

# The Fate of the Dead between Origen(ism) and Orthodoxy in Gaza

Jonathan L. Zecher

*Australian Catholic University; jonathan.zecher@acu.edu.au*

## ■ Abstract

Dorotheos of Gaza (6<sup>th</sup> cent.) was a monastic leader whose works, along with the correspondence of his mentors, Barsanuphios (d. after 543) and John of Gaza (d. 543), provide insight into the Second Origenist Controversy and the tenor of theological investigation at a key juncture in late antiquity. The evidence of Dorotheos, who several times cites Evagrius by name, has been noted but its significance not yet fully appreciated. This essay reassesses Dorotheos's theology and Gazan monastic culture through study of his eschatology in *Instruction 12*, in context of which the Evagrian passages appear, and which he develops from Origen's *On First Principles*. Analysis of Dorotheos's modifications and developing ideas suggests a more vigorous—indeed, “Origenist”—theological life in Gazan monasticism than has been recognized and calls for a new perspective on the effects of the Second Origenist Controversy as well as Dorotheos's own position relative to it.

## ■ Keywords

Dorotheos of Gaza, Monastic School of Gaza, Origen, Origenism, Origenist Controversy, Evagrius of Pontos, eschatology, Byzantine monasticism

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## ■ Introduction

Sometime in the mid-sixth century, a monk from Antioch named Dorotheos became hegoumen of a monastery near Thawatha, in the hinterlands of Gaza.<sup>1</sup> He was in some ways an obvious choice to lead a monastery. Educated in rhetoric, philosophy, and medicine, he had personally assisted his own hegoumen, Seridos, at the Monastery of St. Hilarion.<sup>2</sup> More impressively, he had been disciple and amanuensis for the charismatic but reclusive monks Barsanuphios and John, the “Great Old Men of Gaza.”<sup>3</sup> When Dorotheos joined the monastery, Barsanuphios advised him to keep his books and use his medical training, while commanding Seridos to appoint Dorotheos first to run the guesthouse and later the infirmary.<sup>4</sup> During this time, Dorotheos may have confessed to Seridos,<sup>5</sup> but Barsanuphios and John oversaw his formation.<sup>6</sup> Yet Dorotheos did not succeed Seridos as abbot. On John’s recommendation, a wealthy parvenu named Aelianos did,<sup>7</sup> and at some point after the Old Men’s deaths (ca. 543), Dorotheos left that monastery and took over the running of a monastery nearby. He was an enthusiastic teacher, with seventeen Instructions, several Letters, and various Sayings surviving from his abbacy. It is also likely (*faute de mieux*) that he edited the roughly 850 letters of Barsanuphios and John. Educated between Chalcedonian and Miaphysite monks in Gaza, formed during the decades of the Second Origenist Controversy, and standing as the last known representative of the thriving monastic and educational centers of late antique Gaza, Dorotheos provides an invaluable view into theological and

<sup>1</sup> Dorotheos’s *Instructions (Doct.)* and *Letters (Epist.)*, along with the *Life of Dositheos (V. Dos.)*, likely by Dorotheos) and prefatory letters, are edited by Lucien Regnault and Andre de Préville in *Dorothee de Gaza. Oeuvres spirituelles* (Sources Chrétiennes 92; Paris: Cerf, 1963), hereafter “SCh 92.”

<sup>2</sup> This monastery is identified with excavations at Umm al-’Amr, just south of Gaza near the al-Nuseirat camp: René Elter and Ayman Hassoune, “Le monastère de saint Hilarion. Les vestiges archéologiques du site de Umm el-’Amr,” in *Gaza dans l’Antiquité tardive. Archéologie, rhétorique et histoire. Actes du Colloque international de Poitiers (6–7 mai 2004)* (ed. C. Saliou; Salerno: Helios, 2005) 13–40; eidem, “Le monastère de Saint-Hilarion à Umm-el-’Amr (bande de Gaza) (note d’information),” *Comptes rendus des séances de l’Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres* 148 (2004) 359–82.

<sup>3</sup> The Old Men’s *Correspondence (Resp.)* are edited in François Neyt and Paul de Angelis-Noah, *Barsanuphe et Jean de Gaza. Correspondance* (Sources Chrétiennes 426–27, 450–51, 468; Paris: Cerf, 1997–2002), hereafter, “SCh 426,” etc.

<sup>4</sup> *V. Dos.* 1 (SCh 92:122), *Resp.* 327 (SCh 450:326). Kyle Schenkewitz argues that Dorotheos’s time in the infirmary motivates much of his medically inflected teaching: *Dorotheus of Gaza and the Discourse of Healing in Gazan Monasticism* (New York: Lang, 2016) 56–60.

<sup>5</sup> *Resp.* 286 (SCh 450:274).

<sup>6</sup> Dorotheos’s recollections are complemented and sometimes complicated by his correspondence with the Old Men: *Resp.* 252–338 (SCh 450:208–328); on which, see François Neyt, “Les lettres à Dorothee dans la correspondance de Barsanuphe et de Jean de Gaza” (PhD diss., Catholic University of Louvain, 1969), and Jennifer Hevelone-Harper, *Disciples of the Desert: Monks, Laity, and Spiritual Authority in Sixth-Century Gaza* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005) 55–73.

<sup>7</sup> *Resp.* 599b (SCh 800—802).

intellectual dynamics among late antique Christians in the crucible of sixth-century contests for orthodoxy.

In his twelfth *Instruction*, on which this essay will center, Dorotheos discusses the character of postmortem suffering. He turns to the topic by invoking two hortatory sayings “from the *Gerontikon*,” an early collection of what are now called the Sayings of the Desert Fathers.<sup>8</sup> After quoting “the elders,” Dorotheos says, “And Evagrius too said . . .,” before launching into two quotations from the *Kephalaia Gnostica* of Evagrius of Pontos (345–399) concerning the importance of persisting in ascetic discipline and the distractions offered by one’s body. Dorotheos then pivots from these to claim that the fire which burns in Hades is not an external fire but a psychic sensation born of the passions with which the soul, denuded of its body, is left alone in death. He says, “Such is the impassioned soul—it is forever punished by the wretchedness of its own evil disposition, possessing forever the bitter memory and agonizing chatter of the passions burning and consuming it.”<sup>9</sup> Dorotheos’s vision of the postmortem is striking, and in the context of sixth-century theological politics, the presence of Evagrius even more so.

To explain, let’s leave Dorotheos to one side for now to look briefly at what was going on in the region during the years of his formation under the Old Men and his own abbacy. There are two controversies between which Gazan monasticism took shape, and against which it is generally studied: first, over the authority of the Council of Chalcedon (451), and second, over the legacy of Origen of Alexandria’s theology. While the first of these had divided Christian communities across the Levant, the latter, though more limited in scope and intensity, would influence the dynamics of speculative theology, especially in matters of eschatology, for centuries to come. The Second Origenist Controversy began among monks in Chalcedonian monasteries in Judea during the 520s but soon drew the attention of Emperor Justinian, who convoked councils in Constantinople and Jerusalem (536) and, several years later (543), promulgated nine anathemas against positions drawn (primarily) from Origen’s *On First Principles*.<sup>10</sup> A decade later (553), probably during meetings preliminary to the Second Council of Constantinople, Justinian’s anathemas were expanded to fifteen, focused on christology, and ratified by bishops present there. While the place of Origen in the Council’s proceedings is a matter of scholarly contention, by the mid-sixth century the fate of Origen as “heretic” was sealed.<sup>11</sup> Alongside adoptionist christology, universalism—the idea

<sup>8</sup> References in this paragraph are to *Doct.* 12.125–26 (SCh 92:382–86).

<sup>9</sup> *Doct.* 12.127 (SCh 92:384–86).

<sup>10</sup> See Justinian, *Edictum contra Originem*, in M. Amelotti and L. M. Zingale, *Scritti teologici ed ecclesiastici di Giustiniano* (Milan: Giuffrè, 1977) 68–118, at 116–18. Amelotti and Zingale extract the *Edictum*, which comprises a letter, numerous extracts from *On First Principles*, and the anathemas, from a collection of conciliar documents, the *Collectio Sabbaitica*. The latter is found in *Acta Conciliorum Oecumenicorum*, vol. 3, *Collectio Sabbaitica contra Acephalos et Origeniastas destinata* (ed. Edouard Schwartz; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1965) 189–214.

<sup>11</sup> *Canones xv*, in *Acta Conciliorum Oecumenicorum*, vol. 4, *Concilium Universale*

that postmortem punishment and its accompanying hellfire would terminate and eventually all souls would return to God—was condemned.<sup>12</sup> This position had been attacked centuries before by Methodios of Olympos and, more acerbically, by Jerome, during the First Origenist Controversy, which took place in Egypt at the turn of the fifth century.<sup>13</sup> The so-called Chapters of the Disciples of Evagrius were written and edited sometime in the intervening period, and Gabriel Bunge has argued that these tractates display the teachings, especially the christological ones, that drew the ire of the Council.<sup>14</sup> However, the charge of “Origenism” was leveled at quite a broad range of theologians, including Evagrius, Didymos the Blind (ca. 313–ca. 398), and Leontios of Byzantium (ca. 485–ca. 543), and the differences between these make it impossible to demarcate a body of doctrine shared between them that could be called “Origenist”; yet, for centuries this term would be hurled at those who strayed (or seemed to stray) too far in their speculation, especially in directions of universal salvation.

The epithet and associations stuck, and so over the course of the controversy the name and teachings of Evagrius came especially under fire. During this period key works ceased circulating in Greek (though Syriac versions survived), most especially the controversial *Kephalaia Gnostica*. This period saw also the wholesale, and almost certainly deliberate, transfer of the authorship of most other works from Evagrius to Neilos of Ankyra (5<sup>th</sup> cent.). Thus, Evagrius’s name became a watchword for all manner of heresy, and his *Kephalaia Gnostica* the supposed repository of evil teachings. These facts make it all the more striking, not to say perplexing, that sometime in the 550s or thereafter—in an era when, as Dirk Krausmüller has argued, “Origenists” resorted to strategies of concealment to preserve teachings without drawing notice—Dorotheos openly invokes the name of Evagrius and sets him on

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*Constantinopolitanum sub Iustiniano habitum (AD 553)*, pars 1: *Concilii actiones 8, Appendices Graecae, Indices* (ed. Johannes Straub; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1971) 249. While these canons are not included among the *Acta* of 553, scholars generally accept that they were adopted at meetings prior to the official opening of the Council: Daniël Hombergen, *The Second Origenist Controversy: A New Perspective on Cyril of Scythopolis’ Monastic Biographies as Historical Sources for Sixth-Century Origenism* (SA 132; Rome: Pontificio Ateneo S. Anselmo, 2001) 21. The situation is well summarized by Richard Price, in *The Acts of the Council of Constantinople of 553 with Related Texts on the Three Chapters Controversy* (ed. Richard Price; 2 vols.; Translated Texts for Historians 51; Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2009) 2:270–72.

