



Excerpts From:

# The Paradise Of The Hdy Fathers

**D**uring the winter of 1888 the Vicar of the Chaldean Patriarch at Mosul (Nineveh) was so kind as to show me some of the Syriac manuscripts in his possession, and among them was a thick oblong quarto volume containing the “**Lives of the Holy Men**” by Palladius and St Jerome. I was familiar with the Syriac MSS. Of the Paradise of Palladius in the British Museum, but I had never before seen so lengthy a copy of the work. The manuscript was old, that is to say, it was written probably in the thirteenth or fourteenth century, and as it was impossible to buy the volume, it being church property, I asked permission to have a copy of it made. To this the Vicar assented, and a copy was made in due course and sent to England. On examination it was found to contain “**The Life of St Anthony**”, by Athanasius, Archbishop of Alexandria, “**The Book of Paradise**,” by Palladius, “**The Asketikon**,” or “**History of the Monks of Tabenna**,” “**The Histories of the Solitaries of the Desert of Egypt**,” attributed to St Jerome, “**The Sayings of the Fathers**,” and “**The Questions and Answers of the Holy Men**.” In fact, the manuscript contained a collection of works, which were of the highest importance for the history of the rise and growth of Christian monasticism in Egypt...

## *The History of the Maiden Alexandra*

There was a certain maiden of Alexandria whose name was Alexandra, and she left the city and shut herself up in a tomb until the end of her life; she used to receive her food and whatever she needed through a window, and no man and no woman saw her face, neither did she see the face of any man, for twelve years. And a few days afterwards she yielded up her soul, and she lay down and went to her rest in peace. Now when her serving woman went to visit her according to her wont, she knocked at the window, but Alexandra gave her no answer, and straightway she knew that she was dead, and she came and made known unto us concerning her mistress. And we took off the door of her cell and we found her body dried up.



**Coptic Monastery. Al-Muharraq. Assiut.**  
**Come praise the Lord, all his servants, all who serve in His temple at Night . . .**

*(Psalm 134:1)*

Now the blessed woman Melha also related unto us the story of Alexandra, saying, “I have never seen her face to face. And I stood outside the cell, close to the window, and entreated her to tell me for what reason she had shut herself up in the grave. And Alexandra answered and said unto me, “Inasmuch as the thought of the love of God was present in my mind, I prayed before the Lord, and I entreated Him to permit me to offer unto Him my virginity in the state in which it had been borne with me. Now a certain young man regarded me in his thoughts, and looked upon me, and desired me, and sought to destroy me. But because I did not want to grieve him, or to say what was evil unto him, or to be to him an occasion of sin, I chose rather to shut myself up alive in this grave than to cause a man who was made in the form of the image of God to stumble!

And I said unto her, “How can’st thou bear to live here not seeing the face of any man without being driven to despair? Then she answered and said unto me, “I occupy myself with my prayers and with the work of my hands, and I have no idle moments. From morn until the ninth hour I weave linen, and recite the Psalms



and pray; and during the rest of the day I commemorate in my heart the Holy Fathers, and I revolve in my thoughts the histories of all the Prophets and Apostles, and Martyrs; and during the remaining hours I work with my hands and eat my bread, and by means of these things I am comforted whilst I await the end of my life in good hope.”

**These things we have heard from the blessed woman**

Melha who told the story of the maiden Alexandra. But in this history I must not undertake those who have toiled in the faith of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the glory of the perfect and to the admonition of those who hear.

In the February issue of the Mighty Arrows, the history of Abba Macarius (the Alexandrian) and a certain Virgin will unfold.....

# Scripture Quotes that should be read together

**Samy George**

**St John Kame Church, Birmingham, AL**

## **Willful Temptations Versus Trials**

Last issue we correlated the Lord Jesus Christ prediction that Christians will suffer and God’s promise to comfort the persecuted. In this issue we will examine the Lord’s Prayer of “Lead not into temptation” (Matthew 6:13), and compare it to St James’ teaching of “Count it all joy when you fall into divers temptations.” (James 1: 2)

St Maximus the Confessor (580-662 AD) explains that when the Lord Christ taught His disciples how they should pray by the words “Lead not into temptation”, He taught them to pray to be spared falling or yielding to the temptations arising in the realm of the will, that is, stimulations of sin and lust. The French translation of this verse is ‘Do not let us succumb or yield to temptation’, and makes this explanation clear.

St Maximus explained that the Great James, known as the Lord’s Brother, taught those who are persecuted for the faith not to be overcome by temptations that assail them, (involuntary temptations) coming by God’s permission independently of our will, and causing hardships and sorrows. This is clearly shown in the words which follow each verse, “but deliver us from evil” for the first, and in the second, “Knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.”

Thus Christians should pray not to fall into willful temptations, and properly receive and react to trials with joy and perseverance through God’s help. St Augustine puts the dilemma of whether to pray for avoiding trials as follows: “Is not the life of man on

earth a trial? Who would choose trouble and difficulty? You (God) do command us to endure them not to love them! No one loves what he endures though he may love to endure. For though he rejoices at his endurance, yet he should rather there were nothing to endure. In adversity I desire prosperity; in prosperity I fear adversity.”

Why are then trials useful to the Christians? In the Holy Book of 2 Timothy 1: 8-12 St Paul urges St Timothy to “join with me in suffering for the gospel according to the power of God.” St Paul knew suffering, and when he urged St Timothy to join with him in suffering, he was writing from his prison cell in Rome. St Paul knew that suffering is an essential part of growing in the Lord Jesus Christ, the Suffering Servant of all. As we, the Christians, abide in and commune with the Lord Jesus Christ and let the Holy Spirit provide our sustaining power to endure trials and turn them into glory for God, we grow more and more like the Lord Jesus Christ. Factual knowledge of the Holy Bible alone does not necessitate spiritual growth, and faith that is not tested cannot be trusted. Hence God is simply forcing us in trial times to grow and prepares us for service in His Kingdom.

We notice that the above predictions, promises, and exhortation are all addressed to Christian believers. As to non-Christians and Christians by name only, St Augustine in his book ‘The City of God’ (and The City of Man) refers to the Lord Jesus Christ’s teaching that these people belong to the City of Man, which is under the control of the Prince of this world, or Satan. Their actions and fate are according to the rules of Satan and luck, and not the providence and blessing of God. Our duty is to evangelize them, and most importantly to pray for them.