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# “Earthly Angels and Heavenly Men”: The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha, Niketas Stethatos, and the Tradition of “Interiorized Apocalyptic” in Eastern Christian Ascetical and Mystical Literature

ALEXANDER GOLITZIN

My interests lie in the first half millennium of the eastern Christian world and are focused on a relatively narrow band: the asceticomystical literature of the Christian East and early monasticism and on the roots of that literature in the New Testament matrix of Second Temple Judaism. This is five to twelve hundred years—together with vast cultural and demographic shifts—away from the central figure in this essay, Niketas Stethatos. In spite of this apparent—and real—anachronism, it is precisely the echoes of an ancient literature from earliest Christian and pre-Christian Jewish antiquity, together with the important modifications that literature underwent at the hands of fourth- and fifth-century monastic writers, that struck me when I recalled what I had read previously in and about Niketas. This then directed me back to his writings in order to discover yet more echoes—and those in great abundance—of the ancient currents and motifs that preoccupy me. So I offer this essay as a sort of preliminary notice of elements and trends that lend further substance to frequent observations about the religious life of medieval Byzantium, and that point in other directions where further inquiry may prove fruitful, or at least diverting. In what follows, I first note the question of the survival of Old Testament pseudepigraphic writings in Christianity and provide a glimpse of the revolution under way over the past twenty years in the study of apocalyptic literature; then illustrate the presence of apocalyptic motifs in Niketas’ writings, albeit in “interiorized form”; and conclude with a sketch of the fourth- and fifth-century ascetic writers whom I believe provided Niketas with the means for his appropriation of the ancient themes.

Niketas Stethatos was born sometime in the opening decade of the second Christian millennium and died, an old man, toward the eleventh century’s end. He was a learned monk, perhaps best known as that disciple of St. Symeon the New Theologian (d. 1022) who wrote the latter’s *vita* and edited his works.<sup>1</sup> Niketas was also an author in his own

<sup>1</sup> Niketas’ life is briefly covered in both I. Hausherr’s edition of Niketas’ *vita* of Symeon the New Theologian, *Un grand mystique byzantin: Vie de Syméon le nouveau théologien*, *OrChr* 12 (Rome, 1928), xv–xxxvii, and in J. Darrouzès’ introduction, to his edition of Niketas’ works, *Nicétas Stéthatos: Opuscules et lettres*, SC 81 (Paris, 1961), 7–24.

right. His treatises *On the Soul*, *On Paradise*, and *On Hierarchy*, together with a number of letters and shorter works, were edited forty years ago by Jean Darrouzès for the series *Sources chrétiennes*,<sup>2</sup> while his three hundred chapters on ascetical and mystical topics found their way into Nikodemos Hagiorites' eighteenth-century compendium the *Philokalia*, as well as into J.-P. Migne's *Patrologia graeca*.<sup>3</sup> He wrote controversial works as well and indeed at one point in his career confronted—not very successfully—the irascible papal legate Humbert of Silva Candida. That he was, though, permitted access to so august a personage, and appears to have ended his days as the abbot of the great monastery of Stoudios, may be taken as evidence that he was a man of the highest ecclesiastical culture and status.<sup>4</sup> What was the apparently unlikely relationship between this prominent medieval churchman and certain texts written eight to twelve hundred years before his birth, texts that, with only a few notable exceptions, were not included in the canon of either the Old or New Testaments (even though all or most of them appear under the names of saints from Israel's ancient or mythic past)?

OLD TESTAMENT PSEUDEPIGRAPHA, CHRISTIAN TRANSMISSION,  
AND THE DEFINITION OF APOCALYPTIC

At the end of her book *Ascent to Heaven in Jewish and Christian Apocalypses*, Martha Himmelfarb poses my question in somewhat broader terms: “In monasteries East and West, OT Pseudepigrapha continued to be copied into the Middle Ages and beyond. Just how these texts were understood, and how their transmission could be squared with the existence of a well-defined canon is a subject worthy of attention.”<sup>5</sup> R. A. Kraft has noted that “from the tenth century onward there is a growing flood of Jewish pseudepigraphic materials in Greek, especially those which deal with the lives and deaths of ancient righteous persons.”<sup>6</sup> He also voices a “hunch” that these documents were “preserved in Greek” before the tenth century by “monastics whose concerns for personal piety . . . led them to ignore prohibitions of such material.” For those contemporary scholars anxious to ferret out strains of pre-rabbinic Judaism in these materials, Kraft also voices a caution which, I think, points directly toward our subject. How, he wonders, “in a Christian context that is conscious of its Jewish roots and thrives on visions and revelations . . . can one tell” where the ancient Jew leaves off and the later Christian begins?<sup>7</sup>

Monasteries, visions, revelations, and the tenth-century “flood” that Kraft notes all

<sup>2</sup>Darrouzès' *Nicetas Stéthatos* includes the following works: *On the Soul*, pp. 56–153; *Contemplation of Paradise*, 154–227; *Letters (8) Appended to the Treatise on Paradise*, 228–91; *On Hierarchy*, 292–365; *On the Limits of Life*, 366–411; *Against the Jews*, 412–43; *On the Profession of Faith*, 444–63; *On the Canons*, 464–85; *On Stoudite Customs*, 486–507; and *New Heavens and New Earth*, 508–15. My references to Niketas' works cite this edition, e.g., SC, p. 216.

<sup>3</sup>Νικῆτα μοναχοῦ καὶ πρεσβυτέρου· Πρώτη πρακτικῶν κεφαλαίων ἑκατοντάς, Δευτέρα φυσικῶν κεφαλαίων ἑκατοντάς, Τρίτη γνωστικῶν κεφαλαίων ἑκατοντάς (henceforth *C* 1–3), in Nikodemos Hagiorites, *Φιλοκαλία τῶν ἱερῶν νηπτικῶν*, 5 vols. (repr. Athens, 1961), 3:273–355; PG 120:852–1010; *The Philokalia: The Complete Text*, trans. G. E. H. Palmer, P. Sherrard, and K. T. Ware, 4 vols. (London, 1979–1995), 4:79–174 (hereafter Ware et al.). My Greek citations of *C* refer to Nikodemos' text.

<sup>4</sup>The addressees of his several epistles alone suggest this; cf. Darrouzès, *Nicetas Stéthatos*, 18–24.

<sup>5</sup>M. Himmelfarb, *Ascent to Heaven in Jewish and Christian Apocalypses* (Oxford-New York, 1993), 99.

<sup>6</sup>R. A. Kraft, “The Pseudepigrapha in Christianity,” in *Tracing the Threads: Studies in the Vitality of the Jewish Pseudepigrapha*, ed. J. C. Reeves, (Atlanta, 1994), 55–86, here 68.

<sup>7</sup>*Ibid.*, 70.

play into the matter of Niketas' works. Before I turn to him, however, I would like to make two qualifications, the first bearing on the matter of a "well-defined canon," in Himmelfarb's phrase, and the second regarding the type of Old Testament Pseudepigrapha of most interest to me.

The scriptural canon, particularly of the Old Testament, was slow to achieve a fixed form in the East, at least in all its details.<sup>8</sup> Athanasios of Alexandria's festal epistle of 367 did provide a list that corresponds to the Old Testament of the Hebrew canon,<sup>9</sup> but the absence of the so-called deuterocanonical books and their persistence, for example, in the present-day canon of the Greek and Russian churches (with some interesting minor differences) indicate that the canon was not fixed by the end of the fourth century.<sup>10</sup> Further, at least two of the books to which Athanasios alludes in his epistle as apocryphal and even heretical, probably *1 Enoch* (and perhaps *2 Enoch* as well) and the *Ascension of Isaiah*, continued to be read in Egypt even as he was writing and, in fact, found their way into the very ample canon of Alexandria's daughter church in Ethiopia.<sup>11</sup> Centuries later in Russia, to the best of my knowledge, there was no "Old Testament," that is, no complete collection of the Old Testament books between two covers, until the publication at the end of the 1490s of the Bible (translated, interestingly enough, from the Vulgate!) sponsored by Archbishop Gennady of Novgorod.<sup>12</sup> The Russians seem to have made do until that time with the *Palaia*, the Old Testament texts appointed for reading at the church's feasts. The latter collections often included apocryphal or pseudepigraphical materials now preserved solely in Old Church Slavonic, such as, for example, *2 Enoch*, the *Apocalypse of Abraham*, the *Ladder of Jacob*, together with texts shared with other languages (though not always with Greek), for example, the second half of the *Ascension of Isaiah*.<sup>13</sup> The Quinisext Council, canon 2, may, with its scattershot approval of a number of differ-

<sup>8</sup>The best and practically the only short discussion I know of concerning the canon of scripture in the Orthodox Church is that of M. Prokurat, "Orthodox Interpretation of Scripture," in *The Bible in the Churches*, ed. K. Hagen (Milwaukee, 1994), 59–99, esp. 65–93.

<sup>9</sup>For a translation of Athanasios' Paschal Epistle of 367, which includes important remarks on the Pseudepigrapha preserved only in the Coptic, see D. Brakke, *Athanasius and the Politics of Asceticism* (Oxford, 1995), 326–32 (Coptic addition, 330–32). On the similar reactions of other, contemporary bishops to the pseudepigrapha, see E. Earle Ellis, "The Old Testament Canon in the Early Church," in *MIKRA: Text, Translation, Reading and Interpretation of the Hebrew Bible in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity*, ed. M. J. Mulder and H. Sysling (Philadelphia, 1988), 653–90, esp. 665–70.

<sup>10</sup>See Prokurat, "Orthodox Interpretation," 70–74.

<sup>11</sup>See E. Isaac's introduction to his translation of *1 Enoch*, in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, ed. J. H. Charlesworth, 2 vols. (New York, 1983, 1985), 1:5–10 (hereafter Charlesworth), as well as Charlesworth's "Introduction for the General Reader," 1:xxiii–xxiv. On the reading of the *Ascension of Isaiah* in late 4th-century Egypt, see Abba Ammonas in note 47 below.

<sup>12</sup>See Prokurat, "Orthodox Interpretation," 80–93 on the Slavic Bible, esp. 83 on the *Palaia*: "a 'Reader's Digest' version of the 'historical books' dressed up with apocryphal legends"—i.e., the Pseudepigrapha—which "completed the list" of the available Old Testament, together with the Psalter, the prophets, and certain of the Wisdom books. See also E. Turdeanu, "La *Palea* byzantine chez les Slaves du sud et les Roumains," *RES* 40 (1964): 195–206, repr. in idem, *Apocryphes slaves et roumains de l'Ancien Testament* (Leiden, 1981), 392–403.

<sup>13</sup>I do not know of any one scholarly work in a West European language that focuses on the Slavic pseudepigrapha as a group, save E. Turdeanu's essays in *Apocryphes slaves et roumains*. For something more readily to hand and quickly synoptic, see the introductions and (the now somewhat dated) bibliographies prefacing each of these works in Charlesworth, 1:91–100 (*2 Enoch*); 681–88 (*Apocalypse of Abraham*); 2:143–55 (*Martyrdom and Ascension of Isaiah*); and 401–6 (*Ladder of Jacob*).

ent ancient lists, have set the bounds firmly for the imperial church in 695, but things seem to have been rather more fluid in the wider “Byzantine commonwealth.”

There is, second, the very broad category of the Pseudepigrapha themselves. Here the reasons for preservation and transmission would surely have varied according to the nature of the particular work. It is not difficult, for example, to imagine why books like the story of *Joseph and Aseneth*, or *The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*, remain well attested in the East into the late Middle Ages and beyond.<sup>14</sup> The first is a moving tale of love and conversion, a kind of religious romance, while morality is the very stock-in-trade of the *Testaments*. Few if any ancient texts insist more strongly on “family values” than these moralizing sermons placed in the mouths of the sons of Jacob. The works that concern me, however, do not belong to the categories of either romance or homely preaching; they are instead examples of the genre called “apocalypse.”

Here again I am obliged to introduce a few qualifications. The generally received sense of the terms *apocalypse* or *apocalyptic* immediately evokes images of cosmic catastrophe or perhaps of bad Hollywood movies. With some allowances for academic precision, the focus of biblical scholarship had, until rather recently, been quite similar. Earlier students of apocalyptic literature, whether of the canonical books of Daniel and Revelation, the vast number of similar works written from about 200 B.C. to A.D. 200, or indeed later Christian works from the end of the fourth century on, have concentrated on the eschatological aspects of these texts. These aspects include their view of history (deterministic, the inexorable advance of the divine plan), *ex eventu* prophecy placed in the mouths of figures set deeply—in the case of the earlier works—in Israel’s past, the signs of the endtimes, and the cosmic struggle and last battle between good and evil, light and darkness, God and the devil. Investigations have usually been accompanied by smug remarks about the decline of prophetic inwardness in *Spätjudentum*, together with speculation regarding the sociology and psychology represented by the apocalyptic writers whose texts are thus read as expressions of oppressed Jews or Christians under Greek or Roman rule, or of Jewish or Christian sects struggling within an indifferent or hostile majority, and so on.<sup>15</sup>

While there are certainly insights to be gleaned from this earlier approach, a definition of apocalypse or apocalyptic that focuses exclusively on the characteristics just listed will fail to account for many texts that everyone agrees must be included within the genre. This applies first of all to the grandfather of them all, the “Book of the Watchers,” that is, the first thirty-six chapters of *I or Ethiopic Enoch*, whose composition is at present thought to go back to at least 200 B.C. This text betrays little or no preoccupation with the signs of the end, no *ex eventu* prophecy, only a discrete impression of historical deter-

<sup>14</sup>See the discussion of the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* and of *Joseph and Aseneth* by, respectively, H. C. Kee and C. Burchard, in Charlesworth, 1:775–80 and 2:177–201.

<sup>15</sup>For examples of this earlier approach to apocalyptic literature, see J. Bright, *A History of Israel: Third Edition* (Philadelphia, 1981), 428–57; G. von Rad, *Theology of the Old Testament*, trans. D. M. G. Stalker (New York, 1965), 2:300–315; idem, *Wisdom in Israel*, trans. J. D. Martin (New York, 1972), 263–83; and D. S. Russell, *The Method and Message of Jewish Apocalyptic* (Philadelphia, 1964), esp. 73–103. More recently, however, see R. A. Horsely and J. S. Hanson, *Bandits, Prophets and Messiahs: Popular Movements at the Time of Christ* (San Francisco, 1985), 135–89 on the continuation of prophecy into New Testament times, and S. L. Cook, *Prophecy and Apocalypticism: The Post-Exilic Social Setting* (Minneapolis, 1995), esp. 19–84, proposing that the primary matrix of later apocalyptic literature and thought was the Temple establishment of post-Exilic Palestine.

minism, and not very much sense of the cosmic struggle (other than a set of naughty angels who give the book its name) that would show up with such force a few generations later in Daniel.<sup>16</sup> The same generally holds true for the two apocalypses I mentioned above, the Jewish *2 Enoch* and the Christian *Ascension of Isaiah*, and there are many others of similar nature.<sup>17</sup> What these three works are primarily interested in is the ascent itself to heaven, the vision of the divine throne, the hosts and ranks of angels, and the contours of that heavenly geography that include the mysteries of the present and future worlds, for example, the origins of creation, weather-making, and the movements of the heavenly bodies, together with the places and nature of postmortem rewards and punishments.

I arrive thus at a definition of apocalyptic proposed by Christopher Rowland in his illuminating book *The Open Heaven*: “To speak of apocalyptic . . . is to concentrate on the direct revelation of heavenly mysteries,” together with his later observation that these texts assert, in effect, “that certain individuals have been given to understand the mysteries of God, man, and the universe.”<sup>18</sup> The twin emphases on “direct revelation” and “certain individuals” will appear prominently in Niketas. Somewhat more prosaic and circumspect, though still in the same vein, is the definition of apocalypse by John Collins in 1979: “Apocalypse is a genre of revelatory literature with a narrative framework, in which a revelation is mediated by an otherworldly being to a human recipient, disclosing a transcendent reality which is both temporal, in so far as it envisages eschatological salvation, and spatial, in so far as it envisages another, supernatural world.”<sup>19</sup> Again, while the “temporal” dimension will be quite absent in Niketas (as it is, in fact, largely missing in the three apocalypses cited above), together with much of any “narrative framework,” the other elements of Collins’ definition do appear.

