JOHN EVIRATUS
TO HIS BELOVED IN CHRIST,
SOPHRONIOS THE SOPHIST

In my opinion, the meadows in spring present a particularly delightful prospect. They display to the beholder a rich diversity of flowers which arrests him with its charm, for it brings delight to his eyes and perfume to his nostrils. One part of this meadow blushes with roses; in another place lilies predominate, drawing one’s attention to themselves and away from the roses. In another part the colour of violets blazes out, resembling the imperial purple. In short, the diversity and variety of innumerable flowers affords delights both to nostril and to eye on every side.

Think of this present work in the same way Sophronios, my sacred and faithful child. For in it, you will discover the virtues of holy men who have distinguished themselves in our own times; men, as the Psalmist says, planted by the waterside (Ps 1:3). They were all equally beloved of God (by the grace of Christ)—yet there was a diversity in the virtues from which the beauty and the charm of each derived. From among these I have plucked the finest flowers of the unmown meadow and worked them into a crown which I now offer to you, most faithful child; and through you, to the world at large.

I have called this work meadow on account of the delight, the fragrance and the benefit which it will afford those who come across it. For the virtuous life and habitual piety do not merely consist of studying divinity; not only of thinking on an elevated plain about things as they are here and now. It must also include the description in writing of the way of life of others. So I have striven to complete
this composition to inform your love, oh child; and as I have put together a copious and accurate collection, so I have emulated the most wise bee, gathering up the spiritually beneficial deeds of the fathers. Now I will begin to tell <you> those things.

1. THE LIFE OF JOHN THE ELDER
AND THE CAVE OF SAPNAS

There was an elder living in the monastery of Abba Eustorgios* whom our saintly Archbishop of Jerusalem wanted to appoint higoumen of the monastery. <The candidate> however would not agree and said: 'I prefer prayer on Mount Sinai'. The archbishop* urged him first to become <higoumen> and then to depart <for the mountain> but the elder would not be persuaded. So <the archbishop> gave him leave of absence, charging him to accept the office of higoumen on his return. <The elder> bid the archbishop farewell and set out on the journey to Mount Sinai, taking his own disciple* with him. They crossed the river Jordan* but before they reached even the first mile-post the elder began to shiver with fever. As he was unable to walk, they found a small cave and went into it so that the elder could rest. He stayed in the cave for three days, scarcely able to move and burning with fever. Then, whilst he was sleeping, he saw a figure who said to him: 'Tell me, elder, where do you want to go?'. He replied: 'To Mount Sinai'. The vision then said to him: 'Please, I beg of you, do not go there', but as he could not prevail upon the elder, he withdrew from him. Now the elder's fever attacked him more violently. Again the following night the same figure with the same appearance came to him and said: 'Why do you insist on suffering like this, good elder? Listen to me and do not go there.' The elder asked him: 'Who then are you?' The vision replied: 'I am John the Baptist and that is why I say to you: do not go there. For this little cave is greater than Mount Sinai. Many times did our Lord Jesus Christ come in here to visit me. Give me your word that you will stay here and I will give you back your health'. The elder accepted this with joy and gave his solemn word that he would remain in the cave. He was instantly restored to health and stayed there for the rest of his life. He made the cave into a church and gathered a brotherhood together there; the place is called Sapas.* Close by it and to the left is the Wadi Chorath* to which Elijah the Tishbite was sent during a drought; it faces the Jordan.

2. THE ELDER WHO FED LIONS
IN HIS OWN CAVE

There was another elder at that place called Sapas whose virtue was so great that he would welcome the lions which came into his cave and feed them at his lap, so full of divine grace was this man.

