The History of the Monks of Tabenna, the Asketikon (Budge translation)

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

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Chapter 1.

By the might of our Lord Jesus Christ we begin to write the ”Asketikon,” that is to say, the History of the Monks of Tabenna, who were followers of Abba Pachomius In my opinion, the things which I am now about to write are able to assist [us] greatly if we indeed follow after them, and they will, moreover, make the hearer more vigilant in respect of the contemplation of the things which have been said. And if we were to excuse ourselves through negligence from writing them down this act would bring danger upon him that made such an excuse, and therefore, although we can only advance from the beginning but a very little way with the living word, we will declare a few of the earlier things. It was a custom with the God-loving brother, the holy man Abbâ Pachomius, to gather together the brethren every evening in a duly appointed place in the monastery that they might hear his doctrine, and once when they were all assembled according to their wont in order to hear Rabbâ, he commanded Theodore, a man who had lived in the monastery for twenty years, to speak to the brethren, and straightway he spake unto them concerning the things which were to be employed as helpers, but made no mention of not stumbling. And some of the aged sages who saw what had taken place did not wish to listen to him, and they said within themselves, ”What he is teaching us is for novices, and we [need not] listen unto him,” and they left the congregation of the brethren and departing from that place went to their cells.

And when the brethren had been dismissed from the hearing [of the sermon] Rabbâ sent and called those who had departed and who did not wish to hear Theodore, and when they had come into the presence of the holy man he asked them, ”Why did ye leave us and depart to your cells? And they said, ”Because thou hast made a young man our teacher, and although all the old men were standing [there], and other brethren who were much older [than he], thou didst command a young man to speak unto us. Now when Rabbâ had heard these things he groaned, and said, ”Do ye know by what means wickedness first began to take hold in the world? And they said unto him, ”What were they? And he answered and said unto them, ”By pride, and it began when that bright star which used to shine (or rise) in the morning fell [from heaven] (Isaiah xiv, 12), and was dashed in pieces on the earth. Or, have ye never heard that which is written, 'The man who is haughty in heart is an abominable thing before the Lord?' (Proverbs xvi, 5. For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased, but he that abaseth himself shall be exalted (St. Matthew, xxiii, 12). Therefore deliver ye

yourselves from your false superiority, for do ye not know that the mother of the beginning of wickednesses is pride?

Ye did not only leave Theodore and depart from him, but ye fled and departed from the Word of God, [and] ye fell away from the Holy Spirit. O ye truly wretched men, who deserve sorrow of every kind, how is it that ye cannot understand that it was Satan who was working in you, and that, because of this, ye made yourselves to be remote from God? Oh, what a great and wonderful thing it is that God humbled Himself, and took upon Himself the form of a servant, and put on his body and dwelt in him, and became obedient even unto death for our sakes! And yet we who are by nature low puff ourselves up with pride! He Who is high above all things, and exceeding great, turned from the ordinary course [of His greatness] and in humility fashioned the world, although He was able to destroy everything which existeth by a glance! And yet we who are nothing make ourselves proud, being ignorant that in thus doing we are sinking ourselves into the depths of the earth! Do ye not observe that I stand and incline my ear to the teaching [of Theodore]? Verily I say unto you, that I have been greatly helped by him. For I did not ask him to address you because I thought lightly of him, but because I expected to be helped myself by his words; how very much more, then, is it right that ye should hearken unto his words with a ready mind and absolute humility?

Verily I, who am your father in the Lord, am as one who knoweth not his right hand from his left, and therefore I listen unto him with all my soul. Therefore before God I say unto you that, if ye shew great repentance for this folly which ye have committed, and if ye weep and mourn for yourselves because thereof in such wise that ye be edified thereby, that which hath happened shall be forgiven you, and if not, then ye will go to perdition."

Chapter 2. Of Sylvanus the Actor

Once there was a man among the brethren whose name was Sylvanus, who for a period of twenty years had worn the garb of a monk; now he was originally an actor, and at the beginning of his life as a monk he was exceedingly anxious about his soul, but after a short time had elapsed he began to be so negligent about his redemption, that he wanted to make merry and to enjoy himself, and besides this he used to sing fearlessly among the brethren snatches of the lewd and ribald songs which he used to hear in the theatre. Then Abbâ Pachomius, the holy man, called this brother before the brethren, and commanded him to strip off the garb of a monk, and having received such apparel as was worn in the world, to go forth from among the brethren and from the monastery. And that brother fell down at the feet of Pachomius and entreated him, saying, "O father, if thou wilt forgive me this once, and wilt not cast me forth, thou hast it from me that from this time forward I will repent of those things wherein I have hitherto shown negligence, in such a manner that thou shalt be able to see the change which hath taken place in my soul."

And the holy man answered and said unto him, "Dost thou know how much I have borne from thee, and how many times I have admonished thee, and how many times I have beaten thee? I am a man who hath no wish to stretch out my hands in a matter of this kind, because when, of necessity, I was obliged to act thus in respect of thee, [my] soul suffered far more by the mention of association with passion than thou didst, although the stripes were laid upon thee. I beat thee for the sake of thy salvation in God, so that by that means I might be able to correct thee of thy folly; but since, even though I admonished thee, thou didst not change [thy course of life], and didst not follow after spiritual excellence, even though I entreated thee so to do, and since even when beaten thou wast not afraid, how is it possible for me to forgive thee any more?"

But when Sylvanus multiplied his entreaties, and begged for his forgiveness long and earnestly, and promised that he would amend his life henceforward, Rabbâ demanded a surety from him that after he was forgiven he would no more continue his evil behaviour; and when the venerable man Petronius had made himself a surety for him concerning the things which Sylvanus had promised the blessed man forgave him. Then Sylvanus, having been held worthy of forgiveness, contended with all his soul, and to such good purpose, that he became the pattern of all excellence of the fear of God, both among all the younger

and all the elder brethren. Now the virtue which surpassed all the other virtues which he possessed was that of absolute humility, and tears flowed from his eyes so unceasingly that even when he was eating with the brethren he was not able to restrain his weeping, and his tears were mingled with his food. And when the brethren told him that he should not behave thus before the face of strangers (i.e., visitors), or before any people, he took an oath, saying, "I have sought many times to restrain [my] tears for this reason, but I have never been able [to do so]." Then the brethren said, "Is it not possible for him that repenteth to seek to be alone? And would it not be better for him to act thus when he was praying with the brethren than when he was eating at the table with them? And is it not possible for the soul to weep continually with tears other than those which are visible?" [Then turning to him, they said,] "We wish to know what thou hast to say on the matter. For thou art so overwhelmed with [thy] tears that many of us who see thee in this state are ashamed to eat and take our fill."

Then Sylvanus said unto those who had asked him [those questions], "Do ye not wish me to weep when I see holy men waiting upon me, men, the dust of whose feet I am unworthy [to sweep away]? Is it not proper that I should weep over myself? I weep then, O my brethren, because a man from the theatre is ministered unto by such holy men as these, and I am afraid lest I be smitten even as were Dathan and Abiram. And I weep especially because, being in ignorance, I cared so little at the beginning about the redemption (or salvation) of my soul, that I came in danger of being expelled by the brethren from the monastery, and I was obliged to give surety [for my better behaviour], and to take awful oaths that I would never again treat my life with contempt. For this reason I am not ashamed [to weep], and I have turned away from such things; for I know my sins and that if I was obliged to deliver up my soul I should find no happiness [in heaven]."

And as this man strove nobly in this manner Rabbâ himself bore testimony before all the brethren, and spake thus: "Behold, I bear testimony before God that, from the time when this monastery came into existence, among all the brethren who have lived with me therein, there hath been none who hath resembled completely the example [which I have conceived in my mind] with the exception of one. Now when the brethren heard these things some of them thought that the one man of whom he spake was Theodore, and others thought he was Petronius, and others thought he was Arsenius, and at length Theodore asked the holy man of which monk he had spoken when he said this thing; but Rabbâ did not wish to say. But because Theodore and the other great fathers continued to entreat him [to tell them], for they wished to learn who he was, Rabbâ answered and said, "If I knew that vainglory would come to him of whom I am about to speak, and that he would be greatly praised, I would not shew [you] who he is; but, because I know that the more he is praised, the more humble he will become, and the more he will think scorn of himself, and because [I wish] you to emulate his example, I will, before you all, fearlessly ascribe blessing to him.

