

Debating the Faith in Early Islamic Egypt

by PHIL BOOTH

University of Oxford

E-mail: philip.booth@theology.ox.ac.uk

This article explores a series of doctrinal disputations held in early Islamic Egypt, and known through the Hodegos of Anastasius of Sinai (fl. c. 670–c. 700). Using the text's prosopographical and contextual cues, it argues that these disputations occurred in the 680s, in the aftermath of Constantinople's Sixth Ecumenical Council (680/1), the decisions of which had thrown the Chalcedonian Christians of the caliphate into conflict and schism. In 686, it is argued, Anastasius had confronted the famed Edessene and Severan Athanasius bar Gümōyē before the Marwānid prince 'Abd al-'Azīz at Fustāṭ, and there been defeated. That defeat is indicative of the new-found position of the Egyptian Severan Church, which now flourished under Marwānid patronage.

For the historian of the Coptic Church, no decades are perhaps more frustrating than those which fall between the Arab conquest (639–42) and the governorship of 'Abd al-Azīz b. Marwān (685–705). Both the final phase of Roman rule and the Marwānid period are presented in a number of quite detailed narratives. But for ecclesiastical affairs in the crucial decades between we must depend upon a scattering of less substantial witnesses: a small number of incomplete festal letters;¹ a series of later legends, constructed around the patriarch Benjamin

HP = *History of the patriarchs*; *PO* = *Patrologia Orientalis*

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¹ See Benjamin of Alexandria, *16th festal letter*, ed. (Ethiopic) C. D. G. Müller, in *Die Homilie über die Hochzeit zu Kana und weitere Schriften des Patriarchen Benjamin I. von Alexandrien*, Heidelberg 1968, 302–51, and *P.Köln V 215* (2 Apr. 663/674), with U. Hagedorn and D. Hagedorn, 'Monotheletisch interpretierte Väterzitate und eine Anleihe bei Johannes Chrysostomus in dem Kölner Osterfestbrief (P. Köln V 215)', *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* clxxviii (2011), 143–57.

(627–65);² and the impressionistic, and somewhat superficial, *Lives* of the latter and his successor Agathon (665–81) now embedded, in Arabic, in the two recensions of the tenth-century *History of the patriarchs*.³

A possible light upon these dark decades is nevertheless provided in a source which Coptologists have often neglected: the *Hodegos* of Anastasius of Sinai⁴ – scholar, raconteur and traveller in the eastern Mediterranean during the earliest phase of Arab rule (*fl.* c. 670–c. 700).⁵ Long ago Marcel Richard argued that the *Hodegos* was published in two different editions – one belonging to the period soon after the Arab conquest; and a second, with some additional sections and *scholia*, belonging to the period c. 686–c. 689.⁶ The text's recent editor, Karl-Heinz Uthemann, has refined this same position, arguing that Anastasius had compiled the *Hodegos* from revised parts of his pre-existing *corpus*, and added certain *scholia* which bear witness to a second redaction of the relevant parts.

² See, for example, (Ps.-)Benjamin of Alexandria, *On the marriage at Cana*, ed. C. D. G. Müller, in *Die Homilie über die Hochzeit zu Kana*, 52–285, esp. pp. 132–269; or the fragment of a letter edited by E. Amélineau: 'Fragments coptes pour servir à l'histoire de la conquête de l'Égypte par les Arabes', *Journal asiatique* 8th ser. xii (1888), 361–410 at pp. 368–78.

³ For the *HP (Primitive)* – thought to witness an earlier state of the text – see C. F. Seybold, *Severus ibn al Muqaffa'*, *Alexandrinische Patriarchengeschichte von S. Marcus bis Michael I 61–767 nach der ältesten 1266 geschriebenen Hamburger Handschrift*, Hamburg 1912. For the *HP (Vulgate)* see B. Evetts, 'History of the patriarchs of the Coptic Church of Alexandria', *PO* i (1904), 99–214, 381–518; v (1910), 1–215; x (1915), 357–552. On the nature and limits of this distinction see P. Pilette, 'L'Histoire des patriarches d'Alexandrie: une nouvelle évaluation de la configuration du texte en recensions', *Le Muséon* cxxvi (2013), 419–50. Note that for the dates of the Severan patriarchs this article follows A. Jülicher, 'Die Liste der alexandrinischen Patriarchen im 6. und 7. Jahrhundert', in *Festgabe von Fachgenossen und Freunden Karl Müller zum siebzigsten Geburtstag dargebracht*, Tübingen 1922, 7–23.

⁴ Anastasius of Sinai, *Hodegos*, ed. K.-H. Uthemann, in *Anastasii Sinaitae Viae Dux*, Turnhout 1981.

⁵ On Anastasius see now K.-H. Uthemann's magisterial *Anastasios Sinaites: byzantinisches Christentum in den ersten Jahrzehnten unter arabischer Herrschaft*, Berlin 2015. Several of Uthemann's central arguments are summarised in his 'Anastasius the Sinaïte', in A. Di Berardino (ed.), *Patrology: the eastern Fathers from the Council of Chalcedon (451) to John of Damascus († 750)*, Cambridge 2006, 313–31, and 'Anastase le Sinaïte', in C.-G. Conticello (ed.), *La Théologie byzantine et sa tradition*, I/1: (VI–VIIe s.), Turnhout 2015. For a wider perspective on Anastasius and his corpus, however, see J. Haldon, 'The works of Anastasius of Sinai: a key source for the history of seventh-century East Mediterranean society and belief', in A. Cameron and L. Conrad (eds), *The Byzantine and early Islamic Near East, I: Problems in the literary source material*, Princeton 1992, 107–47.

⁶ M. Richard, 'Anastase le Sinaïte: l'Hodegos et le Monothélisme', *Revue des études byzantines* xvi (1958), 29–42.

He therefore nuances Richard's notion of two publications, but argues that the final text, as a 'Gesamtwerk', appeared at the earliest in 686–9.⁷

The *Hodegos* is a long defence of Chalcedonian doctrine targeted at both the Severans and the Julianists, and is presented as a disputational handbook. Within it, Anastasius several times refers to his experience in disputing with anti-Chalcedonians in Egypt and Syria, and he seems to have been known as something of a public controversialist.⁸ In chapter 10, however, he gives a fuller sense of this experience, for he there offers a remarkable account of four disputations in which he participated at Alexandria, and names several Severan interlocutors.⁹ These disputations have sometimes been situated in the 630s, or in the period *c.* 640–*c.* 680; but based upon their prosopographical and contextual cues, this article will argue for their decisive placement in the 680s, in the shadow of the Sixth Ecumenical Council (680/1). The disputations thus belong to a crucial period of transition, in which the Chalcedonian bishops of Egypt fell into schism and dissent, and in which their Severan rivals seized the ascendancy, harnessing the support of the Marwānid authorities at Fustāt.

