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Was There Life beyond the Life Beyond? Byzantine Ideas on Reincarnation and Final Restoration

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In this paper I discuss several views on reincarnation that were considered beyond the accepted boundaries of Orthodox belief and trace the possible historical trajectory of these non-Orthodox views before and through the period from the eighth to the fifteenth century. My extensive research of the existing bibliography has led me to conclude that the subject has remained unexplored until now, and I therefore ask the readers' indulgence for a report that is more preliminary than conclusive.¹

Byzantine—that is, Orthodox Christian—eschatology was clear on the subject of life after death, leaving virtually no ground for misunderstanding. As the Nicaean-

I wish to thank Prof. I. Ševčenko, Dr. V. Kountoumas, and Dr. S. Ramphos for their advice and help. Thanks are also due to Dr. Susan Wessel for her constructive criticism and her editorial work on this paper. I also wish to thank the two anonymous readers whose numerous comments and corrections have contributed enormously to the final shape of the article. I am responsible for any inaccuracies, mistakes, or shortcomings. It is appropriate to add here a strong *caveat*. Readers will easily realize that the issue of reincarnation is difficult to handle in Byzantium. The reason for this lies mainly in the pattern of chronological distribution of the primary sources. As is apparent, the sources before the 8th century are numerous. This abundance, however, wanes in the period between the 8th and 15th centuries, whose sources provide only random references to reincarnation. Moreover, these references appear in heresiological works dealing with religious movements that were in most cases marginal to the mainstream of Byzantine religious beliefs and practices. The image these sources offer is a distant one, an image very difficult to verify. As a result, the distinction between the idea of reincarnation in Byzantium and the idea the Byzantines had about the religious movements to which they attributed the idea of reincarnation is at times lost. In view of all this I must warn the reader that the attribution of the idea of reincarnation to heretical groups, such as the Bogomils, Paulicians, and Phoundagiagites, remains always tenuous. In some cases I only hope to have offered additional arguments supporting this assumption. The article must be read with the constant awareness that the heresiological stereotypes introduced by Epiphanius of Salamis in his *Panarion* have influenced almost all subsequent Byzantine literature on the issue of reincarnation.

¹For general introductory information on the transmigration of souls or reincarnation, see among others the entries: “Métempsychose,” *DTC* 10.2:1574–95; “Transmigration of Souls,” *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, 14: 257; “Μετεμψύχωσις,” *Ἐρησκειυτικὴ καὶ ἠθικὴ ἐγκυκλοπαιδεῖα* 8:1073–75. For the same topic in Byzantium see also H. Beck, *Vorsehung und Vorherbestimmung in der theologischen Literatur der Byzantiner*, OCA 114 (Rome, 1937); G. Podskalsky, *Byzantinische Reicheschatologie. Die Periodisierung der Weltgeschichte in den vier Grossreichen (Daniel 2 und 7) und dem tausendjährigen Friedensreiche (Apok. 20). Eine motivgeschichtliche Untersuchung*, Münchener Universitäts-Schriften, Reihe der Philosophischen Fakultät 9 (Munich, 1972). For the concept of soul in Byzantium, see “Soul,” *ODB* 3:1931–32, with bibliography. Further bibliography on reincarnation is, unfortunately, of a popular nature.

Constantinopolitan Creed explicitly states in its last clause: “We look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the ages to come.”² Furthermore, John of Damascus, in his *Sacra Parallela* (in fact, the *Parallela Rupefucaldiana* in Migne’s edition) at the end of chapter 24 entitled “On the Time of Death” (Περὶ ὥρας θανάτου), states: “This is what I may say concerning the Netherworld, in which the souls of all are hosted until the time that God has determined. Then He will resurrect all, *not by reincarnating the souls*, but by resurrecting the very bodies, [a fact] which, if you are incredulous, o Greeks, because you see the [bodies] dissolved, you have to believe.” (PG 96:544c–d).³ That this passage originally comes from Hippolytos’ treatise *De Universo*⁴ shows that mainstream Christian beliefs on the issue were already established by early Christian times. Almost four centuries after John of Damascus, Orthodox Christians reconsidered the finer points of the Christian afterlife and officially condemned the transmigration of souls in the third anathema against John Italos. John was put on trial for heresy in 1082, and the anathemas proclaimed against him at this trial were incorporated into the Synodikon of Orthodoxy: “Those who prefer the folly of the so-called wisdom of the profane philosophers and follow their teachers and accept the migrations of human souls or that they are destroyed like the souls of the animals and return to nothingness and on account of this deny the resurrection, judgement, and final retribution of the acts of their lives, anathema.”⁵

Nevertheless, the official Christian eschatological approach to the question “What happens to the soul after death” was rejected among certain nonmainstream Christians. Apart from their belief in the transmigration of souls, those Christians, generally speaking, had several additional serious points of disagreement with the one Catholic and Apostolic Church. In the following I investigate the beliefs of those dissenters along with the ideas of a few theologians who lived more or less in accordance with the tenets of mainstream Christianity on the issue of metempsychosis. I begin with some basic definitions. Transmigration of souls (μετενσωμάτωσης, μετεμψύχωσης, μεταγγισμός ψυχῶν, or even παλιγγενεσία⁶ in Greek) is an idea that presupposes cosmological and soteriological beliefs different from those espoused by Christianity. We usually associate these beliefs with eastern religions such as Hinduism, Buddhism, Zoroastrianism, Mithraism, with quasi-Christian sects such as Gnosticism or Manichaeism, and also with ancient Greek philosophy (Platonism-Pythagoreanism) and its descendants (e.g., Neoplatonism).⁷

²Προσδοκῶμεν ἀνάστασιν νεκρῶν καὶ ζωὴν τοῦ μέλλοντος αἰῶνος. See G. L. Dossetti, *Il simbolo di Nicea e di Costantinopoli* (Rome, 1967), 250.

³See CPG 8056.2 (2.2). The Greek text reads as follows: Οὗτος ὁ περὶ ἄδου λόγος, ἐν ᾧ αἱ ψυχαὶ πάντων κατέχονται μέχρι καιροῦ, ὃν ὁ Θεὸς ὥρισεν, ἀνάστασιν τότε πάντων ποιησόμενος, οὐ ψυχὰς μετενσωματῶν, ἀλλ’ αὐτὰ τὰ σώματα ἀνιστῶν, ἃ λελυμένα ὁρῶντες, εἰ ἀπιστεῖτε, Ἕλληνες, μάθετε μὴ ἀπιστεῖν.

⁴See CPG 1898 for other editions of the extant fragments from this work attributed to Hippolytos. For genuineness and other issues, see CPG 1870.

⁵For the case of John Italos see below, 172. For the Greek text of the *Synodikon*, see J. Gouillard, “Le Synodicon de l’Orthodoxie,” *TM* 2 (1967): 57–61. See also idem, “Le procès officiel de Jean l’Italien. Les Actes et leurs sous-entendus,” *TM* 9 (1981): 133–74, esp. 147, lines 202 ff. The translation here is quoted from L. Clucas, *The Trial of John Italos and the Crisis of Intellectual Values in Byzantium in the Eleventh Century* (Munich, 1981), 142 (note that Clucas’ translation corresponds to the Greek text of the *Synodikon* found in Gouillard, “Le Synodicon,” 57, lines 193–97; see also *ibid.*, 61, lines 234–36).

⁶This word, though, means basically the periodic recurrence of events in Stoicism (see also below, 158, and n. 13).

⁷For a collection of primary sources referring to reincarnation translated into English, see *Reincarnation, The Phoenix Fire Mystery: An East-West Dialogue on Death and Rebirth from the Worlds of Religion, Science, Psychology, Philosophy, Art, and Literature, and from Great Thinkers of the Past and Present*, ed. J. Head and S. L. Cranston (New

One major presupposition of this doctrine is the belief in the preexistence of the soul usually combined with a dualistic view of the world.⁸ Within the premise of the preexistence of souls, their fall is seen as an entry into the circle of birth and death and of subsequent reincarnations into different bodies. Depending on the flavor of the heresy (for Christians) or of the philosophical system, this trip through the ages can direct the souls from one human body to another. However, among the more pessimistic heresies the worst-case scenarios do not rule out reincarnation into the body of an animal, an insect, a fish or—even worse—into a plant.⁹ This rather prolonged trip through the centuries, which can last more than the conventional time span of Christian chronology,¹⁰ has two purposes in most heretical systems. Its first purpose is to allow the soul to remember the series of previous incarnations, recall the sins/mistakes committed in these lives, and pay for them.¹¹ Repayment for past sins fulfills the second purpose of the circle of incarnations. The human who had regained memory of all previous incarnations and of past sins could effectively repay the debts, purge the soul, and disentangle him- or herself from the circle of birth and death. Remembrance of lives past, though, was not as predominant in most Christian heresies that accepted the transmigration of souls as was the notion of atonement. The Manichaeans, for instance, believed that humans should not eat flesh. If they did so, they were bound to return in the body of an animal (e.g., a cow or a pig) in order to suffer the same fate and to pay for the act of destroying an animate creature.¹²

York, 1977). This book is the successor to two earlier collections by the same editors entitled *Reincarnation: An East-West Anthology* (New York, 1961) and *Reincarnation in World Thought* (New York, 1967).

⁸Dualistic view of the world in the Platonic/Neoplatonic sense, i.e., a concept of a visible world alien to the supreme God and (usually) created by an evil (lesser) God. See S. Hornblower and A. Spawforth, eds., *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, 3d ed. (Oxford, 1996), s.v. Gnosticism. References in primary sources can be found in Proklos' *Theologia Platonica*; see D. Saffrey and L. G. Westerink, eds., *Proclus. Théologie platonicienne*, 5 vols. (Paris, 1968–87), 3:18–19 and passim and also in Proklos' *Institutio theologica*, passim.

⁹Plato (cf. *Phaedrus*, 81e, 248a–249d; *Timaeus*, 42c, etc.) and later Plotinos (*Enneades* 3,4,2) maintained that after death the souls of men return to earth and even enter into the bodies of animals. However, the Neoplatonists Porphyrios, Iamblichos, and also Hierokles spoke of human souls transmigrating only to other human bodies. For Hierokles' work *De providentia et fato* see the criticism of Photios in *Bibliotheca*, ed. R. Henry, *Photius. Bibliothèque*, vol. 3 (Paris, 1962), cod. 214 (ὁ πλεῖστος δ' αὐτῷ καὶ μέγας ἀγὼν ἢ τῶν ἀνθρωπίνων ψυχῶν ἔστι προβιοτή καὶ μετενσωμάτωσις, τὸν μὲν ἐξ ἀλόγων ζῶων ἢ εἰς ἄλογα μεταγχισμὸν οὐκ ἀναδεχόμενος, τὴν δὲ ἐξ ἀνθρώπων εἰς ἀνθρώπου μεταβολὴν σπουδαιολογούμενος). For Iamblichos see the scholium in the *De natura hominis* by Nemesios of Emesa: B. Einarson, *Nemesius of Emesa, De natura hominis* (in press), sec. 2, lines 595–600 (Ἰάμβλιχος δὲ . . . κατ'εἶδος ζῶων ψυχῆς εἶδος εἶναι λέγει, ἡγουν εἶδη διάφορα. γέγραπται γοῦν αὐτῷ μονόβιβλον ἐπίγραφον ὅτι οὐκ ἀπ'ἀνθρώπων εἰς ζῶα ἄλογα οὐδὲ ἀπὸ ζῶων ἀλόγων εἰς ἀνθρώτους αἱ μετενσωματώσεις γίνονται, ἀλλ'ἀπὸ ζῶων εἰς ζῶα καὶ ἀπὸ ἀνθρώπων εἰς ἀνθρώπους). Finally, for Porphyrios we have the witness of Augustine (*De civitate Dei*, 10, 30). See also W. Stettner, *Die Seelenwanderung bei Griechen und Römern*, Tübinger Beiträge zur Altertumswissenschaft 22 (Stuttgart-Berlin, 1934), 72–80. For Christian heretics and Manichaeans, see below.

¹⁰For example, according to the calculations of the Neoplatonist Porphyrios, the soul lived for ten thousand years. See A. R. Sodano, ed., *In Platonis Timaeum commentaria (fragmenta), Porphyrii in Platonis Timaeum commentariorum fragmenta* (Naples, 1964), 1.16,8.

¹¹Repaying for past actions is the inherent idea in the Hindu theory of karma (i.e., the moral law of cause and effect). Proponents of the karma law tend to find this principle behind such biblical passages as Gal. 6:7 ὁ γὰρ ἐὰν σπεῖρῃ ἄνθρωπος, τοῦτο καὶ θερίσει (“for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap”) or Matt. 26:52: πάντες γὰρ οἱ λαβόντες μάχαιραν ἐν μάχαιρῃ ἀπολούνται. See Head and Cranston, *Reincarnation in World Thought*, 16–17. I will not consider this topic here, since the Byzantine heretics who were concerned with this issue seem never to have developed any abstract theory on it.

