 95–99.

11. *Vit. Sev*. 100–105. On this, see Steppa, *John Rufus*, 13, and R. A. Darling Young, "The Patriarchate of Severus of Antioch, 512–518" (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 1982), 27–30.

world. The result was a particular fusion of literary devotion and anti-Chalcedonian zeal that manifested itself in anti-pagan activities within the academic environment. The text defends Severus by placing him in this environment, establishing his connection to the activities of the *philoponoi* and demonstrating that Severus' entire career followed the same ascetic and intellectual path as the *philoponoi*. Zacharias then tries to convince his readers that Severus could not have been a pagan because he manifested the same basic character attributes when he was a student, a Palestinian ascetic, an anti-Chalcedonian advocate, and a powerful candidate for bishop. In Zacharias' telling, Severus underwent an ascetic and spiritual progression, but his basic Christian piety remained unchanged throughout his life.

When summarized in this fashion, Zacharias' *Life of Severus* seems to have a reasonable thematic unity and appears to present a compelling argument. There was a problem, however. The allegations about Severus' student paganism were true, as even he admitted.[12] His conversion to Christianity occurred when he was a law student in Berytus and he was a pagan throughout his time in Alexandria.[13] For this reason, perhaps unsurprisingly, Zacharias' handling of Severus' Alexandrian study is extremely awkward. Though he begins with the prediction that Severus would become a bishop, a rather curious transition follows this. Zacharias states: "A little while after this, the events relating to Paralius and the grammarian Horapollon happened. From these, it will emerge that the one who has been slandered contrary to all divine laws is innocent of all the defamations of his infamous slanderer. This is the origin of these events."[14] Thus begin nearly thirty pages of text in Kugener's edition that contain not a single mention of Severus.

12. Severus says, "I know many of the young men who devoted themselves to Roman law in that turbulent city, that is Berytus, and they went off to [Tripoli] to pray and speedily left their vain erudition and way of life and purified their minds of Hellenic myths . . . so I went to the martyr's holy place and prayed. Moreover, I prayed separately because I was still a pagan." The passage is found in G. Garritte, "Textes hagiographiques orientaux relatifs à s. Léonce de Tripolo. ii. L'homélie copte de Sévère d'Antioche," *Mus* 79 (1966): 335–86. See as well Severus' *hom*. 50. This text is discussed in Trombley, *Hellenic Religion*, 45–51 and, in more detail, in Young, "The Patriarchate of Severus," 21–25.

13. Young, "The Patriarchate of Severus," 24–25.

14. ܠܐ ܒܬܪ ܣܓܝ ܕܝܢ: ܓܕܫܬ ܕܬܫܥܝ̈ܬܐ ܘܗܠܝܢ ܕܥܠ ܦܪܐܠܝܘܣ ܘܗܘܪܦܘܠܘܢ ܓܪܡܛܝܩܘܣ: ܕܡܢܗܝܢ ܡܬܚܘܝܐ ܕܕܒܝܫܐ ܐܬܬܘܗܝ، ܡܢ ܒܥܘܣܐ ܕܗܘ ܡܥܒܪܢܐ ܘܣܛܪܐ: ܗܘ ܕܠܒܪ ܡܢ ܢ̈ܡܘܣܐ ܕܐܠܗܐ ܡܢܗ ܐܬܚܫܒ. ܕܐܝܢܐ ܕܝܢ ܫܘܪܝܐ ܗܘܐ ܠܗܠܝܢ ܐܡܪ ܐܢܐ.
Vit. Sev. 14. (this translation is my own).

Instead of Severus, Zacharias here focuses upon a student named Paralius. He provides a detailed discussion of his family life, his pagan background, his study under the pagan grammarian and philosopher Horapollon, and his eventual turn away from paganism. Paralius' religious disillusionment is described with particular thoroughness. According to Zacharias, Paralius became disenchanted with paganism in large part because of his interaction with his brother Athanasius, a former pagan who had converted to Christianity and joined the Enaton. After a discussion with his brother raised questions about pagan religious teachings in Paralius' mind, Paralius discussed these points with the philosophers Horapollon, Heraiscus, Asclepiodotus, Ammonius, and Isidore and found their answers feeble.[15]

Then, in a subsequent conversation with Stephen, another Enaton ascetic, Paralius mentioned an account he had heard of the miraculous birth of a baby to the renowned pagan philosopher Asclepiodotus.[16] Asclepiodotus' wife was infertile and, in response to a vision he claimed had come from Isis, Asclepiodotus went to a shrine of the goddess in Menouthis. He returned to Alexandria with a child,[17] and news of this miracle spread through the pagan communities in Alexandria and Aphrodisias.[18] When Paralius indicated that this account made him believe in the power of the pagan gods, Athanasius and Stephen encouraged him to get proof of the miracle in the form of a written statement that Asclepiodotus' wife was lactating. This proved impossible and Paralius' suspicion of the pagan culture of his school was enhanced when he received an oracle from the Menouthis shrine that was at odds with that received by another student.[19] Paralius' recognition of these frauds was followed by aggressive public criticism of both the pagan teachers who led his school and the Isis shrine. His outburst ultimately led to a beating from which he was saved only by the timely intervention of the student group of *philoponoi*.

15. *Vit. Sev.* 16.

16. *Vit. Sev.* 19.

17. *Vit. Sev.* 16–18.

18. Aphrodisias was the home community of Asclepiodotus' wife Damiane as well as Paralius. Damiane's father, the elder Asclepiodotus, was an Aphrodisian notable who was honored as a patron of the liberal arts in two inscriptions of the period. On Asclepiodotus, see C. Roueché, *Aphrodisias in Late Antiquity: The Late Roman and Early Byzantine Inscriptions* (London: Society for the Promotion of Roman Studies, 1989), # 53–54.

19. *Vit. Sev.* 20–21. Paralius and his classmate each received oracles indicating that the other was a magician.

Paralius then returned with the *philoponoi* to speak with the patriarch of the city, file a complaint with the provincial governor, and lead a group of Christian monks in an attack on the Menouthis shrine. Next, Zacharias describes an Alexandrian procession of the idols from the shrine, Paralius' conversion to Christianity, and his later effort to publicize Asclepiodotus' fraud in his home city of Aphrodisias. Zacharias indicates that these efforts were so successful that Paralius even converted his formerly pagan brothers. The section concludes with a mention of Paralius' brief career as a monastic leader in Aphrodisias and a discussion of his early death.[20]

The last part of the Alexandrian section is prefaced with a curiously unapologetic apology for straying off topic before it attempts to turn back to Severus.[21] It then details a provocative funeral speech that Zacharias gave for his friend Menas. At this point, Severus finally reappears and expresses his approval of the speech. The setting then shifts to Berytus.

Given Severus' adolescent pagan inclinations, it is notable, if not particularly surprising, that he is almost completely absent from the Alexandrian segment of the text. This is, to some degree, paralleled by his indirect involvement in anti-pagan activities in Berytus. But there is a clear and important difference between the Alexandrian section and the rest of the text. The discussion of magical practices in Berytus, like that of Paralius and his conversion, seems not to feature Severus in any substantive role.[22] Nevertheless, Zacharias is careful to mark Severus' involvement in each sequence of events in Berytus. Following a discovery of pagan activities in the scholastic environment, Zacharias states: "In these matters, Severus assisted us with his advice. He learned what had taken place and told us what should be done."[23] Similarly, at a later stage in this conflict, Zacharias states that Severus was involved "like an army commander, though, so as not to give a show, he remained quiet."[24]

One may, of course, contrast this with Severus' absence from the discussion of Paralius and his conversion. Though Severus is of somewhat tangential importance to the Berytus activities of Zacharias' associates, Zacharias makes two clear attempts to emphasize Severus' involvement in their actions. Indeed, he even creates a leadership role for Severus. Even

20. *Vit. Sev*. 44.

21. Zacharias says simply: "but let no one think that this story is too far off from our subject" (*Vit. Sev*. 44).

22. Darling Young, "Zacharias," 323, comments that "Severus seems to have played an ambiguous role at best" in these events.

