Religious History (Lives of the Syrian Monks)

Theodoret of Cyrus (c. AD 444)

SermonIndex.net / Church Fathers

Contents

Preface **1**

Chapter 1 **5**

Chapter 2 **11**

Chapter 3 **19**

Chapter 4 **26**

Chapter 5 **31**

Chapter 6 **34**

Chapter 7 **38**

Chapter 8 **40**

Chapter 9 **45**

Chapter 10 **50**

Chapter 11 **53**

Chapter 12 **55**

Chapter 13 **57**

Chapter 14 **62**

Chapter 15 **64**

Chapter 16 **66**

Chapter 17 **67**

Chapter 18 **70**

Chapter 19 **72**

Chapter 20 **73**

Chapter 21 **74**

Chapter 22 **83**

Chapter 23 **85**

Chapter 24 **86**

Chapter 25 **89**

Chapter 26 **90**

Chapter 27 **98**

Chapter 28 **100**

Chapter 29 **102**

Chapter 30 **104**

Preface

PROLOGUE. It is a fine thing to watch the struggles of the best men, the athletes of virtue, and to draw benefit through one's own eyes. Things we praise seem worth owning when we see them. They become worth loving, and they urge the onlookers to take them for their own. Yet accounts of such achievements also bring no small benefit, when those who know the facts pass them on to the ears of those who do not. Some say that sight is more trustworthy than hearing. Even so, hearing also can be persuaded, and it judges what is said by the truthfulness of the speakers. The tongue and palate are trusted to judge sweetness, bitterness and other such qualities, and they deliver the same verdict together. In the same way, hearing has been entrusted with the discernment of words, and it knows how to separate what brings some benefit from what does harm. If the memory of helpful accounts stayed safe, and the damage of forgetfulness did not settle over it like a mist and make it fade, then writing such things down would be needless and superfluous, since the benefit would pass easily to later generations. But time damages the body by bringing old age and death, and it damages noble deeds by producing forgetfulness and dulling memory. So no one could reasonably take offense at us for undertaking to write down the way of life of men who love God. Physicians prepare medicines to fight disease and help the sick. In the same way, the labor of this kind of writing becomes a kind of remedy against harm, working against forgetfulness and coming to the aid of memory. For would it not be absurd that poets and historians should write down brave deeds in war? Tragedians put on stage, for all to see, disasters that were rightly hidden, and leave a written memory of them. Others spend their words on comedy and laughter. And we would look on while men are handed over to oblivion, men who in a mortal body subject to passions showed freedom from passion, and who rivaled the bodiless nature!

What penalty would we not justly deserve if we stood by while the memory of these admirable struggles grows dim? Consider that they themselves pursued the highest philosophy of the saints of old. They did not carve the memory of those saints in bronze and letters. They copied all their virtue and made themselves into living images and monuments of them. What forgiveness could we expect, then, if we do not honor this celebrated life even with writing? And this is done for those who compete at Olympia. Charioteers who show themselves victorious in the horse races receive this same honor. Not only these, but also [their own kind of men], and effeminate men, and people of whom it is doubtful whether

they are men or women, are painted on panels by the lovers of such spectacles, who are eager that their memory should last as long as possible. Yet remembering them does the soul harm, not good. Even so, some people love these men and some love those, and they honor them with painting, though they corrupt those who watch them. Because death plunders mortal nature, people mix colors and set likenesses of these figures on panels, and so contrive to make the memory last far longer than the life. But we are writing the life of a teacher of philosophy, one who emulated the way of life in heaven. We do not paint the features of bodies, and we do not show copies of them to those who do not know them. We sketch the forms of invisible souls, and we reveal battles no one can see and struggles that are hidden. Such is the full armor that Paul, the general and champion of their battle line, has put on them. For he says: "Take up the full armor of God, so that you may be able to stand against the evil day, and having accomplished everything, to stand." And again: "Stand, therefore, having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with readiness for the Gospel of peace, and over all taking up the shield of faith, with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the evil one, and to receive the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God."

He clothed them in this armor and led them into the contest. For their enemies are of such a kind: bodiless, unseen, advancing without being noticed, plotting in secret, lying in ambush and attacking suddenly. This same commander taught as much when he said: "Our wrestling is not against blood and flesh, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the world-rulers of the darkness of this age, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places." Yet although this company of saints had such opponents (or rather, each one of them was surrounded by so many enemies of this kind, for the enemies did not attack all together, but now fell on one, now on another), they won so brilliant a victory that their adversaries ran away, and the saints pursued them with full force and set up a trophy with no one standing in the way. The victory was not given them by nature, for nature is mortal and full of countless passions, but by their purpose, which drew down divine grace. They became ardent lovers of divine beauty, and gladly chose to do and suffer everything for the sake of the one they loved. They bravely endured the uprising of the passions and firmly beat off the showers of the devil's arrows. In the apostle's words, they bruised the body and made it a slave. They calmed the inflammations of anger, and forced the frenzy of desires to keep quiet. By fasting and sleeping on the ground they put the passions to sleep and stopped their leaps and bounds, and so they forced the body to make a truce with the soul. Thus they ended this war that is born within us. When they had secured peace among these inner powers, they drove out the whole host of their opponents. For the enemy had no thoughts within that betrayed the city, and was robbed of the help of the human members, so he could not make war. The devil uses our own members as the missiles he throws against us.

If the eyes are not lured, the ears not charmed, the touch not tickled, and the mind does not accept wicked plans, then the schemers' effort is wasted. Think of a city built on a

height, encircled by strong walls, and surrounded on every side by deep ravines. No enemy could take it unless someone inside betrayed it and quietly opened some small gate. In the same way, it is impossible for demons attacking from outside to overcome a soul that is surrounded by divine grace, unless some careless thought opens one of the little gates of our senses and lets the enemy in through it. The men we are praising had been taught this plainly by the divine Scripture. They had heard God say through the prophet that "death has come up through the windows." So they shut the senses with the divine laws, as with bars and bolts, and put the keys in the hands of the mind. Neither tongue nor lips opened unless the mind commanded it, and the pupil of the eye was not allowed to look out from the eyelids without permission. The ear could not wall off its entrance with eyelids or lips, so it pushed away foolish words and welcomed only those in which the mind delighted. In the same way they trained the sense of smell not to long for sweet scents, since these naturally make a person soft and slack. In the same way they drove out the fullness of the belly, and taught themselves to take only such food as met a need and not a pleasure, and only as much as could keep off death from hunger. In the same way they overthrew the sweet tyranny of sleep. They freed the eyelids from slavery to it and trained them to be masters instead of slaves, to take the help sleep gives not whenever it comes on them, but when they themselves call it in to give nature a brief relief. So they took care to guard the walls and the gates, and kept their inner thoughts in agreement. They laughed at the enemies attacking from outside. Those enemies could not break in by force, because divine grace made the saints secure, and they found no traitor willing to let them in. Though the enemies are invisible by nature, they could not prevail over a body that is visible and subject to the necessities of nature.

The charioteer of this body, who is also its musician and its helmsman, holds the reins well and has persuaded the horses to run in order. By rhythm he has made the strings of the senses sound one harmony. By skill at the rudder he has broken the force of the waves and the rush of the winds. These are the men who walked through life by countless labors and tamed the body with sweat and hardship. They did not know the feeling of laughter, but spent their whole lives in weeping and tears. They counted fasting a Sybarite's luxury, and counted laborious wakefulness the sweetest sleep. The hard ground was their soft bed, and time spent in prayers and psalm-singing was a pleasure beyond measure and beyond satisfying. Who would not rightly admire men who have gathered every kind of virtue into themselves? Or rather, who could praise them as they deserve? I know well that no speech can reach their virtue. Still, I must try. It would not be right that, because these lovers of true philosophy became perfect men, they should receive no praise at all, even a lesser one. I will not write one common praise for them all. Different gifts were given to them by God, and the blessed Paul teaches this when he says: to one is given through the Spirit a word of wisdom; to another a word of knowledge according to the same Spirit; to another gifts of healing in the same Spirit; to another workings of powers; to another prophecy; to another kinds of tongues; to another interpretation of tongues. Then, to show the source of all of these, he added: "All these things are worked by one and the same Spirit, who divides to

each one individually as he wills." Since they received different gifts, it is right that I give an account of each one separately. I will not go through everything they did, for a whole lifetime would not be enough for such a work. I will tell a few of the things each one lived or did, show through those few the character of his whole life, and then move on to the next.

I will not try to set down in history the lives of all the saints who have shone everywhere. I do not know all who have shone in every place, and it is not possible for one man to write about them all. I will record only the lives of those who appeared in the East like lights, whose rays have reached the ends of the world. The account will proceed as a narrative. It will not follow the rules of formal praise, but will simply tell the story of a few men. I ask those who read this God-loving history, or "ascetic way of life" (call the work what you like), not to disbelieve what is said, even if they hear things beyond their own power. Do not measure the virtue of these men by your own. Know clearly that God is accustomed to measure the gifts of the Holy Spirit by the minds of the godly, and gives the greater gifts to those who are more perfect. I say this to those who are not very thoroughly initiated into divine things. Those who are initiated into the inner sanctuary of the Spirit know the Spirit's generosity. They know what wonders he works through men among men, drawing unbelievers to the knowledge of God by the greatness of his marvels. Whoever will not believe what I am going to say plainly would not believe, as true, the things done through Moses, Joshua, Elijah and Elisha. He must also think the miracles done through the holy apostles a fable. But if he grants that those are true, let him believe that these are free of falsehood too. The grace that worked in those men has worked through these as well. Grace is ever-flowing. It chooses the worthy, and through them, as through springs, it pours out streams of benefit. Of the things I will tell, I was an eyewitness to some. What I have not seen, I have heard from those who saw them: men who love virtue and were counted worthy to see those saints and to be taught by them. Trustworthy writers have also set down the teaching of the Gospel. Not only Matthew and John, the first and great evangelists, who saw the Lord's miracles with their own eyes, but also Luke and Mark, who had received the account from those who were eyewitnesses from the beginning and servants of the word. They taught accurately not only what the Lord suffered and did, but also what he went on teaching.

Blessed Luke was not an eyewitness either. Yet when he begins his writing, he says he is giving an account of matters that have been fully established. We too hear that he was not an eyewitness of these very events but received the teaching from others. Even so, we pay as much attention to him and to Mark as to Matthew and John. Each of them is a trustworthy narrator, because each was taught by those who had seen. In the same way, I will report some things as an eyewitness, and other things on the word of eyewitnesses who told them to me, men who had imitated the lives of these saints. I have spent more words on this because I want to persuade you that what I will tell is true. I will now begin the narrative, starting from this point.

Chapter 1

1. The divine Moses, the lawgiver, laid bare the bed of the sea, flooded the waterless desert with water, and worked all his other wonders. He also wrote the life and conduct of the saints of old. He did not use the wisdom he had learned from the Egyptians; he received the radiance of grace from above. Where else could he have learned the virtue of Abel, the love of God shown by Enoch, the righteousness of Noah, the devout priesthood of Melchizedek, and the calling of Abraham, with his faith, his endurance, his careful hospitality, and his much-celebrated offering of his son? Where else could he have learned the long list of their other achievements, and, to put it briefly, the struggles, victories and proclamations of those inspired men, unless he had received the rays of the intelligent and divine Spirit? I need that same help now, as I try to write the lives of the saints who shone a little before our time and in our own. I want to set before those who wish to imitate them something like a body of law. So I must call on their prayers, and then begin the account. Nisibis is a city on the border between the Roman and Persian kingdoms. In earlier times it paid tribute to the Romans and was under their rule. The great Jacob came from this city. He embraced the life of solitude and quiet, and he went up to the summits of the highest mountains and lived there. In spring, summer and autumn he used the thickets, with the sky as his roof. In the winter season a cave received him and gave him a little shelter. His food was not what is sown and grown with labor, but what springs up of itself. He gathered the fruits of wild trees that grow on their own, and the edible, leafy plants. From these he gave his body what was enough to live on, and he did without the use of fire. He had no need of wool either, since the roughest hair of goats supplied his clothing. From this he made both a tunic and his single, simple cloak.

By afflicting his body in this way, he constantly fed his soul with spiritual food. He cleansed the eye of his mind and made it a clear mirror of the divine Spirit. As the divine Apostle says, with unveiled face he beheld the glory of the Lord as in a mirror, and was transformed into the same image from glory to glory, as from the Lord the Spirit. So his boldness toward God grew day by day, and whatever he asked of God, as he ought to ask, he received at once. So too he foresaw future events like a prophet, and he received power to work miracles from the grace of the Holy Spirit. I will tell a few of these things, and show the ray of his apostolic brightness to those who do not know it. At that time people's madness for idols was at its height. Lifeless wooden images took over the reverence due to God, and the worship of

God was neglected by most. Those who refused to share in that drunkenness were easily despised, though they were the steady ones who discerned reality accurately, laughed at the weakness of the idols, and worshiped the Creator of the universe. At that time Jacob came to Persia to see the plants of godliness there and to give them the care they needed. As he was passing a certain spring, some girls were standing at the washing places, trampling the dirt out of clothes with their feet. They were not ashamed at the strangeness of his appearance. Casting off all modesty, with shameless faces and bold eyes they stared at the man of God. They did not cover their heads, nor let down the clothes they had hitched up. The man of God was disgusted at this. He wished to show God's power at the right moment, so that by a miracle he might free them from their godlessness. He laid a curse on the spring, and at once the stream vanished. He laid a curse on the girls, and punished their shameless youth with premature grey hair. The deed followed the word. The black of their hair changed, and they looked like young trees in spring wearing autumn leaves. So they felt the punishment. The waters of the spring had fled, and as they looked at one another's heads they saw that sudden change. They ran to the city to report what had happened.

The people ran out, found the great Jacob, and begged him to relax his anger and lift the punishment. Without the least delay he made his petition to the Master and commanded the waters to well up again. At once they reappeared from their own storehouses, channeled again at the righteous man's bidding. Those who had gained this then begged that their daughters' locks be given back their former color. They say he yielded in this too, but asked for the girls who had received that lesson. Since they did not come, he let the punishment stand, as a lesson in modesty, a reason for good order, and a lasting, visible reminder of the divine power. Such was the miracle of this new Moses. It was not done by the stroke of a rod, but received its effect through the sign of the cross. Besides the miracle, I greatly admire his gentleness. He did not hand those shameless girls over to blood-drinking bears, as the great Elisha did. He used a harmless correction, with only a slight disorder in it, and taught godliness and good order together. I say this not to accuse the prophet of harshness. May I never be so mad! I say it to show that Jacob had that same power, but carried out what was fitting with the gentleness of Christ and in keeping with the New Covenant. At another time he saw a Persian judge give an unjust verdict. He laid a curse on a very large stone lying nearby, that it be shattered and scattered, and so he exposed the judge's unjust verdict. At once the stone broke into countless pieces, and those present were terrified. The judge, filled with shuddering, revoked his earlier verdict and gave another, a just one. Here too Jacob imitated his own Master. The Master wished to show that he endured the passion willingly. He could easily have punished the guilty if he had wished, but he did not bring punishment on them. He dried up a lifeless fig tree with a word and so showed his power. Imitating this same love for humanity, Jacob did not punish the unjust judge, but taught him justice by the blow to the stone. Distinguished in these things, loved by all, and spoken of on everyone's lips, he came to the service of the high priesthood and was given charge of his homeland.

When he exchanged that life on the mountain for life in the city, he did not do so by his own choice, and he changed neither his food nor his clothing. The places changed, but his manner of life did not. His labors actually increased and became many times greater than before. To fasting, sleeping on the ground, and wearing sackcloth he now added a constant concern for all who were in need: care for widows, protection of orphans, rebuke of those who did wrong, and rightful help for those who were wronged. But why list for those who already know everything that surrounds men who have taken up this office of oversight? He embraced such labors above all because he both longed for and feared, above all, the Lord of the sheep. And the more he gathered the wealth of virtue, the more he enjoyed the grace of the all-holy Spirit. Once, as he was setting out for a village or city (I cannot say exactly which place), some poor men came to him. They had laid out one of their companions as though he were dead, and they begged him for something toward his burial. He yielded to their pleading. But he offered his prayer to God as though for a dead man, asking him to forgive the offenses of his life and to count him worthy of the company of the righteous. As these words were being said, the soul of the man who had been pretending to be dead flew away, and his body was provided with its coverings. When the holy man had gone on a little way, the men who had staged this play told the man lying there to get up. But when they saw that he did not respond, and that the pretense had become truth and the mask had turned into a real face, they ran to the great Jacob. They wailed and rolled at his feet, saying that poverty was the cause of the scheme they had dared, and they begged him to release them from their offense and give back to the man lying there the soul that had been taken away. So, imitating the Lord's kindness toward men, he accepted their plea and showed his wonder-working power: through prayer he gave back to the man who lay there the life that prayer had taken away. This seems to me to resemble the wonder worked by the great Peter, who sent Ananias and Sapphira to their death when they had stolen and lied.

In the same way Peter took away the life of a man who had stolen the truth and used a lie. But Peter knew of the theft, for the grace of the Spirit revealed it to him, and so he brought the penalty. Jacob did not know the purpose of the play. He offered his prayer, and so he stopped the course of a life that was only pretended. Again, the divine Apostle did not undo the calamity of the dead, for the opening of the saving proclamation needed fear. But Jacob, who was full of apostolic grace, punished for a season and quickly lifted the punishment, because he knew that in this way he would win those who had fallen. But we must move on to the other matters and set them out briefly. Arius was the father and maker of the blasphemy against the Only-begotten and the all-holy Spirit. He set his tongue in motion against the One who made it, and filled Egypt with uproar and confusion. Constantine, the greatest of emperors, was the Zerubbabel of our flock. Like Zerubbabel, he brought the whole captivity of the pious back from exile, and raised up to a great height the divine temples that had been thrown down to the ground. At that time, then, he gathered all the presidents of the Churches to Nicaea. Among the others there came the great Jacob, to fight for the right doctrines, like a champion and front-line fighter for the whole army. For Nisibis

then belonged to the Roman empire. Now in the great council many things were said well and rightly, and many otherwise. For there were a few who thought the opposite but did not dare to lay bare their own impiety. They covered it with certain baits. These were not clear to everyone, but were quite plain to those who were precisely initiated into the truth. The confession of faith that now prevails and is proclaimed throughout the whole world was dictated. All signed it, and with hand and pen declared that this is what they believed and thought. Most did so gladly. But seven men, advocates of the blasphemy of Arius, agreed with tongue and hand, though they held a mind that spoke against the tongue. This fits the prophecy that says, "This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me." It also fits the voice of Jeremiah, which cries out plainly: "You are near to their mouth, and far from their reins."

David agrees with this when he says about such people: "With their mouths they blessed, and with their hearts they cursed." And again: "Their words were softer than oil, and yet they are darts." These men begged Alexander, the great bishop of the Alexandrians, to take pity on Arius, who had been condemned by that whole assembly. Alexander knew their hidden unsoundness and suspected the wickedness of Arius, and for that reason he refused the request. Others, who lived in simplicity, spoke many words of praise for mercy, saying that the God of all rejoiced in it too. But the great Alexander called this unjust "mercy" toward one man plain inhumanity. He said it would ruin many and become an occasion of infection for all the flocks. So the divine Jacob urged everyone to take up the hardship of fasting, and for seven days together to beg God to bring about what would benefit the Churches. All accepted the proposal of the godly man, for they knew he shone with apostolic gifts. Fasting was joined to prayer, and the helmsman of these Churches was voting, as it were, for their good. Then the Lord's Day came, on which most expected the guilty man to be received back. The time of the divine liturgy arrived, and everyone waited to see the enemy of God shown mercy. At that moment a truly divine and astonishing wonder took place. That accursed man had gone into a foul and stinking place to relieve himself of his insatiable eating, and he passed out with it the very vessels that held it. His inner organs were loosened and went out with the filth, and the wretch collapsed on the spot and suffered that most shameful death. He paid the penalty for his foul blasphemy in a foul place, and received his death-blow through the tongue of the great Jacob. Now the divine Scripture admires Phinehas the priest, and rightly so, because he killed Zimri, who had become a cause of destruction for the people. So blessed David sang: "Phinehas stood and made atonement, and the plague was stopped; and it was counted to him as righteousness, from generation to generation, forever."

Yet Phinehas used a weapon of war to carry out that just and much-celebrated killing. For Jacob the tongue was enough, in place of spear and sword, and it destroyed the ungodly man so that he would not see the glory of the Lord. This alone is enough to expose the folly of the heirs of Arius's impiety. For this great man was a herald and defender of the doctrines we hold, and he so loathed their impiety that he struck down its very father, using his tongue as a weapon. When the holy council broke up and each man went back to his own home,

Jacob also returned, rejoicing like a champion and victor in the trophies of true religion. Time passed. That great and admirable emperor departed this life with the crowns of piety, and his sons inherited rule over the world. Then the king of the Persians, whose name was Shapur, despised the sons, thinking they could not do what their father could, and marched against Nisibis. He brought a very large force of cavalry and a very large force of infantry, and he had a great many elephants as well. He divided his army as for a siege and encamped all around the city. He set up siege engines and built towers. He drove in stakes and fenced the spaces between them with woven branches. Then he ordered his soldiers to pile up earth and raise towers against the city's towers. He had archers climb up there and ordered them to shoot at those standing on the wall, while he ordered others to dig under the wall from below. But everything came to nothing, undone by the prayer of the holy man. At last, by the labor of many hands, he blocked the flow of the river that ran by the city. When he had collected as much water as possible behind the barrier, he released it all at once against the wall, using it as a very powerful engine. The wall could not bear the blow of the water. It was shaken by the force, and the whole section on that side fell completely. The Persians shouted loudly, thinking the city was easy to take. They did not know about the great wall of the inhabitants [the people's defense]. Still, they put off the attack, because they saw the city made impassable by the waters.

So the Persians withdrew to a distance, supposing their labor was over, and they rested themselves and tended their horses. The people of the city turned to more earnest prayers, with the great Jacob as their envoy. All those of working age rebuilt the wall in haste, caring nothing for beauty or neatness. They put everything together as it came, stones, bricks, whatever anyone brought. In a single night the work advanced, and it rose high enough to stop the charge of horses and to stop men from climbing it without ladders. Then everyone begged the man of God to appear on the wall and to shoot down the enemy with curses. He agreed and went up. When he saw their many tens of thousands, he begged God to send a cloud of gnats and mosquitoes against them. He spoke and God sent them, much as God obeyed Moses. The men were wounded by these divine arrows. The horses and elephants broke their tethers and bolted, scattering this way and that, unable to bear those stings. Then the impious king saw that all his siege engines had done no good, and that the attack of the river had come to nothing, for the wall that had fallen had been rebuilt. He saw his whole army worn out with toil, suffering in the open, and driven off by a blow from God. He also saw the man of God walking on the wall. He guessed that this was the king overseeing the work, because Jacob was seen wearing a purple robe and a diadem. So he raged against those who had deceived him and persuaded him to march, and who had said the king was not in the city. He passed a death sentence on them, disbanded his army, and returned to his own palace as fast as he could. God worked such wonders in the case of this man, as he did for Hezekiah. They were no less than that earlier one, and in my judgment even greater. For that the city was not taken even when its wall had fallen, what greater marvel could there be? And besides this I marvel at something else: though Jacob used curses, he did

not ask for thunderbolts and lightning to be sent down, as the great Elijah did when each captain of fifty came to him with his fifty men.

For Jacob had heard the Lord speak plainly to James and John, who had tried to do this very thing: "You do not know what spirit you are of." For that reason he did not ask that the earth open up for the Persians, nor did he beg that their host be handed over to fire. He asked instead that they be wounded by those tiny creatures, so that they might recognize the power of God and learn, even if late, true devotion to him. So great was this man of God's boldness before God, and so great the grace he enjoyed from above. He continued in these things, growing every day in divine things, and with the greatest renown he laid down this life and set out on his journey from here. Time passed, and this city was handed over to the Persian kingdom by the emperor of the time. All who lived in the city went out, carrying the body of their champion. They were grieving and lamenting their forced migration, and they sang of the power of their victorious hero. For had he been alive, they would never have come under barbarians. Having told this much about this man of God, I will move on to another account, praying that I may share in his blessing.

Chapter 2

Julian, whom the locals honored with the nickname Sabbas (in Greek the name means “old man”), set up his ascetic hut in the region once called Parthia and now called Osrhoene. To the west it stretches to the bank of the river itself, which is named Euphrates. To the east it reaches the edge of the Roman empire, for Assyria follows, which is the western limit of the Persian kingdom and which people later called Adiabene. In this land there are many large and populous cities, and a very great stretch of country, part of it inhabited and a great part of it uninhabited and desert. This godly man reached the far edge of that desert. He found a cave that was not made by hands and had not been dug out neatly or well, but could give a little shelter to those who wanted to take refuge in it. He gladly made it his home, judging it more precious than palaces glittering with gold and silver. There he passed his days, taking food only once a week. His food was millet bread, and that made of coarse bran. His relish was salt. His drink, and the sweetest of drinks, was the water that welled up naturally, and he measured it not by what would satisfy him but by what the food he had set out first required. His luxury, his delicacy, and his feast of every kind was the singing of David’s psalms and his unbroken conversation with God. He enjoyed these without ever being sated, and he did not want to have enough of them. He was always being filled, and always crying out, “How sweet are your words to my throat, sweeter than honey and the honeycomb to my mouth!” He heard blessed David say again, “The judgments of the Lord are true, righteous altogether, more to be desired than gold and much precious stone, and sweeter than honey and the honeycomb.” He heard him say again, “Delight yourself in the Lord, and he will give you the requests of your heart.” And again, “Let the heart of those who seek the Lord rejoice.” And, “Make my heart glad to fear your name.” And, “Taste and see that the Lord is good.” And, “My soul has thirsted for God, the strong and living one.”

And, “My soul has clung to you.” And he took the love of the one who spoke these words and made it his own. This is the very reason the great David sang these words and taught them, so that he might make many into sharers and fellow lovers of God. He was not disappointed in his hope. He wounded this marvelous man, and countless others, with the love of God. This man received such a burning torch of love that he was drunk with longing. He saw nothing of earthly things. He dreamed of the Beloved alone by night and pictured him by day. Many learned of this highest philosophy of his. Some lived nearby and some far away, for rumor flew everywhere on wings. They ran to him, begging to share in the training-

ground and to live from then on under him, as under a trainer and coach. For it is not only birds that hunt birds, singing and calling their own kind to themselves and entangling them in the snares set around. Human beings also catch those of their own nature, some to their ruin and some to their salvation. So they gathered, and quickly there were ten, then double and triple that, and then they filled up the number one hundred. And the cave took in all of these, for they had learned from the old man to condemn the care of the body. Like their coach, they too ate millet bread seasoned with salt. Later they also gathered wild vegetables, packed them into earthen jars, and mixed in as much brine as was needed. This was the relish for those who needed some care. But damp dwellings are the enemy of this vegetable, for it naturally breeds mold and rot. Since this trouble befell the relish, because the cave took in much moisture from every side, the members of the company begged the old man to let them build a small shed, large enough for the jars of this relish. At first he would not accept the request. But at last he was persuaded, for he had been taught by the great Paul not to seek his own things but to be led along with the lowly. He gave only small and modest measurements for the shed, and went off far from the cave to offer his usual prayers to God.

He was in the habit of walking out into the desert, often fifty stades and sometimes twice that far. He cut himself off from all human company and turned inward, so that he could talk with God alone and see reflected, as in a mirror, that divine and unspeakable beauty. Those who had been given into his care took advantage of this leisure and built the little house. They made it a fitting size for its purpose, but larger than they had been told to build it. He came back after ten days, like a Moses coming down from the mountain and from a vision beyond words. When he saw that the building was bigger than he wanted, he said: "I am afraid, men, that by enlarging our lodgings on earth we may shrink our dwellings in heaven. These earthly ones are temporary, and useful to us only for a little while. Those are eternal and can never come to an end." He said this to train the company in the more perfect way. Yet he put up with it, having heard the apostle's voice: "I do not seek my own advantage, but that of the many, that they may be saved." He also trained them in this: inside the cave they offered their psalmody to God together. After dawn they went out into the desert two by two. One would bend his knees and give the Master the worship that is due him, while the other stood and sang fifteen psalms of David. Then they exchanged tasks. The one who had been singing would kneel and bow to the ground, and the other would rise and sing. They kept on doing this from early morning until late evening. Shortly before sunset they rested a little. Then they came back to the cave, some from one direction and some from another, and all together offered their worship to the Master. The old man himself used to take one of the more distinguished brothers as a partner in the service. A certain man followed him quite often, a Persian by birth, tall and admirable in appearance, and possessing a soul even more wonderful than his looks. His name was Jacob. After the old man's death he shone in every virtue, and was famous and admired not only among the people there but also in the monasteries of Syria. In one of those he died, having lived, it is said, a hundred and four years.