¹²See Epiphanius, *Panarion (Adversus Haereses)* (CPG 3745), ed. K. Holl. *Epiphanius, Ancoratus und Panarion*, 3 vols. GCS, 25, 31, 37 (Leipzig, 1915–33), 3:29: τὸν ἐσθίοντα σάρκας ψυχὴν φασι (sc. Manichaeans) ἐσθίειν

The final goal of the journey is for the soul to regain its pristine status of union with God. In this context, the “final restoration” has a somewhat different meaning from that assigned to it by mainstream Christianity. Final restoration is understood by these non-Orthodox Christians as the final event of the process of reincarnation and means something like the release of humans from the circle of successive incarnations. Viewed on a massive scale, the aggregate of these “individual escapes” from the circle of life and death eventually gives final restoration its broader meaning. This is the end of an era (that, depending on the philosophical/religious system, may have lasted tens of thousands of years) or, to put it in Stoic and Neopythagorean terms, the return of humanity to the Great Year or the Golden Age.¹³ But this final restoration is further understood in these systems as both an end of one era and a beginning of another. This process can continue ad infinitum and amounts to what the ancient Greek Orphics, Plato, or the Neoplatonists called the “eternal return” or the cyclical theory of the world’s history.¹⁴ To all these belief systems Christianity opposed and opposes the Incarnation of Christ, which was an *hapax gegonos* (ἄπαξ γεγονός). In Christ the union of humanity with deity is ineffably achieved once and forever.¹⁵

In the post-seventh-century Byzantine Empire, mainstream Orthodox Christians almost unanimously rejected all the tenets that I briefly presented above.¹⁶ Save for a few cases that I have been able to locate, the acceptance of the final clause of the Nicaean-Constantinopolitan Creed was undisputed. Those who continued to profess the transmigration of souls and final restoration were either members of one of the few dualist heresies that persisted after the seventh century or were certain highly educated intellectuals whose interest in cultivating philosophy had led them to rediscover Platonism or Neopla-

τὸν τοιοῦτον, καὶ εἶναι αὐτὸν ἔνοχον τοῦ καὶ αὐτὸν τοιοῦτό τι γενέσθαι, ὡς εἰ ἔφαγε χοῖρον, χοῖρον αὐθις γενέσθαι ἢ ταῦρον ἢ ὄρνειον ἢ τι τῶν ἐδωδίων κτισμάτων. διὸ ἐμψύχων οὐ μετέχουσιν οἱ τοιοῦτοι.

¹³See, for example, the statement of Sextus Empiricus in his *Adversus mathematicos*, ed. H. Mutschmann and J. Mau, *Sexti Empirici opera*, vol. 3, 2d ed., Teubner (Leipzig, 1961), 162 (ἐπειδὴ ὁ αὐτὸς τῶν ἀστέρων σχηματισμὸς διὰ μακρῶν, ὡς φασι, χρόνων θεωρεῖται, ἀποκαταστάσεως γινομένης τοῦ μεγάλου ἐνιαυτοῦ δι’ ἑννεακισχιλίων ἔννακοσίων καὶ ἑβδομήκοντα καὶ ἑπτὰ ἐτῶν). As is evident for Sextus, the “Great Year” comes every 9,977 years.

¹⁴On this topic see the standard work by M. Eliade, *The Myth of the Eternal Return, or Cosmos and History*, trans. W. R. Trask (New York, 1991), 87–88. For Plotinos’ view see the *Enneads*, trans. S. MacKenna, *The Enneads: A New, Definitive Edition with Comparisons to Other Translations on Hundreds of Key Passages* (New York, 1992), 5.7.1–3. Each Period is “a periodical renovation bounding the boundlessness by the return of a former series. . . . The entire soul-period conveys with it all the requisite Reason-Principles, and so too the same existents appear once more under their action. . . . May we not take it that there may be identical reproduction from one Period to another but not in the same Period? . . . Thus when the universe has reached its end, there will be a fresh beginning, since the entire Quantity which the Kosmos is to exhibit, every item that is to emerge in its course, all is laid up from the first in the Being that contains the Reason-Principles. . . . As in Soul so in Divine Mind there is this infinitude of recurring generative powers; the Beings there are un-failing.”

¹⁵See, among others, J. Meyendorff, *Byzantine Theology*, 2d ed. (New York, 1983), 218–23. See also the modern Orthodox Christian position, based on the works of the Byzantine theologian Nicholas Kabasilas (d. 1361), by P. Nellas, *Le vivant divinisé* (Greek title: Ζῶν Θεούμενον, Athens, 1981), trans. J.-L. Palierne (Paris, 1989), 88–91.

¹⁶What unanimous means, though, is debatable; we do not know how many heretics existed at a given time, and I have not investigated the idea of *metempsychosis* on the level of popular beliefs. Unfortunately, there seems to be nothing on the subject in Ph. Koukoules’ monumental compilation *Βυζαντινῶν Βίος καὶ Πολιτισμός*, 6 vols. (Athens, 1948–57).

tonism. To the average Byzantine, however, philosophers were simply another category of heretics,¹⁷ which brings us to the next issue.

THE BACKGROUND TO AND EARLY BYZANTINE NOTIONS ABOUT REINCARNATION

Philosophical (Hellenic) Origins

It has already been noted that ideas of the transmigration of souls and the final restoration follow two rather distinct ideological lines.¹⁸ According to the classification of Epiphanius of Salamis, the first line runs through the Hellenic (ἀπὸ Ἑλλήνων) heresies, which inherited the tenets of ancient Greek philosophy.¹⁹ The second line, which follows the path of Gnosticism, began farther east in India and Persia and goes back to Hinduism/Buddhism and Zoroastrianism.²⁰ I note in passing that even though both these lines claim to trace their origins to India, the actual route is somewhat complex and the sources that transmit this information are not completely reliable. To be more precise, some authors²¹ attribute Platonic or generally Greek ideas of the transmigration of souls to Egyptian influence.²² Plato was not the first to introduce this notion among the Greeks.

¹⁷Certainly not all Byzantines shared this view. Since many Byzantine theologians and literati had also composed philosophical works, one has to keep in mind that Byzantine scholars at least did not entertain this simplistic approach. For a discussion of the problem along with a wider consideration of the relationship between philosophy and theology, see M. Cacouros' entry in A. Jacob, gen. ed., *Encyclopédie philosophique universelle*, vol. 4, ed. J.-F. Mattei, *Le discours philosophique* (Paris, 1998), 1362–84, esp. 1368–69, “Le statut des gens qui ont ‘philosophé’ à Byzance.”

¹⁸Note, however, that this distinction (adopted here for reasons of convenience) is a rather artificial one. In reality these two lines overlap. In fact, Gnosticism and the line of heresies that descend from it borrow much from Plato, especially his perception of this world as an inferior one in which the souls are caught on a wheel of ongoing rebirth. For a more thorough analysis of these relationships and ramifications, see Y. Stoyanov, *The Hidden Tradition in Europe* (London-New York, 1994).

¹⁹See Epiphanius, *Panarion*, ed. Holl, 1:165, 183–86.

²⁰Intellectual affinities and lines of transmission of dogmas and religious ideas are complicated matters, and the suggestions submitted here are only hypotheses based on existing Byzantine sources. For an anthology of texts related to reincarnation in these religions (Hinduism, etc.), see Head and Cranston, *Reincarnation in World Thought*, 33–148. For a more refined classification of the heretical ramifications, based on the rather broad understanding of the term *heresy* by Epiphanius (which I more or less follow), see A. Pourkier, *L'hérésie chez Epiphane de Salamine* (Paris, 1992), 85–91 and 95–114. On the term *heresy*, see also E. Moutsoulas, “Der Begriff ‘Häresie’ bei Epiphanius von Salamis,” in *StP* 8, TU 93 (Berlin, 1966), 86–107; C. Riggi, “Il termine ‘haeresis’ nell’accezione di Epifanio di Salamina (Panarion t. I; De Fide),” *Salesianum* 29 (1967): 3–27; and G. Vallée, *A Study in Anti-Gnostic Polemics, Irenaeus, Hippolytos and Epiphanius* (Waterloo, Can., 1981), 75–79.

²¹See Eusebios, *Praeparatio Evangelica* (CPG 3486), ed. K. Mras, *Eusebius Werke VIII, Die Praeparatio evangelica*, GCS 43.2 (Berlin, 1956), bk. 10, chap. 4, sec. 20, lines 1–3: Πλάτων . . . λέγεται . . . ἀπᾶραι εἰς Αἴγυπτον καὶ τῆ τούτων φιλοσοφία πλεῖστον ἀναθεῖναι χρόνον, combined with Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata* (CPG 1377), ed. O. Stählin and L. Früchtel, *Clemens Alexandrinus II, Stromata I–VI*, GCS 52 (15) (Berlin, 1960), 6.4, 35.1: Εὐρομεν δ’ ἂν καὶ ἄλλο μαρτύριον εἰς βεβαίωσιν τοῦ τὰ κάλλιστα τῶν δογμάτων τοὺς ἀρίστους τῶν φιλοσόφων παρ’ ἡμῶν σφετερισμένους ὡς ἴδια αὐχεῖν τὸ καὶ παρὰ τῶν ἄλλων βαρβάρων ἀπηνθίσθαι τῶν εἰς ἐκάστην αἴρεσιν συντεινόντων τινά, μάλιστα δὲ Αἰγυπτίων τὰ τε ἄλλα καὶ τὸ περὶ τὴν μετενσωμάτωσιν τῆς ψυχῆς δόγμα. The first to assign Egyptian origin to this idea was Herodotos (2.123) who speaks about the belief of the Egyptians that: Πρῶτοι δὲ καὶ τόνδε τὸν λόγον Αἰγύπτιοί εἰσι οἱ εἰπόντες, ὡς ἀνθρώπου ψυχὴ ἀθάνατός ἐστι, τοῦ σώματος δὲ καταφθίνοντος ἐς ἄλλο ζῶον αἰεὶ γινόμενον ἐσδύεται. ἐπεὰν δὲ πάντα περιέλθῃ τὰ χερσαῖα καὶ τὰ θαλάσσια καὶ τὰ πετεινά, αὐτὶς ἐς ἀνθρώπου σῶμα γινόμενον ἐσδύει . . . then he adds that: τούτῳ τῷ λόγῳ εἰσὶ οἱ Ἑλλήνων ἐχρήσαντο, οἱ μὲν πρότερον οἱ δὲ ὕστερον, ὡς ἰδίῳ ἐωυτῶν ἐόντι.

²²That this belief had no basis in reality is to most scholars an accepted fact. The Egyptians never had a doctrine of reincarnation. Cf. H. Bonnet, in *Reallexikon des ägyptischen Religionsgeschichte* (Berlin, 1952), 76ff.

Before him Pythagoras had already taught these ideas along with a number of related topics. Pythagoras' sojourn in Egypt is attested by a number of authors including Clement of Alexandria, who in his *Stromata* states that Pythagoras was a student of Sonchis the Egyptian archprophet.²³ In any case, the notion that the transmigration of souls originated in Egypt is a rather familiar idea among early Byzantine writers. Later authors like George the Monk and Nikephoros Gregoras simply reproduced the information concerning Plato's and Pythagoras' visits to Egypt but skipped the part about the transmigration of souls.²⁴

The missing link between Egypt and India is found in Philostratos' *Life of Apollonios of Tyana*. In the sixth book, Flavios Philostratos describes how Pythagoras decided to abstain from eating meat: "but these men . . . whet their knife against her (i.e., earth's) children (i.e., animals) in order to get themselves dress and food. Here then is something which the Brahmans of India themselves did not approve of, and which they taught the naked sages of Egypt also not to approve; and from them Pythagoras took his rule of life and he was the first of Hellenes who had intercourse with the Egyptians. And it was his rule to give up and leave her animals to the earth."²⁵ In another passage Philostratos presented Apollonios arguing with the Egyptian Gymnosophists on the superiority of the Indian wisdom over that of the Egyptians. His opinion was that the Egyptians had based their religious innovations on Indian philosophy.²⁶ Certainly the Life of Apollonios of Tyana is not a reliable source, a problem shared, I am afraid, with many of the sources that bear witness to the ideas being examined here.²⁷ Despite their unreliability, the avail-

A plausible explanation of this issue is found in W. Burkert, *Love and Science in Ancient Pythagoreanism*, trans. E. L. Minar, Jr. (Cambridge, Mass., 1972), 128: "Greeks in Egypt connected beliefs about the afterlife and religious customs with the name of Pythagoras in the same way as Greeks living in the area about the Hellespont and the Black Sea did with the beliefs of the Getae about immortality. . . . The difference is that in the latter case the Greeks' feeling of superiority to the barbarians led them to make Zalmoxis the pupil of Pythagoras, while in Egypt their awe of the ancient foreign culture produced an opposite result, and Pythagoras became the pupil of the Egyptians."

²³See Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* 1.15, 69.1: Ἱστορεῖται δὲ Πυθαγόρας μὲν Σώγχιδι τῷ Αἰγυπτίῳ ἀρχιπροφήτῃ μαθητεῦσαι (see, however, the previous note for the validity of this statement).

²⁴See George the Monk, *Chronikon*, ed. C. de Boor, *Georgii monachi Chronicon*, Teubner (Leipzig, 1904; repr. Stuttgart, 1978 [1st ed. corr. P. Wirth]), 76; Nikephoros Gregoras, *Historia romana*, ed. L. Schopen and I. Bekker, *Nicephori Gregorae historiae Byzantinae*, vol. 1, CSHB (Bonn, 1829), 323.

