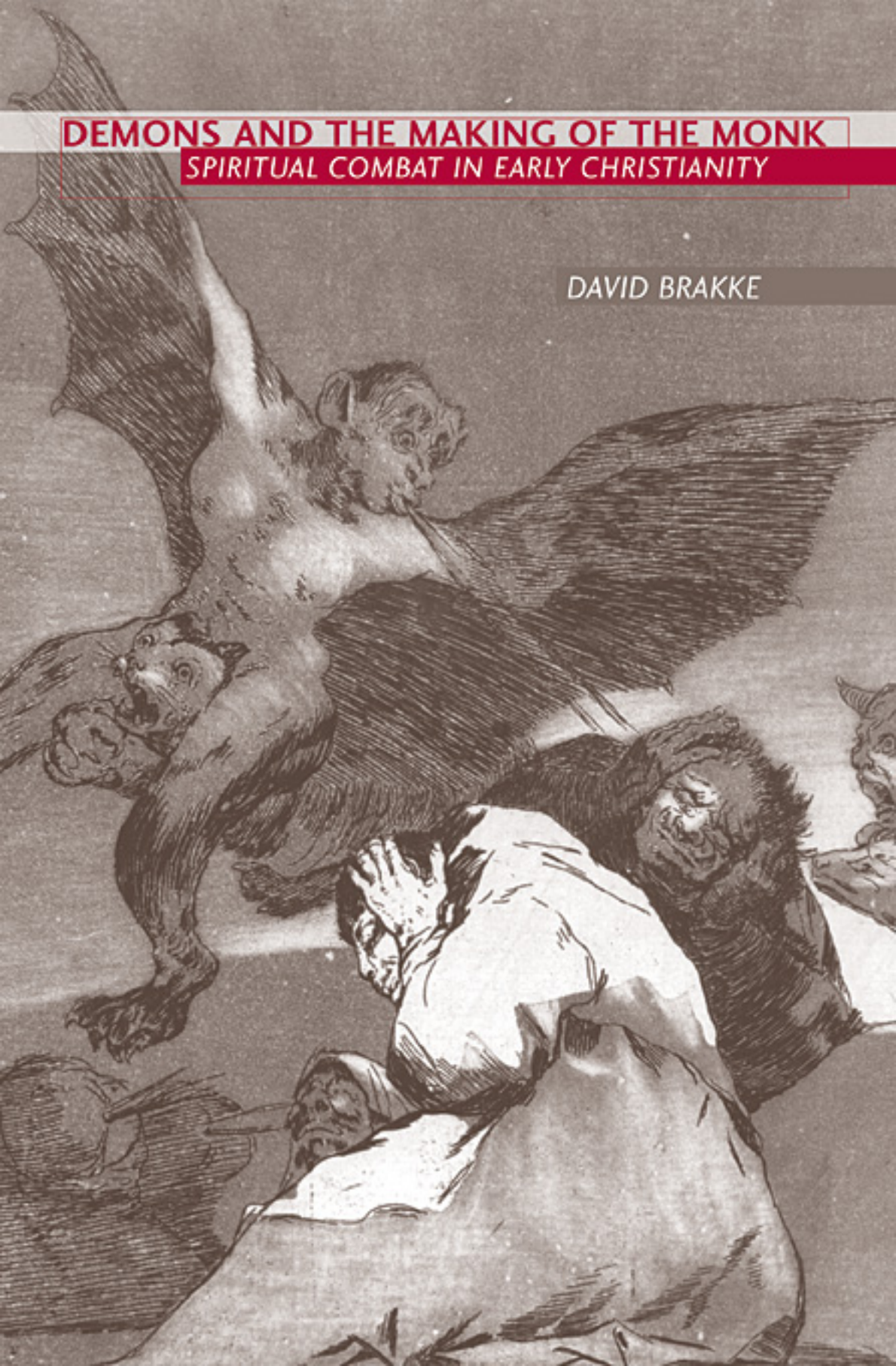


DEMONS AND THE MAKING OF THE MONK
SPIRITUAL COMBAT IN EARLY CHRISTIANITY

DAVID BRAKKE



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Spiritual Combat in Early Christianity

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For Bert

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Demons and the Making of the Monk

I

The Monk in Combat

The Single One

The Monk against the Demons

For our struggle is not against enemies of blood and flesh, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

—Ephesians 6:12

One winter night probably in the 450s (Tybi 9 in the Coptic calendar), Shenoute, the leader of a community of some four thousand monks in Upper Egypt, could not sleep. As he later told his followers in a short address entitled *In the Night*, he was “in distress” over a group of monks whom he had ordered to be bound and confined because they had committed a sin of some gravity (which he does not identify). Should he return the offenders to the community after a period of punishment? Or should he expel them from the monastery? The former course of action would restore the sinners to the monastic life and thus to the path to virtue and salvation; but retaining known sinners in their midst could endanger the spiritual health of the other monks, as it might suggest that they too could commit grievous sins without being expelled. On the other hand, expulsion would deprive the offenders of the stable life they had known in the monastery, most likely consigning them to eternal damnation. As Shenoute wandered the monastic compound in prayer over this matter, a man suddenly appeared before him, dressed as a middle-ranking government official and accompanied by a subordinate. The man grabbed hold of Shenoute and appeared ready to attack him in defense of the offending monks. “What are you?” Shenoute demanded of his attacker, adding that if he were an angel, perhaps he would tell him whether it was Shenoute or the offending monks who had “sinned against God” and thus whether he should expel the monks or not. When

the man made no answer but continued to wrestle, Shenoute fought back and soon prevailed. Then Shenoute realized that the man was no angel, but a demon, because it would have been impossible for him to defeat an angel. The demons then disappeared.

From this encounter Shenoute realized that he must expel the monks. He told his followers that they must not be afraid to expel sinful colleagues even if they came from wealthy or powerful families. And he said that he himself must be ready to expel such sinners “even if I pray with them and they with me, even if I eat bread with them and they with me, and my hand and their hand are in the same bowl on the same table.” It seems that the appearance of a demonic advocate for the offending brothers as an officer of some kind made clear to Shenoute the real reasons for his hesitation to expel the monks: they came from prominent backgrounds, and also he was reluctant to cut ties with brothers with whom he had shared the worship and fellowship of monastic life. Such considerations must be set aside in the cases of those who might “corrupt God’s creatures with any defilement or impurity in this house.”¹

Most twenty-first-century persons with oversight responsibilities—parents, teachers, athletic coaches, business managers—likely recognize the complex issues that Shenoute faced, especially balancing concern for the health of a group with care for the individual. Some may sympathize with Shenoute’s final decision: if a few individuals pose a significant danger to the welfare of others in the group, they must go. But probably very few would struggle with such a problem in the same way, by wrestling with a demon; even if they believe in the existence of a devil and other evil spirits, the idea of engaging in physical combat with a demon probably would seem strange and primitive to them. Even historians and scholars of religion, aware that demons appear with great frequency in early and medieval monastic literature, may find this story strange. This demon does not really tempt Shenoute: instead, from his encounter with the demon, Shenoute becomes aware that social position and personal feelings were clouding his judgment. The demon, by appearing as a figure of high social standing and power, in fact helps Shenoute reach a decision and follow what he considers the right path.

As modern people, we are tempted also to focus entirely on the demon, the player in this drama that strikes us as more bizarre, and thus to miss the novelty of the main character, Shenoute. Why should thousands of men and women have submitted to the authority of this one

man? Why did they trust him with their ultimate salvation? Shenoute's account to his followers of his experience with the demon must have served in part to legitimate his position as leader of the monastery. As someone who engaged in physical combat with a demon and prevailed, Shenoute demonstrated his own virtue, the (literal) strength of his character, and thus his capacity to lead others to salvation by expelling the sinful ascetics. Part of Shenoute's identity as a leader of monks, as an archimandrite, was his ability to successfully resist demons, the forces of evil that surrounded him and his fellow ancient Egyptians.

This book examines both characters in this ancient encounter, the demon and the monk, and argues that neither can be understood apart from the other as they developed over the course of the fourth and early fifth centuries in Christian Egypt. During this period the new religious identity of the Christian monk—in Greek, the *monachos*, “single one”—was invented. Or, better put, in various settings throughout the Mediterranean world, ascetic Christians developed a new set of social roles and religious identities that they gathered under the category “monk.” The monk is now such a familiar figure that it is difficult to remember that he did not always exist, that he has had to be imagined, embodied, legitimated, and reconceived from late antiquity to the present day. Likewise, in this same period, even non-Christian philosophers, such as Iamblichus, began to accept an idea that their predecessors had rejected: the *daimōn* was not merely an intermediary divine being, filling in the gap between human beings and the distant gods, but could be an evil power that caused harm to human beings.² Scholars who study ancient understandings of the *daimōn* often rightly use the more neutral English “daemon” to signal that the *daimōn* was not always a negative force. But in this case such neutrality would be deceptive. For the Christian monk, the *daimōn* became a fearsome enemy, an agent of evil that could appear as a human being, a wild animal, or even an angel. The opponent of the monk was the unambiguously evil demon. In this book I do not attempt to present a complete history of either of these characters and their changing identities in late antiquity; rather, I explore their interaction in early Egyptian monasticism and claim that the Christian monk was formed in part through imagining him in conflict with the demon, which in turn gained its identity through its relation to its monastic opponent.³

I focus on early monasticism in Egypt because, although demons

tempted and frightened monks in other areas of the ancient Mediterranean, the literature from Egypt shaped subsequent Christian demonologies in both the Byzantine East and the medieval West. The chapters in Part One study the primary images of the monk in combat—that is, the social and religious identities for the monk that monastic authors constructed through their presentations of conflict with demons. In the closing section of this chapter, I examine how Antony the Great (and less so his disciple Ammonas) adapted previous demonological teachings, especially those of Origen and Valentinian Christians, to the desert monk's new project of returning to his spiritual essence, of becoming a truly integrated personality, a "single one." In his *Life of Antony*, however, Athanasius portrayed the monk as the new martyr, who preserves his Christian faith and virtue in the face of opposition from the pagan gods (the demons), and also as the holy man, who provides some of the spiritual benefits (exorcisms, healings, divination) for which people had looked to their gods. Evagrius Ponticus took up Antony's modified Origenism and Athanasius's dramatic picture of fierce combat and constructed a compelling and subtle demonology, by which the monk could measure his progress toward freedom from the passions and then to knowledge of God. The Evagrian monk's goal was to be a gnostic, a "knower"; even in his conflict with the demons, it was knowledge that gave the monk his power. The literature emanating from the federation of monasteries founded and led by Pachomius adapted contemporary ideas about demons to its ideal of the monk as a brother, one who lives in community in submission to a rule and in support of his colleagues. The Pachomians emphasized a state of constant moral vigilance, symbolized by the protective walls that surrounded their communities. Finally, Shenoute presented himself as a prophet who was called to end idolatry among the heathens and to expose hypocrisy among the people of God: he wielded the dualistic contrast between Christ and Satan as a sword to bring clarity to the fluid religious situation in late ancient Egypt. Martyr, holy man, gnostic, brother, prophet, monk—such were the diverse ways in which these authors understood the Christian "single one" in conflict with evil.

Whereas Part One examines the discrete demonologies and monastic self-understandings constructed by single authors or limited communities, the chapters in Part Two explore common themes in stories about monks encountering demons. After an initial survey of three im-

portant collections of anecdotes about fourth- and fifth-century Egyptian monks, I study accounts in which demons appear as Ethiopians or black persons and describe how such appearances enabled monks to represent as “other,” and so to renounce, aspects of their selves. Yet the presence of Ethiopian monks in their communities introduced an ambivalence into this theme in monastic literature and reveals a paradox at the heart of the monastic project: the monk must always consider at least a part of himself to be demonic. Consideration of the gendered dimension of demon stories and rhetoric will show that monastic writers used women, both female monks and female-appearing demons, to visualize demonic conflict and the masculinity that the monk gained or lost in that conflict. The female body provided a compelling image with which to render visible an unseen drama of temptation, followed by seduction or resistance. Finally, stories that highlight the demons’ identities as the pagan gods take care to differentiate the Christian monk from religious virtuosi that looked like him—the pagan priest and the magician—and provide a triumphal narrative for the process of “Christianization,” in which the monk played no small role. Telling stories about monks meeting and overcoming demons was one way to announce the victory of Christianity and its God over traditional religion and its pseudo-gods, the demons.

Previous scholars have, of course, offered highly probable explanations for encounters between monks and demons and for their rationalization in demonologies, discursive theories about the demons. For example, historians have claimed to know what “really happened” to Shenoute that winter night: An actual local magistrate came to the White Monastery, accompanied by his assistant, probably to investigate charges that Shenoute was mistreating his monks by beating them, tying them up, and the like. Shenoute confronted the official, charged him with being an emissary of Satan, fought with him—and won! So the original editor of Shenoute’s Coptic text entitled this work *Magistratus quidam e monasterio pellitur*: “A certain magistrate is driven from the monastery.” The incident can then serve as straightforward evidence for the tense relations between local government officials and monastic leaders.⁴ There is a good chance that this is what “actually happened” on the morning of Tybi 9, and we shall see that Shenoute’s understanding of the devil did not preclude his incarnation, so to speak, in an actual person. But as a

historian of religion I am not satisfied with this extremely sensible line of argument, which seeks to explain demonic experiences in terms that cohere with a modern scientific and historical worldview. For one thing, although Shenoute was a brilliant orator, extended irony does not appear to have been part of his rhetorical arsenal. I see no indications that the addressees of *In the Night* were to understand that Shenoute wrestled with anything other than a true demonic being. Shenoute's spiritual world—not to mention his emotional life—was clearly richer than this rational modern explanation will allow.

Psychoanalytic perspectives might be more helpful. These understand experiences of the demonic, particularly visual ones, as products of repression, projection, and persistent anxieties.⁵ The psychoanalytically inclined interpreter of Shenoute's experience on Tybi 9 may find its roots years earlier in an incident from Shenoute's life before he became the leader of the monastery, when Shenoute had learned that certain leading monks had committed grave sins and that others had colluded to keep the transgressions secret. When Shenoute informed him of these transgressions, the monastery's head refused to take any action, leaving Shenoute open to ridicule and resentment. Although Shenoute was later vindicated, the dramatic appearance of a demon at a time when Shenoute, now himself the monastery's leader, was vacillating over punishing sinful monks may be seen as the eruption and resolution of unresolved feelings from this past incident. This interpretation seems probable to me as well; when historians use psychoanalytic concepts to understand demonic appearances, the danger of anachronism—feared by historians, rightly, but perhaps too much—is ameliorated by the ancient monks' own conviction that demons adapt their strategies and appearances to the monk's internal condition. I shall at times invoke psychoanalytic concepts such as repression and projection, especially in discussing demonic appearances like Shenoute's encounter with the official. But their utility is limited in other respects. For example, Shenoute's physical combat with a demon was a rare event, even for him. Most of the Egyptian monks' conflicts with the demonic had no visual content, but consisted of thoughts, suggestions, or inclinations, which they attributed to demons. We must also be alert to how monastic tradition, transmitted both in influential works such as the *Life of Antony* and in countless interactions between monastic guides and their disciples, shaped the experience of individuals as much as it expressed it. Ulti-

mately we have primary access not to the real experiences of monks (what happened on Tybi 9) but to the stories they told and the theories they articulated to explain those experiences (Shenoute's report to his followers). Our topic is less the psyches of individual monks than the culture(s) in which monks sought to form themselves into virtuous persons. Finally, the monks did have their own psychological theories—most prominently that of Evagrius, which rivals any modern system in its complexity, subtlety, and (just possibly) insight.

This last point renders problematic another traditional explanation for monastic demonologies and demon stories: that they represent “folklore,” particularly remnants of a pagan past that uneducated monks could not leave behind but adapted to their new Christian worldview.⁶ Historians with this view might emphasize Shenoute's identity as a Copt: lacking a classical education, Shenoute, even as a Christian, inhabited a world that he crudely imagined to be filled with dangerous spirits. Such historians can only express amazement that stories of demons appearing as wild animals and as a black boy appear in the *Life of Antony*, written by a literate and intelligent Greek-speaking bishop, Athanasius of Alexandria.⁷ Although elements of traditional Egyptian religion and of “popular” beliefs certainly contributed to the demonological views of early monks—after all, the Christians identified the pagan gods as demons—this perspective misunderstands both demonology as a discourse and the monks who created and shaped that discourse. Scholars once believed that nearly all Egyptian monks came from the lower classes and so were uneducated, illiterate, and even anti-intellectual and thus that philosophically inclined monks like Evagrius Ponticus were anomalous. Recent studies, however, have demonstrated that a significant number of the early monks came from a high social background, could read and write, and possessed at least some education.⁸ Late ancient Egyptians do not easily divide into urban educated Greeks and rural less-educated Copts: Shenoute read Greek, could refer to classical authors like Aristophanes, and criticized a range of practices that we would associate with “popular religion.”

In general, demonology—not just theoretical explorations of the nature and activities of demons, but also the transmission of vivid stories about their attacks on people—is an activity of literate, educated persons, who often use demons to address pressing intellectual problems, as recent studies of medieval and early modern demonologies illustrate.⁹

Educated monks could not have been ignorant of previous religious and philosophical thought, including discussions of demons and their roles in a human being's quest for virtue and knowledge of God. For the most part, monastic demonologies concern themselves with the roles that adversarial spirits play in the monk's ethical life, not with the uncanny forces that haunt perilous intersections or reside in threatening animals—the demons of local religion that interest most anthropologists and historians of religion.¹⁰ The demons of the Egyptian desert do fit this category, of course, but we shall see that even these the monks assimilated to their ethically oriented interests. Monastic demons certainly appeared to people, caused diseases, and even possessed people, but they more often suggested evil thoughts, provoked disagreements between monks, or stirred up a monk's passions.

Learned reflection on demons had been a part of Christian theology and moral formation from the beginning of Christianity itself. The earliest Christian authors, especially Paul and his students, believed that Christians were living near the end of the world as they knew it. They believed that history was hastening to a final battle between God, his angels, and the elect, on the one side, and Satan, his demons, and the earthly rulers, on the other. The exorcisms performed by Jesus and his disciples, vividly described in the Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles, dramatized this conflict and brought it into immediate experience. To join the fledgling Christian movement was to enlist in this cosmic war on the side of God and his angels. Christians endeavored to remain faithful to God and Christ in the face of the evil spiritual and political forces that surrounded them, and this was primarily a moral task. The individual's ethical life, including his or her relationships with spouse, children, and slaves, took place within the context of cosmic struggle. As the author of Ephesians put it, "Our struggle is not against enemies of blood and flesh, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places" (Eph. 6:12).¹¹

Even when intellectually inclined Christians of the second and later centuries lost the sense that the end of the present age was imminent, they inherited this image of the Christian in battle with demonic forces.¹² Martyrdom provided a new battlefield for this contest, as the Christian on trial stood fast against the demons that demanded to be acknowledged as gods. Although few Christians faced the prospect of ac-

tual martyrdom, the martyr's arena served as a symbol for every Christian's ethical life, understood as a resistance to the temptations offered by the surrounding demonic culture. Drawing on Jewish precedents, some Christian authors, such as the author of the *Shepherd of Hermas*, reduced this ethical struggle to a simple conflict between two spirits: a good and a bad angel (suggesting, respectively, virtue and vice) accompanied every person.¹³ At a more communal level, demons supplied a ready explanation for a variety of ills that beset Christian groups, including the numerous and persistent divisions among them ("heresies"). The Gnostics and the Valentinians also considered demons in terms of their resistance to the ethical life, but they differed from other Christians by claiming that nearly all the "divine" beings that were active in the universe were demonic: even the God of Israel, if not a demon, was merely an ignorant lower god. Christians' extreme minority status in the Roman Empire and their bitter divisions among themselves and with Jews put a sharp social and cultural edge on their belief that they were fighting a cosmic war with evil powers.¹⁴

Christians were not alone in devoting sustained attention to demons: non-Christian philosophers also made the nature and activities of demons a primary topic of their speculation.¹⁵ Plato had defined "the demonic" (*daimonion*) as that which is "between God and the mortal." "God," he explained, "does not mingle with humanity; rather, it is through it [the demonic] that all interaction and conversation takes place between gods and people, whether sleeping or awake. . . . These demons are in fact numerous and diverse, and one of them is Eros."¹⁶ This enigmatic statement, along with the stories of various divine and semidivine beings appearing and speaking with humans in the Homeric literature, prompted a long tradition of philosophical thought, which sometimes rationalized and sometimes resisted more popular ideas about demons. In the first three centuries of the common era, philosophers increasingly emphasized the remote nature of the ultimate divine power, a trend in which Jews and Christians fully participated, and thus they devoted more attention to the lower divine beings, including demons, that mediated between human beings and the first principle. Philo of Alexandria (d. ca. 45 C.E.) and Plutarch (d. ca. 120 C.E.) developed the fullest demonologies before Origen; as a Jew who followed the Bible, Philo accepted the existence of malevolent demons (fallen angels) that sought to harm human beings and to lead them into vicious activ-

ity; Plutarch appears to have been open to the idea, even if he did not fully accept it.¹⁷

Within this complex cultural context, the Christian intellectual Origen (ca. 185–254) created a rich and multifaceted demonology, whose legacy we shall find in many of our monastic authors.¹⁸ Origen, whose demonology defies brief summary, brought together and elaborated on a range of Christian demonological beliefs, including the identification of the pagan gods as demons, the existence of and conflict between good angels and evil angels (demons), the association of the demons with temptation to vicious behavior, and martyrdom as a combat with Satan. He accepted the teaching found in the *Shepherd of Hermas* that each person has two accompanying angels. In the chapters that follow I shall explore specific points on which Origen influenced monastic demonologies, but three general aspects of Origen's demonology deserve highlighting as particularly significant for later monastic thought. First, Origen taught that all rational beings, including angels, demons, and human beings, fell from an original unity and equality in which they worshiped God as pure intellects. Demons are the beings that fell the farthest away from contemplation of God, and human beings fell a distance between that of angels and that of demons. Human beings seek to return to this original unity, and demons attempt to stop them from doing so.¹⁹ This teaching lay behind the monastic sense that demons can figure people out and know how to attack them, because human beings and demons share an originally equal rational nature, and it provided the overarching metaphor of ascent or return to God despite demonic resistance in the air, which appears in numerous monastic works.

Origen's ruminations on the demonic opposition to human virtue strongly influenced monastic thought in two additional ways. Origen taught that individual demons specialize in particular vices (there is a demon of gluttony, another of pride, and so on), and he believed that, like an army, these demons form groups and ranks, led by commanders.²⁰ We shall see how Evagrius adapted these views in developing his theory that there are eight primary demons, which he also called thoughts. And this association of demons with thoughts also stemmed from Origen. Evil "thoughts" (*dialogismoi*), Origen said, come to us either from ourselves or from demons. We are able to resist the suggestions that demons make, but if we succumb to them often enough, we

can eventually become enslaved to the demons, and our nature can turn as vicious as theirs.²¹ The hallmark of Origen's theorizing about demons is his overriding interest in the Christian's quest for virtue. To be sure, the existence of demons raised metaphysical issues concerning the nature of the soul and the composition of various bodies, and Origen used demonology in part to address the problem of theodicy—how and why evil and evil beings might exist in a universe created by a single, good God. But Origen treated demons primarily in terms of their resistance to the human being's efforts to love God and do the good, and the monks of the fourth century followed him by focusing on their own progress toward virtue and on how demons paradoxically facilitated that progress by providing the resistance they had to overcome.²²

From the final quarter of the third century into the fourth, ascetically inclined Christians in Egypt, both men and women, began experimenting with more extreme forms of withdrawal from society.²³ Particularly by moving to the edges of cities and villages and even into the desert itself, ascetics intensified the demonic opposition that all Christians faced. Egyptians considered the desert the peculiar home of the demons, and a more solitary existence, less distracted by the concerns of ordinary life, permitted a more acute experience of temptation and evil thoughts. These experiments in Christian asceticism took diverse forms. For many monks the basic social unit was the relationship between an advanced monk (an "old man") and a disciple (a "brother"). The modes of life that built on this basic relationship ranged from the fully independent solitary life associated with Antony, who had monastic retreats both at Pispir near the Nile and at a location deep in the desert near the Red Sea, to the so-called semi-eremitical life practiced by the monks of Nitria and Scetis in northern Egypt, who gathered at least weekly for worship and shared meals. Other monks formed full-fledged communities with formal rules and leadership structures; the most famous of these were the federation of monasteries in southern Egypt that Pachomius founded and the set of three monasteries centered on the White Monastery, which Shenoute led for nearly eight decades. Other monks conformed to none of these patterns: for example, Syncletica isolated herself in a tomb outside the city of Alexandria and attracted a circle of disciples.

Just as their ways of life were diverse, so too were both the literature that monks produced and the demons they faced. The sources for this

book include biographies of exceptional monks, collections of monastic sayings and stories, letters from ascetic teachers to their disciples, sermons, community rules, biblical commentaries, and discursive treatises on the monastic life.²⁴ The authors of all of these monastic writings agreed with Plato that the demons were astonishingly varied in their characteristics and tactics. This investigation, then, of the relationship between monk and demon will employ diverse interpretive positions and modes of analysis, at times resembling intellectual history and at other times recent forms of cultural studies. The story that Shenoute tells in *In the Night* cannot be reduced to any single explanation: lying behind it are biblical and theological traditions about angels and demons, Shenoute's own psychological history and emotional condition, his social and political relationships with his fellow monks and persons outside the monastery, and finally, whatever "actually happened." Even if we can fully reconstruct only some or even none of these aspects, no single one of them "explains" Shenoute's encounter with the demon. While I shall imitate both monk and demon in varying my interpretive strategies, I shall pursue a consistent theme of how conflict with demons formed the monk both as a social role and as a virtuous individual, giving his quest for virtue a specific tone and character.

I use the masculine pronoun advisedly because the normative monk that these demonologies form is gendered masculine. To be sure, some women, like Syncletica, eschewed the traditional lifestyle of the Christian virgin within a city and instead embraced the more withdrawn, desert-oriented lifestyles that monastic literature celebrates. Such ascetic women as Amma Sarah and Amma Theodora, whose sayings are included among those of the desert "fathers," fully deserve the title *monk*, and the monastic communities led by Pachomius and Shenoute included houses for women.²⁵ Shenoute intentionally included both his male and his female followers among the "monks" he addressed. Still, the vast majority of the monks that we will consider here were men, and authors such as Athanasius and Evagrius, unless they explicitly include women in their texts, assume that the paradigmatic monk is a man. As we shall see in Chapter 8, even those works that present female monks in their own right do so with male readers in mind, and they call their virtuous subjects "manly." The demon-fighting monk tended to be masculine, even when he was a woman.

Long before Shenoute wrestled with the demonic official, perhaps in the 370s, another monastic leader faced dissension from some of his followers. Unlike Shenoute, Ammonas did not manage a large, well-structured monastic community with a common rule; rather, he served as guide and spiritual leader to a looser confederation of monks centered on Pispir, where Ammonas's teacher, the great Antony himself, had once had a cell. For reasons unknown to us, some of the monks whom Ammonas guided had become dissatisfied with their life in the desert and had resolved to return to a city or village and practice their asceticism there. In his effort to dissuade his disciples from abandoning the eremitical life in the desert that his teacher Antony had pioneered, Ammonas invoked Satan and the demons. The emotional turmoil that the monks experienced, Ammonas explained, was a "trial" that Satan and his assistants had imposed on them: "The demons, knowing that in being blessed the soul acquires progress, wrestle against it either in secret or in the open." Moreover, Ammonas characterized the disciples' inclination to leave the desert and take up a less withdrawn ascetic life as a "temptation" rather than "the will of God." Consonant with Origen's teaching, he argued that every human motivation comes from one of three sources: Satan, the self, or God, only the last being acceptable. Because the monks' plan to leave the desert was not God's will, it must have come from either the devil or themselves. Inasmuch as the inexperienced monks could not easily discern among these sources of motivation, it was essential that they submit to the discernment of their "father," Ammonas.²⁶

Equally essential to the demon-fighting monk, according to Ammonas, was withdrawal into the desert. Only in the desert could the monk practice quietness, "see the adversary" and "overcome" him with divine assistance, and finally return to human society as a spiritual guide. Elijah and John the Baptist were biblical examples of "holy fathers" who "were solitary in the desert" and were able to achieve "righteousness" not by dwelling among people but only by "having first practiced (*askein*) much quiet (*hēsuchia*)." In turn, Ammonas attacked city-based monks as "unable to persevere in quiet" and enslaved to "their self-will." Because they received their support from their neighbors rather than from God, such monks were "unable to conquer their passions or to fight against their adversary."²⁷ The presence of people enervated the contesting monk by diminishing his reliance on God and de-

priving him of the focus he needed to see the devil and his demons. Ammonas employed the view that the demons inhabit the desert in particular, and that one can fight them only when alone, to argue for the superiority of one form of the monastic life over another. In his effort to maintain his authority over his disciples and prevent them from taking up another discipline, Ammonas made combat with Satan and withdrawal into solitude for this combat central to his ascetic program.

Ammonas's teacher Antony, the reputed pioneer of monastic withdrawal into the desert, had not tied conflict with the demons precisely to solitude in the desert, but he did provide one of the earliest articulations of the monk's identity and task in terms of such conflict. Modern scholars have long suspected that the portrayal of Antony the Great as illiterate and uneducated in Athanasius's *Life of Antony* might not present a completely reliable portrait of the famous monk, because it clearly reflects Athanasius's own theology as well as commonplaces in the literary lives of pagan sages. Recently Samuel Rubenson published a thorough study of a set of letters attributed to Antony and made a compelling case for their authenticity.²⁸ His work contributed substantially to the new perspectives on early Egyptian monasticism that I have discussed here. Rather than Athanasius's simple, uneducated Copt (a picture undermined even within the *Life* itself), Antony has emerged as a thoughtful, philosophically inclined ascetic, whose teaching emphasizes the transformative nature of "knowledge" (*gnōsis*) of self and God.

Antony's *Letters* provide an early and clear example of how a monk accepted and adapted previous ideas about demons found not only in such theologians as Clement and Origen, but also in Gnostic and Valentinian literature.²⁹ His demonology constructs the monk as a single, unified personality in opposition to the multiple, divisive demons. Like Origen, Antony writes that all rational beings originated in a lost unity, from which they fell because they engaged in "evil conduct." The devil and his demons, "since their part is in the hell to come," plot against human beings: "They want us to be lost with them." Their means of attack are diverse, and thus monks require "a heart of knowledge and a spirit of discernment" to recognize their "secret evils." In particular, the monk must discriminate between three kinds of bodily movements: those natural to the body, those caused by the monk's own negligence regarding food and drink, and those caused by demons. The mind or soul that fails to attend to the teachings of the Spirit of God becomes disordered, al-

lows the demons to stir up movements within the body, and serves as “a guide to the evil spirits working in its members.” Still, even this condition will bring the monk to weariness and despair, to reliance on God’s help, and thus to conversion and healing. The demons themselves are invisible, but a monk’s capitulation to their suggestions renders them visible on the monk’s person: “And if you seek, you will not find their sins and iniquities revealed bodily, for they are not visible bodily. But you should know that we are their bodies, and that our soul receives their wickedness; and when it has received them, then it reveals them through the body in which we dwell.” Demons are “all hidden, and we reveal them by our deeds.”³⁰

Antony’s demons operate as products, agents, and symbols of the diversity and separation that resulted from the fall, as opposed to the uniformity and unity in which the monk originated and to which he seeks to return. Echoing a discussion of Origen in his *First Principles*, Antony speaks of the diversity of rational creatures in terms of their names—*archangel*, *principality*, *demon*, *human being*, and so on—which God assigned to them based on the quality of their conduct. Demons are “all from one (source) in their spiritual essence; but through their flight from God great diversity has arisen between them since their deeds are varying. Therefore all these names have been imposed on them after the deeds of each one.” There is, then, something deceptive and unreal about names, which have been given to creatures, “whether male or female, for the sake of the variety of their deeds and in conformity with their own minds, but they are all from one (source).”³¹ Although the basis of this teaching on names derives from Origen, Antony’s pervasive reflection on names as secondary and as masking the origination of all spiritual beings in a unity owes as much to the Valentinian tradition as to Origen.

Valentinus, a Christian philosopher who taught in Alexandria and Rome in the second century, contrasted the divine plenitude that God offers in Christ with the material lack of humanity’s present condition in part by distinguishing between “proper” or “lordly” names and more defective names “on loan.”³² His theological followers elaborated on this contrast. The author of the *Gospel according to Philip* writes that “names given to worldly things are very deceptive, since they turn the heart aside from the real to the unreal”; they can be tools of the demonic powers, which seek “to deceive humanity by the names and bind them to the

nongood.” Although the name of Christian has great power, persons who have been baptized only and who have not received the Holy Spirit have only “borrowed the name.”³³ The original unity of the fullness is associated with a single true Name, “an unnamable Name,” which is the Son; the fallen aeons (lower divine beings), who have moved into multiplicity and away from unity, possess now only “a shadow of the Name” or a “partial name.”³⁴ As the Valentinians saw it, naming in this present world is deceptive, a function of the fall away from spiritual reality and unity into material illusion and diversity. The unreliable character of ordinary names plays into the hands of the demonic rulers, which seek to enslave us to evil and whose existence itself bears witness to this fall. Yet an ultimately true Name, an unnamable Name, provides grounding for the reality of unity to which human beings aspire. Although by Antony’s day Valentinus and his followers had been condemned as heretics, their writings continued to circulate in fourth-century Egypt, as the discovery of the Nag Hammadi codices demonstrates.

Like Origen and the Valentinians, Antony associated multiple names with the fall away from unity into diversity, epitomized by the diversity of the evil spirits. The names “Jesus” and “saint,” he wrote, can themselves be deceptive cloaks that cover with the “form of godliness” persons who actually “act according to their own hearts and bodies.” Ordinary names, meanwhile, fail completely to name people’s true identities—that is, “themselves as they were created, namely as an eternal substance, which is not dissolved with the body.” Multiple names of transient flesh must give way to the single real name through self-knowledge: “A sensible man who has prepared himself to be freed at the coming of Jesus knows himself in his spiritual essence, for he who knows himself also knows the dispensations of the Creator, and what he does for his creatures. . . . About your names in the flesh there is nothing to say; they will vanish. But if a man knows his true name he will also perceive the name of Truth. As long as he was struggling with the angel through the night Jacob was called Jacob, but when it dawned he was called Israel, which means ‘a mind that sees God’ [compare Gen. 32:24–28].” Antony contrasts the monks’ “names in the flesh” with their identity as “holy Israelite children, in their spiritual essence”; the monks’ diversity as “young and old, male and female,” with their unity as “Israelite children, saints in your spiritual essence.” “There is,” Antony tells his readers, “no need to bless, nor to mention, your transient names in the

flesh.” In light of these passages, it comes as no surprise that the only contemporary person besides Antony whose name appears in the letters is the heresiarch Arius, who “did not know himself.”³⁵ People have multiple names of flesh—Jacob, Antony, Arius, and many other besides—just as in their fallen condition they have diverse bodies and individual wills; but they share only one true name, Israel, as they share only one spiritual essence.

In addition to Valentinian thought, Antony is drawing on a long tradition of Alexandrian ascetic exegesis of Genesis 32, in which Jacob wrestled with an angel, gained the victory, and received a new name, Israel. According to Philo, whom Clement and Origen follow, Jacob’s wrestling with the angel represents the ethical life of struggle with the passions, while the name Israel, meaning “one who sees God,” signifies the contemplative life, which victory over the passions allows.³⁶ But Antony elaborates on this tradition by associating Jacob, the monk’s “name in the flesh,” with transience, diversity, and corporeality, as well as with struggle with the demons, and Israel, the monk’s “true name,” with eternity, unity, and spirituality, and thus with overcoming the condition of fallenness represented by the demons. Antony’s teaching further echoes Valentinian tradition when it connects discovery of one’s “true name” with the ability to “perceive the name of Truth,” a mysterious term, most likely related to, but not identical with, “the name of Jesus Christ.” The “name of Truth” that belongs to God may ground the validity of the “true name” that belongs to humanity in its single spiritual essence, just as for the Valentinians the name of the Son provided the only reality in which the “partial names” of fallen beings shared. The Antonian monk must withdraw from his individual, separate, surface self of the fleshly name to the shared, united, hidden self of the true name. Although Antony does not explicitly recommend solitary withdrawal into the desert, his teachings clearly support that practice.

Demons oppose the monk’s quest for restored unity by promoting difference on two levels: through embodied vice they encourage a movement away from the invisible unity of spiritual essence, and through interpersonal strife they incite division within the social unity of the Church. These two aspects come together in the metaphor of “the house.” At the level of the person, Antony calls the fallen existence of corporeal individuality, in which the true spiritual self is hidden in the visible body, confinement in an inhospitable “dwelling.” “We dwell in

our death and stay in the house of the robber,” also known as “this house of clay,” “a house full of war,” “this house of dust and darkness,” and so forth. In this metaphor, a person’s true identity as spiritual essence is “invisible,” while externality takes on the negative valence of “outward confusion.”³⁷

Succumbing to demonic suggestion, then, emerges as a process of negative externalization. Demons, because they share the same spiritual essence as human beings, are “hidden” and “not visible bodily,” but they become “revealed bodily” through the monk’s actualizing of their sinful potential, by creating embodied deed from spiritual thought. The result is that “we are their [the demons’] bodies.” Just as the demonic came into being as the result of a fall away from unity caused by activity, the demonic now incites a movement from interior invisible spirituality to exterior visible corporeality, but one that embodies or exteriorizes negative invisible spirituality—namely, the demons. In contrast, virtuous acts effect a positive exteriorization because by them “we shall reveal the essence of our own mercy.” The demons try to cover their tracks by similarly distracting the monk’s attention away from his own interior life to his monastic colleagues and external circumstances: “[We are] accusing each other and not ourselves, thinking that our toil is from our fellows, judging what is outside while the robbers are all inside our house.”³⁸ Although the appellation is biblical and traditional, based especially in exegesis of the parable of the good Samaritan (Luke 10:29–37),³⁹ the demons are “robbers” for Antony because they provoke embodiment or exteriorization of a false identity, one foreign to the monk’s actual identity as spiritual essence, thus stealing the body and making it “their home” rather than an anticipation of the monk’s future resurrected “spiritual body.”⁴⁰

The demons’ creation of alienation among monastic colleagues represents their attempt to undermine the social unity of the Church, which anticipates the eventual return to the single spiritual essence and is also a “house.” Antony calls the Church “the house of truth” (compare Num. 12:7; Heb. 3:2–6): it is the mechanism through which God restores dispersed and divided creatures to the original unity. Although the Church originated with Moses and the prophets, only Christ could heal the “incurable wound” of human sin, and he was able to gather people from all lands and teach them about their essential unity. Restoration of unity and the suppression of corporeal individuality are the goals of the

Church, so the demons prey especially on the monk who follows his own will, and they “sow the seed of division” among monastic colleagues because “he who loves his neighbor loves God.”⁴¹ The “house of truth” should, through a harmony of wills in love, socially embody the unity of undifferentiated essence. Demonically inspired division exposes the house’s character as a collection of individual and therefore conflicting wills.⁴² The demonic intruder is, then, “a robber in our house” because it alienates the monk from his spiritual essence at the levels both of his own personality and of the monastic community.

Once again Antony’s teaching echoes that of at least one stream of Valentinian thought. Valentinus himself drew on the language of the parable of the good Samaritan to describe the fallen human heart as a “caravansary” (Luke 10:34), rendered “impure by being the habitation of many demons.”⁴³ The Valentinian author of *The Interpretation of Knowledge* elaborated on this demonic inhabitation of the person and, like Antony, on its consequences for the Church: “Since the body is a caravansary that the rulers and the authorities have as a dwelling place, the inner person, having been imprisoned in the modeled form, came into suffering. And having compelled him to serve them, they forced him to assist the powers [*energeia*]. They divided the Church.”⁴⁴ Although much of the preceding text is lost in a lacuna, the phrases that remain—“robbers,” “down to Jericho” (6:19–21)—indicate that this discussion also works from the good Samaritan parable. While Valentinus had identified the “heart” as the dwelling that the robber demons invade, this teacher anticipates Antony by making it the body and extending the demons’ work to dividing the Church. When Antony calls the body “the house of the robber” and says that it can become a body for demons, he sounds a lot like these Valentinian authors. But Antony departs from his Valentinian predecessors by understanding the estranged body not as the inevitable condition of material existence but instead as the result of succumbing to demonic temptation and thus as amenable to restoration through the ascetic program.

Because Antony considers the monk’s life to be a process of return to an original undifferentiated unity, the demons represent the tendency toward separation, division, and individuality. Although they incite a movement toward false externality, they themselves are not forces external to the monk, because the monk’s very existence as a separate individual implies the demonic pull of division. Demons are built into the

structure of the fallen cosmos as the principles of differentiation. There is no individual existence without demonic estrangement. But Antony believes that eventually existence will give way to essence: "Now therefore, I beseech you, my beloved, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, not to neglect your true life, and not to confound the brevity of this time with time eternal, nor mistake the skin of corruptible flesh with the reign of ineffable light."⁴⁵ Antony's demonology harnessed insights from earlier philosophical traditions of Egyptian Christianity to a monastic goal of annihilation of the individual self or, rather, its reabsorption into an original undifferentiated unity. This objective is similar to what Pierre Hadot identifies as the aim of note-taking for ancient philosophers: "The point is not to forge oneself a spiritual identity by writing, but rather to liberate oneself from one's individuality, in order to raise oneself up to universality . . . to accede to the universality of reason within the confines of space and time."⁴⁶

Antony adapted an astonishing variety of previous demonological ideas to create a philosophical ideology, in a cosmological or mythological mode, for monastic withdrawal: as principles of differentiation, the demons render problematic individuality and difference, the symptoms of society as a collection of selves. Like his disciple and successor Ammonas, Antony was the intellectual heir to the spiritual guides who directed their disciples' ascent to virtue within and alongside the Christian communities of urban Alexandria and other cities. By striking out into the desert, however, the *monachos* or "single one" radicalized the quest for simplicity of heart and likewise intensified an ambivalence about the multiplicity of human relationships that was deeply rooted in the late antique project of self-cultivation and particularly acute for Egyptian villagers of this period.⁴⁷ For Antony, demons, incorporeal as they were, embodied the fallen state of diversity, in which a multiplicity of selves provided, paradoxically, the essential context for achieving a simplicity that would transcend difference. What made "the single one" single was not only his celibacy, not only his pursuit of wholehearted devotion to God, but also his individual combat with the many demons, which was a struggle to regain his identity as part of a lost spiritual unity.

The New Martyr and Holy Man

Athanasius of Alexandria's Life of Antony

I die daily.

—1 Corinthians 15:31

Tensions between solitude and community, desert and city, are not absent from Athanasius of Alexandria's *Life of Antony*, but they do not shape that work's demonology as they do the demonologies of Antony himself and his disciple Ammonas. Indeed, a reader coming to the *Life* for the first time after reading Antony's letters would scarcely be prepared to find the ascetic hero facing a demonic onslaught of beasts, giants, and even a black boy. That most modern readers are not surprised by the lurid appearances—even if they find them bizarre or puzzling—is a sign of the extent to which the *Life* eclipsed the letters, shaped all subsequent monastic demonologies, and determined how “the temptations of St. Antony” would circulate through Western culture. Hardly the subtle markers of the fault lines of differentiated existence traced by Antony himself, Athanasius's demons brutally attack Antony visually, vocally, and physically, leaving him near death. They are the implacable foes of Christ, miserable pseudo-gods that he has defeated and who yet are determined to terrify Christians into abandoning him. Athanasius's *Life* addressed an international audience, lay and monastic, that had experienced Christian emperors for only fifty years and still lived in a lively pagan culture. Its demonology was the creation of a bishop anxious to prevent a possible failure of Christian nerve just when the divine Christ appeared to have triumphed over the demonic gods.

Despite the *Life's* undeniable focus on monasticism, Athanasius in several ways signals his interest in a wider range of readers. To be sure, the preface addresses itself to monks, outside Egypt and most likely in

the West, who wish to organize their ascetic life according to Antony's example; Antony's story, Athanasius asserts, is "a sufficient pattern of the discipline for monks."¹ But the conclusion suggests that the work is designed not only to show "of what sort the life of the monks ought to be," but to drive home a more fundamental point about the Christian faith: "And if there is need, read this even to the pagans, so that even in this way they might recognize not only that our Lord Jesus Christ is God and Son of God, but in addition that the Christians, those who serve him truly and believe in him piously, not only prove that the demons, whom the Greeks themselves consider gods, are not gods, but also tread on them and chase them away as deceivers and corrupters of humankind" (VA 94.2). Throughout the *Life* Athanasius identifies, as here, the enemies of the demons as not "monks," but simply "Christians," of whom the monks are the outstanding representatives.² The demons attack "all Christians" who make progress in virtue, "but especially monks" (VA 23.1). In this way Athanasius shifts the key of his composition, from the monastic biography as ascetic handbook to the monastic biography as Christian apology. The venerable theme of paganism as mistaken worship of demons and Christianity as triumph over such delusion, which runs from Justin Martyr through Origen and Tertullian, provides the framework for Athanasius's presentation of the monastic struggle with demons.

Athanasius combines monastic asceticism, antipagan apologetics, and demonology by conforming Antony to the figure of the martyr, the Christian opponent of paganism par excellence: in Athanasius's presentation, the monk succeeds the martyr as the person on the front line in the conflict between Christ and Satan, between Christians and the demons.³ Whether Antony himself or other monks saw themselves in this way before the publication of the *Life* is difficult to say. Certainly several pre-Constantinian Christian authors considered ascetic practices an important preparation for the possibility of martyrdom.⁴ Athanasius's Alexandrian predecessors Clement and Origen went farther by explaining how Christians could be like martyrs without actually being arrested and facing execution.⁵ Clement, for example, had argued that actual martyrdom, which was never presented as a real possibility to the vast majority of Christians, was merely the highest form of a witness that was open to every person:

If the confession of God is martyrdom, each soul that has conducted its affairs purely in knowledge of God and has obeyed the commandments is a martyr both in its life and in its speech, no matter how it may be released from the body, by pouring forth the faith like blood during its entire life up to its departure. For instance, the Lord says in the Gospel, "Whoever leaves father or mother or brothers" and the rest "for the sake of the Gospel and of my name" is blessed [compare Matt. 19:29, Mark 10:29]. He indicated not the simple martyrdom, but the gnostic one, in which a person, by conducting his affairs according to the Gospel's rule through love toward the Lord, . . . leaves his worldly family and wealth and possessions for the sake of living without the passions.⁶

The Christian Gnostics who are called to actual martyrdom willingly submit to it because the deaths of martyrs bring non-Christians to the faith and strengthen those in the Church, but the Christian's primary goal is a "disposition" of detachment from the world and "bodily desire," gained through asceticism.⁷ Martyrdom epitomizes this renunciation of the world.

Origen likewise, understanding that the call to actual martyrdom came to only a few Christians, spoke specifically of ascetic practices such as fasting as the weapons of the Christian in the battle against the demons and as the means by which the Christian achieves the renunciation of the world that martyrdom embodies. There are persons, Origen was sure, known only to God, who are "already martyrs by the testimony of conscience."⁸ One's entire life could be one of self-denial and cross-bearing: "Therefore, let our every thought [*dialogismos*] and concept, every word and every deed, breathe our denial of ourselves and our witness [*martyria*] to and confession of Christ. For I am convinced that every act of the perfect person is a witness [*martyrion*] to Christ Jesus and abstinence from all sin is a denial of one's self, leading one after Jesus: such a person is crucified with Christ [see Gal. 2:19] and, having taken up his cross, follows him who carried his cross for our sake [Matt. 16:24]."⁹ In passages such as this, Origen anticipates the idea of "the daily martyrdom" found in the *Life* and other monastic literature.¹⁰

Discussing actual martyrdom, Origen shifts the weight of virtue away from actually dying in martyrdom to remaining steadfast in the face of the diabolical temptation to slip away from fidelity to God and to maintain attachment to family or wealth:

As for how the measure of one's confession is filled or is not filled but rather falls short, we might consider the following. If during the entire time of examination and testing we give no place in our hearts to the devil, who wants to defile us with evil thoughts [*dialogismoi*] of denial or indecision or some incentive that calls us to hostility to martyrdom and perfection; and if, in addition to this, we do not defile ourselves by saying something foreign to confession; and if we bear from the opponents all the abuse, mockery, laughter, slander, and pity that they seem to offer us while they take us to be deceived and stupid and call us dupes; and if we still do not allow ourselves to be led away, even by affection toward our children or their mother or any of those reckoned to be most beloved in life, toward the acquisition of them or this kind of life; but if we turn from all these things and become entirely belonging to God and to the life that is with him and from him, so that we might have fellowship with his Only-Begotten and with those who share in him—then we may say that we have filled the measure of our confession. But if we are lacking in any one of these points, we have not filled but defiled the measure of our confession, and we have mixed it with something foreign. Therefore, we will be lacking, just as they are lacking who have built on a foundation of wood, hay, or straw [see 1 Cor. 3:12].¹¹

Here the martyr's true struggle is to resist the attempts of the devil to dissuade him from his purpose by introducing evil thoughts, by mocking and insulting him, and by reminding him of family and possessions; this struggle to maintain one's devotion to God does not require actual martyrdom, merely a "time of examination and testing." Origen's description of the devil's evil thoughts and his insults of the martyr anticipate the assaults that Antony will suffer. Both Clement and Origen see actual martyrdom as the most perfect form of Christian witness, but they prepared the way for a new perfect form of Christian renunciation of the world and resistance to the demonic after the legalization of Christianity.

At the midpoint of the *Life of Antony*, Athanasius explicitly marks a transition from the age of the martyrs to that of the monks. After Antony does not receive the actual martyrdom he desires and the persecutions end, Antony "departed and withdrew once again to his monastic retreat, and there he was daily a martyr in his conscience [2 Cor. 1:12] and a contender in the contests of the faith." His martyrdom and contending consist of "a greater and more strenuous discipline" (VA 47.1). The demonology of the *Life* unfolds in two distinct ways, through the entire

narrative of Antony's conflict with the demons and through his lengthy ascetic discourse (VA 16–43), most of which concerns demons.¹² Antony's identity as a martyr through discipline shapes the narrative, and the demons' identity as the pagan gods defeated by Christ shapes the discourse. Antony the martyr becomes also Antony the holy man, the one who replaces the gods/demons as a medium of divine aid to people. It is, then, appropriate that when two philosophers—"Greeks" (*Hellēnes*)—come to visit him, Antony speaks only a couple sentences, but concludes with the martyrs' famous declaration, "For I am a Christian." The "amazed" philosophers "withdrew, for they saw that even the demons feared Antony."¹³

Martyrdom, Apologetics, and Clearing the Desert

Despite its venerable place in Western culture, the phrase "*temptations* of Antony" is not quite accurate; better would be *trials* or *tests*. Only at the beginning of his career do the demons tempt Antony with food, money, sex, and the like, attractions that Antony brushes aside. Mostly the demons try to frighten Antony: the "temptation" they offer is to lose heart, to falter in his confidence in God. Although Antony's struggle with the demons is said to be continuous through his lifetime, Athanasius narrates it in four discrete contests or bouts, each of which marks a significant moment of advance in Antony's career: his achievement of a high state of virtue even as a youth (VA 5–7); his first movement outside the village, into the tombs (VA 8–10); his seclusion in the fortified well (VA 13); and his retreat to the inner mountain (VA 51–53). In their attacks, the demons seek to undermine what Antony has already achieved or to drive him away from places he has already occupied. Antony's task in these fights is to not retreat, hesitate, or grow careless, for the outcome of this battle is not in doubt: Christ has already defeated the demons.¹⁴ Indeed, Antony's violent contest with the demons may be, in Athanasius's view, a unique event, one that monks who follow him need not face, at least in Egypt. Antony brings to completion in Egypt a victory that Christ already won.

The devil or his demons do not appear at all in the preface and first four chapters of the *Life*.¹⁵ Although Athanasius concludes the entire work by stating that Antony's career shows that the demons "are not gods," he gives no indication at its opening that conflict with the de-

mons will be a significant theme. Antony at first pursues his ascetic calling without any interaction with demons; other, usually more experienced, village ascetics provide the context for Antony's discipline by serving as examples to imitate. Competition or struggle comes from Antony's relationships with these other "zealous ones": he looks to see what "advantage in zeal and discipline" any may have over him and strives to integrate that virtue into himself. With monks of his own age Antony is not "competitive," but neither does he want to "appear to be second to them in improvements" (VA 4.1–3). The dangers of returning to his household or remembering his relatives arise, but not from demonic suggestion; rather, these are possibilities latent within Antony's own "thinking," which he can counter by focusing his "desire" and "zeal" (VA 3.5). Struggle with demons is evidently not essential to the formation of a virtuous self, for Antony achieves enough success through his discipline of "paying attention to oneself" and imitating others that he can be called "lover of God" (VA 3.2, 4.4).

When the devil first appears in chapter 5, he finds in Antony an already accomplished ascetic: the devil's task is "to bring him back from the discipline" and "to detach him from his righteous intention" (VA 5.2). The struggle that follows, "Antony's first contest against the devil" (VA 7.1), is one of the most important passages in the history of monastic demonology: it provided a frame of reference as well as specific vocabulary for much subsequent literature. The devil's first weapons are "thoughts" (*logismoi*), which he "suggests" (*hupoballein*) or "raises up" in Antony's "thinking" (*dianoia*). On the one hand, these thoughts concern the comforts of the ordinary life that the monk has left behind: "the memory of his possessions, his guardianship of his sister, the intimacy of relatives, love of money, love of glory, the diverse pleasure of food, and the other relaxations of life." On the other hand, they point to the struggles of the ascetic life that the monk now embraces: "the difficulty of virtue and how great its labor is, . . . the body's weakness and the length of time" (VA 5.2–3). Later Antony lists the effects of demonic appearances (rather than thoughts): "the soul's cowardice, confusion and disorder of thoughts, dejection, hatred toward ascetics, listlessness, sadness, memory of relatives, and fear of death" (VA 36.2). These are not systematic, precisely ordered lists, but they provided in part the ingredients for Evagrius's carefully ordered set of eight thoughts, which would serve as the template for the monk's struggle with the demonic as Evagrius envi-

sioned it. Athanasius's Antony, however, proves too strong for these mental suggestions, and thus the devil turns to an attack on his body—namely, on “the navel of the belly” (compare Job 40:16), or sexuality, a particular vulnerability of a youth of Antony's age. Here too the devil employs “filthy thoughts,” but now also he “titillates” the body and must finally resort to visual appearances, first as a woman and then as a black boy. The latter figure, whose appearance I shall discuss more fully in Chapter 7, embodies “the spirit of fornication” that has been troubling Antony all along, but it now declares surrender: “I have been overthrown by you” (VA 5.3–6.5).

Antony's means of resistance are likewise both mental and physical. He counters the original “dustcloud of thoughts” with “continual prayers.” The devil's attack on his sexuality requires a combination of responses: while Antony opposes “foul thoughts” with “prayers,” he responds to bodily “titillation” with “faith and fasts.” In the face of the devil's suggestions of the “ease of pleasure,” Antony “reflected upon the threat of fire and the worm's work” and “set these in opposition” (VA 5.3–6). Finally, when Antony defiantly rebukes the black boy, he concludes by quoting the Scriptures—“The Lord is my helper, and I shall look upon my enemies” (Ps. 117:7)—at which the demon “immediately fled” (VA 6.4–5). These tactics would prove as influential as Antony's lists of thoughts and demonic effects: monks would fast to reduce their sexual desire, oppose demonic thoughts with more pious ones, and use short prayers and passages of Scripture to send demons away, methods that Evagrius systematized and provided with psychological rationales.

This first bout between Antony and the devil provided later monks not only with lists of thoughts and battle tactics, but also with an overarching scheme or plot for a monk's struggle with demons: the devil first attacks with thoughts, then turns to the body, and appears visually as a kind of last resort. Antony later presents a more detailed version of this scheme in his ascetic discourse, indicating that it provides the overall shape of every monk's combat with the demons (VA 23), and it sometimes appears in later monastic literature. For example, in his work most indebted to the *Life*, Evagrius asserts that Satan's attacks on the body come after those made through thoughts and suggests that newcomers to the monastic life “do not fight attacks that are manifest through visions or sensation, lest they be alarmed by their [the demons'] terrors and return to the world.”¹⁶ The biblical source of this progression from

thoughts to physical attacks is the story of Job: God first permits Satan to test Job with misfortunes but not to touch Job himself (Job 1:12); only after Job remains steadfast does God allow Satan to “touch his bone and his flesh” (Job 2:4–6). Job’s first series of misfortunes (such as the deaths of his children) become thoughts probably because Athanasius has in mind the effect on Job of hearing about these calamities. An allusion to Job 40:16 (“the navel of the belly”) provides the pivot for Satan’s turn from thoughts to bodily attacks (VA 5.3). Job emerges in the *Life* as a primary biblical model for the monk’s struggle: Antony later cites the example of Job to show that the devil is so weak that he must get permission from God to attack people, and chapters 40 and 41 of Job provide much of the imagery that Antony uses to describe the devil (VA 24.2–5; 29).

The crucial turn from the purely mental attack of thoughts to the physical attack of bodily engagement and visions occurs very early in Antony’s career. From this point on, Antony’s combat will be primarily physical (body blows, terrifying visions). It seems unlikely that Athanasius imagines every monk enjoying the early success that Antony displays: most would not endure the physical attacks until much later. In any event, Athanasius describes this combat, whether mental, physical, or visual, with the vocabulary of the arena: it is a “contest” (*athlon*), in which the devil is “thrown for a fall” (*katapalaiein*) like a wrestler (VA 5.3, 7.1). Like the martyrs before him, Antony proves paradoxically to be powerful and triumphant when he is the most vulnerable: what should be his point of weakness, his flesh, is the site of his triumph. Although Athanasius emphasizes Antony’s strength, even setting his manliness against the devil’s feminized appearances as a woman and a boy, he nonetheless attributes the victory to Christ, “who gave to the body the victory over the devil” (VA 5.7).

After this initial defeat, the devil and his troops launch full-fledged attacks on Antony only when the monk makes further advances out of the settled land and into their territory, the first of which is his move “into the tombs that were found a short distance from the village” (VA 8.1). In the wake of the first combat, “although the demon had fallen down, [Antony] did not from then on become careless or neglect himself”; instead, Antony intensifies the discipline of his body, engaging in “training measures” so harsh that others are astonished (VA 7.2–5). Athanasius describes Antony’s more severe regime of bodily deprivation in some de-

tail, presenting it as preparation for his move outside the village, just as the martyrs often prepared for their ordeals through ascetic discipline: “having braced himself in this way,” Antony sets out for the tombs and thus makes his first real incursion into the devil’s space (VA 8.1).¹⁷

The combat that follows in chapters 8–10 proves the most harrowing of the work, leaving Antony mute with pain, and takes its vocabulary and some of its plot details from accounts of the struggles of martyrs in the arena. The devil “struck him with blows [*plēgas*] so hard that he lay on the ground speechless from the tortures [*basanoi*]” (VA 8.2).¹⁸ Like the martyr Blandina, Antony is carried out of the struggle at a point near death, only to return to the arena for further combat.¹⁹ The demons then appear in the form of wild beasts—“lions, bears, leopards, bulls, and serpents, asps, scorpions, and wolves”; Antony, “whipped and tortured by them, experienced even more severe bodily pain” and “groaned” (VA 9.7–8). Like martyrs before him who “put the enemy to shame with their courage,” Antony, by remaining “unmoved in his soul” and “dispassionate in his thinking,” mocks the demons, “who made fun of themselves rather than of him.”²⁰ But unlike the martyrs, Antony does not die. Instead, the sudden appearance of a ray of light sends the demons away and ends his pain, leaving Antony with “more strength than before in his body” (VA 10.1–4).

The appearance of the demons in animal forms at this crucial moment and in later battles (VA 39.3, 51.5) has several roots. One is scriptural: Jews and Christians traditionally interpreted the unclean animals in the Septuagint as symbolizing demons, and New Testament passages such as Luke 10:19—“See, I have given you authority to tread on snakes and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy,” later alluded to and quoted by Antony—suggested to Christians both that the demons were like snakes, scorpions, and other animals in their ferocity and malice and, even more, that these animals were themselves somehow demonic.²¹ Attempting to explain on the one hand why Moses declared animals like the wolf to be unclean and on the other hand why divination through animals sometimes worked, Origen speculated that demons sometimes “creep into the most rapacious wild beasts and other very wicked animals and impel them to do what they want”; demons have less power over “milder” animals than they do over ferocious beasts, which “have something about them resembling evil.” He proposed that “each species of demon would seem to possess a certain affinity with a

certain species of animal,” the variety in strength and capability among animals corresponding to a similar variety among the demons.²² Origen singled out Egyptians among those who attributed such supernatural abilities to animals, and certainly the worship of certain animals as gods in Egypt, famous among Christian authors and criticized by Antony in a speech later in the *Life*, is another element behind Athanasius’s demonic animals (VA 74.7).²³ Although the number of animals Egyptians worshiped in this way was small, a variety of animals could have lesser divine significance for Egyptians.²⁴ Wild and fantastic animals embodied for ancient Egyptians the danger, chaos, and even demonic power that seemed to lie in the inhospitable desert.²⁵ The association of animals with the pagan gods brings us back to the martyr’s arena, where the Christian resisted the gods by fighting with vicious animals. Ancient authors, both Christian or not, in turn used arena combat with animals as a metaphor for the quest for virtue, understood as fighting with the bestial passions, a trope given scriptural status by Paul’s reference to having “fought with the beasts at Ephesus” (1 Cor. 15:32).²⁶

The martyr’s ability to persevere even while suffering at the hands of such animals came from Christ, who likewise suffered and died. Having become like “a corpse” in a tomb and then emerging even stronger than before, Antony dramatizes the individual Christian’s death, burial, and resurrection made possible by Christ’s power, and he shows his courage in the face of death. In his other works, Athanasius placed fear of death at the center of humanity’s moral infirmity. Unnerved by the potential end of their bodies and thus of their bodily pleasures, human beings were subject to a moral paralysis that left them in the grip of the demonic. Christ’s own death and resurrection, Athanasius believed, enabled human beings to cast off their terror and face a world of corruption and contingency with fortitude.²⁷ The limit case of the martyrs demonstrated this point: “From the most enduring purpose and courage of the holy martyrs it is shown that divinity was not in terror [in the Garden of Gethsemane], but the Savior was taking away our terror”; Christ “made it so that people would no longer fear death.”²⁸ Antony’s quasi martyrdom in the tomb shows that he has successfully appropriated this benefit of the Word’s incarnation, to such an extent that he receives an extraordinary promise from God: “Antony, I was here, but waited to see your combat. Since you endured and were not defeated, I will be your helper always, and I will make you famous everywhere” (VA 10.3). An-

tony's victory earns him a unique role in God's work against the devil, that of father of monasticism worldwide. Even more enthusiastic than before, Antony resolves now to live in "the desert," a step that his mentor will not take with him (VA 11.1).

Antony still has two bouts with the demons ahead of him, but in these he hardly breaks a sweat. He has won the decisive victory; what remains is to claim the desert territory from the defeated enemy. Brushing aside the devil's attempts to use money to block his progress into the desert (VA 11–12), Antony stakes his claim to the desert by secluding himself in an "abandoned fortification"—perhaps a fortified well, since it has water, is filled with snakes, and is below ground level (VA 12.3–5). The demons understand this to be an invasion of "what is ours" and thus initiate their third attack on Antony. This assault, too, is one of noise and visions, meant to frighten, but in this case Antony does not suffer as he did before, physically or spiritually. His companions gathered outside are unnerved by "the clamoring mobs" they hear within the well; Antony, however, does not "pay attention" to the noisy demons; although their apparitions are "labors" for him, Antony nonetheless "suffered no injury from them nor did he get tired of struggling." Instead, he receives "visions in his intellect" (VA 13.2–6). This "struggle" goes on for nearly twenty years, but it is nothing like the violent martyrdom in the tombs.

Although he does not apply martyrological imagery to Antony in this scene, Athanasius still shapes the conflict between monk and demons in terms of conflict between the Christian and pagan gods. He twice compares Antony's subterranean enclosure to an *adutos*, a "sanctuary" or "shrine" that is literally "not to be entered" (VA 12.4, 14.2). It is this shrine that the gods cum demons claim as "ours" and that Antony nonetheless enters and claims for himself. Within the shrine Antony sings verses from the Psalms (Pss. 67:2–3, 117:10) that refer to the demons both as God's "enemies" and as "all the nations [*ethnē*]" (VA 13.7). Finally, Athanasius draws on Porphyry's *Life of Pythagoras* to depict Antony's emergence from the fortified well: "Antony came forth, as if from a shrine, initiated into the mysteries and filled with God." He is "wholly balanced, as if navigated by the Word and existing in his natural state" (VA 14.2–4).²⁹ Athanasius self-consciously appropriates the language of paganism for the depiction of the ideal Christian. Antony the martyr has not only defeated the pagan gods but also taken on the characteristics of their inspired sages. A new theme emerges here: the monk is both the

opponent of the pagan gods and an alternative source of the blessings bestowed by them. The effects of Antony's condition are astonishing. He heals people; he exorcises demons; he resolves conflicts; and finally he persuades many to take up the monastic life—and thus “the desert was made a city by monks” (VA 14.5–7).

Only one fight with the demons remains for Antony: they attack him when he moves to the inner mountain, even deeper into the desert (VA 51–53). Athanasius closely ties Antony's occupation of the fortified well to his conflict with the devil—it follows immediately his quasi martyrdom in the tomb—but the monk's retreat to the inner mountain stems from his need for quiet from the many demands that other people make on him, demands that he sees as a potential occasion for pride (VA 49.1–6). Only after Antony has created his little garden retreat in the far desert and settled into his ascetic routine do the demons attack. This combat has three stages. First, the demons renew their visual and aural assaults, designed to frighten, and once again Antony does not fear but “keeps his intellect unshaken and unmoved, so that instead the demons fled and the wild beasts, as it is written, made peace with him” (VA 51.5). This last detail, sometimes interpreted as a reference to a return to an Eden-like peace between humanity and animals, in fact once again alludes to the story of Job (Job 5:23). Next the devil sends a pack of hyenas, which flee when Antony announces, “I am a slave of Christ” (VA 52.2–3). The final phase of this bout is one of the stranger scenes in the *Life*:

Then after a few days, while he was working (for he was concerned to engage in labor as well), someone stood at the door and pulled the cord that extended from his work, for he would weave baskets and give them to the people who came to him in exchange for the things they brought him. And he got up and saw a beast that resembled a human being as far as its thigh, but had legs and feet like those of an ass. And Antony merely signed himself and said, “I am Christ's slave. If you have been sent out against me, look, here I am.” But the beast with his demons fled so quickly that it fell and died. The death of the beast was the fall of the demons, for they were eager to do everything to drive him out of the desert and were unable to do so. (VA 53.1–3)

This beast's strange satyr-like appearance, its prankish rather than violent approach to Antony, and its location in the far eastern desert to which Antony has just moved suggest that Athanasius intended to de-

pict the Egyptian god Min, whom Egyptians identified with Pan and considered “the lord of the eastern desert.”³⁰ Antony’s defeat of Min secures even this remote area of the desert for Christ. This is the only demonic appearance in the *Life* that directly draws on the iconography and characteristics of a specific pagan god; significantly, this beast actually dies (and does not rise again), and its death Athanasius calls “the fall of the demons.” This is Antony’s final victory over the gods/demons: as Christ’s slave, he has cleared the desert of its lord and his troops for the Christian monks, who can practice their discipline secure in the knowledge that the devil and his demons are powerless to thwart them.

The remaining chapters of the *Life* include no combats between Antony and the demons; rather, they make clear some of the consequences of Antony’s victory over the gods/demons and his clearing of the desert. For one thing, Antony performs exorcisms. To be sure, before the fall of the demons at the inner mountain, Antony is said to have “cleansed” persons of demons, and after the daughter of a military officer is relieved of her demonic possession simply by coming near Antony’s cell at the outer mountain (Antony refuses even to open his door), “sufferers” begin to sit “outside his monastic retreat” (VA 14.5; 48) in a manner that resembles the ancient practice of incubation for healing in pagan shrines and temples. But only after the death of Pan/Min does Athanasius narrate dramatic personal encounters between Antony and demonically possessed persons, scenes that, like the healing stories in this section of the *Life*, conform Antony to Christ in similar situations in the Gospels (VA 63–64, 71).³¹ This series culminates in his performance of exorcisms before a group of pagan philosophers as his crowning argument in defense of Christianity against paganism (VA 80.2–5).

Antony’s meetings with pagan philosophers and spirited defense of Christian faith also follow from and build upon his defeat of the desert gods/demons (VA 72–80). Here the apologetic dimension of Athanasius’s narrative of Antony’s combats with the demons, implicit in its conforming of Antony to the martyr, becomes explicit. The first brief visit of two pagan philosophers sets the tone: Antony’s terse echo of the martyrs—“For I am a Christian”—causes the pagans to withdraw in amazement at the fear the demons have of Antony (VA 72). Antony’s longest apologetic speech contrasts Christianity with traditional religion precisely in the terms of his earlier bouts with the demons. On the one hand, the pagan gods, actually demons, exhibit “passions of licentiousness”—“acts of

adultery and corruption of children” (recall the appearances of the woman and the boy in VA 5–6)—and appear in animal forms (VA 74.3–5); pagans “fear the demons as gods” and have never been tested by persecutions (VA 78.4, 79.3). On the other hand, the cross of Christ provides “a proof of courage and token of contempt for death” (VA 74.3); Christians have the “power of Christ’s cross” and “drive away” the demons; their courage is exemplified by the ascetics and martyrs: “For when has the knowledge of God shone so brilliantly? Or when has the temperance and excellence of virginity been so clear? Or when has death been so despised if not when the cross of Christ came? This no one doubts, seeing the martyrs despising death because of Christ, seeing the Church’s virgins keeping their bodies pure and undefiled because of Christ.”³² Antony himself demonstrates this proof: turning to a group of persons possessed by demons, “he called upon Christ and sealed the sufferers with the sign of the cross a second and third time, and immediately the people stood, completely sound, finally coming to their senses and giving thanks to the Lord” (VA 80.4). In this way Athanasius sums up Antony’s earlier combats with the demons as the triumph of Christianity itself over traditional religions.

The concluding portion of the *Life* draws out the implications of Antony’s victory for the ascetic lives of others, particularly monks.³³ Athanasius has Antony address this topic primarily in his earlier ascetic discourse, to which I turn next. But in the chapters following “the fall of the demons,” Athanasius presents his portrait of Antony as “a physician given to Egypt by God” (VA 87.3), a role that includes the exorcisms and antipagan activity that we have seen, as well as healings, adjudications of disputes, condemnations of heresies, and the like—the entire panoply of activities that would come to characterize the late ancient holy man.³⁴ The particularly monastic dimension of Antony’s ministry is his “gift of discerning spirits” (1 Cor. 12:10). He can recognize the demons’ movements and individual characteristics and offer guidance to others: “Not only was he not mocked by them [the demons], but he also taught those who were troubled by them in their thoughts how they could overturn their plots, explaining the tricks and weaknesses of those that are active. Therefore, each, as if anointed by him, came down [from the mountain], emboldened against the representations of the devil and his demons” (VA 88.1–2). Antony’s visions of the devil and the demons have a similarly pastoral purpose (VA 65–66). They depict the evil forces as still ac-

tive in the air—the space between the desert, which Antony has cleared for monastic asceticism, and heaven, which is the goal of that asceticism. In this gap, which is as much spiritual as spatial, “the enemy” still has some “authority. He can try “by fighting and testing to hinder those passing through” (VA 65.7). The monk can pass through, however, by resisting the demons through his ascetic discipline, as Antony demonstrates, by “striving more each day to advance to ‘what lies ahead’ [Phil. 3:13]” (VA 66.6).

Courage and Preservation of the Self

Although the brutality of Antony’s combat with the demons is exceptional, Athanasius applies its overall theme—the courage and steadfastness of the Christian “martyr” in conflict with the pagan gods—to the ordinary monk’s ascetic development and struggle with demons. Just as Antony practiced asceticism and achieved a high level of virtue before any encounter with the devil, the monk does not form his self essentially through conflict with demons. Rather, the monk’s basic ascetic task is to preserve his “natural” self from the corruption of the passions. Then, when he is attacked by the demons, the monk must not lose heart or become careless; he must maintain his zeal and virtue in the face of the demons’ efforts to unnerve him. Athanasius emphasizes that the monk’s ability to maintain his integrity comes from Christ’s triumph over the gods/demons, which has rendered them weak, despite evidence that may indicate that they are strong, such as their frightening visual appearances and their accurate prophecies and oracles. The demons’ chief weapons against the monk are these enticing and unnerving manifestations of traditional religious life that surround him.

Antony provides the ultimate model of ascetic self-preservation, but his enduring integrity is rooted in the divine integrity of Christ. Although Athanasius several times speaks of Antony’s zeal “to advance,” in fact Antony does not change much, if at all, over the course of the narrative. The purpose of his asceticism is, as Samuel Rubenson has put it, “not growth and development but protection of stability.”³⁵ Already as a child Antony is an ascetic who eschews diverse foods and rejects the corrupting effects of human education and socialization: he remains “unshaped” (*aplastos*) in his house (VA 1.3). Throughout his ascetic labors and his combats with the demons, Antony’s goal is to maintain

his integrity and disposition. Antony's body "remained completely unharmed" even as he approached death—graphic evidence of his success at preserving himself (VA 93.1–2). Antony's stability stems from that of Christ, whose unchangeable nature stands in contrast to the changeableness of the pagan gods (VA 74.6–10).

Athanasius applies these ideas to the discipline of the monk primarily in Antony's lengthy ascetic discourse (VA 16–43). This sermon divides into three parts: an initial exhortation to ascetic endurance (VA 16–20) is followed, after a brief transition (VA 21), by two separable discussions of demons (VA 22–27, 28–43).³⁶ The break between the two demonological discussions appears in a statement that commentators have long recognized as a characteristic Athanasian rhetorical device: "Thus far I have spoken about this [the weakness of the demons] in passing, but now one must not hesitate to speak about these things more extensively, for the reminder will be protective for you" (VA 28.1).³⁷ The two sections on demons exhibit subtle differences, which may give us insight into how Athanasius adapted teachings about demons from a monastic, perhaps even Antonian, milieu to his own point of view. But the resulting discourse presents a unified teaching on demons and the ascetic life with a strong emphasis on not succumbing to fear, losing heart, or becoming careless.

Just as the first chapters of the *Life* present Antony's discipline without any reference to the devil or his demons, the opening section of the discourse (VA 16–20) encourages monks to persevere in ascetic labor apart from struggle with the demonic. Antony repeatedly exhorts the monks not "to lose heart," not "to become negligent" or "careless," not "to turn back."³⁸ The temptations to do so arise as the monk thinks about the length of a human life span, the wealth that he has abandoned, how much he has already done, the pleasures of sexuality, and the like. The ascetic task is to preserve the self—the soul and its intellectual component—as God created it: "For virtue consists in the soul keeping its intellectual faculty according to nature [*kata phusin*]"—that is, "as it was created." Vice, then, is a "turning away" or "distortion," which happens when the monk "thinks about petty things" or succumbs to "filthy thoughts." The monk needs nothing "from outside" to avoid such thoughts; he can preserve his natural state, for the task lies "within us." His "struggle" is that "anger not rule us or desire dominate us" (VA 20.5–21.1).

