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***WITNESS TO HOLINESS:
ABBA DANIEL OF SCETIS***



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*To Prior Aelred Glidden, celebrating the silver
jubilee of his monastic profession.*

**WITNESS TO HOLINESS:
ABBA DANIEL OF SCETIS¹**

Tim Vivian

I. Holiness

The American writer and farmer Wendell Berry has trenchantly observed that “It is impossible to prefigure the salvation of the world in the same language by which the world has been dismembered and defaced.”² One defacing of the modern western world has been the amputation of holiness from our common vocabulary and, more importantly, lived ethic. When does one even hear about holiness from the pulpit, much less from the secular pulpits of government, education, science, and industry? It was not always so. Holiness once mattered. “Be holy, for I am holy,” says the Lord (Lev 11:44).³ But what is holiness? More importantly, what characteristics does a holy person have? In other words, how does a holy person concretely manifest holiness in his or her life? Jesus, we might be surprised to learn, does not explicitly define holiness or its characteristics, although that great compendium “the Sermon on the Mount” (Mt 5) might be better titled “the Sermon on Holiness.” What does early monastic spirituality have to say about holiness? The *Apophthegmata*, or *Sayings* of the desert fathers and mothers, like Jesus, do not explicitly define holiness (*hagiōsunē*, *hosiotês*) although one could entitle that collection “The Book of Holiness”: most—perhaps all—of its sayings are concerned with what constitutes holy behavior.⁴

¹ This article offers a much shortened version of chapters one and two of Tim Vivian, ed., *Witness to Holiness: Abba Daniel of Scetis* (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, forthcoming).

² Wendell Berry, *Life is a Miracle: An Essay against Modern Superstition* (Washington, D.C.: Counterpoint, 2000), 8.

³ For an overview of holiness in the Bible, see J. Muelenberg, “Holiness,” in *The Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1962), 616-25.

⁴ Douglas Burton-Christie has recognized this by subtitling his excellent study of the *Apophthegmata*, *The Word in the Desert* (New York & Oxford: Oxford UP, 1993), “Scripture and the Quest for Holiness in Early Christian Monasticism.” For a general overview, see Burton-Christie, “Quest for Holiness in [the] Fourth Century: Pagan and Christian Approaches,” in *The Word in the Desert*, 48-62.

The early monastic mothers and fathers (4th to 6th centuries) often spoke in terms of “virtues,” and these, taken singly or together, can serve as lexicon, map, and lived territory of holiness.⁵ Wendell Berry understands how the virtues contribute to holiness. Virtues “are good,” he says, “not because they have been highly recommended but because they are necessary; they make for unity and harmony.”⁶ Evagrius of Pontus, the first great monastic systematic theologian, is known partly for his list of Eight Evil Thoughts, the precursors to the medieval Seven Deadly Sins, which at first seem to focus on *disharmony*; but Evagrius is less well known for the lengthier antidotes or virtues that he supplies immediately afterwards for these evil thoughts and that point towards harmony.⁷ The virtues—or Virtues—were in fact so important to monks at Bawit in Middle Egypt in late antiquity that they personified them and painted them in medallions on a wall in their monastery, giving them a “patron saint,” Ama Sibylla.⁸ The Virtues were variously numbered, either 10, 11, or 12;⁹ although the names of some of the Virtues surrounding Ama Sibylla at Bawit have been effaced over the centuries, the ones that survive are Faith, Hope, Humility, Chastity, Gentleness, Grace, and Patience. Paul of Tamma, a monk of Middle Egypt, offers a lively, and somewhat surprising, image of the Virtues: “And the Holy Spirit will illumine all your members, and the twelve Virtues will dance in the midst of your soul, and the Cherubim and Seraphim will shelter you beneath their wings.”¹⁰ Stephen of Thebes, another monk of Middle Egypt, with a different metaphor names eleven “powers” or virtues:

Sitting in your cell, do not act like it is a tomb but rather behave like it is a banquet room filled with gold that has guards protecting it night and day. The “guards” are the powers of God that protect your spirit, that is, knowledge and faith and patience and abstinence, sincerity and innocence, purity and chastity, love, concord, and truth.¹¹

⁵ In the alphabetical collection of the *Apophthegmata*, see Arsenius 5, Agathon 3, Agathon 9, Amoun of Nitria 2, Elias 8, Theodore of Pherme 13, John the Dwarf 22, 26, 34, James 3, Poemen 119, 130, 134, 208, Pambo 3, Rufus 2.

⁶ Wendell Berry, *Another Turn of the Crank* (Washington, D.C.: Counterpoint, 1995), 76.

⁷ See Evagrius, *Praktikos* 6-14 for the evil thoughts and 15-39, apparently, for the antidotes.

⁸ See Jean Clédat, *Le Monastère et la Nécropole de Baouît (Mémoires publiés par les membres de L'Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale du Caire* 12; [one volume in two parts] Cairo: IFAO, 1904), 23. On Ama Sibylla, see Tim Vivian, “Ama Sibylla of Saqqara: Prioress or Prophet, Monastic or Mythological Being?” *Bulletin of the Saint Shenouda the Archimandrite Coptic Society* 5 (1998-1999): 1-17, repr. in Vivian, *Words to Live By: Journeys in Ancient and Modern Monasticism* (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, forthcoming). These Virtues in medallions become even more striking when one sees the prophets of the Old Testament similarly placed in medallions in the dome above the altar in the old church at the Monastery of Antony by the Red Sea.

⁹ See Marguerite Rassart-Debergh, “Trois Peintures,” in *Acta ad Archaeologiam et Artium Historiam Pertinentia*, ed. Hjalmar Torp, et al. (Rome: Bretschneider, 1981), 193-201.

¹⁰ Paul of Tamma, “On Humility” 9. See Tim Vivian, “Saint Paul of Tamma: Four Works Concerning Monastic Spirituality,” *Coptic Church Review* 18:4 (Winter 1997): 105-16, 111; repr. in Vivian, *Words to Live By*.

¹¹ Stephen of Thebes, *Ascetic Discourse* 37. See Tim Vivian, “The *Ascetic Teaching* of Stephen of Thebes,” *Cistercian Studies Quarterly* 34.4 (1999): 425-54, 438; repr. in Vivian, *Words to Live By*.

In a saying attributed to John the Little and, in the Coptic tradition, to Macarius the Great, the abba gives one of the longest extant lists of holy attributes as he exhorts his disciple to “practice every virtue and every commandment of God.” John (or Macarius) importantly makes these attributes part of monastic praxis; he instructs the monk “when you get up in the morning each day, make it the beginning of your life as a monk.” He then goes on to list what this “beginning” consists of:

fearfully practice perseverance and patience; demonstrate a love of God and a love of people with a humble heart and bodily humility, with mourning and the distress of being confined in prison, with prayers and supplications and groans, with purity of tongue while humbly guarding your eyes, without anger, in peace, without returning evil to an evildoer, without passing judgement on those in need, without thinking of yourself in anything, placing yourself below every creature; with renunciation of material things and fleshly things, with the struggle of the cross, with spiritual poverty, with good free will and bodily asceticism, with fasting and repentance and tears, with the combat war brings and returning from imprisonment, with pure counsel and the tasting of good goodness, quietly at midday; with manual work, with vigils, with numerous prayers, with hunger and thirst, with frost and nakedness and afflictions and the acquisition of your tomb as though you had already been placed in it, placing your death near you day after day, lost in the deserts and mountains and holes of the earth” [Heb 11:38].¹²

A vital assumption of all the monastic sayings is that holiness and the embodying of virtues are not the cordoned off sanctuary of a privileged few, but can be manifested by anyone. We should not, however, be too easily egalitarian here: another assumption of many of the early monastic sayings is that their interlocutor is a disciple, a seeker, a person who has left “the world”—that is, its disordered values—and is out in the desert; he prompts the recorded saying by asking how he may be saved. As Arsenius bluntly puts it, the virtues are acquired by hard work.¹³

Holiness gradually came to be seen more and more in the *person* of the holy man (and, more rarely, it seems, holy woman);¹⁴ eventually, holiness resided less in

¹² *The Virtues of Saint Macarius* 12; Tim Vivian, trans., *Disciples of the Soul's Beloved*, Volume 2, *Saint Macarius the Spirit-Bearer* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's, forthcoming). See also Alphabetical Apophthegmata John Kolobos 34. The Greek Systematic Apophthegmata I.13 also attributes the saying to John; but see also I.16, which is given to Macarius.

¹³ Alphabetical Apophthegmata Arsenius 5.

¹⁴ See Peter Brown, “The Rise and Function of the Holy Man in Late Antiquity,” *Journal of Roman Studies* 61 (1971) 80-101 (repr. in Brown, *Society and the Holy in Late Antiquity* [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982], 103-52) and “The Rise and Function of the Holy Man in Late Antiquity: 1971-1997,” *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 6:3 (1998): 353-76.

the holy person and more in his or her relics.¹⁵ Even in the earliest period of monasticism, however, holiness was often seen, especially by outsiders, as the special provenance of the monks; hence the onslaught of pilgrims into the desert in the fourth century, both spiritual tourists and authentic pilgrims.¹⁶ Abba Daniel of Scetis, 6th-century priest and monastic superior (*hêgoumenos*) of Scetis (modern Wadi al-Natrun, northwest of Cairo), was both a holy man *and* a witness to holiness. The collection of tales surrounding his name offers the modern reader an important view of one perception of holiness in late antique Egypt. The understanding of holiness in this collection is neither all-encompassing nor definitive. But the dossier does offer a different and unusual slant on holiness, one that may cause us to adjust our perceptions of holiness in late antiquity. It may even lead us to ponder the nature of holiness in our own day.

II. *The Daniel Dossier*

Material about Abba Daniel of Scetis, eleven stories (or more), nine of which are translated below, has survived in numerous manuscripts dating from perhaps as early as the seventh century in a multitude of languages: Greek, Coptic, Ethiopic, Syriac, Arabic, and Armenian.¹⁷ Paul Van Cauwenbergh characterized the collection, a bit uncharitably, as “a heap of anecdotes without cohesion.”¹⁸ He also called the stories the “Gestes” of Daniel—that is, the Abba’s deeds, heroic achievements, and exploits.¹⁹ This term, however, even if stripped of its medieval connotations of chivalric knights and fair ladies, unfairly pigeonholes Daniel because it plays to our preconceptions and prejudices about hagiography; Daniel, in fact, does no exploits and performs no heroic achievements, which actually redefines his status as holy man. Offering a typical bifurcation of hagiography and history, G. Garitte characterized the collection as “having all the characteristics of edifying fables,” of which

¹⁵ See Hugh G. Evelyn White, *The Monasteries of the Wadi 'N Natrun* (3 vols.; repr. New York: Arno Press, 1973) 2:292: “In the earlier period of the history of Nitria and Scetis, pilgrims made their way into the desert to be edified by the discourse of the fathers, to beg for their prayers, and to receive their blessing. . . . In the seventh century a change seems to have come over both pilgrims and monks. The former seek out holy places believing that prayer there will, through the mediation of some departed saint, lead to a cure or to some other benefit; the latter are drawn more and more to realize the advantages presented to them by such an attitude, and come to look upon relics as an attraction bringing renown and wealth to their monastery. In proportion, then, as the sanctity of the living grew less remarkable, the veneration of the dead increased.”

¹⁶ See Georgia Frank, *The Memory of the Eyes: Pilgrims to Living Saints in Christian Late Antiquity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000).

¹⁷ For translations of this material, see Vivian, ed., *Witness to Holiness*. The Greek text, to which reference is made in this article, was published by Léon Clugnet, *Revue de l'Orient Chrétien* [ROC] 5 (1900): 49-73, 254-271, 370-91. Clugnet’s introduction appears in ROC 6 (1901): 56-87.

¹⁸ Paul Van Cauwenbergh, *Étude sur les moines d'Égypte depuis le concile de Chalcedoine (451) jusqu'à l'invasion arabe (640)* (Paris, Imprimerie Nationale, 1914), 10: “un ramassis d’anecdotes sans cohésion.”

¹⁹ Van Cauwenbergh, 10.

“it is impossible to see if they contain any historical elements.”²⁰ Max Bonnet, more positively, termed the stories about Abba Daniel “certain adventures about a wide variety of personages” which make it “singularly interesting and instructive.” He then went on to suggest that the collection represents “one of the most curious manifestations of eastern Christianity” in late antiquity. Obviously taken with the dossier, Bonnet went on to add (with language usually lacking in modern scholarship) that the dossier is “precious” and “engaging” and “has preserved a naïveté and sincerity that are not without their charms.”²¹ More recently, Sebastian Brock has well captured the scholarly ambivalence about these stories, in whatever language they appear: “For the most part these narratives take the form of uplifting tales, and their historical value is probably minimal, although it is likely that at least some of the persons who feature in them existed in the flesh.”²² I am more optimistic about the historical value of these stories and the historicity of at least some of the characters and events, and will consider these subjects below. I also wish to suggest that these tales have value beyond their historicity—or lack thereof; that they reflect a certain spiritual angle of vision and point us towards the human ability to bear witness to holiness, in whatever unsuspected forms holiness takes.

III. Abba Daniel of Scetis

In his monumental history of the monasteries of the Wadi al-Natrun, Hugh G. Evelyn White remarked that “the history of Scetis in the Byzantine period can show but one individual figure worthy of remark”—Abba Daniel, priest and superior.²³ Evelyn White construed the term “Byzantine” more narrowly than most historians would today, obviously excluding the fourth and fifth centuries with its great figures of Arsenius, Isaiah, John the Little, Macarius the Great, and Poemen, to name just a few. But his comment does point to a certain paucity of information about the monastic leaders of subsequent periods; the monks themselves in later centuries looked back nostalgically on the fourth and fifth centuries as a golden age of monasticism when spiritual giants (or angels) inhabited the desert places.

But Evelyn White’s comment raises the question: Who was this Abba Daniel, priest and superior of Scetis? He is not the Daniel who appears in the *Apophthegmata*, nor is he the disciple of Arsenius.²⁴ This answer, however, in turn raises other questions. We have a number of stories about and sayings attributed to

²⁰ G. Garitte, “Daniel de Scété,” *Dictionnaire d’Histoire et de Géographie* 14.70-72, 72.

²¹ Max Bonnet, review, *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 13 (1904): 166-71; 166.

²² Sebastian P. Brock and Susan A. Harvey, *Holy Women of the Syrian Orient* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 142.

²³ Hugh G. Evelyn White, *The Monasteries of the Wādī ‘N Natrūn*, Part II, *The History of the Monasteries of Nitria and of Scetis* (New York: Arno, 1973 [1932]), 241.

²⁴ A Daniel was the disciple of Paphnutius Bubalis, who died at the end of the fourth century; see J-C. Guy, *Les apophthegmes des Pères: Collection Systématique. Chapitres I-IX* (Paris: Cerf, 1993), 56. The Daniel of Alphabetical Apophthegmata Daniel 1-8, Arsenius 14, 23, 39, 42, 43, and Agathon 28 is a disciple of Arsenius, who died in 449 (see Guy, 74-79), and a contemporary of Cyril of Alexandria, who died in 444. The Daniel of Alphabetical Apophthegmata Poemen 138 is a contemporary of Poemen, who died after Arsenius (see Guy, 77-79).

a certain Abba Daniel. Do all of these refer to the same person? What historical information do the stories contain? And when did he live? One thing is clear: Abba Daniel remained a popular figure, with stories about him surviving in Greek, Coptic, Ethiopic, Syriac, Armenian, and Arabic manuscripts copied from the seventh through the eighteenth centuries. The main Greek manuscripts, which must be given priority, gather together—somewhat haphazardly and precariously—eleven stories related to Abba Daniel of Scetis, which may be supplemented by other stories of even less secure attribution from John Moschus and elsewhere. The shorter Arabic version offers no additional tales while the Syriac adds a story not extant in the main Greek collection but attested elsewhere; the Coptic and Ethiopic convert the stories into a *Vita* or *Life* given as a homily, undoubtedly intended for the saint's feast day:²⁵ each adds a tale and at the end appends important material, whether historical or hagiographical, on Daniel's opposition to the Council of Chalcedon, his flight from Scetis and return, his final departure to Tambôk, and his death there.²⁶

Given the wide range of the appearance (or appearances) of a Daniel in the ancient sources, scholars have been divided as to whether all of the stories refer to a single person.²⁷ Some, noting that the Greek manuscripts, at least those that include all the major accounts, gather them under the same title referring to Abba Daniel, argue for one Daniel and say that the fact that the Coptic and Ethiopic versions bring together several accounts to form a biography of Daniel “constitutes a presumption in favor of their being a single person.”²⁸ Others, pointing to discrepancies in the Ethiopic version, suggest that there are two or more Daniels.²⁹ Daniel's decidedly peripatetic nature—he travels from Scetis north to Alexandria, south to the Thebaid, and (in the Ethiopic version) far east to the Red Sea—might suggest more than one person,³⁰ but travel is an important motif in these stories and may well be a historical reminiscence about Daniel.³¹ Monks of an earlier gen-

²⁵ For analogous examples, see Tim Vivian and Maged S. Mikhail, “Life of Saint John the Little,” *Coptic Church Review* 18: 1 & 2 (Spring/Summer, 1997) and Tim Vivian, “Humility and Resistance in Late Antique Egypt: *The Life of Longinus*,” *Coptic Church Review* 20.1 (Spring 1999): 2-30. For a homily on a monastic saint where any historical sense of the saint almost completely disappears, see “A Discourse on Saint Onnophrius’ by Saint Pistentius,” in Vivian, *Paphnutius: Histories of the Monks of Upper Egypt and the Life of Onnophrius* (rev. ed., Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 2000), 167-88.

²⁶ See the lists in Clugnet, ROC 6 (1901): 83-87.

²⁷ Van Cauwenbergh, 26, believes that only the stories of Anastasia (I.8) and Eulogius (I.9) belong with certainty to Daniel of Scetis.

²⁸ Clugnet, ROC 6: 56; and Van Cauwenburgh, 24.

²⁹ Lazarus Goldschmidt and F.M. Esteves Pereira, *Vida do Abba Daniel do Mosteiro de Sceté* (Lisbon 1897), viii; see also Garitte, 71, who says that it is “probable” that not all the stories refer to the same Daniel. The Ethiopic sources, upon which Goldschmidt and Pereira base their conclusions, show confusion regarding Abba Daniel.

³⁰ Van Cauwenburgh, 25.

³¹ Evelyn White intriguingly raises the possibility, 244, that Daniel was a partisan of one splinter group within the anti-Chalcedonians in Egypt, the “Theodosians,” and that “his absences from Scetis were due to the hostility” of an opposing group, the Gaianite majority. But he also acknowledges that we do not know enough about his attitude toward “current controversies” to support such suppositions. On these groups see John of Nikiu, *Chronicle* 94.1-9; E.R. Hardy, “Gaianus,” *The Coptic Encyclopedia*, ed. Aziz Atiya (New Yprk: Macmillan, 1991), 4.1138; and Randall Stewart, “Theodosians,” *Coptic Encyclopedia* 7.2240-41.

eration—Antony and Macarius of Egypt, for example—also traveled extensively, so the mere fact that Daniel journeyed far and wide does not automatically split him into two or more persons.

Several things are consistent and clear from these accounts: (1) All the sources indisputably associate Daniel with Scetis; one story says that he lived in Scetis from childhood,³² while several others, with more probability, refer to him as “priest” and “superior” (*hégoumenos*) of Scetis.³³ Daniel may have been Greek, but was undoubtedly bilingual.³⁴ (2) Daniel traveled extensively, especially to Alexandria. (3) He lived in the sixth century. His chronology is worth examining in some detail. In one story, on account of a “murder” he has committed, Daniel goes to see Archbishop Timothy of Alexandria, who was patriarch from 517-35.³⁵ While this story goes on to say, quite improbably, that Daniel then went on to see the Pope of Rome and “all the patriarchs,” including those of Jerusalem and Antioch, it is not inherently unlikely that Daniel went to see Timothy.³⁶ In fact another story from outside the Daniel dossier links Daniel with Timothy III.³⁷

The visit, or visits, to Timothy by themselves constitute slim grounds on which to date Daniel, but the time period they give (early sixth century) finds corroboration in the stories of Anastasia, the patrician lady who fled Constantinople and became a “eunuch” in the desert near Abba Daniel, and Eulogius the stonemason, both of which place Daniel more specifically during the reign of Emperor Justinian I (518-27). According to Daniel, Anastasia “was a patrician lady of the royal court, and Emperor Justinian loved her dearly and wanted to take her into the imperial residence on account of her great intelligence. But she had angered the Augusta Theodora and Theodora banished her to Alexandria. So she founded the great cenobium at the Pempton, which is called ‘The Monastery of the Patrician Lady.’” In Version A of this story, Daniel tells his disciple that “when she founded this cenobium, Emperor Justinian heard about her and began to honor her on account of her great intelligence” so she fled Alexandria by night and came to live near him. “She has now spent twenty-eight years today in Scetis and no one knows about her

³² While not unknown, children at Scetis were rare, it seems, so this could well be a hagiographical topos.

³³ The Arabic version, BN arabe 276, fol. 153v, says that Daniel was superior of the monastery of Am el Madshab before he became *hégoumenos* of Scetis.

³⁴ When Daniel and his disciple travel to the Thebaid in one tale, “his disciple gave what he [Daniel] had written to one of the brothers and he translated it into Coptic [literally: into Egyptian].” Clugnet, BHO iv, believes from this that Daniel was Greek and did not know Coptic, but Evelyn White, 241, says this is unlikely: Daniel was a monk from childhood in Scetis and *hegoumen* there so he “must certainly have known Coptic.” Evelyn White believes, 242, that the translation was from Bohairic into Sahidic Coptic.

³⁵ Evelyn White, 242 n. 4, places the visit in 520 and also believes, 243 n. 2, that the pope mentioned in another story is also Timothy.