²⁵See F. C. Conybeare, *Philostratus, The Life of Apollonios of Tyana* (Cambridge, Mass.-London, 1989), 2:302–4: οἱ δὲ . . . μάχαιραν ἐπ' αὐτὰ ἔθηξαν ὑπὲρ ἐσθῆτός τε καὶ βρώσεως. Ἴνδοι τοίνυν Βραχμᾶνες αὐτοῖ τε οὐκ ἐπήνουν ταῦτα καὶ τοὺς Γυμνοὺς Αἰγυπτίων ἐδίδασκον μὴ ἐπαινεῖν αὐτά· ἔνθεν Πυθαγόρας ἐλὼν, Ἑλλήνων δὲ πρῶτος ἐπέμιξεν Αἰγυπτίοις, τὰ μὲν ἔμψυχα τῇ γῆ ἀνήκεν."

²⁶*Ibid.*, 44–50.

²⁷The nature of the topic itself, which more or less transcends empirical reality, poses a major problem to scholarly investigation. Furthermore, both heretics and their opponents were consciously striving to present in their writings an image that distorted existing reality either positively or negatively. See, for example, the remark of E. de Faye concerning Gnosticism, in *Gnostiques et Gnosticisme, étude critique des documents du Gnosticisme chrétien aux IIe et IIIe siècles* (Paris, 1925), 496 "si le christianisme a vaincu le gnosticisme, il n'a pu le faire qu'en se chargeant des dépouilles de son adversaire." In this respect, it is not by accident that the same author has subtitled the fourth part of his book (*ibid.*, 335–437) "Les Gnostiques des hérésiologues." Finally, for Epiphanius, his predecessors, and the development of heresiological polemics, see Pourkier, *L'hérésiologie chez Epiphane*, 485–97. For another instance of misrepresenting reality (in this case, Peter of Sicily's writings about the Paulicians), see N. Garsoïan, "Byzantine Heresy: A Reinterpretation," *DOP* 25 (1971): 87–113.

able sources may lead one to believe that both the philosophical/Greek and the Gnostic (mostly Manichaean) notions of the transmigration of souls that we encounter in Byzantium can possibly be traced to India.²⁸

That said, I now examine the two lines of reincarnational eschatology indicated so far. In order to trace the development of these ideas, I focus mainly on a period prior to the eighth century. Most of the reincarnational philosophies and sects were established and flourished during the first four centuries of the Christian era. As early as the second half of the fourth century, Epiphanius of Salamis included these heresies in his *Panarion adversus Haereses*, which he completed some time before 378.²⁹ Part of what he described in this manual of heresiology was, nonetheless, facing extinction by the beginning of the fifth century. Still, the information culled and arranged in a systematic way by Epiphanius³⁰ remains what one can find—mostly in abridged form—in later ecclesiastical authors, such as John of Damascus or Germanos of Constantinople. Even much later authors such as Photios or Euthymios Zigabenos based their work on those early writings of Epiphanius and other heresiologists of that period such as Theodoret of Cyrrhus and Irenaeus.³¹ Needless to say, however, Epiphanius is not the only primary source that is used in the present study.

According to the *Suda*, the Syrian (i.e., from the island of Syra) Pherekydes of Babys (6th century B.C. fl. ca. 544) was the first to teach the idea of the transmigration of souls in Greece.³² Pythagoras, his contemporary and alleged student, was the one who expounded this doctrine in a more detailed fashion.³³ In particular, Pythagoras put much emphasis on dietary restrictions, which helped the soul avoid further reincarnations, and

²⁸For the position of modern scholarship on the issue, which exactly traces the roots of reincarnation back to India, see Burkert, *Lore and Science*, 133 and n. 71 for further bibliography.

²⁹Pourkier, *L'hérésiologie chez Epiphane*, 51.

³⁰For the heresiological work of Epiphanius and his system, see *ibid.*, 76–114.

³¹Except for Epiphanius of Salamis, the list of early authors of lists of heresies or antiheretical treatises includes Hippolytus of Rome, *Refutatio omnium haeresium (Philosophoumena)* (CPG 1899), ed. M. Marcovich, *Patristische Texte und Studien* 25 (Berlin, 1986), 53–417; and Irenaeus of Lyon, *Adversus Haereses* (for editions of the preserved parts of this work, in Latin, see CPG 1306). For these and other predecessors, see Pourkier, *L'hérésiologie chez Epiphane*, 53–75. Later heresiologists include Theodoret of Cyrrhus, *Graecarum affectionum curatio* (CPG 6210), ed. P. Canivet, *Théodoret de Cyr. Thérapeutique des maladies helléniques*, 2 vols., SC 57 (Paris, 1958); John of Damascus, *De haeresibus* (CPG 8044), ed. B. Kotter, *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos*, vol. 4, *Patristische Texte und Studien* 22 (Berlin, 1981), 19–67. Germanos of Constantinople, *De haeresibus et synodis* (CPG 8020), PG 98:40–88. Many references to heresies and heretics are found in Photios' *Bibliotheca*. For Euthymios Zigabenos' *Panoplia*, see PG 130:20ff. For bibliography on Epiphanius' predecessors, see Pourkier, *L'hérésiologie chez Epiphane*, 503–4.

³²See A. Adler, ed., *Suidae Lexicon, Lexicographi Graeci*, vol. 1.4 Teubner (Leipzig, 1935), 713. For more on Pherecydes, see M.-O. Goulet-Gazé, ed., *Diogène Laërce. Vies et Doctrines des philosophes illustres*, trans. and comm. J.-F. Balaudé et al. (Paris, 1999), 940 n. 9, with bibliography.

³³See, e.g., Diogenes Laertius, *Vitae philosophorum*, ed. H. S. Long, *Diogenis Laertii vitae philosophorum*, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1964; repr. 1966), 8.4–5. According to recent research, however, it was Plato and his school that shaped this understanding of Pythagorean philosophy. Much of the material concerning Pythagoras' ideas on the transmigration of souls also comes from later authors. It seems that what is credited to Pythagoras is of Orphic origins, and, certainly, no association of Pythagoras with Egypt is recorded by any author before Hellenistic times. In any case, paternity or, at least, espousal of the belief in reincarnation by Pythagoras has not been disputed. On this issue see W. Rathmann, *Quaestiones Pythagorae Orphicae Empedocleae* (Halis Saxo-num [Germany], 1933), 3–10, 59–73, and Burkert, *Lore and Science*, 120.

stressed enormously the significance of memory of past lives.³⁴ It is even said that he was able to recall a number of his previous incarnations.³⁵ Another Pythagorean, Empedokles himself, seems to have retained memories from past lives.³⁶ On the other hand, the idea that the souls should purify themselves and gradually rise to higher and higher levels of human existence is present in the writings of Empedokles and Pindar. In a passage preserved in Plato's *Menon* (81b–c; also cf. *Phaedrus* 249a–c), Pindar states that “the souls of those, who have repaid for old sins, give life in their last incarnation to three kinds of “godly people”: kings, victorious athletes, and wise men.” After their death their noble souls will be honored as heroes.³⁷

Empedokles' and Pindar's ideas remained rather unknown to the Byzantine heresiologists. Epiphanius of Salamis and his followers (John of Damascus, *Suda*, etc.) singled out for consideration the Pythagoreans, the Stoics, and the Platonists. Their belief in the transmigration of souls figures prominently among the rather short lists of major errors that Epiphanius provides in order to characterize their identity.³⁸ That a few of these philosophical systems exerted some influence until the final demise of Greek paganism in sixth-century Byzantium is beyond doubt. The Pythagoreans and the Stoics had possibly ceased to exist by then, but the Neoplatonists were still active (without, however, calling themselves “neo”).³⁹

One or two early Christian fathers were beguiled by the reincarnation theory and tried to integrate it into their theological treatment of human nature. Clement of Alexandria in his *Hypotyposesis* seems to have embraced the idea of reincarnation.⁴⁰ The work has been lost, and we only know of its pro-incarnational tenor from a statement in codex 109 of the *Bibliotheca* of Photios.⁴¹ Given Clement's contacts with and possible influ-

³⁴See J. P. Vernant, Μύθος καὶ σκέψη στὴν ἀρχαία Ἑλλάδα, trans. S. Georgoudi (Thessalonike, n.d.), 104–5, and also A. Cameron, “The Pythagorean Background of the Theory of Recollection” (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 1938).

³⁵Burkert, *Lore and Science*, 138–41.

³⁶This is the understanding of a passage from his *Katharmoi* preserved by Diogenes Laertius, *Vitae philosophorum*, 8.77: ἦδη γὰρ ποτ' ἐγὼ γενόμεν κοῦρός τε κόρη τε / θάμνος τ' οἰωνός τε καὶ ἔξαλος ἔμπυρος ἰχθύς. For further discussion see Stettner, “Seelenwanderung,” 28–29, and Burkert, *Lore and Science*, 133.

³⁷Λέγει δὲ καὶ Πίνδαρος καὶ ἄλλοι πολλοὶ τῶν ποιητῶν ὅσοι θεοὶ εἰσιν . . . φασὶ γὰρ τὴν ψυχὴν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου εἶναι ἀθάνατον, καὶ τοτὲ μὲν τελευτᾶν—ὁ δὲ ἀποθνήσκειν καλοῦσι—τοτὲ δὲ πάλιν γίνεσθαι, ἀπόλλυσθαι δ' οὐδέποτε· δεῖν δὲ διὰ ταῦτα ὡς ὀσιώτατα διαβιῶναι τὸν βίον· οἷσι γὰρ ἂν—Φερσεφόνα ποινὰν παλαιοῦ πένθεος / δέξεται, εἰς τὸν ὑπερθεὺν ἄλιον κείνων ἐνάτω ἔτει / ἀνδιδοῖ ψυχὰς πάλιν, / ἐκ τῶν βασιλῆες ἀγαθοὶ / καὶ σθένει κραιπνοὶ σοφία τε μέγιστοι / ἄνδρες αὖξοντ', ἐς δὲ τὸν λοιπὸν χρόνον ἦρωες ἀγνοὶ / πρὸς ἀνθρώπων καλεῦνται. For the transmigration of souls in Pindar, see Stettner, “Seelenwanderung,” 27–28. For this particular passage, which probably comes from Pindar's *Threnoi* (ed. H. Maehler [post B. Snell], *Pindari carmina cum fragmentis*, pt. 2, 4th ed., Teubner [Leipzig, 1975], frag. 133) and is cited by Plato, see some related discussion in the context of Plato's *Phaedrus* in *Menon*, trans. and comm. M. Canto-Sperber (Paris, 1991), 253–57.

³⁸See Epiphanius, *Panarion*, ed. Holl, 1:183, 185–86 and also the spurious *Anacephalaosis* attributed to Epiphanius, *ibid.*, 165. This *Anacephalaosis* is repeated by John of Damascus in his *De haeresibus*, ed. Kotter, 4:21–22.

³⁹In fact, after the 3rd century A.D. Porphyry and Iamblichos incorporated much of the Pythagorean ideas and myths into their Neoplatonism: it is no accident that each one of these two Neoplatonists composed a Life of Pythagoras.

⁴⁰Only fragments exist from this work (CPG 1380), ed. O. Stählin, L. Früchtel, and L. Treu, *Clemens Alexandrinus*, vol. 3, *Stromata Buch VII und VIII. Excerpta ex Theodoto, Eclogae propheticae, Quis diues saluetur, Fragmenta*, GCS 17.2 (Berlin, 1970), 195–202.

⁴¹R. Henry, ed., *Photius. Bibliothèque*, vol. 2 (Paris, 1960), 79–80 (μετεμψυχώσεις καὶ πολλοὺς πρὸ τοῦ Ἀδὰμ κόσμους τερατεύεται).

ences from Gnosticism and Neopythagoreanism, it is difficult to disprove Photios' pronouncement.⁴²

However, it was Origen who paid dearly for his belief in the preexistence of souls and for his failure to clearly reject reincarnation in one of his early works (*De principiis*).⁴³ Although in other works (*Against Celsus*)⁴⁴ he rejected metempsychosis both explicitly and implicitly, his assumptions on the preexistence of souls made him suspect in the eyes of Orthodox Christians. Later Christians presumed that belief in the preexistence of souls automatically implied belief in reincarnation (see below for Gregory of Nyssa), which was, of course, unacceptable to mainstream Christians. The Fifth Ecumenical Council in 553 condemned Origen on a number of charges related to those ideas.⁴⁵ Later George the Monk in his *Chronikon* gave the following account: "And the Fifth Ecumenical Council convened . . . against Origen, and those who followed him in his impious dogmas, Didymos and Evagrius (who flourished in the days of old) and [against] their (his in the Greek text) writings, in which they frivolously said that the souls existed before the bodies, [and in which they] believed—taking their hint from Greek dogmas—in the transmigration of souls, and that hell would come to an end."⁴⁶

Even Gregory of Nyssa, who admired the learning and allegorical skill of Origen, did not fail to object to the doctrine of the preexistence of souls. "This book," Gregory said, writing about the *De principiis*, was not "clear of the influence of the theories of the Greeks, which they held on the subject of successive incorporations" of the soul. In fact, this remark of Gregory of Nyssa is part of a longer refutation that constitutes chapter 28 of his *De officio Dominis* and is directed against "those who say the souls exist prior to the bodies."⁴⁷ It must be stressed, however, that Origen's anathematization was the final result

⁴²For Clement's relations to Gnosticism and Greek philosophy in general, see S. R. C. Lilla, *Clement of Alexandria: A Study in Christian Platonism and Gnosticism* (London, 1971), esp. 118ff.

