The Lausiac History of Palladius, in the Bohairic Coptic version

Palladius of Galatia (c. AD 363–420)

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Bohairic Lausiac History - Part 1

The letter written to Lausus, the servant of Christ. In the peace of God: amen. Oh, how blessed is your purpose! Indeed, it is fitting that I begin the letter by proclaiming you blessed: for the mouths of all are open to vain things and building houses for themselves which they do not enjoy. But you now desire to be taught the truly just words of your holy father. For no one is untaught, except for the one who is the God of all things, that is, the holy and consubstantial Trinity; for it alone exists, and nothing is more excellent than this one divinity, this one kingdom. All other things, whether heavenly or earthly, must necessarily be taught, since they are created things and creatures of God. The first order, that is, the angels, are taught by the holy and consubstantial Trinity; those of the second order are taught by those of the first; those of the third order receive instruction from the second; and in this way all are instructed according to their rank until you reach the last. For those who excel in knowledge and virtue teach those who are inferior in virtues and true knowledge. All those who say, “We do not need to be taught,” or who do not submit in their hearts to those who teach, suffer from the disease of ignorance, which is the mother of pride. This pride was loved by those who, from the beginning, were prepared for destruction, those who were cast down from heaven, having been led astray by the pride of their own hearts, they did not subject themselves to those superior in virtue, but fled from their heavenly teachers.

Be attentive, with a vigilant mind, to what I write; for these are not mere words or syllables of knowledge, as even the wicked among men possess those. Rather, this is true knowledge: to understand and preserve good thoughts and humility, to avoid anger and disturbance, to think no evil, and to fully rejoice in the liberty before God, which brings forth the Word in the heart, like a flashing fire. For the Word of God is a consuming fire, as Paul says. If the Word had not existed, the Good Master would not have said to His disciples: “Learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart.” He did not adorn His words in a philosophical manner for His holy apostles but instructed them in the service of God, sharp understanding, and every precept of truth, wishing to sadden no one except those who hated the Word and despised their teachers. For the soul that practices asceticism in Christ and

does not know how to be taught with understanding or to teach what it has firmly learned should be understood to be suffering from madness. From God, indeed, comes the beginning of apostasy when a person fills their heart neither desiring nor acting according to the Word of God. However, the mind of one who loves God hungers for the Word at all times until the very end of their spirit. Be strengthened, therefore, and act courageously, and may the Lord Jesus Christ grant you grace in true knowledge.

Farewell in the Lord: amen. The life of holy men, written to Lausus, the servant of Jesus Christ. Many over time have endeavored to write numerous explanations, not to gain glory for themselves, but so that through them the world might see external matters. Some, indeed, by the heavenly inspiration that God granted them, taught and consolidated those things for the edification of humanity, which faithfully fulfills the commands and mandates of our Savior Jesus Christ, the Son of God the Father, with unchanging faith. Others, however, driven by the corrupt intention of pleasing men, loved material gain and left their explanations in words, providing comfort to those who pursue pleasure and anger, who love power, who love riches, but not the poor, until they destroy those who boast of knowledge while their understanding is blind in necessity - which is all of the heretic schismatics. All those who have stained the happy and catholic Church, which remains free from blemish throughout its entire life, by injecting evil words of philosophy into the hearts of men without understanding, so that their lives might be destroyed far from purity. It has also pleased me, a poor and humble man, who reveres the command of your piety, your service to God, and the progress of your thoughts, to teach you these things. From my youth until this time, spanning thirty-three years, I have confessed to leading the life of brothers, becoming a monk among them in ascetic practices. And for these past twenty years, I have served in the episcopate.

Now, for these five years, I desire to teach you about pure and glorious works and all the virtues of the elders, which I have seen with my eyes and heard with my ears from faithful Fathers in the desert of Egypt, in Libya, and from those who were in Upper Egypt, in Syene, in the places inhabited by the Tabennesiotes, and in Mesopotamia, Syria, Palestine, and the West, in Rome, in Campania, and in the inland regions. With all the fervor of my heart, I have striven to direct my attention to writing this book for you, from the beginnings of the monastic works that arose in the desert, so that it might be a mirror in which you see your reflection and remember it day and night for the salvation of your soul. For it is so full of glory and divine medicine that it will even cast out the domination of concupiscence from you, as well as the duplicity of the heart, the softness caused by the abundance of the riches of this world, all sloth, all affliction of the heart, all disturbance, faint-heartedness, and unrelenting anger. In this way, you will become one who progresses in the thought of God and sincere piety, becoming a guide for yourself and for those who are with you, as well as for those who will come to you, and

for pious kings. From the teachings and words of these ascetics, that is, the holy elders, let those who love Christ hasten to unite themselves to God according to virtue and undivided love, expecting at all times the departure of their souls from their bodies, as it is written: “It is better for me to be dissolved from this flesh so that I may be with Christ.”

