

Philoxenus and the Old Syriac Version of Evagrius' *Centuries*

by

J. W. WATT

The discovery by Antoine Guillaumont of a second Syriac version (S_2) of the *Centuries* of Evagrius of Pontus additional to the one already known (S_1) shed new light on the doctrine of Evagrius and on the history of his influence on the Greeks and the Syrians. On the one hand the fact that this second version conformed closely to the extant Greek fragments of the *Centuries*, and also to some of the anti-Origenist anathemas pronounced by the council of 553, made clear that it accurately rendered the original, and explained why Evagrius was condemned along with Origen. On the other hand the fact that the other version S_1 was the one regularly cited by the Syrians from Babai onwards and reproduced by the great majority of the Syriac manuscripts showed that the *Centuries* were generally known to the Syrians in this version. A comparison of the two versions explained why it was that while by the Greeks Evagrius was condemned as a disciple of Origen, by the Syrians, equally hostile to Origen himself, he was held in the highest esteem: S_1 was no mere translation, but an adaptation in which the Origenism of Evagrius was more or less eliminated¹.

Thus it was not Evagrius himself who was known to the Syrians in their 'common' version of the *Centuries*, but an Evagrius whose Origenism had been 'corrected' by the author of S_1 . This individual was also the first translator of the *Centuries* into Syriac, for the authentic version S_2 was later than the expurgated version². Can this person, whose work had such a far-reaching effect, be identified? British Museum Add. 12175, probably the earliest manuscript of S_1 , is dated 533-534. The first Syriac writer known to us to have been influenced by Evagrius was Philoxenus of Mabbug, who died in 523. In a letter attributed to Philoxenus, the authenticity of which, however, is open to question, the writer revealed that he had made a *puššāqā* (i.e. a translation or commentary) of the *Centuries*. Guillaumont

¹ This was convincingly demonstrated in the important study of A. Guillaumont, *Les 'Kephalaia Gnostica' d'Évagre le Pontique et l'histoire de l'origénisme chez les Grecs et chez les Syriens*, *Patristica Sorbonensia* 5, 1962.

² Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 227-231.

therefore put forward the hypothesis that Philoxenus was the author of S_1 ³.

A question thus presents itself: did Philoxenus know the *Centuries*, and if so in which edition, the authentic or the expurgated? In his *Letter to Patricius* he cited a version of Evagrius' *Praktikos*. Guillaumont connected this version of the *Praktikos* to the expurgated version of the *Centuries* and saw in this a proof that Philoxenus was a witness to the version S_1 , of the *Praktikos* and the *Centuries*⁴. Now it may be, as Guillaumont thinks, that the two versions which he calls S_1 , of the *Praktikos* and the *Centuries*, were made by the same author, but it would be more satisfactory if we could demonstrate from the undoubtedly authentic works of Philoxenus that he knew the *Centuries* in one or other of their editions. No citation of the *Centuries* by Philoxenus has yet been found. However, an examination of his teaching on the different levels of spiritual knowledge and of his cosmology and eschatology does, I believe, clearly indicate that he did know the *Centuries*, and that his own doctrine was in complete agreement with the expurgated version of them, S_1 ⁵. When this has been demonstrated, we can investigate further the suggestion that he was the author of this version.

The influence of Evagrius upon Philoxenus is now well established⁶. New texts of Philoxenus have confirmed this insight and provided further striking evidence of it. Here, for example, is how Philoxenus describes the way to *gnosis*: 'A man first believes and is baptised. And after baptism he begins to keep the commandments, holding within himself the fear of God, the recollection of his judgment and the fear lest he grieve in anything him who is in everything holy. But the commandments are kept when a man overcomes every desire which either moves in the body or is stirred in the soul or is sown in the intelligence by demons. And when desires and the thoughts of them have been overcome, he who has overcome... (*Col. 3,9-10*) ... stands in impassibility, which not only is not overcome by passions, but also is not troubled by the memory of them. And from here... he attains to love, which makes him who becomes in it perfect and complete and the genuine image of God... As the image of God he comes upon, without veil,

³ Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 202-213.

⁴ Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 209-211.

⁵ This has been briefly indicated by A. de Halleux, *Philoxène de Mabbog. Sa vie, ses écrits, sa théologie*, 1963, pp. 393-394, n. 3; 428, n. 21; 441, n. 61; 447, n. 7, without, however, setting out the evidence in detail.

⁶ Cf. most recently P. Harb, *L'Attitude de Philoxène de Mabboug à l'égard de la spiritualité 'savante' d'Évagre le Pontique*, in *Mémorial Mgr. Gabriel Khouri-Sarkis*, 1969, pp. 135-155.

the knowledge of all things which have become'⁷. This text reads almost like a summary of the doctrine of Evagrius' *Praktikos*. As in Evagrius, faith is the first step on the way to true knowledge, which must be followed by the fear of God and the observance of the commandments⁸. This latter entails a struggle against desires and the thoughts of them, which move in us and have ultimately been inspired by demons⁹. This leads to impassibility, which requires not only that one is victorious over the passions, but also that one is untroubled by the memory of them¹⁰. Impassibility issues in love¹¹, which fashions the image of God¹², and this in turn leads to true knowledge of all created beings¹³. Following Evagrius Philoxenus also believes that true knowledge of created beings is designated in the Bible by the term 'kingdom of heaven', and the subsequent stage, the knowledge of the Trinity, by 'kingdom of God'¹⁴.

It is, moreover, not just the 'practical' aspects of Evagrius' doctrine which Philoxenus espouses, but also the 'gnostic' elements, which find their chief or even exclusive expression in the *Centuries*. Particularly striking is Philoxenus' enumeration of the five contemplations, exactly as in the *Centuries*¹⁵. Following Evagrius he divides the contemplation of natures into two: the one, "true knowledge placed in bodies", equivalent to Evagrius' second natural contemplation and proper to corporeal beings; the other, "spiritual knowledge", equivalent to Evagrius' first natural contemplation and proper to the angels¹⁶. Spiritual knowledge is the sustenance of the angels, but men too may obtain it now¹⁷. Essential knowledge, the knowledge of the Holy Trinity, is also available to men in anticipatory fashion even now, though in principle reserved for the consummation¹⁸. Like Evagrius Philoxenus interprets bodies as letters in which God has placed his wisdom for the instruction of men¹⁹. And in his assertion that composition, evil, and

⁷ *Comm. on Mt. 3, 1-16* (ed. J. W. Watt, CSCO 392 (393) = *Scriptores Syri* 171(172)), p. 8, 1-21 (7, 6-26).

