

"THE DEMONS SUGGEST AN ILLUSION OF GOD'S GLORY IN A FORM":  
CONTROVERSY OVER THE DIVINE BODY AND VISION OF GLORY IN SOME LATE  
FOURTH, EARLY FIFTH CENTURY MONASTIC LITERATURE

1. *A Little Noticed Controversy with Broader Implications*

The monk, John Cassian, the bishop, Palladius of Heliopolis, and the Church historians, Socrates and Sozomen, all agree that the Archbishop Theophilus of Alexandria's pascal letter of late winter, 399, hit a nerve among the monks of Egypt<sup>1</sup>. Theophilus had taken the occasion to condemn at length the teaching that God has a human form, and it was this condemnation which drew an army of angry monks to his doors looking to string him up from the nearest lamppost. Socrates and Sozomen go on to tell how the cunning prelate averted death by telling the monks that, in them, "I behold the face of God", and then used their anger to begin a purge of monastic figures he had targeted well before: the disciples of Origen<sup>2</sup>.

Perhaps because Theophilus' letter is no longer extant, and because the four ancient reporters I just listed were all in theological (though not political) sympathy with his position on the issue, there has been very little scholarly literature devoted to this incident, and none whatever to the possibility that it represented but one example of a much wider, contemporary phenomenon<sup>3</sup>. Most moderns have shared my ancient

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<sup>1</sup> See John Cassian, *Collatio X*, in *Collationes*, ed. M. Petschenig, CSEL 13:288-308; ET: *John Cassian: The Conferences*, tr. O. Chadwick (NY:1985) 125-140; Socrates, *Historia Ecclesiastica* VI.7, PG 67:684A-88C; ET: *NPNF* 2nd Series, II:142-3; Sozomen, *Historia Ecclesiastica* VIII.1-12; PG 70:1344C-49A; ET: *NPNF* 2nd Series, II:406-7; Palladius, *Dialogue sur la vie de saint Jean Chrysostome*, ed. Malingrey and P. LeClerc, SC 341 (Paris: Cerf, 1988) 138-140.

<sup>2</sup> Socrates, *HE* 684BC, and Sozomen, *HE* 1545A, both quote Theophilus as telling the monks that he sees them *ὡς θεοῦ πρόσωπον*. The ensuing campaign against the monastic followers of Origen is covered in detail by E. Clark, *The Origenist Controversy: The Cultural Construction of an Early Christian Debate* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), if, as the title indicates, chiefly from a sociological perspective.

<sup>3</sup> E. Drioton was the first to write on this controversy in "La discussion d'un moine anthropomorphite audien avec le patriarche Théophile d'Alexandrie", *ROC* 20 (1915-1917) 92-100 and 113-128, providing the Coptic text and French translation of *The Life of Apa Aphou of Pemdje*, discussed in this paper below, and arguing for anthropomorphism as a new "heresy" imported into Egypt by the Syrian Audians. G. Florovsky, in "The Anthropomorphites of the Egyptian Desert", and at greater length in "Theophilus of Alexandria and Apa Aphou of Pemdje", both essays in *The Collected Works of Father Georges Florovsky* (Belmont MA: Nordland, 1975), vol. IV:89-96 and 97-129, resp., argued against Drioton that the "anthropomorphites" were neither Audians nor "heretics", but in fact orthodox defenders of the Incarnation who were slandered by their "Origenist" critics (i.e., Cassian, Palladius, Sozomen and Socrates), who provide -- other than the *Life of Apa Aphou* -- our sole witnesses to the controversy. G. Gould, in "The Image of God and the Anthropomorphite Controversy in Fourth Century Monasticism", *Origeniana Quinta*, ed. B. Daley (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1992) 549-557, seconded Florovsky's opinion, together with E. Clark, *The Origenist Controversy* 43-84, who added speculation about possible pagan influences at work in the protesting monks. G.G. Stroumsa is unique in suggesting ties or at least correspondences with Jewish traditions of the divine image, at first as a concluding aside in "The Incorporeality of God: Context and Implications of Origen's Position", *Religion* 13 (1983) 354, and then at greater length in "Jewish and Gnostic Traditions among the Audians", *Sharing the Sacred: Religious Contacts and Conflicts in the Holy Land*, ed. A. Kofsky and G.G. Stroumsa (Jerusalem: Yad Izhak Ben-Zvi, 1998) 345-58, though he follows Drioton -- mistakenly, I think -- in assuming that the anthropomorphism of the Egyptian monks is a Syrian import. See relatedly D.O. Paulsen, "Early Christian Belief in a Corporeal Deity: Origen and Augustine as Reluctant Witnesses", *HTR* 83.2 (1990) 105-16, and "Reply to Kim Paffenroth's Comment", *HTR* 86.2 (1993) 235-9, esp. 237-9.

reporters' disdain for the protesting monks, who are as a result represented as espousing the sort of "crude forms of folk religion" that the enlightened normally expect from illiterate *fellahin*<sup>4</sup>. Then, too, there is the habit, nearly universal until recently and even now overcome only with difficulty, of projecting back into an earlier era the conceptual structures -- in this case, the theology -- of later periods. The theology in question here is that of post-Nicene, trinitarian orthodoxy, specifically as the latter had, on the one hand, just been confirmed by ecclesiastical authority by the Creed of Nicea-Constantinople in 381, and, on the other hand, enforced by the imperial authority of Theodosius I (+395) and his successors. For my purposes in this paper, the salient characteristic of the new, imperial orthodoxy was its implicit commitment to the place and even necessity of philosophical expression in the self-articulation of the Christian faith, a commitment summed up in the Nicene term, "consubstantial" (ὁμοούσιος). While it is generally recognized that this new formulation of the Christian Trinity overthrew the earlier Logos Christology of the Apologists and Alexandrians, the fact that still older currents of tradition -- currents which quite possibly the Logos theology itself had been intended to reformulate -- were also similarly affected is not so recognized, aside from a very few and mostly unnoticed exceptions<sup>5</sup>.

## II. *Western and Eastern Christianity on the Visio dei: Some Differences in the Wake of Nicea*

I would like to suggest that the angry monks of Egypt, together with Christian ascetics elsewhere in the Eastern Empire at the turn of the fifth century, were adherents of ancient traditions of the divine body and *visio gloriae*. The Nicene-Constantinopolitan settlement had, however, just made their views a theological anachronism. They were slow to realize this fact, so slow indeed that adjustments to the new doctrinal configuration continue to be reflected in monastic literature for decades to come and, in some places, even for centuries. With the exception of scholars such as Guy Stroumsa and Gilles Quispel, nowhere in scholarly literature is this long process at work in Eastern Christian ascetical literature even noticed, let alone examined in detail<sup>6</sup>. Gershom Scholem's *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* sixty years ago and other studies thereafter have over the past twenty years begun to have an extraordinarily fruitful effect on the study of a number of different areas of inquiry: apocalyptic literature, Qumran studies, Christian origins, and, most obviously, Rabbinic thought, but this revolution -- save the exceptions just noted -- has not yet begun to

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<sup>4</sup> I am quoting, a little unfairly, J.A. McGuckin on Cyril of Alexandria's anti-anthropomorphic correspondence in *St. Cyril of Alexandria: The Christological Controversy, Its History, Theology, and Texts* (Leiden: Brill, 1994) 121. See also the similar remarks forty years earlier in H. Chadwick, commenting on Origen's treatise, *On Prayer*, in *Alexandrian Christianity* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1954) 194, 215, and esp. 355-6, together with L.R. Wickham, *Cyril of Alexandria: Select Letters* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983) xxix-xxxi.

<sup>5</sup> To this point on the *Logos* theology, see for example the discussion of Philo in A.F. Segal, *Two Powers in Heaven: Early Rabbinic Reports about Christianity and Gnosticism* (Leiden: Brill, 1977) 159-81.

<sup>6</sup> See G. Quispel, "Sein und Gestalt", in *Studies in Mysticism and Religion Presented to Gershom G. Scholem* (Jerusalem: 1967) 191-5; idem, *Makarios, das Thomasevangelium, und das Lied von der Perle* (Leiden: Brill, 1967), esp. 49-64 on image and glory; and, more recently, idem, "Ezekiel 1:26 in Jewish Mysticism and Gnosticism", *VC* 34 (1980) 1-13; together with G.G. Stroumsa in several articles and at least one monograph, including: "Jewish and Gnostic Traditions among the Audians"; idem, "The Incorporability of God" 354; and idem, *Hidden Wisdom: Esoteric Traditions and the Roots of Christian Mysticism* (Leiden: Brill, 1996), esp. 27-62 and 109-131 on pre-Nicene Christian texts, and 132-167 on post-Nicene.

penetrate scholarly discussion of the Christian literature of the fourth and later centuries<sup>7</sup>. This may be because of a tendency among patristic scholars to ignore works outside of their specialty, or of their traditional focus on the Greco-Roman background of patristic thought and (aside from a few Syriacists) overall ignorance of, or indeed disdain for Semitics in general and Judaica in particular. It might also be ascribed, at least in part, to the fact that Christianity itself as known and practiced in Western Europe and the Americas owes so very much to the legacy of Augustine of Hippo<sup>8</sup>. The opening books of the latter's *De Trinitate*, for example, comprise a sustained attack against the teaching of the theophanies of the Pentateuch and prophets as, in any sense, true theophanies. For Augustine, the divine manifestations are instead

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<sup>7</sup> G.G. Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (Jerusalem:1941, rep. 1973); idem, *Jewish Gnosticism, Merkabah Mysticism, and the Talmudic Tradition* (NY: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1960); idem, *On the Mystical Shape of the Godhead: Basic Concepts in the Kabbalah*, tr. J. Neugroschel (NY: Schocken Books, 1991), esp. 15-37; The following is a sampling of the literature on the several fields noted above which in whole or in part owes importantly to Scholem: I. Gruenwald, *Apocalyptic and Merkabah Mysticism* (Leiden: Brill, 1980); idem, "Manicheism and Judaism in Light of the Cologne Mani Codex", *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphie* 50 (1983) 29-45; I. Chernus, *Mysticism in Rabbinic Judaism* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1982); J. Fossum, "Jewish-Christian Christology and Jewish Mysticism", *VigChr* 37 (1983) 260-87; idem, *The Name of God and the Angel of the Lord* (Tübingen:JCB Mohr, 1985); idem, *The Image of the Invisible God: Essays on the Influence of Jewish Mysticism in Early Christology* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1995); A.F. Segal, *Two Powers in Heaven*; idem, *Paul the Convert: The Apostolate and Apostasy of Saul the Pharisee* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990); J.J. Collins, ed., *Apocalypse: The Morphology of a Genre, Semeia* 14 (1979); idem, *The Apocalyptic Imagination: An Introduction to the Jewish Matrix of Christianity* (NY: Crossroads, 1984); idem with M. Fishbane, editors, *Death, Ecstasy, and Otherworldly Journeys* (Albany: SUNY, 1995); C. Rowland, "The Visions of God in Apocalyptic Literature", *JSJ* 10.2 (1979) 137-54; idem, *The Open Heaven: A Study of Apocalyptic in Judaism and Early Christianity* (NY: Crossroads, 1984); idem, "John 1:51, Jewish Apocalyptic and Targumic Tradition", *NTS* 30.3 (1984) 498-507; J. Tabor, *Things Unutterable: Paul's Ascent to Heaven in its Greco-Roman, Judaic, and Early Christian Contexts* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1986); P. Alexander, "Comparing Merkabah Mysticism and Gnosticism", *JSJ* 35 (1984) 1-18; J. Baumgarten, "The Book of Elchesai and Merkabah Mysticism", *JSJ* 17.2 (1986) 212-23; idem, "The Qumran Sabbath Shirot and the Rabbinic Merkabah Tradition", *RdQ* 13 (1988) 191-213; C. Newson, *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1985), esp. 45-58; D. Dimant and J. Strugnell, "The Merkabah Vision in Second Ezekiel", *RdQ* 19 (1990) 331-48; idem, "The Apocalyptic Interpretation of Ezekiel at Qumran", in *Messiah and Christos: Studies in the Jewish Origins of Christianity Presented to David Flusser*, ed. I. Gruenwald, S. Shaked, and G.G. Stroumsa (Tübingen:1992) 31-51; M. Himmelfarb, *Ascent to Heaven in Jewish and Christian Apocalypses* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), esp. 3-46; C.R.A. Morray-Jones, "Transformational Mysticism in the Apocalyptic-Merkabah Tradition", *JJS* 48 (1992) 1-31; idem, "Paradise Revisited (2 Cor 12:1-12): The Jewish Mystical Background of Paul's Apostolate", *HTR* 86 (1993) 177-217 and 265-92; M. Hengel, "Setzte dich zur meinen Rechten", in *Le trône de Dieu*, ed. M. Philonenko (Tübingen:1993) 108-94, esp. 161-84; A. Goshen-Gottstein, "The Body as Image of God in Rabbinic Literature", *HTR* 87.2 (1994) 171-95; idem, "Four Entered Paradise Revisited", *HTR* 88 (1995) 69-133; W.F. Smelik, "On Mystical Transformation of the Righteous into Light in Judaism", *JSJ* 27.2 (1995) 122-44; J.M. Scott, "The Triumph of God in 2 Cor 2:14: Additional Evidence for Merkabah Mysticism in St. Paul", *NTS* 42 (1996) 260-81; A. De Conick, *Seek to See Him: Ascent and Vision Mysticism in the Gospel of Thomas* (Leiden: Brill, 1996) esp. 46-149; J.C. Reeves, *Heralds of that Good Realm: Syro-Mesopotamian Gnosis and Jewish Traditions* (Leiden: Brill, 1996) esp. 5-30; and A. Golitzin, "Temple and Throne of the Divine Glory: 'Pseudo-Macarius' and Purity of Heart", in *Purity of Heart in Early Ascetic and Monastic Literature*, ed. H. Luckman and L. Kulzer (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1999) 107-29, esp. 117-29. For scepticism regarding Scholem's theses on continuities and mystical praxis, see esp. D. Halperin, *Faces in the Chariot: Early Jewish Responses to Ezekiel's Vision*, *TSAJ* 19 (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1988), esp. 1-114.

