

THREE

CONTINUITY, SYSTEMATIZATION, AND ENCYCLOPEDIISM IN THE MIDDLE BYZANTINE PERIOD

As in Late Antiquity, the provisional judgment appears frequently, although without much detail, in some Middle Byzantine texts.¹ For example, in one of his catecheses addressed to a monastic audience, Theodore of Stoudios (d. 826) exhorts his brothers to always be on guard because of the coming of the terrible angel who will separate the soul from the body. He then mentions Staurakios (d. 800), a eunuch and *logothetes tou dromou*,² who at the time of his death was called into account (*ἐλογοθετεῖτο*, making a pun with Staurakios's title) by a band of angels and a band of demons.³ The tenth-century *Life of Andrew the Fool* has the saint delivering a short diatribe against fornication. Such sinners, Andrew asserts, forget how fierce and bitter is the dragon, the ruler of the world, "who is sent out at each one's death to inquire into his bad works and argue with the angels of God about the souls of the sinners, trying to discover where or how he shall find the soul which loved the darkness so that he can inherit it."⁴ In another story attributed to Paul, bishop of Monemvasia (fl. 10th c.), a woman dies and is taken by two angels through the air to heaven where she sees an innumerable host of angels worshipping God. The angels instruct her to fall down and worship, at which point a voice orders them to take her to the subterranean regions.⁵

In other cases, we find reworkings of older stories. For example, the beneficial tales of Paul of Monemvasia recount a story similar to that in the *Klimax*.⁶ Near death, the protagonist confesses his sins to a priest. After this, with the

priest and his family and friends at his side, the patient starts talking to people who are visible only to him. After the vision is finished, the dying man explains that he had just participated in a logothesion, in which he had to defend his actions in front of an angel in royal attire. His accusers, terrible Ethiopian demons with eyes like fire, furnished both true and false accusations against him. The main point of contention was a sin, specifically a theft, that he had not bothered to confess. At the end of the logothesion, the dying man is given three days to put his affairs in order.⁷

However, in the ninth century there is already a tendency to systematize. *George the Monk* begins his examination of the afterlife with the story of the Carthaginian sergeant. This he complements with an extensive survey of previous authorities in order to prove the story's validity, especially that souls ascend after death.⁸ George's sources include the *Life of Antony*, Chrysostom, Basil, and Maximos Confessor, all of which are discussed in Chapter 2. This pastiche makes for a bewildering reading. George cites, for example, pseudo-Dionysios, who, as stated previously, makes no mention of a provisional judgment or, for that matter, of the soul's ascent.⁹ Unique for its time, George's attempt to establish a narrative of the afterlife based on the collection of relevant sources heralds a mentality that would become prevalent from the eleventh century on. Nonetheless, the survey is further proof of the multitude of circulating traditions. It is only in the tenth century that we find for the first time a detailed picture of the soul's journey in the *Life of Basil the Younger*.

THE LIFE OF BASIL THE YOUNGER AND THEODORA'S ACCOUNT

The *Life of Basil the Younger*, composed in the 950s or 960s, contains the most complete account of a soul's fate after death in Byzantium.¹⁰ Basil is likely a fictional saint who purportedly lived in Constantinople in the tenth century. Gregory, the supposed author of the vita, inquires of Basil whether the saint's faithful servant Theodora, who had recently died, was rewarded in the afterlife for her labors. Basil grants him a vision in which a young man takes Gregory to the "house of Basil," where Theodora welcomes him and agrees to describe her journey.

Theodora begins with a colorful account of anguish at her deathbed. Her misery intensifies when, at the moment of separation of soul from body, multitudes of angry Ethiopians (i.e., black demons) encircle her bed. They make terrible noises and faces, and, carrying documents (χάρτας) in their hands, they examine her works (II.6). As Theodora averts her eyes from them, she sees two "exceedingly beautiful" angels coming toward her. One of them rebukes the demons for their haste to condemn, but they retort that Theodora has committed many sins from the time of her youth (II.7). During this debate Death

arrives. He dislocates all of Theodora's joints and gives her a potion that causes her soul to exit the body (II.8).

The two angels receive her soul in the veil of their cloaks. The demons immediately surround the angels claiming that they have records of Theodora's terrible transgressions (μεγάλα καὶ φοβερὰ λίαν πταίσματα αὐτῆς κεκτήμεθα); they insist that she defend (ἀπολογήσασθαι) herself. The angels examine Theodora's works¹¹ and select and weigh these deeds "against the sins by which I transgressed, and redeemed them one by one."¹² While the angels are thus occupied, the demons continue to attack Theodora (II.9).

During this commotion Basil appears. He gives the two angels a scarlet bag full of pure gold (βαλάντιον κόκκινον χρυσοῦ καθαροῦ μεστόν), to be used to free Theodora from her debts as she proceeds through her subsequent journey. This gold symbolizes Basil's excess spiritual wealth, accumulated through his sweat and toil. Basil explains that his actions are a response to Theodora's longtime service to him. Seeing this, the demons depart, leaving their business unfinished (II.10). Subsequently, Basil pours over Theodora pure oil, which covers her completely.¹³ Then she and the two angels commence their upward journey through the air (II.11).

Theodora's ensuing passage through the tollhouses (τελώνια) occupies most of the vision (II.12–40).¹⁴ There are a total of twenty-one stops in the soul's journey, each one manned by demons who hold records of her deeds and each dedicated to one or two sins: Slander (II.12), Verbal Abuse (II.13), Envy (II.14), Falsehood (II.15), Wrath and Anger (II.16), Pride (II.17), Idle Chatter (II.18), Usury and Deceit (II.19), Ennui and Vainglory (II.20), Avarice (II.21), Excessive Wine Drinking and Inebriation (II.22), Maliciousness (II.24), Magic and Divination (II.26), Gluttony (II.30), Idolatry and Heresy (II.31), Homosexuality and Pederasty (II.32), Adultery (II.33), Murder (II.34), Theft (II.35), Fornication (II.36–38),¹⁵ and Heartlessness and Cruelty (II.39–40). Theodora and the angels stop at each tollhouse. She describes in vivid detail the terrifying demons and their leaders, all exhibiting the characteristics of the sin they represent. For example, in the tollhouse of Wrath and Anger, the leader, "sitting on a throne like an idol of sooty bronze, was full of uncontrolled wrath and bitterness" (II.16.4–5). In some cases, Theodora effortlessly passes the tollhouses because the demons have no grounds for charging her, though at times they try to accuse her falsely. In most, the demons bring out records of her sins. Because Theodora does not have enough good deeds of her own, the angels pay her debt using the spiritual gold that Basil had given them. In the tollhouse of Wrath and Anger, the fifth in the series, Theodora admits that all her good deeds are used up.

