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EVAGRIUS, *KEPHALAIA GNOSTIKA*

A NEW TRANSLATION OF THE
UNREFORMED TEXT FROM THE SYRIAC

Translated with an Introduction and Commentary by

Ilaria L. E. Ramelli

SBL Press

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For Angela, Santina, Savina, and Elvira

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“There was a time when evilness did not exist, and there will be a time when it will no more exist, whereas there was no time when virtue did not exist, and there will be no time when it will not exist. For the germs of virtue are impossible to destroy.”

—Evagrius, *Kephalaia Gnostika* 1.40

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ABBREVIATIONS

Aev	Aevum
Aug	Augustinianum
BETL	Bibliotheca ephemeridum theologiarum Lovaniensium
Bijdr	Bijdragen
BLE	Bulletin de littérature ecclésiastique
BWANT	Beiträge zur Wissenschaft vom Alten und Neuen Testament
ByzZ	Byzantinische Zeitschrift
Car	<i>Carthaginensia</i>
CPG	<i>Clavis patrum graecorum</i> . Edited by M. Geerard. 5 vols. Turnhout, 1974–87
EFN	Estudios de filología neotestamentaria
ETL	<i>Ephemerides theologicae Lovanienses</i>
FZPhTh	<i>Freiburger Zeitschrift für Philosophie und Theologie</i>
GNO	Gregorii Nysseni Opera. Edited by W. Jaeger. Leiden, 1952–
GRBS	<i>Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies</i>
HTR	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
IZBG	<i>Internationale Zeitschriftenschau für Bibelwissenschaft und Grenzgebiete</i>
JBL	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
JECS	<i>Journal of Early Christian Studies</i>
JEH	<i>Journal of Ecclesiastical History</i>
JFSR	<i>Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion</i>
JHI	<i>Journal of the History of Ideas</i>
JTS	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
KG	<i>Kephalaia Gnostika</i>
KJV	King James Version
Mus	<i>Le Muséon</i>
OCP	<i>Orientalia christiana periodica</i>
OrChr	<i>Oriens christianus</i>
OrChrAn	<i>Orientalia christiana analecta</i>

<i>ParOr</i>	<i>Parole de l'orient</i>
PG	Patrologia graeca [= Patrologiae cursus completus: Series graeca]. Edited by J.-P. Migne. 162 vols. Paris, 1857–86
PGL	<i>Patristic Greek Lexicon</i> . Edited by G. W. H. Lampe. Oxford, 1968
PO	Patrologia orientalis
RHE	<i>Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique</i>
RHR	<i>Revue de l'histoire des religions</i>
RSPT	<i>Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques</i>
RSV	Revised Standard Version
SC	Sources chrétiennes. Paris, 1943–
SEAug	Studia ephemeridis Augustinianum
SMSR	<i>Studi e materiali di storia delle religioni</i>
SPhilo	<i>The Studia Philonica Annual</i>
StPatr	<i>Studia patristica</i>
StudMon	<i>Studia monastica</i>
SubBi	Subsidia biblica
SVF	<i>Stoicorum veterum fragmenta</i> . H. von Arnim. 4 vols. Leipzig, 1903–1924
VC	<i>Vigiliae christianae</i>
VSpir	<i>Vie spirituelle</i>
WGRW	Writings of the Greco-Roman World
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
ZAC	<i>Zeitschrift für Antikes Christentum</i>
ZNW	<i>Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche</i>

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INTRODUCTORY ESSAY
RECOVERING THE TRUE THOUGHT OF THE ORIGENIAN
EVAGRIUS: A NEEDED REASSESSMENT OF THE INFLUENCE
OF ORIGEN AND GREGORY OF NYSSA ON EVAGRIUS

Evagrius Ponticus (345/6–399) was an Origenian, a faithful follower of Origen of Alexandria (d. ca. 255) and of his close disciple Gregory Nyssen, and not—as Guillaumont famously suggested, followed by many—an Origenist of the kind of those who radicalized and distorted Origen’s legacy, that is, those known to, and condemned by, Emperor Justinian in 543 and 553. The same reassessment of Origen’s true thought—beyond the construals that are a heritage of the Origenistic controversy and partially still hold today—that is needed, and is underway, is also needed for Evagrius’s thought. Evagrius’s ideas too are indeed undergoing a reassessment, and rightly so. This is necessary, particularly (1) with respect to a unitary vision of his production against a long-standing split between his philosophical and his ascetic works—the former accepted, the latter deemed dangerously “Origenistic”—and (2) with respect to his often misunderstood “Origenism.”

Especially in relation to the former issue, Kevin Corrigan’s attention to the *Kephalaia Gnostika* (KG) and the *Letter to Melania*, or *Great Letter*, and his holistic approach to Evagrius’s thought are very helpful. The same holistic approach, without the inveterate fracture between Evagrius’s ascetic works and his philosophical works, is also used by Julia Kostantinovsky and Augustine Casiday in their books on Evagrius.¹

1. Kevin Corrigan, *Evagrius and Gregory: Mind, Soul and Body in the Fourth Century* (Burlington, Vt.: Ashgate, 2009). Julia Kostantinovsky, *Evagrius Ponticus: The Making of a Gnostic* (Burlington, Vt.: Ashgate, 2009); Augustine Casiday, *Reconstructing the Theology of Evagrius Ponticus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

To address both points, that is, the unitary vision of Evagrius's production and the correction of misunderstandings related to his "Origenism," it is necessary to recover Origen's true thought and thus determine its exact impact on Evagrius's system, as well as to investigate the possible role of the Cappadocians in the transmission of Origen's authentic ideas to Evagrius.² Gregory Nyssen in particular is definitely the most insightful and faithful follower of Origen among all patristic thinkers, the one who best understood and developed Origen's genuine ideas. Indeed, a study of Gregory's reception of Origen's philosophy and theology is showing more and more that Gregory is the patristic philosopher-theologian who understood Origen's true thought best of all and misunderstood it least.

Clarifying, to the extent that is possible, which of the Cappadocians transmitted Origen's ideas and their interpretation to Evagrius (who also had direct access to those ideas) is pivotal for the assessment of Evagrius's intellectual heritage. Even some elements of Evagrius's life bear on his ideas and his relationship with those of the Cappadocians, and consequently with those of Origen himself. This reassessment of Origen and Evagrius's thought, and Origen's direct and indirect influence on Evagrius, is one of the most remarkable issues in Greek patristic study.

1. Evagrius's Life Reconsidered in Light of Origen's and Gregory's Influence

The main sources on Evagrius's life are Palladius's *Lausiac History* 38;³ Socrates's *Church History* 4.23; Sozomen's *Church History* 6.30; and a fifth-century Coptic biography. Other sources are Gregory Nazianzen's will; an anonymous late-fourth-century *Historia Monachorum* (20.15); the anonymous fourth/fifth-century *Apophthegms, Alphabetical Collection* (s.v. "Evagrius"); Gennadius's *Famous People* 6.11 and 6.17; and Jerome's *Letter* 133 and prefaces to *Dialogue against the Pelagians* and to *Commentary on Jeremiah* 4. According to these sources, Evagrius was born in Ibora in

2. See Ilaria L. E. Ramelli, "Evagrius and Gregory: Nazianzen or Nyssen? A Remarkable Issue That Bears on the Cappadocian (and Origenian) Influence on Evagrius," *GRBS* 53 (2013): 117–37.

3. Besides the Greek recensions, there is also a noteworthy Coptic one. See also, e.g., Gabriel Bunge and Adalbert de Vogüé, eds. and trans., *Quatre ermites égyptiens, d'après les fragments coptes de l'Histoire Lausiaque* (Bégrolles-en-Mauges: Bellefontaine, 1994).

Pontus, from a presbyter—ordained in Arkeus by Basil of Caesarea⁴—and “rural bishop” (χωρεπίσκοπος). He received a good education in philosophy, rhetoric, and the liberal arts, thus being “perhaps the best educated in philosophy of all the early monks.”⁵

Thanks to Basil and Gregory of Nazianzus, who probably were the compilers of the *Philocalia*, Evagrius became familiar with Origen’s ideas. He was ordained a reader by Basil, some time after whose death (which occurred in late 378 or early 379) Evagrius moved to Constantinople to study, according to Socrates and Sozomen, with Gregory Nazianzen.⁶ He participated in the 381 Council of Constantinople as a deacon. At this council, during which Nazianzen withdrew from the episcopate of Constantinople, Gregory of Nyssa surely played a core role. Evagrius was ordained deacon by Nazianzen according to Socrates (*Church History* 4.23), and Socrates’s affirmation is followed by most scholars, but Palladius indicates Gregory of Nyssa instead. Unlike Socrates and Sozomen, Palladius knew Evagrius personally, as he himself attests in *Lausiatic History* 12, 23, 24, 35, 38, and 47, and was a personal disciple of Evagrius, as he claims in *Lausiatic History* 23. He devoted to Evagrius a whole chapter of his *Lausiatic History*, all of which was composed “in the spirit of Evagrius,”⁷ and in chapter 86 he speaks of Evagrius very highly. Palladius was an Origenian monk himself and a friend of the Origenian monks dubbed “Tall Brothers,” of Rufinus, and of Melania the Elder. These were in turn close friends of Evagrius.

Palladius is therefore a source worthy of consideration.⁸ In *Lausiatic History* 86 (PG 34:1188C), Palladius reports that it was Gregory of Nyssa

4. Palladius, *Lausiatic History* 38.2.

5. Columba Stewart, “Monastic Attitudes toward Philosophy and Philosophers,” *StPatr* 44 (2010): 321–27, esp. 324.

6. “He studied philosophy and sacred Scripture under the direction of Gregory, bishop of Nazianzen” (Sozomen, *Church History* 6.30).

7. See René Draguet, “L’Histoire Lausiaque: Une oeuvre écrite dans l’esprit d’Évagre,” *RHE* 41 (1946): 321–64; 42 (1947): 5–49.

8. Since Palladius, unlike Socrates, was personally acquainted with Evagrius, he is a firsthand source; while Socrates wrote his information some forty years after Evagrius’s death, Evagrius wrote of what happened during his own lifetime. Moreover, Socrates seems to be much better informed on Nazianzen than on Nyssen. This is particularly clear from his *Church History* 4.26, as I have argued in a detailed manner in Ramelli, “Evagrius and Gregory: Nazianzen or Nyssen?” Socrates seems to know nothing of Gregory Nyssen’s option for the ascetic life, of his ecclesiastical career, of his anti-Arianism and his theological works. Yet, Nyssen was even more of an Origenian

who ordained Evagrius and was a close friend of his: “After the death of the bishop saint Basil, saint Gregory—the bishop of Nyssa, a brother of the bishop Basil who enjoys the honor of the apostles—saint Gregory, I say, most wise and free from passions to the utmost degree, and illustrious for his wide-ranging learning, became friends with Evagrius and appointed him as a deacon.”⁹ On this account, it is unequivocally Gregory of Nyssa—the “brother of the bishop Basil” and the “bishop of Nyssa”—who treated Evagrius with friendship and ordained him a deacon. Note Palladius’s most praising description of Nyssen in this passage. The reason is easy to guess: Gregory was the closest follower of Origen and the spiritual father of Evagrius, and Palladius profoundly admired both Origen and Evagrius.

The relationship between Nyssen and Evagrius may go back to the former’s sojourn in Ibora, between late 379 and 380, when the inhabitants of Ibora asked Gregory to supervise the election of a new bishop. Nyssen and Evagrius were probably together in Ibora at that time. In *Lausiaca History* 86 Palladius goes on to say: “When he left, saint Gregory the bishop handed Evagrius to the blessed bishop Nectarius at the great Council of Constantinople. For Evagrius was most skilled in dialectics against all heresies.”¹⁰ Gregory is regularly identified by scholars with Nazianzen. However, the Gregory whom Palladius mentions in the immediately preceding sentence, and in exactly the same terms as in the present sentence (ὁ ἅγιος Γρηγόριος ὁ ἐπίσκοπος), is Nyssen. Thus, the Gregory who handed Evagrius to Nectarius may also have been the bishop of Nyssa.

Likewise, the source of Socrates’s report in *Church History* 4.23 that Gregory went to Egypt with Evagrius likely referred to Nyssen, since Nazianzen never went to Egypt or Jerusalem after the Council of Constantinople, but Nyssen after Constantinople traveled to Jerusalem late in 381 and in 382, as attested in his *Letter* 3. He may have gone from Jerusalem to Egypt with Evagrius, when Evagrius himself left Jerusalem for Egypt. For

than Nazianzen and Basil were, and this would have been a very interesting aspect to highlight for the strongly philo-Origenian Socrates.

9. Μετὰ δὲ τὴν κοίμησιν τοῦ ἁγίου ἐπισκόπου Βασιλείου προσέχων αὐτοῦ τῇ ἐπιτηδεύσει ὁ σοφώτατος καὶ ἀπαθέστατος καὶ πάσῃ παιδείᾳ λάμπων ὁ ἅγιος Γρηγόριος ὁ Νυσσαεὺς ἐπίσκοπος ἀδελφὸς τοῦ ἐν τιμῇ τῶν ἀποστόλων Βασιλείου τοῦ ἐπισκόπου, προχειρίζεται τούτον διάκονον.

10. Ἐκείθεν ἔλθων ὁ ἅγιος Γρηγόριος ὁ ἐπίσκοπος ἐν τῇ μεγάλῃ συνόδῳ τῇ κατὰ Κωνσταντινούπολιν καταλιμπάνει αὐτὸν Νεκταρίῳ τῷ μακαρίῳ ἐπίσκοπῳ, διαλεκτικώτατον ὄντα κατὰ πασῶν τῶν αἱρέσεων.

Evagrius, as all his biographies agree, left Constantinople hurriedly to disembroil himself from an affair with a wife of a high functionary¹¹ and traveled to Jerusalem (382), where he frequented the Origenians Melania the Elder and Rufinus; the former, as the head of the double monastery where Rufinus too lived, gave Evagrius monastic garb and suggested him to leave for the Egyptian desert. He first headed to Nitria, a cenobitic environment, and then Kellia, where Evagrius practiced a hermitic and extreme form of asceticism and remained until his death in 399.

In Egypt, Evagrius was a disciple of Macarius of Alexandria (d. 394) and especially of Macarius the Egyptian, called the Great, who was converted to asceticism by St. Antony (an Origenian), founded Scetis, and was, like Origen, Antony, and Evagrius himself, a supporter of the doctrine of *apokatastasis*, or universal restoration.¹² Near Alexandria, Evagrius may also have visited Didymus the Blind, the faithful Origenian who was appointed by bishop Athanasius head of the Alexandrian Didaskaleion. Evagrius had disciples himself, among whom were the above-mentioned Palladius, and Cassian,¹³ and many pilgrim visitors. He refused the episcopate at Thmuis that Theophilus of Alexandria offered to him. Indeed, Evagrius, like Origen and Gregory Nyssen, tended to emphasize the spiritual authority coming from inspiration, prayer, learning, teaching, and even miracles, rather than that which comes from ecclesiastical hierarchy.¹⁴

11. Sozomen, *Church History* 6.30; Palladius, *Lausiac History* 38.3–7.

12. The former seems to be mentioned by Evagrius in *On Thoughts* (Περὶ λογισμῶν) 33 and 37 and *Talking Back* (*Antirrheticus*) 4.23 and 4.58; 8.26. In *Praktikos* 93–94, instead, the reference seems to be to the latter; Robert E. Sinkewicz (*Evagrius of Pontus: The Greek Ascetic Corpus* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003], xix), however, refers *Praktikos* 94 to Macarius of Alexandria as well. As for St. Antony and Macarius and their adhesion to the doctrine of *apokatastasis*, see Ilaria L. E. Ramelli, *The Christian Doctrine of Apokatastasis: A Critical Assessment from the New Testament to Eriugena* (Supplements to *Vigiliae Christianae* 120; Leiden: Brill, 2013), the chapter on Antony.

13. For a revisitation of the figure and the works of Cassian, however, with speculative although interesting arguments, see now Panayiotis Tzamalikos, *The Real Cassian Revisited: Monastic Life, Greek Paideia, and Origenism in the Sixth Century* (Leiden: Brill, 2012); idem, *A Newly Discovered Greek Father: Cassian the Sabaites Eclipsed by John Cassian of Marseilles* (Leiden: Brill, 2012).

14. Claudia Rapp, *Holy Bishops in Late Antiquity: The Nature of Christian Leadership in an Age of Transition* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), ch. 3; for the derivation of these ideas from Origen, see Ilaria L. E. Ramelli, “Theosebia: A Presbyter of the Catholic Church,” *JFSR* 26.2 (2010): 79–102.

If Gregory Nyssen was with Evagrius in Jerusalem and later in Egypt, or at least was in contact with Melania and Evagrius, this would clarify the reason why Nyssen's dialogue *On the Soul and the Resurrection* was translated into Coptic in Egypt so early, possibly as early as Gregory's very lifetime.¹⁵ This is even more probable in light of the consideration that Nyssen in that dialogue, like Evagrius himself, upholds Origen's theory of *apokatastasis*.¹⁶ Nyssen, in fact, was also in Arabia—close to Palestine and Egypt—shortly after the 381 Council of Constantinople: the council sent Gregory to a church there, for correcting them. While he was in Arabia, Gregory, by request of “those who oversee the holy churches of Jerusalem,”¹⁷ visited Jerusalem, when Evagrius was there at Melania's and Rufinus's double monastery on the Olive Mountain.

In addition to his friendship (and discipleship) with Gregory of Nyssa, Evagrius was Nazianzen's assistant in Constantinople for some time¹⁸ and received instruction from him too, in philosophy and biblical exegesis.¹⁹ Evagrius contrasted “Arians” and Pneumatomachians, like both Nyssen and Nazianzen. Evagrius's *Letter on Faith*, or *Dogmatic Letter*, approximates the Cappadocians' theology so closely that it was attributed to Basil as his *Letter* 8. It supports the Trinitarian formula “one common essence, three individual substances” (μία οὐσία, τρεῖς ὑποστάσεις), which, as I have thoroughly argued elsewhere, derived from Origen.²⁰

15. See appendix I in Ilaria L. E. Ramelli, *Gregorio di Nissa: Sull'anima e la resurrezione* (Milan: Bompiani–Catholic University, 2007). The very ancient Coptic translation is also used here in the establishment of a new edition of *De anima et resurrectione*, which is included in the same volume. Now these philological contributions are received in the definitive critical edition *Gregorii Nysseni, De anima et resurrectione* (ed. Andreas Spira and Ekkehardus Mühlenberg; GNO 3.3; Leiden: Brill, 2014), based on all seventy-two available manuscripts.

16. On Evagrius's doctrine of *apokatastasis*, its metaphysical reasons, and its Origenian roots, see Ramelli, *Christian Doctrine of Apokatastasis*, the chapter on Evagrius.

17. Gregory of Nyssa, *Letter* 12.2 (GNO 8.2:17).

18. Gregory mentions Evagrius in his will, written in 381 (PG 37:389–96), as “the deacon Evagrius, who has much worked with me.”

19. Sozomen, *Church History* 6.30.

20. For the roots of this formula in Origen, see Ilaria L. E. Ramelli, “Origen's Anti-Subordinationism and Its Heritage in the Nicene and Cappadocian Line,” *VC* 65 (2011): 21–49; and idem, “Origen, Greek Philosophy, and the Birth of the Trinitarian Meaning of Hypostasis,” *HTR* 105 (2012): 302–50.

Konstantinovsky is right to remark that Evagrius's ideas are not very similar to those of "the Cappadocians,"²¹ though in fact they prove to be not very similar to those of Basil (and, to some extent, Nazianzen), but they are quite similar to those of Nyssen (for instance, in metaphysics and eschatology). And Nyssen, in turn, was the most insightful follower of Origen, even more than Basil and Nazianzen were (hence, among much else, his outspoken adhesion to Origen's doctrine of universal restoration, or *apokatastasis*). Consistently, Evagrius, as I mentioned, was close to Origenians such as Rufinus, Melania, the Tall Brothers, John of Jerusalem, and Palladius. To Melania, Rufinus, and John, Evagrius also addressed letters, including the key *Letter to Melania*, or *Great Letter*, to which I will return soon.

Gregory Nyssen was the most faithfully Origenian of Evagrius's friends and probably ordained him a deacon and was with him in Palestine and Egypt. These biographical circumstances help explain Evagrius's acquaintance with Gregory Nyssen's ideas. Remarkable parallels between Evagrius's and Nyssen's ideas, from protology to eschatology, from theology to anthropology, are emerging more and more and in some cases will be highlighted in the present essay and in the commentary below (but an exhaustive analysis is still needed). These parallels can also be explained as common dependences on Origen, but a systematic assessment of the relationship between Evagrius's and Nyssen's ideas is an important desideratum, although Kevin Corrigan has provided some inspiring insights.²² Gregory's influence on Evagrius also means Origen's influence on Evagrius, and it has to be established which influence was direct and which was mediated by Gregory.

Evagrius's reference to "Gregory the Just" in the epilogue of his *Praktikos*²³ may refer to Nazianzen, as is usually assumed, or to Nyssen: "The high Sun of Justice shines upon us ... thanks to the prayers and intercession of Gregory the Just, who planted me, and of the holy fathers who now water me and by the power of Christ Jesus our Lord, who has granted me

21. Konstantinovsky, *Evagrius*, chs. 3–6.

22. Corrigan, *Evagrius*, juxtaposes these two Christian philosophers in respect to some anthropological, ascetic, and mystical issues.

23. Antoine Guillaumont and Claire Guillaumont, eds. and trans., *Évagre le Pontique: Traité pratique, ou Le moine* (2 vols.; SC 170–171; Paris: Cerf, 1971).

growth.”²⁴ Gregory the Just is also cited in *The Gnostic (Gnostikos)*²⁵ 44 concerning the four cardinal virtues first theorized by Plato (“There are four virtues necessary for contemplation, according to the teaching of Gregory the Just: prudence, courage, temperance, and justice”), a topic that Nyssen developed. This fact, together with the metaphors and terminology used by Evagrius in this passage, makes it very likely that the Gregory at hand here was meant to be Gregory of Nyssa, as I will argue more extensively below in the commentary on *KG* 2.25. Likewise, in *Praktikos* 89, as I will contend in the same commentary below, the “wise teacher” of the four cardinal virtues mentioned by Evagrius may easily be Gregory of Nyssa. Therefore, also the “Gregory the Just” mentioned in the epilogue of Evagrius’s *Praktikos* is probably Gregory of Nyssa.

The close relationship between Evagrius and Gregory of Nyssa to which Palladius and the source of Socrates point, and the probable connection between Evagrius and the early spread of Nyssen’s Origenian work in Egypt, clearly have remarkable implications for Evagrius’s ideas and their relationship with those of the Cappadocians and Origen. I indeed suspect that Gregory of Nyssa, the one who best understood and developed Origen’s true thought, played an important role in transmitting Origen’s authentic ideas to Evagrius. This means not simply Origen’s texts, which Evagrius read on his own as well, but also an interpretation of Origen’s ideas that was the closest to Origen’s genuine philosophy and theology.

Evagrius passed away in 399, just in time to avoid one of the worst bouts of the Origenistic controversy. For he died shortly before Theophilus of Alexandria’s Paschal letter against anthropomorphism, which stirred up a revolt among the simpler, anti-Origenian, and anthropomorphite monks, who scared Theophilus and induced his U-turn against Origen and the Origenians. This opportunistic move (for Theophilus was and remained an Origenian, but for a certain period he acted as an anti-Origenian out of fear²⁶) brought him to persecute Evagrius’s fellow monks in Nitria and Kellia, and especially Evagrius’s friends, the above-mentioned Tall Brothers: the monks Ammonius, Euthymius, Eusebius, and Dioscorus. Palladius mentions them together with Evagrius when he speaks of “those belonging

24. Translation from Sinkewicz, *Evagrius of Pontus*.

25. Edition: Antoine Guillaumont and Claire Guillaumont, eds. and trans., *Évagre le Pontique: Le gnostique, ou À celui qui est devenu digne de la science* (SC 356; Paris: Cerf, 1989).

