

## Creation from Gaza

Three late fifth-century thinkers from Gaza defended Christian ideas about creation against arguments for the eternity of the world in contemporary Neoplatonism. This paper explores connections between Aeneas, Zacharias and Procopius and Neoplatonists including Proclus, Hierocles and Ammonius. It identifies relationships between the Gazan contributions and later sixth-century controversies, particularly Philoponus' arguments, and suggests some implications for understanding education in Gaza.

When the Neoplatonist philosopher Proclus wrote his magisterial *Commentary on the Timaeus* around 440 AD, he initiated a debate about the creation and eternity of the world between Christians and Neoplatonists which continued into the late sixth century.<sup>1</sup> His *Eighteen Arguments for the Eternity of the World* added fuel to the fire.<sup>2</sup> Almost one hundred years later, in the same year that Justinian closed the Neoplatonic school in Athens (529), the Christian Neoplatonist John Philoponus wrote a work entitled *Against Proclus on the Eternity of the World*.<sup>3</sup> The Neoplatonist philosopher Simplicius took up the standard for Athens, and Jerusalem found its champion in Cosmas Indicopleustes, an Alexandrian traveller, merchant and monk, who was incensed to find a fellow Christian accepting so much Neoplatonic philosophy.<sup>4</sup> Both Proclus' original contribution and these later sixth-century debates have been well studied. But the narrative that jumps from Proclus to Philoponus leaves a gap between the mid-fifth century and the third decade of the sixth. It is that gap that I want to begin to fill in this paper.

To do so, I introduce three thinkers originally from Gaza: Aeneas (fl. 480), Procopius (fl. 500) and Zacharias (fl. 510). Aeneas and Procopius, from whom we have a large corpus of letters, enter the history books as orators and teachers responsible for the flourishing of the rhetorical schools in Gaza in the late fifth and early sixth centuries.<sup>5</sup> These schools are best known for their production of literary commentaries (on Lysias and Demosthenes), for their rhetorical speeches and *ekphraseis* (Procopius' *Panegyric*

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<sup>1</sup> For Proclus' *Commentary*, see the recent translations by Baltzly, Runia, Share and Tarrant (2007-8).

<sup>2</sup> Lang and Macro (2001).

<sup>3</sup> For Philoponus, see Bohm (1970); MacCoull (1995); Rashed (2004); Scholten (1996); Sorabji (1987); Wildberg (1988). For texts for Philoponus and Simplicius, see Sorabji's *Ancient Commentators on Aristotle* series and the relevant *CAG* texts. On the closure of the Neoplatonist school, see Blumenthal (1978); Alan Cameron (1969); Sorabji (2005); Watts (2004).

<sup>4</sup> For Simplicius, see Baltussen (2008); Foulkes (1992); Hadot (1978); Hadot (1990); Hoffmann (1987); Watts (2005). For Cosmas, see Anastos (1953); Cosmas (1968) (the *SC* edition); Mouriki-Charalambous (1970); Wolska (1962).

<sup>5</sup> See Downey (1958); Seitz (1892). See also the relevant entries in *PLRE* II & III and Kaster (1988); Szbat (2007), 212ff.

for Anastasius is one of many extant) and for their circle of poets who composed a range of anacreontic and hexameter verse.<sup>6</sup> Zacharias, born in Gaza's port-town Maiuma, probably completed rhetorical education in Gaza before following Aeneas and Procopius to Alexandria to continue his rhetorical and philosophical education. He also attended law-school in Berytus, before entering an ecclesial career. Zacharias is perhaps best known for his *Church History* and *Lives* of various Monophysites, although he also polemicised against Manicheans.

