



The Christian schools of Palestine: A chapter in literary history

Citation

Downey, Glanville. 1958. The Christian schools of Palestine: A chapter in literary history. Harvard Library Bulletin XII (3), Autumn 1958: 297-219.

Permanent link

<https://nrs.harvard.edu/URN-3:HUL.INSTREPOS:37363708>

Terms of Use

This article was downloaded from Harvard University's DASH repository, and is made available under the terms and conditions applicable to Other Posted Material, as set forth at <http://nrs.harvard.edu/urn-3:HUL.InstRepos:dash.current.terms-of-use#LAA>

Share Your Story

The Harvard community has made this article openly available.
Please share how this access benefits you. [Submit a story](#).

[Accessibility](#)

The Christian Schools of Palestine: A Chapter in Literary History

THE part played in the shaping of our western civilization by Christian humanism, absorbing and transforming the classical heritage of Greece and Rome, has become familiar to all students. The story of the process, which spread over a long span of time in both the eastern and the western divisions of the Roman Empire, is well known in its general outlines. There are, however, a number of details that still need to be brought to light and added to the larger picture; the continued study of the various aspects of our ancient literary history is enriching our knowledge both of the permanent value and universal validity of the classical intellectual achievement and of the contribution that this heritage was able to make to Christianity as the latter grew and strengthened its roots in the Graeco-Roman world. The history of literature and of literary education during the centuries that witnessed the expansion of Christianity will help us to understand better what it was that the Christian thinkers were trying to develop as the cultural setting of the orthodox faith, and what they hoped to make of the pagan intellectual heritage that was at the same time their own historic background and inheritance. One result of this process was the remarkable achievement of the Byzantine Empire in building up a unity of faith and culture that was one of the outstanding characteristics of the Byzantine world.

Within this development, the literary history of Palestine from the reign of Constantine the Great (A.D. 306-337) to the Moslem conquest in the early seventh century is of special interest because this period, especially during the sixth century, shows us one of the most important stages in the preservation and transmission of Hellenism, and the utilization of the Hellenic tradition in the service of Christianity. While studies of individual literary figures are available, no comprehensive treatment of this chapter of literary history seems to have been published, and a collection of the evidence will give us a heightened understanding of what it was that people then looked for from their schools

and their literary training. In particular, the activity of the famous school of Gaza illustrates the development of the professional Christian scholarship in the classics that placed an important stamp on church and society in the Byzantine period.

We have first of all to recall that the Hellenization of the East that had been begun by Alexander the Great had not resulted, in Palestine, in the same development that it had, for example, in the neighboring lands of Syria and Egypt. In the Hellenistic and Roman periods, settlers of Hellenic stock were attracted mainly to the coastal trading cities of Palestine, which did not reach the same importance, in size and cultural prominence, as did other centers of the general region such as Antioch and Alexandria. And of course the ancient Jewish population, with its proud and exclusive traditions, could not, in general, be Hellenized in the way that the indigenous peoples of Syria and Egypt were, though of course there were some Jews who adopted Greek customs.¹ In the coastal cities of Ptolemais, Caesarea, Joppa, Azotus, Ascalon, and Gaza, where part at least of the commercial and official population would be oriented outward, over the Mediterranean routes to the other Graeco-Roman cities, one would expect to find Hellenic culture well established.

The growth of Christianity under Constantine the Great affected the classical tradition in Palestine in differing ways. In the interior, where the principal holy sites had undergone revival and development beginning with the time of Constantine, and where monasteries had come into existence throughout the region, the Christian cultural tradition established itself by a natural process, and apparently had no trouble ousting the pagan tradition. On the coast, however, where both the indigenous pagan cults and the imported Hellenic cults and festivals had become firmly rooted, Christianity had a less easy time. Christianity indeed had two problems to meet and solve here, not only the conversion of the pagans in the coastal towns, which was, so to speak, a local, physical question, but the larger problem that was arising everywhere in the Graeco-Roman world, that of the accommodation between the classical educational tradition and the form of education that would be regarded as desirable for Christians.

This larger topic, one of the most interesting subjects in late Roman

¹ Saul Lieberman, *Greek in Jewish Palestine* (New York, 1942), p. 1.

and Byzantine studies, must here, in its overall development, be taken for granted. It is sufficient to recall that, after an initial period of alarm and uncertainty, in which classical literature and learning were looked upon as something to be avoided as dangerous, Christian scholars came to recognize that the classical educational tradition had elements that were valuable for the training of Christians, both because Christianity itself was a literary religion, depending on the transmission and study of a body of writings in Greek, and because Christians had to deal with people who had been educated in the classical culture. Choricus of Gaza, one of the sophists whose career will be described later, states the feeling characteristically in one of his panegyrics of Marcianus, the Bishop of Gaza, in which he tells how it was necessary for a man like the Bishop to be trained in both Christian and pagan literature, so that he might master the sacred writings, and then teach them the more readily with the help of his classical learning.²

This was the general situation at the time when our study opens. There were emerging in addition two special factors that enter into the picture of the local development of the Christian Hellenic culture. One was the vigorous growth of monasticism in Palestine. These monks and hermits differed from the secular clergy and the laity in that they believed that they, at least, must follow a different road in the struggle toward spiritual perfection and union with God. Some of the monks, who had received the classical literary education, either as pagans (before their conversion) or as Christians, employed the classical vocabulary and style in the service of Christianity, as for example St Sophronius of Jerusalem. For others, such as St Cyril of Jerusalem,³ the eloquence (*euglotta*) of the pagans was to be classed with Jewish misinterpretation of the Scriptures and with heresy among the enemies of Christianity.⁴ In individual cases, of course, there could be violent

² Choricus, *Laudatio Marciani*, II, 9, 11 ff., in *Opera*, ed. Richard Förster and Eberhard Richtsteig (Leipzig, 1929), pp. 30, 31.

³ *Catechesis*, IV, 2, in Migne, *Patrologia Graeca* (hereafter referred to as *P. G.*), XXXIII, 456.

⁴ A similar opponent of classical culture was Hesychius of Jerusalem, who died some time after A.D. 450, who was at pains to make plain his suspicions of philosophical thought; see Wilhelm von Christ, *Geschichte der griechischen Litteratur*, ed. Wilhelm Schmid and Otto Stählin, 6th ed. (hereafter *Gr. Lit.*), II² (Munich, 1924), 1485-1486; Berthold Altaner, *Patrologie*, 2nd ed. (Freiburg i. B., 1950), pp. 204, 290. Another exemplar of this view was the Abbot Anastasius of Sinai, who died soon after A.D. 700, to whom heresy was connected with what he calls 'Aristotelian or Hellenic' instruction and methodology; the word 'Aristotelian' almost comes to be

opposition to classical culture in any form. A well-known figure of this kind was Epiphanius of Salamis, who was born about A.D. 315 in a village near Eleutheropolis in Judaea and founded a monastery in Eleutheropolis that he headed for thirty years. Later he became Bishop of Constantia (Salamis) in Cyprus. He was a passionate opponent of Greek learning; but his extreme views cannot have been acceptable to many of his fellow monks.⁵ St Jerome, when he established his monastery at Bethlehem in the latter part of the fourth century, taught the Latin classics to a certain number of his pupils, but he was attacked by critics for doing so; and the course of studies that he recommended for girls who intended to embrace the religious life contained no classical subject matter.⁶

The other special factor mentioned above was the circumstance that while Palestine as a whole was undergoing its tremendous development as the Holy Land, and was becoming the goal of pilgrims and the home of holy men and women, there was at the same time the robust survival of paganism in the cities along the coast, notably in Gaza. We are fortunate in possessing a number of important literary texts that permit us to understand both the significance of this continuation of the pagan tradition and the way in which it was in due time absorbed in the new Christian scholarly synthesis. In the following pages we shall attempt to bring together the texts that show this literary development in Palestine in general and in Gaza in particular.

