

## ABBA ISAIAH<sup>1</sup>

THE large ascetic corpus under the name of the Abba Isaiah has long only been known in the West in a Latin translation embedded among other ascetic works of unequal and uncertain interest towards the end of Volume 40 of the Greek Patrology (cols. 1105–1204). In 1911 the monk Avgoustinos in Jerusalem published the Greek original from a late and incomplete manuscript in the Patriarchal Library (Patr. 109), filling in the gaps with a retranslation from the Latin made by Cleopas Coicylides (subsequently Metropolitan of Nazareth). This edition was reprinted by Schoinas at Volos in 1962. Meanwhile, soon after the last war, I had typed for myself and a few friends a more complete Greek text based on a collation of the Jerusalem edition with a Bodleian MS. (Cromwell 14) and a British Museum MS. (Add. 39609) which proved to be that from which the Jerusalem MS. had been copied—but here a later scribe had filled in the gaps on sheets of paper inserted. Mine was certainly not a proper critical edition, and I did not think of publishing it then—though as a stopgap provisional text it might have been useful.

Earlier than this, in 1944, Dr. E. R. Hardy Jr. had published a short but important fragment of the text from a papyrus of sixth- or even late fifth-century date.<sup>2</sup>

A full critical edition of the complete Greek text is awaited from Göttingen, and its publication will be an important event. Meanwhile, the Solesmes French translation (with its introduction) is most timely

<sup>1</sup> C.S.C.O. *Scriptores Syri*, tt. 120–3. *Les cinq recensions de l'Ascéticon syriaque d'Abba Isaïe*, éd. René Draguet (Louvain, 1968)—tt. 120–1 = vols. 289–90, *Les témoins et leurs parallèles non-syriaques: Édition des Logoi*. Tt. 122–3 = vols. 293–4, *Introduction au problème isaïen: Version des logoi avec des parallèles grecs et latins*. Reviewed by Lucien Regnault, 'Isaïe de Scété ou de Gaza?' *Revue d'ascétique et de mystique*, t. 46 (1970), 1, pp. 33–44.

*Abbé Isaïe: Recueil ascétique—Introduction et traduction française par les moines de Solesmes*: Collection Spiritualité orientale, n° 7, Abbaye de Bellefontaine, 49—Bégrolles, 1970.

I wrote the first half of the present article before seeing Dom Regnault's review of Draguet's work, and the whole before receiving from him the most valuable French translation of the whole Isaian corpus (based on an improved Greek text culled from the best manuscripts, not on the Jerusalem or Volos edition). We seem to be in complete agreement, apart from his bowing to Draguet's rejection of the Syriac *Vita Isaiae* (here also, he has since expressed in a letter to me his acceptance of my article from one end to the other). But the overlap between his work and mine is less noticeable than one might have expected. So I have not thought it necessary to rewrite my article.

<sup>2</sup> *Annuaire de l'Institut de philologie et d'histoire orientales et slaves de l'Université de Bruxelles*, vii. (New York, 1944), pp. 127–40.

and welcome for the work is full of interest—monastic rules, and directions and teachings on the spiritual life, with deep theological and human insight and originality, in a Greek creatively employed (there is general agreement that the writer was Egyptian), with a marked character of its own. The corpus appears to have been assembled by Isaiah's disciple Peter (also an Egyptian), who in many chapters is quoting his master's sayings, and sometimes his own questions to him: one chapter takes the form of a letter addressed to Peter on his entering the monastic life: some may be addressed to him or to others; while some again are straight homilies.

In 1956, Antoine Guillaumont published<sup>1</sup> such fragments as have been found of a Coptic version, including large portions of a chapter, 'The Branches of Vice', which was then only known in Greek in a much shorter form.

Now Professor Draguet of Louvain has put us once more immensely in his debt by publishing, in text and French translation, the main Syriac version (*S*), along with four smaller Syriac recensions, of which one (*Sa*) is of considerable interest, and a lesser Greek collection (*Ga*) which has marked differences from the usual Greek corpus (*G*). Of this last he has studied four manuscripts (including Cromwell 14), two of which, one in Moscow ( $\xi$ ), and one in Venice ( $\beta$ ), show marked differences from the others and the published text and from each other, both in order and in content.<sup>2</sup> It is noticeable that the papyrus fragment, usually supported by  $\xi\beta$ , frequently confirms the *Sa* reading against that of *S* and the normal *G* ( $\gamma\kappa$ ). *S*, the main Syriac recension, contains all the elements of *G* except  $\lambda\acute{o}\gamma o i$  19 and 29 (the latter is also absent from  $\xi\beta$ ), and the Pseudo-Basilian piece, *Constitutiones Monasticae* I (éd. Garnier, ii. 767–75) which is added as  $\lambda\acute{o}\gamma o s$  30 in many Greek manuscripts, sometimes attributed to Basil, sometimes to Isaiah, though in fact, in spite of some superficial reminiscences of Isaiah's work, it cannot be attributed to either.<sup>3</sup> In addition, *S* opens with three pieces, of which *S* I and III are versions of the Macarian Homilies 19 and 3 (cf. Draguet, *Muséon* 83, 1970, pp. 483–96), while *S* II is a shorter version of the *Collation des douze anachorètes* of which P. Guy published the Greek text in *Anal. Boll.* 76 (1958), pp. 419–27.<sup>4</sup> At the end of the

<sup>1</sup> *L'Asceticon copte de l'abbé Isaïe* (Bibliothèque d'Études coptes, t. V, Cairo, 1956). See also *Coptic Studies in honor of W. E. Crum* (Boston, 1950), pp. 49–60.

<sup>2</sup> As I pointed out in *The Desert a City*, p. 74, this type of text is also found in a number of marginal emendations and additions in the Bodleian manuscript, Cromwell 14.

<sup>3</sup> I was certainly mistaken in saying in *The Desert a City*, p. 75, that 'its language and vocabulary seem to be that of Esaias'.

<sup>4</sup> Draguet has apparently overlooked one recorded manuscript. Dr. A. B.

Corpus, S XXVII–XXIX are three works of Evagrius, attributed in some manuscripts to him, but in others to Isaiah. Within the main body of the Corpus are two works hitherto unknown in the Greek Corpus—S VI, a very important small collection of *Apophthegmata* as related by Isaiah, to which we will return presently (Draguet has found the collection in Greek in §); and S XVI, an *Antirrhetikos* (scriptural replies to the onset of the passions) of which the only other known example, far more systematic, is among the works of Evagrius (Syriac text published by Frankenberg, pp. 472–545): this also is recorded by Draguet as found in a less complete form in Greek in β. Not infrequently, pieces which are separate in *G* are grouped together in *S*.<sup>1</sup> The chapter on ‘The Branches of Vice’ is found in its long form in *S*, and also in ξβ.<sup>2</sup> We are rather tantalized to learn that each of these two Greek manuscripts has a further collection of *Apophthegmata* within the Corpus, for which we must wait for the Göttingen edition, as they have no parallel in the Syriac.

We should note that the oldest manuscripts of *S*, A (dated A.D. 604) and D from which it was copied, so that it itself must be of sixth-century date, already attribute the corpus to ‘the blessed Isaiah the monk’. Abba Isaiah is also quoted by name at least three times in the ‘*Questions and Answers*’ of Varsanuphius and John. We shall return to this later.

To turn to the lesser Syriac recensions—*Sa* contains, in whole or in part, in a different order, S IV–VI, IX–XI, and XIII–XV (*G* 2–4, 7, 9, 15–16, 20–1). The oldest manuscripts of this recension (s and t) are of sixth-century date (one of them, t = Add. 12, 175, is dated A.D. 534), so they must be treated at least with respect. It is however to be noticed that no manuscript of this recension earlier than the ninth century (when the *S* recession was already well-known) attributes the works to Abba Isaiah. For s and t they are the works of ‘Egyptian fathers’, or ‘solitary brethren who were in the desert of Egypt’. Actually, this recension contains only one of the works in which Isaiah or his disciple Peter is named in *S* and *G*—*G* 21 = S XIV. Here *G* has ‘Ἐμπερωτήθη ὁ ἀββᾶς Ἡσαΐας. *S*, having mentioned Peter in the title, puts the opening in his

Osborne, who is working on a thesis on the *Liber Graduum*, pointed out to me in Kmosko’s introduction to that work (*Patrologia Syriaca*, iii, p. ccxciv) the account of Codex R, i.e. 180 of the Syrian Monastery of St. Mark in Jerusalem. The last four folia of this mutilated manuscript (of seventh to eighth century) contain, following on the *Liber Graduum*, the first five pieces of the *S* corpus, attributed as in *S* to the Abba Isaiah, but in a different order—I, IV, V, II, III.

<sup>1</sup> This misled me into saying, *ibid.*, that the ‘Give heed to thyself’ piece (*G* 27) is absent from the Syriac. It is in fact found (with a few paragraphs omitted), joined on to *G* 24, in S XXIV.

<sup>2</sup> Draguet states (v, p. 373) that the long form ‘n’a de parallèle grec complet qu’enξβ’. He has not noticed my recording, *op. cit.*, p. 81, n. 125, its occurrence, attributed to Mark the Monk, in Cod. Atheniensis 549, pp. 433–63.

mouth, 'I asked the Abba'. The opening of *Sa* represents simply 'Ἡρωτήθη γέρων. Here one would suppose the Isaiah-Peter attribution in *SG* to be original, and the anonymity of *Sa* to be secondary.

