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The Predetermination of Death: The Contribution of Anastasios of Sinai and Nikephoros Blemmydes to a Perennial Byzantine Problem

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Like most of us, the Byzantines were primarily interested in the individuality, the particularity of death, rather than in general theories about its overall nature. So they tended to ask, “When am I due to die?” or “How long have I got to live?” Again, what struck them as strange and puzzling was that they saw certain individuals who lived long lives and others who were cut off in their prime without any apparent moral reason (any sort of “poetic justice”) that would explain this. Even more striking and scandalous for them were the violent deaths that struck down some people, often apparently by pure accident—a wreck at sea or an earthquake—irrespective of their being young or old. How could one explain, or at least accept, such happenings as compatible with the existence of an all-knowing and all-powerful God?¹

We can be certain that people were asking questions of this sort from one very clear source: Anastasios of Sinai, who deals with precisely these problems in his *Questions and Answers*, or *Erotapokriseis*. My aim in this paper is to outline how he handles these questions and to show how his treatment fits into the pattern of Byzantine thinking on such topics.

However, right from the start one can say that the various questions about different sorts of death were dominated by one general problem: has God fixed in advance the day, the hour, and the moment at which one is to die? One’s first reaction may be to think that the question is a strange, and even morbid, one. But if one considers a little further one sees, first, that it is linked to the problem of fate and destiny—are we fated and destined to die at such and such a moment? (as Homer says of Achilles, “thereafter shall he suffer whatever Fate spun for him with her thread at his birth”²)—but also that it is linked to the problem of God’s involvement in our salvation: does God predetermine particular persons to die while they are committing sin and so predetermine them to

¹For more recent reflections on this perennial problem, see M. McCord Adams and R. Merrihew Adams, eds., *The Problem of Evil* (Oxford, 1990).

². . . ὕστερον αὐτὰ τὰ πείσεται ἅσσα οἱ Αἴσσα / γιγνομένων ἐπένησε λίνῳ, ὅτε μιν τέκε μήτηρ. *Iliad* 20, 127–28, ed. A. T. Murray, Loeb (London-Cambridge, Mass., 1925), 380–81.

hell, or vice versa, does he predetermine the hour of death in such a way that they will go to heaven whether they want to or not?

I shall concentrate on Anastasios of Sinai, partly because I have some familiarity with his writings as for several years I have been preparing a critical edition of his *Questions and Answers*, and partly because he happens to be an author particularly associated with the topic under discussion. Although there has been some excellent work done recently on editing his works, there is a lack of secondary studies on him. For most people he is at most a shadowy figure lost in the background, if indeed they have heard of him at all.³ He is a seventh-century writer, presumably at some stage a monk on Mount Sinai, where he may have held the rank of *higoumenos*. There are indications that he traveled quite widely—to Cyprus, the Dead Sea, Palestine, Syria, and Egypt; he was active as an orthodox controversialist in Alexandria between 650 and 700. Above all, he is the author of several influential works, notably the *Hodegos*, or *Guidebook*, some sermons, some stories, and the *Erotapokriseis*;⁴ a number of these works are preserved in many manuscripts, indicating that he was well known in the medieval period.

Without going into great detail about the manuscript tradition, it is clear that the present edition of his *Questions and Answers* in Migne gives a very inadequate idea of the original work. When the seventeenth-century German Jesuit Jacobus Gretser came to prepare the edition, he had to rely on manuscripts that gave one of several later reworkings. Unfortunately very few adequate manuscripts exist of the original collection (and hence the time it is taking me to complete this edition).⁵ However, we can be certain that Anastasios' own collection had a different numbering for the questions, and quite often significant textual differences. Thus for the topic before us the first text, Qu. 16, is in Migne (vol. 89) and is substantially the same as the text in the Appendix to this paper, except that in Migne it is numbered 88; the second text, Qu. 17, appears in Migne as Qu. 21, and in that version both an extra paragraph has been added and also a collection of four patristic texts. These additions teach that at the moment of death it is not unusual to have a glimpse of the future life in store for one: heaven or hell; this is another topic, somewhat tangential to the main issue, but to which I shall return later.

First, a few remarks to help focus the problem in its specifically Byzantine form. In the West the topic usually appears categorized as the problem of “predestination” and is often identified with the doctrine of John Calvin, to the point that it may come as something of a surprise to find that the problem had been intriguing writers for many centuries before, in particular those writing in Greek. But the difference of approach is marked already by the choice of the term *predetermination* rather than *predestination*. The

³However, he is a familiar name to those acquainted with medieval Slavonic literature; a 9th-century translation of one version of his *Erotapokriseis* gained great popularity.

⁴For a recent survey of the relevant literature, see J. A. Munitiz, “Anastasios of Sinai: Speaking and Writing to the People of God”, in *Preacher and Audience: Studies in Early Christian and Byzantine Homiletics*, ed. M. B. Cunningham and P. Allen (Leiden, 1998), 243–45.

⁵There are many manuscripts with different versions of the *Erotapokriseis*. A list of those known to me is due to be published in a forthcoming issue of *Moscovia*, but since drawing up that list further manuscripts have come to my attention among the newly discovered fragments at St. Catherine's monastery, Mount Sinai: ΜΓ 6 (9th century), M 139 (10th–11th century), and X 144 (A.D. 1312). Cf. Ἱερὰ μονὴ καὶ ἀρχιεπισκοπὴ Σινᾶ, *Τὰ νέα εὐρήματα τοῦ Σινᾶ* (Athens, 1998), 142, 179, 212. This inventory was drawn up by Professor P. G. Nicolopoulos; it is not clear yet which version of the *Erotapokriseis* is included in each manuscript.

