Apocryphal and Esoteric Sources in the Development of Christianity and Judaism

The Eastern Mediterranean, the Near East, and Beyond

Edited by

Igor Dorfmann-Lazarev

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CHAPTER 23

Visions of Paradise in the Life of St Andrew the Fool and the Legacy of the Jewish Pseudepigrapha in Byzantium

Emmanouela Grypeou

Greek Byzantine apocalyptic literature has long been a largely unexplored and understudied field. Byzantine eschatological ideas used to be mainly investigated on the basis of theological writings, or liturgical texts, such as hymnography.[1] The popular ideas relating to the afterlife that circulated through writings of an apocalyptic or visionary character remain neglected by modern scholarship.[2]

Significantly, one of the main questions which has hardly been investigated with regard to this body of literature is how far and in which ways those texts form part of a long Jewish and Christian apocalyptic-eschatological tradition. Notably, Alexander Golitzin observed certain common themes between the Byzantine visionary literature and the Jewish Merkabah tradition as well as the *Hekhalot* literature. He stressed the 'interiorization of the ascent to heaven and other motifs from Second Temple and early Christian apocalypses'.[3]

The official theology of the Byzantine Empire has naturally influenced the formation of eschatological beliefs. As is well-known, however, even if the production and dissemination of esoteric literature was frowned upon by the

1 Cf. D. Olster, 'Byzantine Apocalypses', in B. McGinn (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of Apocalypticism* vol. 2, New York, 2000, pp. 48–73; E. Patlagean, 'Byzance et son autre monde: observations sur quelques récits', in A. Vauchez (ed.), *Faire Croire: modalités de la diffusion et de la reception des messages religieux du xxe au xve siècle*, Rome, 1981, pp. 201–221.

2 Following statement by Lennard Rydén reflects the common view of Byzantine scholars of the genre: 'Byzantine apocalypses tend to be fairly simple-minded documents. True, they are made up to a large extent of *topoi* deriving from the eschatological tradition, yet each one of them reflects the fears and aspirations of the time of its composition' (id., *The Life of St. Andrew the Fool: Introduction, testimonies and Nachleben, indices*, Uppsala, 1995, p. 305). Notably, Rydén was one of the few scholars who edited and studied extensively some of the texts in view.

3 A. Golitzin, ''Earthly Angels and Heavenly Men': The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha, Niketas Stethatos and the Tradition of 'Interiorized Apocalyptic' in Eastern Christian Ascetical and Mystical Literature', in *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 55 (2002), p. 147.

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Church authorities, pseudepigraphical literature continued to be copied, translated and expanded upon in monastic scriptoria and most notably in those in the periphery of the Empire.[4]

According to a widespread scholarly opinion, the Byzantine times are characterised by a relative lack of interest in writings relating to the afterlife and heavenly journeys. Indeed, although political apocalyptic texts, which were based mainly on the Book of Daniel, and dealt with the political fate of the Empire, circulated in multiple copies and versions, texts that were concerned with the fate of the souls after death seem to have existed rather marginally. Therefore, these writings are few in number and possibly also of a relatively limited popularity.

Notably, descriptions of eschatological visions are often integrated into hagiographical literature of the time, as part of out-of-body or after-death experiences of holy men and women, monks or nuns and their novices, and righteous people in general. The hell and paradise tours often also include a vision of the divine throne.

The descriptions of afterlife, which were included in the hagiographical literature, marked a shift with respect to the attribution of authority of the visionaries. The traditional revelatory figures of the earlier Jewish and Christian apocalyptic tradition, such as biblical patriarchs, become obsolete and even New Testament and apostolic authorities are viewed as distant figures of the past. The centre of attention is occupied almost exclusively by the figure of the Holy Man or Holy Woman. This shift becomes the norm for the Byzantine literature that seeks to transmit theoretical but also practical otherworldly knowledge to its clerical or non-clerical audience.

Furthermore, these writings demonstrate typical features of the literature of the time and reflect contemporary Byzantine popular views on life after death. In this regard, they represent valuable witnesses of their period and culture. However, it is important to note that a homogeneous tradition of eschatological views and motifs cannot be claimed in the context of Byzantine literature.

Significantly, the bodies of texts which deal with afterlife visions and narratives demonstrate a disproportionate interest in visions of hell punishments. The interest in ideas about paradise is relatively limited. It appears that the horrifying, hair-raising descriptions of hell punishments were considered to be more interesting and urgent because of their moralising intentionality for the broad public compared to the positive and at least superficially optimistic ideas of rewards promised in the afterlife for the very few righteous.