Thou, O Theodore, and all those, who like thee, strive in the fight, have bound the Calumniator with fetters like a kid of the goats, and have placed him under your feet, and daily ye

trample upon him as ye trample upon dust; but if ye are the least unmindful of yourselves, the Calumniator, who hath been cast under your feet, will rise up again, and will set himself against you like an armed man. But this young man Sylvanus, who but a short time since was about to be expelled from the monastery, hath, by his strenuousness, so completely subjugated the Calumniator, and slain him, that he will never again be able to approach him, for he hath vanquished him utterly by his exceedingly great humility. Ye have humbled yourselves as if ye possessed works of righteousness, and the addition which ye would make to your spiritual excellence is reduced, for ye rely upon the things which have already been performed by you; but this young man, however much he striveth, never sheweth himself to the gaze [of his fellows], and he thinketh with all his mind and soul that he is a useless and contemptible being. And tears are always nigh unto him because he is always belittling himself, and because he saith that he is unworthy of the things which are visible.

Ye, in your knowledge, and in your patient endurance, and in your strivings against the Calumniator, which cannot be measured, are better than he is, but he hath surpassed you in humility, because he, in this manner, cutteth off for the Calumniator nothing but humility, and the power of action which ariseth from the whole soul. Now therefore when Sylvanus had striven in this manner for eight years, he completed his fight, and laid down his life in such wise that his servant, a mighty man of God, testified concerning his departure, and said that an endless throng of holy angels, with great rejoicing and singing, received his soul as a choice sacrifice, and that they offered it up unto God like the marvellous incense which is found among the children of men.

Chapter 3. Of a certain Sinner who died

And it came to pass once that Abbâ Pachomius went to another monastery to visit the brethren who were there, and as he was on his journey he met the funeral of a certain brother of the monastery who was dead, and [the monks] were going to the funeral and were singing as they went; and there were also among them the parents of the man who had died. Now the brethren saw from a distance the holy man coming towards them, and they set down the bier upon the ground so that he might come and pray over him. And when the blessed man had come, and had said a prayer, he commanded the brethren not to sing any more psalms and hymns over him; and he also commanded them to bring the garments of him that had died, and they brought them, and in the presence of them all he ordered the men to burn them; then, when they had been burned he commanded that the dead body should be taken and buried without any further singing. Then the brethren, and the parents, and kinsfolk of him that was dead threw themselves down at his feet and entreated him to permit them to sing over him, but he remained unmoved; and the parents of the dead man said unto Abbâ Pachomius, "What hast thou done, O father? This is a new thing, and thou art sending away our son in an unlawful fashion.

It be fitteth not thy holiness to display such a want of compassion unto this dead man, and moreover, this savage cruelty is like to bring about sorrow. Even an enemy who seeth the dead body of his adversary knoweth how to shew pity many times over, although his disposition be unutterable and immovable. We have seen a new sight with you, O Christians, the like of which hath never been seen, even among the barbarians. Through this want of compassion [on thy part] thou hast made to cling to the family [of the dead man] a disgrace which shall never be blotted out. Would that we had never seen thee this day! For then our house, which hath ever possessed an untarnished name, would not have inherited disgrace. Would that our poor son had never come into thy savage hands! For then he would not have bequeathed unto us this everlasting sorrow. We beseech thee now, since thou hast caused even his clothes to be burned, to allow a Psalm to be said over him."

Then Abbâ Pachomius answered and said unto them, "O my brethren, in very truth I have more compassion upon him that lieth here than ye have, and because, like a father, I am

shewing exceedingly great care on his behalf, I have commanded these things to be done. Ye would take care of the body which is visible, but I strive for his soul [which is invisible]; for if ye sing Psalms over him he will receive the greater torments, and a reckoning will be demanded from him because of the Psalms which have been sung, for he departeth not with the power of the Psalms upon him. If then ye wish to make an addition to his everlasting sufferings, sing Psalms; but I tell you, of a truth, that if ye do indeed sing Psalms over him, he will certainly suffer more pain because of them, and he will curse you. And because I know what will benefit his soul I take no care for his dead body whatsoever; for if I permit ye to sing Psalms, I shall be found to be in the sight of God as one who [striveth to] please the children of men, because for the sake of gratifying men I have treated with contempt that which will benefit the soul which is about to be punished in judgement. For because God is a fountain of grace He seeketh excuses upon which He can lay hold in order to pour out upon us the abundant streams of His grace;

if then, we, who have been held to be worthy by God to become acquainted with the art of divine healing, do not apply the binding up which is suitable to the wound, we shall, like those who despise [God], hear that which is written, 'Those who despised [God] saw, and marvelled at the wonderful thing, and were destroyed.' For this reason then, that is to say, that we may lighten his punishment, I entreat you to bury the dead man without any singing of Psalms; for the good God knoweth that in return for this slight which hath come upon him, we are giving him rest and are calling him to life. Had he listened unto me on the several occasions on which I admonished him, he would never have come to this pass."

And when the blessed man had said these things they carried him to the mountain without the singing of Psalms, and he was buried. And the holy man passed several days in that monastery in admonishing and teaching each one of the brethren the fear of God, and the way to strive rightly against the Calumniator, and against his arts, and wiles, and guile, and how in a short time, by the might of the Lord, we shall be able to bring to naught beforehand the things which are cared for by him.

Chapter 4. Of the Funeral of a certain Holy Man who died

Now whilst Abbâ Pachomius was still there he heard that a certain brother from the monastery of Bêth Râ-yâ was sick, [and it was said to him], "He wisheth to see thee and to be blessed by thee before he dieth." And when the man of God heard these things he rose up, and departed on the journey, but when he was about two miles from the monastery, the holy man heard a holy voice in the air, and he lifted up his eyes and saw the soul of the sick brother with the holy angels, singing hymns, and being borne aloft to a blessed and divine life; now the brethren who were accompanying him neither heard nor saw anything. And when the holy man had stood there and gazed for a long time towards 289 the East, they said unto him, "Why standest thou [here], O father? Let us hurry on so that we may reach him whilst he is still alive." And he said unto them, "We shall not reach him there, for I have just seen him ascending to everlasting life; depart ye then, O my children, to your monastery." And when those brethren entreated him [to tell them] in what [form] he had seen the soul of the brother who had died, he said unto them, "In a certain form"; and when they had heard this they departed to their monastery. And they [enquired], and ascertained exactly from the brethren who were in the monastery, concerning the hour whereof Rabbâ had spoken to them, and then they recognized that the things which had been said unto them about the brother who had died were true.

Chapter 5. Of the things which Abba Pachomius heard said in the Air by the Devils as he was journeying in the Desert to his Monastery

Now when the holy old man was journeying to his monastery, and was by the side of the desert which is called "Ammon," certain legions of devils rose up against him, and thronged him, both on his right hand and on his left, and others ran in front of him, saying, "Behold the blessed man of God"; and they acted in this wise because they were plotting to sow the seeds of vainglory in him. Now he knew the evil character of their cunning, and as they cried out these things he cried out to God, and made confession of his sins; then, having brought to naught the evil cunning of these wicked devils, he answered and said unto them, "Ye are not able to persuade me to [indulge in] vainglory. O ye wicked ones, well do I know mine iniquities, and well do I know that it is right for me to weep concerning them continually, and concerning the punishment which is for ever. I have no need of fluent words and cunning error from you, for your work is the destruction of souls. I am not to be carried away therefore by your praisings, for I know well your cunning minds, O evil ones." And though the holy man Pachomius spake these words unto them, their audacious acts did not cease, for they clung round and about the blessed man until he drew nigh unto his monastery.

Chapter 6. Of the things which Abba Pachomius did when he arrived at his Monastery

And when the brethren went forth to meet the holy man and to salute him, a certain young man also went out with them to salute Abbâ Pachomius, and he began to make a complaint to him, saying, "Verily, O father, from the time when thou didst depart to visit the brethren until this present they have not cooked either vegetables or crushed peas"; and the old man answered and said unto him readily and pleasantly, "My son, grieve not, for from this time forward I will make them to cook these things for thee. And having gone round about through the monastery Abbâ Pachomius went to the place where the food was [kept], and he found him that did the cooking plaiting a mat of palm leaves, and he said unto him, "How long is it since thou hast cooked vegetables for the brethren? and he answered, "Two months. And Rabbâ said unto him, "Hast thou acted thus in spite of the command and ordinances of the holy fathers which enjoin that vegetables shall be cooked for the brethren every Saturday and every Sunday?