Throughout the trip the angels accompanying Theodora offer helpful comments on how the tollhouses work and on the mechanics of salvation. Already in the tollhouse of Verbal Abuse (II.13), the second in the series, they

underscore the importance of Basil's gift of spiritual gold, without which Theodora's soul would have struggled greatly. Later the angels remark that those alive would lead a more careful life and store an abundance of good deeds, had they known the terrible misery of passing through the tollhouses (II.23). Theodora asks them how the demons, who live at such a distance from the earth, know the actions of each person in such detail. They reply that at baptism every Christian receives both a guardian angel, who records the good deeds, and a wicked one, who records all sins. This latter record is dispatched in writing to the appropriate tollhouse, along with the amount of the owed debt. Unless the person has worthily repented, or has enough good works, the demons grab the soul, beat it, bind it, and throw it in the depths of Hades until the Last Judgment (II.25). Theodora then asks for a clarification: Is it possible to erase one's sin from these records while still alive? It is possible, they reply, but only if one confesses wholly to his spiritual father, follows the instructions for repentance, and receives the spiritual father's forgiveness (Theodora did not confess, but she had abstained from her sins for a long time). After confession and repentance, the records of sins in the tollhouses are erased by the Holy Spirit – confession at one's deathbed is especially beneficial for obvious reasons (II.27). Repentance, prayer, and avoidance of sin without confession, however, are insufficient (II.28). It is also important to confess to one spiritual father, rather than to many, in order to avoid severe penances (II.29). Finally, the angels tell Theodora that the tollhouse of Fornication is the most terrible of all, responsible for the loss of countless souls to Hades (II.38).¹⁶

After their successful passage through the tollhouses, Theodora and her companions arrive at the wondrous Gate of Heaven (πύλη τοῦ οὐρανοῦ), which is decorated with distinctive artwork. An angel greets and embraces them. Further inside, another group of angels welcomes them (II.41). They proceed to the throne, upon which the Lord "reposes ineffably." It is white, surrounded by angels, and radiant with light. Everybody rejoices in Theodora's salvation. Subsequently the voice of God instructs Theodora's escorts to take her soul on a tour of the "abodes and lodgings of the saints and to all subterranean regions, and then bring it to rest where my servant Basil has commanded you" (II.42).¹⁷

A Road Map for the Afterlife

Theodora's account is the fullest Byzantine exposition of what the soul experiences between death and the end of days. It comprises two main components, a personal (one might say personalized) provisional judgment in which the soul is interrogated, and an intermediate state in which the soul awaits the Second Coming. Depending on the outcome of the personal judgment,

the soul is led either to paradise or to Hades, where it experiences in part its eventual rewards or punishments.

Most of Theodora's account is dedicated to the process of judgment. This begins even before the separation of the soul from the body, when the angels debate with the horde of demons about Theodora's worthiness in a scene, like many in this narrative, that is strongly reminiscent of court proceedings. The debate continues after Theodora's death but its terms become more specific. The angels have to counter the weight of Theodora's sins with her good deeds; both sins and good actions are weighed on a scale. Although Basil's appearance (II.10) seems to leave this business unfinished, the angels had earlier found enough of Theodora's good deeds to compensate for her sins (II.9.14–15).

A second kind of judgment takes place in the various tollhouses. Its mechanics are naively straightforward. As explained by the angels (II.25), each tollhouse receives a record of a person's deeds and the owed amount. If a person has not confessed and repented, then they must offer their good deeds to be "measured and weighed" against their offences. In most cases Theodora has neither confessed her sins, nor carried out enough good deeds, but she is able to pass, because the angels use Basil's spiritual gold to pay for her transgressions.

The last stop in Theodora's upward journey is God's throne (II.42). Though little happens there, God's command allows Theodora to visit (and the author to describe) both the abodes of the saints and righteous, and Hades. As it has been asserted earlier in the *vita*, these are temporary residences, where the souls remain only until the Last Judgment.¹⁸

Theodora's account is essentially a road map of the afterlife, unusual in its completeness. The author strives to cover all bases and to leave no question unanswered. The account, however, is not a work of systematic theology, and it thus contains several inconsistencies. It includes, for example, two separate judgments in which the fate of Theodora's soul is decided: the weighing of her deeds immediately after her death and the soul's passage through the tollhouses.¹⁹ The first renders the second redundant. In fact, the good deeds that save Theodora from the last tollhouse (II.39–40) are virtually the same that tipped the balance in her favor during the judgment immediately after her death (II.9). Though Theodora claims to have used up all her good deeds in the fifth tollhouse, she has enough to be freed from the last one. Furthermore, even though the author goes to great lengths to present the passage through each tollhouse as essentially a monetary exchange (the soul must pay the debt it owes), on occasion he mentions scales and weighing (presumably of deeds, II.24.6, II.25.23–24), something that constitutes a wholly different process. Although Theodora asserts that each category of saints has a separate abode (II.43), and that those saved but not sainted reside in the abode of Abraham (II.44), she ends up in Basil's house, a place specially prepared for that saint and those he guided to salvation (II.46).

Theodora's account is a synthesis of various theologies, narratives, and traditions that ran throughout Late Antiquity, ultimately deriving from the Old Testament and Intertestamental Jewish literature. In these narratives, as we have seen, some elements turn up more frequently than others. At the time of death, angels – most often two – and demons, terrifying and usually described as Ethiopians, appear, sometimes along with Satan. A debate ensues between the two groups about the worthiness of the dying person. In some stories, the fate of the soul is decided at this point. In many others it is not, and at the end of the debate the angels take the soul and begin their heavenward ascent through the tollhouses, each dedicated to a sin. The tollhouse of fornication is the most difficult. If the passage is successful, the angels take the soul to God.

These most frequent elements, coming from different traditions, essentially constitute the outline of Theodora's account in the *Life of Basil the Younger*. Evidently they were all circulating in the tenth century, when its purported author, Gregory, attempted to weave them into a somewhat cohesive narrative, as was the case with the *Apocalypse of Paul*.²⁰ When taken as an amalgamation of various traditions, the inconsistencies of Theodora's account, especially the successive judgments, are easily understood. Thus, Satan, who arrives along with the demonic powers in the descriptions of Basil of Caesarea, Cyril, and Andrew the Fool, is replaced by Death in Gregory's text. The appearance of Death (II.8) successfully interrupts the logothesion between the angels and demons (II.7). Similarly, Basil's arrival suspends the weighing of Theodora's deeds on a balance (II.9–10). Finally, Theodora's appearance at the throne of God (II.42) is devoid of any judgment, unlike the *Apocalypse of Paul* or the story of Paul of Monemvasia. Although Gregory never explains the reason for Theodora's successive judgments, he avoids with certain ingenuity the awkward transitions evident in earlier texts, such as Cyril's homily.

