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# Eastern Theological Journal

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# **Eve in the Desert. History of Reception and of Theology in the early monastic traditions<sup>1</sup>**

Csaba ÖTVÖS

SUMMARY: 1. Introduction. 2. Typological exegesis; 2.1 A source? 2.2 A parallel? 3. Literary exegesis; 4. Spiritual allegory; 4.1 Evagrius; 4.2 Terms; 4.3 Adam, Eve and Christ; 4.4 Gen 1.26-27; 4.6 The paradise and the tree of life; 4.7 The paradise II; 4.8 The creation and the contemplation; 4.9 The contemplations; 4.10 Contemplation and exegesis; 4.11 The chapter; 4.12 Isaiah of Scetis; 5. Conclusion.

*For a man ... is the image and glory of God:  
but the woman is the glory of man.  
(1Cor. 11:7)<sup>2</sup>*

## I. Introduction

The figure of Eve and the teachings concerning her figure played a prominent role already in the earliest Christian theological traditions. However, these fundamental teachings of the doctrinal orthodoxy are apparently missing from the nascent monastic literature and the Fathers seem to avoid even her name. My short paper comes from this two-sided picture of tradition and raises two main questions: how did the Fathers use the figure of Eve in their sayings and writings, and what could be the reason behind ignoring her.

1 The research and the publication was supported by the PD112421 (*National Research, Development and Innovation Office (OTKA)*).

2 Translation from KJV „*Authorized Version*”, *Cambridge Edition*

In the following I make an attempt to investigate this impression.

In the material – I had access to while preparing this paper – I was able to identify three distinguishable types of her figure. For every type the common and primary source of inspiration is the biblical verses from the first chapters of Genesis but these verses serve different theological intentions, incorporating different exegetical methodologies. The following categorization is my invention, with the names to express their main features. As we will see the fathers used the well established traditions of biblical interpretation and drew upon confirmed hermeneutic methods which had been invented by previous interpreters of Scripture. But they created new and distinct solutions. Adding to these, for better understanding and to situate these examples more clearly we should take into account Burton-Christi's statement who wrote about desert hermeneutic: *the hermeneutic firmly embedded within the practical challenges presented by the ascetical life the monks had taken up in the Egyptian desert: a hermeneutic that demands, ultimately, that the meaning of a text be expressed in a life*<sup>3</sup>.

Besides the examples, the scope of this short paper does not extend to the monastic office<sup>4</sup>, the prayers and readings of Feasts, because our task would become too perplexing and turn our attention to other complications. Another theological field that this paper does not cover, is concerned with ascetic teachings and the veneration of Mary, although it has also connotations with the figure of Eve.

3 D. Burton-Christi, *The Word in the Desert. Scripture and the Quest for Holiness in early Christian Monasticism*, Oxford University Press, New York-Oxford, 1993, Preface VIII.

4 For this see, e.g. R. F. Taft, *The Liturgy of Hours in East and West. The Origins of the Divine Office and its Meaning for Today*, Collegeville, The Liturgical Press, 1993, esp. 57-73.

## 2. Typological exegesis

The first one is a typology, where the misogynic attitude is dominant and Eve is the type of the seduced one who is blamed as the reason of fall and expulsion. One noteworthy example comes from the Apophthegmata Patrum, as Abba Hyperechius' saying<sup>5</sup>. I quote the saying from the alphabetical collection (but we should note that the saying is preserved in the same form in the thematic collection and it appeared in the collection of his saying, entitled Παραίνεσις Ασκητῶν in Migne, PG 79, 1472-1489)<sup>6</sup>. The translation comes from Benedicta Ward<sup>7</sup>: 5. *He also said, 'It was through whispering that the serpent drove Eve out of Paradise, so he who speaks against his neighbor will be like the serpent, for he corrupts the soul of him who listens to him and he does not save his own soul'*<sup>8</sup>.

The source of the monastic teaching is the biblical account of temptation but our abba does not mention Adam neither the command nor the curse. He only compares the whispering of the gossip to the whispering of the serpent that drove Eve from Paradise<sup>9</sup> to demonstrate the destructive pattern of this sinful behavior. This is one reason why it could be named typological exegesis. According to Burton-Christi this saying expresses the recognition of how far reach-

5 The french translation of his saying was added: *Instructions aux moines*. du Bienheureux Hyperéchios, prêtre. D'après la traduction de M. Nicolas Fontaine, 1696. 2013

6 Apophthegmata patrum (collectio systematica) (cap. 1-9) (2742: 005) "*Les apophthegmes des pères. Collection systématique, chapitres i-ix*", Ed. J. Guy - C. Paris: Cerf, 1993; Sources chrétiennes 387. Ch 4, par 60, 1-4.

7 B. Ward, *The Saying of the Desert Fathers. The Alphabetical Collection*. Kalamazoo, 1984, 238.

8 The Greek text: Εἶπε πάλιν· Ψιθυρίσας ὁ ὄφης τὴν Εὐάν τοῦ παραδείσου ἐξέβαλε. Τούτου οὖν ὁμοίος ἔσται καὶ ὁ καταλαλῶν τοῦ πλησίον· τὴν γὰρ ψυχὴν τοῦ ἀκούοντος ἀπολλύει, καὶ τὴν ἑαυτοῦ οὐ διασώζει.

9 W. S.J. Harmless, *Desert Christians. An Introduction to the Literature of Early Monasticism*, Oxford-New York. Oxford University Press, 2004, 237.

ing the effects of slanderous words (*ψιθυρίσας* from gr. *ψιθυρίζω*) could be, affecting not only the recipients of the words but also the ones who uttered them<sup>10</sup>. This opinion could be right and the teaching could be only an ethical maxim or advice to cultivate the purity of heart and guard the spoken words. However, on the ground of the biblical verses of temptation and fall we raise the possibility of another explanation.

### 2.1 A source?

While interpreting the Scripture and drawing up his teaching, abba Hyperechius could rely on the results of a widespread exegetical tradition. The typology of Eve and Mary, as the first and second virgin appeared already in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century Christianity. Its earliest example is preserved in Saint Justin Martyr's Dialogue with Trypho (100.4.11-): "[The Son of God] became man through a Virgin, so that the disobedience caused by the serpent might be destroyed in the same way it had begun. καὶ διὰ τῆς παρθένου ἄνθρωπος γεγονέναι, ἵνα καὶ δι' ἧς ὁδοῦ ἢ ἀπὸ τοῦ ὄφεως παρακοὴ τὴν ἀρχὴν ἔλαβε, διὰ ταύτης τῆς ὁδοῦ καὶ κατάλυσιν λάβῃ. For Eve, who was virgin and undefiled, conceived the words of serpent, and brought forth disobedience and death. παρθένος γὰρ οὖσα Εὐὰ καὶ ἄφθορος, τὸν λόγον τὸν ἀπὸ τοῦ ὄφεως συλλαβοῦσα, παρακοὴν καὶ θάνατον ἔτεκε· But the Virgin Mary conceived faith and joy; πίστιν δὲ καὶ χαρὰν λαβοῦσα Μαρία ἢ παρθένος for when the angel Gabriel brought her the glad tidings that the Holy Spirit would come upon her and that the power of the Most High would overshadow her, so that the Holy One born of her would be the Son of God, she answered, 'Let it be done to me according to thy word' (Lk. 1:38). Thus was born of her the [Child] about whom so many Scriptures speak, as we have shown. Through Him, God crushed the serpent, along

<sup>10</sup> Burton-Christi, 1993, 141.

*with those angels and men who had become like the serpent.*<sup>11</sup> Here we are dealing with a teaching that uses the Eve-Mary parallel. For our purpose the motive of listening to the serpent's words plays a significant role because – if our assumption is right, this motive was adopted in the aforementioned apophthegma. In Justin's interpretation Eve conceived the serpent's words (τὸν λόγον τὸν ἀπὸ τοῦ ὄφεως συλλαβοῦσα) and gave birth to disobedience and death (παρακοὴν καὶ θάνατον ἔτεκε) and in our apophthegma the motive of whispering (Ψιθυρίσας ὁ ὄφις τὴν Εὐαν τοῦ παραδείσου ἐξέβαλε) occurs, that causes the corruption of the soul of both who talks and his listeners. The common denominator – that is listening to the words either of the serpent or of the sinful monk, shows into one direction, namely to call the attention to the dangers and effects of receiving the slanderous words. Besides the different terms there are other remarkable differences, e.g. it is a typology and in the former saying the figure of Mary does not occur. However, the common motives, the figure of Eve, the serpent and the mentioned similar meanings of receiving the words (and the omission of Adam's person) raise the possibility that this theological teaching was adopted and modified, and at the end of the process it became more widely applicable in monastic life.