23. *Vit. Sev*. 65 (trans. Darling Young, "Zacharias," 323).

24. *Vit. Sev*. 70 (trans. Darling Young, "Zacharias," 323).

a credulous reader would find this somewhat suspicious, but, despite the implausibility of Zacharias' case, the attempt itself is significant. It shows that Zacharias wrote this part of the text with an eye towards establishing Severus' anti-pagan credentials. This task then shaped the retelling of these events.

This makes Severus' absence from the Paralius section of the text all the more interesting. Severus probably had equally little to do with Paralius' conversion and the magician trials in Berytus but, unlike his insertion of Severus at crucial moments in the Berytus section, Zacharias never interrupts his narrative of Paralius' conversion to introduce Severus. In fact, this segment of the text is structured like a hagiography of Paralius. It begins with an account of his family and early education, moves to his conversion and proper education as a Christian, describes the monastery he founded and the conversions he effected, and then concludes with his premature death.[25] In fact, in its story of Paralius' spiritual progression from a pagan to an active, anti-Chalcedonian ascetic, the text provides a positive illustration of the benefits that come to students from a productive engagement with ascetic culture. At the same time, this narration appears to contribute little to the overall discussion of Severus' life. Severus had no known involvement with either Paralius or the particular teachers who are singled out in the text. Furthermore, one could question whether Paralius' spiritual progression is somewhat at odds with Zacharias' implied statement that Severus could not have experimented with paganism because his later ascetic affiliations are prefigured in his earlier student activity. Consequently, in both its structure and its content, this part of the text seems to stand alone as something of an independent composition—possibly as the remnants of a self-contained life of Paralius.

25. On the biographic structure, see P. Cox, *Biography in Late Antiquity: The Quest for the Holy Man*, Transformation of the Classical Heritage 5 (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1983), 3–17. The Paralius section seems to work within this structure, but it does not perfectly conform to the model described by Cox. Notable in Zacharias' text is the focus upon a chronological account of Paralius' life; there is much discussion of *praxeis* (deeds) and little of *ēthos* (character). This may in part be due to the short period of time between Paralius' conversion and his death. He joined the Enaton monastery not long after his baptism (*Vit. Sev.* 39) and then became interested in the religious fate of his two pagan brothers. After the death of Stephen, the head of Enaton, he returned home, founded a Christian community, and died not long after. As his conversion likely dates to 486 or 487 (on this, see E. Watts, *City and School in Late Antique Athens and Alexandria,* Transformation of the Classical Heritage 41 [Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2006], chapter 8, in press), his death probably occurred in the 490s. Not coincidentally, no material in the Paralius section of the text postdates Paralius' death.

ZACHARIAS AND THE REDACTION HABIT

The idea that the Paralius section of the *Life of Severus* was an earlier independent composition reused in defense of Severus is consistent with Zacharias' particular track-record as an author. Zacharias himself was born in Maiuma, the port of Gaza, probably in 465 or 466.[26] Gaza at the time was intellectually close to Alexandria and a good number of Gazans made a trip there to complete their educations in the later fifth century.[27] Consistent with this, in the 480s, Zacharias began rhetorical and rudimentary philosophical study in Alexandria. In 489, he moved to Berytus to pursue legal study. In 492, he moved to Constantinople to begin practicing law. It appears that he continued to do so through the 510s before eventually becoming the bishop of Mytilene sometime before 536.[28]

Zacharias' education is a particularly important element of this biography because it occurred in a rather tense intellectual environment. In Alexandria, many of the schools of rhetoric shared space and personnel with schools of philosophy.[29] These schools of philosophy were headed by pagans, many of whom were disciples of the Athenian philosopher Proclus, and they were infused with an enthusiasm for a hybridized paganism that mixed Neoplatonic philosophy with an interest in traditional Egyptian practices.[30] In Berytus, the situation was somewhat different, but the *Life*

26. On the basic details of Zacharias' life, see Allen, "Zachariah Scholasticus," 471–72; M. Minniti Colonna, *Zacaria Scolastico, Ammonio: Introduzione, testo critico, traduzione, commentario* (Naples: Tipolitografia "La Buona Stampa," 1973), 15–20; E. Honigmann, *Patristic Studies*, ST 173 (Vatican City: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1953), 194–204; and F. Delmas, "Zacharie le Rhéteur d'après un ouvrage recent," *EO* 3 (1899): 36–37. There is still debate about whether or not he was the brother of Procopius of Gaza.

27. On this, see E. Watts, "Student Travel to Intellectual Centers: What Was the Attraction?" in *Travel, Communication, and Geography in Late Antiquity*, ed. L. Ellis and F. Kidner (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), 11–21.

28. On this, see Allen, "Zachariah Scholasticus," 471; Honigmann, *Patristic Studies*, 195.

29. The personnel overlap is not surprising; a number of fifth-century philosophers had also made their living teaching rhetoric and grammar. Among them are Syrianus (an Alexandrian philosopher who taught in Athens and authored a commentary on Hermogenes) and Horapollon (who taught grammar to Paralius but describes himself as a philosopher in a later court petition). On Syrianus, see G. A. Kennedy, *Greek Rhetoric under Christian Emperors* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), 109–12. For Horapollon, see J. Maspero, "Horapollon et la fin du paganisme égyptien," *Le Bulletin de l'Institut français d'archéologie orientale* 11 (1914): 163–95.

30. The Proclan disciples included Ammonius, Heliodorus, Isidore, and Asclepiodotus. For more on this collection of scholars, see Watts, "Student Travel," 14–19. Their hybridized religious practices were described by Damascius as "adapting Greek notions (of philosophical/religious practice) to conform with Egyptian

of Severus describes schools that were still headed by pagan intellectuals and a scholastic environment full of pagan influences. Within these intellectual circles, there were two significant trends that evidently troubled Zacharias and his fellow Christian students. First, these influential teachers demanded (and commanded) the respect and loyalty of students while making no effort to hide their paganism. In so doing, they seem to have encouraged students to think about paganism in a positive light.[31] In addition, they were unbending about particular philosophical doctrines that later fifth-century Christians found disagreeable. The most notable of these was the Aristotelian notion of the eternity of the world, an idea that was particularly problematic when juxtaposed with the widespread Christian belief that the world would end in or around 500 C.E.[32]

This is the background behind Zacharias' involvement with the student *philoponoi*. In the schools, the *philoponoi* evidently worked to provide Christian religious reinforcement to students while crafting arguments that helped Christian students to refute philosophical ideas that were at odds with their religious beliefs.[33] They also encouraged students to become engaged with Christian ascetic institutions.[34]

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ones" (*Vit. Is.* Ath. 4A; Z. fr. 3) On these religious practices, see Frankfurter, "Consequences of Hellenism," 185–92, as well as the earlier treatments of P. Athanassiadi, *Damascius: The Philosophical History* (Athens: Apamea, 1999), 20–31, and G. Bowersock, *Hellenism in Late Antiquity* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1990), 60–61.

31. The conversion to paganism of the Christian intellectuals Euprepius and Epiphanius (Damascius, *Vit. Is.* Ath. 41; Z. fr. 100) is an extreme example of the effect this environment could have on Christian students. For more specific discussion of this, see E. Watts, "The Student Self in Late Antiquity," in *Religion and the Self in Antiquity*, ed. D. Brakke et al. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005), in press.

32. On the fear that the end of the world was nearing as the year 500 approached, see P. Magdalino, "The History of the Future and Its Uses: Prophecy, Policy, and Propaganda," in *The Making of Byzantine History*, ed. R. Beaton and C. Roueché (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1993), 3–34. The mentality of the time is captured quite vividly by M. Meier, *Das andere Zeitalter Justinians: Kontingenzerfahrung und Kontingenzbewältigung im 6. Jht. n. Chr.*, Hypomnemata 147 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2003), 16–21.