If both the definitions just given, especially Rowland’s, have a “mystical” ring to them, this is not accidental. One of the single most important contributors to this reevaluation of the apocalyptic was the great scholar of Jewish mysticism, Gershom Scholem. It was the latter’s thesis that a line of continuity ran back from the medieval Jewish creators of Cabbalism to the ancient apocalypticists, with the mediating element between these two sets of literature, separated as they were by more than a millennium and by the rise of rabbinic Judaism, being the curious body of *hekalot* literature whose antiquity Scholem

<sup>16</sup>See Himmelfarb, *Ascent to Heaven*, 5–6; and, at greater length on *1 Enoch*, M. Dean-Otting, *Heavenly Journeys: A Study of the Motif in Hellenistic Jewish Literature* (Frankfurt am Main, 1984), 39–58; and J. Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination: An Introduction to the Jewish Matrix of Christianity* (New York, 1984), 1–32 and 35–46. On the roots of the Enochic literature in the ancient Near East, see G. Widengren, *The Ascension of the Apostle and the Heavenly Book* (Uppsala, 1950), 7–37. On the relationship of this Enochic and related literature to Christian origins and asceticism, see R. Murray, “Jews, Hebrews and Christians: Some Needed Distinctions,” *NT* 24.4 (1982): 195–208; idem, “‘Disaffected Judaism’ and Early Christianity: Some Predisposing Factors,” in *To See Ourselves as Others See Us* (Chico, Calif., 1985), 263–81; M. Barker, quite radically, in *The Great Angel: A Study of Israel’s Second God* (Louisville, Ky., 1992), esp. 190–231; and, most recently, C. Fletcher-Louis, *Luke–Acts: Angels, Christology, and Soteriology* (Tübingen, 1997), 72–107 and 137–215, esp. 145–56.

<sup>17</sup>Himmelfarb, *Ascent to Heaven*, 3, distinguishes eight apocalypses of ascent written between 200 B.C. and A.D. 200. These include: “The Book of the Watchers” (= *1 Enoch* 1–36, esp. 14); “The Similitudes of Enoch” (= *1 Enoch* 37–71, esp. 71); *2 Enoch*; *The Ascension of Isaiah*; *The Testament of Levi* (esp. chaps. 2–5 and 8); *The Apocalypse of Zephaniah*; *The Apocalypse of Abraham*; and *3 Baruch*.

<sup>18</sup>C. Rowland, *The Open Heaven: A Study of Apocalyptic in Judaism and Early Christianity* (New York, 1982), 14 and 76.

<sup>19</sup>J. Collins, “Towards the Morphology of a Genre,” *Semeia* 14 (1979): 9.

successfully demonstrated.<sup>20</sup> *Hekhalot* is the plural of *hekal*, meaning “palace” or “temple,” and the palaces or temples that comprised the subject of these texts were the heavens or abodes of the angels and, in the seventh and highest heaven or palace, the chariot or *merkavah* throne of God’s Glory, the *kevod YHWH* (כבוד יהוה), which had formed the object of the prophet Ezekiel’s visions in Ezekiel 1, 9–11, and 43. The *hekalot* texts are thus concerned with the *aliyah bammerkavah*, the ascent to the *merkavah*, and, thanks to Scholem, have been generally dated to the era of the *Talmud*’s composition, that is, roughly A.D. 200–600. For, while it is true that works such as the *Lesser* and *Greater Hekhalot*, together with *3* or *Hebrew Enoch*, are all later, medieval compilations, the *pericopae* that comprise them are much earlier and, moreover, often display the same interest in heavenly ascent and disclosure as the earlier apocalypses of ascent.<sup>21</sup> Indeed, they *are* apocalypses of ascent, and, as such and even though they are largely innocent of all of the eschatological emphases that had hitherto been thought to characterize apocalyptic texts, their consideration as apocalypses has forced reconsideration of the genre as a whole.<sup>22</sup> At present, therefore, the revelatory emphasis of apocalyptic literature shares center stage with the eschatological, together with the genre’s affirmation that some, however few, have gone up to heaven, to the temple or palace on high, to receive the secrets of the celestial realm.

The theme of the “heavenly temple” was recently underscored by, among others, the study of Martha Himmelfarb mentioned earlier. She begins by quoting *2 Enoch* 9:17–19, in which the patriarch, after having been escorted to the heavenly throne, undergoes a transformation: “And the Lord said to Michael, ‘Take Enoch and take off his earthly garments and anoint him with good oil, and clothe him in glorious garments.’ And Michael took off from me my garments and anointed me with good oil. And the appearance of the oil was more resplendent than a great light, and its richness like sweet dew, and its fragrance like myrrh, shining like a ray of the sun. And I looked at myself, and I was

<sup>20</sup>G. Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (Jerusalem, 1941; repr. 1973), esp. 40–79; idem, *Jewish Gnosticism, Merkavah Mysticism and the Talmudic Tradition*, 2d ed. (New York, 1965); and idem, *On the Mystical Shape of the Godhead: Basic Concepts in the Kabbalah*, trans. J. Neugroschel (New York, 1991), esp. 15–55.

<sup>21</sup>See, e.g., I. Gruenwald, *Apocalyptic and Merkavah Mysticism* (Leiden, 1980); C. R. A. Morray-Jones, “Transformational Mysticism in the Apocalyptic-Merkabah Tradition,” *JJS* 43 (1992): 1–31; and, on this current among the Qumran sectaries, idem, “The Temple Within: The Embodied Divine Image and Its Worship in the Dead Sea Scrolls and Other Early Jewish and Christian Sources,” *Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers* 37.1 (1998): 400–431, together with J. Baumgarten, “The Qumran Sabbath Shirot and the Rabbinic Merkavah Tradition,” *Revue de Qumran* 13 (1988): 199–213. For an important analysis of the *hekalot* texts as varying medieval compilations of much earlier pericopae, however, see P. Schäfer, “Aufbau und redaktionelle Identität der Hekhalot Zutarti,” *JJS* 33 (1982): 569–82, and for criticism of Scholem at greater length, D. Halperin, *Faces in the Chariot: Early Jewish Responses to Ezekiel’s Vision* (Tübingen, 1988), esp. 1–114. For the critical texts of the *hekalot* literature, see P. Schäfer, *Synopse zur Hekhalot Literatur* (Tübingen, 1981), as well as Schäfer’s four-volume set of translations into German, *Übersetzung der Hekhalot Literatur* (Tübingen, 1987–95). In English, see P. Alexander’s translation of *3 Enoch* in Charlesworth, 1:223–315, as well as M. S. Cohen, *The Shi’ur Qomah: Texts and Recensions* (Tübingen, 1985). On *kavod* (glory) in the Old Testament, see M. Weinfeld, S.V., *KBD* in *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, ed. G. J. Botterwick, H. Ringgren, and H.-J. Fabry, trans. D. E. Green (Grand Rapids, Mich., 1995), 7:22–38; and, in the Old and New Testaments, the older but still valuable article on δόξα by G. Kittel, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. G. Kittel, trans. G.W. Bromily (Grand Rapids, Mich., 1964–1974), vol. 3, pp. 233–53; and see also P. Deseille, “Gloire de Dieu,” *DSp* 6:421–63, for a sketch (without reference to the Jewish background) of the word’s use in early and medieval Christian literature.

<sup>22</sup>Thus the inclusion of A. J. Saladini’s article, “Apocalypses and ‘Apocalyptic’ in Rabbinic Literature and Mysticism,” in *Semeia* 14 (1979): 187–205.

like one of the glorious ones, and there was no apparent difference.”<sup>23</sup> Enoch, in short, becomes an angel, and he does so through, as Himmelfarb remarks, a “heavenly version of priestly investiture.” She lists the elements in the ancient apocalypses (for example, the *Ascension of Isaiah*, *Apocalypse of Abraham*, *Testament of Levi*, *Testament of Isaac*, to which I would add the remarkable transformation scene in the rabbinic *3 Enoch*, cited below), which are of importance for what I shall have to say about Niketas and his monastic predecessors. These elements are the ascent itself, transformation or transfiguration, the theme of light or splendor, isangelic status, and, perhaps most important, that status as conferred through participation in the heavenly liturgy.<sup>24</sup> Himmelfarb also points out another detail: the seer shares in the angels’ praise by learning their hymns and so taking his place in the celestial choirs, as in the *Ascension of Isaiah* 8:17: “And I was allowed to sing my praises with them, too, and also the angel who was accompanying me, and our praises were like theirs.”<sup>25</sup>

#### SELECTED, REPRESENTATIVE TEXTS FROM NIKETAS

All of these elements appear, some of them repeatedly, in the writings of our medieval churchman, Niketas. So, too, do the components of both Rowland’s and Collins’ definitions, notably the communication of heavenly mysteries both to and through the seer, and these mysteries as embracing the knowledge of God, the angels, creation, and the world to come. Even the “otherworldly mediator” shows up in Niketas, albeit in somewhat altered form. One element alone is missing: the narrative. For Niketas, who echoes in this respect at once his master the New Theologian and the fourth-century predecessors of both men, the apocalyptic ascent, transformation, and participation in the angelic liturgy has become an interior event.

I shall return to these predecessors presently, but for now let me cite some representative passages from Niketas’ writings, a few out of a very great many. The first example requires some extended commentary, since its dense cluster of scriptural citation and allusion signals important elements in the traditions from which Niketas is drawing. The passage is *Century* 3.60 in the collection of three hundred: “To him who dwells in a cave high on a mighty rock will be given the bread of knowledge and the cup of wisdom unto intoxication, and thus will his water be worthy of trust [or: assured]. He shall see a king in glory and his eyes will look on a distant land. His soul will study wisdom and he will announce to all the eternal place, outside of whose bounds there is nothing.”<sup>26</sup>

This appears at first glance to be a simple paraphrase of the following verses from the Septuagint version of Isaiah 33:14–17: “Who shall announce to us that [He is] fire

<sup>23</sup>Himmelfarb, *Ascent to Heaven*, 3, citing the translation by A. Pennington, in *The Apocryphal Old Testament*, ed. H. F. D. Sparks (Oxford, 1984), 337–38. On the heavenly temple, see also, e.g., P. Prigent, *Apocalypse et liturgie* (Neuchâtel-Paris, 1964), 7–13 and 46–68; J. Levenson, *Sinai and Zion: An Entry into the Jewish Bible* (San Francisco, 1985), 89–184, esp. 179–84; G. Vermes, “Introduction,” *The Dead Sea Scrolls in English*, 3d ed. (London, New York, 1990), 46–51; A. Acerbi, *L’Ascensione di Isaia: Christologia e profetismo in Siria nei primi decenni del II secolo* (Milan, 1989), 50–56; and J. Collins, “A Throne in the Heavens: Apotheosis in Pre-Christian Judaism,” in *Death, Ecstasy, and Otherworldly Journeys*, ed. J. Collins and M. Fishbane (Albany, N.Y., 1995), 43–58.

<sup>24</sup>Himmelfarb, *Ascent to Heaven*, 9–46.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., 56, citing J. M. T. Barton’s translation in Sparks, *Apocryphal OT*, 801.

<sup>26</sup>Φιλοκαλία, 3:342; trans. Ware et al., 4:158 (trans. slightly altered).

burning? Who shall announce to us the eternal place? Whoever walks in righteousness and speaks honestly, who hates lawlessness and iniquity and whose hands wave bribes away, who stops his ears from hearing of bloodshed and shuts his eyes so as not to look on iniquity. He shall dwell in a cave high on a mighty rock; bread shall be given him and his water [shall be] assured. You shall see a King with glory and your eyes will look on a distant land.” Niketas’ paraphrase nonetheless incorporates some significant changes. He eliminates the shift in the concluding verse from the third person singular to the second person plural. The opening verse of the scriptural passage, “Who shall announce,” now comes after the originally final verse, or, put another way, the annunciation of the “eternal place” becomes a consequence of the vision of the “King in glory.” We also find the addition of the phrases “[bread] of knowledge” and “cup of wisdom unto intoxication” to the “bread” and “water” of the prophet, and “His soul will study wisdom” to the concluding sentence. Overall, Niketas’ use of Isaiah 33:14–17 first of all incorporates other and for him related reminiscences from elsewhere in the scriptures and, second, is intended to combine them into a single portrait, that of the holy man or inspired elder.

The first of several scriptural echoes in Niketas concern the “cave” (σπήλαιον) and “rock” (πέτρα) of the first sentence, which would have recalled for our author two of the great theophanies of the Old Testament: the experience of divine presence accorded Elijah in the cave (σπήλαιον) on Mount Horeb in 1 Kings 19:9–18 and the *visio gloriae* awarded Moses, sheltered “in the cleft of the rock” (εἰς ὀπήν τῆς πέτρας) in Exodus 33:21–23. In the case of the latter, we might also recall both the subsequent transformation of the lawgiver’s person in Exodus 34:29–35, his face still shining with the reflection of the divine *kavod* and veiled to avoid frightening the Israelites, and then the use to which St. Paul puts this episode, in 2 Corinthians 3:7–4:6, in order to underline the permanent and greater transfiguration afforded the Christian through Christ.<sup>27</sup> Overall, then, the echoes here are all to do with the *visio dei*, especially the *visio dei luminis*, together with the attendant transfiguration of the seer. Perhaps it is also of some note that, at least in the contemporary Orthodox Church, these two Old Testament passages are both read at the vespers of the feast of the Transfiguration.

In Niketas’ additions of the “[bread] of knowledge” and “cup [κρατήρ] of wisdom,” we surely find an allusion to the cup, table, and bread that Wisdom offers in Proverbs 9:2–5. He may also have had in mind the eucharist, especially via John 6:33 and 51, the “living bread,” “bread from heaven,” etc., or “the cup of salvation” of Psalm 116:13, which features in the contemporary Orthodox Church’s precommunion prayers. The note of “intoxication” also recalls the phrase “sober intoxication” used by Philo and later church fathers for the encounter with God, that is, the higher levels of mystical experience. Then there is the phrase ὕδωρ πιστόν. In its scriptural context, it appears to mean simply that the righteous will not need to worry about either food or drink in the eschatological city. In the perfected Jerusalem, one’s water will be “assured,” guaranteed. Niketas is using it, I think, for the preaching or teaching of the seer, or saint, who has seen God, thus partaken of Wisdom’s feast, and so is “worthy of trust.” I would therefore understand the phrase as linked in Niketas’ mind to two scriptural texts, the πιστὸς λόγος of 1 Timothy

<sup>27</sup>On St. Paul’s use of Moses and Exod. 33–34 in 2 Cor. 3:3, see A. Segal, *Paul the Convert: The Apostolate and Apostasy of Saul the Pharisee* (New Haven, Conn., 1990), 58–61; and C. C. Newman, *Paul’s Glory Christology: Tradition and Rhetoric* (Leiden, 1992), 229–35.



and Niketas, the first two from the early fourth century and the third from the eleventh, share a visionary use of Isaiah 33:17 with an important representative of Jewish mystical literature, the medieval compilation of older, amoraic (i.e., Talmudic-era) texts called *Hekalot Zutarti*, the *Lesser Hekalot*.

