

THE *LOGOI* OF PROVIDENCE AND JUDGMENT
IN THE EXEGETICAL WRITINGS of EVAGRIUS PONTICUS

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In Chapter 48 of the *Gnostikos*, the second volume of his trilogy on the spiritual life, Evagrius of Pontus strongly urges regular, even continuous, meditation on what he calls the *logoi* of providence and judgment:

μη' Τους περι προνοίας και κρίσεως
κατὰ σαυτὸν ἀεὶ γύμναζε λόγους,
φησὶν ὁ μέγας καὶ γκωστικός
διδάσκαλος Δίδυμος, καὶ τούτων τὰς
ὑλας διὰ μνήμης φέρειν πειράθητι·
ἅπαντες γὰρ σχεδὸν ἐν τούτοις
προσπταίουσι.¹

48. 'Exercise yourself continuously in the *logoi* of providence and judgment' said the great *gnostikos* and teacher Didymus, 'and strive to bear in your memory their material [expressions]; for nearly all are brought to stumbling through this.

The phrase 'the *logoi* of providence and judgment' occurs here in the *Gnostikos*, in ten passages of the *Kephalaia Gnostica*,² in Evagrius' first, sixth, and seventh *Letters*,³ and in all the collections of his scholia which have been edited to date, that is, Evagrius' scholia on *Psalms*, on *Proverbs*, and on *Ecclesiastes*. This formula is unique to Evagrius, so much so that its occurrence in a text was regarded by Balthasar as a reliable indicator of Evagrian authorship;⁴ this despite the fact that Evagrius attributes this injunction in *Gnostikos* 48 to Didymus the Blind.⁵ This phrase is clearly of importance for Evagrius, but what does he mean by it?

¹ Evagrius, *Gnostikos* 48, *Sources Chrétiennes* (hereafter SC) 356, p. 186.

² Evagrius, *Kephalaia Gnostica* I.27; II.59; V.4; V.7; V.16; V.23; V.24; VI.43; VI.59; VI.75.

³ In *Letter* 1.2-4 Evagrius recommends Job as an example of one who meditated on judgment and providence (discussed by G. Bunge, *Evagrius Pontikos: Briefe aus der Wüste* (Trier, 1986), p. 331, n. 5). In *Letter* 7.1 he laments his own inability to understand these *logoi* fully. In *Letter* 6 he pleads: 'I beg your son [Aidesios] who is my brother, to compel his flesh and, as far as he is able, to subdue it through prayer and fasting and vigils [. . .] He should concern himself with reading the Scriptures, which not only testify that he [Christ] is the redeemer of the world, but also that he is the creator of the ages, and of the judgment and providence in them,' *Letter* 6.4, li. 10-13 (Bunge, *Briefe*, p. 219).

⁴ H.U. von Balthasar, 'Die Hiera des Evagrius' *Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie* 63 (1939), p. 104. Although this phrase is unique to Evagrius, the concepts which it conveys are also found in Origen. Of particular interest in the association of judgment and providence is Origen's description of the diversity of celestial terrestrial and infernal orders (which Evagrius particularly associates with the *logoi* of judgment) in *De prin.* II.11,5 li 163-176. Origen continues with a description of 'the judgment of divine providence' (li 176-185).

⁵ The phrase 'the *logoi* of providence and judgment' is not found in any of Didymus' extant writings. Didymus writes at least twice of the '*logos* of providence' and he associates judgment with providence in ten texts; however he employs neither the phrase 'the *logoi* of providence and judgment' nor 'the contemplation of providence and judgment'.

