Apophthegmata Patrum: Sayings of the Desert Fathers, from the Sahidic Coptic

Desert Fathers (anonymous) (4th–6th century)

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Saying 001: Anonymous Nau 135

…he saying, “I desire to save my soul.” She labored to stop him, but she was not able to. Afterwards, she left him. When he had gone and become a monk, he became negligent, and he spent his life badly. And it happened, when his mother had died, after some time, he became very ill so that he became ecstatic, being carried off to the Judgment. And there he found his mother and those who judge. When she saw him, she was amazed. And she said to him, “What is this, my son, that you come yourself to this place in order to be judged? And where are your words that you spoke, ‘I desire to save my soul’?” And he was ashamed because of the things that he heard. He stood sadly, not having any apology to offer her. According to the economy of God, the lover of man…it happened that he recovered from the illness, after He saw…in his… From this inquiry happening…through God, he confined himself. Afterwards, he sat down, reflecting upon his health and crying over the neglectful things he had done earlier. His being was pricked such that a multitude exhorted him to rest himself a little lest he should be overcome by so much crying. But he did not wish to console himself, saying, “If I have not been able to bear the reproach of my mother, how will I be able to bear the shame on the Day of Judgment in the presence of Christ and all his angels?”

Saying 002: Anonymous Nau 136

An old man said, ‘If the souls of men were to go come in fear after the resurrection, in the presence of God, the world would die of fear and trembling. For, what would it be like to see the heavens opening, and God revealing himself in anger and threat ... an army of angels, being without number ... to cause all of mankind to see these together. Because of this, it is right for us to think in this way, if we shall give an account to God daily, that we shall be cut off because of what we have done in our daily lives.’

Saying 003: Anonymous Nau 138

A brother asked an old man, “My father, why is my heart hard and without fear of God?” The old man said to him, “I think that if a man holds blame in his heart, he will acquire for himself fear of God.” The brother said to him, “What is blame?” The old man said, “Let a man upbraid his soul in everything, saying to it, Remember that it is necessary for us to encounter God.’” And he said again, “What do I have to do with this man?” “If one perseveres in these things, the fear of God comes to him.”

Saying 004: Poemen

Abba Poemen said, a brother said to Abba Païse, 'what should I do about my hard heart? I do not fear God.' He said to him, 'go and cleave to a brother who fears God. And through the fear (of God) of that brother you will learn fear of God yourself.'

Saying 005

Someone asked an old man: why is it that when I sit in my dwelling my heart wanders about? The old man answered him: that's because those of your senses are sick which are exterior, your sight, your hearing, your scent, your speech. If now you develop their ability in purity the other senses which are interior will remain in serenity and well-being.

Saying 006: anonymous Nau 196

Someone also asked an old man: Why do I sit in my cell and become distressed? He answered him: Because you have not yet looked at the repose that we hope for, nor the punishment that will come. If you had looked at these carefully, then while your cell is full of worms about you until they reach up to your neck you would stay among them, and you would put up with them and not be distressed.

Saying 008

for wild donkeys, so it is also for the chosen monk by thoughts of lust.

Saying 009: Hyperechius 2

Again, he said, Fasting is the bridle of the monk resisting in. The one who casts this away from himself is like a lustful horse.”

Saying 010

Again, he said, “The desiccated body of the monk draws up his soul from the depth of the abyss and causes pleasure to dry up through the fast.”

Saying 011

Again, he said, “The prudent monk shall be crowned on earth and also shall be crowned in heaven in the presence of God.”

Saying 012: Hyperechius 3

Again he said, 'The monk who does not restrain his tongue, especially at the time of anger, he does not master any passion ever.'

Saying 013

He said again, “Do not produce any evil word from your mouth, for the vine does not produce thorns.”

Saying 014

Again he said, 'It is good to eat flesh and drink wine, but do not eat the flesh of your brothers through slander.'

Saying 015

Again he said, “As the serpent whispered to Eve until she was cast from Paradise, the one who slanders his brother is like this. For he destroys the soul of the one who listens and his own also he does not save.”

Saying 016

There was a festival one time in Scetis and they gave a cup of wine to an old man. He said, “Take from me this death!” When the others who ate with him saw, they did not accept (any).

Saying 018: Anonymous

A brother was moved to rage against someone. He stood up for prayer and he asked to receive patience with his brother and to pass the test without a blemish. And at that moment he saw smoke coming out of his mouth. After that happened, he stopped being angry.

Saying 019: Presbyter

He went once, that is the presbyter of Scetis, to the archbishop of Alexandria and after he returned to Scetis, they asked him, that is the brothers, about news from the city. But he told them: 'Naturally, my brothers, I have not seen the face of any man, except the archbishop alone.' After hearing him they became strengthened thanks to his story, that they should guard themselves against raising their eyes.

Saying 020: Failings

A monk said, 'The devil dwells in failings of the monk, if a habit endures within him. For a long time, it is strong and it persists like something natural, especially those who are very careless. Do not give it any nourishing food that you will seek after, especially when you are free from illness. And do not eat what you want, but eat the things that God sends to you, and give thanks to him at all times. We sent bread to the monks with every relief. But we did not do the work of the monks. Tell yourself, 'Brother, preserve the seal of Christ, which is humility."

Saying 021: Lentils

One monk went to another monk, and he said to his disciple, 'Make a little bit of lentils for us.' And he made them. He said, 'Wet some bread for us.' And he wet it. But they continued to talk about spiritual things all day and all night.

Saying 022: fragment

… But you, you are of the world, and you have no power to be in this place.

Saying 023: Isaac

He said, that is Abba Isaac: “Our fathers and Abba Pambo would wear tunics of rags in pieces and tunics of palm fiber, but you now you wear adorned tunics. Go from this place, you have ruined it.”