Greek term most used by our writers is προορισμός, and they steer clear of any terms that may suggest “destiny” or “fate” (e.g., εἰμαρμένη and ἀνάγκη); the reason is obvious: the latter set of terms have too obvious links with the Ἕλληνες, the non-Christian Greeks or pagans. Historically it is most instructive to see how the problem of predestination or predetermination reaches back into both Old Testament and Hellenistic reflection,⁶ was a dominant preoccupation for the founding geni of much of patristic thought, both Greek (with Origen) and Latin (Augustine is the most obvious name), and continued to intrigue writers in both Greek and Latin, but also in Arabic (e.g., the early Islamic writers). Naturally there were areas in Europe and the Middle East where the question was discussed more thoroughly, and in different ways, but wherever groups of teachers and academics gathered, the question refused to go away, and the fundamental elements of the problem remained the same.

If we try to enumerate what these elements are, we find that they fall into two categories: on the one hand, there is the commonly accepted teaching that God as all-powerful, παντοδύναμος, *omnipotens*, must empower everything; and moreover that God desires the good of all and is not subject to whims and caprice, but is to be identified with what we recognize to be ideals of justice and goodness; on the other hand, human freedom of choice must be given a place if some sort of moral system is to be defended. If we are not free to choose good or evil, then we are not responsible. So these two poles—God and the free human creature brought into being by him—are the two elements in the problem that somehow have to be balanced if any sort of rational behavior and belief is to be acceptable.

At this point, we can turn from general considerations to concentrate on some texts. A good starting point is the following:⁷

QUESTION 16 QUESTION There is another question after that one, which is universal: whether the life of anyone has a determined limit or not. Some say it has, others affirm it has not.

ANSWER [1] Our reply to this is that the limit that exists for the life of each person is not a foreordained number of years, but the wish and ordinance of God, who transfers someone out of life when and how he commands.

[2] In reply to those who argue by all possible means that a predetermination of God exists for the years of each person, we shall say this: God would then be found to be himself the one who makes wars, something that is too absurd even to be thought of. Again, supposing that predetermination for the years of everybody existed, fixed and immutable, nobody who is sick would call on the saints for their patronage, and indeed nobody would apply to doctors. For anything that God has predetermined will certainly come about.

[3] However, another evil and Manichaean dogma is brought to birth from that supposition. What is it? That as God has foresight and foresees “everything before it come to be” [Daniel, Suz. 35a (LXX)], if he really “wanted everybody to be saved” [1 Tim. 2:4] and nobody to be destroyed, why, if he foresaw the apostasy of Julian the Apostate and the denial of Judas Iscariot, did he not rather predetermine and preordain for them a

⁶Several Old Testament texts will be mentioned below; within the Hellenistic tradition one obvious figure is Alexander of Aphrodisias, who developed an Aristotelian argument against the Stoic defense of determinism. Cf. R. W. Sharples, *Alexander of Aphrodisias On Fate* (London, 1983).

⁷The Greek versions are given in the Appendix; they are based on the new critical edition now in preparation, even if to simplify matters I have drastically curtailed the critical apparatus.

more truncated life, allowing them to die and be saved before their destruction? Similarly in the case of any monk or upright person, who later falls away and is destroyed, the responsibility falls on God. So then one is obliged to say one of two things: either that God did not foresee, or if he did foresee, clearly he did not wish to save them but to destroy them. For had he wanted to save them, it was necessary for him to have predetermined the limits of their lives prior to their falling away.

[4] Therefore, as I said earlier, it is best to say that the limit for each person's life is the incomprehensible command of God. For if an immutable predetermination and limit concerning a person's years had been fixed and established, how does the Apostle say to the Corinthians [1 Cor. 11:30] that it is because of their unworthy reception of communion that they fall ill and die? If a limit to life exists, then someone will not die before that for any reason whatsoever. Again, how did God say to Israel: "Guard my commandments so that you may become long living on the earth" [Exod. 20:12; Deut. 4:40, 5:16]? And again, Solomon said, "Do not become hard, and do not practice impiety at length, lest you die in a time that is not yours" [Eccles. 7:17]. Similarly he says that the curses of parents bring death to the children [Sir. 3:9].

[5] However, if God so pleases, we shall expound these matters at greater length in a separate treatise, explaining the many causes on account of which good people live short lives, whereas the wicked have long ones, and in what ways children die, and what is death for natural reasons, and what is a death brought about by God, and indeed why some persons die suddenly at table, or traveling, or while they happen to be in the bath, without any last will and testament, while others again, who propose to build holy churches or perform other useful works, depart to the Lord before their completion. For the time being we have given a short answer.

[6] In reply to those who quote the great Basil as speaking of a predetermination of life, we shall say this: the predetermination of which this father spoke was the divine saying, "You are earth and to the earth you will return" [Gen. 3:19].