This “strikingly monistic account of the intellectual soul as moral agent” draws on Stoicism, which taught that virtue is primarily a rational process in which the intellect possesses the inner freedom to assent to or to reject thoughts that are presented to it.³⁹ It is the “natural” state not to be dominated by the passions, chief of which are anger and desire. These passions do not originate in irrational (irascible and desiring) sectors of the soul, as they might in a more Platonizing account (despite the highlighting here of anger and desire). Rather, they come from outside the soul. Demons can easily serve as their source, but they need not do so: although this is not mentioned here, the body normally functions as the source of the passions, in Athanasius’s view. According to Athanasius, the original human beings fell when they allowed their souls to be destabilized by the impulses of the body, including fear, and Christ enabled subsequent human beings to resist the passions when he extinguished them in the flesh that he assumed.⁴⁰ Likewise, Antony says that “the soul’s intellect is strong whenever the body’s pleasures are weak” (VA 7.9). Demons, then, are not essential to this understanding of the achievement of virtue and the avoidance of vice, as the structures of both Antony’s career and the ascetic discourse indicate: the body and one’s own social environment can provide the thoughts that the intellect must renounce.

This Stoic approach to virtue nonetheless provides a ready paradigm by which to understand the monk’s conflict with demons. As Michel Barnes has put it, because “all moral conflict originates from outside,” it can be seen as initiated by “moral agents every bit as wholly simple as the *noēton* [intellect]: namely the demons.”⁴¹ Athanasius’s frequent use of the term *phantasia* for the appearance of a demon or demons suggests that he indeed is thinking in such terms.⁴² The Stoic teacher Epictetus, for example, emphasized the correct use of “impressions” in moral progress; for him “the term impression (*phantasia*) covers anything at all that ‘appears’ to us—any thought or object of awareness, ranging from the simplest perceptions such as ‘here is a dog’ to such complex thoughts as ‘money is highly desirable’ or ‘death is not an evil.’” Such impressions usually have a “propositional structure, which is to say that they are either true or false.”⁴³ Epictetus urged his students “not to accept an unexamined *phantasia* but to say, ‘Wait, let me see who you are and where you come from.’” The Stoic must not be “carried away” by an impression’s “vividness,” but subject it to examination; if it is not good, he

should “set in opposition another beautiful and noble *phantasia* and throw out the filthy one.” Epictetus exhorted, “The one who exercises himself against such *phantasiai* is the true *askētēs*: endure, wretched one, and do not get carried away!”⁴⁴ The Stoic must remain calm in the face of the impressions that assault him, interrogate them and only accept those that are true, and make use of good propositions in rejecting bad ones.

The *Life of Antony* shares the basic tenor of standing fast and not being shaken by vivid *phantasiai*, and we have seen Antony set pious thoughts over against the filthy ones of the demons. Antony sounds very much like Epictetus when he exhorts his followers, “Whenever some *phantasia* comes, do not fall into terror, but first bravely ask what sort it may be: ‘Who are you and where are you from?’” (VA 43.1) But Athanasius’s *phantasiai* are not the potentially true or false propositions of Epictetus, but the uniformly deceptive illusions of demons. There are no beautiful and noble *phantasiai* to set against false ones, for an illusion is precisely not something “actual” (*alēthinos*) (VA 12.1). Antony’s question “Who are you and where are you from?” may seek to discover whether an appearance is that of a demon or of an angel, but in fact angels do not use *phantasiai* because they are not impotent like the demons which have no other means of attack at their disposal (VA 28.10). Only in a few places do *phantasiai* resemble potentially unproblematic propositions, thoughts, or suggestions: *phantasiai* of bread and gold come tantalizing close to representing the (not inherently bad) ideas of eating or having money, but even here the illusory visual dimension remains (VA 40.3–4). Unlike the Stoic *askētēs*, Athanasius’s monk does not find himself in a morally ambiguous environment, pressed to make correct judgments in the face of impressions that he must evaluate; he fights a starkly oppositional battle against determined foes of true religion, the impressions of which he must resist.

Clement of Alexandria anticipated this demonizing of Stoic *phantasiai* and may have served as a source for Athanasius on this point. Clement takes issue both with certain strains of philosophy that to his mind underestimate the power of the passions and with certain varieties of Christianity (Basilides, Valentinus) that he believes exaggerate the power of evil spirits over the soul by seeing them as dwelling within the soul. In contrast, Clement argues that the passions originate outside the soul, in the demons, but can impress and alter the soul that succumbs to

them. "The plain account of our philosophy," he writes, "says that all the passions are imprints made in the soul that is soft and willing, something like stamps of 'the spiritual powers' against which is 'our struggle' [Eph. 6:12]." It is "the task of the wicked powers" to fight against those who have renounced them: while some people succumb, others "pursue the fight more athletically," and against these the demons fight "by every means, even to the point of the crown," until, "in much gore," they give up the fight and "admire the victors."⁴⁵ Martyrdom is the ultimate victory in the Christian's resistance to the demons and the passions by which they seek to alter the soul by impressing it. This image of the demons impressing a soul that is pliable like wax will prove central to Evagrius's demonology, but the point here is that the demons make war by means of *phantasiai*:

The rational faculty, which is peculiar to the human soul, should not be impelled in a way similar to that of irrational animals; rather, it should discern the impressions [*phantasiai*] and not get carried away by them. The powers of which we have spoken [the demons] extend to the pliable soul impressions [*phantasiai*] of beauty, praise, adultery, pleasure, and other such things, just as those who drive cattle hold out branches to them. Then, when they have outwitted those who are incapable of discriminating the true pleasure from the false and the perishable and contemptible beauty from the holy, they lead them away in slavery. Each deceit, through continuous pressing on the soul, imprints the impression on the soul, and the soul unwittingly carries around the image of the passion, the origin of which comes from the bait [of the *phantasia*] and our assent to it.⁴⁶

Clement is closer to Epictetus in seeing the soul's task as sorting out true and false *phantasiai*, but he bequeathed to subsequent Alexandrians, including Athanasius, the idea that bad *phantasiai* come from the demons, who hold out impressions of pleasures (often in visual form, in the *Life*), and that the soul's assent to these disfigures its more original state. Although he fights through the discernment of *phantasiai*, the ascetic's true foes are the demons.

Antony's discussion of those foes divides into two parts. The first (VA 22–27) starts with the demons' origin as beings created good that fell into evil, and it then turns to describing their treacheries against monks; the second (VA 28–43) starts with the incarnate Christ's triumph over

the devil and the demons, and it then explains how they are really weak and ineffective despite evidence to the contrary. Because the first section starts with the fall from an original unity and then focuses intently on the demons' methods of opposing the monastic life, it is more reminiscent of Antony's own teaching as it appears in the *Letters*. Nearly quoting Origen's *Against Celsus*, the *Life's* Antony explains that the demons were created good but "fell away from the heavenly wisdom, and henceforth wandering around the earth, deceived the Greeks with their appearances." As in the *Letters*, Antony explains that envy of humanity motivates the demons and that the diversity of their natures and of their methods of attack require that the monk seek "the gift of discernment of spirits" (VA 22.2–3).⁴⁷ The Antony of the *Letters* defined "a spirit of discernment" as the ability "to see all the secret evils" of the demons, which he then listed in detail.⁴⁸ Here too the gift is the ability "to recognize their characteristics: which are less wicked than others, which are more wicked, what kind of plot each one takes an interest in, and how each of them is overturned and expelled" (VA 22.3), and then a progressive scheme of forms of attacks follows. But while the *Letters* maintained that the demons are not visible but become so in the bodies of monks as they sin, here deceptive appearances form a major part of the demonic arsenal. The progression of attacks that Antony sketches begins with "evil thoughts," but then moves to pleasure, frightening specters, and false prophecies, and culminates in the appearance of the devil himself, looking and boasting as he does in Job 41 (VA 23–24). Likewise, as in Antony's *Letters*, the monastic community itself is the site of demonic activity, but rather than sowing division among real monks, here the demons "shape themselves into the forms of monks" and use false exhortations to ascetic behaviors such as prayer and fasting to beguile the monk and lead him into despair over the difficulties of the monastic life (VA 25.1–4). Running through all of this is the Athanasian theme of the weakness of the demons and the monk's need to neither fear nor trust them. The Origenist flavor, echoes of Antony's *Letters* (especially their teaching on discernment), and emphasis on false asceticism suggest that this passage may stem from teaching Athanasius has received from monks in Antony's circle.⁴⁹ Even if so, he has fully adapted it to his own emphasis on the visibility of the gods/demons and their weakness in the wake of Christ's triumph.

The renewed discussion of demons that begins in chapter 28 empha-

sizes that weakness, and so starts not with the demons' primordial fall but with Christ's triumph over them: "Because the Lord resided [among us], the enemy has fallen, and his powers have become weak" (VA 28.1). Here follows a series of arguments in support of this point (VA 28–29): the demons have been unable to prevent the monks from practicing their discipline and from gathering to hear Antony; they need to create bizarre illusions because they cannot actually do anything effective; the example of Job shows that they must be given permission by God to attack human beings; in fact, they must ask even to take possession of swine (see Mark 5:12). The monk, therefore, must fear God and not the demons, and his primary weapon against them is his ascetic discipline: fasting, vigils, prayer, poverty, almsgiving, and the like. He can do this because Christ has given "grace to the faithful": "See, I have given you authority to tread on snakes and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy" (VA 20.3; Luke 10:19).

But Athanasius's monk lived in a world in which these supposedly weak demons still maintained their identities as gods, and thus Athanasius had to confront the most compelling evidence for their continued power—prophecies and oracles (VA 31–34). Providing insight into the future or other miraculous information had been for centuries one of the most important benefits the Egyptian gods bestowed on their followers. Some temple-based oracles continued to function in Athanasius's time, but new forms, such as divination spells and divinely inspired seers, made oracular services available to a wide range of people.⁵⁰ Christian monks also received the gift of prophecy: John of Lycopolis was so famous for his prophetic abilities that Evagrius called him "the seer of Thebes."⁵¹ The extended criticism of pagan oracles that Athanasius has Antony deliver "demonstrates considerable familiarity with the popular function of oracles in the life of Egyptians: the Nile surge, concerns around traveling, and even their medical and meteorological scopes."⁵² Athanasius admits that these oracles are sometimes accurate, and this accuracy deceives people into thinking that the demons are gods and might persuade the monk that the demons still have power (VA 33.1). Athanasius offers rational arguments for the demons' success at seeming to predict the future: their subtle bodies enable them to travel from place to place more quickly than news can travel by human means, and, as with skilled physicians or sailors, their years of observing human and natural affairs enable them to make highly educated guesses. Monks,

then, must reject any demonic offer of supernatural knowledge, but they can gain access to such knowledge. “We should not pray to know things in advance or to receive this as a reward for discipline, but to have the Lord as our co-worker for the victory against the devil. If we are concerned about being able to know in advance, let us be pure in our thinking. For I believe that when a soul is pure in every way and in its natural condition, it is able, having become clear-sighted, to see more and farther than the demons since it has the Lord revealing things to it. Such was Elisha’s soul when it saw the things concerning Gehazi and the powers standing near it [2 Kings 5:26, 6:17]” (VA 34.2–3). In several works Athanasius claims that purity of the soul, achieved through ascetic discipline, could result in special revelations from God.⁵³

Here is another place where the *Life’s* apologetic and monastic agendas coincide in its demonology. On the one hand, Athanasius assures both monks and lay readers that pagan oracles are not evidence of the continued legitimacy of the pagan gods, and he promotes the Christian monk as the only reliable provider of genuinely divine information. On the other hand, he urges monks to view their ascetic life as a victory over the demonic and to resist any temptation to trust the demons’ appearances and predictions and thus to blur the line between the false demons and true religion. These visionary gifts are only one mark of the monk, who now in Athanasius’s presentation has become not merely an opponent of the pagan gods but an alternative to them. For those who need such help, the monk can provide supernatural information, distinguish between the appearances of demons and angels, and exorcise demons. This status presents to the monk a new temptation, to boast and become proud as if these gifts belonged to him; he must instead understand that they belong to Christ and are only bestowed on him (VA 38). We shall return to this theme in Chapter 9 as we consider the monk in comparison to other religious virtuosi in his environment, such as “magicians.”

The ascetic discourse concludes with the point of all this for the practicing monk: he must cultivate an inner disposition of courage and joy in the Lord and avoid despair and fear, for the demons’ effectiveness depends upon the condition in which they find the monk. “When they come, whatever condition they find us in, so they become toward us, and whatever conceptions they find in us, they shape their appearances according to them” (VA 42.5). The monk must therefore work on the quality of his “thoughts” (*logismoi*) by “rejoicing in the Lord, thinking

about the good things that are to come [see Heb. 10:1], reflecting upon things having to do with the Lord [see 1 Cor. 7:32], and considering that everything is in the Lord's hand [see Deut. 33:3; Ps. 94:4] and that a demon has no strength against a Christian" (VA 42.7). The biblical allusions here and other references in the *Life* suggest that meditation on the Scriptures is a central practice in fostering such thoughts. Job serves as an example of a person who was protected against the devil by good thoughts; Judas, a person who was not (VA 42.8).⁵⁴ Athanasius also distinguishes between appearances of demons and of angels based on whether the appearing spirit takes away the initial fear that the appearance of a supernatural being of any kind elicits. An angel restores the soul's tranquility, confidence, and joy, whereas a demon seeks to magnify the initial fear and can do so if the soul has not cultivated an underlying disposition of confidence (VA 35–37). Unlike "appearances" (*phantasiai*), "thoughts" (*logisomoi*) play a double role: they can be weapons of the demons, suggestions that they make in order to deter the monk from his ascetic life (VA 5.3, 23.1); but they can also be shields against the demons, concepts on which the monk concentrates in order to cultivate a disposition resistant to demonic attack.

Job is the biblical figure who serves as the touchstone for Athanasius's monk.⁵⁵ The story of Job tells how the devil attacked an already righteous figure. From that story Athanasius concluded that Satan has no power to test the righteous man without God's permission, which in Job's case he had to ask for twice, and that his attacks begin indirectly with one's family and possessions and then move directly to one's own body. Because Job maintained the proper inner disposition of joy and confidence in God, the devil proved powerless against him, no matter how much physical pain he suffered; even Satan's most frightening appearance and terrifying boasts came to nothing. Job exemplified the stability of the man of God in the face of demonic attack and thus provided the model for Athanasius's depiction of Antony. Job did not figure in Antony's *Letters*, which instead alluded to Jacob, whose wrestling with the angel and subsequently being renamed Israel ("a mind who sees God") provided a paradigm for the monk's advance toward simplicity and knowledge of self and God.⁵⁶ Antony's disciple Ammonas turned to Jacob repeatedly: Jacob's obedience to his parents resulted in his vision of the ladder (Gen. 28); he not only retained God's blessing despite testing

by Esau but even “augmented it day by day”; he did not flee when tested, but once again obeyed his parents.⁵⁷ Jacob, not always the most upright character, provided a model of advance in virtue through struggle with the demons and obedience to a teacher, followed by reward. One of the few times Athanasius invokes Jacob as a model for Antony, he cites the young Jacob, “an unformed [*aplastos*] person, living at home” (VA 1.3; Gen. 25:27). As models for the monastic life, both Job and Jacob exemplified struggle with supernatural forces, but while Antony and Ammonas invoked the dynamism and progress of Jacob, Athanasius appealed to the stability and preservation of Job. The Athanasian monk must not “become negligent” or “lose his nerve” (*oligōrein*); instead, he should cultivate the unwavering disposition of daily martyrdom, summed up in Paul’s phrase “I die daily” (1 Cor. 15:31).⁵⁸

Job entered Egyptian monastic discourse as a primary model for the monk in conflict with Satan, although it was probably not the *Life of Antony* alone that accounted for the popularity of the image. Not long after Athanasius wrote the *Life*, Didymus the Blind, a Christian scholar in Alexandria, developed a full portrait of Job as an ascetic hero in his *Commentary on Job*.⁵⁹ While Athanasius applied to Antony motifs and virtues from the Job story as they suited his purposes, Didymus, writing a commentary on the entire biblical book, sought to interpret Job himself fully in ascetic and contemplative terms and thus faced the greater challenge of accounting for Job’s actions and speeches that do not show him being as patient as he proverbially has been said to be (for example, “Let the day perish in which I was born,” Job 3:3). Still, Didymus portrayed Job as exemplifying courage and unwavering commitment to contemplation of God in the face of Satan’s testing of him. Didymus’s Job avoids precisely the “negligence” or “failure of nerve” (*oligōria*) against which Athanasius’s Antony warns—and thus he brings the devil to “shame,” just as Antony shames the demons that attack him.⁶⁰ It seems likely that Didymus had read the *Life of Antony*, but his courageous Job is not so much a martyr like Athanasius’s Antony as much as a contemplative teacher of knowledge of God (*gnōsis*) like the Antony of the *Letters*. The Job paradigm, we shall see, will return in the works of Shenoute and in the *Life of St. Syncretica*, both of which will emphasize endurance of demonically imposed suffering, especially illness.

Athanasius’s Job-like Antony was the avatar of Christ’s victory over the devil and opponent of the gods of paganism. The monk’s successful

resistance of the demonic became an argument for the superiority of Christianity in its conflict with paganism, and he succeeded the martyr as the Christian on the front line of that conflict. Athanasius's martyr monk is primarily a figure who endures the attacks of the demons, and as a holy man he moves into the position that the lower gods filled in Egypt's religious environment, serving as a conduit for the benefits of the incarnate Christ. Shenoute, as we shall see in Chapter 5, opposed the gods much more aggressively, drawing on the *Life of Antony* to depict the monk as not merely enduring demonic attacks but assisting in the destruction of the devil and his demons. Such a picture of the monk proved very attractive to later bishops, who sometimes recruited monks to their antipagan endeavors, and to hagiographers, who found in the triumphant story of the gods' defeat a stirring way to glorify their monastic heroes. But this was a role that later monks did not fully embrace. Some became active, even violent, opponents of pagan religion, but most did not, for such activity in "the world" seemed to compromise their identities as monks, persons who had withdrawn from normal human affairs. Not blessed with the serene stability of Athanasius's Antony, such monks found the more important battle to be the one in their own hearts.

The Gnostic

Evagrius Ponticus

This is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God.

—John 17:3

In 383, Evagrius of Pontus, an exceptionally learned but emotionally exhausted man nearing his fortieth birthday, arrived in the monastic settlements of Nitria in northern Egypt. In the roughly twenty-five years since its publication, Athanasius's *Life of Antony* had proved to be a literary sensation: copies of the Greek original and its Latin translation circulated throughout the Mediterranean world. Its portrait of Antony as a rural Egyptian who was able to defeat terrifying demons and reach the pinnacle of virtue and wisdom, without the benefit of a traditional education, may have been an inaccurate picture of Antony in particular or of Egyptian monasticism in general, but it struck a chord with elite readers in search of clear models in a time of religious change. Just about when Evagrius was settling among his new monastic colleagues in Egypt, the young Augustine in Milan heard the story of Antony and cried: "What is wrong with us? Uneducated people are rising up and capturing heaven [Matt. 11:12], and we with our high culture without any heart—see where we roll in the mud of flesh and blood!"¹ Augustine, it seems, never considered moving to the Egyptian desert in imitation of Antony, but other Christians engaged in the quest for virtue did. Evagrius was one of these, and in the sixteen years between his arrival in Egypt and his death there in 399, he became the most accomplished theorist of the monastic life, articulating an ascetic psychology and demonology that would dominate later forms of monasticism even after Evagrius himself was condemned as an Origenist heretic in the sixth century.²

Evagrius brought to his work on the problem of demons both an outstanding education in Christian theology in the tradition of Origen and recent personal experience of excruciating temptation and paralyzing self-doubt. Born around 345 to a country bishop in the village of Ibora in Pontus in Asia Minor, Evagrius showed religious and intellectual promise even as a teenager and was ordained a reader by no less than the renowned Bishop Basil of Caesarea. He later became the protégé of Gregory of Nazianzus, serving as Gregory's archdeacon when he became bishop of Constantinople in the late 370s and assisting him in his efforts in behalf of Nicene theology. Evagrius later referred to Gregory fondly as "our wise teacher" and "the one who planted me."³ Both Basil and Gregory were pioneers in adapting the traditional *paideia* (education or culture) of the elite Greek man to the monastic and episcopal vocations of the new elite Christian man.⁴ Origen's learned, ascetic, and dynamic theology proved useful to their project. At times Evagrius could be precise about what he brought from his Cappadocian teachers to his monastic theology—for example, the understanding of the human soul as having three parts.⁵ He gained from them also an adherence to Nicene Trinitarianism, a willingness to borrow insights and concepts from a wide range of philosophical sources (Aristotle, the Stoics, Platonists), and a commitment to Origen's narrative of rational creatures falling away from, and eventually returning to, an original unity with God. Whether Evagrius's equally significant indebtedness to Clement of Alexandria stems from this period of his life as well, or from reading after he arrived in Egypt, is not clear.

In any event, Evagrius's discipleship under Gregory and his stay in Constantinople came to an end in a crisis that sent him in search of radical therapy for the tempted self. Not long after Gregory had to resign as bishop of Constantinople, Evagrius fell in love with the wife of a high imperial official, and she with him. In the volatile world of Christian Constantinople, torn by conflict between the supporters and the opponents of Nicene theology, such an affair would have been a major scandal. Evagrius tried to put an end to the relationship, but he was, we are told, "caught in the bonds of desire." After a sobering dream, Evagrius fled to Jerusalem and the monastic community led by Melania the Elder and Rufinus, prominent ascetic Christians indebted to Origen's theology. Evagrius suffered an emotional and physical breakdown, which im-

proved only when he confessed the love affair to Melania. Melania advised him to take up the monastic life and sent him to Nitria in Egypt, which she herself had visited.⁶

Evagrius arrived in Egypt, then, with recent firsthand experience of the power of erotic temptation and the depths of depression to which the Christian who resisted such temptation could sink. In Nitria and then in Kellia, where he moved two years later, he found a new set of teachers, some also educated in higher Christian theology and familiar with philosophical discussions of the passions, but all experienced in the terrors and temptations that could beset the devoted ascetic. If Gregory was the one who planted him, these advanced monks, Evagrius said, were “the holy fathers who now water me.”⁷ Mentored by such monks as Ammonius and the two Macarii—Macarius the Great (also known as Macarius the Egyptian) and Macarius the Alexandrian—Evagrius began a new phase of education, now in the wisdom of the monastic life. It appears that it was Macarius the Alexandrian in particular who introduced him to the tactics of the desert’s demons and how the monk could oppose them.⁸ We should not imagine, however, that Evagrius brought with him from Cappadocia an Origenist philosophy of which monks like the Macarii had hitherto been ignorant or that Evagrius would have seen his monastic training as fundamentally different from his earlier studies. Rather, Antony’s *Letters* and other sources, including the likely sole surviving letter of Macarius the Great, show that a monastic Origenism existed in the desert before Evagrius arrived, and thus Evagrius saw his education in the Christian life as continuous: he was “planted” in Cappadocia and “watered” in Egypt.⁹

None of this diminishes the originality and creative brilliance of Evagrius’s teachings on the monastic life; it merely indicates their roots in monastic traditions. According to Palladius, Evagrius’s biographer and former disciple, Evagrius soon emerged as an authoritative teacher in his own right, so that Palladius could speak of “the circle around Evagrius.” The monks at Kellia spent the week living in their own cells, following their own ascetic regimes, but they gathered on Saturdays and Sundays for common worship. According to the Coptic version of Palladius’s *Life of Evagrius*, Evagrius would lead all-night discussion groups on Saturday evening, in which monks would reveal their thoughts and share methods of coping with them. If a monk expressed trouble over a particularly severe or embarrassing thought, Evagrius would invite him

to stay for a private session after the others left. Meetings such as these, as well as numerous visits and informal consultations during the week, must have been a primary source for the data that went into Evagrius's demonology. In addition to his literary activities and spiritual counseling, Evagrius supported himself by working as a calligrapher.¹⁰

Some of the surviving anecdotes about Evagrius evoke the awkwardness of the urban intellectual finding his place among monks without formal education. In modern times this contrast has served both to marginalize Evagrius from "mainstream" monasticism and to fuel debates over whether one should interpret Evagrius primarily in philosophical terms, against the background of learned pagan and Christian literature, or in practical terms, making use only of the Bible and monastic tradition. In his works, Evagrius himself seems to carry this supposed tension lightly. For him the monastic life itself was a body of knowledge, consisting of what we would call both practical and theoretical knowledge, which had been handed down from such ancient figures as David, through the Bible and Christian teachers. The monk's life was an education in this knowledge, portions of which the advanced monk (whom Evagrius called the "knower" or "gnostic") measured out to him as he made progress.¹¹ The Evagrian monk would learn about the demons in stages: the beginner first needed to master the strategies that, say, the demon of gluttony employed; full information about the demons' origins and bodies was reserved for the advanced monk.

Christianity, Evagrius explained, is "the doctrine of our Savior Christ," consisting of three forms of knowledge: practical, natural, and theological. He divided the monk's career into two broad stages. As a *praktikos* or "ascetic practitioner," the monk gained practical knowledge of himself, the vices and virtues, and the demons' tactics, in order to reach a state of "freedom from the passions" (*apatheia*). For Evagrius, *apatheia* comprises not only the external self-control (*enkrateia*) that prevents one from committing sins actively, but also the interior serenity that prevents one from having "impassioned thoughts in one's thinking." As his *apatheia* blossomed into the other-directed love of *agapē*, the monk, now a *gnōstikos* (gnostic), contemplated the material world and rational beings so as to gain "true knowledge of things that exist"; he then used that knowledge to move toward theological knowledge, that of the Trinity itself.¹² In this way, the monk's journey was a return trip, because—like our fellow rational beings, the angels and the demons—

we human beings had originated as pure intellects in contemplation of God, from which we had fallen.

In this scheme, conflict with demons became primarily a matter of one's thoughts. The goal was to rid oneself of the evil thoughts that the demons introduced, to clear one's head, so to speak, or to clarify one's vision, so that one could know God once again in a manner beyond all thoughts. For the Evagrian monk, knowledge was power. By gaining increasingly precise knowledge of the demons—their identities, their characteristic strategies, their interrelationships, their origin and nature—the monk gained mastery over them and over his own responses to them. By creating early monasticism's most systematic exposition of this information, Evagrius gave order to the monk's chaotic experiences of temptation and anxiety and so provided him with a sense of certainty and control. Because Evagrius virtually identified the demons with such passions as sadness, anger, and pride, his science of the demons looks to us very much like a psychology in the modern sense—that is, a science of the inner self. But in fact, Evagrius's gnostic monk kept his gaze resolutely outward, focused on his unseen enemies, but even more on the Trinity, for knowledge of God was the very purpose of the human intellect, the center of the self.

The Ascetic Practitioner and the Eight Thoughts

In light of his personal history, it is no surprise that Evagrius made freedom from the passions (*apatheia*) the goal of the monk's first stage as an ascetic practitioner. Evagrius's adoption of *apatheia* marks him as indebted to the Stoics, for whom *apatheia* was the goal of the philosophical life. But like most early Christians, Evagrius was eclectic in his philosophical commitments, and he is not entirely Stoic even on this point. The Stoics believed that our essential self is simple and fully rational: the emotions that disturb us are foreign to us and result from bad judgments we make. They believed that it was at least theoretically possible to eradicate the passions or emotions completely and so to be in practice as rational as we are by nature—to live in accord with the rational plan that underlies the natural order. As we saw in Chapter 2, this view predominates in the *Life of Antony*, where it proves congenial to the notion of attaining virtue through conflict with external agents, the demons. Evagrius, however, joined the Platonists in believing that our soul is not

fully and simply rational, but has an irrational part or, in fact, two irrational parts—a concupiscible, or desiring, part, and an irascible, or aggressive, part. For the Platonists this meant that people will always have emotions such as desire and anger; the goal is not to eradicate them, but to moderate them: to have the right amount of anger for the right reasons, not to get rid of anger entirely.

Evagrius believed that some of the emotions, but not all, originate in the desiring and irascible parts of the soul. He was never completely precise on this point, but roughly speaking the desiring or concupiscible part produces energy of attraction, and so here originate such passions as lust, gluttony, and avarice; the irascible part, in contrast, consists of negative or repellent energy, leading to anger and resentment. Because his soul has these parts, the monk cannot eliminate the energies they produce; instead, he must redirect them “in accordance with nature.” For example, rather than desiring the bodies of other people, the monk should desire God and the virtues. Instead of acting aggressively toward his fellow human beings, he should direct his hostile energy toward the demons. The goal of practical knowledge is to heal these irrational parts of soul, so that they produce not the negative emotions but the positive virtues: from the desiring part, continence, charity, and temperance, and from the irascible part, courage and patience.¹³ And so from this perspective, Evagrius’s goal of *apatheia* meant freedom, not from all psychic energies, but only from the distorted ones that he and the ancients called the passions. Evagrius considered *apatheia* not simply the lack or absence of the passions, but even more the presence or fullness of the virtues.

Also like many Platonists, Evagrius did not identify our truest self with these energy-producing irrational parts of our soul. In fact, for Evagrius human beings once upon a time were not souls at all; rather, we were simply intellects, minds engaged in knowing God. It is only because we fell away from that knowledge at some primordial moment that our intellects became souls and God created bodies for us. The center of who we really are is not our irrational characteristics—indeed, we share them with the animals—but the intellect. The intellect, our rational part, has its own passions or negative emotions—vainglory and pride, vices that do not afflict the animals. Likewise, the intellect, once purified, produces its own virtues—prudence, understanding, and wisdom.¹⁴ The monk’s origin as an intellect contemplating God constitutes

also the ultimate goal of his ascetic journey here on earth and after his death. To purify the intellect so that it can return to its rightful condition of knowing God (the gnostic's task), the monk must first as an ascetic practitioner purify the irrational parts of the soul so as to both gain freedom from the passions and reach the pure, other-directed love (*agapē*) that it produces.

Evagrius described the monk who is striving for *apatheia* as making war—not so much with himself, as with demons. Demons, like human beings, had once been intellects contemplating God, and they too fell away from knowledge of God. Now they are rational creatures dominated by irascibility. Human beings, said the once love-struck Evagrius, are dominated by desire. But the demons' souls, if we can call them that, are veritable machines of irascible energy, producing a seemingly endless supply of malice aimed at the monk. As we shall see, demons can and do attack the monk visibly and physically, but mostly they attack him by means of thoughts—thoughts of gluttony, thoughts of pride, thoughts of avarice, and so on. Although Evagrius acknowledges that there are neutral and even good thoughts, for him the term *thought* (*logismos*) is almost always negative. The thoughts are synonymous with the demons and, at times, synonymous with the passions. And so Evagrius can speak of “the demon of vainglory,” “the thought of vainglory,” and simply “vainglory” interchangeably—they all refer to the same thing. This would not be familiar to Evagrius's Stoic and Platonist predecessors, a few of whom could speak of demons enticing human beings to perform the vices, but none of whom considered the demons to be the vices.¹⁵

Yet Evagrius did not completely identify the demons with thoughts and passions, for he taught that although the monk cannot control whether he is troubled by demonically inspired thoughts, he can control whether the thoughts persist and “set the passions in motion.”¹⁶ In this formulation, Evagrius's demonic thoughts sound a great deal like what the Stoics called “protopassions.”¹⁷ The Stoics considered the passions to be the results of judgments in which the person assents to an impulse beyond what is natural or reasonable. They distinguished between a full-blown passion, for which the rational person is responsible, and an involuntary preliminary motion (*propatheia*), which can lead to a passion if not checked. For example, I might suffer a visceral rush of anger when I see some injustice, but I do not experience true anger unless I assent to

that impulse and choose to pursue vengeance. Led by Origen, Christian writers picked up on this concept particularly as an exegetical tool. Biblical passages that appeared either to recommend passions (such as Psalm 4:5 LXX: "Get angry and do not sin") or to attribute passions to Christ (such as Matt. 26:37: Jesus "began to be grieved and distressed") could be explained as referring not to the passions themselves, but to the protopassions, which all human beings, including Jesus, experience and for which they are not culpable.¹⁸

Didymus the Blind, an ascetic scholar who was Evagrius's contemporary in Alexandria, went further and, using the example of Judas, identified a suggestion from Satan as a protopassion. Commenting on Ecclesiastes 10:4 ("If a spirit of authority should ascend against you, do not yield a place to it"), Didymus writes:

A first ascent [of the spirit of authority] occurs, which is called *propatheia*. Do not "give a place" to it, that it might persist and become a passion (*pathos*). But even should it become a passion, continue to resist it and do not give it a place, that it might become an unworthy disposition (*diathesis*), and, finally, do not permit the deed. This, therefore, is what Paul means when he cites a text from the Psalms, "Become angry and do not sin, / whatever you say in your hearts, / you will repent on your couches" (Ps. 4:5 LXX, cited by Eph. 4:26); and he says, "Let not the sun set upon your anger, do not give a place to the devil" (Eph. 4:26–27). Indeed, for example, such a thing is said concerning Judas. First, the devil cast it into his heart to betray the Lord, then, Scripture says, "After the morsel, Satan entered him" (John 13:27)—not that Satan entered first, but that he "cast into his heart" (John 13:2) [an initiation of the] *propatheia*. After he found that the *propatheia* persisted, so that it was no longer a *propatheia*, but rather the worst kind of disposition, he took a position, a place to enter him.¹⁹

Evagrius conceives of demonic thoughts in precisely the same way: Satan or a demon casts a thought into the monk, who may either resist it or permit it to persist and become a culpable passion. It is possible that Origen had already made the identification of protopassions with demonic thoughts when he said that the "thoughts that proceed from our heart" (Mark 7:21) come from ourselves, the demons, or God and the angels. Such thoughts provide us merely with "agitation and incitement, provoking us to either good or evil deeds," and we retain the power to resist or act upon them. For him, too, Satan's suggestion of betrayal to

Judas serves as an example.²⁰ But Origen appears to have reserved the technical term *propatheia* for an impulse that arises from our own embodied condition: for example, if a person fails to control the “first movements” (*primi motus*) toward sin that arise naturally within him (such as the urge to procreate), a demon exploits this failure and “incites and urges” him to greater sin.²¹ Whether Origen had set the precedent or not, Evagrius could have learned from Didymus that the demonic thoughts functioned like Stoic protopassions: they presented an incipient passion, which the monk could either reject or allow to persist and grow into a full-fledged passion.²²

Evagrius argued that, in order to resist such suggestions, the ascetic practitioner must learn how to identify the demons that make them: “One should understand the differences among the demons and take note of their circumstances.” The monk should pay attention to the object or picture that a thought creates in his mind: it is a clue as to which demon is approaching him. Simply naming the demon that is present can send it away and prevent one from falling into the passion that the demon seeks to arouse. This is the value of Evagrius’s famous classification of the demons into what he calls, using Stoic terminology, the eight “most generic thoughts, in which every thought is included”: gluttony, fornication, love of money, sadness, anger, listlessness, vainglory, and pride. Even the mundane thought that the monk should go into the village and visit the market must fall into one of these categories: perhaps gluttony hopes to get him to desire the food at the market, or maybe fornication wants him to see some women. Evagrius does mention other demons apart from his basic eight (most importantly, the demons of resentment and of blasphemy), but they turn out to be more virulent relatives of one of the eight. Among the basic eight demons, three stand on what Evagrius calls the “front line” of the demonic army—gluttony, love of money, and vainglory. The other five follow on or depend on the work of these three. For example, a person will not fall victim to fornication if he does not first succumb to gluttony, because it is gluttony that persuades him to abandon the discipline of fasting, sleep deprivation, and reduced water intake that protects against fornication. That these three demons are the leading ones Evagrius knows not only by experience and logic, but also from the Bible, because these were the three temptations that Satan offered to Jesus. When Jesus successfully resisted these demons, he did not even face the others.²³

Modern scholars have worked hard to discover some source for Evagrius's list of eight principal thoughts, but without success.²⁴ No one before Evagrius has a list of eight passions or demons, and no one gives us a list that has all of Evagrius's eight. The Stoics selected four passions as the "most generic" ones—sadness (or distress), pleasure, desire, and fear. Evagrius shares exactly with the Stoics only one of these, sadness (*lupē*), and has, of course, eight, not four. But one very influential version of the Gnostic myth took the four Stoic passions, called them "the four chief demons," and gave them esoteric names (desire, for example, was *Iōkō*). From these four demons, claimed the Gnostics, came the passions, including envy, anger, lust, and so on.²⁵ There is no evidence that Evagrius had read the Gnostic texts in which he could have found this theory—either *The Secret Book according to John* or *The Book of Zoroaster*—but there is no reason to discount such works as possible influences on his views.

More important, once again, is Origen, who anticipated Evagrius by sketching a hierarchy of demons and by giving lists of named demons. Origen based his speculations regarding the demonic realm's organization on such biblical books as Numbers and Joshua, for Origen saw in the Israelites' conflicts with various armies and kings allegorical representations of the Christian's combats with the demons and the passions. Origen explained that demons do indeed specialize: there is a demon of fornication, a spirit of wrath, another of pride, and so on. At several places Origen lists some of these; but none of these lists appears to be definitive, because their numbers and contents vary. One can find all of Evagrius's eight thoughts somewhere in Origen's works, but never all of them together, and Origen has no list of eight. Origen did not believe that there is a single demon of fornication that troubles everybody everywhere. Instead, for each vice there is a chief demon (*princeps*) that directs the spirits under his command. Satan, of course, is the general of this demonic army.²⁶ But even Origen got some of this from earlier literature, above all *The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*, in which Reuben lists two sets of seven spirits, those of deceit and those of error. Colluding with both sets is what Reuben calls an eighth spirit, that of sleep, with which, he says, "is created the ecstasy of nature and the image of death."²⁷

Evagrius, then, found several precedents for listing and organizing sets of demons, but the number eight and the thoughts that he listed

were Evagrius's own contribution. Certainly no one else had provided, as Evagrius did, a veritable ethnology of the demons, careful descriptions of their characteristics and strategies, along with the ways the monk could resist them. Evagrius recorded in a variety of works the information about the demons that the ascetic practitioner required, but four of these works are central. The *Praktikos* serves as an overview of ascetic practice; it is the first in a trilogy of works that includes the *Gnostikos* and the *Kephalaia Gnostica*, both of which are intended for the gnostic. *Eight Spirits of Wickedness* collects wisdom about the demons in sayings of various lengths, and *Talking Back* (*Antirrhetikos*) provides biblical verses with which the monk can respond to various demonic thoughts, address fellow monks in need of help, and petition God and the angels. *On Thoughts* gives more advanced information about the ways in which the demons, especially vainglory and pride, cooperate with one another and interfere with the monk's thinking and prayer. As a soldier gathers all the intelligence he can about the enemy, the ascetic practitioner uses this information to wage war against the eight demons that assault him.

More than the simple temptation to eat too much, gluttony, first of the eight, tries to persuade the monk to abandon his ascetic discipline as a whole, including his physical labor, vigils, and restricted diet. Over-eating, or eating one's fill, remains at the core of gluttony both because Evagrius sees it as emblematic of the lack of self-control and because he shares the ancient view that the well-fed body, as if it were a well-fueled engine, is more susceptible to other passions, especially sexual desire.²⁸ In contrast, "a needy body is a tame horse," disciplined by fasting and vigils and not "moved by an impassioned impulse." Gluttony is, then, the "leader" or "starting-point" (*archē*) of the passions. Gluttony's strategies range from reminding the monk of the feasts he used to enjoy in his former life, to recommending that he store more food for his own needs and (more insidiously) for the needs of poor people or guests, to suggesting that the monk will fall ill or even die from his ascetic discipline. Christian feast days like Easter provide particular opportunities for this demon: surely the monk can allow himself an indulgence on such a rare and special occasion. Because its goal is to get the monk to give up his asceticism, gluttony may tempt the monk to bind himself to a particular regime with an oath, a practice that Evagrius calls "foreign to the monastic way of life," which requires flexibility in one's rule. Alternatively, it

can suggest a discipline that is “immoderate,” so that the monk, unable to live up to an unrealistic rule, will abandon monasticism altogether. Evagrius advises the monk to follow a simple diet of bread, oil, and water, eaten once a day and not until one is full. In general, gluttony creates in the monk anxiety about his body, health, and even clothing, and stifles his willingness to share food with others.²⁹

Fornication, as one would expect, is a much more focused demon: Evagrius defines it as that which “compels one to desire a variety of bodies,” but the only bodies that appear in his works are those of women. Married women and prostitutes, young women and women in search of spiritual guidance, beautiful women, naked women, and women who are beautiful *and* naked—these are the images with which fornication floods the intellect, sometimes at such a great speed that the intellect can barely keep pace. When men (including other monks) appear, they are having sex with women. Fornication is, Evagrius says, the most highly visual of the demons: it not only shows the monk images of women, whether in illusions or in dreams, but it urges him to go to markets or events with crowds—once again religious festivals are a danger—so that he can see actual women. In his effort to dissuade the monk from any interaction with women, Evagrius argues that women at first converse with a monk demurely but eventually “flutter their eyelids, bare the neck, and sashay with the entire body,” all of which are “hooks that entice you to death and intricate nets that drag you to destruction.” To be sure, fornication appears at times as the warm temptation to return to the world and enjoy the comforts of marriage and family, but Evagrius’s fornication is seldom so tame: “I have seen the demons perform many unspeakable acts,” he admits, “things that perhaps it is not lawful to say to most people”; he certainly believes such things should not be said to potential monks, whom he fears he might scare away from the monastic life.³⁰

Or not scare away. Evagrius is candid about the monk’s desire to linger over the mental pornography that fornication shows him, mistakenly thinking that such is not really a sin: the monk may not want “to escape from unclean desire.” Modern readers may be tempted to think that for most ancient monks fornication was not necessarily a lasting problem, but that would be to succumb to yet another dangerous thought offered by this tenacious demon. Although Athanasius’s Antony moves past fornication rather quickly (albeit with struggle), Evagrius appears to think

that even advanced monks have difficulty doing so: he offers numerous biblical passages to help monks who are in danger of losing hope that they will ever get past this demon. Indeed, the monk in combat with fornication must endure not only a bombardment of images, but also stimulation of his “members,” a “fire between the thighs.” The monk’s experience of fornication—its reminders of his sexual past, its shockingly obscene images, its excruciating physical touch, and its drive to engage the monk in problematic relationships—is so humiliating that it can rescue the monk from vainglory.³¹

In addition to his arsenal of biblical responses, Evagrius offers the monks a range of countermeasures for their struggle with fornication. The entire ascetic regime of fasting, prayer, and keeping vigil should be helpful, but reducing one’s intake of water and food is particularly effective. The monk should avoid the crowds at public gatherings, including religious festivals, where he is likely to see women. Even if the mental picture or thought of a woman does not immediately provoke passion, the monk should not linger over the image or thought. At moments of severe attack, especially those involving physical stimulation, Evagrius urges, the monk should get up and walk briskly around his cell while praying and even wearing sackcloth. Because fornication is an overheating of the soul’s desiring part, some turning up of its irascible part—that is, a little anger—will aid in driving away that to which one is attracted. Although Evagrius is confident that fornication can be defeated and thus need not be a serious impediment to the monk’s knowledge of God, the measures he recommends and the experiences he recounts indicate that the monk’s battle with fornication is difficult and prolonged.³²

Love of money may not be as fierce a demon as fornication, but its tricks are subtler, and if successful it opens the door to other vices, justifying its biblical reputation as “the root of all evils” (1 Tim. 6:10).³³ Literary, documentary, and archaeological sources indicate that few, if any, monks of Lower Egypt lived in absolute poverty: monks maintained active economic ties to the world around them, and their cells could eventually become quite elaborate.³⁴ The ascetic life did not eliminate the monk’s relationship with money; rather, it created a new, more complicated relationship, shaped by monastic values of simplicity and hospitality as well by the monk’s need to support himself, and providing plenty of opportunities for a crafty demon. To the monk, love of money offers the anxiety that he will not have enough, perhaps not now, but at some

future time of famine, illness, old age, or obligation to guests; thus, the monk feels a need to accumulate money, food, and other provisions. This demon preys on the insecurity and contingency of temporal existence by tempting the monk to seek support from the family and property that belong to his past, to doubt the value of the invisible and eternal goods for which he strives in the present, and to look to material means rather than God's providential care for his security in the future. The monk who succumbs to avarice becomes closed in on himself, loses openness to others, and so does not give to monks and other persons in need or, if he does, regrets the loss of what he has given. He loses his openness to God as well, devoting himself more to the manual labor by which he supports himself than to the prayer for which he ostensibly lives. He oppresses others with his manic activity, forcing his disciple to perform manual labor beyond his ability or in a way that prevents him from reading the Scriptures or learning from advanced monks. Possessions weigh the monk down, tying him to the material world, the body, and their cares and preventing him from ascending to heavenly realities and from greeting death with cheerful serenity. The antidote, of course, is to let go—to give up the lawsuits by which one seeks to retain even unjustly taken property, to stop comparing one's life of poverty to the comfort and esteem enjoyed by one's parents and wealthy siblings, to give to the poor and needy.³⁵

Ingeniously, however, love of money exploits this last antidote: the act of charity carries within it the seductive pleasures of acquisitive activity and esteem from self and others. Charity and support for fellow ascetics can serve as the pretexts for acquiring and storing possessions and for maintaining ties to family property. Performing necessary administrative affairs for the monastic community can become an end in itself, producing anxiety about the amount of money in play rather than a focus on the monastic life that such duties are meant to facilitate.³⁶ The monk who chooses an austere lifestyle does not escape this demon, but only forces it to act more creatively:

The demon of love of money appears to me to be very complex and inventive in its deceit. Often, hemmed in by extreme renunciation, it pretends to be a steward and a lover of the poor; it prepares generous hospitality for strangers who have not arrived and sends provisions to others who are absent; it visits the prisons of the city and ransoms

those sold into slavery; it attaches itself to rich women and points out those persons who ought to be treated well, as it admonishes others who have a full purse to renounce. And after it has little by little deceived the soul in this way, it surrounds the soul with the thoughts of love of money and hands it over to the demon of vainglory. That demon introduces a crowd of persons who glorify the Lord for these acts of stewardship and people who eventually talk to one another about the priesthood; then it predicts the death of the present priest and adds that someone who has accomplished so many things should not flee [from the possibility of ordination]. . . . Finally, while these thoughts are circling around within [the intellect], the demon of pride suddenly appears, forming continuous flashes of lightning in the air of the cell, letting loose winged dragons, and producing the uttermost loss of one's wits.³⁷

The familiarity of this scenario can seduce the modern reader: Evagrius, it seems, has identified the mixed motives and pleasure in virtue that run through the ego.³⁸ Evagrius certainly does recognize that the pleasure of acquiring and administering wealth, even for charitable purposes, carries within it the seeds of even more destructive vices. But he interprets this experience not in terms of mixed motives and a divided self, but in terms of successive demons that cooperate in a multistage attack.

In most of Evagrius's lists, sadness comes in the fourth position, following love of money and preceding anger, but in *Eight Spirits of Wickedness*, anger comes before sadness, which takes fifth place. Both sadness and anger are pivotal in Evagrius's scheme: among the demons that prey on the irrational aspects of the human being, anger appears to be the one that persists and most troubles the monk approaching freedom from the passions, while sadness, at least in one way that Evagrius understands it, results from the passions of desire and anger. Evagrius defines anger as a "boiling" of the soul's irascible part directed at a person who has done one wrong or appears to have done so. Because irascibility is an essential component of the human being, the problems with anger are its magnitude (too much irascibility) and its direction (aimed at fellow human beings, rather than at the demons, its proper targets). In both ways the angry person resembles the demons, in whom irascibility predominates, and thus his soul can be called "savage" or "wild." The angry person slips away from the rationality of the intellect into bestial irrationality,

and thus prayer, the proper function of the intellect, becomes impossible. In support of this fact Evagrius adduces “the mystical and ancient custom” of “chasing the dogs from houses at the time of prayer.” Imitating fornication, the demon of anger uses images—for example, the face of someone who has caused one grief or a scenario in which one’s family or friends are abused.³⁹

Evagrius devotes a substantial section in the *Praktikos* (chaps. 20–26) to anger and refers to it several times in *On Thoughts*, an indication of the special difficulty that anger poses for monks, especially those who are moving beyond the level of ascetic practice. Most of the chapters on anger in *Talking Back* refer in only a general way to tensions and quarrels with fellow monks, but a few describe specific and sometimes surprising situations—for example, one monk taunting another over his status as a slave, another monk failing to repay a loan from a brother. Other provocations to anger include persecution from one’s family “because of the Lord’s name” and cattle that will not walk straight in their path. Evagrius advises the monk tempted by anger to turn his irascibility toward the demons and away from human beings, and he urges gift giving as a way of preventing or ending resentment, anger’s more virulent kin. Resentment, the holding of a long-standing grudge, results from persistent anger and can cause particularly frightening visions at night. Such nightmares can “terrify the soul and thus make the intellect more cowardly for the fight on the next day”; here is one of the links between anger and sadness, at least sadness in one of its Evagrian forms.⁴⁰

Evagrius’s descriptions of sadness are not entirely consistent, for sadness has a different character in *Talking Back* than in the other demonological works. In the *Praktikos*, *On Thoughts*, and the *Eight Spirits of Wickedness*, sadness results from the frustration of a desire or from anger. That is, the person who suffers from gluttony, fornication, or love of money desires some object and becomes sad when he fails to obtain it, while the angry person desires revenge and likewise becomes sad when he does not get it. Sadness, then, is dependent on the presence of the other passions and presents itself as the direct opposite of *apatheia*, freedom from the passions. Sadness is absent in a “pure heart.” Yet just as anger is a perversion of a capacity that can have a good purpose, the desire on which sadness depends can also be rightly directed. So although sadness that originates in the frustration of the desire for a corruptible pleasure is worthy of censure, that which follows from the frustration of

one's desire for the virtues and knowledge of God is to be praised. Even the lower form of sadness has its advantage: a moderate amount of sadness over frustrated corruptible desires can help the monk lose his attachment to the passions and worldly goods. Still, a prolonged or deep attack of this sadness can persuade the monk to return to the world, where he might obtain the objects he desires, and it can rob him of the good pleasure in or desire for virtues and knowledge. At such a point sadness takes on the character of discouragement, such as the sadness that attacks the monk who relapses into sin after having achieved a level of purity.⁴¹

Discouragement, in the form of "trepidation and fear" in the face of the struggle with demons, is the basic character of sadness as it appears in *Talking Back*. Although there are a few passages that suggest the connection with frustrated desire that predominates in other works, the sadness of *Talking Back* is a state of fear or lack of confidence in confronting the demons. This discouragement can take several forms. The monk may doubt that God hears or sees his struggle or gives him help during it. Likewise, he may question the reality of angelic assistance, because the angels are invisible. The monk may be reminded of his former sins, or he may not realize that temptations become more frequent and acute as he makes progress. Forgetting that the demons attack human beings only with God's permission, the monk may believe that the entire contest with the demons is useless or without meaning. The demon of sadness instills fear in the monk by threatening him with mental illness, public shame or ridicule, and even death. Evagrius likely speaks from personal experience of "the demon that threatens me with curses and says, 'I will make you an object of laughter and reproach among all the monks because you have investigated and made known all kinds of unclean thoughts.'" At least as significant in inducing sadness is the terror caused by the demons' brutal attacks—visual, aural, physical—on the monk's body. The fourth book of *Talking Back* is filled with demons that hiss, carry swords, have flashing eyes, look like snakes, fly through the air, burn the monk's skin, and punch him in the nose. As for "the demons that fall upon the skin of the body, put branding marks in it as if made by fire, and make visible marks in it as if made by a cupping-glass," Evagrius testifies that "I have seen such things many times with my own eyes and have marveled." Here are violent, punishing demons that rival any found in the *Life of Antony*.⁴²

In fact, it is probable that Athanasius's work was the immediate inspiration for the unique character of sadness in *Talking Back*. Evagrius reveals that he has read the *Life* when he suggests that the monk who faces "the demons that gradually begin to imitate obscene images and to appear out of the air" should "answer with a phrase, as the righteous blessed Antony answered"; the phrase is Psalm 117:7, precisely the passage that Antony uses in the *Life* to respond to the demon of fornication's appearance as a black boy.⁴³ Eight more scriptural passages in book 4 of *Talking Back* appear also in the *Life* as citations or allusions, all drawn from one portion of the *Life*, Antony's ascetic discourse on demons, and three from one chapter of that discourse.⁴⁴ As he used it to understand the discouragement monks faced, Evagrius read the *Life* selectively, focusing particularly on its picture of the monk as Job, patiently enduring even the most ruthless attacks on his body and maintaining his trust in God. Other features common to the demonologies of Evagrius and Athanasius—the sequence of thoughts followed by attacks, the listing of vices—may be attributed to wider monastic tradition rather than direct influence, but here the *Life of Antony* has had a specific and substantive impact on Evagrius. The Athanasian theme of losing heart in the face of demonic attacks differs from Evagrius's basic concept of sadness as the frustration of desires; sadness's varying positions in Evagrius's lists of demons is a symptom of this inconsistency. On the other hand, Evagrius's view that virulent anger brings on terrifying visions of the night may suggest a way for the Athanasian sadness to follow from a preceding, unsatisfied passion.

More distinctively Evagrian is the demon of listlessness or *akēdia*, for which Evagrius is justly celebrated. Evagrius defines it as "an unnatural slackness of the soul"; it manifests itself as a form of intense boredom, verging on depression, which prevents the monk from carrying out his activities of labor, study, and prayer and entices him to abandon the monastic life altogether. Calling it "the noonday demon" (after Ps. 90:6), Evagrius says that listlessness strikes the monk particularly between 10:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m., when the sun is high in the sky and the day seems endless. The monk waits desperately for something to interrupt what he experiences as monotony—perhaps the time to eat (3:00 p.m.) or the arrival of a visitor. One catches a glimpse of Evagrius the scholar and calligrapher in this description of an attack of listlessness: while reading, the listless monk "rubs his eyes and stretches his hands, and he

takes his eyes off his book and stares at the wall. Then he returns to the book and reads a little. As he unfolds it, he becomes preoccupied with the condition of the texts: he counts the number of folios and calculates the quartiles; he criticizes the orthography and the decoration. Finally, he folds the book up and places it under his head, and he falls into a light sleep.” In its effort to get the monk to give up monasticism, listlessness produces in the monk dissatisfaction with his cell and his fellow monks. The monk thinks that he can find better work elsewhere, that he should visit the sick or his family, or that his cell is unsuitable; he finds his brothers and leaders unresponsive to his feelings and concludes that his ascetic efforts would be more successful in another community. Listlessness can produce sloth (which would later replace listlessness among the “deadly sins”), but its ultimate result is deep sadness and resentment toward God.⁴⁵ Evagrius *akēdia* stigmatized as demonic the desire to leave one’s cell and to wander, and thus it contributed to a wider tendency in late fourth-century monasticism to promote communal stability and to discourage an earlier practice of intentional homelessness as a form of voluntary alienation (*xeniteia*) in imitation of Christ and the apostles.⁴⁶

As the sixth demon, listlessness stands in a position that we might imagine as a hinge or keystone, for it sums up the previous five demons and looks toward the final two.⁴⁷ The first six thoughts all attack the passionate parts of the soul, but while the first five each set in motion either the desiring or the irascible part, listlessness alone afflicts both parts, producing “a complex thought.” Although the other demons “arrive in intervals, following one another,” no other thought follows listlessness because it persists and “contains almost all the other thoughts in itself.”⁴⁸ Listlessness tempts the monk to give up the fight against the demons, and thus the primary way to resist it is to remain in one’s cell and hold one’s ground. The monk must counter the “unnatural slackness” that listless produces by invigorating or tensing his soul. He can do that by living as if he were going to die that day (1 Cor. 15:31), the great theme of the *Life of Antony*, but Evagrius appears to have learned this principle from Macarius the Egyptian. Contemplation of one’s death and the prospect that death will bring either hellish torment or heavenly reward will produce in the monk tears of repentance, which drive away listlessness. The monk doing combat with listlessness, persevering alone in his cell, can become his own spiritual guide: “We should, with tears,

divide our soul in two parts and make one the consoler and the other the object of consolation, sowing good hopes in ourselves and soothing ourselves with David's charm: 'Why are you are sad, my soul, and why do you trouble me? Hope in God, for I will praise him, the salvation of my face and my God' [Ps. 41:6]." Because the fight with listlessness sums up the monk's battle with the six demons that attack the passionate part of the soul, success in this combat produces a condition that anticipates freedom from the passions, described by Evagrius as a glowing heart or indescribable joy.⁴⁹

Evagrius's final two demons, vainglory and pride, afflict the monk's rational part and attack him particularly as the other passions recede and as he approaches *apatheia* and the more advanced stages of natural contemplation and knowledge of God (although the withdrawal of the other demons can be deceptive and temporary).⁵⁰ Both demons exploit a lack of humility, but whereas vainglory holds out the admiration that the accomplished monk gains from other people, pride draws on the monk's own self-esteem to distort his relationships with God, angels, and demons. Vainglory tempts the monk to perform his ascetic labors "in order to provide a spectacle to people" and to gain their approval and esteem. This potential audience can be either laypeople (persons still in "the world") or other monks. In the case of laypeople, vainglory holds out the fame that comes with the abilities to heal diseases or to cast out demons, "holy gifts" that the monk may be tempted even to request. Or vainglory suggests that the monk should return to the world and make known his ascetic success in an effort to persuade others to embrace monasticism. One symptom of vainglory's presence is the urge "to talk a lot about superfluous things," a problem especially for "monks who live in seclusion but who, due to vainglory, throw themselves into the affairs of the world and gladly welcome people who come to them to settle disputes they have with one another." Ordination to the priesthood provides the quintessential opportunity for vainglory: it appears repeatedly as a problem for the vainglorious monk, often accompanied by scenarios in which admiring laypeople force the "reluctant" monk to accept clerical leadership. Evagrius does not say that the monk ought never accept ordination, but should he be offered the bishop's chair in a nearby city and consider it in a disinterested way, then he may be approaching the frontier of freedom from the passions.⁵¹

Although it helps to remove the monk from the dangerously admiring

gaze of laypeople, withdrawal into life among other monks does not guarantee protection from vainglory, but provides new opportunities for it. Vainglory tempts the young monk to choose the fully anchoritic life prematurely or any monk to seek a more cloistered life as a means of avoiding the presumed bad influence of other monastics. The monk may consider himself beyond the regular reading of the Scriptures and so give that up, or he may study secular philosophy for the wrong reasons. The vainglorious monk envies brothers who have attained “knowledge” (*gnōsis*), desires that prominent people see him as a gnostic, and wants to teach other monks before he has reached the required ascetic proficiency and spiritual insight. At the zenith of this attack, vainglory toys with the monk’s aspirations for pure prayer and knowledge of God, promising, “Look, soon you will be caught up to heaven” as Paul was (see 2 Cor. 12:2) or, when one has achieved pure prayer, showing the intellect “the form that it wants,” that is, “praying to the divine” (“Let the one who can understand, understand,” Evagrius writes). Here the monk can be led straight into pride and insanity.⁵²

The monk’s battle against vainglory is particularly difficult, for whatever measure the monk uses against it, if successful, can become an occasion for renewed vainglory. Perversely, vainglory can have a therapeutic effect on the listless monk by reinvigorating his ascetic efforts, although the resulting asceticism is “in vain” because it was performed out of vainglory. Evagrius advises, “Intense prayer drives away this demon, as well as not willingly saying or doing anything that contributes to accursed glory.” Because the demons of vainglory and fornication are opposed to one another, the monk who is approached by vainglory can “drive out a nail with a nail” by forming a thought of fornication; a monk who is able to do this is “near the frontiers of freedom from the passions” because his intellect is “strong enough to obliterate demonic thoughts with human thoughts.” It would be far better, however, “to expel the thought of vainglory by means of humility.” Persistence in the monk’s quest for knowledge of God will ultimately pay off in the monk’s battle with vainglory because the problem is essentially one of motivation: “The one who has attained knowledge and the pleasure that it produces as its fruit will not be persuaded by the demon of vainglory when it presents to him all the pleasures of the world. What could it promise that would be better than spiritual contemplation? But to the extent that we have not tasted knowledge, we should ardently toil in ascetic practice, showing to God our goal—that we do everything for the sake of

knowledge of him.” Here again the monk should not really eliminate the desire to make progress that vainglory exploits, but redirect it away from the admiration of other people to the attainment of knowledge of God.⁵³

If vainglory tempts the monk to perform his ascetic labors to win the admiration of others, pride gets the monk to believe his admirers: that he, the monk, really has achieved a great deal. The monk afflicted by pride attributes whatever success he enjoys to himself rather than to the help of God or the angels. Pride fundamentally distorts the monk’s relationship with God by preventing the creature from acknowledging his total dependence on the Creator and his grace. The result is a loss of the creature’s place in the hierarchy of rational beings: pride caused Satan to fall, and it can send the monk into mad irrationality. Thus, one of the symptoms of pride is a breakdown in the monk’s relationships with his peers: he despises other people, especially his brothers, as being beneath his level of virtue and knowledge, or he overestimates his importance to other monks, claiming, “I am a progenitor of sages.” In turn, the monk loses his sense of place, so to speak, among the other rational beings—angels and demons—mistaking their identities and misjudging their significance, and he can fall victim to “the demon that snatches the intellect into blasphemy against God and into forbidden fantasies.” One of the few direct countermeasures to this demon that Evagrius mentions is poverty, which promotes humility in the monk.⁵⁴

The ascetic practitioner who faces primarily the dangers of vainglory and pride has likely reached the frontier of becoming a gnostic—that is, freedom from the passions. Such a monk may notice that he drives away certain impure thoughts quickly, but he must beware that this phenomenon could be due to the inaccessibility of the desired object: even a new monk is unlikely to be tempted by the remote possibility of becoming bishop of Constantinople. A more reliable indication is the monk’s ability to remain calm when he sees or remembers desirable objects that he could actually get. When the nearly passion-free monk dreams, he will be neither frightened of terrors nor excited by sexually enticing images. He begins to pray in an undistracted manner, without thinking of worldly things. At this point, Evagrius says, the monk’s battle has less to do with the desiring part of his soul and its demons (gluttony, fornication, and such) and more to do with the irascible part and its demon, anger. As the monk becomes a gnostic, his warfare with the demons does not end; rather, it enters a new and subtler phase.⁵⁵

For Evagrius the devil really is in the details. His descriptions of the

eight thoughts, no doubt drawn from countless instances of listening to the experiences of his fellow monks and advising them, cover so many circumstances, temptations, and worries that no rapid survey can do justice to the complexity and ingenuity of any single demon in the Evagrian scheme. The thick circumstantiality of Evagrius's demonology rightly impresses, but we should not lose sight of the simple power of the list itself. As David Frankfurter argues, the essence of demonology is the list, which abstracts from the multiple and anarchic experiences of evil and creates something that can be grasped—that is, known and thereby controlled. In response to an “unsystematic spectrum of dangers,” lists contribute “the pretense of certainty, control, and ritual tradition.”⁵⁶ Evagrius's ascetic practitioner, armed with one of Evagrius's lists and its attendant circumstances and responses, could name what confronted him, drawing on the traditional ability to repel demons by naming them and gaining rational control over his own untidy experiences. The monk who was plagued by the thought, “So-and-so, one of our brothers or relatives, has attained and joined a rank of honor and authority,” could find it listed in *Talking Back* and so learn that he was not alone in having such a thought, that the thought came from the demon of listlessness, and that it could be opposed by saying Psalm 72:3: “It is good for me to cleave to God, to place my hope in the Lord.”⁵⁷ Knowledge was this monk's power as he advanced toward his goal of becoming a gnostic.

The Gnostic, Pure Prayer, and the Knowledge of Demons

The gnostic monk continued to face many of the challenges that the demons presented to the ascetic practitioner, but their warfare now focused intensely on the monk's quest for pure prayer and knowledge of God—the purification of the intellect. On the one hand, the demons continued to assault the monk with evil thoughts and illusions, albeit now with more devious strategies aimed at the monk's irascible part and his mental processes. On the other hand, the nature of demons, including their origins, bodies, and other characteristics, belonged to the knowledge of rational beings, which formed the basis for the monk's advance toward knowledge of God.

Because the gnostic normally enjoys freedom from the passions that trouble his desiring part, the demons give most of their attention to his irascible part, hoping to stir up the anger that prevents prayer, and to his

intellect, hoping to engender vainglory and pride. Just as Jesus taught that one must reconcile with one's brother before approaching the altar (Matt. 5:23–24), Evagrius insists that anger, especially in the form of resentment, "darkens the ruling faculty of the one who prays and leaves his prayers in obscurity." The monk who has gained some control over his bodily desires and prays rightly becomes more acutely aware of the injustice that surrounds him, and thus opportunities for the demons to provoke seemingly "just anger" increase. Likewise, vainglory exploits even a little freedom from self-oriented desires in the monk, filling the monk's intellect with many "words and objects," thereby "spoiling his prayers" and paving the way for pride.⁵⁸

Pride can afflict the advanced monk in the form of "the demon that snatches the intellect into blasphemy against God and into forbidden fantasies." Like the demon of fornication, this demon is very fast, "almost outrunning the movement of our intellect," but unlike fornication, it is "short-lived." It "compels the intellect to commit impiety in heaven." Evagrius refers several times in *Talking Back* to the "blasphemous thoughts" or "unspeakable blasphemies against the Lord" that this demon utters or tempts the intellect to think. Evagrius never says precisely what they are, "lest I shake heaven and earth," but he remarks, "Those who have been tempted by it understand what I am saying." The biblical passages that Evagrius offers in response to this demon mostly rebuke those who "curse" God or speak against him, but one refers to the Lord rebuking the devil (Zech. 3:3) and another refers to the Lord being "the only God" (2 Kings 19:15–16). Because pride caused the fall of the devil, and Evagrius also attributes to the proud monk a propensity to make the demons gods, this blasphemy may be the monk imagining himself as divine or fantasizing about having godlike powers.⁵⁹ This monk blasphemously blurs the differences between himself as a human being, the angels and demons as fellow but distinct rational beings, and God as the creator of them all. The advanced knowledge about the rational beings and their natures that the gnostic contemplates may itself be a form of therapy for this affliction.

Just as the gnostic faces more severe demonic attacks than the ascetic practitioner, he can also attempt riskier strategies to combat them. For example, for the monk who suffers from the "vagabond" demon that leads him around to make numerous visits and engage in idle conversations, Evagrius suggests that he not immediately expose the demon and

send it away, but instead “permit it to spin out its drama for a day or two.” Later the monk should sit down, reflect on where the demon led him and what feelings he had in what sequence, and commit it all to memory. Then when the demon returns, the monk can “drive it crazy” by exposing it and reciting precisely what it did to him the last time. Or if the monk is presented with an evil thought, he should break it down and analyze it: “What is it? Of what objects is it composed? Which of these things especially afflicts the intellect?” Such a rigorous analysis will destroy the thought and cause the demon to flee.⁶⁰ Unlike the ascetic practitioner, who, engaged in purifying the lower parts of his soul, should send thoughts away immediately with opposing biblical verses, the gnostic, engaged in purifying his intellect and facing cannier demons, can allow the thoughts to linger and undertake these more dangerous countermeasures.

According to Evagrius, the fallen intellect works with two kinds of materials—thoughts and representations.⁶¹ Thoughts have some (usually propositional) content (such as “I should store up more bread”) and can come from angels (good), demons (bad), or the monk himself (good, bad, or neutral). But thoughts make use of the more basic intellectual currency of representations (*noēmata*), which are concepts that Evagrius understands in a primarily visual sense (for instance, the image of bread). Representations come to us through the body’s senses, but they can be stored in memory and thus evoked by the intellect or the demons even while the monk is asleep and his body inactive. The mind cannot think without representations: even considering an act of theft requires the representation of one’s hand reaching for the desired object. Representations are basically neither good nor bad—they are like sheep, given to the intellect to shepherd responsibly—but they serve as the basis for thoughts that can be good, bad, or neutral. For example, the representation of gold has no moral significance, but thoughts about gold do. The angelic thought that leads the monk to consider why gold was created and what it symbolizes in the Bible is good, whereas the demonic thought that suggests acquiring gold is bad. The intellect can entertain only one representation at a time, but representations often move through the intellect at a rapid pace, giving the illusion of simultaneity. A representation can persist in the intellect if some passion attaches to it (an “impassioned” representation); the representation of bread, for instance, persists in the intellect of a hungry person. A persistent represen-

tation of a corporeal object can “imprint” the intellect, distorting the intellect in a way that prevents the clarity of vision required for knowledge of God.⁶² We have seen that Clement of Alexandria used this language of imprinting to describe the distorting effects of demonically inspired passions on the soul. For Clement and Evagrius, the intellect or soul is like a wax tablet, and incoming impressions can alter its shape.

The gnostic seeks a state of pure prayer in which his mental tablet, so to speak, is clear and unimprinted, without any thoughts or representations, while the demons, naturally, attempt to thwart this effort. The monk’s ultimate goal is what Evagrius calls, drawing on Exodus 24:9–11, “the place of God,” in which the intellect “sees its condition at the time of prayer to be like sapphire or the color of the sky.” To reach this condition of unvarying luminosity the monk must “transcend all the mental representations associated with objects” by eliminating the passions that cause those representations to persist. Demons can hinder the monk by confusing and troubling him with frightening visual images, especially of threatening animals, and with disturbing sounds. Evagrius reports that demons tossed one intensely praying monk in the air like a ball for two weeks; amazingly, the monk did not stop praying. More insidiously the demons produce a form in the intellect that the monk may mistake for that of God: vainglory may produce such a glorious form, or another demon may manipulate the brain’s physiology to produce a light that falsely resembles the sapphire luminosity that floods the pure intellect. A seeming corporeal representation of God found in Scripture, such as the Lord sitting on a raised and exalted throne (Isa. 6:1), does indeed imprint the intellect; but it represents God only through what it signifies (in this case, the knowledge of God in a pure intellect). Here the allegorical meaning of the text is a special form of representation, one that is not of a corporeal being, but of God, and therefore one that does not imprint the intellect.⁶³ Faced with these demonic challenges, the monk can employ short intense prayers, but above all must persist in keeping his intellect free of any representations of material objects.⁶⁴

Inextricably bound up with the monk’s quest for pure prayer is his advance toward knowledge of the Trinity, and here, while the demons continue to oppose the monk through thoughts, they also play a significantly less oppositional role. In his major treatise for the gnostic, the *Kephalaia Gnostica*, Evagrius explains that the monk must undergo four transformations. The first is the transition from evil to virtue, which

forms the stage of ascetic practice. The remaining three transitions all take place in the life of the gnostic. The second transition takes the monk from freedom from the passions (*apatheia*) to “second natural contemplation,” which is study of the material creation and the “principles” (*logoi*) that underlie it. Third, the monk reaches “first natural contemplation,” which comprises “the knowledge that concerns rational beings,” and from here the monk, fourth and finally, attains “the knowledge of the holy Trinity.” Because the demons are rational beings, information about them—including their origin, bodies, and relationships with angels and human beings—belongs to first natural contemplation, the penultimate stage on the monk’s journey to knowledge of God. “This world,” the object of the gnostic’s study, “is the natural system that includes the varied and diverse bodies of the rational beings, for the sake of the knowledge of God.”⁶⁵ At this point the monk studies the demons, not as a soldier observing the tactics of his enemies, but as a philosopher scrutinizing the nature of the rational world.

Evagrius defines a demon as “a rational nature that, due to an excess of irascibility, has fallen from the service of God.” Demons once did not exist as demons, but belonged with us to the unity of pure intellects that contemplated God. In the “first movement,” the intellects (with the exception of the one that became Christ) separated from that unity and now exist in the three classes of angels, human beings, and demons. Demons, we have seen, can be divided into eight broad categories, but they can be sorted in other ways as well, including more and less vicious. The bodies of demons have color and form, but they grow neither larger nor smaller; because demonic bodies have a different composition from that of human bodies, our senses usually cannot perceive them. They do, however, give off a stench, the means by which they set the passions in human beings in motion; God gives some people the ability to perceive this stench. Demonic bodies are as cold as ice, and sometimes the demons afflict this cold on people by drawing heat out of them and sending them into a perverse sleep. When demons appear to people, they do so not in their own bodies, but in ones that imitate the colors, forms, and sizes of the bodies of the beings whose appearance they assume. Angels, in contrast, are able to transform the nature of their own bodies as their activities require.⁶⁶

Although demons are rational beings and have developed clever strategies in their warfare against human beings, they are not perceptive or

truly intelligent. After all, evil correlates with ignorance in Evagrius's worldview. The demons are instead keen observers and imitators, like the smartest of animals. The demons have no language of their own, for example, and so they must study human languages in order to speak to people; in fact, demons appear to specialize in certain languages, so that different demons oppose people who speak different languages. It is true that the demons seem to know a monk's weaknesses and to adapt their attacks to them, but this does not mean the demons know the monk's heart—only God is “a knower of hearts” (see Acts 1:24, 15:8). Rather, the demons observe how the monk moves his body and listen to what he says, and from these clues they deduce “the things that are hidden in the heart.” Evagrius has more that he could say on this point, but his teacher Macarius the Alexandrian advised him not to reveal it to “the profane.”⁶⁷

Evagrius describes the similarities and differences among the rational beings—angels, demons, and human beings—in a variety of ways. For example, using the three parts of the soul and the basic material elements, he explains that a predominance of intellect and fire characterizes angels; of desire and earth, human beings; and of irascibility and air, demons. This is why demons approach people through the nostrils (with their stench); angels, through the mouth. Considering the faculty of sight, Evagrius claims that angels can see human beings and demons; demons can see only human beings; and human beings cannot see either angels or demons. The rational beings divide also on the basis of their contemplative activities: while angels “feed upon the contemplation of beings” (first natural contemplation) all the time, human beings do so only some of the time, and demons never do so.⁶⁸

The three classes of rational beings, however, do not sort out completely, but overlap and interact with one another in significant ways. Consider “the contemplation of this world,” which Evagrius explains has two forms: one that is “perceptible and material,” another that is “intelligible and spiritual.” Demons and impious people approach the former contemplation, and angels and righteous people the latter. Just as the angels have greater knowledge of the spiritual contemplation than do righteous people, so too the demons know more about the material contemplation than do impious people. Yet the demons grant their greater knowledge of the lower contemplation to “people among those whom they consider to belong to them,” and, Evagrius says, “for our part, we learn from the divine book that the angels do this as well”—that

is, they grant spiritual contemplation to people who belong to them. Here contemplation and the sharing of knowledge cut across the orders of rational beings, which in another chapter Evagrius describes as closely imbricated with one another in a series of overlapping derivations. "Among human beings," Evagrius writes, perhaps speaking of postmortem fates, "some celebrate a festival with the angels; some are added to the troop of the demons; and others are tormented with impure human beings." Other passages suggest that at a postmortem judgment, human beings can move up or down the orders of rational beings, receiving new bodies that befit their achieved level of virtue or vice.⁶⁹ The distinction between human beings and demons is not as clear and oppositional as the warfare between them may suggest. And it is certainly not permanent.