Saying 024: Isaac

Then as they were about to go to the harvest he said to them: “I’m not going to repeat and give you an order again, after all, you don’t observe them.”

Saying 025: Pambo

He also said that Abba Pambo said: “This is the way that it is fitting for the monk to wear his clothes: such that if he throws his tunic out of his cell for three days no one will pick it up to wear it – then he may wear it.”

Saying 026: Cassian 7 (68)

Apa Cassian said, 'A nobleman (senator?) said, after he renounced all his possessions, he gave them to the poor. He set a little for himself because of his own needs. He did not wish to live in complete renunciation, of humility of heart. This one also spoke a word to him, that is, Basimos, the one who is among the saints, who said, 'The elite (senatorial?) rank, you lost it; and monasticism, you did not find it.

Saying 027: Pistamon 1

One of the brothers asked Apa Pistamon, 'What should I do? For it worries me when I sell my handiwork.' The old man answered him, 'Even Apa Sisoes and the others used to sell their handiwork. This is not damaging. But if you sell, say the price of the item only once. If you want to lower the price a little, that is up to you. In this way you will find peace. The brother said to him, 'If I have what I need, do you still want me to be concerned with my handiwork?' The old man answered, 'Even if you have everything, do not give up on your handiwork; Whatever you are able to do, do it—just don't worry about it.'

Saying 028

A brother asked Apa Sarapion, 'Give me a word.' The old man said, 'What will I say to you?' For you have taken the things of the poor and the widows and the orphans, and you have placed them in your window.' For he saw that the window was full of books.

Saying 029

The blessed Syncletica was asked, 'Is poverty a perfect good?' She answered, 'It is an exceedingly perfect good for those who are incapable of it. For those who bear this have suffering in the flesh, but they have grace in their soul. Just as clothing is strengthened by being beaten, and they wash it and twist it violently until it turns white, in this way the soul is strengthened through poverty, and by necessity they prevail all the more.'

Saying 030

Apa Hyperechios said, 'The monk's treasure is not having any material things. Store and gather for yourself in heaven, for there is unceasing rest for you forever.'

Saying 031

One of the saints, called Philagrios, lived in Jerusalem, working hard until he earned his own bread. While he stood in the marketplace selling his handiwork, Behold! Suddenly he found a bag filled with a thousand gold coins! He stood in place, saying, 'Certainly the one who has lost it is coming.' And behold! That one came, crying. The old man grabbed him and took him aside and he gave it to him. and that one held him, wanting to give him a portion, but the old man did not want to take it. Then he started to shout out, 'Come and see a man of God, what he has done!' But the old man secretly fled and left the city, so that they would not know him.

Saying 032

Apa Benjamin and his disciples said, 'Walk on the road of the king, and count the miles and do not be discouraged.'

Saying 033

Apa Bessarion said, 'I spent forty nights in the middle of a thornbush, standing without lying down.'

Saying 034: Theodorus

A brother living in Cellia alone was troubled, and he went to Abba Theodore of Phermes (and) he told it to him. And the old man said to him: “Go and humble your heart and stay with others while obeying them.” And he went and he stayed with some in the mountain (and) he returned again (and) came to the old man. He said: “I didn’t find repose while living with the people” And the old man said to him: “If you didn’t repose alone, nor again while being with others, you won’t find repose. Why did you go out to become a monk? Not in order to stand under afflictions? Tell me how many years is it since you took this habit upon you?” He said: “It’s been eight years.” The old man said to him: “Truly it’s been seventy years since I became a monk, I haven’t found repose for a single day and you, you want to find repose in this eight years?”

Saying 035

One day, one of the brothers asked, Father, if fear suddenly occurs, do you feel afraid?' The father said to him, 'If heaven joins with the earth, Theodore will not be afraid.' For he had entreated the Lord to take fear away from him.

Saying 036

They said about Apa Theodoros and Apa Lucius of Enaton that they spent fifty years tricking their thoughts,saying, 'When winter has passed, we will flee this place.' And when summer came, they would say, 'When summer ends, we will flee this place.' And this is how they spent their entire lives, these fathers who are remembered forever.

Saying 037

Abba Poemen said concerning Abba John the Little that he prayed to God. He (God) took away the struggles from him (John) and he became carefree. Then he went and said to one of the old men, 'I see myself relieved from struggle in me.' The old man said to him, 'Go. Beseech God that the struggles come to you. For, through struggles the soul shall progress.' And when the struggle arose in him, he did not turn to pray to take it away, but was saying, 'Lord, give me endurance in the struggle.'

Saying 038

Abba Macarius the Great went to Abba Antony. And when he had knocked at the door, he [Antony] came to him saying, “Who are you?” And he answered, saying, “I am Macarius.” And he [Antony] shut the door, went in, and he left him. When he [Antony] saw his [Macarius’s] endurance, he opened [the door] to him. And he rejoiced with him, saying, “Behold, a long time I have desired to see you, for I have heard about you.” And he received him kindly and made him rest because of his great labors. When evening came, Abba Antony soaked some small palm branches. Abba Macarius said to him, “Allow me to soak some for myself.” He [Antony] said, “Soak.” And he [Macarius] created a large bundle of palms and he soaked it. And they sat and talked about what is profitable to the soul. From the evening hour onward, they wove, and the plaits went down from the cave through the window. In the morning, the blessed Abba Antony went in and saw the great quantity of Abba Macarius’s palms. He was amazed and he kissed Macarius’s hands, saying, “Great power comes from these hands.”

Saying 039

The old man Abba Macarius went one time from Scetis to Terenuthis. And he entered a small place and he slept. But some ... were there….

