

THE MONK AND THE DEMON:  
THE DEMONOLOGY OF THE BYZANTINE FATHERS  
A STUDY OF THE LADDER OF ST. JOHN CLIMACUS [c. 580-649]

BY  
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*I. Introduction.*

The importance of the demonological theme in Patristic spirituality is nowhere expounded by the Fathers in any systematic fashion but can only be gauged from their writings describing the struggle of the human person, from their anthropology. In the *Ladder* of St. John Climacus, demons seem to dominate the stage, although he never succumbed to any obsession with demonology of the kind which characterised second and third century Gnosticism and which was responsible for the erection of a vast and complex system of demonic hierarchies. Still, Climacus reflects an intense experience of demonic influence, which brings about splits and conflicts within man and impels him to struggle against its divisive claims. To split, to divert, to shift, to disrupt is its essential procedure; but the struggle is basically within man. Indeed, in the East it is accepted that demons approach us in the form corresponding to our own inward state. Satan says to St. Anthony:

It is not I who trouble them (the monks),  
It is they who trouble themselves.<sup>1</sup>

Thus demonology does in some measure signify, though it is not reducible to, psychology. Nonetheless, Climacus' demonological language is at times highly objectified, pointing, as will be seen, to real agents rather than imaginary shadows.

Demons are spirits (*pneumata*)<sup>2</sup> or noetic beings (*noeroi*)<sup>3</sup> which

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1. Athanasius, *Vita Ant.* 41 (PG 26:904 AB) and 42 (905A). Climacus himself makes this point in 22-25 (969B) and 26:15 (1017C).

2. 3:40 (672A).

3. 15:25 (885A).

are evil (πονηροί)<sup>4</sup> and whose main function is to darken man's intellect.<sup>5</sup> Being spirits, they are more difficult to deal with than human persons.<sup>6</sup> They hate the good (ὁ μισόκαλος)<sup>7</sup> and it is they and man's consent to them, not man himself, who are the cause of evil. They sow the seed of sin within man (ὑποβάλλουσι)<sup>8</sup> and «force us to sin»<sup>9</sup> but they cannot predict the consequences of their sowing, they cannot know the future<sup>10</sup> or our innermost thoughts — except, as the *Macarian Homilies* imply, by virtue of the fact that they have been with us for so long.<sup>11</sup> But God knows (*epistatai*) that they cause sinful thoughts and that, at times, they act even without man's consent.<sup>12</sup> Their main characteristic, as will be seen below, is judging, discriminating against others<sup>13</sup> — etymologically, *diavallein* means to slander, to throw over, to separate, to divide; in fact, people become «diabolic» by acting in this fashion.<sup>14</sup> It seems that man, too, can become demonised and thus act against himself as well as others.<sup>15</sup>

Before examining some of the ways in which demons tempt man, one must note that such expressions as «demon of despondency»<sup>16</sup> and «demon of fornication»<sup>17</sup> indicate the aim of the demonic assaults rather than a distinction between the spirits as such. It is only in this sense that each demon can be said to have his particular function to fulfil as in a war.<sup>18</sup>

## II. The demonology of the ascetic Fathers.

Whatever the predominance of demons in Climacus, other ascetic sources, for instance the *Vita Antonii*, reflect an even greater

4. 7:71 (816C).

5. Cf. 26:7 (1013D).

6. 21:14 (952A).

7. 4:99 (716D). Cf. also Paulos Evergetinos, *Synagoge* 1, 30

8. 10:5 (845D).

9. 10:13 (848C).

10. 3:41 (672A). Cf. also Athanasius, *Vita Ant.* 31 (PG 26:889BC).

11. *Mac. Hom.* 26,9.

12. 23:4 (976D), 8 (977B) and 11 (977C).

13. 4:16 (685B).

14. 8:20 (832A).

15. 27:13 (1097D).

16. 13:5 (860B).

17. 15:20 (884A). In Evagrius, «demons» are interchangeable with «passions»: cf. *De octo vitiosis cogitationibus* (PG 40:1272-5) and *Prakt.* 58.