By *logoi* Evagrius means the ‘inner meanings’ the ‘divine purposes’ which the Christian contemplative learns to perceive beneath the surface of external appearances.⁶ He explains something of what he means by ‘providence’ and ‘judgment’ in the next sentence of *Gnostikos* 48:

Καὶ τοὺς μὲν περὶ κρίσεως λόγους ἐν τῇ
διαφορᾷ τῶν σωμάτων καὶ τῶν κόσμων
εὕρησεις· τοὺς δὲ περὶ προνοίας ἐν τοῖς
τρόποις τοῖς ἀπὸ κακίας καὶ ἀγνωσίας
ἐπὶ τὴν ἀρετὴν ἢ ἐπὶ τὴν γνῶσιν ἡμᾶς
ἐπανάγουσι.⁷

And you will discover the *logoi* of judgment in the diversity of bodies and worlds, and those of providence in the means by which we return from vice and ignorance to virtue or knowledge.

Here Evagrius offers very condensed definitions of providence and judgment. It could be said in general terms that meditation on these *logoi* entails an appreciation of creation from the perspective of its origin and its destiny. The inner meaning, the divine purpose of ‘judgment’ is perceptible ‘in the diversity of bodies and worlds’ (ἐν τῇ διαφορᾷ τῶν σωμάτων καὶ τῶν κόσμων), that is, in the variety and multiplicity of creation. It should be noted in passing that throughout his writings, and especially in *Scholia on Psalms*, Evagrius identifies the ‘richly varied wisdom’ of creation (ἡ πολυποίκιλος σοφία, Eph. 3,10) with Christ, the author of this diversity.⁸ As we shall see, the *logos* of judgment enables the *gnostikos* to perceive within the constantly-changing pluriformity of creation both the consequences of the primordial ‘movement’ of reasoning beings away from God, and God’s salvific response, unique for each individual.

The *logos* of providence is to be sought ‘in the means’ (ἐν τοῖς τρόποις), the ‘ways’ or ‘turning paths’, or perhaps better here the ‘customs’, the ‘patterns of behavior’ which ‘contribute to our virtue and knowledge’. Evagrius particularly associates the *logos* of providence with the mediators of spiritual progress, angels or human spiritual teachers whom God employs to assist reasoning beings in making choices which facilitate their return to God. Of necessity, the *logos* of providence is particularly associated with free will and the possibility of choosing to deepen in union with God.⁹

THE LOGOS OF JUDGMENT

In Evagrius’ *Scholia on Psalms* the *logos* of judgment appears early his explication of Psalm One:

5(1) διὰ τοῦτο οὐκ ἀναστήσονται
ἀσεβεῖς ἐν κρίσει

5(1). *Therefore the ungodly shall not rise
in judgment,*

⁶ The notion of ‘rational principles’ or ‘inner meanings’ inherent within created things which express the purposes of God is found also in Plotinus’ explanation of Plato’s myth of Zeus’ garden, where Eros is begotten of drunken Plenty (Πόρος) and poverty (Πενία): *Enneads* III.5.9, li. 11-16.

⁷ Evagrius, *Gnostikos* 48, SC 356, p. 186.

⁸ *Scholia* 3 and 6 on *Psalm* 21; 1 on *Psalm* 30; 1 on *Psalm* 32; 2 on *Psalm* 33; 1 on *Psalm* 76; 2 on *Psalm* 79; 2 on *Psalm* 118; 4 on *Psalm* 131; 4 on *Psalm* 135; 3 on *Psalm* 141. This identification of Christ with the wisdom of God is also found in *Kephalaia Gnostica* II.2, II.21, III.3, III.11, II.81, IV.4, IV.7, V.5, and V.84.

⁹ Evagrius, *Kephalaia Gnostica* VI.43, ed. A. Guillaumont, *Les six Centuries des ‘Kephalaia Gnostica’ d’Évagre le Pontique*, *Patrologia Orientalis* 28.1, no. 134 (Paris, 1958), p. 235: ‘The providence of God accompanies free will; but his judgment considers the order of the *logikoi*.’