## 2.2 *A parallel?*

In connection with the history of the saying – that is the history of tradition and authority – it is worth to note that our saying appears in the Greek collection of the writing of Ephrem the Syrian (in his *Cohortatio ad Monachos, Paraenesis ad ascetas* (ordine alphabetico) (4138: 042) 354.13-315.1. In the scholarly literature, the question of how much

11 Translation from L. Gambero, *Mary and the Fathers of the Church. The Blessed Virgin Mary in Patristic Thought*, Translated by Thomas Buffer. Ignatius Press, San Francisco, 1999. 47. The Greek text from St. Justin Martyr, Dialogue with Trypho, ch. 100, Patrologia Graeca (PG) Migne, 6, 709-712.

of the Greek corpus – if indeed any of it at all – should be attributed to Ephraim himself, has not yet been established.<sup>12</sup>

Ψιθυρίσας ὁ ὄφεις τὴν Εὐάν τοῦ παραδείσου ἐξώρισε· ψιθυρίζων δὲ μοναχὸς ἐκείνω ὅμοιος ἔσται· τὴν γὰρ ψυχὴν τοῦ πλησίον ἀπόλλυσι καὶ τὴν αὐτοῦ οὐ διασώζει.<sup>13</sup>

Inquiring the quotation, on account of the similarities of the two versions, it is beyond question that we are dealing with one and the same saying. The striking feature is that the collection under the name of Ephraim does not mention Hyperechios' name. It uses the aforementioned saying in a slightly modified way but the verb is the same and the context too<sup>14</sup>. He used only the comparison to illustrate the dangers of whispering among the monks.

Unfortunately we do not know the exact dates related to Hyperechios' life<sup>15</sup>. According to the fragmentary information, our saint elder apparently lived at the beginning of the fourth century Egypt (His French translator, Nicolas Fontain dated his life to the 4-5<sup>th</sup> century on account of some manuscripts<sup>16</sup>) but his dwelling is uncertain (Lower Egypt and Syria-Palastine is also possible). He was probably a priest. All these issues allow us to suppose that Hyperechios and Ephraim knew each other, could have met either in Egypt or in Syria.

12 A. Casidey, *St Aldhelm's bees (De uirginitate prosa cc. IV-VI): some observations on a literary tradition*, in *Anglo-Saxon England*, 33 (2004) , pp 1-22. p. 3 note 12.

13 The quotation is from the Diogenes.

14 This concept was used by Joannes Damascenus later in the Christian tradition. In *Scr. Eccl., Theol., Sacra parallela (recensiones secundum alphabeti litteras dispositae, quae tres libros conflant) (fragmenta e cod. Vat. gr. 1236) (2934: 018)*; MPG 95 & 96. Volume 95, page 1313, line 23.

15 W. Graham, *Beyond the written word. Oral aspects of Scripture in the Histroy of Religion*, 225 note 17.

16 *Instructions aux moines*. du Bienheureux Hyperéchios, prêtre. D'après la traduction de M. Nicolas Fontaine, 1696. Numérisée à peine modernisée par Alboicade 2013.

On the other hand, we have two collections of sayings for the monks with the same title, similar intention and similar content and with the same saying. The question, that we should leave open here, is concerning the history of tradition and authenticity, where and when the change happened. For now we can summarize that in this case of the saying the written tradition retained an oral saying.

Summing up shortly our first step we could say that in the apophtegma we met an ethical teaching. The figure of Eve and her temptation was used to illustrate the origin and danger of a bad custom or practice of the monastic life.

### 3. Literary exegesis

The second type is a more literary exegesis. Our chosen example comes from another side of monasticism. The sentence from Casianus' *Conferences* (VIII,9) is a quotation that comes as a statement of father Germanus<sup>17</sup>: "*Up till now we used to believe that the reason and commencement of the ruin and fall of the devil, in which he was cast out from his heavenly estate, was more particularly envy, when his spiteful subtlety he deceived Adam and Eve*"<sup>18</sup>. In the sentence the first couple appears with names and it indicates undoubtedly that the background is the biblical temptation and their expulsion. The couple appear together, both are tempted and deceived, and Germanus did not mention the biblical sequence in his teaching. The main motive is the envy (*invidia*, φθόνος), alluding probably to the Book of Wis-

17 Translation from Edgar C. S. Gibson, *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ser., vol. 11 (Reprint), Ed. by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans. 1964.

18 The latin text from Jean Cassian: *Conférences VIII-IX* ( SC 54) 1958 17: *Nos hactenus credebamus causam atque initium ruinae seu praeuaricationis diabolicae, qua de angelica statione deiectus est, inuidiam specialiter extitisse, quando Adam et Euam liuida calliditate decepit.*

dom (2,24): (*Death came into the world only through the Devil's envy, φθόνῳ δέ διαβόλου θάνατος εἰσῆλθεν εἰς τόν κόσμον* or in the Vulgata: *Invidia autem diaboli mors introivit in orbem terrarum*) or to the tradition that was acquainted with the teaching that the envy was the reason of the temptation of man at first and then the fall of Devil from its heavenly place. The question of the sources is obvious because this variant was well known and widespread in Jewish and Christian orthodox and heterodox circles<sup>19</sup>. Accepting Russel's opinion, in the Christian tradition Theophilus, bishop of Antioch (from about A.D. 169) was the first to follow the Wisdom 2:24 in emphasizing the envy as the motive in Satan's fall. Later, Irenaeus and Cyprian used similarly this version<sup>20</sup>. What is interesting to note that this imagery appears also in the Adam and Eve literature and was known in the tractates of the Nag Hammadi Library. And Cassian's text seems to provide support for the last presumption. Because Germanus' statement bears witness of an old view, arguing that chronologically the first was the temptation of the first couple and thereafter as a consequence, happened the evil's expulsion from heaven. Serenus explained in his answer that "*the occasion of the envy and seduction, which led him to deceive man, arose from the ground of his previous fall, in that he saw that man, who had but recently been formed out of the dust of the ground, was to be called to that glory, from which he remembered that he himself, while still one of the princes, had fallen*"<sup>21</sup>. The explanation that inverts the chronological order, introduces the right and confirmed teaching among the monks and at the same time leads further and testifies a teaching on the genealogies of the seed of righteous Seth

19 E. Grypeau, *Die Dämonologie der koptisch-gnostischen Literatur im Kontext jüdischer Apokalyptik*, in A. Lange – H. Lichtenberger – K.F.D. Römhald (eds.), *Die Dämonen und die dämons*, Mohr Siebeck, 2003

20 But Origen preferred pride, and that explanation came to prevail. Jeffery Burton Russell, *Satan: the early Christian tradition*, 1981., 78-9.

21 Translation from Edgar C.S. Gibson op.cit.

and of Kain, the offspring of devil. And this view could be influenced by the Sethian thinking, known mostly from the writings of the Nag Hammadi Library<sup>22</sup>. Shortly saying, based on both motives, the envy and genealogy of Seth, we dare to say these are parts of common material with the sources – labeled as Sethian – in modern scholarship.

Whether it is a trace of connection of traditions or a coincidence, our second example focused on the origin of evil. Through the motive of envy as the cause of the evil's fall, that could come from the para-biblical tradition, we had an example where the biblical story of temptation of the first couple received attention and filled the role to explain their temptation and fall with the devil's. The motive that is used, could come from earlier Jewish or Christian tradition, here it symbolizes an old teaching that should be revised.

#### 4. Spiritual allegory

The third example also comes from monastic experience but it represents a side that was not mentioned until now. This is the contemplation – that is why we could call it the spiritual type. As we will see in more detailed form later, this chosen example – similarly to the aforementioned examples – represents the complexity of the theological doctrines and retaining the interest by the increased difficulties it raises striking questions that do not restrain to the theology of creation but imply the manifold wealth of monastic traditions. That is why I have deemed it advisable to devote the following part of my short paper to only one example and in this remaining part I would present my questions and results.

22 J. Kim, *The Spiritual Anthropology of John Cassian*, PhD thesis, University of Leeds. 2002. 153.

4.1 *Evagrius*

The example comes from Evagrius, a monk and theologian from the 4<sup>th</sup> century Egypt. He was – with Guillaumont’s words – at once foreign and intellectual among the monks who were, for the most part, illiterate Egyptian peasants<sup>23</sup>. Although this antithesis comes from the former scholarly consensus and the current scholarly opinion is facing a full scale revision both regarding the questions of literacy and the theological sophistication concerning the Egyptian monasticism. The content of Guillaumont’s statement could be true, not only because it alludes to the well known apophtegma about Evagrius<sup>24</sup>, but also because his writings sometimes sounds to be foreign and intellectual although we are not illiterate, nor Egyptian peasants.

In the history of church he is on the one hand a discredited, anathematized Origenist theologian and heretic and on the other an admired teacher, ascetic, spiritual father and leader whose writings were read, valued for centuries and had profound influence on the development of the Christian spirituality and were foundational to the Desert Father’s monasticism.

The sentence that I would quote, comes from his well known *Kephalaia Gnostica*. The chapters are part of his great trilogy, besides the *Praktikos* and *Gnostikos*. The trilogy was written in the 380’s. As per Evagrius’ intention, these chapters contain all that is required for a full description of the ascetic and gnostic teachings of the desert fathers, so that the reader is presented with chapters about God, about the nature of creation and about the dynamics of salvation<sup>25</sup>.