18. 15:25 (885A).

preoccupation with them. Climacus approaches Evagrius who regards «demon» (δαίμων) and «thought» (λογισμὸς) as almost interchangeable, where however the former overrides the latter. Climacus tends to follow the Palestinian tradition: like Barsanuphius, he is concerned not with apparitions but with the inward ascetic struggle. The demons are present, but they do not stand out. His attention is drawn to the almost frightening inner scale and power of demonic activity and its vertiginous possibilities. He elaborates an intricate and subtle strategy to defend and immunise the attacked human person. The demons are not mere figments enlisted to act as scapegoats, to impersonate warring elements with a psyche divided against itself. Nor are they, as some would have us believe,<sup>19</sup> purely psychological, that is mere subjective states in a phantasmagorian tale. They are represented as real forces, but functionally rather than in terms of some monsters in classical or popular mythology. Western mystical thought, for example the medieval association of demons with the seven deadly sins, and even more modern psychology — the *Super-ego*, *ego* and *id* spring to mind — tend to incorporate and, in a sense, re-mythologise demons into parts of the structure of the human person. The demons, if any, are understood to be unregulated drives of man that force him to act according to his deep-seated desires or, theologically speaking, as part of a state of guilt, inherited by man from Adam.

It would probably be wrong to contend that texts such as the *Vita Antonii*, which to some extent «overdramatise» the demonic element, are simplistic by comparison with the more sophisticated St. Paul or Isaac the Syrian. Both kinds of evidence underline the extrinsic, alien, though not necessarily the external character of evil. The *Vita Antonii* and the *Historia Monachorum* liken the demons to a large dragon (cf. Rev. 12:3-9) or serpent; Dorotheus of Gaza not only calls the devil «an enemy» but also describes him as ἀντικείμενος<sup>20</sup> — the one who stands against us. In Climacus, demons appear as hybrid, intrusive, but basically alien forces attempting to coerce man into acting against his true nature and to prevent him from attaining his higher spiritual aspirations. The same point is emphasised by Symeon the New Theologian who says that the demons «continually stand opposite us, facing us, even if they cannot be seen by us».<sup>21</sup>

19. Cf. J. Stoffels, «Die Angriffe der Dämonen auf den Einsiedler Anthonius», in *Theologie und Glaube* 2 (1910) p. 721-32 and 809-30; cf. esp. p. 732.

20. *Insir.* II, 27.

21. *Cat.* 3.

This extraneousness is a measure of the pristine, divinely created perfection of human nature, whose most unnatural, indeed sub-human, aspect is deprivation of freedom and, in the end, death, as distinct from innate, punishable corruption, requiring man's justification. Man as such is a free agent not separated from grace. But he can be and is being assailed *from without* by demonic forces: this is the Christian ascetic answer to Messalianism. In this perspective, spiritual struggle for the ascetic is not a matter of the contortions of human nature, but the confrontation with an enemy without, who prevents man from living according to his true, intergrated nature, in communion with God and illumined by divine grace.

### III. *The snares of the demons.*

The guiles which are used by the demons to tempt man are innumerable<sup>22</sup> and the assaults come from all sides in a most harrowing fashion.<sup>23</sup> Chrysostom says the demons «sweat» and «take pains» to tempt us;<sup>24</sup> Abba Isaias and Barsanuphius agree that they never rest from assaulting us.<sup>25</sup> Climacus in similar terms refers to the devil as having «ten thousand heads» (μυριοκέφαλος)<sup>26</sup> and exclaims: «And I was amazed at the diversity of evil»,<sup>27</sup> and:

‘My hair and my flesh quivered’, said Eliphaz

(Job 4-15), when describing the malice of the demon.<sup>28</sup>

The struggle against the demons is complicated and made more difficult because they can actually cause good.<sup>29</sup> So deceitful are they

22. 15:52-3 (889D-892A), 55 (892B) and 67 (896A); 4:50 (708AB); 7:69 (816C); 8:24 (832CD); 13:5 (860BC); 26:ii, 14 (1061A) and 66 (1973CD).

