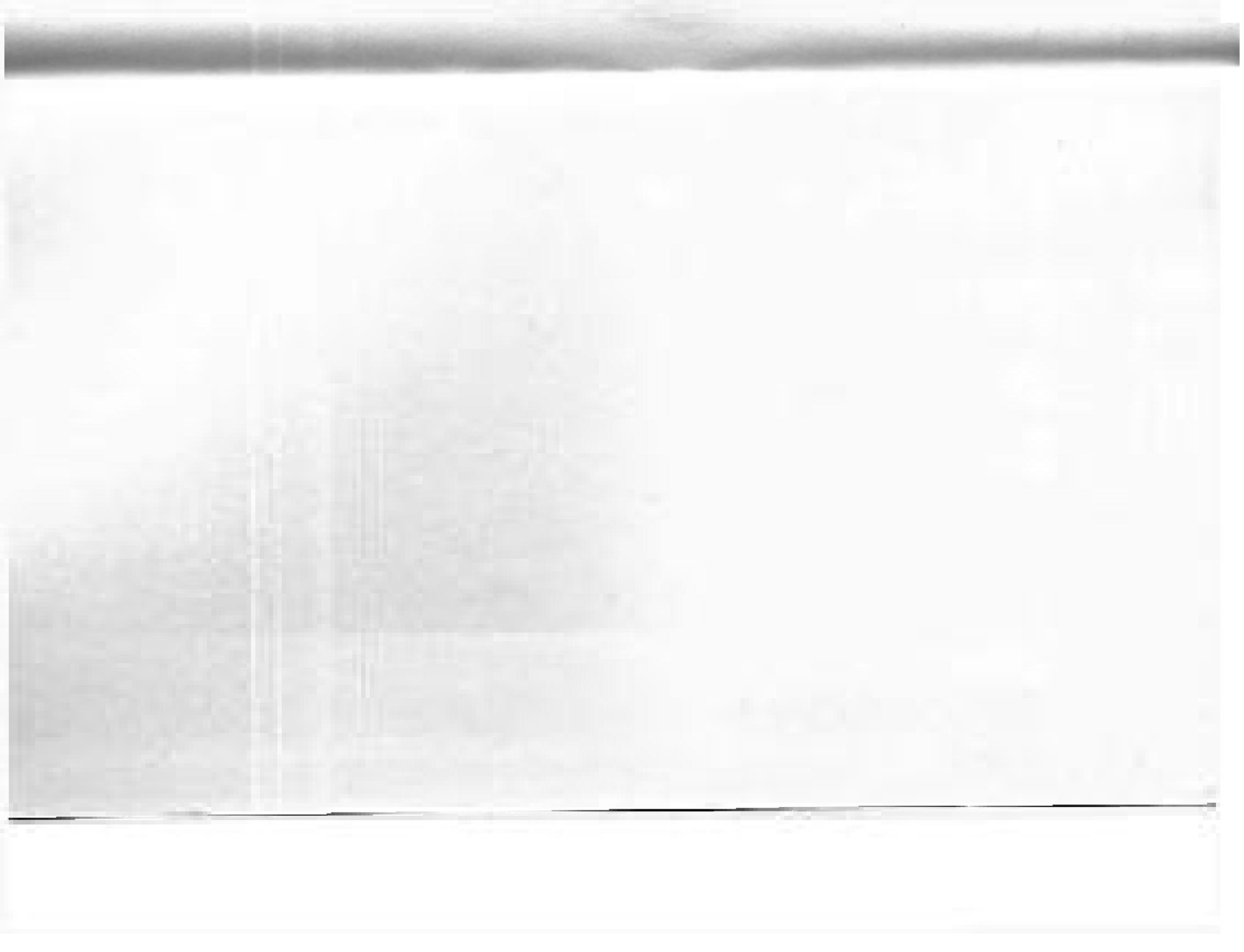


OXFORD EARLY CHRISTIAN STUDIES

General Editors

Henry Chadwick Andrew Louth



THE OXFORD EARLY CHRISTIAN STUDIES series includes scholarly volumes on the thought and history of the early Christian centuries. Covering a wide range of Greek, Latin, and Oriental sources, the books are of interest to theologians, ancient historians, and specialists in the classical and Jewish worlds.

Titles in the series include:

Origen and the Life of the Stars

A History of an Idea

A. Scott (1991)

Regnum Caelorum

Patterns of Future Hope in Early Christianity

Charles E. Hill (1992)

Pelagius' Commentary on St Paul's Epistle to the Romans

Translated with introduction and commentary by

T. S. de Bruyn (1993)

The Desert Fathers on Monastic Community

Graham Gould (1993)

Arator on the Acts of the Apostles

A Baptismal Commentary

Richard Hillier (1993)

Ascetics and Ambassadors of Christ

John Binns (1994)

Eunomius and the Later Arians

R. P. Vaggione (*forthcoming*)

The Christology of Theodoret of Cyrus

P. B. Clayton (*forthcoming*)

Arnobius of Sicca

Religious Conflict and Competition in the Age of Diocletian

Michael Bland Simmons (*forthcoming*)

Athanasius and the Politics of Asceticism

DAVID BRAKKE

CLARENDON PRESS · OXFORD

1995

Oxford University Press, Walton Street, Oxford OX2 6DP

Oxford New York

Athens Auckland Bangkok Bombay
Calcutta Cape Town Dar es Salaam Delhi
Florence Hong Kong Istanbul Karachi
Kuala Lumpur Madras Madrid Melbourne
Mexico City Nairobi Paris Singapore
Taipei Tokyo Toronto

and associated companies in
Berlin Ibadan



Oxford is a trade mark of Oxford University Press

Published in the United States
by Oxford University Press Inc., New York

© David Brakke 1995

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, without the prior permission in writing of Oxford University Press. Within the UK, exceptions are allowed in respect of any fair dealing for the purpose of research or private study, or criticism or review, as permitted under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act, 1988, or in the case of reprographic reproduction in accordance with the terms of the licences issued by the Copyright Licensing Agency. Enquiries concerning reproduction outside these terms and in other countries should be sent to the Rights Department, Oxford University Press, at the address above

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
Data available

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data
Athanasius and the politics of asceticism / David Brakke.
(Oxford early Christian studies)

Revision of the author's thesis (doctoral)—Yale University, 1992,
originally presented under the title: *St. Athanasius and ascetic
Christians in Egypt.*

Includes bibliographical references and index.

1. Athanasius, Saint, Patriarch of Alexandria, d. 373.
2. Asceticism—History—Early church, ca. 30–600. I. Title.
II. Series.

BR1720.A7B73 1995 270.2'092—dc20 94-30998
ISBN 0-19-826816-5

1 3 5 7 9 10 8 6 4 2

Typeset by Regent Typesetting, London
Printed in Great Britain
on acid-free paper by
Bookcraft (Bath) Ltd., Midsomer Norton

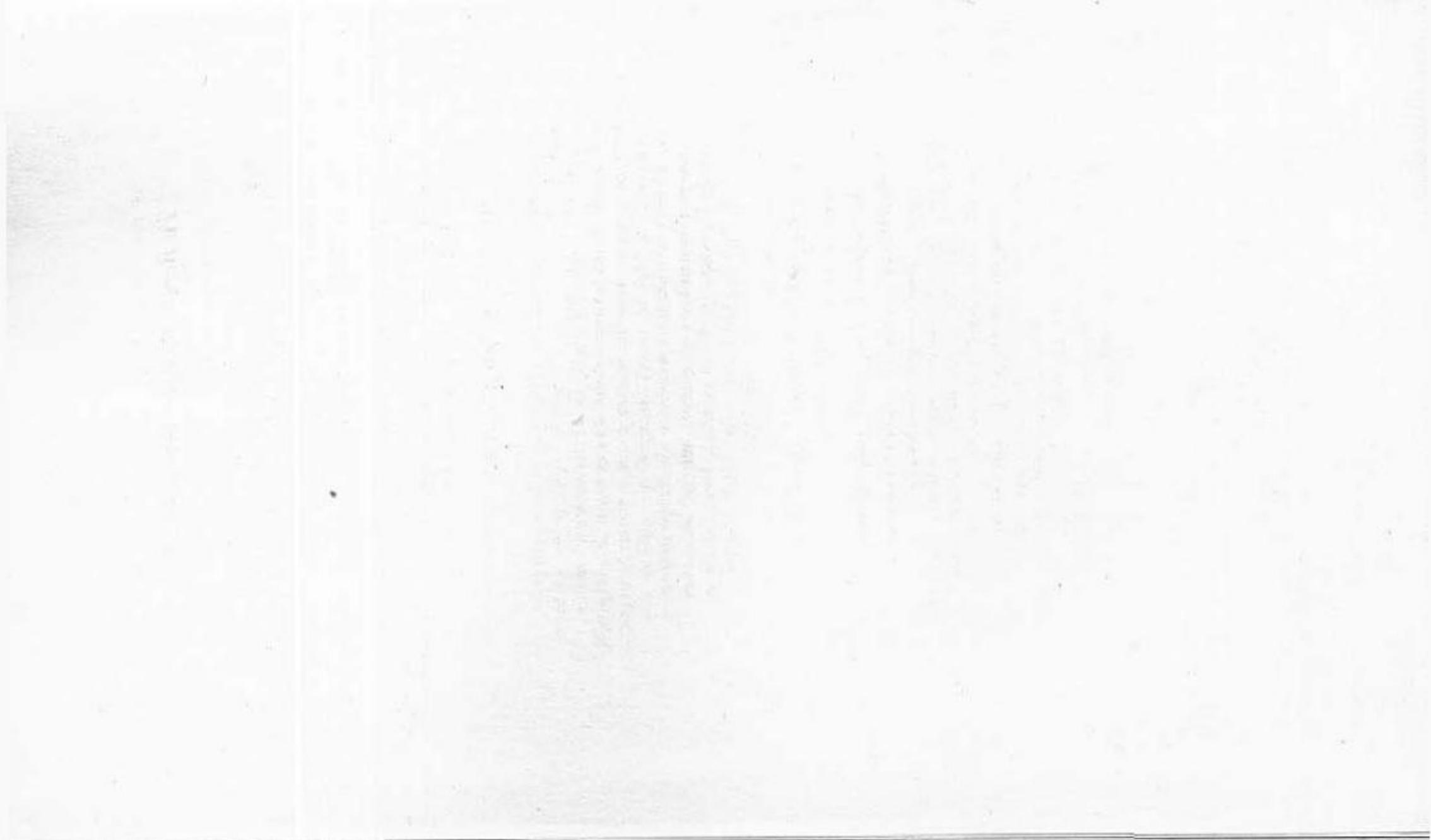
To Bernhard and Norma Brakke

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This book is a revision of my doctoral thesis, 'St Athanasius and Ascetic Christians in Egypt' (Yale, 1992). Bentley Layton, my thesis director, provided me with invaluable guidance, rigorous criticism, and unfailing friendship; Rowan Greer responded to numerous drafts and, in particular, prevented me from going astray on a crucial point. Michael Stone arrived at Yale at an opportune time and generously agreed to introduce me to Armenian. In the process of revision, I have benefited from the wisdom of several scholars, particularly Henry Chadwick, Elizabeth Clark, Thomas Head, Andrew Louth, and Wayne Meeks. Portions of this work were read at meetings of the American Academy of Religion, the North American Patristics Society, the Society of Biblical Literature, the religion faculty of Concordia College (Moorhead, Minnesota), and the Medieval Studies Institute of Indiana University; the participants in those sessions gave me helpful responses. The notes should make clear my debt to such students of Athanasius and of fourth-century Egypt as Carlton Badger, Timothy Barnes, Alberto Camplani, Susanna Elm, James Goehring, J. R. Roldanus, Martin Tetz, and Rowan Williams. To all of these scholars I am grateful for what they have taught me; the remaining errors are my own.

For help of other kinds, I thank Robert F. Goheen and the Mellon Fellowships in the Humanities, who gave financial aid beyond what was owed; J. Albert Harrill, who appeared in New Haven near the start of this project and provided the supportive home that an undertaking such as this requires; and Hilary O'Shea and the staff of the Press, who expertly guided a novice author through the editorial and production process.

My greatest debt is imperfectly acknowledged in the dedication.



CONTENTS

<i>Abbreviations</i>	xi
<i>Note on References in the Text</i>	xv
<i>Chronology of Events</i>	xvi
Introduction	1
1. Female Virginitv and Ecclesiastical Politics in Alexandria	17
The Discipline of Virgins within the Church	21
Virgins in the Arian Conflict	57
2. The Desert Fathers and the Episcopate	80
The Roles of Monk and Bishop	83
Athanasius and the Pachomians	111
The Anti-Arian Campaign of the Third Exile	129
3. Asceticism in Athanasius' Theology and Spirituality	142
The Christian Life as an Ascetic Life	145
Imitation of the Saints and the Diverse Church	161
The Asceticism of the Ordinary Christian	182
4. The Spirituality and Politics of the <i>Life of Antony</i>	201
Early Views of Antony	203
The Story of Antony and the Myth of the Incarnate Word	216
The Definition of Ascetic Authority	245
Conclusion	266
<i>Appendix: Select Ascetic and Pastoral Writings of Athanasius</i>	273
A. <i>First Letter to Virgins</i>	274
B. <i>Second Letter to Virgins</i>	292
C. <i>On Virginitv</i>	303
D. <i>On Sickness and Health</i>	310
E. <i>Fragments on the Moral Life</i>	314
F. <i>Festal Letters</i> 24 (2) (330), 29 (357), 39 (367), and 40 (368)	320
<i>Bibliography</i>	335
<i>Index</i>	351

ABBREVIATIONS

I. WRITINGS OF ATHANASIUS

Works translated in the Appendix are marked with an asterisk.

<i>Apol. Const.</i>	<i>Defence before Constantius</i>
<i>Apol. sec.</i>	<i>Defence against the Arians</i>
<i>Ar.</i>	<i>Orations against the Arians</i>
<i>Car. et temp.</i>	<i>On Charity and Self-Control, preserved in Coptic</i>
<i>Decr.</i>	<i>Defence of the Nicene Council</i>
<i>Dion.</i>	<i>Defence of Dionysius</i>
<i>Ep. Adolph.</i>	<i>Letter to Adelphius</i>
<i>Ep. Aeg. Lib.</i>	<i>Circular Letter to the Bishops of Egypt and Libya</i>
<i>Ep. Afr.</i>	<i>Synodal Letter</i>
<i>Ep. Amun.</i>	<i>Letter to Ammoun</i>
<i>Ep. can.</i>	<i>Canonical Letter</i>
<i>Ep. cler. Alex.</i>	<i>Letter to the Clergy of Alexandria</i>
<i>Ep. Drac.</i>	<i>Letter to Dracontius</i>
<i>Ep. encycl.</i>	<i>Encyclical Letter</i>
<i>Ep(p). fest.</i>	<i>Festal Letter(s)</i>
<i>Ep. Jo. et Ant.</i>	<i>Letter to John and Antiochus</i>
<i>Ep. Marcell.</i>	<i>Letter to Marcellinus</i>
<i>Ep. Max.</i>	<i>Letter to Maximus</i>
<i>Ep. mon.</i>	<i>Letter to Monks</i>
<i>Ep. mort. Ar.</i>	<i>Letter to Serapion on the Death of Arius</i>
<i>Ep(p). Ors.</i>	<i>Letter(s) to Horsisius</i>
<i>Ep(p). Serap.</i>	<i>Letter(s) to Serapion on the Holy Spirit</i>
<i>Ep. virg. 1</i>	<i>First Letter to Virgins, preserved in Coptic*</i>
<i>Ep. virg. 2</i>	<i>Second Letter to Virgins, preserved in Syriac*</i>
<i>Fr. Lc.</i>	<i>Exegetical Fragments on Luke</i>
<i>Frag. (cop.)</i>	<i>Fragments on the Moral Life, preserved in Coptic*</i>
<i>Fug.</i>	<i>Defence of his Flight</i>
<i>Gent.</i>	<i>Against the Nations</i>
<i>H. Ar.</i>	<i>History of the Arians</i>
<i>H. Ar. ep.</i>	<i>Letter to Monks</i>
<i>Hom. in Mt. 11: 27</i>	<i>On 'All Things Were Delivered . . .'</i>
<i>Inc.</i>	<i>On the Incarnation</i>
<i>Mor. et val.</i>	<i>On Sickness and Health*</i>

1. The first part of the document discusses the importance of maintaining accurate records of all transactions. It emphasizes that proper record-keeping is essential for the success of any business and for the protection of the interests of all parties involved.

2. The second part of the document outlines the various methods and techniques used to collect and analyze data. It describes the process of gathering information from different sources and how this data is then processed and interpreted to provide meaningful insights.

3. The third part of the document focuses on the application of statistical methods to the collected data. It explains how statistical analysis can be used to identify trends, patterns, and correlations within the data, allowing for more informed decision-making.

4. The fourth part of the document discusses the challenges and limitations of data analysis. It highlights the importance of ensuring the quality and reliability of the data and the need for careful interpretation of the results to avoid drawing incorrect conclusions.

5. The fifth part of the document provides a summary of the key findings and conclusions of the study. It reiterates the importance of data-driven decision-making and offers recommendations for future research and practice.

6. The final part of the document includes a list of references and a list of figures and tables. The references cite the sources of the data and the methods used in the study, while the figures and tables provide visual representations of the key findings.

<i>Syn.</i>	<i>On the Councils of Ariminum and Seleucia</i>
<i>Tom.</i>	<i>Synodal Letter (Tomus ad Antiochenos)</i>
<i>VA</i>	<i>Life of Antony</i>
<i>Virg.</i>	<i>On Virginity, preserved in Syriac and Armenian^a</i>

2. MODERN EDITORS OF ATHANASIAN WRITINGS

C.	William Cureton
Cas.	Robert P. Casey
C/B	William Cureton and Henry Burgess
Co.	René-Georges Coquin
D.	Franz Dickamp
de Jer.	G. de Jerphanion
J.	Périclès-Pierre Joannou
Leb.	J. Lebon
Lef.	L. Th. Lefort
M/A	Annik Martin and Micheline Albert
Op.	Hans-Georg Opitz
S.	J. M. Szymusiak
T.	Robert W. Thomson

3. OTHER ANCIENT WRITINGS

Abbreviations of ancient authors and titles are taken from H. G. Liddell and R. Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 9th edn., rev. H. S. Jones (Oxford, 1940), xvi-xlii, and G. W. H. Lampe, *A Patristic Greek Lexicon* (Oxford, 1961), xi-xlv. In addition, note the following:

Am.	Arabic <i>Life of Pachomius</i> , translated by Amélineau
Ant. Ep(p).	Antony the Great, <i>Letter(s)</i>
Can. Ath.	<i>Canons of (pseudo-) Athanasius</i>
Can. Bas.	<i>Canons of (pseudo-) Basil</i>
Cass. Coll.	John Cassian, <i>Conferences</i>
Cass. Inst.	John Cassian, <i>Institutes</i>
Chron. Ath.	Index to the Syriac version of Athanasius' <i>Festal Letters</i>
Cyp. Hab. virg.	Cyprian of Carthage, <i>The Dress of Virgins</i>
Did. App.	<i>Didascalia Apostolorum</i>
Hist. ac.	<i>Historia acephala</i>
It. Burd.	<i>Travels of the Bordeaux Pilgrim</i>
It. Eg.	<i>Travels of Egeria</i>
Jer. V. Pauli	Jerome, <i>Life of Paul</i>
Lib. Hor.	<i>Testament of Hørsisius</i>

NHC	Nag Hammadi Codex
Pach. Cat.	Pachomius, <i>Instruction</i>
Ph. Cont.	Philo, <i>The Contemplative Life</i>
Ph. Spec.	Philo, <i>Special Laws</i>
S. Bo.	Comprehensive Sahidic and Bohairic Coptic <i>Life of Pachomius</i>
ⲉⲓⲡ. Ep. Ant. disc.	Serapion of Thmuis, <i>Letter to the Disciples of Antony</i>
ⲉⲓⲕ. Hist. patr. Alex.	Sawirus ibn al-Muqaffa', <i>History of the Patriarchs of Alexandria</i>
V. Epiph.	<i>Life of Epiphanius of Salamis</i>
Verba sen.	<i>Sayings of the Desert Fathers</i> (Latin)
ⲉⲓⲁ	First Greek <i>Life of Pachomius</i>
ⲉⲓⲁ	Sahidic Coptic <i>Life of Pachomius</i>

4. MODERN WORKS OR SERIES

ⲉⲓⲘ	Ancient Christian Writers -
An. Boll.	<i>Analecta Bollandiana</i>
Anton.	<i>Antonianum</i>
ⲉⲓⲁⲘ	<i>Bulletin de la Société d'archéologie copte</i>
CP	<i>Classical Philology</i>
ⲉⲓⲁⲓⲕ	Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium
ⲉⲓⲁⲓⲕ	Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller
HDR	Harvard Dissertations in Religion
HTR	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
ⲉⲓⲁⲓⲕ	<i>Journal of the American Academy of Religion</i>
ⲉⲓⲁⲓⲕ	<i>Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum</i>
ⲉⲓⲁⲓⲕ	<i>Journal of the American Oriental Society</i>
ⲉⲓⲁ	<i>Journal of Egyptian Archaeology</i>
ⲉⲓⲁⲓⲕ	<i>Journal of Early Christian Studies</i>
ⲉⲓⲁ	<i>Journal of Ecclesiastical History</i>
ⲉⲓⲁⲓⲕ	<i>Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion</i>
ⲉⲓⲁ	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
ⲉⲓⲁ	Loeb Classical Library
ⲉⲓⲁ	Liddell and Scott, <i>A Greek-English Lexicon</i> , rev. Jones
M. Sc. Rel.	<i>Mélanges de science religieuse</i>
Mus.	<i>Le Muséon</i>
NPNF	Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Church
ⲉⲓⲁⲓⲕ	New Revised Standard Version
OLP	<i>Orientalia Lovaniensia Periodica</i>
Or.	<i>Orientalia</i>
ⲉⲓⲁ	J. Migne, <i>Patrologia graeca</i>

PL	J. Migne, <i>Patrologia latina</i>
PO	<i>Patrologia orientalis</i>
PSBA	<i>Proceedings of the Society of Biblical Archaeology</i>
R. Bén.	<i>Revue bénédictine</i>
REA	<i>Revue des études anciennes</i>
RSR	<i>Recherches de science religieuse</i>
SBLMS	Society of Biblical Literature Monograph Series
SC	Sources chrétiennes
Sec. Cen.	<i>Second Century</i>
SP	<i>Studia Patristica</i>
TP	<i>Theologie und Philosophie</i>
TRE	<i>Theologische Realenzyklopädie</i>
TS	<i>Theological Studies</i>
VC	<i>Vigiliae Christianae</i>
ZKG	<i>Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte</i>
ZNW	<i>Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche</i>
Z. Th. K.	<i>Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche</i>

NOTE ON REFERENCES IN THE TEXT

In the notes I have cited critical editions of ancient texts by line numbers and the name of the editor (abbreviated in the case of frequently cited texts; such abbreviations are listed on pp. xii). References to the works translated in the Appendix are cited by the section number in the translation and then, in parentheses, by the page and/or line numbers in the critical editions. Full references to editions and translations of ancient works can be found in the Bibliography.

In the notes references to modern secondary works are abbreviated; full references can be found in the Bibliography.

CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS

- c.298 Athanasius is born.
- c.304 Antony emerges as a monk with disciples.
- 304-6 Conflict between Bishops Peter of Alexandria and Melitius of Lycopolis results in 'Melitian Schism'.
- c.311 Ammoun takes up monastic life in Nitria.
- 311 Bishop Peter of Alexandria dies as a martyr.
- 312 Alexander is elected (Petrine) bishop of Alexandria.
- c.313 Antony retreats to an inner mountain near the Red Sea.
- 318-21 Early controversy over teachings of Arius in Egypt.
- 321/2 Bishop Alexander complains about 'silly women' belonging to the Arian faction.
- 324 Constantine I, a Christian, becomes the sole Roman emperor. Pachomius begins his monastic community at Tabennesi.
- 325 Council of Nicaea. Arianism is condemned; Melitians are to be reconciled to the Petrine church in Egypt.
- 328 17 Apr.: Bishop Alexander dies.
8 June: Athanasius is named bishop of Alexandria in a disputed election.
- c.329 Pachomius founds monasteries at Pbow and other sites in the Thebaid.
- 329/30 Athanasius tours Upper Egypt; he fails to ordain Pachomius as Bishop Sarapion of Tentyra requested.
- 335 Council of Tyre convicts Athanasius of various crimes; Constantine banishes him to Gaul.
- 335-7 Athanasius in exile in Gaul; he writes *Against the Nations* and *On the Incarnation* (?).
- 337 22 May: Constantine dies.
23 Nov.: Athanasius returns to Alexandria.
- 337-9 Athanasius in Alexandria. He writes *First Letter to Virgins* (?).
- 338 Summer: Antony visits Alexandria and shows support for Athanasius.
- 339 Jan.: Anti-Athanasian synod at Antioch names Gregory of Cappadocia bishop of Alexandria.
Spring: Gregory arrives in Alexandria. Violence in the city. Athanasius flees to Rome.
- 339-46 Athanasius in exile in Italy and Gaul.
- 345 Bishop Gregory dies.
A synod of bishops and monks in Latopolis tries Pachomius on

charges of clairvoyance.

346

May: Pachomius dies.

July: Horsisius becomes leader of Pachomian monasteries.

Oct.: Athanasius returns to Alexandria.

c.350

Athanasius writes *Letter to Ammoun*.

Monk Paphnutius is active in Upper Egypt.

350

Pachomian leader Horsisius resigns under pressure and retires to Šeneset. In Pbow Theodore takes control of the monasteries.

353

Spring: Bishop Serapion of Thmuis leads a pro-Athanasian delegation to Emperor Constantius.

Autumn: Council at Arles condemns Athanasius.

c.354

Monk Dracontius is elected bishop of Hermopolis Parva and refuses to take office; Athanasius writes *Letter to Dracontius*.

355

Council at Milan condemns Athanasius.

c.356

Antony dies.

356

8 Feb: Military police storm the Church of Theonas in Alexandria and attempt to capture Athanasius, who escapes with help of monks.

Spring: Violence in Alexandria as imperial government delivers church buildings to anti-Athanasians.

356-62

Athanasius hides with supporters among Egyptian monks and in Alexandria; he writes *Defence of his Flight*, *History of the Arians*, anti-Arian letters to monks, *Life of Antony*, and other works.

Bishop Serapion of Thmuis writes a letter of consolation to two disciples of Antony.

357

Feb.: George of Cappadocia is installed as bishop of Alexandria by anti-Athanasians.

358

Pro-Athanasian mobs force Bishop George to flee Alexandria and briefly regain control of the church buildings.

359

Nov: Bishop George returns to Alexandria.

Dec.: Bishop George is lynched by a pro-Athanasian mob.

359/60

Pro-Athanasian virgin Eudemonis is tortured by imperial officials in their search for Athanasius.

362

Feb.: Athanasius openly returns to Alexandria.

Oct.: Athanasius withdraws from Alexandria under pressure from Emperor Julian.

363

26 June: Julian dies.

Sept.: Athanasius secretly enters Alexandria and then departs to meet with the new emperor, Jovian, in Syria.

c.

Feb.: Athanasius openly returns to Alexandria after trip abroad.

c.364-7

Winter: In one of these years Athanasius tours Upper Egypt, visits Pachomian monasteries, meets Theodore, and provokes reconciliation of Theodore and Horsisius.

Chronology of Events

- Oct.: Athanasius withdraws from Alexandria under pressure from Emperor Valens.
- Feb.: Athanasius openly returns to Alexandria.
- Winter: Athanasius writes *Festal Letter 39* promoting a canon of Scripture.
- Winter: Athanasius writes *Festal Letter 40* on the 'irregular' appointments of bishops and priests. He announces that Bishop Dracontius of Hermopolis Parva has died and has been replaced by the monk Isidore.
- April: Pachomian leader Theodore dies. Athanasius writes a letter confirming Horsisius as the new leader of the federation.
- 2 May : Athanasius dies.

Introduction

In 345 Balacius, the commander of the Roman military in Egypt, attempted to enforce the imperial government's support for Bishop Gregory of Alexandria in the face of stubborn opposition from Alexandrian Christians who favoured the rival, exiled bishop of the city, Athanasius. According to Athanasius, writing a decade later, Balacius' efforts included violent persecution of ascetic Christians who supported Athanasius: he 'beat virgins, and stripped and flogged monks'. Such violence, as Athanasius tells it, attracted the attention of the famous hermit Antony, who warned Balacius in a letter, 'I see wrath coming upon you! Stop persecuting Christians lest the wrath seize you, for already it is about to come upon you.' Unmoved, Balacius spat on the letter and decided to apprehend Antony as well, with a tragic result:

Balacius and Nestorius, the prefect of Egypt, went out to the first stopping-place beyond Alexandria, called Chaireu, and both were riding horses. The horses belonged to Balacius and were the gentlest of all that had been trained by him. But before they got to the place, they began to play with each other, as they do, and suddenly the gentler horse, which Nestorius was riding, seized Balacius by biting him, and attacked him. And he mangled his thigh with his teeth so badly that he was immediately carried back to the city, and in three days he died. Everyone marvelled that what Antony predicted had come to pass so quickly.¹

This story captures much of what makes Christianity of the fourth century so fascinating. Here an imperial officer, with an impressive army at his command, contends with a solitary desert monk over theological ideas and ecclesiastical power. Ascetic Christians are at the centre of this struggle, as the victims of political violence and as the heralds of divine wrath. Moreover, Athanasius tells this story in the late 350s, not as a disinterested reporter of facts, but as an outlawed bishop, a fugitive in the desert, trying to rally Christians to his fight against 'Arianism' by invoking the supernatural power and ascetic fame of the now deceased

¹ *VA* 86 (*PG* 26, 964); cf. *H. Ar.* 14, where Athanasius tells a slightly different version of the story.

Antony. Asceticism and politics come together in Athanasius' story, if indeed they were ever separable.

This book studies the efforts of Bishop Athanasius of Alexandria (bishop 328-73) to integrate the ascetic movement and its values into the wider Christian Church both institutionally and philosophically. When Athanasius became bishop, Egyptian Christians existed in multiple groups and movements; as other fourth-century bishops did in their own areas, he worked toward the formation of a single 'catholic' Church in Egypt, which would be uniform in theology and hierarchical in structure. The present study has as its goal to understand how Athanasius' ascetic policies and theology contributed to the eventual formation of a unified and dominant Church in Egypt. It therefore asks how an ascetic programme was also a political programme.

Before the fourth century, Christianity in the Roman empire took various forms; although Christians routinely spoke of their Church as universal and themselves as forming 'one body of Christ' world-wide, they actually understood and expressed their Christian identity in conflicting ways. Moreover, being a small and often oppressed minority, these diverse Christians lacked any coercive powers by which any single group of them could turn its universalizing rhetoric into reality. The conversion of the Emperor Constantine to Christianity in 312 changed all that, for now some Christian organizations began to receive the financial and military support of the imperial government. During the fourth century, emperors and bishops worked to create a world-wide Christian Church, one that would be, in their words, 'catholic', that is, universal. Conflict was inevitable as these political and ecclesiastical leaders quarrelled over who should lead this catholic Church, which expressions of Christianity were legitimate, which books would form the canon of Scriptures, what forms the Church's calendar and liturgies would take, and so on. This book studies one step in the process by which catholic Christianity was created in the fourth century by examining one geographical area (Egypt) and one aspect of ecclesiastical consolidation (the integration of the ascetic movement into the episcopal Church). Egypt represents an excellent choice for such a case-study because it was the birthplace for two of the movements that proved most troubling for the formation of an imperial Church: 'Arianism' and monasticism.

In June 328 Athanasius, a young deacon, was elected bishop of the Christian Church in Alexandria, the major city in Egypt; his supporters acclaimed him as 'zealous, pious, Christian, one of the ascetics, a genuine

bishop'.² It was a critical moment in the history of the Alexandrian Church. The previous bishop, Alexander, had been asked by the Emperor Constantine to readmit to the church the Christian teacher Arius, whose views Alexander and an international council of bishops had condemned as heretical. Here was a crisis in the formation of a world Church, with the emperor's goal of inclusive unity conflicting with Alexandria's vision of doctrinal uniformity. Athanasius' refusal of Constantine's request would surely lead to conflict not only with the emperor, but also with the numerous bishops in the eastern empire who supported Arius. Athanasius had been Alexander's secretary and protégé: the Christians who elected him bishop assumed that he would continue Alexander's firm anti-Arian policy and extend it throughout Egypt. They believed that, as bishop of Alexandria, Athanasius was not only the head of the Christian Church in that city, but also the spiritual father ('pope') of Christians throughout Egypt and Libya. But the complex political situation made that belief more wish than reality. A brief, selective survey of Egyptian Christianity around the year 330 will reveal the obstacles that Athanasius faced in his effort to become truly the 'pope' of all Christians in Egypt.

In the city of Alexandria, we can speak of at least three Christian organizations, along with other less well defined groups. First, there was the emerging network of local churches under the supervision of Bishop Athanasius; the imperial government recognized this organization as the legitimate Christian Church in Egypt, although it did not always recognize Athanasius as this group's head. Secondly, there was an entirely different set of local churches with its own bishop and priests, who also claimed to represent the only true Church. Because they owed their loyalties to a Bishop Melitius of Lycopolis, these Christians were called 'Melitians' by the supporters of Athanasius. Thirdly, an organized group of priests and lay people, called 'Arians' by their opponents because of their support of the deposed priest Arius, was attempting to wrest control of the official Church away from Athanasius and his allies. These so-called 'Arians' (whose coherence as a group at times existed only in the rhetoric of their opponents) often received the support of the imperial government and of foreign bishops in their struggle with Athanasius; at times they also co-operated with the Melitians. Other Christians pursued their religious lives without formal allegiance to any of these three parties. Independent Christian scholars, for example, taught small groups of students interested in Christian philosophy.

² *Apol. sec. 6. 5* (92. 26-7 Op.).

Ascetic Christians, male and female, devoted themselves to spiritual disciplines and renunciation of sex, food, and wealth; some of these lived alone, some in shared houses, others in a celibate relationship with a member of the opposite sex. To what extent these Christians were under the authority of the bishop and priests, whether Athanasian or Melitian, was not clear.

The situation in the rest of Egypt was scarcely more coherent. The Melitians and Athanasians had affiliated churches throughout the province; as in Alexandria, Christian ascetic groups were also active. Outside Leontopolis, a city in the Delta, a group of celibate men and women, led by a teacher named Hieracas, lived and worshipped together, intentionally separating themselves from married Christians. South of the Delta, solitary ascetics lived in and near the villages along the Nile; some of these, like the hermit Antony, became famous for their spiritual insight and abilities to cure diseases. Meanwhile, a monk named Pachomius was forming a series of communal estates where ascetics lived and worked together. Local bishops and priests, anxious about the independence and prestige of these Christian ascetics, sometimes tried to gain control of these spiritual communities by ordaining their leading figures and by involving them in the political struggles with their opponents. Ascetic Christians often resisted these efforts.

It was Athanasius' goal to bring order to this confusion by consolidating all Egyptian Christians around the hierarchical organization of bishops and priests that he headed. In describing how he set about this task, it will be helpful to divide the alternative Christian movements in Egypt into two groups, distinguishing them by their basic attitude toward the Athanasian episcopate and by Athanasius' means of dealing with them. The first group, consisting of the Melitians and the Arians, comprises organizations that originated and developed in specific opposition to the episcopal hierarchy that Athanasius now controlled. These Christians believed themselves to represent the authentic episcopal hierarchy in Egypt. With respect to such Christians, Athanasius' goal was to eliminate their organizations and compel them to affiliate with his Church. The second group, consisting of the various ascetic circles, comprises movements that arose independently of any particular theological or political quarrel or out of a general sense of dissatisfaction with the direction of Christianity after it began to receive imperial support under Constantine. Here Athanasius' goal was not so much to eliminate these groups as it was to bring them into a formal relationship with his episcopal organization and hence at least somewhat

under his control. This book focuses on Athanasius' dealings with this second group of Christians, the ascetics, but his political struggles with the first group, the Melitians and Arians, cannot be ignored. A brief look at the origins of these alternative church organizations and how they affected Athanasius' career will provide essential background for understanding Athanasius' interactions with the ascetics.

The Melitian schism had its origins in the persecutions that Christians suffered in the first decade of the fourth century.³ When in 304 Bishop Peter of Alexandria and other bishops retreated into hiding to avoid arrest, Bishop Melitius of Lycopolis in the Thebaid attempted to carry on church business by ordaining priests and installing bishops in Alexandria and other sees. Peter and the other hiding bishops denounced what they considered an illegitimate intervention into their spheres of authority. Peter briefly returned to Alexandria in 305 and excommunicated Melitius, but he was forced to flee again in 306 and was martyred in 311. By the time of the Council of Nicaea, sponsored by the Emperor Constantine in 325, long after Peter's death, there were two competing Christian Churches in Egypt, a Petrine one and a Melitian one, each with its own hierarchy of bishops and priests. The rivalry between the two parties was exacerbated by differences over how Christians who lapsed during the persecutions should be treated, with the Melitians (who considered themselves to be the true continuation of the pre-Constantinian Church of the martyrs) arguing for a period of penance longer than that advocated by the Petrites. The Council of Nicaea recognized the Petrine hierarchy, now headed by Bishop Alexander, as the legitimate Christian Church in Egypt, and it adopted a policy of gradual integration of Melitian bishops and priests into the Petrine hierarchy. The ordinations of Melitian clergy were recognized, but Melitius himself was commanded to enter retirement. This policy was accepted with little enthusiasm by the parties in Egypt, and thus conflict between the two groups endured through the episcopate of Athanasius. The Melitian movement appears to have been strongest in Upper Egypt, and certainly it included elements of protest against Hellenistic Alexandria and its allegedly lax policies. None the less, the schism was primarily a conflict between competing episcopal organizations and thus was fought not with theological treatises, but with tactics appropriate to political struggles: the use of physical violence to intimidate opponents,

³ L. W. Barnard, 'Athanasius and the Melitian [sic] Schism in Egypt', *JEA* 59 (1973), 181-9; Rowan Williams, *Arius* (London, 1987), 32-41; Tim Vivian, *St Peter of Alexandria* (Philadelphia, 1988), 15-40.

the channelling of church funds in beneficial directions, and the installation of allied bishops and priests in areas controlled by the other party whenever possible.⁴ The schism touched asceticism in that monks and virgins who linked themselves with nearby churches of local communities inevitably chose bishops and priests on one side of the conflict or the other.

The Arian controversy had a fundamentally different character because it arose from theological and social differences within the Petrine hierarchy itself. The chronology of events before the Council of Nicaea in 325 is a matter of great controversy, but the basic outline is clear.⁵ Sometime between 318 and 321, Bishop Alexander learned that one of his priests, Arius, was teaching that the Word of God was not divine in the same sense as God the Father was. Alexander convened a council of Egyptian bishops, which condemned Arius' views and excommunicated him, along with the bishops and priests who supported him. These actions did not end the controversy, however, because Arius had numerous followers in the city of Alexandria; these included ascetic Christians, who were attracted to the intellectual and ascetic climate of Arian study circles, and presbyters, who resented Alexander's heavy-handed leadership. Arius and his allies found further support among certain bishops in Asia Minor, Syria, and Palestine, who shared their theological views, saw an opportunity to reduce the international prestige of the bishop of Alexandria, or both. Councils in Bithynia and Palestine found Arius' views orthodox and urged Alexander to accept him into his Church. Alexander refused and found vindication at the Council of Nicaea in 325, which excommunicated Arius and exiled several bishops who had embraced his cause. None the less, by 327-8, the Emperor Constantine, eager to unite the warring factions of the Church, was allowing the exiled bishops to return to their posts and demanding that Alexander readmit a supposedly repentant Arius to the Alexandrian Church. Alexander once again refused, and he died not much later.⁶ Upon his elevation to the episcopal chair in June 328, Athanasius continued Alexander's policy of uncompromising refusal to readmit Arius to communion.

⁴ Violence and church funds: Barnard, 'Athanasius and the Meletian Schism'; T. D. Barnes, 'The Career of Athanasius', *SP* 21 (1987), 390-401, at 393-6, and *Athanasius and Constantius* (Cambridge, Mass., and London, 1993), 25-33. Bishops and priests: *Ath. Ep. Draç.: Ep. fest.* (cop.) 40; and Ch. 2 of this book.

⁵ H.-G. Opitz, 'Die Zeitfolge der arianischen Streitiges von den Anfang bis zum Jahre 328', *ZNW* 33 (1934), 131-59; Williams, *Arius*, 48-81; R. P. C. Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God* (Edinburgh, 1988), 129-51.

⁶ Barnes, *Athanasius and Constantius*, 18.

When Athanasius became bishop of Alexandria in June 328, probably few observers could have anticipated that Athanasius would have much success dealing with the Melitians and the Arians.⁷ At the time of his elevation Athanasius was still quite young: at most 33 years old. Little is known of Athanasius' early life, but it seems that he received a Christian (but not classical) education and soon thereafter became the secretary and assistant to Alexander, the bishop of Alexandria (bishop 312–28), whom he accompanied to the Council of Nicaea in 325.⁸ The Alexandrians who named Athanasius bishop in 328 called him an 'ascetic' (ἀσκητής).⁹ This appellation, along with Athanasius' claim in the preface of the *Life of Antony* to have seen Antony 'often',¹⁰ has sometimes been understood to refer to some period of ascetic training in the Egyptian desert, but there is no other evidence for that.¹¹ The ascetic content of his first two *Festal Letters* does suggest, however, that the young Athanasius had received some guidance in asceticism, most likely from Alexander or another Christian teacher in the city.¹² In any case, few in Alexandria could have been surprised when, just before his death on 17 April 328, Alexander named Athanasius as his successor. Despite this endorsement, Athanasius was not elected bishop until 8 June; the exact circumstances are so mired in controversy that the actual events may never become clear.¹³ It is possible that Athanasius had not yet reached the minimum legal age for election as bishop (30);¹⁴ or that the election was not entirely in accord with canons adopted at the Council of Nicaea: as mandated by the canons, at least three bishops were present,

⁷ There is no modern critical and comprehensive biography of Athanasius, although Barnes, *Athanasius and Constantius*, has clarified the complex chronology of Athanasius' political career. In the meantime see also Martin Tetz, 'Athanasius von Alexandrien', *TRE* 4: 333–49; G. C. Stead, 'Athanasius', *Encyclopedia of the Early Church* (New York, 1992), 93–5.

⁸ Education: Barnes, *Athanasius and Constantius*, 12–14. Early apprenticeship to Alexander: *Sev. Hist. patr. Alex.* 1: 8; *Soz. H.e.* 2: 17; *Soc. H.e.* 1: 14.

⁹ *Apol. sec.* 6: 5 (92: 26 Op.).

¹⁰ *VA* pref. (PG 26: 840a).

¹¹ Carlton Mills Badger, Jr., 'The New Man Created in God', Ph.D. thesis (Duke, 1990), 191–3.

¹² Here the correct dating of the 24th *Festal Letter*, with its extensive discussion of Christian 'withdrawal', to 330 provides crucial information; cf. Alberto Camplani, *Le Lettere festali di Atanasio di Alessandria* (Rome, 1989), 201. On the dating of the *Festal Letters*, see the summary discussion in Barnes, *Athanasius and Constantius*, 183–91.

¹³ See the diverse views of Barnes, *Athanasius and Constantius*, 18–20; Klaus M. Girardet, *Kaisergericht und Bischofsgericht* (Bonn, 1975), 52–7; Annik Martin, 'Athanasie et les Mélitians (325–335)', in C. Kannengiesser (ed.), *Politique et théologie chez Athanasie d'Alexandrie* (Paris, 1974), 31–61, at 40–4; Duane W.-H. Arnold, *The Early Episcopal Career of Athanasius of Alexandria* (Notre Dame, Ind., 1991), 25–48.

¹⁴ *Chron. Ath.* 3 (56 M/A).

but perhaps the required written consent of absent bishops eligible to vote had not been obtained.¹⁵ Although most Egyptian bishops recognized Athanasius' election, a sizable minority did not, particularly Melitian bishops, whose anticipated participation in the election appears to have been part of their gradual reunification with the Petrine hierarchy.¹⁶

Thus, as he began his episcopate, Athanasius faced a host of enemies: the Melitians, who may have elected their own bishop of Alexandria¹⁷ and whose alternative hierarchy continued to thrive throughout Egypt; those Christians in Alexandria who considered Arius' views within the limits of acceptable theological diversity and were dismayed by Alexander's (and now Athanasius') authoritarian response to philosophical disagreement; and numerous bishops of the Eastern Church, who were sympathetic to Arius' brand of theology and eager to limit the influence of the Alexandrian bishop on the international scene. In 335 these forces combined to have Athanasius condemned for various crimes at a synod of bishops in Tyre; Constantine, although he set aside the council's verdict, banished Athanasius from Alexandria and sent him to Gaul.¹⁸ This was the first of five times that Athanasius was exiled from the city of Alexandria: the first two of these exiles Athanasius spent in the West (335–7, 339–46); during the final three he hid in the Egyptian desert (356–62, 362–3, 365–6). The dates and geographical settings of these exiles provide clues to the chronological shape of Athanasius' interactions with Egyptian ascetics over the course of his career. Before his third banishment from the city in 356, Athanasius was a major player in empire-wide Christian affairs: he was the focus of the conflict between the differing interpretations of the creed adopted at Nicaea.¹⁹ But the years of the desert exile (356–62) were significant ones in the Arian controversy: Athanasius' absence caused his influence on the world scene to fade, and his writings display a shift in the bishop's focus from imperial politics to the problems of the Egyptian Church. The basic structure of Athanasius' political career—intense conflict focused on the city and the empire until around 350, followed by a period of increased engagement with Egypt—determined how he approached ascetic Christians in Egypt. The chronological table that precedes this Introduction integrates the events in Athanasius' political career with the ascetic developments discussed in this book.

The sources for the first half of Athanasius' episcopate (328–50)

¹⁵ Tetz, 'Athanasius', 335. ¹⁶ Soz. *H.e.* 2. 17. ¹⁷ Girardet, *Kaisergericht*, 54–5.
¹⁸ Barnes, *Athanasius and Constantius*, 22–5. ¹⁹ *Ibid.*, *passim*.

provide little evidence for contact between the bishop and the monks of the Egyptian desert. The ascetics that appear in his writings in reference to this period live in the city of Alexandria: men whom the bishop calls *μονάζοντες*, 'solitaries', and women whom he styles *πάρθενοι*, 'virgins'. Although Athanasius used the term 'virginity' (*παρθενία*) to refer to the sexual renunciation of both men and women, he restricted the title 'virgin' (*παρθένος*) to ascetic women. As unsatisfactory as this traditional usage is, Athanasius' practice will be followed here. Both the male 'solitaries' and the female 'virgins' of Alexandria renounced sex and followed a more rigorous regime of fasting, prayer, and vigils than other Christians, but otherwise lived within the city and worshipped with the parish church. These urban ascetics were prominent figures in the struggle between Athanasius and his opponents for control of the Alexandrian Church; those who supported Athanasius suffered imprisonment, torture, assault, and verbal abuse when opponents of the bishop gained the upper hand (as we saw in the case of Balacius).²⁰ The female virgins and their activities were of great concern to Athanasius: his attempts to control their lifestyle and detach them from opposing groups will require close examination. In contrast, although the male 'solitaries' appear frequently in Athanasius' writings, he appears to have had little to say about their ascetic regime and political activity. This silence was most likely the function of two things: the independence conventionally granted to men (and not to women), and the rapid development during Athanasius' career of new forms of asceticism for men.

After the year 350, a new category of male ascetics appears in Athanasius' works: *μόναχοι*, 'monks'.²¹ Unlike the 'solitaries' of Alexandria, these men did not live in the city and orientate their piety by the rhythms of parish life. Instead, they withdrew from normal human society either to live alone in the desert or to live in a community separated from other people by a wall. When Athanasius took office in 328, this desert-orientated ascetic movement was still in its infancy: the

²⁰ *Ep. encycl.* 3. 4, 6; 4. 4-5 (172. 11-12, 19-21; 173. 14-20 Op.); *Apol. sec.* 15; 30 (98. 29-99. 8; 109. 26-7 Op.); *Apol. Const.* 27. 37; 28. 16-17; 33. 16-41 S.; *H. Ar.* 12. 3; 48. 2; 55. 3-4; 59. 2-3; 70. 4; 72. 5-6; 81. 5, 7, 9 (189. 14-16; 211. 2-7; 214. 21-33; 216. 14-20; 221. 26-8; 223. 7-14; 229. 13, 21-5, 31-3 Op.); *VA* 86 (PG 26. 964a). For a study of Athanasius and asceticism that emphasizes these so-called 'in-town' ascetics, see Badger, 'New Man', 160-241.

²¹ *Fug.* 24. 32-4 S.; *Ep. Drac.* 7, 8, 9 (PG 25. 532, 533a); *Ep. mort. Ar.* 1. 2; 5. 1 (178. 6; 180. 13, 16 Op.); *H. Ar.* 72. 6 (223. 15-18 Op.); *VA passim* (39 times); *Ep. Ors.* 2 = *VP* 150 (95. 16 Halkin); *Ep. mon.* 5 de Jer.; *Ep. fest.* 40 (cop.) (OLP 15; 8r. 220 Co.); *Ep. virg.* 2. 28 (366 Leb.) (επιγραφή).

urban 'solitaries' may still have been more numerous. But for ascetically inclined men the trend was away from the city and toward the desert. Around the year 313 a monk named Antony moved into the desert in Upper Egypt and attracted so many imitators that, in Athanasius' words, 'the desert was made a city'; no later than 313 a wealthy Alexandrian named Ammoun had founded a loosely connected series of monastic retreats in the desert of Nitria; before 330 Pachomius began to form a closely related network of monasteries adjacent to Thebaid villages along the Nile.²² By the midpoint of Athanasius' episcopate (c.350) these desert-based modes of discipline, today called eremitical, semi-eremitical, and coenobitic monasticism, had replaced the city-based pattern as the leading forms of the ascetic life for men. To be sure, male ascetics continued to live at every point on the 'continuum' from the most central area of the city to the most remote places of the desert, but for reasons social, theological, and even literary, the general trend was toward the desert.²³ Athanasius' writings both reflect this geographical development and encourage it. The bishop's new interest in the Egyptian 'monks' was also a function of his political career as outlined above. Before 346 Athanasius spent nearly half of his years as bishop in exile in the West: despite a tour of the Thebaid in 329/30, the bishop's attention in the first half of his episcopate was consumed by international and Alexandrian affairs. After 346 Athanasius remained in Egypt almost continually, spending his three remaining exiles in the Egyptian desert. The patriarch was able to devote more of his energy to the unification of the Church in all Egypt, a project which involved forming a stronger connection between the desert monks and the episcopal hierarchy.

Although we have seen that the Egyptian Church was divided along several lines, there were elements in the Egyptian situation that Athanasius could exploit in his efforts to consolidate the Church. First, a series of reforms begun under the Emperor Diocletian (284-305) initiated a process of consolidation in the imperial administration of Egypt, creating a system that the episcopate could parallel in its own hierarchical structures of governance.²⁴ Athanasius imitated the imperial organization by consolidating the administration of the Egyptian Church around the episcopate's system of dioceses and parishes and by

²² Derwas J. Chitty, *The Desert a City* (Crestwood, NY, 1966), 1-45.

²³ James E. Goehring, 'The Encroaching Desert: Literary Production and Ascetic Space in Early Christian Egypt', *JECs* 1 (1993), 281-96, at 286-7 n. 17.

²⁴ Jacqueline Lallemand, *L'Administration civile de l'Égypte de l'avènement de Dioclétien à la création du diocèse (284-382)* (Brussels, 1964); Philip Rousseau, *Pachomius* (Berkeley, Calif., 1985), 3-13.

channelling the receiving and distribution of church funds through this system. He designed his ascetic policies so that ascetic institutions would be ancillary to this episcopal network. Secondly, the literate and economically privileged classes in Egyptian society shared a Hellenistic culture that tied together the metropolis of Alexandria and the cities and towns of Upper Egypt.²⁵ The wealthy families of the Thebaid cities and villages read the classics, sent their sons to Alexandria for their education, and engaged in business with Lower Egypt. This group's allegiance to the Athanasian episcopate and its financial support would have enhanced both the power and prestige of the clergy and the unity of the Church throughout the province. There are indeed signs that Athanasius aimed his ascetic programme particularly at these educated and well-to-do Egyptians.

The following chapters examine this ascetic programme in order to understand Athanasius' ascetic theology and its political and social functions; Athanasius' interactions with discreet groups of ascetic Christians form the first area of investigation. Chapter 1 studies Athanasius' efforts to control the life of virgins in the city of Alexandria. The bishop sought to detach the virgins from competing groups by issuing a set of regulations that fostered a virginal lifestyle isolated from the contentious public life of the city, yet connected to the parish churches that the Athanasian episcopate administered. He resisted efforts by the followers of his Egyptian contemporary Hieracas to establish communities of ascetic men and women totally divorced from married Christians; in response, Athanasius portrayed virginity as a virtue analogous to but superior to ordinary marriage and placed human moral freedom at the centre of his ascetical theology and his social vision of a diverse Church. Athanasius attempted to dissuade virgins from associating with Arian Christian teachers through a rhetoric of anti-intellectualism that rendered the Christian study circle theologically illegitimate and through an interpretation of the virgins' traditional title 'brides of Christ' that rendered the virgins' life silent and submissive. Because he considered the active and vocal participation of virgins in theological conflict incompatible with a united and orderly Church, Athanasius encouraged a lifestyle for virgins that was more separate from Alexandria's public life.

Chapter 2 turns to Athanasius' dealings with the desert monks, the

²⁵ Colin H. Roberts, *Manuscript, Society and Belief in Early Christian Egypt* (London, 1979); Rousseau, *Pachomius*, 6-9; Naphtali Lewis, *Life in Egypt under Roman Rule* (Oxford, 1983), 59-67; Roger S. Bagnall, *Egypt in Late Antiquity* (Princeton, NJ, 1993), 99-109.

semi-eremitical monks of the Nitrian desert and the coenobitic monks of the Thebaid, and describes a strategy not of isolation, but of inclusion. Athanasius tried to involve the monks more fully in the public life of the Church by appointing many of them as bishops. He also asserted the right of bishops to intervene in monastic affairs both by issuing opinions on matters of ascetic practice, such as the proper amount of sleep and the significance of nocturnal emissions, and by resolving questions of leadership within monastic communities. While he told the Alexandrian virgins to stay out of the conflict between himself and his ecclesiastical opponents, Athanasius rallied the desert monks to his cause and introduced the issue of theological disagreement into the monastic practice of hospitality. To Athanasius, a united Church required strong boundaries between the 'orthodox' and the 'heretics'. Once again Athanasius' goal was the integration of ascetic Christians into a Church defined by the Alexandrian episcopate: he granted desert monasticism a certain amount of autonomy, but still considered it ancillary to the network of parish churches that he was forming.

This integration of ascetic Christians into a comprehensive Church in practical terms was accompanied by an integration of asceticism into a comprehensive view of the Christian life on the theoretical level.²⁶ Chapter 3 outlines Athanasius' spirituality and shows how it assimilates ascetic values into a vision that can also encompass ordinary Christians. By picturing the Christian life mythically as an ascent to heaven and an appropriation of the incarnate Word's victory over moral and physical corruption, Athanasius articulated a spirituality that could be most fully embodied only in a life of ascetic renunciation, which he called 'withdrawal'. None the less, he claimed that the Church comprised people at different levels of renunciation, united by the Church's sacraments and by a shared 'way of life' (*πολιτεία*) formed through imitation of the saints. The rhetoric of imitation was crucial to Athanasius' vision of a diverse, yet ascetic Church: the imitation of various saints accounted

²⁶ Here I borrow a distinction made by Rowan A. Greer: 'In broad terms what happened in the course of the fourth century was that Church leaders like Athanasius harnessed what began as a protest movement to the service of the Church. Part of what this involved was bringing the monks under episcopal authority in one way or another. But, as well, harnessing monasticism meant the creation of a theoretical understanding of it that brought its ascetical and moral discipline into relation with the Church's theology. In this way theology sought to shape the monastic life, and the project of leaders like Athanasius, Basil the Great, and John Chrysostom was to establish a full living out of the Christian life that put its theological principles into practice' (*Broken Lights and Mended Lives* (University Park, Pa., and London, 1986), 163). The goal of this book is a more precise understanding of this twofold project as Athanasius carried it out.

for the Church's diversity, but this imitation always had the ascetic character of renunciation of the world and discipline of the body. The bishop developed an ascetic programme for ordinary Christians during the seasons of Lent and Easter, a regime which enabled them to realize in a less perfect fashion the control over the body's movements that monks and virgins achieved. In his *Festal Letters*, Athanasius interpreted such religious practices as sexual renunciation, fasting, and almsgiving so that their meanings cohered with his ascetic yet inclusive spirituality.

The supreme example of Athanasius' ideal Christian life was the monk Antony, whose biography the bishop wrote during his third exile; the *Life of Antony*, the subject of Chapter 4, epitomizes Athanasius' ascetic programme in both its practical and theoretical aspects. Athanasius' portrait of Antony represented an alternative to other views of Antony held by fourth-century Egyptians, who saw him as a spiritual patron, a teacher of wisdom, or a monastic party leader. Athanasius instead made Antony the perfect instance of human appropriation of the Word's victory over sin and death: Antony's body is in the full control of his soul, which is in the full control of the Word of God. Antony is therefore able to withstand the attempts of demons to thwart his journey on the way up to heaven by exploiting humanity's natural fear of death. Antony's interactions with bishops, imperial officers, and philosophers exemplify the relationships between monk and bishop, Church and State, Christianity and false religion that Athanasius considered proper. Athanasius used the motif of Antony's unschooled wisdom to criticize an academic understanding of Antony's authority and to clear the way for his own presentation of Antony as a model for moral imitation. In publishing the *Life of Antony*, Athanasius hoped to foster the formation of the Church as a shared 'way of life' (*πολιτεία*) by setting in motion a process of mutual imitation with his image of Antony as the catalyst.

Admittedly, the primary thesis of this book, that Athanasius' embrace of ascetic Christians and their values strengthened his political position and helped him to build an Egyptian Church more dependent on the Alexandrian episcopate, is not new. Indeed, it was first advanced in 380, just seven years after Athanasius' death, when Gregory of Nazianzus delivered an oration in praise of the deceased bishop of Alexandria. Gregory identified two strategies by which Athanasius formed an 'orthodox' Christian Church in Egypt: one of exclusion, requiring the construction of strong boundaries between 'true' Christians and 'heretics', and one of integration, requiring the construction of strong ties between city-based Christians and desert-based ascetics. Gregory

devoted most of his panegyric to Athanasius' exclusionary anti-Arian activities, comparing them to Christ's cleansing of the Jerusalem temple.²⁷ But Gregory also attributed to Athanasius a policy of reconciliation: the uniting of the active life of ecclesiastical leadership ('priesthood') with the contemplative life of monastic withdrawal ('philosophy'). Gregory claimed that Athanasius accomplished this unification while he was exiled in the Egyptian desert for his Nicene faith:

While he associated with them [the monks], the great Athanasius, just as he was the mediator and reconciler of all people, imitating him who made peace between disparate elements with his blood, so too reconciled the solitary life with the shared by showing that the priesthood is philosophical and that philosophy requires a priesthood. For he harmonized the two and brought them into one—both quiet action and active quietness—in such a way that he convinced [the monks] that to be a monk is characterized more by the steadiness of one's conduct than by the withdrawal [*ἀναχώρησις*] of one's body.²⁸

According to Gregory, Athanasius, like King David, embodied in himself both the active life of political leadership and the quiet life of meditative philosophy and thereby demonstrated to the desert fathers their irrevocable tie to the wider Church. Gregory made Athanasius the virtual founder of monasticism as an organized, disciplined phenomenon within Christianity: 'Whatever he thought was law to them [the monks], and they rejected whatever did not seem good to him. To them his teachings were the tablets of Moses, and their veneration of him surpassed what human beings owe to the saints.'²⁹ The result of Athanasius' monastic activities, in Gregory's view, was the support that the monks gave him in his struggles with the 'Arians'. Modern scholars have discerned an additional benefit of Athanasius' enthusiasm for the ascetic movement: the unification of an Egyptian Church divided between Hellenistic Alexandria and Coptic Upper Egypt.³⁰

If this book's thesis is not novel, my goal none the less is to provide this oft-repeated picture of Athanasius and asceticism with a stronger historical foundation and a more precise understanding of how asceticism advanced Athanasius' political programme. For example, I

²⁷ Gr. Naz. Or. 21. 31. 1–4 Mossay-Lafontaine.

²⁸ Ibid. 19. 17–20. 4 Mossay-Lafontaine.

²⁹ Ibid. 20. 11–14 Mossay-Lafontaine.

³⁰ W. H. C. Frend, 'Athanasius as an Egyptian Christian Leader in the Fourth Century', in *Religion Popular and Unpopular in the Early Christian Centuries* (London, 1976), No. XVI, 20–37; J. G. Griffiths, 'A Note on Monasticism and Nationalism in the Egypt of Athanasius', *SP* 16 (1975), 24–8.

study ascetic works attributed to Athanasius that previous scholars have seldom used (primarily because, for circumstantial reasons, they have survived not in Greek, Athanasius' own literary language, but in such languages as Coptic and Syriac).³¹ Some of these Athanasian writings are presented in English translation for the first time in the Appendix to this book. A continuing theme in this study will be scepticism about the traditional scholarly model that I have just mentioned, namely the sharp division of Egyptian Christianity into 'Hellenistic Alexandria' and 'native Coptic Egypt', a cultural gap that Athanasius is then seen to bridge. Instead, we must imagine, in the words of a modern scholar, 'dual language communities [Greek and Egyptian] with a substantial overlap in membership, neither separate communities nor a fully bilingual society'.³² This book will emphasize the presence in the cities and villages throughout Egypt of a Hellenized élite, characterized by a shared educational culture and economic privilege, and it will see this group as the primary target of Athanasius' ascetic propaganda and unifying activities. Along with this shift in perspective comes a greater interest, particularly in Chapter 3, in a topic virtually ignored by most studies of Athanasius: how Athanasius described the proper lifestyle of the *ordinary*, non-ascetic Christian in ascetic terms and articulated his own 'politics of asceticism'.

Indeed, the 'politics' of asceticism that forms our subject has two aspects, which must be constantly distinguished and kept together. These two aspects roughly correspond to the distinction that anthropologists make between 'etic' analysis, 'which utilizes the investigator's own analytic categories', and 'emic' analysis, which uses 'native categories in explanation'.³³ In this study, the 'etic' politics of asceticism refers to my detection of the ways that Athanasius, self-consciously or

³¹ For a detailed examination of the ascetic writings attributed to Athanasius and the establishment of the Athanasian 'canon' on which this book is based, see my 'The Authenticity of the Ascetic Athanasiana', *Or.* 63 (1994), 17–56. I judge the *Life of Antony* to be authentic; Ch. 4 of this book shows the coherence of the *Life's* content with that of the other Athanasian works. Recent attempts to show that the Syriac version represents the most primitive form of the *Life* and so rules out Athanasian authorship are groundless: see my 'The Greek and Syriac Versions of the *Life of Antony*', *Mus.* 107 (1994), 29–53. As another argument against authenticity, Barnes cites as the 'earliest reference to the *Life*' the mention of it without attribution in a letter to monks attributed to Serapion of Thmuis (*Serap. Ep. mon.* 13 (*PG* 40. 940); Barnes, *Athanasius and Constantius*, 240 n. 64). But Klaus Fitschen has argued that this letter is not by Serapion, but was written in the 5th cent. (*Serapion von Thmuis* (Berlin and New York, 1992), 79–84). Barnes's argument from silence is not persuasive in any case.

³² Bagnall, *Egypt in Late Antiquity*, 259.

³³ Susan R. Garrett, 'Sociology of Early Christianity', *Anchor Bible Dictionary* (New York, 1992), 6. 89–99, at 91.

not, manipulated ascetic Christians, their values, and their prestige in order to enhance his own power and to expand and solidify the episcopally centred Christianity that he was forming. The 'emic' politics of asceticism, in contrast, refers to Athanasius' own understanding of how ascetic behaviours contributed to the formation of the church as a *πολιτεία*, a 'civic community' with a distinctive way of life and pattern of governance. This book will oscillate between these aspects of the 'politics of asceticism' as it seeks to describe both how Athanasius' ascetic policies and theology contributed to his policy of consolidating Christian Egypt around his episcopal hierarchy and how Athanasius himself understood his ascetic programme of self-formation to be a political programme of church formation.

Female Virginity and Ecclesiastical Politics in Alexandria

The abundance of virgins in the Christian Church was, to the young Athanasius, a significant demonstration of the power lying behind the teaching of the incarnate Word, as he wrote early in his career in *On the Incarnation*: 'What person . . . taught about virginity and did not reckon it to be impossible for this virtue to exist among human beings? Yet our Saviour and the King of all, Christ, so prevailed in his teaching about this that even children not yet of legal age promise virginity over and above the law.'¹ Christian virgins, as Athanasius defined them here, were young women who not only observed standards of sexual chastity before marriage, but also renounced the possibility of ever marrying—this even before they had reached the 'legal age' of 12.² Such extraordinary resolution, Athanasius believed, could not be the result of merely human teaching, but had to indicate the dissemination of some divine power to humanity through the incarnation. Years later, Athanasius, now a controversial bishop hiding in the desert, returned to this idea in his *Defence before Constantius*:

The Son of God, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, having become human on our account, and having destroyed death and delivered our race from the bondage to corruption, in addition to all his other benefits bestowed this also: that we should possess upon earth the state of virginity as an image [εἰκῶν] of the angels' holiness. Accordingly the women who have attained this virtue the catholic Church has been accustomed to call the brides of Christ [νύμφαι τοῦ Χριστοῦ]. And the pagans who see them express their admiration for them as the Word's temple [ναὸς τοῦ Λόγου]. For indeed this holy and heavenly profession is nowhere established but only among us Christians, and it is a very strong argument that among us is to be found the genuine and true religion.³

¹ *Inc.* 51. 1–6 T.

² On the legal age for marriage in Roman law, see Susan Treggiari, *Roman Marriage* (Oxford, 1991), 39–43. Although it is not wholly satisfactory, I will use the term 'virgin' to refer to these celibate Christian women.

³ *Apol. Const.* 33. 1–12 S. On the dating of this and other sections of the *Defence*, see Timothy D. Barnes, *Athanasius and Constantius* (Cambridge, Mass., and London, 1993), 196–7.

Athanasius believed that, as 'brides of Christ', virgins were the supreme examples of humanity united with the divine Word; their ability to renounce sex permanently was certain proof that the incarnate Word had triumphed over death and the human soul's bondage to the bodily passions. As individual 'brides of Christ' and as a corporate 'temple of the Word', virgins were united with the Son of God in a manner so close that even 'the virgins' limbs are in a special way the Saviour's own'.⁴ In this respect, Christian virgins replicated God the Word's assumption of a human body, which served as his 'temple', and they exemplified all of saved humanity, which Athanasius called 'God's temple' or 'the Word's temple'.⁵ Virgins, then, were powerful, multivalent religious symbols for Athanasius: their union with Christ, understood as a kind of marriage, manifested in a heightened manner the union with the Word of God required of every Christian and imitated the Word's incarnation; moreover, their exceptional control of the passions demonstrated Christianity's superiority to other religions.

Athanasius' remarks to Constantius reveal not only the theological meaning of Christian virgins, but also their political significance: assuming that the Emperor shares his esteem for virgins, Athanasius goes on to describe how his Arian opponents stripped and scourged Alexandrian virgins while they claimed that Constantius ordered them to do it.⁶ The bishop hopes that his description of Arian attacks on such universally admired figures will discredit his political opponents in the Emperor's eyes. Apart from Athanasius' own purposes in reporting it, this violence against virgins allied with him reflects how by the fourth century consecrated virgins had joined the retinues of prominent bishops as symbols of their power and prestige;⁷ in this particular case, it indicates that many virgins were considered part of Athanasius' own power base and thus appropriate targets for political violence.⁸ Athanasius' remarks suggest also that the Arian conflict in Alexandria was not a struggle that involved only men, but rather one that engaged the interest and energies of Christian women as well. In this passage, Athanasius invokes the virgins' sufferings in order to turn the Emperor against his political opponents, but in other writings he addressed the virgins themselves in an effort to shape their participation in the Alexandrian Church. Theologically,

⁴ *Apol. Const.* 33. 23-6 S.; cf. Carlton Mills Badger, Jr., 'The New Man Created in God', Ph.D. thesis (Duke, 1990), 256-7.

⁵ Word's assumed body: *Ar.* 3. 53 (PG 26. 433b); *Ep. Adolph.* 7 (PG 26. 1081a). Saved humanity: *Ar.* 1. 42-3; 3. 58 (PG 26. 100, 445a); *Ep. Serap.* 3. 3 (PG 26. 629).

⁶ *Apol. Const.* 33. 16-41 S.

⁷ Peter Brown, *The Body and Society* (New York, 1988), 259-60.

⁸ Badger, 'New Man', 231.

Athanasius instructed virgins on how to cultivate their union with Christ so that they would preserve their holy state; politically, he suggested to them patterns of life that would cohere with the church-order he sought to create in Alexandria. Such significant symbols of Athanasian theology and power required careful protection.

The recognition of virgins as a special class with its own problems can be traced back to the earliest Christian communities (1 Cor. 7), but the origins of female asceticism in the Alexandrian Church are, like everything else about earliest Christianity there, frustratingly obscure. There is much talk about the concept of virginity in the writings of Clement and Origen, but practically nothing about the institutions and disciplines in which it was practised.⁹ Gnostic works, some of which originated in Alexandria, often use the term 'virginal' as a laudatory adjective and seem to take a dim view of sexual intercourse, but give us little evidence for the sectaries' social practices.¹⁰ The imprecise nature of our knowledge about Christian virginity in the second and third centuries is not unique to Alexandria, but applies to churches in other areas as well.¹¹ In the fourth century, however, matters become clearer. A fragment attributed to Bishop Peter of Alexandria (bishop 300–11) mentions a virgin who had been promised to the Church by her parents for lifelong service.¹² By the time of Alexander's episcopate (312–28), virgins appear as supporters of the presbyter Arius, and Athanasius describes virgins who lived at home with their parents coming to visit Bishop Alexander as a group.¹³ But during the career of Athanasius the evidence for the life and practices of Alexandrian virgins abounds: the bishop himself wrote at least four letters to virgins as well as a treatise *On Virginity*.¹⁴

⁹ Henri Crouzel, SJ, *Virginité et mariage selon Origène* (Paris, 1963), 195–7.

¹⁰ See Anne McGuire, 'Virginity and Subversion: Norea Against the Powers in the *Hypostasis of the Archons*', and Antoinette Clark Wire, 'The Social Functions of Women's Asceticism in the Roman East', in K. L. King (ed.), *Images of the Feminine in Gnosticism* (Philadelphia, 1988), 239–58, 308–23.

¹¹ René Metz, *La Consécration des vierges dans l'église romaine* (Paris, 1954), 41–76. The notable exception is Carthage, for which the writings of Tertullian and Cyprian provide some information.

¹² Hugo Koch (ed. and tr.), *Quellen zur Geschichte der Askese und des Mönchtums in der alten Kirche* (Tübingen, 1933), 38–9.

¹³ *Ep. virg.* 1. 36, 45 (91. 7–11; 94. 36–95. 3 Lef.); *Scr. Hist. patr. Alex.* 1. 8 (405 Evetts).

¹⁴ See the works treated as Nos. 9, 10, 11, 15, and 16 in my 'The Authenticity of the Ascetic Athanasiana', *Or.* 63 (1994), 17–56. Translations of the most important of these works are provided in the Appendix to this book: the first *Letter to Virgins*, preserved in Coptic (*Ep. virg.* 1); the second *Letter to Virgins*, preserved in Syriac (*Ep. virg.* 2); and *On Virginity*, preserved in Syriac and Armenian (*Virg.*). I cite these works by the section numbers in the translations and then, in parentheses, by the page and/or line numbers in the critical editions.

These writings disclose how Athanasius sought to consolidate the Alexandrian Church around the episcopate partly through organizing female asceticism as a separate, but ancillary branch of the developing network of local churches led by bishops and priests. The first part of this chapter examines these efforts. The bishop encouraged virgins to live in either of two settings: their parents' home, or a community of other women. He developed for them an ascetic regime that would protect them from the machinations of Satan and his demons, restore their soul's control over the body's movements, and focus the mind's attention on Christ. The lifestyle that the bishop recommended was a secluded one, which he compared to an 'enclosed garden'. He expressed ambivalence about virgins' participation in such public activities as employment and pilgrimage. He strongly condemned virgins who lived in a celibate relationship with an ascetic man, accusing such 'brides of Christ' of committing adultery. The bishop also attacked the teachings and social practices of a Christian ascetic named Hieracas, who had formed a community where celibate men and women lived together in complete separation from married people. To refute this alternative model for the virgins' lifestyle, Athanasius entered into a debate with Hieracas over the relative merits of virginity and marriage and the roles of nature and freedom in human ethical life. Athanasius' emphasis on humanity's free will supported his social vision of a Church made up of persons of differing degrees of moral attainment. The bishop also used the virgins' traditional title 'brides of Christ' to depict virginity as not completely dissimilar to marriage, but rather a higher form of marriage.

The title 'bride of Christ' was extremely common in early Christian literature on virginity and carried with it a host of traditional themes.¹⁵ But in fourth-century Alexandria, where controversy was raging over the person and nature of the 'Christ' who was the virgins' 'bridegroom', Athanasius interpreted this image in ways that supported his political goals. The Arian crisis in Alexandria was a struggle over the identity of the Word of God to whom the virgins were symbolically wed. It was a conflict between two competing pictures of this Word, as model of virtue (Arian) and as enabler of virtue (Athanasian), and between two corresponding forms of Christianity, the school (Arian) and the episcopate (Athanasian). Virgins were actively involved in this struggle as partisans of both camps. The second part of this chapter examines how Athanasius

¹⁵ See Elizabeth Castelli, 'Virginity and its Meaning for Women's Sexuality in Early Christianity', *JRS* 2 (1986), 61-88, at 71-2, with references to Christian works; Robin Lane Fox, *Pagans and Christians* (San Francisco, 1986), 371.

sought to detach virgins from unorthodox male teachers and bind them to the Athanasian episcopate by attacking the concept of the Christian teacher and by secluding the virgins in lives of silent conversation with their bridegroom, the fully divine Word, whose incarnation had enabled their virginity. Virgins who accepted such a self-understanding would not take an active role in Alexandria's public conflicts; they would instead lead private lives of devotion to Christ within the episcopate's sphere of authority. Athanasius used the title 'bride of Christ' to make this secluded lifestyle appear to be the natural one for Christian virgins.

THE DISCIPLINE OF VIRGINS WITHIN THE CHURCH

It is during the episcopate of Athanasius that Christian virgins begin to appear regularly in Alexandrian sources as constituting an identifiable group with distinctive patterns of life. The fourth century was a period of change for the virginal life in Christian Alexandria. In the early decades, there was not yet any uniform regimen followed by the majority of virgins. Rather, ascetic women appear in a variety of settings and associated with several groups in the Egyptian Church. A long-standing pattern, whereby a Christian girl dedicated herself to a life of virginity and lived with her parents, was giving way to other models, such as living in a community of virgins guided by older women or cohabitation with an ascetic man. In addition, Holy Land pilgrimage and other new acts of devotion supplemented prayer, fasting, and other traditional forms of piety. Doubtless the end of imperial persecution of Christians in the 310s enabled the multiplication of Christian virgins, their organization into communities, and their development of more public forms of piety—changes evident in other locations, such as Rome.¹⁶ In Alexandria, Athanasius took it upon himself as bishop to bring some order to this changing situation. He endorsed patterns of living and devotion that would minimize contact with men and indeed with the public life of the city, foster a private life of undivided attention to Christ, and yet maintain a close connection to the official cult of the Church. Such a way of life, the bishop believed, would make the virgin 'a whole burnt offering, undivided', one that would 'please the heavenly bridegroom'.¹⁷ Athanasius' ascetic programme was, however, not the only one available to Alexandrian virgins. Hieracas of Leontopolis offered his own vision of the celibate life as the only legitimate response

¹⁶ Metz, *Consécration des vierges*, 77–93.

¹⁷ *Ep. virg.* 2. 4 (72–5 Leb.).

to the teaching and example of Christ. He excluded married people both from his worship services and from the kingdom of heaven that continent people would inherit. Human history, as Hieracas interpreted it, had left marriage behind in the period before Christ's incarnation, an event which had ushered in the new era of self-control and continence. Athanasius defended his programme of connecting the virgins' piety with that of the wider Church by depicting virginity not as a virtue totally dissimilar to marriage, but as a transcendent form of marriage. Virgins were not superior to married people by their nature, Athanasius argued; rather, they chose to pursue a higher virtue and thus demonstrated the full use of human freedom made possible by the Word's incarnation. The varied uses of human freedom created the multi-tiered Church that Athanasius sought, one inclusive of married people and virgins.

Athanasius' ascetic programme for virgins

The sources for the organization and ascetic regime of virgins in fourth-century Egypt are primarily Athanasius' own writings.¹⁸ From these one can discern both the patterns of life that the bishop endorsed and, to a lesser degree, the actual practices of virgins of his time. The Athanasian works can be supplemented with other materials, the most extensive of which are the various canon collections of the early Egyptian Church. There are three canon collections that may (whatever their date of compilation) reflect conditions of the fourth century: those associated with the names of Hippolytus, Athanasius, and Basil; all of these are extant in Arabic versions of lost Greek originals; the latter two also exist in fragmentary Coptic versions.¹⁹ When these collections were compiled is uncertain, and even the origin of the Basilian canons in Egypt has been doubted.²⁰ Still, the rules relating to virgins in all three collections cohere

¹⁸ For this section, cf. Susanna K. Elm, 'The Organization and Institutions of Female Asceticism in Fourth-Century Cappadocia and Egypt', D.Phil. thesis (Oxford, 1987), esp. 110-40.

¹⁹ Probably all three are pseudonymous, although the editors of the canons of Athanasius defended their authenticity. Hippolytus: René-Georges Coquin, *Les Canons d'Hippolyte* (PO 31. 2; 1966). Athanasius: Wilhelm Riedel and Walter E. Crum, *The Canons of Athanasius, Patriarch of Alexandria, ca. 293-373* (London, 1904; repr. Amsterdam, 1973). Basil: Wilhelm Riedel, *Die Kirchenrechtsquellen des Patriarchats Alexandrien* (Leipzig, 1900; repr. Darmstadt, 1968), 231-83.

²⁰ W. E. Crum, 'The Coptic Version of the "Canons of S. Basil"', *PSBA* 26 (1904), 57-62, at 58 n. 6; René-Georges Coquin, 'Canons of Hippolytus', 'Canons of Pseudo-Athanasius', 'Canons of Saint Basil', in *Coptic Encyclopedia* (8 vols.; New York, 1991), 458-9.

with and fill out the situation found in the writings of Athanasius and thus can be used as evidence in a secondary, supplementary fashion. While the letters of Athanasius and these canons, along with some additional materials, provide us with a great deal of information about Egyptian virgins in the fourth century, they leave many of our questions unanswered. The sources none the less paint a vivid picture of Athanasius' attempt to regulate and seclude active and independent women.²¹

In terms of socio-economic status, Christian virgins seem to have come from nearly every level of society. Athanasius believed it necessary to instruct virgins on the proper way to relate to 'a male slave' (as little as possible), but he also knew virgins who were 'oppressed by poverty'.²² The women could read; or, at least, if they could not, they would have had to learn in order to fulfil the exhortations to read the Scriptures.²³ The Athanasian canons speak of virgins inheriting and disposing of family property.²⁴ A fourth-century papyrus records that a certain Bishop Plusianus (most likely the one that presided in Lycopolis in the Thebaid until his death in 346) arbitrated an inheritance dispute between Thaisis, a 'perpetual virgin' (*ἀειπάρθενος*), and other heirs, who included a deacon. Thaisis' rivals accused her of 'stealing Christian books'; but Plusianus awarded the virgin half of the disputed estate.²⁵ The

²¹ Elm ('Organization and Institutions', 110–15) and Badger ('New Man', 179–81) also use these sources to reconstruct the life of virgins in 4th-cent. Egypt; the notes indicate my reliance on and differences with their studies. My task is slightly different: to reconstruct Athanasius' programme for virgins, its goals and implications.

²² *Ep. virg.* 1. 17 (80. 3–6 Lef.); *Ep. virg.* 2. 24 (316 Lef.).

²³ *Ep. virg.* 1. 13, 35 (78. 18–19; 90. 25–7 Lef.); *Virg. (syr.)* 8 (83 Lef.).

²⁴ *Can. Ath.* 102 (Riedel and Crum, *Canons*, 66)

²⁵ *P. Lips.* 43; ed. L. Mitteis and U. Wilcken, *Grundzüge und Chrestomathie der Papyrskunde* (2 vols. in 4; repr. Hildesheim, 1963), 2. 2. 121. The interpretation of *ἀειπάρθενος* as an ecclesiastical term meaning 'perpetual virgin' is not obvious; it could mean, non-theologically, 'still unmarried' (Alanna Emmett, 'Female Ascetics in the Greek Papyri', *Jahrbuch der österreichischen Byzantinistik*, 32. 2 (1982), 507–15, at 507–8). But the ecclesiastical setting and the designation of another heir as a 'deacon' suggest that the word is a formal title (Susanna Elm, 'An Alleged Book-Theft in Fourth-Century Egypt: P. Lips. 43', *SP* 18 (1989), 209–15, at 209–10). The identification of the Bishop Plusianus in the papyrus as Plusianus of Lycopolis appears likely. In a letter to Athanasius written in the 330s, a pro-Athanasian Bishop Plusianus is mentioned by Arsenius, the Melitian bishop of Hypsele, which is just south of Lycopolis (*Apol. sec.* 69. 2 (147. 21 Op.)). At the Synod of Tyre in 335, Plusianus was accused of burning Arsenius' house and arresting him under orders from Athanasius (*Soc. H.e.* 2. 25). In his *Festal Letter* for 347, Athanasius states that Eudaemon has replaced the now deceased Plusianus as bishop of Lycopolis and that in nearby Hypsele Arsenius has been 'reconciled to the [Athanasian] Church' (*Ep. fest. (syr.)* 19. 10 (47*. 14–15 C.)). In our papyrus, Plusianus' church is identified as 'the catholic Church', suggesting that this Plusianus was involved in a conflict with another Christian organization; such a conflict is entirely consistent with the eventful career of Plusianus of Lycopolis. Cf. Opitz's note to *Apol. sec.* 69. 2.

Athanasian canons forbid 'rich women' from having virgins as servants or employing them in other 'worldly' occupations; however, a rich woman who had no daughter could dedicate one of her female slaves to the ascetic life, but then had to remove her from normal slave duties and 'care for her as her own daughter'.²⁶ Virgins came, then, from a variety of backgrounds: some were wealthy enough to own slaves and property; others were themselves slaves; most probably fell between these extremes. Such diversity would not be surprising even if only a minority of Egyptian Christians attempted to fulfil the canon that there ought to be a virgin 'in every house of Christians'.²⁷

There were virgins in several of the cities and towns of Egypt. We have already met the virgin Thaeisis in Lycopolis. Athanasius' writings demonstrate that virgins were common in Alexandria, but the bishop also indicates that in third-century Upper Egypt Antony was able to give his sister to 'respected and trusted virgins' in his village. How organized these women were is not clear: some manuscripts have the sister entering a 'convent' (*πάρθενον*); others, simply 'virginity' (*παρθενία*).²⁸ It is possible that this is not a historical fact, but merely Athanasius' depiction of what he thought Antony should have done with his sister. In any case, by the 330s the Pachomian federation included a monastery for women near Tabennesi. Thus, there were virgins in Athanasius' time in the Thebaid as well as in Alexandria. It seems best, however, to consider the virgins that Athanasius addressed in his letters to be residents of Alexandria because, except for the reference in the *Life of Antony*, the bishop speaks only of virgins in that city, and portions of the letters reflect conditions specific to the Christian churches in Alexandria.²⁹

Already during Athanasius' episcopate the young women who wished to become Christian virgins made some formal vow of celibacy, but we have no details about the vow's content or in what setting (liturgical or other) it was made.³⁰ Throughout the first *Letter to Virgins*, Athanasius emphasizes the permanence of the life of virginity and speaks five times of a 'vow' or 'promise' (ἑπίτη) in ways that indicate something formal. For example, he praises 'the vow of virginity' and urges the virgins,

²⁶ *Can. Ath.* 103-4 (Riedel and Crum, *Canons*, 66-7).

²⁷ *Ibid.* 98 (Riedel and Crum, *Canons*, 62).

²⁸ *VA* 3 (*PG* 26. 844a); cf. Elm, 'Organization and Institutions', 110.

²⁹ *Pace* Elm, who asserts that the first *Letter to Virgins* 'was written in Coptic and therefore intended for virgins who spoke the Egyptian vernacular' ('Organization and Institutions', 116); the first *Letter to Virgins* was actually written in Greek and later translated into Coptic (Brakke, 'Authenticity', 22).

³⁰ Scholars have divided also over what kind of vow, if any, virgins may have made in the 3rd cent.; see Metz, *Consécration des vierges*, 62-7.

when tempted to engage in commercial activities, to 'remember your vow'.³¹ This vow may have taken written form, since Athanasius, to remind virgins of their decision to choose the ascetic life, says in another letter, 'Rejoicing, you offered [yourself] and wrote that you would strive.'³² The canons as well speak of a 'vow'. The Basilian canons, for example, emphasize the disgraceful nature of breaking this vow by getting married: parents therefore must not make such a decision for their daughter; it must be her own choice.³³ If women dedicated themselves to virginity about the time they would have been married, most would have made this vow as teenagers:³⁴ hence, the emphasis in the sources on the girl's own choice and the constant pressure on her to break the vow. Again, the Basilian canons provide no information about the vow's contents or setting. Such a vow probably did not have much legal or canonical definition since Athanasius emphasized that virginity 'has no law' and lacks the precise regulations of ordinary marriage.³⁵ Christian virginity did not yet have the full support of imperial law. None the less, the vow was public and standard enough for Athanasius to appeal to it repeatedly in his exhortation to the virgins; the performance of a vow similar to that associated with ordinary marriage would also have lent 'an aura of factuality' to the virgins' symbolic status as 'brides of Christ'.³⁶

A woman who had made this vow could live in at least four different settings: at home with her parents, in a community with other virgins, in the home of an ascetic man, or independently. Athanasius' second *Letter* contains an extended polemic against the third option, cohabitation with a monk (so-called 'spiritual marriage'), and one of the Basilian canons

³¹ *Ep. virg.* 1. 1, 33 (73. 11; 89. 36 Lef.); cf. 6, 19, 32 (76. 3-4; 81. 32; 89. 9-10 Lef.); cf. *Ep. virg.* 2. 22-4.

³² *Ibid.* 23 (291-2 Lef.).

³³ *Can. Bas.* 5, 36 (Riedel, *Kirchenrechtsquellen*, 239, 256-7); *Can. Ath.* 98 (Riedel and Crum, *Canons*, 62).

³⁴ On the age of Roman girls at marriage, see Treggiari, *Roman Marriage*, 398-403. Evidence from the West indicates that most girls married in their late teens or early twenties: Brent D. Shaw, 'The Age of Roman Girls at Marriage: Some Reconsiderations', *JRS* 77 (1987), 30-46. Roger S. Bagnall estimates that 70% of Egyptian women married by age 20, 90% by 24 (*Egypt in Late Antiquity* (Princeton, NJ, 1993), 189).

³⁵ Elm, 'Organization and Institutions', 119-20; *Ep. virg.* 1. 2; 18-19 (73. 25; 81. 6-23 Lef.).

³⁶ The phrase 'an aura of factuality' is borrowed from Clifford Geertz's famous definition of religion: 'a system of symbols which acts to establish powerful, persuasive, and long-lasting moods and motivations in men by formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic' ('Religion as a Cultural System', in his *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York, 1973), 87-125, at 90).

forbids it;³⁷ the rhetoric surrounding this living arrangement will receive more detailed treatment below. As for the fourth option, the Syriac index to Athanasius' *Festal Letters* speaks of a woman, 'Eudemonis, a perpetual virgin' living in 'a simple house and small cell'.³⁸ The context implies that Eudemonis lived alone in this modest dwelling; doubtless women who had sufficient financial resources could afford to live on their own. But it is the first two options, living at home and in community, that attracted most virgins, and it is the transition from home to community that is most prominent in the sources from Athanasius' career. The peace of the Church under Constantine made it easier for Christian virgins to form communities that would attract public notice.

Athanasius' letters indicate that some virgins lived at home with their parents but still had contact with other virgins, women both of their own age and more advanced in the ascetic life. Bishop Alexander, Athanasius' immediate predecessor, addressed virgins who looked to their parents as their primary authority figures, but who still gathered together as a group. Athanasius as well knew virgins who lived at home: his portrait of the ideal virgin, Mary the mother of Jesus, is of a girl who lives with her parents, is obedient to them, and goes with them to church.³⁹ The procession of virgins described by the bishop includes 'the parents of these women because their daughters walked in the image of their purity', surely an encouragement to parents who might be reluctant to withdraw their daughters from the network of family alliances that defined one's place in Roman society.⁴⁰ Elsewhere Athanasius urges the virgins: 'Let your bodies be on earth, but your minds in heaven. Your dwelling place is your father's house, but your way of life is with the heavenly Father.'⁴¹ Ambiguous as this statement is, the context implies that the father in whose house the virgin dwells is an 'earthly' father.⁴² Most likely this 'father' would be her own parent, not some spiritual leader because, although Athanasius (and Alexander) can speak of the virgin having fellow virgins as 'sisters' and Christ as 'brother' and 'bridegroom', he nowhere refers metaphorically to any contemporary person as the

³⁷ *Ep. virg.* 2. 20-9 (258-381 Leb.); *Can. Bas.* 32 (Riedel, *Kirchenrechtsquellen*, 249-50).

³⁸ *Chron. Ath.* 32 (387-91 M/A).

³⁹ *Ep. virg.* 1. 15-16 (79. 17-80. 3 Lef.).

⁴⁰ *Ibid.* 21 (82. 35-83. 1 Lef.). For similar encouragement to parents of home-based virgins, see the sermon from early 4th-cent. Syria edited by David Amand de Mendieta and Matthieu-Charles Moons, 'Une curieuse homélie grecque inédite sur la virginité adressée aux pères de famille', *R. Bén.* 63 (1953), 18-69, 211-38; tr. Teresa M. Shaw, 'Homily: On Virginity', in V. L. Wimbush (ed.), *Ascetic Behavior in Greco-Roman Antiquity* (Minneapolis, 1990), 29-44.

⁴¹ *Ep. virg.* 2. 6 (94-5 Leb.).

⁴² So Lebon, 'Athanasiana Syriaca II: Une lettre attribuée à saint Athanase d'Alexandrie', *Mus.* 41 (1928), 169-216, at 192. 15.

virgin's 'mother' or 'father', not even himself. It would appear, then, that Athanasius wrote to virgins who lived with their actual families and was not speaking of the ascetic community as the virgin's 'spiritual family'.⁴³ A papyrus from the fourth century illustrates a variation on this household pattern: a certain Nonna appears to live with 'her daughter, a perpetual virgin [*ἀειπάρθενος*]'.⁴⁴ Palladius' *Lausiaca History* also records a mother-daughter ascetic pair.⁴⁵ These family virgins practised their discipline under the guidance of one or both of their parents.

Even household-based virgins interacted with fellow virgins and 'elders'; still other virgins known to us from Athanasius' writings lived in community; the bishop encouraged these developments.⁴⁶ He exhorted the virgins to serve as models of the holy life for one another and to look to more advanced ascetic women for examples of how to behave.⁴⁷ He instructed the women on how to relate to 'elder women' and their 'equals' and how to behave when they attended church together.⁴⁸ The extent of these instructions indicates that Athanasius was addressing not only home-based virgins, but also women who lived together and interacted on a daily basis. The Athanasian canons reflect a similarly diverse situation: they speak of virgins in 'convents' and 'monasteries' and regulate their visitors and trips outside, but they also urge that there be a virgin 'in every house of Christians' and discuss how a virgin's parents ought to direct her life.⁴⁹ One canon illustrates how a virgin who lived at home still participated in the life of a community of virgins: 'Whoso hath a virgin daughter, let him not take her with him unto the church with her people; but he shall go with her unto a virgins' nunnery and deliver her unto the mother, who shall teach her the order of the singing-tones. With them she shall pass the night watching and shall [then] return unto her house.'⁵⁰ Such a virgin would have looked to the authority both of

⁴³ Pace Elm, 'Organization and Institutions', 118. The canons, in contrast to Athanasius, do speak of the female leader of a community of virgins as 'mother'; see e.g. *Can. Ath.* 98, cited below.

⁴⁴ *P. Mich.* inv. 431; ed. H. C. Youtie, 'Short Texts on Papyrus', *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik*, 37 (1980), 211-26, at 216-17; cf. Emmett, 'Female Ascetics', 507-10, who again considers the possibility that *ἀειπάρθενος* means simply 'still unmarried'.

⁴⁵ *Pall. Hist. Laus.* 60.

⁴⁶ Pace Badger, 'New Man', 258.

⁴⁷ *Ep. virg.* 1. 12, 35 (78. 4-7; 90. 28-35 Lef.).

⁴⁸ *Ep. virg.* 2. 8-10 (106-36 Leb.).

⁴⁹ Virgins in community: *Can. Ath.* 48, 92, 99, 101 (Riedel and Crum, *Canons*, 35-6, 58-60, 64-6). Virgins in private homes: *ibid.* 97, 98, 104 (Riedel and Crum, *Canons*, 62-4, 66-7).

⁵⁰ *Ibid.* 98 (Riedel and Crum, *Canons*, 64), a change from Athanasius' instruction that virgins should attend church with their parents. Here household virgins attend church only with fellow virgins.

her parents and of more advanced women in the community, a situation that corresponds exactly with the picture in Athanasius' letters. The references to both home- and community-based virgins in our sources indicate not only the coexistence of these two living patterns during Athanasius' career, but also the reality of most young women's lives: probably only a minority of young adults had living parents (particularly fathers), very few after the age of 40.⁵¹ Thus, even home-based virgins had eventually to find other quarters (if not in a community of virgins, then alone or with a celibate man) or to abandon virginity for marriage.

The means by which virgins supported themselves financially appears to have been as varied as the circumstances from which they came and in which they lived.⁵² We have seen that some virgins had family property to inherit and dispose of, and others continued to live at home with their parents after their vow. But other virgins, Athanasius says, were impoverished.⁵³ Some of these turned to ascetic men for support and shelter; the bishop condemned this practice. He also complained about virgins who engaged in profit-making activities:

When you hear about someone who cares about the seeking of goods, possessions, and worldly transactions and you learn that they have become negligent and have fallen, do not make your virginity like these, but remember your vow. Let your sight be on the Lord, with whom you have made a covenant to remain a virgin. And do not seek the things that bring profit, but let your competitiveness be directed toward the upright person. For indeed a worthy wife does not seek in confusion to know who the evil woman is; rather, she 'worries about how she might please her husband' [1 Cor. 7: 3], and she keeps the bedroom holy [Heb. 13: 4].⁵⁴

The reference to the 'covenant to remain a virgin' may indicate that financial need was a reason for virgins to break their vow and get married; hence, the reminder that the virgin is the 'wife' of Christ. Athanasius here most likely does not forbid the virgin from engaging in all money-making activity, but only from devoting too much attention to it and becoming 'competitive'. He may have in mind fourth-century Egyptian women like Didyme and 'the sisters', two of whose letters

⁵¹ Richard P. Saller, 'Men's Age at Marriage and its Consequences for the Roman Family', *CP* 82 (1987), 21-34, whose evidence is admittedly limited to the Latin-speaking West; cf. Naphtali Lewis, *Life in Egypt under Roman Rule* (Oxford, 1983), 54.

⁵² Cf. Elm, 'Organization and Institutions', 119; Fox, *Pagans and Christians*, 368-9; Castelli, 'Virginity and its Meaning', 83-4.

⁵³ *Ep. virg.* 2. 24 (316 Lcb.).

⁵⁴ *Ep. virg.* 1. 33 (89. 33-90= 7 Lef.).

survive among the Egyptian papyri.⁵⁵ Although these women were certainly Christians, there is no unambiguous evidence that they formed an ascetic community other than their reference to themselves as 'the sisters'. In any case, the women who wrote these letters bought and sold wine, food, and clothing in transactions that involved impressive amounts of money. Men appear as business associates and friends, but otherwise the women act completely on their own. Similarly, in the summer of 400 CE, Aurelius Jose, a Jew living in Oxyrhynchus, rented two rooms of a building in that city owned by Aurelia Theodora and Aurelia Tauris, whom Aurelius Jose identified as 'monks who had renounced' (*μοναχαὶ ἀποτακτικαί*).⁵⁶ It may be this kind of extensive independent commercial activity that Athanasius found objectionable. His *On Virginity* quotes a virgin proudly saying, 'I work as much as I can so that I might not need a husband; I procure my own food.' The bishop approved of this activity, but thought that the virgin should keep only as much money as she absolutely needed and should give the rest to the poor.⁵⁷ Athanasius considered acceptable a moderate amount of business activity, carried on only at a level necessary to support oneself and perhaps make a contribution to the Church's welfare system, but he urged virgins to redirect their competitive energies to moral competition with one another. As we shall see in Chapter 4, Athanasius pursued a similar strategy in the *Life of Antony*, where he urged wealthy men to use their acquisitive instincts in competition for spiritual profit.

Presumably communities of virgins benefited from the inheritances of individual virgins and also received gifts from supporters, in addition to any work the women performed. Didyme's letters suggest how a group of ascetic women may have supported themselves. Athanasius portrayed virgins from a community complaining to Bishop Alexander of sisters who fasted all the time and did 'no work with their hands, by which something might be earned to feed the poor'.⁵⁸ These virgins may have had enough money for their community life, but they still worked for charitable purposes. Supportive non-ascetic Christians were another potential source of money. One of the Athanasian canons provides that 'a

⁵⁵ *P. Berl. inv.* 13897; *P. Oxy.* 1774; dated palaeographically to the early 4th cent.; ed. Mario Naldini, *Il Cristianesimo in Egitto* (Florence, 1968), Nos. 36 and 37, pp. 173–80; tr. Robert F. Boughner with intro. by James E. Goehring, 'Egyptian Monasticism (Selected Papyri)', in Wimbush (ed.), *Ascetic Behavior*, 456–63, at 458 (intro.) and 462–3 (trans.); cf. Alanna M. Emmett, 'An Early Fourth-Century Female Monastic Community in Egypt?' in A. Moffatt (ed.), *Maiutor* (Canberra, 1984), 77–83.

⁵⁶ *P. Oxy.* 44 (1976), 3203; cf. Emmett, 'Female Ascetics', 511.

⁵⁷ *Virg. (syn.)* 8, 12 (83–4, 125–6 Leb.); *Ep. virg.* 1, 13 (78, 16–18 Lef.).

⁵⁸ *Sev. Hist. patr. Alex.* 1, 8 (405 Evetts).

rich woman' who is concerned about a legal affair involving her son or husband may go to a community of virgins and spend the night there while the virgins 'pray for her and for her household'; the canon directs the woman to reimburse financially the virgins for her stay, so that 'none of the virgins shall suffer loss on her account' and 'the blessing of the Lord may rest upon her whole house'.⁵⁹ By means of such hospitality and intercessory prayer, communities of virgins established networks of outside supporters, whose financial contributions in turn secured spiritual benefits for themselves. In his writings to virgins, Athanasius did not address this practice explicitly, but we will see that, in the *Life of Antony*, he did articulate his own model for this kind of exchange of spiritual and material benefits between ascetic and lay Christians.

Some virgins who did not enjoy the financial security of living at home or in community took up residence in the private home of a male ascetic Christian, a practice that modern scholars often call 'spiritual marriage'.⁶⁰ This practice was widespread in the ancient churches: there are references to it in the *Shepherd of Hermas* and in the writings of Irenaeus, Tertullian, Gregory of Nyssa, Jerome, and John Chrysostom, among others. If the controversial opinion that 1 Cor. 7: 36–8 refers to spiritual marriage is correct, then Paul knew and approved of the practice.⁶¹ In any case, all of the subsequent male teachers and bishops who wrote about spiritual marriage condemned it and called the virgins involved in it women who had been 'slipped in' (*συνεισάκται*, *subintroductae*) to the man's home; even today these women are called in modern scholarship by the pejorative term of 'virgines subintroductae'. They have been defined as 'female Christian ascetics who lived together with men, although both parties had taken the vow of continency and

⁵⁹ *Can. Ath.* 99 (Riedel and Crum, *Canons*, 64–5). Elm suggests that the inheritance left to the virgin Thaeasis (*P. Lips.* 43; n. 25 above) may have been a similar donation by a supportive layman ('Alleged Book-Theft', 210).

⁶⁰ H. Achelis, *Virgines Subintroductae* (Leipzig, 1902); Elizabeth A. Clark, 'John Chrysostom and the Subintroductae', in her *Ascetic Piety and Women's Faith* (Lewiston, NY, 1986), 265–90; Dyan Elliott, *Spiritual Marriage* (Princeton, NJ, 1993), 32–8; and much additional literature.

⁶¹ This was Achelis's opinion, argued in *Virgines Subintroductae*. The Pauline passage reads: 'If anyone thinks that he is not behaving properly toward his virgin, if his passions are strong, and so it has to be, let him marry as he wishes; it is no sin. Let them marry. But if someone stands firm in his resolve, being under no necessity but having his own desire under control, and has determined in his own mind to keep her as his virgin, he will do well. So then, he who marries his virgin does well; and he who refrains from marriage will do better' (NRSV, alt.). For a recent discussion of the issue that decides against Achelis's opinion, see Antoinette Clark Wire, *The Corinthian Women Prophets* (Minneapolis, 1990), 87–9, 224–5.

were animated with the earnest desire to keep it'.⁶² Like other male Christian leaders, Athanasius had grave doubts about the 'earnest desire' to be celibate of men and women who chose to inhabit the same house.

In the view of its practitioners, the benefits of spiritual marriage were both practical and spiritual.⁶³ On the practical level, the woman received shelter, food, and clothing from the man, who in turn enjoyed some of the advantages of having a wife: her cooking, cleaning, and serving. These celibate men found justification for aid to the virgin in the teachings of Jesus: 'Whoever gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones in the name of a disciple—truly, I tell you, none of these will lose their reward' (Matt. 10: 42).⁶⁴ In addition to these practical considerations, spiritual marriage offered the possibility of friendship between the sexes, something that most ancient men considered improbable.⁶⁵ The Alexandrian virgins who practised spiritual marriage told Athanasius that their living arrangement was one of 'fellowship' (κοινωνία) and 'spiritual love' (ἀγάπη; ἔσση).⁶⁶ They claimed to preserve the spiritual quality of their fellowship with men from any contamination by sexual desire through their discipline of fasting and prayers.⁶⁷ In this case, asceticism made possible a new form of relationship between women and men characterized by mutuality and intimacy. Although Christians had practised spiritual marriage for centuries, it was increasingly a desirable option for women during the fourth century, as more and more chose an ascetic life, but formal structures for financial and spiritual support were still in their infancy.

Spiritual marriage, however, was unacceptable to Athanasius, who sought to direct virgins into living situations that were satellites of the episcopally controlled local churches: households and communities of virgins. He believed that the only male authorities in a virgin's life should be, in addition to Christ, her father and her priest or bishop. Athanasius' arguments against spiritual marriage were manifold. He ridiculed the exchange of practical help by insinuating that it must include sex as well (and playing on the wording of John 1: 16): "favour"

⁶² H. Achelis, 'Agapetae', *Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics*, 1. 177-80, at 177.

⁶³ Cf. Clark, 'John Chrysostom', 278-82; Brown, *Body and Society*, 266-7.

⁶⁴ *Ep. virg.* 2. 28 (355-6 Leb.).

⁶⁵ Clark, 'John Chrysostom', 279-80; cf. Rosemary Rader, *Breaking Boundaries* (New York, 1983), 62-71.

⁶⁶ *Ep. virg.* 2. 21 (267-70 Leb.), most likely translating *κοινωνία* and *ἀγάπη πνευματική*.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.* 25 (311-4 Leb.).

[*χάρις*] in exchange for "favour".⁶⁸ He claimed that a spiritual friendship of mutual support between the sexes was impossible: daily contact between a man and woman would inevitably arouse lust in both.⁶⁹ In addition, Athanasius feared that such a relationship would result in the reversal of the proper gender roles: because the man would be overcome by lust for a woman with whom he could not have sex, he would 'become subject to a woman rather than [her] head [cf. 1 Cor. 11: 3], a slave instead of lord of the house'. This reduction of a man from ruler to ruled was, in Athanasius' view, the equivalent of 'killing' him.⁷⁰ Such lust and its devastating effects required no physical contact, but merely sight, the vehicle of desire in antiquity; Athanasius urged male ascetics: 'Make a covenant with your eyes not to gaze upon a virgin, as Job said' (Job 31: 1).⁷¹ This rhetoric of 'the gaze' makes only a brief appearance in Athanasius' discussion of spiritual marriage, but would be fully exploited by John Chrysostom.⁷² Like Chrysostom, Athanasius could not imagine a proper relationship between a man and woman that was not hierarchical and dominated by the man: the mutuality and intimacy of spiritual marriage appeared to him to be nothing more than a mask for sexual desire and improper ruling of a man by a woman.

Other arguments that Athanasius mustered against the practice of spiritual marriage drew on three themes that were characteristic of his own particular view of the ascetic life. First, he reminded the virgin that her promise of virginity was an act of the will, a 'willing sacrifice' of the self not made any under 'force'.⁷³ The danger of spiritual marriage was that it divided the virgin's will in that she must serve not only Christ, but also her spiritual partner. The exercise of free will in 'undivided' attention to Christ was a central virtue of virginity as Athanasius saw it.⁷⁴ Secondly, Athanasius claimed that the virgin who entered into a spiritual marriage was turning her attention from spiritual matters to 'fleshly' ones and sacrificing spiritual benefits for material ones. The lowering of the human gaze from spiritual to material realities provoked the fall in Athanasius' interpretation: the goal of the ascetic life was

⁶⁸ *Ep. virg.* 2. 28 (356–8 Leb.). The Syriac term is *ܚܪܝܫܘܬܐ*, the usual equivalent of *χάρις*. For the erotic use of *χάρις*, see *LSJ*, s.v. III. 2.

⁶⁹ *Ep. virg.* 2. 20–1, 25–9 (261–73, 326–73 Leb.).

⁷⁰ *Ibid.* 26 (334–9 Leb.).

⁷¹ *Ibid.* 28 (363–4 Leb.).

⁷² Blake Leyerle, 'John Chrysostom on the Gaze', *JECSS* 1 (1993), 159–74.

⁷³ *Ep. virg.* 2. 23 (290–301 Leb.).

⁷⁴ *Ibid.* 4. 24–6 (72–3, 307–11, 325–30, 340–1 Leb.). On virginity as an exercise of free will, see the discussion of Athanasius' debate with Hieracas below.

the restoration of human focus on the realm of the immaterial.⁷⁵ Finally, Athanasius argued that since the virgin was the bride of Christ, she could not give herself to another man without committing the sin of adultery and dissolving her marital union with the Word.⁷⁶ Athanasius interpreted the virgin's title 'bride of Christ' to indicate that her relationship to the Word of God was exclusive and precluded her from having an intimate relationship with another male.

Despite these more lofty objections to the practice of spiritual marriage, the crux of the matter as Athanasius saw it was financial: the virgin's need for shelter, clothing, and food. He conceded that some virgins were 'oppressed by poverty' and so needed the support that an ascetic man offered. But he insisted that, by taking up residence in the home of a man, the virgin was behaving like Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5: 1-11): she was holding back a portion of 'the wealth of [her] virginity' that she had promised to God. 'For', the bishop asks, 'she who greets a man in order to be seen by him, or to have fun with him, or to speak with him in a fleshly way—what else has she done except taken from that offering pledged by her to God and given it to a man?'⁷⁷ This pecuniary imagery had particular potency at a time when church leaders were eager to redirect the inheritances of virgins into the Church.⁷⁸ If virgins were to offer all their 'wealth' to Christ as Athanasius depicted it, they had little alternative but to live in one of the arrangements that the bishop endorsed: at home or in a community of other virgins. Significantly the bishop never mentioned in his letters to virgins the possibility of financial support from the Church. Perhaps this silence was part of the bishop's strategy of leaving virgins no choice but to live with their families or each other. There are, however, indications in Athanasius' other works that at least some virgins were connected to the Church's welfare system in his time: he complained that, during the turmoil surrounding Arian Bishop Gregory's arrival in Alexandria in 339, the anti-Athanasians interrupted 'the bread offerings for the ministers and the virgins' and seized the alms given to widows and beggars.⁷⁹ None the less, Athanasius advised the poor virgin who was tempted to enter a spiritual marriage to accept a monk's financial gift, but not to sacrifice

⁷⁵ *Ep. virg.* 2. 21-4, 27-8 (279-90, 299-302, 317-20, 350-3, 361-2 *Leb.*). On the fall and ascetic recovery, see Ch. 3.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.* 21, 24, 27-8 (273-8, 313-14, 344-8; 363 *Leb.*).

⁷⁷ *Ibid.* 22 (279-90 *Leb.*).

⁷⁸ Brown, *Body and Society*, 262.

⁷⁹ *Ep. encycl.* 4. 3; *H. Ar.* 13. 3 (173. 11-12; 189. 24-5 *Op.*); *Ep. cler. Alex.* (PG 26. 1335-8).

her reputation by cohabiting with him: 'Receive, but do not give that which is great.'⁸⁰ Athanasius' contempt for spiritual marriage was unrelenting: he accused one of his enemies, Bishop Leontius of Antioch, of having castrated himself rather than give up his domestic relationship with 'a certain Eustolium', in Athanasius' sarcastic words, 'a wife as far as he is concerned, although she is called a virgin'.⁸¹

The discipline that Athanasius recommended to virgins was fairly simple in comparison with what would develop in the following centuries of Christian asceticism. It consisted of seclusion (leaving the home or monastery as little as possible);⁸² wearing a veil in public;⁸³ modesty in clothing;⁸⁴ moderation in eating and drinking, including the avoidance of wine;⁸⁵ fasting;⁸⁶ moderation in sleep;⁸⁷ speaking as little as possible and only to certain people;⁸⁸ prayer;⁸⁹ regular reading of the Scriptures;⁹⁰ vigils;⁹¹ and the singing or chanting of the Psalms.⁹² The purposes of this ascetic regime, according to Athanasius, were threefold: to strengthen the self in order to ward off one's enemies, the devil and his demons;⁹³ to preserve the purity of the body so that it could retain Christ's presence and be presented holy to the bridegroom;⁹⁴ and, above all, to focus the inner person (the 'soul' or 'mind') so that it could devote

⁸⁰ *Ep. virg.* 2. 24 (316-17 Leb.).

⁸¹ *H. Ar.* 28 (198. 2-4 Op.); cf. *Fug.* 26. 14-18 S.

⁸² *Ep. virg.* 1. 13, 15 (78.13-16; 79. 17-19 Lef.); *Ep. virg.* 2. 14 (193-200 Leb.); *Frag. ap. Shea.* (108. 8-17 Lef.); *Can. Ath.* 92, 99, 101 (Riedel and Crum, *Canons*, 58, 64-6); *Can. Bas.* 36 (Riedel, *Kirchenrechtsquellen*, 255-6).

⁸³ *H. Ar.* 55. 3; 59. 2 (214. 24-5; 216. 16-17 Op.); *Ep. encycl.* 4. 3 (173. 9-10 Op.); *Ep. virg.* 2. 7 (96-7 Leb.); *Virg. (syr.)* 15 (166-70 Leb.).

⁸⁴ *Ep. virg.* 2. 4 (68-9 Leb.); *Virg. (syr.)* 8 (85-6 Leb.). The canons speak of a prescribed dress: *Can. Ath.* 92, 98 (*οχημα*) (Riedel and Crum, *Canons*, 59, 63).

⁸⁵ *Ep. virg.* 1. 14 (79. 5-17 Lef.); *Ep. virg.* 2. 4, 14 (67-8, 196 Leb.); *Car. et temp.* 118. 14-119. 10 Lef.; *Frag. (cop.)* 2 (121. 24-6 Lef.); *Can. Ath.* 92, 98 (Riedel and Crum, *Canons*, 59, 62); *Can. Bas.* 36 (Riedel, *Kirchenrechtsquellen*, 255).

⁸⁶ *Ep. virg.* 1. 14 (79. 11-12 Lef.); *Ep. virg.* 2. 20, 25 (261, 331 Leb.); *Virg. (syr.)* 9 (96 Leb.); *Car. et temp.* 117. 20 Lef.; *Can. Ath.* 92, 98 (Riedel and Crum, *Canons*, 59, 62); *Can. Bas.* 36 (Riedel, *Kirchenrechtsquellen*, 255).

⁸⁷ *Ep. virg.* 1. 14 (79. 9-11 Lef.); *Can. Bas.* 36 (Riedel, *Kirchenrechtsquellen*, 256).

⁸⁸ *Ep. virg.* 2. 14 (192-3 Leb.); *Can. Ath.* 92 (Riedel and Crum, *Canons*, 60); *Can. Bas.* 36 (Riedel, *Kirchenrechtsquellen*, 256).

⁸⁹ *Ep. virg.* 1. 13, 15-16, 27, 30, 32 (78. 19-23; 79. 27-36; 86. 32-3; 88. 8-9; 89. 8 Lef.); *Ep. virg.* 2. 10, 25 (123, 332 Leb.).

⁹⁰ *Ep. virg.* 1. 13-14, 35 (78. 18-19; 79. 11; 90. 25-7 Lef.); *Virg. (syr.)* 8 (83 Leb.).

⁹¹ *Ep. virg.* 2. 25 (332 Leb.); *Virg. (syr.)* 8 (82 Leb.); *Frag. (cop.)* 2 (121. 26-122. 2 Lef.).

⁹² *Ep. encycl.* 4. 5 (173. 18-20 Op.); *Virg. (syr.)* 8, 11 (82-3, 111-12 Leb.); *Can. Bas.* 36 (Riedel, *Kirchenrechtsquellen*, 256).

⁹³ *Ep. virg.* 1. 20-1, 32 (82. 16; 83. 4-12; 89. 2-27 Lef.); *Ep. virg.* 2. 12 (164-8 Leb.); *Virg. (syr.)* 15 (167-8 Leb.).

⁹⁴ *Apol. Const.* 33. 9 S.; *Ep. virg.* 1. 14, 17, 34 (79. 5-17; 80. 22-3; 90. 13-15 Lef.); *Ep. virg.* 2. 3 (45-6 Leb.); *Car. et temp.* 116. 1-3; 117. 21-3 Lef.

itself to Christ in an 'undistracted' manner.⁹⁵ Athanasius used a variety of images and philosophical ideas to describe the virgin's ascetic life: it was the Christ-aided warfare waged against the devil; the maintenance of the purity of the temple in which Christ dwells; the stabilization of the mind for focused concentration on the Word; and the behaviour of the bride who wishes to please her groom. All of these rhetorical complexes shared two elements: the bridegroom Christ, with whom the virgin had become 'one spirit', joined in a 'blessed union';⁹⁶ and the rendering of the virgin as a person set apart and enclosed: a tower, a temple, an undivided mind.