³⁶ The story about Mark the Fool in fact states that Daniel went to Alexandria “because it is customary for the superior of Scetis to go up to see the pope for the Great Feast [of Easter].” Unfortunately, this story does not supply the name of the pope.

³⁷ Codex Paris. Coislin 283, ff. 130v-132.

except me, you, and one other old monk.” Versions B and C declare that Anastasia fled to Scetis after the death of Theodora, which occurred in 548. If Daniel is narrating her story twenty-eight years later, then he lived to at least 576. He may have left Scetis during imperial persecution, survived Justinian (who died in 565), returned to Scetis after the emperor’s death, and fled the destruction of Scetis that took place sometime between 570 to 580 (on these events see below).

The story of Eulogius the stonecutter places Daniel even more securely in the time of Justinian. In this story Daniel tells his disciple that when he was “younger, forty years old” (four manuscripts say “about forty years old or less”), he went to an estate to sell his handiwork; while there he was befriended by Eulogius, who made it his ministry to provide food and shelter for foreigners. Due to Daniel’s entreaties, Eulogius finds a cache of money; contrary to the monk’s intentions, however, instead of using the money to provide hospitality, Eulogius runs off to Constantinople (“Byzantium” in the text) when “Justin, the uncle of Justinian,” was emperor. Eulogius ingratiates himself at court, becomes “procurator of the Praetorian guard,” and buys “a large estate” which, interestingly, “to this day . . . is called ‘the estate of the Egyptian.’” The text clearly indicates that Justin dies two years and four months later and Justinian assumes the throne; thus Eulogius must have gone to Byzantium in 525. After Justinian’s accession, Eulogius gets involved in a conspiracy against the emperor and has to flee for his life.

So much of the story of Eulogius is either hagiographical or folkloric that it is difficult at first to give credence to its facts and implicit dates.³⁸ The story does, however, have a reasonably accurate grasp of historical events that can be corroborated from other sources. After Justinian became emperor, the text tells us, “Hypatius and Dexikratus and Pompeius and Eulogius the procurator rose up against him. The first three were killed and all their possessions confiscated, as was Eulogius’ estate. Eulogius fled Constantinople at night,” exchanged his fine clothing for that of “the country folk,” and returned home. Historical sources inform us that Emperor Justin had adopted his nephew Justinian and on April 1, 527, made him co-emperor and then died on August 1 of that year. Early in 532 Hypatius and Pompeius, nephews of Emperor Anastasius who had died in 518, rebelled against Justinian (in what is called the Nika riot) and a number of senators proclaimed Hypatius emperor. After the riot was suppressed, Hypatius and Pompeius were arrested; on January 19 they were executed and their bodies cast into the sea. “Their property, and that of those senators who had supported them, was confiscated. The patricians who had been with them, people whose identity we unfortunately do not know, fled.”³⁹ Is it just possible that Eulogius, even in his rags-to-riches-to-rags story, was indeed one of those unnamed patrician conspirators? If he was,

³⁸ On folklore and hagiography, see A.-J. Festugière, “Lieux communs littéraires et thèmes de folklore dans l’Hagiographie primitive,” *Wiener Studien* 73 (1960): 123-52.

³⁹ See John Moorhead, *Justinian* (London & New York: Longman, 1994), 14, 21-22, 46-47. On the conspirators, see J. R. Martindale, ed., *The Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1971-92), vol. 2, under Eulogius 9, Dexicrates, Hypatius 6, and Pompeius 2.

then this story places Daniel squarely within the time of Justinian I (483-565) and suggests that he was born in 485.⁴⁰ Daniel's visits to Archbishop Timothy around 520 and his first encounter with Eulogius around 525 occurred when he was "young" and seem to have taken place before he became superior of Scetis.

The Coptic *Life of Abba Daniel*, based in part on stories from the Greek collection, also connects Daniel to Justinian; these events are more problematic but are still plausible. According to the *Life*, Daniel opposed the Tome of Leo, which to most Egyptians (those outside of Alexandria) most fully symbolized and represented the execrable decisions of the Council of Chalcedon (451). For his efforts Daniel, like other monastic leaders in Egypt, had to flee his monastery. He went to Tambôk, a small village in the eastern Delta. After Justinian's death, in 565, the Coptic *Life* reports that Daniel returned to Scetis. Not long afterwards, "barbarians came to the holy monastic settlement, laying it waste and killing the old men and taking some of them as prisoners to their country." After this destruction of Scetis, which probably occurred between 570 and 580, Daniel went back to Tambôk where he died.⁴¹ Thus it may be possible to date Daniel's life from 485 to 570-80; if so, he lived an uncommonly long life, as did a number of early monks. According to the Coptic *Life*, Daniel went to God at Tambôk on the eighth of Pashons (8 Bashans = May 3 [Julian] and May 16 [Gregorian]). He is still commemorated in the Coptic Orthodox calendar on that date.⁴²

IV. The Narrator as Disciple and Eyewitness: Hagiography and History

The collection of stories about Abba Daniel begins with the story of Mark the Fool: "There was an old man in Scetis by the name of Daniel." This tale then continues with a number of pieces of important information:

and he had a disciple, and a brother by the name of Sergius lived for a short time with the aforesaid disciple and then went to sleep in Christ. After the perfection of brother Sergius, Abba Daniel gave his disciple the freedom to speak freely [*parrêsia*], for he dearly loved him. One day, then, the old man took his disciple and went to Alexandria, because it is customary for the superior of Scetis to go up to see the pope for the Great Feast [of Easter].

The narrative unassumingly slips in the information that Daniel had a disciple. Actually, he had two disciples who lived together; when one of them, Sergius, died, Daniel conferred *parrêsia*, "freedom of speech," on the other, unnamed, disciple. Then, in a topos that will be repeated throughout the collection, Daniel and his disciple go off to Alexandria, the setting of many of the events in the dossier. The narrative then adds the reason for their journey: it was "customary for the superior of Scetis to go up to see the pope for the Great Feast [of Easter]."

⁴⁰ See Evelyn White, 241-42.

⁴¹ On the dates, see Evelyn White, 249-51.

⁴² Otto F.A. Meinardus, *Two Thousand Years of Coptic Christianity* (Cairo: AUC Press, 1999), 302.

Just as it is important to distinguish the stories about Daniel chronologically and locatively, it is equally important to divide these tales between those in which Daniel's disciple appears and those in which he does not. First, those in which he does *not* figure: Two stories are not narratives *about* Daniel but are rather apophthegms (sayings) spoken *by* the old man. One tale, then, the story of Andronicus and Athanasia, is the only third-person narrative in the main collection in which Daniel's disciple does not figure; in fact, Daniel himself makes only a cameo appearance in this tale. All of the other stories in the Daniel collection are third-person narratives in which Daniel's unnamed disciple figures prominently. One notes also that the narrator, like the narrator of Acts, slips into the first person plural; thus the Daniel collection, like the biblical book, has its own "we" section. Max Bonnet long ago observed that the Daniel dossier is "quite clearly the work of one of his disciples."⁴³ This fact has important implications for any historical assessment of the collection and for our understanding of sixth-century monasticism in Egypt.

In the story about Mark the Fool, Abba Daniel and his disciple "arrived at the city at about four in the afternoon and," the narrator observes,

as they were walking in the street, they saw a brother who was naked except for the loincloth he was wearing around his loins. That brother was pretending that he was half-witted and there were with him other imbeciles. The brother would go around like a half-wit and babble nonsensically and he would snatch things from the stalls in the marketplace and give them to the other imbeciles. His name was "Mark of the Horse." "The Horse" is a public bath; there Mark the imbecile worked.

Mark is a "holy fool," a character well-known in antiquity.⁴⁴ Did Daniel's disciple take over and adapt older material about such late antique characters as holy fools (two stories) and monastic "transvestites" (one story), that is, women who dressed as men in order to live the monastic life in the desert?⁴⁵ Or did he and

⁴³ Bonnet, 167. He did not develop this insight, which was surprisingly unnoticed by other early scholars. John Wortley has recently concurred with Bonnet.

⁴⁴ See Derek Krueger, *Symeon the Holy Fool: Leontius' Life and the Late Antique City* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1996); he mentions Mark on pp. 59-60, 64. See also Belden C. Lane, "The Spirituality and Politics of Holy Folly," *The Christian Century* (15 December 1982): 1281-86.

⁴⁵ Brock, *Holy Women*, 142. Brock believes that the story about "the mad nun" "is clearly modeled" on a figure in Palladius' *Lausiac History* (chap. 34 in the Greek version), but I do not believe that is the case. He also observes that the theme of the transvestite "was always a popular one among hagiographers." For a circumspect and unadorned account of the post-mortem discovery of one transvestite, see Alphabetical Apophthegmata Bessarion 4. On monastic transvestites, see Lucien Regnault, *The Day-to-Day Life of the Desert Fathers in Fourth-Century Egypt* (Petersham, MA: Saint Bede's, 1999), who notes, 25, that "hagiography records many such cases whose historicity is hard to evaluate"; Benedicta Ward, *Harlots of the Desert* (Kalamazoo: Cistercian, 1987); Marie Delcourt, "Appendix: Female Saints in Masculine Clothing," in Delcourt, *Hermaphrodite: Myths and Rites of the Bisexual Figure in Classical Antiquity*, trans. Jennifer Nicholson (London: Studio Books, 1961), 84-102; J. Anson, "The Female Transvestite in Early Monasticism: Origin and Development of a Motif," *Viator: Medieval and Religious Studies* 5 (1974): 1-32; and Teresa M. Shaw, *The Burden of the Flesh: Fasting and Sexuality in Early Christianity* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998), esp. 235-47, and the bibliography cited on 240, n. 79.

Daniel actually encounter such persons?⁴⁶ The idea of being a “fool for Christ” goes back to Saint Paul (1 Cor 1:20, 27; 2 Cor 11:21). It also has roots in early monastic tradition, a tradition that Daniel would have known. Abba Or told his disciples, “In fleeing, either flee from people or mock the world and people by making yourself for the most part foolish.”⁴⁷ In a sense, becoming a monk made one *ipso facto* a fool for Christ, at least initially. Routine and security could blunt the edge of foolishness; the irony, and lesson, in the story of Mark the Fool is that Abba Daniel had to go to the city—commonly seen as the antithesis to monasticism—to find a whetstone.

Modern scholars usually assume a suspicious stance towards such ancient figures as holy fools and transvestite monks.⁴⁸ But such characters (I use the term advisedly) did in fact exist; the modern difficulty—perhaps impossibility—lies in the effort to distinguish the historical person from hagiographical overlay (or inlay).⁴⁹ Daniel, intrigued by the half-wit he encounters in the story, tells his disciple to find out where he is living; after Mark’s death, Daniel sends his disciple to Scetis to inform the fathers there and to summon them to Alexandria in order to be blessed by the deceased saint. These sorts of instruction occur frequently in the dossier (in six stories, in fact) and demonstrate both the disciple’s privileged status and the fact that he was often in a position to observe goings-on surrounding the old man.

What is striking here is both the specificity of Mark’s dress, actions, and setting, something an eyewitness certainly could have reported. “The Horse,” in fact, is known from other ancient sources as a *démosion* or public building, perhaps a bath, in Alexandria.⁵⁰ Such specific, localized details recur throughout the collection: in the story of the Holy Mendicant, Daniel and his disciple go to Saint Mark’s Outside-the-City, the church associated with the martyrdom of Saint Mark the Evangelist in Boukolou (Baucalis); by the third century the city had shrunk, and

⁴⁶ For an account of a modern “fool” and holy man, see Tim Vivian, “A Journey to the Interior: The Monasteries of Saint Antony and Saint Paul by the Red Sea,” *American Benedictine Review* 50.3 (September 1999): 277-310, at 302-5.

⁴⁷ *Alphabetical Apophthegmata* Or 14; PG 65.440C. “Mock” translates *empaixon* < *empaizein*, which also means “make sport of” or “delude”; therefore, one could translate it as “fool.” “Making yourself for the most part foolish”: *mōron seauton eis ta polla poiōn*.

⁴⁸ Ewa Wipszycka, “Les clercs dans les communautés monastiques d’Égypte,” *The Journal of Juristic Papyrology* 26 (1996): 135-66, at 153, even suggests that the famous fourth-century figure Abba Moses “seems to have been composed of *topoi* and literary inventions” and that “we cannot even be completely sure that the literary construction had a real ascetic for its model.”

⁴⁹ Such is the dilemma faced by Krueger, who does not deny that Symeon existed but virtually despairs of knowing anything about the historical person.

⁵⁰ *Démosion* was used of any public building, such as an amphitheater or public bath. Christopher Haas, *Alexandria in Late Antiquity: Topography and Social Conflict* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), cites a 4th-century source to the effect that there were no less than 1,561 baths and 845 taverns in the city. Aristide Calderini, *Dizionario dei nomi geografici e topografici dell’Egitto greco-romano* (5 vols.; Cairo, Società reale di geografia D’Egitto, 1935-1987), vol. 1, *Alexandria*, 96, has an entry, “Balaneia, thermai, loutra,” which mentions the *demosion loutron* to *kaloumenon Ippon en Alexandria* (Anth. Pal 9.628, in an epigram attributed to John the Scribe).

the church had become a suburban one, thus outside the city, as the story accurately reports. In the story of The Woman Who Pretended to be Drunk, abba and disciple journey south from Scetis into the Upper Thebaid for the feast day of Abba Apollo, a monastic figure from Middle Egypt well known in antiquity;⁵¹ they then go on to Hermopolis and visit a “monastery for women” associated with the Monastery of Abba Jeremiah.⁵²

Such geographical details as these would seem to lend credence to the narrator’s accounts, especially when they are coupled with vividness of narration, a strong characteristic of the Daniel dossier. But the situation is not that simple. These two criteria—environmental and narrative—are among ten criteria that John P. Meier fruitfully discusses in his exhaustive study of the historical Jesus and that discussion is also relevant here.⁵³ “Liveliness and concrete details,” Meier observes, “are sometimes taken to be indicators of an eyewitness report,” but such an assumption is not without historical difficulties.⁵⁴ Although the tradition behind the Daniel dossier is undoubtedly not as “convoluted” (Meier’s term) as that of the Synoptic Gospels, a similar historical hesitancy with regard to the material is warranted, especially when one figures in the disciple/narrator’s “agenda” (discussed immediately below). As several New Testament scholars have concluded, “the burden of proof is simply on anyone who tries to prove anything.”⁵⁵ This cuts both ways: for someone who wishes to argue that the Daniel dossier is the work of Daniel’s disciple and reflects eyewitness, historical, reports, as well as for someone who wishes to deny such attestation and who sees the dossier as largely ahistorical hagiography. Meier wisely reminds us that modern historical efforts have much in common with other activities of everyday life, concluding that the use of historical criteria is more an art than a science, requiring sensitivity to the individual case rather than mechanical implementation. It can never be said too many times that such an art usually yields only varying degrees of probability, not absolute certitude. . . . Since moral certitude is nothing but a very high degree of probability, and since we run most of our lives and make many of our theoretical and practical judgments on the basis of moral certitude, we must

⁵¹ See René-Georges Coquin, “Apollon de Titkooh ou/et Apollon de Bawit?,” *Orientalia* 46 (1977): 435-46, and Tim Vivian, “Monks, Middle, Egypt, and *Metanoia*: The *Life of Phib* by Papohe the Steward,” *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 7.4 (Winter 1999): 547-72.

⁵² This monastery, also called the Monastery of Abba Jeremias, is well known because of excavations undertaken there early in the last century; see J.E. Quibell, *Excavations at Saqqara (1908-1909, 1909-1910)*, vol. 4, *The Monastery of Apa Jeremias* (Cairo: IFAO, 1912). To my knowledge, Quibell’s findings do not point to a double monastery or separate monasteries for men and women, but there are some inscriptions by women and the fascinating personage of Ama Sibylla figures prominently.

⁵³ John P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus*, Volume One, *The Roots of the Problem and the Person* (New York: Doubleday, 1991).

⁵⁴ Meier, 180.

⁵⁵ Meier, 183.

not feel that the results of our quest will be unusually fragile or uncertain. They are no more fragile or uncertain than many other parts of our lives.⁵⁶

Just as the Gospels are post-Easter narratives, based on the writers' belief in a resurrected and living Christ, so too is the Daniel dossier the subjective reporting of a disciple or community that remembered Abba Daniel and valued that living memory.⁵⁷ There is no such thing as objective history. The modern historian's take on Abba Daniel is not automatically more objective than that of Daniel's disciple (or community). It is important to consider that disciple's views, what understanding he brought to his material that helped him shape—or caused him to shape—his narrative. In one story Daniel atones for a murder he committed by taking care of lepers one at a time. The disciple-narrator does not figure in the early portions of this tale but then appears suddenly:

One day, then, in accordance with God's divine dispensation, the old man rang the bell at noon, as was the custom, but his disciple had gone to his cell to perform some service for the old man; the old man had forgotten that he had rung the bell and, through God's divine agency, had left open the gate to the courtyard of his cell and the old man was sitting in the sun, treating the leper.

The narrator seems to be saying that it was only by accident that the disciple saw his abba's ministrations to the leper. What he describes, however, is both gruesome and touching and leaves a powerful impression:

The leper was completely eaten up by his many wounds. The old man's disciple returned from his duties and, approaching the courtyard gate, observed how the old man was treating the leper. After the old man had finished treating him, he entered his cell and brought into the courtyard a loaf of the finest wheat flour and was feeding the leper the bread because the leper did not have hands; and since he was not able to swallow his food because he had so completely rotted, the old man was kneading the leper's mouth with his own hands and putting the food in his mouth. When the disciple saw the amazing work that the old man was doing, he was astonished and on account of such a great deed glorified God who was supplying such great patience to the old man to serve the leper like this.

The narrator's words make it clear that this is not dispassionate, disinterested reporting: what the disciple inadvertently observes has come about "in accordance with God's divine dispensation" and "through God's divine agency." What he sees causes him astonishment and he glorifies God who gives the old man incredible patience to treat someone horribly deformed.

⁵⁶ Meier, 184.

⁵⁷ On the theme of remembering in early monasticism, see William Harmless, SJ, "Remembering Poemen Remembering: The Desert Fathers and the Spirituality of Memory," *Church History* 69:3 (September 2000): 483-518.

Such demonstrations of faith remind us that the narrator's interest does not lie in reporting facts per se but in getting at the spiritual truths that, for him, underlie the events he is recording. As William Harmless has observed, "we cannot let modern questions about historicity divert us from understanding how memory worked" in early monastic communities. Those communities,

from all indications, did take great pains to remember accurately. But it was not accuracy for accuracy's sake. It was not the accuracy that might move a modern historian, or one that might have moved an ancient historian. *It was accuracy for the sake of spirituality* [my emphasis] Its concern was not past facts, but past wisdom that might serve the present quest.⁵⁸

Two examples well illustrate how the narrator of the Daniel dossier uses past facts for the sake of spirituality and the present spiritual quest. After the death of Mark the Fool, Abba Daniel sends his disciple to Scetis to summon the monks to Alexandria:

And all of Scetis came wearing white and bearing olive branches and palms, and the [monasteries of] Enaton and Kellia did likewise, and those in the monastic settlement of Nitria and all the lavras around Alexandria, so that his holy body was not buried for five days and they were compelled to embalm blessed Mark's corpse. And the whole city, with olive branches and lighted candles and tears, purified the city and buried the precious body of blessed Mark the fool, glorifying and praising God, the lover of humanity, who gives such grace and glory to those who love him, now and always, for ever and ever.

In the story of Andronicus and Athanasia, after the death of "blessed Athanasia," similar events occur: "The old man sent [the disciple] and brought all of Scetis and the inner desert and all the lavras of Alexandria came and the whole city came out with them and the monks of Scetis were dressed in white, for this is their custom in Scetis." Now, one may reasonably doubt that essentially all the inhabitants of Lower Egypt, lay and monastic, came for the funerals of these lately deceased holy ones, and these details are undoubtedly hagiographic, intended to heighten the temporal and spiritual importance of the occasions. What is striking, though, is the details: monks dressed in white and mourners "with olive branches and lighted candles and tears." The narrator testifies that the wearing of white on such occasions was the custom in Scetis, and the use of olive and palm branches on ceremonial occasions was widespread in Egypt in late antiquity.

Similar ceremonial details occur in the story of the Woman Who Pretended to be Drunk. When Daniel goes to the Thebaid,

the fathers for about seven miles around went out to greet him; there were about five thousand of them. They could be seen lying face down on the sand like a rank of angels welcoming Christ

⁵⁸ Harmless, 517.

with fearful reverence: some were spreading their clothing before him [Mt 21:8] while others were laying down their cowls and tears could be seen pouring forth like gushing fountains.

When Daniel and his disciple travel on to the women's monastery, the superior "opened the two gates and came running out, as did the whole community, and they spread their veils from the gate out to where the old man was, rolling themselves at his feet and licking the soles of his feet." Then the narrator, switching to the first person plural, vividly describes a striking act of obeisance:

After we went inside the monastery, the great lady brought a pan and filled it with warm water and herbs and stood the sisters in two choirs and they dipped the old man's feet and those of his disciple in the water. She took a cup and brought the sisters; taking water from the pan she poured it over their heads and afterwards she poured it over her breast and over her head.

In the Coptic account of the Thief who Repented, not found in the Greek collection, the same ritual footwashing and sanctifying ablutions occur, but in a striking twist of events they take place not in the presence of Abba Daniel but before a thief masquerading as the venerable old man. Despite this deception, the water still has sanctifying effects:

When one of the sisters, who had been blind from childhood, heard the sisters' rejoicing, she said to them, "Give me some of the old man's water too," and they took hold of her and stood her over the basin. She cried out, "Blessed are you, my holy father Abba Daniel! May God and your name have mercy on me!" And she filled her hand with water and rubbed it on her face. Immediately she was able to see. How great were the shouts and the rejoicing of all the sisters at that moment! They ran and kissed the thief's feet. She who could now see cried out all the more, "Blessed are you, my holy father! With the water from your feet, you have given the light back to me."