The other three Syriac recensions prove in fact to be variant versions of a single work, the 'De Virtutibus' (*G* 7A = *S* XIII. 10-27), found alongside the *Sa* version, *Sx* in all three of the best manuscripts, *stJ*, *Sy* in *t* only, *Sz* in *J* only. *Sx* and *Sy* place the chapter among or adjoining the works of Abba Moses: *Sz* attributes it to John the Solitary. It is also attributed to Moses in the lesser Greek recension, *Ga*, in the Sabaite collection of *Apophthegmata* (MS. Burney 50), in the Latin *L*<sup>1</sup> (MS. Darmstadt 1943), and in the Ethiopic *Collectio Monastica*. *Ga* (MS. Coislin 283) also attributes to Abba Moses *G* 16 = *S* XV (*Sa* 2 and 3), and *G* 3A = *S* X. 1-27 (*Sa* 7);<sup>1</sup> to Abba Macarius, *G* 3B = *S* X. 28-80 (*Sa* 8); and to Abba Ammonas *G* 27 = *S* XXIV. 2-18 (this attribution is found in a number of manuscripts, always with *τῆρου σεαυτὸν ἀκριβῶς* instead of *πρόσεχε σεαυτῷ*): Coislin 282 also attributes to Ammonas *G* 6 = *S* XIII. 1-9, and *G* 16 (as in *ξ*) = *S* XV).

Who are the Abba Isaiah and his disciple Peter to whom the Corpus is ascribed? Ever since the identification was proposed by G. Krüger in 1899, there has been general agreement among scholars that they are the Abba Isaiah the Egyptian and his disciple and successor Peter the Egyptian, of whom a glowing account is given in the *Life of Peter the Iberian*, which also relates Isaiah's death on 11 August A.D. 491.<sup>2</sup> The same Abba Isaiah is also mentioned frequently in the *Plerophories* of John Rufus, in the Letters of Severus of Antioch, in Zacharias' *Life of Severus*, in the *Chronicle* of Zacharias, and in the short *Life of Isaiah* surviving, like the other documents mentioned, in Syriac, and attributed to the same Zacharias Scholasticus. This last attributes to Isaiah writings which can with fair confidence be identified as our Corpus.

Draguet, while accepting this last identification, discounts the evidence of the *Life* as later hagiography, rejecting both its Zacharian authorship and its contemporary character. Basing his argument on the apophthegmatic collection *S* VI and certain other apophthegmata, and

<sup>1</sup> Coislin 283 also implicitly agrees with the fragmentary manuscript *u* (Add. 14,606) of *Sa* in attributing to Moses *Sa* 9 = *ξ*3 = *G* 4A + C = *S* XI. 1-76, 98-106, to which it adds *G* 7B = *S* XIII. 30-5.

<sup>2</sup> I accept, though still with some slight reserve, Devos's dating, in his article in *Anal. Boll.* 86 (1968), pp. 337-50, 'Quand Pierre l'Ibère vint-il à Jérusalem?', for the death of Isaiah and Peter the Iberian, as against my dating of A.D. 489 in *The Desert a City*, p. 104. Devos certainly seems to be right in placing the coming of Peter the Iberian to Jerusalem in A.D. 437-8, as against my A.D. 428 (op. cit., p. 87). I had misread *V. Petr. Ib.* to mean that both Pinianus and Passarian were still alive on Peter's arrival, and had supposed the writer to have misdated Melania's visit to Constantinople.

on the evidence of two layers within the *S* and *G* recensions (both of which recensions seem to come at the end of a long process in the formation of the Corpus, although *S* at least dates back in its present form to the sixth century), he would identify the author of the oldest layer with a fourth-century Scetiotte father, a disciple of Macarius the Egyptian, and would date the conversations recorded in *S* VI at about A.D. 400.

Professor Draguet and I seem constantly to be drawn independently to the study of the same sources—the same manuscripts—and to arrive at opposite conclusions. I am sorry once again to have to enter into controversy with him. At least we are in agreement, I believe, in recognizing the importance of the historical issues involved—and in our appreciation of the writer, ‘ce sage entre les sages par la netteté et la profondeur de sa vision chrétienne du monde et par sa connaissance du cœur de l’homme’.

I believe we have a cast-iron case, on the internal evidence of *S* VI itself, for a late fifth-century date for that document, and therefore implicitly for the Corpus as a whole. If that is so, the case against Krüger’s identification, and against the *Life of Isaiah*, loses all its sting. I propose to deal first, shortly, with the evidence as to the formation of the Corpus, then at greater length with *S* VI, then with the *Life of Isaiah*, and finally to add some words as to the significance of the Corpus and its place in history.

1. Draguet seems to have demonstrated one point: again and again, both in order and in division of chapters and in detail, *Sa* and *Ga* convict *S* and *G* of being later recensions (though Draguet agrees that in other cases *S* and *G* appear to have the more primitive text): also *Gξ* and *Gβ*, while differing often from each other, witness often to a more primitive form of the corpus than *Gγκ*. It is also to be noticed that the latter is the only full recension in which the *SaGa* elements are not concentrated, with very few intrusions, in the first half of the corpus.

Draguet would attribute to an earlier layer the portions of *S* (*SA*) represented in *Sa*, together with other portions (*SB*) which he regards as belonging to the same ‘couche’ though absent from *Sa*. Other portions, practically half the whole Corpus, he would classify as the work of quite a different, later writer (*SC*)—leaving a residue, *SD*, which he would hesitate to classify. He regards with caution, but does not completely reject, the suggestion that the compiler of the Corpus, in some form, and the writer of *SC*, may be identical.

For all Draguet’s great learning and considerable acumen, a subjective element is bound to enter into such classification. I myself would question the criteria on which he distinguishes between *SB* and *SC*;

for instance, in the kind of allegory which he is already to admit in *SB*, and that which he relegates to *SC*. Nor do I find certainty of any such incompatibility between *SA* and *SC* as Draguet assumes. Of alleged copticisms I am always suspicious<sup>1</sup> (although ready to admit that both Syriac versions were made from the Greek, he believes *Sa* was based on a much more Coptic form of the *κοινή*, deoptitized later by *G* and *S*). In one case, the use of *ἰσως*, which, as Draguet has failed to observe, seems to be used in our Corpus in a peculiar way, as a conjunction (followed by a subjunctive), and not as an ordinary adverb, and which he regards as belonging to the *SC* layer, I believe I can show a reasonable probability that it belongs to the *SA* layer, and that it is itself a copticism.<sup>2</sup>

Without a full critical edition of the Greek text, the problem of the development of the Isaian corpus cannot really be sorted out, and I do not propose to deal with it further here, except to say that, if indeed two layers are involved (and this is not improbable), and if the earlier layer is mainly represented by *Sa* (supported by *Ga*), we cannot overlook the absence of any mention of Isaiah or Peter in *Gal* (*Γαλ* which does name Isaiah as the author of *S X* and *V*, is really a different recension) or in the oldest manuscripts of *Sa*, either in the text or in the titles of the works—I have already pointed out their attribution to Egyptian Fathers (which would not exclude Isaiah and Peter), or in some cases to Moses, Macarius, or Ammonas. In the rest of the Corpus, Isaiah and Peter are frequently named, in the text as well as in the titles. The natural conclusion would seem to be that, if two layers of authorship are indeed involved, Isaiah and Peter are responsible for the authorship of the later, not the earlier layer, and Peter or a disciple of his is the compiler of the whole Corpus. I propose to refer to this again towards the end of the present article.

2. Supposing Peter had started to make and publish an ascetic corpus during his master Isaiah's lifetime, the latter would naturally have insisted on his own part remaining anonymous: it could be headed 'Egyptian Fathers', and there would be no objection to including edifying works of earlier ascetics. So the compiling of the Greek that lies behind the *Sa* collection (the Syriac version dates back at least to A.D. 534) might already be Peter's work—although in *S VI* at least we shall see evidence that *S* and *Gξ* are generally more reliable evidence for the original text, and *Sa* is secondary—curtailed and altered.

<sup>1</sup> It is hard, in any case, to see why (pp. 46\*-48\*) the Greek words *μετάνοια*, *πολιτεία*, *φύσις*, *ὅλως*, are evidence of Copticism when transliterated by *Sa*, but not when translated by *S*.

<sup>2</sup> See Appendix I.

The discovery of this chapter of Apophthegmata in Greek and Syriac is an important event. For it proves, as Draguet points out,<sup>1</sup> to be one of the sources lying behind the *Alphabetical Collection*, wherein all these stories are to be found, though often curtailed and badly mangled. But here the general narrator is speaking throughout in the first person—'Abba John told me', etc. *Gξ*, supported by *S*, clearly identifies this general narrator as our Abba Isaiah—"Τοῦ αὐτοῦ λόγος." The heading of *Sa*, in spite of Draguet's rendering, 'Discours du Sénior', does not necessarily imply the definite article in Greek, and should rather be rendered *ρήματα γέροντος* (to which the manuscript adds *Εἶπε γέρον*). But in spite of the anonymity in *Sa*, and whatever its explanation, it is reasonable to accept Isaiah as the narrator. He opens, 'Brethren, what I have heard and seen with the old men, these things I tell you, taking away nothing from them and adding nothing.' But actually all he tells us is what he has heard, not what he has seen. His informants appear to be six in number, all of them telling him of an earlier generation.<sup>2</sup> It will be necessary for us to take each in turn.