4 See M. Himmelfarb, *Ascent to Heaven*, Oxford–New York, 1993, p. 99.

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Descriptions of paradise can be found in a number of Byzantine texts that recount visionary experiences. A short description of paradise is included, for example, in one version of the Apocalypse of the Virgin Mary.[5] A longer description can be found in a tenth century text known as the Apocalypse of Anastasia.[6] It is important to note that these texts rely heavily on older apocalyptic texts and most notably on the Apocalypse of Paul. In certain aspects, texts such as the Apocalypse of the Virgin Mary and the Apocalypse of Anastasia can be regarded as medieval 're-writings' or expansions of this most popular Christian apocalyptic text of Late Antiquity.

Detailed narratives on paradise are integrated into hagiographical texts, such as the Life of Andrew the Fool and the Life of St Basil the Younger.[7] Lennart Rydén commented that the Lives of Basil and Andrew are 'fascinated by apocalypses to such an extent' that they 'almost appear to be pretexts for writing apocalyptic fiction' and for lengthy, complicated eschatological digressions.[8]

The mentioned texts are approximately dated to the tenth century. This dating confirms a newly discovered interest in apocalyptic prophecies around the tenth century in Byzantium. Ideas about the coming of the end of the world, the Last Judgment, Heaven and Hell seem to have been particularly popular around that period. It is an era when the Byzantine world appears to discover anew apocalypticism and eschatology.

According to Paul Magdalino: 'the very existence of these texts is important as confirmation that speculation about the afterlife was intense during the tenth century, when apocalyptic expectations ran high with the advent of the middle of the seventh millennium since the creation of the world'.[9]

In the following I am going to discuss the paradise visions narrated in the Life of Andrew the Fool. As I would like to demonstrate, complicated—and at times rambling—Byzantine hagiographical texts, such as the Life of Andrew,

5 See R. Bauckham: '… in most manuscripts, the Greek Apocalypse of the Virgin, consists only of a tour of hell, though in some a brief visit to Paradise is appended' ('The Four Apocalypses of the Virgin Mary', in id., *The Fate of the Dead*, Leiden, 1998, p. 336). There is an impressive number of manuscripts and recensions of this text. However, a critical edition is still lacking.

6 See R. Homburg (ed.), *Apocalypsis Anastasiæ*, Leipzig, 1903. For an exhaustive analysis of this text, see J. Baun, *Tales from Another Byzantium. Celestial Journey and Local Community in the Medieval Greek Apocrypha*, Cambridge, 2007.

7 L. Rydén, 'The Life of St. Basil the Younger and the Date of the Life of St. Andreas Salos', in C. Mango and C. Pritsak, *Okeanos*, Cambridge, 1983, pp. 568–586. P. Magdalino, ''What we heard in the Lives of the saints we have seen with our own eyes': the holy man as literary text in tenth-century Constantinople', in J. Howard-Johnston and P.A. Hayward, *The Cult of Saints in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*, Oxford, 1999, pp. 83–112.

8 *The Life of St. Andrew the Fool* vol. 1, p. 53.

9 Magdalino, 'What we heard in the Lives of the saints we have seen with our own eyes', p. 99.

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preserve, recycle and transmit various established apocalyptic motifs already documented in the early Jewish apocalyptic tradition. Thus, these texts bear evidence to the longevity, popularity and preservation of this vivid tradition through various trajectories, languages and cultural contexts. Furthermore, they suggest that the apocalyptic tradition as preserved, developed and documented in later writings, demonstrates a deeply conservative character regarding the choice of main structural elements and motifs integrated in the respective narratives. The particular narrative frames set the scenery and serve mainly as cultural indicators but they rarely ever significantly modify the major apocalyptic elements used.

