

nal marriage; that "both they that
e" (1 Cor. 7:29) and they that have
order (of the subdiaconate), which
worthy to be observed, how much
piscopate], the second [the presby-
the diaconate], lest anyone be reck-
presbyter's honorable position, or
covered as not yet having bridled his

the ministers of the altar as for the
were laymen, could lawfully marry
they had attained to the said ranks,
ful for them. And thus, in order
al instead of carnal, it is necessary
out have them "as though they had
a of their married life may be re-
e. (Leo, *Rusticus* 3)

the Early Church

ut celibacy. Some Christians went very
Paul and simply rejected the institu-
support in the Church as a whole.

ratites [or the "Self-Controlled"]
od and Christ in accordance with
ode of life they pass their time
at they might glorify themselves,
water, and, forbidden to marry,
eticism. (Hippolytus, *Refutation of*

aturninus and Marcion and who
unmarried state, thus setting aside
ectly condemn Him who made
he human race. Some reckoned
duced abstention from animal
God who created all things. (Ire-

8. A Christian Holy Man

Although the Encratites had their successors and later imitators here or there in the Christian world, these remain for us obscure and marginal movements. Christian self-denial found its champion elsewhere, in the simple Egyptian named Antony who died in 356 C.E., aged 105. His life was written, and widely disseminated, shortly thereafter.

The blessed Antony was a native Egyptian, and he was descended from a noble family, and in fact he owned slaves. His ancestors were (Christian) believers, and from his earliest days he was brought up in the fear of our Lord, and when he was a child and was being reared among his own relatives, he knew nothing of his father or of what went on among his own family: he was so naturally silent and his mind was so humble that he did not even trouble his parents by questioning them. He was exceedingly modest, modest beyond measure. He was unable to read or write because he could not bear the rough behavior of the boys in the school; his whole desire was to be nothing more than what was written of Jacob, "a simple man, a dweller in tents." He clung closely to his parents, and when they came to church he would run before them in the flow of his affection. He was not like an ordinary child, whose usual routine is broken by the childish amusements. He never neglected the observance of any of the seasons of the Church. . . .

After the death of his parents, Antony was left alone with one little sister. He was about eighteen or twenty years old, and on him rested the responsibility of caring for both the household and his sister. Six months after the death of his parents, when he was going, as usual, into the Lord's house, and was reflecting within himself, he thought as he walked how the Apostles had left all and followed the Savior, and how in Acts, men sold their possessions and brought and laid them at the Apostles' feet for distribution to the needy, and what and how great a hope was laid up for them in heaven. While he was thinking of these matters he went into the church just as the Gospel was being read, and he heard the Lord say to the rich man: "If you would be perfect, go and sell what you have and give to the poor; and come and follow me and you shall have treasure in heaven." Antony, as though God had put him in mind of the saints and the passage had been read for his benefit, immediately left the Lord's house and gave the possessions which he had from his ancestors to the villagers—they were three hundred acres, productive and rich—that they should no more be a burden upon himself and his sister. And all the

rest that was unmovable he sold, and the considerable money thus collected he gave to the poor, saving a little, however, for his sister's sake. He went back to the Lord's house, and hearing the Lord say in the Gospel, "Be not anxious for the morrow," he could remain no longer, but went and gave even that to the poor.

Antony committed his sister to known and faithful virgins, installing her in a maidens' house for upbringing, and henceforth he devoted himself outside his own house to ascetic discipline, paying attention to himself and patiently training himself. For there were not as yet many monasteries in Egypt, and no monk at all had experience of the remote desert; but every one of those who wished to have a care for himself practiced the ascetic discipline in solitude near his own village.

There was in the next village to Antony an old man who had lived from his youth the life of a hermit. Antony, after he had seen this man, imitated him in piety and at first he began to live in places outside the village. Then, if he heard of any good man anywhere else, like the prudent bee he went forth and sought him out and did not return to his own place until he had seen him; and he returned only after he had gotten from the good man provisions, as it were, for his journey on the road to virtue. So at first he lived thus and steadfastly held to his purpose not to return to the home of his parents or to the remembrance of his family, but to devote all his desire and energy to the perfection of his discipline. He worked, however, with his hands, having heard that "he who is idle, let him not eat," and part (of his wages) he spent on bread and part he gave to the needy. And he prayed constantly, because he had learned that a man ought to pray unceasingly in private. For he had given such heed to what was read that none of those things that were written fell from him to the ground; he remembered everything, and afterwards his memory served him as Scripture. . . .