This picture of the schools of Gaza may undervalue the scientific, philosophical and theological interests of its adherents. Timothy of Gaza combined grammatical and rhetorical skill with zoological interests.<sup>7</sup> His works suggest an interest in Aristotle, an interest shared by Aeneas and Zacharias. He had studied under Horapollon, the Alexandrian philosopher who was forced to flee Christian persecution in the late 480s.<sup>8</sup> Gaza was also the birthplace of Ulpian, a philosopher in Alexandria and Athens. Ulpian had been a fellow student of Proclus, and the Neoplatonic philosopher Isidore (Isidorus 2, *PLRE* III). The thinkers associated with the Gazan schools whose works have come down to us are all recognisably Christian. But the avowedly pagan sixth-century philosopher Damascius refers to the sophist or advocate Antonius (Antonius 3, *PLRE* II), who 'made [Gaza] far more holy than it previously was' (τὴν Γάζαν ἀπέφηνεν ἱερωτέραν πολλῶ μᾶλλον ἢ πρότερον ἦν) (Damascius, *Isid.* fr. 186 Zintzen). Aeneas, Procopius and Zacharias benefited from creative exchange with people like these in the Gazan schools. Aeneas had studied under the Neoplatonic philosopher Hierocles in Alexandria, and his dialogue refers to the flourishing of philosophy in Athens under Proclus (3.4). Zacharias, some twenty years or so younger, learned his philosophy from Hierocles' successor in Alexandria, Ammonius.

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<sup>6</sup> For Zosimus, see Seitz (1892), 27-30; Wilson (1967), 254-255. For John of Gaza, see Friedländer (1969). His poems have recently been edited by Ciccolella (2000). For Gazan poetry in the context of ancient rhetoric, see Amato and Schamp (2005). For Choricus, see Ashkenazi (2004); Choricus (1929); Greco (2007); Litsas (1980); Renault (2007); Saliou (2004).

<sup>7</sup> Timothy's (wholly or partially) extant works are Κανόνες καθολικοὶ περὶ συντάξεως ἐπικῶς and the περὶ ζώων τετραπόδων θηρίων τῶν παρ' Ἰνδοῖς καὶ Ἀραβί καὶ Αἰγυπτίοις, καὶ ὅσα τρέφει Λιβύη. He also wrote a treatise on exotic birds and snakes (*Suda* T 621). Fragments of *On Animals* are collected by Haupt (1869). The treatise *On Syntax* is edited by Cramer (1835-1837). He also wrote a (lost) oration on the Chrysargon tax to Anastasius.

<sup>8</sup> See Kaster (1988), 368-370; Wellmann (1927). See also *Suda*, loc. cit. Downey placed Procopius of Caesarea as a student in the Gaza school: Downey (1958), 315; Evans (1972), 31f. It is equally likely that he studied in Caesarea. See Averil Cameron (1985), 4-5. I contest Downey's characterisation of Gaza as a place where it was thought 'more suitable, and also in better taste, to keep Christianity and classical thought quite separate'.

This brief sketch of intellectual life in Gaza provides a backdrop for the works about the creation and eternity of the world written by Aeneas, Zacharias and Procopius. They come in two forms. Aeneas and Zacharias both wrote philosophical/theological dialogues; Procopius wrote a biblical commentary (his works directly combating Proclus' philosophy are either lost or their authenticity contested).<sup>9</sup> Zacharias' dialogue is at times dependent on Aeneas', although the two dialogues have different emphases. Each Gazan uses his creation-oriented works to argue for a version of the divine plan of salvation. The same God who is the first principle of Being is also the first principle of Goodness and final cause of the cosmos. God created the world, cares for it providentially, and brings it to perfection. The world cannot be eternal, because this would undermine Christian hope in the future perfection of all things.

The Gazans have particular Christian problems to solve, but like Philoponus after them, they also engage with Neoplatonism. They use Neoplatonism, and seek to turn it against the Neoplatonists.<sup>10</sup> I offer three brief examples of the Gazans turning philosophy against philosophy: Aeneas on *Timaeus* interpretation; Zacharias on cosmic shadows; and Procopius on the creation of form from nothing. In each of these areas the Gazans explore themes that Philoponus would develop, albeit with far greater philosophical rigour.

#### A. Aeneas on the *Timaeus*

The main Christian character in Aeneas' dialogue uses Plato to argue that the cosmos is created:

How can the perceptible cosmos be ungenerated, without a beginning or exist before time?... Plato himself, you remember, appears to us as not taking a particular position in the *Timaeus*, earlier asking whether the cosmos 'came into being' or 'did not come into being'; then the reason [it did] was added: [the cosmos] is visible and tangible (*Tim.* 28b).