Additionally, Gregory is more ambitious than any previous author. By significantly expanding earlier traditions, he goes beyond simple harmonization and makes Theodora's account a fairly orderly theological statement about the fate of the soul. As in earlier cases, Gregory's goal is to instruct and to raise caution. In this respect he reverses the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, because the adventures of Theodora's soul become a warning to the living through Gregory's vision and his recording of the story. By describing the appalling postmortem ordeals of the soul, he encourages his audience to repent and be prepared (the angels say as much in II.23).²¹ He uses imagery that is familiar to his audience – tax collectors, scales, courts, beautiful villas and palaces, gardens, and feasts – to drive his points home. But unlike other authors, he excessively clarifies the process of judgment. His detailed description of the tollhouses and the angels' commentaries leaves out any vagueness. He explains how the demons in each tollhouse know in advance about the good and bad deeds of the soul. Tollhouses, he writes, are dedicated to serious sins, such as

homosexuality, murder, and fornication, but also to such everyday offenses as pride and idle chatter. The implication here is that nobody should feel safe, even if he or she has avoided grave transgressions. It is only through confession to a single spiritual father and true repentance, especially before death, that one can escape the postmortem turmoil.²²

With his emphasis on confession Gregory seems to want to correct earlier traditions, such as that of Peter the toll collector and the thief in Anastasios of Sinai, stories that imply that repentance without confession is enough for salvation.²³ Gregory's attitude toward confession parallels the development of this rite in the ninth and tenth centuries. John H. Erickson has argued that after Iconoclasm the public aspect of confession disappeared, and the actual, private confession of sins was emphasized.²⁴ It is also in the ninth century that the earliest penitential, a manual for confessors, appears.²⁵ Another parallel with Theodora's account is that penitentials overtly emphasize sexual sins and especially fornication. In one, dating perhaps to the early tenth century, the spiritual father's first question is, "How did you lose your virginity?"²⁶

Those, like Theodora, who do not confess their sins and repent before death, must confront their predicament by other means: their reserve of good deeds and assistance from a saint. Theodora's account includes two long lists of good deeds, one in the weighing immediately after her death (II.9), the other at the tollhouse of Heartlessness and Cruelty (II.39–40). Her two lists are very similar and both, especially the second, stress charitable works. The emphasis on charity, which has an important biblical precedent in Matthew 25:35–46, is unsurprising.²⁷ So is the notion that a saint (or saints) would provide aid in this life and, most importantly, in the afterlife.²⁸ What is novel, however, is Gregory's detailed explanation of how a saint can actualize his or her support. Basil gives Theodora's escorts a bag of pure spiritual gold (II.10).²⁹ He explains that, through the grace of Christ, he possesses abundant spiritual wealth and wants to share it with Theodora, who served him for a long time and gave him comfort in his old age. It is this reserve of gold that allows Theodora to reach the Gate of Heaven.

With Theodora's account the provisional judgment reaches its most complete state. Why is it that that particular moment warranted such a systematization? *The Life of Basil the Younger* was composed in the 950s or 960s.³⁰ Based primarily on Basil's omission from the *Synaxarion of Constantinople*, Rydén and Magdalino have concluded that he was an invented character,³¹ as was Gregory, the purported author of the *Life*.³² The patron or patrons who commissioned the vita (if indeed it was commissioned) are unknown. However, Magdalino has argued that the patron could have been Basil the *parakoimomenos* (d. after 985), a eunuch and the illegitimate son of emperor Romanos I.³³ Sullivan, Talbot, and McGrath have suggested the brothers Anastasios and Constantine Gongylios (fl. 10th c.), both also eunuchs and *praipositoi* at the court. Although

this matter remains unsettled, it is significant that the text was likely sponsored by laymen associated with the imperial administration.

As we have seen, the *Life of Basil the Younger* is one of a number of tenth- and early-eleventh-century texts that exhibit an intense interest in eschatology. Several scholars have noticed the many explicit similarities between *Basil* and the *Life of Andrew the Fool*.³⁴ These have led Magdalino to argue convincingly for a “common or co-ordinated authorship.”³⁵ An important parallel that evinces coordination is the apocalyptic visions in both vitae. *Basil the Younger* describes the fate of the soul after death and the intermediate state in both paradise and Hades, the resurrection and the Last Judgment; *Andrew* describes earthly paradise, the throne of God, the state of the souls in paradise and Hades, and the end of days, finishing with the general resurrection. Thus, Magdalino has argued, the *Life of Basil* and the *Life of Andrew* provide a *summa* of what was known about the afterlife, heaven and hell, the end times, and the Last Judgment.³⁶ The almost comprehensive character of these two texts fits well with encyclopedic trends in ninth- and tenth-century Byzantine culture, especially in the imperial court.³⁷

THE PROVISIONAL JUDGMENT AFTER 950

Texts written after the *Life of Basil the Younger* that discuss the provisional judgment essentially recycle some or most of the elements found in Theodora’s account. With few exceptions, such as the *Dioptra*, it is difficult to prove direct dependence upon *Basil*. Variations show that later authors mined the same repository of stories that Gregory did. In fact, many cite their sources, a practice that signals a new approach, namely, the recognition of established traditions backed by saintly authoritative figures of the past.

The *Life of Niphon* was composed in the late tenth or early eleventh century.³⁸ Niphon is another fictional character who supposedly lived in the fourth century in Constantinople until he became bishop of the town of Konstantiniane in Egypt. Like *Basil the Younger*, *Niphon* includes extensive eschatological material.³⁹ In a series of visions Niphon is made to observe the provisional judgment of several individuals. The theological backdrop is almost identical to that in *Basil*. The first of these visions (101) is a summary, so to speak, of what follows: Niphon sees that the gates of heaven are open; angels bring up the souls of men; dark demons in the air attempt to snatch the souls; and the angels resist and whip the demons. Next, the soul of a man who was pious during his lifetime and who had practiced charity, love, chastity, and propriety (σεμνότητά) with fervor bypasses the “dragons of the air” (δράκοντες τοῦ ἄερος). Hosts of angels gather to receive his soul, and take it to the throne of God. It is finally given to archangel Michael, who leads the soul to the appropriate place (103). On the other end of the spectrum is the soul of a cleric

called Eleutherios, who spent his life in sin – fornication, adultery, magic, and theft, among others. As Eleutherios’s soul arrives at the fourth tollhouse, the dragon snatches his soul from the angels and slams it on the earth. A group of demons beats it and takes it to the “abyss” (105).⁴⁰ In other instances, *Niphon* also provides information about other possible complications and outcomes of the heavenward journey that are not explicitly found in *Basil*. The soul of a servant who, abused continuously by his master, hangs himself is taken by the demons directly to the subterranean regions, while his guardian angel laments his loss (104). Evidently suicide, a grave sin that made repentance impossible, rendered provisional judgment unnecessary. In another vision a soul is stopped at the tollhouse of fornication because the person practiced homosexuality and was verbally abusive. The soul’s guardian angel is called, and he confirms that he had repented and confessed his sins to God (101).⁴¹ Similarly, the soul of a eunuch is stopped at an unspecified tollhouse and accused of verbal abuse, fornication, homosexuality, and murder. The angels claim that whatever the eunuch did in his youth, God had forgiven him; after each subsequent sin, he showed honest repentance and confessed his sins to God (102). In *Niphon*’s final vision an angel with a fiery sword is dispatched to claim the soul of a man who was a usurer and a hypocrite, and who had bad-mouthed *Niphon*. His soul is carried to the abyss at the point of the angel’s sword (108). This, the text implies, is the end reserved for the worst sinners, those who particularly irritate God.

