



# Seeing God and Becoming Blessed: Μακαριότης, Purification, and the Hermeneutic Possibilities of *Scholium 136 in Proverbium 14, 9* by Evagrius Ponticus<sup>1</sup>

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**Abstract:** In this article, it is argued that the different verbs designating vision, as attested in MS *Patmiacus* 270, MS *Vaticanus Graecus* 1802, *codices Iviron* 38, *Iviron* 379, *Iviron* 676, and *Parisinus Graecus* 153 are central to Evagrian hermeneutics. These choices have a great impact on Evagrius' theology, concerning not only the vision of God but also another concept deeply rooted in this kind of vision: μακαριότης. While MS *Patmiacus* 270 attests the verb ὄψωνται as designating vision, *codices Iviron* 38, *Iviron* 379, *Iviron* 676, *Parisinus Graecus* 153, and MS *Vaticanus Graecus* 1802 attest ἴδωσι. One might think that both verbs could be used interchangeably. However, deeper research indicates that the different readings might entail different theological ideas. On the one hand, verbs with the stem ἰδ-—at least in Evagrius' *corpus*—generally indicate the sort of natural vision shared even with demons, which is likely to rule out the vision of God. On the other hand, verbs with the stem ὄψ- are often used to indicate supernatural vision or even the vision of God. Furthermore, the reading ὄψωνται in the *Scholium 136 in Proverbium* 14, 9 may constitute a *lectio difficilior* to be considered in new editions.

**Keywords:** Evagrius Ponticus; μακαριότης; divine vision; manuscript readings; hermeneutics

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## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. State of the art

The most comprehensive edition of the *Scholia in Proverbia* by Evagrius Ponticus was produced by Paul Géhin in 1987. For this edition, he relied on two manuscripts of the direct tradition—*Codex Patmiacus* 270 (A) and *Codex Iviron* 555 (B)—and four manuscripts of the indirect tradition—*Codex Iviron* 379 (I), *Codex Iviron* 38 (K), *Codex Parisinus*

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<sup>1</sup> I dedicate this essay to the memory of my friend Max Prado. Furthermore, I would like to thank Joel Kalvesmaki for having read the draft of this paper and for having made valuable suggestions to improve it. Every mistake in this work is mine.

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*graecus* 153 (M), and *Codex Iviron* 676 (N)<sup>3</sup>. MS *Vaticanus graecus* 1802 (Z), on which Paul Géhin also relied, is associated with the direct tradition concerning its parts that attest the *Scholia in Proverbia* by Evagrius Ponticus<sup>4</sup>.

In 2002, Guillaume Bady and Natalie Tchernetska published an article on the direct testimony of MS *Trinity College* O.1.55 to the *Scholia in Proverbia* by Evagrius Ponticus. This manuscript transmits the first twenty-eight *scholia* on ff. 1v-8v<sup>5</sup>. In 2019, Meredith Danezan published a study in which she examined MS *Trinity College* O.1.55 and its relationship to the *catenae vaticanae*<sup>6</sup>. However, since MS *Trinity College* O.1.55 does not contain the *Scholium* 137 in *Proverbum* 14, 9, the article by G. Bady and N. Tchernetska as well as the article by M. Danezan will not be cited too often in this study<sup>7</sup>.

In 2008, Nick Nicholas proposed that the reading ὄψωνται in *Scholium* 136 in *Proverbum* 14, 9 by Evagrius Ponticus, as attested in MS *Patmiacus* 270 (A, fol. 201r), may be interpreted as a middle future subjunctive<sup>8</sup>. He further argued that this type of morphosyntactic construction—especially in purpose subordinate clauses introduced by ἵνα—was intentionally employed by Christian authors and scribes after the 4th century A.D., and should therefore not be regarded as a hypercorrection or an error<sup>9</sup>. On this basis, the aim of the present article is to propose a reconsideration of the reading ὄψωνται attested in

<sup>3</sup> See Évagre le Pontique, *Scholies aux Proverbes. Introduction, texte critique, traduction, notes, appendices et index*, ed. P. Géhin, SCh 340, Paris 1987, p. 55-82.

<sup>4</sup> See P. Géhin, *Évagre le Pontique. Scholies aux Proverbes. Introduction, texte critique, traduction, notes, appendices et index*, SCh 340, Paris 1987, p. 73: “Dans cette source, les scholies d’Évagre se présentaient dans leur rédaction originale et non dans une des rédactions qui remontent à Procope de Gaza. Ainsi le *Vaticanus* 1802 est, après le *Patmiacus* 270 e l’*Iviron* 555, le troisième témoin du texte original d’Évagre”; G. Bady—N. Tchernetska, *Un nouveau témoin direct des Scholies aux Proverbes d’Évagre le Pontique (Cambridge, Trinity Coll. O.1.55)*, “Revue d’histoire des textes” 32 (2002) p. 70.

<sup>5</sup> See Bady, Tchernetska, *Un nouveau témoin*, p. 62-67.

<sup>6</sup> See M. Danezan, *Le chaînon manquant. La source de l’épitomé de Procope (Type II) dans la chaîne du Vatican*, “Byzantion” 89 (2019) p. 123-134.

<sup>7</sup> The *catenae* in MS *Trinity College* O.1.55 include, for example, *scholia* by Iohannes Chrysostomus and other exegetes. Meredith Danezan is currently working on an important edition of the *catenae in Proverbia* by exegetes such as Didymus Alexandrinus Caecus, Iohannes Chrysostomus, and Evagrius Ponticus. The article by M. Danezan mentioned here is part of this major work she is advancing.

<sup>8</sup> See N. Nicholas, *The passive future subjunctive in Byzantine texts*, BZ 101/1 (2008) p. 89-92; 96-97; 100; 107; 113; 115; 128; 130.

<sup>9</sup> Nicholas, *The passive future subjunctive in Byzantine texts*, p. 89-92; 96-97; 100; 107; 113; 115; 128; 130.

A (fol. 201r), and to argue for the connection between this reading and a kind of spiritual vision presented in that *scholium*.

## 1.2. Rationale for investigating differences between the readings ὄψωνται (MS *Patmiacus* 270) and ἴδωσι (*codices Iviron* 379, *Iviron* 38, *Parisinus Graecus* 153, *Iviron* 676, and MS *Vaticanus Graecus* 1802) and its relation to μακαριότης

At first sight, it may seem striking that the verb ὄψωνται occurs in MS *Patmiacus* 270, fol. 201r (A), especially when compared with the reading ἴδωσι attested in *codices Iviron* 379 (I), *Iviron* 38 (K), *Parisinus Graecus* 153 (M), *Iviron* 676 (N), and MS *Vaticanus Graecus* 1802, fol. 65r (Z). Why would it be so striking? This is mainly because of the rarity with which the middle future subjunctive of ὀράω with the stem ὀψ- appears in purposive subordinate clauses introduced by ἵνα, as attested in A (fol. 201r)<sup>10</sup>. Furthermore, this syntactic construction seems to have been typical of a few Christian texts from the 4th (Pseudo-Clementina), 5th (Pseudo-Epiphanius Constantiensis and Isaias Gazaeus), and 6th (Romanus Melodus) centuries A.D., always designating higher realities<sup>11</sup>.

<sup>10</sup> The future subjunctive had been considered to be an almost impossible morphosyntactic structure until the 4th century. It started appearing specifically in Christian literature. Earlier, it was regarded by grammarians such as Apollonius Dyscolus (*De Compositione* 2, 2, 389-395; 2, 2, 97) as either an impossible or even a ridiculous construction hypothesis. One of the issues concerning this structure is the morphological identity that may appear to exist between sigmatic future and sigmatic aorist verbs. This problem is deeply discussed by Nick Nicholas, who states that the form ὄψωμαι and its variants should be regarded as a middle future subjunctive. Apart from this verb and a few others, he himself admits that he rather focused on the passive future subjunctive in his article because it does not have the ambiguity that active and middle verbal forms may have regarding the sigmatic aorist and subjunctive verbs. According to Nick Nicholas, ὄψωνται, in *Scholium* 136 in *Proverbium* 14, 9, is an instance of middle future subjunctive. See Nicholas, *The passive future subjunctive*, p. 89-91; 100; 107; 113; 119-121; 128.