Now Saint Antony was a storehouse of fasting, and of prayer, and of ascetic labors, and of patient endurance, and of love and of righteousness, which is the mother of them all, but he did not compete with those others who were young monks like himself, except in one matter only, that is to say, he would not suffer himself to be second to any of them in good works. . . . And when the Enemy, that hater of the virtues and the lover of evil things, saw all this great perfection in the young man, he could not endure it, and he surrounded himself with his slaves, as is his custom, and began to work on Antony. At the beginnings of his tempting of the saint, he [that is, Satan] approached him with flattery and caused him to feel anxiety about his possessions, and solicitude and love for his sister, and

considerable money thus collected, however, for his sister's sake. Hearing the Lord say in the end that he could remain no longer, but

and faithful virgins, installing himself henceforth he devoted himself to a strict discipline, paying attention to himself as if he were not as yet many monasteries from the experience of the remote desert; but a care for himself practiced in his own village.

There was an old man who had lived in the desert, after he had seen this man, he went on to live in places outside the city, anywhere else, like the prudent man who did not return to his own place but remained after he had gotten from the journey on the road to virtue. So he pursued his purpose not to return to the embrace of his family, but to the perfection of his discipline. He heard that "he who is idle, let him eat bread and part he gave to the poor because he had learned that a man who has given such heed to his duty that what were written fell from him, and afterwards his memory

of fasting, and of prayer, and of love and of righteousness, do not compete with those others in one matter only, that is to say, second to any of them in good works, for of the virtues and the lover of the young man, he could not be his slaves, as is his custom, and because of his tempting of the saint, he was weary and caused him to feel love and love for his sister, and

for his family, and to experience the love of money and lusts of various kinds, and to think of the rest of the things of the life of this world, and finally of the hard and laborious life that he lived, and the weakness of body which would come upon him in the course of time. . . .

Now when the Enemy saw that his craftiness in this matter was without profit, and that the more he tempted Saint Antony, the more strenuous the saint was in protecting himself with the armor of righteousness, he attacked him by means of the (sexual) vigor of early manhood which is bound up in the nature of our humanity. He used to trouble him at night with the goadings of passion, and in the daytime as well he tried to tempt him and pained him with the same desires, and to such an extent that even those who just looked upon him knew from his appearance that he was waging war against the Adversary. But the more the Evil One plagued him with filthy and maddening thoughts, the more Saint Antony took refuge in prayer and in abundant supplication, and amidst them all he remained wholly chaste. And the Evil One was working upon him every shameful deed according to his custom, and at length he even appeared to Saint Antony in the form of a woman—other similar feats he performed with ease, for such things are a subject of boasting for him.

None of these temptations are of any avail, however. Antony perseveres in virtue and soon begins to pay the price of fame.

It happened that in the course of time Antony's fame reached all the monks who were in Egypt and even all the others there who did not live the life of the ascetic and the recluse, and men of distinction and monks in Egypt began to come to him in large numbers. The Egyptian monks came to him that they might copy the manner of his life and deeds, and the laity came that he might pray over them, and might heal certain of them of their illnesses. One day, when a crowd of people had come there in a body to see him and they had besought him repeatedly to speak to them, and he had answered them not a word, they lifted the door out of its socket, and threw themselves down on their faces before him, and implored him, and then each man among them stood up and made known his request to him. And when he had gone out to them, like a man who issues from the bowels of the earth, they saw that his appearance was like that of an angel of light, and they marveled that his body had not been weakened by all his confinement and why it was that his understanding had not become feeble, and rather, on the contrary, in appearance, physique and countenance he was exactly as they had known him in the past. (Athanasius, *Life of Antony*)