

“Become All Eye”: Optical Imagery in Eastern Christianity
and the Theological Anthropology of Pseudo-Macarius

By

Justin Anthony Arnwine

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Approved:

David A. Michelson, Ph.D.
Robin M. Jensen, Ph.D

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“ὅτι ὁ θεὸς ὁ εἰπὼν, Ἐκ σκότους φῶς λάμψει, ὃς ἔλαμψεν ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις ἡμῶν πρὸς φωτισμὸν τῆς γνώσεως τῆς δόξης τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν προσώπῳ Χριστοῦ.”

— *The Second Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians* 4.6

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INTRODUCTION

Around the beginning of the fifth century CE, a Christian pilgrim recorded in his travelogue an account of Apollo, a holy man from Hermopolis west of the Nile River.¹ As this pilgrim wrote, Apollo's renown was so widespread that many monks flocked to him like an "army of angels", some five hundred strong.² Among those who gathered around the holy man, there was a bandit-chief whose story the Christian pilgrim related a little further in his account.³ During a local dispute between two villages over property ownership, Apollo emerged from his monastic cell to settle the matter. Confronted by the brigand who led the opposition against him, Apollo stated, "If you listen to me, my friend, I will ask my Master to forgive your sins." Immediately, the bandit-chief hastened to lay down his weapons and followed Apollo into the desert, where he begged him for some proof that the promise would come to pass. Apollo encouraged the bandit-chief that God would make it so. That night, both Apollo and the brigand had the same dream. They beheld the judgment seat of Christ and heard the voice of God saying,

What communion does light have with darkness, or what part does a believer have with an unbeliever? Why, then, does a murderer, unworthy of such a vision as this, stand before me with a righteous man?⁴

Despite their moral differences, however, God pardoned the bandit's unworthiness to behold the vision on behalf of Apollo, a "righteous man". The brigand, so affected by this vision, forsook his life as a murderer to join Apollo in the desert.

¹The following story is a modified re-telling from the eighth chapter of the *Historia Monachorum in Aegypto* [André-Jean Festugière, ed. *Historia Monachorum in Aegypto: Édition Critique Du Texte Grec et Traduction Annotée*, Subsidia Hagiographica 53 (Bruxelles: Société des Bollandistes, 1971)].

²*Historia Monachorum in Aegypto* VIII.18-19: "ἐγένετο δὲ συνοικία τῶν ἀδελφῶν ὁμοῦ πρὸς αὐτὸν ἐν τῷ ὄρει ἄχρι πεντακοσίων, κοινὸν τὸν βίον ἐχόντων καὶ τράπεζαν μίαν διαιωμένων. καὶ ἦν ἰδεῖν αὐτοὺς ἀγγελικὴν τινα ἀληθῶς στρατιάν..."

³ *Ibid.* VIII.30-35.

⁴ *Ibid.* VIII.33: "Τίς κοινωνία φωτὶ πρὸς σκότος, ἢ τίς μερὶς πιστῶ μετὰ ἀπίστου; τί δὲ καὶ ὁ ἀνδροφόνοσ παρέστηκεν σὺν τῷ δικαίῳ ἀνάξιος ὢν τῆσ τοιαύτης θεωρίας;"

This anecdote illustrates the desire for a vision of God in Late Antiquity. For this vision, many like the bandit sought to join the ascetic Apollo in the desert near Hermopolis. As the monastic community grew, even their cells began to reflect their longing for a vision of God. In Bawit near Hermopolis, from the sixth century CE onward, monks of the Monastery of Apollo constructed eastern-oriented oratory niches toward which they would fix their gazes in vigilant prayer. On the walls of each niche, their gaze was met by the piercing eyes of Christ enthroned upon the many-eyed Cherubim—a vision of God.⁵ For the monks of Bawit, there may have been something more involved in locking eyes with these pictorial representations of Christ and the Cherubim; these paintings may have reflected a theological anthropology of the monastic community wherein the monk became “all eye” as Christ and the Cherubim.

“Become all eye” was an ontological state in which one’s soul had become so transparent that the divine light shone in as part of the Christian’s being and was refracted out as one saw God. To understand the phrase “become all eye”, we must first examine optical imagery in Eastern Christianity as it relates to theology. The occurrence of optical imagery in Eastern Christianity offers insight into how many Christian authors built their theological anthropology (how human beings participate in and behold God). One such author is known in modern scholarship as Pseudo-Macarius.⁶ Ps.-Macarius expounds on the phrase “become all eye” as a part of his theological anthropology. Tracing optical imagery through several Eastern Christian authors up to Ps.-Macarius, we will investigate their conceptions of theological anthropology and

⁵See Appendix: Figures, taken from Jean Clédât, *Le Monastère et la Nécropole de Baouît*, MIFAO 12 (Cairo: Institut français d’archéologie orientale, 1904) and Jean Clédât, *Le Monastère et la Nécropole de Baouît*, MIFAO 111 (Cairo: Institut français d’archéologie orientale, 1999). Cf. Massimo Capuani, *Christian Egypt: Coptic Art and Monuments through Two Millennia*, trans. Otto Meinardus (Collegeville, MI: Liturgical Press, 2002), 193-196.

⁶ Following Columba Stewart, *‘Working the Earth of the Heart’: The Messalian Controversy in History, Texts, and Language to AD 431* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), I will refer to this author as Pseudo-Macarius or the abbreviated form Ps.-Macarius; however, the reader should be aware that he is also referred to as “Symeon” or “Macarius/Symeon”.

discover what implications their understanding of “eyes” (and particularly Ps. Macarius’ phrase “become all eye”) has on Christian theology.

A REVIEW OF SCHOLARLY LITERATURE

The following overview of scholarly material will serve to show the state of research on the eyes (and sense perception) in late antique Christianity, on their relation to a monastic theology of divine vision, and on Ps.-Macarius. Most scholars have tended to be more general in their discussion of “spiritual senses”, rather than offer a specific consideration of vision and eyes. What is more, recent scholarship has tended to devote attention to Ps.-Macarius’ connections with the Messalian controversy.⁷ Where scholars have focused on the themes contained within Ps.-Macarius’ writings, there is very little (if any) discussion on his use of optical imagery and its relation to his theological anthropology.

One may find this general approach to sense perception in Paul L. Gavrilyuk and Sarah Coakley’s collaborative work *The Spiritual Senses: Perceiving God in Western Christianity*, which traces the theme of the “spiritual senses” through several Christian authors up to the modern era.⁸ As the title suggests, the majority of the essays deal with the senses in Western Christian thinkers; however, there are two essays which cover Eastern Christian authors up to the fourth century. The first, contributed by Mark McInroy, shows how Origen developed his “doctrine of the spiritual senses” earlier than scholars have supposed.⁹ The second, a work by

⁷ From the Syriac *mšallyānē* [ܡܫܠܝܢܐ] meaning “the ones who pray”. For the most comprehensive overview of the Messalian controversy and its relation to Ps.-Macarius, see Klaus Fitschen’s work discussed below.

⁸ Paul L. Gavrilyuk and Sarah Coakley, ed., *The Spiritual Senses: Perceiving God in Western Christianity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

⁹ Mark J. McInroy, “Origen of Alexandria,” *The Spiritual Senses*, 20.

Sarah Coakley, argues against Jean Daniélou's false dichotomy (a modern construct, as she claims) between Gregory of Nyssa's spirituality and epistemology which led to a "misleading reading of Gregory on the theme of spiritual sensation."¹⁰ While Gavriilyuk and Coakley's collaboration of essays on sense perception in Western Christianity is a much-needed addition to scholarly discourse, a similar work on the "spiritual senses" in Eastern Christianity ought to be published as well.¹¹

While there is, as yet, no dedicated study on the "spiritual senses" in Eastern Christian authors, several scholars have allocated attention to visual perception in their monographs on Eastern Christian writers up to the fourth century. One of the most recent works, Augustine Casiday's *Reconstructing the Theology of Evagrius Ponticus*, discusses prayer in Evagrius' theological anthropology, attempting to reconstruct Evagrius' theology in its own right.¹² Chapter seven focuses on the mediation of Christ in both the ascent of humanity and the condescension of God and touches on the imagery of light in Evagrius and the sight of the face of God.¹³ He does not give a full account of a theology of vision which focuses on the function of the eyes in Evagrius' writings.

Kevin Corrigan has written an insightful comparative study on Evagrius of Pontus and Gregory of Nyssa.¹⁴ In *Evagrius and Gregory: Mind, Soul, and Body in the 4th Century*, Corrigan delves into the thought of both, showing that these two authors had much in common. Chapters seven and eight are the crux of the book, where he concludes that "Evagrius should be

¹⁰ Sarah Coakley, "Gregory of Nyssa," *The Spiritual Senses*, 37.

¹¹ Susan Ashbrook Harvey has recently written a monograph *Scenting Salvation: Ancient Christianity and the Olfactory Imagination* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006) on olfactory perception in the Syriac tradition. Her work seems to be an important addition to a collection on sense perception in Eastern Christianity.

¹² Augustine Casiday, *Reconstructing the Theology of Evagrius Ponticus: Beyond Heresy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

¹³ Casiday, *Reconstructing the Theology of Evagrius Ponticus*, 167ff.

¹⁴ Kevin Corrigan, *Evagrius and Gregory: Mind, Soul, and Body in the 4th Century* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2009).

interpreted more in light of Gregory than from the anathemas of later Councils.”¹⁵ Corrigan’s main interest is to show the similarity in the anthropology of Evagrius and Gregory, especially in their understanding of perception. His discussion of Gregory’s and Evagrius’ anthropology does not focus on the use of optical imagery in either, however.

Ute Possekkel, writing on Ephrem the Syrian, offers a comparative study to prove her thesis in her monograph *Evidence of Greek Philosophical Concepts in the Writings of Ephrem the Syrian*.¹⁶ In chapter eight, Possekkel compares Ephrem’s works with those of Greek philosophers, such as Plato, the Stoic Poseidonius, and Aristotle, and with those of Christian authors, such as Tertullian, Gregory of Nyssa, and Basil of Caesarea in order to establish that “Ephrem’s theory of sense perception reflects the philosophical syncretism of the late antique period.”¹⁷ But, while this conclusion furthers her thesis, she does not discuss Ephrem’s *theological* anthropology. In other words, she discusses how Ephrem conceived of sense perception in humans and briefly how Ephrem viewed vision. She does not discuss in detail how Ephrem believed humans perceived God through the “spiritual senses”, or more specifically through the “eye of faith”.

Sebastian Brock’s monograph entitled *The Luminous Eye* pays particular attention to the eyes in Ephrem the Syrian’s thought, devoting chapter four of his work to Ephrem’s anthropological view on the analogy of the “luminous eye” (ܐܝܢܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܐ) to describe the “human ascent” to the divine.¹⁸ Brock analyzes the hymns and prose works of Ephrem and finds that the Syrian’s concept of “luminosity” (ܐܘܠܡܘܬܐ) is key in his anthropology. Brock also mentions the

¹⁵ Corrigan, *Evagrius and Gregory*, 155.

¹⁶ Ute Possekkel, *Evidence of Greek Philosophical Concepts in the Writings of Ephrem the Syrian* CSCO Subsidia 102 (Leuven: Peeters Press, 1999).

¹⁷ Possekkel, *Evidence of Greek Philosophical Concepts*, 229.

¹⁸ Sebastian Brock, *The Luminous Eye: The Spiritual World Vision of Saint Ephrem* Cistercian Studies 124 (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1992). See pp. 71-79, especially.

similarities between Ephrem and the Cappadocian Fathers in a later chapter and even includes a list of topics for further comparative study between Ephrem and Gregory of Nyssa, in particular, such as a shared interest in optical imagery.¹⁹ However, Brock does not go into a detailed comparison of Ephrem with other Christian authors.²⁰

Another perspective on how Eastern Christians believed humans perceived God comes from Georgia Frank in her work *The Memory of the Eyes: Pilgrims to Living Saints in Christian Late Antiquity*.²¹ Frank synthesizes a wide range of sources from Christian travelogues to diaries to theological discourses on vision in order to posit a “theory of the beholder”—which would have been assumed for pilgrims of the fourth and fifth centuries seeking an encounter with the divine in holy places like Jerusalem—that theologians such as John of Damascus would articulate in writing during the major Iconoclasm of the eighth century.²² In chapter four, she considers sight a haptic sense for the pilgrims of the late-antique Christian world.²³ As she states, “By this tactile and conjuring eye of faith, pilgrims articulated a theology of vision that would find its fullest expression in the cult of icons.”²⁴ The physical sense of sight could lead a pilgrim to the spiritual sense of sight in perceiving the divine.²⁵ While Frank’s conclusions are developed from a focus on vision for pilgrims, the function of vision in the monastic setting deserves closer study as well.

Next, we will consider the scholarship on Ps.-Macarius which has discussed Ps.-Macarius’s relationship to the Messalian controversy and the theology of the Macarian corpus.

¹⁹ Brock, *The Luminous Eye*, 145-148.

²⁰ An endeavor which is long overdue in modern scholarship and one that, unfortunately, I do not have the space in this thesis to attempt.

²¹ Georgia Frank, *The Memory of the Eyes: Pilgrims to Living Saints in Christian Late Antiquity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000).

²² Frank, *The Memory of the Eyes*, 179-180.

²³ *Ibid.*, 102-133.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 181.

²⁵ Frank’s work offers much on Christian pilgrims’ understanding of the eyes, but her contributions on a fourth-century theology on vision seem quite limited to a discussion of blindness. See, for example, pp. 114-118.

One such scholar, Columba Stewart, deals mainly with Ps.-Macarius' relation to the Messalians and to the Syrian community from whose milieu scholars believe Ps.-Macarius came.²⁶ He provides a helpful survey of the Messalian controversy in his second chapter and uses the remainder of his book to argue that Ps.-Macarius' controversial language of "mixing", "indwelling" and "filling" finds more in common with his alleged Syrian linguistic background than with his Greek theological contemporaries. As Stewart concludes, the principal reason for the inclusion of Ps.-Macarius' writings in the anti-Messalian lists was a linguistic one. When Ps.-Macarius chose to write in Greek but with a Syrian vocabulary, his theological language did not fall on accepting ears: "[Hellenistic Christians] took the unfamiliar language to represent heretical doctrine; now it can be seen that the language in fact represents an unfamiliar culture."²⁷ Stewart's main concern is for scholars to begin considering the Macarian corpus apart from the Messalian tendencies, tendencies that later theologians of the fifth century and onward would anathematize as a result of a linguistic misunderstanding of Ps.-Macarius' writings.

