

THEY SAY concerning Abba Apollo, who lived in Scete, that he was originally a rude and brutish herdsman, and that he [once] saw in the fields a woman who was with child, and that, through the operation of the devil, he said, “I wish to know the condition of the child which is in the womb of this woman,” and that he ripped her open and saw the child in her belly; then straightway he repented, and he purged his heart, and having repented he went to Scete, and revealed unto the fathers what he had done. And when he heard them singing the Psalms, and saying, “The days of our years are threescore years and ten, and with difficulty [we come] to fourscore years” (Psalm xc, 10), he said to the old men, “I am forty years old this day, and I have never yet made a prayer; and now, if I live for forty years more, I will never rest, nor cease, nor refrain from praying to God continually that He may forgive me my sins.” And from that time onwards he did even as he had said, for he never toiled with the work of his hands, but he was always supplicating God, and saying,

*I, as a man, have sinned;  
do Thou, as God, forgive me.*

And he prayed this prayer both by night and by day instead of reciting Psalms. And a certain brother who used to dwell with him once heard him say in his prayer, now as he spake he wept, and groaned from the bottom of his heart, and sighed in grief of heart, “O my Lord, I have vexed Thee, have pity upon me, and forgive me so that I may enjoy a little rest.” Then a voice came to him, which said, “Thy sins have been forgiven thee, and also the murder of the woman; but the murder of the child is not yet forgiven thee.”

And one of the old men said, “The murder of the child also was forgiven to him, but God left him to work because this would prove beneficial to his soul.”

*Paradise of the Holy Fathers,*  
tr. Budge, Vol. I, p. 270

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