Saying 040: Syncletica 8 (10)

…shameful pleasures. These are the ones against which a law has been established for us. But if illness makes these things powerless before us, the word is superfluous. And why do I say that the word is superfluous? For just as a strong medicine is very powerful in the body of illness, the labor of one who destroys sin exists. And this is the great ascesis of supporting yourself during illnesses and of giving thanks with hymns addressed to God, so that we might lift up our eyes to him with thanksgiving. Let us not be like those who arise with difficulty, for we have cast off from ourselves the organs of insatiability and we see the glory of God as in a mirror through the eye of the heart within, even if the external eye of our body has been taken away from us. If we become deaf, let us give thanks that we have lost the faculty of hearing … worthless. We were wounded … We have the ones within which are ready against the attack of the enemy. Even if illness possesses our whole body, yet health according to the inner man increases even more.

Saying 041: Syncletica 9 (11)

She also said, 'In the world, those who are afraid aren't thrown into prison. They keep themselves from sinning. For our part, because of our sins, let us consider ourselves alone, so that, by what is pleasing to our judgment we may cast away from ourselves our future punishments. When you fast, don't find an excuse in illnesses. For even the others who don't fast fall into the same difficulties. You have begun to do good; don't go back. For the enemy will put a stumbling block before you. But as for him… he is brought to nothing by means of…endurance. …The ones who began to sail… … They meet with a favorable wind and they spread out their sail. Later, the opposing wind meets them, but the sailors don't empty out the cargo because of the multitude of winds that come against them. Rather, they rest a little and they continue struggling with the waves which come against them as they sail. This is our method also. If a strong wind comes against us, let us spread out the cross in place of the sail, and let us finish the voyage without fear.'

Saying 042: Sarah

They said about the blessed Sarah the virgin that she spent sixty years living at the top of the river and she never set foot outside to see the river.

Saying 043: Hyperechius

Abba Hyperchius said, 'Spiritual hymns, with continual meditation shall lessen the struggles that have come upon us.'

Saying 044: Hyperechius

Again, he said, 'We must arm ourselves against temptations. For, they come, and if in their coming they find us being watchful, we are glorified.'

Saying 045

An old man said, 'If a temptation arises against someone, the trials multiply for him on all sides so that he becomes cowardly and murmurs.' And the old man spoke in this way: There was a brother at Kellia in whom a temptation arose. And if anyone saw him, he did not speak to him or receive him in his cell. And if he needed bread, no one would give him any. And if he came to the harvest, he was not invited nor to the other meeting as was the custom to invite for the agape meal. But, one time, he came in from the heat and he didn't have bread in his cell. And in all things he gave thanks to God. And when God saw his patience, he took it away (i.e. the temptation).

Saying 046

of this sort. I will go and I will remain near the water. When he said this, he turned his face and saw someone following him, counting the footprints of his feet. He asked him, 'Who are you?' He said, 'I am the angel of the Lord.' I was sent to count your footsteps and give you your reward.' When the old man heard these things, he was content and was rejoicing greatly. He added another five miles into the desert.

Saying 47

The old men said, 'If temptation arises over you in the place where you are, do not leave your place at the time of the temptation. Since also the place where you will go, you will find there the thing on account of which you are fleeing. But remain until the temptation passes over, so that your departure is not an obstacle, and (occurs) in a time of peace, so that your removal is not an affliction for those [...] in [that place]

Saying 052

...'I will struggle with my thought to not touch her.' Abba Abraham said to him, 'Behold, you have not killed the passion, it is still alive but it is bound. Again, if you are walking on the road, and you see some stones and some pottery pieces and gold in their midst, is there power in your heart to reckon this one like those?' He said, 'No. But I will struggle with my thought in order to not take it. The old man said to him, 'Behold again, the passion is living but it is bound.' Again, Abba Abraham said, 'Behold, you heard concerning two brothers that one loves you and glorifies you, while the other one hates you and slanders you. If they come to you, will you receive them with this thought as the same?' He said, 'No. But I will wrestle with my heart to do that which is good with the one who hates me like with the one who loves me.' Abba Abraham said to him, 'Thus, therefore, the passions are alive, but they are bound by the holy ones.'

Saying 053: Ammona

He said, that is one of our fathers: “There was an old man, a bearer of toil, at Cellia who was carrying a reed mat, and he went up to Abba Ammona. He saw him, that is the old man, carrying the reed mat. He said to him: “This won’t benefit you in anything.” And he asked him: “There are three thoughts that disturb me. Either that I should wander in the desert, or that I should go to a strange place where no one will know me or that I should be shut in a cell, not meet anyone and eat in the one of (every) two (days).” He said to him, that is Abba Ammona: “None of these three will benefit you. But you sit in your cell and eat a little daily and leave yourself the word of the tax-collector in your heart at all times and you will be able to be saved.” ”

Saying 054: Daniel 4

Abba Daniel said, 'However much the body grows, the soul weakens. And however much the body weakens, the soul grows.'

Saying 055: Daniel 1

They said in Scetis concerning Abba Daniel, that when the barbarians came the brothers fled and the old man said, 'If God does not care about me, why live?' But he came through the barbarians and they did not see him. The old man said, 'Behold, God has cared for me and I did not die. You, too, do what is human and run like the other fathers.'

Saying 056: Daniel 6

Abba Daniel said, 'When Abba Arsenius was in Scetis, there was a monk there, who was stealing the belongings of the old men. But Abba Arsenius, wishing to benefit his soul, took him into his cell, and said to him, 'Everything that you desire, I will give to you, only do not steal.' And he gave him everything that he needed. Still, he went and he stole. When the old men saw that he did not cease stealing, they ran after him, saying, 'If a brother is found having a lack in himself from weakness, then it is right to bear this one until he becomes strong. But if he steals and is taught but it does not suffice, then it is right to cast him out because his shall destroy his soul, and he shall disturb everyone in this place.'

