Rivalry in the Desert: Jerome’s *Life of Paul of Thebes*¹
A First English Translation of the First Greek *Life*²

**Tim Vivian**

**INTRODUCTION**³

A young monk came to Abba Antony and said, “Abba, are you indeed the father of monasticism, the father of all those who live in the desert?”

“Yes, child, I am.”

“I’m sorry, abba, but you are not. Jerome, he of Jerusalem, tells us there is another who was first to embrace the monastic way of life, as a hermit; he lives much farther out in the desert than you. He is our true father.”

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¹ This article is part of a forthcoming volume on the *Life of Paul* ed. by Lisa Agaiby and Tim Vivian, with translations of the Latin, two Greek, Coptic, Syriac, Arabic, and Armenian vitae. Using the work of J. Bidez and F. Nau, I will offer further discussion of the *Life* for the book. Apostolos N. Athanassakis and I translated the first Greek *Life*, and I translated the second. I wish to thank Hany Takla of the Saint Shenouda Coptic Society for bibliographical help and The Rev. Gary Commins for proofreading the manuscript and offering suggestions.

² The title of the first Greek *Life* (FGL) is *The Life [bíos] of Our Father Paul of Thebes Who Lived in the Desert*; the title of the second (SGL) *The Life and Monastic Practice [bíos kai politeía] of Saint Paul of Thebes*. Both Lives are in J. Bidez, *Deux versions grecques inédites de la Vie de Paul de Thèbes publiées avec une introduction* (Gand/Bruxelles: Université de Gand, 1900). The FGL occupies the even-numbered pages, 2–32; the SGL the odd-numbered pages, 3–33.

³ This Introduction will focus on the first Greek *Life*, with a few references to the second Greek *Life*, and offers a close reading of the FGL.

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This brief apophthegm is of course imaginary. Antony died around 355; Jerome, the author of the *Vita S. Pauli Primi Eremitae, Life of St. Paul the First Hermit*, was born around 347. Unless Jerome was a Mozart of words and wrote the *Life of Paul* at the age of six or seven, writing a version in Greek or writing in Latin and then quickly translating it into Greek, the young monk in the imagined saying above could not have known of the *Life*. The editor of the Patrologia Latina edition says that Jerome wrote the *Life of Paul* “around 374”; J. N. D. Kelly offers a date between 376 and 382 when Jerome was in Antioch. Kelly suggests that the inspiration for Jerome’s *Life of Paul* may have been “his friend Evagrius’s free version” in Latin of Athanasius’s *Life of Antony*. Kelly, the biographer of Jerome, has great praise for the *Life of Paul*: “The *Life* is certainly a masterpiece of story-telling . . . the product of consummate art.”

This essay will assess Jerome’s storytelling in the *Life of Paul* vis-à-vis the *Life of Antony*, focusing on the first Greek *Life of Paul*. (My presumption is that the two Greek Lives had much wider, perhaps even total, readership in Egypt.) Even more tenuous than the date of the Latin *Vita S. Pauli Primi Eremitae* is the historicity of its hero; as James E. Goehring succinctly puts it, “Paul is known solely through Jerome’s *Life of Paul*, written after Athanasius’s *Life of Antony* [c. 358] and modelled upon it. Jerome’s fanciful narrative, filled with miraculous beasts and events, leaves in question the very existence of its hero.” Antoine Guillaumont and K. H. Kuhn offer corroboration: “Jerome’s work is the only historical document concerning Paul. Mention of him in other ancient authors (John Cassian *Collationes [Conferences]* XVIII.6; Sulpicius Severus *Dialogi [Dialogues]* I.17) is dependent on Jerome.” The editor of the Coptic *Life*, Émile Amélineau, Guillaumont and Kuhn point out, thought that the Coptic *Life of Paul the Holy Anchorite* “was an original text that Jerome

4. The Latin *Life* is in Patrologia Latina 23.17–30, *Vita S. Pauli Primi Eremitae*. Although the texts of the two Greek *vitae*, translations of Jerome’s, confirm Paul as the first hermit, the titles do not (see n. 2).
6. This is Evagrius of Antioch, not Evagrius of Pontus; see Kelly 33, and in the Index 344.
had simply adapted into Latin. In reality, it is clear that the Coptic text . . . is a free translation of the Latin text.”

There is also ancient support for historical skepticism about Paul: Jerome himself complains about some contemporaries, “the abuse of some who . . . once disparaged my hero Paul.”

Despite ancient doubts and modern scholarship’s problems with Paul, his historicity, and Jerome’s Life, Goehring reminds us that “Paul quickly assumed importance in Egyptian tradition.” The Monastery of Saint Paul by the Red Sea (Dayr Anba Bula), near the famous Monastery of Saint Antony, bears his name. But Paul’s fame spread beyond Egypt, most likely through monastic channels: in addition to the Coptic and Arabic recensions, there are two in Greek (from Egypt?) and further vitae in Syriac and Armenian. All these different views bring us back to Jerome: why on earth would this monk of Bethlehem want to pen—or, less charitably, concoct—a story wherein Paul not only upstages Antony but that also turns Antony into a sidekick to Paul, an also-ran, a mere reporter announcing, even proclaiming, Paul’s monastic preeminence?

Jerome, a chronicler of other monastic lives, could be cantankerous, even vindictive and scurrilous; he called Rufinus, a protégé of Origen and preeminent translator of Greek into Latin, a “scorpion” and “grunting pig.” It is futile now to guess at Jerome’s intentions with the Life of Paul—literary criticism calls such speculation the “intentional fallacy,” the quest to divine authorial intentions. As two scholars pointed out more than

13. Epistle 125, cited by Robert McEachnie, “Jerome,” ODLA, 806b–808a, at 807a. Rufinus of Aquileia translated not only a great deal of Origen’s work into Latin, but also Basil’s homilies and Gregory of Nyssa’s discourses, among others; he translated a shortened version of Eusebius’s Ecclesiastical History and wrote his own History. With his Apology against Rufinus, Jerome wrote a “ferocious” attack on Rufinus, who had first written his Apology against Jerome, “which contains considerable biographical information, pejoratively expressed” (Philip Amidon SJ, “Rufinus of Aquileia,” ODLA 2.1310b–11b). On Rufinus and Jerome, see the index in Kelly 351.
fifty years ago, “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).”14 As eponymous monasteries and translations attest, this is certainly the case with the Life of Paul.

What we have from long ago is Jerome’s text and renditions in five other languages. With the Life of Paul, pace Kelly, Jerome was a fine dramaturge of monastic hagiography, but we’ll probably never know where he got the material for his script. This Introduction, then, will turn from history to text and offer a close reading, a guided tour, of the first Greek Life so we may look at one diaspora version of Jerome’s work being staged. Let’s also imagine a manuscript of this version in the Coptic Museum in Cairo; the museum displays the partly discolored and torn papyrus pages in a glassed display case.15 The museum’s curators have entitled the work “A Hagiographical Rivalry in the Desert.”

Readers of this journal and of the early desert fathers and mothers may not be aware of something rather odd, the diminishment of Antony vis-à-vis Jerome in some recent encyclopedias, oddly parallel to Jerome’s treatment of Paul vis-à-vis Antony: the two-volume Encyclopedia of the Early Church gives Antony one paragraph, but devotes two and a half columns to Jerome.16 The recent Oxford Dictionary of Late Antiquity gives Antony (surnamed “the Great”) one column, while Jerome receives two.17 In the Life itself, Jerome doesn’t waste time: “Many have often inquired about who it was who first began to live in the desert” (¶1 [2]).18 As soon as I read this, I had a question: “Really? Who? Who’s making such an inquiry?” But then I realized that Jerome is being rhetorical, setting the stage for the drama to come. Life of Antony 4.1 (63) itself acknowledges that indeed Antony was not the first village ascetic (an apotaktikós, “re-
nunciant”) but does show (at least hagiographically) that he was the first to go out into the farther desert (11.1–2; 49–51).

After considering, and quickly disposing of, the idea (“some say”) that Elijah or John the Baptist was who “first began to live in the desert,” Jerome moves on to “the majority” who “claim that Antony was the one who originated and first professed this way of life.” “But,” he immediately, and unequivocally, adds, “even if the majority favor this point of view, he was not the first, ahead of everyone else.” Next, the hagiographer, with vast hyperbole in a very dubious statement, makes Antony just one of a monastic multitude: “rather, most people were inclined to emulate this way of serving God” (all ¶1 [2]). Was Jerome, perhaps, a minority of one? Now we’re fully aware that revisionism is heading for us, like a prowling lion looking for someone to devour.

In danger, Jerome’s Antony now finds himself deserted by his disciples: “Amatus and Macarius, disciples of Antony, who also buried him, affirm, even to this day, that a certain Theban, Paul, was the one who was the first to take on such a way of life. I, too, am convinced of this” (¶1 [4]). Jerome has placed in front of his theater an ancient monk wearing a signboard lettered in boldface with TONIGHT! PAUL, THE FIRST MONK! Each person entering now knows a great deal about what to expect.