The disputations in Alexandria

The evidence for the disputations themselves is described in four sections at *Hodegos* 10.1–4.¹⁰ In the first, Anastasius states that he was in Alexandria and – knowing that the Theodosians, Gaianites and others claimed that Cyril had equated *physis* and *hypostasis* – submitted to 'the heretics' a confession in which he recognised that nature also indicates person, to which the recipients responded in the affirmative – 'for no nature is *aprosōpos* or *anhypostatos*'. A gathering of the elite, the people and the clerics of the different factions then met in public, and Anastasius, having prepared a *florilegium* in advance, proceeded to show how the agreed equation of nature and person would render Cyril and various other patristic luminaries Nestorian. At this, he reports, his opponents were dumbfounded, and all the people of the Church challenged them ('in the commonplace language of the Alexandrians') either to burn the books of the Fathers, or to accept the Council of Chalcedon. The attendees then fashioned a memorable maxim: 'Give it to the Theodosian and to the Gaianite, if he seeks

⁷ See Uthemann, *Anastasii Sinaitae Viae Dux*, ccvi–ccxviii, and *Anastasios Sinaites*, esp. pp. 17–215.

⁸ See *Hodegos* i.3.28–30; vi.1.111–16; xiv.2.65–7. See also the brief reference to a debate with Colluthus, a Jewish sophist, at Antinoe: *Hodegos* xiv.1.37–9.

⁹ For his presence in Alexandria see the scholia at *ibid.* xxii.4.70–2; xxii.5.26.

¹⁰ For the theological content see Uthemann, *Anastasios Sinaites*, 52–62.

something – and at once it will be destroyed.’¹¹ So ends Anastasius’ triumphant account of the first disputation.

The *Hodegos* now passes to a second meeting – which Anastasius calls variously a ‘disputation’ (διάλεξις), ‘colloquium’ (σύλλογος) and ‘council’ (συνέδριον) – which the same opponents, whom he calls Severans or Theodosians, convened ‘likewise in the public armoury’ (? ‘ὁμοίως ἐν τῇ φαύρικῃ τῇ δημοσίᾳ’). To this, Anastasius reports, came their leading disputant, ‘the monk John called “of Zyga”, of the Oktokaidekaton’ (ὁ λεγόμενος τοῦ Ζυγᾶ, ὁ τοῦ ὀκτοκαϊδεκάτου’), and with him ‘Gregory Nystazōn, the Syro-Egyptian-minded’ (ὁ Νυστάζων ὁ Συραϊγύπτιος τὸν νοῦν’), along with ‘the people and the clergy’. Anastasius proceeds into a long refutation of the proposition that Cyril had equated *physis* and *hypostasis*, a refutation punctuated with some dialogue with his two interlocutors, and with long citations from patristic authorities. He then springs a trap, however, for he produces a pre-prepared dogmatic tome in which he has hidden citations from the Fathers under the name of Flavian of Constantinople, in order to show that the Severans will irrationally condemn anything attributed to him. His opponents of course oblige, and when the ruse is revealed, in Anastasius’ telling, ‘the poor people’ in the audience insult and verge on stoning them. ‘Such was the scandal and shame which John and those with him suffered in public.’¹²

The third disputation, again with the Theodosians, is said to have been held ‘in the presence of the Augustalis [ἀγυουστάλιος], during a public audience, and of the city’. Anastasius reports that his opponents, following the defeat of John and Gregory, summoned certain bishops ‘in Egypt’ who were considered learned, and ‘amongst whom also was the bishop of Cynopolis’ (ὁ Κυνωπολίτης’). These bishops then petitioned the Augustalis to organise another Christological disputation and, when Anastasius had presented himself at ‘the praetorium’, began to denounce him as one who had disturbed the city, the people and their Church. Anastasius then writes out a brief confession of faith (‘He is the divine Word who was begotten from the Father before all the ages, was crucified and entombed, and suffered and rose again’), and offers to commune with them. The bishops approve and add their signatures, at which point Anastasius approaches ‘the one who seemed the more wise of them’ and, taking him gently by the beard, and addressing him as ‘Theopaschite’, proclaims that he has deliberately omitted from his confession all mention of flesh, or incarnation, or of birth from the Virgin, in order to expose their latent theopaschism. The bishops (‘as if awakening from drunkenness’) then demand the confession be returned, but

¹¹ See *Hodegos* x.1.1–3 (Uthemann edn, 143–59).

¹² *Hodegos* x.2 (Uthemann edn, 159–90).

Anastasius refuses, ‘until I have presented it to Christ as evidence against you on the day of judgement’.¹³

The final consecutive chapter concerns a disputation (διάλεξις) ‘against the same heterodox in Alexandria, I mean against George the priest and registrar (?) of their church, called “Locksmith”’ (‘πρὸς Γεώργιον τὸν πρεσβύτερον καὶ λογογράφον τῆς ἐκκλησίας αὐτῶν τὸν λεγόμενον Κλειδοποιόν’). Anastasius’ account is, in contrast to preceding chapters, rather brief. He claims that ‘their appointees’ stated that no nature is *anhypostatos*, so that two natures therefore demand two *hypostases* or *prosōpa* in Christ, and four *hypostases* or *prosōpa* in the Trinity. He then dupes his opponents into defending the equation of *hypostasis* and *prosōpon*, before proceeding to claim that this would render Cyril’s proclamation ‘The *hypostases* of Christ remained unconfused’ as Nestorian. Nothing further is reported, but let us note that the anecdote is introduced with an interesting detail: that it occurred ‘in the chancellery of the Kaisarion (ἐν τῷ σημειογραφείῳ τοῦ Κοισαρίου)’, that is, in the Chalcedonian cathedral church.

Dating the disputations

When should we place the disputations? Anastasius seems to describe a period of Chalcedonian dominance, in which meetings were gathered at the Kaisarion, and in which an Augustalis – who Anastasius suggests is a Chalcedonian¹⁴ – presided over the reported defeat of prominent Severans at the praetorium.¹⁵ Richard suggested that the context for discussions was the aftermath of the famous monenergist union of 633, during the last decade of Roman rule.¹⁶ But the content of the disputations does not demand this, and the ideological context of monenergism was *rapprochement*, rather than recrimination.¹⁷ Indeed, as Uthemann has argued, nothing prevents a date within the period of Arab rule, not even the mention of an Augustalis.¹⁸ He points out that the title *augustalios*

¹³ *Hodegos* x.3 (Uthemann edn, 190–2).

¹⁴ See the words put into the Augustalis’s mouth at *Hodegos* x.3.17–19 (Uthemann edn, 191): ‘These bishops, upon hearing what occurred between the church and the Theodosians, came here seeking to dispute with your holiness.’ Pace Uthemann, *Anastasios Sinaites* 56, who suggests that the Augustalis considers Anastasius a troublemaker, and is aligned with the Severans.

¹⁵ Note that between his accounts of the second and third disputations, Anastasius describes how, when he despaired at a certain passage in Cyril’s *To Succensus*, ‘lord Isidore the librarian of the patriarchal palace [ὁ βιβλιοφύλαξ τοῦ πατριαρχείου] produced for me a book which contained this citation unadulterated’: *Hodegos* x.2.176–90 (Uthemann edn, 188–9).

¹⁶ Richard, ‘Anastase le Sinaïte’, 35–42.

¹⁷ See, for example, H. Ohme, ‘Oikonomia im monenergetisch–monotheletischen Streit’, *Zeitschrift für antikes Christentum* xii (2008), 308–34 at pp. 314–15, 332–3.

