A Missing Piece: Monasteries as Centers for a Literate Christian Education

in Late Antique Palestine

By

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Abstract

Research into the history of education provides powerful insights for answering a philosophical question of central importance: namely, what is the purpose of education. While recent research has emphasized looking to the past few centuries, investigating the educational practices of ancient societies is also valuable. The education available in the Byzantine Empire is particularly useful to examine. This society existed for a millennium and contributed substantially to the development of many aspects of the world as we know it today. In contradiction to its importance, however, its study has been neglected by historians of education.

The education of the early Byzantine Empire (4th-6th centuries) is particularly interesting to explore, as society shifted in religious belief from pagan pluralism to Christianity. This religious transition led to questions on the nature and purpose of education as compromise was sought between the two religions. Such a struggle for educational compromise parallels contemporary Canadian society, where, as well-attested in the literature, a formerly Christian society is adjusting to one of pluralism and religious tolerance.

Education in the early Byzantine Empire is presented in the literature as the bailiwick of the elite. Even as society Christianized, historians of education emphasize that educational practices remained those inherited from a pagan past. This assertion is complicated, however, by scholars of early Christianity who identify the rise of Christian monasticism and its “educational” capacity. While the pagan educational practices are well described as literary in nature, the means of monastic education is ambiguous.

This study reconciles these two scholarly traditions, drawing on monastic primary sources to describe the literate education available within Christian monasteries of Late Antique
Palestine. It then goes further, exploring the impact literate monks had on the Christianization of Byzantine society, and recursively, the impact this newly Christian society had on monasticism.

This thesis contributes significantly to an understanding of the intersection between education and religion. Value is also to be found in the form of education that is revealed – an education not concerned with advancement and worldly gain, but one of self-improvement and spiritual growth.
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Introduction

Although Herbert Kliebard describes the field of history of education as one more or less entrenched in teacher training, study in the field has more recently been characterized as one “riven by fissures and beset with insecurities.”¹ Indeed, Theodore Christou portrays the status of history of education as one of languishment and decline, related to a more general decline in the subjects of the social sciences.² Yet the utility of the study of the history of education remains as significant today as ever. Perhaps the statement that best encapsulates the value in the study of the history of education is that made by Gary McCulloch in summarizing Émile Durkheim’s thoughts on the topic: “it is only by carefully studying the past that we can come to anticipate the future and to understand the present, and so the history of education provides the soundest basis for the study of educational theory.”³ Society today continues its struggle to answer that basic educational question: namely, what is the purpose of education.⁴ Investigating the history of education, following Durkheim’s sentiment, may provide some insight for approaching an answer to this crucial question.

The scope of the field of history of education is vast. It encompasses anything considered to be education or related to education within recorded history. In recent decades, the focus within history of education has been on studying topics with a present-minded view to their

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³ McCulloch, 3.
“usefulness.” Rosa Bruno-Jofré makes this focus clear in her historiography of history of education studies within Canada, highlighting that key developments in the field were always in response to the socio-political climate of the time. This presentist focus is echoed in two recent works that examine the types of research published in history of education periodicals. Joyce Goodman and Ian Grosvenor survey the publications of two major history of education journals and conclude that historians should more clearly link their research to its use for educational policy makers and the modern educational environment. Rita Hofstetter et al. find that this call has been heeded by doctoral students, who restrict their research interests in the history of education to modern concerns. Perhaps it is due to this bid for relevancy that the vast majority of history of education dissertations examined by Hofstetter et al. were limited temporally to the modern era. While the above studies reveal that recent work in the history of education has emphasized studying the recent past, investigating education in ancient societies may too yield valuable insight for the modern world. The world of the Byzantine Empire is one such ancient society. Theodore Christou notes that the study of Byzantium has been neglected in the history of education: a problematic dearth when considering that Byzantium contributed substantially to the development of many aspects of the world as we know it today. The early Byzantine Empire, dating roughly from the fourth to the sixth centuries, is particularly interesting to explore for the

7 Goodman and Grosvenor, 611-612.
9 Hofstetter et al., 877.
context of education as it shifted in religious belief from pagan pluralism to Christianity. This religious transition led to questions on the nature and purpose of education as compromise was sought between religious cultures. Such a struggle for educational compromise parallels contemporary Canadian society, where a society that was formerly largely Christian is adjusting as one of pluralism and religious tolerance. Investigating the intersection of religion and education in Byzantium may thus provide insight for Canadian policies on these topics today.

The current study will thus contribute to the field of history of education by examining a historical context both significant and underrepresented in the literature. Tackling a topic that is fundamentally interdisciplinary in nature, I explore the degree to which a literacy-based education was pursued within Greek-speaking Christian monasteries in the Roman province of Palestine, during the period from the fifth century to the end of the sixth century CE. I have focused on literacy-based education as the tools and processes used for such a learning are distinct. Distinct evidence is a necessity for investigating education in the ancient world, since as Sita Steckel notes, educational processes in the pre-modern world varied widely and are difficult for scholars to identify. Highlighting the literacy-based education available in these monasteries allows me to argue that monastic society was a literate one. I may then explore the impact literate monks had on society writ large, ultimately arguing that Palestinian monasteries were viewed by their contemporaries as centers for a Christian education.

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11 Canada’s societal shift from Christianity to religious plurality (including no religion) is a well-attested phenomenon in the literature. See: Lori Beaman (ed.), *Reasonable Accommodation: Managing Religious Diversity* (Toronto: UBC Press, 2012); Robert Choquette, *Canada’s Religions* (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 2004). Choquette usefully identifies that for most of their history, Canadian schools have been confessional, either run or strongly influenced by Christian churches: 307.

The contents of this thesis are divided into three Parts. In chapters one, two, and three of Part One, I situate this interdisciplinary study within the diverse literature to which it belongs. Since terminology familiar to one field may have different nuances of meaning in another, my first chapter clarifies and defines the terms I use throughout my paper. In chapter two, I describe my methodology and summarize in brief all the primary sources extant for my context. My intention in listing my primary sources is for enhanced convenience and comprehension for the reader, as well as for anyone who may wish in the future to undertake research in this context. In chapter three, I present a literature review, known from the history perspective as a historiography. This historiography first addresses relevant scholarly work from the field of history of education. I then review literature from the fields of history, classical studies, and religious studies.

Having established the various strands of scholarship that I draw upon, I proceed to Part Two: setting the scene. In chapters four and five, I explore the political, religious, and social forces at play during the Late Antique period – a critical undertaking for an effective analysis and understanding of fifth-sixth century monastic education. In chapter four, I present first a general overview of the Late Antique world. I then present a history of early Christianity, where I propose a periodization that highlights that a “True Christianization” of Late Antiquity did not begin until the fifth century. Chapter five focuses on the Christian context of Late Antiquity by offering a brief history of two distinct Christian institutions: the Church and the monastic movement. This coverage highlights that these two bodies did not effloresce until the fifth century, and sets them as inextricable actors recursively impacting and being impacted in turn by the Christianization of Late Antiquity.
Having presented a “thick description” in Part Two, I turn in chapters six and seven of Part Three to the question of literacy-based education in Palestinian monasteries. In chapter six, I investigate the existence, use, and extent of a literacy-based education in the Palestinian monastic milieu. In this endeavour I highlight evidence from monastic sources of literary activity, evidenced especially by the existence and use of books in monastic settings. In chapter seven, I investigate the economic power of the monastery and the structure of monastic life, to highlight how the tools and teachers of a text-based monastic education were secured. Having established that Palestinian monks were literate and possessed a monastic education based on textual study, in chapter eight I examine how a Christian culture resultant from the Christianization of Late Antiquity was impacted by and shaped the role played by the literate monk. My examination identifies the role Palestinian monks held throughout all aspects of society, specifically on the local community level, in ecclesiastical affairs, and from the imperial perspective. Based on primary sources produced in these three different spheres, I conclude that monks were regarded by their contemporaries as erudite experts on Christian culture. Drawing upon Lillian Larsen’s exhortation to think of education in Late Antiquity by choosing “an alternate starting point,” my presentation of a literacy-based Palestinian monastic education refines the history of education for this period as one where the basic educational processes remained the same, but their locales and raisons d’être diversified and reflected a newly dominant culture.

This thesis offers a novel way of approaching education in Late Antiquity, tying it closely to the culture of society. It questions the view of education as the domain of the elite, and seeks

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13 See my methodology section below for an explanation of “thick description”: p. 15.
to uncover the educational options of the everyman. Aside from the insight this thesis contains for the intersection of religion and education, perhaps its most significant contribution is in the form of the education it reveals: an education not concerned with advancement and worldly gain, but one of self-improvement and spiritual growth.
Part One

Chapter One: Clarifying Terms

Throughout this study I make use of a variety of terms for which I have a very specific meaning. In an effort for ongoing clarity, I defined my terminology here, at the outset.

**Late Antiquity**: Both temporally and geographically, the scope of this study falls neatly into the historical period of Late Antiquity. This period, encompassing the third-eighth centuries, has developed into a significant field of academic study since its initial development in Peter Brown’s seminal work, *The World of Late Antiquity*.¹ Brown coined the term to describe the unique world that flourished after the decline of the Roman Empire and continued until the beginnings of the Medieval period.² This is a time concerned with the “shifting and redefinition of the boundaries of the classical world.”³ Its inhabitants, the geographical inheritors of the Roman Empire, still looked back to the Classical era even as they evolved for themselves a new and distinct paradigm.⁴ Chief among these novelties was the widespread acceptance and entrenchment of Christianity.⁵ As my study concerns fifth-sixth century Christian monasticism within Roman provinces, it belongs within the field of Late Antiquity. The scope of this thesis also falls temporally and geographically into the field of Byzantine Studies. The Byzantine Empire is accepted by scholars to be the eastern half of the Roman Empire, formally established as a unique entity in 324 CE by Emperor Constantine and continuing until the loss of its capital

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³ Ibid, 19.
⁴ Ibid. see introduction: 11-21.
⁵ Ibid, 82-112.
in 1453 CE. Petre Guran comments on the overlap between the fields of Late Antiquity and Byzantine Studies, identifying and examining how Late Antiquity has grown and appropriated half of Byzantium’s millennial history. While my thesis belongs to both of these areas of study (indeed, throughout this work I make use of publications from both fields), I have opted to use the terminology of Late Antiquity. I have done so for two main reasons. The first is, as Guran highlights, that the study of Late Antiquity is a more powerful instrument of research. Its tightened focus upon the early Byzantine period allows the post-classical world to be interrogated with greater nuance. The second is that Byzantine Studies focus on the Byzantine Empire, thereby connoting the capital at Constantinople as central and all else as peripheral. Since my research situates Palestine as central, I find that it fits slightly better into the framework of Late Antiquity. Although Late Antiquity refers to any former Roman areas during its designated temporal span, I use the term Late Antique or Late Antiquity throughout my thesis to refer to a specific geographical and temporal context: the Byzantine provinces, most often Palestine and Egypt, during the fourth-sixth centuries. Although I recognize that this term has a broader range of meaning, my usage is bound by my context.

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8 Ibid, 1149.
9 Jeffreys, Haldon, Cormack, 3. In this introduction to the field, the authors first highlight the centrality of Constantinople.
10 For a recent and provocative take on the state of Late Antiquity studies, see: Anthony Kaldellis, “Late Antiquity Dissolves,” Marginalia Review of Books, September 18, 2015, accessed August 31, 2017, http://marginalia.lareviewofbooks.org/late-antiquity-dissolves-by-anthony-kaldellis/. One of Kaldellis’ main concerns is the way scholars of Late Antiquity have homogenized sources to the extent that the individuality of an author is subsumed into a generic categorization. It is precisely with this concern in mind that I have highlighted each of my primary sources as a distinct product of a specific context, and have built an argument on the basis of this collective evidence.
Monasticism: As I explore in greater detail below, monasticism, in the context I am investigating, came in a variety of ascetic forms. Although these forms differed enough in practice to defy easy classification, monastic organization followed certain general patterns. The earliest of these was anchoritic or eremitical monasticism, where an individual would live in seclusion as a hermit. The anchorite renounced worldly possessions and lived in a simple cell on the fringes of society, such as in the desert or outside the walls of a coenobium. Anchorites could have disciples, individuals who emulated their example and lived near them, who eventually became anchorites in their own right.\(^{11}\) In parallel development, perhaps influenced by anchoritic monasticism, came coenobitism, a monasticism focused on communal life. Large groups of individuals renounced worldly possessions and built themselves a compound, typically walled, called a coenobium. Communal life was governed by monastic rules, and embraced asceticism by focusing on constant labour and prayer. A hierarchy existed within these institutions, with novitiates seeking guidance from monks who were more spiritually advanced. These micro-societies would sometimes found themselves around an influential anchorite.\(^{12}\) The final type of monasticism remained focused on asceticism and worldly renunciation, and was a combination of the anchoritic and coenobitic traditions. Living in a monastery called a lavra, monks lived in seclusion in separate cells but would come together on the weekends for group prayer.\(^{13}\)

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\(^{12}\) Ibid, 646-647.

**Monophysite:** The terms “Monophysite” and “Miaphysite” are used in the literature to refer to the Christian groups that were anti-Chalcedonian.\(^{14}\) James Evans recognizes the anachronism of using the term “Monophysite” to refer to these groups, identifying it as a term not used until the eighth century.\(^{15}\) For the sake of clarity, however, he opts to use the term in the face of its widespread usage in the literature. I too have taken this route, and my use of the term “Monophysite” throughout this thesis refers generally to those in opposition to the Chalcedonian creed.\(^{16}\)

**Paganism:** When discussing the period after Christianity was adopted as the official religion of the Byzantine Empire, scholars have set up an easy dichotomy between paganism and Christianity. Alan Cameron, for example, sets the year 529 CE as a symbolic chronological division between the pagan past and the Christian future.\(^{17}\) Adding to the confusion caused by such romantic divisions, the term “pagan” has been used in several different ways by scholars. Anthony Kaldellis investigates the etymology of the word “pagan” and uses it with its literal meaning, while some scholars use Justinian’s legal definition that “pagan” was someone who had not been baptized.\(^{18}\) The term “pagan” is perhaps most frequently used as an easy catch-
word in opposition to “Christian,” to describe things of Roman culture and origin. Recognizing the existence of degrees of “paganism,” Christian Wildberg proposes that two separate understandings of “paganism” may have existed in Christianized Late Antiquity: “applied” paganism (with an emphasis on cult and pagan ritual) and “theoretical” paganism (with an emphasis on engaging with the pagan intellectual heritage). Further complicating the issue is the Christian tendency to label all non-Christians as “pagan.” Thus, while I set up a “Christian education” and “Christian culture” against “pagan” equivalents, I recognize that “paganism” by no means represented a distinct group. I use the term “pagan” for the sake of ease, as the group with Greco-Roman culture that often found itself in opposition to Christianity. This usage works for my purposes as I sketch the perceptions Christianity writ large would have had in relation to perceived “others,” but my usage of the term should not be taken too literally.

**Roman Palestine:** Not to be confused with the modern meaning and idea of Palestine, Roman Palestine was an area made up of the three Roman provinces of Palaestina I, II, and III. As Kenneth Holum describes it, this area encompassed “the coastal plain from Mt. Carmel south to Raphia on the Egyptian frontier, the Galilee and the Golan in the north, the Jezreel valley, the hill country of Samaria and Judaea, and the Great Rift valley of the Jordan and the Dead Sea.” In modern terms, this region consists roughly of what is modern-day Palestine, Israel, and the Gaza Strip, and includes parts of Jordan and Egypt (See Appendix A).

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School: In the antique world, the school as we imagine it today did not exist. There was no centralized educational authority, no set curriculum, and no public funding.\textsuperscript{22} Raffaella Cribiore best describes the school in antiquity, and thus I have quoted her here in full:

I … define “school” on the basis of the activity carried on, rather than in terms of the identity of the person teaching, the student-teacher relationship, or the premises where teaching takes place. The teacher could be a friend, a parent, a priest, or someone hired to teach, and the classroom a room in a private house, the shaded porch of a temple, or the dusty ground under a tree. Speaking of school \textit{strictu sensu} is often meaningless in the ancient world and prevents us from seeing the reality of alternative systems of learning and communication that were developed to overcome the deficiencies of formal schooling.\textsuperscript{23}

Since the term “school” carries so much anachronistic modern connotation, I have avoided using it in this thesis. With Cribiore’s definition in mind, I have focused throughout rather on educational activities, and identify where they take place as “educational settings.”

\textsuperscript{22} Raffaella Cribiore, \textit{Writing, Teachers, and Students in Graeco-Roman Egypt} (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1996), 14.
\textsuperscript{23} Ibid, 6.
Chapter Two: Methodology and Sources

Methodology

My research concerns a world largely foreign to a modern observer: distance was further, social status was set, and the acceptance of the existence of the supernatural was absolute. In short, the culture and norms of Late Antiquity are difficult to relate to.¹ Since education is closely tied to the culture of a society, a cultural understanding of this world is required before a primary source-based historical investigation may properly be undertaken.² I have thus made use of cultural theory to direct my presentation of Late Antique culture, utilizing the interpretive theory of “thick description” as popularized by Clifford Geertz.³ Geertz defines culture as the interpretation of the webs of significance that individuals have formed for themselves. He rightly argues that simply identifying these webs is meaningless: they must be interrogated and explicated.⁴ Using a “thick description” aids in this endeavour as it strives to recount not just basic detail, but all the additional nuance, suggestion, and meaning. As Geertz writes, “most of what we need to comprehend a particular event, ritual, custom, idea, or whatever is insinuated as background information before the thing itself is directly examined.”⁵ My research has brought

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⁴ Ibid. 5.
⁵ Ibid, 9.
together several fields of academic research and situated it within a complex and foreign world. A “thick description” is thus required to make sense of this confusing picture.

I employ a typical historical methodology for my research. I have used primary and secondary sources to describe the historical context in which my research is located, using Geertz’s “thick description” as a framework. I have then presented evidence from primary sources in an effort to answer my research question: namely, the degree to which literacy instruction was offered in the Greek-speaking monasteries of my context and the impact this literacy-based education had on the role played by Palestinian monks in Late Antique society. I have limited my research to Greek-speaking monasteries since the sources indicate that these were the dominant type of monasteries in Palestine. For the same reason, I have also made the choice to focus on male monasteries. The primary sources from my context indicate that Palestinian monastic societies were literate ones. I therefore seek to describe to what extent this society was literate, by looking for evidence that monks were engaging in literary activities. These activities are difficult to distinguish in the sources, as typical monastic activities such as prayer and psalmody are not explicitly described as being performed using literacy. As such, my investigation focuses on the prerequisites for such activities. My analysis of the primary sources looks for the existence of the tools of literacy: physical items such as books, paper, and writing utensils, and non-physical requirements such as literate monks who could teach letters, and a place within the structure of monasticism that would have allowed such teaching to take place. In addition, I am cognizant that these tools of literacy could represent a fair expense for monasteries. As such, I investigate the economics of Palestinian monasticism, highlighting that monasteries were quite capable of affording such tools and indeed likely had expansive libraries. This methodology of primary source analysis allows me to speak to the extent that literacy was
pursued in Palestinian monasteries, and to draw some general conclusions about their place as Christian educational centers during my period.

Sources

Undertaking an investigation of education in the ancient world requires the use of primary sources that are around 1500 years old. Three main caveats must be noted at the outset for my use of these sources. First, works that have survived until today from the ancient world are rarely the original documents. Much of what survives comes only from later manuscripts that were copies of the originals. While this situation is not ideal, and indeed scholars sometimes debate the authenticity of parts and passages in ancient sources, published scholarly editions of such works strive for a faithful rendition of the original through a rigorous methodology that includes comparison to all surviving copies of a manuscript. 6 Second, while historians often look to archives for primary sources, such repositories are rarer and difficult to access for ancient sources. Finally, ancient sources were composed in a variety of different languages, none of which are spoken in the same way today, if they are spoken at all. Due to the above three considerations, the primary sources I use are predominately those that have been published in a scholarly format, often with a critical English translation. While I have used the English

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translation of sources when reading through them, I have consulted the text in its original language whenever feasible, especially when considering passages of especial significance.

The main issue in using primary sources that have been transliterated is the risk of later interpolation. Such interpolation may be accidental or deliberate. Since my study looks for evidence of literary activities within my sources, however, the risk that I present false data resulting from either accidental or deliberate interpolation is unlikely. While individual words or the order of a work may accidentally be altered, the general narrative of a source remains consistent. Since my investigation of literary activity looks to such a general narrative in a source instead of specific terminology, my use of ancient sources should not pose an issue. Deliberate interpolation is also unlikely, for two reasons. First, deliberate interpolation requires a compiler to have a motivation: a specific political or religious agenda, for example. Such a motivation is unlikely to exist for literary processes. Second, it is equally unlikely that a compiler could fabricate a section of text convincing enough to fool modern scholars, who are informed by other extant editions of a text and by their knowledge of literary norms for a period. Therefore, although a slim possibility exists that the sources I analyze have been tampered with, it is not a significant concern. Indeed, this study draws legitimacy less in its micro-analysis of a single source, and more so in analyzing a broad spectrum of sources that present a general and consistent picture for understanding literacy processes in Palestinian monasteries. The rare exception to my above arguments against interpolation, then, will have limited impact in skewing my findings in this thesis.

Investigating the Greek-speaking monastic milieu of Palestine in Late Antiquity is fraught with difficulties. Piecing together the degree of literacy-based education within such monasteries proves even more challenging. As such, I have had to draw on a wide variety of
primary sources for information. As will become apparent in my historiography, scholars researching education in antiquity in a general fashion tend to use primary sources from a broad range of temporal and geographical locales. While such an approach is often required due to a lack of source material, it results in a conclusion that is dependent on an assumption of temporal continuity and universal applicability across wide geographical spans. In selecting my primary sources, therefore, I have endeavoured to use only those that are geographically and temporally within my scope (that is, from Roman Palestine, within the 5th-6th centuries). When I do make use of sources beyond this limit, I do so for only two clearly stated reasons. The first is if the relevancy of a primary source has been established for my context. For example, although the monastic Rules of Pachomius are from fourth century Egyptian monasticism, monasticism at Gaza inherited and was founded on this tradition. I thus use these Rules when discussing monasticism at Gaza. The second is for comparative purposes, when I can establish a parallel from another context that was similar to the one I investigate. I do this mostly with primary sources from Egypt, especially for papyri. On these occasions, I am careful to make a clear argument for their applicability to my context. In what follows, I identify the genres of primary sources I have used and their usefulness and limitations. After introducing each genre, I present each source of that type that I have used, referencing the edition of the work that I have used and providing a brief summary of its contents and provenance. The sources I present below include everything I could find for my period of Palestinian monastic provenance. In addition, I have made use of sources of ecclesiastical and imperial provenance to explore the perception these two institutions had of monks and the meaning of a Christian education. In a context with limited sources, my selection criteria has thus simply been everything of relevance. While it is possible

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7 Chryssavgis, “Introduction,” 3-5.
that a few useful sources have escaped my extensive search, I am confident that the picture that emerges from my analysis of the below sources will speak with authority to the literary activities and Christian education that occurred in Palestinian monasticism.

Hagiographies

The term hagiography refers to the biography of a saint. Hagiographies are variously referred to as Lives or by the Latin term Vita. Although some scholars have classified hagiographies as a distinct genre of literature with their own rules of composition, Peter Hatlie presents the debate that their use as primary sources in academia has generated. He highlights that scholars recognize that these narratives are often written with a view to a specific political or religious agenda. However, as Paul Lemerle remarks “given the silence of the other sources, this ‘literature’ is still important to us [as scholars].” Fortunately for this study, hagiographies written during the sixth century have been recognized for their “historicity”: hagiographers from this period concentrated on their contemporaries and people they personally knew. In making use of hagiographies as primary sources, and lacking other alternatives, I have followed Hatlie’s directive “to advance propositions based on common sense and critical judgement alone.”

10 Ibid, 12.
11 As cited by Hatlie, 13.
12 Ibid, 12.
have endeavoured in every instance to make use of the most modern scholarly edition of a work, and to consult the text in its original language when possible and required. The hagiographies I present below have dual uses for the present study. First, their contents provide historical details about their subject and his monastic context. Second, since each of these hagiographies was composed by a monk who lived within the fifth-sixth centuries, the works themselves testify to the literate activities in which monks could engage. These hagiographies are similar in two additional ways: both their subjects and authors are of Chalcedonian faith, and their monastic activities were conducted in the Greek language. The significance of these points is evident later when I present the Christian doctrinal conflicts of the fifth and sixth centuries. I have used the following four works of hagiography:

*Lives of the Monks of Palestine*

This collection of hagiographies was composed by Cyril of Scythopolis sometime in the mid-sixth century. Cyril wrote a *Life* for seven pious individuals who were based in the Judean desert: Euthymius, Sabas, John the Hesychast, Cyriacus, Theodosius, Theognius, and Abraamius. All of these individuals lived either in the fifth or sixth centuries, and Cyril reports that he got the details about their lives either by way of his personal interaction with the individual in question, or from stories he collected in a tradition of oral history. Cyril is exceptional in locating important moments in his *Lives* within their historical context. As a result, John Binns has been able to ascribe specific dates to events within the *Lives*, adding

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15 Ibid, xlix-li, 2, 81.
considerably to their potential for historical analysis. The Lives offer an in-depth and detailed look at the Greek-speaking monastic milieu of the Judean desert. Significantly, each Life describes the familial and educational background of its subject. Their events fall precisely within the context I am investigating in this thesis, and serve as an excellent source.

Life of St. Daniel the Stylite

This hagiography was composed by an unnamed disciple of Daniel sometime after his death. The author states that the details of the Life were gathered from his own observations, as well as from talking to Daniel’s contemporaries. In 409 CE, Daniel was born in Mesopotamia. He undertook a journey to Jerusalem that was interrupted by an old man who told him to go instead to Constantinople. Daniel heeded this advice and eventually established himself as a stylite near Constantinople, where he died in 493 CE. This Life fits within my temporal context, but unfortunately does not explicitly concern the monastic milieu of Palestine. It is significant, however, that Daniel both knew Greek and initially saw the Judean desert as his monastic endpoint. These two details connect Daniel’s context to the one I am investigating and on this basis I have used this Life to highlight monastic practices of the fifth century.

17 Ibid, 7, 12.
18 For date of birth, see “St. Daniel the Stylite,” 6. For place of birth, 8. For Jerusalem and Constantinople, 12-13.
19 St. Daniel’s flawless operation within the Byzantine world attests to his Greek abilities. Further, his biographer makes a distinction when conveying an event where St. Daniel spoke in Syrian: “St. Daniel the Stylite,” 14.
Life of St. Theodore of Sykeon

This hagiography was composed by a monk from Theodore’s monastery, who identifies that his name is Eleusius, but that Theodore called him George. Eleusius/George composed the Life from his own observations and by gathering details from Theodore’s contemporaries. Sometime during the reign of Justinian, Theodore was born in the region of Galatia. He independently undertook ascetical exercises as a child to such an extent that he was ordained priest by the time he was eighteen. Theodore then travelled to Palestine, where he visited Jerusalem and the monasteries and holy men of the Judean Desert. He became a monk at the monastery of Choziba, before returning to his home village. There he devoted himself to ascetic practice, and eventually founded a monastery at the oratory of the martyr George. Theodore died in 613 CE, meaning his Life is an excellent source for the late sixth century. Although Theodore and his monastery were not located in Palestine, Theodore’s monastic experience and formation occurred from his journey to the Judean Desert. Indeed, Eleusius reports that Theodore took notes on the manner of living practiced by the most pious monks he encountered in the desert, so that he might imitate their example. As such, I have used details about monasticism from this Life to inform my investigation of the Judean monastic context.

21 Ibid, 184-185.
22 Ibid, 88.
23 Ibid, 101-102.
24 Ibid, 104.
26 Ibid, 117.
27 Ibid, 104.
This hagiography was composed sometime in the sixth century by an unnamed monk from the Judean Desert.\textsuperscript{28} This monk likely lived in a monastery that had originally been founded by Chariton.\textsuperscript{29} Although Chariton lived and operated during the fourth century, his Life contains significant insights for monastic literate practice in the sixth century.\textsuperscript{30} The author of the Life reports that no one before himself had written a Life for Chariton, and that he had thus gathered his information by collecting stories.\textsuperscript{31} The biographer presents a detailed account of Chariton’s life and his monastic work in the Judean Desert. With a separation of two centuries between the writer and his subject, however, the minute details about monasticism presented in this Life were likely inspired by contemporary sixth century practices. This idea is supported by the biographer’s habit of presenting sixth century information about subjects in the Life for the benefit of his contemporary readers. For example, when discussing a cave Chariton visited, the author identifies that it is now known as “Chariton’s hanging place.”\textsuperscript{32} The author’s concern with locating his story in its relevance for his readers suggests that, unless otherwise noted, the monastic practice he ascribes to Chariton was the same as his and his contemporaries in the sixth century. It is on the basis of this likelihood that I have used this Life as a source for details on Judean monasticism.

\textsuperscript{29} “Life of Chariton,” 393.
\textsuperscript{30} Ibid, 394.
\textsuperscript{31} Ibid, 419.
\textsuperscript{32} Ibid, 410-411.
**Hagiology**

Hagiology refers to literature that pertains to lives of saints and their miracles. This genre differs from hagiography in that it lacks a coherent narrative or focus. I have used one hagiological work for my research: the *Pratum Spirituale* of John Moschus. Moschus was born in the late sixth century and received his monastic formation at the monastery of Theodosius in the Judean Desert. His work consists of edifying and miraculous stories he collected during his travels throughout Palestine and Egypt from the late sixth century into the beginnings of the seventh century. While Moschus’ account provides a rich description of monastic practice throughout these regions, the legendary nature of his writing means caution is required when using it for historical interpretation. As such, I have followed Hatlie’s argument for the type of historical data that may be extracted from such legendary accounts: namely, the “basic ways and customs of monastic life described.” A close reading of Moschus’ text thus produces some significant evidence for exploring the degree of literacy-based education within monasteries of my context. In addition, this work provides excellent general insights for the practices and interconnectedness of the monastic world as it existed at the end of my temporal span.

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34 Flusin, 212.
36 Hatlie, 229.
37 Ibid, 14.
Monastic Rules

Monastic rules are a distinct genre of literature compiled by the leader of a monastery to provide a structure for monastic life. They are invaluable for reconstructing the world of a monastery. They take various forms: from formal rules, to sayings attributed to a monastic leader that contain instructions on the correct form of monastic practice. Monastic rules were composed for a specific monastic community and are therefore best used as evidence within their specific context. Unfortunately, only two sets of monastic rules for the context under investigation have survived: the Ascetic Discourses of Isaiah of Scetis, who lived in Gaza during the mid-fifth century, and the Discourses and Sayings of Dorotheus of Gaza, who lived in Gaza during the sixth century. The Typikon of Sabas for the 6th century monastery of Mar Saba also survives, but only from a twelfth century edition that suffers from later interpolation – thus making the work as a whole suspect. Although not from the provenance of my context, as noted above, I have also made use of the Rules of Pachomius.