Several aspects of this answer deserve comment. (1) *Concerning Anastasios himself, the author.* One sees the very personal approach: "Some say this . . . some say that. But we say. . ." Also remarkable is the colloquial style; it is as if Anastasios were talking with his questioner, and there are frequent traces of later Greek usage which are probably to be attributed to Anastasios himself and not to his scribes.⁸ At the same time there is the very practical, pastoral slant: it is the moral life of ordinary people, not just monks, that Anastasios has in mind. Quite clearly he is not a speculative thinker, and he writes in a rhetorical vein, intent on persuading with whatever means he has available, such as rhetorical questions (e.g., in §4). (2) *Concerning the types of argument.* There are three, though they are mixed up in Anastasios' presentation: one is that predetermination would involve the conclusion that God directly wills evil (cf. §2 but especially §3); another is that our moral system would break down, because we would all become fatalists (§2); finally, there is the argument that predetermination would be irreconcilable with certain passages in scripture, where it is said that God can alter the hour of death, but how could he alter what he has previously determined (§4)? As Wolfgang Lackner has pointed out,⁹

⁸Examples of peculiar forms are to be seen in lines 4–5 and 28 (cf. app. crit.), also the use of the indicative in line 15.

⁹Ed. W. Lackner, *Nikephoros Blemmydes: Gegen die Vorherbestimmung der Todesstunde*, Corpus Philosophorum Medii Aevi, Philosophi Byzantini 2 (Athens-Leiden, 1985), LXXIV–v. He gives an outstanding introductory survey of the whole discussion in Byzantium, though deliberately omitting many of the earlier fathers; for these, see H.-D. Simonin, "Prédestination: II. La prédestination d'après les pères grecs," *DTC* 13 (Paris, 1935), 2815–32.

none of these arguments holds water because defenders of predetermination accept human free will and argue that God's foreknowledge and predetermination take this into account; similarly the scripture texts can be reconciled with either system.

Anastasios seems to realize that it is not so much the predetermination that matters as the prior knowledge by the person concerned of the exact date. This may have led him to pose Question 17.

Question 17 *QUESTION* Some say that if everybody were to know beforehand the days of their deaths, then everybody would repent.

ANSWER If they were to know this beforehand, many strange things would be done. For anyone who had an enemy, knowing that the day of death had approached, would go out and kill that personal enemy, thinking, "Whether from God or from men, my own death has already come." Again, anyone who foresaw by divine intervention that life was going to last for a hundred years would no longer bother about virtue and justice; rather this person having lived a profligate life, wallowing in sin, would start to repent a few days before the time of death. And what reward would be due to someone who lived as a slave of Satan all through life, and served God for only a few days out of necessity?

Once again, the practical, homely, pastoral approach is very evident. But again, one feels a disinclination to grapple with the deeper, philosophical problems. Anastasios seems to suppose that a moral system can stand only if buttressed by threats; there is no hint that goodness may have its own justification.

There are various other occasions when Anastasios returns to the question of the predetermination of death. For example, the reference he makes in Qu. 16, at the start of §5, to "a separate treatise" in which he hopes to expound on these matters at greater length: the exact work has not been identified, and it is not clear if the treatise mentioned ever existed. However, among the *Erotapokriseis* there is one exceptionally long question, preserved in the printed edition as Qu. 96 (though probably numbered 28 in the original collection). It deals with the problem of random death—why some people die young and others in unexpected circumstances (by accident and so on): a characteristic Anastasian feature of it is the introduction of the theory of the four elements, developed in considerable detail as the scientific explanation of secondary causality (obviously following the common knowledge of his day).

But the problem that soon arises in dealing with Anastasios is the existence of so many reworkings and adaptations of his *Questions and Answers*. Marcel Richard, who is the real pioneer of modern Anastasian studies, was convinced that the Pseudo-Athanasian "Questions *ad Antiochum*" also derive from Anastasios, but even among the pseudo-Anastasian works one finds a question like that published by Cardinal Angelo Mai with the title *de vitae termino*, or Περὶ ὄρου ζωῆς καὶ θανάτου,¹⁰ which is put together with extracts from the genuine *Questions and Answers*. I hope to include in the edition of the *Erotapokriseis* another version found in an eleventh-century Athos manuscript, Philotheou 52 (fols. 46–54); this is more important as it has been added to a small collection of genuine Anastasian questions. The question begins:

<Here is> a great <question>, much discussed and raised by almost everyone: do we claim that each human life has a definite limit (ὄρον) or not? If it has such a limit, why

¹⁰Ed. A. Mai, *Scriptorum ueterum noua collectio*, 1.1 (Rome, 1825), 369–71.

does David say to God, “Do not take me away in the middle of my days” [Ps. 101:25], and again, “Those who commit deeds of blood and treachery will not fill out half their days” [Ps. 54:24]? But if there is no such limit, why again does the same David say: “Behold, you appoint my days measured out” [Ps. 38:6]? And again if there is a limit, why did Solomon say, “Do not become hard and do not practice impiety at length, that you may not die in a time that is not yours” [Eccles. 7:17]. Therefore, if it is possible to die “in a time that is not yours,” why did some people think they could teach that “Deaths are brought on when the limits of life have been fulfilled”? And why, when Hezekiah [2 Kings 20:6] and the Ninevites [Jonas 3:9] asked for more life, did God add it for them?

And then the answer begins with a discussion of a Pauline text, and continues mainly trying to smooth out apparent contradictions between scripture texts; there are many similarities with Qu. 16, and the whole text may well be from the pen of Anastasios.