Evagrius invites the gnostic to envision a future recovery of the unity that the rational beings once shared with one another and with God. Virtue, he explains more than once, has always existed and always will, but evil once did not exist and at some future time will again not exist. Reading biblical passages such as Philippians 2:9–11, in which "every knee" shall bend at the name of Jesus, and Isaiah 2:2–4, which speaks of "all nations" coming to worship the Lord, including those who used to make war, Evagrius concludes that in the future "the entire nature of rational beings will bow down before the Lord's name." At the end, he writes to Melania, the intellects that originated in unity with God will "flow back to Him like torrents into the sea."⁷⁰ The gnostic knows, then, that his present estrangement from the demons will give way to the *apokatastasis*, the restoration of that unity in which there was neither angel nor human being nor demon.

As Evagrius envisioned it, the war between the monk and the demon was a civil war, but not in the sense that seems most congenial to modern people—as a war between the monk and his own self. I have stressed that Evagrius consistently externalized the thoughts that plague the monk: the demons hurled the thoughts against the monk like arrows. The thoughts were raindrops that the monk had to "shake off" from his interior self.⁷¹ To be sure, the monk needed to gain self-control, for the passions that fueled the demonic thoughts were distorted forms of the energies produced by the desiring and irascible parts of his soul. But the Evagrian monk who patiently observed how he wandered from place to

place, engaged in conversations with others, and fell into thoughts of fornication or anger was not gaining a better sense of how his own mind worked so that he could alter his own habits; rather, he was learning the strategies of the “vagabond” demon, so that he could confute it the next time it approached. From this perspective, to read Evagrius’s demonology as an ancient and highly perceptive anticipation of modern psychology, as tempting as that might be, would be to attribute to Evagrius notions of repression, sublimation, and unconscious motives that he did not have. Still, we may understand that his strategies of naming thoughts, identifying the demons, and observing and analyzing their methods gave monks a vocabulary and set of strategies that enabled them, in our terms, to talk about their feelings and to analyze them from a distance. The monk could talk about his feeling of resentment toward a brother because, in the end, it was not so much his feeling as a demon’s suggestion. The monk healed himself, not by “owning” his negative thoughts, but by rejecting them as foreign to his nature.

The combat between monk and demon was, however, a civil war from a cosmic perspective, within the “rational nature that is ‘beneath heaven’” (Eccl. 1:13): “Part of it fights; part assists the one who fights; and part contends with the one who fights, strenuously rising up and making war against him.”⁷² As the fighting monk advanced in his knowledge of the nature of the demons—their origins, bodies, and eventual return—he learned that both he and the demon belonged to a larger nature of rational beings, the distinctions among which were clear but somehow permeable and ultimately temporary. “Do not think,” Evagrius wrote to an Abba Loukios, “that a demon is anything other than a human being that has been disturbed by anger and has departed from perception.”⁷³ A fierce bundle of irascible energy and frustrating ignorance, the demon lived a miserable existence in which its only intellectual activity was closely observing and imitating the very human beings it sought to destroy. As such the demon presented the monk with a disturbing and ever present mirror image of his own goal of becoming a gnostic, a gentle lover of the good who contemplated the natures of created things and of the Trinity itself. Only the knowledge attained through his ascetic labors and with God’s grace prevented the Evagrian gnostic from slipping into ignorance and becoming a demon, his implacable foe.

The Vigilant Brother

Pachomius and the Pachomian Koinonia

Sleeper, awake!

—Ephesians 5:14

The demonologies that we have studied thus far originated in the eremitical and semi-eremitical forms of monasticism that developed in Lower and Middle Egypt. Although neither Evagrius nor even the paradigmatic hermit Antony lived truly apart from other monks, they did not form or belong to communities that were organized much beyond the basic pair of guide and disciple, informal circles of colleagues, weekly common worship, and some shared material support. Apart from submitting to the occasional advice of their particular guides or other elders, the monks that we have met up to this point determined their own ascetic regimes—when to sleep and when to keep watch, when and how much to eat, how many and which Psalms to recite, and so forth. In contrast, the monk who joined one of the cenobitic communities in Upper Egypt associated with the Pachomian federation—or Koinonia (community), as it was called—did not organize his own life; he conformed to a rule, a set of expectations and regulations that rendered the monastic life predictable and truly collective. The differences between these styles of monasticism should not be exaggerated: Evagrius formed his teachings within a circle of colleagues who provided one another with support and guidance. But the Pachomians themselves were aware that their way of life was not that of monks such as Antony: indeed, in one of the *Lives* of Pachomius, Antony himself appears to praise the Koinonia as “superior” to his own anchoritic path, which he took only because there was no Koinonia when he became a monk.¹

Born to pagan parents, Pachomius converted to Christianity around

312 when as a soldier he experienced the charity of local Christians; for him, care for others formed the heart of Christianity. Eventually he took up the monastic life as a disciple of Palamon, an anchorite near Seneset. In response to a series of visions, Pachomius in the early 320s settled at Tabennesi and, after some difficult starts, slowly gathered disciples into a community under his direction. Around 329 he expanded his movement by founding a second monastery at Pbow, which eventually became the federation's headquarters. The Koinonia continued to grow both by founding new monasteries and by bringing into the federation previously existing communities. The existence of such "adopted" monasteries indicates that Pachomius was not the first person to bring a group of monks to live together in a single structure or compound.² His innovations, rather, were to establish a set pattern of life, eventually codified into a written rule, that every monk was to follow and to bind together multiple monasteries into a single federation under one "father," with heads of individual monasteries and houses subordinate to him.³ Although later tradition had Pachomius receive the rule in its entirety from an angel, and scholarship once depicted him as starting out with a clear and rigid vision derived from his military experience, more careful study has revealed that it took several years of trial and error for Pachomius to develop a setting in which monks might fully support one another spiritually and materially.⁴ He was certainly still working at it when he died in a plague in May 346.

With the exception of some letters and mostly fragmentary instructions, none of the surviving works in the dossier of Pachomian literature come from Pachomius's lifetime. Rather, his death brought a period of turmoil within the Koinonia, which almost resulted in its dissolution. After Pachomius's chosen successor, Petronius, died only two months later in the same plague, Horsiesios became father of the Koinonia, but he proved unequal to the management of what had become a large and complex enterprise. In 350 Apollonius, the head of one of the individual monasteries, threatened to take his monastery out of the federation. Horsiesios resigned, and Theodore took over and restored stability to the Koinonia. As part of his program, Theodore began the process of recalling and writing down Pachomius's biography as a touchstone of communal identity; eventually the federation produced multiple *Lives of Pachomius*, which cover also the periods under Theodore and Horsiesios, who returned to leadership when Theodore died in 368. By

the turn of the fifth century, the Pachomian literature included not only these *Lives*, preserved in Coptic, Greek, and other languages, but also letters and instructions of the three major leaders, the rules, the memoirs of individual monks (Ammon, Zanos) who had been part of the community, and other miscellaneous items.

In exploring this literature, we discover the demonology not of a single monastic author, but of a community with several decades of development and the contributions of many voices, including ones from outside the Pachomian tradition, strictly defined.⁵ To be sure, the Pachomian view of demons was rooted in the experience and teachings of the founder, Pachomius, who began his ascetic career under an anchorite in the years when the famous Antony was alive and disseminating his own views of the monastic struggle with demons. Pachomius presumably took what he learned from Palamon and adapted it to his new, more collective enterprise. In turn, the literature that gives us access to Pachomius's life and spirituality was shaped both by his followers, such as Theodore and Horsiesios, and by other monastic traditions: the authors of the *Lives* as we have them, for example, had read the *Life of Antony* and understandably drew on its compelling picture of the monk in dramatic conflict with demons. Our interest, then, is how familiar themes such as discernment of spirits, vigilance, thoughts, and exorcism, although similar to what we have seen, take on a distinctively Pachomian character within the milieu of the cenobitic monastery.

Some possible correlations between the cenobitic life and demonology seem obvious. One reasonably expects that conflict within the group would be attributed to demonic activity and that the demonic would be located primarily outside the monastery walls. To some extent the sources confirm these expectations. The Pachomians considered their community and its rule-based life something of a protection against the demonic, with expelled monks finding themselves newly vulnerable to outright demonic assault. Likewise, we find metaphors for demonic activity in the monastery that indicate invasion, entrance into otherwise holy space. The preferred term for the devil is *the enemy*. But demonology could also resolve or prevent the conflicts that inevitably arise from living closely with other people, and like their colleagues to the north, Pachomius and his followers stressed the basic impotence of Satan and his demons. The monk's virtue remained in his own hands, but in the monastery he benefited from the aid of supportive brothers. The

Pachomians promoted fidelity to the rule and thus to one another through exhortations to vigilance against the demons, and they provided mutual support by confessing their thoughts and giving counsel. The *Lives of Pachomius* based these practices in the special gifts of the founder.

In 345 a group of monks and bishops, among them two former Pachomian monks, summoned Pachomius to appear before them in the church in Latopolis to be examined; stories about him (some exaggerated) had given rise to “a debate about his being called clairvoyant.” What appears to have unsettled the gathered Christians was that Pachomius’s antidemonic abilities went beyond the usual healings and exorcisms performed by many monks: he actually “saw the demons, making war against them to ward them off souls.” Such “clairvoyance” or “clear-sightedness” (*dioratikon*) was “a great thing” that required explanation. As it is reported in the *Greek Life*, Pachomius’s reply eloquently positions his exceptional ability to see and resist the demonic within a spirituality that emphasizes mutual care among monks and their responsibility for each other. He attributes his own conversion to Christianity to the grace of God and identifies his hugely successful monastic federation (“this great multitude—nine monasteries”) as a place for monks who are “striving night and day by God’s mercy to keep our souls blameless.” It is a further “gift of God” that “the Lord has given us to recognize, when he wills, which of them is walking aright and which has only the appearances of a monk.” When God sees Pachomius “trembling with all his heart for the loss of his neighbor,” he enables Pachomius to save the failing monk “blamelessly, either by the discernment of the Holy Spirit, or by an apparition when the Lord wills.” Thanks to the clarity of vision that God has given him, Pachomius, the “man of God,” can rescue those monks suffering under demonic oppression. This gift, it seems, only incited the devil’s further animosity: “When he stopped speaking, a man possessed by the enemy came with a sword to slay him.” The monks who were with Pachomius took him to safety.⁶

The portrait of Pachomius in the earliest surviving *Lives* depicts the federation’s founder as an exceptional opponent of the demons and a recipient of the gift of discernment of spirits. Like Antony before him, Pachomius can recognize the types and strategies of the demons, but

in his cenobitic milieu Pachomius's gift enables him especially to see the demonic at work in individual monks and within the monastery, even when others cannot. Giving an instruction to gathered monks, Pachomius's "heart was suddenly so seized that he could no longer speak." He had become aware of a monk who had skipped the instruction and who was struggling with a demon; the man "left the brothers and went back to his parents." Pachomius "understood the wiles of the devil who was in" a monk who wanted an office beyond his abilities, and he could perceive that a group of visiting philosophers brought with them a "snare set for him by the demon that was in [them]." Visiting the monastery at Thmousons, Pachomius sees the demon of gluttony sitting in the monastery's large fig tree. Unbeknownst to the other monks, one of the boys in the monastery had the habit of secretly climbing the tree and plucking figs from it for the other boys, a clear violation of the rule's emphasis on uniformity in eating. Pachomius orders the tree to be cut down, but the extremely virtuous gardener, Jonas, challenges the order, unaware of the boys' demonically inspired sin. Pachomius relents, but the fig tree withers anyway (compare Mark 11:20), confirming Pachomius's status as "the Great Man."⁷ In the cenobitic context, the gift of discernment was an essential part of the leader's ability to counsel individual monks and to maintain the overall purity of the community. In the words of a modern scholar, Pachomius's clear-sightedness was "his ability to judge character, to assess the quality of *logismoi*, and hence the spiritual needs of his subjects."⁸

The *Lives* supplement this picture of penetrating insight with stories in which divinely granted visions reveal to Pachomius the identities of demonically influenced monks and the measures he ought to take with them. In one incident he visits the monastery at Tabennesi, and when he embraces the brothers there, he sees "that one of them had been wounded by a diabolical sin"; after Pachomius prays about this brother at length, the appearance of an angel with a fiery sword reveals that he must expel the monk.⁹ Pachomius also recognizes when a supposed appearance of the Lord is actually that of a demon, and he receives genuine visions of God, rooted in the biblical and early Jewish tradition of throne visions, experiences that instill in him a holy fear.¹⁰ Pachomius's gift of discernment of spirits reflects his own hard-won purity of heart, which grants him the ability to see God and to see through demonic apparitions, and it also works therapeutically for his fellow monks: he helps

them achieve that same purity of heart by diagnosing their demonically inspired ills and by removing from the monastery otherwise undetected demonic presences.¹¹

Pachomius's uncanny ability to see or discern what others cannot shapes what otherwise might be standard exorcism stories into dramas of Pachomian detection of demonic deceit. Before casting a demon out of one possessed man, Pachomius questions the demon at some length about its origins and practices, like a prosecuting attorney smoking out an evasive criminal, until the demon finally concedes, "With that you have again beaten me and put me to confusion."¹² When a man brings his possessed daughter to the monastery, Pachomius asks for a recently washed piece of the girl's clothing. From this item of evidence, Pachomius concludes, "She does not keep her chastity, although she has promised virginity. Just looking at it I understood she was not chaste." Confronted with this insight, the girl confesses her sin and vows never to repeat it; she is then cured with oil over which Pachomius had prayed.¹³ We see here why the gathered dignitaries at Latopolis found Pachomius so disconcerting. Most monks just exorcised demons, but Pachomius saw more, unmasking demons and sinful human beings alike. A monastic demoniac poses unique challenges to Pachomius's detective skills:

They likewise brought to him from a monastery a brother who was being tried by a demon. When our father Pachomius spoke with him, he answered well as one who is in no way tried by demons. He said to the brothers who had led him to him, "I assure you, this demon is hiding in him and will not speak to me by this man's voice; but I am going to examine his whole body till I find out which of his members he is hiding in." While he was examining his whole body, he came to the fingers of his hands and said to the brothers, "Here is the way the demon got in by, I have found it in the fingers of his hands." Then when he came to his neck, the place where the demon was, [the demon] made a great outcry and the man gave a violent jerk, and four men were hardly able to hold him. Our father Pachomius took hold of the place where the demon was and prayed to Christ for [the brother] that He might cure him. While he was praying the demon came out of the man who was immediately restored, thanks to our father Pachomius' prayers. All the brothers who had seen what had happened gave glory to the Lord for his mighty works which he shows forth through his saints.¹⁴

This anecdote can serve as a parable for how Pachomius's gift of discernment of spirits served his project of creating and maintaining the monastic federation. The monk appears to be healthy, but in fact a demon hides in his body, and only Pachomius can detect how it entered and where it lodges. Just so, the federation could appear to be healthy, when in fact a demon or a victim of demonic thoughts was hidden in its midst: Pachomius had the gift of discerning which monks had fallen prey to demonic influence and why.

Not surprisingly, the *Lives* depict Pachomius as earning this gift early in his career by confronting and overcoming fierce demonic opposition, just as Antony does in Athanasius's *Life*, which the Pachomian authors had read.¹⁵ Even when Pachomius is but the child of pagan parents, the gods/demons see him as an opponent. When his family goes to the Nile to offer a sacrifice, the sacred river creatures (demons, Christians would say) flee at the sight of little Pachomius, who another time vomits out wine that has been poured as a pagan libation. In Athanasian fashion, the *Lives* explain that the gods could not actually know ahead of time that he would become a Christian; rather, even as a pagan, young Pachomius "hated evil," thus antagonizing the demons. The Bohairic *Life* expands on this by having the boy face demons that appear as a murderous pack of dogs and as an old man who accuses him of disobedience; Pachomius also resists the sexual advances of a young woman.¹⁶ Like the young Antony, little Pachomius is already virtuous, but the Pachomian hagiographers faced the awkward fact that their subject was a pagan as a child: thus Pachomius's virtue is demonstrated in the hostility that his own gods demonstrate toward him.

Once Pachomius converts to Christianity and attaches himself to Palamon, his monastic guide, his education in the wiles of the demons and how to resist them can begin in earnest. Palamon introduces his student to "a hard and exhausting *ascesis*," including rigorous fasting, and tests him in particular by subjecting him to a grueling schedule of vigils and manual labor with little time for sleep. When Palamon sees Pachomius "tottering with sleep, he comforted him, saying, 'Stay awake, Pachomius, lest Satan tempt you, for many have fallen asleep in their affliction because of the heaviness of sleep.'" ¹⁷ As we shall see, Palamon's advice made a deep impression on Pachomius and made a significant contribution to Pachomian discipline and spirituality. In the midst of Pachomius's training in severe asceticism under Palamon and shortly af-

ter a repeat of the vision that suggests his future greatness, a story of demonically inspired pride appropriately appears. Similar to accounts that we shall find in Palladius's *Lausiac History* (see Chapter 6), the anecdote tells of an accomplished monk whom demons enable to stand on hot coals. A spiral of pride, fornication, and refusal to submit to Palamon's guidance concludes with the monk throwing himself into a bathhouse furnace, in which he either dies or is severely burned.¹⁸ Pachomius takes away from Palamon an appreciation for the rigors of the ascetic life, the belief that sleep deprivation aids in combat with the devil and his demons, and a caution that the demon of pride can destroy the monk.

Just as Antony received his most severe demonic attacks when he made his first move toward a new form of monastic life in the desert, Pachomius's prolonged trial by demons follows his own first steps in forming a monastic federation by building a small dwelling with his brother John. The Bohairic *Life* describes a series of "open attacks": for example, soldierlike demons tempt Pachomius with pride by parading before him and saying, "Make way for the Man of God"; a cock crows loudly in his face to disturb his prayer; naked women join him for a meal. Pachomius counters these appearances by praying to God and ignoring them, but he achieves final success with Palamon's method of staying awake: "He asked the Lord to keep sleep away from him and that he sleep no more until he had put to rout those who were warring against him. . . . The Lord granted his request for some time and they were chased away by him in shame, and feared him." The Greek *Life* contains a more detailed account, which shows clear influence from the *Life of Antony*. Like Antony, Pachomius first must not "allow a foul thought to settle in his heart," and as Antony did, he accomplishes this by "always meditating on the fear of God, the thought of the judgement, and the torments of everlasting fire." Having failed with thoughts, the demons then "attack him openly" with the visions that appear in the Bohairic *Life*, but the Greek adds that "his body was beaten and he suffered visibly from evening till morning." Finally, Pachomius is called "an athlete of the truth, like the most holy Antony," and as in the Bohairic *Life*, sleep avoidance is Pachomius's final weapon against the demons. The moral here, as in the *Life of Antony*, is that the demons "are powerless indeed against faith in the Lord."¹⁹

Although in their present forms these narratives, especially the Greek, reflect the influence of the *Life of Antony*, they nonetheless appear to

be rooted in Pachomius's own experience, which left its mark on Pachomian ascetic practice. In a surviving instruction that, despite signs of later reworking, likely goes back to Pachomius himself, the speaker exhorts the monks to resist evil thoughts and the various evil spirits by referring to his own early experience of demonic attack: "For, O my son, all the spirits have attacked me often since my childhood. When I was in the desert they afflicted me to the point that I was about to lose heart and I thought I could not resist the threats of the dragon. He tormented me in every possible way." This certainly sounds like Pachomius's early trials during his period with Palamon, and Pachomius goes on to urge a kind of watchfulness that would support the sleeplessness that he is reported to have used to defeat the demons. Pachomius exhorts his followers "to be watchful and to be on your guard, acquainted with those who lie in ambush against you," and names as those would-be ambushers the spirits of cowardice, distrust, lying, and so forth. As an exhortation against negligence, he cites Proverbs 6:4–5: "Give your eyes no sleep, your eyelids no rest, so that you may break free like a gazelle from the snares."²⁰ A fragmentary writing of Athanasius reveals that fourth-century Egyptian monks used this verse to justify practices of sleep deprivation, extending a traditional allegorical interpretation of this verse in terms of moral vigilance to the more concrete arena of conflict with demons (an argument that Athanasius opposed).²¹ Later in the instruction Pachomius depicts the Spirit of God as urging the monk, "Do not fall asleep there, because there are ambushes."²²

The virtue of wakefulness and the danger of sleep are frequent themes in Pachomian exhortations. Although surely these exhortations are basically metaphorical, they must also have supported the well-known Pachomian practice of sleeping in reclining seats. The devil, Pachomius explained in another fragment, cannot approach the monk who is "inhabited by the Holy Spirit," but when the devil sees the monk "somewhat idle or completely negligent, he prowls around him and hides until he sees him asleep; then he leaps out at him at once and deceives him." Theodore, too, warned against "the slumber of negligence"; his favorite biblical verse on this theme, which he quotes twice, was Ephesians 5:14: "Sleeper, awake!" Horsiesios urged the monks "to wake up from deep sleep."²³ It is, to be sure, a condition of vigilance within the soul that these leaders seek to inculcate, but the Pachomians enlisted the body in creating and maintaining that vigilance by sleeping not on horizontal

beds, but on reclining seats that did not lend themselves to deep and prolonged sleep.²⁴ Palladius later mentioned this practice as one of the distinctive features of the Pachomian rule.²⁵ The seats facilitated various patterns of keeping vigil, which in one story Pachomius says “I learned from our father Palamon.”²⁶ The Greek *Life* attributes the origin of the reclining seats to Pachomius’s practice of sleeping in a sitting position “without leaning his back against the wall,” which it depicts Pachomius as doing even before his trial by demons leads him to ask God for sleeplessness.²⁷ Not permitted to sink fully into sleep, the body of the Pachomian monk participated in the antidemonic vigilance that the rule as a whole sought to create in the soul.

In their emphasis on vigilance, the Pachomians warned, as did Athanasius, that the monk made himself vulnerable to the devil and his demons primarily through negligence (*amelia*); but while Athanasius based this theme on an anthropology that stressed the soul’s natural state of virtue, the Pachomians grounded it in the shared life of mutual support embodied in the rule. On the one hand, the monk must not relax in his observance of the ascetic life: Pachomius warned that “the demons’ pleasure is when man relaxes his heart and they can lead him off towards ambush before he notices it.” Created by God “upright,” the human being turns “toward evil thoughts . . . of his own volition.” On the other hand, the monk must be careful not to perform that observance for the wrong reasons: the first Sahidic *Life* claims that monks have been “led astray” by evil spirits “because they have performed works out of human desire and vainglory.” Pachomius’s frequent warnings against negligence and relaxation exasperated the otherwise good monk Mauo: “Why these long lectures the old man gave us in the evening? Are we in danger of falling every hour?” A display of Pachomius’s discernment in chastising a monk for stealing persuaded Mauo that, as Pachomius told him (perhaps, we may imagine, with some sarcasm), Mauo himself may have been “firmly seated on the unshakable rock,” but others remained vulnerable to “the ambushes of the evil one and the wicked devil.”²⁸

Understandably, the theme of negligence and consequent vulnerability to demons gained steam after the death of Pachomius. Theodore and Horsiesios more explicitly tied it to maintaining the life of the rule as Pachomius had established it. In the wake of the revolt that led to Horsiesios’s retirement as leader, Theodore condemned “the negligence and contempt into which we have fallen.” Once Pachomius had died, he

charged, “it was not long until we had nullified his rules. Indeed, because of this the devil has troubled the souls of many of us.” By “following our own will” rather than the rule, the brothers “have given ourselves over to the devil to let him swallow us up, with the result that we lose the benefit of the labors our father suffered for us.” Stung by Theodore’s rebuke, the gathered monks wept so loudly that persons passing by on the road outside heard them. A later instruction by Theodore likewise stressed the dangers of negligence: “I assure you, my brothers, that if we do not keep watch at all times with the words of the holy Scriptures, the enemy will take from us the fear of the Lord and make us fear him.” After Theodore’s passing, Horsiesios envisioned the same scenario: “I think that if a man does not guard his heart well he will forget all those things he has heard [in this case, from ‘our father’ Theodore]. Then, because of his negligence, the enemy will overpower him and cast him down.” He offered as an analogy a burning lamp whose flame is allowed to dwindle to the point that mice can eat the wick and break the lamp: just so, when the monk is even “a little negligent,” “the enemy eats up the zeal of that soul and also corrupts the body through wickedness, uncleanness, and the pollution of evil desires.”²⁹ Although they articulated it with particular force at moments of crisis and transition, the consistent Pachomian model of the monk’s relationship to the demonic was that freely chosen neglect of the federation’s traditions led to vulnerability to the devil.

Horsiesios’s lamp analogy played out this pattern at the level of the individual soul, but a parable attributed to Pachomius suggested the double reference to the individual monk and to the monastic community as a whole. The more original form probably appears in the Bohairic *Life*: “Imagine a house today in which there are a hundred rooms. If someone today buys one room from the master of the house, can anyone possibly prevent him from entering it, even though it is the furthest one of all in the house? So, too, a faithful man, even if he has all the *fruits of the Spirit* [Gal. 5:22–23] and is negligent of one of them, will he not be weak before the enemy’s face because of that fruit? Perhaps too, if he does not mend his ways the enemy will defeat him also in another [fruit].”³⁰ The parable follows immediately Pachomius’s description of how he heard two demons discuss their efforts to suggest evil thoughts to individual monks. It suggests the complexity and precarious security of the individual’s self and urges vigilance against even the slightest evil thought.

Yet the house metaphor, like the body of the demon-possessed monk, lends itself to application to the federation as a whole, indicating the danger of allowing even a single monk to fall prey to the devil or permitting such a monk to remain within the community. The Greek *Life* takes advantage of that possibility by inserting, between Pachomius's account of the demons' discussion and the parable of the house, the story of a monk who fell victim to demonic influence and left the monastery. It begins the parable itself by speaking of "a house in which there are a hundred rooms or cells" and then substitutes the term *cell* (*kellion*) for *room* in the remainder of the parable.³¹ Although the parable's primary reference remains the soul of the individual monk, here the pattern of even slight negligence giving way to outright capitulation to demonic invasion applies also to the community as a whole.³² The interdependence of the cells within the house was a source of both strength and vulnerability, and the boundary between the house's interior and its exterior emerged as the site where submission to the enemy could be mapped.

Such mapping of the demonic onto the monastery's boundary surfaces at several points in the Pachomian literature, which adapted the familiar sequence of thoughts followed by visual or physical attacks to the cenobitic milieu. Within the community, demonic activity was mostly (but not entirely) limited to the suggestion of evil thoughts; reception of these thoughts, however, compromised the monk's fidelity to the rule, rendering him vulnerable to departure or expulsion from the community and thus to more severe outright attacks by demons. A fragment of dubious authenticity portrays Pachomius vowing not to expel any sinful monk, but rather to correct him "even by corporal punishment if he deserves it," because the expelled monk would be "abandoned into the hands of the devil."³³ But in fact Pachomius did expel sinful monks, and Horsiesios justified this practice by appealing precisely to this notion of abandonment to further attacks by the devil, grounded in Paul's statement that to expel a Christian was to "hand him over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh" (1 Cor. 5:5).³⁴

The case histories of some bad monks, both expelled and not, illustrate a pattern in which a negligent monk who becomes vulnerable to evil thoughts either halts his regression or experiences more blatant demonic attacks, sometimes outside the monastery. Pachomius opted to keep within his (perhaps not Pachomian) monastery a monk who wanted an office beyond his abilities, in order to "snatch his soul away

from the enemy.” The demon of vainglory that made another monk practice too much asceticism flared into open possession only when the monk’s failure to practice the rule for the right reasons was detected and challenged; prayer healed the suffering monk.³⁵ When the monk Mousaios continually entertained evil thoughts, he claimed that they were “the suggestions of demons.” Theodore denied this, saying, “The demons have not yet been permitted to attack you; but by becoming so full of weeds, you prepare broad pasture for demons, drawing them upon yourself by evil counsels.” Note that not all evil thoughts came from demonic suggestion, some came from one’s own self; either way, the monk had the ability to resist such thoughts. Mousaios, however, persisted both in giving room to such thoughts and in claiming that they came from demons, and Theodore expelled him: “When he was by the monastery gate, he was seized with a demon and he set off like a roaring bull to his own village.”³⁶ Mousaios dramatizes precisely the theory that the monk must control his own thoughts, that failure to do so increases vulnerability to the demons, and that departure from the monastery brings attacks that go beyond thoughts to outright possession. The Pachomians did not normally regard the physical structure of the monastery as protection against physical demonic attacks (there are accounts of such within the monastery walls), but the monastery’s architecture could at times serve to map the fall from fidelity to the rule that rendered the monk more vulnerable to the evil spirits.³⁷ We shall see in Chapter 8 that Pachomius’s prayers and the fear of God that he created in the monks could be called a “wall” that protects the monks from Satan, and at times gender, in the form of the demonic represented as female, reinforced the distinction between the monastery and the threatening exterior world.

As demons helped to separate the brothers and the monastery from the outside, they also helped to manage conflict and tendencies toward division on the inside. Because the monks could attribute to demons some of the irritations and misunderstandings that plague communal living, they sometimes prevented such minor frustrations from leading to outright conflict. For example, when Theodore and a second monk both misunderstand an order that he gives them, Pachomius concludes with a sigh, “I understand it was an evil spirit hindering a good deed.” When another monk carelessly opens a vent above Pachomius as he is addressing the brothers, bricks fall on Pachomius, but Pachomius had

“perceived a spirit of darkness standing there” and thus knew that something like this was going to happen to him.³⁸ Although these stories concern Pachomius and thus his exceptional ability to see the demonic, they provided a way for all the monks to make sense of the mishaps that inevitably occur in group living and thus to avoid conflict. On the other hand, demons also explained such open conflict, especially at times in which the very existence of the community appeared threatened. According to a Sahidic *Life*, when a revolt led Horsiesios to retire, Theodore attributed the revolt to neglect of the rule, which made it possible for “the devil . . . to swallow us up,” and he characterized the leaders of the monasteries as having been “wounded by the devil.” The Greek *Life* more explicitly says that it was “by the enemy’s temptation” that Apollonius, the leader of the monastery of Thmousons, “wanted to separate his monastery from the Community and he persuaded many elders of the monastery to do so.” Theodore urges unity, “that the enemy may not scatter our father’s labor”; when he succeeds in persuading Apollonius to end his revolt, the author comments, “the enemy who had tempted them was put to shame.”³⁹

One depiction of an earlier crisis in the federation’s history, Pachomius’s demotion and punishment of Theodore, is exquisitely precise in its allocation of blame. The crisis arose when Pachomius had fallen into a severe illness. The anxious senior monks begged Theodore to agree to replace Pachomius, should he die; reluctantly, Theodore agreed. When Pachomius recovered, he demoted and punished Theodore for “the wicked thought he had made room for in his heart”; Pachomius’s decision caused pain not only to Theodore but to the other monks as well, and the recovery from this incident was difficult for all concerned. In its account of these events, the Bohairic *Life* does not identify the devil as the source of Theodore’s thought, but it does attribute to the devil the actions or statements of other monks that could have exasperated the already painful situation. Theodore blames only himself, not demonic suggestion, for his fall; but of the suggestion of some of “the ancient brothers” that he weeps more for his loss of rank than for his misdemeanor, he says it is “the thought the devil has suggested to you.” The narrator characterizes another monk’s statement, that Theodore must also have done something “impure” to incur such punishment, as “inspired in his heart by the devil.”⁴⁰ Theodore’s entertainment of the idea of replacing Pachomius originates from himself, but

Satan is behind those monks who would exploit the situation and make it worse.

The overall structure of Pachomian demonology, then, although not so different from that of the *Life of Antony* and similar to Evagrius's in its emphasis on thoughts, was nevertheless shaped by the peculiar character of its founder, Pachomius, and by the high value placed on the group's unity under the rule. The entire ascetic life, embodied in the rule, was designed to create in the monk a disposition that would resist evil thoughts; it was fidelity to that way of life that the frequent warnings against negligence and relaxation sought to inculcate. That disposition could be called "the fear of God," which steadied the mind by focusing it on God and higher realities and which resulted in an intensified life of service to others.⁴¹ The monk, Pachomius taught, must "know blamelessly and without any ignorance the craftiness of the enemies" and "oppose them with the Lord's power," which refers to the strength found in the overall ascetic regime. But Pachomius goes on here to speak specifically of "the words of the divine Scriptures." "And if you practice the way of life [*politeuesthai*] against them," Pachomius said elsewhere, the demons "will have no power over you."⁴² The fact that difficult, exhausting asceticism should have antidemonic results is something Pachomius presumably learned from Palamon: stories in which monks succumb to demons despite years of "lengthy ascetical practices and exercises" indicate that such labors were normally expected to work. Even the debilitating effects of prolonged illness could be God's way of saving a monk "from the snares of youth that the devil sets for him."⁴³ Merely the disciplined routine of hard work, with its predictable simplicity, its concentrated focus, and its physical exhaustion, fortified the monk against thoughts of pleasure, anger, or despair.

Yet the Pachomians understood certain specific practices within the rule as being particularly effective in the struggle against evil spirits. We have already seen that sleeping on reclining seats originated in Pachomius's struggle with the demons during his apprenticeship to Palamon and served to enlist the body in the effort to maintain a state of vigilance in the soul. Fasting helped the monks "to conquer those fighting against them."⁴⁴ Even more central, however, was the recitation of Scripture: the Pachomians regularized the widespread monastic practice of using biblical texts to ward off demons by fully integrating Scripture into their life.⁴⁵ Famously, all the monks were required to learn to read

and to memorize portions of the Scripture, which they then internalized through recitation during work and through the frequent meetings for prayer, psalmody, and explications of the Bible.⁴⁶ Theodore warned that “if we do not keep watch at all times with the words of the holy Scriptures, the enemy will take from us the fear of the Lord and make us fear him.” According to the *Bohairic Life*, the brothers responded to Horsiesios’s parable of the lamp and its call for vigilance against the devil by “reciting the word of God.” Pachomius suggested that the monk oppressed by a thought should speak Psalm 117(118):11—“They swarmed around me closer and closer, but I drove them back in the name of the Lord”—and “divine help will arrive at your side immediately.”⁴⁷ The result of these practices must have been the conforming of the monks’ diction and vocabulary to that of Scripture, and indeed many of the surviving Pachomian letters and instructions are so dense with biblical quotations and allusions that one can hardly separate them from the speech of Pachomius or Theodore. Perhaps it is no surprise that the best example of this phenomenon is a letter of Horsiesios, who of the three primary leaders spent the most years living under the rule.⁴⁸ This scripturalization of the speaking self empowered the monk to address demons directly and to repeat short prayers that would make either the demon or its thought “vanish.”⁴⁹

The federation’s leaders, from the father of the community down to the masters of the individual dormitories, played a crucial role in the monk’s ongoing spiritual combat.⁵⁰ The *Lives’* picture of Pachomius as being able to read a monk’s spiritual condition, even at a distance, must have provided a model for subsequent leaders at every level, even if they could not have hoped to share his miraculous level of insight. The *Letter of Ammon*, which is nearly a *Life of Theodore*, portrays Theodore as inheriting the authority and gifts of Pachomius and thus as possessing nearly the same level of clairvoyance as the founder.⁵¹ The Greek *Life* states that Theodore received visions as Pachomius did but just did not talk about them, lest he get summoned to the kind of ecclesiastical tribunal before which Pachomius appeared.⁵² Without undermining the unique status of Pachomius, these works legitimate his successors as also possessing the required gifts of spiritual discernment. But the literature shows as well that Theodore, other leaders, and even Pachomius himself regularly discerned the thoughts of individual monks by the more ordinary method of listening to them and talking with them.⁵³

The “temptation of blasphemy suggested by the enemies,” Pachomius warned, would bring down even a monk who loves God if he “does not keep awake as he ought or does not consult a man of experience on how to overcome that guileful suggestion.”⁵⁴

The Bohairic *Life* describes Theodore’s pastoral care of individual monks at some length. It reports that housemasters were at the front line, so to speak, of counseling monks about their thoughts; they would send to Theodore monks they suspected of harboring evil thoughts that they could not detect. Theodore’s practice is described as a model for the housemasters and their seconds: “Often, in fact, he used to call two faithful brothers and visit all the brothers’ cells, keeping watch over them to make sure that none of the brothers was being negligent concerning sleep—he vied with their housemasters or their seconds—and that none was suffering afflictions or trials because of the temptations of the demons. He would counsel them privately out of love of God. He would have the brothers accompanying him stay a little distance away so that they would not hear him speaking with any of the brothers whom he was urging to stand firm in the face of evil thoughts.” The hearer of these thoughts had a range of options to offer the afflicted monk—prayer, more ascetic labor, nights of vigil, consoling words, rebukes, and, at the worst, expulsion.⁵⁵ In this passage and in Pachomius’s advice mentioned above, confessing one’s thoughts to an advanced monk is coupled with the practice of sleep deprivation: in fact, one Sahidic *Life* adds to this description of Theodore’s pastoral care the specification that he made sure that none “neglected to sleep on their [reclining] seats in conformity with the rule.”⁵⁶ By avoiding deep sleep and confessing problematic thoughts, the monks acted on the primary goals of the Pachomian fight against the demons—vigilance and mutual care.

The language of resistance and renunciation in the Pachomians’ struggle against the enemy should not obscure the essentially constructive nature of their enterprise: the goal was to create a community of monks who supported one another in their efforts to achieve a level of self-awareness that would lead to purity of heart and ultimately to “seeing the invisible God as in a mirror.”⁵⁷ Forming and maintaining proper relationships among the brothers were themselves antidemonic activities, requiring sensitivity to the needs and frailties of others. A monk’s seemingly banal observation that the grape season was approaching, in a community in which some monks may be struggling against the demon

of gluttony in their efforts to conform to the monastic diet, “made room for such a demon.” More positively, when one monk forgave another, “the enemy” was “made ashamed.”⁵⁸ Even Theodore had to learn to temper his superior asceticism with awareness of how his actions affected others. When, during a season of severe weather, the housemaster tried to comfort the brothers with a little extra cheese at mealtime, the rigorously ascetic Theodore stubbornly refused to accept it. Pachomius rebuked him, “What is this word you have said, ‘I will not,’ having given place in your heart to the demon of disobedience? Even if you do not wish to take some, say, ‘I wish none now’ but take some and lay it down.” Theodore relented. “This,” states the anonymous author, “is how [Pachomius] used to edify Theodore and all the brothers in the fear of God and every good intention.”⁵⁹

The Pachomians knew, of course, that the demons were not only evil thoughts, but also the pagan gods. The gods’ hostility to the child Pachomius was an early indication of the future monk’s resistance to evil and his ability to discern the spirits. A lengthy sermon against paganism, attributed to Pachomius himself and certainly Pachomian in character, calls idolatry the worship of demons, exhorts pagans to follow the Jews in acknowledging the one true God, and predicts that Jews will come to faith in Christ, “if they want to.”⁶⁰ But the Pachomians did not extend their fight against the demonic to active opposition to the traditional forms of religion that surrounded them. Several Pachomian sources report that Pachomius had to deal with a monk who poured out a libation to the gods when he was threatened with death by the “barbarians” who had kidnapped him. In two examples of the same version, the monk is not a Pachomian—he is “from another place” or “living as an anchorite some place”—and he flees to Pachomius after his great sin for advice on whether he can repent and hope for salvation. After stressing the gravity of his error, Pachomius assures the monk that repentance is possible and recommends a stringent ascetic regime. The monk follows his advice, but it is not clear whether the monk becomes a member of the Koinonia.⁶¹ In a longer version, the monk is an outstanding anchorite who joins the Koinonia and expresses the desire to be a martyr. “Pray for me, Abba, that I may become a martyr,” he says to Pachomius, who warns him against asking to be put into a position of temptation. Only then does the monk fall into the hands of the barbarians, and as

Pachomius had feared, he commits apostasy rather than be killed. Severely rebuked by Pachomius, the monk took on an extremely withdrawn and rigorous discipline within the Koinonia: "After he had spent ten years struggling in this manner, he died, having, by the Lord's grace, borne a good witness [*kalos martys*]." ⁶² Critical as they are of the monk's lapse into paganism, these anecdotes subordinate their antipaganism to their promotion of the Pachomian way of life. It alone grants a sure path of repentance from such a grave sin, and indeed by following its path rigorously one can be a martyr. The vigilant Pachomians, faithful to their rule within their house of many cells, waged a mainly defensive war against the enemy that sought to enter their hearts and their community through thoughts. They did not march out aggressively against the demonic gods and their followers. In this respect they differed profoundly from their fellow cenobite near Atriipe, Shenoute of the White Monastery.

The Prophet

Shenoute and the White Monastery

Let the weak one say, "I am strong"; . . . let the gentle one become a warrior.

—Joel 3:10–11

In the Egyptian village of Atripe during the waning years of the fourth century, Flavius Aelius Gessius, former governor of the province of Thebais, stepped into the ruins of a temple that had been devoted to the local goddess, Triphis. Shenoute, the leader of a huge Christian monastic community near the village, had burned the temple and smashed its idols. Shenoute had intended to purify the temple space by driving out its "demons," but for Gesios (as he was known to his Coptic-speaking neighbors) the place retained its connection with the gods who had for millennia maintained the prosperity and well-being of Egypt and its inhabitants. To honor them, he poured out a libation and cast some roses, peach branches, and other aromatic plants around the temple ruins. Unfortunately for Gesios, his visit to the temple did not go unobserved: Shenoute himself saw him there and reported this incident in a sermon denouncing "all unmerciful rich people" and their oppression of the poor. Perhaps Gesios hoped, through his discreet ritual performance, "to preserve the ancient order of the cosmos," and he may have seen no conflict between this gesture of respect for the old gods and adherence to the more recent Jesus of Nazareth, a divine man not so different from Plato or Apollonius of Tyana. But Shenoute did not share this view: Gesios, he told his congregation, was "worshipping Satan."¹

It is difficult to imagine Pachomius or one of his successors as part of such a scenario, burning a temple and unmasking surreptitious "demonic" acts in public. Indeed, it is possible that not even Shenoute saw

Gesios pouring a libation in the ruined temple: one might ask why Shenoute did not initiate any legal action against someone he discovered performing a now outlawed act, pagan sacrifice, and, even more to the point, why this monastic hermit was hanging around a burnt pagan temple in the first place. Yet the moment remains utterly plausible for the leader of the White Monastery, who carried out a relentless campaign to expose Gesios as a crypto-pagan—as a man whose professed Christianity served as a cover for his secret worship of the pagan gods and perhaps as a means of deflecting criticism of his treatment of the poor. When Shenoute told him, “God gave you your wealth, and you have despised him,” Gesios replied, “It is not God who gave me the wealth, but it is my father who gave it to me.” Shenoute’s response: “When I heard that, I knew that he was calling the demon ‘my father,’ that is, Satan, whom he worships in that place.” Perhaps, Shenoute speculated to his congregation, Gesios, like some extreme Christian ascetics, believes that “possessions belong to Satan,” and “this is why the heretics and the pagans worship [Satan] and pour out libations to him beside the water.”²

In Shenoute, archimandrite of the White Monastery, Gesios, former governor of Thebais—not to mention his “father,” Satan—had met his match.³ Born around 348, shortly after the death of Pachomius, Shenoute entered the White Monastery in his early twenties, when it was still led by Pcol, its founder. Pcol appears to have been influenced by the Pachomian federation in establishing the monastery and its embryonic rules, but the monastery was never part of the Koinonia and cannot really be called Pachomian. Shenoute became head of the monastery in 385, in the wake of a dramatic series of events. Around 375 Pcol had been succeeded by a leader whose name has been lost to us. During this second father’s tenure, Shenoute became aware of an instance of severe sin within the monastery, but his attempts to alert the father to the danger went unheeded, and Shenoute withdrew to live in solitude in the nearby desert (where he continued to live for the rest of his life). When a second, related incident of sin became known to all, Shenoute was vindicated and emerged as the strongest candidate to be the monastery’s third father, which he soon became and remained until his death in 465 at the age of about 117. Under Shenoute the White Monastery was the primary community in a federation of three monasteries, including one for women, the combined population of which numbered in the thousands. Although Shenoute lived apart from the monasteries in his

desert cell and directed them primarily through letters and emissaries, he preached about four times a year at large gatherings for worship, attended not only by monks but also by interested outsiders, often including prominent officers of the government and military.⁴

The Coptic Church has always revered Shenoute, but for centuries Western scholars knew little about him because he does not appear in the Greek and Latin sources that survive from antiquity and because the codices containing his extensive writings in Coptic, nearly all of them collected and preserved in the White Monastery, were dismembered and dispersed into libraries throughout the world. Only recently has a modern scholar, Stephen Emmel, reconstructed these codices. Emmel discovered that most of Shenoute's writings were transmitted in basically two forms: the *Canons*, nine volumes of disciplinary writings compiled by Shenoute himself and directed almost exclusively to the monks; and the *Discourses*, eight volumes of assorted works, including letters and sermons addressed to diverse audiences, compiled later by the monastery for its instructional and liturgical needs.⁵ This major breakthrough continues to make possible new discoveries about Shenoute and his monastery, including more accurate reconstructions of Shenoute's career and relationships with figures such as Gesios as well as detailed studies of life within the monastic community. Still, many fragments, large and small, of Shenoute's works remain unpublished and even undiscovered, and thus treatments of many aspects of his life and thought, including his demonology, must themselves be fragmentary and provisional. In our case, however, we are fortunate that among the best preserved and most extensively published volumes of Shenoute's *Discourses* is the fourth, which contains a set of sermons on the devil, his nature, and his role in the believer's struggle for virtue.⁶

We have heard Shenoute say, alluding to Jesus's words to the unbelieving Jews in John 8:44, that Satan was Gesios's "father." Shenoute frequently attacked pagans, heretics, Jews, and sinful Christians as being united, even organically, with the devil: they are Satan's children; he dwells in them and they in him; his evil is like defiling pollution or a contagious disease, infecting entire groups of people *en masse* (nations, monasteries). Yet Shenoute asserted just as frequently that every person has free will and can choose whether to sin or not, no matter what his or her situation, and that the devil is ultimately powerless to harm or restrict any person. In the end, as savage as Shenoute's Satan is, all he has

to use against the monk (or any person) is his thoughts. Although, like the monks we have studied thus far, Shenoute speaks of multiple demons, thoughts, and temptations, he usually reduces the monk's opposition to a single opponent, Satan himself. Shenoute's flexible rhetoric, portraying the devil as both a viciously venomous snake and an impotent dismembered corpse, exploited the polarizing or clarifying effects of demonology. Presenting himself as the modern incarnation of a prophet from ancient Israel, Shenoute sought to expose hidden evil, whether in wealthy landowners who professed a nominal Christianity or in impoverished monks who had made vows of purity, and to separate both monastic and lay Christians from beliefs and practices that were, in his view, not Christian. Such was the duty of the monastic prophet, the one called by God to announce his coming judgment: "Who else is appointed to separate the holy from the defiled and the evil from the good like the one who is in God's house?"⁷

Shenoute the Prophet: Judgment and the Exposure of Hypocrisy

Shenoute lived, and tried to persuade others to live, under the shadow of the day of wrath, when God would judge all people and hold them accountable for what they had done. The judgment would definitively separate human beings into two groups, belonging to either Christ or Satan. The pious, he explained, will go to Christ and his Father, to be with the angels, the prophets and apostles, and all the righteous ones, while the impious will go to Satan, to be with his demons, the worshipers of idols, and "all those who have died in the lawless acts of their faithlessness."⁸ The "dualism" of Shenoute's thought, which has so struck his modern readers, stemmed from this future moment: it was an eschatological dualism, in which the doubled end to which history was moving impinged upon (or should have impinged upon) the present.⁹ Each person faced a tough, but simple, choice:

Either the person knows the good and becomes equal to the angels, as it is written [Luke 20:36], and a child of God in his kingdom, greatly abounding in the glory of the Lord; or he does evil and comes into the shame of the demons, resembling them in the fiery furnace, abounding in the grief and anger of God. Either the person suffers [with Jesus] in

doing the good, so that he might also be glorified with Jesus in his kingdom, or he turns to Satan in his great evildoings, so that he might also be put to shame with Satan in hell. . . . Either the person does good openly and does not fear any of those who see him, and he is received openly into the kingdom of God; or he does evil, looking this way and that, fearing those who see him, and he is taken with a threat by the angels down to hell.¹⁰

But to Shenoute's dismay, the dualistic clarity of the end-time was mostly absent from the confused ambiguity of the present. Actual human beings as they presented themselves were not so easy to divide, to some extent precisely because they did evil secretly, "looking this way and that," eluding detection. As God's spokesman or prophet, Shenoute brought the clarity of the end-time to bear on the present and ferreted out instances of people seeming to be children of God while actually participating in the shame of the demons.

Shenoute's debut as a modern-day prophet and exposor of hypocrisy came when he was an ordinary monk in the White Monastery and received "revelations and disclosures from the Lord."¹¹ From these he learned that a monk in a position of authority had committed a terrible sin, probably homoerotic activity. A conspiracy of silence, involving several monks, had concealed the incident from the father of the monastery, indeed from everyone else, until Shenoute received his revelation. When Shenoute confronted the monastery's father with what he had learned, the father refused to believe him, and Shenoute faced charges of slander and seeking to become leader of the monastery himself. The anguished Shenoute wrote a long letter to the community, in which he presented his version of the events, announced his decision to live apart from the community as one of the several nearby hermits associated with the monastery, and called on his monastic colleagues to repent and to renew their fidelity to Pcol's rules. Not long after these events, Shenoute received vindication when a second incident of grave error could not be concealed, and Shenoute emerged as a figure of exceptional insight and subsequently became the new father of the monastery, presumably on the death of the naive second father.

This incident left its marks on Shenoute in several ways. First, the form of the sin, homoerotic activity, became for Shenoute the archetypal sin, the most extreme violation of categories: it surfaces repeatedly in his writings and served as the basis for calling a host of sins, whether sexual

or not, “contrary to nature” or “unnatural” (*para phusin*; Rom. 1:26–27).¹² Further, the sin involved a lapse on the part of a Christian leader, someone responsible for the salvation of others: such leaders, whether monastic or clerical, would form the target of many of Shenoute’s polemical blasts in the following years.¹³ Other monks participated in covering up the sin, and Shenoute suffered for speaking out about it when he learned of it: numerous times Shenoute would stress the necessity of confronting sinners and revealing their misdeeds to the community. Secret sins and their concealment constituted hypocrisy—the gap between what one professes or is understood to be and what one actually is doing: “Crowds praise us on the outside, but we ourselves are performing deeds that deserve condemnation in countless evils.”¹⁴ The incident exposed a moral complacency in the monastic community that was rooted not only in lay outsiders’ praise but also in the security offered by the choice of the monastic life, as Emmel explains. “That the reigning idea in the community was that they would all be saved by virtue of being monks is indicated in a more specific and interesting fashion by the monastery’s father, whom Shenoute quotes as having said to him during their last interview: ‘Enough! I have built them the wall.’ To which Shenoute replied sadly, ‘Did I tell you that they (the sins) passed within to them (the sinners) from outside? Rather, Satan is inside the wall, with his hands full of weapons, with which they (the sinners) are doing violence to themselves.’”¹⁵ We saw that in the Pachomian literature the monastery’s wall could at times serve as a metaphor for the protective nature of fidelity to the rule; in some stories the demonic, at least in its most vivid and powerful forms, lay outside the wall. The White Monastery’s second father appears to have taken this a step farther: the wall (or at least the ascetic life that it symbolized) actually protected the monks from Satan and sin and ensured their holiness. Shenoute rejected this idea: Satan could still enter through the people inside, who do “violence to themselves.”

Finally, this conflict with the second father provided an opportunity for Shenoute to present himself as a prophet, modeled on those of the Hebrew Bible.¹⁶ Shenoute claimed that he had learned about the concealed sin in “revelations from the Lord” and confronted the naive leader “on a command from God.”¹⁷ The suffering he endured as a result, he interpreted as God’s judgment upon him. Throughout the letter, aptly characterized by Emmel as “a prophetic book,” Shenoute speaks in the

diction of the Coptic Bible, with lengthy passages blending words from Isaiah or Jeremiah with his own. Shenoute's withdrawal into a solitary abode in the desert configured him precisely as a "voice crying out in the wilderness."¹⁸ In turn, the biblical prophets provided Shenoute's voice with its agenda: exposure of hypocritical and concealed sin among the allegedly holy people of God, denunciation of worship of other gods by either the people of God or the surrounding "Gentiles," advocacy for the poor and oppressed, and criticism of the rich and powerful. Notably, even after decades of serving as their leader, Shenoute continued to address the monks as a prophetic outsider.

Shenoute's self-fashioned identity as a prophet conformed him in some ways to the classic figure of Late Antiquity's "holy man," whose carefully cultivated marginality enabled him to function as a spiritual patron and arbiter beyond the monastic community, in the wider Church and society as well.¹⁹ But Shenoute stuck to his own prophetic agenda as drawn from the Bible, despite the expectations of the society around him. For example, when a group of Christians arrived at the White Monastery hoping that Shenoute would use his clairvoyance to reveal the identities of certain thieves and the locations of their stolen goods, Shenoute refused to do so, choosing instead to reveal the sins of ostensible Christians or, as he put it, "which persons Sin has stolen" and "where the enemy has hidden them." In numerous public sermons, Shenoute bemoaned the lack of religious clarity in the region of Panopolis. He complained of Jews, Christians who also practiced "pagan" rituals, heretical Christians, pagans who got baptized and then returned to their former ways, and others. He attacked such ill-defined religious identity with the stark dualism of a choice between God and Satan. Christians who "participate in the faith and mix with the pagans and heretics" should heed Paul's warnings: "You cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of the demons. You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of the demons" (1 Cor. 10:21). So too Jesus said, "I have come not to bring peace upon the earth, but division" (compare Luke 12:51), yet "we ourselves are mixed with the worshipers of the demons."²⁰ As a prophet, Shenoute not only exposed hypocrisy among Christians, but also wielded the sword of division and forced people to choose sides.

For Shenoute no one represented the frustrating lack of religious clarity in his milieu more than Gesios, the furtive worshiper in the temple

ruins of Atripe. Gesios was a ripe target for a would-be Isaiah or Joel. He had served as a prominent government official (governor); he was luxuriously wealthy and, it seems, harsh in his treatment of the workers on his estates and other poor dependents; and he appears to have done his best to straddle the divide between Christianity and traditional religion. In a lengthy campaign of speeches, pamphlets, and even raids on his home, Shenoute sought to expose Gesios as a crypto-pagan, a man whose professed Christianity belied secret pagan devotion, and as an oppressor of the poor and vulnerable.²¹ Throughout this very public drama, Shenoute wrapped himself in the mantle of being God's prophet: he was Jeremiah, summoning to repentance the unfaithful King Jehoiakim of Judah (Gesios, the prominent but false Christian), or he was Moses, denouncing the oppressive Pharaoh of Egypt (Gesios, the powerful and ruthless pagan). Even long after Gesios's death, Shenoute was denouncing him as "that enemy from Panopolis . . . whose name is not to be uttered here."²² His campaign against Gesios enhanced his prophetic reputation, as he took on the wealthy and powerful pseudo-Christian, criticizing his oppression of the poor and unmasking his idolatry through dramatic public acts that rivaled those of Jeremiah. Shenoute applied the stark clarity of the future day of judgment, when all people would be divided into those of Christ and those of Satan, to the murky uncertainty of the present, in which even the most devoted monks were not what they seemed and dodgy persons like Gesios straddled the boundary that separated Christians from the godless. On those few but regular occasions when he emerged from his hermitage to address his monks and the world at large, Shenoute deployed the rhetoric of the devil and his demons to accomplish this task of exposure and division.

Images of Evil: Satan and His Children

Shenoute's Satan embodied the confused state of moral ambiguity that characterized Shenoute's world and so infuriated him. Shenoute sputtered at the devil's slippery formlessness, which signified the terrifying ability of evil to escape definition and so detection:

You are not male, nor are you female. You are not a calf or a horse or a donkey or a camel or any cattle. You are not a snake or scorpion or any

reptile. You are not barbarian or any collection of evil people. You are not a sea or any collection of waters. You are not a pit or any deep place. You are not a mountain or a plain. You are not rich or a beggar. For you assume the likeness of these things and of more things than these, but you do not belong to any one of them. Your form is unchanging, and you are always the same, you thing entirely twisted upon itself and from itself. And you do not have a small share of a member of anything, neither you nor your demons. Every shape into which you change yourself is foreign to you, and they are all illusions [*phantasiai*].²³

Shenoute understood that the devil and his demons were not identical to the images that the Bible or pagan culture gave them or in which they appeared to people. He was also aware of more abstract concepts of the demonic, such as learned etymologies that found the origin of the Greek *daimonion* in “knowing” or “distributing” plurality, but he had little use for them.²⁴ Shenoute preferred highly graphic language in speaking about such a fearsome enemy. He used vivid images—a dismembered, but still breathing, soldier; a horned snake lurking beneath the desert sand—to evoke the devil’s paradoxical combination of abject impotence and lethal viciousness. To understand Shenoute’s demonology, one must unpack his images and analogies.

Shenoute’s Satan was not an independent power, but a fallen creature, a former angel. Satan was “cast from heaven and from the entire army of the angels” because he was “reckless.” He was “an angel who had become a beast.” Like other ancients, Shenoute understood Isaiah’s description of the fall of “Day Star, son of Dawn” (Isa. 14:12–15) as referring to Satan; thus, his “reckless” act was his proclamation, “I will make myself equal to God!” (compare Isa. 14:14), an arrogance that certain heretics imitate when they say to other Christians, “Withdraw from us, for we are holy.” Yet Shenoute suggested that it was not quite accurate to speak of Satan’s having fallen: he never “truly stood” or “possessed honor,” but was cursed from his creation, for God knew that he would be evil from beginning to end. Shenoute’s commitment to an all-powerful single God trumped any more-dualistic tendencies in his thought. The subsequent fall of the other angels provided a model for how human beings succumb to the devil’s influence. Just as the fallen angels descended to the level of demons, sinful human beings descend to the level of wolves. In both cases sin results from a free choice: “Even in the case

of the angels who renounced their origin, if they had not desired, he [Satan] would not have been able to make them sin.” The angels’ renunciation of their origin and abandonment of the truth was a violation of their nature, as perverse as that of human beings who later turned away from God to acts contrary to their nature.²⁵

Shenoute stressed repeatedly that, no matter what the noble heights of his origin, Satan was now thoroughly wretched and weak, defeated and destroyed by God.²⁶ This loss of power was a gradual process, begun with Satan’s fall, climaxing in the work of Christ, and to be completed at the end of time. According to one passage, Satan “was completely destroyed when he fell from heaven,” which could refer either to his original fall from angelic status or to Jesus’s vision during his ministry of Satan falling “like lightning” (Luke 10:18). At “the beginning, when human beings came into existence upon the earth,” the devil enjoyed his greatest power, but even then he was not strong enough to deceive Abel and lead him away from righteousness. In sum, Satan’s “power left him from the beginning, when the Lord God cursed him in the snake and cursed the snake in him, saying, ‘You shall crawl on your belly and upon your chest’ [Gen. 3:14], and even more, he became like a dead person and became stiff through the cross of Christ. From that hour he no longer lives in any person except the sinners alone.” Because Satan “perished completely through the cross,” human beings “have no excuse” if they sin, for the devil cannot force them to do so.²⁷

Although Christ destroyed him in the crucifixion, Satan nevertheless continues to exist and fight against people, due to God’s “forbearance” or “endurance” (*anochē*) of him. Unquestionably able to finish him off at any time, God permits Satan to live and to test human beings, so that the holy may distinguish themselves from the impure as “true Christian soldiers” and so that God may reward their righteousness with glory. Without demonic “obstacles,” people might “become negligent from being too carefree.”²⁸ The ongoing temptations from Satan, the continual stimulation of his “activity” (*energeia*), divides human beings into good and bad and thus fuels history’s movement to the eschatological climax of pure separation.²⁹ In two sermons, Shenoute used the analogy of a king who allows a defeated soldier to live temporarily:

For like a righteous king who has cast down his enemy in battle and made him weak, and who has said that all those who are on his side

should lay their hands upon him [the enemy] because he wants them all to be glorified together, and who later will return and cut off the enemy's head—just so, and even more, when the Lord Christ came, he destroyed the devil like a tyrant whose legs were cut off up to his thighs and his arms up to his shoulders; and as for the other members of his body, his heart and his spine, he [Christ] struck them all. He [the devil] is unable to move [any of his members] so as to get up or pursue a person, except for his breath alone, which comes and goes, that is, his thoughts, which Christ left in him because he wants his children, his soldiers, his servants, and all who are on his side to lay their hands upon him [the devil], that is, to fight against his godless thoughts [*logismoi*], so that they might be glorified with him and reign with him.³⁰

This striking analogy clarified Christ's role in salvation history: he defeated Satan in the incarnation and will return to finish him off, but in the meantime he wants his followers to participate in his glory by fighting the vanquished devil themselves. The image of the devil as a dismembered soldier, able to "move" (*energein*) only his breath, shows that, like other monastic authors, Shenoute believed that thoughts are the devil's most effective means of attack against human beings.

Despite Satan's dismemberment and weakness, he and his demons remained formidable enemies of astonishing viciousness: Shenoute turned frequently to the animal kingdom for images of satanic brutality. Such images may have appealed to Egyptian peasants, who regularly faced dangers from animals and whose non-Christian mythology had often demonized animals,³¹ but they derived also from learned Christian demonological reflection. Working in the tradition of Origen's association of the demons with animals, doubtless mediated to him by the *Life of Antony* (rather than from the "heretic" Origen himself), Shenoute saw a connection between demons and animals that went beyond the analogous to something more concrete. He routinely interpreted biblical references to "beasts" or specific animals as references to demons. The leech provided a suitable model for the devil's insatiability and greed in devouring sinners. Shenoute claimed that a cat will stare at a person's face, looking for the right opportunity to jump up and claw out the eyes of someone who looks back at it in amusement; so too Satan can destroy "the heart's eyes" in people who allow themselves to "find pleasure" in an evil thought rather than rejecting it immediately. Shenoute offered his

personal observations of brutal animal behavior: he once watched an animal that fell victim to another being attacked by an increasing number of animals—one became two, then three, four, one hundred, and finally a multitude—until it was killed, just as the soul that makes room for a single demon soon falls prey to many more, who become “sated with its abominations.” A blind animal, which ran in every direction but got nowhere, reminded him of the soul, blinded by Satan, “which thinks it has drawn near to God, but has actually traveled far from him.” The spirit of fornication, he said, resembles an animal whose harmless appearance leads the careless person to underestimate it, but which is prone to jump up and try to bite one’s genitals: just so, people will fall prey to fornication if they say, “We have resisted it,” without being constantly vigilant against it.³²

Of course, thanks to the biblical account of the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3), the snake provided the most fitting model for Satan; this resonated also with a traditional Egyptian association of the hostile god Seth with reptiles.³³ Like the dismembered soldier, the snake lacked arms and legs, but it compensated for its weakness with its deadly venom and cunning tricks. Shenoute argued that Satan is both stronger and weaker than his kindred animal. Unlike the venom of the actual snake, which can reach only those people within its striking distance, the devil’s venom of sins has wounded people all over the world (but Christ can cure them). Apart from its venom, the snake is merely “a strand of cord, long and soft,” easily killed and not to be feared. But at least the snake’s body is healthy: having been crushed by God, Satan’s body is but a “corpse.” The snake, lacking feet or claws, cannot dig its own holes, but can only occupy holes that have been dug by others; likewise, the devil can enter only the person who “makes his soul and heart a hole by his evil works.” But this incapacity of the snake should not leave the person complacent: the desert horned viper has a “ruse” by which it hides under the sand, sticks its horn up like an arrow, and injects venom into the foot of the person who “was not vigilant or did not pay attention to his surroundings,” a method similar to that used by “the spirit of desire.” The snake’s wily ways of exploiting its paradoxical combination of crippling weakness and deadly viciousness made it the perfect symbol for the persistent danger posed by Satan and his demons. “What serpentine thing will Satan do next?” Shenoute could only ask in disgusted wonder.³⁴

More positively, snake behavior and human strategies for coping with snakes could teach people how to deal with the devil and sin. In one of his more puzzling examples from the animal world, Shenoute reports that “it is said about the snake that it fears the naked person who is about to step on it more than the one wearing clothes.” The lesson here is that people should take up the monastic life, for “the devil fears the person who has abandoned everything, taken up his cross, and followed the Lord (compare Mark 8:34) more than someone who has not abandoned them.”³⁵ The anxiety that human beings experience when they see a snake approaching and trying to bite them should teach them to beware the approach of Satan, whose “thoughts” are “worse than the venom of snakes,” rather than to tolerate such thoughts. Likewise, how people deal with snakebites reveals how they should respond if they do fall victim to Satan:

So what does the person do when the snake bites him? Does he not sit down beneath the one who cuts him with the knife, while others hold him, putting salt and vinegar on them [the wounds], until all the venom has washed out and he lives? And if it has blown into his eyes, salt is placed on them until the venom is flushed out from them. So too with the person whom the serpent, the snake, the pervert, Satan has bitten and into whose heart he has poured his wickedness: it is proper in his case for the fear of the Lord to hold him, just like the one who is held by his friends, under the true physician, who is trustworthy for the healing of our souls, God the merciful, Jesus, who cuts us with reproofs in all his words, which have come forth from the mouths of his saints, and who turns us to repentance with grieving and groans.³⁶

Shenoute used this analogy to urge pagans and sinners to turn to Christianity in a process of repentance that could be emotionally painful. But perhaps when Shenoute’s monastic followers heard this description of painful snakebite treatment, they recalled Shenoute’s methods of corporal punishment: for example, a male elder would beat the soles of a sinful female monk’s feet while she was held by senior monastic women.³⁷

Unlike other animals, the snake had an intimate connection to Satan, forged in the Genesis narrative, and thus could serve as a metaphor for persons who similarly served the devil’s purposes. Although the devil was “not a snake or scorpion or any reptile,” his presence in the snake in Eden meant that both shared God’s curse (Gen. 3:14), the effects of

which persisted in subsequent snakes as well as in Satan. The snake was “the evil animal,” arousing passionate anger: “I myself have seen someone who, when he caught a snake or serpent, killed it and was insatiable in breaking its head and destroying its entire body with great anger, which was amazing to see, as he said, ‘Enemy!’ and ‘You between whom and humanity God placed enmity, why has your race become an instrument of the devil from the beginning and accepted him, you evil seed?’ When I finally realized that it [the snake] represented humanity, I understood that this is what will happen to every human soul that is a dwelling place for Satan, who leads multitudes of people astray through them [such souls] or through themselves.” Here the snake represents not the devil, who once inhabited it and brought his curse upon it, but the human beings who now accept the devil and so become his “instrument” and “dwelling place” as did the snake in the garden. The hacking up of the snake recalls the dismembering of the devil as a soldier by Christ and anticipates a similar fate for sinful human beings, such as heretics. As Satan’s “unclean vessels,” heretics lead people astray, just as the snake in Eden did, but “they are worse than the snake because they are people speaking with people, yet snake venoms are what are on their lips, and teachings of unclean spirits are what they speak.”³⁸ Evil human beings, then, imitate the Eden snake’s receptiveness to the devil and willingness to deceive others on the devil’s behalf. The dwelling of Satan in the primal snake illustrates his present-day dwelling in sinful people.

The snake’s double identity, as both devil and sinful human being, indicates that the weakened Satan has power in this world now only through those human beings who follow him in sin and so gain a solidarity with him that Shenoute described with nearly organic metaphors.³⁹ The devil or demons “dwell in,” “repose in,” or “fill” people, who make themselves, the church, and their houses the demons’ “dwelling places.” The demons “dance” in fallen monks. As “God dwelled in Mary’s ‘house’ for several days,” so too Judas’s “storage places” served as a den for the devil. In a reversal of this metaphor, people can also inhabit or dwell in Satan: “The rulers of the Gentiles who have been unfaithful from the beginning have been sucked into the dark place, that is, Satan, and have gotten lost in its corners, streets, and treasuries.” Sinners intimately unite with the devil, “fulfilling their lusts” with him “in unnatural acts” and sharing a table and even a bed with him.⁴⁰

As we saw with Gesios, Shenoute made liberal use of Jesus’s statement

to unbelieving Jews, "You are from your father the devil" (John 8:44), a statement that Shenoute said applies "to anyone who does not believe in him at any time." Thus, pagans, heretics, and sinners of all kinds are called "children" of the devil or the demons, and Satan their "father." Like the language of indwelling, the parent/child metaphor could be reversed: Shenoute tells "you heretics" that, just as Christ chose the pure virgin Mary and she gave birth to him, "Satan chose you [plural] for himself, people who are defiled and polluted and who resemble him in all uncleanness, so that he exists through you, and it is you who give birth to him." He told a group of disobedient female monks that "the demons are born among you."⁴¹ Because Shenoute frequently used the language of family, including metaphors of parenthood and giving birth, to describe the unity of the monastic community, these statements about the devil and sinners construct a kind of antimonastic family, in which Satan is the father rather than Shenoute.⁴² Coupled with the language of indwelling, the parenthood imagery also creates a kind of incarnational theology for the devil: unlike the triumphant and living Christ, who became incarnate in a single fully human body, the dismembered and corpselike Satan embodies himself in multiple sinful people and gains a physical presence in the world through them.⁴³

When Shenoute spoke of the devil and people in these terms, he also thought of sin organically, as pollution or as contagious disease.⁴⁴ The hardening of the sinner's heart was comparable to the hardening caused by leprosy. "In the case of a leper, if his children become like him, it is no marvel; everyone will say, 'What was in their father has moved onto them.' I am talking about the pagans and all the godless people upon whom the leprosies of their father the devil have produced scales." An inherited disease, sin could travel through the members of a monastery like snake venom through the limbs of a body. "The members of the body in which this disease is great are many . . . it [the disease] runs around in them like the venoms of the snake. As soon as it ceases in particular members, it surfaces in other particular members, which have come under the power of this deceitful disease whose plague takes a multitude of forms." On this logic, Shenoute could say to his wayward community, "We have become Sin. Sin has become a single body with us, for our members have become united in unnatural acts." Shenoute's depiction of sin as a contagious disease or pollution supported his policy of expelling sinful monks, which attracted opposition from monks

of sufficient number and stature to force Shenoute to defend it many times. Although he advocated expulsion of offending monks because they threatened others with their sickness or impurity, Shenoute never doubted that individuals could remove themselves from sin, divorce themselves from Satan, and be cured of their disease. Speaking of the sword of judgment that will at the end separate the righteous from the sinful, and of the “members” of the monastic body, Shenoute assured his followers that “in the case of the members that it [the sword] takes care of so as to heal them, even if very evil destruction appeared in them, their form and their beauty will appear even more elect.”⁴⁵ “Taking care of” is how Shenoute described the responsibility that more senior monks had for the individuals under their authority, and thus the conception of sin as disease supported not only the expulsion of recalcitrant monks but also the rehabilitation of monks who were less ill.

The language of solidarity and disease underscored Shenoute’s belief that Satan, as weakened as he was, still had power through the freely chosen sins of individuals. Shenoute’s portrait of Satan and the demons, defeated by Christ yet still vicious in their bestial brutality and craftiness, drew on the Bible and the *Life of Antony*, written by Athanasius, whom Shenoute held up as a model of what he himself aspired to be—someone who spoke fearlessly to the rich and powerful and who fought for righteousness.⁴⁶ The *Life* inspired one of Shenoute’s few detailed exegeses of an extended scriptural passage, an examination of the “dragon” in chapters 40 and 41 of Job, which had served as the basis for Antony’s description of the devil. In Athanasius’s treatment, the terrifying characteristics of the beast in Job 41:9–12 and 41:22–23 indicated the devil’s arrogance and the terrifying nature of his appearances, but the statements of the Lord’s power over him in Job 40:20–24 demonstrated his ultimate weakness.⁴⁷ What survives of Shenoute’s exegesis shows a more detailed effort to interpret statements that seem to show the devil’s strength and even invincibility—for instance, “If a flood comes, he does not notice” (Job 40:18)—as actually being indications of his weakness, primarily by making such verses refer to the devil’s own people, the heretics and the pagans. For example, the “flood” that Satan does not notice is the rising tide of Christological heresy, and the “spears” that “do nothing” to him (Job 41:17) are the actions of the heretics. The “destruction”

that “runs before him” (Job 41:13) refers to the devil’s making the heretics “enemies of God in their unbelief.” Shenoute understands the beast’s body parts to refer to pagans. “Godless people” form the beast’s tail (Job 40:26), and “the terror around his teeth” (Job 41:5) refers to the “terror for those who worship his likeness, which has been depicted in images, on the walls of their chambers, on their eating and drinking vessels, and on many things and in many places. . . . It [his likeness] is in the idols that we took from their houses.”⁴⁸ With this reference to his raids on the house of Gesios (and others?), Shenoute renders specifically personal his more general point that Satan has power and presence in this world only through the people who follow him.

The Christian in Combat: Trials, Illusions, and Thoughts

Shenoute claimed that God allowed Satan to live in order to give people the opportunity to triumph over him, prove to be righteous, and so gain glory. The devil’s role in the monastic or ordinary Christian’s quest for virtue was to act as an obstacle or stumbling block. Shenoute frequently employed the metaphor of hunting: Satan sets “traps” or “snares” for people and tries to capture them in his “nets.” In the case of heresy, such traps are “false teachers,” and the bait that the hunter puts in the trap, “false knowledge.” But more generally, the demons’ snares are the person’s own desires.⁴⁹ Shenoute could also use the common monastic terminology of the devil putting someone in motion (*energein*) to sin.⁵⁰ For those who succumb to the demonic, the metaphor switches to invading and plundering a house: “The enemy has stripped them, robbed them, and plundered their houses”; but because people have been trapped by their own desires, it is more accurate to say that “on our own we have plundered our houses in behalf of the enemy.”⁵¹ Shenoute saw the devil as having three primary weapons to use against monks—trials, illusions, and thoughts—all of which the monk could resist through his ascetic discipline and with the help of God and his angels. His views on the monk’s conflict with Satan adapted general monastic teachings to his more dualistic sensibility.

