

On the 17th of January, the holy Church commemorates our venerable and God-bearing Father ANTHONY the Great.¹



Saint Anthony the Great

Anthony (Antony),² our great father, was born in Egypt, during the reign of the most impious Decius (249-251). His parents were Christians who raised him in piety. He was modest, shy, and honest. He had no dealings with others apart from his kinsfolk. He did not wish to learn letters, because of the rough behavior of the lads at school. By nature he was guileless and had no desire to keep company with other children or engage in their games. His desire was to conduct his life according to those words that have described the Patriarch Jacob; that is, that he was a simple, natural, and unaffected man, dwelling in a house [Gen. 25:27]. Anthony did not wish to have anxieties, concerns, and

confusion. He did have a desire to attend church frequently with his parents,

¹ The complete Life of this saint was recorded in Greek by Saint Athanasios the Great, Patriarch of Alexandria (328-373). His Life was also recorded in Greek by Saint Symeon the Metaphrastes, which text was rendered in simpler Greek by Agapios the Cretan, who published it in his *Neon Paradeison*, which was incorporated into *The Great Synaxaristes* (in Greek). Collateral sources in English include: Saint Athanasios, *Life of Antony*, Nicene, 2nd Ser., IV:195-221, translated by Rev. H. Ellershaw, edited by P. Schaff and H. Wace; Carolinne White's *Early Christian Lives: The Life of Antony by Athanasius*, pp. 8-70; *The Life of Saint Anthony*, Ancient Christian Writers, No. 10, translated by Robert T. Meyer, Ph.D.; *Early Christian Biographies*, FC, 15:134-216, translated by Sister Mary Emily Keenan, S.C.N.; *The Paradise of the Fathers*, Vol. 1, translated from the Syriac by E. A. Wallis Budge; and H. J. Thurston & D. Attwater, *Butler's Lives of the Saints*. For further reading, see also the sayings of Saint Anthony in "170 Texts on Sainly Life" and "Directions on Life in Christ," from *Early Fathers from the Philokalia*, translated by E. Kadloubovsky and G. E. H. Palmer.

² There is no justification for the spelling "Anthony," other than its current popular usage as a variant of Antony or Antonius. Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, Volume 1, records that the name comes from *ana*, above, and *tenens*, holding, meaning one who holds on to higher things and despises worldly things.

to whom he was obedient. He listened attentively to the sacred readings, keeping in his heart the exhortations and admonitions from which he benefitted. He was neither idle in his parents' house, nor negligent toward them, nor did he despise them as they aged. Though he was reared amid moderate affluence, he did not pester his parents for varied or luxurious fare, nor was this a source of pleasure to him. He did not trouble them for costly array or other items which youths generally ask of their parents. He was satisfied with what his home offered him and sought nothing further. His manner of life showed discernment and understanding. His parents had no need to reprimand him, but he rather became a teacher to others. His attitude toward them was that of a man according honor to his parents, for which they treated him as the household steward.

When Anthony was about eighteen or twenty, his parents reposed. He was left with the care of not only his parental estate but also one little sister. Now it was not six months after the death of his parents that he continued his perfect attendance at church. On one such occasion, as he was going to church, he communed with himself as he walked, and reflected upon how the apostles left all and followed the Christ, even as did the martyrs and other venerable saints. He then meditated upon those words in the Acts of the holy apostles, about how the first Christians sold their possessions and brought and laid them at the apostles' feet for distribution to the poor [Acts 4:34, 35]. He thought how great was the blessing of such, and how great a hope in the heavens [Col. 1:5] was laid up for them who had in this wise obeyed the voice of Christ.

Saint Anthony's Call to Asceticism

As he entered the church, it happened that the Gospel was being read. The words of Jesus to the rich men sounded in his ears: "If thou art willing to be perfect, go and sell thy possessions, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come and keep on following Me [Mt. 19:21]." Upon hearing this admonition, the holy Anthony perceived those words of the sacred Gospel as a message to himself. After reflecting upon these words, he deemed them not to have been pronounced as a matter of chance, but instead that the righteous notion he had about the apostles might be confirmed. He forthwith departed from the church and donated to his neighbors, those who were poor, all of the beautiful property which he had inherited from his forefathers. He possessed three hundred fields, extremely fertile and productive. He shared them out among the poor villagers, lest any should harbor a grudge against him or his sister. He did not wish that either he or his sister should be encumbered or troubled with the cares of the land's cultivation, but that they might labor unhindered in spiritual contests. The remainder of the movable estate and possessions was sold. Anthony received

a considerable sum of money from the sale, which proceeds went to the poor. He did, however, retain a sufficient amount for the maintenance of his sister, for he deemed her more vulnerable on account of her gender and age.

On another occasion, when it was Sunday, Anthony went to church. He inclined his ear carefully to hear what would come forth for him. Then the Gospel words of the Lord to His disciples were read aloud: "Do not become anxious for the morrow [Mt. 6:34]." He thereupon went out and gave away among the poor whatever else remained. He spoke to his sister lovingly, regarding truth and the fear of God. He brought her around to his way of thinking, that is, renunciation of the world for the sake of Christ. He then entrusted her to the care of certain virgins living there. Anthony then began his ascetic course in a place close to his house, where he built a cell. At that time, there were neither monasteries in Egypt nor any who knew of the inner desert. If one wished to give attention to his soul, he practised the ascetical life alone, usually not far from his village. Anthony therefore betook himself a sufficient distance from the village, so that he might be apart from the habitation and conversation of men.

Now there was in the neighboring village a certain blessed solitary who had taken up the ascetical life from his youth. Anthony had observed this man and desired to emulate his conduct and deeds; for "it is good to be zealous in a good thing always [Gal. 4:18]." If he heard of any other righteous men pursuing such a mode of life, as a wise bee which hovers and rests over flowers, Anthony went and strenuously sought out such persons. He would pay his respects and then obtain the gift of honey, whether it be spiritual instructions or the manner of asceticism of these hermits. He disciplined himself, and his resolve grew daily, lest his thoughts should wander to his previous inheritance and the remembrance of his kin. He directed all his energies to spiritual practises that he might be a pure offering to God. He also labored with his own hands, because he heard the apostle say, "This we commanded you, that if anyone is not willing to work, neither let him eat [2 Thess. 3:10]." With a small amount from the wages he received, he provided for himself, while the remainder he donated to the poor. He prayed continually, for he had heard the injunction to "be praying unceasingly [1 Thess. 5:17]." He also gave all his attention at the reading of the Scriptures, lest anything should escape him. Thereupon, not one word fell to the ground. He retained everything in his memory, which came to serve him in place of books.

Thus Anthony found "grace in the presence of God and men [Lk. 2:52]." He was beloved by all and loved all. He subjected himself in sincerity to those righteous anchorites he visited, learning thoroughly where each surpassed him in zeal and discipline. He hearkened to them in everything and

showed them much love and reverence. If he were delayed in visiting them, their love was such that they would send after him; thus, they revealed their anxious care for him. They perceived in Anthony that he was the object of God's mercy. They understood that he was to be perfected as a chosen vessel. They also observed how he benefitted by trafficking in the riches of heaven. Each one of these righteous fathers therefore took him under his wing, according to the measure of the gift and power bestowed upon him by God. Consequently, Anthony carefully heeded those whom he visited, that he might imitate their virtues. He observed the graciousness and courtesy of one, and the constancy and unceasing prayer of another. He took knowledge of another's freedom from anger and another's loving-kindness. He attentively watched those who kept vigil and noticed their endurance and perseverance. He noted how another studied assiduously and with devotion. He regarded with respect another for his fasting, sleeping on the ground, and undergoing other hardships. He looked with pleasure upon those who were meek, even-tempered, and forbearing. In all these virtuous men, he noted their piety toward Christ and the mutual love which animated all. Thus filled with the knowledge of their pursuits and manners, he returned to his own retreat of philosophy and discipline. Once there, he would apply himself and assimilate as his own the qualities of each. He wished to possess in himself the virtues of all. With men of his own age, he was not given to engaging in any rivalry, but was concerned only that he should not be second to them in higher things. He in no wise had high thoughts about himself nor vied with another. He contrived in every way not to give offense. He toiled in his ascetic labors in such a way as not to make others envious of him; rather, they rejoiced and gave thanks to God Who wrought mightily in him. He was called by them a lover of God, that is, Theophilos. Some loved him as a brother, and others as a son.

Saint Anthony Strives with the Demons

The devil, who hates and envies what is good, could not endure seeing such eagerness and diligence in one so young. He saw Anthony's perfection and therefore endeavored to war against the saint, in a manner he was wont to effect against other young men. He first attempted to thwart his asceticism with the remembrance of the care and concern of his little sister, hoping by this anxiety and solicitude to shake his settled purpose. He whispered to Anthony about his former wealth, as he attempted to implant in Anthony a love of money and glory. He reminded him of those sweet and delightful things of the table and the relaxation and enjoyment of the flesh. He warned him of the toil and suffering entailed with striving for virtue and the rough path that lay ahead, involving many years of hardship. He then called to Anthony's mind the infirmity of the flesh and bodily sicknesses, and other

such ailments that might issue from unchecked austerities. He tried to sow all these images in his mind that he might cut off his eagerness and enthusiasm. The devil, however, saw for himself that he was vanquished by the great faith and firm resolve of the venerable one. Though the devil was confounded by Anthony's prayers, he still had confidence in his own munitions, that is, in the weapons which are in the navel of man's belly. These he was wont to employ as his initial snares against the young. He disturbed and harassed the young man with all kinds of recollections, so that even the onlookers could perceive the struggle which was going on between Anthony and the adversary. But Anthony proved a strong combatant in that hard war of the flesh and the belly. The adversary not only attempted to put Anthony to the test and trouble him during the night, but during the day as well. The enemy began suggesting and scattering the seeds of unclean thoughts and carnal desires, but the saint countered such temptations with prayer. Ofttimes the thrice-accursed one would appear as a beguiling woman in his attempt to goad Anthony and draw him into sin. Thus he utilized every ploy to seduce and vanquish the invincible, but his craftiness was to no profit. The saint invoked the Christ, with Whom he filled his mind with the nobility inspired by Him and considered the spirituality suited for man's soul. Thus, with prayer and fasting, he quenched that coal of the enemy's deceit and remained wholly chaste. Now Anthony also employed anger and turned his thoughts to the everlasting fire and the gnawing worm. He set such thoughts in array against his adversary, and thereby passed through that fiery temptation unscathed. Though the foe fancied himself to be like God, now he was put to shame by a stripling of a man. The devil who boasted himself against flesh and blood was put to flight by a man in the flesh. This is because the grace of the Lord was working in Anthony. Verily the Lord, Who for our sakes put on flesh, gave the body victory over the devil. Therefore, whenever one repeated the triumphs wrought for Anthony, the saint would say, "I toiled, . . . yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me [1 Cor. 15:10]." Again, all those involved in this struggle should cite these words of the apostle.

The serpent then, seeing that by means of suggestive thoughts alone he was unable to overthrow Anthony, gnashed his teeth. He threatened to show the righteous Anthony his outward form, thinking to terrify him by his exterior appearance. He therefore assumed the likeness of that which revealed his blackened nature. He appeared to Anthony as a swarthy and malignant-looking child. Though the guileful devil did not ply Anthony with thoughts, yet he fawned and cringed as it were before him. He lamented at his being worsted, declaring, "I shall bring thee low, even as I have many." The saint then made over himself the sign of the Cross, which the enemy observed and from which he drew back, saying, "Many were they whom I have deceived

and cast down, but in warring against thee I have proved weak." Anthony then inquired, "Who art thou who speakest thus with me?" The creature answered with a plaintive voice, "I am the spirit of whoredom, and have taken upon me incitements which lead to it against the young. I am called the spirit of lust. I have deceived and agitated many who wished to live soberly. I have attacked thee, but I was powerless before thee and thy works. I have persuaded many to return to their former foul lives who had sought to live chastely. I am he on account of whom also the prophet reproved those who had fallen, saying, 'They have gone astray in a spirit of whoredom [Hos. 4:12].' For it has been by me that they have stumbled. I am also the one who has so often troubled thee, but thou hast overthrown me." The venerable Anthony then gave thanks to the Lord and said to the demon, "I am not afraid of thee any longer. Nor do I assign thee any consequence, since thou art benighted in mind as some infirm and contemptible child. Henceforth, 'the Lord is my helper, and I shall look down upon mine enemies [Ps. 117:7].'" After the devil heard this, he shuddered and forthwith took flight, not daring to approach the holy man again.

This was Saint Anthony's first encounter against the devil, or rather this was the triumph of Christ working in Anthony; for Christ "condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the ordinance of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh, but according to the spirit [Rom. 8:3, 4]." The holy man, however, neither relaxed nor neglected his rule. He knew from the Scriptures that the ways of the enemy were diverse and wily. He knew that though the enemy had been vanquished for a time, he would not desist. He would look for other opportunities or some small negligence on Anthony's part to gain a foothold and overwhelm him. Saint Peter clearly taught that our "adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he might devour [1 Pe. 5:8]." Anthony also learned that we must put on the full armor of God, in order to stand against the wiles of the devil [Eph. 6:11]. The devices of the evil one are manifold. Reflecting upon this, Anthony reckoned that although the devil had not deceived his heart by bodily pleasure, still the adversary would lay snares to catch him by other means; for the devil's love is sin. Anthony thereupon decided to add toil to toil and mortify his flesh and keep it in subjection, lest haply having conquered on one side, he should be dragged down on the other. He therefore engaged upon a more severe mode of life. His readiness to serve God made every labor easy to bear. Many marvelled at how Anthony was able to endure toils easily. He was tireless in equipping himself for battle, that is, training himself with fasting, vigils, and every imaginable hardship. He endured all this preparation that he might be found ready, should the tempter attack from another flank. On account of his zeal, he participated in all-night vigils, not once or twice,

but many times. He ate once daily, after the setting of the sun, or sometimes once in two days, and often even in four. His fare consisted of only bread and salt. His beverage was a limited amount of water. As for oil, it was not part of his diet. Of flesh and wine, it is superfluous even to speak. His bedding consisted of one rush mat, but he many times slept on the bare ground. He would not anoint himself with oil. He observed that it made the body soft and the members effeminate. He thought that the use of oil would hardly cause young men's bodies to grow strong, if they were being softened by oil. He advised young men to mortify their flesh as much as possible, saying that, whenever the pleasures of the body were diminished, then the soul was empowered, according to the apostle: "Whenever I am weak, then I am strong [2 Cor. 12:10]." Thought Anthony's struggles and contests were long in duration, he daily had renewed zeal, as one who had just begun the contest. He came to the conclusion that renunciation and retirement from the world and progress in virtue should not be measured by time, but by desire and fixity of purpose. He therefore took no account of the time that he had passed in the desert. Each day he began his life of asceticism (askesis) anew, as he had done at the beginning. He remembered the words of the apostle and would recite them: "Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting the things which are behind, and stretching forth to those things which are before, I pursue toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus [Phil. 3:13, 14]." The holy man was also mindful of that spoken of by Prophet Elias, "As the Lord of Hosts before Whom I stand lives, today I will appear before him (Ahab) [3 Kgs. (1 Kgs.) 18:15]," which words incited him to be worthy to stand before God daily. For he observed that in saying "today," the prophet did not reckon the time that had passed. But daily, as though he were ever commencing, he endeavored to appear fit before God, being pure in heart and ever ready to submit to His will alone. He thought that the manner and acts of the monk should be as one alien to this world but akin to the angels. Thus did the saint master and govern himself.

Saint Anthony Lives in the Sepulchers and Contends with Demons

Anthony then went out to the sepulchers. They were located some distance from the village. He entered and took up his abode therein that he might continue his ascetic struggle. He bade an acquaintance of his to bring him a morsel of bread from time to time. Anthony then had this same man shut and lock the door of that sepulcher, leaving him alone to pray. The enemy became frenetic at this juncture, surmising that in but a short time Anthony would fill the desert with the ascetic discipline. Thereupon, the devil came one night with a company of his minions. They administered such a thrashing to the saint that he was left lying on the ground from his wounds and excessive pain. He was half-dead, with little breath remaining in him.

Indeed, the enemy so cut him with stripes that Anthony lay on the ground speechless from the excessive pain. He later said that the pain inflicted had been so excessive that no blows inflicted by man could ever have caused him such torment.



Saint Anthony at the Sepulcher

Nevertheless, by the providence of God—for the Lord never overlooks those who hope in Him—the next day, his acquaintance came with the allotted loaves. He opened the door to the sepulcher, only to find Anthony lying on the ground as one dead. That man raised up Anthony and carried him to the main church in their village, and laid him upon the ground. When his kindred and neighbors learned of his brutal beating, they came running in grief. They then prepared to conduct funeral rites for Anthony. No small number of people collected to pay

their respects, as he was laid out in their midst, and they all sat around him. Anthony, however, was in a deep sleep that was restful and sweet.