And again: “Prepare your works for the departure of your soul from the body.” For whoever places their own death before their eyes at all times will not admit many sins. For they will not forget the commandments and precepts of God, nor will they disdain our humble prayer, which is neither clear enough nor adorned with the wisdom of this world. For we are simple people and have not received the wisdom of this world (and so much the better for us). It is not right to adorn the holy knowledge of incomprehensible divinity and infinite glory with the polluted philosophy of the wisdom of this world, which is full of baseness and all evil. How could it be just to adorn Him who cannot be adorned—that is, God—with the wisdom of this world, when He Himself adorns all His creatures? But let us persuade the hearts of people much more toward the knowledge of God, in subtle understanding, so that they may see the Spirit of the Lord, who resides in the words of truth. For Scripture, unless it is understood, kills. ut the Spirit gives life, if you see the words in the right way, as it is written: “Open your mouth to the Word of God, and learn.” Again, Scripture says: “Do not be incredulous of the words of the elders, for they were taught by the Fathers who lived before them.”

I too, O man of God, lover of knowledge, walked according to the precepts of the elders, and encountered many elders on my path. I did this not out of laziness but from the fervor of my heart. I walked for thirty days, and then I walked again, traveling on foot until I had traversed the entire Roman region. I loved the hardships of the body and the pains of the journey, not in vain, but to meet pious men and gain from their contemplation what I had not yet attained. For if a certain man, far greater than I, whose resolve was unchanging, walked from Tarsus to Judea to meet Peter, James, and John, and gloried in his sufferings, inspiring zeal in all the lazy and slothful, saying, “I went to Jerusalem to see Peter,”— for he did not merely content himself with hearing about the external virtues of the apostles but desired also to see their appearance, reputation, life, and instruction— For this reason he strove until he saw Peter.

How much more must I, who am a debtor of ten thousand talents, find it necessary to narrate what I have seen regarding our holy Fathers? I speak the truth, I do not lie—not as though I am bringing benefit to the Fathers, but for the sole benefit of my soul and anyone who hears of their sufferings and exercises. For those who wrote books about our Fathers, from Adam to Abraham, and about those who followed up to the present day as found in the Scriptures, did not write to bring glory to those about whom they wrote but to provide benefit to those who would read, so that

they might emulate their lives. Therefore, knowing these things, O faithful and venerable servant of Christ, Lausus, strengthen yourself in the meditation of the holy books, and receive my verbosity, which is presented before you, so that you may preserve holy thoughts. The movements of depravity, which are like the waves of the sea foaming and rising against us, should be cast far away from us through prayer and attentiveness. Many are the lives of these holy and pious brothers, each of whom engaged in a different work: yet all shared one faith and one Spirit, working in all their endeavors. For just as in a garden there are many trees, each bearing different fruits, but all watered by the same source, so these holy elders were adorned with different virtues: one with mercy, another with ascetic practices, another with bodily afflictions, another with self-denial, another with humility.

In sum, they excelled in every work of virtue, transforming their way of life and their faith into glory, urging themselves onward to the meditation on divine teachings and an exceptional love through mutual encouragement. Some indeed strove toward these virtues but, lacking discernment, failed to attain them because they practiced these virtues to please men and to accuse their brothers, rushing toward good works out of emulation for works that were not good. In this way, they corrupted good works through pride, the mother of ignorance. Therefore, hurry, my brother, to present yourself as a temple of God. Do not, as you once did, build yourself another house from wealth, but rather let the desire for silver abandon you, and you abandon it. Let the purse, which is consumed by moths, depart from you, and instead acquire for yourself treasures that thieves do not dig through. Spend these on the poor and the needy, take up your cross, and follow the Lord. For in this way, you will acquire all virtues and guard yourself from corruptible human vanity. Do not bind your freedom with the imprudence of an arrogant oath, saying, “I will not drink, I will not eat,” as some men have done who followed such a way of acting. For they fell into passions of hesitation and pleasures until they broke their oath. Therefore, if you eat, eat according to your will; if you refrain from eating, refrain according to your ability without making an oath, and may you never sin.

For the intelligence that resides in us is divine, fighting against the harmful movements of the evil spirit battling against us—that is, our thoughts—driving out those that are harmful and bringing in those that benefit us. For the law is not placed upon the righteous, for they are united with God, and the Lord Himself is their law. It is better, therefore, to drink wine with good judgment than to drink water with pride. Consider those righteous ones who drank wine with good judgment, and do not regard as images of demons those who drink water with improper thoughts. I am not one to criticize or judge, for the one who eats, eats to the Lord and gives thanks to the Lord; and the one who does not eat, does not eat to the Lord and gives thanks to God. But it is very important that a person’s affliction be carried out rationally, lest they fall into the mockery of demons. I do not criticize food, nor do I exalt it with praise, but rather the judgment that receives food with good

counsel. Those who receive good food I consider weak and ignorant. Look at the blessed Joseph: he drank wine with good judgment in the land of Egypt, but his mind was not changed, nor was his discipline corrupted. For his heart was steadfast, and his master's wife could not deceive him into defilement. On the other hand, philosophers such as Pythagoras, Diogenes, Plato, and the Manichees who originated from them, and all the groups of false sages, drank water and committed such great sins of this kind that they forgot God and worshiped impure idols.