In the same sermon in which he interpreted the description of the dragon in Job, Shenoute used the example of Job to distinguish between suffering from trials (*peirasmoi*) and experiencing temptations to sin. Trials can come from God, other people, or Satan, but they all, as Job’s

story indicated, require God's permission. They consist of bodily sufferings, especially pain and disease, as well as persecutions or troubles from human beings, such as the anguish that Shenoute experienced over the dilemma of corporal punishment of monks. Shenoute saw these trials as distinct from temptations to sin—one "endures" the former but "fights against" the latter—and if Job could fight against sin while also enduring bodily trials, the person who is healthy and suffers from no trial should have no trouble resisting sin. Trials carry their own danger and reward. They can either estrange a person from God or build endurance, depending on how the person responds to them. God sends illness, pain, poverty, and other trials upon people in order to bring them to repentance, and thus they should not seek relief from such ills from sorcerers or even from monks or clergy if they offer such things as blessed oil and water. Persons who pray to God for relief from bodily trials but receive none must "strike [*pukteuein*] them [the trials] and not refrain from dealing with them violently," a reference perhaps to taking on even more severe ascetic measures. Indeed, the monk's asceticism can be seen as a self-imposed trial: Shenoute's term for the ascetic regime, *hise*, meant both "labor" and "suffering." Shenoute got a lot of rhetorical mileage out of his own endurance of emotional and physical pain. Through his "rhetoric of suffering," he presented himself as an accomplished ascetic and thus as a worthy leader.⁵² The person who successfully endures trials such as bodily pain can expect a reward. Job himself found blessing with God "not on account of his acts of mercy alone, but also on account of his diseases" (Job 42:10–11), and Lazarus found his place in the bosom of Abraham for no reason "except that he endured diseases" (Luke 16:20–31).⁵³

As Athanasius had done in the *Life of Antony*, Shenoute paired the devil's assaults on the body with his visual appearances as being equally acts of desperation: unable to "attract" people to his abominations, the devil has to resort to such brutal tactics. All the forms the devil takes are illusions because, as we have seen, he is without form. Satan appears to people who "belong" to him "in a demonic form," doubtless the forms of the pagan gods and goddesses; he does not appear as an angel to them (compare 2 Cor. 11:4) because they would not recognize an angel of God. In the case of Christians, however, the devil's appearances in either demonic or angelic forms are ineffective when Christians are awake because they can easily detect Satan's deceit. For example, if one tries to

fight against a demonic apparition physically, it is like one “has struck the wind.”⁵⁴ “A spiritual person” can “recognize” Satan and “understand all his obscure works” because, although the devil is “concealed” and no human being can see him, the Holy Spirit and the angels “exist themselves in a concealed manner” and so can see the devil and inform persons “worthy of their friendship” all about him. Because of their invisible nature, it is “foolish” to “expect an angel or spirit to appear to us or speak to us externally since God, his Spirit, and his angels speak to us internally.” On this logic any seeming appearance of an angel should be immediately suspect. Some demonic “illusions,” although detectable, are more dangerous. The devil can take “the form of a merciful person” and recommend forgiveness for sinful monks, or he can assume “the form of God’s angel” and threaten with judgment monastic leaders who have the courage to expel sinners. The devil subjects Christians to his most horrifying apparitions while they are asleep: “They see you [the devil] totally defiled and surrounded by every defilement, you changing into your abominations and your abominations changing into you, so that they vomit either while asleep or when they awake.”⁵⁵

That grim statement about dreams is in the address *Because of You Too, O Prince of Evil*, which Shenoute may have delivered shortly after his own experience of a demonic apparition, the encounter with an intrusive “official” that we considered in Chapter 1.⁵⁶ As we saw, there is a long tradition among scholars of understanding this event, which appears also in the *Life of Shenoute*, as involving a real local magistrate who came to investigate Shenoute’s violent treatment of his monks.⁵⁷ That interpretation might be true, especially because Shenoute considered Satan and his human followers to have had a close, quasi-incarnational relationship. In the *Night*, Shenoute’s account to his monks of that appearance, both illustrates and contradicts his other statements about demonic apparitions. Shenoute, recall, was pacing the “streets” of the monastery wondering whether he was right to expel a group of monks, when he encountered a man “in the form of an official who had been sent by someone greater than himself,” who entered the monastery “without knocking,” accompanied by a seeming subordinate. When the official attacked Shenoute, “as if he were someone who was concerned about those persons [the sinful monks],” Shenoute fought back, questioning whether the man was a spirit or an angel from God (and thus able to reveal to him “whether it is they who have sinned against God or

it is we”) or a demon. His ability to throw the official to the ground and put him in a scissors hold with his legs revealed that the official was in fact a demon, not a representative of God. He realized, too, that the demon’s appearance as a man of importance was Satan’s effort to deceive people into tolerating the sinful monks and allowing them to stay in the monastery.

This demonic apparition incarnated dissension within the monastic community in a figure who was clearly external to it.⁵⁸ But the appearance of the official also included representational elements that suited Shenoute’s particular prophetic struggle against evil: he was a powerful person who stood on the side of hypocritical monks and thus opposed the exposure of hidden sin. The situation, as the demonic official clarified it, must have reminded Shenoute, who had vacillated over whether to expel the sinners, of the anger and shame of his past conflict with the second father of the monastery; now Shenoute himself had come close to behaving like the second father and failing to ensure that “some souls may go to God in complete purity.” It would make sense, then, if this encounter did in fact inspire Shenoute to deliver the blistering, highly wrought attack on Satan in *Because of You Too, O Prince of Evil*: “How is it,” he demanded of the devil, “that you are a king or soldier or governmental official that you will take their form in order to disturb whoever disturbs you?”⁵⁹

Describing the incident, Shenoute at times sounds defensive, despite his clear conviction of the just nature of his expulsion of the monks, which he gained through the demonic encounter. Was it right for Shenoute to fight the official, given that at first he thought he could be an angelic representative of God? Yes, Shenoute insisted, for to do otherwise would have been to succumb to a dangerous naiveté: “But I have told you, brothers, that the enemy deceives many of those who believe right away in every word and every spirit. Thus it happens in numerous places that many people fight in behalf of impiety because they trust in the deceiving spirits and the demonic teachings. Truly it is no evil if a person who loves Christ fights with a good spirit. If it reveals itself to him, it loves him all the more and rejoices over him, for it knows that it was not against it that he was fighting, rather that he was keeping watch and being on guard lest he do obeisance before a demon and come under the authority of a hostile spirit, thinking it is a holy angel.” This argument puts Shenoute somewhat at odds with his claims elsewhere that

Satan's appearances to the Christian who is awake are easily detectable, that one who strikes a demonic apparition "has struck the wind," and that God's angels and spirits speak with people only internally, not externally. Perhaps the unmasking of the official as a demon persuaded Shenoute that angels do not in fact appear in this way, and in other works, as we have seen, demonic appearances in support of leniency to sinful monks are highly deceptive. In this case, Shenoute tacitly admits that his fellowship with the offending monks—"I eat bread with them and they with me, my hand and their hand in the same bowl on the same table"—may have clouded his judgment, and he concedes that his decision to expel them now will likely make him "their enemy for the rest of my life." Yet there is no other choice but to "cut off from the body the members that have become rotten." The encounter with the demonic official, as emotionally difficult as it may have been for him, accomplished for Shenoute precisely what his demonology was designed to do. It reduced a situation of oppressive moral ambiguity to two clear alternatives—expulsion of the monks or submission to demonic deception.

Shenoute brought that same dualistic sensibility to his treatment of thoughts, the devil's primary means of attack against the Christian. After his defeat and dismemberment by Christ, all that remains of Satan are his breaths—his thoughts. At "the consummation" Jesus will destroy any remaining thoughts of the devil, and then Satan's death will be complete and he will not live again. In the meantime, the Christian must be vigilant against the devil's thoughts: just as the pilot of a boat closely monitors the water that comes into the boat's hull through waves and leakage, "we too with all diligence will guard our heart, as it is written [Prov. 4:23], from every evil thing that jumps or drips into it, thoughts that corrupt the heart and soul of those people who accept them." Satanic thoughts should be easily discerned—even "small children can recognize" them—and thus, unlike Evagrius, Shenoute shows little, if any, interest in identifying different thoughts or spirits. Those "who fight against the devil's evil thoughts" simply should "not permit them to enter them" and, if thoughts do enter, not permit them to remain. Evil thoughts that persist in a person are like the straw and twigs that a wind-storm picks up and turns into destructive weapons. Like Athanasius and Evagrius, Shenoute borrowed from the story of Judas (John 13:2) the image of the devil "throwing" or "casting" a thought into someone's heart. Yet another example from the world of snakes provided a striking

picture of the heart resistant to such demonic suggestions: “Do you want to learn about the heart of people who do not accept the sins of Satan or permit his thoughts to become manifest in them at all? Consider a smooth stone over which snakes have slithered: are you going to find any trace of them on it, or even of the biggest of all serpents?”⁶⁰

Shenoute conforms his understanding of thoughts to the overarching dualistic pattern of his thought, rooted in the traditions of the two ways (*Didache*) and the two angels (*Shepherd of Hermas*) and shaped by the final judgment that loomed in the future.⁶¹ Although he regularly speaks of the devil’s thoughts in the plural and concedes that they are numerous, Shenoute often simply opposes two groups of thoughts—evil or defiled thoughts as a set, in contrast to good or holy thoughts as a set. He can also speak of a single evil thought belonging to Satan in conflict with a single good thought belonging to Christ. For example, the person who considers whether to accept the “counsels and thoughts of Satan” or “the counsels of the Lord” actually finds himself poised between two opposing thoughts: a host of vices (many of which Shenoute lists) “all enter the heart of the person who first accepts the evil thought,” whereas an equal number of virtues (also listed) “all enter the heart of the person who first accepts the good thought.” Here we see the influence of the *Shepherd of Hermas*, in which a good and a bad angel accompany every person and suggest good and evil to him or her. But Shenoute’s “evil thought” and “good thought” have no specific content and instead represent two general orientations or dispositions of the heart, akin to the two spirits of the Qumran literature. Shenoute can present the conflict between the two opposing thoughts as a conflict between a person’s attending angel and Satan, between the “army” of angels and the “swine-herd” of the demons, between the voice of Scripture and that of the serpent, or between Satan’s thought and God’s law.⁶²

In their statements about thoughts, Shenoute’s writings are similar to other monastic sources: the monk must guard against thoughts, prevent them from entering his mind or soul (“heart”), and not allow them to persist within him if they do enter. There is, however, no sign that Shenoute is aware of Evagrius’s more subtle and differentiated teachings about thoughts; the sources of his views are the *Life of Antony*, the Bible, and his own monastic training.⁶³ In contrast to the intellect of the Evagrian monk, always as receptive as a wax tablet to the imprinting of representations of all kinds, the heart of Shenoute’s monk could become

as hard and smooth as a rock, resistant to any demonic traces. Shenoute does not in Evagrian fashion differentiate among evil thoughts, exploring their connections and setting out diverse means to counter them, nor does he provide lists of such thoughts, as Athanasius does. It is inconceivable that he would, like Evagrius, recommend that a monk “drive out a nail with a nail” by, say, resisting a persistent thought of vainglory by entertaining one of fornication. Rather, Shenoute dwells on the clear contrast between good and evil thoughts, so obvious that any Christian should be able easily to identify evil thoughts and reject them.

In fact, however, people often find themselves in a “great darkness and storm,” unable to “discern the truth”; this state of confusion is their own fault, for human beings always remain free to choose the good and reject evil, and an evil thought can seduce them only if their will “precedes” the thought. Although the enemy throws “fiery sparks” (his “evil thoughts”) into a person’s house, it is “the sin-loving person” who provides “the material that ignites the fire” in the form of his own will.⁶⁴ Shenoute’s sermon *As We Began to Preach* recounted his answer to the complaint of a visiting dignitary, Chossoroas the count: “The devil hinders us, and he trips us up and does not allow us to do these [good] things, and he restrains us with his [evil] things.” In response, Shenoute provided numerous biblical examples to support his view that people have free will and can always choose to do good, reject evil, and extricate themselves from sin after they have fallen. As Athanasius argued in the *Life of Antony* and other works, Shenoute claimed that it is natural for the human being not to sin: “The evils do not belong to our nature; rather, they belong to the passions. But they have snared us because our resolution [*prohairesis*] has turned toward acts contrary to our nature. Those people whose resolution has not changed have not turned away from the acts that belong to their nature. Furthermore, some people have come out from unnatural acts after they have fallen into them. If he [the devil] cannot restrain those who want to remove themselves from sin, then how will he make people sin against their will, except out of ignorance?”⁶⁵

While Shenoute’s view resembles that of Athanasius, it has less to do with Stoic reflections on nature and external stimuli and more to do with Paul’s discussion of the Gentiles’ sinfulness in Romans 1, which Shenoute read along with Paul’s Areopagus speech (Acts 17:22–31). His emphasis on “passions” and “unnatural” acts and their connection to

knowledge (or lack thereof) reflects Romans 1:18–32, but Shenoute's concept of "ignorance" includes not only the pagans' willful failure to acknowledge God despite the clear evidence for him, which Paul stresses in Romans (1:19–21, 28), but also the more innocent lack of knowledge of God that the Lukan Paul attributes to pagans in Acts (17:23, 27, 30). Pagans, Shenoute says, possess "the will of the demons" because they "do not recognize the God who created them"; in contrast, "young people" (presumably Christian) sin both because of "the will of their heart" and because of the devil, for "they do not recognize that it is he," but when they grow up and "come to know God's judgment, they give up the wicked will and choose the good for themselves."⁶⁶ Because it is human nature not to sin, awareness of God's judgment and the punishments that await sinners, the constant themes of Shenoute's own preaching, should suffice to turn people away from evil and toward virtue.

A listener might conclude from Shenoute's view of humanity's natural goodness that people would not have sinned if there had been no devil. Shenoute himself seems to say as much in his opening salvo against Satan in *Because of You Too, O Prince of Evil*: "Because of you too, O prince of evil, every wicked pursuit has come into existence. For except that you gave precedence to every evil before every good, working in human beings hatred against love, enmity against peace, defilement against purity, violence against righteousness and judgment, and all the other impieties against piety, that multitude would not be going into destruction." But in another sermon Shenoute attributes to "those who speak perversions" (Prov. 23:33) the statement, "If Satan had not come into being, indeed every person would have been good." He replies with an echo of Paul's retort to any who would question God's justice—"Who are you to answer back to God, the maker of everything?" (compare Rom. 9:20)—and then launches into an argument that begins with the goodness of all that God created and that is then lost in a lacuna. As we have seen, Shenoute elsewhere defends God's "forbearance" of Satan as giving people an opportunity to prove their worth and thus to earn their eternal reward: no guts, no glory. In any event, it is evident that the person poised between the evil thought of Satan and the good thought of Christ should be able to "recognize the voice of the true life-giving shepherd and run to him."⁶⁷

Not only can people always abandon sin, but they also can find the

good if they “labor” (*hise*).⁶⁸ *Labor* (or *suffering*) was Shenoute’s term for the monastic life, which he saw as the most effective means of defeating the devil and thus of gaining salvation on the day of judgment; the plural *labors* referred to the monks’ ascetic practices, such as fasting, prayer, recitation of Scripture, and vigils.⁶⁹ Performed rightly, ascetic acts were of great benefit: “Blessed are they whose flesh, heart, and mouth have dried up for the sake of Jesus and in whom every evil has dried up even more! Blessed are they whose eyes have failed because of thirst for the sake of Jesus because they have rendered the devil blind, and he is indeed blind for those with whom Jesus is present!” Prayer, fasting, and other ascetic measures were the monks’ “battle equipment,” sufficient to defeat the devil, but not if the monks failed to “exercise self-control so as not to do all these abominations,” as was the case in the crisis under the second father. Likewise, when the devil sowed envy, anger, and hatred among the monks, their prayers went “astray,” and their recitation of Scripture was useless, for Satan “does not permit you to understand what you are reciting.” But if they avoided sin, the monks’ labors, Shenoute assured them, would bring them a “great reward”: “God will bless you, increase for you all your labors, and humiliate the enemy, Satan, in your presence for your entire lifetime.”⁷⁰

As in the Pachomian literature, demonology supported adherence to the monastery’s rules and explained dissension and conflict. Fidelity to the rules of the monastery would make the monks “a single heart with one another” and thus “strong against Satan and all his evil works as well,” but if each monk was “wise only unto himself,” then “Sin will be strong against us, along with our diabolical enemy.” Satan’s jealousy could prevent Shenoute from visiting or communicating with the monks, and outright conflict within the monastic community resulted from “Satan’s destruction.”⁷¹ As in the Pachomian *Koinonia*, the leaders and housemasters within Shenoute’s monasteries played, as Bentley Layton has shown, “a crucial pastoral role, instilling values and interpreting regulations” as well as “functioning as emotionally significant others” to the monks under their care.⁷² Shenoute stressed the importance of these leaders: just as soldiers defeat or are defeated by their enemies, depending on the quality of their training, so too “people who learn from those who teach them through God, in the teachings of the Scriptures, defeat their diabolical enemies that make war against them.” In turn, Shenoute harshly condemned as “counselors of the devil” mo-

nastic leaders who “would overturn the traditions of our fathers and scatter God’s law.” Their laxity could lead others to “abandon these words and ordinances,” and then “the unclean spirits will dance in them, within their unlearned heart, in their demonic zeal,” just as they did “in the days when the spirits of fornication and every evil deed passed by, before God helped us with all these words.”⁷³ This is perhaps another reference to the days of the second father, before Shenoute began to compile and augment the rules and traditions of the monastery.

Although Satan and his demons haunted the monastery, sowing division and obstructing discipline, the monks benefited from the presence of angels and the help of God in their combat with the demonic. “We pray to God,” Shenoute said, “that his angels may dwell with us and we with them, while they protect us and chase every unclean spirit and demon from Christ’s house and his places.” God, Jesus, and the angels joined Shenoute in issuing commands and pleas to the monks. The presence of angels should shame people into not doing evil, and “the angel of Christ” who accompanies “the pious person” provides help in the effort to avoid sin. Those who “call upon” God or Jesus will likewise receive divine aid in their struggle, sometimes mediated through angels. The monastic community was something like heaven on earth: to “wear the habit” was to “dwell with angels and holy brothers,” and thus it was all the more disappointing when a monk “thinks about demonic things every hour and does not think about angelic things for a single moment.” But no monk need think about demonic things. Confident in God’s help and humanity’s natural goodness, Shenoute could taunt the devil, “Come out against those who are awake and keeping watch, O murderer! . . . If you love fighting, don’t leave behind anything with which you wage war against the one who truly trusts in God and has renounced your pollutions!”⁷⁴

In comparison to Evagrius’s subtle considerations of the eight evil thoughts, and even Athanasius’s more graphic depiction of the demon-fighting Antony, Shenoute’s relentlessly dualistic juxtapositions of God and Satan, good and evil, and his conviction that monks could easily avoid sin if they would just see the light (backed up by a system of corporal punishment and expulsion) can appear crudely simplistic and psychologically naive. Indeed, Shenoute’s monastery has been called “a kind of fall-back” in the development of monasticism, an “instinctive”

return to “the old, well-structured collectivism, which always remains a temptation to human beings.” According to this view, the success of his enterprise, a monastic community of thousands, indicates that Egyptian peasants were looking, not for “guidance and support to help them walk confidently in the way of a fuller realisation of their personal spiritual self and of their identification with Christ,” but “for a strong authority and a rigorous and detailed rule that would assure their escape from perdition and their eternal salvation.”⁷⁵

To be sure, if one looks to ancient monks for kindred spirits in the modern Western project of discovering one’s “personal spiritual self,” Shenoute is bound to be a disappointment. There is no point in trying to turn him into a sensitive and discerning monastic guide like Ammonas, Evagrius, and even (from what we can tell) Pachomius. But Shenoute made no pretense of being such: his was literally the voice from beyond, from outside the world and from outside the monastic community. His writings should not be taken to represent the countless interactions among fellow monks and between monks and their mentors that constituted the daily life of the White Monastery. The monks and other Christians who gathered for Shenoute’s occasional sermons hoped to hear the Word of God from his inspired prophet. Shenoute did not disappoint them, composing even his monastic rules “in the prophetic voice of his own personal authority, the voice of inevitability.”⁷⁶

Rather than offer an “instinctive” and thus unreflective security, Shenoute developed his prophetic voice in response to a profound failure in his monastic community and deepened it in confrontation with the moral disorder that he saw in the monastery, the Church, and the world around him. In Shenoute, the demon-fighting monk brought the clarity of his struggle against evil to create difference where there was confusion, and truth where there was concealment. A fragmentary untitled sermon shows Shenoute in this dual prophetic role. First he rejoiced in the conversion of a pagan temple to a Christian church, which he depicted not merely as the reorientation of a holy place but as a transfer from demonic evil to spiritual truth: “Instead of a place for an unclean spirit, it will be a place for the Holy Spirit from now on, and instead of sacrificing to Satan and worshiping and fearing him, from now on Christ will be served in it, and he will be worshiped and bowed down to and feared.” Here the monastic prophet, opponent of paganism, used the polarizing language of demonology to promote religious change. But then

Shenoute made the changing nature of the building a model for the potential of the individual to change: “Blessed is a man, blessed is an ignorant woman, whose destiny is like the destiny of this house, when they repent from their evils. But woe to a man, woe to a woman who have come to know Jesus, if their destiny is like the beginning of this house. For just as there are many who have turned from the darkness to the light over time, so too many are those who turn back from the light to the darkness.” He went on to praise the poor who give what little they have to the Church in support of others, in contrast to the rich who accumulate fields and vineyards and wealth, and to condemn married Christians who use the respectability of their married state to conceal their adulterous behavior.⁷⁷ Here the monastic prophet, advocate of social justice, defended the poor, criticized the rich, exposed hypocrisy among the “holy,” and called the people of God back to repentance. Shenoute’s demonological rhetoric—its stark dualistic division between the worship of God and the worship of demons, its depiction of sinners as organically connected to Satan and of sin as pollution and disease, and yet its insistence on the freedom of every person (even the worst sinner) to reject evil and choose the good—suited perfectly the multifaceted agenda of such a modern-day prophet.

II

War Stories

“The Holy and Great Fathers”

Monks, Demons, and Storytelling

Do not miss the narrative of old men, for they too learned from their fathers.

—Sirach 8:9

In January 399 Evagrius died. His passing marked the end of an era in the monasticism of Lower Egypt. The preceding years had brought the deaths of many senior monks, men who had been the pioneers of the new monastic movement or who had known those pioneers. Younger monks began to sense the loss of contact with those who had been brave enough to create a new way of life in the desert. Events soon brought a greater sense of loss. Controversy over the appropriation of Origen's legacy by the desert monks turned violent later in 399 when Bishop Theophilus of Alexandria at first criticized and then supported monks (so-called anthropomorphites) who believed that one could pray with an anthropomorphic image of God in one's mind. Theophilus eventually used military force to drive out of Nitria monks whom he called Origenists, several of whom had gathered around Evagrius and held to his ideal of pure, imageless prayer. Some of these men ended up in Palestine and Asia Minor. In the subsequent years a series of raids by “barbarians” terrorized the monastic settlements of Nitria and Scetis, causing even more monks to flee to other regions, especially Palestine.

In the wake of these events, several authors began to collect and write down the stories and sayings that had circulated among the monks of Scetis and Lower Egypt. In the last decade of the fourth century, monks from the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem made a tour of monastic settlements in Egypt, and shortly thereafter one of them wrote in Greek a memoir of the journey, telling what they had seen and heard as they visited such prestigious fathers as John of Lycopolis. This work, *The*

History of the Monks in Egypt (*Historia monachorum in Aegypto*), circulated widely, and Rufinus, the well-known and controversial Christian teacher, translated it into Latin, revising it and making additions in light of his own visit to the Egyptian desert. About twenty years later, around 420, Bishop Palladius of Helenopolis, perhaps drawing on his own earlier work, composed a collection of portraits of memorable ascetics, mostly Egyptian monks whom Palladius had met or heard about during his nine-year sojourn as a monk in Lower Egypt in the 390s and during a later return to Egypt as an exiled bishop. He dedicated this work to Lausus, a highly placed official in the court of Emperor Theodosius II, and thus it is known as *The Lausiak History* (*Historia Lausiaca*). In the second half of the fifth century, monks in Palestine collected, organized, and wrote down the anecdotes and teachings that Egyptian monks had brought there in the years since the death of Evagrius and the ensuing turmoil. Monks continued to revise and add to these *Sayings of the Desert Fathers* (*Apophthegmata patrum*), whose usefulness as a means of monastic education and formation led to their wide dissemination and translation into several other languages. In this half of this book—Part Two, “War Stories”—I add these collections of monastic lore to the sources I examined in Part One and engage in a more thematic study of the interactions between monks and demons.

These works differ from the sources considered in Part One in several important ways. For one thing, they were all composed outside Egypt, in Palestine or Asia Minor, and thus treat early Egyptian monasticism from a distance, both geographically and temporally.¹ Egypt takes on a foreign, even exotic, character, and its monks are presented as distant figures who ought to be admired or wondered at as well as imitated.² Although each of these collections has a didactic purpose, monks in Egypt were not the immediate and primary addressees of any of them. Events in Egypt left their mark on these works, all the same: *The History of the Monks* evinces sympathy for monks who were labeled Origenists, and the work of Palladius, an opponent of Theophilus in the controversy, may have suffered from later anti-Origenist censorship. The effect of the controversy on the *Sayings* is not as clear, but scholars have long known that the compilers or their predecessors revised the traditions that they received to remove signs of Origenism and to play down the monks most frequently associated with it.

With the exception of the Pachomian literature, the sources in Part

One were the works of single authors. Antony, Ammonas, Evagrius, and Shenoute straightforwardly presented their teachings in letters, treatises, and sermons; Athanasius composed a strongly unified narrative that reshaped traditions about a single monk, Antony, to his own theological and social vision. Palladius, the anonymous author of the *History*, and the monks who had passed on and compiled the *Sayings* also had their own points of view, to which they conformed the sayings and stories. Yet because they treated a variety of monks, who differed in lifestyle and perspective, not in single extended narratives but in short vignettes, their works are somewhat less consistent in their spirituality. The authors' intention to preserve and hand on whatever they knew about monasticism in Egypt provided a check on their efforts to impose a single perspective on their material.

These collections also bear an ambiguous relationship to the works of Athanasius and Evagrius in particular. As somewhat reliable transmitters of oral traditions from the fourth century, Palladius and his fellow compilers provide us with at least echoes of the accounts of demonic attack or temptation that Evagrius and other guides heard and used as data for their systematizing efforts. On the other hand, the forms in which we have these accounts postdate the works of Evagrius, and thus these anecdotes may now serve as much to illustrate Evagrius's theories as to show the material from which they arose. For the modern interpreter there is simply no easy way around this dilemma, nor should there be, for what monks experienced must have been shaped by what monastic guides taught them to expect, just as those experiences informed the guides' teachings. In the end, it must be acknowledged that these collections do reflect authorial intentions, if not completely and consistently. Thus, I begin Part Two with a study of the overall point of view on monastic combat with demons to be found in each of these works.

The History of the Monks: Demons as Signs of Virtues

By the third quarter of the fourth century, the monks of Egypt had become famous throughout the ancient Mediterranean. Athanasius's *Life of Antony* contributed to that fame: enormously successful, it was translated into Latin not long after its appearance around 360. In the following decades, a steady and growing stream of pilgrims, both monks and

laypeople, made their way to Egypt to see these remarkable men for themselves. Pilgrimages to Egypt were made by some of the most illustrious figures in the late ancient Church: Basil of Caesarea, Rufinus of Aquileia, Melania the Elder, Jerome. The monks had left the world, but now the world came to them. Not surprisingly, the monks greeted this development with ambivalence. When the bishop of Alexandria and an imperial official visited Arsenius, they agreed to practice whatever advice they received from the monk, who then commanded, "Wherever you hear Arsenius is, do not go there."³ Monks were understandably anxious to preserve the solitary life they had chosen, and they were aware of the mixed motives with which their visitors arrived. Although some pilgrims undoubtedly sought spiritual benefit and perhaps hoped to incorporate at least some of what the monks did into their own ascetic practice, others sought more mundane benefits for themselves (healings, insights into the future) or simply wanted, like any tourists, to see some amazing people and places.⁴ This "supply-and-demand model" of the monastic visitor, in Georgia Frank's apt phrase, represents the monks' perspective on the phenomenon.⁵ For the pilgrims, touristlike wonder and spiritual aspiration could go hand in hand.

Such appears to have been the case for a group of seven pilgrim monks from Jerusalem, who around 394 made the tour of Egyptian monastic sites in Middle and Lower Egypt that is described in *The History of the Monks in Egypt*.⁶ Once dismissed by modern scholars as pure fiction, the *History* now is believed to report an actual journey, but even the staunchest defenders of the work's historicity must acknowledge that its author is less interested in presenting biographical or descriptive information about the monks and communities he saw than in presenting monastic Egypt as a marvelous land of visions, miracles, and amazing men. In this respect, the work resembles other examples of ancient travel literature, which presented foreign lands as being exotic and amazing.⁷ The prologue sets the tone: the Egyptian monks "live the angelic life in imitation of God our Savior" and are "modern prophets" with "godlike power," manifest in their numerous miracles. The author wants "to provide edification and benefit to those who are beginning to practice asceticism" by showing that the current era is just as magnificent as Bible times: through "the holy and great fathers," Christ "performs what he performed through the prophets and apostles" (*HM* prol. 4–9, 12–13). The wonder and amazement elicited by the *History's* tales

of monks receiving food out of thin air, making sand fertile, slaying monstrous serpents, and standing unburned in fire are meant to motivate the novice monk.

Emphasizing the virtues and miraculous powers of the monks, the author maintains a nearly consistent tone of optimism, even triumphalism, which would seem to leave little room for the kind of combat with demons "to the point of blood" of which Athanasius and Evagrius wrote. And indeed, with the exception of a large section of the first chapter on John of Lycopolis, the devil and his demons appear relatively rarely in the *History* and usually to contribute to the themes of the miraculous and fantastic. The only time the devil is said to appear in the ascetic career of Patermuthius it is to show the monk the legendary "treasure-vaults of Pharaoh filled with pure gold." Anouph includes seeing Satan and his demons consigned to eternal punishment in a long list of his own virtues and miraculous visions. When Apelles uses his bare hands to pick up a red-hot iron to attack the demonic specter of a woman, he suffers no injury, but the demon screams in agony (*HM* 10.23, 11.7, 13.1–2). Demons try to prevent Macarius the Egyptian from entering an amazing paradise deep in the desert, blessed with flowing springs, trees, and abundant fruit (*HM* 21.5–8).⁸ The demons' physical torment of Piammonas and his restoration to health by an angel serve mainly to amaze the other monks, who see his scars, and an account of the demons' attack on a monk with obscene thoughts and their strangling him has as its point the ability of Helles to keep the demons away simply by drawing a line around the place (*HM* 12.12–13, 25.3). Jesus's bestowal of "power to tread on serpents, scorpions, and all the power of the enemy" (Luke 10:19), invoked by Athanasius and Evagrius to assure the monk of victory in his struggle with the unseen forces of evil, here becomes the basis for a chapter about monks controlling and killing fierce serpents: when Amoun tells a very large serpent, "[Christ] will destroy you," it "burst and vomited through its mouth all its poison mixed with its blood" (*HM* 9.9–10). Less spectacularly, four monks receive the ability to exorcise demons thanks to their exceptional virtue.⁹ Monastic authority over the demonic is here simply another amazing gift that God bestows on virtuous ascetics, and demons join crocodiles and fantastically large serpents as the wondrous denizens of the mysterious desert over which the monks display their amazing power. Demons are part of the exotica of Egypt.

Yet the reader who may think that the *History* has completely abandoned the reality of monastic struggle for the outsider's gaze of wonder is brought up short by passages that suggest connection to genuine monastic teaching. For example, the portrait of Pityrion, Ammonas's successor as the leader of Antony's monastery at Pispir, characteristically begins with reference to his "many different kinds of powerful deeds," including exorcism, and ends with a description of his amazingly restricted diet (a little soup only twice a week, on Sundays and Thursdays). But the author describes Pityrion as delivering "many discourses" to the visiting monks, and speaking "on the discernment of spirits forcefully." Pityrion explains that one drives out demons by driving out the passions with which they are associated (*HM* 15). However simplistically it is presented, the teaching still rings true as coming from the tradition of Antony and Ammonas. Evagrius briefly appears. He is said to possess "considerable discernment of thoughts" thanks to his "experience," and he advises the brothers not to drink too much water, "for the demons frequently attack well-watered places" (*HM* 20.15–16). Any college professor will recognize this phenomenon: Evagrius did indeed often speak of the danger of drinking too much water, but doubtless he would have sighed to learn that this was the only specific teaching that the Jerusalem monk recalled from the "many other discourses" he delivered to the visiting students of asceticism (*HM* 20.16).

These traces of the notion that the monk's relationship with the demonic was one of genuine struggle rather than of triumphant display of power are anticipated in the far longer discussion of demonic combat found in the *History*'s opening chapter on John of Lycopolis. Famous for his gift of clairvoyance, John was a long-distance associate of Evagrius and his circle: Evagrius and Ammonius traveled up the Nile to consult John at least once. In the *History*, only Apollo comes close to receiving the length and depth of attention that the author gives to John. John's extended sermon to the visiting pilgrims covers now-familiar themes—humility, renunciation, the dangers of the passions, thoughts and images—but without any mention of demons in its first ten or so chapters. Then John warns against the danger of pride, which he associates with "proximity to the villages," and suggests moving to "the most distant deserts" as an antidote (*HM* 1.31). This point introduces three stories of demonic attacks on monks, each of which serves to affirm a strong boundary between city and desert. An accomplished monk living in "the

near desert" is brought to despair and returns to the world when a female demon successfully tempts him; the lesson is that "dwelling near the villages" leads to contact with women and thus to memories that demons can exploit (*HM* 1.32–36). A dissolute youth repents and withdraws into a cemetery, where he endures three nights of taunts and blows from the demons until the demons withdraw in defeat; although the young man continued to live in the tombs, John advises that "the far desert is especially profitable to us for the practice of asceticism" (*HM* 1.37–44). An extremely contemplative monk in "the more distant desert" slowly succumbs to pride, his spiritual decline indicated by the deteriorating quality of the miraculous bread he receives every two or three days, to the point that he, too, decides to return to the world; fortunately, a stay in a monastery restores him to repentance (*HM* 1.45–58). On the one hand, these stories reflect the now standard monastic teachings that the ascetic must remain humble about his accomplishments and that living among others presents dangers to the reliance on God that the ascetic hopes to cultivate. On the other hand, they use demons to reinforce the powerful dichotomy between the city and the desert, which the author sets up in the prologue.¹⁰ In the *History* that dichotomy contributes to the exotic, foreign character of the Egyptian desert: "The implied desert here both isolates, insulates, and protects the monk from any engagement with the world of the reader."¹¹

These passages concerning Pityrion, Evagrius, and John suggest that the author of the *History* knows some of the genuine teachings about demons that we recognize from other sources that circulated among the Egyptian monks. If so, then perhaps the other less familiar demonological themes in the *History*—authority over the demonic as a reward for monastic virtue, delight in fantastic tales of monks demonstrating their miraculous powers—reflect attitudes among the Egyptian monks as well. In Chapter 9 I shall examine how the monk resembled the magician in his ability to offer concrete supernatural aid to people, and how monastic authors sought to differentiate the monk from the less reputable sorcerer. We have already seen Athanasius and Evagrius acknowledge the supernatural abilities of monks and warn against taking pride in those abilities. In the *History*, likewise, a demon might appear immediately after an ascetic accomplishes something noteworthy and tempt him to be proud (*HM* 2.9–20, 8.3–4, 21.3–4). At one point Copres pauses in his long narration of amazing deeds he and others have per-

formed and expresses some anxiety: "My children, I should not boast to you or extol the achievements of our fathers, lest we become puffed up in our thinking and lose our reward. But for the sake of your zeal and benefit, because you have come to us from so far away, I will not deprive you of your benefit but will relate, while the brothers are here, what God has accomplished through us" (HM 10.27). And so Copres goes right on telling his miracle stories, and his speech is followed by a remarkable session in which monks take turns recounting, without the slightest hesitation, what amazing things they have done and seen. The author then turns to Abba Helle, who frankly exhorts his monastic colleagues to aim for the ability to perform miracles: "If you truly practice asceticism, then demonstrate the signs of virtue!" (HM 12.1). There is no distance between these monks and their awed observers on this point. The spirit of pride may haunt *The History of the Monks*, but for the most part we find here monks taking great pleasure in their power over the demons. The vanquished demons have become signs of the monks' virtues.

Palladius's *Lausiac History*: Purity of Intention and the Danger of Pride

Around 420, some twenty years after the appearance of *The History of the Monks*, Palladius, the bishop of Helenopolis (or perhaps Aspuna) in Asia Minor, wrote his *Lausiac History*, a collection of tales about ascetic Christians in Egypt and elsewhere, dedicated to Lausus, a highly placed official ("prefect of the most religious bedchamber") in the court of the emperor Theodosius II. Palladius may have drawn from or revised an earlier memoir, which now survives only in Coptic and Syriac fragments.¹² Unlike the author of *The History of the Monks*, Palladius had spent a long period in the Egyptian desert. Born in Galatia in 363 or 362, Palladius entered the monastic life on the Mount of Olives as a young man, but by 388 he was in Alexandria, learning ascetic discipline and Christian philosophy under Didymus the Blind and others. Two years later he left the city for the monastic settlements in the desert of Nitria and then retreated farther to Kellia. There he remained for nine years, practicing asceticism in the circles that gathered around Evagrius. In 399, circumstances conspired to force Palladius to leave the desert: Evagrius died in January, Palladius's own health deteriorated, and Palladius became a player in the first so-called Origenist controversy.

As Bishop Theophilus began his crusade to expel "Origenist" monks from the monastic settlements of northern Egypt, Palladius departed for Palestine. By the next year, 400, he was in Bithynia in Asia Minor, where he was consecrated bishop of Helenopolis. Palladius supported Bishop John Chrysostom of Constantinople, to whom others of the Origenist monks had fled, in his conflict with Theophilus, which climaxed in 403 at the Synod of Oak, where Palladius himself was interrogated about his own possible Origenist sympathies. Palladius journeyed to Rome to speak to the Pope on Chrysostom's behalf, and there he stayed with Melania the Younger and met other ascetics, whose stories he included in his *Lausiac History*. Chrysostom died on his way to exile, and eventually Palladius was sent into exile in the Egyptian desert, where he remained until 412. There Palladius wrote a treatise in defense of John Chrysostom, which portrayed Theophilus as an opportunist motivated by greed rather than by theological zeal. Palladius returned to Asia Minor, where, it seems, he served as bishop of Asputa and wrote the *Lausiac History* around 420, before his death sometime in around 430.

Thus, Palladius's position with respect to the desert traditions that he describes is complicated. The ascetic tradition in which he was trained had been called into question, and his primary monastic teacher had become an object of intense controversy, both beloved and reviled. Despite this awkward situation, it is easy enough to find traces of Evagrius's influence throughout the *Lausiac History*, even though the received Greek text may be a somewhat de-Origenized version of an earlier work.¹³ For example, Palladius presents the monastic life in terms of fidelity to one's teachers and their training: the goal is *gnōsis*, and a wise monk earns the adjective "gnostic" (*gnōstikos*), a very wise one "very gnostic" (*gnōstikōtatos*).¹⁴ But the "Evagrianism" of the *Lausiac History* must not be exaggerated: Evagrius was not so far (if at all) removed from the "mainstream" of early monasticism, and Palladius was not simply propagating Evagrian theories through stories.¹⁵ He had his own purposes. All of Evagrius's eight evil thoughts appear somewhere, but never altogether and not with the same frequency. Palladius mentions anger only once; gluttony, fornication, love of money, sadness, and listlessness, from three to six times each; but vainglory appears nine times, and pride eight.¹⁶ Writing to a high imperial official, Palladius concentrates on the dangers of seeking the approval of others (vainglory) and believing in one's self-sufficiency (pride). Such an emphasis not only suited Lausus's own ele-

vated position, but also served Palladius's agenda of commending a range of ascetic practices, from the most moderate to the most extreme, as long as one engaged in those practices with the right intention and in communion with wiser teachers and the Church.¹⁷

Though he had once been a desert monk in Egypt, Palladius was now a bishop in Asia Minor, deeply engaged in the ecclesiastical politics and communal life that many monks sought to avoid. The *Lausiac History* likewise seeks to bring the piety of the desert into the city, indeed into the imperial palace, and thus its goals are multifaceted. In part it seeks to entertain: several of the stories, including ones involving demons, are meant to be good stories and thus to inspire the same kind of wonder that *The History of the Monks* sought to elicit. For example, here too we find Macarius the Alexandrian's journey to the garden-tomb of Jannes and Jambres that appears in the *History*. Although Macarius finds not two holy men, but a scene reminiscent of death, other elements of the story are even more fantastic—the demons are more determined in their opposition to Macarius, and the monk is rescued from starvation by an antelope at whose udder he nurses (*LH* 18.5–9). Yet among many equally fantastic tales about Macarius one finds this moment of realism:

One day when I [Palladius] had some free time, toward the end of his [Macarius's] old age, I went and sat near the door of the old man, having reckoned that he had surpassed humanity in age, and I listened to what he was saying and doing. And all alone inside, although he had reached one hundred and lost his teeth, he was fighting with himself and the devil, saying, "What do you want, you evil old man? Look, you have tasted oil and partaken of wine—what more can you want, you grey-haired glutton?" Thus he scolded himself. Then to the devil as well: "Do I now owe you anything? You will find nothing! Depart from me!" And, as though humming, he kept saying to himself: "Come, you white-haired glutton, 'how long will I be with you' [compare Matt. 17:17]?" (*LH* 18.26)

Palladius intends this picture to be admirable, and it appears to show Macarius using the strategy of "talking back" to demons that he is likely to have taught Evagrius. Still, it is hard not to see here a somewhat disquietingly real picture of an old man in decline. Modern commentators often favorably compare the realism of the *Lausiac History* with the emphasis on the marvelous in *The History of the Monks*, but Palladius's

work displays its own kind of sensationalism: his realism can verge on the morbid. Some anecdotes are so graphic in their depictions of disease and sexuality that a modern translator refused to translate them fully or accurately.¹⁸ Palladius likely intended the shock value of these scenes to have a therapeutic effect. He tells Lausus that he hopes that his account will be a "medicine against forgetfulness" and an antidote against "all the drowsiness that arises from irrational desire and all the double-mindedness and pettiness that arise in necessary activities" and thus help to improve Lausus's "pious intention" (*LH* prol. 3). Lausus need not become an ascetic himself (and would he want to, after reading these tales?), for he can demonstrate the "faith that has extended itself through love to works" whether he fasts or not (*LH* prol. 13).

Pride and vainglory are the greatest dangers to that faith and together form the primary theme of Palladius's demonology. Evagrius, recall, had taught that the monk who suffers from vainglory performs his ascetic labors in order to win the admiration of other people, but the monk who succumbs to pride esteems himself too highly and thinks that he does not need the help of God, the angels, or more advanced monks. This distinction runs through much monastic literature, although even authors inspired by Evagrius, like Palladius, do not always clearly distinguish the two demons and their accompanying vices. According to Palladius, the pride that caused the demons to fall from their original angelic status was their refusal to submit to the instruction of their superiors. As God created them, rational beings should form a community organized by ranks of teachers and students: "Those who are better in knowledge (*gnōsis*) and virtue teach those who are lesser in knowledge." Proud people do not accept their place in this hierarchy and thus imitate the demons: "Now those who think they need no teacher, or who do not believe those who teach them in love, are afflicted with the disease of ignorance, which is the mother of pride. Their predecessors into destruction are those who fell from the heavenly path by the same passion, the demons who fly about in the air, having left their heavenly teachers" (*LH* Ep. 1–2). The demons now live in the region between earth and heaven, and they exist in various classes (*tagmata*), such as "fiery," which Palladius does not list (*LH* 17.12).

When Palladius speaks of teachers in the human sphere, he most often has in mind monastic teachers, but he sees no separation between monks and the wider Church: the individualism of pride separates the

monk from the Church as well as from his brothers. The devil inspires those who “introduced a blemish on the undefiled and catholic Church” (LH prol. 1). A monk’s refusal to receive Communion is a certain indicator of pride (LH 25.2, 5; 27.2). Proud monks trust solely in their own ascetic achievements, forfeiting the stability and guidance offered by the wider community and denying the help of God, and thus “fall short of freedom from the passions (*apatheia*)” (LH Prol. 8).

In fact, several monks in the *Lausiac History* who succumb to pride reach the exact opposite state—not the tranquility that accompanies freedom from the passions, but a form of madness. These include Valens, Heron, Ptolemy, and an anonymous monk at Antinoë (LH 25–27; 58.5). Evagrius had warned that men who took on the anchoritic life “with anger, pride, or sadness” might fall into “episodes of delirium”; he claimed to have seen many brothers who had succumbed to this condition, some of whom other monks were able to return to normalcy “through tears and prayers” and others of whom were not so fortunate. This “loss of wits, madness, and vision of a multitude of demons in the air” Evagrius called “the ultimate evil.” Separation from others only hastened and aggravated this condition, and thus Evagrius advised that the afflicted monk must not remove himself from the company of his brothers. Vainglory, performing one’s asceticism in order to receive the approval of other people, usually prepared the way for the maddening attack of pride. A wretched succession of events, driving the monk from avarice to vainglory to pride, could lead to “the uttermost loss of one’s wits.”¹⁹ In Evagrius’s view, a monk could literally suffer from delusions of grandeur: arrogantly believing that he is sufficient unto himself and separating himself from the supportive and corrective fellowship of the brothers, the monk could, like the fallen angels, leave the society of rational beings and fall into a state of demonic madness.

Palladius’s accounts of Valens and Heron illustrate this process; quite possibly Evagrius knew these monks and had them in mind when he wrote about the madness of pride.²⁰ In the case of Valens, demons use a variety of tricks to enflame his pride: they miraculously produce a lamp so that he can find a lost needle in the dark; they persuade him not to receive the Eucharist; they induce him to refuse a gift from Macarius the Alexandrian and then to reject the older monk’s exhortations. This last action is reminiscent of the demons’ own departure from their heavenly teachers, and thus after it “the demon was then fully satisfied that he

[Valens] had been completely persuaded by its treachery, and it went and disguised itself as the Savior." This last understated phrase introduces an elaborate "vision of a thousand angels carrying lamps and a fiery wheel in which it seemed that the Savior had taken shape" (LH 25.1–4). The reference to a "fiery wheel" indicates that Valens's vision may have been rooted in the *merkevah* tradition of seeing God's glory as a fiery chariot.²¹ Evagrius had, of course, attributed such visions of God "in the form of some image" to the work of demons on a monk who had fallen victim to vainglory.²² At the suggestion of an obsequiously flattering angel, the awestruck Valens leaves his cell and naively worships the Antichrist; the following morning he tells his monastic colleagues, "I have no need of communion, for I saw Christ today." The monks know what to do with the "deranged" Valens: "Then the fathers cured him by binding him and putting him in irons for a year, purging his self-conceit with prayers, neglect, and a quiet life." This striking tale certainly lives up to Evagrius's vivid description of the delirium caused by pride, but Palladius gives it a rather tame moral, saying it should serve as "a caution for those who come across it . . . so that if they should ever find some success, they might not think too much of their virtue"; the important thing is to keep "the right intention" (LH 25.5–6). Lausus and other readers must simply take care not to think too much of themselves should they ever do something good.

Ptolemy was a monk who literally floated on his elevated conception of himself. Evagrius said that the monk afflicted with the delirium of pride could become "lifted up" (*meteōros*), a condition that vainglory could cause as well.²³ Ptolemy practiced such an extreme ascetic regime that Palladius found it "indescribable": he lived in a place with no water supply, somehow surviving on the dew that he collected off rocks with a sponge. Ptolemy's extremism, however, leads him to become "estranged from the teaching and company of holy men and their help and from the continual fellowship of the sacraments." Unlike Valens, Ptolemy is not rescued by the brothers: Palladius reports that "he is borne aloft (*meteōros*) until now, wandering Egypt, having given himself over to gluttony and drunkenness, saying nothing to no one." Such is the result of Ptolemy's "irrational self-conceit." The moral is that one needs a guide or teacher: "Those who have no pilot fall like leaves" (LH 27, citing Prov. 11:14).

Between these two stories with their explicit morals Palladius places

the tale of Heron, who follows a now familiar course. After developing a virtuous reputation, he succumbs to pride and considers himself to be “greater than the fathers.” In particular, he “insulted the blessed Evagrius, saying, ‘Those who obey your teaching are deceived, for there is no need to pay attention to any teachers other than Christ.’” Heron reportedly cited the (somewhat revised) words of Jesus himself: “Call no one teacher upon the earth [compare Matt. 23:8–9]” (LH 26.1). Perhaps Heron had read Athanasius’s famous *Festal Letter* 39 of 367, which makes precisely this argument.²⁴ Whether he had or not, Heron appears here as a critic of Evagrius, Palladius’s teacher, and thus as a forerunner of the later anti-Origenists against whom Palladius had to contend. Like Valens, Heron becomes so “blinded” by his pride that he refuses to take communion, and he is finally put into iron chains (LH 26.2).

But Heron’s story does not end here with a recovery; rather, a new spiral of ascetic achievement and collapse ensues, with Heron the critic of Evagrius ironically serving to illustrate yet another of the demonic scenarios that Evagrius described. After his confinement in chains, Heron returns to an ascetic life of such austerity that he eats practically nothing except the Eucharist. Palladius then relates that he himself and a companion, Albanus, made the forty-mile trip to Scetis with Heron on foot. Palladius and Albanus ate some food twice and drank water three times, but Heron consumed nothing, instead reciting by heart vast portions of the Bible and walking so fast that Palladius and Albanus could not keep up. Such manic behavior could only indicate that Heron has reverted to his previous condition, as subsequent events reveal:

Finally, as if he were driven by fire, he could not remain in his cell. He went off to Alexandria according to a divine plan and, as it is said, drove out a nail with a nail. He willingly fell into neglect, so that he later unwillingly found salvation. For he frequented the theatre and the horse races, and found amusements in taverns. Overeating and drinking in this way, he fell into the mud of the womanly desire, and since he intended to sin, he met a certain actress and had intercourse with her, to his own wounding. While these things were going on, he developed a pustule on the penis itself, and he was sick from this for six months, until his genitals putrefied and fell off. Later, when he had returned to health without those members and came back to pious thinking, he went and confessed everything to the fathers. No sooner had he done this than he died after a few days. (LH 26.2–4)

Palladius provides no moralizing conclusion to this tale, and it scarcely needs one. Pride literally feminizes Heron, victim of "the womanly desire," surely a sufficient warning to Lausus, whom Palladius had exhorted earlier to "be a man" (*LH* Prol. 9).

If Lausus or any other reader should be puzzled by Heron's seemingly self-destructive path to salvation, he could consult Evagrius's cautionary words for the accomplished ascetic. Should an anchorite's intellect fall prey to vainglory and go off to the city, then "according to a divine plan, the spirit of fornication meets it, shuts it up in one of the pig-sties, and teaches it no longer to leave its sickbed before it has recovered its perfect health."²⁵ By actually getting sick and recovering, Heron functions as a case history of the condition that Evagrius describes with the language of health and disease, and both passages contain the crucial phrase "according to a divine plan" (*kat' oikonomian*).²⁶ Palladius nicely brings out the ambiguity of Heron's descent into squalor: the monk willingly and intentionally immerses himself in sin; although his salvation is called unwilling, Heron seems to know that he needs to drive out the nail of pride and vainglory with the nail of fornication, as Evagrius had advised.²⁷ Upon his return to sanity ("pious thinking") Heron confesses everything to the advanced monks and so submits to the community of teachers and disciples that Palladius so values. This episode lacks any explicit reference to the demons: their activity remains implicit in the narrative's passive voice ("driven by fire").

Palladius provides several more examples of arrogant ascetics, victims of the demons of vainglory and pride.²⁸ Abramius demands the right to act as a priest because Christ himself ordained him (*LH* 53). A proud virgin in Jerusalem has sex with her priest, and a Roman virgin's arrogance is exposed when she refuses to accept a challenge to walk around in the city naked (*LH* 28, 37). "The thinking powers" of an anonymous monk near Antinoë are "utterly deranged by the great evil of vainglory," which uses dreams to unhinge him, as Evagrius had said was that demon's practice (*LH* 58.5).²⁹ Even Evagrius himself falls victim to this demon: when he arrives in Jerusalem, Evagrius does not confess his love affair in Constantinople to Melania, but carries on as if nothing happened, because "vainglory stupefied him"; the consequent illness is God's way of curing him (*LH* 38.8–9).³⁰ Perhaps this is why Palladius gives the long speech that explains the role of pride in the downfall of monks, not to Evagrius, but to Paphnutius, whom Evagrius, Albanus, and Palladius

approach and ask “the cause of people living in the desert being deceived in their thinking and destroyed by lack of self-control.” Heron, Valens, and Ptolemy, among others, are named as examples of this phenomenon (*LH* 47.3–5).³¹ The problem is that the desert monks are clearly living virtuous lives: how could God let such things happen to such men?

Paphnutius explains what happened to these unfortunate monks in a way that coheres with Evagrius’s teachings but without the subtlety or precision in vocabulary characteristic of the latter. Palladius may be putting into Paphnutius’s mouth a simplified version of Evagrius’s teaching on pride and abandonment by God, or he may be reporting genuine teachings of Paphnutius that Evagrius heard and used in developing his own theory.³² At the heart of Paphnutius’s discourse is the distinction between one’s intention (or thinking or will or speech) and one’s action or conduct, which corresponds to Evagrius’s distinction between sinning or being virtuous in one’s thinking or intellect and doing so in action. Paphnutius explains that, because everything happens in accordance with virtue and God’s glory (either by God’s will or by his consent), it is impossible for a person who both thinks and acts “rightly” to “fall into the false steps caused by the demons’ shame or deceit,” because God protects such a person. Problems arise, however, when a person seems to act rightly but acts with a wrong intent (especially in order to please others): “God abandons them for their benefit,” so that the resulting negative experiences will lead these people to bring their thinking and their conduct back into line with each other. The cases of Valens and company are more spectacular instances of this more general principle, for Paphnutius points out that “many souls possess superior abilities, talents in thinking and in ascetic practices.” If such gifted persons attribute their abilities to themselves rather than to God, they “are abandoned to shameful conduct and shameful experience,” which is meant to purge their pride through extreme humiliation. “God removes the angel of providence,” one’s guardian angel, from the proud person, who then is “oppressed by the Adversary and falls into licentiousness through pride.” Such abandonment to the devil works for the person’s betterment in some cases (such as the Apostle Paul; 2 Cor. 12:7) but not in all (for example, Judas). The key point is that “it is impossible for someone to fall into licentiousness without being abandoned by God’s providence” (*LH* 47.5–15). Like Evagrius (and Athanasius), Paphnutius

emphasizes that the devil and his demons attack the Christian within limits set by God, whose goal is the reformation of the soul. Spectacular falls like those of Valens and Heron indicate the presence of the vilest sin, pride, which caused the fall of the devil and his demons.

Although it is Paphnutius who presents this simplified version of Evagrius's teachings, Palladius nonetheless depicts Evagrius as the monk most experienced in the natures and tactics of demons. After Evagrius recovers from his own vainglory-inspired illness and takes up residence in the Egyptian desert, "within fifteen years he had so purified his mind that he was deemed worthy of the gift of knowledge and wisdom and the discernment of spirits. So he composed three holy books for monks, the so-called *Responses*, setting forth the arts to be used against demons." Palladius bases Evagrius's credentials on his dramatic experiences of demons, which Palladius relates with the same vividness with which he tells the stories of Valens and Heron:

The demon of fornication troubled him very deeply, as he himself told us, and he stood naked through the entire night in a well during winter, so that his flesh froze. Another time the spirit of blasphemy tormented him, and for forty days he did not enter under a roof, as he himself told us, so that his body sprouted hardened cartilage as irrational animals do. In the daytime three demons approached him in the dress of clergy, asking about the faith: one said he was an Arian; another, a Eunomian; and the other, an Apollinarian. He overcame them by his wisdom with a few words. Again, one day when the key to the church was lost, he made the sign of the cross on the lock and pushed it with his hands and opened it, invoking Christ. He was severely beaten by demons and received great temptation from demons countless times. (*LH* 38.10–12)

Unlike Valens and Heron, Evagrius overcomes vainglory early in his career and so can resist the demons of fornication and blasphemy without falling back into the trap of pride, thus gaining his recognized expertise in the ways of the demons. Macarius the Alexandrian also successfully avoids pride by giving up a marathon session of undistracted prayer that so irritated a demon that it set the contents of his cell on fire (as Evagrius suggested this demon does); later he must resort to extreme measures to resist the temptation of vainglory (*LH* 18.17–18, 22–24).³³ Palladius presents himself as being somewhat like Evagrius in his knowledge and

experience of demons (a self-presentation prepared for in the passage above by the repetitions of the phrase “as he himself told us”): Palladius too “has undergone a thousand and more temptations from demons,” chief of which are the offer of any woman he would like to have sex with and a physical beating like that which Evagrius endured (*LH* 71.1–2). By surviving attacks of fornication and violence, Palladius becomes worthy to pass on the tales of monastic achievement and demonic attack that make up the *Lausiac History*.

Vainglory and pride are not the only demons that appear in the *Lausiac History*; in Chapters 7–9 we shall return to Palladius’s work and examine scenes of exorcism, fornication, and the like. Nonetheless, Palladius’s overall demonology highlights vainglory and pride, the vices by which the demons fell. This emphasis serves the agenda of his work in at least two ways. First, vainglory and pride have to do with the attitude or intention with which one performs ascetic labors—whether one does them for the approval of other people or with humble reliance on the help of God and one’s teachers—and thus have less to do with which ascetic labors one performs. The great variety of ascetic lifestyles Palladius depicts may reflect the historical reality he observed in his sojourns in Egypt and elsewhere,³⁴ but it also makes his point that no one way of life is the correct one. The urban, nonmonastic readers of his work, such as Lausus, need not become monks; rather, they can pursue a moderate degree of self-control in their ordinary lives as long as their intention remains pure and they do not succumb to pride or vainglory. The lurid tales of Valens and Heron, men of severe ascetic discipline who went bad, function like modern urban legends: as parents of today might use graphic stories of blown-off fingers to instruct their children not to use fireworks, Palladius tells tales of desert monks going mad to warn elite urban men and women not to become proud. Second, Palladius, the bishop who was once a monk, emphasizes the essential connection of individual monks to the wider monastic community and to the Church as a whole. Anchoritic monks must not deny their need for guides in the ascetic life (and in this point lies an implicit, but in Heron’s story explicit, defense of Evagrius). Monks also must not seek to please, and receive the applause of, nonmonastic observers (vainglory), nor should they consider themselves superior to the parish-based Church, without need of its teachings and sacraments (pride). Oddly enough, Palladius’s wild tales of monks going mad and losing their genitals serve to rein in the more unsociable tendencies of the monastic movement.

Sayings of the Desert Fathers: The Profit of Combat

After the turmoil of the Origenist controversy, a series of attacks by robbers and "barbarians" on the monastic settlements in Scetis and Nitria in the first decade of the fifth century forced even more monks to abandon these areas and move elsewhere, especially to Gaza and Palestine. These monks brought with them their traditions from Egypt, the stories and sayings that shaped monastic spirituality, mostly in the form of oral traditions and memories, but perhaps also in small written collections. It was in Palestine, probably in the second half of the fifth century, that monks first created the *Apophthegmata patrum*, or *Sayings of the Desert Fathers*, the large collections of anecdotes and sayings featuring monks from the earliest years of monasticism, pioneers such as Sisoës and Macarius the Egyptian, as well as from later generations in fourth- and early fifth-century Egypt.

Because the written collections of the *Sayings* were first made in Palestine, in the late fifth century, and after the Origenist controversy, many scholars are reluctant to use them as sources for fourth-century monasticism in Egypt.³⁵ To be sure, the case for the historicity of any particular anecdote in the *Sayings* requires a detailed consideration of its multiple versions and its coherence with or distance from the overall perspective of the collection(s). Not surprisingly, anyone searching for knowledge about an individual monk, especially an important and contested figure such as Antony, will often find in the *Sayings* not solid evidence for a fourth-century person, but "the image" that "later monastic tradition called for."³⁶ But that is not to say that, taken as a whole, the *Sayings* distort the spirituality and general conditions of monastic life in Lower Egypt in the fourth century. There is evidence that the oral transmission of teachings and anecdotes and the transition to written collections were part of a self-conscious effort to preserve a faltering communal identity.³⁷ A group of monks around Poemen, under whose name more than two hundred *apophthegmata* are transmitted, may have been leaders in this effort.³⁸ This suggests both some reliability in transmission as well as some (collective) authorial intention—in other words, the typical situation when looking at a piece of ancient literature.³⁹ My discussions of monks and demons here and in the following chapters do not depend on the historicity of any particular anecdote that I adduce. Concerns about the distorting effects of the Origenist controversy are valid, for there is certainly evidence that the *Sayings* reflect some hostility to Evagrius and

other “intellectual” monks.⁴⁰ But it is also not hard to find numerous similarities between the *Sayings* and the works of Evagrius, especially on the basic issues of ascetic practice, such as demonology.⁴¹ After all, Evagrius himself created one of the first collections of *apophthegmata patrum* or “words of the holy monks.”⁴²

In accord with all that we have seen before, the desert fathers of the *Sayings* understood their struggle with temptation to be combat with demons as well as with the passions. To be “attacked,” to “wage warfare,” to “fight”—all serve as shorthand to describe the experience of temptation; the presence of demons as the monk’s opponents is implicit in the vocabulary of struggle and combat. A few rare sayings spin out the idea of combat into full-fledged allegory:

Just as in the wrestling matches the opponent throws punches, so too the fighter, that is, the monk, should parry the thoughts by throwing his hands up to heaven and calling on God for help. The fighter stands naked in the wrestling stadium, naked and unencumbered, anointing himself with oil and instructed by the superintendent about how it is necessary to fight. Then the other fighter enters from the opposite side and sprinkles sand, that is, earth, upon him so that he can grab hold of him more easily.

Apply this to yourself, monk. For the superintendent is God, who gives to us the victory; we are the wrestlers; the opponent is the enemy. The sand is the concerns of the world. You see the enemy’s tactic. So stand unencumbered and you shall be victorious. For whenever the mind is hindered by a material concern, it does not receive the immaterial and holy word.⁴³

Although this saying elaborates the combat metaphor in a manner that uncharacteristically equates “concerns of the world” with materiality as such, it captures the drama and the ambiguities that attended the monk’s struggle with Satan. On the one hand, the monk stands alone and naked in the stadium, vulnerable to an opponent who assaults him with a crafty arsenal of thoughts like punches that must be parried. On the other hand, the monk turns to God for help, and he is assured that God will give him the victory. Yet God, as the “superintendent” (*epistatēs*) of the fight, occupies the ambiguous position of being both the coach/trainer to the monk and the judge/steward of the contest.⁴⁴ Alone in the stadium with his opponent, the fighter nonetheless has a powerful advocate and, we shall see, a multitude of supportive fans. Like the semi-

eremitical form of monasticism from which they emanate, the *Sayings* combine solitary and relentless struggle with a deep sense of communal, if usually invisible, support.⁴⁵

At its core the monk's combat with the demons was an individual effort, an unrelenting struggle to maintain the integrity of one's own self in the face of continual assault as one sat alone in the cell. The stakes were very high, as Abba Isaiah laments: "Woe to me, woe to me, because I have not struggled to save myself! Woe to me, woe to me, because I have not struggled to sanctify myself so that I might be worthy of the help of the God of mercy! Woe to me, woe to me, because I have not struggled to prevail in the combats with your enemies so that you might rule over me!" The monk belonged to an army, but he essentially had to fight on his own: "Just as the soldier and the hunter when they go to fight do not worry about whether someone else is wounded or saved, but each one fights for himself alone, so must the monk be." Not only was the warfare with Satan continuous in this lifetime—an advanced monk may think that he is "dead to the world," yet he must beware that "Satan is *not* dead"—but it may also have gotten worse as the monk improved in virtue. So Poemen suggests when a disciple asks, "Why do the demons make war against me so?" His reply: "The demons make war against you? They do not wage war against us as long as we are doing our own wills. For our own wills have become the demons, and it is these that attack us in order that we may fulfill them. But if you want to see those whom the demons make war against, it is against Moses and those who are like him." The monk who manages to conquer his own will (through, for example, the arduous task of obedience to a mentor) is rewarded with even more severe demonic attacks, exemplified by Moses, who journeyed alone up the mountain to see God. This vulnerability of the monk in a solitary struggle, one that intensified as he made progress, is captured in sayings that compare the monk to a house or building, whose walls may come down and into which the devil is constantly throwing "every impurity."⁴⁶ In such sayings the monks portray themselves as essentially alone, vulnerable, and under attack, a condition that intensifies with spiritual progress.

But at other times the monks speak of themselves as fighting without being vulnerable and defensive, even if they are still essentially on their own. In these fights they are the aggressors, storming the citadel of Satan. Like David's general, Joab, the monk is commanded to "take the city

and sack it.” The city, Poemen explains, is “the enemy.” Likewise, when “a great anchorite” asks, “Why do you make war against me like this, Satan?” Satan replies, “It is you who make war against me so greatly.”⁴⁷ Sayings of this kind, in which Satan is the beleaguered city vulnerable to monastic assault, are few in comparison to the numerous times in which the monks speak of themselves as “under attack.” But recasting themselves as the aggressors in an offensive against the demons, as dramatized by Athanasius’s Antony moving confidently into the desert, was one way the monks could counter their experience of vulnerability to temptation.

Moreover, the monks knew that they enjoyed the aid of an unseen army of supernatural beings even more numerous than the demons—angels. The extended allegory of combat in the stadium discussed above lacks spectators, supportive fans who witness and applaud the monk’s otherwise unseen victories, but other anecdotes affirm the invisible presence of such supporters. God and his angels, one old man assured a severely tempted brother, are necessarily present during trials; the monk need only call humbly upon God for help. Another elder consoled a monk who had successfully endured five attacks from the demon of fornication: “Do you think that the affair concerning the blessed Joseph [Gen. 39:6–23] involved only him? Rather, it happened as if in a theater: God and the angels were watching him struggle, and the devil and the demons even more were making the woman savage. And so when the athlete was victorious, all the angels with a great voice gave glory to God, saying, ‘The athlete has won a rare victory!’ Therefore, it is good not to do evil even by thinking, but if someone is tempted, he should struggle not to be defeated.” Even when fighting alone, the monk did not perform his combat without the aid of supportive angelic spectators. Each monk may have had his own guardian angel, Palladius’s “angel of providence,” a phenomenon to which we shall return in Chapter 9: so Paul the Simple could see a monk’s angel “grieved” or “greatly rejoicing,” depending on the monk’s spiritual state.⁴⁸

Like the demons, their former heavenly comrades, the angels normally played their role in monastic life invisibly: “Great is the help of God that surrounds the human being,” Poemen observes, “but we are not permitted to see it with our eyes.” Occasionally, however, a monk was permitted to see the work of the angels, due either to his exceptional virtue or to his need for reassurance. Thus, Macarius the Great is al-

lowed to see a sword-wielding angel chasing demons away from a young monk. An old man who persistently asks to see the demons finally gets even more than he prayed for: he sees "the demons like bees around the person, grinding their teeth against him, while the angels of the Lord drove them away." Moses the Ethiopian, beset by the demon of fornication, is granted the vision of two opposing armies: a host of demons in the west and a more numerous multitude of angels in the east.⁴⁹ These visions reveal that angelic support for the struggling monk went beyond the role of cheering spectators into active combat with the demons assailing the monk. Each monk's struggle, as excruciating and difficult as it must have been, nonetheless was a skirmish in a much larger cosmic battle between supernatural beings. The intensity of the battle in the desert may have indicated to the monks that these were the final days, Satan's last stand.⁵⁰

As in the *Life of Antony* and the works of Shenoute, the combat myth raises pointed questions about the role of God, not only at the high level of theodicy but also at the more mundane level of the monk's ongoing discipline. The theater analogy portrays God as a supportive spectator: along with his angels he watches the monk struggle. When the monk prevails, the angels give the glory to God, yet proclaim that "the athlete" (the monk) has gained the victory. Similarly, the extended wrestling match allegory ambiguously casts God as the contest's "superintendent," who yet instructs the monk in how to fight. In general, the *Sayings* present a God who is ultimately in charge: he is able to help the monk, to allow Satan or demons to tempt or to attack him, and to stop such attacks. Yet this God, as in Athanasius's *Life*, mostly stands aloof from the quotidian give-and-take between the monks and the demons, so much so that monks can lose their sense of God's presence. One anchorite does not "perceive that he is sheltered by God's help and this is why he does not experience attacks from the adversary." This monk's enjoyment of such grace comes to an end when Satan appears to him "with God's consent." If the demons attack the monk only with God's permission, God can revoke his consent: "A certain anchorite was a virgin, more or less ignorant of woman. Thus, the demon of fornication would trouble him, and he was completely on fire, but he did not know from experience the act's pleasure: the slave of God desired, but he did not know what he lusted for. So the devil showed him a certain man having intercourse with a woman shamefully. But when God saw the demon's deception and its ex-

cess (*hyperbolē*), he looked out for the man and stopped the warfare.”⁵¹ In accord with his role as superintendent, God stops this fight when one contestant goes too far. The implication is that, as excruciatingly difficult as many of the monk’s struggles with temptation appeared to be, God would not permit the monk to be tested or assaulted beyond his capacity.

To be sure, the representation of the monk in combat casts God in an ambiguous role: by not giving respite from the demonic assaults, as he is able to do, God becomes the indirect cause of the monk’s trials. Shenoute faced this implication squarely and argued that God allows the devil to tempt people and sometimes imposes trials on them himself so that they may prove their worth and gain their salvation. But this conclusion has removed our gaze from the center of the stadium. For the monks, it was their performance as athletes that was at stake and not God’s character as superintendent. For excellent performance, there had to be combat: “Abba Poemen said about Abba John the Dwarf that he exhorted God and the passions were removed from him. And in this way he became untroubled. When he visited a certain old man, he announced to him, ‘I see myself at rest and having no combat.’ And the old man said to him, ‘Go and ask God that combat might come to you. For it is through the combats that the soul makes progress.’ When the combat came, he no longer prayed that the combat be removed from him, but he said, ‘Give to me, Lord, endurance in the combats.’” Similarly, the monk who claimed, “I see no warfare in my heart,” lacked self-awareness: he had become completely accessible to wicked thoughts, could not see them coming at him, and so had to shut his door “if you (still) have a door.”⁵² Opposition—a closed door—was essential to the formation of the monastic self.

The story about John the Dwarf shows also that opposition was not only, or even primarily, from the demons: several sayings highlight the passions as tools the demons use against the monk and even as being more dangerous than the demons themselves. The *Sayings* do not present a single, coherent view of the passions and their relation to the demons. At times the passions appear to be identical with the monk’s “own desire” and thus to belong to the constitution of the human self, albeit as a troubling part of it.⁵³ According to Poemen, “A human being cannot know those things [that arise] from without, but whenever they arise from within, if the person fights back, he casts them out.”⁵⁴ This saying

suggests both interior and exterior sources for the monks' opponents. In other sayings, however, the passions are, as it were, demonized and thus rendered foreign to the person. The demons lead the monk to the passions, use the passions to enslave or enchant the monk, or join the passions in attacking the monk, so that to remove the passions from oneself is to drive away the demons that are associated with them.⁵⁵ Even when the passions are mentioned without reference to demons, they act like the demons by attacking the monk from without. A lengthy *apophthegma* about Joseph of Panephris speaks of the passions as "attacking" the monk, who can either "cut them off immediately" or "let them enter and make war against them." If possible, he should do the latter, because in this way the monk can get stronger.⁵⁶ The passions are thus seen to be "exterior" to the monk's self.⁵⁷ The *Sayings* indicate that whatever may have been the philosophical origins of these monks' attempt to control the passions, their demonology shaped their thought on this topic, so that the passions became external forces that attacked and should be resisted.

Not surprisingly in the wake of the controversies over Evagrius's thought, the *Sayings* are inconsistent on the question of whether the monk should seek complete freedom from the passions (*apatheia*). Because the passions could be understood to be external attackers, it would seem that such freedom should be possible, and indeed it is said that Bessarion lived "without disturbance or worry" and "seemed entirely free from the passions of the body," although the depiction of him weeping and bewailing is somewhat at odds with that statement. Longinus appears to think that a "passion-free" (*apathēs*) state is difficult but possible for the monk, although short of that it is vainglorious to think one has reached it. Concerning "mischievous thoughts," an anonymous monk is twice quoted as saying, "I exhort you, brothers: we have ceased from the acts, let us cease from the desires as well." One version adds as an explanation, "For what are we except dust from dust?" (compare Gen. 3:19), suggesting that the monk can become as impassive as dust.⁵⁸

But more characteristic is the notion that the passions will always be present and the successful monk will simply keep them under control. Such a blessed condition may have never been more than fleeting. A particularly cheerful Joseph of Panephris tells a group of visiting brothers, "I am a king today, for I reigned over the passions," implying that this

royal state should be savored because it is not permanent. Another saying compares the monk to someone who passes through a marketplace: he cannot help but smell the various dishes being cooked and offered, but he is not obliged to buy any food. The monk troubled by a temptation is similarly free to resist by praying, "Son of God, help me": "For we are not uprooters of the passions, but resisters of them."⁵⁹ References to progress and more or less advanced monks are frequent in the *Sayings*, but one does not find any formal scheme of advancement such as that of Evagrius. The *Sayings* emphasize continued struggle, not the possibility of *apatheia*. In Evagrius's language, they stick mostly to the level of ascetic practice. The monks are fundamentally "resisters," always in combat.