Building on Stewart's findings, Klaus Fitschen published his work *Messalianismus und Antimesalianismus* in what Marcus Plested would call "a significant advance in our understanding of the Macarian/Messalian question [...] Its sheer scale is one of its great virtues, making it an indispensable source-book."²⁸ Fitschen begins in his first two chapters with a definition of Messalianism, providing an outline of its development through the fourth and fifth centuries. He works from Ephrem's first use of *mšallyānē* [ܡܫܠܝܢܐ] in his *Hymns against Heresies* to describe the heretical movement up to the official lists of Theodoret of Cyrhus, Timothy of Constantinople, and John of Damascus. In fact, one of the merits of this work is that

²⁶ Stewart, *Working the Earth of the Heart*.

²⁷ Stewart, *Working the Earth of the Heart*, 239.

²⁸ Klaus Fitschen, *Messalianismus und Antimesalianismus: Ein Beispiel ostkirchlicher Ketzergeschichte* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1998); Marcus Plested, "A Survey of Recent Research on Macarius-Symeon (Pseudo-Macarius)", *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 47:3-4 (2003): 440.

Fitschen goes further than Stewart into a comparative study of the similarities and differences between the official Messalian lists of John and Timothy and the actual writings of Ps.-Macarius.²⁹ Fitschen finds that it is Adelphius of Edessa who is responsible for the manipulation of the Macarian writings into a radical form of asceticism that would become known as Messalianism.³⁰

This brief review shows that much of recent scholarship has been concerned with the question of Ps.-Macarius' relation to the Messalian controversy. We will consider now two monographs which have provided primarily a literary analysis of the Macarian writings. The first, Hermann Dörries' *Die Theologie des Makarios/Symeon*, is one attempt to study in depth the works of Ps.-Macarius without devoting as much space to the Messalian controversy.³¹ Dörries chooses to discuss three themes with respect to Ps.-Macarius' soteriology: "[T]he power of evil, the Spirit of God, and prayer."³² The whole of his monograph, however, is quite limited, not only to his choice of themes, but also to his Lutheran perspective.³³ The subject of the eye in Ps.-Macarius and its relation to the light of God appears only once in Dörries' study with a particular emphasis on "the light of the vision of the cross" [Lichtkreuzvision].³⁴

The second work, *The Macarian Legacy: The Place of Macarius-Symeon in the Eastern Christian Tradition* by Marcus Plested, represents an historical-literary analysis of the Macarian

²⁹ Fitschen, op. cit., 176 ff.

³⁰ Ibid., 238.

³¹ Hermann Dörries, *Die Theologie des Makarios/Symeon* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1978).

³² Ibid., 19.

³³ As Marcus Plested has pointed out in his work *The Macarian Legacy: The Place of Macarius-Symeon in the Eastern Christian Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 45 n.1. See Dörries' conclusion, especially, in Dörries, *Die Theologie*, 456-459.

³⁴ Dörries, *Die Theologie*, 300: "Symeon streift nur eben die auch ihm zuteil gewordene Lichtkreuzvision als den Anfang hoher Erlebnisse, die er nicht um ihrer selbst willen aufführt, sondern wegen ihrer Wirkungen auf ihn. Worauf es ihm ankommt, ist: das reine Auge, das nicht richterlich blickt... Alle diese Offenbarungen öffnen dem Empfänger das Auge für die anderen Menschen und kehren ihn diesen zu."

corpus which builds on what Dörries' work lacked.³⁵ Plested's two-part monograph seeks to provide an historical context for the writings of Ps.-Macarius and to show the influence which Ps.-Macarius may have had on later Eastern Christian authors. His second chapter deals with numerous themes in the Macarian texts and includes many citations to the works themselves. Of these themes, Ps.-Macarius' anthropology figures briefly in Plested's analysis; however, he does not relate Macarian anthropology with the optical imagery which Ps.-Macarius' frequently uses in order to say something about how humans perceived God.³⁶ In fact, his reference to the Macarian usage of optical imagery does not appear until later in his consideration of the activity of the Spirit in Ps.-Macarius' homilies.³⁷

To sum up, recent scholarship has left open two major areas relevant to our inquiry. First, the need to develop a work (a la Gavrilyuk and Coakely) on the "spiritual senses" which is focused primarily on Eastern Christian authors. Related to this is the need to incorporate Ps.-Macarius into this discussion with a view toward the implications of his usage of optical imagery. My thesis intends to fill these gaps in our understanding with the hope that others may give fuller attention to this area of scholarship. First, I will begin with a survey of Eastern Christian authors' ideas up to the fourth century of the "spiritual senses" with a particular focus on the sense of sight. Second, I will end with an analysis of Ps.-Macarius' writings in order to understand his ontological theological anthropology based on his use of the phrase "become all eye". In conclusion, I will consider what implications Ps.-Macarius' understanding of the phrase "become all eye" might have for the oratory wall paintings of the Monastery of Apollo in Bawit.

³⁵ Marcus Plested, *The Macarian Legacy: The Place of Macarius-Symeon in the Eastern Christian Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

³⁶ Plested, *The Macarian Legacy*, 32-36.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 44-45. Even here, though, Plested provides only a footnote to explain Ps.-Macarius' optical imagery in the context of the monastic tradition. Cf. *Ibid.*, 45 n. 14 where he states, "[T]he soul that becomes the throne of God is 'all eye, all light, all face, all glory, and all spirit'. [...] The ascetic tradition has, typically, transposed the image [of 'all eye, etc.'] from the plane of theology to that of the soul" but does not go on to explain what he means by this statement.

FROM THE THIRD CENTURY: FOUNDATIONS

Clement of Alexandria: “Walking according to the Logos”

The city of Alexandria, at the turn of the third century CE, was one of the largest literary centers in history. With a cosmopolitan status one scholar has lauded as “the cultural, educational, and commercial centre of the Hellenistic world,” Alexandria birthed a Christian philosophical tradition in dialogue with the legacy of the Hellenistic philosophers and the canon of the Scriptures, both Jewish and Christian.³⁸ By the mid-third century, the city would also be associated with a Christian catechetical school of thought, guided by one of Alexandria’s instructors, Clement of Alexandria.

Trained in Christian theology and classical philosophy, Clement himself became a skilled pedagogue in the academic life of Alexandria. According to Eric Orson, Clement “produced a Christian Hellenism which makes use of the writers of ancient Greece within the context of Greek education and learning. [...] Clement appears throughout as a teacher.”³⁹ His most widely known works, written around the beginning of the third century, comprise a trilogy which teaches a progressive path to knowledge, or *gnosis*. His concept of *gnosis* shapes his theological anthropology, for it is through the knowledge of God—especially through Christ the Logos—that humanity has access to the divine.

³⁸ Birger A. Pearson, “Egypt,” in *The Cambridge History of Christianity: Origins to Constantine*, vol 1. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 335.

³⁹ Eric F. Osborn, *Clement of Alexandria* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 23.

In his *Protrepticus*, Clement chastises those who do not believe in Christ the Logos when Christ is practically before their eyes.⁴⁰ Clement compares Christ to a constant source of light. For Clement, the revelation of Christ marks the culmination of the philosophers and the prophets. It is through Christ, the “sun of the resurrection” that those who do not believe may be enlightened by true knowledge.⁴¹ His immediacy is palpable, “for great is [God’s] promise of grace, ‘if *today* we hear His [sic] voice.’”⁴² Playing off of the word for ‘today’ (σήμερον), the light of day (ἡμέρα) is important to Clement.⁴³ If Christ the Logos is the “sun”, then it is through him that we as human beings “gaze upon” [καταναζόμεθα] God.⁴⁴ The one who does not believe in the Logos cannot see God without his light.

Following his *Protrepticus*, Clement’s *Paedagogus* moves to instruct the disciple of Christ who assents to the light, Christ the Logos.⁴⁵ Acknowledging the light is one part of the equation; the next part is making sure one’s eyes are healthy in order for there to be pure sight. Clement’s approach to obtaining this sort of health consists of intertwining gnostic and sacramental dimensions.

The sacramental dimension which Clement posits for the health of the eye of one’s soul is baptism. The proselyte who wishes to believe in the Light of Christ the Logos must undergo the sacramental cleansing of baptism as part of the catechetical process. Having done so, according to Clement,

⁴⁰ Clement, *Protrepticus* 9.84.1: “τί δὴ ἕτερον ὑπολείπεται τοῖς ἀπίστοις ἢ κρίσις καὶ καταδίκη;”

⁴¹ Clement, *Protrepticus* 9.84.2: “«ἔγειρε,» φησὶν, «ὁ καθεύδων καὶ ἀνάστα ἐκ τῶν νεκρῶν, καὶ ἐπιφάσει σοι ὁ Χριστὸς κύριος,» ὁ τῆς ἀναστάσεως ἥλιος, ὁ «πρὸ ἑωσφόρου» γεννώμενος, ὁ ζῶν χαρισάμενος ἀκτίσιν ἰδίας.”

⁴² Ibid. 9.84.5 (emphasis my own): “Μεγάλη γὰρ τῆς ἐπαγγελίας αὐτοῦ ἡ χάρις, «ἐάν σήμερον τῆς φωνῆς αὐτοῦ ἀκούσωμεν.»”

⁴³ Andrew C. Itter, *Esoteric Teaching in the Stromateis of Clement of Alexandria*, Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae 97 (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 105: “The perfect day is unmistakably the first day of the *fiat lux*, which is an epithet of the Logos. This is the light of the ‘true to-day’, as Clement says.”

⁴⁴ Clement, *Protrepticus* 9.84.6: “σύμβολον δὲ τοῦ φωτὸς ἡ ἡμέρα, φῶς δὲ ὁ λόγος ἀνθρώποις, δι’ οὗ καταναζόμεθα τὸν θεόν.”

⁴⁵ Ibid. 11.113.4: “Χωρήσωμεν τὸ φῶς, ἵνα χωρήσωμεν τὸν θεόν· χωρήσωμεν τὸ φῶς καὶ μαθητεύσωμεν τῷ κυρίῳ.”

We who are baptized, having rubbed off the sins which threw a shadow on the Divine Spirit, have the eye of the spirit free, unimpeded, and full of light, by which alone we view the divine.⁴⁶

Thus, the waters of baptism have cleansed the eye of the soul, left no obstacle, and allowed light to fill it so that there may be sight. However, baptism for Clement is not the end for the newly-initiated; it is the beginning.⁴⁷

Clement's theological anthropology is that of the pedagogue. With the eye of the soul cleansed through baptism, Clement adds a gnostic dimension to his optical paradigm. The Christian's "end" is rest, in Clement's view, and the path to rest is *gnosis*, or knowledge.⁴⁸ For the eye of one's soul to see clearly on this path, one must have knowledge.⁴⁹ One of his first instructions is on the subject of eating. For Clement, the realms of the flesh and the soul are interconnected: that which affects one, affects the other. The food which one consumes becomes important, then, since it affects one both bodily and psychically. Here, Clement uses optical imagery to make his point. Clear vision for the eye of the soul comes to the one whose soul *and* body are kept clean.⁵⁰ As Clement states, "Let our food be plain and nutritious, most fit for wakefulness, unmixed with various things. Nor is this an uneducated point [ἀπαιδαγώγητον]."⁵¹

⁴⁶ Clement, *Paedagogus* 1.6.28.1: "οἱ βαπτιζόμενοι, τὰς ἐπισκοτούσας ἀμαρτίας τῷ θεῷ πνεύματι ἀγλῶος δίκην ἀποτριψάμενοι, ἐλεύθερον καὶ ἀνεμπόδιστον καὶ φωτεινὸν ὄμμα τοῦ πνεύματος ἴσχομεν, ᾧ δὴ μόνῳ τὸ θεῖον ἐποπτεύομεν..."

⁴⁷ Itter, *Esoteric Teaching*, 131: "Initiates do not receive a light that they did not already possess, but rather they have cleansed the pupils of their eyes so that they can now recognise the light of the soul once more [...] Having become illuminated through baptism, the 'eye of the spirit' [...] is free to contemplate the divine—an 'eternal adjustment of the vision', restored in the light of the Holy Spirit."

⁴⁸ Clement, *Paedagogus* 1.6.29.3: "Ὡστε ἡ μὲν γνῶσις ἐν τῷ φωτίσματι, τὸ δὲ πέρας τῆς γνώσεως ἡ ἀνάπαυσις, ὃ δὴ ἔσχατον νοεῖται ὀρεκτόν."

⁴⁹ Ibid. 1.6.29.4: "Φωτισμὸς ἄρα ἡ γνῶσις ἐστίν, ὃ ἐξαφανίζων τὴν ἄγνοιαν καὶ τὸ διορατικὸν ἐντιθεῖς."

⁵⁰ Ibid. 2.1.1.2: "ὅποταν γάρ τις ἀπὸ τῶν ἐκτὸς καὶ αὐτῆς ἔτι τῆς τοῦ σώματος ἀγωγῆς ἐπὶ τὴν διάνοιαν ἀχθεῖς ὑπὸ τοῦ λόγου τὴν θεωρίαν τῶν κατὰ τὸν ἄνθρωπον συμβαινόντων κατὰ φύσιν ἀκριβῶς ἐκμάθῃ, εἴσεται μὴ σπουδάζειν μὲν περὶ τὰ ἐκτὸς, τὸ τε ἴδιον τοῦ ἀνθρώπου, τὸ ὄμμα τῆς ψυχῆς, ἐκκαθαίρειν, ἀγνίξειν δὲ καὶ τὴν σάρκα αὐτήν."

⁵¹ Clement, *Paedagogus* 2.1.7.3: "Ἀλλὰ γὰρ τὸ δεῖπνον ἔστω λιτὸν ἡμῖν καὶ εὐζώνον, ἐπιτήδειον εἰς ἐγρήγορσιν, ποικίλαις ἀνεπίμικτον ποιότησιν, οὐκ ἀπαιδαγώγητον οὐδὲ τοῦτο·"

Thus, the Christian disciple would do well without the extravagance of various foods, eating only that which is necessary for the daily vigil.