⁴³For this work, see CPG 1482, where all editions are listed. The French edition of the existing fragments with detailed commentary is most useful. The first ambiguous passage (preserved only in Latin) is the concluding paragraph of bk. 1, chap. 8; see H. Crouzel and M. Simonetti, eds., *Origène. Traité des Principes*, 3 vols., SC 252, 253, 268 (Paris, 1978–80), 1:223. For a detailed commentary on this passage, see *ibid.*, 2:119–25. Both the text and the commentary clearly show that Origen condemned reincarnation. However, another passage from the same work, (bk. 2, chap. 10.8; *ibid.*, 1:393) was (wrongly) understood by Jerome as a defense of reincarnation. See also the commentary *ibid.*, 2:240–41, with a discussion of the textual problems this passage presents. A third problematic passage is found in bk. 4, chap. 4.8 of the same work and was misunderstood by Jerome. Again Origen rejects reincarnation in it. For the text see *ibid.*, 3:423, with commentary at 4:267. Also very useful is the edition and German translation by H. Görgemanns and H. Karpp, *Origenes Vier Bücher von den Prinzipien* (Darmstadt, 1976), 262–82, 436, 812.

⁴⁴*Contra Celsum* (CPG 1476), ed. H. Boret, *Origène. Contre Celse*, vol. 1, SC 132 (Paris, 1967), 110 (1, 13, 18).

⁴⁵In fact, it was the Council of Constantinople in 532 that issued fifteen canons against Origen's ideas. In 543 Justinian promulgated an edict against Origen, which concluded with nine anathemas. Anathema no. 1 was directed against the belief in the preexistence of souls. The Fifth Ecumenical Council reiterated many of the canons/anathemas of 532. See *Canones xv contra Origenem* (CPG 9352), *ACO* 4.1:248–49.

⁴⁶See George the Monk, *Chronikon*, ed. de Boor, 629: Πέμπτη σύνοδος γέγονεν . . . κατὰ Ὀριγένους καὶ τῶν τὰ ἐκεῖνον ἀσεβῆ δόγματα διαδεξαμένων Διδύμου καὶ Εὐαγρίου τῶν πάλαι ἀκμασάντων καὶ τῶν ἐκτεθέντων παρ' αὐτοῦ κεφαλαίων, ἐν οἷς ἐληρώδουν προὔπαρχειν τὰς ψυχὰς τῶν σωμάτων, ἐξ Ἑλληνικῶν ὁρμώμενοι δογμάτων τὴν μετεμψύχωσιν δοξάζοντες, καὶ τέλος εἶναι τῆς κολάσεως, etc.

⁴⁷Gregory of Nyssa, *De officio hominis* (CPG 3154), PG 44:229A: Πρὸς τοὺς λέγοντας προὔφυστάναί τὰς ψυχὰς τῶν σωμάτων, ἢ τὸ ἔμπαλιν πρὸ τῶν ψυχῶν διαπεπλάσθαι τὰ σώματα. Ἐν ᾧ τις καὶ ἀνατροπὴ τῆς κατὰ τὰς μετεμψύχωσεις μυθοποιίας. And *ibid.*, 232A: Οἱ . . . πρεσβυτέραν τῆς ἐν σαρκὶ ζωῆς τὴν πολιτείαν τῶν ψυχῶν δογματίζοντες, οὐ μοι δοκοῦσι τῶν Ἑλληνικῶν καθαρεῦναι δογμάτων, τῶν περὶ τῆς μετενσωματώσεως αὐτοῖς μεμυθολογημένων.

of a biased and one-sided anti-Origenist campaign that lasted for more than two centuries. At a certain point, during the period 393–402, this campaign was reinvigorated and further promoted by Epiphanius of Salamis.⁴⁸

In addition to those who specifically wrote against heresies (Epiphanius, Irenaeus, Theodoret of Cyrrhus, Eusebios, John of Damascus, etc.), the early fathers, in general, were openly hostile toward the transmigration of souls. When John Chrysostom, for example, compares Peter to Plato (in the Acts of the Apostles) the first critical remark he makes against Plato is “What benefit can I have from learning that the soul of a philosopher becomes a fly (sic)?”⁴⁹ Another example might be the account of Emperor Julian’s death in the Church History of Socrates. According to Socrates, Julian rejected the Persian king’s plea for peace on the grounds that he expected his campaign against Persia in 361 to be thoroughly victorious. It seems that Julian expected this victory because he was convinced that he was a reincarnation of Alexander the Great. As a result, Julian proceeded with his plans and was eventually killed before even coming into contact with the enemy. Socrates held that this “silly” belief in reincarnation had disastrous consequences not only for the emperor but also for the empire.⁵⁰

In addition to these incidental criticisms against reincarnation, a full-fledged refutation of the ideas of the transmigration of souls appeared in Egypt (between 485 and 512/13 just a few years before Justinian’s antipagan legislation).⁵¹ The dialogue “Theophrastos, or on the Immortality of Souls and the Resurrection of Bodies” penned by Aeneas of Gaza summarizes all the Hellenic/Neoplatonic ideas about the transmigration of souls and defends the Christian positions.⁵² Axitheos, the Syrian Christian who responds to the major objections of his discussant, the philosopher Philotheos, presents a number of elaborate Christian responses to questions such as the following:

“If we deny the preexistence of souls, how is it possible for the wicked to prosper and for the righteous ones to live in dire circumstances”?

“How can one accept the fact that people are born blind or that some die immediately after they are born, while others reach a very old age”?

⁴⁸See J. F. Dechow, *Dogma and Mysticism in Early Christianity: Epiphanius of Cyprus and the Legacy of Origen* (Macon, Ga., 1988); and P. Heiman, *Erwähltes Schicksal, Präexistenz der Seele und christlicher Glaube im Denkmodell des Origenes* (Tübingen, 1988), 262ff. As late as the beginning of the 8th century, people thought they should still inveigh against Origen’s dogmas on final restoration; see F. Diekamp, *Doctrina Patrum de Incarnatione Verbi. Ein griechisches Florilegium aus der Wende des 7. und 8. Jahrhunderts*, 2d ed. corr. B. Phanourgakis, ed. E. Chrysos (Münster, 1981), 179–88.

⁴⁹See John Chrysostom, *In Acta apostolorum homiliae* 1–55 (CPG 4426), PG 60:48.8: Τί γὰρ ὄφελος ἐκ τοῦ μαθεῖν, ὅτι μῦα ἢ ψυχὴ τοῦ φιλοσόφου γίνεται; which is a possible (distorted?) allusion to Plato’s *Phaedrus*, 248e–249e.

⁵⁰See Socrates Scholasticus, *Historia ecclesiastica* (CPG 6028), ed. G. Ch. Hansen, *Sokrates Kirchengeschichte*, GCS, N.F. 1 (Berlin, 1995), 217.

⁵¹For the date of this work see N. Aujoulat, “Le Théophraste d’Énée de Gaza: Problèmes de chronologie,” *KOINΩNIA* 10 (1986): 67–80.

⁵²See Aeneas Gaza, *Theophrastus, sive de animarum immortalitate et corporum resurrectione dialogus* (CPG 7450), PG 85:872–1005, and the more recent edition by M. E. Colonna, *Theophrastus sive de immortalitate animae* (Naples, 1958). For Aeneas’ relation to Neoplatonism (he was a student of the Neoplatonic philosopher Hierokles in Alexandria) and his attempt to formulate a Christian response to the Neoplatonic teaching of his era, see M. Wacht, *Aeneas von Gaza als Apologet* (Bonn, 1969).

“If we believe that each new body comes with a new soul, then the souls are innumerable,”⁵³ and so on.

This dialogue was followed a few years later by the dialogue *Ammonius* by Zacharias of Mytilene, a far-reaching refutation of Neoplatonism in which the transmigration of souls is also rejected in passing.⁵⁴

If this survey of the early pagan/Greek ideas of the transmigration of souls is close to complete, we should be correct in assuming that the post-sixth-century Byzantines had inherited very little from the pagan/Hellenic past on the issue of the transmigration of souls. The works of Aeneas of Gaza and Zacharias of Mytilene stand as witnesses to some latent attempts at survival on the part of Neoplatonism. And it was in some Eastern centers of the Byzantine Empire, such as Gaza, Beirut, and Alexandria, that the last Neoplatonist intellectuals were still debating with Christians about the transmigration of souls and other issues. Christians, however, aided a little later by the antipagan legislation of Justinian, brought about the demise of Neoplatonism. It is only in the works of Christian fathers such as Dionysios the Areopagite that major Neoplatonic tenets were incorporated into a Christian doctrine. The transmigration of souls, being a rather secondary issue, was simply lost as incompatible with the major Christian belief in the resurrection of the body. Few remnants of the *problématique* of *Theophrastus* and *Ammonius* seem to have surfaced in the seventh-century *Quaestiones et responsiones* of Anastasios of Sinai, showing that at least the questions that puzzled both Christians and pagans were, almost a century and a half later, still in the air. However, for the reasons I stated, reincarnation as a possible answer to these questions was by then not an option.⁵⁵

Heretical Origins

Epiphanius classifies a succession of heresies that are Christian by name but not Christian in their beliefs. The root of this line goes back to Simon Magus and forms the cluster of heresies known today under the imprecise term *gnostic*. Epiphanius arranges these heresies chronologically. The Gnostics in Epiphanius' account figure in sixth place, while number seven is occupied by the Carpocratians. Number 22 (and 42 in the general list) in the same list corresponds to the Markionites, and the Manichaeans occupy the 46th (66th in the general list) place right after the followers of Paul of Samosata.⁵⁶

⁵³The text presented here is a rather loose rendering of the meaning of the sentences found in Colonna, *Theophrastus*, 19: Θεόφραστος· . . . Ἄλλ' εἰ παντελῶς τὸν πρότερον τῆς ψυχῆς βίον ἀνέλοιμεν, ἀταξία δοκεῖ τὸ γινόμενον, εἰ κακοὶ μὲν εὖ πράττουσιν, ἀτυχοῦσιν δ' ἀγαθοί. 27–28: Θεόφραστος· . . . Ἄλλ' ἐκεῖνος μὲν, ἠδίκηει γάρ, τῶν ὀφθαλμῶν ἀφήρηται, τὸ δὲ παιδίον ἄρτι τεχθέν, εἰ μὴ προβεβίωκεν, οὐδὲ προήμαρτε, πῶς γάρ; Πόθεν οὖν, εἰπέ μοι, τῶν ὀφθαλμῶν ἡ νόσος; 40: Θεόφραστος· . . . Ἐν δὲ ἡμᾶς παρέδραμεν, ὅτι τὰς μὲν ἄλλας νοεράς καὶ λογικὰς οὐσίας μέτρῳ διορίσθαι λέγομεν, τὰς δὲ ἀνθρωπίνας εἰς ἀμετρίαν ἐξάγεσθαι, εἰ μὴ τὴν αὐτὴν ψυχὴν ἐπὶ πολλὰ σώματα μεταβαίνειν συνεχώρησεν ὁ λόγος.

⁵⁴Zacharias Rhetor (Scholastikos), *Ammonius sive de mundi officio disputatio* (CPG 6996), ed. M. M. Colonna, *Zacharia Scolastico. Ammonio. Introduzione, testo critico, traduzione, commentario* (Naples, 1973), 109–10, also PG 85: 1072B–D. The edition by Colonna is preceded by a detailed introduction on the life and works of Zacharias of Mytilene. According to her, the work possibly dates after 518 (*ibid.*, 44–45). See also *ODB* 3:2218 for further bibliography.

⁵⁵See *CPG* 7746, PG 89:313BC (question 10) and 321A–C (questions 89–96).

⁵⁶See Epiphanius, *Panarion*, ed. Holl, 1:238–45 (Simon), 275–313 (Gnostics and Carpocratians), 2:93–186 (Markion), 3:13–132 (Manichaeans).

Of all these heresies, I single out only the Carpocratians,⁵⁷ the Markionites,⁵⁸ and the Manichaeans,⁵⁹ because Epiphanius explicitly associated them with the notion of the transmigration of souls. We know from other sources that the Gnostics themselves (who in Epiphanius' list appear under nine different names) believed in the transmigration of souls.⁶⁰ We have also seen that Epiphanius placed the Origenists in the same category (at least with regard to the transmigration of souls). At any rate, it should be safe to assume that metempsychosis was part of the heretical lore of the Ophites,⁶¹ the Colorbasians, or the Nicholaites,⁶² for example,⁶³ or, to put it simply, of "all Gnostics and Manichaeans."⁶⁴ It still remains a matter of speculation whether a number of these communities/sects even existed by the time Epiphanius was writing the *Adversus haereses* and, if so, how large these communities were.⁶⁵

Christian criticism of the heresies of Simonian extraction is extremely harsh and exaggerated. The Theodosian code and later legislation provide the most severe penalties for the heretics of this brand (deprivation of the right to draw up wills and testaments, exile, and even death, by sword or fire).⁶⁶ The reasons for this harsh treatment are not

⁵⁷For the Carpocratians see H. Liboron, *Die Karpokratianische Gnosis* (Leipzig, 1938); for further bibliography see Pourkier, *L'hérésiologie chez Epiphane*, 505–6.

