

**On the 27<sup>th</sup> of July, the holy Church commemorates  
the glorious Great-martyr and Unmercenary Healer  
PANTELEIMON.<sup>1</sup>**

Panteleimon, the glorious great-martyr, flourished during the years of Emperor Galerius Maximian.<sup>2</sup> Panteleimon hailed from the city of Nikomedia.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The Life of Saint Panteleimon was recorded in Greek, which manuscript begins: "Of the dark and hazy mist of idolatry that hovered over the entire inhabited area...." The text is extant in the Athonite Monasteries of the Great Lavra and Iveron. The text was rendered in simpler Greek by Agapios the Cretan and set down in his book, entitled *Eklogion*. It was from this source that it was revised and edited for incorporation into *The Great Synaxaristes*. There is extant an encomium, simple and clear, to Saint Panteleimon. The manuscript is found in the main church of the Athonite Skete of Koutloumousiou. Niketas the Rhetor also composed an encomium to the unmercenary healer, which manuscript begins: "Wondrous is God in His saints." The text is preserved in the Great Lavra, the Coenobium of Dionysiou, the fifth *Panegyric* of the sacred Monastery of Vatopedi, and Iveron. At the latter monastery there is also extant another encomium to the martyr, which manuscript begins: "Nobody could surpass him." Saint Joseph the Hymnographer painstakingly composed a canon to him, comprising all eight modes. The text is found at the Athonite Skete of Kafsokalyvia, within the Church of Saint Panteleimon. In the Athonite Skete of Koutloumousiou there is also found a Supplicatory Canon to this saint. Within the *Menaion* for this day, we find a canon, in Mode Two, composed by Saint Theophanes.

The couplet verse for the saint is as follows: "Mingled with milk, O martyr, was the blood of thy head, for whose sake Christ shed blood mingled with water. Slaughter with the sword on the twenty-seventh was Panteleimon's lot." The unmercenary martyr's martyrdom is compared with that of the Lord, of which it is said that "one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and straightway blood and water came out [Jn. 19:34]."

<sup>2</sup> Galerius Maximian was born near Serdica of Thrace (present-day Bulgaria). His full name was Gaius Galerius Valerius Maximianus, Roman emperor from 305 to 311, notorious for his persecution of Christians. He had been nominated as caesar by the Emperor Diocletian, who governed the eastern part of the Roman Empire. With the abdication of Diocletian in 305, the ruthless Galerius became augustus (senior emperor) of the tetrarchy, ruling the Balkans and Anatolia. It was he who imposed the poll tax on the urban population and maintained the persecution of the Christians. In the winter of 310–311, however, he contracted an incapacitating and painful disease. Believing that the wrath of the Christian God had overtaken him, he grudgingly issued an edict of toleration in April of 311. He died soon thereafter and was succeeded by his nephew Maximinus Daia.

<sup>3</sup> Nikomedia (now Izmit of northwestern Turkey) is a city of Bithynia. It lies near the head of Izmit Gulf of the Sea of Marmara. Nikomedia sprawled across several hills and over a narrow plain that contained its commercial and industrial sections. It served as the capital of the kingdom of Bithynia and later, under the Romans, was often the

(continued...)

He was born there circa 284. He was the son of a pagan physician, named Efstorgios. His mother, named Evoulee, came from Christian lineage. As much as Efstorgios depended on the idols to effect cures, so much was Evoulee's love and eagerness heightened toward the Orthodox Faith. She brought up their child, whom they named Pantoleon (meaning "a lion in all"), not only with what was necessary for the body but more so with what was needful for the soul. She would instruct and exhort him in the Faith handed down by Christ. Within a few years, however, the blessed Evoulee reposed. Pantoleon was sent to school, studying first the basic curriculum and then undertaking those subjects integral to a Greek education. When he was taught sufficient knowledge, his father apprenticed him to a splendid doctor of that time, named Ephrosynos, that Pantoleon might gain experience in medical science. The young man, on account of his quick mind, surpassed his fellow students.

Pantoleon possessed a handsome countenance. His manner of speech was sweet and soft spoken. His figure was modest and average. He was a man of excellence with a well-ordered mind. Whoever encountered him and entered into a conversation with him found him to have a pleasing manner of address and a congenial disposition, so that one received both joy and delight from the acquaintance. By reason of his virtues, he came to be widely known. Emperor Maximian, who saw him one day when he accompanied Ephrosynos to the palace, asked after the young man. He learned from Pantoleon's teacher of the apt pupil's dexterity and genius. But Maximian could discern for himself both Pantoleon's prudence and self-possession. He was impressed with his demeanor and speech. So pleased was the emperor that he commanded Ephrosynos to instruct Pantoleon as much as possible that he might become the ultimate doctor and fit for his palace. At the same time, in



*Saint Panteleimon*

<sup>3</sup>(...continued)

residence of emperors. Under Diocletian and his successors until 330, it had become the eastern capital of the Roman Empire.



the year 304, the saintly Hermolaos,<sup>4</sup> the priest of the church at Nikomedia, was in hiding. He was concealed in a house with other Christians for fear of



*Saint Hermolaos*

the emperor. Since Ephrosynos' surgery and home were in the same neighborhood, the Christians observed the goodly young man coming and going to read his lessons at his tutor's clinic. Hermolaos discerned that the young man was most modest in his deportment. He perceived that his soul was replete with goodness and innocence. He understood in the Spirit that if the seed of the word fell upon the good ground of the aspiring doctor's soul, it would bear a hundredfold.<sup>5</sup> The Lord led him to understand that "this one is a vessel of election to Me, to bear My name before the nations, and kings...[Acts 9:15]," as it was once said of the Apostle Paul who was then Saul.

Such were the private ruminations of Hermolaos. He desired to make the attempt to catch Pantoleon in a dragnet for the kingdom of the heavens.<sup>6</sup> The priest, therefore, opened the door of the house and cordially invited the young man inside for a conversation. Pantoleon obliged the venerable elder. Hermolaos greeted him warmly, asking his name, his pursuits, and his position. The youth was straightforward in his responses. He added that his late mother had been a Christian, but that his father was an idolater. Hermolaos interjected, "But thou, child, which religion dost thou love better?" Pantoleon answered, "When my mother was alive, she was always exhorting me to become a Christian when I came of age, which was also my desire as well. But when my mother reposed in my early boyhood, leaving me alone with my father, it was he who insisted that I abide in his religion. For it was his ambition that I should honor the emperor." Hermolaos then inquired, "My child, what is thy field of study?" The young man replied, "Medicine, honorable elder, as taught by Asklepios, Hippocrates, Galen, and other learned

<sup>4</sup> Saint Hermolaos is commemorated by the holy Church on the 26<sup>th</sup> of July.

<sup>5</sup> Mk. 4:8; Mt. 13:8

<sup>6</sup> Mt. 13:47.

men of this science. It was this profession that my father Efstorgios preferred for me above all others. Furthermore, my teacher Ephrosynos has encouraged me to pursue this course of study, believing that I shall come to excel as a physician capable of treating any disease or illness."

Hermolaos, hearing this claim, deemed it the appropriate moment to introduce the true remedy and Physician. He said to Pantoleon, "Believe me, young man, when I say that the art of Asklepios, Galen, and the rest of the ancient physicians, to whom thou dost defer, are able to afford little help to those who make their works their study. Furthermore, the gods whom Maximian venerates are nothing more than manifestations conjured from lying fables which those wanting in sense wish to believe. The true God is one: Jesus Christ. If thou wilt believe in Him with all thy heart, He shall heal every



*Saint Panteleimon*

disease without the application of any medicinal herbs or botanicals. By His grace He cleanses lepers, delivers demoniacs, stanches hemorrhages, and heals other implacable and incurable illnesses. Indeed, it would be easier to count the sands of the seas and the stars of the heaven than to measure the wonders of the Christ. Even now, at all hours and places, He stands by His slaves and helps them, working signs and greater marvels than when He was upon earth. For Christ said that the one who believes in Him shall do greater works than He, because He would be going to His Father.<sup>7</sup> He promised these and other gifts to His children who love Him. For we, as heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ, would be made heirs of His kingdom."<sup>8</sup>

Pantoleon, hearing these promises, sensed an abundance of joy in his heart. He judged that all he heard was true and just. He desired to shake off his father's troubled error of ungodliness and to accept the words of his godly mother whose pious teachings he honored and loved. He responded thusly: "Whatsoever thou hast said, O holy elder, I have heard many times from my

<sup>7</sup> Jn. 14:12.