Although he meant them to be set apart, Athanasius did not want the virgins to practise their piety divorced from the public worship of the wider Church. They were to attend church either with their parents or in a group of fellow virgins.⁹⁷ Church was the only place to which Athanasius encouraged the virgins to go. On such occasions, the virgin was to walk to church 'soberly' and to greet people as little as possible; at worship, she was to be silent and receive the teaching of the priests and bishop; lay people were not to speak with her.⁹⁸ It would seem that after the general dismissal of the people at worship, virgins would remain behind for additional prayer.⁹⁹ For the other worshippers the virgin functioned as the silent image of a person in the grip of the divine: 'Those who saw her thought that she had someone watching over her, making her remember and edifying her in everything she would do.'¹⁰⁰ Athanasius limited virgins' participation in Christian rituals when it violated their regime of seclusion: he told virgins not to keep overnight vigils, even for a dead sister, since 'it is not fitting for a virgin to be seen after sunset'.¹⁰¹ Virgins also contributed to the life of the Church by praying for it and, as we have seen, by praying for other Christians.¹⁰² Thus, Athanasius envisioned the virgin's asceticism as an individual struggle for purity and attention to Christ, but one carried out within the context of the devotional life of the entire Church and in the periodic, controlled view of lay Christians.

⁹⁵ *Ep. virg.* 1. 13, 27, 44 (78. 8-9; 86. 31-3; 94. 32-3 Lef.); *Ep. virg.* 2. 4 (54-75 Leb.); *Virg. (syr.)* 11 (118-21 Leb.); *Car. et temp.* 117. 19-21 Lef.; *Frag. (cop.)* 2 (121. 17-18 Lef.).

⁹⁶ *Ep. virg.* 1. 3 (74. 6, 10-11 Lef.).

⁹⁷ *Ibid.* 15 (79. 17-19 Lef.); *Ep. virg.* 2. 9-10 (119-36 Leb.); *Can. Ath.* 92, 98 (Riedel and Crum, *Canons*, 58, 63).

⁹⁸ *Ep. virg.* 2. 4. 8-10 (63-6, 106-36 Leb.).

⁹⁹ *H. Ar.* 55. 3 (214. 21-3 Op.); cf. Badger, 'New Man', 231.

¹⁰⁰ *Ep. virg.* 1. 15 (79. 21-3 Lef.).

¹⁰¹ *Frag. ap. Shen.* (108. 8-17 Lef.).

¹⁰² *Can. Hipp.* 32 (*PO* 31. 2. 403); *Can. Ath.* 99 (Riedel and Crum, *Canons*, 64-5).

One of the most dramatic acts of devotion performed by the Alexandrian virgins was to make a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, specifically to Bethlehem and Aelia Capitolina (biblical Jerusalem). Athanasius addressed his second *Letter to Virgins* to women who had just returned to Alexandria from such a journey. After the Christian emperor Constantine arrived in the East in 324/5, he began to contribute generously to the construction of churches at the holy sites in Jerusalem and its environs.¹⁰³ The most important of these Constantinian basilicas were built at what Eusebius of Caesarea called the 'three mystical caves': the cave of the nativity in Bethlehem, the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, and the cave of the ascension on the Mount of Olives.¹⁰⁴ In 327 Constantine's mother Helena made a spectacular pilgrimage to Jerusalem; although by no means the first Christian pilgrim to visit the 'Holy City', she did initiate a trend that grew in popularity throughout the fourth century.¹⁰⁵ Because their own accounts of their travels survive, the best known of these early pilgrims are an anonymous pilgrim from Bordeaux, who travelled to Jerusalem in 333; and Egeria, a wealthy lady from Spain who toured the Christian East in the early 380s.¹⁰⁶

What we know of the itinerary of the Alexandrian virgins fits perfectly with the evidence from these fellow pilgrims.¹⁰⁷ The virgins visited 'the cave of the Lord' in Bethlehem, where they participated in worship, received 'noble exhortations' from 'the holy ones' (presumably priests or ascetics), and lodged with 'sister virgins'.¹⁰⁸ Next they saw 'the holy cave of the resurrection and the site of Golgotha', the two attractions in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.¹⁰⁹ That the virgins also visited the site of the ascension on the Mount of Olives is suggested by the comparison of the virgins' 'departure from the holy mountain' to that of the disciples after 'the Saviour departed from them' (cf. Acts 1: 12).¹¹⁰ In any case, the complete triad of major holy places appears later in the letter: 'You have seen the place of the nativity . . . the place of the

¹⁰³ E. D. Hunt, *Holy Land Pilgrimage in the Later Roman Empire AD 312-460* (Oxford, 1982), 6-27.

¹⁰⁴ *Eus. LC* 9. 16; cf. Hunt, *Holy Land Pilgrimage*, 6-27; P. W. L. Walker, *Holy City, Holy Places?* (Oxford, 1990), 171-281.

¹⁰⁵ On the date of Helena's pilgrimage, see Hunt, *Holy Land Pilgrimage*, 29-35.

¹⁰⁶ Both works are available in translation in *Egeria's Travels to the Holy Land*, ed. and tr. John Wilkinson (rev. edn.; Jerusalem, 1981).

¹⁰⁷ Susanna Elm, 'Perceptions of Jerusalem Pilgrimage as Reflected in Two Early Sources on Female Pilgrimage (3rd and 4th centuries A.D.)', *SP* 20 (1987), 219-23, at 220.

¹⁰⁸ *Ep. virg.* 2. 1 (4-26 Leb.).

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.* 2 (27 Leb.).

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.* 2 (35-7 Leb.).

crucifixion . . . the place of the ascension.¹¹¹ Thus, the virgins visited the major pilgrimage sites of the fourth-century Holy Land, those associated with the central events in the incarnation. They may also have seen some less important places from the life of Christ and the history of the Israelites. Twice Athanasius mentions Zacchaeus (Luke 19: 1–10) as a figure to be emulated by those ‘who have walked in the holy places’; in 333 the Bordeaux pilgrim saw ‘the sycamore tree which Zacchaeus climbed’ in Jericho, eighteen miles from Jerusalem.¹¹²

Whatever the virgins saw once they arrived in Jerusalem, the trip there would have been a major undertaking. Although there was a well-used road from Alexandria to Jerusalem, travel was still full of hazards, and a network of Christian hospitality along pilgrimage routes took decades to develop.¹¹³ None the less, we have seen evidence that some women in fourth-century Egypt were organized enough financially to undertake such a journey: in addition to their other transactions, the ‘Didyme and the sisters’ of the papyri acknowledged the receipt of ‘travel supplies’ (τὰ ὁδοιπόρια).¹¹⁴ If the independent, commercially active Didyme and her sisters were ascetics, they appear to have had the wherewithal and independence to undertake a journey to Jerusalem, although there is no evidence that they did.

Doubtless the arduous journey was worth the effort to the virgins, who desired to be physically present at ‘the holy places’. Egeria’s account of her pilgrimage gives a sense of what the experience of visiting the Holy Land may have meant to the Alexandrian virgins. It was Egeria’s desire to see the places where biblical events took place that motivated her journey; as she gazed at each new site, she had the appropriate biblical passage read to her.¹¹⁵ She wrote her memoir so that her sisters could ‘better picture what happened in these places when you read the holy Books of Moses’.¹¹⁶ To Egeria, the places themselves were holy, infused with God’s presence: even the structure of the mountains at Sinai ‘must have been planned by God’.¹¹⁷ The pilgrim’s climb up the mountain was ‘impelled by Christ our God and assisted by the prayers of the holy men who accompanied us’.¹¹⁸ So too Athanasius imagined that

¹¹¹ *Ibid.* 2. 6 (91–4 *Leb.*).

¹¹² *Ibid.* 5 (79, 86 *Leb.*); *It. Burd.* 596. 5–6 (Wilkinson, *Egeria’s Travels*, 160); cf. *Jer. Ep.* 108. 12.

¹¹³ Cf. Hunt, *Holy Land Pilgrimage*, 52–74.

¹¹⁴ *P. Berl.* inv. 13897. 5–6 Naldini.

¹¹⁵ *It. Eg.* 4. 3 (Wilkinson, *Egeria’s Travels*, 95).

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.* 5. 8 (Wilkinson, *Egeria’s Travels*, 98).

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.* 2. 7 (Wilkinson, *Egeria’s Travels*, 93).

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.* 3. 2 (Wilkinson, *Egeria’s Travels*, 93).

the Alexandrian virgins valued their seeing of the biblical sites and considered them filled with the divine presence. 'In the life-giving places', Athanasius wrote, 'you saw, so to speak, Christ walking.'¹¹⁹ For them these places were 'where Christ dwells', 'where Christ's presence is'.¹²⁰ And so their departure from the Holy Land was emotionally painful for the virgins: 'As you were separating from the holy places, you shed streams of bitter tears.'¹²¹ Thus, Athanasius' letter to the virgins takes the form of a consolation to them in their spiritual 'distress' at being separated from the special presence of Christ found in the Holy Land.¹²²

The bishop, in his effort to console the virgins, expressed a less enthusiastic view of such a journey to the holy places: he said that an actual pilgrimage to Jerusalem, although acceptable, was not needed to experience Christ's presence.¹²³ The ascetic life could make any person anywhere a 'temple' for Christ.¹²⁴ The goal of the virgin's life was still Jerusalem, but the Jerusalem defined by Athanasius was, as a modern scholar has put it, a 'spiritual concept', not a geographical one.¹²⁵ The true Jerusalem, he said, was in heaven, and the virgin's journey there took place within her, in her 'mind', by means of her 'way of life':

Do not depart from Jerusalem, but await the promise of the Father [cf. Acts 1: 4]. You have seen the place of the nativity: he has given birth to your souls anew. You have seen the place of the crucifixion: let the world be crucified to you and you to the world [cf. Gal. 6: 14]. You have seen the place of the ascension: your minds are raised up. Let your bodies be on earth, but your minds in heaven. Your dwelling-place is your [earthly] father's house, but your way of life is with the heavenly Father.¹²⁶

Athanasius told the virgins, now physically present in Alexandria, not to depart from Jerusalem with their minds, thereby spiritualizing the holy places and transferring them into the virgin's interior landscape. Like Athanasius, Gregory of Nyssa and Jerome expressed ambivalence about the new enthusiasm for Holy Land pilgrimage.¹²⁷ In his case, Athanasius'

¹¹⁹ *Ep. virg.* 2. 5 (83-4 Leb.).

¹²⁰ *Ibid.* 3 (43-4 Leb.).

¹²¹ *Ibid.* 1 (3-4 Leb.).

¹²² *Ibid.* 1-2 (4-5, 16-18, 24-6, 35-6, 39-41 Leb.). Cf. Joseph T. Rivers III, 'Pattern and Process in Early Christian Pilgrimage', Ph.D. thesis (Duke, 1983), 292-5.

¹²³ Cf. Elm, 'Perceptions of Jerusalem Pilgrimage'; Georgia A. Frank, 'Pilgrims' Experience and Theological Challenge: Two Patristic Views', forthcoming in *PEREGRINATIO: Pilgerreise und Pilgerziel* (Münster). ¹²⁴ *Ep. virg.* 2. 3 (42-8 Leb.).

¹²⁵ Elm, 'Perceptions of Jerusalem Pilgrimage', 220.

¹²⁶ *Ep. virg.* 2. 6 (90-5 Leb.).

¹²⁷ Gr. Nys. *Ep.* 2; Jer. *Ep.* 58; cf. Elm, 'Perceptions of Jerusalem Pilgrimage', 221; Hunt, *Holy Land Pilgrimage*, 91-2; Robert L. Wilken, *The Land Called Holy* (New Haven, Conn., and London, 1992), 117-18.

spiritualization of pilgrimage functioned to console the recently returned Alexandrian virgins. It also dovetailed with two elements of his own thought: an ambivalence about the continued existence of the earthly successor to Jerusalem, and a model of the virgin whose life is private and internal, not public and external.

In Athanasius' view, the earthly city of Jerusalem and the Temple that once stood in it were merely 'patterns' or 'shadows' of the spiritual realities present in Christ and heaven; their destruction by Titus in 70 CE and Hadrian in 135 was a sign that the Word of God had come, that the era of the Mosaic legislation was at an end, and that present-day Palestine no longer had religious significance. Athanasius could have learned all this from reading his Alexandrian predecessor, Origen.¹²⁸ This apologetic theme appears in Athanasius' early work, *On the Incarnation*:

For a sign and a great proof of the coming of God the Word is this: no longer does Jerusalem stand, nor does a prophet arise, nor is vision revealed to them—and rightly so. For when he who was signified has come, what need is there of those that signify? When the truth is present, what need is there of the shadow? For this reason they prophesied until Righteousness itself should come and he who absolves the sins of all; and for this reason Jerusalem stood for so long, in order that they might first meditate there on the patterns of the truth. Therefore, since the holy of holies is at hand, rightly have vision and prophecy been sealed, and the kingdom of Jerusalem has ceased.¹²⁹

Although certainly 'the kingdom of Jerusalem' (the pre-Roman temple state) had ceased, it was true only in a rhetorical sense to say that Jerusalem itself 'no longer stands', for a city certainly did stand on the same site—but one now renamed Aelia Capitolina.¹³⁰ Thus, years later, in his *Letter to Adelphius*, Athanasius limited his remarks explicitly to the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple, which he took to be the 'pattern' for the human flesh in which the incarnate Word dwelled 'as in a temple'.¹³¹ This theme, in the form of a polemic against continued Jewish observance of the Passover, appears numerous times in the *Festal Letters*, where Athanasius assimilated it to his 'shadow'/'reality'

¹²⁸ For more on the context of this belief, see Wilken, *Land Called Holy*, 65–81, and his *John Chrysostom and the Jews* (Berkeley, Calif., 1983), 128–60.

¹²⁹ *Inc.* 40. 4–13 T.

¹³⁰ On the name Aelia Capitolina, see Hunt, *Holy Land Pilgrimage*, 149.

¹³¹ 'And yet the former temple was constructed of stones and gold, as a shadow; but when the reality came, the pattern then ceased, and there did not remain, according to the Lord's utterance, one stone upon another that was not broken down [cf. Matt. 24: 2]; *Ep. Adelph.* 7 (PG 26. 1081a).

typology of history. Here the earthly Jerusalem is merely the pattern for a 'heavenly' or 'higher' Jerusalem, which Christians attain by celebrating Easter but which the Jews fall short of by continuing to observe the Passover.¹³² In these passages, there seems little room for the earthly Aelia Capitolina (formerly Jerusalem) to continue to have spiritual significance, except as a sign of the end of the era of Jewish law and festivals.¹³³ In Athanasius' view, it was far more important to be 'within the truth' than to be in any 'place'.¹³⁴

The bishop's ambivalence about Holy Land pilgrimage also reflected his conviction that virgins should cultivate their particular holiness in a private fashion, as an interior virtue. Here Athanasius urged the returned virgins to focus their ascetic efforts not only on their bodies, but also on their inner persons: 'For it is not holiness of the body alone that is required, but also that of the spirit.' Such holiness of 'spirit' manifested itself in the virtue of being 'undividedly attentive' (1 Cor. 7: 35).¹³⁵ The virgin became 'undivided', Athanasius claimed, by turning away from the public sphere of society: 'Do not love the world, lest you have enmity with your God [Jas. 4: 4]. . . . Abandon the nets of the world, that is the world's entanglements, and henceforth follow Christ, abandoning everything like Zacchaeus.' The bishop invoked the traditional image of Mary from the story of Mary and Martha (Luke 10: 38-42): 'Sit at the feet of Jesus; choose for yourselves the better portion, and do not forsake hearing the divine words.'¹³⁶ In his discussion of Bethlehem, Athanasius compared the virgins not to the magi, who travelled to foreign lands to see Christ, but to this Mary, who welcomed Christ into her private home.¹³⁷ The virgin was to be concealed from other human beings: 'Your entrance as the bride of Christ [is] when your face is veiled before all human beings and is revealed to the bridegroom alone.'¹³⁸ This theme, that the virgin should cultivate a life that is private and interior and not public and exterior, recurs again and again in Athanasius' writings to virgins. In the context of pilgrimage, it severely limited the kinds of activities that women like Egeria and Didyme and

¹³² *Epp. fest. (syr.)* 1. 7-9; 4. 4; 6. 12 (17. 13-18. 19; 34. 18-35. 15; 6^a. 14-15 C.); (cop.) 24 (38. 27-32; 39. 16-20 Lef.); (gr.) 45 ap. *Cosm. Ind. Top.* 10. 13. 3-4 Wolska-Conus.

¹³³ Cf. the attitude of Eusebius of Caesarea as described by Walker, *Holy City, Holy Places?*

¹³⁴ *PG* 26. 1189-90.

¹³⁵ *Ep. virg.* 2. 4 (54-6 Leb.).

¹³⁶ *Ibid.* 5 (76-7, 84-6, 88-90 Leb.).

¹³⁷ *Ibid.* 1 (21-3 Leb.); Frank, 'Pilgrims' Experience',

¹³⁸ *Ibid.* 7 (96-7 Leb.)

her sisters were undertaking. To the extent that pilgrimage represented an exercise of the virgins' 'freedom of movement', Athanasius was eager to limit this freedom.¹³⁹

In summary, then, some Alexandrian virgins in the fourth century were organized and financially secure enough to undertake a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. Papyrus evidence confirms that there were women in Egypt at this time who had the wherewithal to make such a trip. For the virgins, this trip was a pilgrimage to the 'holy places', where 'Christ's presence' existed 'in abundance'; departure from these places could be considered the occasion for profound grief. Athanasius, however, without explicitly criticizing this act of piety by the virgins, urged them to make their ascetic discipline an interior pilgrimage to the 'Jerusalem' that was 'in heaven'. The bishop's position reflected both his own ambivalence about the meaning of the earthly successor to the biblical city of Jerusalem and his view that a virgin's life ought to be private, essentially removed from public life. Bishop Athanasius quoted his predecessor Alexander as explaining that, for the virgin, Christ must replace the normal ties of human society: 'He is your brother, and he is your bridegroom, and he is your neighbour. Oh, daughters of Jerusalem, you will no longer be called by the name of your parents; rather, because you have joined yourselves with him, you will be called by everyone "daughters of Jerusalem".'¹⁴⁰ According to Athanasius and Alexander, the virgins' title 'daughters of Jerusalem' indicated no tie to any earthly city of that name; rather, it represented their abandonment of their earthly citizenship for 'undivided' attention to their heavenly bridegroom and his celestial city.

Another area of public life that Athanasius warned the virgins to avoid was the public baths. The baths were an important part of daily life in Roman cities: only the wealthy could afford to have baths in their own homes, and the public baths provided extensive facilities not only for various kinds of bathing (hot, cold, steam), but also for exercise, reading, and socializing.¹⁴¹ Debates among Christians over their participation in this part of city life focused on the possibility of contact between the

¹³⁹ On pilgrimage as expressing the virgin's 'freedom of movement', see Joyce E. Salisbury, *Church Fathers, Independent Virgins* (London, 1991), 83–96.

¹⁴⁰ *Ep. virg.* 1. 40 (92. 28–32 LeF.).

¹⁴¹ Jérôme Carcopino, *Daily Life in Ancient Rome*, ed. H. T. Rowell, tr. E. O. Lorimer (New Haven, Conn., 1940), 254–63; Erika Brödner, *Die römischen Thermen und das antike Badewesen* (Darmstadt, 1983); Marinella Pasquinucci (ed.), *Terme Romane e vita quotidiana* (Modena, 1987).

sexes.¹⁴² Much of the information concerning the use of the baths by women is unclear.¹⁴³ In general, it would seem that during the republican period most public baths had structurally separate areas for male and female bathers, even with their own entrances, but strict separation of the sexes was not always observed. Later, as the building of new baths escalated during the early empire, public baths without such distinct sections appeared, and mixed bathing remained popular until at least the end of the fourth century. Some private baths may have been exclusive to one sex or the other. The *Apostolic Constitutions* probably reflects the reality of the situation: it assumes the existence of some baths open to both sexes and others open only to one, and it urges Christians to make use only of the latter.¹⁴⁴

Athanasius, like Cyprian of Carthage before him, told virgins that they should not use the public baths at all. The large bath in Alexandria had been built during the second century, perhaps as part of the reconstruction after the Jewish revolt of 113–15.¹⁴⁵ But Athanasius told the virgins who had just returned from a trip to Jerusalem that 'a basin is sufficient for you to wash away your dirt'. He urged them to follow the examples of Sarah, Rachel, Miriam, and the women who followed Jesus, all of whom apparently carried a basin with them on their travels; of the disciples, who did not wash their hands before eating (Matt. 15: 1–20); and of Peter, who asked Jesus not to wash his feet (John 13: 3–11). 'Who', the bishop asked, 'is purer than the aforementioned people?' The danger of public bathing, in Athanasius' view, was not simply that harm might come to the virgins, but even more that the mere sight of their naked bodies might arouse lust in a male viewer and so drag him down to corruption. The prime culprit among 'women who bathe' was Bathsheba: 'When she stripped, she instantly stripped such a great man of holiness and rule. . . . Because she washed her body, she defiled another's soul.' In an astonishing reversal of the biblical text's plain sense, Athanasius even blamed Susannah for the attack on her by the elders: 'When she washed and bathed in the garden, she caused the two elders to fall.'¹⁴⁶ A century earlier Carthaginian virgins had said to Bishop Cyprian in defence of their use of the public bath, 'Let everyone

¹⁴² Johannes Zellinger, *Bad und Bäder in der altchristlichen Kirche* (Munich, 1928); Margaret R. Miles, *Carnal Knowing* (Boston, 1989), 26–9; Roy Bowen Ward, 'Women in Roman Baths', *HTR* 85 (1992), 125–47, at 142–6.

¹⁴³ Ward, 'Women in Roman Baths', thoroughly discusses this issue; what follows summarizes his conclusions.

¹⁴⁴ *Const. App.* 1. 9; Ward, 'Women in Roman Baths', 144–5.

¹⁴⁵ Brödner, *Die römischen Thermen*, 244 (see also plate T52b).

¹⁴⁶ *Ep. virg.* 2. 16–17 (208–16, 218–34 Leb.).

look to the disposition with which he comes there; my concern is only that of refreshing and washing my poor body.¹⁴⁷ The virgins' argument assumed that men were free to control their reactions to women. Athanasius, however, shared Cyprian's belief that the sight of the naked female body would inevitably arouse lust in men and cause them to fail, that men had no control over this reaction. Clement of Alexandria had expressed this idea well: 'From looking people get to loving.'¹⁴⁸ Characteristically, Athanasius saw the problem in terms of fleshly distraction from intellectual contemplation of God: when the elders saw the naked Susannah, 'the uncovered flesh covered their eyes so that they did not contemplate heaven' (cf. Sus. 9).¹⁴⁹ As in the case of spiritual marriage, Athanasius assumed that the mere sight of a female body was sufficient to destroy a man's virtue. A male's anxieties about his own integrity required the removal of female virgins from the city's public life.

It is ironic that Susannah's obscuring of the elders' contemplation of heaven occurred in a garden, for Athanasius said that the way of life he recommended was meant to build a wall around the virgin and make her 'an enclosed garden'. 'It behoves you', the bishop told the pilgrim virgins, 'to be enshrouded, separated, set apart, and withdrawn in every way, with a steadfast will, and to be sealed up.' The inspiration for this image was Song of Songs 4:

An enclosed garden is my sister, the bride,
 an enclosed garden, a sealed fountain,
 a paradise of pomegranates with fruits of the trees:
 cyprus with nard, nard and saffron, cane and cinnamon,
 with all the cedar-wood of Lebanon.

[S. of S. 4: 12-14]

The image drew on the innocence of the Garden of Eden, but it functioned here to emphasize seclusion, with subtle sexual undertones. The virgin, who was 'all fruit and goodness', must be 'guarded, withdrawn, and sealed', 'an enclosed garden that is not trodden upon by anyone, except by its gardener alone'.¹⁵⁰ The virgin's relationship with Christ was to be exclusive: he alone was permitted to enter the garden and harvest its fruit. Athanasius' instructions to virgins carefully set them apart as enclosed spaces of goodness in the midst of the urban

¹⁴⁷ *Cyp. Hab. virg.* 19. 5-7 Keenan; cf. Margaret R. Miles, 'Patriarchy as Political Theology: The Establishment of North African Christianity', in L. S. Rouner (ed.), *Civil Religion and Political Theology* (Notre Dame, Ind., 1986), 169-86, at 179-80.

¹⁴⁸ *Clem. Paed.* 3. 5, cited in Ward, 'Women in Roman Baths', 142-3.

¹⁴⁹ *Ep. virg.* 2. 17 (234-5 Leb.). ¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.* 30 (382-90 Leb.).

Church; the effect of his regulations was to make the virgins' life one 'in the city, but not of it',¹⁵¹ separate from the parish church, but still a satellite of it. Given the tumultuous character of church life in fourth-century Alexandria, there is something wistful in the bishop's description of the virgin garden:

Be careful that no merciless stranger spoils the manifold seedlings and beautiful blossoms of the garden; that no one mars the injured vine; that no ferocious foxes from some place or other destroy the beautiful clusters of grapes [cf. S. of S. 2: 15]; that no one disturbs the sealed fountain or muddies the bright and shining waters of virginity; that no one fills the paradise of sweet fragrance with a foul odour.¹⁵²

Unfortunately, when Athanasius surveyed the life of Alexandrian virgins, he did not always see a placid garden. 'Ferocious foxes', certain Alexandrian men, again and again 'destroy[ed] the beautiful clusters of grapes' and 'muddie[d] the bright and shining waters of virginity'. These 'foxes' were not only the monks who invited virgins into spiritual marriage; they were also Athanasius' theological opponents. Among these opponents was the ascetic teacher Hieracas, whose vision of the virginal life conflicted with Athanasius' both socially and philosophically.

Athanasius vs. Hieracas on virginity and marriage in the Church

In his first *Letter to Virgins*, Athanasius explicitly called Hieracas and his followers 'wolves' who were 'destroying the vineyard' of virginity, and he urged his addressees to 'take courage and condemn Hieracas, who says that marriage is evil inasmuch as virginity is good'.¹⁵³ While Athanasius was developing an ascetic programme that placed virgins in households and communities connected to local churches, Hieracas was promulgating an alternative vision of the Christian Church that placed virgins in communities with ascetic men, disconnected from married Christians. A complex debate between Hieracas and Athanasius on human nature and free will formed the ideological dimension of a conflict between two competing social programmes. Hieracas appeared particularly dangerous to bishops like Athanasius because he was, even his opponents admitted, learned and, in many ways, quite admirable.

¹⁵¹ Badger, 'New Man', 181.

¹⁵² *Ep. virg.* 2. 30 (391-6 Leb.).

¹⁵³ *Ep. virg.* 1. 24, 29 (84. 23-5; 87. 30-1 Lef.). For modern discussions of Hieracas, see Karl Heussi, *Der Ursprung des Mönchtums* (Tübingen, 1936), 58-65; Bernhard Lohse, *Askese und Mönchtum in der Antike und in der alten Kirche* (Munich, 1969), 179-81.

According to the *Life of Epiphanius*, Hieracas 'was reckoned by some to be good and to have prior knowledge of God'; he lived outside Leontopolis, a city in the southern portion of the Egyptian Delta, in a 'monastery' (μοναστήριον). It is reported that Epiphanius, a Christian ascetic from Palestine who later became bishop of Salamis on Cyprus, heard of Hieracas' great reputation, was eager to meet him, and so visited him during his tour of Egypt in 335. The *Life* reports that Hieracas' disciples formed 'a great crowd', and it praises Hieracas' renunciation of food and drink. The only 'irregular opinion' that Hieracas held was about the resurrection: 'He taught that this flesh would not rise, but some other [flesh] in its place, and that this present one would dissolve into the earth, as it is written: "You are earth, and to earth you will return" [Gen. 3: 19]. He also said that immature children would not be found in the age to come.' The *Life* says that when Epiphanius heard this teaching and taught the true doctrine from the Scriptures, he convinced Hieracas to repent (after miraculously striking him dumb).¹⁵⁴ Apart from its legendary qualities, this account portrays Hieracas as an intelligent and genuinely ascetic person, despite his controversial teaching on the resurrection; it also places Hieracas' death sometime after 335 but before 370, since he was dead by the time Epiphanius wrote the *Panarion*, a lengthy refutation of various 'heresies', including that of Hieracas.¹⁵⁵

Chapter 67 of the *Panarion* remains our only extensive source for the doctrine and practice of Hieracas; no work attributed to him has yet appeared.¹⁵⁶ According to Epiphanius, Hieracas was a learned ascetic who published scriptural commentaries, treatises, and 'psalms' in both Greek and Coptic. The resurrection, Hieracas claimed, would not mean the rising of human 'flesh' (σάρξ), but only of the 'soul' (ψυχή), since paradise was not 'of the sensible order' (αἰσθητός).¹⁵⁷ The Christian life, then, was the struggle to overcome and escape the flesh and so to gain this completely spiritual paradise. Children who died 'before knowledge'

¹⁵⁴ *V. Epiph.* 27 (PG 41. 57b-60a).

¹⁵⁵ Heussi, *Ursprung*, 58-9 n. 2.

¹⁵⁶ Martin Tetz has suggested that the Pseudo-Athanasian sermon *On Endurance* is related to the Hieracite movement, but his arguments do not appear conclusive ('Eine asketische Ermunterung zur Standhaftigkeit aus der Zeit der maximinischen Verfolgung (311/13)', *ZNW* 81 (1990), 79-102, at 99-102). More promising is the Coptic fragment published by L. Th. Lefort ('Fragments d'apocryphes en copte-akhimique', *Mus.* 52 (1939), 1-10, at 2-3) and discussed by E. Peterson ('Ein Fragment des Hierakas (?)', *Mus.* 60 (1947), 257-60); more on this below. In general, see Tito Orlandi, 'Coptic Literature', in B. A. Pearson and J. E. Goehring (eds.), *The Roots of Egyptian Christianity* (Philadelphia, 1986), 51-81, at 60.

¹⁵⁷ *Epiph. Haer.* 67. 1. 5; 2. 8 (3. 133. 14-15; 135. 4-7 Hoff-Dummer).

(πρὸ γνῶσεως) would not 'inherit the kingdom of heaven because they have not taken part in the contest [οὐκ ἠγωνίσαντο].'¹⁵⁸ For Hieracas, Christianity was an extreme form of the late antique quest for virtue, requiring purposeful effort. Christians pursued excellence far better than anyone else because they practised 'chastity and continence', virtues unknown before the coming of Jesus Christ. According to Hieracas, marriage had been permitted in the period before the incarnation, but afterwards its practitioners could not 'inherit the kingdom'. Nearly all of Christ's teachings could be found in the Hebrew Scriptures, 'but this one thing he came to establish: to preach continence in the world and to gather to himself chastity [ἀγνεία] and continence [ἐγκράτεια]; now without this (one) cannot live.'¹⁵⁹ Hieracas supported this claim with references to 1 Cor. 7 and Matt. 19: 12 ('There are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven'). To his mind, the Parable of the Wise and Foolish Virgins (Matt. 25: 1-13) did not, as many Christians believed, warn ascetics that virginity alone was not enough to save them, but rather proved that the kingdom of heaven belonged only to the continent: 'Sensible virgins, foolish virgins, none the less virgins they are who are compared to the kingdom of heaven; he did not speak of married people.'¹⁶⁰ Christ's chief function in the Hieracite version of Christianity was to teach and exemplify the virtues of chastity and continence; sexually active persons were at best second-class Christians, if Christians at all, since they failed to imitate Christ in this crucial respect.

Hieracas' teachings may not have been as radical as they might first appear. To have doubts about the resurrection of 'the flesh' was not uncommon among Christians of the second and third centuries, especially since Paul had spoken not of a resurrected 'flesh', but of a 'spiritual body' (1 Cor. 15: 35-50).¹⁶¹ Only in the late fourth century, during the so-called 'Origenist' controversy (in which Epiphanius was a vigorous participant), did various Christian intellectuals reach a majority consensus on this problem.¹⁶² Traditional too was Hieracas' Middle Platonic language for describing the relationship of the Son to the Father: 'a lamp from a lamp, or like a torch [whose flame has been

¹⁵⁸ Epiph. *Haer.* 67. 2. 7 (3. 134. 27-135. 4 Holl-Dummer).

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.* 67. 1. 7-9 (3. 133. 22-134. 8 Holl-Dummer).

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.* 67. 2. 6 (3. 134. 22-5 Holl-Dummer).

¹⁶¹ Bentley Layton, *The Gnostic Treatise on Resurrection from Nag Hammadi* (Missoula, Mont., 1979); W. van Unnik, 'The Newly Discovered Gnostic "Epistle to Rheginus" on Resurrection', *JEH* 15 (1964), 141-67.

¹⁶² Elizabeth A. Clark, *The Origenist Controversy* (Princeton, NJ, 1992), esp. 85-158.

divided] into two'; Arius quoted these phrases of Hieracas as self-evidently heretical,¹⁶³ but even Epiphanius apparently found nothing wrong with this teaching, although he criticized Hieracas' identification of the Holy Spirit with Melchizedek. Moreover, an understanding of human history as a gradual advance from marriage to virginity, similar to that of Hieracas, appears in the *Symposium* of Methodius, a Christian teacher of the late third century active in Olympus, a small city in Lycia (south-west Turkey). Here the history of human morality, as the virgin Marcella is made to tell it, is the story of how human beings 'advance nearer to heaven', progressing from polygamy through monogamy and continence to virginity, as 'the habitual inclination to sexual intercourse' is slowly removed. Virginity arrived with Christ: 'It was reserved for the Lord alone to be the first to teach this doctrine, since he alone, coming down to us, taught humanity to draw near to God.' Christians can recapture the lost image of God in themselves by imitating Christ, the 'Archvirgin'.¹⁶⁴ Marcella's companion Theophila accepts this idea of progress toward virginity, but says that 'the predestined number of human beings' must be fulfilled; at that time, 'there must also be no more procreation of children'. But that point has not yet come, and so 'at present humanity must co-operate in the forming of the image of God, while the world exists and is still being formed'.¹⁶⁵ Thus, Methodius envisions the Christian Church as 'a flower-covered and variegated meadow, adorned and crowned not only with the flowers of virginity, but also with those of childbearing and of continence'.¹⁶⁶ But all are not equal in Methodius' Christian meadow: 'After he had brought in virginity, the Word did not altogether abolish the generation of children; for although the moon may be greater than the stars, the light of the stars is not destroyed by the moonlight.'¹⁶⁷ Hieracas, it would seem, shared Methodius' opinion that marriage could continue after Christ's incarnation, albeit as a lesser light in the ecclesiastical sky: according to him, the apostle Paul wrote, "On account of fornication, each one should have his own wife" [1 Cor. 7: 2], not in the sense of praising marriage after the advent of Christ, but in the sense of tolerating it, lest they fall into greater ruin'.¹⁶⁸ How is this statement to be understood? It is possible that Hieracas reserved complete blessedness (the imperceptible

¹⁶³ Ath. Syn. 16. 3 (Urk. 6; 13. 1 Op.).

¹⁶⁴ Meth. Symp. I. 2. 21-33; 3. 22-6; 4. 6-10 Musurillo.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid. 2. 1. 22-4 Musurillo.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid. 2. 7. 40-4 Musurillo.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid. 2. 1. 8-11 Musurillo.

¹⁶⁸ Epiph. Haer. 67. 2. 5 (J. 134. 17-20 Holl-Dummer).

'paradise', 'the kingdom of heaven') for continent people, but granted a lesser ultimate fate, short of damnation, to married people and children. Such a scenario would have been similar to the one that some Valentinians developed to explain the eternal states of non-Valentinian Christians.¹⁶⁹ These observations, plus Hieracas' willingness to use scripture (the *Ascension of Isaiah*) that did not belong to the canon used by Athanasius and his supporters, justify the description of Hieracas' thought as 'archaic',¹⁷⁰ a system at home in the loosely related Christian groups of the third century, but increasingly out of place in the developing imperial Church of the fourth.

Certainly the social practices of Hieracas and his followers did not cohere with the institutional, episcopally centred Christianity that Athanasius was forming. According to Epiphanius, the followers of Hieracas limited their meetings to fellow ascetics: 'No one worships with them except someone who is a virgin, a monk, a continent person, or a widow.' Moreover, men and women lived together in a community: they 'make themselves quite ridiculous because of the "slipped-in" women that each man has acquired [ὅτι ἄς κέκτηνται ἕκαστος συνεισάκτους γυναῖκας], and whom they are accustomed to boast they have at their service.'¹⁷¹ Here the separatist tendencies of the ascetic movement and the new male-female relationships that it made possible reached their logical extreme in a Christian community that intentionally excluded married people from participation in the cult and where unattached men and women lived together; by no means was this the secluded virginal life that Athanasius proposed. Such a form of Egyptian Christianity could easily have developed in the third century, when the Alexandrian episcopate was not particularly strong; by his death in 231/2, Bishop Demetrius of Alexandria had appointed only three bishops in all the rest of Egypt. But as the power and influence of the Alexandrian patriarch grew, the Hieracites appeared more and more unacceptable to other Christian leaders.¹⁷² None the less, virgins in places other than Leontopolis, even in Alexandria itself, began to embrace the teachings of Hieracas.

Athanasius' presentation of Hieracas in his first *Letter to Virgins* does not differ significantly from what is found in Epiphanius' *Panarion*,¹⁷³

¹⁶⁹ Ir. *Haer.* 1. 6. 1-4; 7. 1, 5; tr. Bentley Layton, *The Gnostic Scriptures* (Garden City, NY, 1987), 293-7.

¹⁷⁰ Heussi, *Ursprung*, 60.

¹⁷¹ Epiph. *Haer.* 67. 2. 9; 8. 3 (3. 135. 7-8; 140. 9-11 Holl-Dummer).

¹⁷² Heussi, *Ursprung*, 63.

¹⁷³ Cf. Yves-Marie Duval, 'La Problématique de la *Lettre aux vierges* d'Athanase', *Mus.*

but Athanasius introduced a topic not found at all in Epiphanius: human nature and free will. Athanasius articulated his dispute with Hieracas over human nature in his interpretation of the Parable of the Sower (Matt. 13: 3–8, 18–23). The question is why the different soils (rocky ground, thorny place, good soil), sown with the same seed, have such different results. From Athanasius' presentation of it, Hieracas' answer appears to have been that each soil is of a different 'nature' (*φύσις*): one soil (the good) has a nature that permits it to receive the seed and bear fruit; the others do not. By analogy, human beings must have different natures that determine their ability to receive the good, to practise celibacy, and thus to be saved. Athanasius rejected this interpretation: the soils that are not good in fact receive the seed at first, demonstrating that by nature they are 'persons capable of receiving the good'; when these soils later reject the seed, it is therefore 'not because of nature, but rather because of neglect and worldly desire'. The biblical figures Judas and Phygelus and Hermogenes (2 Tim. 1: 15) are examples of persons who originally demonstrated a good free will but then went bad, due to their own negligence and greed.¹⁷⁴ Athanasius then turns to the good earth and asks, 'If there is a single kind of nature', as he himself claims, 'why does that soil bear fruit a hundredfold, sixty, and thirty?' The answer is human free will:

Now, it produces fruits that differ from one another so as to make manifest the zeal of free will [*προαίρεσις*] and advancement [*προκοπή*]. Wherever there is free will, there is inferiority. And this is nothing other than a revelation that humanity is free and under its own power [*αὐτεξούσιος*], having the capacity to choose for itself what it wants. Moreover, the virgin reveals that she exists not by nature [*φύσις*], but by free will, when she heeds the opinion of Paul and becomes a bride of Christ, and justly they [*sic*] will receive the crown of purity in heaven.¹⁷⁵

88 (1975), 405–33, at 422–4. In the surviving fragments, Athanasius does not mention Hieracas' teaching on the Son of God, but that is not surprising since his quotation of Alexander contains imagery ('ray of light') that is close to what Hieracas used (*Ep. virg.* 1. 38 (91. 30 Lef.)). In general, Athanasius' portrait of Hieracas' views is more extreme than Epiphanius': Athanasius implies that Hieracas condemned the marriages of the patriarchs, and he does not mention Hieracas' idea that Paul allowed marriage to continue as a concession to the weakness of certain people. But the differing tones in the two presentations is attributable to their different contexts: Athanasius is engaged in a heated polemic against a live option for ascetics in his immediate context; Epiphanius is more removed from the situation temporally and geographically.

¹⁷⁴ *Ep. virg.* 1. 22 (83. 19–84. 5 Lef.).

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.* 23 (84. 8–21 Lef.). A noteworthy passage: without it, one might think that Athanasius did not apply *αὐτεξούσιος* to human nature; cf. J. Rebecca Lyman, *Christology and Cosmology* (Oxford, 1993), 146.

Athanasius accounted for diversity in human ethical achievement by claiming that human beings had a single nature, which made them capable of receiving the good and bearing fruit, but that they were free to advance in virtue as far as they desired. The social result was a diverse Church in which superiority and inferiority in moral attainment were inevitable.

This argument suggests that Hieracas held that human nature did not have 'a single kind', but existed in varying natures that determined the degree to which an individual could 'receive the good'. The social result would have been a uniform Church made up only of those having the 'good' nature. Although Epiphanius does not speak of Hieracas teaching anything like this doctrine, a determinism of this kind might account for Hieracas' teachings that children who died early and so 'have not yet been called to the contest' could not enter the kingdom of heaven and that Paul allowed some people to marry 'lest they fall into greater ruin'. Presumably these people had weak or inferior natures. In this connection, a fragmentary Coptic papyrus dated palaeographically to the fourth century is intriguing.¹⁷⁶ It has been suggested that the Coptic hymn which survives on the papyrus is from Hieracas because Hieracas is the only known fourth-century composer of Coptic hymns and because the papyrus is similar in material, language, and orthography to one containing part of the *Ascension of Isaiah*, a work that Hieracas is known to have used.¹⁷⁷ The hymn begins with an 'Alleluia' and then has three parts: a series of citations from the Old Testament in which God chastises his people, an address to Adam, and a lament by Adam in the first person. In the second section God speaks to Adam after the fall:

For before you changed your nature [φύσας], Adam,
Adam, were you not a god, a son of God?
For this is not the manner in which I made you!
Adam, were you not a god, a son of God?
For nothing dominated you.
Rather, everything was under your power [ἐξουσία].¹⁷⁸

The term 'nature' that figures so prominently in Athanasius' polemic against Hieracas plays a key role in this hymn: Adam's 'nature' changed with the fall, before which he was 'a god, a son of God', having 'power' over everything. Presumably, according to Hieracas' view, after the fall Adam found himself 'dominated' and in need of the gradual introduction

¹⁷⁶ Lefort, 'Fragments', 1-7.

¹⁷⁷ Peterson, 'Ein Fragment'.

¹⁷⁸ Ed. Lefort, 'Fragments', 2, lines 10-15.

of virtue leading to the imperceptible 'kingdom of heaven' that Hieracas described. In contrast, Athanasius stated that even post-lapsarian humanity was 'free and under its own power [*αὐτεξούσιος*]'. In Hieracas' thought, the incremental introduction of perfection culminating in the Word's bringing of 'chastity and continence' on the historical plane may have correlated with an incremental hierarchy of human 'natures' culminating in his community of continent people on the social and theological planes.

In any case, the main contours of Hieracas' thought and its attraction to ascetics are clear. What was new about Christ and Christianity was chastity, and Christ was the model of the chaste person. Those destined to inherit the 'kingdom of heaven' were those who had overcome the flesh: virgins, monks, continent people, and widows. Married people may not have fallen into the deepest perdition, but they were to be kept eternally separate from these holy people. Virgins who accepted Hieracas' ideas lived in community with ascetic men, worshipping and singing new psalms only among other persons who were not sexually active. They may even have considered their nature to be superior to that of the ordinary married person. Hieracas' philosophical concept of diversity in human natures promoted social uniformity in the Church, which he conceived of as the gathering of sexually continent people.

We have already seen that Athanasius offered his own understanding of human nature and free will in response to Hieracas. The bishop attacked Hieracas' model of a sexually continent Church in three additional ways: by claiming that marriage continued to be legitimate after the incarnation, by describing virginity as a transcendent form of marriage, and by developing a vision of a diverse, multi-tiered Church. First, to defend the continued legitimacy of marriage for Christians, Athanasius adduced his own set of prooftexts from the Gospels.¹⁷⁹ As for the important Matt. 19: 12, Athanasius pointed out that Jesus offered his teaching about 'eunuchs' for the kingdom of heaven 'off to the side'; Jesus, he said, 'was not commanding that people become virgins by force of law, but rather giving it to the free will of those who desire it'. Paul as well did not condemn marriage but believed that virginity's virtue is measured according to the 'free will and desire' of those who practised it.¹⁸⁰ The important terms for Athanasius were 'free will and desire', terms opposed to 'nature' and 'command'. The former terms applied to virginity; the latter, to marriage alone. The Scriptures did not abolish

¹⁷⁹ Luke 1: 8-23; John 2: 1-11; Matt. 19: 3-9; *Ep. virg.* 1. 26 (85. 25-32 Lef.).

¹⁸⁰ *Ep. virg.* 1. 26-7 (85. 32-86. 4; 86. 26-8 Lef.).

marriage with the coming of Christ, he said, but only offered virginity as a higher option for those who desire and choose it.

Athanasius, in fact, argued that virginity is marriage, simply a transcendent form of it, as indicated by the virgin's title 'bride of Christ'. Because earthly marriage was in accord with human nature and regulated by scriptural laws, it was characterized by obedience; the virgin's marriage, because it surpassed human nature and was not commanded by any law, represented an act of human freedom, a free choice of higher virtue. Athanasius' statements on marriage and virginity can be put into precise parallelism:¹⁸¹

Marriage

Indeed, virtue of this sort [marriage] belongs to the nature of humanity, for each of the deeds that people do in accordance with the *law* has the law *testifying* in its behalf and recommending it as having fulfilled its precept and its intention. Moreover, *human nature*, aware of the rib that was taken from Adam for a woman, seeks to join her with him, so that, on account of it [the rib] 'the man will leave his father and his mother and cleave to his wife and the two become one flesh' [Gen. 2: 24].

Virginity

But virginity has ascended higher and has no *law*; rather it has transcended it. It has its *testimony* in and of itself. Its honour as well comes from the Word. But virginity, having surpassed *human nature* and resembling the angels, hastens and endeavours to cling to the Lord, so that, just as the Apostle said, they might 'become one spirit with him' [2 Cor. 6: 7].¹⁸²

Athanasius was so insistent that virginity was not to be found among the commands of the Hebrew Scriptures that he claimed that 'Paul himself did not learn about it through the Law, but rather through the lifestyle of Mary'¹⁸³—the ascetic counterpart to Paul's receiving of the gospel through a revelation of Jesus Christ (Gal. 1: 12). Marriage, since it belonged to the realm of human nature and the law, was a matter of regulation, force, compulsion; virginity, in contrast, having transcended human nature and the law, was a matter of recommendation, freedom,

¹⁸¹ Here I use Duval's excellent analytical table demonstrating this point ('Problématique', 408-9).

¹⁸² *Ep. virg.* 1. 2-3 (73. 18-74. 6 Lef.).

¹⁸³ *Ibid.* 18 (81. 2-3 Lef.).

choice.¹⁸⁴ Both marriage and virginity functioned as contexts for the Christian's quest for virtue, but virginity was superior in that it transcended obedience to commands and instead was a full revelation of humanity's ability to choose the good freely, which the incarnation of the Word had made possible.¹⁸⁵

For Athanasius, then, virginity was not something completely foreign to marriage, but a higher form of marital union, one not between two human beings, but between a human being and the divine Word. It even had its own superior form of reproduction, which resulted from an exchange of 'thoughts' between the virgin and her bridegroom: citing Isa. 26: 17-18, Athanasius said that the 'offspring' of the immortal marriage of virgin and Word were 'true and immortal thoughts'.¹⁸⁶ Similarly, Philo had said of the 'aged virgins' among the ascetic Jewish community of the Therapeutae that, having taken Wisdom as their 'spouse', they 'desire no mortal offspring, but those immortal children that only the God-loved soul can bear on its own, since the Father has sown in it intellectual rays by which it can see the teachings of Wisdom'.¹⁸⁷ In this way, Philo's or Athanasius' ideal virgin could still be a good mother, indeed, a superior one, since her offspring were immortal thoughts rather than mortal human beings. Athanasius urged the virgin to use the ordinary wife's attachment to her husband as the model for her own attachment to Christ: 'As for women of the world, all their hope is in their husband, and without him they do nothing; they do not go anywhere because they fear their husbands. How much more the virgin is completely obligated to her bridegroom and Lord!'¹⁸⁸ Thus, Athanasius accepted Hieracas' claim that virginity was better than marriage, but he argued that virginity's virtues were analogous to those of marriage: they only existed on a higher plane, the angelic plane of freedom and immortality. The traditional symbolic designation of virgins as brides of Christ made Athanasius' argument possible.

Athanasius' social purposes in depicting virginity as a transcendent form of marriage were twofold: first, to prevent virgins from breaking their vow and getting married; second, to form a Church that, unlike Hieracas' community, included both celibate and married Christians. Many virgins, recall, dedicated themselves to their celibate lifestyle when

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.* 19 (81. 15-23 Lef.); cf. *Ep. virg.* 2. 23 (290-302 Leb.).

¹⁸⁵ *Ep. virg.* 1. 23 (84. 8-21 Lef.).

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.* 3 (74. 7-12 Lef.). On the theme of virginity's 'spiritual fecundity', see Castelli, 'Virginity and its Meaning', 72-3.

¹⁸⁷ *Ph. Cont.* 68 (LCL 9. 154).

¹⁸⁸ *Virg. (syr.)* 1 (4-7 Leb.).

they were teenagers, and they faced financial pressures that led some to live with an ascetic man. Still others broke their vow by entering actual marriages. Some Alexandrian Christians excused such former virgins by claiming that Mary the mother of Jesus eventually got married and had children; Athanasius replied that Mary actually remained a virgin forever precisely to serve as a model for those who might be tempted not to persevere. The proof of Mary's perpetual virginity was Jesus's entrusting of her to the Beloved Disciple on the cross, which he would not have done if Mary had had other children.¹⁸⁹ Even more, however, virginity's status as a transcendent form of marriage supported its permanence: 'Thus, if human marriage has this law, which is the written word, "What God has joined together, let no person separate" [Matt. 19: 6], how much more, if the Word joins with the virgins, it is necessary for the union of this kind to be indivisible and immortal!'¹⁹⁰ Athanasius argued that ordinary marriage had seasons and regulations, but that virginity had none of these; it was permanent and belonged to the realm of immortality, a union that could not be dissolved.

Athanasius also claimed that, as brides of Christ, virgins should understand themselves as part of a diverse Church that included ordinary brides and thus people of superior and inferior virtue. Athanasius placed virginity atop a hierarchy of greater and lesser goods: 'So if the virgin is different, being first among them, yet marriage follows after her and has its own boast.'¹⁹¹ Admittedly, Athanasius outlined a developmental picture of human sexual history as a progression toward virginity similar to those of Hieracas and Methodius, but the end of his story was quite different. According to Athanasius, virginity was not a new virtue first proclaimed by Christ; rather, Christ's incarnation enabled more people to practise a virtue that had long been known but beyond the ability of most persons. True virginity, as Athanasius defined it, had two essential characteristics: freedom and permanence. Pagans, he said, did not practise such true virginity because they were 'completely ignorant of God, who has given grace to those who believe in him righteously'.¹⁹² Echoing a distinction that Philo had made between pagan virgins and the female Therapeutae, Athanasius claimed that any pagan women who dedicated their virginity to a god or goddess remained virgins only 'temporarily' and did not voluntarily choose virginity, but were 'com-

¹⁸⁹ *Ep. virg.* 1. 10-11 (77. 6-34 Lef.).

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.* 1 (73. 6-10 Lef.).

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.* 19 (81. 29-31 Lef.).

¹⁹² *Ibid.* 4 (74. 13-17 Lef.).

pelled forcibly by others'.¹⁹³ Unlike their Christian counterparts, pagan women lacked God's 'grace' and thus could not be permanent virgins, freely choosing a higher good. Pagan virginity, because it was compulsory and temporary, was not true virginity. Meanwhile, virginity was rare among the Jews because it was not commanded in the Law, but it did exist because 'the shadow of his [the Word's] coming was at work'; examples of pre-incarnation virgins were Elijah, Elisha, Jeremiah, and John the Baptist. The incarnation of the Word, however, divinized human flesh and enabled human beings to control their bodily passions freely and permanently. Virginity was the best example of this: 'When the Lord came into the world, having taken flesh from a virgin and become human, at that time what used to be difficult became easy for people, and what was impossible became possible. That which formerly was not abundant is now seen to be abundant and spread out.'¹⁹⁴ According to Athanasius' version of human sexual history, marriage had always been commanded by God, and it still was; virginity, in turn, had always existed as a more virtuous option, and it still did. Athanasius' Christ was not Hieracas' teacher and example of chastity; instead, the unprecedented ability of so many Christians to practise virginity demonstrated that the incarnation of the Word had made human freedom to choose a higher good fully possible.

Therefore, unlike Hieracas, who placed marriage in ancient history and its practitioners in a state just this side of ruin, and unlike Methodius, who also relegated marriage to a bygone era and retained it only to keep creation moving along, Athanasius saw the new post-incarnational situation as embracing the diverse virtues of all people throughout history and in the present. In contrast to Methodius, Athanasius placed his rhetorical emphasis on the unity of the new order, one Lord, one house, one kingdom, one sky:

It is the same Lord who says to the virgin, 'Be set over ten cities', and to the married woman, 'Be set over five cities [Luke 19: 17-19]. There are many dwelling-places in my Father's house [John 14: 2]. But it is a single age that exists, the kingdom of heaven: everyone whose deeds are pure in faith will be found there. But each one will receive the crown of victory according to how well he carried out the way of life belonging to his vow: even if one star differs from another in glory, it is nevertheless the same sky in which the stars are and which contains them [cf. 1 Cor. 15: 41].¹⁹⁵

¹⁹³ Ibid. 1. 6 (75. 23-9 Lef.); cf. *Ph. Cont.* 68.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid. 7-8 (76. 6-25 Lef.).

¹⁹⁵ Ibid. 20 (82. 9-18 Lef.). Athanasius uses John 14: 2 to make this same point in *Ep. fest. (syr.)* 10. 4 (146. 14-19 C.).

Here is a theme that will reappear in the bishop's *Letter to Dracontius*: each person will be judged on the basis of his moral effort within his own context ('according to how well he carried out the way of life belonging to his vow'), rather than simply on the basis of which vow he had made (married vs. celibate). This idea suggests that Athanasius did not make the sexual hierarchy in the Church (marriage good, virginity better) an absolute one: by her moral effort, a married woman may receive a 'crown of victory' superior to that won by a less accomplished virgin. Athanasius' vision of the procession of the saints into heaven was a lively picture of diversity and joy. The virgins were there, of course, but so were their parents and virtuous married women. Just as at the Red Sea 'Miriam walked before the women with a timbrel', so Virginity would lead diverse people in 'a single symphony in the faith'.¹⁹⁶ This heavenly procession found its earthly counterpart in the Athanasian 'multi-tiered' congregation, made up of ascetics and married people worshipping together.¹⁹⁷ In contrast, Athanasius mocked Hieracas' community of continents as not a church, but merely a 'school of thought' (*αἰρεσις*), one 'foreign to our faith'.¹⁹⁸

Athanasius tried to realize his vision of a united and hierarchically diverse Church in part through his regulation of the lifestyle of virgins. His insistence that virgins live with their families or in their own communities, his polemics against excessive commercial activity and spiritual marriage, and his recommendations that virgins undertake only interior pilgrimages and avoid public baths were all meant to carve out for the virgins of Alexandria their own niche in the Athanasian Church. Virgins were to be secluded and set apart, yet in arrangements that were closely tied to local worshipping communities and their cultic life. Hieracas also wanted to set virgins apart from other people, but not in a manner that recognized the Church as a diverse community. Rather, Hieracas excluded married people from his community as somehow different in nature from celibate Christians. In response, Athanasius defined virginity as a transcendent form of ordinary marriage: as the brides of Christ, virgins cultivated virtues analogous to those that ordinary wives pursued, but they did so not out of obedience to commands, but out of their free choice of virtue. Athanasius' philosophical emphasis on human freedom supported his political programme of a multi-tiered Church, centred around the emerging parish and its clergy. As Athanasius used it, the symbolic designation of virgins as brides of

¹⁹⁶ *Ep. virg.* 1. 21 (82. 28-9; 83. 2-12 Lef.).

¹⁹⁷ Cf. Badger, 'New Man', 263-6.

¹⁹⁸ *Ep. virg.* 1. 25 (85. 6-8 Lef.).

Christ had the double political function of exclusion and integration: on the one hand, Athanasius told the virgins to be secluded and exclusively devoted to their husband, like ordinary wives; on the other hand, he pointed to the virgins' fundamental kinship with Christian women who had chosen more earthly husbands. Athanasius' double-sided manipulation of the symbolic title 'bride of Christ', then, advanced his general strategies of exclusion and integration in church formation, which Gregory of Nazianzus identified.¹⁹⁹ The same can be said of how Athanasius approached the issue of virgins' participation in the Arian conflict.

VIRGINS IN THE ARIAN CONFLICT

It is likely that Hieracas attracted followers among Alexandrian virgins not only because he embraced celibacy so zealously, but also because he was immensely learned and intellectually gifted. According to Epiphanius, Hieracas was highly trained in the traditional disciplines, such as rhetoric and geometry, and in medicine; he was a master of scriptural exegesis who had memorized the Old and New Testaments. He wrote in both Greek and Coptic.²⁰⁰ Hieracas, then, was a learned teacher, but he was not the only teacher whose doctrines Athanasius attacked in his first *Letter to Virgins*; Athanasius also quoted extensively a denunciation of Arius' christology by his predecessor as bishop of Alexandria, Alexander.²⁰¹ Athanasius described a group of virgins calling on Alexander and asking him for instruction. Alexander responded with a lengthy description of the virgins' 'bridegroom', the Word of God, defending his full divinity against 'the deceitful people who falsely say against the noble one that he is a creature and make him foreign to the substance of the Father in order to deceive you, his brides'.²⁰² These 'deceitful people' were the 'Arians', Alexandrian Christians who resisted the ageing Alexander's attempt to suppress the teachings of Arius and who, after Alexander's death, continued to oppose the Nicene theology that Athanasius taught.²⁰³ The conflict began around 318, when Bishop Alexander convinced a synod of Egyptian bishops to condemn and

¹⁹⁹ See *Introd.*, nn. 27–8.

²⁰⁰ *Epiph. Haer.* 67. 1–4 (3. 133. 1–13 Holl-Dummer).

²⁰¹ *Ep. virg.* 1. 33, 37–45 (89. 35; 91. 17–95. 6 Lef.).

²⁰² *Ibid.* 1. 42 (94. 3–5 Lef.).

²⁰³ Throughout this section I will refer to the opponents of Alexander and Athanasius as 'Arians' although it is not clear that such persons formed a coherent group except in Athanasius' rhetoric.

depose the presbyter Arius and his allies. The controversy continued after Alexander died in 328, as his successor Athanasius resisted international pressure to readmit Arius to communion.²⁰⁴ Although Athanasius seemed never to tire of refuting the Arian 'heresy', such a long foray into the fine points of christology might seem out of place in an epistle to virgins devoted primarily to the relative merits of virginity and marriage and to the exemplary lifestyle of the Mother of God. But more was at stake for Athanasius than the proper theological ideas of these virgins. The bishop wished to detach the virgins from a social form of Christianity in which free academic discussion of doctrine thrived and hence 'heresy' might be enunciated: the study circle of men and women gathered around a brilliant teacher. In this effort, the title 'bride of Christ' proved a convenient image: according to Athanasius, the virgins' fidelity to their husband the Word required a private life devoted to the cultivation of true thought, not a public life involving conversation with men. The setting for the virginal life, in Athanasius' view, should not be the Christian school, but the community of women affiliated with the episcopal party. The enclosed garden of virginity was not to be a school-room for unorthodox teaching.²⁰⁵

In recent years it has become increasingly clear that the Arian crisis was not merely a theological debate or even an international political struggle among the major Eastern cities; rather, it was also a crisis in the identity of the Alexandrian Church. Alexander, for instance, now appears in the scholarship as a bishop trying to assert his authority over a group of presbyters accustomed to acting and thinking independently, as equal colleagues.²⁰⁶ And the struggle between Arius and Athanasius becomes symptomatic of 'the constant and vital interplay' between 'the cosmopolitan religiosity proper to the Hellenistic city of Alexandria' and 'the spiritual landscape of the Nile valley' (a characterization that can only be accepted with qualification, since it may underestimate the strength of Hellenistic culture in the cities and towns along the Nile).²⁰⁷ But, even more persuasively, Rowan Williams has described the conflict as an instance of the venerable and ever-present early Christian tension between 'catholic' and 'academic' Christianities, two competing, but not mutually exclusive, modes of authority, social formation, and

²⁰⁴ For a more detailed summary of events, see the *Introd.*

²⁰⁵ For this section, cf. Elm, 'Organization and Institutions', 125-31.

²⁰⁶ Henri-Irénée Marrou, 'L'Arianisme comme phénomène alexandrien', in his *Patristique et humanisme* (Paris, 1976), 321-30.

²⁰⁷ Charles Kannengiesser, 'Athanasius of Alexandria vs. Arius: *The Alexandrian Crisis*', in Pearson and Goehring (eds.), *Roots*, 204-15, at 212.

spirituality.²⁰⁸ The conflict was between two parties: on the one hand, the episcopate, which was centred around the practices of worship and dealt with conflicts juridically as questions of admission to the cult; on the other hand, the school, which was centred around the personalities of outstanding teachers and dealt with conflicts scholastically as questions of intellectual speculation and disagreement. Competing hierarchies of priests and teachers developed simultaneously in early Christianity, and their values and social forms influenced one another. Before Constantine began to patronize episcopal Christianity, these two forms of church life could coexist, albeit not always peacefully; but during the fourth century, 'the "Catholic" model of the church [came] to be allied with the idea of a monolithic social unit and the policy of religious coercion'.²⁰⁹ Nowhere was this development more painful than in Alexandria, where the academic model was clearly the more ancient one.

Although the origins of Alexandrian Christianity remain veiled in obscurity, the first Alexandrian Christians we can make out with any clarity are teachers and their students. Glaucias, who flourished around 100 CE, appears in our sources as (perhaps) a commentator on the Epistle(s) of St Peter and as the teacher of Basilides, who himself became a prominent Christian philosopher.²¹⁰ From here the story of Christianity in Alexandria in the second and third centuries is essentially one of teachers and their competing independent 'schools': the Gnostics, Valentinus, Pantaenus, Clement, Origen, and so on.²¹¹ Within these small study circles, Christians advanced spiritually and intellectually under the guidance of their learned teachers.²¹² Not until after 189 CE, with the advent of Bishop Demetrius, does the monarchical episcopate appear in Alexandria, and then as an institution hostile to the free-wheeling, unmanageable Christian schools. Most likely it was Demetrius who, in the wake of the Severan persecutions of 202–6, first established a single Catechetical School as an official auxiliary of the episcopate. However, Origen, the School's brilliant leader, did not restrict his

²⁰⁸ Rowan Williams, *Arius* (London, 1987), 82–91; cf. Manlio Simonetti, *La Crisi ariana nel IV secolo* (Rome, 1975), 141–3.

²⁰⁹ Williams, *Arius*, 87.

²¹⁰ Bentley Layton, 'The Significance of Basilides in Ancient Christian Thought', *Representations*, 28 (Fall 1989), 135–51.

²¹¹ See now Ulrich Neymeyr, *Die christlichen Lehrer im zweiten Jahrhundert* (Leiden, 1989), 40–105.

²¹² Cf. Brown, *Body and Society*, 103–8. Hans von Campenhausen's description of the Christian teacher, which uses Clement of Alexandria as its example, is a classic: *Ecclesiastical Authority and Spiritual Power in the Church of the First Three Centuries*, tr. J. A. Baker (London, 1969), 194–212. On the spirituality of the teacher–student relationship, see Richard Valantasis, *Spiritual Guides of the Third Century* (Minneapolis, 1991).

activities to the basic instruction of converts; instead, Origen cultivated a smaller circle of students devoted to speculative philosophy and gained international fame and respect through his books and lecture tours. Demetrius eventually sent Origen packing to Caesarea Maritima and installed the more pliable Heraclas in his place as head of the Catechetical School.²¹³ A complete history of the forms of academic Christianity in Alexandria would take us far afield, but three characteristics of the school tradition (wherever it manifested itself) merit attention: a tolerance, even encouragement, of speculation and diversity of opinion; a central role for the teacher, both as source of intellectual enlightenment and as model for moral and spiritual progress; and the participation of women, especially those who had renounced sexual relations. It is precisely these features of the Christian school that Athanasius attacked.

The early Christian study circles varied in the extent to which they encouraged diversity of opinions, but their philosophical atmosphere made a certain amount of intellectual freedom inevitable. The Gnostics, for example, shared a coherent myth and sectarian consciousness, but their literature indicates that they accepted, and perhaps even celebrated, variations on their basic mythic themes.²¹⁴ Philosophically inclined Christians were attacked on this point by bishops like Irenaeus of Lugdunum (*fl. c. 180*), who developed an anti-academic rhetoric that spoke of a universal, uniform Church in possession of a 'rule of truth', a small body of doctrines that he claimed all legitimate Christians shared. In comparison to this rule, any free-thinking person might seem outside the Christian community. In response, academic Christians who accepted this rule still argued that there was a realm of knowledge that was not covered by this set of core teachings and thus open to the speculative musings of human reason. So Origen:

The holy apostles, when preaching the faith of Christ, took certain doctrines, those namely which they believed to be necessary ones, and delivered them in the plainest terms to all believers, even to such as appeared to be somewhat dull in the investigation of divine knowledge. The grounds of their statements they left to be investigated by such as should merit the higher gifts of the Spirit and

²¹³ On the independent schools of Pantænus and Clement and the early history of the Catechetical School in Alexandria, see Gustave Bardy, 'Aux origines de l'école d'Alexandrie', *RSP* 27 (1937), 65-90, and David Dawson, *Allegorical Readers and Cultural Revision in Ancient Alexandria* (Berkeley, Calif., 1992), 219-22.

²¹⁴ See Layton, *Gnostic Scriptures*, 5-214. It is possible that Valentinus learned of the Gnostic myth in Alexandria around the year 130. Certainly Gnostic groups were active in Alexandria by the 180s, when Clement was at work.

in particular by such as should afterwards receive through the Holy Spirit himself the graces of language, wisdom, and knowledge. There were other doctrines, however, about which the apostles simply said that things were so, keeping silence as to the how or why; their intention undoubtedly being to supply the more diligent of those who came after them, such as should prove to be lovers of wisdom, with an exercise on which to display the fruit of their ability. The men I refer to are those who train themselves to become worthy and capable of receiving wisdom.²¹⁵

In Origen's view, not only were portions of Christian philosophy uncertain and hence open to speculation, but they were left so intentionally by the apostles, so that there might be schools like Origen's, populated by Christians 'more diligent' than the rest. For such Christians, the Scriptures and other church teachings served as springboards for philosophical discussion. Athanasius satirized this element of academic spirituality when he wrote about the Arians: 'When they hear that the Son is the Wisdom, Radiance, and Word of the Father, they customarily ask, "How can this be?" [cf. John 3: 9], as if something cannot be unless they understand it.'²¹⁶ Philosophical Christians could justify their ambivalent participation in episcopal Christianity by accepting the creeds and Scripture canons used by ordinary Christians and yet interpreting these texts allegorically as referring to more esoteric doctrines. Origen practised something like this strategy, but it appears that Valentinian Christians most fully exploited allegorical interpretation as a means of maintaining a dual commitment to the episcopally controlled churches and to philosophical speculation.²¹⁷ Academic Christians sometimes called the more speculative matters of doctrine 'higher things' and gave themselves, the ones who studied such matters, special names: 'lovers of wisdom' (Origen), 'true gnostic' (Clement), 'spiritual people' (Valentinians), and the like.

Certain Christians, Origen said, received 'higher gifts of the Spirit' that enabled their doctrinal investigations. Intellectual originality found its warrant in the person of the teacher, considered superior not only because of his learning and intellect, but also because of his moral character, asceticism, and close contact with the divine.²¹⁸ Some Gnostic teachers claimed to have ascended into heaven and contemplated the godhead in its essential nature and then to have descended to transmit

²¹⁵ Or. *Princ.* 1. pref. 3; tr. G. W. Butterworth, *On First Principles* (repr. Gloucester, Mass., 1973), 2.

²¹⁶ *Ep. Serap.* 2. 1 (PG 26. 609a).

²¹⁷ Layton, *Gnostic Scriptures*, 272-4; Dawson, *Allegorical Readers*, 177-8.

²¹⁸ Valantasis, *Spiritual Guides*, esp. 1-33.

what they learned to others. Zōstrianos, for example, said that he had ascended 'into the great, masculine, perfect, first-manifest intellect', where he 'saw all these [spiritual beings] as they exist in one' and 'became wholly perfect'; he then 'descended to the perceptible world . . . and went about preaching truth unto all'.²¹⁹ Valentinus announced dramatically at the end of the *Gospel of Truth*: 'I have been in the place of repose.'²²⁰ The teacher manifested his superior knowledge and his deeper communion with the divine through his virtuous life, especially his asceticism, and so he served as a model for his students to emulate. Gregory Thaumaturgus wrote of Origen: 'Not with words did he go through with us the things concerning virtues, but he encouraged us [to do] works; and he exhorted more by his deeds than by his words.'²²¹ The person who did not meet the philosopher in person could study him through a biography.²²² A teacher could legitimate his authority also by producing his intellectual pedigree, a list of the teachers who had preceded him stretching back to, say, St Paul. Bishops, in turn, drew up their own lists of predecessors that guaranteed their possession of 'apostolic tradition'.²²³ Thus, parallel hierarchies came into being and sometimes into conflict. Origen, the casualty of one such conflict, pointed out that spiritual authority did not always coincide with rank in the bishops' hierarchy: often someone of 'low and common understanding', he said, attains 'a high rank in the priesthood or the teacher's chair' (*cathedra doctoris*, surely meaning the office of bishop), while someone 'spiritual and free enough from worldly pursuits so as to discern all things and to be judged by no one' (cf. 1 Cor. 2: 15) possesses 'an inferior rank in the ministry or is even relegated to the mass of the people.'²²⁴ Here the tension between teacher and bishop surfaces briefly in academic discourse. The author of the *Apocalypse of Peter* was more blunt: bishops and deacons, he said, were 'waterless canals'.²²⁵

Bishops worried not only about the competing authority of the teachers, but also about the participation of women in their study circles. Gnostics and Valentinians were notorious for the active involvement of women in their groups, a practice granted religious legitimacy by myths that featured assertive female characters and valued androgyny or, at

²¹⁹ Zōstrianos 129: 4-12; 130: 4-10 (Layton, *Gnostic Scriptures*, 139).

²²⁰ *Gospel of Truth* 43: 1-2 (Layton, *Gnostic Scriptures*, 264).

²²¹ Gr. Thaum. *Pan. Or.* 9. 126 Koetschau.

²²² Patricia Cox, *Biography in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley, Calif., 1983).

²²³ Campenhausen, *Ecclesiastical Authority and Spiritual Power*, 157-69.

²²⁴ Or. *Hom. in Num.* 2. 1 (9. 22-7 Bachrens); Williams, *Arius*, 83.

²²⁵ *Apocalypse of Peter* 79: 30-1.

least, the reconciliation of male and female elements. The Valentinian teacher Ptolemy was confident that his spiritual sister Flora would prove 'worthy of the apostolic tradition' and so 'learn how to test all the propositions by means of our saviour's teaching'.²²⁶ Teachers allied with the bishops who opposed the Gnostics and Valentinians also included women in their schools. In response to rumours that Origen had castrated himself in his youth, Eusebius offered as a possible reason for this act the presence of women in the philosopher's classroom and Origen's desire to avoid any scandal.²²⁷ Clement believed that women were just as capable of virtue and perfection as men and hence were to be trained in Christian philosophy, albeit in order to fulfil more perfectly their roles as wife and mother.²²⁸ Clement's female 'sages' may have had to wait to study philosophy until after they had raised their children and the passions had subsided; not so the Christian virgins who became so numerous during the third century: early sexual renunciation often gave them the leisure for literary and philosophical pursuits.²²⁹ In Methodius' *Symposium*, a fictional group of ten virgins discourses in learned fashion on topics like the origin of the soul and the mechanics of reproduction; the male teacher produces the literary record of the event at the request of yet another educated woman.²³⁰ These virgins, like academic Christians before them, welcome disagreement as an opportunity for discussion; and, although they talk much of the Church, parish churches and their priests and bishops lie well out of sight, far below their lofty garden, 'a second abode of paradise'.²³¹

The literate and often wealthy young women who became Christian virgins in Alexandria would have expected this advanced study of Christian philosophy to be part of their discipline as well. For guidance they looked to Alexandrian presbyters like Arius, who continued this academic tradition into the fourth century. Although Bishop Demetrius could expel Origen from Alexandria, this act did not represent a final triumph of episcopal over academic Christianity; instead, the values of the venerable study circles permeated the nascent system of parish churches in urban Alexandria.²³² By the 310s there were, Epiphanius tells us, 'many' churches in Alexandria, each presided over by at least

²²⁶ Ptol. *Ep. ap. Epiph. Haer.* 33. 7. 9 (Layton, *Gnostic Scriptures*, 314).

²²⁷ Eus. *H. l.* 6. 8. 2.

²²⁸ Clem. *Paed.* 1. 4; *Str.* 4. 8, 19-20; Donald Kinder, 'Clement of Alexandria: Conflicting Views on Women', *Sec. Cen.* 7 (1989-90), 213-20.

²²⁹ Brown, *Body and Society*, 122-39, 276-7.

²³⁰ Cf. *ibid.*, 183-9.

²³¹ *Meth. Symp.* *pref.* 80-1 Musurillo.

²³² Marrou, 'L'Arianisme'.

one presbyter.²³³ In their parishes, the presbyters continued the Alexandrian tradition of teaching focused on the Scriptures and of rivalry among competing teachers:

Each of them [the presbyters] of course taught the people entrusted to him during the usual services, and they caused a certain rivalry to spring up among the people by their expositions of scripture. Some favored Arius, others Colluthus, others Carpones, and still others Sarmatas. As then each presbyter expounded the scripture differently in his own church, some people because of the one they favored and admired called themselves Colluthians, while others Arians.²³⁴

The local churches in Alexandria took on the character of lecture halls dominated by the personalities of charismatic presbyter/teachers. Arius was one of these presbyters, in charge of the parish of Baucalis; according to one report, he gave public lectures on scriptural interpretation on Wednesdays and Fridays.²³⁵ He self-consciously portrayed himself in his *Thalia* as the latest in a long line of God-taught sages:

According to the faith of God's chosen, those with discernment of God,
His holy children, imparting the truth and open to God's holy spirit,
These are the things I have learned from the men who partake of wisdom,
The keen-minded men, instructed by God, and in all respects wise.
In such men's steps I have walked, advancing in thoughts like theirs,
A man much spoken of, who suffers all manner of things for God's glory,
And, learning from God, I am now no stranger to wisdom and knowledge.²³⁶

Here Arius poetically celebrates the academic pedigree that authenticates his own original thought. In his austere dress and urbane manner, Arius successfully filled the old-fashioned role of the Christian religious mentor: 'he always wore a *hēmiphorion* and *kolobiōn* [the traditional dress of the male ascetic], was charming in his speech, and able to persuade and flatter many souls'.²³⁷ To identify Arius as belonging to the school tradition is not to marginalize him as 'a fringe figure';²³⁸ rather, it is to place him in one of Alexandrian Christianity's most vibrant and long-lived modes of spiritual and social identity, which appears marginal only from the perspective of later Christian episcopal orthodoxy. It was

²³³ Epiph. *Haer.* 69. 2. 2 (3. 153. 16 Holl-Dummer); tr. Philip R. Amidon, SJ, *The Panarion of St. Epiphanius of Salamis* (New York and Oxford, 1990), 255.

²³⁴ Epiph. *Haer.* 69. 2. 6 (3. 154. 2-8 Holl-Dummer; Amidon, *Panarion*, 256).

²³⁵ W. Telfer, 'St. Peter of Alexandria and Arius', *An. Bull.* 67 (1949), 117-30, at 130.

²³⁶ Ath. *Ar.* 1. 5 (PG 26. 20c-12); tr. Williams, *Arius*, 85.

²³⁷ Epiph. *Haer.* 69. 3. 1 (3. 154. 15-16 Holl-Dummer; Amidon, *Panarion*, 256); Williams, *Arius*, 32.

²³⁸ Cf. R. C. Gregg, *JTS*, NS 40 (1989), 253.

precisely this episcopal orthodoxy that Alexander, the bishop of Alexandria, was trying to establish. In doing so, he faced not only the continued work of independent teachers in the city but also the persistence of academic Christianity's philosophical speculation and intellectual mode of authority within his own episcopal organization—a clear threat to any system of bureaucratic authority headed by the bishop. When Arius' opinions appeared to transgress the limits of acceptable diversity, Alexander took the opportunity to assert his episcopal primacy by condemning the presbyter through a synod of bishops. Alexander, in the words of his secretary Athanasius, expressed the opinion of the episcopal party: 'There is one body of the universal [καθολικῆ] Church, and a command is given to us in the sacred Scriptures to preserve the bond of unity and peace.'²³⁹ And so the Arian conflict got under way.

Virgins were active among the Alexandrian Christians who supported either Arius or his episcopal opponents. According to Epiphanius, Arius 'managed to draw apart from the church [namely, the anti-Arian party] into a single group seven hundred virgins'.²⁴⁰ In 321/2 Alexander complained that the Arians 'at times convene tribunals through conversation with disorderly "silly women" whom they have deceived [2 Tim. 3: 6], and at other times bring ridicule upon Christianity through their young women [νεώτεραι] walking around the entire city impiously'.²⁴¹ Here Alexander, inspired by the activities of pro-Arian women, first uses 2 Tim. 3: 6–7 to construct a natural connection between women and heresy.²⁴² Later in the conflict (c. 356) Athanasius charged that male Arians not only verbally abused and physically attacked Athanasian virgins, but also 'gave permission to the women of their party to insult whomever they chose'.²⁴³ Still other Alexandrian virgins made protests in Athanasius' favour, prompting Constantine to write a letter commanding them 'to keep quiet'.²⁴⁴ In many of his writings, Athanasius described how virgins suffered violence, imprisonment, torture, and verbal abuse for their pro-Athanasian activities, particularly during the

²³⁹ Alex. Al. Ep. *encycl.* 2 (6. 3–4 Op.). On Athanasius' authorship of this letter, see G. Christopher Stead, 'Athanasius' Earliest Written Work', *JTS*, NS 39 (1988), 76–92.

²⁴⁰ Epiph. *Haer.* 69. 3. 2 (3. 154. 17–18 Holl-Dummer; Amidon, *Parvion*, 256).

²⁴¹ Alex. Al. Ep. *Alex.* 5 (Urk. 14; 20. 14–16 Op.); cf. 58 (29. 5–8 Op.). Date: Williams, *Arius*, 48–58.

²⁴² Virginia Burrus, 'The Heretical Woman as Symbol in Alexander, Athanasius, Epiphanius, and Jerome', *HTR* 84 (1991), 229–48, at 233–5.

²⁴³ *H. Ar.* 59. 2–3 (216. 14–20 Op.).

²⁴⁴ *Soz. H.e.* 2. 31. 2 (96. 10–12 Bidez-Hansen).

persecutions of 339 and 356.²⁴⁵ Eager to portray his opponents as ruthless and unprincipled, Athanasius in these passages depicts the virgins as helpless objects of Arian violence. But his references to the actions of Arian women and the protests made by Athanasian virgins suggest that some Alexandrian virgins were not merely passive victims of a conflict in which they had no part, but rather were active participants in a struggle over ideas that they valued. In this struggle, virgins allied with the Arians probably suffered indignities similar to those endured by Athanasian ascetics, but Alexander and Athanasius do not report them. In their eyes, the virgins associated with heretical groups played far too public a role: conversing with men, walking around the city in an impious fashion, and insulting Nicene Christians. That is, they were vocal supporters of the Arian cause. Apart from any attraction that the content of their teachings might have had for ascetics, the circles around Arius and his allies doubtless appealed to some Alexandrian virgins as places where they could fruitfully both cultivate their asceticism and advance in Christian philosophy.²⁴⁶ The response of Bishops Alexander and Athanasius to this situation was twofold: first, an attack on the Christian school tradition in general; secondly, a programme of secluding virgins in private lives of prayer.

Athanasius attacked academic Christianity by attacking the concept of a Christian teacher: he claimed that only Christ was to be called 'teacher' and so made the title 'teacher' in reference to human beings a negative one; he then attached that title to his opponents, rendering them suspect, and denied that he himself was a teacher. In his *Festal Letter* for 352, the bishop distinguished between 'the words of the saints' and 'the fancies of human invention' by claiming that only the 'saints', the authors of the New Testament books, handed down what they heard from the Word of God himself 'without alteration'; hence, 'of these the Word wants us to be disciples, and they should be our teachers, and it is necessary for us to obey only them'.²⁴⁷ Here the bishop claimed that Christian doctrine was

²⁴⁵ *Ep. encycl.* 3. 6; 4. 4-5 (172. 19-21; 173. 14-20 Op.); *Apol. sec.* 15; 30. 3 (98. 29-99. 8; 109. 26 Op.); *Apol. Const.* 27. 37; 33. 16-41 S.; *Fug.* 6. 7-8, 24-8 S.; *H. Ar.* 12. 3; 48. 2; 55. 3-4; 59. 2-3; 72. 5-6; 81. 5, 7, 9 (189. 16; 211. 6-7; 214. 21-33; 216. 14-20; 223. 7-14; 229. 13, 21-5, 31-3 Op.); *Thdt. H. e.* 2. 14. 13 (127. 16-128. 3 Parmentier-Scheidweiler). For a narrative description of this violence, see Badger, 'New Man', 225-33.

²⁴⁶ Alexandrian topography may also have played a role. Christopher Haas suggests that the proximity of Arius' parish church of Baucalis to the martyrdom of St Mark and to suburban cemeteries made ascetics who congregated in such places a significant portion of Arius' congregation ('The Arians of Alexandria', *VC* 47 (1993), 243-5, at 237-8).

²⁴⁷ *Ep. fest. (syr.)* 2. 7 (24. 12; 24. 22-25. 1 C.). *Festal Letter* 24 has been mistakenly transmitted as No. 2.

unchanging and found only in the canon that he and his supporters recognized; the only good teachers were the authors of the canonical books. Athanasius later used his 39th *Festal Letter* (367) to attack his opponents by portraying them as teachers whose ideas were too original and whose reading lists included too wide a range of Christian literature. This epistle is justly famous because it contains the first list of the New Testament canon that would eventually prevail, but less studied is its origin in the social conflict between episcopal and academic Christianities.²⁴⁸ Athanasius, the patron of the episcopal party, claimed that only Christ himself was to be the teacher of Christians: 'The name of Wisdom becomes him because it is he alone who is the true teacher. For who is to be trusted to teach human beings about the Father except he who exists always in his bosom?'²⁴⁹ Jesus, Athanasius pointed out, commanded that Christians call no one else 'teacher' (Matt. 23: 8-10). The apostles were therefore called teachers only honorifically; in reality, they were merely disciples, mouthpieces who passed on what the Word of God told them:

For the words that the disciples proclaim do not belong to them; rather, they heard them from the Saviour. Therefore, even if it is Paul who is teaching, it is Christ who is speaking in him. And even if he says that the Lord has appointed teachers in the churches [1 Cor. 12: 28], it is he [the Lord] who first teaches them and sends them out. For the nature of everyone who is part of creation is to be taught, but our Lord and Demiurge is by nature a teacher. For he was not taught by another person how to be a teacher, but all human beings, even if they are called 'teacher', were first disciples. Moreover, everyone is instructed since the Saviour supplies them with the knowledge of the Spirit, so that they might be God's students. But our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, being the Word of the Father, was not instructed by anyone else. Rightly he alone is the Teacher.²⁵⁰

This is an attack on the use by teachers of academic pedigrees to legitimate their authority, a strategy that we have seen Arius employ in the *Thalia*: Christ, said Athanasius, has no need to produce such a pedigree, being himself Word and Wisdom.

By making this claim, Athanasius hoped to replace the authority of human teachers with the authority of his biblical canon. The disciples, the bishop said, simply wrote what Christ the Teacher told them in the

²⁴⁸ An English translation of *Festal Letter* 39 is provided in the Appendix to this book. In this letter Athanasius attacked also the use of writings that he considered 'apocryphal', a practice that he attributes to the Melitians; here I focus only on the anti-academic aspect of the letter.

²⁴⁹ *Ep. fest. (cop.)* 39 (*OLP* 15: 1r. a19-29 Co.).

²⁵⁰ *Ibid.* (16: 17-31 Lef.).

Scriptures, which therefore included every doctrine human beings need to know.²⁵¹ Athanasius declared that the canon, unlike teachers who traced their predecessors back to the source of Christian truth, recorded Truth's speech directly, without mediation or development. This unchanging canon made the intellectual originality of the schoolroom appear suicidal: heretical teachers, by daring to be original, had 'abandoned the spring of life' (that is, Athanasius' canon) and thus 'remained dead in their unbelief by being bound by their evil thoughts, just as the Egyptians were bound by their own axles'.²⁵² In this way Athanasius sought to render independent Christian academic activity illegitimate by making the title 'teacher', when applied to a human being, a cause for suspicion and distrust, and by claiming that original human thought was evil and dead. In turn, the bishop, who was manifestly teaching and inventing new ideas, had to deny what he was doing and say that he was himself no teacher, but merely a conduit for an unchanging tradition: 'For I have not written these things as if I were teaching, for I have not attained such a rank. . . . I have thus informed you of everything that I heard from my father [i.e. Alexander].'²⁵³ Even when claiming not to be a teacher and attacking the use of academic pedigrees, Athanasius acted like a teacher by referring to his own academic succession in the person of Alexander. These strategies of personal attacks on teachers and professed condemnation of original thought were the staples of Christian school polemics dating back to Justin Martyr.²⁵⁴ In the second century, Irenaeus employed a similar strategy of using academic succession to bolster the authority of bishops but of reserving the title 'teacher', and its connotations of suspicious originality, for his opponents.²⁵⁵ Here the episcopal party in fourth-century Alexandria used the rhetoric of anti-intellectualism to render their Arian opponents suspect and their own teaching activity invisible.

In this campaign, Athanasius stressed that the Word of God, unlike human beings, had no need to learn anything: he was by nature a teacher; human beings, by nature students. This assertion took aim not only at the school tradition's great esteem for the teacher, but also at the Arians' alleged depiction of the Word as one who advanced in knowledge and virtue and therefore could serve as a model for Christians making

²⁵¹ *Ep. fest. (cop.)* 39 (*OLP* 15: 6v. 425-429 Co.).

²⁵² *Ibid.* (17. 8-9, 21-4 Lef.).

²⁵³ *Ibid.* (21. 11-12, 14-15 Lef.).

²⁵⁴ Layton, 'Significance of Basilides', 135-6.

²⁵⁵ Virginia Burrus, 'Hierarchalization and Genderization of Leadership in the Writings of Irenaeus', *SP* 21 (1989), 42-8, at 43-5.

their own spiritual progress.²⁵⁶ Whether or not Arian Christians actually held this soteriology, their opponents saw it as a clear implication of their christology.²⁵⁷ According to Alexander, the Arians said that the Word of God was 'of mutable nature and capable of both virtue and vice'.²⁵⁸ Since 'no one is by nature a son of God', the Word was 'singled out' among the higher beings 'on account of the diligence of his way of life and his discipline [*ἀσκησις*], which did not turn to the worse'.²⁵⁹ As the Psalmist wrote: 'You have loved righteousness and hated injustice; therefore, God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness above your fellows' (Ps. 44 (45): 8).²⁶⁰ According to Alexander, the Arians understood the 'therefore' in this verse to show that God promoted the Word to the status of 'son' based on his virtue. The moral of this story was clear to Alexander: 'We too can be sons of God like him'.²⁶¹ Athanasius also claimed that the Arians saw the Word as one who learns and advances:

'But', they say, 'although he [the Word] is a creature and of things originate, yet as from a teacher [*διδασκαλος*] and artisan he learned how to create and thus ministered to God who taught him.' . . . If the Wisdom of God attained to the ability to create through instruction [*διδασκαλία*], how is he still Wisdom when he needs to learn? And what was he before he learned? For it was not Wisdom, if it needed teaching; it was surely but some empty thing, and not essential Wisdom; rather, through advancement [*προκοπή*] it had the name of Wisdom, and will be Wisdom only so long as it can keep what it has learned. For what has accrued not by any nature but from learning admits of being one time unlearned.²⁶²

In this conflict the notions that Christians held about God and Christ were closely tied to the social forms in which they developed and inculcated these notions.²⁶³ In academic Christianity, the Christian teacher's classroom, filled with students eager to progress in wisdom and virtue by patterning themselves after their mentor, found its heavenly

²⁵⁶ Robert C. Gregg and Dennis E. Groh, *Early Arianism—A View of Salvation* (Philadelphia, 1981).

²⁵⁷ Gregg and Groh's argument that the Arians depicted the Word as one who advanced in knowledge and virtue and hence served as a model for Christians has not won universal acceptance (see e.g. Williams, *Arius*, 19–20), but even Williams's summary of Arius' understanding of the Word's 'promotion' places a great emphasis on the Son's use of his freedom to choose virtue (*Arius*, 114–15).

²⁵⁸ *Alex. Al. Ep. Alex.* 11 (Urk 14; 21. 12 Op.).

²⁵⁹ *Ibid.* 13 (21. 20–2 Op.).

²⁶⁰ *Ibid.* 14 (22. 1–3 Op.).

²⁶¹ *Ibid.* 11 (21. 15 Op.).

²⁶² *Ar.* 2. 28 (PG 26. 205c, 208a); cf. *Ar.* 1. 37 (PG 26. 88b–9b).

²⁶³ Cf. Gregg and Groh, *Early Arianism*, 163–4.

analogue in the Word's education at the feet of the Father. Like the charismatic teacher, the Word was a model for Christians to imitate. This spirituality was well adapted to late antiquity's 'civilization of *paideia*', at the heart of which was the 'intensive male bonding' between teacher and pupil.²⁶⁴ In some of Alexandria's Christian study circles, this scholastic 'male bonding' was projected on to the deity itself, and on earth it was modified to include educated, celibate women.

Bishops Alexander and Athanasius would have none of this: by nature the Word was the only true Teacher; human beings, on the other hand, were by nature merely 'God's students', taught by the Word through its mouthpieces, the Scriptures and the bishops. Athanasius, as we shall see in Chapter 3, developed his own teaching about human imitation of the divine, but one based on humanity's dissimilarity—not likeness—to the Word. In this context, Athanasius' attempt to detach Alexandrian Christians from heterodox teachers required not only his prohibition of their actual interaction with such teachers, but also his attack on the image of Christ that provided mythic legitimacy to the school tradition. Athanasius drew a line between Creator and created and limited the term 'teacher' to the former and the term 'student' to the latter. Meanwhile, Alexander's description of the Arian position on the Word suggests how it may have appealed specifically to Christian virgins since the Word was promoted by God on the basis of his 'discipline' (*ἀσκησις*).

So far we have studied the anti-Arian bishops' campaign against academic Christianity in general and Arianism in particular as it was waged in writings not specifically directed to virgins, although ascetic Christians formed a prominent segment of the audience to which the bishops were appealing. When they addressed virgins in particular, Alexander and Athanasius supplemented their attacks on the title 'teacher' and on the Arian Word with interpretations of the virgin's symbolic marriage to the Word that promoted their political goals. Alexander's lengthy exhortation against christological error quoted in Athanasius' first *Letter to Virgins* urged virgins to be devoted exclusively to their bridegroom, the Word of God; to give heed only to teachers who transmit his teaching, by which he meant specifically the Nicene party; and to take as their model of virtue not Christ or any male, but the Virgin Mary. Alexander connected the episcopate's idea of unchanging doctrine with a prospective bride's desire to know about her fiancé: like other brides, the virgins must learn the character of their bridegroom,

²⁶⁴ Peter Brown, 'The Saint as Exemplar in Late Antiquity', in J. S. Hawley (ed.), *Saints and Virtues* (Berkeley, Calif., 1987), 3-14, at 4.

but they should 'become acquainted with him not through simply anyone', but only through 'the people who speak about God just as the Scriptures do',²⁶⁵ that is, Alexander and his partisans. Alexander told the virgins that, like other wives, they should give themselves only to their husband and avoid any other man.²⁶⁶ If the virgins were to cling only to Christ, they would not be confused by differing or complex ideas: 'You will not stumble in your inner thoughts.' The incarnate Christ, Alexander said, did not provide the virgins with an example of discipline to imitate as Arian (and Hieracite) christology implied; rather, the divine Word's taking on flesh enabled their virginity: 'If the Word had not become flesh, how would you now be joined with him and cling to him? But when the Lord bore the body of humanity, the body became acceptable to the Word. Therefore, you have now become virgins and brides of Christ.'²⁶⁷ The virgins did not need to turn to any male teachers for their instruction; their parents and the Virgin Mary were sufficient for them:

For already you have nourishment from your parents, from whom you have received the seeds of the desire for virtue. For because they have nourished you well, the bridegroom has found you and spoken to your heart. He persuaded you to remain a virgin for him. Moreover, you likewise have the way of life [*πολιτεία*] of Mary as a pattern [*τύπος*] and image [*εἰκών*] of the heavenly life.²⁶⁸

Alexander, then, warned the virgins against Arian christological ideas, but he also urged them to cultivate a life of virtue that was private, one developed not in the context of the study circle gathered around the male teacher, but rather in the home with their parents.

Writing perhaps decades later, Athanasius expanded on these themes in the remainder of the *Letter* as well as in his other epistles to virgins, with the goal of detaching virgins from Arian study circles and secluding them in communities ancillary to the Athanasian episcopate. First, he too urged virgins to form their discipline through imitation, not of the Word or of any male teacher, but of the Virgin Mary, Virginity's eternal 'image' (*εἰκών*), and of other virgins, Virginity's more temporary images.²⁶⁹ Here a distinctive Athanasian process of self-formation through observation, imitation, and reflection functioned to create self-contained communities of women. Young virgins were to be 'silent

²⁶⁵ *Ep. virg.* 1. 37 (91. 22-4 Lef.).

²⁶⁶ *Ibid.* 41 (93. 7-13 Lef.).

²⁶⁷ *Ibid.* 41, 43 (93. 17; 94. 25-9 Lef.); Badger, 'New Man', 259-63.

²⁶⁸ *Ep. virg.* 1. 45 (94. 36-95. 6 Lef.).

²⁶⁹ *Ibid.* 11-12, 17 (77. 33-4; 78. 5-7; 80. 20-1 Lef.); cf. *Ep. virg.* 2. 9 (113-19 Leb.); *Ep. virg.* 1. 35 (90. 25-35 Lef.).

students' before 'elder women',²⁷⁰ not speaking subjects interacting with intellectual males. Secondly, Athanasius told virgins that, as the brides of Christ, they should avoid conversation with human males and instead only converse silently with their bridegroom, the Word of God.²⁷¹ Once again Mary was the model of a virgin whose contacts with men were limited to fleeting glimpses and never involved hearing: 'She was not familiar with the male voice.'²⁷² The intended effect of these regulations was to silence the virgins' public conversations with anti-Athanasian teachers by fostering in them a private conversation of thoughts and prayers with Christ. In Athanasius' view, virgins should live secluded among themselves in a zone of silence.

Athanasius' effort to separate virgins from the discourse of academic Christianity thus involved intensive censorship of the virgin's speech and hearing. The virgin must not, 'listening with desire, accept vain sounds'; she should 'speak like a dove, which barely speaks in her heart' (cf. Nahum 2: 8); even her laughter was to be 'without a sound'.²⁷³ Silence ought to surround the virgin. This sensibility found expression in Athanasius' description of an assault on an Athanasian church in June 356. Virgins were beaten, unveiled, and kicked—'dreadful', Athanasius admitted—but 'what happened next was worse and more intolerable than any outrage': young men attacked them with obscene language. The Arians incited such an assault because 'they knew the virgins' piety and the immaculate character of their hearing and that they were better able to endure stones and swords than words of obscenity'. To Athanasius, assault on a virgin with language was far worse than any physical attack. The Athanasian virgins and other women 'fled from such words as if from the bites of asps', doubtless to return to the silent speech of Christ.²⁷⁴ We have seen that virgins were vocal participants in the Arian conflict; displeased with this situation, Athanasius created a model for the virginal life that emphasized silent seclusion.

Athanasius claimed that the virgin's silent conversation with the Word would engender within her thoughts that were stable and pure, instead of the evil and confused thoughts that human teachers produced. Again, Mary provided the model of a virgin whose interior life was true and

²⁷⁰ *Ep. virg.* 2. 8 (110–12 Leb.)

²⁷¹ *Ep. virg.* 1. 30 (87. 31–88. 12 Lef.); *Virg.* (syr.) 3 (40–5 Leb.).

²⁷² *Ep. virg.* 1. 17 (80. 13; cf. 80. 3–5 Lef.).

²⁷³ *Ep. virg.* 2. 4, 14, 11–12 (66–7, 192, 137–69 Leb.).

²⁷⁴ *H. Ar.* 55. 3–4 (214. 21–33 Op.); cf. *Ph. Spec.* 3. 174 (LCL 7. 585), where a woman who hears obscene language in the market-place should 'stop her ears and run away'.

stable, undisturbed by curiosity or dissent from official teaching.²⁷⁵ In the same way, Athanasius told the virgin that her relationship with her husband, the Lord, ought to be an exchange of thoughts, in which 'heavenly thoughts enter you' and 'your thoughts fly [to him]'.²⁷⁶ This exchange, we have seen, was analogous to sexual reproduction in that it gave birth to 'true and immortal thoughts'; here was another imitation of the Virgin Mary, whose bearing of Rationality itself (*Λόγος*) was mirrored in the virgins' bearing of 'rationalities' (*λογισμοί*).²⁷⁷ In contrast to this faithful intellectual reproduction, the heretics offered 'evil thoughts'; the devil, 'a human thought'; these gave birth only to 'confusion'.²⁷⁸ To avoid this evil, Athanasius instructed the virgin to cultivate an internal, private self, one that in public kept silent and conveyed its holiness to others visually, not vocally.²⁷⁹ The virgin who followed this pattern would not adhere to a public study circle gathered around a lecturing teacher; instead, she would, through silent prayer to her bridegroom, acquire 'good thinking' as her 'guardian and teacher'. Her conversation would not be the verbal discourse between teacher and student; rather, it would be the silent exchange of thoughts with her heavenly husband. Such a virgin would not take a learned male ascetic as her image of virtue; she would instead conform her lifestyle to that of Virginity's eternal image, Mary, and her temporal images, older ascetic women. In Athanasius' view the context for the virgin's cultivation of her self was to have been completely private; her public role was to function as a silent image.

To be sure, as in his other writings, Athanasius did not reject completely the values and traditions of academic Christianity in his exhortations to virgins; rather, he adapted academic values to his cause by restricting teaching and learning to a carefully defined space in the public church that was under his control. Beside her reading of the Scriptures at home, the virgin was to do her learning in the church building, but only within the authorized rituals and modes of instruction. Other conversation would make the church 'a house of gibberish' when it should be 'a house of prayers, a house of listening to the divine words, a house of learning the holy teaching'.²⁸⁰ The virgin was to go to church, receive the official teaching, and return home, avoiding contact

²⁷⁵ *Ep. virg.* 1. 13 (78. 11, 19-23 Lef.).

²⁷⁶ *Virg. (syri.)* 2 (19-25 Leb.).

²⁷⁷ *Ep. virg.* 1. 3 (74. 7-12 Lef.). The Coptic word used for 'rationalities' or 'thoughts' is ⲙⲉⲉⲛⲉ, the equivalent of *λογισμῶς*.

²⁷⁸ *Ep. virg.* 1. 22, 30, 32 (83. 14; 88. 5; 89. 7 Lef.).

²⁷⁹ *Ibid.* 15 (79. 17-31 Lef.). ²⁸⁰ *Ep. virg.* 2. 10 (122, 130-2 Leb.).

with other people.²⁸¹ It was not that the virgin was to receive no teaching at all; she simply must be sure to accept only the proper teachings, which she would find in the Scriptures and in the Church, presided over by its bishops and priests.²⁸² Athanasius, in two of his letters to virgins, presented his predecessor Bishop Alexander as a learned teacher: 'And the gospels were in his hand, for he was a long-time lover of reading.'²⁸³ And, of course, the immediate source of proper teaching was the speaker himself, Bishop Athanasius, who none the less claimed merely to pass on 'what we heard from our father Alexander' and hence to be no innovative human teacher dispensing evil thoughts of confusion.²⁸⁴ Athanasius, then, having depicted academic Christianity as intellectually disorientated and morally suspect, still applied academic imagery to himself, other clergy, and their church meetings, all the while denying their academic character.

Athanasius prefaced his citation of Alexander's anti-Arian exhortation by urging the virgins not to 'make your discipline [*ἀσκησις*] different from others'.²⁸⁵ This remark, along with the extensive polemic against Arian concepts, has caused some to wonder whether Arius and his followers, who undoubtedly appealed to ascetic Christians, promoted a form of asceticism different from that practised by Athanasian Christians.²⁸⁶ In this view, the *Life of Antony* might also be targeted against an 'Arian asceticism'. If such an alternative ascetic discipline existed, there is no evidence for what it was like. Probably the basic form of the asceticism practised by 'Arian' virgins would have been little different from that practised by 'Athanasian' virgins: sexual renunciation, fasts, prayers, vigils, readings in the Scriptures, and so on. It is hard to imagine a regime much different from this one, although differences in degrees of harshness are to be expected. Still, virgins associated with Arian study circles may have understood themselves as progressing in discipline and philosophy in imitation of the Word's own advancement; philosophical discussion with their teachers and one another would have been a central part of their spiritual formation. Athanasius' goal was to detach Alexandrian virgins from such schools by telling them to behave

²⁸¹ *Ep. virg.* 2. 10 (132-6 Leb.)

²⁸² *Ibid.* 4, 8 (65-7, 106-8 Leb.)

²⁸³ *Ep. virg.* 1. 36 (91. 11-12 Lef.); cf. Athanasius ap. Sev. *Hist. patr. Alex.* 1. 8: 'He [Alexander] never read the gospel in his cell or elsewhere seated, but always standing, with the light in front of him; for God most high had made him love to read the Scriptures' (405 Evetts.).

²⁸⁴ *Ep. virg.* 1. 36 (91. 5-6 Lef.)

²⁸⁵ *Ibid.* 33 (89. 32 Lef.)

²⁸⁶ Elm, 'Organization and Institutions', 130-1.

more like wives. True virgins, he claimed, did not engage in public controversy, but inhabited a zone of silence, where they exchanged thoughts with a heavenly bridegroom. Their public role was to be limited to appearances in church, where they would passively receive proper teaching and the sacraments before returning to their homes. They were to be seen by others, but not heard. They need fear no loss of spiritual insight, for their bridegroom was no mere human teacher, stuck in the mud of his own 'evil thoughts';²⁸⁷ rather, their bridegroom was the Word of God, Discourse and Reason itself, the only true Teacher.

Athanasius attempted to modify the behaviour and attitudes of Alexandrian virgins by appealing constantly to their title 'brides of Christ'; this title, Athanasius believed, required that virgins should behave like ordinary wives. Athanasius' picture of the ideal wife—silent, withdrawn, and submissive—probably did not reflect the actual behaviour of Roman wives, who doubtless often were not silent and obedient; rather, it drew on a tradition of marital ideals developed by Greek and Latin male philosophers, as well as on the household codes found in the New Testament.²⁸⁸ Although not unanimous on these points, most ancient philosophers and moralists agreed that the ideal wife limited her activities to the home, dressed and behaved modestly, and devoted herself exclusively to her husband.²⁸⁹ A good example is the *Conjugal Precepts* of Plutarch, a Greek philosopher active in the first and second centuries CE.²⁹⁰ According to Plutarch, the ideal wife conforms her emotions (seriousness or laughter) to those of her husband (140a), has no independent friends but only her husband's (140a), wears modest clothing (141de), and subordinates herself to her husband (142de). The wife should stay at home and 'hide herself'; if she must leave the house,

²⁸⁷ *Ep. fest.* (cop.) 39 (17. 21-4 Lef.).

²⁸⁸ Eph. 5: 21-6: 9; Col. 3: 18-4: 1; 1 Tim. 2: 8-15; 5: 1-2; 6: 1-2; Titus 2: 1-10; 3: 1; 1 Pet. 2: 11-3: 12

²⁸⁹ See Treggiari, *Roman Marriage*, 183-228. A recognition of the persistence of these attitudes in the period of the early empire should balance Michel Foucault's emphasis on a new symmetry and reciprocity in the marital relationship during this period (*The History of Sexuality*, tr. R. Hurley (3 vols.; New York, 1978-86), 3. 147-85); cf. David L. Balch, *Let Wives Be Submissive* (Chico, Calif., 1981), 143-9. When reading ancient exhortations to mutual companionship in marriage, one ought to remember the substantial age difference between Roman (older) husbands and their (younger) wives (Saller, 'Men's Age at Marriage', 33-4).

²⁹⁰ References are to the edition and translation found in *Plutarch's Moralia*, tr. Frank Cole Babbitt (LCL; 15 vols.; Cambridge, Mass., 1927-8), 2. 298-343. Cf. Kathleen O'Brien Wicker, 'First Century Marriage Ethics: A Comparative Study of the Household Codes and Plutarch's *Conjugal Precepts*', in J. W. Flanagan and A. W. Robinson (eds.), *No Famine in the Land* (Missoula, Mont., 1975), 141-53.

she should only be seen with her husband (139d). She should not speak to other people or in public; rather, the ideal wife lives in 'silence' and speaks only 'to or through her husband' (142cd). The groom is not only the woman's husband, but also her father and brother; indeed, the wife should consider him her 'guide, philosopher, and teacher [διδάσκαλος] in all that is most lovely and divine' (145c). Independent thought is particularly dangerous:

It is said that no woman ever produced a child without the co-operation of a man, yet there are misshapen, fleshlike, uterine growths originating in some infection, which develop of themselves and acquire firmness and solidity, and are commonly called 'moles'. Great care must be taken that this sort of thing does not take place in women's minds [ψυχαι]. For if they do not receive the seed of good doctrines [λόγοι] and share with their husbands in intellectual advancement [παιδεία], they, left to themselves, conceive many untoward ideas and low designs and emotions (145de).

Here Plutarch, as we have seen Athanasius do,²⁹¹ metaphorically compares the production of thoughts in a woman's mind to sexual intercourse and reproduction: neither should take place without the husband's 'seed'. Plutarch's ideal bride will conform her intellectual, emotional, and social lives to the leadership of her bridegroom. Jews and Christians adopted these ideals in their own marital ethics: Philo of Alexandria, for example, agreed that the outdoor, public life was for men; the indoor, household life for women.²⁹² Athanasius went further and applied these marital principles to the proper conduct of the Christian virgin, taking the title 'bride of Christ' as his warrant to do so. Here, however, the virgin's bridegroom, to whom she was to be exclusively devoted, was a divine, heavenly being; actual direction of the virgin's life therefore passed into the hands of the bridegroom's earthly representatives, the bishops and priests. Only they could supply the proper 'seed' of the bridegroom.

It would appear that many Alexandrian virgins did not interpret their symbolic status as 'brides of Christ' as requiring the withdrawn, episcopally controlled lifestyle that Athanasius wanted. Perhaps, too, this particular title was not the central religious symbol in the virgins' own understanding of their identity; other titles appear in Athanasius' writings—'temple of the Word', 'daughter of Jerusalem', and simply 'virgin', designations that possibly did not carry with them the subordinating implications of 'bride' that the bishop so relentlessly

²⁹¹ *Ep. virg.* 1. 3 (74. 7–12 Lef.).

²⁹² *Ph. Spec.* 3. 169.

exploited. Thus, many virgins did not play the role of the dutiful wife. Instead, they carried on their own commercial activities, made journeys to the Holy Land, cultivated innovative relationships with ascetic men, and participated in public discussions of Christian philosophy. Athanasius' invocation of the virgin's marital union with the Word of God was meant to curtail these independent behaviours.

The traditional title 'bride of Christ' appealed to Athanasius not only because it helped his political goals, but also because the union of human flesh with the Word of God in the incarnation was so central to his theology. The union of a human woman with the divine Word paralleled this archetypal union. The Athanasian motto, 'He became human so that we might become divine', stressed that the Saviour was not 'a mere human being', but 'truly the Son of God, being the Word and Wisdom and Power of the Father'; his incarnation rendered his assumed body incorruptible and, through that single body, miraculously divinized all human flesh.²⁹³ Thus, by Athanasius' logic, for the virgin who was in need, whether financially, intellectually, or spiritually, union with the Word was completely sufficient:

When you have found him, hold on to him, and do not leave him until he brings you into his bedroom. He is your bridegroom. He is the one who will crown you. It is he who is preparing the wedding garment for you. It is he who is revealing to you the treasures. It is he who is preparing the Father's table for you, and who from the torrent of delight gives you to drink. Wait for him; gaze on him with your mind; speak to him; rejoice with him; take everything from him. For when you are fed by the Lord, you will lack nothing, and you will enjoy eternal life.²⁹⁴

The virgin, according to Athanasius, manifested her dependence on this all-sufficient Word by renouncing her ties to other men and by entering the secluded, but parish-orientated lifestyle that he recommended. There were many activities open to virgins in fourth-century Alexandria (pilgrimages, controversies over theology, commerce), and many men who appealed to them for their company and allegiance ('Arian' and Hieracite teachers, potential husbands, male ascetics). Athanasius declared that the virgin needed none of these: her life was complete if she relied totally on Christ, her bridegroom; he was sufficient for her. Moreover, Athanasius' christology of divinization promoted a mode of social formation (the emerging parish church) different from those reinforced by competing christologies of moral exemplification: by portraying Christ, the virgins' bridegroom, as the enabler rather than the

²⁹³ *Insc.* 54. 11-12; 48. 40-1 T.; see Ch. 3.

²⁹⁴ *Ep. virg.* 2. 31 (401-8 Leb.).

model of their virginity, Athanasius hoped to dissuade virgins from adhering to either a Christian school or an alternative community made up of only ascetics.

Several of the themes that the bishop developed in his writings to virgins had ramifications that went beyond the virgins themselves. These included the ascetic life as a battle with Satan, in which the Christian is aided by Christ and his angels; the restoration of the mind's ascendancy over the body and, hence, the acquisition of proper 'thoughts'; the incarnate Word more as the enabler of virtue than as its model; self-formation through a pattern of imitation; the importance of human freedom and the exercise of the will in the life of virtue; the Church as a hierarchical unity, made up of married people and celibates. With some modification, these ideas could apply equally to the lives of non-ascetic Christians, but the virgin, because she was most closely united to the Word of God, embodied them in their purest form. Athanasius, moreover, hoped that the virgin who saw her spiritual life in these terms not only would enjoy a blessed relationship with Christ, but also would remove herself from relationships and groups that were not under his control. In this way, Athanasius' instructions to virgins furthered his project of consolidating the Alexandrian Church under him and his hierarchy.

It is ironic that, in order to create a more unified Church, Athanasius considered it necessary to separate the virgins from the Church's public life more completely. The episcopal organization that the bishop was forming had no room for young women who engaged in independent commercial activities and undertook pilgrimages, who participated in study circles and their theological debates, and who formed alliances of mutual care with ascetic men. To be sure, the Alexandrian virgins were to consider themselves part of the diverse Church, made up not only of brides of Christ like themselves, but also of women married to less ethereal husbands. None the less, their role in this Church was to be carefully regulated, their appearances in public few and silent, their contact with others minimal. Their primary function was to form an 'enclosed garden' in the busy city, a temple of God's unsullied holiness in the midst of a congregation whose life was filled with violence and politics. Athanasius had a far different message for the men who lived as monks in the monasteries at the edges of the city or in the desert: they were to become more actively involved in the life of local churches. But the role of women in the Church required a more cautious approach. Essentially, Athanasius wanted every Christian woman to take on the

social role of a wife: either as an ordinary wife dominated by her earthly husband, or as a supernatural wife dominated by her divine bridegroom, the Word of God, through his agents, Athanasius and his fellow clergy.

The Desert Fathers and the Episcopate

When Gregory of Nazianzus wrote that Athanasius 'reconciled' ascetic Christians with the institutional Church, he did not have in mind the consecrated virgins of the city, but the monks of the desert, with whom Athanasius took refuge during his third exile.¹ While groups of virgins in the churches could be traced back to the New Testament period, both Athanasius and Gregory considered the monastic movement in the Egyptian desert something new. Late in the third century, male ascetics, who also enjoyed a long tradition in the churches, first developed social forms comparable to those of ascetic women, beginning a process that would rapidly lead to the thousands of monks spread throughout the Christian world.² At that time ascetic men called *apotaktikoi* ('renouncers') began to move into community houses and to adopt a distinctive style of dress. By the beginning of Athanasius' episcopate in 328, however, three new forms of monasticism had emerged: the eremitical life associated with Antony, the semi-eremitical associated with Ammoun and Macarius, and the coenobitic associated with Pachomius, and these were rapidly eclipsing the apotactic lifestyle in the popular imagination of Christian Egypt.³ Unlike the apotactic monks, who were to be found in the heart of the city and were engaged in the affairs of the parish church, these new monks lived apart from 'the world', either in the desert or behind monastery walls. Church leaders like Athanasius were quick to embrace these new, more removed forms of monasticism as the most legitimate kinds of ascetic life for men, for such stark withdrawal was both symbolically powerful and politically fortuitous: symbolically powerful in its resonance with the great imaginative distance between city and desert;⁴ politically fortuitous in

¹ *Gr. Naz. Or.* 21. 19. 20-22 Mossay-Lafontaine.

² E. A. Judge, 'The Earliest Use of *Monachos* for "Monk" (P. Coll. Youtie 77) and the Origins of Monasticism', *JAC* 20 (1977), 72-89.

³ This tripartite scheme, along with its fictitious founder figures, oversimplifies a fluid, complex situation; see James E. Goehring, 'The Origins of Monasticism', in H. W. Attridge and G. Hata (eds.), *Eusebius, Christianity, and Judaism* (Detroit, 1992), 235-55.

⁴ James E. Goehring, 'The Encroaching Desert: Literary Production and Ascetic Space in Early Christian Egypt', *JECs* 1 (1993), 281-96.

its removal of competing male authority figures from the immediate proximity of insecure bishops.

Desert monks were not, however, an unmixed blessing for Athanasius and his fellow bishops. In several respects, their emergence posed even greater challenges to the development of a parish-centred Church than did that of the urban virgins. Not only did the desert monastic movement represent something new; it was primarily, but not exclusively, a male institution.⁵ While the maintenance of proper gender roles shaped Athanasius' dealings with the Alexandrian virgins, this issue does not arise in his correspondence with the desert monks. Further, the monks, simply by being in the desert, outside 'the world', were removed from the immediate reach of the local bishop's authority. The geographical and symbolic division between desert and settled land made the monks appear more distant from local worshipping communities and their priests and bishops, even when the actual distance was small and interaction between the monks and 'the world' quite common.⁶ Although this distance had its advantages for bishops, monastic withdrawal could yet increase monks' prestige and represent criticism of episcopal Christianity. While it seemed to Athanasius that the practice of female virginity arose like a garden in the urban Church, the withdrawal of ascetic men (and some women) into the desert and monasteries contained elements of protest against the worldly nature of imperial Christianity: even the urge to receive the Eucharist from a presbyter could be temptation from the devil.⁷ For these reasons, Athanasius could not address the desert fathers as he did the virgins: with simple declarative commands and regulations. Instead, Athanasius related to the monks like a politician: writing letters of advice, admonition, or consolation; making strategic appointments; articulating his vision of a Church made up of bishops, monks, and ordinary Christians. None the less, the bishop's ultimate goal was the same: to link ascetic Christians with

⁵ Cf. Goehring, 'The Encroaching Desert', 293 n. 52.