1 The Life of Andrew the Fool

The Life of Andrew, a fool of God, was composed by his disciple Nikephoros and takes place in a fictive context in Constantinople of the sixth century. However, the text stems most probably from the tenth century.[10] The Life presents a very complex and comprehensive work of an almost encyclopedic character.[11]

The text narrates two visions of paradise. The first vision (490–735) refers to Andrew's visit to paradise, when he was seriously ill and went through a near-death experience during a terrible winter storm in Constantinople. Shortly before Andrew freezes to death, he sees a handsome young man coming over to him, whose face shines like the sun. He greets Andrew with a bunch of golden flowers. A voice orders that Andrew should be transferred to a quiet place

10 On the dating of the Life between 950–1000, see L. Rydén, *The Life of St. Andrew the Fool* vol. 1, pp. 41–56; and also id., 'The Date of the Life of Andreas Salos', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 32 (1978), pp. 127–156; J. Wortley, 'The Political Significance of the Andreas-Salos Apocalypse', *Byzantion* 43 (1973), pp. 248–263; cf. C. Mango, 'The Life of Saint Andrew the Fool Reconsidered', *Rivista di studi bizantini e slavi* 2 (1982), pp. 297–313, who argued for a late-seventh-century date of the text; this early dating, however, has been commonly rejected.

11 The Life of Andreas Salos (Andrew the Fool) is witnessed in over 100 Greek mss from the eleventh–nineteenth centuries; cf. S. Efthymiadis: 'a text with a remarkably wide circulation as it survives in whole or in part, in some 90 codices: popularity extended to the Slav world' (id., *The Ashgate Companion to Byzantine Hagiography* vol. 1, Farnham, 2011, p. 126); cf. C. Ludwig, *Sonderformen byzantinischer Hagiographie und ihr literarisches Vorbild, Untersuchungen zu den Viten des Äsop, des Philaretus, des Symeon Salos und des Andreas Salos*, Frankfurt, 1997, pp. 220–290; S. Ivanov, *Holy Fools in Byzantium and Beyond*, Oxford, 2006, pp. 139–173; see also A. Kazhdan, *A History of Byzantine Literature* (850–1000), ed. C. Angelidi, Athens, 2006, pp. 185–200.

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for two weeks. Immediately, Andrew finds himself in a wonderful garden. He realises that he is transferred to this garden without his body. However, even if he does not have a material body, he is dressed with a dazzling garment, white as snow, set with precious stones and a marvellously red girdle. He also has a golden flower wreath and sandals on. Thus, he is properly dressed for his visit to heaven.

In the garden Andrew marvels at the beautiful, ever-green trees dripping honey that appear like the crystal of heaven. Wonderful birds with wings like gold or snow sit on these trees. A mighty river flows through the garden and irrigates it. A grape vine full with heavy grapes and golden leaves leans over the river like a lamp. This lamp is identified with Christ, the cornerstone. Four winds blow in paradise and spread beautiful odours and colours. Andrew falls in ecstasy and finds himself on the firmament, where he meets again the handsome young man who now becomes his guide in heaven. Andrew starts a heavenly journey to the throne of God, passing through three firmaments.

On the first firmament of heaven, they see a cross and four shining curtains and innumerable magnificent looking singers. Their eyes shine like fire, as they sing a hymn in honour of the Crucified One. The second firmament appears like snow and there are two crosses there in a fiery surrounding. The third firmament looks like a golden leaf and has three crosses, also surrounded by fire. Innumerable heavenly hosts praise God. Andrew and his guide pass through splendid curtains until they reach the throne of God that hangs in the air without support. Andrew sees there the Son of Man, Jesus Christ clad in shining purple and linen.

Andrew descends from the heavens and finds himself again in a wonderful, fragrant flower garden with a well wherefrom milk and honey spring. He encounters there a dazzling man, dressed in a garment like a shining cloud who holds a cross and explains why Andrew, the fool of God, was worthy of a vision of God and a vision of paradise. This man is presumably the Good Thief.

Andrew's vision of paradise as a lavish, marvellous garden reveals the future reward of the righteous in a spiritual way. However, the garden is still empty. The heavenly journey of Andrew borrows a number of common eschatological motifs, but also demonstrates certain original elements such as the presence of the crosses on the various heavens and their veneration by Andrew and his guide. The presence of the good thief as a revelatory figure is an additional original trait of the apocalypse. His presence in this context emphasises even more strongly the importance of the crucifixion motif for the text.