26. See Ramelli, *Christian Doctrine of Apokatastasis*, section on Theophilus.

to the circle of saints Ammonius and Evagrius” (*Lausiac History* 24.2). He probably refers to the same people when he mentions “Evagrius’s community” (*Lausiac History* 33) and “the circle of saint Evagrius” (35). Evagrius himself attests that he was with Ammonius when they visited John of Lycopolis (*Talking Back* 6.16). Chased by Theophilus from Egypt, the Tall Brothers will be received in Constantinople by Olympia the Deacon—the dedicatee of the Origenian *Homilies on the Song of Songs* by Nyssen, who in the Prologue calls her with deference *σεμνοπρεπεστάτη*, “most reverend”—and her bishop John Chrysostom. Much of their vicissitudes are known thanks to Palladius, the admirer of Evagrius.

Evagrius’s impact was impressive, not only on successive radical Origenists such as Stephen Bar Sudhaili,²⁷ but also on theologians such as Pseudo-Dionysius, Maximus the Confessor, John Climacus, Isaac of Nineveh, and others.²⁸ Even much later, Barhebraeus (1226–86), the Syriac bishop and polymath who wrote in Syriac and Arabic on theology, philosophy, history, science, and other topics, and who admired Origen for his *Hexapla* (the first multilingual critical edition of the Bible), described Evagrius as “the greatest of the gnostics.”²⁹ The influence Evagrius exerted is striking, especially on Greek, Syriac, and Latin Christianity. The latter was influenced above all by the Latin writings, or translations, of Cassian and by Rufinus’s translations of Evagrius’s works. Furthermore, Melania and Rufinus, by means of their scriptorium and their relations, very likely contributed to the spread of Evagrius’s Greek works. Others too translated some of Evagrius’s oeuvre into Latin, as the existence of two Latin versions of Evagrius’s *To a Virgin* (*Ad virginem*) indicate. Jerome too, for a long while, was an admirer of Evagrius, and in *Letter* 4.2 Jerome called Evagrius “reverend presbyter.” However, after Jerome’s sudden volte-face against Origen,³⁰ he became hos-

27. See *ibid.*, section on Sudhaili.

28. Columba Stewart, *Cassian the Monk* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), underlines Evagrius’s influence on Cassian; still important is Salvatore Marsili, “Giovanni Cassiano ed Evagrio Pontico, Dottrina sulla Carità e Contemplazione,” *Scriptorium* 5 (1951): 195–213. But now Tzamalikos’s rereading of the figure of Cassian should at least be taken into account (see above, n. 13). On Isaac of Nineveh’s own *Kephalaia Gnostika*, see now Nestor Kavvadas, *Isaak von Ninive und seine Kephalaia Gnostika: Die Pneumatologie und ihr Kontext* (Leiden: Brill, 2015).

29. More generally on Barhebraeus’s knowledge and use of the Fathers, see at least David Taylor, “L’importance des Pères de l’Église dans l’oeuvre spéculative de Barhebraeus,” *ParOr* 33 (2008): 63–85.

30. See below, in this same chapter.

tile to Evagrius no less than to Origen—a clear indication that he perceived Evagrius as a strict follower of the great Alexandrian.

2. The *Kephalaia Gnostika*, Their Two Versions, and Their Riddles

The *Kephalaia Gnostika* (Γνωστικά Κεφάλαια, *Chapters on Knowledge*, or better, *Propositions on Knowledge*, abbreviated *KG*),³¹ in six books of ninety propositions (sometimes called “chapters”) each, are the third and most advanced piece of a trilogy devoted to monastic life and also composed of the *The Ascetic (Praktikos)*, sometimes also called the *Kephalaia Praktika* (Κεφάλαια Πρακτικά, *Chapters or Propositions on Asceticism*), and *The Gnostic (Gnostikos, Γνωστικός)*.³² The *KG* are the masterpiece of Evagrius: he wrote them in Greek, but the whole work is extant only in Oriental versions: in an Armenian adaptation,³³ in Arabic, and above all in Syriac, in two different redactions. The Syriac version discovered by Antoine Guillaumont and called *S*₂, unlike the other extant Syriac version (*S*₁) and unlike the other versions in general, is not expurgated; in particular, it is not freed from what was subsequently perceived as dangerously Origenistic. Guillaumont first contended in an article³⁴ that the original text is *S*₂, on which I have based my translation and commentary here, which, however, profit from new readings from the manuscript and improvements with respect to Guillaumont’s edition. The first critical edition has been Guillaumont’s *Les six centuries des “Kephalaia gnostica”* (PO 28.1; Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1958). Guillaumont’s hypothesis concerning the priority of *S*₂ has been followed by virtually all scholars.³⁵ There are also some Greek fragments of the *KG*, but the Syriac is both complete and much better. The version I have trans-

31. CPG 2432. On their literary form, see Endre von Ivánka, “ΚΕΦΑΛΑΙΑ: Eine byzantinische Literaturform und ihre antiken Wurzeln,” *ByzZ* 47 (1954): 285–91. For the translation *Propositions on Knowledge*, see below, my first note at the beginning of the commentary.

32. Robin Darling Young, “Evagrius the Iconographer: Monastic Pedagogy in the *Gnostikos*,” *J ECS* 9 (2001): 53–71.

33. On which see Robin Darling Young, “The Armenian Adaptation of Evagrius’ *Kephalaia Gnostika*,” in *Origeniana Quinta* (ed. Robert J. Daly; Leuven: Peeters, 1992), 535–41.

34. Antoine Guillaumont, “Le texte véritable des *Gnostica* d’Évagre le Pontique,” *RHR* 142 (1952): 156–205.

35. See James W. Watt, “The Syriac Adapter of Evagrius’s Centuries,” *StPatr* 17.3 (1982): 1388–95; David Bundy, “The Philosophical Structures of Origenism: The Case

lated here is the fuller one, where Evagrius's ideas concerning reality, God, protology, eschatology, anthropology, and allegorical exegesis of Scripture are expressed in a full manner (full but concise and often cryptic, as I will mention).

This does not mean, however, that the *KG*, even in their nonexpurgated version, form a complete work. First of all, this work seems to have been deliberately left incomplete by Evagrius. Babai the Great (569–628), who commented on the *KG*, observes that, instead of the six hundred *kephalaia* promised, Evagrius in fact wrote only 540. According to Babai, the supplement to this incomplete work is to be found in Evagrius's *Skemmata*, or *Reflections* (CPG 2433). Babai's version of this work contained only sixty *kephalaia*.³⁶ On the other hand, Socrates (*Church History* 4.23), when listing Evagrius's works in about 440—only forty years after Evagrius's death—designates this as ἑξακόσια προγνωστικὰ προβλήματα, “six hundred gnostic problems.” Either he knew of a complete edition, now lost and unknown to Babai more than one century later, or he ignored that the *KG* were in fact never written in number of six hundred. Second, this incompleteness seems to be structural and to reflect the limits of human theological discourse and what can be expressed of God and of mystical contemplation.³⁷

of the Expurgated Syriac Version S₁ of the *Kephalaia Gnostika* of Evagrius,” in Daly, *Origeniana Quinta*, 577–84.

36. See *Evagrius Ponticus* (ed. W. Frankenberg; Abhandlungen der Königlichen Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen and Philologisch-Historische Klasse n.s. 13.2; Berlin: Weidmann, 1912), 422–71 = *Pseudo-Supplément des Six Centuries des Képhalaia Gnostica*. The problem is noted by Antoine Guillaumont, *Les “Képhalaia gnostica” d’Évagre le Pontique et l’histoire de l’origénisme chez les grecs et chez les syriens* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1962), 18–22; and Luke Dysinger, *Psalmody and Prayer in the Writings of Evagrius Ponticus* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 204.

37. This conclusion has been reached independently by both Monica Tobon and myself. See Monica Tobon, “Reply to Kevin Corrigan,” *StPatr* 57 (2013): 27–29, esp. 28: “the ‘missing chapters’ are in fact ‘silent chapters,’ corresponding to the passage of the contemplative nous beyond the words of human teachers to the Word himself, beyond image and sign to the unconstrained and uncontainable infinity of God.” See now the more articulate treatment by Monica Tobon, “A Word Spoken in Silence: The ‘Missing’ Chapters of Evagrius’ *Kephalaia Gnostika*,” in *Studia Patristica LXXII* (ed. Allen Brent, Morwenna Ludlow, and Markus Vinzent; Leuven: Peeters, 2014), 197–210. On mystic apophaticism in Evagrius, see Ilaria L. E. Ramelli, “Mysticism and Mystic Apophaticism in Middle and Neoplatonism across Judaism, ‘Paganism’ and Christianity,” in *Constructions of Mysticism: Inventions and Interactions across the Borders* (ed. Annette Wilke; Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2015).

What makes the *KG* the most difficult text of Evagrius, however, is their concision and lack of explanations. This is because these short sentences were destined to Evagrius's most advanced disciples and presuppose a long path of learning, as well as ascetic training. In order to understand something of these propositions, therefore, it is necessary to be very familiar with the rest of Evagrius's works and his spirituality.

Even if Evagrius's propositions are concise to the point of obscurity, however, the *KG* are very long in comparison with the two other works of Evagrius's monastic trilogy, *Praktikos* and *Gnostikos*. As Monica Tobon remarks, in fact, "the *Kephalaia Gnostika*, the most explicitly contemplative of the three volumes, is four times as long as the other two volumes combined."³⁸ I use here, and endeavor to improve in some small points, the above-cited edition of Antoine Guillaumont, *Les six centuries des "Kephalaia gnostica."* I will discuss the few textual problems, some new emendations (including those suggested to me by Sebastian Brock), and some more translation problems directly in my commentary.

Guillaumont's French translation is included in his edition, *Les six centuries*, and a new French translation is being prepared by Paul Géhin, as he communicated to me in summer 2012. As of the summer of 2013, there only exist extremely partial English translations, in an article by David Bundy³⁹ and in a dissertation by Michael O'Laughlin.⁴⁰ In respect to these partial translations, the present one is complete, is based on a different edition (with emendations and some different textual choices vis-à-vis those of Guillaumont), and hopefully introduces many improvements in the translation and interpretation of Evagrius's text. What is more, it also provides a full commentary and a substantial critical essay.

The translation provided by Fr. Theophanes (Constantine) in an appendix of his book *The Evagrian Ascetical System* (vol. 2 of *The Psychological Basis of Mental Prayer in the Heart*; Mount Athos: Timios Prodromos, 2006) cannot be considered to be a direct translation of the *KG*, since it is, admittedly, a translation from Guillaumont's French, and not from the Syriac. Indeed, he declares: "We have translated the *Kephalaia Gnos-*

38. Monica Tobon, "Introduction," *StPatr* 57 (2013): 3–7, esp. 4.

39. David Bundy, "The *Kephalaia Gnostika*," in *Ascetic Behavior in Greco-Roman Antiquity: A Sourcebook* (ed. Vincent L. Wimbush; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990), 175–86.

40. Michael O'Laughlin, "Origenism in the Desert: Anthropology and Integration in Evagrius Ponticus" (Ph.D. diss., Harvard Divinity School, 1987).

tika of Evagrius Pontikos into English from the French translation of M. Antoine Guillaumont, who translated from the Syriac *version intégrale* (S₂), established by M. Guillaumont, which is, presumably, the authentic Syriac translation of the lost Greek original. The reader should refer to the French, or, better, to the Syriac, in cases of doubt as to the meaning of the text.” Something similar would seem to be the case with Luke Dysinger’s online version, which is based on the French translation, the Syriac, and assorted Greek fragments (while the Greek retroversion of the Syriac S₁ version, also printed by Dysinger, is unreliable). Some passages from the *KG* are also translated by Julia Konstantinovskiy in her aforementioned monograph *Evagrius Ponticus: The Making of a Gnostic*, but they are very far from providing the whole *Kephalaia*.

Antoine Guillaumont deemed the S₂ redaction original, and S₁ expurgated. I tend to agree with this view, which has been received by virtually all scholars, even though I doubt the validity of the related claims by Guillaumont that Philoxenus of Mabbug was the author of the expurgated version (S₁)⁴¹ and, especially, that it is Evagrius’s own ideas that were condemned under Justinian. Augustine Casiday is perfectly right, I think, to question this last point, which I also call into doubt, but his argument that S₁ is Evagrius’s original redaction and S₂ is a later reworking in a radicalizing Origenistic sense⁴² is extremely far from being certain. I shall argue throughout my commentary that S₂ is perfectly in line with Origen’s true thought—and not a radicalized version close to the kind of sixth-century Origenism condemned under Justinian—and also with other works by Evagrius himself, including his *Letter on Faith* and *Letter to Melania*. What is there is not what was condemned by Justinian but is Evagrius’s original assimilation of Origen’s (and Gregory of Nyssa’s) ideas, and is very likely to be Evagrius’s own product. It is likely that S₁ is an expurgated version, possibly quite old (it is not even to be ruled out that Evagrius himself provided an alternative redaction, even if this is not very probable), but expurgated in an anti-Origenian sense, just as we have expurgated versions of the *Dialogue of Adamantius* or the *History of the Monks in Egypt* (*Historia monachorum in Aegypto*), or even of Eriugena’s translations of

41. See John Watt, “Philoxenus and the Old Syriac Version of Evagrius’ Centuries,” *OrChr* 64 (1980): 65–81; idem, “Syriac Adapter of Evagrius’ Centuries”; Ilaria L. E. Ramelli, “Philoxenus and Babai: Authentic and Interpolated Versions of Evagrius’s Works?” in idem, *Christian Doctrine of Apokatastasis*.

42. Casiday, *Reconstructing the Theology of Evagrius*, 49, 69–70, and *passim*.

Gregory of Nyssa's *Creation of the Human Being* (*De hominis opificio*). In all these works, the parts that were dropped in the expurgated redactions were all expressions of Origenian ideas, chiefly those concerning the doctrine of universal restoration.⁴³

This is why I chose to translate S₂, moreover exclusively sticking to the Syriac. For “none of the surviving Greek fragments of the *Gnostic Chapters* can be dated before the Second [i.e., Origenistic] Controversy,”⁴⁴ and therefore they do not seem to be fully reliable. This text by Evagrius has not yet been translated into English from Syriac and adequately commented on so far, and it is an exceedingly important work by an author who had a great impact on the development of spirituality, of Origenism, and of the spiritual interpretation of the Bible. Evagrius offered the first complete system of Christian spirituality, as noted by Louis Bouyer.⁴⁵ As will be clear from the commentary, Evagrius's teaching on prayer emerges more than once in the *KG*, even though Evagrius devoted also a specific treatise to prayer.⁴⁶

3. Evagrius's Works, the Loss of Some in Greek, Their Survival in Translations

Like Origen, Evagrius was made the object of attacks already during his life, and much more so after his death; this explains the loss of a number of his works in Greek and their survival only in ancient translations, mostly into Syriac, but also into Armenian, Latin, and other languages. Many

43. See Ramelli, *Christian Doctrine of Apokatastasis*, chapters on the *Dialogue of Adamantius* and Eriugena. On the former, more is in the works.

44. Casiday, *Reconstructing the Theology of Evagrius*, 67.

45. Louis Bouyer, *The Spirituality of the New Testament and the Fathers* (trans. M. P. Ryan; London: Burns & Oates, 1963).

46. See below in the commentary, also with further bibliographical references. Now I limit myself to indicating Irenée Hausherr, “Le traité de l'oraison d'Évagre le Pontique (ps. Nil),” *Revue d'Ascétique et de Mystique* 15 (1934): 34–118; Antoine Guillaumont, “Le problème de la prière continue dans le monachisme ancien,” in *L'expérience de la prière dans les grandes religions* (Louvain-la-Neuve: Presses universitaires, 1980), 285–94; idem, *Études sur la spiritualité de l'Orient chrétien* (Bégrolles en Mauges: Bellefontaine, 1996), 143–50; Gabriel Bunge, “Priez sans cesse: Aux origines de la prière hésychaste,” *StudMon* 30 (1988): 7–16. See also Columba Stewart, “Imageless Prayer and the Theological Vision of Evagrius Ponticus,” *J ECS* 9 (2001): 173–204; Dysinger, *Psalmody and Prayer*.

works by Evagrius (just as some by Gregory Nyssen—for instance, his aforementioned dialogue *On the Soul and the Resurrection*) were translated into Coptic and, probably even before the sixth century, into Syriac. This survival only in translations is especially the case with his most speculative works, and less so with his ascetic works, which were generally judged more innocuous. He was blamed by a monk, Heron, for his teaching during his own lifetime,⁴⁷ and it seems that he was criticized because he was too learned and read too much: such a denigration is reflected in the *Apophthegms of the Fathers*.⁴⁸

The main sources of inspiration for his works were Origen's ideas, together with, and partially through, those of the Cappadocians, and particularly of Gregory Nyssen, as I have mentioned, and Neoplatonism. It has been often missed by scholarship⁴⁹ that Evagrius was an Origenian, as I said at the beginning of this essay, more than an Origenist: he stuck to Origen's true thought, like Gregory of Nyssa, his other great inspirer. The reading of his thought through the lens of later, radicalized, and distorted Origenism—as though Evagrius's ideas, like Origen's and Didymus's, were those of the Origenists condemned under Justinian—also explains the loss of many of his works in Greek, even though Evagrius, like Origen and Didymus, was perfectly “orthodox” in Trinitarian matters, as is clear from his *Letter on Faith* (as well as in his other works, including the *KG*, as I will

47. Palladius, *Lausiac History* 26.

48. A 233 (Evagrius 7); A 224 (Euprepios 7, but in fact Evagrius); A 43 (Arsenius 5).

49. E.g., Henri Crouzel, “Recherches sur Origène et son influence,” *BLE* 62 (1961): 3–15, 105–13; François Refoulé, “La christologie d'Évagre et l'origénisme,” *OCP* 27 (1961): 221–66; idem, “Évagre fut-il origéniste?,” *RSPT* 47 (1963): 398–402; idem, “La mystique d'Évagre et l'origénisme,” *VSpit* suppl. 66 (1963): 453–63; Francis X. Murphy, “Evagrius Ponticus and Origenism,” in *Origeniana Tertia* (ed. Robert Hanson and Henri Crouzel; Rome: Augustinianum, 1985), 253–69; Francis Kline, “The Christology of Evagrius and the Parent System of Origen,” *Cistercian Studies* 20 (1985): 155–83; Michael O'Laughlin, “Elements of Fourth-Century Origenism,” in *Origen of Alexandria* (ed. Charles Kannengiesser; Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988), 357–73; idem, “New Questions concerning the Origenism of Evagrius,” in Daly, *Origeniana Quinta*, 528–35; Charles Kannengiesser, “Antony, Athanasius, Evagrius: The Egyptian Fate of Origenism,” *Coptic Church Review* 16 (1995): 3–8; Lars Thunberg and A. M. Allchin, *Microcosm and Mediator: The Theological Anthropology of Maximus the Confessor* (2d ed.; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), with reflections on the relationships between Origen, Evagrius, and Maximus; Monika Pesthy, “Logismoi origéniens—logismoi évagriens,” in *Origeniana VIII* (ed. Lorenzo Perrone; Leuven: Peeters, 2003), 1017–22.

point out)—so much so that, as I mentioned earlier, this letter was formerly attributed to Basil the Great. This can help explain the reason why it was tranquilly preserved in Greek.

This letter seems to stem from the years that Evagrius spent with the Cappadocians, but it might also be quite later. Joel Kalvesmaki, building upon Robert Melcher's thesis, suggests that it was written by Evagrius, not from Constantinople around 381 to Christians in Pontus, but to Constantinople from Jerusalem or Egypt in 383 or later.⁵⁰ As I mentioned briefly beforehand, this letter follows the Cappadocians' Trinitarian theology with its formula "one common essence, three individual substances," which depends on Origen.⁵¹ Indeed, Evagrius regarded as a heretic anyone who did not believe in the consubstantiality of the persons of the Trinity.⁵²

As I will point out in the commentary below, Evagrius's Trinitarian "orthodoxy" is perfectly compatible with the Christology⁵³ that is found in his *KG* and his *Letter to Melania*. This is not, as is commonly assumed, a subordinationistic Christology, and this comes as no surprise at all in a follower of Origen and Gregory Nyssen, neither of whom was christologically subordinationist.⁵⁴ Consistently with what I will argue, Palladius's biography of Evagrius reports an epigram that exalts Evagrius's Trinitarian "orthodoxy," with regard to the Son and the Spirit. As I mentioned earlier in connection with a critical appraisal of Guillaumont's and Casiday's theses concerning Evagrius's "Origenism," Guillaumont's claim that the doctrine condemned at the fifth to eighth ecumenical councils was not that of Origen (as was previously assumed) but that of Evagrius⁵⁵ needs to be corrected in turn: the ideas condemned under Justinian and later were largely neither those of Origen nor those of Evagrius but those of later Origenists who radicalized and distorted Evagrius's thinking, and moreover in

50. Joel Kalvesmaki, "The *Epistula fidei* of Evagrius of Pontus: An Answer to Constantinople," *J ECS* 20 (2012): 113–39.

51. On Evagrius's *Letter*, see *L'Epistula fidei di Evagrio Pontico: Temi, contesti, sviluppi* (ed. Paolo Bettiolo; Rome: Augustinianum, 2000), here especially Paul Géhin, "La place de la *Lettre sur la foi* dans l'oeuvre d'Evagre," 25–58.

52. *Exhortation to the Monks* 45.

53. On which see Konstantinovsky, *Evagrius*, 109–52.

54. See Ramelli, "Origen's Anti-Subordinationism."

55. See Antoine Guillaumont, "Évagre et les anathématismes anti-origénistes de 553," *StPatr* 3 (1961): 219–26; and idem, *Les "Képhalaia gnostica."*

the form these ideas were represented in a dossier prepared by the Sabaitic monks hostile to Origenism.⁵⁶

It is obviously because of the hostility and the misunderstandings surrounding his thought that Evagrius's works often survive only in translations.⁵⁷ Sometimes, his writings were preserved in anthologies and ascribed to other authors whose orthodoxy was regarded as less suspect, such as Basil and Nilus of Ancyra. "Chapters" (*kephalaia*), or better, "propositions," were compiled by his disciples on the basis of their teacher's ideas.⁵⁸ These *Chapters of the Disciples of Evagrius* are over two hundred propositions (*κεφάλαια*) on asceticism (*πρακτική*) and knowledge (*γνωστική*), collected at the beginning of the fifth century. This collection seems to reflect Evagrius's most mature thought and influenced Maximus the Confessor's *Chapters on Love*.

The original Greek of the *Praktikos*, in one hundred "chapters," or propositions, is preserved (it has also been handed down in Syriac, Armenian, Ethiopic, Georgian, and Arabic),⁵⁹ just as that of several other ascetic works, mostly collections of sentences, such as those *Sentences to the Monks* (*Sententiae ad monachos*)⁶⁰—in 137 chapters, or propositions, on monastic life, handed down in Greek (in a double recension) and in Latin (also in a double recension), plus Syriac, Coptic, Armenian, Ethiopic, and Geor-

56. István Perczel, "Note sur la pensée systématique d'Évagre le Pontique," in *Origene e l'Alessandrinismo cappadoce* (ed. Mario Girardi and Marcello Marin; Bari: Edipuglia, 2002), 277–97. The comparison between Evagrius's obscure and concise language and the coherent and expanded system of the anti-Origenian sources seems to confirm Perczel's thesis. See Ramelli, *Christian Doctrine of Apokatastasis*, ch. 4, in the section devoted to Justinian and the Origenists.

57. See Antoine Guillaumont, "Le rôle des versions orientales dans la récupération de l'oeuvre d'Évagre," in *Comptes rendus des séances de l'Académie des inscriptions* (Paris: Académie des inscriptions, 1985), 64–74; idem, "Les versions syriaques de l'oeuvre d'Évagre," *OrChrAn* 221 (1983): 35–41; Khalil Samir, "Évagre le Pontique dans la tradition arabo-copte," in *Actes du IVe Congrès Copte* (ed. M. Rassart-Debergh and J. Ries; Louvain-la-Neuve: Université catholique de Louvain, Institut orientaliste, 1992), 2:123–53.