But Amatus and Macarius do not appear, or are not named, in either the Life of Antony or in the thirty-eight sayings in the alphabetical Apophthegmata Patrum attributed to Antony. In fact, their names could easily be symbolic: Loved (Amatus) and Blessed (Macarius). Their names, however, are not the main dramatic point here; their burial of Antony is, and the previous sentence holds up a signal that foreshadows the end of the Life of Paul: there Antony, now a disciple, like Amatus and Macarius, buries his master, his abba, Paul (¶¶16–17 [30–32]). This final scene completes the journey, literal and metaphorical, of Antony from abba, revered elder, to disciple. After this foreshadowing, the remainder of the

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Life concerns itself, and us, with this journey to Paul, a pilgrimage filled with wonders; these marvelous events are also signposts, signals pointing Antony to his abba, just as the Gospel of John uses signs (sēmeía) as christological/soteriological pointers to Christ’s divinity.\footnote{See for example Jesus turning water into wine at the wedding in Cana, Jn 2:1–11, v. 10: “Jesus did this, the first of his signs, in Cana of Galilee, and revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.”}

The Life of Paul, in fact, is replete with implicit signs, many of which only a reader of the Life of Antony, or one schooled in Antonian traditions, would catch. And that’s the point. Goehring is correct: Jerome modeled his Life of Paul on Athanasius’s Life of Antony. Instead of revealing this straightforwardly, Jerome is putting up new pointers while removing wrong-way signs, and he is doing so expressly for those who (over-)honor Antony. These signs occur in three parts: (1) in a carefully crafted and gruesome prologue to the drama proper on the monk as martyr (¶¶2–3 [4–6]),\footnote{It’s interesting that the SGL omits these two paragraphs of the Latin text; whether intentionally, we don’t know.} (2) in Paul’s pre-monastic biography (¶¶4–6 [6–10]), and (3) within Antony’s journey to and discovery and burial of Paul (¶¶7–17 [10–32]).

In his prologue, Jerome says nothing about Antony’s journey; the focus is on Paul. But—is the Life really about Paul’s politeía, his way of life? In the final paragraph of the prologue Jerome lists four topics that he is “eager to write briefly about,” “things that have escaped the notice of most”: (1) “the beginning” [of Paul’s eremitic life], (2) “the end of his life,” (3) “how he lived during the prime of his life,” and (4) “some things about how he bore up under the temptations brought by the Devil” (¶1 [4]). Of these four topics, though, Jerome covers only the first two; he does not address either “the prime of [Paul’s] life” or “the temptations brought by the Devil.” The purpose of the Life, then, is not, as with the Life of Antony, biography or hagiography. Both the Life of Antony and the Life of Paul are tendentious, but, with Antony, Athanasius offers plenty of detail about the prime of Antony’s life and the assaults of the Devil.\footnote{On Athanasius and the Life of Antony, see David Brakke, Athanasius and the Politics of Asceticism, Oxford Early Christian Studies (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995).} As we have seen already, a close reading of Paul’s story raises a plethora of questions, and here is one more: Why does Jerome not deal with two of
the four matters he proposes to discuss? I believe it’s because, although the \textit{Life of Paul} clearly has Antony’s in the background, Jerome has no intention of merely emulating the \textit{Life of Antony}. His purpose with Paul, single-minded, is to exalt and magnify Paul—over Antony.

This purpose, however, is not yet apparent as he moves from \textsection{1} to \textsection{2–3}. There is, really, no transition, in Latin or in Greek, between the first paragraph of the \textit{Life}, a prologue, and paragraphs 2–3 on martyrdom. The intent of \textsection{2–3} seems to be, however tenuously, to connect monasticism to martyrdom;\textsuperscript{24} this theme implicitly connects Paul to the Antony of the \textit{Life of Antony}. In chapter 46 of Antony’s \textit{Life} (157–59) Paul travels to Alexandria in the far north to bear witness to the martyrs during the persecution of Maximin Daia, who “laid siege to the church.” Maximin was Caesar from 305–308 and Augustus from 308–13; thus, if Antony’s witness is historical, it probably occurred 311–13 at the end of the persecution. Bishop Peter of Alexandria had died a martyr in 311, so martyrdom was a real possibility.\textsuperscript{25} As the \textit{Life} puts it (46.2), “Antony longed to be a martyr, but not wanting to hand himself over, he ministered to the confessors,” encouraging “those who had been called to fight to remain steadfast and in receiving those who were bearing witness and escorting them until they were perfected.”\textsuperscript{26}

After the martyrdoms in \textsection{2–3}, \textsection{4} offers only the thinnest segue: “So, then, at the same time such things were being done in the Lower Thebaid . . . with the persecution at its peak [Paul] was passing his days by himself in a rural area” [6–8]. But within this paragraph, Jerome fashions not one, but two, explicit parallels to Antony: very much like the Athanasian Antony, “the blessed Paul, with his sister already married and both of his


\textsuperscript{26} Greek \textit{mártys}, genitive singular \textit{mártyros}, means both “witness” and “martyr,” that is, one who has borne witness and died for that witness and faith. Other vocabulary here is martyrological and significant: the “confessors” are those who confess their faith but have not been martyred; the witnesses/martyrs have been called (\textit{kaléō}), like Jesus’ disciples; some “are perfected,” killed for the faith, \textit{teleióō}, as in 1 Jn 4:18, where one can be perfected in love. On martyrs and martyrdom, see nn. 24, 25, 30, 36, 53, 54, 57, 59, 66, and 106.
parents having died, this Paul, around the age of sixteen, acquired a very large inheritance.” In *Life of Antony* 2.4–5 (59), Antony, “around eighteen or twenty years old,” and his sister lose their parents and receive an inheritance; soon Antony sells “all his remaining possessions and, collecting a considerable amount of money,” distributes it “among the poor, keeping a little for his sister” (2.5; 59). With this Antonian background, it’s possible that Jerome is emphasizing that Paul inherited even more than Antony—and thus had many more worldly possessions than Antony to give away.

Whatever the case here, Paul now, at least to the highly educated Jerome, surpasses Antony: he is “very highly educated in both Greek and Egyptian [that is, Coptic] letters.” But, Jerome insists, emphasizing Paul’s humility, his proto-monastic is not captive to learning: Paul is “a humble soul, loving God exceedingly” (¶4 [8]). The two vitae share another connection with regard to education: Antony, Athanasius informs us in the *Life*, “did not continue learning his letters” (1.2, 57).27 Athanasius sees this as a virtue, and Jerome at least foreshadows this: when Paul withdraws to be a hermit he will be giving up more than Antony; both Paul and Antony inherit money and leave it behind, but Paul also “gives up” his education, undoubtedly, to Jerome, a much greater sacrifice than giving up material possessions.28

As a nascent ascetic in the *Life of Antony*, Antony’s enemies are the Devil and his demonic minions (in early monastic literature the Devil and his subalterns particularly attack monks because, presumably, the latter are spiritually advanced), whom, amid great struggles, Antony fends off (5–6, 8–10; 65–73, 77–85).29 In the *Life of Paul* Jerome by contrast rather elliptically moves from two scenes of gruesome torture (of others) in ¶¶2–3 to Paul in ¶4 “with the persecution at its peak . . . passing his days by himself in a rural area.” Thus, both Antony and Paul evade—or, rather, avoid—persecution, but neither Athanasius nor Jerome tells us

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28. One notes that both Athanasius and Jerome wrote numerous works.

why; zeal for martyrdom was, in fact, widespread among fourth-century Christians, and those who evaded it often found themselves ostracized from the Church. But now, in hiding, Paul, because of his wealth, faces a "demonic" brother-in-law: "But what greed drives human thinking to do lawless deeds! His own brother-in-law was eager to betray him [to get Paul's inheritance] ... and was eager to accomplish his cruel intentions [to kill Paul] instead of conducting himself as a devout Christian" (¶4 [8]).

Paul, "on guard against the ambush lying in wait for him," flees into the "mountainous wilds" (¶5 [8])—with numerous parallels with the Life of Antony. The two-word phrase "mountainous wilds" at first seems unimportant, but in monastic parlance it means a great deal; "wilds" translates érēmos, "wilderness," "desert," an important term in the stories about John the Baptist (Mt 3:1//Mk 1:4//Lk 3:2; Jn 1:23) and Jesus (Mt 4:1–2//Mark 1:12–13//Lk 4:1–2) and, adopted, a key term in early monasticism. "Mountainous" renders óros, 'mountain'; in early monastic Greek, óros can also mean a monastic habitation or community. Likewise, in the Life of Antony 49.1 (165) Antony "came to a very high mountain."31

In the Life of Antony 49.7 (165), when Antony comes to his very high mountain, he sees at "the foot of the mountain ... a spring with very clear water, sweet and very cold." In the same way, in the Life of Paul when Antony comes to Paul's mountain cave, he sees "within a spring with the most pure running water" (¶5 [8]). But, despite these parallels with Antony, Jerome's chronology for the saint vis-à-vis Antony, partly because Paul is older (see ¶7 [10]), insists that Paul is the first to enter such a monastic realm.