At about midnight, the saint regained consciousness. He looked about and saw that all of them were slumbering, with the exception of that acquaintance who attended to him. He had been sitting by Anthony's pillow and watching over him. Anthony then nodded at him, making a gesture that he carry him to the sepulcher without waking anyone. He said to him quietly, "Do this charity, lest these people should believe that the evil one still



Saint Anthony is Attacked by Demons

has power and they become afraid to counter him." That man hearkened and carried Anthony to the sepulcher and shut the door after him. As Anthony lay there, he kept constant in prayer. He would have stood, but he had not the strength from the wounds he sustained from the demons. After he had prayed, he said with a shout, "Where are you? Here am I, Anthony. I shall flee not from your blows; for even if you should inflict more wounds, nothing would separate me from the love of Christ [Rom. 8:35]." Then he began chanting,

"Though a host should array itself against me, my heart shall not be afraid; though war should rise up against me, in this have I hoped [Ps. 26:3]."

The fierce and savage enemy, marvelling not only at the words of the ascetic but also that he dared to return to the sepulcher, summoned his hounds. He emitted smoke and addressed them, saying, "Do you see how this insolent fellow challenges us? He treats us with contempt. Neither the spirit of fornication nor the pain of physical blows overcomes him. His heart is not afraid. Let us contrive a way to attack him in another fashion." Now changes of form and creating apparitions are easy for the enemy. The phantasms take on such a character that they seem real to the beholder. The demons then caused a phantom earthquake to rock the sepulcher, making such a din that it seemed to rend asunder the four walls of the chamber. Holes then appeared in the walls, and all kinds of different demons poured forth in the shapes of wild animals and reptiles. They filled the saint's chamber with specters in diverse forms—lions, bears, leopards, bulls, serpents, wolves, vipers, and other such creatures. According to the nature of each of these species, they made noises and moved according to the assumed shape. The lion began roaring as when it is about to slay; the bull was ready and tossing its horns to gore Anthony; the panther was preparing to pounce; the snakes and vipers were writhing and hissing, appearing ready to strike; the scorpion was scuttling into position to sting him; and the wolves seemed to be rushing at him. The noises and the faces of these creatures were terrible, but Anthony was in no wise perturbed. Though the saint groaned as he was pummeled and goaded by them, they could in no wise slay him. He lay there watching them and, although he experienced worse pain, still his mind was unafraid and vigilant. So unshaken in his soul was he that he then laughed and mocked the demons, saying, "There is no power in you. If there had been any power in you, it would have sufficed had only one of you come. But since the Master has deprived you of your strength, you attempt to terrify me by your numbers. Indeed, a proof of your weakness is that you take the shapes of brute beasts." Then with very great boldness of heart, he said to them, "If you have received authority against me, be not negligent. Delay not to attack. But if you are unable to do anything, why trouble yourselves in vain? For faith in our Lord is a seal and a wall of safety to us." The demons then gnashed their teeth against him, because they were mocking themselves rather than him.

Now the Lord was not forgetful of the venerable Anthony's contests, but instead was at hand to help him in his wrestling. The saint then looked up and beheld the roof, as it were, to have been opened. A ray of light came down upon him. Then the demons suddenly dispersed and vanished, the pain of his body forthwith ceased, and the chamber was again whole. There was

no sign or trace of the wounds sustained by Anthony. He perceived the divine visitation and the help of the Lord. After he recovered somewhat and rejoiced in that revelation, he lifted up his voice and entreated the Lord, saying, "O Lord, I give thanks to Thee for Thy gracious help. Where wert Thou, O my most sweet Jesus? Why didst Thou not appear at the beginning to halt my pain and tribulations?" And a voice came to him: "Anthony, I was here, but I waited to look upon thy fight. Therefore, since thou hast endured and triumphed, not being worsted or broken with sadness in thy tribulations, I will ever be a succor to thee. I will make thy name known throughout the world." After he had heard this, Anthony arose and prayed. He received such strength that he perceived that he had more power in his body than formerly. He was then about thirty-five years old.

Saint Anthony Crosses the Nile for Solitude in the Desert

The following morning, Anthony departed from the sepulcher. He went forth with even greater love for God, and increased zeal and commitment. He went to see the ancient elder, the solitary who dwelt by the side of the village. Anthony attempted to persuade him to accompany him into the desert. Though he beseeched the old man, the latter declined and asked to be excused. He put forth as his reasons the infirmity of old age and that there was no custom of monks living in the desert. Anthony did not press him, but instead rose up and prayed with him. By their joint prayers, he hoped that God might make blessed the path that lay before him. Afterward, Anthony went alone into the desert. As he went toward the mountains, the enemy followed after him and looked for an opportunity to diminish his zeal. After traversing a great distance, to the edge of the desert, Anthony grew tired. It was then that the enemy began contending with him. In his attempt to thwart the ascetic, he projected the illusion of a large silver plate cast down in the road. The blessed man perceived this was another wile of the evil one. He then said, "The evil one wishes to do me harm by means of this great plate. Indeed, a silver plate in the desert! How did it come to be here? This road is not a frequented path. There is no trace of any wayfarer. There are no habitations nearby. This is not the ground of thieves. If it spilled out from someone's baggage, something this large could hardly have dropped and lain here unnoticed. Moreover, the owner would have returned looking for it. He certainly would have discovered it gleaming in this desolate place. This must be the handiwork of the enemy. Thou shalt not, O adversary, pervert my mind or mock my resolve by means of this silver. Let it go with thee into perdition!" As Anthony brought his words to a close, the silver plate vanished, leaving in its place smoke.

Anthony thereupon proceeded on the path. The evil one then showed him some gold littering the ground. This time, the sighting of gold was real.

The saint fell into deep thought. "What is this? A lump of gold scattered in the way? Is this a trick of the devil or is it temptation from divine power, that God—may He be blessed!—might try me by real gold and prove me before the evil one?" Though Anthony marvelled at the quantity, he utterly disdained it and was not overthrown. He passed it by as though he were going over fire. He uttered a prayer and signed himself with the sign of the Cross. He did not turn to gaze upon it, but dashed off that he might then lose sight of it. Afterward, neither he could say, nor could we know, whence that gold came.

The saint was then more determined than ever. He came to the mountains, where he discovered a deserted and ancient fortress on the far side of the river. It had been so long abandoned that it was infested with all kinds of creeping things, many of them venomous, on the other side of the river; he crossed over to it and dwelt there. The reptiles, as though someone were chasing them, immediately left that habitation. The saint barricaded the entrance with stones and dwelt within that walled stronghold, where he laid in a supply of bread every six months. The Egyptians had the custom of baking bread every six months, since at one time they make enough bread for a six month's supply. The Thebans find that the bread often remains unspoiled in the dry desert air for a whole year. There was water in the place, so he took up his abode, as if in a shrine, alone, for one year. Anthony never went forth, nor did he look upon any who passed by. Thus he was a long time training himself. His solitariness was such that when he took in his bread supply through the roof twice yearly, he did not converse with those who brought provisions to him. Thus, he made his abode for many years in that remote place, far from any inhabitants. Those of his acquaintances who did come to him, he would in no wise admit within the fortress. They would remain outside for one or two days. When they strained their ears, they would hear the din of a mighty multitude of people or confused sounds, like that of clamoring and lamenting men. Among the shrieking sounds, they could discern voices saying, "Begone from our habitation! What dost thou want in this desert? Thou canst not endure our assaults and attacks." At first, those outside the fortress had the impression that there were some men quarreling with Anthony. They thought that men had entered through the roof. They went around the fortress and found a small opening in the wall. They went up with ladders and peered through, only to find the holy man alone. They became frightened, accounting the noise to be that of demons warring against him. In their dread, they called out to Anthony. The blessed man came to the door and spoke to them graciously, saying, "Be not afraid, beloved, of these noises and conjured-up specters. The devils are wont to act thus before those who are timid. Seal yourselves rather with the sign of the Cross and return to your homes with boldness and faith in God. Leave these creatures to play and

make laughingstocks of themselves." They therefore fortified themselves, making the sign of the Cross, and departed. The saint was left unharmed by the demons. He was not wearied by the struggle, but rather he gained strength and courage through heavenly visions and the defeat of his foes. Now the report of this occurrence reached his friends and acquaintances. Thereupon, they began to come periodically to see if he were dead or alive. When they arrived outside, where they wished to be, they would strain their ears for any sound from within. Then they would hear Anthony chanting melodiously: "Let God arise and let His enemies be scattered, and let them that hate Him flee from before His face. As smoke vanisheth, so let them vanish; as wax melteth before the fire, so let sinners perish at the presence of God [Ps. 67:1, 2]." And then, "All the nations compassed me round about, and by the name of the Lord I warded them off [Ps. 117:10]."

The Saint Becomes a Father of Monks

The saint passed twenty years at the fortress, seldom seen by any human. He had not exited in all that time nor visited with anyone. With the passage of time, his fame reached other solitaries in Egypt. Monks, seculars, and men of distinction came in large numbers to see him. Some monks came who were committed to emulating his deeds, while others were wishful to imitate his discipline. Suffering laity came that he might pray over them and heal them. They called out to him, but he answered them not. His friends also came and forcefully wrenched off and broke down the door, removing it and the wall of rocks. Then Anthony, as from a shrine or divine sanctuary, came forth as one initiated in the mysteries and filled with the Spirit of God. This was the first time in twenty years that he was seen outside of the fortress. The sight of him, like unto an angel of light, inspired wonder in all. Those who knew him noted that he had the same frame and weight as he had before his retirement. They observed his dignified bearing and the beauty of his countenance, which had not altered. He was neither fat or flabby, like a man who had been without exercise, nor lean or emaciated from fasting and striving with the demons. His body had not been weakened, and his understanding suffered no enfeeblement. Anthony beheld the large concourse of people and was not disturbed. What purity of mind! Frivolity and pleasure did not make him burst out laughing. The thought of past sins or grief or dejection did not cause him to frown. The high praise of those present did not lift him up with conceit. Neither did he feel any elation upon being saluted by so many. His voluntary solitude had not rendered him uncivil. Daily strife with the evil adversaries had not brutalized him. His mind was calm, guided by reason, and his attitude was equable in all situations. The people came forward with their petitions. He showed no irritability or impatience or anger. With the living God working in him, he was in a placid and thoughtful state,

as he listened to many who were suffering terribly. By the hand of Anthony, the Lord healed them, delivering both those afflicted with bodily ailments and cleansing others from unclean spirits. God also granted grace to Anthony's speech. He consoled the sorrowing and distressed, and he restored peace and unity to those set at variance. Those who were afflicted became long-suffering, the haughty became humble, the arrogant were brought low. The saint exhorted them and would say that nothing—neither kin or possessions or our lives—was to be esteemed of value but the love of Christ. He urged them to remember the good things to come and the loving-kindness of God toward us 'Who indeed spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all [Rom. 8:32].' He then said, "How much more reasonable is it for us who have tasted and known such divine grace to deliver up our lives on behalf of our own souls?" The holy man persuaded many to embrace the solitary life, which resulted in cells arising in the mountains. Therefore, the desert was colonized by monks, who came forth from their own people, and enrolled themselves for citizenship in the heavens.

On another occasion, when the blessed man needed to visit the brethren, he was obliged to cross the Arsenoitic Canal. It was named after the city of Arsinoë and linked the Nile and Lake Moeris, but it was full of crocodiles. The saint uttered a prayer while in the boat. All those with him passed over and remained unmolested. They also returned safely. The saint then returned to his monastery, struggling valiantly as he had previously. By his frequent discourses, he increased the eagerness and zeal of those who were already monks and drew many others to take up that life and discipline. Thus, the monasteries multiplied under his fatherly affection and guidance. He therefore became their holy father and hegumen.

The Saint Gives a Discourse to the Monastics

Then on one of those days, when the brethren had assembled, they besought the holy man to speak to them words of salvation. He spoke to them in the Egyptian tongue, that is, Coptic, as follows: "Sufficient are the Scriptures for our instruction, but it is a good thing to encourage one another in the Faith with soul-saving words. Therefore you, as children, carry that which you know to your father; and I, as your elder, shall share with you what knowledge and experience have taught me.

"Let this be the first rule for you and the common aim of all of you, my children, that none should weaken or become fainthearted in his commitment to this ascetic way of life he has chosen. Let no one say, 'I have lived in this ascetic discipline for a long time.' Rather, each should strive to renew his earnestness and zeal daily, as if he were just starting out. Consider our human life and its shortness when compared to the ages to come. Our time here is as nothing when compared to everlasting life." The holy man

whom we do not wish. Why then should we not give them up for the sake of virtue, that we may inherit even a kingdom?

"Therefore, let the desire of possession take hold of no one, for what gain is it to acquire these things which we cannot take with us? Why not rather pursue those things which we can take away with us—that is, love, charity, sober-mindedness, righteousness, justice, temperance, fortitude, understanding, faith in Christ, freedom from wrath, hospitality? If we come to obtain these virtues, we shall find them before us preparing a welcome in the land of the meek.

"Let no man make light of these things, especially if he considers that he is himself a servant of the Lord, and owes service to the Master. Therefore, as a servant, he would not dare to say, 'Since I labored yesterday, I need not work today.' A servant does not count up the times of past service and then claim rest for them that he might be released from the tasks that lie ahead. No, even as it is written in the Gospel, he waits on his lord.³ He daily shows readiness to please his lord, lest he should incur great loss and injury. Let us therefore persevere, knowing that the Lord shall not pardon us for the sake of the past if we end in negligence. We have heard the Prophet Ezekiel speak of this, saying, 'When the righteous turns away from his righteousness and commits a trespass, and dies in the trespass he has committed, he shall even die in it [Ezek. 18:26; cf. 3:20].' Bring to mind also Judas, who undermined all his previous toil in one night [Jn. 6:71, 72].

"Therefore, my children, let us hold fast to our ascetic discipline. Let not carelessness creep in. Know this: the Lord is our fellow worker. Even as it is written: 'We know that to those who love God all things work together for good, to those who are called according to purpose [Rom. 8:28].' That we might not succumb to indolence and negligence, let us ponder on the apostle's words: 'I die daily [1 Cor. 15:31].' For if we too should live in this manner, we shall not sin. The meaning therefore is that, as we rise day by day, we should think that we shall not tarry in this life till evening; and again, when about to lie down to sleep, we should not assume that we shall rise up on the morrow. For our life is naturally uncertain and unpredictable. We should understand that God's providence governs our lives insofar as it is measured out to us daily. If we are disposed to carry on our daily life as our last day, we would neither fall into sin, nor lust for anything. We would not bear any grudges or stay angry. We would not heap up treasures here on earth. After all, to one who lives each day with the expectation of death, what is wealth? We would forgive all things to men. Even our desire of women or any other carnal lust would be extinguished. We would deem it transitory and turn away

³ Cf. Lk. 12:35-47; Lk. 17:7-10.

from it as past and gone. We would be thinking of the day of judgment, holding in our mind's eye that coming final retribution. For the fear of judgment and dread of punishment withers the lusts of the flesh and dissipates evil desire.

"Since we have already begun and have set out in the way of virtue, let us strive the more that we may attain those things that are before. Let no one turn to the things behind, as did Lot's wife [Gen. 19:26], especially since the Lord has said, 'No one, having put his hand upon the plow, and looking to the things behind, is fit for the kingdom of God [Lk. 9:62].' To look back means nought else but to feel regret, and to be once more worldly-minded. But fear not to hear of the word 'virtue,' nor be astonished at the name. For it is not far from us, nor is it outside ourselves, but it is within us, and is easy if only we are willing. That they may get knowledge, the Greeks live abroad and cross the sea. But we have no need to depart from home for the sake of the kingdom of the heavens, nor to cross great watery expanses for the sake of virtue. The Lord has already told us, 'The kingdom of God is within you [Lk. 17:21].' Therefore we need only to will perfection, since it is within our power and is developed by us. Who can doubt the natural purity of the soul, were it not tainted by filth from outside? When the soul keeps the understanding in its natural state, that is, when it remains as it was created, perfection is confirmed. When the soul came into existence, it was fair and exceedingly honest. For this cause Jesus, the son of Navee, in his exhortation, said to the people, 'Set your heart right toward the Lord God of Israel [Josh. 24:23].' And John the Baptist said, 'Be making His paths straight [Mt. 3:3].' For rectitude of soul consists in its having its spiritual part in its natural state, its original soundness, as created. If the soul swerves and turns away from its natural state, that is called vice of the soul. Thus the matter is not difficult. If we abide as we have been made, we are in a state of virtue; but if we think of ignoble things, we shall be accounted evil. If, therefore, this thing had to be acquired from without, it would be difficult in reality; but if it is in us, let us keep ourselves from foul thoughts. And as we have received the soul as a trust or deposit from Him, let us preserve it for the Lord, that He may recognize His creation as being the same as He made it.