8. Κρίσις ἐστὶ δικαίων μὲν ἢ ἀπὸ πρακτικοῦ σώματος ἐπὶ ἀγγελικὰ μετὰβασις· ἀσεβῶν δὲ ἀπὸ πρακτικοῦ σώματος ἐπὶ σκοτεινὰ καὶ ζοφερὰ μετὰθεσις σώματα. Ἐγερθήσονται γὰρ οἱ ἀσεβεῖς οὐκ ἐν τῇ προτέρᾳ κρίσει, ἀλλ' ἐν τῇ δευτέρᾳ.¹⁰

8. *Judgment* is for the *just* the passage from a body for asceticism to angelic things: but for the *ungodly* it is the change from a body for asceticism to darkened and gloomy bodies. For the *ungodly* will not be raised in the first judgment, but rather in the second.

Here 'judgment' does not necessarily signify punishment or disaster: rather, judgment is a 'change' (μετὰθεσις) and a 'passage' (μετὰβασις) from one kind of body to another. In the *Scholia on Proverbs* Evagrius states even more clearly that judgment (κρίσις) is not at all the same thing as vindictive punishment (τιμωρία). In commenting on Proverbs 24,22, Evagrius reminds his reader both that it is Christ to whom the Father has given all judgment (Jn. 5,22), and that :

Ἡ ἄλλο μὲν ἐστὶ τιμωρία, ἄλλο δὲ κρίσις. Καὶ τιμωρία μὲν ἐστὶ στέρησις ἀπαθείας καὶ γνώσεως θεοῦ μετ' ὀδύνης σωματικῆς· κρίσις δὲ ἐστὶν γένεσις αἰῶνος κατ' ἀναλογίαν ἐκάστω τῶν λογικῶν σώματα διανεμόντος.¹¹

Punishment (τιμωρία) is one thing and judgment (κρίσις) is another. Punishment is deprivation of [both] *apatheia* and the knowledge of God together with physical pain; while judgment is the creation of an age which distributes to each of the reasoning beings a body corresponding to its state.

Here, as in scholion 8 on *Psalms* 1, judgment is an act of creation (γένεσις), 'according to the state of each', of the bodies and worlds which the reasoning beings inhabit.

If this understanding of 'judgment' is regarded as a legal metaphor, then it more closely resembles the language of the civil rather than the criminal court; however it may not be a legal metaphor at all. Throughout his writings Evagrius makes extensive use of medical-therapeutic analogies to explain his model of spiritual progress;¹² and it is possible that his use of the term, κρίσις 'judgment' reflects the ancient medical understanding of this term, rather than its legal use. For Evagrius Christ is more accurately portrayed as the divine physician who desires and effects the soul's healing than a dread lord who threatens coercive punishment. The term κρίσις was used in classical medicine to describe a 'critical period' which precedes or accompanies a significant turning point in an illness. The κρίσις heralds a change in the patient's condition; a 'critical moment' of transformation in the patient's course which necessarily leads either to improvement or deterioration in the patient's condition.¹³ Evagrius similarly employs the term κρίσις to describe a fundamental

¹⁰ Evagrius, scholion 8 on *Psalms* 1:5(1), (cf. PG 12.1097-1100). Cited according to a collation based on MS Vat. Gr. 754, generously provided by Prof. M.-J. Rondeau.

¹¹ Evagrius, scholion 275 on *Proverbs* 24:22, SC 340, p. 370.

¹² For Evagrius ascetical practices are φάρμακα (*Praktikos* 38, SC 171 p. 586), medicinal remedies by which the passions are treated, 'purged' and 'shriveled' (*Malignis Cogitationibus* 3, SC 438, pp. 160-162), by Christ, 'the physician of souls' (scholion 2 on *Psalms* 102:3(2); scholion 6 on *Psalms* 144:15(2); scholion 2 on *Psalms* 145:7(3); *Malignis Cogitationibus* 3 and 10; *Letter* 42:1; 51:2; 52:4; 55,3; 57,3). Christ the physician employs a wide range of remedies, including everything from diet (scholion 6 on *Psalms* 144:15(2) (cf. Pitra 144.15(1)), to the much more painful remedy of seeming abandonment when the 'gangrene' of sin is chronic or intractable (*Malignis Cogitationibus* 10, SC 438 p.186).

