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Psalmody and Prayer in the Writings of Evagrius Ponticus

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Abstract: This book explores the writings of Evagrius Ponticus. It seeks a connection between the seemingly disparate aspects of Evagrius' mystical theology by approaching the relationship between psalmody and prayer from three perspectives. First, Evagrius' life, works, and spiritual doctrine are presented, followed by a description of the monastic discipline of psalmody as practised by Evagrius and his contemporaries; Evagrius texts on the interrelationship between psalmody and prayer are then considered. Second, Evagrius' recommendations on the usefulness of psalmody in healing of the passions are discussed. Finally, the biblical scholia are studied, which facilitate what Evagrius called 'undistracted psalmody', that is, contemplation by means of the words used in psalmody of the person of Christ and of Christ's salvific work within creation.

Keywords: **Evagrius Ponticus, psalmody, prayer, Christ, mystical theology**



Table of Contents

Preface

FULL TEXT

Introduction

This introductory chapter begins with a discussion on the debates surrounding the influence of Evagrius Ponticus' writings in the Christian East and West. The main thesis of this volume is then described, namely, the analysis of Evagrius' practice of the discipline of psalmody. A connection between the seemingly disparate aspects of Evagrius' mystical theory is sought by approaching the relationship between psalmody and prayer from three perspectives: Evagrius' life, works, and spiritual doctrine; his recommendations concerning the usefulness of psalmody in the healing of the passions; and Evagrius' 'undisclosed psalmody'.

ABSTRACT

FULL TEXT

1. The Life and Thought of Evagrius Ponticus

This chapter discusses the life and writings of Evagrius Ponticus. The main source of information on Evagrius' life is Palladius, Bishop of Helenopolis, who spent nine years as a disciple of Evagrius in the desert of Kellia. Evagrius' writings are classified along a spectrum, with narrative treatises at one end, and collections of gnomic sentences at the other. His understanding of the spiritual life is summarized as 'the mind's long journey to the Holy Trinity'.

ABSTRACT

FULL TEXT

2. The Monastic Discipline of Psalmody

In the fourth century, the Book of Psalms gradually displaced other biblical texts used in so-called 'canonical prayers'. Among the monks, psalmody was one of the exterior ascetical practices which, together with fasting, keeping vigil, and restraint of speech, were recommended by almost all the desert fathers of the late fourth century. John Cassian was one of the most important witnesses to the practice and spirituality of psalmody. The practice and spirit of psalmody are discussed.

ABSTRACT

FULL TEXT

3. Evagrius on Exegesis and Psalmody

Psalmody and the recitation of other biblical texts served as the gateway to gnostike, the perception of the inner purposes of God beneath the letter of the text. Evagrius believed that the art of biblical exegesis, which is part of the gnostike, has its own methodology, just as the progressive vigilant study of the soul, which pertains to the praktike, has its proper methodology.

This chapter discusses the five texts in which Evagrius reflects on the purpose and the goal of psalmody. These are *De oratione* 82, 83, 85, and 87; and *Praktikos*.

ABSTRACT

FULL TEXT

4. Psalmody as Spiritual Remedy

In *De oratione* 83, Evagrius presents his belief that psalmody serves as a spiritual remedy, a means by which the passions are calmed and the body's disharmony is rectified. The basis of his faith in the efficacy of psalmody as spiritual remedy is his conviction that it is above all Christ who is encountered in the psalter. This chapter explores Evagrius' understanding of the therapeutic power of psalmody, particularly its efficacy with regards to the healing of thumos, in light of his regular use of medical imagery, theory, and the title 'Christ the physician'. Because of their significance as sources for Evagrius' spiritual doctrine, the use of these categories by Origen and the Cappadocian fathers is emphasized.

ABSTRACT

FULL TEXT

5. The Psalter as Spiritual Weapon

Evagrius believed that the spiritual benefits of chanting the psalms went beyond the calming effect of psalmody on the passions. The soul is in continuous warfare against demons that employ logismoi (tempting thoughts) to prevent humans from praying or perceiving God. The Book of Psalms is a valuable weapon that provides models of spiritual progress, as well as a means by which prayer and contemplation may be attained. Evagrius recommends the practice of psalmody in the *Praktikos*, *Antirrhetikos*, and *De oratione*. Psalms in the *Antirrhetikos* and antirrhetic texts in the *Scholia on Psalms* are discussed.

ABSTRACT

FULL TEXT

6. The Psalter as Contemplative Vision

Evagrius believed that that Book of Psalms afforded a vision of the whole creation, including the daily struggles of the praktike, as refulgent with divine meaning. The psalter can serve as a training ground for the Christian contemplative, a kind of workshop in which the gnostikos learns to perceive the divine logoi in the events of salvation history recounted in the psalms. This chapter examines the dynamic relationship between praktike and theoretike, and suggests a reciprocal relationship between spiritual progress and biblical exegesis.

ABSTRACT

FULL TEXT

8. Conclusion

This chapter presents a synthesis of the writings of Evagrius Ponticus discussions in this volume. It argues that the monastic discipline of psalmody reflects the Evagrius' vision of the spiritual life. The underlying rhythm of spiritual progress consists of the movement between poles of praktike, physike, and theologike; that is, progress from concern with moral and spiritual improvement to perception of God in and beyond creation.

ABSTRACT

FULL TEXT

Appendix

FULL TEXT

Bibliography

FULL TEXT

Index

FULL TEXT

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Psalmody and Prayer in the Writings of Evagrius Ponticus

Print ISBN 0199273200, 2005

pp. [v]

Preface

This monograph arose out of an interest in the exegetical writings of Evagrius Ponticus and a conviction that the significance of these texts for the overall understanding of Evagrius' spiritual doctrine has yet to be determined. Gabriel Bunge has suggested that the recent recovery of Evagrian texts necessitates a re-examination of widely held assumptions concerning Evagrius' orthodoxy. It has now become possible, thanks to the ongoing editorial work of A. and C. Guillaumont and of Paul Géhin, to read Evagrius' gnomic texts not only in the spirit of the anathemas of 543 and 553, but also in the light of Evagrius' extensive exegetical scholia, which often served as the basis for his more obscure *kephalaia*. Clearer insight into Evagrius' esteem for the Book of Psalms has been made possible by M.J. Rondeau, who has edited a collation of Evagrius' *Scholia on Psalms* based on MS *Vaticanus Graecus* 754. Her generosity in providing her collation for use in this volume is deeply appreciated.

The following individuals also provided valuable assistance in the preparation of this volume: Revd Edward Yarnold, SJ; Dr Alison Salvesen; Sr Benedicta Ward, SLG; Dr Sebastian Brock; Revd Jeremy Driscoll, OSB; Revd Columba Stewart, OSB; Revd Simon O'Donnell, OSB; Bro. Thomas Babusis, OSB; Revd Mark Sheridan, OSB; Revd Charles McCloskey; Revd Nicholas Heap; Revd David Forrester; Dr Douglas Burton-Christie; Dr Paul Ford; Dr Janice Ford-Daurio; Glen Dysinger; Christine Dysinger; Mary Heap; Ronald Berges; Jody Berges; Brent Lamb. To all of these and especially to Abbot Francis Benedict, OSB, who gave permission for the research which led to this book, the author wishes to express his gratitude.

[end p.v](#)

Dysinger OSB, Luke , Assistant Professor, Department of Moral Theology and Church History,
Saint John's Seminary, Camarillo, California

Psalmody and Prayer in the Writings of Evagrius Ponticus

Print ISBN 0199273200, 2005

pp. [vii]

Table of Contents

Abbreviations viii

Introduction 1

- 1 The Life and Thought of Evagrius Ponticus 7
 - 1.1 Biography 8
 - 1.2 Writings 17
 - 1.2.1 Narrative Treatises and Letters 19
 - 1.2.2 *Kephalaia* and Exegetical Texts 20
 - 1.2.3 Relative Dating of Evagrius' Works 24
 - 1.3 Ascetical and Mystical Theology 27
 - 1.3.1 Evagrian Psychology, Anthropology, and Cosmology 29
 - 1.3.2 Asceticism and Contemplation 34
- 2 The Monastic Discipline of Psalmody 48
 - 2.1 Athanasius, Palladius, and the Desert Fathers 49
 - 2.2 John Cassian 53
 - 2.2.1 The Practice of Psalmody 54
 - 2.2.2 The Spirit of Psalmody 58
- 3 Evagrius on Exegesis and Psalmody 62
 - 3.1 Contemplative Exegesis 62
 - 3.2 Evagrius' Principal Texts on Psalmody 70
 - 3.2.1 *De Oratione* 82 73
 - 3.2.2 *De Oratione* 83 88
 - 3.2.3 *De Oratione* 85 97
 - 3.2.4 *Praktikos* 69-71; *Scholion 1 on Psalm 137.1* 98
 - 3.3 Summary 102
- 4 Psalmody as Spiritual Remedy 104
 - 4.1 The Physician of Souls 104
 - 4.1.1 Medical Imagery in Origen 106
 - 4.1.2 Medical Imagery in Athanasius and the Cappadocians 111
 - 4.1.3 Evagrius' Use of Medical Language and Theory 115
 - 4.2 The Calming of *Thumos* 124

end p.vii

Dysinger OSB, Luke , Assistant Professor, Department of Moral Theology and Church History,
Saint John's Seminary, Camarillo, California

Psalmody and Prayer in the Writings of Evagrius Ponticus

Print ISBN 0199273200, 2005

pp. [viii]

5	The Psalter as Spiritual Weapon	131
5.1	Psalms in the <i>Antirrhetikos</i>	132
5.2	Antirrhetic Texts in the <i>Scholia on Psalms</i>	142
6	The Psalter as Contemplative Vision	150
6.1	Christ in the Psalter	152
6.2	The <i>Logoi</i> of Judgement and Providence	171
6.2.1	Judgement and the Variety of Bodies	176
6.2.2	Providence and the Mediators of Spiritual Progress	184
	Conclusion	196
Appendix 1	: The <i>Nous</i> of Christ in the <i>Kephalaia Gnostica</i>	199
Appendix 2	: Select Pages from MS <i>Vaticanus Graecus</i>	754 212
	<i>Bibliography</i>	217
	<i>Index</i>	237

end p.viii

Dysinger OSB, Luke , Assistant Professor, Department of Moral Theology and Church History,
Saint John's Seminary, Camarillo, California

Psalmody and Prayer in the Writings of Evagrius Ponticus

Print ISBN 0199273200, 2005

pp. [ix]

Abbreviations

- CCSL Corpus Christianorum Series Latina
- CSEL Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum
- GCS Die Griechischen Christlichen Schriftsteller
- GCS(NF) Die Griechischen Christlichen Schriftsteller (Neue Folge)
- PG* (Migne) *Patrologia Graeca*
- PL* (Migne) *Patrologia Latina*
- SC Sources Chrétiennes
- TLG* *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae*

end p.ix

Dysinger OSB, Luke , Assistant Professor, Department of Moral Theology and Church History,
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Psalmody and Prayer in the Writings of Evagrius Ponticus

Print ISBN 0199273200, 2005
pp. [1]-[5]

Introduction

Luke Dysinger OSB

Abstract: This introductory chapter begins with a discussion on the debates surrounding the influence of Evagrius Ponticus' writings in the Christian East and West. The main thesis of this volume is then described, namely, the analysis of Evagrius' practice of the discipline of psalmody. A connection between the seemingly disparate aspects of Evagrius' mystical theory is sought by approaching the relationship between psalmody and prayer from three perspectives: Evagrius' life, works, and spiritual doctrine; his recommendations concerning the usefulness of psalmody in the healing of the passions; and Evagrius' 'undisclosed psalmody'.

Keywords: **Evagrius Ponticus, psalmody, prayer, Christianity**

The recovery in the twentieth century of texts by Evagrius Ponticus has occasioned vigorous debate concerning his influence in the Christian East and West. In spite of his condemnation for Origenism in 553, his influence on later spiritual writers was considerable. In the West this influence was primarily indirect through the *Institutes* and *Conferences* of John Cassian,¹

¹ The details of Cassian's relationship with Evagrius are obscure: Cassian never mentions Evagrius by name, although it is likely that Evagrius is the subject of *Conference* 5.32 (Stewart, *Cassian the Monk*, p. 11 and p. 149 n. 101). Whether or not he was ever Evagrius' 'disciple' in the Egyptian desert, it is clear that Cassian was very familiar with Evagrius' writings. As Stewart notes, 'Evagrius was the single most important influence on Cassian's monastic theology' (*Cassian the Monk*, p. 11). The most complete study to date of Cassian's dependence on Evagrius is S. Marsili, *Giovanni Cassiano ed Evagrio Pontico: Dottrina sulla Carità e Contemplazione*. However, only fragments of Evagrius' exegetical texts were available when Marsili wrote: a comparison of Evagrius with Cassian with regard to the use and interpretation of biblical wisdom literature would probably demonstrate even greater dependence.

although Evagrius' own parenetic verses for monks and nuns were known in Latin translation and were widely read during the Middle Ages.²

² The *Ad monachos* was especially well-known and has a rich manuscript tradition: Leclercq, 'L'ancienne version latine des Sentences d'Évagre pour les moines'.

In the East a few of his writings survived under his own name in Greek:³

³ e.g. the *Praktikos*, the *Rerum monachalium rationes*, and brief collections of gnomic sentences, including the *Ad monachos* and *Ad virgines*.

a large number were attributed to orthodox authors and enjoyed continuous

popularity;⁴

⁴ Evagrius' *De oratione* was attributed to Nilus; his *Epistula fidei* or *Letter on the Trinity* survives as Basil's *Letter 8*; the *Scholia on Psalms* and *Scholia on Proverbs* are mixed with Origen's commentaries; and other scholia including those on Genesis, Numbers, Kings, and Job are scattered throughout the exegetical chains, variously attributed, often to Origen.

others survive only in Syriac, Coptic or Armenian translation; and still others have perished.⁵

⁵ Only scattered fragments remain of Evagrius' commentary on the Song of Songs.

His vocabulary and insights are found in the writings of his disciple Palladius as well as later authors such as (Pseudo-)Dionysius the Areopagite and Maximus Confessor.

Controversy concerning Evagrius' influence is broad-ranging: depending upon one's preferred vantage point, Evagrius can be assessed and described in very different ways. As Michael O'Laughlin has pointed out,⁶

⁶ O'Laughlin, 'New Questions Concerning the Origenism of Evagrius'.

throughout history those who consider Evagrius' ascetical treatises such as the *Praktikos*, *Peri Logismon*, and *Antirrhetikos*

end p.1

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to represent the core of his theology have often regarded Evagrius as an orthodox spiritual master who assimilated and expressed the best traditions of the Desert Fathers. Others who consider Evagrius' *Kephalaia Gnostica* and the *Letter to Melanius* to represent the clearest expression of his mature thought have portrayed him as a speculative, esoteric theologian who cloaked controversial doctrines in an enigmatic style, aware that stating them plainly would be dangerous. The breadth of controversy regarding Evagrius' theology can be seen in the contrasting interpretations of Elizabeth Clark, Simon Tugwell, Hans Urs von Balthasar, Irénée Hausherr, and Gabriel Bunge.

In her book *The Origenist Controversy* Elizabeth Clark highlights political and sociological dimensions of Evagrius' theories, and their role in the Origenist controversies of the fourth to sixth centuries. Following Guillaumont, she argues that by the end of the fifth century it was not Origen's writings that were fuelling debate, but rather the theology of Evagrius,⁷

⁷ Some of the doctrines 'of Origen' condemned in the anathemas of Justinian are actually quotations from Evagrius' writings: Clark reminds her readers that Koetschau's reconstruction of the *De Principiis* does not acknowledge this, and is based on the presumption that the anathemas are accurate quotations from Origen's works: Clark, *Origenist Controversy*, p. 86 n. 1.

whose works had become popular in monastic circles, particularly in Palestine.⁸

⁸ Quoting Bunge's introduction to Evagrius' *Letters* and adducing further evidence of her own, Clark posits regular lines of communication between Evagrius and the

Mount of Olives community under Melania and Rufinus. She suggests that it may have been their scriptorium that preserved and disseminated Evagrius' writings: Clark, *Origenist Controversy*, pp. 188-93)

She portrays Evagrius' spirituality as culminating in 'the intense and formless contemplation of the Godhead that suggests no images to the mind and renders it one with the divine'.⁹

⁹ Clark, *Origenist Controversy*, p. 84.

Thus Evagrius is a spiritual 'iconoclast' who emphasized a spirituality of formless, wordless prayer and a correspondingly 'anti-hierarchical' soteriology, derived from Origen. According to Clark both of these teachings threatened the religious and political establishments that eventually anathematized both Origen and Evagrius.¹⁰

¹⁰ Clark maintains that Evagrius' reworking of Origen's *apokatastasis* implied an ultimate levelling of all ranks in heaven, even those which once differentiated angels and human beings from demons. She reminds her readers that defenders of earthly hierarchies, ecclesiastical as well as political, prefer an orthodoxy that includes ranks and hierarchies in heaven: Clark, *Origenist Controversy*, pp. 99-101, 129-32.

Clark suggests that during Evagrius' lifetime his concept of 'pure, imageless' prayer had played a role in the anthropomorphite controversy

end p.2

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of 399.¹¹

¹¹ A possibility first suggested, as Clark notes (*Origenist Controversy*, p. 66) by Antoine Guillaumont in 1962: *Les 'Kephalalaia Gnostica' d'Evagre le Pontique*, pp. 59-62.

She admits that Theophilus, Patriarch of Alexandria and instigator of campaigns first against the anthropomorphites then against Egypt's Origenists, did not blame or even speak of Evagrius; nor did the church historians who described the controversy, all of whom who either knew Evagrius personally or at least knew his writings.¹²

¹² i.e. Palladius (who was Evagrius' disciple), Socrates, and Sozomen: Clark, *Origenist Controversy*, p. 50.

Unlike Gabriel Bunge, however, who believes that this silence vindicates Evagrius' orthodoxy,¹³

¹³ Bunge, 'Origenismus-Gnostizismus'.

Clark interprets it as an 'effective *damnatio memoriae*' by Theophilus.¹⁴

¹⁴ Clark, *Origenist Controversy*, p. 84.

She suggests that the historians in question, all of whom were sympathetic to Evagrius and Origen, may have deliberately avoided any mention of the role played by Evagrius' ideas in the controversy in order to protect his memory.¹⁵

¹⁵ Ibid., pp. 44-50.

For Clark Evagrius is 'the quintessential iconoclast, radicalizing and internalizing the historical anti-idolatry campaign waged by Theophilus'.¹⁶

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 84.

Clark does not pass judgement on Evagrius' orthodoxy, nor does she offer an opinion as to whether his influence on the later spiritual tradition should be regarded as problematic or beneficial. However, she does note in passing that from the perspective of modern philosophy Evagrius seems to have held a 'picture theory' of meaning, a theory she regards as having been refuted by E. Daitz.¹⁷

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 81 n. 279. E. Daitz, 'The Picture Theory of Meaning', *Essays in Conceptual Analysis*, pp. 53-74.

She also quotes J. N. T. Mitchell on the futility of the 'iconoclastic rhetoric' that typifies Evagrius' spiritual enterprise, and she concludes: 'Mitchell [. . .] highlights the futility of [Evagrius'] enterprise, given the contamination by language of all pictorial imagery.'¹⁸

¹⁸ Clark, *Origenist Controversy*, p. 84 n. 319. Mitchell, *Iconology*, pp. 42, 165.

Sharper criticism of Evagrius is provided by Simon Tugwell, who has translated and summarized Evagrius' teachings.¹⁹

¹⁹ Tugwell has edited and translated a critical edition of Evagrius' *De oratione*, and translated the *Praktikos*. He discusses Evagrius' theology in *Ways of Imperfection*, pp. 25-36.

He offers the following comment on Evagrius' doctrine: '[Evagrius was] one of the greatest masters of the spiritual life and of psychology in ancient monasticism; but his theological and philosophical speculation led him into wild heresy, which incurred condemnation at successive Church councils.'²⁰

²⁰ Tugwell, *Prayer*, p. 139.

end p.3

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These two recent assessments of Evagrius' theology were anticipated in the 1930s by criticism levelled by two noted Evagrian scholars, Hans Urs von Balthasar and Irénée Hausherr. It was von Balthasar who had first suggested that Evagrius was the real author of a large part of the *Selecta in Psalmos* attributed to Origen.²¹

²¹ Balthasar, 'Die Hiera des Evagrius', pp. 86-106, 181-206.

In an article on Evagrius' metaphysics and mysticism he concluded: 'there can be no doubt that Evagrius' mysticism in its fully coherent unity is essentially closer to Buddhism than to Christianity [. . .] Evagrius is a true mystic. But can he for that reason alone be regarded as a Christian mystic?'²²

²² Balthasar, 'Metaphysik und Mystik', pp. 39-40.

Von Balthasar was particularly critical of Evagrius' trinitarian theology, which

seemed to him 'clearly subordinationistic' with an overemphasis on the divine unity at the expense of the uniqueness of the three Persons.²³

²³ Ibid., p. 39.

Five years earlier Irénée Hausherr had raised similar concerns in his textual study and commentary on the *De oratione*: '[. . .] It must be said that Evagrius never integrated Trinitarian theology into his mysticism [. . .] although theology is its supreme goal, Evagrian mysticism remains more philosophical than properly theological.'²⁴

²⁴ Hausherr, 'Le Traité de l'Oraison', p. 117. These two articles were reprinted with minor changes as *Les Leçons d'un Contemplatif* (Paris, 1960). In the corresponding passage of *Les Leçons*, Hausherr adds to his observation the qualification, 'at least in a trinitarian sense'. This has prompted Bunge to ask whether Hausherr may have changed his mind on the question of the inadequacy of Evagrius' trinitarian theology: Bunge, 'The "Spiritual Prayer" ', p. 206 n. 4.

In contrast to these appraisals of Evagrius' spirituality stands the work of Gabriel Bunge, a modern anchorite. Bunge's contribution to the scholarly literature on Evagrius is considerable: it includes a German translation from the Syriac of Evagrius' letters (the first such translation in any modern language), commentaries on the *Praktikos* and *De oratione*, a book on Evagrius as spiritual director, and numerous articles on Evagrius' Origenism, technical vocabulary, and relations with other contemporary monastic authors including Didymus the Blind and the two Macarii. Bunge differs from most other Evagrian scholars in his belief that it is possible to understand Evagrius in an orthodox way.²⁵

²⁵ In this he is followed, albeit reservedly, by Jeremy Driscoll, who has translated and written a commentary on select proverbs from the *Ad monachos* (*The 'Ad Monachos' of Evagrius Ponticus*), as well as articles on Evagrius' spiritual doctrine ('Evagrius and Paphnutius', 'Spiritual Progress', 'Spousal Images', 'Penthos and Tears').

Thus on controversial questions, particularly of soteriology and eschatology where Evagrius is notoriously enigmatic, Bunge suggests interpretations

end p.4

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of heretical-sounding proverbs which allow them to be understood in an orthodox sense.²⁶

²⁶ This does not mean that Bunge's presentation is necessarily distorted by what might be called his 'hermeneutic of orthodoxy': for the most part he offers his conclusions together with the views of other scholars and allows his readers to draw their own conclusions; as for example in his defence of Evagrius' doctrine of the Trinity against the criticisms of von Balthasar and Hausherr, 'The "Spiritual Prayer" ', pp. 191-208.

At the heart of the negative judgements described above is Evagrius' doctrine of 'pure prayer'. For Evagrius the goal of prayer is the same as the final goal of human existence: union with God transcending all words and images. 'Spiritual contemplation' or 'theology' (Evagrius' synonyms for 'pure prayer') is the highest form of contemplative experience possible for created

beings. It is nothing less than an inward anticipation of the eschaton, where all diversity will be gathered into unity and the 'many' will be restored to their place within 'The One'.²⁷

²⁷ Evagrius, *Letter to Melania* 27; Bunge, *Briefe aus der Wüste*, p. 312; Frankenberg, *Evagrius Ponticus*, pp. 618-19: 'if into it many rivers [. . .] are completely and effortlessly transformed into its nature and color and taste—how much more will the intelligible, limitless, and unchangeable sea that is God the Father transform into His own nature and color and taste all the intellects that turn back to him, like tributary streams reaching the sea!'

Evagrius' recommendation of formless prayer is based both on his eschatology and on his doctrine of the divine nature. Relinquishing every thought and image is necessary in order to behold 'Him Who is beyond every sense-experience and thought'.²⁸

²⁸ Evagrius, *De oratione* 4, Tugwell, *Evagrius*, p. 3 (cf. PG 79.1168):
τὸν ὑπὲρ πᾶσαν αἰσθησὶν καὶ ἐννοίαν .

What is needed is an approach which holds together these different depictions of Evagrius: on the one hand the much sought-after spiritual father of Kellia, Palladius' 'Blessed Abba Evagrius'; and on the other (to use his own terminology) Evagrius the *gnostikos*, the contemplative hermit in search of spiritual knowledge and union with God. Or to put it another way, what is needed is an approach to Evagrius which emphasizes the interrelationship and not merely the distinctions between the different levels or stages of spiritual development which are the foundation of Evagrius' ascetical and mystical theology.

In this thesis a bridge between these different depictions of Evagrius and a clearer appreciation of the overall unity of his model of spiritual progress will be sought in one facet of Evagrius' personal asceticism, specifically in his practice of the monastic discipline of psalmody. Very few studies of Evagrius' contribution to the Christian mystical tradition have considered his theology from the

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Psalmody and Prayer in the Writings of Evagrius Ponticus

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pp. [6]-[10]

perspective of his own ascetical practice.²⁹

²⁹ The work of Gabriel Bunge, Jeremy Driscoll, and Columba Stewart are exceptions to this generalization. In the first two chapters of *Das Geistgebet*, an introduction to Evagrius' *De oratione*, Bunge discusses psalmody and prayer in Evagrius and raises many of the issues covered in this volume. In *The 'Ad Monachos' of Evagrius Ponticus* Driscoll situates the proverbs of *Ad monachos* in the context of Evagrius' monastic discipline. In 'Approaches to Early Monastic Prayer' Stewart discusses Evagrius' epistemology and theory of prayer in light of Evagrius' daily practice of prayer.

Little attention has been paid to the fact that throughout his monastic life Evagrius performed psalmody followed by a period of silent prayer 100 times each day: thus his own spiritual practice included the nearly-continuous use of words and images of the most varied and vivid kind. Nor has much been made of the fact that his longest work is a collection of glosses on the entire psalter, the *Scholia on Psalms*. In this thesis a connection between seemingly disparate aspects of Evagrius' mystical theology will be sought by approaching the relationship between psalmody and prayer from three perspectives. First, after presenting Evagrius' life, works, and spiritual doctrine, the monastic discipline of psalmody will be described as it was practised by Evagrius and his contemporaries; and Evagrius' own texts on the interrelationship between psalmody and prayer will then be considered. Second, Evagrius' recommendations concerning the usefulness of psalmody in the healing of the passions, especially anger, and in the refuting of temptations, will be discussed. Finally, biblical scholia will be studied which facilitate what Evagrius called 'undistracted psalmody': that is, contemplation by means of the words used in psalmody of the person of Christ and of Christ's salvific work within creation.

end p.6

1 The Life and Thought of Evagrius Ponticus

Luke Dysinger OSB

Abstract: This chapter discusses the life and writings of Evagrius Ponticus. The main source of information on Evagrius' life is Palladius, Bishop of Helenopolis, who spent nine years as a disciple of Evagrius in the desert of Kellia. Evagrius' writings are classified along a spectrum, with narrative

treaties at one end, and collections of gnomic sentences at the other. His understanding of the spiritual life is summarized as 'the mind's long journey to the Holy Trinity'.

Keywords: Evagrius Ponticus, biography, narrative treaties, gnomic sentences, spiritual life, theory

The principal source of information on Evagrius' life is Palladius, Bishop of Helenopolis, who in his youth spent nine years as a disciple of Evagrius in the desert of Kellia. In chapter 38 of the *Lausiac History* he provides a candid but disappointingly brief biography of Evagrius, to whom he occasionally refers in passing throughout the rest of the text. There is no doubt that Palladius wrote the *Lausiac History* in Greek; however, the Coptic version of this text contains additional details of Evagrius' life and ascetical practice not found in the Greek text. It has been suggested that Palladius wrote a longer *Life of Evagrius* which has been lost, but which was available to the Coptic translator who made use of it to augment the Coptic version of the *Lausiac History*.¹

¹ The additions to the Coptic version of the *Lausiac History* are not of equal value: in addition to valuable interpolations they also include a few obvious mistranslations and misleading glosses. Butler discusses these in the introduction to his edition of the *Lausiac History* (Butler, *Lausiac History*, vol. i, pp. 115-19, 130-48). One portion of this additional material is of particular interest: namely, ch. 38.11, the 'Tale of the Three Demons Disguised as Clerics'. Since it is attested in a Greek fragment published by Cotelier (*Ecclesiae Graecae Monumenta*, vol. iii, pp. 117-20), this fragment enables one to distinguish between glosses by the Coptic editor and material probably taken from the source of Cotelier's Greek fragment (presumed to be Palladius' lost work). Butler rejects the theory of Amélineau, the editor of the Coptic version, who suggests that Palladius' original *Lausiac History* was a longer work of which we now possess only an abridgment (*Lausiac History*, vol. i, pp. 141-3). Butler concludes that the Coptic version is a translation from the received Greek text of the *Lausiac History*, augmented with both glosses by the translator and interpolations from another Greek *Life of Evagrius*. Butler does not agree with Zöckler's conclusion that Palladius must have been the author of this second *Life*, but he admits that the author was probably 'a member of Evagrius' circle of disciples' and he tentatively suggests as a possible author the 'Albinus' whom Palladius describes as Evagrius' disciple, friend, and neighbour at Kellia (*Lausiac History*, vol. i, pp. 137-9, 147). Bunge, however, along with other modern scholars, regards Palladius as the probable author of the additional material (*Briefe aus der Wüste*, p. 99 n. 112).

The apophthegmata of the desert fathers contain a few sayings and stories concerning Evagrius which are not found elsewhere; but for the most part they repeat material taken from the *Lausiac History* or from Evagrius' own works.²

² In the Greek Alphabetical Collection (PG 65.173-6) seven apophthegmata are assigned to Evagrius: of these § 5 and § 7 are sayings not attested elsewhere. Two additional sayings in this collection concern Evagrius: the anonymous interlocutor of *Arsenius* 5 is identified as Evagrius in the Latin Systematic Collection (ch. 10, *On Discretion* 5, PL 73.912-3); and *Euprepios* 7 in the Greek collection is correctly assigned to Evagrius in the Latin collection (ch. 10, *On Discretion* 19, PL 73.915). The Latin Systematic Collection lacks one apophthegm found in the Greek Alphabetical Collection (*Evagrius* 5), but the Latin collection includes six additional sayings of Evagrius (chiefly citations from his writings), for a total of fourteen apophthegmata.

The anonymous *Historia Monachorum*

provides a few additional details, both in the original Greek and in Rufinus' Latin translation: the latter version includes several glosses in which Rufinus praises Evagrius, whom he knew well. Evagrius is also mentioned in Gennadius' additions to Jerome's *On Illustrious Men*, the *Ecclesiastical Histories* of Socrates and Sozomen,³

³ Gennadius, Socrates, and Sozomen all appear to have made use of *The Lausiac History* in their descriptions of Evagrius' life. Socrates, however, seems to have had access to other sources concerning Evagrius, since he includes details concerning Archbishop Theophilus' intentions towards Evagrius which are quite plausible, but are not mentioned elsewhere. Both Gennadius and Socrates were familiar with Evagrius' writings: Gennadius translated several of Evagrius' treatises into Latin (*On Illustrious Men* 11); and Socrates quotes extensively from the *Gnostikos*, thereby incidentally preserving texts which would otherwise have been lost in the original (*Ecclesiastical History* 3.7, 4.23).

and the Letters of Gregory Nazianzen, Basil, and Jerome.⁴

⁴ Jerome mentions Evagrius disapprovingly in three texts written about fifteen years after Evagrius' death: *Letter* 133.3 (*ad Ctesiphontem*); *Dialogue Against the Pelagians*, prologue; and *Commentary on Jeremiah* 4.1. His comments do not suggest that Jerome was particularly well-informed about Evagrius' life or his works.

The portrait of Evagrius' life which emerges from these sources, although sketchy, is consistent and generally reliable, since at least in the case of Palladius and Rufinus it represents the testimony of eyewitnesses who knew Evagrius well. The limited portrait provided by these sources has recently been augmented through an extensive biographical study by Gabriel Bunge which serves as the introduction to his German translation of Evagrius' *Letters*.⁵

⁵ Bunge, *Evagrius Pontikos. Briefe aus der Wüste*, pp. 17-111.

Bunge's study of the letters affords glimpses of the ordinarily self-effacing Evagrius in his role as friend and spiritual adviser.

1.1 Biography

Very little is known concerning the first half of Evagrius' life. A native of Ibora in Pontus, he was the son a chorbishop and was born in 345 or 346.⁶

⁶ Palladius states that Evagrius was 54 at the time of his death on the Feast of Epiphany (*Lausiac History* 38.1 and 38.13, ed. Bartelink, pp. 192, 202). It would appear that this was in the same year Theophilus of Alexandria issued his Easter Letter against the anthropomorphites and precipitated the first Origenist crisis; that is, 399.

Completely self-effacing in his own writings, Evagrius

nowhere mentions his youth or early academic training; however, his literary style and occasional citations in his writings suggest that he was familiar with pagan classics and classical rhetoric.⁷

⁷ Wolfgang Lackner has studied the question of Evagrius' classical education ('Zur profanen Bildung'). He notes two citations from pagan authors in Evagrius' works: a quote from Sophocles' lost *Polyeides* in Evagrius' *Epistula Fidei*, and a reference in *De diversis malignis cogitationibus* to the opinion of a 'heathen author', who turns out to be Menander. However, neither citation proves that Evagrius had first-hand knowledge of these texts, since they are also found in Clement of Alexandria's *Stromateis* (4.2 and 7.6), which Evagrius knew well and cites elsewhere in his writings. Not mentioned by Lackner are: Evagrius' citation of Aristotle in scholion 96 on *Proverbs* 7: 22 (which may stem from Hippolytus, cf. Géhin, *Scholies aux Proverbes*, SC 340, p. 197 n.); and Evagrius' reworking in *Praktikos* 89 of the anonymous peripatetic treatise *De virtutibus et vitiis* (discussed by A. and C. Guillaumont, *Traité Pratique*, SC 171, pp. 682-3 n.). The latter is strongly suggestive of Evagrius' first-hand knowledge of classical texts. Lackner further believes that Evagrius' letters demonstrate a familiarity with classical epistolography ('Zur profanen Bildung', pp. 20-2); while Evagrius' definitions and categories, especially in the *Kephalaia Gnostica*, suggest knowledge of Aristotle and Porphyry which may be direct or indirect. Bunge speculates that Evagrius may have studied at Cappadocian Caesarea (*Briefe aus der Wüste*, p. 20).

Evagrius was in his mid- to late twenties, or perhaps older, when Basil of Caesarea ordained him lector,⁸

⁸ Basil became bishop of Caesarea in 370; Palladius does not state how or when Evagrius joined Basil's clergy. The Coptic version of the *Lausiac History* mentions Basil's ordination of Evagrius' father, but Butler considers this to be a mistranslation from the Greek: Butler, *Lausiac History*, vol. i, p. 118.

and he remained a member of Basil's clergy until the latter's death in 379: he thus spent nine years or less in Basil's company. It is tempting to speculate that Evagrius' later choice of the monastic life owes something to the influence of Basil's ascetical theology, or perhaps to personal experience of Basil's monastic foundations. However, Palladius gives no hint of monastic inclinations during this stage in Evagrius' life, and it is noteworthy that neither Evagrius nor his biographers describe him as a 'monk' at this period.⁹

⁹ Scholars have occasionally referred to Evagrius as a 'fugitive [Basilian] monk': e.g. Bousset, *Apophthegmata*, p. 336; Hausherr, *Traité de l'Oraison*, p. 170. Bunge has pointed out that this interpretation lacks supporting evidence in the relevant sources: *Briefe aus der Wüste*, p. 22, 95 n. 14.

Emotionally shattered by Basil's death, he fled Caesarea at the age of thirty-three, as he later explained apologetically to friends in his *Epistula Fidei*:

Μάλιστα μὲν τῷ ἀδοκῆτῳ τότε πληγείς, καθάπερ οἱ τοῖς αἰφνιδίῳις ψόφοις ἀθρόως καταπλαγέντες, οὐ κατέσχον τοὺς λογισμοὺς, ἀλλ' ἐμάκρυνα φυγαδεύων καὶ ἡϋλίσθην χρόνον ἱκανὸν ἀφ' ὑμῶν.

¹⁰

¹⁰ Evagrius, *Epistula fidei* 1.8-11, Courtonne, p. 23.

First of all, then, bewildered at the time by the unexpected [event], as men are who are suddenly terrified by unexpected confusions, I could not

control my [perplexed] thoughts, but I fled the situation afar off, and have spent a considerable time away from you.

In this letter, the earliest extant text from Evagrius' pen,¹¹

¹¹ Bunge believes the *Epistula fidei* was composed in the first half of 381. Although it contains citations from Gregory Nazianzen's *Oration* 36, which Bunge presumes to have been delivered between November 380 and May 381, Evagrius makes no mention of or allusion to the (Second Ecumenical) Council of Constantinople which took place in May 381, and in which he is described as having played an active role: Palladius, *Lausiaca History* 38.2, ed. Bartelink, p. 194; Bunge, *Briefe aus der Wüste*, p. 193.

he goes on to explain that after recovering from the shock of Basil's death he was overcome by 'a longing for divine teachings and their attendant philosophy'.¹²

¹² Evagrius, *Epistula fidei* 1.11-13, ed. Courtonne, p. 23:

ἔπειτα δὲ καὶ πόθος τις ὑπείσθηι με τῶν θεῶν δογμάτων καὶ τῆς περὶ ἐκεῖνα φιλοσοφίας.

The search for these led him to Constantinople, to Basil's friend Gregory Nazianzen, 'a vessel of election and a deep spring [. . .] Gregory, the mouth [piece] of Christ'.¹³

¹³ Evagrius, *Epistula fidei* 1.17-19, ed. Courtonne, p. 23:

σκεῦος ἐκλογῆς καὶ φρέαρ βαθύ, [...] τὸ τοῦ Χριστοῦ στόμα Γρηγόριον.

In the spring of 379 Gregory had assumed leadership of the small orthodox congregation in Constantinople. Evagrius may have reached Constantinople quite soon after Gregory's arrival, perhaps only a few months later.¹⁴

¹⁴ In addition to familiarity with Gregory of Nazianzen's *Oration* 36, described in n. 11 above, Evagrius also borrows in his *Epistula fidei* from Gregory's *Oration* 38, considered by Gallay and Szmusiak to have been delivered in December 379. If this dating is correct, then this supplies a *terminus ad quem* for Evagrius' arrival in Constantinople.

Gregory 'took note of his fitness, and ordained him deacon'.¹⁵

¹⁵ Palladius, *Lausiaca History* 38.2, ed. Bartelink, p. 194:

προσσχὼν αὐτοῦ τῇ ἐπιτηδεύσει [. . .] προχειρίζεται διάκονον.

Gregory mentions Evagrius in his *Testament* of 381, possibly alluding to Evagrius' assistance and support in the turbulent events surrounding Gregory's installation as archbishop of Constantinople by the emperor Theodosius:

Εὐαγρίῳ τῷ διακόνῳ πολλά μοι συγκαμόντι καὶ συνεκφροντίσαντι, διὰ πλειόνων τε τὴν εὐνοίαν παραστήσαντι χάριν ὁμολογῶ καὶ ἐπὶ Θεοῦ καὶ ἐπὶ ἀνθρώπων.

¹⁶

¹⁶ Gregory Nazianzen, *Exemplum Testamenti*, PG 37.393. Gregory goes on to bequeath Evagrius, in thanks for his steadfast support, 'a shirt, a tunic, two cloaks, and 30 gold pieces'.

To Evagrius the deacon who labored and strove together with me, and who so often proved his good will, I render thanks before both God and men.

Several points concerning this period in Evagrius' life should be noted. First, although he spent less than two years as a cleric in Gregory Nazianzen's service, Gregory's influence on him was

end p.10

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Psalmody and Prayer in the Writings of Evagrius Ponticus

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pp. [11]-[15]

profound and enduring. Evagrius employs appellations of deep respect in describing Gregory as one of his teachers and an important source of his own spiritual doctrine.¹⁷

¹⁷ In addition to being 'a vessel of election [. . .] a deep spring [. . .] the mouth [piece] of Christ' as cited above (*Epistula fidei* 1.17-19), Gregory Nazianzen is

Evagrius' 'wise teacher' (ὁ σοφὸς ἡμῶν διδάσκαλος) in both *Praktikos* 89 (SC 171, p. 180) and *Kephalaia Gnostica* VI.51 (Greek fragment e20, Hausherr, 'Nouveaux fragments', p. 232).

Second, Evagrius was present in Constantinople as a member of Gregory's clergy when Gregory delivered his famous orations of 379-81. In his *Epistula fidei* Evagrius draws enthusiastically from Gregory's *Orations* 30, 36, and 38. If, as seems likely, it was through Basil and Gregory Nazianzen that Evagrius became familiar with the teachings of Origen, then he would have received from these two Cappadocians not an uncritical enthusiasm, but rather a highly critical and selective approach to Origen's teachings.¹⁸

¹⁸ Typified by their compilation of the *Philokalia* from Origen's *De Principiis*. Also note-worthy is Gregory's account of the creation and fall in *Oration* 38, discussed below, pp. 31-2 n. 98.

Finally, two famous personalities, Gregory of Nyssa and Jerome, were also active in the circle around Gregory Nazianzen during this period, and it is likely that Evagrius encountered them in Constantinople. However, there is no indication that Gregory of Nyssa or Jerome took any particular notice of Evagrius at this time, nor is there any certain evidence that Evagrius' spiritual doctrine was directly influenced by either of them.¹⁹

¹⁹ Numerous themes common to both Evagrius and Gregory of Nyssa can be adduced, but their significance has yet to be determined. Thus, for example, I. Hausherr believes that Evagrius' allusion to those 'who speak of one ignorance which has an end and another without end' (*Praktikos* 87, SC 171, p. 678:

τῆς δὲ ἀγνωσίας τῆς μὲν εἶναι πέρας, τῆς δὲ μὴ εἶναι) refers to 'the authors of the *Vitae Mosis*', i.e. Philo and Gregory of Nyssa (Hausherr, 'Ignorance infinie', p. 360). Guillaumont, however, believes that this terminology derives from Basil and Gregory in their controversy with Eunomius (*Traité pratique*, pp. 679-80). Lackner suggests that in *Kephalaia Gnostica* III.76, V.12, and IV.68 Evagrius borrows from Gregory of Nyssa's use of Aristotle and Poseidonius ('Zur profanen Bildung', pp. 28-9); but Evagrius' own familiarity with these ancient authors cannot be excluded. This question belongs to the realm of conjecture, since as is noted above, there are no clear citations of Gregory of Nyssa by Evagrius, nor does Gregory of Nyssa ever mention Evagrius by name. As Bunge has concluded, the whole question has yet to be thoroughly studied (Bunge, *Briefe aus der Wüste*, p. 21 n. 16). In regard to Jerome, Evagrius never mentions him by name, except perhaps elliptically and with some anxiety: for example, in disapproving comments about

monks who write or speak scornfully of others (Bunge, *Briefe aus der Wüste*, p. 93 n. 14) and in his evident anxiety that the speculative *Letter to Melania* not fall into the wrong hands (Evagrius, *Letter to Melania* 17). Jerome criticized both Evagrius' doctrine of *apatheia* and Evagrius' friendship with Rufinus and Melania in his *Letter to Ctesiphon*, written about 15 years after Evagrius' death; but Jerome's criticism gives no indication that he knew Evagrius personally.

Upon Gregory Nazianzen's resignation as archbishop in 381 during the Ecumenical Council of Constantinople, Evagrius was entrusted to Nectarios, Gregory's successor. Evagrius demonstrated

end p.11

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great rhetorical skill in Nectarios' service, probably during the Council itself, 'opposing all heresies with youthful vigor'.²⁰

²⁰ Palladius, *Lausiac History* 38.2, ed. Bartelink, p. 194:

λόγοις νεανιευόμενος κατὰ πάσης αἵρέσεως .

Gregory Nazianzen left Constantinople before July of 381. Within a short time, perhaps less than a year, Evagrius also departed the imperial capital, never to return to Asia Minor. Nectarios' eloquent, successful deacon was fleeing an impending love affair with a noblewoman whose husband was a high civic official. Having been warned in an 'angelic vision'²¹

²¹ Palladius describes it as an angelic vision (ἁγγελικὴ ὁπτασία) which followed prayer

(*Lausiac History* 38.4, ed. Bartelink, p. 194); while Sozomen (*Ecclesiastical History* 6.30, 9, ed. Bidez and Hansen (1995), p. 285) calls it a 'fearful and saving vision' which occurred in a dream during sleep,

(καθεύδοντι αὐτῷ φοβερὰν τινα καὶ σωτήριον ὁνείρατος ὅψιν ἐπιπέμπει τὸ θεῖον) .

that the affair could cost him both his reputation and his life, Evagrius swore to obey the angel's command to leave Constantinople immediately and 'take heed for your soul'.²²

²² Palladius, *Lausiac History* 38.2, ed. Bartelink, p. 194:.

Despite misgivings upon awakening regarding the solemnity of an oath sworn in a vision, Evagrius remained in the city only long enough to pack his belongings, and took ship for Jerusalem.

Although the choice of Jerusalem as his destination does not appear to have been inspired by any particular interest in monasticism, he became acquainted soon after his arrival with the double monastery on the Mount of Olives founded by Melania the Elder and Rufinus, who eventually became his life-long friends. However, their influence on him at this stage was insufficient to prevent a return to his former way of life; and for a time Evagrius wallowed in the life of an arrogant, self-indulgent cleric.²³

²³ Palladius states that he reverted both in his clothing and in his speech to what he had been before the vision, and was overcome with vainglory:

κάκεισε πάλιν ἐξαλλάσσων τοῖς ἱματίοις καὶ ἐν τῇ διαλέκτῳ ἐκάρου αὐτὸν ἢ κενοδοξία ,

Palladius, *Lausiac History* 38.8, ed. Bartelink, p. 198.

His conversion to monasticism came as the result of a mysterious febrile

illness which lasted six months and left him weak and emaciated. Melania became concerned and encouraged him to tell her his whole story; after hearing it she promised to pray for his return to health if he would resolve to become a monk.²⁴

²⁴ E. White suggests that Melania considered the cause of Evagrius' illness to be his failure to carry out his oath to obey the angel and 'take heed for [his] soul'. Monastic life presented a way of carrying out this promise: *Monasteries of the Wâdi 'n Natrûn*, pp. 84-5.

He agreed, was healed within a few days, and straightaway received the monastic habit.²⁵

²⁵ Although Palladius mentions only Melania in connection with Evagrius' time in Jerusalem, Bunge emphasizes the significance of Evagrius' relationship with the whole community on the Mount of Olives, and especially the role of Rufinus. Rufinus admired Evagrius (his translation of the *Historia monachorum in Aegypto* includes complimentary addenda praising Evagrius' asceticism and erudition); and both he and Melania were the recipients of many of Evagrius' letters. Bunge believes that it was from Rufinus that Evagrius received the habit, and that Palladius' assertion that it was from Melania that he received the ceremonial 'change of clothing' (*Lausiac History* 38.8, ed. Bartelink, p. 198:) refers to her status as superior of the double monastery.

Shortly

end p.12

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thereafter he embarked for the Egyptian desert, undoubtedly after consulting with Melania and Rufinus, and probably with the intention of spending time in the company of monks and teachers whom they knew.²⁶

²⁶ Bunge believes that the 'Anatolius' to whom Evagrius dedicated his spiritual trilogy of *Praktikos*, *Gnostikos*, and *Kephalaia Gnostica* may have been a wealthy member of Rufinus' monastic community: *Briefe aus der Wüste*, pp. 32-6. He further suggests that the 'Albinus' whom Palladius describes as a close acquaintance of Evagrius in Egypt (*Lausiac History* 47.3, ed. Bartelink, p. 226) may have been a relative of Melania, and the person to whom Melania originally entrusted Evagrius on his arrival in Egypt.

Evagrius lived for two years in the monastic settlement of Nitria, 30 miles south-east of Alexandria. Following this initial cenobitic training he withdrew to the nearby hermit colony of Kellia ('the Cells'),²⁷

²⁷ White believed Kellia lay 10-11 miles south-west of Nitria on the route to Sketis: *Monasteries of the Wâdi 'n Natrûn*, p. 25. In 1964 A. Guillaumont discovered a site 15 miles south-west of Nitria which he believed to be Kellia; his discovery was confirmed in 1965 by archaeological excavations which continued at intervals over the next twenty years: Bridel, 'Le Site des Kellia'; Kasser, 'Le Monachisme copte'.

where he spent the remaining fifteen years of his life. Evagrius' biographers and his own writings particularly emphasize the formative spiritual training he received from the two famous Macarii. Macarius 'the elder' also called 'the Egyptian', was in the last years of his long life. He had founded the monastic community of Sketis, about 36 miles south-west of Nitria; and he maintained cells in both Kellia and Sketis. 'The younger' Macarius, also called 'the

Alexandrian', was 'the priest of Kellia' and thus Evagrius' monastic superior. Since the hermit life as was lived in Kellia did not preclude travel for the sake of spiritual advancement, Evagrius sought opportunities to learn from famous monks, including those who lived at a considerable distance. Thus in addition to regular visits to Macarius the Egyptian in Sketis,²⁸

²⁸ These visits may partially account for the popularity of Evagrius' writings among the monks of Sketis, his inclusion among their apophthegmata, and his occasional designation of himself as coming 'from Sketis' (Evagrius, *Praktikos* Prol. 1, SC 171, p. 482); however the latter designation may be explained by the fact that 'the term "Scetis" is sometimes used in our sources to cover Nitria as well': Chitty, *The Desert a City*, p. 12. It is possible that Evagrius also came into contact with John Cassian, who spent considerable time in Sketis, during

Evagrius is known to have visited John of Lycopolis in the Thebaid; and it is possible

end p.13

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that he also visited Didymus the Blind who lived on an island in the Mareotic Lake near Alexandria.²⁹

²⁹ Visits to Didymus may explain the otherwise unattested and somewhat surprising statement in the anonymous *Historia monachorum in Aegypto* that Evagrius 'frequently visited Alexandria (πολλakis κατελθὼν ἐς λεξιῶρειαν) to dispute with the philosophers', (*Historia monachorum in Aegypto* 4.20.80).

Evagrius came to be known as a gifted *abba*, or spiritual teacher and guide; and as such he played a leading role in the intellectual 'Origenist' circle in Kellia. Its members included the four 'tall brothers', Ammonius, Euthymius, Dioscorus, and Eusebius, all of whom had been disciples of the famous Abba Pambo. Evagrius' own disciples included the later bishops Palladius of Helenopolis and Heraclides of Cyprus. Evagrius and the Tall Brothers came to the attention of successive archbishops of Alexandria, who schemed at different times to add them to their clergy.³⁰

³⁰ White believes that Timothy's successful overtures to Eusebius and Euthemius took place in 375 or 376: *Monasteries of the Wādī 'n Natrūn*, p. 131.

Of the four Tall Brothers, only Ammonius successfully resisted by cutting off his own ear and threatening to cut out his tongue unless Archbishop

Timothy's representatives desisted.³¹

³¹ Palladius, *Lausiak History* 11.1-4, ed. Bartelink, pp. 50-3.

Around ten years later Evagrius employed the less drastic stratagem of flight against Timothy's successor, Theophilus, who intended Evagrius to become bishop of Thmuis. Evagrius fled to Palestine, probably to Melania and Rufinus, until Theophilus relented; then he returned to Kellia and eventually sent the archbishop an apologetic letter.³²

³² Palladius, *Lausiak History*, Coptic version, ed. Amélineau, p. 118. Evagrius' apology to Theophilus is his *Letter* 13, discussed by Bunge in *Briefe aus der Wüste*, pp. 102 n. 158, 187, 340 nn. 1-2.

Socrates mentions that Evagrius later chided Ammonius for his immoderate

act, and was in return rebuked by Ammonius with the observation that for one as skilled in rhetoric as Evagrius, to refuse episcopal ordination amounted to the same thing as cutting out one's tongue.³³

³³ Socrates, *Ecclesiastical History* 4.23, 75-6, ed. Hansen, p. 256.

As was not uncommon among the hermits of Kellia, Evagrius often received visitors at his hermitage, both monks and laypeople who sought his advice. The Coptic version of the *Lausiac History* describes this activity in some detail: he received monks on Saturdays and Sundays, and held discussions with them throughout the night; if any wished to speak privately with him he would see them individually in the morning.³⁴

³⁴ Palladius, *Lausiac History*, Coptic version, ed. Amélineau, pp. 114-15.

He also received up to six or seven

end p.14

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pilgrims each day, and any gifts they offered him were turned over to the steward who lived with him and managed his financial affairs. Evagrius supplemented the income from these gifts by copying manuscripts, a skill at which he evidently excelled.³⁵

³⁵ Evagrius is credited with the ability to 'write the Oxyrinchus characters with a graceful hand' (Palladius, *Lausiac History* 38.10, ed. Bartelink, p. 200). In the nineteenth century Ehrhard suggested that the *Euthalianus* codex of the Pauline Epistles, which in a colophon bears the name 'Evagrius' and the date 396, is an example of Evagrius' activity as a copyist and editor: Robinson, '*Euthaliana*', pp. 5-7, 100-2.

Evagrius' letters and the testimonies of his admirers reveal him to have been a discerning and compassionate spiritual guide; however, his own personal asceticism was severe: his friend Rufinus described it as 'incredible'.³⁶

³⁶ Rufinus, *Historia Monachorum* 27.7.3, ed. Schultz-Flügel, p. 364: 'Hic ergo Evagrius incredibilis erat abstinenciae.'

He slept only a third of the night, spending the remainder of the night hours pacing in his courtyard, praying, and meditating. During the afternoon he again paced in his courtyard in order to stay awake, and meditated on biblical texts.³⁷

³⁷ Palladius, *Lausiac History*, Coptic version, ed. Amélineau, p. 113.

In addition to the customary twelve psalms interspersed with prostrations and prayers which the desert monks offered twice a day as their 'canonical' office, Evagrius engaged in nearly perpetual psalmody and biblical meditation throughout the day. As will be described in detail in Chapter 2 below, Palladius' observation that Evagrius 'prayed 100 prayers each day'³⁸

³⁸ Palladius, *Lausiac History* 38.10, ed. Bartelink, p. 200.

implies that Evagrius spent the majority of his day reciting the psalms and other biblical texts. In obedience to the advice of Macarius the Alexandrian

he mortified himself by nearly continuous dehydration and he abstained entirely from fresh fruit and cooked food for fourteen years, although he was forced to mitigate this regime as his health deteriorated during the last two years of his life.³⁹

³⁹ The Coptic version of the *Lausiac History* (ed. Amélineau, p. 112) mentions that he suffered from urinary tract stones, a condition which would have worsened—and indeed may have arisen—as a consequence of chronic dehydration.

Evagrius' life among the hermits of Kellia exemplifies that dynamic movement between contrasting extremes which also characterizes his spiritual theology. On the one hand his personal asceticism was extremely severe; yet in his capacity as abba he was gentle, and advised discretion. Similarly, in regard to his monastic confrères he was a leading figure in the 'Origenist' circle of monastic intellectuals which included Rufinus, Melania, and the Tall Brothers; yet he readily submitted to the spiritual and moral

end p.15

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Psalmody and Prayer in the Writings of Evagrius Ponticus

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pp. [16]-[20]

authority of rustic Copts, such as Macarius the Great, and he accepted without complaint public tests of humility which were regularly afforded both seasoned *abbas* and newcomers to the Egyptian desert.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ The *Apophthegmata* record Evagrius' gentle answer to a rather sarcastic reproof by 'the priest' (probably Macarius the Alexandrian) on an occasion when Evagrius spoke: 'We are quite aware, Abba, that had you remained in your own land you would doubtless be a bishop, in charge of many; but you now sit here [among us] as a foreigner' (

(Οἶδαμεν, ἀββά, ὅτι εἰ ἦς ἐν τῇ χώρᾳ σου, καὶ ἐπίσκοπος πολλάκις καὶ κεφαλὴ πολλῶν εἶχες εἶναι· νῦν δὲ ὡς ξένος καθέζεσθαι ὧδε).

Evagrius, 'untroubled' (οὐκ ταραχθῆν), cited Job in reply: 'Indeed, Father; "I have spoken once, I will not do so a second time" (Job 40: 35).' *Apophthegmata Patrum*, Greek Alphabetical Collection, Evagrius 7, PG 65.176.9-14.

Despite the constant flow of visitors and the demands of his austere regime, Evagrius' literary output was considerable. Some of his works were known locally in Nitria and Sketis and were probably disseminated there, while others, dedicated to patrons associated with the Mount of Olives community in Jerusalem, were probably copied and distributed through that monastery's active scriptorium.⁴¹

⁴¹ Bunge speculates on the possible relationship to the Mount of Olives community of several friends and patrons whose names appear in Evagrius' works: Bunge, *Briefe aus der Wüste*, pp. 32-7, 50-4.

Rufinus translated several of Evagrius' works into Latin,⁴²

⁴² Jerome levels this as an accusation against Rufinus in *Letter* 133.3 (*ad Ctesiphontem*).

thus making them available to a wider audience in the West.

Evagrius died in 399 on the feast of Epiphany, just a few months before Theophilus of Alexandria's Easter letter against the anthropomorphites precipitated the first Origenist crisis. Thus by a timely death Evagrius escaped Theophilus' armed raids against the monks of Nitria and Kellia, and the exile which befell many of his confrères. During the 150 years which followed his death Evagrius' writings inspired both criticism and admiration; but curiously, in the first decades following his death neither his critics nor his admirers bestowed on him the title (or epithet) 'Origenist'. Jerome disliked Evagrius' use of the term *apatheia* and was suspicious of Evagrius' friendship with Rufinus; but he seems to have regarded Evagrius as a crypto-Pelagian, rather than a disciple of Origen.⁴³

⁴³ Jerome, *Letter 133.3 (ad Ctesiphontem)*; *Dialogue Against the Pelagians*, prologue.

Neither Palladius, Socrates, nor Sozomen associate Evagrius with the first Origenist crisis, which they otherwise recount in detail. Palladius' failure to associate Evagrius with Origen is particularly surprising, since Palladius considered expertise in Origen a high attainment, almost a sign of sanctity; and he extols other desert fathers and mothers precisely

end p.16

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because they pored over the famous Alexandrian's works.⁴⁴

⁴⁴ Palladius, *Lausiac History* II.4, ed. Bartelink, pp. 52-4 (of Ammonius); and *Lausiac History* 55.3, ed. Bartelink, p. 252 (of Melania the Elder).

That Palladius does not praise his own teacher, Evagrius, in these terms suggests that Evagrius' 'Origenism' was either less apparent or less a source of concern to his contemporaries than it was to those who later came to know his writings.

It was not until 553 that paraphrases and partial citations from Evagrius' writings were condemned by the emperor Justinian; and it was not until some time later, perhaps as late as the seventh century, that Evagrius' name began to appear regularly alongside that of Origen and Didymus in the list of anathemas.⁴⁵

⁴⁵ The controversy surrounding Evagrius' Christology is discussed below in Chapter 6.2 and Appendix 1.

These anathemas were occasioned in large measure by the exaggerated (and by then clearly heretical) Christology and eschatology of certain sixth-century Palestinian monks who were fascinated with the writings of Origen and apparently also with Evagrius' more obscure treatises, especially the *Kephalaia Gnostica*.⁴⁶

⁴⁶ The so-called 'isochrist' monks were accused of believing that all 'will be the equal of Christ in the *apokatastasis*'. See below, p. 200 n. 5. The accusations against them are detailed in Cyril of Scythopolis' *Life of Sabbas*, especially chapters 36, 83-5, and 90. Guillaumont discusses the later fate of Evagrius' writings and theology in *Les 'Kephalaia Gnostica'*, pp. 124-66.

The acrimony aroused during this second Origenist controversy so stigmatized Evagrius' memory that efforts were made not only to destroy his works, but to expunge his name from the apophthegmata and the early monastic histories. These efforts were largely ignored in the Syrian and Armenian churches, where Evagrius' writings were cherished and where he is venerated as a saint,⁴⁷

⁴⁷ Evagrius' cult has also recently been approved in the Roman Catholic Church. He is included in the most recent edition of Butler's *Lives of the Saints* (1997), with directions that his feast day of 11 February may be celebrated as an optional memorial.

as the manuscript illumination reproduced here attests.

1.2 Writings

From the perspective of literary genre Evagrius' writings can be classified along a spectrum consisting at one end of narrative treatises and at the other of collections of gnomic sentences (*kephalaia*). The narrative treatises are discursive in structure: they are prose texts divided into clearly defined chapters and subsections in which

end p.17

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From the Armenian *Lives of the Desert Fathers* (MS Jerusalem 285, p. 778), this illumination is probably by Thaddeus Avramenc, a fifteenth-century monk of the monastery of St Antony in Kaffa in the Crimea. The text accompanying the illumination establishes with certainty that this is intended as a depiction of Evagrius Ponticus. Reproduced from Nira Stone, *The Kaffa Lives of the Desert Fathers: A Study in Armenian Manuscript Illumination*, pl. 18, fig. 43.

ideas are discussed sequentially. In contrast, the *kephalaia* are collections of brief sentences which often resemble poetry and vary considerably in their arrangement: in some texts they are arranged in an obvious and orderly way, while in others the underlying significance of their sequence is obscure. The distinction between narrative texts and *kephalaia* is not absolute, since the narrative texts often contain brief series of proverbs, while several of the

collections of *kephalaia* contain occasional narrative paragraphs.

end p.18

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1.2.1 Narrative Treatises and Letters

The narrative treatises consist of three⁴⁸

⁴⁸ A fourth text, the *Praktikos*, might also be classified among the narrative treatises had Evagrius himself not described it as 'one hundred *kephalaia* on matters of the *praktike*', (ἑκατὸν μὲν κεφαλαῖαι τὴν πρακτικῇ). Evagrius, *Praktikos*, Introduction, SC 171, p. 492.

parenetic texts which offer advice on the spiritual life from Evagrius' perspective as a hermit. Unlike many of his other treatises, these three texts are not structured according to Evagrius' system of the eight principal λογισμοί, or tempting-thoughts. The shortest of these, *Rerum monachalium rationes*, differs from Evagrius' other writings both in spiritual vocabulary and in its primary emphasis on exterior matters, such as diet, clothing, and attachment to possessions, persons, and places.⁴⁹

⁴⁹ In *Rerum monachalium rationes* the goal of monastic asceticism is termed *συνημία*, inward stillness, rather than *ἀνορθία*, freedom from passions. Evagrius' technical division of the spiritual life into πρακτικῇ, ὁστικῇ, and θεολογικῇ is conspicuously absent from this text, as is any detailed discussion of λογισμοί, tempting thoughts: instead, the importance of guarding one's thoughts is mentioned briefly and a vivid meditation on heaven and hell is presented.

The *Rerum monachalium rationes* is probably one of Evagrius' early works, and is intended for newcomers to the solitary life.⁵⁰

⁵⁰ The atypical features described in the preceding footnote may reflect an early date, prior to Evagrius' comprehensive systematization of the spiritual life, or they may reflect Evagrius' intention to address only 'elementary' subjects in a text for monastic neophytes (*Rerum monachalium rationes* 3, PG 40.1253). The question of Evagrius' authorship of this text has been raised, but it is not seriously doubted: 'it contains nothing specifically Evagrian, and one would not otherwise have any particular reason for attributing this document to Evagrius if the manuscript tradition, both Greek and Syriac [. . .] did not appear very firm on this attribution' (A. and C. Guillaumont, 'Évagre le Pontique', col. 1635). Additional evidence of very early attribution of this text to Evagrius is a citation from it (the meditation on hell mentioned above: PG 40.1261), which is included among the apophthegmata attributed to Evagrius in the Latin Systematic Collection (ch. 3, 'On Compunction' 3), the Greek Systematic Collection (ch. 3, 'On Compunction' 2) and the Greek Alphabetical Collection ('Evagrius' 1).

The second narrative treatise, *Tractatus ad Eulogium*, is a much longer work which covers a wide range of monastic topics. *Peri Logismon* is particularly concerned with the art of discerning the origin of thoughts; in this text Evagrius contrasts the rejection of demonic temptations with the cultivation of divine or angelic thoughts.

Similar in literary form to the narrative treatises are Evagrius' 63 letters, in which he discusses subjects covering all aspects of the spiritual life. The two longest of these contain his only extended discussion of θεολογία, Evagrius' term for doctrine concerning the divine nature. The *Epistula fidei* (Letter 63)

may be Evagrius' earliest extant work: it is an explication and defence of the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity written during Evagrius' years as a deacon in

end p.19

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Constantinople. The *Letter to Melania* (*Letter* 64) is a very late work, perhaps one of the last from Evagrius' pen, and contains a cautious, allegorical discussion of eschatology and trinitarian theology.

1.2.2 *Kephalaia* and Exegetical Texts

There is a close relationship between Evagrius' exegetical scholia and his gnomic *kephalaia*. The difference in them lies chiefly in structure and organization of the collections: whereas the scholia explicate select, successive verses from a biblical book, the *kephalaia* are generally arranged in a deliberate, often obscure order. Evagrius' *kephalaia* are generally intended as an aid towards θεωρία, prayerful contemplation of the creator and his creation; they therefore do not usually provide the orderly and detailed discussions found in the parenetic treatises. Instead they are composed of a variable but often symbolic⁵¹

⁵¹ In his introduction to *De oratione* Evagrius provides a detailed numerological analysis of the number of sentences in the work: 153 *kephalaia*, the same number as in the miraculous catch of fish in John 21: 11. Similarly, the *Kephalaia Gnostica* is divided into six books of ninety chapters each; in the last sentence Evagrius advises the reader to interpret the work 'according to the number of the six days of creation' (*Kephalaia Gnostica* VI.90, ed. Guillaumont, p. 419).

number of *kephalaia*, a word which is often translated as 'chapters', but which in Evagrius' case could be better rendered as 'sentences', or more precisely, 'sentence-summaries'. These *kephalaia* are often arranged in parallel couplets or thematic 'chains' of variable length. Within these chains concepts are contrasted and explored from different perspectives. There is often a didactic purpose behind both the ordering of concepts within chains and the sequence of chains within treatises, but this underlying purpose may not be immediately apparent; it sometimes becomes so only after multiple re-readings and careful study of the text. The development of ideas in the *Kephalaia Gnostica*, for example, has been described as 'polyphonic'⁵²

⁵² Guillaumont *Les 'Kephalaia Gnostica'*, p. 36.

rather than progressive, and '[deliberately] enigmatic [. . .] for the sake of stimulating meditation'.⁵³

⁵³ A. and C. Guillaumont, 'Évagre le Pontique', col. 1736.

This description could be aptly applied to Evagrius' other collections of *kephalaia* as well.

In his *kephalaia* Evagrius often deliberately imitates the sapiential literature of the Old Testament, particularly the Book of Proverbs. He inherited from Origen the conviction that the biblical wisdom literature sequentially symbolizes and teaches the necessity of moving

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Psalmody and Prayer in the Writings of Evagrius Ponticus

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pp. [21]-[25]

beyond the material world into the spiritual or 'intelligible' realm; and he regarded the genre of proverbs as the best way to convey 'intelligible things'.⁵⁴

⁵⁴ Evagrius, scholion 1 on *Proverbs* 1: 1, SC 397, p. 90: 'A proverb is a saying which by means of sensible things conveys the meaning of intelligible things' (Παροιμία ἐστὶν λόγος δι' αἰσθητῶν πραγμάτων σημαίνων πράγματα νοητά).

The underlying structure of some of these collections reflects what Evagrius considered to be an essential ordering in the spiritual life. He believed that virtues are to be acquired in a specific sequence;⁵⁵

⁵⁵ Evagrius, *Gnostikos* 6, SC 356, p. 96: 'Additionally, he strives to practice all the virtues, equally, continuously, and in proper order; for there is an orderly sequence among them and within himself'

(καὶ πειράσθω πάσας ἐπίσης αἰ τὰς ἀρετὰς κατορθοῦν, ἵνα ἀντακολουθῶσιν ἀλλήλαις καὶ ἐν αὐτῷ)

. Cf.

also *Ad monachos* 137 and *Kephalaia Gnostica* VI.90.

and in some of his works he makes it clear his doctrines are to be progressively comprehended, thus his readers were to memorize and meditate on his proverbs in a sequential fashion.⁵⁶

⁵⁶ This is particularly true of Evagrius' trilogy of *Praktikos*, *Gnostikos*, and *Kephalaia Gnostica*. After beseeching later copyists not to join together separate *kephalaia*, but rather to preserve their correct ordering and numbering, Evagrius explains: 'In this way the order of the chapters is safeguarded, and what is said will be clear,' Guillaumont, *Traité Pratique* 1, SC 170, p. 147

(οὕτως γὰρ ὅ τε κεφαλαιώδης σωθεῖη κανὼν καὶ σαφὴ γενήσεται τὰ λεγόμενα). Jeremy Driscoll notes this and emphasizes this point in his study of Evagrius' *Ad monachos* (*The 'Ad Monachos'*, p. 3 n 12; cf. also pp. 13-18, 305-6, 319-22)

This understanding is important for the accurate interpretation of these texts since Evagrius, imitating the Book of Proverbs, often introduces concepts in an ambiguous or even polemical way in order to explore them more fully in succeeding sentences, or in chains which occur later in the text. In this way his readers are invited to experience for themselves both the progressive acquisition of spiritual knowledge and the interrelationships which exist between different doctrines. It thus follows that these *kephalaia* can only be accurately interpreted in light of their specific context and of the overall structure of the work in which they occur. Nevertheless, this approach to interpreting Evagrius' more obscure texts and doctrines is a comparatively recent feature of Evagrian scholarship.⁵⁷

⁵⁷ The principal exponents of this approach are G. Bunge and J. Driscoll, cf. above p. 000 n. 25.

The relationship between Evagrius' choice of literary form and his didactic method is most clearly seen in the spiritual trilogy of *Praktikos*, *Gnostikos*, and *Kephalaia Gnostica*. Evagrius associates the *Praktikos* (which is subtitled 'the monk') with ascetical struggle (τὰ πρακτικὰ) and the *Gnostikos* and *Kephalaia Gnostica* with contemplative knowledge (τὰ γνωστικὰ).⁵⁸

⁵⁸ Evagrius, *Praktikos*, Introduction 9, SC 171, p. 492.

The introduction to the *Praktikos* is

end p.21

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written in the form of a letter, and the first two-thirds of the work provide a continuous prose discussion of virtues and vices, with only an occasional sprinkling of brief sentence-summaries.⁵⁹

⁵⁹ Of the first 61 chapters of the *Praktikos*, only chapters 1-4 and 17-20 (13 per cent) are unambiguously of the brief, gnomic type.

However, immediately after chapter 60 in which Evagrius discusses the possibility of attaining 'perfect *apatheia*', he shifts the literary style of the remaining chapters, so that the latter third of the *Praktikos* consists almost entirely of gnomic sentences.⁶⁰

⁶⁰ Excluded from consideration here are the apophthegmata with which both the *Praktikos* and the *Gnostikos* conclude. Of the last third of the *Praktikos* 90 per cent (chapters 61-71, 74-88, and 90) are of the gnomic type.

In the *Gnostikos*, the second volume of his trilogy, the majority of its 50 chapters are brief sentences;⁶¹

⁶¹ All but eleven of the 50 chapters of the *Gnostikos* are brief sentences. The exceptions are: the four concluding apophthegmata (chapters 44-8) and chapters 14, 18, 20, 25, 28, and 34.

and, as will be described below in Chapter 1.2.2 and Appendix 1, the 540 chapters of the *Kephalaia Gnostica* are Evagrius' most obscure collection of gnomic sentences. The reader of this trilogy is thus initiated via a parenetic treatise into successive levels of spiritual knowledge which are described in progressively more compact and enigmatic *kephalaia*.

Evagrius' gnomic collections vary considerably in length and structure, from the extremely brief *Sententiae sex* to the 540 *kephalaia* of the *Kephalaia Gnostica*. Evagrius' other works of this type are the *Skemmata*, *De oratione*, *Ad monachos*, *Ad virginem*, *Institutio ad monachos*, *De magistris et discipulis*, and four collections of sentences: the *Capita parenetica*; *Capitula xxxiii*; *Sententiae per alphabeticum dispositae*; and *Aliae sententiae*.

Although a few of Evagrius' *kephalaia* are citations from known collections which were popular in Christian circles in Evagrius' day, such as the *Sentences of Sextus*, the sources from which he borrows most extensively to create his gnomic collections are his own commentaries on the scriptures. Evagrius describes his commentaries as belonging to the well-known genre of scholia, literally 'marginal annotations', on successive, selected verses.⁶²

⁶² Evagrius, scholion 5 on *Psalms* 88: 9(2) (cf. ed. Pitra, 88: 9, vol. iii, p. 160).

His biblical scholia vary in form from paragraph-length, narrative expositions of particularly rich texts to the much more common brief definitions and summaries which, stripped of the biblical verses they explicate, often reappear as *kephalaia* in the gnostic collections. The majority of Evagrius' scholia are succinct sentences; expositions of paragraph-length or longer occur, but are uncommon. Extant are

end p.22

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Evagrius' scholia on the books of *Psalms*, *Proverbs*, *Ecclesiastes*, and *Job*; he probably also wrote scholia on the *Song of Songs* and perhaps on other biblical books as well, but of these no certain traces remain.⁶³

⁶³ In 'Die Hiera des Evagrius', pp. 87-9, Balthasar discusses fragments which suggest that Evagrius wrote commentaries, now lost, on Books of the Pentateuch and on the *Song of Songs*. Also suggestive of a lost commentary on the *Song of Songs* are recently discovered *kephalaia* in which Evagrius deliberately imitates both the style and themes of the *Song of Songs*: Géhin, 'Evagriana d'un manuscrit basilien', pp. 71-3.

The *Scholia on Psalms* is the longest extant work from Evagrius' pen.⁶⁴

⁶⁴ There are no published estimates of the length of the *Scholia on Job* currently being recovered from exegetical chains and edited by Paul Géhin: cf. his 'Avant-Propos' to the *Scholia on Proverbs*, SC 340, pp. 8, 90-1. However, in his article Géhin estimates the total number of scholia attributable to Evagrius at nearly 2,000. The *Scholia on Psalms* number 1,354; there are 73 *Scholia on Ecclesiastes*; and there are 382 *Scholia on Proverbs*. Unless Géhin's total includes fragments from the putative *Scholia on Genesis* and on *Exodus*, this leaves around 191 *Scholia on Job*.

Unaccountably, neither Evagrius' critics nor those sympathetic to his cause ever attributed to him commentaries on the scriptures, despite the fact that biblical scholia represent a very large part, perhaps the majority, of Evagrius' literary output. Palladius, Evagrius' disciple, refers enigmatically to his master's *ἱερὰ* but whether this refers to the exegetical writings is uncertain.⁶⁵

⁶⁵ Palladius states concerning Evagrius:

Συντάττει οὖν οὗτος τρία βιβλία ἱερὰ μοναχῶν
ἀντιρρητικά οὕτω λεγόμενα, πρὸς τοὺς δαίμονας ὑποτιθέμενος τέχνας

(Palladius, *The Lausiaca History* 38.10, Bartelink, p. 200). R. Meyers translates: '[he] then drew up three holy books for monks—Controversies they are called—on the arts to be used against demons.' Balthasar, however, prefers the text printed in Migne: [. . .] τρία βιβλία: ἱερὰ, Μοναχῶν, Ἀντιρρητικῶν, ὅπως καλομένα, τὰς πρὸς τοὺς δαίμονας ποτιθέμενος τέχνας, (PG 34.1193-4). This variant reading describes three different 'books' (or categories of books), namely (1) *hiera*, 'sacred things', (2) 'the monk', and (3) *Antirrhētikos*. Balthasar believes that ἐπ' αὐτὰ refers to the scholia on 'sacred' scripture: Balthasar, 'Die Hiera des Evagrius', pp. 86-7. Few contemporary Evagrian scholars agree with Von Balthasar on this point. However, little notice has been taken of Evagrius' own reference to the 'priestly third' level of philosophy and exegesis in scholion 25 on *Psalms* 76: 21 (cf. Pitra 76.21, vol. 3, p. 109):. Evagrius' appropriation of these categories from Clement of Alexandria (*Stromateis* 1.28) is

discussed below in Chapter 3.1. For Evagrius one of the principal tasks of the Christian *gnostikos* or spiritual teacher is *theoria physiké*, the contemplation of God in creation, especially with the aid of spiritual exegesis of the Bible. If by *hiera* Palladius meant Evagrius' (and Clement's) *hierurgic* level of contemplation it is possible that Balthasar was correct.

What is clear is that soon after their composition Evagrius' biblical scholia were attributed to other writers, chiefly Origen, and were subsequently transmitted in the exegetical chains. The *Scholia on Proverbs* and on *Ecclesiastes* have been published in Sources Chrétiennes, the *Scholia on Job* are currently being edited by Paul Géhin, and the *Scholia on Psalms* can be reconstructed from printed sources according to a key

end p.23

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published by M.-J. Rondeau, who has been working on the critical edition of the *Scholia on Psalms* since 1960.⁶⁶

⁶⁶ Rondeau, 'Le commentaire', pp. 307-48. M.-J. Rondeau has kindly made available for use in this volume an unpublished collation of Evagrius' *Scholia on Psalms* based on MS *Vaticanus Graecus* 754.

One final work, Evagrius' *Antirrhetikos*, is unique among his writings and was of particular interest to his biographers.⁶⁷

⁶⁷ Palladius (*Lausiac History* 38.10), Gennadius (*On Illustrious Men* 11) and Socrates (*Ecclesiastical History* 4.23) all mention it; and Gennadius translated the *Antirrhetikos* into Latin.

It bears a superficial resemblance to his biblical scholia insofar as it cites and to some extent interprets successive biblical texts; but its goal is quite different from the scholia. The *Antirrhetikos* is a collection of Bible verses intended for use in spiritual 'warfare'. Evagrius provides 492 brief texts from the scriptures, usually consisting of only one or two verses, for use in 'contradiction' (ἀντὶ ἰσχυρῶς) of the demons which tempt the soul to gluttony, lust, avarice, sadness, anger, *acedia*, vainglory, and pride. The *Antirrhetikos* consists of eight books, each concerned with a different temptation: each book begins anew at Genesis and offers verses from successive books of the Bible.

1.2.3 Relative Dating of Evagrius' Works

The recovery of Evagrius' exegetical texts has yielded evidence concerning the order in which Evagrius' works were written, a subject on which little could previously have been said. All that seemed probable was that *Letter* 63, the so-called *Epistula fidei* (formerly attributed to St Basil and edited as letter 8 in the Basilian corpus) seems to be one of Evagrius' earliest works, written after the death of Basil in 379 (Basil's death is mentioned in the letter), but before Evagrius' flight from Constantinople in 382.⁶⁸

⁶⁸ As is described in Chapter 1.1 above, Bunge believes that the *Epistula fidei* was composed in the first half of 381.

The remainder of Evagrius' works (with the possible exception of a few letters) were written during his monastic sojourn in Egypt, which lasted from shortly after Easter in 383 until his death in January of 399. Although with the exception of the *Epistula fidei* dates cannot be assigned to any of these texts with certainty, internal criteria provide hints as to which texts preceded others.

In the introduction to the *Praktikos* Evagrius states his intention to write a spiritual trilogy which will consist of the *Praktikos* in 100

end p.24

chapters, the *Gnostikos* in 50, and the *Kephalaia Gnostica* in 600.⁶⁹

⁶⁹ The discrepancy between the 600 promised chapters and the actual length of the *Kephalaia Gnostica* is discussed below in Appendix 1, n. 25.

If this is presumed to be the order in which these books were written, then the following general scheme can be constructed:



Since no reliable date can be assigned to any of the volumes of Evagrius' spiritual trilogy, this timeline (which is not drawn to scale) suggests only the probable order in which these texts were written. The relative relationship between these books is more complex than is shown here, since there appear to have been two recensions of the *Praktikos*, the first of which included an introductory *Letter to Anatolius*, and a second recension which incorporated this letter into the main text.⁷⁰

⁷⁰ A. and C. Guillaumont, *Traité pratique*, SC 170, pp. 387-9.

Whether this second recension was completed before the *Gnostikos* or *Kephalaia Gnostica* were written is not known.