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<sup>9</sup> For the debate on authenticity, see Dräseke (1897), 55-91; Emrich (1994); Mai (1831), 264-6, 274; Stiglmayer (1899); Ter Haar-Romeny (2007); Westerink (1942).

<sup>10</sup> There are differences between each of the three Gazans' creation accounts. For the purposes of this paper I emphasise the congruencies to build a picture of commonalities in Christian theology between Proclus and Philoponus. Differences remain important, and will be the subject of other forthcoming publications.

πῶς ὁ αἰσθητὸς κόσμος ἀγέννητος, ἢ ἄναρχος, ἢ πρὸ τοῦ χρόνου; ...  
 Αὐτὸς δὲ ἡμῖν ὁ Πλάτων, μέμνησαι γάρ, ἐν Τιμαίῳ πως οὐδὲν  
 σχηματιζόμενος ἀποφαίνεται, πρότερον ἐρωτῶν πότερον γέγονεν ὁ  
 κόσμος ἢ οὐ γέγονεν· εἶθ' ἡ αἰτία προσγέγραπται· ὁρατὸς τε γάρ  
 ἐστὶν ἀπτὸς τέ ἐστι. (45.10-15)

In insisting that the whole cosmos is visible and tangible, Aeneas explicitly argues that the heavens are made of the same substance as the terrestrial region, and claims that terrestrial and celestial physics are identical (cf. 38.10ff). He thus rejects the Aristotelian view, held later by Simplicius in opposition to Philoponus, that there is a fifth element only to be found in the heavens.<sup>11</sup> Philoponus has been given credit for this unification of terrestrial and celestial physics.<sup>12</sup>

Aeneas explicitly cites the second-century Platonist Atticus in support of his interpretation of Plato's text (*Tim.* 28b). As Philoponus reports in his rebuttal of Proclus, earlier Platonists such as Calvenus Taurus had attacked Atticus' position by identifying different senses of Plato's term 'gegonen'. Alcinous' *Handbook* set out the Platonic orthodoxy which would be followed by Proclus:<sup>13</sup>

When [Plato] says that the cosmos is 'generated', he must not be understood [as saying] that there was ever a time when the cosmos did not exist; but rather that it is always in a state of becoming, and reveals a more primal cause of its own existence.

Ὅταν δὲ εἶπη γενητὸν εἶναι τὸν κόσμον, οὐχ οὕτως ἀκουστέον  
 αὐτοῦ, ὡς ὄντος ποτὲ χρόνου, ἐν ᾧ οὐκ ἦν κόσμος· ἀλλὰ διότι αἰεὶ ἐν  
 γενέσει ἐστὶ καὶ ἐμφαίνει τῆς αὐτοῦ ὑποστάσεως ἀρχικώτερόν τι  
 αἴτιον. *Did.* 14.3

Hence Aeneas' account is informed by a long-running debate within Platonism, and uses philosophical arguments to defeat Neoplatonists and argue for a Christian conclusion.

<sup>11</sup> Aristotle, *Cael.* 1.2; Plato, *Tim.* 31b, 40a, 58c; Simplicius, in *Cael.* 88,28-89,26; 134,20f.

<sup>12</sup> Bohm (1970), 478.

<sup>13</sup> Alcinous represents the majority position on this question in Platonism traceable to Speusippus and Xenocrates. For Proclus' stance in this debate, see Phillips (1997).

## B. Zacharias, creation and shadows

As Philoponus would later identify (*Contra Proclum* 1.4-5, 14.25-16.25ff), Platonists had used the analogy of the body and its shadow to argue that the world is coeternal with God and therefore eternal but inferior to God.<sup>14</sup> Zacharias rejects this analogy because it suggests that God did not create purposefully (521ff). The shadow comes into being as a necessary by-product of bodies and light (παρακολούθημα). Zacharias argues that such a cause is unwilling and spontaneous. But Proclus had argued that what is spontaneous is uncaused (*ET* 97). So, argues Zacharias, the analogy cannot be used to argue that the universe was caused, eternally or otherwise.