<sup>8</sup> Thus, for example, Stroumsa's choice of Augustine as the example *par excellence* of the fourth century shift in *Hidden Wisdom* 139-46; and cf. Segal, *Paul the Convert* 61, regretting that the vision of the glorious form and gospel of incorporation into the Glory "are strangely unfamiliar to modern Jewish and Christian religious sentiments. Neither Christianity nor Judaism openly transmitted these lively mystical Jewish traditions of the first century". With all due respect to Segal, the contrary is in fact true in the Christian East, especially in the ascetical literature where the *visio dei gloriae* and accompanying deification, *theōsis*, are precisely at the heart of things.

angelophanies or even mere symbolophanies<sup>9</sup>. He does not allow for any *visio dei gloriae* on this side of the eschaton, nor for any transfiguration of the human being, however temporary<sup>10</sup>. The Christian lives instead wholly by faith, to whose grammar of knowledge Augustine devotes the remainder of his treatise on the Trinity<sup>11</sup>. For this pro-Nicene theologian, the old traditions which I take him to be attacking in *De Trinitate* have become simply heretical -- he calls them "Arian" -- and for his descendents in the Christian West, they are thus a book closed and long forgotten.

East of the Adriatic, however, all that was known of Augustine until the late Middle Ages was his name, nor has he ever had any impact on the still flourishing Eastern monastic tradition which remains in consequence *Augustinifrei*. True, Eastern pro-Nicenes shared the Bishop of Hippo's objections to the older understanding of the Second Person of the Trinity as, by nature, the "visibility of the Father", "somehow expanding and contracting" (*modo se distendit, modo contrahet*), to use Augustine's words, depending on whether one is speaking of the heavenly throne or of theophany, and as constituting with Father and Spirit a Godhead of -- quoting again from Augustine's polemic -- "separable parts"<sup>12</sup>. For the Eastern theologians, likewise, the three divine Persons shared a single, transcendent, ineffable and infinite -- indeed, "formless" -- divinity. This was a common consequence of the Nicene *homoousion*. On the other hand, it seems never (or, at least, very rarely) to have occurred to Eastern Christian monastic writers to deny the possibility of the *visio dei luminis* in the present life, or even of momentary transformation as a pledge and foretaste of the world to come. Eastern saints, particularly ascetic saints, have a tendency to "light up" in hagiography to the present day. The brilliant faces and luminous forms familiar from the angels of the old apocalypses are virtually

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<sup>9</sup> He argues this point with special force in *De Trinitate* I-III and *Epistles* 147-148. For the critical text of the former, see M. Millet and T. Camelot, editors, *Oeuvres de St. Augustin* 15, 2ième serie: *La Trinité* (Paris:Desclé de Brouwer, 1955) 183-321; and for the *Epistles*, see *Obras de San Augustin* IIa, ed. B. Cilleruelo (Madrid:1972) 41-113; ET of *De Trinitate*, E. Hill, *St. Augustine: The Trinity* (Brooklyn:New City Press, 1990) 97-146; and of the letters, W. Parsons, *St. Augustine: Letters* III, in *Fathers of the Church* 20 (NY:Cima Pub. Co., 1953) 170-83. For discussion of Augustine's argument against the Son as "the visible" of the Father in light of pro-Nicene polemic, see M.R. Barnes, "Exegesis and Polemic in Augustine's *De Trinitate* I", *Augustinian Studies* 30.1 (1999) 43-59; and idem, "Purity of Heart and the Vision of God: The Sixth Beatitude in Augustine's Trinitarian Theology" (a to date unpublished essay which its author kindly made available to me).

<sup>10</sup> This is the usual thrust of his arguments. For discussion of certain allowances Augustine makes in later life for Moses and Paul as Godseers, however, see R. Teske, "St. Augustine and the Vision of God", in *Augustine: Mystic and Mystagogue*, ed. F. Van Fleteren (NY:P.Lang, 1994) 287-308.

<sup>11</sup> See Barnes, "Purity of Heart and the Vision of God". For another voice in the Western tradition, on the other hand, one should bear in mind the counterpoint of John Cassian's continuing legacy in Western monasticism. On the *visio dei luminis* in Cassian, see C. Stewart, *Cassian the Monk* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998) 56-60 and 87-118. Regrettably, I know of no study which seeks to trace this current among Cassian's successors in the West, save some suggestive observations in E. Lanne, "L'interprétation palamite de la vision de St. Benoît", *Le Millenaire de Mont Athos: 963-1963*, 2 Vol.s (Venezia/Chevtogne: 1963) II:21-47.

<sup>12</sup> For *distendit/contrahet*, see *De Trinitate* II.25 (Latin 246; ET 115); and for "separable parts", *Ep* 148.4 (Latin 99; ET 226). The "expansion" and "contraction" of the Word to which Augustine is sarcastically referring comes in the middle of a discussion of Ex 24:10. See below the very different treatments accorded this key text by Apa Aphou implicitly, explicitly by the Pachomian *Bohairic Life* and by Evagrius, as well as by the Rabbinic sources cited below.

standard fare<sup>13</sup>. It is, in particular, the Synoptic Gospel narratives of the Transfiguration which serve as the model of human transformation, to the degree, indeed, that local Church councils held in Constantinople a thousand years after Nicea upheld the possibility of the vision of the "uncreated light" of Mt. Tabor and declared this the official teaching of the Byzantine Church<sup>14</sup>. Witnesses to this faith, again especially among monks, are a constant feature of the intervening millenium, a continuity which is all the more striking in that it cuts across linguistic and cultural differences to include communities long out of communion with each other due, in particular, to the fifth-century Christological controversies. One finds it alike, in short, among so-called "Nestorians", "Monophysites", and orthodox Byzantines -- among Greeks, Copts, Armenians, Georgians, Syrians, Ethiopians, and Slavs. For all these groups, "the blessed light of the Holy Trinity" (τὸ μακάριον φῶς τῆς ἁγίας τριάδος), to cite the late fourth-century anchorite, Evagrius of Pontus (+399), is the very stuff of both present and eschatological beatitude<sup>15</sup>. A Constantinopolitan abbot who lived six

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<sup>13</sup> Examples are legion. For four such out of fifteen hundred years of tradition, see Abba Pambo and other fourth/fifth century desert fathers below and n.65; the eleventh century account in Nicetas Stethatos' *Life* of his master, Symeon the New Theologian, which has the latter favored with a vision of his own elder and guide, Symeon the Pious, "standing at the right hand of the Glory of God", in *Un grand mystique byzantin: Vie de Syméon le nouveau théologien*, ed. I. Hausherr, OC (Rome:1928) 8-10; and the nineteenth century "Conversation" of Nicholas Motovilov and Seraphim of Sarov (+1833), ET in G.P. Fedotov, *A Treasury of Russian Spirituality* (1950, rep. Belmont: Nordland Press, 1975) 246-79. Note esp. the references Seraphim makes to Ex 34:29-35 and to Christ's Transfiguration in 273, together with Motovilov's purported description of his experience in 274: "Imagine in the centre of the sun, in the dazzling brilliance of its midday rays, the face of the man who talks with you. You see the movement of his lips and the changing expression of his eyes, you hear his voice, you feel someone grasp your shoulders, yet you do not see the hands, you do not even see yourself or his figure, but only a blinding light." For contemporary stories of like experiences among twentieth-century monks on Mt. Athos, see A. Golitzin, *The Living Witness of the Holy Mountain: Contemporary Voices from Mount Athos* (South Canaan: St. Tikon's Seminary Press, 1996) 34-54, 153-7, and esp. 194-215.

<sup>14</sup> On the importance of the Transfiguration in Eastern (here esp. Greek) Christian thought, see J.A. McGuckin, *The Transfiguration of Christ in Scripture and Tradition*, Studies of the Bible and Early Christianity (Lewiston/Queenstown: Edwin Mellen Press, 1987) 1-143 for analysis, and 145-316 for source texts in translation. On the Hesychast Controversy of 1330-1350, see esp. J.M. Meyendorff, *Introduction to the Study of Gregory Palamas*, tr. G. Lawrence (1964; rep. NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1998), esp. 173-8 and 193-8.

<sup>15</sup> See on Evagrius and the vision of light, A. Guillaumont, "Les visions mystiques dans le monachisme oriental chrétien", and "Un philosophe au désert: Évagre le Pontique", in *Aux origines du monachisme chrétien: Pour une phénoménologie du monachisme*, Spiritualité orientale 30 (Abbaye de Bellefontaine:1979) 136-47 and 185-212 (esp. 144-7 and 209-11); idem, "La vision de l'intellect par lui-même dans la mystique évagrienne", in *MUSJ* 50.1-2 (Beirut:1984) 255-62; N. Séd, "La Shekinta et ses amis araméens", *COR* 20 (Geneva:1988) 233-247. Séd supplies, deliberately, a very important balance to Guillaumont's stress on Plotinus and Neoplatonism in "La vision de l'intellect", demonstrating Evagrius' acquaintance with Targumic traditions. Thus see also G. Bunge, "Nach dem Intellekt Leben? Zum sogenannten 'Intellektualismus' der evagrianischen Spiritualität", in *Simandron, der Wachklopfer: Gedankenschrift für Klaus Gember*, ed. W. Nyssen (Köln:1989) 95-109; idem, "Palladiana I: Introduction aux fragments coptes de l'*Histoire Lausiaque*", *StMon* 32 (1990); idem, "Palladiana II: La version copte de l'*Histoire Lausiaque*", *Studia Monastica* 33 (1991) 7-21; and idem, "Erschaffen und erneuert nach dem Bild Gottes: Zu den biblisch-theologischen und sakramentalen Grundlagen der evagrianischen Mystik", in *Homo medietas: Festschrift für Alois Maria Haas*, ed. C. Brinker-von der Heyde and N. Largier (Berlin/Frankfurt/NY:1999) 27-41. For a perceptive if hostile discussion of Eastern Christian "Lichtmystik", regrettably without any sense of Jewish sources and parallels though sensitive to key scriptural passages, see H. Veit-Beyer, "Die Lichtlehre der Mönche des vierzehnten und der vierten Jahrhunderts, erörtert am Beispiel des Gregorios Sinaites, des Evagrius Pontikos, und des Pseudo-Makarios/Symeon", *JÖB* 31.1 (1981) 473-512. On the early eighth century, Mesopotamian Christian ascetic and mystic, John of Dalyatha, and his remarkable parallels on the *visio gloriae* with later Byzantine Hesychasm, see R. Beulay, *L'enseignement spirituel de Jean de Dalyatha: Mystique syro-orientale de VIIIe siècle*, Théologie Historique 83 (Paris: Beauchesne, 1990), esp. 440-461; and more briefly, idem, "Formes de lumière et lumière sans forme: Le thème de la lumière dans la mystique de Jean de Dalyatha", *Cahiers d'Orientalisme* 20 (Geneva:1988) 131-41; and more broadly on the Syriac-speaking mystical tradition, idem, *La lumière sans forme: Introduction à l'étude de la mystique chrétien syro-orientale* (Chevtagne:Éditions de

hundred years after Evagrius makes the same point when he writes of the appearance of Christ to the sanctified believer as occurring

...in a light which is personal and real [lit., "substantial", "essential"]. It is in a shape without shape [σχήμα ἀσχήματος] and a form without form [μορφή ἀμόρφωτος] that He is seen invisibly and comprehended incomprehensibly.<sup>16</sup>

The oxymorons in my quotation are certainly not uncommon fare in any mystical literature striving to express the inexpressible, but the pair, "shape without shape" and "form without form", bring me back -- at last, and with apologies for the long preliminary remarks -- to the matter of monastic debate over the form of God and mystical vision which is the announced topic of this paper. My medieval abbot reflects at once the subject of the controversy and -- not to pun -- the shape of its post-Nicene resolution in the Christian East. Nearly all the literature we possess now reflects the views of the victors, the architects of post-Nicene spirituality, including that Evagrius whom I quoted above, the anonymous author of the *Macarian Homilies* (whom I shall also touch on below), and others among the monks, together with Church Fathers such as Athanasius and Cyril of Alexandria, and the Cappadocians, Basil of Ceasarea, Gregory of Nazianzus and Gregory of Nyssa. With a few exceptions, we are thus also obliged to infer the views of the other side of the debate from the arguments and polemic of its critics. Still, enough comes through, I think, for us to recognize a number of themes familiar from the work of Scholem and his successors; echoes, I would say, from a background in Second Temple apocalyptic literature which resonates here among Christian ascetics in parallel with the then contemporary Rabbinic lore of the *merkavah* and *shi'ur qomah*.

### III. *The Syriac Liber Graduum and the Coptic Vitae of Pachomius and Aphou: Echoes of pre-Nicene Traditions of the Visio dei with Roots in the Second Temple and Affinities with Rabbinic Thought*

Let me begin with three instances where I think we encounter instances of the older, pre-Nicene tradition: the Mesopotamian *Liber Graduum*, the *Bohairic Life of Pachomius*, and the likewise Coptic *Life of Apa Aphou of Pemdje*. The *Liber* was written, anonymously, in Syriac probably in mid-fourth century<sup>17</sup>.

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Chevtogne, 1987). For "light" in the theology of Gregory Nazianzus (+ ca. 390), the pre-eminent Greek theologian of post-Nicene, trinitarian orthodoxy and the master of Evagrius Ponticus, see J.A. McGuckin, "Perceiving Light from Light in Light (Oratio 31.3): The Trinitarian Theology of St. Gregory the Theologian", *GOTR* 39.1 (1994) 7-32.