Here, patiently awaiting the end of the persecution, to avoid "ambush" by his murderous brother-in-law, Paul "purposely" turns "necessity into a deliberate course of action" (¶5 [8]). He now finds a cave and, "as though God had given it to him to settle and dwell there," he spends "all the days of his life in the desert, getting his food and clothing from the palm trees" (¶6 [10]). Then, in an aside, Jerome turns to his audience and addresses skeptics: "Lest anyone think such a thing to be impossible," I

31. The SGL 5 [9] echoes the Life of Antony in having Paul come to "a high mountain."
call “upon Jesus and the holy angels to bear witness” that he himself can testify to other mighty ascetics like Paul. “One of them spent a full thirty years enclosed, eating bread made from barley and drinking dirty water, while another one, living in a certain ancient cistern . . . maintained his strength by eating five dried figs each day. These things appear incredible to those who do not believe [or: “have faith”]” (¶6 [10]).

The monastic hagiographer, having set the wondrous ascetic stage, now, with another weak scene change (“But to return to where I began”) returns us to Antony, who will soon journey to behold wonder itself, in Paul. Before the journey can begin, though, Jerome informs us that Paul is a Biblical 113 years old—Antony a mere 90. But Paul is not only anterior to Antony chronologically; he is “leading a heavenly life on earth”; by contrast, Antony has been “passing the time away” elsewhere (¶7 [10]). The latter phrase is decidedly ambiguous: Diatribō, the Greek for what we’ve translated “passing the time away,” can mean “to allot one’s own time, dedicate oneself, be engaged.” But, it can also mean the opposite: “to lose or waste time,” “delay, hold back, impede,” “consume, wear out, ruin”; its noun, diatrib, can mean, positively, “way of passing time, way of life, occupation, activity,” but, negatively, “waste of time, hold-up, delay.”32 With these negative understandings in mind, Jerome nudges us with a wink and whispers to us, “You know, that Antony—’he himself was accustomed to talk about’ his oh-so-wonderful ascetic practices.” Unlike humble Paul, that is, who, a hermit for sixty years (¶10 [20]), converses only with God.

Given the nudge and wink here, and the tenor of the first Greek Life as a whole, I’m convinced that Jerome, or at least the Greek version, is juxtaposing the two eminent monks, telling us that Paul, because of his way of life (politeía), is the more renowned.33 In the next sentence the

32. See Franco Montanari, ed., The Brill Dictionary of Ancient Greek, English eds. Madeleine Goh and Chad Schroeder (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2015), 514a and 513c, respectively. In English, a similar bipartite word is “egregious.” From Latin ex-, “apart from,” + grex, “flock” (standing out from the herd), “egregious” appears c. 1550, “Of a person, or his or her qualities: distinguished, eminent; great, renowned,” and in 1566 meaning “Conspicuously bad or wrong: blatant, flagrant; (later also) outrageous, offensive” (Oxford English Dictionary, https://www-oed-com.falcon.lib.csub.edu/view/Entry/59939?redirectedFrom=egregious#eid, Dictionary.com makes the negative meaning primary and notes the positive as archaic.

33. Politieía (from pólis, “city”), English political, is an important monastic term; like diagōg in the phrase “monastic way of life,” it can simply mean “way of life,” but as a monastic term it has additional resonance: “conduct oneself; live as a member of community, share a particular mode of
nudge and wink become out-loud confirmation: Antony “was wondering whether anybody else among monks was living his life in the most remote desert. One night, however, while he was sitting in contemplative quiet [hēsychía], it was revealed to him that another, [12] far superior to him, was living much deeper in the innermost desert and that he, in addition, given these circumstances, needed to hasten to meet him” (¶7 [10–12]). “Revealed” (apokalýptō) urges readers to understand that Antony, like the prophets, like Jesus, has just heard directly from the Sacred, whether here from Father, Son, or Holy Spirit.34 And this theophany informs Antony that one, far superior to him, is living much deeper in the innermost desert. “Much deeper” could well be resonant with meeting; endotátō derives from éndon, “within”; although neither word is in the New Testament, as early as Clement of Alexandria (c. 150–c. 215) endotátō can “metaphorically refer to the spiritual life,” and “the indwelling of Christ.”35 Thus Paul is not only geographically superior to Antony, he is also spiritually superior. Location, geographically and spiritually, demonstrates this. Now, if there were any doubt before, none remains. Paul cannot supersede Antony because there is no supersession: Paul not only preceded Antony, he is far greater than the supposed “father of monasticism.”

With this revelation, Antony’s journey itself, filled with signs and wonders, also points us to Paul. There is an important wordplay at the beginning of it. Antony “immediately” sets out on the road to find Paul—“but” he does not know “the way” (¶7 [12]). To “set out on the road” is a compound verb using hodós, which also means “way,” as in John 14:6 where Jesus says, “I am the way and the truth and the life.” The passage may also be an allusion to Life of Antony 50.5 where Antony asks a “voice from above,” “And who will show me the way? I have no idea how to get there” (50.4–5; 163–65). If there’s a quiet allusion here to the Life of Antony, then Jerome is doubling down on Antony’s ignorance. We the readers, however, know the way very well; all roads, at least in the Life of Paul the First Hermit, lead to Paul, the real father of monasticism.

On his way, his journey, Antony will encounter some beasts that (or

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34. See Mt 11:25; Phil 3:15 (of God); Mt 11:27; Lk 10:22 (of Christ); 1 Cor 2:10; Eph 3:5 (of the Holy Spirit).
35. Lampe 468b.
who) dwell in the wilderness. He first encounters “a human combined with a horse, which the poets in their fancy call a centaur,” and asks, “You, there—whereabouts does the servant of God live?” This centaur, “in some barbarian tongue, shouting out his words rather than saying them clearly . . . from his dreadful mouth” answers, and indicates to Antony “the road” (hodós) he is to take. But now Jerome can’t help but slip in a cautionary demurrer: “But whether it was the Devil that answered in order to astonish and terrify him, or whether it was the desert, accustomed to producing monsters, is not ours to say” (all ¶7 [12]). In early monastic literature, the Devil and desert monsters do not provide revelations.

As Antony continues on the way, he now encounters a dwarf or satyr (¶8 [14]). What is striking here, though, is that Jerome uses this satyr, rather irrelevantly, first to attack “the deceiving superstition of the non-believers,” then to tell us that Christ has “obtained the salvation of the world.” Then, seemingly out of joint but in fact connected to monsters earlier, with Jerome as ventriloquist Antony vehemently attacks Alexandria and its denizens: striking “the ground with his staff,” he cries out “Woe to you, Alexandria! You who instead of God worship monsters! Woe to you, you harlot of a city, in whom all the world’s demons have gathered together! What kind of defense do you have, when even the wild beasts confess Christ?!?” (¶8 [14]). I can only wonder here: Is one of the most important cities in the now-Christian Empire, here “the harlot” and demonic cesspool, not only a prop for a direct attack on the city of Alexander the Great but also an indirect assault on the Life of Antony? The great city on the Mediterranean and see of the Church in Egypt has a prominent part in Antony’s Life.36 But is Antony’s malediction here also an indirect onslaught on the great bishop of Alexandria himself, Athanasius, who wrote the Life? Blame both the messaged (Antony), and the messenger (Athanasius)? As we saw earlier, we can broadly date the Life of Paul from around 374 to between 376 and 382. Athanasius, one of the two greatest patriarchs of Alexandria (with Cyril), died in 373. Could his

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36. Life of Antony 46 (157–59), where he bears witness with Christian martyrs; 69 (205), where he opposes the Arians; 70 (207–209) where, like Jesus, he heals a child of her demon; and 72–80 (209–29), a major scene, where Antony defeats philosophers and defends Christianity. (In a curious development of the term, late-antique Christian writers sometimes used “philosophy” for monasticism.) On martyrs and martyrdom, see nn. 24–26, 30, 53, 54, 57, 59, 66, and 106.
death have spurred Jerome to write the *Life of Paul*? Highly speculative, yes, but Jerome gives me reason to wonder.