There is much more that could be said on the confused manuscript tradition of Anastasios;¹¹ however, for the purpose of this study I would like to place these early discussions in the context of later discussions. In particular I would like to turn to the treatise (available in an excellent new edition by Lackner) dedicated to this problem by the thirteenth-century monk and educationalist Nikephoros Blemmydes,¹² the author of a summary of Aristotle’s logic and known in his day as an outstanding φιλόσοφος. Although he is separated from Anastasios by nearly six centuries, we find him quoting Anastasios, and the conclusions he reaches are the same as those of Anastasios: there is no predetermination by God of the hour of death. But paradoxically in the intervening six-hundred years very important philosophical developments had taken place: the Neo-Platonists had been rediscovered, and in particular Pseudo-Dionysios and Proclus had been studied in depth. Moreover, a number of major theological writers had written in defense of the theory of God’s predetermination of the hour of death: starting with Patriarch Germanos I, and including such figures as John of Damascus, Michael Psellos, and Bishop Nicholas of Methone. The sort of considerations that convinced them were, first, a realization that divine knowledge and human knowledge cannot be put in the same category, one is outside time and indeed “super”-natural, the other limited by temporal sequence and, unlike divine knowledge, has no creative function; second, much reflection had been given to the notion of “limit” (ὄρος, ὀρισμός) and “limitlessness” (ἀορισιτία), and their relation to the divine; third, it was recognized more and more that the interpretation of sacred scripture cannot be governed simply by literal criteria: pedagogical and allegorical intentions have to be borne in mind.

It would be very strange if a person of Blemmydes’ intellectual curiosity and passion for reading had been unfamiliar with these developments. Indeed among his works there is a poem, made up of fifteen twelve-syllable lines, addressed to a Nicholas of Methone.

¹¹For example, Joseph Paramelle kindly supplied me with a partial copy of his transcript of Ambrosianus H 257 inf., fols. 1–14, which contains a florilegium of texts dealing with the predetermination of death; included among them are two texts attributed to Anastasios; the first, fol. 10r–v is a combination of Qu. 88 and part of Qu. 96, but attributed to Anastasios “of Antioch” (Θεουπόλεως) and in a different version from both that edited in Migne and that found as Qu. 28 among the genuine *Erotapokriseis*; the second text, fols. 12r–13v, is Qu. 18, as published in Migne (differing from the corresponding Qu. 29 in the genuine work). The florilegium is anonymous and does not seem to be among the works mentioned by Lackner.

¹²Lackner, *Vorherbestimmung*; page references are to this edition.

When August Heisenberg first published this¹³ he was not aware that the manuscripts that have preserved it are those containing the anti-Latin works of Nicholas of Methone.¹⁴ Following indications given by an earlier editor, Constantine Simonides, Heisenberg suggested that the Nicholas in question was a thirteenth-century bishop of Methone. It is not surprising that Lackner wanted to support this view,¹⁵ as otherwise Blemmydes would be praising and promoting someone who held views diametrically opposed to his own. Nicholas of Methone, in his elaborate three-part treatise *To Someone Asking if There Is a Limit to Life and Death*, had given the most elaborate and sophisticated defense of predetermination produced in Byzantium up to that date. But it has been shown that the Simonides who first edited Nicholas of Methone was an enterprising forger, and there can be no serious doubt that the works against the Latins date from the twelfth-century author, and that there was no other.¹⁶

Why then did Blemmydes adopt the opposite view and argue against predetermination? As he summarizes at the end of the first part of his treatise, “learn from all of these <quotations from the fathers> the one simple lesson that there is no limit set for each person’s life, nor has death been predetermined for each person by God” (17.4–6). At one point I did ask myself how seriously one should take this work of Blemmydes: there are several passages in it where his biting irony and sarcasm are put on display, as when he presents an imaginary opponent as a pretentious ignoramus.¹⁷ Again, at the end of the second part of his treatise, he puts great stress on a council ruling that permits a traveler to bring his horse into the church for the night. Was this intended as a joke? Another possible clue to his motive may be the title he gives to his readers at the start of his treatise: he addresses them as ὧ φιλολόγοι, “you lovers of literature.” Was he indulging in a rhetorical exercise? But if so, the first part, with its careful study of biblical and patristic texts, seems out of place.

Lackner’s explanation for the treatise, and this is a view that I defended when I first gave a version of this paper, is that his primary concern is the defense of personal freedom: Blemmydes was a great individualist, prepared to stand up to patriarchs and emperors. But he was also primarily an educationalist: he felt it his duty to convince people of the key role of free choice. It is no good blaming others or fate or destiny: we can choose to do bad or to do good, and we have to answer for our choices. In other words, the surface question about the predetermination of the hour of death is seen to conceal another question: is a person really free in his moral choices? As Lackner expresses it: “Grundmotiv seiner Ablehnung des ὅρος ζωῆς ist also die Sorge um die Willensfreiheit des Menschen” (“The fundamental motivation for his rejection of the predetermined limit to life is therefore his concern for human free will”).¹⁸

¹³Ed. A. Heisenberg, *Nicephori Blemmydae Curriculum Vitae et Carmina* (Leipzig, 1896), 133, with comments CVII–CVIII.

¹⁴Ed. A. Angelou, *Nicholas of Methone: Refutation of Proclus’ Elements of Theology*, Corpus Philosphorum Medii Aevi, Philosophi Byzantini I (Athens-Leiden, 1984), XLV.

¹⁵Lackner, *Vorherbestimmung*, LX n. 32.

¹⁶Angelou, *Nicholas of Methone*, IX n. 2.

¹⁷This occurs in the opening passage of the second part, but even in the first part the vocative, θαυμασιώτατε (16:25) is suspicious given its use elsewhere in an ironical sense (18:27, 21:14).

¹⁸Lackner, *Vorherbestimmung*, XCIV.