The vision of the throne of the Son of Man is described in its full imperial glory. It is assumed that such representations in visionary Byzantine literature were inspired by the symbolism and ritualism of the Byzantine imperial

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court.[12] Jane Baun even suggests that the Byzantine representations of the heavenly world were transformed in order to match the model of the Byzantine imperial court. As Baun further remarks: 'The transformation is most striking in Andrew the Fool's otherworld vision, which reads like a celestial De Ceremoniis, and in fact mirrors Liutprand of Cremona's famous audience before Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos. Andrew progresses through the various gardens (filled with marvellous birds, real-life versions of the palace automata) and forecourts of the heavens like a highly favoured diplomat through the imperial palace. He witnesses theatrical display of treasures and wonders, and singers shouting holy acclamations. (…) All the wonders, including Jesus Christ himself, are located behind huge curtains of fine linen and purple.'[13] However, it should be noted that there is a long tradition of descriptions of the divine throne, in which the limits between heavenly and earthly reality are often fluid. Heaven and the divine throne were often envisioned in terms of a royal court in general.[14]

The second heavenly vision in the Life of Andrew (1690–1775) is attributed to his disciple Epiphanius. Epiphanius wishes to receive a vision of Andrew in heaven. He sees in a dream how an old man visits him. The man holds a gospel and a papyrus scroll and leads Epiphanius to paradise.[15] Together they reach

12 See, for example, P. Magdalino, 'The Year 1000 in Byzantium', in id. (ed.), *Byzantium in the Year 1000*, Leiden, 2003, pp. 151–154.

13 Baun, *Tales from Another Byzantium*, p. 229.

14 See P. Magdalino, 'The assimilation of the earthly empire to the Kingdom of Heaven. The idea that the Roman empire was a pale imitation of heaven, and that the heavenly order could be described in terms of imperial court procedure, was not new in the sixth century. It has been adumbrated in the 330s by Eusebius of Cæsarea in his writings in praise of Constantine, and had been elaborated by later writers, notably St. John Chrysostom' (id., 'The history of the future and its uses: prophecy, policy and propaganda', in R. Beaton and C. Roueché (eds), *The Making of Byzantine history: studies dedicated to Donald M. Nicol*, London, 1993, p. 14); Cf. J.E. Wright, *The Early History of Heaven*, Oxford, 1999, pp. 76–78; on heaven as a 'parallel universe' in Jewish apocalyptic literature, see P. Alexander, who also stresses that: 'there is no ontological discontinuity between earth and heaven: both belong, so to speak, to the same space-time continuum' (id., 'The Dualism of Heaven and Earth in Early Jewish Literature and its Implications', in A. Lange et al. (eds), *Light Against Darkness: Dualism in Ancient Mediterranean Religion and the Contemporary World*, Göttingen, 2011, pp. 169–185, here 170).

15 According to iconographic and legendary traditions, the old man might represent John the Evangelist, who was also identified with John of Revelation and who was the only person among the Evangelists to reach an old age; see *Lexikon der christlichen Ikonographie* vol. 7, col. 112. Notably, Epiphanius does not receive a youthful person as a guide and in that sense, he does not have an angelic escort but an older man reflecting thus perhaps in this way his own status as a novice.

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a court full of light, in which there is a palace, 'built of a solar breeze'. They further walk through a hall full of strange and incredible mysteries and fiery thrones. On one of the thrones, which rises to an immense height, he sees an awe-inspiring and ineffable king shining like the sun, while balls of fire proceed from his face, so that the ether itself is illuminated by an abundance of glory and brilliance. Around him there are innumerable legions and armies of cherubim, seraphim and powers. The king allows Epiphanius to enter the kingdom of heaven reserved for the saints, a chamber full of light. In this chamber, there sits Andrew in full glory. Epiphanius wakes up and realises that he has seen a vision of Jesus Christ as the king.

This short vision clearly demonstrates basic differences to Andrew's vision. Epiphanius is directly translated to the divine throne. The divine residence is described quite precisely like a royal palace. In spite of his awesome appearance Jesus Christ appears approachable and merciful. Epiphanius is allowed to see the Saints in the kingdom of heavens, which is described like a chamber of light.

As observed, Andrew experiences paradise as a luscious garden. Separate elements in the description of the garden of paradise recall motifs that are already evidenced in older apocalyptic texts. Andrew stresses in the text repeatedly the fragrances of Paradise, a motif that corresponds to a well-known motif in apocalyptic texts.[16] Springs of milk and honey in paradise are also mentioned and quite similarly described in 2 Enoch 8:5, Moreover, they also relate to the rivers of honey and milk in the Apocalypse of Paul 22 (cf. Apocalypse of Paul 45). Luscious trees in the garden also present a very common apocalyptic image.[17]

Andrew needs to ascend through the heavens, before he can reach the throne. The paradise is located on the third heaven, as in 2 Enoch 8:1. The motif of the golden third heaven also recalls the Apocalypse of Paul 19, in which the third heaven is described as a golden gate with golden columns.