But now, before moving Antony along, at the end of ¶8 Jerome, with a rather sensationalistic story, assures us, *contra* the centaur, of the reality of the satyr: “After the being died, so that it would not decay in the open air it was embalmed and sent off to Antioch so as to inform the emperor.” For the rest of the tale, as Antony draws nearer and nearer to Paul the bestiary becomes in fact hagiographically realistic: a she-wolf leads Antony to Paul’s cave (¶9 [16–20]), a raven brings bread to Paul and Antony (¶10 [20–22]), and finally two lions help Antony bury Paul (¶16–17 [28–32]). Before we join Paul at the cave, though, I have to wonder if Jerome knew of Antony’s own grotto, which attracts visitors and pilgrims to this day.37

At Paul’s cave, Antony stubs his foot on a rock; Paul, hearing this, shuts the entrance on him, a familiar monastic trope to teach humility. Jerome has Antony now, a supplicant, fall “down in front of the door” and pray “until the sixth hour [noon], or even longer,” exclaiming,

> Who I am, where I came from, and why—*<you know>*. I know that I’m not worthy to even look at you. Nevertheless, if I don’t get to see you, I will not yield [and go away]. Why do you, who welcome wild beasts, avoid a human being? I have sought and I have found; I knock so it may be opened to me [Mt 7:7//Lk 11:9]. If I fail completely, I will die right here, in front of your door, so that, gazing upon my body, you will bury it. (¶9 [18])

With “a charming remark,” Paul welcomes his (to Jerome) now-disciple, and the wonders recommence. A raven will bring them bread, but before that occurs Paul asks Antony four questions, the last of which allows Jerome to renew his attacks: “Tell me whether the rulers of this world are still being made prisoner by the deceptions of the demons” (¶10 [20]). “Rulers” (*árchontes*) and “world” (*kósmos*) are multivalent Biblical and patristic words that for Jerome’s first readers undoubtedly provided the author with even more weaponry: in the New Testament the Devil is “the ruler [*árchón*] of the demons” (Mt 9:34; 12:24); for Paul the Apostle, “the world” is usually a very negative term: “the rulers of this age . . .

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crucified the Lord of glory” (1 Cor 2:8); in 2 Cor 4:4, Paul declares that because of these rulers “the god of this world [kósmos] has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.”

We don’t get an answer to the hermit’s question, but we do have the condemnation by Paul the Apostle. Paul the hermit and Antony are “discussing these matters” when the raven comes and Paul exclaims, “for sixty years now I have partaken of a small piece of half a loaf of bread [each day]. But now, with you here, Christ has doubled the provisions for his own soldiers!” (¶10 [22]). In the morning Paul informs Antony, “now the appointed time [kairós] has come for me to sleep [in the Lord]—the very thing I’ve always desired—and to depart and be with Christ” (¶10 [22]). The Greek Life is again carefully Biblical here. With “depart and be with Christ” Paul is quoting his namesake, the apostle Paul (Phil 1:23). Before the quote from the Apostle, the hermit uses kairós, a key New Testament word: “a moment or period as especially appropriate; the right, proper, favorable time” (Mk 13:32–33; Rom 3:26; Eph 5:16).

Now, with Paul’s dying request, begins Antony’s final journey. For unexplained, but allusive, reasons, Paul says to Antony, “I appeal to you . . . if it’s not a burden for you, go and bring back for wrapping my body the cloak that Bishop Athanasius gave to you as a gift” (¶12 [24]). What we have here, then, is a transfer of power, from Athanasius to Antony and, now, from Antony to Paul. Jerome’s hermit is referring to a scene in the Life of Antony 91.8 (253) where we hear Antony’s final words: “I will receive my body back imperishable from the Lord at the resurrection of the dead [1 Cor 15:42–52]. Distribute my clothing. To Bishop Athanasius give the one sheepskin coat and the tunic I used for bedding. He gave it to me new, but I have worn it out.” In another possible poke at the bishop of Alexandria, in the Life of Paul, Antony’s coat goes not to the great bishop but to Paul.

The Life now quickly informs us of two things: first, “blessed Paul had no desire for any kind of garment to cover his body as it lay perishing in the earth, but that he leave this life by [having his body] dissolve [back


39. The passing on of the sheepskin coat probably reminded ancient readers or listeners of 2 K 2:13–14, where Elisha takes up the mantle of Elijah.
into the earth].” He has made his request to Antony so the latter will leave him so he can die alone, a hermit to the end. Second, to confirm Paul’s miraculous interior visions, “Antony was, rightly, amazed when he heard about Athanasius and his cloak” (both ¶12 [24]). Paul, the Life indirectly informs us, transcends normal boundaries; without being told, he, a hermit for decades, knows the story of Athanasius, Antony, and the cloak, even though it took place far away. Chronologically, we now need even more of a willing suspension of disbelief—in the Life of Antony the hero returned the cloak as he lay dying. So here, in a time warp, Antony returns figuratively from the dead so he can go back to his monastery to retrieve the cloak—and he doesn't know that Paul wants him to leave so the elder and more eminent monk can die alone with the Lord. This displacement of time leads me to wonder what ancient readers, like Augustine, who knew the Life of Antony, thought about Jerome’s use of time travel. Perhaps some of Jerome’s naysayers mentioned towards the beginning of this essay were those who had read Antony’s vita and were questioning the existence of the usurper whom Jerome in the prologue to the Life of Hilarion calls “my hero.”

So, as the Life tells it, Antony “returned to his monastery, which,” the narrative feels compelled to point out, “was later destroyed by the Saracens” (12 [24]). Now, at his monastery, Antony’s two disciples naturally ask him where he’s been. Dramatically, Antony is facing them. But to answer he turns to the audience, to us, and cries out the point Jerome has been making in the third person all along: “Oh, no! I am such a sinner for pretending to bear the name ‘monk’! I’ve seen Elijah, I’ve seen John [the Baptist] in the desert—and now, truly, I’ve seen Paul in paradise!” (¶13 [26]). The irony is that Antony here clearly sees Elijah and John as monastic forerunners, whereas at the beginning of the drama, in ¶1, Jerome explicitly says they are not. Antony the Boasting Pretender, humbled, now leaves his monastery and returns to Paul. The phrasing here is deliberate, and dramatic: Antony “set out on the same road as he had returned on”—and on the road he first took. “Road,” hodós, returns us to ¶7 [12] where Antony “set out on the road,” discussed above. Earlier, he didn’t know the way (hodós) to Paul and had to be pointed, guided, to the hermit by the beasts of the desert.

40. On the Life see n. 10.
Now, he knows the way—which, as we saw earlier, vis-à-vis what Christ says in John 14:6, is also the truth and the life. Earlier, Antony, “as though he were seeing Christ in Paul,” venerated “the Lord within Paul’s breast” (¶12 [24]). Now he sets out to return to Paul, the monastic simulacrum of Christ, who, unbeknownst to Antony on the way, has died and is with Christ. As we anticipate watching this journey, a painted scene lowers from above and gives us new background. We look behind Antony and his disciples and study this scene that depicts Antony’s foresight: in the Life of Antony 60 (185–89) Antony knows that the venerable monk Amoun has died because he sees him ascend to heaven: “and there was great rejoicing among those who met him” (60.1; 185). Paul has foresight, Antony has foresight, and, with the painted background, Jerome foreshadows Paul’s ascension in ¶14.

On his return journey, as “another day dawned, around the third hour [9 a.m.],” Antony sees “on the road ranks of angels and the choirs of prophets and apostles.” Jerome’s description informs us that this is a far more wondrous sight than Amoun’s ascension: “In their midst” Antony “saw Paul, radiant with snowy whiteness, ascending to the heavenly heights” (epouraníois) (both ¶14 [26]). But perhaps more important to the message of the Life than even the glorious scene is the two words “heavenly heights”: one word in Greek, epouraníois derives from ouranós, “heaven.” We saw earlier that while Antony was loitering (“passing the time away”) elsewhere in the desert, Paul, by contrast, “was leading a heavenly [ouránion] life on earth.” “Heavenly” in ¶7 is therefore a linguistic and dramatic foreshadowing of epouraníois, “heavenly heights,” in ¶14. Thus Paul, like Jesus, has ascended from a heavenly life on earth to the heavenly heights (Lk 24:50–53; Acts 1:6–11). The Life of Paul here makes yet another contrast with Antony: in the Life of Antony 92.1 (255) the hero has no such ascension; he merely dies.

Now Antony bears witness to Paul’s “heavenly” sanctity. Reaching the cave, Antony finds Paul dead. Two lions, Solomon’s royal beasts (2 Ch 9:17–18), now help him bury the saint, a disciple doing the obsequies for his abba, just as Antony’s disciples in the Life of Antony bury him (92.2, 255). “Then, the next day,” the Life now makes explicit, “as an apparent heir,” Antony takes “with him the tunic that blessed Paul had made for himself from palm branches” (¶16 [32]), crafted not on a royal loom
like Athanasius’s but by hand. Antony is indeed the apparent heir, but in early monasticism heirs begin as disciples. Paul’s disciple has apparently buried Paul with Athanasius’s coat and will bring back the more important and, though humble, more worthy tunic that Paul himself created. Paul said earlier in ¶12 [24] that he didn’t really want Athanasius’s coat (“blessed Paul had no desire for any kind of garment to cover his body as it lay perishing in the earth”).