And the cook answered and said unto him, "Truly, O father, I wanted to cook some vegetables on each of these days, but because I saw that when they were cooked they were not eaten (for all the brethren, so to speak, were restraining themselves, and were not eating cooked food), except by the young men who usually ate them, and when I saw that when they were not eaten they were thrown away, [I cooked] no more so that all the expense and all the trouble might be avoided. Now we pour into the cooked food of the brethren forty boxes of oil daily. And when I saw that the food was not eaten I did not cook it, for I did not consider it to be right that we should throw away and waste such costly things. And moreover, because I could not sit idle I began to plait a mat with the brethren, for I thought that one man would be sufficient in the kitchen to prepare the less important meals for brethren, that is to say, chopped garlic, and mountain herbs [mixed with] vinegar and olive oil, and herbs from the garden."

And when the holy man had heard these things he said unto the cook, "How many mats have ye made? Ye who belong to the kitchen must have been continually at this work"; and

the cook said, "Five hundred." And Abbâ Pachomius said unto him, "Bring them here, for I wish to count them"; and having brought the mats he ordered them to be thrown into the fire. Then, when they had all been consumed, Abbâ Pachomius said unto them, "Why have ye forsaken the ordinance which hath been given unto you for the government of the brethren through [your] Satanic minds? I have destroyed pitilessly the labour of your hands, and have burned it in the fire, so that ye may learn what it is for a man to treat lightly the laws of the fathers, which have been given for the benefit of souls. How great is the help which ye have removed from the brethren through your not having cooked food for them! Have ye forgotten that a man hath

291 19a power over a desire for food, and that he who restraineth himself from such and such a food, for God's sake, shall obtain from God wages which are not small? while he who hath not received authority, and who denieth himself by force or necessity will seek for wages in return for this in vain? And do ye not know that, if cooked meat be placed upon the table, and the brethren eat it not because they restrain themselves therefrom for God's sake, they shall receive abundant wages? But if cooked meats be not given unto them, because they have not seen them abstinence and selfdenial can never be reckoned unto them. For the sake of eighty boxes of oil, for such is the excuse [which ye have made], ye have cut off all the preparation of all the brethren; I would rather that all the world should be wasted than that onesmall spiritual virtue should be cut off from [their] soul[s]. I therefore truly wish to have food in abundance cooked daily and set before the brethren, so that in practising abstinence every day, and in restraining themselves from partaking of what hath been given to them, they may make an addition daily to their spiritual excellence. For if a man should happen to fall sick, and did not desire to go to the hospital, if he should come to the common table in order to partake of the vegetables which are usually given to the brethren, and should not find any there, what would happen to me? Would not a brother be offended in not finding at the common table that of which he was in need? And do ye not know that young men especially [cannot] continue in spiritual excellence unless they enjoy some small gratification or a little consolation from their food?"

Chapter 7. Of the Revelation which Abba Pachomius received from God concerning certain Heretics who happened to visit him

And it came to pass that when the old man had said these things to the brethren, the doorkeeper came to him, and said, "Certain travellers, who are men of importance, have come hither, and they wish to meet thee"; and he said, "Call them hither," and when they had entered into the monastery he saluted them with the brethren. And after they had seen all the brotherhood, and had gone round about among all the cells of the brethren they wanted to hold converse with him by themselves. Now when they had taken their seats in a secluded chamber, there came unto the old man a strong smell of uncleanness, but he knew not whence came such uncleanness, though he thought that it must arise from them because he was speaking with them face to face; and he was not able to learn the cause of the same by the supplication which [he made] to God, for he perceived that their speech was fruitful [of thought], and that their minds were familiar with the Scriptures, but he was not acquainted with their intellectual uncleanness. Then, after he had spoken unto them many things out of the Divine Books, and the season of the ninth hour had drawn nigh meanwhile, they rose up that they might come to their own place, and Rabbâ entreated them to partake of some food there, but they did not accept [his petition, saying,] that they were in duty bound to arrive home before sunset; so they prayed, and they saluted us, and then they departed

And Rabbâ, in order to learn the cause of the uncleanness of those men, went into his cell, and prayed to God, and he knew straightway that it was the doctrine of wickedness which arose from their souls that sent forth such an unclean smell. Thereupon he went forth from his cell immediately and pursued those men, and having overtaken them, he said unto them, "I beg of you to allow me to ask you one question"; and they said unto him, "Speak." And he said unto them, "Do ye call 'that which is written in the works of Origen heresy?" And when they had heard this question they denied and said that they did not. Then the holy man

said unto them, "Behold, I 'take you to witness before God, that every man who readeth and accepteth the work of Origen, shall certainly arrive in the fire of Sheol, and his inheritance shall be everlasting darkness. That which I know from God I have made you to be witnesses of, and I am therefore not to be condemned by God on this account, and ye yourselves know about it. Behold, I have made you to hear the truth. And if ye believe me, and if ye wish truly to gratify God, take all the writings of Origen and cast them into the fire; and never seek to read them again." And when Abbâ Pachomius had said these things he left them.

Chapter 8. Of the Revelation which he received about the Settlement of the Brethren

And when Abbâ Pachomius had gone into the monastery, he found the brethren gathered together for prayer, and he drew nigh unto them, and said all the prayers; but when the brethren went forth to eat he remained in that chamber by himself, in order that he might recite to the end therein the prayers of the congregation according to custom. And he shut the door and prayed unto God that he might have information about the settlements which were to come subsequently to the brethren. Then having prolonged [his] prayer from the tenth hour until the time when the brethren beat [the boards to summon the brethren] to the service of the night, for he was praying until midnight, there suddenly appeared unto him a vision which made known to him concerning the settlements of the brethren subsequently, and shewed him that they would live rightly in Christ, and the increase which was about to take place in the religious houses. And he saw a congregation of brethren which was endless, and the men were making their way along a deep and gloomy valley, and many of them came with the intention of going up out of that valley, but were unable to do so, and many of them met each other face to face, but because of the great density of the darkness, they did not recognize each other; and many fell down through exhaustion, and others were crying out with the doleful voice of lamentation.

Now a very few of them, with the greatest difficulty, and with much toil, were able to go up out of that valley, and immediately they had done so the light met them; and when they had come to the light, they gave thanks unto God mightily. Then did the blessed man know the things which were going to happen to the brethren in later times, and the absolute supineness which was to exist in those times, and the blindness of error, and the removal of the shepherds which was about to happen to them, and he knew that the wicked were to have dominion over the good, whom they were to vanquish through their great numbers, and that those who were to come afterwards would be mere imitations of monks. Now we set down in writing the memorial of these things lest the wicked shall be governors over the brethren, and those who are without knowledge shall have authority over the monasteries,

and shall strive for the mastery, and the good shall be persecuted by the wicked, and they shall not have freedom of speech in the monasteries, and the divine things which have been said shall be turned to the things of men.

Now therefore, when the blessed man knew these things, he cried out to God with tears, and said, "O Lord God, Who dost maintain the universe, if it is indeed to be thus why didst Thou permit these monasteries to come into being? And if in those times those who are to be governors over the brethren be wicked men, what is to become of those who are to be governed by them? For when the blind leadeth the blind both fall into the ditch. I have toiled absolutely in vain! Remember, O Lord, my works, and those of these brethren, who submit to be governed with all their souls. Remember that Thou didst promise me, saying, 'Until the end of the world I will allow this spiritual seed to exist.' Thou knowest, O my Lord, that from the time when I put on the garb of the monks, I have never satisfied myself with whatsoever groweth upon the earth, not even with water."

Chapter 9. Another Revelation on this matter which [brought] Consolation

And it came to pass that when he had said these things, Abbâ Pachomius heard a voice saying, ”Thou boastest thyself, O Pachomius. Thou art a man. Ask mercy for thyself, because everything standeth by compassion. Now when the blessed man heard these things, he straightway threw himself on his face upon the ground, and he asked God for mercy, saying, ”O Lord, Who dost sustain the universe, send Thy mercies to me, and take Thou them never away from me, for I know that without Thy mercy nothing can possibly exist. And having said these words straightway there stood by his side two angels of God, and there was with them a Young Man, Who had a face which is unspeakable, and an appearance which cannot be described, and on His head was a crown of thorns. Then the angels made Pachomius to stand up, and they said unto him, ”Because thou hast asked God to send thee His mercy, behold, this is His mercy, the Lord of glory, Jesus Christ, the Only One, His Son, Whom He sent into the world, and Whom ye crucified; and ye set a crown of thorns upon His head. And Pachomius said unto the Young Man, ”I entreat Thee, O my Lord, and Thy holy nature, [to remember] that I did not crucify Thee. Then the Young Man relaxed His face a little in a smile, and said unto him, ”I know that thou didst not crucify Me, but thy fathers did;

be of good courage, however, for the root of thy seed shall never come to an end, and thy seed shall be preserved upon the earth even unto the end of the world. And the seeds which shall burst into life in those times, through the abundance of darkness shall be found to be more excellent than those of this present time, and they shall be more completely subject to rule; for at this present, because thou art unto them as a light which is before the eyes, they lead lives of great excellence and according to rule, and they lean upon thy light. But those who shall come after them, and who shall live in a region of darkness, if with a good intent and from the mind voluntarily they run towards the truth, even though no man directeth them, they shall from out of the darkness draw nigh unto the truth; verily, I say unto thee, that they shall be free and shall be with those who now lead a blameless life of the highest character, and they shall be held to be worthy of forgiveness.”