Peter Schäfer's *Konkordanz zur Hekalot Literatur* lists Isaiah 33:17 as occurring ten times in the space of six paragraphs in *Hekalot Zutarti*. The context is R. Ishmael's discussion of the perilous passage through the sixth *hekal* to the seventh in order to see the Glory of God enthroned, "the King in His beauty."<sup>31</sup> I have the impression that the phrase also occurs elsewhere in rabbinic literature, but this one repeated instance will suffice to raise an interesting question about Niketas' sources. To be sure, given especially Eusebios, we do not *need* to postulate Stethatos' direct dependence on Jewish sources for his use of Isaiah 33:17, but there is still an intriguing parallelism here. Eusebios and Aphrahat are rough contemporaries of the Amoraim, the sages of the Talmud, and thus contemporary as well with the rabbis who wrote the passages that would be assembled later in such compilations as *Hekalot Zutarti*, and there is apparently evidence that, again, both of these two fourth-century, Christian writers (especially Aphrahat) were somewhat familiar with Jewish traditions. Niketas, in turn, is the rough contemporary of the medieval Jewish assemblers of the *merkavah* texts and of nascent Cabbalism as well, and we know that there was an interest in mystical traditions in medieval Byzantine Jewry. Niketas may then have had some contact with the Judaism of his time and place in a way more or less analogous to the contacts Eusebios and Aphrahat had with the rabbis of, respectively, fourth-century Palestine and Mesopotamia.<sup>32</sup> At the least, we have in these mystical streams the example of a certain parallel flow in the two great religious traditions, Christianity and Judaism, two branches of a current that finds its wellsprings in the apocalyptic literature of the Second Temple era. Both Eusebios and Aphrahat, on the one hand, and Niketas, on the other, suggest that there may also have been, at least on occasion, a kind of seepage, as it were, between the sister religions. They had common roots, after all, and a shared territory. Why should we then assume that there was never any percolation of ideas through that common earth?

<sup>31</sup>P. Schäfer, *Konkordanz zur Hekhalot Literatur* (Tübingen, 1986), 1:300, for "the king in his beauty"; and idem, *Synopse*, para. 407–12, pp. 172–74, for the passages from *Hekalot Zutarti*. For the German translation, see idem, *Übersetzung*, 3:145–52.

<sup>32</sup>I know of no studies devoted to this question, but see A. Scharf, *Byzantine Jewry: From Justinian to the Fourth Crusade* (New York, 1971), 168–70, for at least the mention of Cabbalists in Byzantine territories at or around the time of Niketas and S. W. Baron, *A Social and Religious History of the Jews*, vol. 3: *Philosophy and Science* (New York, 1958), 30–31, who indeed argues for medieval Jewish mysticism as stemming from Byzantine Jewry. On Syrian Christian use of Jewish traditions, see S. Brock, "Jewish Traditions in Syriac Sources," *JJS* 30 (1979): 212–32; and particularly for Aphrahat's acquaintance with Jewish thought, N. Koltun-Fromm, "A Jewish-Christian Conversation in Fourth-Century Iran," *JJS* 47 (1996): 45–63. See also Niketas, *Against the Jews*, which displays a greater familiarity with Jewish thought, particularly in para. 10's description of the Word incarnate in the "letters" (γράμματα) that comprise the Torah (SC, p. 424), than one might expect, together with a surprisingly sympathetic (other than the opening citation of Jer. 4:5–5:20) approach, e.g., the closing reference in para. 24 to Romans 11:26 (440–42) with its invocation of a unity within the "Israel of God" that demands the inclusion of both Christians and Jews. I cannot think of a more pleasingly eirenic recourse to Romans 9–11 in either patristic or later Byzantine literature. For Christian-Jewish relations in Byzantium, and perhaps for modern ecumenism as well, this little treatise of Niketas might repay closer attention than I can give it here.

The final scriptural echoes that should be pointed out are those that I take to be associated for Niketas with the “eternal place,” αἰώνιος τόπος, of Isaiah 33:14. These are, I think, both Exodus 24:10, “the place [τόπος] where stood,” which the Septuagint inserts in front of the Hebrew, “the God of Israel,” in the sentence, “They saw [the place where stood] the God of Israel,” and the song of the cherubim in Ezekiel 3:12, “Blessed be the Glory of God from His place” (Hebrew *maqom*, מִקוֹם; Greek τόπος).<sup>33</sup> The “eternal place” is thus the dwelling of God and perhaps a stand-in for the reign or kingdom of God which Niketas’ seer is to “announce to all.” The divine τόπος is also a term with a considerable history in eastern ascetical-mystical literature, especially prominent in Evagrius Pontikos.<sup>34</sup> In any case, I hope this exercise has shown that Niketas’ *Century* 3.60 is not a simple paraphrase but is instead quite soaked with theophanic and eschatological allusions, including perhaps even a remarkable echo of the rabbinic *merkavah* lore. But all of this comes with a difference. While we are obviously here in the realm and vocabulary of apocalyptic visions—seeing the enthroned king, the eschatological river, the heavenly temple, perhaps an echo of the angelic liturgy in the “eternal place,” and (not least) the prophetic and inspired calling of the seer—it should also be clear from his subtle manipulations of the original scriptural verse that, for Niketas, it is the seer, the transfigured visionary, who is the subject of interest and whose role is being described. The human recipient is to become himself the spring of living water, and this because, at least by implication, the vision itself has taken place within him, such that it is he who becomes in fact the throne of divinity and locus of the Presence, at once the temple on high and—recalling my earlier discussion of Martha Himmelfarb on vision and transformation—the priest, with the angels, of the heavenly mysteries.

I am emboldened to make these assertions because Niketas himself elsewhere in his writings makes every single one of them explicitly, repeatedly, and in detail. His entire treatise, *Contemplation of Paradise*, is devoted to the siting of the spiritual (νοητός) and eternal paradise of heaven within the sanctified soul. As he remarks at the conclusion of the treatise, it is there, within the soul, that one is to find the presence of the Holy Spirit and so the reality of the third heaven to which St. Paul says he ascended in 2 Corinthians 12:2–4. This interior and more spacious paradise, the “great world in the small,” is the “palace [παλάτιον—and recall *hekal*] of Christ.”<sup>35</sup> Thus, too, the hallowed intellect is “the altar within us,” the “throne of God.”<sup>36</sup> The inner altar as “throne of God” suggests, furthermore, the

<sup>33</sup>Of some note, perhaps, is the use in rabbinic literature of *maqom*, “place,” as itself a divine name whose resonances overlap with those of the *Shekinah*. See in this regard E. E. Urbach, *The Sages: Their Concepts and Beliefs*, trans. I. Abrahams (Jerusalem, 1975; repr. Cambridge, Mass., 1995), 37–79, esp. 66–79.

<sup>34</sup>See my discussion of Evagrius on Exod. 24:10, below.

<sup>35</sup>*Contemplation of Paradise*, 8.53 (SC, p. 216) for the “palace of Christ”; 2.19 (p. 176) for the “greater world” and inner “paradise,” and for “the great world in the small,” *On the Soul* 27 (p. 88). For similar evocations of the inner “paradise” and/or “palace,” see *C* 2.12 (Φιλοκαλία, 3:301; trans. Ware et al., 4: p. 110); *C* 2.44 (308; p. 119); *C* 2.50 (310; p. 121); 3.23 (331; p. 146); 3.38–39 (335; pp. 149–50); *On the Soul* 11.60 (SC, p. 122); *Contemplation of Paradise*, 8.58 (p. 224); Ep. 6.2 (pp. 260–62); 6.9 (p. 270); and 6.10 (p. 272).

<sup>36</sup>Ep. 6.8–10 (SC, pp. 268–72), on the “inner paradise” and “throne of the Trinity,” in the course of a discussion of 2 Cor. 12:2–4. For the divine throne: (1) as theological problem, not to be considered κατ’ αἴθεσιν, see Ep. 5.6–10 (pp. 252–58)—and note that the discussion begins with the issue of the supporting cherubim, thus recalling Ezek. 1 and the *hekalot* literature; (2) as the inner Presence, see *C* 2.42 (Φιλοκαλία, 308; trans. Ware et al., p. 118); *C* 2.50 (310–11; p. 121), God descending upon the intellect “as upon a

liturgy of heaven. In *Century* 3.16, to cite one example, Niketas spells this out: “So long as the nature of the powers within us is in a state of inner discord, we do not participate in God’s supernatural gifts. And if we do not participate in these gifts, we are also far from the mystical liturgy [lit., “priestly work,” ἱερουργία] of the heavenly altar, celebrated by the intellect through its spiritual activity . . . [but, once the intellect has been purified through asceticism and prayer] we participate in the ineffable blessings of God, and worthily, together with God and God the Word, offer up the divine mysteries of the intellect’s spiritual [νοερόν] altar as initiates [ἐπόπται] and priests [ἱερεῖς] of His mysteries.”<sup>37</sup>

The liturgy of the intellect, νοῦς, at the heavenly altar is no mere theory or metaphor. Niketas understands it as entailing a genuine experience, indeed as a transformation—ἀλλοίωσις, change—and he holds, as in the apocalypses of ascent, that this transformation includes a share in the life of the angels. Thus the following from *Century* 2.43: “If while striving actively to practice the commandments, one should feel suddenly, with inexpressible and ineffable joy, that he is being transformed [ἀλλοιωθῆναι] with a strange and unaccountable change . . . then he should know that this is God’s sojourning [ἐπιδημία] with him . . . [which] here and now bestows on him the state [or condition, κατάστασις] of the heavenly beings.”<sup>38</sup>

The note of concelebration with the angels occurs often in Niketas’ works, but nowhere at greater length than in his treatise *On Hierarchy*, which is devoted more or less exclusively to this theme. At one point he supplies a particularly striking echo of the ancient apocalypses and, even more so, of the later *merkavah* literature: each triad of the angelic hierarchy and its corresponding triad in the human—or ecclesiastical—hierarchy has its own special hymn in heaven. The first angelic triad sings the cherubim’s praise from Ezekiel 3:12, “Blessed is the Glory of God from His place,” while the equivalent human triad is assigned the opening doxology of the divine liturgy, “Blessed is the Kingdom . . .” (an additional point, surely, linking the “eternal place” of *Century* 3.60 with the idea of the kingdom or reign of God). The second triad in each hierarchy is assigned the τρισάγιον of Isaiah 6:3, and in the third triad angels and people both sing the “Alleluia.”<sup>39</sup>

throne”; *C* 3.49 (338; pp. 153–54); and *C* 2(3), relatedly, see *C* 3.26 (332; p. 146), for souls “like cherubim,” i.e., bearing the throne, and the virtues like “chariots” in *C* 3.95 (353; p. 171). For the soul as “altar” (θυσιαστήριον), “temple” (ναός), “sanctuary” (ἀγιαστήριον), “place” (τόπος), “dwelling place” (κατοικητήριον), “house” (οἶκος), “mountain [of God]” (ὄρος), and “tabernacle” (σκηνή), in short, the language of the temple and so, relatedly, of theophany and divine indwelling, see *C* 1.25 (Φιλοκαλία, 278; trans. Ware et al., p. 85); *C* 1.49 (284; p. 91); *C* 1.54 (285; p. 93); *C* 2.38 (307; p. 117); *C* 2.49 (310; p. 120); *C* 2.63 (314; p. 125); *C* 3.16 (330; p. 144); *C* 3.52 (339–40; p. 155), referring to Tabor; *C* 3.55 (340–41; p. 156), Zion and “house of God”; *C* 3.60 (342; p. 158); *C* 3.79 (348–49; p. 165); *On the Soul*, 9.51 (SC, p. 114); and *Contemplation of Paradise*, 2.20 (SC, p. 176).

<sup>37</sup>*C* 3.16 (Φιλοκαλία, 330; trans. Ware et al., p. 144, slightly altered). For other references to concelebration with or otherwise becoming like the angels, see just below, as well as: *C* 1.90 (295; p. 103); *C* 2.47 (309; p. 120); *C* 2.63 (314; p. 125); *C* 3.99 (354–55; pp. 172–73); *Vie de Syméon*, chap. 33 (p. 44); *ibid.*, 113 (p. 156) and 133–34 (pp. 192–97); *On the Soul*, 3.16 (SC, pp. 78–80); 10.54 (p. 116); 13.70–71 (pp. 132–34); 14.79–80 (pp. 144–46); 15.83 (p. 150); *On Hierarchy*, 1.2–4 (SC., pp. 302–4); 7.59 (pp. 356–58); *On the Canons*, 10 (p. 474); and *On Studite Customs*, 1 (pp. 486–88). The two latter citations both speak of the ties between the heavenly and earthly liturgies.

<sup>38</sup>*C* 2.43 (Φιλοκαλία, 308; trans. Ware et al., p. 118, slightly altered).

<sup>39</sup>*On Hierarchy*, 3.22–23 (SC, pp. 326–28), and recall my remarks drawn above from Himmelfarb, *Ascent to Heaven*, 35–36 and 55–56. I cannot recall any instance in the ancient apocalypses where the several angelic

To the objection that the human side of these hierarchies has, at the least, a very ecclesiastical ring, and that some bishops (or maybe most) do not really deserve to be singing with the angels either here or even especially in the world to come, Niketas offers a kind of escape clause which at the same time underlines the primacy he places on the inner life. Echoing Origen eight hundred years earlier, he explains in *On Hierarchy* that the “true bishop” is one whose “apostolic rank [τάγμα ἀποστολικόν] the Holy Spirit has made manifest in the Church”<sup>40</sup> and who is therefore, by virtue of that *experience*, both an initiate and communicator of heavenly mysteries, μύστης and μυσταγωγός.<sup>41</sup>

The “true bishop,” “initiate,” “mystagogue,” and “priest of the divine mysteries” has a number of other titles as well. These include mediator (μεσίτης), leader or abbot (ἡγούμενος), lawgiver (νομοθέτης), guide (ὁδηγός), teacher (διδάσκαλος), physician (ιατρός), nazirite (ναζιραῖος), prophet (προφήτης), sage, friend of God, spiritual father “begetting other souls in Christ,” theologian, apostle, and finally “earthly angel” (ἐπίγειος ἄγγελος), and “heavenly man” (ἄνθρωπος οὐράνιος).<sup>42</sup> This list, particularly the first and last titles, mediator and earthly angel/heavenly man, leads me to suggest that, for Niketas, the place

hymns in the different heavens are quoted, but this does occur in the *merkavah* texts. Thus see, e.g., *Ma'aseh Merkavah*, 6, cited at length in Morray-Jones, “The Temple Within,” 416–17 (Hebrew in Schäfer, *Synopse*, 555, pp. 209–10): each of the angelic choirs in the seven heavens has its own hymn, starting with the τρισάγιον in the first heaven. On this text from Niketas’ *On Hierarchy* and its relation to both Symeon New Theologian and Dionysios Areopagites, including their common stress on the liturgies of heaven and earth as both “inner” and “outer” realities, see A. Golitzin, “Hierarchy vs. Anarchy? Dionysius Areopagites, Symeon New Theologian, Nicetas Stethatos, and Their Common Roots in Ascetical Tradition,” *SVThQ* 38.2 (1994): 131–79, here 142–52 ff.

<sup>40</sup>*On Hierarchy*, 5.37–38 (SC, pp. 340–42). The recollection of Origen comes from *In Mt.*, PG 13:161bc, cited by I. Hausherr, *Spiritual Direction in the Early Christian East*, trans. A. Gythiel (Kalamazoo, Mich., 1990), 22.