Now, at the end of the play, Antony will return with Paul’s simple clothing that the saint himself wove from humble palm branches (¶16 [32]): “Returning now to his monastery,” he relates in order to his disciples everything that took place. “At each feast of Easter and Pentecost,” Jerome tells us, Antony, the good disciple, will “always put on Paul’s tunic” (¶17 [32]). The narrative ends. The curtain, though, is still up. And now, bearing the closing words of the Life, Jerome comes on stage; facing the audience, he concludes the playlet: “If God were so to wish it, I would prefer to have Paul’s tunic and, by means of it, his faith, rather than the purple raiment of emperors with their prestige.” Jerome, via Paul, earlier attacked rulers held “prisoner by the deceptions of the demons” (¶10 [20]). It’s clear here that “purple raiment” is not a compliment; it may be an attack once again on Athanasius: as Patriarch of Alexandria, the bishop could well have worn clothes dyed with expensive and much-valued Tyrian purple, and honored Antony with a gift of such clothing. Paul’s tunic, by contrast, is simple, even anti-royal.

Jerome bows and leaves the stage. The people stand and applaud. The curtain descends. One would have to be an expert in late antique monastic hagiography to assess J. N. D. Kelly’s belief (above) that the Life of Paul is a masterpiece. Putting that aside, as I leave the theater I conclude that with the Life Jerome has carefully crafted a drama, one with a very strong agenda. I now walk to the Coptic Museum. With the audience dispersed, the noise of their applause stilled, the atmosphere quiet, I sit at a table in the museum, gloves on, closely examining Jerome’s “A Hagiographical Rivalry in the Desert.” I admire its details, its imagining(s). At the same time, I’m still trying to puzzle out why its artist created it. As we saw at the beginning of this article, Wimsatt and Beardsley say the author’s intent is beyond our ken. But any work, prose or poetry, is both sui generis and not: it’s unique in that it exists in and of itself. But as the two critics also
point out, it doesn't dwell solely within itself; it shares a habitation with each reader, and with us. Here I have argued intent from the text. And the text to me clearly says that it is Paul of Thebes, not Antony of Egypt, who is the father of monasticism. Modern readers, like their ancient counterparts, can responsibly doubt Jerome’s imaginative claim.

THE FIRST GREEK LIFE
THE LIFE OF OUR FATHER PAUL OF THEBES
WHO LIVED IN THE DESERT

Translated by Tim Vivian and Apostolos N. Athanassakis

1. Who First Lived in the Desert?

[2] Many have often inquired about who it was who first began to live in the desert. To be sure, some, hearkening back to much earlier times, say they have found the beginnings of this way of life with blessed Elijah and John. Elijah, however, to us, was more than, greater than, a monk, and John began to prophesy even before he was born.

But others—the majority think this way—disagree: they claim that Antony was the one who originated and first professed this way of life. All Greek words, unless otherwise noted, are in dictionary format: nominative singular for nouns and first person singular progressive (present) for verbs.

41. The First Greek Life (FGL) occupies the even-numbered pages of Bidez’s edition, pp. 2–32. Section titles are the translators’. We have followed Bidez’s paragraph numbering and have put the page numbers of Bidez’s text in square brackets.
42. Elijah: see 1 Kings 19:4–18. All Biblical references and quotations, unless otherwise stated, are to the NRSV.
43. John: John the Baptist or Baptist; see Mt 3:1//Mk 1:4//Lk 3:2; Jn 1:23.
44. John began to prophesy even before he was born: see Luke 1:39–45.
45. But others . . . claim that Antony was the one who originated and first professed this way of life: see Life of Antony 11.1 (85) and 49 (163–65). All references to the Life of Antony are to the critical edition, ed. G. J. M. Bartelink, Vie d’Antoine, SC 400 (Paris: Cerf, 2003), and the translation by Tim Vivian and Apostolos N. Athanassakis, The Life of Antony: The Coptic Life and the Greek Life, CS 202 (Kalamazoo: Cistercian, 2003). References to Antony’s Life give first the chapter(s) and then in parentheses the page number(s). Professed: epangélomai is cognate with ángelos, “messenger” (later “angel”). All Greek words, unless otherwise noted, are in dictionary format: nominative singular for nouns and first person singular progressive (present) for verbs.
But even if the majority favor this point of view, he was not the first, ahead of everyone else; rather, most people were inclined to emulate this zeal for serving God.\footnote{46}  
So, for example, Amatus and Macarius, disciples of Antony, who also buried him,\footnote{47} affirm, even to this day, that a certain Theban, Paul, \textsuperscript{4} was the one who was the first to take on such a way of life. I, too, am convinced of this.\footnote{48}  
To be sure, since not only the Greek language but also the Latin have borne witness to Antony,\footnote{49} I am eager to write briefly about Paul with regard to the beginning [of his eremitic life] but also about the end of his life, and how he lived during the prime of his life, and some things about how he bore up under the temptations brought by the Devil,\footnote{50} things that have escaped the notice of most.\footnote{51}  

\footnote{47. Life of Antony 92.2 (255) says “two monks . . . wrapped his body and prepared it for burial and hid it under the earth.” Amatus and Macarius do not appear, or are not named, in either the Life of Antony or in the 38 sayings in the alphabetical Apophthegmata Patrum attributed to Antony.}  
\footnote{48. In this paragraph the Greek text uses the first person plural, which can also indicate the first person singular; thus, “But if we inquire” may be “But if I inquire.”}  
\footnote{49. In “Life of Antony, Saint,” CCE 1.49a–151a, Antoine Guillaumont notes that “there are two ancient Latin versions, the second being the work of Evagrius of Antioch.” See Augustine, Confessions 7.6.14.}  
\footnote{50. Temptations, peirasmós: or “tests.” See nn. 51 and 54.}  
\footnote{51. Of the four topics in the Life that Jerome gives here, he covers only the first two; he does not address either “the prime of [Paul’s] life” or “the temptations brought by the Devil.”}
2. The Sufferings of the Martyrs during Persecution

Under the persecutors\(^{52}\) Decius and Valerian, at the time when Cornelius in Rome and Cyprian in Carthage\(^{53}\) were perfected [as martyrs] in a state of blessedness, the Church in Egypt and the Thebaid endured numerous trials.\(^{54}\) Each Christian, on behalf of the name of Jesus,\(^{55}\) was eager to be slain by the sword, but the Enemy of Truth\(^{56}\) did not want to destroy their bodies but rather their souls.

3. The Enemy Tortures Two Young Men

As an example, [the Enemy] ordered a certain martyr,\(^{57}\) who had endured in the holy faith and had defeated both the stake\(^{58}\) and various tortures, to be smeared over his whole body with honey;\(^{59}\) then the Enemy ordered him bound, with his hands tied behind his back, to be exposed
beneath the scorching sun. He clearly ordered this so that [the martyr], who was not defeated by the burning gridiron, would surrender to the horseflies stinging him.

[The Enemy] ordered another young man, likewise at full bloom, in the prime of life, [6] to be led into a garden adorned with flowers. There, among the bright splendor of lilies and flowering roses, sweetly flowing water, and the gentle rustling of leaves, they bound him with tender bindings and left him reclining on a soft couch. After everyone had left, a certain voluptuous and beautiful prostitute came and, tenderly wrapping her arms around his neck, with her hands—it is foul even to speak of this!—she began to lay hold of that which is hidden in men. She did this so that, with her shameless behavior, having drawn indecently near and having claimed victory over his body, she might claim him for herself.

What could this soldier of Christ do? What strategy could he put into place, [this soldier] who had not been defeated by various tortures and was now about to be defeated by sensual pleasures? In very truth, inspired by heaven, he bit off part of his tongue and, instead of giving her a kiss, he spat it into her face; thus, on account of his great suffering, he was cutting off the desire for sensual pleasure.

4. Paul, Sheltering from the Persecution, is Betrayed by His Brother-in-Law

SO, THEN, AT THE SAME TIME THAT SUCH THINGS WERE BEING DONE IN THE LOWER THEBAID, THE BLESSED PAUL, WITH HIS SISTER ALREADY MARRIED AND BOTH OF HIS PARENTS HAVING DIED, THIS PAUL, AROUND THE AGE OF SIXTEEN, ACQUIRED

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60. This sentence and the story here could, perhaps, be an allusion to the story of Adam and Eve in Gen 2:4b–3, with the prostitute here playing the dual role of Eve-serpent, and the martyr portraying Adam. Garden occurs twelve times in the Biblical story, but each time the word in the Septuagint is parádeisos (a Persian loan word) whereas the Life of Paul uses képos.

61. Left him: kataleípō can also mean "abandon." See nn. 109 and 146.


63. Soldier of Christ: see 2 Tm 2:3: "Share in suffering like a good soldier of Christ."

64. Inspired, empneúmō (pneûma: "spirit/Spirit"): "inspired;" a sense that English inspire has mostly lost.

65. Both "cutting off" and "bit" translate ekkóptō.

66. See Life of Antony 2.1 (59), 2.4–5 (59), and 3.1 (61).
a very large inheritance.  

[8] Very highly educated in both Greek and Egyptian letters, a humble soul, loving God exceedingly, with the persecution at its peak he was passing his days by himself in a rural area.