<sup>12</sup> Justinian, *Edictum contra Origenem*, Anathema 9 (Amelotti and Zingale, *Scritti teologici*, 118): Εἴ τις λέγει ἢ ἔχει πρόσκαιρον εἶναι τὴν τῶν δαιμόνων καὶ ἀσεβῶν ἀνθρώπων κόλασιν καὶ τέλος κατὰ τινὰ χρόνον αὐτὴν ἔξειν ἢ γοῦν ἀποκατάστασιν ἔσσεσθαι δαιμόνων ἢ ἀσεβῶν ἀνθρώπων, ἀνάθεμα ἔστω.

<sup>13</sup> While Origen had been controversial since his days in Alexandria, questions over his theology bubbled to strife and action in 399/400. The classic study is Elizabeth A. Clark, *The Origenist Controversy: The Cultural Construction of an Early Christian Debate* (1992; repr., Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016). However, see now Samuel Rubenson, “Why Did the Origenist Controversy Begin? Re-Thinking the Standard Narratives,” *Modern Theology* 38 (2022) 318–37.

<sup>14</sup> Gabriel Bunge, *Les enseignements d’Évagre (Chapitres des disciples d’Évagre). Le “missing link” entre la première et la deuxième controverse origéniste* (SA 185; Rome: Pontificio Ateneo S. Anselmo, 2021).

a level with “the elders” of the *Gerontikon*!<sup>15</sup> That he then quotes the *Kephalaia Gnostica* in an *Instruction* concerned with eschatology, to then reconceive hellfire as a condition within the soul, only sharpens the question of what Dorotheos’s own theological commitments might have been, and what effects the Second Origenist Controversy had in Gaza.

In what follows, I will argue that Dorotheos’s interiorized eschatology, with its quotations of Evagrius, show that “Origenist” theology was alive and well in Gazan monasteries, but that this could be reconciled with doctrinal orthodoxy as well as an irenic approach to theological controversy. We will see Dorotheos drawing heavily on Origen and Evagrius, although using not monastic traditions but his secular education to correct and obviate any apparent heterodoxy. By reflecting Dorotheos’s *Instruction* against what we learn from Barsanuphios and John’s *Correspondence* and from scholarly assessments of Gazan intellectual culture I conclude that Dorotheos was an Origenist by sixth-century standards. Furthermore, I show that the formative culture in Gazan monasteries was less touched by the Origenist Controversy and more open to speculative theology within the intimate relationships that defined spiritual direction there than has previously been allowed.

## ■ The Last of the Gazans

Dorotheos’s writings are instructions, originally delivered orally to monks in his cenobium. They are traditional and practical, full of homely illustrations and monastic quotations, which have often enough led to Dorotheos himself being depicted as a Melvillian “sub-sub librarian” of what has sometimes (and for a variety of reasons) been called the “Gaza school.”<sup>16</sup> Brouria Bitton-Ashkelony and Aryeh Kofsky refer to Dorotheos’s writings’ “lack of originality and their eclectic nature” that express his “predilection for preserving and systemizing monastic tradition.”<sup>17</sup> Dorotheos can easily give the impression of a man engaged

<sup>15</sup> Dirk Krausmüller, “Origenism and Anti-Origenism in the Late Sixth and Seventh Centuries,” in *Evagrius and His Legacy* (ed. Joel Kalvesmaki and Robin Darling Young; Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2016) 288–316.

<sup>16</sup> First, Gaza had a famous school of rhetoric with a line of illustrious teachers. Second, the style of monasticism practiced from Isaiah to Dorotheos has been called a “school” in two ways. Some use the term as shorthand for a shared approach to teaching, authority, and scriptural interpretation: Brouria Bitton-Ashkelony and Aryeh Kofsky, *The Monastic School of Gaza* (Leiden: Brill, 2006). Recently, Bitton-Ashkelony has come to see Gaza as an example of wider trends rather than a unique style; see her “Monasticism in Late Antique Gaza: A School or an Epoch?,” in *L’École de Gaza. Espace littéraire et identité Culturelle dans l’antiquité tardive. Actes du colloque international de Paris, Collège de France, 23–25 mai 2013* (ed. Eugenio Amato, Aldo Corcella, and Delphine Lauritzen; Leuven: Peeters, 2017) 19–36. One can also call Gazan monasticism a school because, at least under Dorotheos, the approach to teaching and formation utilizes the same techniques and even some of the same authorities, as the secular rhetorical and philosophical schools in the area: Jan Stenger, “What Does It Mean to Call the Monasteries of Gaza a ‘School’? A Reassessment of Dorotheos’ Intellectual Identity,” *VC* 71 (2017) 59–84.

<sup>17</sup> Bitton-Ashkelony and Kofsky, *Monastic School of Gaza*, 43. So, too, Bénédicte Lesieur, “Le monastère de Sérédos sous Barsanuphe et Jean de Gaza. Un monastère conforme à la législation

in organizing and elaborating an inheritance. He displays wide learning, confesses bookish tendencies,<sup>18</sup> and, in addition to Scripture, frequently quotes from his Gazan forerunners, Basil of Caesarea, and the *Gerontikon*.<sup>19</sup> Lorenzo Perrone has thus argued that Dorotheos's talent lay in harmonizing (rather than systematizing) not just Gazan but Basilian and Pachomian traditions,<sup>20</sup> while Rosa Maria Parrinello speaks of his "unique monastic imaginary."<sup>21</sup> Daniël Hombergen, by contrast, argues that "with regard to striving for spiritual knowledge Dorotheus shows himself much less reluctant than Barsanuphios and John, nevertheless without dissociating himself from his former teachers."<sup>22</sup> He suggests that Dorotheos's speculative proclivities are perhaps masked by his invocation of authorities like the Old Men. Dorotheos displays a persistent fidelity to his monastic heritage but allows a varied assessment of his creativity in relation to it.

Michael Champion and Jan Stenger have set Dorotheos's *Instructions* in the context of late antique rhetorical education and philosophy in the Neoplatonic school of Gaza,<sup>23</sup> as well as late antique philosophical culture generally.<sup>24</sup> Champion, especially, has shown that Dorotheos puts rhetorical, philosophical, and even medical secular learning to a distinctly Christian end.<sup>25</sup> He also notes Evagrius's influence and Dorotheos's mobilization of both practical and speculative works, in service of forming monks.<sup>26</sup> The key, though, is humility as the mode of becoming like God.<sup>27</sup> In similar fashion, Perrone identifies "l'altro," the *other*, whom

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impériale et ecclésiastique," *REB* 69 (2011) 5–47, at 42, echoing Marcel Viller, *La spiritualité des premiers siècles chrétiens* (Paris, 1930) 85; Jean-M. Szymusiak and Julien Leroy, "Dorothee de Gaza," *Dictionnaire de spiritualité* 3 (Paris, 1957), col. 1658; and Lucien Regnault and Jacques de Préville, introduction to *SCh* 92:40.

<sup>18</sup> Dorotheos's fondness for reading outweighed concerns for his own health: *Resp.* 326–27 (*SCh* 450:322–24); *Doct.* 10.105 (*SCh* 92:338).

<sup>19</sup> As has been pointed out since Irenée Hausherr, "Les grands courants de la spiritualité orientale," *OCP* 1 (1935) 114–38, at 131. See Hevelone-Harper, *Disciples of the Desert*, 62–78. So too Lorenzo Perrone, "The Necessity of Advice," in *Christian Gaza in Late Antiquity* (ed. Brouria Bitton-Ashkelony and Aryeh Kofsky; Leiden: Brill, 2004) 131–49; idem, *La Chiesa di Palestina e le controversie cristologiche* (TRSR 18; Brescia: Paideia, 1980) 310–11.

<sup>20</sup> Lorenzo Perrone, *La necessità del consiglio. Studi sul monachesimo di Gaza e la direzione spirituale* (Abbazia di Praglia: Edizioni Scritti Monastici, 2021) 62–63, 70–71; idem, "Monasticism in the Holy Land: From the Beginnings to the Crusades," *Proche-Orient Chrétien* 45 (1995) 31–63, at 52.

<sup>21</sup> Rosa Maria Parrinello, *Comunità monastiche a Gaza. Da Isaia a Doroteo (Secoli IV–VI)* (Temi e Testi 73; Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2010) 229.

<sup>22</sup> Daniël Hombergen, "The Question of Dorotheus of Gaza's Position in the Second Origenist Controversy," in *Church, Society, and Monasticism: Acts of the International Symposium, Rome, May 31–June 3, 2006* (ed. Eduardo López-Tello Garcia; Rome: Centro studi S. Anselmi, 2009) 475–86, at 482.

<sup>23</sup> Stenger, "What Does It Mean?," 59–84.

<sup>24</sup> Michael W. Champion, "Paideia as Humility and Becoming God-like in Dorotheos of Gaza," *J ECS* 25 (2017) 441–69.

<sup>25</sup> Michael W. Champion, *Dorotheus of Gaza and Ascetic Education* (OECS; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022) 20–64. On Dorotheos's medical background, see also Schenkewitz, *Dorotheus*.

<sup>26</sup> Champion, *Dorotheus of Gaza*, 12–13.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 92–119.

Dorotheos identifies at once as one's fellow monks in the cenobium and as Christ himself whom the monk imitates and serves, as the key to his spiritual vision.<sup>28</sup> Read thus, Dorotheos does not merely synthesize monastic regimes; rather, he unites a range of intellectual traditions to form his monks in ethical and cognitive habits aimed at drawing them closer to God and to each other. Putting these readings together, a richly colored portrait emerges, but it remains incomplete until we can incorporate Dorotheos's reliance on Evagrius in the context of the controversies. If we reject—as I think we must—the explanation that Gazan monasticism tended away from philosophical learning, if not into anti-intellectualism, then we have to grapple not just with Dorotheos's own forays into speculative theology and unabashed debts to Origen, but also with what those suggest about the culture that formed him. So, to better understand both Dorotheos and Gazan monasticism in the context of the Origenist Controversy, we turn now to the twelfth *Instruction* and its striking eschatology.<sup>29</sup>

### ■ The Fevered Memory: Dorotheos on Death and Judgment

Despite its influence on later Byzantine theologians like Michael Glykas (1125–1204) and Meletios Confessor (ca. 1209–1286),<sup>30</sup> and even its place in Mark Eugenikos's (1392–1444) diatribes against the doctrine of purgatory,<sup>31</sup> Dorotheos's twelfth *Instruction* has received only passing comment among modern scholars.<sup>32</sup> The *Instruction* teaches effort and endurance in pursuit of salvation, but it begins by reflecting on how present suffering and diminishment ought to be borne. While everything should be ascribed to God or, at least, understood as permitted by divine providence, some cannot see this through the veil of their pains. But they are gravely mistaken, because, in the words of an anonymous elder of the *Geronitikon*, they do

<sup>28</sup> Perrone, *La necessità del consiglio*, 70. So, too, Parrinello, *Comunità monastiche*, 220–28; Champion, *Dorotheus of Gaza*, 100–101, 186. Both Parrinello and Champion point to Dorotheos's justly famous image of the wheel and its spokes: as spokes (monks) move toward the center (God), they grow closer to each other (the other): *Doct.* 6.78 (SCH 92:284–86).