⁸ *Praktikos* (ed. A. and C. Guillaumont, SC 171), Prologue § 8, ch. 81, 84.

⁹ Cf. *ibid.*, ch. 6, 34, 35, 48, 80, 84.

¹⁰ Cf. *ibid.*, Prologue § 8, ch. 60, 67, 81.

¹¹ Cf. *ibid.*, Prologue § 8, ch. 81, 84.

¹² Cf. *ibid.*, ch. 89.

¹³ Cf. *ibid.*, Prologue § 8, ch. 2.

¹⁴ Cf. *ibid.*, ch. 2-3; Philoxenus, *Comm. on Mt. 3, 1-16*, p. 17, 10-15 (15, 11-16).

¹⁵ *Letter to Patricius* (ed. R. Lavenant, PO 30, 5), p. 820(821), § 74; cf. Evagrius, *Centuries* (ed. A. Guillaumont, PO 28, 1) I, 27.

¹⁶ *Comm. on Mt. 3, 1-16*, pp. 14, 18-15, 3 (13, 4-14); cf. *Cent. I*, 70, 76; III, 24, 26; VI, 49.

¹⁷ *Comm. on Mt. 3, 1-16*, pp. 14, 23 - 15, 3 (13, 8-14); cf. *Cent. I*, 23; III, 4; V, 6.

¹⁸ *Comm. on Mt. 3, 1-16*, pp. 15, 3-9 (13, 14-19) and 16, 23 - 17, 7 (14, 30 - 15, 9); cf. *Cent. I*, 70; II, 4, 16, 47; III, 3; V, 57.

¹⁹ *Comm. on Mt. 3, 1-16*, p. 12, 22-27 (11, 15-19); *Comm. on Lk. 2, 52*, p. 68, 17-24 (58, 25-32); cf. *Cent. I*, 76; III, 57, 58; *Praktikos*, ch. 92.

error (or ignorance) are the three veils before the mind preventing it from seeing the knowledge in bodies, that of the spiritual beings and that of the Trinity respectively, he is no doubt dependent upon Evagrius' teaching of the three-fold renunciation, of the world, of evil, and of ignorance²⁰. There can therefore be no doubt that, as Bar-Salibi reports²¹, Philoxenus knew the *Centuries* and thought very highly of them.

But to which version of the *Centuries* does his doctrine conform? Let us examine his cosmology, eschatology, and Christology, for on these topics there are substantial differences between the two versions of the *Centuries*²². Philoxenus clearly states that the creation of bodies (physical and organic) was intended by God from the beginning: God 'created the visible things because he willed to make not only rational spiritual (beings) but also man, who is composed from soul and body, (and) for man's exercise he put wisdom in bodies'²³, and 'incorporated in the created works in the beginning the wisdom of his creation'²⁴. Thus the creation of the two beings, spiritual and corporeal, is not chronologically separated, and angels are 'unembodied beings exercised in (the wisdom of God) without the mediation of bodies'²⁵, and distinct from men. This corresponds to the cosmology of S₁, for its author has eliminated the fundamental cosmological notion of Evagrius, the double creation, first of pure intellects and then of bodies²⁶. For him there is only one creation, even although he retains the terminology of first and second beings²⁷, and he too takes men and angels to be beings distinct

²⁰ *Comm. on Mt.* 3, 1-16, pp. 15, 15-21 (13, 26-33) and 16, 8-12 (14, 13-17); cf. *Cent.* I, 78-80.

²¹ 'For they have found with Philoxenus that he wrote against some heretic Evagrius, and they have supposed that this is he (i.e. the author of the *Centuries*). But that is not true, for in the letter which Philoxenus wrote to Stephen Bar-Sudaili the heretic (ⲉⲩⲁⲅⲣⲓⲟⲩ, *lege?* ⲉⲩⲁⲅⲣⲓⲟⲩ), he mentioned Evagrius and his *Centuries* and said that few attain to the understanding and the depth of their *theoria*' (Introduction to the Commentary on the *Centuries*, text in E. Sachau, *Verzeichnis der syrischen Handschriften der königlichen Bibliothek zu Berlin*, 2, 1899, p. 605b). The distinction Bar-Salibi makes between 'some heretic Evagrius' and the author of the *Centuries* is clearly artificial (cf. Guillaumont, *Kephalaia Gnostica*, p. 294). No writing of Philoxenus against Evagrius is known, and in all probability this is an allusion to the mention of Evagrius in Philoxenus' *Letter to Abraham and Orestes* (so Guillaumont, *ibid.*, n. 151). Whether or not this remark is in fact *against* Evagrius will be discussed below (pp. 71-72). It may be noted, however, that the alleged inferences from old texts made by Bar-Salibi's opponents of the orthodoxy of Evagrius ('they') are not always trustworthy; Gregory of Nazianzus, speaking of an undefined Peter, is supposed to have meant Evagrius, but this is impossible (Guillaumont, *Kephalaia Gnostica*, pp. 293-294).

²² Cf. Guillaumont, *Kephalaia Gnostica*, pp. 231-258.

²³ *Comm. on Lk.* 2, 52, p. 67, 24-27 (58, 2-5).

²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 68, 31 - 69, 1 (59, 1-2).

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 68, 10-11 (58, 19-20).

²⁶ Cf. *Cent.* II, 64; III, 24, 26, 54; VI, 20.