A (Draguet vi. 2). 'Abba John told me'—about Anoub and Poemen when they and their brothers withdrew to Terenuthis on the first devastation of Scetis by the Mazices. This is *A.P. G* (or as Draguet would say, *Alph*) Anoub 1. 'And they spent all their time in peace, and died' (or 'were perfected'—but *pace* Draguet, the *Sa* word, no less than that used in *S*, most naturally means 'died') 'in a good old age'. Draguet on p. 88 says 'Le Jean qui raconte à Isaïe les débuts du groupe Anoub-Poimen est vraisemblablement Jean Colobos. Celui, né vers 399' (*sic!*—a misprint for 339, but repeated on p. 29, n. 1), 'mourut vers 409 à Clysma; il avait quitté Scété, lieu de la conversation d'Isaïe, entre 395 et 407'. There is further elaboration on the same lines on p. 29, n. 1. Actually there is nothing to be said, *pace* Tillemont, for dating back the first devastation to 395. It certainly had not occurred when Theophilus' encyclical against Anthropomorphism arrived there in 399, and it would not have gone unrecorded among all the stirring and tragic events of the years that followed. 407 is the earliest date for it (fixed by a reference in Augustine, *ep.* iii. 1) rather than the latest. John's withdrawal from Scetis to Clysma was in fact, according to our only sources for it, on the occasion of the same devastation, and he never returned to Scetis, dying, according to the same source, in 409. So in any case

<sup>1</sup> I had already pointed this out, after a somewhat cursory inspection of the Syriac manuscripts in the British Museum, in *The Desert a City*, p. 80, n. 117—cf. p. 18, n. 66, and p. 74.

<sup>2</sup> The Solesmes translators have added this chapter to their corpus as *Logos* 30, using the Greek text of ξ as published by Draguet.



his conversation with Isaiah after that devastation could not have taken place in Scetis. Nor does our story read as if it were written within two years of that event. John Colobos was surely not the recounter of this story, which reads most naturally as written after Poemen's death—and that probably did not take place until the 450s. Poemen survived Arsenius (see below), and was visited by a Syrian John, 'who was exiled (clearly after Chalcedon) by the Emperor Marcian' (G Poemen 183), and, except that he could not speak Coptic, might well be Isaiah's informant. The omission of 'the first' in *Sal*<sup>2</sup> cannot be interpreted as taking us back to a time before the second devastation (dated by White in 434).

B (Draguet 3). 'Paphnutius told me, "All the time of the life of the old men, Abba Anoub and Abba Poemen, I used to visit them twice a month—and my cell was twelve miles from them".' Draguet, p. 88, says that Paphnutius 'ne peut guère être que le Paphnuce Cephalas de Pallade et le Paphnuce Bubalis de Cassien'! But Paphnutius was an extremely common name. Poemen and his brothers certainly did live in Scetis before the first devastation. But Paphnutius Bubalis was more than ninety years old when Cassian knew him, and could not have spoken thus of Anoub and Poemen as apparently his seniors. Isaiah's informant, who survived the brothers, had probably known them, not in Scetis, but in their later unspecified abode in Egypt. G Paphnutius 3, which reproduces the present story, is already embarrassed by the apparent anachronism if the great Paphnutius was involved, and turns it round, 'Abba Poemen said that Abba Paphnutius used to say . . .'.

Once more the implication is that Anoub and Poemen are already dead.

No explanation has yet been found why the appendage (3b) about Elisha and the Shulamite, should be attributed to Cronius in G Cronius 1.

c (Draguet 4A). 'Abba Amoun told me that "I said to the old man Abba Poemen . . .". This, without the 'me', is found in G Amoun Nitr. 2b. But Draguet agrees (loc. cit.), 'Amoun ne peut être identifié avec précision. Il n'est en tout cas pas Amoun le Nitriote contemporain d'Antoine.' What is certain is that Poemen, the old man, speaks to Amoun as to a young man—'for youth needs to be on its guard'. A possible identification might be with the Amoun of Rhaithou who visited Sisoës in the latter's old age at Clysmā (G Sisoës 17 and 26—see below).

D (Draguet 4B). 'I said to Abba Peter the (disciple) of Abba Lot—and he answered that "Abba Lot said . . ." (see G Petr. Pion. 2). The



text does not make it clear whether 'I' means Isaiah himself or his last informant Amoun; or later whether it is Lot answering Peter or Peter answering his questioner. *Sa* alone makes an inversion, 'I and Abba Lot asked Abba Peter and I said . . .': this is most unlikely to be correct—the translator may have misread “μετὰ τοῦ ἀββᾶ Λώτ” for “τῷ τοῦ ἀββᾶ Λώτ”. Draguet, however, says (loc. cit.): ‘L’état des sources est trop confus pour qu’on puisse identifier l’abba Pierre que, selon *Sa*, Isaïe et Lot interrogent de concert. Si ce Lot est celui d’*Alph*, rien ne s’oppose à ce qu’il ait pris part à une conversation à Scété vers 400.’ But why should our other witnesses have added another step to the pedigree of the main saying? It is far more likely that *Sa* should have done some telescoping. Of Lot little is known. If it be the same, we find him in G Joseph 6 and 7 questioning Joseph of Panephris, the speaker in Cassian’s *Collations* 16 and 17—We may note that Poemen also is found (G Jos. 3) going to Panephris during his time at Scetis, to question Joseph. But in G Lot 1, Lot is living by the marsh of Arsinoe, and goes to consult Arsenius about an Origenist monk. Geographically, this suggests the time (see below) when Arsenius had left Scetis, and was at Troe by Memphis. Lot would hardly have gone all the way from Arsinoe to Scetis.

Once more, though the evidence is less clear, Isaiah’s informants appear to be the disciples of those who had been among the younger monks in Scetis before the first devastation.

E (Draguet 5). ‘When I was sitting once in the cell of Abba Abraham the (disciple) of Abba Agathon, there came to him a brother saying to him, “Father . . .”, and the old man answered him, “. . . For my father Abba Agathon stayed once with a certain brother called Macarius in the Thebaid . . .”.’ Although G Agathon 1 makes Peter of Lot still the speaker (thus proving the dependence of the *Alphabetical Collection* on the Isaiah collection)—and in other ways makes havoc of the story—we may assume safely that ‘I’ here means Isaiah himself. Abraham is described as already an old man whom younger monks would come to consult. His master Agathon seems already to have been an advanced monk—on whose lips brother Macarius would hang—at his time in the Thebaid, which we may assume to have been subsequent to his time in Scetis. The series of anecdotes about Agathon, told by Abraham, which follow, give the basis of G Agathon 2, 12, 23, 24, 29, 3, 8, 9, 10, 16. At least one of them, 5C, shows Agathon in Scetis already with disciples, including Abraham. A story, which appears as N495 in Guy’s analysis (*Recherches*, p. 67) of the unpublished portion of Coislin. 126 (Draguet refers to it, p. 48, n. 2), confirms this: Abraham in Scetis reports to Poemen something which has just happened between Abba Agathon and Abba Heraclius. G Poemen 67 also shows Abraham ‘of Abba

Agathon' questioning Poemen. Two other apophthegmata show Agathon as already an Abba, but definitely of the younger generation. In G Poemen 61, Poemen gives Abba Joseph his reasons for calling Agathon 'Abba' though he is still young (*νεώτερος*)—'His mouth has made him to be called Abba.' G Elias 2 seems to take us away from Scetis—'The old men were saying to Abba Elias *in Egypt* about Abba Agathon, "He is a good Abba". And the old man says to them, "For his generation (*κατὰ τὴν γενεὰν αὐτοῦ*) he is good . . . : *κατὰ δὲ τοὺς ἀρχαίους*, I have seen a man in Scetis . . ."'

Draguet, convinced (p. 88) that Agathon 'doit appartenir à une génération dont l'apogée se situerait vers 350', assumes (p. 48, n. 2) that both these apophthegmata must refer to a different Agathon. But Draguet himself has given cogent reasons (p. 64) for believing that the mention of Amoun in G Agathon 16 (not 5 as stated on p. 48, n. 2), which suggested to Evelyn White (p. 50—but he is far more hesitant than Draguet implies) that Agathon was a contemporary of Amoun of Nitria, is due to a false reading, and only Agathon was originally mentioned.

It will perhaps be best to quote Draguet's reasons for concluding, all the same, that Agathon did belong to this earlier generation. On p. 48, n. 2, he states:

Les indications, qui se veulent précises, de *Alph*, Arsène 42 (PG 65, 108), que Bousset accepte (*Apophthegmata*, p. 64), fixent aux environs de 360–365 l'arrivée d'Arsène à Scété; or, selon *Alph*, Agathon 28 (PG 65, 116), les séniors de Daniel étaient disciples d'Agathon avant l'établissement d'Arsène à Scété, ce qui implique que, quelque quarante ans avant ca. 400, Agathon était un ancien. Agathon est décédé lorsqu' Abraham parle à Isaïe—; ce pourrait être depuis pas mal d'années, si l'on pouvait mettre en relation avec la mort d'Agathon le passage de ses disciples à Arsène. Prises ensemble, ces données mettraient, une fois encore, aux environs de 400 les entretiens d'Isaïe avec les séniors de VI.