Those in the house of Peter and all the disciples of our Lord Jesus Christ also drank wine with Him, so much so that the Jews murmured against the Master, saying: "Why do your disciples not fast like John's disciples?" But the Lord rebuked their foolishness, saying: "The sons of the bridegroom cannot fast while the bridegroom is with them," meaning that He Himself, who dwelt in their minds and good counsel, was present with them. Again, they rebuked His disciples, saying: "Why does your teacher eat and drink with publicans and sinners?" They did not criticize in vain only because He truly ate and drank. The Lord Jesus Christ answered them: "John the Baptist came to you neither eating nor drinking, and you said, 'He has a demon' (for he did not eat meat nor drink wine, though no one can live in the body without eating food or drinking water); The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and you say, 'Behold a man who eats and drinks, who is a friend of publicans and sinners.' "

Thus, Wisdom was fulfilled by its deeds. What then do you think we should do? Let us follow neither those who heap praises on us nor those who criticize us, but let us follow John the Baptist, let us fast intelligently with him, even if they say, "He has a demon." And let us drink wine and eat fish with Christ in thanksgiving and with good counsel if our flesh is weak or in need, even if they say, "Behold, men who eat meat and drink wine." For not eating is nothing, but what matters is right faith, which is required of you, and the observance of the commandments, which is made evident through good works. If, therefore, every good work we do for God is accompanied by faith—whether eating, drinking, or any other act—such works cannot be condemned because of right faith. However, any work done apart from faith is sin. But since there are those who eat with passion and indulgence, saying, "We eat with faith," and who do not eat according to the measure of sufficiency but with insatiable greed, how shall we discern them? Certainly, we will recognize them, for Christ, our Savior, says: "You will know them by their fruits." The fruits of those who strive in righteousness are, as the Apostle says: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faith, gentleness, and self-control.

These are the fruits of the Spirit. But whoever desires these fruits will not desire to eat meat or drink wine imprudently or carelessly, nor will they find satisfaction in a guilty conscience. Paul reproves such a person, saying: "Whoever competes abstains from all things." If, therefore, our flesh is healthy, one will abstain from all things; But if their body suffers from illness or pain, or if they are in sorrow,

they will eat and drink so that food and drink may serve as remedies for the illness, pain, or sorrow within them, enabling them to endure the affliction of the body. However, they will abstain from those things that harm the soul, such as anger, envy, vanity, hatred, jealousy, insult, and pride in the sight of God and His angels. And while they endure this bodily affliction, they will give thanks to God at all times. Now I will conclude my discourse with you on these matters: it is sufficient. I also ask, for the sake of your love of knowledge, that you avoid associating with people from whom no benefit comes, nor follow the pattern of their lives or leadership. For they decorate the exterior, like a skin that is clean only on the outside, but not the interior. If they say, “Our faith is right,” and if you examine them with your understanding to see whether the fruits of true faith are present in them, then you may associate with them.

But if they are heretics, offering harm through their appearance and hypocrisy—even if their hair is white and their faces show the marks of old age—if they do not bear the fruits of God, avoid their company. Even if you say, “They will not harm me,” because of the strength of your piety, do not let them weaken your fervor, nor make yourself proud before them, nor mock them. For they will attack your conscience with their blasphemous words and destroy your soul with evil and blasphemous speech. Therefore, now consider them with clear speech and mind. Associate with holy men, seek them out, and receive grace for your soul from them so that, like reading books, you may see whether your heart is steadfast or not. From the sight of holy men, their gracious countenance, and their aged, honorable hair, from their humble clothing and lack of pride, from their words full of piety, from their readings and grace, which reside in their understanding, you may draw great strength, even if you have been negligent. For a person’s clothing, the manner of their dress, their gait, and the way they laugh reveal what kind of person they are, as it is written in Scripture. When I begin to tell you the lives of our Fathers, I will omit no place into which I have entered to instruct you—neither those who dwell in cities, nor in villages, nor in the desert, nor those who live only briefly among others.

For we do not seek the places or the people who dwell in them, but rather their character and their choice for God.

Bohairic Lausiac History - Part 2

Concerning Abba Pambo. A certain man was seen on Mount Pernoudj, whom they called apa Pambo. He was second only to Abba Antony, and they call him apa Pamo ἀληθινόν (that is, “the truthful”), of whose virtues all the brothers bear witness. I did not meet him in my time, but the brothers told me that this man had never lied, nor spouted evil from his mouth, nor, since becoming a monk, taken an oath nor cursed, nor had he spoken a word unless it was necessary. He had a wife and two sons who did not want to become monks. When he had come to the brothers, he approached an elder and said to him: “Teach me a psalm”; for he was illiterate.