3. THE LIFE OF CONON, PRIEST OF THE COMMUNITY OF PENTHOULA

At the monastery of our holy father Sabas* we met Athanasios. The elder told us this tale:
When I was in the Community of Penthoula,* there was a priest there who baptised. He was a Cilician and his name was Conon. He had been appointed to administer baptisms because he was a great elder. He would anoint and baptise those who came there; but it was an occasion of acute embarrassment to him whenever he had to anoint a woman. For this reason, he wanted to withdraw from the community. But whenever he thought of withdrawing, Saint John would stand by him, saying: 'Persevere and I will make the struggle easier for you'. One day a Persian damsel came to be baptised and she was so very beautiful that the priest could not bring himself to anoint her with the holy oil. After she had waited two days, Archbishop Peter* heard of it and was very angry with the elder. He
wanted to appoint a woman deacon for the task but he did not do so since this would have been contrary to custom. Conon the priest took up his sheepskin cloak and went his way saying: 'I will not stay in this place any longer.' However, when he got into the hills, Saint John the Baptist met him and said to him in a gentle voice: 'Go back to your monastery and I will make the struggle easier for you'. Abba Conon replied in anger: 'Believe me, I will not return. You have often made that promise to me and you have done nothing about it'. Saint John then made him sit down on one of the hills, stripped him of his clothes and three times made the sign of the cross beneath his navel. 'Believe me, Conon the priest', he said, 'I wanted you to carry away some reward from the struggle. But since you did not wish it to be so, I have caused the struggle to cease. But you shall have no reward for this'. Conon the priest returned to the task of baptising at the community and next day he baptised and anointed the Persian without even being aware that she was of the female sex. For twelve years he anointed and baptised without suffering any physical disturbance and with no awareness of women's femininity; so he drew his life to a close.

4. THE VISION OF ABBA LEONTIOS

Abba Leontios of the community of our holy father Theodosios told us: After the new lavriotes were driven out of the New Lavra I went and took up residence in the same lavra. One Sunday I went to the church to make my communion and when I went in, I saw an angel standing at the right side of the altar. When I had received communion I went back to my cell and a voice came to me saying: 'From the moment that altar was consecrated I was commanded to remain here'.

5. ABBA POLYCHRONIOS' STORY OF THE THREE MONKS

Abba Polychronios told us: I saw one of the brothers at the Lavra of the Towers of Jordan who was not keeping himself up to the mark for he never fulfilled his Sunday duties. Then, some time later, I saw this man who had formerly been so lax devoting himself to his duties with all diligence and great zeal. So I said to him: 'Now you are doing well, brother, and looking after your own soul'. He said to me: 'Abba, I am about to die sir',—and three days later he was dead.

This same Polychronios, priest of the New Lavra, also told me this: Once whilst I was staying at the Lavra of the Towers one of the brothers died. The steward said to me: 'Of your charity, brother, come so we can carry that brother's effects into the storeroom'. As we began to move his things I saw the steward weeping. I said to him: 'Come now, abba, why are you weeping in this way, sir'? He replied: 'Because today I am carrying out that brother's effects and two days from now others shall bear away mine'. And so it was; two days later the steward himself died, just as he said.

6. ANOTHER STORY OF ABBA POLYCHRONIOS

Abba Polychronios the priest told us that he had heard from Abba Constantine, who was higoumen of the New Lavra of Holy Mary the Mother of God, that one of the brethren died in the hospital at Jericho. They brought him back to The Towers to bury him there and from the moment they left the hospital until they arrived at The Towers, a star travelled with them and never ceased shining over the dead brother until they laid him in the earth.
16. ABBA NICOLAS’ STORY
ABOUT HIMSELF AND HIS FRIENDS

There was an elder living at the Lavra of Abba Peter* near the holy Jordan whose name was Nicolas. He told us that when he was staying at Raithou,* three of the brethren, *of whom he was one* were sent to perform a service* at the Thebaïd. 'But when we were going through the desert', he said, 'we lost our way and wandered far and wide. Our water was all used up and we went for days without finding any. We began to faint from thirst and heat. When we could not take one more step, we found some tamarisk trees there in the desert and flung ourselves down wherever any shade could be found, fully expecting to die of thirst. As I lay there I fell into an ecstasy and I saw a pool of water full to overflowing. Two people were standing at the edge of the pool, drawing water with a wooden vessel. I began to make a request of one of them in these words: 'Of your charity, sir, give me a little water, for I am faint'; but he was unwilling to grant my request. The other one said to him: 'Give him a little', but he replied: 'No, let us not give him any, for he is too easy-going,* and does not take care <of his soul>'. The other said: 'Yes, yes; it is true that he is easy-going but he is hospitable* to strangers',—and so he gave some to me and also to my companions. We drank and went on our way, travelling three more days without drinking until we reached civilisation.*

17. THE LIFE OF A GREAT ELDER

The same elder also told us about a certain great elder of the same lavra who spent fifty years in his cave. He never drank wine and the only bread he ate was made from bran. He received <communion> three times a week.

