“To understand the parabolic and paradigmatic nature of the *apophthegmata* (wise sayings) of the desert ammas and abbas, it is best to have a guide as gifted in the ancient languages of the sayings as Vivian, but also to enter into these stories with the contemplative framework of *lectio divina*, as Vivian recommends in his introduction. In the process, the hidden depths of these elders open up layers in one’s own search for the Holy One and the blessings and pitfalls of the spiritual life.”

—Mary Forman, OSB, Prioress, Monastery of St. Gertrude, Idaho

“Vivian’s introductions to each of the monks and nuns give what historical information is available, and he allows us to appreciate their individuality. He takes the time for personal reflection on the sayings of each one as a whole, rather than as separate quotes, and relates these ancient sayings to our world, brings them into our time, with wise lessons to teach us. In his notes, he gives more background, scriptural echoes and sources, and his exploration of the Greek behind the translation illuminates aspects of the sayings which would otherwise be lost in translation. This is a book which general readers will thoroughly enjoy, and scholars will appreciate. I look forward to the next volume in this series.”

—Fr. Lawrence Morey, OCSO

“Bringing a depth of experience as a translator of early monastic texts, Tim Vivian offers not only a new, vivid translation of the *Apopthegmata Patrum*, but also a rare window into the process, and challenge, of translation itself. With an introduction that not only orients the reader to this complex literature but also draws our attention to its contemporary spiritual significance, and a set of tools to decode the language of the desert fathers and mothers, this two-volume work offers rich resources for lovers of the desert monastic tradition and for those encountering for the first time.”

—Revd. Dr. Jane Foulcher
Associate Head of School and Senior Lecturer in Theology
School of Theology, Charles Sturt University, Australia

“A consummate scholar, deft translator, and skilled wordsmith, Tim Vivian links ancient insights to contemporary spirituality and the work for justice. In this collection of sayings and stories, he offers a wealth of detail to feed the mind of any scholar and an abundance of wisdom to fill the soul of every seeker.”

—The Rev. Gary Commins, DD

"Bringing this systematic grouping from its original Greek to the English-speaking world is not only a blessing but a guide for those that seek holiness in their lives whether in the world or in seclusion away from it. The additional distinctive reflections of the author add that much value for the work. We pray that the complete collection will soon be in the hands of so many of us that waited for it for untold years."

—Hany N. Takla, President. St. Shenouda the Archimandrite Coptic Society

"A wonderful book. The introduction on its own ought to be required reading in all theological schools and for those interested in literature generally. This collection of *The Sayings and Stories of the Desert Fathers and Mothers* (Vol. 1) is an edition that is destined to become a classic standard. To situate his material, Tim Vivian offers a generous and reflective introduction to the desert tradition that is both scintillating in its intellectual brilliance and moving in its spiritual profundity. The scholarly translations are accompanied at every step by commentary and insight that demonstrate Vivian's fluent mastery and his status as one of the world's preeminent leaders in the field. It is a book that scholar and student alike will treasure."

—V. Revd. Prof. John A. McGuckin, Faculty of Theology Oxford University

"The flow and precision of Tim Vivian's translation allows for the personalities, messages, and worldview of the *Sayings* to resonate poignantly today. Moreover, his masterful notes reveal the complex linguistic and spiritual layers of these texts, as well as the degree to which scriptural language and imagery permeated monastic thought. Whether read for academic or spiritual purposes, one will encounter fresh insights and the distilled results of decades of research and reflection on every page of this remarkable volume."

—Maged S. A. Mikhail, Professor of History California State University, Fullerton

CISTERCIAN STUDIES SERIES: NUMBER TWO HUNDRED EIGHTY-SEVEN

The Sayings and Stories of the Desert Fathers and Mothers

Volume 1: A–H (Êta)

Translated and Introduced by Tim Vivian

Preface by Kathleen Norris

Foreword by Terrence G. Kardong, OSB†

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To Gregory Boyle, S.J.,
and the Homies and Homegirls
of Homeboy Industries

and to Jim Wallis
and the Sojourners Community

like the ammas and abbas, living the Gospel,

and in Memoriam

Brother Patrick Hart, OCSO
1925–2019

Father Terrence Kardong, OSB
1936–2019

Father John Eudes Bamberger, OCSO
1926–2020

who like the ammas and abbas lived the Gospel

Contents

Monastic community "is also a charism of brotherhood in the wilderness . . . . This closeness is understood as being, at least ideally, a very human and warm relationship, and the charism of the monastic life is, and has been from the beginning, a grace of communion in a shared quest and a participated light. It is then a charism of special love and of mutual aid in the attainment of a difficult end . . . ."

—Thomas Merton, *Contemplation in a World of Action* (1998 edition), p. 18

"The great saints of the monastic tradition, the Desert Fathers [and Mothers] of Egypt . . . read to us now as deeply contemporary. The problems they identify and the disciplines that they suggest are not archeology, not museum pieces, they are directly and profoundly our business."

—Rowan Williams
former Archbishop of Canterbury

"I also came to love the sayings of the desert fathers and mothers, and regretted that I had not found them sooner, for they help me live with myself as I am. I need their stubborn realism, their reassurance that my struggle with bad thoughts does not mean I am a bad person."

—Kathleen Norris, *Acedia*, p. 95.

"Real spirit power isn't something you play with. It's something you get trained in, something you respect, something that can do you damage."

—Grover to Kent Nerburn in Nerburn, *The Girl Who Sang to the Buffalo: A Child, an Elder, and the Light from an Ancient Sky*, p. 240.

Preface

Kathleen Norris

My first encounter with the Desert Fathers and Mothers came about when I purchased Thomas Merton's little paperback *The Wisdom of the Desert*. I found it by happy accident on a less than happy occasion, browsing in a bookstore in St. Paul, Minnesota, on an afternoon when a blizzard was descending on the city. I knew it would be days before I could fly home. I was staying in a big, drafty house with a couple whose marriage was collapsing, and whose young daughter was teething. It promised to be a miserable time for all of us. We managed, but I was glad to go to my room and escape the tension in the household. In those circumstances the desert monastics were the best companions I could have asked for. They lifted my spirits, and took me out of myself and my concerns to an exciting new place that was oddly compelling.