²⁷ Cf. *ibid.* I, 50, 61. In S₁ the three chapters VI, 20; III, 24 and I, 50 are strictly inconsistent. Cf. Guillaumont, *Kephalaia Gnostica*, p. 241, n. 141.

in their creation and willed so by God, not intellects provisionally provided with different bodies²⁸. According to Philoxenus, at the consummation 'both holy angels and righteous men... will become in the renewal', and 'there will remain with the unmade Essence and the knowledge of spiritual things the rational creation of spiritual and of corporeal beings'²⁹. Men 'who cast off their passions become *like* the spiritual powers'³⁰ and share their knowledge³¹. In *S*₁ also men never become angels (as they do in Evagrius himself), but only *like* them when they attain to their contemplation³². In accordance with this cosmology 'movement' is for both Philoxenus and the author of *S*₁ a term designating the sin of Adam, and affects man after his unique creation: Philoxenus states that the commandments to be practised came in after the fall, while the service (of the angels) is spiritual and above movement³³; in *S*₁ 'movement' does not precipitate the creation of a multiplicity of worlds and bodies³⁴.

Philoxenus firmly rejects the *apokatastasis*: 'all will become in God the Father through the Son, except the rebellious demons and the contrary powers and error and evil, (which) he will not renew but destroy'³⁵; 'body and soul and the powers who have not gone astray will be preserved, but error and evil and the rebellious powers will perish'³⁶. This accords with *S*₁, in which demons are not, as in Evagrius, destined as intellects to return to the contemplation of God³⁷, and the author of *S*₁ emphatically insists on the diverse fates of the good and the evil³⁸. Philoxenus and *S*₁ also agree, in opposition to Evagrius, that bodies will not be abolished in the consummation. According to Philoxenus 'bodies, through which rational beings receive the knowledge of God, will not, as signs are erased when the teaching in them has been received, be destroyed, but will be made new', and 'will become spiritual, and with the souls and unembodied powers will become in God'³⁹. To be sure 'the fence (which is this visible composition) which is set in the middle between fleshly and spiritual beings will be

²⁸ Cf. *Cent.* V, 6, 7, 11.

²⁹ *Comm. on Mt.* 3, 1-16, pp. 15, 6-9 (13, 17-20); 12, 10-12 (11, 1-3).

³⁰ *Comm. on Lk.* 2, 52, p. 68, 12-13 (58, 20-21).

³¹ *Comm. on Mt.* 3, 1-16, pp. 14, 18 - 15, 3 (13, 3-14).

³² Cf. *Cent.* III, 20, 65; VI, 24.

³³ Cf. *Letter to Patricius*, p. 746 (747), § 4.

³⁴ Cf. *Cent.* VI, 20, 85.

³⁵ *Comm. on Mt.* 3, 1-16, pp. 11, 30 - 12, 4 (10, 28-32).

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 18, 9-11 (16, 4-6); cf. *Letter to Abraham and Orestes* (ed. A. L. Frothingham, Stephen Bar Sudaili, *the Syrian Mystic, and the Book of Hierotheos*, 1886, pp. 28-48), pp. 28-32 (29-33).

³⁷ Cf. *Cent.* V, 11.

³⁸ Cf. *ibid.*, III, 9, 51; VI, 15.

³⁹ *Comm. on Mt.* 3, 1-16, p. 12, 22-27, 19-20 (11, 15-20, 11-13).

removed, corporality will be changed to spirituality and composition to non-composition, and all things which are seen to the other order which does not fall under bodily senses'⁴⁰, but 'it is not true that with sight and composition also the nature of bodies will be destroyed, as the Manicheans say'⁴¹. This is in complete harmony with S₁, in which bodies will not be destroyed, but renewed and spiritualised⁴², although with thickness⁴³ also number and division⁴⁴ 'will be taken away from the middle' and the *schema* of bodies will pass away⁴⁵.

A further significant departure of S₁ from the authentic Evagrius is the elimination of the Evagrian idea of the development of eschatology in two stages, the reign of Christ followed by the reign of God⁴⁶. In many passages in Philoxenus it is clear that he makes no distinction between the reign of God and the reign of Christ: 'the time of exercise and of doctrine' is followed by 'that of inheritance and the kingdom'⁴⁷; by being gathered together in Christ everything also becomes in God the Father through the Son⁴⁸, and '*Christ all and in all (Col. 3,11) is as God all in all*' (1 Cor. 15,28)⁴⁹. He expressly repudiates the doctrine that the latter follows the former as a further and higher stage, which he finds in the writings of Bar-Sudaili⁵⁰. Finally, Evagrius' distinction between the Word and Christ (an intellect), which the author of S₁ has suppressed⁵¹, is entirely absent from Philoxenus.

The cosmology and eschatology presented by Philoxenus are thus quite clearly the same as those of the expurgated version of the *Centuries*, S₁. The question remains: did he read it or write it? The text adduced by Guillaumont in support of the latter view, from the long recension of the *Letter on the Three Degrees*⁵², is insufficient by itself to resolve the question, for, as Guillaumont himself notes, the *puššāqā* of the *Centuries* which the

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 11, 23-27 (10, 20-25) where the verbs are in the perfect tense because they refer to the baptism of Christ, the type of the consummation (*ibid.*, p. 10, 22-24 (9, 20-23)).

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 14, 5-7 (12, 26-27).

⁴² Cf. *Cent.* II, 17, 77; III, 20, 66.

⁴³ Cf. *ibid.* II, 62, 77.

⁴⁴ Cf. *ibid.* I, 7, 8.

⁴⁵ Cf. *ibid.* I, 26. If in I, 54 the concept of the suppression of bodies is preserved in S₁ (Guillaumont, *Kephalaia Gnostica*, p. 239, n. 137), that may well be on account of the obscurity of the chapter.

⁴⁶ Cf. *Cent.* III, 9, 51; VI, 33, 34.

⁴⁷ *Comm. on Lk.* 2, 52, p. 68, 14-15 (58, 22-23).

⁴⁸ *Comm. on Mt.* 3, 1-16, pp. 11, 28 - 12, 1 (10, 26-29).

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 16, 7-8 (14, 12).

⁵⁰ *Letter to Abraham and Orestes*, pp. 34, 12 - 36, 23 (35, 16 - 37, 28).

⁵¹ Cf. *Cent.* I, 77; II, 22; IV, 9, 18, 21, 80; V, 48; VI, 14, 29.