The elder began to teach him this psalm: “I said: I will guard my ways, so that I may not sin with my tongue;” And when the elder had recited the earlier words, he restrained him, saying: “My father, unless I learn the first verse, I will not study the second.” And when Abba Pamo had returned to his cell, he spent eight years so that he might accomplish through his actions what he had learned in words. For he would not go to anyone, saying: Unless I first master my tongue, I will not approach anyone, lest my tongue should cause me to fall. After spending eight years, he returned to the elder from whom he had first learned the verse, and the elder said to him: “Pamo, why have I not seen you until now? Have you not yet learned the psalm?” Apa Pamo replied: “Since I have not learned the first verse, I have not come to you to learn the second, for until now God has not granted me to learn it. And so, lest I seem to despise you, father, I have come to you. But when I recite this first verse, I will come to you again.”

And when he had returned to his cell, he spent another ten years and did not visit him. Thus, on this mountain, the blessed Abba Pamo instructed Abba Dioscorus to become a bishop, as well as Abba Ammon, Abba John, and the nephew of Abba Dracontius, the bishop in the village of Hor. Therefore, Abba Pamo was a man who inspired admiration, for his virtues and practices were of the highest order. But most admirable of all was that he despised gold and silver, as it is written. Blessed Melania once told me this about him: “When I had first gone from Rome to Alexandria, Abba Isidore, the priest of Abba Pamo, recounted his virtues to me. I, in turn, entreated him with my prayers to show me the way to the desert place where

Abba Pamo dwelled, so that I might see him. When he led me to the mountain and brought me to the place of that Abba, I threw myself at his feet and worshiped him. He commanded me to sit, and he himself sat, weaving palms."

Then I set before him my vessels and gave him a silver vessel that contained three hundred pounds of silver, praying that he would share in my wealth. But he, seated and weaving palms, intent on the work of his hands, did not lift his eyes to see me, but in a quiet voice said: "May God bless you according to what you have endured, and may He grant you your reward in heaven!" He also said to me: "Put that vessel in the window." Then he called Theodorus, the steward, and said to him: "This woman has brought this for the service of God; therefore, take it, go, distribute this among the elders in the cells of Libya, and dispense it among the brothers who live in caves and islands, for these monasteries are the poorest of all." But he instructed me: "Do not distribute this to the monasteries of Egypt; for those regions," he said, "need material goods far less than these do." And I said, standing there pondering these things: "Perhaps he will bless me or praise me!" I truly heard no word from him. Then I said to him: "My father, so that you may know, I remind you that there are three hundred pounds of silver here."

But he, not even lifting his head as he wove the palms, said to me in a firm voice: "He to whom you have given this knows its amount; there is no need for anyone to tell him the quantity. For He who weighs mountains and hills with a scale is not ignorant of the quantity of silver. If you had told me this, you would have done well to remind me, for I am a man; but when you have given it to God, what need is there to inform me? For the God who accepted the widow's two small coins will also accept your offering. But you should be silent, lest you boast." Thus God granted me peace of mind, and I departed from him. Melania said to me: "I have seen nothing of human weakness in him." Then, from that place, I went to the large desert of Shiet and built a church for Abba Isidore, the presbyter. A few days later, Abba Pamo, a man of God, fell asleep in the Lord at the age of seventy, and no one had foreseen his death, nor did he suffer from fever; instead, he sat weaving a basket. When the hour came for his spirit to depart, Melania came again to see him. Pambo signaled to her: "Take this basket, made by the labor of my hands, as a remembrance of me; for I have nothing else to leave you." Immediately, he gave his spirit into the hands of God. She then prayed to his disciples that she might be allowed to care for his body. And so she prepared his body with clean and honorable linens, left the desert, and kept that basket in her hands until her final day.

Abba Isidore of Shiet, the presbyter, recounted to us the virtues of Abba Pambo: "I entreated him to show me the way to the desert place where Abba Pamo dwelled so that I might see him. And these are the men who, marveling at him, stood with him when he departed from the body, namely Abba Macarius the presbyter, Abba

Ammon, Abba Theodorus, and many others chosen among the brothers." and they said to him: "Father, give us a word so that we may live by it." And the old man spoke to them thus: "From the time I entered this desert and built myself a cell and stayed there, I do not remember a single word I have spoken without repentance, for I have never spoken a word unless I first weighed whether it was for death or for life. Nor am I aware that I ever ate bread for free, unless it came from the labor of my own hands. I never brought it into my heart that I had lived a monastic life, but now as I am about to depart from the world, I do not say to you that I have lived a pious life according to God; rather, I bring an accusation against myself, that I have not achieved the will of God."

The brothers then said to him: "Father, do you not think that your labors and your works are of God?" He responded to them: "Up to this point, I have striven with all my strength to fulfill the commandments of God. But how do I know what will happen to me at the hour when I approach God? For the judgment of God is one thing, and the judgment of humans another. His is mercy: if He wishes to treat me kindly, He will grant me grace and love. But if He wishes to reckon accounts with me, I will not be free from blame before Him. I do not know whether I shall obtain pardon from Him beforehand."