⁶ On the one hand, 'the settlements of the fourth-century Egyptian ascetics combined geographical proximity to the settled land with a sense of measureless imaginative distance' (Peter Brown, *The Body and Society* (New York, 1988), 215). On the other hand, '... one must be cautious lest the symbolic significance of the separation between *ἔρημος* [desert] and *οἰκουμένη* [inhabited world] in the monastic literature of Egypt be translated into a reality that precludes too drastically the equally real social and economic interaction between the monks and the surrounding world' (James E. Goehring, 'The World Engaged: The Social and Economic World of Early Egyptian Monasticism', in J. E. Goehring, *et al.* (eds.), *Gnosticism and the Early Christian World* (Sonoma, Calif., 1990), 134-44, at 135).

⁷ *Verba sen.* 7. 24 (*PL* 73. 898); cf. Rowan A. Greer, *Broken Lights and Mended Lives* (University Park, Pa., and London, 1986), 164-8.

the orthodox episcopate and, when necessary, to detach them from competing Christian groups.

Gregory believed that Athanasius' personal example was sufficient to convince the desert fathers of their essential connection to the wider Church. Athanasius, he said, combined in his own person the virtues of action and contemplation and so demonstrated the mutual dependence of 'philosophy' (monasticism) and 'priesthood' (episcopate).⁸ Other ancient sources suggest that Athanasius did more than merely act as an example in his effort to connect monastic communities with the emerging system of parish churches. The present chapter will examine three sets of evidence that show Athanasius addressing the problems for church unity raised by monastic withdrawal into desert or monastery. First, in his correspondence with the eremitical and semi-eremitical monks in the northern part of Egypt, particularly Nitria, Athanasius worked out a proper relationship specifically between monk and bishop. He claimed that the bishop had the authority to adjudicate in disputes between monks over matters of ascetic practice; he brought ascetic issues such as the proper amount of sleep and the meaning of nocturnal emissions within the sphere of ecclesiastical truth that it was the bishop's task to preserve. Athanasius also recruited monks to become bishops. He insisted that the ascetic's withdrawal from the life of the city or town did not exempt him from the duties of church leadership. Monks, he claimed, were irrevocably tied to the parish churches through baptism and the formation of a shared way of life through imitation. Athanasius recognized the different roles of monk and bishop, but he made them intersect by saying that the monastic life was an extension of the network of parish churches that the bishops administered.

Secondly, over the entire length of his career, Athanasius had dealings with the coenobitic monastic federation that Pachomius founded in the southern part of Egypt. Early in his episcopate, when the Pachomian community was still small and its relations with neighbouring churches still fluid, Athanasius did not devote much attention to complaints from a local bishop about Pachomius. But in the 360s, when the federation had grown too large and wealthy to be ignored, Athanasius twice intervened in the Pachomians' affairs, first by provoking a reconciliation between two of its leaders and then by virtually appointing a successor when one leader died. The bishop granted the Pachomian federation much autonomy, but he did not hesitate to assert his authority when circumstances appeared to require it.

⁸ *Gr. Naz. Or.* 21. 19. 17-20. 14 Mossay-Lafontaine.

Thirdly, during his exile of 356–62, much of which he spent hiding in the desert, Athanasius waged a vigorous campaign to rally monks to his side in his struggle with the imperial authorities. He produced literary works that defended his own theology and actions and attacked those of his opponents; he disseminated a sensational account of Arius' ignoble death; he condemned the monks' practice of offering hospitality without regard to theological affiliation; and, in his *Life of Antony*, he depicted the famous hermit as a steadfast opponent of Athanasius' enemies. A monk's withdrawal, Athanasius insisted, did not exempt him from taking sides in church politics, and he had better choose the right party, namely the Athanasian episcopate.

THE ROLES OF MONK AND BISHOP

According to one of the *Sayings of the Fathers*, the bishop of Rhaithou on the Sinai peninsula ordained a monk named Matoes without the monk's consent. At supper the bishop said to the new priest: 'Forgive me, Abba. I know that you did not want this thing; but it was so that I might be blessed by you that I dared to do it.' Matoes replied that, indeed, he did not want to be ordained because he feared that, if he were, 'I must be divided from the brother who is with me, for I am not able to keep on making the prayers alone.' So the bishop ordained the other monk as well. But the two monk-priests never celebrated the Eucharist: Matoes explained, 'I trust God, that I will not receive great condemnation for my ordination, provided I do not make the offering. For ordination belongs to those who are blameless.'⁹

This story illustrates some of the elements that complicated the relationship between the bishops of local churches and the multiplying ascetics outside the cities. The bishop recognizes the monk's spiritual power: he ordains the monk in order to receive the monk's blessing. The monk, however, fears that ordination will 'divide' him from his non-ordained brother and interfere with his ascetic practices. And, once ordained, Matoes refuses to perform the duties of the office because of his great humility. The monk and bishop each ignore the wishes of the other, professing the 'right' reasons but surely engaged in a political struggle in which the bishop tries to bring the monk under his control by ordaining him and the monk tries to escape this by refusing to act as a priest. These underlying tensions surface more explicitly in other stories.

⁹ *Apophth. Patr.* Matoes 9 (PG 65. 202c–3a).

When Archbishop Theophilus of Alexandria visited Scete and a certain Pambo was asked to 'say a word to the patriarch, that he may be edified', the monk replied, with a growl one imagines, 'If he is not edified by my silence, he will not be edified by my speech.'¹⁰ Although ordained monks working within the ascetic world gained increasing acceptance among their fellows as the fourth century progressed, church officials outside the monastic groups, especially bishops, remained suspect.¹¹

Athanasius worked toward the creation of a more stable relationship between the Alexandrian episcopal hierarchy under his control and the growing monastic communities in the desert regions near the Delta. Thanks to his correspondence, we can see how the bishop recast the roles and positions of the bishop and monk in ways that would more closely tie them together. Athanasius defined bodily ascetic practice as part of dogma, to be defined and guarded by the bishop. The monk, although he enjoyed superiority over other Christians by virtue of his renunciation of sex, was none the less to be subject to the Church's rule.¹² Athanasius depicted a Church that remained centred on the bishop and his priests, but which granted a role to the emerging authority of the monk. The monk could share in the power of the bishop by becoming a bishop himself; the bishop could share in the power of the monk by functioning as an ascetic teacher. In other words, Athanasius tied monk and bishop more closely together both by clearly distinguishing their positions and roles and by relativizing these very distinctions.

The bishop as monk: Ascetic correspondence

Authority among the multiplying ascetics of northern Egypt was at first profoundly personal, residing not in offices or positions but in persons, in monks who had, through the duration and character of their discipline, achieved the status of ἀββᾶς, 'father'. Less experienced monks learned by emulating these more advanced figures and by questioning them about ascetic practices and goals.¹³ Sometimes assisted through visions or revelations, the abbas granted words that their

¹⁰ *Apophth. Patr.* Theophilus 2 (PG 65. 197d). The monk could not have been the famous Pambo, who was long dead (Derwas J. Chitty, *The Desert a City* (Crestwood, NY, 1966), 56).

¹¹ On increasing acceptance of ordained monks and the movement of authority within ascetic groups from charisma to ordination, see Philip Rousseau, *Ascetics, Authority, and the Church in the Age of Jerome and Cassian* (Oxford, 1978), 62–4.

¹² Virginal superiority: *Ep. Amun.* 69. 1–3 J. Subject to rule: VA 67 (PG 26. 937c).

¹³ See Rousseau, *Ascetics*, 19–32, and Graham Gould, *The Desert Fathers on Monastic Community* (Oxford, 1993), 26–87, with abundant literature cited at 26 n. 1.

disciples considered inspired by God.¹⁴ So Athanasius depicted Antony gaining an education in the virtues from the 'men of zeal' whom he observed:

Now at that time in the neighbouring village there was an old man who had practiced from his youth the solitary life. When Antony saw him, he emulated him in goodness. At first he also began by remaining in places proximate to his village. And going forth from there, if he heard of some zealous person anywhere, he searched him out like the wise bee. He did not go back to his own place unless he had seen him, and as though receiving from him certain supplies for traveling the road to virtue, he returned.¹⁵

It was the innovation of Pachomius to formalize this master-disciple relationship into a carefully planned hierarchy of offices, although even in the Pachomian federation there remained the real, if undefined, authority of 'the elders' (οἱ ἀρχαῖοι). The informality and fluidity of the prevailing guru system in eremitical and semi-eremitical monasticism could and did lead to differing views on matters of spirituality and ascetic practice. As long as monasticism itself remained informal and fluid, such differences probably did not seem significant, but the pressures toward consolidation and stability operating throughout the forms of fourth-century Christianity were no less at work among monastic communities. Not only the imperial episcopate, but forces unique to the ascetic movement—loyalty to masters, increasing numbers, the passing of the charismatic pioneers, and a growing willingness to exercise ascetic authority beyond the monastic world—contributed to the process of stabilization. The result was the formation of new patterns of relationships not only among the monks, but also between monks and bishops.¹⁶

Athanasius contributed to some of the ways that these new patterns were created. For example, by writing the *Life of Antony*, he furthered the rise of an ascetic literature that would canonize certain models and behaviours for the ascetic life by placing them in the mouths of famous past figures or by embodying them in the lives of such monastic greats.¹⁷ Authors like Jerome (*The Life of Paul, the First Hermit*) and the compilers of the *Lives of Pachomius* followed in his footsteps. Also, by issuing

¹⁴ Gould, *Desert Fathers*, 37-44.

¹⁵ VA 3 (PG 26. 844b); tr. Robert C. Gregg, *Athanasius: The Life of Antony and the Letter to Marcellinus* (New York, 1980), 32.

¹⁶ Rousseau, *Ascetics*, 33-67; Gould is unconvinced (*Desert Fathers*, 82-6).

¹⁷ Rousseau speaks of 'a change from word to example' in the functioning of ascetic authority (*Ascetics*, 39); cf. Gould, *Desert Fathers*, 82-3. On the rise of monastic literature, see Rousseau, *Ascetics*, 68-76.

his own opinions on ascetic matters in correspondence to monks, Athanasius positioned the bishop as an authority on issues of ascetic practice, issues that he phrased in terms of heresy and orthodoxy. It is to this second development that we turn now since it directly involved the relationship between monks and bishops. It is important to understand not only the views of Athanasius, but also those of the monks with whom he was in contact. This task is not an easy one, but it is essential if we are to see how Athanasius accepted, modified, or rejected ascetic values in his efforts to tie ascetic Christians more closely to the church organization that he was developing.

Two extant pieces of Athanasian correspondence address matters of ascetic practice: the *Letter to Ammoun* and the fragmentary work *On Sickness and Health*. In both cases, Athanasius phrased his argument in terms of the correct interpretation of Scripture, a mode of argument familiar indeed to bishops but perhaps less congenial to some monks.¹⁸ According to Athanasius' own depiction of him, Antony began his ascetic career by trying simply to live out what is found in Matt. 19: 21: 'If you wish to be perfect, go, sell your possessions, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven.'¹⁹ Athanasius made Antony a paradigm for the ascetic life as the attempt to embody in one's lifestyle and behaviour the way of life depicted in the Scriptures. When Athanasius sought to modify or correct ascetic behaviour that he found extreme, unwise, or disruptive, he adduced the alleged scriptural foundations for these practices and then offered alternative interpretations. It is not always clear how ascetic Christians thought that Scripture justified their practices because they seldom wrote rational defences of their positions: they simply acted. However central Scripture and its recitation were to monastic spirituality, it seems likely that most ascetic practices, including the ones that Athanasius discussed, had their roots in folk-ways of spiritual discipline; the use of Scripture to justify such practices followed as a secondary phenomenon.²⁰ The monks adapted their use of Scripture to their elder-disciple pattern of authority.²¹ In contrast, when Bishop Athanasius wanted to change an ascetic practice, he asserted that it had a particular scriptural basis, attacked that basis as

¹⁸ On biblical interpretation among the monks, see now Douglas Burton-Christie, *The Word in the Desert* (New York and Oxford, 1993).

¹⁹ *VA* 2-3 (*PG* 26. 841c-4a).

²⁰ 'Certain biblical texts served as an inspiration for action—for the movement to the desert and for the adoption of particular practices. However, it is also true that certain practices and attitudes were highly valued in the desert and that the value of these practices was then confirmed through reference to the Scripture' (Burton-Christie, *Word in the Desert*, 171).

²¹ Cf. *ibid.* 108-11.

incorrect exegesis, and offered the correct interpretation. By clearly subordinating spiritual practice to scriptural exegesis so that the former had to derive from the latter, Athanasius could label ascetic behaviours either orthodox or heretical and so justify the punishment of differing monks as 'heretics'. The political result was an expansion of episcopal control into monastic life.

For example, in addressing the Christian worried about his health in *On Sickness and Health*, Athanasius criticized ascetics who slept as little as possible.²² Athanasius claimed that these monks used the injunction against sleep in Prov. 6: 4–5 to justify their practices of sleep deprivation: 'Give not sleep to your eyes nor drowsiness to your eyelids, so you might be saved, like a gazelle from nets and a bird from a trap.' But Athanasius argued that the 'sleep' referred to in the passage is not 'bodily sleep', but 'the sleep of the soul'. The sleep of the soul, the bishop wrote, exists in two kinds: a good kind, 'when it is at rest from petty things'; and a bad kind, 'its idleness and neglect of virtue'.²³ It is this second kind that is at issue in the Proverbs passage:

And he [the Word] also spoke symbolically about these things in Proverbs: 'Give not sleep to your eyes nor drowsiness to your eyelids, so you might be saved, like a gazelle from the nets and a bird from the trap.' Some of the heretics do not understand this and, as if they really had no mind, misconstrue what is written spiritually and suppose, concerning bodily (sleep), that one should not sleep, and so defraud people of its [sleep's] natural use. They do not know that, although they are awake for a time, they are totally asleep in their thinking and that by fearing bodily sleep they fall away from the watchfulness of the soul.²⁴

From here Athanasius went on to explain how the soul can contemplate 'better things' even while the body is asleep and the mind can travel to faraway places, even to heaven, while the body is lying in bed. This distinction between kinds of sleep, one of the body and the other of the soul, is one example of several such double meanings in Scripture that Athanasius gathered under the Pauline rubrics of the 'inner' and 'outer persons' (cf. 2 Cor. 4: 16; Eph. 3: 14–17).²⁵ The soul not only possesses spiritual counterparts of the body's members, but also makes use of its own five spiritual senses, plus a sixth, 'divine sense'.²⁶

Both Athanasius' interpretation of the Proverbs passage and his guiding concept of spiritual members and senses followed his Alexandrian predecessor Origen. Origen anticipated Athanasius by

²² An English translation of this letter is provided in the Appendix to this book.

²³ *Mor. et val.* 5 (6. 27–8, 30–1 D.).

²⁴ *Ibid.* 6 (7. 1–9 D.).

²⁵ *Ibid.* 1 (5. 6–16 D.).

²⁶ *Ibid.* 8 (7. 26–8. 7 D.).

making the same Pauline distinction between the 'inner' and 'outer persons' in his reading of Prov. 6:

Indeed, there is 'sleep' and 'watchfulness', just as in the case of the 'outer person', so too in the case of the 'inner'. And we are required to be watchful, as the Saviour said, 'Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation' [Mark 14: 38 par.], and it says in Proverbs, 'Give not sleep to your eyes nor drowsiness to your eyelids' [Prov. 6: 4]. And [we are required] to sleep, when the Saviour says, 'Sleep at last, and be refreshed' [Mark 14: 41], and Solomon, 'For if you rest, you will be fearless, and if you sleep, you will slumber sweetly, and you will not fear some panic coming upon you' [Prov. 3: 24-5].²⁷

Elsewhere Origen made the general statement that in the Scriptures, 'apart from the exit from this life, "sleep" indicates the soul's inattentiveness, while its attentiveness is called "watchfulness"'; the 'divine Word' uttered Prov. 6: 4 because he 'wanted to keep us safe from inattentiveness'.²⁸ Origen often cited Prov. 6: 4-5 to show that commands to 'stay awake' or 'watch' in the New Testament forbid not bodily sleep, but the 'sleep of the soul'.²⁹ Origen provided his most thorough discussion of the 'outer' and 'inner' persons and the latter's spiritual senses in his *Dialogue with Heraclides*.³⁰ The tendency to understand Prov. 6: 4-5 only in this spiritual, moralizing fashion reached its zenith with Evagrius Ponticus:

The 'sleep' of the soul is sin in action, while 'drowsiness' is the impure thought that first takes shape in the soul. Therefore, the text forbids 'sleep' even before 'drowsiness'. For he [Jesus] says, 'It was said among the ancients, "Do not kill", but I say, do not even become angry' [Matt. 5: 21-2]. And hence it seems to me that the Law forbids 'sleep', but the gospel of Christ [forbids] 'drowsiness', since the former cuts off sin in action and the latter the evil that first takes shape in thought.³¹

²⁷ Or. *Fr. in Lc.* 196 (310 Rauer). Athanasius also cited Prov. 3: 24-5 as an example of the soul's good sleep; *Mor. et val.* 5 (6. 28-9 D.).

²⁸ Or. *Sel. in Ps. III* 6 (PG 12. 1128a). Of the works of Origen cited here, only this one could be from the Alexandrian period, but there can be little doubt that works written in Caesarea were known in Egypt in the 4th cent. For a chronology of Origen's works, see Pierre Nautin, *Origène* (Paris, 1977), 364-412; on Psalm commentaries, 261-92. On this particular fragment and its manuscript tradition, see Ekkehard Mühlberg, *Psalmenkommentare aus der Kettenüberlieferung* (Berlin, 1978), 3. 44.

²⁹ Cf. Or. *Comm. in 1 Cor.* 90. 2-6 Jenkins (*JTS* 10 (1909), 51); *Comm. in Mt.* 93 (211. 4-7 Klostermann).

³⁰ Or. *Dial. Her.* 154. 9-166. 22 Scherer. On the spiritual senses, see Karl Rahner, 'The "Spiritual Senses" According to Origen', in his *Experience of the Spirit: Source of Theology*, vol. 16 of *Theological Investigations*, tr. David Morland (London, 1979), 81-103.

³¹ Ev. Pont. *Scol. in Pr.* 70 (164 Géhin). That the Hebrew Bible forbids sins in action and the New Testament sins in thought is a principle which Evagrius applies often (Paul

Hence, Athanasius stood in a clear tradition of understanding this passage in a moral sense, referring not to actual sleep of the body, but to an inner disposition of moral neglect called 'sleep'. Inspired by Mark 14: 37, Athanasius declared that in general 'the sleep of the soul is negligence and forgetting death'.³²

Given this well-established reading of Prov. 6: 4-5, who might have understood the passage to forbid actual sleep, and why? It has been reasonably suggested that either the Messalians or the followers of Alexander the Sleepless Monk (both ascetic movements active in Syria and Asia Minor in the fourth and fifth centuries) might have made use of Prov. 6: 4-5 to justify their behaviour;³³ however, there seems to be no literary evidence that they did so. None the less, in monastic circles, the verse could be understood in a sense that extended the interpretation of Athanasius and Origen into the more external sphere of demonology. The unknown author of the *Teachings of Silvanus*, a work of third- or fourth-century Egypt, cited Prov. 6: 4 in urging his readers to 'fight the great fight as long as the fight lasts, while all the powers [δυνάμεις] are watching you, not only the holy ones, but all the powers of the Adversary'.³⁴ Pachomius also used the verse to warn his monks to be vigilant against the attacks of the 'spirits' (πνεύματα) of the vices that 'lie in ambush against' the monk:

Woe to the wretched soul in which they [the spirits] make their home and of which they make themselves masters. They hold such a soul far from God, because it is in their power. It sways from side to side till it ends in the abyss of hell. My son, obey me. Do not be negligent: 'Give your eyes no sleep, your eyelids no rest, so that you may break free like a gazelle from the snares'. For, O my son, all the spirits have attacked me often since my childhood.³⁵

Most likely it is demons that 'Silvanus' and Pachomius called 'powers' or 'spirits'.³⁶ Although still operating within the tradition exemplified by Athanasius and Origen, this reading of the verse did not place it exclusively in the sphere of the soul's interior life, but also in the arena of a person's combat with external, albeit spiritual, forces that wish to invade the soul and take it captive ('make their home' in it). Here we come much closer to the need to keep physically awake and alert as much

Géhin in *Évagre le Pontique, Scholies aux Proverbes*, ed. Géhin (SC 340; Paris, 1987), 165-7).

³² *Fr. Lc.* (PG 27, 1397c).

³³ Franz Diekamp (ed.), *Analecta Patristica* (Rome, 1938), 8-9.

³⁴ *Teachings of Silvanus* 113: 30-114: 6 Janssens.

³⁵ *Cal.* 1. 11 (3-3-11 Lef.).

³⁶ Demons: Yvonne Janssens, *Les Leçons de Silvanos (NH VII. 4)* (Quebec, 1983), 136-7.

as possible. The traditional reading of a biblical passage was adapted to the monastic struggle with demons.

Athanasius accepted the reality of this more external sphere of attacking demons, but he found the practice of extreme sleep deprivation unwise, particularly for someone in ill health. The soul, after all, could enjoy 'contemplation of better things' even while the body was asleep.³⁷ Bodily ascetic practices, Athanasius believed, should exercise or train the soul and so focus its attention on God.³⁸ Sleep deprivation, however, did not contribute to this goal; rather, it made people 'totally asleep in their thinking [*διανοία*]' and led them to 'fall away from the watchfulness of the soul'.³⁹ To Athanasius, then, excessive neglect of the body could relax the mind's attention to God. In making this point, the bishop subordinated monastic practice to the biblical passage as traditionally ('spiritually') understood.

The problem of nocturnal emissions, the subject of the *Letter to Ammoun*, is another example of Athanasius' use of Scripture to argue for modification of ascetic practices in order to reorientate the monk's attention from body to mind. As in the case of sleep deprivation, certain practices involving the body were at issue, and the interpretation of Scripture played an important role in Athanasius' argument. In this case, the biblical passage in question is a surprising one. Athanasius wrote to Ammoun:

We are defiled only when we commit the most foul-smelling sin. But when any natural discharge takes place independently of will, then we experience this, like other things, as we said, by necessity of nature. But since those who want only to deny what is said rightly, or rather what is made by God, twist even a saying in the Gospels, alleging that 'not what goes in defiles a person, but what goes out' [Matt. 15: 11], we are obliged to refute this irrationality—for I cannot call it a question—of theirs.⁴⁰

Athanasius went on to explain that Matt. 15 is really about foods and that doctors teach that 'there are certain necessary passages accorded to the living thing to provide for the dismissal of the excess of what is secreted in our several parts'.⁴¹ Lying behind Athanasius' hostility to the monks who regarded emissions as defiling was the common practice of absenting oneself from communion if one had had an emission. When nocturnal emissions are mentioned elsewhere in early Christian literature, the participation of men in the Eucharist is always the con-

³⁷ *Mor. et val.* 6 (7. 11 D.).

³⁸ See his discussion of fasting in *Ep. fest.* (syr.) 1. 4-6.

³⁹ *Mor. et val.* 6 (7. 7-9 D.).

⁴⁰ *Ep. Amun.* 65. 9-23 J.

⁴¹ *Ibid.* 66. 21-67. 1 J.

cern. Church orders from Syria reveal that some Christians believed that a nocturnal emission rendered a man 'unclean' and hence ineligible to receive the sacrament; accordingly, these men absented themselves from the Eucharist.⁴² The church orders condemn this practice as tantamount to returning to the purity regulations found in Leviticus (in this case, Lev. 15: 16–18) and thus an apostasy to Judaism. Such failure to communicate was to 'abrogate the baptism of God': the Holy Spirit acquired in baptism was not driven out by such bodily discharges (as the criticized Christians seemed to believe), but only by 'impiety towards God, and transgression, and injustice towards one's neighbour'.⁴³ Likewise, these Syrian orders did not bar menstruating women from the Eucharist.⁴⁴ Syrian discussions of nocturnal emissions revolved around two issues: Christianity's need to differentiate itself from Judaism, and the status of the Holy Spirit acquired in baptism.

In Egypt, however, church leaders were more open to regulation based on such emissions, and the problem took on a psychological focus. Bishop Dionysius of Alexandria (bishop 248–65) believed that menstruating women should not 'touch the body and blood of Christ' on the grounds that the woman with the twelve-year flow of blood (Mark 5: 25) did not touch Jesus but only the edge of his garment.⁴⁵ Dionysius also turned to the New Testament to justify his position on nocturnal emissions, but here he was pragmatic and moderate. He compared the question to Paul's principle on the observation of food taboos, taking Paul's statement that 'the one who doubts is condemned if he eats' (Rom. 14: 23) to indicate that men who had had an 'involuntary nocturnal emission' should 'follow their own conscience' and 'examine themselves whether they doubt concerning this or not'. He concluded: 'Let everyone who goes in to God be of good conscience and confidence with respect to his own inner disposition.'⁴⁶ Over a century later, Timothy I, bishop of Alexandria (381–5), also barred menstruating women from the Eucharist,⁴⁷ but his opinion concerning male discharges was, like that of Dionysius, less absolute. On whether 'a layman who has had a [wet] dream' should commune or not, he writes: 'If desire for a woman underlies it [the wet dream], he should not. But if Satan is

⁴² *Did. App.* 26; *Const. App.* 27.

⁴³ *Did. App.* 26 (260. 7–8 Vööbus); *Const. App.* 27. 8 (382. 1–2 Metzger).

⁴⁴ On this closely related topic, see Shaye J. D. Cohen, 'Menstruants and the Sacred in Judaism and Christianity', in S. B. Pomeroy (ed.), *Women's History and Ancient History* (Chapel Hill, NC, and London, 1991), 273–99.

⁴⁵ *Dion. Al. Ep. can.* 2 (12. 1–23 J.).

⁴⁶ *Ibid.* 4 (13. 14–14. 2 J.).

⁴⁷ *Tim. I Al. Resp.* 7 (244. 7–12 J.).

tempting him, so that through this pretext he might be estranged from communion with the divine Mysteries, he should commune, since the tempter will not stop attacking him at that time when he should commune.⁴⁸ While Dionysius defended his reasoning on sexual purity issues solely by an appeal to biblical passages, new elements appear in the thinking of Timothy: a psychological concern about the 'desire' that a dream might indicate, and the possibility that Satan might use sexual dreams precisely to keep a man from receiving the Eucharist. The interest in 'desire' reveals the influence of the monastic movement of the intervening century; the concern for Satan, the influence of Athanasius. The views of the monks and of the great bishop complicated Egyptian attitudes about male sexual purity; it is to these views that we now turn.

The monastic movement of Egypt also considered nocturnal emissions in the context of whether or not to receive communion and shared the ambivalence displayed by the bishops of Alexandria.⁴⁹ The monks did not, as Athanasius assumed, simply view all emissions as defiling. Instead, they urged each other to consider whether an emission was involuntary and natural or the result of impure thoughts. So Dioscorus, a priest and abbot of a monastery in the fourth-century Thebaid:

Take care that no one who has pondered on the image [φαντασία] of a woman during the night dare to approach the sacred Mysteries, in case any of you has had a [wet] dream while entertaining such an image. For seminal emissions [γονόρροιαί] do take place unconsciously without the stimulus of imagined forms, occurring not from deliberate choice but involuntarily. They arise naturally and flow forth from an excess of matter. They are therefore not to be classed as sinful. But imaginings are the result of deliberate choice and are a sign of an evil disposition [γνώμη]. Now a monk must even transcend the law of nature and must certainly not fall into the slightest pollution of the flesh. On the contrary, he must mortify the flesh and not allow an excess of seminal fluid to accumulate. We should therefore try to keep the fluid depleted by the prolongation of fasting. Otherwise, it arouses our sensual appetites.⁵⁰

For Dioscorus, a nocturnal emission may have required that a monk abstain from the Eucharist if it was a symptom of a deeper problem. Antony had enunciated a threefold division that probably lay behind what Dioscorus said: 'It is necessary to know that there are three bodily movements: one natural, another from negligence in foods, and the third

⁴⁸ Tim. I Al Resp. 12 (247. 14-248. 6 J.).

⁴⁹ Most completely studied by Aline Rousselle, *Porneia*, tr. F. Pheasant (Oxford, 1988), 154-9, 170-3, to which I am indebted for much of what follows.

⁵⁰ *H. mon.* 20. 1-3 (20. 3-15 Festugière; tr. N. Russell (London and Oxford, 1980), 105).

from demons'.⁵¹ Dioscorus, like Athanasius, accepted the opinion of ancient doctors that nocturnal emissions resulted 'naturally' from an accumulation of fluid, but unlike Athanasius, he urged following the diet recommended by doctors for reducing fluid in the body in order to reduce the number of emissions and thereby prevent the arousal of 'sensual appetites'.⁵² Although not sinful in themselves, the number of ejaculations and the dreams that accompanied them served for the monks as indicators of their inner state; a modern scholar writes: 'These genital manifestations were considered as signs of the stage the individual had reached in his pursuit of a life directed constantly toward God.'⁵³ According to John Cassian, the achievement of true chastity, attained only by 'a few men', would mean the complete cessation of nocturnal images and emissions; as far as Cassian knew, such perfection had been achieved by only one monk, appropriately named Serenus, and a few others.⁵⁴ Although a nearly unattainable ideal, this level of self-control still lay before the monk as a goal: Dioscorus said that 'a monk must even transcend the law of nature'.

Cassian, a Christian ascetic writing in Gaul in the early fifth century, provides the most detailed discussions of this phenomenon and explains the connection with Matt. 15: 11 that Athanasius found so unreasonable.⁵⁵ Although Cassian presented his material in conformity with his own spirituality, he claimed to be transmitting the teaching of Egyptian monks whom he had met during a lengthy sojourn in Egypt. Thus, he can be used with caution for our purposes. Once again, the purity required to receive communion is central; after discussing the efforts of athletes to prevent nocturnal emissions, Cassian asks: 'With what purity should we guard the chastity of our body and soul, we who must daily eat the Lamb's holy flesh, which the precepts of the ancient Law [Lev. 7: 19-20] permit no one impure to touch?'⁵⁶ The chastity that Cassian has in mind is not merely abstinence from sexual acts, but rather purity of heart:

Hence, correction of this vice [fornication] depends primarily on perfection of the heart, from which, it is indicated by the Lord's voice, the poison of this malady proceeds. 'From the heart', he says, 'come forth evil thoughts, murder,

⁵¹ *Apophth. Patr. Antony* 22 (PG 65. 84b).

⁵² Rousselle, *Porneia*, 172-3. ⁵³ *Ibid.*, 157.

⁵⁴ *Cass. Coll.* 12. 7 (132. 30-133. 14 Pichery); *Inst.* 6. 20. 1-4 Guy.

⁵⁵ See *Institutes* 6 and *Conferences* 12, 22; Michel Foucault, 'The Battle for Chastity', in P. Ariès and A. Béjin (eds.), *Western Sexuality*, tr. A. Forster (Oxford, 1985), 14-25; Brown, *Body and Society*, 420-3; Rousseau, *Ascetics*, 169-234.

⁵⁶ *Cass. Inst.* 6. 8. 4-8 Guy.

adultery, fornications, thefts, false testimony', etc. [Matt. 15: 19]. Therefore, it [the heart] must be purified first, since we learn that it remains the source of life and death when Solomon says, 'Guard your heart with all care, for from it life comes forth' [Prov. 4: 23]. For the flesh serves its judgement and command.⁵⁷

Here is the connection to Matthew 15 that puzzled Athanasius. From the heart come forth all the vices, including fornication, and so it must be purified. But the heart is full of 'hiding places' inaccessible to human examination, which is hindered by 'the distractions of daytime'.⁵⁸ At night, however, 'something hidden in the inmost fibres of the soul' can be brought 'to the surface of the skin', and thus sleep can expose 'the hidden fevers of the agitations that we have collected by feasting on harmful thoughts all day long'.⁵⁹ Images, dreams, and ejaculations are diagnostic tools for the examination of one's otherwise inaccessible heart: in a modern scholar's words, 'signals on a screen' indicating 'processes that lay out of sight in the depths of the self'.⁶⁰ Cassian could almost be speaking about Athanasius when he describes the erroneous thinking that a monk should avoid:

The blessed Apostle said: 'Indeed, the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing until it divides soul from spirit, joints from marrow; it is able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart' [Heb. 4: 12]. And so, he [the monk], like an overseer or impartial judge, discerns fairly which [emission] is a necessary and inevitable attribute of the human condition and which a product of habitual vice and youthful neglect, since he is placed, as it were, at the boundary between them. . . . He thoroughly considers the mode of his purity by the sure scales of his own experience and just discernment. Let him not be deceived by the error of those who excuse ejaculations that, due to their own negligence, are more frequent than nature requires by attributing them to their natural condition. Although it is clear that they are doing violence to nature and forcing out of it pollution that nature itself does not produce, they attribute their intemperance to the needs of the flesh, indeed even to the Creator himself, transferring their own faults to the disgrace of nature. It is well said of such people in Proverbs: 'A man's foolishness corrupts his ways, yet in his heart he accuses God' [Prov. 19: 3].⁶¹

Again, the goal is to see into the heart, the source of all vices (Matt. 15: 19), and so the monk must carefully discern which ejaculations are involuntary and necessary and which speak of a deeper problem.

⁵⁷ Cass. *Inst.* 6. 2. 1-9 Guy.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.* 6. 9. 1; 11. 1-2 Guy.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.* 6. 11. 6-9 Guy.

⁶⁰ Brown, *Body and Society*, 421.

⁶¹ Cass. *Coll.* 12. 8 (133-19-134. 10 Pichery).

Ultimately, for Cassian, any emission in excess of the natural one that would occur every two or three months indicates that there are thoughts and desires still present in a hidden part of the monk's self. The monk's goal is to eliminate this hidden self and to become totally transparent to oneself, to other people, and to God: as Cassian puts it, 'to be the same as one is during the day, the same in bed as one is at prayer, the same alone as in a crowd of people, so that one never sees oneself in secret to be such that one would blush to be seen by other people, nor does that unavoidable eye see in one anything that ought to be concealed from human sight'.⁶² Monks, Cassian writes, can reduce the number of emissions by eating less, wearing metal over their genitals at night, and not drinking too much water before going to sleep.⁶³ But concern about nocturnal emissions really need not enter the monk's spiritual discipline until he reaches an advanced stage: their complete absence will come only at 'the pinnacle of chastity' and, even then, only by grace.⁶⁴ In its depth and subtlety, Cassian's analysis of this problem moves far beyond what can be safely attributed to the monks associated with Ammoun in fourth-century Egypt, but it seems likely that Cassian does provide us with the relevance of Matt. 15.

The discernment and care with which monks approached nocturnal emissions and the relevance of Matt. 15: 10–20 to the subject escaped Athanasius. The monks did not, as he implied, regard the phrase 'what goes out' in Matt. 15: 11 to refer to the emission itself, but to the vice of fornication, whose unsuspected presence the emission might indicate. Athanasius made it appear that an 'absurd' interpretation of a biblical passage was the basis for monastic attention to nocturnal emissions when in fact it was not. Rather, anxiety about such bodily functions and the attendant practices of fasting and absence from the Eucharist struck Bishop Athanasius as ascetic extremism of a dangerous kind: 'nonsense', 'irrationality'.⁶⁵ By calling night emissions 'involuntary', Athanasius seems to have assumed that the will was disconnected from the body during sleep, a position consistent with his belief that the soul enjoys a contemplative life and journeys independent of the body's geographical position during sleep. In any case, speaking in terms that the desert fathers would understand, Athanasius blamed scrupulous attention to emissions on 'the craft of the devil', who 'introduces thoughts in the appearance of "purity" [*καθαρότης*], but it is an ambush rather than

⁶² Cass. *Coll.* 12. 8 (135. 14–21 Pichery).

⁶³ Cass. *Inst.* 6. 19–28 Guy; *Coll.* 12. 11 (139. 17–24 Pichery).

⁶⁴ Cass. *Inst.* 6. 20–2 Guy; Foucault, 'Battle', 21–3. ⁶⁵ *Ep. Amun.* 64. 18–19; 65. 22 J.

“discernment” [δοκιμασία].⁶⁶ Here the bishop took terms directly from the monastic discussion of nocturnal emissions (‘purity’, ‘discernment’) and portrayed them as mere covers for the devil’s ‘ambush’. Once again, Athanasius argued that asceticism too intently focused on the body can disrupt the mind’s attention to God, for precisely by diverting the monks’ attention to the phenomena of the body, the devil hopes to ‘distract the ascetics from their customary and salutary meditation [μελέτης].’⁶⁷ Athanasius likened such demonic concern for the body’s purity to the licentious behaviour of unnamed persons who would not restrict sexual activity to marriage.⁶⁸ Careful regulation of the body’s functions, on the one hand, and free use of its organs, on the other, became, by the pen of Athanasius, two sides of the same ‘evil’ coin.

Steering between the Scylla of obsession with bodily purity and the Charybdis of sexual licence, an extreme dichotomy that he himself had created, Athanasius reduced Christian sexual ethics to two options, ‘two ways in life’: abstinence and married intercourse. He sought thereby to bind together monks and married people in one Church. Worried that certain monks may have had ‘unclean and evil questions’ about married Christians, Athanasius depicted the Church as a community in which both virginity and ‘the lawful use’ (ἡ ἔννομος χρῆσις) of the sexual organs, meaning intercourse within marriage, have their place.⁶⁹ Although the bishop criticized those who would have sex ‘secretly and in an adulterous fashion’,⁷⁰ his main concern here was that monks, anxious about the polluting effects of nocturnal emissions, might also condemn marriage. The bishop assumed, mistakenly as we have seen, that such monks would question the goodness of the body (‘a work of God’s hands’, he said) and condemn any use of its sexual organs.⁷¹ Therefore, Athanasius insisted that the married person ‘is not to be reproached’.⁷² For this point he drew on his favourite passage, the different yields in the Parable of the Sower (Matt. 13: 1–8), and described a hierarchy, in which the married person yields fruit ‘thirtyfold’, but the celibate person yields ‘hundredfold’. Thus, the difference between the monk and ordinary Christians is only one of degree of holiness and, hence, of reward, in a hierarchical unity: monks will receive ‘more wonderful gifts’ since they bear ‘the perfect fruit’, but the married person still receives

⁶⁶ *Ep. Amun.* 64. 8–12 J.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.* 64. 13–15 J.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.* 67. 13–16 J. Such persons, Athanasius sarcastically says, advocate ‘the honest use [ἡ ἀληθῆς χρῆσις] of the organs created by God’.

⁶⁹ *Ep. Amun.* 69. 14–15; 67. 19 J.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.* 68. 1 J.

⁷¹ *Ibid.* 65. 1–5 J.

⁷² *Ibid.* 69. 4–5 J.

'wonderful gifts'.⁷³ To be sure, in this picture the ascetic enjoys moral and heavenly superiority, but here also was an explicit reminder to the monk of his connection to the Church made up of those who have 'chosen the worldly way'.⁷⁴ A monk's abstention from the Eucharist due to emissions undermined this basic connection between ascetic and lay Christians.

When he wrote about nocturnal emissions and sleep deprivation, Athanasius opposed not merely ideas—what a certain biblical text means, what might be defiling—but also practices involving the body. The debates that Athanasius entered in his ascetic correspondence were not first of all disputes over biblical interpretation; rather, conflicts over ascetic practices took the form of arguments over the scriptural passages used to justify such practices. In each case, the bishop exhibited a reserve about the monastic attention to the body and its functions that reflected his belief that the ascetic's task was to reorientate himself from body to mind. The ascetic Christian, in the bishop's view, was to concentrate on 'contemplation' and 'meditation', not on the processes of the body. Because they could obscure this mental attentiveness, Athanasius considered certain bodily practices of monks to be as dangerous and divisive as unorthodox opinions. Moreover, he saw in the practice of abstaining from the Eucharist after a nocturnal emission a threat to the social unity of the Church, which was created and expressed in the sacrament where the bishop presided. For these reasons, not only through thinking, but also through bodily behaviour (sleeping, fasting, taking or not taking communion), the monk could be 'orthodox' or 'heretical'.

But even more, by painting differences in ascetic practice as matters of heresy and orthodoxy, Athanasius implicitly positioned ascetic Christians within the Church and under the bishop's authority. He called the ascetics who quoted Proverbs 6: 4 to support sleeping as little as possible 'certain people from the heresies [*αἰρεσεις*]'.⁷⁵ By interpreting Proverbs in this way they acted 'as if they really had no mind'; this phrase ('have no mind') was a favourite of Athanasius' in describing 'heretics'.⁷⁶ These vigilant monks 'defraud people of its [sleep's] natural use', engaging in an activity ('defrauding') that Athanasius attributed not only to Arius and idol-makers, but even to Satan.⁷⁷ In his *Letter to*

⁷³ *Ep. Amun.* 69. 6–14 J. ⁷⁴ *Ibid.* 69. 3 J. ⁷⁵ *Mor. et val.* 6 (7. 4 D.).

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*; *Gen.* 30. 22–3 T.; *Dion.* 12, 24 (PG 25. 497b, 516c); *H. Ar.* 69 (PG 25. 776c); *Ep. Serap.* 1. 17 (PG 26. 572c).

⁷⁷ *Mor. et val.* 6 (7. 6 D.); cf. *Ar.* 1. 4 (PG 26. 20b); *Gen.* 15. 3 T.; *Ep. Aeg. Lib.* 2 (PG 25. 541a); cf. *H. Ar.* 44 (PG 25. 745d).

Ammoun, Athanasius said that the monks who were worried about nocturnal emissions taught 'nonsense' (*φλυαρία*), 'absurdity' (*ἀλογία*), and 'ignorance' (*ἀμαθία*), all characteristically Athanasian terms for heretical teachings.⁷⁸ They wanted, as Athanasius said other heretics did, to 'deny what is said rightly [*ὀρθῶς*]'.⁷⁹ The cumulative effect of this vocabulary was to recast differences in ascetic practice into conflicts between 'what is said rightly' and the 'nonsense' of 'heretics', that is, between orthodoxy and heresy. Pachomius, in contrast, could say about variety in the monastic life, 'There is not just one measure of piety, but many.'⁸⁰ To be sure, Athanasius introduced the vocabulary of orthodoxy in support of a value shared by numerous monks: moderation in ascetic discipline. The fourth-century monk Agathon, who wandered throughout Egypt, approved of two disciples each 'leading the anchoritic life in his own way'; the Alexandrian virgin Syncletica (fourth or fifth century) distinguished between the asceticism of God and that of the devil by the former's 'balance' (*συμμετρία*) and the latter's 'imbalance' (*ἀμετρία*).⁸¹ These ascetic Christians urged one another to adjust the severity of their regimes to each individual's condition. Nevertheless, Athanasius' rhetoric, while granting hierarchical diversity within the Church (marriage and virginity as 'two ways'), placed limits on the diversity of ascetic practice, limits determined not by the progress of the individual monk, but by 'the truth', which the monks were to hold 'unbroken and secure'.⁸² Ascetic behaviour became part of the domain of ecclesiastical truth, guarded by the bishop.

Athanasius' discussions of sleep deprivation and nocturnal emissions provide additional clues to his theoretical ideas about the human will, desire, and the body, which I will address in the next chapter. Here I want to highlight how these discussions advanced Athanasius' practical goal of church formation: Athanasius tied the monastic movement to the episcopate in part by making the monk's work, namely the cultivation of

⁷⁸ *φλυαρία* (*Ep. Amun.* 64. 18–19 J.); *Fug.* 26. 12–13 S.; *Ep. Max.* 1 (PG 26. 1085b); *Ep. Jo. et Ant.* (PG 26. 1168a); cf. *φλυαρεῖν*: *Hom. in Mt.* 11: 27 6 (PG 25. 217c); *Apol. Const.* 17. 31 S.; *Ar.* 1. 2, 35; 2. 51; 3. 17 (PG 26. 13c, 84a, 253c, 360a); *Ep. Serap.* 4. 15 (PG 26. 657b); *VA* 32 (PG 26. 892a); *Fug.* 10. 20 S.; *Ep. mort. Ar.* 3. 3 (179. 25 Op.); *Ep. Aeg. Lib.* 16 (PG 25. 576b). *ἀλογία* (*Ep. Amun.* 65. 22 J.); *Decr.* 1 (PG 25. 416b); *Dion.* 1 (PG 25. 480a); *Ep. Aeg. Lib.* 16 (PG 25. 573b); *Fug.* 2. 25 S.; etc. *ἀμαθία* (*Ep. Amun.* 65. 24 J.); *Ar.* 1. 29, 32 (PG 26. 72a, 77c); *Syn.* 3, 4, 33 (PG 26. 685b, 685d, 752c); etc.

⁷⁹ *Ep. Amun.* 65. 15–16 J.; cf. *Decr.* 4. 1, 2; 20. 6 (3. 25–36; 4. 2; 17. 26 Op.); *Ep. Drac.* 10 (PG 25. 533d); *Syn.* 7. 1; 9. 2 (234. 32–4; 236. 23 Op.); *Ep. Jo.* 2 (PG 26. 817a).

⁸⁰ VP 75 (50. 20–1 Halkin); cf. *Pach. Cat.* 2. 3 (25. 17–26 Lef.).

⁸¹ *Aporphth. Patr.* Agathon 20; Syncletica 15 (PG 65. 113c–16a, 425); cf. Antony 8, where 'discernment' (*διάκρισις*) is preferred to 'discipline' (*ἀσκησις*) (PG 65. 77b).

⁸² *Ep. Amun.* 70. 22–4 J.

proper ascetic practices, also a part of the bishop's work. He did so in part by subordinating ascetic practice to a 'right' (ὀρθός) understanding of Scripture, which the bishop defined. Athanasius did not by himself create this new ascetic role for the bishop; in both of the instances we have considered, the patriarch's correspondents asked him for his counsel. Athanasius also recognized Ammoun's authority within the guru system of Nitrian desert monasticism, urging him to 'strengthen, O father, the flocks under you'; Ammoun's task, he said, was to 'exhort' (παρακαλεῖν), 'persuade' (ψυχαγωγεῖν), and 'advise' (συμβουλεύειν) less advanced monks.⁸³ But when Ammoun sought Athanasius' opinion, the bishop gave it and then declared the issue settled: having received the episcopal dictum, the monks were now to 'obey the truth' and 'cease from the vain labour' of 'asking questions maliciously'.⁸⁴ Athanasius asserted the bishop's ascetic authority at a time when the monks themselves were seeking more stable modes of authority within their own communities. Taking advantage of this situation, Athanasius worked to ensure that bishops played a prominent role in emerging models of ascetic leadership and conflict resolution.

The monk as bishop: Episcopal appointments

Athanasius not only inserted the bishop into the monastic world; he also brought monks into the episcopal hierarchy. In his political struggles with the 'Arians' and Melitians, it was important to Athanasius that he have bishops allied with him up and down the Nile. In his effort to install such friendly bishops, Athanasius filled numerous available bishoprics with monks. The practice of appointing monks as bishops became 'a general custom in Coptic Egypt' by the fifth century.⁸⁵ It is precisely during Athanasius' episcopate that lists of Egyptian bishops from various sources (including Athanasius' writings) make it possible to trace the careers of several bishops and to follow the episcopal succession in a number of sees.⁸⁶ In two of these lists, Athanasius himself drew attention to the number of monks who had been made bishops. Writing in 354 to the monk Dracontius, who was reluctant to accept appointment as

⁸³ *Ep. Amun*. 69. 18–22 J.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.* 70. 11–12, 17–19 J.

⁸⁵ Jacob Muiser, 'Contribution à l'étude des listes épiscopales de l'Église copte', *BSAC* 10 (1944), 115–76, at 134.

⁸⁶ Most of these lists are conveniently collected by H. Munier (ed. and tr.), *Recueil des listes épiscopales de l'église copte* (Cairo, 1943), 1–10; cf. Muiser, 'Contribution'. For the episcopal succession in a number of Egyptian bishoprics, see Alberto Camplani, *Le Lettere festali di Atanasio di Alessandria* (Rome, 1989), 283–316.

bishop of Hermopolis Parva, Athanasius named several other monks turned bishops:

For you are not the only one who has been elected from among monks, nor are you the only one to have presided over a monastery, or the only one to have been loved by monks. But you know that Serapion was also a monk, and presided over many monks; you were not unaware of how many monks had Apollus as their father; you know Agathon and are not ignorant of Ariston. You remember Ammonius, who went abroad with Serapion. Perhaps you have also heard of Mutilus in the upper Thebaid, and can learn about Paul at Latopolis and many others.⁸⁷

The last two bishops that Athanasius named, Mutilus and Paul, had earlier found their dual ties to episcopate and monastery tested when, at the Synod of Latopolis (345), the defendant Pachomius asked them: 'Were you not once monks with me in the monastery before you became bishops? Do you not know that by the grace of God I, just like you, love God and care for the brothers?'⁸⁸ In 354 Athanasius persuaded Dracontius to join Mutilus and Paul as a monk-bishop. Fourteen years later, at the end of *Festal Letter* 40 for Easter 368, Athanasius, as he often did in these annual pastoral epistles, listed the bishops who took office during the preceding year and paused to comment: 'And all these men are ascetics [ἀσκηταί] and in the life [βίος] of monasticism [ΜΗΤΑΜΟΝΑΧΟΣ]'. These two Athanasian references to the number of monk-bishops frame the episcopal administration of the reluctant Dracontius, for in *Festal Letter* 40 Athanasius also announced that 'Isidore has been appointed in place of Dracontius'.⁸⁹

It is evident from both the *Letter to Dracontius* and the 40th *Festal Letter*, that political necessity was a prime motivation for Athanasius' programme of placing monks in the Egyptian hierarchy; well into his career Athanasius still had to work at building an Egyptian episcopate loyal to him. Toward the end of the 360s, as his influence in the theological and political struggles in the Eastern Church waned, Athanasius turned to the internal problems of the Egyptian Church and wrote a series of *Festal Letters* on issues of church order: the canon of Scriptures (367), irregular ordinations (368), and abuses at martyr shrines

⁸⁷ *Ep. Drac.* 7 (PG 25. 532a). The reference to Serapion's trip abroad dates the *Letter to Dracontius* to around 354 since this unsuccessful mission to the emperor took place in early 353: *Chron. Ath.* 25 (305-10 M/A); *Hist. ac.* 1. 7. 38-44 M/A.

⁸⁸ VP 112 (73. 31-4 Halkin). See the discussion of this incident below.

⁸⁹ *Ep. fest.* (cop.) 40 (OLP 15: 8r. a1-4, 17-20 Co.). An English translation of this letter is provided in the Appendix to this book.

(369–70).⁹⁰ In *Festal Letter* 40 (368), Athanasius complained of people who were ‘electing clergy for other dioceses that are not theirs’. These rival parties seem also to have recruited priests and bishops from among the monks, for he wrote that ‘not only the churches are disturbed by them, but the monasteries as well, for such hastiness reaches even them’.⁹¹ As in the cases of the Scripture canon and the martyr shrines, Athanasius tried to make the Melitian Church a scapegoat for practices widespread in the Egyptian churches, but his first-person plural language reveals that disorderly ordinations and consecrations were a problem also in the pro-Athanasian churches: ‘How will someone not condemn us justly when we do not keep the rules given to us?’⁹² In this letter Athanasius sought to advance two logically connected goals: to bring the selection of bishops under more direct Alexandrian control, and thereby to prevent the installation of unfriendly bishops in vacant sees. As to the first point, Athanasius’ language is unfortunately vague about precisely how bishops were appointed: in writing to Dracontius, he repeatedly uses the non-descriptive verb *καταστήσαι* (‘appoint’) and its cognates;⁹³ in the *Festal Letter*, we find *χειροτονεῖν* (‘elect’, ‘appoint’), which may indicate some democratic procedure.⁹⁴ Indeed, Athanasius reminds Dracontius of the Christians of Hermopolis Parva by calling them ‘those by whom you were appointed [*κατεστάθης*]’.⁹⁵ Judging from such references to the laity in the *Letter to Dracontius* and from the complaints about persons from neighbouring dioceses in the *Festal Letter*, it seems likely that the local clergy, representative laity of all social levels (‘little ones’),⁹⁶ and neighbouring bishops either ratified the nominee of the Alexandrian patriarch or elected their own candidate(s), who then required the patriarch’s consent. Gaining this consent may have required a trip to Alexandria by the candidate and a local delegation, but certainly the patriarch communicated his approval to the wider Egyptian Church through his *Festal Letter*.⁹⁷ In the case of Dracontius, whose bishopric

⁹⁰ Waning influence in East: Camplani, *Lettere festali*, 238; Jean-Marie Leroux, ‘Athanasie et la seconde phase de la crise arienne (345 à 373)’, in C. Kannengiesser (ed.), *Politique et théologie chez Athanasie d’Alexandrie* (Paris, 1974), 145–56.

⁹¹ *Ep. fest.* (cop.) 40 (22. 13–14, 18–20 Lef.).

⁹² *Ibid.* (23. 7–8 Lef.). Scapegoating of Melitians: Camplani, *Lettere festali*, 271–2.

⁹³ *Ep. Drac.* 1, 2, 7, 8 (PG 25. 524b, 525a, 532).

⁹⁴ *Ep. fest.* (cop.) 40 (22. 13 Lef.).

⁹⁵ *Ep. Drac.* 2 (PG 25. 525a). ⁹⁶ *Ibid.* 3 (PG 25. 526c).

⁹⁷ See Ewa Wipszycka, ‘La chiesa nell’Egitto del IV secolo: Le strutture ecclesiastiche’, *Miscellanea Historiae Ecclesiasticae*, 6 (1983), 182–201, at 189–92. Such a procedure would have been similar to that followed in North Africa during Cyprian’s time; see *Cyp. Epp.* 55–8. 4; 59. 5. 2; 67. 3ff.; 68. 2. 1; and the remarks of G. W. Clarke, *The Letters of St Cyprian of Carthage* (New York, 1984–9), 2. 178–9.

(Hermopolis Parva) lay near to Alexandria, Athanasius may have taken part also in some local ceremony of installation, since he speaks of himself 'escorting' (προπέμπειν) the newly elected bishop.⁹⁸ Athanasius' insistence on orderly appointments in the 40th *Festal Letter* suggests that this procedure was still in development: Athanasius was seeking to enlarge his own role at the expense of neighbouring bishops.⁹⁹

Greater Alexandrian control over the selection of local bishops would have helped Athanasius to prevent opposing ecclesiastical parties from installing their own bishops in vacant sees. Athanasius warned Dracontius that his refusal to accept appointment would give Athanasius' opponents an opportunity to gain control of Hermopolis Parva.¹⁰⁰ Competing bishops were still a problem in the 350s, three decades after the Melitian Church was able to present a considerable list of its bishops to Alexander.¹⁰¹ The traditional participation of local bishops in the filling of a vacant nearby see could be exploited by various church factions in their efforts to expand their areas of influence. Athanasius' recruiting of monks friendly to him into the episcopal hierarchy, then, not only bound the monastic movement more closely to the Alexandrian episcopate, but also represented an attempt to counter other Christian organizations, including the Melitians, that were also installing monks into church offices. Doubtless one reason that monks were attractive episcopal candidates to Athanasius was that their withdrawal had prevented them from forming troublesome alliances with opposing local bishops, yet had given them a prestige that drew lay support.¹⁰² Athanasius' acute anxiety about what he called 'lawlessness' in both the churches and the monasteries runs throughout the *Festal Letters* of 367-70: those who were electing rival priests and bishops, the bishop snapped, 'mix the wine and water like tavern-keepers'.¹⁰³ Athanasius' final years were not peaceful and untroubled.¹⁰⁴ As bishops, monks could provide valuable support to Athanasius during a difficult time.

⁹⁸ *Ep. Dracont.* 7 (PG 25. 529d).

⁹⁹ Of course, when it was politically advantageous to him, Athanasius was willing to overlook electoral irregularities, as he did in the case of a Bishop Siderius of Palaebisca in Libya, who was consecrated illegally, yet was anti-Arian; Synes. *Ep.* 66 (107. 17-109. 12 Garzya).

¹⁰⁰ *Ep. Dracont.* 1 (PG 25. 524b).

¹⁰¹ *Apol. sec.* 71 (PG 25. 376b-7a); Munier, *Recueil*, 2-3.

¹⁰² Pace Wipszycka, who sees the monks' lack of 'organizational capacity' as often disqualifying them for episcopal office in the eyes of 4th-cent. patriarchs ('La chiesa nell'Egitto', 193-4).

¹⁰³ *Ep. fest. (cop.)* 40 (OLP 15: 7r. 624-6 Co.).

¹⁰⁴ Pace W. H. C. Frend, 'Athanasius as an Egyptian Christian Leader in the Fourth Century', in *Religion Popular and Unpopular in the Early Christian Centuries* (London,

The reluctance of Dracontius to assume the episcopal office at Hermopolis Parva indicates the kind of resistance Athanasius faced from the monastic side in his efforts to appoint monks as bishops. Although the bishop makes a passing reference to 'the afflictions weighing upon the Church' as a possible reason for Dracontius' flight, Athanasius is more concerned to allay Dracontius' concern that, should he become a bishop, his spiritual condition 'would become worse [χείρων]' and that 'the bishop's office is an occasion for sin' and 'from it comes opportunity for sinning'.¹⁰⁵ Throughout the letter, Athanasius condemns people who made these arguments, whom he calls Dracontius' 'advisers' (συμβουλευόντες),¹⁰⁶ presumably more advanced monks like Ammoun. Athanasius, recall, urged Ammoun to 'advise' (συμβουλεύειν) his monastic disciples.¹⁰⁷ Some monastic teachers did indeed believe that ordination and ecclesiastical office could be the opportunity for sin, particularly for pride. Pachomius and his successors, as we shall see below, made this argument and hence discouraged their followers from becoming ordained. Cassian could almost be speaking for Dracontius' advisers:

But sometimes it [the spirit of vainglory] suggests the rank of clergy and a desire for the priesthood or diaconate. And it represents that, even if a man has received this office against his will, he will fulfil it with such sanctity and rigour that he will be able to set an example of saintliness even to other priests; and that he will win over many people, not only by his manner of life, but also by his teaching and preaching.¹⁰⁸

Pride could enter in when the monk crossed the crucial frontier between 'desert' and 'world'. Surrounded by other people, a monk-bishop could learn to depend more on the approval of human beings than on the assistance of God. When the monk Apphy became bishop of Oxyrhynchus and 'wanted to practise the same austere discipline even in the "world", but could not', he asked God, 'Surely it is not because of the episcopate that your grace has left me?' The answer: 'No, but when you were solitary and there was no human being around, God helped you. Now there is the world, and human beings help you.'¹⁰⁹ The 'world' was full

1976), No. XVI, 20-37, at 36; J. G. Griffiths, 'A Note on Monasticism and Nationalism in the Egypt of Athanasius', *SP* 16 (1985), 24-8, at 24; L. W. Barnard, 'Athanasius and the Emperor Jovian', *SP* 21 (1987), 384-9, at 389.

¹⁰⁵ *Ep. Drac.* 1, 8, 9 (PG 25, 524a, 532).

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.* 4 (PG 25, 528a); cf. 5-10 *passim*.

¹⁰⁷ *Ep. Ammou.* 69, 22; 70, 10-11 J.

¹⁰⁸ *Cass. Inst.* 11, 14, 1-7 Guy; cf. *Inst.* 1, 20.

¹⁰⁹ *Apophth. Patr. Apphy* (PG 65, 133).

of human beings who could disrupt the monk's relationship with God and provide the human approval that leads to pride. When Bishop Adelphius of Nilopolis showed that he had learned all too well how to adapt his behaviour to the opinions of others, Sisoës warned him that 'if God does not glorify a person, the glory of human beings is nothing'.¹¹⁰ For these reasons it was believed that only advanced monks should dare to take on church offices: 'For many are the temptations for those [who live] among human beings. It is good for someone who knows his own limitations to avoid the burden of being in charge.'¹¹¹ In the fifth century, Netras, asked why he undertook a harsher ascetic discipline when he became bishop of Pharan, replied, echoing Apphy, that 'now there is the world' and so he must work harder 'lest I destroy the monk'.¹¹² Athanasius, then, faced the task of convincing monks like Dracontius to return precisely to what they had fled: the settled world, with its hierarchies and offices, its opportunities for pride ('the glory of human beings') and neglect of the spiritual life.

Although he made use of a variety of appeals in his letter of admonition to Dracontius, Athanasius emphasized, as he did in his first *Letter to Virgins*, the imitation of virtuous human models. The bishop makes a personal appeal to Dracontius, asking him to 'spare yourself and us: yourself, lest you run into peril; us, lest we be grieved because of you'. And he urges the monk to consider the ordinary Christians, whose feelings might be hurt, and the other pro-Athanasian bishops, who might follow Dracontius in flight.¹¹³ Ironically, Athanasius makes the same claim that Cassian attributes to the demon of vainglory: that a bishop can convert many people through his teaching, preaching, and lifestyle.¹¹⁴ More characteristically, Athanasius urges Dracontius to emulate the examples of biblical figures: 'We should conduct our common life [*πολιτεύεσθαι*] according to the example of the saints and fathers, imitate them, and know that, should we abandon them, we become alien to their fellowship [*κοινωνία*]'.¹¹⁵ If Dracontius fails to

¹¹⁰ *Apophth. Patr.* Sisoës 15 (PG 65. 397a).

¹¹¹ *Apophth. Patr.* Orsisios 1 (PG 65. 316b).

¹¹² *Apophth. Patr.* Netras (PG 65. 312a). Gould sees no tension between the episcopal and monastic vocations in these sayings (*Desert Fathers*, 147, 174).

¹¹³ *Ep. Drac.* 3 (PG 25. 525c).

¹¹⁴ Other monks turned bishops, Athanasius says, have fulfilled their calling by 'admonishing others to advance: how many have they turned away from the idols? How many have they caused to stop their familiarity with demons by their admonition? How many servants have they presented to the Lord so as to make those who see these signs marvel? Is it not a great sign to make a girl become a virgin, a young man become continent, and an idolater come to know Christ?'; *Ep. Drac.* 7 (PG 25. 532b).

¹¹⁵ *Ep. Drac.* 4 (PG 25. 528b).

imitate these virtuous models and flees, he himself will become a bad example for other bishops. Athanasius here, as he does elsewhere, bases church unity on the formation of a shared way of life through imitation of the 'saints'—in this case, such reluctant preachers as Paul, Jeremiah, and Moses—and hence through imitation of Christ.¹¹⁶ This appeal echoes Athanasius' exhortations to virgins to imitate Mary and more advanced virgins. In the case of the virgins, Athanasius' ethic of imitation functioned to isolate the virgins in self-contained female communities, connected to Athanasian bishops but separate from Arian teachers. Here it performs the opposing function of reducing monastic isolation, but once again fostering connection to the Alexandrian episcopate.

Another strategy of Athanasius in his letter to Dracontius was to neutralize the opposition between desert and settled land, the monastic life and the parish church, the monk and the bishop. His clinching argument relativizes the distinction between monk and bishop by claiming that their lifestyles are not mutually exclusive; characteristically, he adduces models for Dracontius to imitate, Paul and Timothy, two 'bishops' who behaved like 'monks':

For it is possible for you also as a bishop to hunger and thirst, as Paul did [Phil. 4: 12]. You can drink no wine, like Timothy [1 Tim. 5: 23], and fast constantly too, as Paul did [2 Cor. 11: 27], in order that, thus fasting after his example, you may feed others with your words, and while thirsting for lack of drink, you may give others to drink by teaching. Let not your advisers, then, allege these things. For we know both bishops who fast and monks who eat. We know bishops who drink no wine and monks who do. We know bishops who perform signs and monks who do not. Many of the bishops have not even married, while monks have been fathers of children, just as are found bishops who are fathers of children and monks of a perfect kind. And again we know clergy who suffer hunger, and monks who fast. For it [fasting] is possible in the latter way [monasticism], and not forbidden in the former [episcopacy]. But let a person, wherever [*πανταχοῦ*] he is, strive earnestly; for the crown is given not according to position, but according to action [*οὐ κατὰ τόπον, ἀλλὰ κατὰ τὴν πράξιν*].¹¹⁷

This hardly suffices to allay fears about the pride that could arise from episcopal office, but it does undercut one assumption upon which such fears might rest. Athanasius suggests that it is not 'place' or 'position' (*τόπος*), whether desert or world, that determines one's character, but rather one's 'action' or 'deed' (*πράξις*). For by claiming that 'the crown

¹¹⁶ See Martin Tetz, 'Athanasius und die Einheit der Kirche', *Z. Th. K.* 81 (1984), 196–219, esp. 213–14; and Ch. 3 below.

¹¹⁷ *Ep. Dracont.* 9 (PG 25. 532d–3b).

is given not according to position, but according to action', Athanasius shifts the terms of moral discernment from the Christian's 'position' in the Church, where he or she stands in the hierarchy of 'the two ways', to the individual's 'action', his or her 'striving' to live out the moral life 'wherever he [or she] is'. Athanasius makes clear that the hierarchy of celibate and married Christians articulated in the *Letter to Ammoun* depends not on the fact of the monk's separation from the settled world, but on the quality of his moral effort. This effort is always carried out in the context of the Church and so includes care for others. Hence, a monk can become a bishop without becoming 'worse'; indeed, if appointed, he must do so or risk 'the danger that comes from denying the ecclesiastical ordinance [ἡ ἐκκλησιαστικὴ διάταξις]'.¹¹⁸

Athanasius plays on the ambiguity of the Greek word ἀναχώρησις ('withdrawal') in his relativization of the distinction between desert and world. In his writings, this ordinary Greek word and the related verb ἀναχωρεῖν ('to withdraw') begin to take on a technical Christian meaning of ascetic withdrawal from the world.¹¹⁹ In the *Life of Antony*, these words can appear in their neutral sense of 'to depart' or 'to retreat',¹²⁰ but they more often refer to the specific practice of ascetic withdrawal from human society. For example, Antony's twenty years in the deserted fortress are called his 'withdrawal', and monks are those 'who are eager to withdraw'.¹²¹ Elsewhere Athanasius refers to 'virgins' [παρθενοί] and those who are 'renouncers [ἀποτάκτικοί] or people who have withdrawn [ἀναχωρηταί]'.¹²² At about the same time (c. 357) that he wrote the *Life of Antony*, Athanasius wrote the *Defence of his Flight*: for reasons to become clear below, he uses the verb 'withdraw' and its related words eleven times in this work, describing not only his own flight into the desert, but also the prudent flights of biblical figures of which his withdrawal is an imitation.¹²³ In this letter to Dracontius, however, he uses the term only twice: precisely because Dracontius was 'withdrawing' from the episcopal office for ascetic reasons, the term carried strong associations and so had to be used with care. There is a subtle criticism of what Athanasius sees as the wrong kind of 'withdrawal' in his use of the word:

¹¹⁸ *Ep. Drac.* 10 (PG 25. 533d).

¹¹⁹ Cf. Judge, 'Earliest Use of Monachos'.

¹²⁰ *VA* 13, 82 (PG 26. 864a, 960b)

¹²¹ *Ibid.* 14, 94 (PG 26. 865a, 976a); cf. 7, 48, 49, 87 (PG 26. 853b, 912c, 913b, 964c).

¹²² *Car. et temp.* 116. 25-7 Lef. This threefold distinction of *parthenoi*, *apotaktikoi*, and *anakhōrētai* in a work of Athanasius coheres with Judge's case that *apotaktikoi* referred to a distinct, transitional form of the monastic life in 4th-cent. Egypt ('Earliest Use of Monachos', esp. 79-83).

¹²³ *Fug.* 6. 22; 10. 20; 12. 12; 13. 14; 19. 5; 20. 24; 24. 6, 23, 27, 28; 26. 5 S.

The surprising unanimity about your election in the district of Alexandria will necessarily give way to schism because of your withdrawal [*ἀναχώρησις*], and the episcopate of the district will be grasped at by many: many, indeed, who are crooked [*οὐκ ὀρθοί*], but whom you yourself know. . . . Think of the Church, lest because of you many of the little ones [i.e. ordinary lay people] be harmed and the others [i.e. other pro-Athanasian bishops] receive a pretext for withdrawing [*ἀναχωρεῖν*].¹²⁴

For Athanasius, 'withdrawal' from the world was not desirable in its own right but had to be undertaken in a manner that was morally responsible and attentive to the unity of the Church. Athanasius has Antony evaluate 'withdrawal' on the basis of the monk's exercise of moral responsibility: 'And this tenet of his was also truly wonderful, that neither the way of virtue nor withdrawal [*ἀναχώρησις*] for its sake ought to be measured in terms of time spent, but in terms of one's desire and intention [*προαίρεσις*].'¹²⁵ Dracontius' ascetic withdrawal may have given him licence for a certain amount of self-orientation, but the needs of the Church have changed that: 'You must know and not doubt that before you were appointed you lived for yourself, but when appointed, you live for those by whom you were appointed.'¹²⁶

Athanasius argued that the moral discernment that must accompany ascetic withdrawal should take into account the welfare of the Church, full of 'little ones' and endangered by people who are 'crooked', because the Church and its episcopate were essential to the monastic life. There would be no monks, Athanasius tells Dracontius, without the church and its bishops:

For if everyone were of the same mind as your advisers now are, how would you have become a Christian since there would be no bishops? And if those who come after us receive this state of mind, how will the Church be able to hold together? Or do your advisers think that you have received nothing since they look down on it? Indeed, they are wrong on this. For it is time for them to think that the grace of the bath [*λουτρόν*, i.e. baptism] is nothing if certain people look down on it. But you have received it, O beloved Dracontius: do not put up with your advisers nor deceive yourself.¹²⁷

Here Athanasius invokes the sacraments as a mode of church unity complementary to the imitation of the saints that he also places before Dracontius. Monks, he claims, are not self-created Christians, but have received their baptism from the Church, at the hands of its bishops. This 'grace of the bath' underlies their being Christian and binds them to the

¹²⁴ *Ep. Dracont.* 1, 3 (PG 25. 524b, 526c).

¹²⁵ *VA* 7 (PG 26. 853a).

¹²⁶ *Ep. Dracont.* 2 (PG 25. 525a).

¹²⁷ *Ibid.* 4 (PG 25. 528a).

Church. With great sarcasm, Athanasius seizes on the growing tendency of monastic groups to have ordained priests permanently settled among them:

Why do they advise you not to take up the episcopate when they themselves want to have presbyters? For if you become bad, let them not associate with you. But if they know that you are good, let them not envy the others. For if, according to them, teaching and presiding are an occasion for sin, let them not be taught nor have presbyters, lest they and those who teach them become worse.¹²⁸

'Teaching and presiding' are the tasks of the episcopate and are essential to the existence and unity of the Church, whether in the city or in the desert. Athanasius articulated a principle of reciprocity: the monks required priests and must, if called, serve the Church in this capacity.

The unity of the Church was the consistent theme of Athanasius' appeal to Dracontius. This unity had its basis in the sacraments that the bishops administered, and manifested itself across time in lives formed through imitation of 'the saints and fathers'. Moreover, the Church's unity became concrete in the activities of teaching and presiding carried out by bishops and priests. The monks received their faith from the Church like all other Christians and equally required the Church's offices. Their virtue did not rest on their 'withdrawal' in itself or on their 'position', whether on the map of Egypt or in the hierarchy of marriage and virginity; it depended rather on their 'action', their earnest striving wherever they were. The ever-present threat to this ecclesiastical model as Athanasius developed it were the 'crooked' (*οὐκ ὀρθός*) persons who were eager to install their own bishops and priests in place of those friendly to Athanasius and the Alexandrian episcopate. The monks had to adhere to the 'right' (*ὀρθός*) Church.

At least in the case of Hermopolis Parva, Athanasius was successful in convincing his monastic friend Dracontius to become its bishop. In so doing, he made that city a kind of headquarters for the monks of Nitria and tied these monks to an important bishopric and thereby to the Alexandrian hierarchy.¹²⁹ Bishop Dracontius, because of his loyalty to Athanasius, was banished to the desert near Clysma in 356 by Sebastian, the commander of the Roman military in Egypt; he was recalled by the Emperor Julian in 362, at which time he attended the Synod of Alexandria.¹³⁰ Both of Dracontius' successors were Nitrian monks.

¹²⁸ *Ep. Drac.* 10 (PG 25. 533c).

¹²⁹ Camplani, *Lettere festali*, 315; cf. Annik Martin, 'L'Église et la khôra égyptienne au IV^e siècle', *Revue des études augustiniennes*, 25 (1979), 3-26, at 16.

¹³⁰ *Fug.* 7. 19 S.; *H. Ar.* 72. 4 (223. 1 Op.).

Bishop Isidore of Hermopolis Parva was among the ascetics visited by Melania the Elder during her tour of Egypt in the early 370s.¹³¹ On this visit Melania also met Dioscorus, one of the 'Tall Brothers', who would later succeed Isidore.¹³² Thus, starting with Athanasius' appointment of Dracontius in 354, the see of Hermopolis Parva became an established link between the monks of Nitria and the hierarchy of Alexandria. This link would eventually be broken by the persecution of Dioscorus and his brothers at the hands of Archbishop Theophilus at the turn of the fifth century.¹³³ None the less, the career of Dioscorus' brother Ammonius reveals that, after the death of Athanasius, monks remained reluctant to assume offices in the episcopal Church. When the people of a nearby city asked Archbishop Timothy of Alexandria to make Ammonius their bishop, the monk cut off his left ear as a graphic sign of his unwillingness to leave the desert. When the people and archbishop persisted, Ammonius threatened to cut off his tongue as well. At this point, his would-be flock relented, and a relieved Ammonius 'withdrew' (*ἀνεχώρησαν*).¹³⁴

Athanasius' efforts to bind bishop and monk more closely together were made in the midst of a divided Church. Establishing a firmer connection between the monks of the desert and the bishops of the Alexandrian hierarchy promoted two of the bishop's goals: it resisted the work of competing Christian organizations, such as the Melitians, and it countered tendencies among the monks that led to separation from the wider Church. In making these political moves, Athanasius enunciated his own images of the bishop and monk. The bishop was, in his view, an authority on ascetic matters, advising monks on proper ascetic practice and denouncing monks who differed as 'heretics'. The monk, in turn, was subject to the order of the Church; his virtue rested not on his 'position', not on his withdrawal from the settled land into the desert, but on his 'action', which he could perform even as a full participant in the Church's hierarchy. Monks participated in the Church's unity

¹³¹ Pall. *H. Laus.* 46. 2 (134. 13-14 Butler). This Isidore must be carefully distinguished from the hospitable Isidore who would later play such an intriguing role in the career of Bishop Theophilus of Alexandria (Pall. *H. Laus.* 1). The various persons bearing the name Isidore are clearly sorted out by Dom Cuthbert Butler, *The Lausiatic History of Palladius* (Cambridge, 1898-1904), 2. 185 n. 7.

¹³² Ammon. *Aeg. Ep.* 32 (115. 6 Goehring); cf. Pall. *Hist. Laus.* 10. 1; 12. 1. For the careers of Dracontius and Dioscorus, see James E. Goehring (ed.), *The Letter of Ammon and Pachomian Monasticism* (Berlin, 1986), 286-7.

¹³³ Soz. *H.e.* 8. 12-13; Soz. *H.e.* 6. 7.

¹³⁴ Pall. *H. Laus.* 11. 1-3 (32. 20-33. 17 Butler). Also in the 4th cent., Theodore of Pherme (a mountain near Scetis) refused to act even as a deacon; *Apophth. Pair.* Theodore of Pherme 25 (PG 65. 193).

through receiving the sacraments at the hands of the bishops and through imitating the biblical saints. When he developed these ideas, Athanasius did not run roughshod over such monastic values as attention to bodily functions, moderation in ascetic practice, and withdrawal from the settled land, but he did attempt to refocus them in directions that promoted mental attention to God and that took account of the Church's organic unity. Athanasius also recognized the authority of advanced monks like Ammoun to 'advise' their colleagues less experienced in the spiritual life, but when the opinions of Dracontius' 'advisers' undermined Athanasius' efforts to establish episcopal order, the bishop overruled them. The monastic life was to take place within the context of 'the ecclesiastical ordinance'.¹³⁵

Athanasius depicted the kind of relationship he desired between monk and bishop in the *Life of Antony*:

Although he was such a person, he [Antony] honoured the rule of the Church [τὸν κανόνα τῆς ἐκκλησίας] scrupulously, and he wanted every cleric to be held in higher honour than himself. He was not ashamed to bow his head to the bishops and priests. If a deacon ever came to him for benefit, he discussed the matters pertaining to his benefit, but in matters of prayer he yielded to him [the deacon], since he was not ashamed to learn himself. For indeed, often he would raise questions and ask to hear from those with him. And he acknowledged that he was benefited if someone said anything useful.¹³⁶

Just as Athanasius advised Dracontius, so Antony honours 'the rule of the Church'. Like Ammoun and the anonymous Christian in ill health who received the letter *On Sickness and Health*, Antony is willing to learn from the clergy of the Church. The clergy also come to him 'for benefit', recognizing the monastic guide's authority in spiritual development. But clearly it was monk who submitted to bishop in this picture of ascetic and episcopal relations: a sign, perhaps, of how much authority the monks were enjoying and how much their influence disturbed the bishops nearby. By placing the monk firmly under 'the rule of the Church' and its bishops, Athanasius mitigated somewhat the moral superiority he (and most other Christians) granted to the monks who, in comparison to other Christians, followed the 'angelic and unsurpassed' way of virginity.¹³⁷

¹³⁵ *Ep. Drac.* 10 (PG 25. 533d).

¹³⁶ *VA* 67 (PG 26. 937c-40a).

¹³⁷ *Ep. Amun.* 69. 1-2 J.

ATHANASIUS AND THE PACHOMIANS

I turn now to Athanasius' interactions with the Pachomian monastic community in the Thebaid of southern Egypt. So far in this chapter the ascetics that we have seen Athanasius dealing with were mostly eremitical and semi-eremitical monks in northern Egypt. These monks, who were geographically close to Alexandria, understood society and the episcopacy with that metropolis and its bishop in mind. Many of their leading figures, including Ammoun, were men who had given up positions of power or prestige in Alexandria or some other urban setting.¹³⁸ Recent scholarship has justly warned against overstating the distance between the cultures of the Delta in the North and the Thebaid in the South. Indeed, several of the Pachomian monks came from precisely the same wealthy and educated classes that produced monks like Ammoun. None the less, the Pachomian movement presented Athanasius with an ascetic movement of a character different in several respects from what we have seen. First, it developed far away in southern Egypt and so had to identify itself primarily not with respect to Alexandria, but in relation to the many small towns and local bishoprics located along the Nile. Secondly, the Pachomian community was innovative within the Christian asceticism of its time, not because its monks lived near or even with one another, but because it represented a truly coenobitic, communal life. The Pachomians organized a network of monasteries that was held together by a structure of offices, a single authoritative leader, and a rule that regularized the ascetic life; inevitably the spirituality that they developed was qualitatively different from that of the more solitary forms of monasticism. The Pachomian federation's distinct character and values must be kept in mind when its interactions with Athanasius are studied.

In this connection, it is important to avoid two stereotypes of Pachomian monasticism in its relation to the emerging catholic Church. On the one hand, the picture of the Pachomians as consistently obedient 'children of the Church' who never questioned or came into conflict with local bishops and laypeople ignores frank indications of such tensions found in the Pachomian literature itself. On the other hand, the opposing tendency to depict Pachomius and his early followers as free-thinking, even heterodox Christians, unconcerned with how their

¹³⁸ Ammoun: *H. mon.* 22. 1-2; Pall. *H. Laus.* 8. Macarius the Alexandrian: *H. mon.* 23; Pall. *H. Laus.* 18.

beliefs or spirituality cohered with the wider Church, seems equally exaggerated.¹³⁹ Instead, the historian must imagine several forms of Christianity in existence at this time, with one of them, the Athanasian episcopate, emerging only later as a structure that would either embrace other Christian groups or eliminate them. A certain power vacuum had, into the fourth century, fostered a bewildering diversity of Christian groups in Egypt, but the Alexandrian episcopate sought to fill this void. In the particular case of Pachomian monasticism, concepts like 'orthodoxy' and 'heresy' fully apply only to the later period of the federation's history, certainly no earlier than Theodore's administration (350–68). Even then, however, it remained a somewhat open question how the Pachomian *Koinonia* would fit into the developing structure of a dominant Church in Egypt, how independent it could be, how its own spirituality could be maintained, in what ways the episcopate could influence its progress and character. Athanasius played a role in settling these issues.¹⁴⁰

An extensive dossier of evidence, emanating from the ancient Pachomian milieu, has come down to us. It comprises several biographies of Pachomius, letters and sermons of the federation's leading figures, and sets of rules. Just how these Pachomian sources may be used in historical reconstruction is a tangled and controversial question. No single solution is apparent.¹⁴¹ It seems rather that 'the historian must sift and weigh the material from the various *Vitae* to determine, in each case, which account deserves to be followed. . . . [E]ach story or pericope must be explored in all its forms.'¹⁴² For the most part, this procedure means comparing accounts in the so-called First Greek *Life* (VP) and the com-

¹³⁹ This position often rests on the assumption that the Nag Hammadi codices were copied, or at least read, in a Pachomian monastery, a notion for which there is no positive evidence. See John C. Shelton's introduction to J. W. B. Burns, *et al.* (eds.), *Nag Hammadi Codices: Greek and Coptic Papyri from the Cartonnage of the Covers* (Leiden, 1981), esp. 5–11; also the remarks of Bentley Layton in a review of that book, *JIOS* 102 (1982), 397–8.

¹⁴⁰ For this section, cf. Carlton Mills Badger, Jr., 'The New Man Created in God', Ph.D. thesis (Duke, 1990), 193–7, 216–25.

¹⁴¹ For surveys of the debate on this subject, see Goehring, *Letter of Ammon*, 3–23, and Philip Rousseau, *Pachomius* (Berkeley, Calif., 1985), 37–56. Armand Veilleux's stemma of the *Lives* is the most important recent proposal concerning the use of the Pachomian sources (*La Liturgie dans le cénobitisme pachômien au quatrième siècle* (Rome, 1968), esp. 83–107): he has both highlighted the importance of the Arabic material and convincingly combined the Bohairic *Life* and certain Sahidic *Lives* into a comprehensive Coptic *Life* called S. Bo. In this study, I follow Veilleux by referring to the published Arabic *Life* (in translation) when possible and by using his S. Bo.

¹⁴² James E. Goehring, 'Pachomius' Vision of Heresy: The Development of a Pachomian Tradition', *Mus.* 95 (1982), 241–62, at 245–6.

prehensive Coptic narrative formed from Bohairic and Sahidic works (S. Bo.), which I will henceforth refer to as simply 'the Greek *Life*' and 'the Coptic *Life*', respectively.¹⁴³ Fortunately, in assessing evidence for Athanasius' involvement with the Pachomians, other sources (such as the Syriac index to the *Festal Letters*) provide additional checks on the Pachomian material.

First encounter (329/30)

Athanasius' first encounter with the Pachomian federation occurred in the year following his elevation to the episcopate in 328. Five or six years earlier Pachomius had settled near Tabennesi, a village in Upper Egypt, and had started to gather disciples into a community under his direction. Around 329 Pachomius began to expand his movement by founding a second monastery at Pbow, which became the federation's headquarters. Also about this time tensions developed between him and Bishop Sarapion of Tentyra because Pachomius refused to be ordained as a priest by Sarapion. The Pachomian *Lives* record that in 329/30 Athanasius, the new bishop of Alexandria, made a tour of the Thebaid 'to give comfort to the churches', and these reports are confirmed by Athanasian sources.¹⁴⁴ During this tour, Sarapion asked Athanasius to force Pachomius to become a priest, but Athanasius did not do so. Doubtless a major purpose of Athanasius' tour was to solidify his position in the face of the Melitian opposition to his election, but it would be misleading to interpret the interaction between Athanasius, Sarapion, and Pachomius solely in terms of the Melitian schism.¹⁴⁵ Rather, concerns peculiar to the local situation at Tentyra (or Nitentori) motivate the actors in this scene, with the complex factionalism of Egyptian Christianity providing the background.

¹⁴³ For this Coptic *Life*, I follow and cite Veilleux's S. Bo. as found in his *Pachomian Koinonia* (Kalamazoo, Mich., 1980-2), 1. 23-266. Textual references are to Lefort's Bohairic text or to his edition of the appropriate Sahidic *Life*. In this section, the translations from the Pachomia literature are Veilleux's, with some modifications. In the absence of an edition and translation of the best Arabic *Life*, I have, on the advice of Veilleux (*Pachomian Koinonia*, 1. 6), used the Arabic *Life* in the French translation by E. Amélineau, *Monuments pour servir à l'histoire de l'Égypte chrétienne au IV^e siècle: Histoire de Saint Pakhôme et des ses communautés* (Paris, 1889), 337-599, 644-51 (Am.). I cite Am. by page and line number in Amélineau's French translation.

¹⁴⁴ S. Bo. 28 (28. 16-30. 2 Lef.); VP 30 (19. 24-20. 15 Halkin); Am. 384. 13-386. 3, very close to S. Bo.; *Chron. Ath.* 2 (39-46 M/A). Timothy D. Barnes speaks of Athanasius 'withdrawing to the Thebaid' as if under political pressure (*Athanasius and Constantius* (Cambridge, Mass., and London, 1993), 21).

¹⁴⁵ Cf. Martin Tetz, 'Athanasius von Alexandrien', *TRE* 4. 333-49, at 335.

In this case, the more reliable account is to be found in chapter 30 of the Greek *Life*. Pachomius and other monks gather along the river to see Athanasius as he sails by Tabennesi, most likely on his way to Tentyra, whose bishop, Sarapion, has already sent a letter to Athanasius asking him to ordain Pachomius and 'set him over all the monks in my diocese as father and priest'.¹⁴⁶ Pachomius, aware of Sarapion's request, hides among the monks to avoid ordination and, as Athanasius passes by, recognizes that the bishop is 'a holy servant of God'.¹⁴⁷ The Coptic *Life* has taken the basic elements of this more original account—Athanasius' visit to the Thebaid, Sarapion's request for Pachomius' ordination, and Pachomius' avoidance of ordination—and secondarily created a dramatic scene: Athanasius actually prays within a Pachomian monastery, where Sarapion makes his request in person. Pachomius then hides, and Athanasius praises the monastic leader with a speech formed directly out of Pachomian piety. While the focus in the Greek *Life* had been on the relation between Pachomius and the episcopate that Athanasius exemplified, the Coptic emphasizes Pachomius' negative attitude toward the ordination of monks in general. But these differences between the two accounts do not obscure the essential shape of the interchange among the three men: Sarapion's request for Pachomius' ordination, Pachomius' avoidance of this, and Athanasius' failure to ordain Pachomius.¹⁴⁸ These three elements constitute a basis for reconstructing this incident historically.

Sarapion of Tentyra is one of a number of local bishops who appear and disappear in the narratives of the Pachomian literature; their varied responses to the growing monastic federation indicate the kinds of awkward situations that developed as it expanded.¹⁴⁹ For the most part, Pachomius appears to have gone about his organization of the federation without much reference to the local hierarchy, but occasionally bishops became involved. They could hardly ignore such a major enterprise, so

¹⁴⁶ This 'Sarapion' is probably the 'Saprión' who attended the Council of Tyre in 335; Ath. *Apol. sec.* 78. 7 (159. 7 Op.).

¹⁴⁷ On the translation implied here, see A.-J. Festugière, *Les Moines d'Orient*, IV/2, *La Première Vie grecque de Saint Pachôme* (Paris, 1965), 246-7.

¹⁴⁸ For the literary history of this scene, especially its development in the Third Greek *Life*, see Tim Vivian, *St Peter of Alexandria* (Philadelphia, 1988), 5-6.

¹⁴⁹ See Leo Ueding, 'Die Kanones von Chalkedon in ihrer Bedeutung für Mönchtum und Klerus', in A. Grillmeier and H. Bacht (eds.), *Das Konzil von Chalkedon* (Würzburg, 1953), 2, 569-676, esp. 580-6; Heinrich Bacht, 'Mönchtum und Kirche: Eine Studie zur Spiritualität des Pachomius', in J. Daniélou and H. Vorgrimler (eds.), *Sentire Ecclesiam* (Freiburg, 1961), 113-32; Rousseau, *Pachomius*, 158-73; Veilleux, *Liturgie*, 189-95.

commercially active in their villages.¹⁵⁰ At least once a bishop actively encouraged the establishment of a monastery within his diocese: Bishop Arius of Panopolis asked that Pachomius found a monastery near his city despite local opposition.¹⁵¹ On the other hand, when Pachomius received a vision that he should expand further to the South by opening a monastery at Phnoum, the bishop of nearby Latopolis (Snē) led a mob in a violent attempt to stop Pachomius from building there. Pachomius, it would appear, did not yield non-violently; we are told rather that he 'withstood the danger until the Lord scattered them and they fled before his face'.¹⁵² According to the *Coptic Life*, it was also to the bishop of Latopolis that Theodore's mother appealed when, distressed over her son's abandonment of his family and entrance into the monastery, she wanted either to retrieve him from the Pachomians or at least to see him.¹⁵³ Again, Pachomius' resolve in the face of such pressure (from multiple bishops, the Greek says) was firm, and he took evident delight in his protégé's refusal to be moved: 'Certainly', he said (as Rousseau imagines it, 'with a wink'), 'our fathers the bishops will not be vexed when they hear about this, but will rather rejoice at your progress.'¹⁵⁴ Apparently local clergy helped the distraught mother to catch a glimpse of her son from a distance.¹⁵⁵ Such appeals to local bishops may have been fairly common: the First Sahidic *Life*, the most frank account of the Koinonia's early years, reports that Pachomius' first disgruntled disciples 'ran in the blindness of their hearts to the bishop of the diocese' (just possibly our Bishop Sarapion) to complain about Pachomius' harsh treatment of them.¹⁵⁶ Episcopal distrust of Pachomius climaxed in 345, when a synod of 'monks and bishops' put him on trial for suspicious clairvoyant powers, once again at Latopolis. Pachomius barely escaped

¹⁵⁰ Commercially active: Goehring, 'World Engaged', 139-44.

¹⁵¹ S. Bo. 54 (=VS¹ 146. 12-23 Lef.); VP 81 (54. 14-55. 4 Halkin); cf. D. J. Chitty, 'A Note on the Chronology of the Pachomian Foundations', *SP* 2 (1957), 379-85, at 381-2.

¹⁵² S. Bo. 58 (56. 18-57. 10 Lef.).

¹⁵³ Ibid. 37 (39. 2-40. 19 Lef.); VP 37 (22. 16-23. 16 Halkin).

¹⁵⁴ VP 37 (23. 7-9 Halkin); Rousseau, *Pachomius*, 171.

¹⁵⁵ S. Bo. 37 (40. 10-19 Lef.). VP omits this revealing incident: see James E. Goehring, 'Theodore's Entry into the Pachomian Movement (Selections from *Life of Pachomius*)', in V. L. Wimbush (ed.), *Ascetic Behavior in Greco-Roman Antiquity* (Minneapolis, 1990), 349-56, at 349-52.

¹⁵⁶ VS¹ 19 (117b. 14-38 Lef.). Camplani assumes that the bishop involved here, who is indeed named Sarapion, is Sarapion of Tentyra (*Lettere festali*, 312). But the name of the diocese is illegible in the manuscript, and there is space for only three or four letters, certainly not TENTWPE. Lefort suggests either Snē (yet again?) or Hou (*Les Vies coptes de saint Pachôme et de ses premiers successeurs* (Louvain, 1943), 68 n. 76). Veilleux, with hesitation, leans toward the latter (*Pachomian Koinonia*, I. 443 n. 1 to VS¹ 19).

with his life when a riot broke out.¹⁵⁷ For his part, Pachomius displayed no contempt for or opposition to the episcopal hierarchy, but rather urged obedience to 'our fathers the bishops' in ecclesiastical matters.¹⁵⁸ Nevertheless, Pachomius resisted any episcopal intrusion into the life of the federation, and the rapid emergence of his large and well-organized community could and did lead to tensions and even to violence as spheres of authority were being defined and coming into conflict.

Bishop Sarapion of Tentyra was a player in one of these moments of tension: the building of the church at Nitentori.¹⁵⁹ Here the clearer version in the Coptic and Arabic *Lives* is more trustworthy.¹⁶⁰ These sources make plain that part of Pachomius' motive for building the church was to provide a place for the monks to worship: his two reasons were 'so that he could hold the *synaxis* there and because there were many people around that place'.¹⁶¹ When the monks numbered one hundred, Pachomius 'built a church in his monastery so they might praise God there', but he continued to go to the village church for the Saturday evening Eucharist. This double-tiered worshipping community of monks and laypeople must have looked odd enough to Sarapion, the local bishop, but even more disturbing to him would have been the financial arrangements.

The Greek and Coptic *Lives*, although they differ on many details, agree that Pachomius himself took responsibility for the finances of the village church that he had founded. The Coptic reports that Pachomius 'took care of their offering [*προσφορά*] because they were in a state of great poverty', and the Greek says that Pachomius 'spent money [*ἀνήλυσκεν*] for their needs and those of the passing strangers [*οἱ παραβάλλοντες ξένοι*]'.¹⁶² Here Pachomius was more clearly intruding on the bishop's authority, for early church orders made the receiving and

¹⁵⁷ VP 112 (72. 24-73. 36 Halkin); cf. Ueding, 'Kanones', 582-83; Rousseau, *Pachomius*, 171-2. Veilleux suggests that it may have been the same bishop of Latopolis who opposed the foundation of a monastery at Phnoum who instigated the synod in his city (*Liturgie*, 194).

¹⁵⁸ S. Bo. 25 (25. 5-8 Lef.).

¹⁵⁹ Ibid. 25 (24. 3-25. 14 Lef.); Am. 371. 11-372. 14; VP 29 (19. 6-23 Halkin); cf. Ueding, 'Kanones', 582; Bacht, 'Mönchtum und Kirche', 118-19; Rousseau, *Pachomius*, 161.

¹⁶⁰ VP, eager to display episcopal-monastic harmony, places the scene immediately before the visit of Athanasius and is careful to add that Pachomius built the church 'not on his own accord, but on the advice of Sarapion, the bishop of the church of Tentyra'; VP 29 (19. 9-11 Halkin).

¹⁶¹ S. Bo. 25 (24. 6-8 Lef.). VP makes Pachomius a kind of evangelist: he built the church in a 'deserted village' for the 'common' shepherds nearby; VP 29 (19. 7-8 Halkin).

¹⁶² S. Bo. 25 (24. 8-10 Lef.); VP 29 (19. 13-14 Halkin). Am. 371. 13-14 has nearly the exact wording of S. Bo.

distribution of money the unique prerogative of the bishop. Church orders from Syria said therefore that a bishop had to be generous, frugal in his own living expenses, and discerning in the people from whom he accepted money.¹⁶³ Laypeople were not to question how the bishop distributed their offerings,¹⁶⁴ nor were they to give directly to the needy and so bypass the bishop: 'If any man should do something apart from the bishop, he does it in vain, for it is not right that any man should do something apart from the high priest.'¹⁶⁵ Egyptian church orders likewise made the Church's financial organization and welfare system centre on the bishop, assisted by an official called 'the steward'.¹⁶⁶ Thus, a canon complains of men who become bishop for 'shameful gain'.¹⁶⁷ It is noteworthy that, as the patron of all the churches in his diocese, the bishop was to take from the rich parishes and give to the poor ones:

If there is revenue [*πρόσοδος*] in the church [*ἐκκλησία*] or offering [*προσφορά*] [sufficient] for the life of the clergy and the oil for the light of the lamps, they will not trouble the bishop in anything. But if there is not revenue sufficient for the offering and the life of the clergy and the oil for the lamps, the bishop will give to them for these three requirements. But if, in turn, the revenue is more than sufficient for these three requirements, the bishop will take them and use them in accordance with the love of God, since the entire will of God is compassion for the poor. Yet let him not forget one that is needier than another; rather, let equality be among them all.¹⁶⁸

According to this canon, if the parish at Nitentori was poor, it was Bishop Sarapion's right and responsibility to provide for it. The career of Bishop Cyprian of Carthage illustrates how the collection and distribution of church funds could be used to establish and to undermine the authority of the bishop, who by this time in church history played the role of patron.¹⁶⁹ The financial system in place at Nitentori, however, totally bypassed the bishop. As unconventional as the Pachomian establishment and use of a local church for worship may have seemed, Pachomius' control of church finances posed a direct challenge to one means by which the episcopal hierarchy maintained its authority. Pachomius' patronage of the villagers made him a rival to Sarapion.

¹⁶³ Cf. *Did. App.* 4, 8-9, 18-19; *Const. App.* 2, 25-35; 3, 8; 4, 6-8.

¹⁶⁴ *Did. App.* 9 (114, 1-7 Vööbus); *Const. App.* 2, 35 (1, 256-8 Metzger).

¹⁶⁵ *Did. App.* 9 (104, 2-15 Vööbus).

¹⁶⁶ *Can. Ath.* 16, 61, 81, 89 (Riedel and Crum, *Canons*, 26-8, 40-1, 50, 55-6); cf. Marin, 'L'Église et la khôra', 7-11, 22-3.

¹⁶⁷ *Can. Ath.* 5 (Riedel and Crum, *Canons*, 10).

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.* 65 (cop.; Riedel and Crum, *Canons*, 101-2); cf. 23 (Riedel and Crum, *Canons*, 29), where the bishop is responsible for the support of the priest of a poor parish.

¹⁶⁹ Charles Bobertz, 'Cyprian of Carthage as Patron', Ph.D. thesis (Yale, 1988).

Sarapion's plan to deal with this problem was a simple one: bring Pachomius under the full control of the episcopate by making him a priest. His request for Pachomius' ordination proposed that the Pachomian federation be integrated into the local church by the creation of a hierarchy in which all monks in the diocese, presumably both hermits and coenobites, would be responsible to a priest, Pachomius, who would naturally be answerable to his bishop, Sarapion. Such an organization not only would have prevented awkward situations like the Nitentori church, but also would have provided Sarapion with means of dealing more effectively with such problems as monastic affiliations with Melitian churches. With the domain of his power greatly extended, Sarapion could have given orders to Pachomius. This plan represented an innovative expansion of the bishop's authority and was resisted by Pachomius; hence, Sarapion was obliged to ask the bishop of Alexandria, Athanasius, to perform the ordination.

On the part of Pachomius, his avoidance of ordination reflects not so much any reservations he may have harboured about Athanasian 'orthodoxy' or his position on the Melitian question as much as his desire to maintain the federation's independence without introducing any inequality of status into his monastic community. We have seen that Pachomius firmly resisted bishops who attempted to intervene in the life of his federation from outside. Internally, Pachomius feared that ordination would bring divisive distinctions into the community. The *Vides* describe ordination of monks as 'an occasion for strife, envy, jealousy, and even schisms'. The familiar demon of pride appears: Pachomius compared 'a thought of grandeur' to 'a spark cast into the threshing floor', which, 'unless it is quickly quenched, will destroy a whole year's labour'.¹⁷⁰ Clerical rank would threaten what Pachomius saw as the advantage of the coenobitic life over the eremitic: the mutual care among the brothers, each of whom must 'bear the responsibility of other ascetics' and 'see those who practise exercises' and thus learn. Each brother was responsible for his neighbour's soul.¹⁷¹ Gal. 6: 2 ('carry each other's burdens'), among other passages, provided scriptural warrant for this central element of Pachomian spirituality, as the Pachomian leader Horsisius would later express it:

And, after we have rendered an account of our own life, we shall likewise render an account for those who were entrusted to us. And not only is this to be understood of the housemasters but also of the superiors of the monasteries and of each

¹⁷⁰ S. Bo. 25 (24. 28-9; 25. 2-5 Lef.); cf. VP 27 (17. 3-7 Halkin).

¹⁷¹ S. Bo. 105 (137. 21-3, 13-14 Lef.).

of the brothers belonging to the rank and file, because all must 'carry each other's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ'.¹⁷²

Hence, Pachomius' avoidance of the ordination requested by Sarapion arose not from any suspicious or possibly 'unorthodox' proclivities in his theology, but rather from values peculiar to Pachomius and his project: communion with the local episcopate and the wider Church must not be achieved at the cost either of the federation's autonomy or of the equality and mutuality of the monastic brotherhood. It is possible that Pachomius founded his second monastery at Pbow in the diocese of Diospolis Parva precisely to escape the intrusive activity of Bishop Sarapion.¹⁷³

Athanasius did not press for the ordination of Pachomius once he resisted, but it is unlikely that his failure to do so reflected any particular sympathy with Pachomius' side of the dispute or with his monastic values.¹⁷⁴ Athanasius' inaction may indicate that already he was prepared 'to allow a wide latitude for ascetic common-life without strong ties to the local church and community'.¹⁷⁵ However, it may be more reasonable to suspect that the issue of a reluctant monk and his local bishop's anxieties about him did not loom very large in the mind of Athanasius, who had only recently been elevated to the see of Alexandria. Perhaps here the Melitian problem entered the picture, for Athanasius may have been uncertain about his own power at this point. When Athanasius toured Upper Egypt, the Pachomian community was only 6 years old at the most and had only recently begun to expand beyond the first monastery at Tabennesi.¹⁷⁶ The young Alexandrian bishop, recently elevated in a contested election, had greater problems to worry him as he sailed past Tabennesi, perhaps unaware, as the Greek *Life* implies, that the Pachomius about whom Sarapion had written him was anywhere near.

Hence, it is possible that this first encounter between Athanasius and the Pachomian monks was actually no encounter at all. Yet the little interplay between Pachomius, Sarapion, and Athanasius was well remembered by the monks and with good reason, for it exemplified the formless nature of the new federation's relations with local church authorities and hence with the hierarchical Church based in Alexandria.

¹⁷² *Lib. Hor.* II (115. 21–116. 1 Boon); cf. *Pach. Ep.* 5. 11 (92. 12–13 Boon).

¹⁷³ Chitty, 'Chronology', 381.

¹⁷⁴ The speech put in Athanasius' mouth in *S. Bo.* 28 (and *Am* 385. 8–17) closely echoes what Pachomius says earlier and, ironically, conflicts with what the bishop would himself later write to Dracontius in urging him to accept consecration as a bishop.

¹⁷⁵ Badger, 'New Man', 195.

¹⁷⁶ Chitty, 'Chronology'.

The picture of this scene that the Pachomian *Lives* give us is not without its irony: Sarapion's plan to tie monasticism more closely to the institutional Church by means of ordination would later be adopted by Athanasius (as we have seen in studying Lower Egypt). Moreover, as the Pachomian federation grew too large and economically prosperous to be ignored, Athanasius would engage in the very episcopal intervention that Pachomius had so firmly resisted.

Reconciliation of Theodore and Horsisius (c. 363–367)

Athanasius, as far as we know, did not visit the Pachomian monasteries again before Pachomius died in 346, although there is evidence for contact between the federation and the Alexandrian see during the decades following Athanasius' elevation. For example, it is possible that, shortly before Athanasius was forced to leave Alexandria for Rome in the spring of 339, Pachomius sent a delegation of his monks to visit the beleaguered bishop, doubtless a show of support particularly welcome to Athanasius.¹⁷⁷ Before his death, Pachomius had surprised the brothers by naming as his successor not his protégé Theodore, the favourite of an influential faction within the federation known as 'the ancient brothers', but an older monk named Petronius, whose wealthy family had donated one of the federation's monasteries.¹⁷⁸ Petronius died after less than three months in office, and his appointee Horsisius became the new leader of the federation. Unlike the popular Theodore, Horsisius did not have a strong base of support among the monks, and so in 350, when Apollonius, the head of one of the individual monasteries, refused to obey him, Horsisius resigned in tears. Theodore took control of the federation to the joy and relief of the brothers, but he and the monks denied the reality of what had happened by insisting that Theodore was not the leader of the federation, but merely the deputy to Horsisius. Thus, an awkward situation arose, in which Theodore acted as the federation's leader at Pbow, while the ostensible leader, Horsisius, lived in self-imposed exile in the monastery at Šeneset. This impasse lasted into the 360s, when Athanasius made another tour of the Thebaid.

¹⁷⁷ S. Bo. 89. An ascetic Alexandrian lector named Theodore (not to be confused with the Theodore discussed below) returned to the Pachomian monasteries with this delegation. Carlton Badger has studied the chronology of Theodore of Alexandria's career in detail and considers 339 the most likely date for this incident ('Athanasius and the Pachomians', paper read at the General Meeting of the North American Patristics Society, Chicago, May 1992).

¹⁷⁸ Theodore favourite of 'ancients': Chitty, 'Chronology', 385; Veilleux, *Pachomian Koinonia* 1. 420 n. 1 to VP 129. For this period, see Rousseau, *Pachomius*, 181–7.

During this tour the bishop met Theodore and sent by his hand a letter to Horsisius that provoked a reconciliation between the two Pachomian leaders and the return of Horsisius from exile. Athanasius' intervention into the Pachomians' internal problems indicates a closer and more formal relationship between the federation and the episcopate.

There is, however, confusion in the sources about the timing and nature of Athanasius' contact with Theodore. The *Letter of Ammon* and the *Lives of Pachomius* agree that Athanasius met Theodore personally near Hermopolis and Antinoë during a trip through the Thebaid, but there the similarities in the accounts end. These two dissimilar accounts must now be examined.

The *Letter of Ammon* purports to be a letter from a Bishop Ammon, a former monk who had spent time in the Pachomian monastery at Pbow during Theodore's administration, to Bishop Theophilus of Alexandria (bishop 385-412). Its historical reliability is a matter of scholarly dispute. In chapters 34-5 of this work, Athanasius himself is made to deliver a speech in praise of Theodore, who is the focus of the letter. The *Letter* has this speech delivered in either 363 or 366 ('when the blessed pope Athanasius returned' from exile); however, neither of these dates agrees with the assertion in the *Letter* that Theodore had 'recently fallen asleep', i.e. died, for in actual fact Theodore was still alive in 367.¹⁷⁹ In any case, Athanasius is made to report how during his expulsion from Alexandria by the Emperor Julian (362-3) he met Theodore and another monk in Antinoë and prepared to flee with them in their boat; how Theodore miraculously knew that Julian had died and that a Christian would become emperor; and how Athanasius returned to Alexandria and then set out to meet the new emperor, Jovian. The point of this story is the amazing visionary power of Theodore, whom Athanasius is made to praise at great length.

The geographical details of this report are confirmed by the index to the *Festal Letters* and the *Historia acephala*. The latter is a chronicle of Athanasius' reign compiled and revised by the Alexandrian see during the late fourth and early fifth centuries. The index says that Athanasius was 'pursued from Memphis to the Thebaid', from which he sent his *Festal Letter* for 363.¹⁸⁰ The *Historia acephala* provides more detailed information: 'Now Bishop Athanasius, who was staying at Chereon, as has been said, went up to the upper parts of Egypt as far as Upper Hermopolis in the Thebaid and as far as Antinoë. And while he was stay-

¹⁷⁹ Ammon. Aeg. Ep. 34 (155. 20; 156. 6-7 Goehring); cf. Goehring, *Letter of Ammon*, 288-9.

¹⁸⁰ *Chron. Aih.* 35 (436 M/A).

ing in these places, it was learned that the Emperor Julian was dead and that Jovian, a Christian, was emperor.¹⁸¹ Hence, some contact with Theodore or other Pachomian monks during the exile of 362–3 is possible although certainly the details of the story in the *Letter of Ammon* are too problematical to be trusted. In fact, both Palladius and Sozomen report that it was Didymus the Blind who was miraculously informed of Julian's death and given the task of telling Athanasius.¹⁸²

A quite different picture emerges in the *Lives of Pachomius*.¹⁸³ Although there are discrepancies in the details between the Coptic and Greek accounts, both versions describe a triumphal pre-Easter tour of the bishop with no hint of flight from persecution. Here too Athanasius meets Theodore in the vicinity of Hermopolis and Antinoë, but, in contrast to the report in the *Letter of Ammon*, he tours the monasteries at Kaïor and Nouoi (which Theodore had founded), approves of them, and gives Theodore a letter for Horsisius. This letter provokes a reconciliation between the two monks and the return of Horsisius to Pbow. In comparison to the Greek, the Coptic version explains why Theodore went to meet Athanasius without Horsisius, gives a slightly different text for Athanasius' letter to Horsisius, and in general is 'more detailed and clearer'.¹⁸⁴

Because of the geographical similarities between the accounts in the *Letter of Ammon* and the Pachomian *Lives* and the lack of independent corroboration for any pre-Easter visit by Athanasius to the Thebaid after 363, scholars have usually treated these two reports as alternative accounts of the same event. Hence, they have felt obliged to attempt either to reconcile the two versions or to choose between them.¹⁸⁵ It is unlikely, however, that one version is a systematic revision of the other since each reflects its own peculiar tendencies: the *Lives* never mention Julian, and the *Letter of Ammon*, more surprisingly, never mentions

¹⁸¹ *Hist. ac.* 4. 3. 11–16 (M/A).

¹⁸² Pall. *H. Laus.* 4. 4; Soz. *H.e.* 6. 2.

¹⁸³ S. Bo. 200–3; VP 143–4. Am. is of no help here since this part of it is 'a late, free translation' of the third Greek *Life*, itself a revision of VP (Veilleux, *Pachomian Koinonia*, I. 422 n. 1 to VP 144).

¹⁸⁴ Festugière, *Première vie grecque*, 63–5.

¹⁸⁵ P. Ladeuze saw the pre-Easter tour and the incident in the *Letter of Ammon* as both happening in 363 while Athanasius was in exile in the Thebaid (*Étude sur le cénobitisme pachômien pendant le IV^e siècle et la première moitié du V^e* (Louvain, 1898), 223–6). H. Bacht also reconciled the two reports by placing the pre-Easter tour in 363 (*Das Vermächtnis des Ursprungs*, vol. 1 of *Studien zum frühen Mönchtum* (Würzburg, 1972), 21). Lefort preferred the report in the Coptic *Life* and called the story in the *Letter of Ammon* a pure fabrication (*Vies coptes*, 199 n. 7, 223 n. 3). Chitty, however, defended the historicity of the account in the *Letter of Ammon* ('Pachomian Sources Reconsidered', *JEH* 5 (1954), 38–77, at 42).

Horsisius.¹⁸⁶ It seems best to accept the account in the *Lives* and to leave to one side the report in the *Letter of Ammon*: it is possible that Athanasius had contact with Theodore or some other Pachomian monks during his exile under Julian, but the nature of that contact is not to be found in the legendary story of Theodore's clairvoyance. Instead, the *Lives* must be describing yet another trip to the Thebaid sometime after 363: although such a tour finds no independent confirmation in other Athanasian sources, it would have been possible in the years 364–7.¹⁸⁷

Athanasius' tour of Upper Egypt in the middle of the 360s exacerbated the tension between Theodore and Horsisius that had been present since the forced resignation of Horsisius in 350. It did so by raising the question of who should lead the Pachomian delegation that would greet the visiting patriarch: Horsisius, the ostensible leader, who was in self-imposed retirement; Theodore, allegedly the assistant to Horsisius, but actually the leader of the federation; or both. In fact, Theodore led the delegation without Horsisius. Unlike the Greek version, the *Coptic Life* attempts to explain how this could have happened: Horsisius himself, it says, summoned Theodore to Šeneset, site of the monastery where Horsisius had withdrawn, and sent him to meet Athanasius; Theodore urged Horsisius to go as well, but Horsisius replied, 'If you go, it is also I who have gone, because we two are like a single person, a single soul, and a single spirit.'¹⁸⁸ It is difficult to say whether this report contains any authentic historical material: there is no trace of a meeting in Šeneset in the Greek *Life*. The *Coptic* meanwhile takes a special interest in the transition of leadership from Theodore back to Horsisius: it devotes to this subject a long section which begins with Theodore predicting his own death and praising 'Aba Horsisius, the perfect man'.¹⁸⁹ However, if the *Coptic Life* is to be trusted in this, the need to resolve the leadership question was on Theodore's mind as he went to meet Athanasius, and there are hints of this in the Greek version as well.¹⁹⁰ If so, the events that follow, particularly the letter of Athanasius to Horsisius and the return of Horsisius to Pbow from his self-imposed exile, would make a great deal of sense.

¹⁸⁶ Cf. Goehring, *Letter of Ammon*, 290–1.

¹⁸⁷ Cf. Rousseau, *Pachomius*, 189; *pace* Badger, 'New Man', 220–2.

¹⁸⁸ S. Bo. 200 (197. 18–21 Lef.). ¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.* 199 (196. 6 Lef.).

¹⁹⁰ Like S. Bo., VP places the return of Horsisius to Pbow immediately after the tour of Athanasius, but it states that Theodore 'was consoling our father Horsisius for his past affliction. And he began to move him little by little [ἤρξατο ἄλγειν αὐτὸν μικρόν] to come to the monastery of Pbow, first to make a visit to the brothers'; VP 145 (91. 22–5 Halkin). The language here implies an ongoing effort by Theodore to convince Horsisius to return to Pbow, begun perhaps even before the meeting with Athanasius.

There are indications that by this time Theodore already enjoyed established connections with the episcopal hierarchy in Alexandria; such connections make intelligible his request for help from Athanasius in resolving the question of leadership in the federation. It is not likely that Athanasius and Theodore had previously met, although that is not impossible. The Greek and Coptic *Lives* both state that Athanasius did not know which monk Theodore was when the Pachomian group approached the touring bishop (in the 360s), but these statements flatly contradict earlier stories in which Theodore, on trips to Alexandria in 345 and 346, meets the bishop.¹⁹¹ The earlier stories are problematic, however, since both of the visits to Alexandria seem to have occurred while Athanasius was in exile.¹⁹² Hence, unless Theodore made yet other trips to Alexandria that are not narrated, it would seem that Theodore and the bishop did indeed meet for the first time during this pre-Easter tour. None the less, it seems reasonable that Theodore would have established some contact with the Alexandrian clergy and ascetics loyal to Athanasius on these trips. The *Letter of Ammon*, for example, plausibly has Theodore correspond with Athanasius.¹⁹³ There are signs also in the *Lives of Pachomius* that Theodore had close connections with the institutional Church. He came, it would appear, from the cultured élite of Upper Egypt, whose ties with Alexandria were extensive, for he is described as 'a son of a prominent family in the city of Snē', i.e. Latopolis, coming 'from a great home thriving according to the world'.¹⁹⁴ We have already seen how his mother was able to enlist the aid of the bishop of Latopolis in her attempt to retrieve her son from Pachomius. It was Theodore who read Athanasius' 39th *Festal Letter* on the canon to the brothers.¹⁹⁵ The *Lives* are quite frank about Theodore's pragmatic personality and style, especially in comparison to Pachomius.¹⁹⁶ It may

¹⁹¹ 345: S. Bo. 96; VP 109, 113; Am. 589. 13-590. 10, close to S. Bo. 346: S. Bo. 124-36; VP 120; the account in Am. 656. 15-659. 13 lies outside the parts of Am. that we can safely use (Veilleux, *Pachomian Koinonia*, 1. 6).

¹⁹² On the first visit (in 345), see Veilleux, *Pachomian Koinonia*, 1. 282 n. 3 to S. Bo. 96; Badger, 'New Man', 217-18. VP 113 correctly portrays Athanasius as in exile at this time and so, unlike S. Bo. 96 and Am., does not describe Theodore and Athanasius meeting. On the second visit (in 346), see Veilleux, *Pachomian Koinonia*, 1. 287 n. 2 to S. Bo. 124; Badger, 'New Man', 218-19; Barnes, *Athanasius and Constantius*, 97. Once again VP 120 seems more accurate since it appears to place the trip after Athanasius' return from exile in Oct. 346.