Studies of the *Scholia on Psalms*, the *Scholia on Proverbs*, and the *Scholia on Ecclesiastes* have suggested relative relationships between these texts and those of the trilogy. M.-J. Rondeau summarizes her conclusions in regard to the *Scholia on Psalms* as follows:

[. . .] on the one hand, the first gloss on Ps. 143 refers to the *Praktikos*. On the other hand, a certain number of scholia take the form of definitions which, in *on Psalms*, are scholia perfectly suited to a progressive commentary on terms from the sacred text; however they are also encountered literally in the *Kephalaia Gnostica*, where they take the form of dislocated fragments ('corps étrangers'). Balthasar concluded that Evagrius plundered his own *On Psalms* in order to adorn his *Kephalaia Gnostica*.⁷¹

⁷¹ Balthasar, 'Die Hiera des Evagrius', p. 184.

It is therefore probable that these scholia were composed between the *Praktikos* (or at least the first redaction of this work), and the *Kephalaia Gnostica*.⁷²

⁷² Rondeau, *Les Commentaires*, vol. i, p. 126.

With regard to Evagrius' other exegetical works things are less clear. Paul Géhin, who has edited Evagrius' *Scholia on Proverbs* and *on Ecclesiastes*, and who is currently editing the *Scholia on Job* believes that the paucity of references to Ecclesiastes and Job in the *Scholia on Proverbs* suggests that Evagrius' commentaries on these books

end p.25

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Psalmody and Prayer in the Writings of Evagrius Ponticus

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pp. [26]-[30]

were written after the *Scholia on Proverbs*. He concludes that Evagrius probably wrote his commentaries in the order found in the Septuagint and in which Evagrius customarily lists the sapiential books: namely, Psalms,

Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Job.⁷³

⁷³ Géhin, *Scholies aux Proverbes*, 'Introduction: Titre et Genre Littéraire', pp. 19-20. He additionally notes (p. 20 n. 1) that this is the ordering Evagrius uses whenever he lists the books of the Bible, particularly in the *Antirrhetikos*, where this ordering is repeated eight times.

Géhin's analysis of those passages from the *Scholia on Proverbs* which are also found in Evagrius' other works, most notably the *Praktikos*, *Kephalaia Gnostica*, *Scholia on Psalms* and *Peri Logismon*, leads him to conclude that the *Scholia on Proverbs* (and thus of necessity also the *Scholia on Ecclesiastes* and *on Job*) were written after Evagrius had completed the

trilogy of *Praktikos*, *Gnostikos*, and *Kephalaia Gnostica*.⁷⁴

⁷⁴ In this Géhin differs from A. Guillaumont, who in his commentary on *Praktikos* 67 suggests that scholion 377 *on Ecclesiastes* may be the source of *Praktikos* 67: Guillaumont, *Traité pratique*, p. 643; Géhin, *Scholies aux Proverbes*, pp. 20-1, cf. esp. p. 21 n. 1.

Finally, the *Kephalaia Gnostica* contains texts which are discussed in detail in *Peri Logismon*; and in this latter text Evagrius refers to *De oratione* in a way which implies that it is a treatise he has already written. Columba Stewart has suggested that it may be possible to speak of a 'second trilogy'

consisting of *De oratione*, *Peri Logismon*, and *Skemmata*;⁷⁵

⁷⁵ Stewart notes the centrality in these three texts of themes which are hardly mentioned or are absent from *Praktikos*, *Gnostikos*, and *Kephalaia Gnostica*. Chief among these is Evagrius' identification of the *nous* with the 'place of God' (Deut. 24), as well as his teaching concerning the 'light of the *nous*' which can sometimes be sensed by the one who prays. Stewart, 'Approaches to Early Monastic Prayer'.

however, it has yet to be determined which of these trilogies preceded the other.⁷⁶

⁷⁶ Stewart believes that the 'second trilogy' of *De oratione*, *Peri Logismon*, and *Skemmata* is later than that of *Praktikos*, *Gnostikos*, and *Kephalaia Gnostica*; and he also believes that this second trilogy contains a clearer and fuller expression of Evagrius' mature spiritual theology. This is an intriguing and even compelling hypothesis; however, evidence that the *Kephalaia Gnostica* predates *Peri Logismon* is presently lacking. Instead, the texts common to both these works (*Kephalaia Gnostica* 111.78 = *Peri Logismon* 19; *Kephalaia Gnostica* 1.40 = *Peri Logismon* 31 (= scholion 62 *on Proverbs* 5: 14; discussed below in Chapter 6.2.2)) suggest that in composing the *Kephalaia Gnostica* Evagrius 'plundered' (as Rondeau puts it in the text cited above, p. 25) the *Peri Logismon* just as he did the *Scholia on Psalms*:

hence the order of these texts suggested in the timeline above.

If, as in his use of passages from the *Scholia on Psalms*, Evagrius cites in the *Kephalaia Gnostica* concepts he had already discussed more fully in *Peri Logismon*; and if Géhin is correct as regards the order in which the exegetical texts were written, then the timeline given above can be roughly expanded as follows:

end p.26

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1.3 Ascetical and Mystical Theology

Evagrius' understanding of the spiritual life has been succinctly summarized as 'the mind's long journey to the Holy Trinity'.⁷⁷

⁷⁷ This is the title of Jeremy Driscoll's English translation of the *Ad monachos*, a text which Driscoll has shown (*The 'Ad Monachos' of Evagrius Ponticus*) to contain the essential elements of Evagrius' spiritual doctrine arranged in sequential proverbs intended for memorization and meditation.

This journey can be envisioned as a helix, a geometrical form which combines both linear direction and circular movement.⁷⁸

⁷⁸ Although Evagrius does not employ the image of the helix to describe spiritual progress it was used later by Proclus and Dionysius the Areopagite.

The linear motion consists of 'progress' (προκομή) or 'ascent' (ἀνάβασις) towards God which is at the same time characterized by a 'circular' movement between the poles of ἡ πρακτικὴ and ἡ θεωρητικὴ: that is, between the ascetical ('ethical' or 'practical') life and the contemplative life. Fundamental to Evagrius' model of spiritual progress is his conviction that the Christian πρακτικὸς or ascetic should mature into a γνωστικὸς, a 'knower' or 'sage' skilled in contemplation and capable of imparting spiritual knowledge. He describes sequential levels or stages of spiritual progress, but he does not thereby imply that it is possible to completely rise above the *praktiké* and 'graduate' from the quest for virtue. As the *praktikos* makes progress he learns to perceive the work of asceticism from an increasingly contemplative perspective.⁷⁹

⁷⁹ Evagrius, *Praktikos* 50, 79, and 83.

And since the struggle against certain passions continues until the very

moment of death,⁸⁰

⁸⁰ Evagrius, *Praktikos* 36.

even the mature *gnostikos* must continually advance in virtue, practising ascetical vigilance.⁸¹

⁸¹ On the persistence of anger in those who have made considerable spiritual progress: *Gnostikos* 10, 31, and 32.

Thus the journey towards God is not a simply a movement beyond

end p.27

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praktiké into *theoretiké*: spiritual progress entails a gentle oscillation between these two poles in such a way that continuing attention to the changing demands of *praktiké* yields ever greater contemplative refreshment

This terminology was already well-established in Evagrius' day. The distinction between ὁ βίος πρακτικὸς and ὁ βίος θεωρητικὸς stems from Plato and Aristotle,⁸²

⁸² Plato extols the mind possessing 'magnificence' and 'the contemplation of all time and all being' ('ὑπάρχει διανοία μεγαλοπρέπεια καὶ θεωρία παντὸς μὲν χρόνου, πάσης δὲ οὐσίας), *Republic* 486a8-10. Aristotle similarly praises the contemplative life in *Nichomachean Ethics* 1178b20-2, where he identifies contemplation (θεωρία) with happiness (εὐδαιμονία).

and had already been used to describe monastic communities by Philo of Alexandria in the first century.⁸³

⁸³ Philo contrasts the ethical life of the cenobitic Essenes with the contemplative aims of the eremitic *Therapeutae*. The Essenes are those who have zealously pursued the active life, τὸν πρακτικὸν ἐξήλωσαν (*De vita contemplativa* 1.1), and

industriously cultivated ethics, τὸ ἡθικὸν εὖ μάλα διαπονοῦσαν (*Quod omnis probus liber sit*, 80.4-5). The *Therapeutae*, in contrast, 'embrace the contemplative life', τὴν θεωρίαν ἀσπασαμένων, and 'live in the soul alone', καὶ ψυχῇ μόνῃ βιωσάντων (*De vita contemplativa* 1.3 and 90.3).

Similarly, the Christian *gnostikos* who attains charity (ἀγάπη) and 'dispassion' (ἀπάθεια) is a prominent theme in Clement of Alexandria's depiction of the idealized Christian who ascends through asceticism to contemplation.⁸⁴

⁸⁴ Clement *Stromateis* 6.8-19. The virtues of ἀγάπη and ἀπάθεια figure prominently in 6.9.

Thus Evagrius' description of the ascetical *praktikos* and the contemplative *gnostikos* is not his own invention:⁸⁵

⁸⁵ Evagrius does, however, use this terminology in a characteristic way, different from that of his predecessors and contemporaries. Balthasar notes that although the contrast between ὁ βίος πρακτικὸς and ὁ βίος θεωρητικὸς can be found in Pseudo-Maximus, Albinus and Origen, Evagrius' designation of these ways as ἡ πρακτική and ἡ θεωρητική 'in the sense of the later monastic asceticism' is unique and can be used to identify passages that come from the pen of Evagrius: Balthasar, 'Die

Hiera des Evagrius', p. 96.

his contribution consists, rather, in his analysis of the interrelationship between the two poles of spiritual life which these titles represent, and in his augmentation of an earlier simple, bipartite model through the application to it of exegetical categories which Clement of Alexandria had described and which Origen later employed to illustrate the soul's journey towards God.⁸⁶

⁸⁶ Evagrius' appropriation and modification of exegetical categories described by Clement and Origen is discussed below in Chapter 3.1.

Evagrius presents in detail his model of the spiritual life in his trilogy of *Praktikos*, *Gnostikos*, and *Kephalaia Gnostica*. In the *Praktikos* he identifies *praktiké* with monastic asceticism and he describes in detail both the battle against tempting thoughts (λογισμοί) and the monk's quest for the virtues. This struggle is meant to culminate in love and *apatheia*, freedom from domination by the passions. In the *Gnostikos* Evagrius describes the Christian contemplative, who is

end p.28

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not necessarily a monk; the *gnostikos* is, rather, a biblical exegete and spiritual teacher. The *Kephalaia Gnostica* is a spiritual workbook containing proverbs intended for meditation by the *gnostikos*. The divisions of the spiritual life described in these texts can be illustrated as follows:

ἡ πρακτική	ἡ γνωστική (= ἡ θεωρητική)	
Ascetical Practice	Contemplative Knowledge	
	ἡ φυσική	ἡ θεολογική (= ἡ θεολογία)
Observation and understanding of the self: <i>elimination of vices</i> <i>acquisition of virtues</i>	Contemplation of the scriptures and of creation	Knowledge of God

The *praktiké* is the most basic level and corresponds to ethical instruction. Evagrius refers to the contemplative level of spiritual life as either *gnostiké* or *theoretiké*, reflecting his equation of spiritual knowledge with contemplation.⁸⁷

⁸⁷ Exceptions to Evagrius' usual equation of *γνώσις* and *θεωρία* are discussed in Chapter 1.3.2 below.

The *gnostiké* is subdivided into contemplation (or knowledge) of God in creation (φυσική) and contemplation of the divine nature (θεολογική).⁸⁸

⁸⁸ Evagrius' restriction of the term *θεολογία* to doctrine concerning the divine nature is also found in Gregory Nazianzen, *Oration* 27.9 and *Oration* 28.1.

Before describing in more detail Evagrius' model of *praktiké* and *gnostiké* it will be helpful to consider the psychological, anthropological, and cosmic contexts or 'arenas' in which spiritual progress takes place.

1.3.1 Evagrian Psychology, Anthropology, and Cosmology

1.3.1.1 Evagrian Psychology

Since the *praktiké* entails inner warfare with demonic temptations, Evagrius followed many of his predecessors and contemporaries in employing military imagery to describe the *praktikos*. Throughout his writings and especially in the *Praktikos* Evagrius depicts the monk as a soldier who battles the demonic enemy using weapons, tactics, and insights provided by Christ. However, clearer insight into his understanding of human psychology functioning 'according to nature' is afforded by a text in which he employs a pastoral metaphor. In *Peri Logismon* 17-19 he describes the soul as a shepherd in order to present the broader context in which the battles of

end p.29

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the *praktiké* are waged, namely the structure of the human psyche. This text also portrays the Christian moving (presumably at regular intervals) from the struggles of the *praktiké* into the refreshment of contemplation:

17. Τὰ νοήματα τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου ὁ Κύριος καθάπερ [p.210] πρόβατά τινα τῷ ἀγαθῷ ποιμένι τῷ ἀνθρώπῳ παρέδωκε· «Καὶ γὰρ, φησί, σὺν τὸν αἰῶνα ἔδωκεν ἐν καρδίᾳ αὐτοῦ», συζεύξας αὐτῷ θυμὸν καὶ ἐπιθυμίαν πρὸς βοήθειαν, ἵνα, διὰ μὲν τοῦ θυμοῦ, φευγαδεύῃ τὰ τῶν λύκων νοήματα, διὰ δὲ τῆς ἐπιθυμίας στέργῃ τὰ πρόβατα, καὶ ὑπὸ τῶν ὕετων καὶ ἀνέμων πολλάκις βαλλόμενος· ἔδωκε πρὸς τούτοις καὶ νομὸν, ὅπως ποιμαίνει τὰ πρόβατα, καὶ τόπον χλόης, καὶ ὕδωρ ἀναπαύσεως καὶ ψαλτήριον καὶ κιθάραν καὶ ῥάβδον καὶ βακτηρίαν, ἵν' ἐκ ταύτης τῆς ποιμένης καὶ τραφῇ καὶ ἐνδύσῃται καὶ χόρτον ὀρεινὸν συναγάγῃ· «Τίς γὰρ, φησί, ποιμαίνει ποιμήνην, καὶ ἐκ τοῦ γάλακτος τῆς ποιμένης οὐκ ἐσθίει;»

89

⁸⁹ Evagrius, *Peri Logismon* 17, SC 438, pp. 208-10.

17. The concepts of this present age—these the Lord gave to man, like sheep to a good shepherd: for it is written, *He has placed the world in his heart*; (Eccl. 3: 11) yoking to him *thumos* (indignation) and *epithumia* (desire) for [his] support, so that with the first he may drive away the concepts of wolves, while with desire he may lovingly tend the sheep, assailed as he often is by the rain and winds. [God] also gave him pasture so that he may shepherd the sheep, as well as a verdant place and refreshing water (cf. Ps. 23:2), [a] psalter[y] and a harp (*kithara*), a rod and a staff; so that from these sheep he is fed and clothed and gathers provender. For it is written, 'Does anyone feed a flock and not drink its milk?' (1 Cor. 9:7).

Here Evagrius portrays the human person as shepherd of an interior universe of νοήματα, concepts or ideas which correspond to things in 'the present

age', that is the exterior world. As 'fellow-workers', literally 'yoke-fellows', the shepherd receives from God the two energies of ἐπιθυμία (desire) and θυμὸς (indignation, often translated as 'anger'). They can either be of 'support' or 'help' (βοήθεια) to the soul if they are used according to nature, or they will overwhelm the soul as passions if they are misused or present in excess. A large part of the *praktiké* consists in learning how to properly use these 'helpers'.

Following Plato⁹⁰

⁹⁰ Plato, *Republic* IV.440-4; *Phaedrus* 246-8; *Timaeus* 69-73.

and the later Aristotelian tradition,⁹¹

⁹¹ The beginning of chapter 89 of Evagrius' *Praktikos* is modelled closely on an anonymous first-century peripatetic treatise, *On Virtues and Vices* (ed. Bekker, *Aristotelis opera*, vol. ii, 1249^a26-1251^b37).

Evagrius

end p.30

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Psalmody and Prayer in the Writings of Evagrius Ponticus

Print ISBN 0199273200, 2005
pp. [31]-[35]

considers the soul to be tripartite, ruled (when all goes well) by the λογιστικόν⁹² or reasoning faculty,

⁹² Evagrius occasionally refers to the λογιστικόν as the διανοητικόν: scholion 14 on Psalm 72: 21 (= PG 12.1528).

which is chiefly responsible for developing the virtues of prudence, understanding, and wisdom.⁹³

⁹³ Evagrius, *Praktikos* 89, SC 171, pp. 680-4.

It rules over the παθητικόν, the portion of the soul subject to passion and the source of the 'helpers' of desire and indignation.⁹⁴

⁹⁴ Evagrius, scholion 2 on Psalm 107: 3(1) (Pitra, 107: 3(1), vol. iii, p. 220): 'But I call "soul" the portion of the soul subject to passion, which is the *thumikon* and the *epithumetikon*'
(ψυχὴν δὲ λέγω τὸ παθητικὸν μέρος τῆς ψυχῆς, ὅπερ ἐστὶ τὸ θυμικὸν καὶ τὸ ἐπιθυμητικόν).

In this passage Evagrius depicts the energy of *epithumia* in its ideal state, 'lovingly tending the sheep'. When exercised 'according to nature' the ἐπιθυμητικόν⁹⁵ contributes the virtues of temperance, love, and continence.

⁹⁵ Evagrius, *Praktikos* 89, SC 171, p. 680.

Evagrius portrays *thumos* as protecting the sheep by driving away 'wolf-like' concepts: thus the θυμικόν should be the source of courage and patient endurance.⁹⁶

⁹⁶ Ibid., p. 682.

Although Evagrius frequently employs the term 'soul' (ψυχὴ) as a synonym for 'individual person' or 'inner self', this term does not properly describe the deepest level of human personality. The true centre and deepest level of human personality is the νοῦς or intellect, created in the image of God and capable of union with God. The relationship between the soul and the *nous* in Evagrius' thought is best appreciated in the context of his anthropology and cosmology.

1.3.1.2 Evagrian Anthropology and Cosmology

Evagrius believed that history and time began with the 'movement' (κίνησις), or fall from primordial union with God of the intellects (νοεῖ) which God had brought into being before time began.⁹⁷

⁹⁷ The creation of incorporeal beings is 'timeless' (لا احدا—lit. 'without time'; Frankenberg suggests the retroversion *χρῶνος* for this term in *Kephalaia Gnostica* II.87), since time can only be reckoned from the 'movement', that is from 'generation and destruction': Evagrius, *Kephalaia Gnostica* VI.9, p. 221. The effects of the 'movement' are detailed in *Kephalaia Gnostica* I.49; I.50; and I.51.

These *noi*, united to God through essential knowledge, were the 'first beings'.⁹⁸

⁹⁸ In *Kephalaia Gnostica* I.57 and II.64 Evagrius distinguishes between 'first beings' which existed before the *kinesis* and 'second beings' which were created afterwards. Although this terminology may simply be Evagrius' way of emphasizing the difference between the first and second states of all beings, it could also be interpreted as suggesting that some (human beings?) did not exist before the fall. Although it is generally presumed that Evagrius accepted the Origenist doctrine of the pre-existence of souls (or), both Driscoll (*The 'Ad monachos'*, p. 7) and Bunge (*Briefe aus der Wüste*, p. 156 n. 19 and p. 396 n. 52) raise the question whether Evagrius' understanding of the participation of human beings in the *kinesis*, and in particular Evagrius' understanding of time and of temporal succession, may be more subtle than is usually assumed. Bunge notes that Basil and Gregory Nazianzen, Evagrius' revered teachers, both rejected the preexistence of souls and that Evagrius was present in Constantinople as a member of Gregory's clergy when Gregory preached *Oration* 38. In this sermon Gregory employs imagery which would have been congenial to students of Origen (such as the 'clothing of skins' of Gen. 3: 21, interpreted as 'the coarser flesh', τὴν παχυτέραν σάρκα, *Oration* 38.12; PG 36.322), while at the same time describing the fall of Adam and Eve in a way clearly not intended as an allegory of the primordial fall of pre-existent beings.

Evagrius distinguishes between this original creation

end p.31

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of 'naked intellects' and the secondary creation of matter and the universe which came about as a consequence of the fall. In falling from union with God through inattentiveness or negligence⁹⁹

⁹⁹ Evagrius, *Kephalaia Gnostica* III.28, ed. Guillaumont, p. 109: 'The soul is the *nous* which, through negligence (إهمال) has fallen from the Unity; and which, as a result of its carelessness (إفراط), has descended to the rank of the *praktike*.' The first term,, translated here as 'negligence' (Smith, *Compendious Syriac Dictionary*, p. 255), is also found in *Kephalaia Gnostica* I.49, ed. Guillaumont, p. 41, where it describes both the 'movement' and the creation of ignorance 'through negligence'. Frankenberg suggests the retroversion ὁμῆλεια in both these instances (*Evagrius Ponticus*, pp. 207, 89), as well as in three other places where occurs only in the S¹ MS (II.31, p. 151; I.29, p. 285; V. 63, p. 345).

the *noi* became souls (ψυχῆ), capable of receiving bodies provided by God in the creation of the material world,¹⁰⁰

¹⁰⁰ The question has been raised whether Evagrius can properly be said to have described the creation of the material world as a 'second creation'. Driscoll, in his study of Evagrius' *Ad monachos* states that Evagrius does not follow Origen in describing the creation of the material world as a 'second creation' (*The 'Ad Monachos'*, p. 9 n. 9). The only text in which Evagrius appears to write of a 'second creation' is *Epistula fidei* II.3-7 (ed. Courtonne, p. 34): 'Three creations do we find mentioned in the Scriptures: one and the first, the passing from non-being into being; the second, the change from worse to better; third, the resurrection from the

dead'. As Bunge has noted, Evagrius goes on to explain that baptism, rather than the creation of the material world, is the 'second creation' he has in mind (Bunge, *Letter* 63.33, *Briefe aus der Wüste*, p. 389 n. 157).

which Evagrius also calls the 'first judgement'.¹⁰¹

¹⁰¹ Evagrius, *Kephalaia Gnostica* III.38, ed. Guillaumont, p. 113: 'The judgement of God is the creation of the world, through which he provides, proportionately measured for each of the *logikoi*, a body.' The Greek text which probably underlies this passage is found in scholion 275 *on Proverbs*, SC 340, p. 370: '[. . .] but judgement is the creation of an age which distributes to each of the reasoning beings a body corresponding to it[s state]'. This text may also be interpreted as referring to the subsequent judgements or 'changes' by which Christ provides the *λογικοὶ* with new bodies and 'worlds' ('ages') according to their improved or worsened spiritual state. Evagrius' doctrine of successive judgements is discussed below in Chapter 6.3.1.

The creation of the cosmos is an act of God's compassion by means of which each fallen reasoning being (collectively called the *logikoi*) is provided with an environment and a body corresponding

end p.32

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to its degree of self-willed separation from God. All ages, worlds, and bodies exist for the sole purpose of facilitating the return of the *logikoi* to union with God.¹⁰²

¹⁰² Evagrius, *Kephalaia Gnostica* III.7.

Together with an appropriate body blended from the four elements, each fallen *logikos* is given a mixture of the twin 'helpers' of *thumos* and *epithumia* appropriate to the world it inhabits. Thus *thumos* and *epithumia*, indignation and desire, are therapeutic remedies which, unlike ordinary medicines, remain within the soul they purify;¹⁰³

¹⁰³ Evagrius, *Praktikos* 85.

and when used 'according to nature', assist the fallen *logikoi* in their return to God.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁴ Evagrius, *Kephalaia Gnostica* III.59.

Angels are less fallen than human beings and are therefore more simple (ψιλλός), being composed primarily of *nous* and fire. Humans 'moved' further from God and are chiefly made of *epithumia* and earth. Demons fell furthest and are dark, heavy, and angry, made of *thumos* and cold air.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁵ Evagrius, *Kephalaia Gnostica* 1.68 and VI.25; scholion 60 *on Proverbs* 5:9. This cosmology is not unique to Evagrius: his angelology and demonology are an adaptation of the world-view expressed by Plotinus according to which, in contrast to the noetic 'gods' the sub-lunar 'daemons' have bodies of air or fire: οἱ δὲ ἄλλοι δαίμονες [. . .] σμάτα προσλαμβάνουσιν ἕρποντα πύρρινα. *Ennead* III.5.7, lines 37-8.

Over unimaginably long ages each *logikos* will undergo a series of transformations ('changes' or 'judgements') through which it will receive new bodies and environments ('worlds and ages') appropriate to its new, changed state. Any given change may be for the better or the worse, depending on

the extent to which the *logikos* takes advantage of the opportunities afforded by the body and world it inhabits. By 'world' Evagrius means both the external environment the *logikos* inhabits and the inner world of temptations, thoughts, and concepts.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁶ Evagrius, *Kephalaia Gnostica* V.42: 'The world created in the mind seems difficult to see by day, the *nous* being distracted by the senses and by the sensible light that shines; but at night it can be seen, luminously imprinted at the time of prayer'. Greek fragment 'e-16', Hausherr, 'Nouveaux fragments', p. 232.

As will be described, one of the principal tasks of the *gnostikos* is to discover and then to exercise himself in the 'contemplation which concerns [him]', that is the deeper meaning and purpose of his own body and world, in order to be healed and thus to make the best use of his spiritual powers.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁷ Evagrius, *Kephalaia Gnostica* II.15, ed. Guillaumont, p. 67: 'When the reasoning nature will receive the contemplation which concerns it, then also all the power of the *nous* will be healthy.'

end p.33

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1.3.2 Asceticism and Contemplation

1.3.2.1 The Praktiké— Ascetical Practice

Evagrius' understanding of ὁ βίος πρακτικός differs from that of most of his predecessors¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁸ The ancient use of ὁ βίος πρακτικός is described by Andrew Louth (*Origins*, p. 102 and n. 2) and discussed in detail by A. Guillaumont (*Traité Pratique*, SC 170, pp. 38-56). Plato used it in the sense of physical activity or manual labour; Aristotle used it to refer to activity in general (*Nicomachean Ethics* 1095^b10-15; 1098^a30-1179^a32); and the Stoics employed it in reference to social activity. Guillaumont (p. 43 n. 1) similarly believes that Philo in his description of the Essenes intends this term to refer to the Essenes' diligence at manual crafts rather than their study of ethics (Philo, *Quod omnis probus liber sit* 76-7).

in that he means by it, not manual labour, social activity, or external activity of any sort, but rather the inner work of moral improvement and purification of the thoughts. Evagrius' principal treatise on this fundament of spiritual life, *The Praktikos*, is also subtitled *The Monk*, since for Evagrius the *praktiké* is identical with monastic asceticism. The process of spiritual purification which constitutes the *praktiké* entails inner warfare with the demons, which

Evagrius calls 'the opposing powers' (αἱ ἀντικείμεναι δυνάμεις).¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁹ This designation is also found in Origen: *Hom. in Lucam* 22.135, 38.214; *Com. in Matt.* 13.7, 13.8; *Com. in Joann.* 6.54.282, 10.32.208; *De oratione* 12.1.5, 13.3.7.

Demonic attacks usually take the form of λογισμοὶ αἱ, thoughts or mental images which tempt the monk to sin. Evagrius believed that demons cannot read human minds and that they therefore have no direct access to the innermost thoughts of their victims. Nevertheless, they are skilled at interpreting external expressions which reveal the inner dispositions of

human beings,¹¹⁰

¹¹⁰ Evagrius, *Praktikos* 47.

and they are able to set the memory in motion and to form 'strange fantasies' in the *nous*.¹¹¹

¹¹¹ Evagrius, *De oratione* 69.

More rarely, usually in the case of hermits and those who are spiritually advanced, the demons may attack the monk physically and cause bodily harm.

The labours of the *praktiké* are rewarded by God with the birth of love and the gift of *apatheia*, 'dispassion' or 'freedom from compulsion'. *Apatheia* does not mean freedom from temptation, since Evagrius emphasizes that certain temptations will continue until death.¹¹²

¹¹² Evagrius, *Praktikos* 36.

Rather, it refers to freedom from the inner storm of 'passions',¹¹³

¹¹³ Evagrius, *Praktikos* prologue 8 and chapter 81.

irrational drives which in their extreme forms would today be called obsessions, compulsions, or addictions. According to Evagrius, *apatheia* will be present in varying degrees in regard

end p.34

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to different passions. Since the art of resisting temptation must be practised until death, that part of the *praktiké* which consists of this art must be regarded as continuing throughout life, as well. Thus although Evagrius often describes 'progress' from the *praktiké* to the *gnostiké*, he does not mean by this that the *praktiké* is a spiritual phase or stage which can be wholly transcended; rather, it is a training period during which essential skills are learned, skills which are necessary for spiritual growth and which must be continuously practised throughout life.

1.3.2.2 The *Praktikos* , Student of the Self

As Evagrius describes in *Peri Logismon* 17, cited above, the inner world of *νοήματα*, 'the concepts of this present age', are not only the soul's responsibility, its charges; they are also its source of spiritual nourishment: 'from these sheep he is fed and clothed'.¹¹⁴

¹¹⁴ A related simile is found in Evagrius, *De oratione* 101, ed. Tugwell, p. 119 (cf. PG 79.1189): 'Just as bread is nourishment for the body and virtue [is nourishment] for the soul, so spiritual prayer is the nourishment of the *nous*'

The 'shepherd' is required both to protect and to learn from his 'sheep': in order to defend them he must understand the nature of the different *noemata* with which the mind is filled. Evagrius constantly emphasizes the need to distinguish between demonic *logismoi* and the *noemata* which come

from angels or from neutral sense-perception.¹¹⁵

¹¹⁵ Evagrius most commonly uses the term λογισμοί to designate the tempting thoughts inspired by demons and νοήματα to describe thoughts which are benign or angelic in origin. However, this distinction does not always apply; and the terms are sometimes used in the opposite sense: i.e. malignant νοήματα (*Praktikos* 42) and neutral or beneficial λογισμοί (*Praktikos* 30; *Ad Eulogium* 8).

While angels provide *noemata* as spiritual food, demons employ the 'wolf-like' *logismoi* to pervert the natural powers of the soul and to lead it into error:

Δεῖ οὖν τὸν ἀναχωροῦντα φυλάττειν νύκτωρ, καὶ μεθ' ἡμέραν τοῦτο τὸ ποιμνιον, μήτι τῶν νοημάτων γένηται θηριάλωτον, ἢ λησταῖς περιπέσῃ, εἰ δὲ ἄρα τι τοιοῦτο συμβαίῃ κατὰ τὴν νάπην, εὐθέως ἐξαρπάξειν ἐκ τοῦ στόματος τοῦ λέοντος ἢ τῆς ἄρκτου.

Γίνεται δὲ τὸ νόημα τὸ περὶ τοῦ ἀδελφοῦ θηριάλωτον, εἰ μετὰ μίσους νέμοι τὸ ἐν ἡμῖν, καὶ τὸ περὶ τῆς γυναικὸς, εἰ μετ' αἰσχροῦς ἐπιθυμίας στρέφοιτο παρ' ἡμῖν, καὶ τὸ τοῦ ἀργυρίου, καὶ τοῦ χρυσίου, εἰ μετὰ πλεονεξίας αὐλίζοιτο. Καὶ τὰ νοήματα τῶν ἀγίων χαρισμάτων, εἰ μετὰ κενοδοξίας κατὰ διάνοιαν βόσκειτο· καὶ ἐπὶ τῶν ἄλλων δὲ νοημάτων ὡσαύτως συμβήσεται, κλεπτομένων τοῖς πάθεσιν.

116

¹¹⁶ Evagrius, *Peri Logismon* 17, SC 438, pp. 210-12.

end p.35

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Psalmody and Prayer in the Writings of Evagrius Ponticus

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pp. [36]-[40]

It is therefore proper for the anchorite to guard this flock at night and by day, so that the concepts are neither caught by wild beasts nor fall into thieves' hands: if this should happen in the wooded valley he must immediately snatch [it] from the mouth of the lion or the bear (cf. 1 Sam. 7:35).

It is thus that the thought of a brother is caught by wild beasts—if it pastures what is within us with hatred: with regard to a woman, if we turn aside to shameful desire; with regard to gold and silver, if we settle down with greed. And the concepts of the holy gifts [of God are caught by wild beasts] if we mentally graze on vainglory: and the same happens in the case of other concepts if they are plundered by the passions.

Evagrius here describes different ways in which the soul can be misled. The vices of anger, lust, avarice, and vainglory are presented as the consequences of relaxed vigilance, 'shameful fantasies', and failure to properly employ the helpmates of *epithumia* and *thumos*. Evagrius' underlying desire to order and explain the spiritual life is particularly evident in his use of different systems to classify the passions, exemplified here in his depiction of anger, lust, avarice, and vainglory. Of these various systems, his classification based on the eight tempting thoughts is the most familiar and provides the structure of the *Antirrhētikos*, *De octo spiritibus malitiae*, and most of the *Praktikos*. In these works the *logismoi* (or the demons responsible for them) are ranked as follows: first, gluttony; second, lust; third, avarice; fourth, sadness; fifth, anger; sixth, *acedia*; seventh, vainglory; and eighth, pride. These roughly correspond to the divisions of the tripartite soul, beginning with the ἐπιθυμητικόν, moving through the θυμικόν and concluding with intellectual temptations. This forerunner of the medieval seven deadly sins is not, however, the only system Evagrius employs, nor is it fully comprehensive.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁷ Other classifications of the vices which Evagrius employs are discussed below in Chapter 4.1.3.

Evagrius explains these different classifications at length in order to teach the *praktikos* the art of discernment, the ability to understand which demon is oppressing him and which remedy he should employ. Evagrius offers a rich variety of spiritual remedies to be applied in times of temptation, most of them consisting of the ordinary tools of monastic asceticism, such as fasting, keeping vigil, intercessory prayer, psalmody, almsgiving, and deeds of compassion. The *praktikos* is thus both a guardian and a student of the inner

world of his own thoughts. He learns to distinguish among his *noemata* which come from God or the angels and which represent delusions from

end p.36

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his enemies. He learns this art from spiritual teachers, from his own experience, and above all from Christ:

50. Εἴ τις βούλοιτο τῶν μοναχῶν ἀγρίων πειραθῆναι δαιμόνων καὶ τῆς αὐτῶν τέχνης ἔξιν λαβεῖν, τηρεῖτω τοὺς λογισμοὺς, καὶ τὰς ἐπιτάσεις σημειούσθω τούτων, καὶ τὰς ἀνέσεις, [. . .] καὶ ζητεῖτω παρὰ Χριστοῦ τούτων τοὺς λόγους.

118

¹¹⁸ Evagrius, *Praktikos* 50, SC 171, pp. 614-16.

50. If any monk wishes to experience the savage demons and to become acquainted with their art, he should observe his [tempting] thoughts and note [down] their intensification and diminution [. . .] and he should seek from Christ the *logoi* (inner meanings) of these things.

The success of the *praktikos* is thus dependent on his relationship with Christ. It is through prayer, 'conversation of the *nous* with God',¹¹⁹

¹¹⁹ Evagrius, *De oratione* 3, ed. Tugwell, p. 3 (=PG 79.1168):

ἡ προσευχὴ ὁμιλία ἐστὶν τοῦ πρὸς θεόν. Evagrius similarly describes prayer as 'conversing' with God in: *De oratione* 3 (συνομιλεῖν αὐτῷ); *De oratione* 4, ed. Tugwell, p. 3 (συνμιλος αὐτῷ); *De oratione* 34, ed. Tugwell, p. 8 (τῷ θεῷ προσομιλεῖν); *De oratione* 55, ed. Tugwell, p. 11 (ὡς Πατρὶ ἀεὶ συνομιλεῖ); scholion 1 on *Psalm* 140: 2(1). This definition which Evagrius borrows from Clement of Alexandria is discussed below in Chapter 3.1.1.

that he receives aid against the enemy¹²⁰

¹²⁰ 'Antirrhetic' prayers of supplication during temptation are discussed below in Chapter 5.1 and 5.2.

and learns from Christ the *logoi* or inner meanings of temptations. The search for these *logoi* through prayer and through pondering the words and example of Christ in the scriptures is one of the means by which the ascetical *praktikos* becomes a contemplative or *gnostikos*.

1.3.2.3 The *Gnostiké* — The Science of Contemplation

The realm of contemplation and spiritual knowledge which Evagrius calls *theoretiké* and *gnostiké* extends beyond the realm of the *praktiké*, the inner world of thoughts and temptations, to embrace the whole of creation and even the creator himself. In the act of contemplation the *nous* employs 'spiritual senses' to apprehends intelligible realities not apparent to the physical senses.¹²¹

¹²¹ Evagrius, *Kephalaia Gnostica* I.34, II.35.

This noetic vision is a participation in the realities perceived, and it has the power to effect change in the *nous*:

Ὡςπερ αἱ αἰσθήσεις ἀλλοιοῦνται διαφόρων ἀντιλαμβανόμεναι ποιοτήτων,
οὕτω καὶ ὁ νοῦς ἀλλοιοῦνται ποικίλαις θεωρίαις ἐνατενίζων αἰεί.

Just as the senses are changed through being receptive of different qualities,

end p.37

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so also the *nous* is changed, through constantly gazing at multiform contemplations.¹²²

¹²² Evagrius, *Kephalaia Gnostica* II.83; Greek fragment e-7, ed. Hausherr, 'Nouveaux fragments', p. 230.

Evagrius believed that the mind is stamped, like wax receiving an imprint, by the thoughts or images which it chooses to receive into itself. This is particularly true of *logismoi*, tempting thoughts of demonic origin;¹²³

¹²³ Evagrius, *Peri Logismon* 2, SC 438, p. 154: 'All the [tempting] thoughts of demonic origin introduce into the soul concepts of sensory objects: because of this the *nous*, imprinted with the forms of these objects, carries them around within itself'.

but as this text from the *Kephalaia Gnostica* makes clear, it is also true of pure, elevated contemplations. The highest of the *noemata*, the thought of God himself, by its nature leaves the mind unstamped since God is incorporeal.¹²⁴

¹²⁴ Evagrius, scholion 1 on *Psalm* 140: 2(1) (=PG 12.1665; and cf. ed. Pitra, 140: 2, vol. iii, p. 148):. Of thoughts other than the thought of God which do not stamp the *nous*: cf. *Peri Logismon* 8, 15, 16, 25, 28, 41; *Skemmata* 22; scholion 288 on *Proverbs* and scholia 1 and 27 on *Ecclesiastes*. Stewart discusses Evagrius' teaching on thoughts which 'shape' or 'form' the *nous* in his description of Evagrius' epistemology: 'Approaches to Early Monastic Prayer'.

The Christian must exercise care and discernment in choosing subject matter for contemplation, since the change in the *nous* which contemplation effects is of supreme importance for the journey of the *nous* towards God:

وَمَا كَانَ لِقَوْمٍ أَنْ يُبَدِّلُوا مَا فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ
وَمَا كَانَ لِقَوْمٍ أَنْ يُبَدِّلُوا مَا فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ
وَمَا كَانَ لِقَوْمٍ أَنْ يُبَدِّلُوا مَا فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ 125

¹²⁵ Evagrius, *Kephalaia Gnostica* III.42, ed. Guillaumont, p. 115.

III.42. Contemplation is spiritual knowledge of the things which have been and will be: it is this which causes the *nous* to ascend to its former rank.

Evagrius' *gnostikos* discovers that the journey towards God is actually a return of the *nous* to the God from whom it has fallen away. Through contemplation the *nous* is able to re-ascend to its original $\tau\acute{\alpha}\xi\iota\varsigma$ (ܬܚܝܬܐ *taksā*), its 'first rank'. However, as he explains elsewhere, this return of the *nous* to its primordial state is impossible apart from Christ. Unaided the *nous* cannot rise above the world of sin and death to which it is subject. Re-ascent to its first rank is only possible because of what God accomplished through the incarnation, death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ. Through his incarnation we

end p.38

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are brought to a new birth and freed from sin.¹²⁶

¹²⁶ Evagrius, *Letter to Melania* 57, ed. Vitestam, p. 23, ed. Bunge p. 324: 'But because of his love for us, God was born of a woman [. . .] in order to give us a second birth—a birth to which blessing and justice belong.'

Similarly, the descent of God into death and Christ's ascension to the Father is what makes possible our ascent:

(56) he descended (ܕܢܨܠ = $\kappa\alpha\tau\alpha\beta\alpha\acute{\iota}\nu\omega$) and endured all that we had acquired since we stepped out of our nature: that is, everything from conception to death [. . .] (58) Since we have corrupted our nature by our free will, we have come to our present conception and birth which are subject to the curse. But he, remaining what he is, by his grace has taken upon himself with birth all that follows birth until death [. . .] He frees us from them in that he who had not sinned took these things voluntarily upon himself; for we are unable to ascend (ܕܢܥܠ = $\alpha\nu\alpha\beta\alpha\acute{\iota}\nu\omega$) above them by ourselves [. . .] But not only did he not remain in [things subject to the curse], but he also enables us to ascend (ܕܢܥܠ = $\alpha\nu\alpha\beta\alpha\acute{\iota}\nu\omega$) out of them; because he, as we said, descended (ܕܢܨܠ) to them in his love—not because of [his] sin.¹²⁷

¹²⁷ Evagrius, *Letter to Melania* 56 and 58, ed. Vitestam, pp. 22-4, ed. Bunge, pp. 323-5.

In this text intended for a very advanced *gnostikos*,¹²⁸

¹²⁸ Although the intended recipient is designated as Melania in the majority of Syriac manuscripts, Bunge suggests that it may actually have been intended for Rufinus: *Briefe aus der Wüste*, pp. 198-200. Bunge notes that both Melania and Rufinus were venerated by Evagrius and his circle as very holy and learned *gnostikoi* (cf. Palladius, *Lausiac History* 46, 54, and 55).

Evagrius presents the soteriological basis for his theology of contemplation. Through the incarnation God has 'taken upon himself' human birth and death, and all that lies between them. Evagrius contrasts God's providential and compassionate descent ($\alpha\nu\alpha\beta\alpha\sigma\iota\varsigma$) with the impossibility of our unaided ascent, our $\kappa\alpha\tau\alpha\beta\alpha\sigma\iota\varsigma$, a term Evagrius often employs to describe the contemplative's ascent to lofty spiritual teaching and the vision of God.¹²⁹

¹²⁹ Of ἀνάβασις as conversion and spiritual ascent, *Kephalaia Gnostica* VI.19, ed. Guillaumont, p. 225: 'Conversion is the ascent away from [the] movement and away from vice and ignorance towards knowledge of the Blessed Trinity.' In the sense of lofty spiritual teaching, *Gnostikos* 29, SC 356, p. 142: 'Those you teach are saying to you always: "Friend, go up higher!" (Luke 14: 10). It would, indeed, be "shameful" (cf. Luke 14: 9) having [once] ascended, for you to be brought down again by your hearers'.

Thus the contemplative ascent of the *nous* is predicated on the descent of God into our 'conception, birth, and death' followed by the ascension (ἀνάβασις) of Christ to the Father.

Similarly Evagrius writes in *Peri Logismon* of the risen Christ who in his turn 'raises up the reasoning soul' to contemplation 'of all the

end p.39

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ages'.¹³⁰

¹³⁰ Evagrius, *Peri Logismon* 18, SC 438, p. 284: 'Our reasoning nature, having been put to death by vice, is raised by Christ through the contemplation of all the ages; and his father raises the soul which has died the death of Christ, by means of the knowledge he gives of himself'

(Φύσιν μὲν λογικὴν ὑπὸ κακίας θανατωθεῖσαν ἐγείρει Χριστὸς διὰ τῆς θεωρίας πάντων τῶν αἰώνων· ὁ δὲ τούτου πατὴρ τὴν ἀποθανοῦσαν ταύτης ψυχὴν τὸν θάνατον τοῦ Χριστοῦ, ἐγείρει διὰ γνώσεως τῆς ἑαυτοῦ).

This 'contemplation of the ages' is the discipline of *physiké*, the contemplation of God in creation, 'that which has come into being' (θεωρία τῶν γεγονότων). By this Evagrius generally means the contemplation of created beings possessing a *nous*, rather than the contemplation of inanimate matter or non-rational living things.¹³¹

¹³¹ One of the rare instances in which Evagrius invites his reader to meditate in an extended fashion on inanimate matter is *Peri Logismon* 19 (SC 438, pp. 216-22) on the nature and mystical significance of gold.

It is with the origin and fate of intellects that Evagrius is chiefly concerned: his interest in non-rational creation extends chiefly to the presence within all created things of the hidden *logoi*, the inner 'meanings' or purposes of the creator which the *gnostikos* can learn to perceive.¹³²

¹³² The notion of 'rational principles' or 'inner meanings' inherent within created things which express the purposes of God is found also in Plotinus' explanation of Plato's myth of Zeus' garden, where Eros is begotten of drunken Plenty (Πλοῦτος) and Poverty (Πενία). *Enneads* III.5.9, lines 11-16: 'What could the garden of Zeus be but his images in which he takes delight and his glories? And what could his glories and adornments be but the rational principles which flow from him? The rational principles all together are Plenty, the plenitude and wealth of beauties, already manifested; and this is the being drunk with nectar,'.

Two of the most important of these, the *logoi* of providence and judgement, will be discussed in detail in Chapter 6.2

Every hierarchy of phenomena and beings in the created order can serve as an object of contemplation by the *gnostikos*, depending on his level of spiritual maturity. The interior world of human psychology, understood within

the framework of the Platonic tripartite soul, becomes in Evagrius' system a reflection of the great cosmic drama. Although the *nous* has fallen from essential knowledge and from union with God, it nevertheless most closely resembles our unfallen state and bears the image of God. The *nous* interacts with the material universe by means of the soul, which Evagrius specifically identifies with τὸ παθητικόν, the part of the self subject to passion.¹³³

¹³³ Evagrius, scholion 2 on *Psalm* 107: 3, cited above, n. 94.

Evagrius encourages the *gnostikos* to use the scriptures as a starting point in reflecting on the significance of natural phenomena, human relationships and history, and the various ranks of angels

end p.40

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Psalmody and Prayer in the Writings of Evagrius Ponticus

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pp. [41]-[45]

and demons. He encourages a progressive ascent, corresponding to one's own inner spiritual progress, from contemplation of things perceptible by the senses to intelligible realities perceptible only by the *nous*. However Evagrius is not always consistent in the contemplative vocabulary he uses to describe this movement. On the one hand he encourages ascent from the contemplation of corporeal [beings] (ἡ θεωρία τῶν σωμάτων) to that of 'incorporeals' (τῶν ἀσωμάτων);¹³⁴

¹³⁴ Evagrius, scholion 1 on *Psalm* 83:3 (cf. ed. Pitra, 83: 3(2), vol. iii, p. 143).

and in certain texts he makes it clear that by 'incorporeals' he means angels and perhaps other celestial beings such as stars.¹³⁵

¹³⁵ There are suggestions in the *Kephalaia Gnostica* (III.37, III.62, III.84, IV.29) that stars are quasi-angelic *logikoi*, a teaching Evagrius seems to have taken from Origen; and there are occasional hints elsewhere in his writings of the existence of very advanced *logikoi* for which there are no names in human languages: Guillaumont, *Les 'Kephalaia Gnostica'*, pp. 252-3.

Yet he also teaches that all the *logikoi* have been united to bodies since the fall, and that none are therefore fully incorporeal.¹³⁶

¹³⁶ In using apparently contradictory terminology to describe angels Evagrius was following the example of other patristic authors. In *Oration* 28 Gregory Nazianzen discusses the permissibility of describing angels as incorporeal in an invitation to 'step beyond the realm of sense and look into the holy [place], the noetic and heavenly [realm] (καὶ ὑπερβάντες τὴν αἴσθησιν, εἰς τὸ ἅγια παρακλῶμεν, τὴν νοητὴν καὶ οὐρανίαν). He first calls the angels incorporeal (ἀσώματος), then discusses their bodies of 'fire and spirit', and finally concludes that they are, at any rate, 'incorporeal in comparison with us, or as nearly so as possible': *Oration* 28:31 (*Theol. Or.* 2), SC 250, p. 172.

Thus in regard to the contemplation of angels Evagrius often uses the term 'incorporeals' in a rather loose way to refer to beings whose bodies are less coarse and material than our own.

Even more ambiguous is Evagrius' description of progress from 'second' to 'first' natural contemplation, terminology he employs in ten chapters of the *Kephalaia Gnostica* but in no other texts.¹³⁷

¹³⁷ *Kephalaia Gnostica* II.2, II.4, II.20, III.61, III.67, III.84, III.86, III.87, IV.19, and IV.51. First natural contemplation is explicitly named in only three of these: III.61, III.67, and III.87, although Evagrius alludes to it in II.2, II.4, and II.61.

He associates second natural contemplation with the diversity of creation and with Christ, the author of that diversity; linking it to St Paul's praise of 'the

manifold wisdom of God' in Ephesians 3: 10 (ἡ πολυποίκιλος σοφία τοῦ θεοῦ)
. First natural contemplation is an intermediate step between second natural
contemplation and knowledge of the Blessed Trinity.¹³⁸

¹³⁸ Evagrius, *Kephalaia Gnostica* II.4, ed. Guillaumont, pp. 61-3: 'While the transformations are numerous, we have received knowledge of only four: the first, the second, the last and that which precedes it. The first, it is said, is the passage from malice to virtue; the second is that from *apatheia* to second natural contemplation; the third, is [the passage] from the former to the knowledge that concerns the *logikoi*; and the fourth is the passage of all to knowledge of the Blessed Trinity.' Also *Kephalaia Gnostica* III.61, ed. Guillaumont, p. 123: 'Virtues cause the *nous* to see second natural contemplation; and the latter cause it to see first [natural contemplation]; and the first in its turn [makes it see] the Blessed Unity.'

Evagrius does not clearly define

end p.41

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the subject matter of first natural contemplation, but he appears to associate
it with both 'the knowledge concerning the *logikoi*,¹³⁹

¹³⁹ Evagrius, *Kephalaia Gnostica* II.2, ed. Guillaumont, p. 61; and II.4, p. 63.

) and knowledge (ἡ = γνῶσις) 'of the person of Christ'.¹⁴⁰

¹⁴⁰ Evagrius, *Kephalaia Gnostica* II.2, ed. Guillaumont, p. 61: 'In second natural contemplation we see 'the manifold wisdom' (Eph. 3: 10) of Christ, he who served in the creation of the worlds; but in the knowledge that concerns the *logikoi*, we have been instructed on the subject of his [Christ's] person.', often rendered as 'essence or substance', probably translates ὑποστάσις (Smith, *Compendious Syriac Dictionary*, p. 509), rather than οὐσία, which is usually translated as (Smith, *Compendious Syriac Dictionary*, p. 14).

Four different interpretations of the ascent from second to first natural contemplation have been suggested. The first is that the distinction between these two levels corresponds to the aforementioned (inexact) distinction between corporeals and incorporeals, and thus refers to the respective contemplation of earthy and celestial beings in their current embodied state.¹⁴¹

¹⁴¹ O'Laughlin, *Origenism in the Desert*, pp. 132-52

A second interpretation is that first natural contemplation refers to the perception experienced by angels; second natural contemplation is the name given to that experience when it is enjoyed by human beings.¹⁴²

¹⁴² Bamberger, *Evagrius Ponticus*, Introduction, pp. lxxvii-lxxviii.

A third suggestion is that second natural contemplation has as its subject matter the results of the fall, namely the second, material creation, while first natural contemplation is concerned with the first creation of incorporeals, interpreting the word 'incorporeals' in its strict sense as the *logikoi* in their original, naked state of union with God.¹⁴³

¹⁴³ This is clearly the meaning Evagrius assigns to the word 'incorporeals' in *Kephalaia Gnostica* VI.20, ed. Guillaumont, p. 225.

According to this third interpretation, first natural contemplation is the attempt to peer beyond the confines of time, back into the first creation and forward into its eschatological restoration.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴⁴ Driscoll, *The 'Ad Monachos'*, pp. 16-17, also p. 7 n. 5, with reference to Bunge, *Briefe aus der Wüste*, pp. 156 and 396.

A fourth interpretation is that first natural contemplation does not concern the *logikoi* or any other aspect of creation in itself, but is rather contemplation of their concealed *logoi*, the divine intentions and meanings which all created things contain.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴⁵ Louth, *Origins*, pp. 107-8; Guillaumont, *Les 'Kephalalaia Gnostica'*, pp. 110-11.

Still less clearly defined are Evagrius' occasional references to 'third natural contemplation'.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁶ Evagrius, *Kephalalaia Gnostica* III.20, III.21.

end p.42

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Despite this ambiguity in Evagrius' definitions of first and second natural contemplation, it is clear that his spiritual doctrine includes all four models of contemplative ascent described above. These different levels of contemplation reflect his conviction that the *gnostikos* should engage in contemplation corresponding to his level of spiritual maturity, that is to the degree to which he has begun to experience restored union with God. Evagrius describes means by which the contemplative can inwardly become more simple and immaterial, more like what he is destined to be in eternity, namely a 'naked *nous*' reunited with God. The Christian at prayer should rise from material concerns 'towards formless and immaterial knowledge' (*πρὸς ἄυλον καὶ ἀνείδεον γνῶσιν*).¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁷ Evagrius, *De oratione* 69, ed. Tugwell, p. 13 (cf. PG 79.1181).

He should strive always to see the real purposes (*logoi*) of God beneath the complexity of external appearances, returning constantly to the knowledge that union with God is his origin and his destiny.

As the *nous* advances in its understanding of the deeper purposes of God in 'all that has been and will be', it will increase in its capacity to perceive God himself and it will ultimately be rewarded with 'knowledge of the Holy Trinity',¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁸ Evagrius, *Kephalalaia Gnostica* II.16, ed. Guillaumont, p. 67: 'Such is the contemplation of all that has been and will be, that the nature that is receptive of it will be able to receive also the knowledge of the Trinity.'

which in the present age only Christ possesses;¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁹ Evagrius, *Kephalalaia Gnostica* III.3.

but which he will ultimately share with all. At the summit of Evagrius' model of Christian spirituality is *theologia*, contemplation of the divine nature and union with God. To describe the action of Christ in effecting this state Evagrius, like Athanasius, writes of the divinization of humankind:

(60) He, namely the 'leaven' of deity, who in his mercy has concealed himself in the unleavened dough of mankind, has (yet) not only not spoiled his nature and his taste and his power, but thoroughly leavened the whole mass of dough with all that is his [. . .] (61) Thus in the same way as this one [became] human for their sake, so also those on his account [become] God.¹⁵⁰

¹⁵⁰ Evagrius, *Letter to Melania* 60 and 61, ed. Vitestam, pp. 24-5, ed. Bunge, pp. 325-6.

To describe this ultimate state and the stages which precede it Evagrius attempts to formulate a vocabulary of Christian contemplation. One distinctive feature of this vocabulary is his tendency to use the terms *gnosis* and *theoria* almost interchangeably. In the *Scholia on Psalms* Evagrius states, '*gnosis* is contemplation of the Blessed

end p.43

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Trinity.'¹⁵¹

¹⁵¹ Scholion 29 on *Psalms* 118: 66(1)(cf. ed. Pitra, 118: 65-6(1), vol. iii, p. 276):.

In the text from *Kephalaia Gnostica* III.42 cited above he turns this definition around and defines *theoria* (θεωρία) as a particular kind of spiritual *gnosis* (γνῶσις). This definition of contemplation as 'knowledge of things which have been and will be' had already been suggested by Clement of Alexandria in the *Stromateis*.¹⁵²

¹⁵² Clement vindicated the word *gnosis* in orthodox Christian theology by dissociating this term and its cognates from the Gnostic heresy, and he also identified the philosophical ideal of *theoria* with the aims of Christian spirituality. In *Stromateis* 6 Clement first describes Christ as wisdom (σοφία), then identifies wisdom with knowledge, which he then defines as [scientific] knowledge (ἐπιστήμη)

'and apprehension of things which are, which will be, and which are past', *Stromateis* 6.7.61, 1, ed. Stählin, vol. ii, p. 462. Clement then describes contemplation as the goal of the wise, and concludes that 'knowledge or wisdom should be practised until [one acquires] the everlasting and unchangeable habit of contemplation, *Stromateis* 6.7.61, 2-3, ed. Stählin, vol. ii, pp. 462-3.

For Evagrius both *theoria* and *gnosis*, spiritual vision and spiritual knowledge, are terms which describe the proper activity of the *nous*. However, although Evagrius uses these terms interchangeably when describing the contemplation of creation, he tends to prefer *gnosis* to *theoria* when describing the highest levels of contemplation, namely the direct apprehension of God. Thus in describing Christ's knowledge of the Father which we are destined to share he generally employs the terms 'essential knowledge' (γνώσις οὐσιώδης) and 'knowledge of the Trinity', and less commonly 'contemplation' (θεωρία) of God or the Trinity.¹⁵³

¹⁵³ Although there are more than seventy instances of in the *Scholia on Psalms*, Evagrius writes only once of as a definition of *gnosis*, cited above, n. 151: scholion

1.3.2.4 The *Gnostikos*, Exegete and Teacher

Evagrius believed that progress in contemplation entails responsibility for the spiritual progress of others. Since he also believed that the principal textbook of spiritual progress is the Bible, Evagrius' *gnostikos* is a biblical exegete who searches the scriptures for beneficial insights. He must be able to 'give a word to each, according to his worth'.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵⁴ Evagrius, *Gnostikos* 44, SC 356, p. 174: '[. . .] Justice's task is to give to each, according to his worth, a word' (δικαιοσύνης δὲ πάλιν, τὸ κατ' ἕκαστον τοὺς λόγους ἀποδιδόναι).

In order to do this he must become completely familiar with all the levels of meaning contained in the scriptures, from ethical instruction, through the contemplation of creation, to the mysteries of the Trinity. He must understand spiritual 'definitions' and the customary expressions of scripture (*Gnostikos* 17 and 19), as

end p.44

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well as the rules for allegorical exegesis (*Gnostikos* 18, 20, and 21). In the scriptures the *gnostikos* discovers a symbolic world of history and story that helps him to express both the 'ethical' insights he learned as a *praktikos* and the new mysteries of creation he is exploring as a contemplative.

An important pattern for Evagrius' *gnostikos* is the work of the angels. The angels exemplify and symbolize the *gnostiké*: they behold the face of God; they understand the deep *logoi* of God; their bodies and thoughts are simple and pure; and they mediate God's providence, guiding those below them back towards God. Quoting Jesus' term for the sons of the resurrection in Luke 20:36, Evagrius describes the monk who attains true prayer while yearning for the heavenly father's face as ἰσὺ ἀγγελος, 'equal to the angels'.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵⁵ Evagrius, *De oratione* 113, ed. Tugwell, p. 21 (cf. PG 79.1192): 'A monk becomes the equal of the angels through true prayer, yearning to see the face of the Father who is in heaven (Matt. 18:10)'

(Ἰσαγγελος γίνεται μοναχὸς διὰ τῆς ἀληθοῦς προσευχῆς, ἐπιποθὼν ἰδεῖν τὸ πρόσωπον τοῦ Πατρὸς τοῦ ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς)

The *gnostikos* who engages in 'angelic practice' and seeks divine *gnosis*¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁶ Evagrius, *De oratione* 142, ed. Tugwell, p. 26 (cf. PG 79.1197): 'The one longing to pray has moved from what is here, to have citizenship in heaven always (Phil. 3:20), not merely through simple word[s] but through angelic practice and divine knowledge'

(Προσεύξασθαι ποθεῖ ὁ μεταστὰς τῶν ἐνθένδε καὶ τὸ πολίτευμα, ἔχων ἐν οὐρανοῖς διὰ παντός, οὐ λόγῳ ἀπλῶς ψιλῶ ἀλλὰ πράξει ἀγγελικῇ καὶ γνώσει θειοτέρᾳ)

must also share in the angels' work of mediation by praying for others,¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁷ Evagrius, *De oratione* 40, ed. Tugwell, p. 9 (cf. PG 79.1176): 'It is just to pray not only for your own purification, but especially for your own [kindred], so as to imitate the angelic mode'.

by aiding others in their spiritual struggle,¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁸ Evagrius, *Kephalaia Gnostica* VI.90, ed. Guillaumont, p. 249: 'Whoever will have obtained spiritual knowledge will help the holy angels and will return reasoning souls from vice to virtue and from ignorance to knowledge.'

and by curing them.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁹ Evagrius, *Praktikos* 100, SC 171, p. 710: 'we are to revere the elders as the angels, for it is they who anoint us for our struggle and heal us when we are bitten by wild beasts'. The *gnostikos* rejoices in the spiritual progress of others and learns to revere others 'as Christ': *De oratione* 117-25.

This work of spiritual healing is facilitated as the *gnostikos* learns to apply in the arena of spiritual struggle the exegetical tools he employs in interpreting the scriptures. Just as the scriptures invite him to discern God's providential intentions in sacred history, so the *gnostikos* learns to perceive the *logoi* of providence and judgement in the lives of those who seek his advice. Through progress in the art of discernment he becomes 'salt for the impure and light

end p.45

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Psalmody and Prayer in the Writings of Evagrius Ponticus

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pp. [46]-[50]

for the pure'.¹⁶⁰

¹⁶⁰ Evagrius, *Gnostikos* 3, SC 356, p. 90:

Γνωστικός δὲ ὁ ἄλλος μὲν λόγον ἐπέχων τοῖς ἀκαθάρτοις, φωτὸς δὲ τοῖς καθαροῖς.

This allusion to the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5: 13-14) implies that the *gnostikos* must be aware of both the potential and the limitations of those who come to him for advice. He must therefore:

15. Γνώριζε καιρῶν καὶ βίων καὶ ἐπιτηδευμάτων τοὺς λόγους καὶ τοὺς νόμους ἵνα ἕχῃς ἐκάστῳ τὰ συμφέροντα ῥαδίως λέγειν.

¹⁶¹

¹⁶¹ Evagrius, *Gnostikos* 15, SC 356, p. 112.

15. Learn to know the *logoi* and the laws of circumstances, [ways of] life, and occupations, so that you can easily tell each what is useful for him.

While the life of the angels offers a stirring model of spiritual progress, the fate of the demons provides a stark reminder of the fate awaiting those who misuse their freedom, ignoring providence and preferring ignorance and vice; and who therefore face an upcoming judgement full of pain and darkness. Evagrius' version of hell, however, was less threatening than that of classical Jewish and Christian orthodoxy: it resembles medieval versions of purgatory in being something like an agonizing school of correction, to be avoided at all costs,¹⁶²

¹⁶² Evagrius employs traditionally vivid language to warn his readers of the dangers of hell in *Rerum monachalium rationes* 9, PG 40.1261: 'Consider in your mind what is now the state of those in hell. Reflect on the suffering, the silence of bitterness, the frightful moaning, the dreaded fear and torment, fear of what will come, ceaseless pain, constant weeping [. . .] the shame before [all those in heaven and on earth], all the varieties of punishment, the undying worm, the dark abyss, the gnashing of teeth, fears and terrors [. . .]'

but from which all who are sent there will ultimately emerge.¹⁶³

¹⁶³ As regards the *apokatastasis*, the doctrine that all fallen beings will ultimately accept the salvation offered by Christ and thus be restored to union with God, Evagrius appears to have avoided ever stating openly that 'all will be saved'. Instead, this teaching is implicit in his eschatological vision of the *logikoi* returning to their 'original state': *Kephalaia Gnostica* ii.4 (the 'last transformation' is 'the passage of all to knowledge of Blessed Trinity'); *Letter to Melania* 29-30 (like rivers flowing into the sea, once sin is removed 'the many' will again become 'one', Frankenberg, pp. 618-19, Bunge, *Briefe aus der Wüste*, pp. 313-14); *Letter to Melania* 63 (the *logikoi* are to become 'one with [God] in everything without end', Bunge, *Briefe aus der*

Wüste, p. 326, ed. Vitestam, pp. 27-8).

He was well aware that this teaching could be misunderstood, and that even if properly understood it might give scandal: he was particularly apprehensive that 'the *logos* of judgement' containing the doctrine of transformations and renewed bodies would be especially suspect. Thus thus he advised the *gnostikos* who considers himself ready to teach others to be extremely cautious and to adapt his teaching to the particular circumstances of his hearers.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶⁴ Origen similarly recommends prudence concerning his doctrine of remedial punishment in *Contra Celsum* 6.26-7.

end p.46

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36. Λανθανέτω τοὺς κοσμικοὺς καὶ τοὺς νέους ὁ περὶ κρίσεως ὑψηλότερος λόγος, γεννῶν ῥαδίως τὴν καταφρόνησιν· οὐ γὰρ ἴσασιν ὀδύνην ψυχῆς λογικῆς καταδικασθείσης τὴν ἄγνοιαν.

165

¹⁶⁵ Evagrius, *Gnostikos* 36, SC 356, p. 154.

36. [You must] keep hidden from seculars and from the young the more exalted *logos* concerning judgment, for this easily engenders [their] contempt: they do not understand the suffering of the reasoning soul condemned to ignorance.

Spiritual knowledge, Evagrius reminds his readers, entails both responsibility and risk. If the *gnostikos* is incautious in his teaching, and in particular if he speaks boldly and arrogantly concerning matters that are easily misunderstood, then he is guilty of abusing sacred things on the very threshold of the Temple. The careless misuse of these *logoi* carries grave penalties for the teacher:

24. Πρόσεχε σεαυτῷ μήποτε κέρδους ἕνεκεν ἢ τοῦ εὐπαθεῖν, ἢ δόξης χάριν παρερχομένης, εἴπῃς τι τῶν ἀπορρήτων καὶ βληθῆς ἔξω τῶν ἱερῶν περιόλων, ὡς καὶ αὐτὸς ἐν τῷ ναῷ τὰ τῆς περιστερᾶς τέκνα πιπράσκων.

166

¹⁶⁶ Evagrius, *Gnostikos* 24, SC 356, p. 122.

24. Take care that you never, for the sake of profit, well-being, or fleeting glory, talk about those things which should not be revealed, and [thus] be cast out of the sacred precincts, like those selling the pigeon chicks in the temple (cf. Matt. 21:12-13).

In summary, Evagrius' *gnostikos* must constantly exercise the virtue of prudence and the art of discernment in determining what his hearers may profitably be taught. He must maintain the broadest possible horizon in his contemplative efforts: he must strive to perceive himself and the whole of the cosmos from the perspective of a divine origin and destiny. All multiplicity, whether the glorious diversity of the universe or the complex

inner struggle for spiritual maturity, is to be comprehended as pointing either back in time to the unity from which it fell, or ahead into that restored union towards which it is moving.

end p.47

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2 The Monastic Discipline of Psalmody

Luke Dysinger OSB

Abstract: In the fourth century, the Book of Psalms gradually displaced other biblical texts used in so-called 'canonical prayers'. Among the monks, psalmody was one of the exterior ascetical practices which, together with fasting, keeping vigil, and restraint of speech, were recommended by almost all the desert fathers of the late fourth century. John Cassian was one of the most important witnesses to the practice and spirituality of psalmody. The practice and spirit of psalmody are discussed.

Keywords: psalmody, practice, spirituality, Book of Psalms, monks, John Cassian

During the latter half of the fourth century the psalter came to occupy an increasingly prominent place in Christian worship, both in the liturgical assembly and in private devotion. In the fourth century the Book of Psalms gradually displaced other biblical texts used at the so-called 'canonical prayers' which later came to be known as the Liturgy of the Hours.¹

¹ A. Veilleux believes that in the primitive Pachomian office there was no particular preference for psalmody, and that the office consisted largely of consecutive scripture readings, each followed by the prayers Cassian describes in Book 2 of the *Institutes*, i.e. standing with arms outstretched, prostrating, then arising for silent prayer. Veilleux, *La liturgie dans le cénobitisme pachômien*, pp. 276-323

One historian of music has described this 'psalmodic movement' as 'an unprecedented wave of enthusiasm for the singing of psalms that swept from east to west through the Christian population in the closing decades of the fourth century'.²

² McKinnon, 'Desert Monasticism and the Later Fourth Century Psalmodic Movement', p. 506. The same author describes 'that great wave of enthusiasm for the Old Testament Psalms which swept from East to West in the second half of the fourth century. Nothing quite like it has been observed either before or after in the history of Christianity or Judaism' ('The Fourth Century Origin of the Gradual', p. 98).

Different reasons have been adduced for the increasing popularity of the psalter; but whatever its origins, by the 380s, when Evagrius became a monk, the central place of the psalter in monastic life was well-established.

In the liturgical practice of the late fourth century, and especially in monastic communities, the term *ψαλμωδία* referred to corporate or private chanting of psalms which was interrupted at regular intervals by pauses for prayer. These pauses occurred at the end of psalms or between divisions in longer psalms, and generally entailed, as will be described, a change or a series of changes in ritual posture. The prayer which was offered during these pauses

could be vocal or silent and of variable duration (although generally not protracted), depending on circumstances and local practice. The intimate relationship between chanted psalmody and the pauses for prayer which punctuated it was such that late fourth-century

end p.48

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sources often refer to the practice of psalmody as 'the psalms and prayers' or simply as 'the prayers'.

2.1 Athanasius, Palladius, and the Desert Fathers

Among the monks psalmody was one of the exterior ascetical practices which, together with fasting, keeping vigil, and restraint of speech, were recommended by almost all the desert fathers of the late fourth century.³

³ The term 'exterior' is used here to distinguish these practices from 'interior' or mental disciplines such as vigilance over thoughts, compunction, and humility.

In contrast to these other practices, however, psalmody was a practice which occupied the monk throughout the day. Keeping vigil (which consisted chiefly of psalmody) pertained to the hours when one would normally sleep; the question of fasting arose chiefly at mealtimes; and restraint of speech was an issue primarily when one had the opportunity to engage in conversation. Psalmody, on the other hand, encompassed nearly all the monk's waking hours.

In both Nitria and Kellia two formal times of prayer were kept each day.⁴

⁴ This simple practice of twice-daily formal ('canonical') prayer gave way within a few decades to traditions of more elaborate, fixed liturgical prayer every few hours which have characterized the liturgy of the hours in both East and West ever since. In Books 2 and 3 of the *Institutes* Cassian attests to both the older, simple practice of the Egyptian desert and the newer approach of his communities in Gaul, which included the hours of Terce, Sext, and None. Taft traces this shift towards more frequent canonical prayer in Egypt (*The Liturgy of the Hours in East and West*, pp. 57-73) and in the urban monastic offices of the eastern (pp. 75-91) and western (pp. 93-140) churches. Recent excavations in Kellia have revealed the architectural and artistic/decorative changes in the cells of the monks of Kellia which accompanied this liturgical shift: Descoeudres, 'Die Mönchssiedlung Kellia', pp. 26-39.

The Vigil office was celebrated before dawn and Vespers at dusk; these were either celebrated in common, especially in Kellia on weekends, or in the privacy of the hermits' cells. At each of these offices twelve 'canonical'⁵

⁵ Cassian writes of the 'canonical' number of psalms offered at each office in *Institutes* 2.12.1, cited and discussed below, n. 31.

psalms were chanted, interspersed with prayers after each psalm. During the remainder of the day and for as much of the night as the monk could remain awake the practice of psalmody or reciting other biblical texts (μελέτη) provided a background against which all other work was undertaken. This practice of incessant psalmody and scripture-meditation probably underlies the first apophthegm in the Greek Systematic Collection:

1. Ὁ ἅγιος ἀββᾶ Ἀντώνιος καθεζόμενός ποτε ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ ἐν ἀκηδία γέγονε καὶ πολλῇ σκοτώσει λογισμῶν. Καὶ ἔλεγε πρὸς τὸν Θεόν· Κύριε, θέλω σωθῆναι καὶ οὐκ ἐῷσί με οἱ λογισμοί· τί ποιήσω ἐν τῇ θλίψει μου; Πως σωθῶ;

Καὶ μικρὸν διαναστὰς ἐπὶ τὰ ἔξω θεωρεῖ τινα ὁ Ἀντώνιος ὡς ἑαυτὸν καθεζόμενον καὶ ἐργαζόμενον, εἶτα ἀνιστάμενον ἀπὸ τοῦ ἔργου καὶ προσευχόμενον καὶ πάλιν καθεζόμενον καὶ τὴν σειρὰν ἐργαζόμενον, εἶτα πάλιν εἰς προσευχὴν ἀνιστάμενον

Once while living in the desert the holy abba Antony found himself in the state of *acedia*, much darkened by [tempting] thoughts. And he said to God: 'Lord, I want to be saved and my [tempting] thoughts do not allow it. What should I do in my affliction? How am I to be saved?' And standing up a short time later he began to go outside, when Antony saw someone like himself sitting down and working, then standing up from work and praying; then sitting down again to work on the rope [he was making], and again standing up to pray.

Here Antony the Great is the archetype of the monk delivered from *acedia* through a simple practice: he is to regularly interrupt his manual labour by standing briefly for prayer. Although the apophthegm does not state that Antony is also to recite the psalms and other scriptures during the interval while sitting and working on his rope, this is probably presupposed; certainly it had become the norm by the latter half of the fourth century in Evagrius' milieu. Palladius describes the chanting of psalms which could be heard coming from the cells of monks engaged in the manufacture of linen at Nitria.⁶

⁶ Palladius, *Lausiac History* 7.5, ed. Bartelink, pp. 38-40.

Cassian similarly attests that continuous recitation of 'psalmody and the rest of scripture' during 'ceaseless manual labour' was the Egyptian practice in which he had been trained.⁷

⁷ Cassian, *Institutes* 2.14-15: 'sic unusquisque opus exsequitur iniunctum, ut psalmum uel scripturam quamlibet memoriter recensendo [. . .]', SC 109, pp. 82-6

Later monastic authors not only recommend psalmody during manual labour, but occasionally go so far as to specify exactly how frequently the psalmody ought to be interrupted with prayer:⁸

⁸ The letters of Barsanuphius and John reflect sixth-century Palestinian usages. While weaving a mat the practice of 'continuously memorizing or reciting psalms' is to be interrupted with prayer after every third row: Barsanuphius and John, *Letter* 143, 23-7, SC 427, p. 522.

Epiphanius of Salamis summarizes this approach in an apophthegm: 'The true monk ought to have the prayer and the psalmody ceaselessly in his heart.'⁹

⁹ *Apophthegmata Patrum*, Greek alphabetical collection, *Epiphanius* 3, PG 165.64:

ἀληθινὸν μοναχὸν ἀδιαλείπτως ἔχειν τὴν εὐχὴν καὶ τὴν ψαλμωδίαν ἐν τῇ καρδίᾳ αὐτοῦ .

end p.50

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Psalmody and Prayer in the Writings of Evagrius Ponticus

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pp. [51]-[55]

Monastic biographers are fond of quantifying this 'background rhythm' of psalmody, scripture meditation, and prayer in the case of certain exemplary ascetics: they list the number of times each day these monastic heroes interrupted their psalmody and *melete* by arising or prostrating (or both) for prayer. Moses the Ethiopian 'prayed 50 prayers' each day,¹⁰

¹⁰ Palladius, *Lausiac History* 19.6, ed. Bartelink, p. 100.

while Macarius the Egyptian prayed nearly that number while crawling back and forth in the tunnel that led to his secret hermitage.¹¹

¹¹ Ibid., 17.10, pp. 74-6.

Paul 'the Simple' of Pherme offered 300 prayers each day; he kept count by placing the requisite number of pebbles on his lap, then dropping one after each prayer.¹²

¹² Ibid., 20.1, p. 102.

Abba Apollo offered 200 prayers each day,¹³

¹³ Anon., *Historia monachorum in Aegypto* 8.5, ed. Festugière, p. 48.

and Macarius the Alexandrian and Evagrius each offered 100 prayers each day.¹⁴

¹⁴ Macarius describes himself, *ἑκατὸν εὐχὰς ποιῶν* (Palladius, *Lausiac History* 20.3, ed. Bartelink, p. 104); and Palladius reports of Evagrius, *ἔποιε δὲ εὐχὰς ἑκατὸν* (Palladius, *Lausiac History* 38.10, ed. Bartelink, p. 200).

Gabriel Bunge has calculated that Palladius' attribution to Evagrius of 100 prayers each day implies that approximately every ten minutes throughout the day Evagrius offered brief prayers which may have marked the conclusion of a psalm or interrupted sections of the longer psalms.¹⁵

¹⁵ Bunge, *Geistgebet*, pp. 31-2. On the question of 'the prayers' signifying the alternating rhythm of psalmody interrupted regularly by prayers, Bunge refers to the examples of Antony the Great cited above and to Barsanuphius and John (*Letters* 40, 140, 143, 150, and 176), *Geistgebet*, pp. 32-4. He also refers to texts from the Ethiopian collection of *Apophthegmata Patrum* (13, 26, 42, and 43, ed. Arras, *Collectio monastica*, pp. 66 and 70) which indicate that these 'prayers' often consisted of brief formulae such as: 'Jesus have mercy on me! Jesus help me! I bless you, my God!' (*Geistgebet*, pp. 39-40).

The goal of this constant prayer and psalmody consisted both in turning the mind back to God, and in turning away from demonic temptations. As Douglas Burton-Christie has noted, memories and personal concerns which arose during the course of chanting the psalms were often regarded as

distractions and considered to be of demonic inspiration. The recitation of psalms and other biblical texts was supposed to drive out memories of the past and replace them with holier thoughts.¹⁶

¹⁶ Burton-Christie, *The Word in the Desert*, pp. 117-29, esp. 124-7.

A somewhat more positive approach to the goals of psalmody is found in Athanasius' *Letter to Marcellinus on the Interpretation of Psalms*. Although Athanasius does not describe his text as exclusively or even primarily intended for monks, he claims to transmit the

end p.51

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insights of an 'old man diligent in asceticism' (συνετυχὼν τινιφιλοπρόσῳ γέρωντι), evidently a monk.¹⁷

¹⁷ Rondeau has described the monastic ethos which this work reflects: *Commentaires*, vol. ii, p. 222; 'L'Épître à Marcellinus', pp. 196-7.

The first part of this text (chapters 1-9) presents the Book of Psalms as a summary of the whole of scripture, and thus of salvation history. The particular virtues of the psalter are then discussed (chapters 10-11), and particular psalms are recommended for different states of the soul (chapters 13-26). The psalter is presented as a means of restoring harmony and balance in the soul (chapters 27-8). The psalms are to be 'recited and chanted' (λεγέτω καὶ ψαλλέτω) just as they are written;¹⁸

¹⁸ Athanasius, *Letter to Marcellinus* 12, PG 27.41: τὰ γεγραμμένα λεγέτω καὶ ψαλλέτω, ὡς περὶ ῥηται.

that is, in their entirety (chapter 29) and without changing or augmenting the words (chapter 30). A striking image which acquires great popularity is that of the psalter as the soul's mirror:

Καὶ μοι δοκεῖ τῷ ψάλλοντι γίνεσθαι τούτους ὥσπερ εἴσοπτρον, εἰς τὸ κατανοεῖν καὶ αὐτὸν ἐν αὐτοῖς καὶ τὰ τῆς ἑαυτοῦ ψυχῆς κινήματα, καὶ οὕτως αἰσθόμενον ἀπαγγέλλειν αὐτοῦς.

¹⁹

¹⁹ Ibid., PG 27.24.

And it seems to me that for the one chanting psalms, these become like a mirror in which he perceives himself and the movements of his own soul; and thus affected he recites them.

Not only do the psalms display 'as in a mirror' the whole range of human affective life, they also have the power to reshape one's inner life. By making the words of the psalms his own, the one who chants them may be inwardly 'pierced' and moved to compunction along with the penitent psalmist:

καὶ ὁ ἀκούων δὲ ὡς αὐτὸς λέγων κατανύσσεται, καὶ συνδιατίθεται τοῖς τῶν ᾠδῶν ῥήμασιν, ὡς ἰδίαν ὄντων αὐτοῦ.

²⁰ Ibid., PG 27.21.

And the one hearing is struck with compunction as if he himself were speaking, and is moved by the words of the songs as if they were his own.

Finally, the Book of Psalms is the soul's great teacher:

πάσα μὲν ἡ θεία Γραφή διδάσκαλός ἐστιν ἀρετῆς καὶ πίστεως ἀληθοῦς·
ἡ δὲ γε βίβλος τῶν Ψαλμῶν ἔχει καὶ τὴν εἰκόνα πως τῆς διαγωγῆς τῶν
ψυχῶν.

²¹

²¹ Ibid., PG 27.25.

for all of Sacred Scripture is a teacher of virtue and the truths of faith; but the Book of the Psalms somehow contains as well the image of the soul's course of life.

end p.52

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Thus the psalter is a workbook for the soul's whole course of life (διαγωγή²²): the remarkable variety of images evoked during psalmody both reflect and provide direction for human life in all its complexity.