33. A good example of this is the Christian reading group that Severus joined in Berytus (*Vit. Sev.* 52–55). This was populated by former Alexandrian *philoponoi* who were studying law and it focused upon anti-pagan texts by Christian authors.

34. This was a feature of both the Alexandrian *philoponoi* and the students in Berytus who had once belonged to this group. Zacharias' own relationship with ascetic leaders is well known. John Rufus, the author of the *Plero.*, was among his correspondents while Zacharias was a student in Berytus (*Vit. Sev.* 86). John describes Zacharias as a man known for his religious zeal and precise doctrinal arguments (*Plero.* 70, 73).

In Berytus, Zacharias eagerly kept up his ties to his former *philoponoi* associates while also becoming involved in a group of students who enjoyed close relationships with Palestinian anti-Chalcedonian ascetics.[35] Indeed, it is tempting to see a continuation of the *philoponoi* pattern of engagement between intellectual and ascetic communities in his relationship with the ascetics of Maiuma. At this time, Zacharias also evidently began writing quite a bit. From what we know of Zacharias' work, it seems that he had two extremely productive literary periods, one period in the early 490s when he was a student in Berytus, and a period in the late 510s and early 520s when he was in Constantinople. The first productive period followed his move from the schools of Alexandria to the law schools of Berytus. His works of this time reflect the tensions of the intellectual environment to which he belonged. Much of this work was republished or redacted by Zacharias in his second period of intense productivity. It is this later material that survives, but because Zacharias was not a particularly careful redactor, it is not difficult to get a sense of the original content of these revised works.

If one leaves aside the Alexandrian section of the *Life of Severus*, two surviving texts derive from the Berytus period of Zacharias' life. Each illustrates the interplay between ascetic and philosophical influences that animated Zacharias' educational experience. They also contributed in a real way to the apparent religious and intellectual aims of the *philoponoi*. The first is a series of biographical sketches of the anti-Chalcedonian monks, Isaiah and Peter the Iberian.[36] In the form that they currently exist, these texts were included with a biography of Theodore of Antinoe to make up a collective biography. This was prepared by Zacharias for the imperial chamberlain Misael, probably in the 520s.[37] The original text of this collection has disappeared, but Syriac translations of the *Life of Isaiah* and a nondescript fragment from the *Life of Peter* survive. So too

35. Zacharias' continued contact with Alexandrian students in Berytus has been shown above. His ties to those who remained in Alexandria are less apparent, but the nature of his literary production while in Berytus suggested that these remained substantial. The connection that he and his associates had with Palestinian ascetics has been described above.

36. On these texts, see M. A. Kugener, "Observations sur la Vie de l'ascète Isaïe et sur les Vies de Pierre l'Iberién et de Théodore d'Antinoé par Zacharie le Scolastique," *ByzZ* 9 (1900): 464–70. On the *Life of Peter* in particular, see D. M. Lang, "Peter the Iberian and his Biographers," *JEH* 2 (1951): 158–68.

37. On Misael, note E. Honigmann, *Évêques et évêchés monophysites d'Asie antérieure au VIe siècle*, CSCO 127 (Louvain: L. Durbecq, 1951), 152–53.

does an extremely corrupt Georgian translation of the *Life of Peter*.[38] Further muddling our understanding of this work is the fact that these texts probably were first published individually in the 490s and were only later collected by Zacharias.[39] In fact, it seems that one can date the first publication of the *Life of Isaiah* to sometime between 488 and 491, when Zacharias was studying law in Berytus.[40]

The surviving contents of the *Life of Isaiah* appear to confirm both this date and the relative immaturity of the author. The text itself is rather short and represents a collection of anecdotes about Isaiah and, to a lesser degree, Peter the Iberian. Many of these are tropes, as on the two occasions when Zacharias describes Isaiah's decision to move into the desert to avoid being disturbed by crowds of admirers.[41] Zacharias records some distinctive anecdotes, however, and these are what mark the text as an early composition. Overwhelmingly, these anecdotes are derived from a homogenous group of Gazan sources. This suggests the sort of limited social network more typical of a student than a well-placed Constantinopolitan lawyer.[42]

Apart from these personal connections, there are also thematic elements that suggest that these anecdotes were assembled while Zacharias

38. The Syriac materials related to Isaiah and Peter were published and translated by E. W. Brooks, *Vita Isaiae monachi* in *Vitae virorum apud monophysitas celeberrimorum*, CSCO 7–8, (text) 7:1–16, (trans.) 8:1–10. For a discussion of the problems with the Georgian survival, see Lang, "Peter the Iberian," 164–68.

39. In the Berytus section of the *Life of Severus*, Zacharias mentions that he has already written an account of the virtues of Peter and Isaiah (*Vit. Sev.* 83). Kugener "Observations," 469–70, notes that Zacharias said nothing of the *Life of Theodore of Antinoe* in this notice. This omission marks this earlier project as something distinct from the Greek original upon which our texts are based. This suggests that the *Lives* of Peter and Isaiah were originally published before their inclusion in the larger collection with the life of Theodore.

40. This dating is based upon convergences with the *Plero.* of John Rufus. For this, see Kugener, "Observations," 466–67.

41. *Vita Isaiae* 4, 6. On p. 6, the attention of admirers is described as a demonic plague. Among the best known parallels is *Vit. Ant.* 49. Also notable is the story of the divided tunic on pp. 4–5. For parallels, see P. Devos, "Le manteau partagé: Un thème hagiographique en trois de ses variants," *AB* 93 (1976): 157–65.

42. There are nine anecdotal elements in the surviving text. Two of these (the divided tunic story and a round of general healings) are apparent tropes and need not have had any specific source. Four of the next five elements are taken from the testimony of local Gazan notables. One individual, Nestorius, was a member of the *curia* in Gaza, another was the *scholasticus* Dionysius. A third testimony came from ascetics in the area of Gaza, and the fourth came from the prominent rhetorician Aeneas. The final two elements are not Gazan and concern the testimony of a *scrinarius* in the office of the prefect and a visit by legates sent by the emperor Zeno.

was a student. The first of these concerns the ill-fated revolt of the Isuarian general Illus in 484,[43] a revolt notable for the efforts made by its organizers to reach out to pagan intellectuals through the poet Pamprepius.[44] Among pagans, the revolt's supposed promise to restore pagan worship was openly endorsed by intellectuals, even if Pamprepius himself was distrusted.[45] For Zacharias and other Christians studying under Pamprepius' supporters, the revolt was deeply disconcerting and its failure was seen as a triumph of Christianity over paganism. The *Life of Isaiah* evokes these ideas by introducing Isaiah as a calming influence whose steady intellectual guidance helped concerned Christians through this period. Isaiah's example then contrasts with the impetuous failings of pagan intellectual leadership.[46]

Another segment of the *Life of Isaiah* similarly works to establish a new sort of relationship between Christian wisdom and pagan learning. This segment purports to be based upon the testimony of the Christian sophist Aeneas of Gaza, a particularly well-known fifth-century intellectual.[47] Aeneas is quoted as saying that, when he came upon a particularly

43. Illus and his figurehead Leontius were quickly defeated in 484, but only finally and fully subdued in 488. On their last stand, see J. Gottwald, "Die Kirche und das Schloss Paperon in Kililisch-Armenien," *BZ* 36 (1936): 86–100.

44. This idea is clear from Damascius, *Vit. Is.* Ath. 115A; Z. Ep. 290. On pagan involvement in Illus' revolt, see H. Elton, "Illus and the Imperial Aristocracy under Zeno," *Byz* 70 (2000): 403–4. The pagan poet Pamprepius spent much of 482 and 483 in Alexandria working on Illus' behalf to win the support of that city's pagan intellectuals. Pamprepius was one of the generation of Egyptian poets termed "Wandering Poets" by Alan Cameron ("Wandering Poets: A Literary Movement in Byzantine Egypt," *Hist* 14 [1965]: 470–509).