23 Guillaumont (1962): 52–3

24 Apophtegma Evagrius 7 (PG 65: 176).

25 L. Dysinger, *Psalmody and Prayer in the Writings of Evagrius Ponticus*, Oxford University Press, 2005. and his article: An Exegetical Way of Seeing: Contemplation and Spiritual Guidance in Evagrius Ponticus, *Studia Patristica* LIV, 1-22. and Augustine Casiday: *Reconstructing the theology of Evagrius Ponticus. Beyond heresy*, Cambridge University Press. 2013 and Columba Stewart,

The original Greek is lost (only fragments are preserved, e.g. in Sozomeos, Ecclesiastical History)<sup>26</sup>, because this writing together with the Letter to Melania were suppressed after the second Council of Constantinople. Two main Syriac version are preserved, both are edited by Guillaumont (in the Source Chretienne 365)<sup>27</sup>. In the Kephalaia Evagrius' ascetic theology appears in chapter or century form, namely, as collections of enigmatic aphorisms, to quote Casidey's words: "which assign the readers to ponder over the difficulty in understanding by a subtle and deliberately ambiguous mode of thought". Ac-

Imageless Prayer and the Theological Vision of Evagrius Ponticus. *Journal of Early Christian Studies*, 9, 2 (2001) 173-20.

- 26 Dysinger wrote ([http://www.ldysinger.com/Evagrius/02\\_Gno-Keph/00a\\_start.htm](http://www.ldysinger.com/Evagrius/02_Gno-Keph/00a_start.htm)): The Principal Greek fragments edited by Hausherr, I. 'Nouveaux fragments grecs d'Evagre le Pontique', *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 5 (1939), pp. 229-233; Muyldermans, 'À Travers la Tradition Manuscrite d'Évagre le Pontique', *Bibliothèque du Muséon* 3 (Louvain: Ista, 1933), pp. 74, 85, 89, 93; Muyldermans, 'Evagriana. Extrait de la revue *Le Muséon*, vol. 42, augmenté de nouveaux fragments grecs inédits' (Paris, 1931), pp. 38-44; Géhin, 'Evagriana d'un Manuscrit Basilien, (*Vaticanus Gr. 2028; olim Basilianus 67*)', *Le Muséon* 109 (1996), pp. 59-85.
- 27 Guillaumont published two Syria versions: the expurgated, or common, version that was previously published by Frankenberg, and (2) the unexpurgated, or integral, version that was previously unpublished (*Les six centuries de «Kephalia Gnostica» d'Évagre le Pontique. Édition critique de la version syriaque commune et édition d'une nouvelle version syriaque, intégrale, avec une double traduction française*, *Patrologia Orientalis* 28.1 (Paris 1958). The text has an Armenian adaptation and an Arabic version. In 1905 Sarghisan published an Armenian version. The mentioned Syriac text (S') with commentary by Babai the Great and Greek retroversion, was translated by W. Frankenberg, *Evagrius Ponticus*, *Abhandlungen der königlichen Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen, Phil.-hist. Klasse, Neue Folge*, vol. 13, no. 2. (Berlin, 1912). The most recent translation based on the Syriac texts comes from Ramelli with an introduction and commentary: *Evagrius's Kephalaia gnostika: a new translation of the unreformed text from the Syriac*. (*Writings from the Greco-Roman World* 38) SBL Press, Atlanta, 2015.

According to the scholarly opinion, the Gnostic chapters is not a closed theological system and concerning the fact that the six centuries are actually incomplete, the work is deliberately incomplete<sup>28</sup>.

The work gets into the controversies of the Palestinian monks, between the monks of the New Laura, who were students of Origen and Evagrius, and those from the Great Laura and the Laura at Mar Saba (founded by St. Sabbas) who were disturbed because of Origenist ideas<sup>29</sup>. On the other hand it played also a prominent role in the Christological controversies that resulted in the anathemas against Origen, promulgated in 553. Guillaumont established the correspondences between the earlier KG version – he had discovered – and the anathemata<sup>30</sup>.

With the examination of our chapter we would not like to get involved into this theological dispute because our task is a smaller one and its reduced aim is to be only complement in this context while focusing on the text and its interpretation.

The last chapter of the Gnostikos sums up the work of Evagrius since he worked as a copyist, copying sacred texts: “*To the archetype looking always try to write the icons (pros to archetypon blepōn aeipeirō graphein tas eikonas) leaving out nothing of the things which contribute to the gaining of the one fallen*” (GN 50).

At first I quote the chapter. I received the two Syriac manuscript and their Greek retroversion of Frankenberg in this format from Brother Dysinger (to whom I should express here my gratefulness)<sup>31</sup>.

28 A. M. Casidey, *Evagrius Ponticus*, Routledge, London-New York, 2006, 27.

29 H. Case, *Becoming One Spirit: Origen and Evagrius Ponticus on Prayer*, (2006). School of Theology. Seminary Graduate Papers/Theses. 38.

30 Guillaumont, *Kephalaia Gnostica* o.c. but according to e.g. Corrigan, the question of tradition remains open, that involves Evagrius' own time and place and the later categories of the controversies. See, K. Corrigan, *Evagrius and Gregory Mind, Soul and Body in the 4<sup>th</sup> Century*, Ashgate, 2009, esp. 27. footnote 130-131

31 The following quotations from Evagrius are Dysinger's translations (from his homepage: [http://www.ldysinger.com/Evagrius/ooa\\_start.htm](http://www.ldysinger.com/Evagrius/ooa_start.htm)) if it is not indicated others.

century V chapter I			
	SI-Fr		
SI	I.	S2	S2-Dysinger
ܩܝܢ — ܟ	.	ܩܝܢ — ܟ	V,1. Adam is the
ܐܘܢ ܩܘܥܘܪܬܐ	ܟ	ܐܘܢ ܩܘܥܘܪܬܐ	image of Christ,
ܟܘܘܢ .ܟܘܘܘܩܝܢܐ	.	.ܟܘܘܘܩܝܢܐ	and that of the
ܟܘܘܩܝܢܐ ܩܝܢܐ	ܟ	ܩܝܢܐ ܟܘܘܩܝܢܐ	reasoning nature is
.ܟܘܘܩܝܢܐ	. Αδამ	.ܟܘܘܩܝܢܐ ܩܘܥܘܪܬܐ	Eve, on account of
ܐܘܢ ܩܘܥܘܪܬܐ	τυπος του	ܐܘܢ ܩܘܥܘܪܬܐ	whom the Christ
ܩܘܥܘܪܬܐ	X. Εὐα δε	ܩܘܥܘܪܬܐ	has left his Para-
ܩܘܥܘܪܬܐ	της λογικης	ܩܘܥܘܪܬܐ	dise.
ܩܘܥܘܪܬܐ	φυσεως δι ην		
	ο Χ.		
	εξηλθε της		
	παραδεισου		
	αυτου.		

V,1 Adam is the type/figure of Christ and that of the reasoning nature is Eve, on account of whom the Christ has left his Paradise.

I present Dysinger’s translation in a slightly modified way changing the term of image to the type because the Syriac text uses the term *typos*. With this term the allusion to the Rom 5.14 is clearer where the Pauline sentence says that *Adam, who is a type of the coming one* (Αδὰμ ὃς ἐστὶν τύπος τοῦ μέλλοντος). In our Syriac text the Greek original term appears in Syriac letters while the Peshitta translates the Greek term to its Syriac equivalent, ܩܘܥܘܪܬܐ (damuta) in Rom 5.14. We should note that in the Greek version the reasoning nature is in plural but the Syriac uses singular form.

At first sight this sentence is a short summary of the Christian doctrines of creation, fall and salvation, in the frame of a spiritual/allegorical exegesis that exemplifies Evagrius’ theology or rather

spiritual anthropology. The place is the paradise where the figures of Adam, Eve and Christ seem to be in original unity but with the hint of Christ's salvation act, it indicates the fall of man and restoration and in doing so the last part could refer also to the ultimate unity. In short, the chapter gives undeniably a description on the human condition in Paradise before the fall, then after the fall and lastly, supposedly as the ultimate place of restoration.

But, even from this perspective we should point out the seemingly obscure features. How could Eve be Adam's reasoning nature, why does the text mention Christ's paradise that he left, what happened with the couple, and why did Evagrius use the term of *typos* instead of the image, *eikon*? In fact, by means of these questions the whole sentence could become rapidly a sort of metaphor or rather a theological vision that expresses Evagrius' own insights with its features.

These observations raise inevitably our questions and that is why we should make an attempt to see more clearly the sentence's meaning and its function in the Evagrian theological system. In the following I examine first the main terms, then turning to the imagery I would demonstrate its parallels, and lastly I made an attempt to present the theological concept of this *kephalaion*.