When the thief saw this wonder,

he was seized with fear and trembling [Ps 2:11; Phil 2:12]. After all the sisters had gone to sleep, the thief did not go to sleep at all but instead sat weeping until his tears drenched the earth, saying, "God help me! I am a weak and sinful person. I have wasted all my time doing incredibly vain and foolish things as if by taking his name I could actually be this man. *He* caused the water that was used to wash my feet to give light to the blind. What sort of a person is this man? God help me! I am a weak and sinful person. I have neglected my salvation."

In the Coptic story, holy water leads both to the recovery of eyesight and to the thief's repentance. Undoubtedly historical detail—the ritual of washing and ablution—is coupled with hagiographic miracle and moral. Such a combination con-

fronts us with intractable questions: If we accept the ritual, can the miracle and conversion be *ipso facto* ruled non-historical? If so, on what grounds? What criteria do we use to accept the custom of the water and exclude its results? As I have noted elsewhere, modern Copts do not readily distinguish between history and hagiography and this was undoubtedly even more so in antiquity.⁵⁹ These stories about Abba Daniel show how history and hagiography intertwine, each at the service of the other. Those of us in the West may feel compelled to disentangle such ancient branches as these that have grown together;⁶⁰ such separating in fact has value for historians. One can, with difficulty, untangle branches, but it is virtually impossible to disentangle roots without doing irreparable harm. With our scientific-historical predispositions and presuppositions, we moderns would do well to use caution not to kill these ancient plants with their spiritual roots deep in the desert soil.

V. Disciple and Abba: Portraying the Holy Man

Classical Greek and Roman historians, from Herodotus to Ammianus Marcellinus, emphasized eyewitness (autopsy) and inquiry as the foundation of the historian or narrator's craft, and most historians included a profession of autopsy and inquiry in their narratives.⁶¹ Early monastic "historians" did the same: in the Prologue to the *Lausiatic History*, Palladius declares that he will set forth "an account of my entire experience" and will relate the "stories of the fathers, of both male and female anchorites, those I had seen and others I had heard about, and of those I had lived with in the Egyptian desert and Libya, in the Thebaid and Syene."⁶²

A historian of a holy person, or saint (*hagios*), is, by definition, a hagiographer. As Palladius demonstrates, late antique Christian writers, whether we call them historians or hagiographers, often followed classical examples by proudly showing their credentials as eyewitnesses. Unlike his classical predecessors, however, the hagiographer is often a disciple of the person he is portraying, thereby claiming for himself additional "status and authority" as "an eyewitness of the events he describes."⁶³ Such discipleship, for many modern historians, disqualifies the

⁵⁹ Tim Vivian, "The Monasteries of the Wadi Natrun, Egypt: A Personal and Monastic Journey," *American Benedictine Review* 49:1 (March 1998): 3-32.

⁶⁰ Tradition and history blend together in the story of the keep at the Syrian monastery in the Wadi al-Natrun. According to tradition, the keep was built in the fifth century by Emperor Zeno (450-91), whose daughter, Saint Hilaria, lived as a monk at Scetis under the name Hilarion. Scholars regard the story of Hilaria as apocryphal, but the story fits the current understanding of when keeps came into existence. As Evelyn White, 224-7, observed, "It is clear that the story of Hilaria as a whole is a pious legend and no more. . . . But the benefactions bestowed upon Scetis by Zeno cannot be similarly dismissed."

⁶¹ See John Marincola, *Authority and Tradition in Ancient Historiography* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1997), 63-86.

⁶² *Palladius: The Lausiatic History*, trans. Robert T. Meyer (New York: Newman Press, 1964), 23. On the historical/hagiographical nature of such narratives as the *Lausiatic History*, see Georgia Frank, *The Memory of the Eyes*.

⁶³ Claudia Rapp, "Storytelling as Spiritual Communication in Early Greek Hagiography: The Use of *Diagesis*," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 6.3 (1998): 431-48, at 432.

hagiographer's credentials for credibility or at least throws them into serious question. But this is to confuse our concerns with the hagiographer's. As Claudia Rapp has observed, the hagiographer goes further and either directly or indirectly "presents himself as the prototype of the saint's clientele, and hence as a model for the ideal audience of his own text. As a recipient of benefits from the saint, the author also assumes for himself the role of witness of the saint's miraculous abilities."⁶⁴

Because the Daniel dossier is, as it were, a collection of snapshots and not an extended film or documentary, its narrator does not offer a standard profession of credentials, like Palladius. Nor does he present the hagiographical topos of the saint's miraculous abilities and, connected with them, the invocation of the saint in the preface to a *vita*.⁶⁵ As Robin Lane Fox has observed, "hagiographers, especially in the sixth century and later, call their saint 'thaumaturgos' ['wonder-worker']."⁶⁶ Daniel's hagiographer/biographer does not do this. What he does offer, though indirectly, is himself. Through his narrative he is the creator of the benefactor, the saint; as disciple, he benefits from the holy man and offers those benefits to his readers. Ancient historians like Polybius recognized "that a fundamental element in an historical narrative is the narrator himself."⁶⁷ The ancients, like modern philosophers, historians, and literary theorists, worried about this, how narrators shape their narratives; Polybius saw "the great complexity in any attempt to find out what actually happened."⁶⁸ The unnamed disciple who gathered together and wrote down the stories about Abba Daniel of Scetis was not a dispassionate and disinterested observer but was, rather, a very interested participant: to him, writing about his spiritual father, Abba Daniel *was* a holy man (I assume that the disciple wrote after the old man's death). Everything that this disciple wrote, whether we categorize it as history or hagiography, was written with that belief. Separating the two would have made no sense to him. As Claudia Rapp comments, "these works [of hagiography] do not make a distinction between truth and verisimilitude or like-truth. Their *raison d'être* is not the accurate representation of historical events, but the direct involvement of the audience in the narrative."⁶⁹

What kind of portrait, then, did this disciple leave us? Surprisingly, perhaps, a very *unhagiographical* one. Before we look at the disciple/narrator's portrait of Abba Daniel, it would be good first to observe the two of them, abba and disciple, together. Such a course will allow us to see the concrete setting in which the two lived and their interactions and will provide a first glimpse at the way the disciple portrayed his abba. The stories of Anastasia and Eulogius provide excellent avenues for such a study.

⁶⁴ Rapp, 432.

⁶⁵ See Rapp, 432.

⁶⁶ Robin Lane Fox, "The *Life of Daniel*," in M.J. Edwards and Simon Swain, eds., *Portraits: Biographical Representation in the Greek and Roman Literature of the Roman Empire* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1997), 206.

⁶⁷ Marincola, 74.

⁶⁸ Marincola, 74.

⁶⁹ Rapp, 443-44.

The story of Anastasia begins simply enough: "A eunuch was living in the inner desert of Scetis and had his cell about eighteen miles from Scetis itself." In the next sentence we immediately find that the disciple will have an important role in this story: "Once a week [the eunuch] would visit Abba Daniel at night without anyone knowing about it except the old man's disciple and him alone." This sentence illustrates the disciple's privileged position, which we saw above (his *parrêsia*), and then, like a good mystery, introduces an element of suspense. The mystery, along with the disciple's role, deepens in the next few sentences: "The old man ordered his disciple to fill a wine jar with water for the eunuch once a week and to take it to him and knock and go away without speaking with him. 'But if,' he said, 'you find an ostrakon with writing on it at the entrance to the cave, bring it.' And so the disciple would do this."

One day the disciple does discover an ostrakon written to Abba Daniel with the cryptic instructions "Bring your tools and come alone, just you and the brother." When the disciple takes this message to Daniel, the old man weeps and wails and the two hurry off to see the eunuch, who is dying. After the eunuch's death, Abba Daniel instructs his disciple to clothe the eunuch for burial. Now the reason for the mystery becomes clear and the suspense is resolved: "While the brother was dressing the eunuch, he looked at him and saw that his breasts were those of a woman and were like two withered leaves and he did not say anything." The two bury the "eunuch," then head for home. On the way the disciple tells the old man of his discovery and the old man says, "Do you want me to tell you about her?" and the disciple responds, "Yes, I do." Daniel then tells his disciple the story of Anastasia the patrician lady who left the court of Emperor Justinian and became Anastasia, a "eunuch" (more properly a monastic "transvestite") living as a solitary in the desert. In this story the disciple's *parrêsia* puts him in the position (1) to discover the true nature of the "eunuch," and (2) to be the first audience (we are the second) to hear Daniel's account of Anastasia.

A similar two-fold structure informs the next story in the collection, that of Eulogius the stonecutter, although here the story is more hard-won and the winning comes not without some irony and even self-deprecating humor. Once again the story begins innocently enough: Daniel and his disciple are sailing down the Nile back to Scetis from a trip to the Thebaid. Daniel orders the sailors to stop at a certain village and tells everyone that they will remain there that day. His disciple, however, "began to grumble and say, 'How long are we going to waste our time here? Let's go on to Scetis.'" The old man replies, "No, we'll stay here today." They settle down with some foreigners who appear to be camping out there and the disciple continues his bellyaching: "Does it please God for us to sit as brothers with [these foreigners]? Let's at least go to the martyrion." The old man firmly replies, "No, I'm staying here," and they remain there, "staying until late in the evening." The brother now becomes thoroughly petulant and begins "to fight with the old man," exclaiming rather hysterically, "On account of you I'm going to die."

While this unseemly conversation is occurring, an old man appears; when he sees Abba Daniel, he grabs hold of him, weeps, and kisses his feet. Once again the element of mystery: who on earth is this fellow, and what is his relationship with Abba Daniel? The mystery man takes Daniel, his disciple, and the other foreigners home with him and feeds and houses them. He and the old man talk privately until dawn “about the things that lead to salvation,” then early in the morning Daniel and his disciple leave. Now on the road (instead of travelling by boat), the disciple, undoubtedly a bit chastened, begs his abba’s forgiveness and asks who the hospitable old man was. Daniel, understandably, refuses to speak to him. Again the brother apologizes and tries to manipulate Daniel into talking to him: “You’ve confided many other things to me, and now you won’t confide in me about this old man?” Daniel still refuses and the brother then tries the silent treatment, not speaking to the old man the rest of the way.

When Daniel and his disciple arrive in Scetis, the brother huffs off alone to his cell “and did not bring the old man a small meal as was the custom at five p.m.” (The narrator then adds the inside information, possibly because Daniel’s custom was not the norm, that “the old man maintained this practice all the days of his life”).⁷⁰ When evening comes, the old man goes to the brother’s cell and, now with his own hyperbole (mocking his disciple’s earlier protest that he was about to die?), asks, “Why is it, child, that you’ve allowed your father to die of hunger?” The disciple angrily retorts, “I don’t have a father! If I had a father, he would love his own child!” The old man strikes back, “So don’t serve my meal, then.” When the old man takes hold of the door to leave, the brother can no longer stand it; he comes up, grabs the old man, and begins to kiss him, saying, “As the Lord lives, I will not let you go if you do not tell me who that old man was!” The brother, the narrator informs us, “was unable to see the old man distressed for any reason,” for, he adds, “he dearly loved him.” The old man gives in: “Make me a small meal and then I will tell you.” After the old man eats, he says to the brother, “Do not be stiff-necked. I did not tell you on account of what you said in the village.” The old man then rather mysteriously tells his disciple not to repeat what he hears and proceeds to tell him the remarkable and edifying story of Eulogius the stonecutter.

In both of the stories discussed above the narrator skilfully uses the disciple as the intermediary who brings the tales to us. The disciple is first a witness to events that prompt him to become a listener to things that have taken place in the past. Just as skilfully, the narrator uses self-deprecating irony (the disciple comes off as a real whiner) and mystery to add humor and build suspense: in the story of Anastasia, who is this eunuch? Why does he visit Abba Daniel at night? What is this mysterious ostracon about? In the story of Eulogius: Why does Abba Daniel want to stay in this—to the disciple—God-forsaken place? Who is the hospitality-giving old man? And how does he know Abba Daniel? These devices build up our interest for the stories of Anastasia and Eulogius that the old man then narrates.

⁷⁰ Monks usually ate at the ninth hour or about 3 p.m., especially if they ate once a day.

Each of these stories-within-a-story has a moral lesson to impart, which justifies their telling and is the main reason for their existence. Paul Evergetinos preserved a like-minded story-with-a-moral about an Abba Daniel that has not come down within the Daniel dossier.⁷¹ In this tale, narrated by an Abba Palladius, Daniel travels to Alexandria with Palladius and there encounters a dissolute monk who frequents the city's baths. Daniel sighs and tells his disciple, "You see that brother? the name of God is about to be blasphemed on account of him." He then characteristically adds (as in three stories in the dossier), "but let us follow and see where he is staying." They follow the dissolute monk and when they catch up with him Daniel tries to correct the monk but is rebuffed; Daniel then declares that he sees swarms of demons around the licentious monk. The two return to Scetis and a few days later Palladius comes to tell Daniel that the monk had been caught *in flagrante delicto* with an official's wife and had been castrated. Daniel quietly concludes: "Calamity is the correction of the arrogant."

This story, though a bit more paraenetic than the others, does not seem out of place or character with the stories in the main collection. This tale becomes intriguing because it gives a name—Palladius—to the hitherto anonymous disciple/narrator. Even more intriguing is the longer ending of the story attested by one manuscript.⁷² When Palladius hears about the dissolute monk's fate, he goes to Abba Daniel in tears and finds him with Abba Isaac, the superior of Scetis. When Palladius informs Daniel, the latter weeps and gives the same quiet judgement as above. But the story does not end there. Palladius then adds that "I privately conveyed to the superior the things the elder had seen and had said to me, whereupon, deeming them worthy to be recorded, Abba Isaac ordered them to be written and set down in the book of the wonderworking fathers for the edification and benefit of those who come upon them." We are given here nothing less than the *raison d'être* of the Daniel dossier, both the reason for its existence—edification—and the means by which it came into being—Palladius, on orders from Abba Isaac, wrote it. Could Isaac's order have prompted Palladius to gather other stories about Daniel? And, in doing so, did Palladius quietly and humbly remove his name from the accounts, becoming the anonymous narrator-disciple of the dossier? Once again, we can not know for sure, but it certainly seems possible.

In the Daniel dossier itself, however, the disciple/narrator remains resolutely anonymous and thus the messenger does not get in the way of the message. As Claudia Rapp has astutely put it:

Far from being a mere conveyor of a message, the hagiographical account . . . is thus the message itself. What is more, it is something like an event that with its own spiritual force links the saint, the eye-witness/hagiographer, and the audience, and transports them to a level of timeless existence where the drama of the saint is played out perpetually and in eternity.⁷³

⁷¹ Paul Evergetinos, *Synagogé* 3.16.7.

⁷² Cod. Paris graec. 1596, p. 652.

⁷³ Rapp, 441.

But what is this timeless drama? Nothing less than the evocation of holiness on the human stage. The dramatization in the Daniel dossier has a wide variety of locales and supporting actors; the focus at first appears to be typically on the chief character and hero, Abba Daniel of Scetis, but if we look more closely through the hagiographical lens we can see that Daniel is really in the background, offering benediction, while holiness comes more sharply into focus in the foreground.

VI. Witness to Holiness

“Life, like holiness, can be known only by being experienced.”

—Wendell Berry⁷⁴

Douglas Burton Christie, like most scholars and readers of early Christian monasticism, has linked “the monks’ pursuit of holiness” with a “dramatic act of withdrawal,” the “separation and removal from the mainstream of society.”⁷⁵ Antoine Guillaumont has urged further that “this movement of withdrawal, of ‘anachoresis,’ marks the movement from pre-monastic asceticism to monasticism properly called.”⁷⁶ There can be no doubt that these scholars are right—properly understood. Monastic separation does not necessarily have to be spatial, into Antony’s literal desert,⁷⁷ but some sort of withdrawal or distancing is necessary in order to gain perspective on the world and its values.⁷⁸ After his baptism, Jesus withdrew into the wilderness and found the Devil (Mt 4:1-11). Antony, as is famously known and pictured, confronted hordes of demons in the desert. So did later monks. In commenting on this phenomenon, so curious, and even repellent, to moderns, Vincent Desprez has observed that

these famous acts of the demons [*diableries*] reveal fundamentally the hard and difficult aspects [*dura et aspera*] of the monastic experience: the monk who has renounced certain of life’s amenities must fight against ‘thoughts,’ against the attraction that these objects continue to exercise over him. The complete solitude of the desert exacerbates that formidable confrontation between a person and himself.⁷⁹

Withdrawal, then, does not mean flight and evasion but making the hard and difficult journey closer to one’s true self, which is where God is.⁸⁰ Once one reach-

⁷⁴ Berry, *Life is a Miracle*, 8, crediting Kathleen Raine with reminding us of this.

⁷⁵ Burton Christie, *The Word in the Desert*, 54.

⁷⁶ Antoine Guillaumont, “La séparation du monde dans l’orient chrétien: ses formes et ses motifs,” in Guillaumont, *Études sur la spiritualité de l’orient chrétien* (Spiritualité Orientale 66; Bégrolles-en-Mauges: Abbaye de Bellefontaine, 1996), 105-12, at 105.

⁷⁷ See James E. Goehring, *Ascetics, Society, and the Desert: Studies in Early Egyptian Monasticism* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity, 1999), 13-25.

⁷⁸ On this theme, see the powerful meditation of Belden C. Lane, *The Solace of Fierce Landscapes: Exploring Desert and Mountain Spirituality* (New York: Oxford UP, 1998).

⁷⁹ Vincent Desprez, *Le monachisme primitif: Des origines jusqu’au concile d’Éphèse* (Spiritualité orientale 72; Bégrolles-en-Mauges: Abbaye de Bellefontaine, 1998), 184.

⁸⁰ For a deep recent meditation on this theme, see Laurence Freeman, *Jesus: The Teacher Within* (New York & London: Continuum, 2000).

es this harbor, to use a favorite metaphor of the early monks, one has a secure and stable place from which to onload supplies and foodstuffs in order to sally out in search of those shipwrecked in the world. Abba Daniel, although certainly practicing separation or withdrawal in the desert of Scetis, is also very much engaged in the world, especially with travel from the desert *back into* “the world.” This, in fact, is where he is most often pictured and where we, the audience-in-the-world, most often meet him: by our side—or up ahead, calling and waving to us to come look. Thus withdrawal is certainly an important and vital part of early monastic spirituality but, as the Daniel dossier shows, it needs to be balanced with *reaching out*. Monasticism, then, is as much centripetal as it is centrifugal. The monk flees one center, “the world,” in search of his (or her) true center, God; once there, he can leave his monastic center (or, more accurately, embody it, take it with him) and seek out the world in a gesture of healing and salvation.

This tidal action offers at least one explanation for the numerous monastic tales recognizing holiness in the world. Just as the monk knows (or should know; that’s why the stories exist) that he will not reach perfection in this world, he also comes to understand that holiness and goodness do not reside solely in the desert (the belief that they do would be spiritual hubris). The world has multiple spiritual centers radiating out from the one God; *topos* (locale) is not *tropos* (way of life):⁸¹ “It was revealed to Abba Antony,” the classic exemplar of withdrawal, “that there was one who was his equal in the city. He was a doctor by profession and whatever he had beyond his needs he gave to the poor, and every day he sang the Sanctus with the angels.”⁸² In another saying, Antony, like Daniel, goes to Alexandria and there learns about the virtue of a layperson who surpasses him and learns the nature of that person’s virtue: each day this person affirms that the entire city will enter heaven because of their good works while he will suffer punishment for his sins.⁸³

One of the most striking examples of this genre of “the return to the world” involves Abba Macarius the Great. One time “when he was praying in his cell,” “a voice came to him, saying, ‘Macarius, you have not yet reached the level of two women who live in such-and-such a village,’” so Macarius decided to search out the women. When he found them he asked for their way of life and they told him that they had left their husbands and had lived together for fifteen years. “We drew up a covenant,” they said, “between ourselves and God that to the day of our death our mouths would not speak a worldly utterance but that we would direct our thoughts to God and his saints at all times and would devote ourselves unceasingly to prayers and fastings and acts of charity.” When Abba Macarius heard these things he said, “Truly, it is not the name of ‘monk’ or ‘lay person’ or ‘virgin’ or

⁸¹ See the *Life of Saint George of Choziba* 33: “Child, do not think that it is the place [*topos*] that makes you a monk; it’s the way you live [*tropos*]”; Tim Vivian, *Journeying into God: Seven Early Monastic Lives* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), 94.

⁸² Alphabetical Apophthegmata Antony the Great 24; Ward, 6.

⁸³ Lucien Regnault, *Les sentences des pères du désert: série des anonymes* (Solesmes: Bellefontaine, 1985), N 490.

‘wife and husband’ but an upright disposition that God seeks, and he gives his Holy Spirit to all of these people.”

An “upright disposition” here seems to be understood as “prayers and fastings and acts of charity.” The two women have indeed withdrawn, in this case from their husbands, but it is not their withdrawal per se that matters; it is the fruits of their *anachorêsis*. Edified, Macarius then returns to his cell, “clapping his hands and saying, ‘I have not been at peace with my brothers like these lay women have with one another.’”⁸⁴ There are striking parallels between what Macarius says here and what Peter proclaims in Acts 10:34-35; these women are “gentiles” like Cornelius and Macarius is a “Jew” like Peter who learns that God’s bounty is not exclusive: “Thus Peter began to speak to them: ‘I truly understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him.’” We see here being expanded right before us the boundaries of what defined the holy man—or woman. Holiness, the monks saw, almost in spite of themselves, was not the exclusive possession of men domiciled in the desert.⁸⁵ As Claudia Rapp has noted, “Hagiographical texts play a significant and very particular role in the process that joins the author and his audience in their participation in the sanctity of the holy man or woman.” Rapp calls this process “spiritual communication.”⁸⁶ In the Daniel dossier, this “communication” is of persons *other than* the eponymous holy man. If the audience is monastic, then they are learning an important lesson in humility and equality; “the fact that it is possible for laity, living amid the pressures of the world, to attain such virtue heightens the sense of obligation which rests upon monks to rise to the same level.”⁸⁷ If the audience is lay, that is, non-monastic, then they are learning the equally important lesson that holiness resides in their midst and not exclusively among the monastically garbed out in the desert.