<sup>11</sup> For the dates of the cited works, see H.D. Altendorf, Review of: *Die beiden griechischen Klementinen-Epitomen und ihre Anhänge. Überlieferungsgeschichtliche Vorarbeiten zu einer Neuausgabe der Texte*, by F. Paschke, “Gnomon” 40/3 (1968) p. 308; S. Verhelst, *L’homélie in diuini corporis sepulturam du Pseudo-Épiphane (CPG 3568) à la lumière de la vieille version géorgienne*, “Bollettino della Badia Greca di Grottaferrata” 20 (2023) p. 202; J. Kirchmeyer, *A propos d’un texte du Pseudo-Athanase*, “Revue d’Ascétique et de Mystique” 40 (1964) p. 312; J. Grosdidier de Matons, *Romanos le Mélode, Hymnes. Introduction, texte critique et notes*, v. 1, SCh 99, Paris, 1964, p. 13-14.

The construction ἵνα + ἴδωσι, in turn, is far more common, that is, the active aorist subjunctive of ὁράω. Indeed, it occurs with high frequency not only in Christian but also in classical literature, such as Homer, and it is therefore pointless to list all of them here given how often they occur. Finally, the relation between this syntactic structure and μακαριότης must be addressed<sup>12</sup>. In doing so, it is expected that the concept of μακάριος τέλος, present in the Evagrian *scholion* discussed in this article, may be more clearly understood as connected to the very concept of divine vision. Additionally, the hypothesis of ἵνα + ὄψωνται will be addressed not only in light of semantics but also of syntax as a *lectio difficilior*, since it is unlikely that so rare a construction would have been used unintentionally.

Research in *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae* shows, for instance, only one occurrence of affirmative purposive subordinate clauses introduced by ἵνα in which the variation ὄψωμαι appears in Pseudo-Clementina<sup>13</sup>; once with ὄψωνται in Pseudo-Epiphanius Constantiensis<sup>14</sup>, besides the Evagrian instance in A (fol. 201r), once with ὄψηται in Isaias Gazaesus<sup>15</sup>, and once more with ὄψη in Romanus Melodus<sup>16</sup>. It should also be noted that the complement of these verbs with the stem ὀψ-, in these cases,

<sup>12</sup> According to Nick Nicholas, it was only by accident that there had not been a future subjunctive in Greek until the 4th century, since it was a morphosyntactic possibility for that language. Nick Nicholas argues for the hypothesis of a lack of semantic context that could give room for this structure to exist at that time. It seems that this semantic context, in turn, is present in *Scholium 136 in Proverbium 14, 9* by Evagrius Ponticus (4th century A.D.), especially regarding how the aforementioned morphosyntactic structure is connected to the very concept of μακαριότης and divine vision. See Nicholas, *The passive future subjunctive*, p. 92; 96-97; 100; 115; 128; 130.

<sup>13</sup> Pseudo-Clementina, *Epitome de gestis S. Petri praemetaphrastica, dicta «altera»*, ed. A.R.M. Dressel, Leipzig 1873, 174, 2: “Εὐχαριστῶ τῷ θεῷ ἀληθινῷ καὶ παντοκράτορι, ὃς διὰ τοῦτό με τετύφλωκεν, ἵνα ὄψωμαι αὐτόν, καὶ διὰ τοῦτο τὴν ἀκοὴν ἀφειλετό μου, ἵνα ἐν ᾧ τὴν ἀλήθειάν ποτε δι’ ἄγνοιαν κατεγέλων, ἐν αὐτῇ ἀκούσας δέξωμαι· καὶ τοῦτο μὲν ἐνόμιζον ψευδὲς ὑπάρχειν, ὅπερ ἦν ἀληθές”.

<sup>14</sup> Pseudo-Epiphanius Constantiensis, *Homilia in assumptionem Christi* 4, 36-44, PG 43, 485C: “Τὸ σῶμα τὸ ἡμέτερον περικείμενος, τὴν τρωθεῖσαν τῇ λόγῃ πλευρὰν προβαλλόμενος· ἵνα ὄψωνται οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι εἰς ὃν ἐξεκέντησαν· ἡμεῖς δὲ ἀξιωθῶμεν ὄψεσθαι τὸ πρόσωπον αὐτοῦ μετὰ παρρησίας, καὶ τῶν ἐπηγγελμένων ἀγαθῶν ἐπιτύχομεν· χάριτι καὶ φιλανθρωπία τοῦ Κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ· μεθ’ οὗ τῷ Πατρὶ καὶ ἀγίῳ Πνεύματι δόξα, κράτος, τιμὴ, νῦν καὶ αἰεὶ, καὶ εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰῶνων”.

<sup>15</sup> Isaias Gazaesus, *Sermo pro iis qui saeculo renuntiarunt* 2, 38-39, PG 28, 1409B: “Μίσησον λόγους κοσμικοὺς, ἵνα καρδιά σου ὄψηται τὸν καλόν”.

<sup>16</sup> Romanus Melodus, *Cantica* 33, 22, Sch 128, ed. J. Grosdidier de Matons, Paris 1967, p. 96: “Μεῖνον μικρόν, ὃ πανάθλιε, ἵνα ὄψη δίκην ἀμετάθετον· τὸ συνειδὸς σου κατακρίνει σε, ἵνα γνῶς ὅπερ ἐποίησας τῷ δεινῷ μόρῳ νεκρούμενος”.

always expresses a higher reality, such as God<sup>17</sup>, Jesus after having been killed (ὄν ἐξεκέντησαν) and resurrected<sup>18</sup>, τὸν καλόν<sup>19</sup>, and an unalterable judgment<sup>20</sup>. These examples are, respectively, from approximately the 4th (Pseudo-Clementina), 5th (Pseudo-Epiphanius Constantiensis and Isaias Gazaesus), and 6th (Romanus Melodus) centuries A.D.<sup>21</sup> It seems, therefore, that the syntactic construction of ἵνα + ὄψωνται is something that had been developed mainly within late antique Christian texts and employed in specific contexts that designate higher realities.

By contrast, the syntactic construction constituted by ἵνα in conjunction with a verb designating the act of seeing with the stem ἰδ- is far more common. It may be found both in classical and in Christian literature, such as Homer, the New Testament, and John Chrysostom. In these *corpora*, the complement of this verb may denote either material or spiritual—and higher—realities, such as, respectively, the gifts (δῶρα) Agamemnon gave to the Achaeans<sup>22</sup>, the resurrected Lazarus to be seen by the people<sup>23</sup>, and the good works that shall be seen by all<sup>24</sup>, as well as the vision of God

<sup>17</sup> Pseudo-Clementina, *Epitome de gestis S. Petri praemetaphrastica, dicta «altera»*, ed. A.R.M. Dressel, Leipzig 1873, 174, 2.

<sup>18</sup> Pseudo-Epiphanius Constantiensis, *Homilia in assumptionem Christi* 4, 36-44, PG 43, 485C.

<sup>19</sup> Isaias Gazaesus, *Sermo pro iis qui saeculo renuntiarunt* 2, 38-39, PG 28, 1409B.

<sup>20</sup> Romanus Melodus, *Cantica* 33, 22, SCh 128, p. 96.

<sup>21</sup> In fact, *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae* attests only one occurrence of ἵνα + middle future subjunctive of ὀράω with the stem ὄψ- in classical literature: “τῆς ὀρθοβούλου Θέμιδος αἰτυμῆτα παῖ, ἄκοντά σ’ ἄκων δυσλύτοις χαλκεύμασι προσπασσαλεύσω τῶδ’ ἀπανθρώπῳ πάγῳ, ἵν’ οὔτε φωνὴν οὔτε του μορφὴν βροτῶν ὄψη, σταθευτὸς δ’ ἡλίου φοίβῃ φλογὶ χροιάς ἀμείψεις ἄνθος· ἀσμένῳ δέ σοι ἡ ποικιλείμων νύξ ἀποκρύψει φάος, πάχνην θ’ ἐόαν ἡλιος σκεδᾷ πάλιν” (Aeschylus, *Prometheus vincitus* 1, 19-26). In this passage, the construction denotes a kind of bodily vision. However, it is extremely rare in classical literature—*Thesaurus Linguae Graecae* shows its occurrence only once—and, contrary to what happens in Christian literature, this seems to have been used more on the benefit of metrics and poetry than of conceptualization, philosophical and theological discussion.