On p. 42, n. 3, he writes, 'Poimen a survécu à Arsène, mort ca. 430 (Bousset, *Apophthegmata*, p. 63)'. We will deal with the last point first, then with G Arsenius 42 (the main source for the chronology of Arsenius), and finally with G Agathon 28.

Bousset, pp. 63–4, reads the *Vita Euthymii*, of which he had access only to an unsatisfactory text, to mean that Arsenius was already dead when pilgrims from Egypt told Euthymius about him some time between the Councils of Ephesus and Chalcedon. In view of the fifteen years given in G Arsenius 42 as the period between Arsenius' leaving Scetis and his death, he finds that this brings us back to somewhere near 410 (near the date for the first devastation of Scetis), and remembers

Arsenius' saying (G Arsenius 21), 'The world has lost Rome, and the monks Scetis.' He does not mention either Tillemont's dating of 395, or the 407 implied in Augustine. He seems to make no mention of the earlier chronology of G Arsenius 42, except to record its statement that Arsenius had been at the court of Theodosius as tutor to Arcadius and Honorius. As Honorius was born in 384, and Arcadius in 377-8, this generally accepted tradition means that Arsenius can hardly have fled to Scetis before 394—we note that neither Cassian nor Palladius mention him; and if Arsenius died in or before 430, the chronology of G Arsenius 42 would be quite impossible. Draguet's strange date of about 360-5 for Arsenius' arrival in Scetis is coupled with complete silence about the period at the court of Theodosius—though this tradition is far less likely to be in error than the period of forty years attributed to his stay in Scetis. But actually Bousset has misled both himself and Draguet as to the evidence of the *Vita Euthymii*. In Schwartz's text, *Kyrrillos von Skythopolis*, p. 34, 10-15, it is stated that "τὰ κατ' αὐτὸν τὸν μέγαν Ἀρσένιον τὸν . . . ἐν τῇ κατ' Αἴγυπτον ἐρήμῳ κατὰ τὸν αὐτὸν χρόνον ταῖς ἀρεταῖς ἀπαστράπτοντα ἡδέως ἤκουεν ὁ μέγας Εὐθύμιος"—in other words, Arsenius was *still alive and flourishing* when pilgrims from Egypt brought Euthymius news about him in the 430s. The dating in G Arsenius 42 becomes at least possible, as Evelyn White takes it—forty years, 354-94, until his leaving the court of Theodosius; forty in Scetis, 394-434, ending in the second devastation; ten in Troë opposite Memphis, 434-44; three at Canopus, 444-7; and a final two back at Troë, 447-9. The only difficulty about this dating is that G Arsenius 42 omits any mention of an earlier leaving of Scetis after the first devastation, or of an earlier time in Canopus under Theophilus (clearly after the first devastation), when the Roman senatorial lady paid him her disastrous visit (G Arsenius 28). But if he returned quite soon to Scetis, the omission in a summary chapter is perfectly intelligible. Poemen survived Arsenius (G Arsenius 41). But we have already seen other evidence suggesting that Poemen did in fact survive until the 450s.

There remains the question of G Agathon 28, which has been assumed by both Bousset (p. 64) and Draguet (p. 48, n. 2) to mean that Agathon already had disciples who left him for Arsenius on Arsenius' first arrival in Scetis. "Ἐλεγεν ὁ ἀββᾶς Δανιήλ, ὅτι πρὶν ἔλθῃ ὁ ἀββᾶς Ἀρσένιος πρὸς τοὺς πατέρας μου, καὶ αὐτοὶ ἔμειναν μετὰ τοῦ ἀββᾶ Ἀγάθωνος." What they have not noticed is the next sentence but one—"Συνέβη δὲ ὅλους τοὺς μαθητὰς αὐτοῦ πλύνειν τὰ θρῦα εἰς τὸν ποταμόν." There was certainly no river within twenty miles of Scetis. So we learn that Daniel's 'fathers', Alexander and Zoilus the Pharanites (cf. G Arsenius 32 and 43: Daniel also was a Pharanite—G Daniel 7) were disciples first of Agathon, then

of Arsenius, somewhere close to the Nile, and *not* in Scetis. We have already seen evidence of Agathon's moving from Scetis to 'Egypt' (G Elias 2) and the Thebaid (the present chapter, S VI 5A. b). If Agathon settled with Alexander and Zoilus at the Rock of Troë some time after the first devastation of Scetis, and Arsenius came there in 434 after the second devastation, all our evidence seems to fall into place. We do not know the date of Agathon's death. But the *καὶ αὐτοί* of G Agathon 28 *might* mean that Arsenius also was with Agathon for a time at Troë. In any case, we may suppose that Agathon either died or went away to the Thebaid some time before Arsenius' move to Lower Egypt about 444. He was probably younger than Arsenius. There is no proof that Alexander and Zoilus were ever in Scetis: G Arsenius 26, travellers visiting Arsenius on their way from Alexandria to the Thebaid, clearly belongs to the Troë period. G Arsenius 34 shows Arsenius leaving Troë on the occasion of a barbarian raid, probably in 444 (the Timothy, Archbishop of Alexandria, whose uncle visited Arsenius before and after the move, must surely be Timothy 'the Cat', not the fourth-century Archbishop), and staying *ἐν τοῖς κάτω μέρεσι*. G Arsenius 32 shows him troubled there, and sending his disciples back to Troë, while he himself went down by ship to the region of Alexandria (probably Canopus); then finally returning to the Rock of Troë, probably in 447.

Agathon, then, probably did not die before 434. His disciple Abraham, who had already been with him in Scetis, would count as an old man in the 450s or later—not before.<sup>1</sup>

F (Draguet 6: G 'Pistos'). "*Εἰπέ μοι ἀδελφὸς πιστὸς ὅτι Ἀπήλθομεν ἐπὶ ἀναχωρηταὶ πρὸς τὸν ἀββᾶν Σισῶην οἰκοῦντα ἐν τῇ νήσῳ τοῦ Κλύσματος, καὶ εἶπε, Συγχωρήσατέ μοι, ἰδιώτης ἄνθρωπός εἰμι· ἀλλὰ παρέβαλλον πρὸς τὸν ἀββᾶν Ὁρ καὶ τὸν ἀββᾶν Ἀθρέ . . . Ταῦτα εἶπέ μοι ὁ ἀκούσας ἀδελφὸς παρὰ τοῦ ἀββᾶ Σισῶου.*" Draguet on pp. 73–5, using a number of arguments including the absence of 6A (the story about Or and Athre) from *Sa*, would treat 6A as intruded from another source, and reduce the original chapter to a minimum. I do not propose to answer him now in detail, but will content myself with pointing out the consistency of this section with the rest of S VI. But it is worth noticing the 'a faithful brother' of G, with no definite article. Some but not all

<sup>1</sup> Draguet is, by the way, probably wrong (pp. 71–2, 5F. q, n. 1) in making Agathon and not Zeno the subject of N 509 (Guy, p. 68), on the basis of Wake 67 (Christ Church, Oxford) alone among the known manuscripts. The stories immediately following all concern Zeno, and the first of them, N 510, appears in Wake 67 at least as definitely a commentary on N 509—*Τινὲς γοῦν τῶν παραπλησίων ποτὲ μεινάντων τοῦ ἁγίου Ζήνωνος*.

the manuscripts of the *Alphabetical Collection* have ὁ ἀββᾶς Πιστός (hence its appearance under the heading Pistus as a proper name), and the *S* text implies a Greek “Ὁὗτος ὁ πιστός (or ἀληθινός)”. The last sentence of the preceding section, 5G. b, reads rather like a conclusion. So Draguet argues that the definite article here is original, and evidence that 6A has been brought in from some other source in which another brother had just been mentioned; and that the Greek, realizing its impropriety here, has removed it. But in fact, 5G. b is not necessarily final, and is so short that ‘This faithful one’ might still refer back to the Abraham of 5G. a. This is no doubt what the Syriac intended, perhaps wishing to identify Agathon’s disciple with Abraham the disciple of Sisoës who figures prominently in G Sisoës 12, 16, 25, 27, 46, 50. G is more likely to be correct here, and *S* tendentious.

Or and Athre do indeed take us back at last to the earlier generations—though outside the Sisoës *Apophthegmata* they seem to belong to Nitria rather than to Scetis (and we must remember that Sozomen, and perhaps Evagrius, seem to use Scetis in a wider geographical sense, to include Nitria and Cellia). Of Sisoës we read in G Sisoës 28, ‘A brother asked Abba Sisoës, “How is it that you left Scetis, when you were with Abba Or, and came and settled here?”’ He explained that when Scetis began to be too crowded, and he heard that Abba Antony had fallen asleep, he withdrew to St. Antony’s Interior Mountain, and found things quiet there, and settled for a little time. How long? Seventy-two years. That would mean from about 357 to 429. Subsequently in the infirmity of old age he grudgingly consented to move down to Clysma (Suez), where he was always longing to be back in the desert. Here Amoun of Rhaithou and others came to visit him (G Sisoës 17, 21, 26, 50), and here too came Isaiah’s informant with his fellow anchorites, no doubt some time in the 430s. As we know from Cyril of Scythopolis, centenarians were not a rare phenomenon among the ascetic saints.