<sup>29</sup> I use “eschatology” as a shorthand, *totus pro parte*, for what is, really, a discussion of the “intermediate state” of souls between death and general judgment. Dorotheos discusses the last judgment in traditional terms in *Epist.* 7.192 (SCH 92:512).

<sup>30</sup> Chronologically: Nikitas Stethatos, *Orationes* 2.74; Philip Monotropos, *Dioptra* 4.8, ll. 2213–2220 (depending on Nikitas); Michael Glykas, *Quaestiones in sacram scripturam* 20; and Meletios Confessor, *Ἀλφαβηταλφάβητον*, Ψ.179, ll. 1–11.

<sup>31</sup> E.g., *Or.* I *De igne purgatorio* 1, in *Documents relatifs au concile de Florence, vol. I, La question du purgatoire à Ferrare, Documents I–VI* (ed. Louis Petit; PO 15.1; Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1920) 39–60, at 41–42.

<sup>32</sup> Nicholas [Fr Maximos] Conostas, “‘To Sleep, Perchance to Dream’: The Middle State of Souls in Patristic and Byzantine Literature,” *DOP* 55 (2001) 91–124, at 100–102; Vasileios Marinis, *Death and the Afterlife in Byzantium: The Fate of the Soul in Theology, Liturgy, and Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017) 78–79; Demetrios Bathrellos, “Love, Purification, and Forgiveness versus Justice, Punishment, and Satisfaction: The Debates on Purgatory and the Forgiveness of Sins at the Council of Ferrara-Florence,” *JTS* 65 (2014) 78–121, at 91.

not realize “that future suffering is much worse than present suffering.”<sup>33</sup> Dorotheos then turns to Evagrius. The first quote continues the hortatory line of the *Gerontikon*: “And Evagrius too said that ‘Someone who, still in the grip of passion, prays that death come for him sooner, is like someone begging a carpenter swiftly to smash a sick person’s bed.’”<sup>34</sup> Dorotheos uses the second to frame his own eschatology: “Through this body the soul is distracted from its passions and comforted [Διὰ γὰρ τοῦ σώματος τούτου περισπᾶται ἡ ψυχὴ ἀπὸ τῶν παθῶν αὐτῆς καὶ παρακαλεῖται].”<sup>35</sup> Now, in both surviving Syriac versions of the *Kephalaia Gnostica*, Evagrius calls the body a refuge for the soul from the demons (ܕܝܡܘܢܝܘܬܝܢ) that surround it (ܕܝܡܘܢܝܘܬܝܢ ܕܝܠܝܘܬܝܗ). Substituting “passions” for “demons,” Dorotheos pivots from external to internal, while developing an implicit but commonly held distinction between πάθη pertaining primarily to the soul and those to the body. Bodily passions like hunger and thirst may be unpleasant, but by fulfilling such needs the soul can ignore its own passions, like anger and sadness. Thus, Dorotheos explains that what Evagrius must have meant was that, through its attendant body, the soul

eats, drinks, sleeps, meets people, and is diverted with loved ones. But when it has departed from the body, it is all alone with its own passions, and thereafter it is forever punished by them, as it dwells on them, is burned by their irritation, and torn apart by them [μονοῦται αὐτὴ καὶ τὰ πάθη αὐτῆς, καὶ λουπὸν κολάζεται πάντοτε ὑπ’ αὐτῶν, εἰς αὐτὰ ἀδολεσχοῦσα καὶ φλεγομένη ὑπὸ τῆς ὀγλήσεως αὐτῶν καὶ διασπαρραττομένη ὑπ’ αὐτῶν], so much that it cannot remember God. For the very memory of God consoles the soul.<sup>36</sup>

Absent a body, the soul is turned in on itself, and this introversion provides the basis of Dorotheos’s eschatology. Notably, he does not mention either external agents or some kind of “soul-sleep,” which two options are the most likely in this era.<sup>37</sup> If souls are not depicted as temporarily defunct, we generally see them received by either angels or demons and rewarded or punished by them appropriately. Souls may be anxious and downcast in Hades, but because they await the terrible final judgment, not because of their own passions.<sup>38</sup> It is possible Dorotheos is here inspired by

<sup>33</sup> *Doct.* 12.125,9–13 (SCh 92:382). This apophthegm is not found in extant collections.

<sup>34</sup> *Doct.* 12.126,1–4 (SCh 92:384) = Evagrius, *KG* 4.76 (version S<sub>2</sub>), in *Les six centuries des “Kephalaia gnostica.” Édition critique de la version syriaque commune et édition d’une nouvelle version syriaque, intégrale, avec une double traduction française* (ed. Antoine Guillaumont; PO 28; Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1958) 169.

<sup>35</sup> *Doct.* 12.126,5–7 (SCh 92:384) = *KG* 4.82 (S<sub>1</sub> and S<sub>2</sub>) (Guillaumont, *Les six centuries*, 171–72); on which, see Champion, *Dorotheus of Gaza*, 59–60.

<sup>36</sup> *Doct.* 12.126,6–12 (SCh 92:384).

<sup>37</sup> Conostas, “‘To Sleep, Perchance to Dream,’” 109–12.

<sup>38</sup> In apocalyptic literature, externally applied punishment is ubiquitous: *Apoc. Pet.*, *Vis. Paul.*, *Apoc. Soph.*, *Apoc. Theot.*, etc. In monastic and homiletic literature, the struggle of demons and angels over souls and the punishments awaiting souls are equally common. See, for example, Ps-Makarios, *Hom.* 22 (*Collectio H*), *Hom.* 34 (*Collectio B*); Evagrius, *Rat.* 9; Diadochos of Photiki, *Perf.* 100; *Apophth. patr. alph.* Theophilus 4; Symeon Stylites Iunior, *Logos* 22; John of Karpathos, *Cap. cons.* 25; Leontius of Crete, *V. Jo. Eleem.* 43; Anastasios of Sinai (?), *Narr.* 40. Examples



Abba Isaiah, who, in a description of demonic assault at death, claimed that angels accompany the soul and “the powers of darkness go out to meet it.” Those powers “search whether the soul has something of them in it,” and in that struggle, “the angels do not fight them; rather, the soul’s deeds which it did wall it about and guard it from the powers of darkness, lest they touch it.”<sup>39</sup> Isaiah then opposes a number of virtues to vices and concludes that “all these things grip the soul when it departs the body, and the virtues which it procured help it then.”<sup>40</sup> Nevertheless, while “virtues” may take the place of angels, the evil spirits are external agents that attack the soul in accordance with the vices that rendered it liable to them. Another possible parallel or source is a homily attributed to Symeon of Mesopotamia (4<sup>th</sup>–5<sup>th</sup> cent.), in which virtues “become” angels and passions “become” demons (γίνονται δαίμονες πονηροί). However, in Symeon’s account these passions-turned-demons simply join the “opposing powers and rulers of darkness” in dragging the soul off to be punished with the Devil.<sup>41</sup> Dorotheos’s interiority stands apart from both Isaiah and Symeon, as well as other visionary and didactic accounts.

Admittedly, Dorotheos does eventually rattle off the expected furnishings of hell.<sup>42</sup> But then he suggests something worse than all such things. Returning to the soul’s solitary and decidedly inward experience, Dorotheos explains that “The conviction itself of conscience and the very memory of things done [αὐτὸς ὁ ἔλεγχος τῆς συνειδήσεως καὶ αὐτὴ ἡ μνήμη τῶν πεπραγμένων], just as we said before, is worse than myriads of unspeakable punishments.”<sup>43</sup> While Symeon and Isaiah ultimately incorporate passions into the normal setpieces of postmortem punishments, Dorotheos foregrounds interiority and with it a total dislocation from body and place.

Having stripped away all else, Dorotheos must explain the mechanics of a totally interiorized punishment. To that end he asks:

When someone has a fever [πυρέσση], what is it that burns him [τὸ καῖον αὐτόν]? What sort of fire [πῦρ], or what sort of fuel generates that combustion? If, indeed, someone is found to have a body marked by melancholic imbalance [σῶμα μελαγχολικὸν δύσκρατον], is it not his imbalance that burns him, that always troubles him, and that afflicts his life [οὐκ αὐτὴ ἡ δυσκρασία αὐτοῦ καίει αὐτὸν καὶ ταρασσει πάντοτε καὶ θλίβει τὴν ζωὴν αὐτοῦ]? So too

could be multiplied.

<sup>39</sup> Isaiah, *Logos* 16.1, in Augustinos Monachos, Τοῦ Ὁσίου Πατρὸς Ἡμῶν Ἀββᾶ Ἡσαίου Λόγου ΚΘ’ (Jerusalem: Holy Sepulchre, 1911) 86.

<sup>40</sup> Isaiah, *Logos* 16.1 (Augustinos, ABBA ΗΣΑΙΟΥ, 88).

<sup>41</sup> Symeon, *Homilia quod semper mente versare debemus diem exitus de vita*, 1, in *Nova Patrum Bibliotheca* (ed. Giuseppe Cozza-Luzi, 9 vols.; Rome, 1871) 8.3:2. The sermon appears, with only slight differences, among the homilies of Ephrem Graecus, as *Sermo de habenda semper in mente die exitus vitae*, in K. G. Phrantzoles, Ὁσίου Ἐφραίμου τοῦ Σύρου ἔργα (7 vols.; Thessaloniki: Perivoli tis Panagias, 1992) 4:399–402. Neither ascription is worth much credence, though this homily’s author should not be confused with Ps-Makarios, whom scholars have in the past identified with Symeon.

<sup>42</sup> *Doct.* 12.127, 10–28 (SCH 92:386).