45. *Vit. Is.* Ath. 115; Z. Ep. 290. Detailed discussion of this passage is found in R. von Haehling, "Damascius und die heidnische Opposition im 5 Jahrhundert nach Christus. Betrachtungen zu einen Katalog heidnischer Widersacher in der *Vita Isidori*," *JbAC* 23 (1980): 82–95.

46. Zacharias describes how Isaiah calmed Christians who were uneasy about a situation in which "Illus had become deranged, for it is said that he was deceived by the *magus* Pamprepius and led into paganism" (*Vit. Is.* 10). This story is not original; it parallels a similar story told by Rufinus about Athanasius and the emperor Julian (Rufinus, *Hist.* 1.34). Its reuse, however, does show how contentious Illus' revolt had become among Alexandrian and Gazan intellectuals. In the aftermath of the failed rebellion, pagan intellectuals tended to disavow their relationships with Pamprepius while still indicating their sympathy with his goals. Note, for example, *Vit. Is.* Ath. 113 Q; Z. fr. 297.

47. On the biography of Aeneas, see N. Aujoulat, "Le Théophraste d'Énée de Gaza: problèmes de chronologie," *Koinonia* 10 (1986): 67–80 and I. Hadot, *Le problème du néoplatonisme alexandrin, Hiéroclès et Simplicius* (Paris: Études augustiniennes, 1978), 203–4.

difficult passage of Plato, Aristotle, or Plotinus, he would review the commentaries. If he found no answer to his question, he would then check with Isaiah and, invariably, Isaiah would provide him with an answer that both resolved Aeneas' question and "demonstrated the truth of Christian doctrine."[48]

While some ascetics were well-versed in Neoplatonic ideas, it is not common for a hagiographer to use Neoplatonic interpretative skills to demonstrate the holiness of his subject.[49] It is far more common to see a hagiographer contrast the biblically-inspired practical learning of the ascetic with the syllogistic skills of a philosopher.[50] Indeed, this contrast can even be seen as an important part of the self-reinforcing symbolic universe created by hagiographers.[51] This makes Zacharias' decision to break with this accepted biographic notion particularly interesting. He has chosen to emphasize the intellectual elements of Isaiah's identity by putting the description in the words of Aeneas, an intellectual who had been trained in philosophy in Alexandria and remained acquainted with the pagan philosophers in the city.[52] It was intended to be striking to the reader that Aeneas chooses to speak with Isaiah and not an Alexandrian teacher about problems of philosophical interpretation.

In detailing this scene, Zacharias was creating a new sort of ideological structure in which Isaiah's ascetic project was not inconsistent with the

48. *Vit. Is.* 13.

49. The awareness of trends in contemporary Neoplatonism can be seen especially clearly in sixth-century Palestinian monasteries. On this, note I. Perczel, "Pseudo-Dionysius and Palestinian Origenism," in *The Sabaite Heritage in the Orthodox Church from the Fifth Century to the Present*, ed. J. Patrich (Louvain: Peeters, 2001), 261–82. This awareness is not stressed in hagiography, however.

50. e.g. *Vit. Ant.* 78. On this contrast and the role of faith in such a portrait, see S. Rubenson, "Philosophy and Simplicity: The Problem of Classical Education in Early Christian Biography," in *Greek Biography and Panegyric in Late Antiquity*, ed. T. Hägg and P. Rousseau, Transformation of the Classical Heritage 31 (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2000), 118.

51. Cf. A. Cameron, *Christianity and the Rhetoric of Empire: The Development of Christian Discourse* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1991), 115–19.

52. It is commonly thought that Aeneas studied under the philosopher Hierocles in Alexandria (the character of Euxitheos in Aeneas' dialogue *Theophrastus* is thought to be autobiographical). His connections to the Alexandrian Neoplatonic environment in the 480s and afterwards are revealed by his letters. Among them are letters addressed to the physician Gessius (*epp.* 19–20), a well-known affiliate of the Alexandrian Neoplatonic schools. For more on his association with these schools, see E. Watts, "An Alexandrian Christian Response to Fifth-Century Neoplatonic Influence," in *Philosophy and Society in Late Antiquity*, ed. A. Smith (Swansea: Classical Press of Wales, 2005), 215–29.

intellectual values of Christian students. This anecdote, like the Illus revolt described before, broadly supported the *philoponoi* program of discrediting problematic elements of the pagan-dominated Alexandrian intellectual environment while also presenting an ascetically-directed Christian philosophy as a goal.[53] As such, it fit into Zacharias' literary portrait of Isaiah as an exemplary figure who fused both ascetic and philosophical virtues.

The *Ammonius*, a dialogue written during or shortly after Zacharias' time in Berytus, similarly attempts to redefine the intellectual power dynamic within the Alexandrian schools.[54] It does this by focusing in great detail upon the question of the eternity of the world, probably the most vexing difference between the teachings of the city's leading pagan philosophers and the beliefs of its Christian students. In the *Ammonius*, Zacharias seeks to demonstrate, through a series of short discussions, that the world is a creation of God that will perish and be reassembled. At the same time, Zacharias uses these dialogues to illustrate the intellectual failings of Ammonius, the most prominent Alexandrian teacher of philosophy in the 490s, and Gessius, an influential early sixth-century iatrosophist.

While the specific philosophical arguments presented in these exchanges are not pertinent to this discussion, it is important to note that the philosophical content in the text is profoundly unoriginal.[55] In fact, much of it parallels another dialogue on the same theme written by Aeneas of

53. It is less clear how these anecdotes would have worked in the edition that Zacharias prepared for Misael and released in the late 510s or early 520s. There are some clear signs of redaction in the text, but these are largely superficial. An example is *Vit. Is.* 13, where Zacharias indicates that "Bosporius, who afterwards was bishop of Sinope, narrated these events to me when he was a *scrinarius* in the office of the prefect." In addition, the precarious state of anti-Chalcedonian institutions in the reign of Justin could lead one to suppose that the emphasis upon the Christological opinions of Isaiah may mark a later addition to the text. However, the work of Zacharias' correspondent John Rufus shows that such ideas were by no means out of keeping with earlier oral traditions about Isaiah (e.g., *Plero.* 12).

54. The date of composition for the *Ammonius* is difficult to pinpoint. Minniti Colonna, *Zacaria Scolastico*, 44, describes the date and possible circumstances of its composition. A date of composition of 490–91 is suggested by A. Segonds, "Ainéas de Gaza," in *Dictionnaire de philosophes antiques*, ed. R. Goulet (Paris: CNRS, 1989), 83. The text appears intimately connected to Zacharias' student experiences. This is particularly evident in the dramatic setting of the text in which two law students in Berytus discuss their Alexandrian philosophical teacher. Also notable are Zacharias' attempts to ground the discussions in a contemporary intellectual setting.

55. For a more detailed discussion of the nature of the arguments, see Watts, "An Alexandrian Christian Response," 219–20.

Gaza in the mid-480s.[56] In composing the *Ammonius* in the early 490s, Zacharias simply repackaged earlier arguments against the eternity of the cosmos in a new dramatic setting.

When compared to Aeneas' thematically similar work, Zacharias makes several subtle yet significant shifts in presentation that make the arguments more relevant to a student audience. While Aeneas set his discussion as a conversation between middle-aged men in the port of Alexandria, Zacharias places students at the center of his text and sets all of his exchanges within an explicitly academic setting.[57] Unlike Aeneas, who used pseudonyms for all of the speakers in his dialogue, Zacharias singles out the prominent Neoplatonist Ammonius and the iatrosophist Gessius for particular attack.[58] Aeneas' argument was also framed in a relatively genteel manner with no individual characters being humiliated. Zacharias, by contrast, makes an effort to emphasize the humiliation felt by Ammonius and Gessius following their argumentative defeats by the anonymous Christian interlocutor.[59]

As it is presently constituted, the *Ammonius* appears specifically designed to communicate two messages to a student audience. The first was a doctrinal message that the world was created and would ultimately be destroyed. In the intellectual climate of the turn of the sixth century, this was a point of fierce contention between Christians who expected the imminent end of the world and pagans who felt such ideas to be illogical.[60] For some, it had become nothing less than a question of religious identity and, for this reason, Zacharias trumpeted the religious significance of his exchanges at every opportunity.[61] Indeed, following the dis-

56. On these similarities, see as well Watts, "An Alexandrian Christian Response," 220.

57. The three Ammonius discussions take place within a classroom. The exchange with Gessius is set outside the Mouseion.

58. Aeneas' characters include the generically named Euxitheos, Aegyptus, and Theophrastus. In the *Amm.*, only the Christian characters remain anonymous. On this contrast, see, Watts, "An Alexandrian Christian Response," 220–21.