#### 4.2 *Terms*

Concerning the terms involved, our first impression could be the Scriptural sources of the sentence. The first part of the Evagrian chapter could be built on the Rom 5.14, as it is mentioned formerly, and through the term of *typos* from the Pauline teaching it refers also to the two Adams from the Letter to Corinthians, and this whole development alludes evidently to the Genesis account on the first couple in Paradise.

#### 4.3 *Adam, Eve and Christ*

Our second issue is that the exegesis seemingly gives the mentioned symbolism of Adam and Eve but reading more closely, the text could

indicate another meaning. The sentence implies three statements on Adam: (1) he is the type of Christ, (2) Eve is his reasoning nature and (3) he is on account of whom Christ left his Paradise and this last part involves evidently that the protoplasts fall from his Paradise and also that salvation comes from Christ's saving act. In other words, Evagrius deals only seemingly with the first couple and Christ, his most prominent intention seems to utilize the biblical creation story to become able to explain his theological and anthropological teachings on Adam's primordial state. However, the Christological teaching seems to play a decisive and significant role to understand the whole chapter.

#### *4.4 Gen 1.26-27*

Keeping in mind this tripartite complexity of the sentence it is worth to note, that the first part could build on the Origenian spiritual exegesis.

In this exegetical type, Origen, like Philo did formerly, propounds a twofold creation in accordance with the two creation accounts. First, during the spiritual creation, that the Gen 1.26-27 the man was created according to the image and likeness of God (Christ). This creation is incorporeal and Origen locates the image of God in his spiritual part. The Genesis 2 pertain the creation of physical man, Adam who was "formed from the dust of the ground" and Eve who was taken from Adam's side. Origen argues that the spiritual creation of "male and female" of Genesis 1 is superior to the physical "man and woman" of Genesis 2. Besides this view Origen draws the Pauline inner and outer man into parallel with the first and the bodily heavens (HomGen. 1.2, 28. Heine 1982, 49: *And, therefore, that first heaven indeed, which we said is spiritual, is our mind, which is also itself spirit, that is, our spiritual man which sees and perceives God. But that corporeal heaven, which is called the firmament, is our outer man which looks at things in a corporeal way.*) or could interpret them as mind and soul (*Interior homo noster ex spiritu et anima constat. Masculus spiritus*

*dicitur, femina potest anima nuncupari.* HomGen. 1.15, 66. Heine 1982, 68: *Our inner man consists of spirit and soul. The spirit is said to be male; the soul can be called female.* In connection with the Gen 1.27 it is important to note that Origen made a distinction between the man who is made in the image of God – explaining the first part of the biblical verse, and the man who is made male and female as the result of the creation. The former is the entirely incorporeal, pure mind, the inner man, while the latter is a composite of spirit, soul and body. Summing up shortly Origen’s views, he interprets “male” and “female” as either spirit, mind, or reason as opposed to soul<sup>32</sup>, flesh, and body<sup>33</sup>.

But our kephalaion is seemingly closer to the allegory of Philon, who identifies Adam as the mind (nous) and Eve as sensation (aisthesis). This allegory is unlike as Origen’s version and plays an important role e.g. in Ambrose and the young Augustinus<sup>34</sup>. Coming closer chronologically to Evagrius, Didymus the Blind combines the two traditions, the interpretations of Origen and Philon. In his commentary on Genesis, he plainly follows Origen in understanding male and female as mind (nous) and soul (psyche)<sup>35</sup>, but he also states that Eve can represent sensation<sup>36</sup>.

Be that as it may, if we accept that the Origenian line of interpretation lays behind the Evagrian teaching as possible source or in-

32 Clark hints Origen, Hom. 1 Gen. 15 (SC 7bis, 66); Hom. 10 Exod. 3 (SC 321, 316); Comm. Matt. 12.4 (GCS 40, 73). In Reading renunciation. Asceticism and Scripture in early Christianity. Princeton University Press, 1999. 172, note 100.

33 Clark hints Origen, Hom. 1 Gen. 15 (SC 7bis, 66); Hom. 10 Exod. 3 (SC 321, 316); Comm. Matt. 12.4 (GCS 40, 73). O.c. 172 note 101.

34 Gy. Heidl, *The Influence Of Origen On The Young Augustine. A Chapter of the History of Origenism*, Gorgias Press, 2009. 158.

35 Trans. From Heidl o.c. 158.

36 Trans. From Heidl o.c. 158 and he notes: Origen discerns between “male and female” made in the image of God (Gen. 1:27) and “man and woman,” (Gen. 2:23-24), see Comm. Matt. 14.16. This means that Origen may have identified Eve as sensation.

tellectual frame we find two particular results. The first one is that if Evagrius accepted the Origenian interpretation he understood the biblical terms of male and female of Gen 1.26-27 as an allusion of Adam and Eve. The second result is that if it was the case we have strong argument for the exegesis of Gen 1.26-27 as the Scriptural source of the first, spiritual creation in the case of Evagrius.

From this point of view the theological insight of the chapter could be clearer: within the heavenly Paradise humanity had its origin and at the end of time it will be the place of its return, that means the restoring of humanity to its original and ultimate state. In this exegetical type of Gen 1.27 the created man could be interpreted as androgynous who has partly man and partly feminine natures and these parts are translated in the anthropological language as mind and its reasoning faculty. This looks like an Origenist version but the picture is more subtle.

Our conclusion with this Alexandrian parallel is insufficient because it is weakened by three factors. It failed to interpret not only Christ's role in this context and the terminology of Evagrius but it missed to unveil the connection between Christ, his paradise and Adam. According to our text, Christ left his Paradise (because of Adam or the couple as the whole humanity) and this phraseology emphasizes Christ's presence in the Paradise. This emphasis inevitably raises the questions whether the Evagrian exegesis interprets Christ's presence from biblical verses or by using other Christian tradition or is there any other passage that could offer further traces of this teaching.

The Christian traditions offer two possibilities. The first one is that it was Christ who walked *in the Garden in the cool of the day* (Gen 3.8), the second one is the identification of Christ with the tree of life. For our purpose the second one is more important because it has literary witness in the Evagrian corpus. In the following I turn to the symbol of Paradise.

#### 4.5 *The paradise and the tree of life*

The biblical creation story (Gen 2.9) and the description of Christ's cross uses the same Greek term of tree, ξύλον, and this is one reason that the tree of Paradise and the cross were identified already in the second and third century Christianity. Following this stream of Christian theologies, this interpretation occurs in Evagrius' writings. In the Kephalaia he wrote (V, 69): "*The Blessed Trinity is the sign of the blessed water, and the Tree of Life is the Christ who drinks there*"<sup>37</sup>. For our purpose the second half of the kephalaion is more significant where the identification is stated. Similarly, one of his maxims<sup>38</sup> involves this exegetical tradition, it runs as follows (III, 17): "*Jesus Christ is the tree of life; make use of him as is necessary, and you will not perish forever*"<sup>39</sup>. In this saying Evagrius exemplifies his ethical precept and theological teaching.

The common part of both quotations is the identification of Christ and the tree of life, the differences are the consequences of their context that are to bear Evagrius' different intentions. Both allude to the sacramental imagery with its baptismal or Eucharistic connotations<sup>40</sup>. The identification could have biblical source (either the Revelation (22.2) or Prov 3.18.: *for the tree of life is for all who holds of it*).

In evaluating and interpreting the identification we should take into account that in the early Christian traditions the Evagrian statement has exact correspondence. The identification appears in the Teachings of Silvanus. I quote the Coptic text from the VII. Co-

37 Translation from Dysinger.

38 PG 79. 12490-12690; és PG 40 A. Elter (ed.), Gnomica I: Sexti Pythagorici, Clitarchi, Evagrii Pontici sententiae, (Leipzig, 1892), pp. LII-LIV.

39 In number of Elter, 64-65, p LIV. and PG (40, 1269). The 16. maxim: The tree of paradise: a virtue-loving man.

40 We accept Sinkewitz's opinion who stated that the saying provides direct allusions to a Christian context. Frankenberg argued for the baptismal imagery with mentioning in his commentary the verses of Jon 1.16 and the Pauline Rom 8.23. In R. E. Sinkewitz, *Evagrius of Pontus. The Greek Ascetic Corpus*, Oxford University Press. 2003, 228, note 7.

dex of the Nag Hammadi Library, not only the identification but the subsequent sentences also, to illustrate the hymn-like passage and its context: *For the Tree of Life is Christ. He is Wisdom. For he is Wisdom; he is also the Word. he is the Life, the Power, and the Door. He is the Light, the Angel, and the Good Shepherd. Entrust yourself to this one who became all for your sake* (106, 21-30)<sup>41</sup>. Concerning the collection, the Commentators' opinion is that the probable source of most of the Christological titles is the 4. Gospel<sup>42</sup>, but in case of our searched motive the Gen 1.9 is also highly questionable<sup>43</sup>.