<sup>8</sup> Rom. 8:17; Jas. 2:5.



mother in the past. I was also watching her at her prayers before God, upon Whom she not only proclaimed as Lord but also invoked His help.” Pantoleon



*The Raising of  
the Dead Child*

then expressed his thanks for the counsel rendered by Hermolaos. He then went on his way. Consequently, the young physician visited often to listen to the priest's teaching. Little by little, Pantoleon was being confirmed in the Faith of the Christ. Then one day, as the young man was coming from his tutor, he encountered a child in his path. The young boy lay dead on the ground, being the victim of a venomous snake bite. The reptile was still poised in an upright position over the child. Pantoleon, observing this scene, brought to mind the words spoken by Hermolaos who previously cited the Gospel passage of Christ's words: "Be healing the sick, cleansing lepers, raising the dead, casting out demons; freely ye received, freely give [Mt. 10:8]." He also remembered the Lord's promise: "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]." Pantoleon said inwardly, "If Christ should fulfill this request of mine, that is, if He should resurrect the child slain by the serpent, I would ask for no further demonstration. I will believe all the teachings that the honorable elder has imparted to me. Moreover, I am going to become a Christian this instant." Pantoleon, straightway, uttered a prayer. In that same moment the child rose up as though he had been slumbering. Pantoleon then observed how the viper was suddenly sundered before his eyes and utterly destroyed.

Pantoleon, true to his word, believed with all his soul and heart in the



*Baptism*

Christ. He was delighted to raise his soul and bodily eyes heavenward, as he uttered words of glorification and praise to the Lord. He was grateful for having been delivered from the error and the darkness of the idols. He gave thanks that he was led to the full knowledge of the truth. He happily directed his steps toward the house where Hermolaos was abiding. He recounted all that transpired, after which he sought to be illumined in holy Baptism. The priest perceived that Pantoleon would become an elect vessel of the myrrh of the Holy Spirit. Gladly did Father Hermolaos baptize him, after which he had the newly illumined Pantoleon commune the Master's body and blood. The priest also taught him the mysteries of the truth of our Faith. The young man tarried seven days with the holy elder. It was his joy to

partake of the soul-saving nourishment provided by the priest's honey-filled words. On the eighth day, the reverent young doctor returned to his father's house. Efstorgios questioned him, "Where hast thou been for so many days?" The son replied by way of parable, "One nobleman of the palace, a friend of the emperor, was taken ill. For his sake the emperor did not give my teacher leave to depart until his friend was completely well." The following day, Pantoleon went to Ephrosynos, to whom he also gave a pretext, saying by way of allegory, "My father purchased a great and valuable field, the care of which he put into my hands. For this cause it was necessary for me to hand it over to men in order to cultivate it."

The sick man to whom he referred to was his own soul. The emperor represented the King of kings, Christ, Who detained Pantoleon for seven days following his holy Baptism. The great field, which was purchased at the costly price of Christ's blood, refers to the Mysteries of Baptism and Communion that were vouchsafed Pantoleon and the cultivation required thereafter for his soul. The young man spoke in this wise for the present in order to conceal the matter of his conversion. He bided his time for the right opportunity, when he could address his father and extricate him as well from idolatry. When he brought up the subject of the fashioning of idols to his father, he began, "Why, father, are the idols depicting the deities standing never come to sit? And again, why are those showing them sitting never come to stand?" Efstorgios was unable to give an answer. These and similar scrutinizing questions posed by the son to the father had their effect. Little by little, Efstorgios' devotion to the gods cooled. He no longer offered daily sacrifice as before. The son noticed this gradual change in his father and gave thanks to God. He kept entreating the Lord without ceasing for the speedy enlightenment of his father, that he might be delivered completely from the deception and darkness of ignorance. The son conceived the idea of breaking to pieces the idols that resided in the paternal home. However, lest he sorrow his father, he restrained himself and said to himself, "It is far better to persuade him with words to believe in the Christ, so that he will smash them by himself." This is exactly what came to pass, with the help of God Who hearkened to the entreaty of the son. Our God dispensed it in His own time and manner, which was the wisest and best. Efstorgios came to right-believing piety by means of a wonder-working incident. Hearken to how the Lord wrought this double miracle.

On one occasion, when a certain blind man was led to the house of Efstorgios, the kinfolk of the sufferer knocked at the door and asked, "Is Pantoleon the physician within?" The holy doctor, as he heard them for himself, also invited his physician father that they might both see the patient. Pantoleon asked the blind man what he sought. The patient answered directly, "I desire the light of my eyes, O most excellent doctor. For nothing is more



sweeter to man than the power of vision. I ask thee to take pity on my misfortune and my misery. Have mercy on me, the wretched one! For many



*The Healing of  
the Blind Man*

physicians promised to restore my eyesight, but they were unable. They only plundered my fortune in exchange for medicines, from which I received no benefit. Indeed, the slight vision that I previously possessed, I lost that as well together with my money. I, the unhappy one, have become impoverished." The noble Pantoleon responded: "Since thou hast expended all thy livelihood and property upon physicians, albeit all for nought, then what might I expect should I heal thee?" The man answered, "Whatsoever remains of my fortune, I gladly and eagerly make over to thee." Pantoleon remarked,

"The disease of thine eyes can be cured alone by the true God, using me as His instrument. As for the remuneration that thou hast promised, thou art to go and distribute it among the poor."

Thus spoke Pantoleon, all the while remaining hopeful in the grace and power of Jesus Christ. Meanwhile, Pantoleon's father assumed that his son was intending to cure the blind man by means of human remedies and herbs. Since he was a physician as well, he diagnosed that any such course of treatment was useless. Efstorgios attempted to hinder his son and said, "Do not even think of taking this case, my beloved son. His condition is beyond not only thy power but also the healing arts. I should not like to see thee put to shame in the end. Verily, what further regime or therapy can be attempted that had not been prescribed by other physicians, far more experienced as specialists, who failed?" The right-minded son answered his father, saying, "None of them are able to recover his lost vision, my father, save I. For there is a vast gulf between my Teacher and those doctors." Now Efstorgios assumed that Pantoleon was referring to his own teacher, that is, Ephrosynos. Therefore, Efstorgios interposed, "I heard, my child, that thy teacher also tried a corrective upon the patient, but he did not succeed in anywise." Pantoleon cautioned him gently, adding, "Be taking heed, father, to believe the truth by the evidence of thine own eyes." Pantoleon, the peerless physician, upon uttering those words, then stretched forth his right hand. He traced the sign of the Cross over the sightless eyes of the blind man. Pantoleon then called upon the most sweet and saving name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Behold the wonder! Instantly, the eyes of the blind man were opened. It is important to observe here that not only the eyes of the body were opened and received light but also the eyes of his soul, for this man was an idolater. The working of this great sign, which was wrought in the name of the Christ, had its effect.

For in that very hour not only the patient but also the father of the saint cried aloud in a great voice, "Christ is the most true God and all powerful!"

The blissful saint, meanwhile, gave glory to the Lord. He then escorted them to the sanctified Hermolaos for Baptism. Following this solemn

illumination, Efstorgios returned to his house. He proceeded to shatter all the idols. Not much time passed before that blessed father departed from this life to be with Christ, after having turned to the Lord in repentance. Pantoleon shared all of his livelihood and estate with the needs of the poor and those in prison suffering hardship. He not only cured every infirmity but even gave away money to help better people's lives, especially widows and orphans. He also manumitted those of his father's household. As a result of all these benefactions—whether meting out cures or dealing with human misery and poverty—which he performed every hour, his name



*Saint Panteleimon*

was on the lips of all. As many as suffered from sickness, they all sought no other physician other than Pantoleon. Anyone desirous of a cure was not charged by him. The only recompense he sought for the cures was that his patients acknowledge and confess the true Physician, Jesus Christ. He was the true healer of the souls and bodies in pain. Thus, the patients of Pantoleon received a twofold healing: salvation of the soul and health of the body.

As for the other doctors in that city, they were moved to envy and malice beholding the wonderworkings wrought by that young physician. One day, as the doctors were sitting in the marketplace, having lost all their patients and fees to Pantoleon, it so happened that the former blind man, the one restored by the saint, was passing by. The jealous doctors, recognizing him as their former patient, became agitated as they said among themselves, "Is he not the fellow with whom we experimented with manifold treatments, but we were unable to cure him?" So they called him to themselves and examined him. He stated that through Pantoleon he gained his sight. They responded by conceding only the expertise of Ephrosynos, saying, "His master and teacher is great, which is why the pupil has exhibited such wonderful skill." Though they spoke in this manner, yet in what they uttered unknowingly there was a



hidden truth. They knew that Pantoleon was an apt and talented pupil, but not that he was a disciple of the great Master and Physician Christ. In consequence of the blind man's heralding of the new young doctor, their resentment and malice toward Pantoleon multiplied. They sought a reason to bring him into discredit before the emperor.