But there is an important new element that I now think provides a key to the interpretation of Blemmydes' work: the arrival of the Dominican friars in Constantinople around the year 1228.¹⁹ We know that as early as 1234 Blemmydes came into contact with Latin theologians, among them two French Dominicans.²⁰ We also know that an anonymous Dominican wrote a *Tractatus adversus errores Graecorum* in Constantinople in 1252 in time for Thomas Aquinas to use it for his own *Contra errores Graecorum*, composed around 1263.²¹ The exact date of Blemmydes' work is very uncertain. Lackner has suggested the period 1242–49: that was when Blemmydes was looking after another monastery while his own new foundation was being constructed.²² However, there was a second series of discussions with the Latins in the winter of 1249–50, just after Blemmydes' transfer to his new monastery, and my preference would be for the 1250s as the most likely time for the compilation of this work, when he tells us that he took up various writing projects.²³

It is true that Aquinas had not yet penned his treatment of the question, but among earlier Latin theologians, under the influence of Augustine, there was no division of opinion. For example, Gregory the Great, who must have known Greek from his time spent in Constantinople, had accepted that God's preknowledge involved predetermination, while respecting the freedom of choice of the individual: in his lapidary phrases, "omnipotens deus iuxta singulorum merita disponit et terminum."²⁴ It is quite likely that with the arrival of the Dominicans certain Greek scholars had already become acquainted with this line of thought, which Blemmydes stigmatizes as a dangerous innovation, τὸν καινὸν τοῦ ὄρου δογματισμὸν (1.19); he proposes to answer the threat not with the help of "rhetorical techniques or philosophical sophistry"—thus rejecting any "scholastic" approach—but basing his argument on texts from the scriptures and church fathers.

If one accepts this understanding of the genesis of Blemmydes' treatise, some of the apparent paradoxes or contradictions disappear: Blemmydes and Nicholas of Methone were at one in their rejection of the Latin position on many points of dogma and liturgy; so Blemmydes could praise Nicholas for his anti-Latin works while quietly differing from him on his teaching concerning predetermination. Blemmydes himself was not prepared to allow any speculative treatment here, which ran the risk of bringing him too close to a Latin position.

¹⁹Cf. R.-J. Loenertz, "Les établissements dominicains de Péra-Constantinople," *EO* 34 (1935): 332–49, repr. in his *Byzantina et Franco-Graeca*, ST 118 (Rome, 1970). This was the year in which the Dominican General Chapter established the "Province of Greece," with various houses in the Aegean and in Constantinople; *ibid.*, 333–34 (repr., 211). The later influence of the Dominicans, especially through the work of Demetrios Kydones, is well known. Perhaps less well known is the Greek translation of part of the *Speculum Doctrinale* of Vincent of Beauvais, published recently: I. Pérez Martín, "El Libro de Actor. Una traducción bizantina del *speculum doctrinale* de Beauvais (*Vat. gr.* 12 y 1144)," *REB* 55 (1997): 81–136.

²⁰Ed. J. A. Munitiz, *Nikephoros Blemmydes: A Partial Account*, Spicilegium Sacrum Lovaniense, Etudes et documents, fasc. 48 (Leuven, 1988), 106 n. 34.

²¹This presentation of events (not accepted by all) was defended by A. Dondaine, "'Contra Graecos'. Premiers écrits polémiques des Dominicains d'Orient," *AFP* 21 (1951): 320–445, esp. 387–93. A certain Frère Barthélemy soon revised the original *tractatus*.

²²There may be a reference to the building process at the start of the treatise: Lackner, *Vorherbestimmung*, XXIX–XXX, but equally he may be saying that with the work behind him, he can turn to dealing with requests that he has had to put off.

²³Munitiz, *Partial Account*, 132–34.

²⁴Ed. M. Adriaen, *Moralia in Iob*, 16, 10, 7–10; CCSL 143A (Turnhout, 1979), 806. Lackner has collected this and other relevant texts in his introduction: Lackner, *Vorherbestimmung*, LI–LII.

However, there was to be a further paradox in store in the final chapter of Byzantine reflection on this question. About two hundred years after Blemmydes, Patriarch Gennadios II, also known as George Scholarios, wrote five short treatises on the subject. In them he adopts a position clearly in favor of the predetermination theory. But the striking point, as Lackner has shown, is that Gennadios has taken over quite literally the teaching of Thomas Aquinas on predestination, so that one can trace the literal dependence,²⁵ while still avoiding a term in Greek that might suggest “destiny” or “fate.”

In conclusion, it is worth noting that in his fourth treatise on the question of the predetermination of death Gennadios strongly rejects the earlier treatment by Anastasios of Sinai, bluntly stating that Anastasios lacks the theological capacity required for discussing such a problem.²⁶ This is clearly the reaction of a “professional” speculative theologian to one whose primary interest was pastoral, or even what we would call “spiritual,” in the sense of a spiritual director. I mentioned earlier the fascination that the Byzantines felt when they came across cases of holy men who were privileged to know beforehand when they or others were to die. There are of course a number of such cases in Byzantine hagiography, and, thanks to the Dumbarton Oaks hagiographic database project, it is fairly easy to track them down. Part of the fascination may be that in those cases the veil seemed to be lifted, and people were allowed glimpses into the working of the Divine Mind. Anastasios was not unaware of the phenomenon, and he has at least one story of a holy man predicting the death on campaign of a particularly obnoxious emperor, who had threatened to have him executed when he returned. However, he knew that these are, if anything, the exceptions that prove the rule: in general, it is better if we do *not* know; it is better if we believe that death hangs in the balance depending on how we live out our lives; it is better if we live as if everything depended on us, even though we may be certain that everything depends on God.