But what greed drives human thinking to do lawless deeds! His [own] brother-in-law was eager to betray him! In fact, his in-law refused to heed the tears of his wife, or familial bonds, or God, who watches over all things, who was attempting to bear him away from his lawless thinking. Instead, he persisted, and was eager to accomplish his cruel intentions instead of conducting himself as a devout Christian.

5. Paul, Fleeing Ambush, Escapes to the Wilderness and Finds a Cave

TO BE SURE, the sagacious young man, on guard against the ambush lying in wait for him, fled into the mountainous wilds. There, patiently awaiting the end of the persecution, he purposely turned necessity into a deliberate course of action. Within a very short time, he improved his situation by discovering a rocky mountainside where there was a cave [whose opening was] completely enclosed by a very small stone. Rolling
away the stone, he was painstakingly exploring the interior, never satisfied, as humans are wont to be. [Going further,] he saw within a spring with the most pure running water.

6. Paul, Like Others, Spends His Life in the Desert

[10] So then, longing [to stay] there as though God had given it to him to settle and dwell there, he spent all the days of his life in the desert, getting his food and clothing from the palm trees. Lest anyone think such a thing to be impossible, I call upon Jesus and the holy angels to bear witness that I have seen monks living in the same sort of desert near Syria where it approaches those places where the Saracens live. One of them spent a full thirty years enclosed, eating bread made from barley and drinking dirty water, while another, living in a certain ancient cistern that the Greeks call a goubbán, maintained his strength by eat-

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74. Rolling away: *apokulíō* is the same verb at Mt 28:2, Mk 16:3, and Lk 24:2 in the pericope of Jesus’ resurrection and the unrolling of the stone at the tomb.

75. In *Life of Antony* 49.7 (165), Antony, seeking greater solitude, comes to “a very high mountain” (see n. 73). At the foot of the mountain was a spring with very clear water, sweet and very cold.

76. “All the days of his life” uses *kairos*, an important word in NT and patristic Greek, differentiated from *chronos* (as in “chronology”): “a moment or period as especially appropriate; the right, proper, favorable time”; see Bauer 497b(1b) and Lampe 693b. This sentence may also be an allusion to *Life of Antony* 50.1 (165): when Antony comes to his “very high mountain” to settle, “as someone moved by God,” he “love[s] the place, for this was the place indicated by the voice that spoke to him on the riverbank.” On *kairos* see nn. 130 and 142.

77. Palm trees are ubiquitous in Egypt, and in early monasticism. In *Life of Antony* 49.1 (165) Antony “came to a very high mountain,” and in 50.4 (165) he takes “some comfort, although a meager one, from the palm trees.”

78. Seen: Latin *īdeo* “I have seen, and still see” (*vidisse me monachos, et videre*) which the Greek perfect tense implies.

79. Saracens: that is, Arabs; see Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 6.42.4: “And many who fled to the same Arabian mountain were carried into slavery by the barbarian Saracens” (New Advent, online).

80. Cistern: *lakkos* could also be a lake, a reservoir, or a pit/well used for storing wine or oil. The monk could be following the prophet Jeremiah; see Jer 45:6 (LXX; 38:6 NRSV).

81. *Goubbán*: Latin text *gubbam* (see PL 23:22 n. 7); Syriac, *qūbbā*; Turkish *kova*, Greek *koubás*, a medieval Greek word *kobá* derived from Turkish. A derivation of *koubás* from Turkish *kobā* may suggest a late intrusion into the text or, more likely, a Syrian provenance for the text. We wish to thank Robert Kitchen for the Syriac.
ing five dried figs each day. These things appear incredible to those who do not believe.

7. On His Journey to Find Paul, Antony Encounters a Centaur

But to return to where I began, I need to relate further that the blessed Paul, now 113 years old, was leading a heavenly life on earth, and Antony, ninety years old, was passing the time away in another desert location (as he himself was accustomed to talk about, in detail);

82. Such ascetic austerities are common in early monastic literature.
83. Those who do not believe: or “Those who do not have faith.” The Greek here is allusive: “believe” translates πιστεύω, a key word in early Christianity; it can also have the sense of “trust in,” “have faith in.” It is cognate with πίστις, “faith,” another vital word. “Incredible” renders ἀπίστος, “no(t) faith,” “without faith.” The word can also mean “unbeliever,” especially of Jews and other non-Christians. See n. 108.
85. The innermost desert: ἐνδότατος, the superlative of ἐνδός. The comparative ἐνδότερος can mean “the inner person, “most intimate,” and for Chrysostom (347–407) can signify the “innermost parts” of the soul (Lampe 468b–69a).
86. Heavenly (οὐράνιον) life on earth: this is a foreshadowing of a related word ἐπουρανοῖοι in ¶14.
87. These ages are not at all implausible: Shenoute of Atripe in Egypt apparently lived to be 118 and Antony himself lived to 105. One notes that Paul, at 113, also precedes Antony chronologically. If Antony’s age here is at all historical, the year would be around 340 CE.
88. Passing the time away: διατρίβω represents well the condescending, even snide tone, and possible ambiguity of this passage. It can mean “to allot one’s own time, dedicate oneself, be engaged,” but also “to lose or waste time,” “delay, hold back, impede,” “consume, wear out, ruin”; see Montanari 514a. Its noun, διατρίβη, can mean, positively, “way of passing time, way of life, occupation, activity,” but, negatively, “waste of time, hold-up, delay” (513c).
89. Desert, ἐρέμος: or “wilderness”: see Mt 4:1//Mk 1:12//Lk 4:1 (Jesus tempted in the wilderness) and Mt 3:1//Mk 1:3–4//Luke 3:2–4 (John the Baptist in the wilderness).
[Antony] was wondering whether anybody else among monks was living his life in the most remote desert. One night, however, while he was sitting in contemplative quiet,\(^9\) it was revealed\(^9\) to him that another, [12] far superior to him, was living much deeper in the innermost desert\(^92\) and that he, in addition, given these circumstances, needed to hasten to meet him.\(^93\)

Immediately, then, as the day was just beginning, the blessed elder,\(^94\) supporting himself with his staff, set out on the road to accomplish this, but he did not know the way.\(^95\) Before long, it was midday, with the sun scorching hot, beating down on everything, but he would not be deterred from the road that lay ahead of him, saying, “I have faith in my God that he will show me his servant, whom he has promised me.”

In the middle of his prayer, he saw a human combined with a horse, which the poets in their fancy call a centaur. Antony said to him, “You, there—whereabouts does the servant of God live?”\(^96\)

That one, in some barbarian tongue, shouting out his words rather than saying them clearly and, from his dreadful mouth,\(^97\) attempting to deal with Antony with flattery, answered. The centaur, stretching out his right hand, indicated to Antony the road he wanted. Then the centaur

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90. Sitting in contemplative quiet: ἡσυχία (the verb here is ἡσυχιάζω) is a key monastic term, and sitting or being in contemplative quiet a key monastic practice and goal. See “Contemplative quiet” in the Glossary in Vivian 2021.
91. It was revealed: ἀποκαλύφθη < ἀποκαλύπτω, ἀποκάλυψις. See Mt 11:25; Phil 3:15 (of God); Mt 11:27; Lk 10:22 (of Christ); 1 Cor 2:10; Eph 3:5 (of the Holy Spirit).
92. Much deeper: endotάτο derivs from ἐνδόν, “within”; although neither word is in the NT, as early as Clement of Alexandria (c. 150–c. 215) endotάτο can “metaphorically refer to the spiritual life,” and “the indwelling of Christ” (Lampe 468b).
93. In Life of Antony 49.1 (163), Antony says “I want to go to the Upper Thebaid on account of the numerous distractions taking place here,” but a “voice” says to him, “even if you go up to the Thebaid . . . , you will find plenty of troubles remaining, even twice as many as you have now. But if you really desire peace and quiet, leave now for the interior desert.” In Life of Antony 49.4 (164) a “voice from above” tells Antony, “If you really desire peace and quiet [ἡσυχία], leave now for the interior desert.”
94. Elder, γέρον, can also mean simply, “old man,” “old person.” See nn. 117 and 149.
95. There could well be a semi-hidden message here: “set out on the road” is a compound verb using ἡδός, which also means “way,” as in Jn 14:6 where Jesus says “I am the way and the truth and the life.” In Life of Antony 50.5 Antony asks the voice, “And who will show me the way? I have no idea how to get there” (164–65). See nn. 133 and 143.
96. Servant of God: Rm 13:4; 2 Cor 6:4; Tt 1:1; Jm 1:1.
97. Dreadful: φρίκιδες carries more meaning than English “dreadful” does now; “dread-filled,” “causing dread” give the idea: “shivering, shuddering,” that which “strikes terror or horror,” cognate with φρίσσω, “to chatter one’s teeth,” “shiver from the cold.”
galloped across the plain and vanished before Antony’s astonished eyes. But whether it was the Devil that answered in order to astonish and terrify him, or whether it was the desert, accustomed to producing monsters, is not ours to say.98

8. A Satyr in the Desert Bears Witness to Christ

[14] Marveling at what had just happened concerning this vision he had seen, and reflecting on it, as he went further Antony saw in a certain rocky valley a human dwarf bearing a horn in the middle of his forehead and at the end of his body the feet of a goat.99 Put on guard by this startling sight, Antony, a good warrior, put on “the shield of faith” and “the breastplate of hope.”100 “Who could this be that I see before me?” he was asking.