In the same passage, Zacharias also employs the argument that Philoponus will use against Proclus (*Contra Proclum* 1.5, 15.1-16.1). He argues that a shadow is a privation of light caused by a body standing in the way of the sun. But since God is incorporeal, he cannot cast anything like a shadow, and hence the analogy for creation fails. This argument draws on Neoplatonic assumptions about the nature of divinity to overturn a Neoplatonic argument for Christian ends.

## C. Procopius: *creatio ex nihilo* and the creation of form

The main intellectual opponents of the Mosaic account, according to Procopius, are Greek philosophers who believe that the ‘creation is coeternal with God’ (συναΐδιον τῷ Θεῷ) (29A):<sup>15</sup>

Being unable, then, to discover how something will be generated from absolutely nothing, presuming to measure the power of God against their own notions, they invented eternal matter for us.

Μὴ δυνηθέντες γοῦν εὐρεῖν πῶς ἐκ μηδαμῆ μηδαμῶς ὄντος ὄν τι γενήσεται, μετρεῖσθαι τοῦ Θεοῦ τὴν δύναμιν ταῖς οἰκείαις ὑπολαμβάνοντες ἐννοίαις, αἶδιον ὕλην ἡμῖν ἀνεπλάσαντο. (29A)

Like Philoponus after him, Procopius thinks that Neoplatonists have no reason to reject the doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo* (29B-C).<sup>16</sup> ‘How’, he asks,

<sup>14</sup> Baltes (1976), 166-9, analyses this analogy in the fourth-century Neoplatonist Porphyry; it is also found in Plotinus, *Enn.* 6.3.8. Aeneas criticises this analogy in his *Theophrastus* pp. 45-46.

<sup>15</sup> The term συναΐδιον has Trinitarian resonance, suggesting overlap between the creation debates and greater precision about Trinitarian language after the fourth- and fifth-century councils.

was [God] unable to make matter, which is inferior, given that he makes the forms, which indeed are also better, from nothing?

πῶς δὲ τὰ εἶδη ἐκ μὴ ὄντων ποιῶν, ἃ δὴ καὶ κρείττονα, τὴν ὕλην οὕσαν χείρω, ποιεῖν οὐκ ἠδύνατο; (29B-C)

How can sense be made of this claim? Procopius' argument draws on Aristotle, and would be pursued by Philoponus in his rebuttal of Proclus and his debates with Simplicius (cf. Philoponus, *Contra Proclum* 340-1, 347, 365,3; *Contra Aristotelem* in Simplicius *in Phys.* 1142,1-28, 1177,10-26). Aristotle accepted that an object may become white or cease being white, and that the quality of whiteness need only exist potentially before it qualifies a particular body (*Metaph.* 7.9, 1034b16-19; 8.5, 1044b21-4). He further argues that the quality of whiteness does not undergo the processes of generation and corruption. Rather, proximate matter takes on form instantaneously (*Metaph.* 7.15, 1039b23-7; 8.3, 1043b14-16; 8.5 1044b21-22). We can thus explain Procopius' argument by suggesting that like contemporary Neoplatonists, Procopius treats the quality of colour as a form. This renders plausible Procopius' claim that Greek philosophers accept the creation of form from nothing. Hence Procopius uses this background to turn the Neoplatonic-Aristotelian argument about the instantaneous creation of form against the Neoplatonists.

In thus combating Neoplatonism with Neoplatonism, the Gazans are not merely being contrary. The first example showed Aeneas using Plato to argue for a Christian finite, created world; the second example implied that Neoplatonists provide support for a Christian idea of cosmic causation, while Procopius sought to provide philosophical support for the Christian doctrine of creation from nothing. Hence in using Neoplatonism, the Gazans simultaneously implicitly argue for its continuing worth. For Zacharias, philosophy 'desires true and upright doctrines' and thus establishes 'all happiness and well-being'; Zacharias and Procopius acknowledge that God offered (an albeit limited) set of truths to the Greeks (Zacharias 85f, 456f; Procopius, 35A).

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<sup>16</sup> For Philoponus and the Aristotelian context, see Haas (1997), 4f, 281-3; Sorabji (1983), 247-9.