23. 21:27 (953CD). Cf. Ps. Athanasius, *Vita Sanctae Syncreticae* 46 (PG 28:1513D).

24. *Ad Theodorum lapsum*, 1,3 (PG 47:281).

25. Abba Isaias, *Logos* 21,7 and 23,1; Barsanuphius 196. Cf. also Symeon the New Theologian, *Cat.* 7.

26. 16:1 (924C). Cf. also Kallistos/Ignatios, *Cent.* 64 and Greg. Palamas, *On the Procession of the Holy Spirit [Logos I Apodeiktikos]*.

27. 4:86 (713D).

28. 20:7 (945D). Cf. also Athanasius, *Vita Ant.* 22 (PG 26:876B); *Apophth.* Macarius 6 (PG 65:264D-265A) and Theodore of Pherme 8 (189A); Mark the Monk, *De lege spir.* 167 (PG 65:925B), 173 (925D) and *Ad. Nic.* 11 (1048B) and abba Isaias, *Logos* 29,8.

29. 26:ii, 70 (1096A); 19:13 (940D). Cf. *Hist. Monachorum*, I. John of Lycopolis 32-4 says that they can cause «sympathy».

that it is possible to conceive good thoughts which, in reality, are demonic,<sup>30</sup> and to receive intimations of purity which in effect, are impure. They can feign virtues<sup>31</sup> and even be transformed so as to appear as angels (II Cor. 11:14) and saints.<sup>32</sup> They try «to gain territory» in the soul by taking the form of angels or martyrs and even by ostensibly offering us «gifts».<sup>33</sup> This is why the struggle against them requires the gift of discernment<sup>34</sup> which is a fruit of the perfect,<sup>35</sup> of those who have had experience of the unseen warfare. However, although the demons can appear as virtues, this is only «hypocrisy» on their part since their aim is always «the destruction of the soul».<sup>36</sup> Even if one demon seems to contradict another,<sup>37</sup> in effect they pave the way for each other and work mutually for the same destructive purpose.<sup>38</sup> Their fight is so well planned that they collaborate also with our fellow humans.<sup>39</sup>

At times, the ways in which the evil spirits tempt man appear quite absurd. They play games (*ἀθλήματα*) with us,<sup>40</sup> enacting a kind of mad *divertissement*: in the *Vita Prima Graeca* of Pachomius, the demons try to make Pachomius laugh.<sup>41</sup> According to the *Ladder*, their purpose (*σκοπός*) is to steal time from our prayer<sup>42</sup> and thus divert us from looking towards God, to pilfer our good thoughts.<sup>43</sup>

The demons' methods vary with the person against whom they are fighting. Their way with a monk would differ from those applied to people living in the world, and even within the monastic life they would discriminate between a hermit and a cenobite.<sup>44</sup>

Judging others is one of the demons' favourite attacking de-

30. 26:ii,39 (1068BC); 8:24 (832CD).

31. 26:56 (1029D-1032A); 12:7 (856C).

32. 3:42 (672A).

33. 22:19 (968CD). For demons as angels, cf. also Evagrius, *De or.* 95 (PG 79:1188CD) and *Apophth.* Nau 224 (1909, p. 359-60),

34. 26:ii,14 (1061B).

35. 26:ii,70 (1076A); 3:42 (672A).

36. 15:12 (881D) and 78 (901AB).

37. 26:57 (1032A).

38. 27:ii,15 (1109D).

39. 21:16 (952B).

40. 27:19 (1100A); 29:1 (1148A); 14:7 (856A) and 7:49 (809D).

41. *Vita Prima* 17-19. Cf. also Anonymous, *Peri Logismon* 3.

43. 28:39 and 42 (1136CD).

43. 4:80 (713B).