The close relationship between the demons and the monks' passions indicates that the monks did not use the demons to evade their own responsibility for their weaknesses. According to one saying, the enemy is like a stranger outside a house that has a porter guarding the door: he cannot enter unless he is invited in. Another saying compares monks to the mighty cedars of Lebanon: puny human beings are able to fell these massive trees using axes made from the trees' own wood. Likewise, the demons use material from the monks' own souls against them: "We are cut down by means of our evil wills," without which the demons could not bring down anybody. When an old man spent a week beseeching God to relieve a brother who was grievously attacked by fornication and the young monk received no relief, the old man was surprised. But then Satan himself appeared to the elder and declared, "Believe me, old man, from the first day that you prayed to God, I withdrew from him, but he has his own demon and his own combat arising from his swinish behavior. I have no part in his combat; rather, he makes war against himself by eating, drinking, and sleeping a lot." This is an extreme example of Poemen's principle that "our own wills have become the demons."⁶⁰

Although demons appear visually in the *Sayings* as Satan does in this last anecdote, they rarely attack the monk as brutally as they do in the *Life of Antony* or *The History of the Monks*; rather, they mostly offer suggestions of evil, with or without the technical term *thoughts*. The *Sayings* can attribute the injuries that result from the monk's rough desert life to demonic activity. In two anecdotes (perhaps versions of the same story), the devil causes an accident that pokes out a monk's eyes, and the monk is left blind. The monk's "endurance" of this condition leads him to re-

gain his sight. In the longer version, the devil seeks through the accident to derail the relationship between the negligent monk and his abba, which had been troubled but was on the mend; because the monk neither complains about his injury nor blames the old man, who had sent him to do the dangerous work, he ends up not only with his sight restored but also serving as the new "father of the cenobium" when the abba dies.⁶¹ These are examples of the Job model of enduring suffering: the point is to endure "to the end" and not to allow one's hope in God to be destroyed. As Athanasius did in the *Life of Antony*, John the Dwarf drew from Job's story a sequence of demonic attacks with physical assaults forming the second stage, but he identifies the first attacks as "possessions" rather than thoughts.⁶²

As in Evagrius, thoughts in the *Sayings* can appear to be identical with the demons. The "thought of fornication" acts no differently than the demon of fornication, and thoughts can be questioned and answer back. According to Poemen, the demons suggest evil thoughts, but if one patiently resists them, they destroy each other like a snake and a scorpion put together in a bottle. The monk cannot prevent thoughts from coming to him, but he can resist them, if not with total success. A good monk may end up surrendering one out of ten thoughts to the enemy, Poemen allegedly said, while Sisoës thought a monk could in fact give no thought to the enemy. Another monk calls Satan a weaver of ropes, the threads of which are the thoughts: "As long as you supply him with threads, he weaves."⁶³ The monk can oppose thoughts by remaining quiet in his cell, praying to God, and reciting and meditating on Scripture.⁶⁴ Macarius provides a summary of methods to oppose thoughts: "Fast until late, struggle, meditate on the Gospel and the other scriptures, and if a thought comes to you, never look down, but up, and immediately the Lord will help you."⁶⁵ Meditation on and recitation of Scripture were particularly protective. On the one hand, the spoken words themselves had an apotropaic power to repel demons, a theme that we shall examine further in Chapter 9. On the other hand, such recitation produced in the monk a disposition of calm and confidence, which enabled him to resist tempting and discouraging thoughts.⁶⁶

These monks were aware of the ambiguity of thoughts: they could be good or bad, and the bad could masquerade as good. Thus, as Antony had recommended in the *Life*, the monk ought to interrogate his thoughts: "Say to every thought that arises upon you, 'Do you belong to

us or to the enemies?', and it will answer." One monk overhears another employing this practice of "doing battle," saying to the wicked thoughts, "It has been long enough, now go," and to good thoughts, "Come to me, friend." The monk who does not engage in such scrutiny is like "a building open on four sides, and whoever wants to enters and departs"; he needs to shut his door and thereby see "those who are standing outside and making war against you." An example of deceptive thoughts and thus of the need for such interrogation comes in a story about Arsenius: "Someone said to Abba Arsenius, 'My thoughts trouble me, saying, "You can neither fast nor work; at least go and visit the sick, for that is also love."' But the old man, recognizing the seeds of the demons, said to him, 'Go, eat, drink, sleep, do no work, only do not leave your cell.' For he knew that the endurance of the cell brings the monk to his proper position." Other thoughts were obviously wicked or at least should have been recognized as wicked: a very charitable monk should have known that the thought to "put a little money aside for yourself, lest you become old or sick and have expenses" was Satan's suggestion, but he followed the thought's advice, and a gangrenous foot in need of amputation soon made clear to him that he had sinned.⁶⁷

In addition to interrogating his thoughts, the monk should confess them to an abba, a more senior monk, so that he may scrutinize them.⁶⁸ Poemen attributes to John the Dwarf the teaching that "the enemy rejoices over nothing so much as over those who do not manifest their thoughts."⁶⁹ Long experience gave old men such as Arsenius the ability to evaluate others' thoughts and to prescribe appropriate measures. Because the abba's discernment involved "knowing how to act for the best in any particular situation,"⁷⁰ senior monks adjusted their advice to the capacities of their disciples and the tactics of the demons attacking them—hence the diversity of the teachings that survive in the *Sayings*. Like Pachomius, the abbots of the *Apophthegmata* sometimes receive visions or have extraordinary perception that enables them to see what others cannot, especially demons.⁷¹ Echoing the stories of Valens and Heron in the *Lausiac History*, Antony and an anonymous abba state that failure to submit one's discipline to the scrutiny of an elder can lead to the loss of one's wits.⁷²

The monk's combat with the demons never ended—not only because it was essential to the formation of his virtuous self, but also because the demons would be present as adversaries at the monk's death and even

the final judgment. At the end-time the demons will act like prosecuting attorneys, attempting to get the monk condemned for his sins and thus to claim his soul for themselves, while the angels defend him in the divine courtroom. Such a drama can play out at the moment of the monk's death as well, as the demons try to take possession of the monk's soul on the basis of his sins and the angels try to free the soul by pointing to his virtue. Or, as we have seen in the *Life of Antony*, the demons act as obstacles or gatekeepers in the soul's postmortem ascent to heaven. The demons bring this future prosecuting role into the present when they try to unsettle a monk by telling him that he will be condemned to hell.⁷³ More often, however, they lodge or inspire false accusations of sin against other monks or nonmonks in order to divide monks from one another or to bring to the surface a monk's festering desire to commit the same sin.⁷⁴ Unlike the cenobitic leader Shenoute, who demanded that his followers report the sins of other monks, the semi-eremitical monks of the *Sayings* show little enthusiasm for revealing or judging another person's sin, fearing that they might abuse their authority, take the place of God, and fall victim to demonic deceit.⁷⁵

Despite their treachery, accusing demons could provoke the monk to undertake a therapeutic consideration of his motives:

A brother said to Abba Poemen, "If I give my brother a little bread or something else, the demons tarnish these gifts by saying it was only done to please people." The old man said to him, "Even if it is to please people, we should still give what is needed." He told him the following parable: "Two farmers lived in the same town; one of them sowed and reaped a small and impure crop, while the other, who neglected to sow, reaped absolutely nothing. If a famine comes upon them, which of the two will find something to live on?" The brother replied, "The one who reaped the small impure crop." The old man said to him, "So it is for us: we sow a little, even if it is impure, so that we will not die in famine."⁷⁶

Here the accusing demons tell the truth, and in so doing the demons lead the monk to see that ascetic practice even from mixed ("impure") motives contributes something to his ultimate salvation. Without the demons it is unlikely that the monk could have learned this lesson. Numerous stories make clear that resistance to demons and temptations was the only path to virtue and thus to salvation; exceptional monks

did not pray for demonic attacks to cease but for the ability to withstand them.⁷⁷ The greater the struggle, the greater the reward: “A certain brother was tempted by a thought for nine years, so that he renounced his salvation and out of piety condemned himself, saying, ‘I have ruined my soul, and I will go off to the world because I am lost.’ As he was leaving, a voice came to him along the road, saying, ‘These nine years during which you have been tempted were crowns for you. Return to your place, and I will relieve you of the thoughts.’ You see that it is not good for someone to lose hope for himself because of the thoughts; rather, they procure crowns for us if we go through them well.”⁷⁸ Not nearly as flashy or dramatic as those in *The History of the Monks* and the *Lausiac History*, the demons in *Sayings of the Desert Fathers* yet play an essential role in the monastic life, providing the necessary resistance for the monk to reach new insights about his quest for virtue and thereby to achieve it.

In the remaining chapters, I shall explore certain themes in monastic lore about demons, not in order to reconstruct actual events or to discover the most original stories, but to recover the diverse ways that demons and talk about demons served the monastic project of self-formation. The goal, then, remains “actual history”—the actual concerns, anxieties, and conflicts that the demonic helped monks negotiate within their culture. As “concerted representations of otherness,”⁷⁹ demons provided a language of alterity by which monks could differentiate themselves from other people and from aspects of their selves that obstructed their relationships with God and each other. On one level, monastic culture did work to separate itself from certain persons—for example, women and “magicians”—by associating them with demons. But on a deeper level, monks demonized aspects of their own selves—sexual desire, anger, pride—in a process of externalization and rejection to which we turn next.

Ethiopian Demons

The Monastic Self and the Diabolical Other

I was grieved, but I did not speak.

—Psalm 76:5

Most of the time the monk's conflict with the demons was invisible, for it was an internal struggle with thoughts and inclinations. But sometimes the demons appeared, and in many of our sources the devil or his demons sometimes do so as Ethiopians or with black skin. When the devil had failed to tempt the young monk Antony with thoughts of home and family or by coming to him as a woman, he desperately tried to seduce the ascetic by appearing as a black boy. Unimpressed, Antony told the devil, "You are black in your mind and as weak as a boy." A young monk beset by thoughts of sex encountered an Ethiopian woman with a foul smell. An older monk found sitting on his knees an Ethiopian girl he remembered seeing in his youth; driven mad, he struck her, and a foul odor adhered to his hand. A monk who disobeyed his elder discovered an Ethiopian lying on a sleeping mat and gnashing his teeth. Ethiopian or black demons continued to tempt or frighten Christian ascetics into the medieval period.¹

Demons were not the only Ethiopians in the desert. The famous Abba Moses, once a robber, became a monk and demonstrated his great humility by remaining silent when other monks at a meeting complained, "Why does this Ethiopian come among us?" Another time, prompted by the archbishop, priests drove Moses out of a church, crying, "Go outside, Ethiopian!" Moses said to himself, "They have acted rightly concerning you, you ash-skinned one, you black one. You are not a human being, so why do you go among human beings?" Modern readers, rightly

sensitive to instances of racism, have tended to read such stories as sources for the sentiments of early Christians and/or ancient people in general: were they racist or at least color-prejudiced?² It appears that the ancients did not have concepts exactly like the modern notion of “race” and thus that the question of whether they were racist is anachronistic. Instead, Roman images of Ethiopians reflected the Romans’ more general ethnocentric reactions to foreignness in bodies and cultures.³

In Part One, I discussed how monastic authors presented the struggle between the monk and his demonic opponents and how these presentations served to create the new social identity of the Christian monk and his multiple roles. In this chapter I turn to the question of how demons or stories about them worked for the individual monk, and to approach this issue I consider stories in which demons appear as black or as Ethiopians, because such stories exaggerate a process of externalization that characterizes many, but not all, such demonic encounters. Moreover, because Ethiopians were not only demons, but also monks, they exemplify the close, indeed inescapable, relationship between monk and demon. How did speaking about demons as Ethiopians or black facilitate the formation of the monastic self, the making of the individual monk? What function did Ethiopian demons have within the monastic project?

These questions draw on recent studies of racial stereotyping in more recent colonial cultures, especially the work of the postcolonialist scholar Homi Bhabha. Bhabha suggests that the interpreter of stereotypes should move beyond “the ready recognition of images as positive or negative, to an understanding of the *processes of subjectification* made possible (and plausible) through stereotypical discourse.” The goal should be to describe an image’s “effectivity”—that is, “the repertoire of positions of power and resistance, domination and dependence,” that it facilitates and by which it assists in constructing subjectivity.⁴ Such an analysis has an important psychoanalytic component, for Bhabha’s “concern is to demonstrate an ambivalence in colonial and colonizing subjects by articulating the inner dissension within a colonial discourse structured according to the conflictual economy of the psyche.”⁵ Stories about demons invite a cultural analysis that does not eschew psychoanalytic concepts such as repression and projection. As Julia Kristeva writes, “The builder of the *other* and, in the final analysis, of the *strange* is indeed repression itself and its perviousness.”⁶

The Blackness of the Ethiopian: Clarity of Vision

The Ethiopian demon originated in the notion that the Ethiopian's black skin symbolized evil, a seemingly obvious corollary to the use of light or whiteness to symbolize the good.⁷ God's first creative act in the Bible was to separate the light from the darkness: "God saw that the light was good" (Gen. 1: 3–4). In the earliest surviving piece of Christian literature, 1 Thessalonians, Paul tells his followers, "You are all children of light and children of the day; we are not of the night or of darkness" (1 Thess. 5:5). In Revelation (6:11, 7:13, and so on), virtuous Christians are dressed in white robes. From here it was a short step to identifying the devil and evil persons as not merely darkness, but black. Thus, the second-century *Epistle of Barnabas* refers to the devil as "the black one" without any hint that readers would not know who is meant, and explains that "light-bringing angels of God" preside over the virtuous way "of light," while "angels of Satan" direct the vicious way "of darkness"; the *Shepherd of Hermas* portrays the Church as a tower, the black stones of which are discarded.⁸ The devil or demons begin to appear as black figures, sometimes with specific ethnic identities that were seen to involve black skin—not just Ethiopians but, ironically enough in our context, Egyptians.⁹ Not only Christians understood that demons could be black: for example, the satirist Lucian recounts the appearances of at least two black demons.¹⁰ Because the ancients worked with a sliding scale of skin color, ranging between the similarly undesirable extremes of the very light (northern barbarians) and the very dark (Ethiopians), some precision was possible: a disciple of Peter dreams of "a most evil-looking woman, who looked like an Ethiopian, not an Egyptian, but was all black."¹¹ The Egyptian, then, stood between the Ethiopian, whose truly black skin defined one end of the spectrum, and the unmarked ideal somatic type, whose skin was neither too dark nor too light. Not surprisingly, then, Egyptians themselves used Ethiopians as exemplars of blackness and thus of sin.

Most Christian discussion of Ethiopians or black people was exegetical, and here the notion that black skin symbolized the sin that Christian grace removed was pervasive, epitomized in the declaration of Solomon's bride (understood as representing the human soul): "I am black and beautiful" (Song of Sol. 1:5).¹² This basic use of blackness (signifying evil, sin) as the negative opposite of brightness (signifying good,

virtue) appears in a monastic saying preserved in Armenian: “Abba Avita saw a dragon that had penetrated into the desert; a black was seated on it. He heard a voice that said, ‘Darkness has come into the desert, and the sun of righteousness has departed.’ He understood that the works of excellence had become lacking in the desert.”¹³ This saying deploys the clarity of blackness to criticize a decline in monastic virtue from the early days (a frequent theme). It commends the otherwise obscure Abba Avita as possessing the insight to see the deterioration in ascetic excellence that other monks could not.

Several monastic stories likewise use a demon’s blackness to mark as clearly demonic an otherwise ambiguous or puzzling action or problem. For example, John Cassian reports how John of Lycopolis took on an extremely harsh regime of fasting, but gave it up when the devil appeared to him “in the form of a black Ethiopian,” saying, “It was I who inflicted this labor on you”; thus John realized that his “exaggerated abstinence” was a demonic deception.¹⁴ According to Rufinus, Macarius of Alexandria received the gift of seeing the demonic at work in monastic worship services: the diverse virtues of the praying monks were apparent in how they responded to the “little black Ethiopian boys” that harassed them and which were visible only to Macarius.¹⁵ The appearance of a black demon makes clear what is otherwise ambiguous. Is a more severe fasting regime a good idea? Which monks are virtuous and which are not? A second important point of these stories is to portray the monk who sees the black demon as possessing the gift of “discernment of spirits” (1 Cor. 12:10). Like the Pachomius depicted in the literature of the Koinonia and the ideal abba in the *Sayings*, he can see demonic influence where others cannot. The blackness of the demons, by providing an unmistakable sign of evil at work, confirms the clarity of vision given to the “man of God.”¹⁶

The devil’s appearance as a black boy in the *Life of Antony*, the earliest datable appearance of a black or Ethiopian demon in extant monastic literature (ca. 357), anticipates this theme but augments it with themes of sexuality and power.¹⁷ The context is erotic temptations, which Athanasius calls “the weapons of the belly’s navel” (Job 40:16) and presents as a problem peculiar to “the young.” As we saw in Chapter 2, the devil’s sexual attack follows the pattern of thoughts preceding visual appearances and physical assaults: first, suggestions of “dirty thoughts,” when unsuccessful, lead to the appearance of a woman, whose color is

not mentioned; then “thoughts” of “the ease of pleasure,” when unsuccessful, lead to the appearance of the black boy. The boy parallels the woman as an erotic temptation, but with a difference: he is a representation of evil both more accurate and more powerful than the woman. Athanasius presents the devil’s female appearance as deceptive, not revelatory of the devil’s nature: “The wretched devil dared at night even to dress up like a woman and to imitate one in every way merely to deceive Antony” (VA 5.3–5). In contrast, the black boy represents the devil’s true nature: “As if he were beside himself, he finally appeared to Antony in form [*phantasia*] as he is in his mind [*nous*], as a black boy” (VA 6.1). In Athanasius’s view, the mind or rational faculty was the location of the self’s true nature.¹⁸ The form of the black boy reveals the devil’s nature, as Antony tells the devil: “You are black in your mind and as weak as a boy” (VA 6.4). That is, the devil is evil (black) and powerless (boy). But the revelatory appearance of the black boy makes clear not only the devil’s evil, but also Antony’s virtue: it is his amazingly steadfast resistance to temptation that forced this clarifying appearance.

Athanasius’s explicit symbolism of the black boy relies, however, on the implicit identification of evil/blackness as powerful—specifically, erotically powerful. The boy’s speech asserts his power over all monks other than Antony:

And as though he had fallen down, he no longer attacked Antony with thoughts—for the crafty one had been tossed down—but finally he used a human voice and said, “Many people I have deceived, and most I have defeated, but now coming against you and your efforts as I have against others, I have been weakened.” Antony asked, “Who are you who say such things to me?” Immediately he answered with a pitiful voice, “It is I who am fornication’s lover. It is I who have been entrusted with its ambushes and its titillations against the youth, and I am called the spirit of fornication. How many persons who desired to be prudent I have deceived! How many persons who professed to be so I have persuaded to change by titillating them! It is I on whose account even the prophet blames those who have fallen, saying, ‘You have been deceived by the spirit of fornication’ [Hos. 4:12]. For it was through me that they were tripped up. It is I who so often troubled you and who as often was overthrown by you.” (VA 6.1–3)

Using the inflated egocentric language found in the speeches of divinities such as Isis and Jesus (in the Gospel according to John) (“It is I

who . . .”), the boy claims a power that his small stature and weak voice belie. Athanasius invests great strength in the demon of fornication, only to divest it of that power in the face of Antony’s strength, a divestment represented by the demon’s being a boy. The power of the black demon of fornication is contained or constrained by a feminized appearance: the devil might not be a woman, but he does have gender, that of the feminized boy.

But the power of the spirit of fornication does not reside in the demon itself; rather, that power is the projected strength or irresistibility of the monk’s attraction to the erotic object, whether woman or boy. The black demon externalizes the monk’s experience of a seemingly irresistible desire within himself: “It is I who *am* fornication’s lover,” the demon states, “and I am *called* the spirit of fornication.” The demon’s split personality, so to speak—both fornication’s lover and fornication itself—embodies a split within the tempted monk, whose will to virtue is weak in the face of his erotic desire. The ancients often imagined the passion of *erōs* not as originating within themselves, but as an invasive demonic force or disease, whose attractive pull left them feeling powerless.¹⁹ Antony, in contrast, is strong, filled with “courage”; through him the demon is “overthrown,” and Antony’s own erotic desire is rendered “as weak as a boy.” But Athanasius characteristically deflects this investment of power in the monk onto Christ: “This was Antony’s first struggle against the devil, or rather this was the achievement in Antony of the Savior, who ‘condemned sin in the flesh so that the righteousness of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh, but according to the spirit’ [Rom. 8:3–4]” (VA 7.1–5). Because Athanasius consistently subordinates the psychological drama of ascetic temptation to the larger drama of Christ’s victory over Satan and the gods/demons, the black boy is identified—confusingly to readers familiar with more precise demonologies, such as Evagrius’s—as a demon, the spirit of fornication, and an appearance of the devil himself.

The Stereotype of the Ethiopian: Demonic Hypersexuality and Monastic Sons

Athanasius’s black boy demon was not (yet) Ethiopian, but the associations that coalesced into the Ethiopian demon were already present. The black demon embodied an eroticized power, a temptation of such force

that at times it had to be represented as feminized or miniaturized. When the visual form of the black demon gained more precise definition as Ethiopian, it acquired the stereotypical traits associated with the Ethiopian body type that circulated through Greco-Roman culture, especially hypersexuality. Because of this stereotypical hypersexuality, the Ethiopian demon was an effective way to represent erotic desire as something that could be renounced.

The Romans did not think of Ethiopians in terms that we would call racial; they thought of them as a barbarian nation or people, or as a somatic type. Both conceptions simultaneously attributed to and denied the Ethiopian a degree of power. As an at-times mythical nation, the Ethiopians were seen as mighty and noble warriors who, like all barbarians, were vulnerable to the Romans' superior military power.²⁰ Residents of Egypt, who lived near actual Ethiopians, may have experienced them as a real military threat beginning in the second century. A variety of sub-Saharan groups who made violent raids on Egyptian settlements, including the tribe of the Blemmyes, could be subsumed under the category "Ethiopian."²¹ According to *The History of the Monks*, incursions by "Ethiopians" against the Thebaid border town of Syene led a nervous Roman general to ask the monk John of Lycopolis whether he would prevail against them. John assured the general both that he would defeat the Ethiopians and that he would thereby "find favor with the emperors." Then John announced, "The most Christian Emperor Theodosius will die a natural death" (*HM* 1.2). This scene characterizes the Ethiopians as a military threat powerful enough to worry a general and as opponents of the Christian state. The Coptic *Life* of the sixth-century monk Moses of Abydos (not to be confused with Moses the Ethiopian) has the devil appear to Moses, a vigorous opponent of pagan religion, in "the likeness of a tall Ethiopian with many demons following him and carrying lances like the Blemmyes."²² While persons elsewhere in the Mediterranean may have been able to romanticize the mythic military power of the Ethiopian people, Egyptians had a more palpable sense of an "Ethiopian" threat and thus were more likely to scapegoat darker-skinned persons in their midst.²³ And indeed the anti-ascetic Ethiopian demon appears to have been invented in Egypt and then exported literarily to Syria, Palestine, and western Europe.²⁴

Alongside the notion of the Ethiopians as a nation comparable to other barbarian peoples, the Romans thought of the Ethiopian (*Ae-*

thiops) as a somatic type, a kind of body that differed from the somatic norm in several ways, including (but not limited to) skin color.²⁵ The Ethiopian was identified as such not because he or she was born from Ethiopians, but because he or she did not visually conform to the Roman ideal: "The ideal somatic type (in respect of the male sex, at any rate) consisted of pale-brown complexion (described as *inter nigrum et palladium* or the mean between the extremes of *Aethiops* blackness and 'nordic' whiteness), straight (but not large) nose, moist, bright eyes of a brown colour midway between jet blackness and pale-brown, brown hair (of a texture midway between the straight and the tightly-curved, and between excessive softness and excessive coarseness), lips neither thin nor thick, and moderate tallness" (105). With his black skin, flat nose, and curly hair, the Ethiopian deviated from this norm, as did the Nordic type, the "paleface" (*candidus* or *flavus*). The mode of categorization was not what we would call racial; rather, it was "purely and simply a matter of the observer's optical registration of somatic distance or of the somatic norm, uninfluenced by the facts of the observed person's biological descent, and uncomplicated by any ideologically operative link with social role or social distance" (77).

But not uncomplicated by an ideologically operative link with *moral* distance. The ancient pseudoscience of physiognomy claimed to be able to read quality of character from the appearance of the body. Not surprisingly, physical characteristics associated with the somatic norm were evaluated positively, while the attributes of the deviant *Aethiops* indicated moral flaws: woolly hair, for example, signified cowardice (104–109). Hypersexuality was one of the Ethiopian's characteristics and carried with it Roman anxieties about legitimacy and power (107–108). A popular declamation exercise on the statement *matrona Aethiopem peperit* ("a Roman married woman has given birth to an Ethiopian") and frequent jokes in the satirists suggested that Roman women were wont to have sex with erotically powerful Ethiopians. However few liaisons there really were between Roman women and Ethiopian men, the possibility was a shorthand way to express Roman male anxieties about the legitimacy of their sons and thus about Roman identity, understood in patrilineal terms. The appearance of an Ethiopian child made manifest adulterous behavior (at least in the form of a "mental impression" entertained by the woman during sex) that might otherwise have gone undetected.²⁶ Meanwhile, images of macrophallic and ithyphallic black men

in baths and other places believed to be sites of magical or demonic attack were most likely apotropaic: the erotic power of the hypersexual Ethiopian was harnessed to turn back hostile supernatural forces.²⁷ Representations of female Ethiopians marked hypersexuality with large breasts.²⁸ The disturbing sexual power of the Ethiopian, located and visually marked in him or her as a body rather than as a member of a social group, threatened to disrupt genealogical order and yet had (anti-) demonic force.

Nonmonastic Christian authors discussed Ethiopians nearly exclusively in exegetical contexts, explicating references to Ethiopians in biblical passages. Like Christians of later periods, these authors basically thought of others, such as Ethiopians, “in religious rather than racial or national” terms: they were potential Christians.²⁹ But Christian ruminations about the pre-Christian pagan character of the Ethiopian at times drew on prevailing stereotypes to create a similarly eroticized picture. In general, the frequent references to the chastity of biblical Ethiopians suggested that they had overcome their characteristic hypersexuality.³⁰ For example, Christian authors insisted that the Queen of Sheba’s visit to Solomon was entirely chaste, a quest for wisdom only, and that the Ethiopian eunuch baptized by Philip (Acts 8:26–40) exemplified the “defeat of the libido.”³¹ The converted Ethiopian’s sexual self-control demonstrated the depth of transformation that accompanied the turn to the biblical God.

But the exegetical Ethiopian could become the site for the resolution of anxieties both sexual and genealogical. Didymus the Blind offers a good example because he worked in Alexandria, at the intersection of Egyptian Christianity’s monastic, episcopal, and scholarly cultures: he deployed the sexualized Ethiopian in his construction of an orthodox male identity, symbolized genealogically. For Didymus, biblical “Ethiopians” represent pagans, potential Christians (specifically pagan idolaters), children of the devil who are eager to do his desires and are black from ignorance and sin, and flesh. In contrast, Didymus says, non-Ethiopians (“we”) are Christians, children of Zion who are filled with the divine love and are white from divine washing, spirit. The transformation from “Ethiopian” to “white” comes with being “wounded by the choice shaft” of Christ, a saving penetration that fosters divine *erōs* and engenders “children of Zion.” These “children of Zion,” in turn, are male: they are “ecclesiastical men [*ekklēsiastikoi andres*], who have turned back the

contentious words" of "the children of the Greeks," the heretics.³² Didymus uses Ethiopians to indicate satanic carnal desire and to distinguish a demonic genealogy of heretics from an orthodox genealogy of ecclesiastical men.

Precisely these concerns about eroticized power and filial identity circulate through several monastic tales of demons as Ethiopians. That the majority of such appearances are associated with the demon of fornication suggests that the stereotype of hypersexuality attaches to the Ethiopian demon.³³ In general, though, fornication or erotic temptation (conceptualized as an invasive or attacking force) is portrayed in demonic terms more frequently than are the other passions. Monastic literature shared ancient physiognomy's "notion of a connection between bodily appearance and quality of character," but monks and their pilgrim viewers tended to narrow their focus to the ascetic's face.³⁴ In particular, a glowing or radiant face revealed "asceticism's highest achievement, the reversal of the body's decay and its transformation into the glorified body of the resurrection."³⁵ This positive appearance of the bright face could carry with it its negative counterpart. When Paul the Simple visited a monastery, he could see each monk's "spiritual disposition": while all the other monks had "sparkling eyes and shining faces," Paul said he saw "one who is black and his whole body is dark." This monk, a fornicator, later repented and lost his dark appearance.³⁶ Other stories, in accord with Roman ideology, associate a pleasing body with high social status as well as moral virtue. For example, one monk's former high social position in the world seems reflected in his being "handsome."³⁷ The high-born Athanasia, after years of wandering in the desert as a monk, was unrecognizable to her husband because "her beauty had disappeared, to the point that she had the appearance of an Ethiopian."³⁸ The monastic *Life of Aphou* depicts Bishop Theophilus of Alexandria questioning whether an Ethiopian, a leper, a cripple, or a blind person can be said to be "the image of God": to be Ethiopian represents, like leprosy, lameness, or blindness, a defect that obscures Adam's original creation in God's image.³⁹ These examples assume not only the general connection between bodily appearance and moral character, but also the prevailing Greco-Roman somatic norm and the Ethiopian deviance from it.

When the visual appearance of a demon was registered as not merely black, but Ethiopian, the Ethiopian body's characteristic hypersexuality could augment the clarifying function of blackness to signal the pres-

ence not just of evil, but of specifically sexual evil. In a variation on the stories of discernment of spirits discussed earlier, Abba Daniel of Scetis visits Alexandria and sees a monk entering and leaving the baths. When he confronts the monk with his “scandalizing” behavior, the monk protests his innocence of any wrongdoing, pointedly warning Daniel, “Judge not, and you will not be judged” (Matt. 7:1). But Daniel can see past the monk’s veneer of righteousness, as he tells his disciple: “I saw more than fifty demons, which were surrounding him and spreading mud on him. I saw an Ethiopian woman seated on his shoulders who was embracing him tenderly, while another Ethiopian woman, in front of him, dealt with him roughly and was teaching him an indecent act; and all the other demons were accompanying him and rejoicing. But I did not see his angel, neither near to nor far from him; I conclude that it was disgusted by this obscenity.” Daniel’s insight finds confirmation when the monk is caught trying to seduce the wife of an important official, perhaps trying to use the sexual technique taught him by the Ethiopian demon.⁴⁰ These demons, by being Ethiopian, reveal not only that the monk is doing evil, but that his evildoing is specifically sexual. The demons’ clarifying function relies on the secure physiognomic association of hypersexuality with the Ethiopian.

Another such story, preserved in Greek and Syriac, may depend specifically on the macrophallic image of the Ethiopian.⁴¹ A monk who entered the desert “as a virgin and totally ignorant of the existence of fornication” is surrounded by demons “in the forms of Ethiopians,” who stir up in him the passion of lust. Seeing these Ethiopian “forms,” the monk remarks “that the man has this member as a bottle has a neck, to evacuate water. Just as the neck lets pass the water that flows out, so this member evacuates urine from the man.” At this statement a rock falls from the roof, and the monk hears a soft voice; Abba Poemen later explains that the rock is the devil and the voice is desire, and the monk is freed from the passion with this knowledge. The monk’s speech reveals and ends his virginal innocence—he both can and cannot imagine what other use his penis may have—which overthrows the devil. The visibility of the Ethiopians, their “forms,” enables this change: the story metonymically reduces the Ethiopian form to the penis or, rather, enlarges the penis to be the form of the Ethiopian. The Ethiopian form is sexuality, knowledge of which the monk must simultaneously concede and disavow.

What was perhaps the most famous appearance of an Ethiopian demon drew on the eroticized power of the Ethiopian to construct male monastic identity as Didymus did male orthodox identity, in genealogical (specifically, patrilineal) terms. This story enjoyed wide circulation in antiquity; it survives in Greek, Latin, Syriac, and Ethiopic versions, and in several different collections. The Greek, closely followed by the Syriac and Latin, reports as follows:

Someone came to Scetis to become a monk, taking with him also his son, who had just been weaned. And when he [the son] became a youth, the demons began to attack him, and he said to his father, "I am returning to the world, for I cannot endure the battle." But his father kept on exhorting him. And again the youth said, "Abba, I cannot stand it any longer. Let me go." His father said to him, "Listen to me, child, just this once. Take for yourself forty measures of bread and palm leaves for forty days' work, and go into the inner desert. Stay there forty days, and let God's will be done." He obeyed his father: he got up and went into the desert, and he stayed there twenty days working, plaiting palm leaves, and eating the dry bread. And behold, he saw the power [*energeia*] coming toward him. For she stood before him as a female Ethiopian, so foul-smelling that he could not bear her odor, but chased her away. Therefore, the demon said to him, "It is I who appear sweet in the hearts of people, but on account of your obedience and your labor, God did not permit me to deceive you, but he has revealed to you my foul smell." He got up, gave thanks to God, went to his father, and said to him, "I no longer want to depart, Abba, for I have seen the power and her foul smell." But his father too had been fully informed concerning this and said to the youth, "If you had stayed forty days and kept the command to the end, you would have seen a greater vision."⁴²

Although the Ethiopian demon stands at the center of this story, she serves in fact as a kind of third term for the working out of a homosocial relationship/contest between the two men, the youth and his father/abba.⁴³ An ambiguity troubles this relationship, signaled by the narrator's identification of the older man as the youth's (biological) "father" (*patēr*) and the youth's addressing him as his (monastic) "abba." This odd couple—biological father and son and yet monastic elder and disciple—unsettles the customary monastic oppositions of world and desert, biological family and ascetic community, by collapsing the metaphorical monastic father/son relationship into the literal. The disciple/son's dis-

obedient desire to return to the world challenges the elder/father's attempt to recast their biological relationship into the ascetic mold. The youth's obedience is rewarded with a clarifying vision, the Ethiopian demon, a prize whose value the older man deflates with his final assertion of authority. The father/elder comes out on top, for the youth's obedience is revealed to be incomplete, his boast vain, his vision inferior to what he could have achieved. The rejection of the female demon precipitates the engendering of a new male genealogy that remakes the son into a disciple and the father into an elder.

The Ethiopian demon enables this restructuring of the male–male relationship through a simultaneous representation of the power and the danger of the erotic pull that must be sublimated for the creation of this homosocial bond. As tempting as it is to read the demon's foul smell as constitutive of her Ethiopianness, in fact the story explicitly separates the demon's visibility as Ethiopian from her aromaticity as foul. What the youth sees (not smells), the narrative insists, is “the power” (*energeia*), a term that serves in the *Sayings* as shorthand for the demonic, especially fornication—that which moves, pulls, attracts, impels the monk into evil activity.⁴⁴ The Ethiopian demon is eroticized power: her speech mimics that of Athanasius's black boy in its grandiose Johannine diction: “It is I who appear sweet in the hearts of people.” The usually macrophallic hypersexuality of the Ethiopian male is rendered feminine, grammatically to match the gender of *energeia* (a feminine noun in Greek), narratively to suit the presumed sexual interests of the youth, and symbolically to oppose the homosocial bonding with the elder/father that erotic desire thwarts. God reveals the demon's foul odor to the youth because of his “obedience” and “labor”: the revulsion it inspires is the youth's reward for having obeyed the elder/father for twenty days. The strength of the youth's desire for the Ethiopian's sweetness necessitates the use of stench to create revulsion, a strategy that the monks (and the women they pursue!) use elsewhere and that implies a connection between stench and women.⁴⁵ Like Antony's encounter with the black boy, the appearance of the Ethiopian demon to the youth provides a moment of clarity: this is what so relentlessly attracts the youth and what he must renounce if he is to become his father's disciple and not just his son. The Ethiopic version of the story makes this point even clearer: it concludes with the abba saying to the young man, “Behold, today you have been made my son.”⁴⁶

The demon of fornication is Ethiopian here to bring a moment of clar-

ity to a homosocial monastic relationship marked by ambiguity and ambivalence. This function builds on the simple clarifying effect of blackness that we saw in other stories. By her Ethiopianness (and not merely her blackness), the demon reveals the power of the erotic pull away from the ascetic master and embodies an extreme alterity that enables clarification of identity. The young monk's renunciation of the Ethiopianized demon enables the establishment of his new identity as son/disciple. But the alterity that the Ethiopian embodies originates within the monk's self: she is a projection of the monk's own erotic desire, which was in full operation before the appearance of the demon. It is "the archaic, narcissistic self, not yet demarcated by the outside world" that "projects out of itself what it experiences as dangerous or unpleasant in itself, making of it an alien *double*, uncanny and demoniacal."⁴⁷ The clearly marked alterity of the Ethiopian demon facilitates the "othering" of a dimension of the self that the unformed monk must renounce.

Two more stories (concerning Heraclius and Arsenius) follow this pattern of (1) disruption or crisis in a monastic relationship (caused by temptation); (2) encounter with an Ethiopian; and (3) reconstitution of the relationship on a more advanced basis. In one, Heraclius tells the story of a disciple who lived in obedience to his elder for years, "but one day he was attacked and made prostration before the old man, saying, 'Make me become a monk.'" The demonic attack here is not fornication, but the temptation to prematurely abandon discipline under the elder for the life of complete solitude, an inclination that Evagrius attributes to vainglory.⁴⁸ The elder helps the disciple construct a cell a mile away and instructs him to stay there at first only a short time and with a light discipline: "When you are hungry, eat, drink, sleep; only do not come out of your cell until Saturday; then come to me." But the disciple continues to be tempted to do more than what he is capable of: "The brother spent two days according to the old man's word, and on the third day, struck with listlessness, he said, 'Why did the old man prescribe for me not to make prayers?' And he got up and sang many Psalms, and after sunset he ate. He got up and went to go to sleep, and he saw an Ethiopian lying on his mat and gnashing his teeth against him [compare Ps. 34(35):16]." This sight sends the disciple running "in fear" back to his abba, saying, "I need you, Father." The abba tells him that he had this experience because of his disobedience, but "then, having adjusted to his ability the progression to the solitary life, he dismissed him, and gradually he became a proven monk."⁴⁹

Once again, the crisis in a young monk's identity, configured in terms of his relationship to an elder, precipitates and is settled by the vision of the Ethiopian demon. The trouble caused by the disciple's premature desire to live alone is resolved when the disciple, frightened by the Ethiopian, says, "I need you, Father," the first time he so designates the elder monk, properly constructing a relationship of dependence. The disciple achieves the identity that he wants (to "become a monk") at the end of the story. It is the unnerving alterity of the Ethiopian demon that effects the construction of the proper monastic identity. This Ethiopian demon, which is male, lacks explicit eroticism, but an erotic subtext is created both intertextually, through the story's parallelism with the oft-told anecdote about the appearance of the female Ethiopian I have just examined, and intratextually, through the demon's appearance on the monk's "mat" (*psiathion*) when he was about to sleep, a time and space charged with the homoerotic possibility that troubles the homosocial monastic bond.⁵⁰ The renunciation—or sublimation—of this powerful homoerotic pull enables the Father-disciple relationship: "I need you, Father."

A third example of this pattern differs from the two we have seen in that the monk with the identity problem is an abba, Arsenius, not a disciple, and the Ethiopian is not explicitly demonic. While young monks, as "persons without clear social profiles . . . nothing but their vigorous young bodies,"⁵¹ most often faced the pressing issue of identity clarification, responsibility for their development could unsettle even an exemplary abba. Arsenius, too often "troubled" by visitors at his dwelling in Lower Egypt, decides to abandon his cell and go to Alexandria, where he becomes seriously ill. This action throws his disciples, Alexander and Zoilus, into self-reproach ("Perhaps one of us has grieved the old man, and that is why he has separated from us") and makes them the object of criticism from other monks. Arsenius's departure, they later tell him, was not "fitting." Arsenius's failure to play his proper role as abba is brought to a halt when he returns to the area of his monastic cell and encounters an Ethiopian: "Near the river a certain Ethiopian slave-girl approached and touched his sheepskin, and the old man rebuked her. Therefore, the slave-girl said to him, 'If you are a monk, go to the desert.' The old man, struck by compunction at this word, said to himself, 'Arsenius, if you are a monk, go to the desert.'" Reconciliation between Arsenius and his disciples follows: "Thus they [the disciples] were reassured, and they remained with him until his death."⁵²

This Ethiopian girl, although not demonic, performs the same function as the previous two Ethiopian demons: her disturbing alterity shocks Arsenius into a state of compunction and into a resolve to reconstitute his identity as “a monk.” The meeting of Arsenius and the Ethiopian slave is dense with biblical allusions. The touch of the male teacher’s garment by the seemingly impure female recalls Jesus’s encounter with the hemorrhaging woman (Mark 5:25–34); Arsenius’s sheepskin identifies him, as it did Antony, as an Elijah figure, guide to multiple Elishas (VA 91). The girl’s command, “If you are a monk . . .,” echoes the tempting words of Satan to Jesus: “If you are the Son of God . . .” (Matt. 4:3–6). But the scene reverses all these allusions. Arsenius, who should be playing the role of Elijah, has not been doing so; his presence “near the river” contradicts his identity as monk. The girl, as Ethiopian, female, and slave, embodies, like the hemorrhaging woman, social marginality, but in an overdetermined way that marks her as highly impure, nearly demonic. But the girl is not the object of the male master’s healing: instead, she heals the male master. Her words are not temptation, but a call to Arsenius to embody the identity he has lost. In contrast to the previous two young monks, whose Ethiopian demons exteriorize a dimension of the self that they must renounce, Arsenius must interiorize the call from outside his self: this he accomplishes by repeating the words of the Ethiopian girl. This story, so structurally similar to the previous two, functions as a commentary on them. Stripped of an explicitly demonic nature, the Ethiopian girl can make explicit the therapeutic function of the demonic encounters we have examined. She reveals the Ethiopian demon’s salutary effect of clarifying monastic identity.⁵³

Two additional examples of the Ethiopian’s erotic power provide interesting variations on the basic pattern we have seen in the *Sayings*. The single appearance of an Ethiopian demon in Palladius’s *Lausiac History* draws on the more theorized ascetic psychology that Palladius’s teacher Evagrius taught. Palladius’s account is a doubled first-person narrative. In the outer frame Palladius describes a now familiar crisis in his own ascetic life: “troubled by the womanly desire” both in his “thoughts” and in his “nighttime images,” Palladius reveals his struggle neither to his monastic neighbors “nor to [his] teacher Evagrius” and considers leaving the desert altogether. Instead, he goes to the “Great Desert” and spends fifteen days with the monks of Scetis (LH 23). Once again, erotic temptation has disrupted a disciple’s relationship with his elder and

threatens to send him back to the world. Like our previous disciples, Palladius heads to a more remote desert location, but he does not encounter there the Ethiopian demon; rather, he encounters the monk Pachon's encounter with the Ethiopian demon.

After Palladius meets him and shares with him his discouragement, Pachon tells a remarkable story that locates the Ethiopian demon, still disturbingly other, more deeply within the self, at the intersection of mind and body. Pachon first explains the complexity of "the fight with fornication," which is "triple": "At times the flesh attacks us by displaying its vigor; at times the passions attack us through thoughts; and at times the demon itself attacks us with witchcraft." This statement conforms to the teaching of Antony and Evagrius that the monk should distinguish between "natural" movements of the body without passion and more problematic movements involving thoughts, passions, and images.⁵⁴ Then Pachon describes a twelve-year attack by the demon, starting when he turned fifty, which left him so despondent that he tried to commit suicide by exposing himself naked to hyenas in their den. When they did not kill him, but rather smelled him and licked him all over, Pachon interpreted this as salvation by God and returned to his cell, where the demon "attacked me even more harshly than before" and brought him to the brink of "blasphemy": "Having transformed itself into an Ethiopian maiden, whom I had seen once in my youth gleaning at the harvest, she sat upon my knees, and she aroused me to such an extent that I thought I was having intercourse with her. Driven mad, I hit her on the ear, and she disappeared. For two years I could not bear the foul smell of my hand. Discouraged and in despair, I went wandering in the Great Desert. I found a small asp, picked it up, and placed it on my genitals, so that I might die by being bitten in this way. Although I rubbed the head of the beast against my genitals, because they were the cause of my temptation, I was not bitten." At this point an inner voice told Pachon that this experience happened to him so that he would not take confidence in his own ascetic practice, but would rely on God's help. Then Pachon found peace: "Recognizing my contempt for him," the demon "no longer came near me" (LH 23).

While remaining firmly in the eroticized tradition of Ethiopian appearances, this demonic drag performance effects in Evagrian terms the transference of temptation from thought to body. Evagrius's theory of images provides the script for the demon's lap dance.⁵⁵ The demon

places Pachon's memory in motion, drawing up the representation of an Ethiopian woman that is probably forty years old, but which has left a wound in Pachon's soul that is, despite its age, still recent. The representation, its excruciating circumstantiality a clear sign of its impassioned nature, stirs up desire within Pachon and thus moves the body. The Ethiopian woman stands at the boundary of thought and body, image and flesh: although she is but a memory, she nevertheless can sit on Pachon's knees, receive the blunt force of his mad desire, and leave her foul odor in his hand. Desire has now been imbedded in Pachon's flesh; the Ethiopian's representation is gone, but her stench remains. Is she the only thing that Pachon's madness has led his hand to touch? His actions suggest not, as he rubs the asp against his genitals in a futile attempt to kill the place where his affliction dwells.

This graphic scene literally fleshes out Evagrian psychological theory: the erotically charged Ethiopian is so stereotypically fleshly—palpable, aromatic—that she is body even when she is a mental representation. Thus she can provide an efficient mechanism for the process by which, in the Evagrian view, a demonically inspired representation can create corporeal passion. She is, as Pachon would put it, a triple threat: flesh, thought, demon. It is the demon's airy substance that provides the material for this transformation. This Ethiopian, so attractive to Pachon that he can experience her foulness only in his own body, is not so clearly other to the monk and thus cannot serve the immediately clarifying function that her fellows provide in the similar stories: Pachon's peace comes only much later. What effect the telling of her has on Palladius we are not told. The Ethiopian demon is here experienced at a remove: it is now the story of the demon, interpreted in Evagrian terms, that must do the therapeutic work for Palladius, who occupies a position similar to that of later ascetic readers of the *Lausiac History* and the *Sayings*.

We may seem to have traveled far from Didymus's Ethiopians, who are similarly fleshly but masculine and wounded by the arrows of Christ. However, we come full circle with a story featuring the monk Apollo, which appears in both the Latin collection of the *Sayings* and in John Cassian's *Conferences*.⁵⁶ Once again fornication disrupts the relationship between a disciple and an elder. Disturbed by the demon of fornication, the "punctilious" brother shares his thoughts with the elder, who had not experienced such thoughts and so "became angry and said that he was a wretched brother, unworthy of the monk's habit." The disciple is

left in despair, and he tells Apollo that he is returning to the world. After persuading the young man to return to his cell, Apollo goes to the cell of the harsh elder and prays that God will turn the attack from the disciple to the elder: "As soon as he finished his prayer, he saw an Ethiopian standing by the cell and firing arrows at the old man, who, as if he had been wounded or was drunk from wine, began to stagger this way and that. When he could not bear it any more, he came out of his cell and set out on the same road by which the young man had been returning to the world." In this way Apollo taught the elder to be more understanding of those afflicted with "the raging fire of nature," and both elder and disciple gained improved monastic identities. Here the hypersexual, macrophallic Ethiopian becomes the demon of *erōs* par excellence, reincarnating the fearsome deity Eros of Hesiod and Greek tragedy who drove people mad with the fiery darts of his power, before he got multiplied into the charming but by no means scary cupids that flit across the walls of Pompeian villas.⁵⁷ It was the power of the monks' own erotic desires that combined with the stereotypical hypersexuality of the Ethiopian to fuel this resurrection of Eros.

The Ambivalence of the Ethiopian: Fixity and Transformability

Several accounts of Ethiopian demons deploy the stereotypical hypersexuality and fleshliness of the Ethiopian in order to bring stability to a monastic identity in flux. The encounter with the Ethiopian demon, simultaneously attractive and frightening in its condensed visual representation of the self's erotic desire, drives the monk to solidify his position as a monk, especially as a good father or son. By its disturbing yet therapeutic embodiment of alterity within the self, the Ethiopian demon provides some traction, as it were, for the monk in crisis to move to an improved ascetic state. Like all stereotypes, this deployment of the Ethiopian depends on the presumption of a fixed nature in that which is being stereotyped, the Ethiopian: he or she is always body—hypersexual, powerful, and/or macrophallic—while the monk is transformable into spirit, able to renounce the eroticism that sticks to the Ethiopian as closely as his or her skin.

But in fact the Ethiopian was not so fixed, as Abba Moses and other successful Ethiopian ascetics reveal. When the virtuous Moses is set be-

side his demonic fellows, the Ethiopian emerges, as Homi Bhabha describes for the colonial stereotype, as “curiously mixed and split”: she/he “is the embodiment of rampant sexuality and yet innocent as a child”; “what is being dramatized is a separation—*between* races, cultures, histories, *within* histories—a separation between *before* and *after* that repeats obsessively the mythical moment or disjunction.”⁵⁸ Didymus’s Ethiopian dramatized the separation between before and after conversion to Christianity, whereas in monastic literature it is the ascetic regime that effects the separation between Ethiopian eroticism and Ethiopian virtue. Thus, the Ethiopian is “ambivalent” in monastic discourse, as is the stereotype in colonial discourse, which “on the one hand . . . proposes a teleology—under certain conditions of colonial domination and control the native is progressively reformable. On the other, however, it effectively displays the ‘separation,’ makes it more visible.”⁵⁹ As the self that the monk both renounces (demon) and desires to become (Moses)—the before and after of monasticism simultaneously—the Ethiopian exposes the ambivalence between fixity and transformability that drives ascetic discourse more generally.

That ambivalence is most apparent when the Ethiopian appears more than once in a single document, as is the case in *The History of the Monks*. The three appearances of Ethiopians (in the original Greek version) may contribute to its presentation of Egypt in fantastic terms: they lend a touch of the exotic to its account of the Egyptian monks’ “inspired and marvelous and virtuous way of life” in the mysterious desert (*HM* pref. 5). We have already seen how Ethiopians first appear, as barbarian raiders who cause the imperial general enough anxiety that he consults John of Lycopolis, who assures him of victory (*HM* 1.2). This picture of a fierce Ethiopian threat is followed several chapters later by a “small Ethiopian,” whom Abba Apollo removes from his neck and casts into the sand as it cries out, “I am the demon of pride” (*HM* 8.4). Later in the story of Apollo, Ethiopians return, now as exemplars of ascetic transformation. After describing a murderer who became a monk and so “changed from a wolf into an innocent lamb” (fulfilling Isa. 65:25), the author remarks, “It was possible to see also Ethiopians there practicing asceticism with the monks, many of them excelling in the virtues, and in them being fulfilled the scripture that says, ‘Ethiopia shall stretch forth her hand to God’ [Ps. 67:32]” (*HM* 8.34–35). From menacing barbarians who must be defeated and small demons who must be thrust aside to ex-

emplary ascetics who fulfill Scripture—the career of the Ethiopians is a remarkable demonstration of the power of the ascetic program to transform even the most recalcitrant self.

To make this point, the anonymous author must both invoke and disavow the otherness of the Ethiopian with respect to himself and his assumed non-Ethiopian readers. As barbarian invaders, the Ethiopian raiders are menacingly foreign. Apollo's demon of pride is, like its erotic counterparts, ambiguously located. After Apollo has spent forty years in the desert, from the age of fifteen, God tells him that he is the divinely appointed agent to end paganism: "You will banish all worship of demons." In God's own announcement there is temptation for Apollo, as the monk's reply reveals: "Take from me, Lord, arrogance, lest I lose every good by being exalted above the brotherhood." It is then that God instructs him to remove the demon, the small Ethiopian, from his neck (HM 8.3–4). The demon's attachment to his neck indicates that the pride or arrogance belongs to Apollo, but the demon's Ethiopianness marks the sin as foreign and therefore as something he can renounce. The ascetic Ethiopians, finally, excel in the virtues and fulfill Scripture, but they are "with the monks," rather than of them. They conform to "the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite."⁶⁰

Homi Bhabha calls "mimicry" the desire in colonial discourse to produce this Other who is almost the same, but not quite—"Indian in blood and colour, but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals and in intellect." The mimic man is the product of the colonial civilizing mission, but transformation of the colonized cannot be complete, but must be partial: "strategic failure" ensures the continuing need for colonizing institutions. Bhabha emphasizes the disturbing effect of mimicry, which disrupts colonial authority first by threatening to produce "'inappropriate' colonial subjects," but more profoundly by its "metonymy of presence." The products of colonial mimicry are menacing in their "partial presence," which undermines any secure essential identity; their "gaze of otherness . . . liberates marginal elements and shatters the unity of man's being through which he extends his sovereignty."⁶¹ Ethiopian ascetics—monks, but not quite—similarly disturb the normality of the racial symbolism in *The History of the Monks*, rendering partial the essentialized identities of (black) demon and (white) monk set up in the Apollo story. Like the figure of Charikleia, the white Ethiopian in Heliodorus's

Aithiopika, their presence “destabilizes the reader’s sense of the ‘fixity’ of cultural otherness, the primary element in establishing any cultural hierarchy.”⁶²

Abba Moses was the mimic man of the Egyptian desert. In the *Lausiaca History*, Palladius uses Moses to display the transformative power of the ascetic regime.⁶³ Doubly marked as “an Ethiopian by birth, who was black”—not the white kind like Charikleia—Moses is a former slave, robber, even murderer whose past life is so sordid that Palladius feels compelled to apologize for describing it: “I am obliged to tell about his wicked behavior in order to demonstrate the excellence of his conversion.” Nearly all of Palladius’s account is devoted to narrating how hard Moses must labor under the direction of Abba Isidore and another father to liberate his “reason” from his “disposition toward intemperance and fornication” (*LH* 19). The kernel for Palladius’s report may lie in a saying attributed to Moses himself in the Ethiopic sayings collection: attacked “every day” by fornication when he was young, Moses says, “I went into the inner desert and stayed there forty-two days; I did not eat bread or drink water or lie down or sit, but prayed to God.” After that the demon no longer attacked him.⁶⁴ Lengthening (possibly) Moses’s struggle to over six years, Palladius makes apparent to his reader the need for ascetic discipline: it works even on the Ethiopian; it will work for you (non-Ethiopian reader).

This success proved menacing: the taunting of Abba Moses in the *Sayings* may be read as the monks’ failed attempt to reassert the essentialized stability of “white” and “black” identities in the face of the ambivalence embodied in Moses’s mimicry. In contrast to Palladius’s narrative, the *Sayings* present Moses’s virtue as virtually uncontested: his struggle with fornication under Abba Isidore is extremely compressed—a vision of the angels who aid “the saints” is enough to send him back to his cell with courage; his awareness of his own sins and reluctance to judge those of another shame his fellow monks; his prayers to God bring a miraculous gift of water; even when he disobeys a monastic rule he is shown to be obeying “the commandment of God.”⁶⁵ This Moses (not Palladius’s) is indeed “too good to be true,”⁶⁶ or rather too good to be Ethiopian, or perhaps too Ethiopian to be white. The hostility of other monks to Moses suggests the “phobia” that arises “when the contours of the self are overtaken by the clash with something ‘too good’ or ‘too bad.’”⁶⁷ One gibe aimed at Moses’s color comes when he has literally be-

come white by being clothed in the cloak signifying his new ordained status: "And the archbishop said to him, 'Look, you have become completely white, Abba Moses.' The old man said to him, 'On the outside (only), Lord Father, or also on the inside?'"⁶⁸ Moses's reply belongs to the "black body, but white soul" topos that was widespread in literature of the period, but its artful performance of subordination—repeating but (perhaps) mocking the stereotypes on which the archbishop's joke depends, addressing the archbishop with inflated deference—suggests manipulation and concealment, an Other who has not been completely reformed, despite his appearance in white clerical garb.⁶⁹ Mimicry, as Bhabha deploys it, not only presents an ambivalent other to the colonizer, but also opens a space for resistance through mockery to the colonized. Some have criticized this move as "reinscribing colonialism as a totalizing presence . . . there is simply no space in which the colonized can respond to their subjugation other than in the terms already defined by their masters."⁷⁰ Here the difference between colonialism and monasticism as discourses comes into play. The voluntaristic nature of entry into monastic discourse undermines its totalizing pretensions and provides room for resistant mockery. Unlike a truly colonized person, Moses presumably "wants to be subjected" to ascetic discourse: free to leave the game, he can challenge its rules.⁷¹

The possibility that Moses's reply contests the color symbolism of ascetic discourse is suggested by the archbishop's next move, which indicates a desire to know the true mind of the white Ethiopian, to discover a possible "hidden transcript" of resistance in Moses's deference, to discern whether mimicry has become mockery: "Wishing to test him, the archbishop said to the clergy, 'When Abba Moses comes into the sanctuary, drive him away, and follow him to hear what he says.' So the old man came in, and they rebuked him and drove him away, saying, 'Go outside, Ethiopian!' As he went out, he said to himself, 'They have treated you right, you ash-skinned one, you black one. You are not a human being, so why do you go among human beings?'"⁷² Moses accepts both the equation of blackness with being nonhuman (demonic?) and the separation from non-Ethiopians (that is, human beings) this entails, but he does so under the sign of monastic self-abnegation, as a remarkable demonstration of the virtue of humility.⁷³ His acceptance of the demonized subjectivity of the "Ethiopian" transforms him into the idealized subjectivity of the "humble" that ascetic discourse seeks to create. Moses

shows himself to be indeed white “on the inside” though black “on the outside”—the same, but not quite. Likewise, he remains silent when monks at a meeting say, “Why does this Ethiopian also come among us?” Asked by these same monks whether he was “not at all grieved” by their taunt, Moses quotes a Psalm—“I was grieved, but I did not speak” (Ps. 76:5)—which concludes, “You led your people like sheep in the hand of Moses and Aaron” (76:21).⁷⁴ When does mimicry become mockery? When is humility a strategy of resistance? The supremely humble Moses may be precisely the subject that ascetic discourse desires, but the taunting monks disavow the very self they presumably desire for themselves.

It may be tempting to defuse the ambivalence posed by Ethiopian Moses by assigning the fixity of the Ethiopian demon to its nature as demonic, leaving the “real” Ethiopian (represented by Moses) unproblematically transformable. But the monastic literature itself will not allow this escape. Moses accepts his unchanging status as nonhuman Ethiopian (fixed in his black skin) as he demonstrates his human capacity for repentance and humility. Palladius is more revealing: “Such was the effect of his conversion,” Palladius reports, that Moses “brought his helper in wickedness from his youth, the very demon who was his companion in sin, forthwith to the acknowledgment of Christ” (LH 19). This passage has puzzled both modern scholars, who have wondered at a repentant demon, and medieval copyists, who often just changed the text.⁷⁵ There is, of course, the possibility that Palladius, as a student Evagrius, simply believed that demons could repent and be saved. But the circulation of Ethiopian demons through ascetic discourse, including Palladius’s own text, colludes with this statement to create a paradox: the very Ethiopian whose blackness undeniably indicates demonic evil has repented and renounced that evil. The demon has become a monk.

For Bhabha, the ambivalence of mimicry and stereotyping reveals a lack at the heart of the colonial project: there is no unified subject, whether colonial or colonized, but only partial presences, exemplified by the mimic, which are continually displaced and renegotiated within a space marked by “hybridity,” “the creation of new transcultural forms within the contact zone produced by colonization.”⁷⁶ The racial stereotype emerges as a useful “fantasy”—in Greek, *phantasia*, by now a familiar term to us—in the colonizer’s quest to “fix identity,” to realize “the impossible desire for a pure, undifferentiated origin.”⁷⁷ The aim of colo-

nial discourse, of course, is to dominate the other who is stereotyped. The immediate aim of ascetic discourse is not to dominate Ethiopians, but to dominate the self or an aspect of the self that is Ethiopianized. The Ethiopian demon, so clearly marked as evil and other, enabled the monk to exteriorize his self, his desiring self, so as to renounce it as not, in fact, his self. In this respect the Ethiopian only brings into clear focus one of the most important ways that all demons worked for the monk. Kristeva writes: "In the fascinated rejection that the foreigner arouses in us, there is a share of uncanny strangeness in the sense of the depersonalization that Freud discovered in it, and which takes up again our infantile desires and fears of the other—the other of death, the other of woman, the other of uncontrollable drive. The foreigner is within us. And when we flee from or struggle against the foreigner, we are fighting our unconscious—that 'improper' facet of our impossible 'own and proper.'"⁷⁸ This splitting of the self, which Kristeva urges us to confront in order to overcome xenophobia, was, however, an essential step in the formation of a monastic self wholly devoted to God and in fact could not be closed. For the end of "warfare" with the demons—and thus with the self—would have meant the end of the ascetic project itself and thus was impossible, as numerous sayings of the fathers insist. The transformable, potentially repentant self (monk) required a fixed, recalcitrant self (demon) to renounce. The monk desired to be perfect, but not quite. By appearing as both unmistakably demonic and admirably humble, the Ethiopian embodied this ambivalence, so unrelentingly powerful in his macrophallic sexuality and yet, rarely but amazingly, amenable to ascetic transformation. The Ethiopian was indeed demonic, but perhaps no more so than the monk himself.

Manly Women, Female Demons, and Other Amazing Sights

Gender in Combat

You have loved those who sleep with you, and you have increased your fornication with them.

—Isaiah 57:8–9

Whether he was fighting demons or his own passions or both, the monk imagined himself as an *agōnistēs*, a “fighter,” “contender,” or “combatant”—a masculine figure. He was a gladiator in the arena facing down demonic beasts or a soldier in the army of Christ arrayed against the demonic army of Satan. The invention of the Christian monk in the fourth century participated in a wider cultural project that reworked traditional markers of masculinity into new forms of Christian manliness.¹ The monk, after all, did not exhibit many of the most important observable behaviors that characterized the ideal Roman male: he did not preside over a household as its *pater familias*, nor did he climb the ladder of public offices that brought a man public recognition and acclaim. According to Evagrius, some monks experienced the taunts of family members that they had abandoned secular life and embraced monasticism because of their “weakness,” meaning their inability to “excel in worldly affairs.”² In other words, they were not real men. It may have been “for the sake of the kingdom of heaven” that monks had “made themselves eunuchs” (Matt. 19:12), but they were “eunuchs” nonetheless, only ambiguously masculine.³ Perhaps monastic “eunuchs” took comfort from Evagrius’s telling them that they were in fact “warriors and soldiers of our victorious king, Jesus Christ.”⁴

The *Life of Antony* can be read as shoring up the monk’s ambiguous

masculinity by presenting the monastic life as a “particular, meticulously cultivated version of manhood,” in which Antony’s body transcends the porous flux of feminized materiality.⁵ When Antony emerges from his twenty-year seclusion in the deserted fort, the gathered spectators are “amazed to see that his body had its same condition; it was neither fat as if from lack of exercise nor withered as if from fasting and fighting demons, but it was such as they had known it before his withdrawal.” Antony appeared to be “in his natural state.” Antony maintains this state into old age, even retaining all his teeth.⁶ When Evagrius told his monastic readers that they were warriors and soldiers, he enlisted them in an unseen war, “the battle that takes place in the intellect.”⁷ The *Life of Antony* makes that battle and thus the monk’s antidemonic “manliness” (*andreia*) visible.⁸ Demons appear as wild beasts that threaten and harm Antony, but he remains unshaken. When the devil appears as a human being, he does so as a woman and a boy, their feminized forms providing visual contrast to the man Antony.

If examination of “Ethiopian” demons suggests that visible demons enabled the monk to externalize and so to reject undesirable aspects of his self, another useful function of demonic appearances, whether in experience or in literary description, was that they made visible a normally invisible combat; monks or their admirers could see what took place in the mind or soul. Several scholars have remarked on the essential visibility of asceticism: as Patricia Cox Miller notes, “ascetic behavior was a performance that petitioned an audience.”⁹ Antony may have enclosed himself so as not to be seen by others for twenty years, but the desire of admirers to see him and imitate him forced him out of his “shrine.” Even when other human beings were not present, monks knew that God and the angels observed even their interior struggles. Although the rough and often hirsute monk may seem to have presented to lay visitors a picture of masculinity gone wild, in fact observers of male ascetics and their bodies tended to see more transcendent realities—the resurrected body, angels, or the prophets of the Bible.¹⁰ One of the virtues of female monks was that they could make dramatically visible the masculinization that demonic combat and ascetic struggle produced in the monk in a way that male monks could not: they started out as female and could be “made male.”

Both feminist theory and historical study of Christian authors have demonstrated how cultural products ranging from ancient sermons to

modern films position the woman as spectacle, as the object of the male gaze.¹¹ Margaret Miles has argued that in the Christian West the female body in particular has served as “a blank page on which multiple social meanings could be projected.”¹² Likewise, monastic authors used women, both female monks and female-appearing demons, to visualize conflict with the demons and its results. Monastic literature did not equate the demonic and the feminine; rather, gendered imagery, especially visual, provided a variety of perspectives from which to view the monk and his diabolical enemies.

The “Virile Mind” and the “Daughter of Babylon”: Engendering the Monk

Many early Christian writings portrayed virtuous women as being “made male” or becoming “men.”¹³ Such works shared antiquity’s general equation of virtue with manliness, and some authors believed that the female body was merely a lesser version of the male and that an individual’s body could move up or down a sliding scale of masculinity that also measured virtue.¹⁴ The opposite of virtuous “manliness” (*andreia*) was female “weakness” (*astheneia*).¹⁵ Thus, the metaphor (if it can be called that) of the masculine woman did not require the metaphor of combat: in the *Gospel of Thomas*, when Peter asserts that “Mary [Magdalene] should leave us, for females are not worthy of life,” Jesus replies, “I am going to attract her to make her male so that she too might become a living spirit that resembles you males. For every female that makes herself male will enter the kingdom of heavens.” As we have seen, monastic authors inherited the combat metaphor from the literature of martyrdom, which understood the captive Christian’s struggle with beasts or gladiators in the arena to be combat with Satan. A female martyr such as Perpetua displayed masculine courage in her triumphant defiance of the demonic forces: “I became a man,” she says.¹⁶ The monastic life succeeded martyrdom as the arena in which a woman could prove herself to be a “female man of God.”¹⁷

Amma Sarah, who practiced monasticism in “the district of Pelusia” near a river, provides a famous example of the transformation of gender through ascetic conflict with the demons.¹⁸ “For thirteen years she endured being attacked fiercely by the demon of fornication, and she never prayed that the warfare might stop, but said only, ‘Oh my God,

strengthen me.” When “the same demon of fornication” attacked her “very sharply” and suggested “the vanities of the world,” Sarah did not waver in her fear of God or her ascetic practice; rather, as she prayed in her chamber, “the demon of fornication appeared to her corporeally and said to her, ‘You have conquered me, Sarah,’ but she said to it, ‘It is not I who conquered you, but my master Christ.’” Perhaps among “the vanities of the world” was the beauty of the river beside which Sarah lived: remarkably, although she lived in the same spot for sixty years, she “did not turn aside” so as to look at the river. Rightly, then, Sarah was able to say to two male anchorites who sought to “humiliate” her, “By nature [*phusis*] I am a woman, but not by thought,” and to another set of brothers she stated, “It is I who am a man, you who are women.”¹⁹ Sarah’s triumph over the demonic had made her a man.

The sayings associated with Sarah illustrate several themes that surround the masculine female monk in monastic literature. It is endurance or persistence that characterizes Sarah’s conflict with demons (thirteen years, sixty years), and she resists in particular “the vanities of the world.” Other monastic sources praise manly women for their endurance and associate women with “the world.” Sarah calls upon God to strengthen her: the assumed weakness of women, implicit here but explicit elsewhere, requires that God grant strength to women (as to male monks as well) in their efforts to prove manly. Her example serves to shame less accomplished male ascetics, here reproached as “women.”²⁰ Finally, the sayings seem to present an ancient version of the modern assignment of sex (woman or man) to the body or nature, and of gender (feminine or masculine) to practices or culture. Naturally and visibly (in her body) Sarah is a woman, but in her thoughts and thus invisibly, due to her ascetic practice, she is masculine, a man.

In a letter to Melania, who had sent him to the Egyptian desert, Evagrius exhorted her to display a “manliness” modeled on the endurance of Job. “Not one of the trials gives such frankness to the soul at the time of prayer as does the trial that affects the body,” Evagrius writes. This is so because bodily afflictions, a form of “testing” introduced by the demons, cause the person to turn to God for help and thus to be “brought increasingly nearer to God.” As the example of Job illustrates, human friends often prove unreliable in these circumstances: even if their intentions are good, Satan will try to use them to make the afflicted person angry, “for the accursed one knows that a suffering person is eas-

ily angered.” Evagrius concludes by appealing to Melania: “You too, O chaste one, strive to be a beautiful example, not only for women, but also for men, to be for everyone an archetypal image of endurance. For it suits a [female] disciple of Christ to struggle to the point of blood [see Heb. 12:4] and to show everyone that our Lord has armed even women with manliness against the demons and has strengthened weak souls with the gift of the commandments and the faith.”²¹ Like the sayings associated with Sarah, Evagrius argues that women have weak souls, but Christ strengthens them and grants them manliness in the combat with demons, particularly endurance of bodily suffering. Through her endurance Melania will serve as an exemplary spectacle, “an archetypal image,” for men and women alike.

Evagrius does not specify what kind of bodily suffering “to the point of blood” he has in mind in his letter to Melania, but illness and even death will emerge in some monastic sources as a form of demonic combat or demonstration of virtue particularly appropriate to women. Virginia Burrus has observed that the earliest biographies of pious Christian women (for example, Gregory of Nyssa’s *Life of Macrina*) “pivot on the eroticized death of a much-beloved subject and cleave closely to the traditions of both martyrology and letters of consolation, behind which lie funeral speeches of praise and lament. A ‘woman,’ it seems, must die in order to get a Life.” By describing the suffering of the holy woman and dwelling on their own grief, male authors positioned “woman” as “a lamentably ‘masochistic’ subject,” her death “a distinctively feminine performance of ‘the joyful triumph of the body.’”²² In monastic Egypt, the *Life of Syncletica*, to which I shall turn shortly, provides a remarkable example of a woman who gains sanctity by enduring illness and becomes “representable” at the moment of her dying.²³ By the medieval period, as Caroline Walker Bynum notes, “patient suffering of disease or injury was a major way of gaining sanctity for females but not for males.”²⁴

Illness could provide a particularly poignant opportunity to demonstrate ascetic endurance, but the monk had to discern carefully how the demonic might be involved in it. Monks sometimes distinguished between normal illness, which had a physiological basis apart from the demonic and required therapeutic care from oneself and one’s community, and unreal or illusory illness, which demons caused and which the monk could dispel by resisting it.²⁵ Pachomius, for example, once suffered from a fever that dissipated when, despite his suffering, he got up

for prayer and joined the healthy monks at the regular meal. Pachomius was subsequently able to diagnose the presence of this “not natural” illness in other monks so that they “would not be mocked by the enemy.”²⁶ Shenoute likewise contrasted normal illness and “the illness of the demons,” connecting the latter with sloth.²⁷ While monks suffering from natural illness deserved loving care and exemption from the normal monastic routine, those afflicted with demonic illness were to receive no special treatment. But Shenoute identified also a third mode of illness—a sickness that God or perhaps Satan imposes upon the monk or any Christian as a “trial” (*peirasmós*), which the person ought to endure and use as an opportunity for repentance. Job and Lazarus served as biblical models of resisting the demonic by enduring disease.²⁸ Unlike the illusory “illness of the demons,” the diseases suffered by Job and Lazarus and their modern imitators did not go away when the sufferer persevered in his prayer and other activities: the endurance itself was the triumph.

The same ambiguity surrounding illness and the demonic appears in the sayings associated with Amma Theodora, the precise location of whose withdrawal is unknown but who appears to have been a contemporary of Bishop Theophilus of Alexandria (ca. 345–412).²⁹ Like the other *apophthegmata*, these sayings stress patience and discipline of the body, while claiming that the monk conquers the demons with humility, not merely with the ascetic acts of withdrawal, fasting, and vigils, or “any kind of suffering.” In one saying, Theodora offers a description of listlessness (*akēdia*) that includes the unreal form of demonic illness found in the evidence of Pachomius and Shenoute: the enemy imposes sickness upon the body and suggests, “I am ill and cannot perform the prayers [*synaxis*].” But in fact, if the monk perseveres in his prayer, “all these things go away,” and she offers as an example a monk whose persistence in prayer caused his fever to abate. On the other hand, Theodora reports: “An itch came upon the body of another monk for testing [*peirasmós*], along with a great multitude of lice. Now he had once been rich. And the demons said to him, ‘Can you put up with living this way, producing worms?’ And he triumphed by his patience.”³⁰ This monk suffers from a real illness that the demons may or may not have caused, but that has the purpose of “testing.” Although the saying does not mention Job, this monk conforms to Job’s example: he was formerly rich; he suffers from worms (Job 2:9, 7:5); and the demonic tries to use

the illness to change the monk's virtuous disposition. Here, enduring real illness, rather than dissipating illusory disease, represents triumph over the demons.

Such is a primary theme of *The Life and Activity of the Holy and Blessed Teacher Syncletica*, in which the model of Job and endurance of physical suffering combine, as they do in Evagrius's letter to Melania, to create a visually compelling portrait of the demon-fighting female monk as manly. Composed in Alexandria in the fifth century and later falsely attributed to Athanasius, the *Life of Syncletica* presents the modern scholar with a case study in monastic intertextuality.³¹ The *Life* draws on a variety of written sources, including the *Life of Antony* and the writings of Evagrius and John Cassian; in turn, portions of it appear in *Sayings of the Desert Fathers* under Syncletica's name. The result is a "haphazard" compendium of monastic teaching that the author (or compiler) has not edited for coherence or consistency.³² The *Life* presents Syncletica as a member of a reputable and somewhat wealthy family that has moved from Macedonia to Alexandria. Already as a girl Syncletica takes up an ascetic regime of simplicity and fasting, and later she manages to avoid marriage. When her parents die, Syncletica gives up her property and withdraws into a tomb outside the city. There she pays close attention to herself, confronts the thoughts presented to her by Satan, and draws a group of admirers, to whom she delivers a lengthy ascetic exhortation. At the end of the discourse, the devil attacks Syncletica, now eighty years old, with lung cancer and a mouth infection, both of which are graphically described; Syncletica's patient endurance of these illnesses is rewarded with visions shortly before she dies.

Gender flexibility and indeterminacy characterize the *Life*, even in terms of its audience.³³ Syncletica's extended discourse mostly presumes that its hearers are female ascetics, but the *Life* opens by alluding to Plato's *Symposium*, in which a group of philosophizing males benefit from the intervention of a wise woman (Diotima). The author declares that people ought not to be "uninitiated in good things" (see Plato, *Symposium* 210a) and observes that "often valuable pearls elude day-laboring men [*andres*]." Specifically, such hardworking (and thus nonphilosophical) men may miss the significance of Syncletica, "the present pearl," by "looking fixedly only on its form" (her female body) and so miss its "nature." Satan, as we shall see, makes this mistake at the end of the story, but the author has avoided it by closely viewing the pearl: "Lit-

tle by little from its proximity we have learned its beauty; divine love [*erōs*] was born within us for what we saw; for these circumstances kindled our thought toward desire [*pathos*]" (VS 1). Adopting from the *Symposium* the vocabulary of desire and the imagery of virtuous males giving birth, the author positions Syncletica as a beautiful feminine object of the male gaze, which nonetheless must look beyond the object's female form to its true interior nature, revealed at the end of the narrative to be masculine. This opening prepares the way not only for the concluding revelation of Syncletica as masculine, but also for the work's constant play between the ascetic's visible exterior ("form") and her unseen interior ("nature"), the boundary where the demonic will work.

Allusions to the *Symposium* return later during Syncletica's discourse, now applied to a gathering of women so as to double the masculine gaze on the feminine. Syncletica appears to refer to female homoeroticism when she warns that "the devil arouses the goad of fornication" and states, "Certainly often the malignant one will reanchor sisterly charity toward his own evil. For he tripped up by means of sisterly relationship virgins who had fled marriage and illusion all their lives" (VS 27). She then advises her female disciples how to respond to "an illusion of seemingly appearance" that may arise "in the regions of thought." Alluding to the Evagrian strategy of driving out a nail with a nail, Syncletica urges the women to form in their minds an image counter to that of the handsome male—"to represent the body of the beloved [*erōmenos*] as a wound that smells oppressive, and is inclined to putrefy, briefly put, as resembling a corpse, or to imagine oneself as a corpse" (VS 29). Deconstructing the beautiful male body, which formed the first step on the ascent to contemplation in the *Symposium*, as in truth a demonic obstacle to that goal, Syncletica invites her female disciples to perform a revised seeing that the male readers had been asked to perform at the opening of the work—that is, to look past surface beauty to the true nature of what is seen (here, rotting flesh). Strangely, what they must visualize is what Syncletica will incarnate in her final illness, anticipated in the invitation to the women to visualize themselves as corpses. Thanks to this wisdom, Syncletica's discourse "was a divine symposium for those present. For they were made merry from the chalices of wisdom" (VS 30). It is, of course, the originally construed male readers who observe this symposium of merry women, in which female homoeroticism is invoked and the male body, as object of desire, is dismantled.