<sup>41</sup>*On Hierarchy*, 5.39 (SC, p. 342). On the knowledge of “heavenly mysteries,” recall Rowland’s remarks above on this as a virtual definition of apocalyptic, and note the frequent use of this and like phrases—“hidden mysteries,” “unutterable mysteries” (surely a recollection of 2 Cor. 12:4 ἄρρητα ῥήματα), “mysteries of the Kingdom,” “God’s mysteries,” etc.—in Niketas. See *C* 1.1 (Φιλοκαλία, 273; trans. Ware et al., p. 79); *C* 1.9 (275; p. 81); *C* 1.45 (283; p. 90); *C* 1.63 (288; p. 96); *C* 1.89 (294; p. 103); *C* 2.40 (307; p. 117); *C* 2.41 (307–8; p. 118); *C* 2.49 (310; p. 120); *C* 2.61 (313–14; p. 124); *C* 2.64 (314; p. 125); *C* 2.67 (315; p. 127); *C* 2.91 (322; p. 134); *C* 3.13 (329; p. 143); *C* 3.16 (330; p. 144); *C* 3.20 (331; p. 145); *C* 3.31 (333; p. 148); *C* 3.37 (334; p. 149); *C* 3.43–44 (336–37; pp. 151–52); *C* 3.72 (346; p. 163); *C* 3.80 (349; p. 166); *C* 3.83 (350; p. 167); *C* 3.86 (351; p. 168); Ep. 8.2 (SC, pp. 280–82); *On Limits*, 26 (SC, p. 390); and *New Heavens*, 1 (SC, p. 508). For an echo of this language in a late 4th-century ascetic writer, see the *Letters of Ammonas*, 8 (Syriac version), and Ammonas’ prayer for his correspondent that the Spirit reveal to him “all the mysteries of heaven” (ܠܝܘܨܝܘܬܐ ܕܥܠܡܐ ܕܥܝܠܐ), ed. M. Kmosko, PO (Paris, 1913 [fascicule], 1915), 10:587, line 10; and cf. also my remarks below on Niketas’ 4th-century roots, together with notes 47, 58–61, 66, and 83–84.

<sup>42</sup>On the several titles: for (1) μεσίτης, see *C* 1.35 (Φιλοκαλία, 281; trans. Ware et al., p. 88); (2) ἡγούμενος, see *Vie*, chaps. 35–58 (pp. 46–78); (3) νομοθέτης, see *On Hierarchy*, 2.11 (SC, p. 314); (4) ὁδηγός, see *C* 2.10 (300, p. 110); (5) διδάσκαλος, see *C* 2.10 (300; p. 110); *Vie de Syméon*, chaps. 10–12 (pp. 18–22); chap. 149 (pp. 220–22); Ep. 7.7 (SC, p. 280); and *On Limits*, 32–34 (SC, pp. 394–98); (6) ιατρός, see *C* 2.11 (301; p. 110); and 2.22–23 (303–4; p. 113); (7) ναζιραῖος, see *C* 2.7 (300; p. 109); (8) προφήτης, see *C* 2.34 (306; p. 116); 2.63 (314; p. 125); 2.66 (315; p. 126); 3.58 (341–42; p. 157); 3.89 (352; p. 169); and *On Limits*, 27 (SC, pp. 390–92), on “false prophets”; (9) σοφός, see 3.44 (336–37; pp. 151–52); 3.54 (340; p. 156) lit., partaking of wisdom; and, negatively, *On the Canons*, 1–2 and 9 (SC, pp. 464–66 and 472); (10) φίλος τοῦ θεοῦ, φίλος τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος, see *C* 2.34 (306; p. 116); and 3.58 (341; p. 157); (11) πατήρ πνευματικός, see *C* 2.53–54 (311; p. 122); 3.12 (329; p. 143), on spiritual begetting; and *Vie*, chaps. 35–58 (pp. 46–78); (12) θεολόγος, see *C* 3.44 (337; pp. 151–52); *Vie*, chap. 150 (p. 224); and *On Hierarchy*, 5.37 (SC, p. 340); (13) ἀπόστολος, see *On Hierarchy*, 5.36 (SC, p. 338); (14) ἄγγελος ἐπίγειος, ἄνθρωπος οὐράνιος, see *C* 2.51 (311; p. 121); *Vie*, chap. 113 (p. 156); *On the Soul*, 3.16 (SC, p. 78); and 10.54 (SC, p. 116).

of the otherworldly being in the ancient apocalypses who acts as guide and interpreter for the seer, the *angelus interpres*, is taken over by the spiritual father. The latter, in and for himself, stands surely in the place of the ancient seer of apocalyptic. He is transformed into light and has acquired angelic status, but, and precisely in view of the latter change, he becomes indeed for others their “guide” and “interpreter,” the one who directs his disciples to a like experience of heaven and who then explains the vision’s meaning. Niketas certainly had two striking models for this figure, his own avowed master, Symeon the New Theologian, and the latter’s spiritual father, Symeon the Pious of the Stoudios. In the former’s *vita*, Niketas describes his master’s veneration, against the objections of contemporary church authorities, of the elder Symeon as a saint, and quotes the New Theologian as replying to his opponents that he had, after all, seen his venerable elder standing “at the right hand of the Glory of God.”<sup>43</sup> This is an allusion to the incident recorded both in the *vita* and by Symeon himself in his twenty-second *Catechetical Discourse*: the latter’s first vision, as a young man, of the uncreated light and of his elder standing within it.<sup>44</sup>

The old man “at the right hand of the Glory” recalls Acts 7:55–56 and Stephen’s vision of “the Glory of God” and of Christ “standing at the right hand of God.” The spiritual father as *alter Christus*, or *imago Christi*, is at the heart of the notion of the sanctified elder as a kind of theophany for his disciple precisely in light of the former’s function as mediator of the divine presence. This particular, eastern Christian, and especially monastic variant on the theme of the imitation of Christ is well enough known not to have to belabor it here, though I note that it must have been a central—or, better, the central—element in Niketas’ portrayal of his own elder and of Symeon the Pious. Recalling, however, the continuing presence of and interest in the apocryphal Old Testament in Christian circles, apocalyptic literature’s own influence on the portrayal of Christ in the New Testament, and Niketas’ use of the motifs of transformation into angelic status and sharing in the heavenly priesthood, it is reasonable to point also to the echo in his picture of Symeon the Pious “at the right hand of the Glory” of the ministering angel of the apocalypses who steps forward from his place beside the heavenly throne to assist the seer and explain his vision. In the canonical scriptures, one might think of Gabriel, clearly an intimate of the Presence, who is sent to explain things to Daniel in Daniel 8:16 ff, and then again, as a heavenly man with overtones of Ezekiel’s figure on the chariot throne, appearing for the same duties in Daniel 10:5 ff. In the Pseudepigrapha, the same pattern is repeated in the angel of the Presence, Jaouel, sent to conduct Abraham on his

<sup>43</sup>*Vie*, chap. 5 (p. 10, lines 20–21): τὸν αὐτοῦ πατέρα ἐκ δεξιῶν παρεστῶτα τῆς δόξης ὀρώων τοῦ θεοῦ. See also chap. 90 (p. 124, lines 17–18), where the speaker is Symeon himself: “You were shown to me standing at the right hand of God” (ὡς ἔμοι ἐδείχθη ἐκ δεξιῶν τοῦ θεοῦ παριστάμενος), and note Symeon’s prayer just above (line 16) to become τῆς αὐτῆς σοι δόξης κοινωνός.

<sup>44</sup>*Vie*, chap. 5 (pp. 8–10): “He [Symeon] received the power to see by virtue of the light and, behold, he saw the form of a brilliant cloud, without form or shape, and full of the ineffable Glory of God at the height of heaven, and he saw his own [spiritual] father, Symeon the Pious, standing at the right hand of this great cloud” (ἐν γοῦν τῷ τοιοῦτῳ φωτὶ ἐνεργούμενος εἶδε, καὶ ἰδοὺ εἶδος φωτεινοτάτης νεφέλης ἀμόρφου τε καὶ ἀσηματίστου καὶ πλήρους ἀρῆτου δόξης θεοῦ εἰς τὸ ὕψος τοῦ οὐρανοῦ, ἐκ δεξιῶν δὲ τῆς τοιαύτης νεφέλης ἰστάμενον ἑώρα τὸν ἑαυτοῦ πατέρα Συμεώνην τὸν εὐλαβῆ). So see also Symeon’s own description in *Catechetical Discourse*, 22, ed. B. Krivocheine, SC (Paris, 1964), 104, pp. 102–4; trans. C. de Catanzaro, *Symeon the New Theologian: The Discourses* (New York, 1980), 246.

heavenly tour in the *Apocalypse of Abraham*,<sup>45</sup> or the angel of the seventh (i.e., highest) heaven, who is dispatched to provide the same service to the prophet in the *Ascension of Isaiah*.<sup>46</sup>

Both of these pseudepigrapha were circulating among Slavic-speaking Orthodox monks within a century or so of Niketas.<sup>47</sup> Given the latter's—and, as I have argued elsewhere, the New Theologian's—fondness for Dionysios Areopagites,<sup>48</sup> Dionysios himself may well have been alluding to the *Ascension of Isaiah* in *Celestial Hierarchy* 13, where, and not present in the canonical text of Isaiah 6:1–6, the prophet is conducted to the throne of Glory and *visio dei* by an angel who then explains the vision and the heavenly liturgy. Unlike the pseudepigraphon, however, and equally unlike both Niketas and the New Theologian, Dionysios spends considerable energy explaining why the *angelus in-*

<sup>45</sup>*Apoc. Abr.* 10:3–16; Charlesworth, 1:693–94. Note also Jael teaching Abraham the angelic song, which he is to “recite unceasingly,” in 17:4–21 (1:697), followed by the patriarch's vision of the *merkavah* and “indescrutable light” in the seventh heaven, 18:3–13 (1:698). On the important relationship of this pseudepigraphon to the later *hekalot* tradition of visionary ascent, see Gruenwald, *Apocalyptic and Merkavah*, 52–57, particularly the elements of fasting, angelic song, and unceasing repetition. The last is perhaps of interest in view of the ancient monastic emphasis on “unceasing prayer,” especially in light of later developments regarding the “Jesus Prayer.” No one has yet sought to link the latter with ancient apocalyptic, even though the expression “pray without ceasing” is attested as early as the 1st century in St. Paul (1 Thess. 5:17), let alone chart its parallels in the *hekalot* texts; thus the possibilities await exploration. With regard to the *hekalot* literature, see the fascinating, 11th-century Jewish text cited by Morray-Jones, “Temple Within,” 425, with its near precise equivalence to later (?) hesychast practice: “who wishes to behold the *Merkabah* and the palaces . . . must sit in fast for a certain number of days and lay his head between his knees and whisper to the ground many hymns and songs. . . . He then gazes into the inner rooms and chambers as if he were seeing the seven palaces with his own eyes.” For a reliable summary of “unceasing prayer” in eastern ascetic literature, see K. T. Ware, “Ways of Prayer and Contemplation: Eastern,” in *Christian Spirituality*, vol. 1, *Origins to the Twelfth Century*, ed. B. McGinn, J. Meyendorff, and J. LeClerc (New York, 1989), 395–414, esp. 402–12. Likewise, the related Byzantine hesychast emphasis on the “uncreated light” seems to find an analogue in the rabbinic “splendor of the *Shekinah*” (זוֹר הַשְּׁכִינָה). On the latter, see I. Chernus, *Mysticism in Rabbinic Judaism* (Berlin-New York, 1982), esp. the chapter “Nourished by the Splendor of the *Shekinah*,” 74–87, and, for similar language in Symeon and Niketas, see above, notes 43–44 and below, note 53, together with notes 83–4 on the 4th-century *Macarian Homilies* and later works.

<sup>46</sup>*Asc. Is.* 7:2 ff; Charlesworth, 2:165 ff.

<sup>47</sup>See M. A. Knibb, “Introduction,” Charlesworth 2:145–46 for *Asc Is*, and R. Rubinkiewicz, “Introduction,” *ibid.*, 1:681–82, for *Apoc. Abr.*, and in greater detail for both, Turdeanu, *Apocryphes slaves et roumains*, 145–200. It is clear that at least the *Ascension* had been circulating among Christian ascetics since virtually the time of its composition by a Christian group near Antioch in the early 2d century. Thus see Acerbi, *L'Ascensione di Isaia*, 277–94. On this and other Old Testament pseudepigrapha, such as *2 Enoch*, as favored reading among the medieval Bogomils, see I. Ivanov, *Bogomil Books and Legends* (Sofia, 1925), 131–227 (in Bulgarian). It was also, clearly, read and copied by Orthodox Slavic monks, and indeed by 4th-century monks as well. Thus recall Athanasios' allusion above (and note 9) to an apocryphal book of Isaiah, and cf. another late 4th-century work, the *Letters of Ammonas* (Syriac version), Ep. 10, quoting *Asc. Is.* 8:21, the prophet's ascent to the seventh heaven, and then adding quite like Niketas above: “*sunt homines super terram qui ad hanc mensuram pervenere*,” PO 10:594 (lines 12–13 Latin, with the Syriac above, line 11). If not the complete text of the ancient work, Niketas may well have had available the Greek *Legend of Isaiah*, based on the apocryphon, and extant today in a 12th-century manuscript. See R. H. Charles, *The Ascension of Isaiah* (London, 1900), xxvii–xxviii on the *Legend*, and 141–48 for an edition of the text with phrases from the ancient apocryphon marked in heavy type. For Niketas' use of Isaiah as an illustration of the heavenly ascent and transformation, see C 2.26 (Φιλοκαλία, 304; trans. Ware et al., p. 114).

<sup>48</sup>See Golitzin, “Anarchy vs. Hierarchy?” and, expanding on the latter with further documentation of Symeon's admiration for Dionysios, especially with regard to the language of mystical experience, I. Perczel, “Denys l'Aréopagite et Syméon le nouveau théologien,” in *Denys l'Aréopagite et sa postérité en Orient et en Occident*, ed. Y. de Andia (Paris, 1997), 341–57.

*terpres* is merely an ordinary angel and not from the first level of the heavenly hierarchy, that is, one of the seraphim. The angels, he continues, doubtless to underscore one of his principal reasons for composing his very own New Testament pseudepigraphon, are to their highest officers as our priests are to their bishops.<sup>49</sup> In other words, even ascetic visionaries, here represented by Isaiah, require the instruction of the clergy.<sup>50</sup> From rabbinic circles roughly contemporary with Dionysios, one can point to the analogous figure of Metatron, the Angel of the Presence and even called “the Lesser YHWH,” who provides, in the opening chapters of *3 Enoch*, safe passage to the heavenly courts together with an elaborate explanation of their hierarchies and the heavenly throne to Rabbi Ishmael.<sup>51</sup>

*3 Enoch* also features perhaps the most spectacular description of transformation into light and fire available in any of the apocalypses. Metatron was, after all, once the man Enoch, and he becomes an angel at the moment of his exaltation: “When the Holy One, blessed be He, took me to serve the throne of Glory . . . at once my flesh turned to flame, my sinews to blazing fire, my bones to juniper coals, my eyelashes to lightning flashes, my eyeballs to fiery torches, the hairs of my head to hot flames, all my limbs to wings of burning fire, and the limbs of my body to blazing fire.”<sup>52</sup> References to the vision of light, glory, or fire are so frequent in both Niketas and the New Theologian that I limit myself here to just a single incident, albeit a spectacular one: Niketas’ description of one of Symeon’s experiences in chapters 69–70 of the *vita*. The master is taken wholly out of himself, ὄλωσ ἐξίστατο, finds himself permeated—not unlike Metatron—by the immaterial light (φῶς ἄυλον) of divinity, and is told by a heavenly voice, twice, that this is the transformation of the saints in the age to come.<sup>53</sup> Here we do not have a mere vision, but an actual if temporary transfiguration.

<sup>49</sup>See *Celestial Hierarchy*, 13.4, PG 3:304B–5D; critical text ed. G. Heil and A. M. Ritter, *Corpus Dionysiicum*, vol. 2 (Berlin, 1991), 46:22–49:1; trans. P. Rorem and C. Luibheid, *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works* (New York, 1987), 179–80.