The Great Persecution in April of 304 culminated in a final edict commanding all Christians, clergy and laity alike, to offer sacrifice, on pain of death. There was found a certain Christian among the confessors, who was punished brutally for his religion by the ungodly Maximian. Since Pantoleon frequented the prisons in order to offer his medical services, he healed this man from wounds received during torture. It was not long before this piece of intelligence was reported to Maximian who was told: "Your Majesty, did you know that Pantoleon, whom you greatly admired and encouraged to study to become an accomplished physician that he might receive the appointment as the royal physician, has no fear now of your imperium's great power or authority? He gives no thought to thy friendship or love. Much rather, he prefers to go around and treat nicely and freely the enemies of the gods, those Christ lovers who are justly hunted down, punished, and incarcerated for their crimes against the state and our gods. He thinks nothing of mingling with them in a familiar fashion. Furthermore, he is diligent not only in encouraging them in their beliefs but even in healing them of their wounds received in prison. It did not suffice him to renounce his paternal religion in favor of the crucified One, but he also makes it his study to convert as many Greeks as possible to become Christians. Therefore, we, who are thy faithful servants and loyal to the empire's gods, counsel thee to remove him as quickly as possible out of the midst of both Greeks and Christians. Undoubtedly, further delay will only usher in greater sorrow when thou seest how many Greeks he has brought to denial of our deities. They have become Christians in appreciation of Pantoleon's ministrations among them, that is, his cures and treatments. He claims his cures are not wrought by Asklepios<sup>9</sup> but by his Christ. If, O

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<sup>9</sup> Asklepios or Asclepius or Aesculapius (Lat.) was the Greco-Roman god of medicine. Homer, in the *Iliad*, mentions him only as a skillful physician. Later, however, he was honored as a hero and eventually worshipped as a god. Since it was believed that Asclepius effected cures of the sick in dreams, the practise of sleeping in his temples or Asclepiums became standard practise. Asclepius was frequently represented standing, dressed in a long cloak, with a bare breast, bearing a staff with a serpent coiled around it. A similar but unrelated emblem, the caduceus, with its winged staff and intertwined serpents, is frequently used as a medical emblem but is without medical relevance, since it represents the magic wand of Hermes (Mercury). *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 2004 Deluxe Edition CD-ROM, s.v. "Asclepius."

emperor, thou wouldest learn the truth for thyself, give the command that the former blind man be brought in for questioning. He claims to have been healed by Pantoleon. Hear from that man's own lips how he praises Pantoleon to the heavens for bringing the light not only to his eyes but to his soul in the knowledge of Christ."

These allegations profoundly sorrowed Maximian, who had plans of a glorious career for the young doctor. He gave orders to his soldiers to find the former blind man and bring him before his judgment seat. The former blind man, now a Christian, went with the soldiers. Maximian opened the inquiry by asking, "Relate to us in what manner Pantoleon healed thee." The man, without a trace of fear or cowardice, confessed the truth of the matter stating the facts: "With the name of Jesus Christ he healed me. Indeed, what is more wondrous is that, even before he finished uttering the invocation, my eyes were opened to light. Therefore, by no means were the medical arts applied to render a cure." The emperor said to the man, "So tell me what thou dost recognize concerning him? Dost thou believe thou wast healed by the Christ or the gods?" The man answered sincerely, "Let us examine the matter

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<sup>9</sup>(...continued)

Saint Gregory of Nyssa gives the Orthodox interpretation of the brazen serpent borne aloft by Moses: "The voice of the Lord teaches clearly that the serpent lifted up in the desert is a symbol of the mystery of the Cross when he says, 'Even as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, thus it is needful for the Son of Man to be lifted up [Jn. 3:14].' The person who looks to the One lifted up on the wood rejects passion, diluting the poison with the fear of the commandment as with medicine. The one antidote for evil passion is godliness. The Lawgiver Moses rendered the real serpents powerless by the image of a serpent. Look, therefore, to Christ Who suffered the Passion for us. The Cross is the Passion, so that whoever looks to it is not harmed by the poison of desire. To look to the Cross means to render one's whole life dead and crucified to the world. Unruly desires brought forth the deadly serpents upon the Hebrews in the wilderness (for every offspring of evil desire is a serpent). Saint Paul writes: 'Because of the impossibility of the law, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sent His own Son in the likeness of the flesh of sin—and in regard to sin, condemned sin in the flesh [Rom. 8:3].' Sin is the real serpent, and whoever deserts to sin takes on the nature of the serpent. Man, then, is freed from sin through Him Who assumed the form of sin and became like us who had turned into the form of the serpent. He keeps the bites from causing death, but the beasts themselves are not destroyed. By beasts I mean desires. For although the evil of death which follows sins does not prevail against those who look to the Cross, the lust of flesh against spirit has not completely ceased to exist." Saint Gregory of Nyssa, "The Brazen Serpent," *The Life of Moses*, trans. by A. J. Malherbe and E. Ferguson (NY/Ramsey/Toronto: Paulist Press, 1978), pp. 123-125.

It is noteworthy that Saint Panteleimon slew a serpent, used then as the pagan symbol of the medical profession, with the life-giving sign of the Cross.



carefully, for the evidence of itself proclaims the truth. Do you see these superb doctors standing here?" He then pointed to Pantoleon's former colleagues but now recent accusers. Continuing, he said, "They exercised all their knowledge and skill to bring about the restoration of my sight. Instead of being benefitted by them, they took all of my livelihood in the procurement of pharmaceuticals. Their prescriptions and therapies profited me nothing. Much rather, what little vision I had was utterly darkened by them. So whom should I name as my physician and helper? Should I say it was Asklepios, whom they called upon and who did nothing for me? Or should I affirm that it was Christ, of Whom Pantoleon only spoke His name and I immediately recovered my much-desired light? The answer, O emperor, is even known by me, an unlearned fellow, who was previously stone blind."

Maximian, not able to counter this testimony, said to him, "O man, neither play the fool nor claim that Christ healed thee, for it is obvious that the gods bestowed light upon thine eyes." The former blind man, who now enjoyed enlightenment in both his soul and body, feared neither the authority of the state, nor the anger of the emperor, nor the threat of punishment. He, in fact, showed far more courage before the authorities than the blind man in the Gospel,<sup>10</sup> saying these things to Maximian: "Thou art acting as one foolish and wanting in understanding in thy declaration that thy senseless and sightless gods bestowed light to my eyes. Thou art as blind as they, because thou art unable to see and know the truth which shines forth more brilliantly than the sun!" The tyrant, hearing this rebuke, understood that the complaints of the doctors were true. He straightway commanded the executioners, saying as he pointed to the former blind man, "Take this friend of Christ and strike off his head." The blessed new Christian proved himself to be an advocate of the truth and unfeigned witness of Christ. He was accounted worthy to offer himself in sacrifice to Christ Who healed him, in testimony of his love. After his beheading, Pantoleon purchased his relics in a clandestine manner. The relics were laid to rest in the place where Pantoleon had entombed his father.