¹³ This doctrine is based in part on the theory of πέπανσις (πεπασμός) 'coction' or digestion (literally 'ripening') of ingested substances, which when incomplete or unsuccessful, was believed to be responsible for many diseases. The successful calculation and prediction of critical days seems to have depended on the time thought to be required for πέπανσις as well as classical numerology, including

transformation which facilitates the soul's movement either upwards towards virtue and knowledge or downwards into vice and ignorance.

THE LOGOS OF PROVIDENCE

Evagrius believed that every order of intelligence above the human level is entrusted with responsibility for mediating divine providence. Angels are entrusted with responsibility for human beings; archangels are responsible for angels;¹⁴ and so on into 'ages and worlds' of which human beings know nothing. In commenting on Ecclesiastes 5,7-11 Evagrius portrays this chain of providential care which has at its summit Christ, 'who keeps watch over all':

Γίνωσκε γὰρ ὅτι ὁ θεὸς διὰ τοῦ Χριστοῦ φυλάσσει τὰ πάντα καὶ οὗτος πάλιν προνοεῖ πάντων διὰ τῶν ἀγίων ἀγγέλων περισσευομένων ἐν γνώσει τῶν ἐπὶ γῆς. ¹⁵	Know that God keeps watch over all through Christ; and furthermore he exerts his providence over all through the holy angels, who have abundant knowledge of things on earth. (cf. 2 Sam. 14:20)
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In his sixth scholion on *Psalm 47* Evagrius similarly portrays Christ's place at the summit of this chain of mediation by identifying Christ with 'the right hand of God'.¹⁶ Those beings who mediate divine providence must first receive 'from the fullness' of Christ. This mediation of God's providential love which originates in Christ is for Evagrius a defining characteristic of the angelic state, just as misdirected *thumos*, or anger, characterizes the demons. However, the mediation of providence is not an exclusive prerogative of angels. Just as human beings who give themselves over to wrath become in a sense demonic,¹⁷ so the *gnostikos* who has turned from vice to virtue and is growing in the gift of contemplation becomes increasingly able to share in the angelic work of mediating divine providence. The *gnostikos*' understanding of the *logos* of providence enables him to teach others how to increase in virtue and knowledge. In fact, this knowledge carries with it an impulse, almost a compulsion, to aid those further down in the ranks of reasoning beings. In *Kephalaia Gnostica* VI.76 Evagrius offers an exegetical scholion on Eph. 4,10:

musical theories of harmonic intervals: cf. Volker Langholf, *Medical Theories in Hippocrates: Early Texts and the Epidemics* (New York: de Gruyter, 1990), pp. 79-103, esp. pp. 99-102

¹⁴ Evagrius, *Kephalaia Gnostica* V.4 and V.24.

¹⁵ Evagrius, scholion 38 on *Ecclesiastes* 5:7-11, SC 397, p. 128.

¹⁶ Evagrius, scholion 6 on *Psalm 47:11*, (= PG 12.1440). *Your right hand is full of justice.* (6) The Christ is the right hand of God, filled with justice, hence [the saying]: 'and from his fullness we have all received,' (Jn 1:16). (47.11. δικαιοσύνης πλήρης ἡ δεξιὰ σου [6]. ὁ Χριστὸς ἐστὶν ἡ δεξιὰ τοῦ Θεοῦ, πεπληρωμένος δικαιοσύνης· διὸ « καὶ ἐκ τοῦ πληρώματος αὐτοῦ ἡμεῖς πάντες ἐλάβομεν.») Christ is similarly the 'right arm of God' (βραχίων τοῦ θεοῦ) in scholia 10 on *Psalm 70:18(2)* and 11 on *Psalm 76:16(1)*.

¹⁷ Evagrius, *Letter 56.4*: 'do not consider a demon to be anything other than a human being aroused by anger and deprived of perception!'