18. THE LIFE OF ANOTHER ELDER AT THE MONASTERY OF THE LAVRA
WHO SLEPT WITH LIONS

Abba Polychronius the priest also told us about another elder living in the same Lavra of Abba Peter who would often go off and stay on the banks of the holy Jordan. There he found a lion's den in which he installed himself. One day he found two lion-cubs in the cave. Wrapping them up in his cloak,* he took them to church. 'If we kept the commandments of our Lord Jesus Christ', he said, 'these animals would fear us. But because of our sins we have become slaves and it is rather we who fear them'. Greatly edified, the brethren returned to their caves.

19. ABBA ELIJAH’S STORY ABOUT HIMSELF

Abba Elijah the grazer* told us that he was once living in a cave in the area around Jordan because he was not in communion with Abba Macarios, the Bishop of Jerusalem.*

One day, about the sixth hour, when the heat was at its most intense, somebody came knocking at the cave. I went out and saw a woman there. 'What are you doing here?' I asked her, and she answered in these words: 'Abba, I too follow this way of life, sir. I have a little cave in which I live about a stone’s throw from your cell'. She pointed out to me where it was located, away to the south. Then she said to me: 'I have travelled across this wilderness and am very thirsty on account of the raging heat. Of your charity, give me a little water'. I took out my water-bottle and gave it to her. She took it and drank, then I sent her on her way. When she had departed, the devil began working against me on her account, putting lewd thoughts* into my mind. The devil gained possession of me and I could not bear the flame of lust. So I took my staff and set out from the cave in the heat of the day, across the burning
stones. It was my intention to search for her and to satisfy my desire. When I had gone about a furlong, my passion reached fever-pitch and I went into a trance. I saw the earth open up and I fell down into it. There I saw rotting corpses, badly decayed and burst open, filling the place with an unspeakably foul stench. I then saw a person of venerable appearance who pointed to the corpses and said to me: 'See, this is a woman’s <body> and that is a man’s; go and enjoy yourself and do whatever your passion dictates. But in return for that pleasure, take note how much labour you intend to destroy. Just look at the sort of sin for which you are prepared to deprive yourself of the kingdom of heaven. Oh, wretched humanity! Would you lose the fruit of all that toil for one hour’s <pleasure>?'

But I was overcome by the appalling stench and fell to the ground. The holy apparition came and set me on my feet. He caused the warfare to cease and I returned to my cell giving thanks to God.

20. THE CONVERSION OF A SOLDIER
(WHOSE LIFE IS BRIEFLY DESCRIBED)
WHEN GOD WORKED A MIRACLE FOR HIM

One of the fathers told me that a military standard-bearer had told him this:
We were in a battle with the Mauritanians in the African provinces; the barbarians defeated us and put us to flight. They pursued us and many of us were slain. One of the barbarians caught up with me and raised his spear to strike at me. When I saw this, I began calling on God. ‘Lord God’, I said; ‘You who appeared to your servant Thecla* and delivered her from impious hands: deliver me from this calamity and save me from this bitter death. Then I will go and lead a life of solitude* in the desert’. When I turned round, there was not a barbarian in sight. I came straight away to this Lavra of Kopratha* and, by the grace of God, I have lived thirty years in this cave.

21. THE DEATH OF AN ANCHORITE
AND OF HIS SLAYER

Abba Gerontios, higoumen of the monastery of our holy father Euthymios,* told me this:
There were three of us who were grazers living beyond the Red Sea, over towards Besimon. Once when we were walking around on the mountain-side another grazer was walking along the shore of the sea, down below us. It happened that he met with some Saracens passing through the area. As they passed by him, one of the Saracens turned back and struck off the head of the anchorite. We saw all this from a distance as we were on the mountain. While we were grieving for the anchorite, suddenly a bird came over the Saracen, seized him and carried him up into the air. It then let him drop to the ground, where he was turned into carrion.

22. THE LIFE OF ANOTHER ELDER
NAMED CONON

In the community of our holy father Theodosios the Archimandrite* there was an elder named Conon, a native of Cilicia. This is the rule of life which he maintained for thirty-five years: he partook of bread and water once a week, he worked unceasingly and he never went out of the church.