¹⁹³ Ammon, *Aeg. Ep.* 2 (125. 3-6 Goehring).

¹⁹⁴ S. Bo. 30 (32. 23-4 Lef.); VP 33 (from Ath. 1015, 22. 27 Halkin-Festugière). On Theodore's social status, see Goehring, 'Theodore's Entry', 351.

¹⁹⁵ S. Bo. 189; cf. L. Th. Lefort, 'Théodore de Tabennese et la lettre de S. Athanase sur le canon de la Bible', *Mar.* 29 (1910), 205-16; Badger, 'New Man', 222-3.

¹⁹⁶ See e.g. S. Bo. 62; VP 66.

be no coincidence that Pachomius was summoned before the synod of bishops at Latopolis while that city's prominent son, Theodore, was away on a trip to the Delta.

In general, the period of Theodore's leadership was a time of institutionalization within the federation and closer relations with the Athanasian episcopate.¹⁹⁷ The internal revolt that forced the resignation of Horsisius revealed that the federation's administration was unstable without the unifying presence of the charismatic Pachomius. Theodore created an internal structure less dependent on personality by regularly shuffling the leading monks among the individual monasteries. As Theodore introduced reforms in administration, the monks also began to consolidate the federation's memories of its founder and origins. They constructed an 'official' picture, or as it turned out pictures, of Pachomius, which could serve as a model for the monks and a source for the group's cohesion and identity.¹⁹⁸ These changes were not simply the result of Theodore's personality, but rather they were made necessary by the spectacular growth of the federation in numbers and wealth, by the passing of the charismatic founder and indeed of the entire first generation of brothers, and by the leadership crisis. It is at this point that we can see signs in the Pachomian federation of an emerging concept of 'orthodoxy', one linked with the episcopal hierarchy headed by Athanasius.¹⁹⁹

The visit of Athanasius to the monasteries at Nouoi and Kaior and his letter to Horsisius contributed to this process of greater cohesion with the institutional Church. Athanasius' tour of the monasteries and his praise of them represented both the episcopate's approval of the Pachomian organization and the federation's adherence to the hierarchy. Doubtless the sources do not preserve the actual words that the bishop and Theodore spoke, but they credibly depict the monks showing Athanasius their buildings and their way of life and the bishop approving: 'When he saw their buildings and how they slept on the ground, he [Athanasius] marvelled and blessed God, glorifying him for the brothers' way of life and their practices.'²⁰⁰ An exchange of mutual respect followed. Athanasius recognizes the superior nature of the Pachomian discipline; Theodore, the spiritual authority of the bishop:

¹⁹⁷ James E. Goehring, 'New Frontiers in Pachomian Studies', in B. Pearson and J. Goehring (eds.), *The Roots of Egyptian Christianity* (Philadelphia, 1986), 236-57.

¹⁹⁸ S. Bo. 194, 196; Rousseau, *Pachomius*, 45-7.

¹⁹⁹ Cf. Henry Chadwick, 'Pachomios and the Idea of Sanctity', in S. Hackel (ed.), *The Byzantine Saint* (London, 1981), 11-24, at 19.

²⁰⁰ S. Bo. 202 (200. 13-16 Lef.).

Then the archbishop said to our father Theodore, 'You have indeed established in the world something great and splendid, which gives rest to every soul who comes to you.' Abba Theodore said to the archbishop, 'This great gift of God has come to us through our righteous father [Pachomius] and especially, our lord and father, through your holy prayers. Indeed the Lord knows that when we saw Your Holiness, it was as if we had seen our Lord Jesus Christ in the heavenly Jerusalem, because of our great trust in you, for you are our father.'²⁰¹

Here are two politicians engaged in a careful definition of their mutual dependence and independence. The stage was set for the bishop to exercise his leadership and authority over the Pachomians, but only in a manner respectful of their limited spiritual autonomy.

Athanasius' letter to Horsisius was a graceful form of intervention into the Koinonia's awkward leadership problem.²⁰² The Greek and Coptic versions of the letter differ, but on three important points they agree. First, Athanasius did write a letter to Horsisius and send it by the hand of Theodore: in this way, Athanasius acknowledged Horsisius as the actual leader of the Koinonia.²⁰³ Secondly, the bishop named Theodore the 'co-worker' (*σύνεργος*) of Horsisius, providing a biblical model by which the two monks could understand their relationship.²⁰⁴ In Athanasian terms, Theodore and Horsisius were to form their relationship through imitation of Paul's relationship with his 'co-workers'. Thirdly, Athanasius called the Pachomians 'children of the Church' and so emphasized their relationship to the wider Christian community; the bishop also invited Theodore to view the particular relationship between the two of them in biblical terms, responding to the monk's request, 'Remember me', with the words of the Psalmist to Jerusalem (Ps. 136 (137): 5-6).²⁰⁵ In this way, Athanasius provided a context for the leadership that he was exercising over the federation by writing this letter. The sources agree that, shortly after reading Athanasius' words, Horsisius returned to Pbow and was in place there when Theodore died not many years later. As subtle as it was, Athanasius' letter represented the kind of intervention from outside that Pachomius had so firmly resisted during his lifetime. It would not be the last suggestion about Pachomian leadership made by Athanasius.

²⁰¹ S. Bo. 202 (200. 16-25 Lef.); cf. VP 144 (90. 26-91. 6 Halkin).

²⁰² Cf. Rousseau, *Pachomius*, 189.

²⁰³ Cf. Bacht, *Vermächtnis*, 21.

²⁰⁴ *Ep. Ors.* 1 = VP 144 (91. 11 Halkin); S. Bo. 204 (202. 10 Lef.); cf. Rom. 16: 3, 9, 21; 1 Cor. 3: 9; 2 Cor. 1: 24; 8: 23; etc.

²⁰⁵ *Ep. Ors.* 1 = VP 144 (91. 13-20 Halkin); S. Bo. 204 (202. 15-16 Lef.); cf. Martin Tetz, 'Athanasius und die *Vita Antonii*: Literarische und theologische Relationen', *ZNW* 73 (1982), 1-30, at 15-16.

Transition to Horsisius (368)

Not long after these events, in April 368, Theodore died. When he had brought Horsisius back to Pbow, Theodore had said, 'I am the son of Abba Horsisius and his deputy [διάδοχος]', thereby indicating that Horsisius should take on full leadership after his own death.²⁰⁶ None the less, there must have been lingering concerns about Horsisius' ability in light of the crisis of 350. Athanasius, in his letter of consolation to the monks, made clear his own opinion on the matter: Horsisius should 'accept the whole care and take his [Theodore's] place among the brothers'.²⁰⁷ In this way, Athanasius helped Horsisius to consolidate his position as the new father of the federation.²⁰⁸

Of the various versions of Athanasius' letter, the Greek text is the most original and appears certain to be an authentic work.²⁰⁹ In accordance with ancient convention, the function of Athanasius' letter is not merely to console; the epistle is also paraenetic, exhorting Horsisius to take up leadership of the federation and the monks to emulate Theodore's virtuous life and to follow their new leader.²¹⁰ The letter—which is brief, as the ancient handbooks recommended—contains all the elements that have been found to be constants in consolatory epistles: a proem explaining how the author learned of the misfortune and how he received the news; 'eulogistic remarks' about the deceased; 'a series of consolatory arguments' (here, Theodore is really 'asleep', in 'a haven', 'a place free from grief'); and 'concluding prayerful petitions or bits of advice'.²¹¹ Like other Christian authors, Athanasius urges the recipients to replace their grief with the effort to follow the deceased in leading the virtuous life.²¹² Athanasius invokes his characteristic theme of imitation:

²⁰⁶ S. Bo. 204 (204. 1–2 Lef.); cf. VP 145, where Theodore is described as Horsisius' 'deputy' (διάδοχος) and 'second' (δεύτερος) (92. 4, 8 Halkin).

²⁰⁷ *Ep. Ors.* 2 = VP 150 (96. 8–9 Halkin).

²⁰⁸ Cf. Rousseau, *Pachomius*, 190.

²⁰⁹ David Brakke, 'St Athanasius and Ascetic Christians in Egypt', Ph.D. thesis (Yale, 1992), 230 n. 189.

²¹⁰ On the letter of consolation in ancient Christian literature, see Robert C. Gregg, *Consolation Philosophy* (Cambridge, Mass., 1975); Stanley K. Stowers, *Letter Writing in Greco-Roman Antiquity* (Philadelphia, 1986), 142–52; Abraham J. Malherbe, 'Exhortation in 1 Thessalonians', in his *Paul and the Popular Philosophers* (Minneapolis, 1989), 49–66, esp. 64–6. On this letter, see Tetz, 'Athanasius und die *Vita Antonii*', 15–16.

²¹¹ Gregg, *Consolation Philosophy*, 58. Brevity: Julius Victor, *Ars Rhetorica* 27 (4th cent.): 'Be profuse in congratulating someone on his success so as to heighten his joy, but console someone who is grieving with a few words (*pauca consolare*), for a wound bleeds when touched by a heavy hand'; ed. and tr. A. J. Malherbe, *Ancient Epistolary Theorists* (Atlanta, 1988), 64–5.

²¹² Cf. Bas. *Epp.* 269, 301, 302 (LCL 4. 138, 230, 234).

the monks should imitate Theodore by showing respect for Horsisius.²¹³ Basil the Great used the commonplace that the deceased and the mourner were as one person to console a widow and to urge her to devote herself to the task of raising the children her husband left her;²¹⁴ here it functions to exhort Horsisius to take up the care for the brothers left behind by Theodore, 'giving to the beloved useful instructions'. Having made use of these epistolary conventions to establish Horsisius in his position as father of the federation, Athanasius urges continued unity between the Church and the monks through regular communication and mutual prayer.²¹⁵ In this way, Athanasius endorsed his candidate for leadership of the federation and reminded the Pachomians of their tie to the wider church.

The self-assured and tactful manner with which Athanasius in 368 helped to smooth the transition to new leadership in the Pachomian federation indicates how much things had changed in the forty years since the bishop's first tour through the Thebaid. Athanasius' interest in the internal affairs of the monastic federation is a sign of the federation's growth in numbers and importance and of Athanasius' increasing attention to problems of order within the Egyptian Church. In 330 Pachomius could resist local bishops who tried to tie his monastic brotherhood too closely to the episcopal Church and to intervene in its internal affairs, while Athanasius did not see the Pachomian community as significant enough and his own authority as secure enough to press Bishop Sarapion's request for Pachomius' ordination. But by 368 Athanasius could not ignore the thousands of monks living in communities along the banks of the upper Nile. As we have seen, it was also in 368 that Athanasius wrote his 40th *Festal Letter* complaining of the disorder caused by irregular ordinations, disorder that affected even 'the monasteries'.²¹⁶ Thus, it is no surprise to see the bishop using whatever authority his frequent exiles and already legendary intransigence had given him to ensure order in such a large monastic organization. Athanasius' goal was certainly not control of the Pachomian monasteries (impossible, he surely realized), but the establishment of a more formal connection that permitted occasional episcopal intervention.²¹⁷

Athanasius' contacts with the Pachomian monks were few, but significant; they built a relationship that endured after the deaths of Athanasius, Pachomius, Theodore, and the other players in the scenes

²¹³ *Ep. Ors.* 2 = VP 150 (96. 5 Halkin). ²¹⁴ *Bas. Ep.* 302 (LCL 4. 230-4).

²¹⁵ *Ep. Ors.* 2 = VP 150 (96. 9-21 Halkin). ²¹⁶ *Ep. fest.* (cop.) 40 (22. 18-20 Lef.).

²¹⁷ Cf. Rousseau, *Pachomius*, 190; *Ascetics*, 66-7; C. Wilfred Griggs, *Early Egyptian Christianity* (Leiden 1990), 156.

that we have considered. As in the case of the Nitrian monks, Athanasius did not impose his authority on the federation unilaterally; his efforts dovetailed with the Pachomians' own process of institutionalization, which involved forming a firmer connection to the Alexandrian patriarch and his bishops. That closer relationship was continued in the Pachomian literature compiled in the last decades of the fourth century. As we have seen, Athanasius becomes in the *Lives* the embodiment of orthodox Christianity expressing its approval of Pachomian life and spirituality. This iconicizing tendency becomes most fully developed in the Greek literature, particularly the *Letter of Ammon*, but it is present in the Coptic literature as well. In its account of Theodore's second trip to Alexandria, the Coptic *Life* has both Antony and Athanasius appear, like living icons, to praise Pachomius and the Koinonia. Theodore attributes the following statement to Pachomius:

In Egypt now in our generation, I see three principal things flourishing through God and human beings. The first is the blessed athlete, the holy Abba Athanasius, the archbishop of Alexandria, struggling for the faith even to the point of death. The second is our holy father Antony, who is a perfect model of the life of the anchorites. The third is this fellowship, which is the pattern for everyone who wants to gather souls together according to God in order to help them achieve perfection.²¹⁸

Athanasius and Antony become ciphers through which the Pachomians envision their relationship to the Church and to other forms of asceticism. Doubtless Athanasius would not have minded, since his few firm, but respectful interventions in the Pachomian federation encouraged the type of differentiated, but harmonious relationship depicted here.

THE ANTI-ARIAN CAMPAIGN OF THE THIRD EXILE

Athanasius' work to tie the monastic movement more closely to the Alexandrian episcopate both came to fruition and entered a new phase with the bishop's third exile from the metropolis in 356. Thanks to monks and virgins friendly to him, Athanasius was able for six years (356-62) to elude the imperial officials who were attempting to capture him. During this time, the bishop produced an astonishing number of literary works, including such major pieces as the *History of the Arians*

²¹⁸ S. Bn. 134 (= VS¹ 185. 12-20 Lcf.); VP 136 (86. 3-9 Halkin).

and the *Life of Antony*.²¹⁹ Moreover, he conducted a vigorous campaign directed against any tendencies among monks to listen to Arian theology or to try to remain in communion with anti-Athanasian Christians. Athanasius' success at rallying the majority of monks to his side surely contributed to his great power in Egypt. It would prove to be a lesson not lost on Athanasius' successors such as Theophilus and Cyril.

Ascetics were involved in Athanasius' escape from the moment that soldiers, under the command of Syrianus, the head of the Roman military in Egypt, surrounded and stormed the Church of Theonas in Alexandria on the night of 8 February 356. After Athanasius waited for the majority of the worshippers to leave before him, in his own words, 'the monks [μοναχοί] who were with us there and some of the clergy came up and dragged us away'.²²⁰ After some travels in the desert, Athanasius apparently returned secretly to the city, for the index to the *Festal Letters* reports that during 357/8 'the bishop Athanasius was in the city of Alexandria, hidden'.²²¹ It is possible that, while Athanasius spent most of the six years in the villages and desert, he made sporadic clandestine trips into the city. In any case, Alexandrian virgins who were known to be sympathetic to the bishop suffered under the imperial search for the outlaw: Faustinus, the prefect of Egypt, and Artemius, the province's military commander, 'entered a simple house and small cell in search of Bishop Athanasius' and 'cruelly tortured Eudemonis, a perpetual virgin'.²²² This nugget of historical information grew into the legendary reports that Athanasius spent the entire six years of the third exile hiding in the home of an Alexandrian virgin.²²³ More likely Athanasius spent most of his time as Gregory of Nazianzus described it: 'in the holy and divine monastic cells [φροντιστήριον] in Egypt'.²²⁴ Athanasius himself referred to his desert sojourn in his *Letters to Serapion* (on the Holy Spirit): he had received Serapion's letter 'in the desert [ἐρημος]', and he described himself as 'living in the desert [ἐν ἐρημῷ διάγων] on account of the shameless behaviour of those who have turned away from the truth'.²²⁵ The bishop was the object of 'a great search by those seeking to kill us'.²²⁶ This search extended

²¹⁹ See Barnes, *Athanasius and Constantius*, 121–35.

²²⁰ *Fug.* 24. 33–4 S.

²²¹ *Chron. Ath.* 30 (365–7 M/A).

²²² *Ibid.* 32 (387–91 M/A).

²²³ *Pall. H. Laus.* 63; *Soz. H.e.* 5. 5.

²²⁴ *Gr. Naz. Or.* 21. 19. 6 Mossay-Lafontaine.

²²⁵ *Ep. Serap.* 1. 1, 33 (PG 26. 530a, 605c).

²²⁶ *Ibid.* 1. 1 (PG 26. 530a).

(probably without good reason) even to the Pachomian monasteries in the Thebaid.²²⁷ Thus, the traditional picture remains the most plausible one: Athanasius on the run, moving among the desert monastic settlements of northern Egypt yet maintaining contact with his allies in Alexandria.²²⁸

While hiding in their communities, Athanasius devoted himself to the task of convincing the desert monks to adhere firmly to his party and to reject any communion with his opponents. This campaign had four components: the production of literary works that defended Athanasius' actions and theology and attacked those of his opponents; the circulation of a story of Arius' grisly death outside the Church; an attack on the tendency among monks to disregard philosophical disagreements in their relationships with one another; and, as a culmination of these three points, the depiction of Antony as a steadfast opponent of the Arian heresy. Each of these moves displayed Athanasius' keen understanding of the monastic milieu and its values.

Unfortunately, we do not have the pamphlet that Athanasius referred to when he told the monks in a letter that 'I have written briefly about what we and the Church have suffered, refuting, as I am able, the foul heresy of the Ariomaniacs and showing how much it is alien to the truth.'²²⁹ But we can get a sense of its character from what the bishop says in this letter and what he writes elsewhere. The theological discussion in the pamphlet did not so much build a positive case for Athanasius' position on the Word of God as much as it used traditional apophatic language to refute the opposing theology: 'For even if it is impossible to grasp what God is, it is possible to say what he is not.' The bishop chose this strategy precisely because he knew that the less philosophical monks might have no patience for subtle theological distinc-

²²⁷ VP 138; S. Bo. 185.

²²⁸ So Tetz, 'Athanasius von Alexandrien', 340; G. C. Stead, 'Athanasius', *Encyclopedia of the Early Church* (New York, 1992), 93-5, at 93; Barnes, *Athanasius and Constantius*, 121-2; *pace* Badger, 'New Man', 203-11.

²²⁹ *H. Ar. ep.* 1 (181. 5-7 Op.); this pamphlet is probably not the *History of the Arians*, to which tradition has attached this letter. Charles Kannengiesser has argued that this letter, as well as the letter to Serapion of Thmuis on the death of Arius (*Ep. mort. Ar.*) discussed below, should be dated not to the third exile, but to the early 340s (*Athanasie d'Alexandrie évêque et écrivain* (Paris, 1983), 375-97). For refutations of his arguments, see Klaus Fitschen, *Serapion von Thmuis* (Berlin and New York, 1992), 134-5, and Brakke, 'St Athanasius', 236 n. 208. Barnes accepts Kannengiesser's re-dating of *Ep. mort. Ar.* to 340, but retains the dating of *H. Ar. ep.* to the third exile (*Athanasius and Constantius*, 122, 278 nn. 8, 27). Both letters, however, include, in very similar language, Athanasius' peculiar request that the recipients not copy what he has written (*Ep. mort. Ar.* 5; *H. Ar. ep.* 3 (180. 15-17; 182. 20-4 Op.)), a sign that these letters were written around the same time.

tions: as Athanasius politely phrased it, 'I wrote knowing that to the faithful the condemnation of impiety is sufficient knowledge for piety.'²³⁰ As for the lost pamphlet's narrative of events, the *History of the Arians* must be an expanded version of this account, while the *Defence of his Flight* suggests how Athanasius must have depicted himself in the pamphlet. As we have seen, in the *Life of Antony*, which he wrote shortly before the *Defence*, Athanasius began to use the term *anakhōrēsis* in a limited, technical sense of ascetic withdrawal. While Athanasius could use this term to describe the flight of Dracontius only with caution, in the *Defence* he applied it to his own 'withdrawal' and its biblical models eleven times.²³¹ He likened his actions to those of the martyrs.²³² Athanasius was careful to mention the monastic role in his escape from the city (and there is no reason to doubt it).²³³ By these means Athanasius presented his flight as an instance of ascetic withdrawal from and rejection of the world. The creation of the legendary Athanasius, near martyr for the true faith and kindred spirit of those in the desert, began with Athanasius himself.

By way of contrast, the bishop was eager that the monks and other Christians learn of the ominous manner of the death of Arius, the evil heresiarch. Athanasius knew that the monks might be unimpressed by his philosophical reasoning, and so he offered them more compelling proof of the heretical nature of the anti-Athanasian movement:

And if something has been neglected [in the lost pamphlet]—and I reckon that everything has been neglected—pardon it with a pure conscience and only accept the daring of my statement of piety. Indeed, sufficient for a complete condemnation of the heresy of the Arians is the judgement coming from the Lord in the death of Arius, which you know since you have already heard about it from others. 'For what the holy God has decided, who shall scatter?' [Isa. 14: 27] And whom the Lord has condemned, who shall justify? [cf. Rom. 8: 33–4] For who will not at last learn from the occurrence of so great a sign that the heresy is hated by God, even if it has human beings as its patrons?²³⁴

Arius' death was a 'judgement coming from the Lord', a 'sign' (*σημείον*) that should convince even the most sceptical monk. Surely the contrast with how God had saved Bishop Athanasius from the imperial police would not have been lost on the desert fathers. Athanasius had already given his version of Arius' demise once, in his *Letter to the Bishops of*

²³⁰ *H. Ar. ep.* 2 (182. 2–4 Op.).

²³¹ *Fug.* 6. 22; 10. 20; 12. 12; 13. 14; 19. 5; 20. 24; 24. 6, 23, 27, 28; 26. 5 S.

²³² *Ibid.* 22. 11–17 S. ²³³ *Ibid.* 24. 33–4 S.

²³⁴ *H. Ar. ep.* 3 (182. 13–20 Op.).

Egypt and Libya, written just before he went into exile, and so was confident that the monks had already heard the story; but if someone had not, the bishop was more than happy to supply another account. So he did, not long after writing the above words, in a letter to his trusted friend and former monastic leader, Bishop Serapion of Thmuis. Alternative versions of the death of Arius were circulating: 'When there was an argument among you about the heresy, the question followed to this point: whether Arius died having communed with the Church.' Athanasius was eager to present his version of the story because 'to make this known [τὸ σημεῖναι τοῦτο] is also finally to stop those who love to quarrel.' He goes on: 'For I judge that, when the marvel [θαῦμα] concerning his death is made known, no longer will any of those who previously questioned it dare to doubt that the Arian heresy is hateful to God.'²³⁵ Athanasius artfully juxtaposes his enemy Bishop Eusebius of Nicomedia's threats against Bishop Alexander of Constantinople with Alexander's own prayers for the Church. He then describes Arius' ignominious end: 'Arius took courage in the party of Eusebius and, talking a lot of nonsense, he went into the toilet because of the belly's necessity, and all of a sudden, as it is written, "falling headlong, he burst open in the middle" [Acts 1: 18]. And when he fell, he immediately expired, deprived both of communion and of life.'²³⁶ Alexander, according to Athanasius, rejoiced not because Arius had died, 'but because this matter had been demonstrated beyond human judgements'. Athanasius endorsed this supernatural interpretation of the events:

For the Lord himself, having judged between the threats of the party of Eusebius and the prayer of Alexander, condemned the Arian heresy, showed it to be unworthy of the ecclesiastical communion, and made manifest to all that, even if it has the patronage of the Emperor and of all human beings, it was still condemned by the Church itself. Therefore, it was demonstrated that the Christ-fighting workshop of the Ariomaniacs is not loved by God, but rather impious. And many of those who had been formerly deceived changed their minds.²³⁷

The bishop held up to the monks and to others the 'sign' or 'marvel' of Arius' death, God's own condemnation of Athanasius' enemies. This propaganda must have been effective among the monks, who feared the prospect of dying in an impenitent state.²³⁸

²³⁵ *Ep. mort. Ar.* 1 (178. 9-10, 12-14 Op.).

²³⁶ *Ibid.* 3 (179. 24-8 Op.).

²³⁷ *Ibid.* 4 (179. 33-180. 4 Op.).

²³⁸ *Verba sen.* 5. 41 (PL 73. 886c-8b).

Athanasius intended that the horrifying death of Arius should dissuade the monks not only from accepting Arian ideas, but also from entertaining people who were theologically suspect: 'Greet one another in love and all who come to you in piety and faith. "For if someone", as the Apostle said, "does not love the Lord, let him be anathema" [1 Cor. 16: 22].'²³⁹ Athanasius argued vigorously against a monastic tendency to offer hospitality to anyone, regardless of his or her theological proclivities; such a policy, he said, was just as bad as holding heretical opinions. This problem was the focus of the bishop's concern in another letter written to monks during the third exile.²⁴⁰ Athanasius warned against two groups of people: true Arians and those who were not Arians but associated with them: 'However, there are people who believe the opinions of Arius who are going about the monasteries for no other reason than so that, as if coming to you and returning from us, they might seduce the simple. Moreover, there are persons who claim not to believe the opinions of Arius, but who associate with them and pray together with them.'²⁴¹ From this we learn that opponents of Athanasius were attempting to gain support from the monks. Also, it would seem that some monks did not feel that theological differences should preclude the giving and receiving of hospitality and praying together. Athanasius condemned this practice of generous or indiscriminate fellowship: 'For when someone sees you, the faithful in Christ, in communion with such people, he will think this to be a matter of indifference and fall into the mud of impiety.'²⁴² The monks placed a high value on hospitality: they told how a Manichaean monk had been converted to catholic Christianity by another monk showing him hospitality without regard to their theological division.²⁴³ To them, such fellowship was 'a matter of indifference' (*ἀδιάφορον*, *indiscretum*). Not to Athanasius, however; to him, it was 'the mud of impiety' (*ὁ τῆς ἀσεβείας βόρβορος*, *caenum impietatis*). Athanasius believed that the withdrawal of hospitality could bring wavering monks firmly to the pro-Athanasian side:

²³⁹ *H. Ar. ep.* 3 (182. 24-6 Op.).

²⁴⁰ *Ep. mon.* (PG 26. 1185-8). G. de Jerphanion has demonstrated that the old Latin version of this letter, found in the Vatican manuscript Regin. lat. 133 with works of Lucifer of Cagliari, represents a more original form of the letter than does Mauntracon's Greek, which is abridged. This was made clear by a 4th-cent. Greek inscription containing the text of Athanasius' letter found at the Monastery of Epiphanius at Thebes. He has published all three versions of the letter in 'La Vraie Teneur d'un texte de Saint Athanase rétablie par l'épigraphie', *RSR* 20 (1930), 529-44. My study is based primarily on the Latin text, with reference to the two Greek versions.

²⁴¹ *Ep. mon.* (lat.) 12-17 de J.

²⁴² *Ibid.* 26-30 de J.

²⁴³ *Verba sen.* 13. 11 (PL 73. 945).

Therefore, when someone comes to you, if he brings, according to the blessed John [cf. 2 John 10], right doctrine, say to him, 'Hail!' and receive such a one like a brother. But if someone pretends to confess the right faith, yet appears to be in communion with people like this, urge the person to remove himself from such a custom; and if he so promises, treat him too like a brother. But if he persists in a contentious spirit, avoid him as well. . . . And those who see that you do not pray with them will receive benefit by fearing lest they be reckoned to be impious and people who believe such things [the opinions of Arius].²⁴⁴

Once again, Athanasius reshaped an important monastic value, hospitality, by insisting that the monks take into account theological differences in their relationships with one another. This policy was designed to have the political effect of isolating wavering or Arian-sympathizing monks from the most prominent monastic communities, which by now were closely linked to the pro-Athanasian hierarchy.

The *Life of Antony* was the climactic weapon in Athanasius' campaign against monastic sympathy for the Arian cause and indifference about the controversy.²⁴⁵ The *Life* has been shown to have been 'a major offensive' in Athanasius' battle with the Arians. The bishop's anti-Arian campaign among the monks has been described as a war fought on 'two fronts': first, 'the practical work of contact, correspondence, and negotiation'; secondly, 'the related but more theoretical task of propaganda—specifically, the development of the view that the monastic ideal is the product, the legitimate offspring, of only one set of christological and soteriological ideas.'²⁴⁶ So far we have been concerned with the first front. The second, the portrayal of Antony's life and spirituality in a manner compatible with Athanasius' theology, will be examined in Chapter 4. At this point our focus is on how the *Life* furthered each of the elements of the anti-Arian campaign of the third exile. Athanasius was eager to show that Antony adhered fully to the orthodox programme because 'the Arians falsely claimed that he held the same view as they'; he depicts Antony responding to this claim by appearing in Alexandria, publicly denouncing Arian thought with a summary of the Athanasian christology, and commanding that any fellowship with Arians be withdrawn.²⁴⁷ Athanasius has Antony practise what he preaches:

²⁴⁴ *Ep. mon.* (lat.) 37-47, 57-60 de J.

²⁴⁵ Cf. Brian Brennan, 'Athanasius' *Vita Antonii*: A Sociological Interpretation', *VC* 39 (1985), 209-27, at 218-19.

²⁴⁶ Robert C. Gregg and Dennis E. Groh, *Early Arianism—A View of Salvation* (Philadelphia, 1981), 131-59, at 134.

²⁴⁷ *VA* 60 (*PG* 26. 941); cf. Gregg and Groh, *Early Arianism*, 138.

In things having to do with belief, he was truly wonderful and orthodox. Perceiving their wickedness and apostasy from the outset, he never held communion with the Melitian schismatics. And neither toward the Manicheans nor toward any other heretics did he profess friendship, except to the extent of urging the change to right belief, for he held and taught that friendship and association with them led to injury and destruction of the soul. So in the same way he abhorred the heresy of the Arians, and he ordered everyone neither to go near them nor to share their erroneous belief. Once when some of the Ariomaniacs came to him, sounding them out and learning that they were impious, he chased them from the mountain, saying that their doctrines were worse than serpents' poison.²⁴⁸

Antony does precisely what Athanasius had urged in his second letter to the monks: mere association with Arians, the bishop had claimed, would mire someone in 'the mud of impiety'; here Antony claims it will lead to 'injury and destruction of the soul'. As Athanasius had suggested, Antony's only contact with such 'heretics' is to urge them to abandon their unorthodox beliefs. These matters are still on the great monk's mind as he approaches death; he says in his final discourses:

Be zealous in protecting the soul from foul thoughts, as I said before, and compete with the saints, but do not approach the Melitian schismatics, for you know their evil and profane reputation. Nor are you to have any fellowship with the Arians, for their impiety is evident to everyone. And should you see the judges advocating their cause, do not be troubled, for this will end—their fanaticizing posture is something perishable and ephemeral. Rather, keep yourselves pure from contact with them . . . And let there be no fellowship between you and the schismatics, and certainly none with the heretical Arians. For you know how I too have shunned them because of their Christ-battling and heterodox teaching.²⁴⁹

Athanasius had told Serapion to avoid the Arian movement 'even if it has the patronage of the Emperor and of all human beings'; so too Antony urges the monks to shun the Arians even if 'you see the judges advocating their cause'. When an imperial official, Balacius, does actively support the Arian cause, Antony accurately predicts his untimely demise; this story parallels the account of Arius' death that Athanasius so vigorously propagated.²⁵⁰ Athanasius makes Antony's last act to bestow pieces of clothing on Athanasius and on the bishop's close ally, the monk-bishop Serapion of Thmuis.²⁵¹

²⁴⁸ VA 68 (PG 26. 940b-1a; tr. Gregg, *Athanasius*, 83-4).

²⁴⁹ Ibid. 89, 91 (PG 26. 968b, 969c-72a; tr. Gregg, *Athanasius*, 95-7).

²⁵⁰ Ibid. 86 (PG 26. 964). ²⁵¹ Ibid. 91 (PG 26. 972b).

Athanasius' depiction of Antony dovetails with each element of the bishop's monastic anti-Arian campaign: a theological attack on the Arian doctrine and defence of Athanasius as the true leader of orthodoxy; a sign of God's judgement against the Arians in the sudden, grisly death of one of their leaders; and the withdrawal of fellowship from adherents to unorthodox thinking. Combined with the depiction of Antony's progress as reflecting Athanasian christology and soteriology,²⁵² these emphases made the *Life of Antony* Athanasius' ultimate weapon in his anti-Arian work during the third exile (356-62). The success of this campaign is evident in that Athanasius was able to escape capture not only throughout the six years of that exile, but also during the fourth and fifth exiles as well (362-3; 365-6). Some ancient observers attributed the bishop's ability to elude imperial officials to his mysterious powers of clairvoyance, his enemies calling it 'sorcery', his friends 'the gift of prophecy'.²⁵³ But other reports transmit the more likely scenario that numerous Egyptian monks were won over by Athanasius' campaign and so protected him. Thus, Duke Artemius, the cruel torturer of the virgin Eudemonis, was frustrated in his attempt to find Athanasius among the Pachomian monks:

The duke asked through an interpreter, 'Where is your father?' Abba Pecussius answered, 'He has gone to the monasteries.' And he said, 'The one who comes after him, where is he?' They showed him Abba Psarfein, the Great Steward. And [Artemius] told him privately, 'I have an imperial order against Athanasius the bishop, and he is said to be with you.' Abba Psarfein replied, 'He is indeed our father, but I have never yet seen his face. Still, here is the monastery.' After he had searched and not found him, he said to those in the *synaxis*, 'Come, pray for me.' They said, 'We cannot, because we have a commandment from our father not to pray with anyone who follows the Arians'—for they saw with the duke one of the Arians who was acting as bishop—and they left. So he prayed alone. And as he fell asleep in the *synaxis* by day, he woke up with a bleeding nose and was troubled—we do not know for sure what happened to him—and full of fear, he said, 'When that happened to me in the vision, I hardly escaped death with God's mercy.' Thus he withdrew. When Abba Theodore returned and heard these things, he gave praise to God.²⁵⁴

The effects of Athanasius' work are clear in this story, whether it reports actual events of c. 360 or merely reflects attitudes fully developed later. The monks consider Athanasius their 'father', although they have never

²⁵² See Gregg and Groh, *Early Arianism*, 142-53, and Ch. 4 of this book.

²⁵³ *Soz. H.c.* 4. 10.

²⁵⁴ VP 138 (86. 32-87. 15 Halkin); cf. S. Bo. 185.

seen him.²⁵⁵ They have received the bishop's directive not to pray with Arian sympathizers, and they obey it. Moreover, Artemius, the Arian patron, nearly meets the same fate as Arius and Balacius, but is spared by 'God's mercy'. To be sure, the monks offer little in the way of a theological defence of Athanasian orthodoxy, but their loyalty to their 'father' the bishop is no less firm. Thanks to the work of Athanasius, the monks do not enjoy any exemption from ecclesiastical politics, but must take sides. Here the Egyptian Church is well along the path that will lead to Bishop Cyril's bringing gangs of monks to church councils in support of Alexandrian orthodoxy.

The events that we have considered in this chapter occurred primarily during the second half of Athanasius' episcopate, after 350. By this time the potential consequences of the withdrawal of so many dedicated Christian men into the desert or behind monastery walls had become apparent. Questions arose about the meaning of the monks' withdrawal for their relationship to the wider Church. Could monks, for example, regulate their own ascetic practices and settle differences on such matters among themselves? To some extent they could, Athanasius seemed to say in his ascetic correspondence. But when monks practised too much sleep deprivation or absented themselves from the Eucharist because of nocturnal emissions, Athanasius intervened and labelled such practices heretical. The bishop used arguments based on Scripture to legitimate his own ascetic programme of reduced attention to bodily functions and greater devotion to meditation. He also asserted the bishop's right to adjudicate disputes among monks.

Dracontius and his advisers seemed to think that a withdrawn monk was released from any obligation to serve in a church office if he were called. Athanasius denied this and appointed numerous monks to bishoprics throughout Egypt. He reminded Dracontius that he was part of a Church that was united by its sacraments and by its common life of imitation of the saints. The responsibilities of monk and bishop were different, Athanasius agreed, but one was not more worthy than the other. Dracontius' character would be determined not by his 'position' in the desert or the world, but by his 'action', his moral effort within whatever context he found himself.

Yet a third question was the extent to which monastic communities, like that founded by Pachomius, could be independent of episcopal

²⁵⁵ Recall that, if the reconstruction above is correct, Athanasius had not visited the area of the Pachomian monasteries since around 330 and would not again until 363 or later.

control and free to govern themselves. Pachomius insisted on the full autonomy of his federation and resisted bishops who tried to intervene in his community's internal affairs. Theodore, however, was more pragmatic: the large and prosperous federation of his day required stable and friendly relations with the Alexandrian episcopate. He sought and received Athanasius' help in resolving the strained relationship between him and Horsisius. At Theodore's death, Athanasius made clear to the Pachomian monks that they were to accept Horsisius as their new leader. Athanasius was willing to grant the Pachomian federation its autonomy, but he intervened in its affairs when he saw order in danger.

Finally, could monks avoid taking sides in the political conflicts that rocked the Egyptian Church? Some monks appeared to think so: they ate and prayed with just about anyone, without regard to ecclesiastical affiliation. Other monks did become partisans in the Arian conflict, but of the Arians, to Athanasius' horror. Athanasius insisted that monks had to discriminate on the basis of political loyalties, and he rallied the desert fathers to his party at a crucial moment in the struggle: the expulsion of the Athanasians from Alexandria in 356. With the help of the monks, Athanasius was never captured by the imperial police and was able to reclaim his see in 362.

On each of the issues, Athanasius claimed that the monk's withdrawal did not sever his more basic tie to the wider Church. When Antony withdrew into a wilderness where allegedly no monk had gone before, he initiated a dynamic in the monastic movement toward separation, toward an increasing distance from the settled land and its parishes and bishops. Athanasius' primary task with respect to the desert monks was therefore one of integration: bringing them into the episcopal hierarchy and enlisting them in doctrinal and political conflicts. From this perspective, although his ultimate goal remained church unity under the episcopate, the essential thrust of Athanasius' dealings with the desert monks was quite different from that of his regulations of the Alexandrian virgins. Because the virgins were so disturbingly active in the Arian crisis, because their urban setting presented them with so many opportunities for independent associations and activities, and simply because they were women, Athanasius was eager to set the virgins apart, to counter their tendencies toward involvement in the Church's public life with exhortations to separation and seclusion. While he urged virgins to be silent and secluded, the bishop entreated Dracontius to come out from hiding and to preach. Athanasius called virgins 'brides of Christ' and 'daughters of Jerusalem', symbolically relating them to divine beings and heavenly

cities; but the monks he called 'fathers of flocks' and 'children of the Church', politically relating them to earthly, concrete groups of human beings.²⁵⁶ In both cases, however, Athanasius pursued the same goal: a united Church, composed of ascetic and lay Christians, both groups having their place, each sex having its traditional gender role, but all under the care of the bishops.

In his correspondence with the Alexandrian virgins, Athanasius' pursuit of this goal involved his attack on the academic authority of the gifted teacher in favour of the institutional authority of bishops and priests; also when addressing monks, Athanasius placed the bishop and his priests at the centre of church unity. But just as he urged older virgins to serve as behavioural models for younger women, so too Athanasius recognized the guidance that advanced monks like Ammoun offered to less experienced monks. None the less, Athanasius was determined that these monastic 'advisers' would guide their disciples within limits determined by ecclesiastical rule and the opinions issued by the patriarch. Still another way that a successful monk could exercise authority, which I have not discussed in this chapter, was to act as a spiritual patron for other Christians. Athanasius addressed this issue in his *Life of Antony*, which is the subject of Chapter 4. At this point let us note that Athanasius recognized the ascetic teaching authority of advanced monks, but limited it with the higher authority of the episcopal hierarchy.

In his letters to the desert fathers, Athanasius developed themes that also appear in his writings to the virgins: the ascetic life as a battle with Satan; the reorientation of the body-mind relationship and, hence, the direction of physical ascetic practices toward this goal; imitation of the saints as the basic structure of the Christian life; the danger of unorthodox ideas and associations; the Church as a hierarchical unity, made up of married people and celibates. As he expounded these themes, the bishop took monastic ideas and values—bodily discipline, conflict with Satan and his demons, hospitality, withdrawal, and the superiority of sexual renunciation—and transformed them in ways that both continued the ascetic tradition and cohered with his goal of ecclesiastical order. To Athanasius, the spirituality of the ascetic Christian could not be essentially different from that of the lay Christian. Hence, the themes that Athanasius developed in his ascetic writings did not apply to monks and virgins alone, but also shaped his pastoral vision for the mass of Christians. Like other fourth-century bishops, Athanasius faced the task

²⁵⁶ *Ep. Amun.* 69. 18–19 J.; *Ep. Ors.* 1 = VP 144 (91. 13 Halkin).

of articulating, within the imperially sponsored Church, a truly catholic spirituality, one that embraced both the perfection of the desert fathers and the humbler aspirations of the ordinary Christians whom they left behind. That spirituality is the subject of the following chapter.

Asceticism in Athanasius' Theology and Spirituality

When Hieracas proclaimed to Egyptians around the beginning of the fourth century that the incarnation of Christ had brought an end to marriage and had ushered in the era of 'chastity and continence', he stood firmly in a long tradition of Christian ethical perfectionism. From its origins, Christianity had featured a two-tiered ethic: some of its adherents gave up home, family, and wealth for Christ; most did not. Hieracas' spirituality, however, was meant only for the ascetic élite, those persons who wanted, by their renunciation of sex and normal amounts of food and sleep, to lift themselves above the mass of ordinary human beings. Less perfect Christians had no place in Hieracas' virginal paradise: even children could not 'inherit the kingdom of heaven because they have not taken part in the contest'.¹ When he tried to dissuade Alexandrian virgins from accepting Hieracas' ideas, Athanasius offered his own vision of heaven in response. It consisted not only of virgins, but also of their parents and virtuous married women: 'Virginity leads and walks in front, as she is accustomed, with great boldness, but they all will be a single chorus and a single symphony in the faith.'² We have seen in the two previous chapters how in his dealings with virgins and monks Athanasius attempted to translate this spiritual vision into political reality. Athanasius believed that the 'two ways of life', marriage and virginity,³ could best flourish in a Church centred around the local worshipping communities connected with the Alexandrian episcopate: ascetic communities were to be satellites of this hierarchical organization. In the present chapter I turn from Athanasius' political encounters with discreet groups of ascetic Christians to examine the comprehensive spiritual vision that informed them. The goal is to understand how Athanasius' spirituality, unlike that of Hieracas, was able to embrace practitioners of both of the 'two ways of life'.

¹ Epiph. *Haer.* 67. 2. 7 (3. 134. 27-135. 4 Holl-Dummer).

² *Ep. virg.* 1. 21 (82. 28-9; 83. 2-12 Lef.).

³ *Ep. Amun.* 68. 21-2 J.

Athanasius explicitly said that the purpose of his spiritual programme was to enable a person to 'form oneself' (*τυποῦν ἑαυτόν*).⁴ This language of self-formation identifies Athanasius' ascetic regime as one of the programmes in antiquity that Michel Foucault has called 'technologies of the self': regimes 'which permit individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality'.⁵ Foucault has described how 'cultivation of the self' became a central theme in the philosophical and medical discourses of the early empire and formed the background for reflection on sexual practices.⁶ He appears to have identified in early Christian asceticism three transformations of previous discourse about the self and sexuality: a substitution of an ethic of self-renunciation for the classical 'aesthetics of the self'; a focus on the solitary individual's internal life, rather than on acts with another person; and a codification of permitted and prohibited sexual acts leading to the confessional.⁷ Foucault's studies of 'technologies of the self' will provide valuable insights into Athanasius' regime of self-formation, but there are also problems with his approach to early Christian materials.⁸ In the case of Athanasius, we will indeed find an ethic of self-renunciation, but an 'aesthetics of the self' still remains. Moreover, in this chapter I shall explore more fully than Foucault's works do how Athanasius' ascetic programme of self-formation cohered with and supported his political programme of church formation, how his technology of the self was also a technology of power.

One facet of Athanasius' political programme that we have studied is his campaign against academic Christianity; the bishop sought to detach Alexandrian virgins from Arian study circles by disparaging the title of 'teacher', attacking the Arian notion of the Word as having advanced in knowledge and virtue, and secluding virgins in self-contained communities of women. Athanasius promulgated a canon of Scripture in his 39th *Festal Letter* in order to replace the speculation of Christian teachers with an unchanging doctrine derived from the Bible. These tactics found their correlate in Athanasius' theology of the Christian life.

⁴ *Ep. Marcell.* 10 (PG 27. 20c); cf. *Ar.* 3. 20 (PG 26. 365c); *VA* 55 (PG 26. 925a).

⁵ Michel Foucault, 'Technologies of the Self', in L. H. Martin, et al. (eds.), *Technologies of the Self* (Amherst, Mass., 1988), 16-49, at 18; cf. *The History of Sexuality*, tr. R. Hurley (New York, 1978-86), 2. 10-11.

⁶ Foucault, *History*. 3. 39-68.

⁷ Elizabeth A. Clark, 'Foucault, the Fathers, and Sex', *JAAR* 56 (1988), 619-41, at 626-7.

⁸ *Ibid.*

The first part of this chapter examines how Athanasius removed intellectual contemplation of God from the centre of his spirituality, and instead defined the Christian life in ascetic terms as control of the body's passions and cultivation of virtue. The model Christian was no longer the insightful intellectual, but the self-controlled ascetic. Athanasius eschewed an educational paradigm in describing the Christian life and instead articulated a myth (humanity's ascent to heaven past weakened demonic powers) that stressed moral effort and required practices of withdrawal from human society, which he metaphorically described as a death. The Christian life became an ascetic life.

This ascetic spirituality raised the issue of the nature of the Christian Church: Egyptian Christians included not only monks and virgins but also married people. The second part of this chapter describes how Athanasius accounted for the Church's unity and diversity. He did so by defining the Church as a *πολιτεία* ('commonwealth' or 'way of life') that was formed through imitation of the saints; an ethic of imitation followed naturally from Athanasius' theological emphasis on the difference between Creator and created, and it helped him to claim that the Church was a network of diverse persons bound together through a process of modelling and copying. A set of images drawn from Scripture further enabled Athanasius to articulate how the varied lifestyles of Christians could form a united body: ordinary Christians, he said, practised a life of renunciation that differed from that of ascetics only in degree, not in character. In this way Athanasius could see the different programmes of self-formation that monks, virgins, and married people practised as variations on a single ascetic pattern.

Athanasius described the asceticism of the ordinary Christian in his *Festal Letters*; this moderate technology of the self is studied in the final section of this chapter. The 'discipline opposed to sin', as Athanasius called it, took its shape from the celebration of Lent and Easter: because the Christian Pasch was an epitome of the Christian life, its discipline constituted an intensified form of that practised throughout the year. Through prayers and vigils, study of the Scripture, and limited renunciation of sex, food, and wealth, even ordinary married Christians could control their bodily passions and ward off the attacks of demons. Examination of this paschal discipline will reveal an ascetic programme especially suited to persons of wealth and education, a group whose allegiance to the Athanasian episcopate was the glue that held together the fragile earthly counterpart of the heavenly 'single symphony in the faith' that Athanasius so eloquently praised.

THE CHRISTIAN LIFE AS AN ASCETIC LIFE

Prior to Athanasius Christian spirituality in Alexandria had taken its character from the works of such intellectuals as Valentinus, Clement, and Origen. Particularly as formulated by Origen, it placed contemplation of God at the centre of the Christian life; moral reformation, the turning away from vice and the learning of virtue, was chiefly a stage of purification in preparation for the real task of advancing in knowledge of God through study of the Scriptures.⁹ This Platonizing programme was an optimistic one: Origen assumed 'a certain kinship' between the human mind and God and so was confident that human beings were free to progress in the divinizing contemplation of God.¹⁰ If the basic Christian story is one of fullness followed by lack and restoration, Christians like Origen interpreted this story in epistemological terms as the loss of an original human knowledge of God and its restoration. The academic study of the Scriptures was an ascending voyage of deepening rediscovery of oneself and of God. This intellectual spirituality was well suited to the study circles that teachers like Arius and Hieracas guided, and its traces remain even in the thought of Athanasius throughout his entire career. However, Athanasius modified the Alexandrian spiritual tradition that he received so as to give it a character less intellectual and more ethical.¹¹ My purpose in this section is not to present a full discussion of Athanasius' soteriology or spirituality, since fine studies of these topics are available,¹² but to highlight this shift in an ascetic direction.¹³ The Arian crisis made Athanasius place the distinction between Creator and created at the centre of his theological discourse, replacing Origen's basic hierarchy of spiritual and material:¹⁴ this crucial

⁹ See Andrew Louth, *The Origins of the Christian Mystical Tradition* (Oxford, 1981), 52-74; Bernard McGinn, *The Foundations of Mysticism*, vol. 1 of *The Presence of God* (New York, 1991), 101-30.

¹⁰ 'Certain kinship': *Or. Mart.* 47 (tr. Rowan A. Greer, *Origen: An Exhortation to Martyrdom, Prayer, First Principles: Book IV. Prologue to the Commentary on the Song of Songs, Homily XXVII on Numbers* (New York, 1979), 76); *Princ.* 1. 1. 7 (tr. G. W. Butterworth, *Origen: On First Principles* (repr. Gloucester, Mass., 1973), 13).

¹¹ Cf. Louis Bouyer, *L'Incarnation et l'église-corps du Christ dans la théologie de saint Athanase* (Paris, 1943), 23.

¹² In addition to the works listed in nn. 9 and 11, see J. Roldanus, *Le Christ et l'homme dans la théologie d'Athanasie d'Alexandrie* (Leiden, 1968), and Carlton Mills Badger, Jr., 'The New Man Created in God', Ph.D. thesis (Duke, 1990).

¹³ J. Rebecca Lyman finds Athanasius' theology well suited to his social role as an 'ascetic bishop' (*Christology and Cosmology* (Oxford, 1993), 124-59).

¹⁴ Andrew Louth, 'Athanasius's Understanding of the Humanity of Christ', *SP* 16 (1985), 300-18, at 311.

difference between uncreated and created being made Athanasius question any optimistic assessment of humanity's likeness to God, an issue which he recast in moral terms. Athanasius' distrust of intellectual speculation led him to displace ignorance and knowledge as the principal themes of the Christian story and replace them with corruption and incorruption.¹⁵ Not ignorance of God, but the moral and physical corruption of the body became the chief obstacle to the human relationship with God; contemplation was no longer the means of human divinization, but one result of the soul's restored governance of the body and its unruly passions. Humanity's return to the divine remained an ascent to heaven, but not an insightful mind's upward flight from material to spiritual realities, but rather an embodied person's determined effort to pass by weakened demonic powers. Moral reformation took centre stage in the Christian life, which gained an increasingly ascetic character.

These tendencies in Athanasius' thought appear even in his early treatise *Against the Nations*, where the Alexandrian contemplative tradition exerts its greatest influence.¹⁶ According to the young Athanasius, Adam in his ideal state was a contemplative ascetic: he was, in the words of a modern interpreter, 'unconscious of his own self, spontaneously turned away from his body and from the sensible world, and ecstatically turned toward the divine Logos'.¹⁷ Athanasius' description of prelapsarian human beings conforms to traditional contemplative spirituality: created after the Word of God, God's image, the original human beings contemplated God through the Word by means of their rational faculty, 'clinging to the divine and intelligible realities in heaven through the power of their mind'.¹⁸ Origen could have written this. But already cracks appear in this picture of the intellectual communion of rational creatures with their God. Unlike Origen's rational beings, Athanasius' ideal human beings already had bodies, whose 'desires' had to be controlled, and souls, whose 'purity' had to be preserved.¹⁹ Even before the fall, in terms of Christian history, and even before the full theological debates of the Arian crisis, in terms of Athanasius' personal history, Athanasius tied humanity's knowledge of God to virtue and

¹⁵ Bouyer, *L'Incarnation et l'église-corps*, 37-8.

¹⁶ *Gent.* 2-4. Louth contrasts the 'Origenist' *Against the Nations* with the 'more characteristically Athanasian' *On the Incarnation* (*Origins*, 78).

¹⁷ Charles Kannengiesser, 'Athanasius of Alexandria and the Foundation of Traditional Christology', *TS* 34 (1973), 103-13, at 108; cf. E. P. Meijering, *Athanasius: 'Contra Gentes'* (Leiden, 1984), 17.

¹⁸ *Gent.* 2. 20-1 T.

¹⁹ *Ibid.* 2. 22, 33 T.

control of the body and thus anticipated the great theme of moral and physical corruption in *On the Incarnation*. Adam was not merely a contemplative; he was also an ascetic in full control of his body. The absolute Athanasian distinction between Creator and created lay behind the ascetic character of Athanasius' vision of ideal humanity. Athanasius believed that, because human beings were created out of nothing, they were naturally subject to corruption and enjoyed their knowledge of God precariously, only as a gift, as a function of the rational mind that God had given them. The soul and body were the places in the composite human being where communion with God was endangered. The body was mortal and subject to corruption: only constant attention to God prevented it from decaying into non-being.²⁰ The soul was 'by nature mobile [*εὐκίνητος*]', able to turn toward or away from the good.²¹ The corruptible body and the changeable soul were the unstable components of the human personality; the forces that could destabilize them were 'desire' (*ἐπιθυμία*) and 'pleasure' (*ἡδονή*).²² In this precarious situation, the task of the original human beings was an ascetic one: to keep their body and its desires subject to the rule of the rational mind, and to keep their soul pure by ignoring the body's desires and taking pleasure only in God.

Adam and Eve did not persevere in this ascetic self-control: they turned their attention away from God and so became victimized by the body's desires and corruption. Human beings exchanged contemplation of God for 'contemplation of the body' and turned their attention away from God and higher realities and toward things 'closer to themselves', namely the body and sensible things.²³ The first sin, then, was not pride or disobedience, but a loss of moral nerve, a failure to persevere in renunciation of the body and attention to God: Athanasius described it with such terms as 'negligence' (*κατολιγωρεῖν*), 'hesitation' (*ὀκνεῖν*), 'lack of attention' (*ἀμελία*), and 'forgetting' (*ἐπιλανθάνεσθαι*); the result was 'evil' (*κακία*).²⁴ The consequent disorientation of the mind extended to the affections of the soul: human desires became selfish, defiling, and orientated toward the pleasures of the body.²⁵ Single-minded, un-

²⁰ *Gent.* 33. 6-7 T.; *Inc.* 4. 28-9 T.

²¹ *Gent.* 4. 8-13 T. Lyman takes this description to refer (also?) to the *voûs* (*Christology and Cosmology*, 141).

²² *Gent.* 2. 22; 3. 8-20; 4. 3 T.

²³ *Ibid.* 3. 3-5, 16-17 T.

²⁴ *Ibid.* 3. 2-3; *Inc.* 6. 18; 10. 9; *Gent.* 2. 1; 3. 12-13 T.; P. Athanasius Recheis, 'Sancti Athanasii Magni Doctrina de primordiis seu quomodo explicaverit Genesim 1-3', *Anton.* 28 (1953), 219-60, at 250.

²⁵ *Gent.* 3. 8-13 T.

distracted attention toward God gave way to the multiple, divided 'desires of the body', and human beings became morally paralysed by fear of death, since death would terminate their enjoyment of these desires:

Having abandoned the comprehension of and desire for the one true being, I mean God, they [human beings] next fell into the disparate and divided desires of the body. Then, as usually happens, forming a desire for every and all things, they began to have such a habit for them that they feared losing them. Thus too fears, terrors, pleasure, and thoughts of death came upon the soul. For because it did not want to abandon its desires, it feared death and separation from the body. And even more, desiring and not getting satisfaction, it learned to murder and commit injustice.²⁶

It is striking how Athanasius tied together moral disorder and the fear of death. This terror was a result of humanity's new vulnerability to the processes of the created order, for Adam and Eve found themselves 'naked': that is, 'naked of the contemplation of divine things'.²⁷ Stripped of the protective clothing of divine contemplation, people were now exposed to the process of corruption and death natural to them.²⁸ Human beings thus began an inevitable and accelerating decline into moral decay (idolatry and perverse behaviour) and toward certain death.²⁹ The mind's disorientation left it anxious and overwhelmed by the body's passions rather than in control of them: Adam was no longer a contemplative ascetic.

The contrast between Athanasius' ascetic version of the fall and Origen's intellectual version is instructive. Like Origen, Athanasius portrayed prelapsarian humanity as enjoying intellectual communion with the Word of God, through whom they received knowledge of the Father; and he described the fall as the loss of this knowledge and the turn toward the lower, sensible realm; for both Alexandrians, the fall

²⁶ *Gent.* 3. 22-31 T. On the 'many anxieties' associated with 'the pleasures', see *Frag.* (cop.) 3 (122. 12-13 Lef.).

²⁷ *Gent.* 3. 20-2 T.

²⁸ *Inc.* 4. 17-33 T.

²⁹ The process was accelerated by the added penalty of God's sentence of death: 'Because this [the fall] happened, people were dying, and corruption then took control of them, becoming even more powerful over the entire race than was natural, to the extent that it took up against them God's threat on account of the violation of the commandment. For even in their transgressions human beings had not stopped at the set limits; rather, gradually stretching forward, they at last went beyond measure. In the beginning they were inventors of evil, calling upon themselves death and corruption, but later they turned to vice and surpassed all lawlessness, and, not stopping with one evil, they conceived of all sorts of new ones and became insatiable in sinning'; *Inc.* 5. 11-21 T.; cf. *Gent.* 8.

resulted from diminished attention to or desire for God. In Origen's version of creation and the fall, however, all created beings originated as minds, entities of pure reason alone; this was the past of every human being born on earth. The superaddition of body and soul was secondary and a result of certain rational entities' fall—over countless ages of time—away from God. The human body became the condition and measure of the soul's educational progress. As each human being advanced in knowledge of God and eventually returned to pure rational communion with God, the body provided a necessary training field, and its transformation reflected the self's gradual renewal in God's image.³⁰ For Athanasius, in contrast, the body was not a secondary addition to the human person. Human beings consisted of mind, body, and soul from the moment of their creation: the mind contemplated God, but the soul and body provided the possibility of abandoning that contemplation. In comparison with Origen's rational creatures, the Athanasian prelapsarian human beings had a more difficult task of ascetic perseverance because they already possessed a soul, whose affections were 'mobile', and a body, which was a dangerously close enticement toward interest in the sensible realm. The human body, in Athanasius' view, was no mere epiphenomenon of the soul; not a barometer of the individual's progress in divinizing contemplation; rather, the body took centre stage since its corruption was the great result of the fall. The pedagogical function of embodiment disappeared,³¹ and Athanasius turned away from the intellectual contemplative tradition of Alexandrian spirituality without fully repudiating it. For him contemplation was not 'a means of divinization', but merely 'one of the activities of the divinized soul'.³² The divinized soul was the one that had mastered the body and achieved a life of virtue: it was an ascetic soul.

According to Athanasius, the incarnation of the Word made a successful ascetic life possible once again: by dwelling in a human body, the Word granted incorruption to other human bodies, renewed humanity's knowledge of God in preparation for a life of virtue, and defeated the devil and his demons. Athanasius believed that these three benefits were most fully appropriated by ascetic Christians, monks and virgins. First, the incarnate Word granted incorruption to human bodies through

³⁰ See Peter Brown, *The Body and Society* (New York, 1988), 163–8; Margaret R. Miles, *Fullness of Life* (Philadelphia, 1981), 49–61.

³¹ Ekkehard Mühlberg, 'Vérité et bonté de Dieu: Une interprétation de *De incarnatione*, chapitre VI, en perspective historique', in C. Kannengiesser (ed.), *Politique et théologie chez Athanasie d'Alexandrie* (Paris, 1974), 215–30, esp. 223–6.

³² Louth, *Origins*, 78.

a series of 'achievements' (*κατορθώματα*) in his embodied career (for example, the ordeal in the Garden of Gethsemane), by which he conquered the destabilizing 'movements' (*κινήματα*) in the body that post-lapsarian humanity had been unable to control:

Because the Word was clothed in the flesh, as has been explained many times, every bite of the serpent was utterly extinguished from it, and when some evil grew again from the motions of the flesh, it was cut away, and with these death, that follower of sin, was also abolished . . . And these being destroyed from the flesh, we all were thus liberated according to the kinship of the flesh and for the future were joined, even we, to the Word.³³

This series of ascetic achievements climaxed in the passion, by which the Word freed human beings from their natural, but debilitating fear of death, a victory demonstrated by the courage of the martyrs:

From the most enduring purpose and courage of the holy martyrs it is shown that the divinity [of Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane] was not in terror, but the Saviour was taking away our terror. For just as he abolished death by death, and by human means all human circumstances, so by this so-called terror he removed our terror and made it so that people would no longer fear death.³⁴

By conquering fear of death, the Word removed a major obstacle to humanity's moral reformation and recovery of control over the body's passions. As the Word perfectly controlled his assumed body and remained untouched by its passions, he transformed the body itself, rendering it incorruptible, both morally and physically: the Word's perfect guidance divinized the flesh. Moral courage and control of the bodily passions were once again possible for human beings because they shared a 'kinship of the flesh' with the Word's assumed body. The virgin Mary, for example, 'was not anxious about death; rather, she grieved and sighed daily that she had not yet entered the gates of heaven'.³⁵

It is unclear precisely how, in Athanasius' view, this transfer of incorruptibility from the Word's assumed body to other human bodies took place. His dogmatic works manifest inconsistency on this point.³⁶ At some places the 'kinship of the flesh' appears to have been enough; as if they formed one massive body receiving a blood transfusion, all human beings automatically received the benefits of the Word's divinization of

³³ *Ar.* 2. 69 (*PG* 26. 293); Badger, 'New Man', 34-5, 74-98.

³⁴ *Ar.* 3. 57 (*PG* 26. 444); cf. *Inc.* 28. 1-8 T.; Badger, 'New Man', 85-9.

³⁵ *Ep. virg.* 1. 13 (79. 3-5 Lef.). On these 'gates of heaven' and the Word's opening of them, see below.

³⁶ J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines* (rev. edn.; San Francisco, 1960), 378-9; cf. Bouyer, *L'Incarnation et l'église-corps*, 124-31.

his human flesh: the Word, 'being impassable [*ἀπαθής*] by nature, remains as he is [during the incarnation], not harmed by them [the passions], but rather destroying and obliterating them; but human beings, because their passions are changed into impassability and destroyed, have become at last impassable and free of them forever'.³⁷ In other passages Athanasius implies that the individual's union with Christ in baptism is required for him or her to share in the incorruptibility granted by the incarnation:

But now, because the Word became human and made the properties of the flesh his own, these [passions] no longer touch the body on account of the Word who came in it. They have instead been destroyed by him, and at last human beings no longer remain sinners and dead people in accordance with their own passions; rather, having arisen in accordance with the Word's power, they remain immortal and incorruptible. Hence, too, because the flesh was born of the God-bearing Mary, he is said to have been born, he who provides to others their origin into being, so that he might transfer our origin into himself and we might no longer, as mere earth, return to earth, but might, as being joined to the Word from heaven, be carried into heaven by him. Therefore he likewise not unreasonably transferred to himself the other passions of the body, so that, no longer as human beings but as possessions of the Word, we might share in eternal life. For we no longer die in accordance with our former origin in Adam; rather, because at last our origin and all fleshly weakness has been transferred to the Word, we rise from earth, the curse of sin having been removed thanks to him who became in us a curse in our behalf. And rightly so, for just as, being from earth, we all die in Adam, so having been born from above by water and the Spirit, we all are made alive in Christ, the flesh being no longer earthly, but at last having been made rational ['wordified': *λογωθείση*] thanks to the Word of God, who became flesh for our sake.³⁸

This passage begins with general statements that imply a universal reception of incorruption, but it concludes with phrases ('having been born from above by water and the Spirit') that suggest the requirement of incorporation into the Church by baptism.³⁹ Despite this systematic confusion, Athanasius' pastoral writings indicate that, even if all human beings receive the incorruption of the Word's assumed body, they must

³⁷ *Ar.* 3. 34 (*PG* 26. 396c-7a). Speaking of Jesus' reception of the Holy Spirit during his baptism in the Jordan river, Athanasius writes: 'And if, as the Lord himself has said, the Spirit belongs to him and takes from what is his and he himself sends it, then it is not the Word, considered as the Word and Wisdom, who is anointed with the Spirit which he himself gives; rather, it is the flesh assumed by him which is anointed in him and by him, so that the sanctification, coming to the Lord as a human being, may come to all human beings through him'; *Ar.* 1. 47 (*PG* 26. 109c); cf. *Ar.* 2. 61.

³⁸ *Ar.* 3. 33 (*PG* 26. 393b-6a). ³⁹ Badger, 'New Man', 71-4.

individually appropriate it through lives of ascetic discipline within the Church.⁴⁰ Athanasius therefore depicted ascetic Christians as those persons who, through their renunciation of sex, food, and wealth, were most able to 'quiet and calm the body's passions', to 'remove themselves completely from the desires of the flesh', and so to achieve a 'balanced' disposition of the soul.⁴¹ The self-control of monks and virgins was the supreme example of human beings appropriating the Word's victory over the body's corruption.⁴² As one result of their exemplary self-control, ascetics enjoyed contemplation of God: 'undividedly attentive', they could keep their minds fixed on God and meditate continually on higher things.⁴³ Thus, monks and virgins came closest among human beings to becoming the contemplative ascetics that Athanasius thought Adam and Eve once had been.

Knowledge of God continued to have a function in Athanasius' spirituality as the second benefit of the Word's incarnation, but Athanasius subordinated such knowledge to the life of virtue. Before the incarnation, God used the 'patterns and shadows' of his dealings with Israel to educate humanity in three logically successive ways: first about himself, then about virtue, and finally about the future incarnation of his Son. Athanasius explained that, although this education produced several persons of virtue among the ancient Hebrews ('saints'), it was not successful among the general mass of human beings because they were still held captive to the process of moral and physical corruption unleashed by the fall.⁴⁴ The renewal of humanity according to the image of God required the appearance of the Word, God's image, among human beings, and the restoration of human knowledge of God required that this Word use a body to make himself known to human beings now attuned to their physical senses: the incarnation fulfilled both of these requirements.⁴⁵ This renewed knowledge of God continued to be available in the Scriptures, in which the unmediated voice of the Word became incarnate in words; but scriptural study was not an end in itself, not an exercise in divinizing contemplation of the divine, but a means to moral reformation and thus to physical incorruption.⁴⁶ Even those

⁴⁰ See the discussion of grace and free will in the *Festal Letters* below.

⁴¹ *Car. et temp.* 117. 19-21; *Frag.* (cop.) 2 (121. 17-18 Lef.); *Ep. virg.* 1. 13 (78. 8-9 Lef.).

⁴² *Inc.* 51. 7-6 T.; *Ep. virg.* 1. 8 (76. 20-5 Lef.).

⁴³ *Ep. virg.* 2. 4 (54-7 Leb.); *Virg.* (syr.) 11 (118-21 Leb.); *Mor. et val.* 6 (7. 7-11 D.); *Ep. Amun.* 64. 13-15 J.

⁴⁴ *Inc.* 12. 2-30 T.; *Epp. fest.* (syr.) 11. 3; 19. 4.

⁴⁵ *Inc.* 13-16.

⁴⁶ *Ep. fest.* 11. 3-7; *Inc.* 56-7; *Ep. Marcell.*; see the discussion of Scripture study below.

of academic Alexandrian spirituality that Athanasius retained be redirected toward the disciplined life of virtue.

In addition to bestowing incorruption on human bodies and renewing knowledge of God in human minds, the incarnate Word enabled human asceticism in a third way: by defeating the devil and his demons and thereby rendering them weak. Christ's triumph over death and corruption was also his defeat of the devil: 'From now on we will no longer fear the serpent, for he was reduced to nothing when he was attacked by the Saviour in the flesh'.⁴⁷ In Athanasius' Egypt, the demons fled at the mention of Christ's name and at the sign of the cross; the Athanasian Church was a sacred space cleared of the devil and his demonic allies.⁴⁸ Exorcisms at 'catholic' martyr shrines were dramatic evidence of this victory.⁴⁹ By their ascetic disciplines, all Christians continued to wage war with Christ's help against the devil, but monks and virgins especially so: even the virgin's clothing protected her from 'a spirit in the air'.⁵⁰ According to Athanasius, the air, as the space between earth and heaven, was the field on which Christ and his followers battled Satan and his demons: the cross, as a death 'in the air', was the most effective means by which the Word could gain his victory because a literal 'clearing of the air' was necessary. Before the fall, the human mind had been 'raised up high in the air, seeing the Word and seeing in him also the Word's Father'.⁵¹ But after the fall, Satan, 'having fallen from heaven, wanders around the lower atmosphere' with his demons, effectively blocking human access to heaven.⁵² 'The Lord', however, 'came to cast down the devil, clear the air, and prepare our way up [*anodos*] into heaven'.⁵³ When he wrote to his flock before Easter of 350, Athanasius put this idea most succinctly:

The place where our Lord Jesus Christ, who took upon himself death on behalf of all people, stretched out his hands was not somewhere on earth below, but in

⁴⁷ *Ar.* 2. 69 (PG 26. 293c). Here this theme takes a sudden misogynistic turn: 'Nor will we have to watch against woman beguiling us, for "in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like the angels" [Mark 12: 25], and in Christ Jesus there shall be "a new creation" and "neither male nor female, but Christ will be all and in all" [Gal. 6: 5; 3: 28]. And where Christ is, what fear or danger can still happen?'; *Ar.* 2. 69 (PG 26. 293c-6a).

⁴⁸ *Inc.* 50; 54; *Ep. fest.* (syr.) 10. 4.

⁴⁹ *Ep. fest.* (cop.) 42 (65. 3-15 Lef.).

⁵⁰ *Ascetics: Ep. virg.* 1. 32 (89. 2-27 Lef.); *Ep. Amun.*; *VA passim*. Protective clothing of virgin: *Virg.* (syr.) 15 (167-8 Leb.). All Christians: *Ep. fest.* (syr.) 3. 3; 10. 8; (cop.) 29.

⁵¹ *Gent.* 2. 24-6 T.

⁵² *Inc.* 25. 17-21 T. The idea that demons operate in the air goes back to 'Plato's *Epinomis* (984e) and appears in Origen (*Princ.* 2. 11. 6); E. P. Meijering, *Athanasius: De Incarnatione Verbi* (Amsterdam, 1989), 193-4.

⁵³ *Inc.* 25. 23-5 T.

the air itself, so that the salvation accomplished through the cross might be shown to be for all people everywhere by destroying the devil who was at work in the air, and so that he might reopen our way up [*ἀνοδος*] to heaven and make it free.⁵⁴

Thanks to Christ's descent and death in the air, the human path from earth to heaven through the air, formerly blocked by Satan, became once again clear and accessible: demons still roamed the upper atmosphere, but they had been made too weak to prevent diligent Christians from journeying upward.

The individual Christian's task, then, was to ascend to heaven by means of the way up (*ἀνοδος*) that Christ had made accessible; Athanasius made this point numerous times in the *Festal Letters*, in which he also described the Christian feast of Easter as the anticipation of a heavenly feast.⁵⁵ 'Joined to the Word', Christians 'no longer dwell on earth'.⁵⁶ Athanasius understood the Christian life in terms of a controlling myth of descent from and ascent to heaven. It is crucial to differentiate Athanasius' myth of heavenly ascent from Origen's myth of the fall and ascent of the soul, a Christianized version of a myth inherited from the Platonic tradition. Remnants of Origen's myth appear in Athanasius' *Against the Nations*: human beings, he said, descended from rational contemplation of God into the disorderly desires of the body and could 'reascend by means of the rational faculty of the soul' (*ἀναβῆναι τῷ νῷ τῆς ψυχῆς*), through an educational process of contemplation and control of the bodily passions.⁵⁷ But in Athanasius' other writings this venerable philosophical myth disappears into a drama in which embodied human beings (not merely souls) literally fall from heaven and cannot return because demonic forces occupy the air and the gates of heaven have been locked. Here the paradise that Adam lost is equated with the ultimate destination of saved human beings, and Christ's crucifixion and resurrection both render the demons powerless to block the human return to heaven and reopen the closed heavenly gates.⁵⁸ As Athanasius developed it, the myth of ascent no longer

⁵⁴ *Ep. fest.* 22 ap. *Cosm. Ind. Top.* 10. 4. 1-6 Wolska-Conus. So too *Ep. Adolph.* 7 (*PG* 26. 1081b): 'By stretching out his hands on the cross, he overthrew the "prince of the power of the air, who is now at work in the children of disobedience" [Eph. 2: 2], and he made the way [*ὁδός*] clear for us into the heavens.'

⁵⁵ Christian life as the ascent to heaven: *Ep. fest.* (syr.) 5. 3; 6. 11-12; (cop.) 24; 26; (gr.) 22; 43. Easter as anticipation of heavenly feast: *Ep. fest.* (syr.) 6. 12; 7. 8, 10; 10. 11; 14. 2; 20. 2; (gr.) 24; 28; 40; 42; 43; (cop.) 25; 26; 41.

⁵⁶ *Ar.* 2. 69 (*PG* 26. 293).

⁵⁷ *Gent.* 34. 12-26 T.

⁵⁸ 'For not only has he [the Word] comforted us with respect to the distance [from earth

carried pedagogical associations; human souls were not progressively re-educated in divine contemplation. Rather, it was the story of Christ's victory over Satan and of humanity's ability to be courageous in a life of moral effort:

Heaven truly is high, and its distance from us infinite, for 'the heaven of heavens', it says, 'belongs to the Lord' [Ps. 113: 24 (115: 16)]. But not on this account should we hesitate or be fearful as if the way there were impossible; rather, we should be zealous. For we do not need to bake brick in a fire and look for asphalt instead of mud, as did those former people who moved from the east, discovered a level place, and settled in the land of Senaar. For their languages were confused, and their work destroyed [Gen. 11: 2-8]. The Lord has reopened the way for us through his own blood and made it easy [εύκολος].⁵⁹

Human beings, according to Athanasius, did not actually enter heaven until after their natural death, but the myth of humanity's ascent to heaven still communicated something about the Christian's moral effort in this life: it required effort, but it was 'easy'. On the one hand, heaven's distance from earth indicated the need for human effort in the process of salvation: Christians must not 'hesitate' as did the original human beings, nor should they give in to the fear that the fall had brought on them; rather, they must be zealous. On the other hand, their efforts had certain hope of success because of the death and resurrection of Jesus, who had 'reopened the way up and made it easy' by defeating death and Satan. In demythologized language, the incarnation of Christ had made sufficient grace available, but people still had to use their will to make that grace fruitful.

The bishop repeatedly emphasized this necessity for human beings to use their free will in cultivating grace; this theological principle translated the myth of heavenly ascent into hortatory language. Athanasius frequently cited the Parables of the Talents (Matt. 25: 14-30) and of the Sower (Matt. 13: 3-8), both of which highlight the human responsibility

to heaven] and with encouragement; but he also has come and opened the gate that had been shut. For it was shut from the time when he cast Adam out from the paradise of delight and stationed the cherubim and the flaming sword turned to guard the way to the tree of life, but now it has been opened wide. And appearing with great joy and love for humanity, he who presided over the cherubim has led into paradise with himself the thief who confessed [Luke 23: 39-43]. He himself, having entered heaven as forerunner in our behalf, has opened the doors to all'; *Ep. fest.* 43 ap. *Cosm. Ind. Top.* 10. 10. 1-11; Wolska-Conus.

⁵⁹ Ibid. 10. 9. 7-16 Wolska-Conus. So too *Ep. fest.* 28 ap. *Cosm. Ind. Top.* 10. 5. 12-14 Wolska-Conus.: 'Even if the labour of such a way [ὁδός] is great, since it is [the way] to heaven, yet the Saviour himself has rendered even it easy [ἐλαφρά] and mild [χρηστῆ].'

to use what has been received.⁶⁰ The former inspired the bishop to state that 'our will should keep pace with the grace from God and not fall short, lest while our will remains idle, the grace given us should begin to depart, and the enemy, finding us empty and naked, should enter'.⁶¹ This nakedness of grace echoes the nakedness of contemplation that Adam and Eve suffered,⁶² but grace here is not merely a means of divine pedagogy, but a protective force against demonic powers. Athanasius feared that contemporary Christians, like the primeval couple, would neglect the grace that had been given them (making it 'unprofitable' and 'unfruitful') and thus become vulnerable to Satan.⁶³ The responsibility was theirs because human beings were free and the captains of their own destinies: 'We sail on this sea by our own free will, as though by a wind, for everyone is carried where it his will [to go]. Either, when the Word is navigating, one enters into rest, or, when pleasure is in control, one suffers shipwreck and is endangered by the storm.'⁶⁴ Because all human beings were free to use the grace that had been given them for good or ill, Athanasius called Christians those who manifested 'thanksgiving' by cultivating grace in lives of virtue and non-Christians those who displayed 'ingratitude' by squandering grace in lives of negligence.⁶⁵ The ultimate test of how well people made use of God's grace was how they fared during times of persecution and affliction: a theme of great importance to a bishop writing to his flock from exile in the West.⁶⁶ Without the refined analysis found in such authors as Origen and Plotinus, Athanasius thus shared the standard pre-Augustinian view that grace or providence provided the context in which human beings made free choices and proved beneficent or punitive depending on those choices.⁶⁷ In the vocabulary of Athanasius' myth, the Christian life was an ascent up the road to heaven, a path that had been made accessible by Christ

⁶⁰ Talents: *Epp. fest. (syr.)* 3. 2; 6. 5. Sower: *Epp. fest. (syr.)* 3. 3-4; 10. 4; 13. 5.

⁶¹ *Ep. fest. (syr.)* 3. 3 (28. 1-4 C.).

⁶² *Gen.* 3. 20-2 T.

⁶³ *Ep. fest. (syr.)* 3. 3 (28. 9, 16 C.); cf. *Epp. fest. (syr.)* 6. 5; 7. 7, 9; cf. Roldanus, *Christ et l'homme*, 120.

⁶⁴ *Ep. fest. (syr.)* 19. 7 (45*. 9-12 C.); cf. Lyman, *Christology and Cosmology*, 144.

⁶⁵ *Epp. fest. (syr.)* 3. 2-5; 6. 3; 10. 5. Here may be one way out of the conundrum over whether Athanasius' soteriology is 'mechanistic' and/or 'universalist' noted above. Through their 'kinship of the flesh' with the Word's assumed body, all human beings receive the benefits of Christ's victory over death and ignorance ('grace'), but they have to retain and cultivate this gift through the discipline of the Christian life ('free will'). In this sense, nearly all post-incarnational sinners are, in Athanasius' view, apostates.

⁶⁶ *Ep. fest. (syr.)* 3. 5.

⁶⁷ Rowan A. Greer, 'The Analogy of Grace in Theodore of Mopsuestia's Christology', *JTS*, NS 34 (1983), 82-98, at 83-92.

('grace'), but that still required the efforts of believers ('will'). But Athanasius did not phrase the issue of grace and freedom in pedagogical terms; rather, he saw the problem in terms of the conflict with Satan and ascetic control of the body: will one guide oneself by the Word or by pleasure?

The centrality of the exercise of the will in control of the body to Athanasius' spirituality explains why the problems raised by sleep figure so prominently in Athanasius' writings. In the last chapter we saw that Athanasius condemned monks who slept as little as possible, presumably in vigilant opposition to demons, and monks who abstained from the Eucharist when they had experienced a nocturnal emission. In the former case, Athanasius stressed that too little sleep would detract from 'the soul's watchfulness' and remarked that the soul enjoyed a contemplative life even while the body slept.⁶⁸ As for nocturnal emissions, Athanasius said that they took place 'involuntarily' and thus had no moral significance.⁶⁹ These arguments imply that sleep disconnects the soul and its faculty, the will, from the body: thus, Athanasius believed that in sleep the soul is free to travel to faraway places and even to heaven, and bodily functions occur without any involvement of the will. The bishop considered such temporary disconnection of will and body a necessary period of rest for the soul, without which the soul's purposeful control of the body during waking hours was seriously impaired. Moreover, Athanasius appears to have located desires like sexual lust in the body and to have granted them no independent existence in the soul. This observation coheres with Athanasius' treatment of the incarnate Christ, in which he attributed even emotions like fear not to any human soul that Christ may have possessed, but to the human flesh that the Word assumed.⁷⁰

But how could the Christian control his or her body within a turbulent society full of sensual pleasures? Athanasius' myth of ascent implied that Christians had to leave the earth on a journey to heaven; this task was accomplished in practical and social terms through practices of withdrawal. Athanasius described the necessity for withdrawal from the world most fully in his second *Festal Letter*, written during the winter of 329–30. It was during this period that the relatively

⁶⁸ *Mor. et val.* 6 (7. 1–16 D.).

⁶⁹ *Ep. Amun.* 65. 11–14 J.

⁷⁰ Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 286–7; M. Richard, 'Saint Athanase et la psychologie du Christ selon les Ariens', *M. Sc. Rel.* 4 (1947), 5–34, at 42–6; Aloys Grillmeier, SJ, *From the Apostolic Age to Chalcedon (451)*, vol. 1 of *Christ in the Christian Tradition*, tr. J. Bowden (2nd rev. edn., Atlanta, 1975), 315.

new patriarch of Egypt made his first tour of the Thebaid and had his brief, enigmatic interaction with Pachomius and Bishop Sarapion of Tentyra. It is impossible to know what effect his encounters with the Pachomians and the other ascetics in and near the Nile villages had on the young bishop. But as he wrote to his followers at the beginning of Lent, Athanasius told them of 'how powerful are quietness and withdrawal from human beings during the troubles [ὀχλήσεις] of life [βίος]'.⁷¹ The first step in one's ascent to the heavenly city is, the bishop wrote to his flock, to 'withdraw from the clamour of the crowds' through 'quietness' and 'casting off evil'; the resulting disposition of the soul enables the person to begin a life of virtue, eventually to become a 'friend of God', and finally to receive 'the revelation of higher things'. Athanasius contrasted sinful, unbelieving human society—'a large unjust crowd'—with the 'single righteous person' (cf. Prov. 11: 10–11; 16: 32), exemplified by a multitude of Old Testament figures who spent time alone. Such solitary 'saints' as Jeremiah and Abraham are 'shadows of the withdrawal "from darkness to his marvellous light" [1 Pet. 2: 9] and the ascent to the city in heaven'.⁷² Practices of withdrawal, in Athanasius' view, consisted minimally of the renunciation (temporarily or permanently) of certain nourishing or pleasurable acts, such as eating and sex ('casting off evil'); but they also included the more extreme act of severing social ties through withdrawal into a monastic community or to the life of a hermit (becoming alone). These social practices fostered the soul's redirection of its attentions from the distracting movements of body and toward God ('quietness').

Like other ancient writers, Athanasius spoke about the effect of practices of withdrawal with the extreme metaphor of death. Natural death, Athanasius believed, was the complete separation of the soul from the body;⁷³ the metaphor of death expressed the goal of ascetic renunciation as the withdrawal of the soul from the bodily passions. Because Christ had liberated human beings from natural death and the moral paralysis induced by fear of death, they now could, through practices of renunciation, achieve this ascetic death. The 'saints and those who truly practise virtue', the bishop wrote in his seventh *Festal Letter*, 'put to death their members that are on earth, fornication, uncleanness, passions, evil desire' (Col. 3: 15); 'having become dead to

⁷¹ *Ep. fest. (cop.)* 24 (38. 14–16 Lef.). The second *Festal Letter* has been mistakenly transmitted as the 24th; an English translation is provided in the Appendix to this book.

⁷² *Ep. fest. (cop.)* 24 (37. 12–38. 25 Lef.).

⁷³ *Gent.* 3. 29–30; 33. 10–12 T.; *Mor. et val.* 3 (6. 13–15 D.).

the world and having renounced the business of the world, they gain an honourable death, for "precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints" [Ps. 115: 6 (116: 15)].⁷⁴ Christians who have abandoned the vices and renounced the world 'carry death in their bodies' by practising 'the discipline opposed to sin'.⁷⁵ The metaphor of death implied both the neutralization of the body's passions and the abandonment or killing of one's social self as defined by normal social and economic activities ('the business of the world'). This metaphor was not limited to the practices of the ascetic elite; rather, the bishop applied it to the lifestyle of all Christians. The metaphor of ascetic death contributed to Athanasius' controlling myth of ascent by showing that the practices of withdrawal were the means of separating from the earth and travelling to heaven: Christians, 'although they are dead to the world, dwell, as it were, in heaven, thinking higher matters'.⁷⁶ The metaphor also resonated with the theme of the incarnate Word's victory over the fear of death, an anxiety which previously had rendered human beings incapable of reversing their inclination to sin.

Although the myth of ascent and its accompanying practices of withdrawal emphasized individual effort and separation from human society, Athanasius believed that the Christian life was corporate in character. After all, the way up to heaven was the path to a heavenly feast, and Christians manifested their thanksgiving for grace by enduring together when afflicted by their enemies. The Church as a whole, thanks to its 'kinship [*συγγένεια*] with his [the Word's] body', was 'God's temple'.⁷⁷ This communal dimension of Athanasius' view of the Christian life is evident in his frequent use of the term *πολιτεία*, 'civic life' or 'commonwealth', to describe it; he called both the individual Christian life and the Church 'the heavenly civic life'.⁷⁸ For Christians this heavenly civic life was both the means of their ascent and their destination. Athanasius believed that the original human beings had lived in community with the angels and that resurrected human beings would do so again.⁷⁹ He considered this belief to have been confirmed by Paul, who ascended into

⁷⁴ *Ep. fest. (synt.)* 7. 3 (8^o. 22-3; 8^o. 26-9^o. 1 C.).

⁷⁵ *Ibid.* 2 (8^o. 6-7 C.).

⁷⁶ *Ibid.* 3 (9^o. 3-4 C.); cf. *Frag. (cop.)* 2 (121. 18-20 Lef.).

⁷⁷ *Ar.* 1. 43 (PG 26. 100c).

⁷⁸ *Ep. Aeg. Lib.* 1. 1 (PG 25. 540a); *VA* 14 (PG 26. 865b); *Ep. virg.* 1. 35 (90. 27 Lef.); cf. *Gent.* 15. 15; 17. 4, 8 T.; *Inc.* 12. 25 T.; *Ep. encycl.* 2 (PG 25. 225b); *Fug.* 11. 24-5; 17. 26-7 S.; *Ep. virg.* 1. 13, 18, 20, 28-9, 35, 44-6 (78. 32; 81. 3; 82. 15; 87. 4, 23; 90. 30, 34; 94. 32; 95. 5, 7 Lef.); *Frag. (cop.)* 131. 21-2 Lef.; *Ep. fest. (cop.)* 2 (8. 27; 9. 28; 10. 7 Lef.); *VA* pref. 7. 46 (PG 26. 837a, 853b, 912b).

⁷⁹ *Gent.* 2. 12 T.

the third heaven (2 Cor. 12: 1-7), 'saw the higher things', and reported them in his Epistle to the Hebrews. According to Paul, the 'heavenly Jerusalem' consisted of 'innumerable angels in festal gathering', 'the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven' (Heb. 12: 22-3). 'Who', Athanasius asked, 'would not pray to possess the higher common way [σύνωδος] with these?'⁸⁰ The 'way up' (ἀνοδος) to heaven led to a 'common way' (σύνωδος) in heaven. Athanasius' use of the term 'civic life' to denote the Christian life and community cohered with the practices of withdrawal that he recommended: the civic life of heaven represented an alternative to the civic life of Roman Egypt.

Athanasius' spirituality turned away from the Alexandrian tradition of intellectual contemplation of God without directly repudiating that tradition. It did so by defining the Christian life in ascetic terms: as the restored governance of the body and its passions by the rational soul. Contemplation continued to play a role in Athanasius' theology: it had prevented humanity's natural corruption before the fall, and after the fall it was a possible by-product of exceptional self-control. However, it was the life of virtue and the incorruption of the body that took centre stage in Athanasius' thought. By conceiving of salvation 'in a quite physical way', as the divinization of human flesh, Athanasius proved closer to Irenaeus than to Origen.⁸¹ In turn, his controlling myth of the Christian life as an ascent to heaven, achieved through a withdrawal from society, eschewed an educational model for Christian progress and instead emphasized the need for moral discipline in conflict with weakened demonic powers. Religious asceticism has been defined by a modern scholar in terms of 'two main components: (1) the exercise of disciplined effort toward the goal of spiritual perfection (however understood), which requires (2) abstention (whether total or partial, permanent or temporary, individualistic or communalistic) from the satisfaction of otherwise permitted earthly, creaturely desires'.⁸² According to this definition, Athanasius' spirituality was ascetic: he spoke of the first component, the goal of spiritual perfection, in mythical terms as a heavenly ascent and appropriation of the Word's victory over the passions; he spoke of the second, abstention, in social terms as withdrawal and metaphorically as death. A striking myth of divine incarnation and human ascent provided the context for a technology of self-formation

⁸⁰ *Ep. fest.* 43 ap. *Cosm. Ind. Top.* 10. 11. 1-11 Wolska-Conus.

⁸¹ Brooks Otis, 'Cappadocian Thought as a Coherent System', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 12 (1958), 97-124, at 99-101.

⁸² Steven D. Fraade, 'Ascetical Aspects of Ancient Judaism', in A. Green (ed.), *Jewish Spirituality* (New York, 1986), 253-88, at 257.

through renunciation. This ascetic understanding of the Christian life raised a problem, however: if Christians appropriated the incarnate Word's victory over death and the devil through disciplined lives of renunciation, were ascetic Christians, monks and virgins, the only true Christians? Athanasius needed to explain how the heavenly civic life of the Church could include persons whose withdrawal from turbulent human society was not marked by seclusion behind walls or retreat into the desert.

IMITATION OF THE SAINTS AND THE DIVERSE CHURCH

According to Athanasius, before their fall the original human beings had shared 'the common life of the saints', a life in communion with the angels and one another.⁸³ Christians, according to Athanasius' myth, were those people who were ascending to a new version of this 'common life': the heavenly feast now accessible by means of the 'way up' opened by Christ through his incarnation. In the meantime, Christians shared the common life of the Church, a united but diverse body. The manifest lack of unity in the Church of the fourth century did not represent for Athanasius any contradiction of its inherent unity: his opponents, the 'heretics', were simply outside the Church. Athanasius therefore made no attempt either to understand the warring factions of his day as diverse 'brands' of Christianity or to explain how the Church could be one yet many. None the less, the bishop's frequent separations from his Egyptian flock and his eagerness to convince ascetic Christians of their connection to the larger Church motivated Athanasius to articulate his understanding of how the Church's many diverse adherents could form one body. The foundation for the Church's unity was, in his view, its common faith in one Lord. According to Athanasius, the Emperor Constantius II's policy of banishing Nicene bishops to different places had to fail because the emperor did not understand this fact. Constantius thought that 'bodily separation could disunite also the affections of the soul'; but the emperor did not realize that, although each bishop 'may remain apart from the rest, he nevertheless has with him that Lord whom they confessed together'.⁸⁴ But this unity of mind had to be realized in practical terms. In Athanasius' view, the Church's unity was actualized in two ways: through participation in the sacraments of baptism and the Eucharist, and through imitation of the saints' way of

⁸³ *Genl.* 2. 12 T.

⁸⁴ *H. Ar.* 40 (205. 17-26 Op.).

life. The cultic means of this unity served to consolidate Christians, lay and ascetic, around the sacramental life of the parish churches. The ethical mode laid the basis for understanding the diversity of the Church as the result of the different ways of following the saints. A set of biblical passages, allegorically interpreted, provided Athanasius with images to explain this diversity more precisely. The church emerged as a *πολιτεία* or corporate 'civic life', the citizens of which all practiced a disciplined life of renunciation, but at different levels of intensity and in different social roles.

Formation of Church and self through imitation

Athanasius claimed that when Christians gathered to celebrate the Eucharist, although they were separated by distance, they were nevertheless gathered in 'a single house'. In the winter of 365–66 Athanasius found himself in exile for the fifth time, once again separated from his congregation. He wrote in his *Festal Letter* of his desire to be physically present with his followers and of his confidence in their continued unity:

I would be the first to pray, saying, 'Who will give me wings like the dove so that I might fly away and rest with you?' [Ps. 54 (55): 7] except that another thought consoles me. For it is possible for us not to be separated from one another although we are alone in our own tents, is it not? For we will eat the same lamb as if we were in a single house since it is our Lord who has been sacrificed for us. For 'Christ our Passover has been sacrificed for us' [1 Cor. 5: 7]: the one who says, 'Wherever two or three are gathered in my name, I am with them in their midst' [Matt. 18: 20]. Since the Saviour is in our midst, we are not far from one another when we celebrate the feast.⁸⁵

In several of his Easter letters, the bishop repeated his conviction that in the celebration of the Eucharist Christians in different places were united 'in the same house, at the same time, having the same faith, eating the same Passover'.⁸⁶ Not only the Eucharist, but baptism as well secured the Church's unity: since monks had received baptism at the hands of the bishops, they were irrevocably tied to the parochial church.⁸⁷ The only sacraments that had this unifying effect were those that the Athanasian churches administered: opposing Christians, Athanasius said, did not eat the single Eucharist, but a meal 'divided up for small groups of people', and they met not in a single house, but

⁸⁵ *Ep. fest.* (cop.) 38 (57. 23–32 Lef.).

⁸⁶ *Epp. fest.* (syr.) 5. 2; 10. 2 (37. 5–10; 46. 11–21 C.); (cop.) 25; 39 (13. 12–18; 21. 14–20 Lef.).

⁸⁷ *Ep. Drac.* 4 (PG 25. 528a).

(citing Isa. 5: 9) in 'many houses'.⁸⁸ The distribution of spiritual benefits through the sacraments formed the immaterial aspect of the episcopate's system of patronage.⁸⁹ Athanasius' rhetoric of sacramental unity functioned to consolidate Christians around the Athanasian parishes, which he claimed dispensed the only valid sacraments.

Unity through the sacraments was a common enough idea among early Christians; Athanasius' more distinctive theme was that, as individual Christians formed themselves by imitating the saints' *πολιτεία* ('way of life'), they formed a corporate *πολιτεία* ('commonwealth'). The idea of imitation had its roots in religion and aesthetics, where it referred to the relationships between ritual and myth or between art and reality; by Athanasius' time imitation was a central feature of education: students learned rhetoric by imitating the great authors and orators, and they learned virtue by imitating virtuous men.⁹⁰ In Athanasius' treatise, imitation acquired a political function: formation of the 'heavenly *πολιτεία*' on earth through imitation of the saints. This distinctive Athanasian teaching has fittingly been called 'the companionship of travellers', since Christians were those travelling to heaven according to Athanasius' myth of ascent.⁹¹ The biblical basis for this teaching was Paul's exhortation to the Corinthians: 'Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ' (1 Cor. 11: 1), which inspired the opening of the *Festal Letter* for 352: 'Let us celebrate the feast, indeed the joy in heaven, with those saints who formerly proclaimed a similar feast and were patterns [*τύποι*] to us of the commonwealth [*πολιτεία*] in Christ.'⁹² Athanasius distinguished Christians from non-Christians in terms of imitation: Christians were those who 'have imitated the behaviour of the saints' and so 'bear the image [*εἰκῶν*] of their way of life [*πολιτεία*]; non-Christians, those who have not performed this imitation.'⁹³ Athanasius' canonical set of 'saints' to be imitated included angels, righteous figures of the Old and New Testaments, the apostles, and Christians of both the distant and

⁸⁸ *Ep. fest. (cop.)* 41; 40 (*OLP* 15: 10r. 27-9; 7r. 27-8 Co.).

⁸⁹ Charles Bobertz, 'Cyprian of Carthage as Patron', Ph.D. thesis (Yale, 1988), 130-252.

⁹⁰ Elizabeth A. Castelli, *Imitating Paul* (Louisville, Ky., 1991), 59-87; Peter Brown, 'The Saint as Exemplar in Late Antiquity', in J. S. Hawley (ed.), *Saints and Virtues* (Berkeley, Calif., 1987), 3-14. Origins: H. Koller, *Die Mimesis in der Antike* (Berne, 1954). Education: George Kennedy, *The Art of Rhetoric in the Roman World 300 B.C.-A.D. 300*, vol. 2 of *A History of Rhetoric* (Princeton, NJ, 1972), 383-4.

⁹¹ 'Weggenossenschaft': Martin Tetz, 'Athanasius und die Einheit der Kirche: Zur ökumenischen Bedeutung eines Kirchenvaters', *Z. Th. K.* 81 (1984), 196-219, at 203; cf. his 'Zur Biographie des Athanasius von Alexandria', *ZKG* 90 (1979), 158-92, at 174-92.

⁹² *Ep. fest. (syr.)* 2. 1 (20. 13-15 C.); cf. Tetz, 'Athanasius und die Einheit', 203; 'Biographie', 184-5.

⁹³ *Ep. fest. (syr.)* 2. 2 (21. 7-13 C.).

recent past.⁹⁴ Athanasius' usual method of exhorting by example was to follow the saint's name with a brief summary of the biblical account of the saint's exemplary action; in the absence of such an account, Athanasius developed a longer portrait of the model, as in the cases of the Virgin Mary and Antony. There were, of course, bad as well as good models: 'heretics', for example, formed their behaviour by imitating evil persons in Scripture, pagans, and the devil himself; we will return to this perverse form of imitation below. Whether one followed good or bad examples, imitation created a solidarity between the models and their imitators, so that virtuous people and the saints of the past would enter heaven together, while evil persons would grovel with Satan in the dust.⁹⁵ This ethic of imitation exploited the double meaning of the term *πολιτεία* ('civic life'), which referred both to an individual citizen's behaviour and to a city's shared life and institutions: individual imitation of a saint's *πολιτεία* contributed to the formation of the Church's *πολιτεία*.

Although the models that he offered for imitation were diverse, Athanasius believed that they nevertheless formed one 'heavenly civic life' (*πολιτεία*), which had its unity in Christ. In *On the Incarnation*, Athanasius claimed that there were 'two ways in which the Saviour loved humanity through the incarnation': he conquered death, and he restored humanity's knowledge of God.⁹⁶ In a *Festal Letter*, Athanasius adapted these two ways to his homiletic purposes: Christ came, he said, both 'that we might be in his image' (corresponding to the knowledge theme) and 'that we might receive the pattern [*τύπος*] and example of the heavenly *πολιτεία*' (corresponding to the corruption theme).⁹⁷ Among Christ's 'gifts of grace' was 'the pattern [*τύπος*] of the heavenly *πολιτεία*', which he delivered to the apostles and through them to all people.⁹⁸ Christians who 'fashioned themselves' through imitation of this pattern achieved a solidarity with both Christ and the apostles.⁹⁹ The incarnate Christ's behaviour represented a master 'pattern', of which the

⁹⁴ *Epp. fest. (syr.)* 6. 11-12 (angels, prophets, David, Israel); 19. 6 (apostles); *Ep. Drac.* 4, 8 (Paul, Jeremiah, Moses, Peter, Elijah, Elisha); *Ep. Ors.* 2 (Theodore, the recently deceased Pachomian leader); *H. Ar.* 65 (Stephen of Acts 7); *Apol. Const.* 5 (King David).

⁹⁵ *Ep. fest. (syr.)* 2. 2.

⁹⁶ *Inc.* 16. 21-5 T.

⁹⁷ *Ep. fest. (syr.)* 2. 5 (23. 8-9 C.).

⁹⁸ *Ep. Aeg. Lib.* 1. 1 (PG 25. 540a); *Ep. fest. (syr.)* 2. 5; cf. Roldanus, *Christ et l'homme*, 192-3.

⁹⁹ They are 'partakers of Christ and imitators of the apostolic way of life'; *Ep. fest. (syr.)* 2. 5 (23. 13 C.).

numerous saintly patterns were acceptable variations. There is a distinctive Athanasian balance about this teaching, for Christ's imitation of the human condition was what enabled human imitation of him: 'Just as he, when he came in our body, imitated our circumstances, so we, when we receive him, share in the incorruptibility that comes from him.'¹⁰⁰ Diverse as the ways of following the saints may have been, their common origin in Christ and their actualization through imitation gave them their unified character as a single way of life.

From Athanasius' perspective, then, imitation was a political act, since its purpose was to create members of an earthly commonwealth, the Church, whose politics were 'heavenly'. We can observe how the politics of imitation worked quite practically for Athanasius in two particular circumstances. First, we have already seen that in his ascetic writings Athanasius employed the rhetoric of imitation to encourage behaviour that would enhance church unity under his episcopal organization. Virgins were not to imitate a male ascetic teacher in their lifestyle, but rather the Virgin Mary (a cloistered, obedient girl) and one another; the bishop thus tried to foster a virginal lifestyle that was uninvolved in the public conflicts between himself and his opponents.¹⁰¹ In his efforts to promote good order among the monastic communities, Athanasius urged Dracontius to imitate reluctant preachers like Paul, Jeremiah, and Moses, and so to become a bishop; and he exhorted the Pachomian monks to imitate the example of Theodore, their deceased leader, and so to accept Horsisius as their new father.¹⁰² By carefully choosing whom he urged ascetic Christians to imitate, Athanasius could direct them to certain actions consistent with his purposes. Secondly, during his third exile (356-62), the bishop employed the imitation theme to encourage his followers to remain faithful to him. For example, Athanasius portrayed his flight into the desert as an imitation of the biblical saints who had fled to avoid

¹⁰⁰ *Av.* 3. 57 (PG 26. 444c).

¹⁰¹ See Ch. 1. Note the use of the same vocabulary that appears in *Festal Letter 2*: 'The Holy Scriptures are sufficient for us, instructing us so that we might have a perfect goal, the patterns [καὶ οὗτοι, the equivalent of τύποις] of the heavenly way of life [πολιτεία], and particularly the life of Mary, the bearer of God. Moreover, you have a great share in this because you have the signs of her way of life [πολιτεία] and her image [εἰκόνα] near you: that is, the women among you who have grown old in virginity inspire with their beauty. Thus, it is possible for you, as Paul said, to look to the perfection of the discipline [ἀσκησις] of these women, imitating their way of life and establishing virginity'; *Ep. virg.* 1. 35 (90. 25-35 Lef.).

¹⁰² See Ch. 2. Athanasius told Dracontius that 'we should conduct our common life [πολιτεύεσθαι] according to the example of the saints and fathers'; *Ep. Drac.* 4 (PG 25. 528b); *Ep. Ors.* 2; cf. Tetz, 'Biographie', 179-83.

persecution.¹⁰³ In the *Festal Letter* for 357, Athanasius told his followers that continued adherence to him despite imperial persecution was imitation of the Old Testament saints, all of whom had suffered 'afflictions, trials, and persecutions': 'Let us too endure like this', the outlawed bishop told his followers, 'so that we might share in their sufferings.'¹⁰⁴ Fellowship with Athanasius was fellowship with these Old Testament saints. In this case, Athanasius drew on a specifically Egyptian tradition: in the third century, the Egyptian Christian author of the *Apocalypse of Elijah* urged his readers to accept martyrdom in imitation of the Old Testament patriarchs and prophets and thereby to identify themselves as 'saints' in solidarity with these biblical heroes.¹⁰⁵ By echoing the old-fashioned rhetoric of martyrdom literature, Athanasius used his theme of imitation of the saints to rally Christians to his side in his conflict with the imperial authorities and to reclaim from the Melitians the title of martyr Church.

In addition to exploiting it politically, Athanasius adapted the ethic of imitation to his own theology, which drew a firm line between Creator and created; according to Athanasius, imitation was required for created beings because, unlike the divine Word of God, they were changeable and unstable, in constant need of self-definition. He explained that the divine Word was by nature virtuous and God's Son; in him these attributes were unchanging. Human beings, in contrast, 'by imitation [*κατὰ μίμησιν*] become virtuous and children [of God]'.¹⁰⁶ Similarly, only with God are names like 'father' and 'son' completely accurate, for God the Son is immutably a 'son' while a human male is changeable and so can be a 'father', a 'son', and many other things besides.¹⁰⁷ Athanasius believed that he differed from his Arian opponents on precisely this point. In Chapter 1, we saw that the Arians encouraged Christians to imitate the Word of God's progress in virtue, just as pupils imitated their teacher in the earthly class-room. Athanasius claimed that the

¹⁰³ *Fug.* 11–22. 'Since the manner of our withdrawal was such, I do not think that any blame whatever can attach to it in the minds of those whose judgement is sound, seeing that according to holy Scripture, this pattern has been left us by the saints for our instruction'; *ibid.* 26. 4–8 S.; cf. Tetz, 'Biographic', 174–9.

¹⁰⁴ *Ep. fest.* (cop.) 29 (53. 18–19 Lef.). An English translation of this letter is provided in the Appendix to this book.

¹⁰⁵ *Apocalypse of Elijah* 4: 7–29; 5: 18, 36–9 (tr. O. S. Wintermute, in J. H. Charlesworth (ed.), *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* (Garden City, NY, 1983), 1. 721–53, at 747–53); David Frankfurter, 'The Cult of the Martyrs in Egypt Before Constantine: The Evidence of the Coptic *Apocalypse of Elijah*', *VC* 48 (1994), 25–47; cf. his *Elijah in Upper Egypt* (Minneapolis, 1992), 141–55.

¹⁰⁶ *Ar.* 3. 19 (PG 26. 364b).

¹⁰⁷ *Ep. Serap.* 1. 16 (PG 26. 568c–9a); cf. 4. 6 (PG 26. 645a–8a).

Arian ethic of imitating Christ was based on humanity's essential likeness to the Word, who changed and advanced as human beings could. In contrast, Athanasius' ethic of imitation stressed humanity's essential difference from the Word, whose unchangeable virtue provided a secure model for changeable human beings.¹⁰⁸ Thus, Athanasius said that while the virtue of unity is natural to the Father and the Son, it is achieved by human beings only through purposeful imitation of God's unity and so is constantly in danger:

Imitation [*μιμήσεις*] of these natural [*κατὰ φύσιν*] qualities [in God] is particularly protective in the case of human beings, as has been said; for inasmuch as they [God's qualities] endure and never change while the conduct of human beings is easily changed, it is possible, by looking to what is unchangeable by nature, to flee evil deeds and to re-form oneself [*ἑαυτὸν ἀνατυποῦν*] to better things.¹⁰⁹

Given the unstable character of human behaviour, the Christian life required continual 'formation' (*τυποῦν*) of the self through imitation of an eternally consistent 'form' or 'pattern' (*τύπος*).¹¹⁰ The available patterns included the biblical saints and more recent virtuous Christians, but the ultimate pattern was God and his Word; thus, self-formation through imitation, in that one became as like to God as possible, was the ethical facet of the process that Athanasius called 'divinization' (*θεοποίησις*).¹¹¹ For created human beings, such likeness to the Creator God, according to Athanasius, could never be complete or perfect, only an approximation by imitation: 'Although we cannot become like God according to essence [*κατ' οὐσίαν*], yet by improving in virtue we imitate [*μιμεῖσθαι*] God.'¹¹² Formation of the human self through imitation was a function of humanity's status as part of the created and thus changeable order.

It follows, then, that Athanasius did not make use of the theme of imitation merely because it was expedient or conventional, although it

¹⁰⁸ This is the point at issue in *Ar.* 3. 19–22, which begins with Athanasius' consideration of whether Jesus' exhortations to his followers to imitate the Father's mercy and perfection (Luke 6: 36; Matt. 5: 48) indicate humanity's ability to become like the Father.

¹⁰⁹ *Ar.* 3. 20 (*PG* 26. 365). Cf. *Decc.* 20. 3–4 (17. 10–15 Op.): 'The Son's likeness [to the Father] and unchangeability differ from the imitation [*μιμήσεις*] that is attributed to us, which we acquire from virtue [*ἀρετῆ*] thanks to observation of the commandments.' Cf. Alwyn Petterson, *Athanasius and the Human Body* (Bristol, 1990), 70; R. C. Gregg and D. E. Groh, *Early Arianism* (Philadelphia, 1981), 24–5.

¹¹⁰ *τυποῦν*. *Ep. Marc.* 10 (*PG* 27. 20c); *VA* 55 (*PG* 26. 925a). *τύπος*: *Ep. fest. (syr.)* 2. 5 (23. 8–9 C.); *Ep. Aeg. Lib.* 1. 1 (*PG* 25. 540a).

¹¹¹ *Ar.* 1. 39; 2. 70; 3. 53 (*PG* 26. 93a, 296b, 433b).

¹¹² *Ep. Afr.* 7 (*PG* 26. 1041b).

was these; rather, he saw imitation as the inevitable shape of the human ethical life. Evil behaviour resulted from imitation no less than good conduct did. Because they were both rational and created out of nothing, human beings, Athanasius believed, stood in an ontological hierarchy between God and irrational beasts; people determined their ultimate status by imitating the conduct of either God or animals.¹¹³ There was, then, an evil form of imitation; this explained the origin of heresy within the Church, which was a learned behaviour. Arians, Athanasius said, imitated a host of inappropriate models: the devil, Judas, Jezebel, the Jews, the Scythians, the Babylonians, and the Manichaeans.¹¹⁴ Arius, in particular, when he composed his theological writings, did not imitate the reverent style of the Scriptures, but the dissolute rhythms of the pagan poet Sotades.¹¹⁵ Athanasius attributed evil among non-Christians to their imitation of the immoral behaviour of the pagan gods and goddesses.¹¹⁶ Here was a perverse form of 'divinization': human beings became more evil by becoming more like their dissolute gods. This divinization gone astray provided for Athanasius the aetiology of passive homo-erotic activity, since male worshippers of a female deity imitated their goddess by becoming more 'female' in their nature: 'Men, denying their own nature and no longer desiring to be males, assume the nature of women as if by these things they create honour for the mother of those they call "gods".'¹¹⁷ Here was a graphic illustration of the unstable character of the human self and its openness to transformation through imitation. Athanasius appears to have lacked a concept of an essential self or given personality; rather, conformity to some model defined a human being's character, for good or ill.

When he described the human ethical life as imitation, Athanasius articulated the 'aesthetic element in asceticism': its drive to form the self by removing and acquiring certain traits according to a model.¹¹⁸ Athanasius' ascetic programme was not merely one of renunciation of

¹¹³ *Ar.* 3. 19 (PG 26. 361).

¹¹⁴ Devil: *Ar.* 2. 74 (PG 26. 304a). Judas and Jezebel: *Ep. Aeg. Lib.* 23 (PG 25. 592b); *Ep. Adolph.* 6 (PG 26. 1080c). Jews: *H. Ar.* 66 (219. 30-1 Op.); *Decc.* 1 (PG 25. 416b); *Ep. Adolph.* 1 (PG 26. 1072a); *Ar.* 3. 2 (PG 26. 324c), referring specifically to Asterius. Scythians: *H. Ar.* 60 (PG 25. 765a). Babylonians: *Ep. encycl.* 5 (PG 25. 233c). Manichaeans: *Ar.* 2. 39 (PG 26. 229c). Cf. *H. Ar.* 37 (PG 25. 736c), where a court eunuch imitates the evil behaviour of King Saul.

¹¹⁵ *Ar.* 1. 2, 4 (PG 26. 16a, 20b); *Syn.* 15 (PG 26. 705c).

¹¹⁶ *Gent.* 25. 28-36 T.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.* 26. 4-7 T.

¹¹⁸ Geoffrey Galt Harpham, *The Ascetic Imperative in Culture and Criticism* (Chicago and London, 1987), 24-5.

one's societal self; it assumed that the self was a work of art that could be moulded. Similarity to the model became highly valued: Athanasian Christians were to form themselves according to selves that actually belonged to others, whether human or divine. The simile of the mirror illustrated this idea. Moral purification was like polishing a mirror: as one advanced in virtue, the reflected but real image of God in oneself became clearer.¹¹⁹ Athanasius directly applied the mirror simile to imitation in the cases of human models: when virgins properly imitated the Virgin Mary or monks the prophet Elijah, the lives of the model and the copy became mirror images of one another.¹²⁰ Through imitation and mirroring, created human beings became more like one another and the God who created them, producing a unity that imitated ethically what the Father and Son possessed naturally. Along these lines Athanasius could say that human brothers were 'natural mirrors of one another'.¹²¹ From the mirror simile, it would appear that the goal of Athanasius' imitation rhetoric was not diversity, but homogeneity.

This observation raises pointed questions about the political effects of imitation. It has been suggested that the rhetoric of imitation, especially as employed by Christians like Paul, inevitably functions as 'a discourse of power' that rationalizes as true and natural certain power relations within a group by establishing a hierarchical relationship between the model and his or her imitators; it values similarity and renders difference illegitimate. The political result of Christian imitation, according to this view, is a hierarchical Church in which diversity is devalued.¹²² There is some truth to this claim. Both Athanasius and Paul sought to secure their readers' allegiance to themselves through their appeals to imitation, and the ethic of imitation would make no sense unless the model were seen as superior to the copy and the copy valued for its similarity to the model. But the political effects of the rhetoric of imitation are far more complex than this, for they are specific to each context and can vary with the acts that one is urged to imitate. For example, when Paul urged the Corinthians to 'be imitators of me, as I am of Christ' (1 Cor. 11: 1), what he wanted them to imitate was the diversity of his behaviour ('I have become all things to all people'; 1 Cor. 9: 22) and his relinquishing of power ('I have made myself a slave to all'; 1 Cor. 9: 19); Paul sought not merely to secure his authority over the Corinthians but also to transform

¹¹⁹ *Gen.* 8. 10-19; 34. 22-6 T.; cf. *Inc.* 57. 7-16 T.; Andrew Hamilton, S.J., 'Athanasius and the Simile of the Mirror', *VC* 34 (1980), 14-18; Louth, *Origins*, 79-80.

¹²⁰ *Ep. virg.* 1. 12 (78. 1-2 Lef.); *VA* 7 (PG 26. 853b).

¹²¹ *Apol. Const.* 10. 11 S.

¹²² Castelli, *Imitating Paul*, 89-136.

the excessively patriarchal relations among the Corinthians themselves.¹²³ For his part, Athanasius never offered himself as a model to be imitated (although he did portray his flight from persecution as exemplary imitation of the saints), and he used a diverse set of biblical figures as models for a diverse set of behaviours. For example, to Christian women the bishop held up the biblical examples not only of virgins like Mary and Miriam, but also of married women like Sarah, Rebecca, and Rachel.¹²⁴ Unattractive as these options may appear to some modern women, they presented a striking alternative to the monochrome vision of virginity offered to ancient Christian women by teachers such as Hieracas. Athanasius employed homogeneity at the level of the individual's *πολιτεία* ('way of life') to create diversity in the corporate *πολιτεία* ('commonwealth'). To be sure, Athanasius urged imitation in order to create a Church that was unified, hierarchical, and under his control; the sacraments also contributed to this goal. But the imitative mode of church unity also fostered a diverse Church since the models for proper conduct were themselves diverse.

Biblical allegories of ecclesiastical diversity

Athanasius interpreted a set of biblical passages allegorically to explain this diversity more precisely. I turn now from a synthetic analysis of Athanasius' thought to a close reading of his interpretations of these biblical passages. Athanasius shared an Alexandrian tradition of dividing Christians into three groups: beginners, more advanced Christians, and perfect ones. Traditionally these groups were seen either as relatively stable sets of persons or as steps on a ladder of perfection travelled by each Christian. In dealing with human beings, the Word adapted itself to the capacities of each group and left a great deal to the individual effort of each person. While previous Alexandrian interpretation had understood this diversity chiefly in intellectual terms, because the restoration of the mind's governance of the body and its passions formed the centre-piece of Athanasius' spirituality, he saw differing degrees of ascetic renunciation, 'self-control', as characterizing the different groups of Christians. Four biblical images in particular appear in Athanasius' work *in relation to this theme*: the various trumpet calls in the life of Israel (Num. 10: 1-10); Lot's gradual ascent up the mountain away from Sodom (Gen. 19: 15-30); the different foods offered by Paul to believers

¹²³ Dale B. Martin, *Slavery as Salvation* (New Haven, Conn., and London, 1990), esp. 147-8.