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VI.76. If He who has ascended above all the heavens has accomplished everything (Eph. 4:10), it is evident that each of the ranks of celestial powers has truly learned the *logoi* concerning providence, by which they rapidly impel towards virtue and the knowledge of God those who are beneath them.

In four scholia on *Psalms* 134,7 Evagrius similarly portrays this obligation to assist others to make spiritual progress. He says that [rain-] clouds symbolize the spiritually proficient, who are to help the spiritual 'grain' sown in others' souls to 'germinate',¹⁹ thereby raising them up 'from the *praktiké* to the most perfect knowledge'.²⁰

The *logos* of providence entails not only beneficent action on behalf of others for the sake of their spiritual advancement, but also the ability to retain trust in God even when all evidence of providential assistance has vanished. Those cries of anguish and pleas for divine assistance with which the psalter is replete permit Evagrius to explain that God sometimes abandons the soul, not in condemnation but rather out of mercy: sometimes God appears to abandon the soul in order to lead it to repentance. As Evagrius notes in scholion 9 on *Psalms* 93.18(2), it may seem at the time as if this abandonment signifies the withdrawal of providence;²¹ however, this seeming abandonment should not be interpreted as the absence of divine aid, but rather as a providential act of God intended to lead the soul to repentance. Palladius writes that he and 'the blessed Evagrius' received this and other teachings concerning God's providential abandonment from the reclusive Abba Paphnutius.²²

Evagrius' most radical illustration of providential abandonment is his own admittedly-unique exegesis of the parable of the rich man and Lazarus in chapter sixteen of St. Luke's gospel. In scholion 62 on *Proverbs* 5,14, Evagrius claims that in the 'place of torment' where the rich man laments it is still possible to learn about mercy and even to grow in previously-unknown compassion for others. Although 'condemned to hell because of his evil', the rich man 'had pity on his brothers';

¹⁸ Evagrius, *Kephalaia Gnostica* VI.76, Guillaumont, p. 249.

¹⁹ Evagrius, scholion 5 on *Psalms* 134.7(3), (= Pitra 134:7) οἱ τροπικῶς νῦν λεγόμενοι άνεμοὶ τοὺς τῆς ψυχῆς στάχυν ἐκ τῶν καλύκων προβάλλουσιν, ἵν' οἱ σπειρόντες ἐν δάκρυσιν, ἐν ἀγαλλιάσει θερίσωσιν.

²⁰ Evagrius, scholion 5 bis on *Psalms* 134.7(3): άνεμὸς ἐστὶ φύσις λογικὴ τὸν ἀπὸ πρακτικῆς ὑπωθέντα νοῦν ἐπὶ τὴν τῆς γνώσεως μεταφέρουσα τελειότητα.

²¹ Evagrius, scholion 8 on *Psalms* 93:18, (cf. PG 12.1553): *Your mercy, Lord, helps me.* (9) Here the mercy of Christ signifies his providence, by which a man is either helped or abandoned. But a man is helped when [providence] works in him, abandoned when it withdraws from him, (ἐνταῦθα τὸ ἔλεος τοῦ Χριστοῦ τὴν πρόνοιαν αὐτοῦ σημαίνει, δι' ἣν ἄνθρωπος βοηθεῖται ἤτοι καὶ ἐγκαταλείπεται. ἀλλὰ βοηθεῖται μὲν ἐνεργούσης αὐτῆς ὁ ἄνθρωπος, ἐγκαταλείπεται δὲ ὑποχωρούσης αὐτῆς).