⁵² A complete translation is given by its discoverer, F. Graffin, in *OrSyr* 6 (1961), pp. 317-352, 455-468; 7 (1962), pp. 77-102. The passage in question is in vol. 6, p. 324, and is also translated and discussed in Guillaumont, *Kephalaia Gnostica*, pp. 211-213.

author of the letter states he has made could refer to a commentary or a translation. Furthermore, the authenticity of the letter is far from assured⁵³. The fact that Philoxenus' *Letter to Patricius* is a remarkable '*mise au point*' of Evagrian mysticism, 'acknowledging the essential data of Origenistic *gnosis* but stopping them crossing the limits of orthodoxy'⁵⁴, is also indecisive for our question, especially when it is noted that the '*mise au point*' of the *Letter to Patricius* is rather different from the 'correction' of Evagrius in the expurgated version of the *Centuries*⁵⁵. On the other hand many differences between Philoxenus and S₁ are not decisive arguments against the hypothesis of Philoxenian authorship, for the author of S₁ was at pains to keep as far as possible to the terminology of Evagrius and to preserve the appearance of Evagrius' authorship⁵⁶. Nevertheless, there are in my opinion some weighty reasons against attributing the version S₁ to Philoxenus⁵⁷.

In his *Letter to Abraham and Orestes* Philoxenus especially attacks three ideas advanced by Stephen Bar-Sudaili: the consubstantiality of Creator and creatures, the *apokatastasis*, and the eschatology of two periods⁵⁸. There is no trace of the first of these in Evagrius⁵⁹, but the other two are clearly present in the integral version of the *Centuries*, sometimes both in the same chapter⁶⁰. If Philoxenus had read the authentic *Centuries*, he would have known that Stephen could have derived these two ideas from Evagrius. Yet he asserts that to the Jews alone the theory of the two-period eschatology

⁵³ Cf. de Halleux, *Philoxène* (cf. n. 5 above) pp. 272-274.

⁵⁴ I. Hausherr, *Contemplation et sainteté. Une remarquable mise au point par Philoxène de Mabboug* (†523), *Revue d'ascétique et de mystique* 14 (1933), pp. 171-195 (quotation from p. 175).

⁵⁵ In the *Letter to Patricius* Philoxenus is concerned to establish a correct understanding of the relationship of contemplation to holiness (cf. the summary in Hausherr, *ibid.*, p. 194); the subject of the letter is the spiritual life. The 'corrections' made by the author of S₁ are principally to the cosmology, eschatology and Christology of Evagrius. However, it is noteworthy that for Philoxenus the distinction between contemplation and holiness stems from the freedom of God, and that in the last analysis contemplation depends on God's grace alone (*ibid.*), while the author of S₁ also insists that the grace of God is necessary for the acquisition of spiritual knowledge (cf. Guillaumont, *Kephalaia Gnostica*, pp. 253-255). But there is nothing in the *Letter to Patricius* to suggest that Philoxenus could not have read this in his edition of Evagrius.

⁵⁶ Cf. Guillaumont, *Kephalaia Gnostica*, p. 256.

⁵⁷ Guillaumont's hypothesis is considered plausible by Harb, *L'Attitude*, p. 155, and by R.C. Chesnut, *Three Monophysite Christologies*, 1976, pp. 106-107, n. 6, but is rejected by de Halleux, *Philoxène*, pp. 274-275.

⁵⁸ Cf. the summary of the letter in Guillaumont, *Kephalaia Gnostica*, pp. 307-310.

⁵⁹ Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 323-325.

⁶⁰ Cf. III, 9, 51. We may recall here that both ideas are rejected by the author of S₁ and by Philoxenus, as has been shown above.

had occurred⁶¹, and that Stephen 'should say from what holy book, prophet, apostle or teacher he has received (the doctrine that *rest* is one thing and the *kingdom* another) and his division into these three orders', i.e. of Friday, Sabbath, and Sunday (cf. *Lk.* 13,31-33) representing the present world, the kingdom of Christ, and the kingdom of God. Philoxenus then immediately adds that Stephen 'understands by Friday *movement*, having taken the term *movement* from the monk Evagrius'⁶².

We must ask why Philoxenus makes reference here to Evagrius. Harb holds that he here openly combats the system of Evagrius; even although the remark of Philoxenus is brief, merely an incision, the basic structure of Evagrius' system is envisaged and denounced⁶³. But in fact in the text there is no criticism of Evagrius. Philoxenus merely tells his correspondents the source of the term *movement*: the monk Evagrius⁶⁴. We have no reason to suppose that he had become dissatisfied with the term, or with the concept⁶⁵. *Christ all and in all* (*Col.* 3,11) and *God will become all in all* (*1 Cor.* 15,28) are the other terms used by Stephen corresponding to *movement*⁶⁶ and do not thereby become suspect! Of Stephen's *terms* two are scriptural, the other is from Evagrius; his error is *the doctrine of the division into three orders*.

Guillaumont believes that Philoxenus knows more about the Evagrian inspiration of Stephen's doctrine than he here lets appear, that he indicates, in fact, the principle source of Stephen's thought⁶⁷. But it would be strange for him *knowingly* to do so immediately after challenging Stephen to 'say from what holy book, prophet, apostle or teacher he has received' his doctrine. Philoxenus has directed his correspondents to the answer! Admittedly if they were to read the *Centuries* in the expurgated Syriac version they would only discover 'the term *movement*', and not the errors of Stephen. But if Philoxenus had himself been responsible for this version and had therefore known the original, he could hardly have been sure that the latter would not come into the hands of his correspondents. Indeed it would seem that especially in this context he would wish to *avoid* any mention of Evagrius, for here the nature of his 'translation' would be most likely to be exposed. If Philoxenus had set out to dissociate Evagrius from Origenism, he would

⁶¹ Cf. *Letter to Abraham and Orestes*, p. 34, 12-20 (35, 16-25).

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 36, 2-5 (37, 2-6).

⁶³ *L'Attitude*, pp. 149, 151-152, 155.

⁶⁴ No conclusion can be drawn from the fact that Philoxenus does not here designate him 'blessed' or 'one of the saints' (against Harb, *ibid.*, p. 152). He is not here expounding a doctrine to which he wishes to give the authority of a saint.