<sup>43</sup> *Doct.* 12.128, 8–10 (SCH 92:386).

the impassioned soul is forever punished by the wretchedness of its own evil disposition [ὑπὸ τῆς ἰδίας κακοεξίας], possessing forever the bitter memory [πικρὰν μνήμην] and agonizing chatter of the passions forever burning and consuming it [καίωντων αἰεὶ καὶ καταφλεγόντων αὐτήν].<sup>44</sup>

This description of interiorized torment hinges on a biological analogy. The initial reference to “melancholic imbalance” (σῶμα μελαγχολικὸν δύσκρατον) signals a decisive medical element in Dorotheos’s thought. Dorotheos had some medical education and experience running the monastery’s clinic (νοσοκομεῖον),<sup>45</sup> and he frequently draws on medicine either to explain how physical activities impact cognitive and affective states<sup>46</sup> or to draw analogies with education.<sup>47</sup> Here, he employs Hippocratic nosology, according to which black bile (μελαγχόλη) causes quaternary fevers.<sup>48</sup> However, Dorotheos’ language of an underlying humoral imbalance (δυσκρασία) points to a tenet not of Hippocratic but of Galenic medicine, which came to predominance by the late fourth century. Galen read human bodies through a more consistently humoral hermeneutic than one could find in Hippocratic texts.<sup>49</sup> Crucially, for Galen, the mixture of humors (κρᾶσις) defines not only physical states but also affective and cognitive ones,<sup>50</sup> a logic which Dorotheos takes up with regard to virtues like humility.<sup>51</sup> Moreover, while humoral

<sup>44</sup> *Doct.* 12.127,3–10 (SCh 92:384–386).

<sup>45</sup> *Resp.* 259 (SCh 450:230). The clinic’s foundation is described in *V. Dos.* 1 (SCh 92:122).

<sup>46</sup> *Doct.* 2.39, 6.70 (SCh 92:204–206, 270).

<sup>47</sup> *Doct.* 2.36 (SCh 92:200).

<sup>48</sup> Hippocrates, *Nat. hom.* 15, on which Galen, *In Hippocratis de natura hominis librum commentaria* 2.22 (CMG 5.9.1:85 = Kühn 15:167) and *In Hippocratis aphorismos commentaria* 40 (Kühn 18.1:143). So Galen, *De locis affectis* 3.10 (Kühn 8:185), *De praesagitione ex pulsibus* 1.4 (Kühn 9:248); Aëtius, *Iat.* 2.121, 3.23 (CMG 8.1:197, 279); Anonymous, *De februm differentiis*, in *Oeuvres de Rufus d’Éphèse* (ed. C. Daremberg and C. É. Ruelle; Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1879) 604. Note, though, that In-Sok Yeo believes the differentiation of periodic fevers by humor is “original to Galen” and a misreading of the Hippocratic text: “Hippocrates in the Context of Galen: Galen’s Commentary on the Classification of Fevers in *Epidemics VI*,” in *Hippocrates in Context: Papers Read at the XIth International Hippocrates Colloquium (University of Newcastle upon Tyne, 27–31 August 2002)* (ed. P. J. van der Eijk; Studies in Ancient Medicine 31; Leiden: Brill, 2005) 433–43, at 437.

<sup>49</sup> Jacques Jouanna, “Galen’s Reading of the Hippocratic Treatise *The Nature of Man*: The Foundation of Hippocratism in Galen,” in his *Studies in Ancient Medicine: Greek Medicine from Hippocrates to Galen. Selected Papers* (2 vols.; Leiden: Brill, 2012) 1:313–33; Keith Andrew Stewart, *Galen’s Theory of Black Bile: Hippocratic Tradition, Manipulation, Innovation* (Studies in Ancient Medicine 51; Leiden: Brill, 2019) 61–68.

<sup>50</sup> The close connection of bodily and psychical function is emphasized in several of Galen’s works, including the monumental *De placitis Hippocratis et Platonis*, but their dependence is most explicitly in *Quod animi mores corporis temperamenta sequantur*, wherein Galen suggests the soul is nothing other than a series of capacities supervening on the humoral mixtures of bodily organs. The literature is vast, but P. N. Singer’s essay is a good place to start: “Galen’s Pathological Soul: Diagnosis and Therapy in Ethical and Medical Texts and Contexts,” in *Mental Illness in Ancient Medicine: From Celsus to Paul of Aegina* (ed. P. N. Singer and Chiara Thumiger; Studies in Ancient Medicine 55; Leiden: Brill, 2016) 381–420.

<sup>51</sup> *Doct.* 2.39 (SCh 92:204–6), on “what importance bodily labour has for the soul’s disposition

mixtures are variable and susceptible to external alteration, they tend toward lasting configurations, which may be healthy or unhealthy, which Galen terms “dispositions” (διάθεσεις, κατασκευάαι). These lasting configurations constrain the operations of both body and soul. Dorotheos, who is much concerned with bodily and psychical dispositions and their interdependence, employs the same logic when he refers to the soul’s “evil disposition” (κακοεξία).<sup>52</sup> In Aristotelian terms, ἕξις is a more lasting state, or “fixed disposition,” than διάθεσις<sup>53</sup> and, though Dorotheos sometimes uses the terms interchangeably,<sup>54</sup> it may be significant that to describe the condition of the dead he employs a derivation of the stronger term.<sup>55</sup>

This “evil disposition” is composed of “bitter memory” and the “agonizing chatter of the passions.” The body is neither present nor considered. This too marks a departure from other vivid descriptions of punishment in which tormented and mutilated bodies express their owners’ deviant ways of life. The body’s absence is not merely unusual but conceptually important. In Dorotheos’s opposition of the present life to the state of death, the body makes the difference: the soul on its own is stuck, unable either to escape its passions or to alter its disposition. Thus, in place of bodily humors, memory and chatter provide all the fuel needed for its conflagration. Crucially, neither memory nor passions as such feed the soul’s fever, but rather the stable disposition defined by them. The soul burns because it has come to a state of burning; no need then for demons or fiery pits. The soul’s disposition, like a melancholic body, is the agent of punishment. Dorotheos, substituting fever (πυρέσσειν) for fire (πῦρ), not only interiorizes hellfire but makes it the inevitable and permanent consequence of the psychical configuration of the dead.

Dorotheos merges philosophical and medical streams of thought into a striking account of postmortem punishment. Demons and the body are both absent, while a Galenic nosology of fevers explains biblical language of punishment and suffering. However, the unspoken inspiration of these features lies in Origen’s *On First Principles*.

## ■ The Hidden Spring: Dorotheos and Origen

If Evagrius provides Dorotheos a logic of embodiment, Origen provides one of interiorized hellfire. I quote at some length from a section of *On First Principles* that survives only in Rufinus’s Latin translation:<sup>56</sup>

[εἰς διάθεσιν ψυχῆς].”

<sup>52</sup> See *Doct.* 1.6–7, 2.39, 6.70, and 14.157, in which Dorotheos uses διάθεσις; but also 11.120–23, in which he uses ἕξις (SCh 92:154–56, 204–6, 272, 370–78). Other times, Dorotheos prefers κατάστασις (status or condition), and it is not always clear how this differs.

<sup>53</sup> Aristotle, *Cat.* 8b27–29.

<sup>54</sup> E.g., “humble disposition” may be ταπεινὴ διάθεσις (*Doct.* 1.7) or ταπεινὴ ἕξις (2.36).

<sup>55</sup> In fact, this is the only time Dorotheos uses the term κακοεξία, which further suggests that the dispositions of the dead differ from those of the living.

<sup>56</sup> It is, however, corroborated by Jerome’s more hostile version in *Epist.* 124 *Ad Avitum* 7 (CSEL 56:104–5), on which see comments by Henri Crouzel and Manlio Simonetti (SCh 253:234–234 n.

If, then, such be the quality of the body which will arise from the dead, let us now see what the threat of eternal fire (Matt 25:41) signifies [*uideamus nunc quid sibi uelit ignis aeterni comminatio*]. . . . [E]very sinner kindles for himself the flame of his own fire [*flammas sibi ipse proprii ignis accendat*], and is not plunged into some fire which has already been kindled by another or existed before himself. The food and material of this fire are our sins [*cuius ignis esca atque materia sunt nostra peccata*], which are called, by the Apostle Paul, “wood and hay and straw” (1 Cor 3:12). And I think that just as in the body an excess of nourishment and a detrimental kind and quantity of foods gives rise to fevers, and the fevers are also diverse either in kind or duration [*sicut in corpore escae abundantia et qualitas uel quantitas cibi contraria febres generat, et febres diuersi uel modi uel temporis*], according to the degree in which accumulated intemperateness supplies material and fuel for the fevers [*intemperies collecta materiam suggesserit ac fomitem*] (the quality of this material, gathered together from different kinds of intemperance, is the cause either of a more acute or more lingering disease [*uel acerbioris morbi uel prolixioris*]), so also, when the soul has gathered together a multitude of evil works and an excess [*abundantiam*] of sins in itself, at a suitable time all that assembly of evils boils up to punishment and is set aflame to chastisements; at which time, the intellect itself, or the conscience [*mens ipsa uel conscientia*], bringing to memory [*in memoriam recipiens*] by divine power all those things the impressions and forms [*signa quaedam ac formas*] of which it had stamped in itself when sinning, will see exposed before its eyes a history, as it were, of its evil deeds, of every single act it had done [*et singulorum*], whether foul or shameful, and had even impiously committed.<sup>57</sup>

The similarities with Dorotheos’s account are numerous. Origen first denies an external agent (*ab alio*), fire (*aliquem ignem*), or a fiery place, since none existed beforehand. Instead, he claims that sins and evil deeds done (*omnis illa malorum*) become fodder and fuel (*esca atque materia*) through the medium of memory, when the mind recalls everything that has left an impression (*signa ac formas*) on it and sees its life displayed before its eyes. Most telling, though, is the physical analogy and medical logic of these punishments: they correspond to bodily fevers (*febres*) caused by overeating or malnutrition. In the next paragraph, Origen suggests that this fire is a continuation of burning experienced by souls caught in the *passionum vitiis*: “burnt up by the flame of love, or tormented by contention or envy, or agitated by the madness of anger, or consumed by the immensity of sorrow [*uel flammis amoris exurit anima uel zeli aut liuoris ignibus maceratur, aut cum irae agitator insania uel tristitiae immensitate consumitur*].”<sup>58</sup> He then asks

21 to Origen, *Princ.* 2.10.4).

<sup>57</sup> Origen, *Princ.* 2.10.4.90–91, 94–109, in *Origen: On First Principles* (ed. and trans. John Behr; 2 vols.; OECT; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017) 2:260–61. Behr’s text does not differ from P. Koetschau’s (*Origenes Werke* 5 [GCS 22]:177–178) or from Crouzel’s and Simonetti’s (SCH 252:382–84).

<sup>58</sup> Origen, *Princ.* 2.10.5.117–19 (*Origen* [ed. Behr], 262–63 modified).

if these might not be the punishment *described as* “eternal fire.” Origen suggests, as would Dorotheos, that the burning feeling may in fact be the lingering effect of indulgence in destructive emotional attachments and habits.<sup>59</sup> Punishment amounts to a necessary consequence of human psychophysiology: πῦρ is really πυρετός, *ignis* actually *febris*.