Concerning him, Abba Ammon, Abba Theodorus, and Abba Jacob testified: "If asked him about Scripture or any other matter, he did not answer immediately, but said: 'Before I grasp the meaning of this word, give me two or three days, so that I may meditate on it and offer you an answer.' " After two or three days had passed, or even an entire week, he did not respond hastily, but said: "Unless I know whether this word produces the fruit of life or of death, I will not speak it." The words that he did speak were received by the brothers as though they had proceeded from the mouth of God. His disciple Jacob, who modeled his life on Abba Pamo's image and adopted his entire way of life, testified to one exception concerning him related to speech. He said that a certain Spanish man named Anatolius came to him one day. Anatolius had once been a Roman notary of Albinius, and after leaving the world behind, he filled a purse with gold containing four thousand gold denarii. He placed it at the feet of Abba Pamo, hoping, he said, to receive praise or to be admired and appointed as the steward of wealth. However, Abba Pamo remained silent, working with his hands and not paying any attention to him, nor did he utter a single word. Then Anatolius said: "My father," he said, "I have brought this for the service of the poor." The old man replied: "This I know, my son." Anatolius then said: "I want to know how much is in it." The old man replied: "He to whom you gave this has no need to know its quantity."

Abba Pambo, because of his good works and the greatness of his humility, was admired by all the brothers. They also recount about him that one day he was summoned to Alexandria by Abba Athanasius. When he entered the city, he saw a

woman devoted to theatrical spectacles, magnificently adorned. Immediately, tears flowed from his eyes. When the brothers accompanying him saw this, they said: “Father, we beseech you, tell us why these tears are falling.” He replied: “I am moved for two reasons: first, because of the soul I now see being destroyed; second, because my own ungrateful soul has not taken up such adornment as hers—not the adornment of a harlot, but of virtue. It has not clothed itself in that adornment, nor has it sought to please God and the angels.” Regarding a disciple who was very faithful in matters of money, it was revealed that he took pleasure in the curse of Gehazi, the disciple of Elisha the prophet. Then Abba Pambo took the wealth that Anatolius the prefect had brought and gave it to a certain young man named Origenes, who up to that time had lived and dedicated himself to the task assigned to him by the elder, namely, the distribution of goods. He often congratulated himself in the Lord, saying to us: “Neither I nor my sons are aware of having eaten anyone else’s bread: we have used nothing except what we acquired through our own labor.”

He also acted in this way: he gave nothing from the distributions to younger men, but only to elderly poor and infirm men who could not procure bread for themselves. As for the men of his monastery, he gave them nothing from the wealth in his possession; instead, he chose ten faithful men whom he sent annually to the islands and Libya, and to the places of the κελάφων of Alexandria, where ships were loaded with grain and bread, so that they might distribute it to those in need. He also ensured that the churches of the region, which were in want, and the churches of the interior desert, in the land of the barbarians, received support, so that he would not give anything from his monastery to those living nearby. You will understand, therefore, that he introduced this custom to the brothers who inhabit the regions of Egypt and Mount Pernoudj: Namely, he arranged that every year a certain artaba of wheat would be given to each person, which would be distributed to those in need at the κελάφων and also to widows and orphans. Thus, each monk throughout the year strove to give an artaba of wheat in alms from what was necessary for himself. This custom persists among them to this very day.

They also tell this remarkable story about our holy father, Abba Pambo. It is said that the ascetic Apa Pihor, a disciple of Abba Antony, once came to him, bringing bread and two olives that he had taken with him to eat. Abba Pambo said to him: “What are these, Pihor?” Apa Pihor replied: “I have decided to remain with you for a day, and I brought these few necessities with me.” The elder understood that Pihor had bound himself by a vow not to eat another man’s bread. After some time, wishing to teach him without acting according to his own will while among the elders, Pamo rose and went to Apa Pihor. Before he reached him, he had moistened his bread and carried two jars of water with him. Apa Pihor said to him: “What are these, Pambo?” Pambo replied: “Behold, I have brought my bread and water

with me. To avoid causing you any trouble, I moistened my bread before coming to you." Thus Apa Pambo did this to teach him silently.

Bohairic Lausiac History - Part 3

Now I shall begin to speak about Apa Evagrius, the deacon of Constantinople, upon whom Gregory the bishop laid his hands. It is fitting to recount the virtues of one to whom all ascribe glory, for he led an apostolic life. For truth itself required that his work be made known as something marvelous. For it would not be the work of truth if we were to pass over in silence its marvelous deeds and progress. Rather, let those things which are useful for the edification and benefit of those who will read be written, so that praise may be given to God our savior, who grants to humans the power to perform these deeds. For He himself taught me the life that is in Christ, and he himself instructed me in the spiritual understanding of the Scriptures and in the discourses of the elders, as it is written: ‘So that sin might be revealed, for he is a sinner.’ The entire time he remained on the mountain, I too stayed with him, with our solitude shared together: I spent the night of the Sabbath and Sunday entirely with him.