Since the emperor slew the former blind man, Maximian now summoned the saintly physician before him. Pantoleon hearkened and went along the road to the palace, praying these words of the whole psalm that begins with these words: "O God, my praise do not pass over in silence; for the mouth of the sinner and the mouth of the deceitful man are opened against me [Ps. 108:1]." When he arrived in the palace, the emperor commenced the interrogation and said: "I have heard many unseemly reports regarding thee, Pantoleon. I have heard it said that thou dost insult and disdain Asklepios and the other deities, preferring to believe in the Christ and saying that Jesus alone

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<sup>10</sup> Cf. Jn. 9:25.

is God. It is said that thou dost place thy hopes in One Who was put to an ignominious death. I think thou knowest the affection that I bear thee. I have already spoken to thy teacher, charging him to teach thee thy science well that I might appoint thee to the palace. However, I know this also: oftentimes contenders are moved to jealousy and speak falsehoods of their rivals. Surely many others aspire to be appointed as court physician. It is for this reason that I have invited thee here to offer a sacrifice. In this way shall I learn the truth about thy religious persuasion." The holy physician answered, "Deeds, O emperor, are superior to words as everyone well knows. For if we conduct a search and examination of small things in order to ascertain the truth and reliability of greater things, how much more ought we to make an exact study, with much diligence, of the things concerning our worship of God lest we should suffer loss or injury in a very great way? For right-believing piety in the one God is essential and the loftiest of endeavors. The God Whom I venerate and reverence, Who made the heaven and the earth, gives light to the blind, cleanses the lepers, restores the paralytics, and works signs and wonders with a word or a command. The gods, to whom you Greek pagans make obeisance, I do not believe ever wrought one good deed nor are they able to do anything of their own. If thou dost wish, O emperor, let us investigate this vexed issue on divinity, by putting the question to the test this moment that thou mayest ascertain the truth. Command thy men to bring forward someone who is infirm, someone who is suffering from an incurable disease. Then let your priests come forth and call upon as many gods as they please. Afterward, I shall make an entreaty to my God, invoking Him to heal the sufferer for which cure thou wilt be a witness. The Deity that grants healing, we shall name as the one and only God, whereas the others are to be despised as imposters."



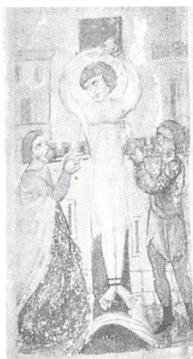
*Sant Panteleimon*

These words pleased the emperor. He, therefore, gave orders and his men brought forward a man who was paralyzed. The quadriplegic was borne aloft on his bed, since he was unable to move a limb. The priests of the idols lifted up their voices, shouting aloud their unholy petitions. They invoked their



deities for a very long while, asking their insensate gods for the return of the senses in the paralytic. The idols, as deaf and dumb stones, could hear nothing. Pantoleon, finding the pagan priests' ignorance contemptible, derided them. When it was finally realized that nothing was going to come from the cries of the pagan priests, the emperor prompted Pantoleon to supplicate his God. The right-minded man of God then raised his eyes heavenward, together with all his mind, reciting the words of this psalm: "'Give ear, O Lord, to my prayer, and let my crying come to Thee. Do not ever turn away Thy face from me; in whichever day I may be afflicted, incline Thine ear to me [Ps. 101:1, 2].' Demonstrate, O Master, to these here present, who do not know Thee, that Thou alone art true and almighty God." Pantoleon then took hold of the paralytic's hands, addressing him with these words: "In the name of the Christ, Who restores the enfeebled, rise and walk about." Straightway, with that word of command, the paralytic rose up and walked about eagerly and gladly. This great miracle was seen by the Greek pagans who were astonished beyond measure. Many of them renounced the idols and came to believe in the true God. As for the abominable priests and the ineffective doctors, they clung to their disbelief. They went to the emperor and said, "We adjure thee by the immortal gods, O emperor, do not let this fellow Pantoleon live another hour longer. Let him begone lest he should eradicate our religion; for the Christians will grow strong against us."

The emperor hearkened to this advice. He summoned Pantoleon and attempted to bait him with words of peace, thinking in this manner to make him



*Martyrdom  
on a Pole*

conform to his will. Since Maximian was unable to persuade him with either blandishments or threats, he began his punishment with the application of instruments of torture. First, they suspended Pantoleon upon a wooden pole, where they lacerated and flayed his flesh with iron nails. This painful chastisement was followed by the application of fiery torches that badly burned his sides and his wounded members. While the shredded and charred body of the martyr was subjected to these punishments, his mind was fixed upon that One, the Christ, Who was able to bestow aid. As he directed his gaze heavenward, Pantoleon was entreating the Lord noetically. The Lord heard him and came to him, before Pantoleon's eyes, in

that same hour. Jesus came in the form of Hermolaos, who spoke to him with genuine paternal affection, "Cease fearing, my child, for I am with thee. I am, indeed, thy helper in all thy sufferings for My sake." Together with those words, there also came to pass a demonstration of deeds of power. Immediately, the hands of the soldiers executing the torture became paralyzed. The

torches were extinguished. The wounds of the saint were healed. As for the transgressing emperor, he was put to shame at these spectacles. He commanded his men to take down Pantoleon from the wood, at which point the emperor said to him, "What kind of art and divination didst thou employ that left debilitated the hands of my soldiers? How didst thou quench the fiery torches?" The excellent Pantoleon answered, "Christ, Whom I revere, is my power and the means whereby this was wrought. It is He Who stands by me and Who energizes these wonders." Maximian retorted, "If I should submit thee to more bitter and keener torments, what then shall happen?" The saint replied confidently, "Then shall I receive from Christ even more help."

The emperor, thereupon, commanded the preparation of a large cauldron filled with molten lead. A blazing fire was kindled underneath it. The martyr was pitched inside. Pantoleon, having again resorted to prayer as his comfort and consolation which was no small help, began to utter, "Hearken, O God, unto my prayer, when I make supplication unto Thee; rescue my soul from fear of the enemy [Ps. 63:1]"—and the rest of the psalm. As he poured forth these words, once more the unearthly doctor was granted a vision of Christ in the figure of Hermolaos. It was seen that the Lord, in the form of Hermolaos, entered into the midst of the cauldron with Pantoleon. The fire was instantly extinguished and the molten lead became cool. The verses of the psalms were not absent from Pantoleon's lips, when he exclaimed, "Unto God have I cried, and the Lord hearkened unto me [Ps. 54:18]." All those present were astonished and wondered at the paradoxical spectacle taking place before them. The emperor, however, hardened and insensible, did not or would not comprehend that these prodigies were wrought by the mighty and true God. He persisted in his belief that the events unfolding before him were brought about by sorcery. Maximian was concerned with what other punishment he might employ in order to vanquish the unconquerable witness for Christ. He was advised by bystanders to tie a huge rock about the martyr's neck and cast him into the sea. Maximian ordered the execution of this punishment. While the soldiers hastened to expedite the command, God, once more, provided His slave with help.

The men took hold of the saint and plunged him, with the heavy rock, into the sea. Christ appeared to him again, causing that weighty mass to become as light as a tree leaf so that it floated and



*Martyrdom  
in a Cauldron*



*Martyrdom in the Sea*



bobbed on the waters. As for Pantoleon he was able to walk upon the waters even as the chief Apostle Peter came down from the ship, and "walked on the water to go to Jesus [Mt. 24:29]." Pantoleon then exited the waves and came onto the shore, healthy and unharmed. The emperor, viewing this scene of Pantoleon striding on dry land, felt helpless. In his amazement, he raised his voice and asked, "What is this, O Pantoleon? Dost thou as well lord it over the sea by thy magic?" The saint responded, "God spoke and the waters obeyed now as they did in the beginning of creation.<sup>11</sup> Therefore observe how the sea, as well as the earth and all creatures, hearken and submit to God more so than do thy men, rational beings, to thee." Maximian abided without conscience and sense. His hardened heart did not soften in the least before such wonder-workings. Instead, he resumed the punishments. This time that beast, more mindless than the irrational creatures, ordered that the martyr be hurled into the arena with wild animals.

The emperor, before he gave the nod to throw Pantoleon to the animals, wished to appear that he was saddened for Pantoleon. Maximian's affectation of sympathy in order to deceive the young physician commenced with him asking, "Dost thou see these animals, O Pantoleon? They have been collected for thy destruction, for they shall devour thee. But behold, take pity upon thyself! I speak thus because I am very sorry for thee, as the gods are my witnesses, for thy youth and comeliness. I, therefore, counsel thee as a father would a sensible son as thyself: do thou prefer that which is in thine interest. So do not die before thy time, especially a death most bitter. Why shouldst thou deprive thyself of this most sweet and desirable life?" The saint answered, "If I did not listen to thee earlier, why dost thou hope to make me do thy will now, particularly after seeing my God bestow such help? Do not even let it enter into thy mind that I would ever sacrifice to demons. So why dost thou threaten me with thy wild beasts? The One Who withered the hands of thy soldiers and cooled the boiling lead, and made a pathway in the sea that I might walk as on dry land, is also able to transform these fearful beasts into tame lambs." Since it was evident that the martyr of Christ had no intention of conforming to the command of the tyrant, but rather he selected the company of physical beasts rather than making obeisance to noetic beasts, that is, the demons, the emperor pronounced the sentence: "If Pantoleon in three day's time does not comply with the imperial order, he is to be thrown to the wild beasts for their consumption."

