



One time Abba Macarius was passing through the wadi to his cell carrying some palm leaves. The Devil met him on the road with a scythe. He attempted to strike Abba Macarius but was not able to. He said to Abba Macarius, “You are very powerful, Macarius! I am unable to do anything against you. Look! Whatever you do I also do: you fast, and I do not eat at all; you keep vigil, and I do not sleep at all. In one thing alone are you victorious over me.” Abba Macarius said to him, “What is that?” He said, “Your humility. Because of your humility I am unable to do anything against you.” When Abba Macarius spread out his hands, the demon disappeared.

It was said about Abba Macarius the Egyptian that he was going up one time from Scetis to the monastic settlement of Nitria; when he drew near the place he said to his disciple, “Go on ahead a little.” When the disciple had gone ahead he met a pagan, a priest of Padalas, who was running and carrying a great load of firewood. The disciple called out to the priest, saying, “Hey you, demon, where are you running?” The priest turned around and came up to him and gave him a beating and left him half dead. Then he picked up the wood and took off running again. When Abba Macarius had gone a little further, he happened upon the priest and said to him, “Well, hello there! You certainly are working hard!” Astonished, the priest stopped and said to him, “What good do you see in me that you honor me by speaking to me?” The old man said to him, “I saw how hard you were working and you didn’t realize that you were working in vain.” The priest said to him, “Your greeting made me think and I realized that you have a great god on your side. But when another monk, a wicked one, met me he cursed me. I beat him within an inch of his life.” The old man realized that the priest was referring to his disciple. Then the priest grabbed his feet and said to him, “I will not let go of you if you do not make me a monk!” They went up to where the brother lay and carried him to the settlement’s church, and when the monks saw the priest they were astonished. They baptized him and made him a monk and numerous pagans became Christians on account of him. Abba Macarius said, “One evil word causes other good words to be bad, just as one good word causes other evil words to become pleasing.”

A brother paid a visit to Abba Macarius the Great and said to him, “My father, tell me a word how I may be saved.” The old man said to him, “Go to the tombs, abuse the dead, and throw stones at them.” So the brother went and abused them and came and told the old man. The old man said to him, “Didn’t they say anything to you?” He said, “No.” The old man said to him, “Go tomorrow and praise them, saying, ‘You are apostles and saints and righteous people.’” He returned to the old man and said, “I praised them,” and the old man said to him, “Didn’t they say anything in reply?” He said, “No.” The old man said to him, “You saw how you abused them and they did not say anything to you and how you praised them and they said nothing in reply; It’s the same with you: if you wish to be saved, go, be dead, take no account of people’s scorn or their compliments, like the dead themselves, and you can be saved.”



Again it was said about Abba Macarius that one time when he was praying in his cell a voice came to him, saying, “Macarius, you have not yet reached the level of two women who live in such-and-such a village.” When the old man got up early in the morning, he took his palm-tree staff and set out on his journey. When he reached the village, an angel walked with him, guiding him to the house. When he knocked at the door, the women opened it to him. When they realized it was Abba Macarius, they did obeisance to him on the ground and received him with joy. The old man said to them, “On account of you I have patiently endured the hardships of this journey through the desert and have come here. Tell me, therefore, what is your way of life?” They, however, wanting to conceal their way of life, said to him, “Why do you inquire about the way of life of those who are defiled?” After the old man had asked their forgiveness, he said to them, “Do not hide anything from me, for it is God who has sent me.” They became fearful and revealed everything to him, saying, “Forgive us, our father. The two of us are strangers to each other according to the world, but by mutual agreement, we have been made two (sisters) according to the flesh. Look, it has been fifteen years today that we have lived in this house and we do not recall that we have ever quarreled with one another or that one of us has ever said an elde word to her companion. On the contrary, we are always at peace and of one mind. We agreed to leave our husbands and to exchange married life for the life of virginity. But when we implored our husbands over and over concerning what we wanted, they did not agree to let us go. When we could not accomplish our goal, we drew up a covenant between ourselves and God that to the day of our death our mouths would not speak a worldly utterance but that we would direct our thoughts to God and his saints at all times and would devote ourselves unceasingly to prayers and fastings and acts of charity.” When Abba Macarius heard these things, he said, “Truely, it is not the name of ‘monk’ or ‘lapperson’ or ‘virgin’ or ‘wife and husband’ but an upright disposition that God seeks, and he gives his Holy Spirit to all of these people.” And after the old man had profited from meeting the two women, he returned to his cell, clapping his hands and saying, “I have not been at peace with my brothers like these lay women have with one another.”