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Drawn to the Blazing Beacon: Visitors and Pilgrims to the Living Holy Man and the Case of Lazaros of Mount Galesion

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In the well-known Gospel story of the feeding of the five thousand, a vast throng of people goes out into the countryside in pursuit of Jesus and his disciples who have taken a boat to a remote place in search of some peace and quiet. Jesus finds the crowd waiting for him when he lands and, unperturbed by this unexpected turn of events, takes pity on these people who have made the journey to see him. He welcomes his visitors and provides them with the teaching and healing they seek, before miraculously feeding them.¹ As Christianity developed, a paradigm was found in this episode, along with many other similar stories in both New and Old Testaments,² for the idea and practice of visiting living holy men. It is thus perhaps not surprising to discover abundant evidence for the continuation and rapid development of such behavior in traditions associated with some of the earliest Christian holy men.³ In the central and later periods of Byzantine history, visitors and pilgrims continued to make their way to living holy men, and it is this phenomenon that forms the topic of my paper.

It should be made clear at the outset that I am examining the whole range of circumstances in which people approached living holy men, and hence I talk in this paper more of “visitors” and “visitation” than of “pilgrims” and “pilgrimage.” In the study of other societies, cultures, and periods, attempts have been made to define quite rigorously the

¹ Mt. 14:13–22, Mk. 6:32–45, Lk. 9:10–17, Jn. 6:1–13; cf. Mt. 15:29–38, Mk. 8:1–10.

² See, e.g., Mt. 4:24–25, Mk. 3:7–8, Lk. 6:17–19; Mt. 13:1–2, Mk. 4:1–2, Lk. 8:4, 5:1–3; Mt. 15:1–2, Mk. 7:1–5; Mt. 16:1, Mk. 8:11. In these stories people seek out Jesus for a variety of reasons: in the hope of healing or exorcism, to hear his teaching, to receive personal advice, to satisfy curiosity, and, occasionally, even to challenge and test his credibility. There are also many accounts of people seeking help and teaching from living holy men in the Old Testament; see, e.g., the visit of the wife of Jereboam to the prophet Ahijah, 1 Ki. 14:1–18; or the various episodes involving the prophet Elisha in 2 Ki. 4:18–44, 5:8–19.

³ See, e.g., Athanasios, *Vita Antonii*, G. J. M. Bartelink, ed., *Athanasie d'Alexandrie: Vie d'Antoine* (Paris, 1994); R. C. Gregg, trans., *Athanasius, the Life of Antony and the Letter to Marcellinus* (New York, 1980), 14: “Moreover when [Antony] saw the crowd, he was not annoyed any more than he was elated at being embraced by so many people. . . . Through him the Lord healed many of those present who suffered from bodily ailments; others he purged of demons, and to Antony he gave grace in speech. Thus he consoled many who mourned, and others hostile to each other he reconciled in friendship, urging everyone to prefer nothing in the world above the love of Christ.”

terms *pilgrim* and *pilgrimage* and to classify and isolate behaviors and practices implicit in them.⁴ While such an approach may have considerable value in many of the contexts in which it has been pursued, the application of any very exact and exclusive understanding is, I believe, inappropriate and unhelpful in the present one, and my inclusive approach to the subject is thus deliberate. For the Byzantines, whose mentality was thoroughly permeated with a Platonic sense of the ideal reflected on an almost infinite number of increasingly imperfect levels, the ultimate pilgrimage was that of *theosis*, the journey to God in eternity. Thus *everything* that led to him, everything that involved the movement from earthly image to heavenly original, was, in some sense, a pilgrimage. An understanding of pilgrimage in the Byzantine world, whether to holy places, holy things, or holy people, and whether in a general or more local context, must then embrace, or at least be aware of, the full range of reflections of this ideal. When talking of Byzantine pilgrimage, a spectrum of perception, behavior, and practice should thus be envisaged, growing ever less direct and ever less clear as it passes from the approach to Christ himself on earth in the Gospel stories, through more deliberate, formal, and institutionalized pilgrimage, until it reaches that of the overtly mundane visitor approaching the most local holy object, place, or person. In Byzantine culture, a local villager visiting a nearby monastery for what might seem the most ordinary reasons was still approaching the holy and was perceived to be necessarily touched and affected by it. Although it might be confusing to apply the specific term *pilgrim* to such a visitor, the activity in which that person was engaged is nevertheless to be understood as being at the opposite end, perhaps, but still on the same spectrum as that of a person who might deliberately travel hundreds of miles to a relic of Christ himself in a traditionally established and officially sanctioned holy place. Thus the words *visitor* and *visitation* must be understood, whenever they are used below, as carrying with them at least some of the sense implied by the narrower and more technical terms *pilgrim* and *pilgrimage*.

The topic of visitation and pilgrimage to living holy men in the Byzantine world has received very little attention in scholarly literature, although a substantial contribution has recently been made in the period of late antiquity by Georgia Frank.⁵ Neither she nor the other scholars whose work is of most relevance approach the subject from quite the same angle as I do, however, and so, while my paper draws on their contributions, it is primarily based on information derived directly from my own reading of Byzantine sources for the period in question.⁶ My principal focus is upon the late eleventh-century *vita* of Lazaros of Mount Galesion, which contains some of the most revealing evidence available

⁴ Perhaps the most apposite and helpful discussion of pilgrimage theory is that provided by J. Dubisch, *In a Different Place: Pilgrimage, Gender, and Politics at a Greek Island Shrine* (Princeton, N.J., 1995), 34–48, since she deals with the phenomenon in the Greek Orthodox context, albeit in modern times; see especially pp. 45–46 for her treatment of difficulties inherent in the categorization of “pilgrimage.” Also useful for its telling analysis of problems associated with such theory when a living person, rather than a place or object, is the focus of pilgrimage is the discussion by J. Eade and M. Sallnow in the “Introduction” to their *Contesting the Sacred: The Anthropology of Christian Pilgrimage* (London–New York, 1991), 1–29. See also the brief discussion in G. Frank, *The Memory of the Eyes: Pilgrims to Living Saints in Christian Late Antiquity* (Berkeley, Calif., 2000), 7–9.

⁵ Frank, *Memory*.

⁶ Frank, *Memory*, deals only with the late antique period and from a particularly literary slant. Among the work of other scholars perhaps most relevant is that of E. Malamut, *Sur la route des saints byzantins* (Paris, 1993), which considers the Byzantine period to the 12th century but focuses on the holy men themselves; see especially chap. 6, “Visites des pèlerins et des fidèles,” 195–229. Peter Brown’s work on the holy man is, of course, of unquestionable importance here, although again directed to late antiquity; I return to Brown’s views toward

from the period under discussion. I then compare this material with information derived from other sources in order to highlight the typical and distinctive features of this type of behavior. Despite the length and continuity of the tradition, however, evidence of visitors to living holy men in this period is scattered and generally quite sparse. It reveals a fair amount about the overt reasons why people visited holy men, about what they did during their visits, and about the responses they received, but it says very little about their deeper individual motivations or perceptions. It is thus hard to answer the sort of questions that recent approaches to pilgrimage by social anthropologists have suggested may be crucial, but some very interesting and useful insights may still be gained by posing such questions, and this I shall do by way of conclusion. Far from being exhaustive and fully developed, my paper should be regarded as a foray into this fascinating and revealing subject, which deserves, and one hopes one day will receive, a much more thorough and penetrating study.

LAZAROS OF MOUNT GALESION

At the time of his death in the middle of the eleventh century, Lazaros of Mount Galesion had gained widespread recognition in the Byzantine world as a stellar example of the monastic way of life. Then in his mid-eighties, Lazaros had acquired a reputation for holiness that was founded principally upon his extraordinary ascetic conduct, for he had spent some forty years confined on top of a series of pillars on the barren mountain of Galesion, just outside Ephesos. In addition to his asceticism, however, he was known for his remarkable powers of insight, for the wisdom of his advice, and for his generosity to those who sought his help. As his reputation had spread, a cluster of substantial monastic communities had grown up around him on the mountain and in the foothills below, and visitors from all walks of life, humble and powerful, rich and poor alike, gathered to gaze in wonder at the old man who lived there exposed to all weathers with only his tattered leather tunic for shelter, seeing in him a living icon, a proof that the age of true Christian asceticism had not yet passed.

the end of this paper. Among his writings see particularly "The Rise and Function of the Holy Man in Late Antiquity," *JRS* 61 (1971): 80–101, repr. in his *Society and the Holy in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley–Los Angeles, 1982), 103–52; "Town, Village and Holy Man: The Case of Syria," in D. M. Pippidi, ed., *Assimilation et résistance à la culture gréco-romaine dans le monde ancien* (Bucharest, 1976), 213–20, repr. in *Society and the Holy*, 153–65; *Authority and the Sacred* (Cambridge, 1995), especially chap. 3, "Arbiters of the Holy: The Christian Holy Man in Late Antiquity," 57–78. Also valuable on the same period is S. A. Harvey's work, especially *Asceticism and Society in Crisis: John of Ephesus and the Lives of the Eastern Saints* (Berkeley, Calif., 1990). On pilgrimage to the living in antiquity see B. Kötting, "Wallfahrten zu lebenden Personen im Altertum," in *Wallfahrt kennt keine Grenzen*, ed. L. Kriss-Rettenbeck and G. Mohler (Munich–Zurich, 1984), 226–34; cf. idem, *Peregrinatio Religiosa* (Regensburg, 1950).

There is no sustained consideration of the topic of pilgrimage to the living in other works on Byzantine pilgrimage, e.g., in R. Ousterhout, ed., *The Blessings of Pilgrimage* (Urbana–Chicago, Ill., 1990), although Gary Vikan is careful to include reference to it in many of his studies of Byzantine pilgrimage and its art, e.g., "Art, Medicine, and Magic in Early Byzantium," *DOP* 38 (1984): 65–86, or "Byzantine Pilgrims' Art," in L. Safran, ed., *Heaven on Earth* (University Park, Pa., 1998), 227–66. This mirrors a similar paucity of treatment in studies of pilgrimage in other times and places; to take but two examples, in M. L. and S. Nolan, *Christian Pilgrimage in Modern Western Europe* (Chapel Hill, N.C.–London, 1989) there is scarcely a mention, while among the nine papers collected under the title "Pilgrimage and Modernity" in *Social Compass* 36.2 (1989), only one, that of E. Pace, "Pilgrimage as a Spiritual Journey," 229–44, deals with the phenomenon.

Almost all that is known about Lazaros comes from his primary *vita*, a work written a decade or so after his death by a disciple and prominent member of his community, Gregory the Cellarer.⁷ Although of considerable length, this is, nevertheless, a refreshingly vivid piece of hagiography that provides not only a wealth of material on Lazaros himself, but also valuable information on Byzantine life in the first half of the eleventh century. The *vita*, moreover, is not simply an encomium. It shows that, while Lazaros's reputation, his authority, and, indeed, his holiness were accepted by many, they were questioned and challenged, sometimes with surprising hostility and even violence, by others in the local church, among his neighbors, and even among his own monks.

This then is the context of visitation and pilgrimage to him, something that evidently began in his early years on a column below Galesion from about 1011–19 and continued, growing in volume over the years, until it reached a peak in the decade or so before his death in 1053 when he was on his third and final column high on the mountain at the community of the Resurrection.

THE PRACTICE OF VISITING LAZAROS

The first thing to be examined here is what people actually did when they went to see Lazaros. Visits to him, certainly after he was well established on Galesion, seem to have followed a fairly set pattern of activity. The journey up from Ephesos or its surrounding villages was a difficult and potentially dangerous one—the climb was steep, and there was at least one very narrow pass to negotiate.⁸ Most visitors and pilgrims seem to have made the journey on foot, but those of superior social standing rode up.⁹ When they reached their destination, they found themselves in the monastery courtyard,¹⁰ where they were probably greeted by one or more of the monks.¹¹ At this point, however, most people were undoubtedly concerned only with the primary object of their visit, for it was here that they first caught sight of Lazaros on his column. Most were deeply impressed when suddenly confronted by the goal of their journey, but some were completely overcome by the sight

⁷ H. Delehay, ed., *AASS* Nov. 3:508–88. For English translation and commentary see R. P. H. Greenfield, *The Life of Lazaros of Mt. Galesion: An Eleventh-Century Pillar Saint* (Washington, D.C., 2000); other versions of the *vita* are discussed there, 58–61.

⁸ The notorious Chalkos Halonios area; see *v. Laz.*, chaps. 41, 56, 77, 154, 155. Over the years the main route came to be punctuated by a series of marked locations that probably served as a combination of shrine, signpost, and resting place; see, e.g., for places marked by a cross, chaps. 41, 77, 154, 155, 174, 176, 199. The path must also have passed near or actually through the three still functioning but earlier monastic foundations of St. Marina, the Savior, and the Theotokos, on its way up to the Resurrection; it may also have led past one or more of the chapels mentioned in the *vita*. The route was passable even in winter, but was apparently much more difficult, especially when obscured by snow; see chaps. 176, 238. Almost everyone came up from Ephesos, but there was evidently at least one other route, although it was not used by pilgrims or most visitors; see chap. 64 and cf. chap. 207.