<sup>22</sup> Homerus, *Ilias* XIX 173: “ἀλλ’ ἄγε λαὸν μὲν σκέδασον καὶ δεῖπνον ἄνωχθι ὄπλεσθαι· τὰ δὲ δῶρα ἄναξ ἀνδρῶν Ἀγαμέμνων οἰσέτω ἐς μέσσην ἀγορὴν, ἵνα πάντες Ἀχαιοὶ ὀφθαλμοῖσιν ἴδωσι, σὺ δὲ φρεσὶ σῆσιν ἰανθῆς”.

<sup>23</sup> John 12,9: “Ἐγὼ οὖν [ὁ] ὄχλος πολὺς ἐκ τῶν Ἰουδαίων ὅτι ἐκεῖ ἐστίν, καὶ ἦλθον οὐ διὰ τὸν Ἰησοῦν μόνον ἀλλ’ ἵνα καὶ τὸν Λάζαρον ἴδωσιν ὃν ἠγειρεν ἐκ νεκρῶν”.

<sup>24</sup> Iohannes Chrysostomus, *In epistulam I ad Timotheum argumentum et homiliae* 2, 2-8, PG 62, 551: “Ὅτι γὰρ οὐκ ἔστι κακῶς ἀκοῦσαι τὸν ἀνεπιλήπτῳ βίῳ κεχρημένον, ἄκουε τοῦ Χριστοῦ λέγοντος· Λαμψάτω τὸ φῶς ὑμῶν ἔμπροσθεν τῶν ἀνθρώπων, ἵνα ἴδωσι τὰ καλὰ ἔργα ὑμῶν, καὶ δοξάζωσι τὸν Πατέρα ὑμῶν τὸν ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς. Τί οὖν, ἂν συκοφαντῆται, φησὶ, καὶ ἐκ περιστάσεως τὴν διαβολὴν ὑπομένῃ”.

himself as τῶν ἀστέρων Δεσπότην<sup>25</sup>. Different from the construction ἵνα + ὄψωνται, the syntactic construction constituted by ἵνα + ἴδωσι, therefore, is interchangeably employed to designate either material or divine vision.

In the following discussions, the very possibility of reading ὄψωνται (A) as a *lectio difficilior* will be addressed, as well as the hermeneutical possibilities of the reading ἴδωσι (I, K, M, N, and Z). Indeed, it does not make any sense that such a rare syntactic structure as that of A would have been used by Evagrius unintentionally. As a highly educated theologian, Evagrius was likely to be aware of how rare ἵνα + ὄψωνται is, not to mention the questions related to immaterial vision and happiness that may be embedded therein<sup>26</sup>. The occurrence of ἵνα + ἴδωσι τὸν Θεὸν τοῖς νοεροῖς ὀφθαλμοῖς, as attested in Z, fol. 65r, may in turn underscore the importance of highlighting this vision as spiritual, insofar as it is attained through τοῖς νοεροῖς ὀφθαλμοῖς<sup>27</sup>.

As a matter of fact, it might lead to different philological choices of reading this Evagrian commentary: ὄψωνται or ἴδωσι τὸν θεόν?<sup>28</sup> In

<sup>25</sup> Iohannes Chrysostomus, *Homilia habita postquam presbyter Gothus* 5, 44-52, PG 63, 507: “Οὕτω καὶ ὁ Παῦλος ἐποίησε, τὸν Δεσπότην τὸν ἑαυτοῦ μιμούμενος· Μιμηταὶ γάρ μου γίνεσθε, φησὶ, καθὼς καὶ γὰρ Χριστοῦ. Καθάπερ γὰρ ὁ Δεσπότης αὐτοῦ μάγους καλῶν ἀστέρων ἐπεμψεν ὄψιν, ἵνα τὸ σύνθηδες ἐπιγνόντες εὐκόλως ὑπακούσωσι, καὶ ἐλθόντες τὸν τῶν ἀστέρων ἴδωσι Δεσπότην, καὶ τῆς δουλείας ἀπαλλαγέντες ἐκείνης, ταύτη προσέλθωσι τῇ δεσποτείᾳ· οὕτω δὲ καὶ αὐτὸς μέλλον περιτομῆν καθαρεῖν, μετὰ περιτομῆς ἐπεμψε τὸν Τιμόθεον”.

<sup>26</sup> Nick Nicholas highlighted that several grammarians and scribes, such as Apollonius and NT copyists, saw the future subjunctive as at least bizarre. There is no reason to believe that it would be different with respect to Evagrius Ponticus. Furthermore, any native speaker is likely to avoid what are, so to speak, bizarre morphosyntactic structures, which is one of the characteristics that may differentiate native speakers from non-native speakers. This raises awareness of how important this structure is in this *scholium* by Evagrius Ponticus and why readers should pay attention to it. See Nicholas, *The passive future subjunctive*, p. 90; 107-108; 112; 116-118; 122; 130.

<sup>27</sup> In this article, there is no intention to claim that the reading found in manuscript Z—τοῖς νοεροῖς ὀφθαλμοῖς—is by Evagrius Ponticus himself. On the contrary, this is likely to be an addition made by a scribe. However, it is important to pay attention to this reading in order to analyse how the scribe interpreted that *scholium* and how he wished readers to interpret the text. Furthermore, if the scribe judged it important to add that reading, it is likely that there was an intellectual environment that led him to do so.

<sup>28</sup> It is important to highlight that this philological choice must not be reduced to an opposition between the direct and the indirect traditions. The text of *Scholium* 136 in *Proverbia* 14:9 is present in manuscripts A, I, K, M, N, and Z. Manuscript A, which belongs to the direct tradition, attests ὄψωνται, while manuscript Z, also associated with the direct tradition, attests ἴδωσι in *Scholium* 136 in *Proverbia* 14:9. Paul Géhin chose the reading attested in the manuscripts of the indirect tradition, ἴδωσι (I, K, M, N), which is the same as Z (associated with the direct tradition). See P. Géhin, *Évagre le Pontique. Scholies aux Proverbes. Introduction, texte critique, traduction, notes, appendices et index*, SCh 340, Paris 1987, p. 55-82; 232-234. This article, however, proposes the reading ὄψωνται, not only on the basis of the evidence of the direct tradition but also on the principle of *lectio difficilior*.

effect, *Scholium 136 in Proverbium 14, 9* is highly representative of the role μακαριότης plays in Evagrius' thought. There, it is presented as a τέλος—both as an ultimate aim and as that which has reached its perfection. It is, so to speak, an aim and an end at the same time.

This raises an important question: what role does μακαριότης play in relation to purification and the very idea of the vision of God? However limited in scope this essay may be, it seeks to tease out these key concepts in order to address the relative lack of scholarly attention to the significance of μακαριότης in conjunction with vision in this particular commentary by Evagrius—especially regarding how it may influence hermeneutic possibilities based on readings of “seeing” as ἴδωσι or ὄψωνται.

## **2. The reading ὄψωνται in MS *Patmiacus* 270 (fol. 201r) within a purposive subordinate clause and its comparison with ἴδωσι in the same syntactic structure according to *codices Ivion* 38, *Ivion* 379, *Ivion* 676, *Parisinus Graecus* 153, and MS *Vaticanus Graecus* 1802**

The text of *Scholium 136 in Proverbium 14, 9* with the reading ὄψωνται is found in MS *Patmiacus* 270 (A), fol. 201r, as shown in the following figure: “The houses of the lawless shall owe purification, so that, having become pure, they may see God. For this is the blessed end that has been reserved by nature for every rational being”<sup>29</sup>.

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<sup>29</sup> Every translation not attributed to a specific author is by us. <Οἰκίαι παρανόμων ὀφειλήσουσι καθαρισμόν> ἵνα καθαροὶ γενόμενοι ὄψωνται τὸν θεόν· τοῦτο γάρ ἐστι τὸ μακάριον τέλος ὅπερ πάση λογικῇ φύσει τετήρηται.

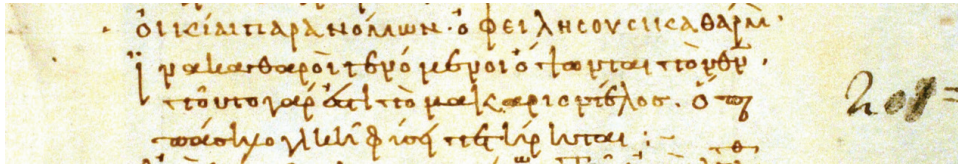


Fig. 1: MS *Patmiacus* 270, fol. 201r<sup>30</sup>.