The Ascetic Discourses of Isaiah of Scetis

Scholars accept that the Discourses of Isaiah were compiled in the mid-fifth century and applied to the context of Isaiah’s monastery in Gaza. This work was originally written in Greek, though it does not survive as a complete manuscript today, and Chryssavgis reconstructed

38 Hatlie, 18.
the text for his modern edition from multiple fragments of various languages.\textsuperscript{42} Scholars argue that Isaiah ascribed to the Monophysite doctrine, and point to his acquaintance with Peter the Iberian.\textsuperscript{43} Chryssavgis points out, however, that the \textit{Discourses} contain nothing that would have been considered theologically controversial.\textsuperscript{44} Isaiah is focused on providing his monks with rules for a proper monastic formation: offering guidance on all aspects of monastic life.\textsuperscript{45} A close reading of these \textit{Discourses} thus yields evidence of fifth century Gazan monastic literate activity, and evidence that these \textit{Discourses} continued to hold an important place in Gazan monasticism in the following century attests to the continuation of such practice.

\textit{The Discourses and Sayings of Dorotheus of Gaza}

Dorotheus of Gaza began his monastic formation in the sixth century at the monastery of Seridus, and may eventually have founded his own monastery.\textsuperscript{46} Although the \textit{Pratum Spirituale} makes reference to Dorotheus heading his own monastery, Eric Wheeler interprets this statement instead as Dorotheus heading the monastery of Seridus after the latter’s death.\textsuperscript{47} In either case, Dorotheus was an influential figure in sixth century Gazan monasticism, and his \textit{Discourses} are his monastic rules for the period. These \textit{Discourses} were originally compiled in Greek, and Wheeler composed his edition of Dorotheus’ work on the basis of the earliest available

\textsuperscript{42} For Greek as the original language, see: Chryssavgis and Penkett, 23. For the collection of fragments, 31-35.
\textsuperscript{43} Ibid, 24.
\textsuperscript{44} Ibid, 24.
\textsuperscript{45} Ibid, 35.
\textsuperscript{47} Wheeler, 65-67.
manuscript, which dates to the tenth century. This work falls directly into the context I am researching, and serves as an excellent source for Gazan monasticism in the mid-sixth century.

The Rules of Pachomius

Pachomius lived in the fourth century and founded a series of monasteries in Egypt. He is recognized as one of the early founders of monasticism, and his Rules are well-known for their influence on those eventually developed by St. Benedict. The Rules were likely originally composed in Sahidic, but had been translated into Greek by the beginning of the fifth century. They are divided into four series: of these, the first three survive today only in a Latin translation, while the last is available in Latin and fragments of Coptic. Although these Rules are not from my context, they offer an important look at the origins of the monastic movement. Significantly, they provide evidence for early monastic literary activity. I have thus used these Rules for comparative purposes when examining the monastic context of Palestine.

Letters

Correspondence is a rare source of information for the ancient world. The ephemeral nature of letters means that they are most often encountered in the field of papyrology. Further, Lincoln Blummel notes that studying correspondence is difficult because a high degree of

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48 Wheeler, 19.
50 Kardong, 62.
52 Ibid, 7.
implicit information exists between the writer and their addressee – which results in an ambiguous understanding of the text, where multiple interpretations are possible.\textsuperscript{53} I use only one source that falls into this genre: the \textit{Letters} of Barsanuphius and John.\textsuperscript{54} The \textit{Letters} constitute an immense corpus of primary material, consisting of around 850 letters, many of which follow the successive back and forth between sender and recipient. As such, the difficulties that Blummel identified for those studying ancient letters are, fortunately, largely negated. Barsanuphius and John were monastic hermits who were part of Abba Seridus’ monastic community near Gaza in the sixth century.\textsuperscript{55} The identity of the compiler and editor of their \textit{Letters} is unknown, but Chryssavgis suggests that it may have been Dorotheus.\textsuperscript{56} The \textit{Letters} take a question-answer format, where the question has been summarized by the unknown compiler, and the response by Barsanuphius or John is recorded in full. The \textit{Letters} were all originally written in Greek, and survive today in several manuscripts of various languages.\textsuperscript{57} The \textit{Letters} illustrate the world of Gazan monasticism in exceptional detail. Their correspondents come from all strata of society and all seek spiritual advice. Jennifer Hevelone-Harper uses this corpus to highlight the spiritual authority that was wielded by the two hermits.\textsuperscript{58} Chryssavgis points out that Barsanuphius and John are silent about their doctrinal beliefs, neither condemning nor exalting the Chalcedonian definition.\textsuperscript{59} Brouria Bitton-Ashkelony and Aryeh Kofsky propose a different view. They suggest that Barsanuphius and John have a Chalcedonian stance, but were actually “crypto-


\textsuperscript{55} Chryssavgis, “Introduction,” 5-7.

\textsuperscript{56} Ibid, 8.

\textsuperscript{57} Ibid, 15-17.


Monophysites.\textsuperscript{60} This claim, however, is speculative and unconvincing, a matter of semantics, and ultimately irrelevant. Even if true, Barsanuphius and John still retained “a Chalcedonian or neo-Chalcedonian veneer.”\textsuperscript{61} This veneer means that the two hermits would have been perceived as Chalcedonian, and thus for most historical intents and purposes were Chalcedonian. These Letters are an invaluable source for understanding the monastic context of sixth century Gaza, and I have used them accordingly.

**Legal Codes**

Legal codes provide excellent insight into societal functioning.\textsuperscript{62} I have made use of one legal code in this thesis: the *Corpus Juris Civilis* (*CJC*), which consists of the *Codex*, the *Digests* and *Pandects*, the *Institutes*, and the *Novellae*.\textsuperscript{63} The *CJC* was produced in the mid-sixth century at the behest of Emperor Justinian. Hatlie highlights the numerous treatises concerning monks and monasteries that are present in the *CJC*, identifying them as evidence for unprecedented imperial interest in the monastic movement.\textsuperscript{64} Hatlie equally identifies the main issue with using the *CJC* as a source for monasticism: namely, how to interpret the laws. They can be taken as evidence for that which Justinian would like to occur in the empire, but the extent to which they were actually implemented or followed within a local context is impossible to say.\textsuperscript{65}


\textsuperscript{61} Ibid, 222.

\textsuperscript{62} Hatlie, 18.

\textsuperscript{63} English translation available from: *The Civil Law: Including the Twelve Tables, the Institutes of Gaius, the Rules of Ulpian, the Opinions of Paulus, the Enactments of Justinian, and the Constitutions of Leo*, in 17 vols, trans. and ed. S.P. Scott (Cincinatti: Central Trust Co., 1932).

\textsuperscript{64} Hatlie, 45.

\textsuperscript{65} Ibid, 53.
Nevertheless, laws within the CJC concerning monasticism provide insight about imperial expectations, and testify to the high visibility of the movement within Late Antique society.

**Acts of Church Councils**

The acts of Church Councils are excellent sources for understanding church affairs for a historical period. They contain a record of the council’s proceedings and their resultant church canons: ecclesiastical rules that were to be followed by all members of the Church. Two ecumenical church councils of particular interest fall within the temporal period I am investigating: the Council of Chalcedon of 451 CE, and the Council of Constantinople of 553 CE. The Acts of these councils are the result of scribal transcription efforts during the council, aimed both at preserving the proceedings for future generations and as evidence in the event that the legitimacy of a council was called into question.\(^{66}\) Hatlie identifies that the church canons concerning monastic practice from this period provide excellent insight for understanding the monastic world and its relation to the Church.\(^{67}\) In addition to their use for understanding the monastic world, the acts of these two councils provide a rich look at the interactions that occurred between high-ranking members of the Church. I have analyzed these interactions in two endeavours. First, to identify the ecclesiastical individuals who were present, especially those of Palestinian monastic origin. In this manner I have identified the prominent role monks came to hold within the structure of the Church. Second, these interactions testify to a common ecclesiastical culture that was shared by all those who were present. Discussions at council are


\(^{67}\) Hatlie, 18.
premised on a shared understanding, and appeals to authority directed at Scripture and other Christian works reveals the importance of a familiarity with such texts. I have presented these arguments later, and restrict my discussion here to an overview of these two sources.

The Acts of the Council of Chalcedon

These Acts are one of the longest surviving texts from the ancient world, making the council one of the best-documented events in early church history.68 This council took place in 451 CE, largely to replace the unpopular “Robber Council” of 449 CE: indeed, the council of Chalcedon found this earlier council to be lawless.69 The council of Chalcedon focused primarily on issues of doctrine, and the understanding of Orthodox Christianity developed here became known as the Chalcedonian creed.70 The role of monasteries within the Church structure was also formally determined as described in the canons of this council.71 The Acts of this council were originally written in Greek, and survive today in both Greek and Latin manuscripts, though Michael Gaddis opines that the surviving Latin text represents the original Greek better than does the extant Greek text.72 I have not consulted the original text however, trusting Price and Gaddis’ edition to suffice.

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70 Ibid., 46-47.
71 Ibid., 47-48.
72 Ibid., x.
The Acts of the Council of Constantinople of 553

These Acts are from a council that has received much condemnation by modern commentators.\(^{73}\) The council took place in 553 CE, and was mainly concerned with resolving the “Three Chapters” controversy: that is, to decide the Orthodoxy of the person and writings of Theodore of Mopsuestia, Theodoret of Cyrrhus, and Ibas of Edessa.\(^{74}\) The council had the power to reconcile the beliefs of the Monophysites and Chalcedonians, a goal that was not attained.\(^{75}\) The Acts were originally written in Greek, but survive today only in a Latin translation.\(^{76}\) It is from this text that Richard Price produced his critical modern translation, upon which I have relied for analyzing this council.

Archaeology/Papyri

Archaeology provides crucial evidence for historical investigations through the study of physical remains. I have used archaeological evidence from my context to supplement my presentation of a “thick description.” The archaeological sources I have used fall into three main categories: that from the context of the Judean desert, that from the context of Gaza, and papyri remains from Egypt. Archaeology faces limitations similar to those faced when analyzing letters: the context of the remains is difficult to determine, and competing theses are possible. In addition, the dating of archaeological sites can be an issue, although ceramic analysis, coins, and inscriptions all allow an excavator to date a site with a degree of certainty. My use of

\(^{75}\) Ibid, vii.
\(^{76}\) Ibid, 104.
archaeological and material evidence in conjunction with textual sources offsets many of the archaeological limitations, and allows the presentation of a more complete picture.

Archaeology of the Judean Desert

Yizhar Hirschfeld presents an excellent survey of the archaeological remains of the Judean desert for my context. His work is thorough, drawing on both a multitude of archaeological reports and the relevant textual resources I have presented above in order to present a detailed description of the Judean desert monasteries of the fourth-sixth centuries. Hirschfeld’s work understandably focuses on the physical aspects of the Judean monasteries: their architecture, architectural components both sacred and secular, and their position in the desert in relation to each other. He also attempts to reconstruct details of the daily life of the monks on the basis of the material evidence. While the archaeology of these monasteries does not offer much information about the literary pursuits that were occurring within them, it does help significantly in reconstructing the economic and physical worlds their monks inhabited. Indeed, the maps Hirschfeld has produced showing the relative positioning of the Judean monasteries with each other have been especially useful in contextualizing information from the textual sources.

77 Hirschfeld, Judean Desert Monasteries.
Archaeology of Gaza

Hirschfeld has also conducted an excellent survey of the archaeological remains of the Gazan monasteries from my period.\textsuperscript{78} Although this survey is far briefer than that of the Judean Desert, Hirschfeld uses the same methodology, drawing on archaeological reports and textual sources to describe the Gazan monastic world of the Byzantine period. The resulting overview is of great use for the present study, notable once more for providing a map that helps locate the monasteries and their relation to each other.

Papyri of Egypt

Papyrus remains from Egypt are abundant and offer an intimate look at the literate strata of society. Although these papyri are not from my context, I have sometimes referred to a relevant papyrus for comparative purposes. Some of the papyri I reference come from Raffaella Cribiore, who has identified multiple papyrus remains as school texts and exercises.\textsuperscript{79} I also make use of the abundant source of papyri that has survived in the city of Oxyrhynchus.\textsuperscript{80} While this site is today of little significance, it was large enough in Late Antiquity. Indeed, the fact that Peter the Iberian, a prominent fifth century theologian, visited it while he was in Egypt testifies to its relative importance.\textsuperscript{81}

\textsuperscript{79} Cribiore, Writing, Teachers, and Students.
\textsuperscript{80} While the Oxyrhynchus papyri have been published in a multitude of monographs, a survey of its papyri is offered from: A.K. Bowman et al. (ed.), Oxyrhynchus: A City and its Texts (London: Egypt Exploration Society, 2007).
Summary of Primary Sources

In tackling this research, I have had to draw on a variety of primary sources. As I examine in greater detail later, fifth-sixth century monasticism in Palestine is concentrated in two distinctive spheres: around Gaza, and in the Judean Desert. I summarize below which sources apply to each context. In addition, a doctrinal tension existed in this period between Monophysites and Chalcedonians. As I argue below, however, Palestinian monasticism need not be investigated in the separate contexts of Monophysite and Chalcedonian. While individual monks might have had differing doctrinal opinions, their theological stance did not alter the form of monasticism they practiced. The organization of my sources may thus be summarized as follows.

My evidence for the region of Gaza comes from the *Discourses* of Isaiah, the *Letters* of Barsanuphius and John, and the *Discourses* of Dorotheus. In addition, Hirschfeld’s Gazan archaeological survey is helpful. My examination of this region is informed by the *Rules* of Pachomius and papyri evidence from Egypt, since the Gazan context was linked with Egypt. My evidence for the Judean Desert comes from the *Lives* of Cyril, Daniel, Theodore, and Chariton, as well as the *Pratum Spirituale* of John Moschus. My research in this sphere is also informed by Hirschfeld’s archaeological survey of the Judean region. Finally, my evidence for Christian culture and general perceptions of monasticism in this period comes from the *Acts* of the Council of Chalcedon and the Council of Constantinople of 553, as well as Justinian’s legal code.

Having presented in brief the content and limitations of my sources, as well as how I have made use of them, I turn now to my historiography.
Chapter Three: Historiography

As discussed above, a neglected field of study within the history of education is that which addresses the Byzantine world – specifically during the Late Antique period. Perhaps the best way to highlight this neglect is to consider the seminal work by Henri Marrou: *Histoire de l’éducation dans l’Antiquité*.¹ As Yun Lee Too points out, Marrou’s work was considered the authority for the history of ancient education in the second half of the 20th century, as evidenced by its many editions and translation into multiple languages.² Marrou offers chapters on the education available within the classical Greco-Roman world and claims that this classical education continued unabated into the Byzantine period.³ He identifies the rise of Christianity as significant, but claims that a “Christian education” was available by only two means: from a child’s parents within their household, or through Church-run catechumenal schools.⁴ Marrou claims that Christianity did not develop its own centers of education in this early period, and draws on the writings of the Church fathers to argue that Christians instead struggled with, and ultimately accepted, the existing classical school system.⁵

Marrou’s assertion that a “Christian education” was never developed in the early Christian period is challenged by a large body of recent scholarship that proposes that such an education occurred in the monastery. Although Marrou identifies the existence of what he terms the “monastic school,” he categorizes it as a place that remained “peculiar to its own

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³ Marrou, 340.
⁴ Ibid. 314-315.
⁵ Ibid, 315-323.
environment and had little outside influence.”6 Significantly, he invokes the discourse that early monasticism idealized the illiterate and unlearned to support the thesis that the “monastic school” never concerned itself with education.7 These claims set up monasteries in opposition to education and the classical school system, thereby precluding the possibility that they be included in discussions about ancient education. Marrou’s dismissal of the monastery is most apparent in his concluding remark on the subject, worth quoting here in full:

…since the monasteries were part of a society which on the whole always maintained a high standard of education, they were not obliged to adopt an educational role for which they had never been designed. Instead of becoming study centres they endeavoured to remain homes of asceticism; instead of trying to influence the world, they tried to get right away from it.8

Aside from seeing monasteries’ absence from the educational discussion as a fait accompli, Marrou’s remark also perpetuates other significant assumptions that raise many questions. To which society is Marrou referring? What does Marrou mean by a “high standard” of education? What were monasteries designed for? What happened in “homes of asceticism”? What does “influencing the world” entail? It is precisely assumptions such as these, consistent throughout Marrou’s work, which are revisited by the essays in Lee Too’s recent anthology.9 Only that by Sara Rappe, however, tackles the question of a Christian education.10 Rappe’s treatment of this subject improves on Marrou’s, both in drawing on a greater variety of sources and in offering a more nuanced presentation of the conflict and compromise between the cultural worlds of paganism and Christianity. As Lillian Larsen points out, however, Rappe’s treatment

6 Marrou, 330.
7 Ibid, 330.
8 Ibid, 333.
9 Too, 16.
of this topic is unable to escape Marrou’s influence and echoes him in seeing monasteries as the bailiwick of the uneducated ascetic.\textsuperscript{11} Indeed, both Rappe and Marrou have fallen into a methodological trap that, as will become apparent throughout my historiography, is all too common for studies addressing the education of the ancient world.

Rappe and Marrou begin by describing the standard of education for the classical world, what they refer to as \textit{paideia}. They identify \textit{paideia} as inextricably linked with classical culture, and proceed to identify the emergence of Christianity as creating a new and distinct Christian culture. However, instead of investigating this Christian culture and a possible Christian education within its own context, Rappe and Marrou draw upon the literary works of individuals in self-conflict, who identify as culturally both pagan and Christian.\textsuperscript{12} It is hardly surprising then that Rappe and Marrou both come to the conclusion that Christians in Late Antiquity simply adopted the \textit{paideia} system that they found already in place: their selection bias predetermined the outcome. This source bias is understandable for a topic from Late Antiquity, where source material is not abundant. It does, however, result in the narrow view that a distinctly Christian education was never developed. As I present next, research exists within the fields of history, classical studies, and religious studies that inspires a new way of approaching the existence of a Christian education in Late Antiquity, and points to the monastery as its locale.

\textsuperscript{11} Rappe, 421-423; Larsen, “Learning a New Alphabet,” 62.
\textsuperscript{12} Both Rappe and Marrou draw extensively from the writings of Christians who were products of the \textit{paideia} system. Rappe makes reference to Augustine, Basil of Caesarea, Clement of Alexandria, Damascius, Evagrius Ponticus, Gregory of Nyssa, Origen, Tertullian: Rappe, 430-431. Marrou references many of the same: Basil of Caesarea, Clement of Alexandria, Gregory of Nyssa, Gregory Nazianzus, John Chrysostom, Theodore of Mopsuestia. The entries for all of these individuals in the \textit{Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium} highlights their \textit{paideia}. See: Alexander Kazhdan et al. (ed), \textit{The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium} (Oxford University Press, 1991). The two exceptions are Evagrius and Tertullain, neither of who have an entry, but Rappe highlights their \textit{paideia}: Rappe, 410, 422.
While a distinct Late Antique Christian education is a non-topic within the field of history of education, it has received better coverage in the fields of history, classical studies, and religious studies. Research from these fields informs the current study both for its conclusions about a Christian education, and its research approach. I have classified the genre of research that I will review into three main categories. In the interest of completeness, I have first identified the traditional scholarship that echoes Marrou and sees Christians as adopting the *paideia* system. I have then looked at the research approach that investigates ephemeral writings, often from archaeology, as a means of researching education. Finally, I have reviewed the scholarship that presents the monastery as the locale for a distinct Christian education. This scholarship falls into two main trends: that which studies Christian ascetic practice and notes its educational possibilities, and that from a more recent scholarly interest that presents the monastery as an educational institution that adapted its structure and educational format from classical *paideia*. My presentation below of these categories identifies the limits of the extant research on Christian and monastic education, and demonstrates how my thesis makes a significant and novel contribution to the field. In the interest of brevity, I have made reference to only a few representative publications in each section.

Research that echoes Marrou’s claims abounds within non-history of education publications. The popularity of this view is not surprising, as it represents what may be termed as the traditional approach to education within the study of antiquity. The canonization of this approach may be attributed in large part to the arguments presented by the eminent classicist Werner Jaeger in his influential *Early Christianity and Greek Paideia*. Jaeger opines that the success of early Christianity was built upon the existing and powerful Greek *paideia* system,

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identifying Greek culture and the Christian religion as sharing common ideals. In doing so, he creates the appealing idea that Christian education was in fact Greek *paideia*, though perhaps with some Christianizing elements. Indeed, Jaeger supports his thesis with reference to early Christian writers who proposed this exact amalgamation: Clement of Alexandria, Origen, and the Cappadocian Fathers (Basil the Great, Gregory Nazianzus, and Gregory of Nyssa). Yet as with the sources Rappe and Marrou used, Jaeger’s too offer a biased view that should not be generalized for the whole period of early Christianity. Nevertheless, the idea that a Christianized Greek *paideia* served instead of a distinct Christian education has perpetuated insidiously throughout the literature. For example, in a recent publication, Ilinca Tanaseanu-Döbler and Marvin Döbler present this view as common knowledge when they write: “As there were no specific Christian schools, developing strategies for the correct appropriation of classical culture became part of a Christian education, alongside familial religious education or the more technical and institutionalised catechumenate.” Although they neglect to provide a citation, this idea is clearly of the Marrou/Jaeger school of thought and emphasizes how pervasive it is in the study of Late Antique education.

Scholarship that studies ancient education using ephemeral writings has only manifested within the last two decades. This approach was first undertaken by Raffaella Cribiore, who focuses on documentary sources from Egypt. The novelty of Cribiore’s approach is noted by Ronald Hock, who writes that she “has changed our view of ancient education by putting less emphasis on the literary accounts used by previous scholars and focusing instead on the papyri,

14 Jaeger, 39.
15 Clement, Origen, Basil, Gregory Nazianzus, and Gregory of Nyssa were Christian, yet all were also the product of the *paideia* system. See: p. 39, fn. 12, above.
wooden tablets and ostraca – now over 400 – from the sands of Egypt that document actual classroom activities.”

Cribiore’s focus on the ephemeral has yielded greater understanding about education as it took place on the everyday micro level. In her masterful *Writing, Teachers, and Students in Graeco-Roman Egypt*, Cribiore sketches out the details of education in Antiquity, identifying teachers, students, school exercises, and the basic process of becoming literate. She expands on this work in *Gymnastics of the Mind*, additionally describing the higher levels of ancient education and offering an overall analysis of the system and its impact on society.

Cribiore mentions primary documents that are Christian in provenance throughout both her works, though she opts not to investigate Christian education. Indeed, although papyri of Christian provenance have been identified and used for religious studies, no project of Cribiore’s scale has been attempted for Christian education.

Chrysi Kotsifou and Lincoln Blumell provide the closest exceptions to this dearth in scholarship. Kotsifou examines the possibility of book production within the monastic communities of Byzantine Egypt, drawing largely on papyrological evidence. She identifies that such books would have been fundamental in “the education and practice of both clerics and monks.” Equally, Blumell’s lengthy study of papyri...
letters of Christian provenance from Oxyrhynchus lead him to speculate occasionally about their authors’ level and source of education. Significantly, he posits that a Christian education of some kind may have been available from the many monasteries surrounding Oxyrhynchus. Although a thorough study of material written remains has yet to be used to study a Christian education in Late Antiquity, Cribiore has demonstrated the excellence of such an approach.

Much of the scholarship that seeks to investigate a distinct Christian education in Late Antiquity looks to the monastery as a likely locale. This tendency is not surprising, considering that Byzantine monasteries of later periods are well-represented as centers of Christian education. This scholarly interest may be split into two distinct approaches: those that focus on the ascetic nature of early monasticism and view asceticism as a program of lived education, and those that link early monasteries to classical paideia, arguing that monasteries offered a Christian education that had appropriated the structure and format of the classical paideia system. As I present below, while these two trends are of enormous import for better understanding Late Antique Christian education, they both fail to address the whole educational picture.

While describing the Late Antique Christian ascetic movement, several scholars have identified asceticism as educational. While these assertions are often not the main thrust of the work, such scholarly classification lends credence to looking at asceticism as a form of distinct Christian education. One of the earliest and most influential instances of this presentation is apparent in Peter Brown’s revolutionary essay “The Rise and Function of the Holy Man in Late

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24 See, for example: Blummel, 15, 171, 181, esp. 187-201.
Brown traces the emergence of the Christian holy man, the desert ascetic who made a place for himself by serving in society as a divinely ordained intermediary. He alludes in passing to the educational role played by the holy man, referring to the idea of Christ as the preeminent teacher. Jean-Claude Guy elaborates on this idea, identifying desert asceticism as “an altogether original method of spiritual education.” In *The Making of Late Antiquity*, Brown associates asceticism with the development of early Christian values. He defines this process as “producing men shorn of the complexities of their earthly identity,” creating a society “loyal to a high-pitched class of ‘friends of God’.” Brown here is discussing a form of education, of social formation with the idea of Christian asceticism at its core. As such, although he never frames this discussion as one about education, Brown presents the idea that Christian ascetics served an educational function within Late Antiquity. Indeed, the idea of asceticism as educational is most explicitly voiced by Philip Rousseau, who draws inspiration in part from Brown. Rousseau presents Christian asceticism as a new story in Late Antique education, one with a “new kind of teacher and a new kind of paideia.” He writes of a “new ‘formative programme’, as put into effect by ascetics” and calls for scholars to investigate this “ascetic programme of wisdom, dialogue, and moral effort.” Brouria Bitton-Ashkelony and Aryeh Kofsky take on this call in their monograph *The Monastic School of Gaza*, which presents the monastic community of Late Antique Gaza as an educational milieu. Their work highlights the ascetic teaching available in

32 Ibid, 58.
33 Ibid, 59.

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Gaza, and traces the development of a monastic curriculum of moral formation. This monastic education is described as the result of “a rare chain of charismatic pedagogues who, although themselves educated, advocated practical devotion rather than learning and theological discourse.” While this scholarship emphasizes the educational role of ascetic practice and highlights that a distinctly Christian education occurred within the monastery, it neglects aspects of the educational picture. The monastery, as illustrated by Bitton-Ashkelony and Kofsky’s quote above, is presented as solely devoted to spiritual formation through a lived curriculum. Such a treatment precludes investigating the monastery for other forms of education, and invokes Marrou’s image, as presented above, of the monastery as the isolated bailiwick of the unlettered. Thus, while the monastery certainly was concerned with spiritual formation, the other forms of education it may have offered still require addressing.

Addressing the non-spiritual forms of education that occurred in Late Antique monasteries is precisely what another trend in the field has focused on. This trend only manifested in the last several years, with the formation of a scholarly consortium called Early Monasticism and Classical Paideia (MOPAI), based out of Lund University in Sweden. MOPAI proposes that early eastern monasticism had strong ties to pagan school traditions, and that these monasteries thus served to preserve classical culture, helped in developing a Christian culture, and were centers of Christian education. As project leader Samuel Rubenson writes in his article “Monasticism and the Philosophical Heritage,” “a special emphasis has to be put on the role of traditional philosophical schools in shaping monastic ideals and teachings.”

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35 Bitton-Ashkelony and Kofsky, Monastic School, 225.
37 See: “Early Monasticism and Classical Paideia.”
end, MOPAI elaborated an ambitious research plan in 2009, and has a summative publication due soon.\textsuperscript{39} Research from MOPAI has resulted in an impressive amount of publications over the past few years.\textsuperscript{40} These have focused primarily on the use of early Christian writings, notably the \textit{Apophthegmata Patrum (AP)}, as elementary educational texts. Lillian Larsen in particular tackles this idea, arguing convincingly that the AP and other early Christian stories were used as a Christian version of \textit{progymnasmata}, or “elementary exercises.”\textsuperscript{41} Per Rønnegård supports Larsen’s thesis in his investigation of the use of Scripture in the AP, concluding that it was used as a pedagogical aid to lend the AP both authority and vivid imagery.\textsuperscript{42} Larsen’s identification of the AP as a Christian form of the classical \textit{progymnasmata} highlights MOPAI’s tendency to identify aspects of monastic education as they parallel with their classical \textit{paideia} counterparts.\textsuperscript{43} While providing hitherto unknown revelations about the functioning of Late Antique monastic education, MOPAI’s focus on the monastic appropriation of \textit{paideia} norms results in a general treatment of the topic that is not grounded in any particular context. In addition, the group neglects to engage with one of their enunciated preliminary goals: the way monastic education

\textsuperscript{39} The research plan was formerly available on the MOPAI website at http://mopai.lu.se/. The summative publication: \textit{Rethinking Monastic Education}, ed. Samuel Rubenson and Lillian Larsen, submitted 2016.


\textsuperscript{41} Larsen, “Learning a New Alphabêt,” 69.

\textsuperscript{42} Per Rønnegård, \textit{Threads and Images: The Use of Scripture in the Apophthegmata Patrum} (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2010), 184.

\textsuperscript{43} This trend is apparent in the titles of their work: see this page, fn. 40, above.
helped develop a Late Antique Christian culture. As such, although MOPAI’s work is revolutionary and exceptional, it does not engage with all aspects of a monastic education.

Based on what I have presented above, it is apparent that there are many strands of scholarship to consider when investigating education in the Late Antique context. The field of history of education has neglected in particular to investigate the existence of a Late Antique Christian education. Other scholarly fields have argued for this existence, locating a Christian education within the Late Antique monastery. As noted above, however, the current discourse on this topic still contains gaps in knowledge, significantly on the way monastic education impacted the development of a Christian culture. My thesis seeks to investigate this topic thoroughly by drawing together the scholarly approaches and foci of research presented above. I have utilized and built on the work done by MOPAI by focusing on the non-spiritual education that was offered in the monastery. In this endeavour, I have opted to focus on a definable and concrete form of education: namely, literacy-based education. I have heeded Cribiore’s example and guidelines for studying literacy, namely that “concentrating on a specific society yields more secure results than attempting to create grand theories about writing.”44 As such, I have focused my research on the specific society to be found in the monastic milieux of Palestine; chosen for its relative abundance of source material and monastic importance as the location of Jerusalem. Although Larsen argues that “whether’ the earliest monks engaged in literate pursuits is more usefully reframed as ‘how’ and ‘to what degree’,” I have been unable to find any definitive study addressing the literate capabilities of Palestinian monasteries. As such, my first task will be to establish the existence of literacy in these monasteries before proceeding to investigate their

44 Cribiore, Writing, Teachers, and Students, 3.
My next task will be to explore the impact this monastic education had on the creation and functioning of a Christian culture. I argue that such a culture emerged and expanded widely across the Byzantine Empire during the period from the fifth-sixth centuries. I further argue that within my period there emerged a Christian elite, located primarily within the institution of the Church. This elite held the Christian culture as central to their identity and power, and possessing expert knowledge of this culture – being able to speak its language – thus gave an individual access to the elite. I posit that a monastic education provided monks with such an expert knowledge of Christian culture, with two end results: monks came to be regarded as specialists, constituting a new respected “wise” class in society, and some monks used their education as a means of joining and perpetuating the Church elite.

To argue for the existence of a monastic education, however, necessitates a thorough presentation of the context of the Late Antique world. In an effort for “thick description,” I first present a general picture of the Late Antique world. Next, I detail the rise of Christianity, along with that of the Church. Finally, I describe the rise of the monastic movement, focusing specifically on its history in Palestine.