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²⁵Lackner, *Vorherbestimmung*, LXVII–LXXI. The theme had been studied in a wider context by G. Podskalsky, *Theologie und Philosophie in Byzanz: Der Streit um die theologische Methodik in der spätbyzantinischen Geistesgeschichte (14./15. Jh.), seine systematischen Grundlagen und seine historische Entwicklung* (Munich, 1977), and in his earlier article, “Die Rezeption der thomistischen Theologie bei Gennadios II. Scholarios (ca. 1403–1472),” *Theologie und Philosophie* 49 (1974): 305–22.

²⁶It is clear that Gennadios is using a version of Anastasios equipped with florilegia, and therefore not the original collection, but one of the more popular later versions; his exact words are: Ἀναστάσιον δὲ τὸν ἀπὸ Σινᾶ ἄγιον μὲν οὐκ ἂν ἀρνησαίμεθα εἶναι . . . θεολόγον δ' οὐκ ἂν ποτε ὀνομάσαιμεν, οὐδὲ τοῖς θεολόγοις παρακολουθεῖν γνησίως δυνάμενον, ὡσαύτως δὲ καὶ εἴ τις τῶν ὑστέρων Ἀναστασίῳ συνᾶδει τῆς ὁμοίας ἕξεως ὄν. *Gennade Scholarius, Oeuvres complètes*, vol. 1, ed. L. Petit, X. A. Sideridès, and M. Jugie (Paris, 1928), 440, 21–29; cf. Lackner, *Vorherbestimmung*, LXXI.

Appendix

ANASTASIOS, QUESTION 16 (cf. QU. ED. 88, PG 89:713A11–716A15)

IS' ΕΡΩΤΗΣΙΣ Ἔστι καὶ ἕτερον μετὰ τοῦτο παγκόσμιον ζήτημα, τουτέστιν εἰ ἔχει ὄρον ἡ ζωὴ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου, ἢ οὐ· οἱ μὲν γὰρ φασιν ἔχειν, οἱ δὲ λέγουσιν μὴ ἔχειν.

ΑΠΟΚΡΙΣΙΣ (1) Πρὸς ταῦτα ἡμεῖς ἐροῦμεν, ὅτι ὄρος ἐστὶ παντὸς ἀνθρώπου οὐ προγεγραμμένος τις ἀριθμὸς ἐτῶν, ἀλλ' ἡ βουλή καὶ ἡ πρόσταξις τοῦ Θεοῦ, ὅτε κελεύει καὶ ὡς κελεύει μεταστένοντος τοῦ βίου τὸν ἄνθρωπον.

5 (2) Πρὸς δὲ τοὺς φιλονεικοῦντας ἐκ παντὸς τρόπου προορισμὸν παρὰ Θεῷ δεῖξει ἐτῶν παντὸς ἀνθρώπου, ἐκεῖνο ἐροῦμεν, ὅτι εὐρεθήσεται ὁ Θεὸς καὶ τοὺς πολέμους αὐτὸς ποιῶν, ὅπερ ἄτοπὸν ἐστὶ κἂν ἐννοῆσαι τοῦτο. Καὶ πάλιν, εἰ προπεπηγμένος καὶ ἀμετάθετος προορισμὸς ἐστὶ τῶν ἐκάστου χρόνων, μηδεὶς ἀσθενῶν εἰς ἀντίληψιν ἀγίους ἐπικαλέσεται, μηδεὶς λοιπὸν ἱατροῦς
10 προσκαλέσεται· ὡς γὰρ προῶρισεν ὁ Θεὸς πάντας γενήσεται.

(3) Ὅμως καὶ ἕτερον δόγμα πονηρὸν καὶ Μανιχαϊκὸν ἐντεῦθεν ἡμῖν τίκτεται. Ποῖον τοῦτο; Ὅτι προγνώστης ὢν ὁ Θεός, προγινώσκων τὰ πάντα πρὶν γενέσεως αὐτῶν, εἰ ἄρα θέλει πάντας ἀνθρώπους σωθῆναι, καὶ μηδένα ἀπολέσθαι, διὰ τί προγινώσκων τὴν ἀποστασίαν Ἰουλιανοῦ τοῦ παραβάτου καὶ τὴν ἄρνησιν Ἰούδα τοῦ Ἰσκαριώτου, μὴ μᾶλλον κολοβωτέραν αὐτοῖς προῶρισε καὶ
15 προέπηξεν ζωὴν, ἵνα πρὸ τῆς ἐαυτῶν ἀπωλείας ἀποθανόντες ἐσώθησαν; Καὶ ἐφ' ἐκάστου δὲ μοναχοῦ, ἢ καὶ ἀνθρώπου καλῶς ἔχοντος, ὕστερον δὲ ἐκπεσόντος καὶ ἀπολωλότος, πρὸς Θεὸν ἡ αἰτία ἀνατρέχει. Καὶ ἀνάγκη λοιπὸν ἔν ἐκ τῶν ὀποτέρων εἰπεῖν, ἢ ὅτι οὐ προέγνω ὁ Θεός, ἢ ἐὰν προέγνω, εὐδηλον ὅτι οὐκ ἠβουλήθη αὐτοὺς σωθῆναι, ἀλλὰ ἀπολέσθαι. Εἰ γὰρ σωθῆναι ἠβούλετο, ἔχρην αὐτὸν πρὸ τῶν ἐκπτώσεων τοὺς ὄρους τῆς ζωῆς προορίσασθαι.