This man shared the great old man's journey into the desert, but followed from a distance. The teacher would not allow him to come near, so that it would not give them an excuse for conversation, and conversation steal the mind away from its vision of God. As he followed, Jacob saw an enormous serpent lying on the road. When he saw it he did not dare go forward. Several times he wanted to turn aside out of fear, but his resolve grew strong again. Then he stooped, picked up a pebble and threw it. He saw the serpent stay just as it was, unable to move at all. Understanding that it was dead, he supposed that the old man had killed the beast. When he had finished the walk and completed the service of psalmody, the time for rest came. The old man sat down and told Jacob to rest his body for a little too. At first Jacob sat in silence. But when the old man began some conversation, Jacob smiled and begged him to make clear something he did not understand. The old man allowed him to ask. "I saw a huge serpent thrown down on the road," he said. "At first I was afraid, thinking it was alive. When I saw it was dead, I took courage and went on. So tell me, Father, who killed it? You were leading the way, and no one else has passed along that road." The old man said, "Stop prying into such things. They can bring no benefit to those who deal with them." But the admirable Jacob still pressed him, eager to learn the truth. The old man tried for a long time to hide it, but could not bear to distress the one who loved him any longer. "I will tell you, if you want to know," he said. "But I charge you not to make anyone else a sharer in what I say as long as I live. Such things ought to be hidden, because they often stir up boasting and conceit. If I depart from here and become free of such passions, I will not forbid you to speak and to tell of the power of divine grace. "Know then," said the great Julian, "that as I was walking along the road, that beast came at me and opened its mouth, wanting to swallow me."

"I used the name of God and pointed with my finger to the trophy of the cross. At once I shook off all fear, and I saw the beast fall to the ground. I sang praise to our common Savior and went on my way." When he had finished the story, he got up and continued on the road to the cave. At another time a young man came, born of a noble family and raised in luxury, but with more eagerness than strength. He begged the old man to let him share his journey into the desert. He did not mean the ordinary trip that everyone made every day, but the very long one, an absence that often lasted seven days and often ten. This was the famous Asterius. The holy old man tried to stop the young man and told him the desert had no water. But the young man kept pressing him and pleading to enjoy this gift. Overcome by his entreaties, the old man gave in. At first the young man followed eagerly. But when the first, second and third days had passed, the heat of the sun scorched him (it was summer, and in the height of summer the heat is fiercer), and he was worn down with thirst. At first he was ashamed to report his suffering, remembering what the teacher had warned him. But he was beaten down and close to fainting, and he begged the old man to have pity on him. The old man reminded him of his warnings and told him to go back. The young man said he did not know the road back to the cave, and that even if he knew it, he could not walk it, since thirst had used up his strength. The holy man pitied the young man's suffering and forgave his bodily weakness. He bent his knees and begged the Master, wetting the

ground with hot tears, and he sought a way of rescue for the young man. And the One who does the will of those who fear him, and hears their prayer, made the stream of tears that touched the dust into a spring of water. When the young man had drunk his fill, the old man told him to go back at once. The spring has remained to this day, bearing witness to the Moses-like prayer of the holy old man.

Long ago Moses struck that barren rock with his rod and flooded it with streams of river water, to satisfy those many thousands who were thirsty. In the same way this holy man watered that bone-dry sand with his tears and drew out flowing streams of spring water. He did it not for many tens of thousands, but to cure the thirst of one young man. His soul was lit by divine grace, and he saw very clearly the perfection that the young man would one day reach. For many years later Asterius was called by divine grace to train many others in the same virtue. In the district around Gindarus, a very large village under the jurisdiction of Antioch, he set up a school of ascetic training. He drew many other athletes of philosophy to himself. He also drew the great Acacius, the famous one, I mean. Acacius shone in the monastic way of life and sent out bright rays of virtue after he was thought worthy of the office of bishop and was appointed to shepherd Beroea. He was entrusted with leading the flock for fifty-eight years. He did not give up the form of the ascetic life, but blended ascetic virtue with the virtue of public life. From the one he took strictness and from the other management, and so brought together things that stand apart. The one who hunted out this virtue and trained Acacius in it was that same Asterius. He remained so warm a lover of the great old man that he often made the journey to him twice a year, and often three times. When he arrived he used to bring figs for the members of the company, loading them on three or four animals. He would also collect two measures of grain, enough for the old man for a whole year, and put that load on his own shoulders, making himself the teacher's pack animal. He walked carrying this load, not ten or twenty stades, but on a journey of seven days. Once the old man saw him carrying the load of figs on his shoulders. He was displeased and said he would not make them his food. For it was not right, he said, that Asterius should endure so much labor while he himself took his pleasure in Asterius's sweat.

Asterius swore he would not take the load off his shoulders unless the old man agreed to share in the food he had brought. "I will do what you ask," said the old man, "only put the sack down as quickly as you can." In this he was imitating the first of the apostles. When the Lord wished to wash his feet, Peter at first refused and flatly insisted it would never happen. But when he heard that he would be cut off from fellowship with the Master unless he allowed it, he begged to have his hands and his head washed as well as his feet. John, too, great as he was, was commanded to baptize the Saviour. At first he confessed that he was only a servant and pointed to the Master. Later he did what he was told, not out of boldness but out of obedience to his Master. So too this holy man was troubled at the thought of eating food that another had labored to bring. But when he saw how warm the zeal of his attendant was, he chose to accept that service rather than his own preference. Perhaps some who love to find fault, and have learned only to mock what is good, will say

this story is not worth remembering. But I have added it to the man's other wonders. I wanted to show not only the reverence the great men had for him, but also, because I think it is useful, the sweetness and modesty of his character. Great as he was, and so excellent in virtue, he did not think himself worthy of ordinary honor. He pushed it away as something that did not belong to him at all, yet he put up with it again, because it did good to those who gave it. Since he had become known to everyone, and his fame drew to him those who loved what is good, he wanted to escape such honor. In the end he set out for Mount Sinai with a few of his closest companions. He did not go through any city or village but made a path through the pathless desert. On their shoulders they carried the food they needed: bread, salt, a wooden cup, and a sponge tied to a cord. If they ever found water deep down, they could draw it up with the sponge, squeeze it into the cup, and drink.

So after a journey of many days they reached the mountain they longed for. They worshiped their Master and stayed there a long time, counting the solitude of the place and the stillness of the soul as the greatest luxury. On that rock, where Moses, the chief of the prophets, hid and was thought worthy to see God as far as it is possible to see him, Julian built a church and consecrated a holy altar, which has remained to this day. [Then he returned] to his own training-ground. Then he learned of the threats of the king who bore his own name but was impious. This king had threatened the godly with total destruction and had set out on his march against the Persians. Those who shared his views were eagerly awaiting his dreaded return. At that time Julian offered earnest prayer to God. He kept it up until the tenth day, and then he heard a voice saying that the foul, stinking pig had been destroyed. Yet he did not simply go on to the end of his prayer. He brought it to a close at once and turned his request into a hymn, sending up a song of thanks to the Saviour of his own people, who is patient and also a powerful enemy to those who are strangers to him. For God had been long-suffering toward the impious man for a long time. But when that long-suffering only trained the accursed wretch to greater rage, God brought punishment on him at the right time. When Julian had finished his prayer and turned to his companions, it was plain that his mind was cheerful, for his face showed a radiant joy. His companions marveled at the strange sight: he always looked grave, yet now he was seen smiling. They asked him the reason. "Gentlemen," he said, "this is a time for gladness and joy. The impious man has come to an end, as Isaiah's word says. He has paid a penalty worthy of his daring deeds. He played the tyrant against God who made him and saved him, and he has received a just death by the right hand of one of his own subjects. That is why I rejoice. I see the churches he warred against now exulting, and I see that the wretch got no help from the demons he honored." So concerning the death of this impious emperor, Julian enjoyed such foreknowledge. But Valens, who took up the reins of Roman rule after him, gave up the truth of the gospel teachings and accepted the deceit of Arius's error. Then a greater storm arose against the Church. Her helmsmen were driven out from every side, and in their place some pirates and enemies were brought in.

So that I do not have to tell that whole tragedy at this point, I will leave the rest aside for now and recall only one thing, which showed plainly the grace of the divine Spirit that flowered

in this old man. The great Meletius, whom the God of all had entrusted with shepherding the church of Antioch, had been driven out. All the clergy had been driven out of the holy churches too, together with the people who shared their mind and confessed the one divine essence of the Trinity. Sometimes they occupied the foot of the mountain and held their sacred assemblies there. Sometimes they made the river bank their place of prayer. At other times they used the military exercise ground that lies before the north gate. For their persecutors would not allow the godly to settle in a single place. The nurslings of falsehood also spread a rumor in that city, and sowed it widely: that the great Julian, this very old man, I mean, had embraced fellowship with the doctrines they professed. This troubled the godly most of all, for fear that the rumor might deceive the simpler and more naive and wrap them in the nets of the heretics. But the blessed and godly men Flavian and Diodore, who had been counted worthy of priestly service and were leading the holy people, together with Aphraates, whose life I shall, God willing, add and tell by itself, persuaded the great Acacius, whom I have already mentioned. They urged him to take as his companion on the road his own teacher, who was also a disciple of this holy old man, the famous Asterius. They asked him to run to the common glory of the Church, the support of the gospel's teaching, and persuade him to leave his dwelling in the desert and come to the help of so many thousands perishing through deceit, and to put out the flame of Arius with the dew of his coming. The divine Acacius ran. He took the great Asterius as he had been told, and came to the greatest light of the Church. He greeted him and said, "Tell me, Father, why do you endure all this toil with joy?" The old man answered, "Serving God is more precious to me than body, soul, life, and my whole existence. I try, as far as I am able, to offer him a service clean of filth, and to please him in everything."

Acacius said, "I will show you a way by which you can serve him even more than you do now. And I say this not from reasoning alone, but because I have learned it from his own teaching. Once he asked Peter whether he loved him more than the others. He learned what he already knew before Peter spoke: 'You know, Lord, that I love you.' Then he showed him what he could do to serve him more: 'If you love me,' he said, 'shepherd my sheep, and feed my lambs.' This is what you too must do, Father. The flocks are in danger of being destroyed by wolves, and the one you love so much loves them very much. It is the mark of lovers to do the things that please the ones they love. Besides, it is no small danger, and a loss of all those many great labors, if you can bear to give up the truth in silence while it is fiercely attacked, and let those who hold to it be hunted down, with your name becoming bait for those being caught. For the champions of the foulness of Arius boast that they have you as a partner in their impiety." As soon as the old man heard this, he said farewell to his quiet at the right moment. He was not afraid of the unfamiliar tumult of city affairs, and he set out running for Antioch. He completed two or three stages through the desert and reached a village as evening fell. A well-off woman heard that this holy company had come. She ran to gather in their blessing, and throwing herself down before their feet she begged them to make her house their lodging. The old man yielded, though he had been separated from such a sight, that is, from lodging in a house, for more than forty years. While this admirable

woman was busy serving those holy men, her seven-year-old child, her only one, fell into the well in the evening darkness. She had imitated Sarah's hospitality. A commotion arose over this, as you would expect. When the mother learned of it, she told everyone to keep quiet. She put a cover over the well and carried on with her service. When the table had been set before the holy men, the divine old man ordered that the woman's child be called in to share in the blessing.

The woman said she was ill and could not bring the child, but the old man kept insisting that he be brought. When the mother finally revealed what had happened, the old man left the table and ran to the well. He ordered the cover taken off and lights brought, and he saw the child sitting on the surface of the water, striking it with his hand as children do. He took what had seemed to be death as a game and a toy. They tied some ropes together, let them down, and pulled the child up. At once he ran to the old man's feet and said that he had seen him carrying him on the water and keeping him from sinking. This was the reward the admirable woman received from the blessed old man for her hospitality. I will pass over the other things that happened on the way. They came to Antioch, and people hurried together from every side. They longed to see the man of God, and each one hoped to receive some healing for his own affliction. He was lodged in the caves at the foot of the mountain, where they say the divine apostle, blessed Paul, was brought and hidden. But right away, so that everyone would learn that he was a man, a violent attack of fever came upon him. The great Acacius saw the crowd that had gathered and was troubled by the illness that had struck. He thought the people who had come would be shaken if they learned of the sickness, since they expected to find healing through that man's hand. "Do not lose heart," said the old man. "If health is needed, God will give that too, and at once." Immediately after these words he turned to prayer. As his custom was, he put his knees and forehead to the ground and begged to receive health, if any benefit would come from it to those who had gathered. He had not yet finished the prayer when a heavy sweat suddenly broke out and put out the flame of the fever. From there he freed many from all kinds of diseases and went to the assembly of the faithful. As he was passing the doors of the palace, a beggar who used his buttocks in place of feet, dragging himself along the ground, stretched out his hand and touched the old man's cloak. By his faith he drove out the affliction. He leapt up and ran as he had before his illness, doing the same as the lame man whom Peter and John raised up.

When this happened, the whole population of the city streamed together, and the military exercise ground was full of people running to it. The slanderers and craftsmen of falsehood were put to shame, while those raised in godliness were filled with cheerfulness and joy. From there those who needed healing dragged the lamp of godliness off to their houses. A man who held a very high office and was entrusted with the helm of the East sent and begged him to come and free him from the illness that lay on him. Without delay he came, entreated the common Master, and loosed the sickness with a word. He urged the man to confess his thanks to God. After doing these and similar things, he decided at last to return to his ascetic hut. On his way he passed through Cyrrhus, a city two days' journey from

Antioch, and was lodged in the shrine of the victorious martyr Dionysius. The leaders of the orthodox community there gathered and begged him to help them, since they expected sudden ruin. They said that Asterius, who had been raised on sophistic falsehood, had slipped into the church of the heretics and been given the office of bishop. He was a terrible advocate for falsehood and used evil craft against the truth. "We fear," they said, "that he will cover falsehood with eloquence like a bait, spread out the tangled webs of his arguments like nets, and catch many of those who live in simplicity. That is why he has been summoned by our opponents." The old man said, "Take courage, and beg God together with us, adding fasting and hardship to your prayer." While they were pleading with God in this way, on the day before the festival at which the advocate of falsehood and enemy of the truth was to give his speeches, he received a blow sent by God. He was sick for just one day and then was gone from the list of the living. He probably heard that voice: "Fool, this night they demand your soul from you. The evils you prepared, the nets and traps, will be for you and for no one else." The same thing happened to Balaam, who was also sent for against the holy people. He gave Balak unholy advice against them and paid the penalty for it, receiving his death at an Israelite's right hand.

So this man too had schemed against the people of God, and by the people of God he was robbed of his life. Cyrrhus enjoyed this deliverance through the old man's prayer. The story was handed down to me by that godly head, the great Acacius, who knew everything about him exactly. Leaving that place, he returned to his fellow ascetics and spent no little time with them. Then he moved very readily to the life that does not age and knows no grief. He had practiced freedom from passion while still in a mortal nature, and he now awaits the immortality of the body. Here I end my account of this story and will go on to another. I beg the saints who figure in this story to win for me, by their intercession, favor from above.

Chapter 3

How could we worthily admire Marcianus, that truly remarkable man? Plainly we must rank him with Elijah and John and those like them, who went about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, afflicted, ill-treated, men of whom this world was not worthy, wandering in deserts and mountains and caves and the holes of the earth. His homeland was once Cyrrhus, which I mentioned earlier. After that it was the desert. Now he has left both of these and has heaven. The first gave him birth, the second nourished him and made him a victor, and the third has received him as one crowned. He despised the splendor of his family, for he came from noble stock. He despised the brilliance of the royal court, for he had flourished there. The Creator had given him a tall body and natural beauty, and he had a soul adorned with sharp intelligence. But he transferred his love to God and the things of God. He bade everyone farewell and went to the very center of the desert. There he built a tiny hut, not even fitted to the size of his body, and surrounded it with another small enclosure. He shut himself in continually, cut off from all human company. He conversed with the Master of all and listened to that sweet voice. When he read the divine oracles, he believed he was enjoying the divine voice. When he prayed and offered his petitions, he was himself holding a conversation with the Master. And though he always enjoyed such delight, he never wished to have his fill of it. For he had heard the divine Spirit singing through the great David: the one who meditates on the law of the Lord day and night will be like a tree planted by the streams of water, which will give its fruit in its season, and its leaf will not fall off. Longing for these fruits, he embraced this sweetest labor. Psalm-singing followed prayer, prayer followed psalm-singing, and the reading of the divine oracles followed both again. His only food was bread, and that was brought to him by weight. The weight was so small that it would not have met the need of a child just weaned. They say that the pound of bread was divided into four parts and shared out over four days, one portion given each day.

He had decided to eat once a day, in the evening, and never to be filled. He meant always to be hungry and always to be thirsty, and to give the body only what was enough to keep it alive. For he used to say that a man who takes food only after several days does his service to the Master more weakly on the days of fasting. Then on the day he does eat, he will naturally take more, and so he loads his stomach. Once weighed down, it makes the soul sluggish for keeping watch. So he said it was better to take food every day, and never to put up with being

full. “For true fasting is constant want.” This divine man kept laying down these rules. Yet his body was very large, and he was the tallest and most handsome man of his time, and he kept it alive on a little food. After some time he took in two companions. One was Eusebius, who became heir of that holy hut. The other was Agapetus, who transplanted this angelic way of life to the territory of Apamea. There is a very large and populous village there called Nicerte. In it he built two very large schools of philosophy. One was named after himself. The other was named after the admirable Symeon, who shone in this philosophy for fifty years. In these communities to this day more than four hundred men live, athletes of virtue and lovers of godliness, buying heaven with their labors. The lawgivers of this way of life were Agapetus and Symeon, who had received the laws from the great Marcianus. From these houses countless other dwellings for ascetics have been planted, adorned with the same rules; they are not easy to count. But the planter of all of them was that inspired man. For the one who supplied the best seed may rightly be called the cause of the good things that grew from it. At first, then, as I said, he had that voluntary prison to himself alone. Afterward he took in these two, but did not keep them as housemates. For the little cell was not enough even for him alone. It was extremely small, and gave him much trouble whether he stood or lay down.

He could not stand upright, because the roof bent his head and neck. And when he lay down he could not stretch out his feet, because the length of the house did not match his body. So he allowed the two to build another cell, ordered them to live in that one, and told them to sing hymns, pray and read the divine Scriptures by themselves. Then, since more people needed to share in this benefit, he instructed that another dwelling be built at some distance, and told those who wished to live there to do so. Eusebius led them, passing on the teaching of the great Marcianus. That divine Agapetus, once he had been trained and exercised as he should be and had been taught this athletic discipline thoroughly, went back, as I said, and sowed the seeds he had received from that holy soul. He became so famous and so admired that he was thought worthy of the bishop’s chair, was entrusted with the care of a shepherd, and was given charge of his own native city. The admirable Eusebius, who presided over the flock gathered there, also took on the teacher’s care. He alone was allowed to visit Marcianus at the proper time and ask whether he wanted anything. Once he wished to see by night what Marcianus was doing, and dared to come near the little window through which the light came, which was small. He looked in and saw a light that was not from a lamp and not made by hands, but given by God. It was a light of grace from above, flashing from the teacher’s head, and it showed him the lettering of the divine Scriptures. For Marcianus happened to be holding a book, and was searching out the inviolable treasure of the divine will. When the admirable Eusebius saw this, he was filled with fear and trembling. He learned how much grace had been poured out on the divine servant, and he learned God’s good will toward his servants. At another time, while the great Marcianus was praying in the forecourt, a serpent crept up the wall that faced east. From the top of the wall it peered over, mouth open and glaring fiercely, showing its intention to attack. Eusebius, standing

far off, was terrified at that dreadful sight. Supposing that his teacher did not know, he pointed it out with a shout and begged him to flee.

Marcian rebuked him and told him to throw off his fear, for fear too, he said, is a deadly passion. With his finger he traced the sign of the cross in front of the creature, and then he breathed on it with his mouth, and so showed the old enmity. The serpent, as if set alight by the breath of his mouth like a fire, was burned up like straw and fell apart in many pieces. Notice, then, how he imitated the Master like a loyal servant. For when the sea once raged against the disciples' boat and the Master saw them in anguish, he did not calm the storm of the sea until he had first ended the disciples' unbelief by rebuking it. The wonderful man had learned this lesson from that example: he first took away his disciple's fear, and only then handed the beast over to punishment. Such was the wisdom of the great Marcian, such his working of wonders, and such his boldness toward God. Yet although he had been counted worthy of such grace and could work great wonders, he was eager to hide his power, because he was wary of the schemes of that thief of virtue. For the one who sows the passion of vainglory tries to rob us of the fruits we have gathered by toil. But though he was determined to hide the grace given to him, he worked wonders against his will, since the brilliance of his achievements flashed out and exposed the power he kept hidden. This is how it once happened. A man of noble family, who had often been entrusted with military commands, came from Beroea in Syria. His daughter had for a long time been raving, tormented by an evil demon and in a frenzy. He reached the desert. He was a friend of the great Marcian and, because of their earlier friendship, expected to meet him and plead with him. But his hope was disappointed, and he was denied the sight of the servant of God. So he begged an old man, who at that time had been given charge of attending the holy man, to take a small flask full of oil and place it beside the door of the little hut. The old man refused to take the task on, many times, but when he was urged many times again, he gave way to the entreaty. The great Marcian heard the noise and asked who it was and what he needed in coming.

The old man hid the true reason and pretended that he had come to learn whether Marcian had any command for him; with this answer he was sent away. Toward dawn the girl's father begged again that the flask be given back to him. The old man, though afraid, went quietly as best he could, stretched out his hand, took the flask, and tried to escape notice. But Marcian again asked what he wanted. When the old man gave the same excuse he had given in the evening, the holy man was displeased, since the old man's coming was contrary to custom, and he ordered him to tell the truth. Trembling and afraid, and unable to hide anything from a man so full of divine grace, he said who had come, told the whole tragic story of the girl's suffering, and showed the flask. Marcian was angry, as one would expect, since he did not want his virtue to be displayed. But he threatened that if the old man ever dared such a thing again, he would be deprived of living with him and have his service taken away. To those who know what is gained by it, that was the greatest loss. Then he sent him off with orders to give the flask back to the one who had given it. So Marcian gave that order. Meanwhile the demon, who was four stages away from the one driving it out, was crying

out about his power. In Beroea Marcian was doing the work of judges, using the demon's own cries as though they were executioners against it, driving out that wretch and showing the girl cleansed of its working. The girl's father learned this exactly. As he was returning and was only a few stades from the city, a servant met him, sent to the countryside by his mistress. When this man saw his master, he brought him the good news of the miracle that had taken place, saying that the wonder had happened four days earlier. The father counted the days and checked the time carefully, and learned that it was the very time when the old man had carried out the flask. As for me, I think of what this great man would not have done if he had wished to work wonders. For if, though he was eager to hide the grace he had received, he gave off so much brightness, what marvels would he not have worked had he wanted to?

In the same way he did not show his spiritual wisdom to everyone. Even at the end of his life he allowed those who wished to come in to him only after the feast of the Savior's passion and the Lord's resurrection. At that season, of course, everyone was eager to see him. Once the leading bishops gathered and came to him: the great Flavian, who had been entrusted with shepherding the Antiochenes; the holy Acacius, whom I mentioned earlier; Eusebius of Chalcis; and Isidore, who was then entrusted with the governing of Cyrrhus, all of them distinguished for virtue. With them was Theodotus, who held the reins of the church of Hierapolis, a man who shone in discipline and gentleness. Some men of rank and office were present too, who kept the spark of faith alive. Everyone sat in silence, waiting for his sacred voice. He too sat silent for a long time, with his tongue idle but his hearing active. Then one of those seated, who was familiar with him through his care for his soul and was also a man of distinction, said: "Father, all of us here, and the holy fathers too, are thirsty for your teaching and are waiting for your sweet streams. Share the benefit with everyone present, and do not hold back the springs of kindness." He groaned deeply and said: "The God of all speaks every day through creation. He speaks through the divine Scriptures, advises what is needed, sets out what is profitable, frightens us with threats, and urges us on with promises, and we gain no benefit from it. So how could Marcianus profit you by speaking? You are sent away with so much benefit along with the others, and you do not want to find help from there." This prompted many speeches from the fathers, which I thought it unnecessary to put into the narrative. They rose and prayed, and wanted to lay hands on him to ordain him to the priesthood, but they were afraid to try it again. One urged the other on, and the other urged the first, and in the end all alike gave up the attempt and made their way home. But I want to add another story to these, which is a mark of his divine understanding.

A certain Abitus was the first to set up an ascetic hut in the other desert. It lies farther north than Marcianus's, and a little to the east, toward the north wind that approaches the east wind. This man was older than the great Marcianus both in years and in labor, a true philosopher, brought up in a hard way of life. He learned that the man's virtue was being talked about everywhere. He judged that seeing such a man was worth more than his small quiet, and he ran in haste to see the one he longed for. When the great Marcianus learned

of his arrival, he opened the door and welcomed him. He told the admirable Eusebius to boil some pulse, and some vegetables if he had any. When they had had their fill of talking with each other and had come to know each other's virtue, they performed the service of the ninth hour together. Then Eusebius came in carrying a table and bringing bread. The great Marcianus said to the godlike Abitus, "Come, dearest of all to me, and let us share this table." He answered, "I have never known myself to take food before evening. Often I even go two or three days without eating." The great Marcianus said, "For my sake, then, let the custom be changed today. My body is weak, and I cannot wait for evening." When even this did not persuade the admirable Abitus, Marcianus is said to have sighed and said, "I am very discouraged, and my heart is stung, that you endured so great a labor to see someone who loves toil and loves wisdom, and that, cheated of your hope, you have seen a huckster and a profligate instead of a philosopher." The most godly Abitus was distressed at this and said he would rather eat meat than hear such words. The great Marcianus said, "We too, my friend, follow the same life as you and embrace the same way of living. We prefer toil to rest and choose fasting over food, and when night comes, only then do we take a share of it. But we know that love is worth more than fasting. The one is the work of divine law, the other is a matter of our own power. And it is right to count the divine laws far more precious than our own labors."

After talking together like this, they shared a little food, sang hymns to God, and spent three days with each other. Then they parted, still seeing one another in the Spirit. Who would not admire this man's wisdom? Guided by it, he knew the proper time for fasting, and the proper time for philosophy and for love of the brethren. He also knew the difference between the parts of virtue, which should give way to which, and to which one should award the prize at the right moment. I have another story as well, a proof of his perfection in divine things. His sister came to him from his homeland with her son, who was a grown man and one of the leading citizens of Cyrrhus. She brought him a generous supply of what he needed. He would not bear to see his sister, but he received his nephew, for it was the time appointed for visitors. They begged him to accept what they had brought. He said, "How many monasteries did you pass on the way? Which of them did you give any of this to?" The nephew said they had given to none. "Then go away with what you brought," he said. "We need none of it, and if we did need it, we would not accept it. You were thinking of natural kinship, not of service to God, when you chose to show us this kindness. If you honored only the closeness of family, you would not have shared what you brought with us alone." With these words he sent his nephew away along with his sister, and he would not allow even the smallest part of their gifts to be accepted. So far was he outside nature, and so completely had he moved over to the citizenship of heaven. What clearer example could anyone give that he was worthy of God, according to God's own word? For he says, "Whoever does not leave father and mother and brothers and sisters and wife and children is not worthy of me." And if the one who does not leave them is unworthy, then the one who does leave them, and shows such exact perfection, was clearly most worthy. Besides these things, I also admire the precision of his doctrine. He loathed the madness of Arius,

which was then being fanned by imperial power. He also detested the mental disorder of Apollinarius.

He also fought bravely against those who hold the views of Sabellius and gather the three hypostases into one. He turned completely away from the so-called Euchites, who suffered from the Manichaean sickness under a monastic disguise. His zeal for the teachings of the Church was so hot that he even entered into a just quarrel with a man who was admirable and godly. There was in that desert a man named Abraames, an old man with grey hair and a still greyer mind, shining with every virtue, and always welling up the tears of compunction. At the beginning, led by a kind of simplicity, he accepted celebrating the Pascha at the earlier date. He was ignorant, as one would expect, of what the Fathers had laid down about this at Nicaea, and he chose to keep to an ancient custom. Many others at that time suffered from the same ignorance. The great Marcian, after many conversations, tried to bring the old man Abraames (for that is what the locals called him) into agreement with the Church. When he saw that Abraames would not be persuaded, he openly withdrew from communion with him. But after some time that godly man threw off his fault and came to love agreement in the holy feast, and he sang truthfully, "Blessed are the blameless in the way, who walk in the law of the Lord." This too was an achievement of the great Marcian's teaching. Many people in many places built shrines for prayer to honor him. In Cyrrhus his nephew Alypius did so. In Chalcis a woman named Zenobiane did so, distinguished in birth and outstanding in virtue, and abounding in wealth. Quite a few others did the same, each competing to seize that victorious athlete for herself. When the man of God learned of this, he urged the admirable Eusebius, binding him with oaths full of every dread, to lay his body in that place, and to let no one know the tomb except two of the closest members of the household, until a great number of years had passed. That admirable man fulfilled the oath. When the end of the victor came, and a choir of angels carried that holy and godly soul to the dwellings in heaven, Eusebius did not announce his death until he had dug the grave with the two who knew him best, laid the body in it, and leveled the surface of the ground.