The greatest confirmation of these understandings comes in the early monastic stories where the monks learn (and they do have to learn this) that the path to heaven is not as narrow as they might have imagined; in fact, sometimes the path seems to be a broad thoroughfare, with the double gates of heaven thrown wide open:

As Abba Silvanus sat one time with the brothers, he had a mystical experience (*en ekstasei*) and fell flat on his face. After a long time he got up and wept. The brothers entreated him, “What’s wrong, father?” but he remained silent and continued weeping.

⁸⁴ Tim Vivian, “The Coptic Sayings of Saint Macarius of Egypt,” *Cistercian Studies Quarterly* 35:4 (2000): 499-524, 520, repr. in Vivian, *Disciples of the Soul’s Beloved*, vol. 2, *Saint Macarius the Spiritbearer* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s, forthcoming).

⁸⁵ This can be seen at the conclusion of the story of Thomaïs in the Daniel dossier: when Abba Daniel orders her to be buried at the monastery, “some of them began to grumble because he was ordering a woman’s corpse to be buried with the fathers, and she a victim of murder.” But the old man says to them, “This young woman is my amma, and yours. Indeed, she died to protect her chastity.” Afterwards, the story reports, “no one opposed the old man.” Jerome came to define the “true” monk not as the ascetic living in town or city but as the anchorite; see Goehring, 53-72.

⁸⁶ Rapp, 432.

⁸⁷ Graham Gould, “Lay Christians, Bishops, and Clergy in the Apophthegmata Patrum,” *Studia Patristica* 25, ed. Elizabeth A. Livingstone (Leuven: Peeters, 1993), 399.

When they forced him to speak, he said, "I was carried off to judgement and I saw numbers of people dressed like us in monastic habits going away to punishment and I saw numbers of people who were not monks going away into the kingdom."⁸⁸

In our own day Flannery O'Connor vividly used this image (had she read the story above?) to bulldoze the narrowly self-constructed gates of heaven that some Christians build for themselves and against others. In her story "Revelation," the self-righteous Mrs. Turpin sees "a vast swinging bridge extending upward from the earth through a field of living fire. Upon it a vast horde of souls were rumbling toward heaven. There were whole companies of white-trash, clean for the first time in their lives, and bands of black niggers in white robes, and batallions of freaks and lunatics shouting and clapping and leaping like frogs."⁸⁹

In another early monastic story, an old man "who served God for many years" is told by an angel that he does not please God like a certain gardener. The old man finds the gardener who, like Eulogius the Stonecutter, shows him great hospitality; like Macarius above, the old man questions the gardener about his way of life. The gardener tells the old man that he eats late in the evening and gives everything beyond his needs to the poor; in the morning before he goes to work and in the evening before going to bed he says, "This city, from the least to the greatest, will enter the kingdom because of their righteousness, but I alone will inherit punishment on account of my sins." When he hears this, the old man responds (rather smugly, we may imagine) that these practices are good but they do not surpass all his efforts in the desert. While the two are getting ready to eat, the old man hears people out in the street singing songs. He asks the gardener if he's not bothered by this and the gardener says no. "Brother," the old man responds, "wanting as you do to live according to God, how do you remain in this place and not be troubled when you hear them singing these [scandalous] songs." The gardener replies, "I tell you, abba, I have never been troubled or scandalized." When the old man hears this, he asks the gardener what he conceives in his heart when he hears such songs. The gardener replies, "That they are all going to the kingdom." When the monk hears this he marvels and says, "This is the practice which surpasses my labour of all these years."⁹⁰ Amma Syncretica seems to have had such a person as this gardener in mind when she memorably said, "Many of those living in a monastic community act like those living in cities and are lost while many of those living in cities do the works of the desert and are saved. Indeed, it is possible to live with a multitude and still be solitary in spirit just as it is possible to live as a solitary while one's thoughts are with the crowd."⁹¹

⁸⁸ Syntmatic Apophthegmata III.33 (= Alph. Silvanus 2); Guy, ed., *Les Apophthegmes des pères*, 166-69.

⁸⁹ Flannery O'Connor, *Collected Works* (New York: Library of America, 1988), 654.

⁹⁰ Columba Stewart, *The World of the Desert Fathers* (Fairacres, Oxford: SLG Press, 1986), 12-13.

⁹¹ Alphabetical Apophthegmata Syncretica 19; *Life of Syncretica* 97 (PG 28.1438A).

If the stories in the Daniel dossier, like the sayings cited above, expand the definition of holiness, they also contract it—or, in contracting it, empty part of it, leaving room for even greater expansion. One of the pronounced traits of monastic hagiography is the wonderworking of the saints, the miracles in the desert.⁹² The earliest strata of the monastic tradition, however, the *Apophthegmata*, do not give much emphasis to miracles and wonderworking. Holiness resides in other, quotidian, activities like prayer and basket-making. The most noticeable—even astounding—thing about Abba Daniel, contrary to one’s expectations, is that he does not perform a single miracle. It is true that in the *Coptic Life*, in the story of the repentant thief, a blind woman is healed by water that she believes has been used to wash Daniel’s feet. (Although in a striking parallel in one story in the Greek dossier, Daniel orders similar water to be thrown on a nun who appears to be drunk and it has no effect on her. Apparently Daniel thought that the efficaciousness of the water lay in waking her up, not healing her.) Both she and the thief attribute this wonder to Daniel, but the miracle appears to have taken place because of the blind woman’s faith in God and Abba Daniel.⁹³ Often in ancient story-telling “the author steps out of the mimetic narrative to guarantee . . . that what will seem unbelievable to the reader actually took place.”⁹⁴ There is no “stepping out” in the Daniel dossier because there are, really, no miracles, no steps to take. Daniel, therefore, by the standards both of hagiography and classical historiography, is an unusual holy man: he is not a thaumaturge.⁹⁵ His charisma, at least as understood by his disciple, the narrator of the tales, lies in discerning holiness, bearing witness to it, and summoning others to bear witness *and* to benefit from it.

In the story of Mark the Fool, Daniel tells the people and clergy of Alexandria that Mark, the holy fool, is a chosen vessel and that there is no one in the city as righteous as he; Daniel’s declaration prompts the pope to beg Mark to tell them who he is which in turn causes Mark to tell his story. After Mark’s death, Daniel summons all the monks of Scetis to come receive the old man’s blessing. In the story of the Holy Mendicant, Daniel in similar fashion sees that a blind beggar is in truth doing great things; he and his disciple follow the beggar home and become the recipients of his generosity and hospitality. In the story of the Woman Who Pretended to be Drunk, Daniel discerns that the drunken nun, like Mark, is really a holy fool, and so he devises a plan to discover her hidden sanctity. After her holiness is revealed to the nuns, which brings about their repentance for their ill-treatment of her, Daniel declares that it was “for this reason” that he came there, “for God loves such drunkards as these.” The Syriac version of this story makes Daniel’s point even more explicit: “You have seen this mad girl; in truth God loves mad people such as these, who are drunkenly mad with ardent love for him.”

⁹² See, for example, the *Historia Monachorum*; see Benedicta Ward’s excursus in *The Lives of the Desert Fathers: The Historia Monachorum in Aegypto*, trans. Norman Russell (Kalamazoo: Cistercian, 1980), 39-45.

⁹³ Her exclamation “May God and your name have mercy on me!” is reminiscent of the holy man Paphnutius; see Tim Vivian, trans., *Paphnutius*, rev. ed., 30-37.

⁹⁴ Marincola, 82. For a Christian example, see the Preface to the *Life of Antony*.

⁹⁵ By contrast, see the stories about Abba Aaron in Vivian, trans., *Paphnutius*, 114-41.

One scholar has commented that “the people always were eager to see sanctity in the eccentric.”⁹⁶ But perhaps that is putting the emphasis in the wrong place. Yes, there are “eccentrics” aplenty in the Daniel dossier, but the emphasis does not seem to be on eccentricities of madness and feigned drunkenness but rather on holiness. In the dossier, madness sometimes points to holiness, but it is not the only indicator; Andronicus, Athanasia, and Eulogius, in their acts of charity, are far from mad (except, of course, that “the world” may regard them as mad for giving away all their money). “Eccentricity,” however, is a signal: the stories in the Daniel collection, like the Gospels (e.g., the Good Samaritan), do demonstrate that holiness may reside where we least suspect it. Daniel’s role as monastic authority is to lend weight to this gospel witness. As priest and superior of Scetis, he has the power, apparently, to summon the monks of Scetis to come to Alexandria. This authority, according to the stories is the collection, was widely recognized: when Daniel goes to the Upper Thebaid, “the fathers for about seven miles went out to greet him . . . some were spreading their clothing before him while others were laying down their cowls and tears could be seen pouring forth like gushing fountains. . . . The archimandrite came out and venerated him seven times.” When he goes on to the women’s monastery, the whole community comes running out “and they spread their veils from the gate out to where the old man was.”

Although Daniel had great authority, as these stories indicate, the narrator takes pains, quietly to be sure, to show his readers that Daniel’s power really lay elsewhere: in the stories of Anastasia and Eulogius, Daniel appears to be holy precisely because he has the humility and discernment to see holiness *in others*. He recognizes the saintliness of the “eunuch” Anastasia, finds a cell for her, protects her identity, and counsels her. When she is dying he asks for her blessing and prayers for himself and his disciple. In the story of Eulogius, Daniel recognizes the grace-filled charism of Eulogius’ hospitality and care for strangers.⁹⁷ Thus Daniel confirms the spiritual truth that monks had long known and that the *Apophthegmata* affirm: holy persons do not reside only in the desert; they live also, and perhaps with even more difficulty and sanctity, in the towns, villages, and cities of this fallen world: “The qualities for which these lay people are commended are the same qualities that the monks themselves wished to cultivate: not only charity, hospitality, and chastity, but humility, detachment, freedom from anger, and the possession of a ‘good will’ in whatever state of life, lay or secular, married or unmarried, someone lives.”⁹⁸

As part of its expansive nature, the Daniel dossier presented the ancient monk with a number of different types of asceticism, not just withdrawal into the desert, which became the norm in the fourth century. Celibacy, testified to by the New Testament, was the first form of *anachorêsis* in the Church and “was already a

⁹⁶ Frazer, 265.

⁹⁷ Interestingly, in his zeal to intercede for Eulogius, he oversteps his bounds, gets himself into trouble, and is reproved for his hubris by an angelic being in a vision.

⁹⁸ Gould, 399.

manifestation of separation from the world.”⁹⁹ Eulogius in his ministry is presumably celibate and Andronicus and Athanasia, though married, live celibately. Despite the fact that *anachorêsis* or separation later came to be identified almost solely with withdrawal into the desert, the Daniel dossier shows that separation from the world could continue to take diverse forms: in the “fool for Christ,”¹⁰⁰ in *xeniteia*, or loss of one’s homeland,¹⁰¹ and in monastic transvestism,¹⁰² all forms of withdrawal from the norms of society. The fool forsook his rational self; the expatriate pulled up deeply set roots; the monastic transvestite gave up sexual and social identity. These different *anchorites* (with the original sense of *anachorêsis*), with their different ascetic disciplines and renunciations of the world’s priorities, illustrate monasticism’s deep and abiding need to return to its roots and sources, thus reforming itself. Precisely because they stand *outside* the main monastic tradition (as later configured) while remaining part of the ascetic critique, the fool, expatriate, and transvestite confront and challenge the tradition, which is what they do in the Daniel dossier. Later figures like Saints Benedict, Francis, and Bernard are commonly seen as the great monastic reformers, but already in the fifth century Isaiah of Scetis, in his withdrawal from Egypt to Sinai, can be seen as representing the spirit of renewal, both individual and corporate, that monasticism needs:

After many years spent in a monastery, the monk can feel resurfacing that which he had wanted to flee by leaving the world, that is, the weight of habits, comforts, the considerations of his circle of friends, and he then feels the need—in order to remain loyal to his ideal—for a new break, which he will realise through the anchoritic life, through *xeniteia*, and by leading a reclusive life.¹⁰³

By the sixth century monasticism had become a generally accepted perversion; it was also ecclesiastically sanctioned and politically regulated, which meant that it had lost some of its countercultural nature and reason for being. Many of the figures in the Daniel dossier, by contrast, retain some of monasticism’s—and Christianity’s—original jaggedness: the holy mendicant, anticipating the monastic fervor of Saint Francis, lives out true self-giving poverty; Andronicus and Athanasia abandon home, property, and country; Anastasia not only renounces great wealth but also gives up completely her social identity. The foolishness of someone like Mark or the drunken nun, whose madness, as Antoine Guillaumont has pointed out, is “essentially a form of separation from the world,” might just

⁹⁹ Guillaumont, “La séparation,” 105. Guillaumont’s essays, cited here and below, have greatly influenced the discussion in this paragraph and the next.

¹⁰⁰ See Antoine Guillaumont, “La folie simulée, une forme d’anachorèse,” in *Études sur la spiritualité de l’orient chrétien* (Spiritualité Orientale 66; Bégrolles-en-Mauges: Abbaye de Bellefontaine, 1996), 125-30.

¹⁰¹ See Antoine Guillaumont, “Le dépaysement comme form d’ascèse, dans le monachisme ancien,” in Guillaumont, *Aux origines du monachisme chrétien: Pour une phénoménologie du monachisme* (Spiritualité Orientale 30; Bégrolles-en-Mauges: Bellefontaine, 1979), 89-116.

¹⁰² See “A Woman in the Desert: Syncretica of Palestine,” in Tim Vivian, *Journeying into God*, 37-52.

¹⁰³ Guillaumont, “Le dépaysement,” 100, speaking of Isaiah.

knock the ascetic reader back against the original sharp corners of his or her monastic vocation.¹⁰⁴ At a time when monasticism had pretty much settled down into Basilian, Pachomian, or Antonian patterns, the main figures of the Daniel dossier are barbarians at the monastery gates—or *within* the gates. Daniel, as it were, instead of merely performing the duties of law-abiding abbot, goes outside the enclosure to welcome these atypical ascetics inside, knowing full well that their presence within will initially provoke consternation and resistance but that such friction will eventually wear at the accumulated rusts of lazy habits and comfortable traditions.

In post-modern terms, Daniel's greatest authority may be precisely that of witness and storyteller, communicator of holiness, for it is he who tells his disciple the stories of Anastasia and Eulogius. It is he who causes Mark to tell his story and it is he who discovers the blind man's story and that of the "drunken" female monastic. In a sense, this narrative strategy only confirms Daniel's humility: it points the reader's attention *away* from the holy man and *towards* the virtues and holiness of the saints whose stories he tells—that is, towards the reader himself. Thus Daniel becomes a narrator within the narrative, and his position as monastic superior and status as holy man lend weight and credence to the disciple's tales. Unlike most hagiographical narratives, in these stories Daniel disappears from the narrative. This disappearance seems to happen in spite of the narrator's intentions. Or does it? Himself humbly anonymous, perhaps he saw that Daniel's greatness lay precisely in his humility and that both Daniel's holiness and his humility could best be shown by having him act as narrator for others rather than as chief actor in these small, saving, sometimes radical, dramas. It's as though he had Daniel saying, in the words of Saint Macarius the Great, "That is why I said that I have not yet become a monk, but I have seen monks."¹⁰⁵

*Selected Greek Accounts about Abba Daniel*¹⁰⁶

I. Stories about Abba Daniel from the Daniel Dossier

1 (3).¹⁰⁷ Mark the Fool

[60] There was an old man in Scetis by the name of Daniel and he had a disciple, and a brother by the name of Sergius lived for a short time with the aforesaid disciple and then went to sleep in Christ. After the perfection of brother Sergius, Abba Daniel gave his disciple the freedom to speak freely, for he dearly loved him.

One day, then, the old man took his disciple and went to Alexandria, because it is customary for the superior of Scetis to go up to see the pope for the Great Feast.¹⁰⁸ When they arrived at the city about four in the afternoon and as they were walking in the street, they saw a brother who was naked except for the loincloth he

¹⁰⁴ Guillaumont, "La séparation," 107.

¹⁰⁵ Alphabetical Apophthegmata Macarius the Great 2; PG 65:261A.

¹⁰⁶ Translated from Clugnet, *Revue de l'Orient Chrétien* 5 (1900): 49-73, 254-271, 370-91.

¹⁰⁷ Numerals in parentheses refer to Clugnet's (mistaken) numbering while numerals in square brackets refer to the page numbers of Clugnet's edition,

¹⁰⁸ That is, Easter.

was wearing around his loins.¹⁰⁹ That brother was pretending that he was half-witted and there were other imbeciles with him. The brother would go around like a half-wit and babble nonsensically and he would snatch things from the stalls in the marketplace and give them to the other imbeciles.¹¹⁰ His name was “Mark of the Horse.” “The Horse” is a public bath;¹¹¹ there Mark the Fool worked and he would spend a hundred *folleis*¹¹² a day and there he would sleep on the benches. From the hundred *noumia*, he would buy provisions for himself with ten *noumia* and give the rest to the other imbeciles. The whole city knew Mark of the Horse on account of his mad babbling.

The old man said to his disciple, “Go and see where that half-wit is living,” and he left and made inquiries and they told him, “At the Horse; he’s an imbecile.” After the old man took leave of the pope the next day, in accordance with God’s divine purpose he found Mark the Fool in the Great Tetracylon,¹¹³ and the old man ran and took hold of him and began to cry out, saying, “Men of Alexandria, help!” The half-wit was mocking the old man and a large crowd gathered around them. The disciple, fearful, stood at a distance and everyone was saying to the old man, “Do not take his insolence seriously; he’s an imbecile!” The old man said to them, “You are [61] the imbeciles, for today I have not found a person in this city except for this fellow.”

Some clergy from the church, who knew the old man, also arrived and said to him, “What has this half-wit ever done to you?” The old man said to them, “Take him to the pope for me,” and they did so, and the old man said to the pope, “Today in this city there is not such a vessel as this one.” The pope, knowing that the old man had been given confidence by God to speak about this fellow, threw himself at the imbecile’s feet and began to adjure him to reveal to them who he was.

The imbecile came to himself and confessed, saying, “I was a monk and was ruled by the demon of sexual sin for fifteen years¹¹⁴ and, coming to my senses, I said, ‘Mark, for fifteen years you’ve been a slave to the Enemy. Go and likewise be a slave to Christ.’ So I went to the Pempton¹¹⁵ and remained there eight years and

¹⁰⁹ The *kampsarikon* was a loincloth worn by a *capsarius* or bathroom attendant.

¹¹⁰ On such “holy fools” see Krueger, *Symeon the Holy Fool*; he mentions Mark on pp. 59-60, 64.

¹¹¹ *Démosion* was used of any public building, such as an amphitheater or public bath.

¹¹² The *phollis* (Latin *folllis*) was a small coin, 1/288 of a *solidus*. In the next sentence the *noumion* (Latin *nummus*) appears to be considered its equivalent. The *keration* (1/24th of a gold piece) was worth twelve copper coins, variously known as *folleis*, *noumia*, *lepta*, *pholera*, or obols, of which there were thus 288 to the gold piece. One hundred *folleis* was more than eight times the earnings of Eulogius the stonemason (I.9).

¹¹³ Literally, a building with four doors. John Moschus says that “the Tetracylon is held in very high esteem by the citizens of Alexandria for they say that Alexander (who founded their city) took the relics of the Prophet Jeremiah from Egypt and buried them there”; see John Moschus, *The Spiritual Meadow* 77, trans. John Wortley (Kalamazoo: Cistercian, 1992), 59.

¹¹⁴ In *Life of Antony* 6.2 the Devil yells, “I am the friend of fornication. I am the one who has undertaken to trap young people into fornication and entice them with its blandishments. I am called ‘the spirit of fornication!’” Chapter five of the *Systematic Apophthegmata* is concerned with sexual sin (*porneia*). In 1.7 below the demon of sexual sin wages war against a monk.

¹¹⁵ The monastic settlements at the fifth milestone.

after eight years I said to myself, ‘Come on, go to the City and make yourself a half-wit for another eight years.’ Today I have completed eight years as an imbecile.” With one accord they all wept.

Mark slept in the episcopal residence along with the old man, and when day came the old man said to his disciple, “Brother, call Abba Mark for me to offer a prayer for us so we may leave for our cell.” So the disciple left and found him asleep in the Lord and he went and told the old man that Abba Mark had died. The old man told the pope and the pope told the general and he ordered everything to come to a stop in the city and the old man sent his disciple to Scetis,¹¹⁶ saying, “Sound the signal and gather the fathers together and say to them, ‘Come and be blessed by the old man.’”¹¹⁷ And all of Scetis came wearing white¹¹⁸ and bearing olive branches and palms,¹¹⁹ and the Enaton and Kellia did likewise, and those in the monastic settlement of Nitria and all the lavras around Alexandria;¹²⁰ as a result, the corpse was not buried for five days and they were forced to embalm blessed Mark’s corpse.¹²¹ And the whole city, with olive branches and lighted candles and tears, purified the city and buried the precious corpse of blessed Mark the imbecile,¹²² glorifying and praising God, the lover of humanity, [62] who gives such grace and glory to those who love him, now and always, for ever and ever. Amen.

2 (8). How Abba Daniel Atoned for a Murder He Had Committed

[71] The same Abba Daniel from childhood renounced the world by living in Scetis¹²³ and the barbarians attacked and took him prisoner and he lived with them for two years when a Christ-loving man, a shipowner, rescued him from the barbar-

¹¹⁶ The Coptic account has the Enaton.