The entire city heard this pronouncement. They all converged to have a look at the handsome and noble young man, who, though guiltless of any crime against society, was about to become prey for beasts. When they

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<sup>11</sup> Gen. 1:6, 7, 9; Mt. 8:27; Mk. 4:41.

gathered in the amphitheater, the emperor took his place on a lofty throne set in a high spot that he might view the spectacle better. The minions of the emperor pushed and dragged Christ's confessor. They prepared to cast him before the animals. Pantoleon did not exhibit the least trace of cowardice or resistance. He went of his own volition courageously forward. Once again, he observed Christ in the shape of Hermolaos. He emboldened Pantoleon, saying, "I am with thee. Cease fearing." When the holy youth was flung into the circus, the heathen set loose the caged animals. The spectators went to the edge of their seats to watch him convulse while being torn limb from limb. The crowd was so evilly disposed that each spectator was more irrational in their ignorance than the animals in the arena. What was it that benighted them? They knew not to venerate God, the Lord and Fashioner.



*Martyrdom  
in the Arena*

In His place they worshipped the vile demons. As children of the devil,<sup>12</sup> each of them was more fierce and wild than the animals in the arena. Even though they were men, they still desired the punishment and slaughter of one who revered God. But God is able to transform all as He wishes. He can dispense in His œconomy that the irrational and wild beasts should reverse their natures, that is, that they become rational and imitate the civility of men, that they might become unfeigned witnesses of the viciousness of men and the goodness of God. The holy man stood in the midst of the arena. But he was not in the presence of irrational and ferocious beasts, but creatures that were like those who are possessed of reason and self-control. With much deference and gentleness, as they wagged their tails, they licked the feet of the saint. Indeed, it could be seen that a rivalry developed between the animals as each attempted to draw close to the martyr in order to fawn over him and reverence him. Each would only back off and let another animal approach when Pantoleon extended his right hand and blessed one after the other. When the crowd beheld this scene, they marvelled. They began to cry out all together in one voice: "Great and true is the God of the Christians! Let the righteous man go free!"

But the emperor, void of understanding, whose beastly savagery was piqued because the beasts did not act according to his will, could not endure the animadversion created by the actions of dumb beasts. The wild creatures that acknowledged the true God and His servant, whom Maximian neither revered nor recognized, were ordered to be slaughtered. Many days passed and no other animal or bird of the carnivores either approached or consumed the flesh of those animals, which had acted more like pets of Pantoleon. God

<sup>12</sup> 1 Jn. 3:10.



permitted this anomaly, in honor of the saint and in order to incite the heathen to reverence. The witless emperor was also put to shame at this display so contrary to nature, so he dispatched a detail of soldiers in order to cover up the creatures with earth.



*Wheel of Torture  
Crushes Unbelievers*

The emperor then returned his attention to Pantoleon. He devised a wheel, large enough onto which the saint's limbs were stretched and tied. The wicked craftsmen, those who contrived to construct this hideous instrument of torture, sought the worst mutilation for the victim. They assured the emperor that when the wheel was rolled down a high hill with Pantoleon affixed to the spokes and felly, the wheel as it turned round

and round would twist and shatter the victim's limbs. Our man-loving Lord, nevertheless, foiled this ill-use of His slave in the following manner. As the executioners prepared Pantoleon for the torture, from which he would be thrust down a dizzying height, the city waited at the foot of the incline. They came to watch the unjust and cruel death of that just man. All observed that the wheel of torture was a fearsome-looking contraption, into which Pantoleon was bound hand and foot. The time arrived and the wheel with its martyric passenger was rolled down the hill. The wheel, guided by the angels of God, then came to a halt at the bottom where the people were waiting. The saintly rider was miraculously loosed from his fetters and stood aright without a trace of injury, glorifying and blessing God. The wheel then moved of itself and rolled upon the unbelievers, crushing them to death. Others took to their heels and fled that spot.

At this paradoxical spectacle, even Maximian was moved to wonderment. However, from his aggravated wickedness, he was unable to accept the light of true piety. He remained obdurate as before, summoning the man of God before him and saying, "Until when art thou going to perform these signs and wonders? Thou hast been the cause not only of death for many of my subjects but also of conversion for many who now hold the gods in contempt. Tell us from whom thou hast learned about Christianity?" The saint confessed the truth and mentioned the holy Hermolaos, judging that it was not meet to keep such a treasure hidden but to present him for the benefit of others. The emperor then demanded that Pantoleon show the hideaway where Hermolaos was concealed. Pantoleon willingly complied, knowing inwardly the power of speech and understanding possessed by Hermolaos. He was confident that the priest could not be misled into their impiety, but rather he would draw many to right belief. Pantoleon was escorted under guard by three soldiers.

Pantoleon, going up to the house where Hermolaos was sojourning, began knocking at the door. Hermolaos emerged and said to him, "How hast thou come here, my child?" Pantoleon remarked, "The emperor summons thee to go before him, my lord." Hermolaos responded with pleasure: "Verily, I also know it: that the time has arrived for me to die for the sake of the name of my Christ, even as He showed me this night with a revelation." When the priest went before the emperor, Maximian asked, "How art thou named? Tell me also if thou hast other Christians with thee." As a friend of truth, Father Hermolaos did not hide anything. He spoke forthrightly, "My name is Hermolaos. I have two other fellow laborers, named Hermocrates and Hermippos."

Emperor Maximian then issued the order to bring those two Christians before his judgment seat. While this was being carried out, Pantoleon alone was returned to prison. When the Priests Hermocrates and Hermippos were made to stand before Maximian, the latter



*Christ with Unmercenaries  
Hermolaos and Panteleimon*

addressed them and Hermolaos: "Are you the ones who swept away Pantoleon into your deception so that he should deny the gods?" They answered, "Christ calls to Himself those who are worthy." The emperor interrupted and said, "Leave off this nonsensical and useless prattle. Exhort Pantoleon to offer sacrifice to the immortal gods, if he wishes to gain friends in high places and enjoy abundant gifts and perquisites." They answered, "God forbid that we should ever counsel a soul for its destruction! All of us who are Christians have one firm resolve and purpose: it would be better to choose ten thousand deaths with diverse torments than to fall down and pay homage to deaf and inanimate idols." So spoke the three priests, who raised the eyes of their minds and senses heavenward to the Lord in order to deliver them from the snares of the demon. The Lord appeared to His three priests, making them steadfast. Suddenly there occurred a great earthquake on that very spot. Maximian spoke these words from his oscillating and tottering mind: "The gods are moved to wrath against you and have shaken the earth." Hermolaos gave a quick rejoinder and said, "But if it should happen that thy gods should be toppled,



then what wouldest thou say?" Before Hermolaos finished this query, a man arrived from the palace and gave this report: "Your majesty, you need to be aware that the gods have fallen and broken into pieces." The sacred priests of Christ laughed scornfully, finding it ridiculous that the heathen could entertain any notions that their gods, shattered to atoms, were to be dreaded and feared. The priests, thereupon, commented, "Who that sees these signs should not want to perceive the truth?"

The ungodly tyrant, nevertheless, continued in his benighted state, even as those who suffer blindness and cannot see the sun. Maximian, consequently, subjected all three priests to diverse tortures. When he finally accepted that he could not bring them to his way of thinking, he sentenced them to be beheaded. This order was carried out swiftly. The Christians managed to collect secretly their precious relics, burying them with profound honor and devotion.

That sly fox Maximian next removed Pantoleon from the prison, saying to him, "Thou shouldest know that thy teacher, Hermolaos, and his companions, came to realize what was to their advantage and they offered sacrifice to the gods. I, therefore, honored them with fitting rewards and established them in the first circle at my palace. If thou shouldest cast off thy stubbornness and imitate them by making a sacrifice to the idols, I shall honor thee in like manner. For even though I punish severely those who vaunt themselves and disobey me, still I know how to lavishly reward and treat those who obey me. But if thou wilt continue to disobey, thou shalt not slip through my hands. Indeed, even this day thou shalt be subjected to a bitter and pain-filled death." The martyr of Christ, enlightened by the divine Spirit, recognized the deceit and craftiness of that defiled man and said, "Where are the priests? Show them to me." The emperor answered, "They are not here, because I sent them on a mission outside of the city." The saint said to him, "Thou hast not only a propensity to lie but even a fondness for not telling the truth. For at this moment they are rejoicing in the heavens, in the city of the Jerusalem above."