¹⁸ See Uthemann, *Anastasios Sinaites*, 54–6.

continued into the Arab period, and cites a document from the Qurra archive, dated to 711, which indeed refers to a ‘Theodore *augoustalios*’ in Alexandria.¹⁹ To this can be added two more witnesses: another document, perhaps from the same archive and dated 709, refers to an *augoustalios* in connection with Alexandria;²⁰ while a further reference within Mena of Nikiu’s *Life of Isaac* confirms that it was in use in Alexandria in about 692.²¹ This, it should be noted, is quite striking. Following the reforms of Justinian, the title *augoustalios*, once the preserve of the *praefectus augustalis* in Alexandria, had devolved to the new provincial *duces*, including those of the Thebaid and (from the 630s) of Arcadia; and although the Arabs adopted the same provincial organisation, the documentation indicates that following the conquest the *duces* of Arcadia and the Thebaid, at least, lost the title.²² It seems, therefore, either that the title continued in Alexandria when elsewhere it was dropped; or that it was revived there after a hiatus.

Although the use of the title *augoustalios* is ambiguous in chronological terms, the prosopographical details offer an unrecognised prop to Uthemann’s position, and perhaps allow the episodes to be placed with more precision.²³ Amongst Anastasius’ interlocutors nothing is known of John or of George, besides what can be extracted from the text: John was a monk of the famous Oktokaidekaton complex to the west of Alexandria;²⁴ while George ‘the Locksmith’ and *logographos* seems otherwise unknown.²⁵ It nevertheless might be possible to identify Gregory,

¹⁹ ‘Θεοδώρω αὐγουσταλίω’: *P.Lond.* IV 1392 l. 13. This is in the context of a dispatch to Alexandria. I am grateful to Sophie Kovarik for checking the reading in the British Library, which is clear. This Theodore is perhaps identical with the ‘Theodore archon (ارخند) of the city of Alexandria’ whom the *HP (Primitive)* (Seybold edn, 122), *HP (Vulgate)* (Evetts edn, *PO* v. 26–7) places there *c.* 700.

²⁰ SB XX 15101. On the office of Alexandrian Augustalis after the conquest see now J. Bruning, *The rise of a capital: Al-Fustāt and its hinterland, 18/639–132/750*, Leiden 2018, 45–9.

²¹ Mena of Nikiu, *Life of Isaac* 13, ed. E. Porcher in ‘Vie d’Isaac, patriarche d’Alexandrie de 686 à 689, écrite par Mena, évêque de Pchati’, *PO* xi (1915), 299–390 at p. 379, describing the later part of Isaac’s patriarchate (689–*c.* 692).

²² See, for example, in Arcadia: *P.Prag.* I 64 (28 May 636): ‘Φλ(αουίω) Θεοδοσίω τῷ εὐκλεεστάτῳ στρατηλά(τῆ) δουκι καὶ αὐγουσταλίω ταύτης τῆς Ἀρκάδων ἐπαρχ(ίας)’. But cf. the absence of *augoustalios* in, for example, BGU III 750 (21 Aug. 655), CPR XIV 32 (19 Aug. 655/670), CPR VIII 82 (9 Aug. 699/700), 83 (676–725).

²³ Uthemann makes the cautious suggestion that the meetings might have occurred under Benjamin or Agathon: *Anastasios Sinaites*, 56.

²⁴ See J. Gascou, ‘Oktokaidekaton’, in A. S. Atiya (ed.), *The Coptic encyclopedia*, New York 1991, vi. 1826b–7b.

²⁵ One candidate is the deacon, and then priest, George, whom the bishops attempted to elect as patriarch after John III: see *HP (Primitive)* (Seybold edn, 120); *HP (Vulgate)* (Evetts edn, *PO* v. 22–4); Mena of Nikiu, *Life of Isaac* 11 (Porcher edn, 348–53).

even if the origins of his soubriquet, *ho Nystazōn* ('the Dozer?'), remain obscure.²⁶ There is one prominent Gregory amongst the Severans of this period – the bishop of Kais/Qays. He came to prominence during the patriarchate of Agathon (665–81),²⁷ served as patriarchal vicar for Lower Egypt during the patriarchate of Isaac (689–92)²⁸ and remained a leading figure up to the earliest reign of Alexander (704–30), before which he had even served as patriarchal *locum tenens* (700–4).²⁹ The coincidence of names is, of course, far from decisive. But the 'Primitive' recension of the *History of the patriarchs* – which bears witness to the earliest extant version of the text – calls Gregory a Syrian (كان سرياني), which would complement Anastasius' description of Gregory Nystazōn as *Syraigyptios*.³⁰ Kais/Qays, moreover, is the Coptic/Arabic for Cynopolis, so that it is tempting to suppose that Gregory bishop of Kais, Gregory Nystazōn, and *ho Kynopolites*, the anonymous bishop of Cynopolis (Anastasius' one named opponent in the third disputation), are all one and the same – that prominent ecclesiastic whose floruit is *c.* 665–*c.* 710.³¹

What then of the dominance of the Chalcedonians? It is known that the Chalcedonian patriarchate had been dissolved in about 651/2, but Chalcedonism seems to have remained strong for several decades, in particular at Alexandria.³² For the most part the *History of the patriarchs*

²⁶ Note that at *Hodegos* x.2.6.1 (Uthemann edn, 175) we find instead Γρηγόριος ὁ Νυστάζας.

²⁷ See *HP (Primitive)* (Seybold edn, 114); *HP (Vulgate)* (Evetts edn, *PO* v. 9).

²⁸ Mena of Nikiu, *Life of Isaac* (Porcher edn, 354). 'Lower' is perhaps here a mistake for 'Upper'.

²⁹ See *HP (Primitive)* (Seybold edn, 120, 129, 133); *HP (Vulgate)* (Evetts edn, *PO* v 20, 22, 42, 49).

³⁰ 'And the blessed bishop Gregory, bishop of Kais, was a Syrian, and [Agathon] had appointed him as a bishop' (وَالْأَسْقَفُ الْمَغْبُوطُ غَرِيغُورِيَسُ اسْقَفُ الْقَيْسِ كَانَ سَرِيَانِي وَكَانَ أَوْسَمَهُ اسْقَفُ): *HP (Primitive)* (Seybold edn, 114); cf. *HP (Vulgate)* (Evetts edn, *PO* v. 9), which seems to misread the same passage and to create a phantom 'Joseph': 'In [Agathon's] time was the blessed bishop Gregory, bishop of Kais, and a Syrian called Joseph' (وَكَانَ فِي أَيَّامِهِ الْإِسْقَفُ الْمَغْبُوطُ أَعْرِيغُورِيُوسُ اسْقَفُ الْقَيْسِ وَسَرِيَانِي اسْمُهُ يَوْسُفُ). Note that 'and' (–و) in the previous sentence has been added by the editor (*ibid.* n. 6). I am grateful to Julien Decharneux for his comments on these passages. For the distinction between the two recensions see n. 3 above.