58. Edition by Paul Géhin, ed., *Chapitres des disciples d'Evagre* (SC 514; Paris: Cerf, 2007).

59. Λόγος Πρακτικός (CPG 2430).

60. Πρὸς τοὺς ἐν κοινοβίοις ἢ συνοδαίαις μοναχοῦς (CPG 2435). See Jeremy Driscoll, *The Ad monachos of Evagrius Ponticus* (Rome: Augustinianum, 1991); idem, "Gentleness in the *Ad monachos* of Evagrius," *StudMon* 22 (1990): 295–321; idem, "A Key for Reading the *Ad monachos* of Evagrius," *Aug* 30 (1990): 361–92.

gian—and those *To a Virgin* (*Ad virginem*), fifty-six thoughts handed down in Greek, Latin, Syriac, and Armenian.⁶¹ Susanna Elm considers this text to be a monastic rule rather than a letter to a virgin.⁶² Also other sentences (*sententiae*), “chapters”/propositions (*capita/kephalaia*), and exegetical works are extant in Greek. Exegetical works that are extant only in Syriac, Coptic, or Arabic are very few; many of them are still available in their Greek original, for instance the *Scholia on Psalms*⁶³ stemming from catenae or biblical commentaries in which they are attributed to Origen or Athanasius, or from unpublished manuscripts, all deriving from an Evagrian commentary on the Psalms now lost.⁶⁴

On the contrary, only scanty Greek fragments survive from the more speculative *KG*, the object of the present commentary. Likewise another work belonging to the same trilogy as the *KG*, the fifty-chapter *Gnostikos* (Γνωστικός),⁶⁵ is preserved in Greek only fragmentarily but survives in full in Syriac, in various recensions, and Armenian. Evagrius’s *Talking Back*, or *Antirrheticus*,⁶⁶ too is lost in Greek, although it does not contain too bold metaphysical, protological, or eschatological speculations, but it is rather a collection of biblical verses aimed at the destruction of passions. An attempt has been made to reconstruct the original Greek, but the work is preserved only in Syriac, Armenian, and Georgian, in addition to some Sogdian fragments in a double recension.

The same is the case with Evagrius’s letters. While the original Greek text is extant even in three recensions—the original, and not later retroversions as in the case of Frankenberg’s retroversion of the *KG*—of at least sixty-two epistles of spiritual advice to different addressees, such as Rufinus, Melania the Elder, John of Jerusalem, or Gregory Nazianzen (all Origenians),⁶⁷ and the Greek of the *Letter on Faith* is likewise extant along with the Syriac translation, also thanks to the previous attribution of this letter to Basil,⁶⁸ the original Greek text is lost in the case of the *Letter to*

61. Παραίνεσις πρὸς παρθένον (CPG 2436).

62. Susanna Elm, “The *Sententiae ad virginem* by Evagrius Ponticus and the Problem of Early Monastic Rules,” *Aug* 30 (1990): 393–404.

63. Σχόλια εἰς τοὺς Ψαλμοὺς (CPG 2455).

64. See also, e.g., CPG 2458.2–5.

65. CPG 2431.

66. CPG 2434.

67. CPG 2437.

68. CPG 2439; it was ascribed to Evagrius only in 1923 by Wilhelm Bousset, *Apothegmata: Studien zur Geschichte des ältesten Mönchtums* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1923),

Melania, where sustained metaphysical, protological, and eschatological speculations are surely put forward. Undoubtedly for this reason, this letter is lost in Greek and is extant only in an Armenian and a double Syriac recension. I shall return very soon to this all-important work, especially on account of its remarkable relevance to the *KG*.

Evagrius's works concern both theology/metaphysics and spiritual ascent and ascetic practice;⁶⁹ in this system, asceticism, the *praktikē*, leads to knowledge, *gnōsis*. As I will point out extensively in the commentary, these aspects are closely related in Evagrius and cannot exist independently of one another. As I have mentioned in the initial methodological observations, Evagrius's thought must be approached in its entirety: it cannot be appreciated only for its ascetic insights and advice, while rejected for its metaphysical, protological, and eschatological Origenian implications. It is lamentable that Evagrius's heritage was, so to say, split into two; his ascetic works were deemed good and safe, but his metaphysical, protological, and eschatological speculations—especially those found in his *KG* and *Letter to Melania*—were considered to be bad and dangerous. Evagrius's *Letter to Melania* and *KG*, among much else, clearly teach Origen's doctrine of *apokatastasis*.⁷⁰ Here, indeed, Evagrius shows that his conception of the *telos*, the ultimate end of all, just like those of Origen and Gregory Nyssen, is closely related to the rest of his thought, which is entirely oriented toward the *telos* itself. For the *telos* is the perfect realization of God's plan for all rational creatures and for the whole of God's creation.

4. The *Letter to Melania* and Its Relation to the *Kephalaia Gnostika*

The *Letter to Melania*, or *Great Letter*,⁷¹ is the lengthiest of Evagrius's epistles. It focuses on the Trinity, protology, eschatology, restoration (or *apokatastasis*), and spiritual knowledge, issues that also come to the fore in the *KG*. This is why this letter is particularly relevant to, and helpful for, the study of the *KG*. The addressee of the *Letter to Melania* in one of the two Syriac manuscripts in which it is preserved, as in other letters

281–341, and Robert Melcher, *Der 8. Brief des hl. Basilii, ein Werk des Evagrius Pontikus* (Münsterische Beiträge zur Theologie 1; Münster: Aschendorff, 1923).

69. A complete English translation of Evagrius's main ascetic works is found in Sinkewicz, *Evagrius of Pontus*.

70. See Ramelli, *Christian Doctrine of Apokatastasis*, the chapter on Evagrius.

71. CPG 2438.

by Evagrius extant in Armenian, is Melania the Elder, who, according to Palladius—as we have seen—definitely converted Evagrius to the ascetic life and gave him his monastic garb. Some scholars do not accept the identification of the recipient with Melania, chiefly because in the Syriac translation Evagrius addresses her thrice as “my lord” (ܐܘܢܝܐ). As a consequence, some consider Rufinus—who lived at Melania’s monastery and, as I have mentioned earlier, was also a friend of Evagrius’s—to be a more probable addressee.⁷²

I would not rule out that the recipient was indeed Melania. Palladius in *Lausiatic History* 38.8 and 9⁷³ calls Melania ἡ μακαρία Μελάνιον, “the blessed, dear Melanion,” using this neutral form as a diminutive and possibly a form of endearment. Evagrius, like his disciple Palladius, may have called Melania Μελάνιον, and Syriac translators may easily have understood Μελάνιον as a masculine, all the more so in that in Syriac there are only masculine or feminine forms, and no neuter. And the neuter in Greek is much closer to masculine than to feminine forms. Also, some scholars think that a masculine address formula for a woman is to be read in a “gnostic” context, as a kind of honorific address: a woman who has transcended the supposed weakness of her gender with her intellectual and spiritual strength and prowess.⁷⁴ At any rate, both of the most probable addressees, Melania and Rufinus, deeply admired Origen, as Evagrius also did, and this letter is composed against the backdrop of Origen’s theology.

The *Letter to Melania* reveals significant points of contact with the KG. Since it is somewhat less concise than the KG, it can help a great deal

72. Gabriel Bunge, *Evagrius Pontikos, Briefe aus der Wüste* (Trier: Paulinus, 1986), 194; on 303–28 he also offers a translation of the *Letter to Melania*; Gösta Vitestam, *Seconde partie du traité, qui passe sous le nom de La grande lettre d’Évagre le Pontique à Mélanie l’ancienne, d’après le manuscrit du British Museum Add. 17192* (Lund: Gleerup, 1964), 4–5, also thought that the recipient of the letter was originally a man. Casiday, *Reconstructing the Theology of Evagrius*, 64, is on the same line. Vitestam offers the edition of the Syriac for §§17, 24–25, 33–68. The edition of §§1–32 is provided by Frankenberg, *Evagrius Ponticus*, 610–19.

73. = 86 (PG 34:1193D).

74. Michel Parmentier, “Evagrius of Pontus’ Letter to Melania,” *Bijdr* 46 (1985): 2–38, esp. 5–6; repr. in *Forms of Devotion, Conversion, Worship, Spirituality, and Asceticism* (ed. Everett Ferguson; New York: Garland, 1999). Parmentier includes an English version of the letter. The title *Letter to Melania* is also kept by Paolo Bettolo, *Evagrius Pontico: Lo scrigno della sapienza; Lettera a Melania* (Magnano, Biella: Edizioni Qiqajon, 1997).

to understand more of the cryptic *KG*. On the other hand, it must also be taken into account that Evagrius in this letter refrains from committing to paper some of his ideas. To be sure, he is also deploying here a literary *topos*, but it is obvious that he has omitted something—just as in the *KG*. Evagrius himself wants to make this clear by means of repeated allusions. In the opening, in section 1, he states that friends write down in letters thoughts that can be revealed only to those who think alike. A little later, Evagrius insists that in this letter he is writing things that he cannot express fully: “I cannot commit these things to paper and ink, because of those who might intercept this letter; moreover, these important topics are too dangerous to be written down on paper. This is why I cannot say everything” (17). In section 18 he repeats that there are things that ink and paper cannot report. These things should be identified, not with the eventual universal restoration, or *apokatastasis*—of which Evagrius in fact speaks rather overtly, even though it was beginning to be contested in his day, so that Gregory Nyssen felt the need to defend it as “orthodox” Christian doctrine⁷⁵—but probably with the way the Spirit and the Son communicate with the intellect, and with the reasons why the intelligible creation was joined to the sense-perceptible creation. For Evagrius declares that the intelligible creation was joined to the sense-perceptible creation “for reasons that it is impossible to explain here.” Moreover, it is of course impossible to speak of the divine mysteries, and in this connection the silence strategy used by Evagrius in this letter seems to parallel that which I have already pointed out—and is finely studied by Monica Tobon—in the *KG*.

Evagrius maintains that, with some rational creatures, the Spirit and the Son communicate directly—although he does not clarify how—but

75. He did so especially in his dialogue *On the Soul and the Resurrection* and in his commentary on 1 Cor 15:28 (*In illud: Tunc et ipse Filius*). See Ramelli, *Gregorio di Nissa: Sull'anima*, for the commentaries on these texts; and idem, *Christian Doctrine of Apokatastasis*, the chapter on Nyssen, for his strategy of defense of this doctrine. I have argued that Gregory supported the *apokatastasis* doctrine in defense of the Nicene Trinitarian orthodoxy (see Ilaria L. E. Ramelli, “Gregory of Nyssa’s Trinitarian Theology in *In illud: Tunc et ipse Filius*: His Polemic against ‘Arian’ Subordinationism and Apokatastasis,” in *Gregory of Nyssa: The Minor Treatises on Trinitarian Theology and Apollinarism; Proceedings of the 11th International Colloquium on Gregory of Nyssa (Tübingen, 17–20 September 2008)* [ed. Volker Henning Drecoll and Margitta Berghaus; Leiden: Brill, 2011], 445–78). Evagrius, too, his follower, upheld both the Nicene Trinitarian orthodoxy and the doctrine of universal restoration.

with others, less advanced, they communicate by means of intermediaries, that is, God's sense-perceptible creation, what Evagrius repeatedly calls the "secondary creation" in his *KG*. This is the object of "natural contemplation"⁷⁶ (φυσικὴ θεωρία, which will exert a profound influence on Maximus the Confessor⁷⁷). The antecedents to Evagrius's natural contemplation are to be found in Clement of Alexandria (who calls it φυσιολογία) and Origen.⁷⁸ This secondary creation, which is the object of natural contemplation, is not evil; on this, Origen had already insisted against "Gnostics" and Marcionites. Far from being evil, the secondary creation is providential and, as Evagrius explains, was wanted by God as mediation, out of love for those who are far from God because "they have placed a separation between themselves and their Creator because of their evil deeds" (*Letter to Melania* 5). God instituted this mediation by means of his Wisdom and Power, that is, the Son and the Spirit. For Evagrius, "the whole ministry of the Son and the Spirit is exercised through creation, for the sake of those who are far from God" (ibid.). Something similar was maintained by Gregory of Nyssa, who, in the footsteps of Philo and Origen, claimed that God's operations play a core role in the acquisition of the knowledge of God: humans cannot know God's essence or nature, but they can certainly know God's activities and operations.⁷⁹

In the *Letter to Melania* the Son is called "the hand of God" and the Spirit "the finger of God." Likewise in Evagrius's *Letter on Faith* Christ is called "the right hand of God" and the Spirit "the finger of God."⁸⁰ These two peculiar designations are also found in Didymus the Blind's treatise *On the Holy Spirit*⁸¹ and in Ambrose's treatise *On the Holy Spirit* 3.3, where both metaphors occur. Evagrius, Didymus, and Ambrose may have been

76. On natural contemplation in Evagrius, see David Bradford, "Evagrius Ponticus and the Psychology of Natural Contemplation," *Studies in Spirituality* 22 (2012): 109–25.

77. See Joshua Lollar, *To See into the Life of Things: The Contemplation of Nature in Maximus the Confessor and His Predecessors* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013).

78. See also Paul Blowers, *Drama of the Divine Economy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 316–18.

79. "The Divine as Inaccessible Object of Knowledge in Ancient Platonism: A Common Philosophical Pattern across Religious Traditions," *JHI* 75 (2014): 167–88; and for the reflections of this idea in Evagrius, see Konstantinovskiy, *Evagrius*, 47–76.

80. PG 32:265AB.

81. PG 39:1051A, 1076C, and 1077AB, all of these on the Son as "the hand of God," and in 1051BC, on the Spirit as "the finger of God."

inspired by Origen in this respect as in so much else. Evagrius himself does not speak very much of the Spirit in his ascetic works, but this is probably because the Spirit there is often replaced by angels.⁸² Evagrius clearly draws on Origen (e.g., *Commentary on Matthew* 13.26)⁸³ also when he postulates that angels assist humans and are in turn followed by Christ in this assistance. A confirmation for Origen comes from one of the recently discovered homilies on Psalms from Codex Monacensis Graecus 314. In *Homily 2 on Psalm 73*, 1, fol. 129v, Origen remarks that the holy angels cooperated (συνεργούς γενομένους) to the salvation and beatitude of Abraham.

Only rational creatures who are particularly close to God do not need the mediation of creation, because they are helped directly by the Son-Logos and the Spirit: “Just as the intellect operates in the body by the mediation of the soul, likewise the Father too, by the mediation of his own soul [i.e., the Son and the Spirit], operates in his own body, which is the human intellect” (*Letter to Melania* 15). Thus, human intellects know thanks to the Logos and the Spirit, who make everything known to them (19); only through the Logos and the Spirit, who are their souls, can they become aware of their own nature (21). In turn, human intellects are the bodies of the Son and the Spirit (*ibid.*), and the Son and the Spirit are the soul of God. As is clear from Evagrius’s argument, the intellect-soul-body tripartition applies both to rational creatures and to the relationship between God and rational creatures, who, as intellects, are the body of God. This is likely to be a development of Origen’s notion of the *logika* as the body of Christ-Logos;⁸⁴ this concept is also connected with Origen’s equation between the body of Christ and the temple, whose stones are rational creatures: this is why in *Commentary on John* 6.1.1–2 the temple is called a “rational building,” λογική οἰκοδομή. Also regarding the Son as the soul of God Evagrius was surely inspired by Origen (*Princ.* 2.8.5, where he explicitly describes the Logos as the soul of God). This is a schematic representation of the

82. So Jason Scully, “Angelic Pneumatology in the Egyptian Desert,” *J ECS* 19 (2011): 287–305, esp. 295.

83. See Joseph W. Trigg, “Christ and the Angelic Hierarchy in Origen’s Theology,” *JTS* 42 (1991): 35–51.

84. See Ilaria L. E. Ramelli, “Clement’s Notion of the Logos ‘All Things as One’: Its Alexandrian Background in Philo and Its Developments in Origen and Nyssen,” in *Alexandrian Personae: Scholarly Culture and Religious Traditions in Ancient Alexandria (1st ct. BCE–4ct. CE)* (ed. Zlatko Pleše; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2016).

relationships that Evagrius posits between the three components of rational creatures and the three persons of the Trinity:

Intellect	>	soul (mediator)	>	body
Father	>	Son and Spirit	>	intellects

Human beings belong to the intelligible creation and are now found joined to the visible creation, with their mortal bodies, “for reasons that it is impossible to explain here” (*Letter to Melania* 13). Evagrius refrains from speaking of the relationship between the fall of the intellects and their acquisition of sense-perceptible bodies, which require the mediation of the soul. He ascribes the role of “soul” to the Logos and the Spirit as well, evidently because of the mediation they perform between the Father and the intellects. Evagrius does not specify whether bodies that are not sense perceptible also require the mediation of the soul. Thus, it is protology—the creation, the fall, and its consequences—that Evagrius omits to explain, by some necessity or convenience, in his *Letter to Melania*, and not so much eschatology.

Indeed, Evagrius does speak of eschatology in terms of universal restoration in this letter, just as he does in a more concise and cryptic way in the *KG*. In sections 22–30 of the letter, in particular, Evagrius expounds some reflections on *apokatastasis*, which he, like Origen, strongly characterizes as a *ἔνωσις*, a “unification” of the three components of humans (body, soul, and intellect) and of rational creatures with God, in the framework of the elimination of divisions, oppositions, and plurality:

And there will be a time when the body, the soul, and the intellect will cease to be separate from one another, with their names and their plurality, since the body and the soul will be elevated to the rank of intellects. This conclusion can be drawn from the words “That they may be one in us, just as You and I are One” [John 17:22]. Thus there will be a time when the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, and their rational creation, which constitutes their body, will cease to be separate, with their names and their plurality. And this conclusion can be drawn from the words “God will be all in all” [1 Cor 15:28]. (*Letter to Melania* 22)

As Origen and Gregory Nyssen did, Evagrius also corroborates every argumentative passage of his with a quotation from the Bible. Both scriptural quotations used here by Evagrius were among the favorite quotations of Origen in reference to the ultimate end: John 17:22 for the final unity or

ἔνωσις,⁸⁵ and 1 Cor 15:28 for both unity and *apokatastasis*.⁸⁶ Evagrius teaches that bodies and souls will be elevated to the order of intellects, not only in the *Letter to Melania*, but also in his *KG* (1.65; 2.17; 3.15, 66, 68). I will soon return to these passages both in this essay and below in the commentary: these are among the most prominent passages on *apokatastasis* in the *KG*.

As is evident from the *Letter to Melania* and the *KG*, Evagrius follows both the tripartition of the human being into body, soul, and intellect/spirit and the Platonic tripartition of the soul itself into irascible faculty or part (θυμός, θυμικόν), concupiscible or appetitive faculty or part (ἐπιθυμία, ἐπιθυμητικόν), and intellectual or rational faculty or part (νοῦς, λογικόν), the noblest and most excellent being the last component.⁸⁷ This tripartition is evident also in *Praktikos* 89: “The soul of rational beings is tripartite into rational ... concupiscible / appetitive ... and irascible,” and at *Praktikos* 38 and 78. The same tripartition also emerges in a number of passages from Evagrius’s *KG* (e.g., 5.27; 4.73; 3.35; 1.84; 3.30; for all of these I refer readers to my translations and commentary below). The excellence of the intellect among the faculties of the soul is proclaimed in *KG* 6.51 (“The intelligent part [i.e., intellect] is the most excellent among all the faculties of the soul”) and in 3.6 (“The bare intellect is that which, by means of the contemplation that regards it, is joined to the knowledge of the Trinity”) and 3.55 (“In the beginning the intellect had God, who is incorruptible, as teacher of immaterial intellections. Now, however, it has received corruptible sense perception as teacher of material intellections”).

85. See my volume on John 13–17 (Ilaria L. E. Ramelli, *Gospel according to John III* [Novum Testamentum Patristicum; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, forthcoming]). For Evagrius in particular, see Ilaria L. E. Ramelli, “Harmony between *Arkhē* and *Telos* in Patristic Platonism and the Imagery of Astronomical Harmony Applied to the *Apokatastasis* Theory,” *International Journal of the Platonic Tradition* 7 (2013): 1–49.

86. On the use of this verse in support of the doctrine of *apokatastasis* in Evagrius’s mentors, Origen and Gregory Nyssen, see Ilaria L. E. Ramelli, “Christian Soteriology and Christian Platonism: Origen, Gregory of Nyssa, and the Biblical and Philosophical Basis of the Doctrine of *Apokatastasis*,” *VC* 61 (2007): 313–56.

87. See Kallistos Ware, “Nous and Noesis in Plato, Aristotle and Evagrius of Pontus,” *Diotima* 13 (1985): 158–63; Gabriel Bunge, “‘Nach dem Intellekt Leben’: Zum sog. ‘Intellektualismus’ der evagrianischen Spiritualität,” in *Simandron, der Wachklopper: Gedenkschrift Gamber* (ed. Wilhelm Nyssen; Köln: Luthé, 1989), 95–109; idem, “Origenismus-Gnostizismus: Zum geistesgeschichtlichen Standort des Evagrius Pontikos,” *VC* 40 (1986): 24–54; Corrigan, *Evagrius and Gregory*, ch. 5, on the tripartite soul in Evagrius.

Origen famously regarded the soul ($\psi\upsilon\chi\eta$) as an intellect that has undergone a cooling down ($\psi\tilde{\upsilon}\xi\iota\varsigma$) and due to a lack of ardent love of God and carelessness about its own eternal destiny has fallen down from its original rank, and Evagrius follows him in considering the soul to be a fallen intellect. Thus, in *KG* 3.28, exactly like Origen, Evagrius depicts the soul as an intellect that, because of carelessness, has fallen down from Unity (hence the division between intellect and soul, and further intellect, soul, and body, while initially the intellect was undivided) and, due to its lack of vigilance, has descended to the order of the *praktikē*. In other words, from spiritual contemplation the intellect, now divided into intellect and soul, has descended to practical life, ethics, which in Evagrius coincides with asceticism and the search for virtue and liberation from passions. The same term, *πρακτική*, with related terms such as *πρακτικός*, is attested in “pagan” Neoplatonism in the same sense of “ethics.”⁸⁸ Evagrius himself offers a definition of *praktikē* in *Praktikos* 78: “*πρακτική* is the spiritual method for purifying the part of the soul subject to passions,” its aim being *apatheia*, or impassivity (absence of passions— i.e., of bad emotions).⁸⁹ *Praktikē* is deemed by Evagrius the first component of the Christian doctrine: “Christianity is the doctrine of Jesus Christ our Savior, consisting in ethics [*πρακτική*], philosophy of nature [*φυσική*], and theology [*θεολογική*]” (*Praktikos* 1). The intellect, which is distinct from the part of the soul subject to passions, ought to proceed along its own contemplative path toward the angels; if, on the contrary, it proceeds on the path of the soul subject to passions, which should rather be its instrument, it risks ending up among demons (*KG* 2.48).

In this Origenian tenet, and in the Platonic tripartition of the soul, Evagrius’s whole ethics and theory of spiritual ascent are grounded. Evagrius’s related theory of vices, the “tempting thoughts” (*λογισμοί*) that lead to the death of the soul, also draws on Origen.⁹⁰ The attainment of the perfec-

88. See Olympiodorus, *Prolegomena to Aristotle’s Categories* 8.

89. The only monograph devoted to *apatheia* in Evagrius is Monica Tobon, *Apatheia in the Teachings of Evagrius Ponticus: The Health of the Soul* (Burlington, Vt.: Ashgate, forthcoming), esp. ch. 3; see also the essay by Robert Somos, “Origen, Evagrius Ponticus and the Ideal of Impassibility,” in *Origeniana Septima: Origenes in den Auseinandersetzungen des 4. Jahrhunderts* (ed. Wolfgang Bienert and Uwe Kühneweg; Leuven: Peeters, 1999), 365–73.