On the subject of wakefulness, Clement once again stresses the psychosomatic connection between the eyes of the body and the eye of the soul in the Christian's daily life. At one point in his instruction he compares the vigilant Christian to the angels. This comparison hinges on his understanding of eyes. The angels, Clement states, are called "watchers" [ἐγρηγόρους] for a reason; their eyes are always open to the light of God.⁵² In this way, Clement believes the Christian should also be as vigilant, for the closing of the eyelids inhibits light from entering one's eyes, allows darkness to enter, and induces death-like sleep. Christians are illuminated, "sons of the true light" [οἱ τοῦ φωτὸς τοῦ ἀληθινοῦ υἱοὶ].⁵³ Thus Clement exhorts,

Let us not shut outside this light, but turning inward on ourselves, illuminating the eyes of the concealed self [τοῦ κεκρυμμένου τὰς ὄψεις ἀνθρώπου], and viewing the truth itself and partaking of its streams, let us visibly and mindfully unveil the truth of our dreams.⁵⁴

He makes an analogy here between the light which one's bodily eyes see and the light which one's psychic eye sees. Clement's admonition in this passage solidifies not only his analogous connection, but a psychosomatic relationship between one's bodily eyes and the eye of the soul. Too much food, wine, or sleep can "cover the clear-sighted eye of the soul" [τὸ διορατικὸν τῆς ψυχῆς κατέχωσαν ὄμμα] and thus should be avoided.⁵⁵

In conclusion, his *Stromata* (or miscellanies) reiterate the need for Christ the light. In a rhetorical argument for the equality of God the Son and God the Father, Clement calls the Son

⁵² Ibid. 2.9.79.3: "μακάριοι γὰρ οἱ ἐγρηγορότερες εἰς αὐτόν, σφᾶς αὐτοῦς ἀπεικάζοντες ἀγγέλοις, οὓς ἐγρηγόρους καλοῦμεν."

⁵³ Ibid. 2.9.79.4.

⁵⁴ Ibid.: "Τὸ οὖν φῶς τοῦτο οἱ τοῦ φωτὸς τοῦ ἀληθινοῦ υἱοὶ μὴ ἀποκλείσωμεν θύραζε, ἔνδον δὲ εἰς ἡμᾶς ἀποστρέψαντες, τοῦ κεκρυμμένου τὰς ὄψεις ἀνθρώπου φωτίσαντες τὴν τε ἀλήθειαν αὐτὴν ἐποπτεύσαντες καὶ τῶν ταύτης ῥευμάτων μεταλαμβάνοντες, τοὺς ἀληθεῖς τῶν ὀνείρων ἐναργῶς καὶ φρονίμως ἀποκαλυπτώμεθα."

⁵⁵ Clement, *Paedagogus* 2.9.81.1.

“all paternal light” and “all eye, seeing all things”, just as God the Father sees all things.⁵⁶ Being light and eye of the Father, Christ the Son of God is the one who “takes away from us by the divine word the hazy ignorance which has covered the eye of the soul and gives the most excellent [of things]: ‘That we might know well whether we be God or man.’”⁵⁷ It is through Christ the light, Logos, and Son of God that we receive a “new eye, new ear, new heart” with which to perceive the things of God and to act accordingly.⁵⁸ “Walking according to the Logos” is for Clement the foremost instruction for the Christian to “awaken the mind, enlighten the darkness, and expel ignorance.”⁵⁹ *Gnosis*, the illumination of the eye of the soul, is through Christ the light who is “all eye.”

Origen: “You Will Find a Divine Sense”

While Clement was teaching on *gnosis* and the illumination of the Christian, another instructor affiliated with the church of Alexandria was also teaching in the city, after the death of his father in 202 CE.⁶⁰ Of the numerous exegetical works which Origen of Alexandria wrote, only a fraction remains for scholarly investigation. The works we do possess, however, reveal an instructor excelling not only in his literary output, but also in his methodical exegesis of the Scriptures. As a scholar “always in the context and service of the Church”, Origen’s numerous commentaries and theological treatises are concerned heavily with the proper exegesis of the

⁵⁶ Clement, *Stromata* 7.2.5.5: “οὐ γὰρ ἐξίσταται ποτε τῆς αὐτοῦ περιωπῆς ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ, οὐ μεριζόμενος, οὐκ ἀποτεμνόμενος, οὐ μεταβαίνων ἐκ τόπου εἰς τόπον, πάντη δὲ ὦν πάντοτε καὶ μηδαμῆ περιεχόμενος, ὅλος νοῦς, ὅλος φῶς πατρῶον, ὅλος ὀφθαλμός, πάντα ὁρῶν, πάντα ἀκούων, εἰδὼς πάντα, δυνάμει τὰς δυνάμεις ἐρευνῶν.”

⁵⁷ Ibid. 1.28.178.1: “τοῦ καταγαγόντος ἡμῶν τῷ θεῷ λόγῳ τοῦ ὀρατικοῦ τῆς ψυχῆς τὴν ἐπιχυθεῖσαν ἐκ φαύλης ἀναστροφῆς ἄνοιαν ἀχλωδὴ καὶ τὸ βέλτιστον ἀποδεδωκότος, «ὄφρ’ εὖ γινώσκοιμεν ἡμὲν θεὸν ἠδὲ καὶ ἄνδρα.»”

⁵⁸ Ibid. 2.4.15.3: “«ἰδοὺ δὴ, ποιῶ καινά,» ὁ λόγος φησὶν, «ἅ ὀφθαλμὸς οὐκ εἶδεν οὐδὲ οὖς ἤκουσεν οὐδὲ ἐπὶ καρδίαν ἀνθρώπου ἀνέβη.» καινῷ ὀφθαλμῷ, καινῇ ἀκοῇ, καινῇ καρδίᾳ ὅσα ὀρατὰ καὶ ἀκουστὰ καὶ καταληπτὰ διὰ τῆς πίστεως καὶ συνέσεως, πνευματικῶς λεγόντων, ἀκούοντων, πραττόντων τῶν τοῦ κυρίου μαθητῶν.”

⁵⁹ Ibid. 5.3.17.1, 3: “ἡ γοῦν τῆς ἀγνοίας ἐπίστασις τὸ πρῶτόν ἐστι μάθημα τῷ κατὰ λόγον βαδίζοντι. [...] φρόνιμοι ψυχαί, καθαραι ὡς παρθένοι, συνεῖσαι σφᾶς αὐτὰς ἐν ἀγνοίᾳ καθεστῶσας κοσμικῇ, τὸ φῶς ἀνάπτουσι καὶ τὸν νοῦν ἐγείρουσι καὶ φωτίζουν τὸ σκότος καὶ τὴν ἄνοιαν ἐξελαύνουσι καὶ ζητοῦσι τὴν ἀλήθειαν καὶ τοῦ διδασκάλου τὴν ἐπιφάνειαν ἀναμένουσι.”

⁶⁰ Pearson, “Egypt,” 343.

Scriptures.⁶¹ The exegesis which Origen develops highly is allegorical.⁶² As one scholar has described his allegorical exegesis, Origen “seems to view the biblical text as a textile woven by the Spirit, in which very many different strands form one coherent whole [...] with the proviso that [...] the woven picture is not clearly visible on first inspection.”⁶³ Therefore, oftentimes when Origen examines a particular section of the Scriptures, his exegesis reads to the effect of “while this passage says this, it should be interpreted this way.”⁶⁴

The exegetical nature of his writings—in particular, his use of allegory—is key to understanding his use of optical imagery. For Origen, allegory allows him to claim that the eyes of the soul are the mind.⁶⁵ It is through these eyes that one senses God. Like Clement, Origen considers Christ the “true light” [τὸ φῶς τὸ ἀληθινὸν] in his *Commentary on John*.⁶⁶ However, Origen strives to make finer semantic distinctions than what the Scriptures state in John 1.9.⁶⁷ For Origen, Christ cannot be any sort of sensible light (like the sun, moon, and stars) since the sensible lights came into existence on the fourth day of creation. What the Scriptures really mean is that Christ is not a sensible light in the sensible world, but the “light of the noetic world”.⁶⁸ He states,

⁶¹ Ronald E. Heine, *Origen: Scholarship in the Service of the Church*, Christian Theology in Context (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), viii.

⁶² Cf. *Commentary on John* I.26.180.

⁶³ Morwenna Ludlow, “Theology and Allegory: Origen and Gregory of Nyssa on the Unity and Diversity of Scripture,” *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 4:1 (March 2002): 49.

⁶⁴ For example, Origen, *Contra Celsum* 7.34: “And if it should be said that the word of the Lord was in the hand of Jeremiah the prophet or some other or the law in the hand of Moses or that ‘I sought God with my hands and I was not cheated’ [Ps. 76.3], no one is so much a fool as not to understand that there are some things figuratively called ‘hands’...”

“Κἂν λέγηται «λόγος κυρίου» γεγονέναι ἐν χειρὶ Ἰερεμίου τοῦ προφήτου ἢ ἄλλου τινός, ἢ νόμος «ἐν χειρὶ» Μωϋσέως, ἢ ὅτι «Ταῖς χερσὶ μου ἐζήτησα τὸν θεὸν καὶ οὐκ ἠπατήθην», οὐχ οὕτως ἐστὶ τις ἀνόητος, ὡς μὴ ἐκλαμβάνειν χεῖρας τινὰς εἶναι τροπικῶς καλουμένας...”

⁶⁵ Origen, *Dialogus cum Heraclide* 17: “...ἀλλ’ εἰσὶν οἱ ὀφθαλμοὶ ἡμῶν ὁ νοῦς.”

⁶⁶ Origen, *Commentary on John* I.25.159: “Ἔστι δὲ «τὸ φῶς τῶν ἀνθρώπων» καὶ «τὸ φῶς τὸ ἀληθινὸν» καὶ «φῶς ἐθνῶν»•”

⁶⁷ John 1.9: “The true light which illuminates every person was coming into the world.”

⁶⁸ Origen, *Commentary on John* I.25.161: “ὁ δὲ σωτὴρ ἐλλάμπων τοῖς λογικοῖς καὶ ἡγεμονικοῖς, ἵνα αὐτῶν ὁ νοῦς τὰ ἴδια ὀρατὰ βλέπη, τοῦ νοητοῦ κόσμου ἐστὶ φῶς•”

But, the Savior, being the ‘light of the world’, does not enlighten corporeal things, but *by His incorporeal power, the incorporeal mind*, in order that just as each of us is enlightened by the sun, so [each of us] is able to see other noetic things.⁶⁹

Christ, then, is a noetic light in order for the mind to see, not a sensible light.

As we have seen in the above quote, Origen emphasizes semantic distinctions in his theological anthropology as well, for it is the “incorporeal mind” [τὸν ἀσώματον νοῦν] that sees the noetic light of Christ. In his commentary on the latter part of Psalm 4.7, similar to Clement’s use of the image of sunlight, Origen correlates physical sunlight with the “light of [God’s] face” in the psalm.⁷⁰ Origen understands that with a source of light and “healthy eyes” [ὑγιαίνοντας...ὀφθαλμοὺς], the Christian is able to see the light and everything around him.⁷¹ However, the Alexandrian exegete is quick to clarify the meaning of the psalm: “In the same manner does the light of God come to the *mind* of each with a certain power.”⁷² The light from the “face of God” comes to the noetic eyes, not to physical eyes.

Likewise, as he comments in his *De Principiis* on the beatitude of Christ concerning the pure in heart who will see God, Origen asks, “For what else is it to see God in the heart, unless—according to what we have explained above—[it is] to perceive and know Him with the mind?”⁷³ Origen explains further that the names of bodily organs are often used to describe the “capacities of the soul” [*virtutibus animae*], but the names do not necessitate a ‘substantial’ relationship between the two, i.e. that the soul is corporeal.⁷⁴ Origen quotes Proverb 2.5 to make his point:

⁶⁹ Ibid. I.25.164 (emphasis my own): “Ὁ δὲ σωτήρ, «φῶς» ὢν «τοῦ κόσμου», φωτίζει οὐ σώματα ἀλλὰ ἀσώματα δύναμει τὸν ἀσώματον νοῦν, ἵνα ὡς ὑπὸ ἡλίου ἕκαστος ἡμῶν φωτιζόμενος καὶ τὰ ἄλλα δυναθῆ βλέπει νοητά.”

⁷⁰ Psalm 4.7 (LXX): “ἐσημειώθη ἐφ’ ἡμᾶς τὸ φῶς τοῦ προσώπου σου, κύριε.”; Origen, *Commentary on the Psalms* 4.7.

⁷¹ Origen, *op. cit.*, 4.7: “Ὁν τρόπον δὲ ἐπὶ τοῦ σωματικοῦ φωτὸς συντέτευχε τὸ συνεργεῖν αὐτὸ τοῖς ὑγιαίνοντας ἔχουσιν ὀφθαλμοὺς πρὸς τε τὴν αὐτοῦ θέαν καὶ τὴν τῶν αἰσθητῶν.”

⁷² Ibid. (emphasis my own): “τὸν αὐτὸν τρόπον ὁ Θεὸς δύναμει τινὶ φθάνων ἐπὶ τὸν ἑκάστων νοῦν.”

⁷³ Origen, *De Principiis* I.1.9: “*Nam quid aliud est corde deum videre, nisi secundum id, quod supra exposuimus, mente eum intellegere atque cognoscere?*”

⁷⁴ Ibid.

“You will find a divine sense” [*Sensum divinum invenies*].⁷⁵ Here and elsewhere, Origen intentionally quotes from a source other than the Septuagint because he conceives of two sensory capacities—one bodily, the other divine.⁷⁶

As Mark McInroy has argued, there are some passages in Origen’s texts which speak of a divine sense analogous to bodily sense.⁷⁷ For example, in his treatise against Celsus, written at the behest of his patron Ambrose, Origen defends the prophetic visions of John, Isaiah, and Ezekiel by drawing a distinction between bodily vision and divine vision.⁷⁸ He states,

For, I do not suppose that the [bodily-]sensible heaven opened [...] so that Ezekiel could describe it. [...] But, the one who scrutinizes this in its profundity will say that there is, as Scripture calls it, some generic divine sense which only the blessed finds here, according to that which is said by Solomon, “You will find a divine sense.” And, there are types of this sense: vision which is disposed to see greater things [...] among which the Cherubim and Seraphim are apparent...⁷⁹

In other words, the senses by which the prophets, such as Ezekiel and Isaiah, saw their visions were divine faculties, different from the bodily. What is more, they were senses that belonged to those who were blessed, that is, “those loving God through everything [who breath] Christ, having Him before their eyes.”⁸⁰

⁷⁵ Ibid.; Origen similarly quotes this proverb in *De Principiis* IV.4.10: “Sensum quoque divinum invenies.’ *In quo ostendit non corporali sensu, sed alio quodam, quem divinum nominat, ea, quae intellectualia sunt, requirenda.*”

⁷⁶ While the edition of Rufinus’ Latin recension of Origen’s *De Principiis* makes it hard to determine whether or not this portion was interpolated by Rufinus, Origen’s *Contra Celsum* I.48 and VII.34 seem to prove that Origen intentionally does not quote the Septuagint version of this proverb which states, “ἐπίγνωσιν θεοῦ εὐρήσεις”, but instead chooses to quote from another tradition because it states “αἴσθησιν θεῖαν εὐρήσεις”. See Mark McInroy, “Origen of Alexandria,” 28ff. on this point.

⁷⁷ McInroy, “Origen of Alexandria,” 33: “I propose that God is described as being present to the human being in these passages, and it is because the human being is able to discern that presence that we are justified in speaking of something resembling perception.”