²² Palladius, *Lausiac History* 47. J. Driscoll provides a detailed discussion of Evagrius' teaching on providential abandonment in 'Evagrius and Paphnutius on the Causes for Abandonment by God', *Studia Monastica* 39 (1997), pp. 259-286.

and ‘to have mercy is the outstanding seed of virtue’.²³ Evagrius suggests in this text that it is possible for the sufferings of hell to bring to fruition the imperishable ‘seeds of virtue’ which were originally implanted within the soul at its creation. He was aware that this exegesis of the parable of the rich man and Lazarus is very different from the considerably more pessimistic interpretation familiar to of his contemporaries;²⁴ nevertheless, Evagrius appears not only to have been convinced by (πέιθει δέ με) but also deeply committed to this interpretation, since he repeats it with only minor variations in five different places in his writings.²⁵

THE PROMINENCE OF PROVIDENCE AND JUDGMENT

In concluding I would like to make a few observations concerning the prominence Evagrius accords to providence and judgment in his exegetical writings. We have already observed that the notion of judgment, understood as God’s bestowal of a new body, appears early in the *Scholia on Psalms* in his exposition of Psalm One. The *logoi* of providence and judgment do not appear together until scholion 6 on *Psalm* 60,8. In the *Scholia on Proverbs* and on *Ecclesiastes*, however, these *logoi* appear at the very beginning; and it would not be an exaggeration to say that Evagrius presents providence and judgment as introductory and essential tools for the art of contemplative exegesis.

In the *Scholia on Proverbs* these *logoi* appear in the second scholion of the collection. In the first scholion Evagrius defines a ‘proverb’ as ‘a saying which by means of sensible things conveys the meaning of intelligible things’,²⁶ Then he lists in the second scholion five *logoi* which, taken together, comprise spiritual knowledge:

1,1 Παροιμίαι Σαλωμώντος υιοῦ
Δαυιδ, ὃς ἐβασίλευσεν ἐν Ἰσραήλ

1,1. *The proverbs of Solomon, son of David,
who reigned in Israel.*

²³ Evagrius, scholion 62 on *Proverbs* 5:14, SC 340, pp. 152-154: *I was almost given over to every evil in the midst of the congregation and assembly.* (62) There was [a time] when evil did not exist, and there will be [a time] when it no longer exists; but there was never [a time] when virtue did not exist and there will never be [a time] when it does not exist. For the seeds of virtue are indestructible. And this man [speaking the proverb] convinces me, who was almost but not completely given over to every evil; as does the rich man who was condemned to hell because of his evil, and who had pity on his brothers (Luke 16,19-31). For to have mercy is the outstanding seed of virtue, (Ἦν ὅτε οὐκ ἦν κακόν, καὶ ἔσται ὅτε οὐκ ἔσται· οὐκ ἦν δὲ ὅτε οὐκ ἦν ἀρετὴ, οὐδὲ ἔσται ὅτε οὐκ ἔσται· ἀνεξάλειπτα γὰρ τὰ σπέρματα τῆς ἀρετῆς· Πείθει δέ με καὶ οὗτος παρ’ ὀλίγον, καὶ οὐ τελείως ἐν παντὶ κακῶ γεγονώς καὶ ὁ πλούσιος ἐν τῷ ἄδη διὰ κακίαν κρινόμενος καὶ οἰκτεῖρων τοὺς ἀδελφούς. Τὸ δὲ ἐλεεῖν, σπέρμα τυγχάνει τὸ κάλλιστον τῆς ἀρετῆς).

²⁴ In his letter to the monk Krekopios (*Letter* 59.3) Evagrius acknowledges the more conventional interpretation of this parable with which Krekiopios was familiar. He prefaces his own more radical exegesis with the following observation: ‘And since you mention Lazarus and the rich man, that Lazarus was gladdened through knowledge while the rich man was tormented by the flames of ignorance, you should also know this [. . .].’

²⁵ Scholion 62 on *Proverbs* 5:14, *Kephalaia Gnostica* I.40, *Malignis Cogitationibus* 31, *Letters* 43.3 and 59.3.