⁵⁸For Markion see D. W. Deakle, *The Fathers against Marcionism: A Study of the Methods and Motives in the Developing Patristic Anti-Marcionite Polemic* (Ann Arbor, Mich., 1991).

⁵⁹For Mani and the Manichaeans see R. Merkelbach, *Mani und sein Religionssystem* (Opladen, 1986).

⁶⁰For Gnosticism see B. Layton, ed., *The Rediscovery of Gnosticism: Proceedings of the International Conference on Gnosticism at Yale, New Haven, Connecticut, March 28–31, 1978*, 2 vols. (Leiden, 1980), and R. T. Wallis and J. Bregman, eds., *Neoplatonism and Gnosticism* (Albany, 1992).

⁶¹For the Ophites see B. Witte, *Das Ophiten-diagramm nach Origenes' Contra Celsum VI 22–38* (Altenberge, 1993), and de Faye, *Gnostiques et Gnosticisme*, 349–54.

⁶²For the Nicholaites see Pourkier, *L'hérésiologie chez Epiphane*, 291–96, and further bibliography, *ibid.*, 506.

⁶³It seems that John of Damascus uses the expression "[heretics] deny the resurrection of the dead" as an alternative indication of the Gnostics' belief in reincarnation (which, one must admit, was not uniformly shared by all Gnostics (see below, note 64)). See John of Damascus *De haeresibus*, ed. Kotter, 4:28: τὸν τε νόμον σὺν τῇ τῶν νεκρῶν ἀναστάσει ἀπηγόρευσεν, ὡς αἱ ἀπὸ Σίμωνος καὶ δεῦρο αἰρέσεις. This is a statement about Carpocrates, who elsewhere, in Epiphanius' *Panarion*, is described as a proponent of reincarnation (see below). The same statement is applied by John of Damascus (who, as already mentioned, follows Epiphanius) to the Simonians, Valentinians, Secundinians, Marcosians, Colorbasians, Caianites, Archontics, Kerdonians, Markionites, and Severians, to name a few. Most of the remaining sects are referred to as followers of notions similar to those espoused by the Gnostic proponents of reincarnation (*ibid.*, 4:27–35). However, this expression may sometimes indicate simply the (Jewish in origin) rejection of the belief in the resurrection of the body without clearly indicating belief in reincarnation. This is the case, for example, of Epiphanius' *Panarion*, ed. Holl, 2:510, although the same expression used elsewhere even by Epiphanius (*ibid.*, 2:100) agrees in meaning with John of Damascus' usage (ἀνάστασιν δὲ ὡς εἶπον οὗτος [i.e., Markion] λέγει οὐχὶ σωμάτων, ἀλλὰ ψυχῶν καὶ σωτηρίαν ταύταις ὀρίζεται, οὐχὶ τοῖς σώμασιν. καὶ μεταγγισμοὺς ὁμοίως τῶν ψυχῶν καὶ μετενσωματώσεις ἀπὸ σωμάτων εἰς σώματα.).

⁶⁴For Gnostic eschatology and the various "destinies" that await the souls after death, according to the particular Gnostic denominations, see A. H. B. Logan, *Gnostic Truth and Christian Heresy: A Study in the History of Gnosticism* (Edinburg, 1996), 259–319, esp. 308 and 313.

⁶⁵If early Byzantine legislation is a valid indicator, it seems that a number of heretics, especially of the Gnostic type, attracted the attention of emperors to the point of their introducing frequent antiheretic laws. See *CTh* 1.2, 855–906. As late as May 430 a law of Theodosios and Valentinian reiterated earlier prescriptions against Manichaeans (*ibid.*, 878, 16.5, 65). The Carpocratians, though, seem to have disappeared by the 3rd century (see Pourkier, *L'hérésiologie chez Epiphane*, 257).

⁶⁶See, for example, the numerous provisions in *CTh* and the 8th-century *Ekloga* of Leo III and Constantine V, 17.52: Οἱ μανιχαῖοι καὶ μοντανοὶ ξίφει τελειοῦσθωσαν. L. Burgmann, ed., *Ecloga. Das Gesetzbuch Leons' III. und Konstantinos' V.* (Frankfurt am Main, 1983), 242.

relevant to this study. I would like to stress, however, that the Gnostic sects, and especially the Taskodrougoi and the Manichaeans, were treated severely. Given the level of Christian hostility toward dualism in general, Epiphanius' writings are not extremely harsh. Still, the case of the Carpocratians is the most interesting in this respect because—according to Epiphanius, who expands on Irenaeus' *Adversus Haereses*—⁶⁷ what was most hideous about them was not their belief in reincarnation, but the particular conduct that they thought guaranteed deliverance from successive incarnations.

For having fearlessly allowed their minds to work in a frenzied fashion, the [Carpocratians] have surrendered themselves to the passions of a myriad of lustful acts. For they claim that whatever is considered evil by the people is not evil, but good by nature (for nothing is evil by nature), and people [only] imagine that it is evil. If one experiences all these [evils] in the course of a particular [incarnation], his soul is no longer going to be reincarnated in order to repay [old sins], but, having done everything [wicked] in one life, it is bound to be set free [from the circle of reincarnations] released from and owing nothing to the . . . world. As for what these [evil] deeds are I am afraid to say . . . however, I will force myself to speak with decency without straying away from the truth. And what else do they do apart from countless unspeakable and unlawful acts, which I am not permitted to even mention? They perform . . . homosexual acts and have lustful intercourse . . . with women. They also practice sorcery, witchcraft, and idolatry, saying that this is the way to repay the debts of their bodies so that they owe nothing and for that reason their souls are not going to turn back after death and proceed to a new reincarnation.⁶⁸

As Epiphanius adds, the Carpocratians believe that individuals who do not manage to accomplish all these things in one life should not be concerned. In their next reincarnation there will be more opportunities to improve their record.⁶⁹ This, of course, contrasts greatly with the practices of other similar sects like the Manichaeans or later the Bogomils who preached abstinence from sex.⁷⁰ Next to the Carpocratians, the Markionites were

⁶⁷ See Pourkier, *L'hérésiologie chez Epiphane*, 257–61.

⁶⁸ Epiphanius, *Panarion*, ed. Holl, 1:305–6: ἀδεῶς γὰρ τὸν νοῦν αὐτῶν εἰς οἴστρον ἐκδεδακότες πάθεισιν ἡδονῶν μυρίων ἐναντοὺς παραδεδώκασι. φασὶ γὰρ ὅτι ὅσα νομίζεται παρὰ ἀνθρώποις κακὰ εἶναι οὐ κακὰ ὑπάρχει, ἀλλὰ φύσει καλὰ· (οὐδὲν γὰρ ἐστὶ φύσει κακόν), τοῖς δὲ ἀνθρώποις νομίζεται εἶναι φαῦλα. καὶ ταῦτα πάντα ἐάν τις πράξῃ ἐν τῇ μιᾷ ταύτῃ παρουσίᾳ, οὐκέτι μετενσωματοῦται αὐτοῦ ἡ ψυχὴ εἰς τὸ πάλιν ἀντικαταβληθῆναι, ἀλλὰ ὑπὸ ἐν ποιήσασα πᾶσαν πράξιν ἀπαλλαγίσηται, ἐλευθερωθεῖσα καὶ μηκέτι χρεωστοῦσά τι τῶν πρὸς πράξιν ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ. ποίαν δὲ πράξιν δέδια πάλιν εἰπεῖν, μὴ βορβόρου δίκην κεκαλυμμένου ὄχετον ἀποκαλύψω καὶ τισὶ δόξω λοιμώδους δυσοδμίας ἐργάζεσθαι τὴν ἐμφόρησιν. ἀλλ' ὅμως ἐπειδήπερ ἐξ ἀληθείας συνεχόμεθα τὰ παρὰ τοῖς ἡπατημένοις ἀποκαλύψαι, σεμνότερον εἰπεῖν τε καὶ τῆς ἀληθείας μὴ ἔξω βαίνειν ἐμαυτὸν καταναγκάσω. τί δὲ ἀλλ' ὅτι πᾶσαν ἀρρητοουργίαν καὶ ἀθέμιτον πράξιν, ἣν οὐ θεμιτὸν ἐπὶ στόματος φέρειν, οὗτοι πράττουσιν καὶ πᾶν εἶδος ἀνδροβασιῶν καὶ λαγνιστέρων ὁμιλιῶν πρὸς γυναῖκας ἐν ἐκάστῳ μέλει σώματος· μαγείας τε καὶ φαρμακείας καὶ εἰδωλολατρίας ἐκτελοῦντες τοῦτο εἶναι φασὶν ἐργασίαν ἀποδόσεως τῶν ἐν τῷ σώματι ὀφλημάτων εἰς τὸ μηκέτι ἐγκαλεῖσθαι ἢ μέλλειν τι πράξεως ἔργον ἀπαιτεῖσθαι, καὶ τούτου ἕνεκα μὴ ἀποστρέφεισθαι τὴν ψυχὴν μετὰ τὴν ἐντεῦθεν ἀπαλλαγὴν καὶ πάλιν εἰς μετενσωμάτωσιν καὶ μεταγισμόν χωρεῖν.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 1:307–8.

⁷⁰ The problem of licentiousness is generally related to Gnosticism. A number of sects, such as the Carpocratians, the Nicholaites, and the followers of Basilides, were associated with licentious practices. See de Faye, *Gnostiques et Gnosticisme*, 413–28, and Pourkier, *L'hérésiologie chez Epiphane*, 270–72. However, Gnosticism in general was marked by a tendency toward continence and celibacy. See H. Chadwick, “The Domestication of Gnosis,” in Layton, *The Rediscovery of Gnosticism* (as above, note 60), 3–16, esp. 4–11. Chadwick stresses that “there were occasional Gnostic groups which mingled erotic elements in their cult, but they were neither typical nor representative” (*ibid.*, 11).

followers of a widespread heresy, according to Epiphanius, another dualist sect whose members believed in metempsychosis.⁷¹

The last reincarnational heresy of the pre- and early Byzantine period is the system of Mani. Much better known than any other heresy of these times, its intellectual connections with India and Persian Zoroastrianism and its presence even in China are well attested.⁷² The early heresiologists give ample information concerning the reincarnation doctrines espoused by the followers of Mani, and it is possible to place Manichaeism among the pessimistic dualist heresies. In general, Mani divides humankind into three lots (Elect, Hearers, and Sinners). After death the souls of Sinners receive severe (if not eternal) punishments, while the souls of the Hearers return and are reincarnated on earth. The souls of the Elect sail to the “Land of Light.”⁷³ Mani assures his followers that a sinner’s soul may return in an animal’s or even a plant’s body.⁷⁴ An example of the elaborate incarnational beliefs of Mani is the following. He taught that the souls of those who harvested the crops would be reincarnated in the bodies of mute persons.⁷⁵ Other interesting pieces of information are also available in the works of Cyril of Jerusalem,⁷⁶ Theodoret of Cyrrhus,⁷⁷ and Zacharias of Mytilene,⁷⁸ as well as in the history of Peter of Sicily.⁷⁹ The influence of Manichaeism’s memory in later Byzantium is so strong that all the dualist heresies of the later Byzantine period are usually described as Manichaean. Later Byzantine authors stress the affinity of these heresies—Paulicianism and Bogomilism—with that of the Manichaeans and consider them as mutations of Manichaeism.⁸⁰

⁷¹Epiphanius, *Panarion*, ed. Holl, 2:94, 100.

⁷²See *ibid.*, 3:13–132. For Mani and Manichaeism, see *ODB* 2:1283–84, with further bibliography. For Manichaeisms in Asia, see H.-J. Klimkeit, *Gnosis on the Silk Road: Gnostic Texts from Central Asia* (San Francisco, 1993); and Geng Shimin, “Recent Studies on Manichaeism in China,” in *Studia Manichaica II. Internationalen Kongress zum Manichäismus (6–10. August 1989, St. Augustin/Bonn)*, ed. G. Wiessner and H. J. Klimkeit (Wiesbaden, 1992), 98–104.

⁷³Information provided by Augustine in his *Contra Faustum*, 20.21. See A. V. Williams Jackson, “A Sketch of the Manichean Doctrine concerning the Future Life,” *JAOs* 50.3 (1930): 177–98, esp. 178–79, and *idem*, “The Doctrine of Metempsychosis in Manichaeism,” *JAOs* 45 (1925): 246–68.

⁷⁴For a collection of many Greek, Latin, Syriac, and Chinese sources on Manichaean beliefs in reincarnation, see G. Casadio, “The Manichean Metempsychosis: Typology and Historical Roots,” in Wiessner and Klimkeit, *Studia Manichaica II*, 106–30 (texts, 113–26).

⁷⁵See Epiphanius, *Panarion*, ed. Holl, 3:62 (ἡ ψυχὴ . . . ἐὰν θερίσασα εὐρεθῆ εἰς μογγιγάλους μεταφέρεται). Note that Epiphanius in this part preserves Hegemonios’ *Acta Archelai*; see *CPG* 3570.