The sayings of these desert Christians were my introduction to the counter-cultural, topsy-turvy world of early monasticism, and I've been an evangelist for this literature ever since. Several years ago I used the desert stories in a course I was teaching at Providence College in Rhode Island. All of my students in the honors program had attended Catholic elementary and high schools, and had read many Christian classics, such as the *Confessions* of Saint Augustine. They were familiar with some of the philosophical and theological concepts of Saint Thomas Aquinas. Not one of them had heard of the Desert Fathers and Mothers, and they were

not excited about studying them until they began to read the stories. At our second class a young man exclaimed, "I really love these desert guys!" He explained that he'd always had difficulty with abstract theology but that reading the desert monks he felt as if he was listening to his grandfather. "They do the same thing he does," he said, "giving me advice that might apply in many situations. Like him, they don't tell you what to do; they point you in the right direction and let you find your way."

I'm grateful to Tim Vivian for bringing out a fresh, modern, and accessible translation, but I have to admit that I am an amateur when it comes to this material. I love it, but I have no expertise in Greek, Syriac, or Coptic. I admire Vivian's diligence with the extensive footnotes that I expect will be of use to bona fide scholars of monastic history, but for the most part I have read this book for the stories and ignored the notes. For me it's enough to hear human voices speaking over a distance of some 1,700 years. These are down-to-earth people, our wise, cranky, faith-filled ancestors. Listen to them.

Foreword

Terrence G. Kardong, OSB†

When I ask myself why I find Tim Vivian's translation and commentary on the *Alphabetical Sayings of the Fathers* (*Apophthegmata)* so satisfying, I have to admit that it is exactly what I would have written. More precisely, it is exactly what I *did* write when I did a commentary on the Rule of Saint Benedict (*Benedict's Rule,* Liturgical Press, 1996). Both of us march through the text and deal with it word by word.

In Tim's case, that means discussing the Greek vocabulary piecemeal. If you are like me, you don't know enough Greek to do this on your own, so here we have an expert to do it for us. This does take an expert, since we are faced with a text that is over a thousand years old, and it is from a spiritual milieu quite different from our own. We need help, and we get it with Tim Vivian's meticulous parsing of the Greek vocabulary.

By this point, some may be muttering that Tim's parsing is a little *too* meticulous for them! Granted, he sometimes seems to err in the direction of repetition and even stressing the obvious. But I think this is the price we pay with this kind of commentary: it is very, very careful. In fact, it is precisely what I need and what I appreciate for *lectio divina.*

By now I suppose I can assume that the reader of this kind of text knows what I am talking about when I use this technical term *lectio divina* from the ancient monastic vocabulary. But in case

you need some reminding, *lectio divina* is a special kind of "sacred reading" or "reading from God." I think most of all, you do *not* do this kind of reading rapidly or cursorily. It absolutely does not fit into the category of "speed reading." *Lectio divina* means savoring the text, perhaps something like sipping a fine after-dinner *digestivo* like *Bénédictine.* That is an unpaid political advertisement, but I thought I might slip it in.

Getting back to Tim Vivian's meticulous parsing of the Greek text of the *Alphabetic Sayings,* I find it pretty much ideal for the kind of *lectio* I like to do. He lifts up almost every word for special treatment! We might wonder if every word deserves this kind of scrutiny, but when it comes to *lectio divina,* the answer is YES. We want to take every word seriously because this is a very precious text that has come down to us from the primary origins of monasticism itself in the Egyptian and Palestinian Deserts. We want to know exactly what these people were trying to say.

Of course, it is slow going! And that may not please everybody. Indeed, it may drive some crazy—but that is what *lectio divina* is all about. It has absolutely nothing to do with gobbling the text as we tend to do with so much modern reading. There is no premium here on speed; in fact, that is strictly *verboten!* Slow down! This is not a survey class where the teacher asks us to read a thousand pages of mystical literature *a day!* No, no, we are in no hurry here. Indeed, it is questionable whether anybody can actually absorb this kind of spiritual literature except by going at it word by word.

And if we are willing to trudge along step by step with Tim Vivian as our master, we will find it greatly to our profit. He not only knows his Greek very well (as well as Coptic, and God knows what else!), but he has spent a good deal of time in the Egyptian Desert itself. He has taken student groups to the great monasteries of Scetis (near Alexandria and Cairo) to see for themselves. Granted, the old monks are long gone, but there is a new crop of Coptic monks out there, and they can also teach us a lot.

Just another word about those Coptic monks. Modern scholars like Zachary Smith (*Philosopher-Monks, Episcopal Authority, and the Care of the Self: The* Apophthegmata Patrum *in Fifth-century Palestine* [Brepols, 2018]) think that the occasion of their "publication" in Palestine was probably pressure from the Egyptian bishops. In other words, this literature may well have been produced in a situation of ecclesiastical stress. Sad to say, the Coptic monks, as well as the whole Coptic church, are today again in a situation of religious stress. And so when we read Tim Vivian's exquisite study of their writings, let's keep them in our hearts and our prayers.

Abbreviations

BCE	Before Common Era = BC (Before Christ)
CE	Common Era = AD (Anno Domini, in the year of the Lord)
CF	Cistercian Fathers series. Cistercian Publications.
CS	Cistercian Studies series. Cistercian Publications.
Ger.	German
Gk.	Greek
HB	Hebrew Bible; the Christian Old Testament
KJV	King James Version of the Bible
JSTOR	A digital online library of academic journals, books, and primary sources
Lat.	Latin
LXX	The Septuagint. *Septuaginta*. Ed. Alfred Rahlfs. 2 vols. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelstiftung, 1935. <academic-bible.com >.
M. Gk.	Modern Greek
n.	noun
NIV	New International Version of the Bible
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version of the Bible
NT	The New Testament.
PG	Patrologia Graeca. Ed. J.-P. Migne. Turnhout: Brepols, 1857–1866. Patristica.net/graeca/.
PL	Patrologia Latina. Ed. J.-P. Migne. Turnhout: Brepols, 1841–1855. Patristica.net/gape/.
pl.	Plural
sing.	Singular

Sp.	Spanish
vb.	Verb

Journals

ABR	*American Benedictine Review*
BSAC	*Bulletin de la Société d'archéologie copte*
CSQ	*Cistercian Studies Quarterly*
JECS	*Journal of Early Christian Studies*