Saying 057: Euprepius 7

In the beginning, Abba Evagrius/Euprepius went to an old man and said to him, 'Speak to me, how shall I be saved?' He said to him, 'If you wish to be saved, do not be disdainful. And if you should visit someone, at first do not speak, until he questions you.' And he [Evagrius/Euprepius] was pricked by this word, and he bowed before him [the old man], saying, 'Forgive me! Truly, I have read a multitude of books, but I have never learned wisdom.' And he benefited and he went away.

Saying 059

Abba Longinus sought the light of Abba Lucius concerning three thoughts, saying, 'I desire to become a stranger.' Abba Lucius said to him, 'Every place to which you go, if you do not control your tongue, you will not be a stranger.' He [Longinus] said to him [Lucius] again, 'I desire to fast two days at a time.' Abba Lucius said to him, 'Isaiah the prophet said, 'Even if you bend your neck like a ring, it shall not be called an accepted fast. But rather master evil thoughts.' And again he spoke a third time, 'I desire to run away from humanity.' He said to him, 'If… humanity. If you are alone, you will not be able to live upright well.'

Saying 064

...to the sky. But now, when we gather together with one another, we descend into malicious gossip. And each one continues to drive his neighbor into the abyss.

Saying 065

An elder said: If the inner human is sober, then it is possible for that person to guard the outer human. If this is not the case, let us guard our language from everything evil with all our strength.

Saying 066

He said again: There is purpose for the spiritual work. That is what we came to this place to do. Because the one who teaches with the mouth but does not do the spiritual work is a danger to themself.

Saying 067

Another one of our fathers said: A person must determine for themself a labor within them. If, say, they apply themself to the labor of God, then the enemy will visit them from time to time but will not find a dwelling place within them. f, on the contrary, the captivity of the enemy rules them, then the spirit of God will still visit them on occasion. But if the person does not make room for the spirit, then the spirit will withdraw because of the evil.

Saying 068

A brother asked an Elder: 'Give me a word: In what manner will I be saved?' And he responded, 'Let us work diligently little by little (and) we will be saved.'

Saying 069

Some monks from Egypt came to Scetis. They saw the Elders in their extreme hunger because of the(ir) ascetic practice. They ate laboriously and the Egyptians were offended. When the presbyter ascertained this (offense), he wished to stop them. He preached to the people of the assembly, saying, 'Fast and extend your ascetic and your religious practices, brothers.' The Egyptians came there (to Scetis). The Egyptians desired to leave them. But they were detained. When they fasted, they were hungry on the first day. And they made them fast for two days. The ones who were from Scetis extended their fast all week. When it was the Sabbath, the Egyptians sat to eat with the Elders. The Egyptians ate hastily. One of the Elders grabbed his hand, saying 'Eat mindfully like monks!' But one of the Egyptians pushed his hand away, saying, 'Leave me, Apa! Because I died! For a week I did not eat hot food!' He said to them, 'If you are so exhausted in this complete way because you fasted for two days, why were you offended by the brothers who complete their ascetic practice in this way always?' And they apologized and learned from their practice and they left joyfully.

Saying 070

A brother took the monastic habit and withdrew immediately, saying, 'I am an anchorite.' Then the Elders heard, left, and gave hands to him. They forced him to return to the cells of his brothers, repenting and saying, 'Forgive me! I am not an anchorite. Rather, I am a sinful and young human.'

Saying 071

The Elders said: 'If you see a child rising up to heaven through their own desire, then grab their leg and pull them down. Because it is not good for them.'

Saying 072

A brother said to a noteable Elder: 'Apa, I desire to find an Elder in accordance with my heart and I will die with him.' The Elder said to him, 'Rightly you ask!' He was confident that it was this way. But really, he did not understand the teaching of the Elder. When the Elder saw in him that this was the manner of his inner thought, as if he understood this matter correctly, he (the elder) said to him: 'If you find an Elder according to your wish, will you desire to stay with him?' And he replied, 'Yes! Absolutely!' The Elder responded, 'You yourself are not following the desire of the Elder. Rather...'

Saying 073

We are speaking while they are discussing about something useful, [...] strange words among ourselves. Because of this he does not permit him to stay near him. If he comes near to question him, he sends him away.

Saying 074

Apa Ammoes said to Apa Schoi at the beginning: 'How do you see me?' He said to him: 'I see you, my father, like an angel.' Later, he again said to him: 'How do you see me?' He said to him: 'Like Satan, and the good word that you speak to me cuts me like a sword.'

Saying 083

[….] brothers once tempted Abba John Kolobos, since he did not allow his spirit to speak about the things of this world. And they said to him that we give thanks to God. The sky has given its rains many times this season. And the palm trees have drunk and they will produce white branches. And the brothers will find the things of their handiwork. Abba Johannes said to them that this is the way of the Holy Spirit. It becomes new and produces white branches through the fear of God.

Saying 085

Aba John Kolobos said: 'I am like a man sitting at the foot of a tree who sees many beasts and reptiles coming towards him.' Since he is not able to stand against them, he hastens to ascend the tree to save himself. This is my way when, sitting in my cell, I see evil thoughts encircling me. And since I am powerless against them, I hasten to run to God through prayer and I am safe from the enemy.

Saying 090: Olympius

...one of the elders… of(?) he saw his way of life and he said to him: “Is it nothing that you see from your God?” He said: “No”. He said, that is the priest: “Us, it is small liturgies that we do and the mysteries are revealed to us and you, you do these toils of this sort, these nights of vigilance and these asceticisms and this silence, and you say: ‘we don’t have any thought that’s wicked in our heart’, and still (there is?) that which separates you from your God, as he doesn’t reveal his mysteries to you.” And after they heard, that is the elders, they were amazed and they said: “The thoughts that are wicked truly have always separated us from God.”