Fifty years or more went by. Countless people ran together and searched for his body, yet the tomb stayed hidden. But each of the shrines I mentioned had received relics, some of apostles and some of martyrs. So the heirs of his dwelling and his teaching took courage. Two years ago they made a stone coffin and moved the relics of the honored body into it. One man pointed out the tomb, for he alone of the three was still alive. The admirable Eusebius became a zealous imitator of Marcian's virtue, and he wore down his body with ever more labors. He put on himself one hundred and twenty pounds of iron. To these he added the other fifty pounds that the most godly Agapetus had worn, and then the eighty pounds of the great Marcian. For his dwelling he had a pit with no water in it, and he lived in it like this for three years. I have gone into these matters because I want to show how many other great achievements the great Marcian was responsible for. The admirable Basil also benefited from his way of life. Many years later Basil built a monastic lodging near Seleucobelus, a city of Syria. He shone in many kinds of virtue, and shone especially

in the God-loved possession of love and in the divine work of hospitality. Who could easily count how many workers he presented to God, to speak as the apostle did, who had no need to be ashamed and who rightly handled the word of truth? To pass over the others for now, though they deserve praise and would make my account too long, I will mention only one of them. There was a pupil of his whom they called Sabinus, who wore out his body with countless labors. He ate no bread and no relish of any kind. His food was flour moistened with water. He used to mix a whole month's food at once, so that it went moldy and gave off a heavy stench. By this kind of food he wanted to dull the appetites of the body, and by the stench of his food to wither pleasure. Living by himself in this way, whenever one of his acquaintances came, he would eat simply of everything that was set before them.

Such grace did he receive from God that a woman of distinction, proud of her family and her wealth, came running to him from Antioch. She begged him to help her daughter, who was being attacked by a demon. "In a dream," she said, "I saw someone run here, urging me and promising that through the prayers of the head of the monastery my daughter would be saved." The man who answered the door told her that it was not the custom for the head of the house to speak with women. But the woman kept pressing him, weeping, wailing, and pleading bitterly, and the head of the monastery came out. The woman said that it was not he, and that the man shown to her was a ruddy one, with some blotches on his cheeks. When they realized who it was she was looking for, who was third in rank in the monastery and not first, they persuaded him to come to the woman. At once she recognized the face, and the wicked demon cried out and left the girl. Such were the achievements of the pupils of the great Marcian. Such were the plants that this excellent planter set everywhere. And I, having brought this account to its end, beg and pray that through the intercession of all these men I may obtain help from God.

Chapter 4

I have already shown, in the accounts written so far, what kind of fruit the unfruitful desert has offered to God. It was ripe and mature, dear to the One who planted it, and lovely and greatly longed for by sensible people. But no one should suppose that virtue is confined to a place, or that only the desert is fit to bear such a harvest. So let us now move in our account to the inhabited world, and show that it is no hindrance at all to gaining the philosophic life. There is a high mountain east of Antioch and west of Beroea. It stands above the mountains around it, and its highest summit has the shape of a cone. It takes its name from its height, for the people who live around it call it "the Peak." Long ago, right at its summit, there was a precinct of demons that the neighbors honored greatly. To the south a plain lies spread out like a bay, enclosed on both sides by ridges that are not very high. These ridges reach as far as the road used by horsemen, and they take in the paths that run down on either side from south to north. In this plain there are settlements, small and large, joined to the mountains on both sides. Right at the foot of the high mountain there is a very large and populous village, which they call Teledan in the local language. Above the foothills there is a glen. It is not very steep, but slopes moderately toward that plain and faces the south wind. In this glen a man named Ammian built a school of philosophy. He shone in many kinds of virtue, but above all he surpassed others in his modest way of thinking. The proof is this. He was well able to teach not only his own company but twice as many, and yet he often ran to the great [Eusebius], begging him to take a part with him, as a trainer and teacher in the wrestling-school Ammian had set up. [Eusebius] lived twenty-five stades away, shut up in a very small dwelling that did not even have windows. Marianos had led him to this way of virtue. Marianos was his uncle and a faithful servant of God.

It is enough to say that much, since the Master honored the great Moses with this same title. This Marianos had tasted divine love, and he did not want to enjoy the good things alone. He made many others fellow-lovers, and he also hunted down the great Eusebius and Eusebius's brother, who was a brother in manner of life as well. For he thought it unreasonable to catch for virtue people who were nothing to him, and to leave his own nephews uncaught. He shut both of them in a small cell and trained them in the angelic way of life. But illness struck the brother and cut short his race, and death followed the illness. He lived only a few days after leaving that place, and then he reached the end of his life. The great Eusebius, however, stayed there for the whole life of his uncle. He spoke with

no one and did not see the light, but remained shut in continually. After his uncle's death he still held to this way of life, until the marvelous Ammian won him over with many entreaties and persuaded him. "Tell me, excellent man," Ammian said to him, "whom do you think you please, that you have taken up this toilsome and squalid life?" Eusebius answered, as was natural, that it was God, the lawgiver and teacher of virtue. "Then since you love him," said Ammian, "I will show you a way by which you will kindle your love further and also serve the One you love. To spend all one's care on oneself would not, I think, escape the charge of self-love. For the divine law commands us to love our neighbor as ourselves. But to take many into a share of one's wealth is the mark of success in love. The inspired Paul called this love the fulfillment of the law. And the word cries out again: 'The law and the prophets are summed up in this saying, in "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."' And in the holy Gospels the Lord told Peter, who had confessed that he loved him more than the others did, to shepherd his sheep. To those who have not done this he cries out in complaint through the prophet: 'O shepherds! Surely shepherds do not feed themselves, do they? Do they not tend the sheep?'"

It was for this reason that he commanded the great Elijah, when he pursued this way of life, to live among the godless. And the second Elijah, John, that great man, who loved the desert, he sent to the banks of the Jordan, and there ordered him to baptize and to preach. So since you too are a warm lover of the God who made and saved you, make many others lovers along with you. For this is very dear to our common Master. That is why he named Ezekiel a watchman and ordered him to bear witness against sinners. And he commanded Jonah to run to Nineveh, and when Jonah was unwilling, he sent him off as a prisoner." With these and similar words Ammianos charmed the divine man. He broke through that self-chosen prison, led Eusebios out and took him away, and handed over to him the care of the brothers. I do not know which I should admire more: the humility of the one, or the readiness to obey of the other. For Ammianos kept running away from leadership. He preferred to be one of those under authority, since he was wary of the danger of presiding over others. And the great Eusebios shrank from living with a larger company. Yet he yielded, and caught in the nets of love he accepted the care of the flock and led the choir. He did not need many words to teach, for the sight of him was enough to make even the very slowest man quick to run the race of virtue. Those who saw him say that his face was always stern and put considerable fear into those who looked at him. He himself took food only every three or four days, but he ordered his companions to share a meal every other day. He urged them to converse with God continually and to let no time go without this work. They were to perform the appointed services together. But in the parts of the day between these, each one was to be by himself, either in the shade of a tree, or beside a rock, or wherever he could enjoy some quiet, and standing or lying on the ground, to plead with the Master and ask for salvation.

Eusebios so trained each part of his body in virtue that it did only what reason alone allowed. To make this clear to everyone, I will tell one story about him. He and the wonderful Ammianos were sitting on a certain rock. One was reading the account in the holy Gospels,

and the other was explaining the meaning of the obscure parts. Some farm laborers in the plain below were breaking up new ground, and the great Eusebios was drawn to watch them. Ammianos, the divine man, had read a passage from the Gospel and was seeking its interpretation, and he told the great Eusebios to take up the reading. But Ammianos said, "You were enjoying the plowmen and, as it seems, did not listen." So Eusebios laid down a law for his eyes: never again to look at that plain, nor to feast on the beauty of heaven and the chorus of the stars. He used a very narrow path, said to be a span wide, leading to the house of prayer, and he would not bear to walk outside it. They say he lived by this law for more than forty years afterward. So that necessity as well as resolve would pull him to this, he bound his waist with an iron belt and put a very heavy iron collar on his neck. He fastened the belt to the collar with another piece of iron, so that, bent over in this way, he was forced to look down at the ground continually. Such was the penalty he exacted from himself for watching those farmers. Many others who have investigated his life and know his story accurately told me these things. But the great presbyter Acacius, whom I mentioned earlier in other accounts, told me this very story. He said that once, seeing Eusebios bent over, he asked him what benefit he was gaining that he could not bear to look at heaven, or to see that plain below, or to walk outside the narrow path. Eusebios answered that he contrived these things against the schemes of the evil demon.

"So that he may not wage war over great matters," he said, "I try to move the fight to these small things. In great matters he tries to steal my self-control and my righteousness, to arm my temper, to inflame my desire, to make me swell and burn with pride, and whatever else he plots against my soul. In small matters, if he wins, he does no great harm, and if he is beaten, he becomes more of a laughingstock, since he could not prevail even in little things. I know this kind of war is the safer one, because the man who is struck in these matters suffers no great loss. What harm is there in looking at a field, or in lifting the eyes to heaven? So I shift the battle to this ground, for here he can neither kill nor wound. These are not deadly arrows, since they have none of those iron points." The great Acacius said he heard this, admired the wisdom, and marvelled at the man's courage and skill in fighting. For this reason I have also set down this story, as worthy of admiration and of remembrance for those who wish to learn such things. His fame ran in every direction and drew to him all who loved virtue. Among them came the sheep of the excellent flock of the most godly Julian the elder, whose story I told earlier. When that inspired man reached the end of his life and passed to the life above, James the Persian and Agrippa, who were the leaders of that flock, ran to the great Eusebius, judging it better to be well led than to lead. Of James I made mention earlier, in summary, showing his virtue; now too I will give a clear proof of his supreme philosophy. When the godly Eusebius was departing this life, he charged James to preside over the flock. James begged to be excused from the care, and though he could not persuade those who wanted to put him in charge, he went off to another flock, choosing to be shepherded rather than to shepherd. He lived a very long time and so ended his life.

Agrippa, then, succeeded to the leadership. He was a man adorned with many other good qualities, and above all with purity of soul. Because of this he received a vision of the divine beauty, and, set ablaze by the torch of that love, he kept his cheeks wet with unceasing tears. After he had shepherded that choice and godly flock lawfully for a long time, he departed this life, and the godly David, whom I also had the joy of seeing, took over the leadership. He was a man who had truly put to death, as the divine Apostle says, the members that are upon the earth. He so benefited from the teaching of the great Eusebius that he spent forty-five years in that monastery, and lived that whole time without temper or anger. Even after he became leader, no one ever saw him overcome by this passion, though, as one would expect, countless things pressed him to it. For a hundred and fifty men were shepherded by his hand. Some were at the summit of virtue and imitated the life of heaven. Others had only just grown their wings and were being taught to rise above the earth and fly over it. Yet among so many being trained in divine things, some of them, as one would expect, were also doing wrong, since it is not easy to get everything right with a newcomer [the Greek here is corrupt]. Still that godly man stayed unmoved, like a bodiless being, and no pretext roused him to anger. I learned this not by hearsay only but by experience. I once desired to see that flock, and I went, with others who shared my way of life as companions on the journey. We spent the whole circuit of a week with this godly man, and we saw a face that underwent no change. It was not relaxed at one moment and drawn into a frown at another. His gaze was likewise never fierce at one time and cheerful at another, but his eyes stayed always in the same composure. These things too are enough to prove the calm of his soul. But some may suppose that he was seen like this only because nothing happened to provoke him.

That is why I am forced to tell of something that happened in our own presence. That godly man was sitting beside us, stirring up talk about the philosophic life and seeking the highest point of the life of the Gospel. While we were speaking of such things, a man named Olympius came to us. He was a Roman by birth and himself admirable in character, honored with the priesthood, and holding the second place in that community's leadership. He came shouting against the godly David. He called that gentleness of his a public plague, said that his mildness was ruining everyone, and named that highest philosophy folly, not gentleness. David, as if he had a soul of adamant, took in the words but was not stung by what is made to sting. His face did not change, and he did not drop the discussion he had begun. In a mild voice, and with words that showed the calm weather of his soul, he sent the old man away, asking him to attend to whatever he wished. "But I," he said, "am talking, as you see, with those who have come to us, since I think this service is necessary." How could anyone better show the gentleness of the soul? The man entrusted with that leadership received such drunken abuse from the one who held the second place, and especially with strangers present listening to the insult, and yet he endured no storm or turmoil of anger. What excess of courage and endurance does that leave out? The divine Apostle, who had considered the weakness of human nature, measures his legislation by that nature. "Be angry," he says, "and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your wrath." He knew that

the stirrings of anger belong to nature, not to the will. So he would not lay down a law that was very burdensome, and perhaps impossible. But for the movement of nature and the storm of anger he sets the day as the measure. He commands us to choke it with reason, to press it with the bridle, and not to let it go beyond its limits. This godly man, however, contended beyond the laws laid down, and leapt beyond the jumping pit. He did not allow anger to stir him until evening. He did not allow it to stir him at all.

Such were the benefits this man too drew from the company of the great Eusebius. I have also seen many other lovers and zealots of this philosophy at that hut, some in the prime of their bodies and some in deep old age. There were men who had lived more than ninety years and still would not leave the laborious life. They were distinguished by the sweat of youth. They besought God all night and all day and performed those holy services. Every second day they shared those poor meals. I will pass over the others, who deserve not silence but praise and every kind of commendation, so that I do not make the account longer than it should be. There was in that divine place a man they call Abba. He sprang from the stock of Ishmael, yet he was not cut off from the house of Abraham, his forefather. He shared with Isaac the inheritance of the fathers, or rather he seized the very kingdom of heaven. He took up this ascetic life at once, under a man who then lived in the desert and was an excellent trainer in such things. His name was Marosas. Later Marosas also gave up leading others and came with Abba to this flock. He lived no short time, and after contending brilliantly and becoming famous in song, he departed this life. Abba has already spent thirty-eight years there, yet he desires toil as if he had only just begun it. To this day he has never covered his feet with shoes. In the cold he sits in the shade, and in the burning heat he takes the sun, and he receives its flame as if it were a breeze from the west. In all this time he has not allowed himself to take any water. Nor does he eat what is usual for those who practice not drinking, who customarily have moister foods. He eats the same food as the others, but only a little, and such things as give little strength, and he considers the use of water unnecessary.

He wears a heavy iron belt around his waist. He seldom sits. For most of the night and day he stands, or kneels, and offers the service of prayer to the Master. He has refused altogether the need to lie down. To this day no one has ever seen him lying down. He has been appointed head of the choir and given charge of the others, and he bears all this labor eagerly, setting himself before all who are under him as the pattern of the philosophic life. Such were the victorious contenders whom the divine Eusebius, trainer and coach in these contests, presented to God. He made many others like them and sent them out as teachers to other training grounds. They filled that whole holy mountain with divine meadows and sweet-smelling flowers. To the east of the ascetic hut first built there, and to the west and south, you can see the offspring of this philosophy, like stars dancing around the moon. Some sing the praises of the Maker in Greek, others in the language of the country. But I am attempting the impossible when I try to go through everything that soul accomplished. So I must put an end to this account and turn to another, and from there gain fresh benefit, begging to share in the blessing of these great men.

Chapter 5

At the same time there lived a man named Publius. He was striking to look at, and his soul matched his appearance; or rather he showed a soul far more admirable than his body. He came from the class of town councillors, and his city was the one where the famous Xerxes, marching against Greece and eager to take his army across the river Euphrates, gathered a multitude of ships, joined them to one another, and so bridged the river. He named the place Zeugma, "the joining," and gave the city its name from the deed. Starting out from there, and sprung from such a family, Publius took possession of a high place not more than thirty stades from the town. There he built a small cottage and sold everything he had received from his father: house, lands, livestock, clothing, vessels of silver and bronze, and whatever else there was besides. He distributed the money, according to the divine law, to those who needed it. Having freed himself from every earthly care, he took up in place of them all one single care: the service of the One who had called him. He turned it over in his soul and guarded it, planning night and day how to increase it. For this reason his labor kept growing continually and became more intense every day. Yet it was sweet and full of pleasure, and it drove weariness far away. No one ever saw him take even a small part of a day for rest. Prayer followed psalmody, and psalmody followed prayer, and the reading of the divine words followed both. Then came the care of strangers who arrived, and after that some other necessary work. Walking his life in this way, and set before those who wished to imitate him as a pattern of virtue, like a sweet-voiced bird he roused many of his countrymen to these nets that bring salvation.

At first Publius would not allow anyone to live with him. He built small huts close to one another and told each man who came to live by himself. He visited them often and searched the huts, in case anyone was keeping anything beyond what he needed. They say he even carried a pair of scales with him and checked the weight of the loaves exactly. If he ever found more than the set amount, he was displeased, and he called those who did it gluttons. For he commanded that, whether eating or drinking, they should not wait until they were stuffed, but should take only as much as was enough to keep the body alive. And if he ever saw flour sifted free of its bran, he rebuked the men who had done it, as though they were enjoying Sybarite luxury. He would also come suddenly at night to each man's door. If he found someone awake and singing hymns to God, he went away again in silence. But if he saw that someone was held fast by sleep, he beat on the door with his hand and struck the

man lying inside with his tongue, for giving the body more care than it should have. Some of his like-minded companions saw this labor of his and suggested building one dwelling for them all. They said that those now scattered would live more strictly, and that he himself would be freed from much of his anxiety. The wise man accepted the advice. He gathered everyone together, pulled down those small huts, and built one house for those who had assembled. He begged them to live as a community and to sharpen one another. One should imitate another's gentleness, and that other should mix his gentleness with the first man's zeal. Another, who shared his wakefulness, should learn from someone else the lesson of fasting. "For in this way," he said, "by taking from one another what each lacks, we will reach the most perfect virtue. In the public markets of a city, one man sells bread, another vegetables, another is a dealer in clothing, another a maker of shoes. By drawing on one another for what they need, they live more happily. The man who gives a coat gets a shoe in return, and the man who buys vegetables pays in bread. In the same way it is right for us to give one another in exchange the precious parts of virtue."

So the Greek speakers trained and struggled in this way, singing hymns to God in the Greek language. Then a love for this way of life seized those who used the native language as well. Some of them ran together and begged to become part of the flock and to share in his holy teaching. He accepted their request. He remembered the Lord's commandment, which he gave to the holy apostles when he said, "Go and make disciples of all nations." Next to that house he built another and told these men to live there. He also built a sacred church and ordered both groups to gather in it at the beginning and the end of the day. In this way they would offer the evening and morning hymns to God together. They were divided into two groups, each using its own language, and they sent up the song in turn. This form of life has lasted to this very day. Time, which loves to change such things, has not altered it, and those who took over his care were not persuaded to overturn any of the rules he laid down. And this is true though not two or three, but more men have succeeded to this leadership. As soon as he had finished his contest and left this life, passing over to that life without grief, Theoteknos took over the leadership of the Greek speakers and Aphthonios that of the Syrian speakers. Both became living pillars and images of his virtue. They allowed neither those who lived there nor those who came from outside to feel any sense of his death, showing themselves to be exact copies of his way of life. The divine Theoteknos did not live long afterward and handed the leadership to Theodotos. Aphthonios remained for a very long time, caring for the flock and guiding it according to the established rules. This Theodotos came from Armenia.

When Theodotus came from Armenia and saw that company of ascetics, he first took his place among the subjects, obeying the great Theoteknos as their governor. But as I said, Theoteknos departed this life and Theodotus took over the leadership. He then flourished in so many good qualities that he almost eclipsed his predecessors in reputation. For divine longing so shaped him, and wounded him with so many arrows of such a kind, that night and day he poured out tears of compunction. He was so full of spiritual grace that when he prayed, everyone present fell silent and listened only to those holy words, counting the

hearing of them as earnest prayer in itself. For who was so hard as adamant that, when those words were offered, his soul would not be charmed, its hardness and stubbornness softened, and itself turned toward the service of God? So he increased his wealth every day and filled his treasures, which no one could plunder, with such goods. After he had shepherded the flock for twenty-five years, he was gathered to his fathers, as the divine Scripture puts it, nourished in a good old age. He handed the reins to Theoteknos, who was his nephew by birth and his brother in character. The divine Aphthonius, for his part, led the company for more than forty years and then received the presidency of the high priesthood. He did not change his ascetic goatskin cloak or the tunic made of goats' hair, and he ate the same food he had eaten before he held the office. Even after taking on this charge, he cared for that flock no less than before. He spent most of his days there. Sometimes he settled the quarrels of those who were fighting. Sometimes he took care of those who were suffering from any cause. At other times he gave the brothers divine exhortation. And he did all this sitting among them, mending the rags of his fellow monks, or cleaning lentils, or washing wheat, or handling some other such task.

So he adorned the presidency, increased his virtue, and reached the divine harbor with its cargo. And why need I speak of Theoteknos and of Gregory, who came after him? Theoteknos in his youth embraced every form of philosophy, and went abroad with the fame of his ancestors. Gregory is still alive today, and in deep old age labors with his body as if he were in his prime. For he has continued to refuse entirely the fruit of the vine. He takes not even vinegar or raisins, nor milk, whether freshly drawn or curdled. For the great Publius laid down this way of life by law. They allow oil only around the season of Pentecost, as they learn the need for it, and then they renounce it again. This is what I have learned about the great Publius. Some I received by hearsay. Some I learned from seeing his pupils and their teacher, and from the athletes I came to know the trainer. I judged it unjust and grudging to betray so great a benefit by silence, so I have added this account for those who do not know it. I do this to secure the benefit for them from it, and to gain for myself the profit of remembering. For I have heard the Master say: "Everyone who confesses me before men, I too will confess him before my Father who is in the heavens." And I know clearly that by bringing the memory of these men to other people, I shall enjoy their memory of me before the God of all.

Chapter 6

If anyone deliberately passed over Symeon the Elder and consigned the memory of his philosophy to oblivion, he could not rightly escape a charge of injustice and ill will. He would be unwilling to praise what deserves praise, and he would hold up nothing lovely for imitation to those who wish to be helped. I will not tell the story out of fear of such an accusation, but out of love for speaking well of him. I will give the account of his way of life. For a very long time this man embraced the life of the desert. He lived in a small cave and enjoyed no human comfort at all. He had chosen to live alone, and he spoke continually with the God of all. He made the edible plants of the field his food. This labor won him a rich grace from above, so that he could give orders even to the strongest and boldest wild beasts. This became plain not only to the godly but even to unbelieving Jews. For some of them were traveling on business to one of the forts lying outside our inhabited world. A violent downpour came, and a squall struck them. They lost the road, since they could not see ahead, and wandered through the desert. They found no village, no cave, no traveler. Tossed about in the middle of the mainland like sailors at sea, they came upon the cave of the divine Symeon as though it were a harbor. There they saw a man dry and unwashed, with a scrap of a goatskin cloak on his shoulders. As soon as he saw them he greeted them, for he was a friendly man, and he asked why they had come. They told him what had happened and begged to learn the road that led to the fort. “Stay,” he said, “and I will at once give you guides to show you the road you want.” They obeyed and rested. While they sat there, two lions arrived. They did not look fierce, but fawned like servants before a master, showing their submission. With a nod he told them to guide the men, and to lead them back to the road they had left and lost when they went astray. But let no one think the story a fable, since I have as witnesses the common enemies of the truth, who testify for the truth.

For the very men who received the kindness never stopped singing of it. The great Jacob also told me this, saying that he was present when they described the miracle to the holy Aaron. So whoever disbelieves Jews who bear witness to the miracle-working of Christians, how could he not rightly be called more unbelieving than the Jews? For they, though hostile, are still overcome and yield to the rays of the truth. But those who are thought to be friendly, and to share the faith, do not even believe their enemies when these testify to the power of grace. That holy man became famous through such miracles and drew many of the neighboring barbarians to himself. (The people who live in that desert are those who take

pride in Ishmael as their ancestor.) But since he loved quiet, he was forced to leave the cave. After a long journey he came to the mountain called Amanus. It had long been full of the madness of many gods. By his many and varied wonders he cultivated it like a field, and he planted the reverence for God that now flourishes there. To tell all of it would be very laborious, and perhaps impossible for me. So I will mention one case and set it out as a sort of imprint of his apostolic and prophetic wonder-working, and I leave it to readers to infer from it the strength of the grace he received. It was summer, harvest time, and the sheaves were being carried to the threshing floors. A certain man, not content with honest labor but longing for what belonged to others, stole some of his neighbor's sheaves and tried to enlarge his own stack with them. At once the divine verdict against the theft was delivered. A fiery blast came, and the threshing floor was set on fire. The wretched man went to the man of God, who was staying not far from the village. He told of the disaster, but tried to hide the theft. When he was ordered to tell the truth, he confessed the theft, for his suffering forced him to accuse himself. The holy man ordered him to undo the punishment by undoing the wrong. "For when you restore those sheaves," he said, "that fire sent from God will be put out." So you could see the man running and bringing the stolen ears of grain to the one he had wronged, and the blaze going out without water, through the prayer and intercession of the holy elder.

This event filled the people living nearby with fear, and the whole city of Antioch too, since the village came under that city. It forced people to hurry there. One reported release from a demon's raving, another an end to fever, another a cure for some other trouble. And Symeon freely poured out the streams of the grace that lived in him. But he again longed for quiet, and wanted to make his way to Mount Sinai. Many of the best men heard of it, men who followed the same way of life, and they ran together, eager to share the journey with him. After a journey of many days they came to the desert of Sodom. From far off they saw a man's hands stretched up toward the sky out of a hollow. At first they thought it was a demon's deception. But they prayed more earnestly and saw the same thing again, so they hurried to the place. They saw a small hole in the ground, like the burrows foxes make for themselves, but they saw no one appear there. For the man who had been holding out his hands heard the sound of their feet and hid himself inside the hole. The old man leaned in and begged him earnestly to show himself, if he was of human nature and not some deceiving demon putting on such appearances. "For we also," he said, "follow the ascetic life and love quiet, and we are wandering through this desert. We want to worship the God of all on Mount Sinai, where he made himself known to his servant Moses and gave him the tablets of the law. We do not suppose that the Divine is confined to a place. We hear him say, 'I fill heaven and earth, says the Lord,' and that he holds the circle of the earth, and that its inhabitants are like locusts. But for people who love ardently, it is not only the beloved who are longed for; the places that received their presence and their company are dear as well." While the old man was saying these things and others like them, the hidden man brought himself out of the hole. He was wild to look at. His hair was matted, his face wrinkled, and

all the limbs of his body withered. He wore some wretched rags sewn together from palm shoots.

He greeted them and gave them the greeting of peace. Then he asked who they were, where they had come from, and where they were going. They answered his questions, and in turn asked where he had come from and why on earth he had chosen this life. He said, "I had the same eagerness you have as you travel. I had made a companion for this journey, a friend of like mind who held the same purpose as I did. We had bound each other by an oath that not even death would end our fellowship. So on the journey he happened to reach the end of his life here. Bound by the oath, I dug as well as I could and committed his body to burial. Beside that body I dug another grave for myself, and here I wait for the end of my life and offer the Master the service I am used to offering. My food is the dates which a brother, appointed by the one who looks after me, brings to me." While he was saying this, a lion appeared in the distance. The men with the old man were seized with terror. But the man sitting at the mouth of the hole noticed it, got up, and signaled to the lion to cross to the other side. The lion obeyed at once and came, carrying a cluster of dates. Then, having been told to, it went away again, lay down far from the men, and slept. So the hermit shared the dates among them all. He joined them in prayer and psalm-singing, and when the service was over, at dawn, he embraced them and sent them off, amazed at the strange sight. If anyone does not believe what has been said, let him remember the way of life of the great Elijah and the service of the ravens, who brought him bread in the morning and meat in the evening. It is easy for the Maker of all things to find every kind of provision for the care of his own. So he kept Jonah safe in the belly of the whale for three days and nights. He made the lions stand astonished before Daniel in the pit. And he made lifeless fire act as if it had reason, lighting those inside and burning those outside. But I am doing something unnecessary by offering proofs of the divine power.

