

ONCE A CERTAIN BROTHER was engaged in a war against fornication, and he happened to pass through a village in Egypt where he saw the daughter of a heathen priest, and he loved her, and he said to her father, "Give her to me to wife."

And the priest answered and said unto him, "I cannot give her to thee before learning from the god [*his will in the matter*];" and he went to his devil, and said unto him, "Behold, a certain monk wisheth to take my daughter to wife; shall I give her to him or not?"

And the devil made him answer, saying, "Seek out and enquire if he will deny his God, and his baptism, and the vows which he made before entering the monastic life."

And having gone to the brother the priest told him that he would accept him [*as his daughter's husband*] if he would deny both these things [*sic*], and the priest also said unto him, "Wilt thou deny the baptism wherewith thou wast baptized?"

And the brother answered and said, "Yea, I will;" and straightway he saw the Spirit of God go forth from his mouth in the form of a dove, and ascend in to heaven.

Then the priest went to the devil and told him what the brother had said, "Behold, he hath promised to deny all three things;" and the devil answered and said unto him, "Thou shalt not give [*him*] thy daughter, for his God hath not departed from him, for He is still helping him, and will accept him if he repenteth."

And the priest came and said to that brother, "I cannot give her to thee, for thy God is with thee, and He will not leave thee, but will help thee."

Now when the brother heard this he said within himself, "So God keepeth such great grace as this for thee, and will still help thee!" Then that brother, having come back to his senses, made strong his mind,

and fortified his will, and went forth to a certain old man in the desert, and related the matter unto him. And the old man answered and said unto him, "Sit thou down here with me in [*this*] cave, and fast for three weeks, only eating once every two days, and I will make supplication on thy behalf unto God."

And the old man laboured with the brother, and he made entreaty and supplication unto God, saying, "I beseech Thee, O Lord God, to grant me the soul of this brother, and to accept his repentance."

And when the first week was fulfilled, the old man came to the brother, and asked him, saying, "Hast thou seen anything?" and the brother answered and said, "Yes, I have seen a dove flying about in the heights of heaven, and standing before my head," and the old man said unto him, "Take heed to thyself, and pray unto God with groans and sighs;" and the following week he came again to the brother, and asked him the same question, saying, "Hast thou seen anything?"

And the brother made answer, saying, "I saw a dove which came and drew near to my head," and the old man admonished him, saying, "Rouse up and pray unto God with abundant supplication."

And when the third week was fulfilled the old man came to the brother and said unto him, "What hast thou seen?"

And he answered and said unto him, "I saw a dove which came and stood upon my head, and I stretched out my hand and took hold of it, but it fled away and entered into my mouth." Then the old man gave thanks unto God, and said unto the brother, "God hath accepted thy repentance; henceforward watch thyself and take heed to thyself."

And the brother answered and said, "Behold, from this day onwards I shall live with thee, O father, even to the day of my death."

Paradise of the Holy Fathers,
tr. Budge, Vol. I, pp. 266–67

PEARLS FROM THE HOLY FATHERS

SEPTEMBER 30 — OCTOBER 6, 2013

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