The writer applies to the ascetic life imagery of procreation, birth, childhood, and maturation into adulthood, language found as well in the *Symposium*, and so construes not only ascetics but also God in gendered terms. Pressed by her admirers to offer teaching, Syncletica protests that she is but a sinner and states, "We have in common the Lord as teacher; from the same source we draw out the spiritual stream. From his breasts we are fed with milk, the Old and New Testaments."³⁴ No, the students reply, Syncletica has made progress in the virtues and is stronger, while they are still young. At this Syncletica weeps as if she were "a newborn at the breast," but then collects herself and delivers her discourse, addressing the hearers as "children" (VS 21–22). Syncletica wavers between the infantlike dependence on the maternal Lord that she shares with all human beings and the maternal wisdom that she possesses as a mature teacher of her "children." In a later passage, the higher Jerusalem is the mother of ascetic Christians as God is their Father; "the righteous [who] withdraw from the ways of the world for the higher journey" are fetuses that reach a healthy condition; sinners are "embryos dead in the womb of the mother." Reborn in baptism, Syncletica's female disciples now find themselves "betrothed to the heavenly Bridegroom." These ascetic women pass through the life cycle of all women from conception to birth to betrothal, but unlike ordinary women who "adorn the body with worldly and earthly blossoms," they "make the soul bright with virtues." Like the ideal male reader of the *Life*, the bridegroom Christ concerns himself not with the visible body but with the invisible soul (VS 90–92).

The *Life* closely ties gender to a contrast between the visible/exterior and the invisible/interior, and it is precisely at the boundary between these two perspectives or ways of seeing that the demonic operates. The author compares Syncletica's ascetic struggles with the ordeals endured by Thecla, the legendary heroine whose choice of virginity over marriage nearly gained her martyrdom: "For if the one Savior was the object of their desires, they necessarily had one opponent." But the author claims that Thecla's sufferings due to physical attacks from wild beasts and fire were "gentler" than Syncletica's, "for the evil of the enemy attacked her [Thecla] from the outside. But with Syncletica he displays his more piercing evil, moving from the inside by means of opposing and destructive thoughts" (VS 8). To be sure, the author applies the familiar imagery of warfare and conflict with beasts to Syncletica's struggle with

Satan, and he portrays her prayer and ascetic acts of fasting and sleep deprivation as her weapons and armor (VS 18). Yet he consistently contrasts an exterior or material battle with an interior or immaterial one and privileges the latter as more advanced and difficult. In a variation on the paradigm established by the *Life of Antony*, the exterior battle with bodily vices precedes the greater interior battle with thoughts (VS 20, 26). The devil may attack by means of both “external acts” and “internal thoughts,” but “he does much more by means of the internal” (VS 28). Just as sailors easily see the water that the waves wash into their boat but may be killed by the bilge water that seeps into the boat when they are sleeping and the sea is quiet, so too the ascetic can quickly identify “encounters with external spirits” but must “always be vigilant to thoughts” (VS 45). Warfare with the demonic is principally interior, consisting of thoughts and invisible to the eye.

Syncletica’s manliness throughout most of the *Life* also has an internal quality. In the tradition of Thecla, Syncletica cuts her hair (and gives up cosmetics) as she begins her ascetic labors in the tomb (VS 11), thereby taking on a less feminine appearance. But Syncletica later spiritualizes and internalizes this act in her exhortation to her followers: “We have performed the removal of the hair; let us also carry away the worms in the head” (VS 80). The author knows that Syncletica performed “manly good deeds” (*andragathēmata*), but he cannot describe them because he has not seen them: “We are not able to speak of her active and ascetic life, because she did not allow anyone to become an observer of this. For she did not want the people who were with her to be heralds of her manly good deeds” (VS 15). Observable ascetic acts merely set the stage for the more important internal struggle with thoughts by creating an internal disposition called a “virile spirit” or “virile thought,” which enables the ascetic to benefit sinners without falling prey to their evil influence (VS 30, 71). Like the pearl whose unexceptional form belies its true value, Syncletica’s exterior femininity, her body, conceals a virility that she has gained through steadfast resistance to the internal assaults of the devil.

These themes prepare the reader for the astonishing conclusion of the work, in which Syncletica’s Job-like endurance of illness literally brings her internal virility to the surface and makes of her a new spectacle of virtue for the work’s male readers. The “pearl” of Syncletica’s body, by losing its deceptive beauty, becomes the means of seeing her “virile

spirit.” Satan’s final assault on Syncletica takes place when she is eighty years old, and once again it is internal rather than external. But here the contrast shifts: while the author previously had contrasted internal thoughts (spirit) with external temptations or blows (body), now he speaks of “the internal organs” of the body in comparison to its “external members” (VS 104). Just as he had earlier compared Syncletica to Thecla and found Syncletica’s internal struggles more difficult than Thecla’s external ones, the author now calls Syncletica’s battles with lung cancer and a throat infection “the contests of Job” yet declares her battles worse than those of the biblical hero: “But in the present he [the devil] cuts short the time, making the sufferings more burdensome. The blessed Job endured in the plague thirty-five years; here, the enemy, as though stripping off as some first fruits the periods of decades, attaches them to the holy body of this one. For three and a half years through famous sufferings, she battled against the enemy. Therefore on Job the devil made the beginnings of the wounds on the outside; on her he added punishments from the inside. For her internal organs having been struck by him, he assigned to her greater and more difficult sufferings” (VS 106). Likewise, Syncletica suffers more than the martyrs, because they faced an external fire whereas she burns from within (VS 106). Although the external/internal contrast now applies to the body, Syncletica’s virtue remains an internal disposition: “She did not lapse in her spirit” (VS 107). Syncletica has not chosen to be ill, but she does refuse various forms of “external assistance,” saying to her companions who have sent for a physician, “Why do you thwart this good battle? Why do you seek what is apparent, ignorant of what is hidden?” (VS 111).

Through her body’s illness Syncletica’s hidden good battle and her unseen “manliness” (VS 111) become visible. Sickness exposes Syncletica’s internal organs and opens up her body, as the devil ejects portions of her lungs out of her body, makes a bone in her jaw fall out, and opens up a hole in her throat (VS 105, 111). Syncletica’s companions now smell the rot emanating from Syncletica’s interior, and they see her virtue in this grisly spectacle of the body being turned inside out. Syncletica can no longer speak, but she nonetheless teaches her disciples through her body: “For perceiving with their eyes the sufferings, they strengthened further the will. For the wounds of the body of that one [Syncletica] cured the stricken souls. And one could see the caution and healing of those who saw the greatness of soul and patient endurance of the

blessed one" (VS 110). Here again the vision is doubled: what the reader sees is the benefit gained by those who see the previously hidden greatness of Syncletica's soul. Syncletica too now sees what is normally invisible: "The blessed one clearly saw the adversary" (VS 111). The only blind character is Satan. Although Syncletica's companions now see her interior virility through her body, whose interior has been exposed, the devil remains captivated by the female form of the saint's body: "And seeking a feast, he [the devil] became food. For she was offered as bait through the snare by the weakness [*astheneia*] of the body; seeing a woman, he looked down on her, for he did not know her virile [*andreios*] mind. He observed ailing members, for he was blind and not able to observe her strongest reasoning. Therefore for three months she competed in this contest. Her whole body was strengthened by divine power" (VS 112). This passage's depiction of Syncletica's triumph over the demonic depends upon a series of equations and contrasts—weakness/body/feminine/visible versus strength/spirit/masculine/invisible—that it also collapses in the sick Syncletica, whose virility is now visible and whose body is now strong. Only the devil remains prey to the presumed stability of these categories, unable to see the virility within the weak female body.

Syncletica literally embodies and makes visible the Job-like manliness to which Evagrius exhorted Melania. Just as the author of her *Life* had earlier revisualized the desirable male body as rotting flesh, he renders visible Syncletica's interior spiritual manliness, hard won in intellectual and physical combat with the devil, through his vivid description of the decay of her beautiful female body. Syncletica's reward is appropriately visual: "She saw visions and the power of angels." And the author remarks, "With the vision of these, she became as if one herself" (VS 113): Syncletica becomes the spectacle of virtue that Evagrius urged Melania to become. The female monk's visible female body belied her interior manliness, and thus depictions of the female monk as manly had to play with the disjunction between what is seen and what cannot be seen. A female body contained within it a virile spirit, normally unseen, but amazingly some female monks could visually display the masculinization that demonic combat engendered in the monk, whether male or female.

Stories of monks who at their deaths are discovered to be women, which multiply in early medieval literature but are comparatively few in

our period, provided equally dramatic, if less grisly, visible examples of the engendering of the monk.³⁵ In one anecdote, Bessarion and his disciple Doulas happen upon a monk who refuses to speak with them or even acknowledge their presence; returning later, they find the monk dead. Doulas reports, "When we took the body to bury it, we discovered that it was a woman by nature." Bessarion exclaims, "See how women triumph over Satan, and we behave shamefully in the cities."³⁶ Here we find, as in the sayings about Sarah, the assignment of sex ("woman") to the body or nature and the use of the masculine female monk to shame male monks. An anonymous anecdote more closely associates masculinity with demonic combat:

Some worldly people visited a certain anchorite, and when he saw them he received them with joy, saying, "The Lord sent you so that you would bury me. For my call is at hand, but for the benefit of you and of those who hear [your report], I shall tell you about my life. As for me, brothers, I am a virgin in my body, but in my soul up to now I have been inhumanly under attack by fornication. Look, I am speaking to you, and I behold the angels waiting to take my soul, and Satan meanwhile standing by and suggesting thoughts of fornication to me." Having said these things, he stretched himself out and died. While dressing him the worldly people found that he truly was a virgin.³⁷

This story plays on the gender ambiguity of the Greek word *parthenos* ("virgin") and on the definition of true virginity. Unlike the male body, the female body could provide evidence of whether a person "truly was a virgin," and in the fourth and fifth centuries Christian authors increasingly identified female virginity with physical intactness, as the debate over Mary's virginity illustrates. The case of men was more difficult: John Cassian quotes Basil of Caesarea as saying, "I do not know woman, but I am not a virgin," and comments, "Well indeed did he understand that the incorruption of the flesh consists not so much in abstaining from woman as it does in integrity of heart, which ever and truly preserves the incorrupt holiness of the body by both the fear of God and the love of chastity."³⁸ Our anonymous monk echoes Basil by claiming that his body is virginal, but his soul has been vulnerable to temptation; yet the anecdote seems to take the dead monk's integrity of body as evidence of the virginity of his—or now, *her*—soul, caught between the angels and Satan even at death. Only a female body could provide proof of the

monk's virginity "truly": as in the case of Syncletica, it bears witness to an unseen battle of the soul.

The story of this anonymous monk joins the accounts of Sarah, Syncletica, and Bessarion's transvestite brother in locating the monk's femininity in her body. Syncletica and Sarah, however, were always visually female through their bodies; their virtuous manliness, initially hidden from untrained eyes, became visible only at the end of their struggles, whether in Syncletica's disease-ridden body or in the bodily appearance of the demon of fornication to Sarah. Our anonymous transvestite monks wore their manly virtue for their unsuspecting visitors to see, and only at the end of their lives did their femininity appear to astound their viewers. Certainly the anonymous anecdote relies on an implied close visual inspection of the female body by the secular visitors, who were able to discern its virginal status. Both patterns of visibility/invisibility continued in later monastic and ascetic literature. Transvestite heroines such as Pelagia the Harlot lived disguised as men and were discovered to be women only at their deaths. And authors continued to praise prominent undisguised ascetic women as masculine or "men." In both patterns, however, the presumed weakness of women and their female bodies enabled the dramatic visual appearance of a manliness that demonic combat created in all monks, whether male or female. Palladius, the student of Evagrius, captured this complex of imagery well in his description of Olympias, a prominent ascetic and deaconess of Constantinople: "Do not say 'woman,' but 'such a man,' for she is a man in contrast to the form of her body."³⁹

If monastic authors praised as male the female monk who proved tenacious in conflict with the demons, so too they could denounce the sinful ascetic woman in ways that exploited gendered imagery to portray the monk as a debased woman, one who has given herself to the demons sexually. Such gendered reproaches exploited antiquity's general assumption that weak women were more vulnerable to their passions and drew on the biblical story of Eve's seduction by the satanic serpent, especially as Paul had deployed it in writing to his Corinthian followers: "I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by its cunning, your thoughts will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ" (2 Cor. 11:3). By combining gender, the wiles of Satan, and the now technical monastic term *thoughts*, this verse proved irresistible to some male leaders addressing their wayward female disciples. Like representa-

tions of virtuous women, their denunciations used imagery of visual exposure or the revelation and invasion of interior space—now, however, to humiliate the fallen woman.

Shenoute provides a particularly interesting example of such rhetoric because, in contrast to other early monastic authors, he explicitly developed an ascetic ideology and practice that applied to both men and women. As Rebecca Krawiec has demonstrated, the phrase *whether male or female* occurs repeatedly in his rules and letters, one among several indications that he wished to create a “universal” or “genderless” monasticism that did not efface gender, but that applied equally to men as men and to women as women. Significantly, he did not exhort women to become like men or praise virtuous women as manly. Rather, Shenoute abhorred gender deviance and associated it with Satan, the demonic realm, and human capitulation to the devil, as I shall explore below. Still, Shenoute defended his male guidance of the affiliated female monastery, as Krawiec shows, “by reminding women of their susceptibility to the Devil,” based in their “passionate and less rational nature.”⁴⁰ Female leaders who did not subordinate themselves to the men, he said, “pass all their time taking counsel from the Devil,” as Eve did. Shenoute told disobedient female monks that their hearts and bodies are “lair of unclean spirits.” He asked them, “How shall the spirits of the righteous and all the saints, whose words we read, repose with you, while demons breed with you and repose in your foul-minded thoughts, and nurture their wickedness in your machinations and your defiled mind?”⁴¹ We saw in Chapter 5 Shenoute’s penchant for language that asserts a strong union between sinners and Satan; here demons take up residence in women’s interiors and perform sexual intercourse with them.

Fornication with demons appears in works that Shenoute delivered to mixed audiences as well, where it served as a metaphor for an entire community seduced by Satan. Just as he presented himself as biblical-style prophet, Shenoute could draw on works such as Ezekiel and Hosea to depict his wayward monastery as a fornicating whore whom God “hated” and “stripped naked of her garments.” Preaching before a congregation that included the governor Flavianus, Shenoute said of sinful Christians, “Having lain down for sin, which corrupts their soul, like a woman into whom dogs have run and who has lain down for them [the dogs] until they have corrupted her flesh, they have not fought against sin.” He went on to state, “I know a woman who has lain down for the

devil and his demons, instead of dogs, until they struck and beat her. Who is she? I shall tell you who she is: she is the synagogue of the Jews." After spinning out the predictable and biblical analogy between a faithless and adulterous wife and the faithless and adulterous Jews, Shenoute labeled the synagogue "a demonic cavern and a diabolical and satanic hole."⁴² Whether applied to Shenoute's monastery or to the synagogue, the sexually penetrated woman symbolized an interior space that the demonic had invaded and made its home.

In another sermon Shenoute condemned both men and women who had "promised" or claimed virginity but failed to keep their vow. The failed male virgins he exhorted not to become effeminate or to have many women as sexual partners, as such "demonic deeds" would embarrass Christians among their pagan neighbors. The failed women he likewise urged not to have many men and not to abort or expose any children they might bear. But Shenoute then accused these women of having "taught the devil about your heart and revealed to him your thoughts and your considerations." The failed female virgin did not have sex with a mere human being, but with the devil:

Who preceded whom among those who entered so as to plunder and destroy your soul? Was it the evil man? Or was it really Satan? For it was you who opened to them your door. Moreover, you know who served as guide to those who took the riches from the house. If it had been thieves or scavengers who entered you, they would have left something behind. The demon, who is insatiable in sinning—it was he who deceived you, and it was he who cast a spell on you—but it was you who first made room for him within yourself. If you had not waited for him, you would not have met up with him lustfully, nor would he himself have settled in the corner, streets, and vicinity of your house. It is you who showed him, as a guide, how to come in and to go out secretly. It is you who concealed him in your heart, soul, and thinking, like a woman who has concealed the man who committed adultery with her in the chambers and corners of her house. It is you who brought him up into the place where the wealth is hid. It is you who pointed it out to him.

Shenoute elaborated on this conceit at some length, the key images being those of invasion of an interior space, fornication with the devil, and the bringing forth and removal of virtues ("riches") from the virgin's soul. This revelation of and removal of interior virtues presents a diabol-

ical parallel to Syncletica's revelation of her interior virtues in her endurance of demonic illness. Needless to say, Shenoute may have called the men who failed to remain virgins "defiled" and "polluted" temples of God, but he did not imagine them having actual sex with Satan or inviting him into their "chambers."⁴³

Besa, Shenoute's successor as head of the White Monastery, continued this misogynistic tradition in letters to female monks, both groups and individuals, and in fact tended "toward a higher level of verbal violence directed against the women under his rule."⁴⁴ In a letter to the monk Aphthonia, who received a gift from her wealthy parents without permission, Besa attributed her error to Satan and cited 2 Corinthians 11:3: the serpent "deceived" Aphthonia as it did Eve. Women who stole from other monastics gave Satan the opportunity "to come in and pollute God's holy places."⁴⁵ More dramatic, however, is Besa's correspondence with the monk Herai. In a first letter to her, Besa worried that Herai was planning to go back on her monastic vow and leave the monastery. Not surprisingly, Besa labeled this idea a suggestion from Satan and quoted long passages from the *Letters* of Antony that warn of the demons' plots. "On no account let the enemy destroy your good purpose in which you advanced toward God," Besa exhorted, "but be firm and do not alter." Besa followed up on this appeal with a general letter to all his monks about the dangers of going back on one's promise to lead an ascetic life. Any monks who did so, he stated, could not receive back the belongings that they had turned over to the monastery when they had entered.⁴⁶

Herai, however, decided precisely to leave the monastery and to ask for the return of her belongings; she received a blistering response from Besa, who drew on the prophetic works of the Septuagint to craft his "gendered abuse."⁴⁷ Besa opened his letter to his "despised and abominable daughter" by calling her the "virgin daughter of Babylon" and applying to her Isaiah 47:1–3: "Uncover your veil, uncover your grey hairs, uncover the shins, cross the rivers. Your shame shall be revealed, your reproaches shall be manifest." The letter combined two gendered themes in its denunciation of Besa: she has committed fornication with the demons, and she will be uncovered, exposed, her shame revealed to the sight of others. For the former theme, Besa turned to Isaiah 57:8: "You have loved those who slept with you—that is, the demons—and you have increased your fornication with them." He returned to the exposure theme by using Jeremiah 13:26–27: "Therefore God will uncover

what covers your buttocks and pull it up over your head to reveal your disgrace and the perversity of your fornication as well as your violence and your neighing.”⁴⁸ As Heike Behlmer comments, “The clothing is pulled up over the head of the woman, so that only her naked behind is exposed. By this focusing upon her body and her sexuality, she is made into an unperson, and through the use of the word ‘neighing’ further deprived of her humanity.”⁴⁹ One suspects that the White Monastery’s male monks may have seen in the vivid image of the naked Heraï the unnerving prospect of their own potential fall into feminized shame and exposure.⁵⁰

Whether praising them as virtuous males, victorious over Satan, or denigrating them as promiscuous women, seduced by Satan, male monastic authors looked at the bodies of female monks for evidence of a combat that could not be seen. The bodies of virtuous women concealed an interior manliness won in demonic combat, sometimes rendered visible through male dress or through the wasting of the body in illness. Alternatively, the bodies of fallen women provided Satan and his demons entrance to the women’s souls (and perhaps to the monastery as well); such invasion exposed an interior or hidden seduction, a shame imagined through the exposure of a naked body. In either case, by depicting their female colleagues in this way, male monks could visualize the manliness that they could win or lose in their own struggle with their usually invisible demonic foes. For the most part, monastic writers left unsaid the implications of this rhetoric for their own masculinity, but sometimes they made them explicit. Sarah dismissed her male monastic critics as “women.” Macarius the Alexandrian, reproached by Macarius the Great for having excommunicated two younger monks, fled in shame to a marsh, where he suffered from mosquitoes. Macarius the Great went after his namesake, told him that he had “not seen” the demons that were mocking him, and chastised him, “You have fled here like a pretty virgin to her innermost bed-chamber.”⁵¹

“Unutterable Beauty” and “Unnatural Acts”: Engendering the Demonic

When demons appeared, they often did so in forms marked by gender, even if most early Christians did not believe that Satan and his demons had a gender. A rare premonastic Christian reference to gendered de-

mons appears in the third-century Valentinian anthology *The Gospel according to Philip*. According to one excerpt, the “unclean spirits” assume male or female “shapes” and attack human “souls” that “conduct their lives” within a shape of the opposite gender by leaping upon them, fondling them, doing violence to them, and so polluting them; the unknown theologian asserted that marriage could provide protection from this demonic form of sexual assault.⁵² The excerpt suggests that both human beings and demons are without gender at the level of their “souls” and that maleness and femaleness belong to the “shapes” of their bodies. The gender-based attacks of these demons cohere with a wider Valentinian program, in which the salvific goal of regaining a lost unity is frequently understood as the reunion of male and female counterparts, a reintegration associated with a mysterious ritual called “the bridal chamber.” This premonastic example should alert us that appearances of the demonic as male or female did not reveal the gender of the demonic; rather, gender was deployed in discourse about the demonic in ways that cohered with wider ideological interests or theological themes.

Consider, for example, the frequently misogynistic accounts of demons appearing as women, or of Satan using women to tempt male monks, that pepper *Sayings of the Desert Fathers*, summed up in Theophilus’s famous sentence, “It is through women that the enemy makes war against the saints.”⁵³ Famously, one monk dips his garment into the decomposed corpse of a woman so that the odor might put an end to his lustful thoughts about her.⁵⁴ Such stories, Peter Brown has persuasively argued, performed the vital purpose of carving a boundary between desert and world in a culture that lacked a clear distinction between the parish church, led by bishops and priests and made up mostly of married Christians with children, and the ascetic communities, led by charismatic monks and emblematic of celibacy’s superiority as the ideal Christian lifestyle. In fourth-century Egypt, “fear of women acted as a centrifugal separator. It kept ‘world’ and ‘desert’ at a safe distance from each other,” to the advantage of both monks and clergy.⁵⁵ And indeed, many of the monks’ tempting encounters with women, whether they result in actual sex or not, occur when the monk is on an errand in “the world” or is tricked into going there by a demon; alternatively, the woman of the world visits the monk, inappropriately bringing the secular into the desert. The association of women with the world takes an amusing turn in a story about a young monk who entered the desert with his father

when he was very young and so had never seen a woman. When he becomes a man, the demons make forms of women appear to him at night. On a trip to the settled land with his father, the young monk points to some actual women and exclaims, "These are the ones who come to me at night in Scetis!" His father replies, "These are the monks of the villages, child, for they wear clothing that differs from that of the hermits."⁵⁶

The women in these cautionary stories exhibit a variety of relationships to the demonic. In some instances, as we have seen, demons appear as women: one monk resists forty days of attacks from four demons "disguised in the shape of beautiful women"; God then gives him relief from the "fleshly fires." In other cases, the devil or demons inspire actual women to tempt monks: for example, moved "by Satan's power [*energeia*]," a certain "irreverent woman" makes a bet with some young men that she can "bring down" their favorite monk; or, "drawn by the devil," a woman decides to visit a monk to whom she is related, and the two fall into fornication. Because this same vocabulary ("power," "dragging") can describe the devil's ability to motivate male monks to sin, there is no reason to see these stories as portraying women as being Satan's tools in a way that men are not, despite Theophilus's saying. Finally, many of the women who tempt monks have no direct relation to the demonic at all: they are simply the unwitting objects of the monks' lust. Some actually persuade the ardent monk not to succumb to his sexual desires and wisely send him back to his monastic retreat. On rare occasion an appearing woman comes not from Satan, but from God. A "combatant" prepares to abandon his cell because he has no brother with which to share his struggles, but "the grace of God appeared to him as a virgin and encouraged him, 'By no means leave, but sit here with me, for none of the evils of which you have heard has happened.'"⁵⁷

These stories almost always remark on the beauty of the tempting women, whether they are demonic illusions or actual human women. The words of women could certainly be seductive,⁵⁸ but it was the sight of women that provided the compelling incitement to lust. The young monk who covered his hands with his cloak when he carried his elderly mother across a river feared the touch of a woman's body precisely because it might stir up images of other women in his mind: "The woman's body is fire, and from it comes the memory of others."⁵⁹ Monastic authors shared a general ancient understanding of erotic desire as "a

pathology of the eyes.”⁶⁰ To make the “object” of desire “visible and present,” noted Evagrius, was a characteristic strategy of the demon of fornication. Hence the multitude of images of women with which the demon flooded the monk’s mind and its encouragement of the monk to go into villages and cities and to attend festivals so as to see actual women. The mental pornography of demonic illusions could be addictive: the monk’s intellect might “not make a vigilant effort to preserve itself from the fornication that is established within, but rather speaks and performs wickedness with a woman that is depicted before its eyes.” Though Evagrius acknowledged that the sight of a woman could inspire the “temperate” monk to “glorify God” rather than to lust after her, he evinced little confidence that monks could count on such self-control: “The sight of a woman,” he warned, “is a poisoned arrow.” Women may act reverently in their first encounters with a monk, but repeated meetings will lead them to “approach you without shame” and “smile.” Before long “they beautify themselves and show themselves to you clearly,” their many charms nothing but “intricate nets that drag you to destruction.”⁶¹

The seemingly inevitably destructive consequences of seeing a woman required strong measures. The virgin Alexandra immured herself in a tomb outside Alexandria and saw no one because the sight of her once “wounded” a man in his “intellect”; she did not want to “scandalize a soul made in the image of God.”⁶² One strategy for male monks was to use odor to create revulsion for what was visually so attractive, as did the monk who dipped his garment into the decomposed body of his obsession. Another story reports that, even though a monk was “ignorant of the foul smell of wretched women,” the mere declaration of his desired woman, “I am in my menses, and no one can come near me or smell me because of the foul odor,” was enough to leave him so “disgusted” that he “came to himself and wept.” Arsenius, perhaps recalling days spent in female company, kept foul-smelling water in his cell as an antidote to “the perfumes and aromatics that I used to enjoy in the world.” The foul odor that emanated from the demonic Ethiopian woman and repulsed the lustful young monk we met in Chapter 7 was a gift from God, granted to the brother because of his obedience and labor.⁶³ This odor not only repelled the monk, but also signaled the demonic character of the woman: a foul smell could indicate the presence of a demon, especially as it departed. Sadly, the stench that Pachomius

perceived emanating from some visiting monks revealed that they had been reading works of Origen.⁶⁴ Of course, it was far safer not to see actual women at all—to avoid crowds and remain safely in the desert—and to reduce the danger from demonic images of women by turning down the body's heat through the ascetic regime of fasting and reduced water intake.⁶⁵ Although demonic illusions troubled even the withdrawn monk, the danger of seeing a woman supported monastic withdrawal into the desert and avoidance of "the world."

A similar use of gender and the demonic to separate monk from world appears in the literature of the Pachomian federation. The Pachomian literature does not equate the feminine with the devil and demons, for they usually appear in ways that are marked as masculine or without any indication of gender.⁶⁶ Anecdotes in which the devil appears as female exist at the margins, so to speak, of Pachomian literature—not in the major *Lives*, but in such fragmentary episodic texts as the so-called *Paralipomena* or *Leftovers*. Here we find Pachomius and Theodore walking in the monastery at night when they see "a great illusion [*phantasia*] full of great deceit . . . the form [*schēma*] of a woman of an unutterable beauty."⁶⁷ Theodore is unnerved, but Pachomius takes courage and prays. Nonetheless, the woman continues to approach them "in a shameful manner." A dialogue follows that is clearly indebted to Athanasius's *Life of Antony*, especially the episode in which the devil appears as a black boy. As in that scene, our beautiful woman makes a grand Johannine-style announcement—"It is I who am the devil's daughter, she who is called 'all his power,' for it is I that every phalanx of demons serves" and so on. And just as Athanasius's black boy suggested the paradoxical combination of powerful evil (black) and abject weakness (boy), the woman's beauty symbolizes her nearly irresistible attractive force but her gender communicates her ultimate weakness against monks who are called "spirit-filled men" (*pneumatophoroi andres*). "Nobody has made me as weak as you have," the woman tells Pachomius. "You have reduced me to being trampled under foot by boys and old men and young men." The demon's gendered form sets in stark opposition the male monks and their female enemy; while her unspeakable beauty suggests a great power, to which even Theodore nearly succumbs, her femininity marks her impotence against spirit-filled men.

The anecdote reflects anxiety within the federation as to whether Pachomius's death will leave the monks—or, probably, has left them—

more vulnerable to demonic seduction. The woman tells Pachomius, “You [sing.] have assembled against me such a great crowd—setting around them the fear of God as a wall most unbreakable—that our assistants can no longer draw near any of you [plur.] with confidence.” But she goes on to warn, “You will not live forever for those for whom at present you make a wall through your prayers and whom you help. A time will come, after your death, when I will dance among them whom now you protect against me.” In response, Pachomius denies that the demon has any knowledge of the future, and later he sends letters to the leading monks of the federation telling them about the vision and “to confirm them in the fear of God.” The imagery of a protective wall, here identified with the work of Pachomius, underscores the opposition between the monks and the demonic, made visible by gender in the vision. For this deployment of demonic femininity and monastic masculinity to work, however, the story must suppress the fact that some Pachomian monks were women.

A remarkable first-person narrative from a Pachomian monk, preserved in a ninth-century manuscript of miscellaneous ascetic texts, provides another Pachomian example of gender policing the wall between monastery and world, yet here the presence of female monks in the federation surfaces.⁶⁸ Abba Zanos offers his story as a cautionary tale of how a monk can make a “praiseworthy and agreeable” start in the ascetic life, but finish “blameworthy and reprehensible.” Three years after abandoning his family in Memphis to enter the Pachomian federation, Zanos suffers from “the thought of going to my parents and relatives according to the flesh, with the idea of saving them, making them monks, and transforming my father’s house into a monastery.” Zanos forges a letter from home saying that his father is sick, in a futile effort to persuade Theodore to permit him to leave. Rebuffed by Theodore, Zanos leaves the monastery in secret, accompanied by another monk. This departure is a sign that Zanos has not given himself “to a pure obedience and an unsolicitous detachment” and so has left himself vulnerable to “shameful and unclean thoughts” from the devil. Zanos’s colleague eventually returns to the monastery, but Zanos continues his journey home.

Zanos then meets a woman who identifies herself as a member of a Pachomian monastery for women, also on her way back to her family. This turns out to be a demonic ruse: “And with those words the thought of fornication began to beset and disturb me. I was no longer able to stay

the burning. I locked her in my embrace and, so it seemed, I tossed her down and stripped her naked; whereupon she gave me a slap, and I saw the whole place looking like fire. Then I arose, having ejaculated, but she had disappeared. And forthwith I heard in the air laughter and clapping, as if from a numerous crowd. A fever and a shivering immediately seized me and I stayed lying there from the third to the ninth hour." Rescued and carried to the hospital in Oxyrhynchos, Zanos undergoes "an expiation rite" carried out by a Bishop Sarapion and resolves to return to the monastery. This decision provokes the demon to appear again "in the habit of that nun" and to kick him in the groin, resulting in a wound that has persisted: it is "through this fleeting pain," Zanos says, that God "freed me from such an unclean, wicked and cruel demon."⁶⁹ Once outside the monastery, Zanos experiences visual and physical attacks from the demon, whose feminine appearance underscores its position exterior to the (male) monastic community. By claiming to be a Pachomian monk also visiting her family, the demon mirrors Zanos's own action, but her gender represents that act as foreign to Zanos's monastic identity: she incarnates his lack of fidelity to the rule. Her femininity enhances Zanos's physical departure from the monastery as symbolic of departure from the ascetic life.⁷⁰

It may be tempting to marginalize these stories from Pachomian spirituality since they do not appear in the major *Lives*, but their marginal position in the Pachomian canon mirrors their placement of demonic femininity at the margin of the community, and they do draw on a tendency in Pachomian writings to associate antidemonic vigilance with manliness and moral negligence or relaxation with femininity. Pachomius, for example, refutes the idea that at least some people are evil from their births by stressing humanity's freedom to resist the passions. He uses the example of virtuous female ascetics to shame his male listeners: "If there exists a multitude of women who have conquered their own nature by giving themselves up to *ascesis* in virginity till the day of their death although their nature is not virile, how much more surely should a man, whom God created after his image and likeness by giving him a virile nature, even if this kind of passion harasses him as men affirm, be able by an act of his own will and the judgment of his reason to master the passion which harasses him and to cast it far from him!" Pachomius accepts the traditional association of virility with rationality and self-mastery and expresses wonder that women can

achieve such a state. In one of his “instructions,” consistently addressed to “my son,” Pachomius urges the monk always to be “awake” and vigilant against demonic attacks. Even “a man as strong as David” fell victim to Bathsheba. Should the monk fall asleep and become “weak” and “negligent,” he has become like Samson: “You have opened your heart to Delilah, that is, to the devil, who has taken you by wile.”⁷¹ Here perhaps we come full circle to Pachomius’s nighttime encounter with the devil’s daughter, back to the demonic in the form of a dangerously beautiful woman.

Like Pachomius, Shenoute, as we have seen, had a close encounter with the demonic while walking around his monastery at night, but instead of a beautiful woman he met a man who was dressed as a government official, accompanied by an assistant. Shenoute’s meeting with the devil in the form of a local magistrate did not lead Shenoute to attribute to Satan masculinity or to associate him with political power. Rather, in the address directed to Satan that he delivered in the wake of that event, Shenoute zeroed in on the devil’s essential lack of any form: “It is you through whom the men and women who have exchanged the act of their nature for an act contrary to nature have brought their passions to completion [Rom. 1:24–27]. You are not male, nor are you female. You are not a calf, a horse, a donkey, a camel, or any cattle.” And so on to the final point: “Your form is unchanging, and you are always the same, you thing entirely twisted upon itself and from itself!”⁷² Shenoute’s Satan is not male, nor is he female. He is a confusion of genders, a lack of stable identity, a violation of proper natures, which Shenoute saw as the primary characteristic of sin. Satan paradoxically combines unchanging sameness with polymorphic perversion.

As the quotation illustrates, Paul’s condemnation of homoerotic behavior in Romans 1 was a key text for Shenoute, who branded a wide range of sinful deeds as “acts contrary to nature.” In Shenoute’s eyes, homoeroticism was not the only unnatural act sinners committed, nor perhaps even the worst of them, but it did provide the most fitting image of sin’s distortion of proper human nature, which included a clear distinction between male and female:

Just as the women and the men too exchanged the use of their nature for one contrary to their nature in abominable acts, we, instead of [doing] those things belonging to our nature in every propriety, have ex-

changed the glory of God; and instead of doing the good in everything, we have done evil in foul works and have exchanged the glory of God. Moreover, those who worship and serve the creature more than the Creator have even further exchanged the glory of God. For nothing in the entire creation that God made exchanges the use of its nature except the human being alone when evil becomes a stumbling block for him, as it did for the angels as well until they abandoned the use of their nature. And the snake too exchanged the use of its nature, instead of surprising and biting a human being. But I will not see another beast nor will I observe anything else that has gone contrary to its nature. I myself will testify about the entire creation of God that nothing has transgressed what God commanded them, according to what is written, when he “set for them a limit that they will not be able to transgress” [Ps. 103:9].⁷³

Human beings and angels—and the snake in Eden—are unique among God’s creatures in their ability to violate their nature and thus to sin. Shenoute made countless references to “acts contrary to nature,” with or without elaborations that drew further on Romans 1.⁷⁴ Even when he was condemning sins that had nothing to do with sex, the allusion to Romans 1 conjured up homoeroticism and its violation of proper gender roles as the archetypal sins. The connection of such acts to Satan was clear: in biblical times the demons “cast arrows at Babylon through ‘those who bend the bow’ [Jer. 27:14 LXX], but now [they cast them] at the soul[s] of those who do these things through Satan, for his burning arrows are the acts contrary to nature of every kind that burn the heart of fools.”⁷⁵

Paul’s condemnation of “effeminate and men who sleep with men” in 1 Corinthians 6:9 served Shenoute as a kind of shorthand characterization of Satan and the demons, particularly in their incarnations as the pagan gods, as well as of their human followers. Those who follow the goddess Rhea, Shenoute claimed, “become effeminate, so that she might be pleased with them,” and he called Apollo “the defiled lute-player who fornicates with a multitude of women and defiles boys.” He referred to the statues of classical gods and goddesses that he removed from the former governor Gesios’s house as “images of effeminate men and lewd and licentious women, whose activities are shameful to speak of.”⁷⁶ If the demonic gods and goddesses violated gender roles, so did those human beings who followed Satan or the demons, such as the “philosophers who

grow their hair long like women” whom Shenoute included among Satan’s “friends.”⁷⁷ The coming wrath would consume “the effeminate ones who share with the demons” and “those who sleep with men”; Satan dwelled in “the effeminate enemies, those who sleep with men, and all those who defile the members of Christ”; “effeminate sons of the devil [and] those who sleep with men are worse than dirt-eating snakes and serpents”; “to become effeminate and to sleep with men” were “demonic deeds.”⁷⁸ Not surprisingly, Shenoute decreed that men who had castrated themselves should be expelled from the monastery.⁷⁹ In a wider monastic culture in which virtuous female monks were praised as manly, and armed with Paul’s vivid evocation of “effeminate men and those who sleep with men,” Shenoute trained most of his rhetorical fire at the demonic gender-bending of effeminate males and male homoerotic activity.

Still, just as Shenoute often carefully balanced his monastic exhortations to men and women, women did not escape his attacks on the gender violations associated with Satan. Speaking of married couples, Shenoute warned that Satan could make either the husband or the wife “a leader of sin” (Micah 1:13) for the other; he invoked Eve as the example of such diabolical female leadership of the husband. The demons, he said, are like “rejected prostitutes,” so ugly that the men who frequent them must freely choose to do so, rather than being helplessly compelled by sexual desire.⁸⁰ Shenoute provides some of the most specific evidence for female homoerotic activity to survive from the ancient world. He ordered that the monks Taëse and Tsansnō be beaten for “running after” other women “in friendship and physical desire”; in Tsansnō’s case, her crime was exacerbated by her taking on the male role of teaching in the monastery: “It is others whom I teach,” she reportedly said.⁸¹ Shenoute formulated rules that regulated the monks’ sleeping arrangements and physical contact so as to prevent homoerotic behavior by either men or women.⁸² From this evidence it seems plausible that Shenoute had female homoeroticism in mind when he wrote these cryptic words to his monks: “Why have you not recognized God? It is not only male blind persons and males alone who walk on paths the ends of which lead to the places where there is no one who digs for them in Hades. No, truly more numerous are blind women and female blind persons who gladly run along these same paths: in some cases, only their footprints are in those paths; but in other cases, their [footprints] merge

into one another's, just as their paths merge into one another, while still it is a single path with many twists or byways in its deception."⁸³ The women whose footprints merge into one another's on a single path that yet contains many twists and byways recalls the perversity of Shenoute's gender-bending Satan, who remains always the same while being twisted in and from himself.

What are we to make of this difference in how Shenoute and the Pachomians, both writing in monastic communities that contained men and women, imagined the demonic realm? Or more simply put, why did these particular understandings of gender and the demonic make sense for these two monastic communities or at least for the authors of their texts? In Shenoute's case, the situation is not too hard to see. Shenoute, recall, saw his religious environment as having insufficiently clear boundaries. The lines between orthodox Christians, heretical Christians, Jews, and "pagans" were not easy to draw, most fully exemplified by the prominent landowner Gesios, whom Shenoute tried to expose as a "crypto-pagan." Shenoute's gender-bending Satan epitomized the confused religious situation to which he was trying to bring clarity. Moreover, Shenoute worked to maintain his authority over his dual monastic community, which already consisted of houses for men and a house for women when Shenoute became its head. In so doing, he articulated his "universal monasticism," which, as Krawiec describes it, "existed for all monks 'whether male or female,' thus retaining gender, and was not a monasticism that recognized 'neither male nor female,' suggesting a repression of sexual difference."⁸⁴ Thus, it made little sense for Shenoute to use diabolical femininity to police the boundary of his doubled male and female monastic community, but his gender-bending Satan and his effeminate and homoerotically inclined followers perhaps did incarnate anxiety about the possibility of effacing gender within such a dual community.

Pachomius, in contrast to Shenoute, was the founder of his monastic federation, which originated as a community founded by men for men. At some point, however, Pachomius's sister Maria showed up at the monastery door. Pachomius did not see her, but he did allow her to set up her own community for women. When that monastery grew in numbers, Pachomius appointed a male monk, Peter, to be its "father." Eventually a second monastery for women was founded.⁸⁵ The Pachomian *Precepts* for the most part present rules for the monastery without any

references to the female monks, even describing how the brothers should receive a female visitor. Only at the end do we find the words "Let us speak also about the monastery of virgins," and here follow a few rules regarding visitation and such.⁸⁶ There are no signs in the rules or in the other Pachomian literature of any conscious attempt like Shenoute's to develop a monastic discipline with both men and women in mind. The Pachomian federation appears to have been essentially a male institution, into which a kind of women's auxiliary was fitted. Susanna Elm has compared the situation to the stereotypical (if not actual) Roman household or estate, in which women were included under a system headed by a *pater familias*, a comparison grounded in the first female monastery's origin as a place for Pachomius's sister.⁸⁷ The monk Zanos's encounter with a demon in the form of a female Pachomian monk exhibits not only the use of gender to affirm the boundary between monastery and world that Brown saw in the *apophthegmata*, but perhaps also an ambivalence about the women who we know were in the Koinonia, but who so seldom surface in the literature that preserves what at least the leadership of that community considered essential to its identity.

Unlike Shenoute, the leaders of the Pachomian federation appear not to have been interested in asserting their leadership over their surrounding religious environment. Shenoute attacked local pagans and chastised nonmonastic clergy and laypeople; the Pachomians left literature addressed only to internal concerns. Gender was not a major category in Pachomian language for the demonic, and when it appears it does so in a rather straightforward way to distinguish monastery from world, men of God from demons, moral vigilance from relaxed negligence. In contrast, Shenoute's more intentional efforts to create a monasticism for men and women and his vigorous antipagan and antiheretical activities required a more imaginative and complicated articulation of the demonic in gendered terms.

When a traveling monk altered his path to give wide berth to a group of ascetic women traveling in the opposite direction, the leader of the women said, "If you were a perfect monk, you would not have paid attention to us as women."⁸⁸ Like many sayings from the desert, this terse anecdote is hardly self-explanatory, but it invites reflection and interpretation. Perhaps the point is the gendered dimension of asceticism's transformation of the self: "For the ascetic the question of male or female no

longer exists, because he or she has risen above the limits determined by the body; asceticism means annihilation of sexual distinction.”⁸⁹ But the focus of the female monk’s statement is not the gender transcendence of herself and her female colleagues, but the vision of the male monk to whom she speaks. While the speaker does not deny her and her sisters’ identity as women, she challenges how the male monk looks at them: if he were perfect, he would not attend to their visible identity as women, but look beyond what he sees. He would perform the new seeing that the *Life of Syncletica* asked its male readers to perform, to look beyond the “form” of the ascetic woman to the virility within.

But this revised seeing, commended by monastic literature, depended upon the compelling visual image of the woman, a useful image with which to view conflict with the demons and its results. With a few notable exceptions, monastic authors did not equate the female with the demonic, but the female body provided a flexible tool for visualizing an interior battle. The transformation of the feminine into the masculine could illustrate the manliness of the demon-fighting monk, something less visible in the male bodies of most monks. Alternatively, the female body could incarnate a clear opposite to the male monk, serving to distinguish and keep separate monk and demon, desert and world, monastery and city. Exposure of the female body and its openness to demonic penetration could provide vivid images with which to shame both male and female monks and to visualize an interior assent to temptation. Satan and his demons appeared sometimes as men, sometimes as women, sometimes as neither men nor women; but women remained firmly tethered in the monastic imagination to the body, the world, sexuality—in short, to the visible materiality that monks sought to transcend through their ascetic regime.

The author of *The History of the Monks* recounts a particularly memorable story that combines the demonic, materiality, visibility, and gender:

We saw another presbyter in the district of Achoris named Apelles, a righteous man who had previously been a blacksmith and had abandoned his trade to turn to discipline [*askēsis*]. Once, while he happened to be forging tools for the monks, the devil came to him in the form of a woman. In his zeal he grabbed a burning piece of iron from the fire and badly seared her entire face and body. The brothers heard her screaming in the cell. From then on the man was always able to hold burning iron in his hand without being harmed. He received us

courteously and told us about the men worthy of God who had been with him and who were still present there.⁹⁰

Although the author is careful not to identify the femininity of the woman with the demonic (it is only a “form”), he nonetheless repeatedly speaks of Apelles and his monastic colleagues as “men” (*andres*). These monks become “men worthy of God” in part through a striking transfer of corporeality: the body of the male monk loses its reality as a human body, becoming impervious to searing heat, whereas the thin, attenuated body of the demon acquires feminine corporeal solidity, enough to be seared and to produce audible screaming. Just as the devastated body of Syncletica enabled readers to see the triumphant manliness engendered in demonic combat, the seared face and body of this woman provides a vivid spectacle of the devil’s defeat at the hands of the manly monk.

From Gods to Demons

Making Monks, Making Christians

See, the Lord sits upon a swift cloud and shall come to Egypt, and the idols of Egypt shall be moved at his presence, and their heart shall grow faint within them.

—Isaiah 19:1

When Apollo of Hermopolis removed the small Ethiopian demon from his neck, he had just received a special commission from God. At the age of fifty-five, after forty years of practicing asceticism in the desert, Apollo heard God say to him, “Apollo, Apollo, through you I will destroy the wisdom of the wise men of Egypt, and I will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent pagans [compare Isa. 29:14]. And together with these you will also destroy the wise men of Babylon for me, and you will banish all worship of demons. And now make your way to the inhabited region, for you will bear me ‘a peculiar people, zealous of good works’ [Tit. 2:14].” Wary of the demon of pride (embodied in the Ethiopian), Apollo did not quite move into the inhabited region, nor was his campaign against paganism as dramatic or as far-reaching as the divine voice prophesied. Apollo settled in the desert near Hermopolis and attracted a number of monastic disciples. When he and some other monks were conscripted into military service, an angel liberated them from their prison. One day Apollo crossed paths with a religious procession: priests and other devotees were carrying an idol in a ritual designed to ensure the annual flooding of the Nile. Apollo knelt and prayed, and immediately the entire procession was stopped in its tracks, the priests unable to move. Apollo left, unobserved. Villagers tried to move the idol with an ox, to no avail. Finally, they sent a delegation to Apollo, “the Christian in their territory who dwelled in the desert,”

who the priests had suggested might be responsible for their plight. More prayer by Apollo freed the immobilized priests, and “as a result, there is no longer anybody in his district who may be termed a pagan.” Apollo then became the local holy man, settling disputes, alleviating famines, and exhorting people to Christian virtue.¹

Apollo’s story, told in *The History of the Monks*, is a familiar one to students of late antiquity. A prestigious monk, after years of developing his identity as a man apart from other people through ascetic withdrawal, becomes the focal point of religious transition.² He disrupts the practice of traditional religion and then provides the services that it had offered—mediation of conflict, healing of diseases, ensuring agricultural prosperity, and the like. A key factor in the monk’s ability to perform this role was his reputation as an opponent of the demons—that is, of the gods of traditional religion. The villagers had to accept the claim that their gods were in fact the demons against which the Christian monk successfully fought. To embrace a holy man like Apollo was, it seems, also to embrace the stark dualism of Christian monastic demonology, which “set all the capricious spirits of the village along one battle line, to be vanquished by some desert prophet and kept at bay, hopefully, by the society of the churches and monasteries.”³

Although all monastic authors identified the demonic opponents of the monk with the pagan gods, Athanasius and Shenoute placed this equation at the center of their demonologies. Athanasius’s Antony was both the martyr who withstood the physical attacks of the demonic gods and the holy man who provided some of their services. Shenoute was a more aggressive opponent of the gods, burning a temple and committing raids on the crypto-pagan Gesios’s home. This latter image of the monk as the violent opponent of the gods captured the imaginations of ancient observers, such as the pagan orator Libanius, who in 386 complained that marauding monks were destroying temples in Syria, as well as of modern historians, who have placed marauding monks at the center of their stories of “Christianization.” That Christian monks, driven by blind obedience to church officials or by their antidemonic fervor, were among the leading agents in the destruction of pagan temples is a fact that historians of late antiquity know so well that they can assume monastic involvement in the demolition of a temple even when there is “no evidence” for it.⁴

Many ancient sources support this view of the monk’s role in religious

change, but Peter Brown has suggested that some of them, such as Libanius's famous account of the "black-robed men who eat more than elephants" (*Oration* 30.8), may refer to monks in connection with anti-temple violence because they were convenient scapegoats: as laymen, they did not enjoy the privileges granted to the clergy and thus "were the one segment of the Christian church who could be convincingly accused by non-Christians of *latrocinium*, the use of force unsanctioned by the Roman state." Violence that was carefully orchestrated by elite bishops could be criticized as coming from uncontrolled outsiders.⁵ We routinely take into account regional differences in our assessments of the roles of government officials and bishops in antipagan activities.⁶ Similarly, we should not attribute a propensity to antipagan violence to monks *qua* monks, but should assume that monastic groups had a range of attitudes toward pagan rituals and sites and investigate how and why violent events took place. For example, even when historians recognize that Libanius offers us direct evidence only for late fourth-century Syria, his account often provides the basic theme against which incidents in very different contexts, such as the Alexandrian Serapeum, are set.⁷

The monastic sources themselves show ambivalence about monastic violence against temples. To be sure, monastic authors may have wanted to conceal acts of monastic violence as much as nonmonastic authors wished to highlight it. But even such concealment would indicate that monks were not unanimous in their enthusiasm for antipagan violence and that their involvement with their pagan neighbors was more complex than the image of the monk as iconoclastic temple-destroyer suggests. In this chapter, I examine stories about monks and demons that highlight the demons' identity as the pagan gods and thus the diversity of the religious environment in which the monks interacted with them. Some anecdotes illustrate a range of monastic attitudes toward the pagan temples, many abandoned and others still in use, that dotted the landscape—its status as headquarters for the demonic made the temple useful for the monk's project of self-formation through combat with demons as well as a target for monastic violence, both real and imagined. Other stories present the monk as similar to and in competition with pagan priests and magicians, the other Egyptians who communicated regularly with the gods or demons. Through a variety of strategies, monastic authors sought to define the identity of the monk over and against his cognates and competitors. Some monks were actively redefining them-

selves, for they had once been pagans and even pagan priests, servants of the gods that they now called demons. The stories of their conversions coalesced in a recurring literary character—the young man, posed between two alternative religious lives, often dramatized as a choice between two fathers, the monastic abba and the pagan priest. For him, making himself a monk was identical with making himself a Christian.

The Habitations of Demons: Monks and Temples

The demonic pagan gods were everywhere, but temples contained their images and thus were a privileged site of interaction between human beings and the gods, an identity that temples retained even after they were abandoned or no longer used for worship. Translated into monastic terms, temples functioned as headquarters for the demons in their campaigns against the monks. As an army, the demons had a hierarchical organization, and in temples monks could overhear the demons as they hatched their plots, reported to their superiors, and assessed the results of their attacks. Such intelligence could be useful to the monk, especially one just starting out on the road to virtue. For example, when a demon admits to its “commander” (*archōn*) that it had failed to create a rift between two monks, the temple’s priest hears the conversation and is so impressed by the reported humility of one of the monks that he becomes a monk. An older monk recalls that as the young son of a pagan priest, he overheard demons, including an *archōn*, reporting on their activities to Satan and his gathered “army” in his father’s temple. Satan praised one demon for accomplishing a “great deed” in bringing a monk into fornication after “waging war” against him for forty years. The monk recalls, “When I saw this, I said, ‘Truly what is great is the brigade of the monks,’ and with God granting my salvation, I left and become a monk.” An advanced monk (“old man”) becomes despondent because he has committed fornication with a female relative. A junior monk is able to comfort him by telling him that when he spent the night in a temple, he overheard its demons exulting in having caused the old man’s fall.⁸

These stories depict junior monks or potential monks overhearing demons discussing their efforts to oppose monks who are pursuing or who have achieved virtue. The eavesdropping monks, who have not yet reached the status of “abba” or “old man,” hear what they need to

hear: the temple performs a therapeutic or pedagogic function for them. Things are quite different for a senior monk like Macarius the Great. He spends the night in a temple and thinks nothing of sleeping on an old coffin. The “confidence” of this act makes the resident demons jealous, and so they try to scare Macarius by making the corpses appear to speak. “So and so, come with us to the bath,” cries out one corpse, to which the one under Macarius replies, “I have a stranger on top of me and cannot come.” Macarius responds with the calm assurance that Antony displays in his *Life*, telling the demons to leave. They flee in confusion, confessing, “You have conquered us.”⁹ The temple is useful to Macarius merely as a place to sleep, but this practical function enables him also to display his hard-won superiority to his demonic rivals. Rather than listening to the demons plotting in their home base, Macarius clears them from their headquarters thanks to his condition of supreme confidence.

Although the adaptation and use of temple remains as primary monastic residences is well attested archaeologically for the sixth and later centuries in Egypt, the literary evidence for such a practice in the fourth and early fifth centuries is meager. To some extent this must be a function of our literature’s interest in more remote forms of desert asceticism: temples tended to be located in populated areas and thus did not lend themselves to use by monks in search of more withdrawn locations, and it was such monks who became the heroes of Egypt’s monastic literature.¹⁰ It is not surprising, then, that our most explicit reference to monastic use of temples appears in a famous description of Oxyrhynchus as boasting five thousand monks within its city walls and another five thousand outside. *The History of the Monks* claims that “the city’s temples and *capitolia* were full of monks” and goes on to say that the city has twelve churches and that each monastery has its own “prayer space.”¹¹ We can infer from this single report that there were similar temples-turned-monasteries in other Egyptian cities and villages. But the phrasing of this account suggests that the conversion of temples to monastic use in Oxyrhynchus may have been a variation on the familiar pattern of conversion to use as churches (liturgical sites) in urban settings. That is, as elsewhere, these buildings retained their identities as cultic spaces: their use as monastic residences may have followed from their use as monastic “prayer spaces,” and as residences of the gods they sometimes remained dangerous for monks who moved into them. Abba Elias reports that “an old man was living in a temple.” Asserting that the temple

is “our place,” the demons try to force the monk to leave by scattering his palm leaves and literally dragging him to the door. When the monk cries, “Jesus, save me,” the demons flee. God explains, “You had become careless. For when you sought me, you see how I was found by you.”¹² The implication is that only a senior monk could use a temple as a cell and then only if he maintained a condition of vigilance.

Despite these drawbacks, circumstances may have forced some monks to move into temples. It is reported that after the first attack on Scetis in 407, Poemen and his six brothers moved to Terenuthis and temporarily took up residence in “an old temple.” The brothers faced a challenging situation: in Scetis each had lived in his own cell and gathered with his colleagues only occasionally; now they might have to live together all the time. One brother, Anoub, suggested that they spend a week living as they did at Scetis, each by himself and not speaking to one another. During that week, observed by his brothers, Anoub awoke each morning and threw stones at the face of one of the images, and in the evening he would kneel before the statue and pray, “Forgive me.” At the end of the week, when the brothers gathered, Poemen asked Anoub whether his actions were really those of a “believing person.” Anoub replied that he was using the image as an object lesson: “If you want us to stay with one another, let us be like this statue, which is not troubled if it is insulted.” The brothers agreed to live together and work “according to the word of the old man, which he has said to us.”¹³ Anoub’s parabolic action depended on the Christian understanding that the pagan images were lifeless but that the demons they represented were not, as he not only insulted the image but also flattered it by mimicking pagan worship. Anoub’s insightful saying earned him the title “old man,” but surely his conspicuous indifference to the temple’s gods played a role as well.

The temples’ reputation as the dwelling places of demons did not render them absolutely negative in monastic culture. On the one hand, temples were potentially useful as sites for beginning, advancing, and completing the monastic journey of combat with the demons. On the other hand, they remained dangerously charged spaces, problematic candidates for use as permanent monastic dwellings. As these stories indicate, most pagan temples were not the objects of violent attacks and forced conversions into Christian buildings; instead they fell into neglect and abandonment, and perhaps much later were devoted to a new use, whether as a church or a monastic dwelling.¹⁴ When monks entered them, only the demons were using them.

Still, some operating temples were violently attacked or converted into Christian churches. The monastic distinction between desert and world, as well as mixed feelings about a bishop, shaped how the monks of Lower Egypt remembered their involvement in one such incident, the plundering of the Serapeum in Alexandria (probably in 391). If not for the sayings to be discussed shortly, we would not know that monks were involved in this event at all, for none of the other ancient sources for it mention monks.¹⁵ Bishop Theophilus of Alexandria orchestrated the event, at the center of which were rival groups of Christian and pagan philosophy students. In the later stages of the conflict, after the dramatic destruction of the Serapis statue by soldiers, Theophilus probably recruited monks to participate so that they might assist in the conversion of the structure into a church and in the raids on other pagan sites that took place in the wake of the Serapeum's occupation.¹⁶ It is impossible to be certain about the motivations of the monks who participated in these violent events, but Theophilus's campaign against pagan images may have resonated with the resistance to images in prayer and one's mental life—and their association with demons—taught by monks like Evagrius.¹⁷ Although Evagrius and his colleagues appear to have been poor candidates for antipagan violence, there may be some support for this hypothesis, as we shall see. Whatever motivated the monks, certainly Theophilus understood that he would benefit from the supportive involvement of the increasingly prestigious desert fathers.

We can say that some of the monks who compiled the *Sayings* looked back at this incident with ambivalence, as an instance in which monastic values were compromised. Moreover, they considered the event in light of Theophilus's subsequent actions in the Origenist controversy, which devastated the monastic communities of Nitria. The only saying that refers to the attack explicitly already exaggerates it into outright destruction of temples: "Once some fathers went into Alexandria, summoned by Theophilus the archbishop, in order to pray and to destroy the temples. As they were eating with him, veal was served, and they ate it without hesitating. The bishop, taking a slice, offered it to the old man beside him, saying, 'Here is a good slice, abba, eat it.' But he replied, 'Until now we were eating vegetables, but if it is meat, we do not eat it.' No longer was any more [veal] added, and none of them tasted it."¹⁸ Although the story does not criticize the monks for going to Alexandria to destroy temples, neither does it praise them; rather, it highlights the problems that follow from such activity. Theophilus's *faux pas* arises from his ig-

norance of the monastic value of accepting hospitality. It was appropriate, even required, for a guest to violate his discipline with respect to food in order not to show up or embarrass his host; after all, Jesus had commanded that his followers eat whatever was set before them (Luke 10:8).¹⁹ In his characteristically unsubtle way, Theophilus broke the spell of strategically feigned ignorance and laid uncomfortably bare the dissonance between the ways of the urban bishop and those of the desert monks. Such were the difficulties that monks who went into cities to attack temples had to navigate.

More pointedly negative is an anecdote, preserved in the Greek alphabetical collection of the *Sayings*, that we encountered in Chapter 8 and whose reference to Theophilus and the Serapeum is covert:

On another day, when I [Doulas] came to his cell I found him [Bessarion] standing at prayer with his hands raised toward heaven. For fourteen days he remained thus. Then he called me and said to me, "Follow me." We went into the desert. Being thirsty, I said to him, "Father, I am thirsty." Then, taking my sheepskin, the old man went about a stone's throw away and when he had prayed, he brought it back, full of water. Then we walked on and came to a cave where, on entering we found a brother seated, engaged in plaiting a rope. He did not raise his eyes to us, nor greet us, since he did not want to enter into conversation with us. So the old man said to me, "Let us go; no doubt the old man is not sure if he ought to speak with us." We continued our journey toward Lycopolis, till we reached Abba John's cell. After greeting him, we prayed, and then he [John] sat down to speak of the vision that he had seen. Abba Bessarion said that a decree [*apophasis*] had gone forth that the temples should be destroyed. That is what happened: they were destroyed. On our return, we came again to the cave where we had seen the brother. The old man said to me, "Let us go in and see him; perhaps God has told him to speak to us." When we had entered, we found him dead. The old man said to me, "Come, brother, let us take the body; it is for this reason God has sent us here." When we took the body to bury it we discovered that it was a woman by nature. The old man marveled and said, "See how women triumph over Satan, and we behave shamefully in the cities." Having given thanks to God, who protects those who love him, we went away.²⁰

A complicated series of allusions to Evagrian practices of pure prayer (with which John of Lycopolis was associated) and the Origenist contro-

versy make it clear that it is monastic involvement in the attack on the Serapeum and other temples, led by Theophilus, that Bessarion condemns as shameful behavior in the cities. Bessarion uses the extreme withdrawal exemplified by the female brother's silence to portray the temple-destroying monks as acting shamefully: that a woman can practice asceticism so perfectly renders the behavior of the men even more condemnable.²¹ Monks did not belong in the cities, even if they were opposing paganism. The saying implicitly disparages the instigator of that action, Theophilus, who some eight or nine years after the Serapeum incident persecuted the "Origenist" monks with whom John was associated.

But matters are not so simple: this story has a somewhat complicated textual history, which may reveal more positive attitudes toward Theophilus and the Serapeum incident among other transmitters and compilers of the *Sayings*. In the Latin systematic collection, an account of the two visits to the female brother in the cave appears separately from a story that features Bessarion's miraculous prayer, John's vision, and the reference to the destruction of temples. The latter story appears independently in the Greek systematic collection as well. According to the separate accounts of Bessarion and John, Bessarion responds to John's vision by saying that "a decree *from the Lord* had gone forth that the temples should be destroyed," and the anecdote ends with the fulfillment of that statement.²² The implication is that John's vision is a revelation from God justifying the destruction of temples. The introduction of this scene with Bessarion's miraculous prayer, presumably imageless and pure, suggests approval of monastic anti-temple violence on the basis of a monastic ideology against images. Here may be indirect evidence for the motivation of some monks to respond positively to Theophilus's summons to participate in his antipagan campaign. The longer Greek version that condemns that participation has Bessarion refer only to a decree, not one "from the Lord," suggesting that the decree came from a human authority, either Theophilus or the imperial government, and had no divine status. Features of the several versions suggest that the longer negative account may be the earliest. The only certain conclusion, however, is that these differences reveal conflicting attitudes among later monks toward Theophilus and monastic involvement in his attacks on temples. None of the versions, however, explicitly refers to demons or to combat with demons as the basis for antipagan violence.

Even monks who did engage in antipagan activity may not have considered such work part of their basic job description as monks or part of their conflict with demons. Apollo's charge to "banish all worship of demons" came as a special commission from God after he had spent forty years practicing asceticism in the desert. Apollo recognized this extraordinary call as a possible occasion for pride, represented by the Ethiopian demon attached to his neck, and continued to maintain a clear distance from the world. The demon of pride was only one of a host of problems that attended crossing the boundary between desert and world; these anxieties often came to expression in stories about two sets of people, women and bishops, who were representatives of the world. Ordination as a priest or bishop was particularly fraught with danger (especially pride), and in the view of many monks was best avoided altogether.²³ Famously Ammonius cut off his ear and threatened to do the same to his tongue if Bishop Timothy of Alexandria and local Christians persisted in their efforts to make him a bishop.²⁴ If bishops wanted to attract monastic candidates for ordination and to harness monastic charisma for ecclesiastical purposes, it was to their advantage to minimize the world/desert distinction, as Athanasius famously tried to do in a letter to the monk Dracontius.²⁵ Correspondingly, our sources often depict bishops as drawing monks into their conflicts with pagans: it was Bishop Theophilus who recruited monks to attack the Serapeum in the wake of his carefully staged provocations. Monks, in turn, sometimes responded positively to these episcopal pulls toward involvement in the world, for their values included some sense of responsibility to the wider church and a desire to promote Christ and oppose the devil and his demons.

During the fifth century, active opposition to the demonic pagan gods became increasingly part of the monk's identity. In later hagiographic accounts, monks invade the inner sanctums of temples, cause temples to burn to the ground or to fall upon and kill their priests, and so on. Athanasius of Alexandria initiated this picture of the monk with his presentation of Antony as the new martyr, opponent of the gods. Yet by conforming Antony to the martyr, especially in the scenes in which the demons physically attack him, Athanasius made him rather passive in his antidemonic aggression. Like the biblical Job, Antony triumphs by remaining faithful despite demonic attacks: he aggressively moves into the desert but then patiently endures the attacks that follow. Shenoute was not so passive. He burned the temple in Atriye, defended Christians ac-

cused of antipagan violence, and made unauthorized raids on the house of Gesios in search of idols; in the more famous of these raids, Shenoute took with him seven monks, and the locked doors to an upstairs chamber miraculously opened for the monastic search party. It appears that in the sixth and later centuries the White Monastery served as a headquarters for the production of monastic biographies that used Shenoute as their model and took details from his legendary acts.²⁶ For example, in the *Life of Moses of Abydos* (a shadowy monk of the late fifth and early sixth centuries), the dying Shenoute himself is made to predict that the soon-to-be-born Moses would “abolish the pagans’ sacrifices and overturn their temples.” When Moses bravely enters an abandoned temple to drive out the demonic god Bes, he takes with him the requisite seven brothers for an all-night session of antidemonic prayer.²⁷

Shenoute’s successor Besa makes an appearance in the *Panegyric on Macarius of Tkôw*, a work from no earlier than the middle of the sixth century. Here Bishop Macarius resolves to disrupt the activities of the temple of Kothos, where, he has learned, the priests sacrifice Christian children. Along with two “great men” (clergy? prominent laymen?), he enters the temple, but the outraged pagans capture the bishop and his companions and prepare to sacrifice them. Just in the nick of time, Besa arrives, sent by a vision received by the dying Shenoute (who, it seems, was very busy on his deathbed). The locked doors of the temple miraculously open to Besa, as Gesios’s doors had opened to Shenoute, and the monk rescues the bishop and then calls fire down upon the temple, which burns, as did the temple in Atripe that Shenoute set on fire.²⁸ The monastic authors could not resist making their man Besa the hero of someone else’s story: the demon-fighting monk, like an action hero, has to come to the rescue of the hapless bishop, who was less adept at demonic combat. Moses may have indeed converted an abandoned temple to monastic use through exorcism,²⁹ and perhaps Besa supported Bishop Macarius’s antipagan activities in Tkôw, but from these accounts we learn more about later monastic reverence for the legendary Shenoute than we do about demonologically inspired monastic antipagan violence. The monk provided an inspiring hero for idealized accounts of the transition to Christianity as being dramatic and sudden, rather than gradual and incomplete.

We have more reliable information about monastic participation in an attack on the temple of Isis in Menouthis on the Mediterranean coast in

485. Zacharias, later bishop of Mitylene on the island of Lesbos, was a student in Alexandria at the time and reported his involvement in the events in his *Life of Severus of Antioch*.³⁰ At the center of his account is a fellow student, Paralius, a pagan who was becoming increasingly disillusioned with pagan teachings under the influence of his brother Athanasius, a Christian monk, and the monk and professor Stephen. Severus himself does not appear. In fact, it appears likely that Zacharias originally composed this section of the *Life of Severus* in the 490s as one of a series of short works that attacked pagan philosophers and their schools: the putative *Life of Paralius* “seems to have mixed a positive narrative of spiritual progression with a refutation of the non-doctrinal elements of Alexandrian intellectual culture that encouraged student fascination with philosophical paganism.”³¹ Whether or not Zacharias had any acquaintance with monastic lore, his Paralius exhibits the characteristics of a stock character in monastic anecdotes—the young man poised between two religious options, one of which involves his family. Paralius acts like “a virtual shuttlecock,” as Christopher Haas puts it, bouncing between the conflicting claims of the pagan philosophers in Alexandria and of the Christian monks at Enaton, led by Stephen.³²

As Zacharias tells it, a series of events, including a pretended miraculous pregnancy, led to violence between the city’s pagan students and Christian students, in which Paralius was a victim. Several of the Christian students were members of the “zealous ones” (*philoponoi*), a fraternity of particularly earnest Christian laymen. When the matter reached Bishop Peter (Mongus), he saw an opportunity to channel the students’ zeal into antipagan activity and thus to enhance his own prestige within the city; he also sought to court both the nearby monks of Enaton and the Pachomian monks who lived in a monastery in Canopus, not far from Menouthis, the site of the Isis temple. Because Peter tried to find a middle ground between the emperor’s support of the Council of Chalcedon and the widespread opposition to it in Alexandria, both the pro-Chalcedonian Pachomians and the anti-Chalcedonian Enaton monks eyed him with suspicion. Peter assigned to Zacharias, Paralius, and their fellow students a group of Alexandrian clergy and gave them a letter inviting the Pachomian monks to “assist” the students in their attack on the Isis temple. The monks, it seems, provided the muscle for the operation. Zacharias says that one of them helped to gain access to an inner area of the temple with his axe—once inside, the monk was so

shocked by the collection of “demonic” images that he scrawled on the wall “There is only one God”—and that as a group the monks assisted the students and clergy in destroying the temple. The Alexandrian party then brought the confiscated images to the city, where they were displayed and ridiculed in a public gathering that Peter orchestrated.

Zacharias’s account is shot through with the language of demonology: he simply refers to the gods as demons. In the story’s original incarnation as a *Life of Paralius*, Zacharias wanted to attack the religious interests of pagan philosophers and, by incorporating the story into the *Life of Severus*, he hopes to defend his hero, the controversial anti-Chalcedonian bishop Severus of Antioch, against charges that in his youth as a student in Alexandria he sacrificed to the gods. This slander is itself the work of demons, claims Zacharias, and his account of the Menouthis incident now demonstrates the antidemonic zeal of the students with whom Severus associated.³³ The monks remain supporting players in this scene, as they were at the Serapeum nearly a century earlier. No doubt they too took pleasure in dismantling the temple of the demon Isis, but it appears that they were there above all because Bishop Peter wanted them there, and they appear in this story to present the true path to virtue to the pagan student Paralius, the story’s hero. Not surprisingly, Paralius not only accepts Christian baptism but also decides to “take up the monastic habit and embrace the divine philosophy” of ascetic Christianity.³⁴

Stories of conversion, whether of individuals, groups, or entire cultures, derive their persuasive power by posing stark alternatives and narrating a dramatic break. In the emerging Christian Egypt of the fourth and fifth centuries, demonology suited such stories, thanks to its dualistic clarity and its emphasis on conflict and victory. Monks expose the false claims of a pagan cult, and a philosophy student becomes a Christian monk. A monk defeats a tempting demon, and a priest devoted to that demon likewise becomes a Christian and a monk. Another monk disrupts the procession of a demonic god, and an entire village becomes Christian. Monks invade and destroy temples, the habitations of the demons, and Egypt turns from its pagan past to worship the Christian God. The triumphs of the demon-fighting monk, large and small, actual or not, contributed to a narrative of “total victory” that dominated the Christian East (if not the West).³⁵ But even Shenoute, the master of demonological dualism and the aggressive attacker of temples and pa-

gans, found the reality of religious life in Egypt confused and ill defined. In turn, the desires of bishops and others to decisively defeat the demons/gods sat at odds with the monks' need to engage the demons in a prolonged struggle to overcome their own deficiencies. Shenoute could not let his conquered and dismembered Satan die: the devil had to live on in his breaths, the evil thoughts that provided the material for the Christian's efforts to gain virtue.

Impresarios of the Demonic: Monks among Other Ritual Experts

Even if Satan had only thoughts as weapons, the warfare between monks and demons could be brutal. Antony was left speechless in pain from the demons' blows, and Shenoute called Satan a leech that was insatiable in devouring people. But the conflict was not always so fierce: *Sayings of the Desert Fathers* supplements this picture with stories of a more playful competition.³⁶ At times the demons act as buffoons and tricksters, to the amusement of a monk and presumably of the hearers and readers of the sayings as well. For example, because Pambo was known not to smile, demons try to make him laugh by sticking feathers on a piece of wood and making it fly. Pambo does laugh, but tells the triumphant demons, "I did not [just] laugh [*egelasa*]; rather I laughed against [*kategelasa*] your powerlessness [*adunamia*]."³⁷ The story of Macarius and the demons pretending to be women going to the baths that we examined above may display Macarius's courage, but it also amuses. These anecdotes communicate a theme found also in the grimmer works of Athanasius and Shenoute: the demons, as Poemen said, are weak in the face of God's aid to the monk, despite their apparent power in the numerous tales of temptation and attack. But the anecdotes also invite the reader to step back from the narrow focus on the monk's struggle with temptation and even from the distinctively Christian narrative of Christ's triumph over the demonic pagan gods. They place the monk within the wider perspective offered by late ancient Egypt, an environment alive with the presence of invisible powers, in which the lines between good and evil were not always as sharply drawn as Shenoute claimed. The monk exhibited the power that he derived from his ascetic practices in his indifference to and control over the invisible forces surrounding late ancient people.

This picture of the monk as the impresario of the demonic placed him among other figures in Egyptian society who likewise offered themselves as specialists in dealing with the divine or demonic powers—specifically, pagan priests and pagan or Christian “magicians,” groups that in this period overlapped. In the fourth and fifth centuries in late ancient Egypt, priests who offered their ritualized power to worshipers in temples gave way to or evolved into mobile ritual experts who offered their services to clients in rituals that could be performed anywhere (now available to us in the “magical papyri”). In theoretical terms, this change was part of a more general shift in late antiquity from locative (this-worldly) forms of religion, in which ritual served to order the sacred within the spaces of the world, to more utopian modes, in which place was subordinated to more transcendent goals.³⁸ But in Egypt this change arose from very particular social and political factors. As its infrastructure of temples slowly eroded, the priesthood sought innovative ways to maintain its ritually based power. As priests became or competed with ritual experts not based in temples, some of these new experts were (also) Christian monks. Monastic communities are among the most likely venues for the scribal production of the numerous magical papyri, which conflate Egyptian, Jewish, and Christian elements. Stories of pagan priests converting to Christianity and becoming monks suggest that Christian monks possessed the literacy and familiarity with traditional and Christian religion and ritual necessary to produce such texts.³⁹ The venerable figure of the priest was giving way to newly emerging identities—the “magician” and the monk.

The fluidity of these identities creates problems for the modern scholar who wishes to speak precisely about persons whose identities were not so distinct. It is relatively unproblematic to use the term *priest* for the temple-based leader of traditional Egyptian religion, but the term *magician* is rightly the object of extensive scholarly discussion, and my point is precisely the deep similarity between monks and so-called magicians as experts in the use of efficacious texts, gestures, and substances. My practice will be to use *magician* only to indicate the perspective of normative monastic ideology, as a term for any mobile ritual expert, whatever his religious affiliations, who had not taken on the more particular identity of Christian monk, a recognized role that would have given his “magical” activities legitimacy in the eyes of the authors who defined that identity (imagine that the word *magician* always appears

here with scare quotes). Within an Egyptian religious environment marked by a variety of religious virtuosi, authoritative monastic authors sought to define and legitimate the Christian monk as both different from and superior to other ritual specialists, which they labeled priests or magicians.

Ritual specialists offered concrete supernatural help to other people. Ancient “magical spells” promised to tell the future, heal illnesses, curse enemies, create pregnancies, instill erotic passion in desired mates, and so on. Likewise, nonmonastic persons, Christian and not, turned to monks for information about the future, healing, and exorcisms.⁴⁰ A set of letters from laypeople to a monk named Paphnutius illustrates the range of concerns they believed an accomplished ascetic could address: illnesses, temptations, plots from their enemies, and sins for which they hoped to atone.⁴¹ Just as other ritual specialists might use special substances to produce the desired end, so a certain Heraclides asked Paphnutius to bless oil for healing purposes.⁴² According to Shenoute, “a great monk” gave a sick “official” some fox claws, saying, “Bind them to yourself, and you will recover,” and Christian presbyters and monks would provide people with special water or oil that would give them relief from diseases.⁴³ Though monks may have been performing their disciplines to achieve the overall goal of ultimate salvation, they and others also saw more limited and immediate payoffs to their ascetic labors.