¹¹⁷ On receiving a blessing from a deceased holy person, see I.3 below.

¹¹⁸ For another example of this custom, see I.5 below. The narrator seems to be suggesting that white dress was unusual here, although that is not certain. The *Historia Monachorum* 2.12 and 8.19 suggests that monastic dress was white, although the angelic context in both places suggests that the author intends the color to be understood symbolically.

¹¹⁹ See I.4 below.

¹²⁰ For similar details, see I.10 below. The Enaton, or Ennaton, nine miles west of Alexandria, was one of the most famous monastic settlements of the 6th and 7th centuries; it was a collection of monasteries, hermitages, and churches, rather than a single monastery. See Jean Gascou, “Enaton, The,” *The Coptic Encyclopedia*, ed. Aziz S. Atiya (New York: Macmillan, 1990), 3.954-58. Nitria, forty miles south of Alexandria and west of the delta, was founded by Amoun about 330; within ten years, Nitria had become too crowded for Amoun, so he and Antony the Great together founded Kellia, the Cells, about 10-12 miles south of Nitria.

¹²¹ Or: the corpse of Mark of blessed memory.

¹²² Or: the precious body of Mark the fool, he of blessed memory.

¹²³ On children and child monks in the desert, see Lucien Regnault, *The Day-to-Day Life of the Desert Fathers in Fourth-Century Egypt* (Petersham, MA: Saint Bede’s, 1999), 34-38. Apollo “withdrew from the world” when he was 15 (*Historia Monachorum* 10.3); Abba Helle “had persevered since childhood in the ascetic life” (*Historia Monachorum* 12.1); see also Alphabetical Apophthegmata Zacharias 2. The Apophthegmata contain numerous warnings against having young boys in the desert: see Isaac of the Cells 5, Poemen 176, and Macarius the Great 5. On bandits such as the ones who snatch Daniel, see Regnault, 147-48.

ians.¹²⁴ A short time later the barbarians again came and took him and he lived with them six months and escaped from them. A third time they attacked and took him, and one of the men who had taken him prisoner sat near the water and the old man, taking a rock, hit the foreigner and he happened to die from being struck with the rock.¹²⁵

After this same Daniel had fled, the old man repented the murder he had committed and boarded a boat to Alexandria and conferred with Archbishop Timothy¹²⁶ and when the archbishop understood what had happened, he blamed him, saying, “God, who twice delivered you from the barbarians, would also have been able to deliver you a third time; nevertheless, you did not commit murder, for you killed a wild beast.” So this same Daniel sailed to Rome and once again related the matter, this time to the pope of Rome, and the pope told him the same thing that he had heard from the pope of Alexandria.¹²⁷ So he went to Constantinople and Ephesus and Jerusalem and Antioch and set forth the details of the murder and he heard the same thing from all the patriarchs.

He returned once again to Alexandria and said to himself, “Daniel, Daniel, he who murders will be murdered,” and he went to the praetorium and turned himself in to the officials of the magistrate’s court, saying to them, “I fought with someone and, ruled by evil, hit him with a rock and killed him. I entreat you that I be handed over [72] to the magistrate and die in return for the murder I committed, so I may escape future punishment.” When the magistrate’s officials heard these things from him, they put him in jail for thirty days and reported to the magistrate the details of his case. The magistrate brought him to trial after the thirty days and ordered the old man to tell him how he accomplished the murder, and he related to him the whole truth. Marvelling at the old man’s discernment, the magistrate released him, saying to him, “Go, pray for me, abba. If only you had murdered seven more of them!”

The old man said to himself, “I have hope, in God’s merciful love for humankind, that his goodness will not hold me responsible for this murder hereafter. From now on I pledge to God all the days of my life to serve one leper in

¹²⁴ The God-fearing shipmaster is not an unknown figure in early monastic tales, e.g., in *The Spiritual Meadow* (where there is far more about shipping than in any other collection of tales) one buries dead monks (91), one prays for rain (174), and one discerns that he has a sinful woman aboard and casts her adrift (76).

¹²⁵ Destructions of Scetis took place from 570-80. See Evelyn White, 2.250.

¹²⁶ This would seem to be Patriarch Timothy III, 517/19-535/6. The other recent patriarchs of Alexandria who bore this name (Timothy II Ailouros [“the Weasel” or “the Cat”] and the Chalcedonian Timothy II Salofaciote) date from the third quarter of the previous century.

¹²⁷ Timothy opposed the Tome of Leo accepted by the Council of Chalcedon in 451. The pope of Rome, by contrast, as the successor of Leo, would have been pro-Chalcedonian.

return for the murder I committed.”¹²⁸ And the old man took one leper and said to himself, “If this leper dies, I will go up to Egypt and get another in his place.”¹²⁹ All the monks of Scetis knew that the old man had a leper, but no one was able to see his face except the old man, and him alone.

One day, then, in accordance with God’s divine dispensation, the old man rang the bell around noon, as was the custom, but his disciple had gone to his cell to perform some service for the old man; the old man had forgotten that he had rung the bell and, through God’s divine agency, had left open the gate to the courtyard of his cell and was sitting in the sun, treating the leper. The leper was completely eaten up by his many wounds. The old man’s disciple returned from his duties and, approaching the courtyard gate, observed how the old man was treating the leper. After the old man had finished treating him, he entered his cell and brought into the courtyard a loaf of the finest wheat flour and was feeding the leper the bread because the leper did not have hands; and since he was not able to swallow his food [73] because he had so completely rotted, the old man was kneading the leper’s mouth with his own hands and putting the food in his mouth.

When the disciple saw the amazing work that the old man was doing, he was astonished and on account of such a great deed glorified God who was supplying such great patience to the old man to serve the leper like this. On account of all these things let us also offer up glory to Christ our God, now and ever and forever and ever. Amen.

3 (4). *The Holy Mendicant*

[62] Another time the same Abba Daniel again went up to Alexandria with his disciple and the old man saw a blind person sitting naked in the square and he was saying “Give me something; have pity,” and the old man said to his disciple, “Do you see the blind man? I tell you that he is a great man. Do you want me to show you what sort of person he is? Stay here.” The old man went and said to him, “Please do me a favor, brother. I don’t have the means to buy myself palm branches so I can work and feed myself,” and the blind man said to him, “Why are you looking at *me*? You see me naked and begging and you tell me to buy palm branches for you? Wait here, however.” The old man beckoned to his disciple to follow him and they went to Saint Mark’s Outside-the-City,¹³⁰ for the blind man had a cell there,

¹²⁸ See *Lausiac History* 21 for a similar example. John McGuckin, *Saint Gregory of Nazianzus* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s, 2001), 153, notes that “[t]he image of the leper stands, of course, as the supreme example of the loss of [classical] ‘balance’ in the human condition: a loss of wealth, status, and even the very image of the human form.” “Who is there even among the most gracious and humane of men,” Gregory asked (in *Oration* 14.10 [PG 35.869], cited by McGuckin, 153), “who does not habitually show himself hostile and inhuman to the the leper?” On lepers and the Church, see Susan R. Holman, *The Hungry are Dying* (Oxford & New York: Oxford UP, 2001), 135-67.

¹²⁹ In monastic literature “Egypt” commonly designates (non-monastic) areas away from Scetis, that is, Alexandria, the Delta, or Babylon (Cairo).

¹³⁰ Saint Mark’s Outside-the-City is the church associated with the martyrdom of Saint Mark the Evangelist in Boukolou (Baucalis). By the third century the city had shrunk, and the church was a suburban one.

and he said to the old man, “Wait here for me, Abba,” and he went inside and brought to the old man a small basket containing raisins and pomegranates and dried figs and three small coins in change and he took out of his mouth a *tremis-sis*¹³¹ and gave it to the old man, saying, “Pray for me, Abba.” The old man went to his disciple and wept, saying, “How many hidden servants God has!¹³² As the Lord lives, I will never turn my back on almsgiving because that is what love is.”

After they left him, a few days later they heard that the Great Steward was suffering terribly with a liver ailment and was lying in Saint Mark’s and Saint Mark the evangelist and apostle appeared to him and said to him, “Send for the blind man and bring him here and he will place his hand on the [63] spot where you are suffering and you will be well again.” So the Great Steward sent his servants and they brought the blind man by importuning and entreating him, and after he prayed and placed his hand on the man, the suffering immediately went away and news of what had happened spread throughout the city.¹³³

When the pope heard about it, he went to see the blind man and found him asleep in the Lord and news of his death spread to Scetis and throughout the City. And the old man went up with his disciple and many of the fathers went up with them and they received a blessing from the blessed brother.¹³⁴ And almost the whole city turned out and, receiving a blessing, with thanksgiving and celebration they bore his precious corpse out for burial and placed him atop Abba Mark the Fool. Thus was his life: if he received any kind of alms, he would buy apples, raisins, and pomegranates from the poor and would distribute them through someone else among the foreigners to the sick every Sunday. He kept up this virtuous service for forty-eight years, to the glory of God. Amen.

4 (7). Concerning Abba Daniel, with Regard to the Woman Who Pretended to be Drunk¹³⁵

[67] Abba Daniel went up from Scetis with his disciple into the Upper Thebaid for the feast day of Abba Apollo¹³⁶ and the fathers for about seven miles around

¹³¹ A small gold coin worth 1/3 of the aureus. Earlier in the sentence “coins” translates *keratia*; the *keration* was another small coin. According to John Moschus, *Spiritual Meadow* 184, twenty-four *keratia* equaled one *tremis-sis*.

¹³² This same exclamation is uttered about Pelagia; see the *Life of Pelagia* 49.

¹³³ For a similar story about the healing of a person’s liver, see Vivian, *Paphnutius*, rev.ed., 150.

¹³⁴ Or: the brother of blessed memory.

¹³⁵ For a strikingly similar story of a female monastic who feigned madness at “the women’s monastery at Tabennisi,” see *Lausiaca History* 34; there the monk who encounters her is Saint Piteroum.

¹³⁶ Apollo was born around 305, and lived most of the fourth century. His monastic activity centered around Hermopolis Magna in the Thebaid (Shmoun; al-Ashmunein in the Middle Sa’id) between modern-day al-Minya and Asyut (Lycopolis); according to the *Historia Monachorum* 8.2, “when he was eighty years old he established on his own a great monastery of five hundred perfect men” at Bawit, about fifteen miles south of Hermopolis (which is mentioned in this story); his feast day is the twenty-fifth of Paope [October 22 (Julian)]. On Apollo, see René-Georges Coquin, “Apollon de Titkooh ou/et Apollon de Bawit?,” *Orientalia* 46 (1977): 435-46, and Tim Vivian, “Monks, Middle, Egypt, and Metanoia: The *Life of Phib* by Papophe the Steward,” *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 7.4 (Winter 1999): 547-72.

went out to greet him; there were about five thousand of them. They could be seen lying face down on the sand like a rank of angels welcoming Christ with fearful reverence: some were spreading their clothing before him [Mk 11:8] while others were laying down their cowls and tears could be seen pouring forth like rushing rivers. The archimandrite came out and venerated him seven times before he approached the old man and after they greeted one another with a kiss, [68] they sat down. Then the archimandrite asked to hear a word from the old man, for he would not quickly speak to anyone. When they sat, therefore, outside the cenobium on the sand because there was not room for all of them in the church, Abba Daniel said to his disciple, “Write ‘If you want to be saved, pursue poverty and silence: the whole monastic life depends on these two virtues.’”¹³⁷ His disciple gave what he had written to one of the brothers and he translated it into Coptic and when it was read to the fathers all of them wept and escorted the old man off, for no one dared to say to him “Please stay.”

So he went to Hermopolis¹³⁸ and there said to his disciple, “Go and knock at that monastery for women,” for there was a monastery for women there called the Monastery of Abba Jeremiah,¹³⁹ and about three hundred female monks were living there. So his disciple went and knocked and the doorkeeper said to him in a faint voice, “We bid you welcome. We are pleased that you have come. Why are you calling?”

He said to her, “Call for me the mother archimandrite; I wish to speak with her.” She said, “She never meets anyone, but tell me why you are calling and I will tell her.”

He said, “Tell her ‘A certain monk wishes to speak with you,’” and she left and told her. The abbess came and spoke to the brother in a faint voice, “The mother superior sent me to ask ‘Why are you calling?’”¹⁴⁰

The brother said, “I’m calling to ask you to please do us a favor and allow us to sleep here, myself and an old man; it’s getting dark and we’re afraid the wild beasts will eat us.”

The mother superior said to him, “No man ever enters here; it is better for you to be devoured by wild beasts outside rather than by those inside.”¹⁴¹

¹³⁷ See Mt 22:40 which has the same sentence structure and some of the same vocabulary.

¹³⁸ Modern el-Ashmunein, on the west bank of the Nile in the Thebaid, between al-Minya and Asyut (Lycopolis).

¹³⁹ Marie Drew-Bear, *Le nome Hermopolite: Toponymes et sites* (American Studies in Papyrology 21; Missoula, Montana: Scholars Press, 1979), 132, identifies two monasteries dedicated to Apa Jeremiah, one south of Antinoë, and the other, this monastery for women, which she believes has no connection with the other one.

¹⁴⁰ The terms are interesting here: the head of the monastery, the superior, is referred to as *tên amman tên archimandritên* and then simply as *ammas* here and below. Her assistant, the “abbess,” is called *hê hégoumenê* here. Later, Daniel and his disciple sit at dinner with the *hégoumenê* and her second-in-command, *hê deuteraria*, but this seems to be the superior and the abbess, so the terms are apparently not being used consistently.

¹⁴¹ It appears that the superior of the monastery (*ammas*) is now present, or came with the abbess. She is referred to below as *hê kuria hê megalê*, “the great lady.” In *Novel 133*, promulgated in 539, contemporary with Daniel’s visit, Emperor Justinian ordered that men should never be permitted inside a women’s monastery; the only exception allowed a priest to enter in order to celebrate the funeral liturgy of a female monastic.

The brother said, “Abba Daniel, from Scetis, is outside.”

When she heard this, she opened the two gates and came running out, as did the whole community, and they spread their veils from the gate out to where the old man was, rolling themselves at his feet and licking the soles of his feet. After we went inside the monastery,¹⁴² the great lady brought a pan and filled it with warm water and herbs and stood the sisters in two choirs and they washed the old man’s feet and those of his disciple in the water. She took a cup and brought the sisters; taking water from the pan [69] she poured it over their heads and afterwards she poured it over her breast and over her head. One could see all of them standing there like stones upon stones, not moving or speaking. They moved only when the signal was given and their movements were those of angels.¹⁴³ So the old man said to the abbess, “Do they honor us or are the sisters always like this?” She said, “Your servants are always like this, master. Pray for them.” The old man said, “Speak to my disciple . . .”¹⁴⁴

One of the sisters lay asleep in the forecourt of the church, wearing rags that were in shreds. The old man said, “Who is this sleeping?” One of the sisters said to him, “She’s a drunk, and we don’t know what to do with her: we’re afraid to take the responsibility of throwing her out of the monastery, and if we let her stay, she demoralizes the sisters.”¹⁴⁵ The old man said to his disciple, “Take the pan of water and throw it on her.” When he did as the old man had commanded, she stood up as though from a drunken stupor. The superior said, “Master, this is how she always is.”

The abbess¹⁴⁶ took the old man and directed him to the refectory and after she prepared dinner with the sisters she said, “Bless your servants so they may eat in your presence,” and he blessed them. Only she and her second-in-command sat with him. They set before the old man a bowl containing some soaked lentils and raw vegetables and dates and water, while to his disciple they served boiled lentils and a small loaf of bread and wine mixed with water. To the sisters they served a number of foods: fish and wine in abundance, and they ate very well and no one spoke. After they got up, the old man said to the abbess, “What is this you’ve done? We ought to have eaten well but you ate the good food.” The superior said to him, “You are a monk, and I served you a monk’s food; your disciple is a monk’s disciple and I served him a disciple’s food; we, however, are novices and we ate novices’ food.” The old man said to her, “May your love be remembered. We have truly profited from what you have done.”

As they were leaving, Abba Daniel stopped and said to [70] his disciple, “Go and see where the drunken sister is sleeping where she was lying in the forecourt of

¹⁴² The narrative switches from the third person to the first here, like the “we” passages in Acts.

¹⁴³ At a monastery a signal (the *krouma*, or *krousma*) was given by striking metal or wood in order to call the monks together for the divine office or some other occasion.

¹⁴⁴ The text seems to be corrupt.

¹⁴⁵ For an analogous figure, less fully developed, see Palladius, *Lausiac History* 34; the female monastic there simulates madness, not drunkenness.

¹⁴⁶ *Hégoumenê*, but later in this paragraph Abba Daniel asks the abbess (*hégoumenê*) a question and the superior (*amma*s) answers—or are the terms being used interchangeably?

the church,” and he went and looked and said to the old man, “By the exit to the toilets.” The old man said to his disciple, “Keep watch with me this night,” and when all the sisters had gone to sleep, the old man took his disciple and went down behind the screen and they saw that the drunken sister was standing up and was stretching her hands to heaven and her tears were like a river and her lips were moving and she was offering up acts of contrition and prostrating herself on the ground. Whenever she perceived one of the sisters coming out to use the privy, she would throw herself to the ground and snore. She spent all her days this way. The old man said to his disciple, “Call the superior¹⁴⁷ for me, quickly!” and he went and called her and her second-in-command and all night they watched what the sister was doing. The superior began to weep, saying, “I don’t know how many times I’ve treated her badly!” When the signal sounded, a rumor concerning her spread through the sisterhood and she perceived it and went away without being noticed to where the old man was sleeping and she stole his staff and cowl and cleverly opened the gate of the monastery and wrote a short note and put it between the bolt and the gate, saying, “Pray for me and forgive me whatever sins I have committed against you,” and she disappeared.¹⁴⁸

When day came they looked for her and did not find her, and they went to the entrance and found the gate opened and the note she had written, and the monastery erupted into weeping. The old man said, “For this very reason I came here, for God loves drunkards such as these.” The whole community confessed to the old man what they had done to her, and the old man offered prayer for the sisters and they withdrew to their cells, glorifying and giving thanks to God, who alone knows how many hidden servants he has.¹⁴⁹

5 (10) Concerning Andronicus the Money-Changer and His Wife Athanasia

[370] There was a money-changer in the great city of Antioch, a young man by the name of Andronicus. He took as wife Athanasia, a daughter of a money-changer. Andronicus was very devout, filled with good works, as was his wife also. They were very wealthy. This was their way of life: they divided the business of money-changing and their possessions in three parts—one part concerned with the poor, another part [371] concerned with the monks, and another part concerned with

¹⁴⁷ Here *hégoumenē* clearly indicates the superior because she brings her second-in-command with her.

¹⁴⁸ This part of the story has strong parallels with *Lausiatic History* 34.7. There Abba Piteroum asks to see one who was more holy than himself at the convent. They assembled all the sisters, but only produced a mad woman (*salē*) when all else had failed. He fell down before her, proclaiming her “my *amma* and yours.” She then went away, and no more was ever heard of her.

¹⁴⁹ An almost identical phrase occurs at the end of the first paragraph of the story of the blind beggar (I.3 above). The same thought is frequently expressed (e.g., *The Spiritual Meadow* 37), especially in connection with holy fools (Symeon salos, Andrew salos), but it is not found in connection with the tale of Mark the Fool.

their property and business.¹⁵⁰ The whole city loved Lord Andronicus on account of his virtuous acts. They produced a son and he named him John. She had already conceived and borne a daughter and named her Mary. After that Andronicus no longer came near his wife;¹⁵¹ instead, all of their time and attention was with the other lovers of Christ. Every Sunday, Monday, Wednesday, and Friday Andronicus would go for the washing of the brothers and his wife would likewise go for the washing of the women.¹⁵²

After twelve years, Lady Athanasia left for home one day from her care of the sick¹⁵³ and went in to look in on her children and she found both of them moaning and groaning. Upset, she got into bed and placed them on her breast. When blessed Andronicus came home, he began to upbraid his wife, thinking she was sleeping, but she said to him, “Don’t get angry, my lord; the children are sick.” Touching them, he found them burning up with fever and he groaned and said, “Your will be done, Lord” [Mt 6:10, Lk 22:42, Acts 21:14] and left the city to pray at Saint Julian’s, for his parents were laid to rest there.¹⁵⁴ He stayed until noon and he heard lamentation and uproar in his house. Upset, he ran and found almost the whole city in his house and the children dead. When he saw his little ones lying together on the bed dead, he went to the oratory and threw himself before the Savior and said, “Naked I came from my mother’s womb and naked shall I return there. The Lord gave; the Lord has taken away. Let it be as has seemed best to the Lord. May the Lord’s name be praised’ [Job 1:21 (LXX), Ps 112:2 (LXX)], now and forevermore!” But his wife was trying to drown herself, saying, “I will die with my children!”

The whole city came out for the children’s funeral, and they placed them in the martyrion of Saint Julian on top of their grandparents. Taking blessed Andronicus to the episcopal residence, the patriarch consoled him. His wife, however, refused to go home but instead slept in the martyrion. In the middle of the night [372] the martyr appeared to her, dressed in a monk’s habit, and said to her, “Why do you not leave in peace those who are here?”

She said, “My lord, do not be angry with me since I am suffering. I had two children and today I buried both of them.”

He said to her, “How old were the children?”

She said to him, “One was twelve years old and the other was ten,” and he said

¹⁵⁰ This motif of dividing possessions into thirds occurs elsewhere in monastic literature. In *Alphabetical Apophthegmata Eucharistus the Secular*, Eucharistus and his wife divide their profits into three parts: one for the poor, one for hospitality, and one for their own needs.

¹⁵¹ This is a circumlocution for saying that they no longer had sexual relations. For a striking parallel to the way of life of Andronicus and Athanasia, see *Alphabetical Apophthegmata Eucharistus the Secular I* (Ward, 60): Eucharistus and his wife divide the profit they make from shepherding into “three parts: one for the poor, the second for hospitality, and the third for our personal needs.” Since they married, Eucharistus says, they have “not had sexual intercourse with one another.”