It seems, according to this extract, that the concept of μακαριότης is deeply intertwined with the very idea of becoming pure (καθαροί γενόμενοι) and being able to see God (ὄψωνται τὸν θεόν).

Although *codices Iviron* 379 (I), *Iviron* 38 (K), *Parisinus Graecus* 153 (M), *Iviron* 676 (N), and MS *Vaticanus Graecus* 1802 (Z) read ἴδωσι—the dominant reading Paul Géhin adopted over that of MS *Patmiacus* 270 (A), i.e., ὄψωνται—it seems worthwhile to reopen this discussion from a different hermeneutic perspective<sup>31</sup>.

In fact, there is reason to believe that ἴδωσι and ὄψωνται, within purposive subordinate clauses introduced by ἵνα, are slightly different. For instance, ἵνα + ἴδωσι may be found abundantly both in classical and in Christian literature, denoting interchangeably either material or supernatural vision<sup>32</sup>. The structure ἵνα + ὄψωνται and its variants, in turn, appear only a few times and is always associated with visions of higher realities; additionally, this appears, in the *corpora* of the *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae*, exclusively in Christian authors from approximately the 4th, 5th, and 6th centuries<sup>33</sup>.

<sup>30</sup> For more information, see P. Géhin, *Évagre le Pontique. Scholies aux Proverbes. Introduction, texte critique, traduction, notes, appendices et index*, SCh 340, Paris 1987, p. 55-62. This manuscript has been graciously provided to us by the Monastery of Saint John the Theologian (Μονὴ Ἁγίου Ἰωάννου τοῦ Θεολόγου), to whom we are deeply grateful. Since this extract is from MS *Patmiacus* 270, the text cited here differs slightly from that of the edition present in *Scholium* 136 in *Proverbium* 14, 9 (SCh 340, p. 232). In effect, to establish this commentary, P. Géhin also drew on material from the *codices Iviron* 38, *Iviron* 379, *Iviron* 676, and *Parisinus Graecus* 153. Accordingly, whereas *Patmiacus* 270 reads ὄψωνται, P. Géhin adopts the reading ἴδωσι. Furthermore, instead of reading οἰκία παρανόμων, as *Patmiacus* 270 does, P. Géhin prefers the reading οἰκία ἀφρόνων: 14, 9 <οἰκία ἀφρόνων ὀφειλήσουσι καθαρισμόν· οἰκία δὲ δικαίων δεκταί> 136. Ἴνα καθαροί γενόμενοι ἴδωσι τὸν θεόν· τοῦτο γάρ ἐστι τὸ μακάριον τέλος ὅπερ πάση λογικῇ φύσει τετήρηται.

<sup>31</sup> In the present essay, there is no intent to dismiss Paul Géhin's reading. On the contrary, the purpose here is to demonstrate the variety of meanings that are to be found when considering not only the dominant reading adopted by Géhin in this extract but also that from *Patmiacus* 270

<sup>32</sup> See notes 22-25.

<sup>33</sup> See notes 13-20.

This latter structure is therefore rarer than the former, being a phenomenon specific to Christian literature and more often than not associated with some kind of spiritual vision. Hence, the structure ἵνα + ὄψωνται ends up hinting at the possibility of a *lectio difficilior*. After all, why would one have employed such a rare syntactic construction if a different meaning had not been intended? This question arises since Evagrius, as a highly educated theologian, would not be expected to have been unaware of how rare that syntactic construction is<sup>34</sup>. The same reasoning applies to the scribe. Had he been working from a manuscript containing ἴδωσι, why would he have employed such a rare reading as ὄψωνται in its place? And even if the manuscript on which he was working lacked the corresponding verb, he would be prone to employ the more common reading: ἴδωσι. On these grounds, ὄψωνται is more likely to be closer to the original version, as it is evidently a *lectio difficilior*<sup>35</sup>.

## 2.1. Variations of verbs with the stems ἰδ- and ὄψ- in syntactic structures other than ἵνα + subjunctive of ὁράω. In these situations, do verbs with the stem ὄψ- continue to convey the same notion of spiritual vision or of higher realities as it does in ἵνα + ὄψ-?

It is unusual to find, in Evagrius' *corpus*, the direct vision of God—or expressions equivalent to it, such as the vision of the Κύριος—as well as other experiences of supernatural vision, represented by the verbal form ἴδωσι, the active subjunctive aorist of ὁράω, or by other verbal forms derived from the stem ἰδ-. More commonly, this idea is expressed by verbal forms derived either from the root ὄπ- or from the stem ὄψ-, such as ὄψωνται in this particular context, the middle future subjunctive of the same verb (ὁράω)<sup>36</sup>. However, a few examples may suggest that one

<sup>34</sup> See note 26.

<sup>35</sup> See note 28.

<sup>36</sup> There are a bunch of examples of verbs with the stem ὄψ- in the middle future indicative designating vision of higher realities. Verbs with the stem ἰδ- in the active aorist subjunctive and even in the indicative, in turn, usually indicate material vision, with the exception of *Scholium 17 in Psalmum* 68, 29b, SCh 614. See, for instance, how ὄψεσθαι functions in Evagrius Ponticus, *Gnosticus* 13, 3, SCh 356, p. 106; Evagrius Ponticus, *Sententiae ad monachos* 18, 1, TU 39/4, p. 154; Evagrius Ponticus, *Sententiae ad monachos* 77, 2, TU 39/4, p. 159; Evagrius Ponticus, *Sententiae ad monachos* 133, 1, TU 39/4, p. 164; Evagrius Ponticus, *Sententiae ad virginem* 11, 2, TU 39/4, p. 147; Evagrius Ponticus, *Scholium 323 in Proverbium* 26, 10, SChr, p. 414-415, citing Is. 40:5.

will not find these differences between verbs with the stems *ιδ-* and *ὀψ-* in cases apart from the syntactic structure *ἴνα* + middle future subjunctive of *ὀράω*, which has been already mentioned<sup>37</sup>.

In Evagrius Ponticus, *Tractatus ad Eulogium*, for example, *ἴδωσιν* refers to the natural vision that demons have when they observe human behaviour<sup>38</sup>. There are plenty of other similar examples in which Evagrius describes demonic natural vision expressed by the verb *ἴδωσιν*, such as *Rerum monachalium rationes*<sup>39</sup>. A similar use of *ἴδωσιν* can be seen in *De malignis cogitationibus*, *De oratione*, and again in *Tractatus ad Eulogium*<sup>40</sup>. In general, when a human being is reported to see something, the verb with the stem *ιδ-* means that this vision is at the natural level, such as *Sententiae ad monachos*<sup>41</sup>. Even when a human being, through a verb with the stem *ιδ-*, is believed to see God, this vision is rather allegorical (as in *Sententiae ad virginem*<sup>42</sup>, for example, an allegorical reading of *νόμφιος*) or, actually, that individual is not seeing God, but something else—for example, the place of God<sup>43</sup>. It has to be recognized, however, that in *De malignis cogitationibus*, there can be found *εἶδον* as a verb that designates the vision of God—but, at the same time, it has to be considered that it is a citation of Isaiah 6, and not a concept

<sup>37</sup> This assertion is mainly based on *Scholium 17 in Psalmum* 68, 29b, SCh 614. As a matter of fact, this *scholium* attests both stems, *ιδ-* and *ὀψ-*, as constituting verbs that, apart from the construction *ἴνα* + middle future subjunctive of *ὀράω*, may denote interchangeably spiritual (that is, higher) vision. Text available on <https://evagriusponticus.net/cpg2455/cpg2455-full-for-reading.html>.

<sup>38</sup> Evagrius Ponticus, *Tractatus ad Eulogium* 4, 28-29, SCh 591, p. 288: “Ὅταν ἴδωσιν ἡμᾶς οἱ δαίμονες εἰς αὐτὸ τὸ ζέμα τῶν ὕβρεων μὴ ἐξαφθέντας (...).” See J. Muyldermans, *À travers la tradition manuscrite d’Évagre le Pontique*, Bibliothèque du Muséon 3, Louvain 1932, p. 62-65, 89-90; J. Muyldermans, *Euagria de la Vaticane*, “Le Muséon” 54 (1941) p. 4-7, 9 (*cum fragmento inedito*). According to Evagrius’ cosmology, demons are unable to see God.