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Part Two: A Thick Description

Chapter Four: Historical Context

General Context

My presentation here aims to provide a general overview of some basic aspects of the Late Antique world as pertinent to this thesis. Since I am looking at monasteries in the fifth-sixth centuries in Palestine, I have presented only that which impacted this milieu. As mentioned above, the temporal context of Late Antiquity spans the period from the second-eighth centuries CE. The beginning of this period flows largely seamlessly from the one that preceded it: the time of the High Roman Empire. To understand my Late Antique context therefore requires an understanding of its inheritance and origins.¹ My description of Late Antiquity thus illustrates both its inheritance and development in the realms of geopolitical history and linguistics, and economy and society. Throughout this discussion are hints as to the culture of Late Antiquity: a topic I take up independently later on. Further, I have omitted here a discussion of religion, as I present a detailed history of the rise of Christianity and its institutions below. A central consideration when describing a society stems from the question of positionality: namely, from whose perspective is the description a reality.² While this question is certainly crucial for a nuanced understanding, in the interest of establishing a baseline of knowledge, I have proceeded with the dominant scholarly interpretations of this period.

¹ Inglebert, 7.
² For Late Antiquity, see Hervé Inglebert’s concerns and identification that the primary sources favour a pro-Roman, elite perspective: Inglebert, 7.
**Geopolitical History and Linguistics**

The geopolitical world of the high Roman Empire was based on a thematic understanding of the known world as first conceptualized by Greek geographers in the fourth century BCE. This understanding saw the world as composed of Europe, Asia, and Africa, within which was a central civilized area represented by cities and their hinterlands, ruled absolutely by the Roman Empire. This civilized zone was seen by its inhabitants in contrast to the surrounding barbaric areas, occupied by nomads and rude villages. Beyond the known world lay the unknown, populated by mythical peoples.³ By the beginning of Late Antiquity, this world had a broad geographical reach, which in Barbara Rosenwein’s words “wrapped around the Mediterranean Sea like a scarf,” and consisted in the west of modern-day Northern Africa, Spain, England, Wales, France, Belgium, the areas south of the Danube river, the Balkans, and Greece, and in the east of Turkey, Syria, Lebanon, Israel, and Egypt.⁴ These regions made up what Hervé Inglebert has classified as four “zones of information circulation.” Each of these possessed a regional culture and world view that, while informed by the dominant Roman way and still in contact with the rest of the Empire, was insular and focused on internal reiteration and circulation. Inglebert identifies these regions as: (1) the Roman West, where the Latin language and Roman culture were strongest; (2) the Roman East, where the Greek language and Greek culture were strongest; (3) the Near East, where Aramaic and other biblical languages were the focus of a Judean-based culture; and (4) the Persian area, where the Persian language and the Zoroastrian

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³ Inglebert, 7-8.
religion dominated. The Roman Empire reigned over the whole known world, and its tradition of unrelenting military conquests and cultural imposition to do so was well known and respected.

This totalizing narrative changed throughout the course of the Late Antique period. In the late third century, the Empire was attacked along multiple fronts: the Germanic tribes which included the Goths, Franks, and Alamanni surged into the west, while a revived Persian Empire calling itself the Sasanian Empire pushed into the east. In response to the multiple fronts and the unmanageably large geographical scope of the Empire, and in response to a variety of other factors, the emperor Diocletian (284-304) re-configured the ruling system, which included the appointment of a co-emperor to rule the eastern half of the Empire. This decision marks the beginning of the history of the Empire as one consisting of two distinct spheres of development. Indeed, the history of the Byzantine Empire, the eastern half of the Roman Empire, is considered as starting soon thereafter in 324 CE, when Emperor Constantine made Constantinople the capital of the empire in the east. As I have treated in fuller detail below, Constantine’s reign also saw the legalization and promotion of Christianity: a change that profoundly altered Late Antique society, culture, and religion. While Christianity had massive ramifications in the domestic sphere, the geopolitical situation continued to morph in the fourth century. The Sasanians took large parts of the eastern empire, while barbarians moved even further into the western territories. The sack of Rome in 410 CE foretold the eventual “fall” of the western

5 Inglebert, 8.
6 Ibid, 8-9.
7 Ibid, 9.
9 Jefferys, Haldon, and Cormack, 3.
10 Inglebert, 9.
empire, and along with the loss of large parts of Africa in the fifth century, shook the long-held
idea of Roman supremacy.\textsuperscript{11} The Byzantine Empire in the east, however, saw itself as the
surviving continuation of the Roman Empire, and Byzantine emperors throughout history sought
to reclaim former Roman territory.\textsuperscript{12}

The above geopolitical understanding is that which would have been held in Palestine
from the fifth-sixth centuries. Palestine was a part of the empire, formerly controlled from Rome,
but now governed from Constantinople. It was part of what Inglebert identified as the Near-East
“zone of information circulation.” While it identified with the empire, it also possessed a rich
local identity, premised on an ancient Judean heritage. The Roman thematic conception of the
world as civilization surrounded by barbarity was starkly apparent in Palestine. The cities of
Caesarea Maritima, Jerusalem, Scythopolis, Neapolis, and Gaza were models of Roman
development, and featured hallmarks of civilization such as aqueducts. In the surrounding deserts
lived nomadic Bedouin and Arab villagers.\textsuperscript{13} The local languages of Syriac and Aramaic were
spoken, though Greek and Latin were the languages of administration.\textsuperscript{14} The popularization of
Christianity, however, meant too a growth in the Greek language, as it was the language of the
Gospels.\textsuperscript{15} While Palestine was largely a hinterland in the Roman period, its prominence and

\textsuperscript{11} Inglebert, 9-10.
\textsuperscript{12} Ibid, 10. This desire is apparent through the military campaigns undertaken by the emperors. See the surveys
Elizabeth Jeffreys, John Haldon, and Robin Cormack (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 249-263;
\textsuperscript{13} Holm, “Palestine.”
\textsuperscript{14} Wood offers that Greek was the language of administration: Philip Wood, “Syriac and the ‘Syrians’,” in \textit{The
Oxford Handbook of Late Antiquity}, ed. Scott Fitzgerald Johnson (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 170-
194, 173. Latin was still definitively used by the empire, however, as evidenced by its Latin law corpuses, see: \textit{The
Theodosian Code and Novels: And the Sirmondian Constitutions}, trans. and ed. Clyde Pharr (Princeton: Princeton
University Press, 1952); \textit{Civil Law}.
\textsuperscript{15} Wood, 173.
influence grew with Christianity and by the fifth-sixth centuries it came to occupy a central space thanks to its biblical heritage.

**Economy and Society**

The economy of Late Antiquity remained much the same as that of the Roman Empire. Simply described, the economy was agrarian based, where an urban elite was supported by the agricultural surplus of a land-working peasant class. The peasantry lived at a subsistence level and their economic well-being was tied to the harvest: hunger and poverty were the norm. In the Roman east, this simple economic framework remained, though the dichotomist separation between elite and peasant had more nuance. As Jairus Banaji describes, this economy was “more complex and ramified, with a stronger urban legacy, a large urban middle class, and a substantial layer of commercial capital… relations between business and state, and between the aristocracy and business, were altogether more involved.” The cities of the east were production and merchant hubs, and their trade activities crisscrossed the eastern Mediterranean. The city was above all the home of the wealthy, where, as emphasized by scholars, civic values based on *paideia* thrived. As mentioned above, cities were the center of civilization, and contained all the hallmarks of a successful classical world. Within the city, as was the case across all walks of society, family and kinship ties were of central importance. Patron-client relationships were

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17 Esler, 13.
19 Ibid, 608-609.
20 Inglebert, 13.
21 Esler, 16.
also of great importance. Briefly defined, patronage was an established relationship in Late Antiquity between two individuals, one of greater wealth and power than the other.\textsuperscript{22} The two voluntarily entered the relationship for mutual advantage; for example, a wealthy patron might financially support multiple individuals in return for their support in electing him to office.\textsuperscript{23} The Late Antique city was the bastion of the wealthy and influential, and in a Christianizing world, one where the greatest conflicts would occur.

The other aspect of the economic and social world of Late Antiquity was found in the countryside. Rural settlement in the Roman east came in the form of villages.\textsuperscript{24} The basic economic and social unit here was the family household. Cooperation between households of a village was an important social norm, and Cam Grey argues that there was “a keen awareness of the advantages and possibilities of marriage alliances, kinship relations, and friendship as strategies for managing economic risk or mitigating a subsistence crisis.\textsuperscript{25} Grey also highlights the tensions that arose in such communities, where households and their neighbours competed for the same resources.\textsuperscript{26} In such an environment, reciprocity was the general rule. This reciprocity is apparent in the patron-client relationships that occurred here just as they did in the city. In Late Antiquity, wealthy urban patrons, typically from the city, were known to support entire villages.\textsuperscript{27} Grey’s description of rural life vividly captures this reality, and is worth quoting in full:

… rural life revolved around the village, hamlet, or farmstead a peasant lived in or near. Travel to a nearby town or city was an occasional, if not particularly unusual event,

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{23} Ibid, 641.
\item \textsuperscript{24} Ibid, 643.
\item \textsuperscript{25} Ibid, 637.
\item \textsuperscript{26} Ibid, 638.
\item \textsuperscript{27} Ibid, 641-642.
\end{itemize}
motivated by the need for staples the household could not produce, the pursuit of a luxury item, or the desire to sell produce or handiwork at market. This was a world of pre-dominantly first-person relationships, of dispute settlements at a local level. It was characterized by local social alliances, with both fellow villagers and kin, and a variety of more powerful individuals with whom they came into contact.28

In fifth-sixth century Palestine, the economic and social norms reflected those of the broader Late Antique context. Chris Wickham examines a variety of evidence and concludes that the peasant society of Palestine was largely village-based.29 Indeed, extensive rural activity would have been necessary to support the busy trade cities of Palestine, which seethed with business activity.30 Scholars have noted a particular increase in prosperity during this period, reflected in the archaeological evidence of a population increase.31 When speaking of Palestine in the fifth-sixth centuries, it is clear that it developed from a typical Late Antique economic and social context. These basic economic and social structures remained the same, and it is in this environment that Christianity grew. This context is important for understanding the development of Christian institutions, especially the monastery.

The Early Christian Context

While I have offered a brief geopolitical history of Late Antiquity, detailing the rise of Christianity in the Late Antique Byzantine world provides the best lens through which to understand the historical context of my thesis. Indeed, the very conception of the Late Antique

28 Grey, 643-644.
29 Chris Wickham, Framing the Early Middle Ages: Europe and the Mediterranean 400-800 (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 454.
30 Banaji, 609.
31 Holm, “Palestine”; Wickham, 454-456.
world is premised largely on its new religious heritage. Christianity impacted many aspects of life, changing political, cultural, and religious norms. The extent of such change, however, is difficult to gauge. The history I offer below is one of pagan-Christian contention and negotiation, as Christianity gradually came to be the official religion of the empire. The sources available for this early Christian history are rife with bias and often offer the perspective of the elite. As such, it must be recognized that this is a history of early Christianity and not the history of early Christianity.

Even my framing of this period as one of pagan-Christian struggle is problematic and represents only one lens through which this history may be viewed. I have chosen to present this history in this way because, as I presented above, historians of education have consistently seen a continuity between pagan education and the education practiced in a Christian world, without taking into account the degree to which the world had been Christianized. As such, my dichotomist presentation highlights the stages of change that Christianity brought to the empire, and specifically focuses on how the development of a distinct Christian education fits naturally into this narrative. I have written my early history of Christianity by drawing primarily on Routledge’s Early Christian World. As I am detailing the rise of Christianity for contextual understanding of my thesis topic (extending temporally from the fifth-sixth centuries), I describe Christian history only until the end of the sixth century. While scholars present this early period in their own ways, I have opted for my own periodization, which consists of three eras: Christian Persecution, Christian-Pagan Negotiation, and True Christianization.

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32 Inglebert, 5.
33 Averil Cameron reminds us of the many histories written that detail the rise of Christianity: Averil Cameron, Christianity and the Rhetoric of Empire: The Development of Christian Discourse (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 1.
Christian Persecution (second century-313 CE)

Much of my presentation on this period is informed by Jeffrey Siker’s excellent article for this early period in The Early Christian World.\textsuperscript{35} My reliance on Siker stems from a dearth of scholarship that focuses on this period: as he explains, scholars tend to focus on Christianity before or after the second and third centuries.\textsuperscript{36} As the Roman Empire can only be considered divided into east and west when Emperor Constantine established Constantinople as his eastern capital in 324 CE, I have looked at the rise of Christianity in this period across the entirety of the Roman Empire.\textsuperscript{37} While the events I highlight occurred in disparate areas throughout the empire, I argue that they would have generated an empire-wide public consciousness that regarded Christians with disdain, resulting in a Christian ethos focused on apologetic.

I have taken on Averil Cameron’s approach in beginning my history of Christianity in the second century CE to avoid the technical (and for my overall point, irrelevant) issues of Christian origins.\textsuperscript{38} I have ended my periodization with the year 313 CE, as it was then that Emperor Constantine promulgated his Edict of Milan that ended imperially-sponsored persecutions of Christians. As I frame the second and third centuries as a time of “Christian persecution,” 313 CE is a suitable moment to note the changing Christian situation. In describing this period as one of Christian \textit{persecution}, I don’t restrict my meaning to the literal sense of the word, but mean, also, the connotation of minority “otherness” that goes with it. Nor do I mean to perpetuate the myth that early Christianity was an imperially oppressed religion soaked in

\begin{itemize}
\item Siker, 231-257.
\item Ibid, 231.
\item Jeffrey, Haldon, and Cormack, 3; Bill Leadbetter, “From Constantine to Theodosius (and Beyond),” in The Early Christian World: Volume I-II, ed. Philip Esler (New York: Routledge, 2000), 258-292, 265. Although Diocletian established the Tetrarchy in 293 CE, it was not a formal division of the empire: Leadbetter, “Constantine to Theodosius,” 260.
\item Cameron, \textit{Rhetoric of Empire}, 4-5.
\end{itemize}
martyrs’ blood, which finally “cracked the power of the Roman Empire… [leading it] as a whole to become Christian.”\(^{39}\) As Laurie Guy rightly describes, the occasions of persecution in the second and third centuries were typically locally inspired, and their impact restricted to this context.\(^{40}\) I aim rather to highlight the uncertainty Christians faced during this period, and to describe their marginal place in general society. This early period can thus be viewed as one where Christians were concerned with ensuring the survival of their religion. Indeed, this preoccupation is evident by the substantial amount of apologetic literature that was produced in this period.\(^{41}\)

From its inception, Christianity spread over a broad geographical swathe, with communities spreading out of Palestine to Syria, Asia Minor, Greece, Rome, as far east as Persia and India, and as far to the west as Spain and Britain – indeed, across the whole of the Roman Empire and beyond.\(^ {42}\) Christians remained a marginal group, however, a status compounded in the second century CE when they separated themselves from the Jewish religion. In doing so, they not only lost Jewish support but set themselves as a newer and inferior version of Judaism.\(^ {43}\) The perspectives held of Christians were various and unflattering.\(^ {44}\) They may best be summarized by quoting Eric Osborn’s description in full: “To pagan Rome, Christians were atheists, disloyal to the state and sunk in secret depravity. To philosophers, Christians believed

\(^{40}\) Ibid, 50.
\(^{42}\) Siker, 240-241.
\(^{43}\) Ibid, 232. On inferiority, see Siker’s point about the Roman respect of antiquity, 232.
\(^{44}\) See, for example, the reputation Christians had as evidenced in Minucius Felix’s Christian apologetic, *Octavius: Tertullian and Minucius Felix, Apologetical Works, and Octavius*, trans. and ed. Rudolph Arbesmann, Emily Daly, and Edwin Quain (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1962).
too much and though too little. To Jews, the scandal of a crucified God sharpened Christian disobedience to the law of Moses.”

An oft-cited letter from the governor of Bithynia to the Emperor Trajan in the early second century reveals that Bithynian Christians were given multiple opportunities to repent their faith, and were executed if they insisted on refusing. As is made clear in the letter, the issue was less that they were Christian, and more that they obstinately refused to maintain a veneer of paganism: a precondition of Roman citizenship. The second half of the second century and the first half of the third witnessed various martyrdoms as reported by Eusebius’ *Ecclesiastical History*. These martyrdoms were inspired by public outcry within their local contexts, but their impact would have been far-reaching. Some persecutions were particularly horrific, such as those undertaken by the Proconsul of Africa in the early third century, who had Christians burned and fed to wild animals. Although these acts were not part of an official widespread program of oppression, news of them would certainly have circulated. The mid-third century reigns of Emperor Decius (249-251 CE) and Emperor Valerian (253-260 CE) confirmed Christian fears. Eusebius relates that Decius required all citizens to acquire papers that certified that they had performed pagan sacrifice before a state official, and imprisoned, tortured, and/or executed Church leaders who refused to do so. Valerian, with equal harshness, forbade Christian gatherings to occur and had Church leaders executed if they would not renounce their

45 Osborn, 526.
47 The Roman Empire was heavily intertwined with the state’s pagan religion. The Imperial cult deified former emperors, thus positioning the acting emperor to near divine status. A dismissal of paganism was thus to question the very legitimacy of the emperor’s right to rule: an act of rebellion. On the religiosity of the Roman Empire, see: Ittai Gradel, *Emperor Worship and Roman Religion* (New York: Clarendon Press, 2002).
48 Siker, 244-245; Guy, *Introducing Early Christianity*, 50.
49 Siker, 245.
Christianity and perform sacrifices. The Emperor Diocletian (284-304) initiated an even more intense form of empire-wide persecution in 303 CE, when he ordered churches razed, Scriptures burned, and Church leaders to perform pagan sacrifice or be faced with execution. Siker writes that this persecution lessened with Diocletian’s retirement in 304 CE, but that it was only ended with Emperor Constantine and Emperor Licinius’ joint issuance of the Edict of Milan in 313 CE. This edict was an historical first, officially granting freedom of religious practice to all people of the empire, especially Christians.

While my presentation above is biased towards the imperial treatment of Christians in these early centuries, it is helpful for a general understanding of the societal space occupied by Christianity. The periodic persecutions that occurred throughout this 200-year period indicate that practicing Christians were consistently at risk. As mentioned in my general context above, kinship networks were an important facet of Late Antique society. Households and communities would have maintained memories of Christian persecutions, even if such were just memories of rumours. This communal knowledge, paired especially in civic centers with popular public displays of pagan practice, means that society would have considered Christians to be second-class citizens. As Bill Leadbetter describes, becoming Christian in this period “meant an instinctual separation from the social world of classical culture. Adherents of a proscribed cult lived within a subculture vulnerable to external attack… [they] existed at the mercy of

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51 Siker, 247.
52 Ibid., 248. Eusebius, 8.2.4.
53 Siker, 248.
54 On the usefulness of looking at Imperial legislation for information as a gauge of oppression or tolerance, see: Maxwell, 862.
55 Craig de Vos notes that the main Christian persecutions that have survived in the historical record would only have been those of particular note. He argues compellingly that Christians faced everyday persecution and explores the evidence and reasons behind such actions. See: Craig de Vos, “Popular Graeco-Roman Responses to Christianity,” in The Early Christian World: Volume I-II, ed. Philip Esler (New York: Routledge, 2000), 869-889.
neighbours who feared them, and blamed them when disaster fell.”56 As I presented in my context above, the situation within rural communities was one of tight-knit reciprocal cooperation, though conflict still abounded. In such a context, Leadbetter’s point is even more poignant: becoming a Christian carried the risk of becoming a social outcast, a suicidal proposition. Becoming a Christian thus carried little benefit. The Christian culture of this period may thus be defined as a small one, focused on apologetics and religious survival. Indeed, to tie this section back to my overall thesis, the socio-political environment of this period was one not favourable to Christianity, much less for the development of a Christian education.

**Christian-Pagan Negotiation (313 CE-423 CE)**

The edict of tolerance promulgated by imperial decree in 313 CE stands as a signpost of the changing place of Christianity in Late Antique society. I present this era as one where the empire sought to redefine itself: where religious and cultural norms were questioned, paganism and Christianity struggled with each other, and individuals who were hybrid products of both traditions stepped forward to make sense of their roots. I have marked the end of this period with the year 423 CE, when laws about paganism reveal that it had lost much of its influence. Although I have offered an exact year to end this period, the end date stands as did the imperial decree that began it: as a signpost of changing times. Indeed, the trends I describe defy rigid delineation and others may well propose a different date as a better-suited “turning point.”57 Nevertheless, it is definitively within this period of negotiation that self-conflicted treatises on

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56 Leadbetter, “Constantine to Theodosius,” 267.
57 Maxwell describes the difficulty in establishing clear boundaries when describing the process of Christianization: Maxwell, 850.
the nature of education were written – oft-cited evidence to support education theses of the Marrou tradition. My presentation here thus aims to place this evidence in its historical context and to distinguish it from the following period I call True Christianization, during which time I argue a Christian education developed within Palestinian monasteries.

The Emperor Constantine (306-337) was most significant in changing the place occupied by Christianity in society, an assertion that is hardly new.\(^{58}\) Long regarded as the first Christian emperor, Leadbetter describes how Constantine’s approach to Christianity was one aimed at legitimization.\(^{59}\) Constantine passed novel legislation that served as the first steps for Christianity to shed its marginal societal status. Bishops and clergy were framed as holding a public office of sorts, episcopal courts carried the power of law, and clergy became exempt from taxation.\(^{60}\) Magnificent new Christian buildings were constructed around Rome, and the greatest building project manifested with the erection of Constantinople, envisioned as a Christian city.\(^{61}\) Constantine’s involvement with the Donatist schism and the Arian controversy, especially his calling of the Council of Nicaea (325) to resolve the latter, further attest to the imperial favour enjoyed by Christianity in this new era.\(^{62}\) Leadbetter describes the new mentality of society: “becoming a Christian ought no longer to invite fear, suspicion and rejection.”\(^{63}\) Indeed, W.H.C. Frend describes how this period seemed to witness a rise in the number of people becoming Christian.\(^{64}\) While Christianity rose in prominence and enjoyed imperial support, however, paganism and its associated cultural underpinnings persisted. Indeed, the acceptance of Christian


\(^{59}\) Ibid, 1076.

\(^{60}\) Ibid, 1077.

\(^{61}\) For Rome, see Ibid, 1078. For Constantinople, Ibid, 1079.

\(^{62}\) Ibid, 1080-1081.

\(^{63}\) Leadbetter, “Constantine to Theodosius,” 267.

worship as legitimate by no means meant that paganism was any less practiced. This dual existence can be barometrically viewed through the imperial treatment of both traditions. Peter Brown describes how Constantine and his successor in the eastern Empire, Constantius II (337-361), took a middle way in religious matters, enjoying support from elites of both Christian and pagan belief. Although Constantius II made pagan sacrifice illegal in 341 CE, this measure was not an attack on pagans but was part of an established imperial tradition that associated sacrifice with divinatory practice. Indeed, the next year Constantius II protected pagans by making it illegal for pagan temples to be plundered.

The first major moment in this new era of pagan-Christian struggle manifested with the short reign of Emperor Julian (361-363). While raised a Christian, Julian’s education in the classical tradition of *paideia* apparently impacted him to such a degree that he apostatized and saw paganism as the true religion. In line with this realization, Julian sought as emperor to revive paganism as the official religion of the empire, promulgating legislation that saw the restoration of sacrifice and the building of pagan temples. He perceived Greek *paideia* as divinely inspired and believed that its implementation in urban centers of the East was the route by which the empire could be made great again. The purity of *paideia* was thus crucial, and led

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66 On the law, see: *Theodosian Code*, 16.10.2. Divinatory practices were dangerous to emperors as they could serve as justification for undermining their authority to rule. See: Maxwell, 855.
67 Maxwell, 862; *Theodosian Code*, 16.10.3.
68 There are remarkably few instances from 313-361 CE of pagan-Christian conflict. Michael Simmons presents anti-Christian sentiment as extending throughout this period, but his jump from Porphyry (234-305) to Julian (361-363) reveals that the Constantian dynasty was as I describe: Michael Simmons, “Graeco-Roman Philosophical Opposition,” in *The Early Christian World: Volume I-II*, ed. Philip Esler (New York: Routledge, 2000), 840-868, 861-862.
71 Ibid, 1253.
to the oft-cited legislation of 362 CE that prohibited Christian teachers from teaching classical literature or from drawing a public teaching salary.\textsuperscript{72} Julian’s death in 363 CE brought Emperor Jovian into power, who promptly reversed Julian’s changes and made Christianity the official religion of the empire again.\textsuperscript{73}

While the pre-Julian period was one of relative imperial ambivalence towards religion, emperors succeeding Julian took an increasingly hard stance against paganism.\textsuperscript{74} In 392 CE, the Emperor Theodosius I (379-395) passed a comprehensive law that reaffirmed the standard imperial ban on sacrifice, but also outlawed a variety of other pagan practices.\textsuperscript{75} In 396 CE, Theodosius I’s successor, Arcadius (395-408), rescinded the privileges formerly enjoyed by pagan priests and other pagan religious leaders.\textsuperscript{76} These imperial measures seem to have effectively dismantled widespread paganism, at least from the perspective of the emperor. In 423 CE, Theodosius II (408-450) reiterated that paganism was illegal, but expressed the belief that no pagans remained.\textsuperscript{77} In the same year, however, he contradicted this belief in another law where he commanded that Christians “shall not abuse the authority of religion and dare to lay violent hands on Jews and pagans who are living quietly and attempting nothing disorderly or contrary to law.”\textsuperscript{78} Theodosius II’s laws of 423 CE reveal another signpost of the changing role played by Christianity in Late Antique society. The emperor did not see paganism as a significant threat,

\textsuperscript{72} Simmons, “Julian,” 1254.  
\textsuperscript{74} Although laws were directed against pagan practice, they were against its religious nature rather than its culture. See for example the law from Arcadius permitting the celebration of traditional pagan festivals: \textit{Theodosian Code}, 16.10.17.  
\textsuperscript{76} On Arcadius’ reign, see: Greatrex, 241-242; On law, see: \textit{Theodosian Code}, 16.10.14.  
\textsuperscript{77} On Theodosius II’s reign, see: Greatrex, 242; On law, see: \textit{Theodosian Code}, 16.10.22.  
\textsuperscript{78} \textit{Theodosian Code}, 16.10.24.
and indeed recognized that there could be “pagans” who yet lived without performing illegal pagan practices. The Christian-pagan negotiation of the last century was thus coming to a close, with a religious victory belonging ostensibly to the Christians.

The imperial perspective in this period is not the only lens through which to view pagan-Christian negotiation. Several influential Christians lived and wrote in this period, and testify to such interactions. Notable among these individuals are the Cappadocian Fathers, of whom two, Gregory Nazianzus and Basil of Caesarea, carried a hybrid Christian-pagan identity. The writings of Basil of Caesarea are instructive to investigate, especially in light of his educational views. These views, however, were propagated only in response to a threat on his hybrid identity. I divided the period of Christian-pagan struggle into two parts in my discussion above when I made a distinction between the pre-Julian and post-Julian periods. Indeed, Julian’s significant role in this narrative should not be underestimated. To paraphrase Michael Simmons, should Julian have been successful in his paganizing endeavour, the Christian-pagan struggle might well have swung the other way.

The pre-Julian period was one of delicate balance between newly accepted Christianity and traditional paganism. Indeed, there was no question that it was possible to ascribe to both cultures. Julian’s reign, however, called this balance into question and irrevocably associated religion with culture. As discussed above, he identified paideia as belonging to the pagan religion, and that it was the ideal path to pagan success. Since paideia encompassed a vast

79 Consisting of Basil of Caesarea, Gregory Nazianzus, and Gregory of Nyssa.
81 Simmons, “Julian,” 1251.
82 As I have mentioned, Julian, Basil, and Gregory Nazianzus all received a classical education in their youth with no issue, while still identifying as Christian.
cultural understanding, the manifestation of this idea, even after Julian’s policies were reversed, had massive ramifications. Anything of pagan origin could be dangerous, especially the *paideia* that Julian had so loved and that had led him to apostatize. Individuals such as Basil and Gregory were suddenly suspect: they too had Julian’s cultural and educational background – were they too at risk of apostatizing? It is in this specific historical context that Basil produced his *Address to Young Men on Greek Literature*, which exhorts Christians to study pagan works but only for the good that may be derived from them.  

83 Basil’s *Address* has often been used in the history of education to see that classical *paideia* became the educational norm for Christians, a point Marrou emphasizes.  

84 Reading this work within its historical context, however, yields a nuanced understanding of its place in the history of education. Basil was legitimizing the Christian use of classical *paideia* in the face of its recent use against Christianity, especially since he himself was a product of such *paideia*. Basil was representative of his times, a man of dual culture who spoke the language of both paganism and Christianity. After Julian, however, such obvious dual cultures would become harder to find.

The culture that carried forward into the fifth century, while certainly hybrid, was dominated by Christian religiosity. In marked contrast from the preceding centuries, Christianity did not have to worry about its very survival in the face of pagan opposition. In the period I shall address next, of True Christianization, Christianity focused more intensely on its own

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83 Dating this work by Basil is difficult. Ann Moffatt frames it as a response to Julian’s edict against Christian teachers, while other scholars place it at a later date, see: Ann Moffatt, “The Occasion of St. Basil’s Address to Young Men,” *Antichton* 6 (1972): 74-86; Philip Rousseau, *Basil of Caesarea* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 49, n. 94. Basil, however, speaks of “my advanced age” which supposes that he was older than 33 years, his age at the end of Julian’s reign, see: Saint Basil, *The Letters IV*, trans. and ed. Roy Deferrari (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1934), 365, 378-379. For the audience of this work, see Rousseau, *Basil of Caesarea*, 49-50, esp. n. 98.

84 Marrou, 322.
development. Doctrinal debate, the rise of a Church elite, and the popularization of monasticism characterized an era that elaborated a distinct Christian culture for itself.

**True Christianization (423 CE-553 CE)**

As elaborated above, the year 423 CE indicates a change occurring in the Christian climate. For the first several centuries of its existence, Christianity had been occupied by defining and defending itself against what it was not. As paganism ostensibly petered out, Christianity could now focus on defining itself on its own terms. The year 553 CE serves as a suitable point to signpost that Christian identity had firmly established itself. In this year, the Council of Constantinople of 553 took place. The council was called as part of an effort to resolve a century-long doctrinal disagreement, and, successful or not, the event indicates that there was a widespread and sustained engagement with a Christian issue. Preoccupation at all levels of society with doctrinal issues testifies to the centrality Christianity had come to hold, and indicates that conditions were right for the elaboration of a distinctly Christian culture.