23. THE LIFE OF THEODOULOS THE MONK

We saw another elder in that same monastery, a former soldier* named Theodoulos who fasted every day, never wore shoes and never slept lying down.*
Patriarch, and let you and me go into it. If one of us comes out unharmed, he is the orthodox and he is the one we ought to follow'. He said this to terrify the patriarch; but the godly Ephraim said to the stylite: 'You ought to have obeyed me as a father, my child, and to have asked nothing of us. Since you have asked something which is beyond my meagre ability, I have put my trust in the mercies of the Son of God that, for the sake of your soul’s salvation, I will do what you suggest'. Then the godly Ephraim said to those who stood by: 'Blessed be the Lord! Bring some wood here'. When the wood arrived, the patriarch lit it before the column and he said to the stylite: 'Come down and we will both walk into the fire to carry out your test'. The stylite was amazed at the patriarch's trust in God and he did not want to come down. The patriarch said to him: 'Was it not you who suggested we do this? How is it you no longer want to go through with it'? Then the patriarch took off the omophorion* he was wearing and, coming close to the fire, prayed in these words: 'Lord Jesus Christ our God, who for our sakes condescended truly to be made flesh of our Lady the holy Mother of God and ever-virgin Mary, show us the truth'. When the prayer was finished, he threw his omophorion into the fire. The fire burned for three hours. Then, when the wood was all burnt up, he retrieved the omophorion from the fire—still in one piece. It was undamaged and unmarked and there was no sign to be found on it of having been in the fire. When he saw what had happened, the stylite received instruction, rejected Severus and his heresy with an oath, and entered the holy church. He received communion at the hands of the blessed Ephraim, glorifying God.

37. The life of a bishop who left his throne and came to the holy city where he changed his clothes and became a builder’s labourer

One of the fathers told of a bishop who left his own diocese and came into Theoupolis, where he worked as labourer. At that time the Count of the East was Ephraim, a merciful and compassionate man; so much so that he was rebuilding the public edifices (the city having been dilapidated by an earthquake). In his sleep one night Ephraim saw the bishop lying down and a column of fire standing over him which reached up into heaven. As he had this vision not once, but several times, Ephraim was greatly amazed, for it was an awesome and truly astounding apparition. He asked himself what it might be, for he had no idea the workman was a bishop. How could he have known the labourer was a bishop, in view of his uncombed hair and shabby clothing? This was a poverty-stricken man, broken down by much endurance, much asceticism and labour, plus the continuous burden of much toil. One day Ephraim sent for the labourer who was once a bishop, to learn from him who he was. He took him aside and began asking him where he was from and what his name was. The sometime bishop said: 'I am one of the poor men of this city. For lack of any support I work as a labourer and God sustains me by my toil.' God prompted Ephraim to answer him: 'Believe me, I shall not let you go until you tell me the whole truth about yourself'. Since he could conceal himself no longer, the bishop said to him: 'Give me your word that you will never tell anybody what you are about to hear from me as long as I am still alive, and I will tell you about myself. But I will not tell you my name or the name of my city'. The godly Ephraim swore to him: 'I will not tell anybody what you are about to tell me for as long as it pleases God to keep you in this life'. The other said to him: 'I am a bishop. At the behest of God, I left my diocese and
came to this place—because it was totally unknown to me. Here I have suffered affliction and laboured at menial tasks. By my toil I earn a little bread, but do you add what you can by way of almsgiving.* For in these days, God is going to raise you up to the throne of Theopolis to be the shepherd of his people which Christ our true God purchased by his own blood. As I said to you, you are to strive for almsgiving and orthodoxy. By such sacrifices you will be well-pleasing to God'. Within a few days it came about as he had predicted. When the blessed Ephraim had heard the bishop out, he glorified God saying: 'Oh, how many hidden servants God has and they are known only to him alone'!

38. THE DEATH OF THE IMPIOUS EMPEROR ANASTASIOS

One of those who loved Christ told us about the Emperor Anastasios who dismissed Euphemios and Macedonios, Patriarchs of Constantinople, and exiled them to Euchalita in Pontus on account of the holy synod of the fathers at Chalcedon. In his sleep, the Emperor Anastasios saw a man of striking appearance, dressed in white and standing before him, carrying a written book from which he was reading. He turned over five pages of the book, read out the emperor's name and said to him: 'See, because of your faithlessness I am expunging fourteen <years(?)>', and they say he erased them with his own finger. Two days later there was an outburst of thunder and lightening. In deep terror <the emperor> surrendered his spirit, greatly distressed. This was his reward for having despised the most holy Church of Christ our God and having exiled her shepherds.