Origen’s account tallies point for point with Dorotheos’s on exactly those issues where the latter seems most idiosyncratic. Moreover, it is entirely plausible that Dorotheos was reading Origen. Seridos’s monastery had books of Origen, Evagrius, and Didymos in its library.<sup>60</sup> Dorotheos, a clever and well-educated individual, would have gravitated to the more challenging books in the monastery library, including *On First Principles*, which, it seems, inspired his otherwise unique account of postmortem punishment.

### ■ A Remembered Conversation: Dorotheos and Disposition

However, Dorotheos’s insistence on habituated dispositions breaks with Origen and tells us much about how Dorotheos received, utilized, and ultimately modified Origenian theology. At stake is the burning issue of postmortem punishment’s duration: how “eternal” is “eternal fire,” really? The turn to fever (*febris*) offers an answer. In the passage quoted above, Origen argues that the soul’s *febris* arises from excess or harmful foods and that *febres* vary in type and duration (*febres diuersi uel modi uel temporis*) according to the amount (*secundum eam mensuram*) of food taken in. The food is the fever’s fuel (*materiam ac fomitem februm*); when burned off, the fever ceases. This is perfectly consonant with Hippocratic theories of fevers, and allows Origen to suggest that postmortem punishment is finite. Once the fuel of passions or wicked deeds have been burned through, punishment can end. In the following paragraph, Origen suggests exactly that, as he presents a different “species of punishment” on analogy with the dislocation of joints. He says:

[The soul] must be supposed to bear the chastisement and torment of its own dissension and to feel the punishments of its own instability and disorder [*inconstantiae suae atque inordinationis*]. But when the soul, thus dissolved and rent asunder, has been tried by the application of rational fire, it is undoubtedly reinforced in the consolidation and re-establishment of its structure [*Quaeque animae dissolutio atque diuulsio cum adhibiti ignis ratione fuerit explorata, sine dubio ad firmiorem sui compagem instaurationemque solidatur*].<sup>61</sup>

For Origen, what is called “punishment” is really the pain consequent on one’s own disorder and failure. But this pain is divinely ordained and is, therefore, educational

<sup>59</sup> So Crouzel and Simonetti (SCh 253:235 nn. 22–24 to Origen, *Princ.* 2.10.5).

<sup>60</sup> *Resp.* 600t (SCh 451:804): Ἀδελφός ἠρώτησε τὸν ἅγιον Γέροντα, τὸν ἀββᾶν Βαρσανούφιον λέγων· Οὐκ οἶδα Πάτερ πῶς ἐνέπεσα εἰς τὰ βιβλία Ὠριγένοῦς καὶ Διδύμου, καὶ εἰς τὰ Γνωστικὰ Εὐαγρίου καὶ εἰς τὰ τῶν μαθητῶν αὐτοῦ. Seridos’s monastery certainly had a well-stocked library!

<sup>61</sup> Origen, *Princ.* 2.10.5.132–36 (*Origen* [ed. Behr], 262–63).

and therapeutic, comparable to bone-setting by the *medicus animarum*. However painful they may be, the fires of torment serve to burn away the soul's illness.<sup>62</sup> Though it may take a long while, and only God's patience can account for it, the aim, at least, of every punishment is salvation.<sup>63</sup>

These passages tend toward the positions condemned by Justinian in 543 and anathematized at the Second Council of Constantinople (553), a decade which saw the deaths of the Old Men and probably the beginning of Dorotheos's abbacy. More than a century earlier, Jerome had written to one Avitus (and would repeat in his attack on Rufinus's books) that Origen's interiorized punishment implied both a transmigration of souls and the ultimate shedding of body and soul.<sup>64</sup> In the same letter Jerome criticized Origen's medicalizing claim that suffering should lead to healing.<sup>65</sup> He takes issue with its implication of numerous successive worlds, which would be required to allow for the lengthy process of healing and the likely relapses souls would suffer on the way, as well as its air of universalism.<sup>66</sup> What, then, does Dorotheos make of the possibility that the memories may be "consumed" or that punishment leads to healing?

We have already seen that Dorotheos, deploying a Galenic medical logic, focuses on the evil disposition (*κακοεξία*) that afflicts the dead soul, rather than on the inventory of its evil deeds. This logic of psychic disposition opposes Origen's specificity, which Dorotheos ventriloquizes in a conversation remembered between him and a certain "great old man." Dorotheos says:

One time we were discussing this with a certain great old man [*μετά τινος μεγάλου γέροντος*], and that old man said that the soul after its departure from the body remembers the passion which it performed, the sin itself, and the face of him with whom it committed the sin. I said to him, "Probably not quite thus, but likely the soul will have the disposition it developed thanks to the activity of sin [*τὴν ἔξι τὴν γενομένην αὐτῇ ἐκ τῆς ἐργασίας τῆς ἁμαρτίας*], and this is what it remembers." We remained for some time contending over this word, wishing to understand it [*φιλονεικούντες περὶ τοῦ λόγου τούτου θέλοντες μαθεῖν*]. The old man would not be persuaded, saying that the soul remembers the form, the place, and the face of its partners in sin [*λέγων ὅτι καὶ αὐτοῦ τοῦ εἶδους τῆς ἁμαρτίας μέμνηται, καὶ τοῦ τόπου καὶ*

<sup>62</sup> Origen, *Princ.* 2.10.6; so also 1.6.3, 2.5.2–3; *Cels.* 2.76, 3.75, 3.79, 4.10, 4.72, 4.99, 5.15, etc. See Anders-Christian Lund Jacobsen, "Origen on the Human Body," in *Origeniana Octava: Origen and the Alexandrian Tradition; Papers of the 8th International Origen Congress, Pisa, 27–31 August 2001* (ed. Lorenzo Perrone; 2 vols.; Leuven: Peeters, 2003) 1:649–56, at 653–54.

<sup>63</sup> Origen, *Princ.* 3.1.13.

<sup>64</sup> Jerome, *Epist.* 124 *Ad Avitum* 7 (CSEL 56:105), possibly concerning Origen, *Princ.* 2.11.7. In his *Apologia adversus libros Rufini*, 2.7, Jerome argues that Origen's equation of "ignes aeterni" with "conscientiam videlicet peccatorum et poenitudinem interna cordis urentem" makes punishment fall equally on Christians and the devil. Of course, Pamphilus quotes this same section in his *Defence of Origen* (151 [Sch 464:236–238]) as proof that Origen taught the eschatological punishment of sinners.

<sup>65</sup> Jerome, *Epist.* 124.8 (CSEL 56:105–7), referring to Origen, *Princ.* 3.1.13.

<sup>66</sup> Not this passage but other sections of Origen, *Princ.* 2 are quoted as evidence of Origenist error in Justinian's *Edictum contra Originem* (ACO 3:208–13), leading directly into the anathemas.

αὐτοῦ τοῦ προσώπου τοῦ συναμαρτήσαντος]. And, truly, if it is this way, then we shall have an even more evil end, unless we pay attention to ourselves.<sup>67</sup>

To begin with, the “certain great old man” is Barsanuphios. In Dorotheos’s works, as in the edited *Correspondence* of Barsanuphios and John, this epithet (μέγας γέρον) is effectively shorthand for Barsanuphios.<sup>68</sup> Dorotheos’s audience would surely have known exactly whom he meant.

And yet Barsanuphios’s words are Origen’s. He argues that memories are at once synoptic and granular. The soul remembers every passion (πάθος) but also each individual sin (ἄμαρτία) and, not only that, but its details: form, place, and faces of those involved (εἶδος, τόπος, πρόσωπα). This mnemonic specificity reiterates Origen’s description of “all those things the impressions and forms of which it had stamped in itself when sinning [*omnia . . . quorum in semet signa quaedam ac formae, cum peccaret*],” and of “a history of evil deeds [*historiam quondam scelerum suorum*] of “every single act [*singulorum*].”<sup>69</sup> Rufinus’s *formae* likely translates εἶδη, the same term used by the old man, and refers to a species of sin, as opposed to a genus (γένος) of passion (πάθος) which can be expressed in numerous different acts.<sup>70</sup> By referring to εἶδη, Origen—and Barsanuphios—argue that the *acts themselves* are remembered and cause the feverish pain of punishment.

Dorotheos claims that things work differently, in fact denying that souls remember such details at all. Instead, the “disposition” (ἔξις), which has been formed through practice of passions, defines a soul’s “bitter memory.” At first glance, this seems a strange way to speak of memory and something of a redundancy, since souls’ evil disposition burns them.<sup>71</sup> However, Dorotheos is now talking about how a psychic disposition is formed during life, before becoming the mechanism of postmortem punishment.

<sup>67</sup> *Doct.* 12.129.1–13 (SCh 92:388).

<sup>68</sup> *Doct.* 1.22, 11.115 (SCh 92:178, 360), etc. Dorotheos twice refers to someone other than Barsanuphios as a μέγας γέρον, but both are in stories from *Gerontika*. The first (*Doct.* 6.71 [SCh 92:272]) refers to Isaac the Theban (*Apophth. patr. alph.* [PG 65:240C–D]). The second is a story told by Evagrius (again!) in *Praktikos (cap. pract.)* 91 (SCh 171:694), almost certainly concerning Makarios the Great. While the first part of *Cap. pract.* 91 became *Apophth. patr. alph.* Evagrius 6 (PG 65:175A), the story referenced is not found there.

Compare *Resp.*, in which John is a γέρον but not μέγας, although in *V. Dos.* 1 (SCh 92:122) he is called great by association. In *Resp.* the only person beside Barsanuphios called “great” is an unnamed Egyptian *abba* whose story Barsanuphios recounts from a *Gerontikon: Resp.* 605 (SCh 451:824), referring to *Apophth. patr. alph.* Daniel 7 and 8 (PG 65:156C–60C = *Syst.* 18.4, 18.8 [SCh 498:40–44]).

<sup>69</sup> Origen, *Princ.* 2.10.4.106–109 (Origen [ed.Behr], 261).

<sup>70</sup> Compare the passion and vice lists found in Stobaios, *Anthologium* 2.7.10b–d; Ps-Aristotle, *De virtutibus et vitiis*; Christian versions in Nemesios, *De natura hominis* 17–21, or Cassian, *Coll.* 5.26.3–5.

<sup>71</sup> Both Plato (*Phileb.* 34a, *Theaet.* 163d–166b) and Aristotle (*Mem. rem.* 1:449b24–25) imagine that memory contains discrete items, whether experiences or (perhaps) pieces of knowledge. Neither they nor their successors, including the Stoics, describe memory’s *contents* in terms of disposition or state.