90. See Irénée Hausherr, “L’origine de la théorie orientale des huit péchés capitaux,” *Orientalia Christiana* 30 (1933): 164–75, and, below, the commentary.

tion of the *nous*, which consists in knowledge, first requires the perfection of the inferior parts of the soul, those subject to passions—a Neoplatonic idea.⁹¹ Thus, in *On Thoughts* (Περὶ λογισμῶν) 26 Evagrius insists that it is impossible to acquire knowledge without having renounced mundane things, evil, and, after these, ignorance.⁹² Clement of Alexandria, who also exerted a certain influence on Evagrius, already posited a similar passage, from the cathartic (“purifying”) to the epoptic (“contemplative”) mode.⁹³ The sequence *katharsis*–contemplation (theology) was also clear in Origen, even in one of the newly discovered Homilies on Psalms from Codex Monacensis Graecus 314. In *Homily 1 on Psalm 77*, 5, fol. 223v–224r, Origen observes that in order to practice a correct philosophical-theological-exegetical “zetesis” or investigation one should first purify (καθαρῶς) one’s moral behavior (τὰ ἤθη), setting it straight, and only at that point one can aspire to theology (θεολογία) and the investigation into deeper, mystical truths (τὴν ζήτησιν τῶν βαθυτέρων καὶ μυστικωτέρων).

I definitely agree with Augustine Casiday that the *Letter to Melania* cannot be considered to express “isochristic” ideas such as those that were later condemned under Justinian.⁹⁴ He rightly observes that when in this letter (at section 22, cited above) Evagrius says that the body and the soul will be raised to the order of the intellect, “there is no compelling reason to think that this elevation destroys rather than, say, consummates or fulfills the body and the soul.”⁹⁵ I think that indeed a comparison with the *KG* confirms, rather than disproves, this supposition. Casiday opposes the remarks of Antoine Guillaumont: “La christologie d’Évagre est donc absolument identique à celle des moins isochristes et à celle qui forme la partie essentielle de l’origénisme résumé dans les quinze anathématismes de 553. Il y a non seulement identité doctrinale, mais, sur certains points, comme nous l’avons vu, des rencontres littérales.”⁹⁶ The only point about which I cannot agree with Casiday is that “Origen taught cycles of falling and rec-

91. This has been rightly shown by Blossom Stefaniw, “Exegetical Curricula in Origen, Didymus, and Evagrius: Pedagogical Agenda and the Case for Neoplatonist Influence,” *StPatr* 44 (2010): 281–95.

92. See also *KG* 1.78–80 and the relevant commentary below.

93. *Miscellany (Stromateis)* 5.70.7–71.2.

94. Augustine Casiday, “Universal Restoration in Evagrius Ponticus’ ‘Great Letter,’” *StPatr* 47 (2010): 223–28.

95. *Ibid.*, 228.

96. Guillaumont, *Les “Képhalaia gnostica,”* 156.

conciliation, which is precluded by Evagrius's reference to the endless and inseparable unity of God."⁹⁷ The reference is to Jerome's *Letter* 124. Jerome, however, ceases to be a reliable source on Origen after his U-turn against him. In fact Origen, exactly like Evagrius, thought that there will be a final unity with God, after which no more falls will be possible. Jerome's letter is much less trustworthy than Origen's own *Commentary on Romans* and many other passages, some of which are preserved in Greek, which I have collected and analyzed elsewhere.⁹⁸ Therefore, also in this respect Evagrius did not distance himself from Origen but rather followed in his footsteps.

The passage from the *Letter to Melania* 22 that I have quoted above may also suggest that the three hypostases of the Trinity and the distinction between the Creator and creatures will be obliterated in the very end. This would imply a kind of pantheism such as that which was perceived in the work of Stephen Bar Sudhaili⁹⁹ and would indeed place Evagrius within the type of extreme Origenism that was condemned by Justinian, as Guillaumont hypothesized. However, in the immediate continuation of his letter Evagrius openly declares that the three hypostases of the Trinity will continue to subsist in the ultimate end and that the three components of rational creatures will be absorbed in each of the three divine Persons:

But when it is declared that the names and plurality of rational creatures and their Creator will pass away, it does not at all mean that the hypostases and the names of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit will be obliterated. The nature of the intellect will be joined to the substance of the Father, since it constitutes his body [2 Pet 1:4]. Similarly, the names "soul" and "body" will be subsumed under the hypostases of the Son and the Spirit. And the one and the same nature and three persons of God, and of God's image, will remain eternally, as it was before the inhumanation, and will be after the inhumanation, thanks to the concord of wills. Thus, body, soul, and intellect are (now) separate in number due to the differentiation of wills. But when the names and plurality that have attached to the intellect due to this movement (of will)¹⁰⁰ have passed away, then the multiple

97. Casiday, "Universal Restoration in Evagrius," 224.

98. In Ramelli, *Christian Doctrine of Apokatastasis*, the section on Origen.

99. See *ibid.*, the section on Bar Sudhaili.

100. This meaning of *κίνησις* is typical of Origen and his tradition, on which Evagrius relies. It is not the case that (as is stated by J. Suzuki, "The Evagrian Concept of *Apathēia* and Its Origenism," in *Origeniana Nona* [ed. G. Heidl and R. Somos; Leuven: Peeters, 2009], 605–11, esp. 608) it is "unique" to Evagrius.

names by which God is called will pass away as well.... It is not the case that those distinctions [God's names, or *epinoiai*] are inexistent, but those who needed them will no more exist. But the names and hypostases of the Son and the Spirit will never disappear, since they have no beginning and no end. As they have not received them [their names and hypostases] from an unstable cause, they will never disappear, but while their cause continues to exist, they too continue to exist. They are different from rational creatures, whose cause is the Father as well; but these derive from the Father by grace, whereas the Son and the Spirit derive from the nature of the Father's essence. (*Letter to Melania* 23–25)

This passage also makes it clear that the eventual unity cannot be interpreted in a pantheistic sense, as though any distinction between the Creator and creatures should disappear. For Evagrius insists that the unity in the very end will be unanimity of wills and not a merging of substances. Indeed, for Evagrius, just as for Origen, the initial and the final unity are not a confusion of God and creatures but are both a union of wills. The three hypostases of the Trinity have the same will, and all rational creatures shall have the same will, instead of having very different wills, as is now the case, because in the end everyone's will shall be oriented toward God, the highest Good. Moreover, unlike now, when each component in a human being has a different will (so that the intellect wants one thing and the body another), in the end the three components will be reabsorbed into the intellect, so that only the will of the intellect shall remain. Indeed, Evagrius, exactly like Origen, accounts for the present differentiation of rational creatures with the differentiation of their wills, which occurred at the fall. Before the fall, their wills were uniformly oriented toward God, but at a certain point they became fragmented into a multiplicity of acts of volition that had not the highest Good as their object. This is the "movement," as Evagrius, following Origen, calls the movement of will made possible by freedom of will—a gift of God to all rational creatures. Likewise, in *KG* 6.20 Evagrius notes that God created the first creation, of incorporeal realities, and only subsequently the second, that of bodies: the latter came after the *logika's* "movement," that is, after they dispersed their wills in different directions, instead of toward God alone—this is why Evagrius will soon say in his *Letter to Melania* 26–30 that it was sin to detach the intellects from that unity of will and to diversify intellect, soul, and body. In the very end, at the restoration of all, when God will be "all in all," the differentiation of wills shall cease to exist, since all wills shall finally be directed toward God. "Just as the fire in its power pervades its own body, so will also the *intellect*

in its power *pervade the soul*, when the whole of it will be mingled to the light of the Holy Trinity” (*Letter to Melania* 26).

The divine names, or *epinoiai*, too—such as “gate,” “shepherd,” “rock,” and the like—will disappear, since they exist exclusively for the sake of the salvific economy. Evagrius derived this conviction from Origen¹⁰¹ and also Gregory of Nyssa; the latter, like Evagrius, speaks more of *epinoiai* of God than of *epinoiai* of Christ alone.¹⁰² But while the “economic” *epinoiai* will vanish in the end, the persons of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit will never vanish. The difference between the Son and the Spirit, on the one hand, and the creatures, on the other, is made very clear by Evagrius: the Son and the Spirit stem from the Father *by nature* and share in the Father’s very substance, while rational creatures derive from God *by grace* and have a different substance. Indeed, in his *Letter on Faith* Evagrius is adamant that the final deification, or *θέωσις*, will depend on grace and not on nature: human creatures will be “deities / gods by grace.” Again, any similarity with the later “Isochristoi,” as well as with a Sudhaili-like pantheism, is to be ruled out.

In his *Letter to Melania* 26, Evagrius draws a parallel between protology and eschatology, as already Origen had done.¹⁰³ Evagrius parallels the descent of the intellect to the rank of soul and further of body at the beginning, as a result of the fall and the above-mentioned dispersion of rational creatures’ wills, and the eventual elevation of the body to the rank of the soul, and of the soul to the rank of the intellect, when all rational creatures’ wills, no more divided into a multiplicity, shall enjoy again perfect unity, once they have returned to be oriented toward God alone:

There was a time when the intellect, because of its free will, fell from its original rank and was named “soul,” and, having plunged further, was named “body.” But there will come a time when the body, the soul, and the intellect, thanks to a transformation of their wills, will become one and the same thing. Since there will come a time when the differentiations of the movements of their will shall vanish, it will be elevated to the original state in which it was created. Its nature, hypostasis, and name

101. *On First Principles* 4.4.1.

102. On Gregory’s doctrine of divine *epinoiai*, see Tamara Aptsiauri, “Die Allegorese in der Schrift *Leben des Mose* Gregors von Nyssa im Kontext seiner Epinoia-Theorie,” in *Gregory of Nyssa Contra Eunomium* (ed. Lenka Karfiková; Leiden: Brill, 2007), 2:495–504.

103. See, e.g., *On First Principles* 2.8.3.

will be one, known to God. What is elevated in its own nature is alone among all beings, because neither its place nor its name is known, and only the bare mind can say what its nature is.

Please, do not be amazed at my claim regarding the union of rational creatures with God the Father, that these will be one and the same nature in three persons, with no juxtaposition or change.... When the intellects return to God, like rivers to the sea, God entirely transforms them into his own nature, color, and taste. They will be one and the same thing, and not many anymore, in God's infinite and inseparable unity, in that they are united and joined to God.... Before sin operated a separation between intellects and God, just as the earth separated the sea and rivers, they were one with God, without discrepancy, but when their sin was manifested, they were separated from God and alienated from God.... When sin, interposed between intellects and God, has vanished, they will be, not many, but again one and the same.

However, even if I have said that the rivers were eternally in the sea, with this I do not mean that rational creatures were eternally in God in their substance, since, although they were completely united to God in God's Wisdom and creative power, their actual creation did have a beginning; however, one should not think that it will have an end, in that they are united to God, who has no beginning and no end. (*Letter to Melania* 27–30)

It is further clarified here that the final unity (ἔνωσις) will not be a pantheistic confusion but a unity of will—that is, concord. The notion that the “bare intellect” alone can see the nature of God, whose name and place are unknown, is found also in *KG* 2.37 and 3.70 (see the commentary on these *kephalaia* below).

In *Letter to Melania* 30, quoted above, Evagrius draws a fundamental distinction between the eternal existence of the paradigms (*logoi*, or Ideas) of all creatures in God's Wisdom (who is Christ) and their creation as substances only at a certain point, so that they existed not *ab aeterno* in God in their substance but only as paradigms or prefigurations. This important theory too depends on Origen:

God the Father existed eternally, eternally having his only begotten Son, who at the same time is also called Wisdom.... Now in this Wisdom, which was eternally together with the Father, the whole creation was inscribed from eternity: there was never a time when in Wisdom there was not the prefiguration of the creatures that would come to existence.... Therefore, we do not claim that creatures were never created, or that they

are coeternal with God, or that God was doing nothing good at first, and then suddenly turned to action.... For, if all beings have been created in Wisdom, since Wisdom has always existed, then from eternity there existed in Wisdom, as paradigmatic prefigurations, those beings that at a certain point have been also created as substances. (Origen, *On First Principles* 1.4.4–5)¹⁰⁴

Evagrius follows Origen very closely. Origen also thought that, when the *logika* were created as individual substances, they also acquired a fine, immortal body (which may have functioned as *principium individuationis*). Evagrius remarks that, even if rational creatures began to exist as independent substances only at a certain point, they will have no end, because in the *telos* they will enjoy unity with God, who has no end. This remark is probably due to Evagrius's awareness of the "perishability axiom," according to which whatever has a beginning in time will also have an end in time. For Evagrius, rational creatures did have a beginning, but not in the time measured by the stars and the skies of this world, and will have no end.

Moreover, the infinity of God, which Evagrius supports in the last passage quoted from the *Letter to Melania*, was developed especially by Gregory of Nyssa but was found to a certain extent already in Origen, who, for instance, insisted that "the greatness/majesty of God has no limit [πέρας]" and God's providence runs "from the infinite [ἐξ ἀπειρου] to the infinite [ἐπ' ἀπειρον] and even further."¹⁰⁵ In texts that are preserved in Greek and are surely by Origen, God is described as infinite (ἄπειρον) and as being "from infinities to infinity" (ἐξ ἀπειρων ἐπ' ἀπειρον).¹⁰⁶ Origen, Gregory, and Evagrius could find the notion of the infinity of God already in Philo.¹⁰⁷

104. *Deum quidem Patrem semper fuisse, semper habentem unigenitum Filium, qui simul et Sapientia ... appellatur.... In hac igitur Sapientia, quae semper erat cum Patre, descripta semper inerat ac formata conditio et numquam erat quando eorum, quae futura erant, praefiguratio apud Sapientiam non erat.... Ut neque ingenitas neque coaeternas Deo creaturas dicamus, neque rursum, cum nihil boni prius egerit Deus, in id ut ageret esse conversum.... Si utique in Sapientia omnia facta sunt, cum Sapientia semper fuerit, secundum praefigurationem et praeformationem semper erant in Sapientia ea, quae protinus etiam substantialiter facta sunt.*

105. *Selected Passages on Psalms* 144.

106. Respectively in *Against Celsus* 3.77 and *On Prayer* 27.16.

107. See, e.g., Paul Blowers, "Maximus the Confessor, Gregory of Nyssa, and the Concept of Perpetual Progress," *VC* 46 (1992): 151–71; Albert Geljon, "Divine Infinity

In the passage from the *Letter to Melania* I quoted, Evagrius maintains that union with God, who is infinite also in the sense of eternal (a point that was extraordinarily emphasized by Origen, who also used it against a subordinationistic Christology¹⁰⁸), makes rational creatures eternal. On the infinity of God Gregory Nyssen based his famous doctrine of *epektasis*, the infinite tension of rational creatures toward God and their eternal growth in beatitude.¹⁰⁹ This is why Gregory identified human perfection (τελειότης) with “wishing to attain ever more in the Good.”¹¹⁰ For “no limit could cut short the growth in the ascent to God, since no boundaries can be found to the Good, nor does the progression of desire for the Good end, because it is ever satisfied.”¹¹¹

Evagrius criticizes those who assume that habit becomes a second nature (in *Letter to Melania* 32) and claims that a habit can dispel another precedent habit. This replicates Origen’s polemic against the “Gnostics,” and especially the “Valentinians,” and their deterministic division of humanity into different natures. Origen argued practically all of his life against this, demonstrating precisely that a habit can dispel another precedent habit and one’s destiny depends on one’s moral choices; his doctrine of free will, protology, and eschatology stemmed from his refutation of the “Gnostic” doctrine of different human natures.¹¹² Evagrius proceeds along the same lines.

Additionally, in *Letter to Melania* 38–39 Evagrius adheres to Origen’s differentiation of beings into sense perceptible and intelligible. Remarkably, when he mentions “this perceptible body,” composed by God’s Wisdom out of the four elements, and subject to God’s providence, he points to at least another kind of bodies, which are *not* sense perceptible. This is indeed in

in Gregory of Nyssa and Philo of Alexandria,” *VC* 59 (2005): 152–77; Ramelli, *Gregorio di Nissa: Sull’anima*, the second integrative essay on Origen as antecedent; Mark Weedman, “The Polemical Context of Gregory of Nyssa’s Doctrine of Divine Infinity,” *J ECS* 18 (2010): 81–104, on Hilary as antecedent. Now Hilary was influenced by Origen, perhaps also on this score.

108. See Ramelli, “Origen’s Anti-Subordinationism,” and, for the all-important implications of God’s eternity on Origen’s philosophy of history and eschatology, idem, *Christian Doctrine of Apokatastasis*, the section on Origen.

109. The model is Moses in *The Life of Moses* 112–113.

110. *The Life of Moses* 4–5.

111. *The Life of Moses* 116.

112. See Ilaria L. E. Ramelli, “Origen, Bardaisan, and the Origin of Universal Salvation,” *HTR* 102 (2009): 135–68.

line with Origen and is further confirmed by the Syriac text of the *Kephalaia Gnostika*, in which there is even a specific terminological differentiation between sense-perceptible, heavy, mortal bodies and spiritual, immortal bodies. I will expand on this regularly overlooked differentiation below.

In *Letter to Melania* 46 Evagrius explains that human beings assumed heavy, mortal bodies because of the original fall. On that occasion “they gave up being God’s image and wanted to become the image of animals.” This description closely resembles Gregory of Nyssa’s account of the fall and the equipment of humans with mortal bodies, subject to passions and corruption. Gregory already described this as the abandoning of the image of God and getting closer to animals, especially in his dialogue *On the Soul and the Resurrection*; therefore, at the very end of the dialogue, he posits as the ultimate end (*telos*) the restoration of the image of God.¹¹³ This is also the outcome foreseen by Evagrius, who in the same *Letter to Melania* (53–55) repeats that God created humans in his image, even though he had no need whatsoever of them, and adds that it is impossible that God change his will, and that God wants no one to perish (2 Pet 3:9). This clearly points to the restoration of human beings. Likewise in his treatise *On the Creation of the Human Being* 12 Gregory claims that the human intellect is the image of God and pours God’s beautiful image down onto the soul as well, and the latter onto the body, but if the intellect does not orient itself toward God but orients itself toward matter, instead of the beautiful image of God it receives the ugliness of matter. And this is evil, which is the privation of Good and Beauty at the same time. The ontological negativity of evil was shared by Origen, Gregory Nyssen, and Evagrius, as I will point out below and especially in the commentary on *KG* 1.40–41. Consistently with his conviction that with the fall humans gave up the image of God and took up that of animals, in *Letter to Melania* 56–58 Evagrius observes that Christ underwent conception and birth, and curse and death, in order to free humans from all this, which is unnatural to Christ and, in the plan of God, was also unnatural to humans (since these were created to share not in the life of animals but rather in the life of God—what will happen at the final deification, or *θέωσις*¹¹⁴).

113. For the connection between the “theology of the image” and restoration in Gregory, see Ramelli, *Christian Doctrine of Apokatastasis*, the section devoted to him.

114. On *θέωσις* in patristic thought, see recently Norman Russell, *The Doctrine of Deification in the Greek Patristic Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); Ilaria L. E. Ramelli, “Deification (*Theosis*),” in *Encyclopedia of the Bible and Its Recep-*

As is clear from *Letter to Melania* 52, Evagrius also took over Origen's idea of the death of the soul, developed by the Alexandrian in his *Dialogue with Heraclides* and elsewhere; this concept was drawn from Paul and was also present in Philo and in early imperial philosophy.¹¹⁵ Evagrius in particular remarks that, just as the body dies without food, so does the soul die without its proper nourishment, which is virtue—that is, sticking to the Good. This is entirely in line with Origen's notion of vice or evilness (*κακία*, the opposite of virtue or goodness) as determining the death of the soul. The effects of evilness on the soul are investigated by Evagrius at length in the *KG*, as we will see.

Evagrius's definition of Christ in *Letter to Melania* 60 is also very interesting to cast light on his intellectual roots and to provide a conceptual background to his cryptic *KG*. He depicts Christ as “the leaven of the divinity who, in its goodness, has hidden itself in the unleavened lump of humanity.” This was made in order to “raise the whole lump to all that God is.” This description, which seems to allude to Matt 13:33 and Luke 13:21, is surprisingly similar to that given by the Christian Middle Platonist Bardaisan of Edessa shortly before Origen. His words are quoted *ad litteram* by Ephrem in his *Prose Refutations*: “The Logos is the unknown leaven that is hidden in the (human) soul, which is deprived of knowledge and extraneous in respect to both the body and the Logos. If this is the case, the body cannot adhere to the soul, because it is earthly, nor can the soul adhere to the Logos, which is divine.”¹¹⁶ For the Logos is Christ-Logos. Ephrem also attests that Bardaisan, exactly like Origen and Evagrius, assigned to the human being a spirit or intellect in addition to a body and a soul. The soul, according to Bardaisan, possesses no knowledge, which is rather proper to the intellect/*logos*/spirit, that is, the divine part in each human being (as an all-important fragment from Bardaisan preserved by Porphyry

tion (ed. Hans-Joseph Klauck et al.; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2013), 6:468–70. On *θέωσις* in Evagrius, see Augustine Casiday, “Deification in Origen, Evagrius, and Cassian,” in Perrone, *Origeniana VIII*, 2:995–1001.

115. See Ilaria L. E. Ramelli, “1 Tim 5:6 and the Notion and Terminology of Spiritual Death: Hellenistic Moral Philosophy in the Pastoral Epistles,” *Aev* 84 (2010): 3–16; and idem, “Spiritual Weakness, Illness, and Death in 1 Cor 11:30,” *JBL* 130 (2011): 145–63.

116. C. W. Mitchell, A. A. Bevan, and F. Crawford Burkitt, eds., *S. Ephraim's Prose Refutations of Mani, Marcion, and Bardaisan* (2 vols.; London: Williams & Norgate, 1912–1921), 2:158,20–32.

shows).¹¹⁷ Evagrius, in his very *Letter to Melania*, similarly declares that in the human intellect the Logos and the Spirit of God operate. I wonder whether Evagrius, who entertained the same concept of the tripartition of the human being, and the same view of *apokatastasis*, knew Bardaisan's thought. Gregory of Nyssa in fact did, like Porphyry and Eusebius (who both had Greek translations of his works available), and Origen too may have known his ideas.¹¹⁸

Also, Evagrius's idea—expressed in the passage quoted above from *Letter to Melania* 60—that God, by becoming a human being, allowed all humans to “become God” (in the eventual deification, or *θέωσις*) is firmly grounded in Origen, from whom it passed on to Athanasius. The latter, at the end of his treatise *On the Incarnation*, famously summed up this train of thought by means of the words “Christ became a human being that we could be deified.”

Another pivotal idea of Origen that Evagrius appropriates in his *Letter to Melania* is found in section 62. Here Evagrius makes it clear that to be in the image of God belongs to human nature, but to be in the likeness of God is beyond human nature and depends on one's own efforts. This is exactly what Origen maintained,¹¹⁹ and in this respect Evagrius seems to stick more to Origen himself than to Gregory of Nyssa, who, even while receiving Origen's “theology of the image,” did not insist so much on the distinction between image and likeness. Also in his *Letter to Anatolius* 61 and 18, Evagrius states that the intellectual soul is in the image of God as an initial datum in humans, while likeness must be acquired voluntarily by each one, by means of virtue, just as Origen too thought: “Love manifests the divine image [*εἰκὼν*], which is conformed to the Archetype (God), in

117. For these fragments from Ephrem and Porphyry, see Ilaria L. E. Ramelli, “Bardaisan as a Christian Philosopher: A Reassessment of His Christology,” in *Religion in the History of European Culture: Proceedings of the 9th EASR Conference and IAHR Special Conference, 14–17 September 2009, Messina* (ed. Giulia Sfameni Gasparro, Augusto Cosentino, and Mariangela Monaca; Palermo: Officina di Studi Medievali, 2013), 873–88.

118. See Ilaria L. E. Ramelli, *Bardaisan of Edessa: A Reassessment of the Evidence and a New Interpretation* (Eastern Christian Studies 22; Piscataway, N.J.: Gorgias, 2009), on the relationship between Origen's and Bardaisan's thought, and here 131–42 on Eusebius's acquaintance with, and Gregory of Nyssa's dependence on, Bardaisan. My conclusions are received by Patricia Crone, “Daysanis,” in the *Encyclopedia of Islam* (ed. Kate Fleet et al.; 3d ed.; Leiden: Brill, 2012), 116–18.