²⁶ Evagrius, scholion 1 on *Proverbs* 1:1, SC 340, p. 90. Παροιμία ἐστὶν λόγος δι’ αἰσθητῶν πραγμάτων σημαίνων πράγματα νοητά

2. Βασιλεία Ἰσραὴλ ἔστιν γνῶσις πνευματικὴ τοῦς περὶ θεοῦ καὶ ἄσωμάτων καὶ σωμάτων καὶ κρίσεως καὶ προνοίας περιέχουσα λόγους ἢ τὴν περὶ ἠθικῆς καὶ φυσικῆς καὶ θεολογικῆς ἀποκαλύπτουσα θεωρίαν.

2. The *kingdom of Israel* is spiritual knowledge comprising the *logoi* which concern God, incorporeal and corporeal [beings], judgment, and providence; or [it is knowledge] revealing the contemplations of ethics, physics, and theology.

Here providence and judgment are fourth and fifth in a series of objects for contemplation. This same ordering of *logoi* is found in the first century of the *Kephalaia Gnostica*,²⁷ and a related although not identical list is found in Evagrius' explication of Psalm 72,23.²⁸ These lists provide as it were 'lenses' for the contemplative 'eye', five themes intended to guide the *gnostikos*' reading of the Book of Proverbs.

In his *Scholia on Ecclesiastes* Evagrius presents the *logoi* of providence and judgment in the first sentence of the collection:

1,1. Ῥήματα Ἐκκλησιαστοῦ υἱοῦ Δαυίδ, βασιλέως Ἰσραὴλ ἐν Ἱερουσαλήμ.

1.1 *The words of the Preacher, the son of David, king of Israel in Jerusalem.*

1. Ἐκκλησία ἔστιν ψυχῶν καθαρῶν γνῶσις ἀληθῆς αἰώνων καὶ κόσμων καὶ τῆς ἐν αὐτοῖς κρίσεως καὶ προνοίας. Ἐκκλησιαστής δὲ ἔστιν ὁ ταύτης τῆς γνώσεως γεννήτωρ Χριστός· ἢ Ἐκκλησιαστής ἔστιν ὁ διὰ τῶν ἠθικῶν θεωρημάτων καθάρων ψυχᾶς καὶ προσάγων αὐτάς τῇ φυσικῇ θεωρίᾳ.²⁹

1. The 'church' of purified souls is true knowledge of ages and worlds and of the judgment and providence [manifest with-] in them. The Preacher is Christ, the progenitor of this knowledge: or the Preacher is the one purifying souls through ethical contemplations and leading them to natural contemplation.

Here, as in many other texts, Evagrius associates providence and judgment with the person of Christ in his roles as creator and teacher.

Paul Géhin, who has edited the critical editions of the *Scholia on Proverbs* and on *Ecclesiastes*, and who is editing the *Scholia on Psalms* is of the opinion that these commentaries were written in the same order as they are found in the Septuagint: that is, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes.³⁰ If this is correct, then one can observe Evagrius according an increasingly prominent

²⁷ Evagrius, *Kephalaia Gnostica* I.27, Guillaumont, p. 29: 'Five are the principal contemplations under which all contemplation is placed. It is said that the first is contemplation of the adorable and holy Trinity; the second and third are the contemplation of incorporeal beings and of bodies; the fourth and the fifth are the contemplation of judgment and of providence.'

²⁸ Evagrius, scholion 15 on *Psalm* 72:23 (cf. *Pitru* 72:23): "'With God" is said to be: first, the one who knows the Holy Trinity; and next after him one who contemplates the *logoi* concerning the intelligible [beings]; third, then, is one who also sees the incorporeal beings; and then fourth is one who understands the contemplation of the ages; while one who has attained *apatheia* of his soul is justly to be accounted fifth.' (μετὰ θεοῦ λέγεται εἶναι, πρῶτος μὲν ὁ τὴν ἁγίαν γινώσκων Τριάδα, καὶ μετ' αὐτὸν ὁ τοῦς λόγους τοῦς περὶ τῶν νοητῶν θεωρῶν, τρίτος δὲ πάλιν ὁ καὶ αὐτὰ τὰ ἄσώματα βλέπων, καὶ πάλιν τέταρτος ὁ τὴν θεωρίαν ἐπιστάμενος τῶν αἰώνων· ὁ δὲ τὴν τῆς ψυχῆς ἀπάθειαν κεκτημένος, πέμπτος δὲν συγκαταχθεῖν δικαίως).