59. This is why, at the end of a short exchange about the Trinity (*Amm.* 1095), Zacharias describes Ammonius silently blushing in embarrassment while the students in the class rejoice.

60. This notion was particularly important to anti-Chalcedonian thinkers like Zacharias. The end of the cosmos played a major role in the world view of Zacharias' associates like John Rufus. Indeed, much of his criticism of the Council of Chalcedon is based upon apocalyptic visions (e.g. *Plero.* 7, 12, 13, 19, 26, 36, 45, 88, 89). On this see, S. Ashbrook Harvey, "Remembering Pain: Syriac Historiography and the Separation of the Churches," *Byz* 58 (1988): 301–2.

61. It is worth contrasting this with Aeneas who, despite making many of the same arguments, generally hesitates to highlight their religious significance.

proof of Ammonius' idea that it is not good to dissolve something so perfect as the universe, the narrator notes: "Many of those present in the class at that time . . . were placed among us and leaned towards our arguments, or more correctly, they leaned towards Christianity out of faith and love of truth."[62]

An equally important concern, at least in terms of the internal rhetoric of the text, was the reversal of the religious power dynamic within the schools. As we have seen, the philosophical community in Alexandria was dominated by the intellectual and personal authority of pagan Neoplatonic teachers like Ammonius. The *Ammonius*, by showing the fallibility of Ammonius, places these specific teachers in a different, less authoritative light. It also contains explicit attacks on the character of Ammonius himself that were designed to undercut his personal authority and, presumably, make students more skeptical of his teaching.[63] This was, of course, a message suitable for the Alexandrian scholastic setting of the 490s.

Like the *Life of Isaiah*, the *Ammonius* was also updated and republished, probably in the 520s.[64] Nevertheless, this update was superficial. The discussions with Ammonius and the introductory conversation are evidently unchanged from the earlier composition. The addition of the Gessius text is the most significant revision. It appears to be an attempt to update the discussion for a sixth-century audience by including a contemporary pagan thinker.[65] Consequently, the themes of the eternity of the world and the desire to attack the reputations and credibility of Ammonius that figure so prominently in the Ammonius sections of the dialogue are a part of the original composition of the 490s. These themes, like the similar incidents in the *Life of Isaiah*, are very much the product of student concerns specific to that time.

62. *Amm*. 357–60.

63. E.g. *Amm*. 19–24 (where he is called one who "pretends to be wise") and *Amm*. 27–32 (where he is said to "corrupt the souls of youths").

64. The suggestion of Minniti Colonna, *Zacaria Scolastico*, 44–45, that the Ammonius discussions may have been written in pieces is interesting, but it need not change the fact that there are two distinct moments when Zacharias chose to release the work. The first moment was evidently in the 490s. Because the revision seems to respond to the need to include another Neoplatonist in the discussion, it should be dated to the 520s, the period around Ammonius' death.

65. Gessius and the arguments covered in the exchange with him are not mentioned at all in either the introductory remarks or the summary of the work. These speak only about discussions with Ammonius (e.g. *Amm*. 42–45).

THE PARALIUS STORY AND ITS ANTI-PAGAN INTENT

If we turn back to the Paralius section of the *Life of Severus*, we see that in this text too, Zacharias focused upon a similar set of themes to those found in the *Life of Isaiah* and the *Ammonius*. As in the *Life of Isaiah*, the Paralius text describes ascetic leaders who possessed an intelligence that was manifestly superior to that of pagan philosophers.[66] By the same token, Zacharias' discussion of Paralius' life contains an indictment of the credibility and quality of judgment of the Alexandrian pagan intellectual leadership that resembles that found in the *Ammonius*. They are not only unable to answer Paralius' religious questions, but they display an unphilosophical cowardice by fleeing Alexandria following Paralius' accusations.[67] Finally, later in the narration, Zacharias introduces Illus' revolt to show both the poor judgment of pagan intellectuals and the inefficacy of their prayers.[68]

The significance of the Paralius text goes beyond simply a reiteration of the points found in the *Ammonius* and the *Life of Isaiah*. Broadly speaking, the putative "life of Paralius" contains another type of attack that is less doctrinal than it is cultural. It neutralizes the non-doctrinal elements in the Alexandrian schools that attracted Christian students to paganism and inserts a story of *philoponoi* triumph in their place. The text does this in two ways. The first centers upon the orally transmitted accounts of pagan miracles that were circulating within the Alexandrian intellectual community. Although the importance of such oral testimony is seldom acknowledged by scholars, these accounts were crucial in defining for students both the purpose of their studies and the nature of the specific intellectual community to which they belonged.[69]

Damascius' *Life of Isidore* preserves much oral testimony illustrating the inspiring (and often equally bizarre) religious achievements of pagan teachers like Heraiscus and Asclepiodotus.[70] These included prophetic

66. So, for example, the monk Stephen is one who "had received from God the grace to vanquish totally (pagans) in discussions" (*Vit. Sev.* 16).

67. *Vit. Sev.* 27. Compare their behavior with Damascius' discussion of the necessity for a philosopher to stand firm when faced with danger (*Vit. Is.* Ath. 146 B; Z. fr. 69).

68. *Vit. Sev.* 40. The reference is specifically to the hopes held out by the Aphrodisian pagan intellectual community, but this community was closely linked to that of Alexandria.

69. On this, see E. Watts, "Orality and Communal Identity in Eunapius' *Lives of the Sophists and Philosophers*," *Byz* 75 (2005): in press.

70. On the development of such orally transmitted religious traditions, see, generally, J. Vansina, *Oral Tradition as History* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985), 7.

visions,[71] miraculous encounters with the divine,[72] superhuman perceptive abilities,[73] and even the ability to bring about an earthquake.[74] For his own programmatic reasons, Damascius works hard to separate theurgical and philosophical achievements, but the *Life of Proclus* suggests that oral traditions also developed around individuals thought to be particularly skilled in theurgy.[75] Some figures had a particularly strong presence in this testimony. Heraiscus, for example, could perceive if a statue contained elements of the divine and whether a woman was menstruating. He had been born with his finger over his lips (as if silencing those around him) and, when he died, mythic signs surrounded his body as it was being prepared for burial.[76] Asclepiodotus was a similarly popular subject. Aside from his child's divinely inspired conception, he was thought to be an expert at interpreting divine visions and even was said to have saved himself from drowning by offering a quick prayer to the sun.[77] These and other similar oral testimonies evidently circulated in the Alexandrian schools of the 480s and this pervasive testimony had a real impact upon student religious conviction. Indeed, Paralius himself continued to hold to his pagan beliefs long after his initial doubts because he had heard the account of the miraculous conception of Asclepiodotus' child.

Zacharias' attack on these oral testimonies centered upon the story of Asclepiodotus' child. It is not nearly as wide-ranging as Damascius' discussion of them, but it was carefully designed to render these testimonies collectively unbelievable to all but the most sympathetic audiences.[78] In his description of the Asclepiodotus affair, Zacharias works to highlight the unreliability of this oral history throughout his narration of the event. Asclepiodotus is introduced as a man who attracted the admiration of

71. e.g. *Vit. Is.* Ath. 9C–E; Z. Ep. 12–14.

72. e.g. *Vit. Is.* Ath. 96 E; Z. Ep. 140.

73. e.g. *Vit. Is.* Ath. 70; Z. Ep. 92.