Each firmament has a different appearance and represents a gradual ascent, since in the first heaven there is one cross, in the second heaven two crosses and in the third heaven three crosses. Already before the first cross there are wonderful curtains and angel choirs which highlight the holiness of the place. These curtains in front of the crosses possibly represent the arrangement and design of Byzantine church altars, with which the author must have been familiar through his everyday liturgical experience. The third curtain which hides

16 Cf. 1En 31; 2En 8. Similar descriptions of fragrant winds in the garden of God can be found in 3 Enoch 23:18 based on the Song of Songs 4:16.

17 Cf. 1En 17 f.; 23–25; Apocalypse of Peter (Greek, achm. 15 ff.) Apocalypse of Paul 45.

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the throne of the Son of Man looks purple and linen, similar to the curtain of the Temple.[18] Jesus is also clad in the priestly-imperial garments of purple and linen (cf. Ex 28:5). The three crosses that represent a forecourt to the throne court are surrounded by fire in accordance with common apocalyptic images. The idea of the fiery throne of the Son of Man is a topos in apocalyptic literature.[19]

Similarly, the fiery palaces in the vision of Epiphanius recall 1 Enoch 14:8 ff., in which Enoch passes through fiery marble houses, until he reaches a fiery throne. 2 Enoch 22 (and Vita Adæ 25:3) also mention, similarly to Epiphanius, the 'burning face of God emitting sparks'. The description of God's throne as 'flashing fire' bears strong similarities to Andrew's fiery heaven.[20]

The paradise garden is totally empty in the Life of Andrew. Similarly, the paradise is not inhabited, for example, in 1 Enoch 32 and in 2 Enoch 8 f. It is also interesting to note that Andrew receives a vision of paradise, while he is still alive. In certain terms, the paradise that awaits him is shown to him in advance. The golden bunch of flowers in the beginning of the paradise story of the Life of Andrew the Fool most possibly represents the good deeds of Andrew and could be understood as a symbol of his righteousness.[21] However, Andrew does not meet the souls of the righteous in paradise. Even if he is considered one of the righteous, he does not yet belong there, since he is not yet dead.

Furthermore, the transformation of Andrew corresponds to a typical motif of the rapture of the visionary in apocalyptic literature. Enoch in 2 Enoch 22:8 ff. is clad with the garments of 'divine glory' and is transformed accordingly into an angel-like figure.[22] Andrew is also transformed in an ideal way, shortly before his upcoming trip to the heavens and only then is he ready to enter the garden of God.

The author recycles common angelic imagery which would have easily been recognisable by his audience, even if they were not familiar with apocalyptic literature and ideas. The description of the garments of Andrew refers to iconographic depictions of angels from the Byzantine time that might have been inspired by the Book of Daniel or other canonical books. Similar images can further be found in texts such as 2 Enoch 1:6 that describe 'gigantic men' with faces like 'shining suns, eyes like burning lamps' and hands white as snow.

18 Cf. Exod. 26.1.31.36; see Josephus, Bell. 5.212; Ant. 8.75.

19 See Daniel 7:9–10; ApocAbraham 18:3; 2En 22:1.

20 See 1En 14:8–25.

21 In the Psalms of Solomon 14:2 and in the Odes of Solomon 11:18.20 f. the trees of paradise are the righteous themselves.

22 Cf. 3En 15:1–12.

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A special emphasis is put on the description of the angels, although they are rarely called angels but rather handsome young men, who are distinguished through their glorious garments and magnificent appearance.[23] The stereotypical depiction of the angels as guides and assistants during the heavenly tours follows standard apocalyptic motifs. However, their precise physical description seems to have been inspired by Byzantine culture and art and, more specifically, Byzantine iconography. Angelic garments were commonly coloured white in Byzantine icons, as a symbol of spiritual purity and transcendence. Furthermore, a number of scholars have argued that the angels imagined as gloriously dressed youths bring to mind court eunuchs.[24] As Ringrose in her study of Byzantine eunuchs maintains, the correspondence refers to 'the imagined parallels of divine and imperial courts and the use of white robes; it is not hard to see why eunuchs were mistaken for angels. In the Vita of St Symeon the Stylite the Younger, for example, Symeon has a vision that includes 'a corps of angel-like men who were eunuchs, whose clothing was white as snow''.[25] However, especially after the sixth century, it was also common for the angels and archangels to be depicted in imperial dress and in the colours red, violet or blue and purple, colours that were especially assigned for the imperial court officers.