119. E.g., in *On First Principles* 3.6.1.

every human.... Your luminous homage to God will be when, by means of the energies of Good that you possess, you will have impressed God's likeness [ὁμοίωσις] in yourself.”

The last sections of the *Letter to Melania* are strategically devoted to the ultimate end (*telos*), the eschatological scenario, when unity (ἔνωσις) and deification (θέωσις) will finally be realized. At section 63 Evagrius describes this not as something natural but as a miracle, a gift from the divine grace. For it is only thanks to God's grace that the nature of rational creatures, which became alienated from God because of the mutability of its free will, should enjoy eternal union with its Creator. Now this too is entirely attuned to Origen's eschatological ideas. For Origen too upheld both the notion of the final *apokatastasis* as unity or unification (ἔνωσις) and its being by grace. Evagrius himself, at section 66, describes “the *telos* of all intellects” as “the union of all these different knowledges in one and the same and unique real knowledge” and as “all becoming this one without end.” Also in *Letter 63*, which perfectly corresponds to the final part of the *Letter to Melania*, Evagrius stresses this element of unity, also applying it to the unification of all kinds of knowledge into the “essential knowledge” (of which he speaks a great deal also in the *KG*, as we will see below in the commentary): “all the different and distinct forms of knowledge will fuse together, into *one and the same essential knowledge*: all of those will become *this only knowledge, forever ... the great ark containing all the treasures of wisdom is the heart of Christ*, on which John reclined during the Last Supper.” Just because Christ is the ultimate knowledge, being God, who is—as we shall see—“essential knowledge,” he is said to be for all rational creatures “the very *telos* and ultimate blessedness.”

Evagrius closes his *Letter to Melania* with the metaphor of God as a compassionate farmer, compassion (συμπάθεια) being an important characteristic of the Divinity itself and of the virtuous person.¹²⁰ Now, it seems remarkable to me that this is the very same theological metaphor as was used by Gregory of Nyssa in the final section of his dialogue *On the Soul and the Resurrection*. Here God, the good farmer, is said to take care even of the most damaged and worst seeds and to make sure that absolutely all seeds will become fruitful. As Evagrius concludes, “the earth will be blessed, and the farmer, the soil, and those who have been fed will sing glory and praise

120. See Kevin Corrigan and Gregory Yuri Glazov, “Compunction and Compassion: Two Overlooked Virtues in Evagrius of Pontus,” *J ECS* 22 (2014): 61–77.

to the *First Farmer*, to whom *all the seeds of blessing* belong, *in eternity*.” The influence of both Origen and Gregory Nyssen on Evagrius’s *Letter to Melania*, as well as on his *KG*—as I will point out below in the present essay and in the commentary—and other works of his, is noteworthy and deserves further investigation.

5. Good and Evil, Gnosis and Ignorance, Virtue and Sin, *Apatheia* and Passions, and Restoration

As I have mentioned, the *Letter to Melania* helps readers understand the *KG*, and this in many respects: for example, metaphysics, ontology, protology, eschatology, and theology. From the metaphysical point of view, in the *KG* too Evagrius highlights the ontological priority of the Good (God) over evil (a lack and negativity). This, according to Evagrius, has momentous eschatological consequences, as Origen and Gregory Nyssen also thought. For the three of them, evil has no ontological consistence: it is not a substance but the result of a bad use of free will. This interpretation, which is the very same as Origen’s, is put forward especially in Evagrius’s work *On Thoughts* (Περὶ λογισμῶν)¹²¹ 19: the cause of sin is not anything endowed with a substantial existence (ὕφιστος κατ’ οὐσίαν), but it is a pleasure that is generated by free will, which forces the intellect to make a bad use of God’s creatures. Likewise, in one of the thoughts collected by the disciples of Evagrius, evil is presented again as a byproduct of free will, being described as “the movement of free will toward the worse” (*Chapters of the Disciples of Evagrius* 118). The one responsible (αἴτιος) for the appearance of evil, as well as for its disappearance, is the moral subject (*ibid.* 165).

Thus, at the very beginning of his *KG*, as a founding stone of his metaphysics, Evagrius proclaims: “There is nothing that is opposed to the First

121. See now the edition by Paul Géhin, Antoine Guillaumont, and Claire Guillaumont, *Évagre le Pontique: Sur les pensées* (SC 438; Paris: Cerf, 1998). Very interestingly, the sense in which Evagrius uses λογισμός, as an evil thought inspired by a demon, depends on Origen, as so much else in Evagrius’s thinking. See, e.g., *On First Principles* 3.2.4 on cogitationes and *Commentary on the Song of Songs* 4.3.4–6, where Origen spoke of thoughts (logismoi) inspired by demons and, basically following Stoic ethics, remarked that it is necessary to avert these thoughts from one’s mind (“heart”) while they are not yet ingrained and it is easier to avoid assenting to them (in reference to the *sykathesis* or assent as the turning point that transforms impulses, prepassions and temptations into passions and vices). See also Pesthy, “Logismoi origéniens–logismoi évagriens.”

Good, because it is Goodness in its very essence; now, there is nothing that is opposed to the Essence” (KG 1.1). Given that the first Good is God, the fact that nothing is opposed to the first Good means that nothing is opposed to God. In fact, evil—the opposite of Good—is nothing. This is why in KG 1.89 Evagrius claims, “All rational nature has been naturally made in order to exist and to be capable of knowledge. Now, God is essential knowledge. Rational nature has as its opposite nonexistence, whereas knowledge (has as its opposites) evilness and ignorance. Yet, nothing among these things is opposed to God.” Evil, as well as ignorance, cannot be a principle on a par with God and antithetical to God, as it would be in a Manichaean perspective, but it is a lack of the Good that God is, just as ignorance is a lack of the Knowledge (“essential knowledge,” as he often calls it) that God is.

Evagrius’s idea of knowledge (γνώσις)¹²² is the direct descendant of Clement of Alexandria’s crucial notion of γνώσις, which in its highest degree is inseparable from that of deification (θέωσις). As is clear from KG 1.89, the opposite of knowledge for Evagrius is not only ignorance but also evil(ness). This indicates that knowledge in his view goes together with goodness/virtue and cannot be separated from it (I will have many occasions to point this out in the commentary below). Indeed, knowledge, for Evagrius, cannot intrinsically be knowledge for evil but only knowledge for the Good. Evil belongs with ignorance, and not with knowledge. Indeed, in Evagrius’s ethical intellectualism—which is parallel to that of Origen and Nyssen—the choice of evil is a result of an obfuscated knowledge.

In one of the most pivotal *kephalaia* in his KG (1.41, to which I will devote a very full commentary below, and I refer readers to that), Evagrius hammers home the ontological priority of Good, goodness, and virtue over evil, evilness, and vice. This is not only a moral and chronological priority, but it is also and especially an ontological priority and superiority: “If death comes after life, and illness after health, it is clear that also evil

122. On which see, e.g., Antoine Guillaumont, “La vie gnostique selon Évagre le Pontique,” *Annuaire du Collège de France* 80 (1979–80): 467–70; idem, “Le gnostique chez Clément d’Alexandrie et chez Évagre,” in *Alexandria: Hellénisme, judaïsme et christianisme à Alexandrie; Mélanges Claude Mondésert* (Paris: Cerf, 1987), 195–201; repr. in *Études sur la spiritualité de l’Orient chrétien* (Begrolles-en-Mauges: Bellefontaine, 1996), 151–60. On Evagrius’s theory of a progression from *πρακτική* to *γνωστική* and to *θεολογική*, see idem, “Un philosophe au désert: Évagre le Pontique,” *RHR* 181 (1972): 29–56; repr. in *Aux origines du monachisme chrétien* (Begrolles-en-Mauges: Bellefontaine, 1979), 185–212; Kostantinovsky, *Evagrius*, 27–76.

comes after virtue. For it is evil that is the death and the illness of the soul, but *virtue comes even before*.” This is what Origen repeatedly emphasized, for instance in his *Homilies on Jeremiah* 2.1: “In all human beings, what is in the image of God [i.e., virtue] *comes before* the image of evil [i.e., vice]”; it is *πρεσβύτερον*. So does Evagrius declare that virtue is *πρεσβύτερον* than vice: it comes before, just as health comes before illness, which is its degeneration. Illness is often meant spiritually by Evagrius, as already by Philo and Origen.¹²³ On this presupposition, Evagrius follows in Clement’s and Origen’s footsteps in seeing Christ as the infallible Physician of souls, the only one who will be able to bring all of them back to health.¹²⁴ All of these thinkers, like Gregory Nyssen, were indeed consistent in supporting the doctrine of universal restoration and salvation.

In fact, from the ontological (and chronological and moral) priority of Good and virtue over evil and vice, Evagrius, exactly like Origen and Nyssen, infers the eschatological annihilation of all evil in another pivotal *kephalaion* to which I will devote an extensive commentary due to its extraordinary importance in Evagrius’s system: “There was a time when evil(ness) did not exist, and there will come a time when *it will no more exist* [*ἦν γὰρ ὅτε οὐκ ἦν κακία καὶ ἔσται ὅτε οὐκ ἔσται*]. But there was no time when the Good/virtue did not exist, and there will be *no time when it will no more exist*. For the germs of virtue are impossible to destroy.” This text of *KG* 1.40, in Syriac, corresponds to that of *On Thoughts* (Περὶ λογισμῶν) 31, preserved in Greek. Evagrius attached so much importance to this pillar of his philosophy that he repeated it not only in these two works, in the very same terms, but even in three more passages: *Letters* 43 and 59, and scholium 62 on *Prov* 5:14.¹²⁵

In the continuation of *KG* 1.40 and of *On Thoughts* 31 Evagrius adds a biblical reference in which to ground his assertion of the inextinguishability of the germs of virtue: “And what persuades me of this is also the

123. See Ramelli, “Spiritual Weakness, Illness, and Death.”

124. See, e.g., *On Thoughts* (Περὶ λογισμῶν) 3 and 10; scholium 2 on *Ps* 102:3; scholium 9 on *Ps* 106:20; scholium 6 on *Ps* 144:15; scholium 2 on *Ps* 145:7; *Letters* 42; 51; 52; 55; 57; 60. On the spiritual interpretation of illness in Origen, see Ilaria L. E. Ramelli, “Disability in Bardaisan and Origen: Between the Stoic *Adiaphora* and the Lord’s Grace,” in *Gestörte Lektüre: Disability als hermeneutische Leitkategorie biblischer Exegese* (ed. Wolfgang Grünstäudl and Markus Schiefer Ferrari; Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2012), 141–59; in Evagrius, see Monica Tobon, “The Health of the Soul: ἀπάθεια in Evagrius Ponticus,” *StPatr* 47 (2010): 187–202.

125. Paul Ghéhin, ed., *Scholies aux Proverbes* (SC 340; Paris: Cerf, 1987).

rich man who in Sheol was condemned because of his evil and took pity on his siblings. Now, pity is a beautiful germ of virtue.”¹²⁶ This practice of buttressing every philosophical argument with a scriptural proof was constantly employed by Origen and by Gregory of Nyssa. Evagrius maintains that the germs of virtue—the Good—never die, not even in hell, since they come from God, who is the Good itself. Evil, on the contrary, which was not created by God, will vanish in the end. The eventual disappearance of evil was repeatedly affirmed by both Origen and Gregory Nyssen; the latter even described it in a detailed manner in his short commentary on 1 Cor 15:28 (*In illud: Tunc et ipse Filius*).¹²⁷ Moreover, Evagrius was very likely acquainted with the exegesis of the Lukan parable of Dives and Lazarus provided by Gregory Nyssen in his *On the Soul and the Resurrection*, all the more so since Evagrius understands hell exactly as Nyssen presented it there, and as Origen also interpreted it, that is, as “the darkness of the ignorance of those who cannot contemplate God.”¹²⁸ Evagrius’s biblical interpretation, here as elsewhere, is spiritual/allegorical, like Origen’s and Gregory Nyssen’s. Examples of such an exegesis of Scripture are spread throughout his *KG*, as we shall see below in the commentary.¹²⁹ It is remarkable that in *Gnostikos* 21 Evagrius recommends allegorizing only good discourses, and not evil ones, in Scripture.

A similar understanding of hell is found in *Gnostikos* 36, where Evagrius expresses the same concerns as Origen did¹³⁰ about divulging

126. See also *Praktikos* 1.65 (PG 40:1240AB).

127. For a full commentary on this short treatise, see Ramelli, *Gregorio di Nissa: Sull'anima*.

128. Giovanni Vannucci, ed., *Philokalia: Testi di ascetica e mistica della Chiesa orientale* (Florence: Libreria editrice fiorentina, 1978), 49.

129. E.g., *KG* 4.46, 53, 56, 79; 5.35, 88; 6.49, 64.

130. Ilaria L. E. Ramelli (“Origen’s Exegesis of Jeremiah: Resurrection Announced throughout the Bible and Its Twofold Conception,” *Aug* 48 [2008]: 59–78) and Mark S. M. Scott (“Guarding the Mysteries of Salvation: The Pastoral Pedagogy of Origen’s Universalism,” *J ECS* 18 [2010]: 347–68) insist on Origen’s prudence in disclosing the *apokatastasis* doctrine to the simple. The latter are the morally immature, those who do good out of fear of punishment and not out of love of the Good, who is God. Origen and Gregory Nyssen seem to me to have used two different strategies, even while sharing the same eschatological doctrine. While Origen used the strategy of not telling immature people about the eventual salvation of all, because he was aware of the moral danger this can entail, Gregory wished to tell everybody (and did so in his *Catechetical Oration*), but through Macrina he also warned people that evil is hard to purify and

his eschatological doctrine to morally immature people: “The highest doctrine concerning the Judgment should remain *unknown to mundane and young people*, in that it can easily produce despise and neglect. For they do not know that the suffering of a rational soul condemned to punishment *consists in ignorance*.” Indeed, Evagrius opposes Sheol to paradise, the latter being conceived as a place of knowledge: “Just as paradise is the place of instruction for the righteous, so is hell [or “Sheol”] the torment of the impious” (*KG* 6.8). The implication is again that the torment of the impious will consist in deprivation of knowledge, that is, ignorance. And that torment will come in a variety of degrees, as is clear from *On Thoughts* 18, where Evagrius also insists on the idea of the death of the soul, which, as I have mentioned, was very dear to Origen. Evagrius here even uses Ezek 18:4 and 20 (“the soul that sins will die”), Origen’s favorite biblical quotation in this connection.

Beatitude, on the contrary, is identified by Evagrius with the perfect knowledge (*γνώσις*) and contemplation (*θεωρία*) of God—a kind of blessedness that is well suited for rational creatures. Evagrius speaks of contemplation quite frequently in the *KG*—for instance, in 1.27, in which he classifies five forms of contemplation, or *θεωρία*: the first and highest is the contemplation of God the Trinity, the second is the contemplation of incorporeal realities, the third is the contemplation of bodies, the fourth is the contemplation of the Judgment, and the fifth is that of divine providence. As I will demonstrate below in the commentary, it is probable that these five contemplations are arranged, not in a hierarchical order, but in a “historical” order, starting from God, who is the principle of all, passing on to the creation of intelligent beings, and then of material bodies, until the judgments that close every aeon, the last Judgment, which will conclude all aeons, and God’s providence, which accompanies creatures during all aeons and will overcome in the end, at the eventual *apokatastasis* after all aeons and all judgments. In this way, Providence completes Judgment; it does not contradict it. I will return later to the relationship between Judgment and Providence, which also entails the relationship between God’s justice and God’s mercy.

Evagrius also refers to knowledge, or “gnosis,” in *Praktikos* 2–3: “The kingdom of heavens is impassivity (*apatheia*) in the soul, along with the true

that the ultramundane sufferings of the wicked will be long and terrible. Evagrius had both strategies before him.

knowledge of beings. The kingdom of God is the knowledge [γνώσις] of the Holy Trinity, which proceeds along with the intellect's getting closer to it." The process of the intellect's getting closer to God and acquiring ever further knowledge parallels Gregory Nyssen's epestatic process. The knowledge of the Trinity is the highest of all; the knowledge of created beings is the knowledge of their *logoi*, their paradigmatic reasons and metaphysical forms. Thus, for instance, in *Praktikos* 92 Evagrius cites Antony the Great, who deemed the contemplation of creation aimed at the knowledge "of the nature [φύσις] of creatures." The knowledge of the Trinity is an end (*telos*) in itself, unlike the knowledge of creatures, which is aimed at the superior knowledge of God the Creator; this is why Evagrius stresses: "Let us do everything for the sake of the knowledge of God" (*Praktikos* 32).

The ultimate end (*telos*) of human life—that is, blessedness—is knowledge. This is also based on 1 Tim 2:4–6, a passage dear to Evagrius, where knowledge of the truth is equated with salvation ("God our Savior wants all humans to be saved and to reach the knowledge of the truth"), which is reiterated by Evagrius in *Letter* 56, with a reference to the beatitude in Matt 5:8: "Blessed are the pure of heart, because they will see God." On this basis Evagrius can claim that seeing God—that is, knowing God—is blessedness: Jesus "proclaims them blessed not because of their purity but because of their seeing God; for purity is the impassivity [ἀπάθεια] of the rational soul, whereas seeing God is the true knowledge [γνώσις] of the Holy Trinity, who must be adored." All rational creatures, according to Evagrius, will reach the knowledge of God and the ultimate blessedness. This is the core of Evagrius's doctrine of universal restoration, or *apokatastasis*, which was already theorized by Origen and Gregory Nyssen, his main inspirers.

Evagrius, like Origen and Gregory, maintained that all rational creatures belong to the same nature and were created equal by God but at some point have become angels, humans, or demons due to the different choices of their free will (the same as Origen and Nyssen maintained). During the aeons human beings, by virtue of their free will, can become good like angels—which is an example of what Evagrius calls "the better transformation"—or evil like demons; this is why he says that they are intermediate between angels and demons (*KG* 4.13). Indeed, rational creatures, for Evagrius just as for Origen, can switch from one order to another between angels, humans, and demons, according to their spiritual progress or regression (*KG* 5.9–11). Spiritual death reigns over demons, because of their choice for evil, whereas spiritual life reigns over angels; humans,

being in the aforementioned intermediate state, are ruled by both life and death, again understood in the spiritual sense (KG 4.65).

But even if some of the rational creatures (notably, humans and demons) adhered to evil to some extent, this belongs to the moral and not to the ontological sphere: none of the *logika*, according to Evagrius just as according to Origen and Nyssen, is evil by nature, not even demons (KG 4.59; see the commentary below). For this would mean making God accountable for evil, something that Origen's, Gregory's, and Evagrius's theodicy could never accept. In KG 3.4 the three main categories of rational creatures are characterized by three different kinds of relation to the contemplation of beings, or *θεωρία*: angels are nourished by it always, humans not always, and demons never. But still, after the vanishing of all evil, the eventual *apokatastasis* will involve all rational creatures, and all will enjoy contemplation and knowledge, eternally.

In this respect, Evagrius is in line with both Origen and Gregory Nyssen, although it is usually assumed that he insists more on the intellectual aspect of contemplation and knowledge.¹³¹ Evagrius, however, does not regard contemplation (*θεωρία*) as separate from charity-love (*ἀγάπη*), which is also a dominant element in *apokatastasis* according to both Origen and Nyssen, Origen especially in his commentaries on Romans and on the Song of Songs, Gregory in *On the Soul and the Resurrection* and in his *Homilies on the Song of Songs*.¹³² In KG 1.86 Evagrius remarks, "Charity-love is the excellent state of the rational soul, a state in which the soul cannot love anything that is among corruptible beings more than the knowledge of God." Love and knowledge are here inseparable.

Gregory Nyssen is very likely to have inspired Evagrius's conviction of the inseparability of knowledge and love. For Gregory, in his dialogue *On the Soul and the Resurrection* 96C, locates knowledge and love together at the highest level, inside the divine life itself: "The life of the divine nature is charity-love [*ἀγάπη*], since Beauty/Goodness is absolutely lovable to those who know it. Now the divine knows itself, and this knowledge [*γνώσις*] becomes love [*ἀγάπη*]." Moreover, once again just as for Nyssen, for Evagrius too *ἀγάπη* is no *πάθος* but impassivity, as is clear, for instance,

131. See Hans Urs von Balthasar, "Metaphysik und Mystik des Evagrius Pontikus," *Zeitschrift für Askese und Mystik* (1939): 31–47; Brian Daley, *The Hope of the Early Church* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 91.

132. See Ramelli, *Christian Doctrine of Apokatastasis*, sections on Origen and Nyssen.

from *Eulogius* 22: “Charity-love is the bond of impassivity and the expunging of passions.... Love possesses nothing of its own apart from God, for God is Love itself.” The link between impassivity (*ἀπάθεια*, absence of passions, i.e., of bad emotions) and love (*ἀγάπη*) is also stressed in *Praktikos* 8: “Charity-love is the progeny of impassivity.” Precisely because charity-love is no *pathos*, this is why love will abide in the end, in the perfect state, and this is why love is the very life of God, who is supremely free from passions and is perfect knowledge.

The same close connection between charity-love and knowledge is drawn by Evagrius in *KG* 4.50, where he identifies the good and eternal love with that which true knowledge elects, and he declares this love to be inseparable from the intellect, and in *KG* 3.58, where he declares that spiritual love is necessary for one to *learn* the wisdom of beings. It is therefore clear that love is indispensable for knowledge; Evagrius in 3.58 even details that love plays the same role in knowledge as light does in vision, which is itself a metaphor for knowledge.¹³³ According to Evagrius, then, there can be no separation whatsoever between love and knowledge. Indeed, I have already pointed out that in his view the opposite of knowledge is not only ignorance but also evilness, which results from a lack of love for the Good. Evagrius describes ignorance as “the shadow of evilness” in *KG* 4.29, thus showing that to his mind ignorance and evil cannot exist independently of one another.

Thus, only after the elimination of evil will ignorance also vanish from among rational creatures (*KG* 4.29). The eradication of evil and ignorance from all rational creatures will take place in the eventual *apokatastasis*. That this will be universal and will involve all *logika* is made clear by Evagrius in many passages—for instance, in *KG* 3.72, where “all” are said to be destined to come to the ultimate end, which is knowledge.¹³⁴ Consistently with this, Evagrius, like Origen and Nyssen, interprets 1 Cor 15:24–28, which describes the final submission of all to Christ, as the final salvation of all. This submission-salvation will take place through virtue and knowledge, as Evagrius puts it in his allegoresis of Christ’s feet in *KG* 6.15: Christ’s two feet are asceticism (the *πρακτική*: ethical life, the pursuit of virtue) and contemplation (*θεωρία*); now, if Christ “puts *all* enemies under his feet” (1 Cor 15:25), then “all,” Evagrius avers, will come to know

133. On Evagrius’s theology of light, see at least Konstantinovsky, *Evagrius*, 77–108.

134. For a full discussion of his complex *kephalaion*, see the commentary below.

asceticism and contemplation. This entails that all rational creatures will reach the ultimate perfection in both virtue and knowledge. The universality of the eventual submission-salvation is stressed by Evagrius also in *KG* 6.27, where he argues that “the whole nature of rational creatures” will submit to the Lord. And the final submission of all to Christ will coincide with the eventual salvation of all. Origen first drew this equation between universal submission and universal salvation, which was later developed by Gregory Nyssen in his commentary on 1 Cor 15:28¹³⁵ and was appropriated by Evagrius as well. All will submit to Christ, will place themselves “under his feet” by converting to the Good—that is, God—and rejecting evil, and will thereby be saved.