<sup>39</sup> Evagrius Ponticus, *Rerum monachalium rationes* 11, 25-27, PG 40, 1264: “Ὅπνικα οὗτοι ἴδωσιν ἡμᾶς προσευχῆ παρισταμένους, τότε δὴ καὶ αὐτοὶ σπουδαίως ἐφίστανται ἡμῖν, ἐκεῖνα ἡμῖν τῷ νῶ ὑποβάλλοντες (...).”

<sup>40</sup> Evagrius Ponticus, *De malignis cogitationibus* 5, 1-8, SCh 438, p. 166; Evagrius Ponticus, *De oratione* 10, 22, SCh 589, available on <https://evagriusponticus.net/cpg2452/cpg2452.grc.2017.g%C3%A9hin.html>; Evagrius Ponticus, *Tractatus ad Eulogium* 4, 28-31, SCh 591, p. 288.

<sup>41</sup> Evagrius Ponticus, *Sententiae ad monachos* 11, 2, TU 39/4, p. 154: “καὶ οὐ μὴ ἴδης καθ’ ὕπνου φαντασίας κακάς”.

<sup>42</sup> Evagrius Ponticus, *Sententiae ad virginem* 43, 2, TU 39/4, p. 149: “καὶ οὐ μὴ ἴδη προελθόντα τὸν νυμφίον αὐτῆς”.

<sup>43</sup> Evagrius Ponticus, *De malignis cogitationibus* 40, SCh 438, p. 288-290: “Ὅκ ἂν ἴδη ὁ νοῦς τὸν τοῦ Θεοῦ τόπον ἐν ἑαυτῷ, μὴ πάντων τῶν ἐν τοῖς πράγμασιν ὑψηλότερος γεγονώς”.

created by Evagrius himself<sup>44</sup>. For it seems, according to those passages here discussed, that Evagrius himself would not employ εἶδον to describe the vision of God<sup>45</sup>. Nonetheless, there is a striking Evagrian example that contradicts this point of view: *Scholium 17 in Psalmum 68, 29b*<sup>46</sup>.

## 2.2. An example of vision expressed through the stem ὄψ- in a syntactic structure other than ἵνα + middle future subjunctive of ὀράω, and its relation to a broader overview of purification and contemplation in Evagrius' cosmology

The very idea of the vision of God expressed by verbs with the stem ὄψ—related to the idea of purification (καθαρός, παρθενός) and to vocabulary linked to vision, such as φῶς (light) and ὀφθαλμοί (eyes)—may be observed in this following passage<sup>47</sup>: “For the just shall inherit the light, and the impious will inhabit the darkness. Virgin eyes shall behold the Lord, and the ears of virgins shall hear his words. The mouth of virgins shall kiss the bridegroom (...)”<sup>48</sup>. According to this extract,

<sup>44</sup> Evagrius Ponticus, *De malignis cogitationibus* 41, 7-10, SCh 438, p. 290-292: “Τὸ δὲ, «εἶδον τὸν κύριον καθήμενον ἐπὶ θρόνου ὑψηλοῦ, καὶ ἐπηρμένον» τυποῖ τὸν νοῦν χωρὶς τοῦ «εἶδον τὸν κύριον»· καὶ τὸ μὲν ῥητὸν δοκεῖ τυποῦν τὸν νοῦν, τὸ δὲ σημαϊνόμενον οὐ τυποῖ”.

<sup>45</sup> At last, it must be noted that, as a matter of fact, it is rare to find descriptions of the vision of God in Evagrius. It seems to be, after all, an experience that is likely to take place only in the ἔσχατον—something Evagrius is likely to have not experienced, and for that reason did not describe it. Indeed, Evagrius typically refrains from describing in detail realities he has not yet experienced—this restraint is a typical feature of him.

<sup>46</sup> Evagrius Ponticus, *Scholium 17 in Psalmum 68, 29b*, SCh 614: “Βίβλος ζώντων ἢ γνῶσις ἢ τοῦ θεοῦ ἀφ’ ἧς ἐκπίπτουσιν οἱ ἀκαθάρτους ἔχοντες τὰς καρδίας· Μακάριοι γὰρ, φησὶν, οἱ καθαροὶ τῇ καρδίᾳ ὅτι αὐτοὶ τὸν θεὸν ὄψονται. Τὸ δὲ ἰδεῖν θεὸν τὸ γνώσεως τῆς αὐτοῦ ἐστὶ καταξιωθῆναι”.

<sup>47</sup> Although several instances of verbs with the stem -ὄψ do not take θεόν or κύριον as their complement, they often have a complement whose main notion is linked to spiritual reality—for instance, γνῶσιν (Evagrius Ponticus, *Sententiae ad monachos* 18, 1, TU 39/4, p. 154), φῶς (Evagrius Ponticus, *Sententiae ad monachos* 77, 2, TU 39/4, p. 159), νοεράς (Evagrius Ponticus, *Sententiae ad monachos* 133, 1, TU 39/4, p. 164), γνωστικά (Evagrius Ponticus, *Gnosticus* 1, 2, SCh 356, p. 88). There are other verbs that could have been used in this context instead of ὄψονται, such as those derived from the root βλεπ-. This strengthens the possibility that Evagrius did not use ὄψονται arbitrarily.

<sup>48</sup> Evagrius Ponticus, *Sententiae ad virginem* 54, 5-55, 3, TU 39/4, p. 151: “Δίκαιοι γὰρ κληρονομήσουσι φῶς, ἀσεβεῖς δὲ οἰκήσουσι σκότος. Παρθένοι ὀφθαλμοὶ ὄψονται κύριον. ἀκοαὶ δὲ παρθένων ἀκούσονται λόγων αὐτοῦ. Παρθένων στόμα φιλήσει νυμφίον αὐτοῦ”.





important to recognize that a more stable vision of God is only to take place in the final return of λογικοί to God.

At the point of second creation, the rational creatures (λογικοί) are believed to have ceased to be pure νοεῖς and began to have a body (σῶμα) and a soul (ψυχή), which led them to be able to see God only through intermediary reality<sup>57</sup>. As a result, it is believed that no one can see God himself—at least in the context of second creation—but rather a manifestation of God through creation<sup>58</sup>.

Human beings then became dependent on intermediaries to see God—so to speak, in an imperfect way<sup>59</sup>. For instance, they had to draw upon allegorical language to grasp supernatural reality<sup>60</sup>. After the second creation, rational creatures (λογικοί) had, by their own will, lost direct contemplation of God<sup>61</sup>.

In *Sententiae ad virginem*, Evagrius thus uses the verb ὄψονται in a syntactic structure other than ἵνα + future subjunctive of ὁράω, thereby showing the relation between purification and the vision of God expressed by a verb with the stem ὀψ-, that is, a sigmatic future<sup>62</sup>. He employs several lexemes related to vision, such as φῶς, and highlights the importance of being just and pure in order to see that light<sup>63</sup>. However, it seems that, in a context other than ἵνα + the middle future subjunctive of ὁράω like this, the verb ὄψονται is not exclusively associated with the experience of seeing God, especially when one considers *Scholium* 17 in *Psalmum* 68, 29b.

<sup>57</sup> See, for example, how Evagrius states, in *Epistula ad Melaniam* (Frankenberg 187bβ-188αα), that the created world works as a letter sent to a distant reader. For God created the material world, according to Evagrius, to communicate with the rational creatures that had departed and deviated from him.

<sup>58</sup> It is reminiscent of the very notion of the knowledge of God as described by Paul in 1Cor 13:2.

<sup>59</sup> M. Parmentier, *Evagrius of Pontus' "Letter to Melania"*, "Bijdragen" 46 (1945) p. 7.

<sup>60</sup> Parmentier, *Evagrius of Pontus' "Letter to Melania"*, p. 7. This passage cited in note 18 from Evagrius' *Epistula ad Melaniam* by Parmentier is an example of how human beings are dependent on allegorical reading in order to grasp supernatural reality. See Parmentier, *Evagrius of Pontus*, p. 5.

<sup>61</sup> Parmentier, *Evagrius of Pontus*, p. 5. See C. Stewart, *Imageless prayer and the theological vision of Evagrius*, JECS 9/2 (2001) p. 176, 188.

<sup>62</sup> Evagrius Ponticus, *Sententiae ad virginem* 54-55, TU 39/4, p. 150-151.

<sup>63</sup> See Konstantinovsky, *Evagrius Ponticus*, p. 77-89.