74. *Vit. Is.* Ath. 104 A; Z. fr. 271.

75. e.g. *Vit. Proc.* 17.

76. *Vit. Is.* Ath. 76 E; Z. Ep. 106, 107, fr. 174.

77. Interpretations of visions: *Vit. Is.* Ath. 87 A; Z. Ep. 131; rescue from drowning: *Vit. Is.* Ath. 81; Z. Ep. 116.

78. Although Zacharias just focuses upon the Asclepiodotus story, his retelling of it unfolds much like the accounts preserved in Damascius' *Vit. Is.* Both the Asclepiodotus story and some of the tales told by Damascius emphasize the particular divine privileges given to a philosophical initiate and sanction the activities described with a divinely inspired dream. In one case among many, Damascius tells of a cave near a shrine in Phrygia that emitted deadly fumes. Because he was an initiate, Damascius was able to enter the cave, descend to its end, and emerge unhurt. He then had a dream in which the Mother of the gods insisted that he celebrate a feast symbolizing his salvation from death. (*Vit. Is.* Ath. 87 A; Z. Ep. 131).

pagans only through his magical skill. As Zacharias describes him stumbling through ever more elaborate pagan infertility treatments (including sexual unification with an idol), he appears to be a liar worthy of ridicule.[79]

It has been suggested that this story ought to be understood as part of a sacred competition in which intellectual pagans and the rural shrines they patronized sought to produce their own miracles to counter the claims of Christian shrines.[80] Both the story of Asclepiodotus' baby and Zacharias' refutation of it are thought to belong to this wider shrine-based competition of miracles and countermiracles. However, it is notable that Zacharias does not provide a Christian miracle to counter this story and does not refer specifically to any Christian alternative in the Paralius section of the text. Instead, his discussion of this anecdote has a similar dynamic to the philosophical discussions in the *Ammonius*. In both cases, there is a systematic disproof of a notion that pagan teachers held to be authoritative. This takes place within the Alexandrian scholastic environment and focuses upon a student's demonstration of the duplicity of that community's intellectual leadership.[81] Once Zacharias' attack is understood in this context, it becomes clear that it was composed to discredit the religious traditions circulating orally in the philosophical schools in the same way that the *Ammonius* refuted the problematic doctrinal elements of the philosophical curriculum. In fact, one can perhaps best understand this as Zacharias' answer to the oral materials that later found their way into Damascius' *Life of Isidore*.

The other long narrative in the text, the discussion of the Christian attack on the Menouthis Isis shrine, should similarly be understood as a part of this pagan-Christian dialogue within the schools. Instead of attacking a particularly prominent leader of the pagan intellectual community, this particular account seeks to discredit a particular locus of intellectual pagan religious activity.

79. In case this implication was not clear enough, Zacharias also states that pagans bribed a messenger to prevent reports of the fraud from being read in Aphrodisias. This kept belief in the tale alive in the city for many years afterward (*Vit. Sev.* 36).

80. Frankfurter, "Consequences of Hellenism," 190–91. Frankfurter presents the "miracle" as something staged in a way that reflected Christian miraculous activities at the time.

81. Zacharias does revisit the story at *Vit. Sev.* 35–36, but only to tell how the priest at Menouthis confirmed Stephen's suspicion that the miracle was fabricated. Frankfurter ("Consequences of Hellenism," 190) sees Zacharias highlighting not the duplicity of the teachers but their defensive gullibility. This is then contrasted with the reasonable skepticism of Paralius. Some of this dynamic is undoubtedly present, but in light of Zacharias' particular interests, it seems better to understand this story as a broader attack on the integrity of teachers and the credibility of the anecdotes that were circulating in their schools.

As the narrative of Paralius' conversion progresses, Zacharias focuses more closely on the Menouthis Isis shrine and its operation. Zacharias tells of the false dream oracle that Paralius received at the shrine, he mentions the fact that another student had received a contradictory oracle, and he explains that the shrine was unable to help resolve this problem.[82] The shrine is revealed to be popular, but lacking in any real divine authority. The shrine next appears when the monastic leader Stephen asks Paralius to lead a raid against it. Zacharias' description of this raid, which involved the student *philoponoi* and both anti-Chalcedonian and Chalcedonian monks, is quite vivid. He tells of walls filled with pagan writings (hieroglyphics, probably), a false wall that hid the idols associated with the shrine, and the absurd appearance and poor state of the idols themselves.[83]

Following a bonfire in which the less spectacular of the idols were burned, the Christian raiders spent the night alongside the remaining idols in order to show the terrified pagan population that the power of the pagan gods and the demons had been shattered.[84] The *philoponoi* and the monks with whom they had come to Menouthis then escorted the idols back to Alexandria where they were mockingly paraded through the city, initially to chants taunting the pagan teacher Horapollon.[85] Finally, the priest of the Isis shrine was humiliated in front of a Christian crowd and compelled to explain the meaning of each image.

Zacharias' account is a peculiar mixture. It contains both a traditional description of violence directed against a pagan temple and specific elements highlighting the event as a triumph for Paralius and the student

82. *Vit. Sev.* 20–21. Frankfurter ("Consequences of Hellenism," 190) suggests that Paralius' visit to the shrine concerned Asclepiodotus' story. This is not clear from the text. In fact, Zacharias' narration has moved on and does not mention the Asclepiodotus story here. Instead, it seems that his intent is to tell a different sort of story that highlights the number of false oracles given by the shrine. He makes clear both that this was a shrine to which many students came (hence the competing oracles they received) and that the shrine was unreliable, despite its popularity.

83. *Vit. Sev.* 27–29. The false wall and the hidden collection of idols in the shrine have other Egyptian parallels. On this, see D. Frankfurter, *Religion in Roman Egypt: Assimilation and Resistance* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 141.

84. *Vit. Sev.* 30. The local pagans felt that "it was not possible to live safely if someone inflicted such outrage upon the idols. They believed that this person would die on the spot."

85. *Vit. Sev.* 31–35. The chants against Horapollon are found in *Vit. Sev.* 32. This reflects the anti-intellectual agenda of the *philoponoi* and also indicates that, at least in the created reality of Zacharias' text, this was an action directed against the intellectual paganism of Alexandrian philosophical circles.

philoponoi.[86] The mockery of pagan images, the use of demonic language to describe pagan gods, the procession of the idols, and the night spent alongside the idols are all paralleled in numerous contemporary Christian texts.[87] These are customarily used both to attack paganism and to define positively the Christian achievements of the text's subject.[88]

At the same time, one cannot discount the role played by Paralius, Zacharias, and the student *philoponoi* in the events. In Zacharias' retelling, all of these anti-pagan actions are theirs. The discrediting and sacking of the shrine result from actions taken by Paralius. He and the *philoponoi* together disprove the power of the pagan gods by spending the night with their idols. Even the public procession, which represents the culmination of the communal anti-pagan feeling, is partially situated within the *philoponoi*-pagan intellectual dialogue by the chanted condemnation of Horapollon.[89] Zacharias' description of the Menouthis raid paints this as a triumph of Christianity, but also as a triumph that reflects particularly upon the *philoponoi* and the religious situation in the schools.[90] The Christian *philoponoi* students have made the Menouthis shrine, like the teachers who patronized it, an object of mockery. Just as the Asclepiodotus refutation seems designed to serve as a counter to the stories about holy

86. On the formulaic elements, see D. Brakke, *Demons and the Making of the Monk: Spiritual Combat in Early Christianity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005), chapter 9, in press. I thank Professor Brakke for allowing me to see an advance copy of his manuscript.

87. For the demonic language, see Brakke, *Demons*, chapter 9 and, for a particularly vivid example, *Apoph. patr*. N 191 (*ROC* 13 [1908]: 275–76). On the procession of idols, see especially Socrates Scholasticus' account of the destruction of the Serapeum (5.16–17). He describes a procession of idols taken from a Mithraeum as well as the peculiar hieroglyphs found in the temple itself (cf. Rufinus, *Hist*., 11.22). For staying or sleeping beside pagan gods, see Athanasius' *Vit. Ant*. 12–14 and, much later, *Life of Daniel the Stylite*, 14–15. On iconoclastic anti-pagan violence in Egypt, see D. Frankfurter, "'Things Unbefitting Christians': Violence and Christianization in Fifth-Century Panopolis," *JECS* 8 (2000): 273–95 (esp. 282–84).