Indeed, in a scholium on Ps 21:29 Evagrius states that the sentence “for he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet” (1 Cor 15:25) means that Christ will have to continue reigning “until all the unrighteous [ἄδικοι] have become righteous [δίκαιοι].” In this condition, all will be immortal and will not risk becoming earthly again. At least two passages, one of probable authenticity and the other certainly authentic, show that Evagrius for his exegesis of 1 Cor 15:25 was relying on Origen closely. If *Selecta in Psalmos* (*Selected Passages on Psalms*) 21, preserved in Greek like Evagrius’s scholium, is indeed by Origen, this would mean that Evagrius was repeating Origen’s exegesis even *ad litteram* (which would not be surprising): “He must reign until he has put all enemies under his feet’ means ‘until all the unrighteous have become righteous.’” That this passage is really by Origen (and was therefore taken up by Evagrius word for word) is made very probable by another, surely authentic, passage whose content is the same, albeit in different words: Origen’s *Commentary on Romans* 9.41.8, in which 1 Cor 15:25–28 is interpreted—the same passage interpreted by Evagrius—and is joined to Phil 2:10: “But when Christ has ‘handed the kingdom to God the Father’—that is, presented to God as an offer *all, converted and reformed*, and has fully performed the mystery of the reconciliation of the world—then they will be in God’s presence, that God’s word may be fulfilled: ‘Because I live—the Lord says—*every knee* will bend before Me, *every tongue* will glorify God.’” Glorification is a sign of voluntary adhesion. This voluntary character of the final submission explains why universal submission for Origen, Eusebius, Nyssen, and Evagrius will coincide with universal

135. See Ramelli, “Christian Soteriology and Christian Platonism”; and idem, “Gregory of Nyssa’s Trinitarian Theology.”

salvation. The idea that Christ's reign, during which he will submit all, will achieve the conversion and salvation of all, which was typical of Origen, was indeed taken over by Eusebius as well, when he spoke of the *θεραπευτική* and *διορθωτική βασιλεία* of Christ, the reign of Christ, during which Christ will heal all those who will still be spiritually ill and he will set right all those who will still be unrighteous.¹³⁶ Thus, given the clear antecedents in Origen and Eusebius, besides Nyssen himself, we cannot really say that Evagrius—as Julia Konstantinovsky has suggested¹³⁷—is original on this score.

Origen even maintained that, as long as one single rational creature remains unconverted to the Good, Christ cannot yet submit to the Father (that is, subject his body—i.e., all of humanity and all rational creatures—to the Father), but he has to go on to reign, precisely because during his reign he will convert everyone to the Good, by healing them and setting them right, that is, turning them from unrighteous into righteous. Evagrius in his *Scholia on Proverbs* 355 details that Christ destroys the unrighteous by transforming them into righteous: “Once the impious have ceased to be such, they will become righteous [δίκαιοι]. Indeed, in this passage [concerning the destruction of the impious in Ps 28:28] ‘destruction’ [ἀπόλεια] means the vanishing of the impiety of that man. Precisely in this way, the Lord brought about the destruction of the publican Matthew, by giving him the grace of righteousness.” Evagrius defines righteousness (*δικαιοσύνη*) in *Praktikos* 89: its task “is to generate the symphony and harmony of all parts of the soul.” This definition derives from Plato’s definition of justice (*δικαιοσύνη*). But the very notion that the destruction of the unrighteous performed by Christ is their transformation into righteous, which Evagrius has expounded in his scholium, comes straight from Origen. Even the examples that Evagrius adduces of this destruction-transformation are the same that Origen already adduced: that of Matthew the publican transformed by the Lord into a righteous man, which is adduced in the scholium quoted above, and that of Paul “the persecutor,” transformed by the Lord into an apostle of Christ. The

136. See Ilaria L. E. Ramelli, “Origen, Eusebius, and the Doctrine of Apokatastasis,” in *Eusebius of Caesarea: Traditions and Innovations* (ed. Aaron Johnson and Jeremy Schott; Hellenic Studies 60; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013), 307–23.

137. “He must reign till he has put all enemies under his feet. How this is to happen, however, constitutes Evagrius’ originality. The defeat of Christ’s enemies will come about when all the wicked, including evil men, demons, and the devil himself, become righteous” (Konstantinovsky, *Evagrius*, 157, emphasis mine). Her book as a whole is very good, though.

latter is adduced by Evagrius in a scholium on Ps 17:8–9. Evagrius is here commenting on the fire that is said in Ps 17:8–9 to come from the face of the Lord and identifies it with God’s action of “destroying evil habits,” so as to transform people into better persons. Evagrius adds two examples: that of Matthew, who was a publican, and that of Paul, who was “a persecutor and a violent man” but became an apostle of Jesus Christ and a righteous man. Likewise Origen, in his *Homilies on Jeremiah* 1.15–16, says: “Who is the person whom ‘I (the Lord) shall kill?’ It is Paul the traitor, Paul the persecutor; and ‘I shall make him live,’ so that he may become Paul the apostle of Jesus Christ.” As is evident, both the concepts and the very examples, Paul and Matthew, are identical in Origen and Evagrius.

In addition, Evagrius’s interpretation of God’s fire as God’s action of burning away evil from sinners—which Evagrius puts forward again in the scholium on Ps 17:8–9 and elsewhere—is the same as Origen had proposed in many passages—for instance, in *Against Celsus* 6.70: “God is the fire that consumes . . . every kind of sin”—or in *Homilies on Jeremiah* 1.15–16, where the burning of chaff is interpreted as the purification of sinners from evil. Moreover, the image of God’s destroying evil and planting a new garden in its place, employed by Evagrius in a scholium on Ps 43:3 (“God eradicates evilness and ignorance and instead plants virtue and knowledge”), is identical to that used by Origen in the same passage quoted above, *Homilies on Jeremiah* 1.16. Here Origen assures that sin and vice, in all varieties, will be eradicated, so that upon the ruins of evil God may plant the garden of the Good, the new paradise.

Even the main scriptural proofs that Evagrius adduces in support of the doctrine of universal restoration, or *apokatastasis* (1 Cor 15:24–28 and John 17:21–22), are the same with which Origen primarily buttressed it: the submission of all enemies and the annihilation of evil and death during Christ’s reign, the handing over of the kingdom to the Father, and the final unity, when God will be “all in all.” This is also the basis of Origen’s and Evagrius’s distinction between the kingdom of Christ and the kingdom of God, the latter being the ultimate reality: “They say the kingdom of Christ is every material knowledge, while that of God the Father is immaterial knowledge.”¹³⁸ Origen clearly inspired Evagrius also in this case: he identified the kingdom of Christ with the contemplation of the *logoi* of salvation and the accomplishment of the works of justice and the

138. Evagrius, *Letter* 63.

other virtues, and the kingdom of God with the blessed, perfect condition of the intellect.¹³⁹ However, the kingdom of Christ is not opposed to that of God but is absorbed into it.

6. The Aeons and the *Telos*

According to Evagrius, the submission of all to Christ, who will hand them to God (on the Origenian exegesis of 1 Cor 15:28), will take place at the conclusion of all aeons, in the very end (*telos*), when all will be brought to unity. As he makes clear in *KG* 6.33, once Christ will no longer be impressed in various aeons and names, then he too will submit to the Father and will delight in the knowledge of God alone. This knowledge is not divided into aeons and increments of rational creatures, but it comes after the end of all aeons, when rational creatures will have stopped increasing. For Evagrius's conception of aeons (*αιῶνες*) is the same as Origen's: there are several aeons before the final *apokatastasis*, which will put an end to all aeons.¹⁴⁰ During the aeons, rational creatures increase in virtue and knowledge and get purified; after all this has been accomplished, the series of aeons will cease, and the fullness of God's absolute eternity (*ἀιδιότης*) will remain. During the aeons, Evagrius avers, rational creatures will acquire more and more knowledge, with a view to the knowledge of the Trinity (*KG* 6.67), and at the end, after the aeons, God will have rational creatures acquire the essential knowledge of God the Father (*KG* 6.34).

Origen's notion of aeons was misrepresented by Augustine and others during the Origenistic controversy; these people claimed that Origen taught an infinite succession of aeons, without end.¹⁴¹ This is not the case, and Evagrius knew that Origen in fact taught a finite sequence of aeons, followed by a definitive and eternal *apokatastasis*. Indeed, he closely adheres to Origen when he maintains that the succession of aeons is not infinite, but it had a beginning and will consequently have an end. For instance, in *KG* 5.89 he remarks that the creation of the first aeon was not preceded by a destruction, but it was the beginning of all aeons, and so also the destruction of the last aeon will not be followed by a new aeon,

139. Origen, *On Prayer* 25.

140. See Ilaria L. E. Ramelli, "Αἰώνιος and Αἰών in Origen and Gregory of Nyssa," *StPatr* 47 (2010): 57–62; idem, *Christian Doctrine of Apokatastasis*, the chapter on Origen.

141. See Ilaria L. E. Ramelli, "Origen in Augustine: A Paradoxical Reception," *Numen* 60 (2013): 280–307.

but the succession of aeons will cease at that point. Aeons are necessary to rational creatures' spiritual and intellectual development. If aeons should end now, most rational creatures would still be helplessly behind in such a development. Only once they are perfect will God bestow his goods on them, since before that rational creatures would be unable to receive God's richness (KG 4.38).

Each aeon is aimed at the knowledge of God on the part of rational creatures: "A world/aeon is a natural system that includes the various and different bodies of rational creatures, because of the knowledge of God" (KG 3.36). The very definition of an *αἰών* as a "natural system" is entirely dependent on Origen.¹⁴² According to Evagrius, just as to Origen, each aeon begins with the end of the preceding one, when a judgment takes place about the moral choices made by rational creatures during the preceding aeon. In this judgment, Christ establishes the role and the kind of body that each rational creature will have in the following aeon, on the basis of the moral and spiritual development of each one (KG 3.38; cf. 3.47). Thus, the number of judgments corresponds to the number of aeons (KG 2.75). Not only in the *KG* but also in his *Scholia* does Evagrius insist on this conception—for instance, in scholium 275 on Prov 24:22: "A judgment is the creation of an aeon that allots bodies to every intellectual creature according to" its moral and spiritual development. In scholium 2 on Ps 134:6 Evagrius further explains that the division of rational creatures into angels, humans, and demons, and their allotment to different places or states, is the result of every judgment. This is why "the exact knowledge of these realms/states and the different bodies [i.e., allotted to angels, humans, and demons] consists in the *logoi* ["criteria, reasons"] regarding the Judgment." A similar principle is expounded in scholium 8 on Eccl 2:10: "we receive knowledge according to our state," or *κατάστασις* (*ἀπο-κατάστασις* is a related term and means the return to the original state without sin).

A systematic investigation into the lexicon of aeons and eternity both in the works of Evagrius extant in Greek, which I have undertaken elsewhere,¹⁴³ and in the Syriac translation of his *KG* (I will indicate in the

142. On this notion in Origen, see Panayiotis Tzamalikos, *Origen: Cosmology and Ontology of Time* (Leiden: Brill, 2006), with my review in *Rivista di Filosofia Neoscolastica* 99 (2007): 177–81; and idem, *Origen: Philosophy of History and Eschatology* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), with my review in *Rivista di Filosofia Neoscolastica* 100 (2008): 453–58.

143. In Ilaria Ramelli and David Konstan, *Terms for Eternity: Aīdionios and Aīdios*

commentary when the Syriac is an obvious translation of αἰών) definitely confirms that he conceived of a series of aeons preceded by the eternity of God and followed by the eternity of *apokatastasis* in God. Evagrius, also due to the influence of biblical quotations, uses the adjective αἰώνιος more frequently than ἄφθιος, which refers to intelligible and spiritual things and indicates absolute eternity. This is the eternity of *apokatastasis* itself and of God; in the *telos* all rational creatures will participate in the life of God, and this life is absolutely eternal. Evagrius applies αἰώνιος to God only in scriptural quotations and echoes, and only in reference to God can this adjective bear the connotation of “eternal.” In other cases it may mean “remote in time, ancient”;¹⁴⁴ it also refers to life in the world (αἰών) to come and the judgment in the next world, which will determine the condition of each one in the αἰών, as long as the αἰών will last. Αἰώνιος is used by Evagrius of punishment in the future αἰών as well, also in the form of a threat.¹⁴⁵ It is also used of fire in the aeon to come,¹⁴⁶ sometimes in connection with the explicit expression αἰών μέλλον, “future aeon.”¹⁴⁷

The future aeon, or aeons, will last until *apokatastasis*, when there will come an end to all aeons and there will be no longer either sinners or evil, which did not exist in the beginning and will not endure in the end: “Virtue, the Good, will *consume evil*, and this will come to pass in the future aeon, until *evilness will be eliminated* [τοῦτο δὲ γενήσεται ἐν τῷ αἰῶνι τῷ μέλλοντι, ἕως ἂν ἐκλείπη ἡ κακία].”¹⁴⁸ This indicates that the future aeon will last until all evil is eliminated, only after which can the eventual universal restoration finally take place. The eschatological triumphal march of the Good, which progressively conquers evil and consumes it, as Evagrius foresees, was already described by his inspirer, Gregory of Nyssa, in his commentary on 1 Cor 15:28 (*In illud: Tunc et ipse Filius*).

Evagrius calls αἰώνιος the Judgment in the next world, too. In his work *On Thoughts* (Περὶ λογισμῶν), destined to those who have reached impas-

in *Classical and Christian Authors* (2d ed.; Piscataway, N.J.: Gorgias, 2011; Logos Bible Software, 2013), 199–203.

144. See *ibid.*, 47–80.

145. E.g., in *Teacher* 25–26: τῆ ἀπειλῆ τῆς αἰωνίου κολάσεως.

146. E.g., in *On Prayer* (PG 79:1197): punishment ἐν πυρὶ αἰωνίῳ; 99 *Sentences Averting from Things Corruptible*, ascribed to Nilus (PG 79:1240).

147. “In the aeon to come,” ἐν τῷ αἰῶνι τῷ μέλλοντι, *On Proverbs* p. 101,16 Tischendorf; see also *ibid.*, 104,25, 119,15.

148. *On Proverbs* p. 108,9 Tischendorf.

sivity (*apatheia*) through ascetic life (the *praktikē*) and have become “gnostics” by means of the achievement of knowledge, both punishment and the judgment in the next world are called αἰώνιοι. He speaks of κολάσεως δὲ καὶ κρίσεως αἰώνιου, “punishment and judgment in the next aeon.”¹⁴⁹ Evagrius here is referring not to an “eternal judgment” but to a judgment in the other world; indeed, Evagrius, like Origen, as I have mentioned, posited a judgment after each aeon, which determines one’s blessedness or purification in the following aeon. Therefore, what will be established in the judgment in the future world will remain until the aeon after that, or until *apokatastasis*. Evagrius invites readers to consider torments in the next world as follows: “think of what awaits sinners: the shame before God and Christ himself ... and all the places of punishment: the fire in the next world [πῦρ αἰώνιον], the worm that does not die [ἀτελεύτητος].”¹⁵⁰ Evagrius did not consider either the fire or the worm eternal, but he had no problem using αἰώνιον and ἀτελεύτητος. The same is true of Gregory Nazianzen, Gregory of Nyssa, Origen, and other supporters of the doctrine of *apokatastasis*.¹⁵¹ Indeed, a passage by Evagrius containing that kind of expressions shows strong affinities with a passage of Nazianzen;¹⁵² here Evagrius uses phrases that could suggest eternity but in fact refer only to the future aeon and not to *apokatastasis*: “Every sinner will be consumed by the otherworldly fire without being able to die; for he will undergo immortal torments,” καταναλωθήσεται πᾶς ἁμαρτωλὸς ὑπὸ τοῦ αἰώνιου πυρὸς καὶ οὐ δύναται τελευτῆσαι, ἀθάνατα γὰρ βασανισθήσεται.¹⁵³ Like Origen, in fact, Evagrius held that the fire will burn evil in sinners in order to purify them. The Gospel expression πῦρ ἄσβεστον, “inextinguishable fire,” is understood not as eternal but as a fire that is not physical and terrestrial but rather precisely αἰώνιον, otherworldly, belonging to not the sense-perceptible realm but the intelligible things of the other world or the aeon to come. This is also the meaning in which Evagrius, like Nazianzen and other patristic authors, uses ἀθάνατον, “immortal, deathless”: they call this fire πῦρ ἄσβεστον, ἀθάνατον, and αἰώνιον, not to declare it eternal, but to indicate that it is impossible to extinguish it, unlike the fire of this world, and that it pertains to the other world. All this confirms that Evagrius considered

149. PG 79:1213.

150. *Principles of the Monastic Life* (PG 40:1261).

151. Demonstration in Ramelli, *Christian Doctrine of Apokatastasis*.

152. I point out the close parallel and analyze it in *ibid.*, 444.

153. *Exhortation to the Monks* (PG 79:1237).

the future aeon(s) to precede the eventual and eternal *apokatastasis*. Then there will be no evil left, since all will have been purified in fire, and all will be in God, who will finally be “all in all” (1 Cor 15:28).

Evagrius thinks that during the aeons angels help rational creatures to attain salvation—something also maintained by Origen and Gregory Nyssen—by means of instruction, exhortation, and the liberation from passions, evil, and ignorance (*KG* 6.35). This action takes place thanks to the intellects of the heavenly powers, which are “pure and full of knowledge” (*KG* 3.5) and have learned “the intellections that concern Providence, by means of which (intellections) they urge on those who are inferior to them quickly toward virtue and toward the knowledge of God” (*KG* 6.76). The cooperation of angels to the salvation of rational creatures is repeatedly highlighted by Evagrius, who illustrates the different strategies used by them in *KG* 6.86. According to Evagrius, not only do angels cooperate with Providence, recalling rational souls from evilness to virtue and from ignorance to knowledge, but even celestial bodies—which Evagrius, like Origen and most ancient authors, regarded as animated—and whatever creatures are endowed with spiritual knowledge (*KG* 6.88, 90).

According to Evagrius, just as according to Origen and Nyssen, and partially also to Clement—another Christian thinker, close to Middle Platonism, who exerted a significant influence on Evagrius—suffering is part and parcel of the process of improvement and purification that takes place before the eventual *apokatastasis*. This punishment through fire *purifies* the part of the soul that is liable to passions (*KG* 3.18). Suffering decreed by God is purifying; this is the principle—anticipated by Clement of Alexandria—to which Origen and Gregory of Nyssa also stuck. Evagrius, consistently with his notion of purifying fire, interprets Matt 3:12, on the distinction of chaff and wheat, in the same way as Origen did; he understands that what the divine fire will burn like chaff and destroy are not sinners themselves but their sins and evilness. The wheat in the parable symbolizes virtue, the chaff evilness or vice, and the aeon to come a purifying instrument that will attract the chaff to itself, thus cleaning sinners from vice (*KG* 2.26).

Of the succession of aeons prior to *apokatastasis* Evagrius speaks also in *KG* 2.25, where he uses an agricultural metaphor already employed by Paul in 1 Cor 15: “Just as this body is called the seed of the future ear, so will also this aeon be called seed of the one that will come after it.” This metaphor, which also appears in *KG* 1.24, refers to the resurrection, but for Evagrius, just as for Origen and Gregory Nyssen, “resurrection” is not only the resurrection of the body. Indeed, Evagrius distinguishes *three* kinds

of resurrection, each of which is a kind of restoration to the original and perfect state: (1) the resurrection of the body, which is the passage from a corruptible to an incorruptible body; (2) the resurrection of the soul, which is the passage from a passible to an impassible soul; and (3) the resurrection of the spirit or intellect, which is the passage from ignorance to true knowledge.¹⁵⁴

Evagrius refers to the restoration of the intellect also in *KG* 2.15 in terms of its restoration to health, which happens when it receives the contemplation (*theōria*). Evagrius, like Origen and Gregory Nyssen, entertains a *holistic* idea of the resurrection, which will involve, not only the body, but the whole of the human being, including its soul and its intellect. This means that the soul will be freed from passions and will attain impassivity (*ἀπάθεια*), and the intellect will be illuminated and vivified by knowledge, since the life of the intellect is knowledge. The eventual resurrection-restoration is in fact a total vivification of the dead (*KG* 5.20), not only their physical resurrection, but also the spiritual resurrection of those who have died because of sin and ignorance.

7. Christ, the Attainment of Unity, and Creation

The resurrection-restoration is made possible by Christ. This is a characteristic that I have pointed out in the case of the main patristic supporters of the doctrine of *apokatastasis*, in a systematic study of this doctrine from the New Testament to John Eriugena¹⁵⁵—and this proves true of Evagrius as well. If we take away Christ, there is no possibility of restoration, and Evagrius stresses in many passages how crucial a role Christ plays in the process that leads to the final restoration of all rational creatures. Now, the extraordinary import of the work of Christ in restoration—with his inhumanation, teaching, death, and resurrection, and Christ's activity as Logos, Wisdom, Teacher and Physician—depends on the fullness of humanity and divinity in Christ. This is a tenet of Origen's, Nyssen's, and Nazianzen's theology (all of them supporters of the doctrine of *apokatastasis*). If Christ were not fully human but only divine, his inhumanation, death, and resurrection would not touch us and the other rational creatures. On the other hand, if Christ were not entirely divine, his inhumanation

154. *KG* 5.19, 22, 25.

155. Ramelli, *Christian Doctrine of Apokatastasis*. See especially the conclusions, and *passim*.

tion, death, and resurrection would not be salvific and could not affect the restoration of all humanity and all rational creatures. Christ, in Evagrius's view, is together fully God, fully *logikon*, and fully human being.

It is often assumed that Evagrius regarded Christ as not fully divine and had a subordinationistic view of Christ, who, on this interpretation, would not be consubstantial with the Trinity.¹⁵⁶ However, this interpretation is far from being accurate and is mainly based on a faulty reading of KG 6.14, which, if interpreted correctly, yields a completely opposite meaning: “Christ is NOT *homoousios* [consubstantial] with the Trinity; indeed, he is not substantial knowledge as well. *But* Christ is the only one who always and inseparably possesses substantial knowledge in himself. What I claim is that Christ is the one who went together with God the Logos; in spirit, Christ IS the Lord [i.e., God]. He is inseparable from his body and in unity IS *homoousios* [consubstantial] with the Father.” Here the “but” I have highlighted signals that what comes before is not Evagrius's own doctrine but the opinion of an adversary, which Evagrius counters. Evagrius's own idea is introduced by “What I claim is...” For this reason I put the first sentence in quotation marks in my edition. The last sentence, which expresses Evagrius's own position, squarely contradicts the initial one: Christ “IS *homoousios* with the Father” and “IS the Lord” God. This evidently overturns the initial statement by an adversary, that “Christ is NOT *homoousios* with the Trinity.” In addition, the adverb “inseparably,” in reference to Christ, who possesses “inseparably” the substantial knowledge that is God (according to the definition of God as “substantial/essential knowledge” in KG 1.89), is the same as the adverbs that at Chalcedon will describe the inseparability of the two natures of Christ, human and divine (*ἀχωρίστως* and *ἀδιαρέτως*, together with *ἀσυγχύτως* and *ἀτρέπτως*, “unconfusedly and unchangeably”). It is not accidental that the adjective “inseparable” is used here by Evagrius exactly to describe the union of the divine and human natures in Christ. Christ is both fully God and fully human; the fact that he is a rational creature, and in particular a human being, does not mean that he is not divine or that he is God only incompletely.

156. E.g., Antoine Guillaumont, *Un philosophe au désert: Évagre le Pontique* (Paris: Vrin, 2004), 375; Claudio Moreschini, *I Padri Cappadoci: Storia, letteratura, teologia* (Rome: Città Nuova, 2008), 307, who ascribes to Evagrius “un subordinazionismo alla maniera origeniana” (“an Origen-like subordinationism”), while neither Origen nor Evagrius were subordinationists; and Konstantinovsky, *Evagrius*, 144.

Thus, the present *kephalaion* does not prove that—as is often repeated¹⁵⁷—Evagrius considered Christ to be not consubstantial with the other persons of the Trinity, but it rather demonstrates that Evagrius countered such a view and regarded Christ, in his divine nature, as God and as consubstantial with the Father. This was already Origen’s and Gregory Nyssen’s view, accepted by Eusebius as well, who may even have conveyed Origen’s teaching on the *homoousia* of the Father and the Son (i.e., Christ in his divine nature) to Nicea through Constantine,¹⁵⁸ while Nyssen introduced Origen’s teaching on “one essence, three individual substances” to Constantinople.¹⁵⁹

Evagrius is perfectly consistent with this line when in his *Letter on Faith* 3 he declares that the Father and the Son have the same essence or substance (*ousia*). Now, Christ in his divine nature is the Son, while in his human nature he is a human being. This is why Evagrius states that Christ has God the Logos in himself (ibid. 4). This clearly points to the divine nature of Christ. In the very first of his *Reflections* (*Skemmata*), likewise, Evagrius states that Christ qua Christ—that is, qua compound of human and divine nature—possesses the essential knowledge, that is, possesses God, his own divine nature. Consistently with this, even in his biography in Palladius Evagrius is represented as supporting, against “heretics” such as “Arians” and Eunomians, the full divinity of Christ-Logos, the Son of God, who also assumed a human body, soul, and intellect. That Christ in his divine nature is the Son is manifest in *KG* 3.1: “The Father, and only he, knows Christ, and the Son, and only he, the Father,” where Christ and the Son meaningfully occupy the same position in the equation.