39. THE LIFE OF A MONK OF THE MONASTERY OF ABBA SEVERIAN AND HOW HE WAS PRUDENTLY RESTRAINED BY A COUNTRY-GIRL FROM SINNING WITH HER*

When I was in Antioch the Great I heard one of the priests of the church saying the Patriarch Anastasios had told something of this sort:
A monk of the monastery of Abba Severian was sent to serve in the district of Eleutheroupolis. He put up at the home of a Christ-loving farmer, the father of a daughter (his only child) whose mother was dead. When the monk had been some days in the farmer's house, the devil (he who is always contending with humanity) thrust unclean thoughts upon the brother. He became disturbed concerning the maiden and sought an opportunity to have his way with her. And the devil who was responsible for this disturbance himself took care to provide the desired opportunity. The maiden's father took himself off to Ascalon to deal with some pressing business. Knowing that there was nobody in the house but the maiden and himself, the brother approached her with the intention of forcing his attentions upon her. When she realised how disturbed he was and how he burned with desire for her, the maiden said to him: 'Do not be so excited and do not act ignobly toward me; my father will not return either today or tomorrow. But first listen to what I have to say to you and then, the Lord knows, I will do anything you wish'. And she began to reason with him saying: 'You, brother, how long have you been in your monastery, sir?' He said: 'Seventeen years'. She replied: 'Have you had any experience with a woman?' and he said he had not. The maiden answered the brother: 'And you wish to destroy all your labour for the sake of an hour's pleasure? How many times have you poured out tears that you might present your flesh spotless and without stain to Christ? And now you are willing to dissipate all that labour for the sake of a short-lived pleasure?
And if I do as you wish and you fall <into sin> with me, have you the wherewithal to assume responsibility for me and to support me?” The brother confessed he had not, whereupon the maiden replied and said to him: ‘In truth, this is no lie: if you disgrace me, you will be the cause of many evils’. The monk said to her: ‘How so?’ The maiden replied: ‘You will destroy your soul and, in the second place, you will have to answer for my soul. To make you aware of this, I will convince you with an oath. If you disgrace me, <I swear> by Him who said Thou shalt bear no false witness that I will hang myself. Thus you will be found guilty of murder too, and in the judgement you will be judged as a murderer. Rather than become the cause of so much evil, go back to your monastery. You will have <plenty> to do in praying for me.’ The brother became himself again and recovered his normal state of mind. He left the farm and went away to his monastery where he fell prostrate before the higoumen with the prayer that he might never again for the rest of his life go out of the monastery. He lived for three months and then passed over to the Lord.

40. THE LIFE OF ABBA COSMAS THE EUNUCH

This story was told to us by Abba Basil, priest of the monastery of the Byzantines:*

When I was with Abba Gregory the Patriarch at Theoupolis,* Abba Cosmas the Eunuch of the Lavra of Pharón came from Jerusalem. This man was most truly a monk, orthodox and of great zeal, with no small knowledge of the holy Scriptures. After being there a few days, the elder died. Wishing to honour his remains, the patriarch ordered that he should be buried at a spot in the cemetery where a bishop lay. Two days later I came to kiss the elder’s grave. A poor man stricken with paralysis was lying on top of the tomb, begging alms of those who came into the church. When this poor man saw me making three prostrations and offering the priestly prayer, he said to me: ‘Oh abba, this was indeed a great elder, sir, whom you buried here three days ago’. I answered him saying: ‘How do you know that’? He told me: ‘I was paralysed for twelve years and, through this elder, the Lord cured me. When I am distressed, he comes and comforts me, granting me relief. And now you are about to hear yet another strange thing about this elder. Ever since you buried him, I hear him at night calling and saying to the bishop: “Touch me not; stay away! Come not near, thou heretic and enemy of the truth and of the holy catholic Church of God”’. Having heard this from the man cured of his paralysis, I went and repeated it to the patriarch. I besought that most holy man to let us take the body of the elder and lay it in another tomb. Then the patriarch said to me: ‘Believe me, my child, Abba Cosmas will suffer no hurt from the heretic. This has all come about that the virtue and zeal of the elder might become known to us after his departure from this world; also that the doctrine of the bishop should be revealed to us, so that we not hold him to have been one of the orthodox’.