In contrast to Andrew's at least partly bucolic vision, Epiphanius' otherworldly vision bears almost urbane features. His out-of-body experience takes place exclusively in closed spaces. The throne vision is located in a palace, where Epiphanius proceeds through fiery halls. The heavenly kingdom is depicted like a chamber of light. The symbol of fire as a medium to describe a theophanic experience is prominent in both visions. It is striking, however, that Epiphanius does not have a vision of the garden of paradise.

The difference in the experiences and in the description probably depends on a distinction of a spiritual character between the two protagonists. Epiphanius, as a novice of Andrew, is granted only a brief audience before the throne in the palace of the king so that his wish to see Andrew's transcendent persona in heaven would be fulfilled.

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23 Angels with hair like snow and in purple red garments can be found again in the Apocalypse of Abraham 11.

24 See C. Mango: 'The angels, being sexless and acting as God's attendants, had their closest earthly analogy in the eunuchs of the imperial palace' (id., 'The Invisible World of Good and Evil in Byzantium', in id., *Byzantium. The Empire of New Rome*, New York–London, 1980, p. 155).

25 K.M. Ringrose, *The Perfect Servant. Eunuchs and the Social Construction of Heaven in Byzantium*, Chicago–London, 2003, p. 80.

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It is possible that the author stressed the difference between the two visions in order to demonstrate the spiritual difference between the master and the novice. Andrew experiences a more esoteric vision due to his spiritual maturity and superiority. He witnesses a genuine heavenly ascent and partakes in the divine secrets. Epiphanius' vision has the sole intention of showing a glimpse of Andrew's glory. Only in this context does Epiphanius also receive a brief insight into the mercy of Jesus Christ, who grants him a transcendent vision of Andrew. In both versions, the visions can only take place after spoken permissions that are understood as special gifts of the divine grace.

The double paradise narrative with their different characteristics is a unique feature of these hagiographic texts. The paradise vision of the novice clearly stresses the blessed elevated status of the master and indirectly confirms his visionary authority. Thus, it provides a very helpful literary device that transforms the hagiographic text into an apocalyptic narrative.

Similarly, the roughly contemporary hagiographic text, Life of Saint Basil the Younger, contains two visions of paradise as well.[26] The first vision refers to the journey of blessed Theodora, the former housekeeper of Basil, who has recently died and has been received into paradise after a short audience in front of the divine throne. In the second vision, Gregory, Basil's disciple, wanders through a paradisiacal garden, that represents the life of his spiritual father, St Basil. Thus, also in this text the novice is granted a brief insight into the blessed state of his masters in heaven. As Paul Magdalino notes about the two Lives: 'The visions and their edifying messages occupy so much space that the Lives can easily be seen as frame stories of set pieces of apocalyptic exegesis, in which the saints themselves are of secondary importance.'[27]

Accordingly, we observe that heavenly ascents and audiences in front of the throne of God (commonly located on the third heaven) become part of hagiographic literature. The monks and nuns or fools of God in our texts all visit the throne of God—evidence of their closeness to God in this life. The description of Paradise is influenced by a number of older motifs and traditions. The paradise is described as a wonderful garden in numerous pseudepigraphical texts.[28] However, as Jane Baun also notes: 'Paradise as a walled garden of

26 On this text see D.F. Sullivan, A.-M. Talbot and S. McGrath (eds and trans.), *The Life of Saint Basil the Younger, Critical Edition and Annotated Translation of the Moscow Version*, D.O. Studies 45, Cambridge, 2015.

27 Magdalino, 'What we heard in the Lives of the saints we have seen with our own eyes', p. 89.

28 Most importantly, similar descriptions can be found in 2 Enoch 8, in 1 Enoch 23–25; in the

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indescribable fertility and beauty is common in dreams, visions, edifying tales, and Byzantine Last Judgment iconography.'[29]

Main motifs are also shared with other contemporaneous texts that describe paradise. The motifs of the paradise as a beautiful, walled garden, of Abraham's bosom and of the banquet for the merciful are also attested in the Apocalypse of Anastasia. Similar descriptions of Paradise as a fantastic garden can also be found in works such as the Life of Philaretos the Merciful by Nicetas[30] and in the funerary oration by Michael Psellos to his daughter Styliane.[31] Both texts describe Paradise as a garden that surpasses all imagination.