To sum up—all Isaiah’s informants, John, Paphnutius, Amoun, Peter, Abraham, and the ‘faithful brother’ of the last section, appear to be speaking from a time well on into the fifth century, after the deaths of the fathers of whom they speak (Poemen in the 450s, Agathon and Sisoës not before the 430s): Lot is the most elusive, but we have seen evidence which would suggest a date in the 430s for him also. Apart from mention of Poemen’s moving from Scetis, the only story explicitly placed in Scetis is that of Agathon and Martyrius and the piece of nitre—a story which shows accurate knowledge of the topography and conditions of Scetis (*Sa* emasculates the story by leaving out all these crisp details—and yet Draguet, p. 53, 5B. b, nn. 1 and 2, suggests that *Sa* is here the original, and these details have come from some second source!).

The faithful brother who tells about Sisoës places his interview with him at *Clysma*—in the 430s (see above).

*Sa* is, as I have said, a witness to be respected, and may often in detail retain the best text—and sometimes may indicate to us the probable original construction of the works. But its omissions and alterations, and even its anonymity, are consistent with its character as part of a selective collection of *Ascetica*—not primarily a corpus of the works of a particular author. Even so, it is committed in this chapter to a date not only after the first devastation of Scetis in 407 (VI. 2A), but after the death of Agathon (5C)—which we have shown to have been not earlier than the 430s—and almost certainly after the death of Poemen (2G, 3A) in the 450s.

If, then, we can rely upon this chapter, the Abba Isaiah gathered his information not earlier than the 450s, as we should expect if he was in fact that Egyptian Abba Isaiah who also had a disciple Peter, and who died in Palestine probably in 491.

3. Before describing and discussing the *Life of Isaiah* ('of Gaza'), it will be well to summarize what we know of him from other sources. He was an Egyptian (*Life of Peter the Iberian*, ed. Raabe, 101. 23). He visited an aged monk, Paul, in the Thebaid, about twenty years before Chalcedon—therefore about 431 (*Plerophories*, xii). He had moved up to Palestine by 452–3, when he set out at dawn from his cell to come down to Maiouma to report a vision to Peter the Iberian at that time installed there as bishop (*Pler.* lxxv). By the autumn of 485, when Peter the Iberian settled for three years at Thavatha (*V. Petr. Ib.*, ed. Raabe, 100–4), Isaiah was installed at Beit Daltha, four miles away, as a recluse controlling a *coenobium* (*Pler.* xlviii) through his second and disciple, the priest Peter, whom he made his sole channel of communication with the world (*V. Petr. Ib.*, loc. cit.: *P.O.* viii, pp. 164–5). Through the next three years Isaiah and Peter the Iberian continued in the closest contact with daily exchange of food, etc., and it was probably in the autumn of 488 (12th Indiction, *Pler.* xii—but this might also mean 473–4) that Isaiah told Peter of his interview with Paul of the Thebaid long ago. The writer of the *Plerophories* and of the *Life of Peter the Iberian* claims to have been in contact with the great ascetic Abba Isaiah from the time of his own flight to Palestine from Antioch in 479 (*Pler.* xxii; cf. *V. Petr. Ib.* 81–2). During the early years of the Henotikon, the more extreme opponents of Chalcedon in Egypt, led by Theodore, Bishop of Antinoë, and John, Bishop of Sebennytis, seem constantly to have looked to Isaiah and Bishop Peter for counsel and direction (*Zacharias, Chronicle*, v. 9, vi. 1; *Vita Severi*, p. 78: Severus, *P.O.* xii. 2, *Ep.* xxxviii, speaks of the very few who checked Chalcedon at this time—Peter the Iberian, Theodore of Antinoë, and Isaiah 'the very famous,

the statue of philosophy and of life in God'). In the autumn of 488, Cosmas the *spatharius*, after an unsuccessful mission to secure unity in Egypt, returned by way of Palestine with orders to bring Isaiah and Bishop Peter to the capital. But Isaiah excused himself on the ground of sickness, while Peter, forewarned, escaped to Phoenicia (Zach. *Chr.* vi. 3; *V. Petr. Ib.*, 103; cf. *Pler.* xxvii)—in the following year, the Prefect Arsenius did send a party of the dissident Egyptian monks to discussions in Constantinople; but Theodore of Antinoe managed to withdraw from it (Zach. *Chr.* vi. 4). After Pentecost, 489, Peter received news that he was excused attendance at Constantinople, and made a somewhat leisurely return to Palestine, finally settling in the autumn of 490 on the seaside near Jamnia, where he received news, confirmed a few days later by the arrival of Isaiah's disciple Peter, of Isaiah's death on 11 August 491 (*V. Petr. Ib.* 124-6). His own death followed on the night leading to Sunday 4 December (*ibid.* 145).

Zacharias the Scholasticus of Gaza was the probable author of an Ecclesiastical History of the years 450-91, which is summarized in books 3-6 of the *Chronicle* which survives in Syriac under his name, and from which we have quoted. He also wrote somewhat later—during Severus' tenure of the Patriarchate of Antioch—a *Life of Severus*, from which also we have quoted, and in which he speaks of having written an account of the virtues of Peter the Iberian and of Isaiah the great Egyptian ascetic (*P.O.* ii. 83). *Plerophories* lxxiii gives his account of his vision, while a student at Beirut, of Isaiah whom he knew, having often seen him.

The *Life of Isaiah* (published by Brooks in C.S.C.O. *Scriptores Syri*, ser. 3, xxv) opens, 'I have joined, as third to the histories before told, Isaiah the second prophet of this our generation, who in faith and in orthodoxy and in polity was partner in everything to Peter and Theodore those famous high-priests.' But of this trilogy the first two works are lost, except for the last few words of a *Life of Peter the Iberian* (quite distinct from that published by Raabe) which precede the *Life of Isaiah* in the oldest and best of the two manuscripts. The *Life of Theodore of Antinoe* must have been lost very early. For the next paragraph in the *Life of Isaiah* is a gloss compensating for the loss with a summary account of Theodore. It concludes, 'But this Abba Isaiah is he whose is that *Book of admonition*. For these three blessed ones were at one time, this blessed Peter, and this Theodore, and the Abba Isaiah. And this history also was written by Zacharias the Scholasticus, who wrote the *Ecclesiasticum*.' Though these words do not come from the pen of the original Greek writer, their meaning at first sight at least seems unmistakable—that this Abba Isaiah was in fact the author of our



ascetic corpus, and that his biographer was the ecclesiastical historian of 450–91 from whose work we have quoted, and the writer of the *Life of Severus* in which he seems to refer to his having written these two short lives of Peter and Isaiah. The plan of the trilogy would occur naturally to one who was a close friend and follower of Severus (cf. the quotation from his letters above): his omission to mention the more distant Theodore in a chance reference to the other two in the *Life of Severus* need not be treated as of great significance.

After the conventional comparison with Antony and Paul, and contrast of the bodily and spiritual nationality (Egypt and Jerusalem), the author describes summarily Isaiah's Egyptian upbringing and coenobitic training, and his withdrawal, in obedience to the command, 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy mind, and thy neighbour as thyself', into the solitude of the interior desert (Scetis may be implied, but is not named: and we remember that *Plerophories* xii shows him present in the *Thebaid* in 431). Even there he finds himself too popular, and moves up to Palestine in search of *ξενιτεία*. After visiting the Holy Places, he settles in the desert near Eleutheropolis—and the *Life* becomes less impersonal, as we should expect if Zacharias of Gaza is indeed the author. We may suppose that it is to this period that belongs his visit (*Pler.* lxxv) to Peter the Iberian at Maiouma in 452–3. The visits of two *scholastici*, Nestorius the *βουλευτής* (a Nestorius is known as a disciple of Procopius of Gaza: it is not a name that would have been selected by a later 'hagiographer'!), and Dionysius (known to us also from *V. Petr. Ib.* 100–1, the biographer of Isaiah claims to be recounting what Dionysius himself told him), show us Isaiah still in unrestricted converse with his visitors. It is only after this, when he moved down to build a monastery in the region of Gaza (no doubt at Beit Daltha), that he enclosed himself in one of its cells, and would hold direct converse with none save Peter, the chief of his disciples (himself also Egyptian in body, Jerusalemite in Spirit), and with him 'after the nightly canon and service of God and the morning lauds, until the ninth hour only'. When some people came to him later than this, he had foreseen it, and left with his disciple gifts equal to their numbers, so that his disciple should not need to trouble him after the ninth hour. So *spudaei* of a church on the Gaza sea-coast told the biographer how, when they arrived after the ninth hour to question him (as they also questioned Peter the Iberian) about the fear of a pagan revival with the revolt of Illus and Pamprepus (c. A.D. 484), they found the disciple waiting for them with the Saint's answer, and a basket containing gifts for each of them. The spiritual unity between Isaiah and Bishop Peter is described in terms which remind us of the passage in

the *Life of Peter the Iberian* describing their intercourse between 485 and 488. When the question was raised among Palestinian monks about the consubstantiality of Our Lord's Body with ours, the same unequivocal answer was received from them both.<sup>1</sup>

A further example is given in the case of a dispute over canons (surely not here musical or liturgical canons) dividing the party in Alexandria, which was submitted to their decision. This involved a visit to Isaiah of an Egyptian monastic group headed by John, Archimandrite and Bishop of Sebennyitis. Isaiah must surely receive such a party to direct colloquy. So rather than appear as a respecter of persons, for the days of their visit only he opened his door to all and sundry.