The same Abba Basil also told us this concerning this elder, Abba Cosmas:

I visited him when he was staying at the Lavra of Pharakôn and he said to me: A doubt once perplexed me concerning the saying of the Lord to his disciples: ‘He who has a garment, let him sell it and buy a sword’, and they said to him: ‘Here are two swords’.* After agonizing unsuccessfully over the meaning of this passage, I went from my cell, out into the heat of the midday sun, driven by a compulsion to go to the Lavra of Pyrgia ==The Towers or Turrets== where Abba Theophilos was, to ask him about the matter. When I came into the desert, near to Calamôn, I saw an exceedingly large dragon coming down from the mountain towards Calamôn. It was so large that it made a great vault of itself as it moved. I suddenly realised that I was passing through its vault unharmed. I knew (he said) that the devil was trying to frustrate my purpose but that the prayer of the elder had prevailed. I went my way (he said) and
But God did not disregard his church. He reversed the judgement which had been pronounced in the bishop’s favour in contravention of the Apostolic canons. On a certain day when he was all dressed up splendidly and ready to go before the rulers in order to regain his priestly dignity by their decision, just as he was about to leave his house, his belly intimated that he was in need of the privy. When he had been two hours in there without coming out, some of those who stood by went in,—for they had to ask him whether he was coming out. They found him with his head down in the drain of the privy and his feet up in the air. He had gained for himself an equally well-matched eternal death as that which bore off Arius, the sacrilegious enemy of God. For Arius too, when his hopes ran high of being arbitrarily restored to the church by the cooperation if those in authority, the wondrous angel of the holy church of God and of the great council, scattered his bowels (bitterly afflicted with the labour-pains of blasphemy) in a privy. When <Thalaios> hoped to continue the evil he had previously committed by the unjust intervention of those in authority, the angel who governed the Thessalonian church set out together with the great martyr Demetrios. And in the very place where he used to associate with the impure demon which provoked him and to contrive his onslaughts against the holy church of God; there, in that place, he nailed the unhallowed <body> of him, the unprofitable servant, and lifted up into the air those feet which would not walk in the way of righteousness, bearing the marks which indicated the judgement which awaited him; and that It is a terrible thing to fall into the hands of the living God <Heb 10:31>.

John Moschos

44. THE LIFE OF AN ELDER,
A MONK LIVING NEAR THE CITY OF ANTINOË*
AND CONCERNING HIS PRAYER
FOR A DEAD BROTHER

When we came to the Thebaïd one of the elders told us that there was an elder of great repute living outside the city of Antinoë, one who had kept his cell for about seventy years. He had ten disciples but one of them was very careless so far as his own soul was concerned. The elder often besought and entreated him, saying: ‘Brother, pay attention to your own soul, for death awaits you and the road to punishment’. The brother always disregarded the elder, refusing to accept what was said by him. Well, after a time, death carried the brother off and the elder was deeply troubled on his account, knowing that he had left this world sadly lacking in faith and devotion. The elder fell to his prayers and said: ‘Lord Jesus Christ, our true God, reveal to me the state of the brother’s soul’. He went into a trance and saw a river of fire with a multitude <of people> in the fire itself. Right in the middle was the brother, submerged up to his neck. The elder said to him: ‘Was it not because of this retribution that I called on you to look after your own soul my child’? The brother answered and said to the elder: ‘I thank God, father, that there is relief for my head. Thanks to your prayers I am standing on the head of a bishop’.

45. THE LIFE OF A MONK,
A RECLUSE ON THE MOUNT OF OLIVES
AND CONCERNING THE VENERATION
OF AN ICON OF THE MOST HOLY MOTHER OF GOD