In our modern habits of thought, we are accustomed to think of Palestine as a separate country, distinct from Syria and Egypt, and different in various ways from its neighbors. Under the Late Roman Empire, this was not entirely the case. In addition to the ordinary free movement of commercial traffic and of travelers in general, the travel and migration of students and of teachers to different parts of the Empire was easy and frequent. It is in part as a consequence of this that we encounter a phenomenon that can on occasion be one of the most baffling and frustrating of ancient peculiarities, namely the inconsistent use of geographical epithets as a part of personal names,

synonymous with 'pagan' (see Altaner, *Patrologie*, p. 473). Characteristic passages may be found in *P. G.*, LXXXIX, 56 C-D, 121 B, 140 A, 148 C.

⁵ *Gr. Lit.*, II², 1446-1451; Altaner, *Patrologie*, pp. 271-274.

⁶ See Ferdinand Cavallera, *Saint Jérôme: sa vie et son œuvre* (Louvain and Paris, 1922), I, 200-202, with n. 1 on p. 202; Henri-Irénée Marrou, *A History of Education in Antiquity*, trans. George Lamb (London, 1956), p. 332.

the place name meaning either that the bearer was born there (and then perhaps spent much of his life elsewhere), or that he was born elsewhere, and then passed the principal part of his career in the place whose name became attached to him. For example the man of letters Procopius of Gaza is so called, evidently, because his major professional activity took place in Gaza, while the approximately contemporary historian Procopius of Caesarea is so called, in order to distinguish him from the other Procopius, simply because he may have studied there, though all of his professional life so far as we know was spent elsewhere, and his home appears to have been Constantinople. Thus when we come upon a record of a man who is called 'of Gaza' or 'of Caesarea,' the meaning of the phrase is not automatically plain.

We find several types of scholarly travels and migrations. Sometimes people born in Palestine went elsewhere to study, and then either returned to Palestine or went to other countries to teach. Others would come to Palestine to study, and then would go elsewhere to pursue their careers. Again, people from outside Palestine, trained elsewhere, would settle and teach in Palestine. Among such figures, Procopius of Caesarea has already been mentioned. Zenobius of Elusa in Palestine, who died in A.D. 354, was a teacher of rhetoric in Antioch, where he had Libanius among his pupils,⁷ and Ulpian of Ascalon, who died in A.D. 329, had been a predecessor of Libanius at Antioch.⁸ Siricius of Neapolis in Palestine, a rhetor of the time of Constantine the Great, taught at Athens.⁹ Eudemon, a grammarian and poet, who was an officially established teacher at Elusa, about A.D. 360, came from Pelusium near the mouth of the Nile.¹⁰ Acacius of Caesarea, a rival of Libanius, was active first in Phoenice, then in Antioch, finally in Palestine once more.¹¹ In the fifth century the philologist Orion, a writer of grammatical treatises, was born in Thebes in Egypt, of Egyptian descent, and taught first in Alexandria, then in Constantinople (where the Empress Eudocia heard his lectures), and finally in Caesarea

⁷ Otto Seeck, *Die Briefe des Libanius* (Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der alchristlichen Literatur, XXX, 1-2; Leipzig, 1906), pp. 315-316; Fritz Schemmel, 'Zu Libanius,' *Wochenschrift für klassische Philologie*, XXXIV (1917), col. 189.

⁸ Schemmel, 'Zu Libanius'; *Gr. Lit.*, II², 988, n. 3.

⁹ Suidas, *Lexicon*, s. n. Σιρίκιος (ed. Ada Adler, Leipzig, 1928-38, IV, 365); *Gr. Lit.*, II², 1102, n. 4.

¹⁰ Seeck, *Briefe des Libanius*, p. 131.

¹¹ Seeck, *Briefe des Libanius*, p. 40; Paul Petit, *Les étudiants de Libanius* (Paris, 1957), Index, p. 197, s. n. 'Acacius II.'

in Palestine, which was the chief scene of his activity.¹² Eudocia herself, the wife of Theodosius II, composed most of her poetical works during her second visit to the Holy Land.¹³ Early in the sixth century the sophist Hieronymus, who came from Elusa in Palestine, returned there after having taught in Alexandria and Hermupolis.¹⁴ At the same period we hear that Hierius, who had been established in Gaza as a teacher of Latin, was moving to Antioch; one of his colleagues remarked, in a letter in which this news was mentioned, that he was more noteworthy for his personal goodness than for his learning.¹⁵

Travels and changes of this kind were of course not confined to pagan students and men of letters. The famous Zacharias Rhetor, who had been born at Maiouma near Gaza, was educated in Alexandria and in Berytus, and died (some time before A.D. 553) as Bishop of Mitylene.¹⁶ Leontius of Byzantium, who was born at Constantinople in the latter part of the fifth century, retired to the Laura of Mar Saba in Palestine; he visited Constantinople several times, and died there in A.D. 542.¹⁷ Sophronius of Jerusalem, the theologian and man of letters, was born in Damascus, studied in Egypt, and traveled in Syria and as far as Rome in various intervals of his career in Palestine. So it was distinctly not a static population or even a native population that was responsible for the development of classical literary studies in Palestine, among both Christians and pagans.

At the opening of our period, about the beginning of the fourth century, Palestine possessed educational facilities and a learned tradition in the classics that were comparable to those in other parts of the Empire.¹⁸ Caesarea in Palestine, famous as a center of Christian learning, where Eusebius of Caesarea had been trained, also possessed a dis-

¹² *Gr. Lit.*, II², 1081.

¹³ Seeck and Cohn, 'Eudokia,' in Pauly-Wissowa, *Real-Encyclopädie*, VI, cols. 906-912.

¹⁴ Procopius of Gaza, *Epistolae*, 65, 116, in *Epistolographi Graeci*, ed. Rudolph Hercher (Paris, 1873), pp. 555-556, 577-579; *Gr. Lit.*, II², 1028.

¹⁵ Procopius of Gaza, *Epistolae*, 149, in *Epistolographi Graeci*, p. 592.

¹⁶ *Gr. Lit.*, II², 1484; Altaner, *Patrologie*, p. 204.

¹⁷ Altaner, *Patrologie*, pp. 459-461.