"And let us strive that wrath rule us not nor lust overcome us, for it is written: 'Man's wrath doth not work out God's righteousness [Jas. 1:20].' And after a man 'conceiveth the desire, it bringeth forth sin; and sin, after it is fully formed, bringeth forth death [Jas. 1:15].' Living in this manner, let us keep guard carefully, and as it is written: 'Keep thy heart with the utmost care; for out of these are the issues of life [Prov. 4:23].' For we have terrible and crafty foes—the evil spirits—and against them we wrestle, as the apostle said that 'for us the wrestling is not against blood and flesh, but against the

principalities, against the powers, against the cosmic rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of evil on account of the heavenly things [Eph. 6:12].’ In the air around us, their number is great; they are not far from us. Now there are great distinctions among them; and concerning their nature and distinctions much could be said, but such a description is for others of greater powers than we possess. But at this time it is pressing and necessary for us only to know their wiles against ourselves.

“First, therefore, we must understand this: that the demons have not been created demons as we understand that name; for God made nothing evil, but even they have been made good. Having fallen, however, from the heavenly wisdom, since then they have been groveling on earth. On the one hand, they deceived the Greek pagans with their apparitions and displays; but on the other hand, out of envy toward us Christians, they move all things in their desire to hinder us from entry into the heavens, lest we should ascend thither from whence they fell. Hence, there is need on our part of much prayer and discipline. When a man has received through the Spirit the gift of discerning spirits, he has been empowered to recognize their characteristics: which of them are less and which more evil; of what nature is the special pursuit of each, and how each of them is overthrown and cast out. For their villainies and the changes in their plots are manifold. The blessed apostle and his followers knew of such things when they said, ‘We are not ignorant of his designs [2 Cor. 2:11].’ Moreover, we, from the temptations we have suffered from them, ought to guide one another. Therefore, having had proof of them, I speak to you as my children.



Guises of Demon Attacks

“The demons, therefore, if they see all Christians, and monks especially, laboring cheerfully and advancing, first make an attack by temptation and place snares and hindrances to hamper our way, to wit, evil thoughts. We, however, need not fear their suggestions; for by our prayer, fasting, and faith in the Lord, their attack immediately fails. But even when they fail, they do not retreat or desist, but knavishly, by subtlety, they come on again. For when they cannot deceive the

heart openly with foul pleasures, they approach in another guise. They change their shapes and forms, displaying themselves as women, wild beasts, creeping things, gigantic bodies, and troops of soldiers. But not even then need we fear their deceitful displays. For they are nothing and shall quickly vanish, especially if a man should fortify himself beforehand with faith and

the sign of the Cross. Yet I tell you that they are still very bold and shameless; for if thus they are worsted, they make an onslaught in another manner. They pretend to prophesy and foretell the future, or they show themselves of a height reaching to the roof and of great breadth. They do these things that they may stealthily catch by such deceptions those who could not be deceived by their arguments. If here also they find the soul strengthened by faith and a hopeful mind, then they bring their leader to their aid."

Saint Anthony then went on to say that "they often appeared as the Lord revealed the devil to Job, who said, 'His eyes are as the appearance of the morning star. Out of his mouth proceed as it were burning lamps, and as it were hearths of fire are cast abroad. Out of his nostrils proceeds smoke of a furnace burning with fire of coals. His breath is as live coals, and a flame goes out of his mouth [Job 41:9-11].' When the prince of the demons appears in this wise, the crafty one, as I said before, strikes terror by making great claims. Again, the Lord described him, saying to Job, for 'he considers iron as chaff, and brass as rotten wood....He regards the sea as a pot of ointment, and the lowest part of the deep as a captive: he reckons the deep as his range [Job 41:18, 22, 23].' Through the prophet, the devil boasts, 'I will pursue, I will overtake [Ex. 15:9].' And through another, he says, 'I will take with my hand all the world as a nest: and I will even take them as eggs that have been left; and there is none that shall escape me, or contradict me [Is. 10:14].' In this way, by speaking such deadly words, the evil one ensnares some of those who live a good life, but we the faithful ought not to believe—not even give the appearance of believing—his promises or fear his threats. He ever deceives, and none of his promises are true. He is a liar and never speaks the truth. Although he speaks so many words in his boldness, without a doubt, as a dragon was he drawn with a hook by the Savior's Cross, and as a beast of burden was he bound with a halter round his nostrils, and as a runaway slave were his nostrils pierced with an iron ring, and his lips bored with an armlet. He was bound in the net by the Lord as a sparrow, that we should mock him. He now groans with his fellows who have been trampled underfoot by Christians, like serpents and scorpions [Lk. 10:19]. The proof of all this is that we now live opposed to him. Look at him who threatened to destroy the sea and take the world into his hand. He cannot stay our discipline, nor even me speaking against him. Let us then heed not his words, for he is a liar. Let us not fear his visions, seeing that they are deceptive. For that which appears in them is no true light, but they are rather the sign and semblance of the fire prepared for the demons who attempt to terrify men with those flames in which they themselves shall be burned. Doubtless they appear; but in a moment they vanish again, hurting none of the faithful, but bearing with them the likeness of that fire which is to receive

them. Thereupon, it is unfitting that we should fear them on account of these things; for through the grace of Christ all their practises come to nothing.

"They are treacherous, ready to transform themselves into every appearance and shape. At times they feign singing psalms or reciting Scriptures. At other times, while we are reading, they repeat many times, like an echo, what we have read. They rouse us from our sleep to prayers; and this constantly, hardly allowing us to sleep at all. At another time they assume the appearance of monks and simulate pious speech of holy men, that by their assumed likeness they may deceive and thus drag their victims where they will. But we ought to pay them no heed, even if they should arouse us to prayer or counsel us against complete abstinence. We ought not to pay attention to them, if they should accuse and revile us for what they once approved and in which they were our accomplices; for this is a pretense on their part of seemingly admirable behavior. They do this not for the sake of piety or truth, but that they may gain the confidence of their victims and then carry off the simple and guileless into despair. They wish to drive their victims to say that the ascetic discipline is useless. They would have it that men should come to loathe the solitary life as burdensome. Their aim is to hinder or trip up those who would lead such a life in spite of them.

"The Lord therefore sent the prophet to declare these creatures as wretched, saying, 'Woe to him that gives his neighbor to drink the thick lees of wine, and intoxicates him, that he may look upon their secret parts [Hab. 2:15].' For such devices are subversive and seduce people from the path that leads to virtue and heaven. Note that even the Lord Himself, although the demons spoke the truth—for they said truthfully that 'Thou art the Christ, the Son of God [Lk. 4:41]'—still bridled their mouths and suffered them not to speak, lest haply they should sow their evil along with the truth. He wished to accustom us never to give heed to them, though they should appear to speak the truth. For it is unbecoming that we, having the holy Scriptures and freedom from the Savior, should be taught by the devil who has not kept his own order but has changed his mind now to one thing, now another. Therefore, even if the demon should use the language of Scripture, Christ would forbid him, saying, 'But unto the sinner God hath said, "Why declarest thou My statutes and takest up My covenant in thy mouth [Ps. 49:17]?"' For the demons are wont to practise all kinds of pretenses—they prate, they confuse, they dissemble, they confound—in order to deceive the simple. They may make a din, or laugh madly and senselessly, or whistle, or hiss; but if no heed is given them, they weep and lament as ones vanquished.

"The Lord therefore, because He is God, stayed the mouths of the demons. It is fitting that we, taught by the saints, should do as they did and emulate their courage. For when they saw these things, they were wont to

say, 'I set a guard for my mouth, when the sinner stood up against me [Ps. 38:2].' And, 'I became as a man that heareth not, and hath in his mouth no reproofs [Ps. 37:14].' So let us neither hear them, as they are strangers to us, nor give heed to them even though they should rouse us to prayer or urge us to fast. But let us rather apply ourselves, because it is part of our way of life. Let us not be deceived by them who do all things in deceit, even though they should threaten death and attack us. For they are weak and can do nought but threaten.

"I know that I have already spoken of these things, though only in passing, yet now I must not shrink from speaking at greater length; for to put you in remembrance will bring greater security for you. Since the Lord came, the enemy and his power have been weakened. Therefore, although he can do nothing, still, like a tyrant, he did not bear his fall quietly, but utters threats, though they be words only. Let each one of you consider this, and he will be able to despise the demons. Now since our enemies are not clothed in flesh, they cannot give as an excuse for their inability to overcome us that they are unable to enter because we have closed the door to them. If they possessed our fragile bodies, when the entrance was closed, access would be denied them. But since they are free of this burden and can penetrate what has been closed and fly about without hindrance, it is clear that because of their weakness the body of the Church remains unharmed. We should not be terrified of them. We should not be afraid of their voices. The Savior affirms that the devil was 'a manslayer from the beginning, and hath not stood in the truth, because there is no truth in him. Whenever he may speak the lie, he speaketh out of the things which are his own; for he is a liar and the father of it [Jn. 8:44].' Despite all their attempts and threats, we are still alive, spending our lives opposing them; therefore, it is plain that they are powerless. But be circumspect: no place is a hindrance to their plots, nor do they look on us as friends that they should spare us; nor are they lovers of good that they should amend. But on the contrary they are evil, and nothing is so much sought after by them as wounding them that love virtue and fear God. Since they have no power to effect anything, they do nought but threaten. But if they could, they would not hesitate in working evil—for all their desire is set on this—and especially against us. Behold now, we are assembled here and continue speaking against them. They know that when we advance they grow weak. If they had the power, they would permit no Christian to live, for 'a righteous man is an abomination to an unrighteous man, and the direct way is an abomination to the sinner [Prov. 29:27].' But since they can do nothing, they afflict themselves with greater wounds; for they cannot fulfill even one of their threats. Then this also is to be considered, that we may have no fear of them: if they had power, they would not come

in great numbers, nor conjure phantoms and apparitions, nor change forms and frame deceits. It would suffice that one only should come and perpetrate what they will. If the devil had authority, he would make full use of it as he wished. But the demons, as they have no power or authority, are like actors on the stage. They transform themselves so as to frighten children with specters, apparitions, and various forms. From all this, they should be despised as blazoning their ineptitude. At least the true angel of the Lord sent against the Assyrian host had no need for tumults nor displays from without, nor noises nor rattlings; but in quiet he exercised divine power and straightway destroyed a hundred and eighty-five thousand Assyrians [4 Kgs. (2 Kgs.) 19:35]. But demons like these, who have no power, try to terrify at least by their empty phantoms and displays.

"Should anyone, however, bring forward the history of Job and say, 'Why did the devil go forth and accomplish all things against that blessed man? He stripped him of his belongings, slew his numerous children, and smote him with dreadful bodily sores, did he not?' I say that such who make this objection should recognize that it was not the devil who was the strong man, but God Who delivered Job to him to be tried. This power is granted against us either for our glory, if God approves of us, or for our punishment should we do wrong. Certainly the devil had no power to do anything. He needed to ask, and that twice, demonstrating his weakness and want of power. Upon receiving leave, he did what he did. So also from this, the enemy is the more to be condemned; for although willing, he still could not prevail against this one righteous man. For if he had power, he certainly would not have asked permission to carry out his plot. Indeed, not only could he do nothing against Job, but even against Job's cattle he required permission. We know he has no power over swine, for so it says in the Gospel: 'The demons besought Him, saying, "If Thou cast us out, permit us to go away into the herd of swine [Mt. 8:31; cf. Mk. 5:12]."' Therefore, if they have not power even against swine, much less have they any authority over men made in the image of God.

"My dear friends, we ought to fear God only, and despise the demons, and be in no fear of them. A pure life and faith in God are great weapons against the demons. I have personal experience of this; for they fear our fasting, keeping vigil, prayers, meekness, quietness, contempt of money and vainglory, humility, love of the poor, alms, freedom from anger, and, chief of all, piety and pure love toward Jesus Christ. The foul serpent knows that it is God's command that he should lie beneath the footsteps of the just, even as the Lord said, 'Behold, I give you the authority to tread upon serpents and scorpions, and upon all the power of the enemy; and nothing in anywise shall injure you [Lk. 10:19].'

“Furthermore, if they pretend to foretell the future, let no one give any heed to their divination. Ofttimes, they may announce beforehand that the brethren are coming to visit us; and in fact they do come. The demons, however, do this not from any care for the hearers, but to secure their confidence and thereby gain admittance. Then, at length, after they have them in their power, they may destroy them. Consequently, we must give no heed to them, but ought rather to confute them when speaking, since we do not need them. For what wonder is it, if with more subtle bodies than we, when they have seen them start on their journey, they surpass them in speed, and announce their coming? Likewise a horseman, outstripping a man on foot, announces the arrival of the latter beforehand. So in this there is no need for us to wonder at them. For they know none of those things which are not yet in existence; but God only is He Who knows all things before their birth. But these creatures, like thieves, running off first with what they see, proclaim it. Indeed, to how many already have they announced our business, before any one of us could go forth and tell of this assembly? I mean that we are here gathered together to discuss measures against them. This in good truth a fleet-footed boy could do, getting far ahead of one less swift of foot. Let me give you an example. Before anyone begins to walk from the Thebaid, or from any other district, the demons do not know whether he will walk. But when they have seen him walking, what do they do? They run ahead and, before he should arrive, report such-and-such’s approach. And so it falls out that after a few days the travelers do indeed arrive. But then again, it also happened that the walkers turn around, rendering the demons purveyors of falsehoods.

“Another example of their idle talk regards the Nile. With respect to the water of the river, they sometimes make foolish speculations. For example, they have seen that there has been considerable rain in sections of Ethiopia. They know that the overflow of the river originates there, and so they run on ahead to Egypt and announce it. Now even men could make these predictions, had they as great a facility of running as the demons. Blessed David’s scout [2 Kgs. (2 Sam.) 18:24] ascended a lofty place and was able to spy out those who were coming, before the people down on the plain caught sight of them. Thus the forerunner announced not those things which had not taken place, but those things which were already on the way and were being accomplished. In like manner do the demons prefer to declare what is happening, simply for the sake of deceiving the gullible. If, however, providence meantime plans anything different for the waters or wayfarers—for providence can do this—the demons are deceived, and those who gave heed to them are cheated.

"This is how, in days gone by, there arose the oracles of the Greek pagans. Thus they were led astray by the demons. Now their deception was brought to an end by the coming of our Lord. Silence was enjoined upon those demons. Their devices were brought to nought. For they know nothing of the future, but, as thieves, what they get to know from others they pass on, and guess at rather than foretell things. Therefore if sometimes they speak the truth, let no one marvel at them. Consider experienced physicians. They observe the same malady in different people. They can foretell what it is, discerning it by their familiarity with the symptoms. Navigators, too, and farmers, from their regular acquaintance with all kinds of weather conditions, often can tell at a glance the state of the atmosphere and forecast whether it shall be stormy or fair. Now no one would claim that they make these declarations, based on either practical experience or education, by inspiration. No one would sanctify such persons as gods. So if the demons should at times do the same by guesswork, let no one wonder at it or heed them. Even if for the sake of argument we should say that the demons do predict true things, what use to the hearers is it to know from them what is going to happen before the time? Or what concern have we to know such things, even if the knowledge be true? For it is not productive of virtue, nor is it any token of goodness. For none of us is judged for what he knows not, and no one is called blessed because he has obtained learning and knowledge. But each one will be called to judgment in these points—whether or not he has kept the Faith and truly observed the commandments.

"Therefore, it behooves us not to set much value on these things, nor for the sake of them to impose on ourselves a life of discipline and labor. What is important is that by living piously, we may please God. And we ought neither to pray to know the future, nor to ask for it as the reward of our asceticism. Much rather, our prayer should be that the Lord may be our helper in gaining victory over the devil. But if even once we should conceive a desire to know the future, let us be pure in mind. For I believe that if a soul serves God, and is perfectly pure and in its natural state, it is able, being clear-sighted, to see more and farther than the demons. For in the case of such persons, their souls have the Lord Who bestows revelations. Such was the soul of Eliseos who beheld what was done by Gehazi [4 Kgs. (2 Kgs.) 5:26], and beheld the armies standing nearby [4 Kgs. (2 Kgs.) 6:17].

"When, therefore, the demons use other means of deception, coming by night and wishing to tell the future, give them no heed. Even if they should say, 'We are the angels,' know that they lie. Yea, even if they praise your discipline and dedication and call you blessed, promising future rewards, give them no attendance. Have no dealings with them. Rather, seal yourselves and your houses with the sign of the Cross, and pray, and you shall see them

vanish. For they are cowards and greatly fear the sign of the Lord's Cross. As it is written: Christ, 'having put off from Himself the principalities and the powers, He made an example of them openly, triumphing over them in it [Col. 2:15],' that is, the Cross. But if those creatures should shamelessly stand their ground, capering and changing their forms of appearance, fear them not, nor cower, nor heed them as though they were good spirits. For, by the help of God, the presence either of the good or evil can easily be distinguished. The vision of the holy ones is not fraught with distraction. Remember what is written: 'He shall not strive nor cry out, nor shall anyone hear His voice in the streets [Mt. 12:19; cf. Is. 42:2].' Thus the holy angels come quietly and gently, instilling joy, gladness, and courage in the soul. For the Lord Who is our joy is with them, and the power of God the Father. And the thoughts of the soul remain unruffled and undisturbed, like a waveless sea, so that it, enlightened as it were with rays, beholds by itself those who appear. For the love of what is divine and of the things to come possesses it, and willingly it would be wholly joined with them if it could depart along with them. But if, being men, some fear the vision of the good, then those angels who appear, being that they are so kind, immediately take fear away. This was also the case when the Archangel Gabriel spoke to the Prophet Zacharias [Lk. 1:13], or when the angel appeared to the women at the holy sepulcher [Mt. 28:5], or when the angel declared to the shepherds, 'Cease being afraid; for behold, I announce to you good tidings of great joy [Lk. 2:10].' For their fear arose not from timidity or mental terror, but from the recognition of the presence of such superior and mighty beings. Such then is the nature of the visions of the holy ones.