³¹ Note that in introducing the third disputation *Hodegos* x.3.4–9 states: 'And so with the heretics sufficiently and unambiguously disgraced by the drama which we inflicted upon them, and since they no longer had anyone left to open their mouth against those of the catholic church, they sent into Egypt and summoned certain bishops whom they considered learned – amongst whom was also the bishop of Cynopolis [ἐν οἷς καὶ ἦν ὁ Κυνωπολίτης]' (Uthemann edn, 190). This might suggest a distinction between the latter and Gregory Nystazōn, although the qualification 'also' suggests to me that the bishop participated but was not amongst those who had to be summoned.

³² For the end of the patriarchate see the patriarchal lists in Theophanes, *Chronographia*, AM 6136–45 (= 644/5–653/4), ed. C. de Boor in *Theophanis chronographia*, Leipzig 1883, 343; Nicephorus, *Chronographia*, ed. C. de Boor, in *Nicephori*

remains silent on the fate of the Chalcedonian Church, but under Agathon it nevertheless chooses to report how the governor at Alexandria was then one Theodosius, ‘who was a head in a congregation of the Chalcedonians [كان رئيسا فى جماعة من الخلقونيين], and was an opponent of the orthodox Theodosians’. He is said to have persecuted Agathon, exacting from him huge amounts of tax, and even issuing a command that he be stoned if seen in the street. Theodosius, the *History of the patriarchs* explains, had travelled to Yazīd b. Mu‘āwiya, ‘the leader of the Muslims’ at Damascus, paid him a bribe and been granted power over Alexandria, Mareotis and surrounding regions, independent of the governor at Fustāt.³³ Although the precise nature of his position is uncertain, Theodosius fits the profile of Anastasius’ Augustalis, who holds an otherwise unusual office (had he revived the ancient Alexandrian title *augoustalios*?), who adheres to Chalcedon and who presides over Severan defeats. Theodosius’ tenure, moreover, can be placed in a narrow time frame. Since the *History of the patriarchs* implies that he was appointed (rather than renewed) under the caliph Yazīd I (680–3), and has him both persecuting Agathon (665–81) and dying soon after the enthronement of John III (681–9), he must have held office for a brief period *c.* 680–*c.* 682.³⁴ I would suggest, therefore, that Anastasius’ second and third disputation – and in all likelihood all four – occurred in that brief period.

Anastasius in Marwānid Egypt

It is not impossible, of course, that Anastasius is describing an earlier decade, and that the disputations were in fact organised under a previous prefect or dux in Alexandria, now invisible to us. Nevertheless, another detail within the *Hodegos* indicates that Anastasius was indeed active in Egypt in the 680s. He exults in the Alexandrian disputations, recounting, with undisguised glee, how he duped his opponents through various ruses, and earned the audience’s acclamations. The actual course of these disputations is of course impossible to recover – but if Anastasius was willing to indulge in gross distortion, it is notable that he does not

archiepiscopi Constantinopolitani opuscula historica, Leipzig 1880, 81–135 at p. 129; Euty chius, *Annals (Antiochene Recension)*, ed. L. Cheiko, in *Euty chii patriarchae Alexandrini annals*, Beirut 1906–9, ii. 28. The last Roman patriarch, Peter, was appointed in July 642: John of Nikiu, *Chronicle* 121, ed. H. Zotenberg, in *Chronique de Jean, évêque de Nikiou*, Paris 1883, 219. Thereafter a *topoterētes* represented the see in East Roman affairs; see nn. 68, 70 below.

³³ *HP (Primitive)* (Seybold edn, 112–13); (*Vulgate*) (Evetts edn, PO v. 5–6). The latter gives ‘Theodore’, but notes ‘Some mss. have “Theodosius”’ (n.1).

³⁴ Death of Theodosius: *HP (Primitive)* (Seybold edn, 115); (*Vulgate*) (Evetts edn, PO v. 10).

do so with reference to another disputation which he twice mentions in passing, once in chapter 6, and once again in chapter 10, while reporting the first disputation; that with ‘Athanasius in Babylon’, qualified in chapter 6 as ‘the *notarios*’.³⁵ Here Anastasius is far more circumspect – suggesting, perhaps, that the outcome was less positive. This disputation must have occurred in the Arab period, when the old Roman fortress had become the site of the new Arab *miṣr* of Fustāt, and when ‘Babylon’ often functioned, in Greek and Coptic documents and texts, as a synonym for it. Anastasius, therefore, participated in a prestigious debate at the new Arab capital.

But who is Athanasius, the humble *notarios* who debated Anastasius in so exalted a forum? The most obvious candidate for Anastasius’ interlocutor is the famous (but far from humble) Athanasius bar Gümōyē, an Edessene and Severan who headed the *dīwān* of Fustāt, alongside the Egyptian Isaac, during the governorship of ‘Abd al-‘Azīz b. Marwān (685–705). Athanasius – who is memorialised in a number of Coptic,³⁶ Syriac,³⁷ Christian Arabic³⁸ and Islamic Arabic³⁹ sources, as well as in Greek documents⁴⁰ – served as a prominent patron of the Severan Church throughout his period in Egypt.⁴¹ Anastasius’ labelling of his Athanasius as *notarios* might suggest a person of lesser status, since Athanasius bar Gümōyē’s title was, or became, *chartouarios* – an exalted role within the fisc,

³⁵ See *Hodegos* vi.1.120–1 (Uthemann edn, 99): ὅπερ καὶ προήγαγεν ἡμῖν ἐν Βαβυλῶνι Ἀθανάσιος ὁ νοτάριος (with reference to Severus’s *Philalethes*); *Hodegos* x.1.2.36–7 (Uthemann edn, 147): Ταύτην τὴν χρῆσιν παραγαγὼν ἠρώτησα Ἀθανάσιον ἐν Βαβυλῶνι λέγων ... (with reference to a quotation from Cyril, and with a small amount of subsequent dialogue). See also, at *Hodegos* iv.3–7 (Uthemann edn, 82), the citation from the Christological letter which Athanasius sent ‘to the holy catholic church in Babylon, when our Christ-loving and orthodox brothers there requested it’. For Anastasius’ interest in Babylon see also *Tales* i.15, 28, 29; ii.14, ed. A. Binggeli, in ‘Anastase le Sinaïte: Récits sur le Sinaï et Récits utiles à l’âme: édition, traduction, commentaire’, unpubl. PhD diss. Paris IV 2001, i. 188, 203, 204, 235; ii. 359–62.

³⁶ Mena of Nikiu, *Life of Isaac* (Porcher edn, 358–62).

³⁷ Michael the Great, *Chronicle* xi.16; *Chronicle to 1234* cxlix. The pair depend on Dionysius of Tel Maḥre, and Michael reveals that Dionysius in turn depended on one Daniel, son of Samuel, of the Tur Abdin.

³⁸ *HP (Primitive)* (Seybold edn, 116, 122, 135); *HP (Vulgate)* (Evetts edn, *PO*v. 12, 48–9, 54); Eutyclus, *Annals (Antiochene recension)* (Cheikho edn, ii. 41); Ps.-Abū Šāliḥ, *Churches and monasteries of Egypt*, ed. B. T. A. Evetts, in *Churches and monasteries of Egypt and some neighbouring countries*, Oxford 1895, fo. 53a.