¹²⁴ *Ep. virg.* 1. 21 (82. 19-83. 3 Lef.).

of different stages (Rom. 14: 2; 1 Cor. 3: 2; Heb. 5: 14); and the varied produce in the Parable of the Sower (Matt. 13: 1-8). The goal of this section is to discover how Athanasius used allegorical reading to articulate a social vision of the Church and to promote his political programme.¹²⁵

The Mosaic trumpets (Num. 10: 1-10). In his first *Festal Letter* as bishop of Alexandria, Athanasius took as his theme 'Paul's' exhortation to Timothy: 'Proclaim the message; be persistent whether the time is favourable or unfavourable' (2 Tim. 4: 2). The Christian's task, he says, is 'to do things befitting the season and to avoid the charge of unseasonableness'. Because he sent the Son at the appropriate time, God functions as a model of timely behaviour that Christians can imitate.¹²⁶ Athanasius' homiletic point is that, with the approach of the paschal feast, Christians must perform the actions fitting for that season. The bishop then notes that God commanded Moses to make two trumpets, which were to be used to signal various times in Israel's corporate life: warfare, feasts, fasts, and so on (Num. 10: 1-10). Even more, these trumpets were designed to educate the 'childlike' Israel: their 'super-human sounds resembled those that were uttered when they trembled before the mountain, and so they were reminded of the Law that was given them at that time, and they kept it'.¹²⁷ The varied calls of the trumpets, then, pointed beyond their immediate occasions to the varied commandments of the Law. The one source (the same trumpets, the Law) emitted different signals (various calls, commandments) at different times. Here Athanasius finds a basis for ethical diversity in the diversity of times and seasons.

For Christians, however, the trumpets and the Law, although 'admirable' and 'excellent', are merely patterns and shadows for 'the priestly trumpets of our Saviour', which are the various summons found in the New Testament.¹²⁸ For example, the ancient call to war is fulfilled in Paul's summons to spiritual warfare (Eph. 6: 12), and the ancient call to a feast finds its truth in Paul's call to 'Christ our Passover' (1 Cor. 5: 7), but even more in Jesus' own invitation to the thirsty person to 'come to me and drink' (John 7: 37). These calls come at different 'times'; thus, the Christian must discern the time and act accordingly.¹²⁹ Athanasius

¹²⁵ Cf. David Dawson, *Allegorical Readers and Cultural Revision in Ancient Alexandria* (Berkeley, Calif., 1992).

¹²⁶ *Ep. fest. (synt.)* 1. 1 (12. 9-13, 24 C.).

¹²⁷ *Ibid.* 2 (14. 3-6 C.).

¹²⁸ *Ibid.* 3 (14. 6-11 C.).

¹²⁹ *Ibid.* 3 (14. 11-14, 18-26 C.).

claims that, in addition to the summons to feasts, fasts, and warfare, the New Testament contains an additional call:

At another time the call is made to virginity [*παρθενία*], and self-control [*ἐγκράτεια*], and the harmony [*συμφωνία*] of marriage [*γάμος*]; saying to virgins the things proper to [*πρέπειν*] virgins, to those who love the way of self-control the things proper to self-control, and to those who are married the things proper to an honourable marriage; thus assigning to each its own virtues [*ἀρεταί*] and an honourable recompense.¹³⁰

The appearance of this varied summons to a proper sexual life is striking because, unlike the calls to feast, fast, and warfare, it finds no corresponding type among the Mosaic trumpet calls that Athanasius discusses earlier in the letter; here is another sign of the ascetic character of Athanasius' spirituality. Athanasius divides Christians into three groups, according to whether they practise 'virginity', 'self-control', or 'the harmony of marriage'. The first seems to include both men and women who have renounced sexual activity altogether. If the third group is made up of those who have sexual intercourse within marriage, then the ill-defined intermediate group ('those who love the way of self-control') might include single persons planning to be married; married persons who have renounced sexual relations, whether permanently or for a time; or widows. In any case, although each of the three groups has its own virtues and its own appropriate rewards, there is only one 'call' made to them all. The Coptic version makes this point clear: 'At one time [*ἄπαξ*] and in one way [*ἄπλωσ*] it [the trumpet] announces to each person the virtues and their rewards.'¹³¹

The Mosaic trumpets enabled Athanasius to make two related points about unity and diversity in the Church and in the Christian life. First, the same trumpet called different people to different virtues with different rewards: likewise, the varied lifestyles of Christians possessed their own sets of expectations and benefits, but they were all responses to a single call issued by God. Secondly, the same people were called at different times to different acts (feasting or fasting, for example): likewise, even Christians who had not taken on the full ascetic regime of monks and virgins still performed at particular times (such as Lent) certain portions of the ascetic discipline (such as fasting). The diversity of the individual's way of life (*πολιτεία*) reflected that of the community's shared life (*πολιτεία*): just as the one Church enjoyed a con-

¹³⁰ *Ep. fest. (syr.)* 1. 3 (14. 14-18 C.); the Greek terms are found in the Coptic version (3. 7-10 Lef.), from which portions of the text were inadvertently omitted by a scribe.

¹³¹ *Ep. fest. (cop.)* 1. 3 (3. 9-10 Lef.).

stant diversity, since it was at every moment made up of diverse persons, so the one Christian individual was to lead a life that was diverse across time, since his or her life was made up of diverse times and seasons. The ordinary Christian life was tied to the rhythms of the Church's liturgical year.

Lot's ascent from Sodom (Gen. 19: 15-30). In a homily on the moral life,¹³² Athanasius discussed the diverse lifestyles of Christians by interpreting the account of Lot's ascent from Sodom in Genesis 19.¹³³ Athanasius read the story as an allegory of progress in the Christian life by dividing all human beings (not just Christians) into three groups that correspond to the three places in Lot's journey: the large city of Sodom, the small city of Segor, and the top of the mountain.

1. Sodom (non-Christians): Here most human beings, including Lot at first, enjoy 'the great and abundant feasting [*τρόφη*] of the world [*κόσμος*]' . These non-Christians wallow in 'the defilement of the flesh' and such 'pleasures' (*ἡδοναί*) as gluttony, dishonesty, drunkenness, and greed, which produce in them 'anxieties'. These people, like the citizens of Sodom, are destined for eternal destruction.¹³⁴

2. Segor (ordinary Christians): Lot then becomes like the majority of Christians, 'who are not able to ascend to the height that is like a mountain peak', but who nevertheless 'cut off from themselves the worldly desires [*κόσμικαί ἐπιθυμίαι*]' . Although they have 'hesitated with respect to great things', they have exchanged the large city of great feasts for the smaller city of smaller feasts.¹³⁵

¹³² This work, extant only in Coptic, is translated as *Fragments on the Moral Life in the Appendix*.

¹³³ 'When daybreak came, the angels urged Lot, saying, "Rise, take your wife and your two daughters, whom you have, and leave, lest you be destroyed in the lawless acts of the city." And they were disturbed. And the angels took his hand and his wife's hand and his daughters' hands because the Lord had mercy on him. When they had led them out, they said, "Save your soul! Do not look behind you nor stay in this entire area. Flee to the mountain, lest you be destroyed as well!" But Lot said, "I ask you, Lord, inasmuch as your servant has found mercy before you and you have magnified your righteousness, which you have done to me by saving my soul, and I cannot flee to the mountain, lest the evils overtake me and I die, let me flee to this city nearby, which is small. Let me flee there—is it not small?—and my soul shall be saved." And he said to him, "Look, I have granted your request and will not overthrow the city of which you have spoken. Therefore, hasten to flee there, for I cannot do anything until you have entered there." Therefore he called the name of that city Segor. . . . And so it happened that when the Lord destroyed all the cities of the plain, God remembered Abraham and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow when the Lord overthrew the cities in which Lot had settled. And Lot ascended from Segor and settled on the mountain and his two daughters with him' (Gen. 19: 15-22, 29-30 LXX).

¹³⁴ *Frag. (cop.)* 3, 5 (123. 2-3; 122. 9-13; 123. 14-15 Lef.).

¹³⁵ *Ibid.* 3-5 (122. 4-6, 24-30; 123. 5-6 Lef.).

3. Summit (monks and virgins): Here Lot 'takes courage' and joins ascetic Christians at the pinnacle of moral achievement. He is able to ascend because he is 'well fed in the works of sparse poverty' and thus can 'elevate his soul upon higher self-control [ἐγκράτεια] and purity'. Those who achieve this stage 'walk angelically according to their free will [προαίρεσις] and practise discipline [ἀσκειν] in the life of the angels'; they 'remove themselves completely from the desires [ἐπιθυμίας] of the flesh'.¹³⁶

Athanasius was indebted to Origen for the basic thrust of this interpretation of Gen. 19, but he differed from his Alexandrian predecessor in significant ways. Like Athanasius, Origen understood Lot's ascent merely to Segor and not to the mountain-top as indicative of his good, but imperfect stage in the Christian life: the summit, he said, belongs to 'the perfect', and Segor is 'somewhere in the middle between the perfect and the doomed'.¹³⁷ But Origen understood the 'smallness' of Segor differently in comparison to Athanasius: for him it represents the literal understanding of the Septuagint, since those 'who live by the Law have a small and petty manner of life as long as they understand the Law literally'.¹³⁸ Thus, in Origen's view, Lot's climb from Segor to the mountain-top signifies his ascent from the literal sense of the Law's observances ('small') to their spiritual meaning ('great'); when Lot's daughters get him drunk and make him fall asleep, they are 'covering and obscuring his spiritual understanding'.¹³⁹ Athanasius did not follow this intellectual interpretation of Segor's smallness as the literal understanding of the Hebrew Scriptures; rather, he understood it in ethical terms as referring to a moderate life of virtue, one far better than that of sinful society ('small feasts' vs. 'great' ones) but still not perfect. Again Athanasius displaced Origen's contemplative ideal from centre stage and instead focused on control of the body.

The bishop's exegesis exhibits points of contact with his own interpretation of the Mosaic trumpets in the first *Festal Letter*. Once again he divided people into three groups according to the intensity of their asceticism and control of their bodies, although here Christians are divided into two groups, and non-Christians form the third. In both cases, the concept of 'self-control' (ἐγκράτεια) plays a mediating role. In the tripartite division of Christians in the *Festal Letter*, 'self-control'

¹³⁶ *Frag. (cop.)* 2-5 (122. 30-1; 123. 8-11; 121. 15-18; 122. 3 Lef.).

¹³⁷ *Or. Hom. in Gen.* 5. 1 (tr. Ronald E. Heine, *Origen: Homilies on Genesis and Exodus* (Washington, 1982), 112-13).

¹³⁸ *Ibid.* 5. 5 (Heine, *Homilies*, 118).

¹³⁹ *Ibid.* (Heine, *Homilies*, 118-19).

defined the lifestyle practised by Christians of the middle rank; here 'self-control' is the means by which a person ascends from the ranks of ordinary Christians and joins the ascetic élite.

Athanasius outlined ascetic regimes for both groups of Christians that emphasized eating practices. The élite Christians ate vegetables instead of meat, drank water instead of wine, and in general enjoyed only 'sparse meals'. They kept vigils, studied the Scriptures, and were the companions of the angels.¹⁴⁰ Appropriately, angels were those who invited Lot to make his ascent out of Sodom and then to climb the mountain. The discipline of ordinary Christians was a less rigorous version of that practised on the mountain-top. They were to avoid over-indulgence in food and drink; they could drink a little wine, but should avoid tavern parties: 'I am not saying that you should abstain from everything entirely.'¹⁴¹ These lay Christians did not keep vigils, but they were to go to church, sing Psalms, and pray.¹⁴² Sexual intercourse within marriage was permitted for the purpose of procreation, but 'relations [κοινωνία] of pleasure [ἡδονή]' were forbidden.¹⁴³ The bishop called this way of life one of 'withdrawing from the desires [ἐπιθυμίας] of the flesh [σάρξ]'.¹⁴⁴ Both disciplines were designed to overcome these 'desires of the flesh': ordinary Christians were expected to 'withdraw' from them, more advanced persons to become 'completely removed' from them. For all Christians ascetic renunciation was the means of overcoming the bodily passions, but monks and virgins achieved a higher level of this self-control.

In this allegory on Gen. 19, Athanasius used the idea of a ladder to perfection (here, a mountain, not to be confused with his myth of ascent) and the practice of withdrawal to articulate a simple two-tiered picture of the Church. On the one hand, all Christians, married and celibate, 'practise discipline [ἀσκειῖν] in order to achieve the gift of heaven'.¹⁴⁵ The image of the mountain, however, made clear the superiority of the full ascetic regime practised by monks and virgins, something implied by the different 'rewards' mentioned in the first *Festal Letter*. The allegory of Lot's ascent, as Athanasius developed it, contained the possibility, indeed hope, that every Christian would eventually pass on from the middle level of Segor and ascend to the mountain peak. The means of

¹⁴⁰ *Frag.* (cop.) 2 (121. 18-122. 2 Lef.).

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.* 3, 6 (123. 5-8, 11-14; 124. 28-125. 1 Lef.).

¹⁴² *Ibid.* 6 (124. 22-7; 125. 28-9 Lef.).

¹⁴³ *Ibid.* 6 (124. 1-11 Lef.).

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.* 5 (123. 20 Lef.).

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.* 5 (123. 21-2 Lef.).

making this transition was 'self-control', perhaps the renunciation of sexual relations in marriage after a certain time. Such an ascent represented a complete exercise of human freedom as well as death to earthly life and birth into 'the life of angels'.¹⁴⁶ This imagery resonated with Athanasius' myth of humanity's free ascent to heaven and recalls Origen's programme of a required advance from the literal understanding of Scripture to its spiritual meaning. But the image of the mountain climb was not equivalent to the myth of heavenly ascent, for here the transition to the élite level does not appear to have been mandatory; Athanasius instead emphasized the first transition, the withdrawal from Sodom to Segor, which he associated with baptism. Athanasius urged his hearers, both catechumens and the baptized, to 'flee the burnings of the flesh's ease', either in preparation for the 'illumination' of baptism or in cultivation of the grace that had been received.¹⁴⁷ The bishop expended much effort on dissuading baptized persons from returning to the 'sin' that they had 'renounced'. To the Christian who complained that 'nature compels me' to sinful pleasures, Athanasius urged Scripture reading, prayer, and less 'relaxation' to stave off corruption of God's work: 'Do not', he pleads, 'for the sake of a little pleasure, make [yourself] a stranger to eternal blessing, in which all the saints now are.'¹⁴⁸ It may have been Athanasius' hope that every Christian would at some point climb to the summit of élite asceticism, but he devoted much of his energy to exhorting ordinary Christians just to withdraw from the pleasures of the world.

Foods (Rom. 14: 2; 1 Cor. 3: 2; Heb. 5: 14) and the sower's yields (Matt. 13: 1-8). At the end of his first exile in the West (335-7), Athanasius wrote his *Festal Letter* for Easter 338. Because his exile had prevented him from writing full letters for the previous two Easters,¹⁴⁹ Athanasius devoted this letter to his political troubles, which he called 'afflictions' and 'severe trials'.¹⁵⁰ This topic leads the bishop to ask why it is that God permits his faithful to undergo such sufferings. The answer is that God has different ways of dealing with different people:

He does not, therefore, possess only one method of healing; but being rich, he works in varied ways for our salvation by means of his Word, who is not restricted, nor does he shrink back from us; but, since he is rich and manifold, he varies himself according to the individual capacity of each soul. For he is the

¹⁴⁶ *Frag. (cop.)* 2 (121. 15-20 Lef.).

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.* 6-7 (124. 28; 125. 1-26 Lef.).

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.* 8 (125. 27-126. 6 Lef.).

¹⁴⁹ *Chron. Ath.* 8-9; *Epp. fest. (syr.)* 7. 11; 10. 1.

¹⁵⁰ *Ep. fest. (syr.)* 10. 1 (45. 18-19; 46. 1 C.).

Word and Power and Wisdom of God, as Solomon testifies concerning Wisdom, that 'although it is one, it can do all things; and remaining in itself, it renews all things; and coming upon holy souls, it makes the friends of God and the prophets' [Wisd. 7: 27].¹⁵¹

As in the case of the Mosaic trumpets, here a single entity (Wisdom is 'one') acts in a variety of ways: the unity of God deals in diverse ways with the diversity of creatures. This idea as well Origen had already formulated to explain the diverse revelations of the Word of God in relation to each person's intellectual ability; Athanasius in contrast applied the notion to the diverse experiences and sufferings of Christians in the political sphere.¹⁵²

Athanasius unfolded this diversity of the creatures in another tripartite scheme, one that also had roots in the teachings of Origen. He divides Christians according to Paul's references to various foods for believers:

<i>Kinds of Christians</i>	<i>Their Foods</i>	<i>Pauline References</i>
'those who have not yet attained to the perfect way'	'milk'	'I feed you with milk, not solid food' [1 Cor. 3: 2]
'... who have advanced beyond the true condition of childhood, but still are weak with respect to perfection'	'vegetables'	'The weak eat only vegetables' [Rom. 14: 2]
'the person who has begun to walk in the perfect way'	'meat'	'But solid food is for the mature, for those whose faculties have been trained by practice' [Heb. 5: 14] ¹⁵³

Elsewhere Athanasius explicitly calls the first group of Christians 'infants', a label only implied here; the scheme correlates with the growth in maturity of the human person.¹⁵⁴ Again, Athanasius did not

¹⁵¹ Ibid. 4 (16^o. 16-23 C.). Paul's method of work reflected that of the Word: 'For he was all things to all people; and being himself a perfect man, he adapted his teaching to the need of each person, so that by every means he might rescue some of them. Therefore, his word was not without fruit; but in every place it is planted and productive even to this day'; *Ep. fest. (syr.)* 11. 2 (54. 19-21 C.).

¹⁵² 'For the Logos has diverse forms, becoming manifest by appearing to each viewer as is fitting and in no manner beyond the viewer's capability'; *Or. Comm. in Matt.* 36 (PG 13. 1068b); cf. Rudolf Lorenz, *Der zehnte Osterfestbrief des Athanasius von Alexandrien* (Berlin, 1986), 72.

¹⁵³ *Ep. fest. (syr.)* 10. 4 (16^o. 23-17^o. 4 C.).

¹⁵⁴ *Ep. fest. (syr.)* 7. 8 (13^o. 5 C.).

invent this analogy: Origen had already applied 1 Cor. 3: 2 and Heb. 5: 14 to the Christian life in three ways: first, to distinguish generally between those who had just begun the Christian life and those more advanced (steps on a ladder); secondly, to differentiate in terms of the virtuous life two stable sets of Christians, the simple (milk) and the more perfect (meat); and thirdly, to contrast in intellectual terms the 'children' and the 'perfect' in the faith, of whom only the latter could benefit from the difficult passages (meat) in such books as the Song of Songs.¹⁵⁵ In connection with the second use, Origen could claim that the 'meat' of Heb. 5: 12 referred to the 'afflictions of martyrdom'.¹⁵⁶ Characteristically Athanasius did not follow Origen in applying the distinction between 'milk' and 'meat' to progress in the study of the Scriptures; rather, he understood the 'meat' given to more perfect Christians to be the 'afflictions' that Athanasian Christians suffered in times of persecution by their Christian opponents.¹⁵⁷ Athanasius thereby implicitly portrayed himself, the afflicted bishop, as one of the 'perfect' Christians and invited his followers to manifest their own advance beyond childhood by remaining faithful to him during persecution.

Athanasius then turns to his favourite scriptural illustration of Christian diversity: the Parable of the Sower (Matt. 13: 1-8). The sown Word, he says, 'does not yield a uniform produce of fruit in this human life, but one various and rich, for it brings forth, some one hundred, and some sixty, and some thirty, as the Saviour teaches, the sower of grace and bestower of the Spirit'.¹⁵⁸ This allusion shifts the focus from the varied ways by which the one Word of God deals with human beings to the varied ways in which human beings respond to the one Word of God. Athanasius now points out that progression on his scheme of maturity is neither inevitable nor mandatory, but that the Word intends to produce a certain unequal diversity in the Church, which the bishop praises as 'various and rich'. Athanasius so far has avoided putting a strictly ascetic cast on his description of the various kinds of Christians,

¹⁵⁵ Rowan A. Greer, *The Captain of Our Salvation* (Tübingen, 1973), 39-42. First: *Hom. in Gen.* 7, 17; *Comm. in Matt.* 17. Second: *Cels.* 3, 49, 52. Third: *Comm. in Cant.* pref. Clement did not use these verses to distinguish among different kinds of Christians, but rather between Christians and non-Christians. To him Heb. 5: 13-14 demonstrates that 'philosophers are children unless they have been made adults by Christ' (*Str.* 1, 11). Discussing 1 Cor. 3: 2, Clement states that 'childhood' is being 'under the Law'; 1 Cor. 3: 2 does refer to Christians as 'children', but there is no childlike Christian faith; rather, 'the childhood that is in Christ is adulthood compared with the Law' (*Paed.* 1, 6).

¹⁵⁶ *Or. Mart.* 1 (Greer, *Origen*, 41).

¹⁵⁷ *Ep. fest. (syr.)* 19, 7 (45^o, 18-22 C.).

¹⁵⁸ *Ep. fest. (syr.)* 10, 4 (17^o, 5-6 C.; 146, 4-5 C/B).

their diets, and their responses to the Word, but he next introduces the differences among ascetic and ordinary Christians as the most convincing demonstration of the varied yields of fruit sown by the Word:

And this is no doubtful matter, nor one that admits no confirmation. Rather, we are able to see this field that has been sown by him, for in the Church the Word is manifold and the produce rich. Such a field is adorned not with virgins alone, nor with ascetics alone, but also with honourable marriage, and the chastity of each person. For as he sowed, he did not compel the will beyond its power.¹⁵⁹

The familiar categories of 'virgins', 'ascetics' (probably monks), and 'married people appear, along with 'the chastity [ἁγιότης] of each one', a phrase that plays the ambiguous mediating role that 'self-control' has played elsewhere. Athanasius once again employs the Parable of the Sower, as he did in his letters to Ammoun and the virgins, to define the relative merits of the ascetic and ordinary lifestyles, and to emphasize the importance of the human will. The Word does not compel human beings to be perfect; rather, they are free to exercise their free will in order to achieve a greater or lesser degree of virtue and thus to receive greater or lesser rewards. As it did in his debate with Hieracas, Athanasius' concept of humanity's moral freedom directly supported his social vision of one Church made up of diverse people.

After the reference to asceticism, Athanasius returns to his general point about the three ranks of Christians: 'Mercy does not belong to the perfect alone; rather, it is sent down also among those who occupy the middle and third ranks, so that he might rescue all people generally to salvation.'¹⁶⁰ Asceticism therefore functions here as an example of the different degrees of moral attainment in the Church, but not as the definition of these degrees. That is, Athanasius does not here directly equate virgins and monks with the perfect.¹⁶¹ This crucial distinction leaves open for Athanasius the kind of argument that he made in his *Letter to Dracontius* and the first *Letter to the Virgins*: that persons are judged according to their performance within their own context.¹⁶² Hence, the bishop implied the possibility that a married person may be

¹⁵⁹ Ibid. (146. 5-11 C/B).

¹⁶⁰ Ibid. (146. 11-14 C/B).

¹⁶¹ Pace Lorenz, *Zehnte Osterfestbrief*, 87.

¹⁶² 'But let a person, wherever he is, strive earnestly; for the crown is given not according to position, but according to action [πράξις]'; *Ep. Drac.* 9 (PG 25. 533b). 'Everyone whose deeds [πράξις] are according to the Law and who are bold in the faith will be found there [in the kingdom of heaven], but each one will receive the crown of victory according to how well he carried out the way of life [παλιτεία] belonging to his vow'; *Ep. virg.* 1. 20 (82. 13-16 Lef.).

'perfect' and a monk still 'weak', something that would appear ruled out by his interpretation of Gen. 19, in which the ascetic life is identified with the 'mountain-top'. Although he was committed to the idea that ascetic Christians practised a lifestyle more virtuous than that of married Christians, Athanasius' rhetoric of ecclesiastical unity sometimes undermined the direct equation of complete ascetic renunciation with perfection.

In any case, the bishop concludes this section of his Easter epistle with a strong statement of the Church's inclusiveness, its ability to embrace the 'rich produce' sown by the Word: 'On this account he has prepared many mansions with the Father, so that although the dwelling-place varies in proportion to the advance of the [various] ways, yet all of us are within the wall, and all of us enter within the same fence, while the enemy is cast out, and all his host is expelled from there.'¹⁶³ The Church constitutes a sacred space cleared of Satan and his demons. People enter this purified area through 'the same fence'—a reference to baptism and the sacramental basis for the Church's unity. But the Church also contains a variety of 'dwelling-places' that correspond to the variety in Christian lifestyles ('ways'). This vision was theological in that it explained the unity of God and the diversity of salvation. But it was also a political vision in that it depicted the Church as a variegated space sheltered within a wall and separated from its enemies. This depiction both accounted for the development of specialized roles in the Church (married persons and ascetics, lay persons and clergy) and justified the clearing of the Church of Athanasius' opponents. Athanasius invited all Christians in Egypt, whatever their station, to adhere to his Church and to escape the machinations of the demons.

This study of Athanasius' exegesis of biblical passages that he believed concerned diversity in the Church has revealed three major points. First, Athanasius revised the readings that he had inherited from his Alexandrian predecessors, especially Origen, in ways that reflected his spiritual and political programmes. Like Origen, Athanasius understood the Church's diversity both in terms of groups, different sets of Christians whose pieties remained fundamentally different, and in terms of a ladder of perfection, a scale on which different Christians had reached different levels. But Origen had understood these differences mainly in intellectual terms: he sometimes defined the different groups by their varying capacities to understand theological ideas, and measured progress toward perfection by advance in study of the Scripture.

¹⁶³ *Ep. fest. (SYR.)* 10. 4 (146. 14–19 C/B).

Athanasius, in contrast, portrayed diversity solely in ascetic and political terms: he defined the different groups by their varying sexual disciplines (marriage vs. virginity), and measured progress by degrees of ascetic renunciation or by willingness to endure persecution for the Athanasian cause. For Athanasius, advance toward ascetic perfection was not mandatory; a moderate life of virtue was sufficient. Secondly, Athanasius discovered a diversity in the individual Christian's life that reflected the diversity of the Church's liturgical year: even married Christians engaged in various ascetic practices during certain seasons in the ecclesiastic calendar. Finally, Athanasius portrayed the ordinary Christian's way of life as different from that of the ascetic Christian only in degree, not in fundamental character; both Christians practised withdrawal from the pleasures of normal human society.

Multiplicity and diversity, Athanasius believed, were defining characteristics of the created order, in contrast to the divine sphere, which was marked by the unity of the one divine nature.¹⁶⁴ As part of the created order, the Church was diverse and multiple in its form. Athanasius' concept of self-formation through imitation of the saints enabled him to understand the diverse patterns of life embodied by countless individuals as having a common origin in the pattern of the incarnate Word's life. The rhetoric of imitation had a political function, in both of the senses in which I am using the word 'politics'. From the 'emic' perspective of Athanasius' own viewpoint, imitation formed individuals who themselves formed a shared 'heavenly πολιτεία'; imitation created the Church. From the 'etic' perspective of historical analysis, Athanasius' use of diverse models for imitation enabled him to direct Christians into behaviours consistent with his own goals and to create a church structure that would embrace specialized roles that might otherwise have developed their own independent spheres of actions. Athanasius' rhetoric of imitation, furthermore, represented yet another turn away from the academic model of Christianity. Imitation of a human model, Peter Brown has shown, originated in the ancient world's 'civilization of *paideia*', in which men formed themselves through imitation of a teacher. Jews and Christians like Athanasius removed the concept of imitation from a living tradition of human instruction and instead placed God at the centre of a system in which iconic individuals, mostly from the distant past of Bible times, exemplified a single faith with varied ways of life.¹⁶⁵ Athanasius used allegorical interpretations of biblical passages to show that, in spite of the surface diversity of the

¹⁶⁴ *Ep. Scrap.* 3. 3 (PG 26. 620b).

¹⁶⁵ Brown, 'Saint as Exemplar', esp. 4-6.

Church, all Christians were practising disciplined lives of ascetic renunciation. Ordinary Christians simply renounced the pleasures of the world to a lesser degree than did monks and virgins. I turn now to this moderate asceticism of the ordinary Christian as found in Athanasius' *Festal Letters*.

THE ASCETICISM OF THE ORDINARY CHRISTIAN

By a complex series of theological equations, Athanasius claimed in his *Festal Letters* that the Church's celebration of Easter epitomized the Christian life. According to Athanasius, the Christian could successfully ascend to heaven past the weakened demons through practices of withdrawal from the world, understood as renunciation of various pleasurable human activities. He believed that the departure of the ancient Israelites from Egypt provided a symbolic prototype of this withdrawal, considered as 'the way to cross over from earth [Egypt] to heaven [Israel]'.¹⁶⁶ The sacrament of baptism initiated the individual Christian's lifetime of withdrawal because, unlike the Jewish festival of Passover, it was the authentic ritual re-enactment of the ancient exodus. For Athanasius, the scriptural link between Passover and baptism was Jesus' telling his disciples that they would find the place where he wanted to celebrate the Passover by following 'a man lifting up a jar of water and going into an upper room, furnished and cleansed' (cf. Luke 22: 10-12).¹⁶⁷ The references to water and cleansing were, according to Athanasius, signs of baptism. The Christian Easter continued to provide baptized Christians with a means for such a withdrawal. It does not appear that baptism was part of the celebration of Easter in Alexandria during Athanasius' episcopate; the bishop therefore did not articulate the direct Passover-Easter-baptism typology familiar from other Christian authors. Instead,

¹⁶⁶ *Ep. fest.* (cop.) 24 (40. 8-9 Lef.); cf. *Ep. fest.* (syr.) 5. 4.

¹⁶⁷ 'And when we go to him [Christ], we will ask him, saying, "Where do you want us to prepare the Passover for you?" [Mark 14: 12] Let the patterns [τύποι] of Moses suffice until now, since they shine light in the darkness before the day. But inasmuch as the sun has risen, let all darkness be scattered, and let all darkness be removed by the light. Let the Saviour himself inform us by means of a sign about the preparation of the Passover and the place where he fulfilled his desire along with his disciples when he says, "In desire I have wanted to eat the Passover with you before I die" [Luke 18: 15]. The sign of the Passover is a man lifting up a jar of water and going into an upper room, furnished and cleansed [cf. Luke 22: 10-12]. No longer do the blood of goats and the ashes of heifers cleanse those who are defiled [cf. Heb. 11: 13]. Rather, purity has come everywhere through the washing of rebirth [cf. Titus 3: 5]. By this the feast of the Passover is fulfilled'; *Ep. fest.* (cop.) 24 (40. 29-41. 13 Lef.).

we find a development in which Athanasius comes to see the Passover of the Old Testament as the pattern for the Church's Easter, which in turn is the pattern for the eschatological feast in heaven.¹⁶⁸ By recreating the Passover and anticipating the final consummation, Easter enabled Christians to redouble their efforts to withdraw from the world and thereby to ascend to the heavenly city: it was, he said, the pre-eminent time when Christians were to 'separate ourselves to the Lord with thanksgiving'.¹⁶⁹ The Christian Pasch was, then, a microcosm of the Christian life.¹⁷⁰ If a disciplined life was the 'way up' to the heavenly feast, the observance of Easter was especially so: 'If we diligently celebrate the feast here, we shall doubtless receive the perfect joy that is in heaven.'¹⁷¹ In this way Athanasius interpreted the Christian observance of Lent and Easter in terms of his myth of ascent.

Athanasius therefore considered his paschal discipline an intensified version of the regime that ordinary Christians should practise throughout the year: during Lent and Easter, Christians should 'increase [ἀυξάνειν] the discipline [ἀσκησις] all the more'.¹⁷² The ascetic regime that Athanasius recommended in his *Festal Letters* included prayers and vigils;¹⁷³ renunciation of sex;¹⁷⁴ fasting;¹⁷⁵ study of the Scriptures;¹⁷⁶ making peace with others;¹⁷⁷ and acts of charity, particularly giving money to the poor and hospitality.¹⁷⁸ This asceticism for ordinary Christians included elements found in the programme that Athanasius recommended to the Alexandrian virgins (discussed in Chapter 1): renunciation of food, sex, and wealth; prayers and vigils; and study of the Scriptures. It differed from the virgins' discipline in two important ways: it was a temporary regime, only portions of which were to be

¹⁶⁸ A. Camplani, *Le Lettere festali di Atanasio di Alessandria* (Rome, 1989), 218.

¹⁶⁹ *Ep. fest.* (syr.) 6. 7 (60. 11 C.).

¹⁷⁰ *Ep. fest.* (syr.) 5. 5 (39. 24-40. 4 C.); cf. *Ep. fest.* (syr.) 2. 4.

¹⁷¹ *Ep. fest.* (syr.) 6. 1 (41. 13-15 C.); cf. *Epp. fest.* (syr.) 6. 12; 7. 8, 10; 10. 11; 14. 2; 20. 2; (gr.) 24; 28; 40; 42; 43; (cop.) 25; 26; 41.

¹⁷² *Ep. fest.* (cop.) 26 (44. 22 Lef.).

¹⁷³ *Epp. fest.* (syr.) 3. 6; 4. 2; 5. 1, 4; 6. 12; 7. 11; 14. 5; 19. 8-9 (31. 27; 33. 6-7; 36. 6; 39. 19-20; 6*. 6-7; 15*. 12; 36*. 25-6; 46*. 18, 20 C.); (cop.) 42 (66. 34 Lef.).

¹⁷⁴ *Ep. fest.* (syr.) 6. 12 (6*. 6-7 C.).

¹⁷⁵ *Epp. fest.* (syr.) 1. 4-7; 3. 6; 4. 2; 5. 1, 4; 6. 12-13; 7. 11; 12; 19. 8-9 (14. 26-17. 21; 31. 27; 33. 8-9; 36. 7; 39. 19; 6*. 9-18; 15*. 11; 25*. 23-26*. 12; 46*. 17-20 C.); (cop.) 25; 40 (43. 17-18; 44. 3 Lef.; *CLP* 15; 7r. 88-9; 7v. a16-b3 Co.).

¹⁷⁶ *Ep. fest.* (syr.) 1. 6, 9; 5. 1; 11. 3-7; 14. 5 (16. 19; 19. 6; 36. 19-20; 54. 22-56. 10; 17*. 11-19*. 17; 36*. 26 C.; 143. 4-141. 20 C/B); (cop.) 39 *passim*.

¹⁷⁷ *Ep. fest.* (syr.) 14. 5 (36*. 26-7 C.).

¹⁷⁸ *Epp. fest.* (syr.) 1. 11; 4. 3; 14. 5 (19. 24-5; 34. 17; 36*. 26 C.); (gr.) 45 *ap. Cosm. Ind. Top.* 12. 1-2 Wolska-Conus.; (cop.) 24; 25; 26; 39; 42 (42. 1-3; 43. 18-21; 45. 15; 21. 31-2; 66. 33 Lef.).

practised throughout the year; and it lacked practices meant to separate the person permanently from the wider society (seclusion and special clothing, for example). Four elements in this asceticism for ordinary Christians merit closer study because they provide evidence for how Athanasius understood the role and purpose of ascetic behaviours in the life of the lay Christian: sexual renunciation, fasting, acts of charity, and study of the Scriptures.

Renunciation of sex. Athanasius suggested that the paschal season (probably including Lent) was an appropriate time for married Christians to follow Paul's advice to abstain from sex for a 'season of prayer' (1 Cor. 7: 5).¹⁷⁹ Athanasius considered this renunciation a secondary form of the celibacy of monks and virgins and necessary for the maintenance of ritual purity. The bishop told virgins that, although they formed the first rank of Christians because they offered themselves 'as a whole burnt-offering', married people had their own boast in that they acted in accordance with the Law and took 'time off for prayer many times, just as Paul said to married people'.¹⁸⁰ In his debate with Hieracas, Athanasius claimed that Paul's exhortation, 'Let those who have wives be as though they had none' (1 Cor. 7: 29), referred not to permanent renunciation of married sex, as Hieracas thought, but to this temporary abstinence for prayer.¹⁸¹ Thus, seasonal renunciation of sex was a means by which married people could introduce the ascetic ideal into their lives and form a second rank behind virgins and monks.

Concerns about ritual purity also lay behind this practice: married Christians of Athanasius' time were encouraged not to have sex before receiving the Eucharist at any time during the year. A fragment transmitted with Athanasius' canonical letters strongly urges that men who have had sex with their wives not 'thoughtlessly' (*ἀπαρατηρήτως*) commune 'on the same day'.¹⁸² The bishop says that people 'should do what seems best to them' after examining the Scriptures,¹⁸³ but he leaves no doubt what his preference is. He argues that if in the Old Testament ('under the shadow') persons who had had sex could not immediately touch consecrated bread, then 'how much more now in the time of grace, when a greater diligence in our way of life [*πολιτεία*] is required of us, should we purify ourselves when we are going to share in such awesome mysteries'.¹⁸⁴ Comparison of this teaching with Athanasius' position on

¹⁷⁹ *Ep. fest. (syr.)* 6. 12 (36*. 6-7 C.); cf. *H. Ar.* 25. 3-5 (196. 20-197. 4 Op.).

¹⁸⁰ *Ep. virg.* 1. 19 (81. 30-82. 1 Lef.).

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.* 27 (86. 14-19 Lef.). ¹⁸² *Ep. can.* 82. 20-83. 3 J.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.* 83. 3-6 J. ¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.* 83. 29; 84. 7-11 J.

nocturnal emissions is instructive. In the *Letter to Ammon*, Athanasius said that nocturnal emissions did not disqualify a man from participation in the Eucharist because they took place 'involuntarily',¹⁸⁵ during sleep, when the will was not in control of the body. Voluntary sexual activity during waking hours, however, was more problematic: its timing, in relation both to the individual's circumstances and to the Church's calendar, was crucial. Athanasius distinguished between married sex, which is legitimate, and sex outside marriage, which is sinful, by their circumstances and timing: "The same act is depending upon the circumstances and the time unlawful, but under different circumstances and at the right time lawful and permitted."¹⁸⁶ The involvement of the human will was the significant element for Athanasius, not merely the fact of a bodily function. Athanasius considered the goal of certain ascetic behaviours that lay persons practised, especially fasting, to be the exercise of the will in control of the body, adherence to virtue, and attention to God. It would seem that to him sex implied some relaxation of the will from these tasks. It is noteworthy that the Athanasian canons prohibited priests from celebrating the Eucharist on the same day that they had had sex with their wives; they recommended celibacy as the best option for priests.¹⁸⁷ Temporary abstinence from sex enabled married Christians to be monks and virgins for a time; Athanasius' concern for ritual purity and the vigilance of the will provided further justification for such periodic renunciation of sexual intercourse.

Despite his praise for temporary abstinence, Athanasius by no means considered married sex simplistically impure or defiling.¹⁸⁸ References to renunciation of food and wealth are far more frequent in Athanasius' *Festal Letters* than those to temporary sexual renunciation. In fact, human procreation imitated the procreation that took place eternally within the triune godhead; it was therefore a symbol for Athanasian Christology.¹⁸⁹ We saw in Chapter 1 how Athanasius used sexual intercourse and reproduction as a metaphor for the virgin's production of 'saving thoughts' through communion with the Word. In his anti-Arian writings, Athanasius envisioned the Trinity in terms of a male sexual reproduction that lacks a female role. Athanasius called Arian teachings 'barren' (*áγovos*) and thus appropriate to court eunuchs, 'who, just as they are by nature, so too have souls barren [*áγovos*] of virtue and

¹⁸⁵ *Ep. Amun.* 65. 11 J.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.* 68. 12–15 J.

¹⁸⁷ *Can. Ath.* 6 (Riedel and Crum, *Canons*, 13).

¹⁸⁸ *Ep. Amun.* 67. 19–24; 68. 16–69. ¶ J.

¹⁸⁹ *Ar.* 1. 23 (PG 26. 60c); cf. Recheis, 'Doctrina', 253.

cannot bear even to hear of a son'.¹⁹⁰ On the one hand, Athanasius granted sexual reproduction theological meaning as an imitation of the Trinity's inner life. On the other hand, he focused this meaning solely on male potency; there is no female element in the begetting of the Son. In general, Athanasius portrayed his trinitarian orthodoxy as 'masculine' (strong, virile, unwavering) and Arian thought as 'feminine' (weak, immoral, passive, seductive).¹⁹¹

Meanwhile, in the case of human reproduction, Athanasius followed the so-called 'Alexandrian rule', Stoic in origin but fully adopted by Clement and Origen, which permitted married sex only for the purpose of procreation and condemned sexual relations engaged in only for pleasure.¹⁹² Because it prohibited sex during pregnancy and at any other time when conception was believed impossible, married Christians who actually followed this rule would not have had sex very often; hence, it is unlikely that abstinence during Lent would have seemed particularly onerous to them. Ancient medical and philosophical authors also regulated sexual activity according to times and seasons, but they recommended an oscillation between more and less sex based on environmental factors like climate; in contrast, Athanasius and other Christian leaders absolutely prohibited sex at certain times based on the calendar of the Church and the rhythms of the woman's body.¹⁹³ Married Christians who lived as Athanasius told them would have understood sexual relations as something to be undertaken only for the serious moral purpose of procreation, not for pleasure; in addition, they would have learned that sex was incompatible with certain religious observances. Even the practice of sexual intercourse within marriage, as Athanasius envisioned it, had an ascetic or disciplined character. None the less, an unintended consequence of this close regulation of intercourse may have been to heighten married Christians' awareness of their sexual activity and to incite pleasure in its disciplined use.¹⁹⁴

Renunciation of food. The discipline of fasting was far more central to Athanasius' piety than was temporary sexual abstinence. Athanasius

¹⁹⁰ Barren: *VA* 82 (PG 26. 959b). Eunuchs: *H. Ar.* 38. 3 (204. 24-5 Op.).

¹⁹¹ *Ar.* 1. 1-10, 22-8; 2. 30; Virginia Burrus, 'The Heretical Woman as Symbol in Alexander, Athanasius, Epiphanius, and Jerome', *HTR* 84 (1991), 229-48, at 235-9.

¹⁹² *Frag. (cop.)* 6 (124. 1-11 Lef.); cf. *Clem. Paed.* 2. 10; *Or. Hom. in Gen.* 5. 4. On the Stoic rule and its adoption by Christians, see John T. Noonan, Jr., *Contraception* (enl. edn.; Cambridge, Mass., 1986), 46-9, 76-81.

¹⁹³ Foucault, *History*, 2. 109-16, esp. 113-16.

¹⁹⁴ So Foucault understands one effect of regulations of sexual activity in 19th-cent. Europe (*ibid.*, 1. 36-40); here the effect would have been far less since the level of regulation was lower.

encouraged Christians to practise moderate fasting throughout the forty days of Lent, excepting Saturdays and Sundays, and to intensify their fasts during Holy Week.¹⁹⁵ Precisely what form these fasts took is not clear; Athanasius exhibited his characteristic flexibility on this matter, urging his followers to participate 'in fasts and vigils, as each person is able'.¹⁹⁶ Although it now appears likely that the forty-day fast of Lent was already practised in Egypt before Athanasius' episcopate, it would also seem that the bishop needed to offer some special arguments for the practice.¹⁹⁷ In any case, Athanasius considered the Lenten fast essential preparation for Easter: by renouncing food, Christians were 'cleansed and purified'.¹⁹⁸ Medical authors of the time, like Athanasius, stressed regulation of eating far more than that of sex in their regimens for maintaining the health of soul and body.¹⁹⁹ Athanasius and the early Egyptian monks, for whom the fruitless and waterless desert symbolized the realm of disciplined virtue, stood at a moment in Christian history before sex replaced food as the chief preoccupation in Christian self-cultivation.²⁰⁰ Fasting carried great symbolic importance for Athanasius personally: because he saw over-indulgent feasting as the peculiar characteristic of sinful human society, renunciation of food was the pre-eminent way by which a person could withdraw from the world.²⁰¹

For these reasons, it is no surprise that Athanasius devoted much of his first *Festal Letter* to the significance of fasting, taking as his theme the command in Joel: 'Blow the trumpet in Zion; sanctify a fast' (Joel 2: 15). Athanasius explains that fasting persons 'defile' their fast by engaging in vicious behaviour or 'sanctify' it by practising the virtues, especially humility.²⁰² Indeed, true fasting is not a matter of the body, but of the soul, for it is really feasting on the virtues: 'Virtues and vices are the nourishments of the soul, and it can eat these two foods and incline to

¹⁹⁵ Lenten fasting: *Epp. fest. (syr.)* 6. 12-13; 12; 19. 8-9 (6^a. 9-18; 25^a. 23-26^a. 12; 46^a. 17-20 C.). Holy Week: *Epp. fest. (syr.)* 3. 6; 7-11 (31. 27; 15^a. 11 C.).

¹⁹⁶ *Ep. fest. (syr.)* 7. 11 (15^a. 11-12 C.).

¹⁹⁷ *Epp. fest. (syr.)* 6. 12-13; 12. This seems to be the best way to understand the ambiguous evidence of the *Festal Letters*, the chronology of which is tied to the question of when the practice of Lent was introduced into Egypt. For recent discussions of the issue, see Lorenz, *Zehnte Osterfestbrief*, 20-37; Alberto Camplani, 'Sulla cronologia delle Lettere festali di Atanasio: La proposta di R. Lorenz', *Augustinianum*, 27 (1987), 617-28, esp. 624-6; Timothy D. Barnes, rev. of *Le Lettere festali di Atanasio di Alessandria* by A. Camplani, *JTS*, NS 41 (1990), 258-64, at 260-2; Thomas J. Talley, *The Origins of the Liturgical Year* (New York, 1986), 168-71.

¹⁹⁸ *Ep. fest. (syr.)* 6. 12 (6^a. 12 C.).

¹⁹⁹ Foucault, *History*, 3. 140-1.

²⁰⁰ Brown, *Body and Society*, 218-24.

²⁰¹ *Frag. (cop.)* 5 (123. 2-3 Lef.).

²⁰² *Ep. fest. (syr.)* 1. 4 (14. 26-15. 24 C.).

either of the two, according to its will.²⁰³ Here Athanasius invokes the traditional Christian theme of 'spiritual fasting', but for him there is no 'dichotomy' between bodily and spiritual fasting.²⁰⁴ Rather, bodily fasting itself becomes an exercise for the human will, a discipline by which people turn their soul away from the food of the vices and toward that of the virtues. Such fasting both secures pardon for past sins and furthers its practitioners on the way up to heaven.²⁰⁵ Athanasius never connected the Lenten fast with the forty-day fast of Jesus in the wilderness; rather, he offered fasting Christians biblical saints to imitate: Moses, Elijah, and Daniel.²⁰⁶ By practising especially prolonged fasts, these saints, Athanasius said, were made worthy to receive revelations of higher things, which sustained them during their physical labours: 'Because the duration of the fast of these persons was amazing and the days lengthy, let no one fall hastily into unbelief; rather, one should believe and know that the contemplation of God and the Word from him suffice to nourish those who hear and replace all food for them.'²⁰⁷ Fasting was designed to focus the soul on the divine nourishment of the virtues and the Word of God; it brought the body under the control of the soul's will. In this way, fasting promoted the general process of ascent to heaven that defined the Christian life. Exceptional control of the body through fasting could result in special divine revelations and contemplation of God: an early arrival, as it were, at the heavenly gates. This belief that prolonged fasting could lead to visions was a rare instance in which Athanasius directly linked an ascetic behaviour with an immediate supernatural reward. In the next chapter we shall see this connection between fasting and visionary powers played out in the *Life of Antony*.

Fasting provided other benefits as well, according to Athanasius. It promoted the stabilization of the body's distracting movements by reducing the level of energy within the body ('silencing our fleshly desires').²⁰⁸ In turn, it gave persons strength to overcome their moral adversaries, namely the devil and his demons.²⁰⁹ Fasting enhanced meditation on the suffering and death of Christ and, in general, consti-

²⁰³ *Ep. fest. (syr.)* 1. 5 (15. 27-16. 2 C.).

²⁰⁴ On 'spiritual fasting' and this 'dichotomy', see Herbert Musurillo, 'The Problem of Ascetical Fasting in the Greek Patristic Authors', *Traditio*, 12 (1956), 1-64, at 35-42.

²⁰⁵ 'For not only does such a fast as this obtain pardon for souls, but being kept holy, it prepares the saints and raises them above the earth'; *Ep. fest. (syr.)* 1. 5 (16. 16-17 C.).

²⁰⁶ These were the usual *exempla* of fasting among early Christian authors (Musurillo, 'Problem of Ascetical Fasting', 5-6).

²⁰⁷ *Ep. fest. (syr.)* 1. 6 (16. 24-17. 1 C.).

²⁰⁸ *Ep. fest. (syr.)* 4. 2 (33. 8-9 C.); cf. *Car. et temp.* 117. 19-21 Lef.

²⁰⁹ *Ep. fest. (syr.)* 4. 2-3 (17. 10-22 C.).

tuted an extreme and visible demonstration of one's faith in the death and resurrection of Jesus.²¹⁰ Fasting thus touched on themes central to the Athanasian picture of the Christian life (as well as themes connected with fasting by other Christian authors).²¹¹ The body played a central role in the Christian's discipline, but one subordinated to the guiding moral role of the soul and its will. Athanasius, in fact, saw no value in fasting if one's ethical life was disordered: for example, it did no good if a person had wronged a neighbour; peace with the neighbour had to come first.²¹²

Renunciation of wealth. Nearly as frequent as references to fasting in Athanasius' *Festal Letters* are those to acts of charity: giving to the poor and hospitality. Exhortations to such partial renunciation of wealth often appear at the ends of the letters (as in the case of the first: 'Let us remember the poor and not forget kindness to strangers'), but they are also found in the bodies of the letters as well.²¹³ The importance that Athanasius placed on these charitable works can be seen in his summary of how one celebrates the feast in his letter for Easter 331:

Since, therefore, this occasion for discipline is set before us, and such a day as this is come, and the prophetic voice has gone forth that the feast shall be celebrated, let us give all diligence to this good proclamation, and like those who contend in the stadium, let us compete with one another in the purity of the fast, in the watchfulness in prayers, in study of the Scriptures, in distributing to the poor, and let us be at peace with our enemies.²¹⁴

Contributing to the poor here assumes a role equal to that of prayer and study of the Scriptures. Almsgiving and hospitality to strangers were signs that one had 'put on our Lord Jesus' (cf. Rom. 13: 14), a reference to baptism.²¹⁵ Even more, remembrance of the poor was remembrance of Jesus Christ, 'who became poor in our behalf' in the incarnation, and, like fasting, enabled one to ward off the attacks of the devil.²¹⁶ Like fasting, the discipline of charity found its symbolic justification in the Athanasian myth of the incarnation of the Word and the defeat of Satan.

²¹⁰ *Epp. fest. (syr.)* 5. 4 (39. 19 C.); (cop.) 25 (43. 17-18 Lef.).

²¹¹ See Musurillo, 'Problem of Ascetical Fasting'.

²¹² *Car. et temp.* 113. 3-25 Lef.

²¹³ *Epp. fest. (syr.)* 1. 11; 4. 3; 14. 5 (19. 24-5; 34. 17; 36*. 26 C.); (gr.) 45 ap. *Cosm. Ind. Top.* 12. 1-2 Wolska-Conus; (cop.) 24; 25; 26; 39; 42 (42. 1-3; 43. 18-21; 45. 15; 21. 31-2; 66. 33 Lef.). Athanasius also speaks of 'good works' in general; *Epp. fest. (syr.)* 3. 5; 11. 15.

²¹⁴ *Ep. fest. (syr.)* 14. 5 (36*. 22-7 C.); cf. *H. Ar.* 25. Recitation of Ps. 40 encouraged charity to the poor in oneself and others, according to Athanasius; *Ep. Marc.* 19 (PG 27. 32c).

²¹⁵ *Ep. fest. (syr.)* 4. 3 (34. 12-17 C.).

²¹⁶ *Ep. fest. (cop.)* 25 (43. 16-26 Lef.).

In practical terms, the discipline of remembering the poor also contributed to the unity of the Church that Athanasius sought in two ways. First, it connected prosperous lay Christians to the Athanasian episcopal hierarchy, which was engaged in a struggle for control of the Church's welfare system. The church orders from the fourth century consolidated charitable activities under the bishops and their delegates: the resulting financial power enhanced the role and prestige of the clergy in Egyptian society.²¹⁷ We saw in Chapter 2 how such patronage figured in the conflict between Pachomius and Bishop Sarapion of Tentyra; control of the Church's welfare system played a role in the struggle between Athanasius and his opponents in Alexandria as well. Athanasius, for example, accused his rival Bishop Gregory of seizing alms given to the widows and the poor when Gregory arrived in Alexandria in March 339.²¹⁸ The conflict became more intense when the imperial government handed over the city's church buildings to the opponents of Athanasius in the spring of 356. Athanasius reports:

For since the Duke had delivered the churches to the Arians, the beggars and the widows could not linger in them, and the widows sat in the places appointed to them by the clergy entrusted with their care. When they [the Arians] saw the brothers zealously contributing to the widows and feeding them, they drove them [the widows] away by striking them on their feet and falsely accused those who were supporting them before the Duke. . . . Here then was a new basis for indictment and a court of law first devised by them: a person is condemned for doing good; the one who shows mercy is accused; the one who receives kindness is beaten.²¹⁹

It seems likely that, when they were deposed from the church buildings, the clergy loyal to Athanasius attempted to keep their welfare system in operation by running the programme in a different location. In this way, the Athanasians hoped to maintain their prestige among the citizens and prevent defections to the other party. Their opponents tried to prevent this plan by forcing the widows back into the church buildings, now under 'Arian' control, and by bringing charges of illegal use of church funds against the Athanasian clergy. The anti-Athanasians could make a legal issue of this dispute because by this time the Church often distributed imperial funds and grain for the poor; thus, imperial and ecclesiastical accounts were difficult to separate.²²⁰ Early in his career,

²¹⁷ Annik Martin, 'L'Église et la khôra égyptienne au IV^e siècle', *Revue des études augustiniennes*, 25 (1979), 3-26, at 7-11, 21-3.

²¹⁸ *H. Ar.* 13. 3 (189. 24-8 Op.).

²¹⁹ *Ibid.* 61. 2-3 (217. 17-22, 24-5 Op.).

²²⁰ Robert M. Grant, *Early Christianity and Society* (San Francisco, 1977), 142-5; T. D. Barnes, 'The Career of Athanasius', *SP* 21 (1987), 390-401, at 393-5.

Athanasius' opponents accused him of embezzling such imperial moneys for his personal use; it is more likely, however, that Athanasius merely limited such distributions to his partisans, itself an effective political strategy.²²¹ The amounts of money and power at stake were not small: Christians, both lay and clergy, were expected to tithe and to contribute to the Church's care for the poor.²²² This practice bound together the clergy, the self-sufficient laity, and the poor in a relationship of mutual support. The question was which set of clergy would receive and dispense the money; control of this welfare operation was a key to control of the Church. The violence surrounding welfare distributions does not reveal the superior power of the imperial state, but resulted from the interruption of the power exercised in the exchanges among clergy, wealthy laity, and poor. Such productive power maintained the Athanasian Church; its interruption brought social disorder and violence.²²³

With their aid of the poor, lay Christians promoted Athanasius' political goals in a second way: by supporting needy virgins. Athanasius regularly spoke of 'widows and poor people' as served by the Church's welfare system, and it is probable that some virgins were on the ecclesiastical dole as well.²²⁴ If so, ascetic Christians may have been among those persons who were to be the objects of the charity that the bishop urged in his *Festal Letters*. In Athanasius' view, financial difficulty was the primary reason why some virgins lived with celibate men in spiritual marriage and others abandoned celibacy for actual marriage. By contributing to the support of such virgins, lay Christians would have helped prevent virgins from marrying and reduce the number of spiritual marriages, independent associations with men that conflicted with Athanasius' programme of settling virgins in self-contained communities of women. Correspondingly, when he wrote to virgins, Athanasius insisted that they participate in the support of the poor if they were financially independent.²²⁵

Remembering the poor, then, had significant theological and social

²²¹ *Apol. sec.* 18. This charge quickly evaporated, but the accusation that Athanasius threatened to delay grain shipments from Alexandria to Constantinople did not and may have figured in Constantine's banishment of him in 335; see Duane Waale-Hampton Arnold, *The Early Episcopal Career of Athanasius of Alexandria* (Notre Dame, Ind., 1991), 170-1; Barnes, 'Career', 394-5.

²²² *Can. Ath.* 70, 83 (Riedel and Crum, *Canons*, 46, 50).

²²³ For this understanding of power, see Foucault, *History*, 1, 81-102.

²²⁴ Widows and indigent: *H. Ar.* 13, 3; 61, 2 (189, 24-5; 217, 16-22 *Op.*); *Ep. cler. Alex.* (PG 26, 1338a). Virgins: *Ep. encycl.* 4, 3 (173, 11-12). See Ch. 1.

²²⁵ *Virg.* (SYR.) 12 (125-6 *Leb.*).

meanings. Acts of charity recalled the self-emptying of Christ in the incarnation and aided in the battle with Satan. They also contributed to the unity of the Church by tying together in a tangible system of mutual support clergy and lay people, rich persons and poor, ascetics and ordinary Christians.

Study of the Scriptures. In Athanasius' view, the primary task of the person on the way up to the heavenly city was to restore the soul's proper governance of the body, a task which required the recovery of knowledge of God. This knowledge was to be found in Scripture, the study of which formed a central element of the Athanasian paschal discipline.²²⁶ The bishop insisted that meditation on Scripture should not be limited to the time of the feast: rather, the festival had 'constant power for those who are enlightened in their mind and meditate on the divine Scriptures day and night' (cf. Ps. 1: 2). A person who diligently studied the Scriptures received the intellectual illumination that came from consideration of God's words: 'For it is not the sun or the moon or the host of the other stars that cause him to shine so abundantly, but he glitters with the sublime beams of the most high God.'²²⁷ Scripture was the means to such knowledge of God because it was produced by the Holy Spirit.²²⁸ Athanasius' emphasis on study of Scripture reflected his conviction that knowledge and virtue were inseparable: just as humanity's turn away from contemplation of God had led to idolatry and immorality, so renewed intellectual comprehension of God enabled the virtuous life.

The bishop most fully explained this close relationship between knowledge and virtue in his eleventh *Festal Letter*.²²⁹ Athanasius takes his inspiration from Psalm 1: 2 ('In his Law I will meditate day and night') and sets out to demonstrate that knowledge precedes virtue: 'The thoughts of the soul of healthy persons should precede action accomplished through the body.'²³⁰ Here Athanasius agrees with the popular Platonist axiom that 'to know the good is to do the good'. He believes this thesis to be confirmed, first, by Jesus' sayings in the Sermon on the Mount in which he pronounces even those who think sinful thoughts to be guilty of sins (Matt. 5: 22, 28)²³¹ and, secondly, by the teaching methods of Paul:

²²⁶ *Ep. fest.* (syr.) 1. 6; 5. 1; 11. 3-7; 14. 5 (16. 19; 36. 19-20; 54. 22-56. 10; 17*. 11-19*. 17; 36*. 26 C.; 143. 4-141. 20 C/B); (cop.) 39 *passim*.

²²⁷ *Ep. fest.* (syr.) 5. 1 (36. 16-25 C.), a reference perhaps to Moses' shining face (Exod. 34: 29-35). ²²⁸ *Ep. fest.* (cop.) 24; *Inc.* 56; *Ep. Marc.* 9, 31.

²²⁹ Cf. Badger, 'New Man', 132-5.

²³⁰ *Ep. fest.* (syr.) 11. 7 (19*. 4-5 C.).

²³¹ *Ibid.* 7 (19*. 5-9 C.).

Since he was experienced in these divine matters and knew the power of the divine teaching, he considered it necessary first to make known the word concerning Christ and the mystery regarding him, and then afterwards to point to the correction of habits, so that when they had learned to know the Lord, they might earnestly desire to do the things that he commanded. For when the Guide to the laws is unknown, one does not readily pass on to the observance of them.²³²

Moses followed a similar procedure: God's entire method of dealing with the ancient Israelites was designed first to introduce them to knowledge of him as the true and only God and then to reform their behaviour.²³³ This method sought to reverse what happened at the fall: because human beings fell away from knowledge of God and consequently descended into vicious activities, the mind must first be restored to its illumination by God in order for virtuous bodily actions to follow.²³⁴ Athanasius labels these two aspects of the Christian life 'faith' (knowledge of God) and 'godliness' (virtuous behaviour), and he stresses their interdependent character: they are 'sisters'.²³⁵ In this homiletic context, as he usually did, the bishop gave 'faith' or knowledge a logical priority: knowledge of God gained through study of the Scriptures precedes and enables the virtuous life. In turn, Athanasius could say that the life of virtue enabled the proper understanding of Scripture: to do the good is to know the good. He made such an argument at the conclusion of *On the Incarnation*:

But for the true study and knowledge of the Scriptures a noble life, a pure soul, and the virtue in accordance with Christ are required, so that through travelling by such virtue the mind might be able to reach and comprehend what it desires, to the extent that it is possible for human nature to learn about the Word of God. For without pure thinking and the imitation of the saints in one's way of life, one cannot comprehend the words of the saints. For just as someone who wants to see the sun's light certainly wipes clean and polishes his eye, cleansing himself until he is almost like what he desires, so that the eye, by becoming a light, might see the sun's light; or, just as someone who wants to see a city or country surely will approach the place to see it—so too the person who wants to comprehend the thinking of the theologians should first wash and cleanse his soul by his way of life and approach the saints by the imitation of their works, so that by being with them in the conduct of the common life he might understand what was revealed to them by God.²³⁶

²³² Ibid. 3 (54. 25–55. 3 C.).

²³³ *Ep. fest. (syr.)* 19. 4; see above.

²³⁴ 'The wicked person is unable to keep even part of the Law, for as his mind is, so necessarily will be his actions, as the Spirit reproves them, saying, "The fool said in his heart, "There is no God." Then the Word, showing that actions follow thought, says, "They are corrupt and defiled in their pursuits" [Ps. 13 (14): 1]. Thus, the wicked person in every way also corrupts his body'; *Ep. fest. (syr.)* 11. 8 (19^m. 21–6 C.).

²³⁵ Ibid. 9 (20^m. 8 C.).

²³⁶ *Inc.* 57. 1–15 T.

Here Athanasius applies his ethic of imitation to Scripture study.²³⁷ Through imitation, Christians become more like the saints, and this likeness enables them to understand the Scriptures, which the saints wrote. This passage shows how closely related knowledge and virtue were for Athanasius: study of the Scriptures enabled virtuous living, which in turn enabled proper understanding of the Scriptures. The bishop seems to say as much in the eleventh *Festal Letter* as well: 'The one who believes in him [God] is godly, and the one also who is godly believes the more.'²³⁸ In any case, both were required for salvation: 'Hence, meditation on the Law is necessary, my beloved, as well as an uninterrupted discipline in virtue, "so that the saint may lack nothing, but be perfect to every good work" (2 Tim. 3: 17).'²³⁹ Although still working within the Platonist framework as Christianized by Origen, Athanasius emphasizes the study of Scripture not as an exercise in contemplation, but as a means to embodied virtue. The Athanasian discipline of scriptural study was, of course, limited to a reading list officially defined by the bishop in his 39th *Festal Letter* and followed a curriculum that, in good Alexandrian fashion, assigned various biblical passages to persons at different stages in the Christian life.²⁴⁰

Athanasius offered particular advice on the use of Scripture in Christian discipline in his *Letter to Marcellinus*, a man who, although he was ill, did not 'neglect the discipline [*ἀσκησις*]'.²⁴¹ Athanasius here focuses on the value of the reading, recitation, and singing of the Psalms, but the bishop also makes general comments about the usefulness of Scripture that reflect familiar themes. Like the Church, the Scriptures are diverse and yet united in a single source: the same Holy Spirit produced all the books of the Bible, but the Spirit adapted its means of expression according to the genre and purpose of each book.²⁴² Scripture contributes to the entire process of self-formation in the Christian life:

²³⁷ Tetz, 'Biographic,' 185–6.

²³⁸ *Ep. fest. (syr.)* 11. 9 (20*. 8–9 C.).

²³⁹ *Ibid.* 7 (19*. 9–12 C.).

²⁴⁰ *Ep. fest. (cop.)* 39 (61. 8–62. 2 Lcf.).

²⁴¹ *Ep. Marcell.* 1 (PG 27. 12a). It is not certain that Marcellinus was a monk since the only act of discipline that Athanasius mentions in the letter is reading the Scriptures, which the bishop considered part of the discipline of every Christian. Marcellinus' study of the Psalms may have been an instance of an upper-class person using his free time to improve his 'religious knowledge' (Charles Kannengiesser (ed.), *Early Christian Spirituality*, tr. P. Bright (Philadelphia, 1986), 14–15). On the other hand, Athanasius' claim to transmit the teachings of a 'learned old man [*γέρων*]' might indicate a monastic setting (M. J. Rondeau, 'L'Épître à Marcellinus sur les Psaumes', *VC* 22 (1968), 176–97, at 194–7). Badger identifies Marcellinus as an urban ascetic ('New Man', 249–50).

²⁴² *Ep. Marcell.* 9 (PG 27. 17d–20a).

by enlightening the mind with accurate conceptions of God and by providing the models after which a person is to shape his or her own 'heavenly πολιτεία'.²⁴³ In addition, biblical texts can function as weapons in the believer's battle with Satan and his demons: since 'the Lord is in the phrases of the Scriptures', speaking those phrases will cause demons to flee.²⁴⁴

Athanasius believed that the Psalms surpass the other biblical books, however, in their usefulness for self-formation because even their verbal recitation moulds the believer into the image that the words convey.²⁴⁵ The Psalms have this quality because they stand at an intersection between the Scriptures and the believer; as a corpus, the Psalms sum up the diverse structures of the Bible and of the human person and bring them into relation.²⁴⁶ On the one hand, the Psalms epitomize all of Scripture because they contain all the various genres of the biblical books (story, law, prophecy, and so forth).²⁴⁷ On the other hand, the Psalms epitomize human existence because, with their varying subjects, moods, and circumstances, they express the different dispositions of the human psychology:

In addition to the other things in which it enjoys an affinity and fellowship with the other books, it [the book of Psalms] possesses, beyond that, this marvel of its own—namely, that it contains even the movements [κινήματα] of each soul, and it has the changes and rectifications of these delineated and regulated in itself. Therefore anyone who wishes boundlessly to receive and understand from it, so as to form [τυποῦν] oneself, it is written there. For in the other books one hears only what one must do and what one must not do. . . . But in the Book of Psalms, the one who hears, in addition to learning these things, also comprehends and is taught in it the movements of the soul, and, consequently, on the basis of that which affects him and by which he is constrained, he also is enabled by this book to possess the image [εἰκῶν] deriving from the words.²⁴⁸

It is precisely the recitation of the Psalms according to a harmony that conforms the person to the image, which Athanasius understands to

²⁴³ Ibid. 11, 33 (PG 27. 22, 45c).

²⁴⁴ Ibid. 33 (PG 27. 45a).

²⁴⁵ Cf. Tetz, 'Biographie', 189–91.

²⁴⁶ Cf. Hermann-Josef Sieben, 'Athanasius über den Psalter: Analyse seines Briefes an Marcellinus', *TP* 2 (1973), 157–73, at 162.

²⁴⁷ *Ep. Marcell.* 2–9 (PG 27. 12b–20b).

²⁴⁸ Ibid. 10 (PG 27. 20; tr. Gregg, *Athanasius*, 108, alt.).

mean control of the passions by a well-disposed soul.²⁴⁹ The harmonization of dissimilar tones into a pleasing melody provides the template for the harmonization of discordant passions into an ordered human personality. This verbal self-formation according to an image is analogous to the ethical mode of imitation that we studied earlier: even the familiar simile of the mirror appears, since Athanasius calls the Psalms a 'mirror' (εἰσποτρὸν) by which the reciter sees and corrects his or her inner moral disposition.²⁵⁰ Ancient philosophers agreed that verbal recitation could produce certain inner dispositions and aid in moral adjustment,²⁵¹ but Athanasius grounds this spiritual exercise in his incarnational theology: the Psalms' moral benefit on the human soul is identical to 'the grace of the Saviour'. The harmony and stability produced in the soul/body through recitation of the Psalms is a verbal appropriation of the physical victory over the movements of the flesh that Christ won in his incarnation.²⁵² In the words of a modern scholar, 'what becomes visible in the incarnation is audible in the Psalter before the incarnation'.²⁵³ Athanasius' theory of Psalm recitation epitomizes his understanding of spiritual disciplines in general: such acts as sexual renunciation and fasting secure in the individual's body the restored governance by the rational soul that the Word's incarnation made potentially available to every human being. Renunciation of sex, food, and wealth contributes to the bodily aspect of this appropriation of God's salvation, but Scripture study perfects such appropriation in its mental aspect.²⁵⁴

Athanasius' notion that the Christian version of Passover was the

²⁴⁹ "Therefore, lest there be such disorder within us, the Word wants the soul that has "the mind of Christ", as the Apostle said [1 Cor. 2: 16], to use this [the book of Psalms] as a guide and with it to gain control of the passions within it [the soul] and govern the members of the body, so as to obey the Word. So, just as in harmony there is a plectrum, so the human being, by becoming himself a stringed instrument and devoting himself completely to the Spirit, may obey in all the members and movements [κινήματα] and serve the will of God. The harmonious reading of the Psalms is an image [εἰκὼν] and pattern [τύπος] of such an undisturbed and calm disposition of the thoughts. For just as we make known and signify the concepts of the soul through the words we put forth, so too the Lord, because he wanted the melody of the words to be a symbol of the spiritual harmony in a soul, has formed the odes to be chanted harmoniously and the Psalms to be recited with song"; *Ep. Marcell.* 28 (PG 27. 40).

²⁵⁰ *Ibid.* 12 (PG 27. 24). For a similar understanding of the Psalms as a mirror, see Cass. *Coll.* 10. 11; cf. Sieben, 'Athanasius', 164 n. 27.

²⁵¹ Paul Rabbow, *Seelenführung* (Munich, 1954), 189-214.

²⁵² *Ep. Marcell.* 13, 27-28 (PG 27. 24d-5b, 37d-40d); Badger, 'New Man', 252-5.

²⁵³ Sieben, 'Athanasius', 166.

²⁵⁴ This division borrows and modifies Badger's helpful concepts of the 'corporeal anagogy' and 'noetic anagogy' in Athanasius' festal discipline ('New Man', 120-53).

concentration of a discipline that the Christian should follow at all times had deep roots in Alexandrian tradition.²⁵⁵ Both Philo and Clement wrote that the proper celebration of any feast was the virtuous life, which persons ought to practise without regard to times and seasons.²⁵⁶ Origen argued that virtuous Christians are always celebrating the Passover because they are 'always passing over in thought and in every word and deed from the affairs of this life to God and hastening towards His city'.²⁵⁷ Actual festivals like the Passover existed, however, since 'the multitude of those who seem to believe have not made such progress'. Therefore, 'because they lack the desire or the ability to live in this way every day, they need sensible examples by way of reminder to prevent them from neglecting the matter entirely'.²⁵⁸ Athanasius accepted the idea that the true celebration of the Passover was the virtuous life, practised always, and that, because of 'the sloth of many', the Passover served as a reminder to Christians, to 'show forth to the saints the reward of their calling and exhort the careless by reproofing them'. But he rejected Origen's use of the category 'multitude'; he instead included all Christians in 'the sloth of many': 'Therefore, in all the remaining days, let us continue in the lifestyle of virtue, repenting, as is our duty, of all that we have neglected, whatever it may be, for there is no one free from defilement'.²⁵⁹ He therefore propagated a paschal discipline for all Christians, an asceticism even for ordinary married people.

There is no way to tell from Athanasius' *Festal Letters* how many Egyptian Christians actually practised the ascetic regime that he promoted or to what extent they did. For example, it is not clear how many Christians could have followed Athanasius' calls to frequent study of the Scriptures: although there is evidence for a high rate of literacy and education among the clergy of the Egyptian Church, the literacy rate among the general population was much lower.²⁶⁰ The letters themselves provide scant evidence for the actual behaviour of Egyptian Christians. However, Athanasius' frequent appeals for reading of the Scriptures and renunciation of food and wealth suggest that he aimed this festal discipline particularly at Christians who belonged to society's privileged

²⁵⁵ Badger, 'New Man', 153-6.

²⁵⁶ *Ph. Spec.* 2, 41-9; *Clem. St.* 7, 35.

²⁵⁷ *Or. Cels.* 7, 22; tr. Henry Chadwick, *Origen: Contra Celsum* (Cambridge, 1965), 468.

²⁵⁸ *Ibid.* 7, 23 (Chadwick, *Contra Celsum*, 468).

²⁵⁹ *Ep. fest. (syr.)* 5, 5 (39, 24-40, 6 C.).

²⁶⁰ Roger S. Bagnall, *Egypt in Late Antiquity* (Princeton, NJ, 1993), 230-60; cf. Martin, 'L'Église et la khôra', 15-19; William V. Harris, *Ancient Literacy* (Cambridge, Mass., and London, 1989), 285-322.

élite. The married clergy would have formed a major portion of this group: many of the bishops, priests, and monks of the fourth-century Egyptian Church were men of wealth and education.²⁶¹ Poorer persons would have heard Athanasius' call to abandon 'the great and abundant feasting of the world' differently: as a condemnation, perhaps, of a heady lifestyle to which they had little access. Whatever their social status, the Christians who practised the Athanasian regime of prayers and vigils, study of the Scriptures, and renunciation of sex, food, and wealth would have lived a life that had the variegated character of 'times and seasons', a reflection of the Church's diversity. Athanasius told his followers that a Christian must withdraw from the tumult of the world in order to ascend to the heavenly city. Christians who followed Athanasius' paschal discipline would have accomplished that withdrawal through a set of practices designed to separate them from the 'desires' of the world, to promote their victory over the demons, and to enable their soul to regain its proper control of the body.

Athanasius' spirituality represented a continuation and transformation of the Alexandrian tradition exemplified by Origen in its shift of focus from divinizing contemplation to virtue and the control of the body. Athanasius' account of the Christian story was a variation on Origen's: it remained a story of a fall away from and return to communion with God, but it gave more prominent roles to humanity's naturally embodied condition and to human community. The original, perfect human beings had existed in bodies and in a community: so would the redeemed human beings. Athanasius' ethic of self-formation through imitation bound Christians together in a diverse civic community (*πολιτεία*) of modelling and mirroring. When Athanasius borrowed Origen's division of Christians into those who were more or less 'mature' in the faith, he changed the criteria for making the distinction. While Origen (and Clement before him) had seen the Christian life primarily in intellectual terms, as a progression in deeper understanding of the Scriptures, Athanasius saw growth in faith primarily in communal and embodied terms: the 'meat' given to 'perfect' Christians was no longer obscure passages in Scripture, but rather the tribulations suffered by those who persevered in adherence to the Athanasian Church. For Athanasius, progression to greater ascetic accomplishment was not inevitable: most married Christians would remain married Christians.

Athanasius' transformation of traditional Alexandrian spirituality

²⁶¹ Martin, 'L'Église et la khôra', 13-19.

It might be attributed to several factors, including the different literary genres in which Origen and Athanasius presented their views of the Christian life (scriptural commentaries and pastoral epistles, respectively).²⁶² But even this difference in literary forms points to a significant social-historical change: Athanasius was a bishop; Clement and Origen, teachers.²⁶³ Athanasius rejected the 'academic' model of the Church: to his mind, the schoolroom was a breeding ground for the unorthodox ideas of human teachers. Moreover, although it fostered a diversity of opinions, the Christian school tended to form one kind of individual: an intellectual like Clement or Origen. Athanasius' Church, however, now included not only scholars like Didymus the Blind, who taught in the Catechetical School, but also bishops, who managed growing bureaucracies; priests, who had to balance family and church responsibilities; virgins and monks, who had withdrawn behind walls or into the desert; widows and other indigents, who looked to the Church's treasury for their sustenance; and married people, who tried to lead respectable lives and who provided much of the financial support for these other Christians. This last group may have formed the particular audience for Athanasius' ascetic programme of temporary sexual renunciation, study of the Scriptures, and almsgiving. Athanasius thus sought to articulate a spirituality that was, as he would put it, 'catholic': inclusive of people of greatly differing social roles. The imperial Church in which Athanasius worked was not a counter-cultural sect, eager to keep its members pure and perfect amid a godless society, but rather a culture-creating institution, eager to embrace even the imperfect. By Athanasius' time, the asceticism that defined the Christian life could no longer be uniform. Specialized roles, monks and virgins, had emerged. While these 'over-achievers' became the standards of Christian perfection, most Christians could manage only a pale version of their discipline.

In Athanasius' view, just as the well-ordered human personality was a harmony of diverse movements, so too the Christian Church was to be a harmony of diverse specialized roles: each person was to have his or her place. So he depicted the joyous Church of Alexandria upon his return from his second exile in October 346:

It is superfluous to speak about the bishops of Egypt and the Libyan [provinces] and about the lay people in these [places] and Alexandria: they were all running together and possessing unspeakable joy, not only because they had received

²⁶² On the 'new functions' that Athanasius brought to the Alexandrian bishop's Easter letters, see Camplani, *Lettre festali*, 199-209.

²⁶³ Well emphasized by Lyman, *Christology and Cosmology*, esp. 162-4.

their own people alive, beyond hope, but also because they had been freed from the heretics that were like tyrants and raving dogs. Therefore, great was the joy of the people who in the assemblies were urging one another to virtue. How many unmarried women, formerly ready to marry, remained virgins for Christ! How many young men, when they saw others, loved the solitary life! How many fathers persuaded their children and how many were required by their children not to be hindered from the discipline that is in Christ! How many wives persuaded their husbands and how many were persuaded by their husbands 'to take time for prayer', as the Apostle said [1 Cor. 7: 5]! How many widows and how many orphans, who formerly were hungry and naked, through the people's great zeal now were not hungry and went forth clothed! The contest for virtue was such that one would reckon every household and each person's house a church on account of the inhabitants' love of honour and the prayer toward God. There was a deep and wonderful peace in the churches, as the bishops everywhere wrote and received from Athanasius the customary letters of peace.²⁶⁴

This idealized picture of the ecclesiastical present reflects the spiritual vision of the heavenly future with which we began this chapter. Bishops and lay people; virgins, monks, and married people; poor persons and their benefactors: all have their places in this portrait of a united, but differentiated Church; they all 'run together'. The ideal Athanasian Church was an ascetic church: all Christians engaged in 'the contest for virtue' in their variety of ways. And the ideal Athanasian Church was an episcopal church: the passage begins and ends with bishops—and, most significantly, bishops in communion with Athanasius. The loci for piety were neither the schoolroom nor the desert, but the 'assembly' (*συναξίς*) and the 'household' (*οἰκία*), two places where diverse people came together under the benign leadership of a father. But, as eloquent as is its expression here, Athanasius' corporate vision of an ascetic, episcopal Church in the city was not his most influential legacy to the following centuries of Christian spirituality. Instead, that would be his portrait of one of the 'young men' who, 'when he saw others, loved the solitary life': Antony, the man of the desert.

²⁶⁴ *H. Ar.* 25. 3–5 (196. 20–197. 4 Op.); cf. Badger, 'New Man', 244–5.

The Spirituality and Politics of the *Life of Antony*

After the death of their leader Theodore, Athanasius wrote to the Pachomian monks that they should accept Horsisius as their new father; as for Theodore, rather than weeping for him, the monks should remember him and 'emulate his life'.¹ Here the spirituality of Athanasius intersected with that of the Pachomians, for both considered imitation central to the formation of an ascetic's discipline. The Pachomians' desire to imitate the example of their founder was one motivation behind the production of the various biographies of Pachomius. Athanasius, in turn, placed imitation of the saints at the centre of the ascetic programme for self and church formation that he articulated in the *Festal Letters* and his letters to monks and virgins. It is appropriate, then, that when Athanasius wrote his basic manual for the monastic life, he did not write a rule, but the biography of a monk whose life was worthy of emulation. Gregory of Nazianzus said that in writing the *Life of Antony* Athanasius 'composed a rule for the monastic life in the form of a narrative'.² The author himself calls Antony's life 'a sufficient pattern for the discipline' of monks; the readers of this work should not merely admire Antony, but also imitate him.³ Athanasius self-consciously presents Antony's life as an ideal, a 'pattern' to be followed.

The author's own description of his purpose indicates that the *Life* is more an expression of his own views than a thoroughly reliable source for information about the real Antony. To be sure, Athanasius wrote his biography at a time when other accounts of the monk were circulating,

¹ *Ep. Ors.* 2 (= VP 150; 96. 4-5 Halkin).

² *Gr. Naz. Or.* 21. 5. 6-7 Mossay-Lafontaine.

³ *VA* pref. (PG 26. 837b). Further references will be made parenthetically in the text by chapter and column number. In this chapter I have made my own translations from the Greek text while consulting that of Robert C. Gregg, *The Life of Antony and the Letter to Marcellinus* (New York, 1980). Unfortunately the new critical edition of the *Life* by G. J. M. Bartelink (*Vie d'Antoine* (Paris, 1994)) appeared too late for me to use.

and he offered his version as the most true.⁴ But Athanasius himself probably had minimal contact with the monk; he instead relied on others for most of his information. The first part of this chapter assesses the evidence for contact between Athanasius and Antony and finds little evidence for such contact. It then describes the alternative views of Antony that Christians held when Athanasius was writing, which included Antony as a spiritual patron, a teacher of wisdom, and the founder of eremitical monasticism. These views form a background set of possibilities against which Athanasius' presentation can be assessed. Athanasius would have been unhappy with all of these contemporary interpretations of Antony; in contrast, he offered his own portrait of Antony as the ideal human being, transformed by the Word of God.

This study, then, will not treat the *Life of Antony* as a source of historical information about the real Antony, but as a piece of social discourse between Athanasius and his readers. When he wrote the *Life*, Athanasius created a 'narrative world': an 'alternative reality or "finite province of meaning" into which the author draws his or her readers, and which is marked by circumscribed meanings and modes of experience'.⁵ Exploration of this narrative world will provide insight into the message that Athanasius wished to communicate to his readers. When I use evidence about third- and fourth-century Egypt to illumine details in the story, my purpose is not to reconstruct 'what really happened'; rather, I want to understand the 'cultural world' that Athanasius and his readers shared and thus that made the *Life's* narrative world intelligible to its readers.⁶

For example, the narrative world of the *Life* is governed by Athanasius' myth of heavenly ascent; the second section of this chapter examines how Antony embodies Athanasius' mythical vision of the Christian life as an ascent to heaven, explored in the previous chapter. Antony's life dramatizes four central elements of Athanasius' spirituality: the myth of heavenly ascent; the psychological and moral problem of fear of death; the social practices of withdrawal; and the spiritual problem of the soul-body relationship. Here the problems and possibilities of human life as Athanasius saw it come into play: not only

⁴ 'Do not disbelieve the things that you have heard about him from those who proclaim him, but consider that you have heard little. . . . I have in every place thought of the truth, lest someone, having heard too much, should disbelieve or, having learned less than necessary, should look down on the man' (*VA* pref. 837b-40a).

⁵ Susan R. Garrett, *The Demise of the Devil* (Minneapolis, 1989), 6.

⁶ On this distinction between 'narrative world' and 'cultural world' and its relevance for the study of early Christian writings, see Garrett, *Demise of the Devil*, 5-9; Norman R. Petersen, *Rediscovering Paul* (Philadelphia, 1985), 1-42.

the demons and bodily passions, but also economic matters and the pressures of a busy world. The Word of God enables Antony's successful management of these concerns as the monk merges his own story into the myth of the Word's incarnation, death, and resurrection. The result is that Antony is 'navigated by the Word'.

This picture of the ideal ascetic not only provides a narrative portrayal of Athanasian spirituality; it also promotes Athanasius' political goal of a Church united under the Alexandrian episcopate. The final part of this chapter turns to the social functions of the *Life* and thus more directly to how Athanasius' narrative world spoke to his cultural world. The bishop's depiction of Antony as unlearned yet wise undermines modes of authority based on intellectual training rather than on ecclesiastical norms. Antony displays obedience to the clergy and hatred for the opponents of Athanasius, and he exhibits a characteristically Athanasian ambivalence towards representatives of the empire. His reluctant use of his supernatural powers constitutes a critique and acknowledgement of the monk's role as patron. Athanasius defines Antony's authority in moral terms; the monk's life is a pattern to be imitated and, as such, contributes to the formation of the *πολιτεία* that characterizes the united Church in Athanasius' view. Athanasius' figural presentation of Antony's *πολιτεία* is designed to initiate a process of modelling and mirroring that would form an international 'heavenly commonwealth'.

EARLY VIEWS OF ANTONY

It would be easier to describe the particular interpretation of Antony that Athanasius promulgated in the *Life* if one could identify earlier material about Antony with which Athanasius worked. Most scholars agree that, in writing the *Life of Antony*, Athanasius was engaged in a process of 'correction', modifying earlier texts or traditions to present a picture of Antony congenial to his own theology.⁷ The attempt to identify such earlier material focuses either on the historical, pre-Athanasian Antony or on layers in the *Life* itself, both dubious prospects. A more fruitful course of study is to situate Athanasius' picture of Antony among the other views of Antony current in fourth-century Egypt.

⁷ This statement of Michael A. Williams is representative: 'Athanasius is employing a biographical genre in a consciously corrective manner, rejecting or modifying material about the ascetic life, material which was being used by others in a different style and with different implications' ('The *Life of Antony* and the Domestication of Charismatic Wisdom', in M. A. Williams (ed.), *Charisma and Sacred Biography* (Chambersburg, Pa., 1982), 23-45, at 24).

Like Jesus of Nazareth, Antony the Egyptian hermit was the inspiration for much ancient literature, not only biographies, but also sayings traditions; and as in the case of Jesus, the historical realities of Antony's life are difficult to discover beneath the traditions surrounding him. Athanasius' *Life of Antony* may be reliable for the basic outline of the monk's life and some of his activities, but its theological sections and presentation of Antony's career too closely reflect the bishop's own spirituality (as this chapter will show) to be a trustworthy basis for understanding Antony's own teachings and discipline. It has been suggested that the sayings of Antony found in the *Apophthegmata Patrum* present an accurate picture of the historical Antony as a reclusive, penitent Copt; Athanasius transformed this appealingly simple figure into the *Life's* heroic opponent of demons, philosophers, and Arians.⁸ The promising aspects of this position are its recognition of the diversity of early traditions about Antony and its interpretation of the *Life* as an expression of Athanasius' thought.⁹ But the desert sayings traditions, as important as they are for the study of monastic origins, are not reliable sources for the reconstruction of any single person within the monastic movement: similar sayings are attributed to different monks, and the collections were edited much later, after the Origenist controversies of later years had caused fundamental shifts in monastic piety.¹⁰ More promising are the seven letters attributed to Antony, which certainly originated during the fourth century.¹¹ The Antony they present is a decidedly Origenist teacher of *askēsis* and *gnōsis*, certainly anti-Arian, but otherwise not particularly appealing to the more earth-bound Athanasius. In any case, these letters still do not provide a good basis for determining how Athanasius modified the historical Antony in his biography because it is unlikely that Athanasius knew very much about the historical Antony. We should, however, reserve the letters of Antony for another purpose.

At the beginning of his *Life of Antony*, Athanasius claims to have seen

⁸ Hermann Dörries, 'Die *Vita Antonii* als Geschichtsquelle', in his *Wort und Stunde* (Göttingen, 1966-70), I, 145-244.

⁹ See Dörries's excellent comparison of the 'basic ideas' of the *Life* with the theology of Athanasius as found in his other works ('*Vita Antonii* als Geschichtsquelle', 177-93).

¹⁰ Williams, 'Domestication', 36-7; Samuel Rubenson, *The Letters of St. Antony* (Lund, 1990), 38-9. Compare the rabbinic literature, which is useful in understanding the teachings of 'the rabbis', but less reliable in reconstructing the unique thought of any individual rabbi.

¹¹ Tr. Derwas J. Chitty, *The Letters of St. Antony the Great* (Oxford, 1975). Their authenticity is defended by Rubenson, *Letters of St. Antony*. The letters can be dated to the 4th cent. because Jerome knew them in 392 (*Vir. ill.* 88).

the monk 'often' (*VA* pref. 840a), but this is an exaggeration: it is more likely that Athanasius saw Antony only once.¹² Outside of the *Life*, Antony appears in Athanasius' writings only a single time, in an account of the monk's interaction with Duke Balacius (*H. Ar.* 14), which differs in its details from a parallel account in the *Life* (*VA* 86).¹³ Within the narrative of the *Life* itself, two scenes possibly refer to direct contact between Athanasius and Antony. In chapter 91, the dying Antony leaves to Athanasius, in addition to a sheepskin, a garment that Athanasius 'gave to me new, but has grown old with me' (*VA* 91; 972b). This statement may refer to some contact between Antony and Athanasius decades earlier, perhaps in the years before Athanasius became bishop, a time that legend has made into Athanasius' monastic period; but if there was such an early meeting between the two men, there is no other evidence for it. There remains, then, only Antony's visit to Alexandria found in chapters 69–71: because the monk's departure from the city is narrated in the first person ('When he [Antony] was leaving and we were sending him off, as we arrived at the gate . . .'; *VA* 71; 944a), it is usually concluded that Athanasius met Antony personally during this visit. But another Athanasian source casts some doubt on this line of reasoning.

An account of a similar visit of Antony to Alexandria in the index to the Syriac collection of the *Festal Letters* may indicate that the visit took place while Athanasius was still in exile. The entry for the *Festal Letter* of 338 covers the period 337–8 and reads:

In this [year], since Constantine died on the 27th of Pachon [22 May 337], when he [Athanasius] was permitted, he returned from Gaul triumphantly on the 27th of Athyr [23 November 337]. In this [year] as well, when many things had happened, Antony, the great man and leader, entered Alexandria. When he had stayed only two days and had caused amazement in many acts and had healed many people, on the third day he departed, in the month of Mesori [late July–mid August].¹⁴

If, as in the cases of Constantine's death and Athanasius' return, the index entry understands Antony's visit as taking place in 337, then Athanasius could not have seen Antony at that time since he did not return from exile until November and Antony's visit is here dated to the summer. This interpretation of the index entry suggests three

¹² On Athanasius' actual contacts with Antony, see Robert C. Gregg and Dennis E. Groh, *Early Arianism—A View of Salvation* (Philadelphia, 1981), 136–7; Carlton Mills Badger, Jr., 'The New Man Created in God', Ph.D. thesis (Duke, 1990), 211–16.

¹³ Karl Heussi, *Der Ursprung des Mönchtums* (Tübingen, 1936), 98–9.

¹⁴ *Chron. Ath.* 10 (126–33 M/A). The Syriac text does not date Antony's departure to the 3rd of Mesori, as some have thought.

possibilities about the first-person account of the visit in the *Life*: (1) Athanasius is deceptively including himself in an event at which he was not present; (2) the 'we' language is an inadvertent remnant of an account of the visit by an eyewitness which Athanasius incorporated into his biography;¹⁵ or (3) Antony visited Alexandria twice. None of these possibilities seems very likely: the first, because Athanasius nowhere else tries to portray himself as personally involved in the narrated events; the second, because no other such inadvertent remnants of an earlier account have been identified; the third, because the two accounts of Antony's visit are otherwise very similar. Instead, it is possible that the interpretation of the index entry that raises this problem may itself be wrong: the index may in fact understand the visit of Antony as taking place in the summer of 338, when Athanasius was in the city, rather than in the summer of 337, when he was not. It has been suggested that the repetition of the phrase 'in this [year]' indicates this.¹⁶ Additionally, the placement of Antony's visit after the descriptions of Constantine's death and Athanasius' return from exile and the intervening phrase 'when many things had happened' suggest that the visit of the monk took place after Athanasius had returned from exile and thus in the summer of 338. The most likely scenario, then, is that Antony did visit Alexandria at the request of the Athanasian party in the summer of 338 and met Athanasius at that time. It is possible that the invitation itself indicates some previous contact between the bishop and the monk, but no more can be said on this point.

Given the paucity of evidence for actual contact between Athanasius and the historical Antony, scholars have considered it more promising to attempt to discover layers of traditions within the *Life* itself. The problematic 'we' passage in chapter 71 is an example of a section that some would identify as belonging to an earlier biography of Antony that Athanasius used. The possibility of such a written source arises from Athanasius' statement that he is transmitting, in addition to his personal knowledge, 'what I have been able to learn from the one who followed him no short time and poured water on his hands [cf. 2 Kgs. 3: 11]' (*VA*

¹⁵ So Badger, 'New Man', 212-14; he believes that Athanasius' failure explicitly to include himself in the party that invited Antony to Alexandria ('the bishops and all the brothers'; *VA* 69; 941a) implies that Athanasius was not in Alexandria at the time. Martin Tetz argues that Bishop Serapion of Thmuis provided the absent Athanasius with the account of this visit and, indeed, with the original biography of Antony ('Athanasius und die *Vita Antonii*: Literarische und theologische Relationen', *ZNW* 73 (1982), 1-30, at 24).

¹⁶ Annik Martin, *Histoire 'acéphale' et index syriaque des lettres festales d'Athanasie d'Alexandrie* (Paris, 1985), 75. However, a similar repetition of the phrase in *Chron. Ath.* 25 (352-3) refers to events that undoubtedly happened in the same year.

pref. 840a).¹⁷ It has been suggested that this unidentified Elisha to Antony's Elijah was Bishop Serapion of Thmuis, an ally and correspondent of Athanasius, who at the end of the *Life of Antony* receives from Antony a sheepskin in another allusion to the story of Elijah and Elisha (*VA* 91; 972b; cf. 2 Kgs. 2: 12–14).¹⁸ But, although Serapion possibly shared what he knew and thought about Antony with Athanasius and probably was the source for the vision described in chapter 82, evidence for a complete *Life* written by Serapion and used by Athanasius is lacking.¹⁹ Without question there are indeed 'seams' in the *Life*, places where one can detect the editorial work of Athanasius on previous material. For example, a string of miracle stories (*VA* 56–64) concludes with this transitional statement: 'Many monks have told unanimously and in like fashion about other such things that were done by him. Yet these do not appear so marvellous in comparison with other even more amazing things' (*VA* 65; 933c). Here follows a series of scenes with patently Athanasian interests: two visions that reflect the bishop's demonology (*VA* 65–6); Antony's loyalty to the clergy and hatred for the Melitians, Manichaeans, and Arians, including the visit to Alexandria (*VA* 67–71); the debates with philosophers (*VA* 72–80); the monk's correspondence with the emperors (*VA* 81); and an anti-Arian vision (*VA* 82). The designation of the material that coheres with Athanasius' interests as 'more amazing' than the miracle stories that went before indicates the bishop's editorial work on what he has received: he passes on the miracles, but stresses what follows. Thus, the contents of chapters 65–82 are probably among the farthest from either the historical Antony or pre-Athanasian traditions about him: here we would expect to find Athanasius' strongest themes.²⁰ Hence, there are indeed places in the work where one can identify Athanasius' redaction.²¹

¹⁷ This is the reading of some manuscripts. Others read, 'what I have been able to learn from him, since I followed him no short time and poured . . .', making Athanasius Antony's disciple. This second reading is a corruption in the text (Heussi, *Ursprung*, 82–3).

¹⁸ Tetz, 'Athanasius und die *Vita*'.

¹⁹ Klaus Fitschen, *Serapion von Thmuis* (Berlin and New York, 1992), 106–16.

²⁰ Another seam is to be found at the beginning of ch. 28, where Antony makes an announcement that is characteristic of Athanasius: 'Already I have spoken about this in a passing fashion, but now I must not shrink from speaking about it more broadly' (cf. *Inc.* 4. 1–3; 20. 19–24 T.). This sentence marks a turn in the discourse from a description of the demons' tricks to a discussion of how Christ's victory on the cross has rendered the demons impotent, which begins with a statement that could have come from *On the Incarnation*: 'Because the Lord dwelled among us, the enemy has fallen, and his powers have become weak' (*VA* 28; 884b); Andrew Louth, 'St. Athanasius and the Greek *Life of Antony*', *JTS*, NS 39 (1988), 504–9, at 507–8.

²¹ See e.g. Fitschen, *Serapion von Thmuis*, 110.

Beyond such occasional passages, however, the portrait of Antony in the *Life* is a fairly consistent and unified one; thus, the attempt to understand the point of view of the *Life* through comparison with its historical subject or with pre-Athanasian traditions does not seem promising. There is more to be learned by comparing Athanasius' portrait of Antony with other contemporary presentations of him.²² Such alternative views should not be merely possible interpretations of Antony, but ones that persons in fourth-century Egypt actually applied to him. In fact, Athanasius' *Life of Antony* is not the only literary portrait of the monk to survive from fourth-century Egypt: three other works transmit the views of Antony held by Athanasius' contemporaries. First, shortly after Antony's death in 356, Bishop Serapion of Thmuis wrote a letter to two of the monk's 'disciples' in which he portrayed Antony as the great intercessor for the Egyptian Church, a new Aaron, whose prayers rose before God like incense and preserved Egypt from the divine wrath. Secondly, a set of seven letters that may come from Antony himself depict the monk as a teacher of wisdom, a new Paul, who guides people to knowledge of self and thus of God. Thirdly, the *Lives of Pachomius* view Antony as the founder and representative of a group within monasticism, the anchorites, and hence as the chief rival to the coenobites' founder, Pachomius. There is no reason to believe that Athanasius was familiar with any of this literature, but he must have been aware of the social roles that these works represent.²³ In other words, these three early views of Antony form a background set of possibilities against which Athanasius' *Life* can be understood; they may be summarized as spiritual patron, teacher of wisdom, and founder of eremitical monasticism.

Spiritual patron. In his letter to two disciples of Antony after the great monk's death, Serapion of Thmuis depicted Antony as the greatest intercessor of all, one 'who prayed in behalf of the entire world'.²⁴ Here

²² Williams, 'Domestication', 37-8.

²³ It is possible that Athanasius knew Serapion's letter since he and the bishop of Thmuis were themselves correspondents and Athanasius was aware of Serapion's close relationship with Antony (*VA* 82, 91). As for the letters of Antony, Athanasius does not mention in the *Life* that Antony wrote letters to his fellow monks. The Pachomian *Lives* not only were compiled after Athanasius' death, but also show knowledge of Athanasius' biography of Antony.

²⁴ *Serap. Ep. Ant. disc. 5*. The text of Serapion's letter on the death of Antony is extant in two versions, Syriac and Armenian. Both versions have been edited with Latin translations by René Draguet, 'Une lettre de Sérapion de Thmuis aux disciples d'Antoine (A.D. 356) en version syriaque et arménienne', *Mus.* 64 (1951), 1-25. References here are to the Syriac text, which Draguet has shown to be closer to the original Greek than the Armenian, which has expanded the work. On the authenticity and contents of the letter, see Fitschen, *Serapion von Thmuis*, 57-66.

Antony appears as a spiritual patron: someone who, thanks to his superior virtue, is able to dispense spiritual and material benefits from God to other human beings. Serapion wrote to these two Antonian monks (for whom various names were supplied by later copyists) during Athanasius' third exile (356–62), when the imperial government had handed over the churches in Alexandria to the anti-Athanasians and had banished Athanasius along with his allied bishops.²⁵ Serapion directly attributes this dire turn of events to Antony's death: while he was alive, Antony's prayers kept 'the wrath of God' at bay, but 'after he departed, the wrath found its opportunity and came down, since there was no one to prevent it'.²⁶ The bishop compares the prayers of Antony to those of Aaron, who preserved the people of Israel when death threatened them.²⁷ Serapion tells the monks to whom he writes that they must replace Antony as the intercessors for the Athanasian Church by tapping into the 'power' that Antony possessed:

Therefore, we turn to you, blessed ones, that you might assume those things that befit you, as he did. For although one person has abandoned us, yet we have many persons, and it is right for us to seek the power of the one person in the many. And we are praying that, just as you are many, you might acquire much power. For each one of you, through his power, has become a blessed Antony, so that, because Antony has become many, many powers will pour forth to us, and a great remedy and perfect medicine will be shed upon us. But, because it is difficult for each one of you to acquire his own power, since there are many of you, his power will instead be manifested in you, and whatever he did, being one, we [*sic*] will do, being many. . . . Perhaps the wrath will have its end, and the Church will receive a little relief.²⁸

Serapion hopes that Antony's 'power', which appears to have a material character, will be acquired by the remaining monks and harnessed to benefit the Athanasian cause. He believed that the intercessory powers of Antony and his fellow monks were not limited to the political sphere: in general, he said that 'because God is loving, although he has been moved because of the sins of human beings, when he is honoured by the holy ones through prayers, he will quickly remove the threat against the sinners'.²⁹ Serapion understands there to be two groups of Christians:

²⁵ Serap. *Ep. Ant. disc.* 19–20 (6. 9–19 Draguet). Names added later: Fitschen, *Serapion von Thmuis*, 59–60.

²⁶ Serap. *Ep. Ant. disc.* 7–8, 11 (4. 13–5. 3, 12–15 Draguet). Serapion's explicit connection of Antony's death to the persecution of the Athanasian Christians supports Jerome's dating of Antony's death to 356.

²⁷ Serap. *Ep. Ant. disc.* 9–10 (5. 4–12 Draguet).

²⁸ *Ibid.* 13, 16–18 (5. 18–6. 9 Draguet).

²⁹ *Ibid.* 22 (6. 23–7. 2 Draguet).

'the holy ones', who are Antony and other monks; and 'the sinners', who are other Christians. The prayers of the former persuade God to spare the latter from his justifiable wrath. Hence, Serapion's request that the Antonian monks relieve the sufferings of pro-Athanasian Christians through their prayers was, for Serapion, only a specific application of the monks' general role as patrons; doubtless he believed that ordinary Christian sinners owed their monastic patrons honour and respect.

How would Antony have acquired and displayed his power and thereby have become a spiritual patron of the kind Serapion describes?³⁰ In order to answer this question, it will be useful to examine the case of another fourth-century Egyptian monk, named Paphnutius, whose rise to spiritual power exemplifies the general form of this social process in Antony's day. All that is known about Paphnutius is what can be gathered from a set of seven (possibly eight) letters written to him around the middle of the fourth century,³¹ when Athanasius was writing his own letters to Ammoun and Dracontius and his *Life of Antony*. Where Paphnutius lived is unknown, but it is likely to have been south of Oxyrhynchus; he does not match any of the other known Egyptians of the time named Paphnutius.³² Our Paphnutius lived sufficiently distant from the settled land that travelling to see the monk was difficult for his correspondents, but he also had some association with other monks ('the brothers who are with your holiness').³³ The monk's correspondents were well-educated persons with at least moderate amounts of wealth and included one official of high rank.³⁴ These persons of status and influence treated Paphnutius with great respect, as a person with substantial spiritual authority: they called him 'friend of God' and 'upholder of Christ', but most often 'father', as in 'beloved father' and

³⁰ Cf. 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), 103-52.

³¹ Seven: *P. Lond.* 1923-9; ed. and tr. H. Idris Bell, *Jews and Christians in Egypt* (London, 1924), 100-20; dated palaeographically to the middle of the 4th cent. by him (p. 100). I have used the translation by Robert F. Boughner, with introduction by James E. Goehring, 'Egyptian Monasticism (Selected Papyri)', in V. L. Wimbush (ed.), *Ascetic Behavior in Greco-Roman Antiquity* (Minneapolis, 1990), 456-63, at 459-62. The seven letters published by Bell were discovered together. A separate letter to a Paphnutius from 4th-cent. Egypt (Ghedini 25) was published by Adolf Deissmann as No. 23 in his *Light From the Ancient East*, tr. L. R. M. Strachan (rev. edn.; New York, 1927), 215-16. It is likely that this letter was addressed to the same Paphnutius who received the letters published by Bell.

³² Bell, *Jews and Christians*, 100-2.

³³ *P. Lond.* 1925. 3-4, 18-20; 1926. 17-19 Bell; cf. Bell, *Jews and Christians*, 101.

³⁴ Bell, *Jews and Christians*, 101.

'most honoured father'.³⁵ Like Antony, this man had withdrawn from human society, yet still played a significant and esteemed role in it.

Paphnutius' considerable powers, in the view of his admirers, were both moral and miraculous, and he had acquired them through a superior ascetic life. In general, the writers asked Paphnutius to pray for them.³⁶ They believed that, through his prayers, the monk could save them from temptations and human plots, convince God to forgive their sins, and heal their diseases.³⁷ A certain Valeria knew that Paphnutius had intercessory powers before God himself: 'Thus I have believed and do believe that if you pray on my behalf, I receive healing. I pray to God, I also pray to you.'³⁸ His followers believed that, in addition to acting as an advocate before God, Paphnutius could bless oil so that it would heal a sick person.³⁹ Paphnutius not only possessed supernatural powers; he was also a moral and spiritual guide. Ausonius, having been advised earlier by Paphnutius on his dealings with a certain Horus of Philadelphia, asked the monk once again to 'give directions in this and all matters'; Dorotheus the Oxyrhynchite wrote that 'we rejoice that we imitate [μιμείσθαι] you in the same noble way of life [φιλοκαγαθεΐα πολιτεΐα]'.⁴⁰ Paphnutius gained these powers through his virtuous behaviour. It is tantalizing to note even that a certain Athanasius said that the monk's prayers 'are received on high because of your holy love'.⁴¹ Dorotheus praised Paphnutius' 'most holy and well-reputed way of life' and told him that 'you renounce the pretensions of the world and hate the arrogance of the vainglorious'.⁴² Indeed, as an 'ascetic' (ἀσκούων) and 'worshipper', Paphnutius was believed to have received 'revelations' (ἀποκαλύμματα).⁴³ Paphnutius' considerable authority was not based on any ecclesiastical office that he held, but on his exemplary virtue, ascetic discipline, and revelations from God. His connection with God enabled him to bestow on other Christians miraculous gifts of protection, healing, and forgiveness, and to provide them with moral and spiritual direction.

³⁵ 'Friend of God': *P. Lond.* 1923. 2; 'upholder of Christ': 1926. 1; 'father': 1923. 3; 1924. 1; 1926. 27; 1928. 1, 11; 1929. 1 Bell.

³⁶ *P. Lond.* 1923. 11-13; 1924. 9-10; 1926. 15-17; 1928. 3-4; 1929. 4-5 Bell.

³⁷ *P. Lond.* 1923. 6-10; 1925. 10-12; 1926. 5-15; 1929. 11-15 Bell.

³⁸ *P. Lond.* 1926. 13-16 Bell.

³⁹ *P. Lond.* 1928. 4-7 Bell.

⁴⁰ *P. Lond.* 1924. 8-9; 1927. 38-40 Bell.

⁴¹ *P. Lond.* 1929. 7-8 Bell; it is impossible to say whether this Athanasius is Athanasius of Alexandria himself (Bell, *Jews and Christians*, 115-18).

⁴² *P. Lond.* 1927. 30-4 Bell.

⁴³ *P. Lond.* 1926. 9-10 Bell.

Such abilities made Paphnutius a spiritual patron, able to dispense spiritual benefits to his clients, who in turn honoured him with respect and gifts. Indeed, a Justinus called Paphnutius his 'master [δεσπότης] and new patron [πάτρων]'. In line with the ideology of monastic patronage that Serapion articulated, Justinus labelled himself 'one of the sinners' and asked that Paphnutius, through prayer, secure for him 'a share in the purification of sins'.⁴⁴ Because a monk like Paphnutius exercised a charismatic authority different from the bureaucratic authority of the priests and bishops, it is understandable how the monastic movement could have become a competitor with the parish churches for the allegiance of the educated, prosperous persons in the towns and villages of Egypt. Whether they were concerned about their health or in need of forgiveness of sins, Christians like Valeria and Justinus turned to Paphnutius.

Bishop Serapion's letter on the death of Antony reveals that Antony was viewed as a spiritual patron like Paphnutius, surprisingly enough by a bishop (but one who had formerly distinguished himself as a monastic leader).⁴⁵ Serapion developed his portrait of Antony as patron in support of the Athanasian cause (Paphnutius' activities were, as far as we know, neutral with respect to the political situation in Christian Egypt). It is possible that Serapion drew the theme of intercession from Antony's authentic teaching and adapted it to his own pro-Athanasian views.⁴⁶ None the less, this portrait of Antony posed certain dangers to Athanasius' vision of the Church. The ideal Church, in his view, did indeed include monks and lay people and give higher status to the ascetics, but it was meant to be a Church centred on the parishes and their sacramental life. Athanasius' programme of lay asceticism was aimed at precisely the sort of educated, prosperous Christians who corresponded with Paphnutius. There was probably little that Athanasius could do to halt such exchange between monks and lay people as took place between Paphnutius and his correspondents, but he could develop a picture of how a monk-patron acquired such powers and how he ought to use them. In the *Life*, Antony will appear as someone who is completely dominated by the Word of God and whose powers are really those of Christ. Like Paphnutius, Athanasius' Antony will heal people, counsel them, and receive visions; like Serapion's ideal monk, Athanasius' Antony will be steadfastly anti-Arian. But the Antony of

⁴⁴ Ghedini 25 (Deissmann, *Light From the Ancient East*, 215-16).

⁴⁵ *Ep. Drac.* 7 (PG 25. 532a).

⁴⁶ Fitschen, *Serapion von Thmuis*, 61-4.

Athanasius' *Life* will show reluctance to play a public role, will ascribe all his successes to God, and will manifest obedience to the Church's clergy.

Teacher of wisdom. In the seven letters attributed to Antony, we may have the monk's own view of himself.⁴⁷ If so, Antony presented himself as a teacher of wisdom, an instructor in the kind of philosophy that seeks to inform the student about God and the world and to lead the student into a more virtuous life. The Antony of the letters is kin to the ascetic teachers like Arius and Hieracas who were at work in Alexandria and its environs in the early fourth century. The author of the letters models himself after the apostle Paul, even appropriating to himself first-person statements from the Pauline epistles.⁴⁸ The author refers to his correspondents, who are both male and female, as his 'children' and as 'wise' or 'reasonable' people.⁴⁹ Stylistically the letters belong to the tradition of wisdom literature represented by such writings as the *Teachings of Silvanus* and the *Sentences of Sextus*.⁵⁰ Although firmly anti-Arian, the author's teachings show his familiarity with Platonic philosophy and his indebtedness to the Origenist tradition in Egyptian Christianity.⁵¹ The author teaches a kind of 'knowledge' (*γνώσις*) that identifies knowledge of self with knowledge of God: 'I write to you as men of understanding, who are able to know yourselves: you know that he who knows himself knows God'.⁵² We are dealing here with a monasticized form of the teaching authority exercised in the study circles of urban Alexandria: an academic Christianity of the desert, with its attendant dangers to the authority wielded by the clergy.⁵³ I have discussed this kind of Christian authority in some detail in Chapter 1. Again, the significance of these letters is not first of all that we find in them the real, historical Antony, which Athanasius transformed, but that, whether authentic or not, these letters circulated in the fourth century under Antony's name and thus provided a certain picture of Antony to their readers: Antony as teacher of wisdom.

Although there are numerous similarities between the theology of

⁴⁷ The authenticity of the letters is defended by Rubenson, *Letters of St. Antony*, esp. 35–42. I have used Chitty's translation cited above in n. 11.

⁴⁸ Rubenson, *Letters of St. Antony*, 48–9.

⁴⁹ Male and female: *Ant. Epp.* 1, 6. 'Children': *Epp.* 5, 6, 7. 'Wise/reasonable': *Epp.* 4, 5, 6.

⁵⁰ Rubenson, *Letters of St. Antony*, 49–51.

⁵¹ *Ibid.* 59–88, 185–6.

⁵² *Ant. Ep.* 3 (Chitty, *Letters*, 11); cf. *Epp.* 3, 4 (Chitty, *Letters*, 9, 12). Arius' problem was that 'he did not know himself'; *Ep.* 4 (Chitty, *Letters*, 13).

⁵³ Cf. Williams, 'Domestication', 28–30.

Antony's letters and that of Athanasius' *Life* (as one would expect, given their shared context), a freewheeling teaching authority like that of the letters' Antony represented a challenge to Athanasius' efforts to consolidate Egyptian Christianity around the episcopal office and to reduce the influence of study circles in Christian affairs. We have seen that Athanasius understood and respected the prevailing guru system among eremitical and semi-eremitical monks, calling Ammoun 'father'.⁵⁴ But Antony as teacher had the potential to exercise his authority beyond the monastic setting and to provide a model for how monks should function for educated laypeople. The Antony of the letters is manifestly literate and well educated, as many Egyptian monks were.⁵⁵ But in his biography Athanasius will present an uneducated Antony whose philosophical brilliance is due not to any training he received, but to his innate knowledge of God preserved through discipline. The Athanasian Antony, obedient to the clergy, puts philosophers to shame not with his learning, but with the victory of Christ over the demonic.

Founder of eremitical monasticism. Antony appears in the *Lives* of Pachomius as the founder of eremitical monasticism, a form of the ascetic discipline different from the coenobitic life that the Pachomians practised, and hence as the rival to Pachomius, the founder of the Pachomian federation. In their final forms, the Greek and Sahidic Coptic *Lives of Pachomius* exhibit knowledge of Athanasius' *Life of Antony* while the Bohairic Coptic version does not; all the versions preserve traditions that go back before Antony's death and reflect long-standing concerns in the Pachomian community.⁵⁶ These concerns included the Pachomians' perceptions of themselves in relation to other groups and movements on the scene of Egyptian Christianity: Pachomius, it would seem, exhibited anxiety about the status of his work and the federation in comparison to other forms of the ascetic life. An important episode in which the Pachomian monks Theodore and Zacchaeus visit Antony (VP 120, S. Bo. 126-9) is 'propaganda intended to allay misgivings' in the Pachomian community about the value of their project in comparison to the more solitary way of life represented by Antony.⁵⁷

The Coptic version of this story is more detailed and sharper than the

⁵⁴ *Ep. Ammon*, 69, 18 J.

⁵⁵ Rubenson, *Letters of St. Antony*, 95-9, 109-15; Anvik Martin, 'L'Église et la khôra égyptienne au IV^e siècle', *Revue des études augustiniennes*, 25 (1979), 3-26, at 13-19.

⁵⁶ Philip Rousseau, *Pachomius* (Berkeley, Calif., 1985), 45-8. See VP 2, 99; S. Bo. 2. The presentation of Pachomius' early struggle with demons in VP 17-22 is based on the *Life of Antony* (Rousseau, *Pachomius*, 60 n. 17).

⁵⁷ Rousseau, *Pachomius*, 72-3; cf. Rubenson, *Letters of St. Antony*, 165-72.

Greek; it does not mitigate the conflicts that this visit provokes.⁵⁸ The account reveals deep divisions in the Egyptian Church among three groups: the anchoritic monks associated with Antony, the Pachomian monks, and the parish clergy. The Pachomian author acknowledges Antony's fame and stature, but places him firmly in one monastic tradition: he is 'the blessed Apa Antony, the anchorite [*ἀναχωρητής*]'.⁵⁹ Pachomius' recent death inspires Antony to declare that Pachomius' federation is 'superior' to his eremitical life because it is closer to what the apostles practised.⁶⁰ Theodore responds politely, but Zacchaeus presses the issue by asking Antony why, if the coenobitic life was superior, he did not join a federation; Antony replies that when he began his ascetic career there were no communities and that now, even if he wanted to lead a community, he would be unable to do it since he did not have the necessary skills.⁶¹ This reply both reveals Antony's humility and relieves the Pachomians' insecurities. When the Pachomians depart, Antony gets criticism from two groups: a crowd of 'clergy and dignitaries', who wonder why Antony treated the Pachomians better than he did them; and his own monks, who complain that when they want to stay in the Pachomian monasteries, the Pachomians question their orthodoxy by asking whether they are Melitians.⁶² To the clergy, Antony replies that an angel had announced to him the Pachomians' visit, a supernatural sign that justified his giving the visitors great honour; and to his monks, he rebukes them for giving hospitality without regard to theological affiliations ('Do you want the brothers of the holy fellowship [the Pachomian federation] to act as you do and not test anyone?'). The scene ends with both groups 'convinced of all the complimentary things which Apa Antony said to them about the brothers of the fellowship'.⁶³

Here is a divided Egyptian Church. Eremitical and coenobitic monks dispute which form of the monastic life is superior and play their

⁵⁸ This portion of Veilleux's S. Bo. is actually from the fifth Sahidic *Life*, which betrays knowledge of the *Life of Antony* (Armand Veilleux (ed. and tr.), *Pachomian Koinonia* (Kalamazoo, Mich., 1980-2), 288, n. 1 to S. Bo. 129). This fact makes the frank manner in which the divisions among Antonian monks, Pachomians, and the clergy are presented all the more striking.