[The dwarf] said, “I am mortal, and one of those who dwell in the desert whom the deceiving superstition of the non-believers, taking a multitude of forms, worships by the name of ‘satyr.’”101 I come to you as the ambassador of my flock. We beseech you to entreat our mutual Lord and Master on our behalf. We ask this because we have learned that long ago he obtained the salvation of the world102 and that ‘his voice has gone out to all the earth.’”103

While he was speaking such words, the elder, wanting to complete his journey, washing his face with tears,104 was rejoicing at the glory of Christ and the destruction of Satan.105 At the same time, marveling that

98. The Devil could appear in a variety of forms to the monks; see Life of Antony 5–6 (65–73), 24–35 (113–37) and Brakke, Demons and the Making of the Monk. For a good psychological interpretation, see Graiver, Asceticism of the Mind.


100. 1 Th 5:8; Eph 6:14. Hope: elpis; Eph 6:14 has dikaiosunê, “righteousness,” as does the SGL.

101. Neither satyr (sátyros) nor centaur (hippos memigménos) occurs in the systematic Aposthegmuta Patrum. Lampe cites neither in patristic Greek.

102. The salvation of the world: see Ac 13:47; Tt 2:11.

103. Rm 10:18 (Ps 19:4).

104. Washing: perilrainō can indicate a sprinkling or washing in a sacred ritual (Lampe 107b).

105. The glory of Christ: see 2 Cor 8:23 and 2 Th 2:14. Destruction, apôleia: even “annihilation,” often used in the NT of eternal destruction of the wicked (Mt 7:13), of judgment (2 P 3:7), as the opposite of sôtēria, “salvation.”
he could understand the dwarf’s words, he struck the ground with his staff, saying, “Woe to you, Alexandria! You who instead of God worship monsters! Woe to you, you harlot of a city, in whom all the world’s demons have gathered together! What kind of defense do you have, when even the wild beasts confess Christ?!”

Antony had not finished speaking when the creature spread its wings and fled away. If what happened appears unbelievable to anyone, the whole Roman Empire at the time of Emperor Constantine bore witness that such a living being was captured and became a great spectacle for the people in Alexandria. After the being died, so that it would not decay in the open air it was embalmed and sent off to Antioch so as to inform the emperor.

9. A Wolf Leads Antony to Paul’s Cave; Paul and Antony Greet One Another

And now I will set forth what lies before us. Antony continued to travel the road, following the tracks of wild animals such as those above, throughout the width and breadth of the entire desert. What should he do to complete his journey? While he was reflecting on the days that had already gone by, he clearly had it within his sight that it was impossible for him to be abandoned by Christ. While he was persevering in prayer for a second night and on into the next day, he saw a female wolf panting, completely out of breath, climbing toward the peak of the mountain.

[18] Antony followed that very she-wolf, and, when he drew near the cave that the beast had entered, coming up to the cave he began to discern what is in accord with what is written: “Perfect love puts away fear.”

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107. By contrast, in Life of Antony 46 (157–59) Antony goes to Alexandria to bear witness with the martyrs. On martyrs and martyrdom, see nn. 24–26, 30, 36, 53, 54, 57, 59, and 60.
108. Confess: often used in the NT of confessing Jesus/Christ: Jn 9:22; 1 Jn 4:2; 4:5.
110. Abandoned, ἐκκαταλείπω: Mt 27:46 and Mk 15:34 use this word when Jesus cries out from the cross, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken/abandoned me.” See nn. 61 and 146.
111. Persevering in prayer: see Acts 1:14; Rom 12:12.
112. See 1 John 4:18.
When he had barely gone in, he saw a light; when he, still hungry to see more, approached the light, he ran into a certain stone—and from it came a loud sound. As soon as the stone resounded, blessed Paul shut the entrance, which had been open.

Antony then fell down in front of the door and prayed until the sixth hour, or even longer, saying, “Who I am, where I came from, and why—<you know>. I know that I’m not worthy even to look at you. Nevertheless, if I don’t get to see you, I will not yield [and go away]. Why do you, who welcome wild beasts, avoid a human being? I have sought and I have found; I knock so it may be opened to me. If I fail completely, I will die right here, in front of your door, so that, gazing upon my body, you will bury it.”

Antony had barely finished saying things such as these when the blessed one said, “No one seeking what you seek is making threats. No one with so many tears makes accusations.” While making such a charming remark, Paul opened the entrance. So, indeed, embracing one another, each greeted the other like neighbors.

10. The Lord, by Means of a Raven, Brings Bread to Antony and Paul

SO AFTER THE holy kiss, Paul sat down with Antony and said, “The person whom you’ve sought with so much wearying effort—he’s now a wasted old man. You’re looking at a human being who will soon be dust. But, since ‘love endures all things,’ tell me, please: How is the human race doing? Tell me whether new buildings are arising in the ancient

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113. Still hungry to see more: akoréstōs < akórestos, “insatiable.” The phrase is literally “as though insatiable.”
114. The sixth hour is about noon, depending on the time of year. The SGL and Latin differ.
115. <You know>: Bidez’s correction from the SGL; see Bidez, 8, note to line 10.
116. Mt. 7:7–8//Lk 11:10–11,
117. This foreshadows Antony’s burying Paul in ¶16.
118. See Lk 7:45; Ro 6:16; 1 Cor 16:20; and others.
119. Old man: or “elder,” gérōn; see nn. 93 and 149.
120. See Gen 3:19.
121. 1 Cor 13:7.
cities. How is the world being ruled? Tell me whether the rulers of this world are still being made prisoner by the deceptions of the demons.”

While they were discussing these matters, they saw a raven sitting on a branch of a tree. This very bird quietly flew down and, to their astonishment, placed a whole loaf of bread right before their eyes! After the bird had departed, Paul said, “Truly, the Lord, who loves humankind, who is merciful and compassionate, has sent our morning meal. Furthermore, for sixty years now I have partaken of a small piece of half a loaf of bread [each day]. But now, with you here, Christ has doubled the provisions for his own soldiers!”

11. After They Break Bread, Paul Speaks to Antony about His Death

[22] So, then, after the two of them gave thanks to the Lord, they sat down near the stream. There they eagerly contended to see who would be the first to break the bread. Their friendly battle lasted almost until nightfall. After thoroughly considering the matter, not readily did the two of them each take hold of the bread and break it in the name of the Lord. When day came, blessed Paul said this to Antony: “For a long time, brother, I’ve known that you were living somewhere around here. For a long time Christ has been promising me a fellow servant. But now the

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122. The rulers (archōntes) of this world: in the NT, archon is often negative: (1) the Devil is “the ruler of the demons” (Mt 9:34; 12:24); (2) there is a forthcoming “ruler of this world,” kósmos (Jn 12:31; 14:30; 16:11; 1 Jn 2:15–16); or the rulers of “this age” (1 Cor 2:6–8) (Bauer 140b). See Mt 20:25//Mk 10:42. See John 12:31, “Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be driven out”; 1 Cor 2:8, “None of the rulers of this age understood this; for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory”; and 2 Cor 4:4, “In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.” World can also be positive in the NT (see Mt 5:14 and 24:14); see ¶8. See Bauer 562b(7b) and Lampe 771b (C6–7).

123. <flew down>: using katêlthen < katérchomai from the SGL rather than diaptân; Latin subvolabat < subvolare.

124. [Each day]: Latin “at noon.”

125. Christ . . . his own soldiers: see 2 Tm 2:3, “soldiers of [and/or: for] Christ.”

126. Chapter 11 lacks a number of sentences in the Latin.

127. The two of them gave thanks to the Lord: see Lv 22:29; 1 Ch 16:8, 39; among many.

128. Take hold of the bread and break it in the name of the Lord: see Mt 14:22–26//Lk 22:14–20 and 1 Cor 11:23–25, all of which use the same vocabulary as here for “bread” and “break.”

129. Fellow servant, sündoulos: see Col 1:7; 4:7; Rv 6:11.
appointed time has come for me to sleep [in the Lord]—the very thing I’ve always desired—and to depart and be with Christ.\textsuperscript{130} Now that the time has come,\textsuperscript{131} what remains for me is the ‘crown of righteousness.’\textsuperscript{132} You have been sent\textsuperscript{133} by the Lord to cover my earthly body—or, rather, to return earth to earth.”