"However, the inroads and the appearance of those most wicked creatures is fraught with confusion, and terrifying sounds, such as the disturbance of boorish youths or robbers would occasion. They strike fear in the heart and usher in confusion of thought. They produce dejection, lethargy, indifference, and despair. They instill hatred toward those who live a life of discipline. They promote a disregard of virtue, unsettled habits, and a desire for evil things. If terror and trembling should be replaced by joy, love, and trust in God, together with cheerfulness, courage, renewed strength, calmness of thought, and all those I named before, then take courage and pray. For joy and a settled state of soul show the holiness of Him Who is present. Thus Abraham, seeing the day of the Lord, rejoiced exceedingly and was glad [Jn. 8:56]; John, at the voice of Mary Theotokos, leaped in Elisabeth's womb [Lk. 1:41]. But should there be confusion, noise, worldly display, threats of death, and the like, such an appearance would signal an onslaught of evil spirits.

"And let this also be a token for you. Whenever the soul should continue fearful, there is a presence of the enemies. For the demons do not

take away the fear of their presence as did the great Archangel Gabriel in the case of Mary and Zacharias [Lk. 1:13, 30], and as he did for the women at the tomb [Mk. 16:6]; but rather, whenever the demons should see men afraid, they increase their delusions that men may be terrified the more. Then, at last, Satan mocks such persons, saying, 'Fall down and make obeisance to me [Mt. 4:9].' Thus they deceived the pagan Greeks; and thus, by them, they were considered gods, though falsely called. But the Lord did not suffer us to be deceived by the devil, for He rebuked him whenever he framed such delusions against Him, saying: 'Get thee behind Me, Satan. For it hath been written: "Thou shalt make obeisance to the Lord thy God, and Him alone shalt thou worship [Mt. 4:10; cf. Deut. 6:13]."' More and more, therefore, let the deceiver be despised by us. For that which the Lord spoke was done for our sakes. The power conveyed by these words has been granted to us, so that when the demons should hear like words from us, they might be put to flight through the Lord Who rebuked them by those very words.

"We must not boast of casting out demons. This is not fitting for us. We should not be uplifted by the healing of diseases. Be more concerned about your way of life than performing miracles. If any of you should be vouchsafed to work wonders, he should neither be lifted up with pride nor look down on those who do not. But rather consider each person's discipline and conduct. It behooves each to emulate the perfect and supply what is lacking in himself. It is not for our humble selves to work miracles, but for the power of God. Be mindful of the Savior's words to the disciples: 'Cease rejoicing in this, that the spirits are being made subject to you; but be rejoicing that your names were written in the heavens [Lk. 10:20].' The fact that our names are written in the heavens is a testimony to our virtuous life; but to expel demons is a free gift of the Savior Who bestowed it. Therefore, to those who boasted in signs, but not in virtue, and said, 'Lord, Lord, we prophesied in Thy name, and cast out demons in Thy name, and did many works of power in Thy name, did we not [Mt. 7:22]?' then the Lord will profess, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, ye who work lawlessness [Mt. 7:23].' For, 'the Lord knoweth the way of the righteous, and the way of the ungodly shall perish [Ps. 1:6].' But we ought always to pray, as I have said before, that we may receive the gift of discerning spirits; that, as it is written that we 'cease believing every spirit, but keep on putting the spirits to the test, if they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world [1 Jn. 4:1].'

"I should have liked to speak no further and to remain silent regarding things that happened to my humble self. But lest you should think that I was speaking of things at random, of which I have no experience, or that I was beating the air with stories of events which could not possibly happen, for this

cause—even though I should become as a fool, yet the Lord Who hears and knows my conscience, and that it is not for my own sake, but on account of your affection toward me and at your request—I again shall tell what I saw of the practises of evil spirits. How often have these foul creatures called me blessed and I have cursed them in the name of the Lord! How often have they predicted the rising of the river Nile, and I answered them, ‘What have you to do with it?’ Once they came threatening and surrounded me like soldiers in full armor. At another time they filled the house with horses, wild beasts, and creeping things and scorpions, but I challenged them and sang: ‘Some trust in chariots, and some in horses, but we will call upon the name of the Lord our God [Ps. 19:7].’ And at that prayer, by Christ’s compassion, they were turned to flight. Once they came in darkness, bearing the appearance of a light, and said, ‘We are come to bestow our light upon thee, Anthony.’ But I closed my eyes, refusing to gaze at that light, and prayed. Immediately, the light of the wicked ones was quenched. Then, after a few months, they came as though singing psalms and quoting the words of Scripture: ‘And I became as a man that heareth not [Ps. 37:14]’; but in actuality they were babbling. Once they shook the cell with an earthquake, but I continued praying with an unshaken heart and unmoved mind. After this, they came again producing noises. They whistled, hissed, and pranced about. But I continued constant in prayer, chanting psalms as I lay on the ground. Then they began to weep and lament, as if their strength had failed them. But I gave glory to the Lord Who humbled those creatures and made an example of their brazenness and madness.

“On another occasion, the monastery was shaken, and there appeared a demon of very large stature, who dared to declare, ‘I am the power of God. What dost thou wish that I should grant thee, O Anthony?’ I blew my breath upon him, calling on the name of the Lord, and he forthwith vanished. On yet another occasion, as I was fasting for a number of days, that cunning deceiver came to me as a monk. He began offering me loaves of bread and saying, ‘Do thou partake. Do not be fasting so much, lest thou shouldest fall ill, as thou art human.’ By the grace of God, I perceived that serpent’s artifice and ghoulish face; so I rose up and prayed, and he vanished like smoke wafting through an open window. Then how many times in the desert has he attempted to trap me with what resembled gold, that I should only touch it and look on it! There were other times that the demons dealt me blows, but I would chant such words as, ‘Who shall separate us from the love of Christ [Rom. 8:34]?’ Upon hearing this, those creatures turned on one another in their rage. They were put to flight at the Lord’s command, not mine. It was also the Lord Who put them to nought, even as He Himself spoke: ‘I was beholding Satan as lightning having fallen out of the heaven [Lk. 10:18].’

Therefore, let us be mindful of the apostle's words: 'These things, brethren, I transferred in a figure to myself [1 Cor. 4:6],' so that you neither grow fainthearted in the ascetical life nor fear the delusions of the devil and his demons.

"But since 'I speak as being beside myself [2 Cor. 11:23],' by recounting many of these experiences for your benefit, I should like to tell you this, but let no one doubt the truth. On still another occasion, a demon knocked on the door of my cell. I exited only to behold a creature of enormous height. I asked, 'Who art thou?' He answered, 'I am Satan. Why do you monks and the other Christians condemn me unjustly?' I answered, 'Why dost thou tempt them and put them to the test?' He replied, 'Who, me? Nay, not I. I do not do anything. It is they who cause each other agitation and trouble. Much rather, I am to be pitied. I ask thee, hast thou not read, "The swords of the enemy have utterly failed, and his cities Thou hast destroyed [Ps. 9:6]"? Look at me now. I have no longer a place, a weapon, a city. The Christians are spread everywhere. Even the desert is crammed full with monks. Let them take heed to themselves, and let them not curse me undeservedly.' Then I marvelled at the grace of the Lord, and said to that odious creature, 'Thou art ever a liar and never speakest the truth. But here, against thine own will, thou hast been forced to admit this truth without lying. For Jesus Christ, having put on flesh, stripped thee naked of every power.' Now I had hardly finished the sentence when that huge figure collapsed and vanished, being unable to bear the burning caused him at the sound of our Savior's name.

"Therefore, brothers, if Satan himself confesses to his infirmity and owns up to his lack of power, we ought utterly to despise both him and his minions. Since the enemy with his hounds has but devices of this sort, we, having got to know their weakness, are able to deem them contemptible. Therefore, let us not become disheartened, nor succumb to cowardice, nor frame fears for ourselves, saying, 'I fear, lest a demon should come and overthrow me. I fear lest he should lift me up and cast me down. I fear lest rising against me on a sudden he should confound me.' Dispel such thoughts. Let us not be sorrowful as though we were perishing; but rather let us be courageous and rejoice always, believing that the Lord is with us and has vanquished our enemies and broken their power. Let us take to heart that while the Lord is with us, our foes can do nought against us. For when they approach, they come in a form corresponding to the state in which they discover us. They adapt their delusions to the condition of mind in which they find us. If, therefore, they find us timid, confused, or dissatisfied, they forthwith beset the place, like robbers, having found it unguarded. Indeed, what we of ourselves are thinking, they do, and more also. For if they find

us fainthearted and cowardly, they mightily increase our terror, by their delusions and threats. Thus, the unhappy soul is thenceforth tormented. But if they see us mindful of the Lord and deeming all things in His hand, or rejoicing in Him and contemplating those future good things, no evil spirit has any strength against the Christian, nor any power at all over anyone. For when they behold the soul fortified with these thoughts, they are discomfited and retreat. Thus the enemy, seeing Job fenced round with these thoughts and strengthened by the Lord, withdrew from him; but finding Judas unguarded, him he took captive. Therefore, if we are to despise and overcome the enemy, let us rejoice in hope and have constant recollection of the Lord in our souls. Then we shall see the snares of the demon driven out like smoke. Thus, instead of pursuing, these evil creatures shall be put to flight. For they are, as I said before, exceeding fearful, ever anticipating the everlasting fire prepared for them [Mt. 25:41].

“Now to bring my discourse to a conclusion, I shall mention one more thing. Whenever there is any apparition, be not prostrate with fear. But whatsoever it be, first boldly ask, ‘Who art thou? And from whence comest thou?’ Now if the apparition is holy and a vision of angels or saints, they will assure you and change your fear into joy. But if the apparition should be anything diabolical, immediately it becomes feeble, beholding your firm purpose of mind. For merely to ask, ‘Who art thou? and whence comest thou?’ is a proof of coolness. On the one hand, Jesus, the son of Navee, learned who his helper was, asking, ‘Art thou for us or on the side of our enemies [Josh. 5:13]?’ On the other hand, the enemy, that is, the two wicked elders, did not escape the examination of Daniel [Susanna 1:51 ff.]”

Monasticism Flourishes

These things and many others were spoken of by the great Anthony to the monastics that had gathered. They marvelled at the grace given him by the Lord, in the discerning of the spirits, which put the monks in a joyful spirit and enhanced their desire to advance in virtue. Thus the desire for virtue increased in some, while carelessness was cast aside in others. Those with flagging faith were rejuvenated. Previously false opinions maintained by some were cast out from their minds. Those who feared the devil and his schemes, after taking Anthony’s advice, came to despise that creature and his devices. So then, on that mountain, monastic cells were like tents, filled with divine choirs of men chanting psalms, reading, and praying. The saint’s discourse had inspired them to persevere, pray, and fast, in their desire for those future good things. There was no self-conceit, only love and compassion among themselves. It was a land to itself, removed from worldly concerns, and filled with godliness and righteousness. There was no evildoer, no one who suffered wrong, no pesky tax collector. There were only ascetics,

all of one mind and one set purpose, which was the attainment of virtue. If one could view these solitary cells and the good order of the monks who rivaled one another in carrying out their duties, he would lift up his voice and exclaim, "How goodly are thy habitations, Jacob, and thy tents, Israel! As shady groves, and as gardens by a river, and as tents which God pitched, and as cedars by the waters [Num. 24:5, 6]."

Thus, the commitment of the brethren grew with each new day. The saint, however, according to his practise, returned alone to his own cell and increased his ascetic discipline. He meditated on, and sighed daily for, those heavenly abodes [Jn. 14:2]. He reflected upon the shortness of man's life, deeming that which he had already achieved to be of little value. When his human condition enjoined him to partake of some food or sleep or any other necessities of nature, he was overcome by an extraordinary sense of shame. He believed that the physical needs and limitations of his poor flesh restricted his spiritual freedom. He would ponder upon spiritual food, so that oftentimes, while sitting at the communal meal, he would ask to be excused. He would then withdraw, far off from them, deeming it a matter for shame if he should be seen eating by others. However, when by himself, he used to eat through bodily necessity. But there were many times that he did take his meals with the brethren. Though covered with shame on these occasions, yet he admonished them that the body must not be completely starved, nor should it be overfed, lest it should lose its mobility and facility contrary to the Creator's will. He used to say that it behooved a man to give all his time to his soul rather than his body, yet to grant a short space to the body through its necessities. He exhorted them that the body should be in subjection to the soul, as spoken of by the Savior: 'Cease being anxious for your soul, what ye shall eat; nor for the body, what ye shall put on....And ye, cease seeking what ye shall eat or what ye shall drink, and cease being anxious. For all these things the nations of the world seek after; and your Father knoweth that ye need these things. But be seeking the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added to you [Lk. 12:22, 29-31].'

Martyrdom Under Maximinus

After these events, the Church came under siege. The cruel persecution which took place under Maximinus (Maximin, 308-314) brought many holy martyrs to Alexandria. Anthony also followed, leaving his cell, and said, "Let us go too that, if called, we may contend or behold those who are contending and triumphing." In his love for Christ and those suffering, that blessed man was already a martyr. Though he longed to suffer martyrdom, yet he was unwilling to give himself up. In the meantime, he ministered to the confessors in the mines and in the prisons. Anthony stirred up the Christians to zealously confess Christ in the judgment hall, lest they should

be compelled by the violent persecutors to deny Christ. Those who were sentenced and were on their way to receiving martyrs' crowns, he accompanied to the execution site, as though he were the victor. The judge, vexed at the fearlessness and interference of Anthony and his companions, commanded that no monk could appear in court or even in the city. So all the rest thought it good to hide themselves that day, but Anthony gave so little heed to the command that he washed his garment and mandya (cloak), and stood deliberately all the next day on a raised and prominent place, before the pagans. He was dressed in white to be sure to catch the judge's attention as he walked by with his retinue, for Anthony also had a desire to suffer martyrdom. His conduct demonstrated that Christians ought to persist in an attitude that disdains death. When he was not granted to undergo martyrdom for the name of God, he did grieve that he had not borne witness with his blood. The Lord, however, was preparing a leader to shepherd His flock. Anthony was being preserved so that the monastic life, still in its infancy, would be developed and strengthened not only by the memory of his words, but also by his personal presence and example. For many, by just beholding his manner of life, became zealous to emulate his ways. So he again ministered as usual to the confessors, as though he were their fellow captive. Thus he labored with all his heart in this ministry, blessed by God. Indeed, on account of his genuine love, sympathy, and anxious concern, he suffered more than they until they should triumph. With the martyrdom of Archbishop Peter, who was beheaded in 311, on the 24th day of November, the storm of persecution subsided. Now Anthony, for his part, was a martyr by disposition and confession, so that he could say with the apostle, "I affirm,...I die daily [1 Cor. 15:31]." But again, his intense hardships and sufferings incurred by his asceticism—wearing a thick hair shirt directly on his skin and a garment of animal skin on top, which articles were left uncleaned, and never washing his head or his feet—were a living martyrdom. Indeed, no one ever beheld Anthony's flesh until his repose when he was washed for burial.

There was an occasion when the saint withdrew for a considerable time from all and immured himself in his cell, refusing all visitors. There came to his retreat a Roman officer of the military, named Martinianos, who interrupted Anthony's solitude. He kept knocking at the door, begging the elder to emerge and offer up prayer on behalf of his dear daughter who was being tormented by an evil spirit. The father persisted in knocking and calling out the saint's name for a long time. Although Anthony had no wish to exit, the officer's persistence could not go ignored. The saint then, not bearing to open his door, looked out from above and said, "Man, why dost thou call on me? I also am a man even as thou art. But if thou wilt believe on Christ Whom I serve, go, and according as thou believest, pray to God, and it shall

come to pass." Therefore, he obeyed the saint's word, by believing and calling upon the name of Jesus. Straightway, his little daughter was restored to him, cleansed from the unclean spirit. Many other miracles were wrought by the Lord through His servant Anthony, which deeds are spoken of in the holy Gospel by the Lord Who said, "I say to you, keep on asking, and it shall be given to you; keep on seeking, and ye shall find; keep on knocking, and it shall be opened to you [Lk. 11:9]." For many of those who were smitten and suffering from ailments, when Anthony would not open his door, slept outside his cell; and they, by their faith and sincere prayers, were cured.