¹⁸ On the schools at this period, see John W. H. Walden, *The Universities of Ancient Greece* (New York, 1909); Fritz Schemmel, 'Die Hochschule von Alexandria im IV. und V. Jahrhundert p. Ch. n.,' *Neue Jahrbücher für das klassische Altertum*, XXIV (1909), 438-457; Gottlob R. Sievers, *Das Leben des Libanius* (Berlin, 1868).

tinguished school of rhetorical and literary studies, going back to the imperial period.¹⁹ Gregory Nazianzen, one of the most distinguished authors of the fourth century, pagan or Christian, studied in the rhetorical schools of Palestine before going on to Alexandria and then completing his studies at Athens.²⁰ Libanius, the famous teacher and rhetorician of Antioch in the middle of the fourth century, speaks with respect of the rhetorical school at Gaza.²¹ Libanius also mentions the way in which the school at Caesarea was able to attract famous sophists by means of paying them high salaries.²² Palestine certainly possessed the interest in and desire for this type of training that was normal in the Graeco-Roman world at this period; for we have to remind ourselves that this type of education was regarded by both pagans and Christians as being primarily of utilitarian value, in that it offered not only the best — in fact the only suitable — formation of the character, but the best preparation for public life and administrative and forensic duties.²³ In Palestine, as in other parts of the Empire at this period, the education of Christian writers in general, down to the time of the Council of Chalcedon in A.D. 451, was at a high level; almost all of them went through the rhetorical schools. After Chalcedon the level declined, but there were still important literary figures among the Christians.²⁴

In addition to the training in ancient Greek literature, philosophy, and rhetoric, which was looked upon as the basis for a career in the civil service, a knowledge of Latin was essential for careers in the law, the army, and the bureaucracy. We have already mentioned Hierius, the teacher of Latin in Gaza in the sixth century. Even more striking testimony to the seriousness of the interest in Latin has been re-

¹⁹ Fritz Schemmel, 'Die Schule von Caesarea in Palästina,' *Philologische Wochen-schrift*, XLV (1925), cols. 1277-1280.

²⁰ *Gr. Lit.*, II^e, 1413-1414.

²¹ *Orationes*, LV, 33-34, in *Opera*, ed. Richard Förster (Leipzig, 1903-27), IV, 125-126, with editor's notes *ad loc.*; see also Schemmel, 'Die Hochschule von Alexandria,' p. 443.

²² *Orationes*, XXXI, 42, in *Opera*, III, 143-144.

²³ See the decrees of Constantius and of Julian in the *Codex Theodosianus*, XIV, 1, 1 (A.D. 357), VI, 26, 1 (A.D. 362), XIII, 3, 5 (A.D. 362), in *Theodosiani Libri XVI*, ed. Theodor Mommsen and Paul M. Meyer (Berlin, 1905), I, 771, 277, 741; also the long rescript of Julian, 'On Christian Teachers' (*The Works of the Emperor Julian*, ed. Wilmer C. Wright, London, 1913-23, III, 116-123); Charles N. Cochrané, *Christianity and Classical Culture* (London, 1944), pp. 286-291.

²⁴ *Gr. Lit.*, II^e, 1374-1375. On the Palestinian writers of the fourth century, see Aimé Puech, *Histoire de la littérature grecque chrétienne* (Paris, 1928-30), III.

covered, by good fortune, in the discovery by the Colt expedition, among the Nessana papyri, of fragments of a sixth-century copy of Virgil's *Aeneid*, accompanied by a Latin-Greek glossary in which the words are arranged, not alphabetically, but in the order of their occurrence in the text.²⁵ It looks as though some one in this remote Palestinian village, possibly a native whose primary literary language was Greek, was studying Latin, perhaps without a teacher, in an effort to prepare himself for a public career.

The individuals who contributed to this tradition in Palestine originated, as has been indicated, in different places, inside and outside Palestine, and they represented quite different interests and levels of the world. The most august was the Empress Eudocia, who had been Athenais, the daughter of a pagan professor in Athens. Most of her literary work dates from her second sojourn in Athens, from some time early in the 440's to her death in A.D. 460.²⁶ Characteristically of the period, her work is in part purely pagan in style and content, partly Christian in content but pagan in style; and some of it is based closely on the work of predecessors. On her journey from Constantinople to Jerusalem, the Empress stopped at Antioch, and pronounced before the local senate a classical encomium on the city in which she exhibited all the learning and literary skill that she had been taught by her father, and indeed it seemed perfectly natural for the Christian Empress to make her principal public appearance at Antioch, the headquarters of the Church's early missions and the cradle of Gentile Christianity, with an encomium on a pagan model, cast in heroic verse. In Jerusalem she did her part to carry on the Athenian literary tradition. One production was an epic poem celebrating the martyrdom of St Cyprian of Antioch. Here we are able to study Eudocia's methods of composition, since we have the three Greek prose sources that she used, these sources being extant in both the Greek originals and in Latin translations; and we see that Eudocia

²⁵ *Excavations at Nessana, II: Literary Papyri*, ed. Lionel Casson and Ernest L. Hettich (Princeton, 1950), pp. 2-78. On the significance of the texts, see the review by the present writer, *American Journal of Archaeology*, LV (1951), 438-439.

²⁶ On Eudocia's life and writings, see above, note 13; and on her activities in Jerusalem, see also Ernest Honigmann, 'Juvenal of Jerusalem,' *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, V (1950), 230. The preserved fragments of her work, with the testimonia and a valuable introduction, were edited by Arthur Ludwich, *Eudociae Augustae Proeli Lycii Claudiani carminum Graecorum reliquiae* (Leipzig, 1897).

followed her originals closely and that her work is in reality chiefly a metrical paraphrase.

The work for which she is chiefly known is the famous cento of Homer, in which the Gospel narratives of the life of Christ are told in verses borrowed from Homer and put together in a patchwork. This composition is specifically described in the introduction as a continuation of a work by a bishop named Patricius; two other authors, Optimus 'the philosopher' and Cosmas of Jerusalem, are named in one manuscript as having taken part in the writing.²⁷ Other works by the Empress, now lost, were a versified paraphrase of the Octateuch and a similar metaphrasis of the books of the prophets Zechariah and Daniel.

Eudocia's writings were unanimously admired by her contemporaries and by the Byzantine critics. In our day they are not much read, though it is recognized that they are of historical value as showing the state of literature at the time, and also as comparative material that brings out the superiority of the work of the epic poet Nonnus, who wrote in the fourth or fifth century.²⁸ But the professional men of letters of Eudocia's day were no doubt grateful for the valuable support given to their studies by the imperial example. All this time, we have to remember, Eudocia was active in all manner of pious occupations, especially the building of churches and the discovery of sacred relics.

After Eudocia, the next most highly placed figure in the history of the classical tradition in Palestine is St Sophronius, who in his later years became Patriarch of Jerusalem, during the years A.D. 634-638.²⁹ We are fortunate in having, not only a considerable amount of information about his long life, but a number of his writings, both prose

²⁷ Ludwich, *Eudoc. August.*, p. 87. Patricius seems to have been a somewhat younger contemporary of Eudocia; the others appear to be otherwise unknown.

²⁸ See Ludwich, *Eudoc. August.*, pp. 3-10, and *Real-Encyclopädie*, VI, col. 910.