### 2.3. A case of ἴδωσι introduced by ὅταν in *De oratione* 10, 22-30 and vision according to *Kephalaia Gnostica* introduced by ἴδωσι

In *De oratione*, Evagrius describes how the demons operate when they see (with the verb ἴδωσι) an individual who is truly willing to pray<sup>64</sup>. It can be said that the demons, while operating within that situation, want monks to lose the fruit—so to speak—of prayer, through sadness (λυπεῖται) and disheartenment (ἄθυμεϊ). According to this extract, the demons are likely to draw the attention of the individual from praying towards things that seem to be necessary (τινῶν πραγμάτων δῆθεν ἀναγκαίων), but in fact are not. And how do they operate that? Through certain mental representations (νοήματα)<sup>65</sup>. Had Evagrius not used the lexemes νοήματα and μνήμη in this extract, it would be rather difficult to grasp how central the very idea of image—and as a result, of vision—is in this context. By cordoning off these two lexemes, it is possible to realize that while νοήματα refer to internal representations of objects, μνήμη—at least in this context—plays a role similar to a kind of internal vision. Accordingly, the verb ἴδωσι is employed in this case to refer both to natural image and natural vision, although both could be interior—and not only external to the seer<sup>66</sup>. On the one hand, it is worth noting that, in this case—as in several other instances already discussed in this article—the active aorist subjunctive of ὁράω is typically used in a temporal subordinate clause introduced by ὅταν. On the other hand, according to Nick Nicholas, it is observed that most middle-future subjunctive cases occur in purposive subordinate clauses introduced by particles such as ἵνα, and they appear primarily in the third-person plural, as ὄψωνται in *Scholium* 136 in *Proverbium* 14, 9<sup>67</sup>. Therefore, it is expected that, in a temporal subordinate clause introduced

<sup>64</sup> Evagrius Ponticus, *De oratione* 10, 22-30, SCh 589: “Ὅταν ἴδωσί σε οἱ δαίμονες προθυμούμενον ἀληθῶς προσεύξασθαι, τότε ὑποτίθενται νοήματα τινῶν πραγμάτων δῆθεν ἀναγκαίων καὶ μετὰ βραχὺ ἐπαίρουσί σου τὴν περὶ αὐτῶν μνήμην, κινουῦντες τὸν νοῦν πρὸς ζήτησιν αὐτῶν, καὶ ὡς μὴ εὐρίσκων, σφόδρα λυπεῖται καὶ ἀθυμεῖ. Ἦνίκα δὲ στή εἰς προσευχὴν, ὑπομνήσκουσιν αὐτὸν τῶν ζητητέων καὶ μνημονευθέντων, ἵνα χαυνωθεῖς ὁ νοῦς πρὸς τὴν γνῶσιν αὐτῶν, ἀπολέση τὴν ἔγκαρπον προσευχὴν”.

<sup>65</sup> See Stewart, *Imageless prayer*, p. 187; W. Harmless—R.R. Fitzgerald, *The sapphire light of the mind: The Skemmata of Evagrius Ponticus*, ThS 62 (2001) p. 514; Corrigan, *Evagrius and Gregory*, p. 164.

<sup>66</sup> Most cases of ἵνα + subjunctive are built with the active aorist subjunctive of ὁράω (stem ἰδ-). However, the middle future subjunctive occurs mainly in purposive subordinate clauses, such as those introduced by ἵνα. See Nicholas, *The passive future subjunctive*, p. 118-122.

<sup>67</sup> See Nicholas, *The passive future subjunctive*, p. 119-121.











become, so to speak, star-like (ἀστεροειδής)—an image that Evagrius used to express that state in which the νοῦς is likely to be in prayer after having reached ἀπάθεια<sup>88</sup>. By becoming star-like (ἀστεροειδής), the νοῦς is able to know immaterial reality, for there must be a likeness between knower and known, seer and seen<sup>89</sup>. In this context, the ἔσχατον rests on that state described by Evagrius in *Scholium 201 in Proverbium* 19, 20: it is not related to time, but to purity that follows practical virtues<sup>90</sup>. At the end of this process, purification is also an act of spiritual unclothing—a stripping away of corporeality. Not only does the seer νοῦς become naked, but also the seen λόγοι from irrational and material reality<sup>91</sup>. Through this epistemological transfiguration, all of creation—both rational (λογικοί) and irrational (ἄλογα)—becomes a step towards Divine knowledge. As stated by Evagrius in *Sententiae ad virginem* 54, 5-55, 3, only the eyes of the παρθένοι will see the κύριον. As a result, this process seems to be a kind of mystical union<sup>92</sup>. Therein, the bride has to be naked—that is, stripped of materiality—in order to know her Spouse, God.

### 3. An overview of μακαριότης, its relation to ἔσχατον and τέλος, and its impact on the vision of God

As attested in MS *Vaticanus Graecus* 1802 (Z, fol. 65r), the *scholium* by Evagrius mainly discussed in this article, namely *Scholium 136 in Proverbium* 14, 9, seemed to have drawn from Matthew 5, 8 while commenting on *Proverbia*, as well as A, I, K, M, and N did:

<sup>88</sup> See Evagrius Ponticus, *De malignis cogitationibus* 43, SCh 438, p. 298.

<sup>89</sup> Konstantinovsky, *Evagrius Ponticus*, p. 166-168.

<sup>90</sup> Evagrius Ponticus, *Scholium 201 in Proverbium* 19, 20, SCh 340, p. 296. “Τὸ γὰρ ἐπ’ ἐσχάτων ἐνταῦθα οὐ τὸν χρόνον σημαίνει, ἀλλὰ τὴν μετὰ τὰς πρακτικὰς ἀρετὰς καθαρότητα”.

<sup>91</sup> See Evagrius Ponticus, *Kephalaia Gnostica* 2, 62.

<sup>92</sup> See Guillaumont, *Un Philosophe au désert*, p. 391-404; Konstantinovsky, *Evagrius Ponticus*, p. 153-171.

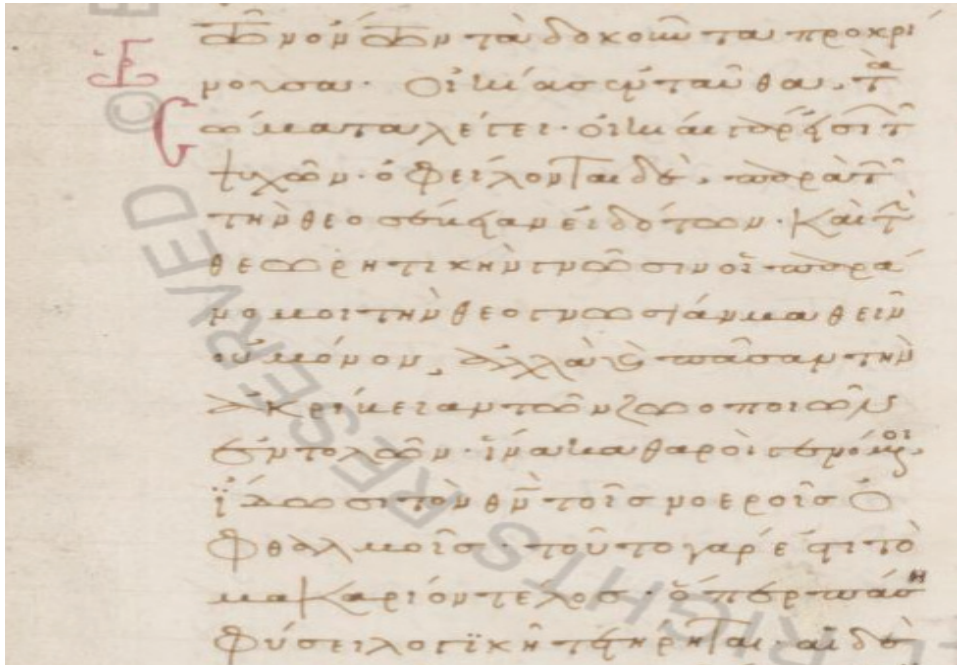


Fig. 2: MS *Vaticanus Graecus* 1802, fol. 65r<sup>93</sup>.