2.2 John Cassian

One of the most important witnesses to the practice and spirituality of psalmody in the late fourth century is John Cassian. While other monastic legislators and desert fathers, Evagrius included, mention only in passing such details as bodily posture and the duration of different intervals associated with psalmody, it is Cassian who provides a more detailed picture. Writing in Gaul around the year 420 he was concerned to correct both imprudent excess in the quantity of psalmody offered at the public offices as well as laxity in the performance of psalmody. Thus he offers in the *Institutes* his recollections of what he had experienced twenty years previously during what was already coming to be wistfully regarded as the 'golden age' of Egyptian monasticism.²²

²² '[After the devastation of Nitria in 399] The freshness of the first generation was fading from Scetis also. And the older monks knew it' (Chitty, *The Desert a City*, p. 60; cf. also pp. 65-8.

Gabriel Bunge has summarized Cassian's description of psalmody at the two monastic offices of Vigils and Vespers as follows:

During the performance of the psalms—in community this would be by one or at most three singers who remained standing while the others sat listening (*Institutes* 2.5.5)—all would arise to pray, cast

themselves praying to the ground, then arise again to pray, standing in silence and with hands uplifted (*Institutes* 2.7.2 and 2.8).²³

²³ Bunge, *Geistgebet*, p. 13.

The three texts from Cassian's *Institutes* to which Bunge refers are among the very few which describe in detail the alternating rhythm of psalmody and prayer which characterized early monastic liturgy. In these passages from the *Institutes* Cassian explains the practices of the monastic communities in which Evagrius was formed as a monk, and which therefore underlie Evagrius' own experience of psalmody. It will therefore be useful to consider these and other related texts from the *Institutes* in some detail.

end p.53

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2.2.1 The Practice of Psalmody

In Book 2 of the *Institutes* Cassian justifies the practice of singing only twelve psalms at each of the principal offices of Vespers and Vigils. He invokes not only venerable tradition but also divine endorsement of this practice; this story may be related to a Pachomian legend claiming angelic authority for monastic usages.²⁴

²⁴ Owen Chadwick admits that Cassian's story is similar to the Pachomian tradition of a 'Rule of the Angel'; but he also describes in detail the principal differences. He doubts whether this represents evidence of a direct relation between Cassian and Pachomius: Chadwick, *John Cassian*, pp. 60-2.

In Cassian's version a group of monastic superiors have gathered to discuss the proper number of psalms to be sung at the common offices, but can reach no agreement. They decide to celebrate Vespers together:

Cumque sedentibus cunctis, ut est moris nunc usque in Aegypti partibus, et in psallentis uerba omni cordis intentione defixis undecim psalmos orationum interiectione distinctos contiguis uersibus parili pronuntiatione cantasset, duodecimum sub alleluiae responsione consummans ab uniuersorum oculis repente subtractus quaestioni pariter et caerimoniis finem inposuit.²⁵

²⁵ Cassian, *Institutes* 2.5.5, SC 109, p. 68.

And while all were sitting (as is still customary throughout the land Egypt), having fixed the whole focus of their hearts on the words of the one chanting the psalms, he sang eleven Psalms separated by prayers introduced between them: singing each succeeding verse with equal modulation,²⁶

²⁶ i.e. a tone or 'mode' for each pair of verses.

he completed the twelfth with the 'alleluia' response, and by suddenly withdrawing from the eyes of all, put an end to both their controversy and their ceremony.

Cassian's intentions in this passage are several. He wishes to establish, first, that psalmody may be listened to while sitting: such was, he says, and is the custom 'throughout the land of Egypt'. Second, individual psalms are to be sung with prayers, not alleluia-responses, after each one. Third (a point he makes at length elsewhere), the psalmody is to be sung clearly and distinctly with the kind of 'modulation' that encourages all to fix the whole focus or attention of their heart, their *intentio cordis*, on the verses being sung. And finally, as the humorous conclusion to the story makes clear, twelve psalms will suffice.

This text also illustrates that in the liturgical assembly psalms were ordinarily sung by one or more cantors while the rest of the

end p.54

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community sat and listened. This point is described in greater detail later in the *Institutes*:

Praedictum uero duodenarium psalmorum numerum ita diuidunt, ut, si duo fuerint fratres, senos psallant, si tres, quaternos, si quattuor, ternos. Quo numero numquam minus in congregatione decantant, ac perinde, quantalibet multitudo conuenerit, numquam amplius psallunt in synaxi quam quattuor fratres.²⁷

²⁷ Cassian, *Institutes* 2.11.3, SC 109, p. 78.

The twelve psalms mentioned above are divided as follows: if there are two brothers, each sings six; if there are three, [each sings] four; and if four, [each sings] three. Less than this number is never sung in community; and so whatever the size of the gathering, not more than four sing at the *synaxis*.

These texts indicate that unlike the 'antiphonal'²⁸

²⁸ The term 'antiphonal' is used here in the narrow sense of alternating choirs. Cassian uses *antiphona* to describe very different practices, sometimes referring to responsorial chanting of a verse or a whole psalm (*Institutes* 2.2.1, SC 109, p. 58), at other times apparently using it to mean the whole psalmody of the office (*Institutes* 2.8, SC 109, p. 72). A third use of the term seems to mean unison singing of a psalm or refrain by the whole community (*Institutes* 3.8.4, SC 109, p. 112).

form of singing according to which alternating choirs answer each other, the early monastic experience of Vigils and Vespers would largely have been one of listening, rather than of singing.²⁹

²⁹ Bunge emphasizes this point in *Geistgebet*, pp. 13-14; however, he inexplicably maintains that the psalmody would have been sung by at most three cantors ('höchstens drei Sängern'), despite Cassian's description of four cantors.

It was the cantor who chanted, not, for the most part, the community.³⁰

³⁰ This was the case in the more primitive Egyptian office described by Cassian throughout most of Book 2 of the *Institutes*. In Cassian's own community in Gaul, however, things were otherwise. In *Institutes* 3.3.1 he refers to Palestinian and

Mesopotamian practices as precedents for his community's usages, where, in addition to the newer hours of Terce, Sext, and None (replacing the more ancient Egyptian practice of 'continual prayer' during work), there was also greater variety in the performance of psalmody. He uses the term *antiphona tria* (*Institutes* 3.8.4, SC 109, p. 112) to refer to one of these variations, perhaps a form of responsorial singing; but certainly a form of psalmody in which the whole community, rather than just the cantor, sang.

In order to help the monks listen as attentively as possible, they were allowed to sit during the psalmody:

Hunc sane canonicum quem praediximus duodenarium psalmorum numerum tali corporis quiete releuant, ut has easdem congregationum sollemnitates ex more celebrantes absque eo, qui dicturus in medium psalmos surrexerit, cuncti sedilibus humillimis insidentes a uoce psallentis omni cordis intentione dependeant. Ita namque ieiuniis et operatione totius diei noctisque lassescunt, ut, nisi huiuscemodi refectione adiuuentur, ne hunc quidem numerum stantes explere praeualeant.³¹

³¹ Cassian, *Institutes* 2.12.1, SC 109, pp. 78-80.

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Psalmody and Prayer in the Writings of Evagrius Ponticus

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pp. [56]-[60]

The aforementioned canonical number of twelve psalms is rendered easier by a kind of bodily rest: all of those who gather to celebrate according to their custom (except the one who stands up in the centre to recite the psalms) sit upon low benches and follow closely the voice of the one chanting the psalms with the whole focus of their hearts. For their fasting and labours by day and night are so exhausting that unless refreshed by some such assistance, they would not be able to complete even this number [of psalms] while standing.

According to Cassian this ostensible indulgence in regard to posture helped the monks maintain *intentio cordis* during the chanting. Their attentive listening was further facilitated by regularly interrupting the chanting with a period of 'refreshment' (*refectio*), an interval of silent prayer which concluded with a collect sung by the cantor. This permitted a redirecting of the *intentio* from receptive listening to a more active self-offering in prayer. Following the period of prayer the attention of the heart, now refreshed, could be redirected towards the next psalm sung by cantor(s):

Etidcirco ne psalmos quidem ipsos, quos in congregatione decantant, continuata student pronuntiatione concludere, sed eos pro numero uersuum duabus uel tribus intercisionibus cum orationum interiectione diuisos distinctim particulatimque consummant. Non enim multitudine uersuum, sed mentis intellegentia delectantur, illud tota uirtute
sectantes: *Psallam spiritu, psallam et mente.*³²

³² Ibid., 2.11.1, p. 76.

And thus they do not even try by an unbroken recitation to finish those psalms they sing in community: rather, depending on the number of verses, they divide them into two or three sections, completing them separately, section by section, interspersing prayers between them. For it is not in an abundance of verses, but rather in the mind's knowledge that they delight, seeking this with all their powers: *I will sing with the spirit: I will sing also with the mind* (1 Cor. 14:15).

James McKinnon believes that the phrase *distinctim particulatimque* ('separately, section by section') implies a slow pace of chanting on the cantor's part, intended to facilitate understanding of the text being sung.³³

³³ McKinnon, *Music in Early Christian Literature*, p. 148.

An additional opportunity to appropriate the spiritual meaning of the psalm

would have been provided during the pauses for prayer which regularly interrupted the psalmody. These intervals of prayer consist of three successive acts, each involving a change in posture. First, the monks arise to stand for a time in prayer; this is followed by a brief prostration. Finally, all stand again for prayer,

end p.56

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this time with outstretched hands, and the cantor concludes with a collect 'gathering' the prayers of the whole community. Cassian warns that although the interval of prayer must be substantial and not rushed, the prostration should not be prolonged. Again Cassian describes and interprets the Egyptian practice he remembers:

[. . .] antequam flectant genua, paulisper orant et stantes in supplicatione maiorem temporis partem expendunt. Itaque post haec puncto breuissimo procidentēs humi, uelut adorantes tantum diuinam clementiam, summa uelocitate consurgunt ac rursus erecti expansis manibus eodem modo, quo prius stantes orauerant, suis precibus inmorantur. Humi namque diutius procumbentem non solum cogitationibus aiunt uerum etiam somno grauius inpugnari [. . .] Cum autem is, qui orationem collecturus est, e terra surrexerit, omnes pariter eriguntur, ita ut nullus nec antequam inclinetur ille genu flectere nec cum e terra surrexerit remorari praesumat [. . .]³⁴

³⁴ Cassian, *Institutes* 2.7.2-3, SC 109, p. 70.

[. . .] before they bend their knees they pray for a little while, standing to spend the greater part of the time in supplication. And after this, for the briefest moment, they prostrate themselves on the ground as if adoring the divine compassion, and then arise as quickly as possible, standing upright with outstretched hands—just as they had previously prayed (*orauerant*) standing—[now] to linger in [supplicating] prayers (*preces*). For remaining prostrate on the ground for any length of time renders you open, they say, not only to the assault of [tempting] thoughts, but of sleep [. . .] But when he who is to 'collect' the prayers rises from the ground they all stand up together: for no one would presume to bend the knee before he bows down, nor to delay when he has risen from the ground [. . .]

This passage suggests a distinction between the kind of prayer offered during the intervals when the monks arise from psalmody. The first precedes the prostration and is referred to by Cassian as *oratio*. During the second, which follows the prostration, the monks stand with outstretched hands (a symbol of supplication) and offer *preces*, which conclude with a collect³⁵ chanted by the cantor on behalf of the whole assembly.

³⁵ That 'he who is to "collect" the prayers' is in fact the cantor is made clear in a passage where Cassian opposes the practice (destined to become the norm in the West) of singing the *Gloria Patri* after each psalm. Cassian maintains that the *Gloria* should be intoned only after all the psalms have been sung: 'And that which we have

seen in this country, namely that after one has sung to the end of the psalm, all stand up and together loudly sing: "Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit"—this we have never heard throughout the whole East. There, rather, while silence is maintained by all, the cantor offers the concluding prayer. This [hymn] glorifying the Trinity generally concludes the whole psalmody (*antiphona*)' (Illud etiam quod in hac prouincia uidimus, ut uno cantante in clausula psalmi omnes adstantes concinant cum clamore 'gloria Patri et Filio et Spiritui sancto', nusquam per omnem Orientem audiuiimus, sed cum omnium silentio ab eo, qui cantat, finito psalmo orationem succedere, hac uero glorificatione Trinitatis tantummodo solere antiphona terminari), *Institutes* 2.8, SC 109, p. 72.

end p.57

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2.2.2 The Spirit of Psalmody

In addition to describing in detail the monastic practice of psalmody, Cassian also describes the inner, spiritual goal of the psalmody and scripture-meditation which monks were expected to practise during manual labour. In the Tenth Conference (the Second Conference of Abba Isaac) Cassian describes and recommends a form of monologistic prayer consisting of continuous recitation of the verse, 'Deus in adiutorium meum intende, Domine ad adiuuandum me festina.' He explains that through 'restricting itself to the poverty of this verse' and meditating as well on the Lord's passion, the mind casts off 'the richness and multiplicity of thoughts'³⁶

³⁶ Cassian, *Conferences* 10.11.1, CSEL 13, p. 303: cogitationum diuitias amplisque substantias abiciat ac refutet, atque ita versiculi huius paupertate constricta'.

to ascend like the stag of Psalm 103: 18 into 'even more exalted and sacred mysteries'.³⁷

³⁷ Ibid., 10.11.2, CSEL 13, p. 303: 'sublimioribus ac sacratoribus mysteriis'.

At first this rejection of multiplicity in favour of inward 'poverty' appears similar to Evagrius' 'pure prayer' beyond all images and concepts. Cassian, however, develops this image further, describing the 'spiritual stag' ascending into 'manifold knowledge of God (*multiformem scientiam dei*) through divine illumination'.³⁸

³⁸ Ibid.

Thus the goal of this spiritual ascent is not so much freedom from words or images, but rather the ability to perceive the 'manifold wisdom of God' (cf. Eph. 3: 10);³⁹

³⁹ This significance of Eph. 3: 10 as a key to Evagrius' understanding of the psalter and of Christ as the personification of this 'manifold wisdom' is discussed below in Chapter 6.1.2 and 6.2.

that is, to better understand and inwardly appropriate the rich variety of images and words found in the psalter:

[. . .] omnes quoque psalmorum adfectus in se recipiens ita incipiet decantare, ut eos non tamquam a propheta compositos, sed uelut a se editos quasi orationem propriam profunda cordis conpunctione

depromat uel certe ad suam personam aestimet eos fuisse directos,
eorumque sententias non tunc tantummodo per prophetam aut in
propheta fuisse completas, sed in se cotidie geri inplerique
cognoscat.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ Cassian, *Conferences* 10.11.4, CSEL 13, p. 304.

[. . .] receiving into himself all the inward states [contained] in the
psalms, he will begin to sing them not as if composed by the
prophets; but as if

end p.58

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spoken by him as his own prayers, drawn forth from deepest
compunction of heart: and he will certainly interpret them as directed
at himself, understanding that their verses were not only formerly
fulfilled by or in the prophet; but that they are fulfilled and acted out
daily in him.

It is clear from this text that for Cassian psalmody is not merely a
preparation for the prayers which are offered between the psalms; rather,
the psalms can and should be sung as one's own personal prayer (*quasi
orationem propriam*). Indeed the chanting of psalms seems here to
accompany, or perhaps to induce, that very highly prized occasion of
repentance and renewed consecration to God called by the desert fathers
compunctio cordis (κατάνυξις).⁴¹

⁴¹ Cassian writes of compunction as one of the proper fruits of psalmody in
Conferences 1.17.2, CSEL 13, p. 26: 'idcirco decantatio crebra psalmorem, ut
adsidua nobis exinde compunctio ministretur.' Johannes Quasten has discussed the
early monastic emphasis on compunction in relation to the use of music in the early
Church in 'The Doctrine of Katanyxis: Oriental Monasticism as Inimical to Artistic
Singing', in *Music and Worship in Pagan and Christian Antiquity*, pp. 94-8.

In Cassian's view psalmody is not so much an exercise in recalling events
from Israel's past as it is an opportunity to practise sharpened spiritual
vision, here principally a vision directed inward, for the purpose of
understanding the deeper meaning of one's own ascetical striving. Psalmody
is thus not an escape from the 'real world' into another state of
consciousness, nor is it an opportunity to meditate piously on events safely
distant in time and culture from one's own experience. On the contrary:
Cassian recommends that the monk receive into himself the *affectus cordis*
of the psalm's original author and make the psalm his own, becoming as it
were a new author of the psalm.⁴²

⁴² Cassian, *Conferences* 10.11.5, CSEL 13, p. 305: 'recipientes cordis affectum, quo
quisque decantatus uel conscriptus est psalmus, uelut auctores eius facti'.

Through familiarity with the text the monk learns to anticipate the deeper
meaning of the words he is about to sing and then to allow this to illuminate
his own lived experience. During psalmody he will recall vividly his own daily

strivings and failings:

[. . .] quid in nobis gestum sit uel cotidianis geratur incursibus
superueniente eorum meditatione quodammodo recordemur, et quid
nobis uel neglegentia nostra pepererit uel diligentia conquisierit uel
prouidentia diuina contulerit uel instigatio fraudauerit inimici uel
subtraxerit lubrica ac subtilis obliuio uel intulerit humana fragilitas seu
inprouida fefellerit ignoratio, decantantes reminiscamur.⁴³

⁴³ Ibid., 10.11.5, p. 305.

end p.59

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[. . .] we remember our own circumstances and what daily happens
when we are assailed by thoughts, and while singing [the psalms] we
recall all that our negligence has caused, or our diligence has attained,
or divine providence has granted, or the instigation of the enemy has
cheated us of, or slippery and subtle forgetfulness has taken away, or
human frailty has brought about, or how careless ignorance has
deceived.

Chanting the psalms, the monk peers into a 'mirror of the soul' where his
own spiritual struggles are seen against the background of salvation history
and in the light of God's compassion:

Omnes namque hoc adfectus in Psalmis inuenimus expressos, ut ea
quae incurrerint uelut in speculo purissimo peruidentes efficacius
agnoscamus et ita magistris adfectibus eruditi non ut audita, sed
tamquam perspecta palpemus [. . .]⁴⁴

⁴⁴ Ibid., 10.11.6, p. 305.

We find all these inward states expressed in the psalms, so that
seeing whatever occurs as in the clearest mirror, we more effectively
understand it; and so with our inward states for teachers, we are
educated not [merely] by hearing, but through actual examination
[. . .]

Thus for Cassian psalmody is a school where the monk learns about his
relationship with God by means of his own memories. The 'inward states'
experienced as the psalms are chanted are 'teachers', clarifying the deeper
meaning of ongoing spiritual progress or failure. The monk's experiences
unfold before him during psalmody, and by listening to what he feels within
himself and to what he hears being sung, he begins to understand the
deeper meaning of both. Psalmody thus becomes a sort of spiritual
training-ground in which the virtue of discernment is learned: one's
thoughts, memories, and aspirations are tested and interpreted in the light
of God's word while that word is chanted. This approach presupposes an
exegetical method whereby the images and stories encountered during
psalmody can be understood as symbols which interpret the monk's ascetical

journey. As will be described, this intensely personal hermeneutic method had been taught in detail by Evagrius, whose exegetical works can be read as spiritual 'dictionaries' or workbooks intended to aid the monk in this very practice.

Cassian's discussion of psalmody and monologistic prayer culminates in a description of the soul caught up into an experience of prayer beyond words or images: Cassian calls it the 'prayer of fire'. It is not a state that can be achieved through any technique, even the monologistic practice Cassian recommends in Conference 10.

end p.60

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Psalmody and Prayer in the Writings of Evagrius Ponticus

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pp. [61]-[65]

It is purely a grace from God and seems to occur unexpectedly at intervals, especially (but not exclusively) during psalmody:

(1) [. . .] Nonnumquam etenim psalmi cuiuscumque uersiculus occasionem orationis ignitae decantantibus nobis praebuit. Interdum canora fraternae uocis modulatio ad intentam supplicationem stupentium animos excitauit. (2) Nouimus quoque distinctionem grauitatemque psallentis etiam adstantibus plurimum contulisse feruoris.⁴⁵

⁴⁵ Ibid., 9.26.1-2, p. 273.

(1) [. . .] For it can occasionally happen that any verse at all from the psalms may set our prayer ablaze while we are chanting. Or sometimes the musical phrasing by the brother chanting will arouse dull minds to focused supplication. (2) We also know that the enunciation and reverence of the one chanting the psalms can very much increase the fervour of those who stand by [listening].

Like the imageless 'pure prayer' which Evagrius extols, Cassian's 'prayer of fire' lifts the one who prays, 'beyond the need for words or voice':

Atque ita ad illam orationis incorruptionem mens nostra perueniet [. . .] quae non solum nullius imaginis occupatur intuitu, sed etiam nulla uocis, nulla uerborum prosecutione distinguitur, ignita uero mentis intentione per ineffabilem cordis excessum inexplibili spiritus alacritate profertur, quamque mens extra omnes sensus ac uisibiles effecta materies gemitibus inenarrabilibus atque suspiriis profundit ad deum.⁴⁶

⁴⁶ Ibid., 10.11.6, p. 305.

And so our mind will attain that incorruptible prayer [. . .] which does not consist solely in averting our inner gaze from images, but rather is characterized by the absence of any need for voice or word: for the focus of our minds is set ablaze through some indescribable eagerness of spirit, which our mind, beyond the senses or the effects of matter, then pours forth to God with inexpressible groans and sighs.

Although this 'prayer of fire' occupies a place in Cassian's model of the spiritual life similar to that of Evagrius' 'pure prayer', Cassian does not emphasize it to the extent that Evagrius does.⁴⁷

⁴⁷ Cassian describes 'fiery prayer' only in *Conferences* 9 and 10. C. Stewart notes

that unlike Evagrius, Cassian understands this highest form of prayer to be both ecstatic and affective, perhaps in this respect more akin to Syriac and Pseudo-Macarian sources than to Evagrius (Stewart, *Cassian the Monk*, pp. 114-30; 'John Cassian on Unceasing Prayer', pp. 170-7).

Although for Cassian this elevation into a state beyond words is in some sense the crown of the spiritual life, it is not so much a goal to be achieved as it is a gift from God which recurs at intervals throughout one's spiritual practice.

end p.61

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3 Evagrius on Exegesis and Psalmody

Luke Dysinger OSB

Abstract: Psalmody and the recitation of other biblical texts served as the gateway to *gnostike*, the perception of the inner purposes of God beneath the letter of the text. Evagrius believed that the art of biblical exegesis, which is part of the *gnostike*, has its own methodology, just as the progressive vigilant study of the soul, which pertains to the *praktike*, has its proper methodology. This chapter discusses the five texts in which Evagrius reflects on the purpose and the goal of psalmody. These are *De oratione* 82, 83, 85, and 87; and *Praktikos*.

Keywords: Evagrius Ponticus, psalmody, prayer, gnostike, De oratione, Praktikos

Palladius' attribution to Evagrius of one hundred daily 'prayers'¹

¹ Cf. above, Chapter 2.1: Palladius, *Lausiac History* 38.10, ed. Bartelink, p. 200: Εὐδελίου κατ' αὐτόν.

attests that Evagrius spent a large part of his day in the alternating rhythm of psalmody and prayer which Cassian describes in his *Institutes* and *Conferences*. Evagrius would have offered twelve psalms (or portions of divided psalms) with their accompanying prayers at each of the two canonical offices of Vigils and Vespers. He presumably offered a sizeable portion of the remaining seventy-six psalm-prayers during the two periods of mediation described in the Coptic version of the *Lausiac History*: namely, the two-thirds of the night during which he prayed and mediated while pacing in his courtyard, and the interval during the afternoon when he resumed his pacing and meditation on the scriptures.²

² Palladius, *Lausiac History* (Coptic version), ed. Amélineau, p. 113.

In Evagrius' model of the spiritual life this incessant psalmody and *melete* would have served many of the purposes described in the previous chapter, such as keeping the mind fixed on God and constantly offering to God the interior world of thoughts and temptations. But for the mature contemplative, psalmody and the recitation of other biblical texts would also have served as the gateway to *gnostiké*, the perception of the inner purposes of God beneath the letter of the text.

3.1 Contemplative Exegesis

Evagrius believed that the art of biblical exegesis which is part of the *gnostiké* has its own methodology, just as the progressive vigilant study of the soul which pertains to the *praktiké* has its proper methodology. However, as has been explained, Evagrius does not regard these two levels or aspects of spiritual progress as mutually exclusive.³

³ Cf. above, Chapter 1.3, p. 27.

Just as *praktiké* and *gnostiké* mutually enhance each other, so the disciplines of spiritual progress and biblical exegesis are inextricably

end p.62

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interwined. Progress in asceticism is the necessary prerequisite to mature spiritual insight into the scriptures, while such exegesis in turn yields understanding which makes possible further progress in both asceticism and contemplation. The methodologies proper to each of these disciplines are closely related in that they are based on the same insight: namely, the distinction between *praktiké*, *physiké*, and *theologiké*. This insight is not unique to Evagrius; it represents his adaptation of categories which Clement of Alexandria had described and which Origen later employed as a model of both biblical exegesis and the soul's journey towards God.

Evagrius greatly esteemed a fourfold division of human knowledge which Clement of Alexandria describes in *Stromateis* 1.28.176.⁴

⁴ Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis* 1.28.176, 1-2, ed. Stählin, vol. ii, p. 108: 'Now according to Moses, philosophy is divided into four [parts]: [first,] into the historical; and [second,] that properly called the legislative, which [two] are proper to the ethical treatise; the third is the liturgical, which is the contemplation of nature; and the fourth, above all [others], the "epoptic", concerns the whole expression of *theologiké*, which Plato says concerns the nature of truly great mysteries, while Aristotle calls this class metaphysics.'

((ἡ μὲν οὖν κατὰ Μωυσέα
φιλοσοφία τετραχῇ τέμνεται, εἰς τε τὸ ἱστορικὸν καὶ τὸ κυρίως λεγόμενον νομοθετικόν, ἅπερ
ἂν εἴη τῆς ἠθικῆς πραγματείας ἴδια, τὸ τρίτον δὲ εἰς τὸ ἱερουργικόν, ὃ ἐστὶν ἡδὴ τῆς φυσικῆς
θεωρίας· καὶ τέταρτον ἐπὶ πᾶσι τὸ θεολογικόν εἶδος, ἡ ἐποπτεία, ἣν φησὶν ὁ Πλάτων τῶν
μεγάλων ὄντως εἶναι μυστηρίων, Ἀριστοτέλης δὲ τὸ εἶδος τοῦτο μετὰ τὰ φυσικὰ καλεῖ)

Clement attributes his approach to Moses, although he acknowledges parallels in Plato and Aristotle; and he goes on in *Stromateis* 1.28.179 to recommend his fourfold division as an exegetical method for interpreting the law of Moses.⁵

⁵ Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis* 1.28.179, 3-4, ed. Stählin *et al.* (1960), vol. ii, p. 108: 'We are then to take the law in a certain fourfold sense: *** or as a revealed [visible] sign or as a commandment instituted for proper living; or fortelling, like a prophecy',

(τετραχῶς
δὲ ἡμῖν ἐκληπτέον καὶ τοῦ νόμου τὴν βούλησιν, *** ἢ ὡς σημεῖον ἐμφαίνουσιν ἢ ὡς ἐντολὴν
κυροῦσαν εἰς πολιτείαν ὀρθὴν ἢ θεσπίζουσιν ὡς προφητείαν)

Evagrius' citation of this text restores the four words indicated here with asterisks,

which are missing from the manuscripts of Clement.

In his scholion on *Psalm* 76:21 Evagrius cites both these passages from the *Stromateis*, one of the few examples of an extended quotation by Evagrius from a known source:

76: 21. ὡδήγησας ὡς πρόβατα τὸν λαόν σου ἐν χειρὶ Μωϋσῆ καὶ Ἀαρών.
15. ἡ κατὰ Μωσέα φιλοσοφία τετραχῇ τέμνεται, εἰς τὸ ἱστορικὸν, καὶ τὸ κυρίως λεγόμενον νομοθετικὸν, ἅπερ ἂν εἴη τῆς ἠθικῆς πραγματείας ἴδια, τὸ τρίτον τε εἰς τὸ ἱεουργικὸν, ὃ ἐστὶν ἡδὴ τῆς φυσικῆς θεωρίας, καὶ τέταρτον ἐπὶ πᾶσι τὸ θεολογικὸν εἶδος.
τετραχῶς δὲ ἡμῖν ἐκκληπτέον καὶ τοῦ νόμου τὴν βουλήν ὡς τύπον τινὰ δηλοῦσαν, ἢ ὡς σημεῖον ἐμφαίνουσαν, ἢ ὡς ἐντολὴν κυροῦσαν εἰς πολιτείαν ὀρθὴν ἢ θεσπίζουσαν ὡς προφητείαν. ταύτῃ τῇ μεθόδῳ Μωϋσῆ καὶ Ἀαρὼν ὁδηγοῦσι τὸν ἀπὸ κακίας ἐπ' ἀρετὴν ὁδεύοντα λαόν.

6

⁶ Evagrius, scholion 15 on *Psalm* 76: 21 (cf. ed. Pitra, 76: 21, vol. iii, p. 109).

end p.63

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V. 21. *You guided your people like sheep, by the hand of Moses and Aaron.*

15. According to Moses, philosophy is divided into four [parts]: [first,] into the historical; and [second,] that properly called the legislative (cf. Exod. 24:12), which [both] pertain to ethical matters; the third is the liturgical, which is the contemplation of nature; and the fourth concerns the whole expression of *theologiké*.

We are to take the purpose of the law in a certain fourfold sense: [1] as indicating a type; or [2] as revealing a sign; or [3] as confirming a commandment for proper living; or [4] foretelling, like a prophecy. By this method did *Moses and Aaron lead the people* journeying from vice to virtue.

The only part of this scholion not taken from Clement's *Stromateis* is the last sentence, in which Evagrius summarizes his understanding of the goal of this method of exegesis. It is a μέθοδος, a method of enquiry, for 'the people journeying from virtue to vice', that is, those who are concerned to make spiritual progress. The first part of this scholion reveals Evagrius' dependence on Clement for the technical vocabulary he uses to describe the spiritual journey. Here the whole of human knowledge (φιλοσοφία) and especially the interpretation of scripture is presented as a movement from 'history' into the successive realms of *ethiké*, *physiké*, and *theologiké*.

Although he is clearly indebted to Clement, Evagrius also makes use of Origen's interpretation of these successive spiritual levels as well as Origen's association of these levels with particular books of the Bible. In his *Commentary on the Song of Songs* Origen describes 'three general

disciplines through which one may attain to the knowledge of things: they are termed ethics, physics, and epoptics by the Greeks; and we may call them the moral, the natural, and the contemplative'.⁷

⁷ Origen, *Com. in Cant.* Prol. 3.1, SC 375, p. 128: 'Generales disciplinae quibus ad rerum scientiam pervenitur tres sunt, quas Graeci ethicam, physicam, epopticen appellarunt; has nos dicere possumus moralem, naturalem, inspectivam.'

For Origen the discipline of ethics concerns the acquisition of an honourable life through practice of the virtues. 'Physics' teaches both the nature of things and God's purpose in bringing them into being, so that 'nothing may be done contrary to nature'. Finally, contemplation enables us to 'rise above the visible to contemplate something of divine and heavenly things, gazing upon them solely with the mind'.⁸

⁸ Origen, *Com. in Cant.* Prol. 3.3, SC 375, p. 130: 'Moralis autem dicitur, per quam mos vivendi honestus aptatur, et instituta ad virtutem tendentia praeparantur. Naturalis dicitur, ubi uniuscuiusque rei natura discutitur, quo nihil contra naturam geratur in vita, sed unumquodque his usibus deputetur, in quos a creatore productum est. Inspectiva dicitur, qua supergressi visibilia de divinis aliquid et caelestibus contemplamur, eaque mente sola intuemur, quoniam corporeum supergrediuntur adspectum.'

end p.64

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Origen associates these three disciplines with the three biblical books attributed to Solomon, and in so doing he applies them to the soul's progress towards union with God. Thus in Proverbs the subject of morals is presented in succinct maxims.⁹

⁹ Origen, *Com. in Cant.* Prol. 3.6, SC 375, p. 132: 'Primo ergo in Proverbiis moralem docuit locum succinctis, ut decuit, brevibusque sententiis vitae instituta componens.'

Ecclesiastes portrays the subject of nature and the necessity to discern between useful and vain things.¹⁰

¹⁰ Origen, *Com. in Cant.* Prol. 3.6, SC 375, p. 132: 'Secundum vero, qui naturalis appellatur, comprehendit in Ecclesiaste, in quo multa de rebus naturalibus disserens, et inania ac vana ab utilibus necessariisque secernens, relinquendam vanitatem monet et utilia rectaque sectanda.'

The Song of Songs teaches the subject of contemplation through the image of bride and bridegroom, encouraging us to 'continue on the paths of charity and love so as to attain fellowship with God'.¹¹

¹¹ Origen, *Com. in Cant.* Prol. 3.7, SC 375, p. 132: 'Inspectivum quoque locum in hoc libello tradidit qui habetur in manibus, id est in Cantico Canticorum, in quo amorem caelestium divinorumque desiderium incutit animae sub specie sponsae ac sponsi, caritatis et amoris viis perveniendum docens ad consortium Dei.'

In this way exegetical categories described by Clement become for Origen symbols of progressive stages in the soul's journey towards God.¹²

¹² Origen makes it plain that he regards these three disciplines as stages or levels which must be successively traversed: he portrays the soul moving from the discipline of ethics (*Com. in Cant.* Prol. 3.8-13) into the physical 'natures and causes

of things' (Prol. 3.14-15) and finally attaining 'to the invisible and eternal things taught to the spiritual senses, although veiled in certain figures of love, in the Song of Songs (*tendet ad invisibilia et aeterna, quae spiritalibus quidem sensibus, sed adopertis amorum quibusdam figuris docentur in Cantico Canticorum*)' (Origen, *Com. In Cant.* Prol. 3.15, SC 375, p. 138). This point is discussed by A. Louth, *Origins*, p. 59.

Although Origen does not employ this particular threefold system in a rigid or exclusive way in his other works, either in his exegesis or in his descriptions of the soul's spiritual progress,¹³

¹³ This model of progress from ethics through physics to epoptics, and its association with the Books of Solomon is only one of many approaches Origen uses to explicate the scriptures and the created order; and he is in no sense bound by this terminology in his other works. He employs a variety of images to illustrate his tripartite method of exegesis, writing in *De principiis* 4.2.4 of the 'body, soul, and spirit' of the scriptures, and explaining his exegetical method in *Homily 2 on Genesis* (ch. 6) through the symbol of Noah's ark with its three decks. Similarly, one of the clearest instances of what Origen means by 'physics' or natural contemplation is his concept of the *logoi*, the divine meanings or principles hidden within created things. Yet in describing these *logoi* in his *Commentary on the Gospel of John* (1.32-4 and 37-9) he refers neither to the discipline of *physiké* nor to the Book of Ecclesiastes.

the subsequent popularity of his *Commentary on the Song of Songs* meant that the terminology he used in this work became well-known and eventually normative.

end p.65

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Psalmody and Prayer in the Writings of Evagrius Ponticus

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In the *Praktikos* Evagrius condenses Clement's and Origen's insights into a tripartite formula which succinctly summarizes his own model of the spiritual life:

Χριστιανισμός ἐστὶ δόγμα τοῦ Σωτῆρος ἡμῶν Χριστοῦ ἐκ πρακτικῆς καὶ φυσικῆς καὶ θεολογικῆς συνεστός.

14

¹⁴ Evagrius, *Praktikos* 1, SC 171, p. 499.

Christianity is the teaching of our Saviour Christ consisting of *praktiké*, *physiké*, and *theologiké*.

In this introduction to his spiritual trilogy Evagrius presents the three branches of ancient learning as categories which contain all of Christian teaching, the whole 'dogma of our Saviour Christ'. Later in the trilogy, in chapters 17-19 of the *Gnostikos*, Evagrius details the use of these three categories in biblical exegesis. In chapter 18 he invites the reader to first distinguish between straightforward texts which may be interpreted literally and passages which require the use of allegory.¹⁵

¹⁵ Evagrius, *Gnostikos* 18, SC 356, p. 116 n. 18, par. 2: . The original Greek is lost; these terms are Guillaumont's retroversion from Syriac and Armenian versions.

Next one must determine whether the text in question should be interpreted at the level of *praktiké*, *physiké*, or *theologiké*. At the ethical level of *praktiké* it will concern the virtues and vices of *epithumetikon*, *thumikon*, or *nous*; a text concerned with *physiké* will explicate the inner meaning of some part of the created order; and passages touching on *theologiké* will describe some aspect of the mystery of the Trinity.¹⁶

¹⁶ Ibid., 18, p. 117 n. 18, par. 1-6.

Some texts, however, such as prophecies, ought to be interpreted only in their literal sense and should not be forced into this schema.¹⁷

¹⁷ Ibid., 18, p. 118 n. 18, par. 1-3.

In chapter 17 of the *Gnostikos* Evagrius stresses the value of knowing the definitions of things,¹⁸

¹⁸ Ibid., 17, p. 115 n. 17, par. 2: οἱ ποί (Guillaumont's retroversion from the Syriac). particularly of virtues and vices; and in chapter 19 he recommends familiarity with 'common expressions' which recur frequently throughout the scriptures.¹⁹

¹⁹ Ibid., 19, p. 118 n. 19. Guillaumont suggests the retroversion $\theta\omicron\varsigma$ or $\sigma\upsilon\nu\eta\theta\epsilon\iota\alpha$ ('habit' or 'common expression'). Evagrius employs both of these terms frequently in his scholia.

This procedure which Evagrius recommends in *Gnostikos* 17-19 is the exegetical method he employs in his own biblical scholia. Paul Géhin encapsulates this approach in a single sentence: 'He [Evagrius] entirely subordinates [biblical] interpretation to his conception of the spiritual life.'²⁰

²⁰ Géhin, *Scholies aux Proverbes*, p. 18.

Although this is a slight exaggeration,

end p.66

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since there are a few scholia in which Evagrius interprets texts solely at the historical level, most often when commenting on a point of geography or natural history;²¹

²¹ Evagrius cites Aristotle on the three types of heron in scholion 96 on *Proverbs* 7: 22. He describes the geographical and historical significance of the city of Tarsis in scholion 4 on *Psalms* 47: 8, and of Mount Tabor and the city of Nain in scholion 8 on *Psalms* 88: 13(2). He cites Josephus on the fate of Jerusalem in scholia 1 and 2 on *Psalms* 73.

it is true that for the most part Evagrius' overarching exegetical methodology is to explicate biblical texts wholly in terms of his model of the spiritual life, interpreting every phrase, even every word, as a reflection of some aspect of that model.

Paul Géhin has summarized the different literary forms Evagrius employs in explicating biblical texts in light of the spiritual life.²²

²² Géhin, *Scholies aux Proverbes*, Titre et Genre Littéraire', pp. 13-22, 'L'Exégèse Évagrienne', pp. 26-32.

He distinguishes between Evagrius' interpretation of individual words, which generally take the form of allegorical 'definitions', and his more varied exegesis of longer phrases. Evagrius' symbolic definitions of individual words are very frequent, often giving his collections of scholia the appearance of glossaries which contain lists of biblical terms together with their spiritual 'translation'.²³

²³ Géhin, *Scholies aux Proverbes*, pp. 15-16.

His approach to the interpretation of phrases or whole verses takes various forms. Sometimes Evagrius paraphrases the text, restating it in a slightly modified form which renders his interpretation obvious. In other scholia his explication consists of a logical syllogism, a parallel biblical text, or a citation taken from the scriptures or from his own or other authors' works. A fourth method consists of scholia containing proverbs of Evagrius' own composition, modelled on the biblical wisdom literature. Two final methods include: 'question—response' scholia in which Evagrius solves or hints at the solution of an enigma he has propounded; and the antirrhetic scholia described below in Chapter 5.2.

In addition to noting different types of scholia it is also possible to make some generalizations concerning the overall orientation of Evagrius' different commentaries. Evagrius was familiar, either through his own reading or perhaps secondarily through Basil²⁴

²⁴ Basil quotes Origen in a homily on the beginning of Proverbs. Basil describes the ethical ('practical') instruction provided in Proverbs, the 'physiology' and vanity of creation revealed in Ecclesiastes, and the soul's nuptial perfection depicted in the Song of Songs. The relevant passage is worth quoting in full, both because of Evagrius' possible familiarity with it and because in places it so closely parallels Rufinus' Latin version of Origen's *Commentary on the Song of Songs*. Depending on the extent to which Basil is quoting or paraphrasing, this text may provide indirect access to the original Greek of Origen with which Evagrius may have been familiar, Basil, *Homily 12.1, Theol. Homilia in principium proverbiorum*, PG 31.388. Gregory of Nyssa similarly paraphrases Origen in his own commentary on the Song of Songs, writing of the soul's progress into union with the *logos* as prefigured in the movement from Proverbs through Ecclesiastes to the Song of Songs: *In Canticum canticorum*, Prologue (Or. 1), ed. Langerbeck, pp. 17-22. Although the question of Gregory of Nyssa's influence on Evagrius has yet to be explored (cf. above, Chapter 1.1), Gregory's use of Origen's categories certainly reflects currents of thought to which Evagrius was exposed while a member of Basil's clergy.

end p.67

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and Didymus the Blind,²⁵

²⁵ Didymus the Blind writes in his commentary on Ecclesiastes of the progressive ethical teaching found in Proverbs, the 'physics' of Ecclesiastes, and the 'hyperphysical, hypercosmic, hypercelestial' dimensions of the Song of Songs: Didymus, *Commentarii in Ecclesiasten* 5.29-6.4.

with Origen's association between the three books attributed to Solomon and the levels of *praktiké*, *physiké*, and *theologiké*:

22: 20. καὶ σὺ δὲ ἀπόγραψαι αὐτὰ σεαυτῷ τρισσῶς εἰς βουλήν καὶ γνώσιν ἐπὶ τὸ πλάτος τῆς καρδίας σου.
247. ὁ πλατύνας διὰ τῆς καθαρότητος τὴν καρδίαν αὐτοῦ νοήσει τοὺς τοῦ θεοῦ λόγους τοὺς τε πρακτικούς καὶ τοὺς φυσικούς καὶ τοὺς θεολογικούς. Πᾶσα γὰρ ἡ κατὰ τὴν γραφὴν πραγματεία τέμνεται τριχῶς εἰς ἠθικὴν καὶ φυσικὴν καὶ θεολογικὴν. Καὶ ἀκολουθεῖ τῇ μὲν πρώτη αἱ Παροιμίαι, τῇ δὲ δευτέρᾳ ὁ Ἐκκλησιαστής, τῇ δὲ τρίτῃ τὰ Ὑμνατά τῶν ὕμνων.

26

²⁶ Evagrius, scholion 247 on Proverbs 22: 40, SC 340, p. 342.

22: 20. And you are to inscribe them for yourself three times for counsel and knowledge upon the wideness of your heart.

247. The one who widens his heart through purity understands the *logoi* of God which are *praktiké*, *physiké*, and *theologiké*. For every commentary on scripture is divided into three parts: ethical, physical, and theological. And to the first corresponds the Proverbs, to the second Ecclesiastes, and to the third the Song of Songs.

This text leads one to anticipate an orientation towards ethical exposition in

the *Scholia on Proverbs* and towards the contemplation of creation in the *Scholia on Ecclesiastes*. To a limited extent such an orientation does exist. The introductory scholia on *Proverbs* move rapidly from a general discussion of the disciplines of knowledge²⁷

²⁷ Evagrius, scholia 1-5 on *Proverbs*.

end p.68

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into the question of how virtue can be acquired and how vice (together with the demons) can be excluded from the soul.²⁸

²⁸ Evagrius, scholia 6 ff. on *Proverbs*.

It is with these concerns of the *praktiké* that the majority of Evagrius' *Scholia on Proverbs* are concerned. In the *Scholia on Ecclesiastes* Evagrius emphasizes the significance of the created order and the need to raise the eyes of the soul from the sensible world to the intelligible world;²⁹

²⁹ Evagrius, scholia 15 and 18 on *Ecclesiastes*.

and a large proportion of the scholia in this collection concern *physiké*.³⁰

³⁰ Géhin discusses the extent to which Evagrius' *Scholia on Ecclesiastes* can be regarded as chiefly concerned with *physiké* in 'Le Livre de la "Physique" ', *Scholies à l'Ecclésiaste*, SC 397, pp. 20-7.

Nevertheless, Evagrius does not maintain this distinction between *Proverbs* and *Ecclesiastes* in a rigid or exclusive way; and in both these books examples may be found of scholia representing all three disciplines: that is, ethical admonitions, contemplative insights concerning creation, and statements concerning the divine nature.

In the case of the Book of Psalms there was no convention of interpretation which required Evagrius to associate this book with any particular level of spiritual knowledge. There did exist, however, an approach to the psalter which was well-established in Egyptian monasticism and with which Evagrius was familiar. According to this tradition, described in detail in Athanasius' *Letter to Marcellinus* and echoed in the tenth conference of John Cassian, the psalter is a 'mirror of the soul' in which the Christian beholds both his own struggle for virtue and the Christ who is saviour and archetype of the soul.³¹

³¹ Athanasius, *Letter to Marcellinus* 12 and 5-8.

According to M.-J. Rondeau, the *Letter to Marcellinus* accurately transmits the piety of the Egyptian desert concerning the psalter, according to which the psalms both depict Christ and encourage the Christian in *imitatio Christi*.³²

³² Rondeau, *Commentaires*, vol. ii, p. 222; 'L'Épître à Marcellinus', pp. 196-7.

As will be described in Chapter 6, it is indeed the figure of Jesus Christ which provides the exegetical key to Evagrius' *Scholia on Psalms*. In the following section it will be seen that Evagrius regarded the practice of psalmody as an

encounter with Christ, the 'richly varied wisdom' of God.

end p.69

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3.2 Evagrius' Principal Texts on Psalmody

There are five texts in the works which can confidently be attributed to Evagrius in which he reflects at some length on the purpose and goal of psalmody.³³

³³ The relative merits of psalmody and prayer are also contrasted in *Paraeneticus* 14-16 (ed. Frankenberg, p. 558), a text preserved only in Syriac which is attributed to Evagrius in manuscripts of the sixth and seventh centuries, but to Abraham Nathperaya after the eighth century. Bunge's study of the *Paraeneticus* has led him to conclude that it cannot be regarded as the work of either Evagrius or Abraham Nathperaya (*Geistgebet*, p. 94 n. 4). Among other disquieting features is the absence of typical Evagrian terminology such as *praktikos*, *apatheia*, *logoi*, and *gnosis*. For this reason texts from the *Paraeneticus* are not discussed in this volume.

Elsewhere in his writings he often extols in passing the value of this practice which occupied so much of his waking day; but in these five texts he employs a variety of images and definitions to contrast psalmody with prayer, thus affording a glimpse of the place he accords to psalmody in his model of the spiritual life. Four of these texts, *De oratione* 82, 83, 85, and 87, comprise most of a chain consisting of chapters 82-7:

82. Προσεύχου ἐπιεικῶς καὶ ἀταράχως καὶ ψάλλε συνετῶς καὶ εὐρύθμως, καὶ ἔσῃ ὡς νεοσσὸς ἀετοῦ ἐν ὕψει αἰρόμενος.

83. Ἡ μὲν ψαλμωδία τὰ πάθη κατευνάζει καὶ τὴν ἀκρασίαν τοῦ σώματος ἡρεμεῖν ἀπεργάζεται· ἡ δὲ προσευχὴ ἐνεργεῖν παρασκευάζει τὸν νοῦν τὴν ἰδίαν ἐνέργειαν.

[84. Προσευχὴ ἐστὶ πρόπουσα ἐνέργεια τῇ ἀξίᾳ τοῦ νοῦ, ἥτοι ἡ κρείττων καὶ εἰλικρινὴς ἐνέργεια αὐτοῦ καὶ χρήσις.]

85. Ἡ μὲν ψαλμωδία τῆς ποικίλης σοφίας ἐστίν, ἡ δὲ προσευχὴ προοίμιόν ἐστι τῆς αὐτοῦ, καὶ ἀποικίλου γνώσεως.

[86. Ἡ γνώσις, καλλίστη ὑπάρχει· συνεργὸς γάρ ἐστι τῆς προσευχῆς, τὴν νοερὰν δύναμιν τοῦ νοῦ διυπνίζουσα πρὸς θεωρίαν τῆς θείας γνώσεως.]

87. Εἰ οὐπω ἔλαβες χάρισμα προσευχῆς ἢ ψαλμωδίας, ἐφέδρευσον καὶ λήψῃ.

34

³⁴ Evagrius, *De oratione* 82-7, ed. Tugwell, pp. 16-17 (cf. PG 79.1185).

82. Pray gently and undisturbed, sing psalms with understanding and good rhythm; then you will be like the young eagle that soars in the heights.

83. Psalmody calms the passions and puts to rest the body's disharmony; prayer arouses the *nous* to activate its own proper activity.

[84. Prayer is the power befitting the dignity of the *nous*; it is the *nous*' highest and purest power and function.]

85. Psalmody pertains to multiform wisdom; prayer is the prelude to immaterial and uniform knowledge.

[86. Knowledge has great beauty: it is the co-worker of prayer, awakening the intellectual power of the intellect to contemplation of divine knowledge.]

end p.70

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Psalmody and Prayer in the Writings of Evagrius Ponticus

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pp. [71]-[75]

87. If you have not yet received the gift of prayer or psalmody,
persevere and you will receive it.

The fifth text in which Evagrius contrasts psalmody and prayer is from the
Praktikos:

69. Μέγα μὲν τὸ ἀπερισπάστως προσεύχεσθαι, μείζον δὲ τὸ καὶ ψάλλειν
ἀπερισπάστως.

35

³⁵ Evagrius, *Praktikos* 69, SC 171, p. 652.

69. A great thing—to pray without distraction; a greater thing still—to
sing psalms without distraction.

The only detailed study of these texts which has been undertaken to date is
by Gabriel Bunge.³⁶

³⁶ Irénée Hausherr comments briefly on *De oratione* 82-7 in 'Le Traité de l'Oraison',
pp. 127-32. Bunge discusses the interrelationship between psalmody and prayer in
Geistgebet, ch. 1, 'Psalmodie und Gebet', pp. 13-28; and ch. 2, 'Betet ohne
Unterlass', pp. 29-43. Bunge reveals the orientation of his commentary in the first
paragraph of the first chapter, where he asserts that in antiquity psalmody and
prayer were regarded as two separate entities, each clearly distinct from the other,
yet closely related. He is particularly eager to challenge the modern notion (almost
universally held by those obliged to recite the Liturgy of the Hours) that the singing
or saying of psalms itself constitutes prayer. He points out that in antiquity psalmody
always preceded prayer, but was not (without further qualification) regarded as
prayer: 'Psalmody is not—or at least is not yet—prayer!' (*Geistgebet*, p. 13).

His concise study, *Geistgebet*, is a commentary on Evagrius' *De oratione*
intended for a wide audience. Bunge acknowledges his indebtedness to
Adelbert de Vogüé who has described and drawn attention to the early
monastic practice of psalmody.³⁷

³⁷ Bunge refers his readers to Vogüé's articles 'Psalmodie et Prière' and 'Psalmodie
n'est pas prier'. Vogüé reviews in detail the ancient monastic practice of prayer and
advocates restoring to the Liturgy of the Hours silent intervals of up to three minutes
following each psalm and reading: Vogüé, *La règle de saint Benoît*, vol. v, pp. 555-8;
vol. vii, pp. 184-240, esp. pp. 206-40.

Bunge's contribution consists in a detailed explication of Evagrius'
understanding of the respective spiritual goals and effects of psalmody and
prayer.

Chapters 82-7 of *De oratione* in which Evagrius describes the relationship

between prayer and psalmody are preceded by two contrasting chains of chapters. Chapters 67-73 warn against the demonic temptation to fantasize a visual form while praying. There then follow eight chapters concerned with the assistance offered by angels to the one who prays. After promising in chapter 80 that angels will 'illuminate the one who truly prays with the *logoi* of things that have been created',³⁸

³⁸ Evagrius, *De oratione* 80, ed. Tugwell, p. 16 (cf. PG 79.1185):

Ἐὰν ἀληθῶς προσεύχῃ [. . .] ἄγγελοι [. . .] τοὺς λόγους τῶν γινομένων φωτιοῦσι σε

Evagrius warns in chapter 81 that we must not provoke the angels 'who strive greatly on our behalf'

end p.71

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through our 'negligent dallying with thoughts inspired by the demons'.³⁹

³⁹ Evagrius, *De oratione* 81, ed. Tugwell, p. 16 (cf. PG 79.1185):

ἄγγελοι προτρέπονται ἡμᾶς εἰς προσευχὴν [. . .] ἔὰν οὖν ἀμελήσωμεν καὶ δεξώμεθα λογισμοὺς ἐναντίους, λίαν παροξύνομεν αὐτοὺς

Having thus emphasized the value of imageless prayer and the need for divine assistance (mediated by the angels) in attaining it, Evagrius turns in *De oratione* 82-7 to the interrelationship between psalmody and prayer. The deliberate structure of these six chapters and their interconnection becomes more apparent when they are summarized in diagrammatic form:

- Chapter 82: (a) Prayer to be offered gently/calmly
(b) [Psalms] to be chanted intelligently/well-rhythmed
- Chapter 83: (b) Psalmody soothes passions/quiets (somatic) disharmony
(a) Prayer arouses the *nous* to its proper activity
- Chapter 84: (a) Prayer—the highest power of the *nous*
- Chapter 85: (b) Psalmody—multiform wisdom
(a) Prayer—uniform knowledge
- Chapter 86: (a) Prayer, co-worker with knowledge, awakening *nous* to contemplation
(Chapter 87: the gift of prayer and psalmody available to those who persevere)

With the exception of chapter 86, which is simply a concluding exhortation to perseverance, these chapters are closely linked and intertwined. In chapters 82, 83, and 85 the concept introduced in the second half of each chapter is taken up in the first part of the following chapter. This permits Evagrius to maintain a consistent pattern of exposition in which psalmody and prayer are contrasted within individual chapters (i.e. 82, 83, 85, 87), while at the same time allowing for a more extended discussion by carrying a subject on into the following chapter. Thus in chapters 82-3 psalmody is associated with both the mind and the body; while prayer is associated with the *nous* in chapters 83-4 and with 'uniform' wisdom, divine knowledge, and contemplation in chapters 85-6. As was described above in Chapter 1.2.2 this circuitous, slowly progressive form of exposition presupposes a willingness to memorize and linger on each chapter and related series of chapters, savouring and exploring biblical allusions and interrelationships between words.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ Driscoll highlights the necessity for repetition and 'digestion' of Evagrius' gnomic texts in *The 'Ad Monachos'*, pp. 329-31, 361-88, and in 'Spiritual Progress', pp. 62-3.

end p.72

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3.2.1 *De Oratione* 82

82. Προσεύχου ἐπιεικῶς καὶ ἀταράχως καὶ ψάλλε συνετῶς καὶ εὐρύθμως,
καὶ ἔσῃ ὡς νεοσσὸς ἀετοῦ ἐν ὕψει αἰρόμενος.

⁴¹

⁴¹ Evagrius, *De oratione* 82, ed. Tugwell, p. 16 (cf. PG 79.1185).

82. Pray gently and undisturbed, sing [psalms] with understanding and good rhythm; then you will be like the young eagle borne aloft in the heights.

The structure of this chapter is simple and symmetrical. At its centre is a biblical quotation which would no doubt have been familiar to Evagrius' readers: the frequently quoted ⁴²

⁴² This text was often quoted and explicated by patristic authors: Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho* 37.1; Athanasius, *Letter to Marcellinus* 27.40 and 27.45; Basil of Caesarea, *Homilies on the Psalms*, PG 29.312; *Asceticon Magnum (reg. brev.)* 279, PG 31.1280; Didymus the Blind, *Fragmenta in Psalmos* 49.1.

exhortation in Psalm 46: 8 to 'sing [psalms] wisely', ψάλατε συνετῶς, adapted from the (aorist imperative) second-person plural of the psalm to the second-person singular which Evagrius employs throughout *De oratione*. Here the monastic disciplines of prayer and psalmody are each associated with two different adverbs, presenting a contrast between the two ascetical practices. The contrast concludes with the vivid image of a soaring eagle, promising spiritual ascent to the one who diligently practises both prayer and psalmody.

3.2.1.1 Προσεύχου ἐπιεικῶς [...]

Forms of ἐπιεικεία, 'forbearance, reasonableness' or 'gentleness' ⁴³

⁴³ Lampe, *Patristic Greek Lexicon*, p. 523.

are rare in Evagrius' writings, ⁴⁴

⁴⁴ Elsewhere in Evagrius' writings ἐπιεικεία occurs twice. In *Rerum monachalium rationes* 9, PG 40.1261, Evagrius uses it in the sense of 'moderation' in juxtaposition with σπουδή in the sense of 'excessive zeal', as two extremes which illustrate the folly of the world. In *Ad Eulogium* 10, PG 79.1105, ἐπιεικεία is the characteristic virtue of one who is gentle (πρᾶος).

as are the adjectival and adverbial forms meaning 'gentle, mild, or restrained' used here. ⁴⁵

⁴⁵ The only other instance of is *De octo spiritibus malitiae* 5, PG 79.1149, where Evagrius warns his reader not to be led astray by the demons' gentle, reasonable-seeming words:.

Lampe notes that ἐπιείκεια is used in the patristic period as an antonym for *thumos*; and for this purpose Evagrius generally employs the terms *πρᾶος/πραότης* ⁴⁶

⁴⁶ Evagrius, *Praktikos* Prol. 31, ch. 20; scholia 23 on *Ecclesiastes* 4: 1; 38 on *Ecclesiastes* 5: 7; 3 on *Psalm* 24: 4(1); and 19 on *Psalm* 106: 37. Elsewhere in the monastic literature of Evagrius' day *πρᾶότης* and ἐπιείκεις were considered to be synonyms, as in the case of Evagrius' contemporary, Abba Bes, 'who excelled every man in gentleness [. . .] For his life was completely tranquil, and his manner was kindly, for he had attained to the angelic state', *Historia monachorum in Aegypto* 4.5.

end p.73

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or the more specific virtue, ἡσυχασία. ⁴⁷

⁴⁷ ἡσυχασία is the characteristic virtue of Evagrius' Christian gnostic: *Gnostikos* 5.2, 45.4; scholion 36 on *Proverbs* 3: 24-5; *De oratione* 14; scholion 1 on *Psalm* 131: 1.

Given that ἐπιεικῶς is here placed parallel to the quote from *Psalm* 46: 8, one must first ask whether it, too, represents an adapted biblical quotation or allusion. However the admonition 'pray gently'—*Προσεύχου ἐπιεικῶς*—is not found in the Septuagint or the New Testament. The only biblical text in which cognates of these two words are found in close proximity is *Psalm* 85: 5-6. ⁴⁸

⁴⁸ '(V. 5) For you, Lord, [are] kind and gentle, and full of mercy to all who call upon you. (V. 6) Give ear, Lord, to my prayer, and attend to the voice of my plea,'.

However, in this instance ἐπιείκεις and προσευχὴν are found in separate verses and are not specifically related to one another; moreover, ἐπιείκεις is employed as a divine appellation rather than a human virtue. ⁴⁹

⁴⁹ This use of ἐπιείκεια and its cognates as descriptive of God's gentleness and forbearance is common in the Septuagint: *Dan.* 3: 42; *Baruch* 2: 27; *Wis.* 12: 18; 1 *Sam.* 12: 22; and *Ezra* 9: 8.

These two terms are, however, found together in a patristic text from which Evagrius is known to have borrowed in writing *De oratione*. Bunge notes that emphasis on Evagrius' 'Origenism' has tended to obscure the important influence of Clement of Alexandria on Evagrius' thought. ⁵⁰

⁵⁰ Bunge, *Geistgebet*, p. 20.

Bunge points out that Evagrius' famous definition in *De oratione* 3 of prayer as 'a conversation of the *nous* with God' (ἡ προσευχὴ ὁμιλία ἐστὶ νοῦ πρὸς Θεόν) ⁵¹

⁵¹ Evagrius, *De oratione* 3, Tugwell, p. 3 (cf. PG 79. 1168).

represents Evagrius' adaptation of a definition found in Clement's

Stromateis: 'Prayer is then, speaking more boldly, conversation with God' (ἐστὶν οὖν, ὡς εἰπεῖν τολμηρότερον, ὁμιλία πρὸς τὸν Θεὸν ἢ εὐχή).⁵²

⁵² Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis* 7.7.39, 6, SC 428, p. 140. The same phrase is also found in *Stromateis* 7.7.42, 1 and 7.12.73, 1. Evagrius repeats this definition in scholion 1 on *Psalm* 140: 2(1). It is tempting to speculate that this phrase may have been current among the Cappadocian fathers who taught Evagrius. While it is not found in the works of Basil or Gregory Nazianzen, Gregory of Nyssa describes prayer as in *De oratione dominica*, oration 1, ed. Oehler, p. 208 (ed. Callahan, pp. 8-9): 'Prayer is conversation with God, contemplation of the invisible, fulfilment of desires, [an] honour equal to that of the angels'.

It is thus of interest that in the same book and chapter of the *Stromateis* Clement uses the adverb ἐπιεικῶς to describe the prayer of the ideal Christian whom he, like Evagrius, calls *gnostikos*. Clement states that one who converses with God (τὸν προσομιλοῦντα τῷ θεῷ) must keep his soul 'undefiled and immaculately pure'. He then turns to the question of praying with others and observes, 'but also

end p.74

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it becomes him to make all his prayers gently (ἐπιεικῶς) [in company] with the gentle (μετ' ἐπιεικῶν); for it is a dangerous thing to take part in the sins of others'.⁵³

⁵³ Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis* 7.7.49, 1-2, ed. Stählin, vol. iii, pp. 36-7: '!' An alternative translation, given Clement's emphasis on reason, would be, 'reasonably along with the reasonable'.

Clement is alone among Evagrius' probable sources in using ἐπιεικῶς to describe a way of praying, and in his writings this is the sole instance of such a use. As was noted above, ἐπιεικῶς is not a term Evagrius commonly employs, so its specific meaning here must be sought in its association with the adverb ἀπαράχως.

3.2.1.2 [. . .] καὶ ἀπαράχως

Whereas ἐπιεικῶς is found only twice in Evagrius' writings, the second adverb he associates with prayer, ἀπαράχως, occurs four times in *De oratione*;⁵⁴

⁵⁴ Evagrius, *De oratione* 21, 68, 82, and 108.

and as a noun or adjective it is found once in *De oratione* and four times in other texts.⁵⁵

⁵⁵ As an adjective: *De oratione* 89; *Praktikos* 67; scholia 6 on *Psalm* 93: 13(1) and 24 on *Psalm* 118: 60. As a noun: scholion 1 on *Psalm* 131: 1.

Lampe describes ἀπαράχως during the patristic period as referring to 'impassivity, calm, detachment' or 'freedom from distraction'.⁵⁶

⁵⁶ Lampe, *Patristic Greek Lexicon*, pp. 235-6.

In classical Greek the adverb ἀπαύτως means 'unconfusedly, calmly'.⁵⁷

⁵⁷ Liddell and Scott, *Greek-English Lexicon*, p. 268.

It was chiefly praised as a virtue by the Epicurians; Plutarch employs it to convey the sense of standing safely on a rock, looking out over a storm-tossed sea.⁵⁸

⁵⁸ Plutarch, *Moralia (De virtute et vitio)*, 101b3.

Evagrius generally employs it in the more specific sense of 'untroubled by wrath' or 'calm in the face of adversity'. Thus ἀπαξία is the virtue which protects the monk during demonic or human assaults, and which particularly defends against being inwardly 'disturbed' (ταράσσειν) by *thumos*, or wrath, inspired by the demons.⁵⁹

⁵⁹ It is used in this sense in the *Apophthegmata Patrum*. Greek alphabetical collection: *Bessarion* 12 (PG 65.141.51); *Poemen* 156 (PG 65.360.49-50); *Poemen* 168 (PG 65.361.45). Greek systematic collection: ch. 2, *On Stillness* 35.24 (SC 387, p. 144); ch. 6, *On Monastic Dispossession* 15.11 (SC 387, p. 324); ch. 9, *On Not Judging Others* 11.5 (SC 387, p. 434).

Thus in *De oratione* 67 Evagrius warns that 'undisturbed prayer' is particularly important when one encounters traps set by the demons. One such trap is the desire to see an image or shape during

end p.75

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Psalmody and Prayer in the Writings of Evagrius Ponticus

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pp. [76]-[80]

prayer, which tempts one to mistake a circumscribed thing for the
uncircumscribed God.⁶⁰

⁶⁰ Evagrius' conviction that the *noema* of the incorporeal God naturally leaves no
'impression' in the mind is discussed above in Chapter 1.3.2.

68. Φυλάττου τὰς παγίδας τῶν ἐναντίων. Γίνεται γὰρ ἐν τῷ προσεύχεσθαι
σε καθαρῶς καὶ ἀταράχως ἀθρώως ἐπιστῆναί σοι μορφὴν τινα ξένην καὶ
ἀλλόφυλον, πρὸς τὸ εἰς οἷησιν ἀπαγαγεῖν, τοπάζοντα τὸ θεῖον εἰκὴ, ἵνα τὸ
ἀθρώως ἐκκαλυφθὲν σοι ποσὸν τὸ θεῖον εἶναι πείσῃ· ἄποσον δὲ τὸ θεῖον καὶ
ἀσχημάτιστον.

61

⁶¹ Evagrius, *De oratione* 68, ed. Tugwell, p. 13 (cf. PG 79.1181).

68. Guard against the snares of the enemies. For sometimes while you
are *praying* purely and *undisturbed*, suddenly there stands before you
some strange and alien form [trying] to lead [you] astray into conceit,
rashly localizing the Deity in order to persuade you that the limited
thing that has appeared to you is the quantifiable Deity, whereas the
Deity is not quantifiable and is without shape.

Challenges to 'undisturbed prayer' may come equally from the brethren with
whom one lives, who, as Evagrius writes, are often willing to do the demons'
work for them.⁶²

⁶² Evagrius distinguishes between the hermits' direct, 'naked combat' with demons,
and the indirect battles of cenobites, 'against whom the demons arm the more
careless of the brethren' (οἱ δαίμονες [...] τοὺς ἀμελεστέρους τῶν ἀδελφῶν ἐφοπλίζουσι),
Evagrius, *Praktikos* 5, SC 171, p. 504.

This is particularly true when members of one's own community provide
occasions for wrath and subsequent brooding over injury:

21. Ἄφες σου τὸ δῶρον φησὶν ἐμπροσθεν τοῦ θυσιαστηρίου καὶ ἀπελθὼν
πρότερον διαλλάγηθι τῷ ἀδελφῷ σου, καὶ τότε προσεύξῃ ἀτάραχος. Ἡ γὰρ
μνησικακία ἀμαυροῖ τὸ ἡγγεμονικὸν τοῦ προσευχομένου καὶ σκοτίζει τοῦτου
τὰς προσευχάς.

63

⁶³ Evagrius, *De oratione* 21, Tugwell, p. 6 (cf. PG 79.1171).

21. 'Leave your gift', it says, 'before the altar, and first go away and
be reconciled to your brother (Matt. 5: 24);' and after that you will be
able *to pray without disturbance*. For memory of injury dulls the mind

of one who prays, and darkens his prayers.

A fourth use of 'untroubled' (ἄταραχος) in connection with prayer in Evagrius' *De oratione* describes as the precondition of this state the necessity to accept God's will:

89 Μὴ θέλε ὥς σοι δοκεῖ ἀλλ' ὥς Θεῷ ἀρέσκει γενέσθαι τὰ κατὰ σέ, καὶ ἔσῃ ἀτάραχος καὶ εὐχάριστος ἐν προσευχῇ σου.

64

⁶⁴ Ibid., 89, Tugwell, p. 17 (cf. PG 79.1185).

end p.76

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89 Do not wish for things which concern you to take place as seems good to you, but rather as is pleasing to God. Then you will be *undisturbed* and thankful *in your prayer*.

When Evagrius describes prayer as ἄταραχος, undisturbed, he is describing a dynamic state, a capacity to respond to constantly changing threats or regular assaults. Such prayer is not a way of blocking out the world, a state of spiritual impregnability or insensibility; it is, rather, the ability to respond appropriately to exterior and interior danger without breaking off communion with God. Evagrius offers a vivid picture of the monk blessed with ἀταραξία in his brief tale of Abba Theodore in *De oratione* 108:

108. Ἀνέγνως πάντως καὶ τοὺς βίους τῶν ταβεννησιωτῶν μοναχῶν, καθά φησι ὅτι λαλοῦντος τοῦ ἀββᾶ Θεοδώρου λόγον τοῖς ἀδελφοῖς ἦλθον δύο ἔχιδναι πρὸς τοὺς πόδας αὐτοῦ· ὁ δὲ ἀταράχως ποιήσας αὐταῖς ὥσει καμάραν, ὑπέλαβεν αὐτὰς ἐνδοθεν ἕως ἐπαύσατο λαλῶν τὸν λόγον, καὶ τότε αὐτὰς ὑπεδείκνυ τοῖς ἀδελφοῖς, ἐξηγούμενος τὸ πρᾶγμα.

65

⁶⁵ Ibid., 108, Tugwell, p. 20 (cf. PG 79.1192).

108. And surely you have read the lives of the monks of Tabennesi, where it is said that while Abba Theodore was speaking a word to the brethren, two vipers crawled towards his feet; but he, *undisturbed*, made them a kind of chamber [with his feet] and let them stay there until he had finished his word. Then he showed them to the brethren and told them what had happened.

In this story Theodore's ἀταραξία consists in his ability to continue his teaching while making a temporary shelter for the poisonous snakes. He ignores neither the brethren nor the snakes; rather he responds to both at the same time without breaking off from his primary spiritual task.

Thus ἀταραξία has much in common with ἀνάθεια, the state of inner freedom from compulsions and obsessions which Evagrius places at the center of his doctrine of spiritual progress. Indeed, he uses the term ἀτάραχος to describe

the signs of ἀπάθεια in *Praktikos* 67:

67. Ἀπάθειαν ἔχει ψυχὴ, οὐχ ἢ μὴ πάσχουσα πρὸς τὰ πράγματα, ἀλλ' ἢ καὶ πρὸς τὰς μνήμας αὐτῶν ἀτάραχος διαμένουσα.

66

⁶⁶ Evagrius, *Praktikos* 67, SC 171, p. 652.

67. The soul possesses *apatheia* not when it is unmoved by matters, but when it remains *undisturbed* even by the memory of them.

end p.77

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Similarly in the *Scholia on Psalms* Evagrius defines an untroubled heart (καρδίαν ἀτάραχον) as one of the 'natural effects' of ἀπάθεια.⁶⁷

⁶⁷ Evagrius, scholion 24 on *Psalms* 118: 60 (cf. PG 12.1600): 'V. 60. *I prepared myself and was not troubled at the keeping of your commands.* 24. *Apatheia* naturally keeps the heart untroubled, which happens to us through a proper way of life and true teachings'

(ἡτοιμάσθην καὶ οὐκ ἐταράχθην
τοῦ φυλάσσειν τὰς ἐντολάς σου. 24. ἡ ἀπάθεια πέφυκε ἀτάραχον τὴν καρδίαν φυλάττειν, ἥτις
ἡμῶν προσγίνεται ἐκ πολιτείας ὁρθῆς καὶ δογματικῶν ἀληθῶν)

In another place in the same work he writes that remaining untroubled (ἀπάραχος) is a characteristic of the Christian contemplative who has been cleansed of passions;⁶⁸

⁶⁸ Evagrius, scholion 6 on *Psalms* 93: 13(1) (cf. PG 12.1553): 'V. 13. *And make him calm from evil days.* 6. [For] *The days of evil*, read the days of judgement, in which those taught by him, [and] purified from [their] passions will enjoy knowledge, remaining undisturbed.' (6.).

and in a third passage in the *Scholia on Psalms* Evagrius includes the ability to remain 'undisturbed by wrath' together with ἀπορησία, 'freedom from anger', in his definitions of gentleness, πραΰτης.⁶⁹

⁶⁹ Evagrius, scholion 1 on *Psalms* 131: 1 (cf. PG 12.1649): 'But if the Lord remembers gentleness, there will be great need of freedom from anger, in order that one may receive the Lord. For gentleness is [the state] of being undisturbed by wrath when [confronted by] the loss of perishable pleasures'.

Elsewhere in the patristic literature ἀπάραξια and its cognates are only very rarely used to describe prayer. There are two instances of such usage by Evagrius' contemporary, John Chrysostom,⁷⁰

⁷⁰ John Chrysostom, *In Matthaëum* (homily 49), PG 58.503-4: *In diem natalem*, PG 49.362:.

but there are none in the authors whom Evagrius read or regarded as his teachers, such as Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Athanasius, the Cappadocians, or Didymus the Blind. There is, however, a text in Athanasius' *Life of Antony* which bears similarities to Evagrius' use of these terms. It occurs in a lengthy spiritual discourse in which Antony teaches his followers how to distinguish between the noisy, 'disturbing' (τεταραγμένη) appearance of the demons, and its opposite, the powerful reassurance which follows a

divine vision. Athanasius states:

36 (3) [. . .] Ὅταν τοίνυν θεωρήσαντές τινα φοβηθῇτε, εἰ μὲν εὐθὺς ὁ φόβος ἀφαιρεθῇ, καὶ ἀντ' ἐκείνου γένηται χαρὰ ἀνεκλάλητος, καὶ εὐθυμία, καὶ θάρσος, καὶ ἀνάκτησις, καὶ τῶν λογισμῶν ἀταραξία, καὶ τὰ ἄλλα ὅσα προεῖπον, ἀνδρία τε καὶ ἀγάπη εἰς τὸν Θεόν, θαρσεῖτε καὶ εὐχεσθε. (4) Ἡ γὰρ χαρὰ καὶ ἡ κατάστασις τῆς ψυχῆς δείκνυσιν τοῦ παρόντος τὴν ἀγιότητα.

71

⁷¹ Athanasius, *The Life of Antony* 36.3-4, SC 400, p. 234. Although doubts have been raised concerning Athanasius' authorship of the *Life of Antony* (Louth, 'St. Athanasius and the Greek Life of Antony'), scholarly opinion generally favours Athanasius as its author (Brakke, 'The Greek and Syriac Versions of the Life of Antony'; ed. Bartelink, SC 400, pp. 27-42).

end p.78

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36 [. . .] When, therefore, you become afraid at having seen something, if the fear is then immediately taken away and in its place comes unspeakable joy and cheerfulness, and courage and recovery of strength, and *calmness of thoughts* and the other things I mentioned before together with bravery, and love of God; then be of good courage and *pray*—for joy and the soul's settled condition indicate the holiness of the one who is present.

Unlike Evagrius, Athanasius is not here describing 'undisturbed prayer'. He is, instead, recommending that one should respond by praying when one has been blessed with the divine gift of ἀταραξία. Whereas Evagrius lays stress on ascetical effort as the necessary precondition for ἀπάθεια and ἀταραξία, Athanasius here describes 'calmness' as an unexpected gift. Evagrius emphasizes the need to safeguard 'untroubled prayer', while Athanasius invites his readers to respond with prayer and 'good cheer' to the angel's gift of 'untroubled thoughts'. Nevertheless, although Athanasius' use of these terms is different from that of Evagrius, the context described by each is strikingly similar. Both authors use forms of the word ἀταραξία to describe the state of the soul freed from demonic disturbances. Athanasius here contrasts angelic and demonic visitations; and, as has been described, Evagrius does the same in the two chains of chapters which precede *De oratione* 82: chapters 67-73 concern the deceptions of the demons, and chapters 74-81 concern the assistance provided by angels.

In their critical edition of Evagrius' *Praktikos* Antoine and Claire Guillaumont highlight similarities between Evagrius' technical vocabulary and terms used by Athanasius in the *Life of Antony*. They note in particular that Evagrius' emphasis on ἀπάθεια in the *Praktikos* very closely parallels Athanasius' depiction of Antony's ἀταραξία.⁷²

⁷² A. and C. Guillaumont, *Traité pratique*, Introduction and Commentary, SC 170, p. 103: 'The term ἀπάθεια is absent in the *Life of Antony*, where the alternative word ἀ

ταραξία is used, a term which can be regarded as a synonym for ἀπάθεια (cf. Epictetus, *Enchiridion* 12.2). St. Athanasius probably prefers this term because ἀπάθεια is specifically used to designate a characteristic of divinity [. . .] [With regard to Evagrius' use of] 'undisturbed (imperturbable)', ἀτάραχος: this term is employed in parallel with the expression μὴ ἰσχυοῦσα, just as ἀταραξία is used in the *Life of Antony* as an equivalent for ἀπάθεια.' A particularly clear example not mentioned by the Guillaumonts is Athanasius' idealization of Antony: 'His soul was unperturbed, and his external senses were calm (ἀταράχους),' *Life of Antony* 87.2-3, SC 400, p. 312.

end p.79

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Both Athanasius and Evagrius associate ἀπάθεια or ἀταραξία with an experience of 'illumination' which may result from angelic visitations. As was noted above, Evagrius promises in chapter 81 of *De oratione* that angels will 'illuminate (φωτιούσι) the one who truly prays [. . .] concerning the *logoi* of things that have been created'.⁷³

⁷³ Evagrius, *De oratione* 80, ed. Tugwell, p. 16 (cf. PG 79.1183):

Ἐὰν ἀληθῶς προσεύχη,
πολλὴν πληροφορίαν εὕρήσεις, καὶ ἄγγελοι συνελεύσονται σοι ὡς καὶ τῷ Δανιὴλ καὶ τοῖς
λόγους τῶν γινομένων φωτιούσι σε

In the *Praktikos* he writes, 'the proof of *apatheia* is had when the *nous* begins to see its own light'.⁷⁴

⁷⁴ Evagrius, *Praktikos* 64, SC 171, p. 648: Guillaumont points out (SC 170, p. 103) that Evagrius' phrase 'the proof of *apatheia*' (ἀπαθείαστεκμήριον) is comparable to Athanasius' 'indication of calmness' (ἀταραξίαςτεκμήριον) in the *Life of Antony*, SC 400, p. 252.

In the *Gnostikos* he describes ascetics blessed with *apatheia* as 'those who are also able at the time of prayer to contemplate the light of their *nous* illuminating them'.⁷⁵

⁷⁵ Evagrius, *Gnostikos* 45, SC 356, p. 178: [. . .].

Athanasius similarly describes the soul's 'bright transparency' associated with the 'untroubled thoughts' which an angelic vision provides:

35. Καὶ γὰρ τὴν τῶν φαύλων καὶ τῶν ἀγαθῶν παρουσίαν εὐχερὲς καὶ δυνατόν ἐστι διαγνῶναι, τοῦ Θεοῦ διδόντος οὕτως. Ἡ μὲν τῶν ἀγίων ὀπτασία οὐκ ἐστι τεταραγμένη. «Οὐκ ἐρίσει γὰρ, οὔτε κραυγάζει, οὐδὲ ἀκούσει τις τὴν φωνὴν αὐτῶν.» Ἡσύχως δὲ καὶ πράως γίνεται οὕτως, ὡς εὐθὺς χαρὰν καὶ ἀγαλλίασιν γίνεσθαι καὶ θάρσος τῇ ψυχῇ. Ἔστι γὰρ μετ' αὐτῶν ὁ Κύριος, ὃς ἐστιν ἡμῶν μὲν χαρὰ, τοῦ δὲ Θεοῦ Πατρὸς ἡ δύναμις· οἱ τε λογισμοὶ αὐτῆς ἀτάραχοι καὶ ἀκύμαντοι διαμένουσιν· ὥστε καταυγαζομένην αὐτὴν δι' ἑαυτῆς τοὺς φαινομένους θεωρεῖν.

76

⁷⁶ Athanasius, *Life of Antony*, SC 400, pp. 230-2.

35. And distinguishing between the good and the bad is both easy and

possible when God grants it. For the vision of the holy ones is *not disturbing*, for 'he will not wrangle, nor cry out, nor will anyone hear his voice'. (Matt. 12: 19; cf. Isa. 42: 2). Rather, it comes so tranquilly and gently that joy and gladness and courage immediately arise in the soul. For with them is the Lord who is our joy, the power of God the Father. (cf. 1 Cor. 1: 24). And the *thoughts* of [the soul] remain *undisturbed* and unruffled, so that itself illuminated, it beholds by itself those who appear.