³⁹ al-Kindī, *Kitāb al-wūlat*, ed. R. Guest, in *The governors and judges of Egypt*, Leiden 1912, 59; perhaps also Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam, *Futūḥ Miṣr*, ed. C. Torrey, in *Futūḥ Miṣr wa-akhbārūhā*, New Haven 1922, 98.

⁴⁰ See nn. 42–3 below.

⁴¹ On Athanasius and the Gümōyē see M. Debié, ‘Christians in the service of the caliph: through the looking glass of communal identities’, in A. Borrut and F. M. Donner (eds), *Christians and others in the Umayyad state*, Chicago, IL 2016, 53–71.

bearing the high honorific of *endoxotatos*.⁴² But in a fiscal register from 698/9, which bears a Greek-Arabic protocol naming ‘Abd al-‘Azīz, we indeed find both Athanasius and Isaac called *notarios*.⁴³ Anastasius refers to ‘Athanasius the *notarios* in Babylon’ as though no further explanation were required – and contemporaries cannot have failed to understand whom he intended.

It is certain that Anastasius was familiar with the Egyptian Severan scene during Athanasius’ tenure. Chapter 15 of the *Hodegos* is entitled, ‘Regarding the sixth festal (or rather lamentable) letter of him who is now bishop of the Theodosians in Alexandria, which was sent to Babylon’ (‘Περὶ τῆς ἑορταστικῆς, μᾶλλον δὲ θρηνητικῆς, 5’ ἐπιστολῆς τοῦ νῦν ἐπισκόπου τῶν Θεοδοσιανῶν ἐν Ἀλεξανδρείᾳ τῆς πεμφοθείσης ἐν Βαβυλῶνι’). Anastasius recounts some of the arguments which seem to have been presented in the letter: that confessing two natures in Christ demands two natures also in the Trinity, since everything which is predicated of Christ must also be predicated of the Father and Spirit; and that for this reason we do not confess ‘two unified natures in Christ, nor indeed wills, nor again operations’.⁴⁴ To this account Anastasius, in his second redaction of the *Hodegos*, has added a scholion which reads: ‘John the bishop of the Theodosians five years ago in two of his festal letters [Ἰωάννης ὁ ἐπίσκοπος τῶν Θεοδοσιανῶν πρὸ πέντε χρόνων ἐν δύο ἑορταστικαῖς αὐτοῦ] set out the pronouncement which said, “All the things which are said of Christ are all said of both the Father and the Holy Spirit.”’ The scholion then concludes: ‘And when we had attacked the first letter he set forth the same things again in the subsequent year.’⁴⁵

This passage constitutes one of the rare places in which the *Hodegos* refers to a named contemporary – John III, Severan patriarch 681–9 – and is indeed crucial to the dating of its most recent and authoritative commentator, Uthemann. In contrast to Richard, Uthemann does not presume that the scholion belongs to the period in which the *Hodegos* was finished since, he points out, it might have been added in the process of redacting and compiling individual sections, rather than at the text’s completion. Assuming that John is alive at the time of writing, Uthemann therefore posits a *terminus post quem* for the final form of the *Hodegos* between 686 (the earliest possible date in which a festal letter of John could be said to have been sent ‘five years ago’) and 689 (the end of John’s patriarchate);

⁴² For the office with honorific see *P.Lond.* IV 1447 lines 139, 141, 144, 189, 191, 192. Athanasius and Isaac also bear the title *chaltouarios* in Mena of Nikiu, *Life of Isaac* (for example at pp. 347 and 358 in the Porcher edn).

⁴³ *P.Lond.* IV 4 1412 (Aphrodito, ind. 12–13) lines 14–15, 20–1, 26–7, 32–3, 38–9, 42–3, 46–7, 55–6, 61–2, 70–1, 86–7, 101–2, 116–17 (the names appearing together in each instance).

⁴⁴ Anastasius of Sinai, *Hodegos* xv (Uthemann edn, 264).

⁴⁵ *Ibid.* (Uthemann edn, 264–5).

the *terminus ante quem* for the final form he places in about 701, when Anastasius is last encountered, alive but ailing.⁴⁶ For Uthemann, moreover, the unnamed patriarch whose sixth festal letter prompted Anastasius' refutation in the earlier redaction of chapter 15 cannot be John, since his sixth festal letter would have fallen in 686, while the later scholion must concern festal letters composed, at the latest, in 684 (five years before John's death). Thus Uthemann attributes the sixth festal letter to John's predecessor Agathon (664–81), placing it at Easter 670 and dating the earlier redaction of chapter 15 to the period 670–81, with the patriarch still alive.⁴⁷

If the most part of chapter 15 was indeed written in this period, then this would contradict the identification of 'Athanasius the *notarios*' with Athanasius bar Gūmōyē – which Uthemann himself also contemplates without considering the chronological consequences⁴⁸ – since the reference to the former within it is not contained within a scholion, and seems therefore to belong to the earlier redaction, while the latter served from 685.⁴⁹ Perhaps it should be seen as an interpolation. But Uthemann's dating of the earlier redaction is also not decisive. It rests on an insistence that John is alive at the time of the scholion, but this is not demanded in the text, in particular if it is conceived as an elucidation of the earlier redaction. If we follow André Binggeli and instead avoid this assumption, then the 'sixth letter' might well be that of John, sent in 686, so that the scholion, a marginal note, does little more than expand upon it, indicating the author, restating its main argument, and noting that that argument was then repeated in the subsequent letter.⁵⁰ In this case the earlier redaction of chapter 15 would belong to the period between the festal letters of 686 and 687, while the scholion, and thus the later redaction, would belong at the earliest to 691 or 692. Thus nothing would prevent the earlier redaction pointing to a meeting of Anastasius and Athanasius bar Gūmōyē. At the same time, this position allows us to explain two otherwise inconvenient facts about the 'sixth letter': first, that it is said to have denounced two wills (more obvious, as we shall see,

⁴⁶ For this see Anastasius of Sinai, *Against the monotheletes*, i.107–8, ed. K.–H. Uthemann in *Sermones duo in constitutionem hominis secundum imaginem Dei*, Turnhout 1985, 35–83 at p. 61.

⁴⁷ Uthemann, *Anastasios Sinaïtes*, 22–4, 151–7; cf. Richard, 'Anastase le Sinaïte', 32.

⁴⁸ Uthemann, *Anastasios*, 9–10; cf., however, Binggeli, *Anastase le Sinaïte*, ii. 343–4, using the reference to Athanasius to support his later dating of the text (see n. 50 below).

⁴⁹ See the reports in *HP (Primitive)* (Seybold edn, 116); *HP (Vulgate)* (Evetts edn, PO v. 12); Michael the Great, *Chronicle* xi.16; and *Chronicle to 1234* cxlix, all suggesting that he was appointed alongside 'Abd al-'Azīz.