While 423 CE is the year I have identified by when paganism was considered obsolete, it was also a time that witnessed the beginnings of an unprecedentedly widespread Christian doctrinal debate. This controversy would split Christians into two camps, Monophysites and Chalcedonians, and it would remain the religious focus in the empire until the ecumenical council of 553 CE. Indeed, the disagreement was so significant that it would resurface for treatment even as late as the ecumenical council of 680-681, and persists today in the form of
Eastern Churches that still adhere to non-Chalcedonian positions.\textsuperscript{85} The controversy has its roots in a disagreement between Cyril, the patriarch of Alexandria (412-444), and Nestorius, who was made patriarch of Constantinople in 428 CE. Cyril represented the Alexandrian school of thought, while Nestorius represented that of Antioch.\textsuperscript{86} This disagreement concerned the nature of Christ: Cyril considered Mary to be “God-bearer,” whereas Nestorius considered her to be “Christ-bearer.”\textsuperscript{87}

The disagreement resulted in the emperor Theodosius II calling for the ecumenical council of Ephesus in 431 CE, where the teachings of Nestorius were rejected. Theodosius II supported this decision with an imperial edict in 435 CE that banished Nestorius from Antioch, and another in 448 CE that decreed that all his works be burned.\textsuperscript{88} While the divinity of Christ had been established, Flavian, the patriarch of Constantinople since 446 CE confusingly objected to the teachings of an influential monk of Constantinople named Eutyches, who espoused that Christ was not consubstantial with humans.\textsuperscript{89} Theodosius II convened a council in 449 CE to resolve the issue, which came to be infamously known as the Robber council. The council proceedings were aggressive and were not accepted in the west. Thus, while the council upheld Eutyches’ teachings and refused to recognize Flavian’s authority, its decisions would be short-lived.\textsuperscript{90}

\textsuperscript{87} Ibid, 812.
\textsuperscript{88} Ibid, 812.
\textsuperscript{89} Ibid, 813.
\textsuperscript{90} Ibid, 813-814.
Emperor Marcian (450-457) called the ecumenical council of Chalcedon in 451 CE, which reaffirmed the orthodoxy of the councils of Nicaea of 325 CE and of Constantinople of 381 CE, and enunciated the Chalcedonian Creed that clarified that Christ was a single person with two natures: one divine and one human.\textsuperscript{91} Thus, while Mary remained “God-bearer,” Christ was consubstantial with humans because he carried a human nature. The council of Chalcedon thus reversed the Robber council’s decision about Eutyches, and also affirmed that Nestorius was wrong: which re-alienated many within the Antiochene school. Although the Chalcedonian creed was an elaborated definition from the council of Ephesus in 431 CE, it was not accepted by the Alexandrian school that held firmly to the original ideas propagated by Cyril, who was clear in his teachings that Christ had only a single, divine nature.\textsuperscript{92} The council of Chalcedon thus resulted in a deep-seated division between two groups, the orthodox Chalcedonians and the Alexandria-based Monophysites. As Pauline Allen points out, this division impacted all levels of society, as regions within the eastern empire, especially Palestine, Egypt, and Antioch, sorted themselves along doctrinal lines.\textsuperscript{93} In Jerusalem, the patriarch Juvenal maintained his position in the face of Monophysite opposition only with the help of imperial troops. In Alexandria, the Monophysite patriarch Dioscorus was replaced by a Chalcedonian, Proterius, who was eventually lynched in 457 CE. In Antioch, an anti-Chalcedonian movement was led by Peter the Fuller, which lasted until his removal in 471 CE.\textsuperscript{94}

The widespread significance of the schism between Monophysites and Chalcedonians is especially apparent in the central place it occupied in imperial policy. As mentioned above, Emperor Marcian committed imperial troops to secure pro-Chalcedonian bishops in both

\begin{footnotes}
\footnote{Gallagher, “Episcopal Councils,” 585.}
\footnote{Ibid, 585.}
\footnote{Allen, 815.}
\footnote{Ibid, 815-816.}
\end{footnotes}
Alexandria and Jerusalem.⁹⁵ The emperor Leo (457-474) maintained this imperial support of Chalcedon.⁹⁶ The following emperor, Zeno (474-491), however, sought to unify the two sides with the issuance of the *Henotikon*, which described Christ without using the terminology of “natures.”⁹⁷ This attempt had mixed results, as the patriarchs of Alexandria, Antioch, and Constantinople all endorsed it, while the pope in Rome rejected it vehemently.⁹⁸ The emperor Anastasius (491-518), however, sympathized with Monophysite views, which influenced his religious decisions from 511 CE onwards.⁹⁹ Anastasius deposed the Chalcedonian patriarch of Constantinople, Macedonius, replaced the Chalcedonian bishop of Antioch with the Monophysite Severus, and decreed that Monophysite phraseology be included in the liturgy of the capital’s churches.¹⁰⁰ These actions provoked bloody popular protests in the capital. Indeed, such actions even provoked an army officer named Vitalian to lead a military revolt. Although both these moments of insubordination eventually came to naught, they indicate the seriousness with which the average person viewed religious matters.¹⁰¹

The following emperor, Justin I (518-527), and his nephew and successor, Justinian (527-565), were both pro-Chalcedonian.¹⁰² Early in Justin I’s reign, the patriarch of Constantinople affirmed Chalcedon, Severus of Antioch was condemned, and multiple synods in the east sought

⁹⁶ Ibid, 45-49.
⁹⁷ Ibid, 51.
⁹⁸ Ibid, 52.
⁹⁹ Ibid, 56.
¹⁰¹ Lee, 56-57.
to overturn the religious changes Anastasius had wrought.\textsuperscript{103} Averil Cameron highlights how the return to a Chalcedonian emphasis caused religious dissent that was met with repression, spurring Monophysites to flee to Alexandria.\textsuperscript{104} Justinian’s long reign witnessed mixed treatment towards religion. While he was severe in his legal code against anyone who was non-Orthodox, his wife Theodora is held by scholars to have been a Monophysite who openly supported her brand of faith during her husband’s reign.\textsuperscript{105} Justinian eventually sought to reunify the Monophysites to the Orthodoxy of Chalcedon, and wrote a treatise to that effect between 542 and 545 CE. His treatise condemned the persons and writings of Theodore of Mopsuestia, Theodoret of Cyrrhus, and Ibas of Edessa, all who came to be referred to collectively as the Three Chapters. Justinian’s attempt, however, met with no success: Monophysites remained unmoved, and several Chalcedonian ecclesiastics opposed his condemnations.\textsuperscript{106} In the face of this unrest, Justinian called the ecumenical council of Constantinople of 553 CE, where he got his condemnation of the Three Chapters confirmed.\textsuperscript{107} Although Richard Price identifies that the council aimed to reconcile Monophysites, he notes that this group did not feel that the council concerned them. Indeed, Price sees this year as the moment when hopes for a Monophysite reconciliation died.\textsuperscript{108}

Although the council of 553 CE did not mend the schism between Monophysites and Chalcedonians, it indicates a Christian world markedly different from 423 CE. In 423 CE, many Christians would have held the view that paganism had been defeated, but the memory of the

\textsuperscript{103} Cameron, “Justin I and Justinian,” 64.
\textsuperscript{104} Ibid, 64, esp. n. 14.
\textsuperscript{105} On legal code: Cameron, “Justin I and Justinian,” 69. His laws targeted Pagans, heretics, Manichaeans, Samaritans, and Jews. On Theodora: Cameron, “Justin I and Justinian,” 70; Evans, The Power Game in Byzantium.
\textsuperscript{106} Gallagher, “Episcopal Councils,” 586; Cameron, “Justin I and Justinian,” 80.
\textsuperscript{108} Ibid, 34.
apostate Julian lived on. Christianity had enjoyed imperial support only within the past
generation. The institutions and functions of the world were still noticeably Greco-Roman pagan
in culture, though they were slowly being amended by Christian equivalents, as I discuss next.
This Christian understanding of 423 CE stands in stark contrast to the Christian world view of
553 CE. The contentions against paganism that characterized the previous two periods were far
removed from the Christian consciousness. Although laws against pagans were still promulgated,
such as those of Justinian in 529 CE, pagans were part of a broader category that included all
those who were not Orthodox.\footnote{Cameron, “Justin I and Justinian,” 69.} Christianity was very clearly the dominant religion, and
enjoyed extensive imperial support. Extensive pagan persecutions under Justinian support this
assertion, and the sixth century situation was an ironic reversal of the Christian persecutions,
noted above, which occurred in the second-third centuries.\footnote{Alan Cameron discusses the several large pagan persecutions that occurred under Justinian: Cameron, “The Last Days of the Academy at Athens.”} Although doctrinal issues were
concerning and served as a rallying point, the continual attempts at reconciliation and the ready
acceptance of the \textit{Henotikon} in the east indicate that Christian internal conflict was never as bad
as pagan-Christian struggles had been. Indeed, the differences between the Monophysite and
Chalcedonian stances did not significantly obstruct Christians from developing an overarching
Christian sense of unity. In this world of “True Christianization,” the apparent forms and
functions of society were cast in a Christian light, reflective of a new Christian culture. In this
newly Christian world, Christian monasteries were centrally situated to produce individuals
expert in the newly dominant culture.

\begin{footnotes}
\item[109] Cameron, “Justin I and Justinian,” 69.
\item[110] Alan Cameron discusses the several large pagan persecutions that occurred under Justinian: Cameron, “The Last Days of the Academy at Athens.”
\end{footnotes}
Chapter Five: Christian Institutions

As I presented in the previous chapter, the early Christian world was one unable to escape the complete cultural influences of the Greco-Roman pagan world until the early fifth century. While aspects of that culture certainly persisted, the growth of a distinct Christian culture may be noted in this later period. One aspect of this culture was the persistence with which it sought, indeed had to seek, orthodoxy.¹ The popular responses evident after the council of Chalcedon, both in favour and against the new Chalcedonian creed, speak to the existence of a Christian population that stayed abreast of Christological developments. Even if such responses were engendered only through the leadership of passionate and knowledgeable figure heads, with the masses themselves lacking a thorough understanding of the issues at hand, the fact that the masses were amiable to such leadership is significant. The Christianization of society that occurred in this period recursively influenced and was influenced in turn by the growth of Christian institutions. The Church and the monastic movement are two such institutions, and tracing their general development and operation reveals further elements of what would come to constitute a Christian culture.

The Church

The Church, as the institution of Christianity, served as the primary point of interaction between the religion and general society. The earliest Christian communities were led by a group

of elders, the *presbyteroi*, who were sometimes headed by the *episkopoi*.2 These governing groups would eventually evolve into a more organized body that constituted the Church. The second century *Didache*, the earliest surviving church order, calls on Christian communities to appoint their own presbyters and deacons.3 Ignatius of Antioch provides the earliest evidence, from the first-second century, of Church hierarchy, and lays out that care for a Christian community came from the local bishop, who was helped by the lower offices of presbyter and deacon.4 The central role held by the bishop for the governance of the Church increased in the second and third centuries, and the third century Cyprian is notable for his statement that “where the bishop is, there is the Church.”5 As Mary Cunningham summarizes, for the first three centuries, “bishops were invested with the authority to oversee Christian communities, to administer the sacraments, and to uphold orthodox doctrine both by preaching and by attending ecclesiastical councils.”6

The acceptance of Christianity as the official imperial religion by Constantine in the fourth century led to a formal structuring of the Church. Episcopal dioceses were set to match the territorial range of the Roman provinces, with the major city in each province serving as the seat of the head bishop for the region.7 Under this head bishop were the bishops of local communities, who were sometimes appointed from the deacon or presbyterial rank by decree of this head bishop.8 The council of Nicaea in 325 CE established that bishops were to be elected by

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3 Ibid, 26.
4 Ibid, 27.
6 Cunningham, 527. This is a succinct presentation of Rapp’s conclusions in *Holy Bishops*.
7 Ibid, 528.
the other bishops of a given province.\(^9\) In the fifth century, the council of Chalcedon in 451 CE saw the term “patriarch” first come into popular use, as a way of referring to city bishoprics that were preeminent for their apostolic origins or for their early role in the establishment of Christianity: these were Rome, Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch, and Jerusalem.\(^{10}\) Although the Church hierarchy had been set, the sixth century still saw slight modifications under Justinian, who encouraged lower clergy and leading citizens to participate in the election of bishops.\(^{11}\)

This brief examination of Church organization reveals that while Christian communities had governed themselves from the earliest times, the formal organization of the Church did not come about until the fourth century, and was still evolving into the fifth and sixth centuries. Indeed, Peter Brown and Claudia Rapp are both notable for their studies that follow the development of the power of the bishopric.\(^{12}\) These distinguished scholars both approach episcopal power by investigating the underpinnings of the authority they wielded. Since, as elaborated above, the Church was for most intents to be found in the person of the bishop, investigating the functioning of the episcopate is synonymous to investigating the power of the Church. Brown presents the bishop as drawing authority from his role in caring for the poor, which he argues became a public virtue with the rise of Christianity from the fourth-seventh centuries.\(^{13}\) He notes that although a Christian duty for charity is evident in the third-fourth centuries, the idea of “care for the poor” was still quite novel into the late fourth century.\(^{14}\)

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9 Cunningham, 530.
10 Constantinople gained this status only in 381 CE (second ecumenical council), while Jerusalem only attained it in 451 CE (third ecumenical council): Cunningham, 528; Hall, 731-732.
11 Cunningham, 530.
13 Brown, Poverty and Leadership, 1.
14 For early fourth: Brown, Poverty and Leadership, 26. For late fourth: Brown, Poverty and Leadership, 3.
Indeed, Pauline Allen and Silke Sitzler stress the idea that the poor only gained visibility as a focus in Christian society due to the writings of the Church Fathers, John Chrysostom and Gregory of Nyssa. As such, Brown’s presentation of an increase in episcopal power through an invocation of “care for the poor” may be temporally located as beginning around the start of the fifth century. Brown argues compellingly that the very conceptualization of “the poor” was an innovation of the Church, as a means of garnering episcopal authority. Setting themselves as “guardians of the poor,” the bishop, in the words of Allen and Sitzler, was “now trusted with funds and authority from a variety of sources, including Christian, secular, and imperial, in order to nourish, protect, care for, and provide justice for the poor.”

Rapp’s treatment of episcopal authority follows a similar vein as Brown, though she nuances her discussion of episcopal authority by defining it as consisting of three components: spiritual authority, ascetic authority, and pragmatic authority. Rapp describes spiritual authority as an external gift from God, which allowed an individual to act from a position of divine inspiration and support. She explains that ascetic authority stemmed from a visible engagement with “virtuous” behavior, what Max Weber has classified as “charismatic abilities.” Finally, she presents pragmatic authority in a sense similar to Brown’s where authority came as the result of external actions that benefitted others, especially those in need. Temporally, Rapp too sees her period of episcopal authority as extending from the late fourth- late sixth centuries, beginning

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16 Brown, Poverty and Leadership, 8.
17 Allen and Sitzler, 18.
18 Rapp, Holy Bishops, 16.
19 Ibid, 16-17.
only with the appearance of treatises focused on the nature of ecclesiastical leadership, the earliest of which was Gregory of Nazianzus’ late fourth century *In Defense of His Flight.*

Rapp’s treatment of episcopal power diverges from Brown’s in that she offers concrete examples of the socio-economic benefits and civic duties that came to be held by the successful bishop. Rapp examines how the holding of an episcopal office became regarded as a great honour, and thus became the subject of social ambition, though Rapp argues that such desire was influenced by genuine religious motivation. The notion of episcopacy as honourable was first expressed in the late fourth century by John Chrysostom, and was reiterated in the east by Theodore of Mopsuestia in 428 CE. Rapp highlights the economic power wielded by bishops. Many bishops came from wealthy families and thus had access to private wealth. The Church, however, also possessed its own wealth, gathered primarily through donations. Church funds were used to pay the salaries of Church officials and to engage in charitable projects. As such, originating from a wealthy family was not a prerequisite for the episcopacy.

Aside from socio-economic power, bishops also came to hold a variety of civic duties and roles. Bishops oversaw public building projects, a practice that surged in the fifth century and reached its peak in the sixth. They also took an interest in the humane treatment of prisoners, and eventually were tasked officially with this duty. A fifth century law stipulated that bishops should see that prisoners were taken to the baths once a week, and under Justinian they

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20 Rapp, *Holy Bishops*, 42.
21 Ibid, 195.
22 Ibid, 166.
23 Ibid, 172. Rapp highlights that economic power was gained through property acquisition, consistent donations from lay people, imperial donations, and pious bequests.
24 Ibid, 211.
25 Ibid, 216. Rapp argues, however, that there was a preference for bishops of wealthy background, 211.
26 Ibid, 222.
were required to visit prisoners weekly to ensure they were being treated appropriately.²⁷ Bishops came to occupy a place in the legal system, with the ability to hold episcopal court during Constantine’s reign, though this right was rescinded by Julian.²⁸ In the early fifth century, however, an episcopal court could oversee disputes so long as both parties agreed to forego secular court.²⁹ This legal role was also apparent in the perception that the Church was a place of asylum, first mentioned in the mid-fourth century, and then commonly seen throughout the fifth and sixth centuries.³⁰ Aside from such civic duties, bishops also came to hold a place in the functioning of the empire. Their perceived possession of extreme virtue set them as trustworthy agents in society.³¹ Bishops were seen to possess parrhesia in this period, the power of “free speech” before the emperor. This idea had belonged originally to the philosopher, but in a Christianized world, it was the bishop who had the religious authority to speak bluntly to the emperor.³² This direct connection between bishops and the emperor is supported by Justinian in the novel responsibilities he lay upon bishops. One of these responsibilities was to oversee tax collection to ensure its fairness, and bishops were encouraged to petition the emperor directly if need be.³³ Indeed, Justinian was adamant in the civil role bishops should occupy, and mandated the bishop’s participation in the annual municipal audit, along with the three leading citizens of a respective town.³⁴ By the sixth century, then, the bishop had gained immense authority across all aspects of society.

²⁷ Rapp, Holy Bishops, 227.
²⁸ Ibid, 242-244.
²⁹ Ibid, 244.
³⁰ Ibid, 253.
³¹ Ibid, 278.
³² Ibid, 267.
³³ Ibid, 277.
³⁴ Ibid, 288.
As I have argued above, Christianity did not effloresce until the early fifth century. Brown and Rapp have supported this assertion in tracing the rise in authority of the bishop, and thus of the Church, in temporal parallel. A developed Church, as the main supplier of Christian identity, is a crucial underpinning for the rise of a distinct Christian culture. The role bishops came to play in all aspects of Late Antique life also testifies to the Christianization of society, and thus of the changing world views of the period. Rapp’s summation of the role of the bishop in the sixth century captures well the spirit of this change:

[Bishops] stood alongside the small body of leading citizens that increasingly monopolized leadership in civic matters… They had become spokesmen of their cities, advocates for the concerns of the general population, community leaders with the ability to agitate the population into action. As the cities were increasingly Christianized, the roles of highest representative of the Christian community and of prominent leader of civic life fell into one.35

The Monastic Movement

Although the Church was the official institution and pillar supporting Christianity, a grassroots movement of monasticism also exerted considerable influence on the development of Christianity. Although its Egyptian origins were humble and occurred on the periphery of society, monasticism played a role in the Christianization of society and grew to be a central phenomenon in Christianized Late Antiquity. Monasticism eventually gained recognition by the Church, and came to constitute the other pillar upholding the Christian faith.

The monastic movement first entered the Late Antique consciousness in the early fourth century, due to the popular reception of Athanasius’ *vita* of the ascetic Anthony.36 Indeed,

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36 McGuckin, 612.
Anthony was considered the “founder of monasticism,” though ascetics certainly existed before him. The *vita* of Anthony constructed the ideal of asceticism that would be pursued as the monastic movement gained popularity. Anthony is depicted as undertaking an ascetic lifestyle as a result of Christ’s words: “If you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven.” Anthony thus gave up his wealth and relocated to the fringes of civilization. Here he apprenticed to an old man, before leaving him and moving fully into the Egyptian desert. Athanasius depicts Anthony as finding true spiritual enlightenment during these decades of solitude in the desert. As Marilyn Dunn summarizes, the *vita* of Anthony depicted that “the ideals of dispossession, solitude, and personal austerity were paramount and… the desert became the locus of true religion.” Anthony’s life emphasized the anchoritic and eremitical aspects of ascetic life: that is, the withdrawal from society. His paradigm for monasticism would be emulated, and eventually led to the development of a distinct classification of monk: the anchoritic hermit.

While Anthony brought anchoritic monasticism into view, the early fourth century also saw the development of a communal monastic life. This style of monasticism may have had its roots in Manicheanism, but it entered the Christian consciousness due to the Egyptian Pachomius. Whereas Anthony had striven for spiritual perfection through private battle in the desert, Pachomius gathered together individuals to live communally in the desert, thereby to

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37 McGuckin, 612-613.  
40 Ibid, 3.  
41 Ibid, 8.  
42 Ibid, 12, 19.  
43 Ibid, 25.
support each other in their bid for asceticism. This communal life followed the same ascetic ideals as practiced by Anthony, that is, renunciation of personal property and a withdrawal from society. Within a communal monastic compound, members engaged in daily labour and prayer.

This style of monasticism was called coenobitic, and the communal monastic buildings formed the coenobium. Coenobitic monasticism was far easier to practice than anchoritic monasticism, as the support of a community providing multiple benefits, not least a source of constant human companionship. Indeed, coenobitic monasticism necessitated that the monastery function as a self-sufficient economic unit to support all its members, while still maintaining social isolation. As a result, however, the coenobium was forced paradoxically to have interactions with society in order to propagate trade. It is perhaps from such interactions that coenobitic monasticism spread in popularity, testified in part by the appearance of the monasteries of Shenoute that sprang up in this part of Egypt during the later fourth century.

The monastic movement in Egypt engendered fascination from Late Antique society, and resulted in the writing and wide dissemination of a variety of early monastic literature. Well known examples include the Life of Antony, the collections of the Apophthegamata Patrum, the Life and Rules of Pachomius, and the Lausiac History. This literature helped spread the movement throughout the empire. News of the monastic movement made its way to the Church fathers, Gregory Nazianzus and Basil of Caesarea. These two embraced monasticism, and their writings helped link the movement to the formal Christianity of the Church. Indeed, Basil especially contributed to the popularity of coenobitic monasticism, writing a series of Rules for

44 Dunn, 27.
45 McGuckin, 614.
46 Dunn, 32.
48 Goehring, 393.
49 McGuckin, 615.
the correct practice of such a life. Marilyn Dunn analyzes these *Rules* to conclude that Basil innovatively depicted that the main focus of coenobitism was to provide charity for others, and in doing so unified the main elements of coenobitic and anchoritic monasticism. In this conception, monks could avoid the dangers of accruing earthly things through their toil, which had occurred in the Pachomian conception, since it was all destined for charity. The popular reception of monasticism meant that it had spread throughout the empire by the fifth century. Monasteries could be found in Egypt, Palestine, Constantinople, and had even crossed to the western empire.

While the monastic movement spread across the empire, the monasticism that developed in the fifth and sixth centuries in Palestine is particularly worthy of study. As Yizhar Hirschfeld notes, Palestine was the location of many important Christian pilgrimage sites, which meant that the desert monasteries that developed there would not stay as isolated as their Egyptian precursors. Indeed, the extreme popularity of monasticism in this region led to a veritable settlement of the desert, a phenomenon highlighted by Derwas Chitty’s eponymous work. In addition, study of this area benefits from the many primary documents that survive about the monasticism of this period, allowing a rich historical treatment. This region is also significant for its popularization a new style of monastery: the lavra. The lavra melded the anchoritic and

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51 Dunn, 41.
53 Hirschfeld, *Judean Desert Monasteries*.
54 Chitty, *Desert a City*. 
coenobitic traditions, and consisted of a small community of hermits living together. While these monks spent most of their time in solitude, they would convene on the weekends for communal prayer and Mass.\textsuperscript{55} As the locale of a popular, innovative, and well-documented monastic movement, Palestine thus serves as an excellent case study by which to investigate the way monasticism developed within a Christianized Late Antique society.

Palestinian monasticism was located within two distinct geographical spheres: in the desert around Gaza, and within the Judean deserts to the east of Jerusalem.\textsuperscript{56} Scholarship has traditionally treated these regions separately, operating on the confident understanding that the two areas represented distinct spiritual profiles.\textsuperscript{57} Lorenzo Perrone has recently questioned this assumption, however, and concludes that the monastic zones exhibit many similarities. Significantly, he notes that there is a “sharing of the biblical, patristic and monastic heritage as well as similar trends in arranging the conditions for a solitary life.”\textsuperscript{58} I have therefore regarded Palestinian monasticism as a whole, following Perrone’s exhortation that the two landscapes “should not [be] consider[ed] anymore as divergent.”\textsuperscript{59} In the interest of clarity of presentation, however, I have examined each of these contexts in their turn.

The desert of Gaza was perfectly situated for monasticism. It was accessible by sea and road, it occupied a geographical location between the major destinations of Egypt, Syria, and Jerusalem, and it had grown as a significant region during the Greco-Roman period (See Appendix B and C).\textsuperscript{60} It is surprising then, that the monastic heritage of Gaza is one that has only

\textsuperscript{55} Hirschfeld, \textit{Judean Desert Monasteries}, 10-11.
\textsuperscript{57} Ibid, 7.
\textsuperscript{58} Ibid, 20.
\textsuperscript{59} Ibid, 21.
\textsuperscript{60} Chryssavgis, “Introduction,” 3.
received scholarly attention within the past two decades, though this may stem from a lack of accessible primary source material.\(^{61}\) As Brouria Bitton-Ashkelony and Aryeh Kofsky point out, the history of this monastic region has also suffered because no comprehensive ancient narrative of its monastic development has survived.\(^{62}\) Nevertheless, a basic understanding of this region may be gained thanks to the work done by scholars such as Bitton-Ashkelony, Kofsky, and Jennifer Hevelone-Harper, among others.

Gazan monasticism claimed its fourth century foundation from the authority of St. Hilarion, who had received his monastic formation from the great monastic innovator himself, Anthony. Hilarion returned to Gaza after his Egyptian training, and began an anchoritic existence in the region south of the port city of Maiouma. He quickly attracted followers, and monasteries were soon established near him.\(^{63}\) Gaza’s apparent monastic ties to Egypt have been elaborated by Hevelone-Harper, who notes that several monastic individuals from Scetis eventually made their way to Gaza. Porphyry was one such individual, who received his monastic formation in Scetis before becoming bishop of Gaza. Another was Abba Silvanus, who had overseen monks in Scetis before moving to Gaza and there establishing a lavra. Indeed, this link is even more apparent when considering that many monks fled to Gaza from Scetis in the early fifth century to escape doctrinal turmoil and desert nomad attacks. The most significant example, however, is in the figure of Abba Isaiah, who moved from Scetis to Gaza and established an anchoritic life for himself near Tawatha.\(^{64}\) Although Isaiah remained physically in seclusion, he oversaw a coenobitic monastery that established itself around him. It is here that the Monophysite Peter the

\(^{62}\) Ibid, 1.
\(^{63}\) Hevelone-Harper, 15-16.
\(^{64}\) Ibid, 16.
Iberian spent some time, and where he befriended Isaiah.\(^65\) Considering Isaiah’s Egyptian monastic formation, and this closeness with Peter, Isaiah has been identified by scholars as Monophysite.\(^66\) Indeed, these connections are stressed by Hevelone-Harper when she asserts that monasticism in Gaza as a whole was Monophysite.\(^67\)

From the fifth-sixth centuries, Gazan monasticism at Tawatha was taken over by the anchorites Barsanuphius and John. These two ascetics, following the example of Isaiah, oversaw the coenobium at Tawatha with the help of the abbot Seridus.\(^68\) While Hevelone-Harper identifies Barsanuphius as originating from Egypt, as I have presented above, scholars are divided on whether he was Monophysite or Chalcedonian.\(^69\) In the mid-sixth century, Dorotheus, a disciple of Barsanuphius and John, came in turn to direct Gazan monasticism.\(^70\) Dorotheus left extensive writings, notably his *Instructions*.\(^71\) After Dorotheus, however, Bitton-Ashkelony and Kofsky report that no general information about Gazan monasticism survives, though there is evidence that it continued into the seventh century.\(^72\) The arrival of the Islamic invasion in the seventh century, however, would certainly have interrupted the norms of monastic life, and it is safe to assume that it is in this period that Gazan monasticism as I have presented it here would have ended.

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\(^{65}\) Horn and Phenix, 203-205.
\(^{67}\) Hevelone-Harper, 17.
\(^{68}\) Ibid, 18-19.
\(^{71}\) Ibid, 44.
\(^{72}\) Ibid, 45-46.
While the history of Gazan monasticism has been relatively neglected, that of the Judean desert has received rich treatment (See Appendix D and E).\textsuperscript{73} For the sake of brevity, however, I have restricted my presentation to provide a basic historical context. Yizhar Hirschfeld identifies four distinct periods in the development of Judean monasticism: the founding stage in the fourth century, the expansion phase of the fifth, the zenith from the end of the fifth to the beginning of the seventh, and a stage of decline in the seventh century.\textsuperscript{74} In the foundational stage, a man named Chariton came to Jerusalem from Iconium in Asia Minor, on pilgrimage. He was captured by bandits, miraculously rescued, and in gratitude dedicated himself to Christ and founded a lavritic monastery. During his life and this early period, Chariton would found two further lavras.\textsuperscript{75} The Judean monastic movement then effloresced in the fifth century, beginning with the arrival of Euthymius in 405 CE as a pilgrim to Jerusalem.\textsuperscript{76} Euthymius settled in one of Chariton’s lavras, and in his life founded the first coenobia in this region. Hirschfeld notes that Euthymius developed a new model of monasticism, whereby a lavra and coenobium were linked.\textsuperscript{77} This cooperation provided economic stability for the lavra and gave the coenobium spiritual governors and models to emulate.

The Judean monastic movement continued to grow throughout the fifth century, as notable monks developed and founded their own monasteries. Foremost among these were Gerasimus, Theodosius, and Sabas. Gerasimus expanded the monastic movement to the Jordan Valley.\textsuperscript{78} Theodosius founded the largest coenobium in the late fifth century. Sabas was involved

\textsuperscript{73} See, for example: Chitty, Desert a City; Hirschfeld, Judean Desert Monasteries.
\textsuperscript{74} Hirschfeld, Judean Desert Monasteries, 10.
\textsuperscript{75} Ibid, 11.
\textsuperscript{76} Chitty, 82.
\textsuperscript{77} Hirschfeld, Judean Desert Monasteries, 12.
\textsuperscript{78} Ibid, 13.
in the foundation of ten monasteries, of which his Great Lavra of Sabas still survives today.\textsuperscript{79} Theodosius and Sabas were appointed archimandrites for the Judean desert at the end of the fifth century, Theodosius for the coenobia, and Sabas for the lavras and hermits. The Church office of archimandrite was responsible for overseeing monastic activity in a region, and Theodosius and Sabas were the first monks to be appointed to this role.\textsuperscript{80} Their ordination thus testifies to a visible rapprochement in Palestine between the Church and the monastic movement. Indeed, Judean monks were important supporters of the Church in the doctrinal arguments of this era, and though initially opposed to the results of the council of Chalcedon in 451 CE, eventually came out as supporters of Chalcedon.\textsuperscript{81}

Judean monasticism continued to grow both in popularity and size in the sixth century, as attested through Cyril’s \textit{Lives}. In the mid-sixth century, controversy about the correctness of Origen split the Judean monks into two camps, although this ostensibly was resolved with the condemnation of Origen at the ecumenical council of 553 CE.\textsuperscript{82} The rich literary sources for Judean monasticism after this period grow slim, though the \textit{Pratum Spirituale} of John Moschus attests to the continuation of a popular engagement in the monasteries of this region. The Persian and Muslim invasions of the early seventh century, however, greatly disrupted the Judean desert. Hirschfeld notes that the archaeological record indicates that many monasteries were abandoned after the Muslim invasion.\textsuperscript{83} Indeed, such invasions would have irrevocably changed the religious, political, and economic context of the Judean desert, and may thus be noted as the end point for this chapter in Judean monasticism.