Saint Anthony the Great

Saint Anthony Retreats to the Inner Mountain

Before long, the saint perceived himself beset by many visitors. Not only was his solitude being penetrated, but he also feared what the miracles, which the Lord wrought by him, might lead to: either that he should become puffed up or that some should be induced to think of him above what he warranted. Thereupon, he was resolved to set off toward the upper Thebaid and abide among a people to whom he was unknown. After the brethren gave him some loaves of bread, he sat down by the bank of the river. He kept looking to see whether a boat would go by, that, after he had embarked thereon, he might go up the river with them. While he was considering these things, a voice came to him from above, "Anthony, whither goest thou and wherefore?" But he in no way was disturbed, for he was accustomed to being called often thus. He gave ear to the query, answering, "Since, my Lord, the people permit me not to live in stillness and contemplation, and they also demand of me things beyond my powers, I repair to the upper Thebaid." But the voice said unto him, "If thou goest into the Thebaid, or, as thou hast in mind, down to the Bucolia, the marshy district close to Alexandria, thou shalt surely endure

more, aye, double the burden as the present one. But if thou wilt truly be in quietude, depart now into the inner desert." And Anthony said, "Who will show me the way to that difficult place? For I am acquainted with neither the

terrain nor any guides." Immediately, the voice pointed out to him a caravan of Saracens, engaged in trade, who were about to go that way. So Anthony went forth and drew near them. He inquired if he might go with them into the desert. They, as if commanded by divine providence, received him willingly. After he journeyed with them for three days and three nights, he came to a very lofty mountain near the Red Sea (Inner Mountain or Mount Kolzim, about one hundred and sixty kilometers southeast of present-day Cairo). At the foot of that mountain ran a clear spring, whose waters were most sweet and very cold. Outside there were a plain and a few palm trees.

Anthony, seeing the beauty before him and moved by God, loved the place; for this was the spot which *He Who had spoken with him by the banks of the river*, had pointed out. After he received loaves from his fellow travelers, he dwelt in the mountain quite alone. He perceived it to be his own home. The Saracens, for their part, saw the earnestness of Anthony and deliberately used to pass that way, glad to bring him more loaves. The palm trees also afforded him a meager and frugal relish. But after this, the brethren, having learned of the place, like children mindful of their father, took care to send supplies to him. At length, Anthony, seeing that the dispatch of bread to him was a source of hardships to others, thought to spare them the trouble of traversing so long a path. He was resolved to ask some of those who came to bring him a spade, an axe, and a little grain that he might sow and thereby feed himself. When these tools and grain were conveyed to him, he went around until he located a small plot of ground, at the foot of the mountain, suitable for cultivation. Since the place was endowed with a plentiful supply of water, he sowed. Consequently, he got his bread from this planting, rejoicing the more that he should no longer be a burden to anyone, but rather would eat by the work of his own hands. He produced a crop large enough for a year's supply of bread, which pleased him. After this, seeing again that throngs were coming to him in that place, he cultivated a few herbs and vegetables, that he might offer some little fare to solace visitors after they had made that difficult journey. At first, however, the wild beasts in the desert, coming because of the water, often injured his seeds and husbandry. But he, gently laying hold of one of them, said to them all, "Why do you injure me, when I hurt none of you? Go in the name of the Lord, and come nigh no longer!" Henceforth, as though fearful of his command, they no more trespassed the place.

So Anthony was alone in taking possession of the Inner Mountain, spending his time in prayer and ascetic labors. The brethren who served him asked that they might come every month and bring him olives, pulse, and oil, as a concession to his old age. It was on account of the visits of others to him that we came to learn of the many wrestling matches he endured, "not against

blood and flesh, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the cosmic rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of evil on account of the heavenly things [Eph. 6:12]." Visitors reported hearing tumults, many outcries, and, as it were, the clash of arms. Terrified eyewitnesses gave descriptions of how the entire mountain was seen to be overrun by fiery phantoms and flashing spears. Now at night, they saw the mountain become full of wild beasts. They observed Anthony also fighting, as though against visible beings, and sending up prayer against them. On the one hand, Anthony offered encouragement to those who came to him; but, on the other hand, he contended with the adversaries as he knelt and prayed. Anthony, comforting his visitors, would say, "They are empty apparitions which perish, as if they never existed, at the name of Jesus and the sign of the Cross." Surely it was a marvellous thing that a man, alone in such a desert wasteland, was not terrified out of his wits. He feared neither the demons who rose up against him, nor the fierceness of the four-footed beasts and creeping things, though they were so many. But in truth, as it is written: "They that trust in the Lord shall be as Mount Sion [Ps. 124:1]." Thus his mind remained unshaken and undisturbed; so that the demons and wild beasts rather fled from him, as it is written: "For the wild beasts of the field shall be at peace with thee [Job 5:23]."

The devil, on another occasion, observing Anthony standing fast and chanting the psalms of David, kept gnashing his teeth against him. The blessed man was consoled by the Savior and continued unhurt by the devil's wiles and varied devices. As he was watching in the night, the devil sent wild beasts against him. Thus, almost all the hyenas in that desert came forth from their dens and surrounded him. Anthony was encircled by them, as each beast threatened to tear him apart. Seeing that it was a device of the enemy, he addressed them all: 'If you have received power from God against me, well then, I am ready to be devoured by you; but if you were sent against me by demons, remain not, but depart quickly, for I am a slave of Christ,⁴ the Master of creation.' When Anthony spoke the name of Christ they fled, driven by that word as with a whip.

A few days after, as Anthony was laboring at his handiwork, for he was careful to work hard, some creature stood at his door. That monster then pulled the plait which he was working, for Anthony used to weave baskets, which he gave to those who came, in return for what they brought him; for Anthony would not eat his bread for free. Anthony then leaped up and beheld a beast, resembling a man from his head to his thighs, but having legs and

⁴ Saint Paul also frequently calls himself a slave of Christ [Rom. 1:1; Phil. 1:1; Gal. 1:10].

feet like those of an ass. The blessed man quickly sealed himself with the sign of the Cross and said, "Christ's slave am I. If thou art sent against me to do evil, behold I am here." But that monster fled so quickly that it burst asunder, from which the evil spirits with it vanished. Thus, the demons strived in all manner of ways to overcome and drive out Anthony from the desert, but they were unable to do so.

Saint Anthony Visits the Brethren Along the Nile

Now some monks came and requested that the saint visit them in their abodes. After a time, compelled by love, he yielded and journeyed with those who had come to him. A camel was laden with provisions of bread and water for them. This was done because they needed to traverse a desert wasteland, having no water fit for human consumption. In fact, the only water available was in that mountain, where Anthony had his cell. On their way, the water supply gave out. The blazing heat of the sun was intense, imperiling all of them. After they went searching round those parts and found no water, those with the saint became weak and could walk no further. They stretched out on the ground, despairing of their predicament, and then let the camel go. The old man, perceiving that all were in jeopardy, groaned in deep grief. He departed a little way from them and knelt down. He then stretched forth his hands in prayer, uttering, "Consider, O Lord, at this time also the prayer of Thy slave." Straightway, as soon as tears fell from his eyes, the Lord made water spring forth where Anthony had been praying. Therefore, all drank and were revived. After they filled their water skins, they sought the camel and found her; for the rope, by God's dispensation, came to be caught in a stone and held fast the beast. They gave the camel water, and then placed their bottles on its back and finished their journey safely.

As they approached an inhabited district, many rushed forward and venerated him as a righteous man. When the holy man came to the outer cells, all saluted him and gazing upon him intently as a father. They vied with one another to respectfully kiss and embrace him. He exhorted and helped them spiritually by his instructions and practical experience, so that there was great joy in the mountains. They were gladdened at the triumphs of the blessed old man whom they beheld renewing his youth "as the eagle's [Ps. 102:5]." Anthony also rejoiced when he beheld their earnestness. He lauded their discipline, stimulated their zeal for improvement, and comforted them through their "mutual faith [Rom. 1:12]." Anthony also joyfully embraced his very own sister who had grown old in virginity, and saw that she herself also was the leader of other virgins.

The Brethren Visit Saint Anthony

After some days, the saint then hurried back to his mountain. Henceforth many resorted to him, and others who were suffering ventured to

go in. To all the monks therefore who came to him, he continually gave this precept: "Believe on the Lord and love Him; keep yourselves from filthy thoughts and fleshly pleasures, and as it is written in the Proverbs, 'Neither be deceived by the feeding of the belly [Prov. 24:15].'" He urged them, before all, to freely confess the true Faith of Christ, and love it with all their strength. He also admonished them to not to give heed to evil thoughts and the lusts of the flesh. He encouraged them to avoid vain boasting. He counseled them to hold in contempt the things of the world. He instructed them to pray continually, chant psalms, and recite the Church offices before they slept. He advised them to meditate upon the acts and lives of the apostles. He told them to recall the deeds of the saints. He urged remembrance of the Faith's spiritual heroes, so that the souls of his disciples might be inspired and trained by the zeal and deeds of the saints. By their sacred examples, the saint hoped that his disciples would keep in mind the Lord's commandments and His holy Faith unadulterated. He counseled them to bear in mind continually the apostle's words, 'Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun set upon your provocation [Eph. 4:26; Ps. 4:5].' Anthony considered that this was spoken of all commandments in common. The sun should not go down, not only on our anger, but on any other sin of ours. For it was good and needful that neither the sun should condemn us for an evil by day nor the moon for a sin by night, or even for an evil thought. That this state may be preserved in us, it is good to hear the apostle and keep his words, for he says, 'Be putting yourselves to the test if ye are in the faith; be examining yourselves [2 Cor. 13:5].' Let each become an honest examiner of his own thoughts, before the righteous Avenger comes and renders to each according to his manner of doing [Mt. 16:27]. Those who have waged war against sins shall be encouraged by Christ. If one has sinned, let him cease from it. If one stands in the truth, Christ will urge him on, lest he should be swept away with boasting or despoiled by over-confidence or come to despise one and love another or justify his own soul. Let us practise these things, even as the Apostle Paul said, 'until the appearance of our Lord Jesus Christ [1 Tim. 6:14],' Who shall 'bring to light the hidden things of darkness and make manifest the counsels of the hearts [1 Cor. 4:5].' For often, unawares, we do not know our own manner of life and works. Although we have lost this knowledge, still it is manifest before God Who 'shall judge the secrets of men [Rom. 2:16].' Therefore, let us commit judgment to Him. Let us have sympathy one with another. Let us 'keep on bearing one another's burdens, and thus fill up the law of the Christ [Gal. 6:2].' Let us examine our own selves and hasten to fill up that in which we are lacking. As a further safeguard against sin, let the following be observed. Let us each write down both his actions and thoughts upon the tablet of his heart, as if he were

obliged to read them aloud to every man. For when he considers the disgrace he could incur should these things come to light, he will abstain from sin and harbor no base thoughts. For who wishes to be seen while sinning? Who will not rather lie after the commission of a sin, through the wish to escape notice and shame? Therefore, let that which is written be to us in place of the eyes of spectators, our fellow hermits, that blushing as much to write as if we had been caught, we may never think of what is unseemly. Let us do as Paul who said, 'I buffet my body and bring it into bondage, lest, having preached to others, I myself should become unapproved [1 Cor. 9:27].' Thus fashioning ourselves, we shall be able to please the Lord and trample on enemy devices."

These and many other words of advice were given by the saint. He encouraged and inspired those who came to pursue the rigors of asceticism. He sympathized with those who were suffering. The Lord wrought mightily through Anthony, delivering many from their ailments. Such achievements did not cause him to become lifted up in his heart. If it happened that his prayers were not hearkened to that moment, he did not murmur against God but rather gave thanks. He persuaded those who were smitten with afflictions to bear them with greater patience. "Remedies such as these," he was saying, "belong to God Who grants healing to those whom He chooses and at a time which He knows best. Neither I nor any other man has power to grant such relief which only God could do." He continued to console them, which also was a relief and lightened their burdens, by these and other words. The sufferers were happy even to receive his words as a cure. They understood the lesson not to give up but to continue being long-suffering. Thus, he taught the down-hearted sufferers to bear their trials with equanimity. Those who were delivered from demonic possession were instructed to return their gratitude to God only, as the almighty One, and not to Anthony.

Saint Anthony Performs Miracles in the Desert

Now there was a nobleman, Fronto by name, who was an officer of the palace. He suffered terribly from a demon. Fronto was given to biting and gnawing at his tongue. He had a further complication involving his eyesight, which was nearly destroyed and about to leave him totally blind. This man had heard of the wonderworkings of the great Anthony. He went to the mountain and besought him that he might be healed. The saint uttered a prayer, "Depart and thou shalt be healed." Fronto, however, did not wish to leave. He insisted on remaining there for some days, waiting for help. The saint again said to him, "Until when shalt thou sit here to no benefit? Therefore, do thou go forth, and whensoever thou comest into Egypt, thou shalt behold the wonder wrought in thee." He finally believed and departed. Straightway, from afar, as soon as he set eyes on Egypt, his sufferings and

possession ceased and he became whole, according to the word of the venerable Anthony, as our Savior had revealed to the abba in prayer.

There was also a maiden from Busiris Tripolitana, who had a terrible and very loathsome disorder. The discharges of her eyes, nose, and ears, when they fell to the ground, immediately became worms. Together with this general condition of putrefaction, she also suffered from paralysis and a nerve disorder to her eyes. Her parents, having learned that a group of monks was going to the great Anthony, asked permission to accompany them with their daughter. These parents believed in the Lord and the miracle He performed on the woman with the issue of blood [Mt. 9:20]. The monks granted their petition. In due course, the parents, together with their maiden daughter, remained outside the mountain with Paphnutios, the confessor and monk. In the meantime, the monks of that party went to see Anthony. They greeted the saint and wished to inform him first of all about the damsel, but the man of God anticipated them. Anthony himself gave details of her sufferings and how she, together with her parents had journeyed with them. But when they asked permission that she might be admitted, Anthony did not allow it, but said, "Go and, if she be not dead, you will find her cured; for the accomplishment of this is not mine, that she should come to me, pitiful man that I am, but her healing is the work of the Savior Christ, Who in every place shows pity to them that call upon Him. Now know this: the Lord, in His love for man, has revealed to me that He shall heal the damsel where she now rests." Indeed, so the miracle took place. The monks went out and found the maiden cured. Then all together they returned rejoicing to the parents' homeland.

On another occasion, two brethren were coming to see the saint. On the way, the water supply failed. One died, and the other was at the point of death. The surviving brother had no strength to go on, but lay upon the ground expecting to die. In the meantime, as Anthony was abiding in the mountain, he called two monks who chanced to be there, and said to them, "Take a vessel of water and hasten on the road toward Egypt. There were two brethren who were coming, but one is already dead and the other is in danger of dying, unless you should overtake him speedily. For this has been revealed to me by the Lord, even as I was praying." The monks therefore made haste. After one full day, they found the one lying dead and buried him. They also came across his companion, whom they revived with water, and brought him to the old man. But if anyone should inquire why Anthony had not spoken up before the other had died, the question ought not to be asked. For the judgment of death was not Anthony's decision but that of God, Who also judged the one and revealed the condition of the other. But the marvel here was only in the case of the watchful Anthony: that he was sitting in his

mountain retreat with a heart pure and vigilant, when the Lord showed him things happening afar off.

Having this blessed spiritual gift, the saint on another occasion was again sitting on the mountain. He gazed upward and beheld a soul being borne upward into the heavens. There was much joy among those who met him. Then wondering and deeming such a soul to be blessed, he entreated God that the identity of that holy one might be revealed to him. Immediately a voice came to him, saying, "This is the soul of Ammoun, the monk at Nitria." Now Ammoun, commemorated by the holy Church on the 4th of October, had persevered in the ascetic discipline to ca. 356, when he reposed at the age of sixty-two. In order to traverse the distance from Nitria to the mountain where Anthony sojourned, a thirteen-day journey was required. The companions of Anthony therefore, seeing the old man amazed, asked to learn the cause of his state of wonder. The blessed elder said that Abba Ammoun had just reposed.

Now the holy Ammoun was a famous ascetic. Moreover, he used to visit and stay there very often among them. He also wrought many signs and wonders, of which one shall now be recounted. On a certain occasion, Ammoun, together with his disciple Theodore, wished to visit with the great Anthony. Ammoun and Theodore went and found themselves before the river called the Lykos ("Wolf") or Dâbhâ. Ammoun was abashed to remove his clothes in order to swim across unhampered. Hence, both men agreed that each should go away a short space from the other, lest they should see each other's nakedness as they swam across. The blessed Ammoun then was agitated by thoughts of shame and did not even wish to gaze upon his own nakedness. While he was engaged in such a quandary, suddenly, an angel of the Lord came and bore him aloft over the river and safely set him down upon the other side. Theodore, in the meantime, had already stripped and swum across. He was startled to find his elder had overtaken him, since he entered the river well before the elder; yet now he observed his elder's hair, beard, feet, and clothing were utterly dry. His elder had passed over the river by the might of the Holy Spirit. The righteous ascetic Theodore repeatedly asked, "How didst thou cross over, my father?" Ammoun kept making excuses, but Theodore was convinced that divine grace was at work here. Theodore then fell down before the holy man's feet and took hold of them, saying, "Yes or no, holy father: was it divine grace? I will not desist until thou hast shown me how this came to pass." When Ammoun observed that there was no way to conceal the matter from his disciple's persistence, he said, "I shall disclose it to thee, but do thou promise not to reveal it until I shall have departed from this world." Theodore agreed, and Ammoun revealed to him how he had been carried over by an angel, and that his feet never at all touched the water. He then cited how, as the Lord empowered his disciple Peter to walk upon the

water to go to Jesus [Mt. 14:29], so also did he by the command of the Lord. The holy Theodore kept his promise and did not reveal the matter until the old man's repose, even as they agreed.