If, as the Guillaumonts suggest, Evagrius was influenced by Athanasius' vocabulary in the *Life of Antony*, then it is also noteworthy that in his *Letter to Marcellinus* Athanasius particularly links the word ἡσυχία with the practice of chanted psalmody: 'The melodious reading of the psalms is an image and type of [our] undisturbed

end p.80

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Psalmody and Prayer in the Writings of Evagrius Ponticus

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pp. [81]-[85]

thoughts (τῶν λογισμῶν ἀταραξίας) and unruffled disposition.'⁷⁷

⁷⁷ Athanasius, *Letter to Marcellinus* 28, PG 27.40:

Τῆς δὲ τοιαύτης τῶν λογισμῶν ἀταραξίας
καὶ ἀκύμονος καταστάσεως εἰκὼν καὶ τύπος ἐστὶν ἡ τῶν Ψαλμῶν ἐμμελὴς ἀνάγνωσις.

In the same chapter Athanasius reminds Marcellinus of the admonition to psalmody in James 5: 13, 'Is anyone among you cheerful? Let him sing praise (ψαλλέτω).' He explains: 'In this way that which is disturbing and rough and disorderly in [the soul] is smoothed away, and that which causes grief is healed when we sing psalms.'⁷⁸

⁷⁸ Athanasius, *Letter to Marcellinus* 28, PG 27.40-1:

Οὕτως τὸ μὲν ἐν αὐτῇ ταραχώδες καὶ
τραχὺ καὶ ἄτακτον ἐξομαλίζεται· τὸ δὲ λυποῦν θεραπεύεται, ψαλλόντων ἡμῶν.

He finds a second scriptural basis for this link between ἀταραξία and psalmody in the story of King Saul, whose 'troubled' (τάραχον) disposition was calmed through David's psalmody:

Ὁ γοῦν μακάριος Δαβὶδ, οὕτως καταψάλλον τοῦ Σαοῦλ, αὐτὸς εὐηρέσκει τῷ Θεῷ, καὶ τὸν τάραχον καὶ τὸ μανικὸν πάθος τοῦ Σαοῦλ ἀπήλαυνε, καὶ γαληνῇ τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ παρεσκεύαζεν. Οὕτως οἱ ἱερεῖς ψάλλοντες, εἰς ἀταραξίαν τὰς ψυχὰς τῶν λαῶν καὶ εἰς ὁμόνοιαν αὐτὰς τῶν ἐν οὐρανοῖς χορευόντων προσεκαλοῦντο.

⁷⁹

⁷⁹ Athanasius, *Letter to Marcellinus* 29, PG 27.41.

And so blessed David, musically overpowering Saul in this way, was himself well pleasing to God; and he drove away the disturbed and frenzied disposition from Saul, rendering his soul calm. In the same way the priests singing [psalms] *summoned the souls of the people into calmness* and into oneness of mind with the heavenly choristers.

As will be described, Evagrius follows Athanasius in pointing to David as an example and a model of how psalmody may be employed against the passions and the demons which inspire them.

3.2.1.3 καὶ ψάλλε συνετῶς [...]

Evagrius shifts from his description of prayer to a depiction of psalmody by quoting the last two words of Psalm 46: 8, 'God is king of all the earth; *sing*

[psalms] wisely (ψάλατε συνετῶς) .⁸⁰ The verb ψάλλω which Evagrius here borrows from the biblical text can refer specifically to the singing of psalms; however, it may also be understood more generically to refer to any singing accompanied by a musical instrument.

⁸⁰ Lampe, *A Patristic Greek Lexicon*, p. 1539.

Thus in *De oratione* 83, 85, and 87, in which he continues to contrast prayer and psalmody, Evagrius uses the more specific ψαλμωδεῖν, which refers exclusively to psalm-singing.

The phrase ψάλλε συνετῶς, modified from Psalm 46: 8 (ψάλατε συνετῶς), is found only here in the writings which can confidently

end p.81

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be attributed to Evagrius.⁸¹

⁸¹ In the scholia attributed to Origen in PG 12 a very large number are actually by Evagrius. The following comment is succinct enough to be Evagrian, and the reference to *gnosis* is very suggestive: (PG 12.1437). However, this scholion is not found in MS *Vaticanus graecus* 754, which is the principal basis for Rondeau's reconstruction of Evagrius' *Scholia on Psalms*.

The adverb συνετῶς, 'wisely', 'intelligently', or 'with understanding', suggests a singing which is also attentive to the meaning of the text being sung. This is the interpretation offered by Evagrius' bishop and teacher, Basil of Caesarea, in his *Shorter Rules*. Basil states that intelligence (ἡ σύνεσις) concerning the words of holy scripture is analogous to the sense of taste in regard to food. One can be said to 'sing psalms intelligently' if his soul 'is affected by the power (δύναμις) of each word' just as his sense of taste is affected by the quality of each kind of food.⁸²

⁸² Basil of Caesaria, *Asceticon magnum (reg. brev.)* 279, PG 31.1280:.

Athanasius interprets συνετῶς similarly in chapter 29 of his *Letter to Marcellinus*, where he first uses musical terminology to explicate ψάλατε συνετῶς as implying a dynamic 'harmony' between the different faculties of the soul: 'the melody [of the psalms] is to be brought forth from the soul's rhythm and its musical concord with the spirit'.⁸³

⁸³ Athanasius, *Letter to Marcellinus* 29, PG 27.40:.

He then underscores with a reference to St Paul the importance of understanding what is sung: 'such people sing with the tongue, but *singing also with the mind* (1 Cor. 14: 15) they greatly benefit not only themselves but even those willing to hear them'.⁸⁴

⁸⁴ Athanasius, *Letter to Marcellinus* 29, PG 27.41:.

At the conclusion of the letter he again uses συνετῶς to emphasize the importance of understanding what is sung in the psalms:

Ταῦτα καὶ σὺ μελετῶν, καὶ συνετῶς ἐντυγχάνων· οὕτως τοῖς ψαλμοῖς, τὸν μὲν ἐν ἑκάστῳ νοῦν ὁδηγούμενος ὑπὸ τοῦ Πνεύματος καταλαβεῖν δυνήσῃ.

85

⁸⁵ Athanasius, *Letter to Marcellinus* 33, PG 27.45.

And you, meditating on these things and reading the psalms *intelligently* in this way, will be able to comprehend the meaning in each one, being guided by the Spirit.

Finally, Didymus the Blind explains Psalm 46: 8 in this way, as

end p.82

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well,⁸⁶

⁸⁶ Didymus the Blind, *Fragmenta in Psalmos*, frgm. 491 on Psalm 46: 8(b): 'He *sings [psalms] wisely*, who both acts according to the divine doctrines, and understands them'.

thus suggesting that there may have been an exegetical consensus on the interpretation of this text with which Evagrius was familiar and which he also intends. However, it should be noted that the virtue *σύνεσις*, 'intelligence, understanding' occupies a particular place in Evagrius' model of spiritual development. It is thus appropriate to ask whether Evagrius uses this text, not only because it refers to psalmody, but also because by describing psalmody in relation to *σύνεσις*, it suggests the broader role Evagrius assigns to psalmody in his model of the spiritual life.

In chapter 89 of the *Praktikos* Evagrius follows ancient classical tradition in associating different virtues with each of the three levels of the Platonic tripartite soul:⁸⁷

⁸⁷ *Praktikos* 89 is modelled on the peripatetic treatise, *On the Virtues and Vices*, which presents the traditional Platonic subdivision of the soul into *logistikon* and *pathetikon*, subdividing the latter into *epithumetikon* and *thumikon*. *Praktikos* 89 (esp. Guillaumont's notes), SC 171, pp. 681-3.

σύνεσις belongs to the *logistikon*, or ruling faculty, and is associated with the virtues of prudence (*φρόνησις*) and wisdom (*σοφία*).⁸⁸

⁸⁸ The virtues of *φρόνησις*, *σύνεσις* and *σοφία* are also mentioned in scholia 8 on *Proverbs* 1: 13 and 88 on *Proverbs* 7: 4 (SC 340, pp. 98, 186-8); however, Evagrius does not define *σύνεσις* in these texts.

Καὶ φρονήσεως μὲν ἔργον τὸ στρατηγεῖν πρὸς τὰς ἀντικειμένας δυνάμεις, καὶ τῶν μὲν ἀρετῶν ὑπερασπίζειν, πρὸς δὲ τὰς κακίας παρατάττεσθαι, τὰ δὲ μέσα πρὸς τοὺς καιροὺς διοικεῖν· συνέσεως δὲ τὸ πάντα τὰ συντελοῦντα ἡμῖν πρὸς τὸν σκοπὸν ἀρμοδίως οἰκονομεῖν· σοφίας δὲ τὸ θεωρεῖν λόγους σωμάτων καὶ ἀσωμάτων·

89

⁸⁹ Evagrius, *Praktikos* 89, SC 171, pp. 682-84.

Now the task of prudence is to plan the attack against the opposing powers and to defend the virtues, to stand prepared against the vices, and to administer neutral matters according to the [requirements of the] times. [The task] of understanding: to direct harmoniously all things which help us toward our goal. [The task] of wisdom: contemplation of the *logoi* of corporeal and incorporeal beings.

The virtue of *οἰκνείσις*, 'understanding', occupies a middle position between the exalted, contemplative work of wisdom and the ascetical, ethical concerns of prudence. 'Understanding' is concerned with 'all things which help us toward our goal': in other words, the realm of *theoria physiké*, the perception of God in creation and history which Evagrius considers to be the subject of the Psalms, as will be described in Chapter 6. From this perspective

end p.83

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ψάλλε συνετῶς means not only 'chant psalms with attention to the meaning of the text', as Basil, Athanasius, and Didymus explicated the text; but even more 'chant psalms with attention to the divine realities concealed beneath external appearances'. Evagrius uses the adjective *συνετός* in this sense in scholion 253 on *Proverbs* 23: 9, where he equates that which is intelligent (*συνετός*) with that which is 'deep' (*βαθύς*) and 'mystical' (*μυστικός*).⁹⁰

⁹⁰ Evagrius, scholion 253 on *Proverbs* 23: 9, SC 340, p. 348. In explicating the verse *Say nothing in the ears of a fool, lest at any time he sneer at your intelligent words* (τοῖς συνετοῖς λόγους σου), Evagrius comments: 'Say nothing intelligent, which is to say deep or mystical, for it is not proper to cast pearls before swine (cf. Matt. 7: 6)'. As Géhin notes (SC 340, p. 349), Cassian also joins these two texts of *Proverbs* 23: 9 and Matt. 7: 6 in describing the need to 'hide from the imprudent the mysteries of spiritual meanings (spiritualium sensuum sacramenta) [. . .] the mysteries of sacred scripture (diuinarum scripturarum sacramenta)': *Conferences* 14.17.2-3, CSEL 13, p. 422.

To 'chant psalms with understanding' is therefore to do so with a focused mind, with an awareness of the different levels of meaning contained in the sacred text. Evagrius further develops this thought in *De oratione* 85 where he identifies psalmody with the 'multiform wisdom' of Christ, and in *Praktikos* 87 where he praises 'undistracted' psalmody. Both these texts will be discussed in Chapter 3.2.3-3.2.4.

3.2.1.4 [. . .] καὶ εὐρίθμως

With this adverb Evagrius makes it clear that in chanting psalms one should not only attend to the inner meaning of the text, but also perform the chant in a careful, dignified way. The term *εὐρίθμως* is found only here in Evagrius' works. It does not occur in the scriptures, but it is found occasionally in patristic sources, since it was part of the technical vocabulary of Greek music and oratory. As an adverb it can refer to a regular musical beat, or in reference to persons it can mean 'gracefully'. The noun *εὐρυθμία* refers to the

measured cadence of language or the 'harmony' between an orator and his hearers; while the adjective εἰρῆμος means 'properly rhythmical', usually in reference to music.⁹¹

⁹¹ Liddell and Scott, *Greek-English Lexicon*, p. 730.

Evagrius' use of this term has been variously translated: the English version of the *Philokalia* offers the literal but perhaps too succinct, 'with rhythm';⁹²

⁹² Palmer *et al.*, *Philokalia*, p. 65.

Tugwell translates more literally, 'with good rhythm';⁹³

⁹³ Tugwell, *Praktikos and De oratione*, p. 39.

Bamberger probably goes too far when he translates,

end p.84

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'with attention to the requirements of the music'.⁹⁴

⁹⁴ Bamberger, *Praktikos and Chapters on Prayer*, p. 69.

Bunge renders it, 'in a well-ordered (*wohlgeordnet*) way',⁹⁵

⁹⁵ Bunge, *Geistgebet*, p. 15.

and notes: ' "well-ordered", literally *well-rhythmmed* (εἰρῆμως) is how [Evagrius says] psalmody should be, since it is performed *aloud*, in a cantilated singsong.'⁹⁶

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 114 n. 14: 'in einer kantillierten Sängsang'.

It may be that in this text Evagrius is simply advising his readers to chant psalms with a dignified, proper cadence. But it is also possible that he is here alluding to other notions of εἰρῆμια in patristic sources with which he was familiar.

In the fathers εἰρῆμως is often combined with ἑναρμονίως to describe hymnody or psalmody;⁹⁷

⁹⁷ Eusebius writes in his *Commentary on the Psalms* of the psaltery and kithara: (PG 24.68) and again of the psaltery, [. . .] κινήσεως εἰρῆμως καὶ ἑναρμονίως. Basil, distinguishing between hymns and psalms, states: "Ὡστε ὁ ψαλμὸς λῆγος ἐστὶ μουσικὸς, ἔταν εἰρῆμως κατὰ τοὺς ρμονικοὺς λῆγους πρὸς τὸ ῥγανονκροῖται: *Homiliae super Psalmos*, PG 29.305. Didymus writes in his *Commentary on Psalms* (Ps. 107: 3) of the kithara and psaltery: εἰρῆμως καὶ ἑναρμονίως τοὺς ὕμνους ἀναπέμποντες.

however, texts in which the adverb εἰρῆμως modifies the verb ψάλλω are extremely rare. In one text, εἰρῆμως modifies the participle ψάλλον, 'the one singing'; however the attribution of this text is uncertain, as is therefore its significance in regard to Evagrius' thought.⁹⁸

⁹⁸ Origen (dub.) *Fragmenta in Psalmos*, Pitra 118: 54, vol. 3, p. 273:. This text may even be by Evagrius himself, since it occurs in one of the collections of psalm-commentaries attributed to Origen which contains large numbers of Evagrius' scholia. Since it is not found in MS *Vaticanus graecus* 754 Rondeau does not include it among Evagrius' *Scholia on Psalms*.

The second occurs in Origen's *De oratione*. He notes that without the assistance of the Holy Spirit 'our *nous* would not be able [. . .] either to sing [psalms] or to hymn the Father in Christ with proper rhythm (αἰρῆθως), melodiously, measured, [and] harmoniously.'⁹⁹

⁹⁹ Origen, *De oratione* 2.4, GCS 3, p. 302:.

It is of interest that both Origen and Evagrius use αἰρῆθως to describe psalmody in their respective treatises on prayer. However, if Evagrius has Origen's use of this term in mind, he is providing it with an emphasis it does not possess in Origen's text, where αἰρῆθως is one of four adverbs which modify the verbs ψάλλω and ὑμνῶ. Here the emphasis is not so much on psalmody, but rather on the necessity for receiving God's gift of the Spirit before daring to discuss the lofty subject of prayer.

A more significant use of this term is found in Athanasius' *Letter to Marcellinus* 29. Here it is the adjective αἰρῆθμος, rather than the

end p.85

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Psalmody and Prayer in the Writings of Evagrius Ponticus

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pp. [86]-[90]

adverb, which is used to symbolize the spiritual effect of psalmody. In the text which immediately follows his praise of David's use of psalmody to calm Saul's frenzy,¹⁰⁰

¹⁰⁰ Cited above, p. 81.

Athanasius notes that melodic recitation of the psalms is not done out of enthusiasm for music, but rather because this is 'a sure sign of the harmony of the thoughts within the soul'. He concludes that the 'melodious reading' (chanting) of psalms is 'a symbol of the well-rhythmed (ἁρρυθμος) and unvexed stable state of the soul'.¹⁰¹

¹⁰¹ Athanasius, *Epistula ad Marcellinum de interpretatione Psalmorum* 29, PG 27.41:

Τὸ ἄρα μετὰ

μέλους λέγεσθαι τοὺς ψαλμοὺς οὐκ ἔστιν εὐφωνίας σπουδὴ, ἀλλὰ τεκμήριον τῆς ἁρμονίας τῶν ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ λογισμῶν. Καὶ ἡ ἐμμελὴς δὲ ἀνάγνωσις σύμβολόν ἐστι τῆς εὐρύθμου καὶ ἀχειμάστου καταστάσεως τῆς διανοίας

Here there is an emphasis on a deeper meaning of the word ἁρρυθμος than one finds in Origen. Athanasius' use of this term to symbolize the inner 'harmony' of thoughts within the soul accords well with Evagrius' model of spiritual progress and his emphasis on ἀπάθεια/ἀταραξία.

Although Evagrius' use of ἀρίθμως primarily represents an injunction that psalmody be performed in a dignified, careful fashion, it may be that he, like Athanasius, considered 'well-ordered' psalmody to be an external sign of that prayer 'free from anxiety' which he recommends in the first sentence of *De oratione* 82. That he intends the reader to infer a relationship between ἀταραχως and εὐρύθμως is suggested by the literary construction of this chapter, which places these two adverbs in parallel: prayer is to be

ἐπιεικῶς καὶ ἀταράχως , while psalmody is συνετῶς καὶ εὐρύθμως . In any case, whether or not Evagrius regarded 'well-rhythmed' psalmody as an external sign of inward calm, it is certain that he considered psalmody to be a means of attaining freedom from various passions, as will be described below in Chapters 3.2.1 and 6.2.

3.2.1.5 καὶ ἔσῃ ὡς νεοσσὸς ἀετοῦ ἐν ὕψει αἰρόμενος

Hausherr believes that 'the very precise meaning' of this concluding image of the 'gliding young eagle'¹⁰²

¹⁰² Hausherr, 'Le Traité de l'oraison', p. 127.

is found in a definition in the last of the *33 Chapters*, a brief work in which

Evagrius provides allegorical definitions of a variety of scriptural images:

33. Νεοσσοὶ ἀετῶν, εἰσὶ δυνάμεις ἅγαι τοὺς ἀκαθάρτους καταβάλλειν πεπιστευμένοι.

103

¹⁰³ Evagrius, *Capitula 33*, ch. 33, PG 40.1268.

33. The *young eagles* are holy powers entrusted with striking down the impure.

end p.86

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Bunge agrees with this interpretation, and suggests that the biblical text Evagrius is citing is Proverbs 24: 22: 'For if his wrath should be provoked he destroys men [. . .] so that they are not even fit to be eaten by the young eagles.'¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁴ A related image not mentioned by either Bunge or Hausherr is Evagrius' rather grisly comparison of allegorical crows 'which peck out the eyes of the impious' and thus symbolize partial purification from sin, with eagles which completely devour their prey and thus represent 'complete purification': (

(καὶ τοὺς μὲν ἐξορύσσοντας τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς τοῦ ἀσεβοῦς, κόρακας εἶπεν· τοὺς δὲ ὅλον αὐτὸν κατεσθίοντας, ὠνόμασεν ἀετοὺς, διὰ τὸ τοὺς μὲν τὴν μερικὴν, τοὺς δὲ τὴν καθόλου κάθαρσιν πεπιστεῦσθαι).

Evagrius, scholion 294 on Proverbs 30: 17, SC 340, p. 386.

Bunge is aware, however, that neither this biblical text nor Evagrius' definition in the *33 Chapters* are consistent with the exalted image, ἐν 0x001f55ψει αἰψ' ὑψιμενος, 'borne aloft in the heights'; and so he offers, as does Hausherr, alternative references having nothing to do with eagles, in which Evagrius describes the act of contemplation as spiritual ascent.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁵ Bunge refers to scholia 2 on Psalm 45: 3 and 2 on Psalm 54: 7 which describes the ascent of the *nous* (*Geistgebet*, p. 114 n. 15). Hausherr alludes to *Kephalaia Gnostika* 11.6 and 11.56 which contain references to spiritual 'wings' ('Le Traité de l'oraison', 127). Another text which could be cited in this connection is Evagrius' use of the eagle as a symbol of one who fasts and is thus able to spiritually 'rise upwards': *De octo spiritibus malitiae* 1 and 7, PG 79.1145 and 79.1152.

The biblical use of the eagle as an image of ascent or of 'dwelling on high' is very diverse and widespread in the scriptures;¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁶ Deut. 28: 49; 2 Sam. 1: 23; Prov 23: 5; Job 39: 27; Obad. 1: 4; Isa. 40: 31; Jer. 49: 16; Rev. 12: 14.

and it is possible that Evagrius is less concerned in this passage from *De oratione* with the eagle as a bird of prey than with other properties for which the eagle was renowned in antiquity, such as its ability to 'renew its strength' (Isa. 40: 31). The apparently rejuvenating effect of avian moulting could be the basis for Evagrius' reference to the 'young eagle'. In scholion 5 on Psalm 102: 5 Evagrius presents the images of 'youth' and 'the eagle' in a more positive, less aggressive or predatory light than in the *33 Chapters*:

102: 5. ἀνακαινισθήσεται ὡς αἰτοῦ ἡ νεότης σου.
 6. Τὸ γῆρας ἀποδύεται ὁ αἰτὸς, ὡς καὶ ὁ ἄνθρωπος «τὸν παλαιὸν ἄνθρωπον»
 ἀποδύεται «τὸν φθειρόμενον κατὰ τὰς ἐπιθυμίας τῆς ἀπάτης.»
 107

¹⁰⁷ Evagrius, scholion 6 on *Psalm* 102: 5(2) (cf. PG 12.1560).

V. 5. *renewed like the eagle's shall be your youth.*

6. The eagle strips off its moult, just as a man strips off 'the old man, corrupt according to deceitful desires' (Eph. 4: 22).

In the final sentence of *De oratione* 82 the image of the soaring eagle serves to unite Evagrius' description of gentle, undisturbed prayer with that of intelligent, well-performed psalmody. Evagrius'

end p.87

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use of the passive participle ἀρτόμενος suggests that the eagle is not so much ascending under its own power as being carried aloft, presumably by air currents.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁸ Thus Tugwell in *De oratione* 82 (p. 39) translates ἀρτόμενος as 'soaring on high'. This grammatical form is also found in the Bible: in Isaiah 46: 3 Israel is 'carried' by the pregnant Lord; in Baruch 5: 6 the people of Israel are borne back by God 'as on a royal throne'; in Mark 2: 3 the paralytic is 'borne' by four others into Christ's presence.

He had already discussed part of what facilitates this flight: In chapters 67-73 he encourages the *nous* to remain as far as possible untroubled by intrusion of images from the demons or from the imagination; and in chapters 74-81 he emphasizes the role played by the angels in assisting the *nous* to pray. In *De oratione* 82 he suggests that 'the eagle's flight', the contemplative ascent of the *nous* towards God, is made possible by the alternating rhythm of untroubled prayer and attentive psalmody.

3.2.2 *De Oratione* 83

83. Ἡ μὲν ψαλμωδία τὰ πάθη κατευνάζει καὶ τὴν ἀκρασίαν τοῦ σώματος ἡρεμεῖν ἀπεργάζεται· ἡ δὲ προσευχὴ ἐνεργεῖν παρασκευάζει τὸν νοῦν τὴν ἰδίαν ἐνέργειαν

83. Psalmody calms the passions and puts to rest the body's disharmony; prayer arouses the *nous* to activate its own proper activity.

In this second chapter of his chain on psalmody and prayer Evagrius reverses the order of exposition he employed in *De oratione* 82: there he describes prayer first and psalmody second; here psalmody comes first, followed by prayer. As was noted above, this links the second part of chapter 82 (on psalmody) with the first part of this chapter, allowing the discussion of psalmody begun in chapter 82 to be explored here in greater detail.

Evagrius explains how psalmody facilitates gentle, tranquil prayer by calming the passions. Here psalmody is associated with the body and with the need to overcome the passions; prayer, on the other hand, activates the proper activity or power of the *nous*, contemplation. Thus psalmody is here associated with the ascetical discipline of the *praktiké*, while prayer is associated with the privileged grace of contemplation.

3.2.2.1 τὰ πάθη κατευνάζει

Evagrius employs the verb κατευνάζω to describe the calming effect of psalmody on the passions. In classical Greek κατευνάζω meant literally 'to put to bed, lull to sleep', and metaphorically 'to quiet or

end p.88

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calm'.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁹ Liddell and Scott, *Greek-English Lexicon*, p. 925.

In patristic usage it could similarly mean 'to lull or calm', or in a more specifically theological context, 'to appease', often in the sense of appeasing the wrath of God.¹¹⁰

¹¹⁰ Lampe, *Patristic Greek Lexicon*, p. 730.

Thus in the *Iliad* the god Hypnos considers whether to 'lull to slumber' Zeus and Hera,¹¹¹

¹¹¹ Homer, *The Iliad* 2.14.245-8: 'I might gently lull Hera to sleep

(Ἥρη [. . .] ῥεῖα κατευνήσαιμι), but I will not go near to Zeus, son of Cronos, nor will I lull him to sleep (οὐδὲ κατευνήσαιμι)', unless he asks it of me.'

and in the *Odyssey* Proteus 'lies down to rest' with the seals.¹¹²

¹¹² Homer, *The Odyssey* 4.414 and 4.421: 'you see him lulled to sleep [. . .] saw him lulled to sleep' (κατευνηθέντα ἴδῃσθε [. . .] κατευνηθέντα ἴδῃαι).

This verb can also refer to the 'last sleep' of death: both Sophocles and Philo use κατευνάζω in this sense.¹¹³

¹¹³ Sophocles, *Trachiniae* 95, Str. 1; Philo of Alexandria, *The Life of Moses* 2.255.2.

This term is not used exclusively of the sleep of gods and men: Aristophanes and Strabo use it to describe animals lying down to sleep.¹¹⁴

¹¹⁴ Aristophanes, *Historiae animalium epitome* 2.241.3; Strabo, *Geographica* 5.4.12.10.

Evagrius, however, uses this term in *De oratione* in regard to the passions. Closer to this use of κατευνάζω is Sophocles' lament that Philoctetes had no friend to soothe (κατευνάσειεν) his 'angry', literally 'bestly' (ἔνθηρος), wound with medicinal herbs.¹¹⁵

¹¹⁵ Sophocles, *Philoctetes* lines 696-9: οὐδ' ὅς [τὰν] θερμότηταν αἱμάδα κηκιομένην ἔλκ

ἔωνν' ἐν θ' ἵρου ποδὸς ἡπίοισι φίλλοις κατευνάσειεν.

Sophocles employs κατευνάζω to describe the soothing of a physical disorder; later authors also use it to describe the alleviating of emotional agitation. Both Plutarch and Aelian employ κατευνάζω to describe the soothing effects of instrumental music and song. Plutarch praises the accompanying of the paeon at a banquet with flute music. He notes that 'the sweet voice of the flute' produces 'calm in the soul [. . .] bringing peace to one who yields to its graceful, gentle melody'; provided, that is, that the flute-player maintains a proper meter, avoiding passionate displays and low registers 'that lead to frenzy (ἔκστασις)'.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁶ Plutarch, *Quaestiones convivales*, 712^F7-713^A10:

τὸν δ' αὐτὸν [. . .] καταχεόμενος φωνὴν
ἡδεῖαν ἄχρι τῆς ψυχῆς ποιούσαν γαλήνην [. . .] τοῦτο τῇ χάριτι καὶ πραότητι τοῦ μέλους
ὑποκατακλινόμενον ἡσυχάζειν, ἂν γε [. . .] μὴ παθαινόμενος μὴδ' ἀνασοβῶν καὶ παρεξιστάς

Here music continues the effect achieved by wine at a civilized banquet. Plutarch has no interest in frenzy or ἔκστασις, here evidently understood in the pejorative sense as a kind of irrationality. Rather, it is 'calm' or 'peace' (γαλήνη) that the flute induces: the verb used to describe its action is ἡσυχάζω, 'to quiet' or 'give rest'. Plutarch muses that just as herdsmen rouse and quiet (κατευνάζουσι) irrational cattle with the music of whistles,

end p.89

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calls, and conch shells, so 'the melody and rhythm of a harp or flute' can quiet and soothe the irrational part of the human soul.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁷ Plutarch, *Quaestiones convivales*, 713^A11:

ὥς γὰρ τὰ θρέμματα λόγου μὲν οὐ συνέησαν
διάνοιαν ἔχοντος, σιγμοῖς δὲ καὶ ποππυσμοῖς ἐμμελέσιν ἢ σύριγγιν καὶ στρόμβοις ἐγείρουσι καὶ
κατευνάζουσι [καὶ] πάλιν οἰνέμοντες, οὕτως, ὅσον ἐνεστι τῇ ψυχῇ φορβαδικὸν καὶ ἀγελαῖον καὶ
ἀξύνετον λόγου καὶ ἀνήκοον, μέλεσι καὶ ῥυθμοῖς ἐπιβάλλοντες καὶ καταυλοῦντες εὖ τίθενται
καὶ καταπραΰνουσιν

Thus κατευνάζω is first employed to describe the tranquillizing of animals, then by extension it explains the effect of music on the lower levels of human personality.

Writing just over a century later Aelian recounts the story of the Pythagorean Kleinias whose anger (ῥργή) and wrath (θυμός) were calmed by 'the harmonious plucking of the lyre' (τὴν λύραν ὁρμωσάμενος ἐκίθριζε). This, Aelian adds, is reminiscent of the account in the Iliad of Achilles, whose fury was calmed (τὴν μῆνιν κατευνάζειν) by means of the kithara.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁸ Aelian (Claudius Aelianus), *Varia historia* 14.23.1:

Κλεινίας ἀνὴρ ἦν σπουδαῖος τὸν τρόπον, Πυθαγόρειος δὲ τὴν σοφίαν. οὗτος εἴ ποτε ἐς ὄργην προήχθη καὶ εἶχεν αἰσθητικῶς ἑαυτοῦ ἐς θυμὸν ἐξαγομένου, παραχρῆμα πρὶν ἢ ἀνάπλεως αὐτῷ ἡ ὄργη καὶ ἐπίδηλος γένηται ὅπως διάκειται, τὴν λύραν ἀρμολύμενος ἐκιδάριζε. πρὸς δὲ τοὺς πυνθανομένους τὴν αἰτίαν ἀπεκρίνετο ἐμμελῶς ὅτι “πραῦνομαι.” δοκεῖ δέ μοι καὶ ὁ ἐν Ἰλιάδι Ἀχιλλεύς, ὁ τῇ κιθάρᾳ προσάδων καὶ τὰ κλέα τῶν προτέρων διὰ τοῦ μέλους ἐς μνήμην ἑαυτοῦ ἄγων, τὴν μῆνιν κατευνάζειν· μουσικὸς γὰρ ὢν τὴν κιθάραν πρώτην ἐκ τῶν λαφύρων ἔλαβε

Thus in the literature of pagan antiquity there are instances of the verb κατευνάζω used to describe the calming effect of music and song on the human psyche. It might therefore be expected that, given the emphasis on transcending the passions found in many schools of ancient philosophy, this term would also have been used by the philosophers. However, this is not the case. Prior to the fourth century, forms of κατευνάζω are hardly ever encountered in philosophical texts, and never in Evagrius' sense: that is, used to describe or recommend an ascetical practice. Plato, Aristotle, and Plotinus never use the term, nor do the Christian Platonists Clement and Origen.

As Johannes Quasten has described,¹¹⁹

¹¹⁹ Quasten, 'The Doctrine of Λογικὴ Θουσιᾶ', in *Music and Worship*, pp. 51-7.

the cultic use of music was regarded with suspicion by many pagan philosophers. Plato had warned against the liturgical use of instrumental music unaccompanied by the human voice,¹²⁰

¹²⁰ Plato, *The Laws* 669e.

and Philodemos of Gadara (c. 100-28 BC) agreed: the latter doubted the value of so-called ecstasy induced by music, and associated the enjoyment (ἡδονή) of music with the satisfaction of pleasure (ἡδονή), thus placing it on

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Psalmody and Prayer in the Writings of Evagrius Ponticus

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pp. [91]-[95]

the same inferior biological level as eating and drinking.¹²¹

¹²¹ Philodemos, *De musica* 18.24:

οὐ μὲν ἀλλὰ καὶ ἀνιῇ καὶ ἱλαροῦς ποιῇ καθάπερ ἀπόλαυσις
ποτῶν τε καὶ βρωτῶν καὶ πᾶσ' ἡδονῇ

Text quoted in Quasten, *Music and Worship*, p. 55, n. 7.

In a text quoted by Eusebius,¹²²

¹²² Eusebius of Caesarea, *Preparatio Evangelica* 4.11-12.

Porphry describes what he considers to be a long-standing philosophical
tradition¹²³

¹²³ In the text from *De abstinencia* cited in the following footnotes, Porphyry quotes
'a certain wise man' (τις ἀνὴρ σοφός), variously identified as either the

Neopythagorean Appolonius of Tyana (McKinnon, *Music in Early Christian Literature*,
p. 100) or Theophrastus of Eresos (Quasten, *Music and Worship*, p. 54). Quasten
cites Apuleius of Madaura and Celsus as additional sources for this tradition.

to the effect that music is appropriate only for inferior deities and demons.
The highest deity ('the god who is above all') should be worshipped 'with
pure silence and unblemished thoughts'.¹²⁴

¹²⁴ Porphyry, *De abstinencia* 2.34, lines 3-7: 'To the god who is above everything, as
some wise man has said, we should offer nothing sensible [. . .] rather, we should
worship him with pure silence and unsullied thoughts'

(θεῷ μὲν τῷ ἐπὶ πάσιν, ὡς τις ἀνὴρ σοφὸς εἶφη, μηδὲν
τῶν αἰσθητῶν [. . .] διὰ δὲ σιγῆς καθαρῶς καὶ τῶν περὶ αὐτοῦ καθαρῶν ἐννοιῶν θρησκευόμεν
αὐτόν.)

Once the soul has been brought into contact with him and 'made like him',
our contemplative ascent constitutes 'a holy sacrifice' which is also our
salvation and a kind of hymn: 'in the soul's *apatheia* and contemplation of
God this sacrifice is made perfect'.¹²⁵

¹²⁵ Porphyry, *De abstinencia* 2.34, lines 9-15:.

However, to the inferior deities, 'to the intelligible gods born of him, we are
to direct a hymnody of speech'.¹²⁶

¹²⁶ Porphyry, *De abstinencia* 2.34, lines 15-16:.

From this perspective liturgical chant (ἐκ τοῦ λόγου ὑμνωδίαν) pertains to the
worship of secondary deities, not to that of the highest god. Thus it is not
surprising that the soothing effect of liturgical singing is not one of the
modalities the philosophers recommended for the overcoming of passions.

Among Christians, however, the situation was otherwise. By the end of the fourth century, κατευναῖζω had become part of the vocabulary of Christian asceticism.¹²⁷

¹²⁷ Chrysostom uses κατευναῖζω to describe the calming of the passions in the following texts: *De petitione matris filiorum Zebedaei* (PG 48.772); *Ad eos qui scandalizati sunt* 13.6; *In Genesim homiliae* (PG 53.81, 53.102); and *In epistulam 2 ad Corinthios homiliae* (PG 61.390).

One reason for this may be the association of this verb with the calming effects of music in light of the increasing importance of psalmody in Christian liturgical practice. Writing in the last decades of the fourth century, John Chrysostom encourages the Christian laity to teach and practise psalmody both in church and also throughout the day during

end p.91

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manual labour: 'not only while weaving or performing other tasks, but especially at table'.¹²⁸

¹²⁸ John Chrysostom, *Expositiones in Psalmos* 41b, PG 55.157:.

Evagrius' use of κατευναῖζω probably reflects his application to contemporary ascetical practice of a term which had already been used in antiquity to describe the effect of music on the passions. The Cappadocian fathers Basil and Gregory of Nyssa employ κατευναῖζω to describe the soothing of the passions. In his correspondence Basil enthusiastically recommends monastic withdrawal from the world and especially solitude, which 'affords to us the greatest help since it quiets (κατευναῖζουσα) our passions [. . .] [which are] quieted (κατευνασθέντα) by [inward] stillness'.¹²⁹

¹²⁹ Basil of Caesarea, *Letter* 2.2, lines 33-40:.

Later in the same letter Basil describes the soothing and transforming effect of sacred music on the soul.¹³⁰

¹³⁰ Ibid., lines 50-1: 'The [stable] state of the soul in which there is joy and freedom from sorrow is a gift conferred by the consolation of hymns' (.).

In a sermon preached to a congregation whose church had recently been burned he advises the people to soothe (καταλῆσθαι) their feelings of sorrow and replace them with higher thoughts.¹³¹

¹³¹ Basil of Caesaria, *Homily* 21 (*Quod rebus mundanis adhaerendum non sit*), PG 31.564:.

Here κατευναῖζω describes the effect which higher thoughts should have on sorrow arising 'from passion' (ἐκ τοῦ πάθους) .

Basil's brother, Gregory of Nyssa, also uses κατευναῖζω to describe relief from the passions. In his *Homilies on the Song of Songs*, commenting on the text 'I sleep, and my heart keeps watch' (Song 5: 2), Gregory describes the effect of sleep on the passions of fear and anger:

ἀλλὰ καὶ λύει τὸν τόνον τοῦ σώματος, ποιεῖ δὲ καὶ λήθην τῶν ἐν τῷ ἀνθρώπῳ
φροντίδων καὶ κατευνάζει τὸν φόβον καὶ ἡμεροῖ τὸν θυμὸν [. .]

132

¹³² Gregory of Nyssa, *In Canticum canticorum* 5.2 (Or. 10), ed. Langerbeck, p. 312.

[sleep] relaxes the tension of the body, causes as well forgetfulness of the worries within a man, and *calms fear*, and tames anger [. .]

An even closer parallel to Evagrius' use of κατευνάζω in regard to psalmody is found in Gregory of Nyssa's principal work on the psalter, *In inscriptiones Psalmorum*. Gregory describes how when Saul was afflicted with a demonic spirit, 'David, by means of the psalter[y],

end p.92

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quieted (κατευνόσαντος) the disturbance of the passion.'¹³³

¹³³ Gregory of Nyssa, *In inscriptiones Psalmorum* 2.16, ed. McDonough, p. 167:.

Here Gregory provides a biblical background to the soothing of passions. He invokes the image of David, whose psalter or harp (ψαλτήριον) was able to calm Saul's demonic agitation. In chapter 6 of the same work Gregory again employs the verb κατευνάζω, this time recalling David's refusal to take vengeance when Saul fell into his power. Gregory states that if we find ourselves in similar circumstances and are tempted to take vengeance, we too should 'calm (κατευνώσωμεν) our anger towards patient endurance'.¹³⁴

¹³⁴ Ibid., 2.6, p. 89: πρὸς μακροθυμίαν τὸν θυμὸν κατευνώσωμεν.

Evagrius' use of κατευνάζω in *De oratione* 83 is thus consistent with the use of this term by Basil and Gregory of Nyssa. As was described above, it appears to reflect the incorporation into Christian ascetical vocabulary of a verb used in antiquity to describe, among other things, the effect of music and song on animals and angry human beings. Evagrius also uses κατευνάζω in *De oratione* 64 to describe God's direct, calming intervention in the human psyche:

64. Οἱ μὲν λοιποὶ διὰ τῆς ἀλλοιώσεως τοῦ σώματος ἐμποιοῦσι τῷ νῷ λογισμοὺς ἢ νοήματα ἢ θεωρήματα. Ὁ δὲ γε θεὸς τοῦναντίον δρα· αὐτῷ τῷ νῷ ἐπιβαίνων, ἐντίθησιν αὐτῷ γνώσιν ὧν βούλεται, καὶ διὰ τοῦ νοῦ τὴν ἀκрасίαν τοῦ σώματος κατευνάζει.

135

¹³⁵ Evagrius, *De oratione* 64, ed. Tugwell, p. 13 (cf. PG 79.1180).

64. The others implant thoughts, ideas, or contemplations in the intellect by affecting the body. God, however, does the opposite: he himself lights upon the intellect and places within it knowledge as he wishes; and through the intellect he soothes the body's disharmony.

In order to fully appreciate this passage it will be necessary to look closely at the word Evagrius uses both here and in *De oratione* 63 and 83 to describe the disordered psyche: namely, ἀκρασία.

3.2.2.2. καὶ τὴν ἀκρασίαν τοῦ σώματος ἡρεμεῖν ἀπεργάζεται

In *De oratione* 83, Evagrius, imitating the gnomic style of biblical wisdom literature, adds a second phrase parallel to the first in order to develop his thought. After stating that psalmody 'soothes the passions' he adds that it 'effects quieting of the body's disharmony'. This second phrase has been variously translated. John Eudes Bamberger translates it as, 'calms the intemperance of the

end p.93

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body'.¹³⁶

¹³⁶ Bamberger, *The Praktikos and Chapters on Prayer*, p. 69.

Hausherr similarly has, '*apaise l'intempérance du corps*'.¹³⁷

¹³⁷ Hausherr, 'Le Traité de l'oraison', p. 127.

The English translation of the *Philokalia* by Palmer, Sherrard, and Ware has 'curbs the uncontrolled impulses in the body',¹³⁸

¹³⁸ Palmer *et al.*, *Philokalia*, p. 65.

while Simon Tugwell translates it as, 'reduces to quietness the imbalance of the body'.¹³⁹

¹³⁹ Tugwell, *Praktikos and De oratione*, p. 83.

These different translations do not represent variant readings: all the translators presume that Evagrius uses the word ἀκρασία; the problem lies in determining exactly what Evagrius means by it.

In the Septuagint¹⁴⁰

¹⁴⁰ *Psalms of Solomon* 4.3: 'And his hand is first upon him as if in zeal, while he himself is guilty of manifold sins and intemperance' (ἐν ποικιλίᾳ ἁμαρτιῶν καὶ ἐν ἀκρασίᾳ).

and the New Testament¹⁴¹

¹⁴¹ Mat. 23: 25: of the Pharisees who cleanse the outside of vessels, but 'inside are full of extortion and excess; (ἔσωθεν δὲ γέμουσιν ἐξ ἀρπαγῆς καὶ ἀκρασίας). 1 Cor. 7: 5, St Paul's warning with regard to marital relations: 'lest Satan tempt you through lack of self-control' (ἵνα μὴ πειράξῃ ὑμᾶς ὁ Σατανᾶς διὰ τὴν ἀκρασίαν ὑμῶν).

this word is used exclusively to refer to 'lack of self-control, self-indulgence'.¹⁴²

¹⁴² Bauer *et al.*, *Greek-English Lexicon*, p. 32.

This accords with the most common use of ἀκρασία in classical Greek:

namely, as a variant spelling of ἀκράτεια, 'want of power, debility'; or, used as an adjective, 'uncontrolled, immoderate, incontinent'.¹⁴³

¹⁴³ Liddell and Scott, *Greek-English Lexicon*, p. 54.

The alpha-privative is here applied to κράτος, 'strength, power, mastery'.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 998.

Thus ἀκρασία (or ἀκράτεια) is failure to exert appropriate restraint:¹⁴⁵

¹⁴⁵ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 7.1 (1145^b), 8.8.5 (1150^a).

it is the vice of indulgence or excess. As such ἀκρασία is sometimes described as the vice specifically opposed to ἐγκράτεια, the virtue of temperance.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁶ Philo of Alexandria, *On Rewards and Punishments* 26. Clement of Alexandria employs this contrast four times: *Stromateis* 3.4.36, 3.5.41, and 3.8.62, and *Protrepticus* 10.93.1.

However, a more specific (if less common) definition of ἀκρασία owes nothing to κράτος. Rather, the alpha-privative is applied to the noun κράσις, which means a mixing or blending of elements to form a compound.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁷ Liddell and Scott, *Greek-English Lexicon*, p. 990.

Philo uses κράσις in this sense to describe the euphonious blending of male and female voices in praise of God.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁸ Philo of Alexandria, *The Life of Moses* II, ed. Cohn, pp. 256-7: '[Moses] divides the nation into two choirs, the one of men and the other of women, [. . .] that the two might together sing hymns to the Father and Creator in melodious response, with a *blending* of both temperament and melody—temperaments able to offer to one another like for like, with melody created by the concord of high and low: for the voices of men are low and those of the women high. And when they are proportionately *blended*, the resulting melody is the most complete and pleasing harmony'.

end p.94

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Κράσις is used in a biological sense in Greek medical texts and by Aristotle to refer to the mental or physical temperament of human beings: that is, to the physiological state created by the 'mixture' or blending of the four humours.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁹ Hippocrates, *Aphorisms* 5.62; Galen, *De melancholia* 6.9.105, 6.9.124; Aristotle, *Problemata* 935^b23, 954^b8, 955^a14.

Evagrius uses κράσις in this physiological sense in *De oratione* 69:

69. Ὅταν μὴ δυνηθῇ κινῆσαι τὸν νοῦν τῇ μνήμῃ ἐν τῇ προσευχῇ ὁ φθονερός δαίμων, τότε τὴν κράσιν τοῦ σώματος ἐκβιάζεται εἰς τὸ ποιῆσαι ξένην τινὰ φαντασίαν τῷ νῷ καὶ μορφῶσαι αὐτόν.

¹⁵⁰

¹⁵⁰ Evagrius, *De oratione* 69, ed. Tugwell, p. 13 (cf. PG 1181).

69. When the spiteful demon is unable to move the *nous* through the memory during prayer, he strikes out against the body's temperament to create some strange fantasy in the intellect, and [thus] shape it.

Similarly, in *De oratione* 62 he describes thoughts which originate 'in sense-perception, memory, or temperament' (τὰ ἐξ αἰσθησεως ἢ μνήμης ἢ κρᾶσεως νοήματα); and in *Antirrhethikos* IV.22 he states that chanting psalms

changes 'the condition (κρᾶσις) of the body'.¹⁵¹

¹⁵¹ Frankenberg offers the retroversion: τὴν σωματος κρασιν for (ed. Frankenberg, pp. 472-545), reading for, which Payne Smith defines as 'mixing, blending, due proportion', Smith, *Compendious Syriac Dictionary*, p. 505. Smith supports either or συγκρᾶσις for: *Thesaurus Syriacus*, vol. ii, col. 2061.

In the context of this medical (and to some extent psychological) definition of κρᾶσις, the application of the alpha-privative gives to it the literal meaning of a 'bad mixture' or 'failure of mixture'.¹⁵²

¹⁵² Liddell and Scott, *Greek-English Lexicon*, p. 54.

Used in this sense it is found in ancient medical texts, often with the Ionic spelling, ἀκρασίη, referring to physiological (literally 'somatic') 'disharmony' or 'imbalance'. This refers to the physiological and psychological state which results from an imbalanced mixture of the four humors or from the failure to completely digest (internally 'mix' and assimilate) food.¹⁵³

¹⁵³ Of ἀκρασίη in the sense of 'noxious mixture' or 'unsuccessful mixture': Hippocrates, *Ancient Medicine* 7.6-10: '[The physician] tried to eliminate those things which, when taken, human nature could not absorb because of their harsh and unmixed [quality]' (μὲν, ὅσων μὴ ἠδύνατο ἡ φύσις ἢ ἀνθρωπίνη ἐπικρατεῖν ὑγιαινούσα ἐμποιτῶντων, διὰ ἀγρίστητό τε καὶ ἀκρασίην). Also, *Ancient Medicine* 18.16-18: 'In all other cases, where caustic and unmixed humours are brought about, I am convinced that the cause is the same and that restoration [of health] ensues from coction and mixture'.

Evagrius' phrase ἀκρασία τοῦ σώματος

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Psalmody and Prayer in the Writings of Evagrius Ponticus

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pp. [96]-[100]

is found three times in Hippocratic texts in the sense of 'somatic disharmony' or humoral imbalance.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵⁴ Hippocrates, *De Morbis* 2.25.4, 2.39.3; *De affectionibus interioribus* 33.8.

It is difficult to point with confidence to examples of ἀκρασία used in this technical medical sense in ecclesiastical writings. In Christian texts this term is commonly found in moral exhortations denoting 'intemperance', reflecting the usage of the Septuagint and New Testament. In the very few instances where the technical, 'scientific' meaning may be intended it is also possible to argue that the more common reading is the correct one. If one presumes that ecclesiastical authors are invariably more concerned with moral exhortation than physiological explanation, then the moral definition of ἀκρασία will always be made to fit.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵⁵ This problem is illustrated by two different translations of Clement of Alexandria. In *Paedagogus* 2.2.21, 2-3 (SC 108, p. 50) Clement explains the value of a dry diet. S. P. Woods (*The Instructor*, p. 112) interprets Clement's use of the phrase ἀκρασίας τεκμήριον as implying a physical 'disorder', presumably a humoral imbalance. A. C.

Coxe, however, understands this phrase in the more commonly used sense, as an indication of (moral) 'intemperance' (*The Instructor (Paedagogus)*, p. 243). In favour of Woods's 'physiological' reading is the fact that Clement often employs metaphors and examples drawn from the different branches of natural philosophy, including medicine. However, it is also true that in all other uses of ἀκρασία in Clement's works (56 references in the *Stromateis* and *Paedagogus*), the moral meaning seems to be intended.

In the case of Evagrius' use of the phrase τὴν ἀκρασίαν τοῦ σώματος a case can be made for translating it as either 'the body's intemperance' or 'the body's disharmony'. In favour of the former reading is the fact that ἀκρασία is most commonly used in the sense of 'intemperance' by the fathers, including those with whose writings Evagrius was certainly familiar, such as Origen, Clement, and Basil.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁶ In *De principiis* 3.1.21.17 Origen paraphrases St Paul 's condemnation of those who 'had not repented of the indecency and intemperance of their deeds' (μὴ μετανοήσαντας ἐπὶ τῇ ἀσελείᾳ καὶ ἀκρασίᾳ, ἣ ἐπραξαν) . Origen also quotes 1 Cor. 7: 5 in *De oratione* 2.2.25, and uses ἀκρασία in the sense of 'intemperance' in the following: *Commentary on John* 13.11.67.7; *Fragmenta in Lucam* 107.18; *In Jesu Nave homiliae* xxvi 454.26; *Fragmenta ex commentariis in epistulam i ad Corinthios (in catenis)* 34.35. Basil devotes *Regulae brevius* 140 to ἀκρασία, understood as 'lack of self-control'.

In addition, in *De oratione* 83 ἀκρασία is set in parallel to τὰ πάθη. If 'passions'

are understood as disordered impulses (and this is Evagrius' understanding), then Evagrius can be read as developing his thought by offering ἡκρασία in the sense of 'intemperance' or 'excess' as an example of one of the passions which psalmody is supposed to soothe. However, in favour of the physiological definition of ἡκρασία is Evagrius' reliance on therapeutic and even specifically medical metaphors, which will be discussed in detail in Chapter 4.

end p.96

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3.2.3 *De Oratione* 85

In *De oratione* 5 Evagrius describes the particular type of contemplation which he believes psalmody facilitates:

85. Ἡ μὲν ψαλμωδία τῆς ποικίλης σοφίας ἐστὶν, ἡ δὲ προσευχὴ προοίμιόν ἐστι τῆς αὐτοῦ, καὶ ἀποικίλου γνώσεως.

157

¹⁵⁷ Evagrius, *De oratione* 85, ed. Tugwell, p. 16 (cf. PG 79.1185).

85. While psalmody pertains to multiform wisdom (cf. Eph. 3: 10), prayer is a prelude to immaterial and uniform knowledge.

In this passage Evagrius distinguishes between psalmody and prayer by invoking the categories of corporeality and complexity. Prayer prepares for an ascent beyond material realities into the immaterial realm. This echoes an earlier statement in *De oratione* that prayer allows one to arise from material concerns 'towards formless and immaterial knowledge' (

(πρὸς αὐτὸν καὶ ἀνείδεον γνῶσιν) ¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 69, p. 13 (cf. PG 79.1181).

Here prayer is also a preparation for a movement beyond wisdom pertaining to the complex created order, into knowledge that is simple, literally 'non-complex' (ἀποικίλος).

Psalmody, in contrast, pertains to the diversity of creation; it is a reflection of divine wisdom, specifically wisdom which is ποικίλος, 'richly coloured, intricate, manifold'. This is an allusion to Ephesians 3: 9-10: '[. . .] the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things: that through the Church the manifold wisdom of God (ἡ πολυποίκιλος σοφία τοῦ θεοῦ) might now be made known to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places'. ¹⁵⁹

[. . .] ἡ οἰκονομία τοῦ μυστηρίου τοῦ ἀποκεκρυμμένου ἀπὸ τῶν αἰώνων ἐν τῷ θεῷ τῷ τὰ πάντα κτίσαντι, ἵνα γνωρισθῇ νῦν ταῖς ἀρχαῖς καὶ ταῖς ἐξουσίαις ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις διὰ τῆς

¹⁵⁹ ἐκκλησίας

For St Paul it is the Church which reflects the 'richly variegated' (πολυποίκιλος) wisdom of God. For Evagrius, however, 'wisdom' is both a Christian virtue and a title of Christ. He particularly associates the virtue of wisdom with the contemplation of all ranks of beings: 'The task of wisdom is

contemplation of the *logoi* of corporeal and incorporeal [beings].'¹⁶⁰

¹⁶⁰ Evagrius, *Praktikos* 89, SC 171, pp. 682-4:.. In the *Gnostikos* he reiterates this definition in his distinction between the virtues of prudence and wisdom: " 'The work of prudence", he said, "is the contemplation of the holy and intelligent powers apart from their *logoi*"; for he handed on the tradition that these are revealed by wisdom alone' (), Evagrius, *Gnostikos* 44, SC 356, p. 172.

end p.97

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Since psalmody is 'an image of multiform wisdom', it provides a privileged opportunity for *theoria physiké*, contemplation of God by means of the *logoi* or deeper meanings concealed beneath the appearance of created beings. The God who is perceptible through the multiplicity of beings is Christ, their creator and redeemer. Psalmody thus invites meditation on 'the *logoi* of corporeals and incorporeals' and on the person of Christ. For Evagrius, as for St Paul, 'the divine wisdom' is a title of Christ: 'Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God [. . .] Christ Jesus, whom God made our wisdom, our righteousness and sanctification and redemption' (1 Cor. 1: 24, 1: 30).

Throughout his writings, but especially in *Scholia on Psalms*,¹⁶¹

¹⁶¹ Scholia 3 on Psalm 21: 7(1); 6 on 21: 15(2); 8 on 21: 19(1); 1 on 30: 2(2); 1 on 32: 1(1); 2 on 33: 3(1); 15 on 34: 26(2); 10 on 76: 15(1); 2 on 79: 5(1); 3 on 84: 10(1); 9 on 93: 15(1); 2 on 118: 3; 4 on 131: 6(2); 4 on 135: 23; 3 on 141: 6(3).

This identification of Christ with the wisdom of God is also found in *Kephalaia Gnostica* II.2; II.21; III.3; III.11; III.81; IV.7; V.5; and V.84.

Evagrius identifies Christ with the wisdom of God, especially the 'richly diverse wisdom' (ἡπολυποίκιλοςσοφία) of Ephesians 3: 10.¹⁶²

¹⁶² Scholia 8 on Psalm 44: 10; 1 on Psalm 122: 1.

The rich panoply of historical events and religious sentiment chanted and brought to mind during the practice of psalmody is often given a specifically christological significance or interpreted in light of Jesus' own words in the *Scholia on Psalms*. This will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 6.1.

3.2.4 *Praktikos* 69-71; *Scholion* 1 on Psalm 137: 1

To properly apprehend 'multiform wisdom' while chanting the psalms it is necessary to practise what Evagrius calls 'undistracted' psalmody. Evagrius extols this kind of psalmody in chapter 69 of the *Praktikos*, which is the first of a brief chain of three chapters concerned with the effects of psalmody and the internalizing of the virtues:

69. Μέγα μὲν τὸ ἀπερισπάστως προσεύχεσθαι, μείζον δὲ τὸ καὶ ψάλλειν ἀπερισπάστως.

¹⁶³

¹⁶³ Evagrius, *Praktikos* 69, SC 171, p. 652.

69. A great thing—to pray without distraction; a greater thing still—to sing psalms without distraction.

Here Evagrius somewhat surprisingly states that undistracted psalmody is greater (*μεῖζον*) than undistracted prayer. What he means by the latter is clear; it is a theme which recurs throughout

end p.98

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De oratione. In undistracted prayer, 'the highest noetic activity of the *nous*',¹⁶⁴

¹⁶⁴ Evagrius, *De oratione* 36, ed. Tugwell, p. 8: Ἀπερίσπαστος προσευχή ἐστὶν ἄκρα νουησις νοῦς.

the *nous* fixes its attention solely on God, laying aside even *noemata* which are pure and 'simple' (ψιλλῶς),¹⁶⁵

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., 56.

ceasing from contemplation of the *logoi* of things, and avoiding everything that has the power to 'imprint' the mind.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., 57.

In this text from the *Praktikos* Evagrius does not place undistracted psalmody on a higher spiritual level than undistracted prayer: he implies, rather, that maintaining the *nous*' focus exclusively on God is easier to do when mental images are laid aside in pure prayer than it is when the *nous* is intentionally immersed in the rich barrage of images which psalmody evokes. By stating that undistracted psalmody is greater than undistracted prayer Evagrius is admitting how difficult it is to achieve and maintain. The ability to remain solely attentive to God is evidence of an advanced spiritual state, as Evagrius goes on to explain in the next chapter of the *Praktikos*:

70. Ὁ τὰς ἀρετὰς ἐν ἑαυτῷ καθιδρύσας, καὶ ταύταις ὅλος ἀνακραθεὶς, οὐκ ἔτι μέμνηται νόμου ἢ ἐντολῶν ἢ κολάσεως, ἀλλὰ ταῦτα λέγει καὶ πράττει ὅποσα ἡ ἀρίστη ἐξίς ὑπαγορεύει.

167

¹⁶⁷ Evagrius, *Praktikos* 70, SC 171, p. 656.

70. A man who has established the virtues in himself and is entirely permeated with them no longer remembers the law or the commandments or punishment. Rather, he says and does what [this] excellent condition suggests.

This text describes one who is 'entirely permeated' with the virtues. If this chapter were considered apart from the texts which precede and follow it, it would not be apparent that psalmody, undistracted or otherwise, plays a significant role in the establishment of this 'excellent condition'. However, Evagrius' use of the term ἀνάκρασις to describe a commingling or 'complete blending'¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁸ Lampe, *Patristic Greek Lexicon*, p. 105: 'interpenetration of sensible and intelligible things in creation; union of human and divine natures in Christ; union of Christ with Holy Spirit; Eucharistic union of human body and Eucharistic elements'.

of the self with the virtues is strongly reminiscent of his repeated assertion that psalmody has the power to change and restore the *κράσις*, the humoral balance or physiological 'harmony' of the body, which in antiquity was held to be responsible for health and illness. As is described in Chapters 3.2.2 and 4.2, psalmody was thought to restore

end p.99

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the *κράσις* chiefly by calming misdirected or excessive *thumos*. The impression that Evagrius intends his reader to understand psalmody as one of the means by which virtues are blended with the self is strengthened by the fact that he immediately returns to the subject of psalmody in the next sentence of the *Praktikos*:

71. Αἱ μὲν δαιμονιώδεις ᾠδαὶ τὴν ἐπιθυμίαν ἡμῶν κινουσι, καὶ εἰς αἰσχρὰς τὴν ψυχὴν φαντασίας ἐμβάλλουσιν· οἱ δὲ ψαλμοὶ καὶ ὕμνοι καὶ αἱ πνευματικαὶ ᾠδαὶ εἰς μνήμην αἰεὶ τῆς ἀρετῆς τὸν νοῦν προκαλοῦνται, περιζέοντα τὸν θυμὸν ἡμῶν καταψύχοντες καὶ τὰς ἐπιθυμίας μαραίνοντες.

169

¹⁶⁹ Evagrius, *Praktikos* 71, SC 171, p. 658.

71. The demonic songs move our desire and throw the soul into shameful fantasies. But 'psalms and hymns and spiritual songs' (Eph. 5: 19) summon the *nous* to continuous memory of virtue by cooling our boiling indignation and by quenching our desires.

Here Evagrius stresses the usefulness of psalmody in the realignment of both disordered *thumos* and *epithumia*. This represents the effect of psalmody on the soul, more specifically at the level of the *pathetikon*, the portion of the soul subject to passion. However, Evagrius also stresses here the effect of psalmody on the *nous*: psalms and other holy songs 'summon the *nous* to continuous memory of virtue'. By encouraging unceasing meditation on virtue, psalmody thus assists in the 'establishing' (καθιδρῶ) and 'commingling' (ἀνάκρασις) of virtue within the soul described in *Praktikos* 70. Although in this brief chain of chapters from the *Praktikos* Evagrius emphasizes the importance of undistracted psalmody, he does not define or explain what he means by this. For such a definition one must look to his exegetical texts.

In the *Scholia on Psalms* Evagrius employs the adverb 'undistractedly' (ἀπερίσπαστως) to describe what might also be termed 'contemplative' psalmody: that is, a way of chanting psalms which enables the soul to perceive the divine *logoi* concealed beneath the symbols and events described in the psalms. In *Scholion 1 on Psalm 137*: 1(3) Evagrius explains that 'undistracted' psalmody entails both spiritual receptivity and careful attention to the underlying meaning of the text:

137: 1(3). καὶ ἐναντίον ἀγγέλων ψαλῶ σοι

1. ἐναντίον ἀγγέλων ψάλλειν ἐστὶ τὸ ἀπερισπάστως ψάλλειν, ἥτοι τυπουμένου τοῦ ἡγεμονικοῦ ἡμῶν μόνοις τοῖς σημαινομένοις πράγμασιν ὑπὸ τοῦ ψαλμοῦ, ἢ καὶ μὴ τυπουμένου· ἢ τάχα οὗτος ἐναντίον ἀγγέλων ψάλλει ὁ νοῶν τὴν δύναμιν τῶν ψαλμῶν.

170

¹⁷⁰ Evagrius, scholion 1 on *Psalm* 137: 1 (cf. ed. Pitra, 137: 1, vol. iii, p. 340).

end p.100

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Psalmody and Prayer in the Writings of Evagrius Ponticus

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pp. [101]-[105]

V.1 [. . .] and before the angels I will chant psalms to you

1. To chant psalms before the angels is to sing psalms without distraction: either our mind is imprinted solely by the realities symbolized by the psalm, or else it is not imprinted. Or perhaps the one who *chants psalms before the angels* is he who apprehends the meaning of the psalms.

In this scholion Evagrius presents three definitions of chanting psalms 'before the angels', which he equates with undistracted psalmody. In the first phrase he states that undistracted psalmody refers to two seemingly opposite experiences. Either the mind is passive with regard to the psalm's inner meanings and receives only their impressions; or it receives no impression at all, presumably because it is solely attentive to the God to whom the psalm bears witness. In the first definition Evagrius recommends that during psalmody the governing part of the soul (ἡγεμονικόν), which is particularly

subject to being formed and impressed by external matters,¹⁷¹

¹⁷¹ In *Peri Logismon* 4 and 41 Evagrius describes the susceptibility of the ἡγεμονικόν to being imprinted or moulded (τυπῶν) by matters originating from within the mind, from angels or demons, and from the external world by means of the senses.

should focus attentively and exclusively on what the psalm signifies or explicates. The mind should thus be receptive during psalmody, capable of being imprinted (τυπούμενος) like wax by the matters 'signified' or 'symbolized' (σημαινόμενοις) by the psalm. By attending exclusively (μῶνους) to the realities signified by the psalm, the mind will be formed and shaped only by them. The second definition, according to which the mind is not imprinted at all, alludes to the final goal of psalmody and indeed of every spiritual practice: namely, that the mind be occupied solely with God who, being incorporeal, leaves no imprint on the *nous*.¹⁷²

¹⁷² Evagrius, scholion 1 on *Psalms* 140: 2(1) (= PG 12.1665; and cf. ed. Pitra, 140: 2, vol. iii, p. 148): τὸ δὲ τοῦ θεοῦ νόημα διασώζει τὸν νοῦν ἀναγκαίως ἀτύπωτον· οὐ γὰρ ἔστι σῶμα. Cited and discussed above, p. 38, n. 124.

In the second phrase of the scholion Evagrius provides a third definition of undistracted psalmody which complements the first, but is less passive. Undistracted psalmody is not merely a willingness to be 'stamped' by the matters symbolized by the psalm; it is also an active search for the δῶναις, the 'meaning', the 'potentiality' or even the 'power' of the psalm. In other words, undistracted psalmody is direct perception of the inner meaning of

the psalm.

end p.101

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Here Evagrius shifts his focus from the impressionable nature of the *λογισμικόν* to the contemplative function of the *nous*. The participle *ὁ νοῶν* suggests the power of the *nous* to apprehend or contemplate realities concealed beneath external appearance. Undistracted psalmody 'before the angels' is thus contemplation by the *nous* of the inner potency or meaning of the psalm.

From these texts there emerges something of Evagrius' purpose in composing the *Scholia on Psalms*. Undistracted psalmody attentive solely to the inner *δύναμις* of the psalm is no easy task. The rich variety of images and events found in each psalm, as well as the poetic beauty of the psalter, can captivate the mind and distract it from the real end of psalmody, God himself—the only legitimate 'distraction' of the soul.¹⁷³

¹⁷³ in *De oratione* 34 Evagrius uses the term 'distracted' in a positive sense: 'For what is higher than conversing with God and being occupied in [lit: 'being distracted by'] communion with him?

(*Τί γὰρ αὐτοῦ ἀνώτερον τοῦ τῷ θεῷ προσομιλεῖν καὶ τῇ πρὸς αὐτὸν συνουσίᾳ περισπᾶσθαι;*) , ed.

Tugwell, p. 8 (cf. PG 79.1173).

Undistracted psalmody requires the ability to move backwards and forwards through the history of salvation amidst the rich diversity of creation while perceiving this variety as a reflection of God's 'manifold wisdom'. Evagrius' formal and exegetical methods become comprehensible when the *Scholia on Psalms* are viewed as a guide to the practice of undistracted psalmody. As Bunge has described, Evagrius writes in the *Scholia on Psalms* 'as a monk for monks', sharing in these scholia the fruit of his own meditation on the psalms.¹⁷⁴

¹⁷⁴ Bunge, ' "der Mystische Sinn der Schrift" ', p. 142. Bunge speculates (pp. 142-3) concerning the *Sitz im Leben* of the *Scholia on Psalms*. He believes that these texts and Evagrius' recommendations of undistracted psalmody are less applicable to the common recitation of the monastic office in monastic communities than to that more leisurely, solitary meditation on the psalter which the hermit was able to practise in the privacy of his cell.

3.3 Summary

Evagrius' discussion of prayer and psalmody in *De oratione* 82 and 83 presupposes and mirrors the monastic practice of psalmody. He depicts the two practices as intertwining, each supporting the other, with psalmody serving a preparatory and subordinate role to prayer. The two chains which precede these chapters make it clear that by 'prayer' Evagrius means 'pure prayer': that is, prayer free from every distracting image arising from within or intruding from without (*De oratione* 67-73), a gift God bestows either directly or

through the mediation of angels (*De oratione* 74-81). In *De oratione* 82 Evagrius employs adverbs which highlight the affective dimensions of prayer ('gently', 'calmly') and the intellectual task of psalmody ('attentively', 'with proper meter'). Then in *De oratione* 83 Evagrius shifts his focus to the affective and somatic goals of psalmody (calming passions and restoring somatic harmony) and the role of prayer in awakening the *nous* to its highest power and function. He goes on to explain that prayer is the highest power of the *nous* (*De oratione* 84) and the co-worker with *gnosis* in the supreme task of divine contemplation (*De oratione* 86). Psalmody therefore serves the purpose of preparing the entire person, body, soul, and *nous*, for prayer. The therapeutic power of psalmody in regard to the body and soul will be discussed in Chapters 4 and 5, while the value of the psalter in Christian contemplation will be the subject of Chapter 6.

4 Psalmody as Spiritual Remedy

Luke Dysinger OSB

Abstract: In *De oratione* 83, Evagrius presents his belief that psalmody serves as a spiritual remedy, a means by which the passions are calmed and the body's disharmony is rectified. The basis of his faith in the efficacy of psalmody as spiritual remedy is his conviction that it is above all Christ who is encountered in the psalter. This chapter explores Evagrius' understanding of the therapeutic power of psalmody, particularly its efficacy with regards to the healing of *thumos*, in light of his regular use of medical imagery, theory, and the title 'Christ the physician'. Because of their significance as sources for Evagrius' spiritual doctrine, the use of these categories by Origen and the Cappadocian fathers is emphasized.

Keywords: Evagrius Ponticus, psalmody, spiritual remedy, Origen, Cappadocian fathers, Christ

Evagrius presents in *De oratione* 83 his belief that psalmody serves as a spiritual remedy, a means by which the passions are calmed and the body's disharmony (or intemperance) is rectified. As has been described, this represents at least in part Evagrius' appropriation of traditions concerning sacred music from both classical antiquity and Christian theology. The basis for Evagrius' faith in the efficacy of psalmody as a spiritual remedy is his conviction, which will be elaborated further in Chapter 6, that it is above all Christ who is encountered in the psalter. Christ, the creator and redeemer of the universe who is perceptible in the 'richly variegated' imagery of the psalms, is also the 'physician of souls' whose words and presence have the power to heal. In this chapter Evagrius' understanding of the therapeutic

power of psalmody, especially its efficacy in regard to the healing of *thumos*, will be studied in light of his regular use of medical imagery and theory, and in particular his use of the title 'Christ the physician'. Because of their significance as sources for Evagrius' spiritual doctrine, the use of these categories by Origen and the Cappadocian fathers will receive particular attention.

4.1 The Physician of Souls

By the end of the fourth century there existed a well-established tradition of illustrating Christian spiritual principles through analogies based on the theory and vocabulary of classical medicine.¹

¹ Owsei Temkin describes the development of this tradition in chapters 11-13 of *Hippocrates in a World of Pagans and Christians*, pp. 126-77. He concludes (p. 177): 'By making available a wide variety of medical analogues, Hippocratic medicine became a vital part of Christian theological exegesis and pastoral practice.'

Writing in the first years of the second century Ignatius of Antioch drew an analogy between the Eucharist and the healing drugs of the physician: it is 'the medicine of immortality (φάρμακον ἀθανασίας), an antidote so that we may never die'.²

² Ignatius of Antioch, *Letter to the Ephesians* 20.2: ὅς ἐστιν φάρμακον ἀθανασίας, ἀντίδοτος τοῦ μὴ ἀποθανεῖν.

Heresy, in contrast is 'a deadly

end p.104

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drug' (θανάσιμον φάρμακον).³

³ Ignatius of Antioch, *Letter to the Trallians* 6.2.

He also describes heresy as a kind of illness, employing the medical adjective δυσθεραπεύτους, 'hard to cure', to describe certain heretics. In elaborating this medical analogy he describes Christ as a physician, thereby creating a metaphor which enjoyed great popularity in subsequent centuries:

Εἰς ἰατρός ἐστιν, σαρκικός τε καὶ πνευματικός, γεννητὸς καὶ ἀγέννητος, ἐν σαρκὶ γενόμενος θεός, ἐν θανάτῳ ζωὴ ἀληθινή, καὶ ἐκ Μαρίας καὶ ἐκ θεοῦ, πρῶτον παθητὸς καὶ τότε ἀπαθής, Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς ὁ κύριος ἡμῶν.

⁴ Ignatius of Antioch, *Letter to the Ephesians* 7.2.

One physician there is, both fleshly and spiritual, begotten and unbegotten, God become flesh, true life in death, both from Mary and from God; first subject to suffering then not subject to suffering—Jesus Christ our Lord.

The notion of a 'spiritual physician' which Ignatius here employs was common in classical antiquity. Plato writes of the importance of the philosopher becoming a 'physician of souls', capable of understanding the

effect on the soul of different kinds of knowledge (μάθημα).⁵

⁵ In *Protagoras* Plato defines knowledge (μάθημα) as the soul's food (ψυχῇ τρέφεται), then raises the question whether either the purveyors of knowledge (οἱ τὰ μαθήματα πωλοῦντες) or their customers truly understand its effect on the soul. Alluding to Hippocratic emphasis on the central role of diet in health and disease, Plato recommends that anyone who buys of these vendors be a 'physician of the soul [. . .] having knowledge of good and evil' (ὡς γὰρ αὐτὸς ἰατρικὸς [. . .] ἐπιστήμων τούτων τί γαστὸν καὶ πονηρόν), Plato, *Protagoras*, 313c4-313e5. Whereas Plato intends this as a skill all should learn, Christian writers generally assign this role primarily to Christ, then secondarily to apostles and other spiritual teachers.

Christian teachers like Clement of Alexandria identify this physician with Christ; other patristic authors such as Origen echo Plato's hope that this skill will be exercised by many human beings.

In the Christian Alexandrian tradition the use of medical allegory,⁶

⁶ In this monograph no distinction will be made between allegory and typology (cf. Frye, *The Great Code*, p. 85) or between iconic and symbolic *mimesis* (cf. Young, *Biblical Exegesis*, pp. 161-85). Young follows Frye in distinguishing between typology, which 'retains the narrative and sequence' and allegory which 'translates narrative into propositions'; however, Young admits that this distinction cannot always be maintained, even when contrasting 'Alexandrian' with 'Antiochene' exegesis, since 'both sides equally turned out propositional translations' (*Biblical Exegesis*, pp. 162-3). Such distinctions do little to illuminate Evagrius' exegetical method, which will be discussed in Chapter 6, below.

particularly the image of 'Christ the physician' became very popular. Clement of Alexandria describes salvation as analogous to medical healing: Christians must cooperate with God just as patients who wish to be healed must cooperate with their physician.⁷

⁷ Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis* 7.7.48, 4, ed. Stählin, vol. iii, p. 36: 'Just as the physician provides health to those who work together with him towards health, in the same way God [provides] eternal salvation to those who work together with him towards knowledge and good deeds'

(ὡς δὲ ὁ ἰατρὸς ὑγίαν παρέχεται τοῖς συνεργούσι πρὸς ὑγίαν, οὕτως καὶ ὁ θεὸς τὴν αἰδίδιον σωτηρίαν τοῖς συνεργούσι πρὸς γνῶσιν τε καὶ εὐπραγίαν).

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Psalmody and Prayer in the Writings of Evagrius Ponticus

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pp. [106]-[110]

Clement presents Christian spiritual development as a two-staged process. First we must be healed from the 'wounds' (τραύματα) of the passions: 'of these wounds Jesus is the sole physician'.⁸

⁸ Clement of Alexandria, *Quis dives salvetur* 29, 3, ed. Stählin, vol. iii, p. 179:
τούτων δὲ τῶν τραυμάτων μόνος ἰατρὸς Ἰησοῦς.

The Word of God is 'the healer [. . .] of those passions of the soul which are contrary to nature [. . .] the sole sacred physician of human diseases and holy enchanter [-healer] of the soul's illness'⁹

⁹ Clement of Alexandria, *Paedagogus* 1.2.6, 1, SC 70, p. 118:

Ἔστιν οὖν ὁ παιδαγωγὸς ἡμῶν
λόγος διὰ παρανοήσεων θεραπευτικὸς τῶν παρὰ φύσιν τῆς ψυχῆς παθῶν. Κυρίως μὲν γὰρ
ἢ τῶν τοῦ σώματος νοσημάτων βοήθεια ἱατρικὴ καλεῖται, τέχνη ἀνθρωπίνῃ σοφίᾳ διδακτὴ.
Λόγος δὲ ὁ πατρικὸς μόνος ἐστὶν ἀνθρωπίνων ἰατρὸς ἀρρωστημάτων παιώνιος καὶ ἐπωδὸς
ἅγιος νοσοῦσης ψυχῆς

This healing is accomplished 'as if by soothing medications (ῥηνοισφαρμῆκοις) through [the Word's] beneficent commandments'. Only after this healing is accomplished is it possible to make progress in spiritual knowledge.¹⁰

¹⁰ Clement of Alexandria, *Paedagogus* 1.1.3, 1, SC 70, p. 112:.

4.1.1 Medical Imagery in Origen

For Origen, as for Clement, 'Jesus is the sole physician of souls and bodies'.¹¹

¹¹ Origen, *Fragmenta in Lucam* (TLG 2042.2), frag. 125.27-8:.

Origen's description of Jesus as 'healer' or 'physician' reflects a model of spiritual progress which, like Clement's, is characterized by the soul's progress from healing towards growth in spiritual knowledge:

Χριστιανὸς [. . .] καλεῖ, ἵν' αὐτῶν καταδήσῃ «τὰ τραύματα» τῷ λόγῳ
καὶ ἐπιχέῃ τῇ φλεγμαινούσῃ ἐν κακοῖς ψυχῇ τὰ ἀπὸ τοῦ λόγου φάρμακα,
ἀνάλογον οἶνῳ καὶ ἐλαίῳ καὶ μαλάγματι καὶ τοῖς λοιποῖς ἀπὸ ἱατρικῆς
ψυχῆς βοηθήμασιν [. . .] Ἐπέμφθη οὖν θεὸς λόγος καθὼ μὲν ἰατρὸς τοῖς
ἀμαρτωλοῖς, καθὼ δὲ διδάσκαλος θείων μυστηρίων τοῖς ἤδη καθαροῖς καὶ
μηκέτι ἀμαρτάνουσιν.

¹² Origen, *Contra Celsum*, 3.61-2, SC 136, p. 142. A similar text, which implies that Christ's role as physician pertains chiefly to the beginning stages of spiritual life, is found in Origen's *Commentary on John* 1.20.124: 'And blessed indeed are they who in petitioning the Son of God, have become the sort [of people] who do not need him as a physician healing the sick, nor as shepherd or savior; but rather as wisdom and word and righteousness: or any of those other [titles] by which the most perfect are able to apprehend his most beautiful [aspects],'.

end p.106

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The Christian [. . .] calls [sinners] in order to bind up their 'wounds' with the Word and apply to [their] soul, festering in vices, drugs [taken] from the Word, analogous to wine and oil and emollients and the rest of the soul's medicinal remedies [. . .] God the Word was indeed sent as a physician to sinners, but as a teacher of divine mysteries to those who are already pure and who no longer sin.

The 'soul's medicinal remedies' are provided by Christ the Word of God to whom Origen frequently applies the title, already known in pagan literature, of *ἱατρὸς ψυχῆς*, 'physician of the soul'.¹³

¹³ As described above, Plato in *Protagoras* (313c4-313e5) appears to have been the first ancient author to use this term, which is subsequently also found in the later Greek medical literature. Galen, in particular, was concerned to describe the diseases of the soul and their treatment (cf. *On the Doctrines of Hippocrates and Plato* esp. 5.2.2.34-43), and he uses the title 'physician of souls' in *On the Doctrines of Hippocrates and Plato* 5.2.23, line 4: . Origen elsewhere uses the title 'physician of the soul' (or 'of souls') in: *Commentary on Exodus* 10.27; *Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew* 13.5.5-6; *Commentary on the Gospel of John* 20.32.285.2.

This title is not, however, used exclusively of Christ: those who minister the healing word of God also share his title of spiritual healer, thus 'the prophets are also, in a sense, physicians of souls' (*ἱατροὺς ψυχῶν*), always spending their time with those who require treatment'.¹⁴

¹⁴ Origen, *In Jeremiam* (homilia 14) 1, GCS 6, p. 106: .

Elsewhere Origen not only designates Christ *ἱατρὸς*, 'physician', but *ἀρχιατρὸς*, 'master physician' (or 'court physician'), a title which referred in antiquity to an imperial medical official responsible for health care in a given area.¹⁵

¹⁵ Liddell and Scott, *Greek-English Lexicon*, p. 252. Temkin, *Hippocrates*, pp. 144, 216-20.

By this Origen means that Christ shares his healing authority with the apostles and their successors, teaching them to be, like him, 'physicians of souls':

Et ille quidem erat archiateros qui posset curare omnem languorem et omnem infirmitatem; discipuli vero ejus Petrus vel Paulus sed et prophetae medici sunt, et hi omnes qui post apostolos in Ecclesia positi sunt, quibusque curandorum vulnerum disciplina commissa est,

quos voluit Deus in Ecclesia sua esse medicos animarum.¹⁶

¹⁶ Origen, *Super psalmum trigesimum septimum*, homily 1, PG 12.1369.

And he [Christ] was the master physician who was able to cure every disease and every infirmity: and his disciples Peter and Paul, as well as the

end p.107

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prophets, are physicians; and indeed all those who after the apostles were appointed in the Church, those to whom the science of healing wounds was committed—these God wished to be physicians of souls in his Church.

Origen's use of medical terminology and imagery is not incidental: his soteriology relies more on therapeutic analogies than forensic ones. According to Origen, God acts as a wise physician by gradually restoring the health of the soul, 'health' understood as that union with God which was lost through the soul's fall from primordial union into diversity and matter. He explains in *De Principiis* 3.1 that all suffering in this life which can be attributed to God is remedial and ultimately therapeutic, rather than simply punitive. It is to the advantage of certain sinners that they should come only slowly to salvation, 'after experiencing many evils'

(μετὰ τὸ πειραθῆναι πολλῶν κακῶν).¹⁷

¹⁷ Origen, *De Principiis* 3.1.13, SC 268, p. 76.