⁹ So the visiting superior, *v. Laz.*, chap. 237, or a visiting ecclesiastical dignitary, chap. 238; cf. the eunuch in a dream, chap. 207. Those making deliveries probably led their animals in the normal way but may have ridden them when there was room. Some, like the thematic judge Nikephoros Proteuon, walked, evidently hoping to maximize the effect, or impression, of their experience, chap. 119.

¹⁰ Although the monasteries were unwalled, there was a definite entranceway; see *v. Laz.*, chap. 144. Those who arrived too late in the day evidently spent the night outside under a tree or at some other suitable place, chap. 243; cf. chap. 132. Riders would dismount in the courtyard, unless, like one visitor hoping to catch Lazaros unawares, they had already tied their animals to a tree outside, chap. 238. There was a stable in at least one of the monasteries, chap. 144.

¹¹ So *v. Laz.*, chap. 88; cf. chap. 238.

of this blazing beacon, this animated relic, this living icon, this earthly angel: one layman is said to have fallen to the ground as if he had been shot and lain there in a pool of tears.¹² The effect on others, however, was evidently less moving, and they simply continued with their discussions, in some cases even carrying on quarrels and trading insults.¹³

Usually people seem to have gone up to see Lazaros straightaway,¹⁴ either individually or in small groups.¹⁵ To do so, they climbed a ladder which led up to the top of the column where there was a platform large enough for at least two or three people to stand and for someone to sit down. Although Lazaros could be seen by those in the courtyard below when he was standing up,¹⁶ those on the platform were separated from him by a wall of some sort which partially enclosed the top of the pillar, and they were unable to see him, or he them, unless he opened the small window that provided access both for communication and for passing things to and fro.¹⁷

An interview with Lazaros normally began with a formal greeting¹⁸ and was followed by a conversation that included the visitors' requests for advice, spiritual or material help, and so forth, as well as Lazaros's responses and words of comfort or wisdom. The interview, which could sometimes be quite lengthy, closed in most cases with a confession from the visitor followed by more advice and penitential suggestions from Lazaros, culminating in his blessing. Occasionally a visitor would ask for, and receive from Lazaros, a token of some sort to be used as a phylactery,¹⁹ or would be given money or a note authorizing the provision of goods or clothing by the cellarer.²⁰ The visitor would then prostrate him- or herself and descend the ladder again. Sometimes, however, things did not go according to plan or follow the usual pattern. For example, a woman, overcome by her emotions after her confession and absolution, dared to lean in and kiss Lazaros on the cheek,²¹ and a demoniac went rushing up and started screaming insults while he hammered and spat on the window. Lazaros sensibly kept it closed on that occasion.²²

¹² *V. Laz.*, chap. 116. A female visitor stood rooted to the spot, beating her breast and weeping so profusely that her dress was soaked through, chap. 117; cf. chaps. 56, 84, 112, 113.

¹³ *V. Laz.*, chaps. 120, 122; cf. chap. 125.

¹⁴ But see, e.g., *v. Laz.*, chap. 84, where the monk Photios first checks out the sacraments reserved for Lazaros in the church; chap. 238, where Nicholas is first offered a meal; and chap. 117, where the same may have happened with a group visit. The exact sequence of events certainly depended on a number of variable factors: the time of day people arrived, how many there were, how busy Lazaros was, what was happening, both routine and extraordinary, in the monastery, even on the weather.

¹⁵ *V. Laz.*, chap. 91, e.g.

¹⁶ *V. Laz.*, chaps. 108, 236, e.g. He himself evidently had a clear view not only of the courtyard but over the whole monastery and much of the surrounding terrain.

¹⁷ On the layout and construction of his column, see Greenfield, *Lazaros*, 17–20.

¹⁸ This included saying the *trisagion* (see *v. Laz.*, chaps. 107, 114) and some sort of identification on the part of visitors, unless they were being introduced by a monk who knew them, chap. 72, e.g.

¹⁹ *V. Laz.*, chaps. 75, 113; cf. the holy oil mentioned in chap. 76. Further on the practice of issuing such objects, see below, p. 216.

²⁰ *V. Laz.*, chaps. 89, 145, 146, 248.

²¹ *V. Laz.*, chap. 117; cf. chap. 75. It is worth noting that, despite social conventions, which might be imagined to have discouraged such practice, it was evidently not unusual for women to make the trek up the mountain. In only one case is Lazaros said to have viewed this as inappropriate, that of a nun disguised as a man while traveling with other pilgrims to Jerusalem, chap. 95. Some of Lazaros's monks and neighboring villagers appear to have been less open, however: see, e.g., the criticism and action prompted by frequent visits on the part of a woman from Ephesos, chaps. 56–57.

²² *V. Laz.*, chap. 219. On another occasion a distinguished visiting ascetic went so far as to force the top half of his body in through Lazaros's window in order to examine him more closely and, apparently horrified by

During the interview, those on the platform could evidently be seen by people below,²³ and so if anything unusual transpired or else if visitors were well known or distinguished in some way, when they came down from the pillar they might find themselves beset in the courtyard by some of the monks, curious to know what had happened or eager to hear some new evidence of their superior's wisdom and insight.²⁴ Other visitors were themselves eager to share their elation and amazement with any who happened to be around.²⁵ Indeed, the courtyard of the monastery seems to have been a lively place, especially when there were a lot of visitors, as apparently there often were. At peak times, such as festivals, there must have been many people milling about, and descriptions of Lazaros overhearing, and resolving, disputes going on between visitors, whether about biblical interpretation or real estate, probably belong in this context.²⁶ Mention, too, of beggars "often" standing in front of the pillar helps to fill out the picture, for they would undoubtedly have hoped to receive alms from other visitors and pilgrims as well as from Lazaros himself;²⁷ the monks would also have been keeping an eye on them, for sometimes Lazaros would tell such people to go into the brothers' cells and take any spare clothing they found there for themselves.²⁸ Add to all this the bustle of monks going about their routine tasks and the intermittent arrival of animals and their drivers making deliveries of food, materials, or water, and one starts to get some impression of the atmosphere that greeted pilgrims and visitors when they entered the courtyard in Lazaros's heyday.

During their time at the monastery, visitors went into the church to look around and pray and probably joined in the offices when they were being said,²⁹ and, at least once a year on the feast day of the biblical Lazaros, they came for the blessing and distribution of holy oil.³⁰ When a venerable and bedridden ascetic in the monastery was patiently suffering his final and particularly unpleasant illness, visitors of all kinds would be sent by Lazaros to see this new Job, as he described him,³¹ and one passage makes clear that a group of visitors might be treated to a homily from Lazaros himself as they stood around the base of his pillar.³²

After the homily, on the occasion mentioned, some monks ushered the visitors to the

the conditions he found, started trying to tear the column down because he claimed it was too much for anyone to bear, chap. 114. Again, an important visitor started holding forth about wars and worldly affairs in an interview, only to find Lazaros had turned his back on him and was refusing to speak, chap. 118.

²³ Although their conversation could not be heard unless they chose to address them directly; see *v. Laz.*, chap. 114.

²⁴ *V. Laz.*, chaps. 72, 87, e.g. On one occasion, some of the brothers gathered to laugh at the greed of a poor man who was being laden with food and other provisions on Lazaros's orders, only to be brusquely told off from above and instructed to help him instead of mocking him, chap. 146.

²⁵ *V. Laz.*, chap. 107, e.g.

²⁶ *V. Laz.*, chaps. 120, 122.

²⁷ *V. Laz.*, chap. 248; cf. chap. 89.

²⁸ *V. Laz.*, chap. 145.

²⁹ *V. Laz.*, chaps. 63, 219, e.g.

³⁰ *V. Laz.*, chap. 76.

³¹ *V. Laz.*, chap. 168.

³² *V. Laz.*, chap. 95. In doing so they were probably joining the monks rather than receiving special treatment, for Lazaros was evidently accustomed to address his followers in this way, using clear straightforward language rather than heavy rhetoric and making extensive use of examples and extracts from the lives of the early ascetic fathers which he loved to read to his audience; see chap. 128.

guest house for a meal. The *vita* refers to this feeding of visitors on several occasions and makes clear that it was part of the customary practice of the monastery. At one point, when Lazaros tells a suspicious visiting ecclesiastic, who has just made the arduous journey up the mountain in deep snow, to go and have a meal in the kitchen before he does anything else, Gregory the Cellarer adds, “For this was always the father’s custom, and whatever time anyone came up to the monastery he would tell them to receive a meal.”³³ This meal (the Greek word used is *diakrasis*)³⁴ was taken by lay visitors in the guest house and by visiting monks, no matter how disreputable, in the refectory, although the latter practice evidently upset some of the regular brethren who complained to Lazaros.³⁵ By the end of his life this had clearly become quite an undertaking, and Gregory who, as cellarer, was involved in the actual logistics of carrying it out, regards as miraculous the fact that “so many guests” could be maintained “in the monastery every day,”³⁶ and that two or even three sittings in the refectory were necessary to accommodate them.³⁷ Lazaros, however, was insistent that this was part of the duty of the monastery and that visitors, both lay and monastic, should receive adequate food and drink even in times of shortage.³⁸ Indeed, Lazaros evidently went so far as to suggest that it was in order to care for the visitors and beggars in this way that the Lord had allowed his monasteries to be founded and to flourish in such bleak and barren surroundings.³⁹ How substantial a meal visitors received is unclear; in times of famine large numbers of people evidently came simply for the food they would be given,⁴⁰ but on one occasion a visiting dignitary arranged for his own supply of fish to be taken up, so that he would be able to have what he considered something proper to eat.⁴¹ Gregory’s insistence that this meal was customary on Galesion may perhaps be an indication that this was not so elsewhere.

Many visitors undoubtedly left the same day that they arrived, going down the mountain in the company of those they had met at the monastery,⁴² but a significant number seem to have stayed longer. The monastery boasted a guest house, looked after by a guest master,⁴³ and, by the end of Lazaros’s life at least, an *archontarion*, where special guests could stay and sleep in the (comparative and perhaps dubious) luxury of the only two beds on the mountain.⁴⁴ In general Lazaros let people stay as long as they liked, but this practice irked some of his own monks who complained vehemently and repeatedly about

³³ *V. Laz.*, chap. 238. See also chaps. 32, 95, 105, 117, 118.

³⁴ Further on the use of the term in this context see P. Karlin-Hayter, “Lexicographical Notes,” *Byzantion* 55 (1985): 589–90; E. Trapp, ed., *Lexikon zur byzantinischen Gräzität* (Vienna, 1994–), s.vv. *diakrasis*, *diakrinomai*; and Greenfield, *Lazaros*, 185–86 note 422.

³⁵ *V. Laz.*, chap. 150, e.g. When a visiting monk arrives in the middle of normal mealtime he is provided with food in the cell of one of the brothers following his interview with Lazaros, chap. 84.

³⁶ *V. Laz.*, chap. 79.

³⁷ *V. Laz.*, chap. 109.

³⁸ *V. Laz.*, chaps. 150–51, 210–13. Laymen received only one measure of wine instead of two, chap. 213.

³⁹ *V. Laz.*, chaps. 210, 211, 213; cf. chap. 151.

⁴⁰ *V. Laz.*, chap. 210.

⁴¹ *V. Laz.*, chap. 107.

⁴² *V. Laz.*, chap. 75. In the early years it is probable that they had to be guided down by someone who knew the way, chap. 46.

⁴³ *V. Laz.*, chap. 150. This was probably reserved for lay visitors, while visiting monks had special cells to stay in; cf. chap. 162.

⁴⁴ *V. Laz.*, chap. 162.

abuses of their hospitality which resulted.⁴⁵ A number of those who came for longer periods were testing their monastic vocation,⁴⁶ while some, who had already been tonsured, clearly wished to experience the exceptional quality of life on Galesion for a time.⁴⁷ Other visitors stayed while they received medical attention or underwent rituals of exorcism which might last a number of days,⁴⁸ but others again, perhaps the majority, came simply for shelter for a while, including numbers of “vagrant” monks. Although high-ranking guests were obviously treated better than their counterparts of lower social standing,⁴⁹ at least some of the visitors staying at the monasteries were expected to work. Indeed, it would seem that they might be asked to perform some of the worst jobs, such as hauling water from the river in winter,⁵⁰ gathering wild leeks high among the mountain crags,⁵¹ or shelling beans by hand,⁵² tasks which they might perform virtuously or not as the case might be.⁵³

MOTIVES FOR VISITING LAZAROS

The second question to be examined here is what drew people to Lazaros. What does the *vita* reveal about people’s motives for visiting him and his communities on Galesion? This is a question to which there is no simple answer. One does not need a profound understanding of human nature to know that, whatever the context and whatever the period, people’s actions may appear to be undertaken for simple reasons but, on analysis, will be found to involve far more complex and multilayered motivations. Thus, although some of the primary reasons why people visited Lazaros may be listed relatively simply, in each case it must be remembered that the overt goal of a visit will almost always conceal or include other less obvious but often no less important goals.