This exegetical tradition, where Christ himself is the tree of life, has other literary witnesses (from Methodius, through Clemens of Alexandria to the Valentinian writings) but in this collection the saying appears in the same form, at least the identification is the same and the explanations are divergent<sup>44</sup>. For our purpose it is enough to note that the similarities seem to be convincing both as far as the context and as the common phrase are concerned. In other words, we get a

41 ΠΩΗΝ ΓΑΡ ΜΠΩΝΘ ΠΕ ΠΕΧΣ ΝΤΟΥ ΠΕ ΤΣΟΦΙΑ ΝΤΟΥ ΓΑΡ ΠΕ ΤΣΟΦΙΑ ΝΤΟΥ ΟΝ ΠΕ ΠΛΟΓΟΣ ΝΤΟΥ ΠΕ ΠΩΝΘ ΔΥΩ ΤΔΥΝΑΜΙΣ ΔΥΩ ΠΡΟ ΝΤΟΥ ΠΕ ΠΟΥΘΕΙΝ ΔΥΩ ΠΑΓΓΕΛΟΣ ΔΥΩ ΠΩΩΣ ΕΤΝΑΝΟΥΦ ΤΑΔΑΚ ΝΤΟΟΤΨ ΜΠΑΙ ΝΤΑΦΩΠΕ ΜΠΤΗΡΨ ΕΤΒΗΗΤΚ

42 Transl. from Malcolm L. Peel and J. Zandee, in B. A. Pearson (ed.), *Nag Hammadi Codex VII*, Leiden, Brill, 1995. 336-337.

43 O.c 336 footnote.

44 Accepting the results of Zandee (In *The Teachings of Silvanus and Clement of Alexandria. A New Document of Alexandrian Theology*, Leiden, 1977.), we could state that similar theological doctrine appears in Clement of Alexandria (Strom V, 11). "Now Moses, describing allegorically the divine prudence, called it the tree of life planted in Paradise; which Paradise may be the world in which all things proceeding from creation grow. In it also the Word blossomed and bore fruit, being "made flesh," and gave life to those "who had tasted of His graciousness;" since it was not without the wood of the tree that He came to our knowledge. For our life was hung on it, in order that we might believe". In this passage the idea of identification of Christ and the tree appears but in a slightly modified way. Beside to this parallel we should mention Methodius (The Symposium of the Ten Virgins 9). The Valentinian Gospel of Philip knows also this identification.

partial result and by means of this quotation from the Teachings of Silvanus – as a part of the Alexandrian Wisdom literature – we were able to illustrate the parallels and consequently we should suppose that Evagrius could have been acquainted with this collection or a tradition that implied this interpretation, and he used the aforementioned teaching as source.

With this parallels and its theological applications we did not detect the meaning of our first quoted kephalaion but we were able to unveil one of the sources of Evagrius that was until now unidentified. This given parallel leads us further and we turn to another aspect of Paradise in the Evagrian theology.

#### 4.6 *The paradise II*

To illustrate the other aspect of the Evagrian teaching concerning the paradise we should turn back to the Kephalaia. The chapter, that preserved the teaching, says: VI,8. *Just as Paradise is the school of the just, also hell (Hades) is the sinners' house of correction.*<sup>45</sup>

The literary meaning seems to be clear, the Paradise is not the ultimate goal but a school as hell is also a place of training and correction. According to Dysinger, the term of *kōlastēriōn*, which is here translated “house of correction,” means most commonly in the Patristic era “house of punishment”<sup>46</sup>. If his argumentation is right, the term should be understood not in the sense of eternal punishment but in terms of “remedial” correction, which is temporary and therefore not eternal<sup>47</sup>. The teaching that lies behind the sentence is the *apokatastasis panton*<sup>48</sup>.

For our purpose the first part of the chapter and the teaching implied in it is more relevant and should be questioned: who are the

45 Translation from Dysinger.

46 Dysinger, Psalmody o.c. 194.

47 Ibid.

48 Dysinger o.c.

just in the Evagriian approach? Dysinger's opinion is that the just are the angels<sup>49</sup>. If it is the case the first part pertains the instructions for the spiritual advancement of angels in the Paradise. Our assumption is that the term could involve also the contemplative minds who are able to ascent and contemplate and in so doing to acquire knowledge, developing further and further to the state of perfection. To argue for this hypothesis we should turn to the closest parallel and hint to Origen who describes Paradise as a classroom for souls, where for a time they receive instruction in the course of their ascent to God<sup>50</sup>.

49 Dysinger o.c.

50 Trans. G. W. Butterworth. (Torchbook, 1973) Origen, princ. 2. 11. 5-6 (Henri Crouzel and Manli Simonetti (eds.), *Origène. Traité des Principes*, 5 vols., SC 252-3, 268-9, 312 (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1978, 1980, 1984), i. 408). See also Lawrence R. Hennessey, *The Place of Saints and Sinners after Death*, in Charles Kannengeisser and William L. Peterson (eds.), *Origen of Alexandria: His World and His Legacy* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988), 295-312. According to Constan Origen also teaches that the souls of the wicked will be punished in the "invisible fires of Gehenna," although like Clement, he too sees these as having an ultimately corrective and therapeutic function. In fact, Origen believes that, in order to enter paradise, all souls must pass through the flaming sword of the cherub that stands guard outside the gates of Eden (cf. Gen. 3:24; 1 Cor. 3:11-15). For this see his "To Sleep, Perchance to Dream": The Middle State of Souls in Patristic and Byzantine Literature. *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 55 (2002) 92-124). From the traditions of Virgin Mary's dormition we also could know about concepts of paradise and the places of the damned and the elected. For our point of view it is worth to note that besides Origen, in generally, the concept of such a waiting place was popular in the ancient Judaism and Christianity. In some instances, a single waiting place is shared by the souls of the just and the wicked alike, while other texts describe two separate locations, each providing the just and the damned a foretaste of their final fate. According to Shoemaker the earliest known Christian to articulate this concept of Paradise is Tertullian, who identifies Paradise as one of two waiting places prepared for the souls of the faithful departed. The first of these, Sheol or Hades, holds the vast majority of departed souls, but for the martyrs alone, God has reopened Paradise, so that they might enjoy

He wrote<sup>51</sup>:

*I think, therefore, that all the saints who depart from this life will remain in some place situated on the earth, which holy Scripture calls paradise, as in some place of instruction, and, so to speak, class-room or school of souls, in which they are to be instructed regarding all the things which they had seen on earth, and are to receive also some information respecting things that are to follow in the future,*

Puto enim quod sancti quique discedentes ex hac vita permane-  
bunt in loco aliquo in terra posito, quem 'paradisum' dicit scriptura  
divina, velut in quodam eruditionis loco et, ut ita dixerim, auditorio  
vel scbola animarum, in quo de omnibus bis, quae in terris viderant  
doceantur, indicia quoque quaedam accipiant etiam de consequenti-  
bus et futuris,

*as even when in this life they had obtained in some degree indications  
of future events, although through a glass darkly, all of which are revealed  
more clearly and distinctly to the saints in their proper time and place.*

*If any one indeed be pure in heart, and holy in mind, and more  
practiced in perception, he will, by making more rapid progress, quickly  
ascend to a place in the air, and reach the kingdom of heaven, through  
those mansions, so to speak, in the various places which the Greeks have  
termed spheres, i.e., globes, but which holy Scripture has called heavens;*

Si qui sane »mundus corde« et purior mente et exercitator sensu  
fuerit, velocius proficiens cito et ad äris locum ascendet et ad caelorum

its pleasures as they await the final judgment. 'Heaven' is yet another place, which will be opened only at the end of time to serve as the final home of the elect. Similar understandings of the afterlife were expressed by Hippolytus of Rome, Hilary of Poitiers, Ambrose, and Jerome. For this see, e.g. Shoemaker S.J., *Ancient Traditions of the Virgin Mary's Dormition and Assumption*, Oxford University Press Inc., New York, 2002, 182-183 and see also the recent monograph from B. P. Blosser, *Become Like the Angels. Origen's Doctrine of the Soul*, The Catholic University of America Press, Washington, DC. 2012.

51 Latin is from P. Koetschau, 1913, 190.

regna perveniet per locorum singulorum, ut ita dixerim, mansiones, quas Graeci quidem σφραγίς, id est globos, appellaverunt, scriptura vero divina »caelos« nominat,

*in each of which he will first see clearly what is done there, and in the second place, will discover the reason why things are so done: and thus he will in order pass through all gradations, following Him who has passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, who said, I will that where I am, these may be also. And of this diversity of places He speaks, when He says, In My Father's house are many mansions.<sup>52</sup>*

in quibus singulis perspiciet primo quidem ea, quae inibi geruntur, secundo vero etiam rationem quare gerantur agnoscet: et ita per ordinem digredietur singula sequens eum, qui »penetravit caelos, lesum filium dei« dicentem: »Volo ut ubi ego sum, et isti mecum sint«. Sed et de his locorum diversitatibus indicat, cum dicit: »Multae mansiones sunt apud patrem«.