⁶⁵ For Philoxenus' use of it, cf. above, n. 33, and de Halleux, *Philoxène*, p. 447, n. 7.

⁶⁶ *Letter to Abraham and Orestes*, p. 36, 4-7 (37, 4-7).

⁶⁷ *Kephalaia Gnostica*, pp. 318-319.

hardly have made reference to him here. The fact that he does mention him at this point is surely a strong indication that in fact he was unaware of the Evagrian inspiration of Stephen's doctrine of three orders, and could therefore only have read the *Centuries* in the version S₁.

Philoxenus then turns to the biblical foundation of Stephen's doctrine, *Luke* 13, 31-33, and presents his own exegesis of the text. *Today, tomorrow and the third day* are the three years of Jesus' ministry, not a type of Stephen's three orders represented by Friday, Sabbath and Sunday, while the *perfection* of Jesus on *the third day* is his crucifixion on *Friday*⁶⁸. This is not, however, how the author of S₁ dealt with Evagrius' interpretation of the text, on which Stephen has drawn. In III,9 he suppressed it together with the clear reference to the eschatology in two periods, but in I, 90 and IV, 26 he allowed the symbolism to stand which identifies *today* with *Friday*, the present world and the crucifixion of Christ, and *the third day* and *perfection* of Christ with the consummation. The author of S₁ did not allow *tomorrow* to be pressed into the service of an intermediate kingdom, but otherwise accepted Evagrius' interpretation, while Philoxenus here understands the text quite differently and takes issue with Stephen's symbolism, which is that of Evagrius. If Philoxenus had been the author of S₁, it seems likely that he would have radically altered these two chapters.

The other doctrine attacked in this letter which Stephen could have derived from the integral text of the *Centuries* is that of the *apokatastasis*. According to Philoxenus the work of the apostles, conversion to Christianity, baptism and struggles for righteousness are all vain if the same honour is ultimately to be accorded to all, and all are to arrive at one perfection⁶⁹. In the case of Stephen the doctrine of the *apokatastasis* is linked to the belief in the consubstantiality of Creator and creation, and this is regarded by Philoxenus as particularly reprehensible⁷⁰, but even so his denunciation of the *apokatastasis* itself is sufficiently emphatic to make it clear that he views this doctrine as incompatible with Christianity. The author of S₁ must have considered Evagrius' espousal of it as unfortunate, but the strength of Philoxenus' words in this letter can hardly be combined with his high regard for Evagrius if he had known the integral text of the *Centuries*. It has been suggested that Philoxenus' pronounced anti-Origenist opinions may have emerged in the course of his dealings with Stephen⁷¹, but in a work which has nothing to do with Stephen and which shows a high

⁶⁸ *Letter to Abraham and Orestes*, pp. 36-42 (37-43).

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 30 (31).

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ Cf. Guillaumont, *Kephalaia Gnostica*, p. 319.

regard for Evagrius, the *Commentary on Matthew and Luke*, written probably several years before the *Letter to Abraham and Orestes*⁷², he asserts that it is 'the Manicheans (who) say the nature of bodies will be destroyed'⁷³. Once again he denounces a doctrine found in the integral text of the *Centuries* in terms which suggest that in his view adherents of it must be completely repudiated. One may also wonder if, granted the fact that Evagrius' distinction (found in S₂ only) between Christ and the Word is different from that of the Antiochene Christology⁷⁴, Philoxenus would still not have found Evagrius' Christology 'Nestorian'.

A final consideration of a different nature may be mentioned. Philoxenus' knowledge of Greek appears to have been far from perfect, and his acquaintance with the Greek Fathers seems in large measure to have come through Syriac versions⁷⁵. It is true that he became aware of some inaccuracies in the existing Syriac versions of the New Testament and for this reason commissioned the translation which bears his name, but this was only after he had for many years used the earlier versions without noticing these infidelities, and he did not himself produce the new version but entrusted it to Polycarp⁷⁶. One wonders whether he himself spotted these inaccuracies or whether they were pointed out to him by another, when one bears from him that in Greek 'become' has two 'v's and 'birth' has one!⁷⁷ The author of S₁ knew better; he translated γένεσις and γέννησις correctly, as we can see from the Greek and Syriac texts of *Centuries* I, 4, 5. This blunder could be a momentary confusion on the part of Philoxenus, or a scribal error, but the evidence as a whole does not incline one to believe that he would or could have undertaken to translate the *Centuries* from Greek. His knowledge of the language was real but limited⁷⁸.

If for these reasons it be accepted that Philoxenus was not himself the translator and author of the expurgated version of the *Centuries*, but read them in this version, then it must have been made no later than the beginning of the sixth century, for its influence is evident in a work of Philoxenus, the

⁷² The *Commentary on Matthew and Luke* was probably written around 505 (cf. the introduction to the version, CSCO 393, pp. 13*-14*), the *Letter to Abraham and Orestes* during the patriarchate of Severus of Antioch (512-518) (cf. Guillaumont, *Kephalaia Gnostica*, p. 305; de Halleux, *Philoxène*, p. 261).

⁷³ *Comm. on Mt.* 3, 1-16, p. 14, 6-7 (12, 26-27). Cf. *Cent.* II, 62 (S₂): 'the whole nature of bodies will be taken away'.

⁷⁴ Cf. Guillaumont, *Kephalaia Gnostica*, p. 182, n. 25.

⁷⁵ Cf. de Halleux, *Philoxène*, pp. 233-234; 323-324.

⁷⁶ Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 121-124.

⁷⁷ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 22.

⁷⁸ Cf. *ibid.*

Commentary on Matthew and Luke, written before 510-511 A.D.⁷⁹ It is quite likely that Philoxenus encountered it, together with the version S₁ of the *Praktikos*⁸⁰ and other works of Evagrius in Syriac⁸¹, during his education at the School of Edessa⁸². Baumstark observed that a fifth century date for the translation into Syriac of works of the Cappadocians, Chrysostom, Athanasius and influential ascetic writers, including Evagrius, is highly probable, for not only were they highly regarded in both monophysite and Nestorian confessions, but also to a great extent the same works of these writers are attested in both traditions, among the monophysites indeed in manuscripts of great age⁸³. It would have been quite natural for Evagrius' main works to have been translated in the same circles in which were translated those of his masters, Basil and Gregory of Nazianzus.