Thus the *Life of Niphon* reiterates Theodora’s account of the afterlife, especially the tollhouses, as well as complements it with additional case studies. The goal of the visions is clearly didactic.⁴² Like *Basil the Younger*, *Niphon* underscores the importance of charity and a pious life of repentance and confession.⁴³ Considering the similarities of *Niphon* with *Basil the Younger* and *Andrew the Fool*,⁴⁴ it is very likely that its author was familiar with Theodora’s account. However, *Niphon*’s author drew from much earlier texts. The assertion of the angels that the eunuch’s youthful sins had been forgiven by God (102) is drawn from the *Life of Antony* (65).⁴⁵ Even more striking are the parallels with the *Apocalypse of Paul*. In *Niphon*’s vision of the righteous man (103), the angels kiss the man’s soul, as they do in *Paul* (14);⁴⁶ Christ in *Niphon* replaces the “spirit” (πνεῦμα) that receives the soul in *Paul*;⁴⁷ and it is the Archangel Michael who takes the soul to paradise in both *Paul* and *Niphon*.⁴⁸ Finally the lamenting guardian angel of the servant who went straight to Hades (104) is inspired by the guardian angel of the paradigmatic wicked man in *Paul* (16).⁴⁹

The visions of the provisional judgment in the *Life of Niphon* sit squarely in the tradition of Constantinopolitan hagiographical fiction exemplified by *Basil the Younger*. Such texts mine earlier sources selectively to create a somewhat systematic narrative. The eleventh century, however, marks a significant turn. From this point on authors often feel obliged to cite their sources, or at

least acknowledge that they exist. This reflects a different mentality. As in *Basil the Younger*, it recognizes that the biblical and conciliar silence on the afterlife had been supplanted by a host of narratives. However, rather than solving the problem by hagiographical visionary harmonization, authors in the eleventh century seek to validate the information provided by turning to authoritative figures of the past. Because of this, there is little production of original content. The way the stories are combined and categorized, however, still serves the particular agenda of each author. Three examples will suffice.

An excellent specimen of this new attitude is the *Evergetinos* by Paul (d. 1054), founder of the famous Evergetis monastery in Constantinople. It is a collection of earlier texts intended as a manual primarily for the monastic life and a reference work for its practitioners.⁵⁰ It circulated widely in Byzantium and remains popular even today.⁵¹

Paul drew from a variety of sources, including the *Apophthegmata*, saints' lives, and the writings of various Church fathers.⁵² The work is arranged in four books. Each book contains fifty *hypotheses* (ὑποθέσεις, "topics" or "subjects") covering a wide variety of issues – such as repentance, confession, earthly possessions, and relations with family. The likely inspiration for the overall concept is the so-called systematic collection of the *Apophthegmata* (*APsys*), but as with that compilation, it is sometimes difficult for the modern reader to discern the logic behind the distribution of the stories.

Even though the *Evergetinos* contains only preexisting material, the selection of the sources and passages is telling. The tenth hypothesis of the first book is entitled "About the fact that after the exit [from the body] the soul receives the examination of the wicked spirits, who meet it and hinder the ascent." It begins with the two visions from the *Life of Antony*,⁵³ and continues with a story from *APanon* that mentions the meeting of the adverse powers with the soul during its ascent;⁵⁴ an excerpt attributed to Abba Isaiah of Skete (fl. 5th c.?) that describes in general terms how the powers of darkness quarrel with the angels who carry the soul; and a short text by "Theophilus, the Archbishop" for which the *Evergetinos* credits the *Apophthegmata*, but that is very similar to Greek Ephraim.⁵⁵ This is a more detailed description of the provisional judgment at the deathbed (the text calls it a logothesion) based on one's deeds, although no weighing is mentioned. Thus the *Evergetinos* transmits in general terms two well-known traditions – judgment at the deathbed and judgment along a journey beset by demons – but omits any mention of the tollhouses. It is difficult to draw any secure conclusions from an argument *ex silentio*, but it seems impossible that Paul, who evidently had access to an excellent library, was unaware of the *telonia*.

Stories touching on the afterlife are sprinkled throughout the *Evergetinos*, although theologically none strays beyond the parameters set by the tenth hypothesis. The first hypothesis of the first book, dedicated to the hope of

salvation through repentance, includes a story of a dispute between the angels and demons over the soul of a repentant monk who had bled to death,⁵⁶ and a similar dispute over a repentant nun.⁵⁷ In the fifth hypothesis of the first book, dedicated to the remembrance of death and future judgment, an excerpt from Greek Ephraim implies that the souls of the righteous are taken by angels, whereas demons lead the souls of the wicked to the eternal fire.⁵⁸ In the eighth hypothesis, dedicated to stories of people who died but then returned to life, the soul of a man called Chrysaorios is taken directly by demons, despite his son's prayers.⁵⁹

The *Evergetinos* confirms that several traditions about the afterlife were still in circulation. All in all, it contains little that is theologically new with one important exception. The seventh hypothesis of the first book is titled, "That the souls of the virtuous are often comforted at the time of death by divine overshadowing and are in that way separated from the body."⁶⁰ Most of this hypothesis is made up of nine stories from the fourth *Dialogue* of Gregory Dialogos, the Byzantine name for pope Gregory I the Great (d. 604).⁶¹ These include the story of a presbyter from Nursia who saw the apostles calling him at his deathbed; Tarsila, Gregory's aunt, whose soul was received by Christ; and Mousa, whose soul was called by the Mother of God.⁶² Gregory's *Dialogues* were somewhat popular in Byzantium, but why did Paul rely so heavily on them? He evidently wanted to argue for the special treatment of saints, or felt that he had to, given the multitude of evidence in the *Dialogues*.⁶³ All nine stories pertain to extraordinary appearances or visions at the death of saintly people, a tradition that was thin in the East. This is evident in that the rest of the hypothesis includes only three stories: the death of Sisoës,⁶⁴ Daniel the Stylite,⁶⁵ and the monk Anthimos⁶⁶ – the latter including only angelic psalmody that was heard at the monk's death but no special apparitions.⁶⁷