The tenth century vision of the Monk Kosmas, a former imperial chamberlain, is the only other extensive Middle Byzantine near-death narrative. Kosmas' 'relaxed, alfresco heaven'[32] includes Abraham in the world of the Blessed, the heavenly city and the banquet of the righteous. According to Christina Angelidi, Kosmas recognised everything he saw in the Other World, either because it was so similar to the imperial palace, or because it looked 'just like an icon'.[33]

These texts can be regarded as more or less elaborate variations of major apocalyptic themes. However, the apocalyptic elements were integrated into hagiographical literature and, as such, achieved a more 'mainstream status' that facilitated their broader acceptance and circulation. Moreover, these texts were also deeply rooted in the canonical church tradition. The eschatological narratives integrated various elements, which were familiar from the Byzantine liturgy and iconography. Thus they merged various traditions both from their contemporary religious culture and older pseudepigraphical literary traditions. The Byzantine visionary literature indicates that non-canonical texts were further copied, read and discussed and even served as inspiration sources for the production of new original literature in Byzantium.

As Evelyne Patlagean has noted, these works constitute narrative justifications of representations of the afterlife according to the normative theo-

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Apocalypse of Peter 15 ff. (Greek achmimic) and in the Apocalypse of Paul 45. The trees provide fruit for the pleasure of the righteous (1En 32; 2En 84).

29 Baun, *Tales from another Byzantium*, p. 124.

30 L. Rydén, *The Life of St. Philaretos the merciful, written by his grandson Niketa*, Studia Byzantina Upsaliensa 8, Uppsala, 2002.

31 See A. Kaldellis, *Mothers and Sons, Fathers and Daughters: the Byzantine Family of Michael Pselllos*, Notre Dame, 2006, pp. 111–138.

32 See Magdalino, 'What we heard in the Lives of the saints we have seen with our own eyes', p. 100.

33 C. Angelidi, 'La version longue de la Vision du Moine Cosmas', *Analecta Bollandiana* 101 (1903), pp. 73–99, 84, 125–128.

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logical system. The descriptions of the afterlife provide answers to questions about Byzantine eschatological beliefs of the time. These variations on a theme emerge during a cultural period that follows the iconoclastic crisis in the middle of the ninth century and lasts until the decline of the ruling Macedonian (also known as the Armenian) dynasty, that is, in 1025.[34] The historical context is thus related to the aftermath of the iconoclastic crisis that triggered an important cultural innovation in all the fields of literary and scholarly production in Byzantium through new editions of ancient works, compilations of encyclopædias, and a renewal of the imperial legislation.

In other words, the Greek Byzantine literature of the tenth century appears to reflect the evolution of the apocalyptic genre and its accommodation with the broader culture and with its specific cultural, religious and literary needs. Apocalyptic ideas become re-adapted and integrated into the Byzantine world and also reflect specific developments in the Byzantine history.

Pseudepigrapha and apocalyptic literature are often viewed as marginal literary genres that led an obscure life in dark corners of the libraries of remote monasteries. However, these texts survived not only due to the efforts of a few curious librarians and monks. They obviously also survived because they filled a vacuum regarding popular questions about death and the afterlife.[35] Furthermore, this textual legacy in the garb of hagiography would appeal to both learned religious specialists and the largely illiterate common believers.

Greek Byzantine apocalyptic literature reflects a stage in the history of apocalyptic literature, in which motifs, which can be more or less easily traced back to famous Jewish and Christians apocalyptic texts, were interiorised and also became integrated into other literary genres. Thus, it is no longer possible to claim a direct textual dependence, even if we can imagine that the authors might have made eclectic use of various texts available in monastic libraries. Finally, even if largely neglected by modern scholarship, accounts of heavenly journeys from tenth century Constantinople are important witnesses for the development of apocalyptic and eschatological literature in Greek language as well as for the development of Byzantine popular religious literature.

34 Patlagean, *Byzance et son autre monde*, pp. 201 ff.

35 Cf. M.E. Stone, *Ancient Judaism: New Visions and Views*, Grand Rapids, 2011, pp. 29–30.

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