<sup>16</sup> *Traité éthiques*, ed. J. Darrouzès, SC 129 (Paris: Cerf, 1967) 322-4; ET: A. Golitzin, *Symeon the New Theologian on the Mystical Life: The Ethical Discourses*, Vol. I: *The Church and the Last Things* (NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1995) 169. On Symeon's sources for the *visio dei luminis* in Christian ascetical literature, see H. Alfeyev, "The Patristic Background of St. Symeon the New Theologian's Doctrine of the Divine Light", *StPatr* 32 (1997) 229-38; A. Golitzin, *St. Symeon*, Vol. III: *Life, Times, and Theology* (NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1997) 81-105; and J.A. McGuckin, "The Luminous Vision in Eleventh Century Byzantium: Interpreting the Biblical and Theological Paradigms of St. Symeon the New Theologian", *Work and Worship at the Theotokis Evergetis 1050-1200*, ed. M. Mullet and K. Kirby, *Byzantine Texts and Translations* 27 (Belfast: 1997) 90-123.

<sup>17</sup> For the Syriac text and accompanying Latin translation, see the edition by M. Kmosko, *PS III* (Paris: 1926); ET: of *Mimro* 12 in S. Brock, *The Syriac Fathers on Prayer* (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1987) 45-53. On the most recent argument for the dating of the *Liber*, see K. Fitschen, *Messalianismus und Antimesalianismus: Ein Beispiel ostkirchlicher Ketzergeschichte* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1998) 108-119.

It is a work intended to reconcile wandering ascetics of the type we find in the *Apocryphal Acts* of the Apostles or, earlier, in the *Gospel of Thomas*, with the episcopally-guided local churches of Sassanid Persia<sup>18</sup>. Particularly of note for us are a few lines from the 28th of its 30 discourses where, mentioned *en passant* as a kind of given, is precisely the old Christology of theophany that Augustine would later set his face against in North Africa. Citing Ex 33:11, the author remarks that "the Glory of God Almighty [ܕܘܠܗܘܘܬܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܐ] was revealed to Moses on the mountain like a man [ܕܥܘܠܡܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܐ]", and repeats the statement a few lines below, but with a slight difference: "And our Lord [ܕܥܘܠܡܐ] was revealed to all the prophets like a man"<sup>19</sup>. I note first of all the parallelism between "the Glory" and "our Lord", and further that in Christian Syriac *moran*, "our Lord", invariably (to the best of my knowledge) designates the Second Person of the Trinity, the Son. Secondly, the "Glory" of the first passage is distinct from "God Almighty". The latter denotes the Father, since the Syriac *moryo ahid kul*, like our English phrase, is a rendering of the Greek θεὸς παντοκράτωρ, and a possible rendering thus of the first article in the Nicene Creed: πιστεύω εἰς ἓνα θεὸν πατέρα παντοκράτορα. What makes these two passages still more interesting is the fact that the author of the *Liber* is not fighting with anyone about this point. He takes it thus for granted, thirdly, that it is the Son of God who is the divine Glory and who appeared to Moses and the other saints of Israel in human form, "like a man". Perhaps I should note as well that the *Liber* elsewhere makes specific allowance for the *visio dei gloriae* as open to the believer even "in this life", or "in this age" (ܕܥܘܠܡܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܐ)<sup>20</sup>.

Turning to Egypt, we find the same understanding of Christ as Glory, together with accounts of the vision of the Glory. The *Life* of Pachomius (+345), founder of common-life monasticism, has come down to us in several recensions, of which the Greek *Vita Prima* and the *Bohairic Life* are presently considered the most authentic witnesses and of roughly equal antiquity -- late fourth, early fifth century<sup>21</sup>. Both versions present Pachomius as a visionary, but where the *Vita Prima* mentions but does not describe his visions, the *Bohairic Life* is not so reticent. I have in mind particularly three visions taking place in the monastery church: the first accorded Pachomius alone, the second to him in the company of his favorite disciple,

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<sup>18</sup> On the peculiarities of early Syrian Christian asceticism and the *Liber's* effort to link it with urban churches, see again Fitschen, *Messalianismus* 120-8, and specifically on the *Liber's* use of the *Gospel of Thomas*, A. Baker, "The Gospel of Thomas and the *Liber Graduum*", *NTS* 12 (1965) 49-55. See also R. Kitchen, "Conflicts on the Stairway to Heaven: The Anonymity of Perfection in the Syriac *Liber Graduum*", in *Symposium Syriacum* VII, ed. R. Lavenant, OCA 256 (Roma: Pontificio Instituto Orientale, 1998) 211-20.

<sup>19</sup> Kmosko, *PS* III, 802:10-11 and 20-21.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, *Mimro* 15, 373:12-13; and cf. also *Mimro* 12, esp. 288:12-289:1; ET: *Syriac Fathers on Prayer* 46.

<sup>21</sup> For discussion of the Pachomian sources, see P. Rousseau, *Pachomius: The Making of a Community in Fourth Century Egypt* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985) 37-55, and A. Veilleux in the "Introduction" to the latter's ET of the Pachomian materials: *Pachomian Koinonia*, 3 volumes (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1980, 1981, and 1982), here I:1-6. For the critical texts of the *vitae*, see L.-T. Lefort, *S. Pachomii vita boharice scripta*, *CSCO* 89, *Scriptores coptici* 7 (1925, rep. Louvain: Imprimerie orientale L. Durbeq, 1953), idem, *S. Pachomii vitae sahidice scripta*, *CSCO* 99-100, *Scriptores coptici* 9-10 (1933-34; rep. Louvain: 1953); and F. Halkin, *S. Pachomii vitae graecae*, in *Subsidia Hagiographica* 19 (Bruxelles: Société des Bollandistes, 1932). I shall be citing from Vielleux's ET of both the *BoLife*, in *Pachomian Koinonia* I:23-266, and the Greek *vita prima*, *Ibid.*, I:297-407.

Theodore, and the last to Theodore alone after his master's death<sup>22</sup>. In the first vision, Pachomius sees the east wall of the monastery sanctuary

...become all golden and on it there was a large icon, like a large picture [of someone] wearing a crown...that crown was glorious in the extreme...[and] Before the icon were two great and very august archangels, motionless and contemplating the Lord's image.<sup>23</sup>

The saint is at first overcome by "the ray of fear" emanating from the image, then comforted by a "sheen of mercy...like a rich, holy chrism". When he tells certain of the monastery's elders about the apparition, "the old men were greatly struck with fear, and they said, "These holy men are like those of heaven"<sup>24</sup>, which I take to mean that they understood Pachomius to have experienced a throne vision like that which the angels enjoy in the heavenly temple or palace. The second vision occurs while Pachomius and Theodore are praying together in the church:

While they were praying, they saw appearing above them, as high as a tower, a great throne on which God was seated under the form in which he chose to appear to them.<sup>25</sup>

The third vision takes place when Theodore is summoned to the church by an angel, who tells him:

"Get up quickly and go to the church, for the Lord is there." He got up as the

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<sup>22</sup> *BoLife* 73, 76, and 184; ET: *Pachomian Koinonia* I:95-6, 99-100, and 228-9, resp. (Lefort, *Vita boharice scripta* 76-77, 81, and 162-4, resp.).

<sup>23</sup> *BoLife* 73; I:95-6 (Lefort 76:5-77:24). Cf. the *Vita prima* 88; I:257-8 (Halkin 59:9-60:10), which mentions the visions and, though it omits any description whatever, does add the interesting detail of Pachomius comparing himself to the elders around Moses at the theophany of Ex 19 (Halkin 60:1-2). On the difference in the handling of the vision, see Guillaumont, "Les visions mystiques" 140-3, who reads the *BoLife's* version as borrowing from "les apocalypses de Pierre et de Paul qui ont profondément nourri la piété Égyptienne" (142). The observation of influences from the apocalypses is certainly perspicacious, but the assertion that these indicate a later and therefore suspect reworking is not convincing. If anything, the *Vita prima* would seem the better candidate for subsequent editing in its elimination of embarrassing details, e.g., as here the suggestions of anthropomorphism. See also Pachomius' trip to heaven, "the luminous air" of divinity, along the lines and with explicit citation of Paul in 2 Cor 12:2-4, in *BoLife* 114 (Veilleux I:166-68; Lefort, *S. Pachomii vitae sahidice scripta* 18-23), and for Egyptian ascetics as enamored of apocalypses such as the Enochic books and the *Ascension of Isaiah*, see the remarks directed against this literature in the longer, Coptic text of Athanasius of Alexandria's *Festal Epistle* of 367, tr. by D. Brakke, *Athanasius and the Politics of Asceticism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995) 330-2, for example: "Who has made the simple folk believe that these books belong to Enoch....? On what basis will they say that there is an apocryphal book of Isaiah?...The apocryphal books are filled with myths...the beginning of discord!" (330). Cf. also in contrast the approving citation of the *Ascension of Isaiah* 8:21 by the reputed disciple of Antony, Ammonas, in the latter's Ep. X; Syriac text edited with Latin translation by M. Kmosko, *PO* 11 (Paris: 1915), 594:3-11, together with Ammonas' cryptic remark that *sunt homines super terram qui ad hanc mensuram* [i.e., the ascent to heaven] *pervenere* (594:11), and then see the old men who greet Pachomius' vision with wonder in *BoLife* 73, below and n.24, together with the experience of Abba Silvanus, below and n.64. Athanasius was fighting an uphill battle!

<sup>24</sup> *BoLife* 73, I:97 (Lefort 78:16-20).

<sup>25</sup> *BoLife* 76, I:99-100 (Lefort 81:14-29).



voice had instructed him, for he always used to walk with great vigilance and with unshakable trust because his thoughts were always in heaven beholding the Glory of the Lord...when he came to the doorway of the church, he went in and saw an apparition. Where the latter's feet were, there appeared to him something like a sparkling sapphire and he was unable to look at the face because of the great light which unceasingly flashed forth from it...[Theodore] was troubled and overcome with fear...He thought about all Israel long ago in the desert and how such great fear came upon them...when the Lord revealed himself to them... They all saw him on Mt. Sinai...the whole mountain was so filled with fire...<sup>26</sup>

This last is specifically related to the theophany of Ex 24, especially verse 10 with its reference to the sapphire-like stuff beneath the feet of God, presumably enthroned. All three accounts are of throne visions. Another biblical echo may be of Is 66:1, "Heaven is my throne", in the great height of the throne in the second vision. I do not, however, recall the divine crown of the first vision appearing in any of the biblical theophanies, but it does show up in *merkavah* and related literature, e.g., in *Hebrew* or *3 Enoch* 29:1-2, and, relatedly, in Metatron's own crown in *3 Enoch* 12-13<sup>27</sup>. Reference to Metatron also reminds me of another of Pachomius' visions, this time in the *Paraleipomena* (Chronicles) of the saint, where Christ appears to him as a "youth", νεώτερος-νεανίσκος, of "ineffable countenance" whom an accompanying angel then introduces as "the Lord of Glory"<sup>28</sup>. Besides the obvious echo of I Cor 2:8, we might also recall the reference to Metatron as a "youth", נער, in *3 Enoch* 2:2<sup>29</sup>. In short, Pachomius' and Theodore's visions here are at the least reminiscent not only of the biblical manifestations of the *kevod YHWH*, but of the throne visions characteristic of later Second Temple era apocalypses and, indeed, of the still later texts -- roughly contemporary, in fact, with the *Pachomiana* -- from Rabbinic literature with their ascent to a vision of the glorious form of God enthroned in the highest heaven. The one great difference, of course, is that these Christian texts identify that glorious form with Christ.

While the Pachomian texts share with the *Liber Graduum* the lack of any particular note of controversy, this is not the case with my third example, *The Life of Apa Aphou of Pemdje*. The latter is a Coptic text from the fifth century which was published with French translation and accompanying commentary by Edouard Drioton in *Revue de l'orient chrétien* in 1917, and it centers around a reply,

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<sup>26</sup> *BoLife* 184; I:228-9 (Lefort 162:28-164:10).

<sup>27</sup> Schäfer, *Synopse* 290, #912, and 289, ## 896-7; ET: P. Alexander, in J.H. Charlesworth, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, Vol. I: *Apocalyptic Literature and Testaments* (NY: Doubleday, 1984) 284 and 265-6.

<sup>28</sup> *Paraleipomena* 18; ET: Veilleux, *Pachomian Koinonia* II:40; Greek text: Halkin, 142:13-19. For νεώτερος or the variant, νεανίσκος, see ll. 14 and 22-23; for the ἀνεκλάλητον πρόσωπον and τὴν ἀφραστον θέαν, ll.14-15, and ll.18-19 for κύριος τῆς δόξης.