However, the version S₁ of the *Centuries* (and to a much lesser extent also of the *Praktikos*⁸⁴) is of course not just a translation, but also a 'correction' of Evagrius, a 'correction' which decisively rejects his Origenism. The great Origenistic controversies occurred during the fourth and sixth centuries, but if S₁ was produced in the fifth century, then it is clear that during that century too Origenism must have been felt by some to be suspect. Two occasions when Origenistic ideas became the subject of discussion around the period 440-460 have been noted by Guillaumont⁸⁵. If Philoxenus did come to know the expurgated version of the *Centuries* during his time at the School of Edessa⁸⁶, which unfortunately cannot be precisely dated but must have been around or shortly after the middle of the fifth century⁸⁷, then their translator could well have been aware of some Origenistic controversies going on at the time when he was producing his version. Perhaps too

⁷⁹ This is the date of the earliest manuscript of the *Commentary*, British Museum Add. 17126. The date of composition was probably around 505 (cf. above, n. 72). The cosmology and eschatology of Philoxenus are particularly clearly exposed in this work, and it has therefore been frequently cited in this article.

⁸⁰ Cf. Guillaumont, *Kephalaia Gnostica*, pp. 209-211.

⁸¹ From the evidence of the Armenian (translated from the Syriac) a fifth century date for part of the Syriac corpus of Evagrius had already been established; cf. *ibid.*, pp. 202-205.

⁸² Cf. de Halleux, *Philoxène*, p. 30. Harb, *L'Attitude*, pp. 136-138, 150-154, has shown that the influence of Evagrius is evident in Philoxenus' *Homilies*. However, it is not possible to date the *Homilies*; all that can be said is that they were written prior to the *Letter to Patricius* and the *Letter to Abraham and Orestes* (cf. de Halleux, *Philoxène*, pp. 287-288).

⁸³ Baumstark pp. 75-93. There is a manuscript (British Museum Add. 14542) containing Basil's treatise *On the Holy Spirit* in Syriac dated 509 A.D. Add. 17143 contains a number of works of Basil in Syriac and may be as old as the fifth century. Cf. W. Wright, *Catalogue of Syriac Manuscripts in the British Museum Acquired since 1838, 1870-1872*, pp. 416-418; and Baumstark p. 78.

⁸⁴ Cf. Guillaumont, *Kephalaia Gnostica*, p. 209, n. 36.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 124, n. 1.

⁸⁶ On this, cf. further below.

⁸⁷ Cf. de Halleux, *Philoxène*, pp. 16, 27.

he was emboldened to modify the text of the *Centuries* by the knowledge that the Cappadocians themselves had explicitly rejected some Origenistic ideas⁸⁸.

If, however, he was working in Edessa before or around the middle of the fifth century, there is one anti-Origenist theologian whose influence he could hardly have escaped: Théodore of Mopsuestia. At this time the Antiochene theology was becoming dominant there, and according to Abdisho⁸⁹ 'Ibas, Kumi and Proba translated the books of the Interpreter (Theodore) and the writings of Aristotle from Greek into Syriac'. Theodore too 'corrected' the Origenistic cosmology. He affirmed the existence of the two sets of beings, the invisible spiritual beings and the visible corporeal beings, and the two worlds or 'states' (*katastaseis*) of the creation. But these two *katastaseis* were both created at the same time by the will of the Creator; according to Theodore the present corporeal and provisional state of men is not the result of a fall from a purely spiritual state, but the Creator's way of preparing men for it⁹⁰. This is exactly the principle according to which the author of S₁ 'corrected' the cosmology of Evagrius' *Centuries*⁹¹. Of course this 'corrected' cosmology is not peculiar to Theodore, but his was the most powerful influence in the School of Edessa at the time to which other indications point as the most likely for the translation of the *Centuries*. If Theodore could criticise the 'mistaken' Origenistic cosmology of the revered Basil⁹², a translator under the influence of Theodore's writings might well have taken the liberty of 'correcting' according to Theodore's principles the 'mistaken' Origenistic cosmology of Basil's still respected pupil Evagrius. I suggest, therefore, that the version S₁ of the *Centuries* was made in Edessa during the fifth century, before Philoxenus arrived there, by a translator who adhered to the Antiochene theology⁹³ and drew

⁸⁸ Cf. Guillaumont, *Kephalaia Gnostica*, p. 50.

⁸⁹ *Catalogue*, ch. 61 (ed. J.S. Assemani, *Bibliotheca Orientalis* 3, 1, 1725, p. 85).

⁹⁰ Cf. R. Devreesse, *Essai sur Théodore de Mopsueste*, *Studi e Testi* 141, 1948, pp. 5-9, 89-90, 100-101; Guillaumont, *Kephalaia Gnostica*, pp. 183-185. On the world picture of the Antiochene tradition as contrasted with that of the Alexandrines, cf. W. Böhm, *Johannes Philoponos. Ausgewählte Schriften*, 1967, pp. 455-457. It is from the *De opificio mundi* of John Philoponus (ed. G. Reischardt, *Bibliotheca Teubneriana* 910) that most of the extant fragments of Theodore's commentary on *Genesis* are known.

⁹¹ Cf. above pp. 68-69.

⁹² Cf. the 'Objection of Theodore of Mopsuestia against Basil having said the angels pre-existed the sensible world' in Reischardt (above, n. 90), pp. 16-18; Devreesse, *Essai*, pp. 5-9; Guillaumont, *Kephalaia Gnostica*, pp. 183-184.

⁹³ It is true that none of the 'corrections' of S₁ betrays an Antiochene (or a monophysite!) Christology on the part of its author. Indeed S₁ presents a more 'unitary' Christology than Evagrius himself, since in it the Evagriian distinction between the intellect Christ and the Word has been eliminated. But this distinction is not Antiochene, but Origenist; cf. above, n. 74.

the inspiration for his adaptation of Evagrius from Theodore's criticism of Origenism⁹⁴, even in such an esteemed theologian as Evagrius' teacher Basil⁹⁵.

