Tales from another Byzantium

The rich corpus of medieval Greek apocryphal religious literature has been little used by historians. This book is the first full-length study of two medieval Greek visionary journeys to Heaven and Hell: the *Apocalypse of the Theotokos* and the *Apocalypse of Anastasia*. Composed anonymously sometime between the ninth and eleventh centuries, both enjoyed a lively circulation in the Byzantine Empire and far beyond. Functioning on the fringes of the official Church, they transmit both traditional and novel theological ideas, and shed new light on the reception of Church doctrine and imperial governance by ordinary Byzantine Christians. Though their heroines tour the Other World, their true concern is this world, and the reinforcement of social, moral, and ritual norms within local communities. Providing original translations of both texts, the book probes the tales as manifestations of non-elite religious and moral culture in the medieval Orthodox Church.

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For P (sine quo nihil)
The widespread disinclination today to take Hell and Heaven seriously results, very largely, from a refusal to take this world seriously.

Dorothy L. Sayers (1954: 100), Introductory Papers on Dante
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Acknowledgments

My first encounter with the *Apocalypse of Anastasia* came in the shadowy inner sanctum of the Classics reading room on the top floor of Princeton’s Firestone Library. When I opened the slim orange volume, I saw that it had been checked out only twice before, by Paul Alexander (d. 1977), the pioneer of Byzantine apocalyptic study. The sun was setting over Nassau Street, and at that moment, I felt the mantle of the prophet (or at least, the apocalypticist) fall upon my shoulders. Paul Alexander’s shade has been a kindly, encouraging spirit throughout the project. 

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Abbreviations

Full references for works cited may be found in the Bibliography.

Anastasia  Apocalypse of Anastasia
Andrew    Life of Andrew the Fool
Baruch     Apocalypse of Baruch
Basil      Life of Basil the Younger
BHG        Bibliotheca hagiographica graeca
Chrysostomic Apocalypse of John attributed to John Chrysostom
DAI        De administrando imperio
Didaskalia Didaskalia of our Lord Jesus Christ
Irene      Life of Irene of Chrysobalanton
KJV        Bible, King James version
Kosmas     Vision of Kosmas
Loukas     Life of Luke of Steiris
LXX        Bible, Septuagint version
NT         Bible, New Testament
ODB        Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium
Paul       Apocalypse of Paul
PG         Migne, Patrologia graeca
PL         Migne, Patrologia latina
Philaretos Life of Philaretos the Merciful
RSV        Bible, Revised Standard version
Skyletter  The Letter of our Lord that Fell from the Sky
Theotokos  Apocalypse of the Theotokos
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