The abominable Maximian, finally distinguishing that neither flatteries and gifts nor threats and punishments, nor any other machination worked in persuading or breaking the adamant resolve of the unbeatable confessor for Christ, directed his executioners to give the prisoner a mighty thrashing. Maximian did not really think this beating could alter Pantoleon's resolve, but he issued the order for this chastisement not only out of his hurt and anger at being dishonored but more so out of the malice he bore the holy physician. This punishment was soon followed by his final sentence. The prisoner was to have his head removed. His dismembered remains were to be consigned to the flames until they were consumed. The soldiers, therefore, escorted the brave-

hearted man to the site of execution. Pantoleon could only fathom entering into joy and gladness upon exiting from this present world's frenzied strife and life of affliction and weariness, for which opportunity for martyrdom he gave voice to by reciting this verse: "Many times did they make war upon me from my youth; and indeed, they were not able to prevail over me [Ps. 128:2]." He then continued with the remainder of the psalm. An extraordinary and wondrous sign then soon occurred, after the executioner bound Pantoleon to an olive tree. The heathen headsman drew his sword in order to sever the confessor's head. But lo, the miracle! The blow was blunted when the cutting edge of the sword began to melt like wax. The other soldiers standing by were startled at this terrifying sight, so that they went to their knees and exclaimed, "We believe that Christ is the true God. We beseech thee not to be angry with us, O Pantoleon, but rather do thou forgive us and entreat Christ that He would accept our repentance."

The saint obliged them and uttered a prayer on behalf of his enemies and tormentors, including petitions that they might enter into right-believing piety. Upon concluding his supplication, an audible response promptly proceeded out of the heavens: "Whatsoever thou seekest, it shall be and much more besides. First, thou shalt no longer be called Pantoleon but Panteleimon. As the meaning of thy new name is 'all-merciful,' so it shall be in very deed, for many shall find compassion and mercy on account of thee." The saint heard the divine voice confirm the spiritual gifts of which the Lord accounted him worthy. Panteleimon then emboldened the soldiers, exhorting them not to cower but to fulfill the imperial order of his execution. Not one of those soldiers would stretch forth his hand against Panteleimon, for whom they felt affection after beholding the power of Christ. The heavenly-minded Panteleimon, nevertheless, coerced them to carry out the royal order of the tyrant that he might finish and clinch the crown of his contest. Although not one of them standing by wanted to execute Maximian's sentence against the sanctified man, yet they did not wish to disobey Panteleimon. They first demonstrated their love and reverence toward him, by ardently kissing his hands and feet. After this show of unfeigned respect and affection, they severed his honorable head on the 27<sup>th</sup> day of the month of July, in the year 305.<sup>13</sup> God, Whose will it was

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<sup>13</sup> Most other sources give the year 304, while Alban Butler gives ca. 305. The only other Roman emperor—named Maximian (Latin in full Marcus Aurelius Valerius Maximianus)—was the co-emperor with the senior Diocletian from 286 to 305. But he was assigned the government of the west. In 293, he was governing Italy, Spain, and Africa. He, too, was a persecutor of Christians. He abdicated in Mediolanum with Diocletian, who was in Nikomedia, on the same day, the 1<sup>st</sup> of May in 305. As the new tetrarchy (two augusti with a caesar under each) that succeeded them began to break

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to glorify even the earthly end of His slave Panteleimon, showed forth another miracle. When Panteleimon's precious head was separated from his body, there flowed milk instead of blood. The olive tree which was previously dry and withered, immediately blossomed forth with broad dark green leaves, white flowers, and edible olive fruit.<sup>14</sup>

These events were soon learned of by the mindless Galerius Maximian,<sup>15</sup> who issued two orders: that the olive tree should be chopped down and the Christian martyr should be burned to ashes. The latter command was already cited earlier with regard to the remains. The soldiers, however, emulated the Magi of old.<sup>16</sup> They did not return to that new Herod, but departed by another way.<sup>17</sup> They went forth proclaiming in every place the wonders of God. Now, after the martyric death of Saint Panteleimon, some Christians came and took up his holy relics. They were laid to rest after the

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<sup>13</sup>(...continued)

down, Maximian reclaimed the throne to support his son Maxentius' claim to be caesar. Persuaded to abdicate once more by Diocletian in 308, he lived at the court of Constantine, who had recently married his daughter Fausta. Maximian died, either by murder or by suicide, shortly after the suppression of a revolt raised by him against Constantine. [See *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 2004 Deluxe Edition CD-ROM, s.v. "Maximian."] Although this Maximian of the west was in Nikomedia from time to time and actively persecuted the Christians, including the 20,000 that were burned alive in the church, it was probably Galerius Maximian that put to death Saint Panteleimon. Alban Butler is also of this opinion.

<sup>14</sup> The menservants of Saint Panteleimon—Laurence, Vassos, and Provos—witnessed his execution and heard the voice from the heavens. They recorded the life, sufferings, and death of the saint.

<sup>15</sup> The year 305 is the first year of the reign of Galerius Maximian. He died miserably in 311 of a cancer. The latter was a tall man, and the vast expanse of his flesh was spread and bloated to a horrifying size. His words, his actions, and his appearance made him a source of alarm and terror to all. He was described as a monster rather than a human being. Eusebius in his *Ecclesiastical History* [VIII.16] reports: "Without warning, suppurative inflammation broke out round the middle of his genitals, then a deep-seated fistular ulcer: these ate their way incurably into his inmost bowels. From them came a teeming indescribable mass of worms, and a sickening smell was given off; for the whole of his hulking body, thanks to overeating, had been transformed even before his illness into a huge lump of flabby fat, which then decomposed and presented those who came near with a revolting and horrifying sight. Of the doctors, some were unable to endure the overpowering and extraordinary stench, and were executed on the spot; others, unable to be of any assistance now that the entire mass had swollen and deteriorated beyond hope of recovery, were put to death without mercy." Christ Scarre, *Chronicle of the Roman Emperors* (London/NY: Thames and Hudson), pp. 207, 211.

<sup>16</sup> Mt. 2 ff.

<sup>17</sup> Mt. 2:12.

reverent application of myrrh and incense. The grave was situated outside of the city in a place called Scholastikos Adamantinos.<sup>18</sup>



*Martyrdom by the Sword,  
and the Burial of Saint Panteleimon*

This account, O brethren in Christ, is the account of the martyrdom and the wonderworkings of the most glorious and unmercenary healer Panteleimon, which were recorded succinctly. For who is able to tell of his contests sufficiently and worthily, especially since he suffered every kind of punishment which he exposed as impotent? But it is needful that as many as hear the lives of the saints that they emulate their conduct of life, according to each one's strength; verily, it is for the listener's edification that these accounts are written. Let us keep the commandments of Christ. Let us not waste the time of our lives in feasting and drinking, in dances and games, in committing murder or adultery, or in any other demon-inspired activity. Let us lead our lives with prudence and self-control, in love and harmony, and in whatever virtues gladden Christ and the saints. For as we live here on earth, we shall receive a recompense in the next life. Thus it is written: "For we must all be made manifest before the judgment seat of the Christ, in order that each one might receive for oneself the things done through the agency of the body, according to what one did, whether good or bad [2 Cor. 5:10]." Not only our deeds but also our words shall be judged, as the Lord says: "Every idle word, whatsoever men shall speak, they shall render an account concerning it in the day of judgment [Mt. 12:36]." Hence, "It is laid up for men to die once, but after this, judgment [Heb. 9:27]." Saint Paul admonishes us: "But thou, why dost thou judge thy brother? Or why dost thou also treat thy brother with con-

<sup>18</sup> Saint John of Damascus reports that the relics were transported from Nikomedia to Constantinople. The relics were then stolen from Constantinople by the Crusaders. The majority of the relics are exhibited in the Abbey of Saint Denys, near Paris. The saint's precious head was for a time at Lyons. The reliquary arm of the unmercenary healer was purchased by Walter's Art Gallery in Baltimore, in 1920, from an art dealer named Harding. Previous to this acquisition, the arm was in the collection of Robert Hoe of New York. Michael James Fochios, *A History of Eastern Orthodox Saints* (Baltimore, MD: Phanari Publications, 1974), p. 172.



tempt [Rom. 14:10]?" Saint Iakovos, the brother of the Lord, warns us that "the judgment shall be merciless to him who rendered no mercy [Jas. 2:13]."