When the old man reached the mountain he longed for, they say that this marvelous elder knelt in the very place where Moses was counted worthy to see God, as far as a mortal nature can see him. He did not get up until he heard a divine voice declaring the Master's favor toward him. He stayed bent over like this for the whole circuit of a week, without tasting even a morsel of food. Then the voice that had spoken told him to take what had been set before him and to eat it eagerly. He stretched out his hand and found three apples. He ate his fill, as the giver had commanded, and became full of strength. Then he warmly greeted his companions, as was natural. He went back rejoicing and glad, having heard a divine voice and having enjoyed food given by God. After he returned, he built two monasteries of philosophy. One was on the ridge of the mountain I mentioned earlier, and the other was at the very edge of its foothills. In each he gathered athletes of virtue, and for both groups he was trainer and coach. He taught them the assaults of the adversary and enemy, promised them the goodwill of the one who presides over the contest, urged them to take courage, and filled them with high resolve. He told them to be modest toward their own kind, but to show great-souled boldness against the enemy. Teaching such things, living such a life, working such wonders, and sending out all kinds of shining signs, he came to

the end of his laborious life. He departed to the life that does not age and knows no grief, leaving behind unquenchable fame and a memory that will last forever. My blessed and thrice-blessed mother enjoyed his blessing while he was alive, and she often told me many stories about him. As for me, I beg to enjoy his power and intercession now, and I know that I will obtain it. For he will surely grant the request, imitating the loving-kindness of the Master.

Chapter 7

Palladius, the much-talked-of, lived at the same time as this man, followed the same way of life, and was his friend and acquaintance. They used to visit one another, so they say, and each benefited from the other, sharpening one another and rousing each other to divine zeal. Palladius was shut up in a small [cell] near a very large and populous village, whose name is Imma. About the man's endurance, his fasting, his sleeplessness and his unceasing prayer, I think it needless to tell, for in these he pulled the same yoke as the divine Symeon. But I thought it right to tell the miracle that is still sung about to this day, which came about through his voice and his hand. A festival gathering was being held in the village I mentioned, drawing merchants from every side and a crowd too large to count. At this gathering a certain merchant sold what he had brought, collected his gold, and wanted to leave by night. A murderer saw the gold he had gathered. Filled with frenzy and madness, he drove sleep from his eyes and watched for the man's departure. After the crowing of the cocks, the merchant set out confidently. The murderer went ahead, took a place suited for an ambush, leapt out suddenly, struck the blow, and dared the bloody deed. To this crime he added another act of impiety. He took the gold and threw the dead body down at the door of the great Palladius. When day came, the rumor spread, and the whole festival crowd was talking about what had happened. Everyone ran together, broke down the door, and demanded satisfaction for the murder from the divine Palladius. One of those doing this was the very man who had committed the murder himself.

So the holy man stood hemmed in by that great crowd. He looked up to heaven, and in his mind went beyond heaven, and begged the Master to expose the lie of the false accusation and bring the hidden truth to light. When he had prayed in this way, he took the right hand of the dead man and said, "Tell me, young man, who struck you this blow? Point out the author of this crime, and show that an innocent man is free of this wicked slander." The word was followed by the deed. The dead man followed his hand, sat up, looked around at those present, and pointed with his finger at the murderer. A shout went up from everyone, astonished at the miracle and stunned at the slander that had been brought. They stripped that murderer and found the knife still stained with blood, and the gold that had caused the killing. Divine Palladius had long been worthy of admiration, and he now naturally became more so. The miracle was enough to show the man's boldness of speech before God. The wonderful Abraames belonged to the same company. He lived in the place called Paratomos,

and sent the radiance of his virtue out in every direction. The miracles worked after his death bear witness to the brightness of his life. To this day his tomb pours out cures of every kind, and those who draw them from it in abundance through faith are witnesses. May I too obtain the help of these men, since I have consecrated my tongue by remembering them.

Chapter 8

That human nature is one and the same in all people, and that philosophy is easy for those who want it, whether they are Greeks or barbarians, can be learned easily from many other examples. But Aphraates alone is enough to show it plainly. He was born and raised among the Persians, the most lawless of peoples, sprang from such parents, and was trained in their customs. Yet he reached such virtue that he put in the shade even those who were born of godly parents and received a godly upbringing from childhood. First he despised his noble birth, which was famous and splendid, and ran to the worship of the Master, imitating his ancestors the Magi. Then, loathing the impiety of his countrymen, he chose a foreign land over his own. He came to Edessa, a very large and populous city, outstanding for its godliness. Outside its walls he found a small house, shut himself in, and looked after his own soul. Like an excellent farmer, he cut out the thorns of the passions by the roots, cleared the divine field, and offered to the Master ripe fruit from the seeds of the Gospel. From there he came to Antioch, which was cruelly tossed about in the storm of heresy. He settled before the city in a monastery of philosophy. He learned a few little words of the Greek language, and drew as many as he could to hear the divine oracles. Using a half-barbarian tongue, he brought out the birth-pangs of his mind, receiving such streams from the grace of the divine Spirit. For which of those who swell with pride in their eloquence, who knit their brows, speak haughtily, and play the young champion among the traps of syllogisms, ever got the better of that uneducated, barbarian voice? He defeated the arguments of the philosophers, reasoning with reasoning and divine oracles with divine oracles, crying out with the great Paul, “Though I am unskilled in speech, I am not so in knowledge.” And he kept on in this way throughout, according to the apostolic word: “casting down reasonings and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, and taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ.” And you could see people running together to him: those in office and high rank, those serving in the army, and those who lived by working with their hands.

He saw people of every kind running to him: ordinary men and soldiers, the educated and those with no schooling, men who lived in poverty and men who prided themselves on their wealth. Some received what was said to them in silence. Others asked questions and inquired, and so gave him openings for his teaching. Though he had taken on so great a labor, he never would put up with a housemate. He preferred to do things himself rather than be served by others. He held his meetings beside the outer door, and he himself opened it to

those who came and saw them off when they left. He never accepted anything from anyone, not bread, not food to go with it, not a garment. Only one of his acquaintances supplied him with bread. When he reached deep old age, he also ate some vegetables after sunset. They say that Anthemius, who later became prefect and consul, was appointed an envoy and set out on a journey to Persia. He brought Aphraates a tunic woven among the Persians and said, "Father, I know that everyone finds his own homeland sweet, and the fruits that grow there most pleasant. So I have brought you this tunic from your homeland. I beg you to take it, and I ask in return to receive your blessing." Aphraates first ordered him to put it down on the stool. Then, after some other conversation, he said he was troubled, because his mind was divided in two. When Anthemius asked the reason, he said, "I chose always to have one housemate, and I made it a rule for myself absolutely to refuse the sharing of the house by two. Now someone has lived with me for sixteen years, and he has been agreeable to me. Recently a man of my own tribe has come, who wants to live with me and asks for this. That divides my mind. I will not bear to have two at the same time. I welcome the tribesman as a tribesman. But to throw out the first one, who has become dear to me, I think would be painful and unjust." Anthemius said, "That is reasonable, Father. It would not be right to send away, as unfit, the one who has served you for so long, and to take in another who has not yet given proof of his own character, simply because of his homeland." At this the divine Aphraates said, "Then, my good man, I will not take this tunic. I will not bear to have two. And by my judgment it is more pleasant, and by yours it is better, to keep the one who has served me for so long."

Having outwitted Anthemius in this way, and having given him cause to marvel at his sharpness, Aphraates persuaded him never to bring up that tunic again. I have told this story to show two things at once: that he accepted the care his body needed from only one person, and that he was so full of wisdom that he made the man who begged him to accept it vote not to accept it. But I will leave such things and tell of greater ones. When the God-hating Julian paid the penalty for his impiety in the barbarian land, those raised in the true faith enjoyed a short calm, as Jovian took the helm of the Roman empire. But he too reigned only a very short time and reached the end of his life, and Valens took the rule of the East. Storms and gales stirred up our sea again, a harsh swell rose, and waves from every side struck the ship. The lack of helmsmen made the storm still worse, for the emperor, bold against true religion alone, forced them to live abroad in exile. Even after such lawlessness, he was not satisfied with his impiety. He scattered the gatherings of all the godly, striving like a wild beast to tear the flock apart. For this reason he drove them out not only from every church, but also from the foot of the mountain, from the riverbank, and from the military exercise ground. They kept going from place to place through all these sites, treated as a side matter by the armed bands. Meanwhile the Scythians and the other barbarians were plundering all of Thrace without fear, from the Danube to the Propontis. Yet he could not, as the saying goes, bear even to hear of this with ears standing open. Against his own countrymen and subjects, who were distinguished for their piety, he used arms. The godly people, lamenting that untimely evil, sang that song of David: "By

the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down and wept, when we remembered Zion." But the rest of the song no longer suited them. For Aphraates, Flavian and Diodore did not let the instruments of teaching be hung on the willows, and the people could not bring themselves to say, "How shall we sing the Lord's song in a foreign land?"

No, they sang the Lord's song everywhere: on the mountains and in the plains, in the city and in the suburbs, in houses and in the marketplaces. For they had learned from David that "the earth is the Lord's, and its fullness, the world and all who live in it." They heard the same prophet say again, "Bless the Lord, all his works, in every place of his dominion." They heard the inspired Paul urge "that the men pray in every place, lifting up holy hands without anger or disputing." And the Master himself, speaking with the Samaritan woman, said the same thing more plainly: "Truly I tell you, woman, an hour is coming, and is now here, when neither in this place nor in Jerusalem, but in every place, they will worship the Father." Taught by these words, they kept on testifying in house and marketplace, and, to speak as the apostle does, "publicly and from house to house." They were like excellent generals, arming their own men and striking down their opponents. Now Flavian the Great and the divine Diodorus were at that time shepherding under the chief shepherd and had been given the second seat. That they did the things I have described is wonderful and deserves praise. Yet they did these things as generals appointed to command, and subject to the laws of command. The most wise Aphraates, by contrast, leapt into this struggle of his own free will. He had been brought up in quiet and had chosen to live by himself, sitting, as the saying goes, out of range of the missiles. But when he saw how fierce the war was, he did not love his own safety. He bade the quiet a farewell for the time being and became a champion in the front rank of the devout. He struck the enemy by his way of life, by his words and by his miracles, and was never struck himself. On one occasion the thoroughly foolish emperor saw him going out to the military exercise ground. (For it happened that the worshipers of the Trinity were then gathering there. Someone pointed Aphraates out to the emperor, who was peering out from the palace, as he walked along the riverbank.) The emperor asked where he was hurrying. Aphraates said he was going to offer prayers for the world and for the empire.

The emperor answered again: "Then why, when you profess the solitary life, do you walk about the marketplace without fear and leave your quiet behind?" Aphraates, who was in the habit of reasoning in parables, imitating the Master, said: "Tell me, O emperor, if I were a maiden hidden away in some inner room, and I saw someone throwing fire onto my father's house, what would you advise me to do as I watched the flames catch hold and saw the house burning? To sit inside and ignore the house going up in fire? In that case I too would have been consumed by the blaze. But if you say that I ought to run, bring water, dash up and down and put out the flames, then do not blame me, O emperor, for doing exactly that. For what you would have advised the maiden in her chamber, I am compelled to do, though I have professed the solitary life. And if you blame me for leaving my quiet, blame yourself, who threw this fire into the house of God, and not me, who am forced to put it out. You yourself have admitted that it is right to defend a father's house when it is on

fire. And that God is a more true father than any fathers on earth is plain to everyone, even to one completely uninitiated in divine things. So we are doing nothing beside the point, nor anything contrary to our original purpose, O emperor, when we gather the nurslings of true religion, shepherd them, and set before them the divine pasture." When he had said this, the emperor reasoned it through and approved the justice of his defense. But one of those who are neither men nor women, who have been deprived of the ability ever to become fathers, and who for that reason are thought to be loyal to the emperor and take their title from it, spoke from above and abused the man of God, and even threatened him with death. He did not wait long to pay the penalty for his boldness. The emperor wanted to refresh his body in the bath. The wretched man went ahead to see whether the tub was properly mixed. But his wits were stricken, and he jumped into the basin that received the unmixed hot water. No one was inside with him (he had gone in alone to see whether all was ready), and he stayed there, boiled and dissolved.

Some time passed. Then the emperor sent in another man to call him, but this one found no one in any of the rooms and reported back to the emperor. After that, several men ran in and searched all the bathing tubs. At last they came to that one and saw him thrown down in it, robbed of his life. There was uproar, and everyone lamented. Some drained off the scalding water, and others carried out the thrice-wretched body. Fear then fell on the emperor and on all who were arming themselves against true religion. A report rang through the whole city: that wretched man had paid the penalty for his insolence against Aphraates, and everyone went on praising Aphraates' God. This prevented the man of God from being banished, though his enemies were pressing for it. For the emperor, thoroughly frightened, turned away from those who urged this and held the man in respect. He learned of the man's virtue from another source as well. A horse of fine breed, well trained to carry its rider, was very dear to the emperor. A sickness came upon it that distressed the emperor greatly: the horse could not pass its liquid waste. The men trained in this art were called in to treat it. When their treatment failed, the emperor was grieved, and the man entrusted with the care of the horses wept aloud. This man was devout and strong in faith. At midday he took the horse to the lodging of the great Aphraates, told him of the illness, made known his faith, and begged him to pray and release the horse from the disease. Aphraates did not delay. He at once besought God, ordered water to be drawn from the well, set the sign of the saving cross on it, and told the man to give it to the horse. The horse drank it, which it had not been doing. Then Aphraates filled oil with the blessing of the divine invocation and rubbed it on the horse's belly. At the touch of his hand the sickness was at once loosed, and immediately the discharge became natural. The man, overjoyed, took the horse and ran to the stables. Late in the evening (for that was the time when the emperor was accustomed to visit the stables) the emperor came and asked how the horse was.

The man answered that it was well and led the horse out. The emperor saw it strong, spirited, whinnying, and holding its neck proudly high, and he asked the reason for its recovery. The man put off answering many times, for he was afraid to point out the healer, knowing that the one asking was hostile to him. In the end he was forced to tell the truth and ex-

plained how the cure had been done. The emperor was astonished and admitted that the man was worthy of admiration. Even so, he was not freed from his former madness. He kept raging against the Only-begotten until he became the prey of a barbarian fire, and was not even thought worthy of burial, as servants or beggars are. But the divine Aphraates showed his own virtue in that storm too, and when calm came he went on doing the same things. He worked countless other wonders, of which I will mention one or two. A woman of noble family, who was dragging the yoke of marriage with a licentious husband, came to that blessed man, wailing over her misfortune. She said that her husband was devoted to a concubine and had been bewitched by some sorcerer's spell, and that he hated her, though she was joined to him by the law of marriage. The woman said this standing in front of the outer door. For this was how he used to speak with women: he never admitted any woman inside the door. On that occasion he pitied the woman in her entreaty, and by prayer he dimmed the working of the sorcery. She had brought a small flask of oil, and he consecrated it with the divine invocation and told her to anoint herself with it. The woman carried out these instructions, and the love of her husband was turned toward herself. She persuaded him to choose his lawful bed over the unlawful one. They say also that once locusts suddenly descended on the land and, like fire, devoured everything: crops, plants, marshes, groves and meadows. A devout man came to him begging for help. He had a single field, from which he fed himself, his wife, his children and his household, and from which he also had to pay the royal tax. Again, imitating the Master's kindness toward people, Aphraates ordered a measure of water to be brought to him. When the man who was asking for his prayer brought the measure, Aphraates laid his hand on it and begged God that the water be filled with divine power.

Then, when he had finished the prayer, he instructed the man to sprinkle the water around the boundaries of the field. The man who had carried it home did as he was told, and the water became an unbreakable, inviolable fence for those fields. Up to those boundaries the locusts crept and flew about like armies. Then they turned back again, afraid of the blessing laid upon the place, as if held in by a bridle and forbidden to go any further. Why should I tell everything that blessed soul accomplished? These examples are enough to show the radiance of the grace that lived in him. I myself was a witness of this, and I gathered the blessing of that holy right hand. I was still a boy, and I went with my mother on her journey to the man. As he usually did, he opened the door a little and gave her conversation and a blessing. But he took me inside and shared with me the riches of his prayer. May I enjoy that prayer even now. I believe he is alive, dancing with the angels, and speaking to God with greater boldness than before. For in those days that boldness was kept within the limits of his mortal body, so that greater boldness would not become an occasion for pride. But now he has laid down the burden of the passions, and like a victorious athlete he speaks freely to the one who presides over the contest. For this reason I beg to receive his intercession as well.

Chapter 9

We hear of Galatians in Europe, in the west. We also know of those in Asia, their descendants, who settled beside the Black Sea, the Pontus. From these the blessed Peter sprang, a man thrice blessed and many times over. They say that he was raised by his parents for seven years from his birth, and spent all the rest of his life in the contests of the philosophic life. He is said to have died after living ninety-nine years. Who could admire as he deserves a man who struggled for ninety-two years and traveled victoriously through every day and night? What tongue could be enough to tell the achievements he labored at as a youth and a child, as a mature man, as an elder and as an old man? Who could measure his sweat? Who could count the wrestling matches that took place in so long a time? What account could do justice to the seeds he sowed, or the sheaves he gathered? Who is so lofty in mind as to see accurately the wealth amassed from that fine trade? I know the sea of his achievements, and so I am afraid to approach the telling of his story, in case my account goes under the waves. Therefore I will walk along the shore. I will admire and describe what lies along the coast of the sea, and I will leave the depths to the one who, as divine Scripture says, searches the depths and knows hidden things. This man, then, first struggled in Galatia. From there he came to Palestine to see the places, so that when he had seen the places that received the saving sufferings, he might worship in them the God who saved him. He did not suppose God was confined to a place, for he knew that God's nature cannot be circumscribed. He went so that he might feed his eyes on the sight of what he longed for, and so that the sight of his soul alone, without the sight of the eyes, would not be the only thing to enjoy the spiritual feast through faith. For people who are tenderly attached to someone are somehow made so that they take delight not only from seeing him, but also look with complete joy on his house, his clothes and his shoes.

With this same love for the Bridegroom, the bride in the Song of Songs cries out: "As an apple tree among the trees of the forest, so is my beloved among the sons. In his shadow I longed to sit, and I sat down, and his fruit was sweet in my throat." So it is not surprising that this divine man did the same. He had received the same love for the Bridegroom, and he used the bride's words: "I am wounded with love." He longed to see, as it were, some shadow of the Bridegroom, and so he sought out the places from which the springs of salvation had burst forth for all people. When he had enjoyed what he had longed for, he came down to Antioch. He saw how the city loved God, and he chose to be a stranger there rather than live

in his homeland. He counted as his fellow citizens not those of his own race and family, but those of one mind with him, partners in the faith, who pulled the same yoke of godliness. He loved this way of life, but he did not pitch a tent, or build a hut, or put up a little house. He spent all his time in a tomb that belonged to someone else. He had an upper room there, with a kind of lattice screen set in front of it, and a ladder was fitted to it to receive those who wished to climb up. He stayed shut up in this place for a very long time. He drank cold water and ate only bread, and not even that every day: he would go one day without food and take these things on the next. Once a man came to him who was raving and out of his mind, full of the working of the evil demon. Peter prayed and cleansed him, and set him free from that devilish frenzy. The man did not want to leave. He begged to give his service in return for that healing, and Peter made him a housemate. I knew this man too. I remember the miracle, I saw the reward of the healing, and I heard the conversation that took place about me between them. For Daniel (that was his name) said, "I will share in this good service myself." But that wonderful man would not agree that this should happen, since he took into account the affection of my parents for me.

Often he sat me on his knees and fed me grapes and bread. My mother had experienced his spiritual grace for herself, and so she told me to gather in that blessing once every week. She came to know him for this reason. A disease had struck one of her eyes, and it proved stronger than medical skill. There was nothing written down by the ancients, or discovered by later men, that was not tried on the sickness. When it had tested everything and shown that none of it did any good, one of her acquaintances came to tell her about the divine man and the miracle he had done. She said that the wife of the man who then held the helm of the East (he was from Pergamum) had fallen into this same affliction, and that he had healed her with prayer and the sign of the cross. My mother heard this and ran at once to the divine man. She was wearing jewels, necklaces and other gold ornaments, and a many-colored dress woven from silk threads. For she had not yet tasted the more perfect virtue; she was in the bloom of her years, and she put up with the adornment of youth. When that wonderful man saw such things, he first healed the sickness of her love of finery. He used words like these: "Tell me, child" (for I will use his own voice, and will not change the address of that holy tongue), "if a painter, well trained in his craft, painted a portrait as the rule of the art dictates, and set it out for those who wished to look at it; and then another man came who did not know that craft exactly, but improvised whatever he pleased; and then, finding fault with the skilled painting, he added longer lines to the eyebrows and eyelids, made the face whiter, and laid red color on the cheeks, would you not think the first painter justly angry, since his art had been insulted, and additions he did not need had been made by an ignorant hand?"

"Then," he said, "you must also believe that the Maker of all, who formed and painted our nature, is angry, because you accuse that unspeakable wisdom of ignorance. You would not pour on red, white and black paint unless you thought you lacked these additions. By supposing that the body needs them, you pass a verdict of weakness on its Maker. You ought to know that his power matches his will. For, as David says, he did all that the Lord willed.

He looks out for what is good for everyone, and he does not give what does harm. So do not spoil the image of God. Do not try to add what the wise Maker did not give. Do not invent this counterfeit beauty, which harms even modest women, because it lies in wait for those who look at it." That most excellent woman heard this, and at once she was inside Peter's net. Like his namesake, this man was a fisher too. She took hold of his feet, and with great earnestness begged that healing be given to her eye. He said that he was only a man and had the same nature as she did. He said he carried a great load of sins, and for that reason lacked boldness before God. But my mother wept and pleaded, and said she would not leave unless she got her cure. Then he said that God is the healer of such things, and always grants the requests of those who believe. "So he will give it now too," he said. "He will not be giving the favor to me, but looking at your faith. So if you have a faith that is pure and sincere and free from all doubt, then say goodbye to doctors and drugs, and receive this medicine given by God." When he had said this, he laid his hand on the eye and traced the sign of the saving cross, and he drove the disease away. She went back home and washed off the medicine. She threw away all her borrowed finery and lived by the rules laid down by her physician. She no longer wore embroidered clothing or decked herself with gold. And she did this though she was still quite young. She was in her twenty-third year and not yet a mother. She lived seven years more, and only then did she go through the pains of bearing me, which were her first and her only.

That is how much she gained from the teaching of the great Peter. She received a double cure. She came seeking healing for her body, and she gained health of soul besides. He was effective when he spoke such words, and powerful when he prayed. At another time she brought a household servant, a cook, who was troubled by an evil demon, and begged to get help from him. The man of God prayed, and then ordered the demon to tell by what right it held power over God's creature. The demon was like a murderer or burglar standing before a judge's bench and commanded to tell what he has done. Against its habit, fear forced it to tell the truth, and it told everything. It said that in Heliopolis the servant's master had fallen ill, and the mistress was sitting beside her sick husband. The maidservants of the house, where it was staying, were telling of the life of the monks who practice philosophy in Antioch, and how much strength they have against demons. Then these girls, like young girls who love a game, were pretending to be possessed and mad. The servant himself put on a goatskin cloak and, in the manner of a monk, exorcised them. "While this was going on," the demon said, "I was standing by the door. I could not stand the boastful talk about the monks, and I wanted to learn by experience what power they boast of having. So I left the girls and slipped into this man, because I wanted to learn how I would be driven out by monks. And now I have learned, and I need no further test. At your command I will go out at once." As it said this, it fled, and the servant enjoyed his freedom. Another time there was a farm worker of my mother's who was possessed. He was brought by [the woman who was my mother's mother?], my nurse, and she begged the enemy of evil to help him. Again he asked the demon where it came from, and from whom it had received authority over

God's creature. But it stood silent and gave no answer. So he knelt down and prayed, and begged God to show that wretch the power of his own servants.

Peter got up again, and again the demon resisted and kept silent. This went on until the ninth hour. Then Peter offered the Master a more fervent and earnest prayer, stood up, and said to the wicked spirit, "It is not Peter who commands you, but Peter's God. Answer, then, under the compulsion of his power." The avenging spirit, shameless as he was, was shamed by the holy man's gentleness. He cried out in a very loud voice that he had been living on Mount Amanus, "but when I saw this man on the road drawing water from a spring and drinking it, I wanted to make him my own dwelling." "Then come out," said the man of God, "for the One who was crucified for the whole world commands you this." The demon heard and fled, and the farmer was given back to my nurse, free of his madness. I have countless other stories like these about that blessed soul, but I will pass over most of them, because I fear the weakness of the many. They look only at themselves, and so they disbelieve the miracles of godly men. I will tell one or two more and then move on to another contender. There was a licentious man who had been a general in earlier times. A young girl of marriageable age, who was under his authority, left her mother and her family and fled to a women's house, a company of athletes. For women also contend just as men do, and go down into the arena of virtue. When the general learned of her flight, he flogged her mother and hung her up, and he did not release her from her bonds until she pointed out the refuge of the devout women. Then, giving rein to his own rage, he snatched the girl from there and brought her back to his own house. The wretch hoped to satisfy his lust. But the God who struck Pharaoh with great and grievous plagues over Sarah, Abraham's wife, and kept that chaste woman untouched, and who struck the Sodomites with blindness when they tried to abuse the incorporeal beings as if they were strangers, struck this man's eyes with blindness too, and let the prey escape from the middle of the nets. He himself went into the bedchamber, but she, who was being kept inside, went out at once and vanished, and reached the refuge she so longed for.

So the fool learned that he could not overpower a girl who had chosen the divine Bridegroom. He was forced to keep quiet, and he no longer sought the one he had caught and who had escaped by divine power. After some time she fell into a grievous illness. It was a cancer, and as her breast swelled, the pain grew with it. But at the height of the pain she would call on the great Peter. She said that as soon as that holy voice reached her ears, all the pain was lulled to sleep, and she felt no distress from it at all. For this reason she sent for him quite often and found comfort. She said that the whole time he was present the pains kept away completely. In the end, having struggled like this, she was sent from this life by him with praises of victory. Again, when my mother, after my birth pangs, had come to the very gates of death, he was begged by my nurse and came, and snatched her from the hands of death. She lay there, so they say, with the doctors having given up and her household wailing and awaiting the end. Her eyes were shut, a raging fever held her, and she recognized none of her familiar friends. Then he came, who had been given the title and the grace of an apostle, and said, "Peace to you, little child" (this was his usual greeting). At once, it is said, she

opened her eyelids, looked steadily at him, and promised that the blessing would bear fruit. The company of women cried out aloud, for sorrow and joy were mixed together, and they raised that great shout. The man of God urged all of them to join him in prayer. He said that Tabitha too had obtained her salvation this way: the widows mourned, and the great Peter brought their tears to God. They pleaded as he commanded, and they received as he had foretold. When the prayer reached its end, the illness also reached its end. Sweat suddenly poured from her whole body, that fire was put out, and the signs of health appeared.

In our own times the Master still works such wonders through his own servants. Peter's clothing, like that of the most divine Paul, was also effective. I do not say this by way of exaggeration; the truth itself agrees with me. He cut his own belt in two (it was broad and long, plaited from coarse linen). With one half he girded his own waist, and with the other half he girded mine. My mother often put this half on me when I was sick, and often on my father, and she drove the illness away. She herself also used this remedy to regain her health. Many of our acquaintances learned of this and constantly took the belt to help their sick, and everywhere it showed the working of his grace. In this way someone took it and deprived those who had given it, proving ungrateful to his benefactors. That is how we were stripped of that gift. So he shone, and lit up Antioch with his rays, and then passed beyond the contests, awaiting the crown laid up for the victors. As for me, I enjoyed his blessing while he lived, and I now beg to enjoy it still. With that prayer I will bring this account to its end.

Chapter 10

Rhosus is a city of Cilicia, on the right as you sail into the Cilician gulf. To the east and south of it there is a high mountain, spreading wide and shady, and it also feeds wild beasts in its thickets. In this mountain the great and much-celebrated Theodosius found a wooded glen sloping down toward the sea. He built a small hut there and, alone, embraced the way of life of the Gospel. He came from Antioch and was distinguished by the splendor of his family. Yet he left house, relatives and everything else, and bought, to speak in the language of the Gospel, the pearl of great price. There is no need to speak of his fasting, his sleeping on the ground, and his clothing of hair to those who see his followers and disciples and observe this way of life among them. Yet he practiced these things with exceptional zeal, since he set himself as an example to those who were being introduced to the life. He added to these an iron burden on his neck, his waist and both his hands. He wore his hair unkempt, reaching right down to his feet and even beyond, and for this reason he had it tied around his waist. He used prayer and hymn-singing continually, and so he lulled to sleep desire, anger, pride and the other wild beasts of the soul. Always adding labor to labor, he also did manual work. At one time he wove what are called fans and baskets; at another he made small fields in the glen, sowed seed, and gathered from there enough food. As time went on his fame spread in every direction, and many people came running from many places, eager to share with him his dwelling, his labors and his way of life. He received them and led them on into this life. You could see some weaving sails, others weaving ropes of hair, others plaiting the fans or the baskets, and others taking up farming.