Some monastic authors played down the abilities of monks to provide healings and other supernatural services or rejected such activities as inappropriate for the monk. Recall the group of people who came to the White Monastery hoping that Shenoute, as an exceptional monk, would reveal to them who had stolen some of their possessions and where the missing items were hidden. Shenoute said to them, “Let no one come to me on account of this sort of thing. I am not that sort of person!” In his view, illness, pain, poverty, and other such troubles were “trials” (*peirasmoi*), usually sent by God “for our salvation and the healing of our impieties” and thus best dealt with through endurance, prayer, and repentance. Remedies such as oil, special water, and animal parts, whether offered by “charmners and sorcerers” or by “the Church’s presbyters and monks,” provided merely “deceptive relief.”⁴⁴ Shenoute believed that the monk’s only tasks were to prepare himself for the final judgment and to call others to repentance, and thus he flatly rejected the role of ritual specialist. Still, even Shenoute’s followers did not maintain

this position: the *Life of Shenoute*, traditionally attributed to his successor Besa, presents its hero as a conventional miracle-working holy man, his sanctity demonstrated by the spiritual gifts that he received. It even has Shenoute reveal the identity of an unknown thief.⁴⁵ Shenoute himself may have claimed that he was no ritual specialist, but his biographers depicted him as in fact “that sort of person.”

Athanasius's *Life of Antony* is filled with healings, exorcisms, and instances of Antony's clairvoyance, but Athanasius has Antony emphasize that achieving virtue is far more important than performing miracles, which should be attributed to Christ, not to the monk.⁴⁶ Both Athanasius and Evagrius warned that a clairvoyant intuition that a fellow monk would soon arrive, especially if true, might be a demon's trick, designed to earn the monk's trust. In general, “spiritual gifts” might be demonic in origin.⁴⁷ Such efforts by elite authors could not, however, outweigh the examples of undeniably virtuous monks who possessed such powers. Valeria, one of Paphnutius's correspondents, acknowledged that any healing she might receive would come from Christ, but she told the monk that “I am confident that through your prayers I receive healing, for the revelations of the ascetics and worshipers are manifested.”⁴⁸ Despite the efforts of Shenoute, Evagrius, and Athanasius, people believed that monks had a special relationship with God and thus could provide divine aid, sometimes through ritualized means.

In this respect the monk resembled the priest and other ritual experts who also enjoyed intimate contact with higher beings. These were persons who lived with, talked to, negotiated with, and manipulated gods or demons. The priest had an obvious relationship to the god he served and to which he sacrificed. Although the priest's social identity was closely tied to his technical expertise in efficacious writing and speech, he offered that expertise in a temple, the home of a god or gods. The case of the ritual specialist who was not based in a temple was more complex: his prestige also came from his proficiency in powerful words, but he was not tied to a sacred precinct and its god. The magical papyri frequently refer to an “assistant” (*paredros*), a supernatural being that did the bidding of the ritualist and could be called a demon (*daimōn*), an angel (*angelos*), or a god (*theos*).⁴⁹ Some spells acquired an assisting demon or angel on a one-time basis for the specific action in view; others procured a more long-term, all-purpose “companion,” who would “reveal everything” to the ritual expert and “eat and sleep with” him.⁵⁰

Indeed, to have such a supernatural companion was part of what made the ritual specialist who he was, and the level of his expertise could be measured by the status of his “assistant”: a god was more prestigious than a demon.⁵¹ The social identity of the mobile ritual expert was grounded in part in his relationship to a demon, angel, or god.

The magician’s assistant provides another angle from which to view the belief that the monk could have a specific angelic or even demonic companion.⁵² Recall that both the *Shepherd of Hermas* and Origen had taught that two angels—one good, one evil—accompanied every person and suggested virtuous or sinful thoughts; this idea was a Christian variation on a well-attested but minority view in antiquity that a person had not one, but two, personal *daimones*.⁵³ Monks readily accepted the notion of a helpful angelic companion, while expressing doubts about the demonic one. Many stories indicate that the individual monk had his own specific assisting angel, and the quality of that relationship could serve as a measure of the monk’s virtue. Paul the Simple could see that a monk was sinning because “his angel, filled with grief, with head bowed, follows him at a distance.”⁵⁴ Palladius reports that the virtue of Mark the Ascetic was evident in that his angel, not a human priest, gave him the Eucharist, and he warns that God withdraws “the angel of providence” from the proud monk who claims that he has achieved virtue without God’s help.⁵⁵ Evagrius states that the “wise intellect” has “God’s angel accompanying it.”⁵⁶ Angels, then, assisted the monk in his fight against demons, and many monks believed that they had a specific angelic companion, whose disposition toward them could change, even to the point that it would depart. We are perhaps not so far from the “magical spells” of Apa Anoub and others, which invoke Michael, Gabriel, and many other angelic powers, either singly or in groups, to come to their aid “against the first formed one [Satan] and all his powers and his unclean and evil demons.”⁵⁷

On the other hand, the evidence for the monk having a specific demonic adversary is not as strong. Evagrius rejected the idea that “the same demons persist with” the soul.⁵⁸ Yet his student Palladius seems to have had in mind a long-term demonic companion when he claimed that Moses the Ethiopian’s conversion to ascetic virtue was so complete that he “brought his helper in wickedness from his youth, the very demon who was his companion in sin, forthwith to the acknowledgment of Christ.”⁵⁹ Obviously, monks who renounced the role of magician or who accepted the Christian distinction between angels and demons

would not have sought a demon as a long-term companion, although one monk did invite a demon to live with him as a way to get him to leave a possessed person. After twelve years of enduring the monk's strict diet of only twelve date pits a day, the demon left.⁶⁰ Doubtless it was more comfortable to stay with a nonmonastic ritual specialist. In any event, monks resembled other religious virtuosi by defining themselves partly in terms of a more intentionally cultivated relationship with the guiding spirit or invisible companion that was believed to accompany every person.

Monks, like other ritual experts, knew how to communicate with and persuade beings that most people could neither hear nor see: they knew the right words to say and invested power over the demonic in those words. A saying attributed to Abba Poemen and other fathers makes the comparison explicit: "The charmer does not understand the force [*dunamis*] of the words that he says, but the beast hears it, understands the force of the word, and submits. So it is with us also: even if we do not understand the force of the things we say, the demons nonetheless hear them and withdraw in fear."⁶¹ The use of the word *dunamis* here conveys the same ambiguity as the English word *force*: the speaker does not comprehend either the meaning of the words or their power, but that does not hinder their effectiveness. Magic spells and books of late antique Egypt drew on the authoritative power of writing and sacred texts that characterized traditional Egyptian temple culture.⁶² The sacred words of Homer, properly inscribed on a piece of iron, could protect a runaway slave from being found, bring their wearer the love of anyone she or he meets, or keep away wild animals.⁶³ Christian monks participated in this movement of text production and thus of ritual power from temple to scriptorium.⁶⁴

If the monk knew, spoke, and wrote down the right words, what words did he use? Characteristically, the *Sayings* are ambiguous about precisely where to locate the monk's antidemonic words, whether in the Bible or in monastically composed prayers and sayings. In the story about not understanding "the force" of one's words, the effective text against demons of fornication is "Son of God, have mercy on me," which is quasi-scriptural (compare Matt 9:27, 15:22, etc.); the story does not attribute the text's power to its possible origin in Scripture.⁶⁵ In general, prayers (whether scriptural or not) and the devotional intensity that prayer creates in the monk repel demons.⁶⁶ One demon refuses to wake a sleeping monk because "once when I woke him, he got up and burned

me by singing Psalms and praying.”⁶⁷ Monks respond to demonic temptations with statements that are drawn from the Bible and others that are not.⁶⁸ In one anecdote, a demon shows up in a monk’s cell and recites by heart the book of Numbers. The monk asks it whether it can recite from the New Testament as well, and at the sound of the word *New* the demon disappears.⁶⁹ The surviving magical texts with Christian elements are diverse: some use passages from Scripture just as others use lines from Homer; others call upon Christian divinities, angels, or biblical figures in words composed by the author.⁷⁰

Authoritatively positioned authors such as Athanasius and Evagrius, however, did not hesitate to argue that the words in Scripture were the best available weapons against demons. The precedent for this view was, of course, Jesus’s use of Scripture to answer the devil’s temptations in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke (Matt 4:1–11; Luke 4:1–13). In the *Life of Antony*, Athanasius has Antony cite Jesus’s example: “For what the Lord said, he did for our sakes, so that when the demons hear similar such sayings from us they will be overturned because of the Lord, who rebuked them with these sayings.”⁷¹ Athanasius, note, attributes the anti-demonic power not to the biblical words themselves, but to “the Lord,” who first used them. This subtle point may not have been clear to every reader of the *Life*, which frequently portrays Antony singing Psalms or reciting other biblical verses in his conflicts with demons without such Christological explanations.⁷²

In his *Talking Back*, Evagrius likewise invoked the example of Jesus’s temptation as the model for his collection of biblical passages to be used in answering demonic thoughts. Influenced by the *Life of Antony* and reflecting Evagrius’s psychological theory regarding the interplay between good and bad thoughts in the intellect, *Talking Back* provides scriptural passages that could “cut off” evil thoughts, organized under brief headings, usually “Against the thought that . . .” or “Against the demon that . . .”⁷³ But the treatise goes beyond this simple oppositional function by also providing passages that the monk in various circumstances could address “towards the Lord” or “towards the holy angels” or that he could speak to other monks as their conditions warrant; one such passage is intended “for the soul that is frightened by the attacks of demons that happen through touching.”⁷⁴ In its literary shape as an arsenal of effective words to oppose demons, to enlist supernatural aid, or to help persons in distress, Evagrius’s treatise invites comparison with the magician’s spell manual, which likewise listed various words or actions under

brief headings such as “For one who is swollen” or “For your enemies, that they [may] not prevail over you.”⁷⁵ Although each of the eight books of *Talking Back* presents its passages in canonical order, the overall effect is to atomize the scriptural text into a series of powerful sayings.

Evagrius may have found another precedent for his book in Athanasius’s *Epistle to Marcellinus*, which makes explicit the contrast with magical spells that is implicit in *Talking Back*.⁷⁶ The ill Marcellinus to whom Athanasius addressed this work was certainly an ascetic Christian and may have been a monk, since Athanasius presents the work as the teaching of an “old man” (*gerōn*).⁷⁷ The *Epistle* resembles *Talking Back*, for it suggests particular Psalms to recite for different conditions in which the Christian finds himself, ranging from persecution to demonic attack to the desire to give thanks to God. The words stabilize the soul through an effectiveness based in Christ’s incarnation.⁷⁸ Athanasius explicitly contrasts the Bible with magical spells. In ancient Israel, he explains (somewhat anachronistically), people “drove demons away and refuted the plots they directed against human beings merely by reading the Scriptures.” But more recently certain persons have “abandoned” the Scriptures; instead, they have “composed for themselves plausible words from external sources, and with these have called themselves exorcists.” Such persons must be Christians who compose magic spells, and the ascetic character of the epistle and its addressee suggest that these are monks. The demons, Athanasius says, “mock” such spell-composing monks; in contrast, those who use the Bible send the demons away in terror because “the Lord is in the words of the Scriptures.”⁷⁹ Ascetic leaders such as Evagrius and Athanasius Christianized antidemonic ritual activity by replacing composed texts, which could be a jumble of “pagan” and “Christian” elements, with texts from the Bible, the distinctly Christian book. They may have found some success: use of the Bible in the surviving magical papyri increased dramatically in the fourth century and remained high through the sixth.⁸⁰ This was one strategy by which the Christian monk could distinguish himself from the magician and by which the ill-defined demonic specialist could take on the more specific identity of Christian monk.

Other stories present the monk as overlapping with and in competition with the pagan priest, a religious type that was also transforming into the mobile religious specialist during the fourth century. Faced with the decline of their temples and the aggressive recruitment of the now

imperially supported Church, pagan priests could choose to continue their lives as religious virtuosi as Christian monks; in turn, monks faced the temptation to return to their old pagan identities. When Abba Olympius has a priest as an overnight guest, the pagan is puzzled that Olympius does not receive visions from his Christian God even though he practices such a rigorous ascetic regime. The priest reports that his sacrifices are enough to get his god to reveal all his mysteries to him, and he sagely suggests that Olympius is not receiving visions because “impure thoughts” separate him from God. Other monks approve of this diagnosis.⁸¹ This story presents the priest–monk relationship matter-of-factly; they are colleagues who follow two paths to revelations from God and can compare notes, so to speak.

But stories of priests converting and becoming monks suggest not only overlap between the two groups, but also competition. One priest beats nearly to death a young monk who had called him a “devil,” but he then converts and becomes a monk when Macarius the Great greets him warmly. Priests convert when they learn that the demons they either command or worship are unable to cause monks to fall into sin.⁸² These stories use the demonic to establish clear boundaries between monk and priest by aligning the priest with the demons that the monk fights; the monastic victory over the demonic enables the conversion of priest to monk. Thus, a monk’s fall could involve his lapse into his old priestly or perhaps magical practices, as when a brother, overwhelmed by his sexual urges, “sacrificed” to procure a sexual partner. The story’s point is not really the brother’s sinful desire, but his identity: his use of sacrifice for erotic purposes casts him as a priest or a magician; many erotic spells involved giving burnt offerings as a form of sacrifice or promising the demon a sacrifice if the spell worked.⁸³ The story ends when Abba Lot for three weeks does penance with the brother, who then submits to Lot for the rest of his life. The brother ends up an obedient junior monk, not a priest or magician.⁸⁴

A lengthy anonymous anecdote is most likely another version of this story—the key detail is the three weeks of repentance—and here the choice of monk versus priest is made much more explicit.

A brother was attacked by fornication. It happened that he went through a certain village in Egypt, and when he saw the daughter of a certain priest of the pagans, he fell in love with her and said to her father, “Give her to me as my wife.” The priest replied to him, “I cannot

give her to you without being advised by my god." And he went to the demon and said to him, "Look, a monk has come, wanting my daughter. Shall I give her to him?" The demon answered, "Ask him whether he will renounce his God, his baptism, and his vow as a monk." And the priest went and said to him, "Renounce your God, your baptism, and your vow as a monk." The monk agreed to this, and immediately he saw, as it were, a dove that came out of his mouth and flew up to the sky. Then the priest went into the temple to the demon and said, "See, he has agreed to these three things." Then the devil replied to him, "Do not give him your daughter as his wife, for his God has not turned away from him but continues to help him." The priest went and said to the brother, "I cannot give her to you, for your God aids you and has not turned away from you." When he heard this, the brother said to himself, "If God has demonstrated such great goodness to me, but I, wretch that I am, have renounced him, my baptism, and my vow as a monk, does the good God continue even now to help me?" So he came to himself and became watchful, and he went into the desert to a great old man and told him about the affair. The old man answered him, "Stay here with me in my cave, and fast for three consecutive weeks, and I shall beseech God in your behalf." And the old man labored in behalf of the brother and supplicated God, "I ask you, Lord, grant me this soul and receive its repentance," and God heard him. [For three weeks the brother fasted and prayed, and finally the dove returned into his mouth.] Then the old man gave thanks to God and said to the brother, "See, God has accepted your repentance; from now on pay attention to yourself." And the brother replied to him, "Look, from now on I shall stay with you, Abba, until I die."⁸⁵

Although the ancient compiler placed this story under the topic of fornication, it really is not about fornication. The priest's daughter never appears; she functions only as device to set in motion the real story, a precisely constructed competition between two fathers for the allegiance of a young man. Here the pagan priest, the potential father-in-law, offers marriage and traditional religion. The Christian elder, the potential abba, offers celibacy and Christian asceticism. Both function as intermediaries between the youth and their respective gods. But the anecdote makes the priest's god a demon, whose power is ineffectual in the face of the loyalty of the Christian God, to which even the demon testifies. And thus the young man ends up more secure in his identity as a monk, son to the Christian abba, not to the pagan priest.

No doubt many religiously inclined young men in fourth- and fifth-

century Egypt faced the choice of religious mentors that confronted this brother. A curious Coptic work, probably originally called *The Life of Aaron*, tells the story of the two sons of Aristos, the priest of the imposing temple of Isis on the island of Philae in the upper Nile.⁸⁶ When the monk-bishop Macedonius surreptitiously takes the temple's sacred falcon from its "demonic cage" and kills it, the brothers flee to the desert, meet Macedonius, and convert to Christian monasticism. Before long the younger son is able to heal miraculously a camel's broken leg. Aristos hears that his sons have become monks and can perform miracles; he goes into the desert after them, and he too embraces ascetic Christianity. Aristos gives away his money, is ordained a Christian priest by Macedonius, and converts the temple into a church. In this domestic drama of conversion, the sons of the local priest, like other young men in monastic lore, are attracted to the monastic regime, or see which way the religious wind is blowing, or both, and become monks and adhere to a new "father." But here the pagan father converts to monasticism as well, and the family's ritual business, so to speak, follows them into their new and yet not so different line of work. They still provide local people with access to the divine, but now to the Christian God rather than to the demonic gods.

As opponents of the demons, monks were famous not only for resisting their temptations, but also for driving them out of people—for being exorcists. *The History of the Monks* singles out as exceptional exorcists four of its monks, including Paul the Simple, to whom it says Antony himself sent those persons whose demons he was unable to drive out.⁸⁷ Antony, at least the Antony of Athanasius's *Life*, had set the standard for the monastic exorcist, even amazing a group of visiting philosophers by cleansing a set of demoniacs who just happened to be present. But typically Athanasius has Antony warn against boasting of one's ability to cast out demons or distinguishing among monks based on their skills in exorcism. Antony cites Luke 10:20—"Do not rejoice that the demons are subject to you, but that your names are written in heaven"—and explains, "That our names are written in heaven is a testimony to our virtue and way of life, but casting out demons is a gift given by the Savior," thus severing the ability to perform exorcisms from virtue and the ascetic regime.⁸⁸ But Athanasius's own depiction of Antony the exorcist undermined this principle, and later authors were not so cautious. According to Palladius, the monk Innocent of the Mount of Olives was

given the power to drive out demons precisely because he was so innocent, and the author of the *History* frankly attributed Paul the Simple's superior exorcistic abilities to his superior obedience, demonstrated through years of unquestioning submission to Antony's harsh requirements.⁸⁹

Exorcism was clearly the monastic gift of healing par excellence and thus, as Antony warned, provided an occasion for temptation. According to Evagrius, to request gifts of healing from God was to fall prey to the demon of vainglory, which could also say to a monk blessed with such gifts, "Look, you are proficient with the gift of healing that you have received." Vainglory, Evagrius claimed, invented dreams in which the monk would see himself performing exorcisms and other healings.⁹⁰ Palladius, we have seen, emphasized vainglory in his demonology. He described in lurid detail a very impressive exorcism performed by Macarius the Alexandrian—the boy levitates and expands horrifically until water bursts out of all his sense organs and he returns to normal size—and then immediately followed this scene with one in which the spirit of vainglory suggests to Macarius that he go to Rome to parlay his gift of healing into greater fame. This is a temptation so powerful that Macarius lies on the ground and challenges the demons to drag him to Rome; he later places a basket of sand on his shoulders to prevent himself from leaving.⁹¹

Likewise, a significant number of *apophthegmata* dealing with exorcisms emphasize humility—not just that the monk must be humble about his exorcisms, but even more that humility itself enables exorcisms. Stories of exorcism by humility dramatize the more general monastic belief that humility, as the opposite of the pride that brought down Satan and his angels, is the most effective virtue in the monk's struggle with the demons. "Whoever has humility," said Moses, the Ethiopian archetype of that virtue, "humiliates the demons."⁹² Thus, demons depart from their human hosts when a monk turns the other cheek after being struck by the possessed man or when another monk identifies himself as one of the goats in the parable of the sheep and the goats (Matt. 25:31–46): in the latter case, the demon admits, "Look, it is because of your humility that I am coming out."⁹³ The motif of humility as an exorcising power generated comic stories in which supremely humble monks furtively cast out demons or must be tricked into doing so inadvertently. For example, when presented with a possessed man,

Abba Longinus says, “I can do nothing for you,” and sends the demoniac to Abba Zeno. When Zeno undertakes the exorcism, the demon departs, but it declares that it is departing because of Longinus’s prayers, telling Zeno, “I would not have given you an answer.” A group of priests tricks Abba Bessarion into casting out a demon by telling Bessarion to say to the possessed man while he is sleeping, “Arise, and go out,” a command that the demon promptly obeys.⁹⁴ What would have happened if Macarius had gone to Rome as the demon of vainglory suggested to him? An anonymous monk similarly blessed with great gifts was summoned to meet the emperor, from whom he received gold and properties. But when this monk tried to exorcise a demon, the demon would not leave, saying, “You have become like one of us by abandoning your concern for God and devoting yourself to earthly concerns.”⁹⁵ The power to exorcise could be lost as well as gained.

The development behind these stories is clear. Monks demonstrated their acquisition of virtue by performing exorcism, which then could be an occasion for pride. Monks then exhorted each other to be humble about their antidemonic powers, and then in turn the virtue of humility became itself the source of that power, so that exceptional monks outdid one another in exorcism by outdoing one another in humility. This paradoxical circle of humility and achievement runs through monastic literature. In the context of our topic, however, exorcism by humility appears to have been another strategy for differentiating the monk from his competitors by attributing power over the demonic to the overall effect of the monastic lifestyle, rather than to the right words or actions. These monks were superior to other potential exorcists in their very persons, so much so that they did not have to perform exorcisms at all in order to drive out demons. Their virtue, carefully built up through the ascetic regime, was sufficient to repel evil spirits. No longer needing to say any particular words or to perform any required gestures, these men were not ritual specialists: they were simply monks.

Although at times the demon-fighting monks, like Shenoute, violently attacked the rituals and temples of traditional religion, their main competition was with other people, with the priests and “magicians” and (in cities such as Alexandria) philosophers who were their rivals as religious virtuosi. A story about Macarius the Great, reported by both *The History of the Monks* and Palladius, features three of these religious types: monk,

priest, and magician.⁹⁶ In Palladius's version, an Egyptian commissioned a "sorcerer" (*goēs*) to procure for him the love of a married woman. To get the husband to send his wife away, the sorcerer turns her into a mare. The distraught husband brings his wife, now a horse, to the village priests, but they are unable to do anything, and for three days the mare does not eat any food. Macarius, however, prays and pours blessed water over the mare, and she regains her human shape. According to Palladius, Macarius explains that the woman did not really change into a mare: she only appeared to do so because the onlookers were lustful sinners ("You are the horses, for you have the eyes of horses") and the woman had not gone to communion for five weeks.⁹⁷ In the *History*, the woman really did become a mare, and there is no moralizing conclusion.

Examining this story, David Frankfurter rightly concludes that "the dichotomy between sorcerer and monk in the monastic literature, where the one removes through Christ what the other sets through magic, masks a much more fluid range of ritual experts both within and without the monastic fold. A monk was certainly as likely to provide one with an erotic binding spell as was an Egyptian priest, a rabbi, or an 'intellectual pagan,' and each could supply the counterspell as well."⁹⁸ Paradoxically, however, Palladius depicts the monk Macarius as the superior ritual expert, able to do what the priests could not, while denying that he has done anything at all because what the magician did was not real. This paradox is found throughout monastic literature: the monks embraced the powers and social roles of the very identities that they renounced and derided as impotent and demonic. The Christian monk fashioned himself in part through a simultaneous acknowledgment and disavowal of his religious cognates, the priest and the magician, fellow adepts in the ways of the gods, now held to be demons.

Afterword

The Inner Battle

For what the flesh desires is opposed to the spirit, and what the spirit desires is opposed to the flesh; for these are opposed to each other, to prevent you from doing what you want.

—Galatians 5:17

It is said that very late on Saturday nights, as the first glimmers of Sunday's dawn appeared, Abba Arsenius would stand with his back to the rising sun, extend his arms to heaven, and pray until "the sun shone on his face." Then he would sit down.¹ Perhaps the reader of this book has missed this image of the monk—the solitary man at prayer, his face turned toward heaven and shining in the Sunday afternoon sun. It may appear that I have dwelled too much on the negative side of the early monastic experience and have neglected the monks' joyful moments of fellowship, love for one another and for others, and communion with God. Monastic humility, it may—and should—be said, was more than Abba Moses's ambivalent acceptance of his role as the sinful "black" and more than a strategy to present the monk as having fashioned himself into a person who, unlike magicians, repels the demonic with his very presence. The humble monk imitated Christ by following a path of self-sacrifice that embodied his dependence on God for his ultimate worth and salvation. The Egyptian monk was not, one may object, obsessively focused on evil, sin, and guilt.

It would be easy enough to answer this reader by saying that I have chosen to explore simply one aspect of early monastic life and do not purport to present its spirituality in full. But I have argued more than that. The monk was not simply a man at prayer and not simply someone who through ascetic performances constructed a virtuous self as an alternative to the deadening conventions of society. At the heart of his

identity was struggle, resistance, and combat with the forces of evil that surrounded the ancient person. Whether he was the martyr who suffered in defiance of the demonic pseudo-gods, the gnostic who mastered the natures and tactics of an unseen enemy, or the prophet who called God's people away from injustice and impiety, the monk chose to enlist in the front lines of a cosmic battle between good and evil. The Egyptian monk acknowledged and squarely confronted the evil that divided human beings from one another, tempted them to turn away from God, and insinuated itself even into the most virtuous acts. Without engaging in such combat, he could never stand and pray until his face glowed in the sun's heavenly light.

Demons haunted and tempted ancient monks in other regions of the Mediterranean basin, of course, but the literature that emanated from Egypt provided later monks with their demonological lore. In both the Greek-speaking East and the Latin-speaking West, monks turned especially to the *Life of Antony* and *Sayings of the Desert Fathers* for the stories and teachings that helped them make sense of their own experiences of temptation, anxiety, and sadness. Condemned at the Second Council of Constantinople (553) for teaching "Origenist" doctrines, Evagrius was a more problematic authority. Although several of his works survived outside the purview of the Byzantine state in Syriac or Armenian translations, monks in the East continued to read in the original Greek other Evagrian treatises, especially *On Prayer*, which were transmitted under the names of others. Popular ascetic authors like John Climacus (ca. 579–649) and Maximus Confessor (580–662) may have denounced Evagrius when they mentioned him explicitly, but they nonetheless drew fully from his teachings. In his *Ladder of Divine Ascent*, John assumed and rang changes on Evagrius's list of eight principal thoughts, and Maximus composed works like *The Four Hundred Chapters on Love*, which not only imitated Evagrius's "chapter" style but also passed on such key Evagrian doctrines as the relationship between the passions and mental "representations." Byzantine monastic authors did not slavishly repeat what Evagrius or any other of their late ancient Egyptian predecessors had taught, as they explored more deeply and creatively such themes as holy tears, stillness, and obedience to a spiritual father. But they held fast to the Egyptian image of the monk as a combatant, advancing toward love, freedom from the passions, and contemplation of God despite resistance from his demonic foes.

The fate of early Egyptian monastic demonology in general, and of

Evagrian teachings in particular, in the Latin-speaking West was more ambiguous and took a more distinctly inward turn, with wide cultural effects. The *Life of Antony* and the *Sayings* became quickly and widely available in Latin translations. Near the end of the fifth century Genadius of Marseilles wrote that he had translated several of Evagrius's works into Latin, including *Talking Back*,² but they apparently did not survive long into the Middle Ages. Instead, Western monks received the teachings of Evagrius, as well as an overall framework for understanding the Egyptian legacy, from John Cassian (ca. 360–435), whose *Institutes* and *Conferences* Benedict of Nursia placed on a short list of recommended readings (along with the Bible and *Sayings of the Desert Fathers*) in his highly influential *Rule*.³ Cassian spent some fifteen years in the monastic settlements of northern Egypt as a disciple especially of Evagrius; he left Egypt during the Origenist controversy of 399–400, and by 420 he had settled at Marseilles, where he wrote his ascetic masterpieces initially at the request of a local bishop.

Cassian presents both works as digests of Egyptian monastic teachings. The *Institutes* covers the basics of monastic life (dress, prayer, etc.) and the struggle against the eight primary vices; the *Conferences* presents advanced teachings on monastic subjects in the form of long discussions that Cassian and his friend Germanus had with renowned Egyptian monks. There is no doubt that Cassian presents genuine teachings he learned in Egypt, but he also developed an original monastic discipline and theology that addressed specific concerns and issues that troubled monks and leading Christians in the early fifth-century West.⁴ In a way that appeared to undermine the ascetic emphasis on hard work and training, the teachings of Augustine of Hippo had called into question the freedom of the human being to choose and pursue the good. Gaul had its own “indigenous” forms of monasticism, epitomized in Sulpicius Severus's popular *Life of St. Martin of Tours*, which rivaled the *Life of Antony* in its emphasis on the monk's fervent opposition to paganism, backed up by miraculous deeds. Gallic monks required a firm ideological foundation that could support their ascetic striving in a post-Augustinian culture and that would, as Cassian described it, focus them on the cultivation of “a perfect life” rather than on the “marvelous works and miracles” that God had performed through their illustrious predecessors.⁵ Moreover, Cassian dared not name his most important monastic teacher, Evagrius, and he avoided Evagrian technical terms even when

he retained Evagrian concepts: “freedom from the passions” (*apatheia*) became “purity of heart,” but the idea was much the same.

Cassian passes on much of the demonological lore of fourth-century Egypt—some, but not all, of it specifically indebted to Evagrius.⁶ The demons, he says, have bodies that are imperceptible to human beings and now make their home in the air that lies between heaven and earth. The demons specialize in particular vices and, as Evagrius taught, the monk suffers attacks from only one specialized demon at a time, even if the attacks come so quickly that it seems as if multiple vices are tempting him. Unlike Evagrius, however, Cassian accepts the idea that two angels, a good and an evil one, accompany each person. Cassian’s fellow student of Evagrius, Palladius, writing at about the same time, stressed through vivid stories Evagrius’s teaching that the monk who suffers from severe pride often falls into disgraceful passions of the flesh, which humiliate him and so cure him of his arrogance. The reader may recall the striking example of Heron, whose plunge into sexual disgrace left him literally unsexed. Cassian likewise teaches that pride can lead to sexual humiliation. He intriguingly also tells the story of a monk named Heron, whose extreme abstinence and refusal to submit to traditional monastic wisdom results in demonic madness and suicide. Although this Heron does not follow the same course of decline into fornication that Palladius’s Heron traveled, both Herons exhibit an arrogant refusal to listen to more experienced monks.⁷

Despite these and other continuities with the traditions of the Egyptian desert, Cassian, writing in the cooler and greener regions of Gaul, sees the savagery of the demonic battles fought by Antony and other Egyptian monks as belonging to another place and time. Demons simply do not attack the European monks of his day with the brutal power with which they once afflicted hermit and cenobite alike in Egypt. Perhaps, he muses, this is because the power of the cross has so penetrated the Egyptian desert, the demons’ primary headquarters, that it has weakened demons everywhere. One suspects that he finds another explanation more likely: monks of his day are so negligent that the demons “disdain to fight against us with the same intensity with which they once raged against those accomplished soldiers of Christ, destroying us more ominously with deceitfulness now that visible trials have ceased.”⁸ Contemporary European monks who want to fight demons, like their Egyptian predecessors did, should not expect the terrifying animals and

seductive women who appeared to the Egyptian monks of yore. Instead they should expect the more subtle thoughts of which Athanasius, Evagrius, and the others also wrote.

Cassian, then, subordinates the monk's conflict with demons to a persistent and divinely planned conflict within himself. Unlike Evagrius, who always had in mind the grand cosmic battle raging among the rational natures that fell from their original unity with God, Cassian devotes much greater attention to the warfare within the individual person, the battle between "the spirit" and "the flesh" of which St. Paul had so eloquently written in Galatians. This "interior battle," Cassian explains, is a "conflict deeply rooted in our body, so to say, according to the design of the Lord." Cassian attributes to the flesh and the spirit the self's conflicting desires for diverse vicious pleasures and ascetic virtues. "The soul's free will" is caught in the middle of this internecine warfare. If the soul relaxes its state of alert, then "all at once stings of the flesh"—acting quite like demons—"make their appearance, wound us with their vices and passions, and do not permit us to abide in the state of purity that we delight in; they drag us to that chilling path of pleasures which horrifies us and which is full of biers." Demons do appear in Cassian's lengthy description of this conflict, but as proof that the human being's divided personality is "a good and beneficial discord": lacking any flesh that would provide resistance to their evil wills, the demons can put any malevolent idea they think of into immediate and unrestrained action. For Cassian's monk, it is the continual interior warfare between aspects of himself that maintains his vigilance and prevents him from falling into lukewarm indolence.⁹

Although God himself designed human beings so that they would experience the interior battle between the spirit and the flesh, Cassian absolves God of any part in the demons' current hierarchy; and he insists that the demons cannot penetrate or, therefore, decisively interfere with the soul that stands poised between spirit and flesh. These are the points that Cassian emphasizes in the two conferences he devotes to systematic treatment of the demons, both of which he has an Abba Serenus deliver. In the eighth conference, Cassian has Serenus explain in good Origenist fashion that the diversity of the demons—their differing specialties and their hierarchical ranks—results from their fall from their original angelic state. But unlike Origen and Antony, Serenus does not say that God assigned the demons to their various ranks (principality, power, and so

on) based on their varying degrees of culpability; rather, the demons themselves chose their current arrangement, perhaps as an imitation or continuation of their previous hierarchy in heaven, and their differences result from their own rivalries, based in their affiliations to diverse human nations.¹⁰ In the seventh conference, Serenus tackles the problem of the human mind's changeable character, which renders the monk vulnerable to distraction and seldom able to maintain a consistent focus on God and virtue. Although Cassian again has Serenus offer the traditional teaching that the demons suggest thoughts to the monk and so distract him, he spends more energy insisting that demons, as corporeal beings, cannot truly penetrate or combine with the human soul, even though the soul might also appear to be possessed when a demon thoroughly possesses a person's body. In the wake of Augustine's controversial claims about the incapacity of the fallen will to choose the good, Cassian stresses that the human being can always resist the demons, which (as Evagrius had said) can only diagnose the monk's psychological state from his external actions and cannot peer into the soul's "inner workings," which are "concealed deep within us."¹¹ Cassian certainly believes that the monk fights with demons and must resist their evil suggestions, but he carefully segregates the evil spirits from the monk's interior psychology, where the more virulent and divinely sanctioned battle between the spirit and the flesh rages.

As perhaps his most influential legacy to Western Christianity, Cassian transmits Evagrius's list of the eight principal thoughts, but in a similarly less demonized way. Although Cassian often refers to, say, "the spirit of anger," he more often refers to the eight principle "vices" (*vitia*). In the fifth conference Cassian provides even more ways to categorize and interrelate the eight vices than Evagrius had provided for the eight thoughts. Both here and in the *Institutes*, where Cassian discusses each of the vices in detail, his primary distinction is between "natural" vices and "unnatural" ones. The former, such as gluttony and fornication, arise from "natural impulses" that occur "within" the monk, whereas the latter, such as avarice, make their attacks "from without" and do not originate "in the monk other than in the weakness of a corrupt and sluggish mind." Some vices (gluttony and fornication) involve bodily activity; others (pride and vainglory) do not. Whatever its cause, origin, or mode of operation, each vice is a "disease" that requires "cure."¹² These distinctions psychologize the vices, arranging them on a grid whose cat-

egories (within / without, involving the body / not involving the body, natural / unnatural) derive from Cassian's anthropology of an inner soul poised between spirit and flesh. Where Evagrius observed and mapped the clever battle tactics of a foreign army involved in a cosmic war, Cassian examines the inner workings of human nature and the hidden places of the soul. In this way he initiates a trajectory that would eventually transform Evagrius's eight primary thoughts or demons (things external to the monk that attack him and that he must repel) into the seven deadly sins (things that originate in the monk and that he must not do).¹³

With this significant transformation, the monk perhaps did not lose his identity as a combatant, but he increasingly became also an introspective penitent and a more influential model for the ordinary Christian. Demons continued to tempt and frighten the monks of the medieval West. But in accord with Cassian's picture of an interior battle between spirit and flesh, these spiritual foes appeared increasingly less ferocious in comparison to the relentless desires of the monks' own flesh—which, Augustine had taught, seethed in the grip of concupiscence. Evil thoughts that Evagrius had seen as raindrops that could be shaken from the surface of the soul now lodged themselves in what Cassian called "hiding places" and "caves" of the heart.¹⁴ The monastic practice of sharing all of one's thoughts with an elder monk became even more crucial than before and eventually gave rise to the confessional and penitential system, which extended its demands for self-revelation even to the laity.¹⁵ As monastic practices of self-examination and disclosure based on a checklist of vices expanded into the wider culture, demons followed. Spectacular demons seduced people as incubi and succubi, inspired heresies, and ultimately assisted, copulated with, and inhabited witches.¹⁶ Other demons continued their traditional and subtler strategies of making suggestions in the mind and titillating the body. Embedded now within a divided self, spiritual combat with demons required no desert, indeed no withdrawal of any kind, and so could enlist not only monks but also laypeople, who increasingly saw themselves as equally at odds with themselves. In this way, although few of us in the modern West can imagine ourselves fighting with a demon as Shenoute did on that winter night sixteen hundred years ago, we nonetheless may take some inspiration from his example as we fight the temptations and anxieties that we often call "our demons."

Abbreviations

Notes

Selected Bibliography

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Abbreviations

Complete bibliographic information for primary sources is given in the Selected Bibliography.

<i>Ant.</i>	Evagrius, <i>Antirrhetikos</i> (<i>Talking Back</i>)
<i>Apoph. patr.</i>	<i>Apophthegmata Patrum</i> (<i>Sayings of the Desert Fathers</i>)
CSCO	Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium, ed. I. B. Chabot et al. (Paris and Louvain, 1903–)
<i>Eight Spirits</i>	Evagrius, <i>The Eight Spirits of Wickedness</i>
<i>HM</i>	<i>The History of the Monks in Egypt</i>
<i>Instr.</i>	Pachomius, <i>Instruction</i>
<i>KG</i>	Evagrius, <i>Kephalaia Gnostica</i>
<i>LH</i>	Palladius, <i>Lausiac History</i>
<i>LXX</i>	Septuagint Greek version of the Hebrew Bible
<i>Monks</i>	Evagrius, <i>Sentences for Monks</i>
<i>Paral.</i>	<i>Paralipomena</i> from the <i>Life of Pachomius</i>
<i>PG</i>	<i>Patrologia cursus completus: Series graeca</i> , ed. J.-P. Migne (Paris, 1857–1886), 162 vols.
<i>PK</i>	Armand Veilleux, ed. and trans., <i>Pachomian Koinonia</i> (Kalamazoo, Mich., 1980–1982), 3 vols.
<i>PL</i>	<i>Patrologia cursus completus: Series latina</i> , ed. J.-P. Migne (Paris, 1844–1864), 217 vols.
<i>PO</i>	<i>Patrologia Orientalis</i> (Paris, 1907–)
<i>Praec.</i>	<i>Rules of Pachomius: Precepts</i>
<i>Praktikos</i>	Evagrius, <i>Praktikos</i>
<i>Prayer</i>	Evagrius, <i>Chapters on Prayer</i>
<i>SBo</i>	Bohairic <i>Life of Pachomius</i> , supplemented by Sahidic fragments
<i>SC</i>	<i>Sources chrétiennes</i> (Paris, 1943–)
<i>Test.</i>	Horsiesios, <i>Testament</i>
<i>Thoughts</i>	Evagrius, <i>On Thoughts</i>
<i>VA</i>	Athanasius, <i>Life of Antony</i>
<i>Verba sen.</i>	<i>Latin Sayings of the Desert Fathers</i>

Virgin	Evagrius, <i>Sentences for a Virgin</i>
VP	First Greek <i>Life of Pachomius</i>
VS	Pseudo-Athanasius, <i>The Life and Activity of the Holy and Blessed Teacher Syncletica</i>

Notes

I have made my own translations from most of the ancient monastic sources that appear prominently in this book. The major exceptions are the *Letters* of Ammonas and Antony, the Pachomian literature, and *The Life and Activity of the Holy and Blessed Teacher Syncletica*; in these cases and in others, I cite in the notes the English translations that I have used. Full references to such translations and to editions of the ancient texts can be found in the Selected Bibliography.

1. The Single One

1. Shenoute, *In the Night* (CSCO 42:37–41).
2. Dale B. Martin, *Inventing Superstition: From the Hippocratics to the Christians* (Cambridge, Mass., 2004), 187–206.
3. The classic exposition of early Egyptian monastic demonology is Antoine Guillaumont and Claire Guillaumont, “Démon: III. Dans la plus ancienne littérature monastique,” *Dictionnaire de spiritualité ascétique et mystique: Doctrine et histoire* 3 (1957): 189–212. It is to be expected that my study differs from the Guillaumonts’ in methodology and emphasis, reflecting particularly the cultural turn in patristic studies in the last two decades. But also my cast of characters differs from theirs. Based on recent studies that emphasize his response to conditions in Gaul and the wider Latin-speaking West, I have not treated John Cassian as a source for fourth-century Egyptian monasticism; but in the Afterword I discuss him as an important reviser of that tradition. Replacing him in the story, so to speak, is Shenoute of Atripe, whom the Guillaumonts do not discuss at all. Also, I devote more attention to the Pachomian sources. In general, like the Guillaumonts, I make full use of Greek sources, but unlike them I privilege Coptic materials over those that survive in Latin.
4. For references to historians who have made this argument, see David N. Bell, *Besa: The Life of Shenoute* (Kalamazoo, Mich., 1983), 103–104.
5. For examples and a caution about this approach, see Richard Valantasis,

- “Daemons and the Perfecting of the Monk’s Body: Monastic Anthropology, Daemonology, and Asceticism,” *Semeia* 58 (1992): 47–79. For a defense of the pragmatic use of psychoanalytic perspectives that I follow, see Dyan Elliott, *Fallen Bodies: Pollution, Sexuality, and Demonology in the Middle Ages* (Philadelphia, 1999), 7–9.
6. See Louis Bouyer, *La vie de s. Antoine: Essai sur la spiritualité du monachisme primitif*, 2nd ed. (Bégrolles-en-Mauges, 1977), 73.
 7. Hans Lietzmann, *The Era of the Church Fathers*, vol. 4 of *A History of the Early Church* (repr., Cleveland, 1961), 137.
 8. For a summary of such research, see Samuel Rubenson, *The Letters of St. Antony: Monasticism and the Making of a Saint* (Minneapolis, 1995), 116–125.
 9. Elliott, *Fallen Bodies*, 127–156; Walter Stephens, *Demon Lovers: Witchcraft, Sex, and the Crisis of Belief* (Chicago and London, 2002).
 10. For example, Charles Stewart, *Demons and the Devil: Moral Imagination in Modern Greek Culture* (Princeton, 1991).
 11. Wayne A. Meeks, *The Origins of Christian Morality: The First Two Centuries* (New Haven, 1993), 111–129.
 12. Adele Monaci Castagno, *Il diavolo e i suoi angeli: Testi e tradizioni (secoli I–III)* (Fiesole, Italy, 1996); Jean Daniélou, *Gospel Message and Hellenistic Culture*, vol. 2 of *A History of Early Christian Doctrine before the Council of Nicaea* (Philadelphia, 1973), 427–441.
 13. *Shepherd of Hermas* Mandate 6.2.
 14. Elaine Pagels, *The Origin of Satan* (New York, 1995).
 15. Frederick E. Brenk, SJ, “In the Light of the Moon: Demonology in the Early Imperial Period,” *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt* 2:16.2 (1986): 2068–2145; John Dillon, *The Middle Platonists, 80 B.C. to A.D. 220*, rev. ed. (Ithaca, N.Y., 1996); Martin, *Inventing Superstition*, 93–186.
 16. Plato, *Symposium* 202e–203a.
 17. Martin, *Inventing Superstition*, 93–108.
 18. Daniélou, *Gospel Message*, 434–441, to which the following discussion of Origen is indebted.
 19. Origen, *On First Principles* 1.6–8. Note that although the demons are ethically inferior to human beings, they are superior to people in their bodies’ composition, and thus human beings require divine protection from them (Martin, *Inventing Superstition*, 180–186).
 20. Origen, *Homilies on Joshua* 15, *Homilies on Ezekiel* 6.
 21. Origen, *Commentary on the Song of Songs* 3.16, *On First Principles* 3.3.
 22. Jeffrey Burton Russell frames his study of beliefs about Satan and demons in this period, including among monks, in terms of theodicy: *Satan: The Early Christian Tradition* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1981).
 23. See especially James E. Goehring, *Ascetics, Society, and the Desert: Studies in Early Egyptian Monasticism* (Harrisburg, Penn., 1999).

24. William Harmless, SJ, *Desert Christians: An Introduction to the Literature of Early Monasticism* (New York, 2004).
25. Susanna Elm, “Virgins of God”: *The Making of Asceticism in Late Antiquity* (Oxford, 1994), 253–330.
26. Ammonas, *Letters* 9.1; 11.1, 3–15. The most extensive discussion of the authenticity of Ammonas’s *Letters* remains Franz Klejna, “Antonius und Ammonas: Eine Untersuchung über Herkunft und Eigenart der ältesten Mönchsbrieft,” *Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie* 62 (1938): 309–348, at 320–326. I quote from the translation by Derwas J. Chitty and Sebastian Brock, *The Letters of Ammonas, Successor of Saint Antony* (Fairacres, Eng. / Oxford, 1979).
27. Ammonas, *Letters* 12.1–2, 5–6.
28. Rubenson, *Letters of St. Antony*. Only fragments of Antony’s original Coptic survive; otherwise, there are multiple versions, of which the Georgian and Latin are the most important (*ibid.*, 15–34). I quote from Rubenson’s translation of Antony’s *Letters*, which is based on comparison of several versions.
29. Rubenson, *Letters of St. Antony*, 64–68, 86–88; Pamela Bright, “The Combat of the Demons in Antony and Origen,” in W. W. Bienert and U. Kühneweg, eds., *Origeniana Septima: Origenes in den Auseinandersetzungen des 4. Jahrhunderts* (Louvain, 1999), 339–343.
30. Antony, *Letters* 1.35–45, 72; 5.40–42; 6.19–20, 27–29, 49–51, 55.
31. *Ibid.*, 6.56–62; compare Origen, *On First Principles* 1.5.2–3.
32. See David Dawson, *Allegorical Readers and Cultural Revision in Ancient Alexandria* (Berkeley, Calif., 1992), 127–182, esp. 153–167. On naming, see particularly Valentinus, Fragments C and D (Bentley Layton, *The Gnostic Scriptures* [Garden City, N.Y., 1986], 234–237).
33. *Gospel according to Philip* 53:23–27, 54:18–25, 62:26–35, 64:22–28 (Layton, *Gnostic Scriptures*, 330–331, 338–339).
34. Clement of Alexandria, *Excerpts from Theodotus* 31.3–4.
35. Antony, *Letters* 3.1–6, 12, 35; 4.17–18; 5.1–2; 6.2, 78; 7.5, 46–48.
36. Mark Sheridan, “The Spiritual and Intellectual World of Early Egyptian Monasticism,” *Coptica* 1 (2001): 1–51, at 27–30.
37. Antony, *Letters* 1.71; 5.6, 10; 6.45, 80, 83–84, 98; 7.12, 20.
38. *Ibid.*, 6.36–37, 49–55, 67.
39. G. J. M. Bartelink, “Les démons comme brigands,” *Vigiliae Christianae* 21 (1967): 12–24. See Matt. 21:13, Mark 3:27, Luke 11:21, John 10:8, Eph. 6:10–18. To the many patristic references collected by Bartelink, add from Nag Hammadi *Teachings of Silvanus* 85:2–3, 13–14; 113:31–33; *The Interpretation of Knowledge* 6:19.
40. Antony, *Letters* 1.71, 6.53; compare *Apoph. patr.* 8.2.
41. Antony, *Letters* 2.9–14, 20–22; 6.46–48, 104–105; see also 3.15–25, 5.15–28, 6.6–13, 7.26–30.

42. Asked why he avoided his fellow monks, Arsenius is said to have replied, “God knows that I love you, but I cannot live with God and people. The thousands and ten thousands of the heavenly hosts have but one will, while people have many. So I cannot leave God to be with people” (*Apoph. patr.* Arsenius 13).
43. Valentinus, *Epistle on Attachments* (Fragment H; Layton, *Gnostic Scriptures*, 245).
44. *Interpretation of Knowledge* 6:30–38. In monastic sayings, the term *energeia* becomes shorthand for the demonic, especially the demon of fornication (for instance, *Apoph. patr.* 5.27, 30, 32, 42).
45. Antony, *Letters* 5.37.
46. Pierre Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life* (Oxford, 1995), 210–211.
47. Deeply rooted: Michel Foucault, *The Care of the Self*, vol. 3 of *The History of Sexuality* (New York, 1986), 71–95. Egyptian villagers: Peter Brown, *The Making of Late Antiquity* (Cambridge, Mass., 1978), 82–86.

2. The New Martyr and Holy Man

1. Athanasius, VA pref. 3. I cite Athanasius’s *Life of Antony* in the text as VA, with chapter and section numbers per Bartelink’s text. 1 Cor. 15:31: VA 19.2.
2. Athanasius, VA 22.2; 24.5; 28.7; 41.2, 4; 42.7; 72.5.
3. Edward E. Malone, *The Monk and the Martyr: The Monk as the Successor of the Martyr* (Washington, 1950); Louis Bouyer, *La vie de s. Antoine: Essai sur la spiritualité du monachisme primitif*, 2nd ed. (Bégrolles-en-Mauges, 1977), 150–152; A. E. D. Van Loveren, “Once Again: ‘The Monk and the Martyr’—Saint Anthony and Saint Macrina,” *Studia Patristica* 17 (1982): 528–538.
4. Maureen Tilley, “The Ascetic Body and the (Un)Making of the World of the Martyr,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 59 (1991): 467–479.
5. Malone, *Monk and the Martyr*, 4–26; Marcel Viller, “Le martyre et l’ascèse,” *Revue d’ascétique et de mystique* 6 (1925): 105–142, at 105–112.
6. Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis* 4.4.
7. *Ibid.*, 4.9.
8. Origen, *Homilies on Numbers* 10.2.
9. Origen, *Commentary on Matthew* 16.24.
10. Walther Völker, *Das Vollkommenheitsideal des Origenes: Eine Untersuchung zur Geschichte der Frömmigkeit und zu den Anfängen christlicher Mystik* (Tübingen, 1931), 218–219, 224–225.
11. Origen, *Exhortation to Martyrdom* 11.
12. See Plácido Alvarez, “Demon Stories in the *Life of Antony* by Athanasius,” *Cistercian Studies* 23 (1998): 101–118, at 104–105.
13. VA 72.2–5; *Christianos gar eimi*: precisely the same statement appears, for example, in *Martyrdom of Pionius* 8.

14. Wilhelm Schneemelcher, "Das Kreuz Christi und die Dämonen: Bemerkungen zur Vita Antonii des Athanasius," in Ernest Dassmann and K. Suso Frank, eds., *Pietas: Festschrift für Bernhard Köttin* (Münster, 1980), 381–392.
15. See Bouyer, *La vie de s. Antoine*, 70.
16. *Ant.* 4.5, 52.
17. On the asceticism practiced by potential martyrs, see Tilley, "Ascetic Body," 471–472.
18. This vocabulary is typical of martyrdom accounts: for instance, Phileas suffers many "blows" (*plēgas*) (*Acts of Phileas*, col. ii, in Herbert Musurillo, *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs* [Oxford, 1972], 330–332).
19. See Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 5.1.
20. *Letter of Phileas* 9, in Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 8.10; VA 9.11.
21. VA 24.5, 30.3; Jean Daniélou, *Gospel Message and Hellenistic Culture*, vol. 2 of *A History of Early Christian Doctrine before the Council of Nicaea* (Philadelphia, 1973), 437.
22. Origen, *Against Celsus* 4.92–93 (translation in Henry Chadwick, *Origen: Contra Celsum* [Cambridge, 1953], 257–258).
23. See Clement of Alexandria, *Paedagogus* 3.7; Eusebius, *Preparation for the Gospel* 2.1.33–50.
24. See the fascinating erotic dream handbook in *P. Carlsberg XIII* in Aksel Volten, *Demotische Traumdeutung* (Copenhagen, 1942), 84–87.
25. L. Keimer, "L'horreur des Égyptiens pour les démons du désert," *Bulletin de l'Institut d'Égypte* 26 (1944): 135–147; Sydney Aufrère, "L'Égypte traditionnelle, ses démons vus par les premiers chrétiens," in Marguerite Rassart-Deberg, ed., *Études Coptes V* (Paris, 1988), 63–92; David Frankfurter, "The Binding of Antelopes: A Coptic Frieze and Its Egyptian Religious Context," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 63 (2004): 97–109.
26. Abraham J. Malherbe, "The Beasts at Ephesus," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 87 (1968): 71–80.
27. David Brakke, *Athanasius and Asceticism* (1995; repr., Baltimore, 1998), 147–150.
28. Athanasius, *Against the Arians* 3.57.
29. Compare Porphyry, *Life of Pythagoras* 35.
30. Alvarez, "Demon Stories," 115–117. On Shenoute's identification of Pan with Min, see Stephen Emmel, "Ithyphallic Gods and Undetected Ligatures: Pan Is not 'Ours,' He Is Min (Rectification of a Misreading in a Work of Shenute)," *Göttinger Miszellen* 141 (1994): 43–46. In general, see the articles on Pan and Min in *Ausführliches Lexikon der griechischen und römischen Mythologie* (1884–1937), 2.2:2976–82; 3.1:1372–76; and Eugene Romanosky, "Min," in Donald B. Redford, ed., *Oxford Dictionary of Ancient Egypt* (Oxford, 2001), 2:413–415.

31. Antony's encounter with the mother of a demoniac child (VA 71) draws on Matt. 15:21–28 and its parallels. The healing anecdote in chap. 58 alludes to Mark 5:25–34 and its parallels: see David Brakke, "Outside the Places, Within the Truth': Athanasius of Alexandria and the Localization of the Holy," in David Frankfurter, ed., *Pilgrimage and Holy Space in Late Antique Egypt* (Leiden, 1998), 445–481, at 459–460.
32. VA 78.4, 79.5–6, 80.3.
33. Françoise Frazier, "L'Antoine d'Athanase: À propos des chapitres 83–88 de la Vita," *Vigiliae Christianae* 52 (1998): 227–256.
34. Peter Brown, "The Rise and Function of the Holy Man in Late Antiquity," in his *Society and the Holy in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley, Calif., 1982), 103–152; idem, *Authority and the Sacred: Aspects of the Christianisation of the Roman World* (Cambridge, 1995), 57–78.
35. Samuel Rubenson, "Philosophy and Simplicity: The Problem of Classical Education in Early Christian Biography," in Thomas Hägg and Philip Rousseau, eds., *Greek Biography and Panegyric in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley, Calif., 2000), 110–139, at 115.
36. Compare Bouyer, *La vie de s. Antoine*, 122.
37. Andrew Louth, "St Athanasius and the Greek Life of Antony," *Journal of Theological Studies*, n.s. 39 (1988): 504–509, at 507.
38. VA 16.3, 17.1, 18.1, 19.1, 20.1.
39. Michel René Barnes, "Galen and Antony: Anger and Disclosure," *Studia Patristica* 30 (1997): 136–143, at 140.
40. Athanasius, *Against the Nations* 2–4; *Against the Arians* 2.69; 3.33–34, 57.
41. Barnes, "Galen and Antony," 140.
42. Olivier Munnich, "Les démons d'Antoine dans la Vie d'Antoine," in Philippe Walter, ed., *Saint Antoine entre mythe et légende* (Grenoble, 1996), 95–110, at 100–103.
43. A. A. Long, *Epictetus: A Stoic and Socratic Guide to Life* (Oxford, 2002), 214.
44. Epictetus, *Diatribes* 2.18.24–25, 27; 3.12.15.
45. Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis* 2.20.110.1–3.
46. Ibid., 2.20.111.2–4.
47. Compare Origen, *Against Celsus* 4.92.
48. Antony, *Letters* 6.27–40.
49. See Samuel Rubenson, "Origen in the Egyptian Monastic Tradition of the Fourth Century," in W. A. Bienert and U. Kühneweg, eds., *Origeniana Septima: Origenes in den Auseinandersetzungen des 4. Jahrhunderts* (Louvain, 1999), 319–337, at 322–323. Rubenson sees similarity between VA 20 and the *Letters*. Writing long before Rubenson's work, Bouyer does not consider the *Letters* as a means of discerning Antonian and Athanasian strands in the discourse (*La vie de s. Antoine*, 119–122).

50. David Frankfurter, *Religion in Roman Egypt: Assimilation and Resistance* (Princeton, 1998), 145–197.
51. *Ant.* 5.6, 6.16.
52. Frankfurter, *Religion in Roman Egypt*, 188.
53. Brakke, *Athanasius and Asceticism*, 250–252.
54. Origen adduced Judas as proof that “we ‘give a place to the devil’ (Eph. 4:27) or to ‘the authoritative spirit which ascends against’ (Eccl. 10:4) when our governing faculty is not filled with sacred lessons or the saving faith and superior thoughts and those things which counsel us to excellence” (*Commentary on Ephesians* frag. 20, quoted by Richard A. Layton, *Didymus the Blind and His Circle in Late-Antique Alexandria: Virtue and Narrative in Biblical Scholarship* [Urbana, Ill., 2004], 130).
55. In addition to the quotations and allusions to Job already mentioned, the desert monastic community’s lack of “complaint about a tax collector” draws on Job 3:18 and 39:7 (VA 44.4), and Antony comforts his disciples during the turmoil of the Arian controversy by paraphrasing Job 5:18 (VA 82.11).
56. Antony, *Letters* 3.5–6.
57. Ammonas, *Letters* 7.1, 9.1, 11.6.
58. Danger of *oligōrein*: VA 18.1, 87.4; compare 56.2. For 1 Cor. 15:31 vs. *oligōrein*: VA 19.2, 89.4.
59. For much of this paragraph, I am indebted to Layton, *Didymus the Blind*, 56–84. On the date of the commentary, see *ibid.*, 6.
60. See especially *ibid.*, 65–69.

3. The Gnostic

1. Augustine, *Confessions* 8.8.19. John 17:3: KG 4.42.
2. On Evagrius’s demonology, see especially Antoine Guillaumont and Claire Guillaumont, “Démon: III. Dans la plus ancienne littérature monastique,” *Dictionnaire de spiritualité ascétique et mystique: Doctrine et histoire* 3 (1957): 189–212, at 196–205. Two of the best entrances into Evagrius’s writings and thought are Evagrius of Pontus, *The Greek Ascetic Corpus*, translated with introduction and commentary by Robert E. Sinkewicz (Oxford, 2003), and William Harmless, SJ, *Desert Christians: An Introduction to the Literature of Early Monasticism* (New York, 2004), 311–371.
3. *Praktikos* 89, epil.
4. See, for example, Philip Rousseau, *Basil of Caesarea* (Berkeley, Calif., 1994), esp. 76–82.
5. *Praktikos* 89.
6. *LH* 38.1–9.

7. *Praktikos* epil.
8. Gabriel Bunge, “Évagre le Pontique et les deux Macaire,” *Irénikon* 56 (1983): 215–227, 323–360; on Macarius the Alexandrian, see pp. 323–332.
9. Samuel Rubenson, “Evagrius Pontikos und die Theologie der Wüste,” in Hanns Christof Brennecke et al., eds., *Logos: Festschrift für Luise Abramowski zum 8. Juli 1993* (Berlin, 1993), 384–401.
10. E. Amélineau, ed., *De Historia Lausiaca* (Paris, 1887), 114–115; Columba Stewart, “Evagrius Ponticus on Monastic Pedagogy,” in John Behr, Andrew Louth, and Dimitri Conomos, eds., *Abba: The Tradition of Orthodoxy in the West; Festschrift for Bishop Kallistos (Ware) of Diokleia* (Crestwood, N.Y., 2003), 241–271.
11. Robin Darling Young, “Evagrius the Iconographer: Monastic Pedagogy in the *Gnostikos*,” *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 9 (2001): 53–72.
12. *Praktikos* 1–3, *Thoughts* 35.
13. *Praktikos* 86, 89.
14. *Ibid.*, 89.
15. For an example of the demons inciting people to the vices, see Porphyry, *On Abstinence from Animal Food* 2.39–40.
16. *Praktikos* 6.
17. From among a large number of works, see especially Richard Sorabji, *Emotion and Peace of Mind: From Stoic Agitation to Christian Temptation* (Oxford, 2000).
18. Richard A. Layton, *Didymus the Blind and His Circle in Late-Antique Alexandria: Virtue and Narrative in Biblical Scholarship* (Urbana, Ill., 2004), 114–127. In the text I refer to the Septuagint Greek version of the Hebrew Bible using the abbreviation LXX.
19. Didymus the Blind, *Commentary on Ecclesiastes* 294.8–20, translated and quoted in Layton, *Didymus the Blind*, 128–129.
20. Origen, *On First Principles* 3.2.4.
21. *Ibid.*, 3.2.2.
22. On Origen’s role, see the conflicting views of Sorabji, *Emotions and Peace of Mind*, 346–349, and Layton, *Didymus the Blind*, 117–119.
23. *Praktikos* 6, 43; *Thoughts* 1.
24. SC 171:68–84.
25. *The Secret Book according to John* II 18:13–31.
26. Origen, *Homilies on Joshua* 15.5–6.
27. *Testament of Reuben* 2–3.
28. Teresa Shaw, *The Burden of the Flesh: Fasting and Sexuality in Early Christianity* (Minneapolis, 1998), esp. 139–158 on Evagrius.
29. *Praktikos* 7, 40; *Ant.* 1; *Eight Spirits* 1–3; *Thoughts* 1, 30, 35.
30. *Praktikos* 8, 51; *Ant.* 2; *Eight Spirits* 4–6; *Thoughts* 16, 27.

31. *Ant.* 2; *Praktikos* 58.
32. *Praktikos* 17, 51; *Ant.* 2; *Eight Spirits* 4–6; *Thoughts* 16.
33. Jeremy Driscoll, “Love of Money’ in Evagrius Ponticus,” *Studia Monastica* 43 (2001): 21–30.
34. James E. Goehring, *Ascetics, Society, and the Desert: Studies in Early Egyptian Monasticism* (Harrisburg, Penn., 1999), 39–52; Mission suisse d’archéologie copte de l’Université de Genève sous la direction de Rodolphe Kasser, *Le site monastique des Kellia (Basse-Égypte): Recherches des années 1981–83* (Louvain, 1984), 22–23; Ewa Wipszycka, *Études sur la christianisme dans l’Égypte de l’antiquité tardive* (Rome, 1996), 337–362.
35. *Praktikos* 9; *Ant.* 3; *Eight Spirits* 7–8.
36. *Ant.* 3.35, 42, 50, 54, 56.
37. *Thoughts* 21.
38. “These last lines could have been written by Trollope” (Sorabji, *Emotions and Peace of Mind*, 363).
39. *Praktikos* 11; *Eight Spirits* 9–10; *Thoughts* 5. The custom of driving away dogs during prayer is otherwise unknown to the editors of *Thoughts* (SC 438:169n6).
40. *Ant.* 5; *Praktikos* 21, 24, 26; *Eight Spirits* 10.
41. *Praktikos* 10, 19; *Eight Spirits* 11–12; *Thoughts* 1, 12, 36; *Scholia on Proverbs* 313, 328.
42. *Ant.* 4.
43. *Ant.* 4.47; VA 6.4.
44. Exod. 15:9: *Ant.* 4.7, VA 24.3. 2 Kings 6:17: *Ant.* 4.27, VA 34.3. Ps. 19:8–9: *Ant.* 4.32, VA 39.3. Ps. 26:3: *Ant.* 4.34, VA 9.3. Job 1:10–11: *Ant.* 4.51, VA 29.3. Job 2:4–5: *Ant.* 4.52, VA 29.1. Matt. 8:30–32: *Ant.* 4.66, VA 29.5. Rom. 8:18: *Ant.* 4.70, VA 17.1.
45. *Praktikos* 12; *Eight Spirits* 13–14; *Ant.* 6.
46. Daniel Caner, *Wandering, Begging Monks: Spiritual Authority and the Promotion of Monasticism in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley, Calif., 2002), 19–49.
47. See Jeremy Driscoll, “Listlessness in *The Mirror for Monks* of Evagrius Ponticus,” *Cistercian Studies* 24 (1989): 206–214; idem, *Evagrius Ponticus: Ad Monachos* (New York, 2003), 265–273.
48. *Scholia on the Psalms* 139.3, translated by Driscoll, *Ad Monachos*, 272–273.
49. *Praktikos* 12, 27–29; *Virgin* 39; *Monks* 54–56; *Exhortations to Monks* 1.5; *Foundations of the Monastic Life* 9. For the evidence that Macarius the Egyptian is the “holy teacher” who taught Evagrius to be prepared to die daily, see Antoine Guillaumont and Claire Guillaumont in SC 171:566–568.
50. *Praktikos* 31; *Ant.* 7.34; *Thoughts* 15, 28.
51. *Praktikos* 13; *Ant.* 7; *Thoughts* 3, 20, 21, 28.
52. *Ant.* 7.

53. *Praktikos* 30, 32, 58; *Eight Spirits* 16; *Thoughts* 14.
54. *Praktikos* 14, 46; *Ant.* 8; *Eight Spirits* 17–19; *Thoughts* 1, 21, 23.
55. *Praktikos* 63–67; *Thoughts* 20, 29.
56. David Frankfurter, “An Architecture for Chaos: The Nature and Function of Demonology,” chap. 2 of *Evil Incarnate: Rumors of Demonic Conspiracy and Satanic Abuse in History* (Princeton, 2006); Frankfurter is writing, however, of the conversion of local spirits into demonologies by priestly elites.
57. *Ant.* 6.23.
58. *Prayer* 12–27; *Thoughts* 5, 14–15.
59. *Praktikos* 46, 51; *Ant.* 8.
60. *Thoughts* 9, 19.
61. For this and the following paragraph, see Columba Stewart, “Imageless Prayer and the Theological Vision of Evagrius Ponticus,” *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 9 (2001): 173–204, at 186–189, with important references to Aristotle.
62. *Thoughts* 2, 4, 8, 7, 22, 24, 25, 32, 36, 41.
63. Stewart, “Imageless Prayer,” 200.
64. *Thoughts* 39, 41; *Reflections* 23; *Prayer* 67–70, 72–73, 91–99, 106–107, 111.
65. KG 2.4, 3.36.
66. KG 1.10, 22, 53; 2.52; 3.34; 5.18, 78; 4.59; 6.25.
67. *Monks* 24; KG 4.35; *Thoughts* 37.
68. KG 1.68, 3.4, 6.69.
69. KG 3.50; 5.9, 11; 6.2, 57.
70. KG 1.40, 6.27; *Letter to Melania* 6.
71. *Ant.* pref.; *To Eulogios* 2.2, 4.4, 31.33.
72. *Ant.* pref.
73. *Letters* 56.4.

4. The Vigilant Brother

1. *SBo* 126–127 (PK 1:183–184). I rely on the organization, and use the translations, of Pachomian sources in Veilleux, *Pachomian Koinonia* (PK). I also adopt Veilleux’s reference system, using *SBo* to indicate the primary Bohairic Coptic *Life of Pachomius*, supplemented by fragmentary Sahidic *Lives*; I use *VP* to refer to the primary Greek *Life*. Eph. 5:14: Theodore, *Instruction* 3.26, 29, 37 (PK 3:108–109, 114–115).
2. James Goehring, *Ascetics, Society, and the Desert: Studies in Early Egyptian Monasticism* (Harrisburg, Penn., 1999), 28.
3. *Ibid.*, 31, but evidence suggests that some Melitian monasteries were affiliated in a relationship of subordination to a primary monastery at about the same time (*ibid.*, 187–195).

4. Philip Rousseau, *Pachomius: The Making of a Community in Fourth-Century Egypt* (Berkeley, Calif., 1985), 57–76.
5. Goehring, *Ascetics, Society, and the Desert*, 137–161.
6. VP 112 (PK 1:375–377).
7. VP 74 (PK 1:348); SBo 42, 55 (PK 1:66, 74); Paral. 28–31 (PK 2:53–55).
8. Rousseau, *Pachomius*, 140.
9. SBo 106, 108 (PK 1:149–150, 159–160).
10. False appearance: SBo 113; VP 87 (PK 1:165–166, 356). True visions: SBo 73, 76; VP 88 (PK 1:94–97, 99–100, 357–378). See Alexander Golitzin, “The Demons Suggest an Illusion of God’s Glory in a Form’: Controversy over the Divine Body in Some Late Fourth, Early Fifth Century Monastic Literature,” *Studia Monastica* 44 (2002): 13–43, at 21–23.
11. These two aspects of Pachomius’s gifts are precisely articulated in the Second Sahidic *Life* 3 (PK 1:445).
12. SBo 109 (PK 1:161–162).
13. VP 43; compare SBo 43 (PK 1:328, 67–68).
14. SBo 110 (PK 1:162–163).
15. VP 99 (PK 1:366).
16. SBo 4–6; compare VP 3 (PK 1:25–26, 299).
17. SBo 10; compare VP 6 (PK 1:32–33).
18. SBo 14; compare VP 8 (PK 1:35–38).
19. SBo 21; VP 17–22 (PK 1:44–45, 308–311).
20. Instr. 1.9–11 (PK 3:14–16).
21. David Brakke, *Athanasius and Asceticism* (1995; repr., Baltimore, 1998), 87–90.
22. Instr. 1.26 (PK 3:24–25).
23. Pachomius, *Fragment* 1.2; Theodore, *Instruction* 3.26, 29, 37; *Test.* 6 (PK 3:85, 108–109, 114–115, 174).
24. *Praec.* 87–88 (PK 2:160–161). Sick monks normally slept on beds, unless they insisted on staying in their reclining seats (VP 79 [PK 1:351–352]), as Pachomius did (Paral. 30 [PK 2:54–55]).
25. LH 32.3.
26. VP 60 (PK 1:339), although this story takes place in a boat and does not mention the seats. Rousseau sees the seats not as antidemonic, but as meant “to achieve a balanced alternation between rest and prayer” and “to avoid undue weariness the following day” (*Pachomius*, 120–121).
27. VP 14 (PK 1:306–307).
28. Instr. 1.55 (PK 3:38); SBo 107 (PK 1:153); First Sahidic *Life* 1 (PK 1:444); SBo 68; compare VP 76 (PK 1:89–91).
29. SBo 141, 186, 209; compare VP 118 (PK 1:197–198, 224–225, 263–264).
30. SBo 67 (PK 1:88–89).
31. VP 74–75 (PK 1:348, emphasis added).

32. Compare Rousseau, *Pachomius*, 139–140.
33. *Draguet Fragment* 1.6 (PK 2:112–113; R. Draguet, “Un morceau grec inédit des Vies de Pachôme apparié à un texte d’Évagre en partie inconnu,” *Le Muséon* 70 [1957]: 267–306, at 272).
34. *Test.* 3 (PK 3:172).
35. VP 42; compare SBo 42 (PK 1:326–327); SBo 64; compare VP 69 (PK 1:84–86).
36. Ammon, *Letters* 24 (PK 2:93–94).
37. Goehring calls the Mousaios anecdote’s marking of the monastery wall as the place of vulnerability to demonic possession “a literary device and not an actual Pachomian position” (*Letter of Ammon*, 270). Citing such stories as SBo 64 and 76, Fidelis Ruppert argued that the monastery did not provide protection from demons, in contrast to earlier scholars who had seen such protection as a point of continuity between the temple in traditional Egyptian religion and the Christian monastery (Ruppert, *Das pachomianische Mönchtum und die Anfänge klösterlichen Gehorsams* [Münsterschwarzach, 1971], 66–69). On Pachomius and the wall in general, see Hjalmar Trop, “Murs d’enceinte des monastères coptes primitifs et couvents-forteresses,” *Mélanges d’archéologie et d’histoire* 76 (1964): 173–200, at 180–188.
38. SBo 67, 98; compare VP 72 (PK 1:87–88, 135–136).
39. SBo 141–142; VP 127, 131 (PK 1:197–198, 387, 390–391).
40. SBo 94 (PK 1:124–128).
41. See, for example, *Paral.* 12 (PK 2:33–34), although phrased here within a distinction between the active and contemplative lives that is unusual within Pachomian sources, and SBo 186: “fear of the Lord” (PK 1:224–225).
42. VP 56, 73 (PK 1:336–337, 348, altered). On “power,” see Rousseau, *Pachomius*, 138.
43. SBo 107, 111–112, 116 (PK 1:156–159, 163–165, 170–171; on the complicated text see PK 1:285).
44. SBo 195 (PK 1:242).
45. Armand Veilleux, *La liturgie dans le cénobitisme pachômien au quatrième siècle* (Rome, 1968), 262–275.
46. *Praec.* 49, 139–142 (PK 2:152–153, 166). On *meditatio*, recitation of texts, see Rousseau, *Pachomius*, 80–81.
47. SBo 186, 209; *Instr.* 1.9 (PK 1:224–225, 264; 3:14).
48. On scripture in Horsiesios, *Letters* 4, see Goehring, *Ascetics, Society, and the Desert*, 224–226.
49. VP 96; Horsiesios, *Instruction* 6.2 (PK 1:363–364, 3:144).
50. Rousseau calls the *praepositus*, or housemaster, “the most important man in [a Pachomian monk’s] life” (*Pachomius*, 79; compare pp. 81–85 on the duties of the *praepositi*). Bentley Layton provides an outstanding analysis of

the centrality of such leaders in the White Monastery in “Social Structure and Food Consumption in an Early Christian Monastery: The Evidence of Shenoute’s *Canons* and the White Monastery Federation A.D. 385–465,” *Le Muséon* 115 (2002): 25–55, the conclusions of which apply, *mutatis mutandis*, to the Pachomian community.

51. Goehring, *Letter of Ammon*, 108–109, 236–237; Ammon, *Letter* 3, 16–17, 20, 22 (PK 2:72–74, 82–84, 88–91).
52. VP 135 (PK 1:393).
53. Pachomius: VP 83 (PK 1:354). Theodore: SBo 195 (PK 1:242–243); Ammon, *Letter* 24 (PK 2:93–94).
54. VP 96 (PK 1:363).
55. SBo 191; compare VP 132 (PK 1:233–234).
56. PK 1:293.
57. VP 22 (PK 1:311). See the nuanced analysis of Rousseau, *Pachomius*, 140–146.
58. SBo 105; *Instr.* 1.59 (PK 1:146, 3:40–41).
59. Tenth Sahidic *Life* 3 (PK 1:452).
60. *Paral.* 37–41 (PK 2:60–66; see Veilleux’s note on 2:70).
61. VP 85; Tenth Sahidic *Life* 7 (PK 1:355–356, 456–457).
62. *Paral.* 8–11 (PK 2:29–33).