There are, for example, several references in the *vita* to locals supplying the monks with the materials and food that they needed to survive on Galesion, and it is perhaps worth reflecting for a moment on the possible motivations involved in a visit to Lazaros’s monastery by such a neighborhood farmer in order to illustrate the possible complexity that lurks beneath even such an apparently simple visit as one to deliver goods. Just by making the long and difficult trek up the mountain to the monastery the farmer was, to the Byzantine mind at least, performing an act of spiritual as well as material significance; sweat was being shed in a good cause, and, for a few hours, he was moving from the ordinary world into a holy place which possessed inherent qualities and advantages. He would

⁴⁵ In the end Lazaros was forced to rule that he would comply with standard practice at other monasteries and order the guest master to see that visitors left after three days, but he secretly instructed those concerned to be generous rather than legalistic in their interpretation of this rule, effectively annulling it, *v. Laz.*, chap. 151.

⁴⁶ *V. Laz.*, chap. 131, e.g.

⁴⁷ *V. Laz.*, chap. 114.

⁴⁸ *V. Laz.*, chaps. 70, 73, 151.

⁴⁹ *V. Laz.*, chap. 227; cf. chap. 162.

⁵⁰ *V. Laz.*, chap. 176; the monk in question had his beard pulled out as the tips were whipped by the wind against the water skins and froze to them.

⁵¹ *V. Laz.*, chap. 131; the man fell to his death.

⁵² *V. Laz.*, chap. 150.

⁵³ *Ibid.*; cf. the light-fingered layman who was set to work in the bakery and at other jobs for the cellarer, chap. 241.

surely believe that saying a prayer in the monastery chapel, watched over by a “living angel,” was more effective than praying down in the village church, while seeing the holy man himself, perhaps exchanging some words with him and maybe even making a confession to him and receiving his absolution, would provide him with an invaluable spiritual boost for months or years to come. Again, the spiritual credit to be earned by supplying a monastery in which a powerful holy man lived would necessarily be a consideration in a society where influence and connection were everything. Even if a fairly substantial material cost were involved in such a visit for the farmer, it would surely still be worthwhile if it meant having someone like Lazaros to put in a good word for him on Judgment Day; in the shorter term, such a powerful friend in the heavenly court might well be thought to have the practical effect of improving next year’s harvest and the like. Quite apart from such considerations, there was usually a crowd of visitors at the monastery, and so a journey there could well be a valuable social experience for the farmer, a chance to meet people from far away, hear the gossip from near at hand, even see some of the rich and famous. Last but not least, there was always something to eat and drink at the monastery, and few people can resist a free lunch.

To start at the most obvious level of motivation, then, some people did indeed go to Lazaros with the purpose of providing service to him, to his monasteries, or to their inhabitants. In addition to general references to faithful Christians in the vicinity supplying food,⁵⁴ there are specific mentions of individuals, both monks and laymen, engaged in this sort of activity. A devoted widow, for instance, makes herself a nuisance at Lazaros’s first monastery by constantly going up to provide him “with anything that he might need,”⁵⁵ and on another occasion a boy is sent to Lazaros with honeycombs from a nearby village.⁵⁶ The monasteries were largely self-sufficient and could call on the services of both skilled or semiskilled craftsmen and laborers from within their own flock to do most things that needed doing, but at times, particularly of large-scale construction, people from outside the community went to assist or find employment.⁵⁷ Others went to work for food and lodging in times of crisis.⁵⁸

Other individuals went to the monastery to bring messages or as servants of distinguished visitors rather than directly for their own purposes, like the messenger who was sent by the exiled would-be emperor, Constantine Barys.⁵⁹ The need to be cautious in being too simplistic about the motivation of individuals even in these circumstances is, however, shown by another messenger who brought Lazaros a letter from a *protospatharios* in

⁵⁴ Implicit in *v. Laz.*, chaps. 32, 34; cf. chap. 245.

⁵⁵ *V. Laz.*, chap. 56.

⁵⁶ *V. Laz.*, chap. 65. Cf. chap. 209, which mentions two monks, sent by the *ekklesiarches* (or sacristan) at the nearby monastery of Limnai, arriving at the monastery with a pair of mules laden with bread, oil, and wine.

⁵⁷ The locals at the site of Lazaros’s first monastic experiment near Attaleia quarried a road up the mountain to him and built a chapel and cells for the brothers, *v. Laz.*, chap. 11. At St. Marina, Lazaros’s first establishment near Ephesos in the foothills of Galesion, the monks received help from “some of the Christian faithful” to build their cells, chap. 33; and much later, when the community was at its largest and the monastery of the Resurrection being developed, a named layman, Pantoleon, was doing some work in the monastery, chap. 206.

⁵⁸ *V. Laz.*, chap. 241. As has been mentioned, most visitors who stayed any length of time were apparently expected to help with the chores, chaps. 150, 176.

⁵⁹ *V. Laz.*, chap. 105. Cf. an interpreter with a recently converted Arab, chap. 113; or a servant accompanying a monk from Constantinople, chap. 252.

Attaleia, for this messenger was someone who had been miraculously cured by Lazaros sometime before and who thus also had his own reasons for returning to Galesion.⁶⁰

Other visitors had more obviously spiritual motives, although they may still be classed with those offering or seeking service. Someone, for example, who went to the monastery to present an endowment in person rather than through a messenger or intermediary;⁶¹ or someone like the secular priest who used to go up to Lazaros to celebrate the eucharist for him when he was first at the Theotokos.⁶² A particular group of this sort, who evidently came to the monastery in quite large numbers, were those seeking to be tonsured by Lazaros, the would-be monks. Like Lazaros's other visitors, these people came from near and far, were young and old, rich and poor.⁶³ Some were undoubtedly drawn by the attractive proposition (a strictly ascetic attraction) of becoming monks in the challenging and demanding environment of Galesion itself,⁶⁴ but for most the biggest draw was undoubtedly Lazaros's reputation as a good spiritual father and mentor to the brothers of his flock.⁶⁵ A few, but presumably not most, came because he was also known to be an easy touch when it came to getting a tonsure and would admit almost anyone without much delay or testing of vocation.⁶⁶

Like these monastic hopefuls, most people who went to visit Lazaros were undoubtedly drawn primarily by his reputation. The *vita* refers at a number of points to Lazaros's reputation spreading far and wide, and, as the title of this paper suggests, the author likes to use the image of a brilliant or blazing beacon to describe the way in which he drew people to him,⁶⁷ but simply to leave things at this general level of explanation would be unhelpful. The nature and effect of this reputation as a motive for visiting Lazaros need more careful analysis.

By the end of his career people all over the Byzantine world from Bulgaria to the Middle East had heard about Lazaros but in fact, on the evidence of the *vita*, only a few, if any, deliberately traveled far to see him.⁶⁸ Much more often, it would seem, his visitors either came from some relatively local origin,⁶⁹ from the vicinity and hinterland of Ephesos itself or at least from southeastern Anatolia,⁷⁰ or else they were people who happened to

⁶⁰ *V. Laz.*, chap. 72. Cf. the person deputed by a sailor to bring his promised annual endowment, chap. 75; the slave accompanying Theophylact Sagopoulos, chap. 107; Kyriakos Galesiotes and his friend accompanying the miraculously preserved layman who has fallen over a cliff, chap. 243; or even the imperial eunuch bringing a message in a dream, chap. 207. At a similar level, at least superficially, are those who came to obtain a permission, e.g. locals at Attaleia wanting to gather honeycomb, chap. 13.

⁶¹ So the sailor who had been saved from the perils of the sea by Lazaros's prayer and had promised to bring him half of his profits each year (or to send a deputy if he could not get there himself), *v. Laz.*, chap. 75. Cf., perhaps, the bishop of Philetos, chap. 11; or the benefactresses Iouditta, chap. 33, and Irene, chap. 56.

⁶² *V. Laz.*, chap. 64.

⁶³ *V. Laz.*, chaps. 33, 56, 73, 75, 96, 131, 227, 234, 243.

⁶⁴ So the monk of *v. Laz.*, chap. 61, e.g.

⁶⁵ As witnessed by *v. Laz.*, chap. 187. But compare the view of Lazaros in this respect expressed by the diabolical old man in chap. 218, and implied by the criticism of chap. 143, suggesting that sometimes he would grow impatient and even violent with some of his younger charges.

⁶⁶ So, obviously, the fraudulent Damianos Thalassenos of *v. Laz.*, chap. 227. But see also the criticism leveled at Lazaros in chaps. 143, 152, 231–32, 239–40.

⁶⁷ *V. Laz.*, chaps. 36, 111, 128.

⁶⁸ Possible examples may be found in the monk Photios of *v. Laz.*, chap. 84, and the distinguished monk from Constantinople of chap. 252.

⁶⁹ So, e.g., those at Attaleia, *v. Laz.*, chaps. 11, 13–14.

⁷⁰ *V. Laz.*, chaps. 32, 56.

be passing through the port of Phygela or the city of Ephesos for some other reason, perhaps often as pilgrims to the basilica of St. John and the other notable sites in the vicinity. These latter went to see Lazaros sometimes because they already knew about him before they arrived, sometimes because they heard about him there. A sailor who believed he had been saved from shipwreck due to the invocation by one of his passengers of Lazaros's prayer thus went to see him when "some time later [he] happened to come to Phygela,"⁷¹ and a monk from the West who was visiting Ephesos to pray heard tales of Lazaros's extraordinary asceticism and so paid him a visit.⁷²

If the evidence of the *vita* is accurate in this respect, it means that Lazaros's reputation was responsible for arousing, at the most basic level, the motive of curiosity in these people. For many this may indeed have been an influential reason for visiting him.⁷³ Lazaros's initial spot on the foothills of Galesion at St. Marina just outside Ephesos clearly threatened to turn into what might today be described as a tourist attraction, being close to the main road and highly accessible: "Because the father was living in this superior way. . . . And because the monastery was near the road, everyone that passed by there used to go up to him," says Gregory the Cellarer.⁷⁴ So people whom we might well label sightseers probably formed a significant proportion of Lazaros's visitors, but if to their simple curiosity is added the almost inescapable sense, for Byzantines, that spiritual benefit, however vague, might well accrue as a result of such a visit, then even here the nature of the attraction must be regarded as more complex than might appear at first glance.

The *vita* describes or alludes to visits by quite a number of officials and notables of more or less high rank, and these people may be considered as a special group. Perhaps the most prominent person to trek up the mountain was the exalted and then imperially favored *strategos*, Romanos Skleros,⁷⁵ but Lazaros was also visited by at least two thematic judges,⁷⁶ a *topoteretes*,⁷⁷ an *episkeptites*, and a *dioiketes*.⁷⁸ For people like these, who held

⁷¹ *V. Laz.*, chap. 75.

⁷² *V. Laz.*, chap. 60. So also the nun disguised as a man on her way to Jerusalem who was visiting Ephesos with a group of pilgrims and who followed along when she saw other visitors going up to Lazaros, chap. 95; the Georgian ascetic from Palestine who had stopped at Ephesos on his way to Constantinople and who went up to check Lazaros out after hearing about him from the metropolitan and his clergy, chap. 114; or, perhaps, the Arab baptized by the metropolitan who does the same, chap. 113.

⁷³ See perhaps various Jews, *v. Laz.*, chap. 112; and a Paulician, chap. 115. Note also the suggestion that, although Lazaros denies it, everyone else in the monastery knows that it is because of his reputation that so many visitors go up to the monastery, chap. 151; cf. chap. 62.

⁷⁴ *V. Laz.*, chap. 36.

⁷⁵ *V. Laz.*, chap. 87; cf. chap. 245.

⁷⁶ These are Nikephoros Kampan<ar>es, Nikephoros son of Euthymios, and Nikephoros Proteuon, *v. Laz.*, chaps. 102, 106, 119, two of whom are probably the same individual. It is impossible to tell which two are to be identified; see Greenfield, *Lazaros*, 194 note 447, 198 note 463, 208 note 494.

⁷⁷ *V. Laz.*, chap. 118. The man is not named.

⁷⁸ *V. Laz.*, chap. 103. Both offices were held by the same man, John of Mita, at the time of separate visits. It would seem such visits were not particularly rare, for, as already mentioned, Gregory the Cellarer refers to two beds being installed when the *archontarion* was built, specifically for distinguished laymen who visited the monastery (apparently that of the Resurrection), chap. 162. Other evidently important people are referred to by name but without office, e.g., Theophylact Sagopoulos, chap. 107, and perhaps Kosmas Konidiarēs, chap. 98. Note also the Makrembolites of chap. 101 and the fraudulent Thalassenos of chap. 227. On visits by such people see also R. Morris, "The Political Saint of the Eleventh Century," in *The Byzantine Saint*, ed. S. Hackel (London, 1981), 48–49; eadem, "The Byzantine Aristocracy and the Monasteries," in *The Byzantine Aristocracy, IX to XIII Centuries*, ed. M. Angold (Oxford, 1984), 115; eadem, *Monks and Laymen in Byzantium 843–1118* (Cambridge, 1995), 104–6.

office in the vicinity, it was presumably prudent, quite apart from any personal spiritual motivation, to try to get the local holy man on their side, or at least not to offend him by ignoring his popular presence. It may well also have been wise to investigate his validity and make sure some serious religious fraud was not taking place on their patch, especially if doubts were in circulation, as they evidently were in Lazaros's case. The same seems also to be true of a series of distinguished ecclesiastical visitors who are mentioned in the *vita*.⁷⁹

While Lazaros's general reputation undoubtedly drew many, it was his reputation in a number of particular, specialized areas that drew others. Lazaros thus had widespread renown for various aspects of his wisdom, such as his ability to prophesy the future, to read the secrets of the human heart and, as a result, both to elicit a thorough and cathartic confession and to deliver sound and helpful advice.