20 (4) Οὐκοῦν, ὡς προεῖπον, καλῶς ἔχει τὸ λέγειν ὅτι ὄρος τῆς ἐκάστου ζωῆς ἐστὶν ἡ ἀκατάληπτος κέλευσις τοῦ Θεοῦ. Εἰ δὲ προορισμὸς τις καὶ ὄρος τῆς ἐκάστου ζωῆς ἀπαράβατος τῶν ἐτῶν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου προτέπηκται καὶ προτετύπεται, πῶς φησὶν ὁ Ἀπόστολος πρὸς Κορινθίους, ὅτι διὰ τὸ ἀναξίως αὐτοὺς κοινωνεῖν ἀσθενοῦσι καὶ τελευτῶσιν; Εἰ γὰρ ὄρος ζωῆς ἐστίν, οὐκ ἂν δι' οἰανδήποτε αἰτίαν προτελευτήσῃ ἄνθρωπος. Πῶς δὲ πάλιν φησὶν ὁ Θεὸς τῷ Ἰσραὴλ· Φύλαξον τὰ προστάγματά μου, ἵνα γένη μακροχρόνιος ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς; Καὶ πάλιν, ὁ Σολομών φησὶν· Μὴ γίνου σκληρὸς, μηδὲ ἀσεβὴς ἐπὶ πολὺ, ἵνα μὴ ἀποθάνῃς ἐν οὐ καιρῷ σου. Ὡσαύτως καὶ τὰς κατάρτας τῶν γονέων λέγει ἐπιφέρεισθαι θάνατον ἐπὶ τέκνα.

30 (5) Ὅμως περὶ τούτων πλατύτερον, εἰ τῷ Θεῷ φίλον ἐστίν, ἐν ἰδίᾳ ἐκθέμεθα δηλοῦντες καὶ πλείστας αἰτίας, δι' ἃς μὲν δίκαιοι ὀλιγοχρονοῦσιν, ἀμαρτωλοὶ δὲ πολυχρόνιοι γίνονται, καὶ ἐκ πόσων τρόπων τὰ νήπια τελευτῶσι, καὶ ποῖός ἐστιν ὁ ἐκ φύσεως θάνατος, ποῖος δὲ ἐστὶν ὁ ἐκ Θεοῦ ἐπαγόμενος, καὶ τί δήποτε οἱ μὲν ἄφω ἐν τραπέζῃ ἢ ἐν ὁδῷ τελευτῶσιν, ἢ ἐν βαλανείῳ τυγχάνοντες ἄφωνοι καὶ ἀδιάθετοι τελευτῶσιν, καὶ πάλιν ἕτεροι ναοὺς εὐσεβεῖς οἰκοδομεῖν ἐπιβαλλόμενοι, ἢ ἕτερα ψυχαφελῆ ἔργα, πρὸ τῆς τούτων πληρώσεως πρὸς Κύριον πορεύονται. Τέως δὲ περὶ τοῦ ζητουμένου διὰ βραχέων εἰρήκαμεν.

- 35 (6) Πρὸς δὲ τοὺς ἀνθρώπους τοὺς λέγοντας τὸν μέγαν Βασίλειον προορισμὸν ζωῆς λέγοντα, ἐκεῖνο ἐροῦμεν, ὅτι προορισμὸν ὁ πατὴρ εἶπε τὴν θεῖαν ἀπόφασιν τὴν λέγουσαν, Ὅτι γῆ εἶ καὶ εἰς γῆν ἀπελεύση.

QUESTION 16

Sources and Later References

3–10 source appears to be Leontios C'pl, *Hom.* 10, *In Mesopentecosten*, 343–70 [ed. Datema/Allen, CCSG 17, 329–31, et cf. 306; ed. Combefis, PG 86.2:1988B–D] **6–10** used by Nikephoros Blemmydes, *De vitae termino*, ed. Lackner, *Vorherbestimmung*, 16 (19–24) **12** Dan. Suz. 35a (LXX), 42 (Theodotion) **12–13** 1 Tim. 2:4; cf. 2 Peter 3:9 **22–23** Cf. 1 Cor. 11:30 **25** Exod. 20:12; Deut. 4:40, 5:16 **25–26** Eccles. 7:17 **26–27** Cf. Sir. 3:9 **28–34** Cf. Qu. 28 (ed. Qu. 96); and the version in *Philotheou*, 52 **35** Cf. Basil Caes., *Quod Deus non est auctor malorum* (CPG 2853), 3, PG 31:333B5–6 **37** Gen. 3:19.

Critical Apparatus (much abbreviated)

Π E / M a (a² [Migne Qu. ed. 88 R] L) X G / P

E (Escorial. 582, fols. 7–8v); G (Escorial. 582, fols. 69–70); L (Laurent. plut IV 16, fol. <195v–196v>); M (Mosq., Bibl. Synod. 265, fols. 247–248); P (Paris. gr. 364, fols. 147v–149); Π (Patmos 264, fols. 99–100v); R (Vat. Pii II gr. 11, fols. 185–186); X (Athen. 2492, fol. 3r–v).

4–5 μεταστένοντος] accperi etsi tardivum cum ΠE, μετὰ σέβοντος X, μετὰ σεμνότητος ML, μεθιστάντος P **7** μεταστένοντος - ἀνθρώπων] om. a² **7** καὶ τοὺς πολέμους αὐτὸς ποιῶν] αὐτὸς λοιπὸν ποιῶν (NOTA lege λείπον, idem quod ἐλλειπές, mancum, defectuosum) Migne. **9** ἐπικαλέσεται] ἐπικαλέσεται Qu. ed. 88, ἐπικαλεσάσθω Blemmydes | λοιπὸν] om. aX | ἱητροὺς X **9–10** μηδεῖς - προσκαλέσεται] om. (homoiotel. causa) ΠEP (sed μηδὲ ἱατροὺς προσκαλέσεται add Pmg) **10** προσκαλέσεται] μετακαλεσάσθω Blemmydes **28** ἐκθέμεθα] ΠE, ἐδιδάχθημεν M, διδαχθησόμεθα Qu. ed. 88 R, ἐπιδιδαχθησόμεθα L, ἐνδιδαχθόμεθα X, διαλεχθόμεν G.