⁵⁰ Binggeli, *Anastase le Sinaïte*, ii. 341–4; *contra* Uthemann, *Anastasios Sinaïtes*, 154–6.

after 681);⁵¹ and, second, that it is qualified as ‘sent to Babylon’ (‘τῆς πεμφοθείσης ἐν Βαβυλῶνι’). The reason for that qualification, one suspects, is that at the time of the festal letter of 686, Anastasius was himself at the Arab capital, there to debate the eminent *chartouliarios* Athanasius, no doubt in the presence of ‘Abd al-‘Azīz.⁵² All the indications suggest that the outcome was far less triumphant, for Anastasius, than the earlier disputations in Alexandria.⁵³

Anastasius and the Sixth Ecumenical Council

From several perspectives the governorship of ‘Abd al-‘Azīz emerges as a formative period for the Severan Church in Egypt. After several decades in which little Coptic literature can be located with confidence, a range of contemporaneous authors can again be named – John III,⁵⁴ John of Nikiu,⁵⁵ Mena of Nikiu,⁵⁶ George the Archdeacon,⁵⁷ Zacharias

⁵¹ On Anastasius’ theological polemic against the letter, which ties the denial of two Christological wills to the earlier, anti-Tritheist assertion that what is said of Christ *qua* God must also be said of Father and Spirit, see Uthemann, *Anastasios Sinaites*, 157–60.

⁵² For ‘Abd al-‘Azīz’s later gathering, at Ḥulwān, of the different Christian factions in the period c. 697–c. 700 (reportedly for three years) see *HP (Primitive)* (Seybold edn, 126–9), *HP (Vulgate)* (Evetts edn, *PO* v. 34–42). And cf. n. 59 below, on the *Controversy of John*.

⁵³ Such a defeat, and a subsequent retreat to Sinai, might also explain the scholion added (in 691 or 692?) to the *florilegium* within Anastasius’ account of the first disputation, in which he states ‘But since the race of heretics loves blame, know that we wrote the citations from memory while in the desert, and at a loss for instructive books’: *Hodegos* x.1.2.197–204 (Uthemann edn, 158). This would seem to mean this section of the *Hodegos*, rather than the original *florilegium*, since Anastasius before the first disputation was in Alexandria, and active in its libraries.

⁵⁴ To John III is attributed the dialogic *Questions of Theodore*, ed. A. van Lantschoot, in *Les Questions de Théodore: texte sahidique, recensions arabes et éthiopienne*, Vatican City 1957; and he is perhaps the patriarch John who authored an *Encomium on Saint Menas*, ed. J. Drescher, in *Apa Mena: a selection of Coptic texts relating to St. Menas*, Cairo 1946, 73–96. He is also the reported author of an *Encomium on John of Scetis* now embedded in the latter’s *Life*: U. Zanetti, *Saint Jean, higoumène de Scété (VII siècle): vie arabe et épitomé éthiopien*, Brussels 2015.

⁵⁵ See John of Nikiu, *Chronicle*, ed. Zotenberg, in *Chronique*. On his career see *HP (Primitive)* (Seybold edn, 120, 125); *HP (Vulgate)* (Evetts edn, *PO* v. 20–2, 32–4); Mena of Nikiou, *Life of the Patriarch Isaac* 12 (Porcher edn, 354).

⁵⁶ See Mena of Nikiu, *Life of Isaac*. To Mena is also attributed the *Martyrdom of Saint Macrobius*, ed. (Coptic) H. Hyvernat, in *Les Actes des martyrs de l’Égypte tirés des manuscrits coptes de la Bibliothèque Vaticane et du Musée Borgia*, Paris 1886–7, 225–46. See *HP (Primitive)* (Seybold edn, 125); *HP (Vulgate)* (Evetts edn, *PO* v. 34).

⁵⁷ George the Archdeacon was compiler of the biographies from Cyril up to Simon within the *HP*: J. den Heijer, *Mawḥūb ibn Maṣṣūr ibn Mufarrīḡ et l’historiographie copto-arabe: étude sur la composition de l’Histoire des patriarches d’Alexandrie*, Louvain 1989, 81–

of Xoïs⁵⁸ – all of whom were somehow connected to the upper echelons of the Severan patriarchate. Within some of their texts – in particular in Mena’s *Life of Isaac*, and in George’s contribution to the *History of the patriarchs*⁵⁹ – the rule of ‘Abd al-‘Azīz is celebrated as a period of tolerance and expansion, when the Severan patriarch assumed a permanent place within the governor’s entourage, and when a number of Severan churches and monasteries were established at Ḥulwān, ‘Abd al-‘Azīz’s new foundation to the south of Fuṣṭāt.⁶⁰ Under the patronage of the governor and his two Christian *chartoularioi*, the Severans seem to have made important inroads, perhaps for the first time, into Alexandria. Thus it is noted in Severan texts that under John III (681–9), the son and successor of Theodosius – our suspected Augustalis – became reconciled with the patriarch;⁶¹ that the same John and his successor Isaac (689–c. 692), with the assistance of Athanasius and Isaac, rebuilt the Alexandrian churches of St Mark and the Angelion;⁶² and that, for the first time, ‘the Hundred’

156, esp. pp. 142–3 (although I would argue that George’s compilation included the patriarchate of Alexander to 715).

⁵⁸ For Zacharias’s career (as monk on Scetis, then bishop of Xoïs) see *HP (Primitive)* (Seybold edn, 131); *HP (Vulgate)* (Evetts edn, *PO* v. 46); *Copto-Arabic synaxarium* 21st Amchir (Basset edn, *PO* xi. 838–9). For hagiographies see *Life of John the Little* extant in Bohairic, Sahidic, Arabic and Syriac versions (M. S. A. Mikhail and T. Vivian, *The holy workshop of virtue: the Life of John the Little by Zacharias of Sakhā*, Colledgeville, MN 2010; also the Arabic and Ethiopic versions of a lost *Life of Abraham and George* (unedited but described in U. Zanetti, ‘Le Dossier d’Abraham et Georges, moines de Scété’, in F. Jullien and M.-J. Pierre [eds], *Monachismes d’Orient: images, échanges, influences: hommage à Antoine Guillaumont*, Turnhout 2011, 227–338). For homilies see *On the ascent of our Lord to Jerusalem and On Jonah*, ed. H. De Vis, in *Homélies coptes de la Vaticane II*, repr. Louvain 1990, 5–57, and the unedited *On the holy family* (extant in a number of Arabic manuscripts, but described in brief in S. Davis, ‘Ancient sources for the Coptic tradition’, in G. Gabra, *Be thou there: the holy family’s journey in Egypt*, Cairo 2001, 133–62 at p. 151).

⁵⁹ See also the so-called *Controversy of John*, in which John III debates a Jew and a Chalcedonian at the court of ‘Abd al-‘Azīz. This is edited (Coptic) in H. G. Evelyn-White, *The monasteries of the Wadi ‘n Natrūn*, New York 1926–33, i. 171–5. There the editor also describes the Arabic versions, which are unedited but contained in BN, Paris, MSS Ar. 215, 4881.