⁷⁶See Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechesis ad illuminandos*, 1–18 (*cat.* VI, 31) (*CPG* 3585.2), ed. W. K. Reischl, *Cyrilli Hierosolymorum archiepiscopi opera quae supersunt omnia*, vol. I (Munich, 1848), 200.

⁷⁷See Theodoret of Cyrrhus, *Graecarum affectionum curatio* (*CPG* 6210), PG 83:380CD.

⁷⁸See Zacharias of Mytilene, *Capita VII contra Manichaeos* (*CPG* 6997), in S. N. C. Lieu, “An Early Byzantine Formula for the Renunciation of Manichaeism,” *JbAC* 26 (1983): 184.

⁷⁹See Peter of Sicily, Πέτρου Σκελιώτου, ἱστορία χρειώδης ἔλεγχός τε καὶ ἀνατροπῆ τῆς κενῆς καὶ ματαίας αἰρέσεως τῶν Μανιχαίων, τῶν καὶ Παυλικιανῶν λεγομένων, προσωποποιηθεῖσα ὡς πρὸς τὸν ἀρχιεπίσκοπον Βουλγαρίας, in C. Astruc et al. “Les sources grecques pour l’histoire des Pauliciens d’Asie Mineure,” *TM* 4 (1970): 33.

⁸⁰Concerning Paulicians as a Manichaean variation, see, for example, the statement in Zonaras’ history, ed. T. Büttner-Wobst, *Ioannis Zonarae epitomae historiarum libri xviii*, vol. 3, CSHB (Bonn, 1897), 389: Κατὰ δὲ τὴν ἑφάν τὸ τῶν Μανιχαίων γένος ἦν παμπληθές, οἱ καὶ Παυλικιάνοι ἀγροικότερον πρὸς τοῦ δημόδους ὄχλου καλοῦνται, ἐκ Παύλου καὶ Ἰωάννου τῆς κλήσεως συγκεκριμένης αὐτοῖς. For the Bogomils, see *Anna Comnène. Alexiade*, ed. B. Leib, vol. 3 (Paris, 1945), 218–19 (15.8.1.2–9): μέγιστον ἐπεγείρεται νέφος αἰρετικῶν, καὶ τὸ τῆς αἰρέσεως εἶδος καινόν, μῆπω πρότερον ἐγνωσμένον τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ. Δύο γὰρ δόγματα συνελθέτην κάκιστα καὶ φαυλότατα ἐγνωσμένα τοῖς πάλαι χρόνοις, Μανιχαίων τε, ὡς ἂν τις εἴποι, δυσσέβεια, ἦν καὶ Παυλικιανῶν αἵρεσιν εἶπομεν, καὶ Μασσαλιανῶν βδελυρία. Τοιοῦτον δὲ ἐστὶ τὸ τῶν Βογομίλων δόγμα, ἐκ Μασσαλιανῶν καὶ Μανιχαίων συγκεκριμένον. For the accuracy of these statements, however, see below.

John of Damascus wrote against the Manichaeans in the first half of the eighth century,⁸¹ but it is difficult to ascertain whether his *Dialogus contra Manichaeos* is a response to existing needs of Christian polemics. Based on this work, one may suppose that the Manichaeans were active even at a time when the Paulicians had appeared on the scene. However, one should take into account that John of Damascus was writing in Muslim territory, in which Manichaeism survived longer than it did in Byzantium.

To sum up, during the early Byzantine period the ideas of the transmigration of souls and of final restoration were much stronger and more widespread among the members of dualist heresies than among the followers of the ancient pagan philosophers. This is to be expected: few could afford studies in ancient philosophy, which would have brought them into contact with Platonic and other philosophical ideas about souls. This situation intensified after the closing of the pagan schools by Justinian in 529. Social class, secular education (or the lack of it), and state prescriptions, therefore, were factors that conspired to produce the suppression of reincarnational philosophies such as Neoplatonism or Neopythagoreanism after the seventh century. It is impossible, however, to say whether persecution of paganism led (pro-pagan) people to join the ranks of dualist heresies.

MIDDLE AND LATE BYZANTINE NOTIONS ABOUT REINCARNATION

Among Heretics

Despite numerous attempts at assessing the dependence of Paulicianism on Manichaeism, we still have no definite answer to part of this problem. Byzantine sources, as already pointed out, are marked by a predilection toward finding in Paulicianism the continuation of Manichaeism. Previous scholarship maintained that the majority of Paulicians were not related to or descendents of Mani.⁸² According to N. Garsoïan, Paulician doctrine adheres to two distinct traditions. The older one that persisted in Armenia throughout the history of the sect was “an Adoptionist doctrine with an emphasis on the importance of baptism and a rejection of extreme asceticism.” The second line appeared in Byzantium, “probably in the middle of the ninth century. This secondary branch of Paulicianism was characterized by a docetic Christology and a mitigated dualism.”⁸³ The sources for their history are silent on their beliefs concerning life after death.⁸⁴ In addition, it is difficult to reconcile the detailed Manichaean beliefs in successive lives and future retributions owed, for example, by those who harvested plants with the fact that Paulicians excelled as warriors.⁸⁵

⁸¹ See John of Damascus, *Dialogus contra Manichaeos* (CPG 8084), ed. Kotter, 4:351–98.

⁸² See N. Garsoïan, *The Paulician Heresy, A Study of the Origin and Development of Paulicianism in Armenia and the Eastern Provinces of the Byzantine Empire* (The Hague-Paris, 1967), 186–230.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 232.

⁸⁴ For example, the impressive dossier put together by Astruc et al., “Les sources grecques” (above n. 79), does not include any reference to the eschatological beliefs of Paulicians and Bogomils. Only the History of Peter of Sicily repeats the same criticism found in earlier heresiologists about the reincarnation beliefs of the Manichaeans and assigns them to Paulicians as well (see *ibid.*, 33).

⁸⁵ This difficulty could have been corroborated by the contents of the so-called *Key of the Truth*, which was discovered in the 19th century and was written in 1782. That document implies that “There is but one last judgement for all, for which the quick and the dead (including saints) wait.” See F. C. Conybeare, *The Key of the Truth: A Manual of the Paulician Church of Armenia* (Oxford, 1898), xxxvi, 121–22, 175–76. Both Conybeare and Garsoïan have placed much importance on this document that supports the Adoptionist nature of Paulicianism, but recent scholarship has seriously criticized the attempts of both scholars. This criticism has

Nevertheless, the Byzantines did not make any distinction between Paulicianism and Manichaeism.⁸⁶ In addition to the reference found in the treatise by John of Damascus mentioned above, one might find an indirect connection of Paulicianism with the reincarnation doctrine in a Byzantine Formula for the Renunciation of the Manichaeans. In chapter six of this formula those who believe in reincarnation are expressly condemned. This formula was later, probably after the tenth century, augmented with additional anathemas against the Paulicians. These anathemas were introduced as follows: “and furthermore I anathematize those who presided over the heresy (of Mani) in recent times: Paul and John the sons of Kallinike, . . . Genesios-Timothy . . . Sergios-Tychikos.”⁸⁷ These anathemas had to be signed by the heretics once they converted from Manichaeism or Paulicianism to Orthodoxy. Since the names related above are all names of Paulician leaders, it becomes evident that the Byzantine (basically Constantinopolitan) churchmen who drafted these documents saw in Paulicianism the continuation of the doctrine of reincarnation among other Manichaean tenets. Since, in addition, recent scholarship has criticized the excessive preference given to the Adoptionist strain of Paulicianism and views the Byzantine Paulicians as another predominantly dualist heresy,⁸⁸ it is reasonable to conclude that belief in reincarnation may have been part of the doctrines of the Byzantine Paulicians.

Concerning Bogomils and reincarnation, the Greek sources are as silent as in the case of the Paulicians. H.-C. Puech hypothesized that eschatology was an underdeveloped branch of Bogomil doctrines,⁸⁹ and he is probably right. Indeed, very few bits and pieces pertaining to Bogomil eschatology are transmitted by the sources. Euthymios Zigabenos in his *Panoplia* refers to the Bogomil belief in the resurrection of the dead body along with the demons that occupy the bones,⁹⁰ a belief that is incompatible with the idea of reincarnation. Zigabenos, however, states that the Bogomils believe that their elect ones “do not die, but ‘transmigrate’, as if in their sleep, painlessly divesting themselves of this clay vestment of flesh and dressing themselves with the indestructible and divine *stole* of Christ.”⁹¹ Finally, as Euthymios of Peribleptos states, the Bogomils rejected the dogmas of the resurrection of the dead,⁹² the Second Coming, and the Last Judgment. Further-

challenged—on rather convincing terms—the antiquity and authenticity of this document and has shifted the focus onto the dualistic characteristics of Paulicianism. See J. and B. Hamilton, *Christian Dualist Heresies* (Manchester-New York, 1998), 295–97.

⁸⁶See P. Lemerle, “L’histoire des Pauliciens d’Asie Mineure d’après les sources grecques,” *TM* 5 (1973): 124–26, 132–35. Certainly there is no evidence for the direct connection of Paulicianism to the Manichaeans, but for the Byzantines this was an easy way to come to terms with a new heresy. See also Hamilton, *Christian Dualist Heresies*, 8.

⁸⁷See Lieu, “Early Byzantine Formula,” 213.

⁸⁸See Lemerle, “L’histoire,” 12–14, and Hamilton, *Christian Dualist Heresies*, 292–97.

⁸⁹See H.-C. Puech and A. Vaillant, *Le traité contre les Bogomiles de Cosmas le prêtre* (Paris, 1945), 211–13.

⁹⁰See Euthymios Zigabenos, *Panoplia dogmatica*, PG 130:1310c: Λέγουσιν . . . ἐκάστω . . . τῶν ἄλλων ἀπάντων ἐνοικεῖν δαίμονα . . . καὶ ἀποθνήσκοντος ἐνοικεῖν αὐθις τοῖς λειψάνοις αὐτοῦ, καὶ παραμένειν τῷ τάφῳ καὶ ἀναμένειν τὴν ἀνάστασιν, ἵνα σὺν αὐτῷ κολασθεῖη καὶ μὴδ’ ἐν τῇ κολάσει τούτου διαχωρίζοιτο.

⁹¹*Ibid.*, PG 130:1317c: Λέγουσι τοὺς τοιοῦτους μὴ ἀποθνήσκειν, ἀλλὰ μεθίστασθαι, καθάπερ ἐν ὕπνῳ, τὸ πῆλινον τουτὶ καὶ σάρκινον περιβόλαιον ἀπόνως ἐκδυομένους, καὶ τὴν ἄφθαρτον καὶ θεῖαν τοῦ Χριστοῦ στολὴν ἐνδυομένους . . . τὸ δ’ ἀποδυθὲν σῶμα τούτων εἰς τέφραν καὶ κόνιν διαλύεσθαι, μηκέτι μηδαμῶς ἀνιστάμενον. See D. Obolensky, *The Bogomils: A study in Balkan Neo-Manichaeism* (Cambridge, 1948), 215.

⁹²See G. Ficker, *Die Phundagiagiten: Ein Beitrag zur Ketzergeschichte des byzantinischen Mittelalters* (Leipzig, 1908), 38: Διδάσκουσι δὲ οἱ παμμίαροι, ὡς ἔφημεν, νεκρῶν ἀνάστασιν μὴ προσδοκᾶν μηδὲ δευτέραν παρουσίαν, μηδὲ κρίσιν θεοῦ, ἀλλ’ ὅτι πᾶσα ἡ ἔξουσία τῶν ἐπιγείων, εἴτε κόλασις, καὶ ὁ παράδεισος εἰς ἐξουσίαν εἰσὶν τοῦ

more, they claimed that the devil rules over this world and sends his friends to paradise and his enemies to hell. The combination of these three rejections may be an indication of transmigrational notions among the Bogomils.⁹³ However, their perception of a paradise and a hell ruled by the devil renders any conclusion difficult for the moment.⁹⁴ It is also regrettable that the confession of Basil, the Bogomil priest who was put on trial by Alexios Komnenos around 1098, is only partly preserved by Zigabenos in his *Panoplia*⁹⁵ and by Anna Komnene in the *Alexiad*.⁹⁶

Bogomilism became quite popular in the eleventh–twelfth century, attracting even affluent members of Constantinopolitan society.⁹⁷ Moreover, Bogomilism spread to major monasteries, and several Bogomils were uncovered around the 1340s on Mount Athos. The synod in Constantinople subjected some of them to penance and expelled others from Mount Athos on charges related to Bogomilism.⁹⁸ One of these charges was that they denied the resurrection of the dead, which may be part of a reincarnational belief system.⁹⁹ We do not know much about these heretics after the establishment of the Ottoman Empire in southeastern Europe.

In the western sources, however, Bogomils appear to adhere to the reincarnation doctrine. The western Bogomils, also called Cathars,¹⁰⁰ were split into two different sects, the Absolute (radical) Cathars and the Mitigated (moderate) ones.¹⁰¹ Both, however, believed in reincarnation, their only difference being that the Absolute Cathars accepted the possibility of a soul entering an animal body, while the Mitigated allowed for reincarnation into successive human bodies only. Concerning Cathars,¹⁰² it is interesting to note

ἄρχοντος τοῦ κόσμου τούτου, ἦτοι τοῦ διαβόλου, καὶ ὅτι τοὺς φίλους αὐτοῦ βάλλει εἰς τὸν παράδεισον, τοὺς δὲ ἐχθροὺς εἰς τὴν κόλασιν. Translation in Hamilton, *Christian Dualist Heresies*, 153.