²⁹ Evagrius, scholion 1 on *Ecclesiastes* 1:1, SC 397, p. 58.

³⁰ P. Géhin, *Scholies aux Proverbes*, SC 340, pp. 19-20. He additionally notes (n. 1, p. 20) that this is the ordering Evagrius uses whenever he lists the books of the Bible, particularly in the *Antirrhētikos*, where this ordering is used eight times.

role to the *logoi* of providence and judgment in each of these successive commentaries. In the *Scholia on Psalms*, as we have seen, although ‘judgment’ merits comment in the first psalm, these two *logoi* are not discussed together until psalm 60, nearly half-way through the collection. In the *Scholia on Proverbs* they appear in the second scholion of the collection, occupying fourth and fifth place in a hierarchical list of objects for contemplation. And in the latest of these texts, the *Scholia on Ecclesiastes*, the *logoi* of providence and judgment occur in the first sentence of the collection.

Why this prominence, this urgent recommendation to meditate constantly on these two *logoi*? It is because the *logoi* of providence and judgment reflect in miniature Evagrius’ exegetical rationale, his hermeneutic method. In composing his scholia Evagrius first selects brief biblical texts for comment: he condenses a series of verses into a brief phrase or a single word. He then comments on this text, or sometimes recommends it for meditation or *antirrhesis* (verbal ‘contradiction’ of demonic suggestions). The scholia represent Evagrius’ attempt to crystallize the rich multiplicity of biblical imagery into lapidary aphorisms. This lends to his commentaries, as Paul Géhin has noted, the appearance of glossaries which contain lists of biblical terms together with their spiritual ‘translation’.³¹ In his descriptions of the *logoi* of providence and judgment Evagrius intentionally reveals the presuppositions which underlie his methodology, so that his readers can understand them and imitate him. These *logoi* summarize Evagrius’ doctrine of *theoria physiké*, the contemplation of God in creation. As such they are more than exegetical ciphers: they are a means by which Evagrius’ *gnostikos* meditates both on salvation history and on the purpose and end of the cosmos; they are a natural introduction to the *Kephalaia Gnostica*, Evagrius’ complex and obscure sourcebook on *theoria physiké* intended for very advanced contemplatives.

The *logoi* of providence and judgment reveal the Christ, the omnipresent source of all providential mediation and the lord of judgment. They encourage the *gnostikos* to look up from the scriptures to apply his exegetical skills to the world around him, that created order which Evagrius calls ‘God’s book’.³² The *logoi* of providence and judgment afford a means of probing beneath the diversity of creation so as to perceive all created things as participants in the ongoing spectacle of creation, fall, and restoration. The *gnostikos* who meditates ceaselessly on these *logoi* learns to contemplate himself, those who seek his advice, and all created beings from the perspective of their divine origin and destiny.

³¹ P. Géhin, *Scholies aux Proverbes*, SC 340, pp. 15-16.

³² Evagrius, scholion 8 on *Psalms* 138.16, (cf. PG 12.1662): ‘The book of God is the contemplation of bodies and incorporeal [beings] in which a pur[ified] nous comes to be written through knowledge. For in this book are written the *logoi* of providence and judgment,’ (βιβλίον θεοῦ ἐστὶν ἡ θεωρία σωμάτων καὶ ἀσωμάτων ἐν ᾧ πέφυκε διὰ τῆς γνώσεως γράφεσθαι νοῦς καθαρὸς· ἐν δὲ τούτῳ τῷ βιβλίῳ εἰσὶ γεγραμμένοι καὶ οἱ περὶ προνοίας καὶ κρίσεως λόγοι).