From the last sentence we might understand the school for souls as having different classrooms and grades as the interpretation of Jesus' saying in Origen's understanding where souls participate in learning according to their merits. The description in its structure could be in correspondence with the contemporary accounts of ascension of soul. The question that we leave open at this point is not this one but how did Origen explained the soul's bodily nature in Paradise. Later I turn back to this question.

In the light of the Origenian quotation it seems likely that Evagrius developed this teaching and adopted it to his own system. If our assumption is appropriate, Evagrius changed the dimensions to put the emphasis on biblical Paradise. Compared to the Origenian version, in this modified adaptation, the Paradise is an intelligible place that has no real contact to the cosmological teachings (and in doing so it lost the Pauline reference from 2Cor 12.1-4) and occurs as an object of

52 Translation from Frederick Crombie in Schhaff (ed.), Ante Nicene Fathers IV.

contemplation, as the place of pure minds to acquire the knowledge of the Holy Trinity. In other words, in Evagrius' hands the Origenian teaching changed into the grade of an interior process that describes the well detectable level of contemplation. We should emphasize this seemingly small feature because it modifies the whole interpretation. They agreed that the created man should attempt to step beyond his own physical conditions (and not only act in the earth like the angels in heaven by contemplating and praising God). But the Evagrian teaching carries one peculiar consequence since the Paradise is not only the place to recapture as the true home after death, as it is well known from other contemporary sources, nor an intermediate place from where further grades could open as in Origen's construction but it serves as a place for contemplation of the original condition of the creatures that is for spiritual exercise of the minds in imitating Christ's. From this point of view it could be more accurate why and how the place of biblical first creation, the heavenly, spiritual Paradise is so elementary in the theological system of Evagrius.

#### 4.7 *The creation and the contemplation*

Turning back to the words of the chapter, the final question remains the interpretation of reasoning nature and the context in which it was embedded.

The chapter uses the Syriac terms of ܢܘܬܢܐ nature, essence, substance<sup>53</sup> and the adjective ܠܘܓܝܩܐ reasonable, reasoning, rational, according to to reason<sup>54</sup>. According to Frankenberg's reconstruction it is the translation of the Greek *phüsis logiké* or probably simply *to logikon*. In our chapter it appears as Adam's reasoning nature, that is Eve.

53 R. Payne Smith, *A Compendious Syriac Dictionary*, Oxford, Clarendon, 1903, 213.

54 R. Payne-Smith, *A Compendious Syriac Dictionary*, Oxford, Clarendon, 1903, 277.

To see more precisely the meaning of this phrase, its usage and the theological insights that serve as its background we should shift our focus to the corpus of Kephalaia and examine other occurrences on the one hand and probably it is not superfluous to evade as concise as possible the Evagrian metaphysical system, from where the concept of contemplation becomes understandable<sup>55</sup>.

I choose some relevant chapters that enable us to fathom the crucial aspects of spiritual contemplation from the level of the Holy Trinity to the human experience.

III,13: “*We have known the wisdom of the Unity, united to the nature that is below it; but the Unity itself cannot be seen, linked to some of the beings; and because of this the incorporeal nous sees the Holy Trinity in those which are not bodies*”. Here Evagrius interprets God’s nature as Unity and Trinity in accordance with the Christian doctrines and explains Christ’s double nature. The important feature is that the incorporeal minds are able to see the Holy Trinity that means the Trinity is knowable for them and this knowable “aspect” is the wisdom of the Unity who is Christ, who embodied and made himself known and through him the Trinity became known.

55 For the reconstruction, see I. Perczel, *Notes sur la Pensée Systematique d’Évagre le Pontique*, G. Bunge, *Hénade ou Monade? Au sujet de deux notions centrales de la terminologie évagrienne*. Idem: *Mysterium Unitatis*, Casidey, Reconstructing the theology of Evagrius Ponticus : beyond heresy, o.c.; K. Corrigan, *Evagrius and Gregory. Mind, Soul and Body in the 4<sup>th</sup> Century* o.c.; Dysinger, *Psalmody and Prayer in the Writings of Evagrius Ponticus*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2005; Konstantinovskiy, *Evagrius Ponticus: The Making of a Gnostic*, Surrey, Ashgate 2009. From the former scholarship for the reconstruction we should mention Bunge’s works: *Hénade ou monade? Au sujet de deux notions centrales de la terminologie évagrienne* LeMuséon, 102 (1989) 69-91.; and *Mysterium Unitatis: Der Gedanke der Einheit von Schöpfer und Geschöpf in der evagrianischen Mystik*, in *Freiburger Zeitschrift für Philosophie und Theologie*, 36 (1989) 449-69.

From this chapter the epistemological and ontological doctrines can be deduced. Adding to these, we should mention in connection with the wisdom of the Unity that this concept is the essential knowledge, the *ousiodes gnosis* that is the basis for the Trinitarian concept. Supposedly using the Plotinian concept<sup>56</sup>, Evagrius proclaims the essential knowledge to be the Trinity or Christ (or in Christ) on the one hand and he states that this knowledge is available to the contemplative minds at the original creation where all rational spiritual beings (*logikoi*) were made equal as pure minds. Accepting Bamberger's opinion we could state that for Evagrius, man is not, essentially, a creature composed of body and soul, but a mind whose proper activity is religious contemplation<sup>57</sup>.

The creation that is implied in the quoted chapter, is the first, original creation. In III, 24 another explanation can be found that pertains the creation of minds as the contemplation of the Creator: *The knowledge of the first nature is the spiritual contemplation which has served the Creator by making only the minds that are receptive of his nature.* According to the chapter there is a close parallel between the contemplation of the Creator, Christ, who while contemplating, creates the minds – who are receptive of his nature – and between the contemplation of the minds, since the minds in the contemplation become able to know their Creator. While the minds contemplate their existence and knowledge operate according to their nature. What is dominant in the *kephalaion* is the contemplation of the Creator and its result, that is the existence of minds. These claims indicate how Evagrius elucidates the connection, the parallel structure and

56 For this see Perczel o.c.

57 J. E. Bamberger, *Evagrius, The Practikos and Chapters on Prayer*, Kalamazoo, Michigan: Cistercian Publications. 1972, 53, note 7. According to Giardini this concept of the human person follows the Platonizing presuppositions of Origen. For this see, F. Giardini, *Pray Without Ceasing: Toward a Systematic Psychotheology of Christian Prayerlife*, Leominster, Gracewing, 1998, 155.

operation of minds, their receptivity and the spiritual contemplation of Christ. With the help of this chapter we could understand also the Christological aspect of creation and also his role in mediating between God and mind.

This fundamental insight in connection with the spiritual creation and contemplation needs other aspects to be enabled to express more completely the Evagrian teaching, because from this state of spiritual creation the minds fall – after their sin – and Christ creates the physical worlds and times to judge and help the minds in their fallen state on the one hand, and to be able to know the *logoi* of creation on the other.

The creation of reasoning natures becomes more approachable as it is described in I, 89: *All reasoning nature was naturally made in order to exist and to know: and God is essential knowledge. And while opposed to reasoning nature there is non-existence, and [opposed] to knowledge there is evil and ignorance, there is in these no opposition to God.*

In the chapter Evagrius offers a very condensed definition of reasoning nature. It could be said in general terms that existence and knowing are one and the same, and this state is according to their nature. In consequence of the primordial movement (because of the free will) of the *logoi* this original unity changes and an unnatural state comes into being with evil and ignorance that is opposed to God. As Corrigan noted: As the *logikoi* fall, they assume soul and body, that is, they take on a movement into multiplicity that indicates the state or level of *nous* within them, which is also an aid to the recovery of that original contemplative union with God through Christ.<sup>58</sup>

To see more exactly the manifold connotations of *logoi* we could quote Robin Darling Young's opinion who said that for Evagrius "the ontological principles that form the reason and reasoning of created beings" (JECS, 9, 1, 2001, p. 60) or the forming-principles according to which they are made, are immanent in them.

58 Corrigan, o.c. 42.

To elucidate the condition of first creation and Christ's role more precisely we should examine Christ's nature. As e.g. Guillaumont pointed out<sup>59</sup> Christ is a created mind (nous) also, equal essentially to all the other created minds in the original Unity, distinct from them only in strength of will, since Christ as mind remained focused on God when all the other mind fell away because of the defection of their will. In this ontological frame the sin of the mind is their defective free will (the failed contemplation) that leads to degradation and ultimately to the corporeality. According to Case's reconstruction, rather than the Word assuming humanity, the created intellect of Christ cleaves to the Word, willing only to contemplate on (or know) God<sup>60</sup>. And this is the aforementioned knowable aspect of Christ before the minds. In II, 22 he goes on: *Just as the Word has known the nature of the Father, so the reasoning nature [has known] that of the Christ*. The knowledge of God is in Christ as he is the Word in relation to the Father, and he is the Word of the Father's salvific response and the actor of His providence in relation to the human beings, and consequently he is able to lead back the fallen being. He wrote in IV,89: *Who will recount the grace of God? Who will scrutinize the logoi of providence and how the Christ leads the reasoning nature by [means of] varied worlds to the union of the Holy Unity?*

#### 4.8 *The contemplations*

The mentioned chapters are strongly connected to the well defined process of spiritual exercises and depict the goal of contemplation. At this point, to be able to fathom the close context of our first mentioned kephalion we should turn more closely to the acts of contem-

59 Guillaumont's opinion is that the sharp distinction which these anathematized teachings make between the uncreated Son and Christ is traceable to Evagrius's Kephalaia Gnostika.