44. 26:15 (1017C).

vices. If they cannot persuade man himself to fall into sin, they will try to make him pass judgment on others who have done so and thus ensnare us.<sup>45</sup> If that snare is kept off, they will try to inject a dose of vain-glory, especially in the intercourse with others, and keep a conversation going. This is qualified by an aside, typical of Climacus, to the effect that:

Perhaps it is better for you to be sprinkled  
with a few drops of vainglory, if only you can  
become a channel of profit for many.<sup>46</sup>

Another trick is flattery which is said to be particularly perilous,<sup>47</sup> and, as with those judging others, he who flatters is «a minister to the demons», leading others into many passions<sup>48</sup>

Pride is described as «a denial of God, an invention of the demons», and again as

...the denial of God's assistance, the  
extolling of one's own exertions,  
demonic in character.<sup>49</sup>

«A proud monk», Climacus sums up:

has no need of a demon; he has become a demon  
and an enemy unto himself.<sup>50</sup>

Also, those who try to enforce their opinion on other people, whether rightly or wrongly, are said to possess «the sickness of the devil».<sup>51</sup>

The demons are wicked. And Climacus describes wickedness as «a demonic way of life», «a science, or rather a demonic deformity»,<sup>52</sup> while a wicked person is «a namesake and companion of the devil» or «food for the demons».<sup>53</sup>

45. 10:13 (848C).

46. 12:4 (856B).

47. 21:27 (953D); 4:86 (713D).

48. 21:9 (949D). The demons themselves often flatter us: cf. 26:6 (1013C).

49. 21:1-2 (965BC). Cf. also Basil, *Sermo de renuntiatione saeculi, et de perfectione spirituale* 10 (PG 31:648B) and Evagrius, *Prakt.* 14.

50. 22:25 (969B).

51. 4:41 (705A).

52. 24:17 (981C) and 19 (981B).

53. 24:18 (981D) and 21 (984A).

Since the body greatly affects the passions of the soul,<sup>54</sup> the demons want man to fall into carnal sins.<sup>55</sup> This will keep man steeped in mud to enable them all the more to assail him.

One final variant of demonic subterfuge is piety:

One who had experience of this craftiness told me that the demon (of sensuality) very often hid himself completely... and he would suggest to the monk extreme piety.<sup>56</sup>

Though the reference here as elsewhere is to personal «experience» (πειρα),<sup>57</sup> it is not clear what is at stake,<sup>58</sup> unless it be stark hypocrisy, which, as is known, is the compliment vice pays to virtue.<sup>59</sup>

#### IV. *The struggle against demons.*

No sin is attributed to the mere fact of being attacked by the demons and indeed we are called «blessed» if we endure their attacks. What is wrong is to give cause to them for tempting us, either through «carelessness» or pride<sup>60</sup>. Just as there are many ways in which the demons wage war against man, so there are many ways of defending oneself and fighting them, using at times their own tactics:

...by divine inspiration he contrived to conquer the guile of the spirits by a pious ruse.<sup>61</sup>

The aim is not merely to wrestle with them (παλαίειν), not merely to engage in combat, but to take the initiative in driving them away, to open fire and declare war on them (πολεμεῖν).<sup>62</sup> The *Shepherd of Hermas* makes this clear:

54. Cf., for example, 7:49 (809D).

55. 15:32 (8886).

56. 15:64 (983C). Cf. similar words in abba Isaias, *Logos* 16,8-9 and Isaac the Syrian, *Mystic Treatises* (Amsterdam 1923) p. 182.

57. Cf. also 25:12 (992).

58. 26:40 (1025C).

59. 8:11 (829C); 15:12 (881CD).

60. 26:4 (1013B).

61. 25:23 (993C). Cf. also Chrysostom, *Non esse ad gratiam concionandum* 5 (PG 50:662) and *Apophth.* Theodore of Enaton 2 (PG 65: 196C-197A).

62. 26:ii,24 (1064B). The notion of «wrestling» is also found in Evagrius, *Prakt.* 72 (p. 660). Cf. also S. Papadopoulos «Provlīmata tou aθeou monachismou», in *Klironomia* 2,1 (1970) p. 172.