²⁹ For a detailed account of Sophronius' life and writings, see Siméon Vailhé, 'Sophrone le sophiste et Sophrone le patriarche,' *Revue de l'Orient chrétien*, VII (1902), 360-385; VIII (1903), 32-69, 356-387. See also Karl Krumbacher, *Geschichte der byzantinischen Literatur*, 2nd ed. (Munich, 1897), pp. 188-190, 671-673, 700-701, and, for more recent bibliography, Altaner, *Patrologie*, pp. 469-470. The most convenient edition of his works is in *P. G.*, LXXXVII, cols. 3115-4010. It was at one time thought that Sophronius had been not merely a sophist, but an iatrosophist; and this, if true, would make him an interesting example of the universal character of learning in the Byzantine period. However, careful examination of the evidence has shown that there is no foundation for this view; see Theodor Nissen, 'Sophronios-Studien III: Medizin und Magic bei Sophronios,' *Byzantinische Zeitschrift*, XXXIX (1939), 349-381.

and verse, representing a variety of subjects. Born in Damascus, Sophronius probably had his early literary training there; and we know that as a young man, interested in the religious life but not yet having renounced the world, he studied literature, philosophy, and astronomy at Alexandria, while visiting the city in company with his master John Moschus, with whom he traveled. One of his teachers was Stephanus of Alexandria, the leader of the Platonic-Aristotelian tradition, who was later to receive an imperial call to Constantinople.³⁰ At this time Sophronius was called a sophist, and it is of great interest to see that he continued to be given this title even after he became a monk. He appears to have served as a professor of rhetoric,³¹ and he wrote commentaries on the school grammar of Dionysius Thrax.³² Then, apparently while he was still a young man, he became a monk and spent some time in travels, sometimes again in company with John Moschus, as well as living in the monastery of St Theodosius in Jerusalem. Finally he became Patriarch. In addition to his famous synodal letter against Monothelism, we possess homilies, lives of saints, a florilegium of texts for use in theological disputes, and a collection of anacreontic verses and religious poems. His refined and elegant prose style, which is often rhythmic, testifies to his early training and interests,³³ and it is probably true to say that his literary skill contributed in some measure to his being chosen as Patriarch.

For our present study, perhaps the greatest interest, as an example of the importance of the classical tradition, lies in his collection of twenty-two anacreontic odes on various religious themes. Eight were written for great festivals, namely the Annunciation, the Nativity, the Adoration of the Magi, the Presentation, the Baptism of Christ, the Miracle of Lazarus, Palm Sunday, and the Last Supper. Others have as their subjects St Paul, the Labors of St Paul, St John the Theologian, the Protomartyr Stephen, the Protomartyr Thecla, the Virtues of Narses the Bishop of Ascalon, the Holy Cross, the Ascension, the Holy City and the Holy Places, and so on. Some of these odes are thought to have been written while Sophronius was living in the monastery of St Theodosius, while others seem to date from his travels in

³⁰ Vailhé, 'Sophrone,' VII, 365; Nissen, 'Sophronios-Studien III,' p. 351; *Gr. Lit.*, II^e, 1067.

³¹ Vailhé, 'Sophrone,' VIII, 368.

³² *Gr. Lit.*, II^e, 1078-1079.

³³ Cf. Nissen, 'Sophronios-Studien III,' p. 351; Krumbacher, *Byz. Lit.*, p. 701.

Syria and Egypt.³⁴ In addition we possess two metrical epitaphs and three liturgical poems written for the services of Christmas, Epiphany, and Good Friday. Modern critics have expressed differing opinions on the poetic merits of these compositions, and they do seem somewhat dry and academic, but technically they are correct and they show the competence of the author; and from the point of view of literary history they are of the greatest interest in that these poems in the ancient meter should have been written after the introduction of the new and popular rhythmic verse-form.³⁵

Sophronius' work has been described in some detail because the volume and variety of his preserved writings give him a prominent position among the theologians and churchmen who in their writings carried on the classical tradition; but he was by no means an isolated figure, and there were others who made their contributions. Sophronius' predecessor Modestus, who like Sophronius had been abbot of the monastery of St Theodosius, and then Patriarch of Jerusalem (from A.D. 631 to 634), wrote homilies that, so far as we can judge from the preserved fragments, were extravagantly rhetorical.³⁶ Leontius of Byzantium, already mentioned, is remembered especially for his work in the introduction of Aristotelian and Platonic terminology and method into the study of dogma.³⁷ Cyril of Jerusalem's work, in the fourth century, shows that he had had a careful training in the Asianic style of rhetoric,³⁸ and Titus of Bostra's writings evidence his knowledge of Plato.³⁹ Chrysippus of Jerusalem, who became a priest in Jerusalem and died in A.D. 479, was a preacher with rhetorical training.⁴⁰ The church historian Sozomen, who was born not far from Gaza and received his training there, was commended for his literary style by the learned Photius of Constantinople.⁴¹

We may now turn to the School of Gaza, the topic that is most widely known in the literary history of Palestine at this period; and

³⁴ Vailhé, 'Sophrone,' VIII, 382.

³⁵ Krumbacher, *Byz. Lit.*, p. 655. Rhythmic compositions are attributed to Sophronius, but the evidence for his authorship is not good (cf. Krumbacher, *Byz. Lit.*, p. 672).

³⁶ Krumbacher, *Byz. Lit.*, pp. 164-165.

³⁷ Friedrich Loofs, *Leontius von Byzanz* (Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur, III, 1-2; Leipzig, 1887).

³⁸ Puech, *Litt. gr. chrét.*, III, 546.

³⁹ Puech, *Litt. gr. chrét.*, III, 559-560.

⁴⁰ Altaner, *Patrologie*, p. 190.

⁴¹ Photius, *Bibliotheca*, codex 30, in *P. G.*, CIII, 64 B; *Gr. Lit.*, II², 1435-1436.

indeed the story of the school is the most unified topic within that history.⁴² The fame of this school has perhaps given it an undue prominence in comparison with the literary activity in the remainder of the country; but the work produced at Gaza is undeniably one of the most characteristic and instructive features of the literary history of Palestine, giving us a broad range of examples of literary work.

In the fourth century, as has already been noted, Gaza possessed a rhetorical school that earned the respect of Libanius and was well known through the Empire.⁴³ During this time Gaza, like other places of Palestine, especially along the coast, continued to be predominantly a pagan city, with cults of Helios, Aphrodite, Apollo, Kore, and Hecate, and a temple of Tyche and a Marneion.⁴⁴ Gregory Nazianzen, in his first invective against the Emperor Julian, speaks of the enthusiasm of the people of Gaza for Julian's program for the restoration of paganism.⁴⁵ Our first extensive knowledge of the city comes, in fact, from Mark the Deacon's life of Porphyrius, the Bishop of Gaza,⁴⁶ in which is recorded the story of the Bishop's success, with the support of the imperial family, and especially of the Empress Eudoxia, in stamping out paganism in Gaza through an intensive campaign during the early years of the fifth century. The conversion of the city was signalized by the destruction of the Marneion, the temple of the principal local pagan deity Marnas, and the construction on its site of a cruciform church named in honor of Eudoxia.⁴⁷

⁴² On the School of Gaza, see, in addition to the special studies cited below, Karl B. Stark, *Gaza und die philistäische Küste* (Jena, 1852); Kilian Seitz, *Die Schule von Gaza* (dissertation; Heidelberg, 1892); Martin A. Meyer, *History of the City of Gaza* (New York, 1907), pp. 67 ff.; Fritz Schemmel, 'Die Hochschule von Alexandria'; reports on modern scholarship concerning the School of Gaza in *Jahresbericht über die Fortschritte der classischen Altertumswissenschaft*, by Wilhelm Schmid, CVIII (1901), 265-268, Schmid, CXXIX (1906), 284-286, Karl Münscher, CXLIX (1910), 178-179, Münscher, CLXX (1915), 189-191, Eberhard Richtsteig, CCXXXVIII (1933), 101-103; *Gr. Lit.*, II^e, 1028 ff.; Félix-Marie Abel, *Histoire de la Palestine* (Paris, 1952), II, 362 ff.

⁴³ See above, pp. 302-303.