Origen draws the analogy with medical practice to illustrate the principle that human suffering serves some (often hidden) therapeutic purpose:

ὥσπερ γάρ τινα καὶ ἰατροὶ δυνάμενοι τάχιον ἰάσασθαι, ὅταν ἐγκεκρυμμένον ἰὸν ὑπονοῶσιν ὑπάρχειν περὶ τὰ σώματα, τὸ ἐναντίον τῷ ἰάσασθαι ἐργάζονται, διὰ τὸ ἰᾶσθαι βούλεσθαι ἀσφαλέστερον τοῦτο ποιοῦντες, ἡγούμενοι κρεῖττον εἶναι πολλῷ χρόνῳ παρακατασχεῖν τινα ἐν τῷ φλεγμαίνειν καὶ κάμνειν ὑπὲρ τοῦ βεβαιότερον αὐτὸν τὴν υἰεῖαν ἀπολαβεῖν ἢ περ τάχιον μὲν ῥῶσαι δοκεῖν, ὕστερον δὲ ἀναδύναι καὶ πρόσκαιρον γενέσθαι τὴν ταχυτέραν ἰασιν·

18

¹⁸ Ibid., pp. 76-8.

For physicians too, although they are able to heal more quickly, whenever they suspect that there exists a hidden toxin in the body, act in the opposite way. This is because they desire a more definitive cure, considering it better to permit him to remain for a long time in his fever and affliction, so that he regains health more certainly; instead of apparently restoring him more quickly to strength but afterwards relapsing—the quicker cure [thus] proving only temporary.

Here Origen goes beyond the use of popular medical metaphors familiar to

everyone. When his predecessors employed such terms as ἰατρὸς, φάρμακον, and τραῦμα, they were drawing on a vocabulary which was as much the property of poets and historians as medical writers. But in this text Origen displays some real familiarity with ancient medical theory. A fundamental tenet of Hippocratic medicine is the doctrine of κρίσις, that is 'critical' days or intervals during which perilous but often subtle changes in the disease process

end p.108

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19
were thought to take place.

¹⁹ This doctrine was based in part on the theory of πέπαισις (variant: πέπαισμος), 'coction' or digestion (literally 'ripening') of ingested substances, which when incomplete or unsuccessful was believed to be responsible for many diseases. The successful calculation and prediction of critical days seems to have depended on the time thought to be required for πέπαισις as well as classical numerology, including musical theories of harmonic intervals: Langholf, *Medical Theories in Hippocrates*, pp. 79-103, esp. pp. 99-102.

It was believed that medical training enabled the physician to foretell the course of an illness through observation of successive κρίσεις; and on the basis of these predictions therapeutic interventions could be planned or abandoned. Thus a delay in treatment for the reason described by Origen accords well with Hippocratic theory.

From this illustration it is clear that for Origen the art of medicine belongs to *physiké*, the investigation of natural phenomena which enables the Christian contemplative to perceive the hidden purposes of God within created things. Origen continues his medical explanation of theodicy by observing that God, 'knowing the secrets of the human heart and foreknowing (προγινώσκων) the future', sometimes permits a hidden evil to remain within the soul. This is evidence of God's patient endurance (μακροθυμία) since God is able to 'extract the hidden evil by means of external circumstances', thus effecting a slower but more certain purification of the one who had carelessly received the 'seeds of sin' into himself.²⁰

²⁰ Origen, *De Principiis* 3.1.13, SC 268, p. 78:.

He concludes with a metaphor which accurately reflects the largely emetic and purgative pharmacology of his day: even the hardened sinner is eventually able to be renewed by 'vomiting out' the seeds of sin which God has drawn to the surface.²¹

²¹ Ibid.:.

In this conclusion Origen again displays his familiarity with Hippocratic theory and practice. His explanation of divine forbearance is based on the medical analogy of a hidden toxin which must be slowly 'extracted' before it can be expelled. What appears to be God's toleration of sin and evil is here portrayed as comprehensible in light of divine 'foreknowledge of future things' (προγινώσκων τὰ μέλλοντα): that is, God's knowledge of what is best

for sinners. Exactly the same words are used to describe the medical art of prognosis in the Hippocratic treatise *Prognostics*: the physician must both

end p.109

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foreknow future events (προγινώσκειν τὰ μέλλοντα)²²

²² Hippocrates, *Prognosticon* 1, line 9.

and use his foreknowledge to foretell (προλέγων) for the patient's benefit what the course of the disease will be.²³

²³ Ibid., line 2:.

Whether Origen here intends a deliberate allusion to the *Prognostics* is uncertain, since 'foreknowledge of future things' is not an exclusively medical phrase: it is used of prophecy and divination in both pagan and Christian religious texts. Elsewhere, however, Origen clearly displays familiarity with Hippocratic aphorisms. In *Homily 14 on Jeremiah* he says of physicians:

14.1. Οἱ ἰατροὶ τῶν σωμάτων παρὰ τοὺς κάμνοντας γινόμενοι καὶ αἰετῇ θεραπείᾳ τῶν καμνόντων ἑαυτοὺς ἐπιδιδόντες κατὰ τὸ βούλημα τῆς τέχνης τῆς ἱατρικῆς ὁρῶσι δεινὰ καὶ θιγγάνουσιν ἀηδῶν, «καὶ» ἐπ' ἁλλοτρίαις συμφοραῖς καρποῦνται ἰδίας λύπας, καὶ ἔστιν αἰεὶ ὁ βίος αὐτῶν ἐν περιστάσει.

24

²⁴ Origen, *In Jeremiam (homilia 14)* 1, GCS 6, p. 106.

14.1. Physicians of the body are found among the sick, constantly dedicating themselves to the cure of the sick according to the purpose of the medical art: *they see affliction and handle repugnant things, and from others' sufferings they reap their own sorrows*, and their life is always at the mercy of circumstances.

The phrase 'they see affliction and handle repugnant things, and from others' sufferings they reap their own sorrows' is taken from the Hippocratic treatise *On Breaths*. As an aphorism it was discussed and regularly employed by Galen, and probably due to Origen's influence it came to enjoy popularity among the Church fathers.²⁵

²⁵ Hippocrates, *De flatibus* 1.1, ed. Littré, p. 91 lines 5-7: 'No other Hippocratic dictum, not even the first Hippocratic aphorism, obtained such widespread attention throughout Antiquity as did the complaint that "the physician sees terrible things, touches what is loathsome, and from others' misfortunes harvests troubles of his own" [. . .] Sometimes quoted in full and sometimes only alluded to, [this] Hippocratic saying was accorded a prominent place by Christian authors' (Temkin, *Hippocrates*, p. 141).

Thus Origen displays in his writings familiarity with basic principles of Hippocratic medical theory as well as acquaintance with Hippocratic aphorisms on decorum and ethics.²⁶

²⁶ This does not necessarily imply an extensive knowledge on Origen's part of the often-enigmatic Hippocratic corpus: the passages Origen quotes and the concepts he

discusses were all extensively commented by Galen and other medical commentators.

end p.110

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Psalmody and Prayer in the Writings of Evagrius Ponticus

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pp. [111]-[115]

4.1.2 Medical Imagery in Athanasius and the Cappadocians

In comparison with his Alexandrian predecessors and his contemporary, Eusebius of Caesarea, Athanasius uses medical imagery relatively sparingly.²⁷

²⁷ Eusebius of Caesaria, Origen's biographer, uses Origen's appellation 'physician of souls' in: *Praeparatio evangelica* 7.12.9, 8.14.17, and 13.3.46; *Demonstratio evangelica* 1.6.31.5 and 4.13.4.6; *Commentarius in Isaiam* 1.11.18 and 2.40.30; *Vita Constantini* 3.59.3.2; *De laudibus Constantini* 11.5.10; *Commentaria in Psalmos* 23.120.42, 23.352.48, and 23.588.44. He also calls Christ 'our great physician' (ὁ μέγας ἡμῶν ἰατρός) and applies to Christ the aphorism from *De flatibus* quoted above: *Ecclesiastical History* 10.4.11, 10.4.12. Athanasius, in contrast, does not use the title 'physician of souls'. In addition to the texts from the *Life of Antony* discussed above, he uses medical analogies in *De Incarnatione* 44.2; *Contra gentes* 43.22; *Epistula ad episcopos Aegypti et Libyae* (PG 25.560.34); and *De Sententia Dionysii* 6.3; and he states that the Word acts 'as a physician' (ὡς ἰατρῷ) in the sermon *Omnia mihi tradita* (PG 25.212).

There are two texts in the *Life of Antony*, however, which present similarities to texts by Evagrius. In the first Antony explains that demons have no certain foreknowledge of future events:

33.2. καὶ μᾶλλον στοχασταί εἰσιν ἢ προγνώσται [. . .] 3. Καὶ γὰρ καὶ ἰατροὶ πείραν ἔχοντες τῶν νοσημάτων, ἐπειδὴν θεωρήσωσιν ἐν ἄλλοις τὴν αὐτὴν νόσον, πολλάκις στοχαζόμενοι ἀπὸ τῆς συνηθείας προλέγουσιν. 4. [. . .] καὶ οὐ διὰ τοῦτο ἐκ θείας ἐπιπνοίας αὐτοὺς ἂν τις εἴποι προλέγειν, ἀλλ' ἀπὸ τῆς πείρας καὶ τῆς συνηθείας.

28

²⁸ Athanasius, *Life of Antony* 33.2-4, SC 400, pp. 224-6.

33(2) [the demons] conjecture rather than foreknow [. . .] (3) For physicians too possessing experience of diseases from having observed the same illness in different [patients], often conjecturing from [their] practice, foretell what will happen. (4) [. . .] And no one would say because of this that it is by divine inspiration that they foretell, but rather from experience and practice.

The demons' seeming knowledge of future events is thus, like the prognostic skills of a physician, a consequence of natural observation. Later in the same work Athanasius uses the image of a physician to illustrate Antony's role as a spiritual teacher. After explaining that many soldiers and politically influential persons had renounced the world to become monks after speaking to

Antony, Athanasius concludes:

87.3. Καὶ ὁλως ὥσπερ ἰατρὸς ἦν δοθεὶς παρὰ τοῦ Θεοῦ τῇ Αἰγύπτῳ. Τίς γὰρ λυπούμενος ἀπήντα, καὶ οὐχ ὑπέστρεφε χαίρων; [. . .] 6. Τίς δὲ ἐν λογισμοῖς ἐνοχλούμενος ἤρχετο καὶ οὐκ ἐγαληνία τῇ διανοίᾳ;

29

²⁹ Ibid., 87.3-6, pp. 358-60.

end p.111

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87(3) And it was actually as if a physician had been given by God to Egypt. For who came to him sorrowing and did not return rejoicing? [. . .] (6) And who came troubled by [tempting] thoughts and was not calmed in mind?

Thus the notion of a spiritual physician, originally identified with Christ, then extended to include ministers of the word, comes to be applied to the monks, as well. Antony, the spiritual father of the Egyptian desert and archetype of monks, is here portrayed as healer of the malady of demonic temptation.

Like Origen, Gregory of Nyssa both uses medical analogies and displays some familiarity with Hippocratic theory. In his fourth sermon *On the Beatitudes* he explicates the text 'hunger and thirst for justice' through a discussion of the physiology of digestion, explaining why purgatives benefit those who suffer from 'stomach disorders and loss of appetite'.³⁰

³⁰ Gregory of Nyssa, *De beatitudinibus*, Or. 4, ed. Callahan, p. 109:.

Similarly, in his fourth sermon *On the Lord's Prayer* he quotes 'a medical expert's' definition of 'illness' as an 'imbalance in the due proportion of one of our internal elements'.³¹

³¹ Gregory of Nyssa, *De oratione dominica*, Or. 4, ed. Oehler, p. 266 (ed. Callahan, p. 44):.

Finally, in the same treatise he applies to Christ Origen's appellation 'physician of souls' to explain the healing power of the Lord's Prayer:

Ὁ τοίνυν ἰατρὸς ἀληθὴς τῶν τῆς ψυχῆς παθημάτων, ὁ διὰ τοὺς κακῶς ἔχοντας ἐν τῇ ζωῇ τῶν ἀνθρώπων γενόμενος, τοῖς ἐν τῇ προσευχῇ νοήμασι τὸ νοσοποιὸν αἷτιον ὑπεκλύων ἐπανάγει ἡμᾶς ἐπὶ τὴν νοητὴν υἰγίειαν.

32

³² Gregory of Nyssa, *De oratione dominica*, Or. 4, Oehler, p. 268 (Callahan, pp. 45-6).

The true physician of the soul's diseases—the one who, for the sake of those having illnesses took part in the life of men—[by] weakening the cause of disease through the thoughts contained in the prayer, restores us to spiritual health.

Gregory Nazianzen's acquaintance with the terminology and precepts of

medicine may stem in part from the experiences of his brother, Caesarius, who studied medicine in Alexandria and became a successful physician.³³

³³ In *Oration 7*, his brother's funeral oration, Gregory Nazianzen recounts Caesarius' education and medical service.

Based, perhaps, on his brother's example he praises physicians as models of virtue, quoting the Hippocratic aphorism from *On Breaths* cited above:

end p.112

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27. Εἴτα οἱ μὲν τῶν σωμάτων θεραπευταὶ πόνοὺς τε καὶ ἀγρυπνίας καὶ φροντίδας, «ἃς ἴσμεν, ἔξουσι καὶ τὸ ἐπ' ἀλλοτρίαις συμφοραῖς ἰδίας καρποῦσθαι λύπας,» ὥς ἔφη τις τῶν παρ' ἐκείνοις σοφῶν.

³⁴

³⁴ Gregory Nazianzen, *Oration 2.27*, SC 247, p. 124 (quotation marks added).

27. We know of the toil, sleeplessness, and worries endured by those who treat the body; and it is theirs 'to harvest grief for themselves from others' misfortunes', as one of their sages has said.

References to physicians and the use of medical allegory, such as the designation of tears, prayers, and the virtues as medicinal remedies (φάρμακα), are common in Gregory's orations.³⁵

³⁵ Gregory Nazianzen, *Carmina de se ipso*, PG 37.940, 37.1202, 37.1319.

Although he does not use the title 'physician of souls', he does speak of 'the [medicinal] cure of souls' (τὴν τῶν ψυχῶν ἰατρείαν)³⁶

³⁶ Gregory Nazianzen, *Oration 2.16*, SC 247, p. 110. Also *Oration 32.2*, SC 250, p. 86:.

and in particular of the soul's '[medicinal] cure from passion' (ἰατρεία τοῦ πάθους).³⁷

³⁷ Gregory Nazianzen, *Oration 8*, PG 35.809.

Like his brother, Gregory of Nyssa, Basil regularly makes use of medical analogies in his theological writings. He often refers to Christ as both 'physician of souls'³⁸

³⁸: Basil of Caesarea, *Homilia in illud: Attende tibi ipsi*, ed. Rudberg, pp. 24, 28; *Homiliae super Psalmos*, PG 29.433.

and 'great physician of souls'.³⁹

³⁹: Basil of Caesarea, *Letter 46.6*; *Homilia in divites 1.36*.

Basil was one of the first Christian authors to discuss in detail the extent to which ascetics may licitly avail themselves of medical remedies and the services of physicians. In the course of discussing this question (which he answers in the affirmative) he states that:

ἡ ἱατρικὴ τέχνη εἰς τύπον τῆς κατὰ ψυχὴν θεραπείας τὴν ἀπόθεσιν τοῦ περισσοῦ, καὶ τὴν τοῦ λείποντος πρόσθεσιν ὑποτιθεμένη ὑπὸ τοῦ πᾶσαν ἡμῖν τὴν ζωὴν οἰκονομοῦντος Θεοῦ συγκεχώρηται.

40

⁴⁰ Basil of Caesarea, *Asceticon magnum* (reg. fus.) 55, PG 31.1044.

the art of medicine [has been granted us] as a pattern for the healing of the soul, to guide us in the removal of excess and in the augmentation of what is deficient: it has been granted us by the God who directs our whole life.

Implicit in this text is a traditional definition of medicine as an art concerned with the restoration of wholesome balance through 'removal of excess' and 'augmentation of what is deficient'. This insight reflects Basil's study of classical medical theory at Athens, a study he pursued not in order to become a physician, but so as to

end p.113

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understand the underlying principles and philosophy of medicine.⁴¹

⁴¹ Gregory Nazianzen mentions Basil's medical study in his funeral oration for Basil, *Oration 43 (Funeris oratio in laudem Basilii Magni)*, SC 384, p. 176:.

Like his brother, Gregory of Nyssa, he frequently illustrates his theological points with examples and analogies drawn from human physiology, as, for example, the distressing physical changes caused by anger⁴²

⁴² Basil of Caesarea, *Homilia adversus eos qui irascuntur*, PG 31.356: 'In the vengeful blood boils around the heart [. . .] his face is livid and suffused with blood'.

and that reverence for the creator which the intricacies of human anatomy⁴³ ought to inspire.

⁴³ Human posture and organs of sense, as well as the physiology of circulation and digestion, invite such admiration in *Homilia in illud: Attende tibi ipsi* 36.8-37.16.

As a bishop Basil founded numerous hospitals,⁴⁴

⁴⁴ Basil describes them as lodgings for strangers, visitors, and the sick in *Letter 94.1.36-8*:. Gregory Nazianzen describes them principally as leprosaria in his funeral oration for Basil, *Oration 43.63.6-7*.

which may have been staffed by monks who had studied medicine.⁴⁵

⁴⁵ In *Letter 94.1.39-41* Basil uses the term ἰατροῦντας ('those who give medical care') rather than ἰατροὶ ('physicians') to describe those who treated the sick in his institutions. Temkin believes this suggests that care in his hospitals was provided by 'monks who possessed medical knowledge such as he [Basil] had acquired as a student in Athens', Temkin, *Hippocrates*, p. 163.

But for Basil the relief of physical suffering was only one of four reasons why Christians should respect the art of medicine. A second reason is that medical precepts concerning the need for moderation, especially in regard to diet, are 'no small aid to self-restraint', and thus encourage certain aspects

of Christian asceticism.⁴⁶

⁴⁶ Basil of Caesarea, *Asceticon magnum* (reg. fus.) 55, PG 31.1052: 'This, however, is true only to a very limited extent. Such practices as severe fasting, keeping vigil, and the repudiation of bathing extolled in the *Apophthegmata* and the *Life of Antony*, were completely inimical to Hippocratic prescriptions. Temkin observes: 'Antony's life broke all the rules of Hippocratic hygiene,' *Hippocrates*, p. 154.

A third reason, described above, consists in the fact that consideration of the wonders of human anatomy and physiology can encourage reverence for the creator. And finally, medicine, for Basil, represents a symbol or model for the care and cure of the soul, a point he makes repeatedly in his *Longer Rule*.⁴⁷

⁴⁷ In *Asceticon magnum* (reg. fus.) 55 Basil describes the art of medicine as a 'pattern' (τύπος) both of the soul's healing (θεραπεία, used twice: PG 31.1044 and 31.1048) and of the care of the soul (ἐπιμέλεια, used four times: PG 31.1045, twice; PG 31.1049 and 31.1052).

end p.114

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4.1.3 Evagrius' Use of Medical Language and Theory

Like his predecessors and teachers, Evagrius frequently employs medical imagery to describe the spiritual life. His metaphors accurately reflect the range of medical therapy available in his day. Ascetical practices are φάρμακα,

⁴⁸
ρμακα,

⁴⁸ Evagrius, *Praktikos* 38, SC 171 p. 586: 'thumos requires more remedies than desire' (πλειόνων δὲ παρά τὴν ἐπιθυμίαν ὁ θυμὸς δεῖται φαρμάκων).

medicinal remedies by which Christ, 'the physician of souls',⁴⁹

⁴⁹ Christ is the 'physician of souls' (ἰατρός τῶν ψυχῶν) in scholion 2 on *Psalm* 102: 3(2); scholion 6 on *Psalm* 144: 15(2); scholion 2 on *Psalm* 145: 7(3); *Peri Logismon* 3 and 10; *Letter* 42.1; 51.2; 52.4; 55.3; 57.3). Elsewhere as 'physician': *Kephalaia Gnostica* VI.20; scholion 9 on *Psalm* 106: 20(1); *Epistula Fidei* 5.

⁵⁰
treats, purges, and shrivels the passions.

⁵⁰ Evagrius, *Peri Logismon* 3, SC 438, pp. 160-2: 'But observe how the Physician of souls here through almsgiving heals our irascibility, through prayer purges the intellect, and through fasting causes desire to atrophy'

(Ἀλλὰ προσεκτέον ἐνταῦθα τῷ ἰατρῷ τῶν ψυχῶν, πῶς διὰ μὲν τῆς ἐλεημοσύνης, τὸν θυμὸν θεραπεύει, διὰ δὲ τῆς προσευχῆς τὸν νοῦν καθαρίζει, καὶ πάλιν διὰ τῆς νηστείας τὴν ἐπιθυμίαν καταμαραίνει)

God employs a wide range of remedies, including everything from diet⁵¹

⁵¹ In commenting on *Psalm* 144: 15, and you give them their food in due season, Evagrius writes: 'As physician of souls the Christ gives them food in due season, scholion 6 on *Psalm* 144: 15(2) (cf. ed. Pitra, 144: 15(1), vol. iii, p. 356).

(the mainstay of the Hippocratic physician) to the much more painful remedy of seeming abandonment when the disease is chronic or intractable (δυσάστος).⁵²

⁵² Evagrius explains that God sometimes heals the intractable love of pleasure by permitting the soul to experience suffering, thus causing it to feel abandoned. *Peri Logismon* 10, SC 438, p. 186: 'But this love—or better [said] this intractable gangrene—the physician of souls heals through abandonment'. Evagrius' understanding of abandonment as an expression of divine providence is discussed below in Chapter 6.3.2.

Thus Christ heals by acting in accordance with the *ἡνίκοις*, the 'title' or 'intention' of a physician;⁵³

⁵³ Evagrius, scholion 9 on *Psalms* 106: 20(1) (cf. *Pitra* 106: 20, vol. 3, p. 217): '*He sent forth his word and healed them*. 9. The Word healed them in accordance with the design of the physician,'.

and the wise monastic superior should imitate Christ by being both a 'commander in battle' and a 'physician of the passions'.⁵⁴

⁵⁴ Evagrius, *De magistris et discipulis* 3, ed. Van den Veld, p. 76:.

As has been described, this kind of imagery is common in the writings of Christian authors influenced by Origen, most notably the Cappadocians. Evagrius, however, uses medical illustrations and vocabulary more extensively than his predecessors. He was the first writer to act on a suggestion found in the second book of

end p.115

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Psalmody and Prayer in the Writings of Evagrius Ponticus

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Origen's *De Principiis*. Origen first notes that God, the physician of our souls, sometimes uses painful and even agonizing remedies, like those of an earthly physician, in order to wash away the vices engendered by our sins.⁵⁵

⁵⁵ Origen, *De Principiis* 2.10.6, SC 252, p. 386, lines 195-7: 'medicum nostrum deum uolentem diluere uitia animarum nostrarum, quae ex peccatorum et scelerum diuersitate collegerant, uti huiusmodi poenalibus curis'.

He then notes in passing that it would be valuable for someone 'with the leisure to do so' to make a list of the illnesses with which malefactors are threatened in the Bible, in order to show that these refer allegorically either to the soul's vices or to the suffering it is forced to endure.⁵⁶

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 388, lines 205-10: 'Si qui ergo ex otio de omni scriptura congreget omnes languorum commemorationes, quae in comminatione peccatoribus uelut corporearum aegritudinum appellationibus memorantur, inueniet quod animarum uel uitia uel supplicia per haec figuraliter indicentur.'

Origen specifically mentions afflictions threatened in the book of Deuteronomy, and in the following chapter he alludes to similar passages in Leviticus:

(2.10.6) [. . .] Denique in Deuteronomio sermo diuinus peccatoribus comminatur quod febribus et frigore et aurugine puniantur, et oculorum uacillationibus et mentis alienatione et paraplexia et caecitate ac debilitate renium cruciandi sint [. . .] (2.11.5) quae sit quoque ratio leprae purgationis et leprae diuersae, quae etiam purificatio sit eorum, qui seminis profluuium patiuntur, aduertet;⁵⁷

⁵⁷ Ibid., 2.10.6, p. 388, lines 200-5; 2.11.5, p. 404, lines 160-4.

(2.10.6) [. . .] and thus in Deuteronomy the divine word threatens that sinners are to be punished with 'fevers, and chills and pallor', and afflicted with 'untrustworthy eyes, insanity, paralysis, blindness and weakness of the kidneys' (cf. Deut 28: 22, 28, 29) [. . .] (2.11.5) [One should understand] the [allegorical] meaning of the cleansing from leprosy, of the different kinds of leprosy (Lev. 13-14), and of the purification of those who suffer a seminal emission (Lev. 15: 13).

In his *Definitiones passionum animae rationalis*, also known as the *Thirty-Three Chapters*, Evagrius lists sixteen biblical afflictions which he allegorically interprets as referring to spiritual vices. Fourteen are taken from Deuteronomy and Leviticus, one is from Isaiah, and the last comes from Luke. The illnesses are: jaundice (ἰκτερος, Lev. 26: 16); convulsive

back-spasm (ὀπισθόσπασμος, Deut. 32: 24); gangrene (σφακελλισμός, Lev. 26: 16; Deut. 28: 32); blindness (τυφλότης, Lev. 21: 18; 26: 16); paralysis (παράλυσις, Lev. 21: 18); urethral discharge (γόνυρροια, Lev. 15: 4-33);

⁵⁸
menstruation

⁵⁸ Possibly 'vaginal discharge' or, more generally, 'flux'. The use of ἀποκόθις in the Septuagint is obscure, as noted in Liddell and Scott, *Greek-English Lexicon*, pp. 200-1 and Lampe, *Patristic Greek Lexicon*, p. 193. It is specifically associated with the pollution incurred through intimacy with a menstruating woman in Leviticus 15: 33 and 20: 18, hence the translation here.

(ἀποκόθις, Lev. 15: 33;

end p.116

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20: 18); leprosy (λεῖπρα, Lev. 13: 8-37; 14: 3-57); dementia (ἔκστασις, Deut. 28: 28); crushed testicles (θλάσις, Lev. 22: 24; Deut. 23: 1-2); nasal deformity (κολοβωσις, Lev. 21: 18); mutilation of the ears (ωτίσμησις, Lev. 21: 18); blotches (ἐφελίς [of the eyes], Lev. 21: 20); dumbness (μογιλαλία, Isa. 35: 6); lameness (χωλότης, Lev. 21: 18); and dropsy (edema or congestive heart failure, ὕδρωψ, Luke 14: 2).

Such a catalogue of diseases drawn from different parts of the scriptures and including rather obscure maladies is characteristic of Evagrius, but uncommon among other Christian spiritual authors. In patristic sources biblical illnesses are generally discussed in the course of commentaries on texts in which the diseases happen to be mentioned.⁵⁹

⁵⁹ Origen in *Homily 4.6 on Exodus* interprets the sixth plague of boils as an allegory of insidious and inflamed malice, while 'fever' represents madness and 'the insanity of hatred'.

Evagrius, however, lists in his *Definitiones* illnesses which are hardly ever discussed by his Alexandrian or Cappadocian precursors,⁶⁰

⁶⁰ θλάσις is found in Galen, Pseudo-Galen, Oribasius, and other medical writers; however, among Christian spiritual authors prior to Evagrius it is used only by Didymus the Blind in his Commentary on Psalm 34.4, not in the medical, but rather in the military sense of crushing or smashing. Similarly, ἐφελίς, common in Galen, Pseudo-Galen, Hippocrates, Dioscorides Pedianus, and others, is found among early Christian authors only in a work of uncertain date, spuriously attributed to Gregory of Nyssa: *De creatione hominis sermo primus* 24.9.

despite their frequent use of medical imagery and metaphor. By following Origen's suggestion and assembling a list of afflictions from different parts of the scriptures Evagrius demonstrates both an interest in obscure illnesses and a conviction that they can be perceived as symbols of deeper and more dangerous spiritual illnesses.

Evagrius was able to find allusions to spiritual growth or decline not only in biblical descriptions of diseases, but in the varied onomastica (lists of natural phenomena) common in the wisdom literature.⁶¹

⁶¹ For Evagrius ants, badgers, grasshoppers, and lizards (scholia. 1-4 *on Proverbs* 30: 24-8), as well as grass (scholion 341 *on Proverbs* 27: 25) and crops (scholion 338 *on Proverbs* 27: 18) symbolize different aspects of the soul's development or the deeper mysteries of creation.

In his allegorical lists of spiritual defects and accomplishments one senses Evagrius' overriding desire to classify and bring order to all aspects of spiritual life and progress. In his desire to discover and explicate an ordered system lying behind seemingly random lists of natural phenomena Evagrius resembles Galen, the physician-philosopher who sought to bring order to the disparate

end p.117

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(and sometimes contradictory) texts of the Hippocratic corpus and to integrate Platonism with Hippocratic medicine.

Evagrius' desire to order and explain the spiritual life is evident in his use of different systems to classify the passions. Of these, his classification based on the eight tempting thoughts is the most familiar and provides the structure of the *Antirrhētikos*, *De octo spiritibus malitiae*, and much of the *Praktikos*; however, it is not the only system Evagrius employs, nor is it fully comprehensive. Absent from it are, for example, 'self-love (φιλαυτία), the

first among all the [tempting] thoughts',⁶²

⁶² Evagrius, *Skemmata* 41, ed. Muijldermans, pp. 37-68.

and the vices of wandering or deception (πλάνος)⁶³

⁶³ The hermits' temptation to 'wander' (πλανῶ) in search of edifying conversation ultimately results, according to Evagrius, in forgetfulness of the bases of monastic life. *Peri Logismon* 9, SC 438, p. 180: 'There is a demon known as the one who leads astray, who especially at dawn presents [himself] to the brothers, and leads the *nous* around from city to city, from village to village, from house to house, pretending at first to simply carry on [holy] conversation; [but] then recognizing those it meets and talking at greater length: and in time it happens that, little by little it incurs forgetfulness of the knowledge of God, of virtue, and of its calling'

(Ἔστι δαίμων, πλάνος λεγόμενος καὶ ὑπὸ τὴν ἑω μάλιστα τοῖς ἀδελφοῖς παριστάμενος, ὅστις περιάγει τοῦ τὸν νοῦν ἀπὸ πόλεως εἰς πόλιν καὶ ἀπὸ κώμης εἰς κώμην καὶ ἀπὸ οἰκίας εἰς οἰκίαν, ψιλὰς δῆθεν τὰς συντυχίας ποιούμενον καὶ γνωρίμοις τισὶ τυγχάνοντα, καὶ λαλοῦντα μακρότερα καὶ τὴν οἰκίαν πρὸς τοὺς ἀπαντῶντας κατάστασιν διαφθείροντα καὶ μακρὰν γινόμενον, κατ' ὀλίγον τῆς γνώσεως τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ τῆς ἀρετῆς καὶ τοῦ ἐπαγγέλματος λήθην λαμβάνοντα)

and insensitivity (ἄναισθησία),⁶⁴

⁶⁴ Also called 'hard-heartedness': described by Evagrius as a consequence of vainglory, characterized by increasing cynicism towards matters pertaining to salvation, this vice is healed by inward-directed compunction (κατάνυξις) for one's own sins and outward-directed compassion (συμπάθεια) for those who suffer, *Peri Logismon* 11, SC 438, pp. 188-92.

which figure prominently in *Peri Logismon*. Other schemata employed by Evagrius include classification of the passions or *logismoι* according to their origin in different parts of the soul or organs of the body;⁶⁵

⁶⁵ Evagrius' distinction between passions of the body and those of the soul is the subject of chapters 35 and 36 of the *Praktikos*. As Guillaumont observes in his notes to *Praktikos* 35 (SC 171, p. 580) this differentiation is found also in Evagrius' *Tractatus ad Eulogium* 23, and is taken from Aristotle's distinction between passions of the body (gluttony and lust) and of the soul (anger) in *Nicomachean Ethics* 10.2, 1173^b7-9.

divisions into primary passions which necessarily precede secondary or consequent ones; and distinction among the *logismoi* according to various characteristics, such as oppressiveness, swiftness, and duration.

These different methods of classifying the passions reflect two underlying approaches to the spiritual life found throughout Evagrius' works. On the one hand he attempts to adapt and employ schemata borrowed from classical antiquity, such as Plato's model of the tripartite soul⁶⁶

⁶⁶ Plato, *Republic* 4. 440-4; *Phaedrus* 246-8; *Timaeus* 69-73.

and the definition of virtues and vices

end p.118

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found in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*. But Evagrius is also an original thinker who tries to incorporate into these schemata his own observations and those of his monastic contemporaries. Thus one finds in his writings both passages in which he acknowledges and quotes his teachers, and other texts in which he emphasizes his own observations and experiences. As Guillaumont has noted, Evagrius often employs in these texts forms of the verbs τηρέω and παρατηρέω, 'to observe or watch closely'.⁶⁷

⁶⁷ Evagrius, *Praktikos*, SC 171, pp. 614 and 616n.

Thus in chapter 51 of the *Praktikos* he writes that the names of the sharpest and swiftest demons can be discovered 'through observation' (παρατηρήσας); and in chapter 57 he writes that one will be more aware of demonic assaults through closely observing (τηρώων) the soul's natural state of peace. In *Peri Logismon* he similarly states that he has learned to distinguish between demonic, human, and angelic thoughts 'with long observation' (μετὰ πολλῆς παρατηρήσεως), and that the ability of the demons to induce sleep is something he has 'often observed' (παρατηρήσας πολλάκις).⁶⁸

⁶⁸ Evagrius, *Peri Logismon*, chs. 8, 33, and 34, SC 438, pp. 176, 266, and 270.

Evagrius' emphasis on empirical observation provides another point of similarity with Galen, who often countered his opponents' theoretical assertions with his own observations based on dissection and vivisection.⁶⁹

⁶⁹ In *On the Natural Faculties* 1, Galen ridicules those who misunderstand the functions of the kidneys and ureters; and he describes a simple animal vivisection which will prove how urine is transported into the bladder.

In his introduction to rival schools of medical philosophy Galen describes the empiricists, who attempted to practise medicine without preconceived

theories, relying solely on experience and observable phenomena. These empiricists, Galen notes, are commonly called 'observationists' (τηρητικὰ) and are known for their reliance on observation and memory.⁷⁰

⁷⁰ Galen, *De sectis ad eos qui introducuntur*, ed. Marquardt *et al.*, p. 2: 'And corresponding to the schools, they call the men "empiricists", "observationists", and "those who [rely on] memory of phenomena"—[those] who follow empirical [experience]'

(καὶ τοὺς ἄνδρας ὁμοίως ταῖς αἰρέσεσιν ἔθεντο ἐμπειρικοὺς μὲν καὶ τηρητικοὺς καὶ μνημονευτικοὺς τῶν φαινομένων, ὅσοι τὴν ἐμπειρίαν εἴλοντο)

Galen is sympathetic to the empiricists, although he refers to himself as an eclectic;⁷¹

⁷¹ Galen, *De libris propriis* Bk. 1, ed. Marquardt *et al.*, p. 95; *De dignoscendis pulsibus* 4.1.1, ed. Kühn, pp. 28ff.

and he recommends that the best physician should make use of both theoretical and empirical knowledge in treating illness.⁷²

⁷² Galen *De Methodo Medendi* 1.4, ed. Kühn, p. 31; 2.7, p. 127; 3.1, p. 159; 4.3, p. 246.

This is exactly what Evagrius does. Not only does he record his own

end p.119

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observations for the benefit of his readers, he also insists that each monk similarly become a keen observer of his own inner life, noting carefully the different aspects to his own inner struggle. Spiritual progress is only possible when one begins systematically to note and interpret the inner meaning of the spiritual conflict taking place within the depths of the soul. The inner self then becomes an object of both study and contemplation:

50. Εἴ τις βούλοιο τῶν μοναχῶν ἀγρίων πειραθῆναι δαιμόνων καὶ τῆς αὐτῶν τέχνης ἔξιν λαβεῖν, τηρείτω τοὺς λογισμοὺς, καὶ τὰς ἐπιτάσεις σημειούσθω τούτων, καὶ τὰς ἀνέσεις, καὶ τὰς μετεμπλοκάς, καὶ τοὺς χρόνους, καὶ τίνες τῶν δαιμόνων οἱ τοῦτο ποιοῦντες, καὶ ποῖος ποίῳ δαίμονι ἀκολουθεῖ, καὶ τίς τίνι οὐχ ἔπεται· καὶ ζητεῖτω παρὰ Χριστοῦ τούτων τοὺς λόγους. Πάνυ γὰρ χαλεπαίνουσιν ἐπὶ τοῖς γνωστικώτερον τὴν πρακτικὴν μετιούσι, βουλόμενοι κατατοξεύειν ἐν σκοτομήνῃ τοὺς εὐθεῖς τῇ καρδίᾳ.

73

⁷³ Evagrius, *Praktikos* 50, SC 171, pp. 614-16.

50. If any monk wishes to experience the savage demons and to become acquainted with their art, he should observe his [tempting] thoughts and note [down] their intensification and diminution, and their interconnectedness, and their timing, and which demons produce what, and which demon comes after another, and which does not follow after which; and he should seek from Christ the inner meanings of these things. They dislike those who approach the ascetic life with more knowledge, for they wish to shoot [arrows] in darkness at the

upright of heart (Ps. 10: 2).

This desire to combine inherited schemata with his own empirical observations is evident in Evagrius' frequent attempts to provide physiological explanations of spiritual phenomena. In doing this Evagrius follows a well-established tradition, not of Christian theology, but of medical philosophy. Plato had repeatedly stressed the reciprocal effects of the body and the soul on one another,⁷⁴

⁷⁴ On the need for healing of the body to begin with healing of the soul: *Charmides* 156b-157c. On diseases of the soul which have their origin in the body: *Timaeus* 86b-87c.

and this subsequently became an axiom of Greek medical philosophy, especially as articulated by Galen, who was particularly concerned to demonstrate a different anatomical location for each division of Plato's tripartite soul.⁷⁵

⁷⁵ This is a central goal of Galen's *De placitis Hippocratis et Platonis*, in which he locates the *epithumetikon* in the liver, the *thumikon* in the heart, and the *logistikon* in the brain.

Evagrius displays a similar interest in anatomical sites and physiological processes, especially those associated with demonic temptation and divine visitation.

Evagrius believed that demons act principally on the bodies of human beings and that the demonic nature is a sort of freezing

end p.120

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Psalmody and Prayer in the Writings of Evagrius Ponticus

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pp. [121]-[125]

rage.⁷⁶

⁷⁶ Evagrius, scholion 60 on *Proverbs* 5: 9, SC 340, p. 150: 'By this [text] we know that the irascible part predominates in demons, because it is said: "Their anger is without pity" and "their fierce anger" (Prov. 27: 4)'

(Ἐντεῦθεν γινώσκουμεν ὅτι τὸ θυμικὸν μέρος ἐπικρατεῖ ἐν τοῖς δαίμοσιν· ἀνελετήμων γὰρ θυμὸς, φησὶν, καὶ ὀξεῖα ὀργή·.)

Having fallen farthest from primordial union with God, demons are dark, heavy, and angry, made of *thumos* and cold air.⁷⁷

⁷⁷ Evagrius, *Kephalaia Gnostica* 1.68.

He believed that through physical contact with their own cold bodies the demons can cool the eyes and heads of their victims in order to force monks to sleep when they ought to be praying.⁷⁸

⁷⁸ Evagrius, *Peri Logismon* 33, SC 400, pp. 266-8; *Kephalaia Gnostica* VI.25, ed. Guillaumont, p. 227.

Even when the demons seem to act directly on the soul by affecting the thoughts or feelings of human beings, Evagrius was convinced that their effects can be explained physiologically. He writes that by directly manipulating the brain and the cerebral veins⁷⁹

⁷⁹ Evagrius, *De oratione* 73, ed. Tugwell, p. 14 (cf. PG 79.1181): 'through the demon's touch of an area of the brain, causing pulsation in the veins' (ὑπὸ τοῦ δαίμονος τοῦ ἀπτομένου τοῦ κατὰ τὸν ἐγκέφαλον τόπου ἐν ταῖς φλεψὶ πάλλοντος).

the demons sometimes 'change the light which surrounds the *nous*' (τὸ περὶ τὸν νοῦν φῶς τρέπειν)⁸⁰ of those who pray in order to trick the devout into believing that they are seeing God.

⁸⁰ Evagrius, *De oratione* 74, ed. Tugwell, p. 14 (= PG 79.1181).

Demons cannot read the innermost thoughts of their victims; but they have the power to set the memory in motion (τὴν μνήμην κινῆσαι) and to form 'strange fantasies' in the *nous* by 'striking out against the body's temperament' (τὴν κράσιν τοῦ σώματος ἐκβιάζεται).⁸¹

⁸¹ Evagrius, *De oratione* 69, ed. Tugwell, p. 13 (= PG 79.1181).

The maintenance of a balanced temperament or 'inner harmony' is thus critical in Evagrius' understanding of spiritual life, as is the restoration of harmony once the temperament has been disturbed. As will be described, Evagrius believed that psalmody has the power to change the *κράσις* and restore it when disturbed.

Thus the demons act indirectly on the soul, disturbing the bodies and brains of their victims in order to produce images which inflame the passions and lead the soul into error. In contrast to the demons, God has direct access to the *nous*: 'He alone knows our *nous*-the God who made us; and he has no need of signs to know what is hidden in our hearts.'⁸²

⁸² Evagrius, *Praktikos* 47, SC 171, p. 606:.

God is able directly to affect the soul and its temperament:

end p.121

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64. Οἱ μὲν λοιποὶ διὰ τῆς ἀλλοιώσεως τοῦ σώματος ἐμποιοῦσι τῷ νῷ λογισμοὺς ἢ νοήματα ἢ θεωρήματα. Ὁ δὲ γε θεὸς τοῦναντίον δρᾷ· αὐτῷ τῷ νῷ ἐπιβαίνων, ἐντίθησιν αὐτῷ γνώσιν ὧν βούλεται, καὶ διὰ τοῦ νοῦ τὴν ἀκρασίαν τοῦ σώματος κατευνάζει.

⁸³

⁸³ Evagrius, *De oratione* 64, ed. Tugwell, p. 13 (cf. PG 79.1180).

64. Now others produce thoughts or ideas and contemplations in the *nous* through changes in the body. God, however, does the opposite: he mounts the intellect itself, inspiring it with knowledge as he wills and by means of the intellect calms the body's disharmony.

Although Evagrius was familiar with and very interested in medical theory, he harboured no illusions concerning the physiological consequences of monastic asceticism; indeed, he knew of them from experience. In his latter years he suffered intense physical pain from 'the stone',⁸⁴

⁸⁴ This detail is mentioned in the Coptic version of Palladius' *Lausiac History*, but not in the Greek text: Butler, *Lausiac History*, p. 143.

probably bladder or kidney stones (or both) worsened by the dehydration he so prized and recommended to others.⁸⁵

⁸⁵ In the *Praktikos* Evagrius cites an anonymous desert father who recommends a 'dry and regular diet' (ξηροτέραν καὶ μὴ ὑγρὰ μάλον διαίταν) as a means of obtaining *apatheia* (ch. 91, SC 171, p. 692). Evagrius is himself quoted in the anonymous *Historia monachorum in Aegypto* as urging his hearers not to satisfy themselves with water, explaining that the demons gather in well-irrigated places *Historia monachorum in Aegypto* 20.80.

Peter Brown has characterized the monastic ascesis of the Egyptian desert as an attempt to remake the body:

We must remember that the body-image which the ascetics brought with them into the desert gave considerable cognitive and emotional support to their hope for change through self-mortification [. . .] In reducing the intake to which it had become accustomed, the ascetic slowly remade his body. He turned it into an exactly calibrated instrument. Its drastic physical changes, after years of ascetic discipline, registered with satisfying precision the essential preliminary

stages of the long return of the human person, body and soul together, to an original, natural and uncorrupted state.⁸⁶

⁸⁶ Brown, *The Body and Society*, p. 223.

Evagrius, however, does not seem to have believed that the changes in the body caused by rigorous asceticism can be regarded as anything but destructive. Indeed, very early in the *Praktikos* he warns the spiritual beginner of a common demonic snare, consisting of close attention to the physical results of asceticism:

end p.122

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7. Ὁ μὲν τῆς γαστριμαργίας ἔκπτωσιν ταχεῖαν τῷ μοναχῷ τῆς ἀσκήσεως ὑποβάλλει· στόμαχον καὶ ἥπαρ καὶ σπλήνα καὶ ὕδρωπα διαγράφων, καὶ νόσον μακράν, καὶ σπάνιν τῶν ἐπιτηδείων, καὶ ἱατρῶν ἀπορίαν. Φέρει δὲ αὐτὸν πολλάκις καὶ εἰς μνήμην ἀδελφῶν τινῶν τούτοις περιπεσόντων τοῖς πάθεσιν. Ἔστι δὲ ὅτε καὶ αὐτοὺς ἐκείνους τοὺς πεπονθότας παραβάλλειν ἀναπείθει τοῖς ἐγκρατευομένοις, καὶ τὰς ἑαυτῶν ἐκδιηγείσθαι συμφοράς, καὶ ὥς ἐκ τῆς ἀσκήσεως τοιοῦτοι γεγόνασιν.

87

⁸⁷ Evagrius, *Praktikos* 7, SC 171, pp. 508-10.

7. The [tempting-thought] of gluttony suggests to the monk the quick abandonment of his asceticism. The stomach, liver, spleen, and [resultant] dropsy are depicted, along with long sickness, lack of necessities, and unavailability of physicians.

It often leads him to recall those of the brethren who have suffered these things. Sometimes it even deceives those who have suffered from this kind of thing to go and visit [others] who are practising self-control, to tell them all about their misfortunes and how this resulted from their asceticism.

Evagrius does not claim that the demons are presenting a false picture: on the contrary, he vividly anticipates the recriminations which will naturally result when the devout monk compares his own physical state with that which Hippocratic medicine considered to be 'in accordance with nature'. Evagrius was aware of scepticism concerning the physiological effects of vigorous asceticism,⁸⁸

⁸⁸ The medical historian Owsei Temkin observes: 'What [could a Hippocratic doctor say to] Christian ascetics who broke every rule of dietary medicine, tormented their bodies, and claimed by such discipline to be led back to a pristine state of health? A Hippocratic doctor could be a sincere and devout Christian, but it is hard to imagine him entering the ascetic's world' (*Hippocrates in a World of Pagans and Christians*, pp. 154 and 255).

and he does not claim that the respective philosophies of medicine and monastic ascesis are wholly compatible. Rather, medical science provides valuable metaphors and insights for *physiké*, the contemplation of God in

nature; but it cannot of itself lead to that final happiness, which consists in the contemplation of God alone.⁸⁹

⁸⁹ Evagrius, *Praktikos* Prol. 8, SC 171, p. 492: 'Love is the door to the knowledge of [God in] natural science, to which succeeds theology and final happiness'.

It is not hippocratic theory which guides the monastic superior or the *gnostikos*: as 'physicians of the passions' analogous to Plato's 'physician of souls' they prescribe the therapeutic remedies of ascetical practice and spiritual knowledge not for physical healing, but for the restoration of the whole person to union with God. Of these remedies, one of the most prominent is psalmody.

end p.123

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4.2 The Calming of *Thumos*

Evagrius believed that one of the chief benefits of psalmody is its power to calm misdirected or excessive *thumos*. Anger (ἔργη), indignation (θυμός), and even hatred (μῖσος) are not merely passions to be extinguished: they describe a psychic power which is frequently present in excess or misdirected, but which plays an important role in spiritual life. Evagrius employs these three terms to describe the action of the θυμικόν, the spiritual wellspring of the soul's ability to respond to threat, which since Plato had been associated with feelings in the chest and with the heart.

In *Timaeus* Plato explains that the heart was placed in the chest by the lesser demiurges so that reason (λόγος) might call forth 'the boiling up of *thumos*' force' (ζέσειεν τὸ τοῦ θυμοῦ μένος) in response to any wrong arising from without or from interior desires (*epithumia*).⁹⁰

⁹⁰ Plato, *Timaeus* 70b-c:.

Plato here describes the heart as the source of the 'boiling up of *thumos*' force'. The verb ζέω most commonly refers to a hot 'bubbling up', or even 'boiling over'; although it can be used metaphorically of cooler effervescence, such as frothing, surging seas.⁹¹

⁹¹ Liddell and Scott, *Greek-English Lexicon*, pp. 753 and 755.

Thus this metaphor could possibly be interpreted in a less violent sense as referring simply to an inner effervescence or energy, a 'welling up'. However, the heart was traditionally regarded as the source of inner heat, and it is therefore more likely that Plato intends ζέω in the sense of heated boiling. His depiction of *thumos* in *Timaeus* is very positive, portrayed in its ideal state as the spirited ally and servant of the ruling principle (ἡγεμονικόν or λογιστικόν), a relationship he depicts symbolically in the famous story of the chariot in *Phaedrus* (246-8) and describes in more detail in *Republic* (4.440-4).

Aristotle incorporates Plato's observation into his own definition of anger as a 'boiling up' (ζέσις); but unlike Plato he applied this image not to *thumos* but

to ὄργη. He notes that whereas a logician would probably describe ὄργη in moral terms, a 'naturalist' (φυσικός) would define it as the 'boiling of blood and warmth around the heart'.⁹²

⁹² Aristotle, *De Anima* 403^a29-403^b1: 'hence a naturalist (lit. "physicist") would define all these things differently from a dialectician, as for example anger: the latter [would define it] as the desire to vex another in return, or something of that sort; while the former [would define it] as a boiling of blood and of warmth around the heart'.

Aristotle evidently intends ζέσις to be understood

end p.124

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not merely as effervescence, but as true boiling, since he adds τὸ θερμὸν to his definition. Galen witnesses to the popularity of this definition, although he avoids mentioning Aristotle by name: instead, he stresses the origins of the definition with Plato, first citing *Timaeus* 70b, and then stating: the philosophers who came after [Plato] even made of this a definition of *thumos*, saying that it is a boiling of the heat in the heart.⁹³

⁹³ Galen, *De placitis Hippocratis et Platonis* 4.8.73-4:.

He tendentiously claims in a subsequent passage that the same concept can be found in the much earlier writings of Hippocrates.

Evagrius incorporates elements from all of these descriptions into his own definition of anger:

11. Ἡ ὄργη πάθος ἐστὶν ὀξύτατον· θυμοῦ γὰρ λέγεται ζέσις καὶ κίνησις κατὰ τοῦ ἡδικηκότος ἢ δοκοῦντος ἡδικηκέναι· [. . .] Ἐστὶ δὲ ὅτε χρονίζουσα καὶ μεταβαλλομένη εἰς μῆνιν,

⁹⁴

⁹⁴ Evagrius, *Praktikos* 11, SC 171, p. 516-18

11. Anger is the sharpest passion. It is said to be a boiling up and movement of indignation against a wrongdoer or a presumed wrongdoer: [. . .] Then sometimes it is lingering and is changed into rancour.

As in Galen's definition, Evagrius here states that it is *thumos* which boils, rather than Aristotle's ὄργη. For Evagrius ὄργη is a species of boiling, moving *thumos*. Like Aristotle, however, Evagrius offers a twofold definition: anger is both an inwardly sensed boiling up (ζέσις) of indignation and an outward movement (κίνησις) directed against a perceived wrong. This definition of anger as ζέσις καὶ κίνησις θυμοῦ recurs throughout Evagrius' writings.

The role of psalmody in calming or healing *thumos* when it begins to 'boil' and 'move' contrary to nature is best appreciated in light of Evagrius' conviction that the struggle with anger lasts until death. Whereas gluttony and lust, the 'passions of the body' predominate during the early years of spiritual growth,⁹⁵

⁹⁵ Ibid., 36, p. 582:.

the inner struggle against misdirected anger is a particular characteristic of those who are more advanced. Thus Evagrius advises the *gnostikos*:

31. Γέροντας μὲν θυμοῦ, τοὺς δὲ νέους γαστρὸς κρατεῖν παρακάλει· τοὺς μὲν γὰρ οἱ ψυχικοί, τοὺς δὲ ἐπὶ πλεῖστον οἱ σωματικοὶ διαμάχονται δαίμονες.

⁹⁶

⁹⁶ Evagrius, *Gnostikos* 31, SC 356, p. 146.

end p.125

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Psalmody and Prayer in the Writings of Evagrius Ponticus

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pp. [126]-[130]

31. Exhort the elders to mastery of anger and the young to mastery of the stomach. For against the former strive the demons of the soul, and against the latter, for the most part, those of the body.

He particularly emphasizes the importance of ἀοργησία, 'freedom from anger' for the *gnostikos*, the Christian who is firm in his ascetical practice and is growing in his capacity for contemplation:

5. Πᾶσαι τῷ γνωστικῷ ὁδοποιούσιν αἱ ἀρεταί· ὑπὲρ δὲ πάσας ἡ ἀοργησία. Ὁ γὰρ γνώσεως ἐφαιψάμενος καὶ πρὸς ὀργὴν ῥαδίως κινούμενος, ὁμοίός ἐστι τῷ σιδηρᾷ περόνῃ τοὺς ἑαυτοῦ ὀφθαλμοὺς κατανύττοντι.

97

⁹⁷ Ibid., 5, p. 92

5. All virtues clear the road before the *gnostikos*; but above all else the freedom from anger. Indeed, one who has touched knowledge yet is easily moved to anger is like a man who tears himself in the eye with a metal stylus.

And in the same work Evagrius expostulates: 'If only the *gnostikos* could, at the time when he explicates [the Scriptures], be free from anger, hatred, sadness, bodily suffering and anxieties!'⁹⁸

⁹⁸ Ibid., 10, p. 102. The original Greek is lost, and the Syriac and Armenian versions are discordant. A. and C. Guillaumont believe the passage begins with εἴθε or εἰ), suggesting the optative translation given above (SC 356, pp. 102-3 n. 10). Frankenberg, p. 547, thought the passage represents an exhortation, and offers the following retroversion: εννοειτω ο γνωστικος ει καιρω οτε εξηγειται ελευθερος εστι οργης και κοτου και λυπης και παθων σωματικων και μεριμνης ('Let the *gnostikos* consider whether he is free [. . .]'). In any case, Evagrius here recommends that the *gnostikos* strive to be free of passions arising from *thumos* while teaching or explicating texts. That the last term should be 'anxieties concerning the body' rather than 'bodily suffering and anxieties' is suggested by a parallel passage in which Evagrius praises the *nous* 'purified from anger, [from] brooding on wrongdoing, and [from] bodily concerns' (καθαυρόμενος ἀπὸ ὀργῆς καὶ μνησικακίας καὶ φροντίδος σωματικῆς), *Institutio ad monachos* 23, ed. Muyldermans, p. 202.

In two chapters of the *Praktikos* Evagrius explains that the chanting of psalms helps to calm the inner boiling or churning of *thumos*. In chapter 71 he writes:

71. Αἱ μὲν δαιμονιώδεις ὦδαι τὴν ἐπιθυμίαν ἡμῶν κινοῦσι, καὶ εἰς αἰσχρὰς τὴν ψυχὴν φαντασίας ἐμβάλλουσιν· οἱ δὲ ψαλμοὶ καὶ ὕμνοι καὶ αἱ πνευματικαὶ ὦδαι εἰς μνήμην αἰεὶ τῆς ἀρετῆς τὸν νοῦν προκαλοῦνται, περιζέοντα τὸν θυμὸν ἡμῶν καταψύχοντες καὶ τὰς ἐπιθυμίας μαραίνοντες.

99

⁹⁹ Evagrius, *Praktikos* 71, SC 171, p. 658.

71. The demonic songs move our desire and throw the soul into shameful fantasies. But 'psalms and hymns and spiritual songs' (Eph. 5: 19) summon the intellect to continuous memory of virtue by cooling our boiling indignation and by quenching our desires.

end p.126

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In chapter 15 he uses κυκᾶω 'to stir or churn' rather than ζέω to describe frothing *thumos*, but the meaning is the same:

15. Νοῦν μὲν πλανώμενον ἴστησιν ἀναγνώσις καὶ ἀγρυπνία καὶ προσευχή· ἐπιθυμίαν δὲ ἐκφλογουμένην μαραίνει πείνα καὶ κόπος καὶ ἀναχώρησις· θυμὸν δὲ καταπαύει κυκῶμενον ψαλμῳδία καὶ μακροθυμία καὶ ἔλεος·

100

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 15, p. 537.

15. the wandering intellect is stabilized by reading, vigils, and prayer. Burning desire is quenched by hunger, toil, and solitude. Churning indignation is calmed by the singing of psalms, by patient endurance and mercy.

The third text is very similar to the preceding one and is found in Evagrius' *Institutio ad Monachos*; here, however, *thumos* is characterized as 'attacking', or even 'laying waste':

Πλανώμενον νοῦν συστέλλει ἀνάγνωσις λογίων Θεοῦ, καὶ ἀγρυπνία μετὰ προσευχῆς. Θυμοῦ δὲ καταδρομὴν, καταπραύνει μακροθυμία, καὶ ψαλμῳδία.

101

¹⁰¹ Evagrius, *Institutio seu paraenesis ad monachos*, PG 79.1236.

The wandering *nous* is gathered [back] through reading the divine oracles, and [through] vigil[s] with prayer. The [violent] inrush of indignation is quieted by patience and psalmody.

In two other places Evagrius mentions the effect of psalmody on indignation, but he does not specify which part of *thumos* he considers to be affected. In *Ad monachos* he writes: 'The indignation of the one singing psalms is quieted' (Ψάλλοντος ἡσυχάζει θυμός).¹⁰²

¹⁰² Evagrius, *Ad monachos* 98, ed. Gressman, p. 161.

In *Peri Logismon* the hermit is advised to 'to keep the heart completely

guarded, quieting indignation with gentleness and psalms'
(πάσῃ φυλακῇ τηρεῖν τὴν καρδίαν, πραῦτι μὲν καὶ ψαλμοῖς τὸν θυμὸν
καταπαύοντας).

103

¹⁰³ Evagrius, *Peri Logismon* 26, SC 438, pp. 248-50.

Given his interest in physiological explanations it is not surprising that Evagrius attempts to explain the underlying means by which psalmody affects the body. In the fourth chapter of *Antirrhethikos* Evagrius recommends specific scripture verses for those who are tempted by sadness and depression, and he invokes King David as an example of one who made use of the power of psalmody to change human physiology:

4.22. For the [tempting] thought that does not realize that singing the psalms changes the temperament (ܩܪܐܝܬܐ = κῥᾶσις) of the body and drives away the demon

end p.127

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touching one on the back and cutting at the nerves and troubling every part of the body: *And whenever the evil spirit was upon Saul, David took the lyre, and played it with his hand, and Saul was refreshed, and was well, and the evil spirit departed from him* (1 Sam. 16: 23).¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁴ Evagrius, *Antirrhethikos* IV.22, Frankenberg, p. 505.

Evagrius here claims that singing the psalms (literally 'singing joined with the psalms')¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁵ ܩܪܐܝܬܐ ܕܡܠܚܝܬܐ ܕܡܠܚܝܬܐ; Frankenberg (p. 505) suggests the retroversion: μελος κολλωμενος τοις ψαλμοις.

) changes the κῥᾶσις,¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁶ The noun Frankenberg translates as κῥᾶσις is ܩܪܐܝܬܐ (a form of), literally 'a mixing, blending, due proportion'; usually equivalent to the Greek or σύγκρασις; Smith, *Compendious Syriac Dictionary*, p. 279.

that is the complex and delicate balance of humours thought to be responsible for health and illness. In *Praktikos* 69-71 Evagrius suggests that 'undistracted' psalmody contributes to the establishment of a new κῥᾶσις, an ἀνᾶκρασις, a commingling or 'complete blending'¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁷ Lampe, *Patristic Greek Lexicon*, p. 105: 'interpenetration of sensible and intelligible things in creation; union of human and divine natures in Christ; union of Christ with Holy Spirit; Eucharistic union of human body and Eucharistic elements'.

of the self with the virtues.

In claiming that singing the psalms could have a beneficial effect on the temperament of the body Evagrius articulates a tradition at least as old as Plato. In *Timaeus* Plato claims that music 'adapted to the sound of the voice'

was given by the muses for the sake of harmony (ἁρμονία). The true purpose of music does not lie in its common use to 'provoke irrational pleasure', but rather in its power to restore order and harmony in the soul afflicted with disharmony (ἀνάρμοστον).¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁸ Plato, *Timaeus* 47c-d:

ὅσον τ' αὖ μουσικῆς φωνῇ χρησίμων πρὸς ἀκοὴν ἕνεκα ἁρμονίας
ἐστὶ δοθέν. ἡ δὲ ἁρμονία [. . .] τῷ μετὰ νοῦ προσχρωμένῳ Μούσαις οὐκ ἐφ' ἡδονὴν ἄλογον
καθάπερ νῦν εἶναι δοκεῖ χρησίμος, ἀλλ' ἐπὶ τὴν γεγυῖαν ἐν ἡμῖν ἀνάρμοστον ψυχῆς περίοδον
εἰς κατακόσμησιν καὶ συμφωνίαν ἐαυτῇ σύμμαχος ὑπὸ Μουσῶν δέδοται

The restoration of interior harmony enables the soul to more easily perceive that celestial harmony of which the soul is herself a reflection.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁹ Plato, *Timaeus* 90c-d.

Not all types of music are suitable for this purpose. In book 3 of the *Republic* Plato explains that only song or chanting, that is music which accompanies and highlights speech, will do; unaccompanied instrumental solos are to be banned, as should certain 'inappropriate' instruments, modes, and rhythms.¹¹⁰

¹¹⁰ Plato, *Republic* 3.398-400.

And in book 4 Plato describes the particular power of music ('harmony and rhythm') to quiet and regulate the θυμοειδής, the 'high-spirited' or irascible part of the soul. He recommends a mixture

end p.128

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of music and gymnastics in order to maintain harmony between the *logistikon* and the *thumikon*, nourishing the former with beautiful words while 'relaxing, soothing, and taming' the latter with harmony and rhythm.¹¹¹

¹¹¹ Plato, *Republic* 4.441e-442a.;;

Aristotle agreed with Plato that melody and rhythm have the ability to create inner 'simulations' (ὁμοιωματα) of virtues and vices, thus 'changing our souls by our listening to them'.¹¹²

¹¹² Aristotle, *Politics* 1340^a18: μεταβάλλομεν γὰρ τὴν ψυχὴν ἀκροῶμενοι τοιοῦτων.

However, he believed Plato had been too severe in his wholesale proscription of certain modes and musical instruments.¹¹³

¹¹³ Aristotle, *Politics* 1341^b32-1342^b17.

Aristotle was less opposed than Plato to the use of unaccompanied instrumental solos and he believed that even those melodies which excite some individuals to religious frenzy can have a restorative healing and purging effect.¹¹⁴

¹¹⁴ Aristotle, *Politics* 1342^a10-11: καθισταμένους ὥσπερ ἰατρείας τυχόντας καὶ καθάρ

ρσεως.

Belief in the therapeutic value of music is later attested by Galen, who recommends the prescription of 'music therapy' to certain classes of patients, the music being suitably adapted to the temperament of each.¹¹⁵

¹¹⁵ Galen, *De placitis Hippocratis et Platonis* V.6.20: 'We shall prescribe for some persons a regimen of rhythms and scales (modes) and exercises of such and such a sort, and for others another sort, as Plato taught us. We shall rear the dull and heavy and spiritless in high-pitched rhythms and in scales (modes) that move the soul forcibly and in exercises of the same kind; and we shall rear those who are too high-spirited and who rush about too madly in the opposite kind'.

Thus through Plato's influence music came to be regarded as a valuable therapeutic modality, particularly useful for calming *thumos*.

The antecedents of Evagrius' remedies for the λογιστικόν and θυμικόν are clearly to be found in Plato's recommendation in book 3 of the *Republic*. For the soul's highest principle Plato suggests 'beautiful words and teaching' (λόγοις τε καλοῖς καὶ μαθήμασιν), while Evagrius recommends reading the divine oracles (ἀνάγνωσις λογίων Θεοῦ): for soothing of *thumos* Plato counsels harmony and rhythm, for which Evagrius recommends psalmody. Thus in recommending psalmody as a therapeutic remedy Evagrius articulates

end p.129

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an ancient philosophical and medical tradition which had become almost commonplace among Christian theologians.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁶ Athanasius writes in the *Letter to Marcellinus* that psalmody 'smooths away that which is disturbed and rough and disorderly [in the soul], healing that which saddens us' (Athanasius, *Letter to Marcellinus*, PG 27.40-1:). The example of King David's cure of Saul's madness had long been used as a recommendation of psalmody: e.g. Clement of Alexandria, *Protrepticus* 1.5.3-7; Basil of Caesarea, *Letter* 140.7: *Exhortation to Youths*; Gregory of Nyssa, *On the Inscriptions of the Psalms* 1.3.24.

The reason Evagrius describes the degeneration and the healing of *thumos* in such detail is that *thumos* is not simply an evil which ought to be extinguished; it is, rather, an essential weapon in the spiritual arsenal which must be properly controlled and employed against the enemy:

10. Πάντ τὸ μῖσος τὸ κατὰ δαιμόνων ἡμῖν πρὸς σωτηρίαν συμβάλλεται, καὶ πρὸς τὴν ἐργασίαν τῆς ἀρετῆς ἐστὶν ἐπιτήδειον [. . .] καὶ πάλιν ἡ ψυχὴ πρὸς τὸ ἀρχέτυπον μῖσος ἐπανατρέχει διδασκομένη πρὸς τὸν Κύριον λέγειν, κατὰ τὸν Δαυὶδ, το «τέλειον μῖσος ἐμίσουν αὐτοὺς, εἰς ἐχθροὺς ἐγενοντό μοι.»

117

¹¹⁷ Evagrius, *Peri Logismon* 10, SC 438, pp. 184-6.

10. Our hatred against demons greatly contributes to [our] salvation and is helpful for [our] practice of virtue [. . .] and the soul returns again to primordial hatred, learning to say to the Lord as did David: / hate them with perfect hatred: they have become my enemies. (Ps.

The demons chiefly tempt human beings to direct the energy of *thumos* 'contrary to nature' against other human beings, rather than 'in accordance with nature' against temptations and the demons themselves. In explaining the proper use of anger 'according to nature' in this passage from *Peri Logismon* Evagrius does not hesitate to employ the word 'hatred' (*μῖσος*) to describe what should be directed against the demons. The delicate task of distinguishing between the demonic enemy and the enemy's human dupes is greatly facilitated by familiarity with passages from the scriptures which can be employed to confound the former and convert the latter. In Evagrius' model of spiritual life this comprises in large measure the art of *antirrhesis* which is the subject of the following chapter.

end p.130

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Psalmody and Prayer in the Writings of Evagrius Ponticus

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5 The Psalter as Spiritual Weapon

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Abstract: Evagrius believed that the spiritual benefits of chanting the psalms went beyond the calming effect of psalmody on the passions. The soul is in continuous warfare against demons that employ *logismoi* (tempting thoughts) to prevent humans from praying or perceiving God. The Book of Psalms is a valuable weapon that provides models of spiritual progress, as well as a means by which prayer and contemplation may be attained. Evagrius recommends the practice of psalmody in the *Praktikos*, *Antirrhethikos*, and *De oratione*. Psalms in the *Antirrhethikos* and antirrhethic texts in the *Scholia on Psalms* are discussed.

Keywords: Evagrius Ponticus, psalmody, psalter, spiritual weapon, prayer

For Evagrius the spiritual benefits of chanting the psalms are not limited to the calming effect of psalmody on the passions. Since the demons employ *logismoi*, tempting thoughts, as distracting weapons to keep human beings from praying or perceiving God, the soul is in a continuous state of spiritual warfare.¹

¹ Evagrius, *De oratione* 50, ed. Tugwell, p. 11 (cf. PG 79.1177): 'The whole war between us and the unclean demons concerns nothing other than spiritual prayer, because it is very hostile and burdensome to them, while it is salvific and very soothing for us'.

Victory consists in the attainment of the virtues and the practice of prayer. The Book of Psalms is a valuable weapon in this warfare since it provides models of spiritual progress as well as means by which prayer and contemplation may be attained. An important symbol in Evagrius' writings of both the spiritual warrior and the contemplative is King David,²

² The motif of David as victorious spiritual warrior, capable also of repentance and great gentleness, is found in *Peri Logismon* 10, 14, and 20; *Letters* 11 and 56; scholia 10 on *Ecclesiastes* 2: 11(4); 12 on *Proverbs* 1: 20-1;; and 14 on *Psalms* 30: 22. Evagrius also presents David as archetype of the Christian contemplative in *Peri Logismon* 18 and frequently in the *Scholia on Psalms*: scholia 6 on *Psalms* 4: 7(2); 2 on *Psalms* 25: 3(2); 1 on *Psalms* 41: 3(2); 4 on *Psalms* 83: 5(1); 48 on *Psalms* 118: 109; and 76 on *Psalms* 118: 164.

who successfully waged war against the Philistines³

³ Evagrius symbolically equates 'Philistine' with spiritual enemy or demon in the prologue to the *Antirrhethikos*, in *Kephalaia Gnostica* V.30, V.36, and V.68, and in

and who was considered to be the author of the Book of Psalms. Evagrius regarded the images and phrases of the psalter as both a textbook and a spiritual arsenal for the *praktikos*, as well as a source of allegories on which the *gnostikos* should meditate. He describes the central importance of the Book of Psalms for spiritual warfare in his introduction to the *Antirrhetikos*:

[. . .] and I expound openly the entire contest (ἀγὼν)⁴

⁴ ܐܓܘܢ / ܐܓܘܢܐ ('the entire contest'); Frankenberg suggests the retroversion: πάντα τὸν ἀγῶνα (ed. Frankenberg, pp. 474-5, 36^{ab}). The term ('*agun*') is a Syriac loan-word for ἀγὼν, (Smith, *Compendious Syriac Dictionary*, p. 3).

of the monastic way

end p.131

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of life, [that contest] which the Holy Spirit taught David by means of the psalms, and which was also handed on to us by the blessed fathers.⁵

⁵ Evagrius, *Antirrhetikos* Prologue, ed. Frankenberg, pp. 474-5.

Here Evagrius asserts that the Book of Psalms is a means by which the Holy Spirit taught David the 'contest' of the *praktiké*. Thus the monastic practice of psalmody, which presupposes memorization and ongoing recollection of the psalms, places at the monk's disposal a rich source of biblical verses for use in the monastic 'contest'. The most basic use to which memorized biblical texts are put is the technique Evagrius calls ἀντίρρησις, literally 'refutation' or 'contradiction'. Evagrius particularly recommends this technique in the

Praktikos, *Antirrhetikos*, and *De oratione*.⁶

⁶ Evagrius, *Praktikos* 42; *De oratione* 94-9, 134-5. Bunge speculates that Evagrius may at one time have intended the *Antirrhetikos* to be published as part of the *Praktikos*, or at least to be read in conjunction with it: Bunge, 'Der Prolog des *Antirrhetikos*', p. 83.

In the practice of *antirrhesis* select biblical verses are employed to counteract the particular *logismos* against which the monk is struggling. *Antirrhesis* entails the deployment of biblical texts not only against the demons and their *logismoi*, but also against sinful tendencies within the self, and even more broadly as 'refutations' of particular groups of people and forms of behaviour. Furthermore, antirrhetic biblical texts may console the tempted soul and remind it of virtues opposed to the *logismoi*. Finally, *antirrhesis* also includes the offering to God of succinct biblical prayers.

5.1 Psalms in the Antirrhetikos

Despite its importance, few studies of Evagrius' *Antirrhetikos* have been

published.⁷

⁷ Otto Zöckler described the overall structure and content of the *Antirrhetikos* in 1893: 'Evagrius Pontikus. Seine Stellung in der altchristliche Literatur- und Dogmengeschichte', in Zöckler, *Biblische und kirchenhistorische Studien* (Munich, 1893); however, the complete text of the *Antirrhetikos* was not available until publication of the Armenian (1907) and Syriac (1912) versions. O'Laughlin provides a brief introduction together with his translations of selections from the *Antirrhetikos* in Wimbush, *Ascetic Behavior*, pp. 240-2. Bunge has written an article intended as an introduction to the *Antirrhetikos*: 'Evagrius Pontikos: Der Prolog des *Antirrhetikos*', pp. 77-105.

Although known and apparently highly regarded by his contemporaries and biographers,⁸

⁸ The *Antirrhetikos* is praised and recommended by: Palladius, *Lausiac History* 38 and 10; Socrates, *Ecclesiastical History* 4.23.

the original Greek of this work is lost: Gennadius translated it into Latin, but his version, too, has perished. As a complete work it survives only in Syriac and

end p.132

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Armenian translations. The Armenian version was published by B. Sarghissan in 1907,⁹

⁹ Sarghissian, *S. Patris Euagrii Pontici*, pp. 217-323.

but most subsequent work has been based on Frankenberg's Syriac text, published in 1912.¹⁰

¹⁰ In 1912 W. Frankenberg published Syriac versions of Evagrius' *Kephalaia Gnostica*, *Skemmata*, *Gnostikos*, *Antirrhetikos*, *Protrepitkos*, *Parainetikos*, and 64 *Letters*, together with a facing retroversion from Syriac into Greek: Frankenberg, *Evagrius Ponticus (Antirrhetikos)* pp. 472-545; Frankenberg's Syriac version of the *Antirrhetikos* is based on British Museum Syriac Add. MS 14578, fos. 34^b-77^a.

The *Antirrhetikos* has never been completely translated into any modern language. There are German translations of the Prologue and Books I, II, and VI,¹¹

¹¹ In 1893 Otto Zöckler published D. Baethgen's translation into German of Books I and II of the *Antirrhetikos*. There are frequent gaps in the text, presumably reflecting *lacunae* in the Syriac manuscript used by Baethgen (Berlin MS Sachau 302): Baethgen, 'Evagrius größere Schrift von den acht Lastergedanken'; this is an appendix (Anhang I) to Zöckler's article 'Evagrius Pontikus. Seine Stellung'. A German translation of Book VI was published in 1994 as an appendix to an article on Evagrius' doctrine of *apatheia*. It appears to be based solely on Frankenberg's Greek retroversion without reference to the Syriac text: Joest, 'Anhang: Übersetzung von *Antirrhetikos* VI', in 'Die Bedeutung von Akedia und Apatheia'. Bunge has translated the Prologue from Frankenberg's edition: 'Der Prolog des *Antirrhetikos*', pp. 77-105.

and English translations of the Prologue with selections from Books III, IV, and V.¹²

¹² O'Laughlin, trans., '*Antirrheticus* (Selections)'. O'Laughlin bases his translation on Frankenberg's edition.

While the technique Evagrius calls *antirrhesis* is the principal subject of his *Antirrhethikos*, it is a practice he describes and recommends in his other works, as well. In the *Praktikos* he states that when assailed by tempting thoughts one must deliberately and verbally contradict the offending demon before proceeding to prayer:

42. Οὐ πρότερον προσεύξῃ πειραζόμενος, πρὶν εἰπεῖν τινα ῥήματα μετ' ὀργῆς πρὸς τὸν θλίβοντα· τῆς γὰρ ψυχῆς σου πεποιαμένης τοῖς λογισμοῖς, συμβαίνει μηδὲ καθαρὰν γενέσθαι τὴν προσευχήν· ἐὰν δὲ μετ' ὀργῆς εἴπῃς τι πρὸς αὐτούς, συγχεῖς τε καὶ ἐξαφανίζεις τῶν ἀντικειμένων τα νοήματα. Τοῦτο γὰρ ἡ ὀργὴ καὶ ἐπὶ τῶν κρειττόνων νοημάτων ἐργάζεσθαι πέφυκεν.

13

¹³ Evagrius, *Praktikos*, SC 171, p. 596.

42. Do not immediately pray when you are tempted; first speak some words with anger to the one oppressing you: for when your soul is acted upon by [tempting] thoughts prayer cannot be pure. But if you speak with anger to them, you will confuse and banish the ideas that come from your enemies. For this is the natural result of anger in the case of good ideas, too.

The soul darkened by tempting thoughts cannot pray purely,¹⁴

¹⁴ Evagrius, *De oratione* 72, ed. Tugwell, p. 14 (cf. PG 79.1181): '[. . .] it is impossible for the *nous* enslaved to passions to see the place of spiritual prayer'.

end p.133

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so it must first direct the energy of *thumos* against the demons which try to prevent prayer; thus anger, which tends by its nature to dissipate thoughts, is made to serve a holy purpose. In this text Evagrius does not specify which 'angry words' (ῥήματα μετ' ὀργῆς) are to be directed against the demons. He is less concerned with their appropriateness for a specific temptation than with their service in the action 'according to nature' of *thumos*.¹⁵

¹⁵ Evagrius, *Praktikos* 24, SC 171, p. 556. Anger (*thumos*) is used 'according to nature' (κατὰ φύσιν) when it is directed against the demons, while anger directed towards other human beings is 'against nature' (παρὰ φύσιν): 'The nature of *thumos* is to fight the demons and to struggle for any sort of pleasure. For this reason the angels suggest to us spiritual pleasure and the blessedness [coming] from it; they encourage us to direct our *thumos* towards the demons. The latter, however, dragging us towards worldly desires, violently force our *thumos* against nature to fight human beings, so as to darken the intellect, separating it from knowledge, and [thus] making it a traitor to the virtues'.

Antirrhesis, the art of refuting specific temptations with appropriate biblical verses, is a specific application of the general principle described here: namely, that verbal contradiction of the tempting demon must precede prayer.

Evagrius depicts the central place of the psalter in the practice of *antirrhesis*

in *Letter 11*, where he refers the recipient of his letter to the Book of Psalms for examples of this art:

Therefore one must be intrepid in opposing his foe, as blessed David demonstrates when he quotes voices as if out of the mouth of demons and [then] contradicts them. Thus if the demons say, 'When will he die and his name be forgotten?' (Ps. 40: 5) he then also replies, 'I will not die, but live and proclaim the works of the Lord!' (Ps. 117: 17). 'And if, on the other hand, the demons say, 'Flee and abide like a sparrow on the mountain' (Ps. 10: 1), then one should say, 'For he is my God and my saviour, my strong place of refuge; I will not waver' (Ps. 17: 3). Therefore observe the mutually contradicting voices and love the victory; imitate David and pay close attention to yourself!¹⁶

¹⁶ Evagrius, *Letter 11.2*, ed. Bunge, pp. 223-4, ed. Frankenberg, pp. 574-5. Bunge discusses this text and its relation to the *Antirrhetikos* in 'Prolog des *Antirrhetikos*', pp. 97-8.

Here David is a symbol of the mature *gnostikos* who understands demonic assaults and knows how to withstand them. The Book of Psalms is depicted as a textbook containing examples of both the

end p.134

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demons' accusations and the words with which David counteracted them. Although David serves as an example of how the psalter may be used in *antirrhesis*, Evagrius explains in his introduction to the *Antirrhetikos* that this practice is even more deeply rooted in the example of Jesus, who during his temptation in the wilderness refuted the devil with appropriate passages from the scriptures (Matt. 4: 1-11; Luke 4: 1-13).¹⁷

¹⁷ Evagrius, *Antirrhetikos* Prologue, ed. Frankenberg, pp. 472-3: 'Our Lord Jesus Christ [. . .] [together with] all his teaching handed on to us what he did when he was tempted by Satan so that in the time of battle, when the demons are fighting us and hurling darts against us, we [may] answer them from the holy scriptures [. . .]'.

Evagrius locates the theoretical basis for this practice and its proper terminology in Ecclesiastes 8: 11:

ὅτι οὐκ ἔστιν γινομένη ἀντίρρησις ἀπὸ τῶν ποιούντων τὸ πονηρὸν ταχύ·
διὰ τοῦτο ἐπληροφόρηθη καρδία υἱῶν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἐν αὐτοῖς τοῦ ποιῆσαι
τὸ πονηρόν

For there is no rapid refutation of evil actions which comes quickly; thus the heart of the sons of men is confirmed within them in the doing of evil.

In this text the preacher laments that unless evil is quickly refuted (ἀντίρρησις [. . .] ταχύ) human hearts become confirmed, literally 'fulfilled', in doing evil. Evagrius similarly urges that *antirrhesis* be practised immediately whenever one is tempted, so that 'the unclean thoughts do not remain in us [. . .] staining the soul and plunging it into the death of sin'.¹⁸

¹⁸ Evagrius, *Antirrhetikos* Prologue, ed. Frankenberg, pp. 472-3.