This use of Neoplatonism for Christian purposes, and the implicit claim that Neoplatonic argumentation should retain some measure of rational weight for Christians (even as its conclusions should be radically revised) reveal a section of Gazan Christian society for whom classical *paideia* remained valuable. This local culture is part of the same milieu occupied later by Philoponus. It sustained him in his engagement with Neoplatonists.

Yet the need to claim the value of Hellenic learning suggests that other parts of Gazan society were not so comfortable using Neoplatonism within Christianity. Cosmas' later attack on Philoponus may be read as analogous evidence for this tension, although Cosmas' position remains extreme in the context of late fifth-century Gaza. For Cosmas, philosophical Christians are two-faced and lack proper foundations. They are like empty houses standing high in the air without supports (*Christian Topography* 1.4). Cosmas rejects the Greek theory of the elements and argues instead for passive matter moved by the divine will alone. Rain is not water seeking its proper place. It falls because angels carry it according to providential commands (*Christian Topography* 2.84f). This argument seeks to ensure that God has complete control over matter, thus making belief in the resurrection plausible (cf. 3.61). Cosmas also believed that the earth is flat (e.g. *Christian Topography* 1.5-7; 4.24) since the tabernacle is a type for the universe (e.g. *Christian Topography* 2.3).<sup>17</sup>

With such arguments we have moved into a new epistemology and a new set of truth claims that would transform sections of Christian thought and render Neoplatonic argument unnecessary.<sup>18</sup> Cosmas' arguments on the creation and eternity of the world share only their conclusion with Philoponus and the Gazans. They are evidence for the eclipse of Neoplatonic argumentation in sections of late-antique society, despite the Gazans' best efforts in the earlier generation to demonstrate the utility of Neoplatonism for Christian thinking.

Alongside their greater familiarity with the philosophical tradition, something like Cosmas' new epistemology may be seen in the Gazans' own works. So far, I have emphasised their connections to the philosophical tradition. But to stop there would be to leave the canvas unfinished. Procopius' emphasis on the centrality of Christ for

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<sup>17</sup> For Cosmas' literal typology, see MacCormack (1982), 291.

<sup>18</sup> See further Champion (2006).

the purpose of creation leads him to claim that the southern hemisphere does not exist, because Christ never got there, and thus there is no purpose for it in the history of salvation (67C-69B). The Gazans' creation-oriented works begin and end with their (varied) accounts of a divine plan of salvation. For Procopius, *Genesis* is a book about history and ethics. It sets out the history of creation and the people of God, and explains and defines the laws which govern good ethical practices (23C). To know the creator is thus to know the lawgiver who draws all creation towards himself. Aeneas and Zacharias both similarly emphasise that the first principle of Being is united with the first principle of Goodness (e.g. Aeneas 43.6ff; Zacharias 324-7). They attempt to demonstrate that only a Christian view of creation preserves the goodness of God. They argue that God created the cosmos as a training ground for mortals (e.g. Aeneas, 49.6-51.23; Zacharias, 1276ff). Humans live their mortal lives to become accustomed or habituated to the life of God (Procopius, 28A). The doctrine of creation from nothing for the Gazans renders plausible their claim that God will inaugurate a new creation at the end of time and bring all creation to perfection. God the creator shows providential concern for his creation and as such is the ground of ethics as the first principle of goodness. This God will bring creation to an end in a free act of re-creation, and throughout human history is the entity to whom humans strive to be assimilated; as such he is simultaneously the final cause of the cosmos.

Yet this account of the divine plan itself has Platonic resonances. In the unification of the first principle of Being with the first principle of Goodness, and in the claim that the creator God is also the perfecter of the cosmos, the Gazans have allies in Hierocles and Ammonius, the two philosophers against whom Aeneas and Zacharias primarily take aim.<sup>19</sup> For Hierocles, divine goodness is all that is required for creation (251.1.460b). The good demiurge, acting at the level of Intellect, creates the cosmos (251.2.461a, 251.6.461b) as the 'father and maker' of everything (251.6.461b). The destruction of the universe is an impossibility (*CPGV* I.12) because, as Proclus had argued, also drawing on *Timaeus* 29e, the demiurge is good:

There is no other reasonable cause for his creation of all things except his substantial goodness.