Dictionaries and Encyclopedias

Anchor	*The Anchor Bible Dictionary*. Ed. David Noel Freedman. New York: Doubleday, 1992.
Bauer	Walter Bauer. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*. Ed. Frederick William Danker, W. F. Arndt, and F. W. Gingrich. 2nd ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979. A 3rd ed. is now available.
CE	*The Coptic Encyclopedia*. Ed. Aziz S. Atiya. New York: Macmillan, 1991. *The Claremont Coptic Encyclopedia*. https://ccdl.claremont.edu/digital/collection/cce.
De Vaan	Michiel de Vaan, ed. *Etymological Dictionary of Latin and the Other Italic Languages*. Leiden: Brill, 2008.
EEC	*Encyclopedia of Early Christianity*. Ed. Everett Ferguson. New York and London: Garland, 1990.
Lampe	W. G. H. Lampe. *A Patristic Greek Lexicon.* Oxford: Clarendon, 1961. Available and downloadable: archive.org/details/LampePatristicLexicon/mode/2up.
Lewis and Short	*A Latin Dictionary*. Ed. Charlton T. Lewis and Charles Short. 1879; Oxford: Clarendon, 1975. www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3atext%3a1999.04.0059.

Liddell and Scott	Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott, rev. Henry Stuart Jones. *Greek English Lexicon*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1977. www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3atext%3a1999.04.0057.
Montanari	Franco Montanari, ed. *The Brill Dictionary of Ancient Greek.* English edition eds. Madeleine Goh and Chad Schroeder. Leiden / Boston: Brill, 2015.
OCD	*The Oxford Classical Dictionary*. Ed. N. G. L. Hammond and H. H. Scullard. 2nd ed. Oxford: Clarendon, 1978.
ODCC	*Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church.* Ed. F. E. Cross and E. A. Livingstone. 2nd ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988.
ODLA	*Oxford Dictionary of Late Antiquity*. 2 vols. Ed. Oliver Nicholson. 1st ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018.
OED	*Oxford English Dictionary*. www.oed.com/public/freeoed/loginpage.
Smith, ed.	*The HarperCollins Dictionary of Religion*. Ed. Jonathan Z. Smith. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1995.

Editions and Translations

AlphAP	Alphabetical *Apophthegmata Patrum*. Ed. J.-P. Migne. PG 65:75–440. Turnhout: Brepols, 1864. (The translations in this volume are from the PG, with occasional variant PG readings given in the notes.)
AnonAP	Anonymous *Apophthegmata Patrum.* Trans. John Wortley. *The Anonymous Sayings of the Desert Fathers: A Select Edition and Complete English Translation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013.

Antony, Coptic Sayings	*Door of the Wilderness: The Greek, Coptic, and Copto-Arabic Sayings of Antony of Egypt*. Ed. Lisa Agaiby and Tim Vivian. Collegeville, MN: Cistercian Publications, forthcoming.
Antony, Letters	Samuel Rubenson, ed. and trans. *The Letters of St. Antony: Monasticism and the Making of a Saint*. Studies in Antiquity & Christianity. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995.
Arabic Antony, Letters	*Letters of Antony.* Forthcoming in Lisa Agaiby and Tim Vivian. *Door of the Wilderness: The Greek, Coptic, and Copto-Arabic Sayings of Antony of Egypt*. Collegeville, MN: Cistercian Publications.
Guy	*Les Apophtegmes des Pères: Collection Systématique* (=SysAP). Ed. Jean-Claude Guy. 3 vols. SCh 387 (1), 474 (2), 498 (3). Paris: Cerf, 2013.
Historia Lausiaca	Palladius of Aspuna. *The Lausiac History*. Trans. John Wortley. CS 252. Collegeville, MN: Cistercian Publications, 2015.
Hist Mon	*The Lives of the Desert Fathers: The Historia Monachorum in Aegypto*. Trans. Norman Russell. CS 34. Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1981.
Life of Antony	*Vie d'Antoine*. Ed. G. J. M. Bartelink. SCh 400. Paris: Cerf, 1994. 123–377; *The Life of Antony: The Coptic Life and the Greek Life*. Trans. Tim Vivian and Apostolos N. Athanassakis. CS 202. Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 2003.
Life of John the Little	Maged S. A. Mikhail and Tim Vivian, eds. *The Holy Workshop of Virtue: The Life of John the Little by Zacharias of Sakha*. CS 234. Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 2010.
Life of Syncletica	*The Life and Regimen of The Blessed and Holy Syncletica: Part One, The Translation*. Trans.

	Elizabeth Bryson Bongie. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2005; Peregrina Publishing, 2003.
Sbo	*Life of Pachomius.* In *Pachomian Koinonia,* edited by Armand Veilleux. Vol. 1. CS 45. Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1980.
St Macarius	*St Macarius the Spiritbearer: Coptic Texts Relating to Saint Macarius the Great*. Trans. Tim Vivian. Popular Patristics Series. Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's, 2004.
SysAP	Systematic *Apophthegmata Patrum.* Ed. Jean-Claude Guy. *Les Apophtegmes des Pères: Collection Systématique*. 3 vols. SCh 387 (1), 474 (2), 498 (3). Paris: Cerf, 2013.

Translator's Reflection

Engagement with the opaque (even esoteric) biblical text enables the willing reader to participate in the creation of a remarkable world of imagination.[1]

I rejoice at the hidden wisdom contained in words; this contradiction helps me break out of the closed circle of my thoughts.[2]

I have commented elsewhere that translation is the fine—or not so fine—art of cutting your losses. Paul Valéry puts it this way:

> A work of art is never quite finished because *artists themselves are never completed,* and the power and agility that they draw from the work confers them with precisely the gift of improving it, and so forth. Artists take from it what they need in order to efface it and remake it—it's in this way at least that artists must consider things. And they

1. Alan Cooper, "Imagining Prophecy," in James L. Kugel, ed., *Poetry and Prophecy: The Beginnings of a Literary Tradition* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990), 26. I think that what Cooper says applies also to the early monastic sayings and stories in the present volume.

2. Kathleen Norris, *Acedia & Me: A Marriage, Monks, and a Writer's Life* (New York: Riverhead, 2008), 217; see "To Wait and to Hope: At Play with Etymology," 217–22.

> arrive at the conclusion that the only satisfying works are those that have taught them something new.[3]

Many years ago, while studying Spanish in grad school, I spent a summer in Guatemala studying and speaking the language. Towards the end of my stay, quite proud of myself, I decided that I was going to read Gabriel García Márquez's *Cien Años de Soledad* (*One Hundred Years of Solitude*). I excitedly "read," oh, four or five pages, and already knew that the novel's syntax and vocabulary, its *acento colombino*, Columbian accent, was way beyond my means.