⁵⁹ S. Bo. 126 (= VS⁵ 16; 177. 2-3 Lef.).

⁶⁰ 'For the fact that he gathered souls about himself in order to present them holy to the Lord reveals that he is superior to us and that it is the path of the apostles he took, that is, the *Koinonia*'; *ibid.* (177. 24-8 Lef.). Cf. S. Bo. 127, where Antony calls the coenobitic life 'the path of the apostles' (178. 12 Lef.).

⁶¹ *Ibid.* 126-7 (178. 5-36 Lef.).

⁶² *Ibid.* 128-9 (179. 3-20; 179. 34-180. 8 Lef.).

⁶³ *Ibid.* (179. 21-33; 180. 9-25 Lef.).

founders against each other. Clergy and imperial officials complain that monks get more respect than they do. Pachomians accuse Antonian monks of having unorthodox proclivities or, at least, of not paying enough attention to theological distinctions. The anchorites, in turn, accuse the coenobites of inhospitality. Antony may be the peacemaker in this scene, respected by all the factions, but he is none the less the representative of one party. Athanasius had no knowledge of the Coptic version of the *Life of Pachomius*, but he was undoubtedly aware of the tensions that this scene describes. The Athanasian Antony will display great respect for clergy and imperial officers (if they support Athanasius), and he will condemn any show of hospitality to Melitians, Arians, and other heretics. He will not represent a single brand of the ascetic life, but rather will be the single model of the Christian life in its most perfect form.

Although it is likely that his actual contact with Antony was minimal, probably only the single visit of Antony to Alexandria in the summer of 338, Athanasius must have been aware of the differing ways that Egyptian Christians interpreted this most impressive monk. Lay Christians in the towns could have considered him their spiritual patron, who used his influence with God to cure their diseases, solve their problems, and protect them from divine wrath. Both lay and ascetic Christians could have seen him as an outstanding teacher of wisdom, who guided them into better acquaintance with themselves and with God. And monks and clergy may have seen him as the founder of a party within the Church, the representative of eremitical monasticism and of that group's sense of superiority. Athanasius chose, however, to present Antony as none of these or, rather, as all of them to some extent. The Athanasian Antony is not first of all a patron, a teacher, or a party leader: he is simply the ideal Christian, the most dramatic example of someone who, thanks to Christ's victory on the cross, is making his journey on the way up to heaven. I turn now to the Antony created by Athanasius and to the narrative world that he inhabits.

THE STORY OF ANTONY AND THE MYTH OF THE INCARNATE WORD

The spiritual programme that Athanasius articulated in his general works described the Christian life in terms of a myth, according to which Christians ascended to heaven by means of the way up (*áνοδος*) that

the devil and his demons once blocked but that the Word of God had made accessible by his death and resurrection. The means of that ascent in practical and social terms was a set of ascetic practices (renunciation of various pleasures, solitary living), which Athanasius gathered under the term 'withdrawal'. The practices of withdrawal both reconfigured the individual's relationship to secular society and restored a proper relationship between the person's soul and body. The *Life of Antony* translates this complex vision into the story of a single person, the monk Antony, whose career functions as a pattern for the successful Christian life. Since it consists primarily of narrative, the *Life synthesizes four Athanasian categories that can be differentiated: (1) the myth of heavenly ascent past demons; (2) the psychological problem of humanity's fear of death and the resulting moral paralysis; (3) the social practices of withdrawal from society and the formation of an alternative community; and (4) the spiritual process of re-establishing the soul's control of the body and its passions.* For example, Antony's single act of renouncing sex (*VA* 5-7) simultaneously possesses multiple meanings and functions: it is his resistance against a demonic attack (1); his refusal to take his place as a married person in society (3); and the successful control of his bodily passions by his rational soul (4). The myth of ascent and the problem of death are particularly difficult to separate, as we shall see, since it is Antony's fear of death that the demons try to exploit when they attack him with apparitions. As a biography, the *Life* resists the reader's efforts to atomize its discourse into mythical, social, and philosophical categories because it embodies all of these in an irreducible human person. Moreover, the narrative world that Athanasius has created absorbs this individual person's biography into the mythical story of the incarnate Word. Narrative may have been the form of moral discourse most suited to Athanasius, who eschewed theoretical discussion of Christian ethics for biblical stories of exemplary saints.

The myth of ascent and the fear of death

Athanasius plots Antony's career as a struggle with the devil and his demons on a three-dimensional graph with two axes: a vertical pole defined by the relation between earth and heaven, and a horizontal pole defined by the relation between the settled land and the desert.⁶⁴ The

⁶⁴ There is much helpful literature on the demonology of the *Life*, but little that attempts to understand it as an expression of Athanasius' own thought as found in his other works. Wilhelm Schneemelcher does relate the *Life's* demonology to Athanasius' theme of

horizontal, or social, dimension is familiar from monastic lore that understood the desert as the habitation of the demons: the monk's advance into the desert was an assault on the devil's territory. This movement from world to desert will be examined below. The vertical, or mythical, dimension has its roots in the philosophical tradition of Christian authors like Origen,⁶⁵ and it represents the distinctive Athanasian turn on the demonology of desert monasticism. Athanasius' portrayal of the monk's conflict with the demons in the air dramatizes in mythical terms the existential problem of humanity's fear of death, the moral paralysis that results from that fear, and its removal thanks to the Word's incarnation.⁶⁶

In accordance with Athanasius' myth of heavenly ascent, the *Life* presents the devil and his demons as in control of the air and trying to prevent human beings from ascending to heaven; human beings can ascend past these demons by living a morally upright life. Antony's statement on the demonic control of the air in his ascetic discourse echoes vocabulary found in similar passages in *On the Incarnation* and the *Festal Letters*.⁶⁷ The visions in chapters 65 and 66 provide programmatic depictions of the ascetic life in mythical terms as the eluding of demons who would thwart the monk's progress toward heaven. These visions occur at the beginning of the final block of material (*VA* 65–93) in which the interests of Athanasius are particularly evident.⁶⁸ The first vision is the more important one:

Once when he was about to eat and had risen up to pray around the ninth hour, he perceived himself to have been snatched up in the mind. And, strangely enough, he stood and saw himself as if he were outside himself and as if he were being guided [ὁδηγοῦσθαι] into the air by certain beings. Then [he saw] harsh and fearful beings standing in the air and wanting to prevent him from passing through. And when his guides fought against them, they demanded the reason

Christ's victory on the cross in 'Das Kreuz Christi und die Dämonen: Bemerkungen zur *Vita Antonii* des Athanasius', in E. Dassmann and K. S. Frank (eds.), *Pietas* (Münster, 1980), 381–92. Norman H. Baynes stresses the New Testament background in 'St. Antony and the Demons', *JEA* 40 (1954), 7–10. Jean Daniélou gives the philosophical, Jewish, and patristic precedents in 'Les Démons de l'air dans la "Vie d'Antoine"', in B. Steidle (ed.), *Antonius Magnus Eremita 356–1956* (Rome, 1956), 137–47.

⁶⁵ See Daniélou, 'Démons de l'air', esp. 139–42, 146.

⁶⁶ Johannes Roldanus, 'Die *Vita Antonii* als Spiegel der Theologie des Athanasius und ihr Weiterwirken bis ins 5. Jahrhundert', *TP* 58 (1983), 194–216, esp. 208–10.

⁶⁷ The demons fell 'from the thinking [φρόνησις] of heaven' and now 'wallow around the earth'. Here they deceive pagans through fantasies and try to 'impede' (ἐμποδίζειν) Christians from 'the way up [ἀνοδος] to heaven'. Hence, the monk's life requires, in addition to 'much prayer and discipline', 'the gift for discerning the spirits' (*VA* 22; 876).

⁶⁸ See the above discussion of 'seams' in the *Life*.

why he was not accountable to them. When they wanted to take account of him from his birth, his guides prevented them, saying, 'The Lord has done away with the things from his birth, but you may make an account of things since he became a monk and made a vow to God.' When they accused but did not convict him, his way [ὁδὸς] became free and unhindered. And immediately he saw himself as if here coming to himself and standing, and once again he was really Antony (*VA* 65; 933c-6a).⁶⁹

Athanasius explains that the demons are able to prevent the ascension to heaven only of those persons who are morally negligent, those who cannot render a satisfactory account of their lives as the demons demand.⁷⁰ According to Epiphanius of Salamis, Egyptian gnostic Christians of the fourth century learned passwords to get past such celestial gatekeepers from a mostly lost work called the *Gospel of Philip* (not the one found at Nag Hammadi), which read in part: 'The Lord revealed unto me what the soul must say when it is ascending into heaven and how it must reply to each of the higher powers: "I have come to be acquainted with my self."⁷¹ To Athanasius, however, people do not have to possess such special knowledge to get past these demonic powers; they need only live virtuous lives. The ambivalent statement of Antony's angelic guides reflects Athanasius' double emphasis, which we have seen in the *Festal Letters*, on the grace made available to all in Christ's victory ('the Lord has done away with the things from his birth') and on the need for moral effort by human beings ('the things since he became a monk and made a vow to God'). In the mythical language of the *Festal Letters*, Christ has made the way 'easy', but humans must be 'zealous'.⁷² The reference to a monk's vow echoes Athanasius' idea that each Christian will be judged 'according to how well he carried out the way of life belonging to his vow'.⁷³ The second

⁶⁹ As he does in his *Letter to Adelphius*, Athanasius presents this vision of the demonic attempt to hinder the Christian's ascent to heaven as based on Eph. 2: 2, where the devil is described as 'the prince of the power of the air'; *Ep. Adelph.* 7 (*PG* 26. 1081b); *VA* 65 (936b).

⁷⁰ Daniélou calls these demons 'celestial customs officers'; this idea also appears in Origen, Basil the Great, and Gregory of Nyssa ('Démon de l'air', 142).

⁷¹ *Epiph. Pan.* 26. 13. 2; tr. Benay Layton, *The Gnostic Scriptures* (Garden City, NY, 1987), 213. Cf. *The Secret Book According to John* (NHC 2) 27. 2-10; *Epiph. Pan.* 26. 10. 7-10; 40. 2. 8 (Layton, *Gnostic Scriptures*, 48, 196-7, 211). Some Gnostics identified the stars as the demonic powers who would thwart the soul's ascent (Alan Scott, *Origen and the Life of the Stars* (Oxford, 1991), 100-3).

⁷² *Ep. fest.* 43 ap. *Cosm. Ind. Top.* 10. 9. 1-16 Wolska-Conus. Note that 'fear' plays a blocking role in both *Ep. fest.* 43 and Antony's vision. Also in both cases Athanasius uses his myth of ascent as a basis for exhortation to moral vigilance: the monks are to put on 'the armour of God' (Eph. 6: 13) so that, 'having no evil to say of us, the enemy may be put to shame' (Titus 2: 2) (*VA* 65; 936b).

⁷³ *Ep. virg.* 1. 20 (82. 15-16 Lef.).

vision repeats these points but collapses the demons into the single figure of the devil.⁷⁴ Together these two visions provide the vertical axis of the grid on which Athanasius plots the ascetic conflict with the demons, and they emphasize moral virtue as the means of eluding the airborne demons.

The demons try to prevent such moral virtue by attacking monks in two ways: internally by thoughts and externally by apparitions; Antony summarizes the two ways in chapter 23.⁷⁵ This two-staged scheme for demonic attacks structures the presentation of Antony's early ascetic efforts: the devil first assaults the young man with thoughts (of sex, food, and wealth) and then turns to apparitions (a woman, a black boy, wild beasts, and so on) (*VA* 5-13). The demons' use of thoughts and apparitions is familiar from the monastic literature of Egypt; Athanasius' presentation is unique in its emphasis on the external mode of attack. Both modes of demonic attack feed on the monk's psychological vulnerabilities; here the mythological language of demonic attack and the psychological pressures of the monastic vocation mutually interpret each other. In the internal mode of their assault, the demons suggest evil 'thoughts', which draw upon the monk's propensity for desire and anxiety about his discipline. For example, when Antony begins his ascetic career, the devil introduces thoughts about his ties to the world ('his property, the care of his sister', etc.), the difficulties of an ascetic regime ('the body is weak and the time is long'), and sexual pleasures ('filthy thoughts'). The devil's strategy is to exploit any hesitation or anxieties already present within Antony as he begins his new life, thereby testing his 'intention' (*VA* 5; 848a). As a monk progresses in his

⁷⁴ Antony sees a 'formless and frightening giant', trying to stop 'certain beings who were going up as if having wings'. Antony learns that he is witnessing 'the passing of the souls' [*ἡ πάροδος τῶν ψυχῶν*] and that the giant is 'the enemy': 'Those accountable to him he seizes and prevents their passing through, but those who did not fall to him he cannot control as they pass beyond.' Antony takes this vision as a reason for him to redouble his ascetic efforts: 'he even more struggled daily to advance in the things before him' (*VA* 66; 937).

⁷⁵ Cf. Schneemelcher, 'Das Kreuz Christi', 382; J. Roldanus, *Le Christ et l'homme dans la théologie d'Athanase d'Alexandrie* (Leiden, 1968), 322. First the demons attack internally by means of 'evil thoughts' (*πρῶτον; λογισμαί*), which prey on the human being's changeable desires by appealing to 'obvious and unclean pleasure [*ἡδονή*]'. The monk's defence against these internal attacks is his ascetic discipline of 'prayers, fasts, and faith in the Lord'. If thwarted in their internal assault, the demons will try a second, external method: 'apparitions' (*φαντασίαι*), which exploit the human vulnerability to fear. The monk's weapon against these attacks is 'the sign of the cross'. In their external mode, the demons have additional means of attack: they can 'pretend to prophesy and foretell future events' (in order to deceive) and they can increase the size of their apparitions (in order to frighten). If all else fails, they bring on the devil himself (*VA* 23; 878).

discipline, the demons continue to feed on his feelings of inadequacy and suggest a more rigorous ascetic regime (longer vigils, stricter fasts) in order to lead the monk into despair and hatred for the solitary life (*VA* 25; 881). In these passages, the categories of mythical as opposed to psychological or existential language dissolve into each other, for Athanasius by no means wants to suggest that the thoughts introduced by the demons are merely projections of the monk's psychology; rather, because the devil has been made weak by Christ's victory in the cross, his only recourse is to draw power from the monk's own vulnerabilities. Satan admits this to Antony: 'It is not I who trouble them [the monks]; rather, they disturb themselves, for I have become weak' (*VA* 41; 904a). Lest the reader think that demonic apparitions therefore are not real, Antony explains that the demons 'come to us in whatever state they find us, and they liken their apparitions to the thoughts that they find in us'. The monk's self-evaluation provides the fuel for the demons' work: 'Whatever we think of ourselves, this they pay out with interest.' Thus, the monk must keep 'his soul secured' by turning his attention away from his insecure self and toward the security of Christ and his promises (*VA* 42; 905). The internal and external modes of the demonic attacks are thus closely related: the demons' use of thoughts forms the basis for their deployment of apparitions, which also derive their power from the monk's internal vulnerabilities.

The chief of these vulnerabilities is the fear of death, which leads to moral paralysis. This is the reason that Athanasius devotes few words to the subtle, internal mode of demonic suggestions but rather dwells at great length on the nightmarish external appearances of the demons, to the puzzlement of modern scholars.⁷⁶ Certainly Athanasius inherited these lurid depictions of demonic apparitions from his monastic sources, but he uses them to adapt to his myth of heavenly ascent a psychological theme also familiar from his other writings: the moral paralysis brought upon fallen human beings by fear, particularly the fear of death. The bishop emphasizes the enormous size and disturbing character of the demons' visual appearances (*VA* 9, 24, 28, 30, 42), and he repeatedly describes the inchoate noises ('tumults') that they make (*VA* 9, 13, 26, 51). Because the demons cannot really harm the monk, the purpose of their apparitions is to instil fear in him and thereby render him incapable of pursuing the life of virtue (*VA* 9, 23, 24, 28, 30, 42). The criterion for discriminating between visions that come from God and those that come

⁷⁶ See e.g. the bewilderment of Hans Lietzmann, *The Era of the Church Fathers*, vol. 4 of *A History of the Early Church*, tr. Bertram Lee Woolf (repr. Cleveland, 1961), 137.

from the devil and the demons is the effect that a vision has on the soul, whether or not it frightens the soul:

For the vision of the saints is not disturbed . . . but it comes so quietly and gently that it immediately brings joy, gladness, and courage to the soul. For the Lord is with them, who is our joy and the Power of God the Father. Its [the soul's] thoughts remain undisturbed and calm, so that, being illumined, it sees those who appear by itself. And desire for the divine things and the things to come enters it, and it desires to be united wholly with them, if it might depart with them. . . . But the attack and apparition of the evil ones is disturbed, with a tumult, roar, and shouting, as if it were the movement of uneducated young men and robbers. From these come at once terror in the soul, disturbance and confusion of thoughts, despair, hatred toward ascetics, boredom, grief, memory of relatives, and fear of death, and finally desire for evil things, neglect of virtue, and a disorderly character (*VA* 35-6; 896).⁷⁷

Passages such as this one recall Athanasius' description of the fall of humanity in *Against the Nations*, when the purity of the soul's vision of God gave way to the disordered desires of the flesh, to neglect, and, above all, to the fear of death. Athanasius' emphasis in the *Life* on the terrifying, disturbing appearances of the demons arises from his belief that the soul's anxiety about death lies at the root of the human inability to lead a virtuous life.⁷⁸ The apparitions of the demons prey upon the anxieties that the process of corruption and death has brought upon fallen humanity; by these means the demons hope to prevent the monk from leading a morally virtuous life and thereby ascending past them to heaven.

The demonic attacks are therefore repelled by the sign of the cross, the symbol of Christ's victory over death. This notion logically follows from Athanasius' belief that the apparitions of the demons derive their power from human anxiety about death. In *On the Incarnation*, the sign of the cross represents Christ's victory over death and the devil and his liberation of human beings from their natural, but enfeebling fear of death: the courage of the martyrs demonstrates death's weakness after the crucifixion.⁷⁹ Similarly in the *Life*, making the sign of the cross (*VA* 13, 35, 78, 80) or saying the name of Christ (*VA* 40, 63, 71) protects the monk from the assaults of the demons and drives out unclean spirits. The sign of the cross has this power because it was the crucifixion, as a

⁷⁷ Should a vision from God bring any fear to the person, it is taken away by reassurances, just as angels who appear in the New Testament tell human beings to 'fear not' (*VA* 35; 896a); cf. *Ep. virg.* 1. 17 (80. 7-19 Lef.).

⁷⁸ *Gent.* 3. 22-31 T.

⁷⁹ *Inc.* 27. 1-30. 2 T.

death 'in the air', that rendered the airborne demons impotent and reopened the way up to heaven.⁸⁰ The incarnation of the Word has left the devil impotent: 'Because the Lord sojourned [with us], the enemy has fallen, and his powers have become weak. Therefore, although he is weak and like a fallen tyrant, he does not keep quiet, but rather he threatens, if only with words' (*VA* 28; 884B). As the token of the Word's victory over them, the sign of the cross repels the demons and, appropriately, instils fear in them: the demons 'are cowards and completely afraid of the sign of the Lord's cross because by it the Saviour stripped them and made an example of them' (*VA* 35; 894). Fear belongs to the demons: when the monk succumbs to their fear, he declines from the courage granted by 'the vision of the saints' into the disorder of a life lived in fear of death. The sign of the cross returns that fear on to the demons.

Thanks to the Word's victory on the cross, the monk's consideration of death can increase his moral effort instead of making him fearful and morally disordered. Like the martyrs in *On the Incarnation*,⁸¹ the monk can replace the disorientating fear of death with an attitude toward death that results in moral courage and an intensified life of virtue. The monk should base his ascetic regime on St Paul's statement, 'I die every day' (1 Cor. 15: 31) (*VA* 19, 89, 91).⁸² His consideration of the rewards in heaven, the precarious nature of human life (*VA* 42, 45; 905b, 908c-9a), and the horrors of hell (*VA* 19; 872b) should produce an unwavering life of virtue free of the 'negligence' that led to the fall of the original human beings.⁸³ The person whose meditation on death leads to such resolve will display courage even in the face of imminent death. Antony, con-

⁸⁰ *Ibid.* 25. 23-5 T; *Ep. fest.* 22 ap. *Cosm. Ind. Top.* 10. 4. 1-6 Wolska-Conus; *Ep. Adelp.* 7 (PG 26. 1081b).

⁸¹ *Inc.* 28. 1-8; 29. 17-29 T.

⁸² Cf. *Frag.* 2 (121. 18-20 Lcf.).

⁸³ 'So that we might not be negligent [ἀλειτουργεῖν] it is good to meditate on the Apostle's statement: "I die every day" [1 Cor. 15: 13]. For if we too live as if we were going to die every day, we will not sin. What was quoted means this: that when we get up every day, we should reckon that we will not last until evening, and when we are about to go to sleep, we should reckon that we will not get up, since our life is by nature uncertain and is measured out every day by Providence. When we are so disposed and so live every day, we will not sin, nor will we have desire for anything, nor will we bear a grudge against anyone, nor will we lay up treasure on earth. Rather, as if we were expecting to die every day, we will be poor and forgive everyone everything. We will not at all retain desire for a woman or another filthy pleasure, but we will turn away from it as something transitory, always fighting and looking forward to the day of judgement. For always the greater fear and the struggle of the torments dissolves the ease of pleasure and restores the slipping soul' (*VA* 19; 872). The original human beings 'neglected [καταλείποντες] better things'; *Gent.* 3. 2-3 T.

fronting martyrdom, 'stood without trembling, showing the zeal of us Christians' (*VA* 46; 912a). When he informs his companions of his impending death, his friends weep, but Antony, 'as though he were leaving some foreign country for his own city, talked with joy' (*VA* 89; 968a). Antony told his followers that seeing him die should lead them not to fear the death-dealing demons, but to increase their ascetic efforts:

As for me, as it is written, I am going the way of the fathers [cf. 3 Kgs. 2: 2], for I see myself summoned by the Lord. But as for you, be sober, and do not reduce to nothing the discipline that you have practised for a long time. But, as if you were beginning now, be eager to retain your zeal. You know the demons that are plotting; you know how they are fierce, but weak in power. Therefore, do not fear them, but rather breathe Christ always, and believe in him. Live as if you were dying every day [cf. 1 Cor. 15: 13], paying attention to yourselves and remembering the exhortations that you have heard from me (*VA* 91; 969).

The imagined imminence of one's death is not to inspire fear; rather, it promotes a focused attention on the present and on oneself. Although this theme was a venerable one in ancient philosophy,⁸⁴ Athanasius bases it on the victory over the natural human fear of death that Christ won in the Garden of Gethsemane.⁸⁵

Hence, the monk's ability to elude the demons is a combination of Christ's work (death on the cross) and his own effort (the life of daily death). Antony calls these two aspects of the monk's victory over the demonic 'an upright life and faith in God':

Therefore, it is necessary to fear God alone and to despise those beings [the demons] and not to be afraid of them at all. Rather, to the extent that they do these things, let us intensify our discipline against them. For an upright life and faith in God is a great weapon against them. Therefore, they fear the fasting of the ascetics, the keeping of vigils, the prayers, the meekness, the quietness, the contempt for money, the lack of conceit, the humility, the love for the poor, the almsgivings, the lack of anger, and especially the piety toward Christ. It is for this reason that they do everything: that no one will trample them under foot. For they know the grace that opposes them and that has been given to the faith-

⁸⁴ Pierre Hadot, 'Exercices spirituels antiques et "philosophie chrétienne"', in his *Exercices spirituels et philosophie antique* (2nd edn.; Paris, 1987), 65.

⁸⁵ 'But from the most enduring purpose and courage of the holy martyrs it is shown that the divinity was not in terror, but the Saviour was taking away our terror. For just as he abolished death by death, and by human means all human things, so by this so-called terror he removed our terror and made it so that people would no longer fear death'; *Ar.* 3. 57 (PG 26. 444); Roldanus, '*Vita Antonii als Spiegel*', 208-10.

ful by the Saviour, when he said, 'Look, I have given to you the authority to trample upon serpents and scorpions and upon all the power of the enemy' (Luke 10: 19) (*VA* 30; 888b-9a).⁸⁶

Here Athanasius ties together the efforts of the ascetic ('an upright life') and the grace or power given by Christ ('faith in God'): both are required if the ascetic is to repel the demons' attempts to frighten him and cast fear on them instead. Christ has rendered the devil and his demons powerless, but the monk, through his ascetic regime, must make Christ's victory his own. This teaching reflects Athanasius' general belief that Christ has made the way up to heaven accessible to human beings, who yet must make the journey through their own efforts; that people have received sufficient grace, but must exercise their free will to make it fruitful.⁸⁷ Athanasius' notion of the co-operation between divine grace and human effort stands behind the famous scene in chapter 10, in which the Lord provides 'assistance' to the struggling Antony by dispersing the demons with 'a ray of light'. 'Antony, I was here', a voice tells the monk, who is relieved, yet puzzled at the delay, 'but I waited to see your striving. Since you have endured and were not defeated, I will be your helper and make you known everywhere' (*VA* 10; 860a). Antony is careful always to attribute his successful conflicts with the demonic to the victory of the Word, but his own exemplary discipline makes an undeniable contribution. The Word's victory over the demons is his victory over death on the cross.⁸⁸ Appropriating that victory through his discipline, Antony faces death and the demons with the courage that Athanasius once attributed to martyrs.

The vertical axis of Antony's conflict with the demons dramatizes on a smaller scale the myth of heavenly ascent that Athanasius articulated from a wider perspective in his *Festal Letters*. In those letters, Athanasius frequently portrayed the Christian life as a conflict with the airborne Satan, his demonic host, or both; he described exorcisms performed at martyr shrines as graphic evidence of this struggle, the outcome of which Christ's death had pre-determined.⁸⁹ Thus, when Athanasius wrote the *Life*, he had already developed a mythical framework in which to set the

⁸⁶ Cf. Schneemelcher, 'Das Kreuz Christi', 385.

⁸⁷ *Epp. fest. (syr.)* 3. 2-5; 6. 3-5; 7. 7-9.

⁸⁸ Cf. Schneemelcher, 'Das Kreuz Christi', 387-92.

⁸⁹ Conflict with Satan: *Epp. fest. (syr.)* 1. 5; 2. 2, 6 (16. 8-9; 21. 17; 23. 26-7 C.); (gr.) 22, 24 ap. *Cosm. Ind. Top.* 10. 4 4-5, 10-11 Wolska-Conus; (cop.) 25 (14. 8-9 Lef.). With demons: *Epp. fest. (syr.)* 1. 3 (14. 14 C.); (gr.) 28 ap. *Cosm. Ind. Top.* 10. 5. 11 Wolska-Conus. With both: *Ep. fest. (syr.)* 10. 4 (145. 13-16; 146. 18 C/B). Exorcisms: *Ep. fest. (cop.)* 42 (28. 19-29. 2; 64. 24-66. 25 Lef.).

monastic lore of demonic conflict that he inherited. What ties the *Life's* more graphic accounts to Athanasius' myth of heavenly ascent is the psychological theme (equally familiar from such writings as *Against the Nations* and *On the Incarnation*) of the human moral paralysis caused by fear of death. The Word's crucifixion provides the point where these mythical and psychological categories intersect since it represents victory over both death and the demonic.

Withdrawal from the world: Renunciation of sex, food, and wealth

Antony's conflict with the demons also has a horizontal dimension: Athanasius understands the desert as the earthly territory under demonic control; Antony's gradual penetration into the desert therefore represents an offensive manoeuvre against the devil.⁹⁰ Satan recognizes this attack when Antony enters the tomb, which is a stark sign of humanity's captivity to the devil in death: 'The enemy did not endure this, but was afraid that soon he would fill the desert with the discipline'; the devil therefore brings 'a great number of demons' to lash Antony mercilessly (*VA* 8; 856a). Next Antony makes war against the demons in a 'deserted fort' in the desert, prompting them to cry: 'Leave our places! What have you to do with the desert? You cannot bear our attack' (*VA* 13; 861c). The barren, waterless land of the desert offered no welcome to ancient Egyptians, who thus populated it with the demonic enemies of humanity. Led by Antony, however, the monks settle in the desert and reclaim the devil's territory for God: they transform the desert into 'the heavenly commonwealth [*πολιτεία*]', 'a land of piety and justice' (*VA* 14, 44; 865b, 908b). The conquest of the desert is a moral one, which the monks achieve through a way of life characterized by reverence and righteousness. As if to underline his own triumph in the desert, Antony creates in it a small copy of the Garden of Eden by planting vegetables and taming the wild beasts (*VA* 50; 916b-17a). This reclamation of the forbidding desert through a life of virtue was an image dear to Athanasius, a man of the city. The ancient Israelites, he wrote in his tenth *Festal Letter*, 'walked in the wilderness as in an inhabited place. For although the place was desolate of the customary converse of human beings, yet, through the gracious gift of the Law and through conversation with angels, it was no longer a desert, but rather more than an inhabited country.'⁹¹

While the vertical axis of Antony's conflict with the demonic played

⁹⁰ Roldanus, *Christ et l'homme*, 324-7.

⁹¹ *Ep. fest.* (syr.) 10. 6 (48. 2-5 C.).

out mythically a psychological theme of fear of death, the horizontal axis plays out mythically a social theme of withdrawal from human society (the world) and the establishment of an alternative civic life. The practices of withdrawal involve renunciation of those things that tie Antony to normal human society: sex, food, and wealth. Of these three temptations, it is wealth that represents the greatest danger for Antony and, presumably, for the audience that Athanasius addresses. The practices of withdrawal do not separate Antony from society completely; rather, they place him outside society and then establish new connections between him and the world he has left behind. In addition to the social function of enabling withdrawal from the world, these acts of renunciation function spiritually to re-establish a proper soul-body relationship in Antony. In this section, our principal focus will be on the social dimension, but the spiritual theme will appear since the two are inextricably related.

Renunciation of sex. Sex appears in Antony's career as a temptation peculiar to adolescence and, once overcome, it almost completely disappears from the monk's life. By renouncing sexual relations and marriage, the young Antony refuses to take the next step in his advance toward his role as a wealthy and prominent man in his village, but this renunciation represents only a small part of his giving up this social role: his property looms far larger.⁹² As Athanasius describes Antony's overcoming of sexual temptation, he instead stresses the overcoming of the bodily passions through the Word's victory.

The disengagement of a prominent young man from his wife and family in order to assume the solitary life was a staple of monastic lore. Ammoun, for example, was said to have convinced his wife on their wedding night that they should live a celibate life; after eighteen years, she suggested a move to the Nitrian desert.⁹³ Here Antony's sister fills the role of the wife (*VA* 2-3, 54). On the one hand, Antony represents a pattern different from that of men such as Ammoun: he enters the ascetic life at such a young age that the possibility of marriage as a social tie appears not to enter the picture. On the other hand, one should not dismiss too quickly the possibility of sexual overtones to how Athanasius presents Antony's relationship with his sister: brother-sister marriage remained common among the élite of Egypt's country towns until it was forbidden by an imperial edict in 295.⁹⁴ In any case, Athanasius uses the

⁹² Peter Brown, *The Body and Society* (New York, 1988), 213-14.

⁹³ *Pall. H. Laus.* 8 (2. 26-9 Butler); cf. *H. mon.* 29. 1.

⁹⁴ Keith Hopkins, 'Brother-Sister Marriage in Roman Egypt', *Comparative Studies in*

sister only to say things about Antony. In the early chapters, she stands beside money and property as items Antony must divest himself of in order to realize his desire for withdrawal; at the end of the story, she enjoys a paler version of her brother's success: she is 'grown old in virginity, herself the leader of other virgins' (*VA* 54; 921b).⁹⁵

In his attempt to thwart Antony's undertaking of the ascetic life, the devil employs sexuality in two ways, one involving marriage, the other pederasty. In his first sexual attack, the devil uses both of his modes of assault: thoughts and visions. Unable to dissuade Antony with thoughts of relatives, food, and wealth, the devil chooses a strategy designed for adolescents: 'the weapons that are "in the navel of his belly" [Job 40: 11]', which are 'his principal ambush against the young'. The devil introduces 'filthy thoughts', but Antony repels these with prayer and fasts. Then come the visions, with a subtle parody of Athanasius' characteristic imitation theme: the devil 'dressed up as a woman [ὡς γυνή σχηματίζεσθαι] at night and imitated [μιμείσθαι] one in every way'. Antony repels this attack as well: 'By thinking about Christ and the noble birth that comes from him, and by considering the rational faculty of the soul [τὸ νοερόν τῆς ψυχῆς λογιζόμενος], he quenched the coal of his deceit' (*VA* 5; 848). By placing this scene immediately after temptations involving wealth and family, Athanasius associates the renunciation of sex with the abandonment of social ties; but he subordinates this social theme to his interest in the proper control of the bodily passions by the rational soul. Antony overcomes the temptation by considering Christ and his benefits and by remembering the incorporeal, rational dimension of his own nature; even as a youth, he enjoys the reorientation from body to soul that marks the successful ascetic life. Antony's apparent weaknesses, his youth and his body, become his triumph, but Athanasius is careful to make Antony's ability to control his bodily passions the boon of Christ's victory:

This entire thing put the enemy to shame. For the one who reckoned himself similar to God was now mocked by a youth, and the one who boasted over flesh and blood was now overturned by a human bearing flesh. For the Lord worked with him, having borne flesh for our sake and having given the victory over the devil to the body. And so each one who truly fights can say: 'Not I, but the grace of God that is with me' [1 Cor. 15: 10] (*VA* 5; 848c-9a).

Society and History, 22 (1980), 303-54; Naphtali Lewis, *Life in Egypt under Roman Rule* (Oxford, 1983), 43-4.

⁹⁵ Antony's sister conforms to the pattern of leadership by 'elder' women in virgin communities that Athanasius promoted in his *Letters to Virgins*, *Ep. virg.* 1. 35 (90. 25-35 Lef.); *Ep. virg.* 2. 8 (106-12 Leb.).

Here Antony appropriates in his own body the 'achievements' (κατορθώματα) over the movements of the flesh that the Word won in his assumed body, as Athanasius described them in his dogmatic works.⁹⁶ In fact, Athanasius calls Antony's ability to resist sexual temptations 'the Saviour's achievement [κατόρθωμα] in Antony' (VA 7; 852a).

Athanasius underscores Antony's precocious mastery of his bodily desires through a second sexual temptation, one that draws on the racial and sexual stereotypes held by Christians in late Roman society. The devil, Athanasius writes, 'finally appeared to him [Antony] in the apparition just as he is in his mind, as a black boy'. Antony asks who this person is and receives the following reply:

Immediately he answered with a pitiful voice, 'I am fornication's lover [φίλος τῆς πορνείας]. I have been entrusted with its ambushes and its titillations, and I have been called the spirit of fornication. How many persons who desired to be prudent I have deceived! How many persons exercising self-control I have seduced by titillating them! It is I on whose account the prophet blames those who have fallen, saying, "You were deceived by the spirit of fornication" [Hos. 4: 12]. For it was through me that they were tripped up. It is I who have troubled you so often and who as often was overthrown by you' (VA 6; 849b).

Athanasius has Antony explain the symbolism of the black boy by telling the devil, 'You are black in your mind and weak as a boy' (VA 6; 849c–52a). The figure thus signifies the devil's evil nature (black) and his weakness after Christ's victory (boy). The representation of the devil's evil with a black person draws on the colour prejudices of some Egyptians of the Roman period.⁹⁷ By choosing to represent the spirit of fornication and its weakness with a boy, Athanasius plays on Christian stereotypes about pederasty going back to Paul: its excessively lustful character and the alleged effeminacy of its practitioners (Rom. 1: 26–7; 1 Cor. 6: 9).⁹⁸ Thus, the boy appears as fornication's φίλος, a term for 'friend' that shades into sexual desire and can denote the adult lover of a boy.⁹⁹ Here the symbolism of the boy becomes confused: he is both 'fornication's lover' and the 'spirit of fornication' itself, both lover and

⁹⁶ See Ch. 3; *Inc.* 31, 50, 54; *Ar.* 2. 65–9; 3. 31–3; cf. Roldanus, 'Vita Antonii als Spiegel', 206–7.

⁹⁷ P. Basilius Steidle, 'Der "schwarze kleine Knabe" in der alten Möncherzählung', *Benediktinische Monatschrift*, 34 (1958), 339–50; Philip Mayerson, 'Anti-Black Sentiment in the *Vitae Patrum*', *HTR* 71 (1978), 304–11; Kathleen O'Brien Wicker, 'Ethiopian Moses (Collected Sources)', in Wimbush (ed.), *Ascetic Behavior*, 329–48, at 334.

⁹⁸ Athanasius, as we saw in Ch. 3, considered passive homo-erotic activity an abandonment of 'male nature' for 'female', the peculiar result of worshipping a female deity, and thus 'divinization' of humanity gone astray; *Gent.* 26. 4–13 T.

⁹⁹ K. J. Dover, *Greek Homosexuality* (Cambridge, Mass., 1978), 40–50, 118.

beloved. This confusion of categories is telling: by tempting Antony with pederasty, the devil offers him what Athanasius considered an anomalous sexual relationship of pure desire, lacking any generally accepted social function in Egyptian society of the late Roman empire.¹⁰⁰ But Antony easily resists this temptation and reminds the devil of Christ's victory over him: 'I will no longer have any worry about you, for "the Lord is my helper, and I will despise my enemies" [Ps. 117 (118): 7]' (VA 6; 852a).

Antony was right that sexuality would never again be a serious threat to his ascetic discipline. 'Desire for a woman or another filthy pleasure' appears briefly in Antony's long discourse to the monks, but he assures his hearers that 'we will turn away from it as something transitory' (VA 19; 872b). Otherwise, however, sexuality disappears from the horizon of Antony's desert; this feature of Athanasius' presentation coheres with his ascetic programme for ordinary Christians in the *Festal Letters*, which emphasizes fasting and almsgiving more than temporary sexual abstinence. In the *Life of Antony*, sex is a temptation of the young, those who are least able to resist their fleshly passions. Thanks to the Word's victory in the body, however, even a young monk can easily place his unruly body under the control of his rational soul and leave the 'filthy pleasures' of women and boys behind. The pleasures of food and wealth are not as easily forgotten.

Renunciation of food. Antony's initial renunciation of food carries with it the symbolism of withdrawing from the over-indulgent feasting of the world that Athanasius saw in Lot's initial withdrawal from Sodom (Gen. 19). According to Athanasius, even as a child Antony had no use for the ostentatious consumption of food associated with wealth and privilege in society. 'Although as a boy he lived in moderate wealth', the bishop writes, Antony 'did not trouble his parents for diverse [ποικίλη] and expensive feasting [τροφή], nor did he seek pleasure from such. He was happy with what he found, and asked for nothing more' (VA 1; 841b). The boy Antony has begun the Christian life by abandoning, like Lot, 'the great and abundant feasting [τροφή] of the world' associated with Sodom for the 'smaller feasts' of Segor.¹⁰¹ In his allegorical interpretation

¹⁰⁰ The Romans' opinions on this matter were complex and are diversely interpreted by modern scholars; see Ramsay MacMullen, 'Roman Attitudes to Greek Love', *Historia*, 31 (1982), 484-502; Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, tr. R. Hurley (New York, 1978-86), 3, 189-232; Paul Veyne, 'Homosexuality in Ancient Rome', in P. Ariès and A. Béjin (eds.), *Western Sexuality*, tr. A. Forster (Oxford, 1985), 26-35; John Boswell, *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality* (Chicago and London, 1980), 61-87.

¹⁰¹ *Frag.* (cop.) 5 (123. 2-3 Lef.); see Ch. 3.

of Lot's story, Athanasius portrayed the renunciation of over-indulgent eating as the first step of the Christian's ascent to the summit of ascetic accomplishment: simple meals were a minimal form of withdrawal. Thus, when the devil tries to stop Antony from beginning his monastic career, he reminds the young man of 'the diverse pleasure of feasting' (*τροφῆς ἡ ποικίλη ἡδονή*) (*VA* 5; 848a). But Antony remains steadfast in his determination, prompting the devil to turn to sexual temptations. Unlike the pleasures of sex, however, food remains a significant danger to Antony's ascetic resolve. The devil later uses loaves of bread to tempt Antony, who warns other monks against being 'deceived by the feasting of the belly' (*Prov.* 24: 15) (*VA* 40, 55; 921b).

Fasting becomes a prominent component of Antony's ascetic regime. Given Athanasius' views on the importance of renouncing food at the start of an ascetic career, it is no surprise that Antony's original discipline, while he is still living among the 'zealous ones' on the edge of town, is quite severe: 'He ate once a day after sunset, but sometimes every two days, and often he partook every four days. His food [*τροφή*] was bread and salt; his drink, only water. Concerning meat and wine it is superfluous to speak, for no such thing could be found among the other zealous ones' (*VA* 7; 852c-4a). Antony's diet is that of the 'angelic' Christians at the summit of Lot's ascent in the spiritual life.¹⁰² Antony's later career exhibits the characteristic Athanasian flexibility on these matters: when Antony gets older, he adds olives, legumes, and oil to his diet (*VA* 51; 917a); and at one point he appears 'about to eat . . . around the ninth hour', well before sunset (*VA* 65; 933c). It is telling, however, that the disturbing vision of the demonic celestial gatekeepers follows upon this uncharacteristically early meal.¹⁰³ Antony employs the careful regulation of eating in order to enhance his contemplative life, to focus on the future 'spiritual feast', and to place the soul and body in proper relation:

For when he was about to eat and sleep and come upon the other needs of the body, he became ashamed, considering the rational faculty of the soul [*τὸ τῆς ψυχῆς λογιζόμενος νοερόν*]. Therefore, often, when he was with many other monks, he would remember the spiritual feast [*ἡ πνευματικὴ τροφή*], ask to be excused, and go far from them, reckoning that he would blush if he were seen eating by others. He ate by himself for the sake of the body's need, but often with the brothers, out of respect for them, but freely offering words for their benefit. He also used to say that one should give all one's attention to the soul rather than

¹⁰² *Frag.* (cop.) 2 (121. 15-18, 24-6 Lef.).

¹⁰³ Geoffrey Galt Harpham, *The Ascetic Imperative in Culture and Criticism* (Chicago and London, 1987), 56.

to the body although, on account of necessity, it is permitted to give a little time to the body. But on the whole one should devote oneself to the soul and seek its benefit, lest it be dragged down by the body's pleasures instead of the body being enslaved to it (*VA* 45; 909).

This passage primarily relates fasting to the spiritual problem of the body-soul relationship, which I will treat more fully below, but it combines this theme with the significance of fasting for Antony's social relationships, which is our principal focus here. As for the body-soul problem, Antony's behaviour reflects Athanasius' statements in his first *Festal Letter* that fasting promotes attention to 'the spiritual food' of the virtues and turns a person's attention away from the body to God.¹⁰⁴ The 'consideration of the soul's rational faculty', which earlier prevented Antony's succumbing to sexual temptation, here restrains his desire for food. Antony follows the advice that Athanasius gave to virgins, in which he urged them to eat 'only up to the measure of the body's necessity'.¹⁰⁵ Antony's discomfort at eating in front of others does not indicate any contempt for the body, but rather a concern that the monk re-establish a proper body-soul relationship. But Athanasius also presents a social dimension to Antony's embarrassment: although the monk is uncomfortable eating with others, he willingly shares with them 'words for their benefit'. Antony's rejection of the solidarity represented by shared food only enhances his mystique as a monastic authority who is able to share his insight with others.¹⁰⁶

Food, then, is problematic not only because it focuses attention on the body, but also because it represents a connection to other people.¹⁰⁷ When Antony seals himself inside the deserted fort, his separation from others cannot be complete because bread must be brought to him twice a year; his twenty years in the fort are marked by a steady stream of visitors, with whom the monk occasionally converses (*VA* 12-14). When Antony moves to the Inner Mountain, once again his followers must bring him bread. Antony sees that the monks are 'troubled' by this duty and so begins to grow his own grain for bread. He takes pleasure in this new independence: 'He rejoiced that he would not be trouble to anyone on this account and that in everything he kept himself from being a burden.' But the duties of hospitality remained: 'Later, when he saw people still coming, he raised a few vegetables as well, so that anyone who came might have a little relief from the toil of that difficult way' (*VA*

¹⁰⁴ *Ep. fest. (syr.)* 1. 4-7; see Ch. 3.

¹⁰⁵ Cf. Brown, 'Rise and Function', 131.

¹⁰⁶ *Ep. virg.* 1. 14 (79. 5-7 Lef.).

¹⁰⁷ Cf. Brown, *Body and Society*, 219.

50; 916). Food becomes another facet of Antony's continuing struggle to be alone in a society that wants contact with him. Visitors bring him food, but in return they want 'words for their benefit': even when Antony's need for their food disappears, the visitors' need for Antony's food remains. Another story illustrates this point. When Antony agrees to return with some monks to their places and give them spiritual direction, the party sets out on the desert journey with 'bread and water'. When the supplies run out and everyone is near death, Antony's prayers result in a spring of water appearing. At the end of the journey, Antony, 'as though bringing travelling provisions [*ἐφόδια*] from the mountain, gave them hospitality with words and shared his benefit' (*VA* 54; 920b-1a). The exchange of food between Antony and his followers is never equal: what the visitors bring can be insufficient or unneeded; Antony's 'provisions' are unlimited and always needed. In this way, Athanasius interprets the significance of food for the monk's withdrawal in terms of a pattern of exchange: the world gives real food to the withdrawn monk, who in turn offers spiritual nourishment to the world. This exchange of foods provides a model by which Athanasius could understand other forms of lay-ascetic interaction, such as the exchange of benefits that we saw between virgins and married women in Chapter 1.

Renunciation of wealth. Attachment to wealth and property constitutes the greatest obstacle to Antony's withdrawal. The Antony depicted by Athanasius belongs to one of the prosperous and influential families of an Egyptian village.¹⁰⁸ 'Antony', the bishop writes, 'was an Egyptian by birth, his parents being well born and sufficiently prosperous' (*VA* 1; 840a). The land that he inherits totals '300 fertile and very beautiful *arourae*' (*VA* 2; 844a), some 200 acres worth in the third century around 90,000 drachmas, if not more, making the Athanasian Antony (by Egyptian standards) a wealthy young man.¹⁰⁹ This Antony would have belonged to a segment of Egyptian society, the large landowners of the villages, that faced increasing financial pressures during the third and fourth centuries. When around 200 CE the emperor Septimius Severus ordered the creation of a council (*βουλή*) in each Egyptian metropolis (the urban centre of a nome, the administrative district), he began a process of consolidation of town and country in Egypt that made wealthy

¹⁰⁸ Sozomen identifies this village as Coma in central Egypt (*H.c.* 1. 13), but there is no way of knowing whether he is right. On the leading families in the 'peasant villages', see Lewis, *Life in Egypt*, 66-7.

¹⁰⁹ Computations based on the statistics given by Lewis, *Life in Egypt*, 208-10.

villagers like Antony increasingly responsible for undertaking financial duties such as liturgies (compulsory public services and offices).¹¹⁰ Some villagers resisted efforts by the metropolitans to force them to participate in such public duties, successfully at times, but the reforms of Diocletian finalized metropolitan control of the surrounding territory.¹¹¹ In addition to these public offices, villagers were becoming responsible as a group for the taxes on all the lands in their communities.¹¹² Some persons in Antony's position simply fled to avoid these financial difficulties.¹¹³ The extent to which such flight to avoid economic oppression figured in the origins of monastic withdrawal can be overestimated.¹¹⁴ It is clear, however, that the possession of significant amounts of land and money could be 'burdensome' to men like Antony in ways that were not only spiritual, but also quite economic and practical. Athanasius displays his awareness of these pressures when he has Antony give his ancestral lands 'to the people of the village so that they would not trouble [*ὄχλειν*] him or his sister in any way whatsoever' (*VA* 2; 844a). Athanasius leaves it ambiguous whether the troublesome 'they' refers to the lands or to the villagers and the corporate life that they represent.

Antony's divestment of his lands is the first step in a staged process of shedding his wealth that defines the monk's gradual withdrawal. This step is inspired by the poverty of the original apostles, by the communal lifestyle of the Jerusalem Christians described in Acts 4: 35-7, and, above all, by the liturgical reading of Matt. 19: 21 ('If you wish to be perfect, go, sell your possessions, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven'). At this stage Antony still retains 'a little' of his wealth for the support of his sister (*VA* 2; 841b-4a). The second step in Antony's financial divestment is inspired by his hearing Matt. 6: 34 ('Do not worry about tomorrow'): at this Antony gives away even the little money that he kept and places his sister in the care of virgins. Antony then assumes a small role on the fringe of the village

¹¹⁰ Administrative unification: Jacqueline Lallemand, *L'Administration civile de l'Égypte de l'avènement de Dioclétien à la création du diocèse (284-382)* (Brussels, 1964); Rousseau, *Pachomius*, 3-13. Liturgies: Lewis, *Life in Egypt*, 177-84.

¹¹¹ Village resistance: Lewis, *Life in Egypt*, 48-50. Diocletian's reforms: Lallemand, *L'Administration civile*, 95-107.

¹¹² Lewis, *Life in Egypt*, 159-76.

¹¹³ Arthur E. R. Boak and Herbert C. Youtie, 'Flight and Oppression in Fourth-Century Egypt', in E. Arslan (ed.), *Studi in onore di Aristide Calderini e Roberto Paribeni* (Milan, 1956-7), 2, 325-37.

¹¹⁴ Rousseau plays down flight from village life and stresses in contrast the development of co-operative ventures (*Pachomius*, 9-13); Rubenson seems more willing to connect monastic withdrawal with economic oppression (*Letters of St. Antony*, 93-5).

economy by performing manual labour and spending his earnings on food for himself and on the poor. But his principal acquisitive activity is now the gathering of ascetic examples from other local 'zealous ones': 'as if he were receiving travel supplies for the road to virtue' (*VA* 3; 844). The devil's first attempt to dissuade Antony from the ascetic life indicates how closely wealth is associated with family ties and social status: 'First he tried to dissuade him from the discipline by reminding him of his possessions, the care of his sister, the relations of kin, love of money, love of fame, the varied pleasure of food, and the other enjoyments of life' (*VA* 5; 848a). 'Possessions' slide easily into family concerns; 'love of money' leads to 'love of fame'. Sex and food each have their own symbolic associations, but Athanasius measures Antony's withdrawal from family and society most precisely through the monk's gradual divestment of his wealth and property.

Likewise, when Antony decides to take his crucial step into the desert, Athanasius marks the boundary between world and desert not with sex or food, but with money. The devil first tries to stop Antony's advance into the desert with 'the apparition of a large silver disc in the way [$\sigma\delta\delta\omicron\iota$]'. Antony, however, is able to see through the illusion precisely because the silver disk belongs not to the desert, but to the world, where there are people who would own it ('Whence a disk in the desert?'): here the line is clearly drawn between the world as the place of wealth and the desert as the place lacking property.¹¹⁵ Next Antony comes upon 'real gold', his attention drawn to it either by the devil or by God. The monk's response is revealing: 'Antony was amazed at how much of it there was, but as if stepping over fire, he passed it by and did not turn back. Indeed, he ran so fast that the place became hidden and forgotten.' Like a magnet that from one perspective attracts and from another repels, the gold simultaneously draws Antony back to the world and pushes him into the desert. He cannot help but notice the gold's astonishing amount, but it drives him into speedy flight. The gold's attractive and repellent force appears to give Antony the momentum that carries him to the deserted fort: 'Therefore, he gradually intensified his resolution and hurried to the mountain' (*VA* 12; 861). Although many ascetic writers relied on the danger of sex with women to restrict

¹¹⁵ Antony's response at seeing the disk: 'Whence a disk in the desert? This way is not trod, nor is there a trace of people travelling here. It could not have fallen without being noticed since it is large. Rather, the one who lost it would have turned back, searched, and found it, because this place is the desert. This is a trick of the devil. You will not impede my resolution in this way, devil. Let this thing go into destruction with you' (*VA* 11; 860b-1a).

monastic life to the safe confines of the desert,¹¹⁶ Athanasius did not. In his *Life of Antony*, wealth defines the boundary between world and desert, and its attraction propels Antony to his desert retreat.

Wealth, unlike sex, does not disappear from Antony's spiritual life. It remains a constant threat to the ascetic life (*VA* 19; 872) and is one of the devil's favourite devices: 'How often in the desert', Antony tells his followers, 'he showed me an apparition of gold, so that I might merely touch and see it' (*VA* 40; 901b). Money retains the function it had at the beginning of Antony's career: as a basis for status in society and a potential source of pride.¹¹⁷ Meanwhile, financial imagery clarifies the possibilities and dangers of the monastic vocation.¹¹⁸ The language of profit and loss pervades Antony's long discourse on the ascetic life. Athanasius has Antony begin by comparing the insignificance of earthly riches with the wealth of eternal life. 'Everything in the world', Antony says to the monks, 'is sold at its worth, and something is exchanged for something equal in value, but the promise of eternal life is purchased with something little.' One gets the impression that Antony is addressing men who understand this kind of talk, because the fiscal imagery continues: 'Although we strive on earth, we will not inherit on earth, but we have the promises in heaven; moreover, putting aside the body corruptible, we will receive it back incorruptible' (*VA* 16; 868). Antony goes on to compare the difference between 'the world' and 'the kingdom of heaven' to that between 'one copper drachma' and 'one hundred drachmas of gold'. Perhaps referring to his own situation, Antony concludes that 'one who has given up a few *arourae* should not boast or become careless since he is leaving behind nothing, even if he abandons a house or a lot of money'. Just as he did in the case of commercially active virgins,¹¹⁹ Athanasius does not condemn the acquisitive aspect of the human personality; rather, he seeks to redirect it from material possessions to the virtues. By acquiring virtues instead of worldly goods, one realizes a superior profit and can even avoid leaving one's property

¹¹⁶ 'In fourth-century Egypt, fear of women acted as a centrifugal separator. It kept "world" and "desert" at a safe distance from each other' (Brown, *Body and Society*, 244).

¹¹⁷ Note how, in this description of the monk's discipline, the virtues of 'lack of conceit' and 'humility' stand among 'contempt for money' and 'love of the poor' and 'almsgiving': 'the fasting of the ascetics, the keeping of vigils, the prayers, the meekness, the quietness, the contempt for money, the lack of conceit, the humility, the love for the poor, the almsgivings, the lack of anger, and especially the piety toward Christ' (*VA* 30; 889a).

¹¹⁸ e.g. Antony uses the language of banking to describe how the demons exploit the monk's estimation of himself: 'Whatever we think of ourselves, this they pay out with interest' (*VA* 42; 905a). The soul is a 'deposit' that must be preserved for the Lord (*VA* 20; 873b).

¹¹⁹ *Ep. virg.* 1. 33 (88. 33-90. 7 Lef.); see Ch. 1.

to an unpleasant heir.¹²⁰ This imagery does not appeal to the richest people in Egyptian society, for they had no need to compete for money and looked down on those who worked for their living; nor does this speech address the poor, for whom profit and inheritance were of no concern. Rather, Athanasius has Antony appeal to the business sense of successful men. On the one hand, should they become monks, the shape of their lives would not change: they would still seek profit in competition, no longer striving for money, but for spiritual gain. This ascetic programme is 'capitalism without money':¹²¹ wealthy men trade their paltry worldly goods for virtues that will yield a huge profit, 'a kingdom'. On the other hand, Antony invites such men to give up the status and power that competition and wealth give them for a new prestige as 'slave(s) of the Lord' (*VA* 18; 86qb). The ascetic economics of the *Life* adapts the psychology of financial competition to a self-forming regime of spiritual profit through voluntary enslavement and poverty.

These references to the dangers of wealth and the use of fiscal imagery suggest that Athanasius envisioned among those who wanted an account of Antony's life wealthy men, aware of the pleasures and prestige that their money gave them, but also increasingly burdened by their prosperity's demands. In fact, Athanasius portrays such rich men as notable among those whom Antony persuaded to take up the ascetic life: 'He was so able to benefit everyone that many soldiers and persons who possessed many things set aside the burdens of life and finally became monks' (*VA* 87; 965a). To be sure, the community that Antony creates in the desert is one of concern for the poor, a 'land of piety and justice', without 'the unjust person or the victim of injustice'. But it was also a paradise free of the tax-collector, the greatest burden on the moderately wealthy (*VA* 44; 908b). This is an ascetic programme of moderate social justice, not of real income redistribution: 'love for the poor' is a central virtue, but the poor themselves learn to 'despise wealth and be consoled

¹²⁰ 'Otherwise we ought to consider that, even if we do not abandon (our material possessions) on account of virtue, we will still die later on and leave them behind, and often to those people to whom we do not wish to leave them, as Ecclesiastes reminds us (cf. Eccles. 2: 18; 4: 8; 6: 2). Therefore, why do we not leave them behind for the sake of virtue and so inherit a kingdom? Thus, let none of us have the desire to acquire things. For what profit is there in acquiring things that we will not take with us? Why should we not rather acquire things that we can take with us: prudence, righteousness, temperance, courage, understanding, love, love for the poor, faith in Christ, meekness, and hospitality? When we possess these, we will find them before us there, preparing a welcome for us in the land of the meek' (*VA* 17; 868c-9b). For a poignant example of a father reluctant to leave any money to his wayward son, see Lewis, *Life in Egypt*, 72.

¹²¹ Harpham, *Ascetic Imperative*, 30, 62-4.

in their poverty' (*VA* 87; 965a). It appeals to persons of sufficient means who are increasingly aware both of the practical and spiritual burdens of their wealth and of the injustice that the poor in their society suffer.¹²² The 'world' teems with victims of economic injustice, ungrateful heirs, and relentless tax-collectors and town councils; the 'desert' is characterized by economic justice, the promise of a heavenly inheritance, and the absence of taxation. Some Christian authors simply condemned wealth and money-making as incompatible with the Christian life; in the *Gospel of Thomas*, Jesus says: 'Buyers and traders [will] not enter the places of my father.'¹²³ Athanasius, in contrast, invites successful men to take as their ideal someone like themselves who enters a new, more profitable enterprise. The *Life of Antony* provides further evidence that Athanasius' ascetic programme was aimed particularly at the prosperous citizens who made up the middle ranks of the larger cities and the élite of the country villages. Such persons formed a significant portion of the monks of fourth-century Egypt.¹²⁴ They were also prominent among the supporters of Paphnutius.

For men such as these, the renunciation of wealth, as well as sex and food, marked their withdrawal from human society even more clearly than did the movement from city to desert. Antony and his fellow monks do not leave communal life behind: they create a new 'commonwealth' (*πολιτεία*) in the desert (*VA* 14; 865b). The distinguishing feature of this commonwealth is that the human personality is no longer centred around the bodily needs for sex, food, and possessions, but around the virtues of the soul, humility, righteousness, and so on. By renouncing sex, food, and wealth, Antony cuts his old ties to human society and creates new ones: he forges for himself a new role as spiritual father and advocate for the oppressed. Antony's prestige among human beings is also a function of a second aspect of his ascetic discipline: his overcoming of the bodily passions, such as lust and greed. Renunciation of sex, food, and wealth reorientates the person toward the life of the soul and restores a proper relationship between soul and body.

¹²² Brian Brennan sees the *Life's* 'anti-economic tendencies' as evidence that 'Antony's immediate following may have been composed of many Copts alienated from the economic and social life of the towns' ('Athanasius' *Vita Antonii*: A Sociological Interpretation', *VC* 39 (1985), 209-27, at 215-16). My reading does not attempt to describe Antony's actual followers; rather, it situates the financial imagery of the *Life* within Athanasius' political programme. Moreover, I do not see 'anti-economic tendencies' in the *Life*; rather, Athanasius presents an economics of asceticism modelled on incipient capitalism.

¹²³ *Gospel of Thomas* 64 (Layton, *Gnostic Scriptures*, 392).

¹²⁴ Martin, 'L'Église et la khôra', 13-19.

The Word, the soul, and the instrumental body

According to Athanasius, the spiritual goal of the social practices of withdrawal is a proper relationship between the soul and body within the individual. Athanasius' presentation of the withdrawal theme in his second *Festal Letter* contrasted the 'clamour' and 'troubles' (ὄχλήσεις) of the world with the 'quietness' of the solitary life. This quietness enables a heightened relationship with God: 'revelations' come only to a 'calm' soul.¹²⁵ These themes shape Athanasius' portrayal of Antony's withdrawal into the desert and to the Inner Mountain in particular. Antony flees to the Inner Mountain when 'he saw himself troubled [ὄχλούμενος] by many people and not permitted to withdraw [ἀναχωρεῖν] as he intended'. Asked by a divine voice why he is fleeing, the monk responds, 'Because the crowds do not permit me to be quiet [ἡρεμεῖν], I want to ascend to the Upper Thebaid, because of the many troubles [ὄχλήσεις] that happen to me here and especially because I am asked by them for things beyond my power' (*VA* 49; 913b). Increasingly it is Antony's fame and his ability to help people that prevent his withdrawal and quietness: for a renowned monk, these are the 'troubles' of the world. Withdrawal from these troubles enables quietness of the soul.

Athanasius succinctly stated the basic problem of the relationship between the body and soul in *Against the Nations*: 'the body is by nature mortal; the soul is necessarily immortal since it is unlike the body'.¹²⁶ As long as the original human beings kept their 'mobile' soul fixed on the Word of God and did not turn toward the needs and desires of the body, the soul remained free of the corruption and death inherent in the body. But when people turned away from contemplation of God, a fundamental disordering of the soul-body relationship followed: the soul became mired in the pleasures and desires of the body, oppressed by fear of death, and subject to moral corruption. When the Word of God assumed a human body and perfectly guided it, he divinized this body and made it incorruptible; through their 'kinship of the flesh' to the Word's body, individual human beings can restore a proper relationship between their own body and soul and thus live a virtuous life. In the *Life of Antony*, Athanasius presents a paradigmatic instance of a human being performing this very process of reordering;¹²⁷ in chapter 20 he translates his picture of idealized humanity in *Against the Nations* into a pro-

¹²⁵ *Ep. fest.* (cop.) 24 (37. 5-38. 26 Lef.).

¹²⁶ *Gent.* 33. 6-7 T.

¹²⁷ Cf. Roldanus, *Christ et l'homme*, 319-20, 346.

gramme for ascetic discipline. In the earlier apologetic work, Athanasius described the original human beings as created after the image of God, able to contemplate the Word through their 'likeness' to him as long as they kept their soul 'pure' and their mind fixed on 'divine and intelligible things in heaven' and not on the sensible realm of bodies. The task of the original humans was to persevere: their fall resulted from their failure to do so, their turn to lower things; it was an act of 'negligence', 'hesitation', and 'forgetting'.¹²⁵ In the *Life* Athanasius presents the ascetic life in similar terms: the monk must persevere and not 'turn back' as Lot's wife did. 'This turning back', he explains, 'is nothing other than to feel regret and to think once again of worldly things.' The ascetic life is a holding pattern, the preservation of the soul in its 'natural' condition: 'Virtue exists when the soul retains its rational faculty [*τὸ νοερόν*] in its natural state'. Since the soul was created 'beautiful and very upright', virtue requires only the will to persevere:

For the soul is straight when its rational faculty is in its natural state, as it was created. Again, should it turn aside and come into a distortion of its natural state, this is called evil of the soul. Therefore, the task is not difficult. If we remain as we are, we are in virtue, but if we think about base things, we are condemned as evil. Therefore, if the task had to be procured from without, it would truly be difficult, but since it is within us, let us guard ourselves against filthy thoughts. And having received it as a deposit, let us preserve it unto the Lord, so that he might recognize his creation as it was when he made it (*VA* 20; 872b-3b).

The monk's task, then, is to keep the soul, or more precisely the soul's 'rational faculty', orientated in the right direction, in attention to the Lord and away from the pleasures of the body, in control of the body's passions rather than overwhelmed by them. This programme is based solidly on the Christian story that Athanasius articulated in his more general works.

This understanding of the monk's task provides the spiritual context for Antony's neglect of the body, the social functions of which we have already examined. Antony's asceticism does not arise from hatred of the body, nor does it seek to free the soul from its embodied condition; for Athanasius, to be human is to be embodied. Rather, Antony seeks to subject the body to the soul, to reorientate his priorities by turning his attention away from his body and toward his soul. The soul's 'rational faculty' is the object of these efforts: preservation of it in its natural state is Antony's goal (*VA* 20), and it appears as an object of Antony's 'con-

¹²⁵ *Gent.* 2. 5-35; 3. 2-13 T.

sideration' at crucial moments of bodily temptation (*VA* 5, 45). At these moments of temptation, Antony avoids what Athanasius considered the fatal mistake of the immoral and idolatrous pagans, who, 'if they had considered the rational faculty of their soul [*ἐλογίζοντο τῆς ἑαυτῶν ψυχῆς τὸν νοῦν*], would not have fallen headfirst into these [immoral acts] and denied the true God, the Father of Christ'.¹²⁹ To 'consider one's rational faculty' is to keep it in its proper place and orientation: between God and the body, submitted to God, in control of the body.

This task requires a certain balance between the soul's unity with the body, understood as enslavement, and its distance from the body, understood as death. The debilitating effects of young Antony's original ascetic regime find their scriptural justification in Paul's words, 'When I am weak, then I am strong' (2 Cor. 12: 10), which Antony takes to mean that 'the soul's intensity is strong when the body's pleasures are weak' (*VA* 7; 853a). Here it is not the body and soul that are played off against each other; rather, 'the soul's intensity' thrives in inverse proportion to the strength of 'the body's pleasures'. The human being is a closed system of energy; the ascetic's goal is to redirect his limited supply of energy to the soul, not by weakening the body itself, but by weakening its 'pleasures'. As we have seen, Antony's embarrassment at eating reflects this goal as well: although the body's needs require the monk's attention, the soul should be his first priority. 'On the whole one should devote oneself to the soul and seek its benefit, lest it be dragged down by the body's pleasures, instead of the body being enslaved to it' (*VA* 45; 909).¹³⁰ Ascetic behaviours knit the body and soul together in a relationship of enslavement. At the same time, however, the discipline of enslaving the body keeps it at a safe distance from the soul, protecting the soul from the dangerous movements and desires of the body. The metaphor of death expresses this idea. Natural death, Athanasius believed, was the complete separation of the soul from the body; ascetic death, the distancing of the soul from the body's passions through renunciation.¹³¹ When Antony is spared from natural death in actual martyrdom, he resolves to be 'a daily martyr in his conscience' and practises ascetic death in an 'even more intense discipline' of bodily neglect, by which he separates his faculties of attention from the body's needs, 'until his [natural] death' (*VA* 47; 912). The result is that, instead of the soul being enslaved to the body's 'fears, terrors, pleasure, and

¹²⁹ Ibid. 26. 23-6 T.

¹³⁰ Cf. Roldanus, *Christ et l'homme*, 303-4.

¹³¹ Natural death: *Gent.* 3. 29-30; 33. 10-12 T.; *Mor. et val.* 6. 13-15 D. Ascetic death: *Ep. fest. (syr.)* 7. 2-3 (8*. 6-9*. 4 C.). See Ch. 3.

thoughts of death',¹³² the body is enslaved to the soul, itself now under the full guidance of the Word.

Athanasius depicts Antony as someone whose soul both is guided by the Word of God and guides the body: as a result, Antony's body enjoys a certain freedom from corruption, and he is able to benefit other people.¹³³ Antony's emergence from the tomb in chapter 14 forms the paradigmatic presentation of these themes. The onlookers are 'amazed to see that his body possessed the same condition, being neither fat from lack of exercise nor withered from fasting and fighting with demons, for it was such as they had known it before his withdrawal'. Antony's body has seemingly become immune not only to the effects of debilitating ascetic acts, but also to the natural corruption of twenty years of ageing. This condition is due to the balanced state of his soul, which has regained the purity of original humanity:

The disposition of his soul was pure again, for it was neither contracted by distress, nor dissipated by pleasure, nor constrained by levity or dejection. For when he saw the crowd, he was not disturbed, nor did he rejoice to be greeted by so many people. Rather, he was wholly balanced [*ἴσος*], as if navigated by the Word [*ὑπὸ τοῦ Λόγου κυβερνώμενος*] and existing in his natural state (*VA* 14; 864c-5a).

Antony is the ideal Athanasian human being. Athanasius told the Alexandrian virgins that Mary had kept 'the disposition of her soul balanced [*ἰσοῦς*] and doubly increasing':¹³⁴ here Antony is 'wholly balanced', with a 'pure disposition of the soul'. Athanasius told the Christians of Egypt that the person sailing on the stormy sea of this life 'enters into rest when the Word is navigating':¹³⁵ here Antony emerges 'as if navigated by the Word'. Athanasius has Antony tell the monks that the goal of the ascetic life is to preserve the soul in its 'natural state' of virtue (*VA* 20): here Antony appears 'in his natural state'. It has long been recognized that this picture of Antony resembles that of Pythagoras in biographies of that sage by Porphyry and Iamblichus,¹³⁶ but the central themes of Athanasius' presentation derive from his own theology.¹³⁷ Even the two words that describe Antony as he emerges from the tomb, 'initiated into the mysteries' (*μεμυσταγωγημένος*) and 'filled with

¹³² *Gen.* 3. 22-31 T.

¹³³ Cf. Alwyn Petterson, 'Athanasius' Presentation of Antony of the Desert's Admiration for his Body', *SP* 21 (1987), 438-47.

¹³⁴ *Ep. virg.* 1. 13 (78. 8-9 Lef.).

¹³⁵ *Ep. fest. (syr.)* 19. 7 (45*. 9-12 C.).

¹³⁶ Richard Reitzenstein, *Des Athanasius Werk über das Leben des Antonius* (Heidelberg, 1914), 13-19, 39-41.

¹³⁷ Roldanus, *Christ et l'homme*, 307-9.

God' (*θεοφορούμενος*), have roots in Athanasius' piety. As for the first, Athanasius calls the Eucharist a 'mystery': the bishop who leads it 'celebrates the mysteries' (*μυσταγωγεῖν*).¹³⁸ The second term, 'filled with God', Athanasius uses elsewhere to describe ideal Christians, those whose 'perfection shows that [God's] Word has sojourned among them'.¹³⁹ For Athanasius, then, these terms do not characterize Antony as a general 'holy man'; rather, they designate him as the quintessential Christian, a person shaped by a particular relationship to the Word of God. Antony's soul has recovered its likeness to the Word and, as a result, has regained proper control over the body. This restored relationship between body and soul appears in the body itself as an immunity to corruption and an ability to be beneficial to other embodied humans. Antony's body anticipates the incorruption to be acquired fully in the resurrection, which Antony understands to be the reunion of the soul with a now 'incorruptible' body (*VA* 16, 91; 868b, 972b). But Antony has not yet reached a state 'without passions' (*ἀπάθεια*), a term that does not appear in the *Life*, because he remains engaged in the ascetic struggle for virtue, renewed daily.¹⁴⁰

The social aspect of ascetic practice returns in that Athanasius makes Antony's ability to help others the direct result of the monk's restored body-soul relationship: 'Therefore, the Lord healed many of the suffering bodies of those present through him, and he cleansed others of demons. He gave Antony grace in speaking, so that he comforted many who were grieved and reconciled into friendship others who were quarrelling' (*VA* 14; 865a). Athanasius awkwardly phrases his description of the healings so as to make 'the suffering bodies' of other people the objects of the Word's help. Antony's benefit to others is twofold: the bodily help of healings and exorcisms, and the psychological help of exhortation and reconciliation, both of which result from the Word's guidance of his soul and his soul's guidance of his body. Two additional passages exhibit the same nexus of ideas: the purity of Antony's soul shines forth in his body, and he is able to benefit others. For example, persons who want help from Antony but have never met him immediately recognize the great monk in a crowd: 'From the joy of his soul he possessed a cheerful face, and from the movements [*κινήματα*] of his body one perceived and understood the state of his soul'. Rare indeed is the passage in Athanasius where the body's 'movements' are positive

¹³⁸ *Apol. sec.* 17. 4 (100. 7 Op.).

¹³⁹ *Ar.* 3. 23 (PG 26. 372); Gregg and Groh, *Early Arianism*, 147.

¹⁴⁰ Roldanus, 'Vita Antonii als Spiegel', 201-3.

expressions of a well-ordered personality rather than disturbing forces that must be controlled. Here Antony's body becomes a beacon that draws people to him: people 'ran to him as if dragged by his eyes' (*VA* 67; 940a). The social character of Antony's proper body-soul relationship appears once again at the end of the *Life*, where Antony's 'stable [*ἴσως*] zeal for the discipline' is manifest both in the healthy condition of his body (he has not even lost a tooth) and in his fame (*VA* 93; 973). The emphasis in Athanasius' spirituality on the embodied and social character of the Christian life finds its narrative expression in Antony's bodily incorruption and ability to help others. Within Athanasius' theological system, Antony's condition resembles the total receptivity of Jesus' human nature to the power of the indwelling Word: just as the Word used his assumed body as an 'instrument' in the incarnation to the benefit of humanity, so too the Word now uses Antony's body as his instrument to the benefit of those around the monk.¹⁴¹

The Word of God remains at the centre of Athanasius' theology, no matter what form it takes: even his biography of Antony is not so much the story of Antony as it is the story of the Word's work through Antony. If the regime of ascetic death is meant to annihilate the self defined by the world, then Antony dies by absorbing his self into the Word: 'Not I, but the grace of God that is with me' (1 Cor. 5: 10; *VA* 5; 849a). According to Athanasius' controlling myth of ascent, the Word's victory on the cross enables Antony to ascend past the frightening demons and to live courageously in the face of death. By renouncing sex, food, and wealth, Antony withdraws from the world but creates a new civic life of virtue and justice. He also subjects his body to his Word-guided soul and thereby becomes the conduit for the Word's bodily benefits to others. According to Athanasius, Bishop Alexander told a group of Alexandrian virgins that the incarnation of the Word made it possible for them 'to be joined to him and cling to him. When the Lord bore the body of humanity, the body became acceptable to the Word.'¹⁴² Antony is the supreme example of this Athanasian doctrine.

¹⁴¹ Frances M. Young, 'A Reconsideration of Alexandrian Christology', *JEH* 22 (1971), 103-14, at 113-14; Roldanus, *Christ et l'homme*, 328.

¹⁴² *Ep. virg.* 1. 43 (94. 25-8 Lef.).

THE DEFINITION OF ASCETIC AUTHORITY

In his ascetic writings Athanasius promoted not only a certain spirituality, the mythical 'way up' to heaven, but also a certain politics, the Athanasian Church. This political agenda involved convincing ascetics of their connection to the wider Church and consolidating church life around the episcopate and its emerging system of parishes. The alternative views of Antony current in fourth-century Egypt either highlighted divisions in the Egyptian Church, as the Coptic *Life of Pachomius* did, or gave Antony an authority that might compete with that of the bishops, as the letters of Serapion and Antony himself did. The *Life of Antony* contributes to Athanasius' ecclesiastical programme in two ways. First, Athanasius defines Antony's relation to other modes of authority in the Egyptian Church: Antony is obedient to the Church's clergy, ambivalent towards imperial officials, and allied with the Athanasian episcopate; his ascetic vocation is not a private one, but arises in the context of the parish church. Secondly, Athanasius defines Antony's authority in his own terms. The bishop's depiction of Antony as an unwilling patron and visionary, whose powers belong to Christ, contributes to this definition. Athanasius also undermines the picture of Antony as a teacher of wisdom by claiming that Antony was unlearned and used philosophy only to show philosophy's impotence. Antony's authority, as Athanasius views it, is moral; it resides in his entire way of life, which constitutes a model for others to imitate. By writing the *Life of Antony*, Athanasius hopes to contribute to the formation of a Christian *πολιτεία* by fostering an ethic of imitation that reflects his own programme of self-formation through imitation of the saints.

Church and empire

Athanasius describes Antony's discipline as grounded in the parish church and its canon of Scripture. Pachomius received his calls to the ascetic life and to the founding of the federation when he was alone, through dreams and heavenly voices.¹⁴³ Antony's call to take up the ascetic life, however, is not a private summons, but one issued to all Christians in the public services of the Church. Both stages in Antony's divestment of his wealth follow a public reading of the Gospel in church,

¹⁴³ VP 5, 12; S. Ho. 8, 12.

where Antony went 'customarily'. Antony interprets the reading of Matt. 19: 21 as taking place 'on his account', but Athanasius makes clear that it is Antony's peculiar state of mind, his consideration of the poverty of the original apostles, that prepares him to receive the public reading in such a radical fashion: 'Thinking these things, he entered the church' (*VA* 2-3; 841b-4a). In the early portion of Antony's ascetic career, when he lives among the 'zealous men' at the edge of his village, Antony continues to attend church and is particularly attentive to the Scripture readings, which he memorizes (*VA* 3; 845a).

As Antony's withdrawal from the settled land becomes more complete and his stature grows, he remains connected to the Athanasian episcopate, which Athanasius makes the inheritor of Antony's spiritual legacy. In general, Antony adheres to 'the order of the Church' and shows the proper respect to 'bishops and priests'. Athanasius describes a division of labour between monk and clergy that gives to each his sphere of authority: Antony is the authority in matters of spiritual development, the clergy in liturgical and ecclesiastical affairs (*VA* 67; 937c). Antony gives his loyalty not to just any bishops, but only to those allied with Athanasius; the invitation to visit Alexandria comes from the partisans of Athanasius in the city: 'the bishops and all the brothers' (*VA* 69; 941a). The confidant with whom Antony shares his most sensitive visions is Bishop Serapion of Thmuis, one of Athanasius' most important allies in the Egyptian Church (*VA* 82; 957a). It is to these two bishops, Athanasius and Serapion, that Antony entrusts the mantle of his authority. 'To Bishop Athanasius', the dying Antony tells his companions, 'give the one sheepskin and the garment on which I lie, which he gave to me new, but which has grown old with me. And to Bishop Serapion give the other sheepskin, and you keep the hairshirt' (*VA* 91; 972b). Because the monk's body lies hidden forever, Athanasius and Serapion possess the only relics of this saint: 'Seeing them [the sheepskins] is like gazing on Antony, and wearing them is like bearing his exhortations with joy' (*VA* 92; 973a). Without a body there can be no cult of Antony, no centre of holy power apart from the parish altars, no access to Antony apart from this biography. Later in his career Athanasius vigorously condemned cults that grew up around the bodies of martyrs, especially those which had been removed from 'the cemeteries of the catholic Church'.¹⁴⁴ Here Antony's body cannot serve as the focus for such a non-catholic cult; rather, two catholic bishops, Athanasius and Serapion, take up Antony's spiritual legacy as twin

¹⁴⁴ *Ep. fest. (cop.)* 41 (62. 31-2 Lef.).

Elishas to his Elijah (cf. 2 Kgs. 2: 12–14).¹⁴⁵ By writing the *Life of Antony*, perhaps assisted by Serapion, Athanasius lays claim to that legacy and makes it his own: Antony's allegiance to the Athanasian episcopate becomes permanent.

This connection between Antony and the Athanasian party precludes any fellowship between Antony and Athanasius' opponents: Antony has no dealings with Arians, Melitians, or any other 'heretics'. We have seen in Chapter 2 how specific elements in the *Life*, such as Antony's refusal to share hospitality with heretics, dovetail with arguments that Athanasius made in his anti-Arian correspondence with monks during his third exile (356–62). In this way Athanasius sought to remove lingering suspicions that Antony was an Arian, rumours that Athanasius acknowledges, or that he had fellowship with Melitian Christians, as the Coptic *Life of Pachomius* intimated. Antony's final anti-Arian vision, recounted to Bishop Serapion, depicts the Arian heresy as a senseless, irrational attack on the cult administered by the Athanasian episcopate: 'My altar will be desecrated', a voice explains. Antony goes on to say that the Arian doctrine 'is the teaching [διδασκαλία] not of the apostles, but of the demons and their father the devil'. Athanasius makes clear that this vision refers to the events of 356, when the imperial government took the church buildings in Alexandria from his control and delivered them to his opponents (VA 82; 957b–60b).

Athanasius' frequently unhappy experiences with imperial authorities give an ambivalent tone to Antony's interactions with representatives of the empire. Important officials seek and receive Antony's help: military officers, judges, dukes, counts (VA 48, 61, 84–85). One of these, Count Archelaus, may be more than a case of name-dropping since an 'Archelaus' was among Athanasius' most fervent supporters during his troubles in the early 330s (VA 61; 932a).¹⁴⁶ Imperial notables less consistent in their support for the Athanasian cause receive rebukes from Antony. The monk sends the general Balacius, an infamous enemy of Athanasian Christians, a threatening letter referring ominously to 'God's judgement'; not much later Balacius dies in a freak accident (VA 86; 964). The emperors Constantine, Constantius, and Constans, notoriously fickle in their affections for Athanasius, at first do not receive any reply at all to their letters to Antony: an emperor is just 'a human being',

¹⁴⁵ Brennan, 'Athanasius' *Vita Antonii*', 223–4.

¹⁴⁶ An Athanasian partisan named Archelaus was arrested for his anti-Melitian activities in the early 330s (*P. Lond.* 1914. 32–8 Bell); a 'Count Archelaus' reportedly aided Athanasius at the Synod of Tyre in 335 (*Soc. H.e.* 1. 29; *Ruf. H.e.* 1. 16–17); see Bell, *Jews and Christians*, 66–7.

the monk says. But when pressed by his colleagues, Antony writes to the emperors that they should worship Christ, remember the coming judgement, know that Christ is 'the only true and eternal emperor', and treat the poor justly. The emperors, Athanasius tells us, 'rejoiced' to receive such a reply (*VA* 81; 956b-7a). Antony treats persons of power with the studied indifference of one who has renounced the status claims of human society. To Antony they are just 'human beings' who must be reminded of their subservience to their king, Christ. Antony's 'cool, yet respectful' treatment of the emperors may reflect Athanasius' changing attitudes toward Constantius during the third exile, from the praise in the *Defence before Constantius* (early 357), to the reserved attitude of the *Defence of His Flight* (late 357), and finally to the hostility of the *History of the Arians* (late 358).¹⁴⁷

The reluctant patron and visionary

Athanasius' depiction of Antony's relations with sources of imperial and ecclesiastical power in Egypt is accompanied by his careful definition of Antony's own authority. We have seen two ways that lay Egyptian Christians understood Antony: as a spiritual patron and as a teacher of wisdom. I turn first to the role of patron. Most scholars assume that Athanasius began his work on the *Life* with a biography of the monk that stressed his miraculous powers or, as I do, that Athanasius was familiar with the amazing abilities of monks like Paphnutius and the tendency to attribute these abilities to the monks' ascetic accomplishments. Because the *Life* emphasizes that Antony's powers are the work of Christ, it has become customary to speak of a 'christological corrective' at work in Athanasius' depiction of Antony as miracle-worker.¹⁴⁸ There is indeed a fundamental problem here: the apparent disjunction between the portrayal of Antony as a model of the virtuous life, someone to be emulated by all Christians, and the depiction of Antony as a miracle-working patron of other Christians.¹⁴⁹ On the one hand, Athanasius does not really resolve this tension: both Athanasius' theology and the phenomenon of Antony stand at a transitional moment in Christian theology, as it begins to turn from a theology emphasizing human free-

¹⁴⁷ L. W. Barnard, 'The Date of S. Athanasius' *Vita Antonii*', *VC* 28 (1974), 169-75; but see the criticisms of B. R. Brennan, 'Dating Athanasius' *Vita Antonii*', *VC* 30 (1976), 52-4.

¹⁴⁸ Gregg and Groh, *Early Arianism*, 145; Tetz, 'Athanasius und die *Vita*', 26-7; Roldanus, '*Vita Antonii* als Spiegel', 198.

¹⁴⁹ Rowan A. Greer, *The Fear of Freedom* (University Park, Pa., and London, 1989), 104-7.

dom and virtue to one emphasizing divine power and grace.¹⁵⁰ On the other hand, Athanasius does attempt in the *Life* to assimilate Antony's miracle-working to his own system, which both made the incarnation of the Word necessary for human salvation and retained an emphasis on the exercise of human freedom. In addition to his stress on the Word's guidance of Antony's soul that we saw above, the bishop tries to accomplish this assimilation in three ways: by de-emphasizing Antony's agency in his miracles, by showing that Antony's visionary powers result from the purity of his soul, and by making Antony reluctant to perform a public role, which God none the less forces on him.

When Antony emerges from the tomb with his soul guided by the Word and guiding his body, he is given two gifts: the ability to heal suffering bodies, and graceful speech (*VA* 14; 865a), which are signs of Christ's power and his victory over the devil. Antony's speech inspires others to take up the monastic life, comforts the afflicted, and impresses visiting philosophers (*VA* 14-15, 56, 73). Antony heals people, but Athanasius makes absolutely clear that Antony's miraculous cures and his exorcisms are all the work of God and Christ (*VA* 37, 48, 56, 58, 62, 65, 84). The following scene is typical. A man whose daughter is possessed by a demon knocks continuously on Antony's door:

He [Antony] would not open, but he peeped out and said, 'Man, why do you cry out to me? I am a human being as you are. If you believe in Christ, whom I serve, go away, and as you believe, pray to God, and it will be.' Therefore, he immediately believed, called upon Christ, and departed, having his daughter cleansed from the demon. The Lord did many other things through him, the Lord who says, 'Ask, and it will be given to you' [Luke 11: 9]. For many suffering people, when he did not open the door, would simply lie down outside the monastic cell, and because they believed and prayed sincerely, they were cleansed (*VA* 48; 913a).

As he does elsewhere in the *Life* (*VA* 57, 63-4; 925b, 933), Athanasius uses the passive voice to de-emphasize Antony's agency in such healings: people 'were cleansed'; the reason for their healing is not Antony, but their own faith and prayer. Athanasius is willing to understand Antony's prayer as efficacious, but only in its solidarity with others, and even then, it is not always successful (*VA* 56; 925a). Antony's ability to perform exorcisms as well derives not from himself, but from Christ's victory: the monk uses verses from the Bible to drive the demons away (*VA* 6, 13, 37, 39), just as Athanasius advised Marcellinus to do. Antony's miraculous

¹⁵⁰ See Greer, *Fear of Freedom*, esp. 147-9, 178-9.

powers are not his own, but are the achievements of Christ working through Antony; they are a function either of the Word's direction of Antony or of the faith of the people inspired by Antony.

We have seen one area in which Athanasius was willing to see a more direct relationship between an ascetic's efforts and his special powers: the ability to see into the future and to receive divine revelations. Athanasius believed that the person who successfully withdrew from the mass of sinful society became 'a friend of God' who received divine 'revelations'.¹⁵¹ Moses, Elijah, Elisha, and Daniel were Athanasius' favourite examples of persons who, through ascetic discipline, rendered themselves worthy of divine revelations. On the one hand, such figures merely actualized a potentiality in every human soul:

For the sleep of the saints possesses contemplation of better things, and while their body is lying still on earth, the mind travels through outer places and flies up from the earth to the heavens. For the great prophet Elisha, while he was bodily lying on the mountain, followed Gehazi with his mind [cf. 4 Kgs. 5: 26], and the holy Daniel, while sleeping in body, was awake in mind, seeing those great and divine visions [cf. Dan. 7: 1].¹⁵²

Here Elisha and Daniel seem to exercise powers that Athanasius believed were available to everyone who possesses a 'rational soul, by which humanity considers and understands what surpasses it'.¹⁵³ On the other hand, there appear to be visionary powers that belong only to those who perform extraordinary ascetic disciplines, such as prolonged fasting:

That great man Moses, when fasting, conversed with God and received the Law. The great and holy Elijah, when fasting, was thought worthy of divine visions, and at last he was taken up like him who ascended into heaven. And Daniel, when fasting, although he was a very young man, was entrusted with the mystery, and he alone understood the secret things of the king, and was thought worthy of divine visions. . . . And generally each one of the saints has been thought worthy of similar transcendent nourishment.¹⁵⁴

In these discussions Athanasius has in mind two different, but related visionary powers: to see earthly things beyond normal ability (Elisha seeing Gehazi travelling, Daniel knowing the king's secrets), and to see

¹⁵¹ Isaac 'withdrew from the clamour of the crowds to converse with God'; Jacob, 'who was great in discipline [*ἀσκητός*], was made worthy of the revelation of higher things only because he went forth and became alone by fleeing from Esau in his temptations'; *Ep. fest.* (cop.) 24 (38. 2-16 Lef.).

¹⁵² *Mor. et val.* 6 (7. 10-16 D.).

¹⁵³ *Gent.* 31. 43-4 T.; cf. 31. 37-43; 33. 21-35 T.

¹⁵⁴ *Ep. fest.* (syr.) 1. 6 (16. 19-24; 17. 7-8 C.).

heavenly things (divine revelations or visions). Antony will display both of these powers. These visionary abilities have their basis in Athanasius' theology, which linked moral purity with knowledge of God, depicted in visionary terms: 'Purity of the soul is sufficient to behold God as in a mirror.'¹⁵⁵ In Athanasius' view, exemplary figures like Elijah, Elisha, and Daniel received special visionary powers on the basis of their exceptional moral purity, but they actualized an ability potential in every person.

Antony joins these figures from the Hebrew Bible as an exemplary recipient of divine visionary powers. Just as Elisha could see Gehazi travelling, so Antony possesses the ability to see earthly matters that he should not be able to see. The stories in chapters 58–61 depict Antony seeing or knowing about things happening elsewhere: for example, he sees Ammoun's death and two travellers on their way to him. Athanasius summarizes these incidents: 'To Antony this alone was miraculous: that as he sat on the mountain, he had his heart being sober and the Lord showing to him what was far away' (*VA* 59; 929a). With respect to the power of prophecy, Antony exhibits caution. It is possibly demonic, and Antony explains how demons, by means of their attenuated bodies and long experience, can report things before they happen (*VA* 31–3). In general, Antony declares that prophetic gifts are not a reliable indicator of moral achievement (*VA* 33; 893a). Still, although someone should not undertake the ascetic discipline in the hope of receiving the gift of prophecy, such divine favour may be a by-product of the virtuous life:

Therefore, it is not fitting to make much of these things, nor to practise the discipline and to labour for their sake, so that we might know the future, but rather so that we might please God by conducting ourselves rightly. Thus, it is necessary to pray, not so that we might know the future, nor so that we might ask for this as the wages of the discipline, but so that the Lord might be our co-worker for the victory over the devil. But if at one time we are concerned about knowing the future, let us be pure in thought. For I believe that when the soul is thoroughly pure and in its natural state, it becomes capable of clear sight and is able to see more and farther than the demons, because it has the Lord revealing things to it. Such was the soul of Elisha as it saw what was happening with Gehazi and saw the powers standing near it (*VA* 34; 893).

This is precisely Athanasius' teaching: although it would be unseemly to ask for such a thing, purity of the soul, achieved through asceticism, can lead to clear sight and to the reception of revelations from God, as the

¹⁵⁵ *Gent.* 2. 32–3 T.; cf. 2. 21–7 T.; *Inc.* 57. 7–16 T.

example of Elisha demonstrates. Other Egyptian Christians shared Athanasius' view on this matter: one of Paphnutius' correspondents declared that 'revelations' belonged to 'ascetics' and 'worshippers'.¹⁵⁶

Athanasius makes Antony a paradigm for how monks like Paphnutius should handle these visions.¹⁵⁷ Not only should they take no pride in their revelations (their ethical life is the only basis for judgement), but they should share them only when they would benefit others.¹⁵⁸ One such benefit would be leading people to the ascetic life: 'They might learn of the good fruit of the discipline and that visions often come as relief for the labours' (*VA* 66; 937b). Another good reason to reveal a vision is if it would promote Athanasius' campaign against the Arians (*VA* 82). Athanasius walks a fine line here. On the one hand, he distrusts visions as potentially demonic, insists that they are not an accurate measure of virtue, and asserts that they should only be shared under exceptional circumstances. On the other hand, he believes that a moral life of purity could be rewarded with visions and revelations from God, and the *Life* reflects this conviction. The bishop, then, acknowledges and respects the visionary powers of monks like Paphnutius, but he is eager to depict them both as the result of the life of virtue and as potentially dangerous. The *Life* is simultaneously an endorsement and a warning about monastic visionaries.

This ambivalence about monastic power also appears in Athanasius' general portrayal of Antony as a reluctant patron: like his miraculous deeds, Antony's fame is the result not of his own efforts, but of God's work. Athanasius frames Antony's public career with God's promise to make him known throughout the world. When Antony successfully struggles against the demons in the tomb, the divine voice tells him, 'I will be your helper and make you famous everywhere' (*VA* 10; 860a). At the end of the book, Athanasius describes Antony's fame as the redemption by God of this earlier promise, not as something that Antony himself sought or created (*VA* 93; 973b). Moreover, God makes Antony and monks like him known precisely in order for them to serve as models for other Christians: 'For although they do their work secretly and want to escape notice, yet the Lord shows them forth like lamps to all people, so that even those who hear about them may know that the commandments

¹⁵⁶ *P. Lond.* 1926. 9–10 Bell.

¹⁵⁷ Williams, 'Domestication', 32–4.

¹⁵⁸ 'He was not willing to announce these things, but he spent much time in prayer and marvelled to himself. But when those with him asked and troubled him, he was forced to speak, like a father who is unable to hide things from his children. But he reckoned that his own conscience was pure and that the recounting might be beneficial to them' (*VA* 66; 937b).

can lead to reformation and may receive zeal for the way [ὁδός] to virtue' (VA 93; 973c). Here God's work conveniently dovetails with Athanasius' writing of the *Life* to make Antony available as a model for other monks. This statement also reveals Athanasius' desire to subsume the monk's power and fame to the quest for virtue: the ideal monk will try to remain hidden and will not seek fame, but God might make him known to other people, not so that they can admire his miraculous deeds, but so that they can emulate his 'way to virtue'. Even Antony's desire to be buried where no one can find his body indicates his reluctance to be the centre of attention (VA 90-2). By portraying Antony as reluctant to be a leading figure in human society and his fame as the result of God's work alone, Athanasius is able both to acknowledge the prestige and authority of monks like Antony and Paphnutius and to criticize this new monastic role. At the same time Athanasius keeps Antony firmly placed within the wider Christian community by making his virtuous example the reason for his fame.

By attributing Antony's miraculous powers to Christ, Athanasius hoped to assimilate the monk's patronal role to his own Christ-centred spirituality; and by attributing Antony's fame to God, the bishop tried to subordinate the monk's public role as benefactor to his exemplary role as a model for the virtuous life. These attempts are not totally successful because Athanasius' own thought had tendencies that supported the view of the monk as particularly connected to divine powers. Athanasius believed that persons who achieved a superior level of moral purity through ascetic renunciation received special visionary powers from God, and so he portrayed Antony. In general, however, the bishop depicts Antony's abilities to heal, to exorcize, and to prophesy as functions of his superior appropriation of Christ's victory over the devil and the bodily passions, an appropriation possible for all Christians. Antony's authority, then, is primarily that of a model to be imitated.

Imitation and the turn from philosophy to ethics

Athanasius' presentation of Antony as uneducated yet able to converse with philosophers on weighty issues has constituted a historical puzzle to later readers. Was Antony illiterate or merely not trained in the more advanced subjects of rhetoric and philosophy? Either way, how could he have argued in so sophisticated a manner with reputable philosophers? Did he know Greek or only Coptic? How is the evidence of the *Life* to be reconciled with the philosophical sophistication that Antony's letters

display? And so on. What gets lost in these questions is the central issue of what purposes Athanasius had in portraying Antony as both unlearned and wise. The motif of Antony's unschooled wisdom arises from Athanasius' suspicion of academic Christianity: the understanding of Christianity as a philosophy, centred around the study of ancient writings under the guidance of an academically trained teacher. The letters attributed to Antony presented the monk as such a teacher of wisdom, someone familiar with Platonic philosophy and wise in the knowledge of God and self. In the *Life*, Athanasius undermines this view of Antony by depicting him as unlearned and by suggesting that there may be something demonic in philosophical speculation. Antony's knowledge does not come from study in a schoolroom, but directly from God. Christianity appears not as a philosophy, but as an ethical way of life that flows from Christ's victory in the cross.¹⁵⁹ Antony is therefore **not** a philosopher to learn from, but a model to imitate.

Antony's antipathy for organized education appears in chapter one. The young Antony practises an ascetic life even before he has reached his eighteenth birthday:

As a child [παιδίον], he lived with his parents, knowing nothing other than them and their house. When he grew to become a boy [παῖς] and was advanced in age, he did not endure the learning of letters [γράμματα μαθεῖν], desiring to be removed even from the companionship of other boys. All his desire was, as it is written about Jacob [cf. Gen. 25: 27], to live in his house as a natural person [ἄπλαστος]. He went to church with his parents. As a boy, he was not remiss; nor when he was advanced in age, did he show contempt. Rather, he was obedient to his parents, and by paying attention to the readings, he preserved in himself the profit deriving from them. Although as a boy he lived in moderate wealth, he did not trouble his parents for diverse and expensive feasting [τροφή], nor did he seek pleasure from such. He was happy with what he found, and asked for nothing more (VA 1; 84r).

Here the young Antony lives in a manner that exactly matches the lifestyle of the young Mary as Athanasius described it in his first *Letter to Virgins*: he remains secluded in his home as much as possible, is obedient to his parents, attends church with them and pays attention to the readings that he hears there, eats simple food in moderate amounts, and avoids intellectual training.¹⁶⁰ This last motif performs two functions. First, it marks an early phase of Antony's renunciation of his **role** in human society. As Athanasius presents it, Antony's antipathy for

¹⁵⁹ Cf. Roldanus, *Christ et l'homme*, 329–30.

¹⁶⁰ *Ep. virg.* 1. 12–13 (77. 35–80. 23 Lef.).

schooling does not appear when he is very young, but only when he is 'advanced in age': thus, the young man's failure to 'learn letters [*grammata*]' does not represent his total illiteracy, but his unwillingness to receive the secondary education from a *grammatikos* that a well-to-do young man like himself might desire.¹⁶¹ Some wealthy parents like Antony's in the towns and villages of Upper Egypt even sent their adolescent sons to Alexandria for training under a tutor: this practice was a means of upward mobility.¹⁶² Young Antony refuses to take any such step. Secondly, lack of education signifies a certain disposition: it denotes seclusion, in contrast to 'companionship', and being 'natural' or 'unformed' (*ἀπλαστος*), in contrast to the artificiality produced by socialization into learned culture. Virtue, Antony claims in chapter 20, is the preservation of the soul in its 'natural' condition: here Antony remains in an 'unformed' state of innate wisdom, unsullied by the ambiguities and conventions of human discourse. This second motif, the 'unformed' character of Antony's wisdom, continues in the following chapters: Antony's response to Scripture, which he hears in the church, is direct and intuitive, a simple (but not simple-minded) attempt to do what Scripture says, uncomplicated by the learned allegorical exegesis that Christian scholars practised (*VA* 2–3).¹⁶³

Antony's discourse on the ascetic life builds on this distinction between natural wisdom and human philosophizing, with the added suggestion of demonic influences in the latter. The discourse begins with a familiar Athanasian statement: 'The Scriptures are sufficient for our instruction [*διδασκαλία*]' (*VA* 16; 868a). Antony goes on to condemn the demons for using 'tactics and arguments' and mixing 'evil with the truth' in their attempts to dissuade monks from the path to virtue. Antony warns: 'It is improper for us who have the holy Scriptures and the liberation that comes from the Saviour to be taught [*διδάσκεσθαι*] by the devil, who has not kept his own rank, but has thought [*φρονεῖν*] one thing after another.' The demons 'do everything: they speak, they raise a clamour, they dissemble, and they confuse, in order to deceive the simple' (*VA* 26; 881b–4a). These charges—the dissembling use of arguments, the mixing of truth and falsehood, the constant changes of mind,

¹⁶¹ Cf. Roger S. Bagnall, *Egypt in Late Antiquity* (Princeton, NJ, 1993), 99–100.

¹⁶² Lewis, *Life in Egypt*, 63–4, 82.

¹⁶³ Surely Athanasius knew that Clement of Alexandria (in *Who is the Rich Man that Will Be Saved?*) had demonstrated that Matt. 19: 21, which inspires Antony to sell what he owns and give the proceeds to the poor, did not at all refer to the actual divestment of real property, but rather to the removal of the passions. Athanasius has Antony display no interest in such subtleties of interpretation.

the promotion of confusion—echo Athanasius' complaints against the Christian teachers of his day who, in his opinion, were seeking to seduce Alexandrian virgins from their holy life. Here Athanasius suggests, as he does elsewhere, that these human intellectual activities are really the work of the devil and his demons. Christians should instead rely on the Scriptures and Christ's liberation of them from sin and death in the cross. They should manifest Christ's victory in lives of virtue, not intellectual achievement.¹⁶⁴ Antony himself is able to offer this discourse, not because he has received teaching from any human being, but because he has 'experience' (πειρα) in the ascetic life (VA 39; 900a). Athanasius explains that Antony does not need any person to explain things to him because his contact with God is direct and unmediated: whenever he was 'puzzled [ἀπορεῖν], it would be revealed to him by the Lord while he prayed; the blessed one was, as it is written, "taught by God" [θεοδιδάκτος]' (VA 66; 936c; cf. 1 Thess. 4: 9). The depictions of Antony as wise by means of experience and instruction from God and of the demons as using methods similar to those of human teachers contribute to Athanasius' portrayal of Christianity as a religion of power, not merely of human thought, and thereby to his campaign against the academic model of Christianity. Athanasius shifts the locus of Antony's authority from philosophical speculation to ethical guidance.

These themes reach their climax in the confrontations between Antony and the 'philosophers' in chapters 72–80.¹⁶⁵ Antony's arguments against pagan ideas derive from Athanasius' apologetic works,¹⁶⁶ but the larger purpose of these scenes is to contrast as sharply as possible two kinds of people: Antony, the man who possesses 'practical wisdom' (φρόνιμος), 'ready wit' (ἀγχίνους), and 'understanding' (συνετός) although 'without formal education' (γράμματα μὴ μαθών); and the 'philosophers' (φιλόσοφοι) who possess 'education' (γράμματα) and seem 'wise' (σόφος) by worldly standards (VA 72, 74; 944b, 946b). The distinction between 'practical wisdom' (φρόνησις) and 'theoretical or contemplative wisdom' (σοφία) was familiar to educated persons of the ancient world.¹⁶⁷ In Athanasius' treatment here, it serves to distinguish

¹⁶⁴ 'For none of us is judged on the basis of what he knows, and no one is blessed because he has learned and knows; rather, each of us has the judgement in this: if he has preserved the faith and sincerely kept the commandments' (VA 33; 893a).

¹⁶⁵ Cf. Rousseau, *Pachomius*, 167–9.

¹⁶⁶ Dörries, *Vita Antonii als Geschichtsquelle*, 179–80.

¹⁶⁷ So Synesius of Cyrene: 'When the intellect is not occupied with things here below, it is occupied with God. For philosophy has two parts, contemplation [θεωρία] and practice [πράξις], and there are two faculties, one for each part: contemplative wisdom [σοφία] and practical wisdom [φρόνησις]. The latter requires fortune, but contemplative wisdom is self-

between Christian faith as something that acts (η δι' ἐνεργείας πίστεως) and all other forms of religion that are merely talk (η διὰ λόγων ἀπόδειξις) (VA 77; 952a). Athanasius develops this contrast against the background not only of Christianity's conflict with pagan culture but also of his intra-Christian conflict with academic Christianity. Antony shifts the dispute from philosophical speculation to ethics by inviting the philosophers, if they consider him to be wise, to 'imitate' (μιμεῖσθαι) his way of life and 'become as I am' (VA 72; 944). He declares that 'the person who possesses a healthy mind has no need of education' (VA 73; 945a). Instead of facility in verbal argumentation, what is required of a person is a certain 'disposition of the soul' that acquires knowledge of God directly and intuitively, 'by faith', and expresses itself in 'action'.¹⁶⁸ As he demonstrates the impotence of words in comparison to active faith, Antony ironically proves quite clever at the use of words to trap his opponents. Here the disingenuous nature of Athanasius' emphasis on Antony's simplicity becomes clear.¹⁶⁹ Athanasius is not interested in the realistic depiction of Antony as a simple, illiterate Copt. Rather, the bishop seeks to contrast the ascetic discipline of concrete service to God with the intellectual life of disputation and theory, and hence not only Christianity with the world, but also the Christianity of the Athanasian episcopate with the Christianity of the schoolroom.

Athanasius demonstrates that Antony's natural, unaffected wisdom is the result of Athanasius' own brand of Christian faith by showing that the 'disposition of the soul' which results in an active faith derives from Christ's victory on the cross, the great Athanasian theme. 'The preaching of the divine cross' is precisely the point at issue between Antony and his philosophical opponents, who 'want to mock' the crucifixion (VA 74; 945b). Drawing on characteristic Athanasian arguments as well as imagery from the Pauline letters, Antony contrasts 'the wisdom of Greek words' and 'the power of faith supplied to us by God through Jesus

sufficient and an activity that acts of itself and cannot be hindered'; Synes. *Ep.* 103 (178. 4-9 Garzya). For this reference I am indebted to Wayne A. Meeks, 'The Man from Heaven in Paul's Letter to the Philippians', in B. A. Pearson (ed.), *The Future of Early Christianity* (Minneapolis, 1991), 329-36, at 333.

¹⁶⁸ 'For faith comes from a disposition of the soul, while dialectic comes from the skill of those who devise it. Therefore, those who have the action that comes through faith have no need of verbal demonstration or even find it superfluous. For indeed, what we understand by faith, you try to construct through words, and often you are not able to express what we understand. Thus, the action that comes through faith is better and more secure than your sophistic syllogisms' (VA 77; 952a).

¹⁶⁹ Averil Cameron, *Christianity and the Rhetoric of Empire* (Berkeley, Calif., 1991), 112-13.

Christ': the former is impotent, while the latter's strength is manifest in the decline of paganism and the magical arts and in the driving away of demons with the sign of the cross (*VA* 78; 952). Antony astonishes the philosophers not merely with his graceful speech, but even more by exorcizing demons with the sign of the cross before their very eyes (*VA* 72, 80; 944c, 953b–6a). Only the crucifixion of the Word of God as Athanasius described it could give humans such power, power to cast out demons and power to live lives of virtue. Opposing systems are impotent in comparison: they produce only words and confusion.

Antony, Athanasius writes in his conclusion, 'became famous not from his writings, nor from external wisdom [*ἡ ἔξωθεν σοφία*], nor because of any skill [*τέχνη*], but only because of his service to God [*θεοσέβεια*]' (*VA* 93; 973b). Here Athanasius returns to the motifs from the early chapters: Antony is uneducated, unskilled, without any wisdom drawn from outside himself. He is instead in a natural, unformed state of service to God. This picture of Antony encourages monks to embrace lives of uncomplicated service to God, unencumbered by the artifices of human learning. It also promotes Athanasius' efforts to form a Christian Church that is defined by the ethical life of imitation and the power of Christ made available in the Church's sacramental life. By way of contrast, Athanasius has Antony make a mockery of a religious life based on rational human disputation and suggest that such subtle, but confusing argumentation is the work of demons. Antony attends no school, Christian or otherwise, but none the less is wiser than the wise, more subtle than the most skilled philosopher. His excellence consists not in his learning, but in his way of life, which is a pattern to be imitated.

The primary social function of the Athanasian Antony is, then, to inspire imitation. The Church, in Athanasius' view, realized its unity through the formation of a shared *πολιτεία* by individual imitation of the saints' *πολιτεία*; as individual Christians formed themselves into saints through imitation, they also formed the Church. The *Life of Antony* places imitation of the biblical saints at the centre of the ascetic's self-formation: Antony tells the monks that they should 'repeat by heart the commandments in the Scriptures and remember the actions of the saints so that the soul, remembering the commandments, might be trained by their zeal' (*VA* 55; 921b). When confronted by demons, monks should 'learn from the saints, do as they did, and imitate [*μιμῆσθαι*] their courage' (*VA* 27; 884a). Antony shapes his early ascetic career by imitating biblical figures and contemporary ascetics, so that he might eventually serve as a model for others to imitate. On the fateful day of his

first conversion to asceticism, Antony walks to church 'thinking about how the apostles abandoned everything and followed the Saviour and how the people in Acts sold what they had and placed the proceeds at the apostles' feet for distribution to the needy'. Thus, when he hears Matthew 19: 21 read in church, Antony concludes that 'the memory of the saints had been introduced by God' into his mind (*VA* 2; 841). Inspired by this recollection of the biblical saints, Antony begins his ascetic career. He then forms his discipline through careful observation of the other 'zealous ones' practising an ascetic life near the villages; like a 'wise bee', the watchful Antony gathers from each ascetic an example of the virtue at which he excelled. This observation of others serves a consciously self-centred project of collecting to oneself the best qualities of others: 'He would gather to himself what he gained from each and was zealous to show forth in himself the qualities of all' (*VA* 3-4; 844b-6b). Antony becomes something like a mirror, gathering in the virtues of others only to reflect them out again.¹⁷⁰ Athanasius has Antony use the simile of the mirror to explain how the example of Elijah should function for the ascetic: 'He used to say to himself that the ascetic ought to observe closely his own life by means of Elijah's way of life [*πολιτεία*], as if in a mirror.' The monk imitates Elijah even by repeating Elijah's words (3 Kgs. 17: 1) as his own (*VA* 7; 853b). This verbal conforming of oneself to the biblical model, which Athanasius urged in his letters to Marcellinus and Dracontius,¹⁷¹ complements the behavioural or ethical mode of imitation. Faced with demons, the monk repeats words of Paul or even of Christ. Antony considers such appropriation of the model's words as a fulfilment of Paul's statement, 'I have applied these things to myself' (1 Cor. 4: 6) (*VA* 40; 901b). The goal of imitating Elijah, whether in words or deeds, is to make oneself so much like Elijah that observing one's own way of life is like looking into a mirror and seeing Elijah. This discipline of observing, imitating, and mirroring another ascetic reflects on a lower plane the connection that Athanasius made between moral purity and humanity's likeness to God: 'Purity of soul is sufficient to behold God as in a mirror.'¹⁷²

Although Antony is the supreme example of a person who imitates the virtues of his models and then reflects these virtues to others, all monks

¹⁷⁰ Cf. Gregory of Nazianzus' description of how Athanasius used his biblical models: 'Having imitated the reasoning of some, the action of others, the meekness of others, the zeal of others, the dangers of others, most things in some, everything in others, and taking from one and another forms of beauty, like those who draw forms with exaggeration, he made a single form of virtue from them all'; *Or.* 21. 4. 3-8 Mossay-Lafontaine.

¹⁷¹ *Ep. Marcell.* 10-11; *Ep. Dracont.* 3. ¹⁷² *Gent.* 2. 32-3; cf. *Inc.* 57. 7-16 T.

are to engage in this process of observation, imitation, and reflection. Here in another context is the mode of self-formation that Athanasius urged on the Alexandrian virgins: 'From the excellent take a pattern [τύπος] of virtue; but to the imperfect give a pattern of your own excellent way of life . . . so that there might be benefit on every side, as we first receive blessing and then in return give virtue'.¹⁷³ Athanasius has Antony acknowledge the diversity of gifts among ascetics: some can cast out demons; others can perform cures. But such gifts should not form the basis for esteem in the monastic community: rather, 'let a person observe closely each one's discipline and either imitate [μιμῆσθαι] and emulate it or correct it' (*VA* 38; 897b). Because, as Antony describes here, one observes other monks both to imitate them and to correct them, monks who follow this ethic of imitation reform their behaviour not only by observing but also by being observed: observation of oneself by others is an incentive to moral vigilance. Antony suggests that the monks keep journals: 'Let each of us indicate and write down the actions and movements of our soul, as if he were going to report them to one another.' The possibility of what is written being seen by others will act as a disincentive to improper behaviour. 'Let the written account be for us in place of the eyes of our fellow ascetics, so that, blushing to write as if it were being seen, we might never think about evil.' In this way the monks will 'form [τυποῦν] themselves' (*VA* 55; 924b–5a). Here Athanasius articulates his own version of early Christianity's 'rhetoric of shame':¹⁷⁴ because the monk is a mirror, both seeing others and being seen, he must form himself so as to be transparent to others without shame or embarrassment. This theme becomes more fully developed in the writings of John Cassian, who reminds the monk not only of 'the eyes of fellow ascetics' but also of the 'unavoidable eye' of God.¹⁷⁵

Antony functions as such a mirror for other monks, both those who are characters within the narrative and those who may read the finished story. Athanasius presents this role for Antony as his destiny, something over which he has no control. After twenty years in the tomb, for

¹⁷³ *Ep. virg.* 2. 9 (114–18 Leb.); cf. *Ep. virg.* 1. 11–12, 17, 35 (77. 33–4; 78. 5–7; 80. 20–1; 90. 25–35 Lef.).

¹⁷⁴ See Elizabeth A. Clark, 'Sex, Shame, and Rhetoric: En-gendering Early Christian Ethics', *JAR* 59 (1991), 221–45.

¹⁷⁵ According to Cassian, the monk who experiences only necessary nocturnal emissions 'has attained that state in which he is found to be the same at night as he is during the day, the same in bed as he is at prayer, the same alone as in a crowd of people, so that he never sees himself in secret to be such that he would blush to be seen by other people, nor does that unavoidable eye see in him anything that ought to be concealed from human sight'; *Cass. Coll.* 12. 8 (135. 14–21 Pichery); cf. Brown, *Body and Society*, 231–2.

example, Antony presumably would have continued to live hidden away, but the necessity of his being a model for others would not permit that: Antony emerges from the tomb 'when many desired and wanted to imitate his discipline, and other friends came and broke down and removed the door by force' (*VA* 14; 864). God prevents Antony from becoming a martyr so that he might teach others about the ascetic life: 'Indeed, merely by seeing his conduct many people were eager to become imitators [*ζηλωταί*] of his way of life [*πολιτεία*]' (*VA* 46; 912). Even Antony's death becomes 'worthy of imitation' (*ζηλωτός*) (*VA* 89; 968a). Now, thanks to the work of God and Athanasius, the *Life* will permit Antony to be a model for Christian ascetics throughout the world to imitate (*VA* pref., 93-4). Antony's call to the philosophers becomes his call to every reader: 'If you reckon that I am wise, become as I am, for it is necessary to imitate the good' (*VA* 72; 944b). Athanasius therefore defines the authority of an ascetic like Antony primarily in moral terms: he is a model to be imitated. Athanasius did not invent this mode of ascetic authority: one of Paphnutius' correspondents, Dorotheus the Oxyrhynchite, wrote, 'We rejoice that we imitate [*μιμείσθαι*] you in the same noble way of life [*πολιτεία*]'.¹⁷⁶ But Athanasius carefully limited the monk's roles as spiritual patron and teacher of wisdom and emphasized his role as virtuous example. This ethical mode of authority could co-exist peacefully with the political, doctrinal, and sacramental authority of bishops and priests. It also cohered with Athanasius' vision of the Church as a shared civic life created through imitation: the *Life* itself, in that it inspires imitation, contributes to the formation of the heavenly *πολιτεία*.