CHAPTER 9. ANOTHER REVELATION ON THIS MATTER WHICH [BROUGHT] CONSOLATION

Then having said these things straightway the Young Man went [up into] the heavens, and the heavens were opened, and the air shone so brightly that it is impossible for us to describe with human words the splendour of that light. And when Rabbâ had marvelled at the things which he had heard, straightway they beat [the board to summon] the brethren to the service of the night.

Chapter 10. Of the Words of Doctrine which Abba Pachomius spake to the Brethren when they were gathered together

Now when the brethren had come to the congregation of the night, and the service for the night also was ended, they sat down to hearken unto his words; and he opened his mouth, and said unto them, "O my brethren, so 'long as ye have breath in your bodies strive for your redemption; and before there cometh the hour wherein we shall have to weep for our souls let us cultivate spiritual excellence with a ready mind. And I say unto you that, if ye knew what good things were in heaven, and the glory which is laid up for the saints, and how those who have fallen are punished by God, and the tortures which are laid up for those who have been neglectful, and especially for those who having known the truth have not, as was right, guided themselves thereby, instead of inheriting the blessedness which is reserved for the saints, [ye would do so]. Flee ye then from the punishments which are in [these] tortures! And consider the graves, and consider the resurrection of the children of men, who are nothing! Why then doth man, who is dust, vaunt himself with vainglory? Why then doth he, who is altogether stinkingness, exalt himself? Let us weep for ourselves whilst we still have the time, so that when our departure cometh nigh we may not be found asking God for more time wherein to repent. A wretched thing is that soul, and greatly to be blamed, which hath left the world, but which had not dedicated itself to God, and which had not lived worthily of its promise. Let us not then, O my brethren, allow this world, which is a small and a contemptible thing, and which resembleth a fleeting shadow, to steal away from us blessed and immortal life.

"Verily I fear lest your fathers in the flesh, who lived in the 'world, and who were carried away by the anxious cares and afflictions of the world, and who imagined about you that ye were nigh unto the Lord, whereby ye received a pledge that ye would enter into a life of blessedness, will be more worthy than ye are of assistance in the world which is to come. And at that time they will be found condemning you, and saying that which is written, How

hath he disgraced you, and put you greatly to shame: the fire hath blazed out upon you, and your branches have been destroyed, and therefore have ye become a thing of spoil (or prey), over which the lions roar and send out their voices.' Therefore, O my beloved, be ye like unto those who are good, and let the crown of your head be exalted. The cities which are towards the south, how are they to be taken? There is none who will open unto you. For the sinner shall be carried off because he seeth not the glory of the Lord. Behold, ye have heard. Therefore, O my brethren, let us strive with all our souls, and let us set death before our eyes, and fasten our gaze upon the terrible tortures [of Sheol], so that by means of them the mind may arrive at the understanding, which beareth away the soul from care; and when it weepeth [the mind] maketh it to be a spectator, and with earthly things it enricheth it without wandering to God. And not this only, for when it doeth these things in humility, it persuadeth it to action which is free from every kind of worldly mind, and to contempt instead of vainglory.

"Let the soul then, O my brethren, practise philosophy each day in respect of this solid body [of ours], and when we come to our beds in the evening let it say unto each one of the members of the body, 'O legs, how much power have ye to stand up, and to move yourselves before ye die and become things without motion? Will ye not stand up with good will for your Lord?' And let it say unto the other members, 'O hands, there cometh an hour when ye shall be dissolved and motionless, and when ye shall never be clasped in each other again, and when ye shall not have any movement whatsoever; why then before ye fall into that hour and are cut off do ye not stretch yourselves out to the Lord?' And unto the whole body shall the soul speak thus: 'O body, before we are separated and are removed far away from each other, and before I descend into Sheol, and receive everlasting fetters under darkness, and before thou art changed into the primal matter of which thou art made, and art cast out upon the earth to become filthiness and corruption, and to decay, rise up boldly to worship the Lord without dislike, and take my intelligence, by means of tears, and make known to thy lordship thy free will servitude;

and bear me on that with a good will I may give thanks unto God before thou art crushed under the weight of other things, and dost seek to lie down, and to take thy rest, and dost condemn me to everlasting torment. For there are times when that heavy sleep is about to confuse thee. And if thou wilt hearken unto me, we shall enjoy happiness together in the inheritance of blessing, but if thou wilt not hearken unto me, then woe is me that I have ever been fettered by thee, for on thy account I, the wretched thing, shall be condemned.' Now, if ye act thus daily, and if ye consecrate yourselves, verily ye shall become real temples of God, and since God dwelleth in you the cunning and wiles of Satan shall not be able to do you injury; for instead of having a myriad of teachers, the word of God shall dwell in you, and it shall teach you more [than they], and it shall make you exceedingly wise by its own knowledge; and it is unable to speak all the things which belong to human speech, but these the Spirit, holy, and divine, and pure, and spotless shall teach you, even as the Apostle saith (Romans viii, 26), 'For we know not what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit itself prayeth for us with groanings which cannot be uttered,' etc.

CHAPTER 10. OF THE WORDS OF DOCTRINE WHICH ABBA PACHOMIUS SPAKE TO THE BRET

And there are many other helpful things which it would be possible for us to say unto you by God's grace, yet because our mind doth not urge us to these same things we must direct our discourse to other matters."

Chapter 11. Of how, not even in the time of Famine, was Abba Pachomius induced to take Wheat for nothing for the use of his Monastery

When a famine took place in the days of Pachomius, and the brethren had no wheat, that is to say, when, so to speak, no wheat could be found in all Egypt, the holy old man sent to call one of the brethren that he might go round about in the cities and villages and seek for wheat to buy; and he gave him a sum of money for the purchase of the wheat, that is to say, one hundred dīnārs. And having gone round about in very many places, the man who had been entrusted with this work came to a city which is called Armūtin, and by the Providence of God he found there a certain governor of the state, who was an exceedingly reverent man and a fearer of God, and who had heard of the rule of the holy man Pachomius and of the brethren; now this governor was in charge of the wheat which belonged to the community, and the brother approached him, and entreated him to sell him wheat to the value of one hundred dīnārs. Then the governor said unto him, "Of a truth, O my brother, if I had wheat of my own, or even some [belonging to] my own children, I would take it and give it to you, for I have heard concerning your godly and spiritual rule of life; but hearken unto what I am going to say unto thee. The wheat which hath been placed under my charge belongeth to the community, and as it will not be required this year by the prefect, if thou wishest to take it I have the power over the wheat of the community, and I will keep it back until the time cometh for it to be laid up in the granary; and if thou knowest that thou wilt be able to return it by that time, take as much of it as thou wishest."

Then the brother said unto him, "I do not wish thee to act thus for me, for I am unable to return so large a quantity as that which I wish to take; but if thou wilt sell me wheat to the value of one hundred dīnārs, at the price which thou wishest [good and well], but if thou art not in any way able to keep back the wheat which belongeth to the community until the

time [for storing it] in the granary, thou actest rightly [in refusing me]." And the governor said unto him, "Yea, I have power to keep back the wheat, and not only wheat to the value of one hundred dīnārs but, if thou wishest, another like quantity. If thou wilt take the wheat thou wilt do me an act of grace, only pray for me." And when the brother said, "We have only this amount of money," the governor hearkened, and said, "Have no care about this matter, for whensoever ye are able to bring me the price of the wheat do so, at the rate of [thirteen] ardebs a dīnār, and in no other place in Egypt wilt thou obtain more than five ardebs a dīnār." And the brother journeyed by water to the monastery with great joy [bringing the wheat with him].