But what was humbling then has taught me over the years that Valéry has, indirectly, like a set of theses, nailed the potential downside of translation, incompleteness, to a door we're trying to open. Undaunted, though, as we walk through, we can take down the downside—no, not to rip it up, but gently to fold it and keep it in our pocket for reference, perhaps even reverence. Incompleteness and transformation can be identical twins; Norris's (seeming) contradiction is a well-lighted doorway. There *is* an upside, therefore, and I think we should not only nail this upside to every door but also plaster it all over the walls, exterior *and* interior. As Edith Grossman, the eminent translator of García Márquez, so rightly puts it,

> Translation expands our ability to explore through literature [and the translations in the present volume *are* literature]

3. "Une œuvre n'est jamais nécessairement finie, car celui qui l'a faite ne s'est jamais accompli, et la puissance et l'agilité qu'il en a tirées, lui confèrent précisément le don de l'améliorer, et ainsi de suite. Il en retire de quoi l'effacer et la refaire—C'est ainsi du moins qu'un artiste libre doit regarder les choses. Et il en vient à tenir pour œuvres satisfaisantes celles seulement qui lui ont appris quelque chose de plus" ("Valéry [Paul] > Les Cahiers," in Régine Detambel, *Conférences, Ateliers, Bibliothérapie*, trans. David Vivian, www.regine-detambel.com/f/index.php?sp=liv&livre_id=1415). Valéry's *mot juste* often appears as W. H. Auden's version, "A poem is never finished; it is only abandoned" (*Collected Poems*, ed. Edward Mendelson, "Author's Forewords" [New York: Vintage, 1976], xxx).

> the thoughts and feelings of people from another society or another time. It permits us to savor the transformation of the foreign into the familiar and for a brief time to live outside our own skins, our own preoccupations and misconceptions. It expands and deepens our world, our consciousness, in countless, indescribable ways.[4]

The very word "translation" is a metaphorical gift to English: Latin *trans*, "across," + *latio*, the passive participle of *ferro*, as in "transfer": to set in motion, especially to move onward quickly or rapidly, to bear, carry, lead, conduct.[5] Also, "a handing over." The translator hands a text over, entrusts it, to the reader's keeping. Probably no one's ever thought of rock guitarist Jimi Hendrix as a translator, but Jimi doesn't just redo Bob Dylan's "All Along the Watchtower"; he hands it over to metamorphosis and recreation, giving birth to a whole new song, thus transforming the original into chords and lyrics for a rapidly changing audience.

Transformation. Live outside our own skins—live *into* our own skins. The expanding and deepening of our world, in fact, offers us *worlds*. As Valéry says, "The work is a modification of the author."[6] Not only do the author, and the translator, modify, but the reader also modifies, shapes and reshapes, and, potentially, transforms. As Alan Cooper tells us in the quotation that begins this Reflection, engagement with texts, biblical, literary, monastic, can lead to "the creation of a remarkable world of imagination." What Marvin Meyer says about *The Gospel of Thomas* applies equally to the Bible and to the sayings and stories in this volume: it "is an interactive gospel, and wisdom and knowledge come when readers creatively encounter sayings of Jesus and respond

4. Edith Grossman, *Why Translation Matters* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 14.

5. *A Latin Dictionary*, ed. Charlton T. Lewis and Charles Short (Oxford: Clarendon, 1879, 1975), 737c.

6. Paul Valéry, "L'œuvre est une modification de l'auteur," Detambel, http://www.regine-detambel.com/f/index.php?sp=liv&livre_id=1415.

to the sayings in an insightful manner."[7] Imagination, creativity, response, and insight are, by their very action(s), transformative. Transformation is a major theme, perhaps the overarching theme, in the sayings and stories gathered in the present collection. A number of transformations made the present volume possible; I'll detail them in this Reflection and in the Introduction.

The first one specific to this volume came a while back when I was translating the Coptic sayings of Antony the Great[8] (who, in his Greek guise, appears first in the present volume) and, as the early Christian monastics often put it, an interior voice spoke to me: "These sayings without notes and comments will lose some, sometimes a lot, of their meaning and, thus, their value." Lost in translation. Thus the first impetus for this annotated translation. As I worked on, lived wonderfully with, the texts and their translations, other similar blessings occurred: as I'll discuss below and in the Introduction, while I was working on the translation I was reading Gregory Boyle's *Barking to the Choir*, and that book greatly transformed the Introduction I had planned. (I briefly discuss Boyle's books below and in the Introduction.) Later, while working on the Introduction, I was reading *Acedia* by Kathleen Norris (who had already agreed to write a preface for this book)

7. Marvin Meyer, "The Gospel of Thomas with the Greek Gospel of Thomas," in Marvin Meyer, ed., *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures: The International Edition* (New York: HarperCollins, 2007), 134. He also cites Richard Valantasis's phrase "performative theology"; Valantasis says that "the theology emerges from the readers' and hearers' response to the sayings and their sequence and variety" (Valantasis, *The Gospel of Thomas: New Testament Readings* [Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 1997], 7).

8. My revised Coptic text and translation is "Bohairic Coptic Sayings Attributed to Saint Antony the Great: A New Transcription and First English Translation," *Coptica* 17 (2018 [July 2019]): 55–90; the translations also appear in *More Sayings of the Desert Fathers*, ed. John Wortley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 118–45. A book dedicated to translations of the Greek, Coptic, and Arabic sayings of Antony is forthcoming: Elizabeth Agaiby and Tim Vivian, *Door of the Wilderness: The Greek, Coptic, and Copto-Arabic Sayings of Antony of Egypt* (Collegeville, MN: Cistercian Publications).

and realized that her book spoke very much to my efforts and to me personally; numerous quotations from and references to her book now occur in this volume. Together, Boyle's and Norris's wisdom and insights confirmed what was already central for me: *these monks still very much speak to us as human beings.*

To better understand, and profit from, the *Apophthegmata Patrum*, *The Sayings of the Desert Fathers and Mothers*,[9] readers without Greek or Coptic read more satisfactorily when they have a guide, their very own *vade mecum*, a travel guide, if not in person then in book. This travel guide I have done my best to provide here: the notes and comments, the Glossary, the Dramatis Personae, and the Scripture and General Indices provide not just linguistic aid but also historical, biblical, and religious directions, not as mandates but as offerings. At first, readers may well be traversing uncertain terrain, but soon they stop and reflect on what's before them (in this case, texts) and then, with further reflection, what's within. Community is a key part of early monastic spirituality (see III.1 in the Introduction). The texts here can create a community of readers and learners.