By presenting Antony as a model for moral imitation, Athanasius provided a definition of ascetic authority that cohered with the late antique holy man's emerging role as an exemplar. During the fourth century, living holy men joined remarkable persons of the past as revelatory exemplars of the virtuous life; this ethic of imitation had its roots in the teacher-student relationship that formed the centre of antiquity's 'culture of *paideia*'.¹⁷⁷ Within this setting, two aspects of Athanasius' presentation of Antony stand out. First, Athanasius takes pains to separate the model-imitator relationship from the teacher-student ethos: Antony is not well read, nor wise, not a philosopher. His virtue is that he is totally receptive to the Word of God: he is a "Christ-carrying"

¹⁷⁶ *P. Lond.* 1927. 38-40 Bell.

¹⁷⁷ Peter Brown, 'The Saint as Exemplar in Late Antiquity', in J. S. Hawley (ed.), *Saints and Virtues* (Berkeley, Calif., 1987), 3-14.

exemplar'.¹⁷⁸ Secondly, Athanasius is clearly attempting to present not one model among many, but *the* model of the Christian life. His goal is to freeze the flow of imitation and to create a single icon, one powerful enough to mirror a diverse set of virtues into a single civic life. Antony is designed to join Athanasius' Bible as a 'canon', the canon of the heavenly πολιτεία. The social function of Athanasius' presentation of Antony as exemplar, both in its form and behavioural content, is to reinforce episcopal Christianity and its unchanging doctrine.

With his characteristic moderation, meanwhile, Athanasius balanced his depiction of Antony as the model for every Christian by carefully distancing the monk from normal human beings. By renouncing sex, food, and wealth, Antony gives up any normal role in human society. It would seem that Athanasius saw this practice of radical withdrawal as the only condition in which a person could achieve such complete domination by the Word. Antony's miraculous power indicates the total perfection of the Word's redemption of humanity in Antony. Athanasius' Antony performed a double function: he provided a model for the spiritual progress of every Christian, but he made clear that perfection would be achieved only by those who followed his example of nearly complete withdrawal. As a model whose perfection is elusive, Athanasius' Antony resembles Athanasius' God, whose likeness human beings can approach through virtue but achieve in only a limited, imitative fashion.¹⁷⁹ He also resembles the historical Antony, whose likeness, Athanasius admits in the preface, not even this account can perfectly render (*VA* pref. 837b). In this sense, 'both Athanasius and his readers strive for the impossible perfect imitation' of Antony; 'they fail, but succeed in the failure'.¹⁸⁰ For the moderately wealthy Christians of Egypt's cities and towns who made up the particular audience for Athanasius' ascetic programme, such an elusive Antony was a challenging ideal, but one at a comfortable distance from the reality of their lives. Undoubtedly many of these people imitated Antony in lives of celibacy, poverty, and retreat, but even more settled for the less intense form of withdrawal found in the Festal Letters: disciplined marriage and care for the poor, shaped by Scripture and the sacraments.

Athanasius wrote the *Life of Antony* at the request of monks in the West.¹⁸¹ It was a way for the controversial and now banished Egyptian

¹⁷⁸ Brown, 'Saint as Exemplar', 8. ¹⁷⁹ *Ep. Afr.* 7 (PG 26. 1041b).

¹⁸⁰ Harpham, *Ascetic Imperative*, 5.

¹⁸¹ According to Evagrius, Athanasius wrote the *Life* 'to foreign brothers' (*ad peregrinos*)

bishop to cultivate further the ties with Western Christians that he had developed during his two earlier exiles. Two Latin authors provide evidence for how successful the *Life* was in setting into motion the network of imitation that, according to Athanasius, formed the 'heavenly πολιτεία'. In his *Confessions*, Augustine describes how at Trier two imperial officials read the book, gave up their promising careers, and became monks; their example hastened Augustine's own conversion to ascetic Christianity.¹⁸² Augustine became a member of 'the community of imitators'.¹⁸³ In the late 370s Jerome wrote his *Life of Paul, the First Hermit*.¹⁸⁴ In this work, Antony's status as the founder of eremitical monasticism is challenged, but his function as the supreme model remains: 'Antony was not so much the first hermit as the hermit whose example stirred others to emulation'.¹⁸⁵ Ostensibly about Paul, Jerome's story actually tells how Antony searches, finds, and then loses the elusive Paul, whose ascetic discipline paradoxically both precedes and imitates Antony's. Paul dies, but Antony survives to be a 'living example' to others.¹⁸⁶ In Jerome's treatment, Athanasius' Antony remains the paradigm for Christian ascetics, even those whose careers precede his. At the same time, however, the hagiographical literature and cults that proliferated in the East and West after Athanasius' work did not follow his 'christological corrective' and critique of the monk's powers and patronal role. In the sixth century, for example, Antony's bones were miraculously discovered and brought to Alexandria, where a cult developed. A later Coptic writer portrayed Athanasius as praising a group of monks as the 'patrons' (προστάτης) of other Christians, who 'obtain grace through your purity'.¹⁸⁷ It was precisely this picture of the monk that Athanasius' *Life of Antony* criticized. In this sense, it was

fratres; 837–8). That Athanasius intended the work for monks outside Egypt appears to be confirmed when he says that his addressees are contending 'with the monks in Egypt' (*VA* pref. 837a). The specific destination of the West finds support in the concluding reference to Antony's fame having reached Spain, Gaul, Rome, and Africa (*VA* 93; 973b).

¹⁸² Aug. *Conf.* 8. 6.

¹⁸³ Harpham, *Ascetic Imperative*, 97. Augustine's attitude toward imitation was far more ambivalent than Athanasius' (*Ascetic Imperative*, 96–100).

¹⁸⁴ Trans. Paul B. Harvey, Jr., 'Jerome: *The Life of Paul, the First Hermit*', in Wimbush (ed.), *Ascetic Behavior*, 357–69.

¹⁸⁵ Jer. *V. Pauli* 1 (Harvey, 'Jerome', 360).

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.* 12 (Harvey, 'Jerome', 366).

¹⁸⁷ Pseudo-Athanasius, *Concerning Brothers Who Came to Us*, ed. Arnold van Lantschoot, 'Une allocution à des moines en visite chez S. Athanase', *Angelicum*, 20 (1943), 249–53, at 250. On the inauthenticity of this work, see David Brakke, 'The Authenticity of the Ascetic Athanasiana', *Or.* 63 (1994), 17–56, at 43–4. On the cult of Antony, see Bartelink, *Vie d'Antoine*, 74–6.

Serapion's picture of Antony that ultimately triumphed.¹⁸⁸ None the less, monks throughout the world claimed to be imitating the Antony of Athanasius' biography when they took up the ascetic life.

Despite these international echoes, the *Life of Antony* served Athanasius primarily as a tool for achieving political unity within the Egyptian Church. He used the *Life* for the formation of the Church by carefully placing Antony among competing modes of authority. He undermined the tendency to understand Antony as a teacher of Christian philosophy by claiming that Antony was unlearned, wise only in the sense of possessing an innate, direct knowledge of God; he acknowledged but criticized the view of Antony as patron by depicting him as unwilling to use his supernatural powers, which really belonged to Christ anyway. Athanasius also portrayed Antony as showing the proper obedience to the Church's clergy and a healthy distance from the officials of the empire. Antony appoints no successor to himself from among his monastic companions, nor does he leave behind his body for a cult; rather, he bequeaths his spiritual legacy to the Athanasian episcopate, in the persons of Athanasius and Serapion. Antony's own authority, as Athanasius defines it, is primarily ethical and thus distinct from that of the teacher or that of the bishop: it resides in the attractiveness of his civic life, his ability to reflect diverse virtues to other Christians. Through the publication of the *Life*, Athanasius hoped to further the unity of the Church by putting in motion a complex process of mutual observation, imitation, and reflection that would issue forth in the formation of a shared 'heavenly commonwealth'.

This 'heavenly commonwealth' consisted of individuals who followed Antony's example by appropriating the benefits of the Word of God's incarnation. Mythically, the Athanasian Antony was the model for the individual Christian life as an ascent to heaven past the demons on the way up that the Word made accessible on the cross. Psychologically and morally, Antony shows how the Word's victory over death and the devil has made it possible for human beings to overcome their natural, but paralyzing fear of death and so to display moral courage in the face of demonic threats and their own death. Socially, Antony's renunciation of sex, food, and wealth constitutes a withdrawal from normal society and the establishment of an alternative civic life. Spiritually, he demonstrates how the Word's control of the passions of the body enables Christians to overcome their own bodily desires and to re-establish proper control of the body by the soul. Because Antony's soul is completely guided by the

¹⁸⁸ Tetz, 'Athanasius und die *Vita*', 28-9.

Word and completely guides his body, his body witnesses to others about the incorruptibility of the redeemed body and acts as a vehicle for the Word's corporeal benefits to other Christians. If it was in fact the goal of the historical Antony to 'die daily' through his ascetic discipline, then he achieved that goal. For the historical Antony passed from memory, and the Athanasian Antony was born, embodying Athanasius' vision of ideal humanity. Athanasius believed that all human beings formed themselves according to 'patterns' (τύποι); his portrait of Antony was his ultimate pattern of the Christian life.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁹ 'As the realization of true humanity, Antony becomes the τύπος of Athanasius' theology' (Dörries, *Vita Antonii als Geschichtsquelle*, 197).

Conclusion

As Athanasius himself understood it, his ascetic programme of self-formation was also a political programme of Church formation. In his view, the individual Christian life was an ascent to heaven past the devil and his demons, whom Christ had defeated in his death and resurrection. The Christian achieved this ascent by placing his or her body under the control of the mind, through a discipline of renunciative practices that Athanasius called 'withdrawal from the world' and 'death'. The result of such practices was the establishment of a 'heavenly commonwealth' on earth, an alternative to the over-indulgent life of feasting that Athanasius saw as characterizing the wider society of Roman Egypt. Even more, individual Christians formed themselves into 'saints' by imitating the behaviour of preceding saints, who lived either in the distant past of the biblical age or just recently in the Egyptian desert. The imitation of diverse saints by numerous individuals produced the church, 'the heavenly commonwealth', a new *πολιτεία*. As Athanasius saw matters, unity and diversity were to characterize the *πολιτεία* both of individuals and of the Church. The Church, he believed, was a single body with a common faith and unifying sacraments, but its members were diverse, manifesting their freedom by pursuing lives of virtue at higher and lower levels of perfection. Likewise the individual Christian was a single self with the goal of physical and moral incorruption, but his or her discipline consisted of various practices associated with the times and seasons of the Church's corporate life. From Athanasius' perspective, the political function of asceticism was captured in his rhetoric of imitation of the saints: by likening themselves to virtuous persons of the past and present, Christians not only formed themselves into saints but also formed the Church as the embodiment of the Christian *πολιτεία*.

But this exposition of Athanasius' thought does not exhaust the *political implications* of Athanasius' ascetic programme. Athanasius spent his career trying to establish a unified and dominant Church in Egypt; in this effort he faced the determined resistance of Melitian and Arian Christians and the more subtle problems posed by the astonishing development of the ascetic movement in its various forms. The commer-

cial and philosophical activities of Alexandrian virgins, the spiritual powers of monks like Paphnutius and Antony, the huge monasteries of the Pachomian federation—all of these things represented challenges to the hierarchical, orthodox, parish-centred church that Athanasius was forming. The bishop's ascetic programme responded to these challenges and to his Melitian and Arian opponents. Athanasius' calls to imitate the saints of the Old Testament by suffering persecution in his behalf robbed the Melitians of their monopoly on self-identification with martyrdom, and his appointment of monks friendly to him as bishops countered Melitian efforts to install their own bishops in vacant sees. Meanwhile, Athanasius' rejection of the academic model of Christianity and his revisions of the rhetoric of imitation represented an attack on the Christian schoolrooms where Arian teachers did their work. As he articulated his ascetic spirituality of renunciation and imitation, Athanasius was shaping an ethos for the new imperial Christianity that would cohere with his particular brand of trinitarian theology and episcopal organization.

Between his contested election to the episcopate of Alexandria in 328 and his first exile in 335–7, Athanasius, if our evidence is accurate, had few direct dealings with ascetic Christians. He did make a tour of Upper Egypt, during which he ignored Bishop Sarapion of Tentyra's request that he ordain Pachomius, who had recently started his monastic federation. Otherwise, however, Athanasius was preoccupied by international struggles with his Arian and Melitian opponents. None the less, his writings from this period show that he had developed a spirituality and theology that would find a place for lay and ascetic Christians in the imperial Church. In his first *Festal Letter*, Athanasius used the Mosaic trumpets from Numbers to explain how Christians, married and celibate, practised diverse disciplines at diverse times and seasons and yet answered a single call from God; he also articulated his understanding of fasting as a process by which the soul brings the body under the control of its will and gains access to special revelatory knowledge from God. The following year Athanasius devoted his *Festal Letter* to the theme of 'withdrawal from the world'; he said that such withdrawal, achieved through practices of renunciation, was necessary for the life of every Christian, not just an ascetic élite. In these early Easter letters, Athanasius developed his ascetic regime for ordinary Christians, one that varied with the rhythms of parish life, directed financial contributions into the bishops' coffers, featured study of the official canon of Scriptures, and emphasized imitation of the saints. Finally, he composed

his two-volume work, *Against the Nations* and *On the Incarnation*, in which he turned away from the contemplative tradition of Alexandrian Christianity and placed control of the body and its passions at the centre of his spirituality. Early in his career, then, Athanasius already possessed a theology that embraced the values of asceticism, yet made room for ordinary Christians.

By the time Athanasius returned to Alexandria from his first exile in 337, the terms of his political struggle were clear in his mind. In his (tenth) *Festal Letter* for Easter 338, Athanasius openly attacked his opponents as 'Ariomaniacs' for the first time, and the 'Arian' heresy as a concept came into shape.¹ Also in this letter Athanasius first presented his exegesis of the Parable of the Sower (Matt. 13: 1-8), in which he adduced the presence of both married and celibate Christians in the Church as an example of the 'various and rich' produce resulting from the sown Word of God. 'Perfect' Christians, he declared, did not manifest their advance in the Christian life by their deeper understanding of the Scriptures, but by their willingness to endure affliction for the Athanasian party. Here was yet another transformation of the Alexandrian spiritual tradition, in which academic study of the Scriptures had held the central role. Shortly after writing this epistle, in the spring of 339, the arrival of a competing bishop of Alexandria, Gregory of Cappadocia, forced Athanasius to flee into exile a second time. In the ensuing riots, virgins and male ascetics on both sides of the conflict suffered violence and abuse. It is likely that shortly before this crisis Athanasius wrote his first *Letter to Virgins*. In this letter, Athanasius condemned Arian christology and told Alexandrian virgins who were attracted to Arian study circles to model themselves not after a male teacher or even the Word of God, but after the Virgin Mary, a silent, secluded, and submissive girl. Athanasius hoped to neutralize in this way the support that his opponents received from numerous virgins. The bishop also criticized the ascetic theology of Hieracas, who had formed a Christian community of celibate men and women outside Leontopolis. Unlike Hieracas, who appeared to believe that human beings possessed varying natures that determined whether they could follow the gospel's requirement of celibacy, Athanasius said that all human beings shared a single nature that was capable of doing good; he told the Alexandrian virgins that their commitment to celibacy was not the only legitimate response to Christ's message, but a free choice of a

¹ Charles Kannengiesser, 'La Témoignage des lettres festales de S. Athanase sur la date de l'apologie *Contra les païens*, *Sur l'incarnation du Verbe*', *RSR* 52 (1964), 91-100.

higher good. Virgins, he said, did not possess a better nature than married women did; in fact, virgins were themselves wives, 'brides of Christ', and so should behave in the obedient fashion of good wives. It is tantalizing to think that the exiled Athanasius brought the Greek original of this letter with him when he moved from Rome to Milan in May 342. Some thirty years later Bishop Ambrose of Milan used a copy of Athanasius' letter when he wrote his influential book, *On Virgins*;² thus, Athanasius' ideas about proper virginity, like his christological doctrines, passed into the literature of the Western Church, while in Egypt his letter survived only in Coptic.

In 346 Athanasius returned in triumph to Alexandria to begin ten years of uninterrupted possession of his see; when he arrived, he found an Egypt much transformed by the astounding development of desert monasticism. The Pachomian federation in Upper Egypt was no longer a small experiment in communal living, but a huge enterprise consisting of no fewer than ten monasteries for men and women. Only months before Athanasius' return, in May 346, Pachomius had died, and the federation entered a difficult period under the uncertain leadership of Horsisius. Horsisius was forced to resign in 350; Theodore took control of the monasteries and began to formalize the federation's internal structures and its external relations with the wider Church. Connections between monks and bishops were forming in northern Egypt as well. The monastic counsellor Ammoun sought Bishop Athanasius' advice on the subject of nocturnal emissions; the bishop's confident response made clear that, while guides like Ammoun had their place, even ascetic practices belonged under the bishop's authority. Still other monks became bishops at Athanasius' encouragement. One of Athanasius' strongest allies was Bishop Serapion of Thmuis, a former leader of a monastic community, who in 353 led a delegation in behalf of the Alexandrian patriarch to the Emperor Constantius II. Some monks resisted the episcopal office, which they believed offered too many opportunities for sin. When the monk Dracontius refused to accept appointment as bishop of Hermopolis Parva for this reason, Athanasius denounced what he saw as irresponsible 'withdrawal' from the responsibilities of a Christian. Baptism, he said, irrevocably tied monks to the episcopate; and all Christians would be judged not by their 'position' in the desert or world, but by their 'action' in whatever circumstances God called them. For the rest of the century, prominent monks followed

² David Brakke, 'The Authenticity of the Ascetic Athanasiana', *Or.* 63 (1994), 17-56, at 20-1.

Dracontius as bishops of Hermopolis Parva, which became a link between the Alexandrian episcopate and the Nitrian desert. Meanwhile, Athanasius must have become aware of the activities of such monks as Paphnutius and Antony, who attracted numerous followers by their insight into spiritual development and by their ability to cure diseases, to expel demons, and even to grant forgiveness of sins from God. What would become of episcopal power if prosperous, educated lay people turned to monastic patrons for their religious guidance and gave their money, not to the parish church, but to monks?

The political storm-clouds that had been gathering over Athanasius' head for years finally burst in 356-7, when the imperial government delivered the church buildings in Alexandria to the Arians, installed George of Cappadocia as patriarch, and forced Athanasius to flee into hiding. Some Athanasian partisans, including Serapion of Thmuis, attributed these events to the recent death of Antony, who was no longer available to turn back God's wrath through his prayers. While supporters of Athanasius, including Alexandrian virgins like Eudemonis, suffered terribly, Athanasius himself appears to have enjoyed some security, hiding among his supporters in the desert and city. He took the opportunity to shift his ascetic programme into a higher gear. He gave his theme of imitation an even more political cast: in a pamphlet defending his flight into hiding, Athanasius portrayed himself as an exemplary imitator of biblical models and as a paradigmatic renouncer of the world; and in his 29th *Festal Letter*, Athanasius told his beleaguered followers that by their sufferings they imitated the persecuted 'saints' of the Old Testament. Meanwhile, the bishop launched a vigorous campaign of propaganda designed to rally monks to his side: he criticized Arian theology, told how Arius died a grisly death outside the Church, and denounced monks who offered hospitality to Arian sympathizers. Finally, Athanasius fused his own picture of the ideal monk with what he had learned about the deceased Antony and produced the *Life of Antony*; in this book he criticized the academic and patronal models of ascetic authority and instead made Antony a pattern for moral imitation. Antony's life played out the drama of heavenward ascent past weakened demonic powers that Athanasius had constructed in his early works and the *Festal Letters*. The *Life of Antony* was the crowning achievement of Athanasius' effort to articulate an asceticism that cohered with his political goals.

Athanasius' return to Alexandria in 362 did not spell the end of the patriarch's struggles, although his remaining two exiles in 362-3 and

365-6 were only minor annoyances. In the 360s Athanasius twice felt it necessary to intervene in the affairs of the massive Pachomian monastic federation, first reconciling the estranged leaders Horsisius and Theodore and then securing Horsisius' position as sole leader after Theodore's death. In the last years of the decade, Athanasius had to devote four *Festal Letters* (367-70) to problems within the Egyptian Church. In 367 the bishop wrote his famous letter on the canon of Scripture; here his campaign against academic Christianity reached its climax as he thundered against all human teachers, ridiculed the use of academic pedigrees, pronounced original human thought to be evil and dead, and declared that Christ alone was the Teacher of Christians and that his teachings were found only in Athanasius' canonical Bible. The letter of the following year reveals that Melitian activities remained a problem, as opponents of Athanasius had borrowed the patriarch's practice of appointing monks as bishops and priests. Possibly it was during these later years that Athanasius wrote his second *Letter to Virgins*, in which he expressed ambivalence about a pilgrimage that some Alexandrian virgins had made to the Holy Land and condemned celibate men and women who lived together in a 'spiritual marriage'. In this letter, themes emerge that would appear later in the writings of other clerical males (Gregory Nazianzus, John Chrysostom, and Jerome) to female ascetic Christians. In 373 Athanasius died.

Although problems persisted into the last years of his life, Athanasius still achieved great success in what he had set out to do: form a unified and dominant Church in Egypt, one hierarchical and episcopal in structure, uniform in theology, and inclusive of ascetic and ordinary Christians. Athanasius has been praised by modern students for uniting the sophisticated, philosophical Christianity of Hellenistic Alexandria with the more popular, action-orientated Christianity of Coptic Egypt; his enthusiastic embrace of desert monasticism is often seen as a primary means by which Athanasius accomplished this task. But despite his endorsement of the desert life, Athanasius remained a man of the city, a bishop whose power rested on a hierarchical structure of offices and a wide-ranging network of spiritual and financial patronage. The desert fathers came to support him solidly, but his principal constituency remained the people of the parish churches and their priests and bishops. We have seen evidence that Athanasius' ascetic programme of self-formation was aimed particularly at Christians of at least a moderate level of wealth and education: virgins who studied the Scriptures, owned slaves, and could afford to make pilgrimages to Palestine; a monastic

community that could finance a parish church; monks for whom the divestment of their money and real estate was the principal task in their withdrawal from the world; married Christians, lay and ordained, whose discipline required the renunciation of 'feasting', frequent contributions to the Church's welfare system, and reading of the Scriptures. This élite stratum of society was present both in Alexandria and in the cities and villages of Upper Egypt, and it was unified by commercial interdependence and a shared Hellenistic culture. These were the Egyptians whose adherence to the Alexandrian episcopal hierarchy Athanasius' ascetic programme chiefly sought to ensure; here was the unification that his ascetic policies principally achieved. The gap between Greeks and Copts may actually have been forced open by the devastating conflicts over 'Origenism', which took place a quarter of a century after Athanasius' death.³

³ See now Elizabeth A. Clark, *The Origenist Controversy* (Princeton, NJ, 1992), esp. 43-84, 105-21, 151-7.

APPENDIX

Select Ascetic and Pastoral Writings of Athanasius

Most of the writings of Athanasius are available in English translation in Archibald Robertson (ed.), *Select Writings and Letters of Athanasius, Bishop of Alexandria* (NPNF, 2nd ser. 4; repr. Edinburgh, 1987). Additional English translations are listed in the Bibliography. Some of the Athanasian sources used in this book have not previously been translated into English. A selection of these sources, the ones that figure most prominently in the argument of this book, are therefore provided in translation in this Appendix. They are the following:

- A. *First Letter to Virgins*, preserved in Coptic;
- B. *Second Letter to Virgins*, preserved in Syriac;
- C. *On Virginity*, preserved in Syriac and Armenian;
- D. *On Sickness and Health*, preserved in Greek;
- E. *Fragments on the Moral Life*, preserved in Coptic;
- F. *Festal Letters* 24 (2), 29, 39, and 40, preserved in Coptic, Syriac, and Greek.

The attribution to Athanasius of the writings translated in sections A–E is a matter of scholarly debate. I have argued for their authenticity in my ‘The Authenticity of the Ascetic Athanasiana’, *Or.* 63 (1994), 17–56.

First Letter to Virgins

This translation from the Coptic is based on the text edited by Lefort.¹ The section divisions, their numbers, and the content headings have been added by myself and have no basis in the ancient manuscript.

[LETTER TO THE VIRGINS BY ATHANASIUS OF ALEXANDRIA]²

[*The beginning of the text is lost.*]

Marriage vs. virginity

1. [' . . . it is good for me to cleave to the Lord] and to place my hope in God' (Ps. 72 (73): 28), and 'To whom shall we go? You have words of eternal life' (John 6: 68). Thus, if human marriage has this law, which is the written word, 'What God has joined together let no person separate' (Matt. 19: 6), how much more, if the Word joins with the virgins, it is necessary for the union of this sort to be indivisible and immortal! For truly the vow of virginity is so great—but all the more when it was God who made it exist on earth—that the purity of the body of the great Elijah the prophet was not overcome by fire, but rather he was taken up by a fiery chariot (2 Kgs. 2: 11). And Elisha's body too received grace after the prayer that he made to God so that he thus raised up the woman's son from the dead (2 Kgs. 4: 32–7).

2. Indeed, virtue of this sort (marriage) belongs to the nature of humanity, for each of the deeds that people do in accordance with the law has the law testifying in its behalf and recommending it as having fulfilled its precept and its intention. And further, people who neglect the law have in it their accusation and condemnation that they have neglected it. But virginity has ascended higher and has no law; rather, it has transcended it (the law). It has its testimony in and of itself. Its honour as well comes from the Word.

3. Moreover, human nature, aware of the rib that was taken from Adam for a woman, seeks to join her with him, so that on account of her 'the man will leave his father and his mother and cleave to his wife, and the two become one flesh'

¹ L. Th. Lefort, *S. Athanase: Lettres festales et pastorales en-copte* (Louvain, 1955), 73–99.

² The manuscript's title and attribution have been lost in a lacuna. This title is restored from Ephraem of Antioch (bishop 527–45), as quoted by Photius in the 9th cent. (*Bib.* 229 (PG 103. 996c)).

(Gen. 2: 24). But virginity, having surpassed human nature and imitating the angels, hastens and endeavours to cleave to the Lord, so that, as the Apostle said, they might 'become one spirit with him' (2 Cor. 6: 17) and they too might always say: 'Through fear of you, we have conceived and gone into labour and given birth to a saving spirit; we have begotten children upon the earth' (Isa. 26: 17-18). For just as people die, so too their offspring die. Likewise, from this kind of blessed union, true and immortal thoughts come forth, bearing salvation.

The history of virginity

4. For on this account nothing has ever been heard among the Greeks or the non-Greeks about virginity, nor has it ever been possible for such virtue to exist among them. Indeed, they are completely ignorant of God, who has given grace to those who believe in him righteously. Among those called Pythagoreans, many women have been prophesying priestesses, exercising self-control so as not to speak, but none of them has truly practised virginity. Rather, those among them who say that they are in virginity have been discovered to be pregnant by the tyrant of that time. Thus, one of them was able to cut off her own tongue so that we could not force her to reveal her mysteries, but she was later found to be pregnant, because she was unable to be a virgin. Therefore, those women are admired because they control themselves so as not to speak, but they are put to shame because they were not able to maintain their virginity.

5. There are many priestly women among the Egyptians, but it has not been written about a single one that she was a virgin. If the devil, taking forms and being deceitful, has compelled some of the Greeks to feign virginity—just as the only ones called virgins among the Romans are those who belong to her who is called Pallas, a virgin by their reckoning—then their virginity is not genuine. For how can virginity exist among the Greeks, whom the mysteries of Aphrodite, whose origin came from prostitution, defile? Indeed, there is no marriage among them without the woman being given to the groom having first committed adultery. And the groom does not discover his bride to be a virgin when he receives her; rather, he receives her from adultery, and he does not know whether the child that is born is his seed. Indeed, as for her who is called the great Hecate, whom they worship, her mysteries are performed by effeminate men, and their adulteries and their impurity of another kind make clear that there is no sign of virginity among them. Further, the others who are called virgins who belong to Athena are not really virgins, but (virgins only) with respect to acquiring possessions and managing what is theirs. Hence, their hypocrisy remains, because after some time they go to drunken dinner parties and give themselves to great wantonness with men. For this is to them a great honour for their priesthood, just as the things that they do in secret are shameful even to say. After a time, they are permitted to sit with men openly, and, more-

over, in place of those (priestesses) other women are taken in to perform this type of 'service'.

6. What kind of virginity exists hypocritically for a time and later gets married? Or what kind of virtue is there in virginity when it exists for some without their free will, but rather they have others to watch over them, who teach them by force to choose for themselves something against their will? In this way they are compelled forcibly by others. How indeed can they at all be virgins when they have not first prepared and strengthened their heart for it inasmuch as thoughts come forth from the heart as from a spring and reveal the intention behind the deeds? For these women pretend on the outside that they consider themselves virgins, but in their heart they fantasize and take shape in evil, fantasizing in it that they do not remain in virginity. But just like their idols, which they falsely call gods, so too the virginity they say exists among them is false. Hence, previously, in times gone by, as I have said, it was not heard that a vow like this existed among the Greeks or the non-Greeks; rather, even their hypocrisy was obvious.

7. But we have heard about virginity existing among the people who lived under the law and the prophets, because they were prophesying since that time about the Lord and because the shadow of his coming was at work. But likewise the virtue of virginity was not great at that time; rather, good like this was scarcely testified to because it existed in so few people. Since the great Elijah was a virgin, he was like an angel, for we have found nothing about him nor has anyone written that he begot children or ever got married. So too the God-loving Elisha; and also Jeremiah, whom he (God) knew before he was made and who was consecrated before he came forth from the womb (Jer. 1: 5); and also he who is great among those born of women, John the Baptist (Matt. 11: 11); and some others.

8. But when the Lord came into the world, having taken flesh from a virgin and become human, at that time what used to be difficult became easy for people, and what was impossible became possible. What formerly was not abundant is now seen to be abundant and spread out, as is fitting. For from . . .

[pages missing]

Mary's perpetual virginity

9. . . . dead inside, and they doubt him who arose, and laziness comes to our faith concerning the resurrection. Therefore, because the body of Lazarus was lying among many, he did not say, 'Let him who is dead arise', lest every one of the bodies lying everywhere hear the voice of the life-giving resurrection and arise before their time had come and before the Saviour had abolished in us death and destruction (cf. 2 Tim. 1: 10). Rather, he called his name, saying, 'Lazarus, come forth' (John 11: 43), so that only he who was called would hear and the dead man

would come forth alive. Perhaps likewise the Lord's body lay alone in a tomb, so that when he alone arose, he might [reveal] the resurrection. Moreover, thus his body alone came from Mary: so that when he alone came forth from the virgin, it might be believed that it was the body of God.

10. The Saviour is instructing us about this plainly when he teaches that his mother Mary remained in virginity forever. For when he ascended the cross, he gave his mother to John (John 19: 26-7). For he said to her, 'Behold, your son', and he said to the disciple, 'Behold, your mother.' From that day the disciple took her into his house. By saying this he is instructing us that Mary did not bear another child except the Saviour alone. If she had had other children, the Saviour would not have abandoned them and given her to other people, nor would she have been mother to other people: she would not have [abandoned her own children] and chosen for herself strangers to live with, knowing that it is not fitting for her to abandon her husband and her children. Rather, inasmuch as she was a virgin and had served him as a mother, he gives her to his disciple as mother, although she is not his mother, on account of the great purity of her intelligence and the undefiled character of her virginity.

11. [There are people who] say lawless [words] against the bearer of God, saying that she got married, in order to create an excuse for themselves, just like the Pharisees, to increase the pleasures of marriage, lest virginity become manifest and put to shame their profitable choice. But Mary, the bearer of God, remains a virgin [so that she might be a pattern for] everyone coming after her. If a woman desires to remain a virgin and bride of Christ, she can look to her (Mary's) life and imitate it, and the edification of her (Mary's) destiny will suffice for establishing her own virginity.

Mary the image of virginity

12. Therefore, let the life of Mary, the bearer of God, be for all of you, as it is written, an [image and likeness of] her virginity. For it is best for you to recognize yourselves in her as in a mirror and so govern yourselves. Complete the good deeds you have forgotten, and increase the things you have done well, so that your life too might serve for a time as an image for others; continually look to the instruction of others.

13. Thus, Mary was a holy virgin, having the disposition of her soul balanced and doubly increasing. For she desired good works, doing what is proper, having true thoughts in faith and purity. And she did not desire to be seen by people; rather, she prayed that God would be her judge. Nor did she have an eagerness to leave her house, nor was she at all acquainted with the streets; rather, she remained in her house being calm, imitating the fly in honey. She virtuously spent the excess of her manual labour on the poor. And she did not acquire eagerness to look out the window, rather to look at the Scriptures. And she would pray to God privately, taking care about these two things: that she not let

evil thoughts dwell in her heart, and also that she not acquire curiosity or learn hardness of heart. And she did not permit anyone near her body unless it was covered, and she controlled her anger and extinguished the wrath in her inmost thoughts. Her words were calm; her voice, moderate; she did not cry out. And, being glad in her heart, she did not slander anyone, nor did she willingly listen to slander. She did not grow weary in her heart or become envious in her soul. She was not a braggart, but completely humble. There was no evil in her heart nor contentiousness with those related to her, except concerning the civic life. Straining forward daily, she made progress (cf. Phil. 3: 13). When she first arose, she strove that her works might be new, beyond what she had already done. She forgot her good works and her merciful deeds: she did them secretly. But she remembered the Lord, struggling to add to what she had done before, and the works of this age she removed from her heart. And she was not anxious about death; rather, she grieved and sighed daily that she had not yet entered the gates of heaven.

14. The desire of the belly did not overcome her, only up to the measure of the body's necessity. For she ate and drank, not luxuriously, but so that she might not neglect her body and it die contrary to its time. Moreover, she did not sleep beyond measure, but so that the body alone might rest, and afterwards she would be awake for her work and the Scriptures. Fasting was as gladsome for her as feasting is for other people. Instead of visible bread, she flourished all the more on the words of truth. Instead of wine, she had the teachings of the Saviour, and she took more pleasure in the latter than in the former, so that she too received the profitable teachings and said, 'Your breasts, my brother, are better than wine' (S. of S. 1: 2).

15. And she did not come and go, but only as was necessary for her to go to the temple. For she did not neglect it (the temple); rather, she went with her parents, walking in a good manner, reverent in her dress and in the gaze of her eyes as well, so that those who saw her thought that she had someone watching over her, making her remember and edifying her in everything she would do. For the good thought that she acquired for herself was her guardian and teacher, that which she acquired from the beginning through her prayers. For she did not gaze at external things with her eyes, nor was she ever heard crying out. Rather, when she prayed, her parents and the other women with her were amazed at her. For they did not hear her voice, but from the movement of her lips they saw her continuing and perceived that they were movements of holy inner thoughts.

16. And her parents, when they saw these things, gave thanks to God, not only because he had given to them a daughter, but because he had given them a blessing like this for them to have. And she, for her part, knew what was fitting: first she would pray to God, and afterwards she would submit to her parents. But as for fighting with her father or mother, she considered it an abomination to God. And she had this desire before her eyes: to submit to her parents more than like a slave.

17. And as for her being familiar with a male slave or with any other male, it is superfluous to speak, for she was a stranger to them in this way, so that she did not endure their voice. And they were distant from her and did not become acquainted with her, [except for her form]. And it is the gospel that bears witness to this saying: for when the archangel Gabriel was sent to her—and it was as a man that he came to her because he had assumed human nature—he spoke with her, saying: 'Greetings, Mary, O favoured one, the Lord is with you!' (Luke 1: 28) And the girl, when she heard that she was being addressed by a male voice, immediately became very disturbed because she was not familiar with the male voice. And Mary took counsel in the purity of her intellect whether to flee or to die until he who was speaking to her took her fear from her by revealing to her his name, saying, 'Do not fear, Mary! It is I, Gabriel!' (Luke 1: 30) Then after this she remained and took courage, greeting him, because she knew that the words of archangels addressed to virgins are true. This is the image of virginity, for holy Mary was like this. Let her who wishes to be a virgin look to her, for on account of things like this the Word chose her so that he might receive this flesh through her and become human for our sake.

Marriage vs. virginity

18. Moreover, perhaps Paul learned about her lifestyle, for when he had received a pattern in her, he brought forth this opinion about virginity. Therefore, he wrote to the Corinthians, saying: 'Concerning the virgins I have no command of the Lord, but I offer an opinion as one who by the Lord's mercy is trustworthy' (1 Cor. 7: 25). And I think that you too have understood this well, because it was said carefully, especially if you will remember what we said about virginity being beyond human nature, because in Mary its image has appeared. For it was not commanded by the law to do, so that we would not think that marriage, which is in accordance with nature, were contrary to the law or acting as a constraint, hindering people from virginity, and so that the person who was not a virgin would not be condemned as having not performed a commandment. Indeed, Paul himself did not learn about it (virginity) through the law, but rather through the way of life of Mary, and he commanded these things as I have already said. Hence, he gave it to the free will of those who desire it so that its virtue might be for those who have chosen it for themselves. For marriage has its commandment through the law inasmuch as its opposite, adultery, brings death (cf. Lev. 20: 10; Deut. 22: 22). But virginity has no law. In fact, the person who has not become a virgin can be pious in marriage.

19. Marriage is good, but it is better if you are a virgin (cf. 1 Cor. 7: 38). It is blessed when a young man governs his household and begets children, as the Apostle says (1 Tim. 3: 12). But it is more blessed to be a virgin and to remain a bride of Christ, just as he has also written (1 Cor. 7: 40). And further, marriage is in accordance with nature, as we have already said, but virginity surpasses

human nature, for it is the image of angelic purity. On this account the law restricts marriage: it commands, sets times, and establishes measures concerning it, so that no one will transgress nature and sin. But virginity persuades people to itself and urges them by counsel and advice. For Paul says in this fashion, 'I offer an opinion on this, not so that I might set a trap for you, but for good order and your good devotion to the Lord without anxiety' (1 Cor. 7: 25, 35), so that no one will act as though he was forced to do something, then despair and become a transgressor and finally an unbeliever. For the commandments of God agree with one another. So if the virgin is exceptional and first among them, yet marriage follows after her and has its own boast. And the virgin makes manifest the vow of her intention to be a whole burnt-offering, but marriage makes manifest its practice in the law and the leisure it takes for prayer many times, as Paul said to married people (1 Cor. 7: 5). Therefore, marriage is not rejected, and moreover virginity is greater with God.

20. But someone will say this: 'Why did the same seed produce a hundredfold and sixty and thirty? Is it not the Word who is the sower?' (Matt. 13: 3-8) The reason for the hundredfold, the sixty, and the thirty, why they differ from one another, is that human beings have chosen for themselves. We will all bear fruit to the Lord who sowed. Moreover, it is the same Lord who says to the virgin, 'Be set over ten cities,' and to the married woman, 'Be set over five cities (Luke 19: 17-19). There are many places in the house of my Father (John 14: 2).' But it is a single age that exists, the kingdom of heaven: everyone whose actions are according to the law and who are pure in faith will be found there. But each one will receive the crown of victory according to how well he carried out the way of life belonging to his vow: even if one star differs from another in glory, it is nevertheless the same sky in which the stars are and which contains them (1 Cor. 15: 41).

21. Oh, how many virgins Mary will meet! And how she will embrace them and lead them to the Lord! How much joy there will be among the angels when they see the image of their purity in the bodies of the virgins! How the Lord will commend them to his Father when he sees them, saying, 'All these have become and are like Mary, who is mine!' This is the fruit of the goodness that has come through him to earth. Oh, from how many women Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel, Leah, Susannah, and Elizabeth will come forth! Not to mention the women who have preserved the piety of marriage: how the patriarchs, rejoicing, will receive them, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, testifying in their behalf to the Lord, saying: 'All these have kept your law, and the bed they have not defiled (Heb. 13: 4); rather, just as you commanded, they have completed their lifetime piously!' How Mary will commend her mother! How the angels will beseech in behalf of the parents of these women because their daughters walked in the image of their purity! And next, just like the time at the sea when Miriam walked before the women with a timbrel (Exod. 15: 20), so it will be in the kingdom of heaven. Virginity leads and walks in front, as she is accustomed, with great boldness, and

they all will be a single chorus and a single symphony in the faith, praising God and saying, 'I will go in to the altar of God, to God, delighting in my youth' (Ps. 42 (43): 4), and 'I will offer to you a sacrifice of praise; I will make my vows to the Lord' (Ps. 115: 8-9 (116: 17-18)). And they will hear this: 'Enter into the joy of your master!' (Matt. 25: 21, 23)

Hieracas

22. Therefore, it is possible for you who have received the thought of the prophet to condemn all the evil thoughts of the old heretics and Hieracas, who has . . .

[pages missing]

. . . imitated the hardness of rock because they have neglected their own free will and become rocky places in their form (Matt. 13: 3-8). First they received the word, but later those who first eagerly received the word despaired not on account of nature, but because of persecution and worldly anxiety. For if they belong to the corruptible nature, whether they are rocky places or thorny places, it is required that they should not receive the word at first and certainly not persevere during times of persecution or worldly anxiety; rather, on account of the work of corruptible nature, they should immediately reject the seed as foreign to them. But in fact they *did* receive it and so reveal that they are persons capable of receiving the good. And so if they have rejected the word because of persecution, it is clear that they have not rejected it because of nature, but rather because of negligence and worldly desire, the things on account of which they became negligent, just as Judas the traitor did. For he received the word as he was able, but when he became negligent and began to desire and be greedy, he fell on his face and burst open in his middle (Acts 1: 18). And Phygelos and Hermogenes demonstrated a good free will at first, but finally they withdrew from Paul, having fallen in love with this age (2 Tim. 1: 15).

23. But that which is called 'the good earth' is particularly able to refute their evil way of thinking. If nature has a single kind, why does that earth bear fruit a hundredfold and sixty and thirty? Because it was appropriate for it to produce a hundredfold or to produce sixty or to produce thirty so that the ignorant might have a reason. Now, it produces fruits that differ from one another so as to make manifest the zeal of free will and progress. Wherever there is free will, there is inferiority. And this is nothing other than a revelation that humanity is free and under its own power, having the capacity to choose for itself what it wants. Moreover, the virgin reveals that she exists not by nature, but by free will, when she heeds the opinion of Paul and becomes a bride of Christ, and justly they will receive the crown of purity in heaven. Those who receive these words are trampled upon, for they are cast on the ground.

24. Especially take courage and condemn Hieracas, who says that marriage is evil inasmuch as virginity is good. In this manner it should be said that the sun is evil because the angel is more excellent and that the human being is evil because the sun is more excellent. Listen, and learn that it is absurd to say this, that is, to despise what is lesser because it is not like what is greater than it. For the number sixty is not evil because the number 100 is greater; rather, it is good, but the other is better. For both are from the same seed: one is great; the other is greater. And just as the sun is good, the angel is better, according to the Scriptures. It (the sun) is in travail and is crying out, looking for the redemption of the children of God (Rom. 8: 21-3), but the angels are looking into the face of the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ (Matt. 18: 10). Likewise, the virgin is better, for no one will deny it, although marriage is allowed by everyone.

25. Now where has Hieracas found this saying of his? What scripture has he read that says these things? It is good for him to be a school of thought: if he speaks such myths by the wisdom of the Greeks, he is foreign to our faith. Moreover, he is lying, for virginity of this sort is not known among them, as I have already said; rather, marriages of their false gods are what their poets narrate. If he hypocritically says, 'I am a Christian,' and thinks that the Scripture is inspired by God, how can he not desire to be burned, as it is written (2 Thess. 1: 8), since he sees God making the woman and Adam (Gen. 2: 22-4), legislating concerning marriage, and blessing the people lest there be barren and childless women among them (Exod. 23: 26)? What does he do when he sees the marriages of the patriarchs and the rest of the saints? What will this uneducated man say about these things? With what eyes will he gaze upon the resting place which is the bosom of his fathers, that is, these people (the patriarchs and saints)? Especially Abraham, whose marriage this rogue condemns!

26. But he says that this institution was given to humanity at first, but now it has been taken away and forbidden. When was it taken away and forbidden? Let the worthless man instruct us about this. For indeed in the gospel the angel first informed Zechariah about him who would be born through him, John (Luke 1: 8-23). And he who earlier gave the law through Moses, the Lord, it is he who commends marriage by his presence in Cana of Galilee (John 2: 1-11). Moreover, he prevented the Pharisees, who desired to transgress the law, from divorcing; rather, (he commanded) that each one be satisfied with his wife piously (Matt. 19: 3-9). And when he spoke about virginity, he taught about it off to the side, because no one could bear it, and said, 'There are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven' (Matt. 19: 10-12). And here the Lord was not commanding that people become virgins by force of law, but rather giving it to the free will of those who desire it. Therefore, marriage did not cease, as the birth of John instructs us, and the marriage in Cana was not hindered, as the Lord commanded. Where does the lawless man get these ideas? Where has he ever become acquainted with virginity?

27. He condemns the law, saying: 'I have read the epistle that Paul wrote to

the Corinthians, in which he wrote about virginity, but about married people (he wrote), "The time is short," and then, "Let those who have wives live like those who have none" (1 Cor. 7: 29). But it is clear that Paul has not been well understood. For if he had said, 'Let not those who have (wives) abandon them', that would have truly been a prohibition. But he said, 'Let them live like those who have none'; that is, let them not continually make use of the institution, but rather refrain for a time for prayer, lest they end the marriage (1 Cor. 7: 5). For this reason he said this. Moreover, he commanded this as well: 'Are you bound to a wife? Do not seek to be free. Are you free from a wife? Do not seek a wife' (1 Cor. 7: 27). Furthermore, he says, 'I want the young women to marry, to produce children, and to govern their households' (1 Tim. 5: 14). And concerning virginity he tells us: 'Those who are forbidding marriage and abstaining from food are heretics and apostates' (1 Tim. 4: 3). Again, the saint writes these things so that the measure of virginity's great virtue might be according to free will and desire, saying, 'He who gives his daughter in marriage does well, but he who does not give her does better', and, 'The virgin is blessed when she remains like this in my opinion' (1 Cor. 7: 38-40). For she has lack of anxiety, purity, and confirmation like Mary, so that she too need not be anxious about others, but rather stand before the Lord with unceasing prayers.

28. Now let Hieracas be cast out, with all the other heretics as well, and let him be cast out before everyone as a defiled enemy, but especially from you, holy virgins. For this man does not disparage honourable marriage on account of your elevated and true way of life, but on account of flattery, because he desires to trap the souls of the simple-minded so that, on account of virginity, he might make enemies of those whom it is inappropriate to suspect, so that he might become like one who does what he wants surreptitiously, just like the brother of these people, Judas the traitor. For he was a thief, pretending to care about the poor and finding fault with the woman who anointed the Lord with ointment, saying, 'This could have been sold for 300 denarii and given to the poor.' But he did not say this, said the evangelist, because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief and wanted to put them (the denarii) into the case so that he could steal them (John 12: 1-8). For this reason he handed over his (Jesus') life for thirty pieces of silver (Matt. 26: 14-16). So too Hieracas does not care about virginity when he condemns marriage; rather, he does it so that he might take away the value of marriage lest anyone think that he practises what he condemns hypocritically.

29. He does not know into what great impiety he has fallen in his hypocrisy. If he condemns marriage, it is necessary for him to condemn the hundredfold fruit, that is, your way of life, and then fall into the sin of godlessness. For just as the fruit of that which produced hundredfold, sixty, and thirty belongs to the same seed, so the Lord is one who has legislated concerning marriage and speaks symbolically about virginity, so that the one who condemns one of them does nothing other than commit impiety against the Lord of this twofold grace.

Therefore, these people are like wolves in their wickedness, destroying the vineyard, and when they are caught, they are disgraced (cf. S. of S. 2: 15).

30. And what is appropriate for you to do except to leave your bridal chamber swept clean of every evil thought of the heretics and put in order for heaven? Your bridal chamber and vineyard, which you have now, are the knowledge of virginity and your free will in a purity intended for him (the bridegroom). Remain in this purity, and do not pay attention to the foreign teachings or flee the truth at all in confusion, thinking other thoughts. Rather, remain in it and speak daily—even every hour—with your bridegroom, the Word of God, and do not cast his conversation from you. Your conversation with him is prayer and zeal and your vow, and his conversation with you is true thoughts arising in your heart, by which he ignites your zeal and increases in you your love for him. For such are the thoughts that the Sower of Sowers sows in the souls that cling to him, so that you who have seen . . .

[pages missing]

The virgin's bridegroom and her enemy

31. ' . . . all the trees, new and old, I have kept for you, my brother' (S. of S. 7: 14). When you are like this and pray to him in this way, he will accept you in this way, as your husband, saying, 'Behold, you are beautiful, my beloved! Behold, you are beautiful; your eyes are the eyes of doves. Your cheeks are beautiful like turtledoves; your neck is like a necklace' (S. of S. 1: 15, 10). For he does not desire that his virgins be beautiful in external beauty, but rather (means that) the moderation of the turtledove and the quiet of the dove are fitting for them and that their inner thinking ought to be solemn like a necklace. For such is your bridegroom, who says, 'Know in your heart that I am gentle and pure of heart, and you will find rest for your souls' (cf. Matt. 11: 29). Moreover, it is similarly truly fitting for people who have this lifestyle to be well joined with him in this way, so that they will be able to enter with him when the voice of the bridegroom, who is he, comes, as it is written in the gospel (Matt. 25: 1-13). Therefore, seal yourselves for him in this way, and he will shine upon you.

32. There will be no envy among you, even if the devil tries to sow envy among you. For he who hates the good dares to be filled with envy, when he sees you running on the road to heaven and entering the place that he left. But take courage: your heart is great, preserving you as a virgin for him, so that, even if the devil dares to cast a human thought into you, the Word, on whom you rely, will drive him away and bring him to shame through your prayers, and through him the hope of your vow will be confirmed. Moreover, the angels, the image of whose purity you have, will aid you against the devil. For indeed piety has strengthened the storehouse of the bridal chamber through the Spirit, who indicates this, saying, 'Behold, the bed of Solomon, with sixty mighty men from the

mighty men of Israel surrounding it, each one holding his sword and trained for war' (S. of S. 3: 7-8). Thus he indicates concerning the virgin who relies on the Lord and clings to him that she has a chest that cannot be defeated, as it is said, 'Your neck is like the tower of David built in Talpioth, from which hang one thousand shields and all the arrows of the mighty men' (S. of S. 4: 4). How will the enemy now prevail against these people, over all of whom this multitude of angels is watching, especially the dwelling-places of the virgins? Will he ever be able to lead astray this soul made secure by this crowd of shields and this multitude of the Spirit's arrows? For how many times does he return each day, seeking some way to defeat them? And the multitude of virgins increases all the more, because they push him away. And he performs many tricks against the people who are entering heaven, because he is shameless.

Pay no heed to backsliders :

33. But as for me, it is necessary for me, as your bridegroom's servant, to remind you. I exhort you, do not make your discipline different from others, and when you hear about someone who cares about the seeking of goods, possessions, and worldly transactions, and you learn that they have become negligent and fallen, do not make your virginity like these, but remember your vow. Let your sight be on the Lord, with whom you have made a covenant to remain a virgin. And do not seek the things that bring profit, but let your competitiveness be directed toward the upright person. For indeed a worthy wife does not seek in confusion to know who the evil woman is; rather, she 'worries about how she might please her husband' (1 Cor. 7: 34), and she keeps the bedroom holy (Heb. 13: 4). And just as people who are sailing on the sea do not look to the boats that are sinking and let go of the rudder, but steer their boats firmly, so too everyone who is entering heaven.

34. It is not appropriate for anyone, but especially the virgins who are joined to the Word, to be afraid on account of those who are falling or even more for them to be slothful; rather, they ought to press the body all the more and make it a good servant for them (cf. 1 Cor. 9: 27) so that they might present it to the bridegroom holy and adorned (cf. 2 Cor. 11: 2), with the inner thoughts of the soul testifying in its behalf. Then, as it is written, the Lord will recognize that they are 'holy in their body and soul' (1 Cor. 7: 34). For indeed, when Judas became a traitor, the disciples did not pay attention to him; instead they were watching out for their own selves and remaining beside the Lord. When Hymenaeus and Alexander were drowned, the others sailed with Paul on the sailing course of truth (1 Tim. 1: 19-20). So it is with you: if others are neglectful, you are still making progress, attaining the goal of virginity, looking toward repose in the true light, Christ.

35. The Holy Scriptures are sufficient for us, instructing us so that we might have a perfect goal, the forms of the heavenly way of life, and particularly the life

of Mary, the bearer of God. Moreover, you have a great share in this because you have the signs of her way of life and her image near to you: that is, the women among you who have grown old in virginity inspire with their beauty. For it is possible for you, as Paul said (1 Cor. 11: 1; 2 Thess. 3: 7; Heb. 13: 7), to look to the perfection of the discipline of these women, imitate their way of life and establish virginity.

Bishop Alexander's exhortation to christological orthodoxy

36. I wanted to be joyful in speech and to lift up my voice so that I might be able to write in an elevated style about virginity all the words that are necessary to say about it. Inasmuch as I want and am able to express its elevated quality, it is necessary for me to speak these things to you in accordance with what we heard from our father Alexander, if I can remember them. For when virgins like you came to him and asked to hear some word from him, he saw them boiling in the Spirit and the grace of their prepared heart, and he received them. And the gospels were in his hand, for he was a long-time lover of reading. Then he immediately spoke about their bridegroom—and yours—and brought them to love for the Word and zeal for virginity. For he commanded them to draw near to him, saying to them:

37. 'If your bridegroom were a human being, it would be possible for you to ask your parents or your relatives about him, what kind of person he was, and you would be uncertain about him. For the lives of human beings are diverse. Inasmuch as you have sought the superhuman glory and desire to join yourselves to Christ, it is necessary for you to become acquainted with him not through simply anyone, but through the people who speak about God just as the Scriptures do.

38. 'Now, your bridegroom is God and the only Son of God; he is the Word and Wisdom and Power of the Father (1 Cor. 1: 24). For he and his Father are one, and he is the image of the Father, resembling him in every way. And it is he who exists according to the substance of the Father, not existing for a time but existing with the Father and having no beginning, like the ray of light. By this Word the heavens were established, and by this Wisdom the earth's foundation was set up. For "everything came into existence through him, and without him nothing came into being" (John 1: 3). And the providence of everything exists in him, and all things came into being through him, and everything stood in him. He is the judge of the living and the dead. It is he who appeared to Moses and gave him the Law from the Father. It is he who enters the souls of the saints in every generation, making them friends and prophets of God. And when he came in the prophets, he indicated beforehand concerning his own self through them. He is good and loves human beings. And in the last of the ages, so that he might destroy sin, he came through the virgin Mary; having taken flesh from her, he became human. For this reason it is said about him that he was created although

he is the Creator. But he took the body that he honoured so that he might give that body up to death and so rescue all people who had lived in fear of death since the time of their fall and had been subject to slavery.

39. 'But do not fear at all when you hear that he became human. Indeed, although he became human, he was not lessened by this at all; rather, he is God. And in the flesh he taught us about the things of the flesh; that is, he was hungry, was thirsty, slept, laboured, suffered, wept, died. In his divinity, he revealed himself by raising Lazarus from the dead, who had been dead four days and had begun to stink, and by turning water into wine. And the blind man whom he received from his mother, he made him see. He cleansed the lepers. He knew the thoughts of people. He rebuked the sea and walked upon it. For such things are not revealing now that he is a human being, but they are teaching us that he is God. For just as he does these things (of the flesh) and instructs us that it is human flesh that he bears, so too he does these miracles and reveals that he is God and the Son of God.

40. 'It is he whom you wanted to make your bridegroom. He is your brother, and he is your bridegroom, and he is your neighbour. Oh, daughters of Jerusalem, you will no longer be called by the name of your parents; rather, because you have joined yourselves with him, you will be called by everyone "daughters of Jerusalem" (Luke 23: 28). And if it used to be impossible for a human being to join with God, he has made it possible by having become human. For he is your brother, as it is written and as I said earlier. "He is radiant and he is ruddy" (S. of S. 5: 10): he is radiant because he is the Word and the true light that lives in everyone, but he is ruddy on account of the flesh that he bore for our sake. But in a myriad of ways it is clear that he lived and that his birth was not like that of any human being. For he took flesh from a virgin alone, having become human so that in this way you too might be with him and he might be for you brother and bridegroom.

41. 'Now, therefore, it is he to whom you cling, beside whom you sleep, with whom you watch, and for whom you are at leisure. He is sufficient for you in every way, and so do not give yourself to another. For he is sufficient for hearing you when you pray, healing you when you are sick, and moreover rescuing you from those who plot against you and saving you when you are in danger. Indeed, Peter would have gone down into the depths, but it was he who helped him (Matt. 14: 28-33) and he who cast the devil behind when he wanted to rebuke the disciples (Matt. 8: 32-3). For you have him in your heart, and so you will not stumble in your inner thoughts. For you have a light concerning his commandments, and you do them, and so you will inherit blessedness in the kingdom of heaven.

42. 'But watch out, O my daughters: let no one lie and speak against your bridegroom in your presence, envying your noble and holy union and the thinking about him that you have, desiring to separate you from his love. Furthermore, if someone speaks against and slanders you, do not fear at all. For

he knows everything before it happens, and he does not need anyone to inform him about human beings, for he knows what is in their hearts (John 2: 25; 16: 30). But beware of those who are coming to you lest anyone, desiring to destroy your heart, speak against your bridegroom, lying and saying: "The Word of God is created, and he came into being from things that do not exist, and before he was begotten he was not." And: "He too came into being by the will of God as one among the rest." And: "Christ is not true God but rather shared (in divinity) like things that have come into existence and was called 'God'." And: "He is not the Word that was with the Father, but someone else, and was called 'Word' as a spokesman." And: "He is foreign to the substance of the Father and is one of the creatures." Beware, my daughters, for these are not the words of truth; rather, they belong to the deceitful people who falsely say against the noble one that he is a creature and make him foreign to the substance of the Father in order to deceive you, his brides. Therefore, when they mock, they bring forward the works of his humanity, saying: "He died." And: "He asked about something because he did not know it." And: "He was disturbed by death and was afraid. How is he God when he does such things?"

43. 'I exhort you: be sober. Such inferiorities do not belong to his divinity, but to the flesh that he bore. For if he had abstained from these acts, people would not have believed that it was a body that he was wearing. Moreover, if he had not done the other things (miracles), people would not have believed that he was God in a body. But he did these things (miracles), and the other deeds he did not abstain from, so that people would believe two things: that the Word became flesh, and that he was God in a body. Therefore, if they now speak against the bridegroom on the basis of the acts of the humanity of the flesh he was wearing, why are they not amazed by the deeds of his divinity? But these activities belong to the deceitful person who is stealing the truth and putting forth the statements he wants in order to deceive the simple folk. For they talk about the works of the Lord's humanity because they envy the vow of virginity and do not recognize God's love for humanity in it. If the Word had not become flesh, how would you now be joined with him and cling to him? But when the Lord bore the body of humanity, the body became acceptable to the Word. Therefore, you have now become virgins and brides of Christ.'

44. By saying these things to the virgins, the elder strengthened them. And because he saw that they wanted to hear about the way of life of the saints and how they might please their bridegroom Christ, he accepted their zeal and glorified the Lord, who made his love work in human beings for him, and he spoke to them a little about this:

45. 'For already', he said, 'you have nourishment through your parents, from whom you have received the seeds of the desire for virtue. For because they have nourished you well, the bridegroom has found you and spoken to your heart. He persuaded you to remain a virgin for him. Moreover, you likewise have the way of life of Mary as a pattern and image of the heavenly life.'

The Beatitudes of the Saviour and the Proverbs of Solomon

46. The way of life that he talked about I have remembered, and I have written a little about it to you earlier. But if you now desire to remember something from the elder, I myself, learn the things that are proper to do from the gospel, and from Proverbs learn what is improper to do. For the things that the Saviour commanded are the teachings of salvation and 'the words of eternal life' (John 6: 68). But the things that Solomon writes about the evil woman he wrote in order that there might be worthy women.

47. Now, these are the things that the Lord said: mercy, love for the poor, humility, purity of heart, a peacemaking heart, daily confession, that we should acquire our desire and wish for the age to come, and that we should reckon the endurance of the afflictions of life and the external persecutions that come upon us as joy and refreshment, and to endure all things rather than despair or deny the truth, not to grieve over afflictions but to rejoice even more over them. For all these things and for each of these deeds that we have spoken of there is a written beatitude given by the Saviour.

48. And as for the things that Solomon wrote about the evil woman (cf. Prov. 9: 13), these are the things that he forbade: a corrupt heart, walking in a way that is not upright, a pattern of meddling, a pleasure-loving heart . . .

[pages missing]

Praise of virginity

49. . . . ineffable.

O virginity, fruit-bearing tree and sweetness without regret!

O virginity, paradise and house of the Almighty!

O virginity, the glory of God and honour of the archangels!³ Your thoughts are beautiful, and your moderate way of life is great, and great are the promises you will inherit. Conduct your civic life with assurance, and strive powerfully. Ascend to the heights quietly, and make firm your steps. Do not be disheartened in your running nor be small of heart with time nor be doubtful concerning what will be. Take leave from the world, and close yourself off from it and its rest. Abandon weakness, and love your God. Bind yourself with truth as with a belt, and be prepared for temptation. Do not delay in prayer. Strengthen your soul, and acquire for yourself unshakeable inner thoughts. Be strong in intelligence, and walk quietly. Be unacquainted with cursing, and inherit blessing. Forsake grief, for you are not its daughter. Strangle the anger inside you, and do not give rest to your body, which is dead to the wise, and the destruction brought by the

³ There is good reason to believe that the expansions that follow most of these apostrophes to virginity are not original. They were not known to Shenute, the Coptic archimandrite (c. 350-466), whose quotation from this letter is one of its earliest testimonia, nor does their content reflect the distinctive themes of the letter. See David Brakke, 'The Authenticity of the Ascetic Athanasiana', *Or.* 63 (1994), 17-56, at 21.

desires will not blossom within you. Give up laughter, and you will not prepare yourself for destruction. Do not pay attention to the appearance of the face, and you will not pierce yourself with the defilement from the congregation of the lawless, for their envy is great. Abandon crooked people, and undertake to walk uprightly. Mingle with the saints, and you will be found righteous. Speak with the wise, and do not walk with the foolish. Open your eyes and see your brightness, for you are a star that has shone and shines even more. For you are the light that comes from the light, and you return to the light before night falls. For the light has cast out the wrath of the night. You walk without stumbling, for your kinsman helps you.

O virginity, the strong base that supports the king! You too, O king, consider the unshakeable civic life of your people, and guard your commonwealth. Cast out your enemy. For if he desires to trip (your people) up, it is you who makes war on him. For the desire for virginity exists in everyone (but few are those who achieve it) because they have not given their heart to suffer in accordance with your worthiness.

O virginity, you who are beautiful and given to humanity by God in accordance with its deeds!

O virginity, you to whom many run, but who are not adorned by anyone as you are worthy! We are all far from you. The evil of the passions of destruction does not exist in us, for it is the snake, deceiving people with his teaching, who has cast it upon us. He has mixed the venom of the serpent with defilement for everyone. For he has sown within us like the serpent. He binds our inner thinking lest we be sober for him who is better and contemplate him who is higher, God. He first comes to a person quietly in solitude. Just as he deceives some people by teaching them face-to-face, so the devil's trap, destruction, is set for us. It often comes through drawing near to disorderly people, which brings destruction to human beings. But sometimes a person is evil without another person: through his own thoughts he brings his destruction on himself. Again, this trickster is a flatterer, a hunter in all these ways. In the heart he advises the person to do improper things and teaches his uninspired deeds, and the person, thinking to himself in solitude, takes counsel and draws upon himself his destruction voluntarily. Therefore, when the person sees these evil thoughts in his heart, he fears God and draws to himself a good thought and immediately casts out the evildoer with his counsels. For the holy thought teaches the person to think about good works so that he might receive many good things along with eternal life. For indeed, good thinking exists for all people to choose for themselves, but not many accept it. For the human heart has become even more deranged, like a person who has filled himself with bad bread and does not seek better because he has been satisfied. So too the gift of virginity: whoever grasps it has received the power to dig up and to build, to destroy and to plant (Jer. 1: 10); once for all he has received the commandment that is authoritative in every way.

O virginity, you who gloriously in blessedness receive holy commandments!

O virginity, you who rule everyone, but whose brothers are few! Daniel put you on, he who belongs to you because he was righteous. He condemned the lust of the elders and put to shame the defilement that occurred among those called elders (Sus.).

O virginity, chastiser of the lawless and co-worker of the saints!

O virginity, whose words are frank, rebuking people! Three noble young men desired you: Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. For such virgins overcame the fire and kept themselves completely holy (cf. Dan. 3) because they built their house upon the rock, and when the rain came with the wind, they were not overturned (cf. Matt. 7: 24-5). You, O virginity, are strengthening your heart. For many traps are set for you, for you counsel well. Many make war against you, for you walk humbly. Some break, the devil and his demons. You live quietly; others are disturbed. You are glad; others are grieving. You are rejoicing; others are mourning.

O virginity, against whom many are angry, but who are helped by one! Therefore, love him, and cast out the others. Strengthen him in your heart, and do not abandon him whom you love. Rather, when you are constant, he will strengthen you with grace all the more. Elijah received this grace when he condemned the vain words of the false prophets (cf. 1 Kgs. 18: 20-40). Even more, he raised the widow's son from the dead and filled vessels with bread and parted the Jordan (cf. 1 Kgs. 17: 8-24; 2 Kgs. 2: 7-8). Finally, he was taken up by a fiery chariot to his Lord (2 Kgs. 2: 11), receiving grace from him who gave him grace as he was worthy. Moreover, the blessed prophet Jeremiah was worthy of such grace, for he was known by God before he was formed in the womb, and he was pure before he came forth from it. For so the Lord says about him: 'Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you, and before you came forth from it, I consecrated you' (Jer. 1: 15).

O virginity, your friendship is for many people destruction because they are not truly your friends! Hence, they have fallen away from you. And some who are thought to be servants of God have been bound with chains, for they tried to do things by fighting against you. Therefore, you are making clear that all who fight against you deserve punishment.

O virginity, you who are sought by all, but received by few! You are inseparable from those who love you, leading the blessed ones. You are the teacher of the wise.

O virginity, the confidence of people who are saved! Who will bless you, you who have loved the glorious one, Christ? For does your lifestyle resemble our works, so that we hide those who inspire you? For daily your souls pray and serve their Lord . . .

[The remainder of the text is lost.]

Second *Letter to Virgins*

This translation from the Syriac is based on the text edited by Lebon.⁴ The section divisions, their numbers, and the content headings have been added by myself and have no basis in the ancient manuscript.

BY ATHANASIUS, ARCHBISHOP OF THE ALEXANDRIANS
A LETTER TO VIRGINS WHO WENT AND PRAYED IN JERUSALEM
AND RETURNED

The holy places

1. We grieve with you, maidservants of Christ, because as you were separating from the holy places you shed streams of bitter tears. As you were travelling, you were also weeping because you were leaving far behind the cave of the Lord, which is the image of Paradise or, rather, which surpasses it. For there 'the first human being, from the earth, a person of dust' was formed; but here 'the second human being, from heaven' was renewed (1 Cor. 15: 47). There he who had been 'in the image and likeness' (Gen. 1: 26) was changed into something imperfect, but [here] the unchanging image of the Father appeared. The first person hid himself under the fig-tree, but the second person took shelter under the power of the Most High (cf. Ps. 90 (91): 1). There he was banished from the angelic glory, but here he was glorified by the angelic choir and worshipped by the magi. Bethlehem, where until today the echoes full of praises endure in every watch of the night! As you were leaving this holy Bethlehem, you travelled quite rightly in many tears from your heart's distress because you recalled that beautiful way of life: the true fast, the entirely pure prayers of that quiet and untroubled manner (of life), the prayers that are continually arising there, and especially the noble exhortations that you would hear from the holy ones as you sat at their feet like Mary in times of stillness (Luke 10: 38-42). Because you were leaving these pearls, you were sorrowful. Hence, as you were saying farewell to your sister virgins, upon your breasts the tears of each of you mingled with those of her companion.

⁴ J. Lebon, 'Athanasiana Syriaca II: Une lettre attribuée à saint Athanase d'Alexandrie', *Mus.* 41 (1928), 169-216, at 170-88.

Second Letter to Virgins

2. You nevertheless had the hope of consolation in seeing the holy cave of the resurrection and the site of Golgotha, which also is not inferior to the excellence of Paradise. For there he who stretched out his hand toward the tree brought death on all, but here he who was stretched out on the tree of the cross bestowed salvation on all. He who was there was led astray by the serpent, but here that serpent was led astray. There the taste was sweet, but the act was bitter; here, however, the food was bitter, but the result was sweet. Not little did the departure from the holy mountain grieve you. But just as the disciples were in groans as they descended from the mountain because the Saviour departed from them—'For then they will fast', he said, 'when the bridegroom is taken from them' (Matt. 9: 15)—likewise you too were in great distress as you departed from the holy places because you desire and long for the courts of the Lord (Ps. 83 (84): 3).

Holiness and Christ's presence

3. Now take heart and do not be grieved! You have not journeyed far from the holy places, for where Christ dwells, there is holiness. And where Christ's presence is, there too is an abundance of the joys of holiness. He lives also in our temple if we keep (its) holiness undefiled always (1 Cor. 6: 19)—'For holiness is suitable to your house, O Lord, for the duration of days' (Ps. 92 (93): 5)—if we are adorned with the other (jewels) of virginity, if we keep our lamps unextinguished (Matt. 25: 1-13). For then you will stand before him on the right like a queen (Ps. 44 (45): 10): when you have gained rule over sin, when you are clothed with a great variety (of colours), when you manifest excellence of great variety. For the excellence of virginity is not uniform in its appearance, but of great difference and variety.

4. For it is not holiness of the body alone that is required, but also that of the spirit. And she will be 'holy in body and spirit' (1 Cor. 7: 34) who will be not only holy but also undividedly attentive. For she who is undividedly attentive to the Lord is also undistracted (1 Cor. 7: 35). Now, the virgin is undistracted, and the virgin is (adorned with) a great variety (of colours) when she also in her seeing, speech, listening, walk, and food preserves her virginity: when 'her eyes are always on the Lord' (cf. Ps. 24 (25): 15) and not seeking fleshly beauty; when her speech is not for the purpose of slander or abuse, but for praise of God; when, in her walking, her cloak is not dragging and, likewise, she does not skip but (walks) soberly and not slackly and, if possible, does not greet people as is customary (cf. Luke 10: 4) but goes only to the house of God; when we listen to the divine words and profitable teachings earnestly and do not, listening with desire, accept vain sounds; when we seek food not for delight, but for necessity; when we prepare our clothes not as decorations, but to cover our nudity; when we take a bath not in lust, but in serenity. Then truly 'you are beautiful, my beloved, and there is no defect in you' (S. of S. 4: 7). Then 'the king will desire

your beauty' (Ps. 44 (45): 12)—if you are a whole burnt offering, undivided. But 'the married woman attends to the things of the world, how she might please her husband', and she is divided (1 Cor. 7: 34). Therefore, be undivided, so that you might please the heavenly bridegroom. Do not please the world and so make the bridegroom jealous.

5. Do not love the world, lest you have enmity with your God (Jas. 4: 4), especially you who have walked in the holy places! Peter saw our Lord Jesus, abandoned his net, and followed him (Matt. 4: 18–20). Zacchaeus the tax-collector saw him, rejected fraudulent profits, and accepted the Saviour (Luke 19: 1–10). That evil-doing woman saw him and wiped his feet with her tears and hair (Luke 7: 37–8). Mary saw him and did not depart from before his feet (Luke 10: 39). You too have visited the holy places, and in the life-giving places you saw, so to speak, Christ walking. Therefore, abandon the nets of the world, that is, the world's entanglements, and henceforth follow Christ, abandoning everything like Zacchaeus, and redeem your lives. Even more, love the Lord like that woman, shedding tears in prayers and committing to him the growth of your hair. Sit at the feet of Jesus: choose for yourselves the better portion (Luke 10: 42), and do not forsake hearing the divine words.

6. Do not depart from Jerusalem, but await the promise of the Father (Acts 1: 4). You have seen the place of the nativity: he has given birth to your souls anew. You have seen the place of the crucifixion: let the world be crucified to you and you to the world (Gal. 6: 14). You have seen the place of the ascension: your minds are raised up. Let your bodies be on earth, but your minds in heaven. Your dwelling-place is your (earthly) father's house, but your way of life is with the heavenly Father.

7. Your entrance as the bride of Christ (will be) when your face is veiled before all human beings and is revealed to the bridegroom alone. It is necessary to walk wisely among outsiders, like a woman walking on high places, 'lest your foot ever stumble against a stone' (Ps. 90 (91): 12). For the adversary is 'a roaring lion, seeking someone to snatch' (1 Pet. 5: 8). Let him not snatch your seeing, nor deceive your hearing, nor harm your thinking, lest, like a thief jumping through a window, he enter and seize your goods. For through the senses he enters the mind and binds it like a strong man, seizing all the vessels of virtue (cf. Matt. 12: 29). Be vigilant against the evil one, lest he do harm in some way.

Authority figures

8. Let your relationship with the priests and (female) elders³ be such that in respect and reverence you are obedient to them as if to the Lord, not to human beings. In speaking, do not answer presumptuously, but gently—scarcely two words if you are questioned. Thus honour the elders, and hasten to greet them.

³ Except for the two cases in the biblical quotation, all the instances of 'elder(s)' in this paragraph are feminine in gender.

Stand before them: 'Stand before the elder, and honour the face of the elder' (Lev. 19: 32). During the stories that an elder tells, let us be like silent students, giving the elder the opportunity to speak.

9. Toward those of our own age and our equals, it is also good to show honour, as the Scripture says: 'Outdo one another in showing honour' (Rom. 12: 10). And from the excellent take a pattern of virtue; but to the imperfect give a pattern of your own excellent way of life—'Be a pattern for the believers' (1 Tim. 4: 11)—so that there might be benefit on every side, as we first receive blessing and then in return give virtue. Do not have numerous conversations with those of your own age, for 'you do not escape sins through an abundance of words' (Prov. 10: 19).

10. Particularly in God's house it is not fitting that there be any talking, for it is called a house of prayers (cf. Isa. 56: 7; Matt. 12: 13). Let them not make it a house of gibberish. Hence, it is fitting to pray or to listen to the Holy Scriptures or the teachers. But if someone does want to speak to you, let him hear from you the word of the Lord, so that the house of God will be called a house of prayer. And let him also hear the Apostle's rebuke: 'For do you not have houses for eating and drinking? Or do you despise the church of God?' (1 Cor. 11: 22) Likewise also with the woman who wants to speak: For do you not have houses for talking about household business and fleshly things? Or do you despise the church of God and make it a house of commerce? Therefore, let God's house be a house of prayers, a house of listening to the divine words, a house of learning the holy teaching. For it is the hospital of the soul, for the taking of healing medicines, so that we might enter, acquire every good thing, and return home. Therefore, so that you might not come in vain because you have not listened to what was said, do not be burdened by people: 'It is fitting to obey God rather than human beings' (Acts 5: 29).

The silent, sober virgin

11. Also, let the virgin's laughter shine forth entirely in divine beauty, without a sound. For the righteous person 'hardly laughs softly' (but) 'the fool raises his voice in laughter' (Sir. 21: 20). For why do we laugh when all the righteous have spent their lives in misery? As David said, 'The entire day I have walked in sorrow' (Ps. 37 (38): 7). Our Saviour blessed those who mourn and weep, but not those who laugh, when he said, 'Woe to those who laugh now because they shall weep' (Luke 6: 25). Indeed, among such frightening things that even the sea feared and fled from God's power, you are not moved by fear! The Lord is mighty, and we laugh? 'The lion roars, and who will not be afraid?' (Amos 3: 8) The Lord God is mighty, and who will not be speechless? But perhaps you say, 'The Scripture says, "Rejoice always!"' (Phil. 4: 4). But rejoice, and 'do not grieve the Holy Spirit' (Eph. 4: 4). The joy of the body is the distress of the spirit; the exultation of the spirit is the affliction of the body. But again you say,

'It is written: "The mouth of the true one will be filled with laughter"' (Job 8: 21). (But) what it will be filled with is the contemplation of the incorruptible world when the righteous are rewarded with their blessings.

12. We, however, are still in a great struggle. The sailor fears and does not laugh while he is on the sea and in a storm, until he is delivered and his ship rests in the harbour. But as for you, how can you laugh and love immoderate laughter while the ship of your soul is still being tossed about in such a storm of the world? It is being buffeted by the churning waves, by the lies of people, the treacheries of demons, and the enticements of the flesh. It is fitting for the pilot to fear and keep watch so that he will never suffer the drowning of (his) faith (cf. 1 Tim. 1: 19). He also is afraid who still stands in the battle and sees the unsheathed sword and spear of the attacker. But when he completes the battle with the enemy, then he sends forth a pure expression of praise. Therefore, in our case, when we wear the breastplate of God and complete the battle with the giant Goliath, then we will rejoice. When we hasten to achieve our course and to receive the crown kept for us where groaning, sadness, and distress are banished, then we will enter into the joy of our Master (cf. 2 Tim. 4: 7-8; Rev. 21: 4; Matt. 25: 21). But now we are standing in the stadium, so that it is fitting for us to be alert. For let the one who stands take heed lest he fall! (cf. 1 Cor. 10: 12)

13. But let us be on guard against slander as well, so that we might escape the divine accusation that says: 'You sat and were slandering your brother' (Ps. 49 (50): 20). Be neither a whisperer nor a slanderer. But you say, 'I am speaking the truth.' If you know the truth, confront the person face to face (cf. Matt. 18: 15), for it is better to confront (someone) openly. 'Do not let any hateful word fall from your mouth unless it is an opportunity for good, as for edification' (Eph. 4: 29). Therefore, if we are speaking for edification, let us speak. But if not, why do we seek stories? If a word is edifying, offer the word. But if it is an idle (word)—'For every idle word you will give an account on the day of judgement. By your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned' (Matt. 12: 36-7). Accordingly, if there has been such a sincere examination of the words, we speak our words in fear, intelligence, and sincerity. If you are expounding from the Scriptures, speak. If (there is something) about the salvation of the soul, listen; if about the kingdom of heaven, take delight in it, rejoicing. Nourish your soul with good words. But if (there is some piece) of empty talk, why place yourself under a word of accusation? But perhaps you will say that your sister virgin has spoken against you; even so, do not be moved. For if she has⁶ spoken the truth, you who are wise should love her who is rebuking you (cf. Prov. 9: 8). But if she is speaking against you (falsely), blessed are you, 'for your reward in heaven is great'. For 'blessed are you when they speak against you every word of evil falsely' (Matt. 5: 11-12). But it is fitting even in this case to keep silent and to speak only to God always in our mind: 'Your eyes are doves in addition to your silence' (S. of S. 4: 1).

⁶ The manuscript mistakenly reads, 'you have'.

Second Letter to Virgins

14. Therefore, speak like a dove, which barely speaks in her heart (Nahum 2: 8); do not, like a raven, make a lot of noise and commotion. Be quiet in the house like a dove, and do not make your movements like the ravens. For the dove's movement (adjusts itself) outside or in the house or on the roof or while flying. Her speech is gentle; her walking, silent; her eating, without anxiety; her way of life, without anger. She does not linger in every square; she does not rejoice in vanity nor in eating flesh; she does not stand on dead bodies. She knows no other person except her parent and guardian: many others who resemble him call to her, but she does not listen to any of them. She knows the true one in the house.

Dangers of the public bath

15. The dove is acquainted with the bath in the ordinary waters in the basin; she does not take off her garment or reveal her nudity. Observe her appearance: see how her appearance is pure, without force or cleansings, how she is adorned by her insight and not by the adornment that enters from outside. You have heard the animal's nature: imitate her ways. Likewise, remain at home, only contemplating; likewise, speak quietly; likewise, walk, eat, be unadorned; likewise, use the bath.

16. A basin is sufficient for you to wash away your dirt. Ask and learn how Sarah washed herself while living in a tent; how Rachel followed the flock; how Miriam sojourned in the desert without water; how the saints called Mary followed the Lord. Have you not heard that the apostles and disciples of our Lord ate food without washing their hands (Matt. 15: 1-20) and St Peter declined to have his feet washed by the Lord (John 13: 3-11)? And who is purer than the aforementioned people? For they who were pure on the inside were also completely pure on the outside (cf. Matt. 23: 26).

17. But learn how the women who bathe have been injured and have dragged others down into corruption. The first is Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah, who, when she stripped, instantly stripped such a great man of holiness and rule (2 Sam. 11). For that reason he made supplication to the good God and said, 'Do not take your holy spirit from me', and he entreated, 'Restore to me the joy of your salvation' (Ps. 50 (51): 13-14). For he who previously had been escorted by such a great army and had been glorious in the power of the kingdom was with one or two (men) cast out in flight into a strange land (2 Sam. 15). Was it not by the greatness of his repentance that he returned to power? Did he not eat ashes like bread and mix his drink with tears (Ps. 101 (102): 10)? Was it not with tears that he dampened the defiled bed (Ps. 6: 7)? Did not his knees become weak from fasting and his flesh lean from anointing (Ps. 108 (109): 24)? Was it not in mourning and suffering that he walked (Ps. 37 (38): 7)? Did he not make sackcloth his garment (Ps. 68 (69): 12)? Did he not also take off his pure linen garment? You see how she who wanted to bathe poured out filth on such a man; for because she washed her body, she defiled another's soul. But she was not the

only one! Susannah as well, when she washed and bathed in the garden, caused the two elders to fall (Sus.). For the uncovered flesh covered their eyes so that they did not contemplate heaven (Sus. 9). Therefore, if these things happened in this way, it is not suitable to bathe, lest there be scandal for you and others. Others in the ascetic life do not touch the water even with their fingertips. Why do I say 'with their fingertips'? Because, when their tongue is being broiled, they do not moisten it, recalling the story of Lazarus and the rich man (Luke 16: 19-31).

18. But consider other women—how their senses have turned foolish so that they take delight in myrrh and pleasant fragrances that certainly are not 'the sweet fragrance of Christ' (2 Cor. 2: 15). It is more fitting for them to be in sackcloth and ashes so that they might preserve their virginity without danger. But I believe that such a soul, one that loves to revel in pleasures, does not belong to a perfect virgin, for it is fitting for the true virgin to abandon every desire.

Conversations with men

19. For that reason she also does not speak to men, except to be instructed or to receive some spiritual profit. For when a teaching is divine or a word penitent, it is recognized (as such) because it is without laughter or levity or any desires of the flesh. Hence all suspicion is avoided. But great harm can come also from this when it is abundantly obscured because of bodily delight and desire. For it is fitting also to mention here the chaste Joseph: how, when he was young, he infatuated his mistress (Gen. 39). You are a holy vessel, set apart for God, one which it is not fitting for anyone to touch. For who would not become impure (if he were to touch you) like Balthasar, who did touch (Dan. 5)? And (in that case) this holy vessel would also require purification.

Spiritual marriage

20. But consider some among the virgins, as I have heard: they do not merely confuse and fail to distinguish good from evil by speaking (to men), but they dare even to live and mix with men, not considering such a great danger or how easy it is to fall in this life. Others of this (ascetic life) employ aids and strategies so that, through fasts and dried-up ascetic practices, they extinguish the flame of passion that burns within them. But as for these (virgins who live with men), because of regular conversation with men and toilsome custom, the flame burns greatly within them, just as when someone, by giving a lot of fuel to a small fire, will change a flame into a great roaring blaze.

21. But you will say to me that such a living arrangement is one of 'fellowship' and 'spiritual love', as if it were without harm or injury, although it bears danger in its bosom and walks on fire. 'For does a person tie up a fire in his bosom and not burn his clothes? Or does a man walk on a fire's burning coals and not burn

his feet? So, too, no one who goes in to his neighbour's wife will be pardoned, nor any who touch her' (Prov. 6: 27-9). So, if he who goes in to his neighbour's wife is not pardoned, what will he who goes in to and touches the bride of Christ endure from the heavenly King? Hence, 'it is good for a man not to touch a woman' (1 Cor. 7: 1)—even more, the bride of Christ! Or are you ignorant of how jealous a bridegroom he is, both avenging sins swiftly and establishing tortures for a great variety for crimes?

22. All of you have promised God to stand at the King's right hand: offer up to your Lord all the wealth of your virginity, lest, by keeping back a portion, you suffer the fate of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5: 1-11). And if they kept back things from the fleshly offering of their wealth and so awaited these (sufferings), what will you endure, you who neglect the valuable wealth of your virginity? For she who greets a man in order to be seen by him, or to have fun with him, or to speak with him in a fleshly way—what else has she done except taken from that offering pledged by her to God and given it to a man? For fittingly it is said to her: 'As long as it remained, did it not remain yours? And when it was sold, was it at your disposal? Why has Satan filled your heart so that you cheat the Holy Spirit and hold back some from the field's proceeds?' (Acts 5: 4)

23. For by your own will you became a virgin: you presented a willing sacrifice. Rejoicing, you offered (yourself) and wrote that you would strive. By your own will you were brought to the arena: he did not bring you by force, but persuaded you with the promise. He did not use a threat, but he was earnest with counsels. He did not require you by law, but led you by your will. You did not fear some punishment stored up, but you were encouraged by the glory stored up. You were not compelled by a torture made ready, but you were emboldened by the crown reserved. Shouts did not force you, rather 'the crown of the upward call' (Phil. 3: 14). The chains of force did not compel you, but the liberty of Christ attracted you. You have not yielded to the deception of human beauty, but to the love of him who is more beautiful in his appearance than human beings (Ps. 44 (45): 3). You have not been enticed by numerous marriage gifts, but you have hoped in heavenly treasures. You did not desire the noble birth of a man, but you relied upon divine chastity.

24. Therefore, this kind of sin is unforgivable; this offence, without excuse; this lifestyle, unacceptable. 'It is better not to make a vow than to make a vow and not to accomplish it' (Eccles. 5: 4). For it is better not to promise virginity than, when you have promised, not to accomplish it perfectly. For just as it is impossible for two men in the world to have one wife, so too one soul cannot perfectly be with God and with humanity. For 'no person can serve two masters, for either he will hate one and love the other, or he will love one and treat the other with contempt' (Matt. 6: 24). Therefore, O virgin, abandon such a love, one which separates you from the divine love. Break your bond of goodwill toward a man, lest you break your covenant with the heavenly bridegroom. Do not, when you consider a small pleasure or gift, fall away from the true one.

Therefore, if you are oppressed by poverty, receive, but do not give that which is great. Do not, for the sake of a corruptible garment, lose the name of him who is incorruptible. Do not, for the sake of the gift of nourishment, remain outside the banquet of Paradise, lest by fearing to leave an (earthly) house you fall from the heavenly mansion.

25. But perhaps you will say, 'I guard my virginity and holiness.' But it is fitting for the perfect virgin to be 'holy in body and soul' (1 Cor. 7: 34), to escape from the defilement of spirit and flesh, and—for the sake of him who came to collect human thoughts, for the sake of him who knew the secrets of the heart—to be undistracted and undividedly attentive (1 Cor. 7: 35). Therefore, see whether you are (holy) in spirit, for if he who looks at a woman—as he (Jesus) says—so as to desire her has sinned (Matt. 5: 28), what about him who is constantly with her? So see whether you are able to be undividedly attentive, whether you are permitted also to be undistracted, or whether you serve and are subject to a man. For in this way in body and mind you will be anxious, so that you are engaged in human affairs (cf. 1 Cor. 7: 35). But you say, 'On every side I guard myself with fasts and vigils, prayers and complete continence, lest I fall from this position.' But what need is there for you to walk beside a fire so that you require lots of cool, quenching water?

26. But if you are not injured, consider him who is with you. Are you not killing him? His soul is sought in your hands. Do not strike him all the time, lest his mind be conquered, lest he become a captive instead of a conqueror, lest he become subject to a woman rather than (her) head (1 Cor. 11: 3), a slave instead of lord of the house. Therefore, it is not expedient to be a virgin with a man, lest she in his view be lacking in her soul. 'The one who cleaves to the Lord', it says, 'becomes one spirit (with him)' (1 Cor. 6: 17). But the one who cleaves to flesh is flesh. 'Are you bound to a wife? Do not seek to be free. Are you free from a wife? Do not seek a wife' (1 Cor. 7: 25).

27. What do you, O monk, seek with a virgin, with another man's bride? You will not dare to approach a man's wife because of her husband's jealousy, lest you fall into his hands. But you do not fear to approach the bride of Christ although you know his fearful jealousy: 'It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God' (Heb. 10: 31). Why do you catch God's dove with a few grains? Why do you capture an innocent bird? For she sees only what is given by you, but does not see what is taken by you. For she receives from you fleshly things, but she forsakes spiritual things. By a few (earthly) gifts she loses heavenly gifts. Why do you draw away the virgin's mind, which it is fitting for her to place always before God?

28. But you say, 'I am doing a noble thing, for God's sake, for the name of virgin' (cf. Matt. 10: 41-2). You are doing good if you are giving without approaching (her), without staying with her, without being served (by her), if you are not giving 'favour' in exchange for 'favour'. If (you do this) on account of God's command, you will have a reward; but if on account of your own desire,

you have received your reward. Give necessary things if she requests something for food or clothing, but not for fleshly decoration. For these are the desires of the flesh and not spiritual gifts. Therefore, be distant from other men's wives; do not embrace a woman who is not yours. Make a covenant with your eyes not to gaze upon a virgin, as Job said (Job 31: 1). And again: 'Do not gaze upon a virgin. Avert your eyes, and do not gaze upon another's beauty' (Sir. 9: 5, 8). You are called a solitary in name; be one in deed. But if you live with another person, you are not a solitary; rather, you are a second person.

29. 'The queen of the south will rise and condemn this generation' (Matt. 12: 42). The married women who have separated from their husbands for the sake of the pure life condemn those 'virgins' who live with men, and they receive their glory. Virgins like these will be rejected from their honour, but those who have kept themselves will receive the virginal honour. Be ashamed, O virgin of this kind! Even she who has not promised to lead a life pure and solitary lives diligently, but you who have so promised cheat the true one and take another man. Therefore, put on adornment, and strip off virginity, for the adorned class claims you. Therefore, occupy yourself with baths and myrrh, and take care of yourself with cleansings, so that you might please him who is with you. For she who is like this is anxious about how to please men, and she is divided. But she who is dedicated to God alone thinks night and day about how to please the Lord (1 Cor. 7: 32-4).

The virgin and her bridegroom

30. Therefore, it behoves you to be enshrouded, separated, set apart, and withdrawn in every way, with a steadfast will, and to be sealed up, just as you were sealed by the Lord at the beginning as a servant:

An enclosed garden is my sister, the bride,
 an enclosed garden, a sealed fountain,
 a paradise of pomegranates with fruits of the trees:
 cyprus with nard, nard and saffron, cane and cinnamon,
 with all the cedar-wood of Lebanon. (S. of S. 4: 12-14)

Thus it is fitting for her to be guarded and withdrawn and sealed who is all fruit and goodness. Virginity is like an enclosed garden that is not trodden upon by anyone, except its gardener alone. Be careful that no merciless stranger spoils the manifold seedlings and beautiful blossoms of the garden; that no one mars the injured vine; that no ferocious foxes from some place or other destroy the beautiful clusters of grapes (S. of S. 2: 15); that no one disturbs the sealed fountain or muddies the bright and shining waters of virginity; that no one fills the paradise of sweet fragrance with a foul odour.

31. Therefore, remove yourself from fleshly and human love, O virgin! Rather, turn and seek him whom your soul loved, where he grazes, where he lies

down at midday, until you find him whom your soul loved, and he shows you his face and makes you hear his voice. For his face is beautiful and his speaking sweet. When you have found him, hold on to him, and do not leave him until he brings you into his bedroom (S. of S. 3: 2; 1: 7; 2: 14; 3: 4). He is your bridegroom. He is the one who will crown you. It is he who is preparing the wedding garment for you. It is he who is revealing to you the treasures. It is he who is preparing the Father's table for you and from the torrent of delight gives you to drink (Ps. 35 (36): 9). Wait for him; gaze on him with your mind; speak to him; rejoice with him; take everything from him. For when you are fed by the Lord, you will lack nothing, and you will enjoy eternal life. Amen.

On Virginity

This translation is based on the Syriac text edited by Lebon in comparison with the Armenian text edited by Casey.⁷ The end of the Syriac text is lost in a lacuna; the short remainder of the work, extant only in Armenian, has been translated into German by Casey. The section divisions, their numbers, and the content headings have been added by myself and have no basis in the ancient manuscripts.

BY THE SAME ATHANASIUS, ARCHBISHOP OF ALEXANDRIA
ON VIRGINITY⁸

Obey your husband, Christ

1. You want to be a virgin, but (do so) not in the way that you desire, but rather as the Lord (desires), the one to whom you are married. It is fitting that your zeal give way to him: he is the husband. As for women of the world, all their hope is in their husband, and without him they do nothing. They do not go anywhere because they fear their husbands. How much more the virgin is completely obligated to her bridegroom and lord! She shall offer up her reason and her honour. She shall go nowhere without him, just like the woman of the world: not in a company, nor in feasts of gluttons, nor in night-time revelries of the corrupt, nor in gatherings of slanderers, nor in gatherings of scoffers. Excuse yourself and say, 'I did not sit with the council of vanity' (Ps. 25 (26): 4). For your husband is yours.

2. To all of them (women of the world), the fleshly husband gives food, considering only what is visible. But the virgin's husband considers those things that are invisible. He examines the mind, appearance, lifestyle, behaviour, gait, clothing, and will: Is her thinking outside (unorthodox)? Does her mind take counsel? Is that purity which is in all the organs of the soul fearful? Will he see his temple shining forth from every side and see fulfilled in you the (word) of the apostle: 'Let the virgin be holy in her body and soul' (1 Cor. 7: 34)? When he sees your

⁷ J. Lebon, 'Athanasiana Syriaca I: Un *Logos* *nepi* *naphevias* attribué à saint Athanase d'Alexandrie', *Mus.* 40 (1927), 205-48, at 209-18; Robert P. Casey, 'Der dem Athanasius zugeschriebene Traktat *Περί* *ναρθεβίας*', *Sitzungsberichte der Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Philosophisch-historische Klasse*, 33 (1935), 1022-45, at 1026-34.

⁸ The title and attribution are taken from the Armenian manuscripts.

lamp unextinguished, then the Lord too will cry out and say, "Come from Libanus, my bride, come from Libanus" (S. of S. 4: 8) to the place where heavenly thoughts enter you.' And he joins you to himself;⁹ he brings you near to him; he makes you worthy of his Spirit. When he sees your beauty without blemish or offence, and when your mind is gazing upon him and your thoughts flying (to him), he helps you, crying out and saying, 'Arise and come, my companion, my beautiful dove!' (S. of S. 2: 10)

Exhortation to vigilance

3. Therefore, guard yourself, O virgin, until death. Do not be neglectful, do not slumber, so that you¹⁰ will not be asleep when you reach your end and so bring to nought your toils and labour and squander the profit of your sweat. For it is written: 'Do not bless a man before his end' (Sir. 11: 28). The profit is great; the labour is small in comparison to the gift. The crowning is great. Manifold and powerful is the struggle; great is the contest; very exalted is the crown. Let not a small and cold pleasure quench the Father's goodness, which seethes and burns in you.¹¹

4. For I am weeping and sighing, lamenting and sorrowful; I am shaking my head and moving my limbs more than Jeremiah, who back then mourned the ruin of the daughter of his people, Jerusalem (cf. Lam. 2: 15). Now I too weep for the virgin who, on account of inferior, worthless, and unclean pleasure, destroys the kingdom of heaven and turns from the angelic way of life and rejects the pure lifestyle, and not only this, but also brings to nothing (her) former labours.

5. Therefore, watch yourself, O virgin, lest lascivious men seduce you with words of 'God's love'. Revere the words, but scorn the man. Do not be led astray by a human being; let him serve for you (only) as a minister of the Word. It is fitting, if possible, not to speak to a man at all, not to observe one, not to frequent one, not to remain with one, not to have acquaintance with him. For 'our enemy the devil' (1 Pet. 5: 8) is ready for evil, and he knows that when he mixes honey with gall he goes unrecognized and by means of sweetness gives bitterness to drink. The time has not come 'for you to sweeten your palate' (Prov. 24: 13); rather at the last it will be more bitter than gall for those who taste it.

6. When one of you sees herself sitting naked, examines her shame, and considers her fall, then she will hide, then she will groan, then she will weep, then she will be consumed, then she will shake her head, then she will be filled with doubt and curse the day she was born. But listen to God, just as Adam and Eve did when they transgressed the commandment. Adam heard, 'Where are you?' (Gen. 3: 9) You hear, you also: 'Virgin, where are you?'¹² Where were you then,

⁹ Reading with Casey ('Traktat', 1036 n. 3) ܡܘܨܘܦܝܢ instead of ܡܘܨܘܦܝܢ.

¹⁰ Restoring with Casey ('Traktat', 1036 n. 7) ܐܢܝܢܐ before ܡܘܨܘܦܝܢ.

¹¹ Reading with Casey ('Traktat', 1036 n. 8) ܡܘܨܘܦܝܢ instead of ܡܘܨܘܦܝܢ.

¹² This question is not present in the Syriac text and is restored from the Armenian.

and where are you now? Although you were called "temple of God", although you were called "bride of Christ" and your proper name was above all "virgin", you now remain on a corruptible bed.' Therefore, you too respond in great shame and say, 'I heard your voice and hid because I was naked' (Gen. 3: 10). And he will say to you, 'Why have you revealed yourself to be naked unless you have transgressed the covenant and loved the mortal more than the immortal?' (cf. Gen. 3: 11) Oh, the fear! Oh, the groaning! Oh, the sport most bitter!

7. But let it not be for you, my beloved, to be tangled in such destruction! I say these things when I admonish you so that you might forsake such destruction and, having fear before your eyes, flee and not remain in such fear. For hitherto our Saviour has honoured you: he has made you his temple and called you his bride. Watch, lest you hear: 'Humanity, being in glory, did not understand; it was compared to the senseless beasts and resembled them' (Ps. 48 (49): 13). Learn what you have, O virgin, so that when you have learned you might hold (it) fast; and when you hold (it) fast, you will not slumber or sleep and so bring to nought the costly pearl. Now, I say 'pearl' because of virginity's splendour and wonder. But virginity is not only a pearl, but also a hidden treasure not of transient goods, but of eternal chastity. Therefore, diligently keep what you have, O virgin! It is easily stolen if you sleep. For those things that are small and no burden for the thief he snatches and flees: the pearl that is carried in the hand is easily stolen. So too that which you have, O virgin. Therefore, watch yourself!

Manifold virtues required, not just ascetic acts

8. Perhaps the virgin says: 'What shall I do? Shall I fast? I keep away from foods. I keep my soul away from everything on account of the body's carelessness. I keep away from the bath. I reject the worldly pasture, and I am in silence. I keep vigils frequently. I have a ready desire for psalmody. I read the Scriptures sufficiently. I work as much as I can so that I might not need a husband. I procure my own food. For because I am poor, I am naked without wanting to be so, but if I were rich, I would not willingly dress more richly. I am not glad, fearing lest I injure others, and fulfilling the apostolic commands: "in hunger and in thirst" (2 Cor. 11: 27) and "he who competes keeps his mind from everything" (1 Cor. 9: 25) and "those who belong to Christ have crucified their flesh along with all its passions and its desires" (Gal. 5: 24).'

9. But I too say to you: it is good that you do these things, just as you study the divine Scriptures and read the apostolic words and seek the way of truth. But I say to you: I also seek the word of the gospel, that you not 'tith only cumin and mint and dill, not justice and mercy' (Matt. 23: 23). You abstain from nourishment and food, depriving your belly. But do not fill your soul with sins by planning evils against your neighbour, or neglecting your mother, or being moved by anger toward one of those who live with you. Fasting takes place where these

(sins) are departing, just as Isaiah the prophet also said: 'Loose every knot of injustice and bondage, and cut the burdens of deceit, and set loose the oppressed for freedom, and cut off all burdens, and give with all your soul food to the hungry—then call the acceptable fast' (Isa. 58: 5-6).

10. Now watch, so that you who are continent never condemn those who are chaste in marriage and so bring sin upon yourself. For hear Paul, who says: 'To marry is good, but it is better not to marry' (1 Cor. 7: 38). Therefore, whatever the divine Scripture praises and calls good and honourable and spotless (Heb. 13: 4), you must not condemn, you who are more perfect than she who is still in the tumult of the sea. And so, when you are keeping a vigil, do not think to yourself about the women sleeping with their husbands. Let your sight be only on Jesus.

11. And chant Psalms, saying: 'To you I lift up my eyes, O dweller of heaven!' (Ps. 122 (123): 1) But when you chant, let the mind complete the soul; do not let your thinking wander outside or your thought be engaged in many things. Do not seek many things, lest you receive many evils. Do not be double-souled, but have a single thought. Have a single request: to gaze on the good alone. For 'the Lord settles the solitaries in a house', as it is written (Ps. 67 (68): 7). Let the mind, the tent of thought, be vigilant; let the mind, the enemy of corporeal things, be vigilant; let the mind, the charioteer of the body, be vigilant; let the mind be vigilant and take you to the dwelling-places on high. Let your mind be in accord with the spirit, for if the two agree on the same thing, all that they ask they will receive (Matt. 18: 19).

12. Therefore, watch, lest you, being holy, condemn her who is clothed. You stay away from the bath, but do not let thoughts consume you from within. You labour, but do not store up in storehouses (Luke 12: 16-21): spend, and give to the poor as you are able (cf. Ps. 111 (112): 9). And be completely perfect (cf. Matt. 5: 48). Take care to acquire the things that are useful to the soul: acquire noble money, and cast out the money-changers (cf. Matt. 21: 12-13).

The foolish virgins

13. Do not bury your talent and be like that evil slave (Matt. 25: 14-30), so that you will not be found to be like those foolish virgins whose lamps went out because they lacked oil (Matt. 25: 1-13). For what will continence and virginity profit those who have been expelled from the wedding feast, who have heard that bitter echo, and in whose faces the gates have been shut? Knocking, they also hear: 'I do not know you' (Matt. 25: 12). Then they say: 'You do not know us? Are we not your temple? Is it not on your account that we fast and have been continent all our lives? Why do you not listen to us? Why do you not give us the things promised? We have heard, "Blessed are those who have kept their flesh purely, for they shall become God's temple,"¹¹ but you have cast us out! We have

¹¹ *Acta Pauli* 5; cf. 2 *Clem.* 8: 6; 2 *Cor.* 6: 16.

done nothing, but you will not let us see the bridal chamber, and you shut the gates!' These things they will say within themselves, groaning.

14. But doubtless our Lord will say to them: 'Why do you have no oil in your vessels? Did you not extinguish your lamps? Did you not hear me say, "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord', will enter the kingdom of heaven; rather, everyone who does the will of my Father will enter the wedding feast" (Matt. 7: 21)? You have not done the will of the Father, nor even that of his Son. For those whom the Father draws I will receive (cf. John 6: 44). If you have heard, "Blessed are those who have kept their flesh pure, for they shall become God's temple," have you not heard the following: "Blessed are the meek; blessed are the peacemakers; blessed are the merciful; blessed are the poor in spirit; blessed are those who are pure in heart"; and so forth (Matt. 5: 2-12)? There are nine beatitudes; have you heard only that one?' But what did the wretched one say in response to this? Nothing at all. Rather, she fell silent, deserving this sorrow. But if someone keeps these (beatitudes) along with purity of the body, ineffable blessing, the kingdom of heaven, a hidden treasure, eternal life, an unfading crown, unending glory—these the Lord prepares (for her).

15. Paul, the vessel of election (Acts 9: 15), says: 'Let the virgin be holy in her body and soul' (1 Cor. 7: 34). Acquire [all] these things: gentleness, humility [of mind], patience, love¹⁴ hospitality, kindness, tranquillity, peace (cf. Eph. 4: 2; Gal. 5: 22; Rom. 12: 13). Acquire knowledge and discipline; call wisdom 'Mother'. And with all these (acquire) that which is the foundation of all the virtues, faith and hope, that which is the beginning and the end, that which moves mountains (Matt. 17: 20). Make yourself a daughter of Wisdom (cf. Prov. 7: 4), lest you remain too feeble to offer the first-fruits to God. Do not, like Cain, offer your sacrifice foolishly, or God will not receive it from you and you will begin to turn aside (cf. Gen. 4: 3-5). Be seasoned with strength, as if with salt (Col. 4: 6). Be one who always turns to God in all holiness and love, O daughter, always covering your body, lest a spirit of the air pour down upon you, enter, and steal something from your goods. Therefore, cover your toes; let your veil fall down to your eyebrows; let your modesty conceal your fingers to your companions. Let there be fear; stir up zeal in many things, and you will save yourself and your companions. And you will hear from God's Wisdom: 'My son, if you perform nobly, (it is good) for you and your companions; but if you perform evilly, you bring evils upon yourself alone' (Prov. 9: 12).

The virgin's reward

16. See how the person who conducts himself by God's law is full of praises (cf. Ps. 118 (119): 1).¹⁵ For when you walk blamelessly, then 'like dawn your light will shine forth, and your health will quickly spring forth. You will call, and the

¹⁴ 'Love' is restored from the Armenian.

¹⁵ In this paragraph the emphasized words have been restored through comparison with the Armenian.

Lord will answer you, and as much as you speak, he will say, "Behold, I am near" (Isa. 58: 8-9). When you are clothed in the virtues like garments and like a cloak you *have acquired* the power of the Holy Spirit, then the king will see you and desire your beauty, because you are so clothed and multicoloured with the virtues (cf. Ps. 44 (45): 10, 12). Then you will be brought to him, for he has seen your beauty and love. Then he will bring you into the bridal chamber not made by hands, the *unending* marriage feast, the kingdom of heaven, eternal *life*, the place of the *angels*, the inheritance of the righteous, [. . .] of the holy, the *palace* of the King of kings, the *habitations* of the principalities and rulers and powers and lords, where cherubim are glorifying the power of the Trinity. There face to face you will see the [children of the resurrection, the] angels, who do not marry nor are given in marriage (Luke 20: 35-6). There you will see face to face the Lord your God, who made you.

17. Then in purity of heart you will sigh and say, 'Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth' (S. of S. 1: 2). But you will hold him with the hands of brides and call out and say, 'I held him and did not let him go until I brought him to my father's house and to the chamber of her who bore me' (S. of S. 3: 4).¹⁶ But I call your mother (in this passage) Mary,¹⁷ the bearer of God, she with whom you have (your) heritage. Then you will dwell with Christ. Then you will see your bridegroom, your brother, your father, your lord, your king, your Lord God Sabaoth, Adonai, El, who is, was, and always will be. Then he will appear to you, he who established heaven and spread forth the earth among the waters. To the virgin alone belongs this right, this heritage, this rank, this station, such glory, because she has hated the day of humanity (Jer. 17: 16), because she has rejected all uncleanness. Then she will rejoice in repose; then she will exult. Then she will clap her hands in glory, crying out and saying, 'The king has brought me in to his inner chamber' (S. of S. 1: 4). Then she will live, being served by angels, judging those angels who have sinned (cf. 1 Cor. 6: 3), reproaching virgins who have fallen, boasting in the crown she has received.

Virginity beyond human understanding

18. Now, have you understood, virgins, these things that are said to virgins? Do not be negligent in your hearing; rather, like the good earth, receive the seed (cf. Matt. 13: 18-23, 36-43), so that I too, the labourer, might be renowned. Let the work survive so that the builder might receive his wages (cf. 1 Cor. 3: 14). For as we have learned, we have repeated to you. For, although we do not understand these sublime things as they really are, as it is useful for a human being to speak, we are saying them. Such are the limits of language; such is the rule of words; such are the things given to human nature to know. These sublime things the Lord alone knows, he who incited the preacher to say, 'Eye has not seen, and

¹⁶ The LXX actually reads 'mother's house'.

¹⁷ The name 'Mary' is not present in the Syriac text and is restored from the Armenian.

On Virginity



ear has not heard, and it has not fallen on human heart what God has prepared for those who love him' (1 Cor. 2: 9). Great is the profit; unprecedented the rewards! The stadium is large; the race, long. The stadium is spread out; the opponent, ready. The victor is crowned. For here is found corruptible silver and gold (cf. 1 Pet. 1: 18), but there is found eternal life and a crown that flourishes always. Indeed, there is nothing equal to virginity! For just as the nature of God is incomprehensible, just as human beings cannot understand God's nature, not understanding what is near to them, or perhaps even their own nature,¹⁸ . . .

¹⁸ Here the Syriac text breaks off and is lost in a lacuna. The remainder of the work, extant only in Armenian, can be found in German translation in Casey, "Traktat", 1044-5.

On Sickness and Health

This translation from the Greek is based on the text edited by Diekamp.¹⁹ The section divisions, their numbers, and the content headings have been added by myself and have no basis in the ancient manuscript. The emphasized words are the comments of the anonymous compiler.

FRAGMENT A

From the discourse 'On Sickness and Health' of St Athanasius, Patriarch of Alexandria, which begins, 'We have received the letter about your health . . .':

The inner and outer persons

1. The discourse concerning the health of human beings is not indicated singly in the holy Scriptures; rather, the understanding of this subject happens to be twofold. For because human beings have their reality in two modes and we have, according to the most blessed Apostle, the double meaning of the inner and outer person—for he says in the Epistle to the Corinthians, 'Though our outer person is wasting away, the inner is being renewed' (2 Cor. 4: 16), and in that to the Ephesians, 'For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with might through his Spirit in the inner person, and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith' (Eph. 3: 14–17)—it is necessary that thought about them (human beings) not be unitary, but twofold.

2. Indeed, just as the human being with respect to the outer person has bodily bread for nourishment, so too with respect to the inner person he has its own corresponding food, about which Paul said, 'nourished on the words of the truth' (1 Tim. 4: 6). This nourishment has its origin from the Lord, who says, 'It is I who am the bread of life that has come down from heaven and gives life to human beings' (John 6: 33–41). Again, just as outwardly a person has rivers and wells and springs to drink, so inwardly he has the Spirit, which is given to those who believe and becomes 'a spring of water, welling up to eternal life' (John 4: 14). And for walking on earth he has the bodily feet, but for the sake of ascend-

¹⁹ Franz Diekamp, *Analecta Patristica* (Rome, 1938), 5–8.

On Sickness and Health

ing to heaven he has the feet that Paul had, saying, 'I do not run aimlessly' (1 Cor. 9: 26), concerning which we were also commanded to 'have those feet shod with the equipment of the gospel' (Eph. 6: 15). And truly he has bodily hands for the sake of touching, but, so that he might touch the Word, he inwardly has (hands) like those the disciples had, who said, 'That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, and our hands have touched, concerning the word of life' (1 John 1: 1). But since the Word is incorporeal, it is necessary that the hands touching it be incorporeal.

3. But both are one human being, made this way in the beginning by God from body and soul. One of these, in accordance with the grace of the Creator, is the physical structure, so that the goal of each one's activity is the same and they share the same praise and blame. For even if they are separated by death, they will recover themselves again and, having been united, they again will be one and remain undivided thereafter. For when we arise, death will no longer rule.

The members of the body and the soul

4. In short, lest I linger making clear the particulars, one must know that the body is composed of members, but the inner person is not composed of bodily members, but rather possesses the significance of the members' actions. Thus, the soul's progress toward virtue is the feet, and the accuracy of its reflections is the hands, and the clear-sighted mind is the eye, and the discrimination of thoughts is the tongue itself. And it is said to have even a womb, so that the productive capacity of thought itself might be made manifest, as it is written, 'From fear of you, we have conceived, and been in labour, and given birth to a spirit of salvation, which we have wrought upon the earth' (Isa. 26: 17-18).

The sleep of the soul

5. So also it is said to lie down and sleep when it does nothing. For so that it might rest, it even has leisure time. And for this purpose it is said to have sleep as well. For when it is at rest from petty things, then it is said to it, 'If you sleep, you shall slumber sweetly, and you shall not fear sudden panic' (Prov. 3: 24-5). And this is the gift of the Saviour, who says, 'Sleep still, and no longer be afraid' (Matt. 26: 45). But its idleness and neglect of virtue is that kind of sleep which the Holy Spirit condemns, saying, 'All those on horses slumbered,' and again, 'They slept their sleep and found nothing' (Ps. 75 (76): 6-7). So too our Lord Jesus Christ, who desires that our mind not be neglectful concerning virtue, commanded, 'Be awake!' and 'Watch!' (Mark 13: 33-7)

6. And he also spoke symbolically about these things in Proverbs: 'Do not give sleep to your eyes nor slumber to your eyelids, so you might be saved like a deer from the nets and a bird from the trap' (Prov. 6: 4-5). Some of the heretics do not understand this and, as if they really had no mind, misconstrue what is

written spiritually and suppose, concerning bodily <sleep>, that one should not sleep, and so defraud people of (sleep's) natural use. They do not know that, although they are awake for a time, they are totally asleep in their thinking and that, by fearing bodily sleep, they fall away from the watchfulness of the soul. This watchfulness the saint possesses, even if he is reclining with his body: 'I am sleeping, but my heart is watchful' (S. of S. 5: 2). For the sleep of the saints possesses contemplation of better things, and while their body is lying still on earth, the mind travels through outer places and flies up from earth to heavens.²⁰ For the great prophet Elisha, while he was bodily lying on the mountain, followed Gehazi with his mind (2 Kgs. 5: 26), and the holy Daniel, while sleeping in body, was awake in mind, seeing those great and divine visions (Dan. 7: 1).

The health of the body and that of the soul

7. Therefore, since reasoning concerning human beings has thus been shown to be twofold, it is also necessary that thought about their health be twofold. For there is health of the soul, and there is health of the body. Things that ail only the soul are healthy in the body, but, in turn, things that ail the body are healthy for the soul; and some things bring sickness to both or do harm to neither the body nor the soul. Again, the two, because they are one human being, suffer with one another, since they have one freedom from pain in health or one torment in sickness.

FRAGMENT B

And further concerning this:

The spiritual senses

8. Just as the structure of the body has the five senses fitted to it by the Demiurge, so too the intellectual substance of the soul accomplishes the entire work of the commandments with the five senses. The eyes are also the symbol of its (the soul's) sight, as the holy David said: 'My eyes are continually on the Lord' (Ps. 24 (25): 15). And concerning its hearing: 'Place in me an ear to hear' (Isa 50: 4), and the Lord: 'The one who has ears to hear, let him hear' (Matt. 11: 15). And concerning its sense of smell: 'I will run to your aroma of myrrh' (S. of S. 1: 4). And concerning its taste: 'Taste and see how excellent the Lord is' (Ps. 33 (34): 9), and, 'I have opened my mouth and drawn breath' (Ps. 118 (119): 13), and, 'Lord, open my lips' (Ps. 50 (51): 17). Concerning its touch: 'That which we have seen and our hands have touched, concerning the word of life' (1 John 1: 1). There is, after these, also another sixth sense, with which we who are

²⁰ Cf. *Gent.* 31, 33.

able to grasp grasp the untouchable, about which Solomon said, 'You will discover the divine faculty of perception' (Prov. 2: 5),²¹ which often exists by nature even in the slumber of the heart.

²¹ Not as in LXX, but so in Clem. *Str.* 1. 27 and Or. *Cels.* 1. 48.

Fragments on the Moral Life

This translation from the Coptic is based on the text edited by Lefort.²² The section divisions, their numbers, and the content headings have been added by myself and have no basis in the ancient manuscript.

[The title and attribution have been lost, along with the beginning of the text.]