\textsuperscript{79} Hirschfeld, \textit{Judean Desert Monasteries}, 13-15.
\textsuperscript{80} Ibid, 14.
\textsuperscript{81} Lives of the Monks of Palestine, xlv.
\textsuperscript{82} Hirschfeld, \textit{Judean Desert Monasteries}, 16.
\textsuperscript{83} Ibid, 17.
Although brief, the above survey of the development of monasticism in Palestine provides a crucial point from which to investigate literate education within the monasteries of this region. Both Gaza and the Judean desert witnessed significant growth in monasticism during the fifth century: the same period in which I have identified a “True Christianization” of Late Antiquity. Although Gaza drew its monastic heritage from Egypt while the Judean desert largely innovated its own from Chariton, the two regions pursued the same ascetic goals and were interacting in the sixth century. Indeed, although scholars have represented Gaza as Monophysite and the Judean desert as Chalcedonian, I posit that these differences were largely rhetorical and had no impact on monastic practice. Palestinian monasticism, then, may be considered a major movement in the Late Antique world of the fifth and sixth centuries, one that migrated from the fringes to work in tandem with the Church and State to Christianize society. In this period, monasticism recursively impacted Christian society and was impacted in turn.

My above presentation of the historical context of early Christianity provides the necessary background for understanding the arguments I present about Palestinian monastic education in the fifth-sixth centuries. As my historiography makes clear, studies in the history of education are too narrow in their treatment of Late Antiquity and Byzantium, and suffer from a reliance on the same primary sources. Indeed, although this situation is improved in the fields of classics, history, and religious studies, gaps in scholarly knowledge still persist. My periodization of Christianity in Late Antiquity reveals three distinct trends in the religion’s progression. Classified first by defense and apologetic, then transitorily making sense of two heritages, and finally the consolidation of the religion on its own terms, the early history of Christianity is one where a “True Christianization” did not occur until the mid-fifth century. This delayed development is supported in my presentation of the Church and monastic movement, neither of
which effloresced until the fifth century. Following this periodization, it is thus inutile to investigate the existence of a separate and distinct Christian education until the Christianization era of the fifth century. In corollary, describing Christian education on the basis of sources from before this period, as Marrou and others do, is only representative of their specific Christian contexts. I have aimed throughout my historical survey above to provide a “thick description” in the manner proscribed by Geertz. Having established a rich background upon which to rest my arguments, I can now turn to the central investigation of my thesis: the existence, use, and extent of literate education within Greek-speaking monasteries of the Palestinian milieu, beginning at the start of the period I have called “True Christianization,” and ending when the sources disappear at the end of the sixth century.
Part Three

My argument that Palestinian monasteries served as centers for a literate Christian education has two main parts: first, that these monasteries offered an education premised on textual study, and second, that individuals who were part of monastic communities played a significant role in the functioning of Late Antique society. As such, in chapter six I present primary source evidence that reading, writing, and books were an important resource for monastic education. I then offer evidence that literacy was taught in monasteries, and highlight the textual study this literacy allowed. In addition, I will highlight the economic capacities of Palestinian monasteries, aiming to demonstrate that they had the necessary capital to procure and maintain book collections. In chapter seven I then examine social, ecclesiastical, and legal sources of the fifth and sixth centuries to highlight the role monastics occupied in these arenas as erudite Christian experts. At the same time I describe the learned ecclesiastical culture apparent throughout this period, and consistently highlight how Palestinian monks were viewed by the Church.
Chapter Six: Books, Reading, and Writing for a Literate Education in Palestinian Monasticism

As noted, early monasticism has not been considered by scholars as the bailiwick of the lettered. A notable exception is Samuel Rubenson, who describes monks of the fourth, fifth, and sixth centuries as persons capable of reading and writing. Rubenson’s citations, however, refer primarily to the clear literary culture to be found amongst Egyptian monasteries led by the likes of Pachomius, and Rubenson freely admits that explicit sources supporting literate expertise among Palestinian monks are lacking. Indeed, Pachomius’ fourth century rule regarding monastic literacy requirements, worth quoting here in full, is quite explicit:

Whoever enters the monastery uninstructed shall be taught first what he must observe; and when, so taught, he has consented to it all, they shall give him twenty psalms or two of the Apostle’s epistles, or some other part of the Scripture. And if he is illiterate, he shall go at the first, third, and sixth hours to someone who can teach and has been appointed for him. He shall stand before him and learn very studiously with all gratitude. Then the fundamentals of a syllable, the verbs, and nouns shall be written for him, and even if he does not want to, he shall be compelled to read.

In the following rule, Pachomius sets his expectations even higher: “There shall be no one whatever in the monastery who does not learn to read and does not memorize something of the Scriptures. [One should learn by heart] at least the New Testament and the Psalter.”

Such requirements are less clearly enunciated in the Palestinian sources. Through casual mention of reading and the existence of books in monasteries, however, the sources do convey that reading was a common monastic activity. Although these indications are brief and generally unelaborated, they present on the whole a monastic culture of literacy.

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1 Rubenson, “Monasticism and the Philosophical Heritage,” 489-491.
2 Pachomian Koinonia Volume Two, 166. (rule n.139)
3 Ibid, 166. (rule n. 140)
Although I argued above that the monastic practice in Palestine was the same in the spheres of both Gaza and the Judean Desert, I nevertheless organize my treatment of monastic literacy by addressing each of these regions in turn. My separation of the two is not an indication that findings for one region do not apply to the other, but rather to ensure that conclusions drawn from the sources are as accurate to the context as possible. Indeed, by the sixth century these two regions shared a similar monastic culture, as attested by an anecdote in Moschus’ *Spiritual Meadow* where a Judean monastic leader, Abba Zosimus, had ties with the monastery of Dorotheus to the extent that he sent a former robber turned monk to live there so as to escape the authorities. Indeed, Moschus’ *Spiritual Meadow*, contains evidence from both Gaza and the Judean desert and indicates that monasticism in both regions propagated literacy as a necessary underpinning for monastic practice.

**Literacy for Monastic Formation in the Gazan Context**

The first monastic source we have from the Gazan region in the fifth century is the compilation of monastic rules laid down by Abba Isaiah. These rules hint at the culture of literacy present in the monastery, and Isaiah, originally from Egypt and the monastic tradition there, was influenced by Egyptian monastic norms (such as the rules of Pachomius). Isaiah suggests that disciples should study the word of God when they first wake up each morning. The “word of God” would presumably be recorded within books, and Isaiah also offers several rules as to how books should be regarded, significantly indicating that monks could possess their

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4 Moschos, 136. (n. 166)
5 *Abba Isaiah*, 15. Pachomius’ influence may be seen in several of Isaiah’s rules. For example: *Abba Isaiah*, 40, fn. 8, 9, 14.
6 *Abba Isaiah*, 50.
own books.\textsuperscript{7} Isaiah’s \textit{Discourses} also reveal that a visiting monk may be given a book to read, but exhorts that when visiting someone else, a monk left alone in a room should not examine or open a book if unbidden.\textsuperscript{8} Further, Isaiah offers a warning against heretical stances that may be hidden within books, and exhorts monks not to read such a book should one be found.\textsuperscript{9} Isaiah’s \textit{Ascetic Discourses} take for granted that monks were literate, as these specific rules on the use of books in everyday life are offered without condition.

Isaiah is less explicit on how monks became literate, although he lays out guidelines on how monks might teach each other in his rules. He exhorts new monks that are “carrying out [their] manual labour, do not despise it but perform it carefully and in godly fear, lest you fall into the sin of ignorance. Irrespective of the manual labour that you are being taught and without ever being shy, ask your teacher, ‘Please tell me if this is satisfactory, or not.’”\textsuperscript{10} This inter-monk teaching applied even once monks were no longer beginners, as Isaiah also states that “if you happen to be working inside your cell, or building something nearby, or doing any other thing, let the one actually doing the job do as he pleases. And if he says, ‘Please be so kind as to teach me [how to do this] because I do not know’, and there is someone else around who does know, let him not be cruel and say that he does not know, for this is not godly humility.”\textsuperscript{11} While Isaiah does not have rules explicitly governing the teaching of literacy to new illiterate monks, his rules for inter-monk teaching apply to those who need to learn to read the “word of God.” Indeed, Isaiah’s rules indicate that his monastic milieu was a literate one: reading the word of God was an important daily task, books were commonplace, and monks were tasked and exhorted to teach

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{7}Abba Isaiah, 49.
\item \textsuperscript{8} Ibid, 50; 51.
\item \textsuperscript{9} Ibid, 60.
\item \textsuperscript{10} Ibid, 49.
\item \textsuperscript{11} Ibid, 69.
\end{itemize}
their brothers any skills required to accomplish their labours. The Gazan sphere of monasticism in the first half of the fifth century thus seems to be one with a strong culture of literacy.

Strong evidence from the sixth century indicates that monastic literacy continued in Gaza from Abba Isaiah’s time. The massive corpus of letters written by Barsanuphius and John elaborates on the simple existence of literacy hinted at in Isaiah’s Discourses. Indeed, Isaiah’s influence on the Gazan monastic milieu is evidenced in letter 528, within which the writer asks John about a rule laid down by Abba Isaiah.\textsuperscript{12} Isaiah’s obvious influence suggests that the inheritors of the monastic tradition in sixth century Gaza would also have adopted his rules around books and literacy. Indeed, the references to monastic literacy in the Letters take the existence of books and literate monks even more for granted than did Isaiah’s Discourses. The Letters offer hints of a well-established book infrastructure in the monasteries, and provide tantalizing glimpses of a monastic education premised on textual study.

The idea that monasteries possessed their own libraries first came from the monastic rules of Pachomius. His rules contain several indications of a monastic book sharing program. A rule about the storage of thorn-removing tweezers states that “only the housemaster and the second shall have them, and they shall hang in the alcove in which books are placed.”\textsuperscript{13} A later rule implies the monastery possessed enough books for each monk in the community, exhorting that “no one shall leave his book unfastened when he goes to the synaxis or to the refectory.”\textsuperscript{14} The communal ownership of these books, in a library-like format, is indicated in the next rule, which

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{12} Barsanuphius and John: Letters Volume 2, 120-121. (n. 528)  \\
\textsuperscript{13} Pachomian Koinonia Volume Two, 160. (rule n.82)  \\
\textsuperscript{14} Ibid, 162. (rule n.100)
\end{flushleft}
stipulates: “every day at evening, the second shall bring the books from the alcove and shut them in their case.”\textsuperscript{15}

Although such clear statements do not exist in our sources on Palestinian monasticism, letter 326 from the \textit{Letters} of Barsanuphius and John seems to indicate that a similar library system existed at the monastery of Seridus. The writer of this letter explains “I have some books of my own, and my thought tells me to donate these to the monastic community (coenobium) in order to become carefree; then they would be the common property of the monastic community, and each brother would be able to borrow and read them.”\textsuperscript{16} The writer also goes on to ask whether he should also donate his clothes, and how many he should keep for himself. While Barsanuphius has specific instructions on which clothes the disciple should keep, on the donation of the books he writes simply “If you want to distribute your belongings, then it would be a good thing to donate them to the monastic community (coenobium), as you say.”\textsuperscript{17} The uncomplicated manner in which Barsanuphius tells the writer to go ahead with his planned book donation, while offering detailed counsel on clothing, is significant. The lack of detailed instructions on how a book donation would proceed implies that an existing book infrastructure already existed in the coenobium. Indeed, the writer highlights his reasoning for the book donation for the benefit it would hold for “each brother” of the coenobium, that they might read them – an assumption Barsanuphius tacitly accepts by not offering any correction or amendment (which he does for statements he finds problematic in other letters). This letter supports the likelihood that the monastery possessed an established library that was free for all monks to use.

\textsuperscript{15} \textit{Pachomian Koinonia Volume Two}, 162. (rule n. 101). Veilleux notes that Jerome’s edition of this rule states instead “shall number the books from the alcove.” Jerome’s version conveys even more strongly the idea of communal ownership and stewardship over a monastic library.
\textsuperscript{16} \textit{Barsanuphius and John: Letters Volume 1}, 301. (n. 326)
\textsuperscript{17} Ibid, 301. (n. 326)
Such a ready-to-hand collection of books fits with the context of other letters that takes for granted easy and permitted access to written material. For example, the monk who wrote letter 602 seemingly had easy access to the works of potentially heretical authors. The writer asks John “Should we not, then, read even the works of Evagrius.”18 John replies “Do not accept such doctrines from his works; but go ahead and read, if you like, those works that are beneficial for the soul.”19 The above exchange is easily pictured in the context of a newer monk reading the various material available in his coenobium’s library, and seeking clarification as to whether the controversial ideas he was reading were suitable. John’s exhortation to “go ahead and read… those works that are beneficial to the soul” implies that various works were at hand for the inquiring monk. It is otherwise difficult to envision how an individual would have access to a whole variety of monastic-themed books.

Glimpses of a monastic education premised on textual study can be seen in the Letters. Indeed, the basic idea that the monastery was a center of Christian education is touched upon in letter 98, when Barsanuphius draws a parallel between secular schooling and the monastery, writing:

I am astonished how some people, who have spent many years in schools, are yet still learning the alphabet and syllables, when they really ought by now to be accomplished teachers. In the same way, I am also astonished at how those who have spent a long time in the monastic life, and ought to be able to discern the deeper thoughts of others, are nevertheless still besieged by the warfare of novices.20

The literacy-based aspect of monastic education is visible in other letters. As Barsanuphius writes in letter 57, the foremost reason for a monk to be literate would be to study the bible

18 Barsanuphius and John: Letters Volume 2, 183. (n. 602)
19 Ibid, 183. (n. 602)
20 Barsanuphius and John: Letters Volume 1, 121. (n. 98)
independently, “For if you search the Scriptures, you will have greater sobriety and understanding than I.” However, reading Scriptures oneself could be a difficult and potentially perilous undertaking. Letter 469 asks about the proper way to share information obtained through personal reading. The writer asks, “Is it always a good thing or not to tell others about good stories found in Scripture and in the Lives of the Fathers.” John offers a lengthy response, with three main points:

We cannot put all people on an equal footing; indeed, one person can speak without bringing any harm, while another cannot do this… let us speak about those things which contribute to edification, namely, from the Sayings of the Desert Fathers, rather than risking our souls by using accounts from Scripture. For this matter contains a risk for someone who does not understand; [the scriptural words] have been spoken spiritually, and a fleshly person will not be able to discern their spiritual truths… Nevertheless, let this not prevent us from godly conversation about them with others. For it is more beneficial to converse about them in a manner that is according to God than to converse about other inappropriate matters.

John’s response implies that the one asking the question is not yet advanced enough in spiritual formation and may not possess the judgment required to properly communicate the ideas found in Scripture. Instead, he suggests that discussing the Sayings of the Desert Fathers is more straightforward. The idea that the Sayings of the Desert Fathers is an introductory text of sorts is supported by letter 708. The writer seeks to know what to do when those beloved to him are discussing idle matters. The advice he receives is “If you know that they would gladly receive the word of God, then speak from the Lives of the Fathers, and transfer the conversation to the

21 Barsanuphius and John: Letters Volume 1, 71. (n. 57)
22 Barsanuphius and John: Letters Volume 2, 81. (n. 469)
23 Ibid, 81-82. (n. 469)
24 The Sayings of the Desert Fathers and the Lives of the Desert Fathers are the same text. They are referred to in a variety of different ways throughout the Letters. See: Chryssavgis, “Introduction,” 11.
salvation of the soul.” Chryssavgis points out that this intriguing preference that the Sayings be used as an introductory text is repeated many times throughout the Letters. When asked what is best for one to read, Barsanuphius responds “It is also beneficial to read The Lives of the Fathers; for in this way, the intellect is illumined in the Lord.” Indeed, the Sayings are also known as the Apophthegmata, and as mentioned above, have been identified by Lillian Larsen as having a similar structure to protogymnasmata, such that they may have served as a Christian version of these elementary exercises. Barsanuphius and John’s preference in consistently recommending the Sayings as the ideal introductory text thus identifies two stages in the monastic curriculum at Gaza: one should begin with the Sayings of the Desert Fathers before proceeding to studying the Bible.

The idea that the Sayings served as an introductory text for the monks of Gaza is confirmed by a story Moschus relates in his Spiritual Meadow. Moschus visits a monk named Abba Irenaeus who relates how the threat of a barbarian attack forced him to move from his monastery in Scetis, Egypt, to Gaza. Irenaeus relays that he accepted a cell in the Lavra, and upon arriving, “from the elder of the Lavra I received a book of sayings of the elders.” Irenaeus did not express any surprise at receiving a book but reports that “the same day I set myself to read it and as soon as I unrolled the book, I found a passage in which a brother visited an elder…” The story Ireneaus finds makes him realize that he has abandoned his former monastic community, and he sets off immediately to return, but not before he “rewound the book” and

27 Barsanuphius and John: Letters Volume 1, 172. (n. 150)
29 Moschos, 44. (n. 55)
30 Ibid, 44. (n. 55)
“gave the book <back> to the abba.”\textsuperscript{31} This anecdote not only emphasizes the literate culture of Gaza but also suggests that the \textit{Sayings} were an introductory text given to all monastic newcomers.

The curriculum of textual study apparent at Gaza was to be undertaken daily. In letter 85, the Great Old Man answers a query as to how a monk ought to spend his day. He quotes a line from the \textit{Sayings} that a monk “ought to recite the Psalms a little, to repeat by heart a little, to examine and watch your thoughts a little.”\textsuperscript{32} The distinction in studying the Psalms by reciting and repeating by heart is significant and conveys the means by which a monk could gradually memorize the Psalms: by recursively reading it aloud and then repeating as much as possible from memory. Indeed, in this same letter Barsanuphius reminds the monk to “not neglect your reading and prayer” and a later letter conveys the same sentiment: “as for the Psalms, do not stop studying these.”\textsuperscript{33} This idea is also apparent in letter 143, when the correspondent writes Barsanuphius to ask him about a passage he has read. He writes “Since in the \textit{Lives of the Old Men} it is written that one of them used to offer one hundred prayers and another would offer so many prayers, should we, too, have a particular number in mind.”\textsuperscript{34} In response to this, Barsanuphius highlights how monks from different areas of the local monastic community do things differently. He offers that those who live in the scetes “neither observe the Hours nor chant the Odes, but rather do their own manual labor and study and some prayer, each on one’s own.”\textsuperscript{35} He emphasizes, however, how a monk in the coenobium should go about praying, specifically in the evening. He writes: “The same also happens at night: they say twelve Psalms,

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item[31] Moschos, 44. (n. 55)
\item[32] \textit{Barsanuphius and John: Letters Volume 1}, 107. (n. 85)
\item[33] Ibid, 108. (n. 85); 223. (n. 215)
\item[34] Ibid, 166. (n. 143)
\item[35] Ibid, 166. (n. 143). The scete is a group of monastics living under the direction of an elder: \textit{Barsanuphius and John: Letters Volume 1}, 166, fn. 15. The scete is very similar to the lavra.
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but after these Psalms they sit down to their handiwork. If any so wish, they may recite the Psalms by heart; otherwise, one may search one’s thoughts or else read the *Lives of the Fathers*. When one reads, however, one should read five to eight pages and then continue the manual labour.\textsuperscript{36} This letter indicates that both monks of the scetes and those of the coenobium engaged in “study” and “reading” and explicitly identifies that learning happened through reading. Literacy was thus an essential requirement for monks to properly follow the monastic curriculum at Seridus’ monastery.

While the *Letters* contain much evidence of the literacy requirements and the composition of the monastic curriculum at Gaza, they are less vocal about the processes by which illiterate monks would learn their letters. As mentioned above, the monastery of Seridus likely inherited the monastic rules laid down by Abba Isaiah in the preceding century, which in turn were descended from Pachomius’ Egyptian monasticism. Both of these traditions emphasized that monks would teach their brothers the skills they required for a successful monastic life. Such too was likely the case under Barsanuphius and John, and monks who taught others their letters may have considered this service their monastic “manual labour.” This supposition is supported by letter 327. The writer asks:

> Since you have tested me and found me capable of this service in the hospital, declare to me, father, whether I should read some medical books and practice them on my own, or whether I should be free of such matters and avoid them as distracting the intellect and as giving rise to vainglory in me, since I am not vigilant. I could remain content with the knowledge that I already have and perform with oil, fire, ointments, and other such simple things, as are used by those who do not read medical books.\textsuperscript{37}

\textsuperscript{36} *Barsanuphius and John: Letters Volume 1*, 167. (n. 143)  
\textsuperscript{37} Ibid, 302. (n. 327)
In response, Barsanuphius offers that practicing medicine “does not prevent one from practicing piety; you should regard the practice of medicine in the same manner as the brothers’ manual labour.” Barsanuphius’ acknowledgement that “manual labour” was not restricted to physical labour and the weaving of baskets or mats as other monks often did reframes manual labour as doing something to serve the needs of the monastery. Following this reframing, it is possible that literate monks could have taught their fellow monks as one of their contributions to “manual labour.”

The continuation in the sixth century of a monastic curriculum of textual study is apparent in the *Discourses and Sayings* of Dorotheus of Gaza, who attended the monastery of Seridus at the same time that Barsanuphius and John were servings as the community’s spiritual leaders. Indeed, Chryssavgis identifies that nearly a hundred letters from the *Letters* were communiqués between the Great Old Men and Dorotheus. Dorotheus joined the coenobium in the mid-sixth century, followed the monastic curriculum there, and eventually developed in his spiritual formation and became a respected monastic elder himself. Although Dorotheus’ directives are mostly concerned with moral and spiritual matters, a section of the work indicates the continuation of the reading practices glimpsed in Isaiah’s *Discourses*. Echoing the language used by Isaiah, Dorotheus describes what a monk does in his cell, highlighting that “he prays, he studies, he does some manual work, he pits himself against the power of his thoughts.” Monks under Dorotheus were thus engaged in the same manner of textual study that had persisted at Gaza since Isaiah’s time in the fifth century. One would be mistaken to see Dorotheus’ minimal

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38 *Barsanuphius and John: Letters Volume 1*, 302. (n. 327)
41 Wheeler, 61.
42 *Dorotheus of Gaza*, 244. This is an echo of Isaiah’s directives found at: *Abba Isaiah*, 50.
treatment of this matter as a decline in monastic literacy. Instead, reading and studying holy works was such an obvious part of monastic life that Dorotheus took the knowledge for granted and focused instead on moral teachings.

The monastic culture revealed at Gaza in the fifth and sixth centuries is undeniably focused on literacy and textual study. The *Letters* build on hints about monastic literacy to be found in Abba Isaiah’s *Discourses* to reveal a monasticism with a strong grounding in literature study, while Dorotheus’ neglect of the topic emphasizes how taken for granted this practice was. The monastery of Seridus had a library, of such a size that many donated books could be easily accommodated. Monks were encouraged to read from this library, but to focus their study on the *Sayings*, which were a basic text that all new monks should read daily. Monks of all stages of development were also expected to study and memorize Scripture. Monks were expected to dedicate part of their day to manual labour, which was an activity catering to the needs of the monastery, whether weaving baskets, practicing medicine, or perhaps teaching illiterate monks their letters. Studying Scripture and other Christian works was part of a curriculum to achieve understanding and spiritual growth. The monasteries at Gaza of the fifth and sixth centuries may thus be considered as centers of a literate Christian education: perhaps going as far as to teach new illiterate monks their letters, and certainly a place where some individuals could receive a continuing Christian education premised on literate study. Significantly, these monasteries represented educational centers where social and economic standing had no impact on the education that an individual could achieve.
Literacy for Monastic Formation in the Judean Context

Judean Desert monastic sources for the fifth and sixth centuries are even more lacking than the Gazan region. The only monastic sources from this period are hagiographies, which contain limited information about the daily activities of monks. Indeed, there is nothing remotely like the abundant data available in the massive corpus of *Letters*. Our endeavour to understand the monastic culture of literacy in the Judean Desert must thus stem entirely from what can be reconstructed from snippets and hints in the *Lives*.

The *Life of Chariton* contains some telling references to the literacy that existed in the monasteries of the Judean Desert. As mentioned above, Chariton was a founding monk in the region during the fourth century, but his *Life* was not written until the sixth century. As such, monastic practice evident in this work may tentatively reflect the realities of fourth century Judean monasticism and certainly reflected the expectations of the sixth century author. Indeed, the author begins his work by praising the teachings of Chariton, and supports his opinion with reference to Scripture, urging any who wish to see the proof of these teachings to “unroll the holy books… for indeed both Testaments, as well as the writings of the God-inspired church fathers and ascetes, all display as in a picture, by means of the written word, the virtues of the holy men.” Later in the *Life*, the author describes the manner of monastic life that Chariton laid down for his followers. He notes that various hours should be spent in prayer, vigil, and song, and that for the rest of the hours of the day they ought either to “fill their mouth with the holy song of the divine David, at the same time busying their hands with uninterrupted work, each in his own abode, or they may unroll the books inspired by God and speaking with God’s own

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voice, and pluck from them, as though from blooming meadows, the fruit that benefits the soul.”

These two instances in the Life are significant as they convey that early monasticism (fourth century) in the Judean Desert emphasized reading the written word to further one’s spiritual formation. Since this source was composed in the sixth century, we may also see that the literacy practices ascribed to Chariton’s time were also likely those prevalent at the time of composition. Although Chariton does not explain how one was to become literate, this passage testifies to the literacy-based practice of Judean Desert monasticism.

Tangential hints of Judean Desert monastic literacy culture of the fifth century are glimpsed in the fifth century Life of St. Daniel the Stylite. Although, as mentioned above, Daniel never made it to the Judean Desert, he identified it as the preeminent place to practice monasticism and initially saw this region as his destination. Although Daniel received his monastic formation in Samosata, Mesopotamia, it is thus likely that many of the practices in the two regions were similar.

Daniel’s childhood explicitly highlights the strong culture of literacy in the Samosata monasteries. Describing how Daniel received his name, his biographer explains that the archimandrite of a monastery told Daniel “Go, child, and fetch me a book from the table,” and explains that the books were out because “it is a custom in monasteries that many different books should be laid in front of the sanctuary, and whichever book a brother wants he takes and reads.” George likely learned his letters during his time at this monastery and its library. His Life relates that he joined the coenobium when he was twelve years old. No mention is made as

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45 “St. Daniel the Stylite,” 12.
46 Ibid, 8.
to whether he was educated secularly in letters before joining the coenobium, but since hagiographers typically identify if their subjects have had education outside of the monastery, it is unlikely that George knew his letters before joining the brotherhood.\textsuperscript{48} That his parents were average citizens from a small village makes it further unlikely that George had a teacher of letters.\textsuperscript{49} George, however, was certainly literate later in life. His hagiographer relays the moment at which George decided to become a stylite, and states that he found the strength to do so by “taking the Holy Gospel into his hands and opening it with prayer he found the place in which it was written, ‘And thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest, for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways’. And he gave thanks and closed the book.”\textsuperscript{50}

The most likely manner by which Daniel would have gained the literacy to read the Bible, and indeed where he would have obtained his copy, is the coenobium he had lived in as a child.

George’s monastery in Samosata, with its library and likely emphasis on literacy, was George’s reality and expectation for monasticism. When George was newly tonsured he accompanied his abbot to Antioch and stayed in monasteries along the way.\textsuperscript{51} No mention of differing literacy practices are mentioned, which would surely have elicited some comment from his biographer otherwise. Indeed, George’s desire to continue his monastic formation in the Judean Desert suggests that this region had a similar monastic culture as that he had grown up with.

The sixth century \textit{Life} of St. Theodore is also useful for tangentially uncovering the literary culture of the monasteries of the Judean Desert. Whereas George underwent his monastic

\textsuperscript{48} Cyril of Scythopolis, for example, exhaustively relates the upbringing of all his subjects. See below, p. 106-108.
\textsuperscript{49} “St. Daniel the Stylite,” 8.
\textsuperscript{50} Ibid, 19.
\textsuperscript{51} Ibid, 10.
formation in Samosata and desired to continue his ascetic life in the Judean Desert, Theodore took the opposite path, gaining his monastic formation in the Judean Desert at the monastery of Choziba before returning to Galatia where he continued his ascetic life. His biographer, Eleusius, relates that in order to best understand monastic practice, Theodore

visited all the monasteries and the various fathers confined in cells round the city, and the hermits in the inner desert. After receiving a blessing from them he would inquire into the manner of life of each of the more earnest ones, and recorded their answers that he might imitate their example. In his wanderings he came down to the Jordan… and arrived at the neighbouring monastery… called Chouziba.  

This passage makes it clear that Theodore was rigorous in his exploration and self-edification while in the Judean Desert, and that this was the monastic practice he would eventually live by and teach others. This monasticism was one with an emphasis on literacy, since Theodore’s biographer, Eleusius, explains how he came to write this work and writes that “as a child I was brought to him [Theodore] and reared in his holy monastery and was taught letters so far as was necessary by the abbot.” As such, it is quite likely that the monasticism Theodore found in the Judean Desert, and ultimately propagated himself, was one where new illiterate monks would be taught their letters. Furthermore, it is clear that being taught “letters so far as was necessary” meant a fairly comprehensive education – after all, it was sufficient for Eleusius to write the hagiography of Theodore.

The Lives written by Cyril of Scythopolis, discussing Judean monks of the fifth and sixth centuries, is far sparser than the other sources I have presented in terms of discussing the tools of literacy. Cyril’s work, however, provides an excellent description of the varied social and educational backgrounds of the seven monks he writes about. Euthymius was of noble birth, and

52 “St. Theodore of Sykeon,” 104.
53 Ibid, 184.
was accepted as a child into the Church, where he was educated in letters and Scripture by two men, Acacius and Synodius, who had themselves been educated in secular culture and Sacred Scriptures.\textsuperscript{54} In contrast, Sabas was born to a humble family, joined the monastery of Flavianae when he was eight years old, and there “received a strict education in the monastic life and had in a short time learnt both the psalter and the rest of the observance of the cenobitic rule.”\textsuperscript{55} Cyril writes less about the background of John the Hesychast, noting only that he was born into a very well-off family and that he “received a Christian upbringing along with his brothers.”\textsuperscript{56} John’s status, however, along with him founding his own monastery when he was eighteen, makes it likely that John was educated in the \textit{paideia} tradition rather than from his time as a monastic.