Now the monks to whom Anthony spoke concerning Ammoun's repose made a note of that day and the hour in which the God-bearing Anthony advised them of Saint Ammoun's repose. Not much time passed before certain brethren from Nitria were passing through. The brethren who had been with Saint Anthony inquired, "Tell us of the repose of the blessed Ammoun. When did it happen?" The traveling monks acknowledged his repose and said that it occurred on such a day and at such an hour, which exactly matched the time when Saint Anthony communicated what was made manifest to him in the Holy Spirit. The brethren marvelled at the holy Anthony's divine vision, which allowed him to see clearly what had taken place at a distance of some thirteen days' journey.

In another instance, the court functionary (*comes*) Archelaos found the blessed elder in the Outer Mountain. He asked him to pray for Polycratia of Laodikeia, an excellent virgin dedicated to Christ. She was suffering terrible pains in her stomach and side. This was brought about by her austere manner of life, which left her weak and exhausted. Anthony offered up prayer on her behalf, at which time Archelaos recorded the day and hour. After the blessed man dismissed him, Archelaos departed for Laodikeia. He found the virgin wholly restored. He immediately inquired when and by what means was she relieved of her infirmity. He then found that the time of her cure corresponded to the time he had written down. He then produced the paper on which was written the same time. All wondered when they knew that the Lord had relieved her of her pain at the time when Anthony made a prayer on her behalf, invoking the goodness of the Savior.

Now concerning those who came to see the holy man, he often foretold their arrival, sometimes days and even months beforehand. Some came only for the sake of seeing him, others on account of illness, and still others because of sufferings incurred from evil spirits. All deemed the labor of the long journey neither trouble nor loss. For each one returned aware that he had received benefit and relief greater than any toil. When anyone exulted in these triumphs and wished to narrate them, the blessed Anthony would entreat them not to marvel at the deeds, but rather at the divine grace of God. For this grace not only vouchsafed unworthy men such great care, but also brought knowledge of God to men according to their capacity.

Afterward, on another occasion, Anthony came down to visit the outer cells. He was asked to embark in a boat and to cross over the river. The saint perceived a foul and fetid odor that smote him only. He asked what might be the cause of the smell, but no one knew. They were answered by

others, "Perhaps what thou art smelling comes from the fish and salted meat on board." He replied, "The stench does not arise from those things." Then, while he was speaking, a youth, possessed by an unclean spirit, was found on the boat. He had slipped in beside the hull and stowed himself away. Then the youth cried out at the sight of the holy man. Saint Anthony rebuked the demon in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. That spirit forthwith departed, leaving the young man whole. All on board, in a state of wonderment, were then persuaded that the evil smell arose from the demon.

Another man, a person of rank, who was sorely tried by a demon, was brought to the saint. The demon was so terrible that the man's mind was carried away, so that he could not understand any question that was put to him. He did not even know that he was being taken to the great Anthony. His whole body was covered with bites from his own mouth. Those who brought him to Anthony besought the saint for his prayers. The elderly Anthony looked upon the young man and was moved to pity. He was resolved to keep watch with the sufferer all that night. Anthony had the young man stand up while he knelt in prayer the whole night. At dawn, the young man approached Anthony from behind, getting ready to smite the saint. He then pushed Anthony, which action received a quick rebuke from others who were present. When Anthony saw that they had become wroth with the youth, he said, "Be not angry with the young man; for it is not he, but the demon which is in him. Since that demon was rebuked and commanded to exit and return to his place, it was the demon who became incensed and did this. Instead, give glory to the Lord, since by this He has given you a sign that the demon was driven forth." When Anthony had said this, straightway the young man became whole. He came at last to his right mind and knew who he was, and through whom deliverance had been wrought. He then began embracing the blessed Anthony and loudly giving thanks and praise to God.

Visions of Saint Anthony

Many monks have related, with the greatest agreement and unanimity, other such accounts done by Anthony; but these do not give rise to as much amazement as the following wonders. Once, when about to eat a biscuit, Anthony rose up to pray at the ninth hour according to his custom. It seemed to him that angels came and bore him aloft. In the air he encountered dreadful and gloomy demons who attempted to prevent his higher ascent. The angelic beings who escorted him contended with those demons who demanded a defense for Anthony's deeds which he committed from birth. The angels rebuked them. The demons attempted to set forth Anthony's sins from birth, but the angels shut their slanderous mouths, saying, "Anthony's sins have already been blotted out through Christ's goodness. You have license to examine whether he kept his promises, the ones which he gave when he took

the holy Schema, to preserve sobriety, poverty, and the other virtues, which he has practised. Therefore, concerning them, you might examine." The demons continued lying, in a shameless manner, accusing Anthony of many things, which they could not prove. Therefore, the saint's ascent lay open and unobstructed. But then he returned to himself and saw himself once more as he had been, in the very place where he had been standing. The saint kept pondering on the vision, so that he forgot to eat. He kept sighing and praying, bringing to mind the words of the apostle regarding "the prince of the power of the air [Eph. 2:2]." He thought upon the great army of enemies against our race and how much we must endure and struggle. He then brought to mind that for this cause we are told, "Take up the full armor of God, in order that ye might be able to withstand in the day, and having counteracted all things, to stand [Eph. 6:13]." Thus, anyone opposing us "might be ashamed, having nothing bad to say about us [Tit. 2:8]." Now, my beloved, in connection with this account, let us be mindful of the apostle when he says that "whether in the body I know not, or whether out of the body I know not, God knoweth—such a one was carried off as far as the third heaven [2 Cor. 12:2]." But Paul was "caught up into Paradise and heard unspeakable words [2 Cor. 12:4]," and then he came down; while Anthony was borne away to the place to which he ascended, received a pledge for his toils, and returned and took up his abode.

Saint Anthony was also granted this spiritual grace that while he was living in solitude on the mountain, should he ever be in perplexity regarding his meditations, the Lord would reveal the answer to him in prayer. Thus, that happy man, as is it written, was "taught of God [Jn. 6:45; cf. Is. 54:13]."

After this, when he once had a discussion with certain men who had come to him, concerning the state of the soul and of what nature its place will be after this life, the following night One from above called him, saying, "Anthony, rise, go out, and pay attention to what thou seest." He went out, knowing that the voice was from God. He looked up and beheld a huge and horrid giant, standing and reaching to the clouds. He also saw that around that giant, on all sides, were numerous beings; some were flying about, and some soared above the giant and escaped heavenward. The giant meanwhile was putting forth his hands that he might lay hold of some of them, but he failed. Those who were borne aloft, free from care, caused that son of perdition to gnash his teeth. Although he rejoiced over those who fell back, he still would have preferred that every man perish with him. Forthwith a voice came, saying, "Consider the matter, understand the vision [Dan. 9:23]." Then was Anthony's mind thoroughly opened to understand [cf. Lk. 24:45]. The one standing in the midst was Satan, the enemy of righteousness, who envies the

faithful. He attempts to stay the passage of souls, but is unable to seize those who have not yet yielded to him, as they pass above him. So, after he had seen this, Anthony was incited to triumph in his old age, "forgetting the things which are behind, and stretching forth to those things which are before [Phil. 3:13]."

Now he was unwilling to speak of these visions. The brethren enjoined him, after they observed that he was sighing during his lengthy prayer to God. By this sign, they perceived the old man had seen something. They therefore pressed him with inquiries to reveal what he had seen. Therefore, as a father who cannot withhold things from his children, he first examined his mind and perceived that it was free of boasting. He then decided to speak to them, so that his spiritual sons might stand up like mighty warriors against the enemy, lest they should be caught by him. He thought that the disclosure would be beneficial to them and show them what the fruit of their labors might be.

Saint Anthony's Reverence for the Clergy

Anthony was also meek in spirit. In all things he preserved scrupulously the Church canons. He responded to the clergy according to each one's rank, honoring them above himself. Toward bishops and priests, he was not ashamed to bow his head at the time of the blessing. Toward deacons, if ever one came seeking help, he discoursed with him on what was profitable. Although as a father he spoke to them words of admonition, during the time of prayer he gave place and would set them in front by reason of the authority which had been given them by God. He not only sought that another should hear the word, but also rejoiced to hear it himself. Though he was an old man and famous, he was never ashamed to do so. On several occasions, he would even ask questions of those who were with him at all times. He would also acknowledge whenever he had been benefitted therefrom.

Now the saint's countenance had a great and wonderful grace, which was a gift also from the Savior. For if he were present in a great company of monks, and one who had never made his prior acquaintance should wish to see him, all the newcomer had to do was quickly gaze over those present, and he would be drawn to distinguish Anthony above the rest, as though attracted by his appearance. It was not that Anthony was taller or of a larger build or more comely than most that he should appear conspicuous, but rather that the serenity of his manner and the purity of his soul radiated from him. He possessed a soul free from disturbances, which was reflected in his outward calm. One could perceive the state of his soul by his outward movements, so that the words of Scripture applied to him which say, "A glad heart promotes health; but the bones of a sorrowful man dry up [Prov. 17:22]." Thus Jacob discerned by Laban's countenance that he was mediating some fraud and so

commented to his wives, saying, "I see the face of your father, that it is not toward me as before, but the God of my father was with me [Gen. 31:5]." In like manner, Samuel recognized David, for the beauty of his eyes, and that he was "very goodly to behold [1 Kgs. (1 Sam.) 16:12]." Thus, by such indications, was Anthony known. He was never disturbed, for his soul was at peace. He was never downcast, for his mind was joyous.

Saint Anthony, Confessor of Orthodoxy

The saint was also firm in the Orthodox Faith, to which he held fast with honor and discernment. He never held communion with the Meletian schismatics,⁵ knowing their dissensions, wickedness, and apostasy from the beginning. The saint also had no friendly dealings with the Manichaeans or any other heretics; or, if he had, only as far as advice that they should convert to piety. For he thought and asserted that intercourse with these would be harmful and destructive to the soul, and said as much: "Neither in the discussion of them nor in their result is there any advantage." Similarly, he detested the heresy of the Arians, and exhorted all neither to approach them nor to embrace their erroneous belief. Once, when certain Ariomaniacs came to him, he questioned them that he might ascertain their impiety. When he learned of their godlessness, he drove them from the mountain, saying that their words were worse than the poison of vipers.

Once the Arians falsely asserted that Anthony held their opinion. The saint was displeased by this slander and moved to righteous indignation. Since the wickedness of the Arians was prevailing and their report against the saint circulated throughout the city, the bishops and other faithful Orthodox besought the saint to come as far as Alexandria, to lend his support to the faithful against the dangerous presence of the heretics. He thereupon descended from the mountain and entered Alexandria (ca. 335), where he denounced the Arian impiety and blasphemy, teaching the people that the Son is coessential (*homoousios*) with the Father and coeternal. But they, even as the heathen, worshipped the creation rather than the Creator. In a loud voice he warned all to beware of the Arian error, saying, "This Arianism is the essence of all heresies. Keep away from them, lest you should be corrupted

⁵ The schism, named after Meletios, Bishop of Lykopolis (ca. 325), is not to be confused with that of the Antiochene bishop, which occurred some fifty years later. The Nicæan Synod took action against the Egyptian bishop. He disagreed with Archbishop Peter of Alexandria regarding the lapsed during the Decian persecution. He was deposed for his irregular behavior and arrogation of the right to ordain clergy to replace those who had been imprisoned. His followers later went with the Arians, among whom they became prominent adversaries against the present hagiographer, Saint Athanasios.

by them. God forbid that the Son of God should be proclaimed to be a creature that hath been made, or that He should be brought into existence from non-being. For He is of one essence with the Father, and He is His Son and Logos. It is therefore great wickedness for a man to say that there was ever a time when Christ was not; for the Logos of God existed at all times. Therefore, flee from association with them, lest you should have a portion in their blasphemy; for 'what communion hath light with darkness [2 Cor. 6:14]?' You must have no connection or association whatsoever with them. For you are in the righteousness of your Faith. Those who say that the Son of the living God is a created thing are in no wise different from the heathen. Believe me, beloved brethren, 'the whole creation groaneth together and travaileth together until now [Rom. 8:22],' in the face of the Arian madness, because it sees its Lord, 'of Whom, and through Whom, and to Whom, are all things [cf. Rom. 11:36]' made, being accounted as one of the creatures."

The faithful rejoiced, hearing the saint anathematize that Christ-fighting heresy. The citizens flocked to hear the great elder of the desert. Not only layfolk and heathen, but even the priests of the Greek pagans sought to behold the man of God, even as he was called, for he wrought many

miracles and wonders. Therefore, many came to believe in the Christ and to receive Baptism during those few days that he spent in the city. His virtues were conspicuous, and his great knowledge and understanding were extraordinary, though it was known that he had not received a formal education. Then when some observed that the elder was being thronged by the crowds and in danger of asphyxiation, they went forth and began dispersing the crowd. The blessed man, not in the least annoyed at the human press, responded to this quietly and with a smile, remarking, "Let the people have



Saint Anthony the Great

their way. For what do think? Is it not easier for me to bear with this crowd of believers than with the more numerous army of demons inhabiting the desert?"

"When he was leaving, and we (Saint Athanasios and those with him) were accompanying him on the way, as we arrived at the gate, a woman from behind, running with all her strength, called out, 'Wait a little for me, O man of God, for my daughter is grievously vexed by a devil. Stay, I beseech thee, lest I too should harm myself with this hard running.' Now the old man, when he heard her, paused. We too asked him to stay, but he wished to do so in any event. When the woman drew near, the child was placed on the ground. Then Anthony prayed and called upon the name of Christ. The damsel was restored and raised whole, for the unclean spirit had gone forth from her. The mother rejoiced and blessed God, and all gave thanks. Anthony himself also rejoiced, for he was departing to the solitude of his mountain as a man about to return to his home after a long absence."

Saint Anthony and the Greek Philosophers

Saint Anthony was exceedingly prudent and wise. The wonder to many was that although he had not had formal schooling, he still was a ready-witted and sagacious man. At all events, two Greek pagan philosophers once came, thinking they could try their skill on Anthony and outwit him. While the old man was in the Outer Mountain, he recognized who they were from their garb and appearance. He went forth to meet them, addressing them by means of an interpreter, "Why, O philosophers, have you troubled yourselves so much to come to a foolish man?" When they said that he was not a foolish man, but exceedingly prudent and wise, he said to them, "If you came to a foolish man, your labor is superfluous; but if you think me wise, become as I am; for at all times we ought to imitate what is good. Had it happened that I had come to you, I should have been moved to become as you. But since you have come to me, become Christians even as I am." The philosophers marvelled at his words. They departed in awe of him, for they saw that even demons feared Anthony and were subject to him.

On another occasion, others such as these met with Anthony in the Outer Mountain. They came thinking to treat him scornfully, as if he were a simpleton, only because he had not received schooling. Anthony said to them, "What do you say? Which came first, the mind or letters? And which is the cause of the other? Is learning the source of the mind, or the mind of learning?" They answered, "The mind is the prince of learning, for it has discovered learning and invented letters." Anthony then said to them, "Does not the man whose mind is enlightened and bright surpass greatly him who has only learning? Therefore, he who has a sound mind has no need of letters." This answer amazed both the bystanders and the philosophers. They

departed marvelling that they had seen so much understanding in an unlettered man, that is, one who did not know Greek. He was not boorish, and his manners were not rough, as though he had been reared in the mountain or desert where he had grown old; much rather, his mannerisms were gracious and polite. His speech was seasoned with the heavenly salt, so that no one was envious or angry, but rather all his visitors rejoiced over him.⁶

After this, certain other philosophers also came. They were men who were deemed wise, and gladly received, among the Greeks. They asked the elder questions concerning faith in Jesus Christ. When they attempted to dispute and confound him concerning the preaching of the divine Cross, Anthony paused a little, bearing with them and pitying their ignorance, and then spoke, through an interpreter who could skillfully interpret his words, saying, "Which is more beautiful, to confess the Cross or to attribute to those whom you call gods adultery, fornication, parricide, incest, and the seduction of boys? For that which is chosen by us, the Christians, is a sign of courage and a sure token of the contempt of death. That religion which you preach is a service to impurity, the teacher of obscenity, and cultivation of the passions of licentiousness. Next, which is better, to say that the Logos of God was not changed in His divinity, but, being the same, He took a human body for the salvation and restoration of man, that having shared in human birth He might make man partake in the divine and spiritual nature? Or do you think it better to liken the divine to senseless animals and consequently to worship four-footed beasts, creeping things, and the likenesses of men? For these things are the objects of reverence of you wise men. Our belief proclaims the incarnation of Christ took place for the redemption of men, and that it should not be for a cause for fornication, falsehood, injustice, gluttony, drunkenness, lasciviousness, and the rest of the practises of the world. We exhort men to shun these things, for a penalty has been decreed for those who dare to transgress in respect of one of these things. Now you, through the fable of error, labor in abominable works. We, however, trust in the power and mercy of God, believing that the preaching of the Cross is the best for us to follow.