And when Rabbā heard that a boat full of wheat was about to arrive, and the manner in which it had been bought, he sent immediately to the boat and said, "Ye shall not bring one grain of the wheat into the monastery, neither shall he who hath bought the wheat come into my presence until he hath returned it to its place; he who hath acted thus hath committed great wickedness. And not only this hath he done, but he hath also taken wheat to the value of one hundred darics more than [the hundred dīnārs which I gave him], and I never ordered him to do this; but in carrying out his own desires he wished to have a superabundance, and having become inflamed by love of gain he hath brought us into subjection and laid us under condemnation. And moreover, he did not approach the generosity of the seller of the wheat satisfactorily, for he acted in a greedy manner, and he hath brought more wheat than he needed, and on his own responsibility he undertook to pay back that which we could never return. And not this only, for supposing that from some human cause an accident had happened, and the boat had sunk in the river, what could we have done [to make good the loss]?"

"Should we not all have become slaves? Therefore let him sell all the wheat which he hath brought to the laity who are in this district at the rate at which he hath taken it from him that entrusted it to him, that is to say, at thirteen ardebs a dinâr, and after he hath sold them, let him take the gold and carry it to him that gave him credit. And with the one hundred dinârs which are mine, let him buy wheat at the rate at which it is sold everywhere and bring it [to me]." And the brother did even as Rabbâ said unto him, and he brought the wheat which he bought at a rate of five and a half ardebs a dinâr. And from that time Rabbâ did not allow that brother to go outside the monastery on business for the brethren, and having made him to remain inside he appointed other brethren to render service of the kind.

Chapter 12. Of how when the Work of the Brethren was sold Rabba was unwilling even that they should accept the full Price of the same

And that same brother [who hath been mentioned above] took away from the shoemaker to sell a large number of shoes (or sandals) and other kinds of objects, and having received as their price a larger sum of money than the shoemaker had mentioned brought to him the oboli; and when the shoemaker had received the oboli, he reckoned up the price of the leather and of the labour of his hands, and the value of the work of the days wherein he had made the various kinds of [leather] objects, and found that it amounted to fifty oboli, whilst the money [which he had received] was three times that amount. Then straightway the shoemaker went to Rabbâ, and said unto him, "Verily, O father, this brother will never prosper by such acts as these, for he still hath in him a worldly mind. And when Rabbâ said, "What is this matter in which he hath behaved so badly? the shoemaker answered and said, "I gave him sandals and other kinds of [leather] things to sell, and I said unto him, 'Their prices are so much,' but he hath sold them for a great deal more, and he hath brought unto me a price which is three times as large as that which I mentioned to him. When Rabbâ had heard these things, he called the brother and said unto him, "Why hast thou done thus?

And the brother said unto him, "Father, I told to the people who bought the sandals and the other things the price which this shoemaker told me to take, but they said to me, 'Brother, if these things had been stolen they would be worth a far higher price than what thou askest'; and I, feeling ashamed, said to them, 'They have not been stolen, and I have been commanded to sell them at the price which I have named; but whatsoever ye wish to give [me] for them, that give'; and they gave me what it pleased them to give me, and I never counted the oboli which were given unto me by them. When Rabbâ had heard [these things] he said, "Thou hast sinned greatly in loving excess, but run quickly, and give back the excess

in price to those who gave it to thee, and come and repent because of this offence, and sit in the monastery and perform the work of thy hands, for it is not good that thou, O my son, shouldst do again work of this kind"; and the brother did even as the old man had said unto him. Then Rabbâ appointed the holy man Zakkai, a good man, who overcame all the praises of the children of men by the manifestation of good deeds, and he administered all the affairs of the monastery.

Chapter 13. Of a certain ascetic Brother who was in the Monastery, and who desired a crown of Martyrdom unseasonably

And there was also [there] among those who were very famous a certain brother who cultivated the ascetic life by himself, and when he heard of the divine rule of our holy Father Pachomius he entreated him to receive him in the monastery; and when Rabbâ had received him, and he had passed a little [time] with the brethren, he desired greatly to bear witness (i.e., to become a martyr), although the world was in a state of peace, and the Church was flourishing and was, by the grace of God, at peace, and the blessed Constantine, who had put on Christ, was at that time reigning. And this brother was continually entreating the blessed man Pachomius, and saying, "Pray for me, O father, that I may become a martyr"; but Rabbâ admonished him that he should not permit this thought to enter his mind again, and said unto him, "Brother, endure the strife of the monks " mightily and blamelessly, and make straight thy life in the " way which will please Christ, and thou shalt have com-"panionship with the martyrs in heaven."

As, however, the brother made his desire for this thing stronger each day, and he was wearying the holy man therewith, Rabbâ, wishing to drive away this kind of desire from him, said unto him, "I will pray [for thee], but if thou seekest " for this thing thou wilt be vanquished. And put armour on " thy soul, lest, when the hour cometh wherein thou hast to " bear witness, thou shalt deny Christ. Verily thou wilt cer- "tainly commit sin, because of thine own will thou drawest " nigh unto temptation, although our Lord Jesus commanded " us, saying, 'Pray that ye fall not into temptation'" (St. Matthew xxvi, 41; St. Mark xiv, 38; St. Luke xxii, 40, 46). And having said these things unto him, he admonished him to take good heed unto himself, and not to meditate upon martyrdom. And it came to pass that two years later certain of the brethren were sent by Rabbâ to a village which was further to the south to collect wreaths [to make] mats for the monastery; now this village was nigh unto the barbarians who are called "Blemmyes." And whilst the brethren were there, and were on an island

where there were large numbers of reeds, the blessed man Pachomius sent the brother who was wishing to suffer martyrdom to carry a little money to them for their expenses, and he commanded him to take good heed to himself. And he said unto him, "The words which are written, Behold, now is the acceptable time (2 Corinthians vi, 2) behold, now is the day of redemption,' have a mystical signification [for thee], and ye shall not commit an offence against any man, so that there may be no blemish in our ministration"; so the brother took an ass to carry the money and departed to the brethren.

Now when he had arrived at the place which is opposite the desert, the barbarians came down [to the river] to draw water, and they came upon the brother, and made him to come down from off the ass, and they bound his hands, and took the ass and that which was thereon, and they led him up to a neighbouring mountain where there were other barbarians. Now when the barbarians saw that they came with an ass, they began to make a mock of him, and to say, "O monk, come and worship our gods," and they slew some beasts, and poured out libations to their gods, and they brought the monk and urged the monk to pour out libations with them. And when he did not want to do this they rose up in wrath and came towards him with their drawn swords in their hands in a threatening manner, and said, "If he be unwilling to sacrifice to our gods and to pour out libations to them, we will kill him." Then seeing the drawn swords and the savage disposition of the people, straightway the brother took wine and poured out a libation to their gods, and because he was afraid of dying the death of the body he slew his immortal soul by denying God, the Lord of all; now when he had done these things the Blemmyes sent him away.

Then having descended from the mountain, when he had come to himself he knew his iniquity, that is to say, the wickedness which he had committed, and he rent his garments, and having beaten himself upon his face severely he came to the monastery; and the blessed man knew what had happened to him, and he went forth to meet him in sore affliction.

And when the brother saw that he was coming to him, he threw himself on his face upon the ground, and shedding tears cried out and said, "I have sinned against God and against thee, O father, and I would neither listen to thy promise nor to thine admonition, and had I but hearkened unto thee, I should not have had to bear what I have suffered." And having said these words, Rabbâ said unto him, "Rise up, O wretched man, thou hast snatched thyself away from the good things which were awaiting thee, for in very truth there was laid up for thee a crown which thou hast cast away from thee; thou wast ready to be reckoned with the holy martyrs, but thou hast cut thyself off from their blessed companionship. Our Lord Jesus Christ was near with His holy angels, and He wished to lay the crown upon thy head. Through thy momentary turning back thou hast refused (or denied) this, and in being afraid of that death which thou wast about to endure, a death which thou didst not seek, thou hast fallen away from God and destroyed thine everlasting life. Where are the words which [thou didst speak] before this [happened]? Where is thy desire for martyrdom?" And the brother said, "I have sinned in all these [respects], O father, and I am no longer able to lift up my

face to heaven. I am lost, O father, I have no position wherefrom I may contemplate what I shall do, O father, I never expected that the matter would happen thus."

Then having said these words with tears, Rabbâ spake unto him, saying, "Thou, O wretched man, hast made thyself altogether an alien to the Lord, but the Lord is good, and He never keepeth His anger for a testimony, for He is a lover of mercy, and He is able to sink our sins in the depths of the sea. As far as are the heavens from the earth so far hath He put away our iniquity and sins. For He desireth not the death of the sinner, but his repentance, and He wisheth not that a man who hath fallen should remain in his fallen condition, but that he should rise up; and He desireth not that he who hath turned back should keep afar off from Him, but that he should return quickly to Him. Therefore despair not, for there is still a hope of [thy] redemption. For it is said, 'If thou cuttest down a tree it shall renew itself' (Job xiv, 7). If then thou wishest to obey me in everything which I shall say unto thee, thou shalt obtain forgiveness from God. And with tears the brother said, "From this time forward I will obey thee in everything, O father.