88. Brakke, *Demons*.

89. On processions in the Alexandrian environment, see Haas, *Alexandria in Late Antiquity*, 82–90. John of Nikiu's description of the acclamation as Hypatia's remains were dragged out of the city by a Christian mob (in R. Charles, trans., *The Chronicle of John, Bishop of Nikiu, Translated from Zotenberg's Ethiopic Text* [London: Williams and Norgate, 1916] 84.103) shows how popular chants tended to mark such occasions as communal triumphs. Particularly notable was the communal opposition to the Arian bishop Lucius in the fourth century (e.g. *Historia Acephala* 5.13) expressed by a combined crowd of pagans, Christians, and Jews.

90. Frankfurter's idea of the "regional activity" of the shrine ("Consequences of Hellenism," 189–92) is a good one, but this is not all that Zacharias is describing. His interest in the Menouthis shrine comes only because of the role it played in the intellectual communities.

pagan teachers circulating within the schools, the Menouthis raid seems to negate the impact of the oral testimony about pagan holy places. In both cases, the ascetic and philosophical program promoted by the student *philoponoi* emerges as an honest and powerful alternative to the messages of pagan intellectuals.

REVISED TEXTS IN THEIR LATER CONTEXT

The focus upon the *philoponoi* and the Alexandrian scholastic environment in the "life of Paralius" suggests that we ought to understand this original composition as a part of a series of three related texts originally published by Zacharias in the 490s. The *Ammonius* was a philosophically inspired defense of the Christian idea of a created, destructible cosmos that responded to philosophical teachings to the contrary. In so doing, it provided contemporary philosophical support to the Christian doctrinal ideas championed by the student *philoponoi* and their ascetic sponsors. The "life of Paralius" seems to have mixed a positive narrative of spiritual progression with a refutation of the non-doctrinal elements of Alexandrian intellectual culture that encouraged student fascination with philosophical paganism. It presented the *philoponoi* and their ascetic sponsors as wiser alternatives to the deceptive and duplicative pagan authority figures who headed the schools.[91] Finally, the *Life of Isaiah* represented the achievements of a wise ascetic who had a gift for learning but chose to apply himself to a different sort of philosophy from that taught in the schools. Together, as originally composed, Zacharias' works of the early 490s present a set of diverse but complementary themes relevant to the experience of Christian students in a pagan-led teaching environment.

The complementary nature of the three compositions was obscured by their republication. Though it is difficult to tell from the surviving text, the *Life of Isaiah* was probably the least affected by this process. As noted above, the collective biography within which it appeared in the 520s was a commissioned work and appears to have been something of a slap-dash composition.[92] Nevertheless, the inclusion of the lives of Isaiah and Peter

91. Indeed, this message was particularly well communicated through the text's focus on Paralius, a near contemporary of the students of the 490s.

92. There is a notable disjunction between Peter, Isaiah, and Theodore. Peter and Isaiah were the most prominent Palestinian leaders of the anti-Chalcedonian ascetic movement in the years immediately following the Council. Theodore was one of the Egyptian leaders, but Zacharias seems to have placed him in the same category as John of Sebennytos among Egyptian ascetic leaders (*Vit. Sev.* 78). The inclusion of Theodore and not John may reflect the general level of effort that Zacharias put into this revised product.

the Iberian in a collection with another biography written in the 520s would likely have diluted some of the particular themes that appealed to the student Zacharias in the 490s.[93]

The 520s revision of the *Ammonius* seems to have been something different, a task undertaken not because of a request from a patron, but because Zacharias apparently determined that an updated version of work was necessary. As we have seen, the initial composition was motivated by the teaching of Alexandrian philosophers that the world was eternal, a set of teachings that conflicted with the widely held Christian belief that the world would end around the year 500. As one would expect, the furor over this idea began to die down when the year 500 came and went.[94] By the 520s, however, the possibility of the end of the world was again being discussed by anti-Chalcedonian Christians, both within and outside the scholastic environment.[95] While the doctrinal arguments were presumably still valid, Ammonius, the figure who made the discussion particularly relevant to Zacharias' student audience, had died in the 520s.[96] Gessius, however, had risen to prominence in the intervening decades (albeit as a physician) and his inclusion would have helped to make the discussion relevant to students of the 520s.[97] Nevertheless, his addition represented only a light revision of the text.

93. The shift from a biography that stands alone to one that is part of a collection requires a shift in the approaches of both an author and a reader. As P. Cox Miller has ably illustrated ("Strategies of Representation in Collective Biography: Constructing the Subject as Holy," in *Greek Biography and Panegyric in Late Antiquity*, 209–54), collected biographies have their own logic of inclusion that shapes a reader's apprehension of their themes. Zacharias' collection was likely lightly revised and, consequently, the logic of inclusion would probably have seemed somewhat muddled.

94. John Rufus shows that these ideas had yet to completely dissipate. On John Rufus and this notion in the 510s, see Ashbrook Harvey, "Remembering Pain," 301–2.

95. On this, see Meier, *Das andere Zeitalter Justinians*, 342–56. Probably not long after the new edition of the *Ammonius* appeared, the intellectual argument was taken up by the far more able mind of John Philoponus in his *De Aeternitate Mundi contra Proclum* (on which, see K. Verrycken, "The Development of Philoponus' Thought and Its Chronology" in *Aristotle Transformed*, ed. R. Sorabji [London: Duckworth, 1990], 233–75). This text is internally dated to 529, but was likely begun earlier (Watts, *City and School*, chapter 9). Against Verrycken, see as well C. Scholten, *Antike Naturphilosophie und christliche Kosmologie in der Schrift "De opificio mundi" des Johannes Philoponos* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1996), 118–43; and U. M. Lang, *John Philoponus and the Controversies over Chalcedon in the Sixth Century: A Study and Translation of the Arbiter* (Louvain: Peeters, 2001), 8–10.

96. His death is usually placed in or around 526.

97. Gessius is a well-known figure who appears, among other places, in the *Life of Isidore* and the letters of Aeneas of Gaza. He apparently was also something of a

The *Life of Severus* presents a different situation. It is the only case where the earlier text is thematically obscured by the revised one. Nevertheless, the Paralius material appears to have been copied into the *Life of Severus* wholesale, without any attempt to shape the original narrative to include Severus. This raises the natural question of why Zacharias would choose to include such extraneous material at all. After all, in the prefatory dialogue (which, incidentally, may itself have been partially reused in another text),[98] Zacharias claims only to be responding to a slanderous rumor that Severus participated in pagan rituals while a student in Phoenicia. If this is the case, why did he not just begin the work with a brief discussion of Menas' prophecy that Severus would be a bishop and then turn to Severus' time in Berytus?

There cannot, of course, be any definitive answer to this question, but one possible answer does present itself. Conventionally, it is assumed that this work was written during the period of Severus' time at the head of the church in Antioch (512–18), likely as a response to Chalcedonian attacks on his fitness.[99] If that were the case, the Alexandrian narrative about Paralius would be a peculiar inclusion. It has little direct relevance to any discourse motivated by Severus' Antiochene activities and even less to a rumor about Severus' pagan activity in Berytus. If one were to move the date of composition up to the early 520s, however, this Alexandrian material would become much more relevant. In 518, Severus was exiled to Alexandria by the new emperor Justin. Later, in 519, over fifty other prominent anti-Chalcedonian bishops were deposed by Justin. A number

lightning rod for Christian criticism. In a text describing the miracles of St. Cyrus and John of Menouthis, Gessius is afflicted with a horrible illness for proposing a non-miraculous explanation of the saints' curative powers (Sophronius, *mir. Cyr. et Jo.*, 30 [PG 87: 3514–20]).