¹⁵² “Washing” must have been some kind of ministry, perhaps to the poor or the infirm. See the next sentence and note there.

¹⁵³ “Care of the sick”: *philoponia*. A *philoponos* was a lay person with specific duties in the Church, including care of the sick.

¹⁵⁴ It is not certain who this Julian is, but it is probably Julian of Cilicia.

to her, “Why, then, are you weeping over them? You should be weeping for your own sins! I tell you, woman, just as a person, by nature, demands food and it is impossible for that person not to give himself something to eat, in the same way on that day the little ones will also demand of Christ the good things to come, saying, ‘Righteous judge, you deprived us of earthly things; do not deprive us also of heavenly things.’”

When she heard these things, she was stung to the quick and exchanged sorrow for joy, saying, “If my children really are alive in heaven, why am I weeping?” And she turned and looked for the abba, going through the whole church, but did not find him, and she knocked on the doorkeeper’s door and said, “Where is the abba who came in here just now?”

The doorkeeper said to her, “You see that the doors are secured and yet you say ‘Where is the abba who came in here just now?’” Then the observant attendant realized that she had had a vision. Confused and fearful, she begged the doorkeeper to take her to her home so he took her and led her home. She related to her husband what she had seen; the two of them were filled with fear and blessed Athanasia said to him, “Truly, my lord, while the children were alive I wanted to speak to you and was embarrassed to do so but now, after their death, I will now say to you: ‘If you will give heed to me, put me in a monastery so I may weep for my sins.’”

He said to her, “Go, think for a week about what you have said and if you still want to pursue this intention we will talk.”

She came back and said the same thing and blessed Andronicus summoned his brother-in-law and handed over to him all his property, saying, “We are going to the Holy Land to pray. If, therefore, something befalls us as mortal human beings, attend to God’s will in doing what you are supposed to do with this property. I implore you therefore to do your soul good and establish a hospital here and a guest-house for monks.” Freeing his slaves he gave them a bequest,¹⁵⁵ and taking a small amount of blessed bread, he and his wife left the city by themselves.

When Athanasia [373] saw her home from a distance, she looked up to heaven and said, “God, who said to Abraham and Sarah, ‘Leave your land and your kindred’ [Gen 12:1], be our guide also in our fear of you. Look! For your name’s sake, we have left the doors to our house open; do not close the door to your kingdom on us!” And they left, both of them weeping. When they reached the Holy Land, they worshipped there and, joining the company of many fathers, went to the Shrine of Saint Menas near Alexandria and had the benefit of the martyr.¹⁵⁶

About three in the afternoon Lord Andronicus happened to see a monk having an argument with a lay person and he ran and said to the lay person, “Why are you insulting the abba?”

¹⁵⁵ On the manumission of slaves, see K.R. Bradley, *Slaves and Masters in the Roman Empire: A Study in Social Control* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1987), esp. “Manumission,” 81-112.

¹⁵⁶ Literally: Saint Menas of Alexandria. The shrine of Saint Menas (Abû Minâ in Arabic) was the most popular pilgrimage site in Egypt in Late Antiquity; see Peter Grossmann, *Abu Mina: A Guide to the Ancient Pilgrimage Center* (Cairo: Fotiadis, 1986), and Grossmann, “The Pilgrimage Center of Abû Minâ,” in David Frankfurter, ed., *Pilgrimage and Holy Space in Late Antique Egypt* (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 281-302.

He said to him, “Master, he has hired my animal as far as Scetis and I keep saying to him, ‘Let’s go now so we can travel all night and tomorrow until eight in the morning so we can reach our destination before it gets hot,’ but he doesn’t want us to leave now.”

Lord Andronicus said to him, “Do you have another animal?”

He said to him, “Yes.”

“Go,” Lord Andronicus said, “and bring it and I will take one and the abba will take one, because I too want to leave for Scetis.” And Andronicus said to his wife, “Stay here until I go to Scetis and receive a blessing from the fathers and come back.”

She said to him, “Take me with you.”

He said to her, “A woman can not go to Scetis.”

Weeping, she said to him, “You owe it to Saint Menas to wait here until you have put me in a monastery.”

After saying goodbye to each other, he went down to Scetis, and offering obedience to the fathers at each lavra, he heard about Abba Daniel and he left and with great effort was able to meet him and so told the old man everything. The old man said to him, “Go and bring your wife and I will write a letter for you and you can take her to the Thebaid to the monastery of the Tabennisiotes.”¹⁵⁷

Lord Andronicus did just as Abba Daniel had told him. He took his wife to the old man and he spoke to them the word of salvation. Having written a letter, he sent them to the monastery of the Tabennisiotes.¹⁵⁸ When Andronicus returned, the old man gave him the monastic habit and taught him about the monastic life and Andronicus remained at his side for twelve years. After twelve years, Lord

¹⁵⁷ Although the term “the monastery of the Tabennisiotes” could be referring to one of Pachomius’ monasteries, it seems probable that “Tabennisiote” came to be used in an almost general way for communities that followed the Pachomian form or rule and does not necessarily mean that they belonged to a formal Koinonia as in the time of Pachomius and Theodore. Hence the use here may mean nothing more than “cenobitic.” Since the stories about Daniel often refer to “lavras” or semi-anchoritic communities, a contrast is probably being made here between these and cenobia. In the *Lausiac History*, “Tabennisiote” is used vaguely (Prologue 2, 18.1) and then explicitly of Pachomius and his monastery at Tabennisi (18.12, 32). The Pachomian sources mention two female communities, and *Lausiac History* 33 specifically refers to a Tabennisiote monastery “of some four hundred women.” This monastery for women may in fact be the same one as in I.4 above.

¹⁵⁸ The Pachomian sources mention two female communities, and *Lausiac History* 33 specifically refers to a Tabennisiote monastery “of some four hundred women.” Jim Goehring has observed that the term “Tabennisiote” “had come to be used by this period of any monastery that used the Pachomian *Rule*. The use of the *Rule*, however, did not necessarily mean that the monastery belonged to the Pachomian *koinonia* or system centered at the Upper Egyptian monastery of Pbow,” and notes as examples the White Monastery at Atripe, Ammon’s monastery (*Historia Monachorum* 3) and, probably, the monastery of Metanoia at Canopus. See James E. Goehring, *Ascetics, Society, and the Desert* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity, 1999), 258. As a sixth-century example, the monastic communities founded by Macrobius in Sarga, 25 km. south of Assiut, included separate monasteries for men and women; see Clara ten Hacken, “Coptic and Arabic Texts on Macrobius, an Egyptian Monk of the Sixth Century,” in Stephen Emmel, et al., ed., *Ägypten und Nubien in spätantiker und christlicher Zeit*, 2.122.

Andronicus begged the old man to release [374] him so he could go to the Holy land. Abba Daniel offered a prayer and released him.

Abba Andronicus, traveling through Egypt,¹⁵⁹ sat beneath a thorny broom tree in order to get some relief from the heat [Jonah 4:6] when suddenly, through the dispensation of God, his wife came, dressed in men's clothing; she too was leaving for the Holy Land. They greeted one another; the dove recognized her mate. But how could he have recognized such beauty as hers, withered away as it was, and when she looked like an Ethiopian?¹⁶⁰ So she said to him, "Where are you going, abba?"

He said to her, "To the Holy Land."

She said to him, "I too wish to go there; let the two of us travel together and let us travel in silence as though we were traveling alone."

He said, "As you wish."

She said to him, "Are you not in fact the disciple of Abba Daniel?"

He said, "Yes," and she said, "The prayers of the old man will travel with us."

So after they had worshipped at the holy places, they returned to Alexandria. Abba Athanasius said to Abba Andronicus, "Do you want us to live together in a cell?"

He said, "Yes, but first I want to get the old man's blessing."

He said to him, "Go and I will wait for you at the Oktokaidekaton, and if you come, let us remain in silence just as we traveled together in silence. If the old man does not keep you, come, I will remain at the Oktokaidekaton."

He left and reported to the old man, who said to him, "Go and love silence and remain with the brother, for he is a monk just as one ought to be." After Abba Andronicus returned, they remained together in the fear of God another twelve years and she was not recognized by him.

The old man would often go up to visit them,¹⁶¹ instructing them in things for their profit. One time, then, after he had gone up to see them and had said goodbye, before he reached the shrine of Saint Menas, Abba Andronicus overtook him and said to him, "Abba Athanasius is going to the Lord," and the old man returned and found him in pain. Abba Athanasius began to weep and the old man said to him, "You're weeping instead of rejoicing that you are going to meet the Lord?"

He said to the old man, "I would not be weeping except for Abba Andronicus. But please do me a favor: after you bury me you will find a note under my pillow. Read it and give it to Abba Andronicus."

They offered a prayer and received Communion and she went to sleep in the Lord. They went to bury her and a marvellous thing happened—she was found to

¹⁵⁹ "Egypt," as elsewhere in the Daniel dossier and other early monastic literature, often designates places away from the monastic settlements of Scetis, Nitria, and Kellia.

¹⁶⁰ This motif occurs elsewhere: in one saying from the Apophthegmata, a man whose wife has left him to become an ascetic does not recognize her because, as an ascetic, she had become as dark as an Ethiopian; see *Les sentences des pères du désert: Série des anonymes*, ed. Lucien Regnault (Spiritualité orientale 43; Sablé-sur-Sarthe/Béroulles-en-Mauges: Solesmes/ Bellefontaine, 1985), 241 (no. 1596, 10).

¹⁶¹ *Episkepsis* suggests an official visit or inspection made by a monastic superior.

be a woman, and the news spread throughout the lavra.¹⁶² [375] The old man sent and brought all of Scetis and the inner desert and all the lavras of Alexandria came and the whole city came out with them and the monks of Scetis were dressed in white, for this is their custom in Scetis.¹⁶³

With olive branches and palm branches, they carried out the precious corpse of blessed Athanasia, giving glory to God, who had provided the woman with such great endurance. And the old man remained during the week of mourning for blessed Athanasia and after the week was over he wanted to take Abba Andronicus with him, but he refused, saying, “I will die with my lady,” for the old man had told him that he had learned from the note that she was Andronicus’ wife. Abba Andronicus stayed there and a little later he too went to sleep and Abba Daniel once again went up and, after gathering together all the fathers, he carried out the corpse with psalms and hymns [Eph 5:19] and placed it near Abba Athanasius.

To the glory of Father and Son and Holy Spirit, now and always and for ever and ever. Amen.

* * * * *

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With olive branches and palm branches, they carried out the precious corpse of Athanasia, giving glory to God, who had provided the woman with such great endurance. And the old man remained during the week of mourning for blessed Athanasia and after these things he wanted to take Abba Andronicus with him, but he refused, saying, “I will die with my lady.”

So the old man once again said goodbye but before he could reach the shrine of Saint Menas the brother [sic] approached him and said, “Abba Andronicus is in pain,” and the old man once again sent word to Scetis, saying, “Hurry and come. Abba Andronicus is following Brother Athanasius.” When they heard, they went up and found him alive and after they were blessed by him he went to sleep in the Lord. War broke out between the fathers of Oktokaidekaton and those of Scetis; the latter were saying, “The brother is ours and we are going to take him to Scetis so that his prayers may help us.” Those from Oktokaidekaton were saying, “We are going to bury him with his sister.”

Those from Scetis were superior in number and the archimandrite of Oktokaidekaton said, “We will do what the old man says.” Abba Daniel said, “He is to be buried there.” Those from Scetis did not listen to him and said, “The old man already belongs to heaven and no longer fears bodily conflict; we, however, are younger and want the brother so his prayers may help us. It should be enough for those of you from Oktokaidekaton that we have left you Abba Athanasius.”

¹⁶² For a similar discovery, see I.2 above.

¹⁶³ See I.1 above. Again, it is not clear whether the narrator intends to mean it was the monks’ custom to wear white for a special (funerary?) occasion or whether white was the normal color of monastic dress.

When the old man saw that a great disturbance was taking place, he said to the brothers, “Truly, if you do not listen to me, I too will remain here and will be buried with my child.” Then they were at peace and they brought out brother Andronicus for burial. They said to the old man, “Let us go to Scetis.” The old man said to them, “Allow me to observe the week of mourning for the brother,” but they did not allow him to remain there.

These things Abba Daniel confided to his disciple. Let us also pray, therefore, to come into the measure of Abba Athanasius and of Abba Andronicus, through the prayers of all the saints. Amen.

6 (5). Concerning Thomais, the Chaste and Holy Young Woman

[63] The same Abba Daniel went up with his disciple to Alexandria and while they were staying there, the following occurred: An abba of the Oktokaidekaton¹⁶⁴ outside Alexandria had a son and his son had a wife, a young woman about eighteen years of age, and she lived with his son. His son was a fisherman. The enemy of Christians and enemy of our souls, the Devil, was waging carnal warfare [64] against the abba with regard to his daughter-in-law and the abba was looking for an opportunity to have sexual intercourse with her and did not succeed. Therefore he began to kiss her frequently and the young woman accepted that, as from a father.

One day, then, fishermen came at night and took the young man in order to go out and fish. After the young man had left, the father got up and went and stood over the young woman and the young woman said to him, “What are you doing, father? Leave and cross yourself, for what you are doing is the work of the Devil.” He, however, refused to leave and the young woman, vigorously fighting him off, refused his advances. His son’s sword hung over the bed and, wanting to frighten her, the abba brandished the naked sword at her, saying, “If you don’t obey me, I’ll let you have it with this sword!” But she said to him, “If I have to lose an arm, so be it; I will never commit this unlawful act!” Filled with rage, he suddenly lashed out with the sword and, completely controlled by the Devil, he pulled the young woman down by her hips and cut her in two. God immediately struck him blind and he went around groping for the door but was not able to find it.

Some other fishermen came looking for the young man at dawn, and when they called for him his father answered, “He’s gone fishing. Where’s the door? I don’t see it!” They said to him, “Here it is,” and when they opened the door and went inside they saw the calamity that had taken place,¹⁶⁵ and he said to them, “Seize me and hand me over to the authorities; I’ve committed murder,” and they took him and handed him over to the city magistrate. The magistrate interrogated him and, when he learned from him the whole truth, tortured and punished him.

Afterwards, Abba Daniel said to his disciple, “Let us go and see the young woman’s corpse.” After they left for the Oktokaidekaton outside Alexandria, the

¹⁶⁴ The monastic settlement at the eighteenth milestone west of Alexandria; it is mentioned by John Moschus in *Pratum spirituale* 87.

¹⁶⁵ *Ptōma* can also mean “corpse,” so this part of the sentence could also be translated “the corpse lying there.”

fathers and the monks of that same Oktokaidekaton [65] heard that Abba Daniel was coming and they went out to greet him. The old man said to them, “Offer a prayer, fathers, for this young woman’s corpse is not to be buried except with those of the fathers.” Some of them began to grumble because he was ordering a woman’s corpse to be buried with the fathers, and she a victim of murder.¹⁶⁶ The old man said to them, “This young woman is my amma, and yours. Indeed, she died to protect her chastity.” Afterwards, no one opposed the old man, and they buried her with the fathers, and the old man, after greeting the fathers with a kiss, returned with his disciple to Scetis.

7 (6). A Monk, Tempted by Sexual Sin, Receives a Blessing from Thomaïs

[66] One day a brother was besieged in this same Scetis by the demon of sexual sin.¹⁶⁷ Greatly troubled, he went and told the old man about it, and the old man said to him, “Go to the Oktokaidekaton outside Alexandria and stay on top of the tomb¹⁶⁸ of the fathers and say, ‘God of Thomaïs, help me and deliver me from the temptation of sexual sin!’ and I have faith in God that [67] he will free you from this temptation.”

The brother took the old man’s prayer and order and went to the Monastery of the Eighteenth Milestone and did just as the old man had commanded. After returning to Scetis three days later, he threw himself at the old man’s feet and said to him, “Because of God and your prayers, master, I have been freed from the warfare caused by sexual sin.”

The old man said to him, “How were you freed?”

The brother said, “I just did twelve acts of contrition¹⁶⁹ and placed myself on top of the tomb and I woke up and a young woman came and said to me, ‘Abba, abba, take this blessing¹⁷⁰ and go in peace to your cell.’ Having received the blessing, I was immediately relieved of the warfare and knew that I had been freed. What the blessing was, I don’t know.”

The old man said, “Those who do battle on behalf of chastity have such great freedom of speech before God!”

¹⁶⁶ In *The Spiritual Meadow* 88 a dead abba refuses to lie beneath a female corpse.

¹⁶⁷ See I.1 above.

¹⁶⁸ *Koimêtêrion*, which usually means “cemetery,” but here and below seems to mean “tomb.”

¹⁶⁹ *Metanoias*, literally “(acts of) repentance,” which probably meant saying a prayer and then prostrating oneself.

¹⁷⁰ *Eulogia* could also mean consecrated eucharistic bread or a gift of blessed bread, so it’s possible that the young woman is giving the monk such blessed bread; see Lampe 570D-E. The fact that the monk later says that he doesn’t know what the blessing was would seem to indicate that the *eulogia* was not a gift of bread.

8 (2). *Life and Ascetic Practice of the Patrician Lady Anastasia*¹⁷¹

[51] A eunuch was living in the inner desert of Scetis and had his cell about eighteen miles from Scetis itself.¹⁷² Once a week he would visit Abba Daniel at night without anyone knowing about it except the old man's disciple and him alone. The old man ordered his disciple to fill a wine jar with water for the eunuch once a week and to take it to him and knock and go away without speaking with him. "But if," he said, "you find an ostrakon with writing on it at the entrance to the cave, bring it." And so the disciple would do this. One day he found an ostrakon with this written on it: "Bring your tools and come alone, just you and the brother." When the old man read the ostrakon, he wept and wailed and said, "What woe there is in the inner desert! What great pillar is going to fall today!" And he said to his disciple, "Take these implements. Let's go and make our way to the old man lest we be deprived of his prayers, for he is going to the Lord."

Weeping, the two of them left and went off to the cave and they found the eunuch burning up with fever. The old man threw himself at the eunuch's feet and wept, saying, "Blessed are you because you are giving your attention to this hour¹⁷³ and have looked with contempt on an earthly kingdom!" And the eunuch said, "Blessed are you, a second Abraham, because God receives such a large quantity of fruit from these hands!" And the old man said, [52] "Offer a prayer for us." The eunuch said, "It is I who need many prayers at this hour," and the old man said, "Had I known beforehand, I would have comforted you." The eunuch sat up from the mat on which he was lying, took the old man's head, and kissed him, saying, "God, who has been my guide in this place, will himself bring to fulfillment your old age, just as he did with Abraham" [Gen 21:1-7].

The old man, taking hold of his disciple, threw him to his knees, saying, "Bless my child here too," and the eunuch tenderly kissed him and said, "God, you who are standing by me at this hour to remove me from this body and who knows how many steps he has taken to this cell for your name's sake, cause the spirit of this brother's fathers to rest upon him just as you caused the spirit of Elijah to rest upon Elisha [2 Kings 2:1-18], and may the name of this brother's fathers be invoked upon him." Then he said to the old man, "For the sake of the Lord, do not take off the clothes I am wearing but rather send me to the Lord just as I am, and let no one besides yourselves ever know anything about me," and he said to the old man, "Give me communion," and the old man did so. After receiving communion he said, "Pray for me," and he looked to the east and to the right and his face shone

¹⁷¹ *The Life of Pelagia* has interesting parallels with the story of Anastasia. Pelagia had been a prostitute and, after her conversion, fled to the desert disguised as a male monk with the name of Pelagius. See Pierre Petitmengin, ed., *Pélagie la pénitente: Métamorphoses d'une légende*, Tome I, *Les textes et leur histoire* (Paris: Études augustiniennes, 1981) and, for an English translation of the Syriac version, Brock and Harvey, *Holy Women of the Syrian Orient*, 40-62.

¹⁷² In early monastic literature, "inner" designates not movement towards the Nile but away from it and thus may be translated as "further" or "remoter" desert.

¹⁷³ On this theme see chapter III of the Systematic Apophthegmata.

more brightly than the sun and he made the sign of the cross on his mouth and said, "Into your hands, God, I commend my spirit" [Ps 31:5, Lk 23:46], and in this way he offered up his soul.

The two of them wept. After they had dug a grave in front of the cave, the old man stripped off his clothes and said to his disciple, "Clothe him with more than what he is wearing (the eunuch was wearing a patched cloak and a loincloth made from palm fiber. While the brother was dressing the eunuch, he looked at him and saw that his breasts were those of a woman and were like two withered leaves but he did not say anything.¹⁷⁴ After they buried him and offered a prayer, the old man said, "Let us break our fast here today and let us celebrate an *agapê* for the old man," and picking up the rope [that the eunuch had made with his labor], they carried it off and left, giving thanks to God.