To the eleventh century dates another exceptionally interesting text, the *Dioptra*, written in 1095 by the monk Philip Monotropos.⁶⁸ The *Dioptra* comprises five books, four of which include a dialogue between the Soul and the Body in verse, with several insertions in prose. The last book, entitled *Klauthmoi* ("Lamentations"), is a lengthy exposition of the afterlife starting at the deathbed and ending with the Last Judgment.⁶⁹ Philip was patently familiar with apocalyptic accounts such as *Basil the Younger* and *Andrew the Fool*. In the *Klauthmoi* the sequence of events of the afterlife is identical to Theodora's account. Many details, such as the categories of good deeds presented at the weighing and the emphasis on fornication, are similar,⁷⁰ although Philip names the sources from which he draws his material (Gregory Dialogos, Makarios, and Antony), and *Basil the Younger* is not one of them.⁷¹ Virtually nothing is new here, and the attempt to harmonize disparate traditions on the provisional judgment is made even more gauche by Paul's orthodoxy, namely, that God is the acting agent. The angels tell the soul that the "fearful and great judge" ordered it to exit the

flesh, that they will depart toward the Lord, and that the soul should be fearful of the decision that the judge, that is, God, will rightly deliver.⁷² Yet, in the meantime, the soul must undergo the weighing of its deeds (vv. 84–122), which Philip describes in some detail, and then must pass the tollhouses (vv. 123–133), which are dealt with summarily. When the ascending party finally makes it to the throne, the “impartial judge,” whose opinion is rather purposeless at this point, decides, in fidelity to the long apocalyptic tradition, that the soul should be taken on a tour of the abodes of the righteous.⁷³

Philip’s work is certainly meant for a monastic audience. In the *Klauthmoi* he addresses directly his “brothers and fathers in Christ,”⁷⁴ to whom he offers an all-inclusive picture of the afterlife. Unlike *Basil the Younger* or *Andrew the Fool*, this picture is not presented as a revelatory vision, but as a given fact, based on distinguished authorities of the past, however few the cited sources might be. Philip’s goal is evidently didactic, but in the last forty verses he encourages his readers to pray on his behalf, and he implores Christ to save him, whether Philip wants it or not. In this way, the *Klauthmoi* become part instruction, part intimate meditation on the end of life and the hope for eternal salvation. More than any other part of the *Dioptra*, and indeed in contrast to most previous literature on the afterlife, the *Klauthmoi* are distinctly personal.

The so-called *Theological Chapters* of Michael Glykas, an imperial *grammatikos* (secretary), have been rightly characterized as representing “the orthodoxy that was common to the educated and the uneducated, the powerful and the poor.”⁷⁵ The work comprises nearly one hundred answers to questions posed to Glykas by various laypeople and clergy.⁷⁶ They deal with biblical stories and characters, dogma, life on earth, the resurrection of the body, and many other topics. In the twentieth chapter Glykas addresses the fate of the souls through a masterful *mélange* of biblical and later quotations that almost makes sense.⁷⁷ It is worth quoting at length:

Indeed at the time of the exit [of the soul from the body], the souls are forcefully carried down to Hades by demons. This is evident from what the Lord demonstrated. For right around the time of the passion, when he said that “the ruler of this world is coming; he has no hold over me,”⁷⁸ he demonstrated plainly, as the great Basil says,⁷⁹ that when each person dies, the demons stand nearby and fight it out to take [the soul] with them, and especially those who do not deny committing wicked deeds. That this is how these things are has also been proven by acts from above. As the apostle Jude says in his catholic epistle, when that God-seeing Moses died, the devil appeared, calling him a murderer and claiming that he had jurisdiction over such matters. And he confidently laid claim to his body. To whom the commanding general Michael said, “The Lord rebuke you!”⁸⁰ In addition to these examples, the Lord indicated through a physical image, in accordance with what the great Maximos says,⁸¹ that, after the departure from this life, wicked powers stand against our

souls as they proceed on the upward journey. And they prevail over those who have performed bad deeds, but they are defeated by the righteous through the angelic alliance.⁸²

There follows a quotation from Greek Ephraim about the “rulers of the darkness,”⁸³ and a summary of the first vision from the *Life of Antony* (65).⁸⁴

With Glykas we are beyond the charming tales of the *Apophthegmata*, the hagiographic fiction of *Basil*, or the poetic introspection of Philip Monotropos. This is theology by a highly respected author with an impressive knowledge of the Bible and many Christian writers, aimed at answering a question relevant to everyone. But in the end, despite the deluge of quotations, Glykas is very thin on details. The righteous go to heaven, the wicked go to Hades, and demons appear at one’s death and in the air – that is as far as he would venture. There is nothing about the weighing of the deeds, or anything specific about the tollhouses – nothing about the mechanics of the provisional judgment.⁸⁵

After Glykas, discussions of the provisional judgment drop dramatically, likely as a result of the encounter with the Latin concept of purgatory and the ensuing emphasis on the intermediate state. By the time of Symeon, archbishop of Thessalonike (d. 1429), the provisional judgment had entirely disappeared. Like Glykas, Symeon answers a question, or rather a series of questions, about the soul’s exit and journey: Do one or many angels receive the soul? Is it possible for the soul to exit without an angel? Symeon does not have any definite answers, so he discusses these matters to the extent he can (ταῦτα κατὰ δύναμιν λέγομεν). What is sure, Symeon says, is that the souls of the saints and the righteous are received by angels, and those of the wicked by demons. We know this, he says, from many stories and the works of the Church fathers, including the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, and visions, such as the death of Paul of Thebes. Symeon believes the souls of the saints are also attended by souls of other saints for comfort. The number of angels appearing at one’s deathbed is not fixed but likely depends on the worth of the soul: Some are comforted by many angels, others by fewer. The sinners are grabbed by demons, but not without God’s consent; the souls of sinners are also separated by angels so that the “enemy” does not have the opportunity to kill men before it is their time, and so that he does not think that he is lord of death and life.⁸⁶

THE INTERMEDIATE STATE IN THE MIDDLE BYZANTINE PERIOD

Pseudo-Athanasios’s concept of the intermediate state, paradise and Hades, as places or states where the righteous and the wicked get a foretaste of their rewards or punishments, remains dominant throughout the Byzantine period and is followed by major fathers of the Church. For example, Photios, patriarch of Constantinople (d. after 893), makes a clear distinction between paradise,

which he describes in eloquent sensory terms, and the Kingdom of Heaven, whose goods are infinitely superior.⁸⁷ Similarly, Theophylaktos, archbishop of Ohrid (d. after 1126), in his exegesis of Luke 23:39–43, claims that the thief entered into paradise, which is a place of spiritual repose (χωρίον πνευματικῆς ἀναπαύσεως), but not into the Kingdom. Those who have been deemed worthy of spiritual gifts of grace and have hence received the foretaste of the Holy Spirit are in paradise, even though they are not yet perfect and they have not received the Kingdom.⁸⁸ In the fifteenth century Symeon of Thessalonike proclaimed that the souls of sinners “have not yet been delivered to the full punishment.”⁸⁹ Several other theologians take the same position.⁹⁰