<sup>93</sup> Available on [https://digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS\\_Vat.gr.1802](https://digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS_Vat.gr.1802). For more information, see P. Géhin, *Évagre le Pontique. Scholies aux Proverbes. Introduction, texte critique, traduction, notes, appendices et index*, SCh 340, Paris 1987, p. 71-75. Evagrius Ponticus, *Scholium* 136 in *Proverbium* 14, 9: “Οικίας ένταῦθα τὰ σώματα λέγει· οικίαί γάρ εἰσι τῶν ψυχῶν· ὀφείλονται δέ παρὰ τῶν τήν θεοσέβειαν εἰδῶτων καί τήν θεωρητικήν γνῶσιν, οἱ παράνομοι τήν θεογνωσίαν μαθεῖν οὐ μόνον, ἀλλά καί πᾶσαν τῶν ζωοποιῶν έντολῶν· ἵνα καθαροί γενόμενοι, ἴδωσι τὸν Θεὸν τοῖς νοεροῖς ὀφθαλμοῖς· τοῦτο γάρ ἐστὶ τὸ μακάριον τέλος, ὅπερ πάση φύσει λογικῇ τετήρηται”. MS *Vaticanus Graecus* 1802, fol. 65r (Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana), consulted in digital images via the Vatican Library Digital Collections. In MS *Vaticanus Graecus* 1802, most of its *Scholia in Proverbia* are attributed to Origen through the siglum  $\Sigma$  as is also the case with *Expositio in Proverbia* PG 17, 193. Tischendorf, in turn, edited these *scholia* on the basis of MS *Patmiacus* 270, likewise attributing them to Origen, see C. Tischendorf, *Notitia editionis codicis bibliorum Sinaitici*, Leipzig 1860, p. 76-122. Only in 1939 did Hans Urs von Balthasar suggest that these *scholia* were in fact by Evagrius Ponticus, see H.U. von Balthasar, *Die hiera des Evagrius*, ZKTh 63 (1939) p. 189-191. In 1987, Paul Géhin edited these *scholia* based primarily on MS *Patmiacus* 270 and the *codices Ivirion* 38, *Ivirion* 379, *Ivirion* 676, and *Parisinus Graecus* 153, see P. Géhin, *Évagre le Pontique. Scholies aux Proverbes. Introduction, texte critique, traduction, notes, appendices et index*, SCh 340, Paris 1987. Some of the *Scholia in Proverbia* in *Vaticanus Graecus* 1802, as the one reported in this article, are slightly different from those attested in *Patmiacus* 270. These differences seem worthy of further research.

What differs MS *Vaticanus Graecus* 1802 (Z, fol. 65r) from the other testimonies is the fact that it determines the mode of seeing God as achieved by spiritual eyes, that is, τοῖς νοεροῖς ὀφθαλμοῖς<sup>94</sup>. Indeed, according to the reading of Z, the scribe who added it seems to have considered it important to highlight that this divine vision has a spiritual rather than a bodily nature, probably because there might have been readers, at that time, that would have understood this divine vision as constituted by a bodily nature<sup>95</sup>. In MS *Vaticanus Graecus* 1802 (Z, fol. 65r), as in A, I, K, M, and N, it is said that the vision of God constitutes the blessed end (τὸ μακάριον τέλος). Furthermore, according to this *scholium* in MS *Vaticanus Graecus* 1802 (Z, fol. 65r)—and in a manner consistent with what MS *Patmiacus* 270 (A, fol. 201r), I, K, M, and N attest—this μακάριον τέλος is reserved by nature (φύσει) for every rational creature (πάση λογικῇ)<sup>96</sup>. What is distinctive in MS *Vaticanus Graecus* 1802 (Z, fol. 65r), as already said, is that it is taken at face value that of God has an intellectual—or noetic—nature, so to speak. For this very reason, MS *Vaticanus Graecus* 1802 (Z, fol. 65r) seemed to have lent a spiritual and intellectual interpretation to the μακαριότητα attested in The Sermon on the Mount, especially regarding

<sup>94</sup> In this article, no attempt is made to argue that this addition—namely, τοῖς νοεροῖς ὀφθαλμοῖς—is by Evagrius Ponticus himself. On the contrary, it is clearly a later addition. The aim here is to discuss how important it may have been in the context in which it was read and how it may have contributed to its interpretation. To better understand the tradition of MS *Vaticanus graecus* 1802 and its connection to other testimonies, see P. Géhin, *Évagre le Pontique. Scholies aux Proverbes. Introduction, texte critique, traduction, notes, appendices et index*, SCh 340, Paris 1987, p. 71-75; Danezan, *Le chaînon manquant*, p. 123-152.

<sup>95</sup> According to David Michelson, in the Syriac world Babai the Great tried to erase the Origenism of the Evagrian doctrine, and the S1 version of the *Kephalaia Gnostica* bears witness to it. For Babai, the highest stage was to be the contemplation achieved within bodily existence. This is likely the reason why Evagrian metaphysics is not so evident in S1 as it is in S2, see D.A. Michelson, *Cloak, Tunic, Book, Cell: Reading Evagrius in Syriac with Babai the Great*, in: *The Library of Paradise: A History of Contemplative Reading in the Monasteries of the Church of the East*, Oxford 2022, p. 156-158. One may wonder whether this rejection of unembodied contemplation in favour of bodily contemplation also existed among Greek readers of Evagrius Ponticus. This possibility may help explain why the scribe of MS *Vaticanus Graecus* 1802 (Z) was concerned to specify the contemplation he was describing as spiritual (τοῖς νοεροῖς ὀφθαλμοῖς).

<sup>96</sup> In *Epistula Fidei* 22, Evagrius Ponticus is adamant about the relation between μακαριότης, ἔσχατον, and the τέλος, and how they are connected to immaterial knowledge (τὴν ἄυλον γνῶσιν). According to him, God Father himself is τὸ τέλος καὶ ἡ ἐσχάτη μακαριότης.

the vision of God. What is most striking in MS *Vaticanus Graecus* 1802 (Z), in turn, is the use of the instrumental dative τοῖς νοεροῖς ὀφθαλμοῖς. It appears that, on the part of the manuscript's copyist of that *scholium* as transmitted in MS *Vaticanus Graecus* 1802 (Z), it was crucial to emphasise that the vision described therein was to be realized through τοῖς νοεροῖς ὀφθαλμοῖς—that is, through spiritual rather than bodily eyes. For him, the verb ἴδωσι by itself was likely insufficient to convey the intended meaning—in contrast to what is attested not only by MS *Patmiacus* 270 (A), but also by *codices Iviron* 379 (I), *Iviron* 38 (K), *Parisinus Graecus* 153 (M), and *Iviron* 676 (N)<sup>97</sup>.

Blessedness—that is, μακαριότης—is a central concept for Evagrius, as it has been argued in this article<sup>98</sup>. Not only is this concept based on Scripture, but also on the hermeneutic tradition that includes other influential Christian writers. It seems that μακαριότης is related to notions such as the ἔσχατον and the τέλος of rational souls (λογικοί) as well as the vision of God, being deeply rooted in a spiritual interpretation of Scripture<sup>99</sup>. As Hans Urs von Balthasar stated, Evagrius was used to applying macarism as a literary formula in his writings<sup>100</sup>. According to Balthasar, this feature was so prominent in Evagrius' style that it could even be useful as a criterion for establishing authorship in disputed manuscripts<sup>101</sup>.

#### 4. A hypothesis of a *lectio difficilior* for MS *Patmiacus* 270 (A, fol. 201r)

##### 4.1. Excluding semantic differences between verbs with the stems ἰδ- (active aorist) and ὀψ- (middle future) in syntactic structures other than ἵνα + subjunctive of ὀράω: the case of *Scholium* 17 in *Psalmum* 68, 29b (CPG-2455)

Besides subordinate clauses introduced by ὅταν, in which there is no strong reason to think of a semantic difference between subjunctive

<sup>97</sup> See P. Géhin, *Évagre le Pontique. Scholies aux Proverbes. Introduction, texte critique, traduction, notes, appendices et index*, SCh 340, Paris 1987, p. 232-234.

<sup>98</sup> See Corrigan, *Evagrius and Gregory*, p. 129-132.

<sup>99</sup> See Corrigan, *Evagrius and Gregory*, p. 169-170, 193-195; Stefaniw, *Mind, Text, and Commentary Noetic Exegesis*, p. 198-217.

<sup>100</sup> Urs von Balthasar, *Die hiera des Evagrius*, p. 183. See, for example, Evagrius Ponticus, *Sententiae ad monachos* 92; Evagrius Ponticus, *De oratione* 117, 118, 120-123.