⁷⁸ Heine, *Origen*, 220.

⁷⁹ Origen, *Contra Celsum* I.48: “Εγὼ γὰρ οὐχ ὑπολαμβάνω τὸν αἰσθητὸν οὐρανὸν ἀνεῶχθαι [...] ἵνα ἀναγράψῃ τὸ τοιοῦτον Ἰεζεκιήλ. [...] Ὁ δὲ βαθύτερον τὸ τοιοῦτον ἐξετάζων ἐρεῖ ὅτι οὐσης, ὡς ἡ γραφὴ ὠνόμασε, θείας τινὸς γενικῆς αἰσθήσεως, ἣν μόνος ὁ μακάριος εὐρίσκει ἤδη κατὰ τὸ λεγόμενον καὶ παρὰ τῷ Σολομῶντι· «Ὅτι αἴσθησιν θεῖαν εὐρήσεις», καὶ ὄντων εἰδῶν ταύτης τῆς αἰσθήσεως, ὀράσεως πεφυκυίας βλέπειν τὰ κρείττονα [...] ἐν οἷς δηλοῦται τὰ χερουβὶμ ἢ τὰ σεραφίμ...”

⁸⁰ Origen, *Commentary on Lamentations* CXVI: “οἱ γὰρ θεοφιλεῖς διὰ παντὸς τὸν Χριστὸν ἀναπνέουσι, πρὸ ὀφθαλμῶν αὐτὸν ἔχοντες.”

Origen's concern for a distinction between divine perception and bodily perception in *Contra Celsum* becomes clearer when one considers his historical setting. According to Heine, after his move to Caesarea in 232 CE due to "irreconcilable differences with bishop Demetrius of Alexandria", Origen may have encountered opposition from the Jewish community in Caesarea.⁸¹ "The fact that Celsus," Heine writes, "had presented part of his attack on the Christian faith as the objections of a Jew to Christianity may have contributed to Origen's decision to assent to Ambrose's request."⁸² As Heine argues, Origen's decision to write *Contra Celsum* may reflect his desire to defend the Christian faith against the objections of the Jews in Caesarea and, furthermore, to educate new believers on the soundness of Christianity.⁸³ Thus, the Scriptures may speak of eyes ("Open my eyes, and I will comprehend the wonders from Your Law"), but the Christian does not believe that one comprehends the Law with bodily eyes. Origen retorts, "No one is so much a gaping fool as to suppose that the 'wonders of the Law' of God are comprehended by the eyes of the body."⁸⁴ It is by the eyes of a divine sense that the wonders of the Law of God are comprehended.⁸⁵

How the eyes of the divine senses have concretization in Origen's thought is apparent in his late work *Dialogus cum Heraclide*. One particular passage tells how there are in every person, "two human beings": an inner and an outer.⁸⁶ Both the inner and outer human beings have eyes. But, again quoting Psalm 119.18, "Open my eyes and I will comprehend the wonders from Your Law", Origen clarifies what these eyes are which comprehend the Law of God: "Our

⁸¹ Heine, *Origen*, 145.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 221.

⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ Origen, *Contra Celsum* VII.34: "«Ἀποκάλυψον τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς μου, καὶ κατανοήσω τὰ θαυμάσιά σου ἐκ τοῦ νόμου σου»"; *Ibid.*: "οὐχ οὕτως τις ἐμβρόντητός ἐστιν, ὡς νομίζειν ὀφθαλμοῖς σώματος κατανοεῖσθαι «τὰ θαυμάσια» τοῦ θεοῦ «νόμου»"

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*: "Ἐὶ δὲ καὶ περὶ τῆς κρείττονος αἰσθήσεως καὶ οὐ σωματικῆς βούλει ἀπὸ τῶν ἱερῶν γραμμάτων μαθεῖν, ἄκουσον Σολομῶντος ἐν ταῖς Παραροιμίαις λέγοντος • «Αἴσθησιν θεῖαν εὐρήσεις.»"

⁸⁶ Origen, *Dialogus cum Heraclide* 16: "Δύο οὖν καθ' ἕκαστον ἡμῶν εἰσιν ἄνθρωποι."

eyes are our mind.”⁸⁷ Throughout this portion of his dialogue, Origen never makes the same equivocation of the other senses. Thus, the eyes of the inner human being, or rather (since he later understands the inner human being as the soul⁸⁸), the eyes of the soul are the mind. It is through this faculty of the soul that one may find the divine vision that the prophets had, if one “breathes Christ, having Him before their eyes”.⁸⁹

FROM THE FOURTH CENTURY: CONTEMPORARIES OF PSEUDO-MACARIUS

Evagrius of Pontus: “A Conversation with God”

From the foundations of Clement and Origen in the third century, we move to the fourth century to consider the contemporaries of Pseudo-Macarius and how they used optical imagery in tandem with their theological anthropologies. Not least of those who were influenced heavily by the Alexandrian instructors were two theologians from Asia Minor—Gregory of Nyssa and Evagrius of Pontus. The latter had so much of an affinity with the works of Origen that his own writings were condemned as heretical along with Origen’s at the Council of Constantinople in 553 CE.⁹⁰ The condemnation of his esoteric cosmology notwithstanding, Evagrius’ works stand at the pinnacle of what may be considered a desert monastic systematic theology in which his theological anthropology factors significantly.

According to the monastic historian Palladius, Evagrius moved at least twice in his life—the first from Constantinople to Jerusalem, and the second, from Jerusalem to Nitria of Egypt—

⁸⁷ Origen, *Dialogus cum Heraclide* 17: “Αποκάλυψον τοὺς ὀφθαλμούς μου, καὶ κατανοήσω τὰ θαυμάσια τοῦ νόμου σου, ὡς κεκαλυμμένων αὐτοῦ τῶν ὀφθαλμῶν οὐχί, ἀλλ’ εἰσὶν οἱ ὀφθαλμοὶ ἡμῶν ὁ νοῦς.”

⁸⁸ *Ibid.* 23: “Εἰ νενόηται ἡ ψυχὴ, καὶ νενόηται κατὰ τὸν ἔσω ἄνθρωπον...”

⁸⁹ See note 80 above.

⁹⁰ Columba Stewart, “Evagrius Ponticus and the Eastern Monastic Tradition on the Intellect and the Passions,” *Modern Theology* 27:2 (April 2011): 271: “Like his theological mentor, Origen, Evagrius elaborated an esoteric cosmology (or more precisely a protology and eschatology) that was viewed suspiciously in the climate of increasing theological precision and controversy from the late fourth through sixth centuries.”

to escape from luxury, vainglory, and (in one instance) lusty desire for a high-born woman.⁹¹

That from which he escaped became part and parcel of his theological anthropology. To Evagrius, even thoughts of luxury, glory, and erotic love pulled one away from God, regardless of whether they were acted upon, and thus, these thoughts (known as *logismoi*) needed to be bridled and steered in the right direction—toward God. In the monastic communities of Egypt, Evagrius’ teachings on *logismoi* and the ascent to God developed into an ascetic system.

Foundational to a discussion of Evagrius’ ascetic system is his understanding of the body and soul. Similar to Origen, Evagrius speaks of the two, body and soul, in one person,

To separate [χωρίσαι] the body from the soul is only for the One who bound them together, but [to separate] the soul from the body is for the one who desires virtue. For our fathers called withdrawal [ἀναχώρησιν] the practice of death and the flight from the body.⁹²

However, as Kevin Corrigan has pointed out, one’s “flight from the body” is the soul’s separation, but it is also (paradoxically) a deeper integration of the soul and body.⁹³ “The separation of the mind/soul from body,” Corrigan states, “leads [...] not simply to a new integral mind/body relation, but to a new interrelated way of living in the world.”⁹⁴ One’s mind in this “new interrelated way of living” functions as the *hegemonikon*, a leading faculty of the whole human being, body and soul.⁹⁵ Thus, in the Evagrian corpus, the mind plays a central role in his concept of theological anthropology.

⁹¹ Palladius, *Historia Lausiaca* 38. On Evagrius’ desire for a high-born woman, see 38.3: “...εἰδῶλω περιπαῖναι γυναικικῆς ἐπιθυμίας, ὡς αὐτὸς ἡμῖν διηγήσατο, ὕστερον ἐλευθερωθεὶς τὸ φρονοῦν. Αντηράσθη τούτου πάλιν τὸ γύναιον· ἦν δὲ τῶν μεγιστάνων.”

⁹² Evagrius, *Practicus* 52: “Σῶμα μὲν χωρίσαι ψυχῆς, μόνου ἐστὶ τοῦ συνδήσαντος· ψυχὴν δὲ ἀπὸ σώματος, καὶ τοῦ ἐφιεμένου τῆς ἀρετῆς. Τὴν γὰρ ἀναχώρησιν μελέτην θανάτου καὶ φυγὴν τοῦ σώματος οἱ Πατέρες ἡμῶν ὀνομάζουσιν.”

⁹³ Corrigan, *Evagrius and Gregory*, 121ff.

⁹⁴ Corrigan, *Evagrius and Gregory*, 126.

⁹⁵ Cf. Evagrius, *Peri logismōn* 41-42.

Evagrius' theological anthropological system consists of three tiers: *praktikē*, *physikē*, and *theologikē*.⁹⁶ Between all three tiers, the glue which holds his system together is prayer. Reminiscent of Clement's *Stromata*, Evagrius writes, "Prayer is a conversation of the mind before God."⁹⁷ A conversation necessitates the presence of two parties. In the case of the Evagrian system, these parties are the ascended mind and condescended God.

For the human mind to ascend, prayer requires constancy in order for the relationship between the mind and God to be well-nourished.⁹⁸ Should one slack in this constancy, the mind becomes susceptible to the pollution of demonic temptations.⁹⁹ In the ascension of the mind from *praktikē* into *physikē*, the monk must defeat the demons and *logismoi* that oppose the mind.¹⁰⁰ *Praktikē* includes the bridling of bodily actions within the sensible world, but for Evagrius, the mind is the primary battleground over which the monk must gain victory. The body falls in line after one's victory in the mind.

The end of the tier of *praktikē* was *apatheia*. When a stone is cast into a pond, the ripples dissipate, and the surface of the water is still again. This imagery visualizes Evagrian *apatheia*. The mind must prevent the stones of the passionate *logismoi* from entering in the time of prayer so that its surface remains still.¹⁰¹ Through self-control, the monk reaches the next tier, *physikē*, or the contemplation of nature. For Evagrius, *physikē* is when the mind begins to see itself and

⁹⁶ Evagrius, *Practicus* 1: "Χριστιανισμός ἐστι δόγμα τοῦ Σωτῆρος ἡμῶν Χριστοῦ ἐκ πρακτικῆς καὶ φυσικῆς καὶ θεολογικῆς συνεστός." For more on the Evagrian tiers, see William Harmless, "Evagrius Ponticus: Mystical Theology," in *Desert Christians: An Introduction to the Literature of Early Monasticism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 345ff. Harmless includes a helpful visualization on page 346.

⁹⁷ Evagrius, *De oratione* 3: "Ἡ προσευχὴ, ὁμιλία ἐστὶ νοῦ πρὸς Θεόν." Cf. Clement, *Stromata* 7.7.39.6: "ἔστιν οὖν, ὡς εἰπεῖν τολμηρότερον, ὁμιλία πρὸς τὸν θεὸν ἢ εὐχή."

⁹⁸ Casiday, *Reconstructing the Theology*, 138. Cf. Evagrius, *De oratione* 101: "Ὡσπερ ὁ ἄρτος τροφή ἐστὶ τῷ σώματι, καὶ ἀρετὴ τῇ ψυχῇ, οὕτω καὶ τοῦ νοῦ ἡ πνευματικὴ προσευχὴ τροφή ὑπάρχει."

⁹⁹ See, for instance, Evagrius, *Practicus* 23.

¹⁰⁰ Evagrius, *Practicus* 60: "Ἡ μὲν τελεία τῇ ψυχῇ ἀπάθεια μετὰ τὴν νίκην τὴν κατὰ πάντων τῶν ἀντικειμένων τῇ πρακτικῇ δαιμόνων ἐγγίνεται."

¹⁰¹ Evagrius, *Skemmata* 3: "Ἀπάθειά ἐστι κατάσταση ἡρέμεια [read ἡρεμαῖα] ψυχῆς λογικῆς, ἐκ πραύτητος καὶ σωφροσύνης συνισταμένη."

light appears to be the limit of the human mind's experience of the Trinity. Evagrius explains in his commentary on Psalm 4.7,

The angels throughout all time see the face of God, but humans [only see] the light of His face. For, the face of the Lord is the spiritual contemplation of everything which has come into being on earth. But, the light of [His] face is the partial knowledge of these things, since according to the wise Thekoa, "David was just like an angel of God, seeing all things on earth."¹¹¹

Similar to Origen's commentary on the same passage, Evagrius justifies why the mind only sees the *light* of the face of God: The human mind is limited to "partial knowledge".

The human mind has its limitations, but Evagrius hints in other passages that the mind may be able to see the face of God. One such cryptic passage in his *De oratione* states, "A monk becomes equal to the angels through true prayer, desiring to see the face of the Father [who is] in heaven."¹¹² In this case, the monk through prayer has achieved angelic status, presumably reaching the goal of *theologikē*. But, is Evagrius indicating that at the end of the tier of *theologikē* the monk *can* see the face of God? Casiday answers yes, but with nuance. The monk "desires to see the face of the Father"; however, a monk cannot see the face of God on her own without the condescension of God. If prayer is a "conversation with God", God as the second party in the conversation must meet the human mind's ascent. Thus, the condescension of God in Evagrius' writings occurs in Christ who, Casiday argues, "mediates between the Trinity and the creature."¹¹³ This mediation of Christ is that with which Evagrius is concerned in his commentary on Psalm 79.8:

Monachorum Aegyptiorum historiam scribendam utilitas (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1887), 116-117, in which Evagrius is said to have had a mystical experience.

¹¹¹ Evagrius, *scholion* 6 on Psalm 4.7: "Οἱ μὲν ἄγγελοι διὰ παντὸς βλέπουσι τὸ πρόσωπον τοῦ Θεοῦ• οἱ δὲ ἄνθρωποι, τὸ φῶς τοῦ προσώπου αὐτοῦ. Πρόσωπον γὰρ Κυρίου ἐστὶ θεωρία πνευματικὴ πάντων τῶν ἐπὶ γῆς γεγονότων. Φῶς δὲ προσώπου ἐστὶν ἡ μερικὴ γινῶσις τούτων αὐτῶν, εἴτερ κατὰ τὴν σοφὴν Θηκοῦντιδα• Ὡσπερ ἄγγελος Θεοῦ ἦν ὁ Δαυὶδ, πάντα εἰδὼς τὰ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς."