There are, however, a few notable dissenting voices, most importantly Niketas Stethatos (d. ca. 1090), a monk and distinguished theologian.⁹¹ Stethatos mentions no provisional judgment in his writings.⁹² He asserts that Adam’s paradise has been closed for it serves no purpose because, with Christ’s Resurrection, the door of the Kingdom was opened to all.⁹³ He further believes that angels take the souls of saints (including, presumably, the souls of all righteous) to the Trinity, and that, under the primordial light (πρωτον φως), they join the angelic powers in offering praise. For Stethatos this is a continuation of the situation granted through the Holy Spirit during one’s lifetime: “Then, in such a way, intimately and purely, as a friend meets a friend, each of these [souls] joins, by divine approval, the [angelic] order, whose grace and rank it received, through the Holy Spirit in the present life.”⁹⁴ Likewise, punishing angels bring the souls of sinners to Hades, where they join the ruler of the darkness and his dark angels.⁹⁵ Stethatos, therefore, sees the afterlife as an extension of earthly life. He completely foregoes the provisional judgment, because he deems one’s conduct and deeds to be sufficient in themselves; no postmortem appraisal by demons or angels is necessary. His opinions on the intermediate state are not always clear. In his letters to a certain Gregory the Sophist, Stethatos vehemently opposes any notion of the earthly paradise as an intermediate state and claims, again, that the souls of the righteous are already with Christ.⁹⁶ Elsewhere, however, he concedes that the souls await full restoration in the future (τῆς μελλούσης τῶν θείων ἐκείνων πραγμάτων ἀποκαταστάσεως), but he does not explain how this is different from the previous state.⁹⁷

Stethatos, nevertheless, seems to be in the minority. Pseudo-Athanasios’s positions influenced most later theologians. He is quoted extensively by Glykas in his *Theological Chapters*. According to Glykas the souls of the righteous are in paradise, because Christ opened paradise not only for the thief of Luke 23 but for all the righteous, as argued by pseudo-Athanasios and Gregory Dialogos.⁹⁸ This is Adam’s paradise, which was opened by the repentance of the thief; it is incorruptible and located above the earth.⁹⁹ This is, however, different from the Kingdom, which is much more excellent.¹⁰⁰ The goods prepared by God for those who love him have not been seen by any eye or heard by any ear.¹⁰¹

Glykas, however, disagrees strongly with Pseudo-Athanasios on one important point, the activities of the saints after death, to which he dedicates a whole chapter.¹⁰² Though the saints have received only a “deposit” (ἄρραβῶνα) of the future enjoyment without being perfected, they can stand with confidence (μετὰ παρρησίας) before Christ on behalf of those still living.¹⁰³ They are not confined in one place, nor are they hindered from going to heaven to intercede with Christ.¹⁰⁴ Glykas dismisses pseudo-Athanasios’s objection that the saints cannot be in different places at once. He explains that sometimes the saints appear to us, sometimes angels are sent (in the form of the saints), and in other cases it is just the grace of the All-Holy Spirit.¹⁰⁵ In support of his positions Glykas offers a great number of sources: Christ said, “Father, I desire that those also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory,” and Paul said, “My desire is to depart and be with Christ.”¹⁰⁶ And Theodore Stoudite promised his disciples that “if I find *parrhesia* with God after I depart, I will not stop praying on your behalf.”¹⁰⁷ Why do the souls of the righteous have visions of saints and hear angelic hymns when they are separated from the body? So that they can bear the separation without pain, as Gregory Dialogos has explained.¹⁰⁸

Glykas’s strong disagreement with one of his most revered sources is understandable. Pseudo-Athanasios’s position implies, at least according to Glykas, that the saints do not have the ability to intercede in front of Christ, because they are confined in paradise. This controversy over the postmortem activity and location of the saints goes back to at least the sixth century, when it was addressed primarily by presbyter Eustratios.¹⁰⁹ Employing an impressive array of scriptural, patristic, and hagiographical sources, Eustratios argued that the souls of the saints appear on earth in their own essence and existence, although behind everything is the divine power.¹¹⁰ The intercessory ability of saints was hardly in doubt in the twelfth century, but Glykas evidently felt he had to address it at length because he considered Pseudo-Athanasios an authority on many other topics.

As with the provisional judgment, several texts dating from the ninth to the eleventh centuries describe paradise and Hades in detail.¹¹¹ These literary imaginings depend upon a variety of sources. For paradise, these include the books of Genesis, Ezekiel, and Revelation, along with Jewish apocrypha, such as *1 Enoch*, and such pagan traditions as the Elysian fields, and ekphraseis of cities.¹¹² For Hades, these include pagan “descents into hell,” the New Testament (especially Matthew 25 and Luke 16:19–31), and Early Christian apocrypha, especially the *Apocalypse of Peter* and that of *Paul*.¹¹³ Here I concentrate on three of the most thorough descriptions, from the *Life of Basil the Younger* and from the Apocalypses of *Anastasia* and the *Theotokos*, with references to others when appropriate.

Paradise

Let us revisit Theodora's account of paradise in more detail. After successfully passing through the tollhouses, Theodora and her companions arrive at the Gate of Heaven. They cross a body of water, an airy expanse (II.41), and two clouds to arrive at an incredibly beautiful courtyard, where they see God's throne. After the customary praise and prostration, Theodora is taken to see the abodes and lodgings of the saints (τὰς σκηναὶς καὶ μοναὶς τῶν ἁγίων) and the subterranean regions (τὰ καταχθόνια) (II.42). This is an important point because it indicates that paradise proper is part of heaven, but it is distinct from the area of God's throne, a differentiation that Glykas makes explicit.

Theodora finds the abodes of the saints in "that plain and place of Eden, in the place of spiritual green grass, where noetic water of relaxation gushes up, in a place of life and living water of repose, in a place of divine refreshment" (II.43). Though the setting is clearly pastoral, the abodes are like "extraordinary palaces," gleaming with mosaics and marbles, all exceedingly beautiful in different ways. Theodora notices that each category of saints has their own abode. She mentions prophets, martyrs, holy monks, hierarchs and teachers, and the righteous. In width and length, the plain is one hundred times bigger than Constantinople.

Next Theodora and her companions traverse all the abodes of the saints and arrive at the location of Abraham, whose abode is filled with ineffable glory (II.44). It stands in a valley¹¹⁴ filled with many-colored flowers and spices of various types. In the same place, there are palaces belonging to Isaac, Jacob, and the twelve patriarchs.¹¹⁵ Abraham sits on a throne surrounded by the souls of baptized children. The patriarchs, as well as those of their descendants who have pleased God, also sit on thrones.