Then Rabbâ commanded him to seclude himself in a cell alone, and never to hold converse with any man until death, and to eat one meal daily, of bread and salt only, and to drink water only for the whole period of his life, and to plait two palm-leaf mats daily, and to keep vigil as long as possible, and never to cease from crying. So that his brother departed, even as the blessed man had commanded him, and he carried out everything which he had told him to do. And he held converse with no man except Rabbâ and Theodore, and with a few of the other great sages; and he passed ten years in striving in this manner, and died in the grace of the Lord, and Rabbâ bore witness nobly concerning his tranquil state.

Chapter 14. Of the Phantom which they saw by Night when they were going through the Monastery

And it came to pass once when Rabbâ, and Theodore whom he loved, were walking through the monastery by night, that they saw suddenly a great phantom, which was full of the deepest deceit; now that which appeared was in the form of a woman, and its beauty was of so indescribable a character that no man was able to tell the beauty, or the form, or the appearance, which belonged to that phantom, and even Theodore, who looked at that phantom, was exceedingly perturbed, and his face changed colour. And when the blessed man saw that he was afraid, he said unto him, "Be of good cheer in the Lord, O Theodore, and fear not," and the holy man, having said these things unto him, commanded him to pray with him, that the phantom which was striking wonder into them might be driven away. And as they were praying the phantom came nearer and nearer and took a solid form, and when it, and the company of devils which ran before it, drew nigh, for their prayer did not drive it back, it came forward and said unto them, "Why do ye labour in vain? Ye are unable at this present to do anything whatsoever against me, for I have received power from God, Who sustaineth the universe, to tempt whomsoever I please; and I have abundance of time in which to do this, for this I have asked from God."

Then Pachomius asked her, saying, "Whence comest thou? And whom dost thou wish to tempt?" And the phantom answered and said, "I am the daughter of the Calumniator, whose great power cannot be described, and unto me the whole company of the devils is subject. It was I who brought down the holy stars to the earth, and it was I who snatched Judas from the Apostolic power. I have received authority [or power] to make war against thee, O Pachomius, for I am not able to endure the reproach of the devils, and no man hath made me as weak as thou. Thou hast made me to be trampled under foot by youths, and by old men, and by young men, and thou hast gathered together against me a congregation such as thou hast, and hast set for them [as] a wall which shall never fall the fear of God, so that my ministers are not able to approach with boldness and freedom unto anyone of you. Now all these things have happened unto me because of the Word of God Who was made

man, for it is He Who hath given you power to trample upon all our might, and to hold us in derision."

And when the holy man Pachomius asked her, "Hast thou come to tempt me alone according to what thou sayest?" she said unto him, "I have come to tempt thee, and all those who are like thee." Pachomius said unto her, "So then thou wilt tempt Theodore also?" And she said, "I have received power over thee, and over Theodore, but I am never able to come nigh unto thee." And when Pachomius had said unto her, "Why?" she said unto them, "If I were to make war with you [two], you would have an occasion for help and not for injury, and especially would it be so in thy case, O Pachomius, who with the eyes of thy body art worthy to be a spectator of the glory of God; but ye will not live for ever for those for whom at present ye make yourselves a wall through your prayers, and whom ye help; and the time will come after your death when I shall have dominion over those whom thou now protectest against me, for ye have made me to be trodden under foot by this multitude of monks."

Then Rabbâ said unto her, "How knowest thou that those who shall come after us will not serve the Lord more truly than do we, and that they will not be able to confirm and strengthen those who come after us in the fear of God more than do we?" And the phantom said unto him, "I do know this." And Rabbâ said unto her, "Thou liest by thy wicked head, because thou hast no knowledge whatsoever beforehand of the things which are going to take place, for unto God alone belongeth fore-knowledge; thou art then the chief of falsehood." And the phantom answered and said unto him, "True, I have no knowledge whatsoever of anything by [the faculty] of fore-knowledge, even as thou sayest, for it belongeth to God alone to know what is going to happen beforehand, but I told thee that I had knowledge because [I judged] by analogy." And the blessed man said unto her, "How canst thou judge by analogy?" And she said unto him, "By the things which have already taken place I am able to judge of what will take place in the future." Then Rabbâ said unto her, "How?" And she said unto him, "I know that the beginning of every matter is in love and knowledge, and it receiveth

305 confirmation from the things which are provided, and especially through the divine care and the calling of heaven, and "by the Will of God it becometh confirmed by wonderful things and signs, and it is confirmed also by various powers which are exercised therein; but when that beginning waxeth old and becometh grey, it falleth away from growth, and when growth hath fallen away [i.e., ceased], it perisheth of old age, or languisheth through sickness, or decayeth through neglect."

And afterwards Rabbâ asked her, saying, "Why hast thou come, according as thou sayest, to tempt these great [saints] and not all the brethren? If it be as thou sayest, the destruction of souls resteth with thee to work, and thou surpassest in power all the devils, and thou must have all this power so that thou mightest be able to strive against men like these." And the phantom answered and said unto him, "I have already told thee that when the strength of the Sustainer of creation, the Redeemer Christ, appeared upon the earth, we were brought so low that, like a sparrow, we were mocked and laughed at by men such as

these who are clothed with the Spirit, and who seek to learn the Lord; but although we have become feeble through Him, we do not cease to work as much as we possibly can [against you], and we never cease from opposing you by every means in our power. And we sow the seed of our wickedness near the soul of him that striveth with us, and this we do especially when we see that he receiveth [it], and if we see that he really permitteth us to embrace him, then do we inflame him with fierce lusts, and we encompass him like mighty ones and cruel devils, whom it is exceedingly difficult to defeat. But if he is not willing to receive our seed, and will not, through his faith in God, and the watchfulness of his mind, accept with pleasure the things which are offered unto him by us, we dissolve away even as smoke is dissipated in the air. This is the reason why I am not permitted to wage war with all the monks, and I do not do so because all possess not perfection. For if it were permitted to me to wage war against them all, I should be enabled to lead astray many of those who lean upon thee."

And the blessed man said unto her, "Fie upon your wickedness which never sleepeth! Ye will never cease to stir yourselves up against the race of the children of men until the divine and unpolluted grace of God descendeth from heaven and destroyeth you." Then, having said these things, Rabbâ commanded the phantom to depart unto the place whither it had been commanded to go, and never again to approach with her feet his monastery. And when the morning was come, he cried out unto all the great brethren, and related unto them all the things which he had seen and heard from the destroying devils, and unto the other brethren who were living in the other great monasteries he sent letters, and informed them, in the fear of God, by means of these concerning the vision [which he had seen].

Chapter 15. Of the Gift of Tongues which Pachomius received

And it came to pass that, when the blessed Pachomius was visiting the brethren in their cells, and was correcting the thoughts of each of them, he was obliged to visit a certain Roman, who was a nobleman of high rank, and who knew the Greek language very well. Now therefore, having come to this great man, so that he might exhort him with words which would be beneficial to him, and might learn the motions of his heart, the blessed man spake unto him in the Egyptian tongue, but the brother did not know what the blessed man said. And because the blessed man did not know how to speak Greek, Rabbâ was obliged to call some brother who would be able to interpret to each of them the things which were said by the other. Now when the brother came to interpret, the Greek did not wish to declare to Rabbâ through others the defects of his heart, and he spoke unto him thus, "After 'God, I wish thee, and thee alone, to know the wickednesses of my heart, and I do not desire to declare them unto thee through others, for I do not wish that any man except thee should hear them.

And when Rabbâ heard these words he commanded the brother who had come to interpret to depart, and because Rabbâ was unable to speak to the Greek brother the words which he wished to say to him about help and redemption, for he knew nothing whatsoever of the Greek language, he made a sign to him with his hand to remain until he came [back] to him. Then Rabbâ left him, and went to pray by himself, and he stretched out his hands towards heaven, and prayed to God, saying, "O Lord, Thou Mighty One, Who 'sustainest the universe, if I am not able to benefit the children of men whom Thou dost send unto me from the ends of the earth, because I am not acquainted with their languages, what need is there for them to come? But if Thou wishest them to be saved here through me, give me, O Lord, Thou Star of all creation, the power to know their languages so that I may be able to set their souls in the straight way. And when he had prayed for more than three hours and had entreated God to grant him this knowledge, suddenly there

307 was sent from heaven into his right hand something which was like unto a letter written on paper, and when he had read it, he learned immediately how to speak all tongues, and he sent up praise to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost. And he came with great

joy to that brother, and began to talk to him both Greek and Latin with such fluency that when the brother heard him, he saith that Rabbâ's skill in speaking [Greek] surpassed that of all the learned men [of the day]. Then Rabbâ corrected him, as was right, and appointed to him the penance which was suitable to his defects, and he committed him to the Lord, and went forth from him.