*Saint Panteleimon*

But let us with Saint John come to know and believe the love which God has in us. "God is love; and the one abiding in love, abideth in God, and God in him. In this hath love been made perfect with us, in order that we may have boldness in the day of judgment, that even as He is, we are also in this world [1 Jn. 4:16, 17]." Let us, therefore, do as the apostles and holy fathers bid us that we might be accounted worthy of the kingdom of the heavens, in our Lord Christ Jesus, to

Whom is due glory, honor, and veneration together with His unoriginate Father, Who has "given all judgment to the Son [Jn. 5:22]," and the all-holy and good and life-creating Spirit, now and ever, and to the ages of the ages. Amen.

### **Some Miracles Performed by Saint Panteleimon**

The veneration of the holy unmercenary martyr in the Russian Orthodox Church was already known in the twelfth century. Prince Izyaslav (in holy Baptism Panteleimon), the son of Mstislav the Great, had an image of the saint on his helmet. Through the intercessions of the saint he remained alive during a battle in the year 1151. On the Feast of the Great-martyr, Russian forces won two naval victories over the Swedes (in 1714 near Hanhauze and in 1720 near Grenham).<sup>19</sup>

Portions of the holy relics of the Great-martyr Panteleimon were distributed throughout the world. His venerable head is now located at the Russian Monastery of Saint Panteleimon on the Holy Mountain. Saint Panteleimon, after his repose, worked a multitude of cures for diverse illnesses and demonic possession. Not many from among the numberless miracles,

<sup>19</sup> See "July 27<sup>th</sup>," online at <http://www.oca.org/FSlives.asp>.

regrettably, were recorded.<sup>20</sup> The fathers of the Athonite Monastery of Saint Panteleimon were aware of numerous works of healing, but kept no written records of them.<sup>21</sup> The monastery, nevertheless, kept the chrysobulls and gift citations awarded by emperors and princes. Prince John Nikolai of Moldavia, records in the chrysobull of July 1744, that a terrible plague raged in Yassakh decimating the population. When a procession with the sacred relic of Saint Panteleimon's head was brought into the public square, a *moleben*, consisting of supplicatory prayers, was chanted and the Service of the Blessing of Water was conducted. The result was a multitude of miracles. Prince John Nikolai, in giving thanks to the unmercenary healer, sent the chrysobull with alms to the Monastery of Saint Panteleimon. In 1750, the wonderworking skull of the martyr was again brought to Moldavia. The ruler, John Constantinou, in his chrysobull of that year, testifies that he witnessed one of the numerous miracles performed in his principedom. The skull, at the insistent behest of the people of the Moldavia-Wallachian principedom, returned in 1754 for another tour of veneration by the faithful. The result was a multitude of miracles. The ruler, John Gregorevich Gerka, issued a chrysobull that year attesting to the gratitude of his people. He promised the Athonite monastery the right to receive an annual pension from his government's treasury.

Now, in 1735, Saint Panteleimon Monastery fell under the control of the Greeks. Two factors led to the monastery's decline: the idiorrhhythmic mode of life and the loss of financial help from Russia.<sup>22</sup> The Athonite

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<sup>20</sup> See the account of some of his miracles as recorded at the Athonite Monastery of Saint Panteleimon, presented in a periodical: "A Collection of Miracles of the Holy Great-Martyr and Healer Panteleimon Performed in Recent Times," *Orthodox Life*, Volume 40, Number 4 (July-August 1990): 7-15.

<sup>21</sup> Saint Panteleimon is built on an inlet of the Singitic Gulf, beyond Xenophontos and before reaching Daphne. The monastery is also known as: *ton Rosson* ("of the Russians") or simply *Roussikon*, as well as "the Coenobium of the Kallimachides." By 1840 the monastery received Russians, whose numbers increased so rapidly that they soon constituted the majority. A new period in the monastery's history commenced, and, as was to be expected, one of their number was elected as abbot in 1875. Since then it has passed entirely under Russian control. Sotiris Kadas, *Mount Athos*, pp. 133, 136.

<sup>22</sup> The monastery declined and slipped into such poverty that it was forced to borrow large sums of money, using its ecclesiastical plate, the holy vestments, and many of its properties as security. By the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> C., it was forced to shut its gates. The construction of the present monastery was carried out with the help of the ruler of Moldo-Wallachia, Scarlatos Kallimaches, who also built the *katholikon*. An inscription above the entrance to the eso-narthex reads that the *katholikon* was begun in 1812 and finished in 1821. Patriarch Kallinikos III confirmed the coenobitic way of life in 1803. He decreed that the monastery should enjoy the title of "the true Coenobium of the

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governing body at Protaton recommended the monastery's closing to the then Patriarch of Constantinople, Kallinikos. The Lord and His martyr arranged this matter otherwise. The patriarch, inspired by God and His saint, sought to restore the monastery and establish coenobitic monasticism. Kallinikos enlisted the help of the Elder Savvas of the Xenophon Skete. The latter spent four years in Constantinople raising money for Saint Panteleimon Monastery. Many miracles were performed in the capital, especially when the holy skull of the saint was conveyed there from Athos. The blind had their sight restored, the lepers had been cleansed, and the demoniacs had their demons expelled. Savvas could not meet all the requests for visits. But then war broke out between the Turks and Russia, which resulted in the loss of financial assistance from the Patriarch Kallinikos. The holy Unmercenary Panteleimon then took part in the reconstruction of his monastery. He wrought miracles which helped the new hegumen of the monastery, Elder Savvas. The magnitude of Savvas' success with the wonderworking relic was such that he was menaced by the Muslims, who felt Islam was belittled in the face of the saint's achievements. Nevertheless, the life of the Athonite elder was protected by Saint Panteleimon from their evil designs upon his life.

Now it came to pass that the interpreter at the Ottoman court, Prince Scarlatos Kallimaches, succumbed to a grave illness. The physicians diagnosed the disease as incurable. The family of the sufferer invited Elder Savvas to visit. He prayed to the Martyr Panteleimon to restore the ailing prince. Scarlatos promised that if the great-martyr healed him, he would build the monastery on Mount Athos to him. After Elder Savvas served a supplicatory canon to the saint and blessed water, Scarlatos was sprinkled with the holy water. He was then told to imbibe a broth, mixed with holy water, that contained Athonite herbs. The following day, Prince Scarlatos recovered completely. The prince remained true to his vow concerning the construction of the monastery. After a number of years, he ascended the throne of Moldavia by decree of the sultan. The small monastery that Scarlatos erected by the sea was later expanded and made grand by donations from Russia.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup>(...continued)

Kallimachides." Ibid., pp. 133-136.

<sup>23</sup> The monastery was laid out on its present site above the sea after the year 1765. It was originally founded on the site now known as Palaiomonastiron or "the old monastery" of Saint Panteleimon or the Monastery of the Thessalonian, founded at the beginning of the 11<sup>th</sup> C. At that time monks from Russia and Dalmatia arrived on the Holy Mountain and settled at the Monastery of Xylourgos. As they increased in number, at the urging of Abbot Laurentios and the *Protos*, the holy community granted them the then deserted Monastery of the Thessalonian. Xylourgos eventually sank to the status of skete, which it still is today. Xylourgos or  
(continued...)

On another occasion, the saint also acted as a go-between during Ottoman rule. The court physician to the sultan had an only daughter who was possessed by a demon. The court physician, a papist, was at a loss how to remedy the situation. He affirmed that he would spare nothing for the deliverance of the lass. It was during this period that the Elder Savvas was in Constantinople and the wonderworking relic of Saint Panteleimon abounded in cures that redounded to Christ's glory in the city. The doctor, although a Roman Catholic, still wished to invite the elder with the miraculous relic to his own house. Savvas came and conducted a supplicatory canon in the presence of the demonized girl, who was bound in chains to a wall in order to curb any violence on her part. This was for the safety not only of others but of her own person as well. Elder Savvas allowed her to kiss the relics. The doctor invited the elder to pass the night in his house as his honored guest. The elder could not refuse. Savvas prayed throughout the night to the holy physician Panteleimon. He had the relics set on a large tray, which was placed in the chamber where the afflicted girl was fettered.

The following day, when Father Savvas, the doctor, and the girl's kinfolk entered the chamber, they beheld a surprising sight. The lass appeared healthy and sound of mind. The precious skull of Saint Panteleimon that was placed on the tray was exuding a sweet-smelling myrrh. The entire family rejoiced and glorified God and the Martyr Panteleimon. They all asked to be received into the holy Orthodox Church, which the Elder Savvas welcomed. As for the myrrh that seeped from the skull, the Elder Savvas left it with the lass, saying that it was for her sake and in her room that Christ bestowed that fragrant gift.