<sup>50</sup>The usual account of the Dionysian hierarchies reads them as a kind of thinly Christianized adaptation of late Neoplatonist, triadic ontology, thus most recently in A. M. Ritter, “Gregor Palamas als Leser des Dionysios Pseudo-Areopagita,” in de Andia, *Denys l’Aréopagite* (as above, note 48), 565–79. For a contrary view, see A. Golitzin, *Et introibo ad altare dei: The Mystagogy of Dionysius Areopagita* (Thessalonike, 1994), 167–230 and 359–92, arguing that they are instead based in great part on ascetical traditions, especially of Syrian provenance, and are designed to reconcile the ascetic visionary tradition with the sacramentally based polity of the church. A striking illustration of this presence of ascetical tradition in the Areopagitica would be to compare *Celestial Hierarchy*, 8.2 (PG 3:240D; ed. Heil and Ritter, 34:14–16), “the all-embracing principle that beings of the second rank receive enlightenment from beings of the first rank” (trans. Luibheid and Rorem, 168), with Palladios’ “Letter to Lausus,” prefacing his *Lausiac History*, which offers a virtually identical statement about angelic mediation, including the triadic form, with the purpose of illustrating the principle of spiritual instruction and obedience, i.e., that no one may trust his own will, experiences, or visions, but must test them against the counsel of those wiser than he: “The first order of beings have their learning from the most high Trinity, the second learns from the first, the third from the second, and so on. . . . Those who are higher in knowledge and virtue teach the lower.” R. T. Meyer, trans., *Palladius: The Lausiac History*, Ancient Christian Writers 34 (New York, 1964), 21; Greek text by C. Butler, *The Lausiac History*, vol. 2 (Cambridge, 1904), 7. Dionysios simply puts the bishop (“hierarch”) in the place of the monastic elder, exactly the point of his exegesis here of Isa. 6:1–7.

<sup>51</sup>See *3 Enoch* 1:9 ff, trans. P. Alexander, in Charlesworth, 1:256 ff.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid. 15, 1:267. See Morray-Jones, “Transformational Mysticism,” 7–11; and M. Idel, “Enoch Is Metatron,” *Immanuel* 24–25 (1990): 220–40, esp. 231–37, on Enoch’s experience here as that of exemplary mystic.

<sup>53</sup>*Vie*, chaps. 69–70 (pp. 92–96). For more citations from Symeon on the *visio luminis*, and a discussion of his sources for it in scripture and the fathers, though without reference either to apocalyptic literature or to parallels in later Jewish mysticism, see the preliminary remarks in A. Golitzin, *St. Symeon the New Theologian*

“INTERIORIZED APOCALYPTIC”: FOUR PRECEDENTS FROM  
FOURTH-CENTURY ASCETICAL WRITERS

Participation in the angelic liturgy within the purified heart and the portrait of the transfigured elder or γέρων that we have found in Niketas, together with the themes of light and the *visio dei gloriae*, are all instances of what I call “interiorized apocalyptic,” the transposition of the cosmic setting of apocalyptic literature, and in particular of the “out of body” experience of heavenly ascent and transformation, to the inner theater of the Christian soul, to “the great world,” as Niketas puts it, borrowing from Gregory of Nazianzos, “within the small.”<sup>54</sup> It seems clear that Niketas could well have read and found profitable some of the ancient pseudepigrapha. It is certainly the case that he incorporated into his thought materials and motifs stemming from the ancient literature at the same time as he recast them into a new, inner-oriented model.

Or was that model so very new? We can surely find some basis for it in the foundational documents of Christianity, such as, for example, St. Paul’s promise of the “light of the glory of God in the face of Christ” shining within the Christian heart in 2 Corinthians 4:6, or the words of Christ in John 14:21–24 and 17:22–24, which speak of indwelling, epiphany, and of the gift of the same glory which he had with the Father “before the world was” (John 17:5). As one late fourth-century ascetic author put it, with Christ “everything [i.e., all the company of heaven] is to be found within.”<sup>55</sup> It is indeed to the fourth-century emergence of monasticism and the latter’s earliest documents that I should like to turn in this section. If there are certain new emphases in what we have seen of Niketas, there is still virtually nothing in his writings that does not have precedents in fourth- and early fifth-century monastic literature. Let me begin with the last item men-

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*on the Mystical Life: The Ethical Discourses*, vol. 3: *Life, Times, Theology* (Crestwood, N.Y., 1997), 81–105; H. Alfeyev, “The Patristic Background of St. Symeon the New Theologian’s Doctrine of the Divine Light,” *StP* 32 (1997): 229–38 (very good for the echoes of Evagrius, Macarius, and Isaac); and J. A. McGuckin, “The Luminous Vision in Eleventh-Century Byzantium: Interpreting the Biblical and Theological Paradigms of St. Symeon the New Theologian,” in *Work and Worship at the Theotokos Evergetis 1050–1200*, ed. M. Mullett and A. Kirby (Belfast, 1997), 90–123. For Niketas’ references to transforming glory, light, or, as in 3 *Enoch* 15 above, fire, see: *C* 1.9 (Φιλοκαλία, 275; trans. Ware et al., p. 81); *C* 1.20 (277; p. 84); *C* 1.56 (286; p. 93); *C* 1.63 (288; pp. 95–96); *C* 1.90 (295; p. 103): “the divine realms [τόποι] of glory”; *C* 1.94 (295–96; p. 104); *C* 2.5 (299; p. 108); *C* 2.43 (308; p. 118); *C* 2.45 (309; p. 119): “immaterial, primal light” (ἄυλου πρώτου φωτός); *C* 2.50 (310–11; pp. 120–21): the “descent” (κατάβασις) of God in light on the “throne” of the intellect; *C* 2.100 (325; pp. 137–38): the eschaton anticipated in the experience of “eternal light”; *C* 3.20–21 (331; p. 145); *C* 3.31 (333; p. 148); *C* 3.37–38 (334–35; pp. 149–50); *C* 3.48 (338; p. 153); *C* 3.82–83 (350; pp. 166–67); *Vie*, chaps. 5 (pp. 8–10), 9 (pp. 16–18), 19 (p. 28), 23 (p. 32), 29 (p. 40), 33 (p. 44), 90 (p. 124), 111 (p. 154), 133 (pp. 192–94), 143 (pp. 210–12); *On Soul*, 6.30 (SC, p. 92); 11.61 (SC, pp. 122–4); 13.70 (SC, p. 132); and 14.79 (SC, pp. 144–46).

<sup>54</sup>See Niketas’ *On the Soul*, 27 (SC, pp. 88–90) and note 35 above. With the expression “interiorized apocalyptic,” I mirror in reverse part of Nicholas Conostas’ concluding observations, on page 123 of this volume, in “‘To Sleep, Perchance to Dream’: The Middle State of Souls in Patristic and Byzantine Literature”: “In Byzantium, the afterlife was the inner life turned inside out and writ large upon the cosmos. The contours and dimensions of the inner world shaped the landscape of the outer world, producing an alternative world through the subjective transformation of self”—apocalypse, in other words, as exteriorized mystical experience. We were both surprised to find our papers reflecting each other in this unexpected way.

<sup>55</sup>*Macarian Homilies*, Collection III, Homily 8.1.5; text in ed. V. Desprez, SC (Paris, 1980), 275, p. 144, line 50. For the great frequency in “Macarius” of just those New Testament texts cited above, together with other and related passages (e.g., Eph. 4:13, Phil. 3:21, etc.), see the citations in A. Golitzin, “Temple and Throne of the Divine Glory: Pseudo-Macarius and Purity of Heart,” in *Purity of Heart in Early Ascetic and Monastic Literature*, ed. H. Luckman and L. Kulzer (Collegeville, Minn., 1999), 107–29, esp. 121–24, and in note 84 below.

tioned above, the portrait of the transfigured elder, and then conclude with a brief sketch of four fourth-century writers in whom we can see the same process of interiorization at work as in Niketas.

The Christian holy man of late antiquity has been in the scholarly spotlight ever since Peter Brown's seminal article on the subject more than a generation ago. Brown's focus was also precisely on the mediatorial capacity and function of the sainted ascetic, the latter as a meeting place between heaven and earth, and thus as a social force.<sup>56</sup> More recent—and less sociologically driven—research into the leading figures, and their portraits, of early Egyptian monasticism (Brown had concentrated on 5th-century Syria, especially on the figure of Symeon Stylites<sup>57</sup>) in the fourth century has come up with similar pictures. I might point, for example, to the stress on the direct link with the prophets and apostles which the Pachomian Koinonia saw embodied in its founder, together with the portrayal of Pachomios as locus of the divine presence and even, in one text, as intercessor at the heavenly throne.<sup>58</sup> At least according to the *Bohairic Life*, the great koinobiarch was also a visionary, and the content of three of the visions in the same source bears an unmistakable resemblance to accounts in the ancient apocalypses of the heavenly throne.<sup>59</sup> One may turn for stories of actual ascents to heaven to the *Historia monachorum in Aegypto*, which is rife with them, as well as, and still more often, monastic

<sup>56</sup>P. Brown, "The Rise and Function of the Holy Man in Late Antiquity," *JRS* 61 (1971): 80–101, reprinted in expanded form in Brown, *Society and the Holy in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley, Calif., 1982), 103–52.

<sup>57</sup>For an account of Simeon Stylites that is peculiarly sensitive to the themes of this essay—light and fire, transformation, converse with angels, identification with the prophets, and "new Moses" (recall Niketas' νομοθέτης in note 42 above, and cf. note 58 below), etc.—see S. A. Harvey, "Sense of a Stylite: Perspectives on Symeon the Elder," *VChr* 42 (1988): 376–94, esp. 381–86 on the Syriac *vita*.

<sup>58</sup>For the insistence on continuities with the prophets and apostles, see, e.g., the opening two paragraphs of the *Vita Prima*, with its implicit comparison of Pachomios to Abraham, Moses, the martyrs, Elijah, Elisha, and John the Baptist, in *The Pachomian Koinonia*, ed. and trans. A. Veilleux, 3 vols. (Kalamazoo, Mich., 1980), 1:297–98; for commentary, see P. Rousseau, *Ascetics, Authority, and the Church* (Oxford, 1978), 18–67; idem, *Pachomius: The Making of a Community in Fourth-Century Egypt* (Berkeley, Calif., 1985), 77–148; and esp. M. S. Burrows, "On the Visibility of God in the Holy Man: A Reconsideration of the Role of the Apa in the Pachomian *Vitae*," *VChr* 41 (1987): 11–33, for the themes of mediator, physician, lawgiver, and father—the *imago Christi*, in short—and 22–23 for Burrows' offhand parallel of the apa with the rabbi as the latter appears in Talmudic literature. For Pachomios as intercessor, see *The Tenth Sahidic Life*, frag. 7, in Veilleux, *Pachomian Koinonia*, 1:457. Comparison with the apostles and prophets had become virtually formulaic by the time of Besa's *Life of Shenute*; see *The Life of Shenute by Besa* (Kalamazoo, Mich., 1983), trans. D. N. Bell, e.g., pp. 41 and 48 ff. On the figure of the spiritual father in two other 4th-century ascetics, see G. Bunge, *Geistliche Vaterschaft: Christliche Gnosis bei Evagrius Pontikos* (Regensburg, 1988), esp. 33–36 (*imitatio Christi*), 40–44 ("true gnostic" and *visio dei*), 45–50 (physician and teacher), and 69–72 (the "mystagogue"); and H. Dörries, *Die Theologie des Makarios/Symeon* (Göttingen, 1978), esp. 336–66 on "The Charismatic Teacher."

<sup>59</sup>See *Bohairic Life*, 73, 76, and 184, in Veilleux, *Pachomian Koinonia*, 1:95–96, 99–100, and 219–20. All three are classical throne visions, the seated Majesty (here Christ) accompanied by the angels of the Presence, and cf. Pachomios' several ascents to Paradise in *Bohairic Life*, 114 (Veilleux, 1:166–68). A. Guillaumont, "Les visions mystiques dans le monachisme oriental chrétien," in idem, *Aux origines du monachisme chrétien* (Bellefontaine, 1979), 139–42, perhaps put off by their "primitive" quality, thinks these visions late and not genuinely Pachomian. I am not so persuaded. Thus see also the Pachomian *Paraleipomena*, 18 (Veilleux, 2:40; Greek text in F. Halkin, *S. Pachomii vitae graecae*, SubsHag 19 [Brussels, 1932], 141–43, here 142, lines 13–14), and Pachomios' vision of Christ, "the Lord of Glory," as a "youth" (νεανίσκος) of "ineffable countenance" accompanied by angels, and cf. the introduction of Metatron as "youth," *na'ar* (נער), in *3 Enoch* 2:2. For comment on the latter, see Alexander's n. 3a, in Charlesworth, 1:257; Scholem, *Jewish Gnosticism*, 50–51; and, on its presence earlier in the Enochic tradition, A. A. Orlov, "Titles of Enoch-Metatron in *2 Enoch*," *Journal of the Pseudepigrapha* 18 (1998): 71–86, esp. 80–82.

conversation and comparison with angels.<sup>60</sup> The *Apophthegmata Patrum* present us with at least two examples of ascent to the throne of Glory in Abba Silvanus, while the latter, together with the Abbas Sisoës, Pambo, and Arsenios, also provide instances of transformation via heavenly light or fire.<sup>61</sup> The λόγος or ῥήμα of the desert abbas, with its power to inform and shape the disciple for salvation, provided the latter take it to heart, should recall the ὕδωρ πιστόν that Niketas ascribed to the ascetic visionary. It is a word of life, pregnant with the Holy Spirit and thus authoritative, backed by the elder's experience.<sup>62</sup> Regarding the phrase "earthly angel–heavenly man," I can point in the *Apophthegmata Pateron* to the analogous and indeed even more extraordinary expression, θεὸς ἐπίγειος, applied at least once to one of the abbas, Macarius the Great, because he "covered the sins of the brethren."<sup>63</sup> In sum, virtually all the long list of titles for the spiritual father noted above in Niketas, together with their occasionally implicit and even explicit evoca-

<sup>60</sup>In the *Historia monachorum in Aegypto*, critical text ed. A.-H. Festugière (Brussels, 1971), see Patermuthis 21–22 (Festugière, pp. 83–84), Sourous 5–7 (pp. 91–92), and Macarius 5–12 (pp. 125–26) for trips to Paradise and, in Sourous' case, to the heavenly court. On converse with angels, see Apollo 5–6 (pp. 48–49), 16–17 (pp. 52–53), 38–41 (pp. 62–63), 44–47 (pp. 63–65); Helle 1–4 (pp. 92–93) and 14–15 (pp. 96–97); Sourous 8 (p. 92); and Paphnutius 23–24 (pp. 109–10). See also "Prologue," 5 (Festugière, p. 7) on the "angelic life" of the monks, and John of Lycopolis 6 (p. 34) on the monk as "standing in the presence of God" and participating in the angelic choirs. Note at the same time a clear instance of polemic *against* visions of the *merkabah* type in Or 9 (Festugière, p. 38), and cf. Palladios, *Lausiaca History*, 25.4–5 on the monk Valens, who is deceived by the devil posing as Christ atop a "fiery wheel" (τρόχος πύρινος); Greek in Butler, 80, line 1; trans. Meyer, p. 85. Ananisho, Palladios' 7th-century translator into Syriac, renders the "fiery wheel" as a ܟܪܘܒܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܪܐ, "chariot of fire" (ed. R. Draguet, CSCO [Louvain, 1978], 398, p. 213, lines 13–14). Related to the polemic, see my remarks on Evagrius and others, below, note 102, and at greater length in "Forma lui dumnezeu si Vederea Slavei: Reflectii asupra controversei antropomorfitate din anul 399 d. Hr.," in A. Golitzin, *Mistagogia: Experientia lui dumnezeu in Ortodoxie*, trans. I. Ica, Jr. (Sibiu, 1998), 184–267, esp. 196–208 and 243 n. 81. On the theme of monasticism as the "angelic life," though without reference to the Old Testament Pseudepigrapha and Jewish background, see the older studies of P. Suso Frank, *Angelikos Bios: Begriffsanalytische und begriffsgeschichtliche Untersuchung zum "engelgleichen Leben" im frühen Mönchtum* (Münster, 1964), and P. Nagel, *Die Motivierung der Askese in der alten Kirche und der Ursprung des Mönchtums* (Berlin, 1966), esp. 20–79.