Theodora's description of Hades is brief. Its dungeons are dark and gloomy, full of lament. Its inmates are innumerable. They cry "woe, woe" and raise a bitter song, as they are devoured by the filth of their own transgressions (II.45). Finally, Theodora arrives at Basil's abode. She shares it with others whom Basil has helped to acquire salvation, although she does not know all of them.

After Theodora ends her account, she invites Gregory to visit Basil's mansion (II. 46). Gregory is amazed at the beauty of the house's courtyard (II.47) that precedes shining palaces of boundless height (II. 48). At the east end of the courtyard stands a table filled with colorful fruits and flowers (II. 48). Basil sits at the head of this table on a high throne sharing a feast with many young men (II.49). The saint offers a blessing to Gregory (II.50) and expresses his hope that the latter will not pester him anymore about Theodora's fate (II.51). He then instructs Theodora to show Gregory the house's garden, which is of indescribable beauty (II.52). Theodora explains to Gregory that God created this garden

for Basil and his spiritual children (II.53). Gregory tries to touch his body but realizes that he is in a noetic state (II.54). He subsequently departs from Basil's house and wakes up (II.55).

Thus Theodora visits three locations in heaven: the throne of God, the abodes of the saints, and that of Abraham, which includes those of the other patriarchs and of the righteous. The last two constitute paradise proper. Theodora seems to differentiate between the dwelling places of the saints, who are separated in homologous groups, and those saved but not sainted, who reside with Abraham and the other patriarchs.¹¹⁶ This distinction seems to satisfy the need for a more exalted position for the saints, and is in line with later texts such as the *Evergetinos* and Glykas's *Theological Chapters*. The account is unclear about the location of Basil's mansion. This is likely intentional. The living arrangement – Basil and those who were saved by his work, a clear attempt at lionizing the saint – does not fit in either of paradise's two parts.¹¹⁷

Theodora repeats again and again that whatever she sees is constructed by God noetically (νοητῶς κατασκευασμένα, II.43.9). Also noetically, she embraces the saints who greet her (II.43.23–24); she cannot touch them, even though they appear in bodily form (II.44.21–24). This is because Theodora encounters souls that are divorced from their bodies. During her journey through the tollhouses the angels establish that this state of affairs is temporary, lasting only until the general resurrection (II.25.29–30, II.39.12–13). Theodora says that, in comparison to the real paradise, what Gregory sees is “a shadow and a mere dream” (II.53.4–6).¹¹⁸ Similarly, when Gregory tries to touch his own body, he finds himself “resembling a fiery flame or a sunbeam” (II.54.7–9). And yet both Theodora's and Gregory's descriptions engage the senses strongly. “Such were the eternal abodes of the saints,” Theodora recounts, “one surpassing another in radiance, so that each of the saints in turn, observing that awesome and immaterial beauty of the abodes, rejoices and exults, never in the end being sated with the luxurious beauty of the other's abode” (II.43.9–13). Abraham's valley is filled with “sweet-smelling violets and roses, and spices of various types ... and every other pleasant fragrance” (II.44.6–8). As elsewhere in the *vita*, the author mines the experiences of his audience to help them relate to an otherworldly account. Fragrant flowers and spices would have been known to everyone. The palaces of the saints, with their exquisite decoration, expansive courtyards, and beautiful gardens are certainly influenced by imperial and aristocratic residences that would have been familiar to the inhabitants of Constantinople. In fact, Theodora gives a sense of the magnitude of the area covered by the saints' abodes by comparing it with Constantinople (II.44).

Other visualizations of paradise in texts from the ninth to eleventh centuries employ similar motifs. In the life of *Philaretos*, composed circa 823, Niketas, the grandson of the saint, describes paradise as filled with huge, beautiful trees of every kind, laden with fruit and nuts. Men, women, and children eat them. In

the middle, sitting on a golden, bejeweled throne, was his grandfather Philaretos, who had become Abraham.¹¹⁹ In *Barlaam and Ioasaph*, a prose romance written likely in the ninth or tenth century, paradise is described as a grand plain, filled with pleasing, translucent waters, beautiful flowers, plants, and trees.¹²⁰ There are thrones and couches with delightful coverings and mattresses prepared for the righteous. Next to the plain is a brilliant city surrounded by golden walls, in which reside light-emanating angelic hosts singing with incredible voices.¹²¹ In the tenth-century *Vision of Kosmas*, a text that has many affinities with *Basil the Younger*, the protagonist, accompanied by saints Andrew and John, traverses the gates of heaven, a city, and a plain with beautiful villages. He ends up in an agreeable green valley. In the middle of the valley is Abraham surrounded by countless children. After this there is an olive grove. Under each tree Kosmas sees a tent, and inside each tent a bed with a man upon it (Kosmas recognizes some of these men). His companions explain to him that these are the many abodes in the Savior's house, distributed according to the virtue of each inhabitant. After the olive grove is a splendid, but empty, walled city. At its edge there is a palace. In one of its halls Kosmas sees a marble table around which many people recline (again he recognizes some). Kosmas has a glimpse of Hades, situated near the city in the form of seven lakes, before returning to earth.¹²² The tenth-century *Apocalypse of Anastasia* contains a brief description of paradise as a garden laden with trees. There is also a prepared table¹²³ and an immense chamber, where many lamps hang; the ones that dazzle are those of the righteous, the dark ones belong to the sinners.¹²⁴ In the funeral oration for his daughter Styliane, Michael Psellos (d. after 1081) recounts her vision of paradise as an exceedingly beautiful garden. In the middle sits an enormous man who receives a tiny infant in his bosom.¹²⁵ In his vita, Niphon describes the vision of a certain Sozomen (69), who finds himself in an admirable courtyard filled with fragrant multicolored flowers, gorgeous plants, and sweet-singing birds. Sozomen follows a eunuch and ends up in front of posts through which he can glimpse another courtyard and many glorious palaces.¹²⁶ In the *Dioptra*, paradise is an all-shining place, where one can see Abraham and the other patriarchs, the Theotokos, the apostles and hierarchs, and all the other righteous.¹²⁷

These accounts have much in common. Their most immediate characteristic is exaggeration.¹²⁸ Henry Maguire has noted that descriptions of heaven inflate size, number, preciousness of materials, and the nature of physical features to differentiate it from the earthly realm.¹²⁹ Second, paradise is perpetually verdant and contains extraordinary nature, which, in most visions, is combined with some sort of constructed environment, usually courtyards, palaces, and a city. The inhabitants of these places live a peaceful and restful existence, eating the plentiful fruit (*Philaretos*), feasting (*Basil the Younger*, *Vision of Kosmas*), or resting on beds and thrones (*Vision of Kosmas*, *Barlaam and Ioasaph*). Finally, the

distinct parts of paradise seem to imply variations of holiness and concomitant rewards. This is also evident in the *Evergetinos*, which, excerpting Gregory Dialogos's exegesis of John 14:2, supports a differentiation of rewards based on one's works.¹³⁰ Theodora visits the abodes of the saints and the valley of Abraham while Sozomen is able to catch only a glimpse of the palaces behind the posts. However, no text explains what the exact differences among the locales are.