Because the place lay by the sea, he later built a ferryboat and used it to carry goods. It took out the work of the brothers who lived with him and brought back what they needed. He remembered the apostle's words: "working night and day so as not to burden any of you," and "these hands served my needs and those of the men with me." So he worked himself, and he urged his fellow monks to add the sweat of the body to the labors of the soul. For it would be wrong, he said, for people living in the world to toil and suffer to feed wives and children, and on top of that to pay taxes and tribute, to offer firstfruits to God, and to relieve the need of beggars as far as they can, while we do not earn what we need by our labor. And that, though our food is poor and scanty and our clothing is poor, too! It would be wrong for us to sit with our hands tucked away, living off other people's hands. With these and similar words he urged them to work. He performed the divine services, as

they are customarily kept everywhere, at their proper times, and gave the time between to work. He took special care of the hospitality given to strangers. He entrusted this duty to men adorned with gentleness and humility of mind, who had love for their neighbor. He himself oversaw everything and checked whether each task was carried out according to the established rules. He became so famous that sailors, even those more than a thousand stades away, called on "the God of Theodosius" in times of danger, and by the name of Theodosius they calmed the storm at sea. Even bold and savage enemies respected him, men who had plundered and enslaved most of the East. For who among those living in our part of the world has not heard of the evils that happened in that time at the hands of the people once called Solymi and now called Isaurians?

Even so, those raiders spared neither city nor village. They plundered every place they were able to capture and set it on fire. Yet they respected that philosophy of his. They asked only for bread and promised prayers, and they left that ascetic dwelling unharmed. They did this not once but twice. Still, the bishops of the churches feared that the devil might put a love of money into the barbarians and so cause that great light to be taken captive. It was likely that very large ransoms would be sent to them from everywhere by all who honor divine things. So they begged him and persuaded him to go to Antioch. They had already taken two bishops of the churches captive. They treated them with every kindness, but after receiving fourteen thousand gold pieces for the two, they allowed them to go back wherever they wished. When he came to Antioch, he settled in a dwelling beside the river. He drew to himself all who knew how to gather such fruit. I was carried along by the rush of my story and passed over a miracle that this holy man performed. To many it may seem unbelievable, yet it remains to this day as a witness to my account, and it shows what grace and boldness before God this marvelous man had received. A steep rock rises above the monastery that he himself had built, and it had previously been completely dry, without any moisture. In this rock he made a channel running from the summit down to the monastery, as though the flow of water were already in his hand. Full of confidence in God, and bold, as one might expect, because he had the Master favorable to him and an unwavering faith, he woke at night and went up to the top of the channel before his companions had risen for their usual prayers. He begged God in prayer, trusting in the one who does the will of those who fear him, and struck the rock with the staff on which he happened to be leaning. The rock split and water gushed out like a river. It flowed inside the monastery through the channel and supplied every need richly, and what was left over drained into the nearby sea.

To this day the grace of Moses at work in the great Theodosius can be seen. This one thing is enough to show the man's boldness before God. He lived only a short time longer in Antioch, and then passed over to the company of angels. His holy body was carried through the middle of the city. It was adorned, as with golden crowns, by that iron he had worn. All the leaders walked in front, including those entrusted with the great offices. There was a struggle and a quarrel over the bier, since everyone was eager to carry it and to gain a blessing from it. So he was carried, and laid in the shrine of the holy martyrs. He had shared tent and roof with Julian, that victorious champion of godliness. The tomb that received

him is the same one that received the divine and blessed Aphraates. The leadership of the flock passed to the admirable Helladius. He spent sixty years in those labors, and then by God's gift received the bishopric of the Cilicians. He did not give up his earlier philosophy. Day after day he added the toils of the high priesthood to those labors. The blessed Romulus became his hearer and was appointed leader of a very large flock. His company, too, has continued to this day in the same way of life. A village lies beside the monastery, called Marathon in Syriac. With this I bring the account to its end, and I ask [to share] in the blessing that comes from it.

Chapter 11

Now the great Theodosius came from Antioch and struggled in the Rhosian mountains. He returned to the city of Antioch and so received the end of his life. The godly Romanus, however, was born and first raised in Rhosus, but took up the contests of virtue in Antioch. He pitched his tent outside the city walls, at the foot of the mountain, and spent all his time in a small house that belonged to someone else. He lived to old age without ever using fire or receiving the light of a lamp. His food was bread and salt, and his drink was spring water. His hair was like that of the great Theodosius, and so were his clothing and his iron. He excelled in simplicity of character, gentleness of manner, and humility of mind. For this reason the radiance of divine grace shone from him. "On whom shall I look," it says, "but on the gentle, the quiet, the one who trembles at my words?" And the Lord said again to his own disciples: "Learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls." And again: "Blessed are the gentle, for they will inherit the earth." For Moses the lawgiver, too, this was the mark of his achievements. "Moses," it says, "was the gentlest of all the people on the earth." The all-holy Spirit bore the same witness to the prophet David: "Remember David," it says, "and all his gentleness." And we have learned about the patriarch Jacob that he was a plain man, living in a house.

Romanus gathered these virtues like a bee from those divine meadows, and made from them the honey of truth. But he did not enjoy the fruit of his labors alone. The sweetest streams flowed out also to those outside. To those who came to him he spoke in a gentle, sweet voice. He gave many exhortations about brotherly love, and many about harmony and peace. Many he made lovers of divine things merely by being seen. For who would not have been amazed to see an old man with a body worn out, choosing to carry as much iron as possible, dressed in a garment of hair, and taking only as much food as would prevent death from hunger? Besides the greatness and number of his labors, the grace that bloomed in him persuaded everyone to marvel at him and honor him. Often he drove away severe diseases from many people, and he gave children to many barren women. Though he had received so much power from the divine Spirit, he called himself a poor man and a beggar. So all who came to him he filled with benefit, by being seen and by speaking, through his whole life. When he left this world and was moved to the company of angels, he left a memory that was not buried with his body. It flourishes and is green, it never goes out, it remains forever, and it

is enough to help any who wish. I too have gathered a blessing from it. Now I will tell, as well as I can, the stories of the other champions.

Chapter 12

Not many people know the wonderful Zeno, and those who do know him cannot admire him as he deserves. He left behind very great wealth in his homeland, which was Pontus. There, as he used to say, he had drunk from the streams of the great Basil, who lived nearby and watered Cappadocia, and he gave back fruits worthy of that watering. As soon as the emperor Valens was killed, he laid aside his soldier's belt. He had been enrolled among those who carry the emperor's dispatches at speed. Leaving the palace, he went off to a tomb (the mountain beside Antioch has many of them) and lived there alone. He was purifying his soul and washing the dirt from its power of sight. He pictured the divine vision to himself and set the ascents to God in his heart. He longed to take wings like a dove and desired to fly up to the divine rest. For this reason he had no bed, no lamp, no hearth, no cooking pot, no oil flask, no chest, no book, nothing else. He wore old rags, and his shoes were the same, in need of ties, since the leather had come apart from the stitching of the soles. He got the food he needed from one acquaintance only. It was a single loaf, supplied every two days. The water he drew from far off and carried himself. Once someone saw him struggling with the load and begged to lighten his labor. At first Zeno resisted, explaining that he could not bear to drink water that another had carried. When he could not persuade the man, he gave him the jars (he carried two, one in each hand). When the man got inside the door of the cell, Zeno poured out the water and sprinkled it about, then ran back to the spring, confirming his words by his deed.

When I first longed to see him and went up the mountain, I saw a man holding the jars in both hands. I asked where the dwelling of the wonderful Zeno was. He said he knew of no monk called by that name. I guessed that it was he and followed him, taking his modest manner as proof of my guess. When I got inside the door, I saw a bed made of hay, and some other rubbish spread over the stones, so that those who sat on it would suffer no harm from them. We held many conversations about the philosophy of the ascetic life. I asked questions, and he unfolded for us the things we sought. Then it was time to go home, and I begged him to give us the provisions of his blessing. He resisted, saying that it was lawful for us to fulfil the prayer, and calling himself a layman and us soldiers. For at that time I happened to be reading the sacred books aloud to the people of God. We pleaded our youth and the unripeness of our age (for we had only just begun to show a slight down on the cheek), and swore that we would never come again if we were forced to do this now. At last,

late in the day, he gave way to our entreaties and offered the prayer to God. Then he made a long defense of having done it, saying that he had done it out of love and obedience, for we had heard him praying as we drew near. For an old man, who had by then completed forty years in the ascetic life, to have such humility of mind at such a height of philosophy, who could admire it as it deserves? What praise could one offer that matches its greatness?

He possessed such wealth of virtue that, though he lived in the utmost poverty, he went to the holy church with the crowd every Sunday. He lent his ears to the divine words and to the teachers, and shared in the mystic table, and then returned to that strange dwelling of his. He had no little key and left no guard behind. The place was closed to evildoers and entirely safe, since he had nothing in it but that litter of rubbish. He would borrow a single book from his acquaintances and read it right through, and only when he had returned it would he take another. Yet he had no bolts and used no bars, and he was guarded by grace from above. We learned this plainly from experience. When a band of Isaurians seized the high citadel by night, and after dawn ran down as far as the foot of the mountain, they cruelly speared many men and many women who were living the ascetic life. At that time this godly man watched the slaughter of the others, and by prayer he darkened the eyes of the raiders. They went past his door and did not see the entrance. He said, calling the truth to witness, that he also clearly saw three young men driving all that company away, showing them the way out. So much, then, is enough to show what kind of life this godly man led and what grace he enjoyed from God. But I must add one more thing. It grieved and stung him greatly that his property had remained, and had not been sold and distributed according to the law of the Gospel. The reason was the youth of his brothers. The lands and the money were held in common, and he did not want to go back to his homeland to divide them. Yet he was afraid to let another man sell his share of the estate, in case the buyers took advantage of his brothers in their greed and then heaped slanders on him.

He turned these thoughts over in his mind and put off the disposal for a long time. Later he sold everything to one of his acquaintances and gave away most of the money. Then an illness came on him and forced him to make a decision about what was left. So he sent for the bishop of the city. This was the great Alexander, the glory of godliness, the pattern of virtue, the exact image of true philosophy. Zeno said to him, “Come, my godly friend, and be the best steward of this money. Distribute it according to God’s purpose, as one who will give an account to that Judge. I handled the rest myself and gave it away as I thought best, and I meant to manage what is left in the same way. But since I am ordered to depart from this life, I appoint you steward of it, for you are a high priest and live in a way worthy of your high priesthood.” So he handed the money over to him as to a godly treasurer. He himself did not live much longer, but departed like an Olympic victor leaving the wrestling ground, having received praise not only from men but from angels. And I, begging him also to intercede with the Master on my behalf, will now turn to another account.

Chapter 13

Macedonius, nicknamed “the Barley-Eater” (the food he ate gave him that name), is known to everyone in Phoenicia, Syria and Cilicia, and also to their neighbors and the people living near them. Some saw the man’s miracles with their own eyes. Others heard rumor singing them out and repeating them. Not everyone knows everything, however. One person has learned this, another that, and each naturally admires only what he knows. But I know the story of this godly man better than most. Many things drew me to go to him and to marvel, and I will tell each as well as I can. I have placed his story after many others, not because he was second to the rest in virtue (he was equal to the highest and the first), but because he lived a very long time and reached the end of his life after those I have already mentioned. This man made the mountain peaks his wrestling-ground and racecourse. He was not settled in a single place, but lived now in one, now moved to another. He did this not because he found the places disagreeable, but to escape the crowds that gathered to him and came running from every side. For forty-five years he went on in this way. He used no tent and no hut, but made his stand in a deep pit dug in the ground. Because of this some called him Gouba. In the Syrian language, when turned into Greek, that name means “pit.” After this time, when he had become an old man, he gave way to those who begged him and put up a hut. Later, at the urging of his acquaintances, he also made use of small houses, not his own but other people’s. He lived twenty-five years in the hut and the small houses, so that the time of his struggles adds up to seventy years. His food was not bread or vegetables but hulled barley, soaked in water alone.

My mother, who had become a friend of his, supplied him with this food for a very long time. Once he came to her when she was ill. He learned that she would not take food suited to her sickness (she too had by then embraced the ascetic life). He urged her to yield to the doctors and to regard such food as medicine, for it is taken not for luxury but for need. “I too,” he said, “as you know, have lived forty years on barley alone. When I fell ill the day before yesterday, I told my companion to ask for a little bread and bring it. A thought had come to me: if I should die, I would have to answer for my death before the just Judge, as one who had run away from the struggles and fled the labors of his service like a runaway slave. It was possible to hold off death with a little food, and to stay on in this life, toiling and suffering, and so gather up the wealth that comes from it. I judged that death by starvation was to be preferred over a life of philosophy. So I was filled with fear, and wanting to blunt

the sharp points of that thought, I told him to ask for the bread, and when it was brought I ate it. So now I urge you to give me bread from now on, and no longer barley." So we heard from a lips that do not lie that for forty years he made barley his food. This is enough to prove the man's self-discipline and love of labor. We will show the simplicity of his old-fashioned character by other things. When the great Flavian was appointed to shepherd God's great flock, he learned of the man's virtue (he was famous and on everyone's lips). He brought him down from the mountaintop as though a written charge had been laid against him. When the mystical liturgy was set out, he led him to the altar and enrolled him among the priests. When the service was over and someone told him what had happened (he had known nothing at all of it), at first he railed at everyone and pelted them with words. Then he took his staff (in his old age he was used to walking leaning on it) and chased after the bishop himself and everyone else who was there.

He thought that ordination would rob him of his mountaintop and the way of life he longed for. That time, some of his friends barely managed to calm him down in his anger. But when the cycle of the week was completed and the Lord's Day came again, the great Flavian sent for him once more, asking him to share in the festival with them. He said to those who came, "Is what has already been done not enough for you? Do you want to put me forward as a presbyter again?" They told him that the same ordination could not be laid on a man twice. He would not give way and did not go, until time and his friends taught him this by repeated explanation. I know that this story will not seem very admirable to many. But I have included it because I think it is worth remembering, as sufficient proof of his simplicity of mind and purity of soul. For to such people the Master promised the kingdom of heaven. "Truly I say to you," he said, "unless you turn and become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven." Now that I have shown the character of his soul in summary, let me also show the boldness of speech that came from his virtue. A military commander who loved hunting went up the mountain to hunt. Dogs followed him, and soldiers, and everything needed for the chase. When he saw the man from a distance and learned from his companions who he was, he leapt at once from his horse, approached, greeted him, and asked what he was doing there. Macedonius asked him in return, "And what have you come up here to do?" The commander said, "To hunt." "I too," he said, "am hunting my God. I long to catch him and I yearn to behold him, and I will not give up this noble hunt." When the commander heard this, he was amazed, as one would expect, and went away. At another time the city was seized with frenzy by some evil demon, and in its madness it abused the imperial statues. The foremost of the generals came, bringing a sentence of total destruction against the city.

Macedonius came down from the mountain and stopped both generals as they were passing through the marketplace. When they learned who he was, they jumped down from their horses, clasped his hands and knees, and promised deliverance. He told them to say this to the emperor: "He is a man, and he has the same nature as those who have insulted him. He ought to measure his anger by that nature, but he has used a measureless fury. For the sake of his own images he hands over the divine images to slaughter, and in place of

bronze statues he sends bodies to death. For us," he said, "it is easy and simple to recast the bronze ones and give them shape again. But you, though you are emperor, cannot bring slaughtered bodies back to life. Why do I say bodies? You cannot even restore a single hair." He said this in the Syrian language. The generals heard it as the interpreter put it into Greek, and they shuddered, and they promised to carry the message to the emperor. I think everyone would agree that these words came from the grace of the divine Spirit. How else could he have said them, a man untouched by any education, raised in the countryside, living on mountaintops, carrying all simplicity in his soul, and who had not even spent time on the divine oracles? So now that I have shown his spiritual wisdom, and the boldness of speech that suits a righteous man ("for the righteous man is confident as a lion"), I will turn to his miracles. The wife of a wealthy man fell into a disease of ravenous appetite. Some called it the work of a demon, others thought it a sickness of the body. Whichever it was, it went like this: they said she ate thirty birds a day and did not quench her craving, but still longed for more. As the household's wealth was being used up on her, her relatives took pity and begged that divine man for help. He came and prayed. He laid his right hand on water, stamped on it the saving seal, and told her to drink. He cured the disease, and he blunted the excess of her appetite so greatly that from then on a small portion of a bird each day was enough to meet her need for food.

So that was the kind of cure this illness received. There was also a girl, still living in her bridal chamber, who was suddenly seized by the working of an evil demon. Her father ran to the holy man, pleading and begging that his little daughter might be healed. Macedonius prayed and ordered the demon to leave the girl at once. The demon said that he had not entered her willingly but had been forced by sorcery and magic spells. He even named the man who had forced him, and said that love was the reason for the sorcery. When the father heard this, he could not bear the surge of his anger, and he did not wait for his daughter's cure. He went to the governor who ruled over the higher officials and presided over many nations, lodged a charge against the man, and told him the whole affair. The accused was brought in, denied it, and called the charge slander. The father called as his witness no one else but the very demon who had served the sorcery, and he begged the judge to run to that holy man and hear the demon's testimony. The judge said it was neither lawful nor holy for an examination to be held in a place of ascetics. So the girl's father promised to bring the holy Macedonius to the court, and he ran, persuaded him, and brought him. The judge sat outside the courthouse, and he became no judge but a spectator. For the great Macedonius took the judge's seat, using the power that lived in him, and commanded the demon to drop his usual lying and to tell the whole tragedy of the affair truthfully. Driven by the greatest necessity, the demon pointed out the man who had forced him with his magical incantations, and the maidservant through whom that potion had been given to the girl. Then he hurried on to tell of other things that he had done under compulsion from other people: burning down one man's house, destroying another man's cattle, harming someone else in some other way. At that the man of God ordered him to be silent and to go at once far away from the girl and from the town.

The demon, as if obeying a law from the Master, did what he was told and fled immediately. In this way the holy man freed the girl from her madness. He also snatched that wretched man out of the charge and prevented the judge from passing a sentence of death. He said it was not right that slaughter should be imposed on those who had been exposed through him, but rather that safety should be granted to the man through repentance. These things are enough to show the abundance of the divine power given to him. But I will still tell of others. A woman of noble family and great wealth (they called her Astrion) lost her wits. She recognized none of her household and would not take any food or drink. She remained out of her mind for a very long time. Others called this the working of a demon, but the doctors called it a disease of the brain. All their skill was spent and no help came from it. So her husband, Aūodianos (he was a man of rank and office), ran to that holy head, described his wife's affliction, and begged to obtain her cure. The wondrous man yielded. He went to the house and offered an earnest petition to God. When he had finished the prayer, he ordered water to be brought, traced on it the sign of salvation, and told her to drink. The doctors objected that cold drinking would make the disease worse, but the man pushed that whole company aside and gave the woman the drink. As soon as she drank, she came back to herself and her mind was sound. Fully rid of the illness, she recognized the holy man. She begged to take his right hand, laid it on her eyes, and put it to her mouth. For the rest of her life she kept a healthy mind. At the time when he was embracing the life of the mountains, a shepherd looking for stray sheep came to the place where the man of God was.

It was deep night and a heavy snow was falling. The shepherd said he saw a fire burning around the man, and two figures in white clothing feeding it with fuel. For Macedonius brought his own eagerness, and so he enjoyed help from God. He had also received the gift of prophecy. Once a general came to him, a man distinguished for his piety (who does not know the virtue of Lupicinus?). He said he was anxious about some men who were bringing him supplies by sea from the imperial city. Fifty days, he said, had passed since they sailed from the harbor, and he had received no word of them. Macedonius did not hesitate. "My friend," he said, "one of the ships is lost. The other will reach the harbor of Seleucia tomorrow." The general heard this from that holy tongue as it spoke, and he learned by experience that the words were true. But to pass over the other cases, I will tell what concerns myself. My mother lived with my father for thirteen years and did not become a mother. She was barren, held back by nature from bearing fruit. This did not distress her much, since she had been taught the things of God and believed that it was for the best. But my father was greatly grieved by the lack of children. He went about everywhere, begging God's holy servants to ask God for children for him. The others promised to pray, and urged him to accept what God willed. But this holy man promised a direct petition, and he promised that my father would receive one son from the Creator of all. Three years went by and the promise had not been fulfilled, so my father ran to him again to demand what he had promised. Macedonius ordered that his wife be sent to him. When my mother came, the holy man told her that he would ask, and that she would receive the child, and that it was fitting to give back to the Giver. My mother begged only to receive the salvation of her

soul and deliverance from Gehenna. “Besides this,” he said, “the bountiful Giver will also give you the son.”

“For to those who ask sincerely he grants their requests twice over.” My mother went home carrying the blessing of the promise. In the fourth year after the promise she conceived and was heavy with child, and she went to the holy man, showing him the sheaves from the seeds of his blessing. In the fifth month of the pregnancy a danger of miscarriage arose. She sent again to her new Elisha (for her illness kept her from going herself). She reminded him that she had not wanted to be a mother of children, and she brought his promises before him. When he saw the messenger coming from far off, he recognized him and knew the reason. For during the night the Master had shown him both the illness and its cure. So he took his staff and came leaning on it. He entered the house, gave the greeting of peace as he always did, and said, “Take courage and do not be afraid. The Giver will not take the gift away, unless you break the agreement that was made. You promised to give back what would be given, and to consecrate it to the service of God.” “Yes,” said my mother, “that is what I want and pray for as I bear it. I would rather have a child who never comes to birth than raise it for some other life.” “Then drink this water,” said the holy man, “and you will feel God’s help.” She drank as he commanded, and the danger of miscarriage fled. Such were the miracles of our Elisha. I often enjoyed his blessing and his teaching. He would often advise me, “My child, you were born with much labor. I spent many nights asking God only this, that your parents would become what they were called after your birth. So live in a way worthy of those labors. You were dedicated by promises before the birth pains. What is dedicated to God is holy to all and untouchable by the many. So it is fitting that you do not accept the base movements of the soul, but do, say and think only those things that please God, the lawgiver of virtue.”

This is the kind of advice the man of God always gave me. I remember his words, and I have been taught about the divine gift. But I do not show my obedience to that advice by my deeds. So I beg that, through his prayer, I may obtain help from God’s hand, and that I may live out the rest of my life according to his counsel. What sort of man he was, and by what labors he drew down the grace of God, these accounts are enough to show. Yet even in this life his death received a fitting honor for his labors. All of them, citizens and strangers alike, and those who had been entrusted with great offices, carried that holy bier on their shoulders. They took it to the shrine of the victorious martyrs, and beside those godly men, Aphraates and Theodosius, they laid his holy body, so dear to God. His fame remains unquenched, and no length of time will be able to blot it out. As for us, we bring this narrative to its end, and we have gathered the fragrance that comes from telling it.

Chapter 14

I know that many other lights of godliness shone around the city of Antioch: the great Severus, Peter the Egyptian, Eutychius, Cyrillus, Moses, Malchus, and very many others who walked the same road. But if we tried to write the life of all of them, all our time would not be enough. Besides, reading about too many wearies most people. So let everyone judge the lives of those I have left out from the ones I have written down. Let them praise those men, imitate them, and gather the benefit. As for me, I will cross over to the meadows of Cyrrhus, and of the sweet-smelling and beautiful flowers there I will point out the loveliness of a few, as far as I can. In the times before us there was a man named Maisymas. He was Syrian in speech, raised in the countryside, and he showed every kind of virtue. He shone in the life he lived, and the care of a certain village was entrusted to him. As he performed the sacred rites and shepherded God's flock, he said and did what the divine law prescribed. They say he hardly ever changed his tunic or his goatskin cloak. When tears appeared in them he sewed other rags onto them, and in this way he looked after his old age. He cared for strangers and the poor so eagerly that he threw open his doors to every passer-by. He is said to have had two jars, one of grain and one of oil. From these he always supplied everyone in need, and yet he always kept them full, because the blessing given to the widow of Zarephath was extended to these jars as well.

For the same Lord of all is rich toward all who call upon him. As he commanded that jar and that cruse to keep flowing, supplying the sheaves from the seeds of hospitality, so to this wonderful man he gave a supply equal to his eagerness. He also received from the God of all great grace for working miracles. I will mention one or two miracles and pass over the rest, since I am in a hurry to come to the others. A woman, distinguished by both birth and faith, had a son who fell ill. He was very young, hardly more than a boy. She set him before many physicians. But their skill was defeated, and the physicians gave up. They told her plainly that the child would die. The woman did not throw away her better hopes. She imitated that Shunammite woman and set the covered carriage on her mules. She put herself and the child in it and went to find that godly man. Weeping, and showing him how nature's weakness had struck her child, she begged him to help. He took the child in both hands, went up to the foot of the altar, and lay face down, pleading with the physician of souls and bodies. He received what he asked, and gave the son back to his mother in good health. I heard this from the woman herself, who saw the miracle and whose child

received his healing. They also say that the owner of that village once came there. This was Letoius. He held the first place in the council of Antioch, but he was held in the darkness of ungodliness, and he was exacting the crops from the farmers more harshly than he should. The godly man urged him toward kindness, advised him, and went through arguments about mercy and compassion. Letoius stayed unmoved, but he learned by experience the harm of disobedience.

For when Leto'ios was about to leave, the carriage was ready. He sat down and ordered the driver to urge on the mules. They pulled with all their strength, straining to drag the pole, but the wheels seemed fastened down with iron and lead. The crowd of villagers also tried to move the wheels with levers, but it did no good. Then one of the more friendly men in his company explained the cause to Leto'ios. He said that the aged priest had laid a curse on him, and that he ought to win the man's favor. So he leapt down from the carriage and begged the very man he had spat upon. He rolled at his feet and clung to his filthy rags, pleading with him to relax his anger. The old man accepted the plea and offered it to the Master. He loosed the invisible bonds on the wheels and made the carriage move again as usual. They tell many other such stories about that holy man. From these we can also learn that living in cities and villages does not at all harm those who choose the philosophic life. For he and those like him, who care for the service of God, showed that even people who live in the middle of a crowd can reach the very summit of the virtues. May I, helped by their prayers, climb a little way above the foot of that mountain.

Chapter 15

Akepsimas lived at the same time, and his fame spread widely through the whole East. He shut himself up in a small cell and spent sixty years there, neither seen nor speaking. He turned his attention inward and pictured God before him, and from this he received every comfort of the soul, according to the prophecy that says: “Delight yourself in the Lord, and he will grant you the requests of your heart.” He would stretch out his hand through a small opening to take the food that was brought. The opening was not cut straight through, so that it would not lie open to those who wanted to look in, but was built slanting, with a winding turn. His food was brought to him: lentils soaked in water. Once a week he went out at night and drew enough water from a nearby spring. Once a shepherd tending his flocks some distance away saw something moving in the darkness. He supposed it was a wolf, for the man walked bent over, weighed down by a great deal of iron. He swung his sling to hurl a stone. But his hand stayed fixed and unmoving for a very long time and could not let the stone go, until that holy man had drawn his water and gone back. Then the shepherd realized his mistake. After dawn he went to that school of virtue, told what had happened, asked pardon, and received forgiveness for his offense. He did not hear a voice speak, but learned the man’s kindness from the movements of his hand. Another man, with malicious nosiness, wanted to find out what he was doing all that time, and dared to climb the plane tree planted beside the enclosure wall. But he immediately reaped the fruits of his boldness. Half of his body, from the top of his head to his feet, was ruined, and he became a suppliant, confessing his sin.

He announced beforehand that health would come through the cutting down of the plane tree. So that no one else would do the same and suffer the same, he ordered the tree cut down at once. When it was cut, the punishment was lifted. This was the endurance of this holy man, and this was the grace he received from the one who presides over the contest. When he was getting ready to depart this life, he declared in advance that he would reach the end of his life after fifty days. Meanwhile he received everyone who wished to see him. The head of the Church also came, and urged him to accept the yoke of the presbyterate. “Father,” he said, “I know the height of your philosophy and the depth of my own poverty. But I have been entrusted with the stewardship of the high priesthood, and by this, not by that, I put forward men for ordination. So accept the gift of the priesthood. My right hand will serve, and the grace of the all-holy Spirit will supply it.” To this he is said to

have replied: “Since I shall depart from here in a few days, I will not quarrel about this. If I were going to live much longer, I would have run from this heavy and fearful burden of the priesthood, dreading the accounting required for such a trust. But since I shall soon leave everything here behind, I will obey what is commanded.” At once, with no one leading him, he bent his knees and waited for the grace. The bishop laid his hand on him and served the Spirit. He lived only a few days after becoming a priest. Then he exchanged one life for another, and received a life that does not age and has no grief in place of one full of cares. All the villages wanted to seize his body and carry it off to their own place. Then someone revealed the oaths the saint had made, and ended the quarrel.