<sup>61</sup>Silvanus 2–3 (PG 65:409A). In Silvanus 3 the old man's disciple asks him what he saw in a trance. After much insistence, the elder finally tells him: "I was caught up into heaven [εις τὸν οὐρανὸν ἠρπάγην] and saw the Glory of God [εἶδον τὴν δόξαν τοῦ θεοῦ], and there I was standing [ἵσταμην] until now, and now I have been sent away." The rapture, ἀρπαγή, surely recalls 2 Cor. 12:2 ff; the *visio dei gloriae* is likewise out of apocalyptic throne visions, while the "standing" is itself a feature of angelic ministry before the throne in Jewish literature: "There is no sitting in heaven; the angels have no joints" [i.e., to bend in order to sit]; *yBerakot*, 2c, cited in Gruenwald, *Apocalyptic and Merkabah Mysticism*, 66. Cf. also Symeon the Pious in notes 43–44 above, παριστάμενος, ἵστάμενος, and John of Lycopolis, in note 60. On monastic transformations into fire or light, see Arsenios 27 (PG 65:96BC), Joseph of Panephrisis 7 (229CD), Pambo 12 (372A), Sisoës 14 (396BC), Silvanus 12 (412C), and, for brief comment, G. Gould, *The Desert Fathers on Monastic Community* (Oxford, 1993), 177–82. See also, if from a polemical perspective (anti-Palamite) and with no sense of the Jewish background, the still valuable article by H.-V. Beyer, "Die Lichtlehre der Mönche des vierzehnten und des vierten Jahrhunderts, erörtert am Beispiel des Gregorios Sinaites, des Evagrius Pontikos, und des Ps-Makarios/Symeon," *JÖB* 31.1 (1981): 473–512, and, more recently on the phenomenon, C. Stewart, *Cassian the Monk* (Oxford, 1998), 55–60 and 114–22.

<sup>62</sup>"The abba . . . was the one who discerned reality and whose words, therefore, gave life . . . the word that was sought was not a theological explanation, nor was it 'counseling' . . . it was a word . . . that would give life to the disciple if it were received." B. Ward, "Translator's Foreword," in *The Desert Christian: The Sayings of the Fathers, the Alphabetical Collection* (New York, 1980), xix–xx.

<sup>63</sup>Macarius the Egyptian 32 (PG 65:273D). See also Burrows, "On the Visibility of God," 16, applying the same expression to Pachomios. On the expression ἐπίγειοι ἄγγελοι as "the Jewish equivalent of the Hellenistic θεῖοι ἄνδρες," see Fletcher-Louis, *Luke–Acts*, 201.

tion of the apocalyptic *angelus interpretis*, appear in the words or certainly in the substance of the original literature of monasticism.

Turning to the four writers of the fourth century, I have chosen these exemplars in order to provide a variety of backgrounds and locations and give examples of authors relatively contemporary with each other, thus illustrating the simultaneity across linguistic and national boundaries of a process involving ascetics in the interiorization of the apocalyptic motifs noted in Niketas, particularly of the *visio dei* in the heavenly temple. Two of these authors wrote exclusively in Syriac, Ephrem Syrus and the anonymous author of the *Liber Graduum*, the first from within Roman Syria and the latter from across the border in Sassanid Persia.<sup>64</sup> Neither of them would have been known to Niketas, whose knowledge of Ephrem would certainly have been limited to the writings of “Ephrem Graecus,” which are not, in fact, the authentic products of the Syrian poet. The second pair, Evagrius Pontikos (d. 399) and the unknown author of the *Macarian Homilies*, Niketas would certainly have known of and likely read, at least in part. Evagrius was an accomplished Hellenist, learned and philosophically inclined.<sup>65</sup> The Macarian Homilist was clearly fluent in Greek, much less interested in systematizing, and versed as well in local Syrian traditions.<sup>66</sup> The two Syriac writers’ formal knowledge, in Ephrem’s phrase,

<sup>64</sup>For Ephrem’s *Paradise Hymns*, cited below, see E. Beck’s edition of the critical text in CSCO 174 and the trans. by S. Brock, *Hymns on Paradise* (Crestwood, N.Y., 1990). For the *Liber Graduum*, see M. Kmosko’s critical text in *PS* 3, and the trans. of *Mimro* 12 (= *PS* 3:284–304) by S. Brock, *The Syriac Fathers on Prayer and the Spiritual Life* (Kalamazoo, Mich., 1987), 45–53. On Ephrem’s links with Jewish traditions, see esp. N. Séd, “Les Hymnes sur paradis de saint Ephrem et les traditions juives,” *Le Muséon* (1968): 455–501—esp. 468 and 482 for echoes of the *hekalot* texts and the rabbinic *shekinah*—and, more briefly, in Brock, “Introduction,” *Hymns on Paradise*, 39–74.

<sup>65</sup>The literature on Evagrius is large and growing. For the texts cited below, see W. Frankenberg, *Evagrius Ponticus* (Berlin, 1912); A. Guillaumont, *Kephalaia Gnostica*, PO 28:17–257; A. and C. Guillaumont, *Traité pratique ou le moine*, SC 170–71 (Paris, 1971); trans. J. E. Bamberger, *The Praktikos and the Chapters on Prayer* (Spencer, Mass., 1970); *De oratione*, under the name of Neilos of Sinai, PG 79:1165A–1290C, and Nikodemos Hagiorites, Φιλοκαλία, 1:176–89; trans. Ware et al., 1:55–71. For secondary studies, see A. Guillaumont, *Les ‘Kephalaia Gnostica’ d’Evagre le Pontique* (Paris, 1962); idem, “Les visions mystiques” and “Un philosophe au désert: Evagre le Pontique,” in *Aux origines*, 136–48 and 185–212; idem, “La vision de l’intellect par lui-même dans la mystique évagrienne,” *MUSJ* 50.1–2 (1984): 255–62; N. Séd, “La *shekinta* et ses amis ‘araméens,’” in *Mélanges Antoine Guillaumont: Contribution à l’étude des christianismes orientaux*, ed. P. Cramer, *Cahiers d’orientalisme* 20 (1988): 233–42; G. Bunge, “On the Trinitarian Orthodoxy of Evagrius of Pontus,” *Monastic Studies* 17 (1987): 191–208; idem, “Nach dem Intellekt Leben? Zum sogenannten ‘Intellektualismus’ der evagriani-schen Spiritualität,” in *Simandron, der Wachklopper: Gedankenschrift für Klaus Gamber*, ed. W. Nyssen (Cologne, 1989), 95–109; idem, “Palladiana I: Introduction aux fragments coptes de l’*Histoire Lausiaque*,” *Studia monastica* 33 (1991): 7–21; and J. Driscoll, *The Mind’s Long Journey to the Holy Trinity: The Ad Monachos of Evagrius Ponticus* (Collegetown, Minn., 1993).

<sup>66</sup>“Macarius,” not the writer’s actual name which remains unknown, has come down to us in four medieval collections. The oldest, Collection IV, has not yet appeared in a critical text. The other three include V. Desprez’ edition of Collection III for SC, cited above, note 55; H. Dörries, E. Klostermann, and M. Kröger, eds., Collection II, *Die 50 geistlichen Homilien des Makarios* (Berlin, 1964); H. Berthold’s edition of Collection I, *Makarios/Symeon. Reden und Briefen: Die Sammlung I des Vaticanus Graecus 694 (B)*, 2 vols. (Berlin, 1973); and R. Staats’ edition of the *Great Letter*, *Makarios-Symeon: Epistola Magna* (Göttingen, 1980). Secondary works of particular note include: H. Dörries, *Symeon von Mesopotamien. Die Überlieferung des messalianischen Makarios-Schriften* (Leipzig, 1941); idem, *Die Theologie des Makarios/Symeon*; G. Quispel, “Sein und Gestalt,” in *Studies in Religion and Mysticism Presented to Gershom Scholem* (Jerusalem, 1967); idem, *Makarios, das Thomasevangelium, und das Lied von der Perle* (Leiden, 1967) (very suggestive for Macarius’ background in both the Thomas tradition and Jewish thought); R. Staats, “Messalianerforschung und Ostkirchenkunde,” in *Makarios Symposium über das Böse*, ed. W. Strothmann (Göttingen, 1983), 47–71; V. Desprez, “Introduction,” SC 275, 13–70; idem, “Le baptême chez le Pseudo-Macaire,” *Ecclesia Orans* 5 (1988): 121–55; C. Stewart, “*Working the Earth of the Heart*”: *The Messalian Controversy in History, Texts, and Language to A.D. 431* (Oxford, 1991); K. Fitschen,

of “the poison of the Greeks” was modest at best. There is no evidence, finally, that any one of the four knew any of the others, though certainly Evagrius and probably “Macarius” had some acquaintance with the Cappadocians, and both were aware of and used the traditions of Alexandrian spiritual exegesis. Yet, in spite of this mutual ignorance, each writer is, in his own idiom, engaged in the same project of interiorization that I have sketched in Niketas.

In Ephrem, to begin with possibly the earliest of the four, this engagement appears particularly in the cycle of the *Hymns on Paradise*.<sup>67</sup> Woven throughout these fifteen songs, especially in the second and third, is a series of parallels: the mountain of paradise, with the Sinai of theophany, the temple of Jerusalem, and the human being who is body, soul, and spirit (ܪܘܚܐ, *ruho*).<sup>68</sup> In paradise Adam was the intended priest of the sanctuary of the Tree of Life: his “keeping of the commandments,” says Ephrem, “was to be his censer. Then he might enter before the Hidden One into the hidden Tabernacle.”<sup>69</sup> Christ has restored access to the hidden sanctuary and is himself both the Tree of Life and the *Shekinto* (ܫܝܟܝܢܬܐ) there enthroned. By implication, thus, it is the calling of the Christian to enter and worship before that same Presence (*shekinto*, equivalent to the rabbinic *Shekinah*) within the holy of holies of the human spirit.<sup>70</sup> To ascend the mount of theophany with Moses is therefore to enter before the inner throne of the heart, there to discover paradise, heaven, within.

At about the same time, or perhaps a little later, the *Liber Graduum* is struggling to hold together freelance ascetics, disdainful of institutions and clergy, and ecclesiastics suspicious of unruly, charismatic wanderers. The *Liber* wants to affirm both experience

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*Messalianismus und Antimesalianismus: Ein Beispiel ostkirchlicher Ketzergeschichte* (Göttingen, 1998); and see also Golitzin, “Hierarchy vs. Anarchy?” 157–62; *Et introibo*, 373–85; and “Temple and Throne of the Divine Glory.”

As the bibliography indicates, much space has been devoted to Macarius’ place in the “Messalian” controversy of ca. 380–431, with a great deal of confessional polemic clouding the picture. Staats, Desprez, Stewart, and Fitschen have been instrumental for clearing Macarius of the heretical Messalian charge and revealing him as instead, in Desprez’ phrase, standing at the “confluence” (“Introduction,” SC 275, pp. 54–56) of several different currents of tradition—Greek Alexandrian, Cappadocian, and Syrian Christian, including the Thomas tradition and Manicheanism. Quispel’s suggestion of continuities with Jewish traditions has, unfortunately, not yet been taken up by scholars, save for some very preliminary efforts in my “Temple and Throne of the Divine Glory.” The subject awaits investigation and promises considerable results, up to and including the sources of “Messalianism” itself in apocalyptic ascent and vision traditions. On the antiquity of these currents in Christianity, especially in Christian Syria, see J. Fossum, *The Image of the Invisible God: Essays on the Influence of Jewish Mysticism on Early Christology* (Göttingen, 1995); Acerbi, *L’Ascensione di Isaia*, 83–98 and 210–53; and A. DeConick, *Seek to See Him: Ascent and Vision Mysticism in the Gospel of Thomas* (Leiden, 1996), 21–23, and 41–147 on ascent, Christ as Glory, and the *visio dei luminis*. On the *Gospel of Thomas* as our oldest source for the use of the word *μοναχός* to signify a Christian ascetic, see esp. F. E. Morard, “Monachos, Moine. Histoire du terme grecque jusqu’au IV<sup>e</sup> siècle,” *Zeitschrift für Philosophie und Theologie* 20 (1973): 332–411, and esp. on *Thomas*, 362–77.

<sup>67</sup>For an argument that the *Liber Graduum* is in fact older, see Fitschen, *Messalianismus*, 108–19, who reckons it as contemporary with Aphrahat, i.e., mid-4th century.

<sup>68</sup>For a synoptic sketch of these parallels, see the chart in Brock, *Hymns on Paradise*, 53, and the brief discussion in Golitzin, *Et introibo*, 368–71.

<sup>69</sup>*De par.* 3.16 (CSCO 174, p. 12; trans. Brock, p. 96). On Adam as priest and Eden as sanctuary in the Old Testament Pseudepigrapha—*Jubilees* in particular—and in rabbinic thought, see G. Anderson, “Celibacy or Consummation in the Garden? Reflections on Early Jewish and Christian Interpretations of the Garden of Eden,” *HTR* 82.2 (1989): 121–48, citing Ephrem (142–45).

<sup>70</sup>*De par.* 2.12; 3.1, 6, and 12–13 (CSCO, pp. 7, 9, and 11; trans. Brock, pp. 88–89, 92, and 94–95). See also Séd, “Les Hymnes sur Paradis,” 482, on *shekinto* in Ephrem and the rabbinic *shekinah*.

and institution, vision and sacraments. It finds a solution in the declaration that “there are three churches, and [that each and together] their ministries possess life.” The three are the church “on high” (ܐܠܗܐ, *l’el*, or “heavenly,” ܫܡܝܝܘܢܐ, *shmayyono*), that is, the heavenly temple, the church on earth with its sacraments and clergy, and the “little church” of the heart.<sup>71</sup> Through God’s economy in Christ, the second is the necessary and mediating term which has been called into being in order to open up the first, the heavenly temple, to access for the third, the human heart. As the *Liber* puts it: “By starting from these visible things, and provided our bodies become temples and our hearts altars, we may find ourselves in their heavenly counterparts . . . migrating there and entering in while we are still in this visible church.”<sup>72</sup> In other words, the liturgy of heaven becomes an accessible experience—even “in this world,” *bhon olmo* (ܒܗܘܢ ܐܠܡܐ), as the *Liber* remarks elsewhere<sup>73</sup>—through the visible church’s sacraments and a corresponding asceticism of heart and body. To disdain the visible church, on the other hand, means that our body “will not become a temple, nor our heart an altar . . . nor shall we have revealed to us that church on high with its altar, its light, and its priesthood.”<sup>74</sup> It is surely not difficult to discern in these passages themes dear to the apocalypses.

In the fifty-second homily of the longer and less well known Collection I of the *Macarian Homilies*, the homilist presents us with a second ascetic writer who is concerned to affirm that the Holy Spirit is “present and takes part in all the liturgy of the holy church of God.”<sup>75</sup> The worship of the church carries a “real presence,” as it were, but, at the same time, in its outward and visible form it is also an “icon . . . [given] in order that . . . faithful souls may be made again and renewed, and having received transformation [μεταβολή], be enabled to inherit life everlasting.”<sup>76</sup> Thus, the homilist continues, this “visible temple [is a type] of the temple of the heart, and the priest [a type] of the true priest of the grace of Christ . . . [and the whole] arrangement and manifestation of the church a pattern [ὑπόδειγμα] for [what is] at work in the soul by grace.”<sup>77</sup>

So far, then, we find the notes of inner church, temple, and priesthood expressed in terms that Niketas effectively would duplicate seven hundred years later. It also becomes clear, a little later in the same homily, that “Macarius”—to give this writer the name he has gone by for centuries—understands the inner shrine and its liturgy as a participation in the worship and priesthood of heaven. The “arrangement,” οἰκονομία, of the church

<sup>71</sup> *PS* 3:293, lines 23–24 and 296, lines 8–10 (trans. Brock, p. 49). On the *Liber*’s and Macarius’ coordination of the churches of heaven, earth, and the heart, its setting, background, and future in Syrian Christianity, see R. Murray, *Symbols of Church and Kingdom: A Study in Early Syriac Tradition* (Cambridge, 1975), 262–76; Desprez, “Le baptême,” 125–30; S. Brock, “Fire from Heaven: From Abel’s Sacrifice to the Eucharist. A Theme in Syrian Christianity,” *StP* 25 (1993): 229–43; and Stewart, “*Working the Earth of the Heart*,” 218–21. On the presence and continuity of this coordination in later Byzantine theology, including Dionysios, Symeon, and Niketas, see Golitzin, “Anarchy vs. Hierarchy,” and, drawing instead chiefly on Maximos the Confessor and without mention of the Syrians (or of either Dionysios or Symeon), M. Van Parys, “La liturgie du coeur chez S. Grégoire le Sinaïte,” *Irénikon* 51 (1978): 312–37.