As Norris puts it, "languages have a life and wisdom of their own."[10] My intention, then, is to provide help not just with the spoken and written language of these monastics, but to translate, at least partially, imperfectly, the various *languages* they use, that is, the things they take as normal (and abnormal) in the fourth and fifth centuries that are often not the matters of our world. But much more often, I would urge, the normalities and abnormalities that they inhabit, and the ones they confront, are still very much our habitations.

In their Preface and Foreword, Kathleen Norris and Terrence Kardong, respectively, mention the, well, superabundance of notes in this volume. As I've already said and will discuss further in the

9. See the discussion of the *Apophthegmata* in Part II of the Introduction and some of its themes in III–V).

10. Norris, *Acedia*, 2.

Introduction, I believe wholeheartedly that the sayings and stories gathered here still speak to us and can even be transformational. Thus I hope that this volume will reach many kinds of readers: scholars, yes, but, more important, anyone interested in religion, Christianity, early Christianity, early Christian monasticism, monasticism in general, and / or spirituality—in fact, humanity. I believe that the material in this collection can also speak to those who are not Christian, and even to those who don't see themselves as conventionally religious. Perhaps the novelist L. O. Hartley provides the best one-sentence reason for footnotes and comments: "The past is a foreign country; they do things differently there."[11] As a professor, I'm constantly telling my students (probably, to them, *too* constantly), few of whom now regularly attend a place of worship, "With regard to *any* religious text or practice, you don't have to be a 'God-person' to see in the texts you're reading the truths, the values, even the bad truths and values, that make us truly human."

As Terrence Kardong emphasizes in his Foreword, a reader may consult the biblical and linguistic notes as part of *lectio*: slow contemplative reading. English *meditate* doesn't accurately or precisely describe what meditation is for the early monks. For them, it primarily means the quiet, vocal, recitation of Scripture, especially the Psalms, as what we now call a mantra. Scripture's present, and presence, helps the monks attain what they call *hēsychía*, "contemplative quiet," and *anápausis*, "inward stillness," which I discuss in the Introduction (V.4–5).[12]

11. L. P. Hartley, *The Go-Between* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1953; repr. New York Review Books Classics, 17). In "Sacred Arts: Reading the Great Good Books, from the Torah to the Quran," a review of Robert Alter's new translation of the Hebrew Bible in *The New Yorker* (January 28, 2019), 69–75, Adam Gopnik speaks of "the helpful clarity" of "the greatest feature of Alter's Bible: the commentary, which takes up more than half of nearly every page, seamlessly sliding into the translation proper" ("Sacred Arts," 71). The comments in the present volume are not nearly so voluminous as Alter's, but I hope they're seamless.

12. The translations are my own. For more about the terms, see the Glossary and the General Index, which identify sayings that use these words.

What Kardong emphasizes could well be primary, but another main purpose here is to illustrate how thoroughly biblical these ammas and abbas, mothers and fathers, were—and are.[13] Most translations of early monastic literature footnote only direct quotations from Scripture, but I'm convinced that Scripture, both Testaments, were and are a vital part of the air these monks breathed, the work they did, the ground they sat on, the prayers they made, and the counsel they gave. And now reread the sentence and substitute the present tense for each verb. For every direct quotation from Scripture, there are possibly, probably, ten allusions. Ewa Wipszycka concludes, partly correctly, "If we were to reconstruct [the religious life of the monks] solely on the basis of the sayings, we would conclude that the Bible was of minor importance, since the number of biblical quotations in the sayings is not significant."

"But," Wipszycka immediately adds, "this conclusion would be off the mark, as other sources . . . testify that the Bible was the cornerstone of all religious practices."[14] Scripture was indeed the cornerstone of early Christian practices, but with the Mothers and Fathers of the Desert Wipszycka has restricted herself to quotations, whereas it became clear to me as I translated that the ammas and abbas wove biblical allusions, sometimes consisting of a single word, into the baskets they made (as they prayed while working), the clothes they wore, and the wisdom they offered, and offer still. Close study of their sayings and stories actually tells us that the Bible was central for the ammas and abbas of the desert.[15]

Can we know for certain that these allusions are intentional? No, but that question has two serious problems: (1) In the gospels, thanks to modern scholarship we can sit beside Matthew and Luke

13. See especially Douglas Burton-Christie, *The Word in the Desert: Scripture and the Quest for Holiness in Early Christian Monasticism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).

14. Ewa Wipszycka, *The Second Gift of the Nile: Monks and Monasteries in Late Antique Egypt*, trans. Damian Jasiński, The Journal of Juristic Papyrology Supplements (Warsaw: The University of Warsaw, 2018), 185.

15. For example, see the *Antirrheticus* by Evagrius of Pontus.

especially and watch them shape Jesus (and reshape Mark's Jesus), his acts and words, not into their own image, but into what they thought their respective communities needed. For example, in Matthew's gospel, Jesus says "Blessed are the poor in spirit"; in Luke he says "Blessed are the poor."[16] Depending on how one reads and one's own background and context, that difference of two words can be profound. The gospel writers have given us a simulacrum of Jesus, not Jesus himself. This is true also of the content and language of the sayings gathered in this volume that portray the Desert Fathers and Mothers. (2) Literary critics talk about the "intentional fallacy," pointing to the impossibility of discerning from a text what its author intended. As two scholars long ago pointed out, "The poem is not the critic's own and not the author's (it is detached from the author at birth and goes about the world beyond his power to intend about it or control it)."[17] We can never know, at least fully, the author's intent—she or he doesn't fully know. What we have is the writer's text to make our own.

The more I translated, the more I immersed myself in the texts and their world(s), the more certain I became that primarily through reading / hearing and prayer the early monks steeped themselves in Scripture; it is only natural that its vocabulary, and worldview, became part of who they were, just as the language, and world, of the Hebrew Bible in Greek translation became the referential world

16. Matt 5:3 and Luke 6:20, respectively; Burton Mack's translation ("Q: The Lost Sayings Source Burton Mack's translation," www.tonyburke.ca/wp-content/uploads/Burton-Macks-Q-Text.pdf) has Luke as the original: "How fortunate are the poor; they have God's kingdom." The majority understanding now is that Matthew and Luke used a common source, Q, from German *Quelle*, "source," oral or written, and added it to Mark's gospel. Who changed what in the saying here is, at present, unknowable. On Q see John S. Kloppenborg, *Q, the Earliest Gospel: A Introduction to the Original Stories and Sayings of Jesus* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2000), and Kloppenborg, *Excavating Q, The History and Setting of the Sayings Gospel* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2008).