The \textit{Life} of Cyriacus relates that he was born to a family of the Church, for his father was a priest in Corinth.\textsuperscript{57} Cyril does not relate his education per se, but mentions that he was made a lector in the church when he was a child, and read the Scriptures during this time: meaning that he was not taught his letters in the monastery.\textsuperscript{58} Theodosius was much the same as Cyriacus, spending his childhood as a cantor in the church of Comana, near Caesarea, where he was “accurately instructed in the office of the Church and learnt thoroughly the psalter and the other holy Scriptures.”\textsuperscript{59} The \textit{Life} of Theognius is the shortest and contains the least information of the seven \textit{Lives}. Of Theognius’ formation, Cyril relates simply that he spent his childhood in Ararathia, Cappadocia, where “from early youth he was instructed in the monastic life.”\textsuperscript{60}

\textsuperscript{54} \textit{Lives of the Monks of Palestine}, 4, 7.
\textsuperscript{55} Ibid, 94, 95.
\textsuperscript{56} Ibid, 220.
\textsuperscript{57} Ibid, 245.
\textsuperscript{59} \textit{Lives of the Monks of Palestine}, 262.
\textsuperscript{60} Ibid, 269.
Finally, Cyril writes equally sparsely of Abraamius’ upbringing and education, explaining that he was from Emesa, had joined a monastery at an early age, and received there “an excellent formation in the monastic life.”

This sampling of monastic individuals allows us to see the diversity of backgrounds that were present in the monasteries of the Judean Desert. Of the seven, Euthymius and John the Hesychast came from wealthy families, who likely educated them in the paideia system according to common practice. Cyriacus and Theodosius joined the ranks of the Church as children, and were educated in their letters, though whether from individuals of the Church or from a secular teacher of letters is impossible to say. Finally, Sabas, Theognius, and Abraamius all joined monasteries when they were children, and learned all the requirements of monasticism by this means. For Sabas, we see explicitly that he learned the psalter, but for the other two we can only assume that their monastic formation must have included learning the psalter as well. Learning the psalter was likely accomplished through repetitive readings, only possible once the new monks had been taught their letters. Since these three individuals joined the monastery as children, they were likely taught all of these skills in the monastery itself. Indeed, this sampling of diverse individuals who were all part of the Judean monastic scene conveys that there were certainly lettered individuals, indeed even individuals of advanced paideia, who could teach new illiterate monks. Literacy and textual study would have been essential to furthering spiritual advancement and practice.

In addition to the composition of individuals in the Judean monasteries, hints of the culture of literacy extant in the Judean desert monasticism may be gathered by examining Cyril

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himself. Cyril spent his childhood in Scythopolis, Palestine, where he was taught the Psalter and was ordained as a lector thanks to the intervention of Sabas.62 Cyril then became a monk when he was eighteen years old, ultimately joining the monastery of Euthymius.63 These details allow us to compare the educational background of Cyril himself to the individuals he writes about. Cyril likely learned his letters as a child through the Church. His life as a monk, however, was certainly one where his literacy was valued and an essential part of his monasticism. Conveying the process by which he undertook to write the Lives, Cyril relates that he gathered information and personal accounts from various monks in the Judean Desert, and that he recorded these details “on various sheets in disorganized and jumbled accounts.”64 Cyril writes that John the Hesychast encouraged him to continue his work, and thus he “left the cenobium and settled in the New Laura, taking with me the pages I had written on Euthymius and Sabas.”65 Cyril records that he then spent the next two years as a hermit, working on the Lives. He writes: “I was at a loss how to begin the composition since I was uncultivated and had been through nothing in the way of secular education; in addition, I was ignorant of the divine Scriptures and also slow of speech.”66 John Binns notes, however, that we cannot take Cyril’s protestations too literally as claiming to be ignorant was a common feature of writings from the period.67 While Binns is likely correct that Cyril was exaggerating his ineptitude, he was certainly truthful in relaying that he had no secular education: as noted above, Cyril likely became literate as a child through the Church. Nevertheless, Cyril produced a work of high quality, a task that he undertook as part of

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62 Lives of the Monks of Palestine, 189, 190.
63 Ibid, 235.
64 Ibid, 81. The original Greek of “various sheets” is “διαφόροις χάρταις”: Kyrillos von Skythopolis, 83, ln. 6. The use of χάρταις is instructive as it refers most likely to papyrus, see: T. C. Skeat, “Was Papyrus Regarded as « Cheap » or « Expensive » in the Ancient World?,” Aegyptus 75, no. 1/2 (1995): 75-93, 77.
65 Lives of the Monks of Palestine, 82.
66 Ibid, 82.
his monastic duties, with access in the monasteries to the materials required for the composition of this work: ink, writing utensils, and papyrus, as well as the ability to reference Christian works from the monastic library. The support, both financial and otherwise, which Cyril received demonstrates the high value placed by Judean monastics on literacy.

A final source from the end of the sixth century illuminates the culture of literacy that persisted in Palestinian monasticism. John Moschus’ *Spiritual Meadow* is a collection of tales he compiled as he travelled throughout Palestine and Egypt. As mentioned above, this work contains an anecdote supporting Lorenzo Perrone’s conclusion that the two monastic zones of Gaza and the Judean Desert shared significant similarities and ought to be considered as a whole.\(^{68}\) Although the information from Moschus’ anecdotes applies to Palestinian monasticism as a whole, I have included it in the discussion on Judean desert monasticism because Moschus received his own monastic formation there and many of his anecdotes specifically feature monks of the Judean desert.\(^{69}\) Although Moschus compiled these stories at the end of the sixth century, many of the events he relates were told to him in a tradition of oral history from individuals operating in the mid-sixth century.\(^{70}\) Although this work is a disparate collection of tales, the information that can be gathered from it is invaluable and describes a monastic world with a strong culture of literacy.

Moschus’ anecdotes from the Judean Desert reveal a monasticism that valued reading and clarify how books were used and circulated. Moschus relates a tale told to him by Abba Cyriacus

\(^{68}\) Perrone, 20. The anecdote linking the two zones: above, p. 91.

\(^{69}\) Wortley, xvii-xviii.

\(^{70}\) For example, Moschus relates an anecdote about Abba Conon, who, as I explore later, was active during the council of Constantinople in 553. See below, p. 146-147.
about a vision he once had of the Virgin Mary visiting him. She disapproved of the contents of his cell, and Cyriacus relates that he

rose up and took up a scroll, intending to read it, thinking that perhaps reading would alleviate my distress. It was a book I had borrowed from Hesychios, priest of Jerusalem. I unwound it and found two writings of the irreligious Nestorios written at the end of it… so I rose up and went off and gave the book back to him who had given it to me. I said to him: ‘Take your book back, brother, for I have not derived as much benefit from it as it has brought adversity upon me’… when he had heard about it all, he immediately cut the writings of Nestorios off from the scroll and threw the piece into the fire, saying… [that] shall not remain in my cell either.  

Cyriacus sought to read when he was spiritually distressed, which suggests that reading was viewed by monastics not only as a means to learn and memorize Scripture, but also a means by which monks might achieve spiritual peace. In addition, this anecdote indicates a culture that valued the exchange and sharing of information and learning. Hesychius willingly lent his book to his friend Cyriacus and was as appalled as he was to discover that it contained “incorrect” content.

Aside from indicating the value of reading for lavritic monks, Moschus also emphasizes the importance monks ascribed to Bible ownership. He relates the story of an anchorite, Theodore, who came to see Abba John and asked him to “find me a book which contains all the New Testament.” John was able to find a beautiful parchment copy of such a book from a fellow monk, Abba Peter. Indeed, the book was so fine that Abba Peter priced its worth at three pieces of gold. He gave it away freely, however, on hearing that it was an anchorite who wanted it, and indeed offered three gold pieces in addition to the gift of the book. Theodore took the book happily and went back into the wilderness. Two months later, however, he returned to

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71 Moschos, 37-38. (n. 46)
72 Ibid, 110. (n. 134)
73 The book was “written on extremely fine skins”: Ibid, 110. (n. 134)
Abba John and told him that he was troubled that he had received the book for free. He insisted on earning the money required to pay for the book in full, but needed to borrow a tunic from Abba John first because he was so devoid of worldly possessions that he was naked. Theodore worked as a manual labourer, earning five coppers a day until he earned the full three pieces of gold. Satisfied that he had paid his debts, Theodore then returned to the wilderness. Although there is no certainty that Theodore desired the copy of the New Testament so that he could read it, this story still illuminates several aspects of literate culture in the Judean Desert. The readiness with which John, by making enquiries, was able to find a fellow monk with a copy of the New Testament suggests that Bible ownership and availability was common. Indeed, that Peter had a copy of the New Testament available for sale suggests that he had more than one copy of the work. In fact, Peter may have had this book for sale because he had manufactured it himself. As Blummel suggests in his discussion of the Oxyrhynchus papyri, monks of late antiquity likely produced copies of books in their possession as a means of earning money for their monastery. Although Blummel’s evidence stems from the Egyptian monastic context, a parallel practice likely also occurred in the Judean Desert. As I elaborate below, book copying was a lucrative practice, and it may explain how Abba Peter had such a fine book in addition to three gold pieces that he was willing to give away. This tale allows us to conclude several details about Judean monasticism: the Bible was considered by even the most ascetic monk as a spiritual necessity rather than a material luxury, monks were possibly producers of books as well as

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74 Moschos, 110-111. (n. 134)
75 The Bible was thought to have inherent spiritual power and Theodore may have wanted a copy for what it symbolized rather than to read it. See for example, the presence of scripture at ecumenical councils: below, p. 137. See also: Claudia Rapp, “Holy Texts, Holy Men, and Holy Scribes: Aspects of Scriptural Holiness in Late Antiquity,” in The Early Christian Book, ed. William Klingshirn and Linda Safran (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 2007), 194-222, 196-200.
76 Blummel, 181.
consumers of them, and information about who had books for sale was common knowledge in monastic circles.

Although the above story does not confirm whether the anchorite Theodore was literate, Moschus presents several other accounts of ascetic anchorites who owned bibles as well as accounts that indicate that anchorites could write and did so as part of their monastic practice. Moschus visited a monastery near Anazarbus, in southern Anatolia, and learned that an ascetic anchorite named Julian had spent seventy years in a cave, owning only “a hair shirt, a cloak, a book of the gospels, and a wooden bowl.”77 Similarly, Moschus relates a tale he heard from two monks near Rossos, who explained how they had been led to the cave of an anchorite by miraculous visions. They told Moschus that he was dead when they found him, and that he was “holding a gospel-book <enhanced with> a silver cross” and that next to him were “writing-tablets inscribed thus: ‘I, the unworthy John, died in the fifteenth indiction’.”78 The anchorite’s ownership of a writing-tablet indicates that he engaged in writing on a regular basis as part of his monastic practice.

The use of writing to communicate from beyond the grave is featured in a few other tales from Moschus, and emphasizes the writing skills monks other than anchorites possessed. He tells in one story how a monk was found dead with a piece of broken pottery next to him upon which he had written a message.79 In another story, Abba Gregory of Byzantium and Abba Gregory from Pharan become stranded on a deserted island without water. They are later discovered dead.

77 Moschos, 42. (n. 51)
78 Ibid, 70. (n. 87)
79 Ibid, 80. (n. 98)
with a message next to them written on a tortoise shell glorifying how they were both able to survive for weeks without water.\textsuperscript{80}

The ubiquity of monastic writing is especially apparent in a tale Moschus relates about his own monastic formation. Moschus relays the advice offered to him by Abba Cosmas from the Lavra of Pharôn, in the Judean Desert. Cosmas treasured the sayings of Saint Athanasius of Alexandria to such an extent that he encouraged Moschus that “when you come across a saying of Athanasios the Great, if you have no paper, write it on your clothing.”\textsuperscript{81} Moschus’ monastic formation clearly included literate elements. It is thus no surprise that he presents stories of monks reading and writing with such banality. Their literacy is not unusual, and was simply a part of a well-established literate monastic culture.

Moschus’ banal acceptance of monastic literacy is evident in anecdotes he conveys from Egypt. The way he presents these stories as the norm reinforces the literate reality of Judean Desert monasticism. For example, Moschus relays a story told to him by a bandit in Egypt in which the latter “saw [a] monk on the mountain holding a book and reading.”\textsuperscript{82} In another tale, Moschus paradoxically affirms the norm of book ownership when telling of an old monk who rejected all worldly possessions and “not even for one hour did he ever possess books, money or clothing.”\textsuperscript{83}

Moschus’ collection of anecdotes explicitly reinforces the culture of literacy only alluded to in other Judean desert monastic sources from the fifth and sixth centuries. Judean Desert monasticism had a strong literate basis, where it seems likely that new monks were taught their

\textsuperscript{80} Moschos, 99. (n. 121)
\textsuperscript{81} Ibid, 32. (n. 40)
\textsuperscript{82} Ibid, 109. (n. 133)
\textsuperscript{83} Ibid, 153. (n. 184)
letters and encouraged, as Moschus was, to record in writing useful teachings. Books were readily available from monastic libraries, and monks likely contributed to these libraries by copying works they owned. The emphasis on literacy was reflected across all types of monks, from ascetic anchorites to those of the lavra and coenobium. Indeed, monks such as Cyril of Scythopolis were encouraged by their brothers to take on large writing projects. Judean Desert monasticism had a strong literate culture, with an especial emphasis on studying and owning the Bible.

As I have explored in this chapter, Palestinian monasticism in both the Gazan and Judean contexts exhibited a culture of literacy. Monastic primary sources from the fifth and sixth centuries indicate a thriving and ubiquitous use and ownership of books and other writing-related materials. In the words of Eleusius, new illiterate monks might be “taught letters so far as was necessary” for their monastic practice.84 This literate requirement was an inheritance from the founding Egyptian monasticism of Pachomius, and although later monastic Rules did not enunciate or elaborate this necessity as clearly as Pachomius’, it nevertheless persisted as the sine qua non for monastic formation. This basic tenet is most visible from the implicit assumptions surrounding mentions of praying, learning, and book usage. This literate requirement is most clearly seen in the monastic milieu of Gaza, where newcomers were given the Sayings as the beginning of their monastic curriculum. While this section has established that Palestinian monasteries contained the tools of literacy, I explore next the extent to which monasteries were hubs of literacy, looking at the economic requirements of the book trade and demonstrating how monasteries would have been able to afford expansive book collections.

84 “St. Theodore of Sykeon,” 184.
Chapter Seven: Monastic Economy and the Acquisition of Literacy Resources

Monastic Possessions and Wealth

As discussed above, scholars examining early monasticism emphasize its ascetic aspects, especially the renunciation of worldly possessions. Although I presented evidence in the preceding section that the monks of Palestine made use of books, the extent of book possession in monastic communities is a persistent question. Scholars such as Marilyn Dunn cite Basil’s opinion on the ownership of possessions to emphasize that monastics avoided wealth. Dunn writes that “involvement with material possessions hinders the monk from the achievement of total impassivity and detachment from the world, from the prospect of the spiritual refashioning of the self” and emphasizes that monastic toil had but two purposes: to provide the community’s own subsistence and for charitable purposes.¹ The practical interpretation of this “subsistence” ideal in Palestine, however, meant that coenobia operated with a fair degree of resources at their disposal.²

There is ample evidence from the Judean and Gazan monastic spheres that monks maintained some possessions while living in a monastic community. For example, the Rules of Isaiah contain guidelines about how a monk should act when returning to a cell he has left to another monk, on which cell the first owner has spent personal money to upgrade.³ The Letters of Barsanuphius and John also clearly dismiss the notion of total material renunciation, as they

¹ Dunn, 37-38.
² For example, see recent work addressing rural monasteries’ impact on economic functioning: Jacob Ashkenazi and Mordechai Aviam, “Monasteries and Villages: Rural Economy and Religious Interdependency in Late Antique Palestine,” Vigiliae Christianae 71 (2017): 117-133.
³ Abba Isaiah, 59.
clarify in letter 254: “the statement ‘Behold, we have left everything and have followed you’ is about perfection; it is not about property and small amounts of money, but about thoughts and desires… as for your property, keep it for now for your nurture.” Indeed, this revised sentiment towards possessions is evident from Yizhar Hirschfeld’s comprehensive examination of Judean Desert monastic income, which highlights that monasteries gained significant economic capital from a variety of sources, including personal donations of cash and property (from both new monks and wealthy patrons), imperial support, and the labour of the monks themselves. These various incomes allowed monastic communities to amass significant wealth. Hirschfeld cites the *Life of Euthymius* in which Cyril indicates that the monks had a common coffer containing six hundred gold coins. Moschus’ *Spiritual Meadow* also testifies to the lesser but significant sums of money that individual monks controlled; this amounts to far more money than the narrative of monks as ascetics renouncing worldly goods might lead us to believe. For example, Moschus writes the tale of the sick Abba Auxanôn who was sent six pieces of gold by Abba Conon of the Lavra of Sabas. Auxanôn sent the money back with the message that he had himself already ten pieces of gold, but would send another message if he had need of additional funds.

The purchasing power of this gold was significant. Hirschfeld uses the calculations of Cyril Mango to estimate the daily wage of a manual labourer at 1/30 of a gold solidus. This figure is near to that offered in a story already mentioned from the *Spiritual Meadow*, in which

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4 *Barsanuphius and John: Letters Volume 1*, 258. (n. 254)
5 Hirschfeld, *Judean Desert Monasteries*, 102-104.
6 Ibid, 104.
7 The idea that true monks renounce all worldly property came from the early and influential Anthony, and was echoed firmly by Pachomian monasticism: Dunn, 30.
8 Moschos, 33. (n. 42) See also the story of the monk with three pieces of gold in his cell: 191. (n. 212)
an anchoritic monk performed manual labour for five coppers a day.\(^{10}\) According to John Wortley, one gold solidus was worth 288 copper coins, and so the monk was being paid just shy of 1/60 of a gold solidus for his daily labour.\(^{11}\) Although Hirschfeld’s figure for the daily pay of a labourer is double that which the monk earned from the *Spiritual Meadow* (perhaps because the monk was unskilled), the figures still illustrate the vast sum of money that the three hundred gold pieces owned by Euthymius’ monastery represented: 9,000 to 18,000 days of labour (depending on which labour rate is used), or thirty to sixty years’ worth of salary (assuming 300 working days a year). Even the gold owned by Abba Auxanôn and Abba Conon represents a fair sum, as the sixteen gold coins they both possessed were worth one and a half to three years of a labourer’s earnings. These amassed sums of gold are especially noteworthy because they likely constituted the monks’ savings rather than funds that were actively needed for the essentials of life.

With the goal of self-sufficiency in mind, monks engaged in daily labour as part of their monastic practice. Hirschfeld notes that monks cultivated their own agricultural fields, and supplemented their crop gains through the proceeds gained by manufacturing and selling products such as baskets, mats, rope, and pottery.\(^{12}\) Monks were thus successful in their bid for self-sufficiency, and extra money was used to fund the expansive building projects that saw the foundation of many new monasteries during the fifth and sixth centuries.\(^{13}\) Such funds could also be used to improve the infrastructure of existing monasteries, which reasonably would have included new furnishings as required. Thus the tools of literacy, especially the procurement of

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\(^{10}\) Moschos, 110. (n. 134)  
\(^{11}\) Wortley offers equivalencies which I have used to calculate the cited sum. One *keration* was equal to twelve *pholleis* (translated as copper coins). Twenty four *keratia* were equal to one gold *nomisma*, also known as a *solidus*. Wortley, 231.  
\(^{12}\) Hirschfeld, *Judean Desert Monasteries*, 104-105.  
\(^{13}\) Ibid, 102.
books, would have been funded by extensive donated capital. Indeed, books might also be procured from book donations made to the monastery by new monks.14

Monastic Book Production

An alternative to buying books likely existed for certain Palestinian monasteries: they could produce them themselves. The role played by monks and monasteries in book production has been well-established for Late Antique Egypt in several recent publications.15 Chrisy Kotsifou pulls together multiple primary sources attesting to monastic book production to argue that Christian books were produced primarily within the confines of monastic or other ascetic communities.16 Kotsifou proposes that nearly every monastery would have had its own scribe, especially the “large monastic communities, for example the Epiphanius and the Pachomian monasteries… and that they even employed groups of scribes who could copy not only for their own monastery but also for other, maybe smaller, monastic communities.”17 Her research finds that by the sixth century, “Homer could be written in the same style as the New Testament” indicating that either “pagan and Christian books were written by monks or that monks were in close relation to possible lay scribes.”18 Kotsifou describes the book production process by referencing letters found on ostraca and papyri in which monks are commissioned to copy

14 See the example from Gaza, above: p. 92.
17 Ibid, 55.
18 Ibid, 56.
books. Based on these examples, monks would procure the materials for the production of a new book (whether parchment or papyrus) while the commissioner provided the original to be copied. This rule likely only applied to books that the monk did not themselves own, however, as Kotsifou writes that people often commissioned specific books of the Bible, originals of which monks would certainly have had on hand from which to copy.

While monastic book production in Late Antiquity has been well researched for the Egyptian setting, no similar project has been undertaken for Palestinian monasticism. It is likely, however, that book production happened to some extent in the Palestinian milieu as literate Palestinian monks, descended from the Egyptian monastic tradition, paralleled their brothers in book copying. This idea is also supported by a tale from Moschus’ *Spiritual Meadow*, in which he identifies a monk of Palestinian monastic formation as a calligrapher. Moschus describes two urban monks in Alexandria who had died: Abba Theodore the Philosopher, and Zoïlus the Reader. Moschus explains that he was well acquainted with Zoïlus because they “shared the same homeland and up-bringing” and describes how “calligraphy was his [Zoïlus’] occupation.

The original Greek and Latin of these passages is instructive. Moschus describes his familiarity with Zoïlus from “communis nobis esset patria et educatio” or in Greek “κοινήν ἔχειν τὴν πατρίδα καὶ τὴν ἀναστροφὴν” and his occupation is related as “exercebat autem se in scribendo libros” and in Greek “ἐσχόλαζεν δὲ εἰς τὰ καλιγραφία.” Moschus was born in Damascus and was tonsured as a monk at the Monastery of Saint Theodosius in the Judean Desert. He there received his basic

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20 Ibid, 53-54.
21 Moschos, 139. (n. 171)
22 Ibid, 140. (n. 171)
23 Moschus, *Patrologia Graeca*, 3037-3038. (Caput CLXXI). Kotsifou relates that the Greek term for a scribe of literary texts is a καλιγράφος: Kotsifou, “Books and Book Production,” 60, fn. 41. See also: Lampe, 697. A calligrapher was the most skilled and expensive scribe one could hire in Late Antiquity: Maravela-Solbakk, 25.
monastic training before moving to the nearby Monastery of Pharan to continue his monastic practice. When Moschus relates that he and Zoïlus shared the same “patria/πατρίδα” and “educatio/ἀναστροφήν,” his meaning is doubtless that Zoïlus was also born in the region of Damascus and received his education in the Judean Desert. It is probable then that Zoïlus received his training as a “scribendo libros” or in “καλιγραφία” in the Judean Desert. Indeed, this supposition is strengthened when considering that Moschus himself was strongly literate from his time in the monasteries, with the writing skills required to record and collate the many stories found in the *Spiritual Meadow*. Zoïlus’ likely training as a calligrapher in the Judean Desert thus provides some indication that monasteries there were indeed emulating their Egyptian colleagues as centers of book production.

One further tale from Moschus, already presented above, also supports the idea that book production was occurring in Judean monasteries. It is telling that a Judean anchorite was able to find a complete copy of the New Testament, available for sale from Abba Peter. As Kotsifou emphasizes, books were expensive not from the materials from which they were made, but rather for the extensive skilled labour that was required to produce one. Indeed, copying a book took a long time and Maravela-Solbakk presents several examples of individuals who had commissioned books urging the scribe to work as quickly as possible. Abba Peter’s willingness to part with his very fine copy of the New Testament thus implies that it was relatively easily

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24 Wortley, xvii-xviii.
25 Lampe suggests “mode of life” as the translation for ἀναστροφήν, and emphasizes the religious qualities of this word: Lampe, 125.
26 Whether Moschus was literate before coming to the Judean monastic sphere is impossible to say. However, he certainly honed his literacy skills during his ten years as a monk in the Judean Desert: Moschos, 32. (n. 40). Had he not, it is unlikely he would have decided to travel as he did to write down the stories of various monastics.
27 This anecdote was presented above, p. 111-112.
29 Maravela-Solbakk, 31-32.
replaceable, or, more likely, that it was a copy Abba Peter had made explicitly to sell. Either possibility supports the proposition that Judean monasteries produced their own books.

Copying for Education

While it is not certain that Judean Desert monasteries served in the same book copying capacity as their Egyptian brothers, Palestinian monks likely copied Christian works as part of their monastic education. Indeed, Claudia Rapp proposed some time ago that one of the first steps a monk might take in his monastic education would be to create for himself a copy of the Bible, which he would then keep for life.30 In a more recent article, Rapp reaffirms this idea and communicates the importance and benefit which monks would have ascribed to copying Christian works. She writes:

The copying of scripture was not just a mechanical activity but carried enormous spiritual significance for the copyist. According to ancient custom, the reading or writing of any text was accompanied by speaking or murmuring the words as the eye or the hand moved over the page. The physical act of writing out a text also aids in its memorization… In the monastic context, the act of copying simultaneously served the purpose of learning the scriptures by heart and engaging in lectio divina, having the word of God constantly on one’s lips.31

Rapp cites an example of such practice as evidenced by some papyri found in the cell of a sixth century Egyptian anchorite.32 Anastasia Maravela-Solbakk clarifies that the monk copied psalms onto these scraps of papyrus, likely for his own edification.33 The practice of copying Christian

32 Ibid, 206.
33 Maravela-Solbakk, 30.
works with the dual goals of memorizing them and engaging in active prayer certainly fits into the Palestinian monastic context. As I indicated above, Palestinian sources emphasized that monks should pray daily and study the divine works, found most explicitly in the Letters of Barsanuphius and John, the Rules of Isaiah, and the exhortations offered in the Lives of Cyril of Scythopolis. In addition, a source from the Palestinian fifth century context directly supports Rapp’s proposal that monks copied Christian works for themselves. Rapp highlights a passage in Isaiah’s Discourses that states: “if you make for yourself a book, do not take care about its decoration, for this will be your passion.” Rapp’s proposition that monks copied Christian works for their own benefit thus likely applies to the Palestinian context.

While copying Christian works for the purpose of education was a literate pursuit, the distinction in skill between this practice and formally producing books needs to be highlighted. Kotsifou looks at the various skill levels apparent in copies of works found on papyrus and concludes that the “level of literacy of scribes was high, or at least higher than the rest of their [monastic] community.” Such a difference in literacy skill had long been recognized in Late Antiquity, and was valued differently, with Diocletian’s price edict of 301 CE stipulating that a top notch scribe (καλλιγράφοι) should earn 25 denarii per 100 lines copied, while copyists of

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34 Rapp, “Holy Texts, Holy Men, and Holy Scribes,” 206. This translation is likely correct, although Chryssavgis translates this passage as “if you buy a book for yourself” (emphasis mine): Abba Isaiah, 49. Rapp’s translation came from a French translation of a seventeenth century Greek text. The original Greek text indeed relates the relevant passage as “ἐὰν ποιήσῃς σαυτῷ βιβλίον,” with the operative verb “make”: Isaiah, Tu hosiu patros hēmon abba Hēsaïu Logoi 29, ed. Soterios Schoinas (Volos: 1962), 43. A Latin version of this work from the twelfth century gives the passage as “si librum tibi ipse compegeris,” with the operative verb being “bind” or “construct”: Isaias, “Orationes” in Patrologia Graeca 40, ed. J. - P. Migne (1863), 1105-1205, 1109. Similarly, a French translation of a Coptic version of the text from the tenth/eleventh century conveys the passage as “si tu te fais un livre,” with the verb “make”: Antoine Guillaumont (ed), L’Asceticon Copte de L’Abbé Isaië (Caire: Imprimerie de l’institut français d’archéologie orientale, 1956), 54. Chryssavgis’ English edition was translated from a compilation of several extant Greek versions, ranging over many centuries. It is thus impossible to know from which manuscript Chryssavgis translated the verb “buy,” and I was unable to analyze it further.

lesser skill were recompensed accordingly.\textsuperscript{36} Significantly, Kotsifou offers a compelling argument that eventually “scribes could be trained in monasteries as part of the education an elder passed to a novice.”\textsuperscript{37} This idea is highly relevant to the Palestinian context, where, as argued above, there is evidence of basic copying as well as expert scribing in the form of Zoïlus engaging in καλιγραφία. Thus, while Palestinian monasteries had highly skilled scribes such as Zoïlos, Abba Peter, Cyril of Scythopolis, and John Moschus among their ranks, most monks would have possessed a far more basic level of scribing.

**Teaching Literacy as Monastic Labour**

The sources I presented above are very clear in describing how books were ubiquitous in the Palestinian monastic context. Explicit references to teaching illiterate monks their letters, however, are nearly completely absent.\textsuperscript{38} Indeed, the monastic sources are silent when it comes to describing any teaching practices that occurred so that new monks could learn while living in the monastery. All monks constantly engaged in “manual labour,” however, and other services for the good of the monastery.\textsuperscript{39} The idea of labour was central to the functioning of the monastery, allowing the community to survive as a unit in otherwise inhospitable locations, while also providing monks with an income. The *Discourses* of Isaiah mention the importance of

\textsuperscript{36} Maravela-Solbakk, 25.

\textsuperscript{37} Kotsifou, “Books and Book Production,” 57. See also fn. 30. Kotsifou offers that Claudia Rapp’s comment on scribal training “there is no indication in the sources to suggest that it was provided within the monasteries” is unnecessarily unconditional. She offers the monastery of Shenoute as an example, which certainly had a cultivated environment where monks discussed theological questions and produced Coptic literature. According to Kotsifou, to ignore such hints of scribal training from a lack of explicit textual evidence is negligent.

\textsuperscript{38} I presented an exception to this trend above, in the case of Eleusius who was taught his letters in the monastery of Theodore of Sykeon: p. 106.

\textsuperscript{39} This term is translated from the Latin “opus” or the verbal “operare,” sometimes with the modifier “manibus.” The Greek word is “ἐργόχειρον,” which the Patristic Greek Lexicon confirms is somewhat ambiguous in meaning, providing “handiwork” or “handicraft” of monks as the translation: Lampe, 547.
“manual labour” on several occasions, but do not clearly define what activities are included in this description. Indeed, the general nature of this term and how it was taught by more experienced monks is conveyed by a section of the rules directed at beginner monks:

“Irrespective of the manual labor that you are being taught and without ever being shy, ask your teacher, ‘Please tell me if this is satisfactory, or not’.”40 This passage communicates that there were two parts to “manual labour” when it came to beginner monks: the beginner ostensibly doing the labour, and the experienced monk teaching how the labour was done. Isaiah offers many instances indicating that manual labour happened only in a monk’s cell.41 He also highlights that manual labour produced goods that could be sold.42 The teacher-student aspect of labour is also apparent in letter 215 from Barsanuphius and John, in which a novice monk is told “as for your manual labor, do whatever you are told, and you will be saved in the name of God.”43

While crafting was certainly the monastic labour most often undertaken, Palestinian monks of Late Antiquity were not limited to these activities. As suggested above, letter 327 from Barsanuphius and John indicates that the idea of “manual labour” was more fluid than a set list of crafting activities. A monk skilled in medicine is told that he “should regard the practice of medicine in the same manner as the brothers’ manual labour.”44 It thus certainly seems possible that caring for a new monk by teaching them their letters might also have been considered “manual labour.” Recognizing that teaching new monks may have constituted a form of manual labour would explain how literacy, and indeed, other aspects of monastic practice were taught in

40 Abba Isaiah, 49.
41 Ibid, 58, 71, 96.
42 Ibid, 58.
43 Barsanuphius and John: Letters Volume 1, 223. (n. 215)
44 Ibid, 302. (n. 327)
the monastery. On this understanding, learning literacy would have been seen as a form of studying and praying for new monks, while teaching literacy would be a form of manual labour for more experienced monks. This model would also explain why monastic sources are so silent about teaching practices: they are included in the catchall term of monastic labour.