Recognizing that it is often impossible to find an appropriate biblical text while in the throes of temptation, Evagrius undertook to search through the whole of sacred scripture to create a collection of verses for use in *antirrhesis*. In the *Antirrhetikos* he provides 492 brief biblical texts, usually consisting of only one or two verses, to be used as remedies against different manifestations of the eight principal *logismoi* of gluttony, lust, avarice, sadness, anger (*thumos*), *acedia*, vainglory, and pride. The *Antirrhetikos* is divided into eight books, each concerned with a different *logismos*. Each book begins at Genesis and works progressively through the bible, offering a brief description of the offending demon or habit of thought and then the healing verse. The verse is generally given as a reference, although sometimes the first few words of the verse are quoted, followed by the reference. Evagrius generally intends these verses to be understood in their literal sense. His biblical weapons against the demons do not consist of the symbolic definitions and syllogisms

end p.135

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Psalmody and Prayer in the Writings of Evagrius Ponticus

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pp. [136]-[140]

which abound in his scholia, but are based for the most part on the straightforward biblical narrative.¹⁹

¹⁹ In a very few verses of the *Antirrhetikos* the question arises whether Evagrius intends an allegorical interpretation. In Book V (against anger (*thumos*)) Evagrius recommends: 'For the tempting thought arousing our anger against cattle that do not walk along the path; *A righteous man has pity for the lives of his cattle, but the bowels of the wicked are without mercy*' (Prov. 12: 10), Evagrius, *Antirrhetikos* V.18, ed. Frankenberg, p. 515 (citation corrected per O'Laughlin, '*Antirrheticus* (Selections)', p. 258). This verse could be employed as it stands, indicting the wicked for their lack of mercy; however, it would be even more valuable in the monastic context if 'cattle' signify erring brethren who stray from the 'path' of strict asceticism. Evagrius writes in this vein of the fallen, 'who resemble irrational cattle' in scholion 21 on *Ecclesiastes* 3: 21, SC 397, p. 92.

In the *Antirrhetikos* Evagrius cuts a broad swathe through the scriptures, offering verses from all the canonical books of the Bible. In light of his own predilection for gnomic utterances, it is not surprising that the sapiential books of the Bible are represented in the *Antirrhetikos* by a disproportionately high number of citations relative to their length: there are 60 citations from Proverbs, 20 from Job, and 13 from Ecclesiastes. However, the book Evagrius cites most frequently in the *Antirrhetikos* is the Book of Psalms: of his 492 antirrhetic verses, 91 (19%) are taken from the psalter. Thus texts from the wisdom literature account for 184 citations (38%), or more than one-third of the entire work. The table below shows the number of verses from each of these books in the *Antirrhetikos*:

<i>Antirrhetikos</i> , Book	Number of verses	Verses from Psalms (% of book)	Verses from Proverbs (% of book)	Verses from Ecclesiastes (% of book)	Verses from Job (% of book)
I (gluttony)	69	10 (14.5)	14 (20.3)	3 (4.4)	1 (1.5)
II (lust)	65	13 (20)	6 (9.2)	2 (3.1)	5 (7.7)
III (avarice)	58	11 (19)	7 (12.1)	2 (3.5)	1 (1.7)
IV (sadness)	76	22 (28.9)	1 (1.3)	0 (0)	4 (5.3)
V (anger)	64	5 (7.8)	15 (23.4)	2 (3.1)	0 (0)
VI (<i>acedia</i>)	57	18 (31.6)	2 (3.5)	0 (0)	4 (7)
VII (vainglory)	43	4 (16.3)	9 (20.9)	1 (2.3)	1 (2.3)
VIII (pride)	60	8 (13.3)	6 (10)	3 (5)	4 (6.7)
TOTAL	492	91 (18.5)	60 (12.2)	13 (2.6)	20 (4.1)

These figures demonstrate that although the Psalms are the book of the Bible most frequently cited, there are sections of the *Antirrhetikos* in which the number of citations from Proverbs exceed

those from the Psalms: namely Books I, V, and VII. This reflects the fact that Proverbs represents a very rich mine of aphorisms on the subjects of gluttony, anger, and vainglory.

An examination of Evagrius' use of the Psalms in the *Antirrhethikos* reveals something of his methodological approach to this work as a whole. The psalter is cited most frequently in Books IV (on sadness) and VI (on *acedia*).²⁰

²⁰ There are 10 citations from the psalter in *Antirrhethikos* Book I (accounting for 11% of the 91 citations from the psalter); 13 citations (14%) in Book II; 11 citations (12%) in Book III; 22 citations (24%) in Book IV; 5 citations (6%) in Book V; 18 citations (20%) in Book VI; 4 citations (4%) in Book VII; and 8 citations (9%) in Book VIII.

In his 91 citations from the psalter he makes use of 57 of the 150 psalms. Of these, 10 psalms are cited twice (Psalms 24, 33, 38, 41, 49, 54, 55, 61, 117, and 131); 4 psalms are cited 3 times (Psalms 6, 83, 118, and 139); 2 psalms are cited 4 times (Psalms 26 and 37); 1 psalm is cited 5 times (Psalm 34); and 1 psalm is cited 7 times (Psalm 36). Evidently Evagrius had favourite psalms which he found particularly rich in the spiritual material he was seeking. Nevertheless, despite his preferences for certain books of the Bible and even for individual psalms, Evagrius generally avoids using the same verse more than once, however rich it may be in spiritual content. There is only one instance of a psalm verse used more than once in the *Antirrhethikos*: Psalm 139: 6, used in III.26 and in Book VII.11.

On closer inspection it becomes clear that the 492 verses of the *Antirrhethikos* are intended to serve a wider variety of spiritual purposes than Evagrius suggests in the Prologue. Something of this variety is indicated by the stereotyped phrases with which each verse begins. The majority of verses (301 of 492) begin with the phrase, 'For the [tempting] thought of [. . .]'.²¹

²¹ **للمفكر**, or more frequently **للمفكر**: for both Frankenberg suggests the retroversion: *pro|j logismo/n*.

Less than a quarter (116 verses) begin, 'For a soul [. . .]'.²²

²² **للمفكر**; Frankenberg suggests: *πρὸς ψυ χήν*.

or 'For a mind [. . .]'.²³

²³ **للمفكر**; Frankenberg suggests: *π ρ ὸς δ ι ᾱ ν ο ι α ν*.

A small minority (44 verses) are introduced by the phrase, 'To [the] Lord [. . .]'.²⁴

²⁴ **للمفكر**; Frankenberg suggests: *εἰς κτ'ρ ι ον*.

A still smaller number (32 verses) begin: 'For the demon of [. . .]'.²⁵

²⁵; Frankenberg suggests: *π ρ ὸς δ α ἰ μ ο ν α*.

And two citations are intended 'For the angel(s) [. . .]'

The range of different spiritual functions these verses are meant to serve may be conceived as a spectrum, consisting at one end of what might be

termed 'direct *antirrhesis*', a kind of exorcism which

end p.137

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specifically negates or repels the offending *logismos*. Evagrius often alerts the reader that a verse is of this type by introducing it with the phrase, 'For the demon [. . .]'. At the other end of this spectrum are brief prayers which are not directed against the demons, but are offered, rather, to God. Most of these are introduced with the phrase, 'For the Lord [. . .]'.²⁶

²⁶ O'Laughlin speculates that this designation ('for the Lord' or 'to a Lord') may indicate 'that in this case Evagrius is addressing [his] more illustrious or sophisticated [readers]' (O'Laughlin, *Antirrheticus* (Selections)', p. 253 n. 65. It is more probable, however, that since the majority if not all of these texts (the biblical reference is not always certain) contain prayers addressed to God, the introductory formula simply indicates that these verses are literally intended 'for the Lord'.

Evagrius evidently regards these ejaculatory prayers as 'indirectly' antirrhetic in the sense that they invite the soul to turn towards God and away from the demons, thus 'contradicting' the demonic goal of preventing prayer. Evagrius believed that temptation and physical affliction have a unique power to galvanize the soul into a type of prayer characterized by frankness or 'freedom of speech' (παρησία).²⁷

²⁷ Evagrius, *Letter* 1.2, ed. Frankenberg, pp. 564-7, (160^β a), ed. Bunge, p. 211: 'Nothing bestows such freedom of speech at the time of prayer as the temptations which assail the body.' The term (*parehēsya*) is a Syriac loan-word for π α ρ η σ ι α: Smith, *Compendious Syriac Dictionary*, p. 458.

Nevertheless, the soul which suddenly turns away from its own distress towards God may sometimes find itself mute; thus these antirrhetic prayers provide the stunned soul with words which may be addressed to God.²⁸

²⁸ Evagrius, *Antirrheticus* VIII.28, ed. Frankenberg, pp. 540-1: 'For the Lord, concerning the tempting thought of pride which, having abided within us, presents our *nous* incapable of free speech at the time of prayer; *The words of the wicked have prevailed over us: and you, [pray] pardon our sins*' (Ps. 64.4).

Between these two extremes, consisting of antirrhetic exorcism verses at one end and antirrhetic prayers at the other, lie the majority of texts in the *Antirrheticos* which are neither directed against the demons nor offered to God, but are rather intended for the tempted soul. These verses serve a variety of functions: to exhort; to evoke compunction and repentance; to console; to inform; and often to encourage practice of the virtue opposed to the temptation being endured. No specific formula heralds any particular function. Evagrius alternately describes these different categories of verses as intended, 'For the soul (or "mind") [. . .]', or 'For the tempting thought [. . .]'. These two introductory phrases serve a stylistic rather than a taxonomic purpose; their alternate use avoids an endlessly repetitive introductory formula rather than signalling a change in content.

end p.138

An example of a 'direct' antirrhetic text which takes the form of an exorcism or curse against the demon is the following: 'Against the demon of lust which simulates the form of a beautiful naked woman who corrupts with her steps and delights with her whole body in a defiling way, and snatches away the prudence of many so that they forget higher things; *Therefore may God destroy you forever, may he pluck you up and utterly remove you from your dwelling and your root from the land of the living* (Ps. 51: 7).'²⁹

²⁹ Evagrius, *Antirrhetikos* II.32, ed. Frankenberg, pp. 474-5.

Similarly, demons 'which wail in the wind and afterwards cause us to listen for them' are to be cursed with the words of 1 Samuel 17: 47: '*For it is not by sword or spear that the Lord delivers, for the battle is the Lord's; and the Lord will deliver you into our hands.*'³⁰

³⁰ Ibid., IV.24,, pp. 506-7.

Verses intended to exhort, encourage, or inform the tempted soul constitute the majority of the *Antirrhetikos*. Representative of these is the following admonition from Book VI (on *acedia*): 'For the soul that wants to experience whether the soul will truly be given over to demonic assaults if it is abandoned a little by the holy angels; *My friends and my neighbours drew up before me and stood by; and my nearest relatives stood afar off* (Ps. 37: 12).'³¹

³¹ Ibid., VI.17,, pp. 524-5.

Here the reader is warned that the angels can indeed withdraw their help, and it is implied that this should not be risked. An example of a more consoling form of *antirrhesis* comes from Book V (on sadness). The person afflicted with sadness who doubts that angels stand nearby waiting to help, is to be reassured with the following: 'For the soul which does not believe that the air is full of holy angels helping us, which are unseen by the demons: *Then Elisha prayed and said, "Lord, open the eyes of the boy so that he sees," and the Lord opened his eyes and he saw; and behold the mountain was full of horses and fiery chariots in a circle surrounding Elisha* (2 Kgs. 6: 17).'³²

³² Ibid., IV.27,, pp. 506-7.

Of particular relevance to the interrelationship between psalmody and prayer are the 44 antirrhetic prayers which Evagrius introduces with the formula 'For [the] Lord [. . .]'. More than half of these (25 of 44) are taken from the Psalms.³³

³³ The 25 verses 'For the Lord [. . .]' from the Book of Psalms are: *Antirrhetikos* II.21 (Ps. 3: 2); II.24 (Ps. 9: 7); II.25 (Ps. 12: 4); II.27 (Ps. 29: 12); III.16 (Ps. 15: 5); III.25 (Ps. 118: 36); IV.29 (Ps. 6: 3-5); IV.31 (Ps. 16: 13); IV.35 (Ps. 31: 7); IV.36 (Ps. 34: 1-2); IV.37 (Ps. 34: 17); IV.41 (Ps. 38: 11); IV.43 (Ps. 68: 7); IV.45 (Ps. 73: 19); IV.49 (Ps. 139: 11); V.12 (Ps. 118: 98-9); VI.11 (Ps. 24: 18); VI.21 (Ps. 55: 2); VI.22 (Ps. 55: 12); VI.23 (Ps. ?); VI.27 (Ps. 142: 2); VIII.23 (Ps. 7: 2); VIII.24 (Ps. 35: 12); VIII.25 (Ps. 43: 7); VIII.28 (Ps. 64: 4). The remaining 19 verses 'For the Lord [. . .]' are: *Antirrhetikos* I.43 (Jer. 15: 15); I.44 (Lam. 1: 20); II.19 (Ezra 9: 6); II.50 (Jer. 20: 12); II.51 (Lam. 1: 9); II.52 (Lam. 1: 11); II.54

(Lam. 3: 55); IV.15 (Deut. 3: 24); IV.63 (Jer. 15: 18); IV.64 (Jer. 17: 18); V.33 (Lam. 3: 58); VI.42 (Dan. ?); VII.25 (Jer. 17: 14); VIII.06 (Exod. 15: 6); VIII.10 (Num. 10: 35); VIII.21 (2 Kgs. 19: 15); VIII.22 (Ezra 4: 59); VIII.48 (Jer. 10: 23); VIII.49 (Lam. 3: 31).

The majority of these verses

end p.139

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are prayers of supplication varying widely in form and content, but having in common that they request God's assistance against a specific temptation. Evagrius is often quite graphic in describing the demonic attacks which warrant these petitions: 'To the Lord, concerning the demons that fall upon the skin of the body scorching like flames with their touch and then leave circular marks like those made by a cupping instrument. These I have often seen with [my] eyes and been amazed: *Judge, O Lord, those that injure me, fight against those who fight against me. Take hold of shield and buckler, and arise for my help* (Ps. 34: 1-2).'³⁴

³⁴ Evagrius, *Antirrhetikos* IV.36, ed. Frankenberg, pp. 506-7.

Similarly Psalm 6: 3-5 or Psalm 73: 19 are to be prayed when the demons employ optical illusions: the former in the case of disturbing, sordid visions;³⁵

³⁵ Ibid., IV.29, pp. 506-7: 'To the Lord, concerning the sight of troubling and vile things, appearing at night; *Have mercy on me, O Lord, for I am weak; heal me, Lord, for my bones are troubled. And my soul is greatly troubled; and you, Lord, how long? Return, Lord, deliver my soul, save me on account of your mercy,*' (Ps. 6: 3-5).

and the latter when the apparitions are bizarre flying animals.³⁶

³⁶ Ibid., IV.45, pp. 508-9: 'To the Lord, concerning the wild beasts appearing to fly in the air which make us leave the walls [of the monastery]; for we need the blessed elder, Macarius the Egyptian, to open his mouth, saying: *Do not hand over to the wild beasts a soul that praises you; do not forget the souls of your poor forever* (Ps. 73: 19).'

Evagrius also includes in the *Antirrhetikos* prayers other than those of petition. A prayer of trust and confidence from Psalm 15 is to be offered when demons tempt the monk to recall the financial inheritance he has renounced: 'To the Lord, concerning the avaricious thought that anxiously reminds me "you have lost the inheritance of your parents"; *The Lord is the portion of my inheritance and my cup; you are he who restores my inheritance to me. The lines have fallen to me in the best places; indeed, I have a most excellent heritage* (Ps. 15: 5).'³⁷

³⁷ Ibid., III.16, Frankenberg, pp. 496-7.

And the monk is to pray in a spirit of rejoicing when he finally realizes the demons' limitations: 'To the Lord, against the demon which suddenly falls upon the body, but cannot conquer the spirit through the unclean thoughts he brings near to it; *You have transformed my sadness into joy; you have loosened my sackcloth and girded me around with joy. Therefore I will sing praise and not be silent* (Ps. 29: 12).'³⁸

³⁸ Ibid., II.27, Frankenberg, pp. 488-9.

end p.140

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Psalmody and Prayer in the Writings of Evagrius Ponticus

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pp. [141]-[145]

The large number of psalm-prayers in the *Antirrhethikos* demonstrates that Evagrius included certain kinds of prayer in his working (if not his technical) definition of *antirrhesis*. This conclusion is corroborated by two chains in the treatise *De oratione* in which Evagrius describes and recommends the use of 'brief, intense prayers' to combat the demons. In *De oratione* 134 Evagrius describes the demons' response to our attempts to 'pray against them' (προσεύξασθαι κατ' αὐτῶν) and to 'answer them back' (ἀντιλέξαι αὐτοῖς).³⁹

³⁹ Evagrius, *De oratione* 134, ed. Tugwell, p. 24 (cf. PG 79.1196).

In *De oratione* 135 he advises that when praying 'against a demon or a passion' (προσευχῇ κατὰ πᾶθους ἢ δαιμονος) one should recall David who said, 'I will pursue my enemies and overtake them; and I will not turn back until they give up; I will crush them and they will not be able to stand, they will fall beneath my feet (Ps. 17: 38-9)'. This verse is to be 'recited at the right time while praying' (ἐκκαίρως εὐχόμενος λέξεις) as an aid to humility.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ Ibid. 135, p. 24 (cf. PG 79.1196).

In chapters 94-9 of *De oratione* Evagrius advises the use of antirrhetic prayer-verses when the demons attempt to distract the soul from pure prayer. The demons do this by directly assaulting the senses,⁴¹

⁴¹ These assaults may consist of visions (*De oratione* 94 and 99), terrifying sounds (ch. 97), or physical harm 'to the flesh' (ch. 99).

or by more subtly masquerading as angels⁴²

⁴² Evagrius, *De oratione* 95.

in an attempt to distract the soul from God by forcing it to attend to them.⁴³

⁴³ Evagrius, *De oratione* 99, ed. Tugwell, p. 19 (cf. PG 79.1189): 'They are trying to frighten you, to test whether you are taking any notice of them or whether you ignore them totally' (Ἐκφοβοῦσι γάρ σε πειράζοντες εἰ ἄρα προσέχεις αὐτοῖς εἰ τέλειον αὐτῶν κατεφρόνησας).

Evagrius recommends that after praying for enlightenment, one should wield the 'staff of supplication to God' by which the demons are 'driven far away [. . .] flogged by the power of God'.⁴⁴

⁴⁴ Evagrius, *De oratione* 94, ed. Tugwell, p. 18 (cf. PG 79.1188): 'See that the unclean demons do not deceive you with some vision: be deeply thoughtful, turn to prayer, and call upon God to enlighten you himself as to whether the idea (ὁ νόμος) comes from him; or if not, to quickly expel the deception from you. And take courage: the dogs will not withstand you, if you are experienced in wielding the staff

of supplication to God against them. For they will instantly be driven far away, invisibly and secretly flogged by the power of God'

(Ὅρα
μή σε ἀπατήσωσι διά τινος ὀπτασίας οἱ πονηροὶ δαίμονες· ἀλλὰ γίνου σύννους, τρεπόμενος
εἰς προσευχὴν καὶ παρακάλει τὸν Θεόν, ἵνα εἰ μὲν ἐξ αὐτοῦ ἐστὶ τὸ νόημα, αὐτός σε φωτίσῃ,
εἰ δὲ μήγε, τὸ τάχος τὸν πλάνον ἀπελάσῃ ἀπὸ σοῦ. Καὶ θάρσει, ὥς οὐ στήσονται οἱ κύνες, σοῦ
ἐμπείρως τῇ βακτηρίᾳ τῆς πρὸς Θεὸν ἐντεύξεως κεχρημένον εὐθέως γάρ, ἀοράτως καὶ ἀφανῶς
Θεοῦ δυνάμει μαστιζόμενοι, μακρὰν ἐλασθήσονται)

This 'staff' consists of 'brief, intense prayers' taken from the scriptures, of which Evagrius particularly recommends Psalm 22: 4, '*I will not fear evil*

end p.141

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*things, for you are with me.'*⁴⁵

⁴⁵ Evagrius, *De oratione* 97, ed. Tugwell, p. 18 (cf. PG 79.1188-9): 'Noises, crashes, voices, and tortured [screams] will he hear—the person carefully attending to pure prayer: but he will not cave in or surrender his rationality, saying instead to God, *I will not fear evil things, for you are with me* (Ps. 22: 4) and other similar [verses]'.

In order to avoid elation the soul should also meditate on Psalm 90: 10-11, recalling that it is the power of God, mediated by the angels, which drives the demons away.⁴⁶

⁴⁶ Evagrius, *De oratione* 96, ed. Tugwell, p. 18 (cf. PG 79.1188): 'Take care to acquire great humility and courage, and no demonic spite will accost your soul and the scourge will not draw near your tent, for God will give his angels charge over you to guard you (Ps. 90: 10-11), and unseen they will chase away from you the whole of the enemy manoeuvre'.

In chapter 98 Evagrius condenses his observations in a succinct recommendation of antirrhetic prayer: 'At the moment of these sorts of temptations make use of a short, intense prayer.'⁴⁷

⁴⁷ Evagrius, *De oratione* 98, ed. Tugwell, p. 19 (cf. PG 79.1189):.

That Evagrius stresses the importance of antirrhetic prayers twice in *De oratione*, once in the middle of this work and again towards the end, highlights the broad range of spiritual practices which *antirrhesis* encompasses. Although Evagrius particularly emphasizes the 'contradiction' of demons and their operations in his definitions of *antirrhesis* in the Prologue to the *Antirrhethikos* and in *Letter 11*, examination of the texts of the *Antirrhethikos* reveals that the majority of these verses serve, rather, to evoke repentance, to exhort, to console, and to provide prayers for the afflicted soul to use. A similar range of uses is discernible in the antirrhetic scholia of Evagrius' *Scholia on Psalms*.

5.2 Antirrhetic Texts in the Scholia on Psalms

In shifting from the use of psalmody in *antirrhesis* to the presence of antirrhetic texts in the *Scholia on Psalms* one moves not only into a different literary genre but also onto a different plane of activity in the life of the monk. Whereas the *Antirrhethikos* is an arsenal of texts for use in the

moment of temptation, the *Scholia on Psalms* are marginalia intended to enhance the *gnostikos*' experience of ἀνάγνωσις, meditative reading. While *antirrhesis* pertains to the battles of the *praktiké*,

end p.142

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the scholia are the particular concern of the *gnostikos* who searches out deeper meanings in the scriptures for his own spiritual healing and for the benefit of those who seek his advice. Nevertheless, as has been described, Evagrius' domains of *praktiké* and *gnostiké* overlap to a considerable extent; and it is not surprising that Evagrius' commentaries on the scriptures include antirrhetic scholia which comprise a spectrum of uses very similar to that served by the verses of the *Antirrheticos*.

In the introduction to his edition of Evagrius' *Scholia on Proverbs*, Paul Géhin describes six different categories of scholia found in Evagrius' exegetical writings. Sixth in his list are, ' "antirrhetic scholia" which Evagrius recommends be used against a specific category of individuals'.⁴⁸

⁴⁸ '(6.) Scholies "antirrhétiques". Évagre demande d'utiliser le verset biblique contre une catégorie déterminée d'individus,' Géhin, *Scholies aux Proverbes*, SC 340, p. 18.

Géhin describes these 'polemical' scholia as almost always beginning in the same way: 'This verse is to be used against [. . .]'

(Χρηστέον τούτῳ τῷ ῥήτῳ πρὸς τοὺς [. . .]) . He cites scholia 182, 215, 269, 326, and 340 *on Proverbs* as directed against, respectively: those who despise knowledge; false spiritual teachers;⁴⁹

⁴⁹ Evagrius, scholion 182 *on Proverbs* 18: 13, SC 340, p. 276: 'Whoever answers a word before he hears it, it is folly and a reproach to him. This saying is to be directed towards those who have not received the knowledge of God, but who attempt to teach others,'.

detractors of the body;⁵⁰

⁵⁰ Evagrius, scholion 215 *on Proverbs* 20: 12, SC 340, p. 310: 'The ear hears and the eye sees, and both are the work of the Lord. You will apply this saying to those speaking evil against this our body and [thus] insulting the creator'.

those who have received spiritual knowledge but who shy away from spiritual teaching;⁵¹

⁵¹ Evagrius, scholion 269 *on Proverbs* 24: 11, SC 340, p. 362: 'Rescue those led away to death; do not refrain from liberating those condemned [to death]. This verse should be directed towards those who have been judged worthy to receive divine knowledge and who neglect to teach [while] many are being led away to death through vices'.

those who choose unworthy persons for the clerical state;⁵²

⁵² Evagrius, scholion 326 *on Proverbs* 26: 17, SC 340, p. 416: 'Like one who grasps a dog's tail—so is he who champions the judgement of another: This verse should be directed towards those who choose for the priesthood or for a clerical function someone who is unworthy'.

and bad pastors.⁵³

⁵³ Evagrius, scholion 340 on Proverbs 27: 23, SC 340, p. 428: 'See that you thoroughly know the number of your flock, and pay attention to your herds. So this proverb should be directed towards the pastors of the Church, whom it behooves to pay close attention not to appearances but rather to hearts, and to spiritually pasture the sheep'.

He notes

end p.143

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that this type of scholion is also encountered in the *Scholia on Psalms*, and he concludes that the procedure described in these scholia appears to be that which Evagrius used in the *Antirrhetikos*.⁵⁴

⁵⁴ Géhin, *Scholies aux Proverbes*, SC 340, p. 18.

Géhin's observations provide a useful starting point for considering the antirrhetic scholia in Evagrius' *Scholia on Psalms*, however his observations need to be somewhat nuanced. First, Géhin's translation of πρὸς τοὺς as 'against' does not always apply in the *Scholia on Psalms*. Just as in the *Antirrhetikos*, many of these scholia are intended not to confront sinners, but rather to comfort people enduring hardships. The texts are thus 'to be used for' rather than deployed 'against' those already afflicted. For this reason, in the translations of the texts cited above and of the scholia below 'χρῆσταις οὖν [. . .] πρὸς τοὺς [. . .]' has been more broadly rendered as 'should be directed towards', rather than 'should be used against' ('Il faut utiliser contre'), which Géhin employs in his translations. But even this more general translation may not do full justice to what Evagrius intends. The term χρῆσταις οὖν is commonly used in the Hippocratic corpus and by ancient medical authors such as Galen of treatments which are 'useful' or 'helpful'. When appropriate these treatments 'are to be used' (χρῆσταις οὖν) for the benefit of patients. It is possible that Evagrius intends this therapeutic nuance, but it is difficult to render this in English without overstating the case: 'this text is to be used for [the benefit of] [. . .]' is, indeed, implied; but Evagrius gets this across more subtly.

Second, Géhin's criteria for identifying antirrhetic scholia need to be augmented. There are eight texts in Evagrius' *Scholia on Psalms* which fulfil Géhin's definition of antirrhetic scholia in that they employ the phrase 'χρῆσταις οὖν [. . .] πρὸς τοὺς [. . .]'; however, there are nine additional scholia in which Evagrius employs the verbal adjective λεικταῖς rather than χρῆσταις οὖν. In these 9 scholia Evagrius recommends that the text 'is to be spoken to' (λεικταῖς οὖν πρὸς τοὺς) a designated class of people. An explicit therapeutic nuance is found in a third category of seven antirrhetic scholia in which Evagrius employs the adjective χρησιμὸν, 'useful', to describe the beneficial effect of the verse he recommends. Evagrius employs this adjective in a medical sense in a scholion on Psalm 4: 5 found in *Peri Logismon* 16. This text affords an example of Evagrius' frequent 'recycling' of his exegetical scholia in other writings (described above in Chapter 1.2.1-1.2.2). After noting that *thumos* may profitably be directed against the temptation of lust he concludes:

καὶ τοῦτό ἐστι τὸ, «ὀργίζεσθε, καὶ μὴ ἁμαρτάνετε», χρήσιμον φάρμακον ἐν τοῖς πειρασμοῖς τῇ ψυχῇ προσαγόμενον.

55

⁵⁵ Evagrius, *Peri Logismon* 16, SC 438, pp. 206-8.

And this [text], 'Be angry and do not sin' (Ps. 4: 5), is a useful medicine to apply to the soul during temptations.

Although taken from a narrative text, this passage from *Peri Logismon* is typical in every way of Evagrius' antirrhetic scholia. It also restates Evagrius' primary definition of *antirrhexis* as contradiction of the *logismoi* and their authors. However, examples of 'direct' *antirrhexis*, verses intended solely to contradict the demons, are uncommon in the *Scholia on Psalms*. There is only one scholion *on Psalms* in which a verse is recommended for use against a particular class of demons:

91: 12. καὶ ἐπεὶ δὲν ὁ ὀφθαλμὸς μου ἐν τοῖς ἐχθροῖς μου καὶ ἐν τοῖς ἐπανισταμένοις ἐπ' ἐμὲ πονηρευομένοις εἰσακούσεται τὸ οὖς μου.

7. Χρήσιμον τὸ ῥητὸν πρὸς τοὺς ἐμφανιζομένους δαίμονας ἡμῖν καὶ πειρωμένους ἡμᾶς ἐκφοβεῖν.

56

⁵⁶ Evagrius, scholion 7 *on Psalm* 91: 12, (= ed. Pitra, 91: 12, vol. iii, p. 172).

V.12. And my eye has seen my enemies, and my ear will hear the wicked who rise against me.

7. This passage is useful for those demons who become visible to us and [thus] tempt us to be terrified.

Similarly, there is only one antirrhetic scholion *on Psalms* directed against a specific *logismos*; in this case, the temptation to pride. Here Evagrius employs Psalm 126: 1 to remind his reader that nothing can be accomplished without God's help:

126: 1. ἐὰν μὴ Κύριος οἰκοδομήσῃ οἶκον, εἰς μάτην ἐκοπίασαν οἱ οἰκοδομοῦντες· ἐὰν μὴ Κύριος φυλάξῃ πόλιν, εἰς μάτην ἡγρύπνησεν ὁ φυλάσσων.

1. χρήσιμον τὸ ῥητὸν πρὸς τοὺς τῆς ὑπερηφανίας λογισμούς.

57

⁵⁷ Evagrius, scholion 1 *on Psalm* 126: 1, (= PG 24.20).

V. 1 Unless the Lord build the house, in vain do they labor who build it; unless the lord keeps watch over the city in vain do the watcher keeps vigil.

I. Useful is this saying for the [tempting] thoughts of pride.

In Book VIII of the *Antirrhetikos* (on pride) Evagrius explains in more detail that the pride this verse is intended to counteract is that of the *gnostikos* who comes to believe that it is he, rather than the Lord working through

him, who builds up souls and leads them to the knowledge of God.⁵⁸

⁵⁸ Evagrius, *Antirrhētikos* VIII.30, ed. Frankenberg, pp. 488-9: 'For the tempting thought of pride praising me on splendidly edifying souls in the perfection of divine knowledge; *Except the Lord build the house, they that build labour in vain; except the Lord keep the city, the watchman watches in vain* (Ps. 126: 1)'.

end p.145

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Psalmody and Prayer in the Writings of Evagrius Ponticus

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pp. [146]-[150]

More typical of the *Scholia on Psalms* are fourteen antirrhetic scholia intended to induce compunction and repentance. Four of these concern the misuse of wealth. Psalm 10: 30 is intended to prick the consciences of wealthy persons who misuse the poor: *'He lies in wait in secret like a lion in his den. He lays in ambush to seize the poor; to catch the poor, by drawing him to himself.'*⁵⁹

⁵⁹ Evagrius, scholion 14 on Psalm 10: 30, (cf. PG 12.1196): 'This saying is to be directed towards the wealthy' (χρηστέον τούτῳ τῷ ῥητῶ πρὸς τοὺς πλουσίους).

Similarly, Psalm 61: 11 'is to be said to those who are greedy; *If wealth should flow in, do not set your heart upon it.'*⁶⁰

⁶⁰ Evagrius, scholion 6 on Psalm 61: 11(3) (= ed. Pitra, 61: 11, vol. iii, p. 70):
τοῦτο λεκτέον πρὸς τοὺς πλεονεκτοῦντας .

And Psalm 38: 7 'is to be said to the childless rich who give no alms whatever to the poor: *He stores up treasure, and does not know for whom he gathers it.'*⁶¹

⁶¹ Evagrius, scholion 8 on Psalm 38: 7(3), (= ed. Pitra 38: 7(3), vol. iii, p. 30):.

Psalm 14: 5, *'His money he has not given in usury,'* is to be said to usurers.⁶²

⁶² Evagrius, scholion 4 on Psalm 14: 5(1) (= ed. Pitra 14: 5(1), vol. ii, p. 469): 'This is to be said to the usurers as an obstacle to their dwelling on the holy mountain (Ps. 14: 1)',. The 'holy mountain' probably refers to the hope of heaven which usurers endanger through their profiteering; but Evagrius may also intend a more local monastic interpretation. Although only a few metres above sea level, Nitria was often described as a 'mountain' (ὄρος): Palladius, *Lausiac History*, esp. 7.1, but also 1.1, 10.1, 10.4, 13.1, 13.2, 18.9, and 38.8. Thus at a mundane level Evagrius' observation may also imply that unreformed usurers deserve no place 'on the holy mountain'; that is, among the monks of Nitria and Kellia.

Five scholia are directed towards those who scorn virtue or engage in worldly pursuits. Evagrius states in the *Scholia on Psalms* that Psalm 108: 24, *'My knees are weakened from fasting and my flesh is changed from lack of oil,'* 'is to be directed towards those who are contemptuous of temperance'.⁶³

⁶³ Evagrius, scholion 16 on Psalm 108: 24, (= PG 12.1568-9):. In *Antirrhetikos* 1.18, (ed. Frankenberg, pp. 476-7) Evagrius explains this in more detail: 'For the tempting thought that rebukes us because we abstain from oil, and does not reflect on the fact that David did exactly this when he said, *My knees are sick from fasting and my flesh is wasted from lack of oil* (Ps. 108: 24).'

Slanderers should recall that the Lord says, *The one secretly slandering his*

neighbor—him I have expelled (Ps. 100: 5).⁶⁴

⁶⁴ Evagrius, scholion 4 on *Psalm* 100: 5(1) (= PG 12.1557): 'This saying is useful for slanderers'.

Those who frequent public amusements and socialize with heretics should be reprimanded with *Psalm* 25: 5, '*I have hated the assembly of those who act wickedly, and with the impious I will not sit.*'⁶⁵

⁶⁵ Evagrius, scholion 4 on *Psalm* 25: 5 (cf. ed. Pitra, 25: 4, vol. ii, p. 483): 'These [words] are to be said to those who view horse-racing and the theater; or again to those who cultivate familiarity with heresy'.

Psalm 37: 7,

end p.146

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'For my loins are filled with ridicule', 'is to be said to those who laugh much and take pleasure in laughable things';⁶⁶

⁶⁶ Evagrius, scholion 5 on *Psalm* 37: 8(1), (cf. PG 12.1368):.

and those who revel in drinking and music are to be reminded that David '*ate ashes as if it were bread, and mixed [his] drink with weeping.*'⁶⁷

⁶⁷ Evagrius, scholion 5 on *Psalm* 101: 10 (= PG 12.1557): 'This saying is useful for those who at the time of drinking make merry with flutes and songs'.

Four antirrhetic verses in the *Scholia on Psalms* are intended to exhort or rebuke erring monks and aspiring *gnostikoi*. Those who are 'neglectful of nocturnal prayers' are to be told: '*At midnight I arose to bless you for the judgements of your righteousness (Ps. 118: 62).*'⁶⁸

⁶⁸ Evagrius, scholion 27 on *Psalm* 118: 62 (= PG 12.1600):
λεκτέον τοῦτο πρὸς τοὺς ἀμελοῦντας νύκτωρ τῶν προσευχῶν.

Older monks are to be reminded in the words of *Psalm* 118: 100 that it is not only advanced years, but also *apatheia* that leads to divine knowledge.⁶⁹

⁶⁹ Evagrius, scholion 44 on *Psalm* 118: 100 (cf. PG 12.1608): '*I have insight beyond elders: for I have sought your commandments.* We should apply this saying to those seniors of advanced age who consider *apatheia*, too, to be a vehicle for the knowledge of God'.

Those who are learned only in profane literature but nevertheless dare to teach are reprimanded: '*Transgressors told me idle stories, but not according to your law, O Lord (Ps. 118: 85).*'⁷⁰

⁷⁰ Evagrius, scholion 37 on *Psalm* 118: 85 (= PG 12.1604): 'This saying is to be directed towards those who, from external wisdom, profess to teach concerning the knowledge of God'.

Those who lack discretion in their exegesis of scripture are to be reproved: '*Kindly is the man who shows mercy and lends; He will steward his words with judgement (Ps. 118: 85).*'⁷¹

⁷¹ Evagrius, scholion 4 on *Psalm* 111: 5, (= ed. Pitra, 111: 5(2), vol. iii, p. 231; cf. PG 12.1572): 'The saying is to be directed towards those who thoughtlessly disclose

the mysteries of the sacred scriptures indiscriminately: and so Paul says, "Let a man thus account us as ministers of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God" (1 Cor. 4: 1).'

In contrast to these thirteen antirrhetic scholia intended to induce compunction are eight scholia *on Psalms* intended to encourage persons in distress. In scholion 6 *on Psalm* 89: 12(1), '*to number your right hand, that it be made known*', Evagrius explains that the term 'right

end p.147

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hand' refers to the proclamation 'not of punishment, but rather of love of mankind'.⁷²

⁷² Evagrius, scholion 6 *on Psalm* 89: 12(1) (= PG 12.1552): μὴ ἐπὶ κολάσει, ἀλλ' ἐπὶ φιλανθρωπῷ ἡγνώσῃς τὸ σὸς θωσσοῦ ἡδέξει.

He then provides an antirrhetic scholion recommending that this verse be offered, 'to those who have repented and hold knowledge in high esteem';⁷³

⁷³ Evagrius, scholion 8 *on Psalm* 89: 12(1):
τοῦτο λεκτέον ἐπὶ τῶν μετανοησάντων καὶ γνώσεως καταξιωθέντων.

that is, those who are moving beyond servile fear of the Lord to emulate God's love for human beings. The soul 'given over to grief' should ask, *Why, then, are you sad, my soul? And why do you trouble me?* (Ps. 41: 12).'⁷⁴

⁷⁴ Evagrius, scholion 6 *on Psalm* 41: 12, (= ed. Pitra, 41: 8, vol. iii, p. 37): 'These [words] are necessary in the circumstance of a soul given over to grief'.

Those enduring persecutions are to reflect on the verse, '*away from of the voice of the slanderer and reviler*' (Ps. 43: 17).'⁷⁵

⁷⁵ Evagrius, scholion 10 *on Psalm* 43: 17(1), (cf. PG 12.1426): 'This is to be said to those who are patient in persecutions'.

Priests who are badly served are to be consoled with the text: '*My eyes will be on the faithful of the land, that they may dwell with me*' (Ps. 100: 6).'⁷⁶

⁷⁶ Evagrius, scholion 6 *on Psalm* 100: 6 (= PG 12.1557): 'The saying is to be directed towards priests who are served by most wicked servants' (χρηστέον τῶν πρὸς τοὺς ἱερατικοὺς ὑπηρετοῦμένων ὑπὸ δούλων πονηροτάτων).

Four of these eight consoling scholia are antirrhetic prayers. Those who experience providential abandonment by God⁷⁷

⁷⁷ Abandonment which is simultaneously an expression of divine providence in discussed below in Chapter 6.3.

are to pray, '*It was good for me that you humbled me, that I might learn your righteous deeds*' (Ps. 118: 71).'⁷⁸

⁷⁸ Evagrius, scholion 31 *on Psalm* 118: 71 (= ed. Pitra, 118: 83(1), vol. iii, p. 284): 'This saying is to be directed towards those who are abandoned by God for the benefit of [their] soul'.

Christians who live with irreverent and sinful persons are encouraged to pray: '*Do not destroy my soul together with the impious* (Ps. 25: 9).'

⁷⁹ Evagrius, scholion 7 on *Psalms* 25: 9(1) (= PG 12.1276): 'These words are said as if the capable and the just are destroyed together [with] the impious. Thus Abraham also says to God, "Would you destroy together the just with the impious, and shall it be for the just as for the impious?" (Gen. 18: 23). Now this saying is to be directed towards pious men or women living together with wicked [persons]'.
⁸⁰

Those who are falsely accused should pray, '*Do not hand me over to the souls of those who afflict me* (Ps. 26: 12).'

⁸⁰ Evagrius, scholion 8 on *Psalms* 26: 12(1) (= ed. Pitra 26: 12, vol. iii, p. 1): 'In the circumstance of false accusation these [words] are to be said'.

And those

end p.148

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required to bear witness to their faith are to pray, '*To you, O Lord, have I lifted up my soul* (Ps. 24: 1).'

⁸¹ Evagrius, scholion 1 on *Psalms* 24: 1-3 (cf. PG 27.144): 'In the circumstance of bearing witness these words are to be said'.

As in the *Antirrhetikos*, the antirrhetic verses of the *Scholia on Psalms* serve a wide variety of spiritual purposes. In *antirrhesis*, broadly understood, the ascetical practices of psalmody and meditation on the scriptures are directed towards specific goals in the project of spiritual improvement. Verses from the scriptures, especially from the Psalms, are used to confound the demons and neutralize their effects in the soul, and to encourage repentance and spiritual improvement. Furthermore, in *antirrhesis* the relationship between psalmody and prayer occasionally becomes one of identity: texts which have been memorized through the practice of psalmody can serve as the soul's own words to God in times of temptation and affliction.

In comparing the orientation of the *Antirrhetikos* with that of the antirrhetic verses in the *Scholia on Psalms* a progression can be discerned from preoccupation with one's own spiritual improvement in the former text, to a broader concern for others in the latter. Whereas most of the biblical verses in the *Antirrhetikos* are intended for a single demon, habit of thought, or afflicted soul, the antirrhetic scholia are generally intended for groups of people who share a common affliction. To some extent this corresponds to Evagrius' model of spiritual progress: whereas the *praktikos* employs the weapons of the *Antirrhetikos* in the battlefield of his own soul, the *gnostikos* discovers in the *Scholia on Psalms* healing texts which are not only therapeutic for himself, but which may also be offered to the diverse groups of people who seek his advice.

end p.149

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6 The Psalter as Contemplative Vision

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Abstract: Evagrius believed that that Book of Psalms afforded a vision of the whole creation, including the daily struggles of the *praktike*, as refulgent with divine meaning. The psalter can serve as a training ground for the Christian contemplative, a kind of workshop in which the *gnostikos* learns to perceive the divine *logoi* in the events of salvation history recounted in the psalms. This chapter examines the dynamic relationship between *praktike* and *theoretike*, and suggests a reciprocal relationship between spiritual progress and biblical exegesis.

Keywords: Evagrius Ponticus, psalmody, psalter, spiritual progress, biblical exegesis, Christ, Christian contemplative

For those who are making spiritual progress the practice of psalmody is more than a means of calming the passions and contradicting the demons. Evagrius believed the Book of Psalms affords a vision of the whole of creation, including the daily struggles of the *praktiké*, as refulgent with divine meaning. The psalter can serve as a training-ground for the Christian contemplative, a kind of workshop in which the *gnostikos* learns to perceive the divine *logoi* in the events of salvation history recounted in the psalms. Once this art has been learned the *gnostikos* is able to turn from the Book of Psalms to the 'divine book' of creation¹

¹ The contemplation of beings is a 'divine book': Evagrius, scholion 8 on *Psalms* 138: 16(2). This scholion is cited and discussed below in section 6.3.

where these *logoi* are perceptible everywhere, especially in the daily struggle against sin. Evagrius depicts this contemplative function of psalmody in *Peri Logismon* 17:

Εἰ δέ τις ἐκ τοῦ καμάτου καὶ ἀκηδία ἡμῖν προσγένηται, μικρὸν ἀναδραμόντες ἐπὶ τὴν τῆς γνώσεως πέτραν τῷ ψαλτηρίῳ προσομιλήσωμεν, πλήσσοντες διὰ τῶν ἀρετῶν τῆς γνώσεως τὰς χορδὰς· βοσκήσωμεν δὲ πάλιν ὑπὸ τὸ Σιναῖον ὄρος τὰ πρόβατα, ἵνα ὁ θεὸς τῶν πατέρων ἡμῶν καὶ ἡμᾶς ἐκ τῆς βάρους καλέσῃ, καὶ τοὺς λόγους τῶν σημείων, καὶ τῶν τεράτων καὶ ἡμῖν χαρίσῃται.

² Evagrius, *Peri Logismon* 17, SC 438, pp. 212-14, lines 32-9.

And if, weary from our toil, a certain *acedia* overtakes us we should climb up a little onto the rock of knowledge and converse with the psalter (cf. Ps. 48: 5), plucking with the virtues the strings of knowledge: let us again tend our sheep as they pasture below Mount Sinai, so that the God of our fathers may also call to us out of the bush (cf. Exod. 3: 1-6) and grant us the *logoi* of the signs and the wonders (cf. Exod. 7: 9; 11: 9-10).

Here Evagrius positions the Book of Psalms at the midpoint of an oscillating movement from ascetical toil into contemplative knowledge and back again into ascetical practice. From the tedium of our daily struggle we³

³ At the beginning of *Peri Logismon* 17 (SC 438, pp. 208-10, lines 1-18) Evagrius employs the second person singular in reference to the shepherd who symbolizes the *praktikos*. Midway through the chapter (p. 210, line 19) he introduces the first

person plural, which he employs intermittently throughout the rest of the chapter, making it clear that we, his readers, are the shepherd.

are to 'climb up', to 'take refuge',⁴

⁴ ἀνατρέχω can mean both 'climb up' and 'take refuge', Liddell and Scott, *Greek-English Lexicon*, p. 104.

on the 'rock

end p.150

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Psalmody and Prayer in the Writings of Evagrius Ponticus

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pp. [151]-[155]

of knowledge' which signifies Christ,⁵

⁵ In scholion 4 on *Psalm* 60: 3(3) Evagrius' only comment on the verse, 'you lifted me up on a rock' is a citation of 1 Cor. 10: 4: 'and the rock was Christ' (ἡ δὲ πέτρα ἦν ὁ Χριστός). Driscoll discusses *Peri Logismon* 17 and other instances where Evagrius identifies 'the rock' with Christ, 'the manifold wisdom of God', in 'Penthos and Tears', p. 156 n. 27, and *The 'Ad Monachos'*, p. 242.

where 'conversation with the psalter' (τῷ ψαλτηρίῳ προσομιλήσωμεν) cures our *acedia* and enables us to hear the call of God and perceive 'the *logoi* of signs and wonders'⁶

⁶ The phrase 'the signs and the wonders' (τὰ σημεῖα καὶ τὰ τέρατα) refers throughout the Septuagint and the New Testament to the events of salvation history, especially to the events of the Exodus: Exod. 7: 3; 11: 9; 11: 10; Deut. 6: 22; 7: 19; 11: 3; 28: 46; 29: 2; 3 Macc. 6: 32; Ps. 77: 43; 104: 27, 134: 9; Wisd. 8: 8; Isa. 8: 18; 20: 3; Jer. 39: 20; Dan. 4: 37; Matt. 24: 24; Mark 13: 22; John 4: 48; Acts 2: 19; 43; 4: 30; 5: 12; 6: 8; 7: 36; 14: 3; 15: 12; Rom. 15: 19.

in the 'pasture' of asceticism to which we must regularly return. The phrase 'conversation with the psalter', and in particular the verb προσομιλέω, suggest an alternating rhythm of attention to the biblical text followed by intervals of prayer;⁷

⁷ It is chiefly in his texts on prayer that Evagrius uses the verb προσομιλέω and its cognates. *De oratione* 34, ed. Tugwell, p. 8 (cf. PG 79.1173): 'For what is higher than conversing with God and being occupied in communion with him?' (Τί γὰρ αὐτοῦ ἀνώτερον τοῦ τῷ θεῷ προσομιλεῖν καὶ τῇ πρὸς αὐτὸν συνουσίᾳ περισπᾶσθαι;). Similarly in *De oratione* 3, ed. Tugwell, p. 3 (cf. PG 79. 1168): 'prayer is a conversation of the *nous* with God' (ἡ προσευχή, ὁμιλία ἐστὶ νοῦ πρὸς θεόν); it is a state in which one may 'converse with him without intermediary'.

in other words, the monastic practice of psalmody. However, Evagrius does not write here of 'psalmody', but rather of the ψαλτήριον. This term, like the English 'psaltery', can refer either to the Book of Psalms or to the instrument of psalmody;⁸

⁸ Lampe, *Patristic Greek Lexicon*, p. 1540.

and it is likely that Evagrius intends both meanings here.⁹

⁹ Driscoll discusses the probability that both these meanings are intended in 'Penthos and Tears', pp 155-6. The pastoral imagery which recurs throughout *Peri Logismon* 17, especially the shepherd's 'psalter[y], kithara, rod and staff' (SC 438, p. 210, lines 9-10) naturally evokes King David, who is associated with both psalter and psaltery: archetype of the biblical shepherd who goes apart to 'pluck the strings' of the harp, David is also the traditional author of the Book of Psalms. A less likely

interpretation is suggested by Evagrius' frequent allegorical definition of ψαλτήριον as the *nous* in the *Scholia on Psalms* (but not in *Peri Logismon*). The psalter and kithara are defined in scholia 2-3 on *Psalm* 32: 2(1)-(2) (cf. PG 12.1304): '2. The kithara is the *praktike* soul moved by the commandments of God. 3. The psalter[y] is the purified *nous*, moved by spiritual knowledge'. These two scholia are combined in scholion 2 on *Psalm* 91: 4 and repeated in condensed form in scholion 2 on *Psalm* 107: 3(1) and in scholia 2-3 on *Psalm* 150: 3(2). Thus 'conversation with the psalter[y]' could possibly signify 'conversation with the *nous*'; but this would be an unusual way of describing prayer, and it is otherwise unattested in Evagrius' writings.

Although this image presupposes

end p.151

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the monastic practice of psalmody, Evagrius is more concerned to emphasize here the spiritual insight which may be drawn from the Book of Psalms,¹⁰

¹⁰ Evagrius specifically describes the psalter as a source of 'spiritual teaching' in scholion 1 on *Psalm* 80: 3 (= ed. Pitra, 80: 3(4), vol. iii, p. 136). The verse 'take up the psalm' (λάβετε ψαλμὸν) means 'take up spiritual teaching' (λάβετε διδασκαλίαν πνευματικὴν). Bunge discusses this scholion in *Geistgebet*, p. 14 n. 12.

rather than psalmody as an ascetical discipline.

In this relatively brief text Evagrius symbolically depicts the dynamic interrelationship between *praktiké* and *theoretiké*. In so doing he also suggests a reciprocal relationship between spiritual progress and biblical exegesis. In the following sections of this chapter this interrelationship will be studied from two different but interrelated perspectives. First, in section 6.1 the central place of Christ in Evagrius' exegesis of the psalter will be studied by means of five scholia which contain a controversial definition of Christ. Second, in section 6.2 Evagrius' teaching that the scriptures reveal the hidden *logoi* of God will be considered from the perspective of two particular *logoi* which recur throughout the psalter, the *logoi* of providence and judgement.

6.1 Christ in the Psalter

The theme encountered most frequently in Evagrius' *Scholia on Psalms* is Jesus Christ, whom Evagrius explicitly mentions at least once in 107 of the 149 psalms on which he comments in the *Scholia on Psalms*, referring to Christ by name, by title, or by citation of Christ's words from the gospels.¹¹

¹¹ In the remaining 42 psalms of the *Scholia on Psalms* Christ is often implicit in allegorical symbols which Evagrius elsewhere identifies with Christ.

The title χριστός is explained or employed in 159 scholia,¹²

¹² Scholia 3 on 3: 5; 4 on 5: 8(2); 6 on 5: 9(1); 7 on 5: 10(1); 1 on 9: 1; 2 on 9: 5(2); 4 on 9: 12(1); 9 on 9: 19(2); 12 on 9: 26(3); 1 on 14: 1(2); 2 on 15: 5(1); 7 on 15: 9(3); 4 on 17: 7(3); 7 on 17: 12; 10 on 17: 16(2); 13 on 17: 24(1); 2 on 18: 5-6; 4 on 19: 9; 1 on 20: 4(2); 3 on 21: 7(1); 4 on 21: 10(1); 7 on 21: 16(3); 8 on 21: 19(1); 16 on 21: 30(3); 4 on 22: 5(1); 8 on 24: 16; 2 on 25: 3(2); 1 on 26:

2(1); 4 on 26: 5(1-2); 2 on 27: 2(2); 5 on 28: 7; 1 on 30: 2(2); 2 on 32: 2(1); 8 on 32: 9; 7 on 33: 9(1); 2 on 34: 3(1); 15 on 34: 26(2); 5 on 35: 10(1); 6 on 35: 10(2); 18 on 36: 20(3); 2 on 37: 5; 2 on 39: 3(3); 9 on 39: 11; 2 on 42: 3(2); 8 on 43: 13; 14 on 43: 14(1); 15 on 43: 24(1); 3 on 44: 4(1); 4 on 44: 5(1-2); 5 on 44: 5(3); 6 on 44: 6(1); 7 on 44: 8(2-3); 8 on 44: 10; 5 on 46: 9(2); 1 on 47: 3(1); 2 on 47: 3(2); 6 on 47: 11(3); 7 on 47: 15(1.3); 1 on 49: 2(2); 2 on 49: 3(2-3); 4 on 49: 6(2); 4 (*bis*) on 49: 6(2); 2 on 53: 7(2); 2 on 56: 4(3); 4 on 60: 3(3); 1 on 61: 2; 1 on 63: 2(2); 5 on 64: 10; 7 on 64: 10; 10 on 67: 14(1-2); 13 on 67: 19; 13 (*bis*) on 67: 19; 15 on 67: 24(1); 11 on 68: 20(1-2); 14 on 68: 23; 4 on 69: 5(2); 6 on 70: 18(2); 1 on 71: 1; 7 on 71: 11(2); 9 on 71: 15(1); 1 on 71: 16(2); 4 on 73: 11; 1 on 74: 4(1); 9 on 76: 14(1); 10 on 76: 15; 11 on 76: 16(1); 13 on 76: 17(3); 5 on 77: 16(1); 2 on 79: 5(1); 4 on 79: 8(2); 3 on 84: 10(1); 7 on 85: 11; 5 on 87: 8(1); 2 on 88: 5(2); 4 on 88: 7(2); 5 on 88: 9(2); 8 on 88: 13 (2); 10 on 88: 20(1); 12 on 88: 23(1); 13 on 88: 25(2); 14 on 88: 26(2); 15 on 88: 30; 19 on 88: 40 (2); 25 on 88: 52(2); 2 on 89: 4; 2 on 90: 4(3); 9 on 90: 16(2); 2 on 91: 4; 8 on 93: 15(1); 9 on 93: 18(2); 11 on 93: 20; 4 on 94: 7(1-3); 5 on 94: 7(4); 7 (*bis*) on 94: 11(2); 3 on 97: 6(1); 2 on 98: 3(3); 11 on 101: 19(2); 7 on 104 11(1); 10 on 104: 15; 5 on 105: 9(1); 1 on 106: 3; 6 on 107: 10(2); 13 on 108: 18(1); 15 on 108: 20; 1 on 109: 3(1); 2 on 109: 3(3); 4 on 109: 7; 4 on 111: 5; 3 on 113: 8(1); 3 on 114: 7(1); 6 on 117: 22; 7 on 117: 24; 2 on 118: 3; 5 on 118: 7; 19 on 118: 46; 25 on 118: 61; 48 on 118: 109; 55 on 118: 124; 58 on 118: 130; 73 on 118: 160; 2 on 119: 4; 3 on 119: 5(1); 4 on 119: 7; 2 on 126: 1; 4 on 131: 6(2); 5 on 131: 7(2); 6 on 131: 8; 10 on 131: 11(2); 3 on 132: 2(3); 2 on 134: 6; 4 on 135: 23; 4 on 136: 7; 5 on 136: 9; 10 on 138: 18(2); 8 on 139: 13; 1 on 140: 2(1); 2 on 142: 2(2); 6 on 144: 15(2); 3 on 150: 3(2).

and of 130 scholia in which Evagrius

end p.152

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comments on the title κῑρῑος, he applies this title to Christ in the majority of instances. Christ is invoked as 'savior' in twenty-four scholia¹³

¹³ Scholia 17 on *Psalms* 9: 35(4); 2 on 13: 3(9); 6 on 13: 7(1); 11 on 17: 18(1); 8 on 21: 19(1); 5 on 23: 8(2); 8 on 34: 11; 1 on 42: 3(1); 4 on 56: 6(1); 2 on 68: 3; 9 on 68: 15; 1 on 74: 4(1); 7 on 77: 19(2); 10 on 77: 25(1); 2 on 84: 9(2); 2 on 87: 5(2); 17 on 106: 33(1); 7 on 107: 10(3); 15 on 108: 20; 4 on 109: 7; 3 on 111: 4(1); 6 on 117: 22; 5 on 131: 7(2); 6 on 144: 15(2).

and the name 'Jesus' appears in eight.¹⁴

¹⁴ Scholia 15 on *Psalms* 43: 24(1); 1 on 71: 1; 2 on 86: 5(1-2); 18 on 88: 37(2)-38(1); 2 on 89: 4; 5 on 94: 7(4); 3 on 108: 6(2); 6 on 117: 22; 55 on 118: 124.

Of the numerous instances in which Evagrius refers to Christ by quoting Christ's words from the gospels, most frequent are citations employing the phrase 'I am' (ἐγώ εἰμι); all but two of which are taken from Christ's 'I am' statements in the Gospel of John. These citations are distributed fairly evenly throughout the *Scholia on Psalms*, appearing 31 times in 29 different

scholia:¹⁵

¹⁵ In two instances Evagrius employs two different 'I am' statements in the same scholion: scholion 7 on *Psalms* 85: 11 contains both 'I am the way' and 'I am the truth'; scholion 1 on 42: 3(1) contains both 'I am the light of the world' and 'I am the truth'.

'I am the life' (John 11: 25; 14: 6) is used in nine scholia;¹⁶

¹⁶ Scholia 2 on *Psalms* 6: 6(1); 4 on 29: 6(1-2); 11 on 37: 20(1); 5 on 48: 10(2); 5 on 65: 9(1); 8 on 79: 19(2); 6 on 87: 11(1); 9 on 113: 25(1); and 1 on 123: 3.

'I am the way' (John 14: 6) in eight;¹⁷

¹⁷ Scholia 2 on *Psalms* 13: 3(9); 13 on 17: 24(1); 2 on 58: 5(1); 1 on 66: 3(1); 7 on 85: 11; 7 on 118: 15; 17 on 118: 37(2); and 25 on 118: 61.

'I am the truth' (John 14: 6) in five;¹⁸

¹⁸ Scholia 2 on *Psalms* 25: 3(2); 1 on 42: 3(1); 2 on 53: 7(2); 2 on 56: 4(3); 7 on 85: 11

'I am the bread which came down from heaven' (John 6: 41) in four;¹⁹

¹⁹ Scholia 12 on 21: 27(1); 17 on 36: 19(2); 10 on 77: 25(1); 21 on 104: 40(2).

'I am the good shepherd' (John 10: 11, 14) in two;²⁰

²⁰ Scholia 7 on *Psalms* 47: 14(2-3)-15(1, 3) and 4 on *Psalms* 94: 7(1-3).

'I am the light of the world' (John 8: 12; 9: 5) once;²¹

²¹ Scholion 1 on *Psalms* 42: 3(1).

'I am (lit. "it is I")—do not fear' (Mark 6: 50) once;²²

²² Scholion 1 on *Psalms* 63: 2(2).

and 'I am your salvation' once.²³

²³ Evagrius does not pretend this is a citation of Christ's words; rather he suggests that Christ should be understood as the one who speaks to the soul the words of *Psalms* 34: 3, *say to my soul, I am your salvation*: 'This is the *soul's salvation*: the Lord saying to it "*I am your salvation*"', scholion 3 on *Psalms* 34: 3(2) (= PG 12.1312).

end p.153

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This pre-eminence of the person and words of Christ is not confined to Evagrius' exegesis of the Book of *Psalms*. Christ also figures prominently in Evagrius' *Scholia on Proverbs* and on *Ecclesiastes*;²⁴

²⁴ Of Evagrius' 384 scholia on *Proverbs* the title 'Christ' occurs in 39; the name 'Jesus' once; and the title 'saviour' eighteen times. Of his 73 scholia on *Ecclesiastes* 'Christ' occurs in twelve; 'Jesus' once; and 'saviour' in two.

however, the *Scholia on Psalms* is considerably longer than these works and it therefore contains a considerably larger number of references to Christ. An association between Christ and the psalter is common in patristic authors; however, Evagrius' approach differs significantly from that of his predecessors and contemporaries. In her study of patristic commentaries on the psalter M.-J. Rondeau coined the term *l'exégèse prosopologique* to describe the widespread interest of early commentators in the question, 'whose face (πρόσωπον) lies behind the psalm?' Or put more simply, 'who is praying the psalm?' She points out that patristic exegesis of the psalter often begins with the determination whether a text should be regarded as David's prayer, as the prayer of Jesus Christ, or as our own prayer.²⁵

²⁵ Rondeau, *Commentaires*, vol. ii, pp. 21-89.

Evagrius' constantly recurring references to Jesus Christ in the *Scholia on Psalms*, however, only rarely represent 'prosopological' attribution to Christ of the sentiments expressed in the psalm.²⁶

²⁶ An example is scholion 3 on *Psalm* 34: 3(2), cited above, n. 23. Scholion 1 on *Psalm* 43: 2(1) (cf. PG 12.1421) is the sole instance in which Evagrius uses πρὸ ὧν in Rondeau's sense. Here he suggests that the 'countenance' behind the psalm is either the Jewish diaspora or gentiles who hear 'the word' from Jews:.

Instead, the person or sayings of Christ explicate the inner meaning of the psalm, that δύναιμις which is the goal of undistracted psalmody and which reveals the *logoi*, the divine purposes, concealed beneath the images and words of the psalms.

Evagrius presents Christ as the exegetical key to the psalter in a wide variety of ways in the *Scholia on Psalms*. Sometimes his only explication of a verse from the Psalms consists of a brief citation of Christ's words from the gospel. More often he presents Christ as the underlying meaning of images which recur throughout the psalter, such as 'king', 'shepherd', 'judge', 'wisdom', and 'sun'. Thus the words and person of Christ continually recur throughout the *Scholia on Psalms* in a wide variety of contexts. In his exegesis of *Psalm* 126: 1 Evagrius presents a rationale for his approach, explaining that Christ will be perceived and comprehended in a variety of different ways according to one's level of spiritual maturity:

end p.154

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126.1. εἰ μὴ Κύριος οἰκοδομήσῃ οἶκον, εἰς μάτην ἐκοπίασαν οἱ οἰκοδομοῦντες·

εἰ μὴ Κύριος φυλάξῃ πόλιν, εἰς μάτην ἡγρύπνησεν ὁ φυλάσσων.

2. ἐφ' ὅσον οἶκος ἐστὶν ἡ ψυχὴ, οἰκοδεσπότην ἔχει ἐν ἑαυτῇ τὸν Χριστόν· εἰ μὴ γένηται πόλις, ὡς βασιλέα καθεζόμενον ἔχει ἐν ἑαυτῇ τὸν Χριστόν. εἰ μὴ γένηται καὶ ναός, ὡς Θεὸν ὑπάρχοντα ἔχει ἐν ἑαυτῷ τὸν Χριστόν. καὶ διὰ μὲν πρακτικῆς κτᾶται ὡς οἰκοδεσπότην αὐτόν, διὰ δὲ φυσικῆς θεωρίας ὡς βασιλέα, καὶ πάλιν διὰ θεολογίας ὡς Θεόν. καὶ τῷ μὲν τρίτῳ ἔπεται ἐξ ἀνάγκης τὰ δύο, ὥσπερ καὶ τῷ δευτέρῳ τὸ πρῶτον· τῷ δὲ πρῶτῳ νῦν οὐκ ἐξ ἀνάγκης τὸ δεύτερον καὶ τὸ τρίτον.

27

²⁷ Evagrius, scholion 2 on *Psalm* 126: 1, cf. PG 12.1641-4.

V. 1 Unless the Lord builds the house, in vain do they labour who build it; unless the lord keeps watch over the city in vain does the watcher keep vigil.

2. Insofar as the soul may be compared to a house, it possesses within itself the Christ as master of the house; if it then becomes a city it possesses within itself the Christ enthroned as king. And if it then becomes a temple, it possesses the Christ within itself as [the] existing God. For [it is] through the *praktiké* [that] it acquires him as master of the house, through natural contemplation as king; and

finally through *theologia* as God. And the two necessarily follow the third, just as the first follows the second; but the second and the third do not necessarily follow the first.

At the level of *praktiké* Christ is 'master of the house': he provides a model of correct behaviour as well as ethical instruction in the struggle to avoid sin and attain virtue. To this level correspond many of the scholia which describe the struggles of the *praktiké* in general terms,²⁸

²⁸ Christ is example or teacher of the *praktiké* in: scholia 4 on Psalm 18: 9; 1 on Psalm 26: 2; 2 on Psalm 27: 2; 1 on Psalm 30: 2; 8 on Psalm 32; 9 on Psalm 32; 15 on Psalm 42: 23; 3 on Psalm 44: 4; 4 on Psalm 44: 5; 6 on Psalm 44: 6(1); 13 on Psalm 67: 19; 7 on Psalm 85: 11; on Psalm 100: 8; 13 on Psalm 108: 19; 25 on Psalm 118: 61; 2 on Psalm 119: 4; 4 on Psalm 119: 7; 1 on Psalm 126: 1; 4 on Psalm 136: 7; 5 on Psalm 136: 9; 1 on Psalm 143: 1; 5 on Psalm 143: 7-8.

as well as scholia which treat of particular virtues and vices. At the level of *physiké* Christ is 'enthroned as king' of his 'city': that is, the universe which he created. The majority of Evagrius' *Scholia on Psalms* are concerned with this level. They encourage the reader to interpret the words and images of the psalter as symbols of the great cosmic drama of creation, fall, and redemption. Evagrius' frequent evocation of the person and sayings of Christ enable the language and imagery of the psalter to reflect Christ's work as creator, redeemer, and cause of our sanctification. A few scholia pertain to *theologia*, the summit of Evagrius' model of spiritual progress,

end p.155

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Psalmody and Prayer in the Writings of Evagrius Ponticus

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pp. [156]-[160]

where the divine nature itself is contemplated and where Christ is
acknowledged as 'our God'.²⁹

²⁹ 'The Christ is our God who shepherds us' (ὁ Χριστός ἐστι θεὸς ἡμῶν ὁ ποιμαίνων ἡμᾶς),
scholion 7 on Psalm 47: 15(1.3) (cf. PG 12.1441). 'For our God is the Christ'
(ὁ δὲ θεὸς ἡμῶν ἐστὶν ὁ Χριστός), scholion 1 on Psalm 49: 2(2) (cf. PG 12.1449 and PG
27.229d-232a). 'The divine judge is the Christ' (ὁ δὲ θεὸς κριτὴς ἐστὶν ὁ Χριστός),
scholion 4(b) on Psalm 49: 6(2) (cf. PG 12.1452 and PG 27.232). 'You are the God
who works wonders [. . .] This is the Christ; for Christ is the power and the wisdom
of God. (1 Cor. 1: 24)', scholion 10 on Psalm 76: 15 (cf. PG 12.1540).

Thus the *Scholia on Psalms* contain a very large number of texts which attest
to the central place of Christ in Evagrius' theology. However, modern studies
of Evagrius' theology, especially of his christology, have concentrated
particularly on a definition of Christ which Evagrius employs five times with
minor variations in the *Scholia on Psalms* and once in *Kephalaia Gnostica*
VI.14:³⁰

³⁰ Evagrius, *Kephalaia Gnostica* VI.14: 'The Christ is not connatural with the Trinity.
Indeed, he is also not essential knowledge; but he alone always has essential
knowledge inseparably [with] in him. But Christ—I mean he who has come with God
the Word and [who] in spirit is the Lord—is inseparable from his body; and by that
union he is connatural with his Father, because he is also essential knowledge.'

'By "Christ" I mean the lord who, with God the Word, has dwelt among [us],'
(Χριστὸν δὲ φημι τὸν μετὰ τοῦ θεοῦ λόγου ἐπιδημήσαντα κύριον). This
definition is found with minor variants in: scholia 7 on Psalm 44: 3; 10 on
Psalm 104: 15; 2 on Psalm 118: 3; 5 on Psalm 131: 7; and 4 on Psalm 88:
7(2). Of these five scholia, only the first four have been previously studied:
the fifth, scholion 4 on Psalm 88: 7, is attested only in *Vaticanus Graecus*
754 and is not available in any published collection. It has, however, been
transcribed in Rondeau's unpublished collation of the *Scholia on Psalms*
which is used in this monograph, and it will be considered here together with
the other four texts.

This formula has been cited as evidence of an heretical Christology which
Evagrius is alleged to have concealed in his ascetical treatises, but which is
supposedly discernible in these scholia and in the *Kephalaia Gnostica*. A.
Guillaumont maintains that this formula and the scholia which contain it
attest to a 'christologie très particulière'³¹

³¹ A. Guillaumont, *Les 'Kephalaia Gnostica'*, p. 147. Evagrius' Christology is
discussed in pp. 146-56.

which was described and condemned in the 15 *Anathemas Against Origen*

published by Justinian in 553.³²

³² These fifteen anathemas are separate both from Justinian's *Letter to Menas* of 543, which contains nine anathemas against Origen, and the fourteen canons of the Second Council of Constantinople, which, in addition to anathematizing Origen, also condemn the teachings of Arius, Eutyches, Eunomius, Macedonius, and Nestorius. The *15 Anathemas Against Origen* of 553 which Guillaumont particularly associates with Evagrius' *Kephalaia Gnostica* ('Évagre et les anathématismes antiorigénistes de 553', pp. 221-6; *Les 'Kephalaia Gnostica'*, pp. 133-70) were formerly edited and printed with the *Letter to Menas* and the canons of Constantinople III (*Mansi* (Florence, 1759), vol. ii, cols. 283c-288a); however, recent scholarship has questioned their association with the council, and they are thus not included in either Denzinger or the *Acta Conciliorum Oecumenicorum*. The most recent edition of the *15 Anathemas Against Origen* of 553 is that of Diekamp: *Die Origenistische Streitigkeiten* (publ. 1889), pp. 90-6.

Guillaumont and

end p.156

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those who accept his conclusions³³

³³ Refoulé undertakes a detailed study of Evagrius' Christology which generally agrees with Guillaumont's findings in 'La Christologie', pp. 251-66. Guillaumont's and Refoulé's conclusions have been accepted by most scholars, including: Géhin, *Scholies à L'Ecclésiaste*, pp. 50-1; Kline, 'Christology', pp. 169-72; Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition*, pp. 377-84; and Bamberger, *Praktikos*, pp. xxxiii-xxxv, xlviii-lix, lxxi-lxxxii; 'Desert Calm', pp. 190-2. Two scholars who disagree with this consensus are Gabriel Bunge and Jeremy Driscoll.

maintain that Evagrius taught an Origenist Christology which 'shifts the subject of the incarnation' from the second person of the Trinity to the (created) intellect of Christ.³⁴

³⁴ Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition*, p. 382.

In their view Evagrius did not believe that God the Word, the second person of the Trinity, took on flesh in the incarnation. They allege that Evagrius regarded the incarnation as the assumption of flesh by the 'Christ-nous',³⁵

³⁵ Kline, Bamberger, and Grillmeier (cited in n. 33 above) employ the term 'Christ-nous' to explain the heretical Christology they attribute to Evagrius. However, this term is not found in any of Evagrius' writings. Indeed, if Guillaumont is incorrect in his interpretation of *Kephalaia Gnostica* 1.77 (see n. 37 below), then Evagrius never expressed in writing any opinion whatever concerning the *nous* of Christ.

that mysterious, unfallen being described by Origen in *De principiis* 2.6.3-6, who alone of all the *logikoi* remained 'inseparably and indissolubly united' with God from the beginning.³⁶

³⁶ 'illa anima [. . .] ab initio creaturae et deinceps inseparabiliter ei atque indissociabiliter inhaerens' (Origen, *De principiis* 2.6.3, lines 100-1, SC 252, p. 314). In the absence of the original Greek it is uncertain whether Origen describes this being as a *nous* or, as Rufinus' translation of *anima* suggests, as a soul.

They therefore conclude that in Evagrius' theology Jesus Christ is not truly the incarnation of the *logos*, the Word of God and the second person of the Trinity: he is, rather, the enfleshed 'Christ-nous' and therefore a unique

vehicle or instrument through whom the (non-incarnate) Word of God³⁷ interacts with the material world.

³⁷ The attribution to Evagrius of this 'christologie très particulière' is based principally on A. Guillaumont's interpretation of *Kephalaia Gnostica* 1.77, where he maintains that Evagrius defines 'Christ' as 'nous united to knowledge of the Unity': Guillaumont, *Les 'Kephalaia Gnostica'*, pp. 151-6. A different interpretation of *Kephalaia Gnostica* 1.77 is suggested below in Appendix 1.

Although the conclusion that Evagrius held or taught the Christology³⁸ condemned in the *15 Anathemas Against Origen* has been challenged,

³⁸ Bunge, *Briefe aus der Wüste*, p. 173 n. 178; p. 400 n. 92; 'Hénade ou Monade?', pp. 86-91.

the scholia in which many scholars claim to find traces of

end p.157

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this Christology provide a useful starting-point for considering the significance of Christ in Evagrius' *Scholia on Psalms*.

6.1.1. *Scholion 7 on Psalm 44: 3*

44: 8(2-3). διὰ τοῦτο ἐχρίσεν σε ὁ θεὸς ὁ θεός σου ἔλαιον ἀγαλλιάσεως παρὰ τοὺς μετόχους σου.

7. ἡ πᾶσα δύναμις τῶν οὐρανῶν τῇ τῶν γεγονότων κέχρηται θεωρίᾳ· ὁ δὲ Χριστὸς παρὰ πάντας κέχρηται μετόχους αὐτοῦ τῇ τῆς μονάδος δηλονότι κέχρισται γνώσει. διὸ καὶ μόνος λέγεται ἐν δεξιᾷ καθέζεσθαι τοῦ πατρὸς· Χριστὸν δὲ φημι, τὸν μετὰ θεοῦ λόγου ἐπιδημήσαντα κύριον.³⁹

³⁹ Evagrius, scholion 7 on Psalm 44: 8(2-3) (cf. ed. Pitra, 44: 3(3), vol. iii, pp. 40-1), *Vaticanus Graecus* 754, of. 123^v, correcting Rondeau's transcription of this scholion. In her collation Christ is τὸν μετὰ λόγου ἐπιδημήσαντα κύριον, whereas the MS has. *Vaticanus Graecus* 754, of. 123^v is reproduced below in Appendix 2 for comparison with of. 219^v (scholion 4 on Psalm 88: 7(2)) and of. 258^v (scholion 10 on Psalm 104: 15).

V. 8. Therefore God your God has anointed you with the oil of rejoicing beyond your fellows.

7. Every celestial power has been provided with the contemplation of creatures, but the Christ has been provided *beyond* all *his fellows*: that is, he has been *anointed* with the knowledge of the Monad. This is why he alone is said to sit at the right [hand] of the Father (cf. Eph. 1: 20; Col. 3: 1; Heb. 10: 12). By 'Christ' I mean the Lord who, with [the] divine Word, has dwelt [among us].

This verse from Psalm 44, the 'Royal Wedding Psalm', has been used by early Christian writers beginning with the author of the Letter to the Hebrews to contrast Christ with the angels and to highlight the unique attributes of Christ (Heb. 1: 5-10). Patristic authors with whom Evagrius was familiar

employed this verse both to describe the relationship between the divinity and humanity of Christ and to contrast Christ with created beings. Thus

Origen⁴⁰

⁴⁰ For Origen, Christ's soul is 'anointed with the oil of gladness', that is the word of God, as a reward for its love and thus 'made Christ' ('Dilectionis igitur merito unguitur oleo laetitiae, id est anima cum verbo dei Christus efficitur') *De principiis* II.6.4, SC 252, p. 316, lines 139-41. He goes on in *De principiis* II.6.6 to distinguish between Christ's anointing and that of his fellows by describing Christ's soul as the 'vase' containing the 'oil of gladness', which ointment is the word of God and wisdom ('[. . .] oleo laetitiae, id est verbo dei et sapientia [. . .] Christus [. . .] vas ipsum quod substantiam continet unguenti'), p. 322, lines 205-15. Christ's fellows are said to 'run in the perfume of his ointments' (Ps. 44: 9). Christ's soul is the 'vase' which contains the ointment itself, 'of whose fragrance the prophets and apostles were made worthy partakers' ('Illi enim in odore unguentorum eius concurrerunt dicuntur, ista autem anima vasculum unguenti ipsius fuit, ex cuius fragrantia participant digni quique prophetae fiebant et apostoli'), p. 322, lines 205-8.

end p.158

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and Gregory Nazianzen,⁴¹

⁴¹ Gregory Nazianzen, *In seipsum ad patrem (Oration 10)* 35.832.5-7:
χρίσας τὴν ἀνθρωπότητα τῇ θεότητι, ὥστε ποιῆσαι τὰ ἀμφοτέρω ἐν.

interpret this verse as a description of the 'anointing' by divinity of Christ's humanity. Since the text of Psalm 44: 8, 'anointed [. . .] beyond your fellows', implies an anointing of both the bridegroom and his companions, these commentators distinguish between the anointing bestowed on creatures (which they usually associate with baptism) and that superior anointing which pertains only to Christ. Evagrius was familiar with this interpretation;⁴²

⁴² *Kephalaia Gnostica* VI.21, is probably based on this scholion. It more closely resembles the approach of Gregory Nazianzen (*Oration 10*. 35 and *Oration 30*. 21) and Origen (*De principiis* II.6) in that both Christ and 'the others' are described as anointed: 'The *anointing* either indicates knowledge of the Unity or [it] designates the contemplation of beings. And if Christ is anointed more than others, it is evident that he is anointed with knowledge of the Unity. Because of this, he alone is said to be seated at the right of his Father; the *right* which here, according to the rule of the *gnostikoi*, indicates the Monad and the Unity.'

however, his exegesis of this text differs from that of his predecessors in the unusual emphasis he places on the distinction between Christ and the heavenly powers. This he achieves by contrasting the similar verbs *χρίω*, 'to furnish what is needful' and *χρίω*, 'to anoint'.

That Evagrius is here contrasting, that is drawing attention to dissimilarity, rather than simply comparing Christ with 'his fellows' is not apparent in the version of this text which was available to A. Guillaumont. Prior to M.-J. Rondeau's study of Evagrius' *Scholia on Psalms* the only published version of this text was that of Pitra.⁴³

⁴³ Pitra's text of *Origenes in Psalmos* in *Analecta Sacra*, vols. ii-iii is based on several Vatican MSS, including *Vaticanus Graecus* 1685. Rondeau describes inaccurate

transcriptions and other difficulties associated with Pitra's text in *Commentaires*, vol. ii, pp. 121-3 and 'Le Commentaire sur les Psaumes', pp. 307-28.

In this version only forms of the verb $\chi\rho\iota\omega$ appear; $\chi\rho\iota\omega$ is not found: Christ and the heavenly powers are both described as 'having been anointed' ($\kappa\epsilon\chi\rho\iota\sigma\tau\alpha\iota$). Thus the version of this text which Guillaumont and his followers used lends itself to the interpretation that the distinction between Christ and 'his fellows' is more quantitative than qualitative: both are 'anointed' with contemplation, although Christ's is the higher contemplation.

M.-J. Rondeau's transcription is based on *Vaticanus Graecus* 754 (of. 123^v).⁴⁴

⁴⁴ *Vaticanus Graecus* 754, of. 123^v is reproduced below in Appendix 2.

In this version it is clear that Evagrius particularly emphasizes the distinction between Christ and the powers of heaven. The celestial powers have been provided ($\kappa\epsilon\chi\rho\eta\tau\alpha\iota$) with contemplation, while Christ has been anointed ($\kappa\epsilon\chi\rho\iota\sigma\tau\alpha\iota$) with *gnosis*. More specifically, the powers of heaven have been provided with

end p.159

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the contemplation of creatures, that is *theoria physiké*; while Christ's anointing signifies *theologia*, a *gnosis* of God which transcends the diversity of creation. These are themes which Evagrius reiterates elsewhere in the *Scholia on Psalms*, especially in his explication of Psalm 88 where the holy oil of anointing 'signifies the knowledge of God—essential knowledge',⁴⁵

⁴⁵ Evagrius, scholion 11 on *Psalm* 88: 21(2):

τὸ ἅγιον ἔλαιον τὴν τοῦ Θεοῦ γνώσιν σημαίνει, μᾶλλον δὲ τὴν οὐσιώδη γνώσιν δηλοῖ. (= PG 12.1549a). This definition is repeated in *Kephalaia Gnostica* IV.18 and IV.21.

and where 'Christ alone is exalted in the knowledge of the Father'.⁴⁶

⁴⁶ Evagrius, scholion 13 on *Psalm* 88: 25(2) (= ed. Pitra, 88: 43, vol. iii, p. 165):.