Swearing

1. . . . to swear falsely, let it fall on us. Indeed, we do not want to swear by his name; rather, we are afraid to speak the living name of our Lord God over trivial and perishable things. For in this way we all will be wiser than the people who meet us: thus we will be good leaven, and the world will be leavened through us who are saved. And our abundant fruit will be found to have been preserved by the Lord, and God will be glorified in us, just as he said in the gospels: 'By this my Father has been glorified, that you should go and bear much fruit and be my disciples' (John 15: 8, 16). If the Lord is glorified through us, he will glorify us in his eternal glory.

The advanced life of virtue

2. The people who walk angelically according to their free will and practise discipline in the life of the angels remove themselves completely from the desires of the flesh, beloved brothers; they die daily (1 Cor. 15: 31) in the life that belongs to earth, but they live in the life of the angels, just as they share in the life of the Lord. For Paul says: 'Therefore, those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the passions and desires' (Gal. 5: 24). Moreover, it is said concerning them: 'They have put on the Lord Jesus and have made no provision for the flesh in desires' (Rom. 13: 14). Vegetables replace meats for such people, and water replaces wine, sparse meals replace abundant meals. Moreover, for this reason, they keep vigils rather than sleep, and nights of prayer to God often replace day-time for them, along with meditations on his law and blessings (cf. Ps. 1: 2). And truly, in accordance with the word of the Apostle, they 'walk in the flesh, but are not armed according to the flesh' (cf. 2 Cor. 10: 3).

²² Lefort, *Lettres festales*, 121-9. I have used the text in the manuscript that he calls 'Codex A'.

Allegory on Lot's ascent: Moderate and advanced virtue

3. As for the people who are not able to ascend to the height that is like a mountain peak, let them cut off from themselves the worldly desires, lest they drag themselves away from the holy perseverance that is entirely aimed at God and be caught only in the temporary perseverance of the world. For where there are ease of the flesh, abundant leisure, gluttony, dishonesty, and drunkenness, which also follows the defilement of the flesh, the pleasures draw to themselves greed, and many anxieties about the desires that we have mentioned are produced in the human being.

4. Let us imitate Lot, the blessed man, the son of Abraham's brother, who was saved from Sodom and Gomorrah on the day when they were consumed in the fire that came down from the sky, when his hand was grasped and he was brought forth and led by the angels (Gen. 19: 15-30). They ordered him to go to the mountain so that he might be saved, but he hesitated to go up because he was tired and he feared when he saw the fire. He was afraid also of the angels, lest he die because he did not flee to the mountain as they had said to him. They gave to him the city smaller than Sodom, preserved so that he might flee into it. Therefore, since he hesitated with respect to great things, he asked for a little (city) instead of the populous place, and instead of great things they granted him his request. First he preserved the smaller city among those bigger ones that were flourishing and living extravagantly; therefore, it was called Segor the city, which means 'the little city', having earlier been called Balak. After this, Lot took courage and ascended the mountain.

5. Let us be like this as well. For we walk, fleeing from the great and abundant feasting of the world, which is like the feasting of the Sodomites, about whom it was said by God, 'They have run riot in the over-indulgence of bread' (Ezek. 16: 49). And let us leave great feasts for smaller ones, so that we will not be consumed by wine-drinking and over-eating and the merry-making that follows these things just as Sodom and Gomorrah were consumed. And then let us be well-fed in the works of sparse poverty and lift our soul up upon elevated self-control and purity, having ascended to the mountain top. But if you are living extravagantly in the feasts of Sodom, fear lest you receive the sufferings of Sodom. Let fornication be far from you, for you are removing yourself from over-eating and fleeing from drunkenness. For if you light a fire, you will be consumed. Let us not cleave to the unbelievers in our lifestyle because we are far from them in faith. Therefore, let us withdraw from them, and let your endurance daily make manifest your faith in works (cf. Jas. 2: 18). And let your love for Christ be confirmed before everyone by your withdrawal from the desires of the flesh. Let no one see you disgracing yourself and say, 'This is the person who is practising discipline to achieve the gift of heaven; this is the disciple and pupil of the wise teacher; this is the person who has been chosen out of the world (John 15: 18) and reckoned with the angels in heaven.' You who look to the king of heaven, hoping to stand next to him, let Christ be glorified

through you, and let him not be blasphemed on your account. For he speaks in this way: 'Whoever glorifies me I will glorify; whoever despises me I will despise' (1 Sam. 2: 30). You despise him when you honour him with your words yet blaspheme him with your deeds. The people who are making their life worthy of Christ are working more in order to manifest his power and grace than in order to be admired.

The moderate life of virtue

6. Your members have been cleansed: do not let them be joined with the unclean members of a prostitute (1 Cor. 6: 15); do not defile a cleansed temple of God; do not make yourself alien to the Spirit. For the Holy Spirit will not dwell in an unclean temple (cf. 1 Cor. 3: 16-17). What fellowship does light have with darkness (2 Cor. 6: 14)? Do not use nature contrary to nature (cf. Rom. 1: 26). The law of nature recognizes the act of procreation: have relations with your wife only for the sake of procreation, and keep yourself from relations of pleasure. Marriage flees from fornication. You have been given a helper: make use of the pious institution so that you might be far from useless shame. Do not be presumptuous because Christ did not punish you today. For just as he is merciful, he repays later; that is, there is the time for patience, but the time that is coming belongs to the wrath. Do not become so fearless that you sin. For it is written: 'So speak and so act as those who will be judged by the law of freedom' (Jas. 2: 12). Moreover, the Apostle says to other people: 'If you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if <by> the Spirit you put to death <the works> of the body, you will live' (Rom. 8: 13). Speak with the Spirit, and the flesh will not prevail over you. 'Do not get drunk on wine', he said, 'in which there is intemperance. Rather, be completed in the Spirit, speaking with one another in psalms and singing psalms in your hearts to the Lord' (Eph. 5: 18-19). See: these are all the medicines of God's house, existing for the soul's healing. Often you hear the holy words and psalms: through them you will make your vows spiritually to the one who called you to eternal life. Flee the burnings of the flesh's ease: I am talking about the excess of wine at the dinner-parties in the drinking places; I am not saying that you should withdraw from everything entirely. For this is a bodily thing and a good symbol of the person bodily: that he drink a little should he need it, but not so that you make the abundant Spirit a stranger to the soul (cf. 1 Tim. 5: 23).

7. And I am not saying these things only to the person who has received the light, baptism, but I am commanding also the one who is going to receive. For just as it is necessary for the person who will receive the light to prepare himself so as to make himself worthy of the light that he will receive, so too let the person who has received be worthy of the light that he has received.²³ For let one fear that after the instruction he will be found unworthy of the instruction and so

²³ The translation of this sentence emends the text as suggested by Lefort (*Lettres festales*, 125 n. 45).

be judged to be unworthy of the cleansing. For he says: 'I did them in ignorance and lack of faith, but the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ abounded with faith and love' (1 Tim. 1: 13-14). But in your case, if you sin in the faith knowingly, fear lest you be deprived of grace; rather, prepare yourself day and night. What person will receive a king without having prepared his house in every way? What person whose house is dirty and polluted will receive a king when he comes? And so you who prepare yourself to receive a king when he comes, not for a single day but for your entire lifetime, have you sinned? Repentance cleanses and prepares the person for purification. For this reason John came, preparing the way of the Lord and commanding people to bear fruits worthy of repentance, so that they might flee from the coming wrath (cf. Luke 3: 7-8). Have you been baptized with the Holy Spirit? Do not return to sin: having renounced it, do not later return to it. Rather, recall the fearful judgement. Do not be like the dog that returns to its vomit nor like a sow that returns to rolling in the mud (2 Pet. 2: 22).

8. Perhaps you will reply and say, 'Nature compels me.' Give yourself to God's word and to frequent holy prayer, and do not seek after your relaxation too much, so that reason will seize the numerous passions of nature and prayer to God will put them to shame and you will supervise nature to the extent that is necessary to steer your body with intelligence, like a horse (cf. Jas. 3: 3). And do not show the creature that God made to be an abomination before him. For the craftsman does not want to see his work corrupted. Keep it whole so that it will stand before the Lord in this age and the next. Do not, for the sake of a little pleasure, make it a stranger to eternal blessing, in which all the saints now are. It is the Lord who created us and who is the physician for our ailments and the giver of the good things to come. He will prepare your zeal for the good and complete your race for salvation. For while we are in the body, brothers, repentance remains for us. Therefore, it is necessary for us to pray for one another, weeping and mourning for those who are strangers to the true God until they all know him without having come into his hands (cf. Heb. 10: 31). For it is a great shame and cause for weeping for a person to go forth from the body as an unbeliever to Jesus, the Son of the living God. Such a person is more wretched than everyone else. Would that we could weep for those who have died as strangers to God! But it is impossible to weep for our companions in the other place. For each person will bear his own burden (cf. Gal. 6: 5) and weep for his own sins if he has not repented here. It is a great wretch who will hear this voice: 'How have you entered this place without wearing a wedding garment?' (Matt. 22: 12) Beloved brothers, this is the place for us to fight in our behalf and to help ourselves, while the wedding garment is available to us. Therefore, let us not be negligent in our works. For the Scripture says: 'Cursed is the one who does the works of the Lord neglectfully' (Jer. 31 (48): 10). And again: 'Cursed is the person whose hope is in human beings' (Jer. 17: 5). Therefore, let us have the fear of God in all of our lifestyle, brothers, zealously completing the things that he has commanded us.

Orthodox Christology

9. Christ loved us in his great love and ascended a cross for our sake. As for us, brothers, let us not turn back and make ourselves wretched. For he is our salvation and true high priest. It is he through whom all things exist and without whom nothing came into being (John 1: 3). He is Jesus, the holy only-begotten, with whom his Father takes counsel: 'Let us make a human being according to our image and likeness' (Gen. 1: 26). It is he with whom his Father is always rejoicing. He is the Lord of all creation, having endured humiliation for the salvation of us humans and having taken flesh in our behalf in the womb of Mary the holy Virgin. He is true God from true God and true Light from true Light, having neither beginning nor end (cf. Heb. 7: 3). It is he to whose divinity the prophets testify when they cry out, saying: 'You are the same, and you are the same, and your years will not end' (Ps. 101 (102): 28). He is Jesus, the immortal one who died in the flesh on our behalf and died in behalf of the entire race of Adam. He became human by nature, like us, and died like us, in accordance with the dispensation of humanity. But he arose from the dead on the third day in accordance with the Scripture, went up to heaven in ineffable glory, and sat at the Father's right hand. He is Jesus, the Son of God, who entered Mary's womb by a Holy Spirit. It is he whom the Jews crucified, who arose again and appeared to his disciples. They thought that they saw a spirit, but he said to them: 'Touch me, and see that it is I and that a spirit does not have bones and flesh as you see that I have' (Luke 24: 39), teaching them that the bodies that will die are the ones that will rise again, those that have done good things to a resurrection of life, and those that have done evil things to a resurrection of condemnation (John 5: 29). His disciples believed that it was truly he who rose from the dead. Immediately they knelt down and worshipped him and knew without a doubt that he is the true God.

10. We too, beloved brothers, let us kneel with a true heart and worship him truly and his holy cross, for he is the Lord of all. And whoever believes in him truly will not be put to shame. He is Jesus, who took on flesh from a woman who had never known a man, that is Mary, the holy root, a virgin in her body and thinking. We too, beloved brothers, having put on Christ, let us remove ourselves from every evil: arrogance, quarrelling, enmity, injustice, cursing, thinking about any evil, sexual immorality, deceit, cruelty, boasting, hatred of the poor, hypocrisy, two-tonguedness, two-heartedness, slander, love of possessions, evil commerce, lack of mercy, small-heartedness, falsehood, stealing, theft, shamelessness, sloth, false swearing, murder, disobedience to any good person, disturbance, too much talking, envy, a human-killing tongue, hateful slave-trading, and similar things, for those who do these things will die in them and not inherit the kingdom of God (cf. 1 Cor. 6: 9-10; Gal. 5: 19-21; 1 Tim. 1: 9-10). Beloved brothers, truly it is a great shame for us, having known God, to remain in these evil works. For it is a great shame to hear that a layperson has sworn falsely by God's name over a trivial matter, not to mention a monk and the

children of the Church, or that one among them has done something leading to death and not turned away quickly. It would be better for them not to have known God than for them to know him and despise his commandments. The judgement of these people will take place at the judgement seat of Christ Jesus because after believing in him they have denied him by their works (cf. Titus 1: 16). But as for us, brothers, let us obey the teaching of our Lord and suffer for him so that we might be glorified with him and we too might be a single body in Christ Jesus.

The example of the martyrs

11. For indeed the martyrs were triumphant on account of Jesus. They did not want to deny him, for it was he who said: 'Whoever acknowledges me before human beings I will acknowledge before my Father in heaven, but whoever denies me before human beings I will deny before my Father who is in heaven' (Matt. 10: 32-3). Therefore, the martyrs, when they reached the time of persecution, befriended God through their good free will. And when the children of unbelief caught some of them, they brought them before the ruler in Alexandria and placed them before the judgement seat in his presence. Having stripped them of their garments, they clothed them in skins, just like thieves, and placed tortures before them. The torturers terrified them so that the ruler cried out to the martyrs: 'Obey the laws of your masters, the emperors, and revere them, for on account of their humanitarianism and their concern for you they advise you to worship the gods. So obey them and be saved from the evil death and give joy to us and to all who are watching you! For it is because of your disobedience that these tortures are here.'

12. When the martyrs heard these words, they lifted up their eyes to God, because they remembered Jesus, who died in their behalf and said: 'Do not fear those who will kill your bodies; they cannot kill your souls. Fear more the one who is able to destroy your soul and your body in fiery Gehenna' (Matt. 10: 28). And immediately they chose for themselves to die at the hands of human beings rather than go into the hands of the living God (cf. Heb. 10: 31), and they gave their bodies to the fire, others to the sword, others to the cross. Others were bound and given to the beasts and eaten, and others were tied to rocks and drowned in the sea. The eyes of others were plucked out. Men and women completed their martyrdom victoriously, truly trusting Jesus, that he would give them back again incorruptible their bodies, which had been destroyed on account of his holy name. Let it be for us all that we attain the forgiveness of our sins through the love for humans of our Lord Jesus Christ. Glory to the Father, with him and the Holy Spirit, the giver of life and of one substance, for ever and ever. Amen.

Festal Letters 24 (2), 29, 39, 40

Athanasius' Festal Letters survive fragmentarily in Greek, Syriac, and Coptic. The Greek and Syriac fragments have long been available in English translation.²⁴ The following letters, extant in Coptic, are translated into English for the first time. The translations are based on the Coptic texts edited by Lefort and Coquin.²⁵ Portions of these letters survive in Greek; translations of such portions are based on the Greek and are noted where they occur.

LETTER 24 (2) (330)²⁶

[The beginning of the text is lost.]

... but if this concern is for the truth. Let the truth be your concern, because the Holy Spirit, who has produced these Scriptures, is a trustworthy witness. Let the voice of Moses serve as truth for you when he says, 'Your life will hang before you' (Deut. 28: 66). Who can this be except he who says, 'I am the life' (John 14: 6)? For it is he whom the Jews did not believe, whom the executioners stripped, and whose clothes the soldiers divided. For this reason, the holy Jeremiah turned away from such people for the sake of piety, and it pleased him to walk alone (Jer. 15: 17), knowing that 'a single righteous person is greater than a large unjust crowd' (Prov. 16: 29) and also that 'a city is made populous by one righteous person, but it is overturned by a foolish crowd' (Prov. 11: 10-11), according to the word of the Proverbist.

Therefore, each of the saints, by fleeing the wide and broad way, has remained alone, living virtuously, like Elijah, Elisha, and the entire chorus of the prophets.

²⁴ Archibald Robertson (ed.), *Select Writings and Letters of Athanasius, Bishop of Alexandria* (NPNF, 2nd ser. 4; repr. Edinburgh, 1987), 506-53.

²⁵ Lefort, *Lettres festales*; R.-G. Coquin, 'Les Lettres festales d'Athanase (CPG 2102), Un nouveau complément: Le manuscrit IFAO copte 25', *OLP* 15 (1984), 133-58. Alberto Camplani is preparing a new critical edition of the *Festal Letters*, which will make use of all manuscripts in all language versions. In the meantime, translations such as this one must remain provisional.

²⁶ Lefort, *Lettres festales*, 37-42. This letter, actually the second, written for 330, has been mistakenly transmitted as the 24th *Festal Letter* (352). The letter of 352 was, in turn, transmitted in Coptic and Syriac as the second letter (for 330) and is so translated in Robertson, *Select Writings*, 510-12. The correct order of the *Festal Letters* can be found in Alberto Camplani, *Le Lettere festali di Atanasio di Alessandria: Studio storico-critico* (Rome, 1989), 195-6.

For even the great Moses is not outside such a testimony; rather, he too, when Dathan and Abiram rose up against him and accused him, fled from them and built his own tent, desiring to flee from their ignorance (Num. 16: 20-30). This is a sign that the person who is wise and a friend of God flees from the clamour of the people whose heart is in ease, through quietness and by casting off evil. And not only the saints that I have mentioned have loved quietness, but whoever wishes can learn from the Scriptures that the patriarch Isaac, who was filled with virtue, withdrew from the clamour of the crowds to converse with God for no other reason than so that his soul might be quiet, turn to itself, and be able in this way to please God. Thus too Jacob, who was great in discipline, was made worthy of the revelation of higher things only because he withdrew and became alone by fleeing from Esau in his temptations (Gen. 27: 41-28: 10, etc.).

You see, my beloved, how powerful are quietness and withdrawal from human beings in the troubles of life. You see how powerful is this kind of life and the pure conscience, for it makes the person a friend of God, like Abraham. For when he withdrew from the land of the Chaldeans, he was called 'the friend of God' (Jas. 2: 23). Moreover, the great Moses likewise, when he withdrew from the land of Egypt, that is, from the deeds of the earth that are close to darkness, he spoke with God face to face (Exod. 33: 11) and was saved from his enemies and passed through the desert. All these are shadows of the withdrawal 'from darkness to his marvellous light' (1 Pet. 2: 9) and the ascent to the city in heaven. They are patterns of the true joy and the eternal festival.

Even the ignorant Jews did not understand these things, and by their failure to recognize the pattern of the heavenly Jerusalem, they led astray their thoughts and the city, and they stumbled on the stumbling stone, who has become the cornerstone for everyone (Ps. 117 (118): 22; Matt. 21: 42) by binding to one another two people, the Jews and the Greeks, and indeed the entire race of humanity (Eph. 2: 11-12). The ignorant and fleshly Jews do not believe in him even until now: 'Being ignorant of the righteousness of God, they seek to establish it themselves, for they have not submitted to the righteousness of God. The fulfilment of the Law is Christ for the righteousness of everyone who hopes in him, the Jews first and the Greeks' (Rom. 10: 3-4; 1: 16), just as it was testified about our father Abraham that he found righteousness (Jas. 2: 23).

Lack of faith is a great evil, my beloved, just as faith is the mother of all the virtues. Both lack of faith and faith give birth, but lack of faith gives birth to evil and its forms while faith gives birth to hope and every virtue. Therefore, the unbeliever is the first to receive the punishment of the judgement from the place where the Lord says, 'Whoever believes in me will not be judged, but whoever does not believe has already been judged' (John 3: 18). The ruler of the synagogue, as it is written in the gospels, when he approached the Saviour, did not find the blessing for his daughter to have life again except through the entreaty and faith toward God (Mark 5: 22-43).

Indeed, it was the Jews alone who went astray willingly and so fell short of the

city. And by reading the Law outwardly, they became once and for all estranged from everything: they do not celebrate the Passover, nor do they perform the works of the Law; rather, even they remain unworthy. For by failing to arrive in time at the place where the Passover is sacrificed and continuing to eat the flesh of irrational animals, they have missed out on the rational nourishment of the true Lamb, our Lord Jesus Christ. He is 'the true bread that has come from heaven and gives life to the world' (John 6: 33, 41). Therefore, let the Jews go astray inasmuch as that is their desire, and let them make use of the irrational nourishment at the wrong time. But the truth is on our side, that which the shadows and patterns signified: that is, the image of the Father, our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we are nourished always and with whose blood the doors of our souls are anointed (cf. Exod. 12: 22).

We will be liberated from the works of Pharaoh and his taskmasters, not as it is written on the narrative level, for they are no longer present, but with respect to the works that those things signify, for through them we have been taught the truth. For at the time when the children of Israel slaughtered the irrational sheep, the first-born of their enemies died because God struck them (Exod. 12: 29); but now when we eat 'the bread that has come from heaven' (John 6: 33), the Word of the living God, death has become weak, so that it hears us asking it, 'Death, where is your judgement? Hell, where is your sting?' (Hos. 13: 14; 1 Cor. 15: 55) And in the past, when they went forth and passed from Egypt, their enemies became the sea's plaything; but now when we pass from earth to heaven, Satan himself at last falls from heaven like lightning (Luke 10: 18).²⁷ And formerly the Lord attracted them through Moses with a pillar of fire and a cloud; but now he calls us through himself, saying, 'Let whoever is thirsty come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture said, streams of living water will pour forth from that person, welling up to eternal life' (John 7: 37-8).

Therefore, let all people zealously and eagerly prepare to go to the festival; let them hear the Saviour inviting them. For it is he who is consoling everyone, each person at his or her door (Rev. 3: 20). Let whoever needs nourishment approach him, because he is the true bread (John 6: 32). And let whoever thirsts come to him, because he is the spring of living water (John 4: 10); whoever is sick, because he is the Word who heals the sick. If someone is weighed down by the burden of sin and reckons him to be oppressive, let that person run to him, because he is rest and the saving refuge. Let that person take courage in him who proclaimed, 'Come to me, all who are oppressed and burdened, and I will give you rest' (Matt. 11: 28). Let everyone who wants to keep the feast have this zeal and eagerness because we are going to him who is the feast. 'For Christ our Passover has been sacrificed for us' (1 Cor. 5: 7), as I said before.

And when we go to him, we will ask him, saying, 'Where do you want us to prepare the Passover for you?' (Mark 14: 12) Let the patterns of Moses suffice

²⁷ This sentence is quoted in Greek by Cosmas Indicopleustes; the translation is based on Cosmas' quotation (*Top.* 10. 4. 8-11 Wolska-Conus).

until now, shining light in the darkness before the day. But inasmuch as the sun has shone, let all darkness be scattered, and let all darkness be scattered by the light (cf. 1 John 2: 8). Let the Saviour himself inform us through a sign about the preparation of the Passover and the place where he fulfilled his desire along with his disciples when he says, 'Eagerly I have desired to eat the Passover with you before I die' (Luke 22: 15). The sign of the Passover is a man lifting up a jar of water and going into an upper room, which is furnished and cleansed (Luke 22: 10-12). No longer do the blood of goats and the ashes of heifers cleanse those who are defiled (Heb. 11: 13); rather, purity has come everywhere through the washing of rebirth (cf. Titus 3: 5). By this the feast of the Passover is fulfilled. In this way, Jesus ate the Passover with his disciples, and he will eat it with us, if we do not start eating and drinking in haste like the Jews and so abandon life and bring death on ourselves. Rather, let us stay with him as he grieves and accepts death (Matt 26: 38); let us take courage and believe that he will rise from the dead and come to judge the living and the dead. For when we thus receive the deposit of eternal joy from now on and the Lord is with us until the completion of this age (Matt. 28: 20), we will celebrate in heaven the perfect feast.

We will begin the holy fast on Phamenoth 13 (9 March), and after the week of the holy Lent on Pharmuthi 18 (13 April), we will cease fasting on the 23rd of the same month (18 April) on the very evening of the Sabbath. The holy Sunday dawns upon us on the 14th of the same month (19 April). Next we will reckon the seven weeks of the holy Pentecost, and during them we will celebrate the feast by doing what pleases God. For truly this is the feast: when sinners remove themselves from their evil lifestyle to the better one. Let us remember the poor and not forget hospitality; rather, let us clothe the naked and welcome those who have no homes into our houses. Before everything, let us have love for God and our neighbour and so fulfil the Law and the Prophets (Matt. 22: 40) and inherit the blessing through the only-begotten, our Lord Jesus Christ. Through him be glory and power to the Father forever, with the Holy Spirit for ever and ever. Amen.

Greet one another with a holy kiss. I pray that you might be saved in the Lord, my beloved brothers and sisters.

LETTER 29 (357)²⁶

[*The beginning of the text is lost.*]

. . . through impiety. Rather, Job, the man who loved God and accepted suffering, continued to stand in piety: he did not care about the destruction of his possessions, and he did not listen to his wife (cf. Job 1: 13-21; 2: 9-10). The one who induced all these things, the devil, brought upon himself great shame.

²⁶ Lefort, *Lettres festales*, 51-6.

Afflictions, trials, and persecutions are tests and trainings for the saints. Vindication follows them: the crown of righteousness, which is not received from human beings, but from God (cf. 2 Tim. 4: 8). For Solomon said, 'You will receive a silver crown upon your head and a gold necklace around your neck' (Prov. 1: 9). Therefore, who now among the saints has been testified to as righteous through affliction? Who has passed through the burning heat of this life and not undergone suffering and trials in the world? How can a person be remembered as believing in the things of heaven without having been tested by sufferings here? For the gate is narrow (Matt. 7: 14), and it is impossible for anyone to enter the kingdom of heaven without affliction (cf. Acts 14: 22).

Abraham suffered affliction when he saw that Lot and those of his house had become prisoners. The patriarch thus suffered affliction when he was forced to make war with those who had taken his people prisoner until he freed them from imprisonment (Gen. 14: 14-16). Moreover, Isaac was tested when the wells and places that he had laboured over were seized (Gen. 26: 17-22). Furthermore, Jacob likewise suffered affliction when Laban accused him and Esau sought to kill him (Gen. 29: 21-30; 27: 41). None the less, the afflictions that they received on account of upright faith in the Lord brought a great reward of such vindication that people are unable to compare anyone with them. For it is God who established everything and called himself their God, and he deemed worthy the people that came after them to be told about him, revealing himself to them in this way. For he said to the children of Israel: 'The Lord God of your ancestors, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob, has sent me to you. This is my name, eternal and to be remembered from generation to generation' (Exod. 3: 15).

For this reason Joseph was silent when he was plotted against by his brothers (Gen. 37: 12-28). And when he was blasphemed against in the house of the chief cook, he took courage and trusted in the God who judges righteously (Gen. 39: 6-23). And after a short time he became ruler over all Egypt, and his people were fed through him (Gen. 42-50). For he (God) promised and did not lie when he said, 'Whoever gives glory to me, I will give glory to them' (1 Sam. 2: 30). Moreover, Moses ran to him, and when he kept the faith, he received a reward more excellent than the treasures of Egypt. For he was called 'the friend of God' (Exod. 33: 11). 'And what will I say? For the time will prevent me from speaking', as Paul said, 'about Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel, and the rest of the prophets who prevailed over these kingdoms through faith' (Heb. 11: 32-3). And after they endured such sufferings on account of it—I mean faith—they did not receive the promises on earth. For God looks to what is *better for us so that they would not be perfected without us* (Heb. 11: 39-40).

Let us too endure like this, so that we might share in their sufferings. It is a good thing, brothers and sisters, for us to use the words of the Apostle and say, 'We have this multitude of witnesses laid up for us, and we see our ancestors who endured so many trials, as we look to the pioneer and perfecter of the faith, Jesus,

who, instead of the joy stored up for him, endured the cross and thought nothing of the shame' (Heb. 11: 1-2). I exhort you, just as the blessed Peter said, 'Do not marvel at the burning that is among us, which is a test for us, as if it were a new thing that has come upon us' (1 Pet. 4: 12). And even if the impious commit wicked acts more burdensome than these, let no one say the word that the Lord said that Zion said and for which he found fault with her, saying, 'Zion said, "God has abandoned me, and the Lord has forgotten me"' (Isa. 49: 14). For he did not permit the affliction to happen because he hates us, and he has not abandoned us because the lawless people are too strong; rather, he cares for us through the things that happen.

Therefore, take courage: 'God has not abandoned his people, whom he knew beforehand' (Rom. 11: 2). Speaking about those who are persecuted on account of the faith, he permits us to struggle, so that we might make clear the proof (cf. 1 Cor. 11: 19). For when the enemy asks that we be handed over to him, then the battle of the saints is directed against him. When there is need for an act of service in love for humanity or a testimony for those outside, then God himself—for he is good and the one who will do it for our salvation—tests his servants and trains them many times, either so that, as I said, their obedience might be even more manifest to everyone, or so that by their being diligent in whatever things by which he—I mean God—tests them for a little while, they might acquire for themselves a zeal of heart that defeats their enemies whenever the devil asks that he be allowed to tempt them.

In this way God tested the patriarch Abraham through the sacrifice of Isaac, by which it was made manifest to all people that the old man loved God more than anything, for Isaac, his only son, was everything to him (Gen. 22: 1-19; Heb. 11: 17-19). Moreover, the Lord trained his disciples by sleeping on the pillow when the marvel happened, which is able to put the impious to shame (Mark 4: 35-41). For when he arose and rebuked the sea and made the storm be silent, he revealed two things well: that the storm was not from the winds, but happened because of the fear of the Lord who walked on top of the sea; and that the Lord who rebuked it is not a created thing, but rather the Creator, for no created thing obeys its fellow creature. For if the Red Sea was divided by Moses, it was not Moses who performed the marvel. For he did not say, 'Let it be'; rather, it was God who commanded it. Moreover, if the sun stood still over Gibeon and the moon over the valley of Aijalon (Josh. 10: 12-14), this too was not a work of the son of Nun; rather, it belonged to the Lord who heard his prayer. Indeed, it is he who rebukes the sea and made the sun to set at the hour of the crucifixion (Luke 23: 44-5). Just as Moses remembered, he wandered with the people through the desert, made them hungry, caused them grief, and tested them, so that they would make manifest whether they loved the Lord our God or not. Moreover, it is written that the Lord left Hezekiah alone 'in order to test him and to find out everything that was in his heart' (2 Chr. 32: 31).

Such actions do not reveal hatred or forgetting; rather, they indicate the

Word's care and love for us. If he did not care for us, he would not do what is good. Inasmuch as he does good for us, he heals us like a good physician: there cannot be healing without pain. For he spoke to Zion, saying, "Will a mother forget her children and have no mercy for those begotten in her? Even if a woman should forget them, I will not forget you, Jerusalem", says the Lord' (Isa. 49: 15). For the love of God surpasses that of human beings. And the works of human beings cease, but the goodness of God is unceasing; therefore, when we die and our nature has become weak, he will raise us up and lead us who were made from earth up to heaven.²⁹

[The remainder of the text is lost.]

LETTER 39 (367)³⁰

[The beginning of the text is lost.]

. . . although alive, he came to those who are dead; and although God, he came to human beings. In this way those who sought him found him, and he was made manifest to those who did not question him. So too he became a light for the blind when he opened their eyes, and he became a staff for the lame when he healed them and they walked. Once and for all he became a teacher for everyone in everything.

For the teaching of the worship of God is not from human beings; rather, it is the Lord who reveals his Father to those whom he wishes, since it is he who knows him (Matt. 11: 27). And first he did this to the Apostles; one of them, Paul, writes to the Galatians: 'I am informing you, brothers and sisters, about the gospel that was proclaimed through me, that it is not of human origin, nor did I receive it from any human being, nor was I taught it; rather, it is according to a revelation of Jesus Christ' (Gal. 1: 11-12). Moreover, writing to those in Ephesus, he said, 'If you have heard about the working of the grace of God that has been given to me for you, how in a revelation I was informed about the mystery, just as I wrote to you earlier in a little bit as you are able, you desire to understand my teaching in the mystery of Christ, which was not revealed to the generations of the children of humanity as it has now been revealed to his prophets and holy apostles' (Eph. 3: 2-5).

Not they alone, brothers and sisters, are the ones to whom the Lord has become a teacher by revealing the mystery to them; rather, he is a teacher to us all. [For] Paul rejoices with his disciples that they have been taught about the gospel in this way. He prays in behalf of those in Ephesus that 'the God of our

²⁹ This sentence is quoted in Greek by Cosmas Indicopleustes; the translation is based on Cosmas' quotation (*Top.* 10. 6. 10-14 Wolska-Conus).

³⁰ Lefort, *Lettres festales*, 16-22, 58-62; Coquin, 'Lettres festales', 138-44.

Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, might give to you a spirit of wisdom and revelation in his knowledge' (Eph. 1: 17). The Apostle knows that we all share in this prayer that he made for them (the Ephesians), and not only at that former time. When the Lord reveals knowledge to human beings, it is he who commands forever, he who teaches humanity about knowledge, according to the word of the Psalmist (cf. Ps. 17 (18): 35; 93 (94): 10). It is he whom his disciples asked to teach them how to pray, and he who taught daily in the temple, as Luke said (Luke 11: 1; 19: 47). It is he whom his disciples asked, 'Teacher, when will these things happen, and what is the sign that all these things are going to be fulfilled?' (Matt. 24: 3) When his disciples asked him, 'Where do you want us to prepare to eat the Passover?' he answered, saying to them, 'Behold, when you enter this city, a man will meet you carrying a jar. Follow him into the house that he enters and say to the master of the house, "It is the Teacher who says to you, Where is my guest room where I will eat the Passover with my disciples?"' (Luke 22: 9-11)

Well indeed he spoke like this, for the name of Wisdom is fitting for him, because it is he alone who is the true Teacher. For who is to be trusted to teach human beings about the Father, except he who exists always in his bosom? (John 1: 18) Thus, who can convince those whom he teaches about 'things that eye has not seen nor ear heard nor have arisen upon the human heart' (1 Cor. 2: 9), except he who alone is acquainted with the Father and has established for us the way to enter the kingdom of heaven? Therefore he charged his disciples, just as Matthew said, 'Let none of you be called "Rabbi", for your Teacher is one and you are all brothers and sisters. And do not call for yourselves "Father" on earth, for your Father in heaven is one. And do not be called "Teacher", for your Teacher, Christ, is one. And the great one among you will be your servant' (Matt. 23: 8-11).

It is not fitting, brothers and sisters, that we should listen to the holy words carelessly. Therefore, why does the Apostle in one place call himself 'teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth' (1 Tim. 2: 7), and in other places say about the Lord, 'It is he who has made some apostles, others prophets, and some preachers, others pastors and teachers' (Eph. 4: 11)? And James commands, saying, 'Let not many be teachers, my brothers and sisters: you know that we will receive a more severe judgement than you all' (Jas. 3: 1). He did not say this as if there were no teachers, but as if there were some, although it was not necessary that there be teachers. While these people are speaking like this, it is written in the gospel that the Lord commanded that we not be called 'Rabbi' and that no one be called 'Teacher' except the Lord alone.

While I was examining these (passages), a thought occurred to me that requires your scrutiny. What I thought is this: The task of the teacher is to teach, and that of the disciple to learn. But even if these people teach, they are still called 'disciples', for it is not they who are the originators of what they proclaim; rather, they are at the service of the words of the true Teacher. For our Lord and

God Jesus Christ, wanting to inform us of this, said (to) his disciples, 'What I say to you in the darkness, receive in the light, and what you hear with your ears, proclaim upon the rooftops' (Matt. 10: 27). For the words that the disciples proclaim do not belong to them; rather, they heard them from the Saviour. Therefore, even if it is Paul who is teaching, it is nevertheless Christ who is speaking in him. And even if he says that the Lord has appointed teachers in the churches (1 Cor. 12: 28), he (the Lord) nevertheless first teaches them and then sends them out.

For the nature of everyone who is of the created order is to be taught, but our Lord and Craftsman (demiurge) is by nature a teacher. For he was not taught by another person how to be a teacher; but all human beings, even if they are called 'Teacher', were nevertheless disciples first. Moreover, every (human being) is instructed because the Saviour supplies them with the knowledge of the Spirit, so that they might be students of God. But our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, being the Word of the Father, was not instructed by anyone.

Rightly he alone is the Teacher, as I have said, so that the Jews were astonished when they heard him and said, 'How does he know the Scriptures without being taught?' (John 7: 15) Therefore, when he was teaching in the synagogue and healing the sick, the Jews persecuted him. Therefore, 'from their feet to their head they do not lack wounds nor bruises' (Isa. 1: 6); rather, such punishment came upon them as a great madness. For 'they have not understood', as it is written, 'nor have they learned wisdom; rather, they walk in darkness' (Ps. 81 (82): 5). And, following them, those from the heresies who have caught up to them, namely the wretched Melitians, by denying him, have walked in waterless places and have abandoned the spring of life (cf. Luke 11: 24). Therefore, even if they talk about the Passover hypocritically for the sake of the glory of human beings, their gathering is a bread of mourning, for they take counsel evilly against the truth, so that whoever sees such a gathering speaks the word that is written as suited to them: 'Why have the nations become arrogant, and why have the peoples worried about vain things?' (Ps. 2: 1) For the Jews gather together like Pontius Pilate, and the Arians and the Melitians like Herod, not to celebrate the feast, but to blaspheme the Lord, saying, 'What is truth?' (John 18: 38) And also: 'Take him away! Crucify him! Release to us Barabbas!' (Luke 23: 18) For it is just like the request for Barabbas to say that the Son of God is a creature and that there was a time when he was not. As for them, it is no surprise that they have remained dead in their unbelief by being bound by their evil thoughts, just as the Egyptians were bound by their own axles (Exod. 14: 25).

But for our part, let us now keep the feast according to the tradition of our ancestors, since we have the Holy Scriptures, which are sufficient to instruct us perfectly. When we read them carefully with a good conscience, we will be 'like the tree that grows upon places of flowing water, which brings forth its fruit in its season and whose leaves do not wither' (Ps. 1: 3). But¹¹ inasmuch as we have

¹¹ Here the extant Greek text begins. The translation is now based on the Greek text edited by Périclès-Pierre Joannou, *Les Canons des pères grecs* (Rome, 1963), 71-6.

mentioned that the heretics are dead but we have the divine Scriptures for salvation, and we are afraid that, as Paul wrote to the Corinthians (2 Cor. 11: 3), a few of the simple folk might be led astray from sincerity and purity through human deceit and might then begin to read other books, the so-called apocrypha, deceived by their having the same names as the genuine books, I exhort you to bear with me if, to remind you, I write about things that you already know, on account of the Church's need and advantage.

As I begin to mention these things, in order to commend my undertaking, I will employ the example of Luke the evangelist and say myself: 'Inasmuch as certain people have attempted' (Luke 1: 1) to set in order for themselves the so-called apocryphal books and to mix these with the divinely inspired Scripture, about which we are convinced it is just as those who were eyewitnesses from the beginning and assistants of the Word handed down to our ancestors, it seemed good to me, since I have been urged by genuine brothers and sisters and instructed from the beginning, to set forth in order the canonized and transmitted writings, those believed to be divine books, so that those who have been deceived might condemn the persons who led them astray, and those who have remained pure might rejoice to be reminded (of these things).

There are, then, belonging to the Old Testament in number a total of 22, for, as I have heard, it has been handed down that this is the number of the letters in the Hebrew alphabet. In order and by name they are as follows: first Genesis; then Exodus; then Leviticus; and after this, Numbers; and finally, Deuteronomy. After these is Joshua, the son of Nun; and Judges; and after this, Ruth; and again, next four books of Kings, the first and second of these being reckoned as one book, and the third and fourth likewise being one. After these are First and Second Chronicles, likewise reckoned as one book; then First and Second Esdras, likewise as one. After these is the Book of Psalms; and then Proverbs; then Ecclesiastes and the Song of Songs. After these is Job; and finally the Prophets, the twelve being reckoned as one book; then Isaiah, Jeremiah and with it, Baruch; Lamentations and the Letter; and after it, Ezekiel and Daniel. To this point are the books of the Old Testament.

Again, one should not hesitate to name the books of the New Testament. For these are the four Gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John; then after these, Acts of the Apostles and seven letters, called catholic, by the apostles, namely: one by James; two by Peter; then three by John; and after these, one by Jude. After these there are fourteen letters by Paul, written in this order: first to the Romans; then two to the Corinthians; and after these, to the Galatians; and next to the Ephesians; then to the Philippians and to the Colossians; and after these, two to the Thessalonians; and that to the Hebrews; and additionally, two to Timothy, one to Titus, and finally that to Philemon. And besides, the Revelation of John.

These are the springs of salvation, so that someone who thirsts may be satisfied by the words they contain. In these books alone the teaching of piety is

proclaimed. Let no one add to or subtract from them (cf. Deut. 12: 32 (13: 1)). Concerning them the Lord put the Sadducees to shame when he said, 'You err because you do not know the Scriptures or their meaning' (Matt. 22: 29), and he reproved the Jews, 'Search the Scriptures, for it is they which testify to me' (John 5: 39).

But for the sake of greater accuracy, I add this, writing from necessity. There are other books, in addition to these, which have not been canonized, but have been appointed by the ancestors to be read to those who newly join us and want to be instructed in the word of piety: the Wisdom of Solomon, the Wisdom of Sirach, Esther, Judith, Tobit, the book called Teaching of the Apostles, and the Shepherd.

Nevertheless, the former books are canonized; the latter are (only) read; and there is no mention of the apocryphal books. Rather (the category of apocrypha) is an invention of heretics, who write these books whenever they want and then grant and bestow on them dates, so that, by publishing them as if they were ancient, they might have a pretext for deceiving the simple folk.³² Great is the hardheartedness of those who do this and do not fear the word that is written: 'You shall not add to the word that I command you, nor shall you subtract from it' (Deut. 12: 32 (13: 1)). Who has made the simple folk believe that those books belong to Enoch even though no Scriptures existed before Moses? On what basis will they say there is an apocryphal book of Isaiah? He preaches openly on the high mountain and says, 'These words are not hidden or in a dark land' (Isa. 45: 19). How could Moses have an apocryphal book? He is the one who published Deuteronomy with heaven and earth as witnesses (Deut. 4: 26; 30: 19). No, this can be nothing except 'itchy ears' (2 Tim. 4: 3), trading in piety, and the pleasing of women. Paul spoke about such people beforehand when he wrote to his disciple: 'A time will come when they will not keep to the salvific teaching, but according to their own desire they will produce teachers for themselves, when their ear will itch, and they will turn their ears away from the truth and go after myths' (2 Tim. 4: 3-4). For truly the apocryphal books are filled with myths, and it is a vain thing to pay attention to them, because their voices are empty and polluted. For they are the beginning of discord, and strife is the goal of people who do not seek what is beneficial for the Church, but who desire to receive compliments from those whom they lead astray, so that, by publishing new discourses, they will be considered great people.

Therefore, it is fitting for us to decline such books. For even if a useful word is found in them, it is still not good to trust them. For this is a work of the wickedness of those who have conceived of mixing one or two inspired texts so that, through such deception, they might somehow cover up the the evil teachings that they have clearly created. Therefore, it is even more fitting for us to reject such books, and let us command ourselves not to proclaim anything in them nor to speak anything in them with those who want to be instructed, even

³² Here the extant Greek text ends. The translation returns to the Coptic text.

if there is a good word in them, as I have said. For what do the spiritual Scriptures lack that we should seek after these empty voices of unknown people? It is appropriate for us to cite the text that is written about them: 'Is there no balm in Gilead nor physician there?' (Jer. 8: 22) and again 'Of what profit to you is the road to Egypt so that you drink the troubled water from Gehon?' and again 'Of what profit to you is the way to Assyria that you drink the water from their rivers?' (Jer. 2: 18)

Therefore, if we seek the faith, it is possible for us to discover it through them (the Scriptures), that is, we believe in Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Or on the subject of his humanity, John cried out, 'The Word became flesh and lived among us' (John 1: 14). And on the subject of the resurrection, the Lord put to shame the Sadducees, saying, 'Have you not read what is said to you by God, saying, "I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob"? He is not the God of the dead, but of the living' (Matt. 22: 31-2). On the subject of the coming judgement, it is written, 'We shall all stand . . .' (Rom. 14: 10)

[The text is missing here.]

. . . among human beings? Who among those who have no hope could at all think that the Word would become flesh (cf. Eph. 2: 12; 1 Thess. 4: 13; John 1: 14)? Have the things in God's heart arisen upon the heart of human beings (1 Cor. 2: 19)? When has anyone known his heart (Rom. 11: 34; 1 Cor. 2: 16)?

[. . .] and 'these are the things that he proclaimed' or 'as he said' or 'Isaiah charges and says' and 'as David says' and also 'Moses says beforehand' and again 'the Scripture says that Elijah was'. Even if it says 'as it is written', it does not make clear where the text is written or who proclaimed it. Rather, we are the ones who read and learn where it is written in the (Hebrew) Scriptures. And this text, 'What eye has not seen . . .' (1 Cor. 2: 9), we do not find written in the Scripture as it is. But if it is extant in the apocryphal books as the heretics says, then those who invented these books have secretly stolen from the words of Paul and written it at a later time.

Therefore, inasmuch as it is clear that the testimony from the apocryphal books is superfluous because it is unfounded—for the Scripture is perfect in every way—let the teacher teach from the words of the Scripture, and let him place before those who desire to learn those things that are appropriate to their age. In the case of those who begin to study as catechumens, it is not right to proclaim the obscure texts in the Scripture, since they are mysteries, but instead to place before them the teaching that they need: what will teach them how to hate sin and to abandon idol-worship as an abomination. The wisdom . . .

[The text is missing here.]

. . . in the Scriptures. I am satisfied that this will remind you, so that, when you take for yourselves the saints as patterns and administer well the words of the

Holy Scriptures, you will hear sometime, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! Since you are trustworthy in small things, I will place you over great things' (Matt. 25: 21, 23).

For I have not written these things as if I were teaching, for I have not attained such a rank. Rather, because I heard that the heretics, particularly the wretched Melitians, were boasting about the books that they call 'apocryphal', I thus have informed you of everything that I heard from my father (Bishop Alexander of Alexandria), as if I were with you and you with me in a single house, i.e. the Church of the living God, the pillar and strength of truth. When we gather in a single place, let us purify it (the Church) of every defilement, of double-heartedness, of fighting and childish arrogance. Let us be satisfied with only the Scripture inspired by God to instruct us. Its books we have set forth in the words above: which they are and how many their number. For in this way we now celebrate the feast as is fitting, not with old leaven nor with evil or wicked leaven, but with pure and true leaven (1 Cor. 5: 8).

We will begin the holy Lent on the 25th of the month of Mechir (19 Feb.), and the great week of the saving Passover on the last of the month of Phamenoth (26 March). And we will finish the holy fast on the 5th of the month of Pharmuthi (31 March). And next we will celebrate the seven weeks of the holy Pentecost, remembering the poor and sharing with one another and with the needy, in accordance with the word of Esdra (2 Esd. (Neh.) 8: 10). Once and for all we do everything, glorifying God, in accordance with the command of Paul in Christ Jesus our Lord, through whom be glory and power with the Holy Spirit for ever and ever. Amen.

Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the brothers and sister with me greet you.

I inform you of this as well: that when the blessed Lampon, bishop of Darnéi, fell asleep, [. . .] was appointed . . .

[*The remainder of the text is lost.*]

LETTER 40 (368)³³

[*The beginning of the text is lost.*]

. . . electing clergy for other dioceses that are not theirs. This is nothing other than biting and eating one another and destroying one another if they do not cease doing this (Gal. 5: 15). For from lawlessness like this come strife, envy, and irritation, then reasons for schism. Not only the churches are disturbed by them, but the monasteries as well, for such hastiness reaches even them. Who indeed has commanded them to do this? From what Scripture is this taught? They

³³ Lefort, *Lettres festales*, 22-3; Coquin, 'Lettres festales', 144-6.

cannot answer, for they have nothing to say. Rather, they are doing this on account of some profit, 'being lured and led astray by their own desire' (Jas. 1: 14).

For everything stands in good order, and every created thing remains as it was established, as it is written: 'The sun knows its place of setting', and the moon keeps the beginning of evening without changing its course (Ps. 103 (104): 19; Hab. 3: 11). And 'the river waters he gave a course to run through', according to the word of the Psalmist, 'and they do not turn aside to cover up the ground' (Ps. 103 (104): 9), and 'he apportioned the mountains with a measure and the shores with a balance' (Isa. 40: 12). The body, as Paul says, God composed, 'having given greater honour to the inferior part, lest there be division in it, but that the members might care for one another' (1 Cor. 12: 24-5). Therefore, inasmuch as all created things are well ordered, nothing abuses its neighbour or takes another's needs. But the tasks of the Church have their own clergy: how is it not a work full of shame that the priests are doing? How will someone not condemn us justly when we do not keep the rules given us?

But the example of Paul is not like this. For when he completed the ministry given to him, he boasted and taught us to pay attention. For he writes to the Corinthians, saying, 'I will not boast in myself beyond limit, but rather according to the limit of the rule God apportioned to us, so that we might reach even to you. For we we did not reach you and so divide ourselves. We reached you in the gospel of Christ. We do not boast beyond the limit of labours . . .' (2 Cor. 10: 13-15).

[*The text is missing here.*]

. . . For after what it proclaimed to condemn such people, it revealed also this word to us plainly, saying, 'For if there come to be many houses among you, they will become desolate, the great and good ones, and there will be no inhabitants in them' (Isa. 5: 9). For such a thing will be reckoned as nothing, as the Teacher taught us and the Prophet indicated beforehand.

And as for the others who think that they have been elected, let them learn that they have been mocked and they will receive a great judgement, they along with those who have named them bishops, because they have [. . .] God [. . .] changed it, being disturbed. Therefore, those who have become the leaders of such a disturbance are schismatics. Even if they act as though they fast and proclaim the name of the festival, it is nevertheless impossible for them to keep the feast or to eat the true Passover. For how can there be a festival for those who oppose the word of the Apostle who says, 'Let all things be done decently and in order' (1 Cor. 14: 40)? They mix the wine and water like tavern-keepers, and they are transgressors in everything.

But as for you, brothers and sisters, because you have become a people for life and you keep the share of the faith that our ancestors gave to you, and because

you have been called from darkness into light (1 Pet. 2: 9) and have destroyed all the evil and wicked leaven, let us therefore celebrate the feast with pure and true leaven (1 Cor. 5: 8).

We will begin the holy Lent on the 14th of the month of Phamenoth (10 March) and the great week of the Passover on the 19th of Pharmuthi (14 April). We finish the holy fast on the 24th of the same month of Pharmuthi (19 April) on the eve of the Sabbath. And we will celebrate the festival on Sunday the 25th (20 April). We will join the additional seven weeks of the holy Pentecost in Christ Jesus our Lord. Through him be glory and power to the Father for ever and ever. Amen.

Greet one another with a holy kiss. The brothers and sisters with me greet you.

I have been eager to inform you of this as well: that in place of Sun [. . .] Isidore has been established in place of Dracontius, Isaac in place of Agathos, Ammon in place of Didymus, Epiphanius in place of Agathos-Daimon, Sarapion in place of Leonites, Isaiah in place of Mark, and in Marmarike of Libya Loucius—and all these men are ascetics, being in the life of monasticism—and Sarapammon in place of Nammon, and in place of [. . .] Write to them and receive from them writings of peace as is customary.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

I. PRIMARY SOURCES: INDIVIDUAL AUTHORS

- AMMON, *The Letter of Ammon and Pachomian Monasticism*, ed. James E. Goehring (Patristische Texte und Studien, 27; Berlin, 1986).
- ANTONY, *The Letters of St. Antony the Great*, tr. Derwas J. Chitty (Oxford, 1975).
- ATHANASIUS, *Contra Gentes and De Incarnatione*, ed. and tr. R. W. Thomson (Oxford Early Christian Texts; Oxford, 1971).
- *Deux apologies*, ed. and tr. J. M. Szymusiak (rev. edn.; SC 56; Paris, 1987).
- *The Festal Epistles of S. Athanasius*, tr. Henry Burgess (Library of Fathers of the Holy Catholic Church, 38; Oxford, 1854).
- [Festal Letters], ed. and tr. R.-G. Coquin, 'Les Lettres festales d'Athanase (CPG 2102), Un nouveau complément: Le manuscrit IFAO copte 25', *OLP* 15 (1984), 133–58.
- [Festal Letters], ed. and tr. R.-G. Coquin and E. Lucchesi, 'Un complément au corps copte des lettres festales d'Athanase', *OLP* 13 (1982), 137–42.
- *The Festal Letters of Athanasius*, ed. William Cureton (London, 1848).
- [Letter to Monks], ed. G. de Jerphanion, 'La Vraie Teneur d'un texte de Saint Athanase rétablie par l'épigraphie', *RSR* 20 (1930), 529–44.
- [(Second) Letter to Virgins], ed. and tr. J. Lebon, 'Athanasiana Syriaca II: Une lettre attribuée à saint Athanase d'Alexandrie', *Mus.* 41 (1928), 169–216.
- *Lettres festales et pastorales en copte*, ed. and tr. L. Th. Lefort (2 vols.; CSCO 150–1; Louvain, 1955).
- *The Life of Antony and the Letter to Marcellinus*, tr. Robert C. Gregg (Classics of Western Spirituality; New York, 1980).
- [On Virginity], ed. and tr. R. P. Casey, 'Der dem Athanasius zugeschriebene Traktat Περὶ παρθενίας', *Sitzungsberichte der Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Philosophisch-historische Klasse*, 33 (1935), 1022–45.
- [On Virginity], ed. and tr. J. Lebon, 'Athanasiana Syriaca I: Un Λόγος περὶ παρθενίας attribué à saint Athanase d'Alexandrie', *Mus.* 40 (1927), 205–48.
- *Opera Omnia* (PG 25–8).
- *Select Writings and Letters of Athanasius, Bishop of Alexandria*, ed. Archibald Robertson (NPNF, 2nd ser. 4; repr. Edinburgh, 1987).
- *Vie d'Antoine*, ed. G. J. M. Bartelink (SC 400; Paris, 1994).
- *Werke*, ed. Hans-Georg Opitz (3 vols.; Berlin, 1935–41).
- *Der zehnte Osterfestbrief des Athanasius von Alexandrien: Text, Übersetzung, Erläuterungen*, ed. and tr. Rudolf Lorenz (Berlin, 1986).
- AUGUSTINE, *Confessions*, tr. R. S. Pine-Coffin (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, 1961).

- CASSIAN, JOHN, *Les Conférences*, ed. and tr. E. Pichery (3 vols.; SC 42, 54, 64; Paris, 1953-9).
- *Les Institutions cénobitiques*, ed. and tr. J. C. Guy (SC 109; Paris, 1965).
- Constitutions apostoliques*, ed. and tr. Marcel Metzger (3 vols.; SC 320, 329, 336; Paris, 1985-7).
- COSMAS INDICOPLEUSTES, *Topographie chrétienne*, ed. and tr. Wanda Wolska-Conus (SC 197; Paris, 1973).
- 'Une curieuse homélie grecque inédite sur la virginité adressée aux pères de famille', ed. and tr. David Amand de Mendieta and Matthieu-Charles Moons, *R. Bén.* 63 (1953), 18-69, 211-38.
- CYPRIAN, *De habitu virginum*, ed. and tr. A. E. Keenan (Patristic Studies, 34; Washington, DC, 1932).
- *The Letters of St Cyprian of Carthage*, ed. and tr. G. W. Clarke (4 vols.; ACW 43-4, 46-7; New York, 1984-9).
- The Didascalia Apostolorum in Syriac*, ed. and tr. Arthur Vööbus (2 vols. in 4; CSCO 401-2, 407-8; Louvain, 1979).
- EGERIA, *Egeria's Travels to the Holy Land*, tr. John Wilkinson (rev. edn.; Jerusalem, 1981).
- EPIPHANIUS, *Panarion*, ed. K. Holl and J. Dummer (3 vols.; GCS 25, 31², 37²; Leipzig and Berlin, 1915, 1980, 1985).
- *The 'Panarion' of St. Epiphanius of Salamis: Selected Passages*, tr. Philip R. Amidon, SJ (New York and Oxford, 1990).
- EVAGRIUS PONTICUS, *Scholies aux Proverbes*, ed. and tr. Paul Géhin (SC 340; Paris, 1987).
- GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS, *Discours 20-23*, ed. and tr. J. Mossay and G. Lafontaine (SC 270; Paris, 1980).
- GREGORY THAUMATURGOS, *Des Gregorios Thaumaturgos Dankrede an Origenes*, ed. P. Koetschau (Sammlung ausgewählter Quellenschriften zur Kirchen- und Dogmengeschichte, 9; Freiburg, 1894).
- Historia Monachorum in Aegypto*, ed. A. J. Festugière (Subsidia Hagiographica, 34; Brussels, 1961).
- The Lives of the Desert Fathers: The Historia Monachorum in Aegypto*, tr. Norman Russell (London and Oxford, 1980).
- METHODIUS, *Le Banquet*, ed. and tr. Herbert Musurillo (SC 95; Paris, 1963).
- ORIGEN, *Contra Celsum*, tr. Henry Chadwick (Cambridge, 1965).
- *Entretien d'Origène avec Héraclide et les évêques ses collègues sur le père, le fils, et l'âme*, ed. J. Scherer (Publications de la Société Fouad I de Papyrologie: Textes et documents, 9; Cairo, 1949).
- *An Exhortation to Martyrdom, Prayer, First Principles: Book IV, Prologue to the Commentary on the Song of Songs, Homily XXVII on Numbers*, tr. Rowan A. Greer (Classics of Western Spirituality; New York, 1979).
- *Die Homilien zu Lukas in der Übersetzung des Hieronymus und die griechischen Reste der Homilien und des Lukas-Kommentars*, ed. Max Rauer (GCS 49; Berlin, 1959).

- *Homilien zum Hexateuch in Rufins Übersetzung*, ed. W. A. Baehrens (GCS 30; Leipzig, 1921).
- *Homilies on Genesis and Exodus*, tr. Ronald E. Heine (Fathers of the Church, 71; Washington, 1982).
- *On First Principles*, tr. G. W. Butterworth (repr. Gloucester, Mass., 1973).
- PALLADIUS, *The Lausiaca History of Palladius*, ed. C. Butler (2 vols.; Cambridge, 1898–1904).
- PLUTARCH, *Conjugal Precepts*, in *Plutarch's Moralia*, tr. Frank Cole Babbitt (LCL; 15 vols.; Cambridge, Mass., 1927–8), 2. 298–343.
- PSEUDO-ATHANASIUS, *The Canons of Athanasius, Patriarch of Alexandria*, ed. and tr. W. Riedel and W. E. Crum (Text and Translation Society, 9; London, 1904).
- [Concerning Brothers Who Came to Us], ed. and tr. Arnold van Lantschoot, 'Une allocution à des moines en visite chez S. Athanase', *Angelicum*, 20 (1943), 249–53.
- PSEUDO-HIPPOLYTUS, *Les Canons d'Hippolyte: Édition critique de la version arabe, introduction et traduction française*, ed. and tr. René-Georges Coquin, *PO* 31. 2 (1966).
- SAWIRUS IBN AL-MUQAPPA', *History of the Patriarchs of the Coptic Church of Alexandria*, ed. and tr. B. Evetts, *PO* 1 (1907).
- SERAPION OF THMUIS, 'Une lettre de Sérapion de Thmuis aux disciples d'Antoine (A.D. 356) en version syriaque et arménienne', ed. and tr. René Draguet, *Mus.* 64 (1951), 1–25.
- SILVANUS, *Les Leçons de Silvanos (NH VII, 4)*, ed. and tr. Yvonne Janssens (Bibliothèque copte de Nag Hammadi 'Textes', 13; Quebec, 1983).
- SOZOMEN, *Kirchengeschichte*, ed. Joseph Bidez and Günther Christian Hansen (2nd edn.; GCS 50; Berlin, 1960).
- SYNESIUS OF CYRENE, *Epistolae*, ed. Antony Garzya (Rome, 1979).
- THEODORET OF CYRRHUS, *Kirchengeschichte*, ed. Léon Parmentier and Felix Scheidweiler (GCS 44; Berlin, 1954).

2. PRIMARY SOURCES: COLLECTIONS

- AMÉLINEAU, E. (ed.), *Monuments pour servir à l'histoire de l'Égypte chrétienne au IV^e siècle: Histoire de Saint Pakhôme et des ses communautés* (Annales du Musée Guimet, 17; Paris, 1889).
- BELI, H. IDRIS (ed. and tr.), *Jews and Christians in Egypt: The Jewish Troubles in Alexandria and the Athanasian Controversy Illustrated by Texts from Greek Papyri in the British Museum* (London, 1924).
- BURNS, JOHN W. B. et al. (eds.), *Nag Hammadi Codices: Greek and Coptic Papyri from the Cartonnage of the Covers* (Nag Hammadi Studies, 16; Leiden, 1981).
- CHARLESWORTH, JAMES H. (ed.), *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* (2 vols.; Garden City, NY, 1983).
- DEISSMANN, ADOLF (ed.), *Light From the Ancient East: The New Testament*

Bibliography

- Illustrated by Recently Discovered Texts of the Greco-Roman World*, tr. Lionel R. M. Strachan (rev. edn.; New York, 1927).
- DIEKAMP, FRANZ (ed.), *Analecta Patristica: Texte und Abhandlungen zur griechischen Patristik* (Orientalia Christiana Analecta, 117; Rome, 1938).
- HALKIN, F. (ed.), *Sancti Pachomii Vitae Graecae* (Subsidia Hagiographica, 19; Brussels, 1932).
- JOANNOU, PÉRICLÉS-PIERRE (ed. and tr.), *Les Canons des pères grecs*, vol. 2 of *Fonti: Discipline générale antique (IV^e-IX^e s.)* (Rome, 1963).
- KANNENGIESSER, CHARLES (ed.), *Early Christian Spirituality*, tr. Pamela Bright (Sources of Early Christian Thought; Philadelphia, 1986).
- KOCH, HUGO (ed. and tr.), *Quellen zur Geschichte der Askese und des Mönchtums in der alten Kirche* (Tübingen, 1933).
- LAYTON, BENTLEY (ed. and tr.), *The Gnostic Scriptures: A New Translation with Annotations and Introductions* (Garden City, NY, 1987).
- LEFORT, L. TH., 'Fragments d'apocryphes en copte-akhimique', *Mus.* 52 (1939), 1-10.
- (ed.), *Œuvres de s. Pachôme et de ses disciples* (CSCO 159; Louvain, 1956).
- (ed.), *S. Pachomii Vita Bohairice Scripta* (CSCO 89; Paris, 1925-36).
- (ed.), *S. Pachomii Vitae Sahidice Scriptae* (2 vols.; CSCO 99-100; Paris, 1933-4).
- (ed. and tr.), *Les Vies coptes de saint Pachôme et de ses premiers successeurs* (Bibliothèque du Muséon, 16; Louvain, 1943).
- MARTIN, ANNIK, with ALBERT, MICHELINE (eds. and trs.), *Histoire 'acéphale' et index syriaque des lettres festales d'Athanase d'Alexandrie* (SC 317; Paris, 1985).
- MITTEIS, L., and WILCKEN, U. (eds.), *Grundzüge und Chrestomathie der Papyrskunde* (2 vols. in 4; repr. Hildesheim, 1963).
- MUNIER, HENRI (ed. and tr.), *Recueil des listes épiscopales de l'église copte* (Publications de la Société d'archéologie copte: Textes et documents; Cairo, 1943).
- NALDINI, MARIO (ed. and tr.), *Il Cristianesimo in Egitto: Lettere private nei papiri dei secoli II-IV* (Studi e testi di papirologia, 3; Florence, 1968).
- REVILLOUT, EUGÈNE (ed.), 'Le Concile de Nicée, d'après les textes coptes', *Journal asiatique*, 7th ser. 1 (1873), 210-88.
- RIEDEL, WILHELM (ed. and tr.), *Die Kirchenrechtsquellen des Patriarchats Alexandrien* (repr. Darmstadt, 1968).
- VEILLEUX, ARMAND (ed. and tr.), *Pachomian Koïnonia* (3 vols.; Cistercian Studies 45-7; Kalamazoo, Mich., 1980-2).
- WIMBUSH, VINCENT L. (ed.), *Ascetic Behavior in Greco-Roman Antiquity: A Sourcebook* (Studies in Antiquity and Christianity; Minneapolis, 1990).
- YOUTIE, H. C., 'Short Texts on Papyrus', *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik*, 37 (1980), 211-26.

3. SECONDARY SOURCES

- ACHELIS, H., 'Agapetae', *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, 1. 177-80.
 — *Virgines Subintroductae: Ein Beitrag zum VII. Kapitel des I. Korintherbriefs* (Leipzig, 1902).
- ARIÈS, PHILIPPE, and BÉJIN, ANDRÉ (eds.), *Western Sexuality: Practice and Precept in Past and Present Times*, tr. Anthony Forster (*Family, Sexuality, and Social Relations in Past Times*; Oxford, 1985).
- ARNOLD, DUANE WADE-HAMPTON, *The Early Episcopal Career of Athanasius of Alexandria* (*Christianity and Judaism in Antiquity*, 6; Notre Dame, Ind., 1991).
- BACHT, HEINRICH, 'Mönchtum und Kirche: Eine Studie zur Spiritualität des Pachomius', in Jean Daniélou and Herbert Vorgrimler (eds.), *Sentire Ecclesiam: Das Bewusstsein von der Kirche als Gestaltende Kraft der Frömmigkeit* (Freiburg, 1961), 113-32.
 — *Das Vermächtnis des Ursprungs*, vol. 1 of *Studien zum frühen Mönchtum* (Würzburg, 1972).
- BADGER, CARLTON MILLS, JR., 'Athanasius and the Pachomians', paper read at the General Meeting of the North American Patristics Society, Chicago, May 1992.
 — 'The New Man Created in God: Christology, Congregation and Asceticism in Athanasius of Alexandria', Ph.D. thesis (Duke, 1990).
- BAGNALL, ROGER S., *Egypt in Late Antiquity* (Princeton, 1993).
- BALCH, DAVID L., *Let Wives Be Submissive: The Domestic Code in I Peter* (SBLMS 26; Chico, Calif., 1981).
- BARDY, GUSTAVE, 'Aux origines de l'école d'Alexandrie', *RSR* 27 (1937), 65-90.
- BARNARD, L. W., 'Athanasius and the Emperor Jovian', *SP* 21 (1987), 384-9.
 — 'Athanasius and the Meletian Schism in Egypt', *JEA* 59 (1973), 181-9.
 — 'The Date of S. Athanasius' Vita Antonii', *VC* 28 (1974), 169-75.
- BARNES, TIMOTHY D., *Athanasius and Constantius: Theology and Politics in the Constantinian Empire* (Cambridge, Mass., and London, 1993).
 — 'The Career of Athanasius', *SP* 21 (1987), 390-401.
 — Review of *Histoire "acéphale" et index syriaque des lettres festales d'Athanasie d'Alexandrie*, ed. and tr. A. Martin and M. Albert, *JTS*, NS 37 (1986), 576-89.
 — Review of *Le Lettere festali di Atanasio di Alessandria. Studio Storico-critico*, by A. Camplani, *JTS*, NS 41 (1990), 258-64.
- BAYNES, NORMAN H., 'St. Antony and the Demons', *JEA* 40 (1954), 7-10.
- BOAK, ARTHUR E. R., and YOUTIE, HERBERT C., 'Flight and Oppression in Fourth-Century Egypt', in Edoardo Arslan (ed.), *Studi in onore di Aristide Calderini e Roberto Paribeni* (Milan, 1956-7), 2. 325-37.
- BOBERTZ, CHARLES, 'Cyprian of Carthage as Patron: A Social Historical Study of the Role of Bishop in the Ancient Christian Community of North Africa', Ph.D. thesis (Yale, 1988).

- BOSWELL, JOHN, *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality: Gay People in Western Europe from the Beginning of the Christian Era to the Fourteenth Century* (Chicago and London, 1980).
- BOUYER, LOUIS, *L'Incarnation et l'église-corps du Christ dans la théologie de saint Athanase* (Unam Sanctam, 11; Paris, 1943).
- BRASSE, DAVID, 'The Authenticity of the Ascetic Athanasiana', *Or.* 63 (1994), 17-56.
- 'The Greek and Syriac Versions of the *Life of Antony*', *Mus.* 107 (1994), 29-53.
- 'St Athanasius and Ascetic Christians in Egypt', Ph.D. thesis (Yale, 1992).
- BRENNAN, BRIAN R., 'Athanasius' *Vita Antonii*: A Sociological Interpretation', *VC* 39 (1985), 209-27.
- 'Dating Athanasius' *Vita Antonii*', *VC* 30 (1976), 52-4.
- BRÖDNER, ERIKA, *Die römischen Thermen und das antike Badewesen* (Darmstadt, 1983).
- BROWN, PETER, *The Body and Society: Men, Women, and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity* (Lectures on the History of Religions, NS 13; New York, 1988).
- 'The Rise and Function of the Holy Man in Late Antiquity', in his *Society and the Holy in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley, Calif., 1982), 103-52.
- 'The Saint as Exemplar in Late Antiquity', in John Stratton Hawley (ed.), *Saints and Virtues* (Comparative Studies in Religion and Society, 2; Berkeley, Calif., 1987), 3-14.
- BURRUS, VIRGINIA, 'The Heretical Woman as Symbol in Alexander, Athanasius, Epiphanius, and Jerome', *HTR* 84 (1991), 229-48.
- 'Hierarchalization and Genderization of Leadership in the Writings of Irenaeus', *SP* 21 (1989), 42-8.
- BURTON-CHRISTIE, DOUGLAS, *The Word in the Desert: Scripture and the Quest for Holiness in Early Christian Monasticism* (New York and Oxford, 1993).
- CAMERON, AVERIL, *Christianity and the Rhetoric of Empire: The Development of Christian Discourse* (Sather Classical Lectures, 55; Berkeley, Calif., 1991).
- CAMPENHAUSEN, HANS VON, *Ecclesiastical Authority and Spiritual Power in the Church of the First Three Centuries*, tr. J. A. Baker (London, 1969).
- CAMPLANI, ALBERTO, *Le Lettere festali di Atanasio di Alessandria: Studio storico-critico* (Rome, 1989).
- 'Sulla cronologia delle Lettere festali di Atanasio: La proposta di R. Lorenz', *Augustinianum*, 27 (1987), 617-28.
- CARCOPINO, JÉRÔME, *Daily Life in Ancient Rome*, ed. Henry T. Rowell, tr. E. O. Lorimer (New Haven, Conn., 1940).
- CASTELLI, ELIZABETH A., *Imitating Paul: A Discourse of Power* (Literary Currents in Biblical Interpretation; Louisville, Ky., 1991).
- 'Virginity and its Meaning for Women's Sexuality in Early Christianity', *JFSR* 2 (1986), 61-88.

- CHADWICK, HENRY, 'Pachomios and the Idea of Sanctity', in Sergei Hackel (ed.), *The Byzantine Saint: University of Birmingham Fourteenth Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies* (Studies Supplementary to Sobornost, 5; London, 1981), 11-24.
- CHITTY, DERWAS J., *The Desert a City* (Crestwood, NY, 1966).
- 'A Note on the Chronology of the Pachomian Foundations', *SP* 2 (1957), 379-85.
- 'Pachomian Sources Reconsidered', *JEH* 5 (1954), 38-77.
- CLARK, ELIZABETH A., 'Foucault, the Fathers, and Sex', *JAAR* 56 (1988), 619-41.
- 'John Chrysostom and the Subintroductae', in her *Ascetic Piety and Women's Faith: Essays on Late Ancient Christianity* (Studies in Women and Religion, 20; Lewiston, NY, 1986), 265-90.
- *The Origenist Controversy: The Cultural Construction of an Early Christian Debate* (Princeton, NJ, 1992).
- 'Sex, Shame, and Rhetoric: En-gendering Early Christian Ethics', *JAAR* 59 (1991), 221-45.
- COHEN, SHAYE J. D., 'Menstruants and the Sacred in Judaism and Christianity', in Sarah B. Pomeroy (ed.), *Women's History and Ancient History* (Chapel Hill, NC, and London, 1991), 273-99.
- COQUIN, RENÉ-GEORGES, 'Canons of Hippolytus', 'Canons of Pseudo-Athanasius', 'Canons of Saint Basil', in *Coptic Encyclopedia* (8 vols.; New York, 1991), 458-9.
- COX, PATRICIA, *Biography in Late Antiquity: A Quest for the Holy Man* (The Transformation of the Classical Heritage, 5; Berkeley, Calif., 1983).
- CROUZEL, HENRI, *Origen*, tr. A. S. Worrall (San Francisco, 1989).
- *Virginité et mariage selon Origène* (Museum Lessanium, section théologique, 58; Paris, 1963).
- CRUM, W. E., 'The Coptic Version of the "Canons of S. Basil"', *PSBA* 26 (1904), 57-62.
- DANIÉLOU, JEAN, 'Les Démons de l'air dans la "Vie d'Antoine"', in Basilius Steidle (ed.), *Antonius Magnus Eremita 356-1956: Studia ad Antiquum Monachismum Spectantia* (Studia Anselmiana, 38; Rome, 1956), 137-47.
- DAWSON, DAVID, *Allegorical Readers and Cultural Revision in Ancient Alexandria* (Berkeley, Calif., 1992).
- DÖRRIES, HERMANN, 'Die Vita Antonii als Geschichtsquelle', in his *Wort und Stunde* (3 vols.; Göttingen, 1966-70), I. 145-224.
- DOVER, K. J., *Greek Homosexuality* (Cambridge, Mass., 1978).
- DUVAL, YVES-MARIE, 'La Problématique de la *Lettre aux vierges* d'Athanase', *Mus.* 88 (1975), 405-33.
- ELLIOTT, DYAN, *Spiritual Marriage: Sexual Abstinence in Medieval Wedlock* (Princeton, NJ, 1993).
- ELM, SUSANNA K., 'An Alleged Book-Theft in Fourth-Century Egypt: P. Lips. 43', *SP* 18 (1989), 209-15.

- ELM, SUSANNA K., 'The Organization and Institutions of Female Asceticism in Fourth-Century Cappadocia and Egypt', D.Phil. thesis (Oxford, 1987).
- 'Perceptions of Jerusalem Pilgrimage as Reflected in Two Early Sources on Female Pilgrimage (3rd and 4th centuries A.D.)', *SP* 20 (1987), 219–23.
- EMMET, ALANNA M., 'An Early Fourth-Century Female Monastic Community in Egypt?', in Ann Moffatt (ed.), *Maistor: Classical, Byzantine, and Renaissance Studies for Robert Browning* (Canberra, 1984), 77–83.
- 'Female Ascetics in the Greek Papyri', *Jahrbuch der österreichischen Byzantinistik*, 32. 2 (1982), 507–15.
- FESTUGIÈRE, A.-J., *Les Moines d'Orient*, IV/2. *La Première Vie grecque de saint Pachôme* (Paris, 1965).
- FITSCHEN, KLAUS, *Serapion von Thmuis: Echte und unechte Schriften sowie die Zeugnisse des Athanasius und Anderer* (Patristische Texte und Studien, 37; Berlin and New York, 1992).
- FOUCAULT, MICHEL, *The History of Sexuality*, tr. Robert Hurley (3 vols.; New York, 1978–86).
- 'Technologies of the Self', in Luther H. Martin *et al.* (eds.), *Technologies of the Self: A Seminar with Michel Foucault* (Amherst, Mass., 1988), 16–49.
- FOX, ROBIN LANE, *Pagans and Christians* (San Francisco, 1986).
- FRAUDE, STEVEN D., 'Ascetical Aspects of Ancient Judaism', in Arthur Green (ed.), *Jewish Spirituality: From the Bible through the Middle Ages* (World Spirituality, 13; New York, 1986), 253–88.
- FRANK, GEORGIA A., 'Pilgrims' Experience and Theological Challenge: Two Patristic Views', forthcoming in *PEREGRINATIO: Pilgerreise und Pilgerziel: 12. Internationaler Kongress für christliche Archäologie, Bonn, 1991* (JAC Ergänzungsband; Münster).
- FRANKFURTER, DAVID, 'The Cult of the Martyrs in Egypt Before Constantine: The Evidence of the Coptic *Apocalypse of Elijah*', *VC* 48 (1994), 25–47.
- *Elijah in Upper Egypt: 'The Apocalypse of Elijah' and Early Egyptian Christianity* (Studies in Antiquity and Christianity; Minneapolis, 1992).
- FREND, W. H. C., 'Athanasius as an Egyptian Christian Leader in the Fourth Century', in his *Religion Popular and Unpopular in the Early Christian Centuries* (London, 1976), No. XVI.
- GARRETT, SUSAN R., *The Demise of the Devil: Magic and the Demonic in Luke's Writings* (Minneapolis, 1989).
- 'Sociology of Early Christianity', *Anchor Bible Dictionary* (New York, 1992), 6. 89–99.
- GEERTZ, CLIFFORD, 'Religion as a Cultural System', in his *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York, 1973), 87–125.
- GIRARDET, KLAUS M., *Kaisergericht und Bischofsgericht: Studien zu den Anfängen des Donatistenstreites (313–315) und zum Prozess des Athanasius von Alexandrien (328–346)* (Antiquitas, ser. 1, Abhandlungen zur alten Geschichte, 21; Bonn, 1975).

- GOEHRING, JAMES E., 'The Encroaching Desert: Literary Production and Ascetic Space in Early Christian Egypt', *JECs* 1 (1993), 281-96.
- 'The Origins of Monasticism', in H. W. Attridge and G. Hata (eds.), *Eusebius, Christianity, and Judaism* (Detroit, 1992), 235-55.
- 'Pachomius' Vision of Heresy: The Development of a Pachomian Tradition', *Mus.* 95 (1982), 241-62.
- 'The World Engaged: The Social and Economic World of Early Egyptian Monasticism', in J. E. Goehring, et al. (eds.), *Gnosticism and the Early Christian World: In Honor of James M. Robinson* (Forum Fascicles; Sonoma, Calif., 1990), 134-44.
- GOULD, GRAHAM, *The Desert Fathers on Monastic Community* (Oxford Early Christian Studies; Oxford, 1993).
- GRANT, ROBERT M., *Early Christianity and Society: Seven Studies* (San Francisco, 1977).
- GREER, ROWAN A., 'The Analogy of Grace in Theodore of Mopsuestia's Christology', *JTS*, NS 34 (1983), 82-98.
- *Broken Lights and Mended Lives: Theology and Common Life in the Early Church* (University Park, Pa., and London, 1986).
- *The Captain of our Salvation: A Study in the Patristic Exegesis of Hebrews* (Beiträge zur Geschichte der Biblischen Exegese, 15; Tübingen, 1973).
- *The Fear of Freedom: A Study of Miracles in the Roman Imperial Church* (University Park, Pa., and London, 1989).
- GREGG, ROBERT C., *Consolation Philosophy: Greek and Christian 'Paideia' in Basil and the Two Gregories* (Patristic Monograph Series, 3; Cambridge, Mass., 1975).
- and GROH, DENNIS E., *Early Arianism—A View of Salvation* (Philadelphia, 1981).
- GRIFFITHS, J. G., 'A Note on Monasticism and Nationalism in the Egypt of Athanasius', *SP* 16 (1985), 24-8.
- GRIGGS, C. WILFRED, *Early Egyptian Christianity: From its Origins to 451 C.E.* (Coptic Studies, 2; Leiden, 1990).
- GRILLMEIER, ALOYS, SJ, *From the Apostolic Age to Chalcedon (451)*, vol. 1 of *Christ in the Christian Tradition*, tr. J. Bowden (2nd rev. edn.; Atlanta, 1975).
- HAAS, CHRISTOPHER, 'The Arians of Alexandria', *VC* 47 (1993), 234-45.
- HADOT, PIERRE, 'Exercices spirituels antiques et "philosophie chrétienne"', in his *Exercices spirituels et philosophie antique* (2nd edn., rev. and enl.; Paris, 1987), 59-74.
- HAMILTON, ANDREW, SJ, 'Athanasius and the Simile of the Mirror', *VC* 34 (1980), 14-18.
- HANSON, R. P. C., *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God: The Arian Controversy 318-381* (Edinburgh, 1988).
- HARPHAM, GEOFFREY GALT, *The Ascetic Imperative in Culture and Criticism* (Chicago and London, 1987).

- HARRIS, WILLIAM V., *Ancient Literacy* (Cambridge, Mass., and London, 1989).
- HELISSI, KARL, *Der Ursprung des Mönchtums* (Tübingen, 1936).
- HOPKINS, KEITH, 'Brother-Sister Marriage in Roman Egypt', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 22 (1980), 303-54.
- HUNT, E. D., *Holy Land Pilgrimage in the Later Roman Empire AD 312-460* (Oxford, 1982).
- JUDGE, E. A., 'The Earliest Use of Monachos for "Monk" (P. Coll. Youtie 77) and the Origins of Monasticism', *JAC* 20 (1977), 72-89.
- KANNENGISSER, CHARLES, *Athanase d'Alexandrie évêque et écrivain: Une lecture des traités 'Contre les Ariens'* (Théologie historique, 70; Paris, 1983).
- 'Athanasius of Alexandria and the Foundation of Traditional Christology', *TS* 34 (1973), 103-13.
- (ed.), *Politique et théologie chez Athanase d'Alexandrie* (Théologie historique, 27; Paris, 1974).
- 'La Témoignage des lettres festales de S. Athanase sur la date d l'apologie *Contra les païens, Sur l'incarnation du Verbe*', *RSR* 52 (1964), 91-100.
- KELLY, J. N. D., *Early Christian Doctrines* (rev. edn.; San Francisco, 1960).
- KENNEDY, GEORGE, *The Art of Rhetoric in the Roman World 300 B.C.-A.D. 300*, vol. 2 of *A History of Rhetoric* (Princeton, NJ, 1972).
- KINDER, DONALD, 'Clement of Alexandria: Conflicting Views on Women', *Sec. Cent.* 7 (1989-90), 213-20.
- KING, KAREN L. (ed.), *Images of the Feminine in Gnosticism* (Studies in Antiquity and Christianity; Philadelphia, 1988).
- KOLLER, H., *Die Mimesis in der Antike: Nachahmung, Darstellung, Ausdruck* (Dissertationes Bernenses, ser. 1, fasc. 5; Berne, 1954).
- LADEUZE, P., *Étude sur le cénobitisme pachômien pendant le IV^e siècle et la première moitié du V^e* (Louvain, 1898).
- LALLEMAND, JACQUELINE, *L'Administration civile de l'Égypte de l'avènement de Dioclétien à la création du diocèse (284-382): Contribution à l'étude des rapports entre l'Égypte et l'empire à la fin du III^e et au IV^e siècle* (Académie royale de Belgique, Classe des lettres et des sciences morales et politiques, Mémoires, 2nd ser. 57, pt. 2; Brussels, 1964).
- LAYTON, BENTLEY, *The Gnostic Treatise on Resurrection from Nag Hammadi* (HDR 12; Missoula, Mont., 1979).
- Review of *Nag Hammadi Codices: Greek and Coptic Papyri from the Cartonnage of the Covers*, ed. and tr. John W. B. Burns, et al., *JAOS* 102 (1982), 397-8.
- 'The Significance of Basilides in Ancient Christian Thought', *Representations*, 28 (Fall 1989), 135-51.
- LEFORT, L. TH., 'Théodore de Tabennese et la lettre de S. Athanase sur le canon de la Bible', *Mus.* 29 (1910), 205-16.
- LEWIS, NAPHTALI, *Life in Egypt under Roman Rule* (Oxford, 1983).
- LEYERLE, BLAKE, 'John Chrysostom on the Gaze', *J ECS* 1 (1993), 159-74.

- LIETZMANN, HANS, *The Era of the Church Fathers*, vol. 4 of *A History of the Early Church*, tr. Bertram Lee Woolf (repr. Cleveland, 1961).
- LOHSE, BERNHARD, *Askese und Mönchtum in der Antike und in der alten Kirche* (Munich, 1969).
- LOUTH, ANDREW, 'Athanasius's Understanding of the Humanity of Christ', *SP* 16 (1985), 309-18.
- *The Origins of the Christian Mystical Tradition* (Oxford, 1981).
- 'St Athanasius and the Greek *Life of Antony*', *JTS*, NS 39 (1988), 504-9.
- LYMAN, J. REBECCA, *Christology and Cosmology: Models of Divine Activity in Origen, Eusebius, and Athanasius* (Oxford Theological Monographs; Oxford, 1993).
- MCGINN, BERNARD, *The Foundations of Mysticism*, vol. 1 of *The Presence of God: A History of Western Christian Mysticism* (New York, 1991).
- MACMULLEN, RAMSAY, 'Roman Attitudes to Greek Love', *Historia*, 31 (1982), 484-502.
- MALHERBE, ABRAHAM J., *Paul and the Popular Philosophers* (Minneapolis, 1989).
- MARROU, HENRI-IRÉNÉE, 'L'Arianisme comme phénomène alexandrien', in his *Patristique et humanisme* (*Patristica Sorbonensia*, 9; Paris, 1976), 321-30.
- MARTIN, ANNIK, 'Aux origines de l'église copte: L'implantation et le développement du Christianisme en Egypte (I^e-IV^e siècles)', *REA* 83 (1981), 35-56.
- 'L'Église et la khôra égyptienne au IV^e siècle', *Revue des études augustiniennes*, 25 (1979), 3-26.
- MARTIN, DALE B., *Slavery as Salvation: The Metaphor of Slavery in Pauline Christianity* (New Haven, Conn., and London, 1990).
- MAYERSON, PHILIP, 'Anti-Black Sentiment in the *Vitae Patrum*', *HTR* 71 (1978), 304-11.
- MECKS, WAYNE A., 'The Man from Heaven in Paul's Letter to the Philippians', in Birger A. Pearson (ed.), *The Future of Early Christianity: Essays in Honor of Helmut Koester* (Minneapolis, 1991), 329-36.
- MEIJERING, E. P., *Athanasius: 'Contra Gentes': Introduction, Translation, and Commentary* (*Philosophia Patrum*, 7; Leiden, 1984).
- *Athanasius: 'De Incarnatione Verbi': Einleitung, Übersetzung, Kommentar* (Amsterdam, 1989).
- METZ, RENÉ, *La Consécration des vierges dans l'église romaine: Étude d'histoire de la liturgie* (Bibliothèque de l'Institut de droit canonique de l'Université de Strasbourg, 4; Paris, 1954).
- MILES, MARGARET R., *Carnal Knowing: Female Nakedness and Religious Meaning in the Christian West* (Boston, 1989).
- *Fullness of Life: Historical Foundations for a New Asceticism* (Philadelphia, 1981).
- 'Patriarchy as Political Theology: The Establishment of North African Christianity', in Leroy S. Rouner (ed.), *Civil Religion and Political Theology* (Notre Dame, Ind., 1986), 169-86.

- MÜHLENBERG, EKKEHARD, *Psalmenkommentare aus der Ketenenüberlieferung* (3 vols.; Patristische Texte und Studien, 19; Berlin, 1978).
- MÜLLER, GUIDO, *Lexicon Athanasianum* (Berlin, 1959).
- MUSRILLO, HERBERT, 'The Problem of Ascetical Fasting in the Greek Patristic Authors', *Traditio*, 12 (1956), 1-64.
- MUYSER, JACOB, 'Contribution à l'étude des listes épiscopales de l'Église copte', *BSAC* 10 (1944), 115-76.
- NAUTIN, PIERRE, *Origène: Sa vie et son œuvre* (Christianisme antique, 1; Paris, 1977).
- NEYMEYR, ULRICH, *Die christlichen Lehrer im zweiten Jahrhundert: Ihre Lehrtätigkeit, ihr Selbstverständnis und ihre Geschichte* (Supplements to *Vigiliae Christianae*, 4; Leiden, 1989).
- NOONAN, JOHN T., Jr., *Contraception: A History of its Treatment by the Catholic Theologians and Canonists* (enl. edn.; Cambridge, Mass., 1986).
- OPITZ, H.-G., 'Die Zeitfolge der arianischen Streitigkeiten von den Anfang bis zum Jahre 328', *ZNW* 33 (1934), 131-59.
- OTIS, BROOKS, 'Cappadocian Thought as a Coherent System', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 12 (1958), 97-124.
- PASQUINUCCI, MARINELLA (ed.), *Terme Romane e vita quotidiana* (Modena, 1987).
- PEARSON, BERGER A., and GOEHRING, JAMES E. (eds.), *The Roots of Egyptian Christianity* (Studies in Antiquity and Christianity; Philadelphia, 1986).
- PETERSEN, NORMAN R., *Rediscovering Paul: Philemon and the Sociology of Paul's Narrative World* (Philadelphia, 1985).
- PETERSON, E., 'Ein Fragment des Hierakas (?)', *Mus.* 60 (1947), 257-60.
- PETTERSEN, ALVYN, *Athanasius and the Human Body* (Bristol, 1990).
- 'Athanasius' Presentation of Antony of the Desert's Admiration for his Body', *SP* 21 (1987), 438-47.
- RABOW, PAUL, *Seelenführung: Methodik der Exerzitien in der Antike* (Munich, 1954).
- RADER, ROSEMARY, *Breaking Boundaries: Male/Female Friendship in Early Christian Communities* (Theological Inquiries; New York, 1983).
- RAHNER, KARL, 'The "Spiritual Senses" According to Origen', in his *Experience of the Spirit: Source of Theology*, tr. David Morland, vol. 16 of *Theological Investigations* (London, 1979), 81-103.
- RECHELS, P. ATHANASTUS, OSB, 'Sancti Athanasii Magni Doctrina de primordiis seu quomodo explicaverit Genesim 1-3', *Anton.* 28 (1953), 219-60.
- REITZENSTEIN, RICHARD, *Des Athanasius Werk über das Leben des Antonius: Ein philologischer Beitrag zur Geschichte des Mönchtums* (Sitzungsberichte der Heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften; Philosophisch-historische Klasse, 5; Heidelberg, 1914).
- RICHARD, M., 'Saint Athanase et la psychologie du Christ selon les Ariens', *M. Sc. Rel.* 4 (1947), 5-54.

- RIVERS, JOSEPH T., III, 'Pattern and Process in Early Christian Pilgrimage', Ph.D. thesis (Duke, 1983).
- ROBERTS, COLIN H., *Manuscript, Society, and Belief in Early Christian Egypt* (Schweich Lectures of the British Academy, 1977; London, 1979).
- ROLDANUS, JOHANNES R., *Le Christ et l'homme dans le théologie d'Athanase d'Alexandrie* (Studies in the History of Christian Thought, 4; Leiden, 1968).
- 'Die *Vita Antonii* als Spiegel der Theologie des Athanasius und ihr Weiterwirken bis ins 5. Jahrhundert', *TP* 58 (1983), 194–216.
- RONDEAU, M. J., 'L'Épître à Marcellinus sur les Psaumes', *VC* 22 (1968), 176–97.
- ROUSSEAU, PHILIP, *Ascetics, Authority, and the Church in the Age of Jerome and Cassian* (Oxford, 1978).
- *Pachomius: The Making of a Community in Fourth-Century Egypt* (The Transformation of the Classical Heritage, 6; Berkeley, Calif., 1985).
- ROUSSELLE, ALINE, *Porneia: On Desire and the Body in Antiquity*, tr. Felicia Pheasant (Family, Sexuality, and Social Relations in Past Times; Oxford, 1988).
- RUBENSON, SAMUEL, *The Letters of St. Antony: Origenist Theology, Monastic Tradition and the Making of a Saint* (Bibliotheca Historico-Ecclesiastica Lundensis, 24; Lund, 1990).
- SALISBURY, JOYCE E., *Church Fathers, Independent Virgins* (London, 1991).
- SALLER, RICHARD P., 'Men's Age at Marriage and its Consequences for the Roman Family', *CP* 82 (1987), 21–34.
- SCHNEEMELCHER, WILHELM, 'Das Kreuz Christi und die Dämonen: Bemerkungen zur *Vita Antonii* des Athanasius', in Ernest Dassmann and K. Suso Frank (eds.), *Pietas: Festschrift für Bernhard Kötting* (JAC Ergänzungsband, 8; Münster, 1980), 381–92.
- SCOTT, ALAN, *Origen and the Life of the Stars: A History of an Idea* (Oxford Early Christian Studies; Oxford, 1991).
- SHAW, BRENT D., 'The Age of Roman Girls at Marriage: Some Reconsiderations', *JRS* 77 (1987), 30–46.
- SIEBEN, HERMANN-JOSEF, 'Athanasius über den Psalter: Analyse seines Briefes an Marcellinus', *TP* 2 (1973), 157–73.
- SIMONETTI, MANLIO, *La Crisi ariana nel IV secolo* (Studia Ephemeridis 'Augustinianum', 11; Rome, 1975).
- STEAD, G. CHRISTOPHER, 'Athanasius', *Encyclopedia of the Early Church* (2 vols.; New York, 1992), 93–5.
- 'Athanasius' Earliest Written Work', *JTS*, NS 39 (1988), 76–91.
- STEIDLE, BASILIUS, 'Der "schwarze kleine Knabe" in der alten Möncherzählung', *Benediktinische Monatschrift*, 34 (1958), 339–50.
- STOWERS, STANLEY K., *Letter Writing in Greco-Roman Antiquity* (Library of Early Christianity, 5; Philadelphia, 1986).
- TALLEY, THOMAS J., *The Origins of the Liturgical Year* (New York, 1986).

- TELFER, W., 'St. Peter of Alexandria and Arius', *An. Boll.* 67 (1949), 117-30.
- TETZ, MARTIN, 'Eine asketische Ermunterung zur Standhaftigkeit aus der Zeit der maximinischen Verfolgung (311/13)', *ZNW* 81 (1990), 79-102.
- 'Athanasius von Alexandrien', *TRE* 4, 333-49.
- 'Athanasius und die Einheit der Kirche: Zur ökumenischen Bedeutung eines Kirchenvaters', *Z. Th. K.* 81 (1984), 196-219.
- 'Athanasius und die *Vita Antonii*: Literarische und theologische Relationen', *ZNW* 73 (1982), 1-30.
- 'Zur Biographie des Athanasius von Alexandrien', *ZKG* 90 (1979), 158-92.
- TREGGIARI, SUSAN, *Roman Marriage: 'Iusti Coniuges' from the Time of Cicero to the Time of Ulpian* (Oxford, 1991).
- UEDING, LEO, 'Die Kanones von Chalkedon in ihrer Bedeutung für Mönchtum und Klerus', in Aloys Grillmeier and Heinrich Bacht (eds.), *Das Konzil von Chalkedon: Geschichte und Gegenwart* (3 vols.; Würzburg, 1953), 2, 569-676.
- VALANTASIS, RICHARD, *Spiritual Guides of the Third Century: A Semiotic Study of the Guide-Disciple Relationship in Christianity, Neoplatonism, Hermetism, and Gnosticism* (HDR 27; Minneapolis, 1991).
- VAN UNNIK, W., 'The Newly Discovered Gnostic "Epistle to Rheginus" on Resurrection', *JEH* 15 (1964), 141-67.
- VEILLEUX, ARMAND, *La Liturgie dans le cénobitisme pachômien au quatrième siècle* (Studia Anselmia, 57; Rome, 1968).
- VIVIAN, TIM, *St Peter of Alexandria: Bishop and Martyr* (Studies in Antiquity and Christianity; Philadelphia, 1988).
- WALKER, P. W. L., *Holy City, Holy Places? Christian Attitudes to Jerusalem and the Holy Land in the Fourth Century* (Oxford Early Christian Studies; Oxford, 1990).
- WARD, ROY BOWEN, 'Women in Roman Baths', *HTR* 85 (1992), 125-47.
- WICKER, KATHLEEN O'BRIEN, 'First Century Marriage Ethics: A Comparative Study of the Household Codes and Plutarch's *Conjugal Precepts*', in James W. Flanagan and Anita Weisbrod Robinson (eds.), *No Famine in the Land: Studies in Honor of John L. McKenzie* (Missoula, Mont., 1975), 141-53.
- WILKEN, ROBERT L., *John Chrysostom and the Jews: Rhetoric and Reality in the Late 4th Century* (The Transformation of the Classical Heritage, 4; Berkeley, Calif., 1983).
- *The Land Called Holy: Palestine in Christian History and Thought* (New Haven, Conn., and London, 1992).
- WILLIAMS, MICHAEL A., 'The Life of Antony and the Domestication of Charismatic Wisdom', in Michael A. Williams (ed.), *Charisma and Sacred Biography* (JAAR Thematic Studies, 48; Chambersburg, Pa., 1982), 23-45.
- WILLIAMS, ROWAN, *Arius: Heresy and Tradition* (London, 1987).
- WIPSYZKA, EWA, 'La chiesa nell'Egitto del IV secolo: Le strutture ecclesastiche', *Miscellanea Historiae Ecclesiasticae*, 6 (1983), 182-201.

- WIRE, ANTOINETTE CLARK, *The Corinthian Women Prophets: A Reconstruction through Paul's Rhetoric* (Minneapolis, 1990).
- YOUNG, FRANCES M., 'A Reconsideration of Alexandrian Christology', *JEH* 22 (1971), 103-14.
- ZELLINGER, JOHANNES, *Bad und Bäder in der altchristlichen Kirche* (Munich, 1928).

INDEX

- abba 84-5
 'academic' Christianity:
 attacked by Athanasius 66-75, 143-4,
 199, 253-8
 definition of 58-60
 diversity of 60-1
 teacher in 61-2, 69-70
 women in 62-3
 Adam (and Eve):
 as created 146-7, 152
 fall of 32, 50-1, 147-9, 154, 156, 222,
 240
 Adelphius, bishop of Nitopolis 104
 Aelia Capitolina, *see* Jerusalem
 afflictions, endurance of 156, 165-6,
 176-8
Against the Nations 146, 154, 222, 226,
 239-40, 268
 Agathon, monk 98
 Alexander, bishop of Alexandria 7, 19, 26,
 68, 74
 anti-Arian activities of 3, 6, 57-8,
 65-6, 69-71
 Alexander, bishop of Constantinople 133
 Alexander the Sleepless Monk 89
 Alexandria, Synod of (362) 108
 'Alexandrian rule' 186
 almsgiving, *see* wealth, welfare system
 Ambrose, bishop of Milan 269
 Ammon, bishop, *Letter of* 121-4, 129
 Ammonius, monk 109
 Ammoua of Nitria 10, 80, 103, 110-11,
 214, 227, 269
 see also Letter to Ammoua
 Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5: 1-11) 33
 Antony the Great 1-2, 4, 10, 13, 24, 80,
 107, 200, 267, 270
 and Athanasius 7, 204-6
 Letters of 204, 208, 213-14
 sayings of 204
 see also Life of Antony
 Apollonius, Pachomian monk 120
Apostolic Constitutions 42
 Apphy, bishop of Oxyrhynchus 103-4
 Archelaus, Count 247
 Arians, Arian controversy 3, 6, 8, 18-21,
 57-9, 74-5, 129-39, 143, 145, 166-8,
 185-6, 190, 247, 252, 266-70
 Arius of Alexandria 3, 6, 19, 58, 145
 as ascetic teacher 64-5
 death of 131-4, 138
 Thalia 64, 67
 Arius, bishop of Panopolis 115
 Artemius, Roman military commander
 130, 137-8
Ascension of Isaiah 48, 50
 ascent, *see* heaven
 asceticism:
 definition of 160
 'politics of' 15-16
 Athanasius, bishop of Alexandria:
 authentic works of 15n.
 election of 2-3, 6-8
 exiles 8, 10, 199-200
 third exile (356-62) 83, 129-39,
 165-6, 209, 270
 tours of Thebaid 113-14, 122-6,
 157-8, 267
 youth and education 7
 see also titles of individual works
 Augustine, bishop of Hippo 263
 Aurelia Tauris, monk 29
 Aurelia Theodora, monk 29
 Aurelius Jose of Oxyrhynchus 29
 Balacius, Roman military commander 1, 9,
 136, 138, 205, 247
 baptism 82, 91, 107-8, 151, 180, 182-3
 see also sacraments
 Basil the Great 128
 Basilides 59
 baths, public 41-3
 Baucalis, parish of 64, 66n.
 Bethlehem, pilgrimage to 36
 bishops:
 as ascetic authorities 85-6, 97-9, 140

1875

Received of the Treasurer of the
Board of Education the sum of
\$100.00 for the year ending
June 30, 1875.

Witness my hand and seal this
15th day of July, 1875.

John J. [Name]

Superintendent of Schools

City of New York

Received of the Treasurer of the
Board of Education the sum of
\$100.00 for the year ending
June 30, 1875.

Witness my hand and seal this
15th day of July, 1875.

John J. [Name]

Superintendent of Schools

City of New York

Received of the Treasurer of the
Board of Education the sum of
\$100.00 for the year ending
June 30, 1875.

Witness my hand and seal this
15th day of July, 1875.

John J. [Name]

Superintendent of Schools

City of New York

- bishops (*cont.*):
 election of 100-2
 and monks 105-6, 109-10, 246-7
 as patrons 116-17, 163
 vs. teachers 62
- body:
 attention to 96-7, 147
 control of 146-7, 149, 157, 187-8,
 228-30, 241-4
 divinization of 149-52, 242-4
 movements of 150, 188, 241-4
 neglect of 90
 parity of 34
 and soul 231-2, 239-44
- Bordeaux pilgrim 36-7
- Brown, Peter 181
- 'canons' 22
 (pseudo-) of Athanasius 23-4, 27,
 29-30
 (pseudo-) of Basil 25-6
 biblical, *see* Scriptures
- Cassian, John:
 on nocturnal emissions 93-5, 260
 on ordination 103-4
- Catechetical School of Alexandria 59-60,
 199
- Church:
 diversity of 50, 55-6, 96-7, 169-82,
 199-200
 unity of 2, 107-10, 139-40, 161-5,
 190-1
see also politeia
- Clement of Alexandria 19, 43, 59, 61, 63,
 145, 178n., 186, 199
- consolation, letter of 127-8
- Constans, emperor 247
- Constantine I, emperor 3, 5-6, 8, 26, 36,
 59, 205-6, 247
- Constantius II, emperor 17-18, 247, 269
see also Defence before Constantius
- contemplation of God 146-9, 152, 188
- Cyprian, bishop of Carthage 42-3
- Cyril, bishop of Alexandria 130, 138
- Daniel 188, 250-1
- death:
 fear of 148-50, 217-27
 meditation on 223-4
 as metaphor 158-9, 241-2
 as penalty for sin 147-8
Defence before Constantius 17-18, 248
Defence of his Flight 106, 132, 248
- Demetrius, bishop of Alexandria 48
 expels Origen 59, 63
- demons 156, 180, 188, 249, 255-6
 conflict with 34, 89-90, 188, 195,
 216-44
 defeated by Word 153-4, 222-5
see also Satan
- Didyme and 'the sisters' 28-9, 37, 40-1
- Didymus the Blind 122, 199
- Diocletian, emperor 10, 234
- Dionysius, bishop of Alexandria 91-2
- Dioscorus, monk and bishop of
 Hermopolis Parva 92-3, 109
- Dracontius, bishop of Hermopolis Parva
 99-110, 138-9, 165, 269
see also Letter to Dracontius
- Easter, *see* Passover
- Egeria, pilgrim 36-8, 40
- Elijah 55, 206-7, 246-7
Apocalypse of 166
 as ascetic model 169, 188, 250-1, 259
- Elisha 55, 206-7, 246-7, 250-2
- Epiphanius, bishop of Salamis 219
 on Arian conflict in Alexandria 63-5
 on Hieracas 45-9
Life of 45
- Eucharist 162-3
 abstention from 90-7, 184-5
 as temptation from devil 81
see also sacraments
- Eudemonis, virgin of Alexandria 26, 130,
 137, 270
- Eusebius, bishop of Caesarea 36, 63
- Eusebius, bishop of Nicomedia 133
- Eustolium, virgin of Antioch 34
- Evagrius Ponticus 88
- Eve, *see* Adam (and Eve)
- fall, *see* Adam (and Eve)
- fasting 175, 186-9, 230-3
 and visionary powers 188, 250-2
- Faustinus, prefect of Egypt 130
- Festal Letters* 7, 39-40, 100-1, 144, 154,
 218-19, 225, 230, 271
 discipline in 182-98
 index to 121, 130, 205-6
 no. 1 (329) 171-5, 187-9, 232, 267
 no. 2 (24) (352) 66, 164
 no. 7 (335) 158-9
 no. 10 (338) 176-80, 226, 268
 no. 11 (339) 192-4
 no. 14 (3) (331) 189

- no. 24 (2) (330) 7n., 157-8, 182, 239, 267
 no. 29 (357) 166, 270
 no. 38 (366) 162
 no. 39 (367) 67-8, 124, 143, 194, 271
 no. 40 (368) 100-2, 128
- Foucault, Michel 143
Fragments on the Moral Life 173-6
 free will, *see will*
- George, bishop of Alexandria 270
 Glaucias, Alexandrian teacher 59
 Gnostics 19, 59-61, 219
Gospel of Philip 219
Gospel of Thomas 238
Gospel of Truth 62
 grace 155-7, 219, 225
 Gregory of Cappadocia, bishop of Alexandria 1, 33, 190, 268
 Gregory of Nazianzus 13-14, 38, 57, 80, 82, 130, 201, 271
 Gregory of Nyssa 30
 Gregory Thaumaturgus 62
- Hadrian, emperor 39
 heaven, ascent to 154-61, 163, 175-6, 216-26
 Helena, mother of Constantine 36
 Hellenistic culture 11, 15, 58
 Heraclius, Alexandrian teacher 60
 Hieracas of Leontopolis 20-2, 44-5, 170, 179, 184, 268-9
 attacked by Athanasius 11, 51-6
 community of 4, 48
 hymn of (?) 50-1
 as teacher 57
 teachings of 45-51, 142
Historia Acephala 121-2
History of the Arians 129, 132, 248
 homo-eroticism 229-30
 aetiology of 168, 229n.
 Horsisius, Pachomian leader 118-19, 165, 201, 269
 reconciliation with Theodore 121-6, 139, 271
 resignation of 120
see also Letter(s) to Horsisius
- hospitality 134-5, 215-16
 humanity, nature of 49-51
- Iamblichus 242
 imitation 163-70, 228
 of Antony 260-2
 of ascetics 71-2, 127-8, 165, 258-60
 of biblical models 37, 42, 104-5, 126, 165-6, 170, 188, 258-9
 ethic of 166-8
 of evil models 164, 168
 of God 167, 171, 262
 politics of 165-6, 169-70, 181
 of 'saints' 163-4, 193-4
 of the Word of God 68-9
On the Incarnation 17, 39, 147, 164, 193-4, 218, 222-3, 226, 268
 Irenaeus, bishop of Lugdunum 30, 59, 68, 160
 Isidore, bishop of Hermopolis Parva 100, 109
- Jeremiah 55, 105, 165
 Jerome 30, 38, 271
Life of Paul 85, 263
 Jerusalem:
 destruction of 39
 as pattern 39-40
 pilgrimage to 36-41
 virgins as 'daughters of' 41, 139-40
 Jews 39-40, 168
 Jezebel 168
 John the Baptist 55
 John Chrysostom 30, 32, 271
 Jovian, emperor 121-2
 Judas 168
 Julian, emperor 108, 121-2
 Justin Martyr 68
- Latopolis:
 bishop of 115, 124
 Synod of (345) 100, 115-16, 124-5
- Lent:
 discipline of 172, 182-98
 in Egypt 187
- Leontius, bishop of Antioch 34
Letter to Adelpheus 39
Letter to Ammoun 86, 90, 95-9, 185, 210
Letter to Dracontius 56, 99-101, 179, 210
Letter(s) to Horsisius 126-8, 201
Letter to Marcellinus 194-6, 249
Letter to Serapion on the Death of Arius 133
Letter(s) to Serapion on the Holy Spirit 130
Letter to the Bishops of Egypt and Libya 133
Letter to Virgins, First 44, 48, 57, 70-4, 104, 179, 254, 268
Letter to Virgins, Second 36-41, 271
Life of Antony 13, 29-30, 110, 130, 188,

- Life of Antony (cont.):*
 201-65, 270
 as anti-Arian document 74, 135-7
 Athanasius in 7
 authenticity of 15 n.
 as historical source 201-2
 virgins in 24
 'withdrawal' in 106-7, 132
- literacy 23, 197, 253-5
- Lives of Pachomius:*
 Antony in 129, 208, 214-16, 245, 247
 Athanasius in 114, 129
 as historical sources 112-14, 116,
 122-4
 on ordination 118
 writing of 85, 125, 201
- Lot, ascent from Sodom of (Gen. 19:
 15-30) 173-6, 230-1
- Macarius, monk 80
- Manichaeans 134, 165
- marriage, married Christians 51-3, 75-6,
 172
 discipline of 144, 175, 184-6
 goodness of 96-7
 see also 'spiritual marriage'
- martyrs, martyrdom 166, 223-4
- Mary and Martha (Luke 10: 38-42) 40
- Mary, mother of Jesus 150, 242
 as model of virginity 52-4, 70-3, 165,
 169, 254, 268
 perpetual virginity of 54
- Matoes, monk 83
- Melania the Elder 109
- Melitians 3-6, 8, 67 n., 101-2, 109, 113,
 118-19, 165, 215-16, 247, 266-7,
 271
- Melitius, bishop of Lycopolis 3, 5
- Miscellaneous 89*
- Methodius of Olympus 47, 54-5, 63
- mirror, simile of 169, 196, 259
- monks:
 appointed as bishops 99-110
 city-based 9, 80
 desert-based 9-12, 80-1
 as 'heretics' 86-7, 97-8
 ordination of 83-4, 118-19
 as patrons 208-13, 248-53, 263-4
 as visionaries 250-2
- Moses:
 as model 105, 165, 188, 250
 as teacher 193
 trumpets of (Num. 10: 1-10) 171-3
- Netras, bishop of Pharan 104
- Nicaea, Council of (325) 5-7
- Nitentori, church at 116-18
- nocturnal emissions 90-6, 157, 184-5
- Nonna, mother of virgin 27
- Origen 19, 186, 197, 218
 as biblical exegete 87-8, 174, 177-8
Dialogue with Heraclides 88
 as teacher 59-63, 199
 theology and spirituality of 145-6,
 148-9, 154, 156, 159, 198-9
- Origenism 272
- Pachomian federation 82, 85, 131, 138-9,
 165, 201, 214-16, 269
 and Athanasius 111-29
 institutionalization in 124-5, 128-9
 and local bishops 114-15
 sources 112-13
 women in 24
- Pachomius, monk 4, 10, 80, 82, 85, 89, 98,
 103, 138-9, 158, 245, 269
 attempted ordination of 113-20, 128,
 190
 death of 120
 see also *Lives of Pachomius*
- Palladius 27, 122
- Pambo, monk 84
- Pantaenus, Alexandrian teacher 59
- Paphnutius, monk 210-12, 238, 248,
 252-3, 261, 267, 270
- Passover:
 Christian 182-3, 197
 heavenly 154, 183
 Jewish 39-40
- Paul the Apostle 30, 46, 62, 87-8, 91, 223
 ascent of 159-60
 as model 105, 126, 163, 165, 169-70,
 213
 as teacher 177 n., 192-3, 208
 on virginity and marriage 51-2, 184
- Pbow, Pachomian monastery at 113, 119,
 121
- persecutions, see afflictions
- Peter the Apostle, *Apocalypse of* 62
- Peter, bishop of Alexandria 5, 19
- Petronius, Pachomian leader 120
- Philo of Alexandria 53-4, 76, 197
- pilgrimage 36-41
- Plotinus 156
- Plusianus, bishop 23
- Plutarch 75-6

- poiteia*:
 Christian life as 195
 Church as 13, 16, 144
 desert as 238
 as individual and corporate 159-60,
 162-5, 172, 181, 203, 258, 261-2,
 266
- Porphyry 242
- Psalms, recitation of 34, 195-6
- Ptolemy the Valentinian 63
- Pythagoras 242
- reproduction:
 as metaphor for Trinity 185-6
 virginal 53, 73, 76
- Rousseau, Philip 115
- sacraments 107-8, 161-3
- Sarapion, bishop of Tentyra 113-20, 128,
 158, 190
- Satan:
 conflict with 35, 156-7, 192, 195, 226
 defeated by the Word 153-5, 180,
 189
 as model 97, 164, 168
 temptation by 91-2, 228-30
see also demons
- Scriptures:
 canon of 66-8, 262, 271
 interpretation of 86-7, 90, 95-9,
 170-81, 255
 study of 34, 145, 152, 192-6
- Sebastian, Roman commander 108
- Segor 173-6, 230
- self, formation of 143, 166-9
- Sentences of Sextus* 213
- Septimius Severus, emperor 233
- Scrapion, bishop of Thmuis 136, 207,
 246-7, 264, 269-70
Letter to the Disciples of Antony
 208-10, 212-13
- sexual intercourse 175
 renunciation of 184-6, 227-30
- Shepherd of Hermas* 30
- On Sickness and Health* 86-7, 90, 110
- slavery, as metaphor 241-2
- slaves 23-4
- sleep 157
 renunciation of 87, 89-90
 spiritual 87-9
- Sodom 173-6, 230
- Song of Songs 43-4
- soul:
 and body 149, 158-9, 231-2, 239-44
 focus of 34-5, 158
 members and senses of 87-9
 mobility of 147, 149
 nourishment of 187-8
 purity of 146-7, 240, 242, 255
- Sower, Parable of the (Matt. 13: 3-8)
 49-50, 96-7, 155-6, 176-80, 268
- Sozomen 122
- 'spiritual marriage' 30-4, 48, 191
- study circles, Christian, *see* 'academic'
 Christianity
- Susannah and the elders 43
- Synecetica, monk 98
- Syrianus, Roman military commander 130
- teacher, Christian 61-2
 attacked by Athanasius 66-8, 143
 monastic 84-5, 213-14
see also 'academic' Christianity
- Teachings of Silvanus* 89, 213
- Tertullian 30
- Thaesis, virgin 23-4
- Theodore, Pachomian leader 112, 139,
 165, 214-15, 269
 death of 127-8, 201, 271
 policies of 124-5
 reconciliation with Horsisius 121-6,
 271
 replaces Horsisius 120
- Theonas, Church of 130
- Theophilus, bishop of Alexandria 84, 109,
 121, 130
- Therapeutae 53-4
- Timothy, associate of Paul 105
- Timothy I, bishop of Alexandria 91-2,
 109
- Titus, Roman general and emperor 70
- Tyre, Synod of (335) 8
- Valentinians 48, 61
- Valentinus 62, 145
- virgines subintroductae*, *see* 'spiritual
 marriage'
- virginity:
 as free choice 32, 49-53
 history of 47, 54-6
 among Jews 55
 vs. marriage 51-3
 among pagans 54-5
- On Virginity* 19, 29
- virgins, female 9, 11
 in Arian conflict 65-6, 143



- as 'brides of Christ' 18, 20-1, 33, 52-3, 57-8, 70-2, 75-7, 139-40
- communities of 27-8
- definition of 17
- discipline of 34-5
- financial activities of 28-30
- home-based 26-8
- living situations of 25-8, 30-1
- at public worship 35, 73-4
- origins and history of 19
- silence of 71-3
- social status of 23-4
- violence against 18, 65-6, 72
- vow taken by 24-5, 28
- visions 84, 158, 188, 211, 222, 250-3

- wealth:
 - as metaphor 236-7
 - renunciation of 189-92, 233-8
- welfare system of Church 33, 190-2
- will:
 - exercise of 187-8

- freedom of 32, 49-51, 55, 155-7, 179, 219
 - in sleep 95, 157, 185
- Williams, Rowan 58
- withdrawal:
 - of all Christians 157-8
 - of Athanasius 132
 - of monks 106-7, 139-40, 226-39
- Word of God:
 - death of 153-4, 257-8
 - and diverse persons 177-80
 - as enabler of virginity 53-5, 71
 - and human soul 242-4
 - incarnation of 149-54
 - as means of knowing God 146, 148, 152-3
 - as model for Christians 68-70
 - as model of virginity 46-7
 - as Teacher 67-9, 75

- Zacchaeus (Luke 19: 1-10) 37, 40
- Zacchaeus, Pachomian monk 214-15
- Zōstrianos 62