¹¹² Evagrius, *De oratione* 113: "Ἰσάγγελος γίνεται μοναχὸς διὰ τῆς ἀληθοῦς προσευχῆς, ἐπιποθῶν ἰδεῖν τὸ πρόσωπον τοῦ Πατρὸς τοῦ ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς."

¹¹³ Casiday, *Reconstructing the Theology*, 185.

“And reveal Your face, and we will be saved, etc.” Here, [the psalmist] calls Christ a face, “for He is the image [εἰκὼν] of the invisible God, first-born of all creation.”¹¹⁴

According to Evagrius, it is in and through the face of Christ that one sees the face of God.

That one sees the face of God *through* the face of Christ in Evagrius’ theology is part of Casiday’s iconic hypothesis.¹¹⁵ Casiday makes a compelling case that one need not read subordination into Evagrius’ Christology, but should instead consider mediation as the role of Christ in the relationship between God and created beings.¹¹⁶ Based on Evagrius’ writings, Casiday also makes note of Evagrius’ assertion that “when we encounter Christ, we encounter the Trinity.”¹¹⁷ In other words, there is no reason to suppose that Evagrius believed there was an ontological distinction between Christ and the Word.¹¹⁸ Since the Word is considered a person of the Trinity and since there is no ontological distinction between Christ and the Word, one sees the face of God *in* the face of Christ as well.¹¹⁹

To sum up, Evagrius’ theological anthropology gives us the necessities for prayer, a conversation with God. Since God has condescended in Christ, the monk is able to ascend through the tiers to see the face of God (just as the angels do) from *praktikē* to *physikē* to *theologikē*. As the monk grows further and further away from the passionate *logsimoi*, the mind grows closer and closer to the enlightenment of the Holy Trinity. When the mind approaches the contemplation of God in pure prayer, it not only sees the light of God in Christ, but is illuminated

¹¹⁴ Evagrius, *scholion* 4 on Psalm 79.8: “Καὶ ἐπίφανον τὸ πρόσωπόν σου, καὶ σωθησόμεθα, κ. τ. ἐ. Πρόσωπον ἐνταῦθα τὸν Χριστὸν ὠνόμασεν• «Εἰκὼν γάρ ἐστι τοῦ Θεοῦ τοῦ ἀοράτου, Πρωτότοκος πάσης κτίσεως.»”

¹¹⁵ Casiday, *Reconstructing the Theology*, 188ff.

¹¹⁶ Casiday, *Reconstructing the Theology*, 203.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 216.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁹ Cf. Evagrius, *Kephalaia Gnostica* III.3: “Unity is that which is now known by Christ alone whose knowledge is eternally existent.”

✧,⊕,⊙,⊚,⊛,⊜,⊝,⊞,⊟,⊠,⊡,⊢,⊣,⊤,⊥,⊦,⊧,⊨,⊩,⊪,⊫,⊬,⊭,⊮,⊯,⊰,⊱,⊲,⊳,⊴,⊵,⊶,⊷,⊸,⊹,⊺,⊻,⊼,⊽,⊾,⊿,Ⓚ,Ⓛ,Ⓜ,Ⓝ,Ⓟ,Ⓠ,Ⓡ,Ⓢ,Ⓣ,Ⓤ,Ⓥ,Ⓦ,Ⓧ,Ⓨ,Ⓩ,ⓐ,ⓑ,ⓒ,ⓓ,ⓔ,ⓕ,ⓖ,ⓗ,ⓘ,ⓙ,ⓚ,ⓛ,ⓜ,ⓝ,ⓞ,ⓟ,ⓠ,ⓡ,ⓢ,ⓣ,ⓤ,⓶,⓷,⓸,⓹,⓺,⓻,⓼,⓽,⓾,⓿,Ⓚ,Ⓛ,Ⓜ,Ⓝ,Ⓟ,Ⓠ,Ⓡ,Ⓢ,Ⓣ,Ⓤ,Ⓥ,Ⓦ,Ⓧ,Ⓨ,Ⓩ,ⓐ,ⓑ,ⓒ,ⓓ,ⓔ,ⓕ,ⓖ,ⓗ,ⓘ,ⓙ,ⓚ,ⓛ,ⓜ,ⓝ,ⓞ,ⓟ,ⓠ,ⓡ,ⓢ,ⓣ,ⓤ,⓶,⓷,⓸,⓹,⓺,⓻,⓼,⓽,⓾,⓿

predisposed toward the Divine Good.¹²⁴ He explains his argument by means of a comparison with the human eye. In Gregory's understanding, a person sees because the eye, having a light within itself, mingles with an exterior light:

For as the eye by the ray of light which is wrapped up in it comes into fellowship with light, [...] so it was necessary that something akin to the Divine should be mingled with human nature, so that by its corresponding state, [human nature] might have a desire for that which is proper to it.¹²⁵

Since the eye and light have a mutual correspondence, the eye is naturally drawn to desire light. In the same way, humanity has a mutual correspondence with the Divine, and so is naturally drawn to desire the Divine.

For Gregory, if humanity has a predisposition to desire God as a result of its likeness to God, it also has a condition of sickness which can separate it from God. In his *De infantibus praemature abreptis*, Gregory of Nyssa argues that an infant cannot have a condition of sickness because the eyes of its soul were healthy from birth.¹²⁶ But, those with unhealthy eyes of the soul are afflicted with the illness of vice and ignorance as they grow in age.¹²⁷ Such people, therefore, must purge their souls of this illness in order to see God.

Similar to the purging of *logismoi* in the Evagrian ascetic system, Gregory understands that for one to see the Divine, one must purge the soul of its sickness. In his *De instituto*

¹²⁴ Gregory of Nyssa, *Oratio catechetica* 5.4: “Εἰ τοίνυν ἐπὶ τούτοις ὁ ἄνθρωπος εἰς γένεσιν ἔρχεται, ἐφ’ ᾧτε μέτοχος τῶν θείων ἀγαθῶν γενέσθαι, ἀναγκαίως τοιοῦτος κατασκευάζεται, ὡς ἐπιτηδείως πρὸς τὴν τῶν ἀγαθῶν μετουσίαν ἔχειν.”

¹²⁵ Gregory of Nyssa, *Oratio catechetica* 5.4: “καθάπερ γὰρ ὁ ὀφθαλμὸς διὰ τῆς ἐγκειμένης αὐτῷ φυσικῶς αὐγῆς ἐν κοινωνίᾳ τοῦ φωτὸς γίνεται, [...] οὕτως ἀναγκαῖον ἦν ἐγκραθῆναι τι τῇ ἀνθρωπίνῃ φύσει συγγενὲς πρὸς τὸ θεῖον, ὡς ἂν διὰ τοῦ καταλλήλου πρὸς τὸ οἰκεῖον τὴν ἔφεσιν ἔχοι.”

¹²⁶ Gregory of Nyssa, *De infantibus praemature abreptis* [Hörner, 82-83]: “τὸ δὲ ἀπειρόκακον νήπιον, μηδεμιᾶς νόσου τῶν τῆς ψυχῆς ὀμμάτων πρὸς τὴν τοῦ φωτὸς μετουσίαν ἐπιπροσθούσης, ἐν τῷ κατὰ φύσιν γίνεται μὴ δεόμενον τῆς ἐκ τοῦ καθαρῆς ὑγιείας, ὅτι μηδὲ τὴν ἀρχὴν τὴν νόσον τῇ ψυχῇ παρεδέξατο.”

¹²⁷ Gregory of Nyssa, *op. cit.* [Hörner, 82]: “ὁ δὲ τὰ διὰ τῆς ἀρετῆς φεύγων καθάρσια καὶ δυσίατον ἑαυτῷ διὰ τῶν ἀπατηλῶν ἡδονῶν κατασκευάζων τῆς ἀγνοίας τὴν νόσον, παρὰ φύσιν διατεθεὶς ἡλλοτριῶται τοῦ κατὰ φύσιν καὶ ἀμέτοχος γίνεται τῆς οἰκειᾶς ἡμῶν καὶ καταλλήλου ζωῆς.”

christiano, he states that the “perfect will of God” [θέλημα τέλειον τοῦ θεοῦ] for humanity is twofold: To purify the soul and to bring the pure soul to God.¹²⁸ Just as in the Evagrian tiers of *praktikē* and *physikē*, the purification of the soul involves ascension higher than the pleasures of the body into the realm of the intellectual, wherein one is “desirous and able to see that noetic and ineffable light [τὸ νοητὸν ἐκεῖνο καὶ ἄφραστον φῶς].”¹²⁹ Further on, Gregory explains what he means by the “noetic and ineffable light”: it is the very light of God.¹³⁰ Thus, like Evagrius, the cure for the illness of vice and ignorance is the ascent to the vision of the light of God.¹³¹

An analysis of the optical imagery in Gregory’s *In Canticum Canticorum* reveals that in Gregory’s understanding, the vision of God entails likeness to God. The two concepts of vision and likeness are not mutually exclusive.¹³² In fact, as Martin Laird has argued, virtue (the likeness to God) and knowledge (the vision of God) occur in tandem in Gregory of Nyssa’s homilies.¹³³ As one becomes more like God through virtue, one may see God in personal knowledge. As Gregory indicates in his preface, the homilies were written at the behest of one “most-dignified Olympias” [τῇ σεμνοπρεπεστάτῃ Ὀλυμπιάδι], a noblewoman about whom, moreover, he states,

¹²⁸ Gregory of Nyssa, *De instituto christiano* 3.2 [Staats, 97]: “ἔστιν οὖν θέλημα τέλειον τοῦ θεοῦ τὸ καθᾶραι διὰ τῆς χάριτος τὴν ψυχὴν παντὸς μολυσμοῦ, τῶν τοῦ σώματος ἡδονῶν ὑψηλοτέραν ποιήσαντα, καὶ προσάγειν αὐτὴν καθαρὰν τῷ θεῷ, ποθοῦσαν καὶ δυναμένην ἰδεῖν τὸ νοητὸν ἐκεῖνο καὶ ἄφραστον φῶς.”

¹²⁹ Gregory of Nyssa, *De instituto christiano* 3.2 [Staats, 97].

¹³⁰ Ibid.: “τοὺς τοιοῦτους καὶ ὁ κύριος μακαρίζει λέγων• Μακάριοι οἱ καθαροὶ τῇ καρδίᾳ ὅτι αὐτοὶ τὸν θεὸν ὄψονται•”

¹³¹ Cf. Alessandro Cortesi, *Le Omelie sul Cantico dei Cantici di Gregorio di Nissa: Proposta di un itinerario di vita battesimale* (Rome: Institutum Patristicum Augustinianum, 2000), 166: “The symbolism of light to express the inner presence and transforming power of the Logos in the souls of believers opens reflection on the Christian life to two complementary- and mutually-related dimensions of progress in communion with the luminous presence of the One who has assumed human nature, and of the responsibility and need for communication of this luminosity of a life in virtue, received and welcomed in all those who make up the body of the Church.”

¹³² Cf. *De instituto christiano* 3.3 [Staats, 101]: “Δεῖ οὖν τὸν ἐπιθυμοῦντα οικειωθῆναι τινὶ τὸν ἐκεῖνου τρόπον τῇ μιμήσει λαβεῖν ᾧ οικειοῦται• οὐκοῦν ἀνάγκη καὶ τὴν Χριστοῦ ποθοῦσαν γενέσθαι νύμφην τῷ τοῦ Χριστοῦ ὁμοιωθῆναι κάλλει δι’ ἀρετῆς κατὰ δύναμιν• οὐ γὰρ ἔστι συναφθῆναι ποτε φωτὶ μὴ πρὸς ἐκεῖνο βλέψαντα τὸ φῶς•”

¹³³ Martin Laird, “The Luminous Dark Revisited,” in *Gregory of Nyssa and the Grasp of Faith: Union, Knowledge, and Divine Presence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 174ff.

For, I believe that the eye of your soul is clean [σου καθαρεύειν τὸν τῆς ψυχῆς ὀφθαλμὸν] of every passion and filthy thought and that it looks, free of any impediment, toward the undefiled grace through these divine words.¹³⁴

Gregory is forthright that his homilies, while written at Olympias' request, are for those who are “more fleshly” [τοῖς σαρκωδεστέροις] in their spiritual lives and are in need of proper guidance.¹³⁵ Thus, the homilies are not just Gregory's comments on the Song of Songs for a noblewoman, but instructive pieces on the proper way for those desirous of God (the Bride) to see God (the Bridegroom).

In these homilies, one may see the interplay between virtue and personal in Gregory's use of the image of the eye. As we have concluded from Gregory's other writings, human nature like the human eye has the potential to shine in the light of God. However, “by the mixture with evil” it is instead “discolored and dark”.¹³⁶ In his fourth homily, Gregory likens human nature to a mirror.¹³⁷ If one directs a mirror toward things of evil, it will reflect those evil things; likewise, if it is directed toward the Good, it will reflect the Good. Gregory also understands the function of the human eye in this way. With a desire to understand Song of Songs 1.15, which states, “Your eyes are doves,” Gregory explains, “For, one receives the likeness of that toward which he fixes his eyes.”¹³⁸ When the bride of the Song of Songs is told her eyes are doves, Gregory (not unlike in the allegorical exegesis of Origen we have seen above) concludes that the Bride has gazed

¹³⁴ Gregory of Nyssa, *In Canticum Canticorum*, Preface [Langerbeck, 4]: “πέπεισμαι γάρ σου καθαρεύειν τὸν τῆς ψυχῆς ὀφθαλμὸν ἀπὸ πάσης ἐμπαθοῦς τε καὶ ῥυψώσης ἐννοίας καὶ πρὸς τὴν ἀκήρατον χάριν διὰ τῶν θείων τούτων ῥητῶν ἀπαραποδίστως βλέπειν”

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Cf. Gregory of Nyssa, *In Canticum Canticorum*, Homily 4 [Langerbeck, 100]: “χρυσῆς ἦν τὸ κατ' ἀρχὰς ἡ ἀνθρωπίνη φύσις καὶ λάμπουσα τῇ πρὸς τὸ ἀκήρατον ἀγαθὸν ὁμοιότητι, ἀλλὰ δύσχρους καὶ μέλαινα μετὰ τοῦτο τῇ ἐπιμιξίᾳ τῆς κακίας ἐγένετο...”

¹³⁷ Ibid. [Langerbeck, 104].

¹³⁸ Ibid. [Langerbeck, 105]: “πρὸς ὃ γὰρ ἂν τις ἐνατενίσῃ, τούτου δέχεται ἐν ἑαυτῷ τὸ ὁμοίωμα.”

upon that which is like a dove, namely the Holy Spirit.¹³⁹ Thus, “Your eyes are doves” means that one becomes like a dove because one has gazed upon the things of the Holy Spirit.