The devil is able to wrestle with us (*παλαῖσαι*) but not to overcome us in the wrestle (*καταπαλαῖσαι*).<sup>63</sup>

Symeon the New Theologian's explanation is particularly pointed:

It is one thing to resist and fight one's enemies and another thing to completely defeat and subdue them, putting them to death; for the first belongs to athletes and those brave in *ascesis*, but the second belongs rather to the dispassionate and perfect.<sup>64</sup>

The battle against the demons is an entire science — abba Arsenius refers to the «alphabet» of this science — which must be learned in experience, starting from a young age because:

to see an old man going to a children's school is a great disgrace.<sup>65</sup>

If we have been trained well enough in this science we will be able to mock the demons.<sup>66</sup> At any rate, one should be just as brazen and ruthless in one's counter-attacks as those who attack us. To neglect the fight is to be shallow (*κουφότεροι*), to remain on the surface and to turn into «tools of the demons».<sup>67</sup> The demons do not fight us at random but, in their shrewdness, aim at the weak spots. That is where battle must be given.<sup>68</sup> The demons may strike at random but we parry «where we are fought», deftly (*πανσόφως*) «taking the demons by surprise»,<sup>69</sup> which requires discernment.<sup>70</sup>

It is natural to turn one's very passions against the demons,<sup>71</sup> and the monk is aroused to go into the wilderness to fight the demons who inhabit it.<sup>72</sup> The notion of the wilderness, the desert as a dwelling-

63. *Liber* II, Mand. XII, ch. 5. These same words are found in Ps. Athanasius, *Doctrina ad Antiochum Ducem* 12 (PG 28:572B).

64. *T.G.P.* 1:97.

65. 26:14 (1017A) and 48 (1029AB). For Arsenius, cf. *Apophth.* Arsenius 6 (PG 65:89A).

66. 14:10 (865C); 25:23 (993C).

67. 26:ii,17 (1061D).

68. 15:42 (889A). Cf. also Basil, *Reg. Fus. Tract.* 75 (PG 31:1136A) and *Apophth.* Matoes 4 (PG 65:289D).

69. 25:12 (992C). Cf. Isaac the Syrian, *Mystic Treatises* (p. 192).

70. 15:62 (893B).

71. 26:ii,41 (1068C).

72. 15:60 (893A) and 7:71 (816C). Cf. also Athanasius, *Vita Ant.* 8 (PG.

place of demons, is common in ascetic literature, perhaps going back to Leviticus 16:22. The retreat into the desert is not a negative gesture, a form of escapism, but a positive counteraction to demonic forces in «outer darkness». The demons try in every way to drive the monk back into the city.<sup>73</sup> But in that confrontation there is a promise of encountering God. It is a promise given in the tormenting trial of strength between good and evil in which God participates<sup>74</sup> and in which, as Climacus says, the demons try «to dash (their victim's) foot against the stone» (Ps. 91:11 and Matt. 4:6).<sup>75</sup> The monk turns into a martyr or a confessor (δμολογητής).<sup>76</sup>

While there are no recipes or patent stimulants for pursuing the spiritual warfare, there are ways for sustaining it. The *Macarian Homilies* speak of prayer which «burns the demons like fire melting wax»;<sup>77</sup> and Climacus sees the monk standing:

with feeling of heart before God in prayer, and none of the  
...demons will make sport of him.<sup>78</sup>

Above all, they are disabled by humility, which can turn even demons into angels.<sup>79</sup> Climacus keeps away from the question as to whether the demons could actually be saved — a matter which Gregory of Nyssa seriously considered;<sup>80</sup> but then Climacus is overwhelmingly concerned with *man's* salvation.

26:856A), 13 (861C) and 41 (904AB); Palladius, *Hist. Laus.* 18 (ed. Butler, p. 50) and Cyril of Scythopolis, *Life of Sabas*, XXVII.

73. 15:60 (893A); 7:71 (816C) and 21:16 (952B).

74. Cf. *Apophth.* Moses 1 (PG 65:281BC). Cf. also Athanasius, *Vita. Ant* 42 (PG 26:904B-905C); Ps. Athanasius, *Doctrina ad monachos* (PG 28:1452A) and *Mac. Hom.* 3,6.