For he said that the saint had made him swear to hand over his body for burial in that particular place. So the citizens of heaven cared about plainness even after death. While they lived they never allowed themselves to think highly of themselves, and when they died they did not draw to themselves any honor from men. They transferred all their love to the Bridegroom, like modest wives who want to be loved and praised only by their own husbands and despise the good reports of others. For this reason the Bridegroom made them famous even against their wishes, and gave them in abundance a good name among men as well. For whenever someone who pursues divine things asks for heavenly things, God adds many other things besides, giving many times over what was asked. This is exactly what he said when he gave his law: “Ask for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all the rest will be added to you.” And again: “The one who leaves father and mother and brothers and wife and children for my sake and the sake of my Gospel will receive a hundredfold in this age, and in the age to come will inherit eternal life.” He said this, and he has done it. May we, taught by this account and leaning on the prayers of these saints, run straight toward the goal, to the prize of the upward calling in Christ Jesus our Lord, to whom be glory forever. Amen.

Chapter 16

After these I will mention Maron, for he too adorned the holy company. He embraced a life in the open air and took possession of a hilltop that had been honored by the ungodly of old. He consecrated to God the shrine of the demons on it and spent his time there. He pitched a small tent, but rarely used it. He practiced not only the usual labors but devised others as well, gathering up the riches of philosophy. The one who presides over the contest added grace to his labors. For the generous Giver bestowed on him the gift of healing so richly that his fame ran everywhere, and people from every direction were drawn to him and learned by experience that the report was true. One could see fevers put out by the dew of his blessing, shivering fits stopped, demons fleeing, and every kind of varied illness healed by a single remedy. Physicians' sons give each ailment its own fitting medicine, but the prayer of the saints is a common antidote for all afflictions. He healed not only bodily sicknesses but also gave the fitting treatment to souls. He cured one man's greed and another's anger. To one he brought teaching about self-control, to another he added lessons in righteousness. He trained one man out of his licentiousness and roused another from his sluggishness.

By working this field, Maron produced many plants of philosophy, and he himself planted for God the garden that now flourishes in the territory of Cyrrhus. The great Jacob was a product of his planting. One could rightly apply to him that prophetic saying: "The righteous will flourish like a palm tree; he will be multiplied like the cedar in Lebanon." The same applies to all the others, each of whom I will mention separately, God willing. While he was tending this divine farm in this way, healing souls and bodies together, he endured a brief illness. This was so that we might learn both the weakness of our nature and the courage of his purpose. Then he departed this life. A fierce war broke out among his neighbors over his body. A populous village among the neighboring ones came out in a mass, scattered the others, and seized that thrice-longed-for treasure. They built a very large shrine and, to this day, enjoy the benefit that comes from it, honoring that victorious man with a public festival. We too, [by speaking of him], reap the blessing. For us the memory is enough in place of the tomb.

Chapter 17

It would not be right to pass over the memory of the admirable Abraham, on the pretext that after the solitary life he graced the episcopal chair. In fact he deserves to be remembered all the more for this reason: when he was forced to change his way of public life, he did not change his manner of living. He carried his ascetic hardship over into it, and ran the course of his life surrounded both by a monk's labors and by a bishop's cares. He too is a fruit of the territory of Cyrrhus. He was born and brought up there, and there he gathered the wealth of ascetic virtue. Those who lived with him say that he subdued his body with so much wakefulness, standing, and fasting that for a very long time he remained motionless, hardly able to walk. By divine providence he was freed from that weakness. He then wished to bring dangers upon himself for the sake of divine grace, and he went to Lebanon. He had learned that a certain very large village was held in the darkness of impiety. He hid the face of a monk behind the mask of a merchant. He took sacks along with his companions, as though he were going to buy nuts, for that was the fruit the village produced above all. He rented a house and paid the owners a little money in advance. For three or four days he kept quiet. Then, little by little, he began the divine service, using a moderate voice. When the villagers noticed the psalm-singing, the town crier shouted and called everyone together. Men and women gathered. They walled up the doors, and from above, from the roof, they piled on a great deal of earth and dropped it down on them. But when they saw the men being choked and buried, unwilling to do or say anything, and offering only prayer to God, some of the villagers made a different suggestion, and the rest stopped their frenzy. Then they opened the doors, dug away the heap of earth, and ordered the men to leave at once. But at that very time tax collectors arrived, forcing people to pay their levies. Some they bound; others they abused.

But that holy man remembered nothing of what had been done to him. He imitated the Master, who while nailed to the cross cared for those who had done it, and he begged the tax collectors to carry out the collection gently. When they demanded guarantors too, he accepted the demand willingly and promised to pay a hundred gold pieces in a few days. The men who had done those terrible things were full of admiration for his kindness. They asked pardon for what they had dared to do, and begged him to become their patron. For the village had no landlord; the villagers were both the farmers and the owners. So he went to the city, which was Emesa, found some acquaintances there, and took out a loan

of the hundred gold pieces. Then he returned to the village and fulfilled his promise to the collectors in full. When they saw his earnestness, they pressed him with a more urgent appeal. He said he would do what they asked if they promised to build a church. They begged him to begin at once, and they led the blessed man around, showing him the more suitable sites. One praised this place, another that. He chose the better one, laid the foundations, and in a short time put the roof on. When the building was finished, he told them to receive a priest. But they said they would choose no one else, and begged him to take them as their father and shepherd. So he accepted the grace of the priesthood. He stayed with them three years and guided them well in divine things. Then he arranged for one of his companions to be put forward in his place, and went back to his monastic dwelling. I do not want to make my account long by telling everything about him. After he had shone in these things, he received the bishop's chair of Carrhae. That city was wrapped in the drunkenness of impiety and had given itself over to the revelry of demons.

But the city was thought worthy of his farming and received the fire of his teaching. It stayed free of its former thorns, and now it flourishes with the crops of the Spirit and offers God sheaves of ripe ears of grain. The holy man did not do this divine farming without toil. He went through countless labors. He imitated the skill of those entrusted with healing bodies: some things he soothed with encouragement, others he treated with harsher astringent medicines, and in some cases he even cut and cauterized, and so he brought about health. His teaching and his other care were backed by the shining example of his life. Lit by that, people listened to what he said and gladly accepted what he did. For during all the time he was bishop, bread was superfluous to him, water was superfluous, a bed was useless, and the use of fire was superfluous. At night he completed forty sets of psalms sung in alternating choirs, and he doubled the measure of the prayers that came between them. For the rest of the night he sat on a chair, granting his eyelids only a brief rest. That man will not live on bread alone, Moses the lawgiver said, and the Master recalled this saying when he turned aside the devil's invitation. But that it is possible to live without water, we have not learned anywhere in the divine Scripture. Even the great Elijah first supplied his need from the brook. Then, when he came to the widow of Sarepta, he first commanded that water be brought to him, and only then asked for bread. But this remarkable man, during his time as bishop, ate no bread, no pulses, and no vegetables that had been near fire. He took no water either, which people clever in such matters have judged the first of the four elements because of how much it is needed. He ate only lettuce, chicory, and celery.

He made these things his food and drink: lettuce, wild chicory, celery, and the like. He showed that the arts of the baker and the cook are unnecessary. In the season of fruit he supplied his need from that, and he took even these only after the evening service. He wore his body down with such labors, yet he gave tireless care to others. For guests who came, a bed of rushes was made ready, and bright, choice loaves were set before them, along with fragrant wine, fish, vegetables, and all that goes with these. At midday he sat beside those at table. He handed each one a portion of what was set out, passed the cups to everyone, and urged them to drink. In this he imitated his namesake, the patriarch I mean, who

served his guests but did not eat with them. He spent whole days over the lawsuits of people quarreling. Some he persuaded to be reconciled with one another. Those who would not be persuaded, he compelled with gentle teaching to do what was right. No wrongdoer ever went away having beaten justice by his boldness. He always gave the wronged man his share of justice and so showed him unbeatable, stronger than the man who wanted to do wrong. He was like an excellent physician who always checks whichever humor is in excess and works by his remedies to restore the balance. The emperor longed to see him. Rumor has wings, and it easily carries every report, good and bad. So the emperor summoned him, and when he arrived, greeted him, and counted that rough peasant's goatskin cloak of his more precious than the imperial purple. The company of the empresses too took hold of his hands and knees and begged him, a man who did not even understand the Greek language. So worthy of reverence is philosophy, to emperors and to all people. And when its lovers and devotees die, they win even greater glory. This can be learned from many things, and not least from the story of this wonderful man.

When he died and the emperor learned of it, the emperor wished to lay him in one of the holy shrines. But when he learned that it was right to give the shepherd's body back to his flock, he himself led the procession, and the company of the empresses followed, with all the officials and those under them, soldiers and private citizens alike. With this same zeal the city of Antioch received him, and the cities after it, until he came to the great river. Along the bank of the Euphrates citizens ran together, and foreigners too. All who could fit in, and people from the neighboring lands, hurried to share the blessing. Many staff-bearers walked beside the bier. They frightened off, by striking them, those who were trying to strip the body of its clothing and wanted to take rags from it as relics. You could hear some singing psalms and others singing laments. One woman, mourning, called him protector, another called him nourisher, another shepherd and teacher. One man, weeping, called him father, another helper and guardian. With such praises and laments they gave that holy and sacred body to the tomb. I marvel that when he changed his office he did not change his way of life. He did not settle into an easy routine in the bishop's seat, but increased his ascetic labors. For this reason I have counted him in my history of the monks, and I have not separated him from the company he loved, since I seek the blessing that comes from it.

Chapter 18

To the holy men already mentioned I will add the great Eusebius. He died not long ago. He lived a great many years, and he bore labor equal to his years, and gathered virtue equal to his labor. The profit he carried away from it was many times greater, for the Judge of the contest surpasses the struggles themselves in the generosity of his rewards. At the beginning he entrusted the care of himself to others and was led wherever they led. They too were godly men, athletes and trainers of virtue. He spent some time with them and took up the knowledge of the ascetic philosophy well and thoroughly. Then he embraced the solitary life. He took a ridge of a mountain, on which there lies a very large village (they call it Asichas). He made use only of a low wall, not even fitting its stones together with mortar. In the open air he spent the rest of his life in hardship. He was clothed in a garment of skins and fed on chickpeas and beans soaked in water. Sometimes he also ate dried figs, trying in this way to prop up the weakness of his body. He reached a deep old age, so that he lost most of his teeth. Yet he changed neither his food nor his dwelling. He was frozen in winter and scorched in summer, and he endured the opposite extremes of the weather with patience. His face was shriveled and wrinkled, and all the limbs of his body were dried up like salted meat. He wore his body down with so many labors that even his belt would not stay at his waist but slipped down. Nothing held it up, for his buttocks and hips had wasted away and gave the belt an easy way downward. So he sewed the belt to his tunic and in this way contrived to make it stay in place. Talking with the many wore him out completely. He was continually seeing the vision of God, and he did not want to draw his mind away from it.

Yet even though his love was so ardent, he allowed a few of his acquaintances to open the door and come inside. He would offer them teaching from the divine oracles, and as they left he told them to put clay against the door again. Later he judged it better to avoid even meetings with the few, and he walled up the entrance completely, fitting a very large stone to that door. Through a small opening he spoke with a few of his familiars without being seen, for he had arranged it so. Through it he also received his small portion of food. Then he forbade conversation with everyone, and he thought only me worthy of that sweet voice, dear to God. When I wished to leave, he kept me a very long time, talking about heavenly matters. Many came to him and demanded the gift of his blessing. He was greatly annoyed by the commotion. Giving no thought to his old age and not reckoning with the weakness

that weighed on him, he climbed over the wall, which was not easy to climb even for the very strong. He went to a nearby company of ascetics, and again using a small wall by the corner of a building, he carried on his usual labors among his companions. The man who presided over this flock, a man full of every virtue, said that Eusebius got through the seven weeks of the holy fast on fifteen figs. He fought this contest when he was past ninety years old and worn down by an illness hard to describe. But his eagerness was stronger than his illness, and his divine longing made everything seem easy and light. Streaming with these sweats, he too reached the goal of the race, looking on the Judge of the contest and longing for the crowns. As for me, I ask to obtain that intercession which I enjoyed while he was still living. For I believe that he lives, and that he has a purer boldness before God.

Chapter 19

I would be wronging virtue if I did not make the life of the admirable Salamanes known to those who want to hear of it, and let it lie buried in forgetfulness. So I will tell his story briefly. There is a village on the western side of the river Euphrates, right on its bank, called Capersana. Salamanes came from this village. He loved the life of quiet, and in the village on the far side of the river he found a small cottage and shut himself in, leaving neither door nor window. Once a year he dug through the ground beside the wall, and he received food for the whole year, never speaking to any human being. He lived this way not for a short time but for a very long time indeed. The bishop of the city to which the village belonged learned of the man's virtue and came, wanting to give him the gift of the priesthood. He broke through part of the cottage and went in, laid his hand on him, and offered the prayer. He said many things to him and told him of the grace that had come upon him. But he heard no word in reply, and he went away, ordering the opening to be built up again.

At another time the people of the village he had come from crossed the river by night, broke into the cottage, and seized him. He neither resisted nor gave any order. They carried him off to their own village, and at dawn they built the same kind of cottage and shut him in at once. He kept silence just as before, speaking to no one. A few days later the people of the village across the river came by night, broke into the cottage, and carried him back to themselves. He did not object, nor did he force them to let him stay, nor again did he eagerly set off with them. So completely did he make himself dead to this life, and he spoke the apostle's saying truthfully: "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." Such a man was this one also. These things are enough to show the whole purpose of his life. I have gathered a blessing from this man too, and I will pass on to the account of the others.

Chapter 20

There is a village in our country called Homer's village. Beside it the inspired Maris built a small house, and he stayed shut up in it for thirty-seven years. It took in a great deal of damp from the neighboring mountain, and some streams of water welled up in it. How much harm this does to the body, both townspeople and country people know, for even to the peasants the illnesses that spring from it are plain. Yet not even this persuaded that holy man to change his cottage. He stayed on, enduring, until he had finished his course. His earlier life too he had passed amid the labors of virtue. So he kept both body and soul pure. He made this clear to me himself, telling me that his body had stayed uncorrupted, just as it came from his mother's womb. And this although in his youth he had taken part in many festivals of the martyrs, and had charmed the crowds with his fine voice. For he sang psalms for a very long time, and he was also a man of striking bodily beauty. Yet neither the beauty of his body, nor the brightness of his voice, nor mixing with the many harmed the beauty of his soul. He lived much like those who are shut in, took care of his own soul, and increased his virtue through the labors of his confinement.

I often enjoyed his company. He would order the door to be opened for me, and when I went in he embraced me and spoke at length about the philosophic life. He too shone with simplicity, and he utterly detested elaborate ways. He loved poverty more than the greatest wealth. At ninety years old he wore garments made of goat's hair. Bread and a little salt supplied all the food he needed. After a long time he longed to see the spiritual and mystical sacrifice offered, and he asked that the offering of the divine gift be made there. I gladly agreed. I had the sacred vessels brought, for the place was not far away, and using the hands of the deacons in place of an altar, I offered the mystical, divine and saving sacrifice. He was filled with every spiritual pleasure. He thought he was looking at heaven itself, and he said he had never enjoyed such joy. I was warmly loved by him, and I thought I would be doing wrong if I did not speak well of him after his death. I thought I would wrong others too, if I did not urge them to seek this excellent help from him,

Chapter 21

Now that we have gone through the struggles of the athletes of virtue already named, telling in summary both their labors in training, their sweat in the contests, and their bright and glorious victories, let us write about the way of life of those who are still alive. They are contending nobly and are eager to outdo their predecessors in toil. Let us leave a profitable memory for those to come. Just as the lives of the saints who shone long ago brought very great benefit to those after them, so the stories of these men will be patterns for those who come after us. I will begin with the great Jacob. He is first among the others both in time and in labor, and those who imitate him do wonderful and astonishing things. Somehow it has happened that this name stands first both among those who have departed and among those who are still alive. For when I told the story of the earlier men, I began with that divine Jacob who scattered the Persian army by prayer. When the walls of the city had fallen, he did not allow the city to be taken, and he forced the enemy to flee, by sending gnats and mosquitoes against them as his soldiers. So let his equal in honor and in character lead the company of the athletes who are still living. I do not say this just because he shares the name, but because he imitated that man's virtue and has himself become an example of philosophy for others. He kept company with the great Maron and shared in his divine teaching, and then he put his teacher in the shade by his greater labors. For Maron had as his enclosure the precinct of the old error, and he set up a tent of goat-hair skins, and by using it he escaped the assaults of rain and snow. But this man has said goodbye to all of these things, tent, hut and enclosure. He has the sky for a roof and takes every hostile blow the air can deal. At one time he is flooded by a pouring rain, at another stiffened by frost and snow, and at another scorched and burned by the sun's rays. He endures it all, and contends as if in someone else's body, striving by sheer eagerness to overcome the nature of the body.

For though he wears this mortal body, subject to suffering, he lives as if he were beyond suffering. He practices the bodiless life while in the body, and with the divine Paul he cries out: "Though we walk in the flesh, we do not wage war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not fleshly, but powerful through God for the tearing down of strongholds, tearing down reasonings and every high thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and taking captive every thought to the obedience of Christ." But he trained for these struggles above nature with smaller labors first. He shut himself up at first in a small cell,

freed himself from outside disturbances, and fastened his mind to the remembrance of God. In this way he practiced perfect virtue. When he had trained himself very well and made his soul used to good labors, he dared the greater contests. He took possession of this mountain, which is thirty stades from this city, and made it famous and venerable, though long ago it was obscure and altogether barren. It is now believed to have received such a blessing that the soil on it is being used up, as people coming from all directions carry it away for their benefit. He lives on this mountain and is seen by all who come. He has no cave, as I said, no tent, no hut, no fence, no wall around him. He is seen praying, resting, standing, sitting, in health, and held by some sickness. So he is always contending before spectators and fighting off the necessities of nature. [The Greek of the next sentence is damaged; the sense is:] Even for other people, raised with a little privacy, it is not easy to bear such things when strangers are present, much less for one trained in the highest philosophy. [uncertain] I say this not because I learned it from someone else, but because I have seen it myself. Fourteen years ago a severe illness struck him and left him in the condition one would expect for someone with a mortal nature. It was the height of summer, and the heat of the sun's rays burned more fiercely, the winds were asleep and the air did not stir. The illness was a flood of bile moving downward, biting the bowel, pressing on it and forcing it to run outward.

Then I saw the great endurance of the man. Very many villages had gathered, meaning to seize his victorious body, and he sat there struck from two sides. Nature forced him to go and relieve himself, but shame before the crowd standing around forced him to stay in position. I knew this, so I gave the people who had come many exhortations and many threats, telling them to go away. Finally I even laid on them the bonds of the priesthood, and with great labor I sent them off late in the evening. Yet even when they had gone, the holy man did not give way to nature. He stayed on, enduring, until deep night came on and forced everyone to go home. I came to him again the next day. I saw that the burning heat had grown fiercer, and that the fever lying on him was fed and increased by the fire from outside. So I pretended to have a headache and said I could not bear the sun's glare. I begged him to let me improvise a little shade beside him. When he gave the order, we set up three reeds, hung two goatskin rugs on them, and so contrived a shade. He told me to go inside, but I said: "Father, it would be shameful for me, young and strong as I am, to have this comfort, while you, held by a raging fever and in need of such relief, sit outside taking the sun's blows. If you want me to enjoy the shade, share this little tent with me. I want to stay with you, but the sun prevents me." When he heard these words he yielded, and chose to accept my care. Once we were enjoying the shade together, I began another argument. I said that I needed to lie down, since my hip could not bear sitting without pain. He urged me to lie down, but I answered that I could not bear to recline while I saw him sitting. "So if you want me to enjoy this rest too, father, let us lie down together. I will not blush if I am not lying down alone." By such arguments I outwitted his endurance and brought him the comfort of reclining. As he lay on the ground I spoke to him in gentle words, turning his soul toward a more cheerful frame of mind.

I put my hand inside his garment and tried to rub his back gently, and then I saw the great load of iron which bound his waist and his neck. There were other chains too, running from the ring around the neck, two in front and two behind, slanting down to the lower ring. They made the shape of the letter Chi, in front and behind, and joined the two rings to each other. His arms also had similar bonds inside, around the elbows. When I saw this load, worth many talents, I begged him to spare his suffering body. It could not bear both the burdens he had taken on willingly and an illness he had not chosen. "For now, father," I said, "the fever is doing the work of the iron. When it eases, we will put the iron load on the body again." He yielded in this too, charmed by many such coaxing words. He was ill for only a few days then and recovered easily. Some time later he fell into a more severe illness. Many people gathered from many places to seize his body. When the people of the city heard of it, they all ran together, soldiers and private citizens, some taking up the gear of war, others using whatever weapons they happened to find. Closing ranks, they fought, and they let fly missiles, not to strike but only to frighten. In this way they drove off the neighbors. They laid the champion of the five contests on a bed. He was quite unaware of what was happening; he did not even feel his hair being pulled out by the country people. They rushed him to the city, and when they reached the shrine of the prophet, they put the bed down in the monastery near it. Someone came to Beroea, where I happened to be, to tell what had happened and to bring the news of his death. I ran at once and spent the whole night on the road. After dawn I found the holy man unable to speak or to recognize any of those present. But when I spoke to him and said that the great Acacius was addressing him, he opened his eyes at once, asked how I was, and inquired when I had come. When I answered these questions, he closed his eyes again.

Three days passed. Then he asked where he was. When he learned it, he was very upset and asked to be carried back to the mountain at once. I wanted to take care of him in every way, so I immediately ordered the litter to be lifted and carried him to the place he longed for. There I saw how little he cared for honor, though his head was worthy of reverence. The next day I brought him barley gruel, cooled first, because he would not take anything hot; he had completely refused the use of fire. When he would not take it, I said, "Father, spare us all. We count your health as the common salvation of us all. You are not only set before us as a pattern of benefit; you also help us by your prayer and win us the favor of God. And if the unfamiliar food wears you down, endure this too, Father, for this also is a form of philosophy. As you once overcame your appetite by endurance when you were healthy and hungry, so now, when you have no appetite at all, show the same endurance in taking food." While I was saying this, the man of God Polychronius was with me. He joined in my plea and offered to be the first to take some of the food himself, though it was early morning, and he often fed his body only once in seven days. Overcome by the argument, Acacius took one cup of the gruel, with his eyes shut tight, as we do when we drink something bitter. Since his feet had lost the power to walk through weakness, we persuaded him to have them bathed in water. I think it right to bring this part of his philosophy into the open too. The bowl was lying close by, and one of the attendants tried to cover it with a basket so that it would not

be seen by those who came to him. But he said, "Why are you covering the bowl?" The man answered, "So that it won't be an offense to the visitors who come to see you." "Away with you, child," he said. "Do not hide from men what has been made plain to the God of all. I want to live for him alone, and I take no thought for human opinion. What good would it do if these people credited me with more discipline, and God with less? They do not give the reward for my labors; God supplies it."

Who would not marvel at these words, and at the mind that produced them, so far above human glory? I have learned of another such incident. It was evening, late evening, and the time for his meal. He took the potsherd that lay near him and was eating soaked lentils, for that was his food. A man came from the city, entrusted with some military collection. Acacius saw him from far off, but he did not put down the lentils; he went on eating his food as usual. Supposing the man to be an apparition of a demon, he pelted him with words and drove him off as an enemy. To show that he was not afraid, he kept putting the lentils to his mouth in between. The man under this abuse begged him, saying that he was a human being, and that because of some oath he had to leave the city before evening, which was why he had come at this hour. Acacius said, "Take courage and do not be afraid, but pray and then go on your way. Be my table companion too, and share my food." As he said this, he filled his right hand and gave the man some of the lentils. In this way he drove the passion of empty glory out of his mind, along with the others. As for his endurance, it is unnecessary even to speak of it, since the sight of him bears witness. Often, when snow fell for three days and as many nights, he lay face down praying to God, and was buried so completely that not even a bit of the rags around him could be seen. Often the neighbors would take shovels and hoes, clear away the snow that covered him in this way, and pull him up and raise him as he lay there. From these labors he gathered the gifts of divine grace, and all who wish share in them. By his blessing many fevers have been put out and are still being put out. Many cases of malarial chills have eased and left entirely. Many demons have been forced to flee. The water blessed by his right hand becomes a remedy against harm. Who does not know of the dead child raised through his prayer? His parents live in the suburbs of the city. They had become fathers of many children, but had sent every one of them to the grave before their time.

When this last child was born, the father ran to the man of God. He begged that the child might have a long life, and he promised to dedicate it to God if it lived. The child lived four years and then reached the end of its life. The father was away. He came back suddenly and saw the child being carried out. He snatched it from the bier and said, "I must keep my promise and give it to the man of God, even though it is dead." He carried it there, as he had said he would, and laid it before those holy feet. He spoke the same words he had spoken to his household. The godly man set the child before him, bent his knees, and lay face down, beseeching the Master of life and death. Late in the evening the child gave a cry and called for its father. Then that holy man knew that the Master had received his plea and granted life, and he stood up. He worshiped the One who does the will of those who fear him and hears their prayer, and he finished his supplication. Then he gave the child back to the one

who had fathered it. I saw this myself, and I heard the father tell of the wonder. I have told the story to many people, because it is worthy of the apostles and I knew it would bring great benefit to its hearers. I too have often enjoyed this man's help. I will mention one or two instances, since I think it would be very ungrateful to pass over them in silence and not teach the kinds of kindness he showed me. The abominable Marcion had sown many thorns of impiety in the territory of the city of Cyrrhus. I tried to pull them up by the roots, and, as the saying goes, I moved every rope and used every device. But those who [received] my care did not love me. To put it in the prophet's words, they slandered me, and they "set evil against me in return for good, and hatred in return for my love." They used sorcerers' spells and wicked demons as their helpers, and they tried to wage war on me unseen. One night a vile demon came, shouting in the Syriac language: "Why are you fighting Marcion, so-and-so?

"Why have you taken up this battle against him? What grief has he ever caused you? Put an end to the war, and stop your hostility. Otherwise you will learn by experience how good quiet is. Know well that I would have speared you long ago, if I did not see the chorus of the martyrs, together with Jacob, guarding you." I heard this, and I said to one of my acquaintances who was sleeping nearby, "Do you hear what is being said, so-and-so?" He answered, "I heard it all. I wanted to get up, look out, and find out who was speaking, but I kept still for your sake, thinking you were asleep." So we both got up and looked out. We saw no one moving and heard no one speaking. But the others who lived with us also heard those words. Then I understood what he meant. By the "chorus of the martyrs" he meant the little flask of the martyrs' oil, which held a blessing gathered from many martyrs and hung by my bed. Under my head lay the old cloak of the great Jacob, which had become a stronger defense for me than any wall of adamant. Another time I was about to attack the largest of their villages. Many things came up in between and kept me from setting out. So I sent word to my friend Isaiah, asking him to help me by securing divine support. He said, "Take courage. All those hindrances have been dissolved like spiders' webs. God taught me this in the night, not by sketching it in a dream but by showing it to me in a waking vision. For I saw this, he said, when I had begun the psalmody. In that direction, where those villages lie, I saw a fiery serpent crawling from west to east and carried through the middle of the air. When I had finished three prayers, I saw it bend again and form a circle, with its tail joined to its head. When I had finished eight more prayers, I saw it cut in two and dissolved into smoke." That is what he foresaw, and we saw the outcome agree with his prediction. At dawn, led by the arch-evil serpent, men who had once belonged to Marcion's band, and who had now become part of the apostolic ranks, rushed at us from the west and showed us their drawn swords.