Evagrius further sharpens this contrast between Christ and the celestial powers by explaining that whereas the celestial powers have been given the power to contemplate things that have been created, only Christ has knowledge 'of the monad' (*τῆς μονάδος*). This is the only occurrence in the *Scholia on Psalms* of the philosophical term $\eta\ \mu\omicron\nu\acute{\alpha}\varsigma$, which Evagrius employs in only two other works: the *Epistula fidei* and the *Kephalaia Gnostica*. In these texts $\eta\ \mu\omicron\nu\acute{\alpha}\varsigma$ is used either alone or in combination with $\eta\ \epsilon\nu\acute{\alpha}\varsigma$, 'the unity'. Bunge has studied Evagrius' use of these two terms and concludes that he employs them with careful precision. According to Bunge, the occurrence of $\eta\ \mu\omicron\nu\acute{\alpha}\varsigma$ together with $\eta\ \epsilon\nu\acute{\alpha}\varsigma$, as in the phrase, 'the

contemplation of monad and henad',⁴⁷

⁴⁷ Evagrius, *Epistula fidei* 7.7, ed. Courtonne, p. 30: τὴν ἑνᾶδος καὶ μονάδος θεωρίαν.

always refers to 'the divinity itself [. . .] the absolute and non-numerical

unity of the divine essence'.⁴⁸

⁴⁸ Bunge, 'Hénade ou Monade?', pp. 80, 82-3.

Evagrius sometimes employs this double phrase as a synonym for the Blessed Trinity: the first term, *ἐνς*, emphasizes 'the absolute unicity of the divine essence'; while the second, *μονάς*, 'implies the trinity of persons'.⁴⁹

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 81.

However, when *μονάς* is used by itself, as it is in this scholion, Bunge believes that Evagrius intends it to mean 'the beatific state of non-numerical union between the creature and its creator [. . .] a state of *participation* bestowed upon created beings by God through grace'.⁵⁰

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 83.

Thus the phrase Evagrius employs here, 'knowledge of the monad', either hearkens back to the original state of union between God and his creatures which preceded the fall, or looks forward to the eschatological destiny of the *logikoi*.⁵¹

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 82.

In this text Evagrius does not define '*gnosis* of the monad' in philosophical terms. Instead, in the second sentence of this scholion he

end p.160

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Psalmody and Prayer in the Writings of Evagrius Ponticus

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pp. [161]-[165]

employs two strikingly different images of Christ, one static and the other dynamic, to depict two closely related concepts: first, Christ's union with God the Father; and second, the extension of that union to the *logikoi*. He first employs a familiar biblical image to portray Christ's unique relationship with the Father: 'This is why [Christ] alone (μόνος) is said to sit at the right [hand] of the Father.' Next he employs his definition of Christ to portray Christ as the mediator of this relationship, the means by which God the Word extends that relationship to those 'among whom he sojourns' (ἐπιδημήσαντα): 'By "Christ" I mean the Lord who, with [the] divine Word, has dwelt [among us].'

The interrelationship between these two concepts is intriguing, and it is echoed in three other scholia on this psalm.⁵²

⁵² This is the second of four closely related scholia on Psalm 44 in which Evagrius employs spatial and relational imagery (i.e. standing below or standing at the right) to depict both Christ's relationship with the Father, and that relationship of the *logikoi* with the Father which Christ mediates. In scholion 4 on Psalm 44: 5 the truthful, the gentle, and the just are said to 'rule beneath Christ'; οἱ ἀληθεῖς, καὶ πραεῖς, καὶ δίκαιοι βασιλεύονται ὑπὸ Χριστοῦ (cf. PG 12.1429), while in scholion 5 on Psalm 44: 5(3) the 'right hand of God' is defined as Christ, together with 'the divine word within him', δεξιὰ τοῦ θεοῦ ἐστὶν ὁ Χριστὸς καὶ θεὸς λόγος ἐν αὐτῷ (MS Vaticanus Graecus 754, of. 123^v). In scholion 8 on Psalm 44: 10 the queen who stands at the right of her lord and husband is a symbol of the holy souls who, united through faith and virtue, stand together at the right hand of Christ: (cf. PG 12.1432).

The first image is static and suggests repose: Christ's unique (μόνος) relationship with the Father is symbolized by his enthronement at the Father's right. Yet this image of union can be eschatologically applied to the whole of creation, for it portrays what is only temporarily unique to Christ. Essential knowledge, which Evagrius here calls 'knowledge of the Monad', will eventually be restored to all the *logikoi* through Christ's salvific acts and teaching. The second image, in contrast, depicts the extension of divine union to created beings through Christ's unique role as saviour. Here Christ is 'the Lord who with the divine Word has dwelt', literally 'has made his home', with the beings he created. Paradoxically the static, royal symbol of union depicts a temporary uniqueness which Christ will ultimately share with all the *logikoi*, while the more dynamic image of Christ's saving descent portrays what will forever remain unique to Christ: namely, the saving work of the incarnate Word of God.

6.1.2. Scholion 10 on Psalm 104: 15

104·15. μὴ ἄπτεσθε τῶν χριστῶν μου

10. οὗτοι οἱ χρηστοὶ Χριστοῦ μετέχοντες λέγονται χρηστοί· ὁ δὲ Χριστὸς τοῦ πατρὸς μετέχων λέγεται Χριστός. Χριστὸν δὲ φημι τὸν μετὰ τοῦ θεοῦ λόγου ἐπιδημήσαντα κύριον.

53

⁵³ Evagrius, scholion 10 on Psalm 104: 15 (cf. PG 12.1564), MS *Vaticanus Graecus* 754, fo. 258^v. This page of the MS is reproduced in Appendix 2, for comparison with fo. 123^v and fo. 219^v, containing scholia 7 on Psalm 44: 8(2-3) and 4 on Psalm 88: 7(2).

V. 15. *Do not touch my anointed ones*

10. Because those who are kind partake of Christ they are called 'kind'; whereas the Christ who partakes of the Father is called 'Christ' [*anointed*]. By 'Christ' I mean the Lord who, with God the Word, has dwelt [among us].

As in the scholion just discussed, Evagrius is here concerned to clearly distinguish between Christ and created beings. Whereas in scholion 7 on Psalm 44: 8 he distinguishes between Christ and the powers of heaven, here he contrasts Christ with human beings. Evagrius accomplishes this by contrasting two similar words: the title, ὁ Χριστός, 'the anointed one'; and the appellation, οἱ χρηστοί, 'the kind ones' or 'the honest folk'. And as in the previous scholion, the only version of this text which was available to A. Guillaumont and his followers obscures Evagrius' emphasis on dissimilarity. Unlike Rondeau's transcription of MS *Vaticanus Graecus* 754, fo. 258^v given here, the version of this scholion found in Migne lacks the term οἱ χρηστοί: there the title οἱ χριστοί is used of both Christ and his followers.⁵⁴

⁵⁴ 'Origen', *Selecta in Psalmos*, PG 12.1564:.

The contrast between χριστός and χρηστός is traditional patristic wordplay which Evagrius may have encountered in Clement of Alexandria⁵⁵

⁵⁵ Clement, *Stromateis* 2.4.18.3.1; 6.17.149.5.

or Didymus the Blind,⁵⁶

⁵⁶ Didymus, *De Trinitate* 39.712.6.

and which he evidently enjoyed, since he makes use of it both here and in scholion 7 on Psalm 33: 9(1).⁵⁷

⁵⁷ In commenting on the verse "γέλασθε, καὶ ἴδετε, ὅτι χρηστὸς ὁ κύριος", Evagrius explains: (cf. PG 12.1308).

In order to employ this wordplay Evagrius paraphrases the text of Psalm 104: 15, changing the object of the sentence from 'my anointed ones' (οἱ χριστοὶ μου) to 'those who are kind' (οἱ χρηστοί). His decision to paraphrase the biblical text in this way is noteworthy since he was unquestionably familiar with

another time-honoured wordplay which would have permitted him to leave the text intact. The comparison between Christ's title and the baptismal chrismation which allows the newly baptized to be called *ὁ χριστός*, 'the christs', is extremely common in patristic sources:

⁵⁸ Cf. Lampe, *Patristic Greek Lexicon*, p. 1532 on the frequent use of *χριστός* to designate Christians anointed in baptism.

indeed, Evagrius was present in Constantinople when Gregory Nazianzen preached his Fifth Theological Oration which makes this very point.

For Gregory Nazianzen, Christ's title (*Χριστός*) signifies the complete presence (*παρουσία*) in Christ of God, 'the one who anoints'.⁵⁹

⁵⁹ 'He is "Christ" (*anointed*) because of [his] divinity: for this is the anointing of the humanity which [anointing] sanctifies not through [its] action, as with the other anointed ones; but rather through the complete presence of the one who anoints'

(*"Χριστός" δέ, διὰ τὴν θεότητα· χρίσις γὰρ αὕτη τῆς ἀνθρωπότητος, οὐκ ἐνεργεία κατὰ τοὺς ἄλλους "χριστοὺς" ἀγιάζουσα, παρουσία δὲ ὅλου τοῦ χρίοντος*)

Gregory Nazianzen, *Oration 30 (4. Theol.)*, SC 250, p. 272.

In this scholion Evagrius similarly explains that the title *Χριστός* signifies that Christ 'partakes of the Father' (*τοῦ πατρὸς μετέχων*). He employs the verb *μετέχω*, 'to partake in, share' or even 'to have communion' in something,⁶⁰

⁶⁰ Lampe, *Patristic Greek Lexicon*, p. 864.

to define Christ's anointing just as he used 'knowledge of the Monad' to define 'anointing' in scholion 7 on *Psalm 44*: 8 above. In this scholion the title *Χριστός* signifies Christ's relationship of communion with the Father. In an analogous way, but at a significantly lower spiritual level, 'those who partake of Christ' (*Χριστοῦ μετέχοντες*) are 'kindly folk' (*χρηστοί*). Evagrius is able to establish a link between these two analogous but distinct forms of communion through his concluding definition of Christ as 'the Lord who, with God the Word, has dwelt [among us]'. By employing this definition Evagrius is able to draw attention to both Christ's mediation of communion with the Father (his dwelling [among us]) and his role as the unique manifestation of God the Word.

6.1.3. Scholion 4 on *Psalm 88*: 7(2)

A third scholion in which Evagrius distinguishes between Christ and created beings was not available to Guillaumont:⁶¹

⁶¹ The first sentence of this scholion is in Pitra, 88: 9(2), vol. iii, p. 160: however Pitra's version lacks the second sentence which contains Evagrius' definition of Christ, and which is found only in *Vaticanus Graecus* 754.

end p.163

88.7(2). καὶ τίς ὁμοιωθήσεται τῷ κυρίῳ ἐν υἱοῖς θεοῦ;

4. οὐδεμία λογικὴ φύσις ὁμοία ἐστὶ τῷ Χριστῷ· ἡ μὲν γὰρ τὴν τῶν γεγονότων θεωρίαν γινώσκει· ὁ δὲ καὶ αὐτὸν ἐπίσταται τὸν τὰ πάντα ποιήσαντα. Χριστὸν δὲ φημι τὸν μετὰ θεοῦ λόγου ἐπιδημήσαντα κύριον. ⁶²

⁶² Evagrius, scholion 4 on Psalm 88: 7(2) (cf. ed. Pitra, 88: 9, vol. iii, p. 160), MS *Vaticanus Graecus* 754, fo. 219^v. This page of the MS is reproduced in Appendix 2 for comparison with fo. 123^v and fo. 258^v, containing scholia 7 on Psalm 44: 8(2-3) and 10 on Psalm 104: 15.

V. 7. And who will be like the Lord among the sons of God?

4. No reasoning nature is *like the* Christ: for while [reasoning nature] knows the contemplation of things which have come to be, he [the Christ] also understands the very one who created all things. For I call 'Christ' the Lord who, with [the] divine Word has dwelt [among us].

Here Evagrius distinguishes between the *gnosis* which may be attained by 'reasoning nature' and that *ἐπιστήμη* which is Christ's alone. The *logikoi* are part of creation and they are able to know God indirectly through the contemplation of creation. Evagrius' statement that the *logikoi* 'know the contemplation of things which have come to be' is another way of saying that they know the contemplation of themselves and the world of which they are part. Christ, in contrast, understands not only creation but also 'the very one who created all things'. This phrase can be interpreted in two ways. The theme of Christ the creator recurs throughout the *Scholia on Psalms*: Evagrius calls Christ *ὁ δημιουργός* in scholia 2 on Psalm 89: 4 and 4 on Psalm 135: 23, and *ὁ κτίζων* in scholion 3 on Psalm 44: 4(1). ⁶³

⁶³ Christ's role in creation is implied in numerous scholia, including the following: 1 on Psalm 95: 4(2); 14 on Psalm 102: 19; 4 on Psalm 113: 10(2); 40 on Psalm 118: 91; 3 on Psalm 138: 7; 8 on Psalm 138: 16(2); and 5 on Psalm 143: 7(2-3).

The concept of Christ's unique *ἐπιστήμη* may therefore refer to his 'understanding' of both creation and its creator; that is, himself. A second possible interpretation is that Evagrius intends τὰ πάντα ποιήσαντα as a reference to God the Father, who is often described as ποιητής, 'maker', in creedal formulae with which Evagrius was probably familiar. ⁶⁴

⁶⁴ Tanner, *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, vol. i, 'The Profession of Faith of the 318 Fathers [of Nicea]', p. 5: 'We believe in one God the Father all-powerful, maker of all things both seen and unseen'. Also of interest is 'The Exposition of the 150 Fathers' which was later attributed to the First Council of Constantinople, in which Evagrius took part. Although the final form of this creed may date from well after Evagrius' time, it is based on the Creed of Nicea and contains ancient elements (Tanner, *Decrees*, vol. i, p. 22). Here, too, the Father is 'maker of heaven and earth', Tanner, *Decrees*, vol. i, p. 24.

According to this interpretation Christ is unlike 'reasoning nature' in that he 'understands' both creation and the Father.

end p.164

6.1.4. Scholion 2 on Psalm 118: 3

118.3. οὐ γὰρ οἱ ἐργαζόμενοι τὴν ἀνομίαν ἐν ταῖς ὁδοῖς αὐτοῦ ἐπορεύθησαν

2. εἰ οἱ ἐργαζόμενοι τὴν ἀνομίαν ἐν ταῖς ὁδοῖς τοῦ Θεοῦ οὐ πορεύονται, οἱ ἐργαζόμενοι δηλονότι τὴν δικαιοσύνην ἐν ταῖς ὁδοῖς τοῦ Θεοῦ πορευθήσονται. οὐκοῦν ὁδοὶ τοῦ θεοῦ εἰσιν αἱ θεωρίαι τῶν γεγονότων ἐν αἷς πορευσόμεθα δικαιοσύνην κατεργαζόμενοι. εἰ δὲ ἡ δικαιοσύνη ἡμῶν ἐστὶν ὁ Χριστὸς, «ἐγενήθη γὰρ ἡμῖν σοφία παρὰ θεοῦ, δικαιοσύνη τε καὶ ἁγιασμός, καὶ ἀπολύτρωσις,» καλῶς λέγει ἐν ταῖς Παροιμίαις ὁ Σολομὼν τὴν σοφίαν «ἀρχὴν» εἶναι τῶν «ὁδῶν» τοῦ Κυρίου, ἥτις ἐστὶν ὁ Χριστός. λέγω δὲ Χριστὸν τὸν μετὰ τοῦ θεοῦ λόγου ἐπιδημήσαντα Κύριον. ⁶⁵

⁶⁵ Evagrius, scholion 2 on Psalm 118: 3 (cf. PG 12.1588).

V.3. *For those who work lawlessness have not walked in His ways*

2. If *those who work lawlessness* are not those who *walk in the ways* of God, it follows that *those who work justice* are those who will *walk in the ways of the Lord*. Therefore *the ways of the Lord* are the contemplations of beings, 'in which we shall walk, accomplishing justice' (cf. Ps. 14: 2). But if *our justice is* the Christ, 'for he has become our wisdom from God, our justice and sanctification and redemption' (1 Cor. 1: 30), Solomon says well in Proverbs that wisdom is the '*beginning of the ways*' (Prov. 8: 22) *of the Lord*—which [wisdom] is the Christ. And I call 'Christ' the Lord who, with the divine word, has dwelt [among us].

This scholion illustrates Evagrius' love of syllogism and progressive definition; however, his introduction of what at first seem to be extraneous citations from 1 Corinthians and Proverbs make the thread of his logic somewhat difficult to follow. The underlying schema of his exposition becomes clearer when it is noted that he repeats and interweaves three concepts throughout this scholion: first, 'justice', a virtue which for Evagrius can stand for all the virtues; ⁶⁶

⁶⁶ Evagrius alludes in scholion 2 on Psalm 118: 3 to Psalm 14: 2: 'He who walks blamelessly and works righteousness'. In scholion 2 on Psalm 2(1) Evagrius notes that 'insofar as one *works justice*, so he also [works] temperance and courage and love, and the remaining virtues' (ὥσπερ ἐργάζεται τις δικαιοσύνην, οὕτω καὶ σωφροσύνην καὶ ἀνδρείαν καὶ ἀγῆπην καὶ τὰς λοιπὰς ἀρετάς) (cf. PG 12.1208).

second, 'the contemplation of beings'; and third, 'wisdom', which is both a title of Christ and a virtue which Evagrius elsewhere defines as 'contemplation of the *logoi* of corporeal and incorporeal beings'. ⁶⁷

⁶⁷ Evagrius, *Praktikos* 89; *Gnostikos* 44.

These three concepts represent spiritual ascent from the virtues of the *praktiké* into two successive levels of *theoria physiké*.

Evagrius begins by employing the concept of justice to distinguish between those who do and those who do not walk in the ways of the Lord. He then invokes 1 Corinthians 1:30 to equate justice

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pp. [166]-[170]

and wisdom (as well as other qualities) with Christ. He next cites Proverbs 8:22 where wisdom is described as the beginning of the ways of the Lord. He concludes that since Christ is wisdom, Christ is therefore also the beginning of the Lord's ways. Thus through a rather tortuous series of definitions Evagrius equates Christ with both the starting-point of the spiritual journey in the *praktiké* (justice) and its mid-point in the *physiké* (the contemplation of beings). To complete this thought it only remains to link Christ with *theologia*, which Evagrius accomplishes in his concluding definition: Christ comes 'with the divine Word', the Second Person of the Trinity and the object of *theologia*.

6.1.5. Scholion 5 on Psalm 131: 7

The fifth and final scholion which contains Evagrius' controversial definition of Christ is intelligible only if it is considered in context. It is part of a cluster of five consecutive, interrelated scholia on Psalm 131 in which definitions are foreshadowed in one scholion, presented in another, and developed in a third. Scholia 2-6 on Psalm 131: explore and allegorically interpret the central theme of Psalm 131; the discovery of the ark of the covenant in Ephratha and its transfer to 'the place of the Lord' in Jerusalem, where it was venerated and regarded as a source of blessing. In scholion 2 Evagrius defines 'the place of the Lord' as 'the pure *nous*'. In scholion 3 he introduces the theme of Jesus' humanity by identifying Ephratha with the Virgin Mary, whom he again mentions in scholion 9.⁶⁸

⁶⁸ Evagrius mentions the Virgin Mary by way of drawing attention to Christ's humanity in only five places in the *Scholia on Psalms*: twice in this psalm (scholia 3 and 9 on Psalm 131), and in scholia 4 and 9 on Psalm 21, and 15 on Psalm 67: 24(1).

In scholion 4 he identifies Christ with wisdom. It is against this background that his controversial definition of Christ appears in scholion 5:

131: 7. προσκυνήσωμεν εἰς τὸν τόπον, οὗ ἔστησαν οἱ πόδες αὐτοῦ

5. Προσκυνούμεν τὴν σάρκα τοῦ σωτῆρος οὐ διὰ τὴν φύσιν, ἀλλ' ἐπειδὴ ὁ Χριστὸς ἐστὶν ἐν αὐτῇ· καὶ ἡ μὲν σὰρξ προσκυνητὴ διὰ τὸν Χριστόν, ὁ δὲ Χριστὸς διὰ τὸν θεὸν λόγον τὸν ἐν αὐτῷ. Χριστὸν δὲ ἐνταῦθά φημι τὴν λογικὴν καὶ ἁγίαν ψυχὴν τὴν μετὰ τοῦ θεοῦ λόγου ἐπιδημήσασαν τῷ βίῳ τῶν ἀνθρώπων· μόνη γὰρ σὰρξ οὐ πέφυκε δέχεσθαι θεόν, διότι ὁ θεὸς ἡμῶν σοφία ἐστίν. ἐν δὲ καρδίᾳ ἀγαθῇ, φησὶ Σαλομών, ἀναπαύσεται σοφία· οὐδὲν δὲ τῶν συνεστώτων ἐκ τῶν τεσσάρων στοιχείων γνώσεώς ἐστι δεκτικόν, γνωστὸς δὲ ἡμῶν ἐστὶν ὁ θεός.

69

⁶⁹ Evagrius, scholion 5 on Psalm 131: 7 (cf. ed. Pitra, 131: 7, vol. iii, p. 330).

end p.166

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V. 7. *Let us worship in the place where his feet stood*

5. We worship the flesh of the Savior not because of its nature, but because the Christ is in it: and just as the flesh may be worshipped because of the Christ, so the Christ [may be worshipped] because of God the Word within him. By 'Christ' I here mean the reasoning and holy soul who with God the Word dwelt in the life of men: for flesh alone cannot naturally receive God, because our God is wisdom. Now it is in a good heart that Solomon says wisdom will rest (cf. Prov. 13: 43): and while nothing of what is constituted by the four elements is able to receive knowledge, what is known to us is God.

Evagrius' definition of Christ as one who comes 'with the Word of God' necessarily draws attention to the question of Christ's divine nature. In this scholion, however, Evagrius repeatedly emphasizes the humanity of Christ through such images as the flesh of Christ, Christ's soul, and the four elements. In the first sentence of the scholion Evagrius explains why it is legitimate to venerate the flesh of the savior. He raises this question in response to the first word of Psalm 131: 7, the verb προσκυνέω, 'to worship' or 'to prostrate'. However, Evagrius' concern with worship of 'the savior's flesh' makes sense only in light of his earlier allusion to Christ's human origins through his definition in scholion 3 of Mary as 'Ephratha', the place where the ark was found. As he will go on to explain in scholion 6, he regards the ark of the covenant as a symbol of Christ's flesh and an invitation to meditate on the mystery of God's presence in material things.⁷⁰

⁷⁰ 'Now the flesh is the *ark* of the Christ, while the *ark* of God is the Christ, since "God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself" (2 Cor. 5: 19)'

(ἡ σὰρξ μὲν ἐστὶ κιβωτὸς τοῦ Χριστοῦ· κιβωτὸς δὲ Θεοῦ ὁ Χριστὸς, εἶπερ ὁ θεὸς ἦν ἐν Χριστῷ κόσμον καταλλάσσων ἑαυτῷ),
Evagrius, scholion 6 on Psalm 131: 8 (cf. ed. Pitra, 131: 8, vol. iii, p. 330).

Evagrius does not explain whether 'worship of the saviour's flesh' refers to ritual liturgical gestures (perhaps prostrations at the eucharistic celebration),

or interior acts of devotion directed towards the humanity of Christ.⁷¹

⁷¹ For Evagrius 'the flesh and blood of Christ' can signify the whole of Christ's earthly life: 'for, he named "his flesh and blood" his whole mystical dwelling [among us]' [*Σάρκα γὰρ καὶ αἷμα πᾶσαν αὐτοῦ τὴν μυστικὴν ἐπιδημίαν ὠνόμασε*]. Evagrius, *Epistula fidei* 4.23-4, ed. Courtonne, p. 28.

Whatever the source of his concern, Evagrius explains that adoration offered to the saviour's flesh reaches beyond 'nature' to the Christ 'within it' (*ἐν αὐτῇ*). He goes on to explain that Christ deserves worship 'because of the Word of God within him' (*διὰ τὸν θεὸν λόγον τὸν ἐν αὐτῷ*), a point he will re-emphasize very

end p.167

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shortly in scholion 6 by citing St Paul's christological formula in 2

Corinthians 5: 19: 'God was in Christ' (*ὁ θεὸς ἦν ἐν Χριστῷ*)⁷²

⁷² Cited above, n. 70.

At this point in his exposition Evagrius has established a three-fold distinction between Christ's flesh, 'Christ', and the Word of God. This distinction is intended primarily as a rationale for the veneration of God through material things: as a christological definition, however, it is open to an Apollinarian interpretation,⁷³

⁷³ It could be interpreted in an Apollinarian sense as implying that Christ may be sufficiently described as the union of human flesh and the Word of God, without any reference to Christ's human soul. There is some suggestion that Evagrius was sensitive to the charge of Apollinarianism. In Palladius' story of Evagrius' temptation and examination by three demons disguised as clerics, his last opponent is an Apollinarian (*Lausiac History* 38.11, ed. Bartelink, p. 200). Additionally, the only use of the word 'heretic' in Evagrius' *Scholia on Psalms* is directed against the Apollinarians: 'The heretics are those *speaking evil against the soul of Christ, denying it*' (*οἱ δὲ αἱρετικοὶ εἰσιν οἱ λαλοῦντες πονηρὰ κατὰ τῆς ψυχῆς τοῦ Χριστοῦ, ἀναιροῦντες αὐτὸν*), scholion 15 on Psalm 108: 20 (cf. ed. Pitra, 108: 19(1), vol. iii, pp. 224-5).

and it is understandable that Evagrius immediately expands upon it by introducing a significantly modified form of his favourite definition. Here he does not call Christ 'the lord', as in the other four scholia, but 'the holy and reasoning soul'.⁷⁴

⁷⁴ To some extent this counters Apollinarius' contention that the divine *logos* replaced some part of Christ's psychic apparatus. However, in the Coptic version of the *Lausiac History* and the associated Greek fragments, Evagrius' debate with the Apollinarian demon centres on the *nous*, rather than the soul of Christ (ed. Butler, *Lausiac History*, pp. 132-5).

This designation of Christ as a soul rather than a *nous* particularly emphasizes Christ's possession of a material body and thereby his humanity, since in Evagrius' metaphysics the soul exists only in relation to the material world as an intermediary between body and *nous*.

Evagrius further modifies his definition by adding what is otherwise only implicit in the verb ἐπιδημέω, with its suggestion that Christ dwells 'among his

own' or 'among us'.⁷⁵

⁷⁵ Lampe, *Patristic Greek Lexicon*, p. 521.

Here he explicitly states that Christ dwelt 'in the life of men'. This emphasizes the material world into which Christ comes, and it lends Evagrius' definition a more personal element by explicitly linking it to the world of the reader. This personal element is also discernible in Evagrius' use in the first and last sentences of grammatical forms which include the reader: '*We adore* the flesh of Christ', and, 'What is known *to us* is God'.

Evagrius now raises the question how material beings, 'compounded of the four elements', can be fit receptacles for the immaterial knowledge of God. He presents his question as a paradox: on the one hand flesh 'cannot naturally receive God'; yet God is

end p.168

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known to 'rest' in 'a good heart' as wisdom, and as wisdom he is thus 'known to us'. The solution to this paradox also explains why Evagrius positions his christological definition at the middle rather than the end of the scholion, as in the other four scholia which contain it. The 'good heart' in which wisdom rests is Christ 'our God'. Evagrius' definition thus serves a dual purpose in this scholion: it explains why the veneration of something created is permissible and it also explains why Christians worship Christ. Christ is worshiped not only 'because of God the Word within him'; but also because he is the mediator between God and creation. Since Christ has come 'into the world of men', we who 'are compounded of the four elements' are made capable of receiving Christ 'who is wisdom', and through him the knowledge of God.

The five scholia which contain Evagrius' controversial definition of Christ all have in common that they simultaneously highlight both the uniqueness of Christ and his role as mediator. Christ alone comes 'with the Word of God': he 'partakes of the Father' (scholion 10 *on Psalm* 104); he has 'knowledge of the Monad' (scholion 7 *on Psalm* 44); he 'understands the whole of creation' (scholion 4 *on Psalm* 88); he is identifiable with each level of spiritual progress (scholion 2 *on Psalm* 118); and his is the 'good heart' in which 'wisdom rests' (scholion 5 *on Psalm* 131). Yet each of these unique qualities is also a source of mediation: through the universe Christ has created we are 'provided with the contemplation of creatures' (scholion 7 *on Psalm* 44); we 'know the contemplation of beings' (scholion 4 *on Psalm* 88); by partaking of Christ we become 'kindly folk' (scholion 10 *on Psalm* 104); through Christ who is 'justice' and 'wisdom' (*praktiké* and *physiké*) we make spiritual progress (scholion 2 *on Psalm* 118); and through 'the flesh of Christ' material beings have access to the immaterial God (scholion 5 *on Psalm* 131).

Before concluding this discussion of Evagrius' Christology it will be helpful to consider one final scholion *on Psalms* which helps to provide a context for Evagrius' teaching on prayer:

22: 5(1). ἡτοιμάσας ἐνώπιόν μου τράπεζαν ἐξ ἐναντίας τῶν θλιβόντων με
 4. πρότερον μὲν ὡς ποιμὴν ὁ Χριστὸς ποιμαίνει τὰ πρόβατα· νυνὶ δὲ
 λοιπὸν ὡς φίλος καλεῖ τοὺς φίλους ἐπὶ τὴν τράπεζαν. «Οὐκέτι γὰρ ὑμᾶς
 καλῶ δούλους,» φησὶν ὁ σωτὴρ, «ἀλλὰ φίλους.» καὶ δούλον μὲν ποιεῖ φόβος
 θεοῦ, φίλον δὲ γνῶσις μυστηρίων. 76

⁷⁶ Evagrius, scholion 4 on Psalm 22: 5, cf. PG 12.1261-4.

end p.169

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V. 5(1). *You have prepared before me a table in the presence of those who afflict me*
 4. At first as a *shepherd* Christ *shepherds* the *sheep*; but now henceforth as a friend he calls [his] friends to the *table*. 'For I no longer call you servants', says the saviour, 'but friends' (John 15: 4). For fear of God produces a servant, while knowledge of mysteries [produces] a friend.

The movement from *praktiké* to *gnostiké*, from 'fear of God' to 'knowledge of mysteries', is here presented as ascent from the status of servant or slave to that of friend. Christ's gift of knowledge is depicted as an ennobling invitation to share with a new-found friend at table. Evagrius undoubtedly intends his reader to interpret the 'knowledge of mysteries' shared at the 'table' of Christ as essential knowledge, that *gnosis* of the Father which Christ alone can share with others, and which is the subject of the christological scholia on Psalms 44 and 104 discussed above. ⁷⁷

⁷⁷ Although Evagrius' juxtaposition of the terms 'mysteries' and 'friends at table' raises the question of a eucharistic interpretation of this scholion, it does not appear that Evagrius is concerned in this text with sacramental theology.

This image of servants elevated by essential knowledge to the status of friendship and table fellowship with Christ suggests a possible explanation of one feature of Evagrius' texts on prayer which some commentators have regarded with suspicion: namely, the relative paucity of direct references to Christ in Evagrius' texts on prayer. In *De oratione* Christ is unambiguously mentioned by name or title only three times. ⁷⁸

⁷⁸ The title 'Christ' appears in *De oratione* Introduction and ch. 115; the title 'Son of God' is used once in ch. 59. Evagrius' uses of the title 'Lord' in *De oratione* are much more ambiguous than in the *Scholia on Psalms*, where this title generally refers to Christ. In *De oratione* the majority, if not all of these appear to refer to 'the Lord of Hosts'; that is, the Father.

On closer examination, however, it becomes apparent that Christ is in no sense neglected in this treatise: on the contrary, Evagrius cites Christ's words on prayer from the gospels fourteen times in *De oratione*. ⁷⁹

⁷⁹ Evagrius, *De oratione* 17, 21, 30, 31, 33, 39, 59 (twice), 88, 102, 113, 147, 151 (twice).

One who attains that 'pure prayer' which Evagrius recommends in *De oratione* enjoys a state analogous to the 'friend' depicted in this scholion. Christ is not as it were 'in front of' or 'above' the one who prays: the imagery of this scholion suggests that Christ 'sits beside' the *gnostikos* who understands mysteries, sharing 'as with a friend' his knowledge of the Father. For the one who 'prays purely' it is not so much a question of calling Christ by name or invoking him by title: rather, the friend who 'sits with Christ at table' has carefully attended to Christ's teaching on prayer and now imitates his example. Whereas in the *Scholia on Psalms* and in the practice of psalmody Evagrius emphasizes the

end p.170

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Psalmody and Prayer in the Writings of Evagrius Ponticus

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pp. [171]-[175]

perception of Christ in the 'richly diverse wisdom' of salvation history and creation, in *De oratione* and during the interval for prayer which follows each psalm Evagrius encourages the laying aside of images and words in order to enjoy that 'immaterial and uniform' wisdom which is Christ's gift of knowledge of the Father.

The six scholia discussed in this chapter give some indication of the variety of ways in which Evagrius invites the reader of the *Scholia on Psalms* to perceive Christ within the psalter. This perception makes possible another level of contemplative interpretation of the psalms, which will now be considered. Having perceived Christ in the psalter it becomes possible to discern in the saving and sanctifying acts of Christ the *logoi*, the deeper purposes of God, and in particular the *logoi* of judgement and providence.

6.2 The Logoi of Judgement and Providence

The rich tapestry of salvation history recounted in the psalter provides Evagrius' *gnostikos* with glimpses of the complex process God employs to draw the *logikoi* back into union with himself. In his exegetical writings Evagrius repeatedly emphasizes that the perception of this deeper level of salvation history requires attention to two particular *logoi*, judgement and providence. In his explication of Psalm 138 Evagrius invites the reader of the Book of Psalms to regard the whole of creation as a 'book' which can be contemplated or 'read' by means of the *logoi* found in the scriptures:

138: 16(2). καὶ ἐπὶ τὸ βιβλίον σου πάντες γραφήσονται
8. βιβλίον θεοῦ ἐστὶν ἡ θεωρία σωμάτων καὶ ἀσωμάτων ἐν ᾧ πέφυκε διὰ
τῆς γνώσεως γράφεσθαι νοῦς καθαρὸς· ἐν δὲ τούτῳ τῷ βιβλίῳ εἰσὶ
γεγραμμένοι καὶ οἱ περὶ προνοίας καὶ κρίσεως λόγοι, δι' οὗ βιβλίου
γινώσκειται ὁ θεὸς ὡς δημιουργὸς καὶ σοφὸς καὶ προνοητὴς καὶ κριτὴς·
δημιουργὸς μὲν διὰ τὰ γεγονότα ἀπὸ τοῦ μὴ ὄντος εἰς τὸ εἶναι· σοφὸς δὲ διὰ
τοὺς ἀποκειμένους λόγους ἐν αὐτοῖς· προνοητὴς δὲ διὰ τὰ συντελοῦντα πρὸς
ἀρετὴν ἡμῶν καὶ γινώσιν· κριτὴς δὲ πάλιν διὰ τὰ διάφορα σώματα τῶν λογικῶν
καὶ τοὺς ποικίλους κόσμους καὶ τοὺς περιέχοντας τούτους αἰῶνας.

80

⁸⁰ Evagrius, scholion 8 on Psalm 138: 16 (cf. PG 12.1662).

V. 16. And in your book all shall be written.

8. The book of God is the contemplation of bodies and incorporeal
[beings] in which a pur[ified] *nous* comes to be written through

knowledge. For in this book are written the *logoi* of providence and judgement,

end p.171

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through which book God is known as creator, wise, provident, and judging: creator through the things that have come from non-being into being; wise through his concealed *logoi*; provident through those contributing to our virtue and knowledge; and furthermore judge, through the variety of bodies of the reasoning beings, and through the multiform worlds and the [beings] who comprise those ages.

In this scholion Evagrius condenses the whole of *theoria physiké*, 'the contemplation of bodies and incorporeal [beings]', into a succinct formula: 'the *logoi* of providence and judgement'. This formula is unique to Evagrius, so much so that its occurrence in a text has been regarded by some scholars as a reliable indicator of Evagrian authorship.⁸¹

⁸¹ Balthasar, 'Die Hiera des Evagrius', p. 104. Although this phrase is unique to Evagrius, the concepts which it conveys are also found in Origen. Of particular interest in the association of judgement and providence is Origen's description of the diversity of celestial, terrestrial, and infernal orders (which Evagrius particularly associates with the *logoi* of judgement) in *De principiis* 2.11.5 lines 163-76. Origen continues with a description of 'the judgement of divine providence' (lines 176-85). This text is discussed in greater detail in below, n. 101.

In this scholion the *logoi* of providence and judgement include the divine appellations of 'creator', 'wise', 'provident', and 'judge', titles which Evagrius explicitly assigns to Christ throughout the *Scholia on Psalms*. 'Providence' is here defined as what God does to help the *logikoi* attain the goals of the *praktiké* and the *theoretiké*, namely 'our virtue and knowledge'. God's role as judge is here associated with the pluriformity of 'bodies [. . .] ages, and worlds'. As has been described in sections 6.1 and 6.2 above, the pluriformity of creation is a characteristic which Evagrius particularly associates with Christ. The *logoi* of providence and judgement thus reflect Evagrius' overall christological emphasis in the psalter.

As with every other aspect of spiritual advancement, the perception of these inner meanings presupposes God's grace; ascetical effort and contemplative skill do not suffice, unaided, to apprehend them. In his exegesis of Psalm 100 Evagrius explains that perception of the *logoi* of providence and judgement can only be attained with God's assistance:

100: 2(1). ψαλῶ καὶ συνήσω ἐν ὁδῷ ἀμώμῳ· πότε ἤξεις πρὸς με;
2. ὁ εἰρηκῶς τῷ θεῷ «πότε ἤξεις πρὸς με,» τίνα καὶ πόσα εὐτρέπισεν πρὸς ὑποδοχὴν αὐτοῦ, καταλέγει. πλὴν τοῦτο ἰστέον, ὅτι χωρὶς θεοῦ τὸν περὶ προνοίας καὶ κρίσεως λόγον νοῆσαι ἀδύνατόν ἐστιν· διόπερ καὶ οὗτος βουλόμενος ἐφαιψᾶσθαι τοῦ λόγου τούτου, Θεὸν καλεῖ πρὸς βοήθειαν, ἑαυτὸν ὡς ἐνὶ μάλιστα μακαρίσας.

82

V.2. *I will sing [a psalm] and I will understand in blameless ways. When will you come to me?*

2. The one saying to God, *When will you come to me*, recounts how and in what way he prepared to receive him. But take note of this: that apart from God it is impossible to comprehend the *logos* of providence and judgement; and therefore the one who wishes to grasp this *logos* cries to God for assistance, having declared himself blessed as for one thing alone.

Here juxtaposition of the verbs 'I will sing' (*ψαλῶ*) and 'I will understand' (*συνήρω*) suggests to Evagrius the effort to comprehend (*νοῆσαι*) the *logoi* of providence and judgement in the text of the psalm. He warns that this is impossible without God's assistance (*βοήθεια*).

In order to properly interpret Evagrius' references to the *logoi* of providence and judgement in his *Scholia on Psalms* it will be helpful to consider these references together with explanations of these *logoi* which occur in his other writings, particularly his other exegetical works and the *Kephalaia Gnostica*. Evagrius introduces the theme of these *logoi* at or near the beginning of his *Scholia on Psalms*, on *Proverbs*, and on *Ecclesiastes*. In his first scholion on *Ecclesiastes* Evagrius associates the *logoi* of providence and judgement with 'knowledge of ages and worlds' and with the person of Christ in his roles as creator and teacher.

1:1. *Ρήματα Ἐκκλησιαστοῦ υἱοῦ Δαβὶδ, βασιλέως Ἰσραὴλ ἐν Ἱερουσαλήμ.*

1. *Ἐκκλησία ἐστὶν ψυχῶν καθαρῶν γνώσις ἀληθῆς αἰώνων καὶ κόσμων καὶ τῆς ἐν αὐτοῖς κρίσεως καὶ προνοίας. Ἐκκλησιαστὴς δὲ ἐστὶν ὁ ταύτης τῆς γνώσεως γεννήτωρ Χριστός· ἡ Ἐκκλησιαστὴς ἐστὶν ὁ διὰ τῶν ἠθικῶν θεωρημάτων καθαίρων ψυχὰς καὶ προσάγων αὐτὰς τῇ φυσικῇ θεωρίᾳ.*

83

⁸³ Evagrius, scholion 1 on *Ecclesiastes* 1: 1, SC 397, p. 58.

I.1. *The words of the Preacher, the son of David, king of Israel in Jerusalem.*

1. The 'church' of purified souls is true knowledge of ages and worlds and of the judgement and providence [manifest with] in them. The *Preacher* is Christ, the progenitor of this knowledge: or the *Preacher* is the one purifying souls through ethical contemplations and leading them to natural contemplation.

For 'the pure' who constitute the Church, judgement and providence are

perceptible in 'the knowledge of ages and worlds', which knowledge comes from Christ the creator. It is of interest that Evagrius here introduces the *logoi* of providence and judgement despite the fact that neither term is used in the first verses of

end p.173

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Ecclesiastes. That he does the same in his second scholion on Proverbs where these terms are likewise absent suggests that Evagrius regards these two *logoi* as essential introductory tools for those who would practise contemplative exegesis.

Here as in scholion 8 on *Psalm* 138: 16(2), cited above,⁸⁴

⁸⁴ pp. 171-2.

Evagrius employs the *logoi* of providence and judgement as a shorthand summary of *theoria physiké*, the midpoint of his model of spiritual progress. He does the same in the *Scholia on Proverbs*. After defining 'proverb' in the first scholion as 'a saying which by means of sensible things conveys the meaning of intelligible things',⁸⁵

⁸⁵ Evagrius, scholion 1 on *Proverbs* 1: 1, SC 340, p. 90:

Παροιμία ἐστὶν λόγος δι' αἰσθητῶν πραγμάτων σημαίνων πράγματα νοητά .

Evagrius lists in the second scholion five *logoi* which, taken together, comprise spiritual knowledge:

1: 1 Παροιμίαι Σαλωμώντος υἱοῦ Δαυίδ, ὃς ἐβασίλευσεν ἐν Ἰσραήλ
2. Βασιλεία Ἰσραήλ ἐστὶν γνώσις πνευματικὴ τοὺς περὶ θεοῦ καὶ ἁσωμάτων καὶ σωμάτων καὶ κρίσεως καὶ προνοίας περιέχουσα λόγους ἢ τὴν περὶ ἠθικῆς καὶ φυσικῆς καὶ θεολογικῆς ἀποκαλύπτουσα θεωρίαν.

⁸⁶

⁸⁶ Evagrius, scholion 2 on *Proverbs* 1: 1, SC 340, p. 90.

1.1. *The proverbs of Solomon, son of David, who reigned in Israel.*

2. The *kingdom of Israel* is spiritual knowledge comprising the *logoi* which concern God, incorporeal and corporeal [beings], judgement, and providence; or [it is knowledge] revealing the contemplations of ethics, physics, and theology.

This same ordering of *logoi* is found in the first century of the *Kephalaia Gnostica*,⁸⁷

⁸⁷ Evagrius, *Kephalaia Gnostica* 1.27, ed. Guillaumont, p. 29: 'Five are the principal contemplations under which all contemplation is placed. It is said that the first is contemplation of the adorable and holy Trinity; the second and third are the contemplation of incorporeal beings and of bodies; the fourth and the fifth are the contemplation of judgement and of providence.'

and a related, although not identical list is found in Evagrius' explication of *Psalm* 72.⁸⁸

⁸⁸ Evagrius, scholion 15 on *Psalm* 72: 23 (cf. ed. Pitra, 72: 23, vol. iii, p. 96): 'With

God is said to be: first, the one who knows the Holy Trinity; and next after him one who contemplates the *logoi* concerning the intelligible [beings]; third, then, is one who also sees the incorporeal beings; and then fourth is one who understands the contemplation of the ages; while one who has attained *apatheia* of his soul is justly to be accounted fifth'

(μετὰ θεοῦ λέγεται εἶναι, πρῶτος μὲν ὁ τὴν ἁγίαν γινώσκων Τριάδα, καὶ μετ' αὐτὸν ὁ τοὺς λόγους τοὺς περὶ τῶν νοητῶν θεωρῶν, τρίτος δὲ πάλιν ὁ καὶ αὐτὰ τὰ ἀσώματα βλέπων, καὶ πάλιν τέταρτος ὁ τὴν θεωρίαν ἐπιστάμενος τῶν αἰώνων· ὁ δὲ τὴν τῆς ψυχῆς ἀπάθειαν κεκτημένος, πέμπτος ἂν συγκαταχθεῖ δικαίως)

This sequence of the *logoi* of providence and judgement in a hierarchy of contemplative objects suggests why these *logoi* are emphasized so frequently in Evagrius' writings. The highest object of contemplation is God; next comes

end p.174

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God's creation, that is the corporeal and incorporeal *logikoi*, including all the 'ages and worlds' of angels, human beings and demons. But for Evagrius, the real significance of created things lies in the witness they provide as to the purpose and intentions of their creator. Thus more important than details concerning the ranks or ordering of the *logikoi* are their *logoi*, the inner purposes of God to which they attest. The *logoi* of providence and judgement, which occur last in this list, provide a means of probing beneath the diversity of creation so as to perceive all created things as active participants in the ongoing spectacle of creation, fall, and restoration.

Evagrius encourages meditation on the *logoi* of providence and judgement in his letters⁸⁹

⁸⁹ In *Letter* 1.2-4 Evagrius recommends Job as an example of one who meditated on judgement and providence (discussed by Bunge, *Briefe aus der Wüste*, p. 331 n. 5). In *Letter* 7.1 he laments his own inability to understand these *logoi* fully. In *Letter* 6.4 he pleads: 'I beg your son [Aidesios], who is my brother, to compel his flesh and, as far as he is able, to subdue it through prayer and fasting and vigils [. . .] He should concern himself with reading the scriptures, which not only testify that [Christ] is the Redeemer of the world, but also that he is the creator of the ages, and of the judgement and providence in them' (*Letter* 6.4, lines 10-13; Bunge, *Briefe aus der Wüste*, p. 219).

and in the *Gnostikos*, where he attributes the following injunction to Didymus the Blind:⁹⁰

⁹⁰ The phrase 'the *logoi* of providence and judgement' is not found in any of Didymus' extant writings. Didymus writes at least twice of the '*logos* of providence' and he associates judgement with providence in ten texts; however, he employs neither the phrase 'the *logoi* of providence and judgement' nor 'the contemplation of providence and judgement'.

48. Τοὺς περὶ προνοίας καὶ κρίσεως κατὰ σαυτὸν αἰὲ γύμναζε λόγους, φησὶν ὁ μέγας καὶ γκωστικός διδάσκαλος Δίδυμος, καὶ τούτων τὰς ὕλας διὰ μνήμης φέρειν πειράθητι· ἅπαντες γὰρ σχεδὸν ἐν τούτοις προσπταίουσι. Καὶ τοὺς μὲν περὶ κρίσεως λόγους ἐν τῇ διαφορᾷ τῶν σωμάτων καὶ τῶν κόσμων εὐρήσεις· τοὺς δὲ περὶ προνοίας ἐν τοῖς τρόποις τοῖς ἀπὸ κακίας καὶ ἀγνωσίας ἐπὶ τὴν ἀρετὴν ἢ ἐπὶ τὴν γνῶσιν ἡμᾶς ἐπανάγουσι.

91

⁹¹ Evagrius, *Gnostikos* 48, SC 356, p. 186.

48. 'Exercise yourself continuously in the *logoi* of providence and judgement', says the great *gnostikos* and teacher Didymus, 'and strive to bear in your memory their material [expressions]; for nearly all are brought to stumbling through this.

And you will discover the *logoi* of judgement in the diversity of bodies and worlds, and those of providence in the means by which we return from vice and ignorance to virtue or knowledge.'

Here, as in the scholion on Psalm 138 cited above,⁹²

⁹² Evagrius, scholion 8 on Psalm 138: 10(2), cited above, pp. 171-2.

Evagrius offers very condensed definitions of the *logoi* of providence and judgement. Meditation on these *logoi* entails an appreciation of

end p.175

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Psalmody and Prayer in the Writings of Evagrius Ponticus

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pp. [176]-[180]

creation from the perspective of its origin and destiny. The variety and multiplicity apparent within creation, 'the diversity of bodies and worlds', should evoke meditation on 'judgement'. As will be described, the *logos* of judgement enables the *gnostikos* to perceive within the constantly changing pluriformity of creation both the consequences of the first 'movement' away from God and God's salvific response, unique for each individual. The *logos* of providence is to be sought in the free choices of the *logikoi* and in the means God employs to assist the *logikoi* in making spiritual progress.⁹³

⁹³ 'The providence of God accompanies free will; but his judgement considers the order (τάξις) of the *logikoi*.' Evagrius, *Kephalaia Gnostica* VI.43, ed. Guillaumont, p. 235 [the term *τάξις* (*taksa*) is a Syriac loan-word for *τάξις*: Smith, *Compendious Syriac Dictionary*, p. 173].

6.2.1 Judgement and the Variety of Bodies

In revealing the rich diversity of creation and history the Book of Psalms also bears witness to that series of progressive transformations which Evagrius calls 'judgements', through which God provides the *logikoi* with the bodies and worlds they require in order to make spiritual progress. As was described above, Evagrius introduces this concept somewhat artificially in the *Scholia on Ecclesiastes* and *on Proverbs* by emphasizing the *logoi* of providence and judgement at the beginning of these works, despite the fact that these terms do not appear in the texts he is explicating. In the *Scholia on Psalms*, however, he is able to do this more naturally, since the word 'judgement' appears in the first psalm:

1:5(1). διὰ τοῦτο οὐκ ἀναστήσονται ἀσεβεῖς ἐν κρίσει

8. Κρίσις ἐστὶ δικαίων μὲν ἢ ἀπὸ πρακτικοῦ σώματος ἐπὶ ἀγγελικὰ μετάβασις· ἀσεβῶν δὲ ἀπὸ πρακτικοῦ σώματος ἐπὶ σκοτεινὰ καὶ ζοφερά μετάθεσις σώματα. Ἐγερθήσονται γὰρ οἱ ἀσεβεῖς οὐκ ἐν τῇ προτέρᾳ κρίσει, ἀλλ' ἐν τῇ δευτέρᾳ.

94

⁹⁴ Evagrius, scholion 8 on *Psalm* 1: 5(1) (cf. PG 12.1097-1100).

V. 5(1). Therefore the ungodly shall not rise in judgement,
8. *Judgement* is for the *just* the passage from a body for asceticism to angelic things: but for the *ungodly* it is the change from a body for asceticism to darkened and gloomy bodies. For the *ungodly* will not be raised in the first judgement, but rather in the second.

Here 'judgement' does not necessarily mean punishment or disaster: rather, it is a 'change' (μεταθεσις) and a 'passage' (μεταβασις) from one kind of body to another. In the *Scholia on Proverbs* Evagrius

end p.176

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makes this point even more forcibly by distinguishing vindictive punishment (τιμωρία) from judgement (κρίσις):

Ἡ ἄλλο μὲν ἐστὶ τιμωρία, ἄλλο δὲ κρίσις. Καὶ τιμωρία μὲν ἐστὶ στέρησις ἀπαθείας καὶ γνώσεως θεοῦ μετ' ὀδύνης σωματικῆς· κρίσις δὲ ἐστὶν γένεσις αἰῶνος κατ' ἀναλογίαν ἐκάστῳ τῶν λογικῶν σώματα διανέμεντος.

95

⁹⁵ Evagrius, scholion 275 on *Proverbs* 24: 22, SC 340, p. 370.

[. . .] Punishment is one thing and judgement is another. Punishment is deprivation of [both] *apatheia* and the knowledge of God together with physical pain; while judgement is the creation of an age which distributes to each of the reasoning beings a body corresponding to its state.

Here, as in scholion 8 on *Psalms* 1, judgement is an act of creation (γένεσις), 'according to the state of each', of the bodies and worlds which the *logikoi* inhabit. Nevertheless, Evagrius' comments on the first psalm make it clear that although 'judgement' does not necessarily describe punishment or retribution, meditation on the *logos* of judgement will necessarily have a sobering effect on the contemplative, since the body and world most suited to the next stage of spiritual development may be either 'angelic' or 'darkened and gloomy'.

If this understanding of 'judgement' is regarded as a legal metaphor, then it more closely resembles the language of civil than criminal law. However, it is possible that Evagrius is here employing terminology which is not properly legal at all. As was noted above in Chapter 4.1, Evagrius often makes more extensive use of therapeutic analogies than forensic ones to explain his model of spiritual progress; and it is possible that his use of the term κρίσις, 'judgement', reflects the ancient medical understanding of this term, rather than its legal use. For Evagrius Christ is more accurately portrayed as the divine physician who desires the soul's healing than a dread lord who threatens coercive punishment. As has been described,⁹⁶

⁹⁶ Chapter 4.1, esp. n. 19.

the term κρίσις was used in classical medicine to describe a 'critical period' which precedes or accompanies a significant turning-point in an illness. The κρίσις heralds a change leading to either improvement or deterioration in the patient's condition. Evagrius similarly employs the term κρίσις to describe a fundamental transformation which facilitates movement either upwards towards virtue and knowledge or downwards into vice and ignorance.

These texts illustrate why Evagrius particularly associates the *logos* of judgement with the diversity of creation. Only the *nous*, the

image of God and the core of personal identity, persists throughout successive judgements: everything else compounded of the four elements—body, emotions, aptitudes, and the world in which these gifts are exercised—reflects the most recent judgement received by each reasoning being. For Evagrius' *gnostikos* the contemplation of the *logos* of judgement is thus equivalent to contemplation of the diversity of creation. The 'richly variegated' diversity of creation is a reflection of the dynamic relation between God and creation: the body and environment of every *logikos*, whether in heaven, on earth, or in hell, bears witness to Christ's power to create and transform, and it reflects as well a divine judgement which has provided each reasoning being with the resources (or limitations) it requires in order to move closer to God.

The complexity of the *logos* of judgement in Evagrius' thought is most clearly expressed in the *Kephalaia Gnostica*. In this work Evagrius uses the term 'judgement' to describe three distinct but related events. First, 'judgement' may refer to God's original, providential creation of the material universe in response to the *kinesis* or fall of the *logikoi*. Second, 'judgement' may describe a series of transformations at which each *logikos* receives a new body and environment suited to its changed spiritual state. Finally, 'judgement' may designate that final, complete transformation which will restore all things to union with God. An example of the first use, judgement understood as the creation of the material world, is the following description of the divine *epinoia* or titles:

حس - مبه مداملا / مبه ماملا :
 با ماملا . ماملا : ماملا ولا ماملا .
 ماملا ماملا : ماملا . ماملا :
 ماملا : ماملا ماملا . ماملا : ماملا . ماملا : 97

⁹⁷ Evagrius, *Kephalaia Gnostica* VI.20, ed. Guillaumont, p. 225.

VI.20. Before the movement, God was good, powerful, sage, creator of the incorporeals, father of the *logikoi* and omnipotent; after the movement, he has become creator of bodies, judge, governor, physician [. . .]

Here Evagrius distinguishes between titles which are proper to God in his role as 'creator of the incorporeals' and those which pertain to his role as 'creator of bodies', such as 'judge' and 'physician'. It is only in regard to the secondary creation of the material universe, not in regard to the original creation of the *logikoi*, that

God is called 'judge'; thus the creation of bodies is the first act of divine

۱۰۰ - مہیہا مہیہا وحیہا :
 وایہیہا مہیہا / مہیہا .
 ۱۰۱ - مہیہا مہیہا ویاہا .
 ۱۰۲ - مہیہا ویاہا . مہیہا مہیہا . مہیہا ویاہا .
 ۱۰۳ - مہیہا مہیہا مہیہا .
 ۱۰۴ - مہیہا مہیہا ویاہا .
 ۱۰۵ - مہیہا مہیہا ویاہا :

⁹⁸ Ibid., VI.75, p. 249.

Here judgement and providence comprise God's answer to the *kinesis* or fall from 'first knowledge' of the *logikoi*. God responds to the misuse of free will by an act of judgement which consists of the creation of the material universe. In this new material world free choice is again possible for the *logikoi*; and there then follows that cascading cycle of free will, providence, and judgement which comprises time and history. The interweaving of the terms 'providence' and 'judgement' in this text illustrates the close interrelationship between Evagrius' cosmology and his soteriology: the ages and worlds of the *logikoi* are the result of divine judgements, and they exist solely to facilitate the reunion of the *logikoi* with God. Although one can describe the interaction between God and his creatures sequentially, defining separate events or movements as Evagrius does here, the distinction between these events is somewhat artificial. Judgement and providence, as Evagrius uses the terms, are two aspects of divine grace, the former providing periodic transformations and the latter offering ongoing assistance in the movement towards reunion with God. By inviting the *gnostikos* to 'meditate frequently' on these *logoi* Evagrius encourages the Christian contemplative to regard the whole history of creation from the perspective of divine

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While Evagrius' first and second uses of the term 'judgement' are not always easy in practice to distinguish from each other, his description of the final

judgement is quite distinctive. The creation of the material world(s) and the subsequent cycle of successive changes, both of which Evagrius calls 'judgement', have in common that they make use of matter, either by creating or by transforming it. The last judgement, in contrast, is restoration of all fallen *noes* to their naked, incorporeal state of union with God. In Evagrius' theology this final judgement is not so much a transformation as it is an annihilation of the material world:

١١ - واما / سنا:
 لا محسلا ولا قعلا محسلا
 99

⁹⁹ Ibid., II.77, p. 91. So also III.66: 'Just as the first trumpet has made known the genesis of bodies, so in the same way will "the last trumpet" make known the destruction (or "corruption"—*محلا*) of bodies (*محسلا*).'

11.77. [In] the last judgement it is not the transformation of bodies that will be made manifest: rather, it will make known their destruction.

Evagrius considers the hierarchical orders of the *logikoi* to be a particularly fruitful object of meditation for those who wish to understand the *logos* of judgement. Throughout his *Scholia on Psalms* Evagrius interprets words and phrases which recur in the psalter as allegorical symbols of the celestial, terrestrial, and infernal orders. In scholion 5 *On Psalm* 118: 7 the verse 'the judgements of your justice' permits Evagrius to present to his readers an extensive list of themes and images which reveal the varied ranks of reasoning beings and thus comprise the *logos* of judgement:

118: 7. ἔξομολογήσομαί σοι, κύριε, ἐν εὐθύτητι καρδίας, ἐν τῷ μεμαθηκέναι με τὰ κρίματα τῆς δικαιοσύνης σου.

5. οὗτος ἐν εὐθύτητι καρδίας δοξάζει τὸν θεὸν ὁ τοὺς περὶ κρίσεως λόγους παρὰ κυρίου μεμαθηκώς, τίνος χάριν ὁ οὐρανὸς μὲν τοῦ οὐρανοῦ τῷ κυρίῳ, τὴν δὲ γῆν ἔδωκε τοῖς υἱοῖς τῶν ἀνθρώπων καὶ τίς ὁ λόγος τῶν καταχθονίων δαιμόνων καὶ διὰ τί μὴ οὗτοι γεγόνασιν ἄνθρωποι, τίς τε ἡ αἰτία τοῦ ἄδου, καὶ τίς ὁ παράδεισος, καὶ τίς πάλιν ἡ ἄνω Ἱερουσαλήμ καὶ ἡ ταύτης Σιών, ἀφ' ἧς λέγεται ἔρχεσθαι ὁ Χριστός, ἥξει γάρ, φησὶν, ἐκ Σιών ὁ ῥυόμενος καὶ ἀποστρέψει ἀσεβείας ἀπὸ Ἰακώβ, καὶ τίς ὁ λόγος τοῦ ἐκπεσόντος Ἰσραὴλ, καὶ τῶν ἀντεισαχθέντων ἔθνων· τίνος χάριν μὴ πάντες ἄνθρωποι ἐκλήθημεν ἀπ' ἀρχῆς, τὸν τοῦ Μωσέως νόμον δεξάμενοι, ἀλλ' ἡμεῖς μὲν ἀγγέλων γεγόναμεν κληροῖ, ὁ δὲ Ἰσραὴλ μερὶς ἐχρημάτισε τοῦ κυρίου καὶ σχοίνισμα κληρονομίας αὐτοῦ, πῶς οὖν ἡ κληρονομία τῶν ἀγγέλων πεπίστευκεν, ἡ δὲ μερὶς τοῦ κυρίου ἠπίστησεν· καὶ διὰ τί νῦν λέγει καὶ ὁ Δαβὶδ· τὰ κρίματά σου ἄβυσσος πολλή· καὶ Παῦλός φησιν· ὦ βάθος πλούτου σοφίας καὶ γνώσεως Θεοῦ· ὡς ἀνεξερεύνητα τὰ κρίματα αὐτοῦ καὶ ἀνεξιχνίαστοι αἱ ὁδοὶ αὐτοῦ.

100

¹⁰⁰ Evagrius, scholion 5 *on Psalm* 118: 7 (cf. ed. Pitra, 118: 7, vol. iii, pp. 254-5).

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Psalmody and Prayer in the Writings of Evagrius Ponticus

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pp. [181]-[185]

V. 7. I will give you thanks, O Lord, in uprightness of heart, when I have learned the judgements of your justice.

5. He glorifies God *in uprightness of heart*—the one who *has learned* from the Lord the *logoi* concerning *judgement*: why it is that 'the heaven of heavens belong to the Lord, while the earth he has given to the sons of men' (Ps. 113: 16); and what the *logos* is of the subterranean demons and why they have not become human beings; what the origin is of Hades; and what Paradise is; and what 'the Jerusalem above' is (Gal. 4: 26); and [what] its Zion is, from which the Christ is said to come, for it says, 'there shall come from Zion the Deliverer, and he will turn back impiety from Jacob' (Isa. 59: 20); and what the *logos* is of Israel's falling away and of the gentiles' substitution [for Israel]; the reason why we men have not all been called from the beginning, having received the law of Moses; why we have become the heritage of the angels, while Israel is 'the portion instructed by the Lord', and 'the allotment of his inheritance' (Leut. 32: 9); how the inheritance of the angels had believed; and how, in contrast, 'the portion of the Lord' (Deut. 32: 9) disbelieved; and the reason David says, 'Your judgements are a great abyss' (Ps. 35: 7); and [why] Paul says, 'O the depth of the riches [and] wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgements and how inscrutable his ways!' (Rom. 11: 33).

This unusually long scholion consists of a chain of biblical citations and paraphrases which probably reflect Origen's discussion of 'rational natures' (περὶ λογικῶν φύσεων) in *De principiis* 1.5.¹⁰¹

¹⁰¹ In *De principiis* 1.5.1, lines 18-19, Origen cites St. Paul's list of 'thrones, dominions, principalities, and powers'; in 1.5.2, lines 42-61, he implies that Paul's reference to 'terrestrial and infernal' beings refers to certain classes of demons; in lines 67-9 he cites Deut. 32: 8-9 on Jacob as the Lord's portion (*pars domini*), Israel as the Lord's [measuring] line (*funiculus hereditatis eius*), and other nations as the 'portion of the angels' (*pars autem angelorum dicuntur ceterae nationes*). This latter phrase, the 'portion' or 'inheritance' of the angels is of particular interest since it appears to be unique to Origen, and Evagrius uses it in two different forms in this scholion: ἀγγέλων κληροὶ and κληρονομία τῶν ἀγγέλων. This phrase is not found in the scriptures: Origen derives it from the division of nations 'according to the number of the angels of God' (Deut. 32: 9). Shorter chains of texts which probably also derive from *De principiis* 1.5 are found in Evagrius' *Letter* 57.4 and in scholion 2 on *Psalm* 134: 6.

Evagrius frames his series of texts and allusions as riddles which

invite allegorical explanation. Although this scholion thus takes the form of unanswered questions, its underlying heuristic goal is clear: through sequentially pondering the answers to Evagrius' questions the reader is expected to mentally descend and ascend the hierarchical ranks of creation, reflecting as he does so on the origin and purpose of creation. Evagrius begins by mentioning in order heaven, earth, and the subterranean depths, the respective dwelling places of angels, men, and demons. He then he re-ascends from hell to paradise and invites the reader to ponder an allegorical distinction between the heavenly Jerusalem and 'its Zion'. He goes on to suggest that some of the titles and promises associated with Israel in the Old Testament are allegories of the angelic state, while Israel's infidelity is a symbol of our lesser human status and a reminder of our need for angelic guidance. Thus Evagrius encourages his reader to contemplatively ascend and descend the ranks of the *logikoi*, meditating on the *logoi* or reasons for the diverse fates of the different orders.

Solutions to most of the riddles proposed here are found scattered throughout the *Scholia on Psalms*. 'Zion' may either symbolize God the

Father¹⁰²

¹⁰² Evagrius, scholion 6 on *Psalm* 13: 7 (cf. PG 12.1205): 'Here Zion is a symbol of the Father' (ἡ Σιών τὴν σύμβολόν ἐστι τοῦ Πατρὸς).

as seems to be the case in this scholion, or it may represent the *nous*,¹⁰³

¹⁰³ Evagrius, scholion 1 on *Psalm* 147: 2(1) (cf. PG 12.1677): 'Zion signifies the *nous*' (ἡ δὲ Σιών τὸν νοῦν ἐρμηνεύεται).

that is, reasoning nature in the most exalted state of contemplating heavenly things.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁴ Evagrius, scholion 8 on *Psalm* 110: 14 (= ed. Pitra, 101: 14, vol. iii, pp. 194-5): 'Here "Zion" means the reasoning nature naturally disposed to behold the things of heaven'.

'Jerusalem' often stands for the soul, as contrasted with the *nous*.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁵ Evagrius, scholion 1 on *Psalm* 147: 2(1) (cf. PG 12.1677): 'Jerusalem signifies the soul' (Ἱερουσαλὴμ πᾶν ψυχὴν σημαίνει). Similarly, in Scholion 6 on *Psalm* 50: 20 (= ed. Pitra, 50: 20(3-5), vol. iii, pp. 52-3), 'the walls of Jerusalem signify the soul's *apatheia*'.

More details concerning the 'heaven of heavens' and the 'subterranean demons' are provided in scholion 2 on *Psalm* 134:

134: 6. πάντα ὅσα ἠθέλησεν ὁ κύριος ἐποίησεν ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ καὶ ἐν τῇ γῇ, ἐν ταῖς θαλάσσαις καὶ ἐν πάσαις ταῖς ἀβύσσοις

2. ὥσπερ ὁ οὐρανὸς ἁγίων δυνάμεων οἰκητήριον, οὕτω καὶ ἡ γῆ τῶν ἀνθρώπων· «Ὁ οὐρανὸς γὰρ, φησὶ, τοῦ οὐρανοῦ τῷ Κυρίῳ, τὴν δὲ γῆν ἔδωκε τοῖς υἱοῖς τῶν ἀνθρώπων.» καὶ ὥσπερ ἐν ταῖς τροπικῶς λεγομέναις θαλάσσαις οἰκοῦσιν οἱ ἀντικείμενοι ἡμῖν δαίμονες, ἐν αἷς καὶ ὁ δράκων ἐπλάσθη τοῦ ἐμπαίξειν αὐτοῖς, οὕτως καὶ ἐν ταῖς ἀλληγορικῶς λεγομέναις ἀβύσσοις οἱ καταχθόνιοι δαίμονες πρὸς οὓς μὴ πεμφθῆναι παρεκάλουν τὸν Χριστὸν ἐν τοῖς εὐαγγελίοις οἱ ἐπίγειοι δαίμονες· ἡ δὲ τούτων τῶν κόσμων καὶ τῶν διαφόρων σωμάτων ἀκριβεστέρα γνώσις ἐν τοῖς περὶ κρίσεως λόγοις ἀπόκειται.

106

¹⁰⁶ Evagrius, scholion 2 on *Psalm* 134: 6 (cf. PG 12.1653 and ed. Pitra, 134: 5-6(3), vol. iii, pp. 333-4).

end p.182

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6. *all that the Lord willed he did in Heaven, and on earth, and in the sea, and in the depths.*

2. Just as Heaven is a dwelling for the holy powers, so is the earth for human beings. For [Scripture] says, 'The heaven of heavens belong to the Lord, but the earth He has given to human beings' (Ps. 113: 16). And just as in the figuratively interpreted 'seas' dwell the demons which oppose us, within which 'the dragon, too, was made to play in them' (Ps. 103: 26), so also in the allegorically interpreted *depths* there are the subterranean demons, to which the terrestrial demons pleaded in the gospels that the Christ would not send them (cf. Matt. 8: 31). The more accurate knowledge of their worlds and their various bodies is stored up in the *logoi* concerning judgement.

In this text the 'heaven of heavens' describes the dwelling place of the heavenly powers,¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁷ 'Heaven' may also allegorically describe the fact that the *logikoi* bear Christ within themselves: 'the noetic heaven is the reasoning nature which carries within itself the sun of justice'

[οὐρανός ἐστι νοητὸς φύσις λογικὴ τὸν τῆς δικαιοσύνης ἥλιον ἐν αὐτῇ περιφέρουσα], Evagrius, scholion 3 on *Psalm* 148: 4(1) (= PG 12.1680).

whose ranks and distinctions are detailed in other scholia;¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁸ Evagrius, scholion 4 on *Psalm* 148: 4(2), (cf. PG 12.1680 and ed. Pitra, 148: 4, vol. iii, pp. 360-1): 'And all of these waters [*above the heavens*] signify the holy and reasoning ranks dwelling in various worlds, which the holy apostle had indicated with other names calling [them] thrones, dominions, principalities, and authorities (Col. 1: 16).'

whereas the earth is the dwelling of 'the sons of men'. The subterranean demons which are described here in greater detail than in scholion 5 *On*

Psalm 118 recur in other scholia: their dwelling place is often figuratively called 'the depths',¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁹ Evagrius, scholion 8 on *Psalm* 70: 20 (= PG 12.1521): 'Here *the depths* designate the place of the subterranean demons; but there are some who call the demons themselves *depths* on account of the boundlessness of their wickedness'.

although the demons may themselves be called by that term;¹¹⁰

¹¹⁰ Evagrius, scholion 13 on *Psalm* 76: 17(3) (= PG 12.1540): '*The depths* indicate the subterranean powers which were terrified at the arrival of the Christ'. Evagrius also mentions the subterranean demons in the following scholia: 1 on *Psalm* 55: 3(1); 5 on *Psalm* 62: 11; 10 on *Psalm* 68: 16(3); and 8 on *Psalm* 103: 9.

and they are frightening even to the terrestrial demons from which, as

end p.183

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this text makes clear, they are to be distinguished.¹¹¹

¹¹¹ Evagrius' allusion to Matt. 8: 31 implies that the terrestrial demons preferred to be sent into the Gaderene swine, rather than being sent to the subterranean demons. Origen writes similarly of demons delivered over to other 'opposing powers' for punishment: παραδίδονται ἄρ δυνάμεις ἀντικείμεναι δυνάμεσιν ἑτέραις ἀντικείμεναις εἰς κ' ὀλασιν, *Fragmenta in Jeremiam* 25.28-9

The angelic and demonic hierarchies provide the *gnostikos* with vivid reminders of the series of divine judgements which have brought into being the great diversity of creation. As the *gnostikos* looks beyond the 'bodies and worlds' of the *logikoi* into the choices which caused these judgements, and especially as he reflects on his own role and purpose in this diversity, the *gnostikos* moves from the *logos* of judgement to that of providence.

6.2.2 Providence and the Mediators of Spiritual Progress

Evagrius uses the term 'providence' to describe God's ongoing provision of what each *logikos* requires in order for it to return to divine union.¹¹²

¹¹² Evagrius, *Kephalaia Gnostica* IV.89, ed. Guillaumont, p. 175: 'Who will recount the grace of God? Who will scrutinize the *logoi* of providence and how the Christ leads the reasoning nature by [means of] varied worlds to the union of the Holy Unity?'

The reader of Evagrius' *Scholia on Psalms* discovers that although providence is ultimately ordered toward eschatological reunion with God, it is also present in everyday experience: providence is the basis of both the ascetical labour of the *praktiké* and the contemplative search of the *gnostiké*. In

scholion 8 on *Psalm* 138: 16,¹¹³

¹¹³ Cited above, pp. 171-2.

God's 'book', which Evagrius defines as the contemplation 'of bodies and incorporeal beings', includes the following description of the *logos* of providence:

[. . .] ἐν δὲ τούτῳ τῷ βιβλίῳ εἰσὶ γεγραμμένοι καὶ οἱ περὶ προνοίας καὶ κρίσεως λόγοι, δι' οὗ βιβλίον γινώσκεται ὁ Θεὸς ὡς δημιουργὸς καὶ σοφὸς καὶ προνοητὴς καὶ κριτὴς. [. . .] προνοητὴς δὲ διὰ τὰ συντελοῦντα πρὸς ἀρετὴν ἡμῶν καὶ γνῶσιν. [. . .]

114

¹¹⁴ Evagrius, scholion 8 on *Psalm* 138: 16 (cf. PG 12.1662).

[. . .] For in this book are written the *logoi* of providence and judgement, through which book God is known as creator, wise, provident, and judging. [. . .] provident through those contributing to our virtue and knowledge [. . .]

Here Evagrius employs the key terms 'virtue' and 'knowledge' to indicate that providence is active throughout the spiritual journey in both *praktiké* and *gnostiké*. In every aspect of daily life it is providence which affords the possibility of acting virtuously and seeking

end p.184

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God. At the level of the *praktiké* providence is the grace which helps one resist sin and strive for virtue. For the *gnostikos* providence assists in the acquisition of spiritual knowledge.

Fundamental to Evagrius' understanding of providence is his conviction that providence is mediated: God's providential care is effected among the *logikoi* chiefly by other (usually higher-ranking) *logikoi*. Evagrius may have this in mind in his description of God in this text as 'provident through those contributing (διὰ τὰ συν-τελοῦντα) to our virtue and knowledge'. He may intend the reader to understand τὰ συντελοῦντα as an allusion to ministering *logikoi*, either angelic or human; but it is also possible that this refers more broadly to any divinely contrived circumstances which promote virtue and knowledge. In other scholia he explains more clearly the role of higher *logikoi* in mediating providence. In the psalter God's providential love is often symbolized by the metaphor of God's 'hand'; ¹¹⁵

¹¹⁵ In commenting on *Psalm* 94: 4, 'For in his hand are the ends of the earth,' Evagrius notes: 'here, *hand* means the providence of God', scholion 1 on *Psalm* 94.4(1) (= PG 12.1255).

more specifically, God's 'hand' refers to the angels who mediate God's providence:

16: 13(2–3). ῥύσαι τὴν ψυχὴν μου ἀπὸ ἀσεβοῦς, ῥομφαίαν σου ἀπὸ ἐχθρῶν τῆς χειρὸς σου

7. [. . .] χεὶρ δὲ εὐεργετικὴ Θεοῦ οἱ ἅγιοι ἄγγελοι εἰσι, δι' ὧν προνοεῖ τοῦ κόσμου τοῦ αἰσθητοῦ, οἷς ἀντίκεινται δαίμονες, οἱ μὴ βουλόμενοι «πάντας ἄνθρώπους σωθῆναι καὶ εἰς ἐπίγνωσιν ἀληθείας ἐλθεῖν».

116

¹¹⁶ Evagrius, scholion 7 on *Psalm* 16: 13 (= ed. Pitra, 16: 13, vol. ii, p. 470; cf. PG 12.1221).

V. 13. *Deliver my soul from the ungodly; [draw] your sword because of the enemies of your hand.*

7. [. . .] And the holy angels are the beneficent *hand* of God, through which God providentially cares for the sensible world, which [angels] are opposed by the demons who do not wish 'all men to be saved and come to knowledge of the truth' (1 Tim. 2:4).

According to Evagrius every order of intelligence above the human level is entrusted with responsibility for mediating divine providence. Angels are entrusted with responsibility for human beings; archangels are responsible for angels;¹¹⁷

¹¹⁷ Evagrius, *Kephalaia Gnostica* V.4 and V.24.

and so on into 'ages and worlds' of which human beings know nothing. In the *Scholia on Proverbs* Evagrius portrays this chain of providential care which has at its summit Christ, 'who keeps watch over all':

Γίνωσκε γὰρ ὅτι ὁ θεὸς διὰ τοῦ Χριστοῦ φυλάσσει τὰ πάντα καὶ οὗτος πάλιν προνοεῖ πάντων διὰ τῶν ἁγίων ἀγγέλων περισσευομένων ἐν γνώσει τῶν ἐπὶ γῆς.

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¹¹⁸ Evagrius, scholion 38 on *Ecclesiastes* 5: 7-11, SC 397, p. 128.

end p.185

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Psalmody and Prayer in the Writings of Evagrius Ponticus

Print ISBN 0199273200, 2005
pp. [186]-[190]

Know that God keeps watch over all through Christ; and furthermore he exerts his providence over all through the holy angels, who have abundant knowledge of things on earth (cf. 2 Sam. 14: 20).

In the *Scholia on Psalms* Evagrius portrays Christ's place at the summit of this chain of mediation by identifying Christ as 'the right hand of God':

47: 11. δικαιοσύνης πλήρης ἡ δεξιὰ σου
6. ὁ Χριστός ἐστιν ἡ δεξιὰ τοῦ Θεοῦ, πεπληρωμένος δικαιοσύνης· διὸ
«καὶ ἐκ τοῦ πληρώματος αὐτοῦ ἡμεῖς πάντες ἐλάβομεν.»
119

¹¹⁹ Evagrius, scholion 6 on *Psalm* 47: 11 (= PG 12.1440). Christ is similarly the 'right arm of God' (βραχίον τοῦ Θεοῦ) in scholia 10 on *Psalm* 70: 18(2) and 11 on *Psalm* 76: 16(1).

V. II. *Your right hand is full of justice.*

6. The Christ is *the right hand* of God, filled with justice, hence [the saying]: 'and from his fullness we have all received' (John 1: 16).

Thus those who would mediate divine providence must first receive 'from the fullness' of Christ. This mediation of God's providential love which originates in Christ is for Evagrius a defining characteristic of the angelic state, just as misdirected *thumos* characterizes the demons. However, the mediation of providence is not an exclusive prerogative of angels. Just as human beings who give themselves over to wrath become in a sense demonic,¹²⁰

¹²⁰ Evagrius, *Letter* 56.4, ed. Bunge, p. 272, ed. Frankenberg, pp. 604-5: 'do not consider a demon to be anything other than a human being aroused by anger and deprived of perception!'

so the *gnostikos* who has turned from vice to virtue and is growing in the gift of contemplation becomes increasingly able to share in the angelic work of mediating divine providence. The *gnostikos*, understanding of the *logos* of providence enables him to teach others how to increase in virtue and knowledge. In fact, this knowledge carries with it an impulse, almost a compulsion, to aid those further down in the ranks of the *logikoi*. Evagrius describes this in the *Kephalaia Gnostica*:

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¹²¹ Evagrius, *Kephalaia Gnostica* VI.76, ed. Guillaumont, p. 249.

end p.186

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VI.76. If *He who has ascended above all the heavens has accomplished everything* (Eph. 4: 10), it is evident that each of the ranks of celestial powers has truly learned the *logoi* concerning providence, by which they rapidly impel towards virtue and the knowledge of God those who are beneath them.

In the *Scholia on Psalms* Evagrius conveys this concept in a series of four scholia which allegorically interpret the imagery of Psalm 134: 7, 'He brings up clouds from the extremity of the earth, he has made lightnings for the rain; he brings forth winds from his treasuries.' Evagrius explains that 'cloud' signifies 'the reasoning nature [which] has been entrusted with the *logoi* concerning providence'.¹²²

¹²² Evagrius, scholion 3 on Psalm 134.7(1) (cf. PG 12.1653): νεφέλη ἐστὶν ψυχὴς λογικῆς ἢ τοῦς περὶ προνοίας λογικοῦς πεπιστευμένῃ.

'Lightning' represents the efficacious use of these *logoi*: 'spiritual teaching which brings the reasoning soul forth from vice'.¹²³

¹²³ Evagrius, scholion 4 on Psalm 134.7(2) (cf. PG 12.1653): ὁστραπή ἐστὶν διδασκαλίᾳ ἀνευματικῇ λογικῆς ψυχῆς ἀπὸ κακίας ἐπαναγωγὴ.