⁹³An additional feature of both Paulicians and Bogomils was that they abstained from eating meat. (For Paulicians see the abjuration formulas in Astruc et al., “Les sources grecques,” *TM* 4 [1970]: 201, and for the Bogomils see J. Gouillard, “Quatre procès de mystiques à Byzance [vers 960–1143],” *REB* 36 [1978]). This practice may be connected with beliefs in reincarnation. See M. Loos, *Dualist Heresy in the Middle Ages* (Prague, 1974), 251: “An even more secret Cathar doctrine came to the knowledge of Peter of Verona, connecting the prohibition of meat with the mystery of *metempsychosis*. On its long pilgrimage towards salvation the soul passes through many bodies, not only those of human beings, but animals as well, those ‘with blood.’ It is therefore forbidden to eat animals and birds, but there is no objection to eating fish for they ‘are born of water.’”

⁹⁴For a different interpretation of the notion that there is no resurrection of the dead, see Obolensky, *The Bogomils*, 241, who sees in this belief a Jewish influence.

⁹⁵For Zigabenos’ omissions see PG 130:1332: Αἰσχύνομαι, πιστεύσατε, καὶ ἀβουλήτως τοιαῦτα (i.e., Bogomil doctrines expounded by Basil) φθέγγομαι. Διὰ τοῦτο καὶ τὰ πολλὰ παρέδραμον ἐπίτηδες καὶ σποράδην τὰ ῥηθέντα συνεγραψάμην.

⁹⁶See Büttner-Wobst, ed., *Ioannis Zonarae Epitomae historiarum libri*, 3:743, and Anna Komnene, *Alexiad*, ed. Leib, 219–28; translation in Hamilton, *Christian Dualist Heresies*, 175–80.

⁹⁷For a discussion of the primary sources (Anna Komnene and Zigabenos) reporting on this reality, see Obolensky, *The Bogomils*, 197–205, esp. 201.

⁹⁸See A. Rigo, *Monaci esicasti e monaci Bogomili. Le accuse di messalianismo e bogomilismo rivolte agli esicasti ed il problema dei rapporti tra esicasmo e bogomilismo* (Florence, 1989), 135ff.

⁹⁹*Ibid.*, 201.

¹⁰⁰For the relationship of Bulgarian Bogomils to the western Cathars, see D. Angelov, “L’influence de Bogomilisme sur les Cathares d’Italie et de France,” *Académie bulgare des sciences. Institut d’histoire, Études historiques* 4 (Sofia, n.d.), 175–90, and Hamilton, *Christian Dualist Heresies*, 43–52.

¹⁰¹See D. Angelov, *The Bogomil Movement* (Sofia, 1987), 14ff.

¹⁰²How these heretics viewed the world in which their souls “did time,” entering one human body after another, is a mystery to us. In a recent nonacademic publication, an American-British art historian, Linda Harris, attempts an interesting, to say the least, interpretation of the paintings of the 16th-century Dutch

that these sectarians combined belief in reincarnation with the notions imputed to Bogomils by Euthymios of Peribleptos (i.e., rejection of the resurrection of the dead, the Second Coming, and the Last Judgment).¹⁰³ The Inquisition records in this respect seem to be more complete than the accounts of the Bogomils by Zigabenos and Anna Komnene.

Among Byzantine Philosophers

It has already been stated that pagan/Hellenic notions about metempsychosis are directly connected to pagan education or simply education. It is not a surprise, therefore, that discussion of reincarnation is rather nonexistent at times of general cultural decline such as the eighth century.¹⁰⁴ As education picks up pace in Byzantium, the frequency of references to metempsychosis increases. Yet within the broader Byzantine philosophical context, interest in metempsychosis was minimal.

Photios in his *Bibliotheca* rejects the idea of Hierokles of Alexandria that the transmigration of souls is proof of divine providence.¹⁰⁵ Michael Psellos is also highly critical of the Greek dogma that the soul descends (from the heavens) assuming material garments, that is, bodies.¹⁰⁶ John Italos, the student and successor of Psellos, was rather unlucky when his philosophical interests crossed with the idea of metempsychosis. I have already cited the anathema of the Constantinopolitan synod in 1082 which anathematized Italos for holding both the Platonic theory of metempsychosis and the Aristotelian theory on the destruction of souls at death.¹⁰⁷ Since these two theories cancel each other out,¹⁰⁸ it is likely that those who condemned him either did not understand what Italos had written or that they simply wanted to condemn en bloc both views for the simple reason that they had originally been introduced by pagan authors.¹⁰⁹ It seems that people in the time of Alexios Komnenos were sensitive to these non-Orthodox notions. The rapid expan-

master Hieronymus Bosch. According to Harris, paintings such as *The Garden of Earthly Delights* or the *Last Judgment* are filled with Bogomil-Cathar symbols, and a number of scenes are understood by the author as depicting human souls waiting for a new reincarnation. See L. Harris, *The Secret Heresy of Hieronymus Bosch* (Edinburg, 1995), 215–38.

¹⁰³On this issue, evidence pertaining to the Cathars of southern France in the 14th century is found scattered among the depositions that make up the Inquisition Register of Jacques Fournier, bishop of Pamiers in Ariège in the Comté de Foix, from 1318 to 1325. The text has been published in its entirety by J. Duvernoy, *Le Registre d'Inquisition de Jacques Fournier, évêque de Pamiers (1318–1325)*, 3 vols. (Toulouse, 1965). These records are extensively quoted by E. Le Roy Ladurie, *Montaillou, village occitan de 1294 à 1324* (Paris, 1975). For the rejection of the resurrection of the dead, etc. among the Cathar peasants of Montaillou, see Duvernoy, *Le Registre*, 1:151–53, 206, 258–65, 309, etc.; for their belief in reincarnation, see *ibid.*, 2:33–34, 107, 199, 407, 411, 489–90, 3:130, and 3:219. On Cathars and reincarnation, see also Loos, *Dualist Heresy*, 140–42, 244–45.

¹⁰⁴For Byzantine education and its development, see, among others, P. Lemerle, *Le premier humanisme byzantin. Notes et remarques sur enseignement et culture à Byzance des origines au Xe siècle* (Paris, 1971).

¹⁰⁵See above, note 9.

¹⁰⁶See D. J. O'Meara, ed., *Michaelis Pselli Philosophica minora*, vol. 2, Teubner (Leipzig, 1989), 22–23, the very short essay Περὶ Ψυχῆς.

¹⁰⁷See above, note 5.

¹⁰⁸Transmigration is predicated on the assumption that the soul preexists the body and continues to live after its death, whereas according to Aristotle the souls disappear along with the body after death. Cf. Nemesios' understanding of Aristotle's mortality of the soul in his *De natura hominis* (see Einarson, *Nemesios* [as above, note 9], sec. 2, lines 462–63).

¹⁰⁹For a discussion of this anathema, see Clucas, *Trial of John Italos*, 142–43. For Italos' serious arguments against reincarnation, see P. Joannou, ed., *Ioannes Italos, Quaestiones quodlibetales (Απορία καὶ Λύσεις)*, (Ettal, 1956), 63–69. See also J. Gouillard, "La religion des philosophes," *TM* 6 (1976): 306–15.

sion of Bogomilism on the one hand and pagan philosophy along with pagan learning on the other conspired to create a set of rather wary reactions on the part of the political and ecclesiastical authorities of Byzantium. It is no accident that the additions to the *Synodikon of Orthodoxy* related to John Italos provide for the anathematization of “those who study the Greek disciplines . . . not only for the sake of educational training.”¹¹⁰ It is no accident either that George Tornikes in his funerary oration on Anna Komnene does not fail to remind his audience, when he speaks about her education, that Anna admired Plato, Aristotle, and the ancient philosophers, but she disagreed with their ideas on reincarnation.¹¹¹

There seems to be not much more on the transmigration of souls during the late Byzantine period. A reference to reincarnation in Patriarch Kallistos I’s sermon *Against Gregoras* does not enrich the overall picture. Given by the former Constantinopolitan patriarch sometime between 1357 and 1359, the sermon complains about the introduction into a text of Nikephoros Gregoras¹¹² of a particular formulation that opens the door to the idea of the transmigration of souls.¹¹³

In later Byzantium it is likely that learned people were not very interested in philosophical ideas on the transmigration of souls. Niketas Stethatos, for example, in his work *On the Soul* never felt obliged even to mention any other alternative of the soul’s fate after death apart from the standard Orthodox view. Only once does he state that wicked souls go to Hades, but get some solace when the living give charity or celebrate a liturgy in their memory.¹¹⁴

However, during the last years of the Byzantine Empire metempsychosis returns in the work of George Gemistos Plethon and in his discussions with a circle of friends that included, among other famous people, Cardinal Bessarion. Plethon was a Neoplatonist

¹¹⁰See Clucas, *Trial of John Italos*, 154ff; Greek text in Guillard, “Le Synodicon,” 59. For the implications of these anathemas concerning education and the study of philosophy, see H. Hunger, *Die hochsprachliche profane Literatur der Byzantiner*, vol. 1 (Munich, 1978), 43–44. See also R. Browning, “Enlightenment and Repression in Byzantium in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries,” *Past and Present* 69 (1975): 3–23, esp. 11–15.

¹¹¹See J. Darrouzès, *Georges et Démétrios Tornikès, Lettres et Discours* (Paris, 1970), 289: Καὶ τὸ νοερὸν τῶν ἀνδρῶν κατεπλήττετο, οὐκ ἐδέχετο ὅμως αὐτῶν τὸ ἀπίθανον τῆς μετεμψυχώσεως. Οὐ γὰρ ἐδεδίει ἢ μὴ ἐπιλείπει Θεῷ τὰ δημιουργημένα, οὐκ ἐξ ὕλης ἀγενήτου δημιουργοῦντι, ἀλλὰ ἐκ μὴ ὄντων τὰ πάντα κτίζοντι καὶ παράγοντι ἢ μὴ τοῦτω στενοχωρηθεῖν φύσις αὐλὸς καὶ ἀσώματος. I wish to thank M. Patedakis for this reference.

¹¹²See D. B. Gones, *Τὸ συγγραφικὸν ἔργον τοῦ Οἰκουμενικοῦ Πατριάρχου Καλλίστου Α΄* (Ph.D. diss., Athens, 1980), 189–90. The contested Greek text of Gregoras reads as follows: Μετέχεται μὲν ὁ Θεὸς ὑφ’ ἀπάντων, ἀσχετῶς δὲ καὶ ἀμερῶς κατὰ τὴν εἰκόνα τῆς ἡμετέρας ψυχῆς ἀπλῆς οἷον οὐσίας οὐσης καὶ αὐτῆς. Καὶ γὰρ καὶ αὕτη πανταχῆ τοῦ σώματος οὐσα ὅλη ὀλικῶς μετέχεται μὲν ὑφ’ ἐκάστου τῶν τοῦ σώματος μερῶν, ἀμεθέκτως δέ, οὐ γὰρ τούτων οὐδὲν τῶν ἀπάντων γίνεται ψυχή· οὐδὲ γὰρ πέφυκεν. (God is partaken by all, but in a nonpossessional and indivisible fashion, in accordance with the paradigm of our soul which is a somehow simple essence. For [the soul] itself, being connected to all parts/molecules of the body, is wholly partaken by each part of the body on the one hand, but, on the other, with no commingling [between the two], for no part of the body becomes soul, nor has the soul been created as such by nature).

¹¹³Three more references—the first in a hagiographic work of John of Damascus (*Passio s. Artemii*), the second found in a small phrase transmitted by two inferior codices of the *Life of St. Andrew the Fool*, and the last (in fact the earliest one, dating from the 7th century) found in the *Miracles of St. Artemios*—are only useful for statistical purposes. One may suggest that hagiography does not seem to have bothered much about reincarnation. See John of Damascus, *Passio s. Artemii* (CPG 8082), PG 96:1280A; *The Life of St. Andrew the Fool*, ed. L. Ryden, Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, Studia Byzantina Upsaliensia 4, (Uppsala, 1995), 218; and V. S. Crisafulli and J. W. Nesbitt, *The Miracles of Saint Artemios* (Leiden-New York, 1997), 172 (Greek text) and 278 (comm.).