⁴⁴ Abel, *Histoire de la Palestine*, II, 316.

⁴⁵ *Orationes*, IV, 86, in *P. G.*, XXXV, 616 A.

⁴⁶ *The Life of Porphyry, Bishop of Gaza*, tr. George F. Hill (Oxford, 1913); *Vie de Porphyre, évêque de Gaza*, ed. Henri Grégoire and Marc-Aurèle Kugener (Paris, 1930); cf. Henri Leclercq, 'Porphyre de Gaza,' *Dictionnaire d'archéologie chrétienne et de liturgie*, XIV¹ (Paris, 1939), cols. 1464-1504.

⁴⁷ On the history and construction of this church, see E. Baldwin Smith, *The Dome* (Princeton, 1950), pp. 15-16, 39-40, 96, 110.

Mark's biography of Porphyrius is itself a highly rhetorical composition. The author speaks of the need of classical education for the understanding of the Bible,⁴⁸ and testifies to the continuation of the classical literary tradition at Gaza after the official conversion of the city. In the early part of this century we do not hear otherwise of the rhetorical school of Gaza, but during the reign of Zeno, between the years A.D. 473 and 491, we begin to have specific information.

The scope of the present paper will allow only an enumeration of the names and the chief works of the principal members of the school, and some general observations on their significance. The works themselves cannot be described or criticized in detail here. Also we must remember that there are many members of the school, both students and teachers, who are known only by name from the letters of the period that have been preserved; and these there is not space to mention at all.⁴⁹

One of the earliest members of the school of whom we know is the scholar and grammarian Zosimus of Gaza, author of commentaries on Lysias and Demosthenes, who died during Zeno's reign, and so might have begun his career about the middle of the century.⁵⁰ At about the same time we also meet the sophist Aeneas of Gaza,⁵¹ the author of a dialogue called *Theophrastus*, in which the philosopher Theophrastus allows himself to be convinced by the Christian arguments concerning immortality and resurrection, and leaves the Academy. The work, written in A.D. 484 or later, shows an immediate knowledge of Plato, Plotinus, and Gregory of Nyssa, and a second-hand knowledge of other classical texts; but Aeneas does not know Aristotle. Aeneas tells us that he had studied in Alexandria under Hierocles. There are also preserved twenty-five of his letters,⁵² from which we get a certain amount of knowledge of his friends and pupils. Zacharias Scholasticus of Gaza, who became Bishop of Mitylene and wrote his church history in Syriac, also composed a dialogue called *Ammonios*, in imitation

⁴⁸ *Vie de Porphyre* (ed. Grégoire-Kugener), p. 8, line 12; *Gr. Lit.*, II², 956, n. 2.

⁴⁹ They are listed by Seitz, *Schule von Gaza*.

⁵⁰ See Seitz, *Schule von Gaza*, pp. 27-30; *Gr. Lit.*, II², 1033. Zosimus of Gaza is to be distinguished from Zosimus of Ascalon, who was active at a somewhat later period; see below, pp. 313-314.

⁵¹ *Gr. Lit.*, II², 1032-1033; Seitz, *Schule von Gaza*, pp. 23-27; Stephan Sikorski, *De Aenea Gazeo* (Breslauer philologische Abhandlungen, IX, 5; Breslau, 1909).

⁵² Published in *Epistolographi Graeci*, pp. 24-32, and in *Epistole*, ed. Lidia Massa Positano (Naples, 1950).

of Aeneas' dialogue *Theophrastus*.⁵³ In a setting similar to that of Plato's *Phaedrus*, this dialogue sets forth a conversation between a jurist and the Neoplatonist Ammonios on the problem of the eternity of the world; but in artistic quality it is inferior to Aeneas' work. It is possible that Zacharias was also the author of commentaries on Aristotle.

In some ways the most prominent and most important member of the school is Procopius of Gaza, whose activity is dated chiefly in the reign of Anastasius, A.D. 491-518.⁵⁴ Like most of the members of the school, he studied at Alexandria, which he calls in one of his letters⁵⁵ 'the common mother of literary studies.' He then began as a teacher of rhetoric at a very early age. We are told that Antioch, Tyre, and Caesarea in Palestine tried to engage his services but that he remained faithful to Gaza. One hundred and sixty-three letters of his have been preserved,⁵⁶ which give us valuable information about academic circles in Alexandria and Gaza, and also about Procopius' numerous pupils, the most prominent of whom were Choricus the rhetorician, who succeeded Procopius as head of the school in Gaza, and Marcianus, who later became Bishop of Gaza.

Procopius was a pious Christian. Photius says that he wrote many works on all kinds of subjects,⁵⁷ and his compositions included both Christian treatises and productions in the classical manner. He wrote a commentary on the Octateuch that Photius describes as somewhat prolix because he was careful to cite all the opinions of all the authorities;⁵⁸ a commentary on Isaiah, and various other religious works including polemical writings. Among his works in the classical style were a panegyric of the Emperor Anastasius, a monody on an earthquake at Antioch, an *ekphrasis* (description), in rhythmic prose, of two pictures at Gaza that portrayed scenes from the story of Phaedra and Hippolytus,⁵⁹ and an *ekphrasis* of a clock in Gaza.⁶⁰ In these de-

⁵³ *Gr. Lit.*, II², 1033.

⁵⁴ See Seitz, *Schule von Gaza*, pp. 9-21; *Gr. Lit.*, II², 1029-1031.

⁵⁵ *Epistolae*, 133, in *Epistolographi Graeci*, p. 586.

⁵⁶ All published in *Epistolographi Graeci*, pp. 533-598.

⁵⁷ *Bibliotheca*, codex 160, in *P. G.*, CIII, 444 B.

⁵⁸ *Bibliotheca*, codex 206, in *P. G.*, CIII, 676-677.

⁵⁹ Paul Friedländer, *Spätantiker Gemäldezyklus in Gaza: Des Prokopios von Gaza Ekphrasis Eikonos* (Studi e Testi, 89; Vatican City, 1939).

⁶⁰ H. Diels, 'Über die von Prokop beschriebene Kunstuhr von Gaza: mit einem Anhang enthaltend Text und Übersetzung der *Ekphrasis Horologii* des Prokopios von Gaza,' *Abhandlungen der Königlich Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaft*,

scriptions he was a follower of the earlier art connoisseurs the Philostrati and Callistratus, and his *ekphraseis* are valuable for the history of art.

Choricus, Procopius' pupil and successor, studied in Alexandria, like his master, before taking up his career in Gaza, where he was active in the 520's and 530's.⁶¹ His preserved works⁶² are all in classical forms, though several of them deal with Christian subject matter, notably descriptions of churches in Gaza. The descriptions of the churches of St Sergius and of St Stephen, which were designed to adorn two panegyrics of his former fellow student Bishop Marcianus, are widely known because of their value for the history of architecture.⁶³ His declamations and other rhetorical compositions were highly successful, and were more esteemed than those of his master. The judgment on these by Photius may be quoted, as being typical of the appreciation of the works of Choricus and of other members of the school:

He is a lover of clearness and purity of style, and if he expatiates for any useful purpose, the clearness of his thoughts is no way impaired, since the expansion is not ill-timed and never reaches the length of a complete period. In his writings, character and sincerity are combined, while at the same time he does not neglect the inculcation of moral lessons. As a rule he uses carefully selected words, although not always in their proper sense; for sometimes, owing to his unrestricted use of figurative language, he falls into frigidity, and sometimes is carried away into the poetical style. But he is at his best in descriptions and eulogics. He is an upholder of the true religion and respects the rites and holy places of the Christians, although for some reason or other, contemptuously and without any excuse, he unjustifiably introduces Greek myths and heathen stories in his writings, sometimes even when discussing sacred things. Many writings by him of various kinds are in circulation; one meets with fictitious, laudatory, and controversial speeches, monodies, nuptial songs and many others.⁶⁴

Philosophische-historische Klasse, 1917, Nr. 7. This work was once attributed to Choricus.