<sup>29</sup> Schäfer, *Synopse* 287-8, ## 884-6; ET: Alexander, *OT Pseudepigrapha* I:257-9. For comment, see Scholem, *Jewish Gnosticism* 50-51. On the antiquity of Enoch-Metatron's title, "youth", see A.A. Orlov, "Titles of Enoch-Metatron in 2 *Enoch*", *Journal of the Pseudepigrapha* 18 (1998) 80-82.

precisely, to Archbishop Theophilus' paschal epistle of 399<sup>30</sup>. Apa Aphou is a hermit living in extreme asceticism among the beasts -- antelopes in this case -- of the upper Egyptian desert. An angel comes to him with news of the Archbishop's distressing new doctrine which, as the saint is informed, seeks "to exalt the Glory [*mpeooy*] of God" by denying the *imago dei* in humanity<sup>31</sup>. For reasons we shall see, this must have appeared to Aphou as a flat contradiction. In any case, armed with heavenly encouragement, the old man goes off to Alexandria to instruct the Archbishop in the latter's error. He, a strange figure in rags and tatters, is naturally kept cooling his heels in the patriarchal antechambers for some days before being allowed into the great man's presence. Once there, however, he loses no time in humbly pressing his point: has the Archbishop forgotten Gen 1:26? Theophilus replies with the assertion that the *imago* was lost with Adam's fall. Aphou counters by citing Gen 9:6, the prohibition against murder addressed to Noah -- thus *after* the Fall -- because "in his own image God has made humankind"<sup>32</sup>. Theophilus then essays a slightly different tack, contrasting divine splendor with the corruption and filth of the human body. Can the "true and unapproachable light" (recalling I Tim 6:16), he asks, have anything to do with a beggar defecating in the gutter?<sup>33</sup>

Aphou does not reply immediately to the Archbishop's question, but instead turns in a quite unexpected and apparently unrelated direction. He appeals to the sacrament of the Eucharist. If, he argues, the latter is truly the body of Christ, and if Christ who said "I am the living bread come down from heaven" (Jn 6:51), is the very same one who spoke to Noah forbidding murder because God made us "in his own image", then Theophilus, by acknowledging the sacramental presence, must perforce also recognize the *imago* even in fallen humanity<sup>34</sup>. The old man then concludes by returning to the question of the unapproachable light in relation to the human body:

As for the Glory of the Greatness [*peooy de mpmegethos*] of God, which it is impossible for anyone to see because of its incomprehensible light, and as for human weakness and imperfection...we think that it is like a king who orders the making of an image which everyone is to acknowledge as the image of the king. Yet everyone [also] knows perfectly well that it [=the image] is only [made] of wood together with other elements...but...the king has said, "This is my image"... How much the more so, then, with man?<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Drioton, "La discussion d'un moine" 95. All who have written on the *Life of Apa Aphou* agree on its fifth century provenance and direct relationship to the anthropomorphite debate, thus: Drioton 92-4; Florovsky, "Theophilus of Antioch and Apa Apou of Pemdje" 99-101 and 117-18; Clark, *The Origenist Controversy* 50-51 and 59-64; and Gould, "The Image of God" 549-50.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 98.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 98-99.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 99-100. The use of Gen 9:6 and comparison with the statue of the King recalls R. Hillel in *Leviticus Rabbah* 34.3. Asked why he considers bathing a religious duty, the sage replies: "If the statues of kings...are scoured and washed by the man appointed to look after them...[who is therefore] exalted in the community of the great...how much more shall I [look after my body] who have been created in the image and likeness, as it is written, 'for in the image of God made He man'", tr. J. Israelstam and J.S. Slotki (London: Soncino, 1939) 428. I am grateful to M. Smith for having brought this text to my attention in his "The

According to the *Life of Aphou*, as indeed -- though for very different motives -- in the accounts of Sozomen and Socrates, Theophilus promptly surrenders to the old man's arguments, and the two part in an atmosphere of happy reconciliation. For the *Life* at least, the story is one of the triumph of the desert's traditional wisdom over the philosophical learning of the Greeks.

I should like to pause here a bit in order to "unpack" what I take to be Aphou's argument, particularly since its density and -- I believe -- relative complexity have proven effectively impenetrable to the few scholars who have attempted to deal with it: Drioton in 1917, Georges Florovsky in the late 1950's, together Elizabeth Clark and Graham Gould in the past decade<sup>36</sup>. The key, in my opinion, lies in the relation between Aphou's appeal to the Eucharist and the other, I daresay more familiar elements which appear in the colloquy with Theophilus: the *imago dei* of Gen 1:26 and 9:6, the "unapproachable light" in which God dwells of I Tim 6:16, and these three texts in connection with the likeness or statue of the king in Aphou's concluding illustration. Apa Aphou, as Drioton pointed out eighty years ago, clearly believed in a divine body "clothed with incomprehensible light"<sup>37</sup>. What escaped the French scholar, however, were three interrelated elements in addition to this insight: first, the identification of a divine body of light at once with the human form of the *kevod YHWH* (and of the "angel of the Lord) in the biblical theophanies and with the image (*tselem*) and likeness (*demut*) of God in Gen 1:26<sup>38</sup>; second, the equation of both the *kavod* and the original divine likeness, *demut*, with the "Man from Heaven", to cite I Cor 15:47 and 49, i.e., with the Second Person of the Christian Trinity<sup>39</sup>; and 3) both of the above as linked to, or functionally identical with, the "living bread come down from heaven" of Jn 6:51, the food of the Eucharist<sup>40</sup>.

It is the last which is especially significant in that it forms the real punchline of Aphou's argument since it touches on the very "stuff", we might say, of salvation as both the desert elder and the archbishop understood the latter, specifically the answer to the question: how do we partake of God? Their answer: by

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Image of God: Notes on the Hellenization of Judaism, with especial reference to Goodenough's work on Jewish Symbols", *BJRL* 40 (1958) 473-512, here 475-6.

<sup>36</sup> It is chiefly on the basis of the linkage between Gen 1:26, 2:7, and 9:6 in the *Life of Aphou* that Drioton, "La discussion" 116 ff., argued for the connection between Aphou and the Syro-Mesopotamian Audians described by Ephiphanius of Salamis in the latter's *Panarion* 70.2-6. For the text of the latter, see the edition by K. Holl, revised by J. Dummer, *Epiphanius III: Panarion 65-80*, GCS (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1985), here 323-49; ET: *The Panarion of Epiphanius of Salamis*, tr. F. Williams (Leiden: Brill, 1987), here Vol. II:402-28. For Florovsky's and Gould's responses, see n.3 above.

<sup>37</sup> Drioton, "La discussion" 127.

<sup>38</sup> See J. Barr, "Theophany and Anthropomorphism in the Old Testament", *VT.S* 7 (1960) 31-38, esp. 37-8; together with Quispel, "Ezekiel 1:26" 9; Fossum, "Jewish-Christian Christology" 263 ff.; and Goshen-Gottstein, "The Body as Image" 172; together with A. Marmorstein, *The Old Rabbinic Doctrine of God* (1939; rep. NY: KTAV, 1968), Vol. II:133-57.

<sup>39</sup> See again Quispel, "Ezekiel 1:26" 1-2 and 8-11; Fossum, "Jewish-Christian Christology" 260-73; and Stroumsa, "Form(s) of God" 279-86.

<sup>40</sup> On Jn 6:31-58, see P. Borgen, *Bread from Heaven: An Exegetical Study of the Concept of Manna in the Gospel of John and the Writings of Philo*, Supplements to *Novum Testamentum* 10 (Leiden: Brill, 1965), esp. 147-82, and note 177 on parallels in the Fourth Gospel with *merkavah* mysticism. On the latter theme, see also C. Rowland, "John 1:51"; and J.A. Draper, "Temple, Tabernacle and Mystical Experience in John", *Neotestamentica* 31.2 (1997) 263-88, esp. 275-85.

feeding on the divine body of light<sup>41</sup>. Here I think we arrive at the reason for Aphou's selection of John 6 instead of the more familiar Synoptic narratives of the Last Supper. The "living bread come down from heaven" of Jn 6:51 must first of all be read in parallel with "the Son of Man come down from heaven" of Jn 3:13, the descent thus of the Heavenly Man, and, second, the "living bread" occurs in the Fourth Gospel in the context of a discourse where Christ is comparing himself to the manna of Ex 16. To the latter I would add, third, Ps 78:24-25, which speaks of the manna as "the grain of heaven" and "the bread of angels"<sup>42</sup>. Fourth, in connection with both angelic diet and the Exodus theophany, I am reminded of a passage from the Babylonian Talmud which I chanced on while reading Ira Chernus' study of Rabbinic mysticism, and which I think sheds a certain light on Apa Aphou's argument. The passage is from *bBerakot* 17a, quoting from Chernus' translation:

Rav was in the habit of saying: The coming aeon is not like this aeon. In the coming aeon there is neither eating nor drinking nor procreation...Rather, the righteous sit with their crowns on their heads and feed upon the splendor of the Shekinah [בזיו השכינה], as it is said, "And they beheld God and ate and drank" (Ex 24,11).

Chernus later cites a functionally identical passage from *Abot d'Rabbi Nathan* which adds the phrase, "like the ministering angels", to the citation of Ex 24:11<sup>43</sup>. I submit that it is something very like the thinking of these two Rabbinic texts which underlies Apa Aphou's appeal to the Eucharist, and I think that it fits very well, indeed, into the complex of the *imago* and body of light which features so essentially in his reply to Theophilus<sup>44</sup>.

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<sup>41</sup> For the importance of the notion of "deification", *theosis*, in Eastern Christian thought, see J. Meyendorff, *Byzantine Theology: Historical Trends and Doctrinal Themes* (NY: Fordham University Press, 1974) 32-41, and L. Bouyer, *The Spirituality of the New Testament and the Fathers*, tr. M.P. Ryan (rep. NY: Seabury Press, 1982) 416-21. Relatedly, on the centrality and interdependence of *theosis* and the Eucharistic presence in the thought of Theophilus' nephew and successor, Cyril of Alexandria (+444), see H. Chadwick, "Eucharist and Christology in the Nestorian Controversy", *JTS*, ns 2 (1951) 145-64.

<sup>42</sup> See again Borgen, *Bread from Heaven* 148-53 and 175-7 on Christ as the object of the Sinai theophany (151-2), on feeding on the Torah given at Sinai, and other references to the biblical theophanies, and cf. below and n.43, together with Evagrius' use of Ex 24:10-11 below.

<sup>43</sup> Chernus, *Mysticism in Rabbinic Judaism* 75, citing *bBerakot* 17a and, a little below (77), *Abot de R. Nathan*, version A, 1.3a, with its additional reference to the angels. Admittedly, Chernus also notes (76) that these several elements – Ex. 24:10-11, vision of the *Shekinah* and "feeding on it" as eschatological anticipation, together with "food of the angels" – occur together only in these two passages. On the other hand, "feeding on the light of the *Shekinah*" in reference to both humans and angels does occur frequently. See thus his entire chapter, "Nourished by the Splendor of the *Shekinah*", 74-87.

<sup>44</sup> For a very similar chain of associations in a Christian author writing in Egypt two centuries earlier, see Clement of Alexandria, *Excerpta ex Theodoto* 10-13, ed. F. Sagnard, *SC* 23 (Paris: Cerf, 1948) 76-84. Clement begins in *Excerpta* 10.1 (Sagnard 76) by stating that the Son, like the angels but unlike the Father, has "his own form [μορφή] and body [σῶμα]"; in 10.5 (78) that the Son "is called 'light unapproachable' [cf. I Tim 6:16, together with Aphou and Theophilus above] which 'eye has not seen' [cf. I Cor 2:9], the 'face [πρόσωπον] of the Father'" (cf. Theophilus' reply above to the protesting monks); then appeals explicitly to the Transfiguration account of Mt. 17:2 ("face as the sun") in 12.3 (84), and concludes the sequence in 13.1-5 (84) with a stream of references to Jn 6:31-58: "This is the 'heavenly bread' and spiritual nourishment of life [cf. Jn 6:49 ff.]" which is given to the saints and to the angels. There is no mention of the Son's "form" and "body" as humanlike, which one would not expect given Clement's

Permit me then to paraphrase Aphou's alarm at the paschal epistle of 399 and his catechism of the archbishop. To exalt the divine Glory by denying the image which is the human form must have been for our desert monk a *contradictio in adjecto*. Christ, the Son of God, *is* for him the image, the Heavenly Man. So off the old man goes to instruct the archbishop in the basics which he seems to have forgotten. These include the making of humanity after the model in heaven who is the *kavod*, the *μορφή θεοῦ* (cf. Phil 2:6), and, when Theophilus tries to bring up the discrepancy between corrupt human flesh and divine light, there is the reminder of the Eucharist as marking the advent of the New Covenant in anticipation of the age to come when the blessed shall be fed by the light of the body of the Glory and where, indeed, believers are fed even now by the same body. In other words, we might say that for Aphou the difference between the two covenants lay in the fact that while the elders of Israel ate from it only once, all Christians are offered it as their "daily bread". Then, topping off the argument, there is the illustration of the king's image whose point is the following analogy: as the living flesh of the king is to the wood and other inanimate materials of his statue, so is the living and "incomprehensible light" of God's Glory, Christ, to our flesh. Yes, Aphou says in answer to Theophilus' objection raising the incommensurability of human flesh with divine splendor, the discrepancy is indeed vast. It is absolute, in fact. But then, his argument goes on to ask in effect, is it not true that Christians have been given that very flesh of light to eat? And, eating it, do not believers become truly "partakers of the divine nature" (to recall II Peter 1:4)? And in what else, the old man adds implicitly, might his Eminence say that the Christian hope of salvation consists? So it is scarcely surprising, at least according to the terms assumed by this document, that Theophilus is left with no other recourse than to capitulate, which, as the *Life of Aphou* has it, he manages quite graciously.

#### IV. *Evagrius of Pontus (+399): The Shape of the post-Nicene Adjustment in the East*

Other monastic writers of the time had different terms of reference, however, and these included that Evagrius Ponticus whom I noted some pages back, and whose influence was also, not accidentally, perhaps the primary target of Theophilus' purge of the "Origenists" among the monks of Egypt following the Archbishop's *volte face* before the angry mob reported by Sozomen and Socrates<sup>45</sup>. As Samuel Rubensen demonstrates in the introduction to his splendid, recent edition of the *Letters* of St. Anthony the Great, Evagrius was part of a large network of philosophically informed desert dwellers who appear to have included the "father of monks" himself<sup>46</sup>. I single Evagrius out because he was also unquestionably the most important member of this group. His writings comprise perhaps the single most influential body of works in Eastern Christian ascetico-mystical literature, and, in the person and oeuvre of his disciple, John Cassian, they would

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sensitivity to philosophical tradition and dependence on Philo, but -- save any explicit reference to Sinai -- the other elements in this exegetical complex, which I take to be presumed by Apa Aphou, are all present.

<sup>45</sup> See Clark, *The Origenist Controversy* 7, 18-23, 62-84, and 105-21.