Saying 091: Anonymous Nau 277

It was said that on the Mountain of Antony seven brothers dwelt. And during the season of the dates, each one scared away the birds. There was an old man there who, when he was guarding on his day, would cry out, 'Go away bad thoughts inside and also birds outside!'

Saying 092: Anonymous Nau 278

A brother at Kellia soaked his palm fronds, and just at the time he was sitting to weave, his thoughts said to him, 'Go to this particular old man.' And he thought to himself, 'After a few days, I will go.' And they [his thoughts] were saying, 'If he should die, what will you do? And at the same time [you are talking], he can talk about the summer. Then he said to himself, 'But it is not time.' And he thought to himself, 'Since you are cutting the reeds, the season is about to happen.' But he answered, 'Let me complete the reeds just so, then I will go.' Again he said to himself, 'But the air today is good.' And immediately, he stood and he set down the soaked palm fronds. He took his sheepskin and he left. There was an old man near him who saw rightly. And when he saw him running, he cried out to him, saying, 'Prisoner, come here!' And when he had come, the old man said to him, 'Return to your cell quickly!' And in this way the brother told him about the battle with all these thoughts that came into his heart. When he went into his cell, he prostrated himself and repented. The demon, crying out in a great voice, said, 'You have defeated us, o monks!'

And the mat that he was on became like it was on fire. And they became smoke and left. ... ...learn their power and their wickedness.

Saying 093: Anonymous Nau 279

It was said concerning an old man that he died at Scetis. And the brothers surrounded his bed and set him in order. And they laid him to rest and they cried for him greatly. And immediately, he opened his eyes and laughed. Then, he laughed again. Afterward, he repeated himself and laughed a third time. And immediately, the brothers exhorted him, saying, 'Tell us, Abba, why while we are crying greatly, you are laughing?' He answered and said to them, 'I am laughing because you all are afraid of death. And I laughed a second time...'

Saying 094: Anonymous Nau 286

And the brother, he gives to him while he became increasingly poor. And the brother went and told one of the elders. And the elder said to him, If you want to obey me, don't keep giving to him. But say to him, My brother, at the time when I had (anything), I gave (it) to you. Now for your part, whatever you earn in your work, bring it to me. And whatever he brings, take it from him and in the place in which you know there is a stranger or a poor elder, give it to him and ask them to pray for him. So the brother went and did these things. When his worldly brother came, he spoke to him in the manner that the elder had said … he went away sad. And behold, on the first day he took from the garden some vegetables to eat and gave them to him. But his brother took them and gave them to the elders and asked them to pray for him, and he received a blessing and returned to his house. After this, again he brought some vegetables to cook and three loaves of bread. Again, [the brother] took them … just as … [he] received a blessing … And he came … [another] time and he brought … and wine and … When the brother saw, he was amazed and he summoned the poor brothers and set them at ease.

He said to his brother, 'Do you need a little bread?' He said, 'No, my brother. For at the time when I had need and I received anything from you, I became as if I had received a fire into my house, and it destroyed it. But when, on the other hand, I did not receive anything from you, I abounded in everything and God blessed me. And the brother went and told the elder everything that had happened. And the elder said, Don't you know that the work of a monk is a fire? Everywhere it goes, it burns. This was a benefit to him, [to make] him give charity from his labors himself, and he received the prayers of the holy ones. This is the way that he will be blessed.

Saying 095: Anonymous Nau 282

An elder said, “There was a certain person who did many good things, and the evil one … so that he might… the reward for the great good things that he did. For when I lived a while in Pemje (Oxyrhynchus) near an elder who performed charity, a widow came to him asking him for a little grain. He said to her, “Go and bring a measure and I will measure it for you.” So she brought it and he assessed (it) saying to her, “The measure is large,” pushing it out of her hand. He made the widow ashamed. But after the widow left, I said to him, “My father and elder, Did you give grain to the widow?” But he said, “No.” I said to him, “If you were giving it to her in charity, why did you assess the measure and make the widow ashamed?”

Saying 096: Anonymous Nau 281

An elder lived in a monastery with a brother. The elder gave bread to everyone who came. When the brother saw what was happening, he said to the elder, “Give me my portion of the bread, and however you want to act with your portion, do it.” The elder divided the bread between himself and the brother, and he continued doing charity with his portion. And many were running to the elder because they heard that he gave to everyone. And God saw his zeal of heart and blessed his bread. But the brother ate his bread. And he said to the elder, “Since I have a little more bread, take [it] for yourself also, and let us share in common.” The elder said to him, “However you wish, I will do it.” And again they combined their life with each other. When the time occurred, those who had need of receiving charity came. It happened one day [that] the brother came in and he saw that the bread had diminished. A poor brother came. The elder said, “Give him some bread.” But he said, “There isn’t any, Father.” The elder said to him, “Go in and look.” The brother went in and he found a bread storeroom filled with it. When he saw this, he was afraid. And he gave [it] to the poor brother. And he perceived the faith and virtue of the elder.

And he glorified God.

Saying 097: Poemen 109

…very much in a hurry and I am eager to see the king. Take me there. He said to him, "I will come with you for half the way." And he said to another friend, "Take me to the king." He said to him, "I will come with you to the palace." He said to another friend, "Take me to the king." He said to him, "I will take you to the king boldly, and I will speak concerning you." They said to him, "Explain this parable to us." And he said, "The first is ascesis, which takes the road up to half of the way. The second is sobriety, that which reaches up to heaven. The third is charity, that which takes them up to God boldly."