While they were walking on their way, the disciple said to the old man, "Did you know, father, that that eunuch was a woman? [53] I saw her breasts." The old man said, "Do you want me to tell you about her?" He said, "Yes, I do." The old man said, "She was a patrician lady connected with the royal court, and Emperor Justinian loved her dearly and wanted to take her into the imperial residence on account of her great intelligence. But she had angered the Augusta Theodora and Theodora banished her to Alexandria. So she founded the great cenobium at the fifth milestone outside Alexandria, which is called 'The Monastery of the Patrician Lady.'¹⁷⁵ When she founded this cenobium, Emperor Justinian heard about her and began to honor her on account of her great intelligence. She, however, fled Alexandria by night and came to live near me and entreated me to give her a cell and she confided in me everything that you have heard. She has now spent twenty-eight years today in Scetis and no one knows about her except me, you, and one other old monk. When I would go away to the monastery, I would order him to fill a wine jar with water and take it to him and withdraw. No one learned who this is

¹⁷⁴ For a circumspect and unadorned account of the post-mortem discovery of one transvestite, see Alphabetical Apophthegmata Bessarion 4. For the "recognition scene" in the *Life of Pelagia*, see par. 49 (Petitmengin, 93; Brock and Harvey, 61). Hilaria/Hilarion was also recognized at death by her withered breasts, which "were not those of a woman"; see *Vita Sanctae Hilariae*, in *Three Coptic Legends: Hilaria, Archellites, The Seven Sleepers*, ed. and trans. James Drescher (Supplément aux annales du service des antiquités de l'Égypte 4; Cairo: IFAO, 1947), 6 (Coptic), 75 (English trans.). Teresa Shaw has commented, 235-36, "Descriptions of the physical changes brought on by food deprivation emphasize reduction in sexual humors through drying and cooling, drying or shriveling of the breasts, and general destruction of the female characteristics or 'nature' of the body. . . . But there is more. The virgin's physical regimen not only alters the internal processes of nutrition and sexuality; it is part of an overall effort to alter the external presentation of her body."

¹⁷⁵ The group of lavras, cenobias, and hermitages at the fifth milestone west of Alexandria was known collectively as To Pempton, The Fifth (Milestone). This monastic settlement was apparently on the same route heading west out of Alexandria as other monastic settlements such as Ennaton, at the ninth milestone, Oktokaidekaton, at the eighteenth milestone, and Eikoston, at the twentieth. On these monasteries, see Van Cauwenbergh, *Étude sur les moines d'Égypte*, 64-78. The Syriac version of this story says that Anastasia founded her monastery at the Ennaton; see Brock and Harvey, eds., *Holy Women of the Syrian Orient*, 148.

except you alone. How many court officials the emperor sent, searching for her—and not only the emperor but also the archbishop and almost all of Alexandria! And not a single person discovered where she was until today.

“See, therefore, how those in imperial courts contend¹⁷⁶ and afflict their bodies in battle against the Devil while we, who in the world could scarcely find a way of being filled with bread, have entered the monastic life and live in excessive luxury and are unable to acquire a single virtue! Therefore let us also pray that the Lord may think us fit to run his race [2 Tim 4:7] and with our holy fathers find mercy on that day and with Abba Anastasius the eunuch—for she used to be called ‘Anastasia’—with the prayers and entreaties of our Queen, the Mother of God, and of all the saints, because to him it is right to give glory, honor, and worship, to the Father and Son and Holy Spirit, now and for ever and ever. Amen.”

9 (9). *Concerning Eulogius the Stonecutter*

[254] Abba Daniel, the priest of Scetis, was across from the Thebaid, having with him one of his disciples, and they left, sailing down the river. After setting sail, they came to a farm to which the old man had directed the sailors and the old man said, “We will stay here today.” His disciple began to grumble and say, “How long are we going to waste our time here? Let’s go on to Scetis.” The old man said, “No, we’ll stay here today.”

There were foreigners in the village center¹⁷⁷ and the brother said to the old man, “Does it please God for us to sit like brothers with them? Let’s at least go [255] to the martyrion,” and the old man said, “No, I’m staying here,” and they remained there, staying until late in the evening. The brother began to fight with the old man, saying, “On account of you I’m going to die.” While they were talking, an elderly lay person came, a large man, completely gray-headed, very old, advanced in years, holding a fishing-basket. When he saw Abba Daniel, he clasped hold of him and began to kiss his feet and weep. He also greeted the disciple and said to them, “I am at your disposal.”

He would also raise up a torch and go through the streets of the village, looking for foreigners. Taking the old man and his disciple and the other foreigners that he found, he went home, and putting water into the basin, he washed the feet of the disciples and of the old man. He had no other property of his own in his house, or in any other place, only God alone. He set the table for them and after they ate he took the leftovers and threw them to the dogs in the village. It was his custom to do this, and from evening until morning he would not allow a single crumb to remain in the house. The old man took him aside and they sat until nearly dawn, with many

¹⁷⁶ *Agônizetai* is a technical monastic term, borrowed from athletics, used to designate fighting or contending against Satan or demons.

¹⁷⁷ Drew-Bear, *Le nome Hermopolite*, 42, citing L. Robert, says that a *chôrion* could designate vaguely “a place” (*topos*) or, more precisely, a fortress, estate, or village. This last was current in the Byzantine period and replaced *kômê*; thus *chôrion* evolved into Modern Greek *chôrio*, “village, hamlet.” For a list of sites in the Hermopolite nome designated as *choria*, see Drew-Bear, 388.

tears talking about the things that lead to salvation. Early in the morning, they kissed one another and the old man and his disciple departed.

While they were on the road, the disciple asked the old man's forgiveness, saying, "Please, father, tell me who that old man was and where you know him from," but the old man refused to speak to him. Again the brother asked for forgiveness, saying, "You've confided many other things to me, and now you won't confide in me about this old man?" But the old man refused to confide in him about the old man so that as a result the brother was saddened and did not speak to the old man until they reached Scetis.

After the brother went to his cell, he did not bring the old man a small meal as was the custom at five p.m. (the old man maintained this practice all the days of his life).¹⁷⁸ When evening fell, the old man went to the brother's cell and said to him, "Why is it, child, that you've allowed your father [256] to die of hunger?" The disciple said, "I don't have a father. If I had a father, he would love his own child!" The old man said, "It's obvious that you're not going to serve my meal." He was taking hold of the door in order to open it and leave when the brother came up and grabbed the old man and began to kiss him, saying to him, "As the Lord lives, I will not let you go if you do not tell me who that old man was!" The brother was unable to see the old man distressed for any reason, for he dearly loved him. Then the old man said to him, "Make me a little something to eat and then I will tell you," and after the old man had eaten, he said to the brother, "Do not be stiff-necked. I did not tell you on account of what you said when you were in the village. See that you do not repeat what you hear.

"That old man is called 'Eulogius'; by trade he is a stonemason. He earns a *keration* a day from his manual labor, eating nothing until evening, and when evening comes he goes to the village and takes home whatever foreigners he finds and feeds them, and their leftovers he throws to the dogs, as you saw. He's been a stonemason by trade since he was a young man up to today; it has been a hundred years and more. God provides him with strength equal to that of a strapping young man, and each day to this very day he works for the same one *keration*. When I was younger, forty years old,¹⁷⁹ I went up to sell my handiwork at that village and at evening he came and took me and other brothers with me, as was his custom, and gave us lodging.

"When I went there and saw the old man's virtue, I began to fast every day of the week, entreating God to provide him with greater wages so that he might do good for even more people. After fasting for three weeks, I was half dead on account of my ascetic regimen, and I saw a holy person coming towards me and he said to me, 'What's the matter with you, Daniel?' and I said to him, 'There's a reason for the way I look: I've given my word to Christ not to eat bread, my master, until he hears my request concerning Eulogius the stonemason and bestows a bless-

¹⁷⁸ Daniel's custom here was probably not typical; the monks usually ate at 3 p.m.

¹⁷⁹ In *Lausiac History* 17, Macarius the Great is reported as having become a monk as a young man at the age of 30.

ing¹⁸⁰ on him so that he may do good for even more people.’ He said to me, ‘No, everything is fine as it is,’ [257] and I said to him, ‘No, it’s not. Give him more in order that everyone, on account of him, may praise your holy name.’ He said to me, ‘I myself am telling you that things are fine. If you want me to provide him with more, guarantee that his soul will find salvation through benefitting many, and then I will provide it.’ Then I said to him: ‘You may require his soul at my hands.’

“I saw that it was as though I were standing in the Church of the Holy Resurrection¹⁸¹ and a young man was sitting upon the blessed stone [see Mt 28:2 and parallels] and Eulogius himself was standing at his right. The young man sent near me one of those standing by and he said to me, ‘Are you the one who has pledged himself for Eulogius?’ and I said to him, ‘Yes, master,’ and again he spoke, ‘Tell him that I will demand the pledge,’ and I said, ‘Yes, master, with me as the pledge, only multiply your blessings upon him.’ I then saw two persons emptying a very large amount of money into Eulogius’ lap and Eulogius’ lap was able to hold it, however much the two kept pouring. When I woke up I knew that I had been heard and I gave glory to God.

“When Eulogius came out to do his work, he struck a certain rock, heard a hollow-sounding “thunk,” and found a small hole; again he struck the rock and he found a cave filled with money. Filled with amazement, he said to himself, ‘This money comes from the Israelites! What should I do with it? If I take it to the village, the owner will hear about it and will take it and I’ll be in danger. It would be better if I hid it out in the country where no one knows me.’ Hiring animals as though he were using them to haul stones, at night he hauled the money to the riverside and, completing the good work of hospitality as he was accustomed to do every day, he put the money in a boat and sailed to Byzantium. Justin, the uncle of Justinian, was emperor at that time.¹⁸² Eulogius gave a large amount of money to the emperor and to his nobles and as a result became procurator of the holy praetorian guard. He also bought a large estate and to this day it is called ‘the estate of the Egyptian.’

“Two years later I again saw in a dream that young man in the Church of the Holy Resurrection and I said to myself, ‘Where is Eulogius?’ [258] A little later I saw Eulogius being dragged away from the young man by an Ethiopian. Waking up, I said to myself, ‘God help me, a sinner! What have I done? I have lost my life!’ Taking my shoulder-bag I left for the village in order to sell my handiwork, expecting to come across Eulogius as usual. Late evening came and no one invited me home with him, so I got up and made inquiries of an old woman, saying to her,

¹⁸⁰ *Eulogia* can mean both “blessing” and a gift or alms.

¹⁸¹ The pilgrim Egeria mentions many times in her diary the Anastasis, which was part of Constantine’s Basilica of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem. As one of her modern editors notes, “Moving from west to east, we find first the Anastasis, or sanctuary of the Resurrection, a church in the round, in the center of which was the grotto of the Holy Sepulchre” where, in Daniel’s vision, the young man would be sitting on the stone. See *Egeria: Diary of a Pilgrimage*, trans. George E. Gingras (ACW 38; New York: Newman, 1970), 24.

¹⁸² Justin became emperor in 518 and ruled until 527, when he was succeeded by Justinian I.

‘Surely you, mother, will give me three dried loaves of bread¹⁸³ so I may eat; I haven’t eaten today,’ and she said, ‘What about me?’ She went and brought me a little boiled food and gave it to me and began to tell me spiritually beneficial things, saying, ‘Don’t you know that the monastic life requires contemplative quiet?’ and other helpful things. I said to her, ‘What, then, are you telling me to do? I came to sell my handiwork.’ She said to me, ‘If you had wanted to sell your handiwork, you would not have arrived late at the village like you did. If you want to be a monk, go to Scetis.’ I said to her, ‘Really, spare me these instructions. Isn’t there in this village a God-fearing person who goes out and gets the foreigners?’ and she said to me, ‘What are you saying, my good monk? We used to have a stonecutter here and he used to do many things for the foreigners. When God saw his works, he gave him grace, and today he is a patrician.’

‘When I heard these things, I said to myself, ‘I committed this murder!’ and I boarded ship and sailed to Byzantium. I asked where I might find ‘the estate of the Egyptian’ and they showed me and I sat in front of the gate until he came. I saw him coming with great ostentation and I called out to him, ‘Have mercy on me! I wish to speak with you in private about some matter!’ but he turned away from me and his escort beat me instead. Once again I touched the escort and repeated what I had said, and once again they beat me. I spent four weeks making my request as custom dictated but was not able to meet with him. Then, a little later, I went and threw myself in front of the gate of the Church of the Mother of God and wept and said, ‘Lord, release me from the pledge I made for this person or I will go away into the world!’

[259] “While I was trying to understand these events, I fell asleep and suddenly there arose a clamor and they were saying, ‘The Augusta is coming!’ and there came before her thousands upon thousands and ten thousand upon ten thousand ranks, and I cried out and said, ‘Have mercy on me!’ She stopped and said to me, ‘What is the matter with you?’ and I said to her, ‘I pledged myself as surety for Eulogius the procurator. Order him to release me from this pledge.’ She said to me, ‘I don’t have authority in this matter. Fulfill the pledge as you wish.’ When I woke up I said to myself, ‘Even if I have to die, I am not leaving the gate!’ When Eulogius came out, I cried out and the doorkeeper attacked me and gave me a beating until he had broken every bone in my body. Then, discouraged, I said to myself, ‘Let us go to Scetis, and if God wishes he will also save Eulogius.’

‘I left to look for a ship and found one bound for Alexandria and boarded it to sail to my cell. I boarded ship alone and sat by myself, feeling discouraged, and once again I saw myself in a dream in the Church of the Holy Resurrection and that young man was sitting upon the holy stone; he turned towards me in a threatening manner so that, afraid of him, I was trembling like a leaf and was unable to open

¹⁸³ *Paxamatia* or *paxamadia* was bread baked and dried in small loaves that could be stored and soaked in water for later consumption. See Alphabetical AP Agathon 20, Macarius the Great 33, Achilles 3; *Lausiatic History* 22.

my mouth, for my heart had turned to stone. He said to me, 'Aren't you going to go fulfill the pledge?' and he ordered two of those standing at his side to hang me up with my arms tied behind my back, and he said to me, 'Do not pledge yourself beyond your ability to do so; do not gainsay God.' I was unable to open my mouth and remained hanging there.

"Suddenly there was a voice: 'The Augusta is coming!' and when I saw her I took courage and said to her in a subdued voice, 'Have mercy on me, mistress of the world!' She said to me, 'What do you want now?' I said to her, 'I am hanging here because I pledged myself for Eulogius,' and she said to me, 'I am making entreaties on your behalf.' And I saw her leave to kiss the feet of that young man and the young man said to me, 'Do not do this any longer.' I said, 'No, master, I won't. I had asked in order to be of service but I have sinned. Forgive me.' He gave the order and they released me, and he said to me, 'Go to your cell, and I [260] will return Eulogius to his former way of life. Do not be anxious.' When I awoke from sleep, I was suddenly deliriously happy, having been set free from such an onerous pledge, and I set sail, giving thanks to God.

"Three months later, I heard that Emperor Justin had died and Justinian was now emperor, and Hypatius and Dexikratius and Pompeius and Eulogius the procurator rose up against him. The first three were killed and all their possessions were confiscated, as was Eulogius' estate.¹⁸⁴ Eulogius fled Constantinople at night and the emperor ordered that he was to be killed wherever he was found. Then he went and fled to his own village and exchanged his clothing for that of the country folk who lived there. The whole village gathered to see him and they said to him, 'We heard that you had become a patrician,' and he said, 'Indeed. If I had become a patrician, you would be coming to me with petitions. No, that was another Eulogius, who is also from here, for I was in the Holy Land.'

"And he came to his senses and said, 'Wretched Eulogius, get up, take your stonecutting tools and you too go, before you also lose your head. There is no royal court here!' Taking his stonecutting tools, he went out to the rock where the money had been and, striking it for six hours, did not find anything, and he began to remember the foods and the attendants and the treachery that took place and once again said to himself, 'Get yourself up; you're in Egypt now.' Little by little the holy young man and the Queen Mother of God brought him to his former way of life, for it would be unjust of God to forget his previous labors.

¹⁸⁴ Emperor Anastasius died on July 9, 518, without grooming a successor, although each of his nephews, Hypatius, Pompeius, and Probus, had hopes of succeeding him. While Hypatius, who was commander-in-chief in the East, was out of the city, Justin, the leader of the bodyguard, managed to buy his way into power and became emperor. Justin adopted his nephew and on April 1, 527, made Justinian co-emperor, and died on August 1 of that year. Early in 532 Hypatius rebelled against Justinian, was defeated, and on January 19 he and Pompeius were executed and their bodies were cast into the sea. "Their property, and that of those senators who had supported them, was confiscated. The patricians who had been with them, people whose identity we unfortunately do not know, fled." See John Moorhead, *Justinian* (London & New York: Longman, 1994), 14, 21-22, 46-47.

“A little after this I went up to the village and when evening fell he came and took me, as was his custom. and just seeing him made me groan and weep, saying, ‘How exalted your deeds are, Lord! You have done everything with wisdom [Ps 104:24]. What god is as great as our God, who raises up the poor from the earth and lifts up the laborer from the dung heap [Ps 113:7]? He humbles and exalts [Ps 75:7]. Who is able to search out your marvellous deeds, Lord and Master? [Ps 89:6] When I, a sinner, attempted it, my soul dwelt for a little while in Hades’ [Ps 94:7]. [261] Taking water, he bathed my feet in the customary way and set the table, and after we had eaten I said to him, ‘How are you, Abba Eulogius?’ He said to me, ‘Pray for me, abba, for I am a wretched person, having nothing to my name,’ and I said to him, ‘I wish that you had not even had what you had!’ He said to me, ‘Why, lord and abba? What have I ever done to give you offense?’ I said, ‘What haven’t you done to give me offense!’ Then I laid everything out for him. Both of us wept and he said to me, ‘Pray that God summons me in order to set me on the right track from now on.’ I said to him, ‘Truly, child, do not expect to ever be entrusted by the Lord with anything again in this world except for the *keration*.’

“You see? God has now seen to it all these years that each day he earns the *keration*. Look, now I’ve told you where I know him from. Do not repeat what I have told you to anyone.”

These things Abba Daniel openly told to his disciple after they had sailed up from the Thebaid. Marvellous is God’s loving care for humanity, how he raised up such a person from among the lowly and humbled such a person for his benefit! Therefore let us pray that we too may be humbled by the fear of God and of our Savior Jesus Christ, that with the prayers and entreaties of our Queen and ever-virgin Mary, the Mother of God, and of all the saints, we may find mercy before the terrible judgement seat. Amen.

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Eucharist in our Spiritual Life

WORTHY OR UNWORTHY: HOW THE BREAD OF LIFE BROUGHT DEATH INTO CORINTH!*

Dr. R. Yanney

- *Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of profaning the body and blood of the Lord. Let a man examine himself, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For any one who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment upon himself. That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died (1 Cor 11: 27-30).*
- *Whoever receives the medicine of life unworthily brings condemnation upon himself. It is surprising to have someone like this who, on the contrary, gets death from life. (St Ephrem the Syrian: *The Armenian Hymns*: 47)*

In various periods during the history of the Church, and till now, these verses from the first letter to the Corinthians have been used in order to reach a conclusion that is alien to the teaching of the whole Bible and that of the early Church about the Eucharist as well as her practice of the Sacrament. This conclusion has led and is still leading to an erroneous practice of the Sacrament in a different spirit from that of our Lord who used to gather around him sinners and tax-collectors (Matt 9: 10-13, 11:9; Luke 15:1) and invited to his marriage feast the bad before the good (Matt 22:10). The problem has arisen from the same cause of most erroneous biblical interpretations, when one takes a single verse or a portion of Scripture out of context and separates it from its historical background. This results in a meaning that is not intended by the original author, nor does it have any relation to the problem facing the Church to which the letter has been originally written. Things become more complicated when the interpreter ends with a general conclusion from the verse or the story, on the assumption that it is the teaching of the Bible, while in fact it is merely a human interpretation. It is *eisogesis*, not *exegesis*.

* This is a chapter in a forthcoming book by the same author.

In order to understand this portion from the first letter to the Corinthians, we have to study closely the whole chapter, or even the whole epistle. Besides, we need to know the daily life of the community to which the letter was originally addressed, not only from the religious aspect, but also from the social, economical and historical aspects. I can only address this in a short abstract, praying that our Lord may persuade others who are able to study it in detail, in Bible Study Groups, in commentaries or in liturgical studies. It is an essential subject that affects the essence of our spiritual and liturgical life, and represents a life and death problem for many (1 Cor 11: 30).

The Eucharist in First Century Corinth

The first letter to the Corinthians was written on c. 57 AD. It is one of the earliest letters of St. Paul and it represents the earliest written record of the establishment of the Eucharist by Christ. In order to understand what the Apostle means in it, it is a mistake to imagine that he is addressing a church in the twentieth century. There were fundamental differences:

- (1) *Sunday was not a holiday*; the Emperor Constantine established this about three centuries later. Hence the Eucharist was performed on the eve of Sunday, i.e. Saturday night (Acts 20: 7) after the people return from work.
- (2) *Eucharist was performed in the context of a meal*, the 'agape'. It was in the same tradition as the first Eucharist which Christ established during the Last Supper. This continued for several generations, even for centuries in some places till it was finally discontinued because of the problems caused by eating and drinking during the service that appear even in the apostolic time in this chapter. Some liturgical scholars see that the separation of the Eucharist from the agape started in the apostolic era.¹ Some Bible commentators understand from 1 Cor. 11: 34 that this was the decision of St. Paul himself.
- (3) *At this time there was no special building for the church*². The faithful used to meet in one of the big houses in the city, and this was where they had the Eucharist (Acts 2: 46 & 20: 8) In large cities like Corinth, the dining room could not fit all the people. Those who came late had to sit in the outer hall.
- (4) The rich were usually responsible for this; the poor had their small offering or even nothing at all.

Before we come to the Scripture portion at hand, one can understand from the rest of the epistle that St. Paul was addressing himself to particular problems related to the Church of Corinth. In spite of the fact that the small part that deals with the Eucharist gives us a lot of information about it, that is not found in other parts

¹ Gregory Dix: *The Shape of the Liturgy*, op. cit., and pp. 49, 50 & 100- 102.

² The Greek word *eklesia*, meaning the People of God or the Faithful, has never been used to describe the building or place of worship in the NT. Some old Bible versions have implied this in 1 Cor. 11: 18; the RSV translates it as, 'when you assemble as a church'.

of the New Testament, yet any conclusion or any general teaching we may get should consider the circumstances in the local church to which the epistle was originally addressed, and what was happening in it.

In the light of this entire introduction we can now look at the Scripture verses in front of us.