But lest anyone should think that I ascribe glory to him or offer him praise, I call Christ as my witness that I saw most of his virtues with my own eyes, and that the miracles he performed were not done for his own glory, but for the benefit of those who will read or hear of them, so that they may praise Christ, who gives power to his servants and fulfills His will in them. Would that I were also worthy to teach you these things—namely, how he progressed from his beginning to this perfection and great asceticism, completing sixty years, and then rested, as it is written, ‘In a short time, he fulfilled many years.’ This man, of whom we speak, was of Pontic descent. He was the son of a presbyter from Iberia, whom Saint Basil, bishop of Cappadocia, ordained as a presbyter over the city near Arkeus. When blessed Basil died, Evagrius went to Constantinople, following his father, who was also a presbyter serving God. Evagrius, full of wisdom, followed in the footsteps of Saint Basil. He attached himself to Gregory, bishop of Constantinople, who, seeing his insight and understanding, which were truly good, ordained him as a deacon. For he was indeed a wise man, abstinent in his passions and an irreproachable deacon. He went to Constantinople along with our holy bishops, at the time when the synod was held in Constantinople. He surpassed all the heretics.

Therefore, Evagrius and Nectarius the bishop disputed face to face with each other, for Evagrius was very vigilant in the Scriptures and prepared by his own wisdom and understanding to refute all heretics. Thus, throughout the entire city of Constantinople, he was renowned for boldly combating the heretics with splendid words, and the entire populace attributed much praise to him. After all this knowledge, however, because of the pride he possessed, the demon of feminine desire ensnared him in thought. But just as he later escaped the passions, he taught us these things. For a certain woman greatly loved him. But since Evagrius truly feared God, he did not sin with her, for the woman was married, and he guarded his own conscience, because the woman's husband was a man of great and most honorable lineage. Evagrius thought about his immunity to disgrace, about sin, judgment, and the joy with which heretics rejoiced after being confounded by him. He therefore prayed to God, ceaselessly imploring Him to aid him in his struggle against his passions in the battle imposed upon him. When the woman's desire clung to him and persisted until he might succumb, he wished to flee her, but he could not find the strength. For his thoughts, like those of a child, were bound by pleasure. But divine mercy did not delay in seizing him; the grace of his prayers and supplications quickly came to him and gave him strength through a vision.

Before anything evil happened with the woman, the Lord sent angels to him in a nighttime vision, dressed in splendid garments like the guards of an eparch. They seized him and dragged him away like one being led to judgment. They bound him, as with thieves, in a prison with other criminals, placing collars and shackles on him, though he knew not why they had taken him or what the cause was. He then realized that this was happening to him because he had considered, even in thought, standing before the eparch—the husband of the woman.

He was utterly astonished by these things. The angel who appeared to him changed his appearance and, in his presence, became like one of his friends who had come to comfort and encourage him. When the angel saw him bound with the criminals, he said to him: 'Why have you been arrested, my deacon?' He replied: 'Truly, I do not know; but my mind tells me that I have accused a certain man, moved by jealousy. Therefore, fear lest he give silver to the judge and I perish here violently.' The angel said to him: 'If you listen to me, your friend, surely it is not good for you to remain in this city.' Evagrius said: 'If God frees me from this necessity and you see me again in this city of Constantinople, say to me: 'You have deserved this punishment by right.'' But the angel, who had taken the form of a friend, said to him: 'I will bring you the Gospel; swear to me: 'I will not remain in this city.' What is good for your soul, the Lord will provide, and I will free you from this necessity.'

Then he swore upon the Gospel, saying: 'After one day, when I have placed my belongings on a ship, I will leave this city.' As soon as he swore, he awoke from the vision he had seen during the night and said: 'Even though I swore in a dream, still

I have sworn an oath.' He immediately rose, loaded his belongings and clothing onto a ship, and sailed to Jerusalem. Blessed Melania the Roman received him with joy. Once again, the devil hardened his heart, just as he had once hardened Pharaoh's. His heart became wavering and conflicted: his youth luxuriated, as did his pride in words and his delight in the changes of fine clothing. He would change them twice a day, succumbing to pride and the pleasures of the body. But God, who always protects his people from ruin, sent him a fever so severe that he endured a prolonged illness, and his flesh became thin as a thread; yet all these pains afflicted him so secretly that doctors, unaware of his illness, were unable to cure him.

Saint Melania said to him: 'My son Evagrius, this illness, which has been long for you, is a lesson for me: do not hide your thoughts from me, and perhaps I will heal you. Speak to me sincerely about your thoughts; otherwise, I see that this has not happened to you without God's will.' Then he revealed all his thoughts to her, and she said to him: 'Promise me that you will take on the monastic habit, and although I am a sinner, I will pray to my God that He may grant you healing freely.' He gave her the promise, and within a few days he was healed. He rose, put on the monastic habit, departed, and walked to Mount Pernoudj in Egypt. There he lived for two years, and in the third year he left. Then he entered the desert of Cellia, where he lived for sixteen years, practicing many exercises, and there he died at the age of sixty. He did not see the bitterness of old age or the weakness of the body, and so he rested, as it is written: 'In a short time, he fulfilled many years,' and he was swiftly carried to the Lord lest his understanding be corrupted by wickedness.