Like the cloud, the 'winds' signify those who have made spiritual progress and who are now obliged to help others. They must now assist the spiritual 'grain' sown in others' souls to 'germinate',¹²⁴

¹²⁴ Evagrius, scholion 5 on Psalm 134.7(3) (= ed. Pitra, 134:7, vol. iii, p. 334): λεγόμενοι ἄνεμοι τοὺς τῆς ψυχῆς στάχυς ἐκ τῶν καλύκων προβάλλουσιν, ἵν' οἱ σπείροντες ἐν δάκρυσιν, ἐν ἀγαλλιάσει θεορίσωσιν.

thereby raising them up 'from the *praktiké* to the most perfect knowledge'.¹²⁵

¹²⁵ Evagrius, scholion 5(b) on Psalm 134.7(3):.

The *logoi* of providence entail not only beneficent action on behalf of others for the sake of their spiritual advancement, but also the ability to retain trust in God even when all evidence of providential assistance has vanished. In

Psalm 72: 16 the psalmist laments the material prosperity of sinners, concluding, 'I tried to understand this, but it is too laborious for me.' Evagrius comments: 'Laborious it is to comprehend the *logos* concerning providence.'¹²⁶

¹²⁶ Evagrius, scholion 11 on Psalm 72: 16(2) (= PG 12.1528):.

He agrees with the psalmist that only 'when we enter the sanctuary of God, then will we understand the *logos* which concerns providence'.¹²⁷

¹²⁷ Evagrius, scholion 12 on Psalm 72: 17(1) (= PG 12.1528):.

In other words, it is in conversation with God who dwells within the 'temple' of the *nous* that explanation of this apparent discrepancy may be sought. The *gnostikos* seeking to understand the *logos* of providence must hold together a seeming contradiction. On the

end p.187

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one hand, in Psalm 106 Evagrius identifies God's providential love with the divine 'mercy':

106: 21. ἐξομολογησάσθωσαν τῷ κυρίῳ τὰ ἐλέη αὐτοῦ
10. ὁ τοὺς περὶ προνοίας ἐπιστάμενος λόγους, οὗτος δοξάζει τὰ ἐλέη κυρίου.
¹²⁸

¹²⁸ Evagrius, scholion 10 on Psalm 106: 21 (cf. ed. Pitra, 106: 21-2(1), vol. iii, p. 217). He also equates providence with mercy in commenting on Psalm 100: 1, 'Of mercy and judgement will I sing to you, O Lord.' Here Evagrius notes: 'He wishes to sing of the *logos* of providence and judgement'. Scholion 1 on Psalm 100: 1 (= PG 12.1557).

V. 21. *Let them acknowledge to the Lord his mercies.*

10. The one who understands the *logoi* of providence—he extols the Lord's mercies.

Paradoxically, however, this 'mercy' which Evagrius equates with providence may sometimes take an unexpected, painful form. Cries of anguish and pleas for divine assistance which recur throughout the psalter provide opportunities for Evagrius to explain that God sometimes abandons (ἐγκαταλείπει) the soul, not in condemnation but rather out of mercy.¹²⁹

¹²⁹ J. Driscoll discusses Evagrius' teaching on providential abandonment in 'Evagrius and Paphnutius on the Causes for Abandonment by God', pp. 259-86.

It may seem at the time as if this abandonment signifies the withdrawal of providence:

93: 18(2). τὸ ἔλεός σου, κύριε, βοήθει μοι
9. ἐνταῦθα τὸ ἔλεος τοῦ Χριστοῦ τὴν πρόνοιαν αὐτοῦ σημαίνει, δι' ἣν ἄνθρωπος βοηθεῖται ἥτοι καὶ ἐγκαταλείπεται. ἀλλὰ βοηθεῖται μὲν ἐνεργούσης αὐτῆς ὁ ἄνθρωπος, ἐγκαταλείπεται δὲ ὑποχωρούσης αὐτῆς.
¹³⁰

¹³⁰ Evagrius, scholion 8 on *Psalm* 93: 18 (cf. PG 12.1553).

V. 18. *Your mercy, Lord, helps me.*

9. Here *the mercy* of Christ signifies his providence, by which a man is either helped or abandoned. But a man is helped when [providence] works in him, abandoned when it withdraws from him.

This seeming abandonment should not, however, be interpreted as a complete withdrawal of divine aid, but rather as a providential act of God intended to lead the soul to repentance. Palladius writes that he and 'the blessed Evagrius' received this teaching concerning God's providential abandonment from the reclusive. Abba Paphnutius¹³¹

¹³¹ It is uncertain whether this is the same Paphnutius 'the buffalo' (*bubalis*) whom Cassian describes as 'the priest of Skete' in *Conferences* 3.1, CSEL 13, p. 68. The doctrine of the 'three renunciations' which Cassian attributes to Paphnutius Bubalis bears some resemblance to the teaching on abandonment described by Palladius' Paphnutius 'Kephalas'.

whom they met during a visit to the community of Abba

end p.188

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Chronius.¹³²

¹³² Palladius, *Lausiac History* 47, ed. Bartelink, pp. 226-36.

The visitors were perplexed by the example of fallen monks. They could not understand why God sometimes allows good monks to abandon ascetical practice and give themselves up to sin, and so they sought Paphnutius' opinion. Paphnutius explained that God sometimes withdraws the 'angel of providence'¹³³

¹³³ Ibid., 47.9, p. 230: ἀφιστᾷ ὁ θεὸς τὸν ἄγγελον τῆς προνοίας ἀπ' αὐτοῦ.

from the proud, abandoning them 'for their own good'.¹³⁴

¹³⁴ Ibid., 47.6, p. 228:.

This 'abandonment' by the grace that keeps monks from sinning is paradoxically a manifestation of divine compassion¹³⁵

¹³⁵ Ibid., 47.12, p. 234:.

and of God's desire that the proud should learn humility. By this means some of the proud are able to sense within themselves 'the change wrought by abandonment'; these then correct themselves 'both in intention and in deed'.¹³⁶

¹³⁶ Ibid., 47.6, pp. 228-30:.

Others who are afflicted with more intractable pride are permitted by God to fall into actual sin, so as to learn from their resultant humiliation and shame how to gradually correct themselves.¹³⁷

¹³⁷ Ibid., 47.8, p. 230:.

Paphnutius taught that God 'providentially' abandons not only the proud, but

also the just: sometimes as in the case of St Paul this occurs so as to prevent their falling into pride;¹³⁸

¹³⁸ Ibid., 47.15, p. 236: 'lest I be too haughty' (να μὴ ὑπεραίρωμαι), 2 Cor. 12: 7).

or in the case of Job, 'so that hidden virtue might be made manifest'.¹³⁹

¹³⁹ Ibid., 47.14, p. 234: Palladius explains this phrase by citing Job 40: 3 (40: 8 in some editions): 'Do not annul my judgement, nor think I have dealt with you for any other [reason], than that you might appear just.' He explicates this text by attributing to God a soliloquy in which he explains that Job's friends thought Job served God because of his wealth. Thus, God explains, 'I who see the hidden things [. . .] cut off [your] riches in order to show them that your way of life ("philosophy") is pleasing to me', *Lausiac History* 47.15, ed. Bartelink, p. 236.

Guillaumont has questioned Palladius' account of how Evagrius received this doctrine¹⁴⁰

¹⁴⁰ In his commentary on *Gnostikos* 28 Guillaumont suggests that Palladius' attribution of this teaching to Paphnutius is a fiction, and that Palladius actually received it directly from Evagrius (*Le Gnostique*, pp. 141-2). Driscoll, on the other hand, is inclined to accept Palladius' account. He presents evidence that the *Sitz im Leben* described by Palladius is a reasonable one: namely, anxiety about the significance of failed monks; and he points out that there is good evidence that Evagrius did receive a significant amount of his teaching from other desert fathers, 'Evagrius and Paphnutius on the Causes for Abandonment by God', pp. 259-86.

which, in any case, ultimately derives from Origen.¹⁴¹

¹⁴¹ Origen *De principiis* 3.1; *De oratione* 29.17: in both cases Origen's explanation of providential abandonment follows a discussion of the hardening of Pharaoh's heart.

Whatever role Paphnutius may have played in its

end p.189

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transmission, it is likely, given Palladius' acknowledged reverence for Evagrius' teachings, that his account also reflects Evagrius' reworking of the doctrine of providential abandonment. In chapter 28 of the *Gnostikos* Evagrius recommends study of 'the five reasons for abandonment', a doctrine which was taken up and adapted by later monastic authors.¹⁴²

¹⁴² These include Maximus Confessor, *Centuries on Charity* IV. 96, and Pseudo-Damascene (cited by Nicetas), PG 96.1412. Portions of Palladius' account are also incorporated into Pseudo-Macarius *Homily* 54 (Suppl.). The relationship between these later adaptations and Evagrius' original doctrine is discussed by Guillaumont, *Le Gnostique*, pp. 136-41.

The causes (αἰτίαι) or species (εἶδη)¹⁴³

¹⁴³ It is not certain which (if either) of these two terms Evagrius employs. Guillaumont's reconstruction of *Gnostikos* 28 is somewhat tentative (*Le Gnostique*, pp. 135-41, esp. p. 136): the Syriac and Armenian texts are discordant, and Greek fragments of uncertain value exist only in the texts of Maximus Confessor and Pseudo-Damascene mentioned above, n. 142.

of abandonment which Evagrius catalogues include: first, the manifestation of hidden virtue; second, the reestablishment through chastisement of

neglected virtue; third, abandonment as a cause of salvation for others; fourth, the establishment of humility; and fifth, hatred of the sin which necessitated the abandonment.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴⁴ As Driscoll notes, 'it is not easy to know for sure exactly where in the text to place the numbers that divide [the five causes of abandonment]', 'Evagrius and Paphnutius on the Causes for Abandonment by God', pp. 277-8. Also Guillaumont, *Le Gnostique*, p. 138.

This division of the causes of abandonment into five represents Evagrius' only systematic explication of this doctrine: elsewhere in his writings and especially in the *Scholia on Psalms* examples of these five causes are found scattered among other texts.

Guillaumont regards Evagrius' comments on Psalm 37: 12 as an example of the second of these five causes of abandonment: namely, the proving (δοκιμή) or punishment (κόλασις) of the negligent.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴⁵ Guillaumont *Le Gnostique*, p. 138.

This God accomplishes by withdrawing the heavenly powers which mediate his providence and which would otherwise assist the soul in avoiding sin:

37: 12(2). καὶ οἱ ἔγγιστά μου μακρόθεν ἔστησαν
8. τάχα δυνάμεις τινὰς λέγει ἁγίας ὑποχωρούσας ἐν καιρῷ πειρασμοῦ
πρὸς δοκιμὴν τοῦ πειραζομένου, ἢ πρὸς κόλασιν.

¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁶ Evagrius, scholion 8 on Psalm 37: 12 (= PG 12.1368). Evagrius cites and interprets Psalm 37: 12 in the same way in *Antirrhetikos* VI.17.

V.12. and my nearest [relatives] stood afar off.

8. Perhaps this refers to certain holy powers that withdraw in the time of temptation so that the one tempted may be proven or punished.

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Psalmody and Prayer in the Writings of Evagrius Ponticus

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pp. [191]-[195]

In his discussion of Psalm 89:3 Evagrius describes abandonment which leads to humility, the fourth of his five causes:

89: 3. μὴ ἀποστρέψῃς ἄνθρωπον εἰς ταπείνωσιν

1. τότε ἀποστρέφεσθαι ἄνθρωπόν εἰς ταπείνωσιν, ὅταν διὰ τῆς ἀμαρτίας ἐγκατελίπη αὐτόν.

147

¹⁴⁷ Evagrius, scholion 1 on Psalm 89: 3 (cf. ed. Pitra, 89: 3(1), vol. iii, p. 167).

V. 3. *Do not turn a man back to humility*

1. Sometimes a man is turned back to humility, when [God] abandons him on account of his sin.

As was described above in Chapter 5.2, Evagrius recommends that those who have been 'humbled' by divine abandonment 'for their own good' should seek consolation by meditating on Psalm 118: 71:

118: 71. ἀγαθόν μοι ὅτι ἐταπείνωσάς με, ὅπως ἂν μάθω τὰ δικαιώματά σου.

31. χρηστέον τῷ ῥήτῳ τούτῳ πρὸς τοὺς ἐγκαταλειφθέντας παρὰ θεῷ εἰς ὠφέλειαν ψυχῆς.

148

¹⁴⁸ Evagrius, scholion 31 on Psalm 118: 71 (= ed. Pitra, 118: 83(1), vol. iii, p. 284).

V. 71. *It was good for me that you humbled me, that I might learn your righteous deeds.*

31. This saying is to be directed towards those who are abandoned by God for the benefit of [their] soul.

Hatred of sin, the fifth of Evagrius' five causes, is encouraged in several places in the *Scholia on Psalms*; however, in these scholia he does not specifically describe abandonment as the source of this hatred.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁹ Evagrius, scholion 6 on Psalm 96: 10:

οἱ ἀγαπῶντες τὸν Κύριον, μισεῖτε πονηρά·
τούτέστιν, οἱ ἀγαπῶντες τὴν γνώσιν, μισεῖτε πονηρά

'Perfect hatred' of evil is recommended in scholion 12 on Psalm 138: 22.

Evagrius' explication of Psalm 36:25 provides a clear example of his first cause, abandonment which reveals hidden virtue:

36: 25(2). καὶ οὐκ εἶδον δίκαιον ἐγκαταλελειμμένον
 20. οὐκ εἶπεν· ἐγκαταλειφθέντα, ἀλλ' ἐγκαταλελειμμένον, τουτέστιν
 ἕως ἡξῶ, ὅτι γὰρ ἐγκαταλίμπανονται οἱ δίκαιοι πρὸς καιρὸν δοκιμῆς χάριν,
 ὁ Κύριος πρὸς Ἰώβ· «μή με οἶον ἄλλως σοι κεχρηματικένοι ἢ ἵνα ἀποφανῆς
 δίκαιος.»
 150

¹⁵⁰ Evagrius, scholion 20 on *Psalms* 36: 25 (cf. ed. Pitra, 36: 25(1), vol. iii, pp. 11-12).

V. 25. *And I have not seen the just who had been forsaken.*

20. It does not say 'who was forsaken' but rather *who had been forsaken*, that is until I [the Lord] shall come: for because the just are indeed abandoned

end p.191

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for a [brief] time for the sake of testing, the Lord says to Job: 'do not think I have dealt with you for any other [reason], than that you might appear just' (cf. Job 40: 3).

Evagrius concludes this scholion with a citation of Job 40: 3, the same verse Palladius attributes to Chronius and Paphnutius in their discussion of providential abandonment.¹⁵¹

¹⁵¹ See above, n. 139.

For both Evagrius and Palladius Job typifies the just man abandoned by God for the sake of proving or testing (δοκιμή), so that hidden virtue, in this case the virtue of justice, may be made manifest: ἵνα ἀποφανῆς δίκαιος .

Presuming that Guillaumont is correct and that Palladius' text reflects Evagrius' developed doctrine of abandonment, then this scholion also suggests Evagrius' third cause: abandonment which is of benefit to others. Palladius explains that the Lord's consoling explanation also contains a warning to Job's erstwhile 'friends' and a recommendation to them of Job's whole way of life, his φιλοσοφία.¹⁵²

¹⁵² See above, n. 139.

Job's abandonment thus not only reveals his hidden virtue, it serves as an example to others. Here Evagrius allows the scholion itself to serve this second purpose. By understanding that Job's apparent abandonment served to demonstrate his justice, the reader of the scholion, like Job's friends, derives benefit from the inner meaning of Job's abandonment.

There are hints in the *Scholia on Psalms* of a doctrine concerning divine providence which Evagrius makes more explicit in his other writings. He believed that although the *logos* of providence is most clearly perceived in the exercise of free will by the *logikoi*,¹⁵³

¹⁵³ Evagrius, *Kephalaia Gnostica* VI.43, ed. Guillaumont, p. 235: 'The providence of God accompanies free will; but his judgement considers the order of the *logikoi*.'

it also concerns their very existence. Furthermore, that compassion which is God's providence reaches down not only into the celestial and human ranks, enabling angels and human beings to become agents of providence, but it extends as well to all those reasoning beings (presumably including the demons) caught in 'vice and ignorance':

[illegible]

¹⁵⁴ Evagrius, *Kephalaia Gnostica* VI.59, ed. Guillaumont, p. 243.

end p.192

VI. 59. Twofold is the providence of God: one part, it is said, guards the *sustasis* of bodies and incorporeal [beings]; and the other urges the *logikoi* (reasoning beings) away from vice and ignorance towards virtue and knowledge.

Evagrius' most daring description of the depths to which divine providence condescends is his exegesis of the parable of the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16: 19-31). Although he does not explicate this parable in the *Scholia on Psalms*, two of the doctrines which underlie his exegesis are to be found there. First is his teaching concerning the 'seeds of the virtues':

125; 5. Οἱ σπείροντες ἐν δάκρυσιν ἐν ἀγαλλιᾷσει θεριοῦσιν.
3. οἱ μὲν τὴν πρακτικὴν μετὰ πόνου καὶ δακρύων κατεργαζόμενοι ἐν δάκρυσιν σπείρουσιν· οἱ δὲ τῆς γνώσεως ἀπόνως μεταλαμβάνοντες ἐν ἀγαλλιᾷσει θεριοῦσι. πλὴν τούτῳ τῷ ῥητῷ προσεκτέον ὅτι πάντες ἔχοντες σπέρματα τῶν ἀρετῶν ἐπιδημοῦμεν τῷ βίῳ. καὶ ὥσπερ ἔπεται τοῖς σπέρμασι δάκρυα, οὕτω τοῖς δράγμασιν ἡ χαρά.

¹⁵⁵ Evagrius, scholion 3 on *Psalm* 125: 5 (cf. PG 12.1641).

V. 5. *Those who sow in tears will reap in joy.*

3. Those who labour at the *praktikē* with painful effort and tears are sowing in tears; those who effortlessly receive a share in knowledge are reaping with rejoicing. However, one should note in this saying that we come into [this] life possessing all the seeds of the virtues. And just as tears fall with the seeds, so with the sheaves there is joy.

For Evagrius the 'seeds of the virtues' represent our capacity to cooperate with divine providence and make spiritual progress. Since, as will be described, Evagrius believed that these 'seeds' can never be destroyed, it follows that the possibility of cooperating with providence and returning to

God always remains, even for *logikoi* which have moved very far from God. The second doctrine underlying his exegesis of the parable of the rich man and Lazarus and which also occurs in the *Scholia on Psalms* concerns the nature of hell:

9: 18(1). ἀποστροφήτωσαν οἱ ἁμαρτωλοὶ εἰς τὸν ἄδην
7. ὥσπερ ὁ παράδεισος τῶν δικαίων ἐστὶν παιδευτήριον, οὕτως ὁ ἄδης
τῶν ἁμαρτωλῶν ἐστὶ κολαστήριον.
156

¹⁵⁶ Evagrius, scholion 7 on *Psalms* 9: 18(1)(cf. PG 12.1189).

V. 18. *Let sinners be turned back to hell.*

7. Just as Paradise is the school of the just, so also hell is the sinners' house of correction.

end p.193

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Here Evagrius describes hell as a κολαστήριον, a 'house of correction' or 'place of punishment', in contrast to the παιδευτήριον or 'school' which he, like Origen, identified with heaven.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁷ Origen describes remedial punishment in *De principiis* 2.10.5-8, and celestial education in 2.11.5-7.

Whereas in classical Greek κολαστήριον could describe a house of correction,¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁸ Liddell and Scott, *Greek-English Lexicon*, p. 971.

a term which at least hints at the possibility of eventual release, the patristic use of this word favours the considerably less optimistic 'place of punishment',¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁹ Lampe, *Patristic Greek Lexicon*, p. 765.

without any implication of reprieve. That Evagrius favours the remedial rather than the punitive definition of this term is suggested in the *Scholia on Proverbs*, where Evagrius explains that in the 'place of torment' (Luke 16: 28) where the rich man laments, it is still possible for him to learn about mercy and even to grow in previously unknown compassion for others:

5: 14. παρ' ὀλίγον ἐγενόμην ἐν παντὶ κακῷ ἐν μέσῳ ἐκκλησίας καὶ συναγωγῆς.
62. Ἦν ὅτε οὐκ ἦν κακὸν, καὶ ἔσται ὅτε οὐκ ἔσται· οὐκ ἦν δὲ ὅτε οὐκ ἦν ἀρετὴ, οὐδὲ ἔσται ὅτε οὐκ ἔσται· ἀνεξάλειπτα γὰρ τὰ σπέρματα τῆς ἀρετῆς·
Πείθει δέ με καὶ οὗτος παρ' ὀλίγον, καὶ οὐ τελείως ἐν παντὶ κακῷ γεγωνῶς καὶ ὁ πλούσιος ἐν τῷ ἄδῃ διὰ κακίαν κρινόμενος καὶ οἰκτείρων τοὺς ἀδελφούς. Τὸ δὲ ἐλεεῖν, σπέρμα τυγχάνει τὸ κάλλιστον τῆς ἀρετῆς.
160

¹⁶⁰ Evagrius, scholion 62 on *Proverbs* 5: 14, SC 340, pp. 152-4.

V. 14. *I was almost given over to every evil in the midst of the*

congregation and assembly.

62. There was [a time] when evil did not exist, and there will be [a time] when it no longer exists; but there was never [a time] when virtue did not exist and there will never be [a time] when it does not exist. For the seeds of virtue are indestructible.

And this man convinces me, who was *almost* but not completely *given over to every evil*, as does the rich man who was condemned to hell because of his evil, and who had pity on his brothers (Luke 16: 19-31). For to have mercy is the outstanding seed of virtue.

Here Evagrius suggests that it is possible for the sufferings of hell to bring to fruition the imperishable 'seeds of virtue' which were originally implanted within the soul at its creation. He was aware that this exegesis of the parable of the rich man and Lazarus is very different from the considerably more pessimistic interpretation

end p.194

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familiar to his contemporaries;¹⁶¹

¹⁶¹ In his letter to the monk Krekopios Evagrius acknowledges the more conventional interpretation of this parable with which Krekopios was familiar. He prefaces his own more radical exegesis with the following observation: 'And since you mention Lazarus and the rich man, that Lazarus was gladdened through knowledge while the rich man was tormented by the flames of ignorance, you should also know this [. . .]' (Evagrius, *Letter* 59.3, ed. Bunge, p.279, ed. Frankenberg, pp. 608-9.

nevertheless, Evagrius appears not only to have been convinced (παθειδμε) but also deeply committed to this interpretation, since he repeats it with only minor variations in five different places in his writing: in the *Scholia on Proverbs* cited here; in *Kephalaia Gnostica* 1.40; in *Peri Logismon* 31; and in *Letters* 43.3 and 59.3.

By asserting that the imperishable seeds of justice implanted within us at our creation are still perceptible in those who suffer in the 'house of correction' which is hell, Evagrius enables the *gnostikos* to retain hope concerning the ultimate fate of all, even those whose sins create for them darkened bodies and worlds. By encouraging the reader of the *Scholia on Psalms* to perceive the *logos* of providence both in God's assistance and in seeming abandonment by him, and by further emphasizing the role of the *logikoi* in mediating this providence, Evagrius encourages the *gnostikos* to glimpse the purposes of God in every verse of the psalter, and thus in every conceivable human circumstance. This perception, however, is a preparation for something even higher. The *logoi* of providence and judgement which reveal the person and purposes of Christ beneath the text of the psalter are not the final end of contemplation. They are like medication which promotes healing; but in comparison with that final end to which they bear witness, 'the *logoi* of the ages and the worlds are vain'.¹⁶²

¹⁶² Evagrius, *Scholion 2 on Ecclesiastes*, SC 397, pp. 58-60: 'To those who [have] entered the intelligible Church, and who are amazed by the contemplation of created [beings] the word says: "O friends, do not think that this is the final goal stored up

for you in the promises: these are all *vanity of vanities* in the presence of the knowledge of God Himself. Just as medications are *vain* after the final healing, so too after receiving the knowledge of the Blessed Trinity are the *logoi* of the ages and the worlds *vain*" ' (

(Πρὸς τοὺς εἰσελθόντας εἰς τὴν νοητὴν ἐκκλησίαν καὶ θαυμάζοντας τὴν θεωρίαν τῶν γεγονότων, ὁ λόγος φησί· μὴ νομίσῃτε τοῦτο εἶναι τὸ ἔσχατον τέλος, ὡς οὗτοι, τὸ ταῖς ἐπαγγελίαις ὑμῶν ἐναποκείμενον· ταῦτα γὰρ πάντα ματαιότης ἐστὶ ματαιότητων ἐνώπιον τῆς γνώσεως αὐτοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ. Ὡς περ γὰρ μάταια μετὰ τὴν τελείαν ὑγείαν τὰ φάρμακα, οὕτω μετὰ τὴν γνώσιν τῆς ἁγίας τριάδος μάταιοι τῶν αἰώνων καὶ κόσμων οἱ λόγοι).

Psalmody and all it affords serves therefore as a preparation for that 'pure prayer' which is akin to *theologia*, during which the *nous* peers beyond the diversity of creation to behold something of the Blessed Trinity.

end p.195

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Psalmody and Prayer in the Writings of Evagrius Ponticus

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pp. [196]-[198]

8 Conclusion

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Abstract: This chapter presents a synthesis of the writings of Evagrius Ponticus discussions in this volume. It argues that the monastic discipline of psalmody reflects the Evagrius' vision of the spiritual life. The underlying rhythm of spiritual progress consists of the movement between poles of *praktike*, *physike*, and *theologike*; that is, progress from concern with moral and spiritual improvement to perception of God in and beyond creation.

Keywords: **Evagrius Ponticus, psalmody, spiritual life**

Evagrius' mystical theology has been variously characterized as apophatic, iconoclastic, and even as questionably Christian. However, the studies in which such generalizations occur tend to emphasize the apophatic aspect of Evagrius' theology without commensurate attention to the specific liturgical and ascetical context in which Evagrius explicates his doctrine. Evagrius' frequent admonitions to lay aside all thoughts and mental images 'at the time of prayer' presuppose a monastic culture constantly steeped in the rich language and imagery of the scriptures, particularly the Book of Psalms. Evagrius' injunctions concerning 'the time of prayer' do not refer to prolonged exercises in formless contemplation of God, but rather to the 'refreshing' interval which followed each chanted psalm or reading at the daily canonical prayers and during the psalmody and scripture meditation which filled most of the monks' waking hours. It is clear from descriptions by his contemporaries, particularly John Cassian, that the 'prayers' which followed each psalm and reading were not protracted. Evagrius, who supported himself as a copyist and spent a portion of each day seeing 'five or six pilgrims who came from afar, attracted by his wisdom and asceticism', would have had less time to devote to the intervals of silent prayer between psalms and readings than many of his reclusive monastic contemporaries in the desert of Kellia. Evagrius' spiritual teaching presumes that wordless, imageless prayer takes place in an oscillating, dynamic relationship with word-filled, image-filled psalmody and biblical meditation, from which it regularly arises and into which it quickly returns.

A balanced assessment of Evagrius' spiritual theology must take into account this monastic 'background rhythm' of alternating psalmody and prayer. In his treatise *De oratione* Evagrius describes the somatic and spiritual components of the daily monastic oscillation between prayer and psalmody. Prayer is to be offered gently and calmly, so as to awaken the *nous* to divine

highest power and function. Psalmody facilitates this prerequisite calm by quieting the passions, especially the passion of *thumos*, and by restoring physical and emotional balance. Evagrius particularly recommends that the one chanting the psalms practise 'undistracted psalmody', by which he means attention to the underlying spiritual meaning of the text. Undistracted psalmody is an opportunity for *theoria physiké*, perception of the 'richly diverse wisdom' of Christ who created and sustains the universe. From the multiform wisdom of psalmody the monk can at regular intervals ascend into the uniform and immaterial wisdom of divine *gnosis*, or *theologia*, an experience of God which transcends words and concepts.

Evagrius believed in the therapeutic and didactic power of psalmody. Medical terminology and therapeutic metaphors recur throughout his writings: thus the 'diverse wisdom' of psalmody is also an encounter with Christ the divine physician, whose words and example enable others to become 'physicians of the passions'. The Book of Psalms is also the means by which the Holy Spirit taught King David 'the whole contest of the monastic way of life', including the art of spiritual warfare. The alternating rhythm of psalmody and prayer both stores in memory and brings to consciousness an arsenal of texts which may be wielded against the demons in *antirrhesis* (verbal 'contradiction'), or used as prayers in the moment of temptation. Whereas the ascetical *praktikos* employs *antirrhesis* chiefly in the battlefield of his own soul, the contemplative *gnostikos* employs memorized verses from the Psalms and other scriptures to exhort, to encourage, and to heal both himself and those who seek his advice.

For Evagrius the oscillating rhythm of psalmody and prayer is the training-ground of the Christian contemplative. In his longest work, the *Scholia on Psalms*, Evagrius interprets the images and words of the psalter as reflections of the great cosmic drama of creation, fall, and redemption, allegorically attested in the psalter and daily encountered within the soul of the one who chants the psalms. In the psalter the monk encounters Christ 'the Lord who, with the Word of God, has dwelt with us', a definition Evagrius employs at intervals throughout the *Scholia on Psalms* in order to highlight simultaneously the uniqueness of Christ and his role as mediator. By moving back and forth between the 'diverse wisdom' of psalmody and the 'uniform wisdom' of pure prayer the monk learns to perceive the divine *logoi* in the events of salvation history and in his own struggle with temptation.

Evagrius particularly emphasizes the importance of two *logoi*, judgement and providence. In the diverse ranks of created beings which the psalms depict,

the *gnostikos* contemplates a series of progressive transformations which Evagrius calls 'judgements'. These are 'transformations' through which God provides reasoning beings with the bodies and worlds they require in order to make spiritual progress. All differences in status, especially the various ranks of angels, human beings, and demons, remind the *gnostikos* of successive judgements which have brought this diversity into being. The *logos* of providence asserts that in addition to the status it enjoys or endures, every reasoning being is also continuously supplied by God (usually through the mediation of other reasoning beings) with the specific means required for spiritual progress. By interpreting the psalms in light of the *logoi* of providence and judgement the *gnostikos* learns to glimpse the purposes of God in every conceivable human circumstance.

The monastic discipline of psalmody reflects in miniature the broad sweep of Evagrius' vision of the spiritual life. The underlying rhythm of spiritual progress consists of movement between the poles of *praktiké*, *physiké*, and *theologiké*; that is, progress from concern with moral and spiritual improvement to perception of God in and beyond creation. An analogous movement takes place in the monastic ascesis of interwoven psalmody and prayer, during which the monk perceives in the mirror of the psalter his need for reform, and regularly arises from chanting the 'manifold wisdom' of Christ in the psalms to rest briefly in undistracted, wordless 'conversation with the Father'. An appreciation of the intimate interrelationship between psalmody and prayer in Evagrius' own life and in the lives of those for whom he wrote helps to counterbalance the tendency to emphasize the apophatic or 'iconoclastic' character of his writings, especially his texts on prayer. If Evagrius' understanding of the spiritual life is to be properly apprehended, then texts such as *De oratione* in which he emphasizes pure prayer should be read together with his considerably more voluminous exegetical writings, especially the *Scholia on Psalms*, in which he lays stress on the kataphatic and christological dimensions of spiritual experience.

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Psalmody and Prayer in the Writings of Evagrius Ponticus

Print ISBN 0199273200, 2005

pp. [199]

Appendix 1 The Nous of Christ in the *Kephalaia Gnostica*

Introduction

As is described above in Chapter 6.1, Evagrius is regarded by many scholars as having held and taught in a furtive and allusive way a Christology which would otherwise have been judged as heretical according to the standards of his day. A. Guillaumont maintains that Evagrius taught an Origenist Christology which 'shifts the subject of the incarnation' from the second person of the Trinity to the (created) intellect of Christ.¹

¹ Grillmeier, 'Evagrius Ponticus', p. 382; A. Guillaumont, *Les 'Kephalaia Gnostica'*, pp. 146-56.

Thus it is alleged that Evagrius did not believe that the Word of God became flesh in the Incarnation, but rather that the Incarnation consisted in the assumption of flesh by the solitary *nous* which had not fallen from divine union in the primordial *kinesis*. This incarnate *nous* served as the instrument through which the second person of the Trinity both created and interacts with the material universe. The principal basis for the attribution to Evagrius of this doctrine is Guillaumont's interpretation of *Kephalaia Gnostica* 1.77, in which he alleges that Evagrius defines 'Christ' as '*nous* united to knowledge of the Unity'.²

² A. Guillaumont, *Les 'Kephalaia Gnostica'*, pp. 151-6.

Refoulé, Grillmeier, Kline, and Bamberger all quote Guillaumont on this point and accept his interpretation of this text.

The Anathemas

The first anathemas which include Evagrius' name may have been issued in association with the Second Council of Constantinople (the Fifth Ecumenical Council) in 553. In the surviving texts of the council's fourteen anathemas there is no mention of Evagrius;³

³ Anathema 11 condemns the writings of Arius, Eunomius, Macedonius, Apollinaris, Nestorius, Eutyches, and Origen; Theodore of Mopsuestia is condemned in anathema 12, Theodoret is condemned in anathema 13, and anathema 14 is directed against a letter falsely attributed to Ibas. Tanner, *Decrees*, vol. i, pp. 119-20.

however, accounts by two contemporaries of the council who

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Psalmody and Prayer in the Writings of Evagrius Ponticus

Print ISBN 0199273200, 2005
pp. [200]

had access to the conciliar decrees suggest that the names of both Evagrius and Didymus may originally have appeared together with that of Origen in the list of condemned heretics. Cyril of Scythopolis, writing late in the sixth century,⁴

⁴ The dates of Cyril's hagiographic works are uncertain: all that can be said is that they were written in the last half of the sixth century. Dates are only available for the early part of Cyril's life: he came under the influence of St Sabba 'as a child' in 531 (*Life of Sabba* 75) and was tonsured in 543. From 544 he was associated with the monastery of St Euthymius, which foundered as a result of the Origenist controversy; and from 557 he lived in the monastery of St Sabba.

chronicled in detail the sixth-century Origenist controversies in the monasteries of Palestine⁵

⁵ Cyril of Scythopolis, *Life of Kuriakos* 12-13, ed. Schwartz, p. 230, lines 12-14. Cyril describes the so-called *isochrist* monks who allegedly taught 'that we will be equal to Christ in the apokatastasis', one of several doctrines Cyril claims they 'received from Pythagoras, Plato, Origen, Evagrius, and Didymus', rather than 'the God who spoke through the apostles and prophets':

λέγουσαν ὅτι γινόμεθα ἴσοι τοῦ Χριστοῦ ἐν τῇ ἀποκαταστάσει. ποῖος τοίνυν αἰδῆς ταῦτα ἐρεῦξάτο; οὐ παρὰ τοῦ θεοῦ ταῦτα μεμαθήκασι, μὴ γένοιτο, τοῦ λαλήσαντος διὰ προφητῶν καὶ ἀποστόλων, ἀλλὰ παρὰ Πυθαγόρου καὶ Πλάτωνος Ὀριγένους τε καὶ Εὐαγρίου καὶ Διδύμου παρειλήφασιν τὰ μυστὰ ταῦτα καὶ δυσσεβῆ δόγματα.

and describes the Fifth Ecumenical Council as having condemned 'in the presence and with the accord of the four patriarchs' the doctrines of Origen and Theodore of Mopsuestia, as well as 'that which was said by Evagrius and by Didymus concerning the pre-existence and the apokatastasis'.⁶

⁶ Cyril of Scythopolis, *Life of St. Sabas*, ed. Schwartz, p. 199, lines 4-6:

καὶ τὰ περὶ
προϋπάρξεως καὶ ἀποκαταστάσεως Εὐαγρίῳ καὶ Διδύμῳ εἰρημένα παρόντων τῶν τεσσάρων
πατριαρχῶν καὶ τούτοις συναινούντων.

The historian Evagrius Scholasticus (c.536-600) similarly states that the council had been aware of 'many blasphemies of Didymus, Evagrius, and Theodore (Askidas)'.⁷

⁷ Evagrius Scholasticus, *Ecclesiastical History* 4.38, p. 189, lines 26-9: Ἀνὴρ χθῆσαν αὐτοῖς καὶ Διδύμου καὶ Εὐαγρίου καὶ Θεοδοῦρου τεραὶ πολλαὶ βλασφημίαι μᾶλα σπουδαίως τὸ περὶ τοῖπων ἐκλεξαμένοις.

Further evidence that Evagrius and Didymus were condemned by name in 553 is provided by lists drawn up at later councils which state or imply that Origen, Didymus, and Evagrius were named in the anathemas of the Fifth Ecumenical Council. Thus canon 18 of the Lateran Synod of 649 requires the

faithful to 'reject and anathematize the infamous heretics together with all their writings, down to the last dot' who had been condemned in the preceding five ecumenical councils. The last three names in this list of twenty-one condemned authors are Origen, Didymus, and Evagrius.⁸

⁸ Lateran Synod of 649, canon 18, Denzinger, *Enchiridion symbolorum*, §518-19 (reproducing *Acta Conciliorum Oecumenicorum*, 2nd ser., 1.364-87:).

The

end p.200

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Psalmody and Prayer in the Writings of Evagrius Ponticus

Print ISBN 0199273200, 2005
pp. [201]

Exposition of Faith of the Third Council of Constantinople (680-1) specifically states that the Second Council of Constantinople ('the fifth holy synod, the latest of them which was gathered here') had condemned Theodore of Mopsuestia, Origen, Didymus, and Evagrius, as well as Theodoret and pseudo-Ibas.⁹

⁹ *Exposition of Faith* of the Third Council of Constantinople, Tanner, *Decrees*, vol. i, p. 125.

Thus the names of Origen, Didymus, and Evagrius became linked in the tradition of conciliar decrees, and the trio continued to be condemned in anathemas of later synods and councils.¹⁰

¹⁰ The Second Council of Nicaea in 787 anathematized the 'mythical speculations' (μυθαιματα) of Origen, Evagrius, and Didymus; and the Fourth Council of Constantinople in 870 anathematized 'Origen with his useless knowledge, Theodore of Mopsuestia and Didymus along with Evagrius, who also, although of the same or different opinions, were ensnared in the same pit of damnation' (Origenem etiam qui vana sapuit, et Theodorum Mopsuestiae; Didymum quoque pariter et Evagrium, qui etiam secundum easdem et diversas opiniones eodem perditionis irretiti sunt barathro), Tanner, *Decrees*, vol. i, pp. 135 and 161.

In addition to the fourteen anathemas of the Fifth Ecumenical Council, two other documents are of importance with regard to Evagrius' condemnation. The first was issued in 543, ten years before the council, and consists of a letter with appended anathemas written by the Emperor Justinian to the Patriarch Menas. Justinian quotes from the *De principiis* in order to expose Origen's errors in detail, and he concludes with ten anathemas summarizing the condemned doctrines. The errors condemned in the ten anathemas include the following: the pre-existence and fall of souls through satiety (κρεβς) of divine contemplation, and their chastisement through descent into bodies (anathema 1); the pre-existence of Christ's soul (anathema 2); the uniting of Christ's body with both his pre-existent soul and the divine Word (anathema 3); that Christ assumed the form of all the heavenly powers (anathema 4); that in the world to come Christ will also be crucified for the demons (anathema 7); that the resurrected body will be spherical and immaterial (anathema 5); that the celestial bodies (sun, moon, stars, and firmament) are ensouled, reasoning beings (anathema 6); that the power of God is limited or that creation is eternal (anathema 8); and that a restoration (*apokatastasis*) of demons and evil human beings will put an end to temporal punishment (anathema 9).¹¹

¹¹ Text in *Acta Conciliorum* 3.213, reprinted in Denziger, §403-11.

The second text which must also be considered was formerly considered part of the declarations of the Fifth Ecumenical Council. Like the condemnation of Origen in 543 it consists of a letter from the Emperor Justinian with attached anathemas. In this letter

end p.201

Dysinger OSB, Luke , Assistant Professor, Department of Moral Theology and Church History,
Saint John's Seminary, Camarillo, California

Psalmody and Prayer in the Writings of Evagrius Ponticus

Print ISBN 0199273200, 2005
pp. [202]

Justinian writes to the council fathers 'concerning Origen and his sympathizers', to warn them about the teachings of certain monks of Jerusalem whom he describes as devotees not only of Origen, but also of Pythagoras and Plotinus.¹²

¹² Diekamp, *Origenistische Streitigkeiten*, p. 90:

Ἐπεὶ τοῖνυν διέγνωσται ἡμῶν, ὥς τινες ἐν
Τεροσολύμοις εἰσὶ μοναχοί, δῆπουθεν Πυθαγόρα καὶ Πλάτωνι καὶ Ὠριγένη τῷ Ἀδαμαντίῳ
καὶ τῇ τούτων δυσσεβείᾳ καὶ πλάνῃ κατακολουθοῦντες καὶ διδάσκοντες

Associated with his letter are fifteen anathemas which until the late nineteenth century were generally appended to the fourteen anathemas of the Fifth Ecumenical Council;¹³

¹³ Some manuscripts of these fifteen anathemas specifically ascribe them to the council fathers:

Τῶν ἁγίων ρξέ πατέρων τῆς ἐν Κωνσταντινουπόλει ἁγίας πέμπτῃς συνόδου κανόνες
δεκαπέντε

Diekamp, *Origenistische Streitigkeiten*, p. 90.

however, studies by Diekamp in 1889 led to the conclusion that these fifteen additional anathemas were not part of the original conciliar decrees.¹⁴

¹⁴ Their exclusion from recent editions of the conciliar texts is briefly discussed in Tanner, *Decrees*, vol. i, pp. 105-6 and Denzinger and Hünermann, *Enchiridion*, p. 189.

These 'Fifteen Anathemas of 553' condemn several of the doctrines which had been described in 543, namely: the pre-existence of souls and the apokatastasis (anathema 1); the fall of 'incorporeal intellects' (νόας ἠσωμῶν τους)¹⁵

¹⁵ Diekamp, *Origenistische Streitigkeiten*, p. 90

and their consequent embodiment as heavenly powers, human beings, or demons (anathemas 2 and 4); the doctrine that the celestial bodies (sun, moon, and stars) are fallen intellects (anathema 3); the spherical shape of the resurrected body (anathema 10); and the restoration of all fallen powers in the *apokatastasis* (anathema 12) to a state identical to that which they had possessed in the beginning (anathema 15). But as Guillaumont has discussed in detail,¹⁶

¹⁶ Guillaumont, *Les 'Kephalaia Gnostica'*, pp. 146-56.

the principal difference between these anathemas and those of 543 lies in the 'very particular Christology' explicated in anathemas 6-9, 11, and 14 of 553, which correspond to anathemas 2 and 3 of 543, concerning the

pre-existent soul of Christ.¹⁷

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 147.

Guillaumont believes that the source of this 'christologie très particulière' is Evagrius; however, in order to properly assess his conclusions it will first be necessary to consider the scope and content of Evagrius' most controversial work, the *Kephalaia Gnostica*.

end p.202

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Psalmody and Prayer in the Writings of Evagrius Ponticus

Print ISBN 0199273200, 2005

pp. [203]

The Structure and Content of the *Kephalaia Gnostica*

A complete assessment of the *Kephalaia Gnostica* has always proven elusive, partly because of the complex and often bewildering structure of this work, and also because the complete text survives only in Syriac and Armenian translations with extant Greek fragments and parallels available for only about one-sixth of the complete text. An even more fundamental textual problem obscured its proper assessment until relatively recently.

Frankenberg's 1912 edition of the Syriac text (which includes a commentary by the seventh-century anti-Origenist abbot, Babai the Great)¹⁸

¹⁸ *Codex Vaticanus Syriacus* 178.

contains no evidence of the controversial Origenist doctrine condemned by the councils. Matters were clarified in 1958, when Antoine Guillaumont published the critical edition of a new Syriac version based on a manuscript tradition he designated S².¹⁹

¹⁹ Guillaumont, *Les six Centuries des 'Kephalaia Gnostica'*.

This version exists in only a single manuscript.²⁰

²⁰ British Library Add. MS 17.167: Guillaumont, *Les 'Kephalaia Gnostica'*, pp. 201-2.

Although known in antiquity, it had been denounced by ancient Syriac authors as the work of heretical forgers who were alleged to have intentionally altered texts by 'the blessed abbot Evagrius' in order to justify their own teachings.²¹

²¹ In his commentary on the *Kephalaia Gnostica*, Babai the Great (abbot of Mt Izla from 604 to 628) warned his readers against 'alterations conforming to heretical opinions' (ed. Frankenberg, pp. 44-5), by which he apparently meant the unexpurgated S² version. It is interesting to note that this allegation of heretical 'insertions' into the master's texts had been invoked much earlier in Origenist tradition: Rufinus employed it (in spite of Jerome's vituperative protests) to justify his own avowedly expurgated translation of Origen's *De Principiis*.

The surviving Greek fragments of the *Kephalaia Gnostica* uniformly attest to the priority of the S² version,²²

²² Guillaumont, *Les 'Kephalaia Gnostica'*, pp. 201-2.

revealing the more widespread S¹ tradition to be a drastic re-editing of Evagrius' text, in which all passages suggestive of controversial Origenist doctrine had been either eliminated or modified. This (expurgated) S¹

version appeared very quickly, possibly anticipating by several decades the anathemas of 543 and 553. The Syriac manuscript evidence places it no later than the first third of the sixth century; and an Armenian translation of S¹ may have been made sometime in the fifth century, that is within a century of Evagrius' death in 399. The existence of both expurgated and unexpurgated versions of Evagrius' works during the sixth century reflects an uneasy attitude of reverence for his writings combined with anxiety concerning their orthodoxy

end p.203

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Psalmody and Prayer in the Writings of Evagrius Ponticus

Print ISBN 0199273200, 2005
pp. [204]

which is well-attested elsewhere in the monastic literature of the period.²³

²³ Abba Barsanuphius (d. c.543) was once asked whether it is permissible to read Evagrius. He replied that although one must not accept Evagrius' [unorthodox] teachings, his texts may be read according to the example of the angels in the parable of the wheat and the tares, who keep what is good and reject the bad:

Τὰ μὲν δόγματα τὰ τοιαῦτα μὴ δέχου. Αναγινώσκει δὲ αὐτοῦ εἰ θέλῃς τὰ πρὸς ὠφέλειαν ψυχῆς, κατὰ τὴν παραβολὴν τὴν ἐν τῷ Εὐαγγελίῳ περὶ τῆς σαγῆνης ὡς γέγραπται, ὅτι τὰ μὲν καλὰ εἰς ἀγγελίαν ἔβαλον, τὰ δὲ σαπρὰ ἔξω ἔρριψαν (PG 86.891-902. A much darker admonition concerning Evagrius is given by John Moschus (c.550-619) who tells the story of a monk who visited Kellia and, despite warnings that 'the demon which misled Evagrius' still inhabited the place, insisted on staying in Evagrius' cell. Within a week the monk had committed suicide (*The Meadow* 177).

The *Kephalaia Gnostica* was never intended to be read in isolation from Evagrius' other works. He describes it as the final volume of a spiritual trilogy consisting of *Praktikos*, *Gnostikos*, and *Kephalaia Gnostica*. In the conclusion to the prologue of the *Praktikos* Evagrius sets out what he hopes to accomplish in these texts:

Περὶ δὲ τοῦ βίου τοῦ τε πρακτικοῦ καὶ τοῦ γνωστικοῦ νυνὶ διηγούμεθα, οὐχ ὅσα ἐωράκαμεν ἢ ἠκούσαμεν, ἀλλ' ὅσα τοῦ καὶ ἄλλοις εἰπεῖν παρ' αὐτῶν μεμαθήκαμεν, ἑκατὸν μὲν κεφαλαίοις τὰ πρακτικά, πεντήκοντα δὲ πρὸς τοῖς ἑξακοσίοις τὰ γνωστικὰ συντετμημένως διελόντες.²⁴

²⁴ Evagrius, *Praktikos* Introduction 9, SC 171, p. 492.

But concerning the life of the *praktikos* and the *gnostikos* I now propose to describe in detail not [merely] what I have heard or seen, but what I have also been taught by [the elders] to say to others. I have compactly divided matters of the *praktiké* into a hundred chapters, and matters of the *gnostiké* into fifty plus the six hundred.

Evagrius here explains that his trilogy has an underlying two-fold division based on the division of Christian life into *praktiké* and *gnostiké*. The one hundred chapters of the *Praktikos* constitute the first division, while the fifty chapters of the *Gnostikos* and the 540 chapters of the *Kephalaia Gnostica*²⁵

²⁵ There is no satisfactory explanation for the discrepancy between the six hundred chapters Evagrius promises and the actual five hundred and forty chapters of the *Kephalaia Gnostica*. In the seventh century Abbot Babai the Great included with his text and commentary on the *Kephalaia Gnostica* a 'Supplement' of sixty chapters, taken mostly from a work now known as the *Skemmata*. It does not seem originally to have had any connection with the *Kephalaia Gnostica*: Muyldermans, 'Evagriana' pp. 44-8; and 'Évagre le Pontique', pp. 73-83.

constitute the second. As is described above in Chapter 1.2.2, the *Kephalaia Gnostica* is the longest and most obscure of these three books. Although divided into six 'centuries', each consisting of ninety sentences or *kephalaia*, the significance of this division is not immediately apparent, nor is there an orderly progression of ideas within each century. In the introduction

end p.204

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Psalmody and Prayer in the Writings of Evagrius Ponticus

Print ISBN 0199273200, 2005
pp. [205]

to the *Praktikos* Evagrius warns his readers to expect just this kind of obscure explication in the *Kephalaia Gnostica*:

καὶ τὰ μὲν ἐπικρύψαντες, τὰ δὲ συσκιάσαντες, ἵνα μὴ δώμεν τὰ ἅγια τοῖς
κυσὶ μηδὲ βάλωμεν τοὺς μαργαρίτας ἔμπροσθεν τῶν χοίρων. Ἔσται δὲ
ταῦτα ἐμφανῆ τοῖς τὸ αὐτὸ ἵχνος αὐτοῖς ἐμβεβηκόσιν. 26

²⁶ Evagrius, *Praktikos* Introduction 9, SC 171, pp. 490-2.

And some things I have concealed and shadowed over, so that we do not give holy things to dogs nor cast pearls before swine (Matt. 7: 6). But these will be clear to those who have themselves embarked on the same search.

Here he states that his meaning will be clear only to those who are following the same 'search' or 'path' as he. The word ἵχνος literally means 'track, trace' or 'clue'. It suggests a hunt for prey which leaves traces on a track or path, which are only visible to those who know what to look for. And, indeed, the five hundred and forty sentences of the *Kephalaia Gnostica* appear to present a very meandering path. A large number of these *kephalaia* are citations from Evagrius' exegetical scholia; but they generally lack any indication of the text being explicated. Nearly one-sixth of the sentences are allegorical definitions of words or concepts, such as 'crown of justice' (I.75), 'chariot of knowledge' (II.51), 'moon' (III.52), stars' (III.62), 'tunic' (IV.74), 'cloud' (V.13 and V.16), 'fish-hook' (V.37), 'arrow', (VI.53), and 'stone knife' (VI.66). As has been described, ²⁷

²⁷ Above, Chapters 1.3.2.4 and 3.1, esp. pp. 66-7.

Evagrius considered familiarity with allegorical definitions to be an essential skill for the *gnostikos*.

At first glance these scattered definitions appear to lack any clear association with each other or with ideas presented in nearby *kephalaia*. On closer inspection, however, the definitions are sometimes drawn from a common biblical chapter or verse, ²⁸

²⁸ Examples include: Exodus 28-9, from which many of the definitions in *Kephalaia Gnostica* IV.28-72 are taken; and Eph. 6:17, which supplies the subjects of many definitions in *Kephalaia Gnostica* V.28-34.

or occur in (albeit scattered) clusters which progressively explicate a common theme, such as the celestial bodies and heavenly powers (III.37-65), symbols of priestly sacrifice (IV.12-79), symbols of spiritual warfare (IV.28-82), and successive articles of the Nicene Creed (VI.28-61).

Since the definitions comprising these thematic clusters are separated, often widely so, from each other by intervening sentences which explicate very diverse concepts, the existence of these clusters only becomes apparent to the reader after multiple rereadings of the text.

end p.205

Dysinger OSB, Luke , Assistant Professor, Department of Moral Theology and Church History,
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Psalmody and Prayer in the Writings of Evagrius Ponticus

Print ISBN 0199273200, 2005

pp. [206]

The only hint Evagrius gives as to the underlying structure of this work is found in the last sentence of the book: 'Scrutinize our words, O our brothers, and explicate with zeal these centuries, according to the number of the six days of creation.'²⁹

²⁹ Evagrius, *Kephalaia Gnostica* Conclusion, ed. Guillaumont, p. 257

This seems to refer only superficially to the creation narrative in Genesis

1-2:³⁰

³⁰ There is, for example, no obvious correlation between the assignment of definitions (such as those of stars, mountains, angels, or human beings) to any particular century in the *Kephalaia Gnostica* and the day of creation assigned to those objects in Genesis 1-3.

instead, the six centuries of the *Kephalaia Gnostica* seem intended to encompass the whole of history, from the primordial Monad to the apokatastasis. Thus the first century begins with 'the unopposed good', which is rapidly followed by 'opposition' (1.2-4, 10), principles and qualities (1.5-8) and assorted discussions of demons, temptation, and human psychology. The second century invites meditation on those aspects of creation's multiplicity which most directly affect human beings. The third century invites the reader to contemplate the heavens through definitions of the world (III.36), the sun (III.44), the moon (III.52), the stars (III.37 and 62), and the angels (III.65). The fourth century progresses through symbols of priesthood and sacrifice, described above. The fifth century invokes the symbols of cloud (V.13 and 16) and resurrection (V.22 and 25), then progresses through symbols of spiritual combat (V.28-45) to images of the heavenly city (V.74-82) and the heavenly temple (V.84). The sixth and last century invites meditation on themes apparently drawn from the creed, including the Father (VI.28-30), the difference between begetting and engendering (VI.31-32), the crucifixion (VI.38 and 40) and death of Christ (VI.40-2), the 'living and the dead' (VI.61); and the century culminates in the theme of spiritual submission (VI.68-70).

Evagrius' division of this work into centuries 'according to the days of creation' provides more than an invitation to meditate on cosmic history. Many passages invite the reader to apply the allegorical method to lofty theological concepts in order to appreciate these doctrines in more personal, spiritual terms, or as it might be put today, at a more existential, psychological level. The *Kephalaia Gnostica* is above all else a workbook for meditation. Evagrius seems relatively uninterested in providing unambiguous theological definitions: his purpose is to tantalize, not necessarily to satisfy. He invites his reader to 'scrutinize', that is to search more deeply in his texts

and in the history of creation itself for the God who lies behind the letter of the text and the external appearances of creation.

end p.206

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Psalmody and Prayer in the Writings of Evagrius Ponticus

Print ISBN 0199273200, 2005
pp. [207]

The Syriac word ܐܚܕܐ , used to translate the opening verb in Evagrius' last sentence, 'Scrutinize our words [. . .]', means 'to trace, track, seek out, investigate'³¹

³¹ Smith, *Compendious Syriac Dictionary*, p. 424.

, possibly translating the Greek ἐξίχνειω. Throughout the *Kephalaia Gnostica* Evagrius invites such 'scrutiny' through the use of allusion, hints, paradox, and above all through symbolic imagery drawn chiefly from the scriptures. It therefore follows that one would need to exercise great care in using texts from the *Kephalaia Gnostica* to assess the orthodoxy of Evagrius' dogmatic theology. Nevertheless, this is precisely what theologians from Justinian down to the present have attempted to do.

Evagrius' 'Hidden Doctrines'

Four years after producing his critical edition of the *Kephalaia Gnostica*, Antoine Guillaumont published a study of this text demonstrating that Evagrius' writings had played a more significant role in the Origenist controversies of the sixth century than had previously been realized. As has been described, none of the sixth-century anathemas or anti-Origenist chroniclers specify any particular doctrine as having originated with Evagrius. Guillaumont pointed out, however, that whereas Justinian's anathemas of 543 are directed against specific doctrines taken from Origen's *De principiis*, the subsequent anathemas of 553, although not mentioning Evagrius by name, specifically condemn doctrines which appear to be present in the *Kephalaia Gnostica*. The clearest example is anathema 8 of 553:

8. Εἴ τις μὴ λέγει τὸν θεὸν λόγον τὸν ὁμοούσιον τῷ θεῷ καὶ πατρὶ καὶ ἁγίῳ πνεύματι, τὸν σαρκωθέντα καὶ ἐνανθρωπήσαντα, τὸν ἕνα τῆς ἁγίας τριάδος, κυρίως Χριστόν, ἀλλὰ καταχρηστικῶς διὰ τὸν, ὡς φασι, κενώσαντα ἑαυτὸν νοῦν, ὡς συνημμένον αὐτῷ τῷ θεῷ λόγῳ, καὶ κυρίως λεγόμενον Χριστόν, ἀλλ' ἐκείνον διὰ τοῦτον Χριστὸν καὶ τοῦτον δι' ἐκείνον θεόν, ἀ. ἔ.

32

³² Diekamp, *Origenistische Streitigkeiten*, p. 93, lines 23-34.

8. If anyone does not say that the divine Word, consubstantial with God the Father and [God the] Holy Spirit, who was incarnate and became man, one of the Holy Trinity, is Christ in the proper sense; but [says] instead that he is incorrectly so-called because (as they put it) of the self-emptying *nous* which unites itself to God the Word, and which is referred to as Christ in the proper sense: and further that the

latter [Word] because of the former [*nous*] is [called] Christ and the former [*nous*] because of the latter [Word] is [called] God—let him be anathema!

end p.207

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Psalmody and Prayer in the Writings of Evagrius Ponticus

Print ISBN 0199273200, 2005
pp. [208]

Strikingly similar to the last phrase of this anathema is the text of *Kephalaia Gnostica* IV.18:

The intelligible *anointing* is the spiritual knowledge of the holy Unity, and the Christ is he who is united to this knowledge. And if this is so, the Christ is not the Word in the beginning, just as he who is anointed is not God in the beginning; rather the latter [God] because of the former [anointed] is the Christ, and the former [anointed] because of the latter [God] is God.³³

³³ Evagrius, *Kephalaia Gnostica* IV.18, ed. Guillaumont.

Guillaumont believes that the last phrase of anathema 8 (from καὶ κυρίως λεγόμεν οὐν [. . .]) is a direct citation from *Kephalaia Gnostica* IV.18. This is certainly possible; although as Bunge has noted, this text appears to be a citation by Evagrius of Gregory of Nazianzen's *Oration* 30.³⁴

³⁴ Bunge, *Briefe aus der Wüste*, p. 163 n. 178 and p. 400 n. 92. Gregory Nazianzen, *Oration* 30 (4. *Theol.*), SC 250, p. 272: 'He is "Christ" (*anointed*) because of [his] divinity: for this is the anointing of the humanity which [anointing] sanctifies not through [its] action, as with the other anointed ones; but rather through the complete presence of the one who anoints' ('Χριστὸς' δέ, διὰ τὴν θεότητα· χρίσις γὰρ αὕτη τῆς ἀνθρωπότητος, οὐκ ἐνεργεία κατὰ τοὺς ἄλλους χριστοὺς ἀγιάζουσα, παρουσία δὲ ὅλου τοῦ χρίοντος).

However, the first part of this anathema describes a doctrine which is not attributable to Evagrius: nowhere does he write of a divine 'kenotic *nous*' (*κενώσαντα ἑαυτὸν νοῦν*) which effects Christ's 'spiritual anointing'. Thus, although anathema 8 of 553 may well contain a citation from the *Kephalaia Gnostica*, it cannot be regarded as solely, or even as primarily directed against Evagrius, since the majority of the anathema describes a doctrine which Evagrius did not teach.

Nevertheless, having concluded that the author (or authors) of the 15 anathemas of 553 knew the *Kephalaia Gnostica*, Guillaumont proceeded to search this work for evidence of the 'christologie très particulière' which he regarded as characteristic of the 15 anathemas. He bases his claim to have found such a Christology in Evagrius on the following citation from *Kephalaia Gnostica* 1.77: '[. . .] intellect is the Christ who is united to the knowledge of the Unity.'³⁵

³⁵ Guillaumont, *Les 'Kephalaia Gnostica'*, p. 152: '[. . .] intellect est le Christ, qui est uni à la science de l'Unité'.

It should be noted that this is a partial citation of a longer text, the

preceding portion of which Guillaumont neither cites nor discusses;
nevertheless this text is quoted in the same partial way by Refoulé³⁶

³⁶ Refoulé, 'La Christologie d'Évagre et l'Origénisme', p. 252.

and Grillmeier³⁷

³⁷ Grillmeier, 'Evagrius Ponticus', p. 381.

in their discussions of Evagrius' Christology. This text

end p.208

Psalmody and Prayer in the Writings of Evagrius Ponticus

is absolutely crucial because it is the only passage in all of Evagrius' works where he appears to speak openly of, and even to define, the *nous of Christ*.

١٢ - قلنا لا علم لنا بهذا قال رسول الله :
هو مما يورثهم
١٣ - قلنا يا محمد انما هذا من
المرسلات
١٤ - قلنا يا محمد انما هذا من
المرسلات

³⁸ Evagrius, *Kephalaia Gnostica* 1.77, Guillaumont, pp. 52-3: 'La nature seconde est le signe du corps, et la (nature) première le (signe) de l'âme; et le *nous* est le Christ, qui est uni à la science de l'Unité.'

³⁹ Evagrius, *Letter to Melania* 15, ed. Frankenberg, p. 514: 'And just as the [human] *nous* acts in the body through the mediation (توسط) of the soul, in the same way the Father acts (توسط, prob.) through the mediation of the "soul" [i.e. the Son and the Spirit] in his "body", which is the [human] *nous*.' The same notion of hierarchical mediation is expressed in *Kephalaia Gnostica* 1.56: 'The *nous* teaches the soul, and the soul the body; and only the "man of God" (Deut. 33: 1) knows the man of knowledge.' Evagrius elsewhere points out that this inner hierarchy can also be a reminder of the dire consequences of failing to seek God. In scholion 6 on *Psalms* 48: 12, commenting on the verse 'Their graves shall be their homes forever', Evagrius employs the anthropological model of body/soul/ *nous* to suggest the possibility of spiritual decay through sin: 'The unclean grave of the *nous* is the soul; and the grave

of the soul is the body' (cf. PG 12.1445).

For Evagrius the body represents the lowest and 'most dense', that is to say the least spiritual, level of the human person. Above it in dignity

end p.209

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Psalmody and Prayer in the Writings of Evagrius Ponticus

Print ISBN 0199273200, 2005

pp. [210]

is the soul, which, although spiritual, exists as a consequence of the fall and serves as the mediator between *nous* and body. The *nous* or intellect is the highest level and true centre of the human person: it is the image of God and is solely capable of both perceiving the 'light' of God and being 'illuminated' by that light.

Corresponding to these levels of human psychology Evagrius offers the analogy of: (3) second nature—(2) first nature—(1) Christ. Another way of saying this would be: (3) fallen nature—(2) original (unfallen) nature—(1) Christ.

Seen as a whole, it becomes clear that in this chapter Evagrius is presenting a symbolic analogy rather than a theological definition. In Guillaumont's translation the full significance of the term **σημα**, which means 'sign, portent', or 'ensign, standard, banner'⁴⁰

⁴⁰ Smith, *Compendious Syriac Dictionary*, p. 339.

is obscured. In this context Evagrius clearly intends it to mean 'symbol' or 'sign', and the underlying Greek term is probably **συμβολον**.⁴¹

⁴¹ Frankenberg considers **σημα** the equivalent of *symbolon* in his retroversion of *Kephalaia Gnostica* II.26 and III.60. This suggests that Evagrius is here employing a formula he customarily uses in his exegetical writings to suggest symbolic analogies: 'X is the symbol of Y'. However, he renders the same term as **σημειον** in *Kephalaia Gnostica* III.29, III.47, IV.21, and IV.43; as **τιπος** in II.70 and III.67; and as **σκοπος** in IV.81. In the sole instance where a Greek fragment exists (IV.68) the Greek word translated by **σημα** is **λογος** (**ἐνέχουσι λόγον**: 'signify' or 'convey the meaning').

Whatever the underlying Greek may be, the use of this term at the beginning of the chapter makes it clear that Evagrius is presenting a symbolic analogy intended to facilitate contemplation: thus, 'the second nature is the *sign* of the body'. Guillaumont's translation acknowledges that **σημα**, although not repeated, is implied in the second phrase; thus he translates: 'the first [nature is] the [sign] of the soul'. But in the third phrase the implied **σημα** is inexplicably absent from Guillaumont's translation. Based on what precedes it, a better translation would be: 'Christ is [the sign of] the *nous*, who is united to the knowledge of the Unity.'

This would suggest that *Kephalaia Gnostica* 1.77 is not primarily christological: rather, the reader of the text is being invited to meditate simultaneously on two parallel symbols of spiritual ascent. The first is anthropological⁴²

⁴² Although the term 'anthropological' is used here, this threefold model would also apply to angels or demons as well; since as has been described, Evagrius believed that they, too, are fallen *noes* with bodies and souls.

and consists of the threefold 'signs' of body, soul, and *nous*. From the perspective of Evagrius' cosmology these three 'signs' also suggest the fallen state of the *nous*. Thus the second,

end p.210

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Psalmody and Prayer in the Writings of Evagrius Ponticus

Print ISBN 0199273200, 2005

pp. [211]

parallel set of concepts for meditation is a more overt reminder of the origin and destiny of the *nous*: second (fallen) nature; first (unfallen) nature; and Christ who enjoys knowledge of the Unity. The capstone of this passage is clearly the reference to 'knowledge of the Unity', which Evagrius elsewhere refers to as 'essential knowledge'. Christ now 'knows the Unity', and the implication is that the reader, too, should ascend from 'the sign of the body' through the 'sign of the soul' to the 'sign of the *nous*' in order to 'know' what Christ knows.

It has been suggested here that the principal text on which modern criticism of Evagrius' Christology is based should be looked at in full and in greater depth than has been customary hitherto; and that when this is done it becomes difficult if not impossible to establish with any certainty that Evagrius wrote anything on the subject of the *nous* of Christ. This does not mean that I think Evagrius did not believe in the pre-existent *nous* of Christ, nor that I consider such a doctrine to be compatible with orthodox Christology, either of Evagrius' day or our own. What I do believe is that Evagrius was aware of the problem. I do not believe the consequences of incorrectly stating Who or What became incarnate were any less obvious to Evagrius than they are to us. Evagrius, however, had explicated his whole cosmology and spirituality on the basis of Origen's doctrine of the pre-existence of *noes*, and he could not easily set that doctrine aside, no matter how troubling the consequences. Knowing that there was no theological solution to his problem, I believe he chose to keep absolutely silent on the question of Christ's *nous*, and that he thus remained true to his own admonition:

41. Πᾶσα πρότασις ἢ γένος ἔχει κατηγορούμενον, ἢ διαφοράν, ἢ εἶδος, ἢ ἴδιον, ἢ συμβεβηκός, ἢ τὸ ἐκ τούτων συγκείμενον· οὐδὲν δὲ ἐπὶ τῆς ἁγίας Τριάδος τῶν εἰρημένων ἔστι λαβεῖν. Σιωπῇ προσκυνεῖσθω τὸ ἄρρητον. 43

⁴³ Evagrius, *Gnostikos* 41, SC 356, p. 166. Cited by Socrates, *Ecclesiastical History* 3.7, 23-4, ed. Hansen, p. 199.

41. Every proposition has a predicate or a genus, or a distinction, or a species, or a property, or an accident, or that which is composed of these things. But on the subject of the Blessed Trinity, nothing of what has been said [here] is admissible. In silence let the ineffable be adored!

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Psalmody and Prayer in the Writings of Evagrius Ponticus

Print ISBN 0199273200, 2005

pp. [212]

Appendix 2 Select Pages From MS. *Vaticanus Graecus* 754

The text of the *Scholia on Psalms* used in this volume is that of M. J. Rondeau, based on MS *Vaticanus Graecus* 754. In three of the scholia discussed in Chapter 6, Rondeau's text differs significantly from the versions printed in Migne, *Patrologia Graeca*, and Pitra, *Analecta Sacra*, in ways which affect the interpretation of Evagrius' Christology. For this reason reproductions are included of the following:

MS *Vaticanus Graecus* 754, fo. 123^v, containing Evagrius, scholion 7 *on Psalm* 44: 8(2-3) (cf. ed. Pitra, 44: 3(3), vol. iii, pp. 40-1).

MS *Vaticanus Graecus* 754, fo. 219^v, containing Evagrius, scholion 4 *on Psalm* 88: 7(2) (cf. ed. Pitra, 88: 9, vol. iii, p. 160).

MS *Vaticanus Graecus* 754, fo. 258^v, containing Evagrius, scholion 10 *on Psalm* 104: 15 (cf. PG 12.1564).

Details of the relevant portions of the three preceding pages.

end p.212

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Psalmody and Prayer in the Writings of Evagrius Ponticus

Print ISBN 0199273200, 2005
pp. [213]

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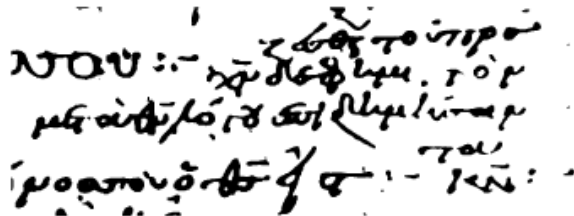
(cf. ed. Pitra, 44: 3(3), vol. iii, pp. 40-1).

end p.213

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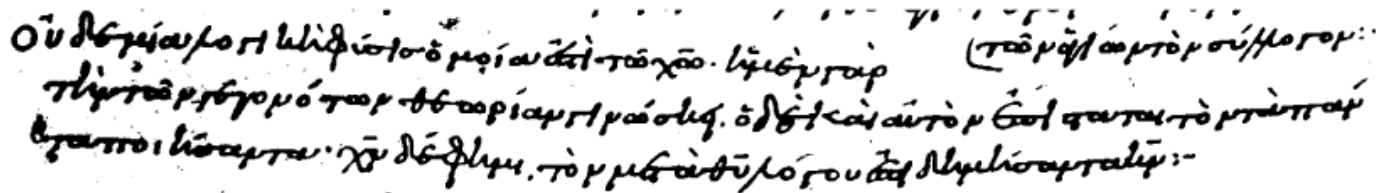
Psalmody and Prayer in the Writings of Evagrius Ponticus

Print ISBN 0199273200, 2005
pp. [216]

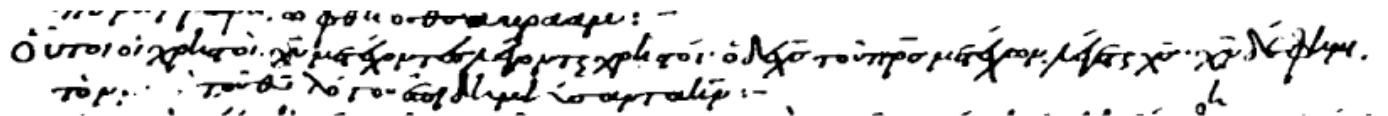


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end p.216

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Psalmody and Prayer in the Writings of Evagrius Ponticus

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pp. [217]

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
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Psalmody and Prayer in the Writings of Evagrius Ponticus


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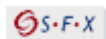
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Psalmody and Prayer in the Writings of Evagrius Ponticus

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


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Psalmody and Prayer in the Writings of Evagrius Ponticus


Print ISBN 0199273200, 2005


pp. [221]


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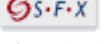
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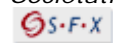
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end p.221


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Psalmody and Prayer in the Writings of Evagrius Ponticus



Print ISBN 0199273200, 2005


pp. [222]


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
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Print ISBN 0199273200, 2005


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Psalmody and Prayer in the Writings of Evagrius Ponticus

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pp. [224]

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
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end p.224

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
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



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
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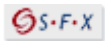
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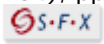
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Print ISBN 0199273200, 2005

pp. [234]

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Dysinger OSB, Luke , Assistant Professor, Department of Moral Theology and Church History,
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pp. [235]

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
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Dysinger OSB, Luke , Assistant Professor, Department of Moral Theology and Church History,
Saint John's Seminary, Camarillo, California

Psalmody and Prayer in the Writings of Evagrius Ponticus

Print ISBN 0199273200, 2005

pp. [236]

Index Locorum

For discussion of individual works see Index Rerum

Ad monachos

98 : 127

Antirrhetikos

Prologue : 131 , 132 , 135

I. 44 : 139

II. 19 : 139

II. 21 : 139

II. 24 : 139

II. 25 : 139

II. 27 : 139 , 140

II. 32 : 139

II. 50 : 139

II. 51 : 139

II. 52 : 139

II. 54 : 139

III. 16 : 139 , 140

III. 25 : 139

IV. 15 : 139

IV. 22 : 95 , 128 , 236

IV. 24 : 139

IV. 27 : 139

IV. 29 : 139 , 140

IV. 31 : 139

IV. 35 : 139

IV. 36 : 139 , 140

IV. 37 : 139

IV. 41 : 139

IV. 43 : 139

IV. 45 : 139 , 140

IV. 49 : 139

IV. 63 : 139

IV. 64 : 139

V. 12 : 139

V. 18 : 136

V. 33 : 139

VI. 11 : 139

VI. 17 : 139 , 190

VI. 21 : 139

VI. 22 : 139

VI. 23 : 139

VI. 27 : 139

VI. 42 : 139

VII. 25 : 139

VIII. 6 : 139

VIII. 10 : 139

VIII. 21 : 139

VIII. 22 : 139

VIII. 23 : 139

VIII. 24 : 139

VIII. 25 : 139

VIII. 28 138 , 139

VIII. 30 145

VIII. 48 : 139

VIII. 49 : 139

De magistris et discipulis

3 : 115

De octo spiritibus malitiae

1 : 87

5 : 73

7 : 87

De oratione

Introd. 170

3 : 37 , 74 , 99 , 102 , 151

4 : 5 , 37 , 45

10 : 35 , 77

11 : 45

13 : 141

14 : 45 , 74

17 : 170

21 : 75 , 76 , 170

34 : 37 , 102 , 151

30 : 170

31 : 170

33 : 170

36 : 99

39 : 170

40 : 45

50 : 131

55 : 37

56 : 99

57 : 99

59 : 170

62 : 95

63 : 93

64 : 93 , 122

67 : 75 , 102

68 : 76

69 : 34 , 43 , 95 , 97 , 121

72 : 133

73 : 121

Dysinger OSB, Luke , Assistant Professor, Department of Moral Theology and Church History,
Saint John's Seminary, Camarillo, California

Psalmody and Prayer in the Writings of Evagrius Ponticus

Print ISBN 0199273200, 2005

pp. [237]

74 : 102 , 121

80 : 71 , 80

81 : 72

82 : 70 , 71 , 72 , 73 , 75 , 79 , 86 , 87 , 88 , 102

83 : 81 , 93 , 96 , 103 , 104

84 : 103

85 : 84 , 97

86 : 103

88 : 170

89 : 75 , 76

94 : 132 , 141

95 : 141

96 : 142

97 : 141 , 142

98 : 142

99 : 141

101 : 35

102 : 170

108 : 75 , 77

113 : 45 , 170

115 : 170

117 : 45

134 : 141

135 : 141

142 : 45

147 : 170

151 : 170

Epistula fidei (Letter 63)

1 : 9 , 10 , 11

4 : 167

5 : 115

7 : 160

11 : 32

Gnostikos

3 : 46

5 : 74 , 126

6 : 21

10 : 27 , 126

15 : 46

17 : 66

18 : 66

19 : 66

24 : 47

28 : 189 , 190

29 : 39

31 : 27 , 125

32 : 27

36 : 47

41 : 211

44 : 44 , 97 , 165

45 : 74 , 80

48 : 175

Institutio ad monachos

23 : 126

Kephalaia Gnostica

I. 27 : 174

I. 34 : 37

I. 35 : 37

I. 40 : 26 , 195

I. 49 : 31 , 32
I. 50 : 31
I. 51 : 31
I. 56 : 209
I. 57 : 31
I. 75 : 205
I. 68 : 33 , 121
II. 2 : 41 , 42 , 98
II. 4 : 41 , 46
II. 15 : 33
II. 16 : 43
II. 20 : 41
II. 21 : 98
II. 51 : 205
II. 61 : 41
II. 77 : 180
II. 81 : 98
II. 83 : 38
II. 87 : 31
III. 3 : 43 , 98
III. 7 : 33
III. 11 : 98
III. 20 : 42
III. 21 : 42
III. 28 : 32
III. 38 : 32
III. 42 : 38 , 44
III. 52 : 205
III. 59 : 33
III. 61 : 41
III. 62 : 205
III. 67 : 41
III. 76 : 11

III. 78 : 26

III. 84 : 41

III. 86 : 41

III. 87 : 41

IV. 4 : 98

IV. 7 : 98

IV. 18 : 160 , 208

IV. 19 : 41

IV. 21 : 160

IV. 51 : 41

IV. 68 : 11

IV. 74 : 205

IV. 89 : 184

V. 4 : 185

end p.237

Dysinger OSB, Luke , Assistant Professor, Department of Moral Theology and Church History,
Saint John's Seminary, Camarillo, California

Psalmody and Prayer in the Writings of Evagrius Ponticus

Print ISBN 0199273200, 2005

pp. [238]

- V. 5 : 98
- V. 12 : 11
- V. 13 : 205
- V. 16 : 205
- V. 24 : 185
- V. 30 : 131
- V. 36 : 131
- V. 37 : 205
- V. 42 : 33
- V. 53 : 205
- V. 68 : 131
- V. 84 : 98
- VI. 9 : 31
- VI. 14 : 156
- VI. 19 : 39
- VI. 20 : 42 , 115 , 178
- VI. 21 : 159
- VI. 25 : 121
- VI. 43 : 176 , 192
- VI. 51 : 11
- VI. 53 : 205
- VI. 59 : 192
- VI. 66 : 205
- VI. 75 : 179
- VI. 76 : 186
- VI. 90 : 20 , 21 , 45

Letter to Melania (Letter 64)

15 : 209

17 : 11

27 : 5

29 : 46

30 : 46

56 : 39

57 : 39

58 : 39

60 : 43

61 : 43

Letters

1 : 138

11 : 134

56 : 186

59 : 194

Paraeneticus

Peri logismon

1 : 26 , 29 , 30 , 35 , 40 , 115 , 118 , 130 , 131 , 144 , 145 , 150 ,
151

2 : 38 , 127

3 : 26 , 115 , 121 , 195

4 : 101

8 : 38

9 : 118

10 : 115 , 130

11 : 118

16 : 144 , 145

17 : 29 , 30 , 35 , 150 , 151

18 : 40 , 131

19 : 26 , 40

26 : 127

31 : 26 , 195

33 : 121

Praktikos , 1 , 3 , 4 , 9 , 11 , 13 , 19 , 21-2 , 24-8 , 30 , 31 , 33 , 34-6 , 37 ,
45 , 66 , 71 , 73 , 75 , 76 , 77 , 79 , 80 , 83 , 84 , 85 , 94 , 97 , 98-102 ,
115 , 118-23 , 125-8 , 132-4 , 157 , 165 , 204 , 205 , 220 , 222 , 227 , 228
, 235

Prol : 13 , 73 , 123

1 : 45 , 66 , 125 , 127

2 : 134

3 : 27 , 34 , 35 , 115 , 118 , 125

4 : 34 , 35 , 121 , 132

5 : 27 , 37 , 76 , 120

6 : 26 , 71 , 75 , 77 , 80 , 98 , 128

7 : 99 , 100 , 123 , 126

8 : 9 , 11 , 31 , 33 , 83 , 84 , 97 , 165

9 : 22

10 : 45

11 : 125

15 : 127

24 : 134

30 : 35

35 : 118

36 : 27 , 34 , 125

38 : 115

42 : 35 , 132

47 : 34 , 121

50 : 27 , 37 , 120

64 : 80

67 : 26 , 75 , 77

69 : 71 , 98 , 128

70 : 99 , 100

71 : 100 , 126

85 : 33

87 : 11 , 84

89 : 9 , 11 , 31 , 83 , 97 , 165

90 : 22

Rerum monachalium rationes , 1 , 19 , 46 , 73 , 221

3 : 19

9 : 46 , 73

Scholia on Ecclesiastes , 23 , 25 , 26 , 38 , 68 , 69 , 73 , 131 , 136 , 154 ,
173 , 176 , 186 , 221

1 : 38 , 173

10 : 131

15 : 69

18 : 69

21 : 136

23 : 73

end p.238