Unworthily (Anaxious)

This word, in the Greek original, as well as in various English versions (unworthily; in an unworthy manner), is an adverb that is related to the verb (how people eat and drink) and not an adjective that describes the people themselves (being worthy or unworthy).³ What the epistle says is that the eating and drinking occur in an unworthy manner; it tells us nothing about the moral or spiritual state of the communicant or his personal worthiness. This cannot be a condition for participation in the Eucharist; St. Thomas a Kempis says, “If you had the purity of an angel, and the sanctity of St. John the Baptist, you would not be worthy to receive or handle the Sacrament. For this is not due to any merits of men, that a man should consecrate and handle the Sacrament of Christ, and receive for his food the bread of angels (Ps. 77:25)”.⁴ Becoming worthy, i.e. having the right to share in the Body of our Lord is a free gift, which the believer receives through faith and baptism. It is based on the salvation work of Christ in his incarnation, death and resurrection.

The problem in Corinth was not the nature of its people, worthy or unworthy, just or sinners. It was rather what was taking place in the Church meeting for the Eucharist, and which St. Paul clearly describes in the same chapter.⁵ When the Apostle started the topic of the Corinthian church meeting, he mentioned the presence of divisions and factions among them. (Verses 18 and 19). This by itself prohibits the Eucharistic meeting according to the *Didache*,

“Let no one who has a quarrel with his neighbor join you until he is reconciled, lest your sacrifice be defiled”⁶

In earlier chapters of the letter, the Apostle mentions the presence of factions in the Church. Here he is speaking of a different kind of division, the class division. It may be the same division that St. James refers to in his Catholic epistle:

“My brethren, show no partiality as you hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory. For if a man with gold rings and in fine clothing comes into your assembly, and a poor man in shabby clothing also comes

³ Ellicott CJ: *St. Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians with a Critical and Grammatical Commentary*, London, 1887.

⁴ *Imitation of Christ* 4:5:1.

⁵ The reader has to read the whole chapter or at least verses 17- 31.

⁶ *Didache* (Teaching of the twelve Apostles), 14:1. Translated in Jurgens WA: *The Faith of the Early Fathers*, 1970: vol. I, 4.

in, and you pay attention to the one who wears the fine clothing and say, "Have a seat here, please," while you say to the poor man, "Stand there," or, "Sit at my feet," have you not made distinctions among yourselves, and become judges with evil thoughts? Listen, my beloved brethren. Has not God chosen those who are poor in the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom, which he has promised to those who love him? But you have dishonored the poor man.....If you show partiality, you commit sin, and are convicted by the law as transgressors." (James 2: 1-9)

Such partiality in which the poor are despised St. Paul does not call the Lord's Supper, "When you meet together, it is not the Lord's supper that you eat. For in eating, each one goes ahead with his own meal, and one is hungry and another is drunk." (I Cor. 11:20, 21). We can imagine what used to happen in the Corinthian church. Wealthier members brought plenty to the feast. Also having more leisure time they could gather earlier than the slaves and freedmen who worked longer hours. So the meal would start in the main dining room for a privileged few without the rest of the church (verse 33). Latecomers arrived with their meager contribution only to discover that the early arrivals were gorged and drunk. The poor had to settle in the atrium (outer courtyard), with little or nothing to eat. Paul wanted the Corinthians to recognize that the meal was no longer the Lord's Supper since each individual regards the food he brought as his own. If all members did not share in 'the one bread', then it was not 'the table of the Lord'. (Cf. I Cor 10:17-21).⁷

St. Paul has more harsh words to describe what was happening. He calls this 'despising the church of God' and 'humiliation of those who have nothing' (verse 22). In this chapter, his teaching concerning the Eucharist has been started and concluded by the topic of food and that of despising the poor. This is the mortal sin of the Corinthians (verse 30) that has been committed during the Eucharist, and that made their participation unworthy. But did they really participate? St. Paul gives the negative answer (verse 21). Their offering has been refused. A contemporary biblical scholar who has written three volumes about the biblical teaching on the Eucharist explains further:

"In these circumstances it was not the Lord's Supper that was being eaten. Even if they were performing the right actions and saying the correct words over the bread and wine, they were not really concerned with what Christ meant by his actions at the Last Supper. They were concerned only with the satisfaction of their own appetites. Their selfishness was fatal to the proper spirit of devotion and brotherly love; their supper became no more than an ordinary meal (verse 21)."⁸

The Body of the Lord

The sin of the Corinthians which brought God's rapid and severe condemnation upon them was the fact that it was directed toward the Body of the Lord, "*guilty of*

⁷ Kevin Quast: *Reading the Corinthian Correspondence*. Paulist Press, 1994: 72- 74.

⁸ Ernest Lussier, S. S. S.: *The Eucharist the Bread of Life*, New York, 1977, p. 49.

profaning the body and blood of the Lord" (v.27), and "*without discerning the body*" (v.29). Biblical commentators have found three meanings in the phrase 'Body of the Lord' as it appears here:

1-*The Body of the Lord in the Eucharist.*⁴ It is evident that the verses 27-29 are very clear in demonstrating the doctrine of the real presence of Christ in the Sacrament.

2- The Body of the Lord that was crucified resurrected and now sits on the right hand of the Father, and with which He will come back (1 Corinthians 11:24-26).

3-The People of God, the Church (verses 18 and 22).

It is clear that the Apostle here does not separate between the three meanings, but he rather affirms them all together. The Lord has only one Body and not three. The words of our Lord in consecrating the bread and wine, and which are echoed in the *Confession Prayer* at the end of the Coptic Liturgy as well as in several *Fraction Prayers* in it⁹, leave no doubt about the truth of the Church's faith that the eucharistic Body of the Lord is his same crucified Body. On the other hand, the Scripture teaches that whatever happens to the Church affects our Lord personally (Matt. 25:39 & Acts 9:4). This illustrates the gravity of the sin committed by the Corinthians in despising the weak members of Christ in their trial to eat the Lord's Supper alone (verse 22). In the Lord's Supper the whole community meets together 'in one Body', otherwise there is no Eucharist.¹⁰ Communion in the Eucharist is the sacrament of the Church unity, in the full meaning of the word; unity in heart, spirit, mind and belongings. It cannot be reduced to a nominal communion in one bread while the Body is divided or some of its members are excluded, as was the case in Corinth. 'To exclude others from the celebration of the Eucharist is to despise the Church, disregard Christ's sacrifice for all, and incur God's judgment.'¹¹

Patristic Exegesis

So far this portion of the Corinthian letter has been studied with the aid of all modern means of exegesis as well as the help of contemporary theologians and biblical scholars. It seems that the conclusion reached does not conform to a different teaching and a different Eucharistic practice that have prevailed in many churches along the centuries. According to this teaching and this practice, which are totally different from the practice of the early Church, communion in the Eucharist is a right of a small segment of the Church, which is attained through a personal ascetic preparation. The only and the orthodox way to get out of this dilemma is to listen to the teaching of the early Church Fathers in their homilies and commentaries on

⁹ "Today on this table is present with us Emmanuel our Lord, the Lamb of God who carries the sins of the whole world" (*From the Fraction Prayer for the feasts of St. Mary, the Angels and the heavenly powers*).

¹⁰ Xavier Leon Dufour, S. J.: *Sharing the Eucharistic Bread*, 1987, page215.

¹¹ *Reading the Corinthian Correspondence*, op. cit., 76.

this part of I Corinthians, starting with St. John Chrysostom says in a homily delivered at Antioch in c. 392 AD:

“Ver. 27. *“Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread and drink the cup of the Lord **unworthily** shall be guilty of the Body and the Blood of the Lord.”*

Why so? Because he pours it out, and makes the thing appear a slaughter and no longer a sacrifice. Much therefore as they who then pierced Him, pierced Him not that they might drink but that they might shed His blood: so likewise does he that comes for it unworthily and reaps no profit thereby....For how can it be other than unworthily when it is he who neglects the hungry? Who besides overlooking him puts him to shame? Since if not giving to the poor casts one out of the kingdom, . . . consider how great the evil will prove, to have wrought so many impieties? “What impieties?” say you. Why do you say, what impieties? You have partaken of such a Table and when you ought to be gentler than any and like the angels, none so cruel as you have become. You have tasted the Blood of the Lord, and not even thereupon do you acknowledge your brother....Whereas if even before this you had not known him, you ought to have come to the knowledge of him from the Table; but now you dishonored the Table itself; he having been deemed worthy to partake of it and you not judging him worthy of your meat. Have you not heard how much he suffered who demanded the hundred pence? How he made void the gift given to him? (Matt.18: 21-34)....If this man be poor in possessions, you are much more beggarly in good works, being full of ten thousand sins? Notwithstanding, God delivered you from all those and counted you worthy of such a Table: but you have not even thus become more merciful: therefore of course nothing else remains but that you should be “delivered to the tormentors.”

“But let a man prove himself, and so let him eat of the bread, and drink of the cup”. (Verse 28) Wherefore he says, *“But let each man prove himself, and then let him approach.”* And he bids not one examine another, but each himself, making the tribunal not a public one and the conviction without a witness.

“For he that eats and drink unworthily, eats and drinks judgment to himself.”(Ver. 29) What do you say, tell me? Has this Table, which is the cause of so many blessings, and teeming with life, become judgment? Not from its own nature, he says, but from the will of him that approaches. For as his presence, which conveyed to us those great and unutterable blessings, condemned the more them that received it not (John 9:39): so also the Mysteries become provisions of greater punishment to such as partake unworthily. ...”¹²

Commenting on the same topic, St. Augustine says that those who participate in the Eucharist unworthily are similar to Judas who ‘after the morsel, Satan entered

¹² John Chrysostom: *Homilies on First Corinthians*, 27, 28. From the *NPNF* with language adaptation.

into him'. He adds that the state of the communicant does not change the nature of the Eucharist. It is still the Lord's Body and Blood, even in those who participate unworthily, and so they bring condemnation on themselves.

Another anonymous Church Father has left us the earliest Latin commentaries on all the epistles of St. Paul. He lived in Rome in the second half of the fourth century and his writings reached us under the name of St. Ambrose. He says in his comment on the same verses:

"Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of profaning the body and blood of the Lord (Verse 27)". He calls him unworthy of the Lord who celebrates the mystery differently from the way it was handed on by him. For he who receives it otherwise than it was given by its Author cannot be devout. For that reason he gives a warning that the one approaching the Eucharist of the Lord should be devout according to the order handed down, that there will be a judgement, so that each may explain how he approaches on the day of the Lord....; That those who approach without the discipline of tradition and behavior are guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But what is it to be guilty except to pay the penalty for the death of the Lord? For He was killed because of those who regard his kindness as nothing.

"Let a man examine himself, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For any one who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment upon himself. (Verses 28 & 29)". He teaches that one should approach communion with a devout soul and with fear, that the mind may know that it owes reverence to him whose body it approaches to receive".¹³

The ancient author shows here that the behavior of the Corinthians during the Eucharist was a sign of their disbelief in the reality of God's presence in the Sacrament (*'any one who eats and drinks without discerning the body'* in verse 29). From the beginning of Christianity a true Christian faith has been the first requirement for participation in the Eucharist.

Conclusion

The sin of the Corinthian Church is that of every Church that does not discern the Body of Christ. It is a sin that prohibits the performance of the Eucharist in such a Church, with grave consequences if performed. It is also the sin of every individual who loses his feeling toward other members in the Body (1 Cor 11:22) The reason for such a prohibition is that the first condition for participation in the

¹³ The quotations from Amrosiastar are taken from Sheerin DJ: *The Eucharist* (Message of the Fathers of the Church # 7), Liturgical Press, 1986: 193, 194.

Eucharist is the belief in Christ and in his work for our salvation. Eucharist is an integral part of the *economy* of salvation, for there is no salvation outside the Body of our Lord, “Therefore, brethren, since we have confidence to enter the sanctuary by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way which he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh”. (Heb. 10:19,20). This Body (flesh) is the Church, the Bride of Christ that is complete with all her members. A division in this Body, the despising of some members by others, is the mortal sin of the Church in Corinth (1 Cor 12:20-26). This becomes more serious when the neglect and the despising are directed towards the weak members, ‘the least of Christ’s brethren’, whom He considers the continuation of his Incarnation (Matt. 25:40). We would be receiving the Eucharist unworthily and for our condemnation if we ignore Christ in his little members (1 Cor 11:29). We may end losing our right in Christ’s free salvation, and have nothing to wait for but to hear the verdict of condemnation from his mouth on the Last Day (Matt 25: 41-46).

The message one can have from the Corinthian tragedy is that the multiplication of liturgies, the lengthy prayers, and the huge numbers of those ‘receiving communion’- all this is not a sign of a great church, nor of the presence of Christ in it. The only sign is the real union of her members, a union from the heart, not by words, a union centered on the One Bread. Then the Divine Sacrament will transform her from a society of dispersed members into the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church of God.

BOOK REVIEW

L'Incarnation de la Lumière: Le renouveau: iconographique copte à travers l'oeuvre d'Isaac Fanous.

By Ashraf and Bernadette Sadek. Le Monde Copte 29-31. Limoges: Association "Le Monde Copte," 2000 (11bis, rue Champollion, 87000 Limoges, France; e-mail: a_sadek@club-internet.fr). 448 pp. 350 FF/ 54 Euros (paperback), 400 FF/ 61 Euros (hardbound) + 25 FF/4 Euros s&h.

The last twenty-five years have witnessed an impressive rebirth in the Coptic Orthodox Church of Egypt, despite ongoing persecution by the government and murder and mayhem visited upon the Copts by Muslim fundamentalists. This renaissance has manifested itself most noticeably in two areas: the extraordinary revival of monasticism within Egypt and the planting of Coptic communities in a worldwide diaspora, mostly in English-speaking countries such as the United States, Canada, England, and Australia. But there is a third, less known, manifestation of this renewal: the rediscovery and revival of ancient Coptic iconography, a movement commonly, and appropriately, called "Neo-Coptic." The undisputed leader and spiritual godfather of this movement is Isaac Fanous, to whose work Ashraf and Bernadette Sadek have dedicated this beautiful and thorough volume, comprising three issues of *Le Monde Copte*, the journal they jointly edit and publish in France.

Like most Copts, the Sadeks see themselves and Fanous and their Church's traditions within the long and broad and grand sweep of Egyptian history and religiosity. Thus the first section of their book is not on Fanous but on "The Egyptian Quest for the Face of God," which comprises three chapters: "The Ancient Egyptians, their Beliefs and their Images," "Egyptian Christianity, its History and its Icons," and "The Egyptians and their Images: Some Persevering Constants." At the outset they appositely quote Fanous (15): "Someone one day asked me how many years I had been painting icons, fifty? No, seven thousand years!" In the first chapter, therefore, the Sadeks trace the Egyptian "search for God" from the earliest known pre-Pharaonic period to the Hellenistic and Roman eras: "In passing rapidly through the millenia, we have attempted to penetrate the development of the Egyptian soul and discern there the beginnings of what would become the icon" (15).

The icon, although it has Pharaonic and Greco-Roman antecedents, is a Christian invention; as the Sadeks pointedly affirm, "in effect the icon is justified

only by the Incarnation” (47). The great virtue of their second chapter is the localization, as it were, of the incarnation in Egypt, the link between history and iconographic subject matter, “the landmarks of the history of Egyptian Christianity, to which Coptic art is without a doubt intimately connected” (34). The Sadeks thus make sense of those particularly Coptic themes: the Holy Family, Saint Mark and the patriarchs of the Coptic Church, and the choirs of martyrs and monastic saints. The Coptic Church describes itself as “the Church of the Martyrs” and begins its calendar not with the birth of Christ but with the “Era of the Martyrs” who died for the faith under Emperor Diocletian. Apostles, martyrs, and monks dominate Coptic iconography and spirituality and the monastic way of life represents the apogee of Coptic spirituality: the Egyptian Church, the Sadeks emphasize, is “very strongly marked by monastic spirituality: its theology is centered on the quest for union with God apart from the world, by asceticism, and the life of prayer” (38)

Coptic iconography apparently flourished from the 5th to the 7th century but, for a number of reasons, essentially disappeared between the 7th and 18th centuries. It resurfaced in the late eighteenth century with Ibrahim el-Nasikh and his disciple Youhanna the Armenian (some of whose icons are reproduced in this volume). Coptic iconography again vanished in the early twentieth century when Roman Catholic, Anglican, and Protestant (“iconoclasts by definition”) missionaries introduced European Renaissance works that displaced indigenous icons. This displacement still dominates Coptic popular piety, as a visit to any monastery gift shop in Egypt will amply demonstrate. In Egypt one time I expressed to a colleague and friend, an art historian, my distaste for this “bad Italian art,” and she chided me for being elitist. Perhaps I am, but Renaissance Italian art in Egypt, much of it bad knock-offs, has no connection with Coptic or Egyptian roots.

Fanou and the Sadeks agree. In their view the westernization of Coptic religious art not only threatens Coptic identity but, more dangerously, “represents a risk for the faith itself.” Bad western images, the Sadeks believe, are not icons but are, rather, “false images.” In Orthodox theology, the Sadeks insist, the icon becomes “the third mode of the divine presence, complimenting” the revealed word and the Eucharist. The icon, because of its prominent liturgical function, truly becomes “a vector of divine realities” (all 71). One has only to visit a monastery or church in Egypt to see how icons become a mode of the divine presence: pilgrims wait in line to touch icons and wall paintings. In the Church of al-Adra at the Syrian monastery in the Wadi al-Natrun northwest of Cairo I witnessed the interface of modern technology and ancient religious traditions: a 13th-century wall painting of the Ascension of Christ had been removed by conservationists in order to expose an earlier wall painting of the Annunciation dating from the 8th to the late 12th century. The removed painting had then been placed behind plexiglass in the southeastern corner of the nave; there pilgrims approached, touched the glass, and dropped slips of paper, intercessions, behind it and in front of the “icon.”

With the Egyptian past as prologue (Part One), the Sadeks, in Part Two, “The Neo-Copt Revolution and its Outward Radiance,” turn with four chapters to the proximate source of that light (God is the ultimate light-giver), Isaac Fanous: “Isaac Fanous” (Chapter IV), “Listening to the Master” (Chapter V), “The School of Fanous” (Chapter VI), and “The Realization of an Icon according to the School of Fanous” (Chapter VII). According to the Sadeks, Fanous; “return to the sources” has permitted him “to inscribe his icons and his school in a profoundly Egyptian current” (53); his goal has been to “cause a revival of the Egyptian legacy by creating a Coptic iconographic current” (74). Born in Egypt in 1919, Fanous trained in art and architecture in his native country before studying iconography in France with the Russian Orthodox emigrés Leonid Ouspensky and Paul Evdokimov. He began work as an iconographer only in 1968, when he was almost fifty. According to the Sadeks, his work was at first greeted with “relative incomprehension” by Egyptians because they had been estranged from their tradition (76). In a chronological appendix supplied by the authors, I was struck by the fact that although Fanous had received a number of awards abroad, he was officially honored by the Coptic pope only in 1997, when he was almost eighty (427).

The Sadeks divide Fanous’ work into three periods: 1941-65, 1968-98, and 1999-present. Fanous’ early paintings show (to this non-art historian) the influence of Picasso, Chagall, and Matisse. On pp. 98 to 109 the authors reproduce examples of the iconographer’s work from each period so “the reader may thus form his own opinion” about the direction of the master’s painting (98). Especially interesting are the pages with four plates where one may follow the development of a theme—Madonna and Child and the Entry of the Holy Family into Egypt—from the 1950s to the 1990s. To this untrained eye, Fanous’ icons have not only broadened their use of color over the years but have also developed in compassion and tenderness. They explore the loving and mysterious interstices between the divine and the human. In helping to map this exploration, *L’Incarnation de la Lumière* acts partly as a compendium and includes interviews and conversations with Fanous that help the reader draw closer to both icon and iconographer. “Christ became incarnate,” Fanous explains, “in order to speak with human beings, through his life, his action, his words. Our role as iconographers is to speak to human beings through the language of art in order to transmit the faith: a theology that does not express itself in a form has no function and, conversely, a form that does not have a theology does not fulfill its function. Therefore the aspiring iconographer must first of all be a theologian; otherwise he will not be an iconographer but only a technician of the icon” (131). Once the theological groundwork is laid, Part Two then concludes with “The Realization of an Icon according to the School of Fanous” (Chapter VII), a fascinating step-by-step depiction of the creation of an icon.

Parts One and Two serve as introduction to the heart and glory of the volume, Part Three, “From Genesis to the Apocalypse: a Path of Light,” which makes up half of the book. As the Sadeks explain, “This third part of the work presents

eighty-one icons realized by Isaac Fanous; they are presented in full-page color on the right hand pages and each is accompanied opposite, on a left-hand page, by explanatory texts” (187). The subjects of the icons move from depictions of biblical events to the apostles to Orthodox saints (patriarchs, monks, martyrs, and theologians). In these pages one may come to appreciate, even in reproduction, the beauty and depth and holiness of modern Coptic iconography. The texts on the left undergird the images with biblical and traditional material, from which the reader may appreciate both the biblical spirituality of the Copts and the Coptic Church’s long history of persecution and suffering. Perhaps the most striking, and initially surprising, aspect of Fanous’ work is that so much of it is in the United States, especially in Coptic churches in the Los Angeles area.

L’Incarnation de la Lumière very helpfully concludes with an “Envoi” of bibliographies and six appendixes, including chronological tables, a glossary, and a map of Egypt. I understand that the Sadeks hope to publish an English translation of this volume. But even a reader without French can enjoy and profit from this book. *L’Incarnation* is not a work of criticism but is, rather, an *hommage*, a deeply felt one; the Sadeks are clearly partisans of Fanous and his work. Undoubtedly there will be time and opportunity for disinterested criticism of Fanous’ work but for now, at least, appreciation seems sufficient. At 400 French francs (\$60) for the hardbound edition, this book, with its hundreds of well-produced color illustrations, is a bargain, and I enthusiastically recommend it to anyone interested not just in iconography but in the *raison d’être* of iconography, the Incarnation.

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