Chapter 16.

Of a certain Holy Man whose name was Dawnan (i.e. Jonah), who was the Gardener of one of the Monasteries, and of the wonderful thing which Rabba Pachomius wrought in his Monastery

And it came to pass on the morrow that the blessed man departed to visit the other monasteries, and he arrived at the monastery which is called "Demeskenyânôs," and entered therein; now there was in that monastery a fine, large fig-tree, which one of the youths was in the habit of climbing up secretly, and he plucked the fruit thereof, and ate it. And when Rabbâ had gone in, and had drawn near that fig-tree, he saw an unclean spirit sitting in it, and he knew straightway that it was the devil of the love of the belly; and the holy man, knowing that it was he who led astray the youths, called to the gardener, and said unto him, "Brother, 'cut down this fig-tree, for it is a stumbling-block to those who possess not a well-established mind, and it is not a seemly thing for this tree to be in the middle of the monastery.' Now when the gardener, who was called Yâwnân, heard these words, he was sorely grieved, for he had passed eighty-five years in the monastery, and he had lived therein a pure and honourable life, and by himself he had cared for all the fruit [trees] therein, and he had planted all the trees that were in the monastery [garden]. Now, until the day of his death he never tasted any of the fruit whatsoever, though all the brethren, and the strangers, and those who dwelt round about them used to eat their fill in the fruit season. And this brother dressed in this fashion:

he joined three skins [of goats] together to form a covering for his body, and these were sufficient [clothing] for him; he did not lay down for himself one kind of bed in the winter season, and another in the time of summer. What rest of the body was he knew not, because of the press of his labours, for, with a ready mind, he toiled always; he never ate any cooked food whatsoever, neither did he partake of lentiles, or of any other food [of the same kind], but he lived all the years of his life on plantains only, which he ate with vinegar. And the brethren used to declare positively about him, and say, that he did not even know where the hospital was, and that still less did he know what the sick folk ate.

And besides all these things, he never, so far as we have heard concerning him, lay upon his back until the day of his death, but he worked all day long in the garden, and towards sunset he used to take his food and go into his cell, and sitting upon a chair which he had

in the midst thereof, he would plait ropes until [the time for the recital of] the service of the night, and in this way it might happen that he was able to snatch a little sleep through the absolute need of his corporeal nature, and that he slept whilst he was plaiting the ropes which were in his hands. Now he did not plait these ropes by the light of a lamp, but whilst he was sitting in darkness and reciting the Scriptures. And he had only one garment of linen, which he used to put on when he was about to partake of the Holy and Divine Mysteries of Christ, and immediately [he had done this] he would take it off and lay it aside, so that he might keep it clean, and it lasted him for eighty-five years. And that blessed old man performed very many other works which deserve praise, but we have not set them down in the book of this history, lest our discourse might become either too long or too full for those faithful ones who believe, and we should cause those who read it to become weary.

Now we found out concerning this man of whom we have written these things when he was dead, and he died in an unusual manner, that is to say, he was sitting upon a chair and plaiting ropes, according to his custom, and the ropes were found in his hands when he was dead. And this blessed man did not die suddenly, and so lose any portion of the happiness which was due to his health, but he fell ill, like all other men, and he would not be persuaded to go into the hospital, because he did not wish to be ministered to by any man, as are other sick folk; and he did not want to eat any of the meat which the brethren who were sick were wont to eat. And he would not lie upon his back even when he was sick, and he would not permit anyone to place a cushion for him when he was sitting up, or anything whatsoever which was a little soft, and was able to afford him relief. And no man was standing by him when he died, and he went to his rest grasping his rope-work [in his hands]. It was, moreover, a wonderful thing to hear how they buried him; for it was impossible to stretch out his legs, because they had become [stiff] like logs of wood, and it was impossible to make one hand lie by the side of his body.

It was impossible to strip off him the skin garment wherewith he was clothed, and we were therefore obliged to roll him up in cloth like a bundle and to bury him in that state. To this man came the blessed Pachomius, and told him to cut down this fig-tree, and when Yáwnán heard this, he said unto Rabbá, "Nay, O father, for we are accustomed to gather a large crop of fruit from this fig-tree for the brethren"; now although Rabbá was greatly grieved because of this matter he did not wish to urge the old gardener any further, and he was the more grieved because he knew that Yáwnán lived a great and marvellous life, and that he was held to be wonderful by many, and by great and small alike. And it came to pass on the day following that the fig-tree was found to have become withered so completely that not one soft leaf or fruit was found upon it. Now when the blessed man saw these things, he was greatly grieved, not for the sake of the fig-tree, but because of his own disobedience, when Rabbá told him to cut down the fig-tree, and he did not act according to his word.

Chapter 17. Of how Abba Pachomius would not keep Beautiful Buildings

The blessed man Pachomius built an oratory in his monastery, and he made pillars [for it], and covered the faces thereof with tiles, and he furnished it beautifully, and he was exceedingly pleased with the work because he had built it well; and when he had come to himself he declared, through the agency of Satan, that the beauty of the oratory was a thing which would compel a man to admire it, and that the building thereof would be praised. Then suddenly he rose up, and took ropes, and fastened them round the pillars, and he made a prayer within himself, and commanded the brethren to help him, and they bowed their bodies, and the pillars and the whole construction fell [to the ground]; and he said to the brethren, "Take heed lest ye strive to ornament the work of your hands overmuch, and take ye the greatest possible care that the grace of God and His gift may be in the work of each one of you, so that the mind may not stumble towards the praises of cunning wickedness, and the Calumniator may not obtain [his] prey."

Chapter 18.

Of how when on a certain occasion the Heretics came to him be did not yield to them, and of how he let them receive an experience of him by the Sign which they asked at his hand

And it came to pass on a certain occasion that certain heretical monks, who were in the habit of wearing garments made of hair, and who had heard concerning the blessed Pachomius, rose up and came to his monastery; and they said unto certain monks of Rabbâ, "Our father hath sent 'us to your Rabbâ with a message, saying, If thou art in truth a man of God, and if thou art confident that God will hearken unto you, come hither, and let us walk together across the river on our feet, so that every man may know which of us hath more freedom of speech before God than the other.' And when the brethren informed Rabbâ concerning these things, he was exceedingly angry with them, and said unto them, 'Why did ye undertake to listen to those who have said these things? Know ye not that requests of this kind are things which are foreign to God, and are wholly alien to our rule? And besides this, they are not even things which are thought well of by men who live in the world. For what law of God teacheth us to do these things? And more-over, our Redeemer commandeth us to the contrary in the Holy Gospel, saying, Let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth' (St. Matthew vi, 3). For thou [thinkest] of 'something which is more wretched than the want of mind '[i.e., foolishness] in imagining that I should give up mourn-ing for my sins, [or cease to think] how I may flee from ever-lasting punishment, or that, even if I were a boy in my thoughts I could ever come to [make] such a demand as that.'

And the brethren answered and said unto him, "How is it 'then that this man, who is a heretic and alien to God, should be so bold as to call upon thee to do this [thing]?" And Rabbâ answered and said unto them, "He is able to pass over 'the river as one who travelleth over dry land through the neglect of God, and the Calumniator helpeth him, so that his wicked heresy may not be brought to naught, and so that the faith of those who have gone astray may be more finally established by means of works of audacity which he performeth through him. Get ye out then, and say unto those who have brought such a message as this: Thus saith the man of God, Pachomius, I devote all my strivings, and all my anxious care, not that I may pass over the river by walking on the waters thereof, but in trying to flee from the judgement of God, and to escape, by the might of the Lord, from such Satanic wiles as these.'" Then having said these things to the brethren he strictly forbade them to think

greatly of their integrity, and to lust after the sight [of him walking across the river on the water], and to go with those who pry into such matters as these; [and he said] "We must not voluntarily follow after such matters as these, and we must not put God to the test by such questions, for concerning the knowledge of events before they happen He hath commanded us by His Holy Scriptures, saying, 'Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God, saith the Lord'" (Deuteronomy vi, 16).