After Lazaros foretold the unfortunate accident that caused the death of a local honey collector at his first solitary retreat near Attaleia, he was hailed as a prophet by the villagers. So great was the reputation he gained that he was eventually forced to leave the area as a result of the consequent flood of visitors.⁸⁰ At Galesion a similar reputation developed. He was popularly known to be able to predict the length of someone's life, even down to the very day they would die,⁸¹ as well as the course of that life, particularly as it involved perseverance in the monastic vocation.⁸² Perhaps more impressive, to some at least, was his skill at foretelling the outcome of developing political situations, something he apparently demonstrated most clearly at the time of the overthrow of Michael V Kalaphates in April 1042.⁸³ His reputation in this regard evidently prompted a number of visits either from imperial hopefuls themselves or from their trusted messengers.⁸⁴ Even more importantly, Lazaros seems to have gained the reputation of having predicted the rise to power of Constantine Monomachos and, as a result, the imperial favor and endowment with which the visit by Romanos Skleros may well have been connected.⁸⁵ Gregory, the author of the *vita*, is careful to point out for his own reasons (involving the local ecclesiastical politics in which Galesion was embroiled) that the prediction was in fact made by an unscrupulous monk associated with the monastery. But he reveals how widespread Lazaros's reputation in this

⁷⁹ So the bishop of Philetos at Attaleia, *v. Laz.*, chap. 11; an impressive Georgian ascetic called Jeremiah, chap. 114; a distinguished monk from Constantinople, chap. 252; a monastic superior called Michael, chap. 237; or one Nicholas who later became *oikonomos* to the bishop of Batheia, chap. 238.

⁸⁰ *V. Laz.*, chaps. 13–14.

⁸¹ *V. Laz.*, chap. 93; cf. also chaps. 94, 97, 101, 103–4, 227.

⁸² *V. Laz.*, chaps. 98–100, e.g.

⁸³ *V. Laz.*, chap. 102.

⁸⁴ The exiled Constantine Barys was prepared to pay handsomely for Lazaros's inside knowledge of his chances while he prepared a rebellion against Constantine IX Monomachos, *v. Laz.* chap. 105; and, earlier, an unidentified member of the Makrembolites family had visited Lazaros, perhaps in similar circumstances, with a request for him "to pray that he might enter Constantinople in good health" (and, presumably, some indication of whether or not he might do so), chap. 101. In both cases the visitor obtained a response, although in neither case was it the one for which they had probably hoped; in the former Lazaros refused the proffered donation and made veiled hints about the failure of the enterprise (which were proved correct when Barys went ahead anyway and ended up losing his tongue); in the latter he correctly foretold that Makrembolites would die before he even made it out of the district, let alone to Constantinople. Another political exile, Nikephoros Proteuon, wanted to write to Lazaros while he was in what he considered to be unjust exile to seek his prayers for help, chap. 106.

⁸⁵ *V. Laz.*, chap. 230, and see Greenfield, *Lazaros*, 41–48 on this question. The visit of Romanos is described in *v. Laz.*, chap. 87.

respect was when he reports that, on an earlier mission while this same monk was on a preaching trip that ended up in Bulgaria, he was in the habit of telling everyone for his own nefarious purposes that “The father [Lazaros] who has sent me out on this mission is a prophet and, because he has the gift of prognosis and precognition, he predicts to all the people who come to him what will befall each <of them> in the future. And so, because he has also given me this gift through prayer, he has sent me out to teach and to prophesy to everyone about everything.” Gregory concludes: “By saying this <sort of> thing he persuaded almost everyone that this was <indeed> the case, especially when they heard the father’s name <mentioned>.”⁸⁶

Lazaros’s reputation for possessing the grace of being able to see and reveal to people “the secret things of their hearts”⁸⁷ perhaps proved an attraction to a wider group of visitors. It is clear that many people came to him specifically for the purpose of making their confession, while many others ended up doing so, whether they had intended to or not. For most, it would appear, confession was one of the principal elements of a visit to Lazaros.⁸⁸ As with any successful psychoanalyst today, part of the attraction was that he was evidently very good at getting people to unburden themselves of things they found hard to get out, things that had been weighing on their consciences.⁸⁹ Trust was another factor. People seem to have believed that their secrets would be completely safe with Lazaros, whereas with some other confessors confidentiality was not always assured—Lazaros himself once recounted to Gregory the salutary tale of a local confessor who was sufficiently unprofessional as to reveal the identity of a woman’s lover to her husband, an error that sadly led to her murder.⁹⁰ The quality of the advice that followed confession, the nature of the “therapy” prescribed by Lazaros, was also a key element both in attracting visitors and in sending them away satisfied enough to spread the word. Gregory describes how people would visit Lazaros every day with this sort of concern and asks: “Who would be able to tell in detail, case by case, how those who had fallen into various sins obtained appropriate <spiritual> healing from him in a most discriminating fashion?”⁹¹ It is unclear of what

⁸⁶ *V. Laz.*, chap. 228; cf. chap. 78.

⁸⁷ *V. Laz.*, chap. 78.

⁸⁸ A particularly clear example is provided in *v. Laz.*, chap. 117; cf. also, e.g., chaps. 63, 75, 93, 94, 104, 116.

⁸⁹ Typical, perhaps, is the account of a man who was struck dumb with embarrassment at the crucial moment; as he stood there by Lazaros’s little window, unable to speak, he heard Lazaros patiently ask him several times what it was he wanted to say and then, when he still remained tongue-tied, listened in amazement as the holy man named first one and then another of his sins and so led him to confess the rest himself, *v. Laz.*, chap. 96; at other times Lazaros might bully the confession out of an unwilling visitor for the good of his soul, as on the occasion he refused to dismiss the monk Meletios until he had heard what he knew the man needed to tell him, chap. 226.

⁹⁰ *V. Laz.*, chap. 127. A vivid example of Lazaros’s own scrupulous respect for the confidence of the confessional is provided by the story of a local priest’s wife who, having suffered years of abuse, finally resorted to magic in an attempt to drive her husband insane and so provide her with grounds for divorce. The plan backfired, however, when the priest gave to his congregation at the eucharist the foully doctored wine she had concocted for him. The distraught woman hurried to Lazaros as fast as she could and confessed her sin. Her husband, still unaware of what had happened, but puzzled by his wife’s erratic behavior, followed her up the mountain and unfortunately arrived while she was still at the monastery. But when the couple approached the holy man together, Lazaros refused to say anything about why the woman had gone to him and advised the priest not to inquire any further. Like his wife, the priest was to go immediately to a monastery and, none the wiser, was to see nothing more of her ever again, chaps. 125–26.

⁹¹ *V. Laz.*, chap. 124; cf. chaps. 36, 123.

exactly this advice consisted, but there appears to have been a range of responses depending on circumstances. These evidently involved suitable penance, regulation of future conduct, prescription of specific actions or avoidance of specific activities, and practical suggestions that were sometimes even accompanied by material assistance. One recurring theme, although how common is hard to tell, was encouragement in the right circumstances to adopt the monastic way of life.⁹² But above all Lazaros's responses included words of comfort and created the necessary sense of forgiveness, so that those who confessed to him went on their way with their minds healed and at peace.⁹³

Undoubtedly good advice about future behavior and spiritual well-being normally followed confession, but other people seem to have gone up the mountain specifically for advice on a large range of matters not only spiritual but also material. Advice was clearly often sought at times of crisis,⁹⁴ but it was also looked for as a matter of course,⁹⁵ and perhaps was not even the main motive for visiting Lazaros. If someone had made the journey for another reason, or simply out of vague interest or curiosity, it would surely have been tempting to seek advice while they were there about any problem that was bothering them.⁹⁶ The *vita* refers to the fact that a lot of people, especially at festivals, would bring questions about their everyday lives to Lazaros, such as disputes about real estate and the like. Unfortunately details are not provided, but such arguments in progress were evidently taken up the mountain and continued in the monastery; Lazaros is said to have waited patiently for the quarrels and insults to die down and then to have settled the issue with a few calm and well-chosen words.⁹⁷ One special area of advice for which Lazaros apparently gained a reputation concerned the foundation of new monastic communities and the details of the rules that would govern them, something doubtless due to the obvious and visible success of his own foundations in such an unpromising and hostile environment as Galesion. As in so many other areas, his advice here tended to be liberal, kind, and considerate, rather than harsh or legalistic.⁹⁸

Another element of Lazaros's reputation which drew visitors was the power believed to reside in his blessing or prayer (for which the Greek term *euche* is always used). Indeed, the desire to receive this blessing is the commonest specific reason provided in the *vita* as to why people went to see him in person.⁹⁹ There is also good evidence to suggest that,

⁹² *V. Laz.*, chaps. 73, 123, 125–26.

⁹³ See esp. *v. Laz.*, chap. 123; also chap. 118, where Gregory describes how one visitor had his ears filled “with salvific and spiritually helpful words that rolled serenely and soothingly from [Lazaros's] holy tongue;” and how, consequently, when he went away, his heart was overflowing with “as much gladness and joy as was possible instead of his previous grief.” See too chaps. 36, 63, 126, 199; cf. chap. 194 and Greenfield, *Lazaros*, 285 note 745.

⁹⁴ As in the case of the priest's wife mentioned above, *v. Laz.*, chaps. 125–26. See also the general comment of chap. 36; the examples of the recently widowed Irene, chap. 56, and the monk who has just accidentally slept with his daughter, chap. 63; cf. some of those seeking political advice mentioned above.

⁹⁵ *V. Laz.*, chaps. 199 and 107, e.g., Cf. Lazaros's own visits to stylites, chaps. 6, 41.

⁹⁶ As has already been mentioned above, an unnamed *topoteretes* left the mountain in a huff after Lazaros refused to reply to him at all, let alone shed the pearls of wisdom he had been led to expect by his reputation; only later did it emerge that he had talked about purely secular affairs in which Lazaros was not interested, and, after being persuaded to return and discuss spiritual matters, he duly received the marvelous counsel he had hoped for, *v. Laz.*, chap. 118 and see above, note 89.

⁹⁷ *V. Laz.*, chap. 122.

⁹⁸ *V. Laz.*, chap. 187.

⁹⁹ For visitors see *v. Laz.*, chaps. 46, 88, 97, 116, 120, 187, 210, 219. It was also common for Lazaros's monks to seek and receive his blessing in interviews.

even when this was not the primary reason for a visit, almost all who did see him received his blessing as they were departing.¹⁰⁰ Occasionally a clear reason is provided as to why people sought such a blessing, for example when someone was taking up a new appointment,¹⁰¹ but generally there is no specific purpose mentioned, and it is undoubtedly to be connected with the pervasive Byzantine notion of spiritual patronage.¹⁰² The degree of power that was believed to be concentrated in Lazaros's prayer is not to be underestimated, however, or regarded only as some vaguely supportive force. Monks can banish demonic apparitions by reciting it, and, most tellingly of all, perhaps, two of the brethren use it precisely as a binding spell to control a flock of goats.¹⁰³ If Lazaros's blessing had such a reputation of power at the popular level, it is not hard to understand why the desire to secure it should have been such a compelling reason for visiting him.

It is interesting to note that on two occasions in the *vita* visitors specifically ask for and receive a tangible *token* of this blessing. In one case an Arab convert to Christianity visited Lazaros with an interpreter and refused to leave "until he had received something from Lazaros's own hands that he might have as a phylactery (*phylakterion*) and a safeguard (*diokterion*) against every danger."¹⁰⁴ In the other, a sailor who was talking to Gregory the Cellarer produced a lead seal stamped with an image of the Theotokos which he wore hanging round his neck. He explained that, on his first visit to Galesion, when he had asked Lazaros for "something from his own hands [. . .] as a phylactery and safeguard in every difficulty," the father had produced the seal and given it to him.¹⁰⁵ What is not clear is whether these visitors received a purpose-made pilgrimage medallion or simply something that happened to be at hand on Lazaros's pillar. Certainly such lead *eulogiai* are known from other pilgrimage centers in this period, particularly from the shrine of St. Symeon the Stylite the Younger at the Wondrous Mountain near Antioch, a site that Lazaros had himself visited.¹⁰⁶ Regular lead seals bearing an impression of the Virgin were also very common at this time, however, and so it is possible Lazaros simply produced something for his visitor which he had lying about. In that case the medallion would be rendered holy for its recipient by the fact that the sanctity of the donor was so respected rather than because of any deliberate intent in its manufacture. No actual pilgrimage medallions from Galesion have ever been found,¹⁰⁷ and the fact that the first story does not

¹⁰⁰ See *v. Laz.*, chaps. 63, 65, e.g.

¹⁰¹ So John Libanos, *v. Laz.*, chap. 97. Compare the seeking of a blessing by monks being sent out on business, chap. 249, e.g., although in such cases it is perhaps as much a permission as anything else.

¹⁰² Compare the words of Romanos Skleros, *v. Laz.*, chap. 87.