<sup>46</sup> S. Rubenson, *The Letters of St. Antony: Monasticism and the Making of a Saint*, Studies in Antiquity and Christianity 5 (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), esp. 64-71, 81-8, and Rubenson's conclusions in 88-91. See also on Evagrius, A. Guillaumont, "Un philosophe au désert"; idem, *Les 'Kephalaiā Gnostica' d'Évagre le Pontique et l'histoire du origénisme chez les grecs et chez le syriens*, Patristica Sorbonensia 5 (Paris: Éditions de Seuil, 1962), esp. 40-80, together with G. Bunge, "Origenismus-Gnosticismus: Zum geistesgeschichtlichen Standort des Evagrius Pontikos", *VigChr* 40 (1986) 24-54, on Evagrius as continuing Origen's struggle with Gnostic thought in Egypt, and idem, "Évagre le Pontique et les deux Macaires", *Iren.* 56.2-3 (1983) 215-27 and 323-60, on Evagrius' close relationships, as disciple to masters, with Macarius of Scete and Macarius of Alexandria, two of the leading figures in later fourth century Egyptian monasticism.

travel to Latin-speaking monasticism as well<sup>47</sup>. As a disciple of the Cappadocian fathers, Basil the Great (+379), Gregory Nazianzus (+ ca.390) and Gregory of Nyssa (+ ca.394), who were and are to Greek trinitarian orthodoxy as Augustine would be to the Latin, Evagrius was a thoroughly orthodox advocate of the Niceno-Constantinopolitanum. He was not so orthodox in other regards, however, being too much the student of Origen -- including advocacy of the latter's theory of a double creation and consequently dubious anthropology (no place for the body in the world to come) -- not to escape sharing in the latter's posthumous condemnation at the Fifth Ecumenical Council in 553, a fact which led to such of his works as survive in Greek being usually sheltered under the name of a less controversial figure, Nilus of Sinai<sup>48</sup>. Other works, though lost in Greek subsequently to 553, continued to be transmitted in Syriac translation and under Evagrius' own name. They had, in either case, been around long enough to leave an indelible mark on both Greek and Syriac monastic literature<sup>49</sup>.

Enough certainly survives of Evagrius for us to touch here on his reconfiguration, in accordance with his reading of post-Nicene orthodoxy, of those themes and scriptural loci which we found at work in both the visions of Pachomius and in Aphou's exchange with Theophilus. His reworking at once affirms these traditional elements *via* a thorough-going process of interiorization, and denies them through a repeated insistence that the divine being, as transcendent and immaterial, has neither body nor form. Let me begin with the first, the matter of interiorization, while recalling both the monastery church as locus of the Pachomian visions cited above and Aphou's appeal to the Eucharist, together with the *Bohairic Life's* explicit and Aphou's implicit invocation of Exodus 24:10-11. All of these reappear in Evagrius, save that in him they become descriptions of the inner life of the sanctified human spirit or intellect, the *nous*. Thus we find the *nous* as temple in the following from the *Kephalaia Gnostica*:

The intelligible temple is the pure intellect which now possesses in itself the "wisdom of God, full of variety", [and] the temple of God is he who beholds

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<sup>47</sup> See Stewart, *Cassian the Monk* 11-12 and throughout, on the influence of Evagrius.

<sup>48</sup> See Guillaumont, *Les 'Kephalaia Gnostica'* 15-36 on the fate of Evagrius' most important doctrinal work, the *Kephalaia Gnostica*, and 129-258 on the reception of his works. See also Guillaumont's publication of the Syriac text(s) in *Les six siècles des 'Kephalaia Gnostica' d'Évagre le Pontique: Édition critique de la version commune et édition d'une nouvelle version Syriacque*, in *PO* 28.1 (Paris:1958) 1-261. The "nouvelle édition", as Guillaumont demonstrates in his monograph, is in fact the earlier and more accurate translation of the *Kephalaia*. For a comprehensive listing of Evagrius' published works in Greek and Syriac, a matter of great complexity owing to the condemnations of 553, see S.P. Brock, *Isaac of Nineveh: "The Second Part", Chapters IV-XLI*, in *CSCO* 555, *Scriptores Syri* 225 (Louvain: Peeters, 1995) xxiv-xxix. Evagrian texts preserved in Greek can be found in Migne, *PG* 79:1165-1233 (under the name of Nilus of Sinai), and in the first volume of Nicodemus Hagiorites' anthology, *Φιλοκαλία τῶν ἱερῶν νηπτικῶν* (1783, rep. Athens: Astir, 1957) I:38-57 and (under Nilus' name) 176-89; together with A. and C. Guillaumont, editors, *Traité pratique ou le Moine, Sources chrétiennes* 170-171 (Paris: Cerf, 1971); and P. Géhin, ed., *Évagre le Pontique: Scholies aux Proverbes, SC* 340 (Paris:1987). For the Syriac Evagrius, see especially the texts and accompanying Greek retroversions published by W. Frankenberg, *Evagrius Ponticus*, *Abhandlungen der königlichen Gesellschaft der Wissenschaft zu Göttingen, Philosophisch-historische Klasse, Neue Folge* 13.2 (Berlin:1912); and J. Muyldermans, *Evagriana Syriaca: Textes inédits du British Museum et de la Vaticane*, *Bibliothèque du Muséon* 31 (Louvain:1952), together with idem, *À travers la tradition manuscrite d'Évagre le Pontique: Essai sur les manuscrits grecs conservés à la bibliothèque nationale de Paris*, *Bibliothèque du Muséon* 3 (Louvain:1931). For ET(s) of Evagrius, see K.T. Ware, P. Sherrard, and G.W. Palmer, editors, *The Philokalia: The Complete Text*, Vol. I (London: Faber and Faber, 1979) 28-71; J.E. Bamberger, *The Praktikos and Chapters on Prayer* (Spencer: Cistercian Publications, 1970); and M.W. O'Laughlin, "Evagrius Ponticus: *Antirrheticus* (Selections)", in V.L. Wimbush, ed., *Ascetic Behavior in Greco-Roman Antiquity: Sourcebook*, *Studies in Antiquity and Christianity* 6 (Minn: Fortress, 1990) 243-62. For a German translation of the *Letters* collected in Syriac in Frankenberg, see G. Bunge, *Briefe aus der Wüste* (Trier:Paulinus, 1986).

<sup>49</sup> See again Guillaumont, *Les 'Kephalaia Gnostica'* 139-258, and idem, "Évagre le Pontique", *DSp* 4:1731-1744.

the sacred unity, while the altar of God is the contemplation of the Holy Trinity.<sup>50</sup>

In Evagrius' 39th epistle, the intellect is identified with the holy mountains of Sinai and Zion, and thus as the locus of theophany:

If then, by the grace of God, the intellect both turns away from these [i.e., the passions] and puts off the old man, then it will see its own constitution at the time of prayer like a sapphire or the color of heaven, which recalls as well what the Scripture names "the place of God" seen by the elders on Mt. Sinai [Ex 24:10]. It calls this place and the vision the peace [cf. Ps. 75:3] by which one sees in oneself that peace which surpasses every intellect and which guards our heart. For another heaven [ἄλλος οὐρανός] is imprinted on a pure heart, the vision of which is both light and the spiritual "place"...<sup>51</sup>

It is on the "spiritual mountain" of the intellect that the "blessed light of the Holy Trinity" descends "at the time of prayer"<sup>52</sup>. Evagrius thus accomplishes, in the words of Nicholas Séd ten years ago, "the first interiorization [of the Sinai theophany] of which we have written attestation", just as his play on Ps 75:3, according to the same scholar, "follows the uninterrupted line of the traditional interpretation: Salem, Jerusalem, vision of peace, place of the Presence [or *Shekinah*]"<sup>53</sup>. Here, too, is the interiorization of the

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<sup>50</sup> *Kephalaia Gnostica* V.84, PO 28:213; and cf. the "Supplementary Chapters" to the *KG* in Frankenberg, *Evagrius Ponticus* 429-65, esp. chp. 37 (457) on the intellect again as "temple" (ναός) and 45 (461) as altar (θυσιαστήριον), together with Ep. 33 (Frankenberg 589), evoking 2 Cor 5:1-4, "May the Lord grant...that your tabernacle [σκηνή] become the lodging of the holy angels and of our Savior, Jesus Christ."

<sup>51</sup> Frankenberg, *Evagrius Ponticus* 593; and for other echoes of Ex 24:10, cf. also the "Supplementary Chapters" 2 (425), 4 (427), 21 (441) and 25 (449).

<sup>52</sup> "Supplementary Chapter" 4 (Frankenberg 427). See also "Supplementary Chapters" 26 (450) and Ep. 17 (579) for the "dawning" of the Trinity "at the time of prayer", and cf. Guillaumont, "La vision de l'intellect", esp. the latter's reference to Plotinus, *Enneads* V.5.8 and the "dawning of the One". On the "light of the Trinity" and vision of God as light, see also in Frankenberg "Supplementary Chapters" 4 (427), 30 (455), 53 (465) and Epistles 34 (593) and 58 (609). In the *Antirrheticus*, see "Prologue 7"; and see also *de mal. cog.* 8, PG 79:1221B; *Kephalaia Gnostica* I.35 (PO 28:33), I.81 (53), III.30 (111): the intellect as "beholder of the Trinity"; VI.87 (255): the "light [of God] appears to the intellect joined to the heart"; *Praktos* 64 (Guillaumont, SC 171:646-7); *de oratione* 52 (*Φιλοκαλία* I:181; ET: *Philokalia* I:62): Christ the Word "is accustomed to reveal himself [ἀναφαίνεσθαι] at the time of prayer" – perhaps an echoing of Jn 14:21, together with the passages from *de orat.* cited below, nn 53-61. For discussion, see again Guillaumont, "La vision"; idem, "Les visions des moines au désert" 144-8; Beyer, "Die Lichtlehre der Mönchen" 478-91; Bunge, *Geistliche Vaterschaft* 69-72 (esp. valuable for noting the interiorization of the Sinai and Zion motifs); Séd, "La Shekinta et ses amis"; M.W. O'Laughlin, *Origenism in the Desert: Anthropology and Interpretation in Evagrius Ponticus*, PhD dissertation, University of Michigan (Ann Arbor:1988) 179-86; and most recently, C. Stewart, "Imageless Prayer and the Theological Vision of Evagrius Ponticus", *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 9.2 (2001) 173-204.

<sup>53</sup> Séd, "La Shekinta et ses amis" 242. For the νοῦς as Zion, see also "Supplementary Chapter" 28 (Frankenberg 453), together with *KG* V.88 (PO 28:213) and VI.49 (PO 28:237), and Ep. 25 (Frankenberg 583). For "knowledge of the Holy Trinity" as "the spiritual mountain" which the νοῦς is to ascend, recalling Moses in Ex 19 and 24, see "Supplementary Chapters" 43 (Frankenberg 459).

Eucharist itself, since for Evagrius it is the intellect which is now the place of divine manifestation and which, as it were, feeds on the light of the *Shekinah*, with the latter effectively understood in this re-working as the common radiance of the Three divine Persons. The equation of the *nous* with the Eucharist, and thus with the "body of God", is made explicit in a passage from the treatise *On the Eight Evil Thoughts*, where Evagrius takes the Eucharistic words of Christ and applies them to the intellect, adding by way of a reference to the throne vision of Isaiah 6 that the *nous* is the divine throne: "For it is there", he writes, "that God takes his seat and there that he is known"<sup>54</sup>.

In that it is the light of the transcendent Trinity which appears within the sanctified intellect, itself immaterial and bodiless, it is no surprise to find Evagrius insisting time and again on the *visio dei gloriae* as also bodiless and formless. This insistence is especially marked in his brief but immensely influential treatise, *On Prayer*. As the foremost contemporary interpreter of Evagrian thought, Dom Gabriel Bunge, remarks, the latter work features "a scarcely-veiled polemic...against the materialist notion of the vision of God to which the anthropomorphite monks at Scete had succumbed"<sup>55</sup>. I think it safe to say myself that the monks of Scete and elsewhere in Egypt, together with still others throughout the Christian world at the turn of the fifth century (recall Augustine's polemics in Numidia and compare them with Cyril of Alexandria's letters to the monks of Palestine in the 430's)<sup>56</sup>, were not so much the victims of some novel "heresy" as they were the continuation of traditions which long antedated them, but which had also been rendered anachronistic -- as I noted earlier -- by the doctrinal developments of the fourth century. In any case, and to return to Evagrius, the latter's short work, *On Prayer*, feature a number of sayings directed against the notion of a divine form or body, notably numbers 67-68, 73-74, and 114-117<sup>57</sup>. Saying 67 is directed against human efforts to image

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<sup>54</sup> PG 79:1228C.

<sup>55</sup> Bunge, "Palladiana I" 108.

<sup>56</sup> See Wickham, *Cyril of Alexandria: Select Letters* 132-79, for the letters on anthropomorphism addressed to Palestinian monks, esp. Ep. 1-3 (132-47), 6 (156-7), and 15 (176-9). The first three address specifically questions of anthropomorphism. In Ep. 1 (137-9), Cyril inveighs against the "stupid and wicked" notion that the divine nature should be equated with the human form, and warns his correspondents that they are instead to seek "the world above" through their conduct (139). Here there is surely some relationship presupposed between questions of the divine form and heavenly ascent. Ep. 2 (140-52) objects against a reading of Phil 2:6-7 that sees the Second Person "emptying heaven" of his presence for the sake of the Incarnation. Cyril protests that the divine essence is wrongly thus "quantified" (πεπόσωται) and spatially limited. Here we may recall particularly Augustine's sarcastic reference a generation earlier in Numidia to divine "expansion" and "contraction" -- reacting, be it noted, to the theophany of Ex 24:10! -- as well as to a God of "separable parts" (see above and n.12). In Ep. 6, Cyril rejects the idea that the Savior's (human) body has been simply merged with his divinity to become "consubstantial" with it, an idea which we find, interestingly enough, duplicated two centuries later in Timothy of Constantinople's (ca. 600) list of condemned "Messalian" propositions: "They say...that the body of the Lord was uncircumscribed [απερίγραπτον], like the divine nature". For Timothy's and other lists, see C. Stewart, *Working the Earth of the Heart: The Messalian Controversy in History, Texts, and Language to A.D. 431* (Oxford/NY: Oxford University Press, 1991) 245-79, here 278, and for comment, Fitschen, *Messalianismus* 70-73 and 230. Perhaps related, at least insofar as it may indicate his addressees' reading material, there is Cyril in Ep. 15 replying to the question whether or not the giants of Gen 6:2 were the result of copulation with angels, a possible reference to *I Enoch* 6 ff. Finally, and related I think to the web of scriptural allusions we saw in Aphou above, there is Cyril's "Epistle to Bishop Calosirus" (Wickham 214-221) replying both to questions of anthropomorphism among the monks of the Fayyum, as well as to the proposition that the Eucharist loses its efficacy after a day -- like the manna, I take it, of Ex 16:14-21, though Cyril does not make the connection with the Exodus passage explicit.