<sup>101</sup> Urs von Balthasar, *Die hiera des Evagrius*, p. 183; Evagrius Ponticus, *Sententiae ad monachos* 92; Evagrius Ponticus, *De oratione* 117, 118, 120-123.

verbs derived from ὁράω—whether the active aorist with the stem ιδ- or the middle future with the stem ὀψ—*Scholium 17 in Psalmum 68, 29b* presents a further case. Indeed, as attested in *Scholium 17 in Psalmum 68, 29b*, both ὀψονται and ιδεῖν have as their syntactic object θεὸν<sup>102</sup>. Divine vision, at least according to this *scholium*, may be expressed interchangeably either by active aorist (stem ιδ-) or middle future (stem ὀψ-) verbs of ὁράω. This extract, together with the other examples discussed in this article, arises as evidence that the possible difference between active aorist subjunctive (stem ιδ-) and middle future subjunctive (stem ὀψ-) verbs of ὁράω may occur only in the syntactic structure of ἵνα + subjunctive of ὁράω.

#### 4.2. MS *Patmiacus 270* (A, fol. 201r) as a *lectio difficilior*

If most of the manuscripts attest ἴδωσι rather than ὀψονται, why should one nevertheless advance the hypothesis that ὀψονται best fits *Scholium 136 in Proverbium 14, 9*?<sup>103</sup> Furthermore, even in the Septuagint and in the New Testament no semantic distinction can be drawn between the notion of seeing expressed by verbs derived from the active aorist and middle future of ὁράω with the stems ιδ- and ὀψ- respectively. The same holds true for the *Scholium 17 in Psalmum 68, 29b* considered here. Thus, although this semantic difference may appear to be attested in Evagrius Ponticus, it lacks corroborating evidence *apud Scriptores Ecclesiasticos* more generally, as can be seen in the *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae*. A search in the *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae* confirms that both ιδ- and ὀψ- are stems interchangeably used to express either divine or bodily vision *apud Scriptores Ecclesiasticos*, the Septuagint, and the New Testament, with the possible exception of Evagrius Ponticus. Syntactically, however, the picture is different. Rarely does the middle future subjunctive of ὁράω with the stem ὀψ- appear in a purposive clause introduced by ἵνα, as it is attested in MS *Patmiacus 270* (fol. 201r)<sup>104</sup>. In the *Thesaurus*

<sup>102</sup> Evagrius Ponticus, *Scholium 17 in Psalmum 68, 29b*: “βίβλος ζώντων ἢ γνώσις ἢ τοῦ θεοῦ ἄφ ἧς ἐκπίπτουσιν οἱ ἀκαθάρτους ἔχοντες τὰς καρδίας μακάριοι γὰρ φησὶν οἱ καθαροὶ τῇ καρδίᾳ ὅτι αὐτοὶ τὸν θεὸν ὀψονται τὸ δὲ ιδεῖν θεὸν τὸ γνώσεως τῆς αὐτοῦ ἐστὶ καταξιωθῆναι”.

<sup>103</sup> While I, K, M, N, and Z attest ἴδωσι, only A attests ὀψονται. See P. Géhin, *Évagre le Pontique. Scholies aux Proverbes. Introduction, texte critique, traduction, notes, appendices et index*, SCh 340, Paris 1987, p. 232-234.

<sup>104</sup> See note 66-67.

*Linguae Graecae*, only six occurrences of this phenomenon are found<sup>105</sup>. By contrast, the occurrences of this phenomenon with ἵνα plus ἴδωσι are so abundantly attested in the *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae* that it would be pointless to list them all<sup>106</sup>. Because of this, the following questions are raised: why a copyist would have substituted ἴδωσι for ὄψωνται in MS *Patmiacus* 270 (fol. 201r)—in a purposive clause introduced by ἵνα—if ἴδωσι is far more common in this syntactic context? And why Evagrius Ponticus himself would have used such a rare syntactic construction unless the choice was meaningful? This landscape is implausible. Given Evagrius Ponticus' highly sophisticated education, it is unlikely that he would have been indifferent to semantic differences that such a rare morphosyntactic formula might have involved<sup>107</sup>. Certainly, he would not have been unaware of how rare the formula ἵνα plus ὄψωνται is in canonical literature. In this context, it seems that a *lectio difficilior* takes place in favour of MS *Patmiacus* 270 (fol. 201r).

## 5. Conclusion

In this study, *Scholium* 136 in *Proverbium* 14, 9, as well as other passages from Evagrius' *corpus*, has been examined as evidence that, according to Evagrius, there are fundamentally two kinds of vision: a spiritual—noetic or intellectual—and a bodily—namely material—one. The former may be understood as spiritual, and, in the particular case of the syntactic structure ἵνα + subjunctive of ὀράω, it appears that middle future verbs (stem ὀψ-) are strongly connected to the idea of a higher and spiritual way of seeing (ὄψωνται in the case of MS *Patmiacus* 270). The latter, in turn, may be understood as material and, in different kinds of syntactic structures, may be expressed interchangeably either by the active aorist (stem ἴδ-) or by the middle future of ὀράω (stem ὀψ-), except for the case of *Scholium* 136 in *Proverbium* 14, 9. In turn, given the rarity of the structure ἵνα + middle future subjunctive of ὀράω (with

<sup>105</sup> See Pseudo-Clementina, *Epitome de gestis S. Petri praemetaphrastica, dicta «altera»* 174, 2; Pseudo-Epiphanius Constantiensis, *Homilia in assumptionem Christi* 4, 36-44; Romanus Melodus, *Cantica* 33, 22; Isaias Gazaecus, *Sermo pro iis qui saeculo renuntiarunt* 2, 38-39.

<sup>106</sup> In Evagrius Ponticus' Greek *corpus*, there are plenty of examples of active aorist verbs of ὀράω (stem ἴδ-) in the subjunctive, including cases of purpose subordinate clauses introduced by ἵνα, as in Evagrius Ponticus, *Practicus* 62, 2, SCh 171, p. 644 and Evagrius Ponticus, *Scholium* 79 in *Proverbium* 6, 20-22, SCh 340, p. 178-180 attest.

<sup>107</sup> See notes 10, 12 and 26.

the stem ὄψ), it makes no sense to assume either that Evagrius would have used this structure unintentionally or that the scribe would have altered ἴδωσι to ὄψωνται, since a scribe would have been prone to use the far more common form, namely ἴδωσι<sup>108</sup>. There seems to be, in this case, a *lectio difficilior* in favour of the reading ὄψωνται.

MS *Vaticanus Graecus* 1802 (Z, fol. 65r), in turn, helps illuminate the concept of vision associated with μακαριότης in *Scholium* 136 in *Proverbium* 14, 9. It is particularly striking that Z attests the instrumental dative τοῖς νοεροῖς ὀφθαλμοῖς to the verb ἴδωσι. In effect, this lacks in A, I, K, M, and N. Why would it happen? It seems odd that the scribe of MS *Vaticanus Graecus* 1802 (Z, fol. 65r) would have written meaningless τοῖς νοεροῖς οφθαλμοῖς to characterize the way ἴδωσι is achieved. In effect, why would the scribe be concerned about characterizing that mode of seeing in this way? Was he afraid of the possibility of someone reading that *scholium* as describing a bodily vision of God, and therefore had to specify that vision as achieved by spiritual eyes (τοῖς νοεροῖς οφθαλμοῖς)? With this instrumental dative, namely τοῖς νοεροῖς ὀφθαλμοῖς, the scribe makes clear one of the main thesis of *Scholium* 136 in *Proverbium* 14, 9: the type of vision that provides blessedness (μακαριότης)—the τέλος of every rational being—has a spiritual nature. The Evagrian vision of God, in general, represents the ultimate τέλος available only to those who have undergone ascetical purification. In order to see God, one must be stripped of material bonds, represented by the material parts of the soul, θυμός and ἐπιθυμητικόν, and elevate them to the noetic level<sup>109</sup>. Only after this process of unclenching, so to speak, will the νοῦς be naked and able to see God without intermediaries—whether linguistic or ontological.

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<sup>108</sup> This might have been the reason why P. Géhin adopted the reading of I, K, M, N, and Z rather than A. See P. Géhin, *Évagre le Pontique. Scholies aux Proverbes. Introduction, texte critique, traduction, notes, appendices et index*, SCH 340, Paris 1987, p. 232, 234.

<sup>109</sup> See Corrigan, *Evagrius and Gregory*, p. 159.

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