¹⁰³ Against demonic apparitions, see *v. Laz.*, chaps. 50, 154–55; for the binding spell, see chap. 77. The brothers in the latter episode acknowledge that Lazaros intensely disliked people doing this sort of thing, but what is significant here is the fact that they still do it and that even Gregory the Cellarer himself is prepared to accept that it could work. Cf. the people who believed they had been saved from inevitable shipwreck because a passenger invoked it: "Holy Lazaros make haste and deliver us from our present danger!" he cried, "God help us through the blessing (*euche*) of holy Lazaros who is on Galesion!" chap. 75.

¹⁰⁴ *V. Laz.*, chap. 113.

¹⁰⁵ *V. Laz.*, chap. 75.

¹⁰⁶ *V. Laz.*, chap. 25. On the *eulogiai* from the Wondrous Mountain, see G. Vikan, "Art, Medicine, and Magic in Early Byzantium," *DOP* 38 (1984): 73–74; idem, *Byzantine Pilgrimage Art* (Washington, D.C., 1982), 39–40; idem, "Byzantine Pilgrims' Art," 258–60; J.-P. Sordini, "Nouvelles eulogies de Syméon," in *Les saints et leur sanctuaire à Byzance*, ed. C. Jolivet-Lévy et al. (Paris, 1993), 25–33.

¹⁰⁷ Although a seal from Galesion, bearing an image of St. Antony and the legend Τῆς μ(ο)νής τῶ(ν) Γαλλι[σίου] and dated to the 11th or 12th century, has survived. See V. Laurent, *Le corpus des sceaux de l'empire byzantin*, vol. 5.2 (Paris, 1965), 151–52, no. 1227.

mention that a special pilgrimage token was provided, while there is no reference to such a thing anywhere else in the *vita*, may well be an argument for assuming that these were exceptional gifts rather than part of a general pattern of pilgrimage to Lazaros. What is clear, however, is that some people left Galesion with some sort of token that Lazaros had given them, a token that they thought of and used as an amuletic device, as a material, tangible evidence that they possessed his blessing and the power and influence which that ensured.

Above all, perhaps, Lazaros was renowned for his generosity, something displayed not only in his kind words, but also in his deeds. If his biographer is to be believed, and there were certainly some who did not share this view, his extraordinary generosity was perhaps the aspect of his reputation that actually drew the greatest number of people up the mountain to visit him. The first half of the eleventh century was apparently not an easy time for the ordinary people who lived in the vicinity of Ephesos, perhaps no time was, but the *vita* of Lazaros reveals clearly that one recourse they had in their plight, as they struggled to eke out a living and avoid ruin or even death by starvation, lay in a visit to the monasteries of the holy man on Galesion. The poor evidently came up the mountain in droves seeking not spiritual sustenance but food, clothing, and other supplies for their bodily needs.¹⁰⁸

“A year before our holy father’s death [i.e., 1052] a severe famine afflicted the region,” recalls Gregory, “and one could see a crowd of poor people coming up to the monastery every day. No one who came up left without receiving food, however, and so I said to [Lazaros] many times (for I was then cellarer), ‘Surely you don’t think all these people are really coming up here to receive a blessing?’ The father smiled and said to me, ‘No, of course not! The majority of them are coming up to be fed, and for this reason God is sending their food here so that we too may be fed through them.’”¹⁰⁹ This passage contains perhaps the clearest expression of a theme that is echoed at a number of points in the *vita* and almost certainly reveals an element of Lazaros’s own conviction, namely, that his foundations and all the success they had achieved had been brought about almost entirely to feed and look after the poor.¹¹⁰ Lazaros thus clearly saw a major aspect of his life’s work, perhaps even the central purpose of it, as being a practical involvement in providing welfare to the poor and unfortunate.¹¹¹ If the *vita* is to be believed, it was quite normal for at least one beggar to be stationed in front of Lazaros’s pillar. Some of these people were given

¹⁰⁸ See, e.g., *v. Laz.*, chaps. 145, 146, 150–51, 161, 210, 211, 212, 213, 248.

¹⁰⁹ *V. Laz.*, chap. 210.

¹¹⁰ *V. Laz.*, chaps. 151, 211, 213.

¹¹¹ The *vita* provides an explanation in Lazaros’s own unhappy and all too frequent experience of the cold-hearted absence of Christian charity. He first encountered this in some of his early monastic teachers and associates including his own uncle Elias, *v. Laz.*, chap. 3; see also chaps. 4, 8–9, 24. Even more influential, perhaps, was that shown him by villagers in Anatolia as he trudged northwards toward Pontos on his journey from Jerusalem. Chaps. 27–28 contain a vivid account of his rejection in a village somewhere between Caesarea and Euchaita on a cold March evening and on the following day, the feast of the Forty Martyrs, when no one would take him in or even give him a crust of bread. After a wretched night spent standing beside the cooling ashes of a bread oven while warding off the village dogs with a piece of kindling wood, Lazaros promises that if it is ever God’s will for him to settle down anywhere, he will not eat by himself the bread that God sends to him, but will also serve it as food to all those, rich and poor, who come to him in God’s name. This promise is specifically recalled in relation to his first ministry at the monastery of St. Marina, where he is said to have fed and provided for all who went to him, despite the dismay and disapproval of the monks who had been there before him at the sight of such lavish and unrestrained charity, chap. 32.

money,¹¹² some clothing,¹¹³ but all seem to have been fed, in some cases taking considerable quantities of provisions away with them.¹¹⁴ One particular and perhaps unusual element of this provision for visitors has already been mentioned above, namely, the custom of providing a meal to all who arrived at the monastery.

If one wants to know, then, why Lazaros proved such a major attraction to visitors while he was alive, there is probably no need to look further than the simple, practical answer that he provided food, clothing, and money in times of crisis to those who had nothing. Whatever deeper spiritual goals some visitors may have had, whatever spiritual spin-offs there may have been for them, and however great Lazaros's reputation as a confessor, as an adviser, and as an ascetic may have grown, many, perhaps even most, people visited him in the first place for much more mundane reasons. Despite objections by others, he himself saw nothing wrong with this and in fact believed it was the central aspect of his work.

Finally, when considering the motives of visitors to Lazaros, two important negative points should be noted. The first is that, although there is some evidence of Lazaros being known for providing protection against snakes and scorpions,¹¹⁵ his reputation for healing seems to have been quite limited. There were evidently few real curative miracles associated with him, despite Gregory's best attempts to provide some, and not many people appear to have visited him for this purpose.¹¹⁶ At one point Gregory speaks in general of "those who used to go up to Lazaros every day and receive from him appropriate healing and release from their grievous woes,"¹¹⁷ but it is unclear how many of these actually went for physical healing.¹¹⁸ There are also a few instances in which possessed people were specifically brought to Lazaros for treatment and were cured as a result,¹¹⁹ but other demoniacs arrived in the company of other visitors and were probably not primarily looking to be healed.¹²⁰

The second negative to be borne in mind is that another significant category of Lazaros's visitors is made up of the unscrupulous, the hostile, and the disbelieving. Some people certainly went to him in order to exploit and defraud, some actually to steal, while others went because they wanted to catch him out, to prove he was a charlatan.

¹¹² *V. Laz.*, chaps. 89, 145, 248.

¹¹³ *V. Laz.*, chap. 145; cf. chaps. 143 and also 66.

¹¹⁴ Gregory tells the story of one desperate wretch who was given a *nomisma*, a goat, four measures of wine, oil, pulses, cheese, bread, and vegetables and was still willing to accept more, even though he could not carry anything else and was being openly mocked by the brothers for his apparent greed, *v. Laz.*, chap. 231. See also chap. 161, where poor people and beggars go to the monk Kerykos, who is looking after the goats, in order to get milk.

¹¹⁵ *V. Laz.*, chaps. 55, 59, 67.

¹¹⁶ The most elaborate healing story in the *vita* is that of a man, Leo of Attaleia, with a grotesquely paralyzed arm. His cure, however, took place not directly at Galesion but as the result of a dream he had after visiting Lazaros, *v. Laz.*, chaps. 71–72.

¹¹⁷ *V. Laz.*, chap. 123; cf. chap. 36.

¹¹⁸ The only other evidence of any general association of pilgrimage to Galesion with healing is the mention of a nun who is said to have visited the monastery every year to obtain healing oil which she took back to Chios, *v. Laz.*, chap. 76. John of Mita asks Lazaros to pray for his gout-stricken uncle, but his visit seems equally, if not primarily, motivated by other concerns, chap. 103. Lazaros did, however, cure a number of his monks from physical illness.

¹¹⁹ John Kouphalides from Attaleia, *v. Laz.*, chap. 70, and Laurentios Halmyrenos, chap. 73.

¹²⁰ *V. Laz.*, chap. 219; cf. chap. 220. Lazaros also cured some of his monks from possession.

Visitors who abused Lazaros's generosity have already been mentioned.¹²¹ Others would visit with more elaborate scams, like the fake demoniac who approached him at Attaleia with a complicated plan to defraud the locals of their valuables by supposed prophecy.¹²² At Galesion, Lazaros's reputation, also mentioned above, as someone who was ready to tonsure those who wished to become monks without demanding any significant period of vocational testing, appears to have attracted a number of dubious visitors hoping or needing to take the habit, at least temporarily, for their own nefarious reasons.¹²³ Less subtle were those visitors who came to steal outright, one of whom at least was an ex-monk of the community hoping to exploit his inside knowledge of its layout and operation.¹²⁴

Other visitors were motivated by suspicion and even outright hostility toward Lazaros and his community. At Attaleia in his early days of solitary practice, Lazaros had been subjected to visits by a group of local heretics who mocked, insulted, and physically assaulted him in an attempt to get him to move away.¹²⁵ When he established himself on Galesion, relations with the village that lay at the foot of the mountain were evidently so lacking in cordiality that the headman, in an attempt to discredit and remove him, sent a gang of youths up the mountain to rape a nun and her companions who were in the habit of visiting him.¹²⁶ Indeed, an important theme of the *vita* concerns local hostility and opposition to Lazaros, although this appears to have come primarily from the metropolitan and ecclesiastical authorities in Ephesos. Before they arrived at Galesion, some visitors had thus been exposed to rumor and innuendo in the town and neighboring monasteries which suggested Lazaros was far from being the virtuous ascetic he appeared. Their visits were, then, motivated as much by a wish to check out the validity of his conduct as by any more noble reason. For example, a monk from Jerusalem called Photios, who was on his way home from Constantinople, heard about Lazaros and decided to visit him, but when he stopped at the nearby monastery of Kouzena and asked for more information, one of the

¹²¹ Some of these people simply told exaggerated stories, hoping that the old man would fall for them and, for example, sponsor their children. According to Gregory, Lazaros would always give them what they needed, even though he saw through their deceit, *v. Laz.*, chap. 146.

¹²² *V. Laz.*, chap. 12. This individual was evidently making the rounds of monastic and ecclesiastical establishments in search of unscrupulous accomplices, but he failed, of course, to persuade Lazaros who instead counseled him to take up a more honest occupation.

¹²³ Most prominent of these in the *vita* was a handsome young fraud who claimed to be a member of the Dalassenos family, although quite what he was up to is not revealed. After this fellow had failed to persuade Lazaros to perform the required tonsure, he tried to force the father's hand by engineering a raid on the monastery by fake imperial agents pretending to be out to arrest him; the tonsure was performed, although not by Lazaros himself, and the man stayed in the monastery for a while, where he apparently did quite well for himself, receiving special treatment in accordance with his supposed noble status. After a time, however, he must have tired of life on the mountain and absconded, eventually being murdered by one of his servants while continuing his dubious way of life elsewhere, *v. Laz.*, chap. 227. Cf. the anonymous monk of chaps. 228–30. For criticism of Lazaros's policy in this respect, his own answer, and Gregory's defense of him, see chaps. 227, 231–32.

¹²⁴ *V. Laz.*, chap. 66; cf. chap. 142. See too the theft of a horse and equipment, chap., 144, and the demonic thieves of chap. 48. One local layman worked in the kitchens for a time while passing quantities of goods to an accomplice who picked up the stolen property on visits and then transported it to the man's mother in a nearby village. Gregory the Cellarer realized what was happening and told Lazaros, hoping to have the fellow arrested, but Lazaros, out of pity for the man's poverty, let him go unpunished, even though he knew he was making off with a sack of flour and some hides from the storeroom as a final fling; chap. 241.

¹²⁵ *V. Laz.*, chap. 10.