<sup>57</sup> Texts in PG 79:1165-99C, and Nicodemus, *Φιλοκαλία* I:176-89 (both under the name of Nilus); ET(s) in Bamberger, *Praktikos and Chapters on Prayer* 52-80, and Ware *et alii*, *The Philokalia* I:57-71. Migne's text and Bamberger's translation, on the one hand, and the *Philokalia*, Greek and English, on the other, differ slightly. I have chosen to follow the latter.



the divinity:

When you are praying, do not shape within yourself any image of the Deity, and do not let your intellect be stamped with the impress of any form; but approach the Immaterial in an immaterial manner, and then you will understand.<sup>58</sup>

In two following sayings, however, the impression of God as having a form is instead ascribed to demonic activity. As Saying 73 also provided me with the title for this paper, I shall quote it in full:

When the intellect attains prayer that is pure and free from passion, the demons attack no longer with sinister thoughts, but with thoughts of what is good. For they suggest to it [i.e., the *nous*] an illusion of God's Glory in a form [σχηματισμός] pleasing to the senses, so as to make it think that it has realized the final aim of prayer. A man who has spiritual knowledge has said that this illusion results from the passion of self-esteem and from the demon's touch on a certain area of the brain.<sup>59</sup>

The last sentence, particularly the last phrase (less the demon, of course) has a modern ring to it -- visions of the divine form as the result of psychopathology!<sup>60</sup> What is primarily to my point, however, is Evagrius' affirmation of the *visio dei gloriae* as "the final aim of prayer", in which he is clearly at one with the traditions represented both by the *merkavah* texts of the Rabbis and by Pachomius and Apa Aphou, and his simultaneous negation of that vision as in any way of a human form. The one place where I found that he does use the word form, εἶδος, in a positive sense comes by way of a brief remark on the Bridegroom of *Song of Songs* 5:15: "The form of the Bridegroom is as a form of light"<sup>61</sup>. The combination of the *Song of Songs*, Bridegroom, divine form, and light is itself surely suggestive of, among other things, the *shi'ur qomah* traditions, though again any note of the human form is deliberately absent<sup>62</sup>. We are rather in the presence of the "substantial light" and "formless form" which will, for example, appear six hundred years later in the

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<sup>58</sup> Φιλοκαλία I:182 (ET: Ware I:63).

<sup>59</sup> Note: the Φιλοκαλία version has δόξα (Ware: "glory") here, while Migne's sources have instead γῶσις θεῖος καὶ οὐσιώδης (Bamberger 67: "divine and essential knowledge").

<sup>60</sup> I am thinking here, not too unfairly I hope, of Halperin, *Faces in the Chariot* 7, 67-8, and 451, and more briefly, idem, "Heavenly Ascensions in Ancient Judaism: The Nature of the Experience", *SBLSP* 26 (1987) 218-32.

<sup>61</sup> The phrase appears in P. Géhin's recovery of a fragment from Evagrius' otherwise lost *Scholia on the Song of Songs*, in "Evagriana d'un manuscrit basilien (Vaticanus Gr. 2028, olim Basilianus 67)", *Le Muséon* 109 (1996) 71, lines 11-12, and French tr. 72. See also Géhin's n.34, p.72, identifying the εἶδος φωτός as belonging to Evagrius' commentary on Song of Songs 5:15; and cf. on this use of the Song of Songs: G. Bunge, "Evagrius Pontikos: Der Prolog des *Antirrhethikos*", *StMon* 39 (1997) 95-6, and on the νοῦς as filling the role of "divine body" in Evagrius' thought, idem, "Nach dem Intellekt Leben?" 102-4, together with Ibid. 101-2, on the notion in Evagrius of the "divine light" as -- echoes of Apa Aphou above -- "the bread of angels".

<sup>62</sup> See Scholem, *Jewish Gnosticism* 36-42, and Stroumsa, "Form(s) of God" 276-7.

citation from Symeon the New Theologian quoted above, and nearly a thousand years later in the Hesychast movement of Mt. Athos and the whole Byzantine commonwealth.

V. *Survivals and Continued Polemic in the Apophthegmata, Historia Monachorum and Lausiaca History*

Before I close, I should like to note that Evagrius was not alone in his efforts to recast older traditions of the *visio dei formae*. At the same time as he was working, or even a little before, we find both both polemic directed against and occasional direct echoes of those traditions. Permit me then simply to cite here three brief anecdotes from as many fourth/fifth century monastic sources, and then conclude with a fourth passage from an exact contemporary of Evagrius who lived and wrote not in Egypt, but somewhere in Mesopotamia on the Roman side of the border with Sassanid Persia. The first of my three sources, the *Sayings of the Fathers (Apophthegmata Patrum)*, is a collection of narratives and *logia* of the earliest monks, though the collection itself was not edited in its present form until the turn of the sixth century, probably in Palestine and in the neighborhood of Gaza<sup>63</sup>. I cannot resist including here its brief account of Abba Silvanus' journey to heaven. One day, the holy man's disciple comes to speak with him, only to find the old man rapt in a trance. He tries again several times over the next few hours with the same result. Finally,

[He] finds him at rest and says to him, "What happened to you today, Father?" And the other said, "I was sick today, child". But he, seizing his feet, said, "I won't let you go until you tell me what you saw." The old man says to him, "I was caught up into heaven and I saw the Glory of God [ἡρπάγην εἰς τὸν οὐρανὸν καὶ εἶδον τὴν δόξαν τοῦ θεοῦ] and I was standing [ἵσταμην] there until now, and now I have been sent away.<sup>64</sup>

True, there is no mention of the divine form in this story, but we do find other elements -- the trance, rapture, *visio gloriae*, and the "standing" before, presumably, the divine throne -- which are all elements familiar from sources in apocalyptic literature, in the Pauline corpus (esp. 2 Cor 12), and in Rabbinic *merkavah* lore<sup>65</sup>. I would add, though it does not appear here, that the transformative aspect of these mystical traditions also shows up in the *Apophthegmata*, as in:

They used to say that, just as Moses received the image of the glory of Adam

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<sup>63</sup> I am obliged, for want of a critical text, to cite from the "Alphabetical Collection" of the *Apophthegmata* in Migne, PG 65:76A-440D. For a summary of the scholarship this century on the early monastic sayings collections, see D. Burton-Christie, *The Word in the Desert: Scripture and the Quest for Holiness in Early Christian Monasticism* (Oxford/NY: Oxford University Press, 1993) 76-98. For an ET of the "Alphabetical Collection", see B. Ward, translator, *The Desert Christian: The Sayings of the Desert Fathers* (NY: MacMillan Publishing Co., 1975).

<sup>64</sup> Silvanus 3, PG 65:409A (ET: Ward 223).

<sup>65</sup> On "standing" in apocalyptic literature and its associations with the heavenly court, see De Conick, *Seek to See Him* 89-92, citing 1 Enoch 39:12, 40:1, 47:3, 68:7; 2 Enoch 21:1; *Testament of Abraham* 7-8; and *Ascension of Isaiah* 9:9-10. Cf. also Gruenwald, *Apocalyptic and Merkavah Mysticism* 66, on the same association in Rabbinic thought, citing *yBerakot* 2c and *Genesis Rabbah* 738: "There is no sitting in heaven...the angels have no joints". For the note of transformation, see Morray-Jones, "Transformational Mysticism", esp. 13-31.

when his countenance was glorified, so too with Abba Pambo, that his face shone like lightening, and he was as a king seated on his throne. And the same thing applied as well to Abba Silvanus and to Abba Sisoës.<sup>66</sup>

Here I would underline the connection between the "glory" and Adam, the reference to Moses' encounter with the *kavod* on Sinai and subsequent descent with shining face in Ex 34:29-35, so important for Paul in 2 Cor 3:7-4:6, and the image of a king enthroned. All of these elements are likewise familiar from the Old Testament Pseudepigrapha and, again, Rabbinic sources<sup>67</sup>.

Trips to heaven and converse with angels are relatively frequent in another collection of early monastic stories and sayings, the *Historia monachorum in Aegypto*, written just prior to the turn of the fifth century by an anonymous monk from Byzantine Palestine who is recounting the tour-pilgrimage he and some fellow members of a monastery in Jerusalem had taken to visit the already famous sites and personalities of monastic Egypt<sup>68</sup>. What catches my eye particularly is a story directed precisely against visions of the *merkavah* type. Abba Or, whom the *Historia* holds up to its readers as one of the great old men, describes in the third person a temptation that he had experienced:

The demons came to him [i.e., to Or himself] in a fantasy, showing up as the angelic hosts together with a chariot of fire and many spear-carriers, and [a figure] like an emperor on tour who says to him, "O man, you have accomplished everything! Worship me and I shall take you up like Elijah!"<sup>69</sup>

The devil's appeal is clearly to the self-esteem that we saw Evagrius also warn against, and Or is not fooled, but counters with a confession of Christ as King and the vision promptly vanishes. Yet, given the frequency

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<sup>66</sup> Pambo 12, 327A (ET 197); and cf. Sisoës 14, 396BC (215), and Silvanus 12, 412C (224) for the shining face reminiscent of Ex 34:29-35. For temporary transformations into fire, see also Arsenius 27, 96BC (ET 13), and Joseph of Panephris 7, 229 CD (ET 103); and cf. Enoch's transformation into fire in 3 *Enoch* 15, text in *Synopse* 284 and 289, ## 855 and 900; ET: *OT Pseudepigrapha* I:267.

<sup>67</sup> See again Morray-Jones, "Transformational Mysticism" 16-28; and, relatedly, Tabor, *Things Unutterable* 15-19 (on Adam and Glory); Segal, *Paul the Convert* 39-49 (transformation, Adam, Moses, ascent, and Glory) and 152-7; Goshen-Gottstein, "The Body as Image" 178-83 (Adam, Moses, and the "body of light"); W.A. Meeks, "Moses as God and King", in *Religions in Antiquity*, ed. J. Neusner (Leiden: Brill, 1968) 354-71, esp. 361-5 (Moses, Adam, Sinai, and the image); and Segal again, "Paul and the Beginnings of Jewish Mysticism", in *Death, Ecstasy, and Otherworldly Journeys* 95-122, esp. 102-14.

<sup>68</sup> Critical text by A.-J. Festugière, *Historia Monachorum in Aegypto: Édition critique du texte grec et traduction annotée* (Bruxelles: Société des Bollandistes, 1971); ET: N. Russell and B. Ward, *Lives of the Desert Fathers* (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1981). For trips to heaven, see *HM* 10, Paternuthis 21-22 (Festugière 83:128-84:146; ET: 85); 11, Sourous 5-7 (91:20-92:37; ET 88-9); and 21, Macarius 5-12 (125:25-126:66; ET 108-9). For angels' converse with the monks, see *HM* 8, Apollo 5-6 (48:38-49:1; ET 71), 38-41 (62:243-63:265; ET 76-7), and 44-47 (63:273-65:298; ET 77); 12, Helle 1-5 (92:1-94:32; ET 90) and 14-15 (96:76-98:87; ET 91-2); and for the equation of the angelic with the monastic life, see the "Prologue" 5 (7:30-36; ET 49) and *HM* 1, John of Lycopolis 6 (34:417-21; ET 62), where Abba John characterizes the monk as one who "stands in the presence of God" participating in the praises of the angelic choirs (and see above, n.65).

<sup>69</sup> *HM* 2, Or 7 (38:52-56; ET 64).

of ascents to heaven elsewhere in the *Historia*<sup>70</sup>, together with the story of Silvanus' trance and Evagrius' polemic, it is difficult not to suspect that this sort of *merkavah* vision may have been fairly common, or, at the least, that it was a well known type.

Indeed, the vision of the *merkavah* as demonic temptation shows up again in a third collection of monastic stories, this time by one of the same four disciples of Evagrius whom I mentioned at the beginning of this essay, Palladius of Heliopolis. The latter wrote his *Lausiaca History* sometime in the 420's about the monks, primarily of Egypt, whom he had known personally or else had heard about<sup>71</sup>. Besides the expected paradigms of ascetic virtue, the *History* also contains a few admonitory tales, examples of the dangers that could befall someone living the monastic life. The Palestinian monk, Valens, is one of the latter, and his sin is, once again, an overweening pride -- "arrogance", in Palladius' words -- which makes him an easy victim of demonic delusion. Once more, too, the specific temptation is a false *merkavah* vision:

[When] the demon was fully satisfied that Valens was completely won over...he went and disguised himself as the Savior. He appeared at night in a vision of a thousand angels carrying lamps and a fiery wheel [τρόχος πύρινος] in which, so it seemed to Valens, the Savior had taken shape...