For Gregory, if the eyes are the organs through which one not only sees, but becomes the likeness of another, it is little wonder that the eyes are accorded the greatest honor among the body’s organs in the Song of Songs.¹⁴⁰ In further praise of the eyes, Gregory calls a number of the Hebrew prophets “eyes”.¹⁴¹ Gregory considers prophets such as Moses “eyes” because they, like leaders of the body of the Church, have looked “unswervingly toward the Sun of Righteousness, at no point having weak sight from the works of darkness.”¹⁴² When the leaders of the Church look towards God, their act of looking entails their virtuous conduct, and vice versa. Like eyes properly aligned toward a source of light, one becomes divine as one sees the Divine.¹⁴³

That one becomes divine through seeing the Divine is exemplified for Gregory in the person of Moses. In both his *In Canticum Canticorum* and his *De vita Moysis*, Gregory of Nyssa describes what scholars have labeled as a “mysticism of darkness” in which Moses’ encounter with God in Exodus 24.18 represents humanity’s mystical ascent to God.¹⁴⁴ Since Moses is said to have ascended to God “in darkness” [ἐν γνόφῳ], humanity can only ascend to God “in darkness” as well.¹⁴⁵ But Martin Laird has rightly pointed out that in those passages where

¹³⁹ Cf. Gregory of Nyssa, *In Canticum Canticorum*, Homily 7 [Langerbeck, 219]: “περιστερὰ γὰρ τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον.”

¹⁴⁰ Gregory of Nyssa, *In Canticum Canticorum*, Homily 7 [Langerbeck, 216-217]: “ἄρχεται δὲ τῶν ἐγκωμίων ἀπὸ τῶν κυριωτέρων μελῶν. τί γὰρ ὀφθαλμῶν ἐν τοῖς μέλεσιν ἡμῶν ἐστὶ τιμιώτερον; [...] ὧν ἡ θέσις τῶν ἄλλων αἰσθητηρίων ὑπερκειμένη τὸ προτιμότερον τῆς ἀπ’ αὐτῶν γινομένης ἡμῖν πρὸς τὸν βίον ὠφελείας ἐνδείκνυται.”

¹⁴¹ Ibid. [Langerbeck, 217]: “ὀφθαλμοὶ πάντες ἐκεῖνοι οἱ εἰς ὁδηγίαν τοῦ λαοῦ τεταγμένοι.”

¹⁴² Ibid.: “καὶ νῦν οἱ τὸν ἐκείνων τόπον ἀναπληροῦντες τῷ σώματι τῆς ἐκκλησίας ὀφθαλμοὶ κυρίως κατονομάζονται, ἐὰν ἀκριβῶς πρὸς τὸν τῆς δικαιοσύνης βλέπωσιν ἥλιον μηδαμοῦ τοῖς ἔργοις τοῦ σκότους ἐναμβλυώττοντες...”

¹⁴³ Cf. Ibid. Homily 13 [Langerbeck, 394-399].

¹⁴⁴ Laird, *Gregory of Nyssa and the Grasp of Faith*, 174.

¹⁴⁵ For “in darkness”, cf. Gregory of Nyssa, *In Canticum Canticorum*, Homily 11 [Langerbeck, 322]: “τῷ μεγάλῳ Μωϋσῆ διὰ φωτὸς ἤρξατο ἢ τοῦ θεοῦ ἐπιφάνεια, μετὰ ταῦτα διὰ νεφέλης αὐτῷ ὁ θεὸς διαλέγεται, εἶτα ὑψηλότερος

Gregory discusses light giving way to darkness, “the light that gives way to darkness is in some sense *epistemological* light. [...] This is a discursive realization regarding the limits of human knowledge of God.”¹⁴⁶ In other words, humans ascend to God “in darkness”, i.e. limited with respect to knowledge *about* God.

As Laird argues, Gregory’s is just as much a “mysticism of light” as it is a “mysticism of darkness”.¹⁴⁷ While Moses “comes within the darkness”, Gregory indicates that Moses also “becomes a sun, flashing forth unapproachable light from his face to those who draw near.”¹⁴⁸ Moses as an “eye” refracted that toward which his eyes were fixed—the light of God—in his pursuit of virtue and his personal knowledge of God.¹⁴⁹ Moses’ knowledge was personal in that he knew God, and thus became like God. Virtue (God-likeness) and the personal knowledge of God (God-sight) are two sides of the same coin. While the darkness into which Moses entered was an epistemological unknowing, Moses’ resultant luminosity is a consequence of both his virtue and his personal knowledge of God. Richard Norris has summed it this way: “Virtue makes the vision of God possible, and the vision of God makes virtue possible.”¹⁵⁰ In Gregory’s understanding, the image which best illustrates his theological anthropology is the eye, for it is through this organ that both the likeness to and the sight of something is achieved. Thus, the members of the body of Christ are to be “eyes”, having the likeness and the sight of God.

καὶ τελειότερος ἤδη γενόμενος ἐν γνόφῳ τὸν θεὸν βλέπει.” And cf. *De vita Moysis* II.162: “Τί δὲ δὴ βούλεται τὸ ἐντὸς γενέσθαι τοῦ γνόφου τὸν Μωϋσέα καὶ οὕτως ἐν αὐτῷ τὸν Θεὸν ἰδεῖν; Ἐναντίον γὰρ δοκεῖ πως εἶναι τῇ πρωτῇ θεοφανείᾳ τὸ νῦν ἱστορούμενον. Τοτὲ μὲν γὰρ ἐν φωτὶ, νῦν δὲ ἐν γνόφῳ τὸ Θεῖον ὁράται.”

¹⁴⁶ Laird, *Gregory of Nyssa and the Grasp of Faith*, 179.

¹⁴⁷ Laird, *Gregory of Nyssa and the Grasp of Faith*, 204.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid. Cf. Gregory of Nyssa, *In Canticum Canticorum*, Homily 12 [Langerbeck, 355]: “ἐντὸς τοῦ γνόφου γίνεται ἐν ᾧ ἦν ὁ θεός, τὴν διαθήκην δέχεται, ἥλιος γίνεται ἀπροσπέλαστον τοῖς προσεγγίζουσιν ἐκ τοῦ προσώπου τὸ φῶς ἀπαστρέπτων.”

¹⁴⁹ Cf. Gregory of Nyssa, op. cit., Homily 7 [Langerbeck, 217].

¹⁵⁰ Norris, *Gregory of Nyssa*, xxix. Cf. Gregory of Nyssa, op. cit., Homily 13 [Langerbeck, 376].

PSEUDO-MACARIUS: “BECOME ALL EYE” AS ONTOLOGICAL THEOLOGICAL ANTHROPOLOGY

In his treatise based on the *Epistula Magna* of Ps.-Macarius, Gregory of Nyssa states,

For there are two things of which a human being is composed, the body and the soul. While the one encompasses the outside, the other remains inside through the course of a lifetime...one must guard through every vigilance the inside, lest some ambush of evil...enslave the soul, secretly filling it with the passions which tear it apart.¹⁵¹

Scholars agree that Gregory’s work closely resembles Ps.-Macarius’ original, and in fact, Reinhart Staats has persuasively argued for the anteriority of Ps.-Macarius’ letter.¹⁵² How Gregory came to find and copy Ps.-Macarius’ works is still a matter of debate. Gregory, however, does hint that he visited the Mesopotamian East, and it is possible that he came into contact with Ps.-Macarius’ works there.¹⁵³

Both Ps.-Macarius and Gregory share an idea of the human person divided into two different realms of the body and the soul. It is within a consideration of these two realms that Ps.-Macarius’ optical imagery frequently appears. Ps.-Macarius has a clear distinction as to an “inner human” and an “outer human” in every person, complete with their own organs. He explains in one homily that just as the ancients read from their scrolls with sensible eyes, “so Christians read with the inner eyes of the soul and learn from the testament of the Spirit and speak with a new

¹⁵¹ *De instituto christiano* 3.6 [Staats, 107]: “Δύο γὰρ ὄντων ἀνθρώπων, ἐξ ὧν ὁ εἷς ἄνθρωπος ἤρμυσται, ψυχῆς τε καὶ σώματος, καὶ τοῦ μὲν ἔξωθεν περιέχοντος, τῆς δὲ ἔνδον παρὰ τὸν βίον μενούσης...τὴν δὲ ἔνδον χρὴ διὰ πάσης φρουρεῖν φυλακῆς, μὴ τις λόχος κακίας ...δουλώσῃ τὴν ψυχὴν, πληρώσας τὼν διεκόντων αὐτὴν λάθρα παθῶν.” Cf. Ps.-Macarius, *Epistula Magna* 3.6.

¹⁵² Reinhart Staats, *Gregor von Nyssa und die Messalianer: Die Frage der Priorität zweier altkirchlicher Schriften* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter & Co., 1968).

¹⁵³ Gregory of Nyssa, *De deitate adversus Evagrium* [Gebhardt, 337]: “οἰκιοῦμαι γὰρ τῶν ὁμοδούλων ἡμῶν τὰ κατορθώματα, οἱ τῷ αὐτῷ πνεύματι στοιχοῦντες ἐν τῇ δυνάμει τῶν ἰάσεων μαρτυροῦσι τῇ ἀληθείᾳ τοῦ λόγου ἄνδρες ἐξ ὑπερορίας ἤκοντες, πολῖται τοῦ πατρὸς ἡμῶν Ἀβραὰμ ἐκ Μεσοποταμίας ὁρμώμενοι, ἐξελθόντες καὶ οὔτοι ἐκ τῆς γῆς καὶ τῆς συγγενείας αὐτῶν καὶ τοῦ κόσμου παντός, πρὸς τὸν οὐρανὸν βλέποντες, ἐκδημοῦντες τρόπον τινὰ τῆς ἀνθρωπίνης ζωῆς...”

inner tongue and hear with inner ears.”¹⁵⁴ While this passage speaks of several “inner” (ἔσωθεν) organs, one of the main organs on which Ps.-Macarius places importance is the eye.

Many passages within Ps.-Macarius’ homilies reveal his proclivity for the eyes in his understanding of the human person. In one of his admonitions, he exhorts his audience to keep watch over their soul with “inner eyes”: “With respect to the soul, one must foresee with inner eyes [τοῖς ἔσωθεν ὀφθαλμοῖς], lest it become ensnared by the power which opposes it. As the animals which are ensnared and hunted by the hunter...so should we think [νοήσωμεν] concerning the soul.”¹⁵⁵ As wary animals can see the hunter approach, Ps.-Macarius understands that the soul can see the demons which may try to ensnare it.¹⁵⁶ While only hinted at here, Ps.-Macarius makes explicit elsewhere the correlation between the eyes of the body and the eyes of the soul.

Ps.-Macarius states that the body is made up of many different parts, yet these parts compose one human person. “So, also, the parts of the soul are many,” he argues, “While there are parts of the soul, there is one soul, an inner human [ὁ ἔσω ἄνθρωπος].”¹⁵⁷ He goes on to draw an analogy between the outer eyes which spot trouble, but he does not use the phrase “inner eyes” as the analogous counterpart. Instead, he uses the word νοῦς—the mind.¹⁵⁸ Thus, the mind functions as the eyes of a human person’s soul. As Marcus Plested explains, this equivalency of

¹⁵⁴ Ps.-Macarius, Homily III.15.2: “οὕτως οἱ Χριστιανοὶ τοῖς ἔσωθεν ὀφθαλμοῖς τῆς ψυχῆς ἀναγινώσκουσι καὶ μανθάνουσιν ἐκ τῆς διαθήκης τοῦ πνεύματος καὶ τῇ ἔσωθεν γλώσσῃ καινῇ λαλοῦσι καὶ τοῖς ἔσωθεν ὠσὶν ἀκούουσιν.”

¹⁵⁵ Ps.-Macarius, Homily I.3.3: “Χρὴ οὖν προβλέπειν τὴν ψυχὴν τοῖς ἔσωθεν ὀφθαλμοῖς, μήποτε παγιδευθῆ ὑπὸ τῆς τοῦ ἀντικειμένου δυνάμεως. ὥσπερ γὰρ τὰ ζῶα παγιδεύονται καὶ θηρῶνται ὑπὸ τῶν θηρευτῶν...οὕτω δὴ νοήσωμεν καὶ περὶ ψυχῆς.”

¹⁵⁶ He explicitly references demons a little further below in H. I.3.3: “καὶ οὕτως οἱ δαίμονες κάμπτουσι τὴν ψυχὴν...”

¹⁵⁷ Ps.-Macarius, Homily II.7.8.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid: “ὥσπερ δὲ οἱ ἔξωθεν ὀφθαλμοὶ προβλέπουσι μακρόθεν τὰς ἀκάνθας καὶ τοὺς κρημνοὺς καὶ τοὺς βόθρους, οὕτω καὶ ὁ νοῦς προβλέπει...”

the mind and eyes is Ps.-Macarius' noetic-sensible framework at play.¹⁵⁹ Within every human person, there are two parts, a body and soul, and within these parts are correlated organs. The eyes, then, correlate with the mind.

The function of the eyes/mind is sight, necessitating the health of the eyes and the presence of an exterior light, just as in Clement's theological anthropology. In one homily, Ps.-Macarius uses the imagery of the sun in order to speak about the health of one's eyes, "Just as if an eye had been struck, it could not see the rays of the sun..."¹⁶⁰ In other words, for the one who has received a blow to the eye, there is no sight; the swelling obstructs any ability to see. This obstruction is also the case for the blind. Concerning the blind, Ps.-Macarius writes, "For the sun appears even to the blind and to those who see; however, the blind do not see from their blindness that which appears before them. But, those who see purely behold the light because their eyes lie opened [ἡνεωγμένους]."¹⁶¹ Therefore, an eye which is not obstructed but lies opened is necessary for sight to occur.

Similar to the authors surveyed above, the other element which is necessary for sight is light. In one passage, he writes, "Just as the eyes of sensible sight see the sensible sun, so we see through the eyes of the soul the noetic light of the Sun of righteousness."¹⁶² For there to be sight, there must be a constant source of light which meets the viewer's eye. As we have seen above, Ps.-Macarius often uses the imagery of the sun as the constant source of light. In several other passages, he draws a connection between the sun's light which the eyes see and the light of the

¹⁵⁹ Plested, *The Macarian Legacy*, 32.

¹⁶⁰ Ps.-Macarius, Homily I.34.2: "Ὡσπερ ἐὰν ἦ ὀφθαλμὸς πεπληγμένος, ἀδυνάτως ἔχει ἰδεῖν τὰς ἀκτίνας τοῦ ἡλίου..."