12. Paul, Expecting to Die Soon, Sends Antony Back to His Monastery

When Paul had finished speaking, Antony, weeping and groaning, was imploring Paul not to leave him behind but rather to be his companion on the way.\textsuperscript{134} [24] Paul responded, “You shouldn’t be seeking only your own interests but the interests of your neighbor.\textsuperscript{135} It’s to your benefit\textsuperscript{136} to put aside bodily things in order to benefit the rest of your monastic brothers so they can emulate you.\textsuperscript{137} I appeal to you, then, if it’s not a burden for you, go and bring back for wrapping my body the cloak that Bishop Athanasius gave to you as a gift.”\textsuperscript{138}

Now, blessed Paul had no desire for any kind of garment to cover his body as it lay perishing in the earth, but that he leave this life by [having his body] dissolve [back into the earth].\textsuperscript{139} Antony was, rightly, amazed when he heard about Athanasius and his cloak. As though he were seeing Christ in Paul, venerating the Lord within Paul’s breast, for a long time he

\textsuperscript{130.} To depart and be with Christ: see Ph 1:23.
\textsuperscript{131.} Now that the time has come: or “Now that the time is fulfilled [plēróō].” “Time” here is \textit{chrónos}. Earlier in the sentence “appointed” (or “appropriate”) time is \textit{kairós}; on the latter see nn. 76 and 141.
\textsuperscript{132.} See 2 Tim 4:8a (verses 6–7 lie in the background here).
\textsuperscript{133.} Sent: \textit{apostellō}, as in “apostle,” “one sent.”
\textsuperscript{134.} Way: \textit{hodós}; see nn. 94 and 142.
\textsuperscript{135.} Your neighbor: see Mt 19:19//Mk 12:31//Lk 10:27; Jn 5:30; Ph 2:21.
\textsuperscript{136.} It’s to your benefit, \textit{symphérō}: or “profitable, useful, fitting.”
\textsuperscript{137.} Put aside, \textit{apotíthēmi}: or, stronger, “rid yourself of.” The verb has plentiful resonance with NT passages: lay aside “the works of darkness” (Rom 13:22), “your former way of life” (Eph 4:22), “falsehood” (Eph 4:25). “sordidness and wickedness” (Jm 1:21), and “malice, guile, insincerity, envy, and slander” (1 Pt 2:1).
\textsuperscript{138.} See \textit{Life of Antony} 91.8 (253).
\textsuperscript{139.} Chapter 12 in Greek is much abbreviated. The Latin \textit{Life} says that Paul asked Antony to get the cloak “because he wanted to spare Antony the grief of witnessing his death.” Dissolve: in the NT \textit{ánēsis} can mean “relief from something onerous or troublesome,” “rest, relaxation, relief” (Bauer 77b–78a); see 2 Cor 8:13; 2 Th 1:7.
did not dare a response. Instead, weeping with peaceful calm,\textsuperscript{140} he kissed Paul’s eyes and hands and returned to the monastery, which was later destroyed by the Saracens.

13. \textit{Reaching the Monastery, He Retrieves the Cloak}

When he arrived, the two disciples who had long been serving him greeted him and were asking, “Where were you spending so much time, father?”\textsuperscript{141}

[26] But he kept saying [only], “Oh, no! I am such a sinner for boasting—pretending!—to bear the name ‘monk.’ I’ve seen Elijah, I’ve seen John [the Baptist] in the desert—and now, truly, I’ve seen Paul in paradise!”\textsuperscript{142}

And so, having closed his mouth, and beating his breast with his hand, he [left] the monastery, carrying the cloak [out of his cell]. To his disciples who kept urging him to tell them all about what had taken place, he said, “There’s a time appropriate for speaking, and a time appropriate for keeping silent.”\textsuperscript{143}

14. \textit{Antony, on the Way Back to Paul, Sees Him Ascend to Heaven}

So Antony, without taking even a little food with him, left his monastery and set out on the same road as he had returned on. On that road he was thirsting, on that road he was longing to behold him, on that road both with his eyes and in his thoughts he was greeting him—all this because he suspected that Paul would return his spirit to the Lord, as was his due.\textsuperscript{144}

\textsuperscript{140} Peaceful calm, \textit{hēsychia}.
\textsuperscript{141} The now-antiquated word \textit{tarry} would be perfect here for \textit{diágō}; both words include the sense of “delaying.”
\textsuperscript{142} Elijah: \textit{Life of Antony} 77.12 (77) has Antony “also recall the voice of the prophet Elijah.”
\textsuperscript{143} Qo 3:7 (Qo, Qoheleth = Ecclesiastes). “Time” here is \textit{kairóς}; see nn. 76 and 129.
\textsuperscript{144} “Road,” \textit{hodós}, returns us to §7 [12] where Antony “set out on the road” (see nn. 94 and 132). \textit{Hodós} occurs once, followed by a threefold \textit{ekéinos}, “that (road),” which we have translated with the noun.
When, therefore, another day dawned, around the third hour, he saw on the road ranks of angels and the choirs of prophets and apostles. In their midst he saw Paul, radiant with snowy whiteness, ascending to the heavenly heights. Immediately at this sight, scattering sand all over his head, weeping and groaning, he was saying, “Why, Paul? Why have you left me behind? Why are you going away without receiving a final farewell from me!”

15. Antony, Returning to the Cave, Finds Paul Dead

[Blessed Antony used to recount afterwards that he finished the rest of his course with such great speed that one would not compare the speed with which he accomplished his journey even with the flight of birds. In truth, when he went into the cave, he saw the blessed one down on his knees, with his neck held high, his hands rising up like a bird in flight. At first, to be sure, Antony thought that Paul was still living, so he began praying with him. But when he did not hear the usual groaning from the supplicant, he realized that Paul’s body was making an act of reverence to the one through whom all things live.

16. Two Lions Help Antony Bury Paul

Antony then wrapped the body and carried it, as is the custom, singing hymns and chanting psalms, in accordance with Christian worship and tradition. He then became very sad because he had not brought a hoe that he could use to dig in the earth and lay Paul in it.

As a result, he was having great difficulty deciding what to do, and was thinking to himself, taking counsel whether he should attempt to return to the monastery, knowing that four days would not suffice for

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145. That is, around 9 a.m.
146. Ranks of angels: the imagery may come from Rv 7:11; 8:2; 18:20; 21:14.
147. In Life of Antony 60.1–2 (185) Antony sees Amoun enter heaven: “Antony marveled at and blessed so great a chorus.” See ¶7.
148. Left me behind, kataleipō: or “abandoned”; see nn. 61 and 109.
149. See Rm 14:8. The Latin makes it explicit earlier that Paul has died.
him to make his journey there. He kept saying, “Christ, I too will die with him, as is right, alongside your servant.”

While he was considering these things, two lions from the [30] farthest wilderness were charging at him! When he saw them, at first he shuddered with fear, but afterwards, turning his thoughts back to God, he was able to stop trembling and remain calm, as though he were truly looking at doves.150

The two lions, quickly reaching the body of the blessed elder,151 stopped and, submissively wagging their tails, fell before his feet, howling loudly and chomping their teeth. Because of this, it seemed to blessed Antony that the wild beasts were bitterly lamenting the departure of blessed Paul.152 Then they began tearing into the earth; pushing away the sand, they dug out a burial place large enough for one person. Right away, wanting to receive a reward for their labor, bowing down their heads and moving their ears, they went up to Antony and were licking his hands and feet with their tongues so Antony would understand that they were seeking a blessing from him.

Confounded at this, Antony had not a doubt that even those by nature that are without speech know that the very best things are to the glory of God. So he said, “Lord, without your will a leaf does not fall from the tree, nor is a single one of those that fly brought to the ground.153 Therefore give to these lions as you know how to give.”154

[32] Now, with a sign of his hand, he ordered them to leave. After they left, he lifted the holy body and laid it down [in the grave], as is the custom. Then, the next day, as an apparent heir, he took with him the tunic that blessed Paul had made for himself from palm branches. Returning now to his monastery, he related in order to his disciples everything that had taken place. At each feast of Easter and Pentecost Antony would always put on Paul’s tunic.

150. In 2 Ch 9:17–18 Solomon “made a great ivory throne, and overlaid it with pure gold. 18 The throne had six steps and a footstool of gold, which were attached to the throne, and on each side of the seat were arm rests and two lions standing beside the arm rests.”
151. Elder, gérōn: or “old man”: see nn. 93 and 118.
152. Departure, análusis: the same word occurs in 2 Tm 4:6: “As for me, I am already being poured out as a libation, and the time of my departure has come.”
153. See Mt 10:29; 2 K 14:11.
154. See Mt 7:11; Lk 11:13.
18. Conclusion and Entreaty

Now, therefore, I entreat you who are reading about all these events, keep in mind the sinner Jerome. If God were so to wish it, I would prefer to have Paul’s tunic and, by means of it, his faith, rather than the purple raiment of emperors with their prestige.¹⁵⁶

Department of Philosophy & Religious Studies
California State University Bakersfield / tvivian@csub.edu

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¹⁵⁵. Both the FGL and the SGL lack ¶17 of the Latin; in it Jerome attacks the wealthy and concomitantly exalts Paul’s poverty.

¹⁵⁶. “To wish it, I would prefer” has a play on words: bouléσi boúlomai.