⁶¹ Seitz, *Schule von Gaza*, pp. 21-23; *Gr. Lit.*, II², 1031-1032.

⁶² See above, note 2.

⁶³ Gabriel Millet, 'L'Asie Mineure: nouveau domaine de l'histoire de l'art,' *Revue archéologique*, sér. 4, V (1905), 93-109; Richard W. Hamilton, 'Two Churches at Gaza, as Described by Choricus of Gaza,' *Palestine Exploration Fund . . . Quarterly Statement*, 1930, pp. 178-181; Félix-Marie Abel, 'Gaza au VI^e siècle d'après le rhéteur Chorikios,' *Revue biblique*, XL (1931), 5-31; Smith, *The Dome*, Appendix, pp. 155-157 (description of the Church of St Stephen, translated with commentary by Glanville Downey).

⁶⁴ Photius, *Bibliotheca*, codex 160, in *P. G.*, CIII, 441-444. I quote the translation of John H. Freese, *The Library of Photius* (London, 1920), I, 229-230.

The Teubner edition is provided with an index of the passages in which Choricus quotes or refers to classical authors, and this is highly instructive as to which writers were most popular at Gaza. A few of the figures may be cited (by way of comparing the quantity of the references, one may keep in mind that Choricus' works comprise 544 pages of Greek text in the Teubner edition): Aeschines, 29 passages, Aristophanes, 47, Demosthenes, 142, Homer, 274, Libanius, 493, Plato, 356 (Aristotle, 2), New Testament, 21 (Old Testament, 1).

Procopius of Gaza and Choricus had both been distinguished, as we have seen, for their prose *ekphraseis* or descriptions of buildings and works of art. A third member of the school who did important work in this field, apparently in the reign of Justinian (A.D. 527-565), is John of Gaza, whose description of a *tabula mundi*, or allegorical representation of the world and the powers of nature, differs by being in verse.⁶⁵ The work comprises 703 hexameters, divided into two parts, each of which is prefaced by a brief iambic introduction. Among the figures described in the picture are Aion, Hesperus, Iris, Atlas, Sophia and Arete, Selene, the four winds, Oceanus, Eos and the Horae, Ge and her children the Karpoi, Europa and Asia, Thalassa, Cheimon, and the Ombroi. The poem opens with a Christian introduction, and in the middle of the picture John describes a representation of the Cross.⁶⁶ The picture is said, in the sole manuscript in which it survives, to be 'in the public winter bath in Gaza — or in Antioch.'⁶⁷ Great interest was aroused when a mosaic showing Ge and the Karpoi, very much as John described them, was found in the excavations at Antioch in 1933, in one of the large public baths of the city.⁶⁸ The bath and the mosaics found in it have been dated by archaeological evidence in the first half, perhaps the second quarter, of the fourth

⁶⁵ The description is edited, with a valuable introduction, German paraphrase, and commentary, by Paul Friedländer, in *Johannes von Gaza und Paulus Silentarius* (Leipzig, 1912).

⁶⁶ For reconstruction of the picture, see Friedländer's introduction to *Johannes*, pp. 1-103, and his Plate I (p. 179); and Gerhard Krahmer, *De tabula mundi ab Joanne Gazaeo descripta* (dissertation; Halle, 1920). See also George M. A. Hanfmann, 'The Seasons in John of Gaza's Tabula Mundi,' *Latomus*, III (1939), 111-118.

⁶⁷ Friedländer, *Johannes*, p. 164 n.

⁶⁸ See the study by the present writer, 'John of Gaza and the Mosaic of Ge and Karpoi,' *Antioch-on-the-Orontes*, II: *The Excavations, 1933-1936*, ed. Richard Stillwell (Princeton, 1938), pp. 205-212; Doro Levi, *Antioch Mosaic Pavements* (Princeton, 1947), I, 260 ff.

century.⁶⁹ The mosaic of Ge found in Antioch does not correspond in all details with the picture described by John, and the relation between the monument in Antioch and that described by John, 'in Gaza — or in Antioch,' has been debated. New evidence of great interest has quite recently been recovered in a chance excavation at Chahba (ancient Philippopolis) in southern Syria, in which a private house was found containing a mosaic showing an allegory of time, the fertility of nature, agriculture, and man.⁷⁰ Ge and the Karpoi are shown in the central part of the panel, and the composition could be taken as a *tabula mundi* or allegory of the world in miniature, perhaps representing a copy, reduced in scope for use in a domestic setting, of a larger and more elaborate composition such as John saw. This discovery, coming after the finding of the mosaic at Antioch, is of particular value for our understanding of John of Gaza's work, showing as it does that the picture that John described was on a well-known theme that had been treated by classical artists long before John himself wrote. Thus the subject matter of John's *ekphrasis* finds the place that we should expect in the classical tradition at Gaza, being a treatment of a traditional classical theme, but with a Christian exordium and with a description of the Cross that would appear to have been added to an otherwise classical composition.

John is the last representative of belles-lettres with whom we have to deal in our survey of the School of Gaza; but there were scholarly authors in other fields. The best known of these is Timothy of Gaza, who lived in the time of Anastasius.⁷¹ After having been a pupil in Alexandria of Horapollon, he wrote a treatise on animals in four books, in rhythmic prose, and a work on syntax. In his choice of subjects he illustrates the literary character of scholarship and science at this period, in which it was possible for the same man to treat both zoology and grammar.

Timothy's work brings to mind the activities of other scholarly writers elsewhere in Palestine who have not yet been considered. One of these is Zosimus of Ascalon, whose activity is dated in the reign of Anastasius; he wrote a lexicon to Demosthenes, a choice of subject

⁶⁹ Levi, *Antioch Mosaic Pavements*, I, 261, 626.

⁷⁰ E. Will, 'Une nouvelle mosaïque de Chahba-Philippopolis,' *Annales archéologiques de Syrie*, III (1953), 27-48, with plate following p. 48. M. Will dates the mosaic in the third century after Christ.