60 Case, *Becoming One Spirit: Origen and Evagrius Ponticus on Prayer*, o.c. 40.

plation that is also the grades of transformation and ask where the place of our chapter can be found. The question is striking because in the Evagrian Great Trilogy there are some, different lists of its grades that are interwoven with the three progressive but interrelated ways: praktikē, gnostikē and theologia.

To start with KG I, 27 we found: contemplation of Trinity, of incorporeal reality, of bodies, and of judgment and providence. In I,70 there is a similar order: one who knows the Holy Trinity, one who sees the logoi of the intelligibles, one who sees incorporeal themselves, one who knows the contemplation of the worlds and one who possesses the impassibility of soul.

For our purpose the type of natural contemplation is important. In II,15 Evagrius wrote: *When reasoning nature receives the contemplation that concerns it, then all the power of the nous will also be healthy.* This description is about the natural contemplation that is able to heal the reasoning nature. In this type of contemplation Evagrius distinguished two levels. The first natural contemplation corresponds to the knowledge of the incorporeal natures, and the second one to the corporeal natures. (I,47). This distinction appears also in II,13: *The first contemplation of nature suffices for the creation of reasoning nature, and the second also suffices for its conversion.* In II,47<sup>61</sup> he added further hints and explained that the two contemplations consist in mediating the *logoi* of immaterial things and the *logoi* of bodies but the knowledge of the Holy Trinity is beyond meditation<sup>62</sup> In V,57 he demonstrates this tripartite system: *Just as we now approach sensible objects through the senses, and later when we are purified we will also*

61 II,47 The Trinity is not reckoned among the contemplation of sensible or intelligible [things], and still less is it counted among objects: because the former is one quality and the latter are creatures; whereas the Blessed Trinity alone is essential knowledge. Trans from Dysinger.

62 For the detailed description, see J. Konstantinovskiy, *Evagrius Ponticus. The Making of a Gnostic*, o.c. 49-50.

*know their logoi; so we first see realities themselves, and having we further purified, we will also know the contemplation concerning them, after which it is possible to know even the Blessed Trinity*<sup>63</sup>.

The three degrees describe the three different types of knowledge, from the sensible object, through their logoi of corporeal and incorporeal creation to the ultimate goal, the essential knowledge, the knowledge of the Holy Trinity, that is the *theoria*, or the theology. The different forms of knowledge as a kind of chain are to describe the ascension<sup>64</sup>. These subsequent levels are in correlation with the contemplation of the gnostikos monk. As Corrigan wrote: *in the gnostikē*<sup>65</sup>, *the monk must uncover and contemplate the reasons (logoi) by which the Logos, Christ, has made the world – something like the genetic patterns and significances in bodies, times and worlds. Such natural (physikē) contemplation (or second natural contemplation) also reveals the incorporeal or intelligible world with its own logoi (first natural contemplation), whose significance must be understood. Thereby the monk comes to realize that the immaterial reality of the mind responds naturally to intelligible realities because it is made for communion with the immaterial Trinity in prayer or theologia, in thēoria theologikē (theological contemplation) namely, the highest form of intimate knowing in which there is no more division*<sup>66</sup>.

63 Translation from Case.

64 The sentence maintains the necessary fact, that was not mentioned until now, that the contemplation requires the monk's spiritual struggle that is to overcome the passions and to establish the purity and control of body and soul.

65 Evagrius sees praktikē and gnostikē as functions of the Eucharist: "Flesh of Christ, practical virtues; he who eats it will become impassible. Blood of Christ, contemplation of created things; he who drinks it will become wise by it" (AM 118–19). Translation from Corrigan, 45.

66 Corrigan 45.

#### 4.9 *Contemplation and exegesis*

This approach should be complemented with the other side that comes from partly the interpretive methodologies of Evagrius, and partly from the curriculum of monks and nuns that is the daily routine of ascetic discipline. And as the third reason, it leads us back to our kephalaion and helps to understand why the biblical passage appears in the Evagrian writing in the context of the contemplation.

As we noted above, in the natural contemplation the mind could see the corporeal natures or their logoi. In the Evagrian spiritual contemplation not only the physical word of creation could serve as basis but the written Scripture also. Its ontological source is the original unity between Christ's mind and the human mind, and as necessary basis, the acceptance that Christ's mind is in the Scripture. On the other hand, the monk was to repeat a verse or passage from the Scripture and meditate upon it until he was able to perceive the divine wisdom in it<sup>67</sup>. And the continuous development and perfecting of this noetic skill was a necessary requirement both on the side of the student and the teacher with the common aim of moral, mental and spiritual formation.

From this double foundation it can be understandable how Evagrius categorizes the passages of the Scripture according to the tree levels of spiritual life (in Gnostikosi8): *It is necessary to search, therefore, concerning allegorical and literal passages relevant to the praktike, physike, and theologike. (1) If it is relevant to the praktike it is necessary to examine whether it treats (i) of thumos and what comes from it, (ii) or rather of epithumia and what follows it, (iii) or again of the nous and its movements. (2) If it pertains to the physike, it is necessary to note whether it makes known one of the doctrines concerning nature, and which one. (3) And if it is an*

67 B. Stefaniw, *Mind, Text, and Commentary: Noetic Exegesis in Origen of Alexandria, Didymus the Blind, and Evagrius Ponticus*, Frankfurt am Main, Lang, 2010, 293.

*allegorical passage concerning theologike it is necessary to examine as far as possible whether it provides information on the Trinity and whether it is seen [in its] simplicity or seen as The Unity. But if it is none of these, then it is a simple contemplation or perhaps makes known a prophecy*<sup>68</sup>. It is easily understandable how Evagrius connected the tripartite system to the Scripture while providing instructions to differentiate the types of texts and their usages in the three levels. In the 20<sup>th</sup> saying he differentiates similarly: *It is necessary to know this: that all texts of an ethical character do not comprise a contemplation of an ethical character; no more does a text concerning nature [comprise] a contemplation on nature; but such as is of an ethical character comprises a contemplation of nature; and such as treat of nature comprise a contemplation of ethics, and the same for theology*<sup>69</sup>.

Adding to the former types he introduces the different contemplations<sup>70</sup>. According to Stefanwik this typifying “indicates the degree to which the interpretation of the Scripture was directly applied to the spiritual life, so that the monastic teacher required discernment in this manner of differentiation to guarantee appropriate application”<sup>71</sup>.

For our purpose the descriptions of the *physiké* are crucial because these complement the former explanations of the natural contemplation and clarify how Evagrius explains the biblical passage that *makes known one of the doctrines concerning nature*, locating this level of understanding between the *praktiké* and the *theologiké*.

68 Translation from Dysinger.

69 Translation from Dysinger.

70 It is clear for Evagrius that not every passage has allegorical meaning. In 34 he wrote: *You must not interpret spiritually everything that lends itself to allegory, but rather only that which is fitting to the subject; because if you do not act thus, you pass much time on Jonas' boat, explaining every part of its equipment. And you will be humorous to your listeners, rather than useful to them: all of these sitting around you will remind you of this or that equipment, and by laughing [they] will remind you of what you have forgotten.*(translation from Dysinger).

71 Stefanwiw, *Mind, text and commentary*, o.c. 349.

If in light of these results we turn back to our kephalaion we could accept that Evagrius describes literary Adam, Eve and Christ in Paradise and through the biblical account he refers supposedly to mind, its reasoning natures and Christ's saving act to explicate in summary form the history of salvation. As we mentioned former, we are dealing with an exegesis that invites to participate in the experience of a spiritual authority but, more concretely – if our assumption is right – this is the noetic exegesis in practice in which Evagrius gives a clear vision to contemplate on the logoi of the creation of man.

#### *4.10 The chapter*

In summing up our remarks on the chapter we could say that if our hypothesis is right it explains the unity where the first created nous of men, Adam dwells and as a consequence of the first creation, he has a personified reasoning nature, that is Eve. The symbolic place of the first creation is the paradise, the intelligible paradise.

To clarify Christ's role in the chapter we should only refer to the former quotations and note that the unity of reasoning natures implies also Christ's mind (nous) who does not fall but incarnates to save and restore the fallen humanity<sup>72</sup>. In the original unity Adam and Christ are in the same condition, their ways diverge drastically after Adam's sin. Our kephalaion declares this fact: Christ filled his role as antitypos of Adam who is the typos of Christ (and in the same time he is the typos of humanity).