To explain, we need to think a bit about the role of habit (ἔθος, συνήθεια) in Dorotheos's ethics.<sup>72</sup> Dorotheos's language of dispositions draws out Aristotelian ethics, according to which ἔξις is a fixed disposition developed through habit and stamped on the soul through embodied action. The formation of ἔξεις through habit is central also to Aristotelian mnemonics, in relation to which Aristotle says that "habit is already nature [φύσις ἤδη τὸ ἔθος]."<sup>73</sup> While the memory (μνήμη) may contain numerous impressions, recollection (ἀνάμνησις)—the process of calling up memories as well as other pieces of knowledge—proceeds through chains of inference defined either by art or habituation.<sup>74</sup> Training emotions was especially important to schools that asserted an irreducible irrationality in the soul, whether in the ἐπιθυμητικόν of a Platonic, or the παθητικόν of a Peripatetic, account. By Dorotheos's time, many philosophers had amalgamated these psychologies in service of training emotions through habituation, as well as teaching them by correcting judgments.<sup>75</sup> Galen, for example, had followed this line in his ethical-philosophical treatises,<sup>76</sup> while in his clinical ones he says that habit is a more important consideration (σκοπός) in learning a patient's capacity and condition even than age.<sup>77</sup> For writers in these traditions, habit and habituation are decisive factors in the formation of lasting somatic, affective, and ethical dispositions.

Christian thinkers like Basil of Caesarea absorb and repurpose these ideas. I dwell for a moment on Basil, because Dorotheos is particularly fond of him and discussed Basil's *Asceticon* with Barsanuphios and John.<sup>78</sup> Basil not only links habit and nature, but, in one passage, he makes "fixed disposition" (ἔξις) an intermediary stage between "habit" and "nature," since ἔξις is "hard to change" (δυσκίνητον) and, therefore, "hard to cure" (δυσίατος) and, eventually, "utterly incurable" (παντέλως ἀνίατος), by which point "habit has been transformed into nature" (εἰς φύσιν, ὡς τὰ πολλὰ, τοῦ ἔθους μεθισταμένου).<sup>79</sup> This fluidity between nature and habit is key to ethical development (or degeneration). However, when it comes to dispositions, Basil tends to treat διαθέσεις as something akin to "attitudes."<sup>80</sup> He rarely discusses ἔξεις, though he does draw attention to them as considerations when disciplining monks: "Let the following be considered in superiors' estimation [of penances]:

<sup>72</sup> On which, see especially, Champion, *Dorotheus of Gaza*, 173–215.

<sup>73</sup> Aristotle, *Mem. rem.* 2:452a27–28. This is a commonplace. See also Aesop, [*Prov.*] 23; Aristotle, [*Probl.*] 879b37; Theophrastos, *Caus. Plant.* 2.5.5, 4.11.5; Plutarch, *Tu. san.* 18 (132A); etc.

<sup>74</sup> Aristotle, *Mem. rem.* 2:452a26–30: "Ἐὰν οὖν διὰ πολλοῦ κινήθῃ, ἐπὶ τὸ συνηθέστερον κινεῖται ὡσπερ γὰρ φύσις ἤδη τὸ ἔθος, διὸ ἂν πολλάκις ἐννοοῦμεν, ταχὺ ἀναμνησκόμεθα ὡσπερ γὰρ φύσει τότε μετὰ τὸδε ἐστίν, οὕτω καὶ ἐνεργεῖα· τὸ δὲ πολλάκις φύσιν ποιεῖ."

<sup>75</sup> Alkinous, *Didaskalikos* 24.4; Apuleios, *Dogm. Plat.* 11; etc.

<sup>76</sup> Galen, *Aff. dig.* 1.6.10–21 (Corpus Medicorum Graecorum 5.4.1.1:20–23), *QAM* 8, 11 (*Scripta Minora* 2:60, 78).

<sup>77</sup> Galen, *De consuetinibus* (*Scripta Minora* 2:9–31).

<sup>78</sup> John of Gaza, *Resp.* 318–19 (SCh 450 :314–6).

<sup>79</sup> Basil of Caesarea, *Hom. super Pss.* 1.6 (PG 29.2:224C).

<sup>80</sup> E.g., Basil of Caesarea, *Reg. fus.* 2.1, 5.3, 16.3 (PG 31:909C, 924D, 960B), and especially 30, 42, 52 (PG 31:992D, 1024D, 1041A).



the time and manner of sin, the age of the body, and the disposition of soul, as well as the category of sin [ὁ καιρὸς καὶ ὁ τρόπος κατὰ τε τὴν ἡλικίαν τοῦ σώματος καὶ ἕξιν ψυχῆς, καὶ ἁμαρτήματος διαφορὰν].<sup>81</sup> In the *Asceticon*, then, language of disposition is largely lacking, but habit matters, since patterns of behavior become so ingrained that they are no longer chosen but compulsory. Dorotheos, however, presses Basil into alliance with his own project, saying: “Nothing is worse than bad habit. And the holy Basil says, ‘The struggle to overcome one’s habit is no small one, for habit is strengthened by prolongation and acquits, very often, the power of nature [οὐδὲν γὰρ χειρὸν κακῆς συνηθείας. Καὶ ὁ ἅγιος Βασίλειος λέγει· Οὐ μικρὸς δὲ οὗτος ἀγὼν, τῆς συνηθείας ἑαυτοῦ περιγενέσθαι. Ἔθος γὰρ διὰ μακροῦ χρόνου βεβαιωθέν, φύσεως ἰσχύν, ὡς τὰ πολλὰ, λαμβάνει].”<sup>82</sup> Basilian anxiety over the power of habit fits neatly with Dorotheos’s emphasis on the “evil disposition” that punishes the dead. He concludes, then, that this disposition is formed through habits indulged while living.

Dorotheos explores such lived habits at greater length in his eleventh *Instruction*, “On striving to cut off the passions swiftly before they become an evil disposition in the soul [Περὶ τοῦ σπουδάζειν ταχέως ἐκκόπτειν τὰ πάθη πρὸ τοῦ ἐν ἕξει κακῆ γενέσθαι τὴν ψυχῆν].”<sup>83</sup> That *Instruction* mirrors the twelfth: the dead suffer a punishment they unwittingly contrived while alive. In the eleventh, Dorotheos describes how evil habits begin from chance events or even for good reasons. His example is of a monk who steals food because he is hungry, but over time, the action itself *becomes* the reason. Eventually, that monk, despite being reprimanded and even given extra rations, not only continues to steal but admits that he throws it in the rubbish or gives it to a donkey. Concluding that thievery has become this monk’s nature compelling him to it, Dorotheos summarizes the power of bad habits thus: “We receive through evil activity a certain strange and contra-natural fixed disposition [ἀλλὰ ξένην τινὰ καὶ παρὰ φύσιν λαμβάνομεν ἕξιν διὰ τῆς ἐνεργείας τοῦ κακοῦ].”<sup>84</sup> This is true, however, only for *bad* habits. Virtue, Dorotheos explains, is already natural.<sup>85</sup> Engaging in virtuous habits perfects, rather than alters, human nature. Thus, “I have said, therefore, that as much as we engage in good activities, we come to be in a fixed disposition of virtue, which is to say, we take up again our

<sup>81</sup> Basil of Caesarea, *Reg. brev.* 106 (PG 31:1156B); see also *Reg. fus.* 19.1, 20.3 (PG 31:968A, 31:973C); *Reg. brev.* 198 (PG 31:1213C).

<sup>82</sup> *Doct.* 12.131.3–6, quoting Basil, *Reg. fus.* 6.1 (PG 31:925B). Basil’s statement is also incorporated into *Apophth. patr. anon.* N 373 (= *syst.* 4.67) and is found among similar passages from various early Christian writers, including Gregory Nazianzen and John Chrysostom, Neilos, and Athanasios, in the *Sacra Parallela*: Π’ 1916 (Σ.3.7) in *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos*, vol. 8.5, *Liber II*. “*De rerum humanarum natura et statu.*” *Erste Rezension. Zweiter Halbband* (ed. Tobias Thum; PTS 75; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2018) 1033.

<sup>83</sup> *Doct.* 11t (SCh 92:356).

<sup>84</sup> *Doct.* 11.122,23–25 (SCh 92:374).

<sup>85</sup> A solidly Aristotelian statement (*NE* 6.13:1144b, 1151a, etc.), though comparable also to Evagrius’s that “the seeds of virtues are indelible”: *Mal. Cog.* 31 (SCh 438:262); cf. *Capita discipulorum Evagrii*, 149 (SCh 514:226).

own proper disposition [Εἶπον οὖν ὅτι ὅσον ἐνεργοῦμεν τὰ καλά, ἐν ἕξει τῆς ἀρετῆς γινόμεθα, τοῦτ' ἔστι τὴν ἰδίαν ἕξιν ἀναλαμβάνομεν].”<sup>86</sup> Medical thinking enters here as well, as Dorotheos calls this state of natural function “proper health” (ἴδια ὑγεία) and the contra-natural disposition a “pestilential disease” (λοιμῶδης ἀρρωστία), both harmful and painful.<sup>87</sup> Its pain may be called “punishment,” just as health may be “refreshment”: “But from their continuous operation both virtue and vice fashion a certain disposition in the soul, and thereafter this very disposition either punishes or refreshes [ἀλλὰ καὶ ἡ ἀρετὴ καὶ ἡ κακία ἐκ τοῦ συνεχῶς ἐνεργεῖσθαι ἕξιν τινὰ ἐμποιεῖ τῆ ψυχῆ, καὶ λοιπὸν αὐτῇ ἡ ἕξις ἢ κολάζει ἢ ἀναπαύει αὐτήν].”<sup>88</sup> The mechanism of punishment and refreshment is the same for the living and the dead. It is the soul’s disposition in both instances.