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<sup>19</sup> For Aeneas' relationship to Hierocles, see Aujoulat (1987); Schibli (2002); Wacht (1969).

αἰτία γὰρ ἡ τῆς τῶν πάντων ποιήσεως αὐτῷ οὐδεμία ἄλλη  
 πρόσσεστιν εὐλογος πλὴν τῆς κατ' οὐσίαν ἀγαθότητος.

(*CPGVI.13*; 181 Schibli translation modified)

As in the Gazan creation accounts, creation is linked to Providence. No orderly creation implies no Providence (*CPGV XI.27*). This claim, built upon Platonic foundations such as the Myth of Er, is the main claim of Hierocles' *Commentary on the Pythagorean Golden Verses*:

We earlier defined the law as the eternal and uniformly abiding activity of god that forever and invariably leads all things to their well-being...The main part of what has been said is that god, who is at once lawgiver and judge, ordains goods and removes evils; hence he is in every respect blameless of evils.<sup>20</sup>

Νόμον μὲν ἐν τοῖς προτέροις ἀπεφηνάμεθα τὴν αἰεὶ καὶ ὡσαύτως  
 ἔχουσαν ἐνέργειαν τοῦ θεοῦ, τὴν αἰδίως καὶ ἀτρέπτως τὰ πάντα  
 πρὸς τὸ εὖ εἶναι παράγουσαν...κεφάλαιον δὲ τῶν εἰρημένων, ὅτι ὁ  
 θεὸς νομοθέτης ὧν ἅμα καὶ δικαστὴς τίθεται μὲν τὰ ἀγαθὰ, ἀναιρεῖ δὲ  
 τὰ κακά.

(*CPGV II.1, XI.19* Schibli translation)

Ammonius gave the Gazans further support in arguing (as Simplicius reports) that

Aristotle considers god [the final cause] to be also the efficient cause of the entire world.

καὶ ποιητικὸν αἴτιον ἡγεῖσθαι τὸν θεὸν τοῦ παντὸς κόσμου τὸν  
 Ἀριστοτέλη. (*in Phys.* 8.10, 1363.8-11 McKirahan translation)

This is a contentious claim since Aristotle's unmoved mover appears to be best understood as solely a final cause.<sup>21</sup> The novelty of Ammonius' claim was recognised by Simplicius, who wants to know:

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Plato, *Rep.* 614b-621d, especially 617e: ἀρετὴ δὲ ἀδέσποτον, ἦν τιμῶν καὶ ἀτιμάζων πλέον καὶ ἔλαττον αὐτῆς ἕκαστος ἔξει. αἰτία ἐλομένου· θεὸς ἀνάτιος. (Virtue is free, and each person will have more or less of it as he honours or dishonours her. The blame is the chooser's: god is blameless).

<sup>21</sup> For modern discussions, see Kahn (1985); Matthen (2001).

why in the world Aristotle does not say that god is an efficient cause as evidently as he said that he is a final cause.

τί δήποτε ὁ Ἀριστοτέλης οὐχ οὕτως φανερώς ποιητικὸν αἴτιον τὸν θεὸν εἶπεν ὡς τελικόν.

(*in Phys.* 8.10 1363.12-14 McKirahan translation modified)

For our purposes, Ammonius' and Simplicius' ingenious arguments for this novel solution are less important than the fact that this strand of Neoplatonism is congruent with the Gazans' insistence that creation is linked to eschatology. There are, of course, strong differences between Hierocles' and Ammonius' accounts and those of the Christians, and congruency does not prove influence. But Hierocles' insistence on binding physics to ethics with the claim that goodness and being must be held together is a central plank of the Platonic tradition which fits with Christianity. Similarly, Ammonius' insistence that Aristotle believed that the first principle of Being is also the final cause of the cosmos lends the Christian unification of creation and eschatology intellectual respectability within Neoplatonism. It seems plausible that the Gazans were able to sharpen their thought on these matters through interaction with Neoplatonists and their ideas. However, they justify Christian salvation history through their creation accounts. For the Gazans, the logic of the divine plan is what ultimately drives their physics towards ethics, onwards to soteriology and eschatology.<sup>22</sup>

