



It is said about those who resided in Mount Nitria..."He never told a lie in his life, and he never used oaths; he never uttered a curse, and beyond what was necessary he never spoke at all." Such was the greatness of those who made the desert their homes...

The Paradise of the Holy Fathers

ΠΙΠΑΡΑΔΙΣΟΣ ἩΤΕ ΝΕΝΙΟΪ ΕΘΟΥΔΒ

The Histories of the Natural Brethren Paesius and Isaiah

ΠΙΦΙΡΙ ἩΩΝΩ ἩΤΕ ΝΙΣΝΗΟΥ ΠΕΣΙΟΣ ΝΕΜ ἩΣΑΪΑΣ



And there were also there two brethren, whose names were Paesius and Isaiah, who were the sons of a certain merchant who traded in Spain; and when their father died they divided his inheritance between them, and there came to each of them money which amounted to five thousand dinars, and furniture, and raiment, and slaves, and property of all kinds. And these blessed men took counsel together and meditated together and said unto each other, "By what manner of trafficking shall we live in this world? If we continue to exercise the trade of our father, we shall only double our labor and toil for the benefit of others; and perhaps our wealth will fall into the hands of thieves by land or of pirates by sea.

And whilst they were being troubled by such thoughts as these they answered and said unto each

other, "Let us come to the way of truth, and let us acquire the life and conversation of the Christians, whereby we shall both keep the benefit of what our father hath left us, and get possession of our soul." And this proposition concerning the labor of the dwellers in the monasteries was pleasing unto them, and each of them found in his discipleship the power to judge as to what work he should embrace. And having divided their father's inheritance they both possessed the eager care to please God by the various kinds of labors of life of the mourner.

One of them divided everything which had come to him and gave it to the churches and monastic habitations, and distributed it among the poor and needy; and he learned a handicraft at which he could work and earn his daily bread, and he was constant in prayer and fasting. The other brother did not distribute his possessions, but he built himself a monastery and gathered together unto him a few brethren and providing therefore became a care unto him. All strangers and poor folk, and all the aged men and sick folk who thronged unto him, he used to receive and relieve their wants. And every first day of the week, and ever Sabbath, he used to prepare three tables and relieve the wants of every one who happened to be present there; and thus he spent all his possessions.

Now, when the two brothers died abundant blessing was ascribed unto them by the whole brotherhood, but the one brother pleased some of them most the other the others; and although the brethren praised both brothers, a dispute arose among them concerning the



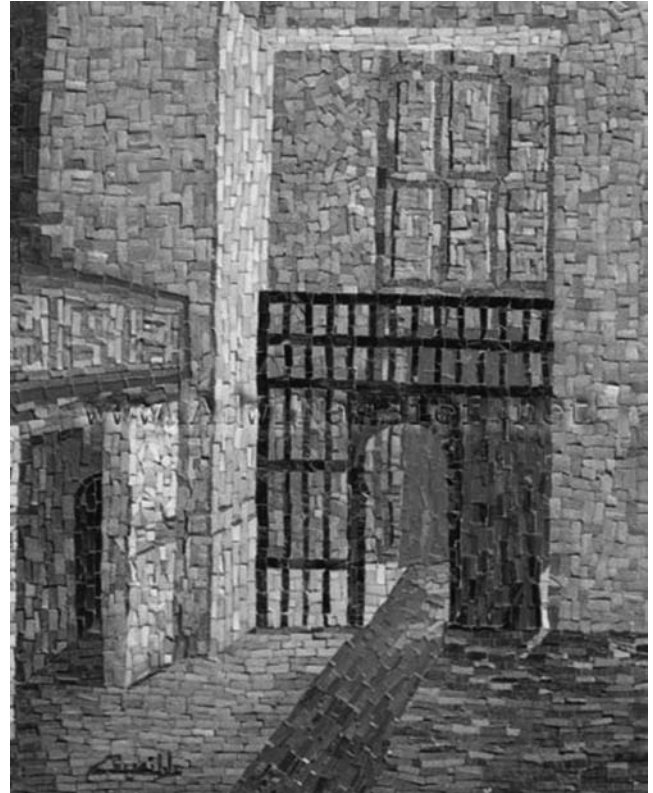
superior merit of one or the other of the two brothers. Then the brethren went to the blessed Pambo and related the matter unto him, and wished to learn which rule of life and labor was the greater and more excellent. And Pambo said unto them, “They are both perfect. One man made manifest the work of Abraham by his hospitality and the other the self-denial of Elijah.” And again the brethren said unto him, “How is it possible for the two to be equal in merit? We praise and magnify him who embraced poverty, for we find that he did the work of the Gospel in selling everything that he had and giving it to the poor, and that every day, and at every season, both by day and by night, he took up his cross and followed after his Lord by his fasting and his prayers.”

And again the other brethren contended with them, saying, “The other brother showed such supreme compassion on those who were strangers and on those who were afflicted that he would even sit in the highways and gather together the passers-by who were in trouble; and not only did he relieve his own soul, but he also brought a lightening unto many souls that were heavy laden, and he would make ready the dead for the brave and bury them.”

And the blessed Pambo said unto them, “Again, I say unto you that both are equal in merit, and I will tell you how each of them became so. Unless the one had fasted he would not have been worthy of the goodness and compassion of the other, and again, the other in relieving the wants of strangers also lightened his own load, for although a man may think that he hath trouble in receiving them yet he also gaineth rest of body. But tarry ye here a few days so that I may learn the answer from God, and come ye back to me and I will declare it unto you.

And after a few days they came unto him; and he answered and said unto them, “I have seen them both standing in the Paradise of Eden, as it were in the presence of God.”

(Budge, E.A., 1994, New Sarov Press, Blanco, TX)



Morale:

The two brothers had different gifts. The first brother's gift was giving; he gave all that he had to the poor, the churches, and the monasteries living an ascetic life. The second brother's gift was hospitality and service. He spent the remainder of his life serving others.

We will not be judged according to the type of gift(s) we possess but according to our steadfast using of our gifts in sincerity and wisdom for the glory of God.

II Corinthians 12: 14-30: “...Are all apostles, are all prophets, are all teachers, and are all workers of miracles? Do all have gifts of healings? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret?” ❀