17. "The Intentional Fallacy," from W. K. Wimsatt, Jr., and Monroe C. Beardsley, *The Verbal Icon: Studies in the Meaning of Poetry* (Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky Press, 1954), faculty.smu.edu/nschwart/seminar/fallacy.htm.

of Paul and the Evangelists, narrators of the Gospel. Some scholars, especially in the early twentieth century, said that the Bible was not important for the monks. But in his translation of the *Conferences* by John Cassian, Boniface Ramsey, O.P, titles his index "Index of Scriptural Citations and Allusions." That "and" is important. I've followed Ramsey's lead with the Scripture Index in this volume. I'm convinced that with annotated references to scriptural quotes and allusions, we understand these monastics much better, and they, in turn, if we're open to it, can help us better understand ourselves.

This sentence points to an equally important purpose of this book, as I suggest above with the use of the present tense: to show the relevance of these monastics and their sayings and stories. In *Tattoos on the Heart: The Power of Boundless Compassion,* and *Barking to the Choir: The Power of Radical Kinship*, Boyle calls the stories he tells "parables."[18] He ministers to current and former gang members; in 1988 he and fellow parishioners founded what became Homeboy Industries.[19] In a Christian context, *parables* walks us right over to Jesus. But Jesus didn't invent the genre; it long preceded him and, as Boyle shows, lives long after him. Boyle's work, like Kent Nerburn's transformational trilogy about his journeys with a Native American elder and his people and geography, like the sayings and stories of the Desert Fathers and Mothers, are fictions in that word's most imaginative, creative, and transforming sense: not something false, but something true, and thus enduring.[20]

18. Boyle, *Tattoos on the Heart* (New York: Free Press, 2011), and *Barking to the Choir* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2017).

19. See homeboyindustries.org.

20. Kent Nerburn, *Neither Wolf Nor Dog: On Forgotten Roads with an Indian Elder* (Novato, CA: New World Library, 1994, 2002), *The Wolf at Twilight: An Indian Elder's Journey through a Land of Ghosts and Shadows* (2009), and *The Girl who Sang to the Buffalo: A Child, an Elder, and the Light from an Ancient Sky* (2013). *Fiction* has a dueling etymology: Latin *fictio* derives from the verb *fingo*, "to touch, handle, stroke," then "form, shape, fashion," with the accessory idea of arranging, adorning," thus "to set to rights, arrange, to adorn, dress, trim." But another accessory meaning is that of untruth, "to alter, change," for the purpose

Fiction is key for me. I spoke earlier in this Reflection of personal transformation that helped lead to the present volume. An anterior transformation, one that I fully realized only when writing this piece, was this: my first three degrees are in English, American Literature, and Comparative Literature (Greek, Latin, Spanish). Thus I bring to the endeavor here a different perspective than would, say, someone trained in history or theology.

Over the past hundred years we've looked at the *Sayings of the Desert Fathers and Mothers* in many different, creative, and helpful ways. But we haven't given one approach much attention—the sayings and stories as literature.[21] This is surprising, given the literary approaches to the New Testament and Hebrew Bible—for example, for the latter, Alter's work on biblical narrative and poetry.[22] Wipszycka summarizes the matter well; she correctly speaks of the sayings as "one specific literary genre," just as the gospels are examples of Late Antique biographies and need, at least in part, to be read as such.[23] She continues, "The compilers of the collection continued to treat their literary material as something malleable: they cut out or added various passages at will, and made changes and corrections whenever the given text seemed to be difficult to understand or simply not to their liking." She

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of dissembling (Lewis and Short 750c; www-oed-com.falcon.lib.csub.edu/view/Entry/69828?rskey=nDM7rM&result=2&isAdvanced=false#eid4405097).

21. This may be partly because scholars such as C. Wilfred Griggs have not seen the *Apophthegmata* as literature: "of the major sources relating to fourth century monasticism, there are also the non-literary collections of sayings of the desert fathers, or the *Apophthegmata Patrum*" (Griggs, *Early Egyptian Christianity from its Origins to 451 C.E.* (Leiden: Brill, 1990), 149–50.

22. Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, 2nd ed. (New York: Basic Books, 2011), and *The Art of Biblical Poetry*, rev. ed. (New York: Basic Books, 2011).

23. For an introduction to Late Antique biography, see Ben Witherington III, *Invitation to the New Testament: First Things*, 2nd ed. (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 58–59. For a full study, see Richard A. Burridge, *What are the Gospels? A Comparison with Graeco-Roman Biography,* rev. ed. (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2018).

adds that the "first heroes of the desert should be regarded as a literary fiction."[24] Wipszycka is correct—though we need to use *fiction* with care and nuance; as many scholars have shown, the *Apophthegmata*, like the gospels, like Paul's letters, are grounded in history and location(s), persons and personalities.[25]

Owen Chadwick calls the *Apophthegmata Patrum* "raw material" that is valuable because it lacks an editor's (or editors') "unifying interest."[26] But (1) a comparison of the sayings in the anonymous *Apophthegmata Patrum* (AnonAP) and the systematic *Apophthegmata Patrum* (SysAP) shows plenty of editorial handiwork.[27] (2) Within the alphabetical *Sayings* it is clear that an editor (or editors) has placed some sayings together, either thematically or linguistically, or both; sometimes a single word connects two sayings. I have noted a number of these occurrences in the notes to the translations. (3) Many of the sayings reflect writerly skill, juxtapositions of words, and places where the vocabulary enhances, sometimes dramatically, the theme(s) of the saying. These, too, I've noted. But let's let a poet have the last word here: Marianne Moore famously said of poetry that we are in the presence of "imaginary gardens with real toads in them."[28]

The monks who handed on the monastic traditions, like Nerburn and Boyle, were not reporters; they were witnesses, recorders, and transmitters, and what they offer is truths (the plural here is important). In Religious Studies we call such truths *myths*,

24. Wipszycka, *Second Gift*, 80, 83.

25. For a brief discussion of the historical question, see Zachary B. Smith, "The *Apophthegmata Patrum* in its Historical Context," in *Philosopher-Monks, Episcopal Authority, and the Care of the Self: The* Apophthegmata Patrum *in Fifth-Century Palestine*, Instrumenta Patristica et Mediaevalia 80 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2017), 17–21, chap. 1.3. Smith emphasizes "the compiler" in 5th-century Palestine.