Chapter 19. Of the Question which a certain Brother brought to him, and its Answer

Rabbâ was on one occasion asked by a certain brother, who said, "Why is it that, before the coming of that devil who vexeth us, we possess the understanding of the mind in a healthy state, and are able to make use of philosophy for the sake of self-denial, and humility, and the other virtues, but that when it cometh to us to make manifest in very deed the virtues of philosophy, that is to say, longsuffering in the hour of wrath, and the keeping of the temper in the season of anger, and a frame of mind from which vainglory is absent, and when there are praises [ascribed to us], and many other things which are akin thereto, the mind (or understanding) languisheth and becometh destroyed?"

And Rabbâ answered and said unto him, "It is because we are not perfectly skilled in the performance [of these things], and because we are not so thoroughly acquainted with all the mind and vague thoughts of the devils that we are able, through the power of the sight of the soul, to recognize in quiet contemplation the advent of him who causeth us vexation, and who watcheth that he may be able to gather together the outpouring of suchlike thoughts. Therefore, every day and every hour it is the portion of the soul to watch, and we must pour out upon it, like oil, the fear of God, that is to say, the efficacious performance of work, and the lamp which will enable us to see the things which are falling upon us in the healing of the mind. Whosoever then will not be strenuous [will come] to anger, and wrath, and ill-temper, and to each of the passions which lead us on to wickedness. And the soul will see, and will depart to that incorporeal country, and it will make the mind to hold in contempt the things which are wrought by the devils, and will compel it to trample under foot serpents and scorpions, and all the power of the Enemy."

Chapter 20. Of how unclean and contemptible in the sight of Rabba was the man who toiled with the Labour of his hands for the sake of Vainglory

On one occasion when Rabbâ was sitting with a number of the other brethren in a certain place in the monastery, [he was told that] one of the monks in the monastery used to make two mats of plaited palm leaves daily and that day he placed them in front of his cell, opposite the place where Rabbâ was then sitting with the brethren. Now he did this because he was [unduly] exalted with the thought of vainglory, and he believed that he would be praised for such assiduity, because the rule [of the fathers] was that each monk should make one mat daily. And Rabbâ perceived that the monk did this for the purpose of making a display, and he understood the intention which was stirring in the man and moving him; and he sighed heavily and said unto the brethren who were sitting with him, "See ye this man who toileth from morning to evening? He hath endowed Satan with all his labour, and hath left nothing whatsoever of his work for the comfort of his own soul. He hath toiled overmuch for the praise of the children of men, and he hath not worn out his body with all this work for the sake of God, and his soul is empty of work through the pleasure of him that doeth it, for he hath loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.

Then he called that brother, and rebuked him, and charged him to stand up behind the brethren when they were praying, and to hold the two mats, and to say to them, "O my brethren, I beseech you to pray for my degraded soul, in order that through your prayers God may shew abundant mercy to it, for I have held these mats in greater honour than His king-dom. And he also commanded that the man should stand up with the mats among the brethren when they were sitting at meat until they rose up from the table; and he commanded likewise that after this he should be confined to his cell for a period of five

months, and should make two mats daily, and should eat bread and salt only, and that no man should visit him.

Chapter 21. Of a certain Monk who belonged to the Monastery

Now before we bring this history to a close we are obliged to mention, in addition to those of whom we have already spoken, another holy monk who was thoroughly trained in the spiritual excellence of the brethren, so that we may narrate a few of the things which were wrought by him for edification. This brother, of blessed memory, because he was afflicted in his body had a cell separate from the brethren; he lived upon bread and salt only, and he used to make one mat of plaited palm leaves each day, and it would happen often, when he was plaiting the ropes which were being used in making the mats, that his hands would become covered with blood, and they were so full of wounds caused by the reeds, that the very mats which he was making were wetted with blood. But although he suffered from such a weakness as this, he never turned away from the congregation of the brethren, and he never lay down to sleep in the daytime until the end of his life. And it was his habit every night before he lay down to sleep to repeat some portion of the Scriptures, and then he would go to sleep until they beat the board to summon the congregation to the service of the night.

Now on one occasion a certain brother went to him, and seeing that his hands were covered with blood through plaiting mats, he said unto him, "Why dost thou work and toil in this manner, seeing that thou art so seriously ill? Thinkest thou that thou wouldst not obtain permission not to work and to be idle from God? God knoweth that thou art sick, and no man who hath thy complaint hath ever worked. We feed and take care of strangers and poor folk, and are we not in duty bound to minister unto thy wants, thou who art one of us, and art so holy a man, with all our soul and with the greatest joy and gladness?" And the monk said unto him, "It is impossible for me not to work," and the brother replied, "If it pleaseth thee to act thus, at least anoint thy hands with oil at eventide, for thou wilt not become as weary as thou art now, and thou wilt not become covered with blood." And the monk hearkened unto that brother, and anointed his hands with oil, even as he had told him to do, yet because they were tender they were grievously chafed, and cut, and torn by the sharp reeds (or palm-grass). Then Rabbâ himself went to visit him in his cell, and he said unto him, "Thinkest thou, O Theodore, that the oil had any beneficial effect upon thee? Who forced thee to work? Didst thou not place thy hope of being healed rather upon the

operation of the oil than upon God?" Peradventure was not thy God able to heal thee? Yet when He saw that thou wast ordering help for thyself He left thee "[to fall into] this pain." Then the monk answered and said unto Rabbâ, "O father, I have sinned against God, and I give thanks (or confess), and I entreat thee that God may forgive me this sin."

And, according to what those fathers who were with him said, he passed a full year in mourning for this act of folly; and he ate once every two days. And at the beginning of the period wherein this man began to gain strength considerably, Rabbâ was in the habit of sending him to every monastery that he might be both the foundation and the type of all the brethren, because he endured the cruel weakness of that disease with such patience.

Here endeth the History of the Followers of Pachomius, which is called in Greek the Asketikon of the Followers of Pachomius — Further remarks by the writer Palladius

Now therefore, though I must here add a few remarks about my beloved brother, who hath lived with me from my youth up until this day, I will make an end to my discourse in the haven of silence. It is indeed a very long time since I first knew this man, who is worthy of blessings; and I never knew him either to eat or to fast with desire; and, in my opinion, he overcame also the lust for possessions, and especially the passion for empty praise, and that which was his own was sufficient for him. He never arrayed himself in fine and costly apparel, but being made contemptible he received [acts of] grace, and in return for God's true mercy he continued thus even unto death. And this man accepted the temptation of devils a thousand times when they rose up against him, and at length one day a certain devil pressed him, and said unto him, "Agree thou with me for one day only, and commit sin only once, and any woman that thou shalt mention in this world I will bring unto thee."

And on another occasion that devil strove with him for fourteen nights, even as he himself told me, and he used to kick him with his feet in the night-season, and say unto him, "Do not worship Christ, and I will never come near thee again." And he answered and said unto him, "It is for this very reason that I worship Him, and I confess Him and glorify Him ten thousand times because thou art vexed thereby, and thou reelest away and dost tremble before Him." In his coming in and going out he walked through one hundred and six cities (or provinces) several times, and in the greater number of them he tarried for some time. By the grace and mercy of Christ he never knew the temptation of a woman, not even in a dream, except in [his] warfare [against fornication]. I know that he received food from an angel thrice: One day he was in a parched desert, and had not upon him a morsel of bread, and he found three cakes of bread in his cloak. Another time, when he lacked [food], an angel appeared unto him in a vision and said unto him, "Go and take wheat and oil from such and such a man"; and thereupon there came to him the man from whom the angel had commanded him to take [wheat and oil], and said unto him, "Art thou such and such a man?" and he said unto him, "Yea, I am"; and the man said, "A certain One hath told thee to take thirty bushels of wheat from me, and twelve boxes of oil."

Now over a matter of this kind, for such was his nature, he would boast. And I know that on very many occasions he used to weep over people who were in straits and difficulties, and who were living in poverty, and he would give them whatsoever he possessed, with the exception of his body only, which he was unable to give. Now I have seen him very many times weeping over a man who had been caught in a snare, and had fallen into sin, but through his tears he made him to become penitent, and to repent of his sin. This brother swore unto me once, saying, "I made supplication unto God that I would never make myself pleasing unto any man, especially the rich folk of the world, and the liars, lest they might give me whatsoever I had need of." Now it is sufficient for me that I have been held worthy to set down completely in writing, and to make mention of the man who, by the grace of God, was able to make perfect all these things. Behold the summary [of the contents] of the book hath been written above.

Here endeth the Second Part of the Histories of the Holy Fathers, which were compiled by the blessed Bishop Palladius, [and dedicated] to Lausus the Prefect. Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost, for ever! Amen.

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