Saying 099: Anonymous N 293

An old anchorite had a servant living in a village. And it happened one time that he delayed going to the elder according to his custom. And the elder lacked all the necessities and the handiwork which he had in his cell. And it bothered him that he did not have anything to do, and he did not have food. And he said to his disciple, “Do you want to go and summon the one who serves us?” And he said, “I will do what you command.” And yet the elder did not dare to send the disciple. When they had continued to be constrained, the servant did not come to them. The elder said to the brother, “Do you want to go to the village?” The brother said, “I will do what you command.” The brother was afraid to go to the village because of scandal And yet in order not to disobey his father, he determined to go. He said to him, “Go, and I believe in God completely,” that … in every temptation. And he prayed and sent him. When he went into the village, he went to the place where the servant lived. He found him and all his household away from the village because of a memorial except for only a young girl belonging to him. When he knocked on the door, she replied and opened it.

He asked for her father. But she entreated him and she drew him in. but he did not endure it. But when she had compelled him by force, she touched him and drew him in. As for him, when he realized that it was for defilement that she was drawing him in, he groaned and cried out “Lord, save me in this hour because of the prayers of my father.” And when he had said this, instantly he found himself beside the river going to the monastery. And he was taken safely to his father.

Saying 100: Anonymous N 294

Two brothers according to the flesh went to a monastery. One of them was an ascetic. The other was very obedient. If the father told him to do something, he did it. … because of his obedience. But his ascetic brother was goaded by it. He said to himself, "I will test him and I will see if he is obedient." He made his way to his father and he said, "Send my brother and me and we will go to that place." And the father gave them permission. Wishing to test him, the ascetic took him and he went down beside the river. In that place, there were many crocodiles. And he said to him, "Go down to the river and pass through." So he went and the crocodiles came and they crushed his body. And they did not hurt him at all. When the ascetic saw, he said, "Come out of the river." And as they were walking, they found a body lying in the road. And the ascetic said, "If you have an [old thing] let us throw it over him." The one who had obedience said, "Let us pray for him instead. Perhaps he will arise." …

Saying 101: Macarius 1

…going around with me in every street of the village, they were striking me, saying, “This monk took the virginity of our daughter. Strike him!” And they struck me. And I was almost going to die. And someone, having compassion, said, “Until when are you striking this monk, a stranger?” The one who served me was following after me, ashamed. For they were abusing him saying, “Is this the anchorite to whom you bear witness? Look at what he did.” Then her parents said, “We will not release him until he gives a guarantee for himself [that he will] support her.” So I spoke to the one who served me and he guaranteed me. I went to my cell. … “… necessity, and you must do a little more work so that you can support her.” And I worked night and day, sending to her. But when the wretched woman came to give birth, she continued laboring. And she did not give birth. They said to her, “What is this?” And she said, “I know, because I slandered the anchorite, and I lied about him. And he did not do anything to me. But it was some other youth.” My servant came to me, saying, “The woman was not able to give birth, until she confessed, “The anchorite had nothing to do with me but I lied about him.”

And look, the whole village wants to come here in order to repent.” When I heard these things, so that the people would not bother me, … I came to this place, to Scetis. This is the reason why I came here.

Saying 107: Paul the Great 2

A brother asked him, 'To what should I pay attention to when I am sitting in my cell?' He said to him, 'I am hitherto a man in a deep pit dug up to my neck. Being full of burden I cry out, 'God have mercy on me.'

Saying 108: Poemen 41

Again he said, 'A brother asked Apa Allonios, 'What is contempt?' The old man said, 'It is putting yourself below the animals, and knowing that these things should not be condemned."

Saying 109: Poemen 55

Again he said: 'Once when they were sitting and eating he, namely the old man, was remaining, ministering with Apa Allonios. And when they saw him they honored him. He said absolutely nothing to them. One said to him: 'Why do you not answer the old men when they glorify you?' He, namely Apa Allonios, said to him: 'If I answer them, you would also find that I rejoiced on account of the glory and that I accept it'

Saying 110: Anonymous Nau 656

He said also: 'The land which the Lord commands on his behalf to sacrifice to him is the humility of heart.

Saying 111: Poemen 167

He, namely the old man, also said: ’If a man minds his rank, he will not be troubled.’

Saying 112: Poemen 61

He, namely Apa Joseph, said: When we were sitting with Apa Poimen, he called Agathon 'apa'. And we said to him: 'He is a young man. Why do you call him 'apa'?' And he, namely Apa Poimen, said: 'His mouth (is) that which makes him worthy to be called 'apa'"

Saying 114: Theophilus Beta

One time, the blessed Abba Theophilus the archbishop went to Scetis. But the brothers gathered and said to Abba Pambo: 'Tell the Father one word that he may benefit.' The old man told them: 'If he does not always benefit from our silence, then if we speak he will still not benefit.'

Saying 115: Pistus 1

He, namely brother Pistus, said: 'We, being seven anchorite brothers, went out to Apa Sisoes who was staying on the island of Klysma.' We begged for him to give us a word. And he said: 'Forgive me. I am an unlearned man, but I went to Apa Or and Apa Hatre.' Apa Or was sick for eighteen years. And I fell before them, (saying) 'Give me a word.' Apa Or said to me: 'What is that which I should say to you? Go do that which you see (is right). God does not belong to the one who loves more, but he who does violence to himself is blessed in everything.' Apa Or and Apa Hatre were from the same region. Up until the time they left their bodies there was a great peace in their midst. For Apa Hatre's obedience was great and Apa Or's humility was great. I spent a few days beside them observing them, and I saw him, namely Apa Hatre, perform a great wonder. Someone brought a small fish to them and he, namely Apa Hatre, wanted to relieve Apa Or. He was holding the knife while cutting up the fish, and he, namely Apa Or, called him, 'Hatre, Hatre.' And Apa Hatre left the knife in the middle of the fish. He did not cut up the rest.