Despite these connecting elements, the visions vary in many details. In *Philaretos* there is mention only of the bosom of Abraham, while in *Barlaam and Ioasaph* there is a plain and a city. Some details are unique to each text. *Anastasia* sees the Good Thief inside paradise, but Adam and Eve stand, inexplicably, outside. In Styliane's vision she is let into paradise by Peter; Psellos explains that the enormous man in the middle of the garden is the Ancient of Days, rather than Abraham. The most complicated is the *Vision of Kosmas*. The protagonist sees what are presumably souls surrounding Abraham, the olive grove with the tents, the empty city, and the palace inside the city, where a banquet takes place. We might conjecture that the empty city is the Heavenly Jerusalem, where the souls will enter after the Second Coming. Its description has commonalities with that of the Heavenly Sion in *Basil the Younger* (IV.11–15).¹³¹ But Kosmas recognizes people he knows from his earthly life within the city's palace. As with the provisional judgment, we are likely dealing with various coexisting but independent traditions, which some authors attempted to combine. The composer of *Kosmas* felt obliged to include the bosom of Abraham (Luke 16:19–31), the many dwelling places in the house of the Father (John 14:2), the Heavenly Jerusalem in Revelation 21, and a feast, a reference to the parable of the great banquet in Luke 14:15–24, which Jesus narrated after a dinner guest said, "Blessed is anyone who will eat bread in the Kingdom of God." The juxtaposition of these motifs may not make logical sense but it certainly satisfies any need for scriptural precedents.

Hades

Two important texts describe in great detail Hades and the punishments of the souls therein. The first, the *Apocalypse of Theotokos*, composed between the ninth and eleventh centuries, recounts the Virgin's visit to the place of punishments and her intercession on behalf of the damned. In the other, the tenth-century *Apocalypse of Anastasia*, the protagonist, a humble nun supposedly living in the sixth century, is granted a tour of the other world with the Archangel Michael as her guide.

In both apocalypses, mirroring paradise, Hades has many compartments and gradations of punishments. The Theotokos first visits those condemned for their unbelief. They sit in darkness and wail (3–4).¹³² Then in the south and

western parts of Hades she sees a series of custom-made punishments: those who defiled their godparents in fornication are up to the chest in fire (6); those who took interest from gold are hanged by the feet and eaten by worms (9); and those guilty of sins of the mouth, that is, blasphemers and slanderers, hang by their tongues (14). Careless priests (16) and unworthy monastics (18), presbyters' wives (19) and deaconesses (20) have their own spaces as well. The worst sinners, however, are located in the left-hand parts of paradise, inside the "outer fire": the Jews who crucified Christ, those who deny baptism, those who fornicate against mother and daughter, sorcerers, murderers, and women who kill babies (23). The final punishment described is the lake of fire, where Christians who lived in evil ways reside (24). Anastasia, in her tour of Hades (29–36), sees fiery rivers, a pit with seven mouths, and a punishment called *Heptalophos* (lit. "seven hills"), which has innumerable ovens. Anastasia finds there, among others, careless priests and presbyters' wives who do not honor their husbands. Finally, she visits a separate punishment zone for the elite. Here she finds emperors (including John Tzimiskes, who murdered his predecessor Nikephoros II in 969), officials, bishops, and priests (41–43).

Often dismissed for their naiveté and peculiar content, these two apocalypses were rehabilitated by Baun's masterly study.¹³³ Baun showed how influential these texts were, investigated the textual environment that produced them, and suggested that their main goal was didactic, aimed at inducing repentance. Most important, she argued that the primary audience would have been what she calls "village Christianity," a lay, provincial, and likely rural society. Indeed, many of the sins – adultery, usury, eavesdropping, using false weights, inefficient priests – would have commonly disrupted life in small communities. While Baun is certainly right on the whole, one should not take these texts too seriously. Some of the sins they describe are plainly absurd: Laypeople are punished because they did not rise for the priest whenever he entered a church (*Theotokos* 13), priests because they did not realize that some morsels of the Eucharistic bread fell out of the vessel (*Theotokos* 16), or priests, again, because their widows married other men (*Anastasia* 41).

The level of detail in the apocalypses of *Theotokos* and *Anastasia* contrasts with the usually simpler visualizations of Hades in most other sources. *APsys* recounts a woman who has a vision of her mother in a dark house inside a boiling furnace, being burned by the fire and eaten by worms,¹³⁴ a story repeated in the *Evergetinos*.¹³⁵ The jails of Hades, according to Cyril of Alexandria, are "a place dark and gloomy, a place of eternal darkness where the light does not shine," filled with pain and incessant wailing.¹³⁶ In *Philaretos*, Niketas simply sees punishments and a deep, fiery, boiling river.¹³⁷ In *Barlaam and Ioasaph*, Hades, which constitutes a pendant to paradise, is a dark and gloomy place; the damned are inside a furnace, where they are burned by fire and eaten by punishing worms.¹³⁸ On his way out of the palace in the empty city, Kosmas

sees seven lakes: “One was full of darkness, the other of fire; one was full of ill-smelling fog, the other of worms, and every other was full of other kinds of punishment and retribution.” The lakes are filled with innumerable crowds that cry loudly.¹³⁹ Finally, the *Dioptra* describes Hades as dark and gloomy, the outer darkness, where one finds the worm that never sleeps, the gehenna of fire, the gnashing of teeth, and the rest of the punishments.¹⁴⁰ Virtually all of this imagery – the darkness, the incessant fire, the punishing worm – is the product of elaboration of the terse biblical constructions of Hades and gehenna.

The only seeming exception to this imagery is the life of *Andrew the Fool*. In a vision Andrew takes Epiphanius, his protégé, on a tour of Hades. It is a place difficult to access, dark, unpleasant, and foul smelling. They see prisons, bars, and jails, inside of which are animals, including rats, cats, foxes, snakes, vipers, and crows. They also see dung, which, as Andrew explains, is the accumulation of their sins; the chained souls feed on it until the resurrection, when they will be delivered to fire. Andrew also explains the various animals: The souls do not really look like that, but God altered their appearance for Epiphanius’s benefit. Each has become an animal that represents his or her sin. The deceitful are foxes, the avaricious are cats, and so on. While the punishments in *Andrew* are inventive, their context – a dark, gloomy jail-like place – is in line with the traditional understanding of Hades.¹⁴¹