<sup>72</sup> *PS* 3, *Mimro* 12, vol. 288, line 23–289, line 1 (trans. Brock, p. 46).

<sup>73</sup> *Mimro* 15, *PS* 3:373, lines 12–13.

<sup>74</sup> *Mimro* 12, 289, lines 14–22 (trans. Brock, p. 46).

<sup>75</sup> Berthold, *Makarios/Symeon. Reden und Briefen*, vol. 2:139, lines 7–9 (trans. Golitzin, “Anarchy vs. Hierarchy,” 177).

<sup>76</sup> Berthold, *Makarios/Symeon*, 139, line 40–140, line 2.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 140, lines 3–8 (trans. Golitzin, “Anarchy vs. Hierarchy,” 177–78).

which he mentions above signifies the “geography,” as it were, of the assembled worshipers, with its progression from the narthex or porch to the laity in the nave, to the deacons (lit., ministers, *λειτουργοί*) serving before, and the presbyters (lit., *πάρεδροι*) standing beside, the bishop’s throne in the apse.<sup>78</sup> Likewise, Macarius concludes, the soul that struggles and progresses in the virtues “is made worthy of promotion and of spiritual rank” in order to be included “with the blameless ministers and assistants [lit., *λειτουργοὶ καὶ πάρεδροι*] of Christ,” which is to say, as I read this passage, with the angelic ministers (recall Ps. 103:4, LXX, the “ministers [*λειτουργοί*] of fire”) and the heavenly beings who stand beside the throne of glory (and cf. Wisd. 9:4 for wisdom as angelic *πάρεδρος* of the heavenly throne).<sup>79</sup>

Stronger still along the same lines is the first homily in the more familiar Collection II, the *Fifty Spiritual Homilies*, where Macarius begins with the chariot vision of the first chapter of Ezekiel. He cites the latter in full, and then goes on to state that “the prophet beheld the mystery of the soul that is going to receive its Lord and become His throne of glory.”<sup>80</sup> This deliberate interiorization of Ezekiel’s throne vision was noticed sixty years ago by Gershom Scholem, who rightly pointed out that the homilist was offering his readers “a mystical reinterpretation of the *merkavah* tradition.”<sup>81</sup> Neither is Macarius’ “mystery of the soul” confined to the eschaton, since he also means it to signify the experience of the same light, “shining within the heart, as will shine from the bodies of the blessed in the age to come.”<sup>82</sup> Indeed, Homily 8 of Collection II, just quoted, also expressly mentions a “robe of light not made with hands” as one of the modalities of the light that Macarius later admits he has seen within himself. The robe must surely remind us of the glorious robe given to the biblical forefather in the citation from 2 *Enoch* above with which I began.<sup>83</sup> Heaven is therefore obtainable, be it only for a moment, even now—*ἀπὸ τοῦ νῦν*, as Macarius is fond of repeating (and recall the *Liber* above, *bhon olmo*).<sup>84</sup> Christ and his angels, as the homilist writes elsewhere, make their throne within

<sup>78</sup>Berthold, *Makarios/Symeon*, 141, lines 13–15 (trans. Golitzin, “Anarchy vs. Hierarchy,” pp. 178–79). I borrow the use and sense of the expression “geography” of the church from A. Louth, *Denys the Areopagite* (Wilton, Conn., 1989), 54–55.

<sup>79</sup>*Ibid.*, 142, lines 9–16 (trans. Golitzin, “Anarchy vs. Hierarchy,” p. 179).

<sup>80</sup>Collection II, Homily 1.1–2; Dörries, *Die 50 geistlichen Homilien*, pp. 1–2; trans. G. Maloney, *Pseudo-Macarius: The Fifty Spiritual Homilies and the Great Letter* (New York, 1992), 37–38. Cf. also Hom. 33.2 (ed. Dörries, 258–59; trans. Maloney, 202) for Ezekiel’s chariot as a type of the soul.

<sup>81</sup>Scholem, *Major Trends*, 79. I know of no one in Macarian studies who has picked up on Scholem’s observation here, even though it is so obviously right.

<sup>82</sup>Homily 8.3 (ed. Dörries, 78–79; trans. Maloney, 81–82).

<sup>83</sup>*Ibid.* (ed. Dörries, 79; trans. Maloney, 82). On the notion of the luminous robe, or robe of light, see S. Brock, “Clothing Metaphors as a Means of Theological Expression in Syriac Tradition,” *Typus, Symbol, Allegorie bei den östlichen Vätern und ihren Parallelen im Mittelalter*, ed. M. Schmidt and C. F. Geyer (Regensburg, 1982), 11–38, and relatedly, A. Goshen-Gottstein, “The Body as Image of God in Rabbinic Literature,” *HTR* 87.2 (1994): 171–95, esp. 178–83 and 190–95 on the “body of light.” Cf. also the clothing of Thomas with the robe of light which carries—or equates with—the *imago dei*, and therewith his ascent to the “gate of greeting” to worship Christ, the “Radiance [φῆγγος] of the Father,” in the *Acta Thomae* 112–13, ed. M. Bonnet, *Acta Apostolorum Apocrypha*, vol. 2.1 (1903; repr. Hildesheim, 1959), 223–24; *New Testament Apocrypha*, vol. 2, *Writings Related to the Apostles, Apocalypses and Related Subjects*, ed. W. Schneemelcher, trans. R. McL. Wilson, rev. ed. (Louisville, Ky., 1992), 384–85. Macarius’ robe and vision of light, via the Thomas literature, are clearly in the lineage of Jewish traditions, and, just as clearly, Niketas and his master are in continuity with Macarius. Thus see above, notes 36–37, 43–45, and 53, and below, note 84.

<sup>84</sup>For the expression, *ἀπὸ τοῦ νῦν*, see, e.g., in Collection I: Homilies 33.3.6 (Berthold, *Makarios/Symeon. Reden und Briefen*, vol. 2:31, line 14); 34.1 (2:34, lines 4–5); 50.2.3 (2:127, line 1); 54.4.6 (2:157, line 12); and

the heart,<sup>85</sup> such that: “He ministers to her [the soul] in the city of her body, and she in turn ministers to Him in the heavenly city.”<sup>86</sup>

Evagrius Pontikos, the last of the four, spent his final twelve years in the desert of the Cells, between Nitria and Scete, dying there in 399. While his name and many of his works were officially rejected in 553, he is nonetheless recognized today as one of the great architects of eastern Christian spirituality.<sup>87</sup> Niketas would surely have known of Evagrius’ treatise, the *Praktikos*, which continued to circulate under the latter’s own name, as well as other materials, including the exceedingly influential *De oratione*, which were preserved in Greek under the respectable name of Neilos of Sinai, just as they continue to be today in Nikodemos Hagiorites’ *Philokalia* and in volume seventy-nine of Migne’s *Patrologia graeca*.<sup>88</sup> In one of the latter works, Evagrius takes the eucharistic words of Christ and applies them to the intellect, νοῦς, in order to conclude, by way of an added reference to the throne vision of Isaiah 6, that the intellect is the “divine throne.” “For it is there,” he continues, “that God takes His seat and there that He is known.”<sup>89</sup> In two passages taken, respectively, from the *Kephalaia Gnostica* and the corpus of Evagrius’ letters, works presently extant only in Syriac translation, we hear echoes of the temple: “The intelligible temple is the pure intellect which now possesses in itself the ‘wisdom of

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58.2.5 (2:184, line 25). Each of these citations occurs in a context clearly related to the current traced here, e.g., the heavenly “palaces” in the first example as now an interior reality, and in the remarkable catena of texts—2 Cor. 4:6, Ps. 12:4, Ps. 118:18, Ps. 42:3, Acts 26:13 ff (Paul’s conversion, the light on the Damascus road), 1 Cor. 15:48, John 3:6, John 1:13, 1 Cor. 14:49 (the “man from heaven”), Rom. 13:14, Phil. 3:21 (Christ’s “body of glory”), and 1 Cor. 2:9—that Macarius uses in Homily 58 to support his insistence that the heavenly light which comes to the blessed even in this life is not a νόημα, a creation of the human intellect, but a βέβαιον ὑποστατικὸν φῶς (2:183, lines 14–15). 2 Cor. 4:6, 1 Cor. 15:48–49, and Phil. 3:21 are also particularly redolent of the Jewish background of the “luminous image” and “body of light.” See above, note 83, and A. Segal, *Paul the Convert*, 9–22, on the Lucan account of Paul’s conversion, and 58–64 on “Paul’s Mystical Vocabulary,” where several of the same texts that Macarius cites here turn up in Segal’s argument for the Apostle as a 1st-century “witness to *merkabah* mysticism” (*Paul the Convert*, 11). Along these same lines, see also J. Tabor, *Things Unutterable: Paul’s Ascent to Heaven in Its Greco-Roman, Judaic, and Early Christian Contexts* (Lanham, Md., 1986), esp. 11–21 and 83–97 on *merkabah* elements in Paul; and, more recently, C. R. A. Morray-Jones, “Paradise Revisited (2 Cor. 12:1–12): The Jewish Mystical Background of Paul’s Apostolate,” *HTR* 86 (1993): 177–217 and 265–92. See above, note 36, for Niketas on the ascent of 2 Cor. 12 as denoting entry into the “inner Paradise” and before the “throne of the Trinity.” Cf. Symeon on the same text and the light of the Trinity in *Ethical Discourse*, 3, *Traité théologique et éthique*, ed. J. Davrouzès, SC (Paris, 1966), 122, pp. 247–309, together with Alfeyev, “The Patristic Background,” on Symeon’s sources for the divine light, and Golitzin, *Symeon the New Theologian: Life, Times, Theology*, 182 and n. 27 on this interpretation of the Pauline text in Gregory Palamas, *Triads*, 1.3.5 and 21–22, together with E. Lanne, “L’interprétation palamite de la vision de Saint Benoît,” in *Le millénaire de Mont Athos* (Venice, 1963), 2:21–47. Taken all together, the outlines of a remarkable continuity seem to me to be unmistakable. Thus, and given especially his complete lack of acquaintance with eastern Christianity (as evident, e.g., in his remarks in *Paul the Convert*, 61), Segal’s *merkabah*-inspired account of Paul’s mysticism, Christology, and soteriology as amounting in sum to a sketch of the central eastern Christian doctrine of *theosis*—including what is effectively an early version of the 14th-century hesychasts’ mysticism of the “uncreated light”—is almost eerie.

<sup>85</sup>Collection II, Homily 15.33 (ed. Dörries, 146; trans. Maloney, 120–21).

<sup>86</sup>Collection II, 46.4 (ed. Dörries, 303; trans. Maloney, 231).

<sup>87</sup>For example: “Evagrius established the categories [of eastern Christian spirituality]; Macarius . . . provided the affective content”; Desprez, “Macaire,” *DSp* 10 (Paris, 1980), 39.

<sup>88</sup>See above, note 65. For a handy (if slightly dated) sketch of the Evagrian inheritance, see Bamberger, *The Praktikos and the Chapters on Prayer*, xlvi–lix.

<sup>89</sup>*De malignis cogitationibus*, 24 PG 79:1228c.

God, full of variety'; [and] the temple of God is he who beholds the sacred unity, while the altar of God is the contemplation of the Holy Trinity."<sup>90</sup> And, in the following from Epistle 39, there are echoes of the theophany at Sinai and the angelic liturgy: "If . . . by the grace of God the intellect both turns away from [the passions] and puts off the old man, then it will as well see its own constitution at the time of prayer like a sapphire or in the color of heaven, which also recalls what the scriptures call 'the place [τόπος] of God,' seen by the elders on Mount Sinai. . . . For another heaven is imprinted upon the heart, the vision of which is both light and the spiritual place . . . within one beholds the meaning of beings and the holy angels."<sup>91</sup> Here Evagrius takes up and interiorizes the theophany at Sinai in exactly the same way that Macarius dealt with Ezekiel's chariot throne.<sup>92</sup> For both, this interiorization of the throne of heaven includes the angelic liturgy. The ascent to heaven of the ancient apocalypses is thus identified with entry into the sanctuary of the purified intellect or heart.

#### CONCLUSION

Now I can offer a provisional answer to Himmelfarb's question concerning the medieval interpretation of the Old Testament Pseudepigrapha and begin to glimpse something of the monastic *Sitz im Leben* for that tenth- through fifteenth-century "flood" of manuscripts transmitting it that Robert Kraft noted. For the Byzantinist, this increase of interest in ancient literature must obviously be connected with the mystical renaissance of later Byzantium, so often and not without justice linked to Symeon the New Theologian and his disciples, which has been widely noted and repeated in the standard accounts of the era.<sup>93</sup> With the qualification of that quality of interiorization which I have stressed is so characteristic of both Niketas and his master, as well as of their common sources in the earliest monastic literature, I suggest that Niketas could easily have read these much older texts as testimonies to the same experience of the light and liturgy of heaven that both he and especially Symeon claimed as their own. Certainly Symeon had insisted that he did no more than preach the teaching of "the Master and the Apostles that some have perverted."<sup>94</sup> Is it not therefore reasonable to suppose that, in the old apocalypses, both he and his disciples, together with legions of other monks throughout the empire and its "commonwealth," could have welcomed the witness of the "grandfathers," the saints of Israel, who had seen and known beforehand the coming of the Mes-

<sup>90</sup> *Kephalaia Gnostica*, 5.84, PO 28:213.

<sup>91</sup> Ep. 39; Frankenberg, *Evagrius Ponticus*, 593; cf. also "Supplementary Chapters," 2, 4, and 25 (Frankenberg, 425, 427, and 449).

<sup>92</sup> Thus N. Séd on these passages as "la première intériorisation [of the Exodus theophany] dont nous ayons une attestation écrite," in "La *shekinta* et ses amis," 242. See also Bunge, "Nach dem Intellekt Leben?" 101–4, on Evagrius' related idea of the *voûs* as "feeding on the bread of angels," a notion that I take as akin to the rabbinic phrase for eschatological beatitude, "feeding on the splendor of the *Shekinah*," which in turn is based, precisely, on an exegesis of Exod. 24:10–11. For the rabbis, see Chernus, *Rabbinic Mysticism*, 75–6, on *bBerakot*, 17a.

<sup>93</sup> See, e.g., J. M. Hussey, *Church and Learning in the Byzantine Empire: 867–1185* (Oxford, 1937; repr. 1960), esp. 201–25; and R. Browning, *The Byzantine Empire*, rev. ed. (Washington, D.C., 1992), 141–42.

<sup>94</sup> See *Cat. Discourse* 34, SC 113, lines 248–63; trans. de Catanzaro, 354.

siah and the light of the Trinity? This is almost exactly the view, for example, stated three hundred years later in the opening paragraphs of Gregory Palamas' *Tome of the Holy Mountain*.<sup>95</sup> As for the ancient patriarchs' and prophets' accounts of the ascent to heaven and personal transformation, these appear clearly to have been read as testimonies to the transfiguration which, in Christ, begins even now within the Christian. With Christ, to repeat my citation above from Macarius, "everything is within," and, on occasion, this was taken as meaning the accessibility and even vision of the divine Presence and the heavenly court. It is not difficult thus for me to imagine how a cultivated man like Niketas, who believed that the eschatological liturgy of the Lamb and the priesthood of the angels were present, equally, in the ordered offices of the monastery *katholikon* and in the person of the hallowed elder, bright and fragrant already with the presence of the age to come, could and might well in fact have approved the copying and reading of the old apocalypses by the monks of Stoudios. We are obliged to acknowledge that other abbots were so disposed, simply in order to explain the manuscripts that have come down to us. So why not Niketas?