75. 5:5 (776C).

76. 4:25 (696A). For the monk-martyr theme, cf. also 4:6 (680BC) and 37 (704B). Cf. also M. Viller, «Martyr et perfection», in *R.A.M.* 6 (1925) p. 2-25; A. Phyrakis, «Martyrion kai monachikos vios», in *Theologia* 19 (Athens 1941-8) p. 304-29, and esp. E. E. Malone, *The Monk and the Martyr. The Monk as the Successor of the Martyr* (Washington 1950).

77. *Mac. Hom.* 43,3 Climacus himself says that he will offer no recipes. cf. 26:ii, 55 (1072CD).

78. 18:4 and 3 (937BC).

79. 25:60 (1001BC) and 43 (997D-1001A). Cf. 4:19 (688B) and 26:29 (1021C-1024B). Cf. also Ps. Athanasius, *De virg.* 5 (PG 28:257AB); *Apophth.* Theodora 6 (PG 65:204AB) and Nau 298 (1912, p. 204).

80. *Or. Cat.* 26 (PG 45:68A-69C).

The one thing demons cannot withstand or fake is humility.<sup>81</sup> In other respects, they not only threaten man in a conflict of opposing forces, but have a way of, as it were, participating distortedly in the holy and virtuous. They involve themselves intimately in our very struggle. One may, through *ascesis*, wear down the body and prevent the demons from settling comfortably in it,<sup>82</sup> but they try to take advantage of the struggle itself. The struggle, therefore, must not remain self-contained or self-sufficient, in isolation from man's total commitment to God, nor should it exceed man's limited strength.<sup>83</sup> Sense of proportion, ingenuity and «logic» should be exercised. On reaching dispassion, one can outfool the demons. One can, as we shall see, even, pretend to be subject to passions, while having none. The struggle then, is an extraordinarily multiform, versatile and intricate process, providing no security at any of its stages and persisting uninterrupted to the end of this life.<sup>84</sup>

#### V. Indirect warfare.

Speaking of man's struggle against the demons, Barsanuphius says:

Do not argue with them, for this is what they want and they will never stop.<sup>85</sup>

Climacus' advice is likewise to fight the demons indirectly, disregarding them and doing the exact opposite of what they intimate.<sup>86</sup> This is achieved by feeding one's mind with good thoughts each time the demons sow their evil ones.<sup>87</sup> This does not contrast with Evagrius' exhortation «to stand there firmly» and not «to flee and to shun such

81. 25:16 (993A). Cf. 23:3 (976D); 22:19 (968CD) and 22 (969AB). Cf. also Macarius/Symeon Metaphrastes, *De patientia* 13 (PG 34:876C).

82. 26:ii,8 (1085B).

83. 26:ii,8 (1060BC). Cf. also Ps. Athanasius, *De virg.* 8 (PG 28:261AB); Evagrius, *Prakt.* 40 (p. 592); *Apophth.* Poemen 129 (PG 65:353D); Pachomius, *Vita Prima* 126 and abba Isaias, *Logos* 4,4.

84. 4:80 (713B). Cf. also *Apophth.* Abraham 1 (PG 65:129D-132B); Anthony 4 (77A); Nau 266 (1909, p. 369-70) and *Vita Prima* of Pachomius, 22.

85. Barsanuphius 91.

86. 7:49 (812A) and 14:10 (865C).

87. 4:8 (680D). Cf. also *Apophth.* Evagrius 1 (PG 65:173AC) and Nau 241 (1909, p. 363) and Isaac the Syrian, *Mystic Treatises.* 61.

conflicts».<sup>88</sup> Climacus refers to the manner of outflanking the demons while actually facing the battle: it could be suicidal to attempt to fight them directly,<sup>89</sup> or even to attempt «to overthrow them with refutations and pleadings».<sup>90</sup> The attitude towards them should be one of «mindfulness of evil» (μνησικακία):

Have remembrance of wrongs and spitefulness against the demons.<sup>91</sup>

One must lead one's energy elsewhere, in the direction of doing good, but at the same time being firmly conscious of the facing enemy. All these propositions: that one should not be involved with the demons but rather mind one's own business;<sup>92</sup> that one should fight them positively yet indirectly;<sup>93</sup> and that one should not underestimate the demons,<sup>94</sup> are emphasised in the *Apophthegmata Patrum*.