⁶⁰ For Severan churches at Ḥulwān see *HP (Primitive)* (Seybold edn, 121, 129); *HP (Vulgate)* (Evetts edn, *PO* v. 24–5, 42); Mena, *Life of Isaac* 13 (Porcher edn, 368, 384); Ps.-Abū Šālih, *Churches and monasteries of Egypt*, fo. 53a; Eutychius, *Annals* (Cheikhoe edn, 41). On Ḥulwān at large see S. Timm, *Das christlich-koptische Ägypten in arabischer Zeit*, Wiesbaden 1984–92, 1074–8; and for ‘Abd al-‘Azīz’s wider building activities see W. B. Kubiak, ‘Abd al-‘Aziz ibn Marwan and the early Islamic building activity and urbanism in Egypt’, *Africana Bulletin* xlii (1994), 7–19. On its palace complexes see P. Grossmann, *Christliche Architektur in Ägypten*, Leiden 2002, 417–19. Grossmann identifies Palace A with the Severan patriarchal palace.

⁶¹ *HP (Primitive)* (Seybold 115); *HP (Vulgate)* (Evetts edn, *PO* v. 10, 12).

⁶² St Mark: *HP (Primitive)* (Seybold edn, 119); *HP (Vulgate)* (Evetts edn, *PO* v. 18); Angelion: *Life of Isaac* 12 (Porcher edn, 363).

were able to convene there – perhaps a gathering of all Severan bishops and most higoumens.⁶³

Such tales of tolerance might have been constructed in retrospect, as the long rule of ‘Abd al-‘Azīz gave out to those of his more aggressive successors.⁶⁴ But there is good reason to suppose that the evident explosion in Severan literature, with all its (perhaps exaggerated) reports of Severan success, was bound up with a simultaneous crisis of Egyptian Chalcedonism. It is probable that the Chalcedonians who remained in post-conquest Egypt were adherents of the doctrine of monenergism (Christ’s single operation) and of monotheletism (Christ’s single will), both of which Constantinople had supported, in one form or another, since the 630s.⁶⁵ In the last phase of Roman rule, monenergism had brought numerous prominent Severan Christians into communion with Constantinople,⁶⁶ and it seems that the Chalcedonians of Alexandria remained committed to it. In the Arab period it continued to exercise the Severan patriarch Benjamin and, perhaps, Agathon,⁶⁷ and in 662 Theodore, the alleged Chalcedonian *topotērētēs* of the Alexandrian see, participated in a high-profile council at Constantinople which condemned Maximus the Confessor, the leading Chalcedonian opponent of monenergism and monotheletism.⁶⁸ In 680/1, however, the so-called Sixth Ecumenical Council reversed several decades of eastern Roman doctrine, and instead endorsed belief in Christ’s two operations and wills. For

⁶³ Mena of Nikiu, *Life of Isaac* 12 (Porcher edn, 358–63).

⁶⁴ Indications of tension between the regime of ‘Abd al-‘Azīz and its Christian subjects are discussed in P. Booth, ‘Images of emperors and emirs in early Islamic Egypt’ (forthcoming). For the changing contexts under his successors see now J. Mabra, *Princely authority in the early Marwānid state: the life of ‘Abd al-‘Azīz b. Marwān*, Piscataway, NJ 2017, esp. pp. 119–59.

⁶⁵ For the monenergist-monothelete crisis see M. Jankowiak, ‘Essai d’histoire politique du monothélisme à partir de la correspondance entre les empereurs byzantins, les patriarches de Constantinople et les papes de Rome’, unpubl. PhD diss. Paris–Warsaw 2009, and P. Booth, *Crisis of empire: doctrine and dissent at the end of late antiquity*, Berkeley, CA 2014.

⁶⁶ See especially the *Acts of the Sixth Ecumenical Council*, ed. R. Riedinger, *Concilium universale Constantinopolitanum tertium*, ACO ser. 2.2, Berlin 1990–2, ii. 594–600; *HP (Primitive)* (Seybold edn, 98–9); *HP (Vulgate)* (Evetts edn, PO i. 491–2).

⁶⁷ See *HP (Primitive)* (Seybold edn, 101); *HP (Vulgate)* (Evetts edn, PO i. 497); *P.Köln* V 215 (as n. 1 above).

⁶⁸ See *Acts of the Sixth Ecumenical Council*, i. 230, in which Macarius, patriarch of Antioch, recalls how his predecessor Macedonius, the Constantinopolitan patriarch Peter, and the Alexandrian *topotērētēs* Theodore (ὁ τοποτηρητής τῆς Ἀλεξανδρέων Θεόδωρος) condemned Maximus’ doctrine, along with other resident bishops and the Constantinopolitan senate. On this council see Jankowiak, *Essai*, 351–3, and Booth, *Crisis of empire*, 322–3.

those Chalcedonian Christians who now lived within the caliphate, the *volte-face* was no doubt a political and theological disaster.⁶⁹

No Egyptian bishops had attended the Sixth Council, but the *Acts* nevertheless claim that a *topotērētēs*, the monk and priest Peter, represented the see of Alexandria.⁷⁰ Soon after, it seems that Peter was promoted, for at the Constantinopolitan Quinisext Council (691/2) he is present not as *topotērētēs* but as bishop of the same see.⁷¹ Whether Peter had been dispatched from Alexandria itself – rather than being a Roman stand-in, as later alleged⁷² – is uncertain, but it is not a great leap to imagine that ‘Abd al-‘Azīz’s reported patronage of the Severans might have been a product, at least in part, of a heightened perception that the caliphate’s principal antagonist, the Roman emperor, continued to exercise a claim over the Chalcedonians living under Arab rule. If the Council thus increased the political pressure on the Chalcedonian leadership, it also presented it with some difficult if not impossible theological choices – to denounce the Council, and cleave to a doctrine which no patriarch now recognised; to follow the Constantinopolitan lead, and abandon previous commitments (risking Severan ridicule);⁷³ or to renounce Chalcedon altogether, and commune with the ascendant Severan Church. It is not surprising that the *History of the patriarchs*’ first reports of specific, large-scale conversions from the Chalcedonian cause occur in its *Life of John III*.⁷⁴

If the dating of the earlier redaction of chapter 10 is correct, then it must have been composed in the shadow of the Sixth Council. It is true that book 10, and indeed the *Hodegos* as a whole, never mentions the Council – this indeed was the basis for Richard’s supposition that a first edition of the text was composed long before it.⁷⁵ But the *Hodegos* in fact maintains a

⁶⁹ On the situation in Syria see J. Tannous, ‘In search of monotheletism’, *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* lxxviii (2014), 29–67. Tannous suggests that monenergism-monotheletism was a ‘regional orthodoxy’ amongst Syrian Chalcedonians at the time of the Sixth Council.

⁷⁰ See *Acts of the Sixth Ecumenical Council*, i. 20; cf. Eutychius, *Annals (Antiochene Recension)* (Cheiko edn, ii. 35), calling the see of Alexandria vacant.

⁷¹ See *Acts of the Quinisext*, ed. H. Ohme and others, in *Concilium Constantinopolitanum a. 691/2 in Trullo habitum*, ser. 2.2.4, Berlin 2013, 62 (with the scholia at 10–11, calling Peter patriarch). I am grateful to Marek Jankowiak for the reference.

⁷² See Michael the Great, *Chronicle* 11.12, speaking of the Sixth Council.

⁷³ The Council did not go unnoticed in Severan circles: see the garbled account of the monothelete crisis in *HP (Primitive)* (Seybold edn, 115–16), *HP (Vulgate)* (Evetts edn, *PO* v. 11), placed at the beginning of the account of John III (681–9). See also L. MacCoull, ‘The paschal letter of Alexander II, patriarch of Alexandria: a Greek defense of Coptic theology under Arab rule’, *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* xlv (1990), 27–40.