I have argued in the past two chapters for the ubiquity of books and literacy among the Palestinian monasteries of the fifth and sixth centuries. My treatment of this topic has highlighted the economic capacity monasteries had to keep extensive monastic libraries. In addition, I have underscored the likelihood that Palestinian monks copied books: most for their own study and edification, but some as quality copies to be sold or added to monastic libraries. It seems likely that new illiterate monks were taught their letters by more advanced monks, and a text-based curriculum may perhaps be discerned whereby new monks would study the Sayings before moving on to Scripture. The development, or even production, of literate monks, learned in the corpus of key Christian works, meant that Palestinian monasteries served as *de facto* centers of education producing Christian “experts.” As I argue in the next chapter, the perception that Palestinian monastics were educated is evident at the local level. This educated status was also recognized in the ecclesiastical and imperial spheres, and was most developed by the sixth century. Highlighting the prescriptions that ecclesiastical and imperial authorities imposed on monastics also provides further evidence to describe the literate practice underpinning Palestinian monasticism.
Chapter Eight: Literate Palestinian Monks as Christian Experts

Palestinian Monks as Christian Experts: Local Perceptions

In a revolutionary essay entitled “The Rise and Function of the Holy Man in Late Antiquity,” Peter Brown describes the societal needs fulfilled by the holy ascetic in the fifth and sixth centuries. He positions the holy man as holding the role of spiritual intercessor, gained through a life dedicated to prayer and worldly renunciation, a “professional in a world of amateurs.”¹ Brown also highlights, however, the uncertainty Late Antique society exhibited when attributing spiritual power: “power in society… was blatantly based on ‘achieved status’.”² Averil Cameron reinforces the tenuous hold Christian ascetics had on spiritual power, highlighting the different options available to early Christians seeking spiritual advisors.³ In a world where anyone could claim divine connection, Palestinian monks surely had qualities that elevated them above their spiritual competition. I propose that Palestinian monks accomplished this feat because in addition to acting as spiritual intercessors, their extensive study of Scripture and Christian works made them “experts” in Christian matters. This textual study enabled them to speak with authority, and indeed to provide guidance recognizable by petitioners as premised on Scripture.⁴ In other words, I propose that the interactions between monastics and their local community reveal that monks had more learning than just an ascetic “lived curriculum” of

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² Ibid, 95.
spirituality: supplicants recognized that beneath such appearances were keen minds educated in the Christian schools of the time.

The undertaking of such an analysis is difficult not least because extensive Late Antique sources describing the micro interactions between monks and laymen rarely survive. The Letters of Barsanuphius and John, however, provide a rare opportunity to examine how the community around the monastery of Seridus viewed these two holy men. I have therefore used the communiqués of Barsanuphius and John as a case study and highlight the Christian expertise these two monastics possessed and referenced to support the advice they provided questioners.

The Letters of Barsanuphius and John contains communiqués from different segments of the population around Gaza. Much of the corpus is from monks in the local monastic community, while many others are from ecclesiastical contacts who wanted Barsanuphius or John’s advice about Church matters because of their direct connection to God. There are also, however, many letters from Christian laypeople in the environs of Gaza who addressed letters to the two holy men about their everyday issues, seeking expert knowledge on the proper Christian way to tackle issues, legal, moral, and inter-religious in nature. It is these letters that reveal the nuanced position Barsanuphius and John held as Christian “experts,” not solely because they were closer to God than others, but also because they had specialized knowledge gained from a lifetime of monastic learning and reading. Although Jennifer Hevelone-Harper characterizes this power as stemming from a spiritual place, whereby these petitioners were assuming the spiritual role of disciple to the role of spiritual directors assumed by Barsanuphius and John, I aim to

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5 See, for example letter 834. The bishop asks John to intervene by writing letters to the governor because “there is a different power in the words that comes from the Holy Spirit that dwells in you”: Barsanuphius and John: Letters Volume 2, 316. (n. 834)
highlight that a more nuanced position is possible. Barsanuphius and John were respected for more than the “divine charisma” granted to them: they were considered learned and their expert responses perpetuated this reputation.

Christian laypeople in the environs of the monastery of Seridus sent queries to Barsanuphius and John concerning how to live the ideal Christian life. These questions often reveal uncertainty with how to proceed with a particular decision or how to approach a complex life development. These varied questions indicate the expectation held by the inhabitants around Gaza that Barsanuphius and John were equipped to provide advice about a variety of matters. The reason locals trusted these two holy men is understood when considering the caliber of the answers they received to their questions. Chryssavgis’ edition of the Letters is enormously helpful in indicating when a response from the holy men contains an explicit or paraphrased reference from Scripture or another Christian work, a practice that occurs in the majority of letters. As the petitioners are all Christians, it is likely that they recognized the echo of holy words in the responses they received. Indeed, the two holy men sometimes made it a point to clearly identify that they were conveying advice found in Scripture. This reliance on citing established Christian wisdom allowed the two holy men to speak with more than just the authority of their monastic position – they were invoking too the specialized knowledge of Scripture and respected Christian thinkers, thereby legitimizing their opinions and cementing their status as a learned Christian resource. Presenting a few examples of this practice will both illustrate the variety of people who sought the advice of these monks, and the ubiquity of Scriptural reference in the responses from Barsanuphius and John. I have grouped letters

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6 Hevelone-Harper, 105.
thematically, into those asking about legal affairs, social affairs, inter-religious affairs, and even those seeking clarification about the correct way to practice Christianity.

Although Barsanuphius and John had no training in the legal system, a number of the queries they received asked how a Christian should approach legal matters in a moral way. For example, letter 670 asks for advice when going to court, and whether it is better to hire a lawyer or to represent oneself. The petitioner is concerned that they may bring moral harm to the lawyer by having him take their case. Indeed, the reply agrees that this is a concern, and further offers advice on how far one ought to push for restitution in a court case. The opinions offered in this response are supported by explicitly quoting New Testament scripture from Luke, 1 Peter, and Matthew. Another legal question is posed in letter 725, when the petitioner wonders whether they should settle a legal matter with someone so that it is resolved quickly, or if they should go through a lengthier legal process to get full justice. John offers his opinion in a short reply but nevertheless relates his answer to an explicit reference from the Gospels of Matthew and Mark. A longer interaction in letters 667 and 668 demonstrates the breadth of Scriptural and Christian knowledge that the old men could bring to bear on a legal matter. The petitioner writes to relate that his house was broken into, yet nothing was stolen, and seeks advice as to what legal actions he should pursue. His follow-up letter asks for clarification as to what he should do if the trespassers had stolen anything. John advises the petitioner not to pursue legal action, since doing so is motivated by revenge. In these two short letters, he explicitly references Hebrews and Matthew, echoes passages from Psalms and Hebrews, and also makes reference to the Reflections of Abba Zosimas. This selection of letters highlights that Christian community

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8 Barsanuphius and John: Letters Volume 2, 235. (n. 670)
9 Ibid, 260. (n. 725)
10 Ibid, 233-234. (n. 667, 668)
members disregarded the two monks’ absence of legal training, seeking instead expert opinions on Christianity’s treatment of legal matters. The two old men did not disappoint but authoritatively used their knowledge of the Bible and other Christian writings to support their recommendations.

The two old men also received many letters related to social concerns. Intriguingly, in one of these Barsanuphius and John are each consulted in turn by another learned man, a “professor of secular wisdom,” who asks in letters 664 and 665 whether he should accept a promotion.\textsuperscript{11} Not surprisingly, considering the question is so vague, Barsanuphius provides a single sentence in response, in which he nevertheless uses phrases found in 1 Timothy and Luke. It is significant that an individual educated in secular affairs still perceived these two holy men as possessing an erudition that differed from or superseded his own.

Barsanuphius and John were also called upon to give their learned opinion as to how Christians ought to interact with community members who were not themselves Christian, but instead Jews or pagans. For example, the petitioner in letter 686 wants to know if it is a sin to press the grapes of a Jew in his winepress.\textsuperscript{12} John refers to Matthew and explicitly cites Luke to reassure the questioner that pressing a Jew’s grapes is acceptable. Indeed, commercial interactions seemed always to be acceptable, since the response to letter 777 cites 1 Corinthians to assure the questioner that merchandise from a pagan vendor may be bought with no adverse effects.\textsuperscript{13} The old men are less tolerant with regards to attending the celebrations of other religions. Letters 775 and 776 concern whether, for the purposes of celebrating a pagan or Jewish

\textsuperscript{11} Barsanuphius and John: Letters Volume 2, 233. (n. 664, 665)
\textsuperscript{12} Ibid, 242. (n. 686)
\textsuperscript{13} Ibid, 282. (n. 777)
festival, a Christian may join their pagan or Jewish friend for a meal or accept gifts from them. Barsanuphius demonstrates his knowledge of Christian practice by counseling the petitioner not to accept either overture, since it would contravene “the canons of the holy church.” Although Barsanuphius does not elaborate, he is referencing Apostolic Canon 70 and Canons 37 and 38 of the Council of Laodicea. Similar curt refusal is evident in Letters 753 and 754 in which the petitioner asks about magic spells and sorcerers. John references Deuteronomy to emphasize that magic is forbidden by God. In the subsequent letter 755, the petitioner seeks clarification as to what they should do if they see another Christian visiting a sorcerer. This response is more elaborate and references 1 Timothy and 1 Samuel to support the advice provided.

Aside from offering advice on how to interact with other religions, questions to the two old men included many whose writers sought clarification on matters related to the proper practice of Christianity itself. Some of these questions focused on heretical stances, such as letter 695. The writer wants to know if he should speak up if his orthodox brother, in conversing with a heretic, is having difficulty defending the orthodox position. The response highlights the dangers of speaking up and suggests that the petitioner might be better off remaining silent, supporting this position with reference to Romans, Ephesians, Genesis, and 1 Timothy. Other letters to the Old Men focus instead on clarifying for a petitioner why or how Christian worship should be undertaken. For example, the writer of letter 711 confesses that he/she does not know the meaning of the words he/she says while praying and wonders at the point of the exercise. Barsanuphius offers two references from the Sayings of the Desert Fathers, from Nau and

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14 Barsanuphius and John: Letters Volume 2, 281. (n. 775, 776)
16 Ibid, 271. (753, 754)
17 Ibid, 271-272. (n. 755)
18 Ibid, 249-252. (n. 695)
19 Ibid, 255. (n. 711)
Poemen, to explain the benefit of constantly praying. Questions from Christian lay people could be far more esoteric, such as in letter 763 in which the writer wonders how to resolve the seeming contradiction that God created man free, yet stated elsewhere that without Him people can do nothing.\textsuperscript{20} John offers an erudite response in which he draws on Romans and 1 Samuel for support.

The above examples make clear that Barsanuphius and John were not trying “to get right away from [the world]” as Marrou suggested of monastic communities.\textsuperscript{21} Although they served as the spiritual leaders of the monastery of Seridus, they were also available as a learned resource to the inhabitants of Gaza. The wide variety of questions they received, each related to the specialized Christian knowledge that the two old men possessed, attests to the position accorded to the two monks as Christian experts. Indeed, the two old men earned this reputation in part from their spiritual devotedness, but certainly too from the high caliber of answers they provided, which convey a strong familiarity with Scripture and other Christian works. To revisit a description used by Hevelone-Harper, the monastic community was more than a “spiritual resource for the wider community”: it was also a textually learned Christian resource for the wider community.\textsuperscript{22}

Although this investigation is only feasible for the Gaza context due to its unique corpus of primary sources, this situation was likely paralleled for other monasteries in Gaza, as well as those in the Judean Desert. The Lives of Cyril of Scythopolis convey that there was consistent

\textsuperscript{20} Barsanuphius and John: Letters Volume 2, 275. (n. 763)
\textsuperscript{21} Marrou, 333. For an interesting discussion on the fluidity between monastic alienation and monastic social influence, see: Robert Markus, The End of Ancient Christianity (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), esp. 157-197. Although Markus is commenting on the Gallic Christian landscape, his thoughts also provide insight for the Palestinian context.
\textsuperscript{22} Hevelone-Harper, 4.
interaction between monks of the Judean desert and nearby laypeople, who would certainly have asked questions relating to Christianity of their erudite monastic neighbours.23

Palestinian Monks as Christian Experts: Ecclesiastical Perceptions

While Barsanuphius and John serve as the best lenses through which to examine the reputation for erudition possessed by monks on the local level, the ecumenical councils of the fifth and sixth centuries allow us to see the learned culture valued in the ecclesiastical sphere. Claudia Rapp has pointed out that John Chrysostom espoused the belief that monastic formation was not sufficient training for an episcopal position, as it did not include training in administration or rhetoric.24 This idea, however, must be revisited when considering the sixth century, when attaining a monastic formation became an established route by which to join the Church ranks. Such a change may come in part because the literacy-based Christian education monks received in monasteries was recognized by ecclesiastics as a legitimate means of becoming a Christian expert. Rapp’s proposition that “the qualification that monks and holy men brought to the episcopate was their ascetic authority as a visible sign of their spiritual gifts” must be amended. While such ascetic authority was certainly an aspect of a monk’s qualifications, Palestinian monks were also valued for the expertise in Christian learning they possessed.25

I investigate two ecumenical councils of interest that took place during the period under investigation in this thesis. Both of these councils sought to resolve the Christological divisions of their day: the 451 council of Chalcedon sought formally to establish the nature of Christ,

23 For the interconnectedness of the Judean Desert, see Appendix F.
24 Rapp, Holy Bishops, 149.
25 Ibid, 152.
while the 553 council of Constantinople considered the Orthodoxy of the Three Chapters, with the power to reunify the Monophysites and Chalcedonians. In examining these two councils I highlight first the identity of those present, focusing especially on identifying individuals from Palestine to establish that the conclusions I draw from the council proceedings were applicable to the Palestinian context. I then use evidence from the council proceedings to highlight how ecclesiastics valued and defined an erudite Christian culture premised on textual study. By additionally highlighting how monastic literacy is the assumed standard throughout the council proceedings, I propose that monks had the learning required for full participation in ecclesiastical affairs. Finally, by considering each council as a signpost of their times, I am able to compare the two councils to highlight how ecclesiastical culture developed over the course of the fifth and sixth centuries. Such a comparison reveals that monks gained increasing recognition as official members of the Church: a development, I argue, that was due in part to the increasingly recognized educational role held by monasteries.

**Monks and the Learned Culture of the Council of Chalcedon (451 CE)**

The fifth century council of Chalcedon was convened by Emperor Marcian with the aim of settling Christian understanding of the nature of Christ; it also issued a list of disciplinary canons governing church authority and administration. The aim was to revisit issues unsatisfactorily resolved at the controversial “Robber Council” of 449, at which participants were coerced into certain decisions by soldiers and club-wielding monks. To prevent a similar situation from arising, the Empress Pulcheria sent a letter to the Governor of Bithynia to ensure

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that he would expel “from the city and its districts any clerics who are staying there without our summons or the bidding of their own bishops, and also any monks or laymen whom no good reason calls to the council.”

Individuals at the council were thus only those who had been formally invited. Nevertheless, this council was larger than any previous one, with around 370 voting members in attendance. Voting members were bishops and their designated representatives, invited almost exclusively from the eastern sees. Other Christians of clerical or monastic background were also present for parts of the proceeding, either as assistants to the council or, in the case of most of the monks, as petitioners. In addition to Christian representation, the council had in attendance a number of secular officials who oversaw the proceedings. Palestinian representation at this council was restricted to bishops of Palestinian sees, 43 individuals in total. The proceedings convey little about these bishops other than their names on the attendance sheets and how they reacted in certain parts of the proceedings. The Lives of Cyril of Scythopolis, however, reveal that two of these bishops were former monks: Stephen, bishop of Jamnia, and John, bishop of the Saracens, were both former disciples of Euthymius. The presence and participation of individuals from Palestine, especially those of

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28 *Acts of the Council of Chalcedon*, vol. 3, 196. Price and Gaddis acknowledge that historians typically ascribe attendance to this council as numbering 520 or 636, but make compelling arguments based on the council attendance lists to drop the figure to the still substantial sum of 370. See vol. 3, 193-196.
30 This figure was achieved by consulting the list of personal names Price and Gaddis compiled: *Acts of the Council of Chalcedon*, vol. 3, 235-287.
monastic origin, affirms that the council’s ecclesiastical view of Christian culture and what
constituted a learned Christian reflects too how it would be defined in Palestine.\footnote{Acts of the Council of Chalcedon, vol. 2, 221. The Palestinian bishops were still active participants, however. See, for example, their temporary condemnation of Dioscorus: Acts of the Council of Chalcedon, vol. 1, 188; their objection to passages in the Tome of Leo: vol. 2, 25-26; their eventual acceptance of the Tome of Leo: vol. 2, 138-139.}

The Christian culture apparent at the council of Chalcedon was a learned one. Price and Gaddis describe the Acts as expressing “a late-antique obsession with textuality, and with the authentication of texts, as a basis for legitimate authority in both secular and religious spheres.”\footnote{Acts of the Council of Chalcedon, vol. 1, 2.} Price and Gaddis’ identification of the textual obsession visible in the Acts especially characterizes the council’s Christian culture. This textual culture is apparent in every step of the council’s proceedings, which have the feel of judicial proceedings. In this environment, those arguing their case did not make appeals to God or to having more holiness than their opponents, but rather offered rational arguments supported by appeals to textual evidence. Indeed, this reverence for text is especially apparent from the notaries’ description of the physical layout of the council, highlighting that “in the centre was placed the most holy and immaculate gospel-book.”\footnote{Ibid, 129.} The council proceedings follow a particular format: an accusation or proposition is presented, and those opposed present their case through logical argument and appeal to relevant text.\footnote{See, for example, how the first session started. An accusation levied at Dioscorus claims that he supported Eutyches at the Robber Council, an allegation that Dioscorus defends himself against by asking that the minutes of that council be read aloud: Acts of the Council of Chalcedon, vol. 1, 131-132.} This reliance on the written record caused issues at certain points, such as when certain Oriental bishops called the veracity of a document into doubt.\footnote{The Oriental bishops claimed that they had not said the things laid out in the cited document: Acts of the Council of Chalcedon, vol. 1, 152.} At this juncture the recording practices of notaries are discussed, revealing that individual notaries tended to record only what was said by their own employer. These notaries tended to be fellow ecclesiastics, as exemplified...
by Stephen, Bishop of Ephesus, who explained that his notaries at the previous council were an individual named Julian, now the bishop of Lebedos, and a deacon named Crispinus. The emphasis throughout the council’s proceedings on respecting the written record and decision-making based on debate and Scripture emphasizes an erudite ecclesiastical culture. It is unsurprising that these bishops had the learning and skills required to navigate and succeed in such a scholarly and textual environment since, as highlighted by Rapp, rhetorical and administrative skills were prerequisites for the episcopate. It is telling, however, that the monks who appear before the council in the fourth session also seem to possess such erudition, and handily kept pace with council proceedings.

Monks from Constantinople, sent by Emperor Marcian, appeared before the council during the fourth session. These monks were of two groups: those that followed what was to become the Chalcedonian creed after this council, led by Faustus, and those who were former followers of Eutyches, led by Dorotheus and Carosus. Both groups had written and signed petitions, the first group requesting to be given the authority to bring former followers of Eutyches into proper beliefs, while the latter group stood in opposition and wanted no longer to be persecuted for their beliefs. Since Faustus’ orthodox group was well known to the gathered bishops, they were asked to affirm which of the names on Dorotheus’ and Carosus’ petition they recognized as actual monks. This affirmation is helpful for the modern researcher as it fleshes

out who these monks were. Faustus’ description of these monks highlights that they were
overwhelmingly average individuals, unlikely to have been educated secularly:

Carosus and Dorotheus are archimandrites. Helpidius is the custodian of the martyrium, of Procopius. As for Photinus, we don’t know who he is. Eutychius is at the martyrium of Celerine, and doesn’t have a monastery. Theodore is a custodian of a martyrion. Moses we do not know. Maximus is an archimandrite, the teacher of Eutyches. Gerontius we do not know. Nemesinus we do not know, and his name puzzles us. We are puzzled at the name Theophilus. Thomas likewise we do not know. Leontius is a former bear-keeper. Hypses is a custodian of a martyrion, and has two or three people at the Xylocircus. Callinicus has ten people at the martyrion at the Xylocircus. Paul the Bithynian lives on his own at a martyrion. Gaudentius is a custodian of a martyrium, and has five people at that of Philip. Eugnomonius we do not know. We ask that some people be sent by your magnificence and the holy council to go and see their monasteries and find out if they have monasteries or if they are mocking and damaging the reputations of the archimandrites and should be punished by them, to prevent people living in martyria calling themselves archimandrites.43

Carosus and Dorotheus’ group, despite their seeming ordinariness, nevertheless held their own in the face of episcopal questioning. They demanded that Dioscorus be present to support their claim of orthodoxy (not knowing that he had just been condemned and excommunicated in the previous session of the council) and cited Scripture in their attempt to avoid giving a straight answer as to whether they supported the council’s decision to anathematize Eutyches and Dioscorus.44 This monastic group eventually refused to accept the anathematization of the council and so they were themselves put on trial where they were summarily found in contravention of canon 4 of Antioch and warned of possible consequences through a reading of canon 5 of Antioch.45 Although it was emperor Marcian who arranged that these monks appear before the council, the ability of both monastic groups to operate in this setting is telling. Each group submitted a written petition, each petition signed by all members of their group. Indeed,

44 Scripture is cited several times by Carosus: Ibid, 160.
each group seemed to know well the issue on which they were disagreeing, and were confident enough in their position to submit an appeal to the emperor himself and then to follow up on his direction to consult the ecumenical council. Nor do the gathered bishops seem surprised by the erudition displayed by the gathered monks: they are instead focused on their disdain for those who would dare support Dioscorus.

*Defining the Need for a Christian Education: the Dangers Which Exist without Erudition*

In the process of condemning Eutyches, the council of Chalcedon reveals a basic assumption that monks are literate, and additionally highlights the theological dangers of monks who are not sufficiently learned. As is made clear throughout the minutes of the Acts, Eutyches was a danger because he was distributing his teachings via books and the written word. He was in fact called to account for sending his ideas to various monasteries, asking that his ideas be adopted, and claiming that his writings were orthodox. Indeed, after Chalcedon had concluded, a letter was sent to various imperial officials outlining actions to be taken if anyone should be found still following Eutyches’ teachings. In particular, the letter addressed the dangers of Eutyches’ writings and how they ought to be destroyed: “we order that, wherever writings of this kind are found, they are to be consigned to the flames, and we decree that those who either write them or give them to others to read, out of eagerness to teach or learn, are to be punished with deportation”

What constituted an appropriate Christian education according to ecclesiastics is alluded to in various places in the proceedings of the council. A section of the minutes from a session at

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46 *Acts of the Council of Chalcedon*, vol. 1, 210-211.
Constantinople in 448 is read out at Chalcedon, in which the archbishop Flavian identifies knowledge possessed by learned Christians. He says of Cyril’s letters “although they are known to all the faithful and to all who are raised and read in the books of the holy fathers, because of the benefit and confirmation the faith within us receives at each reading of them, there is no reason why they should not now be read as you request”\textsuperscript{48} Flavian suggests that learned Christians are those who have studied and are familiar with Scripture. Indeed, this description of erudition is also apparent in a letter written by Leo bishop of Rome to Flavian in 449, which roundly denounces Eutyches and questions his education. It is worth quoting here in full:

Eutyches, who had been thought worthy of honour with the title of presbyter, has been shown up to be someone extremely unintelligent and utterly uneducated, with the consequence that the saying of the prophet applies to him, ‘He refused to understand doing good; he meditated unrighteousness on his bed.’ What could be more unrighteous than to have impious opinions and to resist those who have sound opinions and are wiser? Into this folly fall those who through some impediment of unclarity are hindered from recognizing the truth, have recourse not to the prophetic sayings nor to the writings of the apostles not to the authority of the gospels but to themselves, and are consequently showed up as teachers of error, since they have not become disciples of the truth. For what education from the divine books of the Old and New Testament has been received by one who has not even grasped the rudiments of the creed itself? And is what is proclaimed throughout the whole world, by the voice of all those being born again, still beyond the mental comprehension of this old man? Ignorant therefore of what ought to be thought about the incarnation of the Word of God, and refusing to labour in the wide field of the divine scriptures so as to become worthy of the light of knowledge from that source, he ought at least through attentive listening to have made his own that common and not discordant confession which is professed by the whole multitude of the faithful…\textsuperscript{49}

This passage echoes Flavian’s description of erudition and highlights ecclesiastical expectations for those who would be considered Christian “experts.” Eutyches’ incorrect doctrine is attributed to an obvious lack of education. Leo does not specify that secular education is required,

emphasizing simply that Eutyches would not have gone astray if he had studied the Bible, and had understood anything from the prophetic sayings, the writings of the apostles, or the gospels themselves. Leo demonstrates his own educational qualifications, based on this standard, by extensively referencing passages from the Bible. Whether this attack on Eutyches’ education is fair or not and whether Eutyches was actually familiar with Scripture or not is irrelevant. The significance of this passage is the highlighted ecclesiastical expectation that a Christian had to study Scripture in order to be considered educated.

This definition of a Christian education was certainly known and likely upheld across the empire proceeding the council, especially in Palestine. The passage is thus contained in the Tome of Leo, which was approved unanimously by the council at the beginning of the second session. In particular, the Palestinian bishops were present and attentive during this reading, as the Acts describe how they raised objections to certain of Leo’s points during the reading.\(^50\) There is, additionally, evidence that monks in Constantinople were being made to support the Tome of Leo.\(^51\) This extremely public and widely supported sentiment thus best testifies to the expectations ecclesiastics would have had of those who might join their ranks as members of the clergy and be considered learned: those who had studied Scripture extensively and had the ability to demonstrate their biblical knowledge.

Monastic sources also support the idea that the results of the council were known and implemented in Palestine. In the *Life of Euthymius*, Cyril indicates that the monks in the Judean desert were intimately aware of the council and its proceedings. Cyril writes that Euthymius was visited by his former disciples, the bishops Stephen and John, who brought the Chacedonian


\(^{51}\) Ibid, 156.
definition for him to read and verify. Euthymius accepted this definition as correct, but a
division soon arose in Judean monasticism as many monks, led by a monk named Theodosius,
refused to accept the definition. Theodosius sent two monastic archimandrites, Elpidius and
Gerontius, to Euthymius in an attempt to convince him that Chalcedon was incorrect. These two
monks significantly asked Euthymius “Where have we read in holy Scripture, or which of the
holy fathers has taught us, that Christ is to be acknowledged in two natures, as the council has
affirmed?” Euthymius offered an eloquent and erudite response in reply, explaining the
correctness of the Chalcedonian definition. This exchange highlights that Palestinian monks in
the mid-fifth century already possessed the Christian education premised on Scriptural study
described by Flavian and Leo. The ecclesiastical administration would gradually recognize that
Palestinian monks had such an education, and by the sixth century monks increasingly occupied
ecclesiastical posts.

Twenty-seven canons governing Church affairs were published at the end of the council
of Chalcedon. These canons were the first real acknowledgement by imperial and ecclesiastical
administration of the growing trend in monasticism, with several canons aimed at standardizing
how monks would interact with society and the Church. As Peter Hatlie describes them, these
canons were “a more coordinated and comprehensive solution to the question of the monk’s
place in church and society than any yet envisioned.” Canon 4 and Canon 6 are particularly

52 Lives of the Monks of Palestine, 38.
53 Ibid, 39.
55 Hatlie, 39. See also Frazee’s discussion of this phenomenon: Charles Frazee, “Late Roman and Byzantine
Legislation on the Monastic Life from the Fourth to the Eighth Centuries,” Church History 51, no. 3 (1982): 263-
279, 268.
useful to examine for the present study. Canon 4 sets Chalcedon’s expectation regarding the monastic life and is worth quoting in full:

Those who truly and sincerely enter on the solitary life are to be accorded due honour. But since some people use a cloak of monasticism to disrupt both the churches and public affairs, while they move around the cities indiscriminately and even try to set up monasteries for themselves, it is decreed that no one is to build or found a monastery or oratory anywhere contrary to the will of the bishop of the city. Those who practice monasticism in each city and territory are to be subject to the bishop, and are to embrace silence\textsuperscript{56} and devote themselves to fasting and prayer alone, persevering in the places where they renounced the world; they are not to cause annoyance in either ecclesiastical or secular affairs, or take part in them, leaving their own monasteries, unless indeed for some compelling need they be permitted to do so by the bishop of the city. No slave is to be accepted into a monastery as a monk contrary to the will of his master; we have decreed that the infringer of this our regulation is excommunicate, lest the name of God be brought into disrepute. The due care of the monasteries must be exercised by the bishop of the city.\textsuperscript{57}

Canon 6 prohibits honorary ordination of individuals to the clergy, insisting that they need be “appointed to a particular church in a city or village or martyrium or monastery.”\textsuperscript{58}

These two canons provide the clearest picture of ecclesiastical expectations for monasticism, after the council of Chalcedon. Canon 4 was clearly developed with the Eutyches controversy in mind and aimed to prevent similar incidents in the future. While the canon envisions monks as largely removed from ecclesiastical and secular affairs, placing monasteries under the direction of bishops meant that a client-patron relationship was forged – ironically providing monasteries an excellent means by which to shape ecclesiastical affairs. Indeed, this symbiotic relationship would facilitate the eventual ordination of monks to ecclesiastical positions. Canon 6 highlights an additional means by which monks would develop relations with

\textsuperscript{56} Price and Gaddis note that the Greek word used is ἡ συχία. Although it literally translates to “silence,” its use in the monastic context means “tranquility” or “quiet,” the “state of soul necessary for contemplation”: Lampe, 609. The activity of reading would not be in opposition to the ideals behind this term.


\textsuperscript{58} Ibid, 96.
the Church, as ordaining clergy members to a monastery meant increased contact between monks and ecclesiastics. Indeed, the implied need apparent in Canon 6 to have members of the clergy in monasteries indicates how monks would initially have joined the clergy: bishops looking for suitable candidates would have found it most practical to ordain the educated and literate individuals already living in the monastic community. Indeed, as I elaborate below, this practice is precisely what is apparent by the following century.