This same logic of habituated dispositions leads to a key distinction between the living and the dead. Whereas God may deliver people from an “evil fixed disposition” in life,<sup>89</sup> Dorotheos offers no such consolation in death. Why not? Dispositions, as we have seen, are only formed through activities (ἐνέργειαι) and, for Dorotheos, that means especially *bodily* activities: fasting, vigil, prayer, mercy, psalmody, labor, and obedience. The absence of a body in Dorotheos’s postmortem is decisive. Without it, repentance and the development of new habits are impossible. In a chilling illustration, Dorotheos explains eschatological fever:

Would you like to learn what I’m saying in an example? Let one of you go and close himself in a dark cell, and neither eat nor drink for three days, nor sleep, nor meet anyone, nor chant psalms nor pray, nor even remember God at all. Then he will teach me what the passions do to him. And if this is what happens even now, just think how much worse it will be after his soul departs his body, is handed over to the passions, and left alone with them [πὸσφ γε μᾶλλον μετὰ τὸ ἐξελεθῆν τὴν ψυχὴν ἀπὸ τοῦ σώματος καὶ προδοθῆναι αὐτοῖς καὶ μονωθῆναι μετ’ αὐτῶν].<sup>90</sup>

Death means the soul lacks the body through which it could perceive, act, sense, feel—in short, do anything. The body does not merely distract the soul from its passions. Rather, turning the soul toward “I’altro,” as Perrone put it, the body provides the means of repentance, progress, and salvation. Death is a sensory-deprivation chamber in which the soul, unable either to act or to receive new stimuli, is frozen in place, doomed to feel only the pain and misery of its own passion. By referring the soul’s memory to its disposition, Dorotheos has removed the possibility of remediation, let alone salvation for souls in suffering. Why do souls suffer in death? They are not burning off the memories of past deeds. Instead, lifelong habituation in passions has congealed into a self-tormenting nature.

<sup>86</sup> *Doct.* 11.122.18–20 (SCh 92:374).

<sup>87</sup> *Doct.* 11.122.20–25 (SCh 92:374).

<sup>88</sup> *Doct.* 11.122.13–15 (SCh 92:374).

<sup>89</sup> As at *Doct.* 10.108.21–25; 11.122 (SCh 92:346–48, 372–74).

<sup>90</sup> *Doct.* 12.126.15–22 (SCh 92:384).

Behind Dorotheos's account of death, we can see (even if filtered through Basil) Aristotle's ideas of habit and Galen's concept of disposition. But now with a twist: neither Aristotle nor Galen imagined the soul to outlast the body. They have no account of postmortem memory, because, for them, there is no such thing. Dorotheos, however, applies their logic of habituated dispositions to an immortal soul and in consequence overcomes any question of the duration of postmortem punishment. Origen, in keeping with Hippocratic logic, had imagined that individual deeds were stacked in the memory, ready to be burned off. For Dorotheos's Galenic logic, not the number of actions but the disposition developed in the soul matters. Absent a body, the disposition has become an irreversible state. Dorotheos's eschatology is clearly inspired by Origen, informed by Aristotle, and filled out by Galen and Basil, but what he makes of those sources is at once wholly his own and thoroughly orthodox by the standards of the Chalcedonian churches in the sixth century. Dorotheos can quote Evagrius and draw on Origen without committing to their conclusions—even arguing the merits of the latter with Barsanuphios.

### ■ Dorotheos the Origenist

In the twelfth *Instruction*, Dorotheos weaves together Christian theology with non-Christian philosophy, using Aristotelian categories of disposition and its development in Galenic medicine to interpret Evagrius and correct Origen. He advanced these categories in debate with Barsanuphios, who seems to have maintained a more strictly Origenist position. Dorotheos's interweaving of philosophy, medicine, and theological speculation shows him participating in a tradition not of inflexible dogmatism or crushing obedience but of conversation and intimacy.

Let's return now to the Second Origenist Controversy. What, exactly, the Controversy concerned remains contentious. Cyril of Scythopolis and the Emperor Justinian paint a picture of universalist heresy and tainted hellene philosophy,<sup>91</sup> but there is little scholarly consensus on the doctrinal content of "Origenism."<sup>92</sup> That is, the connection between the fifteen anathemas and the surviving texts is frequently tenuous, both as regards Origen's own ideas and those of thinkers labeled "Origenist."<sup>93</sup> Absent a clear doctrinal basis, Daniël Hombergen has argued that

<sup>91</sup> Cyril of Scythopolis, *Vita Cyriaci* 13 (TU 49.2:230). While neither Cyril nor Justinian is a reliable narrator (Hombergen, *Second Origenist Controversy*), it is noteworthy that a letter to Barsanuphios (*Resp.* 600t [SCh 451:804–6]) enumerates the same concerns as does Cyril.

<sup>92</sup> In addition to Hombergen, *Second Origenist Controversy*, see Lorenzo Perrone, "Palestinian Monasticism, the Bible, and Theology in the Wake of the Second Origenist Controversy," in *The Sabaitic Heritage in the Orthodox Church from the Fifth Century to the Present* (ed. Joseph Patrich; Leuven: Peeters, 2001) 245–59; and especially Brian Daley, "The Origenism of Leontius of Byzantium," *JTS* 27 (1976) 333–69.

<sup>93</sup> Bunge (*Les enseignements d'Évagre*) certainly shows that the *Capita discipulorum Evagrii* contain much of the christological teachings condemned in 543/553. But this hardly explains the accusations against Leontios or Pamphilos, among others.

the controversy in Judean monasteries originally centred on issues of authority and ascetic practice, to which doctrinal—specifically eschatological—speculation was important, but secondary. He writes: “Instead of being a mere difference of opinion over *doctrine*, the Second Origenist Controversy was also a clash of different concepts of the spiritual life.”<sup>94</sup> The intellectual and moral formation that underlay philosophical pedagogy and the tight-knit relationship between teacher and student were pitted against centralized political and theological authority invested in the persons of emperor, bishops, and abbots. At stake, then, were the location and construction of authority, the rigorism of ascetic practice, and especially “the integration of the Hellenistic philosophical legacy within the monastic tradition.”<sup>95</sup> Those issues certainly inflect Gazan monasticism. Authority appears in Dorotheos’s twelfth *Instruction* in the form of both Scripture, which he interprets creatively, and monastic elders, with whom he argues imaginatively. Ascetic practice is implicated in the pain of postmortem punishment and leads Dorotheos to his favorite topics of habit and the formation of disposition through bodily action. Philosophical categories and concepts inform him as well; though, as we have seen, Dorotheos uses them judiciously. In the twelfth *Instruction*, we see him freely considering with his monks the same questions, both doctrinal and social, that sparked such vitriolic polemic in Judean monasteries and stern response from Constantinople.

Brian Daley has argued that the label “Origenist,” in this era at least, picked out “a style of religious thinking, and perhaps a set of priorities in living the monastic life” rather than “adherence to a body of doctrine which could find its inspiration in the works of Origen.”<sup>96</sup> To be an “Origenist” did not necessarily mean adopting Origen’s—or Evagrius’s—doctrines. It meant resistance to centralized theological authority (represented at the monastic level by heavy-handed leaders like Sabas and at the imperial level by Justinian’s enforcement of Chalcedonian orthodoxy) and a commitment to faithful intellectual inquiry. By 543, and certainly after 553, the anathemas surely pushed theologians toward more calcified rejection of the tenets of Origen and Evagrius. In this era, John of Gaza’s bifurcated reading strategy—read what’s good, reject what isn’t—merely oscillates between adherence and rejection,<sup>97</sup>

<sup>94</sup> Daniël Hombergen, “Barsanuphius and John of Gaza and the Origenist Controversy,” in *Christian Gaza in Late Antiquity* (ed. Bitton-Ashkelony and Kofsky) 174–81, at 174 (emphasis original).

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, 174.

<sup>96</sup> Brian J. Daley, “What Did ‘Origenism’ Mean in the Sixth Century?,” in *Origeniana Sexta. Origène et la Bible. Actes du Colloquium Origenianum Sextum Chantilly, 30 août–3 septembre 1993* (ed. Gilles Dorival and Alain le Boulluec; Leuven: Peeters, 1995) 627–38, at 628. Given the numerous contradictions surrounding key “Origenist” figures and the paucity of explanatory evidence, many scholars agree with this characterization, including Hombergen, Antoine Guillaumont (“*Kephalaia gnostica*,” 161–62), Andrew Louth, and Richard Price. This stance is—to some extent—countered by scholars like Istvan Perczel and, recently, Adrian C. Pirtea: “Astral Ensoulment and Astral Signifiers in Sixth-Century Readings of Origen and Evagrius: Justinian’s Anathemas, Sergius of Reš’aynā, John Philoponus,” *VC* 75 (2021) 1–41. While admitting that “Origenism” is a “big tent,” these argue that its key figures did at least share tenets with Origen and Evagrius.

<sup>97</sup> *Resp.* 602 (Sch 451:812). On the complexities of this strategy, see my *The Role of Death in*

while Origenist thinkers frequently concealed his presence in their teachings like a secret code. Dorotheos, however, like his near contemporary Boethius or Maximos Confessor a century later, cuts his own path, neither concealing nor vacillating. He acts like an “Origenist,” not by agreeing to everything Origen said but by his creative and careful working of Origen’s ideas into a thoroughly orthodox form. This work exceeds repetition and comment; it opens horizons of eschatological thinking not otherwise seen in late antiquity.

## ■ Reassessing Gazan Monastic Culture

Having shown Dorotheos to be an Origenist and speculative theologian, I would suggest that this picture requires two broader reassessments of the intellectual and theological climate of Gaza, which call for, and will inform, further research. First, the Origenist Controversy’s effects were felt much less in Gaza than Judea. Hombergen has said that “Evagrius’s unconcealed presence in Dorotheus, against the background of what was going on in the sixth-century Palestinian monastic world, remains an enigma.”<sup>98</sup> But it is only puzzling if we accept that conciliar condemnations of Origen and Evagrius in Jerusalem and Constantinople led immediately to rejection everywhere. There are two good reasons not to accept that claim.

First, the social networks of Gazan monasteries differ from Judean ones. Both the *Correspondence* and the *Instructions* are full of positive interactions with sophists, dignitaries, and other laypeople.<sup>99</sup> Both Thawatha and Maiouma were sought out by intellectuals in Gaza, much as the Enaton Monastery was by Christian students in Alexandria.<sup>100</sup> Schools run by the philosopher Aeneas and the rhetorician and exegete Prokopios (465–528) were turning out thinkers like Zacharias of Mytilene and Chorikios during Barsanuphios and John’s tenure at Thawatha, and during Dorotheos’s formative years there. None of these shied from controversy and speculative thought, and Chorikios defended a mixture of secular and religious education in public intellectuals even as he praised his teacher, Prokopios.<sup>101</sup> Prokopios, it might be added, peppered his biblical commentaries

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the “Ladder of Divine Ascent” and the Greek Ascetic Tradition (OECS; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015) 64 (though I referred, incorrectly, to Barsanuphios).

<sup>98</sup> Hombergen, “Dorotheus of Gaza’s Position,” 482.

<sup>99</sup> For example, a sophist visits to see Abba Zosimas and asks difficult questions out of sincere admiration (*Doct.* 2.36–37 [Sch 92:198–202]). A local magistrate learns biblical exegesis through political analogy (*Doct.* 2.34 [Sch 92:196–98]). The magistrate is there to learn, contra Stenger, “What Does it Mean?,” 75. For other examples of interaction between monastery and city, see *Resp.* 46, 62, 71, 73, 100, 101, 125, 188, 348, 456, 553, 604. Compare the vitriolic attacks on philosophers (and attacks by philosophers) in Cyril’s *Lives*.