Christ, who is God in his divine nature, is Life, the Logos of God, and the Wisdom of God. And the *telos*, or ultimate end, of all rational creatures is the divinity, who created them for itself, as Evagrius observes in *KG* 4.1. He also adds there that Christ, the Wisdom of God, grows in the rational creatures of God. Precisely in order to allow all rational creatures to return to God, for whom they were created, as Evagrius explains in *KG* 4.26, Christ assumed humanity, died, and was resurrected, calling all to life in the world to come. This is why he is named the Savior. In *KG* 1.90 Evagrius presents the resurrection of Christ as containing also the resurrection and restoration of all rational creatures, who are now dead because

157. E.g., Konstantinovsky, *Evagrius*, 144–45.

158. Argument in Ramelli, “Origen’s Anti-Subordinationism.”

159. Demonstration in Ramelli, “Origen, Greek Philosophy.”

they are unrighteous: in them the justice of God is dead, as Evagrius puts it. But they will be resurrected, will receive a spiritual body, and will be made righteous. Evagrius is following here in the footsteps of Origen, who read the resurrection of Christ as including (in anticipation) the resurrection and restoration of all rational creatures, who are “the body of Christ.”¹⁶⁰

Christ is the one who “makes” justice, both because he is the judge in the judgments that follow each aeon and in the last Judgment and because he is the agent of the justification of rational creatures by means of his sacrifice and of his eschatological reign of instruction and purification (I have already pointed out how Evagrius thought that during the reign of Christ those who are not yet righteous will be set right). Christ’s justice is evident in the partial judgments that take place after each aeon, and in which each rational creature is assigned a given body and place in the world according to its spiritual progress, but Christ’s mercy is evident from the fact that he extends divine providence to all, including those who would not deserve it (KG 2.59). As I have mentioned, indeed, the *logoi* of judgment for Evagrius are always followed by the *logoi* of Providence. In KG 1.72 Evagrius emphasizes again Christ’s mercy, which is made clear by the fact that Christ orients even fools away from evilness and toward virtue. Spiritual knowledge itself and contemplation are a gift of divine mercy; Evagrius identifies knowledge with life, since human life was intended for knowledge (KG 1.73).

In KG 3.57, consistently, Christ’s role in the process of restoration is presented as that of a teacher of wisdom to rational creatures. It is remarkable that in his task Christ, according to Evagrius, uses mortal bodies: as I have anticipated while treating the *Letter to Melania*, and as I will show further below, bodies, far from being evil, are a valuable instrument in the process of the instruction of intellects that will lead to *apokatastasis*. Christ providentially leads all *logika* through the aeons in their process of purification and perfecting whose *telos* is *apokatastasis*, characterized by perfect unity, both for Evagrius and for Origen. Indeed, the *logoi* of Providence, as Evagrius explains, have to do with “how Christ leads the rational nature through various aeons, toward union in the holy Unity” (KG 4.89).

Christ plays a pivotal role also in the purification of rational creatures in the world to come, with a view to their restoration; this is adumbrated

160. See Ilaria L. E. Ramelli, “Cristo-Logos in Origene: Ascendenze filoniane, passaggi in Bardesane e Clemente, e negazione del subordinazionismo,” in *Dal Logos dei Greci e dei Romani al Logos di Dio: Ricordando Marta Sordi* (ed. Alfredo Valvo and Roberto Radice; Milan: Vita e Pensiero, 2011), 295–317.

by the words “the houses of the impious will receive purification” (*KG* 3.9). Only thanks to Christ’s work can Evagrius speak of both paradise and hell as overcome in the eventual *apokatastasis*, in the *telos*, which will be participation in the life of the Trinity, “the restoration/completion [*apokatastasis*] of the orbit of all” (*KG* 3.60). As I will argue extensively in the commentary on this *kephalaion*, what escaped Guillaumont and the other commentators is that Evagrius here is playing on the astronomical meaning of ἀποκατάστασις as a return of all stars to their original position after the end of a cosmic cycle, a meaning that Evagrius symbolically applies to the eventual restoration of all rational creatures, both those who are in heaven and those who are in hell. All will experience deification (a leap into the life of the Trinity). Reaching the final unity and delighting in contemplation together with Christ will correspond to participating in divine life, or θέωσις (*KG* 4.8).

The ultimate end is described as the knowledge of Unity in *KG* 3.72 and 4.18. Evagrius, like Origen and Gregory Nyssen, within the framework of Platonism, posits the absolute metaphysical and gnoseological preeminence of the Unity,¹⁶¹ which characterizes both the beginning and the end. This preeminence is evident, for instance, in *KG* 1.19, where the divinity itself is described as “the One,” and the one “who only is.” In *KG* 3.1–2 and 3.11 Evagrius describes the Father as “unique in Unity,” and the Son as “Monad” and “Unity/Henad.” Christ is the only one who has the Unity/Henad in himself, in his divine nature; the incorporeal nature both shows the Wisdom of the Unity (this Wisdom being Christ) and is susceptible of the Unity (to the highest degree in the final deification). Similarly, in *KG* 4.21 Christ only is said to sit to his Father’s right, which indicates “the Monad and the Unity/Henad.” It seems clear to me that Evagrius was once again inspired by Origen and his fundamental metaphysical principle, that God is Monad and Henad (spelled out in *On First Principles* 1.1.6; see more in the commentary below). Evagrius himself in his *Letter on Faith* explains that “the Monad and Henad/Unity indicates the simple and incomprehensible substance” of God (2.41–42).

161. *KG* 3.33. Cf. Gabriel Bunge, “Hénade ou Monade? Au sujet de deux notions centrales de la terminologie évagrienne,” *Mus* 102 (1989): 69–91; idem, “*Mysterium Unitatis*: Der Gedanke der Einheit von Schöpfer und Geschöpf in der evagrianischen Mystik,” *FZPhTh* 36 (1989): 449–69; idem, “Encore une fois: Hénade ou Monade?” *Adamantius* 15 (2009): 9–42; Ramelli, “Harmony between *Arkhe* and *Telos*.”

Perfect unity will be the outcome of *apokatastasis*. Then, distinctions of merits, which pertain to the stage of judgments in aeons, will be overcome, since all rational creatures will have abandoned passions and evilness by then. Only at that point will the consummate unity of all rational creatures be possible, when all will participate in divine life: “in the Unity there will be no leaders, nor (others) submitted to leaders, but all of them will be gods” (*KG* 4.51); “There will be only bare/naked [or “pure”] intellects who continually satiate themselves from its impossibility to satiate” (*KG* 1.65). The eventual Unity, as is clear from this passage, will be deification: all rational creatures will be gods. They will be pure intellects longing for God and never entirely satiated in their longing, because of the infinity of God. This reflects Origen’s notion of an absence of satiety, or *κόρος*, from the final *apokatastasis* (thanks to the presence of perfect love after its manifestation in Christ—what was lacking in the beginning, when rational creatures fell) and Nyssen’s epestatic progress, which is also based on that concept of absence of satiety, with an emphasis on the infinity of God.

The unity that will reign in the end also reigned in the beginning, with the difference that the initial unity was unstable, and many *logika* fell from it, while the final unity will be stable and eternal. Indeed, eschatology is closely connected with protology in Evagrius’s thought, just as it is the case with Origen’s and Nyssen’s thought. This is clear, as I have already showed, in his *Letter to Melania*, but it is clear also in his *KG*, as will become evident. From the *KG* it emerges that God’s first creation was the creation of “primary beings”—that is, intelligent creatures—who originally dwelled in a unity of concord that is now lost and will be recovered only in the end, at the restoration of all. That unity, which is also described as essential knowledge (identical with the definition of God the Trinity), was broken because of a differentiation of the intellects’ acts of will, as a consequence of which the intellects became souls. I have already discussed above *KG* 3.28, as a parallel to the protology of the *Letter to Melania*, and I have already highlighted that Evagrius, when speaking of sin and vice as “carelessness,” is adopting a typically Origenian turn. After the fall of many intellects and their total or partial transformation into souls, God equipped these souls with heavy and mortal bodies subject to passions (in the case of human beings) or dark, immortal bodies subject to passions (in the case of demons). This was the second creation, that of “secondary realities,” which resulted from the “first judgment.” This judgment, operated by Christ, was the first of a series of judgments, each of which will follow an aeon. In the first judgment, Christ divided rational creatures into angels, humans, and

demons, in accord with the gravity of their falls, and transformed their bodies accordingly as well.

8. The Positive Role of Matter and a Crucial but Overlooked Distinction: Different Kinds of Bodies

This second creation, for Evagrius just as for Origen,¹⁶² is neither evil nor a punishment. So, in *KG* 3.53 Evagrius states that “none of the mortal bodies should be declared to be evil.” Evil depends on wrong moral choices: it does not lie in the product of any divine act of creation. The secondary creation is rather a providential strategy excogitated by God in order to help the development and restoration of souls to intellects. In the secondary creation there are bodies of different kinds. In this connection it is very important to note a regularly overlooked¹⁶³ terminological distinction in the Syriac version of the *KG*, which heavily bears on the exact interpretation of Evagrius’s notion of corporeality. There are two different words for “body,” one referring to heavy, thick, fleshly, and mortal bodies (*pgr*, which in Syriac also means “corpse”), and the other also including finer, incorruptible, and immortal bodies (*gws̄m*). Unlike earlier translators, who translated both words as “body,” or in French, “corps,” in my translation of the *KG* and in my commentary I will methodically take into consideration the important distinction between the two different terms. This has a remarkable impact on the interpretation of Evagrius’s thought. I doubt that the Greek corresponding distinction was between *σῶμα* and *σάρξ*, since the Syriac translates *σάρξ* with a third term; so this remains possible but not so probable. It may be more probable that Evagrius, like Origen and the Neoplatonists,¹⁶⁴ added adjectives to *σῶμα* to specify which kind of body he was speaking of.

Many more hints can be found that indicate that Evagrius, like Origen, Gregory Nyssen, and most Neoplatonists, had in mind different kinds of

162. For Origen, see Ilaria L. E. Ramelli, “Preexistence of Souls? The ἀρχή and τέλος of Rational Creatures in Origen and Some Origenians,” *StPatr* 56 (2013): 167–226.

163. Even in such insightful papers as Julia Konstantinovskiy, “Soul and Body in Early Christian Thought: A Unified Duality?” *StPatr* 44 (2010): 349–55.

164. See Ilaria L. E. Ramelli, “Iamblichus, *De anima* 38 (66,12–15 Finamore/Dillon): A Resolving Conjecture?,” *Rheinisches Museum für Philologie* 157 (2014): 106–8.

bodies. For example, in his *Letter to Melania* 38–39, as we have seen, he speaks of “this sense-perceptible body,” assembled by God’s Wisdom out of the four elements and subject to God’s providence. This suggests that there is another kind of bodies that are not sense perceptible. This is perfectly in line with Origen’s views and is confirmed by the Greek text of *Praktikos* 49: the intellect “is naturally constituted for prayer even without *this body*,” which points to *another* body, different from the mortal. Likewise, when in *KG* 5.19 Evagrius describes the resurrection of the body as a passage from a bad to a good quality—that is, from corruptible and mortal to incorruptible and immortal—this obviously indicates that at least the bodies of the resurrection will be immortal and incorruptible and different from the mortal bodies. What is more, since the resurrection is for Evagrius a restoration to the original state (so that the resurrection of the soul is its restoration from passible to impassible, and that of the intellect is its restoration from ignorance to true knowledge, *KG* 5.22, 25), the restoration of the body to the “better quality” suggests the original existence of an incorruptible body. Also, in *KG* 3.36 Evagrius clearly speaks of “the *various* and *different* bodies of rational creatures,” which entails the existence of other bodies than mortal, heavy, and fleshly bodies. There are many other examples in Evagrius’s works, including reflections on the bodies of angels and those of demons. I will analyze them in the commentary.

According to Evagrius in his *Letter to Melania*, as I have pointed out earlier, the secondary creation—that is, bodies—is providential and came into being for the sake of those who are far from God. Evagrius also states that the intelligible creation at a certain point was joined to the sense-perceptible creation “for reasons that it is impossible to explain here” (*Letter to Melania* 13). This seems to refer to the union of souls with mortal bodies. Sense-perceptible creation belongs to the “secondary creation,” as it is often called in the *KG*, and makes the object of natural contemplation. It is helpful in that, while with some advanced intellects the Spirit and the Son communicate directly, with others they must do so by means of this secondary creation. The latter is not evil, as Origen too clarified in his anti-“Gnostic” and anti-Marcionite polemic. It is neither evil nor a punishment (*KG* 3.53), but it is God’s providential strategy for the restoration of souls to intellects.¹⁶⁵ The secondary creation is in fact providential, qua mediation,

165. This has been rightly stressed by Konstantinovskiy, *Evagrius*, 27–46, who emphasizes that, according to Evagrius, the body and sense perception are part of the ascent to perfection.

for those who are far from God due to “their evil deeds.” This mediation was created by God’s Wisdom and Power, the Son and the Spirit, who are absolutely incorporeal, as all the Trinity is (a tenet of Origen’s metaphysics as well).¹⁶⁶ But the most advanced rational creatures do without the mediation of the secondary creation.

Indeed, when God’s first creation of “primary beings”—rational creatures, or *logika*, who originally dwelled in a unity of concord—experienced a dispersion of the intellects’ acts of will, the intellects descended to the rank of souls. Heavy, mortal bodies were thus provided by God for these. This was the creation of “secondary beings,” which came after the “first judgment,” operated by Christ, who divided rational creatures into angels, humans, and demons according to the gravity of their falls. Christ himself even assumed a heavy, mortal body, and after his resurrection he had a body that revealed how human risen bodies will be (*KG* 4.41). The fact that mortal bodies will vanish at the end of all aeons (*KG* 2.17) does not imply that mortal bodies are not good: they serve their purpose during the aeons. Only, they will have to disappear when all inherit immortality, not because they are evil, but because they are mortal (*KG* 1.58). If the human mortal body is a part of this world, and if “the form of this world will pass,” then the form of the mortal body will also pass (*KG* 1.26), simply because it is tied to the present state of things, and not because it is evil. Since Evagrius regards mortal bodies as a positive means for intellects to return to God, as Origen also did, in *KG* 4.60 he warns that those who hate the mortal body hate the Creator as well.¹⁶⁷

In the eventual *apokatastasis* mortal bodies (“thick bodies”) will vanish, when evil will disappear as well, and all secondary beings, to which bodies belong, will cease to exist as such when ignorance will be removed (*KG* 3.68; see the commentary below). The first bodies to disappear will be mortal bodies, which will vanish at the resurrection when they are turned into immortal. At that point evil will also disappear, and no one will sin anymore. Then all bodies will cease to exist as secondary beings, when the body will be elevated to the rank of soul, and the soul to the rank of intellect. In this way, only primary beings (intellects) will remain, because bodies and souls will have been subsumed into intellects. And they will enjoy knowledge; for at that stage ignorance will be definitely removed. But

166. E.g., Evagrius, *On Thoughts* (Περὶ λογισμῶν) 41.48–49; *Letter* 39.134–135 Géhin; scholium 1 on Ps 140:2.

167. *KG* 4.62 also blames those who “disparage our body.”

while ignorance is closely associated to evil by Evagrius, as I have pointed out beforehand, bodies, and even thick bodies, are not in the least related to evil. Thick bodies will cease to exist when evil too will, but they are neither evil themselves nor the cause of evil. The destruction of evil and ignorance, which will be contemporary with the disappearance of mortal bodies and all secondary beings respectively, is declared by Evagrius, once again, to be a work of Christ, who in Origen, Nyssen, and Evagrius himself is the main agent of *apokatastasis*, as I have already pointed out. In particular, Evagrius maintains that Christ, in his capacity as high priest, intercedes for all rational beings and leads them all to salvation by purifying them from evilness and ignorance (KG 5.46). The intercession of Christ as a high priest with a view to universal restoration was greatly emphasized by Origen, who much insisted on the universal and eternal validity of Christ's high-priestly sacrifice.¹⁶⁸

Kephalaion 3.68, referred to above, mentions two rests of God as the times when the destruction of evil and ignorance respectively will take place. This is related in turn to the "eighth day," the great Sunday. Like Origen, Didymus, Gregory of Nyssa, and Maximus the Confessor, Evagrius identifies the eighth day with the ultimate end and *apokatastasis*. It will be preceded by the Sabbath of rest. In KG 4.44 Evagrius identifies the Sabbath as the rest of the rational soul, in which it is naturally made not to trespass the boundaries of its nature. But the rational soul will indeed trespass the boundaries of its creaturely nature—by grace—on the Sunday of the eventual deification (θέωσις). The seventh day will see the healing and corrective reign of Christ on all rational creatures, and on the eighth day, the glorious Sunday, all will return to Unity.¹⁶⁹ Bodies and souls will be subsumed into intellects; what is inferior will be subsumed into what is superior—an eschatological principle that was later developed especially by John the Scot Eriugena.¹⁷⁰

Once the body has been elevated to the rank of the soul, then the whole of the soul will return to the rank of intellect: the intellect in its power will pervade the soul, when the whole of it will be mingled with the light of the

168. See Ilaria L. E. Ramelli, "The Universal and Eternal Validity of Jesus's High-Priestly Sacrifice: The Epistle to the Hebrews in Support of Origen's Theory of Apokatastasis," in *A Cloud of Witnesses: The Theology of Hebrews in Its Ancient Contexts* (ed. Richard J. Bauckham et al.; London: T&T Clark, 2008), 210–21.

169. Cf. KG 4.26; 5.8.

170. See Ramelli, *Christian Doctrine of Apokatastasis*, the section devoted to him.

Trinity (KG 2.29). This will happen at the eventual restoration and deification. When the intellects receive contemplation, then the whole nature of the bodies will be eliminated, not because they will be destroyed, but because they will be transformed into souls and souls into intellects, so that the contemplation, or *θεωρία*, concerning them will become immaterial, since bodies themselves will have become immaterial (KG 2.62). In KG 3.66 Evagrius observes that the first trumpet at the beginning revealed the coming into being of bodies, and likewise the last trumpet at the end of history will reveal the vanishing of bodies, in that these will be subsumed into souls, and souls into intellects, the superior parts or faculties of souls.

Therefore, any plurality, number, and name will disappear along with all aeons (KG 1.7–8) and all bodies, which were useful for life in the aeons. After all aeons have passed away, only the absolute eternity, or *αἰδιότης*, of life in God will remain (KG 2.17). Quantity, plurality, and number are attached to secondary beings, what Nyssen would call diastematic or measurable realities that are stretched out in intervals or extensions of space or time.¹⁷¹ “One” is a number of quantity; quantity is linked with mortal corporeal nature; therefore, number is proper to secondary natural contemplation (KG 4.19). This contemplation pertains to secondary beings, those of the second creation, but this creation, as I have already illustrated, will be subsumed into the first. As a consequence, quantity and number will disappear along with the subsumption of secondary realities into primary realities. This description parallels that of the cessation of plurality and names, and even of all divine *epinoiai*, described by Evagrius in his *Letter to Melania*, which I have analyzed earlier. Plurality must cease in the ultimate end, which will be in fact characterized by unity. This does not mean that confusion will arise at that point. Evagrius himself in his *Letter to Melania* is clear that the persons of the Trinity will not be confused, nor will any distinction between the Creator and the creatures disappear. Rather, the unity of which Evagrius speaks will be a unity of concord, as it was also conceived by Origen.

Like Origen, but also like all Platonists, and like most educated people in the imperial age, Evagrius maintains a dualism between the intelligible and the sense-perceptible worlds.¹⁷² However, like Origen and against “Gnostic” and Manichaean perspectives, he is far from seeing matter and

171. On which, see Ramelli, *Gregorio di Nissa: Sull'anima*; and Hans Boersma, *Embodiment and Virtue in Gregory of Nyssa* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

172. E.g., KG 1.33; 2.35; 4.12; 5.2; 6.2–3, 38–40.

the sense-perceptible realm as evil. Rather, as I have showed, he considers it to be providential, as an instrument of instruction, elevation, and salvation. In *KG* 6.17 too, Evagrius distinguishes the incorporeal nature from the corporeal one, and according to the Syriac translation and its aforementioned terminology of bodies, this distinction seems to be absolute: there are beings that are corporeal—that is, endowed with any kind of body, thicker or finer, mortal or immortal—and there are realities that are absolutely incorporeal—that is, without any kind of body, either fine or thick. God the Trinity, according to both Evagrius and Origen, is absolutely incorporeal. In *KG* 6.20 God is said to have created first the first creation, that of incorporeal realities, including rational creatures, of whom God is the Father, and then the second, that of bodies, which came after the “movement” of rational creatures—that is, after they began to direct their wills in different directions—instead of orienting them only toward the Good, that is, God. The *epinoiai* of God also changed: before the movement, God was good, powerful, wise, and omnipotent; after the movement, God has become Judge, Ruler, Physician, Shepherd, Doctor, merciful and patient, and moreover, Door, Way, Lamb, High Priest, and the like. God’s *epinoia* of physician of souls is particularly emphasized by Evagrius,¹⁷³ just as by Origen, due to its role in the process of *apokatas-tasis*. In *On Thoughts* 10 Evagrius notes that the divine Physician applies even drastic remedies, if necessary, for the salvation of the soul, something that was already stressed by Origen. He insisted that Christ, the divine Logos, is such a powerful Physician that there is no spiritual illness that he cannot heal (*Against Celsus* 8.72). As I have remarked earlier on the basis of the *Letter to Melania*, divine *epinoiai*,¹⁷⁴ just as the corporeal creation, for Evagrius are useful for the sake of the salvific economy but will not need to subsist in the end. Similarly, neither will the secondary creation need to subsist in the end.

The first creation, that of incorporeal realities, including rational creatures, is kept distinct from the second also in *KG* 4.58: God (presumably the Father), while creating rational creatures, was in nobody and nothing, whereas while creating the corporeal nature and the aeons he was in his Christ, the creative Logos. Thus, when Christ created the aeons and

173. E.g., in *Letter* 42; 51; 52; 55; 57; 63; *On Thoughts* 3. See Konstantinovskiy, *Evagrius*, 112–13.

174. Note again that Evagrius, exactly like Nyssen, regards these *epinoiai* as belonging to God the Trinity and not only to Christ.

the bodies, he had God in himself, so that, on account of Christ's divine nature, we cannot speak of an inferior creative agent, different from God, for bodies. In *KG* 3.19 the ontological distinction between incorporeal and corporeal realities brings about a parallel gnoseological distinction between the primary and the secondary contemplation, the former immaterial, the latter being in matter. The same distinction between two kinds of knowledge and two kinds of creation is kept in *KG* 3.24 and 3.26: the knowledge of the primary nature is the spiritual contemplation that the Creator used in creating the intellects (the primary creation), which alone are susceptible of the divine nature. And the knowledge concerning the secondary nature is a spiritual contemplation that Christ used in creating the nature of bodies and aeons. The succession of aeons, just as bodies, belongs to the second creation and will vanish in the absolute eternity of *apokatastasis* (which is not αἰώνιος or belonging to any aeon, but ἄιδιος). God's science or knowledge produced primary beings, that is, intellectual realities; secondary beings, bodies, only came after the aforementioned "movement" of rational creatures' free wills (*KG* 1.50). Moses's account of creation in Genesis, according to Evagrius, refers to secondary creation, which took place after the first judgment of fallen rational creatures, whereas there exists no account of God's primary creation, which came to existence before the judgment (*KG* 2.64).