¹¹⁴See S. Sakkos and G. Mantzarides, *Νικητὰ Στηθάτου, Μυστικὰ συγγράμματα* (Thessalonike, 1957), 123–26.

whose contribution to the Italian Renaissance remains to be assessed.¹¹⁵ The transmigration of souls is part of a wider philosophical-political system, which he tried to establish by emulating the *Republic* of Plato.¹¹⁶ Unfortunately, George Scholarios, the first patriarch of Constantinople under Ottoman rule, destroyed Plethon's magnum opus *The Laws* after he had compiled an anthology of extracts from it.¹¹⁷ Plethon's ideas on the transmigration of souls are found in the concluding paragraph of *The Laws*, the *Epinomis* that is preserved, and in a brief note entitled "Recapitulation of Zoroastrian and Pythagorean-Platonic Dogmas."¹¹⁸ In the *Epinomis* Plethon also gives a brief history of the dissemination of these "dogmas" similar to that presented at the beginning of this study. Interestingly enough, Plethon and Apollonios of Tyana entertain the same contempt for Egyptian philosophy.¹¹⁹

The death of Plethon, less than a year before the fall of Constantinople to the Turks, marks the end of the philosophical eschatological tradition in Byzantium. The church allowed Plethon a funeral in accordance with the Orthodox rite and turned a blind eye to his heretical views. Nevertheless, Plethon's friends continued the Neoplatonic tradition in the West. Bessarion, who became a Roman cardinal and was considered twice for the papacy, wrote the following words to Plethon's sons: "I have learned that our common father and master has shed every earthly element and departed to heaven, to the place of purity, joining the mystical chorus of Iacchus with the Olympian Gods. . . . if one were to accept the doctrines of the Pythagoreans and Plato about the infinite ascent and descent of souls, I should not hesitate even to add that the soul of Plato, having to obey the irrefragable decrees of Adrasteia and to discharge the obligatory cycle, had come down to earth and assumed the frame and life of Plethon."¹²⁰ Bessarion's wording is careful, but the idea of reincarnation was employed for eulogistic purposes, and one may assume that Plethon's soul, whether in the Christian afterworld or in his Neoplatonic intelligible world, would have enjoyed this reference.

CONCLUSION

This rather cursory review of the notion of reincarnation among the Byzantines has made apparent a reality that mostly ignores this eschatological possibility, which is so common among other peoples and religions. In fact, there have been only two instances

¹¹⁵See, e.g., F. Masai, *Pléthon et le Platonisme de Mistra* (Paris, 1956), 315–83, esp. 344.

¹¹⁶See C. M. Woodhouse, *George Gemistos Plethon: The Last of the Hellenes* (Oxford, 1986), 320–21.

¹¹⁷Hunger, *Die hochsprachliche profane Literatur*, 24 n. 72a; for the detailed story of the manuscript's fate, see Woodhouse, *Plethon*, 356–61. For the remaining fragments of the book by Plethon that was destroyed by Scholarios, see C. Alexandre, ed. and trans., *Pléthon, Traité des Lois* (Paris, 1958; repr. 1966). For the dispute between Plethon and Scholarios, see B. Lagarde, "Le *De differentiis* de Pléthon d'après l'autographe de la Marcienne," *Byzantion* 43 (1973): 312–43; idem, *Des différences entre Platon et Aristote* (Ph.D. diss., Paris, 1976); idem, "Contre les objections de Scholarios en faveur d'Aristote (Réplique)," *Byzantion* 59 (1989): 354–507 [= E. V. Maltese, *Georgius Gemistos Plethon Contra Scholarii pro Aristotelis Obiectiones*, Teubner (Leipzig, 1988)] (for bibliography see Cacouros [as above, note 17], 1379).

¹¹⁸PG 160:973B–974D, Πλήθωνος Ζωροαστρείων τε και Πλατωνικῶν δογμάτων συγκεφαλαίωσις. For the sources of Plethon's ideas, see Woodhouse, *Plethon*, 62–78. For a new edition see Br. Tambrun-Krasker, ed., *Μαγικά λόγια τῶν ἀπὸ Ζωροάστρου μάγων: Γεωργίου Γεμιστοῦ Πλήθωνος Ἐξήγησις εἰς τὰ αὐτὰ λόγια. Oracles chaldaïques recension de Georges Gémiste Pléthon. La recension arabe des Μαγικά λόγια par Michel Tardieu*, *Corpus philosophorum Medii Aevi, Byzantinoi philosophoi = Philosophi Byzantini* 7 (Athens-Paris-Brussels, 1995).

¹¹⁹See Plethon, Ἐπινομίς, PG 160:971AB.

¹²⁰Greek text in PG 161:695–98; see also Masai, *Pléthon*, 307.

in which the Byzantines seriously addressed the issue. The first was in the dialogue *Theophrastus* by Aeneas of Gaza¹²¹ and the second in the work of Plethon, in which reincarnation was seriously considered. What is strange is that we see no later references to *Theophrastus* in Byzantium (with the exception of the *Nachleben* of a few questions in Anastasios of Sinai which still were disconnected from reincarnation). There are only occasional references to reincarnation made by a very few individuals (such as Photios or Psellos). These references were always premised in a wider context of antipagan or anti-heretic polemics. Therefore, it seems as though the subject of the transmigration of souls had been resolved once and for all after the turn of the fifth century. *Theophrastos*, on the one hand, and the anathemas against Origen, and the Origenists issued by the Fifth Ecumenical Council on the other might have put the whole problem to rest. Still one does not know even today whether the Gnostic infiltration of the early monastic communities in fourth-century Egypt and the spread of Origenism in the Palestinian monasteries in the fifth and sixth centuries were accompanied by dissemination of the particular belief in reincarnation. As Chadwick suggests, the Nag Hammadi Gnostic documents “must have been regarded by their monkish readers (i.e., the Christian monks of the Pachomian monasteries) as edifying stuff, perhaps too esoteric . . . but certainly not abhorrent.”¹²² Whether this “edifying stuff” included reincarnation is a matter of speculation, but cannot be completely rejected.

In an entirely different premise, though, a more careful reading of a number of the sources cited in this paper shows that reincarnation is usually condemned along with the idea of the final restoration. This combined condemnation is aptly summarized in the passage of George the Monk referring to the anathemas of the Fifth Ecumenical Council (cited above, p. 163 n. 46): “against Origen and those who followed him in his impious dogmas, Didymos and Evagrius . . . and their . . . writings, in which they . . . said that the souls existed before the bodies, [and in which they] believed in the transmigration of souls . . . and that hell would come to an end.” The last notion that is condemned in this passage, the notion of hell coming to an end, bears greater significance than that of reincarnation itself. As already pointed out, Origen had rejected the notion of reincarnation but not the idea of the final restoration.¹²³ Viewed under the prism of the final restoration, reincarnation becomes an insignificant technicality or detail.

The question Christianity was interested in was whether evil (therefore hell) would persist eternally. And as Christianity follows a trajectory toward more and more philanthropic/humanitarian ways of living and believing, the final restoration might be one of the major topics of theological reconsideration. Highly relevant to this topic is a passage from the *Quaestiones et dubia* of Maximos the Confessor, in which he responds to an inquiry related to Gregory of Nyssa’s beliefs on the final restoration:

The church recognizes three kinds of restoration . . . the third [kind], which Gregory of Nyssa mostly employs in his own sermons, is this one: the restoration of the soul’s powers, which have fallen into sin, to the state in which they were created long ago. For, just as

¹²¹See above, pp. 164–65.

¹²²See Chadwick, “The Domestication of Gnosis,” in Layton, *Rediscovery of Gnosticism*, 16.

¹²³For more about the notion of ἀποκατάστασις and further bibliography, see B. E. Daley, “Apokatastasis and ‘Honorable Silence’ in the Eschatology of Maximos the Confessor,” in F. Heinzer and C. Schönborn, *Maximos Confessor, Actes de Symposium sur Maxime le Confesseur, Fribourg, 2–5 septembre 1980* (Fribourg, 1982), 309–39.

all nature has to regain the incorruptibility of the flesh in the resurrection in the time that is awaited, so it is necessary that the fallen powers of the soul by the[ir] extension through the ages reject the memories of evil, which have been instilled [in the soul], and that the soul, passing through all the eons and finding no obstacle, come to God, who has no end, and thus, through the full understanding of—not [simply] by the partaking of—that which is good, regain its powers and be restored to its ancient [status] and the Creator be revealed as not responsible for sin.¹²⁴

Maximos' position on the final restoration may still be *sub judice*,¹²⁵ but the possibility of his adherence to this doctrine remains open. One might even ponder the meaning of the sentence "the fallen powers of the soul by the[ir] extension through the ages reject the memories of evil." If nothing else, Maximos presents his statement as part of the established beliefs of the Christian church (τρεις ἀποκαταστάσεις οἶδεν ἡ ἐκκλησία).

To conclude, reincarnation and the final restoration may have been outside the immediate interests of the majority of Byzantine Christians (as long as they were not dualist heretics). It is also likely that the Byzantines never considered reincarnation as a serious eschatological possibility, despite the *prima facie* advantages presented by Aeneas of Gaza in *Theophrastus*.¹²⁶ The Byzantines had at least one more appealing alternative, presented to pious people in short stories embedded in hagiography, in the *Apophthegmata patrum*, and in the genre of *Erotapokriseis* such as the *Quaestiones et responsiones* of Anastasios of Sinai.¹²⁷ If, according to N. Berdyaev, "the doctrine of reincarnation, which has obvious advantages, involves . . . another nightmare—the nightmare of endless incarnations, of infinite wanderings along dark passages," and if the same doctrine "finds a solution of man's destiny in the cosmos and not in God,"¹²⁸ these stories spoke of simple Christians who obtained salvation beyond the cosmos through a single act. That single act of piety or human compassion was enough to redeem a lifetime of sin. For example, there is a story in which a robber who committed all sorts of crimes (even murders) was finally saved thanks to his handkerchief that was wet with the tears he had shed in repentance

¹²⁴Note that this passage does not seem to have attracted the attention of scholars who have written on Maximos and his ideas on restoration. For instance, Daley, "Apokatastasis," does not examine this fragment. The full Greek text reads as follows: Ἐπειδὴ Γρηγόριος ὁ Νύσης ἐν τοῖς ἑαυτοῦ συγγράμμασιν φαίνεται τοῖς μὴ τὸ βάθος ἐπισταμένους τῆς ὑψηλῆς αὐτοῦ θεωρίας πολλαχοῦ ἀποκατάστασιν ὑπεμφαίνειν, παρακαλῶ ὅπερ ἐπίστασαι περὶ τούτου εἰπεῖν. Τρεῖς ἀποκαταστάσεις οἶδεν ἡ ἐκκλησία· μίαν μὲν τὴν ἐκάστου κατὰ τῆς ἀρετῆς λόγον, ἐν ἣ ἀποκαθίσταται τὸν ἐπ' αὐτῷ λόγον τῆς ἀρετῆς ἐκπληρώσας· δευτέραν δὲ τὴν τῆς ὅλης φύσεως ἐν τῇ ἀναστάσει, τὴν εἰς ἀφθαρσίαν καὶ ἀθανασίαν ἀποκατάστασιν· τρίτη δέ, ἣ καὶ μάλιστα κατακέχρηται ἐν τοῖς ἑαυτοῦ λόγοις ὁ Νύσης Γρηγόριος, ἐστὶν αὕτη· ἡ τῶν ψυχικῶν δυνάμεων τῇ ἁμαρτίᾳ ὑποπεσουσῶν εἰς ὅπερ ἐκτίσθησαν πάλιν ἀποκατάστασις. Δεῖ γὰρ ὡσπερ τὴν ὅλην φύσιν ἐν τῇ ἀναστάσει τὴν τῆς σαρκὸς ἀφθαρσίαν χρόνῳ ἐλπιζομένῳ ἀπολαβεῖν, οὕτως καὶ τὰς παρατραπείσας τῆς ψυχῆς δυνάμεις τῇ παρατάσει τῶν αἰῶνων ἀποβαλεῖν τὰς ἐντεθείσας αὐτῇ τῆς κακίας μνήμας καὶ περάσασαν τοὺς πάντας αἰῶνας καὶ μὴ εὐρίσκουσιν στάσιν εἰς τὸν θεὸν ἐλθεῖν, τὸν μὴ ἔχοντα πέρας, καὶ οὕτως, τῇ ἐπιγνώσει οὐ τῇ μεθέξει τῶν ἀγαθῶν, ἀπολαβεῖν τὰς δυνάμεις καὶ εἰς τὸ ἀρχαῖον ἀποκαταστήναι καὶ δειχθῆναι τὸν δημιουργὸν ἀνάιτιον τῆς ἁμαρτίας. J. H. Declerck, ed., *Maximi confessoris quaestiones et dubia* (CCSG 10) (Turnhout, 1982), 19. I wish to thank D. Sullivan for his help with the translation.

¹²⁵See Daley, "Apokatastasis," 314–18 and his conclusion, 337–39. Daley opts for a Maximos noncommitted to the Origenist view of final restoration.

¹²⁶Cf. the statement of Berdyaev: "There is more justice in the doctrine of Karma and reincarnation, according to which deeds done in time are expiated in time and not in eternity and that man has other and wider experience than that between birth and death in this one life." N. Berdyaev, *The Destiny of Man*, trans. N. Duddington (New York, 1966), 274–75.

¹²⁷PG 89:312–824, esp. 706c.

¹²⁸Berdyaev, *The Destiny of Man*, 279.

for his past actions.¹²⁹ To the Byzantines, who listened to these stories, God's love and philanthropy was much stronger and appealing than the logical exactness of the retributions for human actions provided in the detailed scheme of reincarnations taught by Mani.

The Richard Stockton College of New Jersey

¹²⁹See Anastasius Sinaita, *Oratio in sextum Psalmum* (CPG 7751), PG 89:1112b–1113c. For more on the popular theology that underlies this kind of narrative, see V. Déroche, *Etudes sur Léontios de Néapolis*, Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, Studia Byzantina Upsaliensia 3 (Uppsala, 1995), 270–96.