#### *VI. Positive view of demons.*

Without temptation the monk could never reach perfection, and so he should thank the Lord for the trials he undergoes.<sup>95</sup> Abba Anthony said, «Whoever has not experienced temptation cannot enter the Kingdom of Heaven;» and even stronger: «without temptations no one can be saved.»<sup>96</sup> The temptations thereby acquire a eucharistic quality, that is to say, they are an occasion for thanksgiving. Origen already stated:

Let us give thanks for the goods revealed to us through temptations.<sup>97</sup>

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88. *Prakt.* 28. Cf. also Basil, *Hom. in Quadraginta martyres* 6 (PG 31:517B) and Greg. of Sinai, *Chapters*.

89. 4:30 (700B). Cf. also Mark the Monk, *De lege spir.* 109 (PG 65:917D).

90. 15:20 (884A). Cf. also Barsanuphius 558.

91. 9:8 (841C). Cf. also 3:40 (672A).

92. Cf. *Apophth.* Poemen 20 (PG 65:328A).

93. Cf. *Apophth.* Poemen 111 (349C) and Serapion 3 (416CD).

94. Cf. *Apophth.* Syncletica 18 (428A).

95. 4:25 (696A).

96. *Apophth.* Anthony 5 (PG 65:77A). Cf. also John the Dwarf 13 (208BC); Athanasius, *Vita Ant.* 56 (PG 26:925A); Mark the Monk, *De his* 8 (PG 65,932A); abba Zosimas, *Alloquia* 9 (PG 78:1692B); Cyril of Scythopolis, *Life of Theodosios*; John Moschus, *Pratum* 14 (2861C) and abba Isaac the Syrian, *Mystic Treatises* (p. 50 and 188).

97. *De or.*, XXIX, 17.

And, much later, Symeon the New Theologian wrote:

Learn to love temptations as if they are to be the cause of all good for you.<sup>98</sup>

The demons have no power by themselves; they do what they do because God allows them to do it. In this sense,<sup>99</sup> they are to be seen as instruments used by God for man's salvation. Ultimately, they are a cause of our crowns, and the more there are of them, the more abundant are the crowns.<sup>100</sup> Without sorrow there can be no salvation. Thus the monks in the Prison, in a mood of well-nigh self-torture, even pray for temptations and affliction:

And some prayed to become possessed by devils; others begged the Lord that they might fall into epilepsy; some wished to lose their eyes and present a pitiful spectacle; others, to become paralysed.<sup>101</sup>

Everything, to the most cruel snare of the devil, transforms into a part of God's design:

Wonderful sight — a demon curing a demon! But perhaps this is the work not of demons but of divine providence.<sup>102</sup>

98. *Cat.* 2.

99. 26:ii,44 (1069AB).

100. 26:ii,42 (1069A) and 14 (1061AB). It is also implied in 22:10 (968A). Anastasius the Sinaite speaks of demons as «ministers» (*leitourgoi*) of God; cf. *Quaestiones* 31 (PG 89:568D); and Isaac the Syrian says that a merciful heart prays for demons, too: cf. *Mystic Treatises* (p. 507-8). In 28:3 (1129C) Climacus says that those who throw us out of the King's palace are His «servants» and «ministers» (*leitourgoi*). These could be the angels but they could also be the demons who «tie us up» and «exile us from God's face.»

101. 5:5 (776A). Cf. also Athanasius, *Vita Ant.* 22 (PG 26:876A), where it is stated that demons were originally created good.

102. 9:6 (841B). Cf. also Chrysostom, *Ad Stagirium ascetam a daemónio vexatum* 1,4 (PG 47:433).