He ran to him. And I marveled at his great obedience. Because he did not say, 'Wait until I cut the fish.' But I said to Apa Hatre: 'Where did you find this great obedience?' He said to me: 'It does not belong to me, but it belongs to the old man.' And he took me to the old man's cell, saying: 'Come and look see the obedience.' And he cooked the small fish. He ruined it intentionally and served it to the old man. He ate and did not speak. He, namely Apa Hatre, said to him: 'Is it good, Old Man?' He replied: 'It is very good.' After this, I brought him a little which was good, and he said to him: 'I ruined it, Old Man.' He responded: 'Yes, you have ruined it a little.' And he, namely Apa Hatre, said to me: 'You saw that obedience belongs to the old man'. And I went away from them and I guard that which I saw according to my strength.

Saying 116: Pistus 01

Apa Sisoes said these things. One of us entreated him, saying, 'Please, say one word to us yourself.' He said, 'Mindful lack of consideration for yourself. It will fulfill all the Scriptures.' And another of us said to him, 'What is it to be a stranger, my father?' He said, 'It is being silent and saying everywhere you go, I have nothing.' This is being a stranger.'

Saying 117: Sisoes 9

A brother went to Apa Sisoes at the mountain of Apa Antonius and they said to Apa Sisoes, You have not yet reached the measure of Apa Antonius, father. He said to them, 'Where (would this come) from? If I have a single thought of Apa Antonius, I would be completely on fire. However, I saw a man who had power to bear his own thought with difficulty.'

Saying 118: Sisoes 11

The brother asked him again, 'Did Satan also trouble people long ago in this way?' Apa Sisoes said to him, 'He causes more trouble now, since his time has drawn near, and because of this he is upset.'

Saying 119: Sisoes 16

Some others went to him to hear a story from him. And he did not say anything to them. But he said, 'Forgive me.' When they saw his baskets, they said to Abraham, his disciple, What are you doing with these baskets?' He said, 'We usually send them out to this place and that.' But the monk heard and he said, 'Your Sisoes eats in this place and that.' And they heard this and they profited greatly. And they left, rejoicing, having been strengthened by his humility.

Saying 120: Sisoes 13

A brother asked Apa Sisoes, 'I see myself, and my thoughts remain on God.' The monk said to him, 'It is not a great thing to make your thoughts remain on God. But it is a great thing to see yourself as below every living thing. For this leads to being someone who suffers in body These are the acts of humility.'

Saying 121: Syncletica 26

The blessed Syncletica said, 'Just as a boat cannot be built without nails, in the same way it is not possible to be saved without humility of heart.'

Saying 123: Syncletica 11

He spoke again, 'Be like the tax collector, so that they do not condemn you with the Pharisee. But also choose for yourself the gentleness of Moses, so that you can change your heart, like the rock, into springs of water.'

Saying 124: Orsisius 1

Apa Orsisius said, 'A mud brick that is laid as a foundation by the river will not last a single day. But the one that has been baked endures like a rock. In the same way, the man who has his mind on worldliness is not baked in the fear of God. If he comes upon greatness, he dissolves. For there are many trials, mostly of this kind, that happen in the midst of men But it is good that a man know his mesaure, and avoid the burden of greatness. The things which are strenghtened in faith are unshakeable.'

Saying 125: Joseph

About the holy Joseph: If one wants to speak about him, one would say He was not an earthly man. For, he was tempted by how many temptations, and in what sort of land, in the place where there is not an imprint of divine worship. But the God of his fathers was with him and saved him from every affliction. And now he is with his fathers in the kingdom of heaven. Then, we ourselves, too, knew our measure. Let us struggle. For, scarcely, in all these things are we able to flee from the judgment of God

Saying 126: N 123 E

An anchoritic monk was wandering in the desert, and he said to himself, 'I have kept straight in virtue.' And he prayed to God, saying, 'Provide whatever I need.' God wished to make his thoughts humble. He said to him, 'Go to this particular archimandrite, and do whatever he tells you.' And God revealed this to the archimandrite, saying, 'Behold, this particular anchorite is coming to you. Give him a whip and make him tend the pigs.' And the monk came and knocked on the door, and he went to the head of the congregation. They embraced each other and they sat down. And the anchorite said, 'What should I do so that I may be saved?' The archimandrite said to him, 'You will do what I tell you.' And he said yes, and he said to him, 'Take this whip and tend the pigs.' And those who know him saw him tending the pigs. And they were saying, 'Look at this great anchorite, whose heart is deranged, and there is a demon in him, since he tends the pigs.' And God saw his humility, that he was patient with the insults of the men in this way. He sent him back to his cell.

Saying 127: N 298

A man became a demon, and was greatly afflicted, and was spitting out foam. He struck a monk among the elders upon his cheek. But the monk quickly turned the other one to him. And the demon could not bear the fire of his humility. He went out of him.

Saying 128: N 299

A monk said, If a thought that has been inflated with arrogance enters you, question in your thoughts whether you have oberved the commandments: whether you love your enemies; whether you rejoice in the glory of your enemies and are pained by their failures; whether you have become a worthless slave in your own eyes and a sinner beyond everyone else. And, in these things, do not consider greatness, as if you were successful in everything. For you know that this thought destroys everything.

Saying 129: N 331

A monk said, Do no allow your heart to speak against your brother, saying, for instance, 'I am more sober than he.' And again, 'I am more ascetic than he.' And, 'I know more than he.' But humble yourself in the spirit of poverty on account of Christ. And acquire love without pretense, so that you do not destroy the pride of spirit which you have. For it is written, 'Let he who stands be aware lest he fall.' And you will become seasoned in the salt of Christ.'