There follows an account from Aeneas the sophist of Gaza, reported to the biographer by one of Aeneas' pupils, how though Isaiah was quite unversed in pagan teaching, Aeneas would often consult him on problems of Plato, Aristotle, or Plotinus, and get from him the interpretation and the Christian answer: he was a man who had learned all from God, about the creation of things, and the *naturalium theoria*, and the *theoria* of divine theology, so that his knowledge did not come second to that of any learned philosopher: 'and many writings were made by him concerning instruction and the rest of the monastic polity'. Even Draguet agrees that this refers to the ascetic corpus that he has edited; so that if the *Life* is genuine, the corpus is the work of 'Isaiah of Gaza'.

Bosporius, who was later Bishop of Sinope, but was then *scrinarius* of the prefects' office, told the biographer how he had wanted to ask Isaiah whether he ought to get married, and whether it was 'the last times', but had received the answers by message through Peter before asking.

In conclusion we return to the three heroes, 'whose politics I have written to the best of my power, partly from what I have heard from other reliable witnesses, and partly from experiences which I myself shared'. There follows an account, bearing out, with some details added, what we have already found in Zacharias' *Chronicle* and in the *Life of Peter the Iberian*, of how each of the three avoided obeying Zeno's summons to the capital. There is a summary statement of Isaiah's death, leaving his disciple Peter his heir and second. Then 'thou hast the histories of these three illustrious who have been in our time, which we have written to the glory of the holy and consubstantial Trinity'—and a dedication to Misael the chamberlain, whom we know from the Letters

<sup>1</sup> We know from Zacharias, *Chron.* iii. 10, that this question was raised very quickly after Chalcedon, by John the Rhetorician, and received the same answer from Peter the Iberian. Draguet errs in suggesting an echo here of the later controversy between Severus and Julian. Cf. Timothy Aelurus, *J.T.S.* Oct. 1970, p. 351.

of Severus and other sources to have occupied that office some time between 492 and 518.

How different subjective impressions can be! To me this work bears as clearly as any the stamp of genuineness. For Draguet (p. 107\*), 'la *ViIs* n'est pas l'œuvre historique d'un biographe sur laquelle l'histoire elle-même pourrait faire fond, mais une composition qui ressortit de bout en bout au genre hagiographique'. But what has been obvious throughout his argument is that he has treated this from the beginning as a foregone conclusion. For instance, in all the parallels where *ViIs* and the other documents we have quoted (*V. Petr. Ib.*, *Plerophories*, *Zach. Chron.*, *V. Sev.*) cover the same ground and, as I should say, confirm each other, as documents of equal value, Draguet takes it for granted that the other documents must be sources employed by *ViIs* (pp. 102\*–105\*).<sup>1</sup> The 'hagiographical' character of the *Life* is

<sup>1</sup> Draguet can make some strange mistakes: on p. 104\*, *Pseudo-Zacharie*, he writes, 'A son tour, la *ViIs* enchérit sur la chronique. Ainsi, elle fait écrire par Isaïe des lettres de communion à l'empereur (*ViIs*, p. 19, 9 ss)'. Actually, the correct reference is p. 10, 9 ss. But in any case, neither the Syriac nor Brooks's Latin translation speak of letters of communion. They speak of Isaiah's consenting to honour the king 'communione litterarum' (Brooks)—exchange of letters or perhaps more simply and accurately, 'an answer by letter'—a very different matter.

It will be as well to list here some other mistakes and oversights which need to be pointed out, without obtruding them into our main argument:

(a) In this story of Cosmas' mission, Draguet treats the introduction of Theodore of Antioch as gratuitous, without noticing its confirmation in *Zach. Chron.* vi. 4.

(b) Draguet repeatedly (pp. 93\* and 103\*) calls Isaiah's monastery near Gaza a *lavra*, whereas in *Plerophories* xlviii it is definitely called a coenobium (the word is transliterated into Syriac). This need not surprise us in view of the relation in the next century between Varsanuphius and John and their coenobium at Thavatha. But in the present case, while it is nowhere stated whether Isaiah was a priest, the fact that the priest Peter would not exert his priesthood until Isaiah's death may suggest that Isaiah was in fact a priest, and led the liturgical life of his community, though otherwise withdrawn into his cell. This conviction that we are dealing with a *lavra*, where the solitary would only meet at the week-end, has led Draguet into a further error in translation and comment on *S VIII. 11* (p. 112), n. 1, 'avant le moment'] c.-à-d. avant le samedi, jour où les solitaires se rencontrent; cette précision, omise en ξ comme en γ, γ change la portée du précepte'. Actually γ does here give πρὸ τῆς ὥρας—of which the Syriac phrase here used is an exact translation; on its two other occurrences, *S XII, 2* and *42*, Draguet himself renders it 'avant l'heure'. Incidentally, Draguet has not noticed, as Avgoustinos did, that *S VIII. 10*, πρὸς μίαν δὲ ἑβδομάδα ποιῆσατε εἰς τὸ μαγειρεῖον, provides in itself a strong argument against placing Isaiah in Egypt. Cassian, *Inst.* iv. 19–21, describes this weekly rotation for the kitchen in the coenobia of 'Mesopotamia, Palestine and Cappadocia and all the East', but goes on in c. 22 to say expressly that this did not apply to Egypt, where one brother was appointed as whole-time chef.

(c) p. 104\*. Draguet has misconstrued the time at which, according to *ViIs*,

constantly asserted, but such proof as is offered always seems to involve a *petitio principii*: and this supposed 'hagiographical' character is itself given as a ground for rejecting the Zacharian authorship (cf. p. 108\*, 'L'authenticité zacharienne est pourtant incompatible—avec le fait littéraire qui vient d'être établi: le caractère hagiographique du document'; p. 112\*, 3. 'Exclusion de l'authenticité zacharienne par le genre hagiographique'; especially n. 5 'L'élément [6] de la section Gaza, qui attribue formellement à Isaïe des écrits ascétiques, partage éminemment le caractère hagiographique de l'ensemble de la *ViIs*'; p. 118\*, 3. 'Cadre suspect d'un document hagiographique. Notre analyse générale de la *ViIs* a établi...'). In attempting to counter the argument from the dedication to Misael (which he suggests may have been borrowed from some source) he adds (p. 113\*), 'le traitement très libre que la *ViIs* fait de ses sources suffit à nous mettre en garde'. But of course, if the Misael ascription is genuine, the 'sources' are not sources, but contemporary corroborative documents. Incidentally, the reference on p. (9) 19 to 'Zeno qui religiose vitam finivit' suggests a date for the writing not very long after that emperor's death. The evidence of the apparent ascription of the *ViIs* to Zacharias on p. (3) 19 is hardly lessened in value by its coming in a gloss (we should not expect it to be the author's own statement), and Draguet's attempt on p. 109\* to argue that it need not mean what it seems obviously to say, is surely special pleading too blatant to need an answer. This ascription, confirmed by the reference in the *Life of Severus*, and supported, as we believe, by the whole character of the work, leads us to the conviction that the *ViIs* is indeed a genuine early work of Zacharias the Scholasticus of Gaza, and confirms us in our belief that its hero is indeed the author of the Isaian ascetic corpus.

Isaiah had his converse with his disciple. As we have seen above, it was not after but before the ninth hour. Incidentally, what was the *hour* before which the brethren must not hold converse? Was it after Lauds (*ViIs* v, p. (7), 9)? Or the sixth hour, as in Nitria (*H.L.*, ed. Butler, 26.2)?

(d) p. 104\*. 'La *ViIs* corse la donnée en disant qu'Isaïe ne parle absolument avec personne sinon avec Pierre—Ce qui ne l'empêche pas de dire explicitement le contraire par après: Isaïe, dit-elle, converse avec Nestorius, avec Denys, avec Énée de Gaza—; elle déclare même qu'il tenait porte ouverte à tous—. 'Draguet omits to mention that the conversations with Nestorius and Denys were at Eleutheropolis, before Isaiah's moving to the Gaza region and shutting himself up; and that the opening his doors to all for a few days when already a recluse is given definitely as a very exceptional case. It is never stated in *ViIs* that he held direct converse with Aeneas: and one has only to glance at the *Erotapocrises* of Varsanuphius and John to see how full a correspondence could be carried on through an intermediary.

(e) p. 107\*. It is not true that the author never names his sources. Both Dionysius (6. 21) and Bosporius (9. 1) are said to have told him their stories themselves.

The silence of the *Life of Peter the Iberian* about any writings of this Isaiah may not be quite so complete as is supposed. The reference on *V. Petr. Ib.* 102 to 'mimrè' (λόγοι) in connection with him is at least suggestive of the λόγοι which constitute our Corpus. But in any case, the absence of reference need cause no surprise in a work produced not long after the death of the two saints. The final compiling of the Corpus was, after all, the work of the disciple Peter, not of his master.