¹²⁶ *V. Laz.*, chap. 56.

brethren “poured forth a great stream of abuse and criticism” of Lazaros. Shaken, but determined to get to the bottom of the matter, Photios made the ascent of Galesion and, with the aid of one of the monks, went into the church and examined the elements of the communion which Lazaros would be given, hoping to make sure that he was not being supplied with the large quantities of bread and wine he was apparently rumored to receive in this way.¹²⁷

In two other episodes, the hostile and suspicious intent of the visitors is made quite explicit. A certain Nicholas, who later became an episcopal steward and so was evidently in, or at least trusted by, the ecclesiastical administration, made the difficult and dangerous journey up the mountain in the snow in order to arrive unexpectedly, and refused the offer of a meal upon his arrival to prevent any hasty cover-up from taking place. Instead he went straight up to Lazaros and “stood there examining <everything> carefully <to see> if he . . . could see anything he had been sent <to find>.” Later, convinced that Lazaros was not faking, he went back up to him and told him “about the affair” which had been instigated by the metropolitan.¹²⁸ What he said must have echoed the motivation demonstrated by an earlier group of visitors led by a monastic superior called Michael. These men had also turned up unexpectedly with the poor excuse that they “happened to be passing” and had subjected Lazaros’s pillar to close, but unrevealing, scrutiny. Gregory concludes the tale by recounting that “When they arrived [back] at the Theologian [Ephesos], they reported what they had seen and heard to the metropolitan and everyone <else>. But even then the treacherous servants of the Evil One were not convinced and <refused> to keep quiet, for they <started> saying that the superior had lied about these things because he was thinking of himself and wished to glorify Lazaros.”¹²⁹ It is an interesting possibility that this hostility may have been motivated to some extent, if not primarily, by the emergence of Mount Galesion under Lazaros as a rival pilgrimage attraction to the “official” sites of Ephesos, or at least as one that might threaten to taint their credibility and international renown with its dubious authenticity.

VISITATION OF OTHER LIVING HOLY MEN COMPARED TO THAT IN THE *VITA* OF LAZAROS

If a general conclusion is to be drawn from comparing the evidence of the *vita* of Lazaros with other source material, it is that people visited living holy men for a range of reasons which are almost always similar to those apparent in the case of Lazaros. Depending on particular circumstances, the nature of the times, and especially on the character and style of the individual holy man, however, emphases within that range are different. It may, then, be instructive to look briefly at some of the areas described above in this light.

For example, people seem generally to have behaved in very much the same ways when

¹²⁷ *V. Laz.*, chap. 84. See also the incident in which an impressive Georgian ascetic from Palestine learned about Lazaros while being entertained by the metropolitan and his clerics. His behavior when he visited the mountain, however, suggests that they had not been entirely supportive in their account, for he leaned in through Lazaros’s little window, looked carefully around to see what was in his “cell,” and even went so far as to put his hand inside Lazaros’s tunic to feel his body. The visitor was suitably amazed by what he discovered and declared Lazaros to be the greatest ascetic he had encountered in his considerable experience, but the clear impression given by the story is that he had come to find evidence of fraud and was actually checking out the veracity of Lazaros’s lifestyle, chap. 114.

¹²⁸ *V. Laz.*, chap. 238.

¹²⁹ *V. Laz.*, chap. 237. For general checking out cf. the visit of the bishop of Philetos at Attaleia, chap. 11 and, as mentioned above, perhaps also the visits of some local secular officials.

they visited other living holy figures as when they went to Lazaros, but their precise actions may be quite significantly modified by both the style of life adopted by the holy man and the location in which he lived. Some of the themes surrounding the actual practice of visiting Lazaros are thus clearly governed by the fact that he lived in an isolated place and was also both fixed to a particular spot and distanced from his visitors because he was a stylite. While descriptions of what visitors did in his *vita* are thus closely paralleled by the actions of those in the lives of other pillar saints, and to an extent in those of holy men who chose to live in remote and inaccessible places,¹³⁰ they differ from those associated with pilgrimage to holy men who were more accessible and freer to interact with their visitors.

In such cases the journey, except when it has involved travel from an unusual distance or exceptional effort or danger, is not normally commented upon. Nor does it seem that the first impression made by the appearance of the holy man was quite so immediately astounding if he was at ground level and, as was often the case, living simply like another monk. Here people would come directly before the object of their visit and speak with the holy man face to face. In the accepted Byzantine gesture of honor, individuals of whatever status would usually prostrate themselves at his feet,¹³¹ but, once the initial formalities were out of the way, the visitor and the holy man might engage in a relatively private, even intimate conversation, either one on one or in the presence of a small group of other visitors and, perhaps, disciples. One may think, for example, of Luke of Steiris sitting on the shore of the Gulf of Corinth talking with his visitors while they watch the sunset with the breeze ruffling the water and the fish jumping.¹³² In these interviews the usual sort of conversation appears to have taken place, with particular issues and concerns being discussed, advice being given, and appeals for help made and granted; often, too, the encounter would culminate with a confession followed by absolution and then a blessing and dismissal.¹³³ At the opposite end of the spectrum, however, when the holy man had become a

¹³⁰ E.g., in the cases of Symeon the Stylite the Elder, ed. P. Canivet and A. Leroy-Molinghen, *Théodoret de Cyr, Histoire des moines de Syrie*, vol. 2 (Paris, 1979), 158–215, trans. R. M. Price, *A History of the Monks of Syria by Theodoret of Cyrrhus* (Kalamazoo, Mich., 1985), 160–76; of Daniel the Stylite, ed. H. Delehay, *Les saints stylites* (Brussels, 1923), 1–94, trans. E. Dawes and N. H. Baynes, *Three Byzantine Saints* (New York, 1977), 7–71; or of Luke the Stylite, ed. Delehay, *Saints stylites*, 195–237.

¹³¹ See, for some examples among many, the *Life* of Peter of Atroa, ed. V. Laurent, *La vie merveilleuse de Saint Pierre d'Atroa*, SubsHag 29 (Brussels, 1956), chaps. 51, 77; the *Life* of Theodore of Sykeon, ed. A.-J. Festugière, *Vie de Théodore de Sykéon*, SubsHag 48 (Brussels, 1970), trans. E. Dawes and N. H. Baynes, *Three Byzantine Saints* (New York, 1977), 88–185, chaps. 36, 54 (where this action is performed even by the distinguished general and future emperor Maurice); the *Life* of Theoktiste of Lesbos, ed. H. Delehay, *AASS* 4 (Brussels, 1925): 224–33, trans. A. C. Hero in *Holy Women of Byzantium*, ed. A.-M. Talbot (Washington, D.C., 1996), 95–116, chaps. 9, 17, 18. In the *Life* of Elisabeth the Wonderworker, F. Halkin, “Sainte Elisabeth d’Héraclée, abbesse à Constantinople,” *AB* 91 (1973): 249–64, trans. V. Karras in Talbot, ed., *Holy Women*, 117–35, a distraught father seeking a cure for his daughter casts her at the saint’s feet, p. 260; in the *Life* of Nikon a mother does the same thing, ed. and trans. D. F. Sullivan, *The Life of Saint Nikon* (Brookline, Mass., 1987), chap. 27.

¹³² *Life* of Luke of Steiris, ed. and trans. C. and R. Connor, *The Life and Miracles of St. Luke of Steiris* (Brookline, Mass., 1994), chap. 22. Cf. all those, important and unimportant, who visit Maximos Kausokalybites, ed. F. Halkin, “Deux vies de S. Maxime le Kausokalybe, ermite au Mont Athos (XIVe s.),” *AB* 54 (1936): 38–112; see, e.g., chaps. 4, 5, 15. Cf. also the formal but still personal interviews with John Eleemon when patriarch of Alexandria, ed. A.-J. Festugière and L. Rydén, *Léontios de Néapolis, Vie de Syméon le Fou et Vie de Jean de Chypre* (Paris, 1974), 257–637, trans. E. Dawes and N. H. Baynes, *Three Byzantine Saints* (New York, 1977), 199–262, chap. 5.

¹³³ See, e.g., Luke of Steiris, chap. 27; Theodore of Sykeon, chap. 142; or Maximos Kausokalybites, *Life* by Niphon, chap. 4.

well-known figure or when a particular feast day was being celebrated, he might be surrounded by a milling throng and his appearance greeted by an enthusiastic and organized public spectacle.¹³⁴ Here, instead of being raised up in isolation above the hustle and bustle of the courtyard like Lazaros, the holy man was right down in the middle of it all.

Another variation in the pattern which became possible when the holy man was not isolated or static manifests itself in two main ways; first, visitors might come to him and request that he accompany them to their homes or some other location in order to deal with a problem they were experiencing; second, visitors might approach the holy man when he himself was visiting a different locality to that in which he normally lived.¹³⁵ Again, the pattern here is one of greater accessibility and fluidity than may be apparent from the *vita* of Lazaros, one in which the locus of visitation may move about; holy men who are not fixed in one place can make house calls and even go on tour.

The offering of a formal meal of some sort to all visitors at Lazaros's monastery was noted above as probably being unusual, but it is obvious that rituals surrounding the sharing of food played an important part in much of the activity involved in visiting holy men. Large-scale feasting might occur on occasions of mass visitation, as is evidenced by passages in the *vita* of Theodore of Sykeon,¹³⁶ but more normally the sharing of food seems to have taken place in the quieter and more intimate settings described above. Such meals, for instance, form a distinctive theme in descriptions of visits to the Athonite holy man of the fourteenth century, Maximos Kausokalybites.¹³⁷

Finally, the fact that few people seem to have visited Lazaros in search of healing was mentioned above. As other papers in this volume make clear, the quest for healing is a very common goal of pilgrimage in general, and it is also a prominent factor motivating visitors to some living holy men. I will be suggesting in a moment that such holy men may, in fact, have been the exception and that those who, like Lazaros, are not much involved in healing may have been the norm, but a visit to a living individual with whom healing powers were associated clearly contained some significant practical differences. The visit in such cases thus tended to be structured almost entirely around the search for, and implementation of, a cure. The interview with the holy man was significantly affected by this purpose, in that curative or exorcistic actions would usually follow the confession or might replace it entirely. The poor physical condition of many of the visitors as well as lengthy waits for an interview and prolonged periods of treatment meant that in these circumstances particular facilities developed at the site and interaction with the holy man or his assistants might be considerably extended. From the very beginning of the period under

¹³⁴ As in the case of Theodore of Sykeon, e.g.; see chaps. 36, 43, 66, 101, 112.

¹³⁵ See, e.g., Theodore of Sykeon, chaps. 36, 43, 44, 45, 65–66, 101, 114–16, 118, 141; Peter of Atroa, chaps. 51, 52, 61–62; Luke of Steiris, chaps. 44, 45, 59; much of Nikon's life was spent "on the road" preaching; see especially here, however, chaps. 30, 33, 35, 39–41, 43. See also Cyril Phileotes, E. Sargologos, *La vie de saint Cyrille le Philéote moine byzantin († 1110)* (Brussels, 1964), chap. 17; and Malamut, *Route*, 140–44.

¹³⁶ Theodore of Sykeon, chaps. 69, 112.

¹³⁷ See, e.g., Maximos Kausokalybites, *Life* by Niphon, chaps. 5, 8, 15, 17, 18, 19; cf. *Life* of Niphon of Athos, ed. F. Halkin, "La vie de Saint Niphon ermite au Mont Athos (XIVe s.)," *AB* 58 (1940): 5–27, chap. 17. Luke of Steiris kept a garden in which he grew vegetables for the meal he usually provided for visitors, chaps. 19, 20, 28; on at least one occasion this practice evidently gave rise to suspicion that Luke was rather too fond of his food, chap. 63. Theodore of Sykeon gave visitors bread and fruit, chap. 30, and ate with them on occasions, e.g., chaps. 72, 74, 124. See also, e.g., the *Life* of Theoktiste of Lesbos, chaps. 13–14; or of Nikon, chap. 43.

consideration here the case of Theodore of Sykeon exemplifies visitation patterns of this type, while a little later the *vita* of Peter of Atroa shows how a holy man could become the object of large-scale curative pilgrimage without a permanent infrastructure developing at the site where he lived, at least not until after his death.¹³⁸

Turning to the reasons why people came to these holy men, the same multiple and multilayered range described in the *vita* of Lazaros appears in most instances. There are thus many accounts of people going to living holy men to receive their blessing,¹³⁹ to make confession, to receive their absolution and spiritual counseling,¹⁴⁰ to benefit from their gifts of prophecy and insight,¹⁴¹ to seek their advice about religious and secular matters of all sorts,¹⁴² or to benefit from their material generosity.¹⁴³ In a number of cases, too, there is evidence of people visiting holy men on occasion for nefarious reasons or out of hostility.¹⁴⁴

¹³⁸ For the developing institutionalization of curative visitation in the *Life* of Theodore of Sykeon, see chaps. 35, 40, 81, 103, 110; for Theodore as a doctor, see esp. chaps. 145–46. The pattern evident in the earlier *Life* of Daniel the Stylite may be compared, but, in the case of Peter of Atroa, although there are numerous specific episodes in which people visit him in search of healing and there are several general complaints of him constantly being bothered by those seeking cures, e.g., chaps. 20, 22, he does not allow the same sort of infrastructure to develop around him.

¹³⁹ See, e.g., the monks who go to be blessed by Peter of Atroa, chap. 55; the local villagers who seek a blessing from the dying Luke of Steiris, chap. 64; or the man who visits Isidore I Boucheiras for this purpose: see his *vita* by Philotheos Kokkinos, ed. A. Papadopoulos-Kerameus, *Zapiski Istoriko-filologičeskogo fakulteta S.-Peterburgskogo Universiteta* 76 (1905): 52–149, chap. 41. For this and the other reasons mentioned in this paragraph, see Malamut, *Route*, 212–15.