⁶ Saint Anthony is quoted as saying, "People are generally called intelligent through a wrong use of this word. The intelligent are not those who have studied the sayings and writings of the wise men of old, but those whose soul is intelligent, who can judge what is good and what is evil. They avoid what is evil and harms the soul. They intelligently care for, and practise, what is good and profits the souls greatly thanking God. It is these alone who should properly be called intelligent. A truly intelligent man has only one care—wholeheartedly to obey almighty God and to please Him." Kadloubovsky & Palmer, "170 Texts on Saintly Life," §§ 1, 2, *Early Fathers from the Philokalia*, p. 21.

But you, without any discernment, ascribe all kinds of hateful deeds to your gods, so that you without any further thought may do everything that pleases you. The Christian Faith, in regard to the almighty God's mercy, believes that the incarnation was possible for God, but in such a way that this condescension had not caused Him to lose dignity.

"But you, who proudly announce that the soul issues from the purest source of God, say that the soul has shamefully fallen. Furthermore, you say that the soul is an image of the mind and proclaim that the soul is unborn. When you have meditated well upon this subject, you change back and say that it shall be dissolved. Because of this opinion, which comes from your study, you lay it down that the mind itself will be broken up and changed. Thus, after proudly claiming that the soul issues from the purest source of God, you say that it has shamefully fallen. Thus, you desecrate this nature by your insults. Now, of necessity, the image must in its form and similitude be exactly like that of which it is the copy. Consequently, the image which according to you retains the natural likeness and substance of its maker, sends back its own humiliation and injuries to its origin. So beware: your insults to the soul will, as a result of your blasphemy, redound to their father, as you call him.⁷

"Now let us discuss the Cross of the Lord our God. I ask you, how is it an obscenity of religion? Is it not better to endure the Cross or a death of this kind at the hands of wicked men than to bewail the Egyptian mythical tales which have spread to the Greeks and Romans, regarding the dubious wanderings of Isis in search of her husband Osiris, or the plots of Typhon, who murdered Osiris, or the banishment of the Titan Cronus, who mutilated his father and seized world dominion, and then swallowed his children, except for Zeus (Jupiter), but later regurgitated them? You ought to be put to the blush at Zeus' murder of his father and his incest or even at his ravishing of both women and boys. He flowed into Danae's lap, sought the embraces of Leda, and corrupted a boy with birds as his accomplices. These are the fables you believe and worship. These are the accounts that decorate your temples. These things are not wisdom. Therefore, weigh our words with impartial justice. Is all or nothing to be believed in the sacred books of the Christians? Why do you make a mockery of the Cross only and not keep silent regarding the resurrection? Those who have written of the latter also wrote the former. When you make mention of the Cross, why do you not also recount the resurrection from the dead? Why do you omit speaking of the miracles, I mean, the restoration of the blind, the hearing of the deaf, the cleansing of the

⁷ Saint Anthony here refutes the teaching of the Neo-Platonists, especially Plotinos, who maintained that the Mind, or *Nous*, was the first emanation from the One.

lepers, and the healing of the paralytics? There are also the accounts of the walking upon the water, the flight of demons, the raising from the dead, and the return from Hades of those who were dead. Your judgment therefore is not just, for you do not judge matters rightly. You do not read the Scriptures in the proper manner. But read and see that the deeds of Christ prove Him to be God come upon earth for the salvation of men. You do not deal fairly in this matter when you clearly accept certain things, but reject those things which are akin to them.

"But do you tell us your religious beliefs, that is, if you are not ashamed to do so. What can you say of these disgraceful creatures except senselessness, grossness, and ferocity? But, as I hear, you now wish to say that these cruel and obscene things are spoken of by you as legends, and so you veil them in allegory. According to you, the rape of the maiden Persephone (Libera) is allegorized as that of the earth; the lameness of Hephaestus (Vulcan) represents fire; Hera (Juno), the air; Apollo, the sun; Artemis (Diana), the moon; Poseidon (Neptune), the sea; and Jupiter, the foremost of lechers, the sky. You call the elements gods, that you may mislead men from the one God Who is the Creator of the universe. Now if the beauty of the elements has drawn you to write such stories, you should have limited yourselves to admiration, and not to have gone so far as to make gods of creatures and creations, by offering them the worship that is due to the Creator only. Your logic is distorted. You divert to the house the honor that is due the architect; you ascribe glory to the household that is due to the king; and you heap upon the soldiers honors which are due to the general. You do not worship the Creator Himself, but serve the creature. Is it not time to have done with this error and deceit? What then can you possibly reply to these things, that we may know whether the Cross has anything deserving of mockery?"

The philosophers were at a loss, turning hither and thither, in their embarrassment. Anthony smiled and spoke through an interpreter, saying, "Sight itself proves that the elements are in servitude. But since you go about collecting things for dialectical proof, of which you are masters, you would force us to use this ploy to affirm our religion. You take refuge in guileful words, skillfully utilized, so that others should journey on without the truth, devoid of worship of the true God. But since you prefer demonstrative arguments, answer me this: how is knowledge of God truly comprehended and proved more clearly? By means of demonstrative arguments or by the working of faith? Which comes first: an active faith or verbal proof?" They answered that the working of faith takes precedence and is true knowledge. Anthony remarked, "You have answered well, for faith arises as the sign of the love which is made perfect in the soul. Dialectic depends on the skill of

those who invent strings of words. For those who have active faith, demonstrative argument is needless, or even superfluous. For what we know through faith, this you attempt to prove through words; and often you are not even able to express what we have comprehended. No matter how many comparisons and similitudes you may contrive, you shall never be able to narrate the things of the truth which we have perceived. Therefore, it is evident that our faith, which is expressed in works, exceeds in excellence your wisdom which consists of a discussion of words. Your professional sophisms cannot by any means be rightly compared with active faith which is superior.

"We Christians therefore hold the mystery not in the wisdom of speech [1 Cor. 1:17] or Greek arguments, but in the power of faith, richly supplied to us by God through Jesus Christ. In proof of this claim, behold how, without having learned letters, we believe in God. We possess understanding concerning His creation. From His works, we recognize His providence and mercy over all things. We have confidence that our faith in Christ is effective, which supports us, whereas you rely on your words which are full of contention. God's words are sufficient for us to attain to the knowledge of God. The portents of the idols among you are being done away with, but our Faith is expanding in every place. In your case, although you have an abundance of words and arguments, still you have no power to convert even one Christian to Greek paganism. While our faith is effectual, your well-cultivated sophistries and polished words are powerless against the teaching of Christ. We who teach the Faith of Christ have crushed the worship of idols. We have exposed your superstition, since all have come to acknowledge Christ as true God. The preaching of the Cross and Christ crucified, though despised by you, has put to flight the demons, whom you fear as if they were gods. Where the sign of the Cross is placed or named, cunning error has been brought to an end. Whether it be divination or oracles or magic or sorcery, it has been brought to nought.

"Tell us therefore where your legendary oracles are now? Where are the charms and incantations of the Egyptians? Where the delusions of the magicians? When did all these things cease and grow weak, except when the Cross of Christ arose? Is then the Cross worthy to be despised? Much rather, should not the things brought to nought by it and convicted of weakness be deserving of mockery? Now this is a marvellous thing, that your religion was never persecuted, but even was held in honor and magnified, while the followers of Christ are persecuted, and still our side flourishes and multiplies over yours. Our religion was held in contempt and harassed, though it was great and glorious in its operation, and yet it spread and filled the universe while your religion perishes. For when has the knowledge of God so shone

forth? When have sobriety and the excellence of virginity appeared as now? When has death been so despised, except when the Cross of Christ has appeared? Now no one doubts this when he sees the martyr scorning death for the sake of Christ, when he sees for Christ's sake the virgins of the Church keeping themselves pure and undefiled.

"These are signs sufficient to prove that faith in Christ alone is the true religion. But still you seek for conclusions based on reasoning. We however make our proof 'not in persuasive words of human wisdom [1 Cor. 2:4],' as our teacher has it, but we persuade by faith which manifestly precedes argumentative proof."

The saint then said, "Behold there are here some vexed with demons." Now there were certain people, disquieted by demons, who had come to the blessed man. Anthony brought those suffering souls into the midst and said to the philosophers, "Draw nigh and cleanse these afflicted sufferers by whatsoever means you may wish, whether it be arguments, calling on your idols, working sorceries, or pronouncing your enchantments. But if you are unable to give them any relief, put away your strife with us and stand aside that you might see the power of the Cross of Christ." The philosophers, struck with amazement, drew back. Anthony then called upon Christ and made the sign of the honorable Cross over the sufferers three times. Straightway, the men stood up whole and in their right mind, giving thanks to the Lord. The philosophers marvelled at what they had witnessed and were also astonished exceedingly at the understanding of the holy man. But Anthony said, "Why do you marvel at this? Which is better, tell me, words or works to show forth with certainty what is true knowledge of God? Is a demonstration of the true Faith to be made through talk or action? Which is to be preferred? Surely the proper response is a demonstration of efficacious action. But know this: we are not the doers of such works, but Christ Who wrought them by means of those who fear Him and believe on Him. Believe, therefore, also yourselves, and you shall see that with us there is here no handicraft of the devils or trick of words, but faith and love being energized, which can take place in you. If you would possess this love, there shall no longer be any need for you to seek after demonstrative arguments. You will consider faith in Christ sufficient." These were the words of Anthony to the philosophers. They stayed to hear him whom they put to the test, only to receive ample proof of the spiritual and mental adornments of the old man. After they accorded the venerable elder a respectful farewell, they openly confessed that their meeting with him had been of immense benefit to them. With great honor, they embraced and kissed him. After they acknowledged that they were benefitted by him, they returned to their own country.

Emperor Constantine and His Sons Correspond with Saint Anthony

The fame of the saint also came to the ears of Emperor Constantine and two of his sons, Constans (337-350) and Constantius II (337-361). Though Abba Anthony lived in obscurity, he was held in honor by the imperial court, which heard of his deeds. They besought the holy man to reply to them as a father would his children. They wrote frequently and entreated him that he might offer up prayers on their behalf and correspond with them by letters. The saint in no wise became puffed up at this singular distinction from the rulers. He preserved his humility and sweet disposition. Now the saint was not a quick writer. When he communicated with the emperors, with all meekness, he offered them soul-saving counsels, exhorting them to leave off any arrogant thoughts that their present glory in this life might usher in. He admonished them to be mindful of the future recompense and that the Christ, the only true and everlasting King, was to be emulated by earthly kings. He went on to say that they should imitate Christ's love for man with philanthropic deeds, care of the poor, and meting out righteous judgment. After the imperial letters arrived, which Anthony preferred not to receive, he would assemble the brethren and those who happened to be present, and remark, "I suppose that you marvel that the emperor and princes should write to us poor men in the desert. But what need is there to wonder at this? In truth, what we have here is one man writing to another man. What is truly deserving of wonder is how God not only wrote the law for the children of men, but also spoke to us through His only-begotten Son." He then read out the epistles received from the palace. He would say, "It is not within my ability to craft such letters as they write." Since Constantine and his princes were deemed Christians, he deemed it rude not to respond, or to treat the epistles lightly. If he did not answer, they might become displeased at being snubbed.

The saint was beloved and venerated by all. Many entreated him to become both their father and teacher. During this phase, the saint was ninety years of age. It was at this time that a divine revelation came to him and led him into the inner desert and to the venerable Abba Paul of Thebes, whom Abba Anthony interred. The account of their meeting is given in its entirety on the day of Saint Paul's commemoration, the 15th of January.

Saint Anthony Prophesies of the Beastly Acts of the Arians

The holy man returned to the Inner Mountain and resumed his wonted discipline. On another occasion, as the saint was sitting and working on palm leaves, he beheld a fearful and solemn revelation as he was in a state of ecstasy. He was seen to tremble and sigh. Now on other occasions, when people came to him, as he was sitting or walking, as it is written in Daniel, Anthony also turned his face toward the ground and kept silent [cf. Dan.

10:15]. Then, after a season, Anthony resumed the thread of what he had been saying before to the brethren who were with him. It was evident to his companions that Abba Anthony was seeing a vision. Wrapped in a vision, Anthony, while on the mountain, would often see what was happening in Egypt. Afterward, he disclosed what he had seen to Serapion the bishop,⁸ who was indoors with him. But on this particular occasion when Anthony came into a state of ecstasy, he kept sighing deeply and groaning. Then after some time, he turned to those present with groans and trembling. He then prayed and fell on his knees, where he remained a long time. After he arose, he wept. His companions, then beginners in the monastic life, began to tremble, and fear gripped them. They desired to learn from him what he had seen. Since they importuned him greatly, he was compelled to speak. After many groans, he said, "O my children, it were better to die before what has appeared in the vision should pass." And when again they asked him, he sighed deeply and said sadly, "Great wrath is about to seize our Church, and it is on the point of being given up to men who are like irrational beasts. For I saw the holy Table of the Lord and wild mules standing around it on all sides in a ring. These creatures were kicking not only the things therein, but they were also kicking the faithful. And you saw," said he, "how I groaned, for I heard a voice saying, 'My altar shall be made an abomination.'" These things the old man saw, which took place after two years (ca. 343), when the Arians held sway in the Church. These things came to pass with the Arian spoilation of the churches, when they violently plundered the vessels and made the heathen carry them. They even forced the heathen from their workplaces to join in their services, and in their presence did upon the holy Table as they would. Then we all understood that these kicks of the mules signified to Anthony what the Arians, senselessly like beasts, are now doing. The profane and depraved acts perpetrated by the Arians and their minions cause every sober Christian's mind to recoil in horror. Virgins and honorable married women were raped, the faithful were slaughtered in the churches, and abominations were committed in baptistries. All of these events were accurately seen by Abba Anthony. But when he saw this vision, his sharp eye also beheld other future events. He consoled therefore the brethren, saying, "Be not grieved, my children; because speedily again shall the Church take up her previous good order and shine forth brilliantly; for in a short time, impiety shall vanish and the splendor of piety shall shine forth as before. You shall behold those who were persecuted to have been restored. The horn of the righteous, those who hold to the true Faith, shall be exalted. They shall

⁸ Bishop Serapion (339-ca. 360), surnamed "Scholasticus," of Thmuis in the Nile Delta, was also a correspondent of Saint Athanasios the Great [cf. *P.G.* 26:530].

proclaim the truth boldly and freely in every quarter. The evil one, together with those who work his will, shall turn on his heels. The time of these things shall be short. The Lord shall send redemption to His people, and the just shall live by faith.⁹ As for yourselves, beware that you do not defile yourselves with the Arians; for their teaching is not that of the apostles, but that of demons and their father the devil; yea, rather, it is barren and senseless, the product of perverse minds, like the senselessness of the mules."



Saint Anthony the Wonder-worker

The Wonderworkings of Saint Anthony at the Outer Mountain

These were the accomplishments of the venerable Anthony. Such were the words of this blessed man. We ought not to doubt whether such miracles and wonders were wrought by the hand of this man; for it is the promise of the Savior Who says, "If ye have faith as a grain of mustard, ye shall say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it shall move; and nothing shall be impossible to you [Mt. 17:20]."

And again He said, "Verily, verily, I say to you that whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in My name, He will give it to you....Keep on asking, and ye shall receive [Jn. 16:23, 24]." The Lord also said to His disciples and to all those who believe in Him, "Be healing the sick, cleansing lepers, raising the dead, casting out demons; freely ye received, freely give [Mt. 10:8]."