26. Owen Chadwick, *Western Asceticism* (London & Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1958), 34.

27. See the Bibliography.

28. Moore, "Poetry," poets.org/poem/poetry.

sacred encounters that inform us still.[29] As a saying attributed to a Native American elder has it, "What I'm about to tell you may not have happened, but it's true." Truth is always present tense. As I was working on the third or fourth draft of the translation, I was also reading Boyle's powerful and moving books, mentioned earlier. Now an equally strong voice spoke to me: "Use *Barking to the Choir* and *Tattoos on the Heart* as midrashim on the Desert Mothers and Fathers." In the Introduction I offer a reflection on what that voice asked me to do.

Midrash (plural *midrashim*) is the Hebrew word for "interpretation," "study," "rabbinic Bible interpretation." A midrash can be "the interpretation of a single verse of Scripture" or "a compilation of exegeses of Scripture."[30] Paul offers one (he uses a participle of the verb cognate with *allegory*) on Sarah and Hagar in Galatians 4:21-31. Perhaps the central theme of Boyle's parables is, "How does a person live a Gospel life? How do a people live such a life?" This is the central theme of early monasticism, which the monks often express as "Offer me some counsel. How can I be saved?" They usually don't mean salvation in the sweet hereafter *but in the present*. Homies and homegirls walk into Boyle's office every day and in different words ask that same question. It makes sense, therefore, with this symbiosis between Egyptian desert and urban Los Angeles, to use Boyle's parables to enhance the parables of the monks, and vice versa.

My university studies, as I've said, were first in literature and then in early Christianity. My further graduate studies, to paraphrase Samuel Johnson, tended to focus my mind, in this case on

29. "Myth is a much misunderstood and misused word that requires a precise definition"; see "Myth," in Smith, ed., 749. This article for me overemphasizes "supernatural beings," thereby restricting myth. Norris, *Acedia*, 35, offers a pertinent point about myth, especially now: "We have not changed so much that the myth of Narcissus has no relevance today; it is a valid representation of a dangerous aspect of the human personality."

30. See "Midrash" in Smith, ed., 717.

just one or two areas of study, not then connected with literature.[31] When as a Religious Studies professor I began teaching Judaism and the Hebrew Bible, I actually knew little about either. One of my first discoveries, actually a transformational one, was the Talmud: there center stage was a passage of Scripture, and all around it were rabbinic discussions of the text, midrashim—and sometimes the rabbis disagreed![32] I had found a sacred text, and a tradition, where it was not just okay to discuss and differ, it was expected! More important, I found that such discussions, and disagreements, could be transformational, transforming not only the text but also its reader—dare we say making him or her more open-minded. In the Introduction, therefore, I reflect on the sayings of the Desert Fathers and Mothers and with them the thoughts of Greg Boyle as he has lived out his own calling. In this way, adding where apposite insights from Kathleen Norris, I hope to meld the ancient with the modern.

I hope this translation serves these purposes:

1. Language: "Context, context, context." With regard to *any* text, ancient or modern, this is my mantra, both for myself and for my students. When discussing the Bible or early Christian writings (or any writings), with *context* we often think of historical, sociological, religious, and anthropological settings, but we need to add linguistic context too, as any annotated edition of Shakespeare, Chaucer, or Milton shows. As I was translating one day, I remembered how grateful I was in second-year Greek to have a thoroughly annotated edition as I read Plato's *Apology*, his defense of Socrates.

31. Johnson: "Depend upon it, sir, when a man knows he is to be hanged in a fortnight, it concentrates his mind wonderfully," from James Boswell, *The Life of Samuel Johnson*, www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/1564.

32. For an example of a page, Google the Vilna Edition of the Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Berachot, fol. 2a.

A significant linguistic example in the New Testament is the Greek word *ánōthen* in John 3:3: "Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born *ánōthen*." The King James Version (KJV) and New International Version (NIV) translate *ánōthen* as "again." The New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) uses "from above."[33] Words indeed matter. How one translates them matters, too. Many words don't translate easily; thus the need for notes and a Glossary.

As someone who grew up in a time when we guys would pool our change for gas, when "groovy" was all the rage, both linguistically and culturally, and as someone who loves Chaucer, Shakespeare, Donne, Herbert, and poetry, I am well aware how language changes and dates. Consider the word *egregious*, with its etymology and shape-shifting character.[34] I've tried with these translations to walk a *via media*, a middle course: I've tried to make the language colloquial, but not too colloquial.[35] I want these monks to sound as though they're speaking, with ease, using contractions. Grossman states the translator's role well:

33. The NIV notes that *ánōthen* also means "from above" and the NRSV notes also "born anew." Walter Bauer places the word with Gal 4:4 as "again, anew" (*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, ed. Frederick William Danker, et al., 2nd ed. [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979], 92b [4]). To me, the other appearances of the word in John's gospel show that it primarily means "from above," an important theme in John.

34. "Latin *ēgregius*, outstanding, excellent, splendid (also used sarcastically), pre-eminent, illustrious, lit. 'towering above the flock' " (*grex* / *gregis*). In the mid-16th century *egregious* could mean "distinguished, eminent; great, renowned," "remarkably good; wonderful, extraordinary." But it could also mean "conspicuously bad or wrong; blatant, flagrant"; (later also) "outrageous, offensive," for example, an "egregious foole" [*sic*] (1566). This is the only meaning it has now (www-oed-com.falcon.lib.csub.edu/view/Entry/59939?redirectedFrom=egregious#eid).

35. Gopnik, "Sacred Arts," paraphrases Alter's belief (in *The Art of Bible Translation*) that biblical translation "should somehow be at once lucid and properly 'estranged,' sounding more like an ancient language" than "like a TV evangelist's homey English" (69–70). In my translations for this volume, I've chosen homey over estranged.