The secondary creation, like all that which was not from the beginning, will disappear in the end, at the universal restoration, not because it will be utterly destroyed, as evil and ignorance will, but because it will be subsumed into what is superior and best; I have already expounded the elevation of bodies to the level of souls and of souls to the level of intellects. *Apokatastasis* thus appears to be the restoration of creatures to the best, that is, the perfection of the intellect, which consists in immaterial knowledge. Now immaterial knowledge is only the Trinity; therefore the intellect will become a seer of the Trinity (*KG* 3.15). The contemplation of the Trinity produces in turn the deification of the creatural intellect, and deification will be the culmination of *apokatastasis*.

Evagrius, just as Origen and especially Gregory of Nyssa, regarded the final *apokatastasis* as the restoration of the divine image in the human being, which was created by God in the beginning but became blurred because of sin. The authentic image of God in the human being is not in the body nor in the inferior faculties of the soul subject to passions—as Philo, Origen, and Gregory Nyssen all agreed (since God is both incorporeal and free from passions)—but in the intellect, the only human faculty that is susceptible of the knowledge of God. *Kephalaion* 6.73 makes it clear that the image of God

is the intellect, due to its receptivity of God through knowledge, which is also tantamount to its incorporeality. In this *kephalaion* Evagrius interestingly uses the same “zetetic” method as Origen deployed: first Evagrius presents an explanation for the intellect’s characterization as “image of God”—that is, because the intellect is susceptible of God through knowledge; then he presents another explanation, which apparently excludes the former—that is, because the intellect is incorporeal—but finally he shows that both in fact are compatible and even are the same thing. This dialectic structure is similar to that which I have already postulated for *KG* 6.14.

A further clarification comes from *KG* 3.32, where Evagrius explains that the image of God is not what is susceptible of God’s Wisdom, since in this way the mortal corporeal nature too would be the image of God. The image of God is rather what is susceptible of the Unity. The mortal corporeal nature can come to know the Wisdom of God as expressed in creation, but only the intellect can know God the Unity/Henad; hence, only in the intellect is the image of God. Thus, in *The Gnostic (Gnostikos)* 50 Evagrius urges his reader to endeavor to depict the images (*εἰκόνας*) by looking at the Archetype, God, without omitting any of the factors that contribute to the reconstitution of the fallen image. This reconstitution is the restoration, or *apokatastasis*, when the image of God will be restored to its original splendor in each intellect. In *Sentence* 58 Evagrius, deeply reminiscent of Origen and in full accord with Nyssen as well, identifies the essence, the true identity of the human being, or better of each rational creature, with what it was at the beginning (the *ἀρχή*), in God’s own plan, before its fall: “If you want to know yourself, who you are, consider not who you have been but *who you were at the beginning*.” What rational creatures were in the *ἀρχή*, before their fall, will be restored in the end, in the eventual *apokatastasis*, when their soul has become entirely pure from passions. Their souls will then become intellects, and intellects will become fully pure in turn and will be immersed in divine life and knowledge.

9. *Apatheia*, *Pathē*, and Charity-Love, Which Is No *Pathos*

The *praktikē*, basically asceticism, aims at virtue and the eradication of passions (*apatheia*), and not simply at their moderation (*metriopatheia*). Evagrius shares the ideal of *apatheia*¹⁷⁵ with Clement of Alex-

175. See Jeremy Driscoll, “*Apatheia* and Purity of Heart in Evagrius,” in *Purity*

andria, Origen, Gregory Nyssen, and most Neoplatonists, as well as with the ancient Stoics. He insists on this point, because it is closely related to knowledge and intellectual activity in his view. I have already demonstrated how for Evagrius virtue and knowledge are closely interrelated and interdependent. *Apatheia* and knowledge are as well, given that for Evagrius virtue is essentially absence of passions. The close connection between *apatheia* and knowledge is clear, for instance, in *Praktikos*: “We will say that the absence of passions is the health of the soul, and that its nourishment is knowledge” (56); “Impassivity is possessed by the soul that not only does not suffer for the things that happen but remains imperturbable even at their memory” (67). *Apatheia* is the perfection of the soul that is liable to passions, while knowledge is the perfection of the intellect (*KG* 6.55). The relation between *apatheia* and knowledge is made clear especially by Evagrius’s somewhat empirical reflection in *KG* 4.70 that freedom from passions allows for contemplation, for the intellectual activity.

Indeed, the intellect approaches the intelligible realities when it does not unite itself any longer to tempting thoughts (*logismoi*) that come from the part of the soul that is subject to passions (*KG* 1.81). Evagrius even declares that the intellect possesses a creative power when it is free from passions; in this way, intellectual knowledge becomes completely independent of sense perception: “The intellect that has been stripped of its passionable thought and sees the intellections of beings does not truly receive anymore the representations that (are formed) by means of sense perceptions, but it is as though another world were created by its knowledge, and it has attracted its thought to itself and rejected the sense-perceptible world far from itself” (*KG* 5.12). A similar idea will return in John the Scot Eriugena.¹⁷⁶ And I have already pointed out this conception in Evagrius’s *Letter to Melania* as well. That virtues and *apatheia*—the domain of the *praktikē*—are the prerequisite of knowledge is pithily confirmed by Evagrius in *Scho-*

of Heart in Early Ascetic and Monastic Literature (ed. Harriet A. Luckman and Linda Kulzer; Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1999), 141–59; Somos, “Origen, Evagrius Ponticus and the Ideal of Impassibility”; Corrigan, *Evagrius and Gregory*, ch. 4; Tobon, “Health of the Soul”; Suzuki, “Evagrian Concept of *Apatheia*”; Tobon, *Apatheia in the Teachings of Evagrius*.

176. See Ilaria L. E. Ramelli, “Eriugena’s Commentary on Martianus in the Framework of His Thought and the Philosophical Debate of His Time,” in *Carolinian Scholarship and Martianus Capella* (ed. Sinead O’Sullivan and Mariken Teeuwen; Cultural Encounters in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages 12; Turnhout: Brepols, 2012), 245–72.

lia on Proverbs 258: the soul, in the sense of the soul subject to passions, is “the mother of the intellect” because “by means of virtues it brings the intellect to light.” Of course this is just from the point of view of the present life, since from the protological and ontological point of view the intellect was before the soul, and from the eschatological point of view the soul will be elevated to the rank of intellect.

To Evagrius’s mind, just as to Gregory Nyssen’s,¹⁷⁷ the ideal of *apatheia* is closely related to the conception of passions as adventitious in rational creatures, secondary, and against nature. Evagrius argues that, since all the faculties that human beings have in common with animals belong to the corporeal nature, then clearly the irascible and the concupiscible/appetitive faculties (in Plato’s terminology) were not created together with the rational nature before the movement of will that determined the fall (*KG* 6.85). That is to say, they are adventitious; they do not belong to the authentic human nature, which is the prelapsarian nature of rational creatures, or *logika*. Evagrius in *KG* 6.83 squarely declares the irascible and the concupiscible/appetitive parts of the soul to be “against nature.” Their major fault is that they produce tempting thoughts, or *logismoi*, that prevent the intellect from knowing God. Intellects were created by God in order that they might know God; this is their nature. The faculties of the inferior soul that obstacle this knowledge are therefore against nature. This is why, since passions were not at the beginning—being not included in God’s plan for rational creatures—they will not endure in the end. However, in *KG* 3.59 Evagrius warns that what is really against nature are not the inferior faculties of the soul per se but their bad use, that is, again, their use against nature, since it is from this that evilness or vice (*κακία*) derives: “If all evilness is generated by the intelligence, by *thymos* [the irascible faculty], and by *epithymia* [the appetitive one], and of these faculties it is possible to make use in a good and in an evil way, then it is clear that it is by the use of these parts against nature that evils occur to us. And if this is so, there is nothing that has been created by God and is evil.” It is clear that Evagrius’s main concern in this declaration is theodicy, the same that constantly guided Origen in his own theology. God is not responsible for evil (*θεὸς ἀναίτιος*: this was already Plato’s principle, which later Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Gregory Nyssen, and others repeated many times).¹⁷⁸

177. See Ramelli, *Gregorio di Nissa: Sull'anima*.

178. See the commentary below.

If passions are against nature, being the result of a use of the soul's faculties against nature, and must therefore be eradicated, what about love (*ἀγάπη*, charity-love)?¹⁷⁹ Will it have to disappear as well? But I have already pointed out the vital role that love plays in the final restoration in Evagrius's, Origen's, and Nyssen's perspective. They are all adamant that love will never fade away; indeed, it will endure eternally, as Paul already taught. Origen even adduced Paul's argument that "love [*ἀγάπη*, *caritas*] never falls." This assumption is compatible with the disappearance of all passions in the end simply because Evagrius, like Origen and Nyssen, thinks that *ἀγάπη* is not a passion (*πάθος*). Charity-love is indeed so far from being a passion that it derives from impassivity, as is clear from *Praktikos* 81: "*ἀγάπη* is the product of impassivity." Since in turn impassivity is the goal of asceticism, or *praktikē*, charity-love can be seen as the result of asceticism: "The end of asceticism [*πρακτικὴ*] is charity-love; that of knowledge is the doctrine concerning God, and the principles of both are faith and natural contemplation" (*Praktikos* 84). Not only does love come from asceticism and impassivity, but, reciprocally, charity-love is also said to overcome the passions of the soul in *Praktikos* 35: "bodily passions are overcome by continence; those of the soul are overcome by spiritual love [*ἀγάπη πνευματικὴ*]." The interdependence between love and impassivity is made clear in a passage I have already quoted above, *Eulogius* 22: "Charity-love is the bond of impassivity and the expunging of passions.... Love possesses nothing of its own apart from God, for God is Love itself."

Precisely because charity-love is no *pathos* but is rather the progeny and the source of *apatheia* at the same time, and because the Godhead itself is charity-love, this is why love will abide in the end, in the perfect state, and will endure forever. Thus, in *KG* 4.50 Evagrius remarks, "There is one good kind of love, which is forever: that which true knowledge chooses, and it is said to be inseparable from the intellect." Love is inseparable from knowledge and from the intellect; since in the end only intellects will remain (because bodies will be lifted up to the rank of souls, and souls will be elevated to the rank of intellects), it is clear that, if love is inseparable from the intellect, love will exist forever. Indeed, love "is the excellent state of the rational soul, a state in which the soul cannot love anything that is among corruptible beings more than the knowledge of God" (*KG* 1.86). If love is

179. See Ilaria L. E. Ramelli, "Love," in *Encyclopedia of Ancient Christianity* (ed. Angelo Di Berardino; Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2014), 2:611–26.

the perfect state of the rational soul, then it is clear that, when all rational creatures have reached perfection, love will always remain. Love, which is related to knowledge, leads to wisdom: whoever has to *learn* the wisdom of the beings needs spiritual *love* (KG 3.58). Love, the offspring of *apatheia*, leads straight to knowledge, and with knowledge belongs in the very *telos* of rational creatures.

A strong form of love, which Evagrius, like Origen, Gregory of Nyssa, and later Pseudo-Dionysius, calls desire¹⁸⁰ is even posited by him as the main factor in the continual growth of the intellect in knowledge and in the approximation to God (close to Nyssen's epestatic, infinite movement of progress and development of rational creatures): "the intellect, when it comes close to the intellections of beings, [will] be filled with desire of the spirit and not abandon admiration" (KG 5.29). Love, which is the propulsor of this spiritual development, is the only movement that will remain in the end, in the infinite *epektasis*. The love of intellectual creatures will always strive for the Love that God is.

10. Judgment and Providence, Justice and Mercy

I have analyzed beforehand KG 1.27, where I have proposed to read the five contemplations enumerated by Evagrius in chronological order: first the contemplation of God, then the contemplation of incorporeal realities, then that of bodies, then the contemplation of the Judgment, and finally that of divine providence. God existed before anything else; then God created the incorporeal realities (the primary creation), then bodies and aeons (the secondary creation). After each aeon there is a judgment, and after the last aeon there will come the last Judgment. But judgments are accompanied by divine providence, and after the last Judgment, the eventual *apokatastasis* will be the manifestation of divine providence. Judgments and Providence do not contradict one another but reflect, respectively, God's justice and God's mercy. Both are attributes of God; divine justice is made manifest in the judgments after each aeon, when each rational creature will be allotted what it has deserved in the previous aeon, and divine mercy is manifested by the omnipresent action of Providence during all the aeons, even in purifying punishments (in that they are

180. See Ramelli, *Christian Doctrine of Apokatastasis*, the section on Pseudo-Dionysius.

purifying and not retributive), and especially in the final restoration after all purifications have been completed.

This synergy of Judgment and Providence, of divine justice and divine mercy, was stressed above all by Origen, who had to polemicize against the separation of divine justice and divine mercy hypothesized by “Gnostics” and Marcionites.¹⁸¹ For Origen too, the triumph of divine justice is in the judgments after the aeons, and the triumph of divine mercy and providence will be the eventual *apokatastasis*. Not accidentally, in *Gnostikos* 48 Evagrius quotes with deep veneration and admiration a saying by a faithful follower of Origen, Didymus the Blind, concerning the necessity of meditating on both God’s judgment and God’s providence: “Always exercise yourself in the meditation of the doctrines concerning Providence and Judgment—said Didymus, the great ‘gnostic’ teacher [ὁ μέγας καὶ γνωστικός διδάσκαλος Δίδυμος]—and endeavor to remember their materials, since almost all people err in these topics. As for the rationale of Judgment, you will find that this lies in the variety of bodies and worlds; that concerning Providence, instead, lies in the turns that from evilness and ignorance bring us back to virtue or knowledge [ἐν τοῖς τρόποις τοῖς ἀπὸ κακίας καὶ ἀγνωσίας ἐπὶ τὴν ἀρετὴν ἢ ἐπὶ τὴν γνῶσιν].”

Providence restores rational creatures to virtue and knowledge; its work will be concluded when this restoration will be universal. Evagrius never separates the idea of the Judgment, with the retribution of rational creatures’ deeds and passions or virtues,¹⁸² from that of God’s providence, which is prior to that of the Judgment, because it was anterior to the fall, which brought about the necessity of the Judgment: “The *logoi* concerning the Judgment are secondary, as has been said, vis-à-vis the *logoi* concerning movement and concerning Providence” (KG 5.24). The rationale concerning the movement is rational creatures’ free will, which is a gift of God; this is more important than the Judgment and is prior to the fall, even if it did cause the fall (but not by necessity; indeed, in the end free will shall abide, but it will cause no fall anymore).

That for Evagrius God’s judgment is inseparable from God’s providence is clear from scholium 8 on Ps 138:16 as well, where also the *logoi* of Providence and Judgment are joined. Providence cares for the spiritual healing of rational creatures and operates on their intellects, which take

181. See *ibid.*, the section on Origen.

182. See, e.g., KG 4.33, 38; 6.57.

care of their own souls (*Praktikos* 82). This healing is salvific, because it destroys sins (*KG* 1.28). Evagrius is exactly on Origen's line in thinking that divine providence, which is universally salvific, is not in the least at odds with individual free will, but divine justice rewards each one according to his or her deeds, and divine providence operates at the same time, always allowing each one's will to be free: "God's providence accompanies the freedom of will, whereas God's judgment takes into account the order of rational creatures" (*KG* 6.43). I will highlight below in the commentary the close affinity with Origen's thinking in this respect, to the point of verbal resonance.

Divine providence operates in two ways: (1) it keeps God's creatures, both incorporeal and corporeal realities, in existence; for, without divine grace, no creature could either exist or continue to exist; (2) it converts rational creatures from evilness and ignorance to virtue and knowledge. The first knowledge that was found in rational creatures is that of the Trinity; then, there occurred the movement of free will, Providence, which rescues and never abandons anyone, and then the judgment, and again the movement of free will, Providence, the judgment, and so on with all this, up to the union with the Trinity. Thus, every judgment comes between the movement of free will and divine providence (*KG* 6.59, 75). Aeons, which are the result of each single judgment, come after the first movement of rational creatures' free will and their fall, but before the final and most perfect manifestation of God's providence, which will be *apokatastasis*, after the end of all aeons. Then, not only for Origen, but for Evagrius as well, no one will be in any aeon anymore, but God will be "all in all." Indeed, Evagrius thinks of *apokatastasis* as entailing deification (*θέωσις*) to the point of downright calling it "the Holy Trinity" in *KG* 6.75.

It is worth noting that Evagrius uses the same biblical passage (the parable in Matt 18:23–25 and Luke 7:41) as Nyssen did to establish that otherworldly punishments will come to an end after "the full payment of one's debt." In Gregory's *On the Soul and the Resurrection* 101–104, Macrina understands Jesus's statement that each one will have to pay off one's debt "up to the last coin" as implying that, once the *last* coin has been paid, the relevant punishment and imprisonment will cease:

God's right Judgment is applied to all and extends the time of restitution of the debt according to its amount.... The complete repayment of debts does not take place through a money payment, but the debtor is handed to the torturers, until he has paid his whole debt.... Through the

necessary suffering, he will eliminate the debt, accumulated by means of participation in miserable things, which he had taken upon himself during his earthly life.... After taking off all that which is alien to himself, that is, sin, and getting rid of the shame deriving from debts, he can achieve a condition of freedom and confidence. Now, freedom is assimilation to what has no master and is endowed with absolute power, and at the beginning it was given us by God, but then it was covered and hidden by the shame of debts. Thus, as a consequence, everything that is free will adapt to what is similar to it; but virtue admits of no masters:¹⁸³ therefore, everything that is free will turn out to be in virtue, since what is free has no master. Now, God's nature is the source of all virtue; so, in it there will be those who have attained freedom from evil, that, as the apostle says, "God may be all in all" [1 Cor 15:28].¹⁸⁴

Now, Evagrius refers to the very same parable in *KG* 4.34 and provides of it the same eschatological exegesis as Gregory did: "In the future world/aeon no one will escape from the house of torment into which he will fall. For it is said, 'You will not go out from there until you have given back the very last coin,' that is, up to the smallest amount of suffering." This also means that, after giving back the very last coin, that is, the last amount of deserved suffering, all will at long last be allowed to abandon the house of torment. This parable, indeed, constitutes one of the strongest biblical proofs of *apokatastasis* for both Gregory and Evagrius, as well as for their contemporaries Diodore of Tarsus and Theodore of Mopsuestia, two other significant supporters of the doctrine of *apokatastasis*.¹⁸⁵

Another major biblical passage with which Evagrius buttressed his *apokatastasis* theory is 1 Tim 2:4–6, which he cites in *Gnostikos* 22: "The 'gnostic' must be neither sad nor hostile: for the former attitude is proper to those who do not know what Scriptures say concerning that which is to happen; the latter, of those who do not want all humans to be saved and reach the knowledge of the truth." One must want all humans to be saved and to attain the knowledge of the truth, which is what God wants. Evagrius maintains here that the awareness of what Scripture reveals concerning the ultimate end necessarily brings joy, and this evidently because the Bible, according to him, announces the eventual restoration and salva-

183. Plato, *Republic* 617E.

184. See Ramelli, "Christian Soteriology and Christian Platonism?"

185. See Ramelli, *Christian Doctrine of Apokatastasis*, the section on Diodore and Theodore.

tion of all (*apokatastasis*), which in 1 Tim 2:4–6 is moreover presented as “what God wants.” This persuasion, that universal restoration is revealed by Scripture and wanted by God, was shared by all of the supporters of this doctrine in the patristic age, from Origen to Gregory of Nyssa, from Evagrius to Eriugena. These theologians would not have espoused this theory if they had not considered it to be firmly based on the Bible. Hence also their profound conviction, which I have already pointed out, that the final *apokatastasis* depends above all on Christ. Thus, it is ultimately because of his radical metaphysical and eschatological optimism that Evagrius exhorts his disciples to hope, joy, and confidence, for instance, in *Praktikos* 12. In *Praktikos* 20 and 25–26, consistently, Evagrius warns against wrath, hatred, affliction, and memory of suffered injuries. Likewise, in *Praktikos* 27–28 he warns against sadness and lack of confidence and hope in God. Evagrius, who upheld a strong metaphysical, theological, and eschatological optimism, denounces that lacking hope in God’s providence is a serious sin, a yielding to the devil (*ibid.*, 46–47). This position, as I have demonstrated elsewhere,¹⁸⁶ was shared by Diodore of Tarsus, another supporter of the *apokatastasis* theory: he criticized those Christians who believed in God but not in divine providence, and for him, not believing in the eventual universal restoration is tantamount to not believing in divine providence, which aims precisely at this restoration.

Once again like Origen, Evagrius reveals a deeply rooted “pastoral” concern in respect to the divulcation of the doctrine of universal restoration, especially among spiritually immature people, those who do good out of fear and not for love. It is better for such people to believe threats of eternal punishment, and thereby keep their fear, since this is what prevents them from sinning (only in the eventual *apokatastasis* will love prevent everyone from sinning). This is why in *Gnostikos* 36 Evagrius warns: “The loftier doctrine [ὁ ὑψηλότερος λόγος] concerning the Judgment should be kept undisclosed to secular people and young people.” Secular and young people are the most spiritually immature, who need to believe in a material punishment, and that eternal, whereas the torment of the rational soul will consist in ignorance (*ibid.*), and this will not be eternal, since ignorance, according to Evagrius, will ultimately vanish, as well as evil will.

Indeed, for Evagrius, just as for Origen, fear of punishments as a deterrent from doing evil is typical of hardly mature people: “Those who have

186. In *ibid.*, section on Diodore of Tarsus.

established virtues in themselves and have entirely mixed to them can no longer remember laws, commandments, or punishment [κολάσεως] but say and do all that which the best disposition advises” (*Praktikos* 70). Love and virtue, and not fear, should urge people to do good—and virtue is primarily love and mercy, which are also the main features of God, the model of all virtues (*ibid.* 75).

11. Conclusions: Contribution to Research

All of Evagrius’s works, both those on theology and metaphysics and those on spiritual ascent and asceticism, help reconstruct his doctrine of intellects and souls, their origin, their relation to the body, the different kinds of bodies, and rational creatures’ eschatological destiny. Those two groups of works unfortunately have been kept apart, as I have mentioned at the opening, and have received different treatments: Evagrius’s ascetic works were treasured virtually everywhere, but his metaphysical and eschatological speculations, especially in the *KG* and *Letter to Melania*, were condemned. The close connection between Evagrius’s doctrine of intellects, souls, and bodies, and that of universal restoration, or *apokatastasis*, is particularly evident in the latter group, the *KG* and *Letter to Melania*. In the *KG* and *Letter to Melania*, Evagrius’s reflection on eschatology is clearly related to the rest of his thought, which is oriented toward the *telos*, the ultimate end. This is also the case with Origen and Gregory of Nyssa. For the end is the accomplishment of God’s plan for rational creatures; this is why it reflects the beginning, the prelapsarian state.

Evagrius’s protological and eschatological ideas reveal remarkable points of contact with those of Origen and Gregory of Nyssa. And such parallels are obvious not only in this respect but also in many others. This is not surprising, since Evagrius absorbed Origen’s and the Cappadocians’ theology, as well as that of Didymus, another close follower of Origen, whom Evagrius may have frequented personally. In addition, I suspect that Evagrius’s biographical and intellectual closeness to Gregory Nyssen is more substantial than is commonly thought. I have provided some evidence that appears significant, but a methodical investigation in this respect seems to be still an important desideratum. Moreover, the close intellectual relationship between Evagrius and Origen and Nyssen is far from being limited to protology and eschatology but invests most aspects of their theology and philosophy.

12. The Present Commentary and Acknowledgments

In the commentary below I shall be focusing on the relation of Evagrius's thought to Origen's and Gregory Nyssen's, and I will point out many more derivations than those already highlighted in the introductory essay. I shall also endeavor to explain every *kephalaion* in the context of Evagrius's thought. I will indicate many internal links within the *KG*, while the parallels with other works of Evagrius will be highlighted, but not in an exhaustive way. Likewise I will not systematically point out all the differences between S_1 and S_2 , and the conversation with contemporary scholarship on Evagrius will be well present, as in the introductory essay, though selective.

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