Did then Philoxenus simply take over the moderated Evagrianism of the *Centuries* in the version S₁ and play no creative part in the development of Evagrianism in the Syriac world? I think not, for the mitigated Evagrian cosmology and eschatology of S₁ as it appears in Philoxenus' writings is integrated into a theological synthesis which incorporates the Christological and sacramental teaching of the ecclesiastical tradition, something which even the 'corrected' Evagrianism of S₁ does not do. In both versions of the *Centuries* the soteriological function of the incarnation is essentially confined to that of teaching and revelation. Christ took a body to teach the *logikoi* his spiritual wisdom and so reveal to them the way to attain to essential knowledge⁹⁶; and the decisive stages on a man's progress towards knowledge are faith, the fear of God and the observance of the commandments, which lead to impassibility, love and knowledge⁹⁷. Even a sketch of Philoxenus' complete teaching on Christology and soteriology is out of place here⁹⁸, but what is important to note in the present context is that even in those passages where he is expounding his Evagrian cosmology, eschatology and spirituality, Philoxenus describes the work of Christ in a quite different way from that of the *Centuries* (S₁ and S₂).

Philoxenus relates the spiritualisation of the creation and the acquisition

⁹⁴ Might he also have known what Rufinus did to the text of Περὶ ἀρχῶν? Cf. Rufinus' preface to his translation (ed. P. Koetschau, *GCS* 22, pp. 3-6).

⁹⁵ We may note that Joseph Hazzaya writes about a version of the *Centuries* 'altered... and full of numerous blasphemies' which together with a version of Pseudo-Dionysius is supposed to have been made by a companion of Kumi (cf. Guillaumont, *Kephalaia Gnostica*, pp. 215-221). For Pseudo-Dionysius this is of course impossible (*ibid.*, pp. 221-222), and this 'blasphemous' version of the *Centuries* is probably S₂ (*ibid.*, pp. 217-218). Guillaumont thinks that the real translator of Pseudo-Dionysius, Sergius of Reshaina, may have been the translator of S₂, and that the error of Joseph Hazzaya in calling him a companion of Kumi arose from the fact that he continued the translation work of the School of Edessa on Aristotle (*ibid.*, p. 222). Is it possible, however, that Joseph Hazzaya, who clearly had very little historical feeling (*ibid.*, n. 85), here preserves in confused form a tradition that there was a translation made of the *Centuries* at the School of Edessa in the time of Kumi, not however the 'blasphemous' S₂ but S₁? And that Sergius, the translator of Pseudo-Dionysius, also made a translation of the *Centuries*, the 'blasphemous' S₂—and so continued the translation work of the School of Edessa not only on Aristotle but also on Evagrius, because as a good 'Alexandrine' he objected to the 'Antiochene' modifications to the *Centuries*?

⁹⁶ Cf. Guillaumont, *Kephalaia Gnostica*, pp. 39, 233-236.

⁹⁷ *Praktikos*, Prologue § 8, ch. 81.

⁹⁸ There is a useful summary in Harb, *L'Attitude*, pp. 147-149, which brings out the contrasts with Evagrius. Beyond this the great monograph on Philoxenus by A. de Halleux, frequently referred to in this article, should be consulted. Cf. also recently R. C. Chesnut, *Three Monophysite Christologies*, 1976, pp. 57-112.

of spiritual knowledge to the whole economy of the incarnation⁹⁹. In Philoxenus the cosmic transformation of which the *Centuries* (S₁) speak comes about through an incarnation, the purpose of which is not simply to reveal to the *logikoi* the way to knowledge, but to renew and gather up the creation in the body of the Word; and correspondingly man receives contemplation not simply as a gift, but by the renewal and spiritualisation of his nature through his union with the incarnate Word. These ends are fulfilled progressively during the course of time, but are already realised in the economy of the incarnation and the rebirth of the Christian in baptism¹⁰⁰. 'The return of all to God, and the gathering up and the making new, and that everything might become in him and he in all—this (was not performed by the angels but) was kept for the Son. And its type became in the baptism, and its truth in his resurrection, but its fulfilment will be when all has been subjected to the Son and the Son to the Father, and God has become all in all (*I Cor.* 15,28)¹⁰¹.' At the baptism of Jesus, the type of the consummation, 'to (which) consummation the beginning of everything looked forward'¹⁰², 'the heavens were opened (to make known that)... corporality was being changed to spirituality and everything which is composed to non-composition'¹⁰³, 'the creation was renewed in power, the church united to Christ, the rebellious powers condemned and sin and evil destroyed, and by it mystically God (became) in all and all in God'¹⁰⁴. Clearly therefore for Philoxenus the type inaugurates and makes present the reality which it symbolises, and the transformation of the universe from corporality to spirituality proceeds by stages, from its typological realisation to its fulfilment, from the baptism of Christ through his death and resurrection to its consummation.

Similarly, to men the divine mysteries 'will be revealed in deed after the resurrection, but in sensation and in knowledge they are received by the mind even in this life... if a man is first born of baptism'¹⁰⁵; 'when a man has been born anew by baptism, in it and through it composition is changed by renewal from the Holy Spirit, but evil and error completely destroyed'¹⁰⁶; '(Mt. 3,12 par.)... will come to be at the last... but for the present... there has been put baptism, which by grace separates the wheat from the straw.

⁹⁹ The absence of this in the *Letter on the Three Degrees* is one of the reasons which led de Halleux to question the authenticity of the letter (cf. above, n. 53).

¹⁰⁰ Cf. de Halleux, *Philoxène*, pp. 393-395, 441-445.

¹⁰¹ *Comm. on Mt.* 3, 1-16, p. 10, 22-26 (9, 21-26).

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 6, 12-13 (5, 19-20).

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 11, 22-27 (10, 19-25).

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 18, 29 - 19, 2 (16, 26-28).

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 16, 23 - 17, 2 (14, 30 - 15, 3).

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 15, 27-30 (14, 3-5).