⁷¹ Seitz, *Schule von Gaza*, pp. 30-32; *Gr. Lit.*, II², 974-975, 1077-1078.

that illustrates the scholarly philological training characteristic of the classical tradition as it was taught in Palestine, both at Gaza and elsewhere, at this time.⁷² Thus we also find the work of the lexicographer Ptolemy of Ascalon,⁷³ and of the Egyptian grammarian Orion, of the fifth century, who worked in Caesarea in Palestine, and wrote an etymological lexicon.⁷⁴ And it should not be forgotten that Gaza was not the only center of literary activity in Palestine at this period. Eleutheropolis, not far away, was the residence of Marianus, a Roman by birth, who had been brought to Palestine as a child by his father, a government official. The family was of aristocratic descent, and Marianus became a jurist, or *scholasticus*. He occupied himself, during the reign of Anastasius, in turning the hexameter compositions of Theocritus, Apollonius Rhodius, Callimachus, Aratus, and Nicander into iambic trimeters, and six epigrams by him have been preserved in the Palatine Anthology.⁷⁵

Finally, a word must be said about the most distinguished alumnus of the School of Gaza, Procopius of Caesarea the historian, who, born in Caesarea in Palestine, received his literary training there and at Gaza.⁷⁶ At Gaza, Thucydides was one of the favorite authors, and Procopius steeped himself in his style to such an extent that whole phrases reappear in Procopius' work, not to speak of literary motifs such as the description of the plague. In his careful literary training, Procopius was a worthy product of the School of Gaza; but he is quite different in two ways from the men who remained at Gaza and made their careers there. First, he was a historian, and so far as we know there were no historians among the professors at Gaza, where

⁷² See *Gr. Lit.*, II², 1033. Formerly (e.g., by Seitz, *Schule von Gaza*, pp. 27-30), Zosimus of Ascalon was confused with Zosimus of Gaza, who has already been mentioned.

⁷³ *Gr. Lit.*, II², 1080.

⁷⁴ *Gr. Lit.*, II², 1081. George the grammarian is assigned to the School of Gaza by Stark, *Gaza* (cited above, note 42), p. 645, but his supposed work may belong instead to George Choïroboskos of Constantinople (*Gr. Lit.*, II², 1079, n. 10).

⁷⁵ Suidas, *Lexikon*, s. n. Μαρτιανός (ed. Adler, III, 323-324); Ensslin, 'Marianus,' No. 8, in *Real-Encyclopädie*, XIV, col. 1751.

⁷⁶ Gyula Moravcsik, *Byzantinoturcica* (Budapest, 1942-43), I, 302; János Balázs, *A Gazai Iskola Thukydides-tanulmányai — Gli studi Tucididei della Scuola di Gaza* (Budapest, 1940), pp. 15-16, 19-20 — 35-36, 39-41. I believe that Balázs has made it clear that Procopius of Caesarea studied at Gaza, but I feel that his claim that Gaza was the center of Thucydidean studies at this period is exaggerated; besides, there is no gain in pressing the evidence as he does. It is quite sufficient to show that special attention was given to the work of Thucydides at Gaza.

the chief interests, as has been seen, were in rhetoric and poetry, and, to a lesser extent, philosophy. Second, Procopius allowed Christian and pagan doctrine to become so inextricably entwined in his works that while there are many references to Christian thought and feeling in his writings, pagan allusions and turns of thought are also so common that some scholars have supposed that he was a pagan or a crypto-pagan.⁷⁷ Some of the pagan phraseology may be present for stylistic reasons, and it seems likely that Procopius was actually a Christian, though a somewhat critical and skeptical one. But the apparent mixture of beliefs that appears in his work represents his own personal inclination, or something that he acquired after he left Gaza, for this seeming ambiguity is found in no writer of Gaza, where it was evidently thought more suitable, and also in better taste, to keep Christianity and classical thought quite separate.

It might be asked whether all this literary work may not have been purely academic, and whether these authors were not simply a limited circle of *précieux* writers whose influence did not go beyond their own group. The answer to this is given in a valuable passage toward the end of Choricius' second panegyric of Marcianus.⁷⁸ Choricius speaks of the frequent festivals and holidays at Gaza, which, combined with the beauty of the city's buildings, the brilliant attractions of the market place, and above all the temperateness of the weather, agreeable at all seasons of the year, not only made life pleasant for the people of Gaza, but drew numbers of visitors to the city. Choricius' praise of his own city is matched by the reports of travelers.⁷⁹ The festivals, which were doubtless survivals, suitably altered, of pagan festivals, gave choice opportunities to the local rhetoricians and sophists to display their skill; and Choricius says that the frequency of the festivals did not result in any lowering of the quality of the literary exhibitions that were offered. These celebrations were looked upon by everybody concerned as so important, Choricius says, that the imperial

⁷⁷ See the paper by the present writer, 'Paganism and Christianity in Procopius,' *Church History*, XVIII (1949), 89-102.

⁷⁸ Choricius, *Laudatio Marciani*, II, 63-75, in *Opera*, pp. 43-47; cf. François Halkin, 'L'inscription métrique d'Anazarbe en l'honneur de Saint Méénas,' *Byzantion*, XXIII (1953), 243, n. 3.

⁷⁹ *Expositio totius mundi*, 29, 32, in *Geographi Latini minores*, ed. Alexander Riese (Heilbronn, 1878), pp. 110, 111; Antoninus, *Itinerarium*, in *Itinera Hierosolymitana*, ed. Titus Tobler and Auguste Molinier (Geneva, 1879-85), I, 375: 'Gaza autem est civitas splendidissima & deliciosa, & homines in ea honestissimi, omni liberalitate decori, amatores peregrinorum.'

government supplemented the local resources and added subsidies toward the costs. The tourists, having done their shopping and attended the displays, would return home, and the people who had had to stay at home would ask eagerly for news of the city and the festivals.

This passage shows first of all that the activity of the rhetorical school affected, not only the citizens of Gaza, but, through the visitors, other parts of Palestine and the Gracco-Roman world in general. Classical festivals survived elsewhere at this time, notably in the famous Olympic Games of Antioch, which were celebrated until A.D. 520,⁵⁰ but we get a picture of Gaza as a kind of resort town and shopping center in which the literary and rhetorical displays were a well-known and widely appreciated attraction. It goes without saying that the influence that Gaza could exert, by this means, on education, literature, and art, both in Palestine and elsewhere in the Empire, was important.

Whether all this public activity and fame were a cause or an effect of the academic success of the School of Gaza, one would hesitate to say, for we really have too little knowledge of the earlier history of the school to be able to venture an opinion. One might perhaps attribute to the personality and ability of Procopius of Gaza an impetus that was maintained at a high level by his pupils and successors; but without more knowledge of what the school was before Procopius' time we cannot be sure of this. It seems plain that the flourishing activity of the school in the time of Anastasius, Justin, and Justinian did not constitute a renaissance. The work of the school, basically, was a continuation, perhaps more intensive and more successful than usual, of a literary and educational tradition that had existed for a long time, and there was not the rediscovery or revival that is the essential element of renaissance. Some of the appearance of such a revival may have been given to the productions of the School of Gaza by the emergence of this brilliant success at a time when other literary centers of the Greek-speaking world, such as Alexandria, Antioch, and Athens, were by no means making the same mark with rhetorical and poetic productions; but as will be seen, this phenomenon has another meaning.

The success of the School of Gaza at this time seems to depend upon several factors, some of which do not appear to have been mentioned by previous scholars who have dealt with the literary history of the period. In the first place we have to recall the well-known fact that

⁵⁰ Carl Otfried Müller, *Antiquitates Antiochenae* (Göttingen, 1839), p. 92.

the basic element in the activity of the School of Gaza was the conservatism that governed late Roman and early Byzantine education.⁸¹ This conservatism represented the conviction that the writings of the authors of the classical period were perfect, or as near perfect as it was possible for human works to be; and since one could not improve on them, the best thing one could do was imitate them. Gaza provided the setting for such a program, and the sophists and poets, and their pupils and the visitors, were simply carrying on their version of the cultural activity of the classical Greek city and the Greek city of the Roman imperial period — as they could so well do in a city such as Gaza, with its colonnaded streets and its theatres and sunny climate — even though the political forms of such cities had vanished. In this sense Gaza belonged to a distinctive tradition within the larger framework of Palestine; but in this respect also it was only one among the several coastal cities, and differed from them only in the degree of its literary success. Gaza had never, in fact, had any concern with the religious development that made Palestine the Holy Land. We have only to try to imagine something like the School of Gaza existing in Jerusalem to understand this distinctiveness in the characters of the two cities. In this sense Gaza was not an integral part of Palestine, that is, of Christian Palestine; but on the other hand it was really a surviving part of the older Palestine, going back to the days before Christianity and also to the days before the conflict between the Jews and the Roman government. Even after its conversion to Christianity, the literary work of the city differed from the classical writings of the learned churchmen elsewhere in Palestine, and elsewhere in the Empire as well, in that men like Sophronius of Jerusalem and Paulinus of Nola wrote their classical compositions and their anacreontics in the service of the Church, while the equally Christian scholars of Gaza certainly did not in all cases have this goal in mind.