Around the third hour of the day they coiled themselves together and looked to their own defense, just as the serpent covers its head with its tail. At the eighth hour they scattered and gave us room to enter the village. At once we found a serpent made of bronze, and they were worshiping it. They were eager to serve the accursed serpent, who had openly taken up war against the Creator and Maker of all, as though he were that Creator's enemy. Since

my account has come to the telling of divine revelations, let me relate what I heard from that truthful tongue. He did not tell it out of ambition, for that passion too was far from his divine soul. Some need forced him to say what he wished to keep hidden. I had begged him to entreat the God of all to make my field clean of weeds and free it completely from heretical seeds. The error of the abominable Marcion, which had held on for so long, grieved me deeply. Under my urging he said, "You need neither me nor any other intercessor with him. You have John, the great one, the voice of the Word, the forerunner of the Master, who offers this very petition for you continually." I said that I trusted his prayers, and those of the other holy apostles and prophets whose relics had recently been brought to us. "Take courage," he said, "for you have John the Baptist." But even so I could not bear to keep silent. I pressed him much harder, asking and wanting to learn why he had mentioned John rather than the others. He said, "I wanted to embrace his lovely relics." I answered, "I will not bring them unless you promise to tell me what you saw." He promised. The next day I brought what he longed for, told everyone to stand far off, and he told me alone: "When you received these protectors of the city, who had come from Phoenicia and Palestine, together with the choir of David, a thought came to me: whether these were truly the relics of John the great, and not of some other martyr of the same name."

"One day later I got up at night for the psalm-singing. I saw someone in white clothing, who said, 'Brother Jacob, tell us, why did you not meet us when we arrived?' I asked who they were. He answered, 'Those who came yesterday from Phoenicia and Palestine. All received us eagerly, the shepherd, the people, the townsmen and the villagers. You alone did not share in the honor.' He was hinting at the doubt I had had. He said that he replied to this: [text damaged] 'Even when you and all the others are absent, I worship God.' "Again the next day, at the same hour, that same man appeared and said, 'Look, brother Jacob, at the one standing over there, whose robe is like snow in color, and before whom a furnace of fire is set.' I turned my eyes in that direction and guessed it was John the Baptist, for he was wearing that garment and stretching out his hand as if baptizing. 'He is the one you supposed,' he said. "At another time, when you were going by night to the first village to discipline them as rebels, I had urged them to offer God a more earnest prayer, and I stayed awake the whole night, beseeching the Master. Then I heard a voice saying, 'Fear nothing, Jacob. The great John the Baptist is entreating the God of all through the whole night. There would have been much bloodshed, if the devil's boldness had not been put out by his intercessions.'" Having told me this, he charged me to keep it to myself and not to take others as witnesses. But for the sake of the benefit, I have not only told the story to many, I am also committing it to writing. He said too that he saw the patriarch Joseph, with white hair and beard, giving off in old age the radiance of his beauty, and at the very height of virtue calling himself the last of the saints. For he said that when he first named [one of those who share the tomb with him], Joseph named himself last. He also told me of the many kinds of attacks that evil demons made on him.

"At the very start of this way of life," he said, "a naked figure appeared to me. He looked like an Ethiopian and shot fire from his eyes. When I saw him I was filled with fear. I turned

to prayer and could not bring myself to eat, since he appeared at mealtimes. Seven days passed, then eight, then ten, and I stayed without food. At last I despised the evil assault, sat down, and ate. He could not bear this boldness of mine and threatened to beat me with a rod. I said to him, 'If you have been given permission by the Master of all, strike, and I will gladly take the blow as coming from him. But if you have not been given permission, you will not strike, even if you rage ten thousand times.' When he heard this he fled then, but he kept raging against me in secret. Twice a week water was brought up to me from below. He would meet the man who carried it, take the form of me, take the water, order the man to go away, and pour the water out. He did this not twice only but three times, and so he brought the torment of thirst against me. I was greatly distressed and asked the man who usually brought it, 'Why have you not brought water, now that fifteen days have passed?' He said he had brought it three or four times and that I had received it. 'And where,' I said, 'did I receive it from you?' When he showed me the place, I said, 'Even if you see me coming there ten thousand times, do not hand over the vessel until you reach this place.' In this way I undid that plot of his, and he tried another. At night he shouted, 'I will fill you with such a stench and bring you such disgrace that no human being will ever want to look at you anywhere.' I answered, 'I will be grateful to you. Against your will you will be doing your enemy a kindness, because you will make me delight even more in the remembrance of God. With more free time I will have the vision of the divine beauty as my constant work.' A few days later, at midday, while I was performing my usual service, I saw two women coming down from the mountain."

"I was disgusted by this unusual sight and tried to throw stones at them. Then I remembered the threat of that avenging spirit and supposed this was the disgrace. So I cried out first: 'Even if they sit on my shoulders, I will not throw stones, I will not chase them away. I will use prayer alone.' When I said this, the women vanished, and the appearance of the vision was brought to nothing by my word. After this, again at night, I was praying when I heard the noise of a carriage, the shout of a driver, and the neighing of horses. The strangeness of it troubled me. I thought: no governor was visiting the city at that time, there was no road for carriages here, and the season was not suitable for carriages. While I was reasoning in this way, I heard the din of a crowd drawing near. Some leaders carrying rods were shouting, whistling, driving most of the people out of the middle, and clearing the way for the one in front. When he seemed very close, I said, 'Who are you? Where have you come from? What do you need that you have come at this hour? How long will you play, you wretch, and despise the patience of God?' I said this facing east and offering my plea to God. He shoved me but could not knock me down, for divine grace held firm, and at once everything vanished." He also said that at the time of those accursed robbers, when they set out from Isauria, burned most of the east, and plundered it, he was very much afraid. It was not death he feared, for he was not so fond of his body, but being enslaved and taken captive, and having to look on impiety and lawlessness. The devil noticed this fear, for he had often heard him tell his acquaintances about it, and at night he imitated the wailing of women. "I seemed to hear," he said, "that the enemy had come and were setting fire to the

villages. At once I divided my head in two, set the villages on the right and the left, and carried them over my shoulders to my chest. I made my neck ready for the sword's cut, so that I would receive a quick blow and be delivered from that dreadful sight."

So I spent that whole night, always expecting their attack. When day came and some people arrived, I asked what they had heard about the Isaurians. They said they had heard nothing in those days. "And so," he said, "I recognized that this vision too was the devil's." Another time, he said, the devil took the likeness of a vigorous young man, in the bloom of youth and adorned with fair hair, and came up to him smiling and playing. "But I armed myself with anger," he said, "and drove him off with abuse. He stayed, looking at me like a prostitute, and his smile and his voice gushed pleasure. Then I sharpened my anger further and said, 'How can you go all around the world and bring such plots to everyone?' He said that he was not alone, but that a host of demons was scattered over the whole world, at once playing and working hard at such things. For in what looks like play they labor to destroy the whole human race. 'But you, be gone,' I said, 'at the command of Christ, who sent a whole legion down into the deep by way of the pigs.'" The devil heard this and fled at once. He could not bear the power of the Master's name, nor look upon the brightness of the servant's philosophy. I know many more stories besides these, but I do not wish to write them down, lest their number give weaker readers an excuse for unbelief. To those who see the divine man, nothing said of him seems incredible, since the virtue they see confirms what is told. But this written account will pass on to those who come after, and for most people the ears are less trustworthy than the eyes. So I will measure my narrative by the weakness of those who hear it. Other people built for him a very large shrine in the nearby village, not many stades away, and I too prepared a tomb in the shrine of the apostles, the glorious victors. But when the divine man learned this, he begged me again and again to give his body burial on that mountain. I said many times that it is not fitting for one who has neglected the present life to make provision for burial.

But when I saw that this was his heart's desire, I agreed and consented, and had the coffin cut and brought up. When I saw the stone being damaged by the frost, I allowed a small house to be built over the coffin. When he ordered it and we had finished the building and put the roof on, he said, "I will not allow this to be called the tomb of Jacob. I want it to be a shrine of the glorious martyrs, and I want to lie in another coffin, like a resident alien, counted worthy to live as a neighbor beside them." And he not only said this but did it. He gathered relics of many prophets, many apostles, and very many martyrs from every quarter and laid them in one coffin. He wished to dwell with the people of the saints, to rise with them, and he longed to be counted worthy of the vision of God. This is sufficient proof of the humility of his mind. For he who had amassed so great a wealth, while living in utter poverty, desired to live as a neighbor to the company of the rich. What labors this venerable man endured, how great his struggles, how much grace he enjoyed from God, how many victories he won, and with what crowns he is adorned, these things are enough to teach. But since some people accuse him of a harsh temper and dislike his love of solitude and quiet, I will say a little about this and then end my account. He is exposed to all for viewing,

as I said, neither fenced in by a wall nor sheltered by any hut or tent. Each person who arrives, hindered by no enclosure, comes straight up and wants to speak with him. The other lovers of this philosophy have walls and doors and the enjoyment of quiet. The one shut in opens the door when he wishes, puts people off as long as he likes, and takes his fill of the divine vision as much as he wants. Here there is none of this. That is why he is especially irritated by those who disturb him at the time of prayer. If they go away at once when he tells them, he returns to prayer. But if they stay and keep pestering him, and he urges them once or twice without persuading them, then he becomes angry and sends them away with a rebuke. I once spoke with him about this. I told him that some were distressed at being driven off and not sharing in his blessing. I said it was fitting that those who come for this purpose, traveling many days' journey, should not go back grieved but filled with gladness, and should feed those who do not know you on the stories of your philosophy.

He answered, "I have taken this mountain for no one else's sake but my own. I carry many wounds from my sins, and I need much treatment. For this reason I beg our Master to hand me the remedies for my wickedness. How then would it not be absurd, and very foolish, to break off the chain of my pleading and in the middle of it to hold a conversation with men? "Suppose I were the servant of a man of my own nature, and at the hour of service to my master I left off bringing him his food or drink at the proper time and started a conversation with one of my fellow servants. How many blows would I rightly receive! Or suppose I came to a ruler and was telling of the injustice I suffer from someone, and I broke off the speech in the middle and began to say other things to some of those standing by. Do you not think the judge would be angry, deprive me of his help, add lashes, and drive me away from the bar? How then is it right that a servant should behave properly toward a master, and a petitioner toward a judge, while I, who come to God, the eternal Master, the most just Judge and King of all, should not approach in the same way, but in the middle of my prayer turn to my fellow servants and carry on a long conversation?" This is what I heard from him, and I passed it on to those who had been offended. It seems to me well and rightly said. For besides what he said, it is also the way of lovers to look past everything else and cling to the one whom they love and cherish, to dream of him by night and to picture him by day. That is why he seems to me to be annoyed: he has come to the contemplation he longs for, and he is prevented from being filled with the beauty he loves. I have written these things as a plain narrative, taking care to be quite brief, so that I would not wear out my readers with length. If this man lives on for a time, he will no doubt add countless other achievements to the earlier ones, and others will write those down. As for me, I have a great longing to depart from here. May the one who presides over the contests of the athletes of godliness grant this man an end of his struggles worthy of them. May he let the rest of the course turn out like the first part, so that he reaches the goal as a victor. And may he hold up our weakness by this man's prayers, so that, strengthened, we may wrestle back from our many defeats, and leave this life with victory.

Chapter 22

Tillima is a village in our region. Long ago it received the seeds of the impiety of Marcion, but now it enjoys the farming of the Gospel. South of it there is a hill, neither very rough nor very steep. On it the admirable Thalassius built his dwelling for the ascetic life. He was a man adorned with many good qualities, and in simplicity of character, gentleness and humility of mind he surpassed the men of his time. I say this not only because I believe what I have heard, but because I have tested it. I came to the man and often enjoyed his sweet company. Into his company came Limnaios, whom everyone now celebrates in song. He arrived at that wrestling-school while still quite young, and was well trained in this highest philosophy. First, knowing how slippery the tongue is, while still a boy he made a law for it to be silent, and for a very long time he spoke to no one at all. When he had received enough of the divine old man's teaching and had made himself a perfect impression of that man's virtue, he went to the great Maron, whom we mentioned earlier. He came at the same time as the divine Jacob. From him too he gathered much benefit, and he came to admire the life in the open air. He took possession of another summit, above a certain village called Targala. There he has remained to this day. He has no hut, no tent, no shelter, but is enclosed by a bare wall of stones laid without mortar. He has a small door, always sealed with clay. He never opens it for others who come, but when I alone arrive he allows it to be done. For this reason a great many people gather from every side when they learn of my coming, longing to share my entrance with me.

To others who come to him at various times, he speaks through a small window and gives them his blessing, and through it he grants health to very many. For he uses the name of the Saviour, and so he stops diseases, drives out demons, and imitates the miracles of the apostles. Yet he does not only pour out healing for those who come to him; he has often applied it to his own body as well. Long ago an affliction of the limb attacked him. Those who have suffered it know exactly what pains and agonies come from it, and so do those who have watched someone suffer it. The sufferers writhe like madmen, twisting this way and that, stretching out their legs and drawing them back. Sometimes they sit, then stand, then walk about, trying to find some way to ease it. For this reason they spend time at the baths and go in often, finding some relief there. But why drag this out, listing things that are clear to everyone? He wrestled with such an affliction and was struck by pains so many and so great, and yet he received no help from a physician. He would not put up with a

bed. He accepted no comfort from medicines or foods. Instead he sat on a board lying on the ground, and received his cure through prayer and the sign of the cross, and with the charm of the divine name he put the pains to sleep. At another time, as he was walking at night, he stepped on a viper that was asleep. It seized the sole of his foot and fixed its teeth in. He tried to defend his foot; he bent down and put his hand to it, and so moved the creature's mouth onto the hand. Then he used his left hand to help the other, and drew the beast's fury onto that one too. When it had had its fill of rage (it inflicted more than ten bites on him), it let go and went back to its own hole, while he was struck on every side with bitter pains.

But even then he would not accept the physician's art. To his wounds he applied only the remedies of faith: the sign of the cross, prayer, and the invocation of God. I think the God of all allowed that beast to rage against his holy body for this reason: so that he might show everyone, plainly and openly, the endurance of that divine soul. For we see the same dealing of God in the case of noble Job. He allowed him to be flooded by many waves of every kind, because he wished to show everyone the wisdom of the Helmsman. How else would we have known Job's courage, or this man's endurance, if the adversary of godliness had not been given room to let fly every sort of missile against them? These things are enough to teach the man's endurance; let me show his love for people from another side. He gathered many who had lost their sight and were forced to beg. On either side of his enclosure, to the east and to the west, he built lodgings, and he urged them to live in these and to sing hymns to God. He ordered that the food they needed be supplied by those who came to him. Shut in the middle, he stirs up both groups to sing, and one can constantly hear them praising the Master. Such was the love he showed to his fellow human beings. His open-air struggles run for the same length of time as those of the great Jacob; for they have now completed thirty-eight years.

Chapter 23

John also took up this way of life. Besides his other qualities, he was remarkable for gentleness and meekness. He settled on a rough ridge, exposed to torrents and facing north. There he spent twenty-five years so far, taking the full force of every harsh change in the weather. I will not go through everything one by one: his food, his clothing and the weight of iron he carries are much like those of the men I have already described. He is so far above everything human that he takes no comfort from any of it. I will give one clear proof of this at once. One of his devoted followers planted an almond tree right beside his sleeping mat. In time it grew into a tree. It gave him shade, and [its appearance ??] was pleasing to the eye. John ordered it cut down, so that he would get not even one small comfort from it. Moses also embraced this kind of life. He struggles on a high peak of Rhama, above the village. So does Antiochus, an old man, who built his enclosure in a very desolate place. So does Antoninus, who, though his body is aged, struggles just as the young do. They have the same clothing, the same food, the same standing, the same prayer, and the same labors all night and all day. Neither the length of time, nor old age, nor weakness of nature exposes any failing in their endurance. The love of labor is still in full vigor in them. God, who presides over the contest of virtue, has very many other contestants in our region, in the mountains and on the plains. It is hard even to count them, let alone write the life of each. I have now set before those who wish to profit enough for their benefit from these accounts. So I will turn to another kind of narrative, asking also to share in the blessing of these men.

Chapter 24

Those who were thought worthy to see Zebinas sing his praises to this day. They say that he reached a great old age and kept up the same labors right to the end. Though pressed by very heavy old age, he gave up nothing of what he had practiced in his youth. They said that he surpassed all the men of his time in his devotion to prayer. He spent his days and nights in it, and far from ever having enough, he made his longing burn hotter. Even when visitors came to him and he spoke a few words with them, he could not bear to bring his mind down from heaven. As soon as he was rid of them, as if he had not wanted to be parted from the God of all even for a moment, he took up his prayer of supplication again. When old age would not let him bear his continual standing without pain, he took a staff as a support. Leaning on it, he sang praises to the Master and prayed. Among his other good qualities he was known for hospitality, and he urged many of those who came to him to stay for the evening. But they dreaded his standing all night. They pleaded some business or other and slipped away from the labors. The great Maron greatly admired this man. He urged everyone who came to him to run to Zebinas and gather the blessing of the old man. He called him father and teacher, and the pattern of every virtue. Maron also asked to share a burial place with him. But the people who seized Maron's holy body and carried it to the place I mentioned would not allow it. The wonderful Zebinas died first, in the neighboring village (it is called Kitta). He received the customary honors, and the people built a very large shrine over his tomb. Healing of every kind pours out from it for those who come with faith. The shrine now also has martyrs under the same roof, who contended among the Persians and are honored by us with annual festivals. The great Polychronius benefited from this man's teaching. And the most godly Jacob said that Zebinas was the first to give him a hair tunic.

I never saw Zebinas myself, for he had reached the end of his life before I came. But in this Polychronius I see the philosophy of the divine Zebinas. A seal does not stamp its pattern on wax as exactly as this man bears the marks of that one. I know this for certain, because I have set the stories told about Zebinas beside what Polychronius does. Like him, he is set on fire with love for God, and he stands above everything earthly. Though he is bound to a body, his soul has wings. It passes through the air and the upper sky, rises higher than the heavens, and continually pictures to itself the contemplation of God. He never allows his mind to be dragged down from there. Even while he talks with those who come to him, his

thoughts move about in the heights. I learned of his all-night vigil and standing in prayer from this. I saw him wrestling with old age and weakness together, and receiving no care at all. By pleading with him many times I persuaded him to take two men to live with him and enjoy some comfort from them. He asked for men who shone with virtue and who lived by themselves in another monastery, so I persuaded those admirable men to choose, above everything else, the care of this man of God. They stayed with him only a short time, and then tried to run away, because they could not bear the all-night standing. They begged the man of God to measure the labor by the weakness of the body. He said to them, "Not only do I not force you to share my standing continually, I often urge you to lie down." They answered, "How could we, healthy men in the middle of life, lie down while the one who has grown old in toil stands, and despises the weakness of his body?" This is how I learned of the night labors of that venerable head. As for these two men, in time they gained so much virtue that they pursued the same philosophy as this great man.

One of them, Moses (for that name has stayed with him to this day), gives Polychronius every service as to a father and master, and he imprints on himself the virtue that flashes out from that holy soul. The other, whose name is Damian, went to a city not far away (it is called Niara). He found a small hut beside the threshing floors and lives there, following the same way of life. Those who know both men well say that when they look at him they seem to see the soul of the great Polychronius in another body. He has the same simplicity, gentleness and humility, the same mildness of voice and sweetness in company, the same alertness of soul and attention to God, and the same standing, labor, sleeplessness, food, and poverty according to the divine law. For apart from a small basket holding soaked lentils, his dwelling has nothing in it. That is how much he gained from the company of the great Polychronius. But I will leave the disciple and return to the teacher, for the stream gets its water from the spring. Along with his other passions, Polychronius drove out ambition from his soul and trampled the tyranny of empty glory, and he was always careful to hide his labors. He would not wear iron, fearing that some harm might come of it, if his soul were inflamed with pride. Instead he told someone to bring him a very heavy oak root, saying he needed it for some other use. He put it on his shoulders at night and prayed with it lying on him, and he did the same by day whenever he had leisure. When someone arrived and knocked at the door, he hid it in a certain place. Someone showed it to me. I wanted to know how heavy the load was, and I could barely lift it with both hands. When he saw me, he told me to put it down.

I begged in return to take it, so that I might steal away the occasion for his labor. But when I saw that he was distressed, I gave way to his longing for the victory. From these labors of his there blossoms a grace given by God, and many miracles are worked through his prayers. For example, when that terrible drought was wearing people down and driving them to supplication, a crowd of priests came to him. Among them was one from the territory of Antioch, appointed to shepherd many villages. This man begged the older men who were present to persuade the man to lay his right hand on a small oil flask. They said that he would not put up with it. Afterward, when a prayer was being made and my holy father

was praying, the priest stood behind him and held out the little flask in both hands. The flask began to gush, so that two or three of those present stretched out their hands and received them full of the oil. Yet although he sends out the rays of divine grace, is laden with achievements of every kind, and day by day gathers the riches of the philosophic life, he is so modest in his thinking that he embraces both feet of everyone who comes to him and puts his forehead to the ground, whether the visitor is a soldier, a craftsman, or a farmer. I will tell something that can show his simplicity and his modesty. A certain earnest man had been given the governorship of this region. He came to Cyrrhus and wished to enjoy, together with me, the sight of these great athletes. So we went around to the others, and came also to the man whose virtue I am now describing. I said that the one who had come with me was a governor, a man who cared for justice and loved the godly. At once the holy man stretched out both hands, took hold of both the governor's feet, and said, "I want to ask you for a favor." The governor was very upset and begged him to get up, and promised to do whatever he asked (he guessed that he was going to plead with him on behalf of some of his subjects). Then the holy man said, "Since you have promised, and have confirmed the promise with an oath, earnestly offer prayers to God on my behalf."

The governor, striking his forehead, begged to be released from the oath, since he was not worthy even to bring petitions to the Master for himself. What speech could be adequate to praise worthily a man who, at such a height of philosophy, has so great a humility of mind? Not even the many kinds of suffering that have come upon him have shown up his love of labor as weak. Though besieged by illness of many kinds, he endures the same labors. After much persuasion we barely managed to build this little cell, contriving a little warmth for a body that was thoroughly chilled. Many people have often come to him with gold, and some even left it to him when they died. But he never accepted anything from anyone. He told them instead to become stewards of what they offered. The great Jacob once sent him a goatskin cloak that someone had brought to Jacob. He sent it back, because he saw that it was too weatherproof and too comfortable. He always wore very cheap and plain clothing. He considered poverty more lovable than any kingdom, so that he did not even always have the food he needed. I know, since I have often come to him, asked for his blessing, and found nothing else there but two dried figs. His honey is thrice desired by those who see him, and very sweet to those who hear of him. For I know of no one, not even the most mocking of men, who has ever laid any blame on him. Instead everyone sings his praise and speaks well of him, and those who go to him do not want to leave.

Chapter 25

Asklepios, a remarkable man, belongs to this same company. He lives about ten stades away and has taken up the same way of life. His food is the same, and so are his clothing, his humble character, his hospitality, his love for the brothers, his gentleness and mildness, his conversation with God, and his extreme poverty. Besides these there is his abundance of virtue, the wealth of his philosophy, and everything else we have described in that holy man. They say that even when he was counted among the brothers living in the village, he embraced the ascetic and orderly life and took no harm from mixing with the crowd. Since he distinguished himself in both ways of life, the one among citizens and the one in the wilderness, he will rightly be thought worthy of double crowns. Many others have also imitated his virtue. Not only our own region but the neighboring cities and villages are full of this kind of philosophy. One of them is the most godly Jacob, who is shut up in a small cell near a village called Nimouzan. He is now near the end of his life, for he is more than ninety years old. He is shut in alone and gives his answers through a short opening dug in a winding shape, so that he cannot be seen. He uses no fire and has no lamplight. Twice he opened the door and told me to come inside. In this way he honored me and showed the affection he has for me. Those who are still alive do not need my words, for if they wish they can see the philosophy of these men for themselves. But for those who come after, and who will not share in the sight of them, these accounts are enough to help, since they show the character of this philosophy. So I will end my account of these men here, ask for their blessing in return, and move on to another narrative.

Chapter 26

Symeon, the great Symeon, the wonder of the whole world, is known to all who live under Roman rule. The Persians know him too, and the Medes and the Ethiopians. Report has even run to the nomad Scythians and told them of his labor and his philosophy. I have nearly all people as witnesses of his struggles, which are beyond description. Even so, I fear my account may seem to later generations a mere story, stripped of all truth. For what has been done is higher than human nature, and people like to measure what they are told by nature. If anything is said that goes beyond nature's limits, those not initiated into divine things take the account to be false. But earth and sea are full of devout people who have been trained in divine things and taught the grace of the all-holy Spirit. They will not disbelieve what is to be said but will readily believe it. So I will make my account eagerly and with confidence. I will begin where he was found worthy of the heavenly calling. There is a village on the border between our country and that of the Cilicians. They call it Sisan. He came from there. At first his parents taught him to shepherd flocks, so that in this he would be like the great men: Jacob the patriarch, Joseph the self-controlled, Moses the lawgiver, David the king and prophet, Micah the prophet, and the holy men of their times. Once, when a heavy snow had fallen and the sheep had to stay indoors, he had a break from work. He went to the holy church with those who were breathing out the breath of life [text uncertain: "τ ν φυσάντων"]. I heard this from his own holy tongue. He said that he heard the voice of the Gospel call blessed those who weep and mourn, and call wretched those who laugh. It named as enviable those who have a pure soul, and it said the other things joined to these. Then he asked one of those present what a person should do to gain each of these things. The man pointed him to the solitary life and showed him that highest philosophy.

So he received the seeds of the divine word and buried them well in the deep furrows of his soul. He told me he then ran to a shrine of the holy martyrs nearby. There he pressed his knees and his forehead to the ground and begged the One who wants all people to be saved to guide his steps onto the perfect road of godliness. He spent a long time in this way, and a sweet sleep came over him, and he saw a dream like this. "I seemed," he said, "to be digging foundations. Then I heard someone standing by say that I still had to deepen the trench. So I added depth as he commanded and tried to rest again. But once more he ordered me to dig and not to stop working. He told me this three and four times. At last he said the depth was sufficient, and he commanded me to build from then on without toil,

since the labor had come to an end and the building would go up easily." What happened afterward bears witness to this prediction, for what came about was beyond nature. He got up from there and found lodging with some ascetics who lived nearby. He spent two years with them. Then, longing for a more perfect virtue, he reached the village of Teleda, which I mentioned earlier, near which the great and godly men Ammianos and Eusebios had set up their training ground for ascetics. But the wonderful Symeon did not go to that one. He went to the other, which had grown out of it. For Eusebones and Abibion, who had received full benefit from the teaching of the great Eusebios, built this school of philosophy. They were of one mind and one way of life all their days, as if they showed one soul in two bodies, and they had many fellow lovers of this life. When they departed this life with good reputation, the wonderful Heliodoros took over the leadership of the community. He lived sixty-five years, and he spent sixty-two of them shut inside. For he was raised by his parents for three years, and then entered this flock, never having seen anything of what goes on in the world.

He used to say that he did not even know what pigs or roosters or other such creatures looked like. I myself often enjoyed seeing him. I marvelled at the simplicity of his manners and greatly admired the purity of his soul. This champion of godliness, a contender in all five events, came to him and spent ten years in the contest. There were eighty fellow contenders, and he outdid them all. While the others took food every other day, he stayed without food the whole week. The superiors were annoyed and kept quarrelling with him and called it disorder, but he did not obey what they said, and they could not put a bridle on his eagerness. I heard the man who now leads that same flock tell this story. Symeon once took a rope made of palm fibre, which is very rough to the touch, and tied it around his waist. He did not put it on over his clothes; he fastened it right against the skin. He pulled it so tight that it made a sore all around the part where it lay. He kept on like this for more than ten days, and the wound grew worse and dripped blood. Someone saw it and asked him the reason for the blood. He said there was nothing to be troubled about. But his fellow contender forced the matter, put his hand in, learned the cause, and reported it to the superior. At once the superior rebuked him, begged him, and exposed the cruelty of what he had done, and with difficulty he got him to undo the rope. Even so, he could not persuade him to put any treatment on the wound. When they saw him doing other things of this kind, they ordered him to leave that training ground. Otherwise he might harm the physically weaker men who tried to imitate what was beyond their strength. So he left. He went to the most deserted part of the mountain and found a dry cistern, not very deep. He lowered himself into it and offered his hymns to God there. Five days went by. Then the leaders of that training ground changed their minds and sent two men to look for him, with permission to bring him back.