But can this Isaiah 'of Gaza' still rightly be called 'Isaiah the Scetiotè'? Here we would refer to A. Guillaumont's article, 'Une notice syriaque inédite sur la vie de l'abbé Isaïe', in *Analecta Bollandiana*, 67 (1949), pp. 350-60. I must confess to a further carelessness on my part in *The Desert a City*, pp. 73 and 80, n. 103, where I speak of 'his Syriac description as "Esaias of Scetis"'. I was misled by Wright's catalogue of the B.M. Syriac manuscripts, which consistently refers to him as 'Isaiah of Scete'—as Land had done before, and Baumstark does after him (*Syrische Literatur*, p. 165). The Syriac manuscripts themselves appear never so to describe him. Nowhere in the corpus of his works does he claim himself to have witnessed events in Scetis—not even in the collection of *Apophthegmata* in *S VI*. Where he names Sarapion (*S XXV.* 42) or Nestherous (*S XXV.* 45b), we do not know whether he is speaking at first or second hand: nor do we know the date or location of these two fathers. It appears that the earliest identification of him as Isaiah of Scetis is found in the *Life of Isaiah* with which Dadišo of Beth Qatraya, a Nestorian of the end of the seventh century, prefaces his commentary on the corpus (cf. Guillaumont, op. cit.: Draguet promises an edition of this work). This *Life*, as all agree, is manifestly a compilation from references in the *Apophthegmata*, the *Historia Monachorum in Aegypto*, etc. It is bent on showing Isaiah as an Egyptian father who spent all his monastic life in Scetis, where he became hegumen. A Nestorian writer would naturally wish to cover up any suggestion that the revered father whose work he was annotating had monophysite connections.

But our Isaiah was certainly Egyptian. The *ViIs* speaks of him (p. (4), 31) as withdrawn into the *interior desert* before he moved up to Palestine. This need not mean Scetis, and our only other definite evidence for his time in Egypt (*Pler.* xii) links him with the Thebaid. But Scetis is certainly the 'interior desert' which would come first to our mind. And the father who died in Palestine in 491 could very well have been in Scetis in the 420s or 430s—and even need not have been too young at the end of that time to have a disciple. So it is worth while our examining to see whether any of the Isaiahs mentioned in other monastic sources could be identical with our father.

The Isaiah of *H.L.* xiv, and he of *H.M.* xi (éd. Festugière) can be put out of court at once—incidentally, neither of these was Scetioté. The Isaiah of the long recension of G Pambo 11, coupled with Pambo, Bessarion and Athre, appears to be Scetioté, but of an earlier generation. The two Macarian *Apophthegmata* (G Mac. Aeg. 27, and Guy N(J) 764—the latter quoted by Draguet, p. 90\*) cannot well be referring to a fifth-century father Isaiah—unless, as is by no means impossible, the second of these is referring to a different Macarius. G Poemen 20 (Isaiah questioning Poemen) brings us to the right generation, but has no reference to Scetis. Of the Isaiah apophthegmata in the *Alphabetikon*, 8, 9, and 10 at least belong to our Isaiah, being derived from the chapter on 'The Branches of Vice'. The others have no clear indication of time or place, save for the story of the priest of Pelusium—if this means Isidore, it again confirms our dating for Isaiah who tells the story. In G Achilles 3, we find an Abba Isaiah in Scetis admonished by Achilles who is clearly older. G Achilles 5 shows us Bitimius and Ammoes coming to Achilles (in Scetis) and afraid to tell him they come from Cellia—which suggests a date when Cellia was under suspicion, probably for Origenism. G Daniel 5 shows Ammoes as a younger contemporary of Daniel, the disciple of Arsenius. G Ammoes 2 shows Isaiah as younger than Ammoes—but here some manuscripts make the questioner Saio, not Isaiah. But as G Achilles 3 has already placed the Scetioté Isaiah in the generation of Ammoes and Daniel, there would at least be no anachronism in identifying him with 'Isaiah of Gaza'. The strongest argument for Isaiah's having been in Scetis, already advanced enough to have a disciple, Peter, is certainly the story published in Avgoustinos's introduction, p. 18' (Cod. Hieros. Patr. 113?) and again by Draguet (90\*, and at length in *Byzantion*, xxxv (1965), pp. 44–61). Here Peter tells what happened when he, clearly as a young disciple, laughed when he was dining with Isaiah and other old men in the company of Abba Isaac the hegumen of Scetis. No hegumen Isaac of Scetis is otherwise known: so a date fitting in with our other evidence—say in the 430s—is perfectly acceptable. But the context suggests that Isaiah and Peter were on a visit to Scetis, rather than settled there. Peter must, of course, have been himself of a good age by the time of Isaiah's death.

Other material published in Avgoustinos's introduction deserves close study—but also puts us on our guard. One long story (pp. 16–17) of Isaiah and Peter and another disciple Elisha in Scetis proves to belong to the late sixth century, and the time of the Pope Eulogius of Alexandria (580–607).

The Isaian corpus appears, then, to be the product of two Egyptian monks, 'old man' and disciple, whose migration from Egypt to the Gaza

region has brought them into yeasty contact with one of the most famous philosophical and literary schools of the period—a period overclouded with a sense of present or impending disaster in Church and state. So we can suppose Peter, under Isaiah's inspiration, collecting and recording, whether from the old man's words or writings, or from other sources, all that he could of the inherited authentic teaching of the deserts, without presuming to impose on the material his own interpretation either by extensive rewriting or even by systematic ordering of the collected works. The corpus consists of a great variety of works with no apparent unity of plan in any of the various orders in which they survive. It may well include pre-Isaian material. We have already noted that the *Sa* recension in its earliest manuscripts does not mention Isaiah or Peter in text or headings, attributing the works to fathers of the Egyptian desert, while a number of these works and at least two others are found in some Greek manuscripts and other sources attributed to Moses, Macarius, or Ammonas. Moreover, as Dom Lucien Regnault has already pointed out (*R.A.M.* 46 (1970), p. 40), the Abba Zosimas, writing in the early part of the sixth century, attributes to Ammonas *G* 27 = *S* XXIV. 13 (in its *τήρει σεαυτὸν ἀκριβῶς* form), and to Moses *G* 16 = *S* XV. 51 and *G* 7 = *S* XIII. 19 and 22 (in each case Zosimas gives some support to the *Ga* reading against that of *G*). Dom Regnault has pointed out (*ibid.*) that Dorotheus, though he frequently quotes or echoes the Isaian corpus, never mentions Isaiah's name. But I believe all Dorotheus' quotations are from this earlier (*Sa Ga*) layer. But in *Varsanuphius & John*, while in V (= Volos edition, 1960) 308 John tells the same Dorotheus ἀκοῦσαι οὐ οἱ πατέρες εἶπον, and proceeds to quote *G* 3 = *S* X. 33 (a passage attributed to Macarius in *Ga*) in a form suggestive of the *Sa Ga* text, in V 311 Dorotheus as questioner attributes another passage from the same work (*G* 3 = *S* X. 46) to the Abba Isaiah, who is also named in quotations in V. 528 (*G* 5 = *S* XII. 7) and V 240 (*G* 8 = *S* XXV. 61a? The language of the quotation seems typical of Isaiah, but is only loosely represented in the text of *GS*). A further story in V 252 (the first answer to Dorotheus) of thousands of *nomismata* given to Abba Isaiah to dispense does not appear in our corpus.

The anonymity of *Sa* is no reason for doubting the Isaian-Petrine authorship of some at least of its contents. Its text and order in spite of its early date, are by no means always superior to that of *SG*—in the *Apophthegmata* collection at least, it is inferior. The anonymity of *Sa* 11 is probably secondary, and *S* XIV, where Peter speaks in the first person of his questions to Isaiah, nearest the original. If, as the Zosimas quotations and some of our manuscript evidence would suggest, several of



the works are in fact derived from earlier ascetics, this would be entirely in keeping with the character of our corpus. Within the normal corpus one work, *G* 23, begins in Greek and Coptic, though not in Syriac, "Εἰπέ τις τῶν πατέρων". When the compiler of *S* added 'Macarian' and Evagrian works at the beginning and end of the corpus, and *G* appended a Pseudo-Basilian, they were acting in harmony with the intention of the original compilers. Whatever its original form, the corpus is certainly not the systematic exposition of the mind of a single author. It is a collection, initiated no doubt in a time of stress, and expanded later, of a variety of occasional pieces—apophthegmata, monastic rule, homiletic—to ensure the recording for future generations of the authentic teaching of the desert fathers (I have already suggested, *The Desert a City*, p. 74, that 'this was the milieu responsible for amassing the main primary corpus of *Apophthegmata*'). Thrown together perhaps rather haphazard in the first instance, it was sorted out and put in order in various ways later, without the elimination of all evidence of the occasional character of particular pieces. Whether as witness, writer or speaker, the personality of the Abba Isaiah pervades the corpus. The relation to the 'Macarian' homilies, particularly of the long letter (*G* 25 = *S* VII) to Peter on his approach to the monastic life,<sup>1</sup> awaits further study. There is much that is reminiscent of Evagrius in thought and in language; but direct dependence seems precluded by the fact that the list of 'Seven Branches of Vice' in *G* 28 = *S* XXII is by no means identical with the list of the eight λογισμοί in Evagrius (and Cassian). The work is highly intellectual, and contains much creative thought, but is in no way 'scholastic'. There is neither cosmic speculation nor dogmatic elaboration. We remember that Zachariah in his *Chronicle* twice (v. 9 and vi. 3) describes the Abba Isaiah as πρακτικός. And this describes well the character of our Corpus—a practical guide for the monk on the way, in prayer and work, towards the one unchanging goal—to attain to accordance with the Nature of Jesus—τὸ κατὰ φύσιν τοῦ Ἰησοῦ (or τοῦ Υἱοῦ τοῦ Θεοῦ—*G* 18 = *S* XXVI. 13).