The blessed man healed all manner of sickness. The cures were not wrought by him as one giving commands, but by praying and invoking the name of Christ, so that it was manifest that it was not he who was working the cures, but that God wrought them by his hands. The old man was triumphant in all such matters; for the Lord fulfilled his desire with good things, and his strength was renewed as the eagle's [Ps. 102:5]. Anthony's part in the miracles consisted of prayer and discipline. Although he possessed love for his fellow man and was cheerful in showing it, still he came to be grieved and afflicted by reason of the continual flux of people coming to see him. Now he had settled on the Inner Mountain for the sake of rejoicing in the contemplation of divine things. At length, he was troubled by so many people that in order to have some respite he was compelled to repair to the Outer Mountain. It should be known that his good fame spread in every level of society, not only among private individuals, but also among the nobility and those in the judicial system. Now the judges used to ask him to come down from the

⁹ Cf. Ps. 110:8; Hab. 2:4; Rom. 1:17; Gal. 3:11; Heb. 10:38.

mountain that they might consult with him and enjoy his wise judgments. It was not possible for them to go to the holy man, on account of their large following of people, that is, those involved in lawsuits, and also on account of the general fatigue which ensued from the journey to the saint's habitation. Though Anthony avoided such encounters and excused himself, yet they remained firm and persisted. Thereupon, in order to bring Anthony into their midst more often, the judges and governors also craftily contrived to send Greek pagans and other people who had been arrested and charged. The judges had dispatched, under military escort, their prisoners in chains, so that, on account of these and their pitiable circumstances, Anthony might come down. These defendants would then implore the saint to intercede on their behalf, for which Anthony, as one sympathetic, did not wish to turn them away without hope. Thus by these means and pretexts, the judges often had occasion to confer with the holy man. Thereupon, the saint, constrained by necessity and seeing the defendants lamenting, did not wish to reject them or turn them away empty and despairing. He came into the Outer Mountain; and again, his labor was not unprofitable. For his coming was advantageous and serviceable to many. He was of profit to the judges, counseling them to prefer justice to all things. He admonished them to fear God and bring to remembrance that "with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged [Mt. 7:2]." But of all things which he did, he loved more than all his sojourn in the mountain. Therefore, after he had been compelled by those who begged his help and performed for them his kind offices by speaking with either the governor or military commander, he hastened back to his philosophical retreat.

On another occasion, when he was importuned by those prisoners in distress, the military commander (*doux*) sent numerous messengers requesting that the saint come down from the mountain. Moved by the tears of those prisoners in their wretchedness, he went and gave advice that was beneficial for salvation. He commended the prisoners, acquitting some of them. The saint then began to hasten away toward his mountain hermitage. The military commander implored him to remain another day or two. Abba Anthony entreated him courteously to be allowed to return, and offered this pithy simile, saying, "Just as fish, if they should remain long on dry land, perish, so do monks suffer injury and loss if they tarry long with those of the world." He then said, "Therefore, it is meet that as fish spend their lives beneath the waters, so should we monastics carry out our lives and works in the wilderness. Therefore as fish must hurry to the sea, so must we hasten to the mountain, lest we should forget the things within us." The military commander, after he had heard this and many other things from Abba Anthony, remarked, "He speaks that which is given to him from heaven and not from

himself. How could this simple man possess such a wealth of knowledge and understanding, unless he was beloved by God and instructed by divine love?"

During the reign of Constantius, the Christians were persecuted bitterly on account of the Arians—that name of ill-omen. Now there was a certain official at Alexandria, the profane Gregory, who perpetrated many atrocities against the Orthodox faithful, which exceed the power of language to describe, and which anyone who should hear would think to be incredible. How many monks were stripped and scourged! How many bishops were wounded and banished! How many virgins were beaten in public! All this occurred as Gregory sat by with Valacius (Balak), the military commander of Egypt (340-345). The reason why this Gregory acted thus was because he had not received his ordination according to ecclesiastical rule, nor had he been called to be a bishop by apostolical tradition. Instead, this Gregory had been sent out from court with military power and pomp, as one entrusted with a secular government. He therefore boasted rather to be the friend of governors, than of bishops and monks. Whenever, therefore, our Father Antony wrote to him from the mountain, as godliness is an abomination to a sinner, so Gregory abhorred the letters of the holy man. But whenever the emperor, or a general, or other magistrate, sent Gregory a letter, he was as much overjoyed as those in the Proverbs, of whom it is written: "Alas for those who forsake right paths, to walk in ways of darkness; who rejoice in evils, and delight in wicked perverseness [Prov. 2:13, 14]." So Gregory honored with presents the bearers of these letters. Now Abba Anthony sent a final letter to Valacius, stating: "I see God's wrath coming against thee. Cease, therefore, persecuting the Christians. If thou desirest thy health, desist and accept correction, so that the angel of wrath may be restrained against thee. Behold, he is set to come. Do this therefore, lest divine justice should apprehend thee and thou wailest to no benefit." Valacius laughed and spat upon the letter, casting it from him. He insulted those who bore the message, bidding them to tell this to Anthony: "Since thou takest thought for the monks, soon I will come after thee also." And five days had not passed before divine justice came upon him. For Valacius and Nestorius, the prefect of Egypt (345-352), went forth on horseback to the first halting-place from Alexandria, which is called Chaereu of Lower Egypt, some seventeen miles southeast of Alexandria. The horses belonged to Valacius, and were the quietest of all his stable. But the men had not gone far toward the place when the horses began to frisk with one another as they were wont to do; and suddenly the quieter beast, on which Nestorius sat, with a bite, unseated Valacius and attacked him, and tore his thigh so badly with its teeth that he was borne straight back to the city. Three days later, the mocker Valacius

expired. All were sore astonished, because what Anthony had foretold had been so speedily fulfilled.¹⁰

These therefore are the things which Abba Anthony was wont to say to the judges of this world. His manner of counsel was loving. He exhorted them not to be puffed up in their minds or magnify themselves over the people. There was none among the governors at that time who did not gladly hearken to Abba Anthony, so that they repented of their evil deeds. Abba Anthony also demonstrated great care for those who were treated unjustly or were plundered. He would bear all their troubles. His words were comforting and soothing, so that many forsook their possessions and occupations and enrolled in the rank of monks. The saint admonished the disorderly and supported the wronged. He became the general physician of all Egypt who was sent by God. All who were grieving or mourning on account of their dead or some other loss or injury, he sent away consoled. The poor and needy were encouraged and comforted, so that many among the poor, though broken by poverty, left the saint despising riches. Those who were angry or indignant, he caused to be filled with love, graciousness, or long-suffering. Those who were licentious or intemperate, he brought to sobriety. Those who were possessed by demons or troubled by perverse thoughts, he marvellously cured. Monks who were sorrowing or being neglectful departed from him full of strength as mighty men of war. Young men, burning with lust and desire for pleasure, went away from the abba with their lusts quenched and mortified. When they beheld the old man triumphant, they henceforth contended in the forefront of the battle of self-restraint. Those who were troubled in their minds went away composed and rational. In a word, all those who met with the venerable elder were greatly benefitted.

The saint had the grace of being able to distinguish and understand the wiliness of the demons. By this gift of discerning of spirits [1 Cor. 12:10], he comprehended not only those things wrought by the adversary, but also the causes by which men were troubled and tempted. Thus those who were suffering from the devices of the evil one were given both armor and shield by Anthony. Even virgins who beheld the holy man from afar, left those to whom they were betrothed and betrothed themselves to Christ. Not only Egyptians sought out the holy man, but also many others came from afar with their questions, which he answered suitably. Needless to say, with his repose, all the people mourned their orphanhood. His memory in fact never died from among the people. Each encouraged himself by the repetition of Abba Anthony's triumphs and sayings.

¹⁰ See also Saint Athanasios, *History of the Arians*, Part II(12, 14).

The Repose of Saint Anthony

"It is worthwhile that I (Athanasios) should relate, and that you, as you wish it, should hear the account of his repose, which is worthy of imitation." According to his custom, he visited the monks in the Outer Mountain. The matter of his repose was not hidden from him. Having learned from divine providence that his own end was nigh, he said to the brethren, "This is my last visit to you which I shall make. I have come to bid you farewell, for I would be surprised if we should see each other again in this life. At length, the time of my departure is at hand; for I have exceeded a century by five years. In but a few days, I shall go to Him Whom I desire." When they heard his announcement they wept, embraced, and kissed the elder, as though he were departing from them that very moment. But he, as though sailing from a foreign city to his own, spoke joyously, and exhorted them, saying, "Do not become negligent or careless in your asceticism, but conduct yourselves daily as though it were your last day. This is how each one of you ought to struggle. Guard yourselves against sordid thoughts. 'Keep on desiring earnestly the better gifts of grace. Keep on pursuing love and emulously desiring spiritual gifts [1 Cor. 12:31, 14:1].' Guard yourselves against associating with the Meletian schismatics and the heretics. You know the cause of their schisms and their profane and cunning ways. With all your might, flee from the doctrine of the Arians. Their wickedness is now patently obvious to all. Be free from all communion with them, so you shall be able to take good heed to the preaching of the truth of our Lord Jesus Christ and to receive the true doctrine of our fathers. Be not troubled if you see the judges protecting them, for their mortal and short-lived pomp shall cease. Therefore, keep yourselves untainted by them and observe the tradition of the fathers. Preserve and uphold chiefly the holy Faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, which you have learned from the Scriptures, and of which you have often been put in mind by me."

Now when the brethren were urging him to abide with them until he should repose, he suffered it not, for many reasons. He showed his refusal by keeping silence. He was especially adamant regarding the undue and age-old honor in the funeral rites accorded to the dead by Egyptians, who were wont to wrap in linen cloths the bodies of good men, and especially of the holy martyrs. The Egyptians did not bury their relics underground, but rather placed them on couches kept in their houses, thinking by these means to honor the departed. Anthony often urged the bishops to give commandment or issue an ecclesiastical decree to the people addressing this practise. In like manner, the blessed Anthony taught the laity and reproved the women, sternly saying, "This habit was neither lawful nor holy in the least. The burial places of the early fathers, the prophets, and the apostles, are known to you this day. Their

bodies, until now, are preserved in tombs. Indeed, the very body of the Lord was laid in a tomb, and a stone was laid upon it, and hid it until He rose on the third day." And thus saying, he showed that he who did not bury the bodies of the dead after death transgressed the law, even though they were sacred. He would argue, "For what is greater or more sacred than the Master's body which was buried?" Many therefore having heard this explanation, henceforth buried the dead underground, and gave thanks to the Lord that they had been taught rightly.

But he, knowing the tyranny of long and accepted custom, and fearing that his body would be treated this way, hastened away. After he bade farewell to the monks in the Outer Mountain, he entered the Inner Mountain, where he was accustomed to abide in his cell. After a few



Saint Anthony Falls Sick

months he fell sick. He summoned those who were there with him, his two disciples, Makarios and Amathas. They had been with him in the mountain for fifteen years, practising the discipline and attending on Anthony on account of his age. The elder said to them, "I go the way of my fathers, for I perceive that I am called by the Lord. I also ask that you be watchful and grow not weary of your long discipline, but as though now making a beginning, zealously preserve your readiness and determination. For you know the plots and assaults of the demons, how fierce they are, but how little power they have. Therefore fear them not. Be faithful, trusting in the Lord and being ever renewed in Him. Live as though dying daily [1 Cor. 15:31]. Give heed to yourselves, and remember the admonition you have heard from me.

"Again, have no communion with the schismatics, nor any dealings at all with the heretical Arians. For you know how I shunned their strange doctrines and deemed their blasphemy as filthy and hostile to Christ. Therefore be the more earnest always to be found with the Lord and His saints, that after death they also may receive you into the everlasting tabernacles [Lk. 16:9] as well-known friends. Ponder over these things and think of them. You know that I have never held a conciliatory conversation with them on account of their perverted will and their continual war against Jesus Christ.

"Moreover, if you have any love for me and are mindful of me as of a father, suffer no one to take my body into Egypt, lest haply they should

embalm me and lay me up in their houses;¹¹ for to avoid this I entered into the mountain and came here. Furthermore, you know how I always put to rebuke those who had this custom, and exhorted them to desist. Bury my body, therefore, and cover it with dirt yourselves. Let my words be observed by you that no one may know the place but your dear selves alone. For at the resurrection of the dead, I shall receive it incorruptible from the Savior.

“Furthermore, I would have you distribute my garments as follows. To Athanasios the bishop, give one sheepskin and the garment whereon I am laid.¹² Now he had of course given me that garment new, but over the years it has grown old with me. To Serapion the bishop, give the other sheepskin; and for yourselves, keep the hair garment. Be working at your salvation and saving yourselves in the Lord, for you shall no longer find Anthony in your midst; for I am being translated to Him Whom I desire. For the rest, my children, God be with you, for Anthony is departing and is with you no more.”



The Repose of Saint Anthony

After Anthony spoke those words, his disciples ardently kissed him as they sobbed. The saint then stretched out his legs, as he beheld his friends, the holy angels, coming to him. The sight of them made him exceedingly joyful, but this signal caused the disciples to weep and cry out for their elder. The saint's countenance was that of a man who sees a friend whom he rejoices to meet. Abba Anthony said nothing further. He

quietly reposed and was gathered to his fathers. He had surrendered his soul into the hands of God in the year 356, during the reign of Constantius II.

Afterward, according to the saint's commandment, his disciples, without hesitation, resolutely prepared him for burial underground. They wrapped his relics round in the garment in which he was clad. They dug a hole in the ground, carried him outdoors, and interred him in the earth. No

¹¹ The saint enjoins that he should not be mummified in accordance with pagan Egyptian custom.

¹² The garment mentioned here is the same referred to in the Life of Saint Paul of Thebes, who, on the point of death, requested it of Saint Anthony, saying, "I beseech thee for love's sake, unless it be too great a trouble, go and fetch the mandya (cloak) given thee by Athanasios the Great, for whom I have profound respect, that I might be buried with that garment wrapped around me."

one knows to this day where the relics were buried, save those two disciples only. But each of those who received any one of Saint Anthony's garments regarded it as a most valuable possession, nay, a precious treasure. Indeed, even to look upon any of the great abba's garments, one could imagine that he was looking at the blessed man in it. Whosoever anyone put on one of those garments, such a one felt as if he were arrayed in the abba's commandments and promises, so that he would take up the blessed Anthony's counsels with great joy.

This closes our account of the life of the blessed old man, Anthony, in the body, while the previous narrative spoke of the beginning of his deeds and labors. If what has been recorded appears to be too small in comparison with the number of the triumphs of the blessed man, still from what has been set down, one can imagine how great was this divine man of God. Abba Anthony, from his youth to so great an age, ever showed constancy in the ascetical life. It should be noted that neither through old age did he yield to the desire for costly food, nor through the infirmity of his body did he change the fashion of his clothing. He was not urged by bodily infirmity even to wash his feet with water. While he maintained his discipline, keeping his body in restraint, God preserved him entirely free from harm. Abba Anthony's eyes, despite his old age, were undimmed. They were quite sound, and he saw clearly. As for his teeth, he had not lost one, but they had become worn to the gums through the great age of the old man. Both his hands and his feet were sound and healthy and remained strong, contrary to the laws of nature for centenarians. His ability to walk was unhampered. His head never ached. While other men were feeding on dainty meats and costly foods, taking baths, and donning fine clothes, he possessed strength which was out of all proportion to his aged body, and maintained a cheerful disposition.

A clear proof of his virtue, his perfect love toward God, and God's love for Anthony, may be seen in his good fame being blazoned in every place. All beheld him with wonder. Those who have never seen him long for him. His faith and love spread throughout all the provinces. It was not from discourses, or writings, or worldly wisdom, or crafty arts and schemes, that he gained renown; but God performed this work. This was Christ's gift. For from whence into Spain and into Gaul, how into Africa and Asia, and Rome herself, was this secluded man heard of who abided hidden in a mountain, unless God had made Him known everywhere? For God had also promised this to Anthony at the beginning when He said, "I will make thy name known throughout the world." For even if they work secretly, even if they wish to remain in obscurity, yet the Lord shows such persons as lamps to enlighten all, that those who hear may thus know that the precepts of God are able to make men prosper and in this way be zealous in the path of virtue.

Epilogue to the Life of Saint Anthony

Read these words, therefore, to the rest of the brethren that they may learn what ought to be the life and conduct of a monk. Let them hear and believe, that they might believe that our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ glorifies those who glorify Him. Let them know that the Lord leads those who serve Him not only to the kingdom of the heavens, but even here, though they should hide themselves and seek withdrawal, He makes them known and spoken of everywhere on account of their virtue and the help they render others. And if need be, read this account among the heathen, that even in this way they may learn not only that our Lord Jesus Christ is God and the Son of God, but also that the Christians who truly serve Him and piously believe on Him, not only prove that the demons, whom the Greek pagans themselves think to be gods, are no gods, but also trample on those deceivers and corrupters of mankind, and cast them out and put them to flight, through Jesus Christ our Lord, to Whom is due dominion, honor, and veneration, together with His unoriginate Father and the all-holy and good and life-creating Spirit, now and ever and unto the ages of the ages. Amen.



Saint Anthony the New

**On the 17th of January,
the holy Church commemorates
our venerable and
God-bearing Father
ANTHONY the New
and Wonder-worker.**

Anthony the New, our venerable father, hailed from Vereia (Berroia) of Macedonia.¹³ He was the scion of virtuous and prosperous parents. He received a liberal education and rearing, which led him to desire a life of virtue. The ever-memorable one, even from his childhood years, was consumed with love for the divine. He therefore left behind dainty living and every luxury, together with the vain pleasures and pastimes of this life, and re-

paired to the Monastery of Peraia, situated by a running river. At that time, a multitude of monastics flourished and labored at virtue in that holy precinct.

¹³ Berroia in Macedonia is a city at the west end of the central Macedonian plain.