At this point the reason for the usage of the term of *'typus'* with the reasoning nature becomes explicable, because in doing so Evagrius was able to explain the necessary movement from the unity – that implies the creation, fall and salvation of man, that is the par excellence

<sup>72</sup> VI, 16 *proceeding from essential knowledge and from incorporeal and corporeal nature has appeared to us*, that means the tripartite composition of Christ, as mind (*nous*), verb (*logos*) and body (*soma*).

history of salvation, the *divine oikonomia*. The typos-antitypos pair is the key motive that links the creation and the salvation and ultimately this pair is able to clarify the unity and distance between the first and last Adam. And this is the reason for avoiding the usage of image that would be the advocate of unity of God and man, Creator and creature.

In the frame of this noetic exegesis Evagrius read the Genesis account and explained its meaning as precept for the contemplative mind's perfection. According to this assumed exegetical model Evagrius resolves the inherent tension, retaining both the typos-antitypos pair and Eve as the reasoning nature. The Christ-Adam opposition is accentuated by the radical contrast in the results of their contemplations on the one hand and in the consequences of their moves on the other, that is the account of the free will, since Adam falls but Christ left the paradise.

However, the chapter does not reveal the goal to achieve nor the way up to the perfection, if not the ascetic's contemplative mind to imitate Christ's, rather it declares the meaning and relevance of the human condition at the first creation, in its first – and necessary – fall and in its coming salvation and restoration. In other words, the chapter enlightens the *logoi* of creation and salvation that is given in the second, the physical contemplation (*theôria physikê*) that neither imprints nor shapes the mind, but simply provides gnosis as direct recognition of *logoi* and *ousia* of the *oikonomia*<sup>73</sup>.

#### 4.II *Isaiah of Scetis*

To argue for this solution I turn to another witness of this teaching and turn abba Isaiah of Scetis. He seems to have been an Egyptian monk who left Scetis sometime in the 430s. He made a pilgrimage to the Holy Land and settled finally in Beit Daltha, near Gaza. He was accompanied by a disciple named Peter and emerged as the head of a

73 TH 41, 2–3. It is the direct recognition of the *logoi* and *ousia* of corporeal and incorporeal things (TH 41, 25–35; 42, 2–3).

community of monks there in Gaza, where he lived until his death in 491<sup>74</sup>. I quote his words from his Ascetical Discourses (2,1-4), that is a treatise entitled “On the Natural State of the Spirit”:

*“I do not want you to be ignorant, brothers, that in the beginning, when God created humankind, he placed [Adam] in paradise with his faculties pure and stable in their natural state. But when [Adam] listened to the seducer, all his faculties got turned around into a state of anti-nature, and he fell precipitously from his glory. Our Lord had pity on the human race because of his great love. “The Word became flesh” (John 1:14), that is to say, “but without sin” (Heb. 4:14), in order to bring what was anti-nature back into conformity with nature by means of his holy body; and having pitied humankind, he made fit to return to paradise, revealing to those who walk in his footsteps and according to his commandments which he gave to us such that we can conquer those things that had rejected us from our glory; and he taught us a [way of] holy service and a law such that humankind can hold itself in its natural state, the one God had created it for”<sup>75</sup>.*

This is the closest parallel to the Evagrian chapter I found in the monastic writings and if my assumption is right we are faced with its developed and elaborated version. The place is the same, we are in the Paradise as original, lost and ultimate place. Adam appears as created man with pure and stable faculties that means he was created perfect in his nature and in his mental and physical health. In consequence of his sin he lost his glory and fell from a state that was in accord with nature (*kata phüsin*) to a state contrary to nature (*para phüsin*). The two natures has Monophysite implications<sup>76</sup> but here we should hint

74 For his life, see e.g. W. Harmless, *Desert Christians. An Introduction to the Literature of Early Monasticism*, Oxford University Press, 2004, 265.

75 Translation from J. Chryssavgis – P. Penkett, *Abba Isaah of Scetis: Ascetic Discourse*, Kalamazo, Michigan, 2002. 43.

76 For Keller, “L’abbé Isaïe,” p. 125. hints Brouria Bitton-Ashkelony and Aryeh Kofsky in *The Monastic School of Gasa*, Brill, Leiden, 2006, 216.

Evagrius' terminology in the former quoted passage where he used the terms of *kata phüsin* as what belongs to the human nature and *para phüsin* as what is contrary to it.

Christ as a New Adam, restored the original state of human nature and through his saving act, his holy body – as an allusion to the sacraments – and his commandments opened the possibility before man to liberate himself and to regain the lost state.

The main difference is the absence of Eve's figure. In the light of our former results we suppose that here, in Isaiah's writing, Adam plays the role of the mind and his faculties takes the place of Eve.

## 5. Conclusion

In this short paper I made an attempt to examine the figure of Eve in the early monastic literature. In the writings three distinguishable types were identifiable. In every type the interpretation of the Scripture or more precisely the Genesis account is found within a teaching that is surrounded by the questions of life and contemplation. As a general characterization or tentative suggestion we could say that the monks' hermeneutical strategies show clearly their intentions how they strove to interpret the words of the Scripture and translate their understanding as instructions into the life with Christ. To evaluate the various traces of the Scripture found in the writings we could say that these are rather allusions than actual citations or quotations of the Genesis account. With regards to the use of Scripture it is beyond question that it enjoyed great authority and serves as a guide that needs to be followed.

Next to the words of the Scripture, the words of the elders constitute the tradition of authority. Although in the examined cases there is no unified hermeneutic pattern which enables us to count all various uses but the common aim with the involved teachings and didactic purposes is certainly to coordinate and direct the monastic behavior or attitude as benefits of ruminating or meditating upon the Scripture.

To specify this general statement, the examples give three different portrayals of Eve that show her as viable exemplar or model, born from experience and to give advices against temptations, for correction of a wrong believe, or for perfection of noetic exegesis in contemplation.

At first in the apophthegma we met an ethical teaching. The figure of Eve and her temptation was used to illustrate the origin and danger of a bad practice. The second example focused on the origin of evil. Through the motive of envy we had an example where the biblical story of the first couple received attention and they together and at the same time filled their role in the explanation of their temptation and fall. Both examples testify their origin in the former oral traditions that found their way to the written approaches to the Scripture and to the monastic life.

Concerning the third example, it is a different case because it was written as a chapter or part of spiritual instructions. I tried to argue that the Evagrian teaching is built on the contemplation with the explicit aim of providing the knowledge of the first creation. The function of introducing of Adam and Eve together with Christ was to serve as objects of the contemplation in summing up the divine *oikonomia*, the history of salvation from the creation to the restoration of humanity. In the frame of the contemplation they represented the personified nous and its reasoning nature as necessarily cohesive and complementary parts of the created and fallen man whom only Christ is able to save.

Concluding our remarks we should quote Jeffrey Conrad's opinion with the aim to illustrate the current but old fashioned scholarly opinion: "the fall of man from the state of perfection was widely accepted in the ancient Christian world as being the result of Adam and Eve's temptation by Satan in the Garden of Eden. But in Egypt at least, in comparison to the Latin derivative of the ascetic tradition in the West, the greatest sin committed by Adam and Eve was not sexual desire, as in Western monasticism, but greed; it was the rav-

enous devouring of the apple that established the greatest sin to be overcome by the Egyptian ascetics”<sup>77</sup>. This statement could be true in its general sense and acceptable concerning the emphasis on the role of fasting in monastic life and practice. The sin of greed has its own place among the main temptations. Obviously, it is included in the different lists of vices and there are traces where it received prominent role, as in Evagrius who counted it among the 8 evil thoughts<sup>78</sup>. However looking through the closely connected examples we found e.g. in Saint Antony’s case that although he deals with greed as sin but nowhere refers to Adam and Eve in his letters<sup>79</sup>. Adding to these critical remarks, this opinion does not consider the fact that the sources are more definite and in light of our results – where not only Adam but Eve also appears – we could reevaluate the statement’s relevances and see more carefully their presence and the functions they filled in.

Keeping the different intentions in mind in the assayed examples, these allow us to state that the insights which we tried to evince, rooted deeply in the contemporary theological doctrines and traditions, and their common aim that permeated all sentences was to lead back the readers or the audience to Paradise and through it to the original unity with God.

77 Egyptian and Syrian Asceticism in Late Antiquity: A Comparative Study of the Ascetic Idea in the Late Roman Empire during the Fourth and Fifth Centuries. ([http://www.syriacstudies.com/2015/09/16/egyptian-and-syrian-asceticism-in-late-antiquity-jeffrey-conrad-2/\[2016.12.11.\]](http://www.syriacstudies.com/2015/09/16/egyptian-and-syrian-asceticism-in-late-antiquity-jeffrey-conrad-2/[2016.12.11.])).

78 These are: gluttony, fornication, love of money, sadness, anger, listlessness (akedia), vainglory, pride (PR 6).

79 For this see S. Rubenson, *The Letters of St. Antony. Monasticism and the Making of a Saint*, Minneapolis, Fortress Press, 1995.