¹⁴⁰ For confession and absolution see, e.g., the women who visit Luke of Steiris, chap. 28, or the murderer of a fellow traveler there, chap. 30; also the woman who goes to John Eleemon, chap. 46. For spiritual therapy and counseling see, e.g., the case of the lapsed superior who seeks out Peter of Atroa for pardon, chap. 28; the wrestler Epiphanius visiting George of Choziba, ed. G. House, *AB* 7 (1888): 95–144, 336–72, trans. T. Vivian and A. N. Athanassakis, *The Life of Saint George of Choziba and the Miracles of the Most Holy Mother of God at Choziba* (San Francisco–London, 1994), chaps. 16–18; the woman who visits Stephen the Younger for advice about becoming a nun, ed. and trans. M.-F. Auzépy, *La Vie d'Étienne le Jeune par Étienne le Diacre* (Aldershot–Brookfield, Vt., 1997), chap. 21; the audiences in general who attend Nikon's many sermons, but also, e.g., his words to John Malakenos, chap. 43; various episodes in the *Life* of Cyril Phileotes, chaps. 16, 19, 38; or the general description of this aspect of Theodore of Sykeon's work, chap. 147. See also on visits by notables cited below and, on "spiritual fatherhood" in general in Byzantine society, Morris, *Monks and Laymen*, 92–102.

¹⁴¹ E.g., the brothers who visit Luke of Steiris seeking buried treasure they have inherited, chap. 27; the imperial agent who appeals for his help after his gold was stolen at Corinth, chap. 44; or Basil Apokaukos who seeks Nikon's prophetic advice at Isthmia, chap. 40; cf. the doctor who seeks the aid of Isidore I Boucheiras in solving a theft, chap. 68. See also Morris, *Monks and Laymen*, 102–3.

¹⁴² See, e.g., the general description of Theodore of Sykeon trying to help those who had come to hate each other, had become involved in lawsuits, or had religious doubts, chaps. 145, 147; the spiritual and practical advice offered by Maximos Kausokalybites, chaps. 15, 29; that sought of Isidore I Boucheiras, chaps. 23–24, 37; of Dionysios of Athos, ed. B. Laourdas, "Metrophanes, Bios tou hosiou Dionysiou tou Athonitou," *Ἀρχ.Πόντ.* 21 (1956): 43–79, chap. 27; or of Romylos, ed. F. Halkin, "Un ermite des Balkans au XI^e siècle. La vie inédite de Saint Romylos," *Byzantion* 31 (1961): 111–47, trans. M. Bartusis, K. Ben Nasser, and A. Laiou, "Days and Deeds of a Hesychast Saint: A Translation of the Greek Life of Saint Romylos," *ByzSt* 9 (1982): 24–47, chap. 15.

¹⁴³ See the many examples of Luke of Steiris feeding and caring for travelers, e.g. chaps. 20–23, 40, 52; the help provided by Theodore of Sykeon for those oppressed by tax collectors and officials, chap. 147; that given to the poor during times of famine by Cyril Phileotes, chaps. 44, 48; that given by Isidore I Boucheiras, chaps. 63–64; or, particularly, the assistance given to the needy by John Eleemon. See also Morris, *Monks and Laymen*, 111–14.

¹⁴⁴ So a visitor to Luke of Steiris who spies on him because he is suspicious of his practice of keeping vigil, chap. 17; or another who is suspicious of his eating and drinking habits, chap. 63. Compare the man who at-

Take, for example, powerful and influential visitors who, in almost every case, were among those who made the effort to seek out living holy men. Mostly they seem to have gone for the same sort of reasons as other visitors, but, given their official status and position, they had particular reason to check out the holy man's credentials, to gain the favor of this locally powerful individual, to obtain his blessing before they undertook an official duty, or to seek his advice, even about important political matters and affairs of state.¹⁴⁵ The holy man who became the object of visitation of this sort in its most developed form was surely Daniel the Stylite in the fifth century, but his role as an imperial counselor, and as a kind of living exhibition to show state visitors that both the current regime and Byzantine rule in general enjoyed divine support, did not become a normal one.

As was mentioned above, few seem purposely to have traveled a long way to see Lazaros, most of his visitors being either locals or else people who happened to be in the vicinity for other reasons. By and large, this also appears to be true of most visitors to most holy men. Locals, or at least people from the same general region, form the vast majority of visitors, while people from further away are usually attracted by the holy man's reputation when they are passing through. They hear about him when they are on the road or staying in the nearby town, they are told of him by associates who live in the area, or, even though they may have heard of him in their distant homeland, they only go to see him because other business has brought them there.¹⁴⁶

tacks Theodore of Sykeon, chap. 76; or the sorcerer who opposes him, chaps. 37–38. Also the iconoclast imperial agent who tries to secure Stephen the Younger's signature on a heretical decree, chap. 30; or Nikon's opponent at Sparta, John Aratos, chap. 35. Cf. the bishop of Trajanopolis whose antics when he visits Maximos Kausokalybites may perhaps indicate a desire to test his powers and so suspicion of him, *Life* by Niphon, chap. 27, *Life* by Theophanes, chap. 30. On suspicion and hostility toward holy men in general in the 12th century, see P. Magdalino, "The Byzantine Holy Man in the Twelfth Century," in Hackel, *Saint* (as above, note 78), 51–66.

¹⁴⁵ Thus the bishop of Corinth checks out Luke of Steiris, chap. 42, as do two *strategoï* of Hellas, chaps. 58–59; the imperial *kourator*, Eustathios, visits Peter of Atroa for a blessing before going to his estates, chap. 57; the *chartouliarios* and future emperor Maurice visits Theodore of Sykeon, chap. 54, as does Domnitziolos, the nephew of the emperor Phokas, when going on campaign, chap. 120, and the consul Bonosos, chap. 142. Basil Apokaukos seeks Nikon's help, chap. 40, as does John Malakenos when he is arrested by imperial agents, chap. 43, although in both cases Nikon agrees to visit them. There are many such visits in the *Life* of Cyril Phileotes, including the emperor Alexios I and members of his family and entourage, e.g., chaps. 34–35, 46–48, 51, 53. Matrona of Perge was beset in Beirut by men and women, but "especially noblewomen," ed. H. Delehaye, *AASS* 3 (Brussels, 1910): 790–813, trans. J. Featherstone in Talbot, ed., *Holy Women* (as above, note 131), 18–64, chap. 19, cf. chaps. 22 and 26. Maximos Kausokalybites was visited by the emperors John V Palaiologos and John VI Kantakuzenos, *Life* by Niphon chap. 4, *Life* by Theophanes chap. 21, and also by the patriarch of Constantinople Kallistos, *Life* by Niphon chap. 7, *Life* by Theophanes chap. 22. Athanasios of Meteora was unimpressed by the behavior of the caesar Prealebos when he visited him, ed. N. A. Bees, "Symbole eis ten historian ton monon ton Meteoron," *Byzantis* 1 (1909): 237–70, chap. 18. Compare the request by Isaac II for the prayers of the stylites and other holy men of Constantinople when he was in danger of being overthrown, recorded by Niketas Choniates, J. L. van Dieten, ed., *Historia* (Berlin–New York, 1975), 383. See also Malamut, *Route*, 199–205, 219–26; Morris, "Political Saint," 48–49; eadem, *Monks and Laymen*, 104–7; eadem, "Byzantine Aristocracy," 113–16, where she sums up the situation as regards the consultation of holy men by aristocrats involved in political intrigue and the like: "But however significant this activity was for the political life of the Empire, it centered on the granting of advice, essentially the same process as the few simple words of guidance given to a community stricken by drought or to a peasant suffering from diabolical visions," p. 116.

¹⁴⁶ Thus, e.g., two old monks traveling to Rome come across Luke of Steiris, chap. 21; an imperial agent who has been the victim of a robbery is told of Luke and so seeks his help, chap. 44; and one *strategos* of Hellas, Pothos, is recommended to seek his aid by an official, while another, Krinites, hears of him when he arrives in

The same general picture of motivation established with Lazaros thus holds true for visitors to all holy men, but occasionally there are definite variations in emphasis. For example, there are some rather different features apparent where the visitors in question are monks or would-be monks. As has been mentioned already, the theme of monastic visitation is certainly present in the *vita* of Lazaros,¹⁴⁷ but it receives greater emphasis elsewhere, and it is a definite phenomenon to be noted in connection with the general topic of visits to living holy men. Throughout the Byzantine period, it would seem, young men who were desperately hoping to become monks, or who had recently done so, made up a considerable proportion of those who visited holy men as they sought out experienced spiritual leaders to guide and educate them, as they moved about seeking the spiritual mentor who would best suit them, or, perhaps more simply, as they sought to witness in person the exceptional proponents of the way of life they themselves wished to lead. But other older and more experienced monks joined the throng as well, seeking advice or encouragement, a change of regime or scenery, or, like some of their younger brethren, simply to gape in amazement at the living exemplars of all they had ever aspired to in the spiritual life but had never been able to attain themselves.¹⁴⁸ Unlike their lay counterparts, such people did evidently tend to travel great distances in order to see particular spiritual leaders with whose reputation they had become acquainted,¹⁴⁹ and they also tend to form the majority of visitors to solitary, or virtually solitary, holy men.

With such holy men who deliberately remain as solitaries for long periods of time or who choose to live with only a single disciple or very small group of followers, another variation in emphasis is also apparent. Distinctive here are the more or less regular visits by those supplying them with food and drink, or making sure they are safe and well during periods of bad weather or in dangerous times. This emphasis is reminiscent of that found

the vicinity, chaps. 58–59. The notable characters cited in the previous note as visiting Theodore of Sykeon all hear about him when they arrive in the area or while passing through, chaps. 54, 120, 142; while an imperial prisoner and his guards want to receive his prayers as they are passing by, chap. 125; at the same time the local origin of the majority of his visitors should be noted. A troubled wrestler on pilgrimage to the Holy Land is directed to George of Choziba, chap. 16. A man caught in a storm finds his way to Cyril Phileotes' house, chap. 12. Two women who happen to be passing by Matrona of Perge's lodgings are attracted by the sound of her psalmody, chap. 38. Somewhat earlier, one might imagine Daniel the Stylite to be an exception, but in fact most of his long-distance visitors are in Constantinople for other reasons. It is unclear how far some visitors travel to see Stephen the Younger while he is in exile on Prokonnesos; see e.g., chaps. 47, 51, 54; see also Malamut, *Route*, 205–7.

¹⁴⁷ Note also Lazaros's own wanderings and the other monks he encounters on his way, *v. Laz.*, chaps. 8–9, 20–31.

¹⁴⁸ The attraction of holy men, to both monks and aspiring disciples, is a common theme of hagiography from the earliest times. See, e.g., Theodore of Sykeon, chaps. 24, 40, 49; Peter of Atroa, chap. 79; Cyril Phileotes, chaps. 19, 38; Romylos, chaps. 12, 15; Dionysios of Athos, chap. 11; Athanasios of Meteora, chaps. 3, 9; Niphon of Athos, chap. 2; Maximos Kausokalybites, *Life* by Niphon, chap. 3, *Life* by Theophanes, chap. 4. To be noted there too is the description of pilgrimage to Gregory Sinaites, who evidently became a major goal of this sort of activity in the 14th century, *Life* by Theophanes, chaps. 13–18. Isidore I Boucheiras was among the many who traveled to see Gregory Palamas, who enjoyed a similar vogue, chap. 22. Compare the way orthodox monks are said to have gathered around Stephen the Younger during iconoclast persecution, chaps. 27, 47. The topic of monastic travel, including journeys by both holy men themselves and others in search of them, is studied extensively in Malamut, *Route*.

¹⁴⁹ Holy men, like Theodore of Sykeon, John Eleemon, or Isidore I Boucheiras, who came to hold official positions and were thus forced to live away from their original base, also seem to have attracted more long-distance visitors of all types, either because these people were coming from the holy man's home or because they were visiting him on official business.

in descriptions of visits to some of the very early Egyptian holy men, but in this period it is associated particularly with the fourteenth-century hesychast holy men.¹⁵⁰

Finally, another significant variation in motive may be seen in the case of holy men who, unlike Lazaros, did have a reputation for healing. In these cases visitors of all sorts flock to the holy man hoping to be cured of their diseases and ailments, to be freed from the demons who torment them, or to receive his help with every physical difficulty imaginable, from infertility to disobedient animals, from mass hysteria to floods. Such holy men were clearly also visited by people seeking other things, such as spiritual wisdom, blessing, insight, aid, and practical advice, and they were able to provide this, but here, whether a visit is made by individuals or small groups or by vast crowds on feast days, the attention, the expectation is largely focused on the miraculous and the dramatic which tends to overshadow the less spectacular part of the holy man's work.¹⁵¹ In fact, however, when the whole range of holy men is taken into consideration across the Byzantine period, those with this type of reputation clearly stand out as exceptional and unusual. Holy men like Lazaros, known primarily for the quality of their advice, spiritual help, and material generosity, are far more normal. Because the power and favor of God is upon them, they are capable of healing, just as they are of performing wonders, but they do not do this very often or very publicly.¹⁵² As a result, it may be concluded that visitors to living holy men seem in general to have been motivated by the desire and expectation of the miraculous only in relatively rare and quite particular circumstances. Even holy men who did attract visitors for these reasons were also sought out by people with a much broader and perhaps less ambitious range of motives.