⁷⁴ *HP (Primitive)* (Seybold edn, 119), *HP (Vulgate)* (Evetts edn, *PO* v. 18–19). The Chalcedonian communities named are the اهل اغرو / اهل اغروة and the اهل اسخنطس / اهل اسخنطس, i.e. the peoples of Agarwa and of Saḥītus/Aṣḥantus (?). Their identification is however unclear; cf. Timm, *Das christlich-koptische Ägypten*, 75–6, 2238–9.

⁷⁵ See n. 6 above.

remarkable silence on the entire monenergist-monothelete crisis, mentioning none of its protagonists or main events. Indeed, although Anastasius refutes at great length the Severan commitment to the ‘one operation’, he makes no explicit comment on Chalcedonians committed to the single operation or will – even in two opening sections which, as Uthemann has demonstrated, derive from earlier Anastasian texts which were intended, in their original form, as critiques of Chalcedonian monenergism and monotheletism.⁷⁶ The silence on the Council is therefore part of a far deeper discomfort, and the reason is not difficult to divine.⁷⁷ In the 680s the Roman condemnation of monenergism-monotheletism was a contentious and doubtless embarrassing issue for those Chalcedonians active in the caliphate, and it is certain that it created a significant schism in Alexandria. In two scholia to chapter 6 of the *Hodegos* – which are, like that on John III, a crucial witness to a stage of redaction after 681 – Anastasius mentions certain persons whom he calls Ἀρμασίταια, indicating that his argument against the Severans and their ‘one nature’ also applied to this group and its ‘[one] theandric operation’.⁷⁸ This monenergist faction is known from a single other source. The *Doctrina patrum* cites an interpolated version of the *Synodical letter* of Sophronius of Jerusalem (634), which is expanded to include those condemned at the Sixth Council, but also adds, ‘The Harmasius who has until now been combating the truth in Alexandria.’⁷⁹ It is probable, therefore that Harmasius headed a Chalcedonian schism at Alexandria which refused to recognise the Sixth Council.⁸⁰ At what stage these *scholia* have been added to book 6 is uncertain, except that it occurred, in all likelihood, in the period c. 686–c. 701 (since the main text of book 6 also contains, as we have seen, a reference to the debate with Athanasius). But the absence of such allusions from other parts of the *Hodegos* does not mean that those parts were written, redacted or compiled in ignorance of the Sixth Council.

At some point in the period c. 680–c. 682 – during the caliphate of Yazīd, and the tenure of the Chalcedonian Augustalis Theodosius – the celebrated polemicist Anastasius of Sinai engaged in a series of disputations

⁷⁶ See Uthemann, *Anastasios Sinaïtes*, 188–210, on *Hodegos* i–ii. For the same sections see Richard, ‘Anastase le Sinaïte’, 39–41, who assigned them to his proposed second edition.

⁷⁷ Cf. also Binggeli, *Anastase le Sinaïte*, ii, 344, and Uthemann, *Anastasio Sinaïtes*, 210–12.

⁷⁸ ‘Οὕτως ἐρωτήσατε αὐτούς καὶ ὑμεῖς καὶ οὕτως ἀρμύσσασθε πρὸς αὐτούς κατὰ τὸν προκειμένον σκοπόν, τοὺς μὲν Ἰακωβίτας περὶ φύσεως, τοὺς δὲ Ἀρμασίτας περὶ θεανδρικῆς ἐνεργείας’: *Hodegos* xiii.6.19–20 (Uthemann edn, 231); ‘Ταῦτα καὶ πρὸς Ἀρμασίτας ἀπορητέον’: *Hodegos* xiii.9.91 (Uthemann edn, 251).

⁷⁹ *Doctrina patrum*, ed. F. Diekamp, in *Doctrina patrum de incarnatione Verbi*, Münster 1907, 271.

⁸⁰ So *ibid.* pp. lxxix–lxxx. See also Richard, ‘Anastase le Sinaïte’, 30–2, and Uthemann, *Anastasios Sinaïtes*, 24–5.

with the Severans at Alexandria, amongst whom was the celebrated bishop, Gregory of Kais. As Anastasius presents things, the issues discussed were perennial issues of Chalcedonian–Severan disagreement – that is, the definition and interrelation of different ontological terms – and he emerged victorious through a combination of guile (his own) and gullibility (his opponents’). Various uncertainties, however, still surround the discussions. What, for example, had brought Anastasius to Alexandria in the first place? What was his relationship to other Chalcedonians there (especially the monenergists)? Did the disputations in fact involve discussion of the energies and wills? Was he then aware of the Sixth Council? Might Anastasius even have been an agent of those bishops who recognised it (for example, Epiphanius, archbishop of Cyprus)?⁸¹ Was Anastasius, then, less a champion of the Fourth Ecumenical Council, and more a herald of the Sixth? And is the *Hodegos* a subsequent attempt to return to basics, to underline, in a context of burgeoning schism and of Severan ascent, the shared Chalcedonian refutation of one-nature Christologies?

We can but speculate. But it seems clear that the triumphalism of Anastasius’ account of the Alexandrian disputations disguises, or stands upon the threshold of, a far more disastrous situation. Two contemporaneous developments conspired against the Chalcedonians in Egypt: first, the decisions of the Sixth Council put them in an impossible political and theological position, and created a schism with those who still defended monenergism and monotheletism; and second, the advent of the Marwānid regime gave new impetus to the Severans, who flourished and expanded under the patronage of ‘Abd al-‘Azīz and his two Severan *chartoularioi*, Athanasius and Isaac. Anastasius indeed encountered the former, the famous Athanasius bar Gūmōyē, in a disputation held at Babylon-Fuṣṭāt in 686, soon after the reception of John III’s sixth festal letter, in which the latter had denounced the Sixth Council. This must have been a high-profile affair, but Anastasius maintains a modest, and thus uncharacteristic, silence on its content and its outcome. Within that silence, it is possible to perceive a defeat; but perhaps also a troubling realisation: that the Severans were ascendant, and that the centre that now mattered most for the Churches in Egypt was not Alexandria, with its fracturing Chalcedonian population, and still less Constantinople. It was rather the rising Arab capital at Fuṣṭāt.

⁸¹ See *Acts of the Sixth Ecumenical Council*, ii. 630; cf. the visit to Alexandria of Paul, archbishop of Crete, in December 655, as reported in Theodore of Paphos, *Life of Spyridon* xx, ed. P. van den Ven, in *La Légende de saint Spyridon, évêque de Trimithonte*, Louvain 1953, 89: ‘Παύλου τοῦ ἀγιοτάτου ἀρχιεπισκόπου Κρήτης κατὰ συγκυρίαν ἀπὸ Αἰγύπτου ἐν Κωνσταντινουπόλει ἀνερχομένου καὶ ἐκεῖ παρατυχόντος.’ It is tempting to connect this mission with the trial and condemnation of Maximus the Confessor at Constantinople in the same year – that is, it reported events and shored up the monenergist-monothelete credentials of the Chalcedonians at Alexandria.