I conclude with some brief remarks about what the creation debates imply about education in late-antique Gaza. First, it should be clear that the traditional picture of Gaza as an important centre for specifically rhetorical education should be modified to include the philosophical and theological interests of its members. Rhetors could be philosophers, which undermines rigid demarcations of late-antique rhetorical and philosophical education. Second, the way in which Christian figures appropriate Neoplatonic arguments, seeking to explain Christian positions using Neoplatonism or to reject Neoplatonism on its own terms, points to interactions between Christians and Neoplatonists in the local Gazan schools. Gaza, like other intellectual centres in late

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<sup>22</sup> Rist's attempt to distinguish between 'Christian' and 'philosophical' problems is useful in clarifying this situation. See Rist, (2004).

antiquity, was in transition, and mutual interactions between Christians, pagan Neoplatonists, and Neoplatonist Christians helped to drive this transformation. Third, the philosophical interests of the Gazans are partly explained by their connections with other intellectual centres. Gaza's particular interests in literary criticism and philosophical theology were influenced by interactions and exchanges of students and teachers between Gaza and Athens and especially Alexandria. The mechanisms for such interactions are the subject for another paper; interaction with educational facilities and institutions in Caesarea were also important. Fourth, the three Gazans' creation-oriented works are partly motivated by an increasing need to demonstrate the utility of Neoplatonism for Christianity, specifically for Christian theology. Philoponus' arguments with Proclus and Simplicius in the next generation are partly possible because of works like the Gazans' which maintained the intellectual and social value of Neoplatonism within Christianity. It is clear that Philoponus' philosophical rigor and understanding are not matched by the Gazans, but more remains to be done on this question. This paper has identified some preliminary correspondences between the Gazans' thought and Philoponus' later contribution. Yet despite the three Gazans' best efforts, Cosmas' rejection of Hellenic learning and argumentation points to transformations in late-antique society which marginalised Neoplatonism.

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#### **Abbreviations:**

Journal titles are abbreviated in accordance with *L'année philologique*.

Titles of classical historical and literary texts and standard reference works are abbreviated in accordance with the *Oxford Classical Dictionary*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition revised, edd. Simon Hornblower and Anthony Spawforth (Oxford, 2003).

Works of ancient philosophy are abbreviated in accordance with the series *The Ancient Commentators on Aristotle*, ed. Richard Sorabji (Duckworth and Cornell University Press), for which see *The Philosophy of the Commentators 200-600 AD Volume 1* (New York, 2005), 415f.

In addition, the following abbreviations or citation conventions are employed:

For citing Zacharias' dialogue, line numbers in Minniti-Colonna's editions are used without noting the title; for Aeneas, page and line number are used. See Aeneas, *Teofrasto*, ed. M. Minniti-Colonna (Napoli, 1958); Zacharias, *Ammonio. Introduzione, Testo Critico, Traduzione, Commentario* (Napoli, 1973).

Procopius' commentary is referred to without title where this is unambiguous. In this context, (37A) refers to Procopius' commentary, *PG* 87.1, column 37A.

- CAG *Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca*. Edited under the direction of the Deutsche Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin, 23 vols (Berlin, 1882-1909).
- CPGV X.10 Hierocles' *Commentary on the Pythagorean Golden Verses*, Chapter X and section 10 of the text edited by F. G. Köhler, *Hierocles in aureum Pythagoreorum carmen commentarius* (Stuttgart, 1974).
- Prov. 214.3.172a Photius' *Bibliotheca* codex 214 (where a summary of Hierocles' *De Providentia* is found), paragraph 3 in Schibli's translation, section 172a in Henry's edition of the *Bibliotheca*. See *Bibliothèque* ed. R. Henry (Paris, 1959-: vol. 3 for codex 214, 1962; vol. 7 for codex 251, 1974); H. Schibli, *Hierocles of Alexandria* (Oxford, 2002), for translations of this work, and for CPGV.

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