VISITING THE LIVING HOLY MAN INSTEAD OF OTHER *LOCA SANCTA*

If this is so, it may help to suggest some answers to the most important question remaining to be considered here, why people should have chosen to visit living holy men rather than the older, better authenticated *loca sancta* about which so much has been said

¹⁵⁰ See, e.g., the *vita* of Antony, chap. 51. Here see, e.g., Luke of Steiris, chap. 31; Theodore of Sykeon, chap. 16; Maximos Kausokalybites, *Life* by Niphon, chaps. 10, 11, 15, 16, 18, 19, 29; Niphon of Athos, chaps. 12, 17. Compare also the journey of Zosimas to take both communion and food to Mary of Egypt, recorded in her *vita*, PG 87:3697–3726, trans. M. Kouli, in Talbot, *Holy Women* (as above, note 131), 70–93, chaps. 34–37; cf. Theoktiste of Lesbos, chaps. 18–19. Note also the food brought to Stephen the Younger by an iconoclast imperial agent, chap. 30; and the first fruits brought to George of Choziba to be blessed, chap. 8.

¹⁵¹ For healing, exorcism, miracle, and spectacle, see the *vitae* of Theodore of Sykeon and Peter of Atroa, *passim*. To be compared here, although fewer examples are presented, are the cases of Nikon, see chaps. 27–30, 32, 33, 36, 41–42; of Elisabeth the Wonderworker, pp. 259–61; and perhaps that of the holy man Matthaias, who is described as healing various sick people in the *vita* of Athanasia of Aegina, ed. F. Halkin, “Vie de sainte Athanasie d’Egine,” in *Six inédits d’hagiologie byzantine* (Brussels, 1987), 179–95, trans. F. L. Sherry in Talbot, *Holy Women* (as above, note 131), 142–58, chap. 8. See also R. Macmullen, *Christianity and Paganism in the Fourth to Eighth Centuries* (New Haven–London, 1997), 136–38.

¹⁵² So, e.g., Luke of Steiris cures a boy in a coma, chap. 45, and indirectly cures a woman in Thebes, chap. 61; George of Choziba brings a dead child back to life, chap. 8; Matrona of Perge “effects many cures,” chap. 33, including that of a noblewoman called Antiochiane, chap. 34; Stephen the Younger cures visitors (monks and laymen, men and women, rich and poor) of such things as fever, blindness, hemorrhage, disability, and possession, chaps. 46, 49–51, 54; Cyril Phileotes cures a man of ptosis (drooping of the upper eyelid), chap. 32; Maximos Kausokalybites cures one possessed layman indirectly, *Life* by Niphon, chap. 5, and another directly even though the man had not come seeking help, *Life* by Niphon, chap. 17, by Theophanes, chap. 20; Niphon of Athos cures paralysis, chap. 5, bleeding, chap. 11, headache, chap. 13; Isidore I Boucheiras cures infertility, chap. 33, a dying infant, chap. 43, hemorrhage, chap. 66.

both in other papers in this volume and elsewhere. Why should a living person have proved an alternative, perhaps for some even a superior, attraction to those venerable places that were consecrated by the deeds and relics of the sanctified dead and that possessed the full and unqualified endorsement of the established church?

On many occasions, as I have shown, the sources appear to indicate that superficial motives were often no different for making a visit to a living holy man than to another type of holy site. People were moved as much by curiosity, by novelty, and simply by issues of convenience as by any sense of greater efficacy or appropriateness. People in search of many kinds of help and healing might visit either “official” or “unofficial” sites. At either they might hope to find immediate solutions to their problems in the form of a cure, of alms, or perhaps of spiritual renewal and support; at either they might hope to secure a vehicle, perhaps in the form of a token or a flask of oil, which would serve to transport at least some vestiges of the power inherent in the holiness located at the site for their own benefit in far-off times and places and for the benefit of others who had been unable to make the journey. Both types of destination usually provided eat-in or take-out menus for visitors, as it were.

But the living holy man did have advantages. Here the primary factor surely has to be immediacy. A person who visited a living holy man had the opportunity to converse face to face, perhaps even negotiate, with someone who was thought to have access to the heavenly court and to whom some of its authority had demonstrably been delegated. It was like talking directly with one of God’s angels, it was like tapping into a hot line to heaven. As Romanos Skleros started up the ladder to see Lazaros on his column, he suddenly stumbled back holding his head in his hands and on the verge of fainting: the holy man had opened his window and looked out, and, to Romanos, Lazaros’s face had appeared like fire. He was undoubtedly in the presence of the holy.¹⁵³

Thus, while the power of God was present at the *loca sacra* of pilgrimage and could effect cures and exorcisms with equal, perhaps greater, efficacy than in the case of a mortal and thus fallible man, relics and holy places could not talk, could not respond, except perhaps through the vague and uncertain medium of dreams and portents. Hence the stress on the role of holy men as mediators and problem solvers, as confessors and advisors. Here were people who could not only listen but could reply, clearly, immediately, and effectively. Here were people who could resolve problems on the spot, who could distribute, directly, without the interpretation of others, the sort of practical advice and practical help sought so frequently there. Here, in other words, is Peter Brown’s “good patron” of late antiquity, still at work in the later periods of Byzantine history.¹⁵⁴

Brown uses his analysis of the late antique situation to argue that the spiritual patronage of the type offered by the holy man is to be regarded as a mechanism for dealing with newfound, perhaps rather dubious, freedoms and the uncertainties that went with them.¹⁵⁵ For him, holy men thus reveal traces of social instability, they are markers of a time where “the objectivity associated with the supernatural” is no longer “lodged in imper-

¹⁵³ *V. Laz.*, chap. 87. Cf. Frank, *Memory*, “Glowing Faces,” 160–65.

¹⁵⁴ Brown, “Holy Man,” 129. For later reservations by Brown on seeing the late antique holy man primarily or exclusively in the role of “good patron,” see, e.g., his *Authority and the Sacred* (Cambridge, 1995), 59–60, 63–64.

¹⁵⁵ Brown, “Holy Man,” 148.

sonal and enduring institutions” like great temple sites.¹⁵⁶ In the conclusion to his paper Brown suggests that he believes the particular period he examines is special, “a distinct phase of religious history,” as he terms it, sandwiched between the ages of the great temples of antiquity and the cathedrals of the Middle Ages.¹⁵⁷ But a look at the continuing phenomenon of the visitation of living holy men in Byzantium may suggest something different, may point toward a need to find a more dynamic model in which modes of religious expression wax and wane, perhaps according to the stability of the society in which they occur, perhaps according to dominant models of political organization.¹⁵⁸

Here a study by Richard Stirrat of shifts in pilgrimage patterns in Sri Lanka provides some fascinating insights and some tantalizing clues as to ways in which the Byzantine situation might be analyzed.¹⁵⁹ Stirrat suggests that in a situation where there is a “congruence between secular polity and the world of the gods,”¹⁶⁰ something long and very widely assumed in the Byzantine context, changes in the pattern of pilgrimage may be seen to reflect changes in the political system. In particular, he argues, the development of a strong patronage system in the postcolonial Sri Lanka polity is to be linked not only with the dramatic rise of the god Kataragama to become the “patron *par excellence*”¹⁶¹ and so the focus of massive Sinhala Buddhist pilgrimage, but also to the rise of new, “person centered” pilgrimage patterns in Sinhala Catholicism. Here it is holy men who have become the focus of pilgrimage, individuals who can dispense religious and spiritual patronage, at the expense of traditional place-specific shrines. Other significant factors are also at work, but surely tempting is the parallel to Lazaros in mid-eleventh-century Byzantium, a period known precisely for the rise of individual patronage and the weakening of central government influence and control. There is no space to develop this point here, but I think it is one well worth further examination.

Something else that needs further study in the context of the visitation of Byzantine holy men, but which can only be alluded to in passing here, is the suggestion by recent social anthropologists that pilgrimage should be viewed as a far less homogeneous phenomenon than it has often been in the past. Consequently, it is argued, a new and deeper level of understanding may be achieved by an appreciation of its essential heterogeneity, by recognizing that pilgrimage “is above all an arena for *competing* religious and secular discourses.”¹⁶² Here the motivations and perceptions of those involved become crucial, for, if the object of pilgrimage (in this case the holy man) derives his power from his “capacity to absorb and reflect a multiplicity of religious discourses, to be able to offer a variety of clients what each of them desires,” he is, then, at base a “religious void,” a “vessel” which all the different pilgrims and visitors fill with all their various motivations, aspirations, and

¹⁵⁶ Brown, “Holy Man,” 148.

¹⁵⁷ Brown, “Holy Man,” 151.

¹⁵⁸ For other criticisms and suggestions of directions in which Brown’s work on the holy man may be fruitfully developed, see J. Howard-Johnston and P. A. Hayward, eds., *The Cult of Saints in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages* (Oxford, 1999); especially relevant there are the papers by Averil Cameron and Philip Rousseau, 27–59.

¹⁵⁹ R. Stirrat, “Place and Person in Sinhala Catholic Pilgrimage,” in Eade and Sallnow, eds., *Contesting the Sacred* (as above, note 3), 122–36.

¹⁶⁰ Stirrat, “Sinhala Pilgrimage,” 131.

¹⁶¹ Stirrat, “Sinhala Pilgrimage,” 133.

¹⁶² Eade and Sallnow, “Introduction,” 2. The italics are mine.

perceptions of what they are doing.¹⁶³ How the holy man views himself in this role, how his disciples view him, how the local or wider church views him, how the majority of visitors view him, how each individual visitor views him, all are parts of a complex and often competing image which cannot be appreciated from one generalized perspective.

In the Byzantine context, as in any other, when visitors chose a holy man over some other *loca sancta*, whether they did so for profound or frivolous reasons, whether they did so deliberately or unthinkingly, they were (or appeared to be) sending a message. When the holy man accepted or rejected their visits, he too was (or appeared to be) sending a message. What, for example, did the established church, particularly at the local level, make of both? Was the holy man perceived as living proof that the age of miracles and prophets was not yet past and thus as a pillar and support of the established church? Or was he seen as a criticism, an overt indicator of how far that church had lapsed from the ideal? Were the visitors thus supporting the established church or expressing, deliberately or unintentionally, dissatisfaction and discontent? Consequently, was the holy man to be embraced and encouraged by that church or to be seen as a threat and rival, and so dismissed, discredited, or destroyed? And what of the holy man himself? Did he try to avoid becoming the center of such activity, recognizing not only the threat these visitors might pose to his solitude but also to his reputation and even physical well-being? Or did he welcome, perhaps encourage them, realizing that without such overt expression of popularity he could never attain sufficient stature to right the ills he saw besetting church and society, even though this might inevitably involve drawing on himself the jealousy and hostility of the establishment?

Of course, the Byzantine historian is not looking through the clear, if multifaceted, lens of the social anthropologist who may be present at the visit or pilgrimage and gain insight by directly interviewing those involved. A Byzantinist must perforce peer through the hardened and distorting crystal of historical source material where one perception tends to push all others from view, and this is a serious problem when pursuing such a line of inquiry. However, even crystals may have their flaws and cracks, and in these, in the hints and allusions, the unsophisticated papering over of awkward elements that one finds in such sources, particularly in some hagiography, there may still linger, on the margins of vision, evidence of the varied and conflicting discourses that existed in the arena of visitation and pilgrimage to living holy men.¹⁶⁴

In conclusion, I would suggest that the *vita* of Lazaros of Mount Galesion is a good example of a source where a glimpse may be caught of the type of complexity and heterogeneity that have been described. As I mentioned above, hostility toward Lazaros is a constant and at times urgent theme of the *vita*. Clearly there was a perception on the part of the local ecclesiastical authorities in Ephesos and some other religious establishments in the vicinity that Lazaros was a fraud and a threat or both. For the established church in the area, then, a visit to him must necessarily have been perceived as an act of criticism, of disapproval perhaps, or at least of dissatisfaction with what Ephesos had to offer. Consequently the religious authorities there became engaged in a propaganda battle against Lazaros and his foundations for the hearts and minds of the visitors, attempting to dis-

¹⁶³ Eade and Sallnow, "Introduction," 15.

¹⁶⁴ Cf. Eade and Sallnow, "Introduction," 2.

credit him and discourage them. The visitors, however, whether they came with open or already made-up minds, had their own vastly differing motives and perceptions ranging, as we have seen, from the curious to the hopeful, from the convinced to the skeptical and downright nefarious or hostile. And then there were the perceptions of Lazaros's monks who had to cope and compete for resources and attention with the streams of visitors. At times they viewed them as a blessing and recognition of their superior's virtue and stature, but at others there were those who saw them as a nuisance and a threat to their spiritual and physical well-being. Finally Lazaros himself, like most holy men, clearly had mixed views of those who sought him out; at times he struggled to avoid them, but at others he saw them not only as the proof of the success of his life's work, but also as the real reason for it; he recognized the dangers they posed for him, but also the value of what he might do for them and, through them, for the world and the furtherance of God's purposes in it. In the vivid and often unintentionally revealing record of Gregory the Cellarer, Lazaros, as an object of visitors or pilgrims, emerges clearly as the focus of many obviously competing and deeply conflicted discourses.

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