One day, our father Macarius was asked: 'Father, how can I overcome the spirit of fornication?' The elder said to him: 'Do not eat at the appointed times, neither vegetables nor anything cooked with fire.' That man was admirable, as his life was filled with the delights of peace and quiet. Indeed, it would not be fair to speak of his life without first recounting his old age. He prayed one hundred prayers every day, and he was also an elegant writer. When he had completed eight uninterrupted years of ascetic discipline, his bodily organs became afflicted; even the place where he passed water caused him pain, for his food was like stones in his stomach. The elders urged him to modify his ascetic practice. Until the time of his death, he did not eat bread, but only a few vegetables from among foods until he completed his short span of time. He neither ate fruit nor anything that gave pleasure to the body, and he did not allow his disciples to eat such things. This was the asceticism of his eating.

His sleep, however, was measured and divided: he slept for a third of the night, but never during the day. He had a corridor where, throughout the entire half of the day, he walked, weighed down with drowsiness, forcing his mind to contemplate visions that were revealed to him. At night, when he had already slept for a third

of the night, he would spend the remaining part of the night walking through the corridor, meditating and praying, driving sleep away from himself, and compelling his mind to focus on the visions of the Scriptures. Thus, he became a man of the purest mind and of wisdom, knowledge, and discernment, and he was regarded as worthy of the grace of discretion, distinguishing the works of demons. In the holy Scriptures and the orthodoxy of the Catholic Church, he was eloquent and learned, for his knowledge and his chosen mind are attested to by the books he wrote. He wrote three books: one about the monks of monasteries, another about the monks who dwelled in the cells of his desert, and another about the presbyters of God, to make them vigilant in their holy place. These three books all taught a good life, ordered understanding, and visions in accordance with the orthodox traditions of the Church. For this was his custom.

The brothers would gather with him on the Sabbath and on Sunday. Throughout the entire night, they would share their thoughts with him, listening to his strong words until dawn. When they left him, they gave glory to God, for his teaching was very sweet to them. If they came to him and he noticed any deep or grave thought troubling them, he would beseech them, saying: ‘My brothers, if any one of you is troubled by a deep or serious thought, let him remain silent until the other brothers have gone, and then let him ask me privately, in secret, between the two of us. Let him not speak before his brothers, lest perhaps he lose the little one through his own thoughts and be overcome at the same time by pain of heart.’ He so loved strangers that in his cell he would admit five or six strangers daily who came from distant regions to hear his wisdom, understanding, and ascetic practices. For he possessed spiritual gifts and to him everyone would send offerings such that he had more than two hundred charismata. All of these were managed by the steward, who at all times served in his house. Often Apa Theophilus sought to apprehend him and make him bishop of Thmouis, but he fled so that this would not happen.

One day, demons came to him and inflicted wounds upon him; we heard his voice, but we saw no one. Throughout the night, they struck him with scourges, and we saw the wounds on his body with our own eyes: God is our witness. If you wish to know about the temptations he endured from demons, read the book he wrote against the demons, and you will see his entire life and the various temptations he suffered. He wrote it for this reason, so that those who read might be strengthened, for they are not the only ones who are tempted; and he taught us how such thoughts and inclinations might be overcome. This man was hidden at the beginning. One day, the demons increased fornication against him so much that they placed this thought in his heart: ‘God has forgotten me.’ As he told us, he spent the entire night naked in winter, praying until his flesh became as dry as stone. At another time, the spirit of blasphemy harassed him, and for forty days he did not enter the shelter of his cell. His entire body became inflamed, like an irrational beast filled with swelling. A few days later, he told us the visions he had seen and never

concealed them from his disciples. He said: ‘During the night, I was sitting in my cell, burning with lamplight, meditating on one of the prophets. In the middle of the night, I was in a rapture of the mind, and I found myself, as it were, dreaming a dream, seeing myself suspended in the air, gazing at the clouds and the entire earth. And a certain one whose hands I was hanging from said to me: ‘Do you see all these things?’ For he had lifted me up to the clouds, and I was seeing the entire world at once. I said to him: ‘Indeed.’

He said to me: ‘I will give you a command: if you fulfill it, you will be made ruler over all these things that you see.’ He said to me: ‘Go, be merciful and humble; place your thoughts rightly in the Lord, and you will be ruler over all these things.’ And when he had spoken these words to me, again I saw myself holding the book, with the lamp burning, though I had been somehow caught up to the clouds. I did not know whether I was in the flesh—God knows—or in the spirit, I do not know; God knows. And so he strove for these two virtues (to be attained), as if he had attained all others, saying: ‘Humility leads to correct knowledge, and understanding aspires to the heights.’ For it is written: ‘He will teach the humble his ways.’ And this is the virtue of the angels.’ Concerning purity, he said: ‘Not only monks and virgins possess it, but many laypeople also maintain purity; for not all possess bodily purity.’ He continued: ‘Therefore, seek peace with all, and pursue purity. No one, unless pure, shall see the Lord.’ It was impossible to find a worldly word in the mouth of Apa Evagrius, or even a word of contention; nor would he listen to such from anyone else.