A false angel then appears to Valens and tells him to leave his cell and go adore the apparition:

So he went out and, when he saw marshalled in a line those who carried lamps, and the Antichrist himself about a stade or so away, he fell down and adored.<sup>72</sup>

Ananisho, Palladius' translator into Syriac in the early seventh century, adds a few details which further underline the resemblance of this story to *merkavah* literature. I quote here from E. Wallis Budge's translation from the Syriac:

...when Valens had gone forth and seen the ranks bearing lamps of fire, and

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<sup>70</sup> See above, n.68, and as well the post-mortem ascent of sainted monks who are carried up to heaven by angels, to the accompaniment of celestial hymnody, in *HM* 8, Apollo 16-18 (52:106-27; ET 72); 11, Sourous 8 (92:38-41; ET 88-9); and 14, Paphnutius 23-24 (109:122-110:132; ET 98).

<sup>71</sup> Critical text by C. Butler, *The Lausiaca History*, Vol. II (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1903); ET: R.T. Meyer, *Palladius: The Lausiaca History*, Ancient Christian Writers 34 (NY: Newman Press, 1964). For the text of Ananisho's Syriac translation, see R. Draguet, *Les formes syriaques de la matière le l'Histoire Lausiaque*, Vol. II: *Éditions des chapitres 20-71*, in *CSCO* 398, *Scriptores Syri* 173 (Louvain: Imprimerie Orientaliste, 1978); and ET: W. Wallis-Budge, *The Paradise or Garden of the Holy Fathers*, The Burt Franklin Research and Source Works Series, Philosophical and Religious Historical Monographs 112 (1907, rep. NY: Lenox Hill, 1972), two volumes. See also R. Reitzenstein, *Historia Monachorum et Historia Lausiaca: Eine Studie zur Geschichte des Mönchtums und der frühchristlichen Begriffe Gnostiker und Pneumatiker* (Göttingen: Van den Hoek und Ruprecht, 1916) 143-84, esp. 172-3 for the vision cited below; and G. Bunge, "Palladiana III" 8-19, for the Coptic materials on Evagrius which are not included in the extant Greek text, esp. Evagrius' converse with angels in 10-11 and 16-17, together with his own reported experience of a vision including heavenly ascent in 15, with elaborate echoes of 2 Cor 12. On Palladius' links with Evagrius, see idem, "Palladiana I" 81-3.

<sup>72</sup> *HL* 25:4-5 (Butler 79:22-80:8; ET 85). See 80, line 1, for τρόχος πύριμος.

the Antichrist himself sitting upon a chariot [*markabto*] of fire -- now he was distant from him a mile -- he fell down and worshipped him.<sup>73</sup>

Following his vision, Valens runs off to the monks' church in order to announce to the assembled brethren that he no longer needs the Eucharist, since "I saw Christ this very day!" The fathers thoughtfully clap him in irons for a year and pray over him until he comes to his senses<sup>74</sup>.

A number of things are worth notice here. First, there is the association of the false Christ with a "shape", particularly we may assume a human shape. It is difficult not to catch an echo of Evagrius' polemic, including the note of the sin of pride, in the story his disciple tells. Second, there is the size of the figure Valens sees. He sees and thinks he recognizes it from six hundred feet away in Palladius' account, and from a mile off in Ananisho's translation. I think that we can safely assume, especially in the Syriac version, that the figure is assumed to have been of super-human size, and that we may have thus an allusion to the *shi'ur qomah* tradition. Third, we have a clear enough allusion to the *merkavah* in Palladius' "fiery wheel", but this becomes unmistakably explicit in Ananisho's use instead of the Syriac equivalent, *markabto*. Fourth and last, the tie-in to the Eucharist is itself of significance. In the Pachomian visions cited above, it is precisely the *synaxis* or church which is highlighted as the locus of the divine presence. Each of the three apparitions mentioned in the *Bohairic Life* shows up in the eastern part of the building, that is, in the sanctuary or altar area, while for Aphou the Eucharist is the very center and pivot of his argument in favor of the human form of divinity, the body of God. I cannot therefore help wondering if perhaps Palladius has added a layer here to the polemic which further distorts the older tradition. Not only are the anthropomorphite monks wrong and deluded, as in Evagrius, or even just heretics, as with Evagrius' other disciple, John Cassian<sup>75</sup>, but now they are deniers of the Church and sacraments as well.

#### VI. *The Adjusted Merkavah and visio gloriae of the Macarian Homilies*

It is true, on the other hand, that there were ascetics who simultaneously claimed the possibility of a vision of the Trinity with their physical eyes and understood both Baptism and Eucharist as matters of relative indifference. These were the Messalians of Syro-Mesopotamia, condemned in a series of episcopal

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<sup>73</sup> Wallis-Budge, *Paradise of the Fathers* I:133; Syriac: Draguet 213-214, esp. 213:11-20, and 213:13-14 for ܡܪܟܒܬܐ ܕܥܝܪܐ ܕܥܝܪܐ ("on a chariot of fire").

<sup>74</sup> Cf. a similar dispute in monastic Egypt about the Eucharist in the "Alphabetical Collection": Daniel 7, PG 65:156D-160A (ET: Ward, *Desert Christian* 53-54); and Mark the Egyptian 1, 304A-C (ET 151), where the erring monks are instead corrected more gently by angelic visions. For comment, see Clark, *The Origenist Controversy* 64-66.

<sup>75</sup> See *Collationes* X.2 (CSEL 291:5-6), *haeresis quae dicitur Anthropomorphitarum*; and X.5 (287:7-8), *inepta quoque Anthropomorphitarum haeresis* (ET: Chadwick 126 and 128); and cf. the characterization of Abba Serapion's (Cassian's anthropomorphite foil) "abominable interpretation" (*detestandae huius interpretationis*) of Gen 1:26 as representing, on the one hand, a *gentilem blasphemian* (X.5; 290:22-291:9; ET 128), and, on the other hand, as operating *sub illa quodammodo iudaica infirmitate* (X.6; 291:25; ET 128). On the "Jewish weakness" here as in fact representing "a very specific exegesis" of, especially, Is 66:1, see E. Wolfson, "Images of God's Feet: Some Observations on the Divine Body in Judaism", in *People of the Book: Jews and Judaism from an Embodied Perspective*, ed. E. Eilberg-Schwarz (Albany: SUNY, 1992) 143-81, here 152-3. Wolfson is commenting on Origen's use of the phrase, "Jewish weakness", in considering the interpretation of Is 66:1 and (once again!) Ex 24:10, as preserved by Theodoret of Cyrrhus (+461) in the latter's *Quaestiones in Genesim*, PG 80:113A-16B, and cf. Stroumsa, "On the Incorporality of God" 345 ff.

synods held between ca. 390 and 431<sup>76</sup>. Writing somewhat earlier, but out of the same traditions and as a result sometimes (by both ancients and moderns) wrongly identified with the heretical Messalians, is the unknown author of the so-called *Macarian Homilies*, a body of monastic letters and discourses which was sheltered for centuries under the distinguished name of Macarius of Scete<sup>77</sup>. The homilist has arguably been as influential as Evagrius in subsequent Eastern monastic literature, and both men, though separated by hundreds of miles and by very different cultural settings -- Greek and Coptic Egypt *versus* Semitic Syro-Mesopotamia -- also shared in a number of other ways: in fidelity to the Niceno-Constantinopolitanum, in acquaintance with the Cappadocian fathers (though in "Macarius" case the influence traveled in both directions)<sup>78</sup>, in knowledge of the Alexandrian tradition of spiritual exegesis, and, as a result of these, in the effort to reconfigure ancient traditions in accordance with Nicene trinitarian orthodoxy. Like Evagrius, too, "Macarius" (to give this writer the name he has gone by for centuries) is also an advocate, and if possible even more forcefully so, of the *visio dei luminis*, which he insists is not a mere product of the intellect, a *noëma*, but:

...a divine light, shining essentially and substantially [ἐν οὐσίᾳ καὶ ὑποστάσει] in the hearts of the faithful...the divine and essential [οὐσιώδης] light which appears and shines in souls more than the light of the sun.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> See the lists of condemned Messalian propositions set in parallel and translated by Stewart, "*Working the Earth of the Heart*" 245-79, here 246-9 (the inadequacy of Baptism), 250-7 (perception of the Spirit with the physical senses), 258-9 (the visibility of the Trinity), and 268-9 (indifference to the Eucharist). For discussion, see Fitschen, *Messalianismus* 18-88.

<sup>77</sup> See again Fitschen, *Messalianismus* 145-58, for a review of the twentieth century scholarship on the *Macarian Homilies* and Messalianism, and 176-235 for a close comparison between the *Homilies* and the condemned propositions which concludes (238) that the homilist was used and "radically reinterpreted" by a later movement. The Greek texts of the *Homilies* are preserved in four medieval, Byzantine collections, of which three have been published in critical editions: Collection II, far and away the most popular and well-represented of the three, by H. Dörries, E. Klostermann, and M. Kroeger, *Die 50 geistlichen Homilien des Makarios*, PTS 4 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1964); ET: G. Maloney, *Pseudo-Macarius: The Fifty Spiritual Homilies and the Great Letter* (NY: Paulist Press, 1992); Collection III by V. Desprez, *Pseudo-Macaire: Oeuvres spirituels*, vol I: *Homélies propres à la Collection III, Sources chrétiennes* 275 (Paris: Cerf, 1980); and Collection I by G. Berthold, *Makarios/Symeon: Reden und Briefe. Die Sammlung I des Vaticanus Graecus 694 (B)*, two volumes, GCS (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1973). In citing from these, I shall be placing the collection number at the beginning in upper-case Roman numerals, followed by the homily number in lower-case, and the section and subsections in arabic numerals, with the page and line number of the critical text in parenthesis followed, where applicable, by the page of Maloney's translation.

<sup>78</sup> See R. Staats, *Makarios-Symeon: Epistola Magna. Eine messalianische Mönchsregel und ihre Umschrift in Gregors von Nyssa 'De instituto christiano'*, *Abhandlungen der Akademie der Wissenschaft in Göttingen, Philologisch-historische Klasse, Dritter Folge* 134 (Göttingen: 1984) esp. 28-42; idem, *Gregor von Nyssa und die Messalianer*, *Patristische Texte und Studien* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1968); and briefly in Desprez, "Introduction", *SC* 275: 47-54.

<sup>79</sup> I.xvii.1.3 (Berthold I, 188:19-189:2). Cf. also I.ii.3.12-15 (8:13-9:25) on Adam's glory reflected in Moses' face as a type of Christ, x.3.1-2 (137:31-138:14) on the heavenly light of glory, xviii.4.4 (198:5-7) and 6.2 (203:2-12) on the "eternal light" in parallel with the manna of Ex 16 and Ps 75:25; xxxv.1-10 (Berthold II, 42-44) from Adam's loss of "glory" (δόξα) to Christ's recovery of it; 1.2.3 (127:6-18); lviii.1-2 (182-185:6); II.iv.9-12 (Dörries 33:137-37:198; ET: Maloney 54-5) on the body of Christ and Phil. 2:6-7; iv.13 (37:199-214; 55-6) on the OT theophanies "in an unapproachable glory of light"; vi.5-7 (67:72-70:109; 76-7) on the uncreated crowns of light awaiting the righteous; viii.2-3 (77:15-79:41; 81-2) on the cross and robe of light, and 6 (83:76-89; 83) for Macarius' testimony to his own experience of this light; xii.8-11 (110:86-113:136; 100-101) on Adam's robe of divine glory; xv.38 (149:537-150:547; 122-3) on the transfiguration of Christ and the believer; xx.2-3 (188:16-189:43; 150-1) on Christ as the

In support of this assertion he appeals at different points to scriptural witnesses, as for example the long catena of texts in one homily which begins with 2 Cor 3:18 and 4:6 (transfiguration and the glory of Christ within the heart), then moves to Pss 118:18 and 42:3 (the light of God's face), Acts 9 and 22 (the light at Paul's conversion), I Cor 15:49 (the "image of the heavenly man"), Phil 3:21 (the "body of glory"), I Cor 2:9-10 ("what eye has not seen"), and R 8:11 (the indwelling Spirit)<sup>80</sup>. Elsewhere he will appeal frequently to Eph 4:13 ("the measure of the stature of Christ's fulness")<sup>81</sup>, to Jacob's ladder in Gen 28:12-19<sup>82</sup>, to Moses' shining face in Ex 34:29-35<sup>83</sup>, to the Synoptic Transfiguration accounts<sup>84</sup>, to Jn 14:21 and 17:22-24, which promise an indwelling manifestation of Christ and participation in the Glory<sup>85</sup>, and to Rev 21 on the "new

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robe and ἀρρητων φῶς; xxvi.9-10 (209:100-210:130; 163-4) on Christ the divine fire, with references to Lk 12:49; Heb 12:29; Ex 3:2, 2 K 4:11, and Heb 1:7; xxxi.5 (249:55-250:68; 195-6) on the heavenly fire of I K 18:18; xlvii.1 (304:1-12; 232) again on Moses' reflection of divine glory as a type of Christ; III.iii.3.1-2 (Desprez 90); xvi.8 (206); xxxv.2.4 (272:37-274:47); xxvi.4 (302-4), 6 (306:1-308:25); and xxviii.4.4 (342:40-344:53). I note that this listing reflects merely my own unsystematic notes and is by no means complete.

<sup>80</sup> I.lviii.1-2 (Berthold II, 182-185:6); and cf. the shorter catena in I.xvii.1 (Berthold I, 188:5-189:2) which features 2 Cor 3:18; Acts 9:3 and 7:56; Jn 14:21; Pss 18:9 and 118:105 (LXX). For other references esp. to 2 Cor 3:7-4:6, esp. 3:18 and 4:6, see Berthold's "Stellenregister zum Alten und Neuen Testament", II:232, where I count eleven references to 3:18 and two to 4:6. See also Collection III: iii.2 (Desprez 90:10-12); viii.4 (128:37); and xxviii.2.2 (334:9 ff.).

<sup>81</sup> See Berthold's "Stellenregister", II:233 (fourteen references); Dörries, "Bibelstellenregister" 352 (six); and Desprez, "Indices des citations scripturaires" 355 (seven).