QUESTION 17

IZ' ΕΡΩΤΗΣΙΣ Λέγουσί τινες, ὅτι εἰ προεγίνωσκον οἱ ἄνθρωποι τὴν ἡμέραν τοῦ θανάτου αὐτῶν, λοιπὸν ἤμελλον πάντες μετανοεῖν.

- 5 ΑΠΟΚΡΙΣΙΣ Εἰ προεγίνωσκον τοῦτο, πολλὰ ἄτοπα ἤμελλον διαπράττεσθαι. Ἐκαστος γὰρ ὁ ἔχων ἐχθρόν, γινώσκων ὅτι ἤδη ἤγγικεν ἡ ἡμέρα τοῦ θανάτου αὐτοῦ, ἐπορεύετο ἂν καὶ ἐθανάτου τὸν ἴδιον ἐχθρόν, λογιζόμενος ὅτι εἶτε ὑπὸ Θεοῦ εἶτε ὑπὸ ἀνθρώπων ἤδη ἦλθέ μου ὁ θάνατος. Πάλιν δὲ ὁ προγνοὺς ὑπὸ Θεοῦ, ὅτι ἐκατὸν ἔτη μέλλει ζῆσαι, οὐκέτι ἀρετῆς ἢ δικαιοσύνης ἐφρόντιζεν, ἀλλὰ πᾶσαν αὐτοῦ τὴν ζωὴν ἐν ἀσωταίαις ὦν, καὶ ἀμαρτίαις κυλιόμενος, πρὸ ὀλίγων ἡμερῶν τοῦ θανάτου μετανοεῖν ἤρχετο. Καὶ ποία λοιπὸν χάρις τῷ ἀνθρώπῳ δουλεῦσαι τῷ Σατανᾷ ὅλον τὸν χρόνον τῆς ἑαυτοῦ ζωῆς, ὀλίγας δὲ ἡμέρας ἐξ ἀνάγκης δουλεῦσαι τῷ Θεῷ;

Cf. Qu. ed. 21 (PG 89:532C3–D2); Ps.-Athanasios, *QQ ad Antiochum* 36 (PG 28:617C8–D6)

QUESTION ADDED TO COLLECTIO B (*PHILOTHEOU* 52)

Cf. Ps.-Athanasios, *QQ ad Antiochum*, Qu. 113 (PG 28:668A)

- 1 ΕΡΩΤΗΣΙΣ Τὸ μέγα καὶ πολυθύλλητον καὶ σχεδὸν παρὰ πάντων ζητούμενον· ὅρον θέλομεν
λέγειν ἔχειν τὴν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ζωὴν, ἢ οὐ; Εἰ μὲν γὰρ ὅρος, πῶς φησιν ὁ Δαυΐδ τῷ Θεῷ· Μὴ
ἀναγάγῃς με ἐν ἡμίσει ἡμερῶν μου, καὶ πάλιν, Ἄνδρες αἱμάτων καὶ δολιότητος, οὐ μὴ ἡμισεύσου-
5 σιν τὰς ἡμέρας αὐτῶν; Εἰ δὲ οὐκ ἔστιν ὅρος, πῶς πάλιν ὁ αὐτὸς λέγει· Ἴδου παλαιστὰς ἔθου τὰς
ἡμέρας μου; Εἰ δὲ πάλιν ὅρος ἐστὶ, πῶς ὁ Σολομὼν εἶπεν· Μὴ γίνου σκληρὸς μηδὲ
ἀσεβῆς ἐπιπολύ, ἵνα μὴ ἀποθάνῃς ἐν οὐ καιρῷ σου; Εἰ οὖν ἔστιν ἐν οὐ καιρῷ ἀποθανεῖν, πῶς τισιν
ἔδοξε λέγειν, ὅτι Θάνατοι ἐπάγονται τῶν ὄρων τῆς ζωῆς πληρωθέντων, Πῶς δὲ καὶ τῷ Ἐζεκίᾳ καὶ
τοῖς Νινευΐταις ζωὴν αἰτησαμένοις, ὁ Θεὸς ἐπροσέθηκεν;
ΑΠΟΚΡΙΣΙΣ Ἡ τῆς σοφίας μηγὴ τὸ μέγα δοχεῖον τῆς γνώσεως, Παῦλος ὁ Ἀπόστολος πρὸς Κοριν-
10 θίους γράφων λέγει· . . .

2–3 Πσ. 101:25 3–4 Πσ. 54:24 6 Πσ. 38:6 5–6 Εμφψλεσ. 7:17 7 Ψφ. Βασιλ. Ψαεσ., Θθοδ
Δεθσ νον εστ αθψτορ μαλορθμ (ΨΠΓ 2853), 3, ΠΓ 31:333b5–9; ψφ. Θθ. 16 [48–50] 8 Ψφ. 4 Ρεγ. (= 2
Κινγσ) 20:6, Ιον. 3:9 9–10 2 Ψορ. 11:29–30; ψφ. Θθ. 16 [30–31]