We also heard this miracle about him: when Apa Theophilus sought to make him bishop of Thmouis, he fled and withdrew to Palestine. There, he found a woman possessed by an unclean spirit. Nothing created could satisfy her, for the demon had proposed to her a life resembling that of angels; but for many years, she did not lie with her husband. When Apa Evagrius, the man of God had met him, and with a single word he turned the woman’s heart to God, along with her husband’s. For she had been speaking externally of philosophy, yet unaware of what she was saying, such that it was wondrous for her to speak otherwise. She was saved in the Lord and reconciled with her husband through him. On another occasion, an old man who was fleeing from the priesthood and living in the desert came to him. While traveling, his bread and that of his disciple failed, and the disciple was on the verge of collapsing from hunger on the way. But an angel brought bread before him and placed it on the mountain. When the old man reached the place of Apa Evagrius, he said to him: ‘As I was coming to you, my boy and I, on the road, we were starving and found no bread to eat. The boy nearly fainted from hunger, and when we had stretched out a skin and knelt down, as we fell to the ground, the scent of warm bread reached us. When I rose, I found two warm loaves. And when each of us had taken his share of bread, we ate and were strengthened, we

traveled and came to you.' And I also sat there while he spoke of these things and the wondrous deed that had happened to Apa Evagrius.

As I sat, he said: 'Tell me, then, do you think that demons can accomplish these things?' Apa Evagrius replied: 'The same thing happened to both of us—you and I are witnesses. A few days ago, I also set out to visit the brothers, and as I walked along the road, I found a purse in which were three gold coins.' After I sat down for a day, no one came to search for it, and because I did not know who it belonged to, I sent someone to the nearby villages, saying: 'Has anyone lost a purse in recent days?' When no one came forward, I gave an order to my steward and said: 'Distribute it among the pilgrims, whether it comes from angels or from the devil.' And we distributed it accordingly. Therefore, I give thanks to God, for such works do not pertain to the soul unless they lead it to be purified, are useful. However, I congratulate you for having received food from an angel; for demons, too, can bring bread, even steal it and offer it. But this bread does not nourish the body, for the bread of demons stinks, and if bread is from the devil, the soul is disturbed when it sees it. But if the bread is from an angel, the soul is not disturbed but remains in peace and tranquility. At that moment when someone is worthy to receive bread from the hands of angels, reason first provides discernment, if we recall the words of the Apostle, saying: 'The food of the mature is for those who, because of their perfection, have trained their senses to discern what is good and what is evil.'

Another time, three demons approached him at midday, disguised in the form of ministers of the church. By their appearance, they displayed themselves as though they were righteous, and he did not immediately recognize them as demons. After they left and he found the door firmly closed, he knew they were demons, though at first he had not realized it. They showed themselves in such a way as to dispute with men of faith about the Scriptures and each of them presented him with a problem: 'We have heard of you, that you speak beautifully of the orthodox faith; therefore, we have come to you to persuade our hearts concerning these matters which we question. He replied to them: 'Say what you want. The first said: 'I am a Eunomian, and I have come to you so that you may teach me whether the Father is unbegotten or begotten. Apa Evagrius said to him: 'I will not answer you because you have questioned poorly, for it is not fitting to speak of what is unbegotten by nature as something begotten or unbegotten. When the first man knew that he had been defeated, he instructed his companion to proceed. The second man stepped forward and said to the first: 'You questioned poorly. Apa Evagrius said to him: 'And you, who are you? He replied: 'I am an Arian. Apa Evagrius said: 'And what do you seek? He said: 'Concerning the Holy Spirit and about the truth of the saying that Mary bore God in the flesh.

Then Saint Evagrius said to them: ‘The Holy Spirit is neither begotten nor created; for every created thing is comprehensible, mutable, and is sanctified by Him who chose to sanctify it. The third said: ‘You have defeated these […] The old man replied: ‘What are you seeking, you who boast of yourself before the battle? The demon replied: ‘I bring no ambiguity, but my heart is not persuaded, nor am I certain that Christ accepted human understanding. Instead, I believe divine understanding was in Him. For it cannot happen that a human spirit could drive out demons who dominate and overcome them. However, the human spirit does not exist in a body alongside God.’

Apa Evagrius said: ‘If He had not accepted the human spirit, He would not have taken on human flesh; for the Blessed Virgin Mary did not bear one without a human soul. In every human work, free from sin, this was fitting. For it is not possible that there be a body [….] soul and spirit. For unless He had received these, Christ would be called in vain. Therefore, the immutable Word, the Only-Begotten Son of the Father, assumed a human body, as well as a soul, spirit, and all things human, without sin. Let us now simply bring forward Paul’s testimony, which says: to unite us into one faith, one divinity, one kingdom, because the Trinity is immutable. For he said: ‘There is one God and one mediator between God and humanity, Jesus Christ, the Son of God the Father, one Holy Spirit, one Catholic Church, one resurrection of the dead in time.’ Thus, Paul said, ‘[…] you have fully grasped the mystery of the Holy Trinity.’ One among you said the Word is a creature; another said the Holy Spirit and the body of Christ are creatures; another, however, killed the soul and body of Christ […].

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