One of the elders told us that Abba Theodore the Aeliate said that there was a certain recluse on the Mount of Olives, a great warrior against whom the demon of sexual desire waged battle. One day
when <the demon> attacked with vehemence, the elder began to
give up in despair and to say to the demon: 'How much longer are
you not going to let me go? Desist from growing old together with
me!' The demon appeared to him in visible form, saying: 'Swear to
me that you will never reveal to anybody what I am about to tell
you and I will no longer wage war against you'. The elder swore:
'By Him who dwelleth in the heavens I will not tell anybody what
you say'. The demon said to him: 'Desist from venerating this icon
here and I will call off my war against you'. The icon in question
bore the likeness of our Lady Mary, the holy Mother of God,
carrying our Lord Jesus Christ. The recluse said to the demon: 'Let
me go and think about it'. The next day he sent for Abba Theodore
the Aeliotе (the one who told us this story) for at that time he was
residing at the Lavra of Pharón. When Abba Theodore came, the
recluse told him all there was to tell and received this reply: 'In fact
you were ensnared when you swore, abba. But you are quite right
to speak out. It were better for you to leave no brothel in the town
unentered than to diminish reverence from our Lord Jesus Christ
and from his Mother'. Abba Theodore strengthened and comforted
the recluse with many words and then returned to his own place.
The demon re-appeared to the recluse and said to him: 'What is this
then, you wicked old man?* Did you not swear to me that you
would not tell anybody? Why then have you revealed everything to
the man who came to see you? I tell you, you wicked old man, you
will be tried as an oath-breaker at the day of judgement'. The
recluse answered: 'I know that I gave my oath and broke it, but it
was with my Lord and Creator that I broke faith; you I will not
obey. As the initiator of evil counsel and of the oath-breaking, you
are the one who will have to face the inescapable consequences of
the misdeeds you brought about'.

46. THE WONDEROUS VISION OF ABBA CYRIACOS
OF THE LAVRA OF CALAMÓN AND
CONCERNING TWO BOOKS
OF THE IMPIOUS NESTORIOS

We once paid a visit to Abba Cyriacos the priest at the Lavra of
Calamón on the Holy Jordan and he told us this story:
One day, in my sleep, I saw a woman of stately appearance clad in
purple and after her <I saw> two reverend and honourable men
standing outside my cell. It seemed to me that the woman was our
Lady the Mother of God and that the men with her were Saint John
the Divine and Saint John the Baptist. I went out of my cell and
invited them to come in and offer a prayer in my cell, but she would
not agree <to my request> I persisted at some length, entreating
her and saying: Oh let the simple not go away ashamed <Ps 73:21>
and much else. When she realised that I was importunate with my
invitation, she answered me coldly, saying: 'How can you ask me to
enter your cell when you have my enemy in there?' With these
words she went away. When I awoke, I began to worry and to
wonder if I might have offended her in my thoughts, for there was
nobody in the cell but me. I examined myself at some length and
could find no fault which I might have committed against her. As
it seemed that I was about to be overcome with remorse, I rose up
and took up a scroll, intending to read it, thinking that perhaps
reading would alleviate my distress. It was a book I had borrowed
from Hesychios, priest of Jerusalem. I unwound it and found two
writings of the irreligious Nestorios written at the end of it—and
immediately I knew that he was the enemy of our Lady, the holy
Mother of God. So I rose up and went off and gave the book back
to him who had given it to me. I said to him: 'Take your book
back, brother, for I have not derived as much benefit from it as it
has brought adversity upon me'. When he asked me how it had
caused me adversity, I told him what had happened. When he had
heard about it all, he immediately cut the writings of Nestorios off from the scroll and threw the piece into the fire, saying: 'The enemy of our Lady, the holy Mother of God, shall not remain in my cell either'.

47. A MIRACLE OF THE HOLY MOTHER OF GOD AGAINST GAIANAS THE ACTOR WHO WAS BLASPHEMING HER IN THE THEATRE

[Heliopolis] is a city of Lebanese Phoenicia. There was an actor there named Gaianas who used to perform at the theatre an act in which he blasphemed against the holy Mother of God. The Mother of God appeared to him saying: 'What evil have I done to you that you should revile me before so many people and blaspheme against me?' He rose up and, far from mending his ways, proceeded to blaspheme against her even more than before. Three times she appeared to him with the same reproach and admonition. As he did not mend his ways in the slightest degree, but rather blasphemed the more, she appeared to him once when he was sleeping at mid-day and said nothing at all. All she did was to sever his two hands and feet with her finger. When he woke up he found that his hands and feet were so afflicted that he just lay there like a tree-trunk. In these circumstances the wretched man confessed to everybody (making himself a public example) that he had received the reward for his blasphemy. And this he did for love of his fellow men.