The council of Chalcedon serves as a significant signpost to describe the state of ecclesiastical conceptions of erudition and the status of monks in the fifth century of Late Antiquity. In a climate of “True Christianization,” the ecumenical council of Chalcedon worked in tandem with imperial officials to tackle a purely Christian issue. Apparent throughout the council proceedings is a culture of literacy, since, as invoked by Leo, it was paramount that one reads Scripture in order to be educated and to avoid doctrinal error. Indeed, although unacknowledged by the Church, the humble monks of Constantinople under Carosus and Dorotheus seemed to possess just such an expertise. The canons promulgated by the council foreshadowed the major role monasticism would come to play in Church affairs. While the canons seemingly restricted monastic freedom by imposing the Church’s standard of what monasticism ought to be about, they also had the effect of positioning monasticism as a legitimate part of the Church. This legitimization of monasticism changed the perception society and the Church held. Monks were part of the world now, more than ever before. By the council of Constantinople in 553, the learned status of monks would be entrenched and unquestioned.
Monks and the Learned Culture of the Council of Constantinople (553 CE)

Emperor Justinian convened the council of Constantinople in 553 to condemn formally the Three Chapters. Justinian invited a large number of bishops to Constantinople, with 152 members of the episcopate represented in the attendance records of the council. In contrast to the council of Chalcedon, the council of Constantinople had a notable absence of secular authorities. Whereas secular officials had conducted the proceedings at the council of Chalcedon, the council of Constantinople was attended primarily by ecclesiastics, and was chaired by Eutychius, Patriarch of Constantinople. Of the gathered bishops, Price highlights the fact that there was a striking absence of attendance from the Palestinian sees, with only 5 bishops in attendance. Notably, the new patriarch of Jerusalem, Eustochius, did not attend the council and was instead represented by three bishops from Palestine: Stephen of Raphia, George of Tiberias, and Damian of Sozusa. While the documents from this council emulate those of Chalcedon in not elaborating on the identity of these Palestinian individuals, Cyril of Scythopolis reveals that Eustochius was an oikóvnomos in Alexandria before being promoted to the patriarchate by Justinian, at the behest of Abba Conon, head of the monastery of Sabas. Significantly, Cyril also describes how Abba Conon asked Eustochius to bring monastic representation with him to the council, so that Eustochius “sent three bishops to take his place at the council, and also sent Abba Eulogius with two other superiors, Cyriacus of the laura called ‘The Spring’ and one

62 This representation is noted in the attendance lists from the beginning of sessions. See for example: Acts of the Council of Constantinople, vol. 1, 184. Price notes that Eustochius was only made patriarch in December 552 and likely needed time to get settled: vol. 1, 184, fn. 5.
63 Lives of the Monks of Palestine, 207; Original Greek: Kyrillos von Skythopolis, 198. While Price translates oikóvnomos simply as “administrator,” Eustochius was likely an ecclesiastic or monastic in charge of revenues and property: Lampe, 944.
Pancratius, a stylite." The presence of these monks at the council is confirmed by the History of Evagrius, who writes that they, along with Abba Conon, presented libels against Origenism at the council. The presence of monks without a formal ecclesiastical title at the council is significant, especially since their attendance was not noted as exceptional. Indeed, that they were sent with confidence that they would be allowed to attend, and could cope in the learned Christian culture present at the council speaks to the erudition these monks possessed.

The learned ecclesiastical culture apparent at the council of Constantinople was the same as that of Chalcedon. The emphasis on literacy, the power of the recorded word, and the preeminence of Scripture continued unabated. Although the scribes for this council did not bother to describe the centrality of the “holy book of gospels,” as had those of the council of Chalcedon, this practice was certainly still extant. This council had too the same systematic method of conducting its proceedings as the council of Chalcedon: a particular matter was raised, relevant documents were read aloud, a discussion of the document led to a consensus, and the bishops all signed their names in approval of the decision taken by the council as a whole. A thorough and ready knowledge of Scripture and Christian history was required to participate properly in this environment. Indeed, the emphasis from the council of Chalcedon that a learned

64 Lives of the Monks of Palestine, 208. Abba Conon is also mentioned by John Moschus in an anecdote of the Spiritual Meadow, already presented above: Moschos, 32-33. (n. 42). Abba Conon was clearly a formidable individual: he got Eustochius promoted and had a fair amount of wealth ready to hand in the anecdote.
65 Theodoret and Evagrius, A History of the Church, (London: Bohn, 1854), 421.
66 Consider that those uninvited, especially monks, were discouraged from attending the council of Chalcedon: discussed above, p. 136.
67 In the fifth session a section of the Acts of the Council of Mopsuestia, held in 550, is read out. This council took place three years before that of Constantinople and describes the physical centrality of a copy of Scriptures. In addition, letters between Vigilius and Eutychius that discuss the need for the council of Constantinople emphasize that a council is needed so that the Three Chapters might be examined “in the presence of the holy gospels” or “with the holy gospels in the midst.” The practice certainly thus continued at Constantinople but was not considered important enough to note by the scribes. For date of the council of Mopsuestia: Acts of the Council of Constantinople, vol. 1, 340, fn. 313. For centrality of Scripture: Acts of the Council of Constantinople, vol. 1, 344-345. For the letters: Acts of the Council of Constantinople, vol. 1, 200; vol. 1, 203.
Christian was one who knew Scripture is detectable throughout this council as well. The book of Leo, first heard at the council of Chalcedon (quoted above), and its explicit expectation that an educated Christian was one well-studied in the bible, was read out in full during the sixth session.68 Leo’s words on education are echoed when the council condemned Theodore of Mopsuestia, underlining how he seemed learned but was not: “This wretch who had professed to know the scriptures did not remember the words of the prophet Hosea.”69 Indeed, Justinian also invokes this idea in his edict On the Orthodox Faith which supported the correctness of the Chalcedonian creed, writing: “Having learnt this from the divine scriptures and from the teachings of the fathers, we have appropriately written to refute those who merge or divide the mystery of the divine dispensation.”70 A further example is apparent from a reading of the fifth century writings of Cyril against Theodore of Mopsuestia that took place in the fifth session. Cyril emphasized the false beliefs that could be propagated if one did not know Scripture: “This is what some extremely proud persons, preening themselves on their knowledge of the divine scriptures, inserted in their writings, and, as the Lord of all says through one of the holy prophets, ‘set snares to corrupt men’. For what else than a snare and stumbling-block is a tongue that speaks lies that are abhorrent to scared scripture and impudently oppose the tradition of the holy apostles and evangelists?”71 Indeed, the final paragraph of the Acts emphasizes that the point of the Council was to promulgate the correct faith as “received from divine scripture, the teaching of the holy fathers, and the definitions concerning the one and the same faith of the aforesaid holy four councils.”72 A common ecclesiastical culture emphasizing the study of

69 Ibid, 113.  
71 Ibid, 320.  
Scripture is thus apparent in the proceedings of the council of Constantinople, a continuation of the culture apparent at Chalcedon in the previous century. This culture, with its emphasis on knowing and referencing the bible, indicates that the environment of the council was one where a developed level of Christian erudition was needed in order to participate.

Monks and the culture of the Council

In contrast to the council of Chalcedon, monks are far less apparent in the proceedings of that at Constantinople. As I highlighted above, however, monks from Palestine were certainly in attendance. The reason for this omission is likely because monks were an established and respected part of ecclesiastical affairs by the sixth century. In addition, individuals identified by name and rank in the Acts of this council are restricted to those with voting powers (as recorded at the beginning of every session) and the handful of individuals reading or presenting cases to the council. The notaries for this council often did not bother to distinguish between and identify which individuals offered commentary, preferring to group comments together as what “the holy council said.” This habit thus prevents us from assessing the extent to which monks participated, and we must be content simply to know that they did.

In addition to highlighting the inclusive role monks played in ecclesiastical affairs, this council also offers a tantalizing clue as to the involvement of monks in a Christian education. Warning against the Three Chapters, the council decreed that “if anyone attempt to transmit, teach, or write what is contrary to our pious decrees, if he be a bishop or enrolled in the clergy, he will be stripped of his episcopal or clerical rank for doing what is alien for priests and to the

73 See, for example, the reactions recorded by the council after hearing the teachings of Theodore of Mopsuestia: Acts of the Council of Constantinople, vol. 1, 270.
ecclesiastical order, while if he is a monk or layman he will be anathematized.” The implication of this statement is that at least some monks could very well “transmit, teach, or write.” This statement echoes the language used by the council of Chalcedon in the Chalcedonian creed but is more explicitly educational in nature. This passage thus indicates that the Church was aware that monks engaged in literacy and a Christian education of textual study.

The council of Constantinople of 553 serves as an illuminative signpost of ecclesiastical culture and composition. Although ecclesiastical culture remained nearly identical to that found at the council of Chalcedon, ecclesiastical composition and the perception of monastics had changed dramatically. By the sixth century, monks were an unquestioned part of ecclesiastical affairs. Individuals such as Abba Conon, who arranged for Eustochius to achieve the patriarchy, demonstrate how embroiled some Palestinian monks were in ecclesiastical affairs. The Palestinian monks Eulogius, Cyriacus, and Pancratius were eager to attend ecumenical council, where an ecclesiastical culture of learning and literacy would have been navigable only by those with an advanced Christian education. Such an education was thus certainly available in the Palestinian monasteries of the sixth century.

75 The Chalcedonian creed was more comprehensive in its concerns, seeking to prohibit any deviance or creativity (which would not require monks to hold an educational role). The relevant section of the creed relates “No one is allowed to produce or compose or construct another creed or to think or teach otherwise. As for those who presume either to construct another creed or to publish or teach or deliver another symbol to those wishing to convert to the knowledge of the truth from paganism or Judaism or from any heresy whatsoever, the council decrees that, if they are bishops or clerics, they are to be deposed, bishops from the episcopate and clerics from the clerical state, while, if they are monks or laymen, they are to be anathematized.” Acts of the Council of Chalcedon, vol. 2, 204-205. The difference is slight but significant.
Palestinian Monks as Christian Experts: Imperial Perceptions

Just as Palestinian monasticism and its evolving place in ecclesiastical affairs can be examined by consulting the proceedings of the ecumenical councils, how it was perceived from the imperial viewpoint can be seen through imperial laws concerning monks. The *Corpus Juris Civilis* (CJC), published at Justinian’s behest in the first half of the sixth century, serves this function. This immense law code contains many directions for the proper conduct of monastic life and also highlights special legal privileges enjoyed by monastics: it is thus enormously helpful for investigating the education and status that Justinian perceived Palestinian monasteries to possess. The section of the CJC applicable to the present study are the Novels of Justinian, the laws he wrote and implemented during his reign. The three Novels most concerned with monastic affairs are Novel 5, promulgated in 535 CE, Novel 123 from 546 CE, and Novel 133 from 539 CE. A progression of legal thinking is sometimes apparent in these laws, as subsequent edicts elaborated or amended those that preceded them.

**Monastic Education**

Novel 5 begins by praising the monastic pursuit and highlighting the education available to the individual who undertakes this life: “where anyone who intends to become a monk is lacking in theological erudition and soundness of discourse, he becomes worthy of obtaining both by his change of condition.” This change would presumably come about through a proper

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77 *Civil Law*, vol. 16, 24.
study of the bible. Novel 133 highlights this activity as critical to the monastic life, and lays out the means by which it would occur:

[Monks should be] devoting themselves to the study of the Bible. Hence a large number of these books must be kept in the monastery, so that each one can purify his soul, and water it with the Holy Scriptures; for by their frequent perusal they will have no longer any temptation to deceive, and will be relieved of all human cares. Four or five of the oldest monks, who have practiced continence and have deserved to be ordained priests, deacons, and other ecclesiastics, shall be attached to the chapel of the monastery. These monks shall be charged with giving lectures upon the Holy Scriptures, and imparting instruction in them; they shall have the care of the sacred house; and shall restrain petulant youth always desirous to pass the bounds of decorum.78

Novel 133 from 539 CE thus offers the clearest and most explicit depiction of how a Christian education premised on the study of scripture should occur in monasteries. The education proposed here is one of spiritual growth premised on a curriculum of literate textual study. More experienced monks, who have been ordained as members of the clergy, would offer lectures and lessons on the Bible. Studying the Bible requires literacy, and instruction from these clergy members would presumably have included teaching at least some illiterate monks their letters. As Novel 6 of 535 CE stresses: “we are unwilling for persons who are ignorant of letters to be ordained under any circumstances, that is to say, as clerks, priests, deacons, readers of the service, or of ecclesiastical or canonical books,” a sentiment reaffirmed later in Novel 123.79 As such, the four or five monastic teachers who had been ordained would certainly have known their letters and thus had the knowledge to teach literacy.

The monastic education described in the Novels established the opportunity for monks to acquire the knowledge they needed to become Christian experts in Late Antiquity. As I suggested above, such an education also provided those monks who made use of it with

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78 Civil Law, vol. 17, 134.
opportunities for formal advancement. Several scholars have already noted that Late Antique
monasticism became an excellent precursor for achieving ecclesiastical appointment. Rapp, for
example, says of Palestine that “bishops were eager to position monks because of their moral
excellence.” The CJC supports the idea that the literacy-based Christian education some monks
received was a major factor in those monks’ ecclesiastical advancement. As noted above,
members of the clergy were required to be literate. In addition, the CJC mandates that candidates
for the clergy had to undergo an examination to ensure they were of good character, knew their
letters, and were proficient in the doctrines of the church. Similar requirements, though more
demanding, were in place for those who would be ordained to the episcopacy. Individuals
leaving civil employment were prohibited from the bishopric unless they were still young, as
were individuals with children. A candidate certainly had to be literate, and Novel 6 conveys
the rigorous examination a candidate had to undergo, whereby

he must, before his consecration, be familiar with the ancient and accepted canons which
Our faith acknowledges as just and inviolate, and the Catholic and Apostolic Church has
established and transmitted to Us. When, after having frequently read them previous to
his ordination, the official in charge of the same must interrogate him, and ascertain if he
is capable of complying with the said rules and of doing what they prescribe.

The educational qualifications a candidate required for ordination to the clergy, much less the
episcopacy, were fairly advanced. One can imagine that finding suitable candidates was difficult,

80 Claudia Rapp notes several examples of monks ordained into the clergy to highlight this pattern: Rapp, Holy
Bishops, 147-149. Phil Booth likewise notes this pattern, describing monasticism as “the first rung on the
ecclesiastical cursus honorum: Phil Booth, Crisis of Empire: Doctrine and Dissent at the End of Late Antiquity,
(Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014), 123. Monks becoming bishops is also apparent throughout
the sources examined in this paper – notably Euthymius’ disciples who attained the episcopate and Letters from
Barsanuphius and John giving advice to a bishop who had been formerly a monk: Barsanuphius and John: Letters
81 Rapp, Holy Bishops, 148.
82 Civil Law, vol. 16, 35.
83 Ibid., 31.
84 Ibid., 32.
and thus it is no surprise that literate monks educated in Scripture and matters of the Church by experienced monks were eagerly sought for ordination.\textsuperscript{85}

Aside from ecclesiastical appointment, monks could also formally advance by taking on leadership of a monastery. The requirements for this role were far less prescribed than those for the clergy, and are conveyed at first in Novel 5:

We do not wish the ordination of abbots (where at any time a monastery happens to be without an abbot) to be made in accordance with the seniority of the most reverend monks, and that the one who comes directly after the abbot in rank should be selected; or that the second or the third should be chosen (which is also provided by another of Our laws), but the bishop of the diocese shall go over the names of all of them in succession; and he must not limit himself to their priority of ordination by which their rank is determined, but must choose the one among all the monks who appears to be the best fitted for the place, and worthy of becoming the head of the monastery. The reason for this is that human nature is such that abbots cannot all be taken from among the oldest or most recent monks, but the examination must be conducted by the bishop according to rank, and he who appears to be best qualified of those successively examined shall be created abbot, as possessing the dignity and virtues requisite for the position. For it is necessary to choose those who can distinguish what is best from what is worst, since it is one thing to be unfitted for administration, and another to have the inclination to become competent, and, through proper instruction, to acquire, little by little, the faculty of presiding over a monastery.\textsuperscript{86}

And also in Novel 123:

Hence We order that an abbot or an archimandrite, who is ordained in any monastery whatsoever, shall not be selected on account of his monastic rank, but that all the monks who enjoy the best reputation shall choose their head in the presence of the Holy Gospels, stating at the time that their choice is not influenced by friendship, or by any other motive, but that they make the appointment for the reason that they know that the candidate professes the true faith, that his life is chaste, that he is worthy of governing, and that he can maintain discipline among the monks, and observe all the rules of the

\textsuperscript{85} That monks were ordained as ecclesiastics is supported by several lines throughout the Novels concerned with such an eventuality: “Where anyone leading a monastic life proves worthy of being ordained a priest, he shall continue to observe the rule of his order absolutely”: \textit{Civil Law}, vol. 16, 28. “He who aspires to be a bishop, and has previously embraced a monastic life, or has been a member of the priesthood for not less than six months, shall have neither wife, children, nor grandchildren”: \textit{Civil Law}, vol. 16, 31.

\textsuperscript{86} \textit{Civil Law}, vol. 16, 29.
monastery, and then the most holy bishop within whose jurisdiction the monastery is situated shall ordain as abbot the person who has been elected in this way.\textsuperscript{87}

The leadership requirements highlighted in both of these passages are generally the same. They emphasize a leader who is suited for governing and can hold the monks in check and accountable to the rules of the monastery. These requirements, though less specific than those for the clergy, still reflect skills that were attained from the Christian education available in the monastery. Of particular interest is the change apparent between 535 CE and 546 CE in Justinian’s conception as to how an abbot ought to be chosen. Justinian initially tasks the local bishop with this decision, but later amends this directive so that monks might choose their own leader. By this change Justinian tacitly recognizes that monks of a community were as discerning as a bishop. This comparison, offered alongside Justinian’s statements on monastic education and requirements for the episcopacy, suggests that the imperial perspective in the sixth century viewed some monks as learned Christian experts, more than capable of self-governance. Indeed, with such an opinion apparent from imperial sources, it is no surprise that a monastery’s local community also perceived monks as a potentially learned Christian resource, and that individuals such as Barsanuphius and John were so widely asked for help and advice.

**The Place of Monastics in Christian Culture**

In addition to highlighting the education and possible advancement monks could gain, the laws of the CJC pertaining to monks are instructive in describing their place in sixth century society. Presenting the various privileges monks possessed and were denied by law underscores

\textsuperscript{87} *Civil Law*, vol. 17, 99.
the particular space they occupied in the imperial perspective. Monks were granted powerful protections against incursions from the secular world, but were forbidden in turn from interacting too much with it.

Monks received special protection in court matters, and were exempt from being judged in secular court. Novel 79 conveys that if someone wished to engage in litigation with a monk, they were required to do so by notifying the bishop of the city, who would send for the accused individual. The accused was represented “by means of an abbot, a responsal, or any other person whomsoever” to the same bishop of the city, who would “hear and examine the case with all due sacerdotal dignity, and absolutely without the assistance of civil judges, for the bishops of every city are qualified to decide honorably and sacerdotally, in accordance with Our laws and the rules of the Church, when legal proceedings are instituted against monks.” This ruling applied only to monks, and contrasts with the edict for clergy members in litigation, who could be judged by either an episcopal court or a secular one dependent on the situation and the charge. Bishops, however, were also exempt from being judged by a secular official. Novel 123 elaborates on the protections monks enjoyed in court cases, stipulating that they be represented and defended by an attorney, whom they need not pay more than four siliquae.

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88 Civil Law, vol. 16, 294.
89 Novel 79 specifies that this law applies only to monks: “This law shall be applicable where anyone has a case against a most reverend monk, virgin, or nun residing in any venerated monastery. We have already enacted laws concerning members of the clergy stating the manner in which they may be sued, and these We desire to remain valid and unaltered under all circumstances”: Civil Law, vol. 16, 295. Novel 83 explains the various factors impacting whether clergy members were to be tried by the local bishop or secular authorities. Notably, criminal and civil cases were to be tried before competent secular judges: Civil Law, vol. 16, 310.
90 Civil Law, vol. 17, 87.
The dignity of monks was also something that Justinian felt should be protected by law. Novel 123 forbids laymen, especially actors and prostitutes, from donning a monastic habit, stating that “those who have the audacity either to wear such garments or imitate them or ridicule the practice of ecclesiastical discipline are warned that they will be liable to corporeal punishment, as well as to be sent into exile.”92 This decree further highlights the respected status monks had come to hold in 6th-century society.

Although monks received special legal protections, they were also excluded in large part from the secular world. Significantly, they were forbidden from conducting secular business or holding any sort of public office:

We do not permit a deacon, a steward, or any other member of the clergy, no matter what his rank may be, or any monk attached to a church or monastery, to be appointed a receiver or collector of taxes, a recorder of public or private property, a superintendent of a household, or an attorney to conduct litigation; nor do We allow him to act as surety for any of the above-mentioned purposes; and formulate this rule in order that religious establishments may sustain no injury, or the holy services of the Church be interfered with.93

While monks were forbidden from involvement in the secular world, this did not extend to property ownership. Indeed, the CJC contains many statements protecting the ability of monks to procure and keep property. Novel 123 explicitly allows monasteries to purchase property adjacent to the monastery.94 As presented above, however, the main way monasteries would have acquired property was from laymen who came to dedicate themselves to the monastic life: a practice that Justinian entrenched in law, decreeing that all of a new monk’s property would become the property of the monastery.95 The CJC made the accrual of property by monasteries

92 Civil Law, vol. 17, 103.
93 Ibid, 85.
94 Ibid, 85.
95 See, for example: Civil Law, vol. 16, 27.
even more effective by prohibiting monastic property from ever being sold in the future: “[abbot
and abbesses of monasteries] shall not be permitted to alienate any immovable property, whether
it consists of buildings, fields, gardens or anything of this kind, rustic slaves, and grain provided
by the State, or deliver it under a special contract to creditors by way of pledge.”96 With laws
safeguarding monastic property ownership, Justinian thus ensured that monasteries had the
economic might to continue in perpetuity.

The CJC contains many indications as to the role held by monks in sixth century society.
Justinian explicitly highlights that an education premised on reading Scripture, taught by
ordained monks, was a central expectation of monastic practice. The CJC further provides
information about the expected role of the monk in society, and in corollary, the ways in which
monastics were perceived by other members of Late Antique society. Monks were an established
part of ecclesiastical affairs, and some might have had the letters, education, and experience
required for ordination to the clergy and indeed the episcopacy. They operated on the fringes of
society, removed from the secular world. They were to be judged only by bishops and to emulate
their dress in jest was strictly punished. Yet they had the power to accrue significant economic
resources, resources that they could never lose possession of. To their contemporaries in the sixth
century, they must have seemed paradoxically formidable indeed: removed from the world yet
ubiquitous, immune to secular law yet advantaged by it, educated Christian experts yet
professing to know nothing. For those needing a learned opinion, guidance on a Christian matter,

96 Civil Law, vol. 16, 42. The term “alienate” is subsequently defined: “We accept the term alienation in its general
sense, and hence forbid the sale, donation, and exchange of property, as well as perpetual emphyteusis, which does
not differ greatly from alienation.” Monasteries themselves were also prohibited from being sold: Civil Law, vol. 16,
49.
or who sought to learn of Christianity and perhaps join the ecclesiastical ranks, the monastery was their destination.
Conclusion: A New Narrative of Late Antique Palestinian Monasticism

Over the past two chapters I have presented extensive evidence that Palestinian monasticism in the fifth and sixth centuries was one that was to at least some demonstrable extent concerned with literacy and textual study. In addition, I have drawn on societally significant sources for Christianity in this period to highlight a Christian and ecclesiastical culture desirous of Scriptural expertise and eloquence. My treatment of these topics is ultimately to highlight a hitherto unremarked method by which Palestinian monks wielded influence and power. Scholars, struggling to label this influence, have ascribed its source to ambiguous concepts like “charisma,” “ascetic power,” or “spiritual power.” I propose that these less tangible qualities were in part supplemented by the erudition possessed by some leading monastics – stemming from their lived curriculum of asceticism, yes, but also in large part from textual study.

There is clear evidence that some monks in the Gaza and Judean region of Palestine in the fifth and sixth century were literate and studied Scripture daily. This practice was likely inherited from their monastic predecessors in Egypt, from individuals such as Pachomius who stressed the importance of literacy and biblical study. The Rules of Isaiah from Gaza monasticism in the fifth century support the continuation of monastic literacy and biblical study, and this practice is also attested for the Judean region from the use of books and expressions of literacy found in the Lives of Chariton, Euthymius, and Daniel the Stylite. Indeed, such literacy and biblical study had an impact on the ecclesiastical institution, allowing monks to enter their ranks. Palestinian bishops, former monks under Euthymius, played a part in the erudite council of Chalcedon of 451. The rise in popularity and prominence of monastics, which had gone so far that monastic issues from Constantinople were presented at Chalcedon, prompted the council to
formally recognize monasticism as an aspect of the church. The increased profile of monasticism in this period was especially apparent in Palestine, where archaeological data notes an increase in monastic buildings and the construction of new monasteries. Individuals of diverse backgrounds, as seen especially in the Lives of Cyril, or in the figure of Dorotheus at Gaza, eagerly sought to be tonsured in the deserts of Palestine.

At least some new monks, if they were illiterate, were taught their letters and instructed in biblical study. Individuals arriving who already possessed a basic literacy became more adept at reading and writing as they engaged in these activities as part of their daily practice. Part of this education, as alluded to in the Rules of Isaiah, included copying out the bible and other Christian works: the bible possibly to be retained by the new monk as their own, and the other copied works destined for the monastery’s library or to be sold. The tools of literacy were ubiquitous, as attested at Gaza by the hundreds of letters and their learned contents exchanged with the Christian experts, Barsanuphius and John. These exchanges testify too that local communities recognized the power wielded by educated monks, whose consistent citation of Scriptural wisdom assured supplicants that they had chosen the right spiritual counselor. Throughout, monastic life was simple and dedicated to achieving enlightenment, the path to which was contained in both self-reflective contemplation and a rigorous study of Scripture. Palestinian monks sometimes became perturbed with their singular focus on the Bible, having read it many times, and sought other texts to study in the monastery’s library. Such feelings may be detected in letters to Barsanuphius and John, with queries as to what might be good to read.

1 Hirschfeld, Judean Desert Monasteries, 10.
Literate monks who were further along in their formation could undertake large written projects, such as the sixth century *Life* written of Theodore of Sykeon by the monk Eleusius/George, or the *Lives* written by Cyril of Scythopolis. These advanced monks were also consistently called upon as the perfect candidates for ordination into the Church. Indeed, in the first half of the sixth century Justinian finally formally identified the Christian education monks received in monasteries and prescribed the lettered and learned criteria required for ecclesiastical membership. Imperial recognition was a century behind actual practice, however, and ecclesiastical acceptance of learned Palestinian monks was such that they attended and participated in the Council of Constantinople of 553 as one of a crowd, without being singled out in the minutes of the council proceedings.

The culture of literacy and textual study continued unabated in the Palestinian monasticism of the second half of the sixth century. John Moschus’ account attests to the ubiquity of literacy and the written word in Palestine. Notable too are the many individuals who Moschus encounters who are both monks and holders of ecclesiastical office. In line with Justinian’s edicts these individuals would have been literate and learned, and gave lessons on Scripture to the monks of their community.² Moschus’s account also points to the incredible consistency apparent in monastic practice across different regions during this period: he is never surprised by what he encounters travelling through the Levant and Egyptian regions, and the hallmarks of literacy are consistently apparent.

² Examples are pulled from Moschos, *Spiritual Meadow*, and include: Abba Basil, priest: 30. (n. 40); Abba Stephan, priest: 48. (n. 62); Monk Peter, priest: 80. (n. 100); Abba Eusebios, priest: 98. (n. 119); Abba Athenogenes, bishop: 103. (n. 127); Abba Photios, bishop: 104. (n. 127); Abba Nicholas, priest: 111. (n. 135); Abba John, priest: 111. (n. 136); Abba Gregory, priest: 147. (n. 178); Monk Menas, deacon: 97. (n. 118).
Although the Palestinian monasticism that flourished in the fifth and sixth centuries seemingly ended with the Persian and Muslim invasions of the seventh century, the impact of this period cannot be underestimated. As the empire moved beyond a period of “Christian-Pagan Negotiation,” a period of “True Christianization” was shaped in part by the unique style of Palestinian monasticism, which emphasized rapprochement to God through a program of both asceticism and textual study. The literacy and education provided in these monastic crucibles shaped Christian culture in subtle ways: from its practitioners serving an advisory function to the local community, to providing devout individuals a means of truly dedicating themselves to God, to contributing learned individuals to the ranks of the Church. Indeed, Palestinian monasticism served as a means of democratizing Christianity, accepting the poor and rich alike and potentially providing all with the tools, fiercely guarded in pagan times by the wealthy, needed to occupy positions of ecclesiastical governance. The Christian world that continued into the seventh century was markedly different than the one at the beginning of the fifth century. The role played by Palestinian monks in this shaping, with their distinctly Christian erudition, cannot be underestimated.

This thesis has addressed a topic of significance in the history of education. Of particular note is my emphasis on describing the type of education to be found in Palestinian monasticism. As I presented above, scholars of antiquity too often use “education” as a catch term to describe all manner of formation. With the ascetic education of Palestinian monasticism well established, I have uncovered and described the literacy-based education that simultaneously took place. This differentiation has significant ramifications for our understanding of Late Antiquity, and also exhorts scholars to consider the question of perspective when describing education – an individual would have been considered educated by whom?
While this thesis has established the literary element of Palestinian monasticism in the fifth and sixth centuries, much work remains to be done. Of obvious interest is the question of what happened to the evidently quite widespread monastic literacy in this region during the seventh century and the Persian and Muslim invasions. Did this cultural emphasis persist? In what ways did it continue forward into following centuries and shape the Church and imperial administration?

Aside from these questions, this thesis also suggests ramifications for our understanding of religious education today. Palestinian monastic education was concerned not, at least in theory, with advancement and worldly gain, but with self-improvement and spiritual growth. A curriculum restricted to asceticism and meditation, however, was not possible. The written word and its study was crucial for the propagation of the sort of learning and understanding valued by both church and society, and for the propagation of the monastic institution itself. This requirement for balance might be applied too to the modern world: enlightenment and true education comes from simultaneously training both the body and the mind.
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Appendices

Appendix A: Late Antique Provinces of Palestine

Appendix B: The Monasteries of Gaza

From: Hirschfeld, “Monasteries of Gaza,” Fig. 1.
Appendix C: Monasteries in the Close Vicinity of Gaza

From: Hirschfeld, “Monasteries of Gaza,” Fig. 6.
Appendix D: Location of the Judean Desert within Palestine

Appendix E: The Judean Desert Monasteries

From: Hirschfeld, Judean Desert Monasteries, xviii.
Appendix F: Footpaths of the Judean Desert

From: Hirschfeld, Judean Desert Monasteries, 206.