> as Ralph Manheim, the great translator from German, so famously said, translators are like actors who speak the lines as the author would if the author could speak English. . . . Whatever else it may be, translation in Manheim's formulation is a kind of interpretive performance, bearing the same relationship to the original text as the actor's work does to the script, the performing musician's to the composition.[36]

As I translated I kept asking myself "Would we say it this way?" Of course that means I'm imposing the way I and we speak, in the United States, in 2020. But all translation is not only, as is often noted, interpretation; it is also imposition. But so, too, is writing. I have, therefore, used contractions, as we do in our conversations. Some of the monks—Arsenius, Evagrius, Theodora, and Theophilus, and others—because of their seeming education or status (bishop), speak more formally. For biblical quotations, I have stayed with the more formal translation of the NRSV.

2. Language, Part II: Many of the sayings in Greek, and especially the narratives, have numerous word plays that English cannot adequately capture without notes. I had not before associated *art* with the ammas and abbas, but as I translated I discovered that there is definitely art here. Long gone are the days when scholars treated these monastics as ignorant, illiterate rubes.[37] I've come to see that the "rubes," or at least those who told and eventually wrote down their stories, have become artists, aware of language; their linguistic gambols reinforce, even undergird, even excavate, the themes inherent in the stories they're telling.

a. Quotations from and allusions to the Bible: discussed above.

36. Grossman, *Why Translation Matters*, 11.

37. Discussing the archeological finds in Egypt, Griggs reports that the papyrologist C. H. Roberts "declares that in the first century C.E., writing was pervasive through all levels of society, 'to an extent without parallel in living memory' " (Griggs, *Early Egyptian Christianity,* 23). See also Griggs, *Early Egyptian Christianity,* 40 n. 65.

b. Extensive glossary: The reader will quickly note that many words have an asterisk after them. These refer to the Glossary, where there is more, often much more, information. The Glossary entries often direct the interested reader, not just scholars, to further primary or secondary sources. The monks, like us if we stop to think about it, have a well-thumbed lexicon of oft-used words, many of which have important meanings that help us better understand their world—words and phrases such as *acedia*, *apatheia*, contemplative quiet, and inward stillness.[38] *Woman* has an asterisk. Why? One wonders. Because some of the (male) monastic views about women are, well, unfortunate, or worse. A little elucidation in the Glossary may help here, and elsewhere.

c. Notes and comments: As is discussed above, many of the notes are biblical references. But notes also direct the reader to other sayings in the volumes, to different textual readings, and to secondary, usually scholarly, works. One could probably comment on each saying, but then the reader would be holding something the size and heft of *The Oxford English Dictionary* (whose hefty volumes some of us have in pre-digital format). Except for one, necessary, long comment, the comments tend to be brief. Here again, a reader can profitably read without either notes or comments, but my hope is that interest or a "Huh?" will ask for further exploration.

Inclusive language: I've done my best to use inclusive language. *Man* appears nowhere in this translation unless the Greek word specifically indicates a male, which, perhaps surprisingly, is rare. (Greek distinguishes between "male" [*anḗr*] and "human / person" [*ánthrōpos*].)[39] With God, pronoun inclusivity is more difficult; usually *he* appears, but I have occasionally substituted *God*.

38. See the Glossary and the Introduction for these.

39. I haven't, though, followed the NRSV in making *brothers* "brothers and sisters." The latter wording is anachronistic in an early monastic context where male and female monks rarely interacted.

Greek: The transliterated Greek words in the notes are given in dictionary form; that is, nominative singular masculine for nouns and first person singular present progressive for verbs. Those with Greek will be able to retrofit the transliterations into Greek and use the various dictionaries cited. The sayings in this book often use parataxis: short, simple sentences, with the use of coordinating rather than subordinating constructions (especially *and*). Thus they are much more like Mark's gospel than Paul's letters. This translation will omit many of the instances of *and,* as do modern translations of Mark. I have also often translated *kaí*, "and," as "so," as in "So they went."[40] Some sayings, though, use a more complex syntax and vocabulary, which I've tried to capture.

I'd like to end this Reflection with a story. Many years ago, right after seminary, I had a two-year post-doctoral fellowship at Yale Divinity School. The school was going to pay me to do research and teach only one course on the subject of my research. I thought, "This is pretty cool—being paid to read." There was one problem, though. The post-doc fellows were required to have a subject to work on. And I didn't have one. My first foray proved nugatory when the late Henry Chadwick informed me that one of his doctoral students was already working on it.

Seeking, and not finding, one day early on, to keep up with the Coptic I had learned in grad school, I was reading some Coptic texts, and accidentally, providentially, they were monastic. I had had many years of grad school and seminary and had rarely read an ancient monastic text.[41] Although married, with one child and one in the planning stages, I fell in love. At the same time, with money in my pocket to buy books, I was reading everything I

40. Here again I disagree with Alter's approach; Gopnik writes, "This feature [Hebrew parataxis—its rule of connecting phrases with simple 'and's] . . . [is] faithfully reproduced in the King James Version, as it is in Alter's" version ("Sacred Arts," 70).

41. I'm indebted to Prof. Birger Pearson for asking me as a grad student to take his Coptic class at UC Santa Barbara.

could find, pre-Amazon, by Thomas Merton. My parish priest back in grad school had introduced him to me;[42] I was enthralled, and now, after seminary, I had much more free time to read him. I became a very fortunate scholar: I had found a topic, early monasticism, that spoke to me and nourished me well beyond the academic. It turned out that that Coptic text didn't have an English translation; the subsequent—or was it consequent?—translation of it became my first published article.

That was thirty years ago. I'm still journeying with, and within, their communities.

> When I first came out here, I was asleep . . .
> but then I read a few lines from the Desert Fathers and then,
> after that, my whole being was full of serenity and vigilance.
>
> —Thomas Merton[43]

* * *

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42. Another thank you: to The Rev. Gary Commins.

43. Thomas Merton, *When the Trees Say Nothing: Writings on Nature*, ed. Kathleen Deignan (Notre Dame, IN: Sorin Books, 2003), 161–62.

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Scripture Index

Scriptural references are indexed by page and / or note number.

Old Testament / Hebrew Bible

New Testament

General Index

Entries are indexed by page numbers; asterisks indicate the presence of the term in a note on the numbered page. An asterisk after a range of page numbers indicates the presence of a note on at least one of those pages. **Boldfaced** page numbers indicate sayings collected under the name of the cited father. Greek, Coptic, and Latin words are italicized. In lists of Greek terms, nouns and adjectives appear first, followed by the first person present singular form of the verb.