98. Zacharias also seems to have reused the opening dialogue about the booksellers' stalls in Constantinople. A parallel is found in the *Antirrhesis*, Zacharias' refutation of Manichaean beliefs (tentatively dated to 527). On this, see Honigmann, *Patristic Studies*, 199–200, and S. N. C. Lieu, "An Early Byzantine Formula for the Renunciation of Manichaeism—The *Capita VII Contra Manichaeos* of <Zacharias of Mytilene>," *JbAC* 26 (1983): 165–66.

99. This assumption is based upon Zacharias' statement that the text "describes the career of Severus up to his patriarchate" (*Vit. Sev.* 115); it suggests that he was still patriarch when it was written. However, it is not likely that Severus' exile to Egypt in 518 was seen by Zacharias as the end of his patriarchate. It was certainly not seen as such by other anti-Chalcedonian authors (e.g. Elias, *Life of John of Tella*, 59, 85). More relevant, an epistle to the exiled Severus that is preserved by the continuator of Zacharias' *Chronicle* still refers to Severus as "patriarch" (*Chronicle*, 9.21).

of them also fled to Alexandria.[100] When Severus arrived, he took up residence at Enaton, the monastery with which the scholastic *philoponoi* were affiliated in the 480s.[101] Then, not even one year after he had arrived in Alexandria, Severus fell into a disagreement with another exiled bishop, Julian of Halicarnassus.[102] Because much of the leadership of the anti-Chalcedonian church was in or around Alexandria at this time, this argument quickly came to involve many bishops, all of whom evidently tried to prevail by appealing to the only constituencies on hand—elements of the Egyptian Christian community. Consequently, by the early 520s the bitter dispute had split the anti-Chalcedonian population of Egypt into two camps with each side working to steal support away from the other. [103]

In the course of this argument, both Severus and Julian wrote works filled with ever more aggressive rhetoric against the other—including, eventually, a work by Julian entitled the *Adversus blasphemias Severi*.[104] Because many of the exiled bishops were resident in the city, these works were written in Alexandria, circulated in Egypt, and were designed to influence both bishops and general public opinion within the province. Associates of the bishops also weighed in, sometimes with equally polemical contributions.[105] Even though charges of paganism did not figure into the Julianist written works (these apparently only called Severus a heretic), it is not difficult to imagine accounts of Severus' student religious activities surfacing (or resurfacing) in Alexandria at this time.

100. Zacharias, *Chronicle*, 8.5. The number of exiles is uncertain. On this, see E. Honigmann, *Évêques et évêchés monophysites*, 145–48.

101. On Severus' stay at Enaton, see Leontius of Byzantium, *sect.* 5. 3 (PG 86:1230). Severus also spent time in his later life at Kellia (Honigmann, *Évêques et évêchés monophysites,* 153–54).

102. For the Julianist controversy, see Zacharias, *Chronicle* 9.9–16, and, less accurately, the Arabic *History of the Patriarchs of Alexandria* (Timothy III). For modern accounts, see the extensive study of R. Draguet, *Julien d'Halicarnasse et sa controverse avec Sévère d'Antioche sur l'incorruptibilité du corps du Christ* (Louvain: Impr. P. Smeesters, 1924). In addition, J. Maspero, *Histoire des patriarches d'Alexandrie depuis la mort de l'empereur Anastase jusqu'à la réconciliation des églises jacobites (518–616)* (Paris: E. Champion, 1923), 88–93, puts the details together well. A less detailed account is found in W. H. C. Frend, *Rise of the Anti-Chalcedonian Movement* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), 253–54.

103. Despite this, the story in the *History of the Patriarchs of Alexandria* that all the monks in the city save seven supported Julian is nonsense.

104. On these exchanges, see Draguet, *Julien d'Halicarnasse*, esp. 36–41. The *Adversus blasphemias Severi* is now lost. For a more detailed account of the exchanges between the two men at the beginning of the controversy, see Zacharias, *Chronicle*, 9.9–13.

105. For these contributions, see Draguet, *Julien d'Halicarnasse*, 75–90.

If one imagines that Zacharias wrote the *Life of Severus* in response to rumors about Severus' pagan activities that were spread by supporters of Julian of Halicarnassus, the inclusion of a great deal of seemingly unrelated Alexandrian material becomes comprehensible. Alexandria was a central battleground for the Severus-Julian fight and, because of the powerful religious influences of Alexandrian pagan teachers in the 480s, an Egyptian audience would likely expect Severus' scholarly career in the city to be addressed.[106] Though Severus' paganism made it difficult for Zacharias to say much about his student activities in Alexandria, his reuse of the earlier "life of Paralius" enabled Zacharias to associate Severus with the Alexandrian activities of Paralius and the *philoponoi*. Even if Zacharias' attempt was not convincing, an implied association between Severus and Paralius served two purposes. First, it illustrated Severus' anti-pagan credentials in a specifically Alexandrian context. Beyond that, the manufactured connection with Paralius also suggested an old tie between Severus and the large and powerful monastery of Enaton. This gave an Alexandrian point of reference to balance out the Berytus and Palestinian evidence of Severus' engagement with anti-Chalcedonian ascetic circles. It also gave Severus a manufactured connection to a respected Egyptian ascetic institution that his rival Julian lacked. Both would matter little to a general audience, but they could help in Severus' Egypt-centered struggle with Julian.

CONCLUSION

Though often used as a source for pieces of information about late antique religious life, Zacharias Scholasticus' *Life of Severus* has seldom been studied as an entire work. This oversight has obscured both the complicated nature of its composition and Zacharias' likely authorial aims. A close reading of the work reveals that the part of the text describing the career of Paralius has its own internal organization and thematic structure that complements other works written by Zacharias in the 490s. As originally conceived, the *Ammonius*, the lives of Isaiah and Peter the Iberian, and the putative "life of Paralius" all reflected Zacharias' intellectual world of the 490s by addressing elements of the interaction between Christian intellectual values and pagan intellectual culture. These

106. In light of this, it is worth noting that Zacharias' works are known to have circulated among the anti-Chalcedonian exiles in Alexandria. His church history was brought to Amid as a part of the library of bishop Māre, an anti-Chalcedonian bishop exiled to Alexandria in 521. On this, see Allen, "Zachariah Scholasticus," 472.

texts were designed with specific programmatic intent and were never intended to be read as general discussions of religious or philosophical practices of the time. Modern historians should hesitate to attach general significance to the specific arguments that they contain.

Each of these earlier works were revised and reissued by Zacharias in the 510s or 520s. These revisions are a product of a mature Zacharias and reflect a new intellectual and religious context, but they had an uneven impact on the original texts. The *Ammonius* was changed only minimally and the lives of Isaiah and Peter the Iberian were evidently altered primarily by becoming part of a larger hagiographic collection. Only in the case of the Paralius materials did the original composition become a small part of a larger text. This makes Zacharias' decision to reuse the text in the *Life of Severus* seem peculiar, but his choice is comprehensible if the final composition is understood as a response to attacks coming from the party of Julian of Halicarnassus. When included in the *Life of Severus*, the "life of Paralius" implicitly gives Severus an Alexandrian-defined identity as an associate of the anti-pagan *philoponoi* and the Enaton monastery. This not only provided a possible refutation of the charge that Severus was a pagan while a student; it also established his Alexandrian background to a divided Egyptian Christian community.

The literary impact of this reuse is equally significant. In the original text, Zacharias had constructed his portrait of Paralius' life to counteract pagan influences in the Alexandrian intellectual environment of the 490s. Although the "life of Paralius" appears to have been copied wholesale, Zacharias' inclusion of this earlier material in his defense of Severus transforms the text. Instead of being a response to problematic religious elements in the pagan-led Alexandrian schools, this material now evokes an earlier period and associates Severus with triumphant Alexandrian institutions. Though the three decades did not change the "life of Paralius," its meaning and significance shifted dramatically because of the new context in which it appeared.

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