Anastasios, priest and treasurer at the holy <Church of the> Resurrection of Christ our God told us that Cosmiana, the wife of Germanos the Patrician, came one night, wishing to worship alone at the holy and life-giving sepulchre of our Lord Jesus Christ, the true God. When she approached the sanctuary, our Lady the holy Mother of God, together with other women, met her in visible form, and said to her: 'As you are not one of us, you are not to come in here, for you are none of ours'. The woman was in fact a member of the sect of Severus Acephalos.* She begged hard for permission to enter but the holy Mother of God replied: 'Believe me, woman, you shall not come in here until you are in communion with us'. The woman realised that it was because she was a heretic that she was being refused entry; and that nor would she be allowed in until she join the holy catholic and apostolic Church of Christ our God. She sent for the deacon and when the holy chalice arrived, she partook of the holy body and blood of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ; and thus she was found worthy to worship unimpeded at the holy and life-giving sepulchre of our Lord Jesus Christ.

49. THE WONDROUS VISION OF THE DUKE OF PALESTINE BY WHICH HE WAS COMPELLED TO RENOUNCE THE AFOREMENTIONED HERESY AND TO ENTER INTO COMMUNION WITH THE CHURCH OF CHRIST

Anastasios the Priest also told us that when Gēbēmer became the military governor of Palestine, his first act was to come and worship
at the holy <Church of the> Resurrection of Christ who is God. As he was about to approach, he saw a ram charging at him intent on impaling him on its horns. So great was his fear that he stepped backwards towards the guardian of <the Chapel of> the Cross who was present, and also the ictors who stood by. They said to him: ‘What is the matter, your highness? Why do you not enter?’ He said: ‘Why did you bring in that ram?’ They were taken aback by this, but they peered into the holy sepulchre and saw nothing. So they spoke to him, urging him to enter and telling him that there was no such thing <as a ram> in there. A second time he made as though to enter and again he saw the ram charging at him and preventing him from entering. This happened several times, at least in his eyes. Those who were with him saw nothing and the guardian of <the Chapel of> the Cross said to him: ‘Believe me, your highness, there is something in your soul and it is because of this that you are prevented from worshipping at the holy and life-giving sepulchre of our Saviour. You would do well to confess before God, for he is kindly disposed towards humanity and it was to show mercy on you that he made you see this vision’. Bursting into tears, the governor said: ‘I am responsible for many great sins against the Lord’. He cast himself face down on the ground and remained weeping in that position for a long time, confessing to God. Then he got up and made as though to enter the sepulchre, but he could not <enter>. The apparition of the ram prevented him no less than before. Then the guardian of <the Chapel of> the Cross said to him: ‘There is still some other impediment’. The governor replied: ‘Could it be that I am forbidden to enter because I am in communion with Severus, and not with the holy catholic and apostolic Church?’. And he besought the guardian of <the Chapel of the> Cross that he might partake of the holy and life-giving mysteries of Christ our God. When the holy chalice arrived, he made his communion, and thus he entered and worshipped, no longer seeing anything <which deterred him>.

50. THE VISION AND A SAYING OF ABBA GEORGE THE RECLUSE

Scythopolis was the second city of Palestine. There I met Abba Anastasios who told us about Abba George the recluse:

One night I got up to beat the wood <en signal> (for I was the precentor) and I heard an elderweeping. I went and entreated him saying: ‘Abba, what is the matter, sir, that you weep so?’ He answered me not a word. So I asked him again: ‘Tell me the cause <of your grief>.’ Sighing from the depths of his heart, he said to me: ‘How should I not weep, seeing that our Lord is not willing to be placated on our account? I thought I stood before one who sat on a high throne, my child.’ Around him were several tens of thousands who besought and entreated him concerning a certain matter, but he would not be persuaded. Then a woman clothed in purple raiment came and fell down before him saying: ‘Please, for my sake, grant this request’, but he remained equally unmoved. ‘That is why I weep and groan, for I am afraid of what is going to happen to me’. He said this to me at first light on the Thursday. The next day, Friday, about the ninth hour, there was a severe earthquake which overthrew the cities of the Phoenician coast.

This Abba Anastasios spoke to us again and told us this about the same elder:

Some time later, as he stood at the window <of his cell>, he began to weep and to say to me: ‘Woe are we, brother, for we have no compunction, but live heedlessly. I fear we are at the gates <of perdition> and that the wrath of God has overtaken us’. The next day, fire appeared in the sky.