It burns up the straw by means of the fire which is in it, but it makes new and regenerates the man who, if he is preserved, being pure, as he was born by baptism, does not need to be purified by the winnowing fork (*Mt.* 3,12 par.), because that from which he must be separated is not in him'¹⁰⁷. The renewal of the Christian proceeds through the fulfilment 'in deed' of the realities given 'in power' in baptism. The baptism of Christ, 'because it is a type of his death and resurrection'¹⁰⁸, is what gives this character to our baptism, and is thus the decisive step in the economy which leads Christ from the legal to the spiritual realm and inaugurates the spiritualisation of all¹⁰⁹.

The Evagrian cosmology, eschatology and spirituality of Philoxenus are thus inseparably connected to an interpretation of the economy of the Word as a type of the eschatological fulfilment, a type in which the reality is present. Where could he have found both of these, the moderated Evagrianism of S₁, and the understanding of the economy as the typological inauguration of the spiritual state? If, as I have suggested¹¹⁰, he came to know the expurgated *Centuries* during his education at the School of the Persians in Edessa, he could have found them both there. All that has been said above about Philoxenus' interpretation of the economy as the beginning of the spiritualisation of the universe can be found in Theodore, the Patristic authority above all others for Philoxenus' teachers at Edessa. Not only can we assume that Philoxenus would have had to read Theodore there, but according to his own testimony he did read him assiduously, even although he later described it as 'tasting venom'¹¹¹. But what both Theodore and Philoxenus say about the inauguration of the spiritual *katastasis* by the economy is not of necessity either monophysite or dyophysite, and it is therefore quite possible that with the Evagrianism of S₁ this aspect of Theodore's teaching entered permanently into the thought of Philoxenus, who, after making it his own and no longer consciously associating it with Theodore, retained it with his Evagrian cosmology, eschatology and spirituality after his conversion from the Theodorian to the Cyrillian party¹¹².

'Theodore's theology is a theology of symbols and types', in which 'the

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 18, 16-25 (16, 13-22). Cf. also the text cited above, p. 66, which significantly adds to faith baptism, which is not found in the similar passages of Evagrius (cf. above, n. 8).

¹⁰⁸ *Comm. on Mt.* 3, 1, p. 19, 6-10 (16, 32 - 17, 3).

¹⁰⁹ Cf. de Halleux, *Philoxène*, pp. 453-454.

¹¹⁰ Cf. above.

¹¹¹ de Halleux, *Philoxène*, p. 29.

¹¹² Reminiscences of Theodore in Philoxenus were pointed out to me by Prof. L. Abramowski during a course at Bonn; cf. her review of de Halleux's monograph in *Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique* 60 (1965), pp. 865-866.

type contains the reality which it symbolises'¹¹³. His Christianity is governed by its orientation towards the heavenly realities. Man's history unfolds in two *katastaseis*, the present corporeal *katastasis*, and the future spiritual *katastasis*. The latter is introduced by the redemptive work of Christ, whose history is a type of the realities present in the church, themselves a type of the eternal heavenly realities. The Christian experiences eternal life first in this life in types and figures and then in full reality after his resurrection, for Christ himself went through the two phases, the first in his baptism and life, the second in his resurrection. The baptism of Christ is in this respect for Theodore the decisive act of the economy, for being a type of his resurrection it inaugurates the spiritual *katastasis*, which reaches fulfilment only at the general resurrection, but the reality of which is present in the resurrection of Christ. The baptism of Christ anticipates our baptism, and because his baptism was a type of his own resurrection, in baptism man receives resurrection and renewal in types and symbols. Baptism is the beginning of resurrection, and in it the Christian enters into the church and into heaven, of which the church is the type. As in the baptism of Christ the second *katastasis* is truly present in type, so in baptism the Christian is truly reborn and lives now in types and figures the eternal life which he will live in full reality after his resurrection¹¹⁴.

The similarity of this to Philoxenus' system presented above is unmistakable. 'We read the books of (Diodore and Theodore) more than those who now preach (their doctrine), and we tasted their venom', wrote Philoxenus to the monks of Beth-Gogal¹¹⁵. It is hard to believe that he studied Theodore carefully when reading his account of the Antiochene Christology of two natures, so manifestly unjust is his presentation of it. But it is not hard to believe him when reading his exposition of the inauguration of the spiritualisation of the creation by the economy of the Word. Here he speaks the same language as Theodore, and it makes sense to think of him having received it at the School of Edessa together with the moderated Evagrianism of S₁, itself perhaps, as I have suggested¹¹⁶, a product of the School under Theodorian inspiration.

Whether or not Philoxenus found these two systems already brought into

¹¹³ L. Abramowski, *Zur Theologie Theodors von Mopsuestia*, ZKG 72 (1961), pp. 263-293 (citations from pp. 273 and 272), who summarises and quotes from an article in Spanish by I. Oñatibia, *La vida cristiana, tipo de las realidades celestes. Un concepto básico de la teología de Teodoro de Mopsuestia*, *Scriptorium Victorienense* 1 (1954), pp. 100-133.

¹¹⁴ Cf. Oñatibia, *La vida cristiana*, pp. 100-117, 128-133; Abramowski, *Zur Theologie Theodors*, pp. 269-274.

¹¹⁵ Cf. above, n. 111.

¹¹⁶ Cf. above.

a theological synthesis at Edessa cannot be said. But either way he is the first Syriac writer known to us whose work bears the imprint of Evagrius, and we may therefore assume the first thinker of note to have employed creatively the doctrine of the expurgated *Centuries* in the construction of his own system. If the adaptation of Evagrius into the Syriac church tradition, by the elimination of his Origenism and by the linking of his moderated metaphysics to the understanding of the economy of the Word as a type of the transformation of the visible world, came about under Antiochene influence, then it may be that the work of Philoxenus was decisive in ensuring its acceptance on the monophysite side. In that case this former pupil of the School of the Persians, who may have had a hand in closing it down¹¹⁷, has nevertheless contributed to the survival among monophysite Syrians of important aspects of the thought of two men dear to his 'Antiochene' teachers, Evagrius and Theodore^{117a}.

¹¹⁷ Cf. de Halleux, *Philoxène*, p. 49.

^{117a} On the question of the 'Antiochene' inspiration of S₁, cf. further my communication *The Syriac Adapter of Evagrius' Centuries* in the Proceedings of the Eighth International Conference on Patristic Studies, Oxford, 1979 (due in 1981).