Saying 130: N 300

A monk said, 'The one who is honored beyond his worth, or who boasts about himself will lose greatly. The one who is not glorified among men will receive glory in heaven.'

Saying 131: N 301

A brother asked a monk, Is it good to repent often?' The monk said, We see that Joshua, the son of Nun when he was still lying face-down, God revealed himself to him.'

Saying 132: N 302

A monk was asked, 'Why do demons attack us like all this?' The monk said, 'Because we cast off our armor, which is shame, and humility, and not abandoning anything for ourselves, and endurance.'

Saying 133: N 303

A brother asked a monk, 'If a brother brings me some words from outside, do you, father, want me to say to him, 'Do not bring them in to me?" The monk said to him, 'Do not.' The brother said to him, 'Why?' The monk said to him, 'Because we ourselves have not been able to observe this, lest, while we say to our companion, 'Don't do this,' we find ourselves later doing this.' The brother said to him, 'What else is it necessary to do?' The monk said, 'What we desire is silence, its example is enough for our companion.'

Saying 134: N 304

A monk was asked, 'What is humility?' He said, 'It is when your brother sins against you, and you forgive him when he has not yet repented.'

Saying 135: N 305

A monk said, In every temptation, do not blame some person, but blame… saying, 'These things have happened to me because of my sins."

Saying 136

A monk said, 'I have never passed beyond my rank to move toward my exultation. And I am also not disturbed, having been brought down by humility. It is my sole concern to make myself pray to God, that he might not … the old man from me.

Saying 137: P263

A brother asked a monk, 'What else is a humble heart?' The monk said to him, 'It is to make yourself do good to those who do evil to you.' The brother said to him, 'If one does not achieve this measure, what will he do?' The monk said, 'Let him choose to be silent.'

Saying 138: Unidentified

A brother said to a monk, 'Father, tell me a whole story. Even if you tell it and we don't understand, since our soil is salty soil.'

Saying 139: N 306

A brother asked a monk, '[what] is [it] .. to be a stranger...?' He said, '…a brother…and…in…the feast was happening.' And he sat down at the table to eat with the brothers. Some said, 'Who even is this person?' And they grabbed him and made him stand up, saying, 'Get up and leave!' So he stood up and left. But some others were troubled, and they called him back. After this, one (of them) asked him, 'What entered into your heart when you were cast out and brought back in again?' He said, 'It entered my mind that I must be a dog, which leaves it if it cast out and comes when it is called.'

Saying 142

The old men said, 'If there is no battle against us, then instead we humiliate ourselves as much as we can. When God sees our weakness, He shall protect us. If we boast ourselves He shall take away his shelter from us, and we shall perish.'

Saying 143: N 131

The devil changed into an image of an angel of the light. He appeared to one of the brothers and said to him, “I am Gabriel, who was sent to you” But he said to him, “Look, you were sent to another of the brothers, for I am not worthy.” And he immediately disappeared.

Saying 145: N 312

They said about an old man, he dwelled in his house struggling He saw the demons in a vision. He mocked them. And the devil saw that he was defeated inside of the old man And he went and revealed himself to him saying, 'I am Christ'. After the old man saw him, he closed his eyes and the devil said to him: 'Why did you close your eyes, I am Christ?' And the old man said, 'I don't want to see Christ in this life'. And the devil heard this and left him.

Saying 150: Anonymous Nau 324

if you have the ability to rise against insulting you, this is greater than all virtues

Saying 151: Anonymous Nau 325

An old man said, 'The one who bears contempt and reproach is able to be saved.'

Saying 157: Papnoute

They said about Abba Paphnutius that he never hastens to drink wine. But while walking on one occasion he came upon a band of bandits and he found them drinking. And he knew him, that is the one who is head, and while knowing that he never drinks wine he saw him in a great weariness (and) filled a cup of wine while his sword (is) in his hand and told the old man "If you don't drink I will kill you." He knew, that is, the old man, that it's to do the commandment of God that he wants and wanting to gain him he took it (and) he drank it. But the head of the bandits, he repented saying: "forgive me my father for I have made you suffer". He said to him, that is the old man: "I trust in God that he will do you charity for this cup of wine in this life and the one that's coming". He said to him, that is the head-bandit: "I trust in God that from now I won't do wrong to anyone." And the old man, he acquired for himself the whole band, for he left his desire behind him for God.

Saying 172: Antonius

It was revealed to Apa Antonius in the desert that there's one who is like him in the city who is a doctor in his trade who gives his plenty to those who are needy and always spends the whole day saying the Trishagion with the angels

Saying 177: Ephraim

When the blessed Ephraim was a little boy he saw a dream or a revelation that a grapevine sprouted in his tongue and it grew and it filled all the land under the sky whose fruit (sic) were very good, and they came, that is all the birds of the sky (and) they ate its fruit, and whatever will be eaten from the grapevine, it (the vine) will regrow more abundantly.

Saying 216: Besarion

He said, that is Abba Doulos, the disciple of Abba Besarion: “while we were walking beside the sea, and I became thirsty. I said to Abba Besarion: “My father, I am very thirsty.” But the old man prayed he said to me: “Drink at the sea and the water is sweet.” And I drank. And I put a little water into my vessel which was in my hand, saying: “Lest I get thirsty again.” But the old man after seeing (this) said to me: “Why did you fill water?” I said: “Forgive me, lest I become thirsty there.” The old man said to me: “God here (of this place) is also God there.”

Saying 217: Besarion

And on another occasion, another need compelled him, he prayed and he crossed the river which is called “that of the golden one, the pomegranate” walking on his foot until he went up to its bank. And I, I was amazed (and) I prostrated myself before him: “How is it that you feel your feet while you walk upon the water?” He said, that is the old man: “I feel that the water comes up to the ankles of my foot, but the bottom is firm.”

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