¹⁶¹ Ps.-Macarius, Homily I.44.2: "... γὰρ ὁ ἥλιος φαίνει καὶ ἐπὶ τοὺς τυφλοὺς καὶ ἐπὶ τοὺς βλέποντας, ἀλλ' οἱ τυφλοὶ παρὰ τὸ τετυφλῶσθαι οὐχ ὁρῶσι τὸν εἰς αὐτοὺς φαίνοντα, οἱ δὲ βλέποντες καθαρῶς ὁρῶσι τὸ φῶς διὰ τὸ τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς αὐτῶν ἡνεωγμένους εἶναι..."

¹⁶² Ps.-Macarius, Homily I.18.6: "Ὡσπερ δὲ οἱ τῆς αἰσθητῆς ὄψεως ὀφθαλμοὶ ὁρῶσι τὸν αἰσθητὸν ἥλιον, οὕτω διὰ τῶν τῆς ψυχῆς ὀφθαλμῶν ὁρῶμεν τὸ νοερὸν φῶς τοῦ ἡλίου τῆς δικαιοσύνης."

“Sun of Righteousness” which the mind sees.¹⁶³ These two elements, the health of the eye itself and the presence of an exterior light, make up the essence of sight for Ps.-Macarius.

Turning now to Ps.-Macarius’ understanding of theological anthropology, we see how his view of the eyes and his view of humanity fit together. The theological anthropology of Ps.-Macarius is a two-part anthropology, both active and passive. The first part is active in that Ps.-Macarius encourages freedom from the passions and the pursuit of the virtues. He nicely sums this up in one homily where he describes the goal of those who pursue the Lord. He writes,

But every day, [the one who pursues the Lord] has an insatiable hunger and thirst for the mysteries of grace and for every state of virtue...believing that she will receive from the Spirit in fullness complete freedom from sins and from the darkness of the passions so that she may be purified in soul and in body through the Spirit.¹⁶⁴

Ps.-Macarius describes the passions, or vices, and the virtues using the imagery of a chain.¹⁶⁵ He lists such things as hatred, anger, pride, unbelief as vices to be avoided; he lists such things as love, joy, humility, and prayer as virtues to be pursued. The avoidance of vice and the pursuit of virtue are the active part which the Christian must play in Macarian theological anthropology.

The second part, then, is passive in that the Christian must be considered worthy by God. Ps.-Macarius uses the verb *kataxiōō* [καταξιώω] to talk about this stage of his anthropology. In an extended passage on “the true light” [τὸ ἀληθινὸν φῶς], a reference to the Gospel of John, Ps.-Macarius exhorts his audience to accept the light of God.¹⁶⁶ He writes that those who are born in the light cross over from eternal death into eternal life. Further on, he qualifies the one

¹⁶³For example, see homilies I.28.1, I.35.1, II.17.3, and II.34.1. Cf. Gregory of Nyssa in note 142.

¹⁶⁴ Ps.-Macarius, Homily II.10.4: “ἀλλὰ πᾶσαν ἡμέραν ἐκπεινος καὶ ἐκδιψος...εἰς τὰ τῆς χάριτος μυστήρια καὶ εἰς πᾶσαν κατάστασιν ἀρετῆς ἀκορέστως ἔχει...τῆς ἁμαρτίας καὶ τῆς σκοτίας τῶν παθῶν τελείαν λύτρωσιν δέξασθαι ὑπὸ τοῦ πνεύματος ἐν πληροφορίᾳ πιστεύουσα, ἵνα καθαρισθεῖσα διὰ τοῦ πνεύματος ψυχῇ καὶ σώματι.” The use of the feminine pronoun in my translation is a play on the feminine endings in the Greek. The actual subject of the feminine participles in this homily is ψυχῇ which is not quoted here.

¹⁶⁵ Cf. Ps.-Macarius, Homily II.40.1.

¹⁶⁶ Ps.-Macarius, Homily I.44.2; cf. John 1.9.

who has received this light as the one who is “considered worthy” [τῷ καταξιωθέντι].¹⁶⁷ The reception of this light comes as a result of the ascetic labor of the individual. Ps.-Macarius states, “One sees this True Light and has it in himself necessarily because he has seen the darkness dissipated, having acquired the fruits of the Spirit.”¹⁶⁸ This is the crossroads of Ps.-Macarius’ anthropology, wherein the actions of the Christian are met by the light of God at the moment when the Christian is considered worthy.

In sum, we have found that Ps.-Macarius’ anatomical understanding of sight is composed of two elements—the health of the eye itself and the presence of an exterior light. His theological anthropology is similarly divided into two parts, having both active and passive elements in the pursuit of the virtues and the consideration of worthiness, respectively. We may now begin to see the relationship between Ps.-Macarius’ optical imagery and his theological anthropology. If Ps.-Macarius conceives of the mind as the eye of the soul, there is a certain type of blindness which can afflict it: sins “which enter into it.”¹⁶⁹ Thus, it is up to the one who loves God to pursue the virtues in order to clean the mind of the taint of sin which may render it blind. However, there is also the element of the exterior light. At times, Ps.-Macarius cries out for the light of God to illuminate the soul when sin has clouded it.¹⁷⁰ This is because his is a synergistic understanding of sight and of anthropology. Just as the believer must actively pursue the health of his mind, so God must actively bestow the divine light. Without both the health of the eye and the presence of the exterior light, there can be no sight. Likewise, without both the action of the believer and the bestowal of the light of God, there can be no sight of God.

¹⁶⁷ Ps.-Macarius, Homily I.44.2: “πάλιν δὲ ὁμοίως τὸ φῶς τὸ ὄν ἐν τῷ καταξιωθέντι ἀπὸ τοῦ νῦν διαδέχεται ἀνακαινούμενον μέραν ἐξ ἡμέρας καὶ σὺν αὐτῷ ἀναλύει πρὸς τὸν ἐπουράνιον πατέρα.”

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.: “καὶ ὁ ὄρων τοῦτο «τὸ φῶς τὸ ἀληθινόν» καὶ ἔχων αὐτὸ ἐν ἑαυτῷ, ἀνάγκη ὅτι ὄρᾳ τὸ σκότος ἀφαντούμενον, κεκτημένος τοὺς καρποὺς τοῦ πνεύματος”

¹⁶⁹ Ps.-Macarius, Homily I.35.1: “ἡ ψυχὴ τυφλωθεῖσα ὑπὸ τῆς ἁμαρτίας τῆς εἰσελθούσης εἰς αὐτήν καὶ σκότει πονηρίας καλυφθεῖσα οὔτε βλέπει τὸν ἥλιον τῆς δικαιοσύνης...”

¹⁷⁰ Cf. Ps.-Macarius, Homily I.44.2.

The point when the soul's eye comes to its "healthiest" state and is considered worthy enough to be illuminated by the light of God is referred to as "all eye". In a homily on the Holy Spirit as a treasure, Ps.-Macarius uses the analogy of the rich and poor to discuss the wealth of God which a true Christian possesses.¹⁷¹ If a Christian possesses the treasure of the Holy Spirit, she may entertain others out of the wealth which she possesses. Contrary to this, if one who claims to be a Christian does not possess the treasure of the Holy Spirit, she may entertain others, but not out of the wealth she possesses, but out of wealth that is borrowed "from some writing or whatever is heard from spiritual people".¹⁷² Following this logic, Ps.-Macarius then describes what it means to possess truly the treasure of the Holy Spirit. Those who truly possess the Holy Spirit pursue the virtues. But, the language of Ps.-Macarius suggests that the possession of the Spirit and the consideration of worthiness which comes from God are not the same thing. Rather, another point must be reached in order to be considered worthy.

Ps.-Macarius hints that the working of the Spirit within a human person one "near to completeness" [ἐγγύς τῆς τελειότητος].¹⁷³ The crucial point of "completeness" for Ps.-Macarius is the moment when one's soul is purified of all passions (with the help of the Spirit) and is considered worthy by God. These are precisely the two elements we have discussed. First, one has cleaned the eye of one's soul, i.e. become purified of all passions. Second, one is considered worthy to receive the exterior light of God. It is at this moment when Ps.-Macarius states that one "becomes all light, all eye, all spirit..."¹⁷⁴ Since the eye is the organ which allows light to shine into the body, Ps.-Macarius understands that the soul has become wholly "eye" so as to allow the light of God to shine inward and outward without impediment.

¹⁷¹ Ps.-Macarius, Homily II.18.4-5.

¹⁷² Ps.-Macarius, Homily II.18.5: "...ἐξ ἐκάστης γραφῆς ἢ παρὰ πνευματικῶν ἀνδρῶν ἀκούσας..."

¹⁷³ Ibid. II.18.10.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.: "ὅλη φῶς, ὅλη ὀφθαλμός, ὅλον πνεῦμα...γίνεται."

Similar to Homily II.18, Ps.-Macarius elsewhere uses another monetary analogy to discuss the progressive nature of the virtues up to the point of becoming “all eye”. He offers the analogy of a businessperson who shrewdly examines every possibility in order to turn a profit.¹⁷⁵ In the same manner also are Christians to pursue the virtues in order to gain the profit which is the Lord “who teaches us every goodness of the virtues and the full reality of truth.”¹⁷⁶ He goes on to describe the Lord who comes to rest at the heart of the human person as the same Lord whom Ezekiel saw in his vision: “God, being borne by the noetic, divine, and spiritual living creatures, creatures covered with eyes in all of their parts in front and behind.”¹⁷⁷ It is the relationship between the living creatures in Ezekiel’s vision and the Lord whom they bear which Ps.-Macarius correlates with his notion of the soul. Just as the living creatures covered with eyes bear the throne of the Lord, Ps.-Macarius believes that the soul, when it becomes the throne of the Lord, becomes wholly “eye”.¹⁷⁸ As we have seen above, Ps.-Macarius uses the phrase “become all eye” here to describe the state of one’s soul after pursuing the virtues and being considered worthy enough to receive the Lord.

Homily I.9 focuses primarily on Ezekiel’s vision and provides the fullest explanation of the connection between the biblical Cherubim and the soul which has “become all eye”.¹⁷⁹ As Ps.-Macarius explains, Ezekiel’s vision of both the chariot of the Lord and the four living creatures which uphold the throne of God was an indication of things to come after the appearance of Christ.¹⁸⁰ The vision of the chariot for the prophet Ezekiel was a revelation of the

¹⁷⁵ Ps.-Macarius, Homily I.29.2 (cf. II.33.2).

¹⁷⁶ Ps.-Macarius, Homily I.29.2: “... τὸν διδάσκοντα ἡμᾶς πᾶσαν ἀγαθωσύνην ἀρετῶν καὶ ἀληθείας ἐνέργειαν...”

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.: “... ὁ θεὸς φερόμενος ὑπὸ τῶν νοερῶν καὶ θείων καὶ πνευματικῶν ζώων γεμόντων ὀφθαλμῶν καθ’ ὅλων τῶν μερῶν ἔμπροσθεν καὶ ὀπίσθεν...” Cf. Ezekiel 1.4-28.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.: “οὕτω καὶ ψυχὴ ἢ καταξιωθεῖσα... ὑποδέξασθαι ἐν ἑαυτῇ τὸν μέγαν βασιλέα Χριστὸν καὶ ναὸς καὶ θρόνος αὐτῷ γενομένη νοερός, ὅλη ὀφθαλμὸς γίνεται...”

¹⁷⁹ Ps.-Macarius, Homily I.9 (cf. II.1).

¹⁸⁰ Ps.-Macarius, Homily I.9.1.

“mystery of the soul” [μυστήριον...ψυχῆς] for Ps.-Macarius.¹⁸¹ Just as the four living creatures in Ezekiel’s vision were covered with eyes, the soul “becomes all eye” allowing the light of God to shine in every part of the soul.¹⁸² What is more, these eye-covered Cherubim were considered worthy to bear the throne of the Lord and to have the Lord as their Charioteer. Ps.-Macarius believes the soul is likewise capable of bearing the Lord as Charioteer, but only at the point when the soul has “become all eye” like the Cherubim. For Ps.-Macarius, this biblical passage provides the exemplar par excellence toward which the Christian must strive. If one’s soul “becomes all eye”, it is like the many-eyed Cherubim—in the closest proximity to God than anything else mentioned in the prophetic vision of Ezekiel.

In sum, we have found that Ps.-Macarius has a two-part understanding of sight and of his theological anthropology. In order for a human person to see, one must have a healthy eye and an exterior light. In a similar fashion, in order for a human person to be in communion with God, one must have a healthy “eye” and the light of God. In fact, as Ps.-Macarius makes clear, one must become wholly “eye” so that the light of God shines inward and outward. His exhortation to “become all eye” is not just a reference to Ezekiel’s vision where the Cherubim themselves are covered in eyes. It is a qualitative state of being wherein the Christian has reached a glass-like purity that is so transparent, there is no trace of darkness in the individual. In this state of being, as Ps.-Macarius states, one’s soul lives eternal life and “rests with the Lord” [μετὰ τοῦ κυρίου ἀναπαυομένης].¹⁸³

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

¹⁸² Ps.-Macarius, Homily I.9.1: “ψυχή γὰρ ἢ καταξιοθεῖσα κοινωνῆσαι τῷ πνεύματι τοῦ φωτός αὐτοῦ... ὅλη φῶς γίνεται καὶ ὅλη πρόσωπον καὶ ὅλη ὀφθαλμός· οὐδὲν αὐτῆς μέρος μὴ γέμον τῶν πνευματικῶν ὀφθαλμῶν τοῦ φωτός (τουτέστιν οὐδὲν ἐσκοτισμένον).”

¹⁸³ Homily I.9.3.

CONCLUSION: “BECOME ALL EYE”, CHERUBIM, AND DESERT MONASTICISM

As Marcus Plested has noted elsewhere, Ps.-Macarius was not the first to employ the imagery of “all eye”.¹⁸⁴ What once was a phrase used, for example, by Clement of Alexandria to describe the relationship between God the Father and God the Son came to be applied to humanity in the fourth century and on.¹⁸⁵ As we have seen above, the anthropological application of the phrase “become all eye” has its fullest treatment in the homilies of Ps.-Macarius. For Ps.-Macarius, “all eye” is an ontological state of divine transparency. In the desert monastic settings of Egypt and Palestine, the phrase “all eye” is applied to humanity in several other places as well.