5. The Prophet

1. Shenoute, A26 (Heike Behlmer, *Schenute von Atripe: “De iudicio”* [Turin, 1996], 91–92; hereafter cited as Behlmer, *De iudicio*). Shenoute’s works lack a standard modern edition for the reasons that I discuss below. I cite Shenoute’s works by the titles (incipits) established by Stephen Emmel, *Shenoute’s Literary Corpus* (Louvain, 2004); when a work’s title is unknown, Emmel refers to it with an A (for *acephalous*—lacking a heading) and a number, as in this case. When the Coptic text has been published, I cite the modern publication in which the Coptic text may be found, and I omit the manuscript page numbers, which are meaningful only to experts. In the few cases when the Coptic text has not been published, I work from my own transcription or from one that Emmel has shared with me, and I cite the manuscript page numbers. All translations are my own, with the exceptions noted.

Almost every element in my description of Gesios and Shenoute in the temple—names, dates, locations, and so forth—is a matter of uncertainty. See Heike Behlmer, “Historical Evidence from Shenoute’s *De extremo iudicio*,” in G. M. Zaccane and T. R. di Netro, eds., *Sesto Congresso Internazionale di Egittologia: Atti* (Turin, 1993), 2:11–19; and Stephen Emmel,

- “Shenoute of Atripe and the Destruction of Temples in Egypt,” in Johannes Hahn, Stephen Emmel, and Ulrich Gotter, eds., *From Temple to Church: Destruction and Renewal of Local Cultic Topography in Late Antiquity* (Leiden, in press). The phrase *to preserve the ancient order of the cosmos* comes from Behlmer, “Historical Evidence,” 15. Joel 3:10: *I See Your Eagerness* (Émile Amélineau, *Oeuvres de Shenoudi: Texte copte et traduction française* [Paris, 1907–1914], 2:68).
2. A26 (Behlmer, *De iudicio*, 131–132).
 3. This paragraph follows Stephen Emmel, “Shenoute the Monk: The Early Monastic Career of Shenoute the Archimandrite,” in Maciej Bielawski and Daniël Hombergen, eds., *Il monachesimo tra eredità e aperture: Atti del simposio “Testi e temi nella tradizione del monachesimo cristiano” per il 50° anniversario dell’istituto monastico di Sant’Anselmo, Roma, 28 maggio–1e giugno 2002* (Rome, 2004), 151–174.
 4. Heike Behlmer, “Visitors to Shenoute’s Monastery,” in David Frankfurter, ed., *Pilgrimage and Holy Space in Late Antique Egypt* (Leiden, 1998), 341–371.
 5. Emmel, *Shenoute’s Literary Corpus*.
 6. The key works are *The Lord Thundered; A Beloved Asked Me Years Ago; Because of You Too, O Prince of Evil*; and *As We Began to Preach*—all described in Emmel, *Shenoute’s Literary Corpus*, 614–621. Unfortunately, only a short fragment from the promisingly titled *Since It is Necessary to Pursue the Devil* has been identified (Emmel, *Shenoute’s Literary Corpus*, 619–620). Along with *In the Night*, these works form the basis for the study of Shenoute’s demonology in Jacques van der Vliet, “Chenouté et les démons,” in Marguerite Rassart-Debergh and Julien Ries, eds., *Actes du IVe congrès copte: Louvain-la-Neuve, 5–10 septembre 1988* (Louvain, 1992), 2:41–49.
 7. *I See Your Eagerness* (Amélineau, *Oeuvres*, 2:54–55).
 8. *God Is Blessed* (É. Chassinat, *Le quatrième livre des entretiens et épîtres de Shenouti* [Cairo, 1911], 181).
 9. Janet Timbie, “Dualism and the Concept of Orthodoxy in the Thought of the Monks of Upper Egypt” (Ph.D. diss., Univ. of Pennsylvania, 1979), 126–132; C. E. Hammock, “Dualism and the Religious Thought of Shenoute of Atripe,” *Coptic Church Review* 21 (2000): 119–131.
 10. A26 (Behlmer, *De iudicio*, 32–33). My restoration of “with Jesus” is hypothetical.
 11. Canon 1 (Emmel, “Shenoute the Monk,” 160). My account of these events depends on Emmel, “Shenoute the Monk.” See also Emmel, *Shenoute’s Literary Corpus*, 558–562, and Caroline T. Schroeder, “Disciplining the Monastic Body: Asceticism, Ideology, and Gender in the Egyptian Monastery of Shenoute of Atripe” (Ph.D. diss., Duke University, 2002), 42–85.

12. On “unnatural acts,” see Schroeder, “Disciplining the Monastic Body,” 199–216, and my briefer discussions below and in Chapter 8.
13. Shenoute was such a vocal critic of simony (Behlmer, “Visitors to Shenoute’s Monastery,” 351–353) that he had to explain that he was “not disparaging the ranks and the offices” themselves, only their abusers (A26 [Behlmer, *De iudicio*, 108]).
14. *Canon 1* (CSCO 42:199).
15. Emmel, “Shenoute the Monk,” 169, quoting and citing *Canon 1*.
16. Emmel describes Shenoute’s “unassailable self-understanding as a prophet in the mold of the great prophets of the Old Testament” (“Shenoute the Monk,” 172). See also Rebecca Krawiec, *Shenoute and the Women of the White Monastery: Egyptian Monasticism in Late Antiquity* (New York, 2002), 55–66; Caroline T. Schroeder, “Prophecy and *Porneia* in Shenoute’s Letters,” paper delivered at the conference Living for Eternity: Monasticism in Egypt, University of Minnesota, March 2003.
17. *Canon 1* (Emmel, “Shenoute the Monk,” 162).
18. Emmel, “Shenoute the Monk,” esp. 172–173.
19. Peter Brown, “The Rise and Function of the Holy Man in Late Antiquity,” in his *Society and the Holy in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley, Calif., 1982), 103–152.
20. *I See Your Eagerness, The Lord Thundered* (Amélineau, *Oeuvres*, 2:69–70, 380); *A1 GG 117* (unpublished, FR-BN Copte 130^f f.101r).
21. For the details of this campaign, see Stephen Emmel, “From the Other Side of the Nile: Shenute and Panopolis,” in A. Egberts, B. P. Muhs, and J. van der Vliet, eds., *Perspectives on Panopolis: An Egyptian Town from Alexander the Great to the Arab Conquest; Acts of an International Symposium Held in Leiden on 16, 17, and 18 December 1998* (Leiden, 2002), 95–113; Emmel, “Shenoute of Atripe.”
22. *Not because a Fox Barks* (Chassinat, *Quatrième livre*, 40, 48), alluding to Jer. 36:20–26; *God Is Blessed* (Chassinat, *Quatrième livre*, 188–189).
23. *Because of You Too, O Prince of Evil* (P. du Bourguet, “Diatribes de Chenouté contre le démon,” *Bulletin de la société d’archéologie copte* 16 [1961–1962]: 17–72, at 24–25).
24. *A Beloved Asked Me Years Ago* (Frederik Wisse, “The Naples Fragments of Shenoute’s ‘De certamine contra diabolum,’” *Oriens Christianus* 75 [1991]: 123–140, at 132); compare Wisse, “Naples Fragment,” 131; J. ter Vrugt-Lentz, “Geister (Dämonen): B. II. Vorhellenistisches Griechenland,” *Reallexicon für Antike und Christentum* 9 (1976): 598–615, at 600–601; Plato, *Cratylus* 398b.
25. *Because of You Too, O Prince of Evil* (du Bourguet, “Diatribes,” 33–34); *Since It Is Necessary to Pursue the Devil* (Amélineau, *Oeuvres*, 2:389); *The Lord Thundered* (Amélineau, *Oeuvres*, 2:373–374); *As We Began to Preach* (Chassinat,

- Quatrième livre*, 72, 76); *God Is Blessed* (Chassinat, *Quatrième livre*, 180); *AI* GG 123–124 (unpublished, FR-BN Copte 130⁺ f.104).
26. This notion lies “at the heart of his demonology” (van der Vliet, “Chenouté et les démons,” 48).
 27. *As We Began to Preach* (Chassinat, *Quatrième livre*, 70, 75); *Since It Is Necessary to Pursue to Devil* (Amélineau, *Oeuvres*, 2:389); *AI* (Amélineau, *Oeuvres*, 2:253); *A Beloved Asked Me Years Ago* (Wisse, “Naples Fragments,” 134; Klaus Koschorke, Stefan Timm, and Frederik Wisse, “Schenute: De certamine contra diabolum,” *Oriens Christianus* 59 [1975]: 60–77, at 71).
 28. *As We Began to Preach* (Chassinat, *Quatrième livre*, 70); *A Beloved Asked Me Years Ago* (Wisse, “Naples Fragments,” 133; Bentley Layton, “Two Unpublished Shenute Fragments Against Kronos: Layton, *Brit. Lib.*, Nos. 90 and 91,” *Journal of Coptic Studies* 2 [1992]: 117–138, at 129–130); *AI* (Dwight W. Young, *Coptic Manuscripts from the White Monastery: Works of Shenute* [Vienna, 1993], 1:155–156).
 29. See note 50, this chapter, for instances of *energeia* and its cognate verb *energein*.
 30. *A Beloved Asked Me Years Ago* (Koschorke et al., “Schenute,” 71); “move” is *kim*, the Coptic equivalent of *energein*. The analogy appears also in *Because of You Too, O Prince of Evil* (du Bourguet, “Diatribes,” 33), where the king also has taken away the soldier’s “fighting gear” because the soldier “fought against the king.” See also an unidentified work: Christians are subjects of “a righteous king” who go out to fight their enemies and “do not return before they have wiped out Satan and all his evil works” (Amélineau, *Oeuvres*, 1:291–292).
 31. Harold Seymour Jaye, “A Homily of Shenoute of Atripe on Human Will and the Devil: Translation, Commentary, and Literary Analysis” (Ph.D. diss., Brandeis University, 1980), 102–103; David Frankfurter, “The Binding of Antelopes: A Coptic Frieze and Its Egyptian Religious Context,” *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 63 (2004): 97–109.
 32. *God Is Blessed* (Chassinat, *Quatrième livre*, 181–182); *Canon 1* (CSCO 42:195); *Why, O Lord (Canon 4)* (CSCO 42:179), where Shenoute interpolates terms such as *diabolical* and *satanic* into the lists of animals in Ps. 90:13; *Because of You Too, O Prince of Evil* (du Bourguet, “Diatribes,” 28–30); *AI* (Young, *Coptic Manuscripts*, 150–151); *I Myself Have Seen* (CSCO 42:209–210).
 33. David Frankfurter, *Elijah in Upper Egypt: The Apocalypse of Elijah and Early Egyptian Christianity* (Minneapolis, 1993), 138–139.
 34. *Because of You Too, O Prince of Evil* (du Bourguet, “Diatribes,” 30–32); *AI* (Amélineau, *Oeuvres*, 2:252–254); *Another Evil That Has Come Forth* (H. Guérin, “Sermons inédits de Senouti [Introduction, texte, traduction]:

- Thèse soutenue à l'École du Louvre," *Revue égyptologique* 10 [1902]: 148–164; 11[1904]: 15–34, at 11:18).
35. *You, O Lord* (Amélineau, *Oeuvres*, 1:260).
 36. A26 (Behlmer, *De iudicio*, 161–162), of interest also simply for its account of ancient snakebite treatment.
 37. *Canon 2* (Young, *Coptic Manuscripts*, 105–106; translated in Krawiec, *Shenoute and the Women*, 198n199).
 38. *Because of You Too, O Prince of Evil* (du Bourguet, "Diatribes," 24); *A1* (Amélineau, *Oeuvres*, 2:253); *You, O Lord* (Amélineau, *Oeuvres*, 1.249); *I Myself Have Seen* (CSCO 42:208); *Another Evil That Has Come Forth* (Guérin, "Sermons inédits," 18).
 39. "Satan, who fell down from heaven like lightning, is considered by those who sin to be strong although he is weak. For when he has power, which he has in those who work for him among them, he makes great evils happen among them, especially the pagans and the heretics" (*The Lord Thundered* [CSCO 42:85]).
 40. *A1* (Amélineau, *Oeuvres*, 2:252–254); *The Lord Thundered* (Amélineau, *Oeuvres*, 1:365, 2:138); *This Great House* (Amélineau, *Oeuvres*, 2:7, 9, 20); *I Myself Have Seen* (CSCO 42:208); A26 (Behlmer, *De iudicio*, 146–147); *You, O Lord* (Amélineau, *Oeuvres*, 1:260–261); *Another Evil That Has Come Forth* (Guérin, "Sermons inédits," 18); *Canon 2* (CSCO 157:119), a work wrongly attributed to Besa (Emmel, *Shenoute's Literary Corpus*, 938); *Then I Am Not Obligated* (CSCO 73:43); *As We Began to Preach* (Chassinat, *Quatrième livre*, 65–66); *Because of You Too, O Prince of Evil* (du Bourguet, "Diatribes," 30).
 41. *The Lord Thundered* (Amélineau, *Oeuvres*, 2:139, 368, 373); A26 (Behlmer, *De iudicio*, 132); *Not because a Fox Barks* (Chassinat, *Quatrième livre*, 39); *I Am Amazed* (Tito Orlandi, *Shenute: Contra Origenistas* [Rome, 1985], 32, 44); *Canon 2* (CSCO 157:119).
 42. On the monastic community as a family, see Krawiec, *Shenoute and the Women*, 136–144.
 43. On Shenoute's belief in the full embodiment of the incarnate Christ, see Schroeder, "Disciplining the Monastic Body," 266–278.
 44. On sin as disease running through the monastic body, see *ibid.*, esp. 146–154.
 45. *This Great House* (Amélineau, *Oeuvres*, 2:26, 31); *If Everyone Errs* (CSCO 73:19–20). On expulsion and Shenoute's defenses of it, see Krawiec, *Shenoute and the Women*, 62–63, 88–89, and Schroeder, "Disciplining the Monastic Body," 124–136.
 46. *God Is Blessed* (Chassinat, *Quatrième livre*, 201–202).
 47. VA. 24 (SC 400:200–202).
 48. *A Beloved Asked Me Years Ago* (Wisse, "Naples Fragments," 134–135).

49. *Why, O Lord* (CSCO 42:161); *I See Your Eagerness* (Amélineau, *Oeuvres*, 2:46); *I Am Amazed* (Orlandi, *Contra Origenistas*, 24, 56, 62); *As We Began to Preach* (Chassinat, *Quatrième livre*, 77).
50. Sometimes the Greek word (or its noun form, *energeia*) appears; other times it comes into Coptic as *kim e-* (Ariel Shisha-Halevy, "Two New Shenoute-Texts from the British Library," *Orientalia* 44 [1975]: 149–185, 469–484, at 479). See *I Am Amazed* (Orlandi, *Contra Origenistas*, 56); A6 (Shisha-Halevy, "Two New Shenoute-Texts," 166–167); *Because of You Too, O Prince of Evil* (du Bourguet, "Diatribes," 23); *Why, O Lord* (CSCO 42:125); Unidentified Work (Amélineau, *Oeuvres*, 1:287); *I Have Been Reading the Holy Gospels* (René-Georges Coquin, with Stephen Emmel, "Le traité de Šenoute 'Du salut de l'âme humaine,'" *Journal of Coptic Studies* 3 [2001]: 1–43, at 11); *As We Began to Preach* (Chassinat, *Quatrième livre*, 77).
51. *God Is Blessed* (Chassinat, *Quatrième livre*, 165); compare Matt. 24:43, Luke 12:39. See also *I See Your Eagerness* (Amélineau, *Oeuvres*, 2:63–66), discussed in Chapter 8.
52. Krawiec, *Shenoute and the Women*, 66–71.
53. *A Beloved Asked Me Years Ago* (Koschorke et al., "Schenute," 68–69) *Because of You Too, O Prince of Evil* (du Bourguet, "Diatribes," 36, 38); *He Who Sits upon His Throne* (Amélineau, *Oeuvres*, 2:307); A14 (Orlandi, *Contra Origenistas*, 16–18).
54. *Because of You Too, O Prince of Evil* (du Bourguet, "Diatribes," 26, 31), but see *A Beloved Asked Me Years Ago* (Koschorke et al., "Schenute," 70), where his appearance as "an angel of light" (2 Cor. 11:4) seems to deceive "the simple-minded," especially the pagans.
55. *A Beloved Asked Me Years Ago* (Koschorke et al., "Schenute," 70); *Because of You Too, O Prince of Evil* (du Bourguet, "Diatribes," 27, 31–32); *This Great House* (Amélineau, *Oeuvres*, 2:15).
56. *In the Night* (CSCO 42:37–41). All of the references in this paragraph and the next two are to this text, with the exceptions noted. See van der Vliet, "Chenouté et les démons," 44–47; idem, "Demons in Early Coptic Monasticism: Image and Reality," in H. Hondelink, ed., *Coptic Art and Culture* (Cairo, 1990), 135–155, at 152–154 ("one of the masterpieces of Coptic literature"). An annotation in one manuscript containing *Because of You Too, O Prince of Evil* connects it to Tybi 9, the date in the Coptic calendar on which Shenoute had the experience related in *In the Night* (van der Vliet, "Chenouté," 46–47).
57. *Life of Shenoute* 73 (David N. Bell, *Besa: The Life of Shenoute* [Kalamazoo, Mich., 1983], 63). For this story as "a fairy-tale re-telling of a rather more prosaic event," with references to the scholars who have argued this, see Bell, *Life of Shenoute*, 103–104.

58. van der Vliet, "Chenouté et les démons," 46; idem, "Demons," 154.
59. *Because of You Too, O Prince of Evil* (du Bourguet, "Diatribes," 26).
60. Ibid., 28–30; *I See Your Eagerness* (Amélineau, *Oeuvres*, 2:48–49); A18 (Amélineau, *Oeuvres*, 2:163–164); *The Idolatrous Pagans* (Amélineau, *Oeuvres*, 1:166).
61. See Timbie, "Dualism and the Concept of Orthodoxy," 126–32.
62. A26 (Behlmer, *De iudicio*, 34–35, 144–145, 150–151, 160, 163); A1 (Amélineau, *Oeuvres*, 2:255); *As We Began to Preach, God Is Blessed* (Chassinat, *Quatrième livre*, 64–65, 162).
63. Contrary to du Bourguet, "Diatribes," 20–21, who sees dependence on both the *Life of Antony* and, "in a certain measure," Evagrius.
64. A26 (Behlmer, *De iudicio*, 32); *Because of You Too, O Prince of Evil* (du Bourguet, "Diatribes," 36); *As We Began to Preach* (Chassinat, *Quatrième livre*, 63, 77); compare Canon 6 (Amélineau, *Oeuvres*, 1:151); *Truly, When I Think* (CSCO 73:24). On free will in Shenoute, see Johannes Leipoldt, *Schenute von Atripe und die Entstehung des national ägyptischen Christentums* (Leipzig, 1903), 78–79.
65. *As We Began to Preach* (Chassinat, *Quatrième livre*, 62–63). See Jaye, "Homily of Shenoute of Atripe."
66. *As We Began to Preach* (Chassinat, *Quatrième livre*, 79–80).
67. *Because of You Too, O Prince of Evil* (du Bourguet, "Diatribes," 23); *A Beloved Asked Me Years Ago* (Wisse, "Naples Fragments," 133, translation at 136); *As We Began to Preach* (Chassinat, *Quatrième livre*, 83).
68. *God Is Blessed* (Chassinat, *Quatrième livre*, 184).
69. See the lists of ascetic labors in table 4 of Bentley Layton, "Social Structure and Food Consumption in an Early Christian Monastery: The Evidence of Shenoute's *Canons* and the White Monastery Federation A.D. 385–465," *Le Muséon* 115 (2002): 25–55, at 48. Most effective means: *You, O Lord* (Amélineau, *Oeuvres*, 1:260).
70. *Truly, When I Think* (CSCO 73:23–24); Canon 1 (CSCO 42:199–200); Canon 4 (Dwight W. Young, "An Unplaced Fragment from Shenute's *Fourth Canon*," *Journal of Coptic Studies* 3 [2001]: 133–147, at 138); *Why, O Lord* (CSCO 42:179).
71. *Why, O Lord* (CSCO 42:158); Canon 2 (CSCO 157:121); Canon 4 (Young, *Coptic Manuscripts*, 94).
72. Layton, "Social Structure and Food Consumption," 51–52.
73. *Why, O Lord* (CSCO 42:123, 162–163; see also CSCO 42:175–176); *Then I Am Not Obligated* (CSCO 73:43).
74. A13 (Young, *Coptic Manuscripts*, 169–170; translation at p. 171, with one word altered); *Truly, When I Think* (CSCO 73:26); Canon 4 (Young, *Coptic Manuscripts*, 96); *As We Began to Preach, God Is Blessed* (Chassinat,

- Quatrième livre*, 63–64, 79, 160); *A Beloved Asked Me Years Ago* (Koschorke et al., “Schenute,” 68); Unidentified Work (Amélineau, *Oeuvres*, 1:292); *God Is Holy* (?) (W. E. Crum, *Catalogue of the Coptic Manuscripts in the British Museum* [London, 1905], no. 198); *Because of You Too, O Prince of Evil* (du Bourguet, “Diatribes,” 24).
75. Armand Veilleux, “Shenoute or the Pitfalls of Monasticism,” in Bell, *Life of Shenoute*, v–xv, at x–xi.
76. Layton, “Social Structure and Food Consumption,” 28.
77. A6 (Dwight W. Young, “A Monastic Invective against Egyptian Hieroglyphs” in Dwight W. Young, ed., *Studies Presented to Hans Jakob Polotsky* [Gloucester, Mass., 1981], 349–350, 352–353; Shisha-Halevy, “Two New Shenoute-Texts,” 153–168).

6. “The Holy and Great Fathers”

1. Douglas Burton-Christie (*The Word in the Desert: Scripture and the Quest for Holiness in Early Christian Monasticism* [New York, 1993], 93–94) more sharply distinguishes the *Sayings* from the two “histories” in this respect than I do. Sirach 8:9: *LH* prol. 4.
2. On literary strategies of “displacement” in the two histories, see Georgia Frank, *The Memory of the Eyes: Pilgrims to Living Saints in Christian Late Antiquity* (Berkeley, Calif., 2000), 49–69.
3. *Apoph. patr.* Arsenius 7.
4. For a study of the great variety of persons who visited a single monastery and their diverse motives, see Heike Behlmer, “Visitors to Shenoute’s Monastery,” in David Frankfurter, ed., *Pilgrimage and Holy Space in Late Antique Egypt* (Leiden, 1998), 341–371.
5. Frank, *Memory of the Eyes*, 4–5.
6. I have made my own translations from Festugière’s critical edition and I refer to the *History* (*HM*) parenthetically in the text.
7. Frank, *Memory of the Eyes*, 38–49.
8. In contrast, no demons try to thwart Paternuthius’s physical transport to paradise (*HM* 10.21–22).
9. Monk-exorcists: Or, Copres, Pityrion, and Paul the Simple: *HM* 2.6, 10.1, 15.1, 24.10.
10. Some monks “do not even know that there is another world on earth or that evil is a citizen in the cities” (*HM* prol. 6; compare *HM* prol. 11).
11. Georgia Frank, “Miracles, Monks, and Monuments: The *Historia Monachorum in Aegypto* as Pilgrims’ Tales,” in Frankfurter, *Pilgrimage and Holy Space*, 484–505, at 497.
12. On the “mystery” of the origins of the *Lausiaca History*, see Gabriel Bunge

- and Adalbert de Vogüé, *Quatre ermites égyptiens d'après les fragments coptes de l'Histoire lausiaque* (Bégrolles-en-Mauges, 1994), 17–80. I have made my own translations from Butler's edition, and I refer to the *Lausiac History* (LH) parenthetically in the text.
13. On the Evagrianism of LH, see R. Draguet, "L'Histoire Lausiaque': Une oeuvre écrite dans l'esprit d'Évagre," *Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique* 41 (1946): 321–364; 42 (1947): 5–49.
 14. Draguet, "Histoire Lausiaque," 41:325–327. Paphnutius, for instance, is *gnōstikōtatos* (LH 47.5).
 15. Jeremy Driscoll, "Evagrius and Paphnutius on the Causes for Abandonment by God," *Studia Monastica* 39 (1997): 259–286, esp. 261. On demons in the *Lausiac History*, see also Antoine Guillaumont and Claire Guillaumont, "Démon: III. Dans la plus ancienne littérature monastique," *Dictionnaire de spiritualité ascétique et mystique: Doctrine et histoire* 3 (1957): 189–212, at 206–208.
 16. Draguet, "Histoire Lausiaque," 41:344.
 17. See Elizabeth Ann Schechter, "The Desert in the Heart of the Church: The Domestication of Asceticism in the *Lausiac History*" (M.A. thesis, Indiana Univ., 1992).
 18. LH 23.5, 26.4; compare Robert T. Meyer, *Palladius: The Lausiac History* (New York, 1964), 82–83, 87. Other graphic (but not sexual) scenes include LH 11.4, 18.22.
 19. *Thoughts* 14, 21, 23; *Praktikos* 14.
 20. The modern editors of *Thoughts*, Géhin and the Guillaumonts, suggest that in *Thoughts* 23 Evagrius "seems to allude here to two monks of whom Palladius speaks in HL 25 and 26 [Valens and Heron] and whom he himself certainly knew" (SC 438:234n3).
 21. Alexander Golitzin, "'The Demons Suggest an Illusion of God's Glory in a Form': Controversy over the Divine Body in Some Late Fourth, Early Fifth Century Monastic Literature," *Studia Monastica* 44 (2002): 13–43, at 36–37.
 22. Evagrius, *Prayer* 72–73.
 23. *Thoughts* 23; *Praktikos* 13.
 24. David Brakke, "Canon Formation and Social Conflict in Fourth-Century Egypt: Athanasius of Alexandria's Thirty-Ninth *Festal Letter*," *Harvard Theological Review* 87 (1994): 395–419.
 25. *Thoughts* 15.
 26. Noted by Géhin and the Guillaumonts (SC 438:203n3).
 27. *Praktikos* 58.
 28. In addition to these examples from the Greek text, the Syriac fragments include Stephen and Eucarpios, whose stories are similar to those of Valens

- and Heron and are summarized in Driscoll, “Evagrius and Paphnutius,” 266–270.
29. Compare *Thoughts* 28.
 30. Here and in the discussion of Evagrius below, I use the Greek text (rather than the Coptic fragments) because it is this complete version that is under study.
 31. The others include Stephen and Eucarpios, whose stories appear in the Syriac fragments of the text (see above).
 32. The Guillaumonts suggest the former (SC 356:141–142); Driscoll leans toward the latter (“Evagrius and Paphnutius”).
 33. Compare *Thoughts* 23.
 34. Susanna Elm, “*Virgins of God*”: *The Making of Asceticism in Late Antiquity* (Oxford, 1994), 311–330.
 35. See, for example, Mark Sheridan, “The Spiritual and Intellectual World of Early Egyptian Monasticism,” *Coptica* 1 (2001), 1–51, at 10; Samuel Rubenson, “Origen in the Egyptian Monastic Tradition of the Fourth Century,” in W. A. Bienert and U. Kühneweg, eds., *Origeniana Septima: Origenes in den Auseinandersetzungen des 4. Jahrhunderts* (Louvain, 1999), 319–337, at 332.
 36. Samuel Rubenson, *The Letters of St. Antony: Monasticism and the Making of a Saint* (Minneapolis, 1995), 145–162, quotation at 162.
 37. Graham Gould, *The Desert Fathers on Monastic Community* (Oxford, 1993), 5–25.
 38. See William Harmless, SJ, “Remembering Poemen Remembering: The Desert Fathers and the Spirituality of Memory,” *Church History* 69 (2000): 483–518.
 39. See the balanced assessment in Jan Pollok, “The Present State of Studies on *The Apophthegmata Patrum*: An Outline of Samuel Rubenson’s and Graham Gould’s Perspectives,” in Marek Starowieyski, ed., *The Spirituality of Ancient Monasticism: Acts of the International Colloquium Held in Cracow-Tyniec 16th–19th November 1994* (Tyniec, Poland, 1995), 79–89.
 40. Antoine Guillaumont, *Les “Képhalaia Gnostica” d’Évagre le Pontique et l’histoire de l’origénisme chez les Grecs et les Syriens* (Paris, 1962), 51–59.
 41. See Gabriel Bunge, “Évagre le Pontique at les deux Macaire,” *Irénikon* 56 (1983): 215–227, 323–360, esp. 348. In Evagrian terms, the *apophthegmata* have to do with the level of *praktikē*, not the higher levels of *gnōsis* (Jeremy Driscoll, *The “Ad Monachos” of Evagrius Ponticus: Its Structure and a Select Commentary* [Rome, 1991], 354).
 42. *Praktikos* 91–100.
 43. *Apoph. patr.* 7.58.
 44. See Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott, with Henry Stuart Jones, eds., *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 9th ed. (Oxford, 1968), s.v. *epistatē*.

45. On the combination of the solitary life with commitment to community, see Gould, *Desert Fathers*.
46. *Apoph. patr.* 3.12 (= Isaiah, *Asceticon* 26.4); N 267; N 266; 10.91; 11.101, 107.
47. *Ibid.*, Poemen S 6 (ed. Jean-Claude Guy, SJ, *Recherches sur la tradition grecque des Apophthegmata Patrum* [Brussels, 1962], 30; translation in Benedicta Ward, *The Sayings of the Desert Fathers: The Alphabetical Collection*, rev. ed. [Kalamazoo, Mich., 1984], 194); N 35.
48. *Apoph. patr.* 11.122, 5.52; Paul the Simple 1.
49. *Ibid.*, 5.10; Macarius the Great 33; N 369; Moses 1.
50. *Ibid.*, Sisoës 11; Burton-Christie, *Word in the Desert*, 181–183.
51. *Apoph. patr.* N 34; 5.48.
52. *Ibid.*, 7.12; N 57.
53. For instance, *ibid.*, Sisoës 44, citing James 1:14.
54. *Ibid.*, Poemen S 12 (Guy, *Recherches*, 30).
55. *Apoph. patr.* 10.84; Cronius 2, John the Dwarf 16, Macarius the Great 20, Pityrion.
56. *Ibid.*, Joseph of Panephris 3.
57. *Ibid.*, Arsenius 9.
58. *Ibid.*, Bessarion 12; Longinus 5; N 83, 220.
59. *Ibid.*, Abraham 1; Joseph of Panephris 10; N 167.
60. *Ibid.*, 11.116 (compare 12.28); 10.84; 15.133; 10.91.
61. *Ibid.*, 7.55; N 22.
62. *Ibid.*, 7.19; Poemen 102; John the Dwarf S 5 (Guy, *Recherches*, 24).
63. *Apoph. patr.* N 78, 99; 10.60, 81; Poemen 88–89; 11.106.
64. Quiet in cell: *Apoph. patr.* 2.15. Prayer: 2.15; Poemen 146, Syncletica 3; N 167. Scripture: N 366.
65. *Ibid.*, Macarius the Great 3 (translation in Gould, *Desert Fathers*, 43).
66. Burton-Christie, *Word in the Desert*, 122–129. Power: *Apoph. patr.* N 184. Disposition: Macarius the Great 3.
67. *Apoph. patr.* N 99, 56; 11.101; Arsenius 11 (translation in Ward, *Sayings*, 10, altered slightly); N 261.
68. For an excellent study of the relationship between abba and disciple in the *Apophthegmata*, see Gould, *Desert Fathers*, 26–87, esp. 31–33 (on disclosure of thoughts), 42–52 (on the abba's discernment).
69. *Apoph. patr.* Poemen 101 (translation in Ward, *Sayings*, 181); compare *Verba sen.* 4.25.
70. Gould, *Desert Fathers*, 46.
71. *Apoph. patr.* N 66, 169, 366.
72. *Ibid.*, Antony 37; N 370.
73. *Ibid.*, Theophilus 4; N 88; 2.16; Isidore 6.

74. Ibid., 9.6; 10.138; Macarius the Great 21; N 181.
75. Gould, *Desert Fathers*, 123–129; compare Burton-Christie, *Word in the Desert*, 273–282.
76. *Apoph. patr.* Poemen 51 (translation in Ward, *Sayings*, 173–174, altered).
77. *Apoph. patr.* 5.13; Antony 5, John the Dwarf 13, N 170.
78. Ibid., N 210.
79. Charles Stewart, *Demons and the Devil: Moral Imagination in Modern Greek Culture* (Princeton, 1991), 249.

7. Ethiopian Demons

1. Gregorio Penco, “Sopravvivenze della demonologia antica nel monachesimo medievale,” *Studia Monastica* 13 (1971): 31–36. Psalm 76:5: *Apoph. patr.* 16.9.
2. See the survey of twentieth-century scholarship in David Brakke, “Ethiopian Demons: Male Sexuality, the Black-Skinned Other, and the Monastic Self,” *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 10 (2001): 501–535, at 502–503n4.
3. Lloyd Thompson, *Romans and Blacks* (Norman, Okla., 1989); compare David M. Goldenberg, *The Curse of Ham: Race and Slavery in Early Judaism, Christianity, and Islam* (Princeton, 2003).
4. Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London, 1994), 67, emphasis in original.
5. Robert Young, *White Mythologies: Writing History and the West* (London, 1990), 145.
6. Julia Kristeva, *Strangers to Ourselves* (New York, 1991), 184, original emphasis; compare G. R. Dunstan and R. F. Hobson, “A Note on an Early Ingredient of Racial Prejudice in Western Europe,” *Race* 6 (1965): 334–339; Dyan Elliott, *Fallen Bodies: Pollution, Sexuality, and Demonology in the Middle Ages* (Philadelphia, 1999), 7–9.
7. Franz Joseph Dölger, *Die Sonne der Gerechtigkeit und der Schwarze: Eine religionsgeschichtliche Studie zum Taufgelöbnis*, 2nd ed. (Münster, 1971), 49–83.
8. *Epistle of Barnabas* 4:10, 18:1–2, 20:1; *Shepherd of Hermas* Vision 9:8.
9. Peter Frost, “Attitudes toward Blacks in the Early Christian Era,” *Second Century* 8 (1991): 1–11, at 4–5.
10. Lucian, *Lover of Lies* 16, 31.
11. *Acts of Peter* 22.
12. Jean-Marie Courtès, “The Theme of ‘Ethiopia’ and ‘Ethiopians’ in Patristic Literature,” in *The Image of the Black in Western Art* (Cambridge, Mass., 1979), 2.1:9–32.
13. Lucien Regnault, *Les Sentences des pères du désert: Nouveau recueil; Apophtegmes inédits ou peu connus*, 2nd ed. (Solesmes, 1977), 271.

14. John Cassian, *Conferences* 1.21.1; see also 9.6.1.
15. HM 29.4 (Eva Schulz-Flügel, ed., *Tyrannius Rufinus: Historia Monachorum sive de Vita Sanctorum Patrum* [Berlin, 1990], 371–374).
16. P. Basilius Steidle, “Der ‘schwarze kleine Knabe’ in der alten Möncherzählung,” *Benediktinische Monatschrift* 34 (1958): 339–350.
17. See Gay Byron, *Symbolic Blackness and Ethnic Difference in Early Christian Literature* (London, 2002), 85–89.
18. Athanasius, *Against the Nations* 2–4, 26; VA 20.5–7, 45.2.
19. Christopher A. Faraone, *Ancient Greek Love Magic* (Cambridge, Mass., 1999), 43–49; Ruth Padel, *In and Out of Mind: Greek Images of the Tragic Self* (Princeton, 1992), 114–137.
20. Thompson, *Romans and Blacks*, 88–93.
21. Lellia Cracco Ruggini, “Leggenda e realtà degli Etiopi nella cultura tardo-imperiale,” in *IVe Congresso internazionale di Studi etiopici (Roma, 10–15 aprile 1972)* (Rome, 1974), 1:141–193, at 173–178; idem, “Il negro buono e il negro malvagio nel mondo classico,” in M. Sordi, ed., *Conoscenze etniche e rapporti di convivenza nell’antichità* (Milan, 1979), 108–135, at 120–121; Byron, *Symbolic Blackness*, 82–84.
22. Mark Moussa, “The Coptic Literary Dossier of Abba Moses of Abydos,” *Coptic Church Review* 24 (2003): 66–90, at 81.
23. Cracco Ruggini, “Leggenda e realtà degli Etiopi,” 160–162; idem, “Il negro buono e il negro malvagio,” 119–120; idem, “Intolerance: Equal and Less Equal in the Roman World,” *Classical Philology* 82 (1987): 187–205, at 194–195; Thompson, *Romans and Blacks*, 96–100. Byron views this as the key factor in the negative image of Ethiopians in monastic literature (*Symbolic Blackness*, 77–103).
24. Cracco Ruggini, “Il negro buono e il negro malvagio,” 131–133.
25. Thompson, *Romans and Blacks*, 62–85 (hereafter referred to parenthetically in the text by page number).
26. See Elliott, *Fallen Bodies*, 37–40.
27. John Clarke, “Hypersexual Black Men in Augustan Baths: Ideal Somatotypes and Apotropaic Magic,” in Natalie B. Kampen, ed., *Sexuality in Ancient Art: Near East, Egypt, Greece, and Italy* (Cambridge, 1996), 184–198; idem, *Looking at Lovemaking: Constructions of Sexuality in Roman Art, 100 B.C.–A.D. 250* (Berkeley, Calif., 1998), 119–142.
28. Thompson, *Romans and Blacks*, 108–109.
29. Nicholas Thomas, *Colonialism’s Culture: Anthropology, Travel and Government* (Princeton, 1994), 72–77.
30. Thompson, *Romans and Blacks*, 108–109.
31. Courtès, “Theme of ‘Ethiopia’ and ‘Ethiopians,’” 22, with references.
32. Didymus the Blind, *Commentary on Zechariah* 3.83, 188–197; see also 4.312.

33. Thompson, *Romans and Blacks*, 108–109.
34. Georgia Frank, *The Memory of the Eyes: Pilgrims to Living Saints in Christian Late Antiquity* (Berkeley, Calif., 2000), 134–170.
35. *Ibid.*, 161.
36. *Apoph. patr.* Paul the Simple 1.
37. *Ibid.*, Cronius 5.
38. Lucien Regnault, *Les Sentences des pères du désert: Série des anonymes* (Solesmes, 1985), 241.
39. Etienne Drioton, “La Discussion d’un moine anthropomorphite Audien avec le patriarche Théophile d’Alexandrie en l’année 399,” *Revue d’Orient chrétien*, 2nd ser., 10(=20) (1915–1917): 92–100, 113–128, at 97–98.
40. Regnault, *Sentences des pères du désert: Nouveau recueil*, 183–185.
41. *Apoph. patr.* N 426 (Regnault, *Sentences des pères du désert: Série des anonymes*, 141); *Apoph. patr.* (Syriac) 579 (E. A. Wallis Budge, *The Paradise or Garden of the Holy Fathers* [London, 1907], 2:130).
42. *Apoph. patr.* 5.27; see also (Syriac) 580 (Budge, *Paradise*, 2:130–131); *Verba sen.* 5.23.
43. The “erotic triangle” can be “a sensitive register precisely for delineating relationships of power and meaning, and for making graphically intelligible the play of desire and identification by which individuals negotiate with their societies for empowerment” (Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* [New York: 1985], 27).
44. *Apoph. patr.* 5.30, 32, 42.
45. *Ibid.*, 5.26; N 52; Arsenius 18. See Chapter 8.
46. *Ibid.*, (Ethiopic) 14.27 (Victor Arras, *Collectio Monastica* [Louvain, 1963], 84–85); see Ps. 2:7; Mark 1:11; Luke 3:22; Acts 13:33; Heb. 1:5, 5:5.
47. Kristeva, *Strangers to Ourselves*, 183, emphasis in original.
48. On the danger of a premature “transition from aspirant to abba,” see Maud Gleason, “Visiting and News: Gossip and Reputation-Management in the Desert,” *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 6 (1998): 501–521, at 516. *Ant.* 7.15.
49. *Apoph. patr.* 14.30.
50. Compare this story: “A brother was attacked by a demon and went to a certain old man, saying, ‘Those two brothers are with one another.’ The old man learned that he was mocked by a demon, and he sent to summon them. And when it was evening, he placed a little mat [*psiathion*] for the two brothers, and covered them with a single spread, saying, ‘The children of God are holy.’ And he said to his disciple, ‘Shut up this brother in the cell outside, for he has the passion in himself’” (*ibid.*, N 181).
51. Peter Brown, *The Body and Society: Men, Women, and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity* (New York, 1988), 249.

52. *Apoph. patr.* 15.10.
53. Compare Gleason, “Visiting and News,” 518–519.
54. Antony, *Letters* 1.35–45; *Praktikos* 54–56.
55. *Praktikos* 55–56; *Thoughts* 4. See Elizabeth A. Clark, *The Origenist Controversy: The Cultural Construction of an Early Christian Debate* (Princeton, 1992), 75–76; François Refoulé, “Rêves et vie spirituelle d’après Évagre le Pontique,” *La Vie spirituelle* 14 (1961): 470–516, at 501–504.
56. *Verba sen.* 5.4; compare John Cassian, *Conferences* 2.13.
57. T. G. Rosenmeyer, “Eros-Erotes,” *Phoenix* 5 (1951): 11–22; Padel, *In and Out of Mind*, 115–120. Byron considers the Ethiopian’s bow and arrow to reflect anxieties about Ethiopians as a military threat rather than to represent the god Eros (*Symbolic Blackness*, 90–93).
58. Bhabha, *Location of Culture*, 82, emphasis in original.
59. *Ibid.*, 82–83.
60. *Ibid.*, 86, emphasis in original.
61. *Ibid.*, 86–89.
62. Judith Perkins, “An Ancient ‘Passing’ Novel: Heliodorus’ *Aithiopika*,” *Arethusa* 32 (1999): 197–214.
63. Vincent L. Wimbush, “Ascetic Behavior and Colorful Language: Stories about Ethiopian Moses,” *Semeia* 58 (1992): 81–92, at 86–87.
64. *Apoph. patr.* (Ethiopic) 14.26 (Arras, *Collectio*, 84).
65. *Apoph. patr.* Moses 1, 2, 5, 13.
66. Wimbush, “Ascetic Behavior and Colorful Language,” 86.
67. Kristeva, *Strangers to Ourselves*, 188.
68. *Apoph. patr.* 15.43.
69. Topos: Cracco Ruggini, “Il negro buono e il negro malvagio,” 108–113. On subordinates’ “artful manipulation of deference and flattery to achieve” their “own ends,” see James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven, 1990), 33–36. The theories of Scott and Bhabha, both of which I am invoking here, are not equivalent, for “whereas Scott argues for an emergence of intentional, albeit coded resistance, Bhabha’s writings point to a more indirect and unintentional assertion of ‘difference’” (Corinne G. Dempsey, *Kerala Christian Sainthood: Collisions of Culture and Worldview in South India* [New York, 2001], 37–38). Neither theory alone, my argument suggests, is adequate to the rich ambiguities of these Moses stories.
70. Richard King, *Orientalism and Religion: Postcolonial Theory, India, and “The Mystic East”* (London, 1999), 204.
71. The quoted phrase is from Jason BeDuhn, *The Manichaean Body: In Discipline and Ritual* (Baltimore, 2000), 67, who makes this point regarding Manichaean subjects and Foucauldian analysis.

72. *Apoph. patr.* 15.43. The archbishop's desire to learn what Moses says in private indicates that he suspects the existence of precisely what Scott calls the "hidden transcript": "discourse that takes place 'offstage,' beyond direct observation by powerholders" (*Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, 4).
73. Compare Cracco Ruggini, "Il negro buono e il negro malvagio," 116–117; Gleason, "Visiting and News," 520–521.
74. *Apoph. patr.* 16.9.
75. Robert T. Meyer, ed. and trans., *Palladius: The Lausiac History* (New York, 1964), 184n183.
76. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, *Key Concepts in Post-Colonial Studies* (London, 1998), 118.
77. Bhabha, *Location of Culture*, 81, 107.
78. Kristeva, *Strangers to Ourselves*, 191.

8. Manly Women, Female Demons, and Other Amazing Sights

1. Virginia Burrus, "Begotten, Not Made": *Conceiving Manhood in Late Antiquity* (Stanford, Calif., 2000); Mathew Kuefler, *The Manly Eunuch: Masculinity, Gender Ambiguity, and Christian Ideology in Late Antiquity* (Chicago, 2001). Their work builds on studies such as Maud Gleason's *Making Men: Sophists and Self-Presentation in Ancient Rome* (Princeton, 1995). Isa 57:8–9: Besa, *To Heraï* (no. 32) 2.6.
2. *Ant.* 6.46.
3. This is a major theme of Kuefler, *Manly Eunuch*, esp. 245–282.
4. *Ant.* pref.
5. Burrus, "Begotten, Not Made", 68–78.
6. VA 14.3–4, 93.2.
7. *Ant.* pref.
8. VA 27.1, 36.3.
9. Patricia Cox Miller, "Desert Asceticism and 'The Body from Nowhere,'" *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 2 (1994): 137–153, at 138.
10. *Ibid.*; Georgia Frank, *The Memory of the Eyes: Pilgrims to Living Saints in Christian Late Antiquity* (Berkeley, Calif., 2000).
11. Blake Leyerle, "John Chrysostom on the Gaze," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 1 (1993): 159–174.
12. Margaret R. Miles, *Carnal Knowing: Female Nakedness and Religious Meaning in the Christian West* (Boston, 1989), 169.
13. Elizabeth A. Castelli, "'I Will Make Mary Male': Pieties of the Body and Gender Transformation of Christian Women in Late Antiquity," in Julia Epstein and Kristina Straub, eds., *Bodyguards: The Cultural Politics of Gender Ambiguity* (New York, 1991), 29–49; Kerstin Aspergen, *The Male Woman: A Feminine Ideal in the Early Church* (Uppsala, 1990).

14. For a good summary, see Gillian Clark, *Women in Late Antiquity: Pagan and Christian Lifestyles* (Oxford, 1993), 120–126.
15. Umberto Mattiolo, *Astheneia e andrea: Aspetti della femminilità nella letteratura classica, biblica e cristiana antica* (Parma, 1983).
16. *Gospel of Thomas* 114; *Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas* 10.7.
17. Susanna Elm, “Virgins of God”: *The Making of Asceticism in Late Antiquity* (Oxford, 1994), 267–269; Gillian Cloke, “This Female Man of God”: *Women and Spiritual Power in the Patristic Age, A.D. 350–450* (London, 1995).
18. The exact location of Sarah remains a puzzle: see the conflicting views of Elm, “Virgins of God”, 266n42, and William Harmless, SJ, *Desert Christians: An Introduction to the Literature of Early Monasticism* (New York, 2004), 441.
19. *Apoph. patr.* 5.13–14; Sarah 3, 4, 9.
20. See Elizabeth A. Clark, “Sex, Shame, and Rhetoric: En-Gendering Early Christian Ethics,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 59 (1991): 221–245.
21. Evagrius, *Letters* 1. The Syriac noun for “disciple” is feminine in form.
22. Virginia Burrus, *The Sex Lives of Saints: An Erotics of Ancient Hagiography* (Philadelphia, 2004), 12, 60, quoting Karmen MacKendrick, *Counterpleasures* (Albany, N.Y., 1999), 102.
23. Compare Burrus, *Sex Lives*, 59.
24. Caroline Walker Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women* (Berkeley, Calif., 1987), 199.
25. On sickness and health care among monks in general, see Andrew T. Crislip, “The Monastic Health Care System and the Development of the Hospital in Late Antiquity” (Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 2002); on this distinction, see pp. 131–135.
26. VP 52 (PK 1:332–333).
27. Shenoute, *Canon* 3 (unpublished, BnF ms. copte 130.2 f. 60, quoted by Crislip, “Monastic Health Care System,” 133n68).
28. Shenoute, *A14* (Tito Orlandi, *Shenute: Contra Origenistas* [Rome, 1985], 16–18); *Because of You Too, O Prince of Evil* (P. du Bourguet, “Diatribes de Chenouté contre le démon,” *Bulletin de la société d’archéologie copte* 16 [1961–1962], 38).
29. Elm places Theodora in Nitria or Scetis, but she speaks also of Theodora’s “regular contact” with Theophilus (“Virgins of God”, 263–265), which may indicate that she lived instead in the suburbs of Alexandria or in Alexandria itself (Harmless, *Desert Christians*, 441).
30. *Apoph. patr.* Theodora 1, 3, 4, 6, 9.
31. The text is found in PG 28:1487–1558. I have used the translation of Elizabeth A. Castelli, “Pseudo-Athanasius: *The Life and Activity of the Holy and Blessed Teacher Syncletica*,” in Vincent L. Wimbush, ed., *Ascetic Behavior in*

- Greco-Roman Antiquity: A Sourcebook* (Minneapolis, 1990), 265–311, sometimes altered. I refer to the *Life* (VS) parenthetically in the text by chapter number.
32. Elizabeth A. Castelli, “Mortifying the Body, Curing the Soul: Beyond Ascetic Dualism in *The Life of Saint Syncletica*,” *Differences* 4 (1992): 134–153, at 138.
 33. Compare *ibid.*, 146–147.
 34. On this passage and the food imagery in VS in general, see Derek Krueger, *Writing and Holiness: The Practice of Authorship in the Christian East* (Philadelphia, 2004), 141–149. Shenoute identifies the Old and New Testaments as the breasts of the bride in Song of Songs 1:4 and 8:10: see his *Blessed Are They Who Observe Justice* (É. Chassinat, *Le quatrième livre des entretiens et épîtres de Shenouti* [Cairo, 1911], 144–145).
 35. See Burrus, *Sex Lives*, 137–146; Patricia Cox Miller, “Is There a Harlot in This Text? Hagiography and the Grotesque,” *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 33 (2003): 419–435; Stephen J. Davis, “Crossed Texts, Crossed Sex: Intertextuality and Gender in Early Christian Legends of Holy Women Disguised as Men,” *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 10 (2002): 1–36.
 36. *Apoph. patr.* Bessarion 4.
 37. *Ibid.*, N 63.
 38. John Cassian, *Institutes* 6.19 (Boniface Ramsey, *John Cassian: The Institutes* [New York, 2000], 161). Of course, Cassian did find a way to measure integrity of heart through the male body—nocturnal emissions: see David Brakke, “The Problematization of Nocturnal Emissions in Early Christian Syria, Egypt, and Gaul,” *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 3 (1995): 419–460.
 39. Palladius, *Dialogue on the Life of St. John Chrysostom* 16.
 40. Rebecca Krawiec, *Shenoute and the Women of the White Monastery: Egyptian Monasticism in Late Antiquity* (New York, 2002), 93–106, 110–111.
 41. Shenoute, *Canon 6* (Émile Amélineau, *Oeuvres de Shenoudi: Texte copte et traduction française* [Paris, 1907–1914], 1:69, quoted in Krawiec, *Shenoute and the Women*, 110); *Canon 2* (CSCO 157:119; translation in CSCO 158:115, falsely attributed to Besa).
 42. Shenoute, *Canon 1* (unpublished, quoted in Caroline T. Schroeder, “Prophecy and *Porneia* in Shenoute’s Letters,” paper delivered at the symposium Living for Eternity: Monasticism in Egypt, University of Minnesota, March 2003); *I Have Heard about Your Wisdom* (Chassinat, *Quatrième livre*, 120–123); compare *Blessed Are They Who Observe Justice* (Chassinat, *Quatrième livre*, 140–153).
 43. Shenoute, *I See Your Eagerness* (Amélineau, *Oeuvres*, 2:61–66).

44. Heike Behlmer, "The City as Metaphor in the Works of Two Panopolitans: Shenoute and Besa," in A. Egberts, B. P. Muhs, and J. van der Vliet, eds., *Perspectives on Panopolis: An Egyptian Town from Alexander the Great to the Arab Conquest; Acts of an International Symposium Held in Leiden on 16, 17, and 18 December 1998* (Leiden, 2002), 13–27, at 25.
45. Besa, *To Aphthonia* 1.3, 3.1–2; *To Sinful Nuns* 3.2–3; *To Thieving Nuns* 1.1.
46. Besa, *To Herai* (no. 30) 1.1–3.1; *On Those Who Have Renounced Their Constancy*.
47. For an excellent analysis of the rhetoric of this letter, to which I am indebted, see Behlmer, "City as Metaphor," 22–27.
48. Besa, *To Herai* 1.1–3; 2.2, 6; 7.2 (translation in Behlmer, "City as Metaphor," 24, altered).
49. Behlmer, "City as Metaphor," 24.
50. See Clark, "Sex, Shame, and Rhetoric."
51. *Apoph. patr.* Macarius the Great 21.
52. *The Gospel according to Philip* 65:1–26 (Bentley Layton, *The Gnostic Scriptures* [Garden City, N.Y., 1987], 340).
53. *Apoph. patr.* Arsenius 28.
54. *Ibid.*, 5.26.
55. Peter Brown, *The Body and Society: Men, Women, and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity* (New York, 1988), 242–244.
56. *Apoph. patr.* 5.25.
57. *Ibid.*, 5.28, 41–42; N 49, 52, 215.
58. *Eight Spirits* 4.
59. *Apoph. patr.* N 159.
60. Leyerle, "Chrysostom on the Gaze," 160.
61. Evagrius, *Praktikos* 8; *Ant.* 2.6; *Eight Spirits* 4, 6.
62. *LH* 5.2.
63. *Apoph. patr.* N 52; Arsenius 18; 5.27.
64. *Ibid.*, 4.27; *VA* 63; *KG* 5.78, although here the odor sets the passions in motion; *Paral.* 7 (*PK* 2:28–29).
65. Avoiding crowds: *Eight Spirits* 4–5. Fasting and water: *Praktikos* 17; *Eight Spirits* 5; *Ant.* 2.48.
66. For a demon appearing in a masculine form to Pachomius ("under the aspect in which the Lord used to appear to him"), see *SBo* 113 (*PK* 1:165–166); compare *VP* 87 (*PK* 1:356).
67. *Paral.* 24–26 (*PK* 2:48–51, altered).
68. René Draguet, "Un paralipomenon pachômien inconnu dans le Karakallou 251," in *Mélanges Eugène Tisserot* (Vatican City, 1964), 2:55–61.
69. *Draguet Fragment* 2 (*PK* 2:115–119).
70. Compare Brown, *Body and Society*, 247.

71. SBo 107 (PK 1:152–153); *Instr.* 1.26 (PK 3:24–25).
72. Shenoute, *Because of You Too, O Prince of Evil* (du Bourguet, “Diatribes de Chenouté,” 24–25), quoted in full in Chapter 5.
73. Shenoute, A1 (unpublished, FR-BN Copte 130^f f.104).
74. A few examples: Shenoute, *Because of You Too, O Prince of Evil* (du Bourguet, “Diatribes de Chenouté,” 30); *As We Began to Preach; Blessed Are They Who Observe Justice; God Is Blessed* (Chassinat, *Quatrième livre*, 63, 74, 139, 166); *This Great House* (Amélineau, *Oeuvres*, 2:2, 5–6, 8–9, 12, 22).
75. Shenoute, *This Great House* (Amélineau, *Oeuvres*, 2:12–13).
76. Shenoute, *The Lord Thundered* (Amélineau, *Oeuvres*, 1:384–385); *Let Our Eyes*, quoted in Stephen Emmel, “Shenoute of Atri and the Christian Destruction of Temples in Egypt,” in Johannes Hahn, Stephen Emmel, and Ulrich Gotter, eds., *From Temple to Church: Destruction and Renewal of Local Cultic Topography in Late Antiquity* (Leiden, in press).
77. Shenoute, *The Lord Thundered* (Amélineau, *Oeuvres*, 2:134).
78. Shenoute, *Blessed Are They Who Observe Justice; God Is Blessed* (Chassinat, *Quatrième livre*, 139, 177); *I Myself Have Seen* (CSCO 42:209); *I See Your Eagerness* (Amélineau, *Oeuvres*, 2:61).
79. Shenoute, *Canon 6* (Amélineau, *Oeuvres*, 1:66), translated and discussed by Krawiec in *Shenoute and the Women*, 126–132.
80. Shenoute, A6 (Ariel Shisha-Halevy, “Two New Shenoute-Texts from the British Library,” *Orientalia* 44 [1975], 166–167); *As We Began to Preach* (Chassinat, *Quatrième livre*, 78).
81. Shenoute, *Canon 4* (Dwight W. Young, *Coptic Manuscripts from the White Monastery: Works of Shenute* [Vienna, 1993], 1:103–105). For translation and discussion, see Terry G. Wilfong, “‘Friendship and Physical Desire’: The Discourse of Female Homoeroticism in Fifth-Century CE Egypt,” in N. Sorkin Rabinowitz and L. Auanger, eds., *Among Women: From the Homosocial to the Homoerotic in the Ancient World* (Austin, 2002), 304–329.
82. Wilfong, “Friendship and Physical Desire,” 317.
83. Shenoute, *I Myself Have Seen* (CSCO 42:212–213).
84. Krawiec, *Shenoute and the Women*, 132.
85. SBo 27; VP 32 (PK 1:49–51, 318–320); Elm, “*Virgins of God*,” 289–296.
86. *Praec.* 143 (PK 2:166–167).
87. Elm, “*Virgins of God*,” 295. For the complexity of Roman reality, see, for example, Richard P. Saller, “*Pater Familias, Mater Familias*, and the Gendered Semantics of the Roman Household,” *Classical Philology* 94 (1999): 182–197.
88. *Apoph. patr.* 7.75.
89. Elm, “*Virgins of God*,” 267.
90. HM 13.1–2.

9. From Gods to Demons

1. *HM* 8; Isa. 19:1; *HM* 8.1.
2. Peter Brown, "The Rise and Function of the Holy Man in Late Antiquity," in his *Society and the Holy in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley, Calif., 1982), 103–152; idem, *Authority and the Sacred: Aspects of the Christianisation of the Roman World* (Cambridge, 1995), 57–78; David Frankfurter, "Syncretism and the Holy Man in Late Antique Egypt," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 11 (2003): 339–385.
3. David Frankfurter, *Religion in Roman Egypt: Assimilation and Resistance* (Princeton, 1998), 276.
4. Garth Fowden, "Bishops and Temples in the Eastern Roman Empire A.D. 320–435," *Journal of Theological Studies*, n.s. 29 (1978): 53–78, at 67, discussing the destruction of the temple to Zeus in Apamea led by Bishop Marcellus around 386.
5. Peter Brown, "Christianization and Religious Conflict," in *The Late Empire*, A.D. 337–425, vol. 13 of *The Cambridge Ancient History* (Cambridge, 1998), 632–664, at 647; idem, *Authority and the Sacred*, 50–51.
6. This is a theme of Fowden, "Bishops and Temples."
7. For example, *ibid.*, 67–71.
8. *Apoph. patr.* 15.112; 5.44; N 176. As a term for evil spiritual powers, *archōn* has a long history. In the New Testament Gospels, it appears to have been reserved for Satan or Beelzebub himself (Matt. 9:34, 12:24; Mark 3:22; Luke 11:15), but gnostic and other early Christian writings drew on its use in the plural in Ephesians 6:12 for a number of demonic forces.
9. *Apoph. patr.* Macarius the Great 13.
10. James E. Goehring, *Ascetics, Society, and the Desert: Studies in Early Egyptian Monasticism* (Harrisburg, Penn., 1999), 73–88. Conditions in Syria were different. Theodoret of Cyrrhus's *History of the Monks in Syria* (444) depicts monks such as Maron and Thalelaius settling in abandoned temples, which they "consecrate to God," sometimes in the face of demonic resistance (16.1, 28.1–2).
11. *HM* 5.1–4. *Capitolia* would have been temples devoted to the Capitoline gods; most cities would have had only one such temple, and thus the use of the plural here is curious. Perhaps it refers to the individual shrines or precincts devoted to the three gods within the single temple.
12. *Apoph. patr.* Elias 7.
13. *Ibid.*, 15.12.
14. See the essays gathered in Johannes Hahn, Stephen Emmel, and Ulrich Gotter, eds., *From Temple to Church: Destruction and Renewal of Local Cultic Topography in Late Antiquity* (Leiden, in press).

15. The key ancient source is Rufinus, *Ecclesiastical History* 11.22–30. For modern accounts, see Jacques Schwartz, “La fin du Serapeum d’Alexandrie,” in *Essays in Honor of C. Bradford Welles* (New Haven, 1966), 97–111; Elizabeth A. Clark, *The Origenist Controversy: The Cultural Construction of an Early Christian Debate* (Princeton, 1992), 52–56; and Christopher Haas, *Alexandria in Late Antiquity: Topography and Social Conflict* (Baltimore, 1997), 161–163. *Apoph. patr.* Theophilus 3 is “our only authority for assigning a share in the destruction of the temples to the monks of the desert” (Hugh G. Evelyn-White, *The Monasteries of the Wādi ‘n Natrūn. II: The History of the Monasteries of Nitria and of Scetis* [New York, 1932], 90). An early fifth-century manuscript contains an illustration of Theophilus triumphing over the Serapeum, accompanied by figures that scholars have identified as monks, but this identification is not certain (Adolf Bauer and Josef Strzygowski, *Eine alexandrinische Weltchronik: Text und Miniaturen eines griechischen Papyrus der Sammlung W. Goleniscev* [Vienna, 1905], 82–84 and plate).
16. Haas, *Alexandria*, 163.
17. Clark seems to suggest this (*Origenist Controversy*, 56).
18. *Apoph. patr.* Theophilus 3.
19. For instance, *ibid.*, Eulogius the Priest 1.
20. *Ibid.*, Bessarion 4. I have used but altered the translation in Benedicta Ward, *The Sayings of the Desert Fathers: The Alphabetical Collection*, rev. ed. (Kalamazoo, Mich., 1984), 41.
21. David Brakke, “The Lady Appears: Materializations of ‘Woman’ in Early Monastic Literature,” *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 33 (2003): 387–402.
22. *Verba sen.* (5) 12.3, emphasis added; compare *Verba sen.* (6) 3.1; *Apoph. patr.* 12.3.
23. David Brakke, *Athanasius and Asceticism* (1995; repr., Baltimore, 1998), 103–104, citing *Apoph. patr.* Apphy, Theodore of Pherme 25, Netras, Orsisios 1, Sisoës 15.
24. *LH* 11.1–3.
25. Brakke, *Athanasius*, 104–110.
26. Tito Orlandi, “The Library of the Monastery of Saint Shenute at Atri-pe,” in A. Egberts, B. P. Muhs, and J. van der Vliet, eds., *Perspectives on Panopolis: An Egyptian Town from Alexander the Great to the Arab Conquest; Acts of an International Symposium Held in Leiden on 16, 17, and 18 December 1998* (Leiden, 2002), 211–231, at 220.
27. Mark Moussa, “The Coptic Literary Dossier of Abba Moses of Abydos,” *Coptic Church Review* 24 (2003): 66–90, at 78, 83–84; Émile Amélineau, *Monuments pour servir à l’histoire de l’Égypte chrétienne aux IV^e et V^e siècles* (Paris, 1888), 682, 689–690.

28. *Panegyric on Macarius of Tkôw* 4.3–5.11 (CSCO 415:28–40).
29. Christian graffiti and pictures in the Osireion at Abydos suggest conversion to a monastery for female ascetics, which literary sources indicate Moses led: see Margaret A. Murray, *The Osireion at Abydos* (London, 1904), 38–43; A. Piankoff, “The Osireion of Seti I at Abydos during the Greco-Roman Period and the Christian Occupation,” *Bulletin de la société d’archéologie copte* 15 (1958/1960): 130–149, esp. 129.
30. M.-A. Krugener, ed., *Sévère patriarche d’Antioche, 512–18: Textes syriaques publiés, traduits et annotés*, PO 2 (Paris, 1907), 14–39; Haas, *Alexandria*, 327–329.
31. Edward Watts, “Winning the Intracommunal Dialogs: Zacharias Scholasticus’ *Life of Severus*,” *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 13 (2005).
32. Haas, *Alexandria*, 187.
33. Zacharias, *Life of Severus* (PO 2:9–10).
34. *Ibid.* (PO 2:39).
35. Brown, *Authority and the Sacred*, 25.
36. Antoine Guillaumont and Claire Guillaumont, “Démon: III. Dans la plus ancienne littérature monastique,” *Dictionnaire de spiritualité ascétique et mystique: Doctrine et histoire* 3 (1957): 189–212, at 211–212.
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39. Frankfurter, *Religion in Roman Egypt*, 198–237, 257–264.
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42. *P. Lond.* 1928 (Bell, *Jews and Christians*, 114–115).
43. Shenoute, A14 (Tito Orlandi, *Shenute: Contra Origenistas* [Rome, 1985], 18).
44. Shenoute, *I See Your Eagerness* (Émile Amélineau, *Oeuvres de Schenoudi: Texte copte et traduction française* [Paris, 1907–1914], 2:69–72); A14 (Orlandi, *Contra Origenistas*, 16–18).

45. On the distance between Shenoute's works and the *Life* on this point, see Heike Behlmer, "Visitors to Shenoute's Monastery," in David Frankfurter, ed., *Pilgrimage and Holy Space in Late Antique Egypt* (Leiden, 1998), 341–371, at 354–359.
46. Brakke, *Athanasius and Asceticism*, 248–253; Rowan A. Greer, *The Fear of Freedom: A Study of Miracles in the Roman Imperial Church* (University Park, Penn., 1989), 104–107.
47. VA 31.1; Evagrius, *To Eulogios* 7, 28, 31.
48. P. Lond. 1926 (Bell, *Jews and Christians*, 108–109).
49. C. Colpe, "Geister (Dämonen): B. III. a. Synkretismus in Ägypten," *Reallexicon für Antike und Christentum* 9 (1976): 615–625, at 621–622.
50. Assistants for specific actions: *Greek Magical Papyri* IV:1716–1820, 2006–2125; VII:862–918. All-purpose companions: *Greek Magical Papyri* I:1–41 (quoted phrases from 1–5), 42–195.
51. Fritz Graf, *Magic in the Ancient World* (Cambridge, Mass., 1997), 107–116.
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53. *Shepherd of Hermas* Mandate 6.2; Origen, *On First Principles* 3.2.4; *Homilies on Luke* 3.5.3–5. On the two *daimōnes*, see Pierre Boyancé, "Les deux démons personnels dans l'antiquité grecque et latine," *Revue de philologie, de littérature et d'histoire anciennes*, 3d ser., 9 (1935): 189–202; see also John Dillon, *The Middle Platonists, 80 B.C. to A.D. 220*, rev. ed. (Ithaca, N.Y., 1996), 221, on Plutarch.
54. *Apoph. patr.* Paul the Simple 1.
55. *LH* 18.25, 47.9. A proud virgin in Jerusalem appears to suffer the withdrawal of her angel (*LH* 28). See *Apoph. patr.* Macarius the Great 33, in which Macarius learns of the virtue of two monks in part by observing an angel protecting them from demons.
56. Evagrius, *Scholia on Ecclesiastes* 31.
57. Marvin W. Meyer and Richard Smith, eds., *Ancient Christian Magic: Coptic Texts of Ritual Power*, rev. ed. (Princeton, 1999), nos. 63 (Apa Anoub), 71 (quotation), and 135 (pp. 117–119, 133–146, 326–341).
58. *Praktikos* 59.
59. *LH* 19.2 (translated in Kathleen O'Brien Wicker, "Ethiopian Moses [Collected Sources]," in Wimbush, *Ascetic Behavior*, 329–348, at 336).
60. *Apoph. patr.* N 12.
61. *Ibid.*, 5.37.

62. Frankfurter, *Religion in Roman Egypt*, 257–264.
63. *Greek Magical Papyri* IV:2145–2240.
64. Frankfurter, *Religion in Roman Egypt*, 258–260, cites much of the evidence; see also Siegfried G. Richter, “Bemerkungen zu magischen Elementen koptischer Zaubertexte,” in Bärbel Kramer et al., eds., *Akten des 21. internationalen Papyrologenkongresses, Berlin, 13.–19.8.1995* (Stuttgart and Leipzig, 1997), 2:835–846, esp. 838.
65. *Apoph. patr.* 5.37. G. Bartelink assumes that this text is biblical, in his brief discussion of the apotropaic power of biblical texts among monks: “Die Rolle der Bibel in den asketischen Kreisen des vierten und fünften Jahrhunderts,” in J. den Boeft and M. L. van Poll-van de Lisdonk, eds., *The Impact of Scripture in Early Christianity* (Leiden, 1999), 27–38, at 36–37. Likewise, Douglas Burton-Christie is more likely than I to see scriptural citations and allusions in the phrases with which monks in the *Apophthegmata* respond to and repel demons (Burton-Christie, *The Word in the Desert: Scripture and the Quest for Holiness in Early Christian Monasticism* [New York, 1993], 199–200).
66. For example, *Apoph. patr.* N 45, 64, 66.
67. *Ibid.*, 12.19.
68. The monk in *Apoph. patr.* 15.90 uses Matthew 24:23 and parallels to refute the demons’ offer to show him Christ. Poemen recommends repelling a demonically inspired thought of blasphemy with a retort that is not scriptural (*Apoph. patr.* Poemen 93), contrary to Burton-Christie, *Word in the Desert*, 199.
69. *Apoph. patr.* N 632 (Lucien Regnault, *Les sentences des pères du désert: Série des anonymes* [Solesmes, 1985], 275).
70. Many additional examples could be cited from Meyer and Smith, *Ancient Christian Magic*, but for the use of Scripture see nos. 7 and 9 (pp. 33–35) and for the use of other words see nos. 8, 10, and 16–17 (pp. 33–36, 40–41). See E. A. Judge, “The Magical Use of Scripture in the Papyri,” in Edgar W. Conrad and Edward G. Newing, eds., *Perspectives on Language and Text: Essays and Poems in Honor of Francis J. Anderson’s Sixtieth Birthday, July 28, 1985* (Winona Lake, Ind., 1987), 339–349.
71. VA 37.3–4.
72. VA 6.4–5, 9.2–3, 13.7, 39.3, 41.5. In the last incident Antony “countersings” (*katapsallein*) a demon.
73. *Ant.* pref.
74. *Ibid.*, 4.65. Passages “towards the Lord” are frequent; for “towards the holy angels” and similar, see *ibid.*, 2.14, 42.
75. Meyer and Smith, *Ancient Christian Magic*, nos. 128, 133, 135 (pp. 271–272, 305–307, 339–341).

76. Evagrius's statement that "the melody that is applied to the Psalms alters the condition of the body" (*Ant.* 4.22) may indicate knowledge of the *Epistle*, which teaches that the melody affects the soul, which can then harmonize the body's members (Athanasius, *Epistle to Marcellinus* 28).
77. Athanasius refers to Marcellinus's "discipline" (*askēsis*) (*Epistle to Marcellinus* 1). For the possible monastic setting, see M. J. Rondeau, "L'Épître à Marcellinus sur les Psaumes," *Vigiliae Christianae* 22 (1968): 176–197, at 194–197.
78. See Hermann-Josef Sieben, "Athanasius über den Psalter: Analyse seines Briefes an Marcellinus," *Theologie und Philosophie* 2 (1973): 157–173; this is treated more briefly in Brakke, *Athanasius and Asceticism*, 194–196.
79. Athanasius, *Epistle to Marcellinus* 33.
80. Judge, "Magical Use of Scripture," 343–346. The later decline in such use may indicate the success of Christianization and a corresponding lesser need for clear self-differentiation as Christian.
81. *Apoph. patr.* Olympius 1.
82. *Ibid.*, Macarius the Great 39.; N 77; 5.44.
83. See *Greek Magical Papyri* IV:1830–1840, 2095–2100.
84. *Apoph. patr.* Lot 2.
85. *Ibid.*, 5.43.
86. The text can be found in E. A. Wallis Budge, *Miscellaneous Coptic Texts* (London, 1915), 5:443–456. It is translated in Tim Vivian, *Histories of the Monks of Upper Egypt and the Life of Onnophrius*, rev. ed. (Kalamazoo, Mich., 2000), 87–97. On the name and date of the work, see Jitse H. F. Dijkstra, "Horus on His Throne: The Holy Falcon on Philae in His Demonic Cage," *Göttinger Miszellen* 189 (2002): 7–10.
87. The four monk-exorcists are Or, Copres, Pityrion, and Paul the Simple: *HM* 2.6, 10.1, 15.1, 24.10.
88. *VA* 14.5; 48; 63–64; 71; 80.2–5. *Luke* 10:20: *VA* 38.1–3.
89. *LH* 44.3; *HM* 24; compare *LH* 22.
90. *Ant.* 7.35, 42; *Thoughts* 28.
91. *LH* 18.22–24.
92. *Apoph. patr.* 15.44 (Moses); see also Theodora 6, Macarius the Great 35; Evagrius, *Eulogios* 25, *Vices* 9; *VS* 56.
93. *Apoph. patr.* 15.71, 84, 112; compare Daniel 3.
94. *Ibid.*, Longinus 4, Bessarion 5; compare Poemen 7.
95. *Ibid.*, 11.80.
96. David Frankfurter, "The Perils of Love: Magic and Countermagic in Coptic Egypt," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 10 (2001): 480–500.
97. *LH* 17.6–9.
98. Frankfurter, "Perils of Love," 500.

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1. *Apoph. patr.* 12.1. Gal. 5:17: John Cassian, *Conferences* 4.7.
2. Gennadius of Marseilles, *Lives of Illustrious Men* 11.
3. Benedict of Nursia, *Rule* 73. On Cassian, see Columba Stewart, *Cassian the Monk* (New York and Oxford, 1998). The translations are from the *Institutes* and the *Conferences* by Boniface Ramsey (New York, 1997 and 2000).
4. Conrad Leyser, *Authority and Asceticism from Augustine to Gregory the Great* (Oxford, 2000), 33–61.
5. Cassian, *Institutes* pref. 7.
6. Antoine Guillaumont and Claire Guillaumont, “Démon: III. Dans la plus ancienne littérature monastique,” *Dictionnaire de spiritualité ascétique et mystique: Doctrine et histoire* 3 (1957): 189–212, at 208–210.
7. Cassian, *Institutes* 12.20–22; *Conferences* 2.5; 7.12–13, 17–19; 8.12, 17.
8. Cassian, *Conferences* 7.23.1–3.
9. *Ibid.*, 4.7, 11–15.
10. *Ibid.*, 8.6–8, 13.
11. *Ibid.*, 7.3–4, 7–16.
12. Cassian, *Institutes* 7.1–5, 9.2; *Conferences* 5.
13. Morton Bloomfield, *The Seven Deadly Sins: An Introduction to the History of a Religious Concept, with Special Reference to Medieval English Literature* (East Lansing, Mich., 1952).
14. Cassian, *Institutes* 6.11; *Conferences* 2.10; compare Evagrius, *To Eulogius* 2.2.
15. David Brakke, “The Problematization of Nocturnal Emissions in Early Christian Syria, Egypt, and Gaul,” *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 3 (1995): 419–460, at 446–457; Michel Foucault, *Religion and Culture* (New York, 1999), 135–197; *idem*, *The History of Sexuality*, vol. 1, *An Introduction* (New York, 1978), 58–67; compare Dyan Elliott, *Fallen Bodies: Pollution, Sexuality, and Demonology in the Middle Ages* (Philadelphia, 1999). For an objection to this reading, see Conrad Leyser, “Masculinity in Flux: Nocturnal Emission and the Limits of Celibacy in the Early Middle Ages,” in D. M. Hadley, ed., *Masculinity in Medieval Europe* (London and New York, 1999), 103–120.
16. See especially Elliott, *Fallen Bodies*.

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