These characteristics, viewed in comparison with the literary activity of the remainder of the Empire, will show us what lies behind the School of Gaza. When this school was flourishing, there was no comparable output of classical literature, that is, of belles-lettres, in Alexandria, Antioch, or Athens, which had been three of the great centers of learning and literature in the past. Athens, as the last stronghold of purely pagan learning, had been less and less productive as the years went by. Antioch and Alexandria were absorbed in theological con-

⁸¹ Marrou, *History of Education in Antiquity*, pp. 340-341.

troversies that engaged the local energies (especially in Alexandria), and Antioch in addition was vexed by the Persian wars and by a series of earthquakes.⁸² In the reigns of Anastasius, Justin, and Justinian, when the School of Gaza was at its height, the only other center of literary production in the Greek-speaking world was Constantinople; and this circumstance itself, in conjunction with the nature of the work carried on in the capital, shows us the significance of Gaza. In Constantinople there was, as in Gaza, both prose and poetry, in the works of Paulus Silentarius, Agathias, Procopius of Caesarea, and John Lydus. The poetic work of Paulus and Agathias, as represented in the Greek Anthology and in Paulus' long poems on the Church of St Sophia, is much like that written at Gaza; but the bulk of the work produced at Constantinople, by Procopius and Agathias, is history. So far as we know there was no history written at Gaza. People who lived in or were connected with the imperial capital were much more alive to history, past and present, than those of the little city in Palestine, where the great events of the times were much more remote, and classical literature could be cultivated for its own sake. It was precisely because it was not so much in contact with the affairs of the great world that Gaza was able to sustain the classical spirit more successfully than Alexandria and Antioch during these years. This explains why it is that Gaza, which has been well described as 'a spiritual colony of Alexandria,'⁸³ and was dependent upon the mother city for its teaching and its Neoplatonist tradition, surpassed its parent at this time. The 'colony' indeed was able to benefit from the learning and culture of Alexandria without becoming involved in the political and theological controversies of the Egyptian capital. Here is one point at which the literary phenomenon is both characteristic of Palestine and unique to it at this period. Gaza seems in fact to have been the last place, in those days, in which one could comfortably carry on such literary

⁸² On the history of the University at Athens at this period, see Walden, *Universities of Ancient Greece*. On Alexandria, see Edward R. Hardy, *Christian Egypt: Church and People* (New York, 1952), pp. 111-143. On the Christianization of the School of Alexandria in the sixth century, see H. D. Saffrey, 'Le chrétien Jean Philopon et la survivance de l'école d'Alexandrie au VI^e siècle,' *Revue des études grecques*, LXVII (1954), 396-410. For the history of Antioch at this time, see Johannes Kollwitz, 'Antiochia am Orontes,' *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum*, I (Stuttgart, 1950), cols. 461-469, and C. Katalevskij, 'Antioche,' *Dictionnaire d'histoire et de géographie ecclésiastiques*, III (Paris, 1924), cols. 574 ff.

⁸³ *Gr. Lit.*, II², 1028.

occupations. It is more than accident that Procopius of Gaza was a rhetorician, while the other Procopius was a historian.

In sum, we see in the literary history of Palestine how the classical tradition and the pagan vocabulary had come to be looked upon as being so far divorced from Christian dogma that once an understanding had been reached, there was no chance of any real conflict. Christian faith and the Christian life were personal matters, and did not depend upon one's education or lack of it. Christianity was a religion of newness and renewal, and could afford to make the old pagan tradition a part of itself for its value as education. One closing text will illustrate the position that the classical tradition had come to occupy in Palestine in the middle of the sixth century. Cyril of Scythopolis, who was born about A.D. 514 in Scythopolis in Galilee, was the most prominent hagiographer of the time and has left a valuable series of lives of saints, written in an individual style and without literary pretensions. Yet in his life of Euthymius, Cyril tells us that he found it very difficult to write without classical training, and that he regretted his lack of literary education.⁵⁴ If he had had this training, Cyril's biographies might not make such interesting reading for us. But his words are surely testimony to the position that classical learning — *ἡ ἔξω παιδεία*, to be translated perhaps as 'the worldly education' — had been able to maintain.⁵⁵

GLANVILLE DOWNEY

⁵⁴ In *Kyrillos von Skythopolis*, ed. Eduard Schwartz (Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der alchristlichen Literatur, XLIX, 2; Leipzig, 1939), p. 83, lines 23 ff.

⁵⁵ The substance of this paper was presented at the symposium on Palestine in the Byzantine period held at Dumbarton Oaks in April, 1955, under the direction of Carl H. Kraeling. I must record my thanks to Dr Kraeling for his invitation to join in the symposium, and my appreciation of his sympathetic interest in this study. The present paper represents a considerable expansion, as well as revision, of the material presented at the symposium.

List of Contributors

- PAUL H. BUCK, Francis Lee Higginson Professor of History, Director of the Harvard University Library, and Librarian of Harvard College
- GLANVILLE DOWNEY, Associate Professor of Byzantine Literature at the Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, Harvard University
- ERNEST H. WILKINS, President, Emeritus, Oberlin College
- KIMBALL C. ELKINS, Senior Assistant in the Harvard University Archives
- ANNE W. HENRY, Bibliographer in the Harvard College Library
- JOSEPH SCHIEFFMAN, Professor of English, Dickinson College
- ELEANOR M. GARVEY, Assistant, Department of Printing and Graphic Arts, Harvard College Library
- GEORGE KIRK, Lecturer on Government and on History, Harvard University
- NINO PIRROTTA, Professor of Music and Librarian of the Eda Kuhn Loeb Music Library, Harvard University

Forthcoming Articles

- Barbarism and Decadence: Historical Nemesis versus Aesthetic Catharsis
RENATO POGGIOLI
- The Catechism of Edward Norris, 1649
R. J. ROBERTS
- Pope on the Threshold of His Career
GEORGE SHERBURN
- Schelling's Copy of Schleiermacher's *Ueber die Religion*
WALTER GROSSMANN
- The Manuscripts of Tennyson's *Gareth and Lynette*
JOAN E. HARTMAN
- Melville's 'Rammon': A Text and Commentary
ELEANOR M. TILTON
- 'That Delightful Man': Frederick Locker
MADISON C. BATES
- Francis Howard Fobes
ARTHUR STANLEY PEASE
- 'La culture allemande et les universités américaines,' by Jean Giraudoux
LAURENT LESAGE
- The Poems of Robert Lowell — A Critique and a Bibliography
HUGH B. STAPLES