One such instance of humanity as “all eye” appears in the letters of Isidore of Pelusium of the late fourth and early fifth centuries. As he writes to the bishop Tribonianus on the duties which his office entails, he states,

It is necessary that [a bishop] look out for the approaches of unseen and invisible beasts, the indifferences of the Church, the negligences of the monks, the insults of the unrighteous, the ill-successes of the widows, the difficulties of the orphans [...] and that he be ‘all eye’ [ὅλον εἶναι ὀφθαλμὸν], seeing all things and overlooking nothing [...].¹⁸⁶

His application of “all eye” to the bishop Tribonianus is a play on the word “bishop” [ἐπίσκοπος] since a bishop is an overseer of the Church.¹⁸⁷ As an “eye”, then, Tribonianus should watch out for the dangers which a bishop may face.

¹⁸⁴ Plested, *The Macarian Legacy*, 45 note 14.

¹⁸⁵ See note 56 above.

¹⁸⁶ Isidore of Pelusium, *To Bishop Tribonianus*, Letter CXLIX [PG 78.284]: “Ἐπισκοπεῖν αὐτὸν χρὴ τὰς ἐφόδους τῶν θηρῶν τῶν ἀοράτων καὶ τῶν ἀφανῶν, τὰς τῆς Ἐκκλησίας ῥαθυμίας, τὰς τῶν μοναχῶν ὀλιγορίας, τὰς τῶν ἀδίκων ἐπηρείας, τὰς τῶν χηρῶν δυσπραγίας, τὰς τῶν ὀρφανῶν ἀπορίας, [...] καὶ ὅλον εἶναι ὀφθαλμὸν πάντα ὀρῶντα, καὶ μηδὲν παρορῶντα...”

¹⁸⁷ Cf. note 142 above, where Gregory of Nyssa uses similar language to describe the leaders of the Church as “eyes”.

Another instance occurs in the collection of sayings known as the *Apophthegmata Patrum*. According to William Harmless, the *Apophthegmata* as a written collection were solidified into the forms which we have today sometime around the late fifth century.¹⁸⁸ The compilation contains a number of apothegms from a certain monk named Abba Bessarion. As the collection attests, on his deathbed Abba Bessarion said, “The monk ought to be as the Cherubim and the Seraphim—all eye [ὄλος ὀφθαλμός].”¹⁸⁹ While there is little context for his statement, Bessarion’s application of “all eye” not only to humanity, but to the Cherubim and Seraphim is not unlike Ps.-Macarius’ above. In fact, a similar understanding of humanity and angelic beings as “all eye” appears again in the sixth century in Gaza among the letters of Barsanuphius and John.¹⁹⁰

In the mystical tradition of desert monasticism, the Cherubim, especially, represented angelic beings which at all times contemplated God.¹⁹¹ As Ps.-Macarius makes clear, the many-eyed Cherubim described in the vision of Ezekiel had unceasing sight of God, worthy to bear the throne of God and to operate as God’s chariot.¹⁹² So, too, was one’s soul to operate in Ps.-Macarius’ view. Similarly, Evagrius writes concerning the vision of Ezekiel,

The many-eyed Cherubim are reasonable beings [معتدك خلعة] with much intellectual knowledge. The one who is many-eyed contemplates much and from all sides is illuminated. And, he remains without shadow by means of the presence and working of the Holy Spirit.¹⁹³

¹⁸⁸ Harmless, *Desert Christians*, 170-171.

¹⁸⁹ *Apophthegmata Patrum: The Alphabetical Collection*, Bessarion 11[PG 65.141]: “Ο ἀββᾶς Βισσαρίων ἀποθνήσκων ἔλεγεν, ὅτι ὀφείλει εἶναι ὁ μοναχὸς, ὡς τὰ χερουβὶμ καὶ τὰ σεραφὶμ, ὄλος ὀφθαλμός.”; *Apophthegmata Patrum: The Systematic Collection* 11.15: “Ο ἀββᾶ Βισσαρίων ἀποθνήσκων ἔλεγεν ὅτι Ὀφείλει ὁ μοναχὸς εἶναι ὡς τὰ Χερουβὶμ καὶ τὰ Σεραφὶμ ὄλος ὀφθαλμός.”

¹⁹⁰ Barsanuphius and John of Gaza, *Epistula* 241: “Ο διακονῶν ὡς τὰ Χερουβὶμ ὀφείλει εἶναι ὄλος ὀφθαλμός, ὄλος νοῦς, τὰ ἄνω νοῶν καὶ φρονῶν, τὸν φόβον, τὸν τρόμον, τὴν δοξολογίαν. Βαστάζει γὰρ τὸ σῶμα καὶ τὸ αἷμα τοῦ ἀθανάτου Βασιλέως...”

¹⁹¹ Cf. note 52 above, where Clement of Alexandria calls angels “watchers”.

¹⁹² Ps.-Macarius, Homily I.9.1.

¹⁹³ Evagrius, *De Cherubim*: *αὐτὸς ὁ θεὸς ὁμοῦς ὡς ἡμεῖς ἄλλοι ἄλλοι ὄλοι ὀφθαλμοὶ ὄλοι νοῦς, τὰ ἄνω νοῶν καὶ φρονῶν, τὸν φόβον, τὸν τρόμον, τὴν δοξολογίαν. Βαστάζει γὰρ τὸ σῶμα καὶ τὸ αἷμα τοῦ ἀθανάτου Βασιλέως...*

Thus, in desert monasticism, the concepts of “all eye” and of Cherubim were closely related. The ascent to the knowledge of God (i.e. God-sight) entailed becoming God-like, just like the eye which not only enabled sight, but also enabled the viewer to come into the likeness of that which he viewed. She became a divinely transparent vessel through which the light of God could shine. The Cherubim, as in the vision of Ezekiel, represent the angelic beings which operated fully as “all eye”—seeing the Divine and having perfect divine likeness.

In conclusion, we return to the Monastery of Abba Apollo in Bawit to consider the wall paintings in the eastern-oriented niches. According to Massimo Capuani, the monastery developed around the fourth-century monk Apollo who converted the bandit-chief and grew to become a monastic complex for women in the sixth century, but it was not until the seventh century that “the monastery reached its highest point [...] when the monastic complex counted up to five thousand monks.”¹⁹⁴ Within this large complex were many cells with oratory niches where the monks would perform their daily prayers.¹⁹⁵

A monk’s cell was a place of solitude in which the monk could pray and seek God through contemplation. In her cell, a monk was not troubled by the memory of her past life, was always attentive to God without distraction, was free from *logismoi* which threatened the stillness of the mind, and was ever meditating on the Scriptures.¹⁹⁶ When asked how the Scriptures could aid in contemplation, one monk answered,

Daniel beheld [God] as the Ancient of Days, Ezekiel as on a chariot of Cherubim, Isaiah as on a throne, high and lifted up, and Moses endured the invisible as though he were

.ⲕⲁⲓⲁⲓⲁⲓ ; cf. Ps.-Macarius, Homily I.9.1: “ἀλλὰ πᾶσα ὄλη δι’ ὄλου φῶς καὶ πνεῦμα ἀπειρασμένη καὶ ὄλη ὀφθαλμῶν γέμουσα καὶ ὄλη πρόσωπον οὖσα, μὴ ἔχουσα ὕστερόν τι ἢ ὀπίσθιον μέρος, ἀλλὰ πάντα κατὰ πρόσωπον τυγχάνουσα ἐπιβεβηκότος ἐπ’ αὐτήν καὶ ἐπικαθεσθέντος τοῦ ἀρρήτου κάλλους τῆς δόξης τοῦ φωτὸς κυρίου.”

¹⁹⁴ Capuani, *Christian Egypt*, 194.

¹⁹⁵ For a plan of the monastery layout, see Clédat, *Le Monastère et la Nécropole de Baouît*, MIFAO 111, 439ff.

¹⁹⁶ *Apophthegmata Patrum: The Anonymous Sayings* N.714, 1-13 [Wortley, 553-559].

seeing. [...] Endure in [contemplation], as the prophets saw within history, and perfection comes in oneself. Just so, the Apostle says, “For we see now as in a mirror and in darkness, but then, face to face.” The ‘then’ reveals, he says, that whenever the mind is made perfect, it sees freely.¹⁹⁷

In monasticism, the experience of the vision of God came to a perfected mind through contemplative prayer. This experience paralleled the experiences of the prophets in the Scriptures.

At Bawit, the monks faced paintings of these prophetic visions during their daily prayers. In at least five niches with extant and decipherable wall paintings, Christ sits enthroned upon the chariot of many-eyed Cherubim.¹⁹⁸ The compositions vary, but the figures of Christ and the Cherubim occur in each one. As Elizabeth Bolman argues, wall paintings in the niches of monastic settings were more than just decorative or instructive pieces; these paintings were a practical, physical part of the monk’s spiritual ascension to God.¹⁹⁹ Is it possible that here, in the most intimate of spaces, the monk would strive in his spiritual ascent to “become all eye” while the animated Cherubim and Christ—those beings which were perfectly “all eye”—stared back at him and noted his progress?²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁷ Ibid. N.714, 10, 13 [Wortley, 557, 559]: “Ὁ μὲν Δανιὴλ ὡς παλαιὸν ἡμερῶν ἐθεωρεῖ, ὁ δὲ Ἰεζεκιὴλ ἐπὶ ἄρματος Χερουβὶμ, ὁ δὲ Ἡσαΐας ἐπὶ θρόνου ὑψηλοῦ καὶ ἐπηρμένου, ὁ δὲ Μωϋσῆς τὸν ἀόρατον ὡς ὀρῶν ἐκαρτέρει. [...] Κράτει τοῦτο ὡς οἱ προφηταὶ εἶδον ἱστορικῶς, καὶ ἐαυτῶ τὸ τέλειον ἔρχεται, καθὼς ὁ ἀπόστολος φησὶ· βλέπομεν γὰρ ἄρτι ὡς ἐν ἐσόπτρῳ καὶ ἐν αἰνίγματι, τότε δὲ πρόσωπον πρὸς πρόσωπον. Τὸ δὲ τότε δηλοῖ, φησὶν, ὅταν ὁ λογισμὸς τελειωθῆ, παρρησία βλέπει.

¹⁹⁸ See Appendix: Figures.

¹⁹⁹ See, especially, Elizabeth S. Bolman, “Depicting the kingdom of heaven: Paintings and monastic practice in early Byzantine Egypt,” in *Egypt in the Byzantine World, 300-700* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 408-433, and “Joining the Community of the Saints: Monastic Paintings and Ascetic Practice in Early Christian Egypt,” in *Shaping Community: The Art and Archaeology of Monasticism*, ed. Sheila McNally (Oxford: Archaeopress, 2001), 41-56.

²⁰⁰ For the theory of animism in the viewer’s relationship to objects of the late antique world, see Glenn Peers, “Object Relations: Theorizing the Late Antique Viewer,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Late Antiquity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 970-993.

APPENDIX: FIGURES

Cell XVII (Clédat, MIFAO 12, Plate XL and XLII)



Détail de l'abside Est.

Cell XXVI (Clédat, MIFAO 12, Plates XC and XCI)



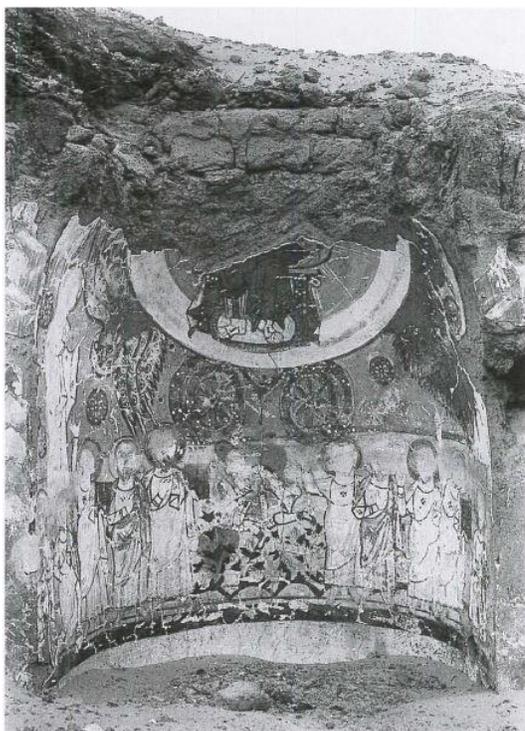
Abside Est.



Fresque de l'abside Est.

Phototypie Berthoud

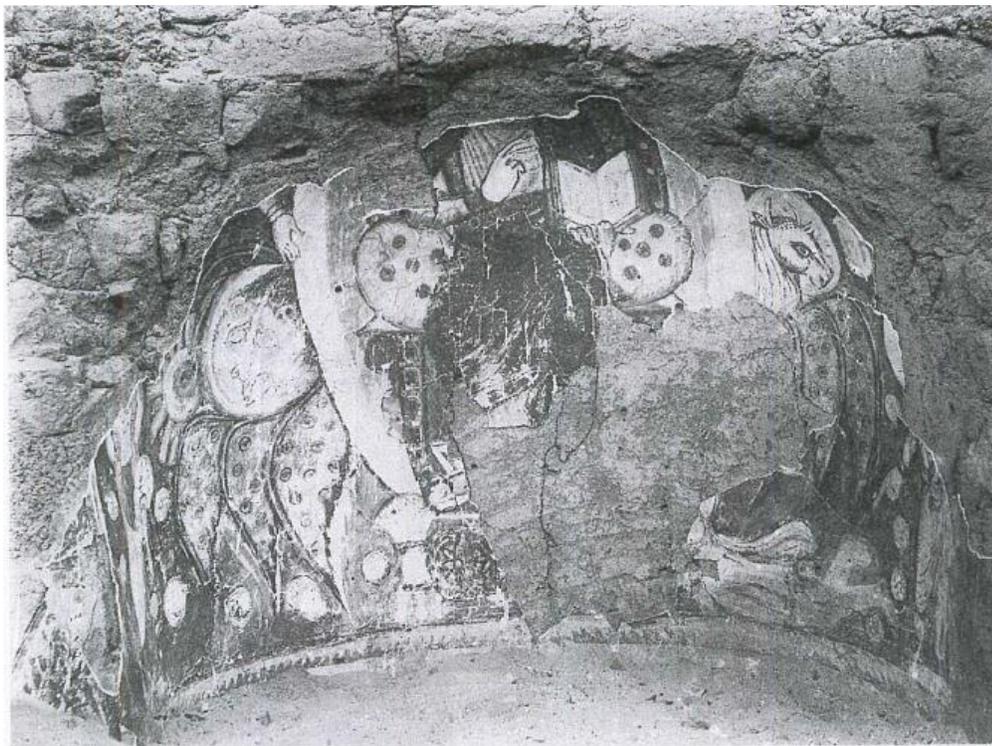
Cell XLV (Clédat, MIFAO 111, pp.85-86, Figures 80 and 82)



Cell XLVI (Clédat, MIFAO 111, pp. 92, Figures 86 and 87)



Cell LI (Clédat, MIFAO 111, pp. 123-124, Figures 97 and 99)



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