Is there anything in the Corpus to confirm the character given elsewhere to the Abba Isaiah as the spiritual leader of the more intransigent opponents of Chalcedon? On the face of it—on the polemical side—nothing. Here is no theological controversy, nor a word in which the Chalcedonian could scent heresy. The *Vits* account of Isaiah's

<sup>1</sup> Dragnet's arguments against the unity of this letter do not appear to hold water. Even if *S* is right in varying the address between singular and plural (*G* supports the plural only once, c. 26, "ἀδελφοί"), the alternation is not unnatural when we remember that Peter is shown in the *G*(ξ) form of *G* 1 = *S* VIII to have been the leader of three brothers.

answers on the 'Image of God', and the consubstantiality of our Lord's Body with ours, is unexceptionable and in complete harmony with the teaching of the corpus—though here the only theological occurrence of the word *οὐσία* is in connection with the Rebirth—those who become his brides *ἐκ τῆς οὐσίας αὐτοῦ εἰσι διὰ τῆς ἀναγεννήσεως* (G 25 = S VII. 25—but the Syriac implies *φύσεως* for *οὐσίας*). Here as ever the mind is set on the goal—the incorporation into the Body of Christ, and the attainment and contemplation of the glory and sweetness and light and fire of the Godhead. Of all the theological terms involved in the controversy, apart from this one occurrence of *οὐσία*, *φύσις* alone is used in the corpus, and that constantly—*κατὰ φύσιν τοῦ Ἀδάμ, παρὰ φύσιν, κατὰ φύσιν τοῦ Ἰησοῦ*. Never is the word used of the 'Divine Nature'. In the background we feel the Cyrilline phrase—*μία φύσις τοῦ Θεοῦ Λόγου σεσαρκωμένη*. And surely 'the beloved Jesus' cannot be divided, and to attain his Nature is somehow to attain to his Godhead—without the distinctions being obscured.<sup>1</sup> But here 'monophysite' spiritually is seen all on its positive side, stripped of its negations and anathemas by the humility of the monk, and the simple love of the Lord Jesus.<sup>2</sup> Those like Varsanuphius and John and Dorotheus, who in the next century accepted Chalcedon, would not be ashamed of their inheritance from the Abba Isaiah. And in the times that followed, Chalcedonian and Monophysite and Nestorian alike preserved his works and profited from them.

Isaiah's friend Peter the Iberian called down anathemas on himself if he should ever say there was nothing wrong with the Synod of Chalcedon (*V. Per. Ib.* 134. 20). Was he ever told of Isaiah's answer conveyed to two Chalcedonian monks by his embarrassed disciple—'There is no harm in the Council of the Catholic Church: you are well as you are: you believe well' ?<sup>3</sup>

#### APPENDIX I

In his list of 'formules propres à SC', Draguet gives, p. 42\*,

20.c. *Peut-être Dieu aura-t-il pitié.*

Cette réserve (cfr. *Ÿr* 43, 7), d'ailleurs toute littéraire, sur la certitude du secours divin ou la possibilité d'atteindre l'idéal ascétique, est une

<sup>1</sup> Just as in a later age the 'Palamites' were to insist that the Light of Mount Tabor is indeed uncreated—God in his energies though not in his essence.

<sup>2</sup> See Dom Hermann Keller, *L'abbé Isaïe-le-jeune, in Irénikon*, 16 (1939), pp. 113–26. This valuable but neglected work, indicating much as I have done the 'monophysite' character of Isaiah, was pointed out to me by Dom Regnault after I had completed my article.

<sup>3</sup> Cod. Paris. gr. 1596, s. xi, f. 610, printed by Nau, *P.O.* viii. 164.

touche de style propre à SC. Elle y figure en effet en trois passages où le correspondant *Sa* l'omet (V, 32; XIV, 38; XV, 7) et elle revient en XXII, 28 et XXIV, 3.

As a matter of fact, in XV. 7 the phrase *is* found in *Sa*, except only that *Sa* has 'jusqu'à ce qu'' (*ἕως*) where S has 'afin que peut-être' (*ἴσως*)—which may be due either to a different reading in the Greek or to an inexpert translation. But it will be good to look at all the occurrences of *ἴσως* in the corpus, remembering that itacism makes it often impossible to tell whether the verb should be in the subjunctive or the future indicative:

1. G 8 = S XXV. 55—*ἡ ἔχθρα διαμένει βλασφημοῦσα . . . ἴσως ὁ νοῦς χανωνθεὶς ἀποστῇ τοῦ κόπου καὶ ἐπιστρέψῃ πάλιν εἰς τὴν ἀμέλειαν.*
2. Ibid. *ὁ εἰς ὠνείδιζεν αὐτὸν, ἴσως ἀποστήσῃ αὐτὸν τῆς ἐλπίδος.*
3. G 9 = S V. 32 *Ἀνάγκασον σεαυτὸν ἐν πολλαῖς προσευχαῖς μετὰ κλαυθμοῦ, ἴσως ἐλέησει σε—Sa omits the phrase.*
4. G 16 = S XV. 5—*ἐργαζόμενοι καλῶς . . . ἴσως (Ga: ἵνα GS) δυνηθῶμεν σωθῆναι—Sa omits the paragraph.*
5. G 16 = S XV. 7—*ποιήσωμεν τὴν δύναμιν ἡμῶν ἐν δάκρυσιν ἐνώπιον τοῦ Θεοῦ, ἴσως (G, Ga, S, Amm.<sup>1</sup>: ἕως Sa) ἐλέησῃ ἡμᾶς (Gκ, S, Sa: σπλαγχνισθῇ ἐφ' ἡμᾶς Ga: om. Gξ, Amm.<sup>1</sup>) ἡ ἀγαθότης αὐτοῦ καὶ ἐξαποστείλῃ ἡμῖν δύναμιν.*
6. G 16 = S XV. 117—*στέλλουσιν ἑαυτοὺς ἐν πανουργίᾳ πρὸς καιρὸν, ἴσως (G, Ga, S: ἕως οὐ Amm: ἵνα Sa?) ὁ ἄνθρωπος ἀπολύσῃ τὴν ἑαυτοῦ καρδίαν . . .*
7. Ed. Draguet 'S XV. 136'—*G ξβ Amm.: om. SG γκ—Μὴ ἐκκακήσης οὖν ἀδελφέ . . . ἴσως (Amm.: ἵνα ξ) γένηται καὶ ἡμῖν ἔλεος—*
8. G 21 = S XIV. 38 *ποιήσωμεν οὖν τὴν δύναμιν ἡμῶν . . . ἴσως ἐλέησῃ ἡμᾶς ἡ ἀγαθότης αὐτοῦ, καὶ ἀποστείλῃ ἡμῖν δύναμιν—GS: om. Sa*
9. G 27 = S XXIV. 3—*ὅλως καταξιοῦμαι παθεῖν τι διὰ τὸν Κύριον καὶ βαστάξαι, ἴσως (τάχα γὰρ Amm.) . . . κἂν ῥοπὴν τινα μιμητῆς γένωμαι τοῦ πάθους τοῦ Θεοῦ μου (SG).*

While in five cases the mood of the verb is ambiguous, in the other four it is definitely a subjunctive, so that *ἴσως* must be not an adverb, but a conjunction introducing a subordinate clause. It happens that in the case of 'S XV. 136' the Coptic version survives, confirming the *ἴσως* of Amm. with *ⲙⲉⲩⲁⲕ*—'thou knowest not', and so 'perhaps'—see Crum, p. 102a: it is used to represent the Greek *μήπως*, *ἴσως*, or *τάχα*. Like *μήπως*, it is often used to introduce a subordinate clause; and *ἴσως* in

<sup>1</sup> Amm. Coisl. 282, ed. Nau, Ammonas, P.O. xi. 4.

Isaiah has taken over the same use. Here surely is a Copticism—and one which seems after all to be found in both layers of the Corpus.

## APPENDIX II

Draguet, V, p. 66—Logos VI. 5F. i "Όταν δὲ ἡγόραζεν ἑαυτῷ κολόβιν ἢ παλλιν ἢ σκεῦος εἰς λόγον τοῦ κελλίου ἐν τῇ ἀτελείᾳ περιεβλέπετο, καὶ εἰ εἶδε χήραν μετρίαν ἔχουσιν τὸ σκεῦος ὃ ἐζήτει ἀγοράσαι . . .

5F. n *Εἰ* ἔχρηζε τὸ κελλίον τινὸς σκεύους ἡγόραζεν αὐτό, καὶ εἰ ἔλεγεν αὐτῷ ἀδελφὸς ἀσθενής· ἀπῆλθες ἐν τῇ ἀτελείᾳ. Ἀγάθων καὶ οὐκ ἔμαθον· ἤθελον γὰρ ἵνα ἀγοράσῃς μοι σκεῦος . . . Ἀτέλεια clearly means market: but why? Draguet virtually despairs of an explanation. As constantly in such circumstances, I wrote to consult Professor A. H. M. Jones, and received the usual prompt reply, along lines that I was already rather expecting—I think it was the last letter that I was to receive from him. I offer it here in his memory. 'I have never met ἀτέλεια used to mean πανηγυρὶς ἀτελής, but I think it must mean that. See *OGI* 262, where Baetocaeca has a market free from dues on the 15th and 30th of each month. There were also duty-free fairs on a big scale e.g. at Aegae in Cilicia (*Itin. Hierosol.* Theodosius 32) for 40 days p.a., at Edessa (Greg. Tur. *Glor. Mart.* 32) for 30 days p.a.'

So a vivid detail is added to our picture: the monk and the widow taking advantage of the duty-free market. †DERWAS J. CHITTY