<sup>82</sup> See I.iv.14.2 (Berthold I, 56:5-10): so uninterruptedly was God with Jacob that "He opened the gates of heaven to him and showed him the heavenly house [οὐκος], manifesting it to him in the form of a ladder". Cf. relatedly the interesting conflation of Gen 28:12-19 and Ezk 1:1 ff in Macarius' contemporary in Egypt, Ammonas: Ep. 13 (PO 11, 602:3-603:8); ET: D.J. Chitty and S.P. Brock, *The Letters of Ammonas* (Oxford: SLG Press, 1979) 19-20; and see below Macarius' use of Ezk 1:1 ff.

<sup>83</sup> See I.ii.3.14 (Berthold I, 9:5 ff.): Satan sees the glory on Moses' face which Adam had (ref. 2 Cor 3:7); iv.1.1 (141:4 ff.): Moses' glory a type of Christ's; xxvi.2.2 (II, 46:14-15): Moses kept faith with God and received the Glory; II.xxxvii.1 (Dörries 265f:12ff.; Maloney 207); xlvii.1 (304:1-12; 232); and III.xx.1.3 (Desprez 236:31-34): Moses received upon his face the "seal...of the glory of the divine light which Adam had before the Fall...The Glory of God and divine vesture." Related to the discussion and citations above from Aphou and Evagrius on the relations between the heavenly meal of Ex 24:10-11, the "bread from heaven" of Jn 6:31-58, and the "light of the *Shekinah*", cf. Macarius in II.iv.12-13 (Dörries 36:180-37:205; Maloney 55-6) with its deployment, in order, of Heb 12:29, I Cor 2:9, Jn 6:35 and 58, I Tim 6:16, and Ex 24:18; to the conclusion that Moses' food on Sinai during his forty day fast was the "heavenly fire" of divinity and "unapproachable glory of light".

<sup>84</sup> See I.xxxv.2 (Berthold II, 81:12 ff.); II.viii.3 (Dörries 78:25-80:43; ET 82): the light of Mt. Tabor shines within the heart; and xv.38 (Dörries 149:537-150:547; ET 122): the glory of Christ on Tabor as promise both of the body's eschatological transformation, and of the inner vision of glory available inwardly even now, ἀπὸ τοῦ νῦν (150:543; and recall the *Liber Graduum's* *bhon 'olmo* above). Note also the use in this context of Jn 17:22 (150:545 ff.).

<sup>85</sup> See Berthold's "Stellenregister" II:229 for Jn 14:21 (seven times) and 23 (eight times); Dörries' "Bibelstellenregister" 328-9 (three times for 14:21 and 23, see n.84 above for 17:22); and Desprez' "Indices" 352 for Jn 14:23 (six times). See also above, n.80, where Jn 14:21 is included in the catena demonstrating the reality of the divine light available to the believer in this life.

earth and new heaven"<sup>86</sup>. Those familiar with Alan Segal's recent interpretation of Paul as a *merkavah* mystic will recognize the Pauline loci cited above. They are the same, by in large, as play a central role in Segal's argument<sup>87</sup>. Macarius, it seems to me, is saying much the same thing in the late fourth century, albeit against the changed background of the Nicene settlement, which should come as no surprise since he, too, is a kind of Christian *merkavah* mystic<sup>88</sup>.

This is borne out in spectacular fashion in the opening paragraphs of the best known collection of Macarius' works, *The Fifty Spiritual Homilies*. The first paragraph of *Homily I* is a straight paraphrase of Ezekiel's vision of the chariot throne, and in the second paragraph Macarius moves to its interpretation:

The prophet truly and assuredly saw what he saw, but [his vision] also suggested something secret and divine, a mystery truly hidden from eternity and after generations made manifest in these last days with the appearance [lit., epiphany] of Christ. For Ezekiel beheld the mystery of the soul which is going to receive its Lord and become his throne [θρόνος] of glory, since the soul which has been made worthy of the fellowship with the Spirit of his [i.e., Christ's] light, and which has been illumined by beauty of his ineffable Glory after having prepared itself for him as a seat [καθέδρα] and dwelling place [κατοικητήριον] becomes all light, and all face, and all eye.<sup>89</sup>

Gershom Scholem touched briefly on the importance of this passage sixty years ago, noting at the end of his chapter on the *hekalot* texts in *Major Trends* that Macarius represents "a mystical reinterpretation of the

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<sup>86</sup> See Berthold II:236 (twice); Dörries 334 (once); Desprez 356 (once).

<sup>87</sup> *Paul the Convert*, esp. 9-11, 58-64, and 156-7.

<sup>88</sup> Thus the use of Ezek 1 cited immediately below, but see as well certain passages in the *Homilies* which recall apocalyptic ascent narratives or the later *hekalot* texts, though here in interiorized form: for example, perhaps esp. I.xxxiii.3.2-3 (Berthold II, 30:9-22): the purified soul sees with its inner eye the "heaven of light" beyond the firmament, the camps (παρεμβολαί) of the angels, and the "tabernacle not made with hands". Cf. also II.xiv.6 (Dörries 125:45-51; ET 107): the "luminous country" of divinity, and again the "camps of the angels and spirits of holiness"; III.iv.1 (Desprez 94:8-13): Christ reigning over the heavenly palace and staff; xv.3 (174:36-9): Christ coming to the soul and making "palaces" (παλάτια) within it for his dwelling (μονή); xix.1 (228:13-20): the soul as great "city" of the King, receiving the "sword of the Spirit", the "heavenly image of Christ", and the "spiritual seals of light" (τὰ οὐράνια τοῦ φωτός πνευματικά σίγνα); and xxv.5 (282:23-25): the palace (παλάτιον) set up for divine inhabitation in the invisible place (χώρος) within the soul.

<sup>89</sup> II.i.2 (Dörries 1:23-2:31; ET 37). Note that the soul is called "throne" here, together with "seat" and "dwelling place". Elsewhere Macarius will refer to it as "temple" (ναός), "church" (ἐκκλησία), "house" (οἶκος), "altar" (θυσιαστήριον), "tabernacle" (σκηνή), "palace" (παλάτιον), and "city" (πόλις). For discussion of these passages, including the idea of the soul as microcosm of both the heavenly and earthly Churches, see A. Golitzin, *Et introibo ad altare dei: The Mystagogy of Dionysius Areopagita*, Analekta Blatadon 59 (Thessalonica: Patriarchikon idryma paterikon meleton, 1994) 374-85; and idem, "Temple and Throne of the Divine Glory" 120-7. For other appearances of Ezek 1 in the *Homilies*, see II.i.9 (Dörries 10:202-215; ET 42); xxxiii.2 (258:22-259:28; 202); and I.xxix.2.2 (Berthold I, 263:9-20), and note in the last the assimilation of the μονή of Jn 14:23 to Ezekiel's chariot. For a straight borrowing of the charioteer in Plato's *Phaedrus* (i.e., the intellect and not Christ God as charioteer), however, see II.xl.5 (Dörries 277:62-4; ET 215).



*merkavah* tradition"<sup>90</sup>. Other than Gilles Quispel, I know of no scholar of the *Homilies* who has since picked up on the echoes of Jewish-Christianity in Macarius<sup>91</sup>. Put another way, Macarius does effectively the exact same thing with Ezekiel's chariot as Evagrius does with the Sinai theophany. Note in the passage cited how he begins with an affirmation of the prophet's vision: Ezekiel really and truly did see the *kavod*. Macarius is speaking to other monks who, I rather think, were quite keen on this passage as exemplary of the sort of vision that they hoped to enjoy themselves -- recall the Pachomian materials I cited earlier, as well as Abba Silvanus' heavenly journey, or, in a negative phrasing, Abba Or and the monk Valens. Only after this affirmation does the homilist introduce his qualifying "but", his point being that since, as he writes elsewhere, "with Christ everything is [now] within"<sup>92</sup>, Ezekiel's vision means something a little different and, in Macarius' eyes, even greater for the Christian. It is no longer the hope of an exterior vision which should drive the monks' desires and longing, but the promise of transfiguration from within. The soul itself is to become at once the chariot throne and, as Macarius goes on to explain, the soul's faculties are thus typified by the living creatures (*hayyot*) which support the *merkavah*. The soul is the true and intended dwelling place and seat of the Glory<sup>93</sup>. This again is functionally identical with Evagrius' understanding of Sinai and the "place" of the divine presence. Like Evagrius, too, Macarius does not simply moralize or ethicize the Glory out of effective existence. The Trinity itself is light, true and substantial, which can be known and seen within the soul in a real anticipation of eschatological transformation in the age to come.

## VII. Concluding Remarks: Continuity and Discontinuity

In this harmony of emphasis on the consubstantial Trinity, on the formless light of the Godhead, and on the possibility of knowing the latter directly even in the present life, the homilist and Evagrius lend that shape to the ruling emphases of Eastern Christian spirituality and mysticism which obtains to the present day<sup>94</sup>. True, this late fourth century shift does constitute a discontinuity of sorts. It is in some respects a break with prior traditions that is comparable even to the discontinuity which Christianity itself represents with respect to the Second Temple matrix out of which it came. On the other hand, I also think it fair to say,

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<sup>90</sup> Scholem, *Major Trends* 79.

<sup>91</sup> See *Makarios, das Thomasevangelium* 9-13; and idem, "Sein und Gestalt", for Macarius' Jewish echoes, though Quispel nowhere addresses the specific matter of the *merkavah* in the *Homilies*.

<sup>92</sup> III.viii.1.5 (Desprez 144:50). The whole passage is playing on the contrasts of 2 Cor 3, ink and stone in opposition to Spirit and heart.

<sup>93</sup> II.i.3 (Dörries 2:51-67; ET:38): "The four living creatures that bore the chariot were a type of the leading faculties of the soul:...the will, conscience, mind [νοῦς], and the power to love...The Rider, then, is carried by the chariot and the living creatures who are all eye or, in a way, he is carried by every soul that has become his throne and exists now as eye and light".

<sup>94</sup> "Evagrius established the categories [of Eastern Christian spirituality]; Macarius...provided the affective content", V. Desprez, "Macaire", *DSp* 10:39. I believe, however, that the "head" and "heart" contrast between Evagrius and Macarius reflected here is somewhat overdrawn. See on this point Golitzin, "Temple and Throne of the Divine Glory" 108-14. On Macarius' use of "body of the Glory" traditions, and his importance thus for later Eastern Christian thought, see A. Orlov and A. Golitzin, "Many Lamps are Lightened from the One: Paradigms of the Transformational Vision in the Macarian Homilies", *VigChr* 55.3 (2001) 281-98; and cf. above, n.61, on Evagrius' use of the same traditions.

first and together with Guy Stroumsa very recently<sup>95</sup>, that the newly exclusive stress on interiority in these writers is in harmony with a certain logic inherent in the Christian Gospel itself, and, second and this time rather in opposition to or at least as supplementing Stroumsa, that the break with the past is a little less sharp in the Christian East than in the West of Augustine and the latter's heirs<sup>96</sup>. The divine light remains, as do the notes of transfiguration and of the commerce of heaven with earth even in the present life. The monks of Egypt who protested Theophilus' letter were doomed ultimately to lose their struggle, at least for that particular configuration of the traditions which they cherished. Yet the earlier emphases and hope did not disappear. The old apocalyptic texts of the Pseudepigrapha continued to be read, copied, and, I presume, valued by Eastern monks. Likewise, the hope of the *visio dei maiestatis* retained its central place and, I think, continued to be nourished by texts from Jewish antiquity<sup>97</sup>. The story of this continuity remains to be explored and charted. I hope that this paper has made some small contribution toward that enterprise, just as I hope, too, that it may serve as a signal of my own deep gratitude for the work of those Jewish and Christian scholars who have, since Scholem, begun to open a door toward the glimpse of wider vistas, and of deeper affinities between Jew and Christian, than had long been thought to be the case.

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<sup>95</sup> Stroumsa, *Hidden Wisdom* 145-6, 156-9, and 164-7; and cf. idem, "Ascèse et gnôse: aux origines de la spiritualité monastique", *RThom* 89 (1981) 557-73, esp. 566-72.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid. 109-10, and esp. the choice of Augustine as universal pattern for later Christian mysticism 132-46. But recall also the qualification above, n.11, regarding John Cassian and the latter's successors in the Western tradition.

<sup>97</sup> See Himmelfarb, *Ascent to Heaven* 99, asking why late antique and even medieval and post-medieval Christian monks continued to copy non-canonical literature (here the OT Pseudepigrapha), especially in the East, and cf. the same question posed more forcefully by R.A. Kraft, "The Pseudepigrapha in Christianity", in *Tracing the Threads: Studies in the Vitality of the Jewish Pseudepigrapha*, ed. J.C. Reeves (Atlanta: Scholar's Press, 1994) 55-86, esp. 68-70. The answer, I suggest, is that the monks continued to find the experience of God they hoped to receive themselves mirrored in the ascent and vision stories of the saints of Israel, the as it were "grandfathers" of Christianity. This is precisely the assumption -- i.e., what the prophets saw then we may see today -- which opens Gregory Palamas' *Tomos* in defense of the Hesychasts of Mt. Athos in 1340/41. See the *Tomos of the Holy Mountain*, Greek in Nicodemus, *Φιλοκαλία* IV:188-9; ET: Ware *et alii*, *The Philokalia* IV:418-19; and for comment, J.R. Romanides, "Notes on the Palamite Controversy and Related Topics", *GOTR* 6.2 (1960/1) 186-205 and 9.2 (1963/4) 225-70, esp. 194-205 and 257-62; together with A. Goltizin, "Earthly Angels and Heavenly Men: The OT Pseudepigrapha, Nicetas Stethatos, and the Tradition of 'Interiorized Apocalyptic' in Eastern Christian Ascetical and Mystical Literature", *DOP* forthcoming.