Again, during the abbacy of Elder Savvas, a physician was hired for the needs of the brotherhood at Saint Panteleimon Monastery. He intended to serve in the monastery in a dual capacity—not only as a doctor but also as a tonsured monk. With his intentions there also came to pass the temptations that usually accompany this promise to serve the Lord. The man's constancy and love for the Lord were put to the test. The devil kept suggesting to him that he could better please God with his various talents and gifts in the world, where there were more opportunities to do good works. This proposal was presented to him in an attractive way. The devil reminded him that in the world he could not only do good but also do better for himself by avoiding the privations and vexations associated with monastic life. The fact that the doctor had a lucrative profession and a significant sum of money already made the devil's pious

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<sup>23</sup>(...continued)

Bogoroditsa (of our Lady) is also a coenobitic community and inhabited by a few Bulgarians. Ibid., p. 133.



pretenses more appealing. The doctor then made claims that his intention to become a monk was unfounded. He inwardly wished to live in the world in such a way that he could both please God and not inconvenience himself too much.

On the day that he planned to depart the monastery, some of the brethren came to bid him farewell. They were horrified to find his body utterly disfigured from edema. His swollen flesh gave him such torment that he could not walk. The hair from his head and beard had fallen out. His voice could hardly be heard. He in no way resembled the doctor whom they all knew to be perfectly healthy only yesterday. The doctor felt his life slipping away. He made provision that his money and property would be transferred to the abbot and the monastery. He then pleaded for the abbot to come and read over him the prayers of absolution before he died.

Father Savvas made haste to visit the sufferer, bearing the holy relic of the skull of Saint Panteleimon. The fathers served a *moleben* before the icon of Saint Panteleimon, requesting his mighty intercessions. After offering up prayers and litanies, they also conducted a Service for the Blessing of Water. The ailing doctor was sprinkled with holy water. The holy relic was taken up by the abbot, who traced the sign of the Cross over the sufferer. The repentant doctor then asked forgiveness from the abbot and the brethren. With his contrition, the swelling began to shrink more and more until it disappeared. Once healed, he gave thanks to his healer, Saint Panteleimon, and promised to remain in the unmercenary's monastery to the end of his days. He then asked to be tonsured to the Great Schema. He was given the name Philotheos. After five years, Father Philotheos entered into everlasting life.

We shall recount one other miracle during the tenure of Abbot Savvas, and then we shall bring our account to a close. Now a new monk joined the monastic brotherhood of Saint Panteleimon. His name was Azarios or Azary. By his deeds and his lack of zeal, he was unstable in his decision to serve the Lord as a monk. On account of his inconstancy, the devil was determined to deter him from the monastic conduct of life. He first thought to entice him to return to his former family life, where he was indulged and spoiled. At the monastery, even from the beginning, he was assigned to the kitchen for the preparation of food for the laborers. As it turned out, he proved to be proficient in his duties so that he did the work of three men. The devil then attempted to lure him back into the world, employing the pretext that there it was needful for him to do the charitable work of raising three orphans among his kinfolk. The spiritual warfare that Azarios endured was grievous and long. Even after years had passed and the orphans reached their majority and no longer required a guardian, he finally made up his mind to leave the monastery—despite the exhortations of Elder Savvas and his spiritual father.

As he passed through the monastery gates, he observed that instead of the inlet, where the monastery was situated, there was a vast plain stretched out before him. He was astounded at the inexplicable alteration in geography, and pondered within himself upon the meaning of it. Suddenly, he heard the racing hooves of three steeds carrying horsemen that appeared as Arab infidels. They were coming swiftly toward him from out of the opposite side of the Athonite peninsula. They appeared to arrive at the monastery gates almost instantly. Azarios viewed a young man, about eighteen years of age, walk out of the monastery gates. He was holding a staff in his hand. As though he were the owner of that holy establishment who had just encountered robbers, he struck the three intruders with his staff. Azarios, stunned at the spectacle, could hear him deriding the riders, saying, "What do you seek here, O you offspring of perdition? Does not the Gehenna of the fire suffice you? Would you also snatch a sheep from the fold on my property? You have no portion here, begone!" With this command and the blows from his staff, the alien riders disappeared.

The young man was the all-merciful Panteleimon who had driven away the demons, who came in the guise of heathen horsemen in order to poach a lamb from the flock of the monastery's patron. The lamb, Azarios, beheld this vision. The young man then turned sorrowfully to Azarios and scolded him, saying, "Why dost thou give me no peace? Why dost thou trouble me again and again?" The young man then struck Azarios on his right side, which had a debilitating effect upon him. Thereafter, Azarios could neither sit nor recline without help. He could neither stand nor walk without assistance or a crutch. This miraculous intervention by the saint was actually a merciful gift. Azarios, due to his handicap, was finally resolved to remain in the monastery. Following this episode, he was appointed as the monastery gatekeeper. He reposed in the year 1836.

The feast day of the unmercenary healer Panteleimon is the patronal feast of Saint Panteleimon Monastery. The forefeast commences eight days prior to the 27<sup>th</sup> of July. Each day following Vespers, *molebens* are chanted with canons in each of the eight modes, allowing each day to have its own canon for his commemoration. The second day after the feast is also the monastery's feast day. On this day a general *Panikhida* (Office of the Dead or a Memorial Service) is served after Vespers in memory of the founders and benefactors of the coenobium, and *kolyva* (*kutiya*: boiled wheat or rice boiled with honey) is blessed and distributed.

Saint Panteleimon is a wellspring of cures, dispelling diseases and delivering from diverse sufferings. Thus, the great-martyr and healer is invoked in the Mystery of Anointing the Sick, at the Blessing of Water, and in the Prayers for the Sick.



O most blessed physician, the image and namesake of mercy, intercede with Christ that we be granted mercy, for thou hast fought the good fight and hast finished the course of martyrdom for His sake! Amen.

**On the 27<sup>th</sup> of July, the holy Church commemorates  
the BLIND MAN  
who was healed by Saint Panteleimon,  
and who confessed Christ  
and was slain by the sword.**

**On the 27<sup>th</sup> of July, the holy Church commemorates  
our venerable Mother ANTHOUSA the Confessor  
of the most holy Monastery of Mantineon.<sup>24</sup>**

Anthousa, our righteous mother and confessor of Orthodoxy, lived during the reign of the iconoclast Emperor Constantine V Kopronymos (741-775). She was the daughter of the pious Strategios and Fevronia. Not one to foolishly gape after the things of this world or to pluck the joys of youth, Anthousa was an admirer of virginity and purity. She chose to live and wander "in mountains, and in caves, and in the holes of the earth [Heb. 11:38]."

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<sup>24</sup> A divine office was composed in honor of Saint Anthousa, by the hymnographer Father Gerasimos Mikrayiannanites. The hagiographic account herein was translated from the Greek of *The Great Synaxaristes*. According to hagiographer Alice-Mary Talbot, there are also passages regarding Saint Anthousa in the vita of one of her male disciples, Romanos the Neomartyr, who suffered death at the hands of the Arabs in 780 (on the 1<sup>st</sup> of May). This vita of Saint Romanos survives only in a Georgian version, which was translated into Latin [Paul Peeters, "S. Romain le néomartyr," *Analecta Bollandiana* 30 (1911), pp. 393-427.] See Ms. Talbot's work [entitled *Byzantine Defenders of Images* (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 1998), pp. 13, 14], wherein she describes Saint Anthousa as an iconodule abbess of a large double monastery—that is, a monastery housing both men and women in separate but adjacent communities. Double monasteries, however, were not encouraged. See Justinian (A.D. 546) [Novel 123.36]; the Second Synod (A.D. 777) [Canon 20]; and Patriarch Nikephoros I (ca. 810). According to the Life of Saint Romanos, the Mantineon communities were arranged so that the monks lived on the shore of a lake, while the nuns dwelt on an island in the lake. It is evident from the Life of Saint Romanos that the fathers brought food to the mothers, so that the nuns never had to leave their island convent. In exchange, the nuns wove cloth to make Habits for the monks. The Life gives a figure of nine hundred monastics. Anthousa appears to have been the superior of both houses, with her nephew serving as a deputy for the male monastery. Ms. Talbot cites another example of this arrangement, which can be attested in the 14<sup>th</sup> C. at the Monastery of the Philanthropos Soter in Constantinople, presided over by Irene-Evlogia Choumnaina.