<sup>100</sup> Edward Watts, *Riot in Alexandria: Tradition and Group Dynamics in Late Antique Pagan and Christian Communities* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007).

<sup>101</sup> See Jan R. Stenger, “The Public Intellectual according to Choricius of Gaza, or How to Circumvent the Totalizing Christian Discourse,” *JLA* 10 (2017) 454–72.

with quotations from Origen, Didymos, and Evagrius.<sup>102</sup> While people sought the intercession and power of holy men,<sup>103</sup> it would be strange indeed for sophists and philosophers to visit or correspond with doctrinaire monks afraid or dismissive of rigorous intellectual inquiry. Second, Gaza, as opposed to Jerusalem, was largely non-Chalcedonian, and, whatever the epithets hurled, the Origenist Controversy was a spat within the Chalcedonian fold. We should keep asking how much effect Justinian's decrees and Constantinopolitan—or even Jerusalemite—councils actually had in Gaza, even among Chalcedonian circles. It may well be that Seridos's monastery, and later Dorotheos, were committed to elements of Justinianic orthodoxy, or at least orthopraxy, without feeling bound by every point.

This leads to the second point of reassessment: the formative culture of Gazan monasticism. We need to understand how much it has been portrayed as nonspeculative, noncontroversial, and even anti-intellectual. These monasteries appear in the literary record as refuges from the bitter, sometimes violent prosecution of theological controversy in the sixth century. While Peter the Iberian placed Gazan monasticism in the field of theological polemics, Isaiah and the Old Men were keen to remove it as much as possible. Peter and Zacharias of Mytilene were fiery anti-Chalcedonians but Isaiah an irenic one.<sup>104</sup> For example, in his *Discourses* (or, *Logoi*), Isaiah recommends abstaining from debates or even reading books containing “heretical things.”<sup>105</sup> His attitude led to ambiguous reputations for him and some of his disciples. On the one side, Chalcedonians would eagerly read Isaiah's works alongside those of “orthodox” writers. On the other, Barsanuphios, John, and Dorotheos had their Chalcedonian bona fides questioned even in late antiquity.<sup>106</sup> In fact, it is quite likely—despite the protestations of Dorotheos's editor and their icons in Hagia Sophia<sup>107</sup>—that Sophronios of Jerusalem condemned not

<sup>102</sup> See Bas ter Haar Romeny, “Procopius of Gaza and His Library,” in *From Rome to Constantinople: Studies in Honour of Averil Cameron* (ed. Hagit Amirav and Bas ter Haar Romeny; Late Antique History and Religion 1; Leuven: Peeters, 2007) 173–90, at 184, 186–88.

<sup>103</sup> On the varied roles of holy men like Barsanuphios and John, see Claudia Rapp, “‘For Next to God, You Are My Salvation’: Reflections on the Rise of the Holy Man in Late Antiquity,” in *The Cult of Saints in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages* (ed. James Howard-Johnston and Paul Antony Hayward; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999) 63–81.

<sup>104</sup> Cornelia B. Horn, *Asceticism and Christological Controversy in Fifth-Century Palestine: The Career of Peter the Iberian* (O ECS; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006); Jan-Eric Steppa, “Heresy and Orthodoxy: The Anti-Chalcedonian Hagiography of John Rufus,” in *Christian Gaza in Late Antiquity* (ed. Bitton-Ashkelony and Kofsky), 89–106; and idem, *John Rufus and the World Vision of Anti-Chalcedonian Culture* (Gorgias Studies in Early Christianity and Patristics 4; 2<sup>nd</sup> rev. ed.; Gorgias: Piscataway, NJ, 2005); Perrone, “Palestinian Monasticism.”

<sup>105</sup> Isaiah, *Logos* 4.6 (Augustinos, ABBA ΗΣΑΙΟΥ, 22–23) warns against dialoguing with αἰρητικοί or reading their books and against despising a brother taken in by them, since this resulted from ignorance. Compare the anecdote in Ms. Paris BNF, gr. 1596, f. 610, printed by François Nau as “texte complémentaire XVI,” in *Jean Rufus, évêque de Maïouma. Plérôphories, c'est-à-dire témoignages et révélations (contre le concile de Chalcédoine)* (PO 8.1; Paris: Fermin-Didot, 1907) 164. See also Parrinello, *Comunità monastiche a Gaza*, 124–27.

<sup>106</sup> Lesieur, “Le monastère de Séridos,” 5–47.

<sup>107</sup> *Anonymous prefatory letter* (SCh 92:108).

some doppelgänger, but *this* Isaiah and *this* Barsanuphios with Peter the Iberian as “headless” (i.e., belonging to the party of Severos of Antioch).<sup>108</sup> Whether or not Sophronios was correct and there was, as Bitton-Ashkelony and Kofsky suggest, “transformation into a kind of crypto-Monophysitism,”<sup>109</sup> it is clear that Isaiah’s legacy included such reticence on christology that Gazans could be read as members of either church. The question is whether reticence on *that* topic expressed a more general rejection of dogmatic as well as speculative theology and discussion.

Of course, while monasteries to the north, in Judea, were being convulsed by the Second Origenist Controversy, and Cyril of Scythopolis was tarnishing the names of Evagrius and Didymos, monks at Seridos’s monastery in Gaza had access to their books. An unnamed monk wrote to the Old Men about his adventures with Origen, Evagrius, and Didymos, claiming to have stumbled on them in the monastery library (quite by accident, he claims). The fact that the monastery possessed such books and that monks could read them without permission certainly suggests a degree of curiosity and openness. However, Barsanuphios advised him vehemently to avoid such authors entirely, while John said to sift out and ignore the more problematic positions and focus instead on what was practically beneficial. This advice echoes Isaiah’s refusal of polemics and has been read as part of a wider strategy of avoiding controversy, also including the Chalcedonian one,<sup>110</sup> or even as a sign of an anti-intellectual trend among Gazan (and other) monastics.<sup>111</sup> Monastic formation in Gaza would seem to have shunned not just ecclesial conflicts but also the speculative reading that might embroil monks in theological controversies.

And yet, Dorotheos presents the same Barsanuphios who authored such condemnatory letters, as arguing over the finer points of Origenist eschatology. If we take Dorotheos’s presentation of that conversation, or at least his monks’ likely perception of it, seriously, then it would be ridiculous to imagine that speculative theology was out of bounds in Seridos’s monastery. But it would make sense that such conversations occurred within the context of the intimate relationships of spiritual direction. The conversation Dorotheos recounts is unusual only in that it took place in person. Time and again in the *Correspondence* asymmetries of power and the Old Men’s sometimes vociferous insistence on obedience

<sup>108</sup> *Epist. syn.* (PG 87.3:3192B–3193A).

<sup>109</sup> Bitton-Ashkelony and Kofsky, *Monastic School of Gaza*, 222.

<sup>110</sup> Hevelone-Harper, *Disciples of the Desert*, 23–28; Daniel Neary, “The Image of Justinianic Orthopraxy in Eastern Monastic Literature,” *J ECS* 25 (2017) 119–47, at 129; and now Austin McCray, “Between the Judean Desert and Gaza: Asceticism and the Monastic Communities of Palestine in the Sixth Century” (PhD diss.; Louisiana State University, 2020) 145–54. Compare, however, Hombergen, “Barsanuphios and John of Gaza,” 178, and “Dorotheus of Gaza’s Position,” 478.

<sup>111</sup> Bitton-Ashkelony and Kofsky, *Monastic School of Gaza*, 99–106; Brouria Bitton-Ashkelony, “Territory, Anti-Intellectual Attitude, and Identity Formation in Late Antique Palestinian Monastic Communities,” *R & T* 17 (2010) 244–67, especially 260–63; eadem, “Monastic Hybridity and Anti-Exegetical Discourse: From Philoxenus of Mabbug to Dadiso Qatraya,” in *Studia Patristica* 91 (ed. Markus Vinzent; Leuven: Peeters, 2017) 417–33. Lesieur, “Le monastère de Séridos,” 41.

are balanced by their correspondents' frequent boldness, even stubbornness.<sup>112</sup> Further, the infrequency of more mystical or speculative teaching (excepting the famous *Resp.* 137b) in the *Correspondence*, an absence on which so much has been built, is comprehensible for two reasons. First, the Old Men set no universal curriculum. Rather, the dynamics of spiritual direction required that the character and capacity of the disciple determine in large part what the master would say, as not everyone is ready for more intellectually challenging or mystical teachings. Focus on mitigating, even extirpating, one's own passions is as much a cognitive propaedeutic as it is an ethical imperative, and so when Barsanuphios counsels the monk reading Evagrius to focus his attention on his passions, he is not telling him that "intellectual speculation is a distraction from ascetical struggle and prayer."<sup>113</sup> Rather, he is reminding his interlocutor that he is going about things in the wrong order—a warning that Evagrius, committed as he was to a pedagogical program that moved from emotional and ethical transformation into contemplation, would have agreed with wholeheartedly. Second, ancient epistolography was public business, and we should not expect the Old Men to have committed to writing everything they said in private or communicated through Seridos and Dorotheos. We have no reason, after all, to expect that the letters *to* the Old Men are faithfully reproduced, and the collection's composition has yet to be seriously studied. Rather, tempting though it is to read the *Correspondence* as direct witness to the topics touched on in various letters, we must remember that it is more limited in its scope. It is a literary and layered text, which invites scholars to read against the grain and to explore its silences. The same awareness calls for greater weight to be given to Dorotheos's *Instructions*—though they are, of course, just as literary and complex—in assessing the intellectual and theological climate of Seridos's monastery, as well as Dorotheos's position in Gaza and contribution to late antique theology.

So then: how to characterize Dorotheos's formation under the Old Men of Gaza? how to explain Seridos's well-stocked library? how to make sense of Evagrius's explicit and Origen's implicit place in Dorotheos's own theology? All things considered, it seems to me simplest to describe Dorotheos and those who formed him as, in the sense it held in their time, "Origenists."

<sup>112</sup> Examples are numerous; but take the monk who read Origen. Given a lengthy rebuttal and firm rebuke by Barsanuphios (*Resp.* 600), the monk persists in clarifying, nuancing, and arguing for seven more letters. Indeed, he even admits (607) that he has not followed Barsanuphios's advice at all and has, instead, persisted in reading supposedly forbidden texts.

<sup>113</sup> As Andrew Louth claimed: "The *Collectio Sabaitica* and Sixth-Century Origenism," in *Origeniana Octava* (ed. Perrone) 2:1167–75 at 1168 and 1174.