Some years ago Archbishop Basil Krivocheine wrote an article demonstrating the presence of motifs, vocabulary, and occasional passages from the Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles—whose years of manuscript efflorescence, by the way, almost precisely match those of the Old Testament Pseudepigrapha—in the writings of Symeon the New Theologian.<sup>96</sup> The presence of the still older apocalypses is, I should think, also discernible in Symeon, though I know of no study that has pursued that line of inquiry. Given the manuscript traditions noted above and by Kraft, the renewed interest in the apocrypha of both the Old and New Testaments is clearly part of the same general phenomenon, the resurgence of interest in mystical texts and, more widely still, perhaps, in harmony with that overall renewal of enthusiasm for the recovery of Byzantium's links with the distant past which appears in a more secular vein in such contemporaries of Niketas as, for example, the philosopher and courtier Michael Psellos.<sup>97</sup> What were the sparks that set off the specifically religious side of that renaissance? How much did the translation

<sup>95</sup>See the Ἀγιορείτικος Τόμος, in, *Φιλοκαλία*, 4:188–89; trans. Ware et al., 4:418–19. The passage is built on the explicit parallel between the prophets, who saw the Trinity then, and "those who have been purified through virtue" sufficiently in the present life to be vouchsafed the vision of the "mysteries" of the eschaton—the holy ascetic fathers, in other words, as the continuation of the prophetic line, i.e., of the "grandfathers." On the "grandfathers" as also seers of the uncreated God in eastern asceticomystical literature, see J. S. Romanides, "Notes on the Palamite Controversy and Related Topics," *GOTR* 6.2 (1960–61): 186–205, and 9.2 (1963–64): 225–70, esp. 194–205 and 257–62.

<sup>96</sup>B. Krivocheine, "Ὁ ἀνυπερήφανος θεός: St. Symeon the New Theologian and Early Christian Popular Piety," *StP* 2 (1957): 485–94. On the manuscript tradition for the Greek of the Apocryphal Acts, see the accounting prior to the English translation of each of the Acts in Schneemelcher, 2:104–6 (*AAndrew*); 156–59 (*AJohn*); 216–17 (*APaul*); 277–79 (*APeter*); 322–24 (*AThomas*). The manuscripts tend to cluster between the 10th and 15th centuries. The same holds for the three manuscripts of the related and remarkable 4th-century *Acts of Philip*, two of which are Athonite; see F. Amsler, F. Bovon, and B. Bouvier, *Actes de l'apôtre Philippe* (Tumhout, Belgium, 1996), 23–25. More generally on the widespread, medieval Byzantine regard for the apocryphal acts, see F. Bovon, "Byzantine Witness for the Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles," in *The Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles*, ed. F. Bovon, A. G. Brock, and C. R. Matthews (Cambridge, Mass., 1999), 87–98. I thank Prof. Bovon for kindly sending an offprint of his article.

<sup>97</sup>See Hussey, *Church and Learning*, 37–50 and 73–88, and Browning, *Byzantine Empire*, 138–41. We in fact owe much, perhaps everything, to Psellos and to a number of his students and contemporaries, e.g., John Italos (Hussey, *ibid.*, 89–102), for the preservation of the texts of the later Neoplatonists.

and arrival of Isaac of Nineveh's corpus in the capital sometime during the tenth century contribute to it?<sup>98</sup> Were there other stimuli, besides of course the older body of ascetical literature which had never vanished and which drew on the same sources? How much else, besides Isaac, came up to "the city" from that still largely Christian Palestine of earlier Umayyad and later Abbasid rule which has just lately begun to attract scholarly attention? And were there, perhaps, some impulses generated through contact with the empire's Jewish population, of which we may have caught at least one or two hints in Niketas? There are many questions, but so far, at least to my knowledge, there are not many answers.

There is also the matter of all those materials that remain extant in Church Slavic which it is most reasonable to suppose were translated from Greek at or around the time of Niketas and immediately thereafter.<sup>99</sup> Could their subsequent disappearance in Greek be connected with the near loss of the New Theologian's own corpus and the complete loss of the service that Niketas wrote in his honor? Between the latter's time and the rise of Byzantine hesychasm there was a long period when the authorities of church and state looked with a very dim eye on the charismatic ascetic. Was it, perhaps, through association with the always potentially difficult figure of the holy man, or else, relatedly, as part of the same emphasis on "law and order" within church and empire which we find reflected in, for example, the great twelfth-century canonists, that what had before been tolerated or ignored as simply extracanonical became, in the eyes of authority, uncanonical and, even, heretical?<sup>100</sup> Here, too, we would have a fourth-century precedent. The same Athanasian epistle cited above, which set out the bounds of the biblical canon and forcibly denounced other writings claiming like authority, was written, as Athanasios tells us, in order to shut the mouths of certain uppity ascetics, the Meletians, who had been giving the archbishop problems and whose "boasting" over the apocalypses he wishes to silence.<sup>101</sup> How many bishops felt the same way in later Byzantium?

Throughout this essay I have discussed the interiorization of the ascent to heaven and other motifs from Second Temple and early Christian apocalypses. The fact, however, that one also finds warnings in monastic literature, and condemnations, directed against taking the notions of visions and ascents literally, in an exterior sense, condemnations that begin in the fourth century and continue into the fourteenth and beyond, strongly suggests that a number of the brethren persisted in doing just that.<sup>102</sup> For the

<sup>98</sup>See D. Miller, "Introduction," *The Ascetical Homilies of St. Isaac the Syrian* (Boston, 1984), lxxiv–vii and lxxxv–xciv on Isaac's rapid dissemination and translation. So far as I know, however, there is as yet no significant monograph on Isaac's thought and influence, one of the many glaring *lacunae* in the scholarship on eastern Christianity.

<sup>99</sup>See above, notes 12–13 and 47.

<sup>100</sup>On the frigid attitudes of the authorities toward the charismatic holy man which are frequent in late Macedonian and Komnenian times, see K. Holl, *Enthusiasmus und Bussgewalt beim griechischen Mönchtum* (Leipzig, 1898), esp. 291–301 on the 12th-century canonists; J. M. Hussey, *Ascetics and Humanists in XIth Century Byzantium* (London, 1960); J. Gouillard, "Quatre procès de mystique à Byzance (vers 960–1143)," *REB* 36 (1978) 5–81; and P. Magdalino, "The Byzantine Holy Man in the Twelfth Century," in *The Byzantine Saint: Studies Supplementary to Sobornost*, ed. S. Hackel (London, 1981), 51–66.

<sup>101</sup>Brakke, *Athanasius and the Politics of Asceticism*, 332.

<sup>102</sup>Evagrius makes a special and repeated point of warning against the manifestation of "forms" in prayer in *De oratione*, e.g., esp. *De orat.* 73: οὐδαίμονες . . . ὑποτίθενται γὰρ αὐτῷ (= τῷ νῷ) δόξαν θεοῦ καὶ σχηματισμὸν τινα, in *Φιλοκαλία*, 1:183; trans. Ware et al., 1:64, "The demons . . . suggest to it an illusion of the *Glory of*

latter, whom I take to have been mostly monks, the old imagery was not merely the clothing of the *visio dei* in symbolic forms—as interpreted in, for example, Dionysios the Areopagite<sup>103</sup>—but rather actual descriptions of the heavenly realities as well as of a possible experience of the same. Here I think of Abba Silvanos’ ascent to the throne and standing “before the Glory” in the *Apophthegmata*, of the several heavenly journeys in the *Historia Monachorum*, of the descriptions of Symeon Stylites’ encounters in his Syriac *vita*, or, closer to Niketas’ own era, of several of the stories in Paul of Monemvasia’s *Edifying Tales*.<sup>104</sup> I am sure that such stories are legion and particularly frequent in hagiography. Apocalyptic imagery continued to nourish popular imagination and devotion at the same time as it served the more exalted and refined masters of spiritual discourse.<sup>105</sup>

I conclude with an anecdote from a collection of twentieth-century Athonite sayings, vignettes, and spiritual talks.<sup>106</sup> While this anthology features a number of contributions

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*God* in a form” (emphasis mine, trans. slightly altered). The point continues to be repeated, e.g., in Diadochos of Photiki’s *Gnostic Chapters*, 36 and 40, *Dialog de Photice: Oeuvres spirituelle*, ed. E. des Places, SC (Paris, 1966), 5 bis, pp. 105 and 107; and Dionysios Areopagita, *Mystical Theology*, 4, PG 3:1040D (Heil and Ritter, p. 148). Cf. above, note 59, on Pachomios’ visions, and notes 60–61 on polemic vs. chariot visions and Silvanus on seeing “the Glory,” together with Golitzin, “Forma lui dumnezeu,” in *Mistagogia*, 197–223 and 241–45 nn. 77–83. In the 14th century, see, e.g., Gregory of Sinai, “On Prayer,” 7, Φιλοκαλία, 4:84–8; trans. Ware et al., 4:271–76; and, relatedly, Gregory Palamas against visionary journeys “out of the body” in “On those who practice stillness,” 4–8, Φιλοκαλία, 4:126–28; trans. Ware et al., 4:335–38.

<sup>103</sup>See, e.g., *Celestial Hierarchy*, 2.5, PG 3:145B (Heil and Ritter, p. 16, lines 7–13), where Dionysios cites the strange forms of the angels in (not stated, but evidently) Ezek. 1 ff as a spur for his own composition; also *Celestial Hierarchy*, 4.3, PG 3:180C (22); *Divine Names*, 1.8, PG 3:645C (*Corpus Dionysiaceum*, vol. 1, De Divinibus Nominibus, ed. B. M. Suchla [Berlin, New York, 1990], 132); 9.5, PG 3:912B–13B (*Corpus Dionysiaceum*, vol. 2, ed. Heil and Ritter, 209–10); and Ep. 9.1, PG 3:1105BC (Heil and Ritter, pp. 196–97). Cf. also Romanides, “Notes on the Palamite Controversy,” as above, note 95.

<sup>104</sup>See above, note 60, and for Symeon Stylites, see the Syriac *Vita*, 3 and 98–99 on the manifestation of angels, 41 for the appearance of Christ atop the angelic ladder, and 42–43 for Elijah’s brilliant form in the heavenly chariot; in R. Doran, *The Lives of Symeon Stylites* (Kalamazoo, Mich., 1992), pp. 105, 171–72, 125–26, and 126–27, respectively. In *The Spiritually Edifying Tales of Paul, Bishop of Monembasia*, ed. and trans. J. Wortley (Kalamazoo, Mich., 1996), note the frequent appearances of angels with faces “bright as the sun” or robed with splendor and light, as in “The Man Called to Account” (70); “The Man Who Made His Confession” (73); “The Child Who Had a Vision at His Baptism” (93); the angel consecrator of the Eucharist in “The Drunken Priest” (128); and a tour of heaven in “The Woman Who Died and Came Back to Life” (108–10), which greatly resembles the ancient apocalyptic tours of heaven and hell. On the latter, see M. Himmelfarb, “From Prophecy to Apocalypse: The *Book of the Watchers* and Tours of Heaven,” in *Jewish Spirituality*, vol. 1, *From the Bible to the Middle Ages*, ed. A. Green (New York, 1988), 145–70, esp. 146–48.

<sup>105</sup>This essay has not dealt with what J. Collins refers to as “historical apocalypses,” especially those with no “otherworldly journey”: “Morphology of a Genre,” 13–14. A. Y. Collins also notes that the first Christian apocalypses tend not to be interested in the precise, future unrolling of history: “The Early Christian Apocalypses,” *Semeia* 14 (1979): 63–67. This early difference between Jews, identifying with their own land and polity, and early Christians, who “have here below no city which abides” (Heb. 13:14), no longer applies once Christianity acquires its own earthly turf in the Roman Empire of the 4th century. See P. J. Alexander, *The Byzantine Apocalyptic Tradition*, ed. D. deF. Abrahamse (Berkeley, Calif., 1985), 13–60, with its account of the long line of Byzantine historical apocalypticism that begins late in the 4th century—about the right length of time, it seems, for the idea of the “Christian Empire” to sink into popular piety—and carries on to the end of the empire and beyond. This phenomenon, though, seems to derive more from piety specific to the *Reichskirche* (see, e.g., E. von Ivanka, *Romäerreich und Gottesvolk* [Freiburg-Munich, 1968]) than from those earlier currents of faith and, indeed, mystical experience that I have been tracing.

<sup>106</sup>*The Living Witness of the Holy Mountain: Contemporary Voices from Mount Athos*, trans with intro. and notes A. Golitzin (South Canaan, Pa., 1996).

exactly along the lines of what we found in Niketas and his predecessors,<sup>107</sup> there is also one story that rings so strongly and artlessly of the apocalyptic journey to heaven that I cannot help but believe it represents a genuine experience or at least the belief in such experiences. This story came from a famous contemporary γέρων of the Holy Mountain, the late Father Paissios of Karyes (d. 1994), speaking about his own elder, Papa Tikhon the Russian of Kapsala (d. 1968). According to Father Paissios, the old man was a prodigious faster, prayed unceasingly, wept constantly, and engaged in frequent and numerous prostrations. All of these actions are not only traditional monastic practice, but also feature regularly in the ancient apocalypses as part of the preparation for visions.<sup>108</sup> At the conclusion of Father Paissios' narrative there is a little taste of "Christian *merkavah*" from the late twentieth century: "When Papa Tikhon celebrated the holy liturgy in the chapel of his hermitage, he would often interrupt himself at the moment of the Great Entrance during the Cherubimic Hymn . . . and, entering into ecstasy, would become a stranger to everything earthly. At the end of a half hour . . . he would take up the celebration again, very slowly. . . . When someone once asked him what had happened, he answered in his broken Greek: 'Guardian angel take me up. Guardian angel take me back down.' 'And what did you see?' the other persisted. 'Angels, Archangels, Cherubim, Seraphim . . . heavenly choir . . . t'ousands, ten t'ousands.'"<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>107</sup>See the talks and sermons of Archimandrite Aemilianos, *ibid.*, 165–215, esp. "The Experience of the Transfiguration," 194–215, and certain of the other fathers in the "Contemporary Athonite Paterikon," 134–57, esp. 148–57.

<sup>108</sup>On fasting, at least temporary celibacy, prostrations, weeping, and constant prayer as features known in Second Temple Judaism and particularly associated with apocalyptic visionaries and continuing into the rabbinic-era *merkavah* texts, see S. P. Fraade, "Ascetical Aspects of Ancient Judaism," in *Jewish Spirituality*, vol. 1, *From the Bible to the Middle Ages*, ed. A. Green (New York, 1988), pp. 253–88, esp. 261–69, 280 nn. 30–31, and 281 n. 33; M. D. Swartz, "'Like the Ministering Angels': Ritual and Purity in Early Jewish Mysticism," *Association for Jewish Studies Review* 19 (1994): 135–67; and M. Himmelfarb, "Practices of Ascent in the Ancient Mediterranean World," in *Death, Ecstasy, and Otherworldly Journeys*, 123–37. For earlier though related considerations on the Jewish roots of Christian asceticism, see A. Guillaumont, "A propos du célibat des Esséniens" and "Monachisme et éthique Judéo-Chrétienne," in *Aux origines*, 13–23 and 47–58, respectively.

<sup>109</sup>*Living Witness*, 142. See also the story of "Father Augustine the Russian," *ibid.*, 140–41, with his daily experience of "the uncreated light" and deathbed scene reminiscent of Abba Sisoës (PG 65:396BC).