So these two men went around the mountain and asked some people who were pasturing flocks there whether they had seen anyone of such a complexion and wearing such a dress. The shepherds pointed out the pit. The two men at once shouted loudly down to him, then brought a rope and hauled him up with great effort, since getting out is not as easy as going

down. After spending a short time with them, he came to the village of Telanissos, which lies below the summit where he now stands. There he found a small hut and stayed shut up in it for three years. Always eager to increase the wealth of his virtue, he longed to go forty days without food, like Moses and Elijah, those men of God. He persuaded the admirable Bassus, who at that time was traveling through many villages overseeing the priests of each village, to leave nothing inside and to seal the door with clay. Bassus pointed out how hard the thing was and urged him not to think that a violent death was virtue, for that is an accusation, the greatest and the first. But Symeon said, "Father, set aside for me ten loaves and a jar of water, and if I see that the body needs food, I will take some of them." It was done as he ordered. The loaves and water were put in place, and the door received the clay. When the days were over, the admirable Bassus, a man of God, came. He took away the clay and went in through the door. He found the loaves still in their number and the jar of water still full, and Symeon himself lying breathless, unable either to speak or to move. So Bassus asked for a sponge, moistened the man's mouth with it and washed it out, and gave him the tokens of the divine mysteries. Strengthened by these, Symeon raised himself up and took a modest meal: lettuce, chicory and the like, chewing them a little at a time and sending them down to his stomach. Bassus the great was filled with admiration. He returned to his own community and told them of this great wonder.

Bassus had more than two hundred members in his company. He did not allow them to keep an animal or a mill, or to accept gold that was offered, or for anyone to go outside the door either to buy something necessary or to visit an acquaintance. They were to stay inside and receive the food sent by divine grace. His company keeps this rule to this day, and though they have grown more numerous, they have not broken the commands they were given. But I will go on to the great Symeon. From that time until today (twenty-eight years have passed) he stays forty days without food. Time and practice in the labor have robbed it of most of its difficulty. In the first days he used to stand and sing hymns to God. Then, as his body, weakened by the fast, could no longer bear standing, he would sit and carry out the divine service. In the last days he would lean over, for as his strength was gradually spent and extinguished, he was forced to lie half-dead. Once he was on the pillar, he could not bear to come down, so he devised another way of standing. He tied a beam to the pillar, and fastened himself to the beam with ropes, and in this way he spent the forty days. After that, receiving a greater measure of grace from above, he no longer needed even this help. He stands the forty days taking no food, strengthened by his eagerness and by divine grace. As I said, he spent three years in that little hut, and then took possession of this much-talked-of summit. He ordered a low wall built around it. He had an iron chain of twenty cubits made, nailed one end of it to a very large rock, and fastened the other to his right foot, so that even if he wished he could not go outside those limits. So he lived inside, continually picturing heaven to himself and straining to behold what lies above the heavens. For the iron bond did not hinder the flight of his mind. But the admirable Meletius, who was then appointed to oversee the territory of Antioch, a man shining in prudence and understanding and adorned with sharpness of mind, said that the iron was needless, since

the will was enough to put rational bonds on the body. Symeon yielded and accepted the advice readily. He ordered a smith to be called, and had the bond removed.

The skin was bound to his leg so that the iron would not injure his flesh. It was sewn on, and it had to be torn open. They said that more than twenty very large lice were found nesting in it, and the admirable Meletius said he had seen this himself. I have recorded it to show the man's great endurance. He could easily have crushed the skin with his hand and killed them all, yet he put up with the painful bites and bore them steadily. In small things he welcomed training for greater struggles. As his fame spread in every direction, everyone came running, not only his neighbors but people who lived many days' journey away. Some brought those whose bodies were paralyzed. Some begged health for the sick. Some begged to become fathers, and asked to receive through him what nature had not given them. Those who received what they asked went home rejoicing, and by proclaiming the benefits they had obtained they sent out many times as many to ask for the same things. So people arrived from every side, and every road was like a river. You could see a sea of people gathering in that place, taking in rivers from everywhere. For not only do those who live in our own part of the world flow together there, but also Ishmaelites, Persians, Armenians who are subject to them, Iberians, Homerites, and people living farther inland than they. Many came who live at the farthest edges of the West: Spaniards, Britons, and the Gauls who live between them. About Italy it is needless even to speak. They say that the man became so famous in mighty Rome that at the entrances of all the workshops people set up small images of him, to get from them a kind of protection and security. Since those who came were beyond counting, and all tried to touch him and to gather some blessing from his garments of skin, he first thought that such excessive honor was out of place. Then, finding the burden of the situation hard to bear, he devised the plan of standing on the pillar.

First he ordered a pillar of six cubits to be cut, then one of twelve, after that one of twenty-two, and now one of thirty-six. For he longs to fly up to heaven and be freed from this earthly life. I believe that this way of standing did not come about without divine providence either. So I urge fault-finders to bridle their tongues and not let them run loose as they please. Rather, they should consider how often the Master has devised things like this for the benefit of the more careless. He commanded Isaiah to walk naked and barefoot. He commanded Jeremiah to put a loincloth around his waist and so bring his prophecy to the disobedient, and at another time to put wooden and then iron yokes on his neck. He commanded Hosea to take a prostitute as wife, and again to love a wicked and adulterous woman. He commanded Ezekiel to lie on his right side forty days and on his left a hundred and fifty. Again, he commanded him to dig through a wall, go out as a fugitive, and act out a captivity in his own person. At another time he told him to sharpen a sword to a keen edge, shave his head with it, divide the hair into four parts, and distribute some to one place and some to another. I will not list them all. The Ruler of the universe commanded each of these things to be done. By the strangeness of the sight he gathered those who would not obey a word and would not tolerate listening to prophecy, and so prepared them to hear his oracles. For who would not be astonished to see a man of God walking naked? Who would not long

to learn the reason for what was happening? Who would not ask, "Why on earth does the prophet put up with living with a prostitute?" Just as the God of the universe commanded each of those things to be done, looking out for the benefit of those living in carelessness, so he also arranged this new and strange spectacle. By its strangeness he draws everyone to come and see, and he makes the exhortation offered to those who arrive more persuasive. For the novelty of the sight becomes a sound pledge of the teaching, and the one who comes to see goes home instructed in the things of God.

Kings, too, change the images on their coins from time to time. Sometimes they stamp the likeness of lions, sometimes stars and angels, and at other times they try to make the gold more valuable by a strange new design. In the same way the King of all puts these new and varied ways of life on true religion like so many stamps, and so moves the tongues of everyone to praise. This includes not only those raised in the faith but also those sick with unbelief. That this is so is shown not by arguments but by the clamor of the facts themselves. The Ishmaelites, many tens of thousands of them, were enslaved to the darkness of impiety, and the standing on the pillar has enlightened them. For this brilliant lamp, set as if on a lampstand, sends its rays everywhere like the sun. As I said, you can see Iberians, Armenians and Persians coming, and receiving holy baptism. The Ishmaelites come in bands, two hundred together, or three hundred, and sometimes a thousand. They loudly renounce their fathers' deception. Before that great lamp they smash the idols they once worshiped. They renounce the rites of Aphrodite (for from ancient times they had accepted the worship of that demon) and they share in the divine mysteries. They receive laws from that holy tongue, bid farewell to their ancestral customs, and refuse to eat wild asses and camels. I have been an eyewitness of these things. I have also heard them renouncing their fathers' impiety and agreeing to the teaching of the Gospel. And once I went through a very great danger. Symeon himself ordered them to come to me and receive the priestly blessing from me, saying they would gain the greatest benefit from it. But they ran together in a rather barbarous way. Some pulled me from the front, some from behind, some from the side. Those standing farther back climbed over the others and stretched out their hands. Some pulled at my beard, and others grabbed hold of my clothes.

I would have been suffocated by their over-eager rush if he had not shouted and scattered them all. Such is the benefit that flowed from the pillar that the mockers love to mock, and such a ray of the knowledge of God has it sent down into the minds of the barbarians. I know of another incident involving these people. One tribe begged the holy man to send a prayer and blessing to its chieftain. Another tribe, which was present, objected. They said the blessing should not be sent to him but to their own leader, for the first man was thoroughly unjust, while theirs had nothing to do with injustice. There was a long quarrel and a barbarian brawl, and at last they came to blows. I used many words to urge them to be quiet, saying the holy man was fully able to give his blessing to both. But these said that the other man must not receive it, and those tried to keep it from the other. Symeon threatened them from above and called for dogs, and with difficulty he put an end to the quarrel. I tell this because I wanted to show the faith in their minds. They would never have raged

against one another like this unless they believed that the blessing of the godlike man had very great power. At another time I saw a celebrated miracle. A man came in (he too was a chieftain of the Saracens) and begged the holy head to help a man who had been struck on the road and had lost the use of the limbs of his body. He said this had happened near Callinicus, which is a very large fortress. The man was brought into the middle. Symeon ordered him to renounce the impiety of his forefathers. When he gladly accepted this and obeyed, and did what he was told, Symeon asked whether he believed in the Father, and in the only-begotten Son, and in the Holy Spirit. When he confessed that he believed, Symeon said, "Since you believe in these names, stand up." When the man stood up, Symeon ordered him to carry the chieftain on his shoulders as far as his own bed. The chieftain had a very large body. The man took him up and went off at once. Those present set their tongues to singing hymns to God.

He gave this order in imitation of the Master, who told the paralytic to carry his bed. Let no one call this imitation tyranny. For the saying is the Master's own: "He who believes in me, the works that I do he will do also, and greater than these he will do." We have seen the fulfillment of this promise too. The Lord's shadow never worked a miracle anywhere, yet the shadow of the great Peter both undid death and drove out diseases and put demons to flight. But it was the Master who was working these miracles through his servants. So now too, in the same way, the divine Symeon uses his name and works countless miracles. Another miracle happened through him, in no way inferior to the first. One of those who had come to believe in the saving name of Christ the Master, an Ishmaelite of some standing, made a vow to God with Symeon as witness. The promise was that from then on, to the end of his life, he would abstain from all food that has life. Somehow, after some time, he let the promise slip, slaughtered a bird, and dared to eat it. But God wished to bring him to repentance by rebuke, and also to honor his own servant, who had witnessed the broken promise. So the flesh of the bird was changed into the nature of stone, and the man, even if he wanted to, could no longer eat it. For how could he possibly eat from a body that had turned to stone, the very one he had taken up for food? The barbarian was struck with amazement at this strange sight. He hurried to the holy man, bringing his hidden sin into the light, proclaiming his transgression to everyone, asking God's forgiveness for his fault, and calling on the saint for help, so that by his all-powerful prayers Symeon might draw him out of the bonds of sin. Many people saw the miracle with their own eyes and felt with their hands the part near the breast, made of bone and stone together. I was not only an eyewitness of his miracles; I also heard him foretell things that were to come.

He foretold the drought that came, the great failure of crops that year, and the famine and plague that followed, two years in advance. He said he had seen a rod being carried against mankind, signaling the scourges that would come through it. At another time he announced the attack of the so-called caterpillar, and said that it would do no great harm, since God's love for mankind would accompany the punishment. Thirty days later an immense swarm arrived, so thick that it cut the sunlight and cast a shadow. We all saw this clearly. It damaged only the fodder for the animals and did no harm at all to the food of men. Once,

when someone was making war on me, he told me fifteen days beforehand that my enemy would be overthrown, and by experience I learned that his prediction was true. I know very many other things like these, but I will pass over them to avoid a long account. These are enough to show the spiritual insight of his mind. His fame is great even with the king of the Persians. The ambassadors who came to that king told his story, and he asked carefully what kind of life the man led and what miracles he did. They say that the king's wife asked for oil that had been granted his blessing, and received it as a very great gift. All the king's court were struck by the report; though they heard many slanders against him from the magi, they still inquired carefully, and when they were told, they called him a man of God. The rest of the crowd approached the muleteers, the couriers and the soldiers, offering them money and begging to share in the blessing of the oil. The queen of the Ishmaelites was barren and longed for children. First she sent some of her most eminent people to ask that she might become a mother. When her request was granted and she had what she desired, she took the child, now a king, and ran to the holy old man. Since women were not allowed to approach him, she sent the baby to him and begged to receive his blessing, saying, "This sheaf is yours."

"I brought the seed of my prayer with tears, but you have made the seed into a sheaf, drawing down the rain of divine grace through your prayer." But how long shall I keep trying to measure the depth of the Atlantic Ocean? Just as those depths cannot be measured by men, so what he does day by day goes beyond any telling. For my part, I admire his endurance above all of this. Night and day he stands in the sight of everyone. He has taken away the doors and pulled down no small part of the enclosure, so that he is set before all as a new and strange spectacle. At one time he stands for a long while, at another he bows again and again, offering worship to God. Many of those standing by count these bows. Once one of those with me counted one thousand two hundred and forty-four, and then he grew tired, sat down, and gave up the count. As he bends down he always brings his forehead to his toes. His stomach receives food only once a week, and then only a little, so it readily allows his back to bend. They say that from the standing a long-lasting sore has formed on one foot, and a great deal of pus is constantly draining from it. Yet none of these sufferings has shamed his philosophy. He bears bravely both what he has chosen and what has been forced on him, and has overcome both by his eagerness. He was once compelled to show this sore to someone, and I will tell the reason. A man came from Ravenna, an earnest man honored with service to Christ. When he reached that summit he said, "Tell me, by the truth itself that turned the race of men around: are you a man, or a bodiless nature?" The bystanders were angered at the question, but Symeon ordered them all to be silent. To the man he said, "Why have you asked this?" The man replied, "Because I hear everyone repeating that you neither eat nor sleep. Each of these belongs to human beings, for no one who has this nature could live without food and sleep." Symeon ordered a ladder to be set against the pillar and told him to climb up. First he was to examine his hands, then put his hand inside the leather covering, and see not only the feet but also the very grievous sore.

The man saw it and marveled at the extent of the sore. He learned from Symeon himself that he does take food, and he came down from there. When he reached me, he told me everything. At the great public festivals Symeon shows yet another kind of endurance. From sunset until the sun returns to the eastern horizon he stands all night with his hands stretched up to heaven, neither charmed by sleep nor overcome by weariness. Amid so many labors, such a mass of achievements, and so many miracles, his mind is so humble that he considers himself, by his own worth, the last of all men. Besides his humble mind, he is very easy to approach, gentle, and gracious, and he answers each person who speaks to him, whether a craftsman, a beggar, or a countryman. He has also received from the generous Master the gift of teaching. Twice each day he gives his exhortations and floods the ears of his hearers, speaking with great grace and bringing the instruction of the divine Spirit. He urges them to lift their heads toward heaven and take wing, to be freed from the earth, to picture the kingdom that is expected, to fear the threat of Gehenna, to despise earthly things, and to wait for what is to come. One can also see him sitting as judge and delivering right and just verdicts. These things and others like them he does after the ninth hour. For he spends the whole night, and the day until the ninth hour, in prayer. After the ninth hour he first gives divine teaching to those present. Then he receives each one's petition, works some healings, and settles the quarrels of those in dispute. Around sunset he begins his conversation with God for the rest of the time. Yet while doing all this he does not neglect care for the holy Churches. At one time he fights against Greek impiety, at another he puts down the boldness of the Jews, and at another he scatters the factions of the heretics. Sometimes he writes to the emperor about these matters. Sometimes he rouses the rulers to zeal for God. At other times he urges the shepherds of the Churches themselves to take greater care of their flocks.

Having gone through these things, I have tried to show the whole rain from a single drop, and to give those who read this writing a taste of the sweetness of the honey on the tip of my forefinger. What everyone else sings of him is many times more than this. But I have not undertaken to write down everything. I have undertaken to show, through a few things, the character of each man's way of life. Others, as is likely, will write far more about him, and if he lives on, they may perhaps add greater wonders. As for me, I long for him, helped by his own prayers, to continue in these good labors. I also beg God that he, who is a common adornment and the glory of true religion, may have my own life set in order and steered toward the life of the Gospel.

Chapter 27

The common destroyer of mankind has found many roads of wickedness, striving to hand the whole human race over to utter ruin. In the same way, the children of true religion have devised many different ladders for the ascent to heaven. Some contend together in companies. In countless such communities, beyond counting, they enjoy the unfading crowns and reach the ascent they long for. Others embrace the solitary life. They train themselves to speak with God alone, and they take no share in any human comfort, and in this way they win the proclamation of victory. Others live in tents, and others in huts, and sing hymns to God. Others embrace life in caves and grottoes. Many, some of whom I have mentioned, could not be persuaded to have a cave, a grotto, a tent or a hut. They have given their bodies to the open air and put up with extremes of weather: at one time stiff with unmixed frost, at another scorched by the fire of the sun's rays. Their way of life differs again among themselves. Some stand continually. Others divide the day between sitting and standing. Some shut themselves up behind low walls and avoid the company of the crowd. Others use no such covering and are set out in full view for anyone who wishes to look. I have been forced to go through each of these now, because I wanted to write the life of the wonderful Baradatus. For he too devised new practices of endurance. First he shut himself in a small cell for a long time, and enjoyed only the soul's delight in God. From there he went up to the ridge above, and made a small wooden chest, not even matched to the size of his body, and lived in it, forced always to stoop. For it was not as high as his body was long.

It was not joined with solid planks. It stood open like a lattice, and was like those skylights that have wider openings for the light. For this reason he was not spared the beating of the rains, nor freed from the blaze of the sun. He took both just as other men do who live in the open air. His one advantage was the hardship of being shut in. After he had continued in this way for a long time, he later came out, yielding to the urgings of the holy Theodotus, who received the high priesthood of the church of Antioch. Now he stands continually with his hands stretched out to heaven, singing hymns to the God of all. He covers his whole body with a leather tunic. Only around the nose and mouth he has left a small opening for his breath, so that he can breathe the common air, since human nature cannot live otherwise. He endures all this labor though he did not receive a strong body. He is struck by many ailments. But his boiling zeal, set on fire by love for God, forces to labor a body that cannot labor. His mind is adorned with understanding, and he asks and answers questions very

well. At times he reasons better and more powerfully than those who have read through the labyrinths of Aristotle. Though he is at the very height of virtue, he does not let his mind climb up with him. He bids it creep below, at the very foot of the mountain. For he knows how much harm a mind inflamed with pride brings on itself. Such, in sum, is his philosophy. May it grow until he reaches the turning post of the race. For the fame of these victors is the common joy of the godly. As for me, may I be upheld by his prayers and not be far from delighting in such sights.

Chapter 28

I will not pass over the story of Thalelaios either, for the sight of him is full of wonder. I have not only heard others tell of this strange marvel; I saw it myself. About twenty stades from Gabala (a small and very charming city) he took possession of a hill. On it stood a sacred precinct dedicated to demons, honored with many sacrifices by the godless people of former times, and there he built a small hut. The people used to serve these accursed beings, as they said, trying to soften their great cruelty with sacrifices. For the demons harmed many people, both passersby and neighbors, and not only human beings but also donkeys, mules, cattle and sheep. They were not making war on the animals; through them they were plotting against people. So when they saw him arrive at that time, they tried to terrify him but could not, since faith fenced him round and grace fought on his side. Filled with rage and madness, they turned against the trees planted there. Around that hill there happened to be many flourishing fig and olive trees. They say that more than five hundred of these were suddenly torn up. I heard this from the neighboring country people as they told it. They had long been held in the darkness of ungodliness, but through his teaching and his miracles they received the light of the knowledge of God. When the accursed demons had done this and still had not frightened the champion of the philosophic life, they brought other devices against him. At night they raised howling cries and showed torches, trying to scare him and throw his mind into confusion. But he laughed at all their assaults, and in the end they left him and ran away. He then made two wheels, each two cubits across, with boards not fitted tightly against each other but standing apart, and joined the two wheels together. Then he sat inside, fastened those spaced boards with pegs and nails, and hung the wheel out in the open air. He drove three other tall timbers into the ground, joined their upper ends with further beams, tied the double wheel between them, and suspended it. The inside of this is two cubits high and one cubit wide.

Sitting in this, or rather hanging in it, he spent ten years so far. He is a man of very large frame, and even sitting he cannot straighten his neck. He always sits bent over, with his face pressed to his knees. When I came to him, I found him gathering the benefit of the divine Gospels. I asked him, because I wanted to learn the reason for that strange way of life. He answered in Greek (he was a Cilician by birth): “I am weighed down by many sins, and I believe in the punishments that have been threatened. So I thought up this kind of life, devising moderate punishments for my body, so that I might take something away from the

weight of those that are expected. For those are harder, not only in amount but in their very nature, because they are involuntary. What happens against one's will is very painful, but what is freely chosen, even if it is hard, hurts less. For the labor is self-chosen, not forced. So by lessening what I expect to suffer with these small troubles, I shall carry away from here great gain." When I heard this I greatly admired his sharpness of mind. He was not only contending in contests beyond those set before him and devising other struggles of his own, but he also understood the reasons for them and taught them to others. The people of the neighborhood also said that many miracles happen through his prayer, with healing given not only to people but also to camels, donkeys and mules. As a result that whole nation, long held in ungodliness, renounced the deceit of their fathers and received the brightness of the divine light. With these as his helpers he tore down the demons' precinct and raised a very large shrine to the glorious martyrs, setting the holy dead against the falsely named gods. By their intercession may he too come to the end of his contests with the same victory, and may we, helped by them and by him, become warm lovers of the struggles of the philosophic life. Amen.

Chapter 29

Now that I have written about the lives of the best men, I think it fitting to record also the women who have contended no less, and perhaps even more. They deserve even greater praise. Their nature is weaker, yet they show the same zeal as the men, and they free their sex from the disgrace it inherited from its ancestors. For the present I will speak of Marana and Cyra, who have surpassed all the others in the contests of endurance. Their homeland was Beroea. Their family was distinguished in that city, and their upbringing matched their family. But they looked down on all of this. They enclosed a small plot of ground a short way outside the city, went inside it, and walled up the door with clay and stones. Their maidservants were eager to share this way of life. So they built a small lodging outside the enclosure and told them to live there. These women watch what goes on in the enclosure through a small window. They rise often for prayer, and they are set ablaze with love for God. Marana and Cyra have neither house nor hut, and they embrace life in the open air. In place of a door they have had a small opening made. Through it they receive the food they need, and they speak with the women who come to them. The time of Pentecost is set aside for this meeting. For the rest of the year they keep to a life of silence. Marana alone speaks with those who come. No one has ever heard the other utter a word. They wear iron, and carry so heavy a load that Cyra, who has the weaker body, is bent down to the ground and can hardly straighten up. Their garments are very large. At the back they trail along the ground and cover the feet completely. At the front they hang down to the belt itself, and they completely hide the face, the neck, the chest and the hands. I saw them often when I went inside that door. They had told me to have an opening dug through, out of respect for the dignity of the priestly office. I saw that the weight of that iron could not be borne even by a strong man. After much pleading I was able to have it taken off at once. But after I left, they put it back on their limbs, the collar on the neck and the belt on the waist.

They put on also the irons assigned to the hands and feet. They have lived this way not for five, ten or fifteen years, but for forty-two. After contending for so long, they long for the toil of the struggle as if they had only just begun. For they picture the beauty of the Bridegroom, and so they bear the labor of the race very lightly and easily. They hurry to reach the end of the contest, seeing their Beloved standing there and holding out the crown of victory. For this reason, though they take the force of rain, snow and sun, they are not distressed or pained. Out of what seems painful they gather joy. They imitated the fast of the divine

Moses, and three times went without food for that long. For through forty days they took only a little food. Three times too they imitated the abstinence of the divine Daniel. They went through three weeks of days, and only then gave food to the body. Once they longed to see the holy places of the saving sufferings of Christ, and they ran to Aelia. They took no food at all on the road. Only when they reached that city and had finished their worship did they take food. Then they came back the same way, again without food. The journey is no fewer than twenty stages. They also desired to see the shrine of the glorious Thecla in Isauria, so as to kindle the torch of their love for God from every side. As they went, so they came back, without food. Such was the divine love that drove them into ecstasy. So did divine love for the Bridegroom drive them to frenzy. These women have adorned the female sex with such a way of life. They have become models for the others, and they will be crowned by the Master with the garlands of victory. As for me, I have set out the benefit that comes from this and gathered the blessing. Now I will move on to another account.

Chapter 30

The wonderful Domnina, whom I mentioned a little while ago, imitated the way of life of the holy Maron. In the garden of her mother's house she set up a small hut. Her hut is made of reeds from the millet plant. She spends her days in it, and with unceasing tears she soaks not only her cheeks but also her garments of hair, for she covers her body with clothing of that kind. About the time of the cock-crow she goes to the house of God, which is not far off, and with the other women and men she offers the hymn of praise to the Master of all. She does this not only at the beginning of the day but also at its close. She both believes, and teaches others, that the place dedicated to God is more worthy of reverence than any other place. For this reason she also gave it great care. She persuaded her mother and her brothers to spend their possessions on it. Her food is lentils soaked in water. She endures all this hardship in a body that is wasted and half dead. For a very thin skin, like a membrane, is stretched over thin bones, since her fat and flesh have been used up by her labors. She is open to everyone who wants to see her, men and women alike. She does not look at a face, nor does she show her face to anyone. She is carefully covered by her garment and bent down to her knees. She speaks very softly and indistinctly, and always with tears as she speaks. Often she took my right hand and laid it on her eyes, and let it go so drenched that the tears dripped from the hand itself. When someone with such great riches of philosophy weeps, laments and groans like those who live in the utmost poverty, what words could praise her as she deserves?

For it is burning love toward God that brings forth those tears. It sets the mind ablaze toward the contemplation of God, pricks it with its rays, and urges it on toward the passage from this life to the next. Although she spends her days and nights in these things, she does not neglect the other kinds of virtue. As far as she can, she serves the excellent contenders whom I have mentioned, and those I have passed over. She also serves those who come to her. She tells them to lodge with the shepherd [priest] of the village, and she herself sends them everything they need. For her mother's and her brothers' goods are set before her for expenses, and they gain a blessing through her. When I too go to that district, which lies to the south of our country, she sends me loaves, fruit and soaked lentils. But how long shall I go on, striving to tell all her virtue at length, when I ought to set before you the lives of others as well, who imitated her and those women I mentioned earlier? For there are many others. Some have embraced the solitary life. Others have loved life in a community with

many, so that two hundred and fifty, or more or fewer, live together. They put up with one kind of food and choose to sleep only on rush mats. They give their hands to wool-working and dedicate their tongues to hymns. There are countless such schools of philosophy, too many to number, not only in our country but throughout the whole East. Palestine too is full of them, and Egypt, and Asia, and Pontus, and all of Europe. For ever since Christ the Master honored virginity by being born of a virgin, nature has put forth meadows of virginity. It offers these fragrant, unfading flowers to its Maker. It does not divide virtue into male and female, nor split philosophy into [differences of sex]. For the difference is of bodies, not of souls.

For in Christ Jesus, as the divine Apostle says, there is no male and female. One faith has been given to men and women alike. There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all, and through all, and in all of us; and to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift. The one who sets the contest has also laid out a single prize for the victors, the kingdom of heaven, and has made this the common reward for all who strive. There are, then, as I said, many training grounds of godliness for men and women, not only in our own country but throughout Syria, in Palestine, in Cilicia, and in Mesopotamia. In Egypt, they say, some monasteries hold as many as five thousand men, who work with their hands and sing hymns to the Master in the midst of their work. They do not only earn the food they need from their labor, but also help strangers who come to them and the poor. But to tell it all is impossible, not only for me but for any writer. And if it were possible, I think it would be superfluous, an ambition that gains nothing. For those who want to reap some benefit, what has been said is enough to give them what they long for. This is why I have recorded different ways of life, and added the stories of women to those of men: so that old and young and women alike may have patterns of the philosophic life, and so that each person, copying the life that suits his heart, may have a rule and measuring-line for his own life in the account set down here. Painters look at their model and copy the eyes, the nose, the mouth, the cheeks, the ears, the forehead, even the hair of the head and of the beard. Beyond these they copy the seat and the stance, and even the look of the eyes, whether gentle or fierce. In the same way, each reader of this work who chooses to imitate some way of life should shape his own life by the one he has chosen.

Carpenters straighten their boards with a chalk line, and they keep trimming off what is extra until they lay the rule against the board and see that it is level. In the same way, the one who wants to emulate some way of life should lay it beside himself as a rule, cutting away the excess of vice and filling up whatever is lacking in virtue. This is why I took on the labor of writing: to give those who wish it a starting point for benefit. And I ask those who read, since they enjoy the labors of others without labor, to repay those labors with prayer. I also beg those whose lives I have written not to overlook me while I live far from their spiritual dance. Lift me up from where I lie below, lead me up to the height of virtue, and join me to their own company. Then I will not only praise the wealth of others but may myself have some grounds for praise, glorifying with deed, word and thought Christ, the

Savior of all, our God. With him be glory to the Father, together with the Holy Spirit, now and always, and to the ages of ages. Amen.

Sources. Greek text: Johann Ludwig Schulze's edition (Theodoretus Cyrensis Episcopus Opera Omnia, Paris: J.P. Migne, 1864), digitised by Open Greek and Latin and the First Thousand Years of Greek project (CC BY-SA 4.0). The English is a new translation made by SermonIndex with AI directly from the Greek, as a first reading version; it has not been checked line by line by a person and may contain mistakes. No older English translation was used. Where the digital Greek is flagged as damaged, the English is a best reading. Released under CC BY-SA 4.0.