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The Evil Angels in the *Vita* and the *Letters* of St. Antony the Great

Some Observations concerning the Problem of the
Authenticity of the *Letters*

by Dmitrij F. Bumazhnov

In this article¹, I will try to place in their respective historical contexts two different traditions about the possibility of seeing evil angels which we find in the *Vita Antonii* and in the *Letters* attributed to the saint. My suggestion is that the most probable explanation for the theory in the *Letters* about the invisibility of angels and God is to see them as polemics against the opposite views expressed in other monastic documents of fourth century Egypt.

I will proceed as follows. First, I will give some needed information about the so-called *Letters* of St. Antony and a short report about the current state of their research. Then I will present a passage from *Letter* 6, where the possibility of seeing evil angels is denied, and briefly discuss some recent comments on it. The problems arising from these comments will lead us to the last part of this article where I will attempt to put the *Letters*'s and the *Vita*'s views on evil angels in their proper contexts.

1. The "Letters of St. Antony"

As late as A.D. 392 St. Jerome knew about a collection of seven letters written by the father of the monks². According to him, the original language of the *Letters* was Coptic, although Jerome himself read a Greek translation. A whole letter and fragments of two more are indeed transmitted as the works of St. Antony in Coptic; in addition to this, Coptic quotations from the *Letters* are preserved in the 5th century Egyptian Christian writer

¹ This article is a revised version of my paper given on 12th October 2006 at the Third Annual Conference of the Pappas Patristic Institute on Evil and Suffering in the Patristic Period, at Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology in Boston (Massachusetts). I would like to express my deep gratitude to Aaron Overby and István Perczel for correcting my English.

² See Hier., vir. ill. 88 (TU 14, 45,8-13 Richardson).

Besa³. The lost Greek text was still available in 1475 and was used by Valerio de Sarasio, who prepared a Latin translation of the corpus, the best known edition of which is to be found in PG 40, 977-1000. The Coptic text provided the basis for the Arabic version of the *Letters*, which still lacks a critical edition⁴. In 1909, François Nau edited the Syriac text of the first letter⁵; then in 1955, Gérard Garitte made available the full old Georgian version⁶.

No serious attempt to scrutinize the problems of the corpus was undertaken until 1990 when Samuel Rubenson published the first edition of his seminal study of the *Letters* based on the careful philological analysis of all extant versions. Rubenson's strong emphasis on the complete Antonian authenticity of all parts of the *Letters* led him to the question of the historicity of the *Life of the St. Antony* by bishop Athanasius. Taking for granted that St. Antony – as the *Letters* suggest – was a wisdom teacher acquainted with the theological thinking of Origen, Rubenson takes leave of the *Vita* image of St. Antony where he is depicted as a simple peasant, taught by God alone⁷. This correction made for the sake of the "historical Antony" as well as Rubenson's arguments for the authenticity of the *Letters* succeeded in convincing almost everyone who was interested in the subject⁸.

Among some few voices⁹ expressing various degrees of disapproval of Rubenson's theses, the criticism of the present archbishop of Canterbury,

³ See for the Coptic text of the *Letters*: *Letters and Sermons of Besa*, CSCO 157 = CSCO.C 21 [edited by K.H. Kuhn]; CSCO 158 = CSCO.C 22 bietet die englische versio [translated by K.H. Kuhn], Louvain 1956, 97.99-101, and *Lettres de S. Antoine*. Version géorgienne et fragments coptes, édités par G. Garitte, CSCO 148 = CSCO.I 5, Louvain 1955, 11f.41-46. A full account of all extant versions of the letters can be found in S. Rubenson, *Letters of St. Antony. Monasticism and the Making of a Saint*, Minneapolis 21995, 15-22. In the following discussion, I will use the numbering of the *Letters* in the Coptic and Arabic version adopted by S. Rubenson.

⁴ For the present article I used the edition *Anbā Murqus al-Anṭūnī, Kitāb rauḍat al-nufūs fi rasā'il al-qiddīs Anṭūniyūs*, Cairo 1899, a copy of which was kindly provided to me by Prof. Samuel Rubenson, to whom I would like to express my deep gratitude.

⁵ E. Nau, *La version syriaque de la première lettre de Saint Antoine*, ROC 14, 1906, 282-297.

⁶ *Lettres de S. Antoine* (see note 3).

⁷ Rubenson, *Letters* (see note 3), 141-144.

⁸ Cf. e.g. M. Puzicha, *Art. Antonius der Einsiedler*, in: S. Döpp/W. Geerlings (eds.), *Lexikon der antiken christlichen Literatur*, Freiburg im Breisgau/Basel/Wien 2002, 43; J.-M. Mayeur/N. Brox (eds.), *Die Geschichte des Christentums. Religion, Politik, Kultur*, vol. 2. *Das Entstehen der einen Christenheit (250-430)*, Freiburg im Breisgau/Basel/Wien 1996, 820.

⁹ Cf. A. Khosroyev, *Die Bibliothek von Nag Hammadi. Einige Probleme des Christentums in Ägypten während der ersten Jahrhunderte*, Münster 1994, 158-166. Khosroyev expressed his fundamental disagreement with Rubenson's thesis about the authorship of the *Letters*. G. Gould questioned the very dependence of the *Letters* on Origen's theology, cf. G. Gould, *The Influence of Origen on Fourth-Century Monasticism. Some further Remarks*, in: G. Dorival/A. Le Boulluec (eds.), *Origeniana Sexta. Origène et la Bible/*

Rowan Williams, is worth noting¹⁰. Williams focuses on the conspicuous lack of common ideas between the so-named “*Letters of Antony*” and another corpus of monastic epistles attributed to Ammonas, generally considered to be one of the pupils of the Father of the monks. To solve this tension Williams proposes a redaction hypothesis. According to him, a genuine Antonian nucleus of the present text of St. Antony’s *Letters* could have been rewritten and extended by some monastic group interested in propagating the theological ideas of Origen shortly before the outbreak of the first Origenist Controversy in Egypt.

The great methodological advantage of this theory is that it does not attempt to answer the difficult question of the authenticity of the seven *Letters* with a simple “yes” or “no”. Instead Williams invites his readers to focus more deeply on the theological and historical context of the corpus as well as on the evidence that does not conform to Rubenson’s theory.

What follows is an attempt to apply Williams’s approach to a passage of *Letter 6* while reconsidering the merit of Rubenson’s thesis about its origin.

2. Letter 6,50-56 in modern scholarly discussion

The passage in question reads as follows¹¹:

(50) If you seek, you will not find their [i.e. of the evil angels] sin and iniquities revealed bodily, for they are not visible bodily. (51) But we are their bodies, and our soul receives their wickedness. And in receiving them, it reveals them through the body in which we dwell. (52) So, therefore, my children, let us not give them any place, lest we shall stir up the wrath of God against us, (53) and they will mix themselves with our houses and laugh at us, since they know that our destruction is of our neighbour and also our life is of our neighbour. (54) For who has ever seen God so that he would rejoice with Him and keep Him

Origen and the Bible, Actes du Colloquium Origenianum Sextum, Chantilly, 30 août-3 septembre 1993, BETHL 118, Leuven 1995, 592 note 9: “it seems at least questionable whether the parallels adduced by him [i.e. S. Rubenson] are of any great worth, even taken together, as evidence of direct dependence on Origen’s writings”. For Rubenson’s replay to Khosroyev, see S. Rubenson, Origen in the Egyptian Monastic Tradition of the fourth Century, in: W.A. Bienert/U. Kühneweg (eds.), Origeniana Septima. Origenes in den Auseinandersetzungen des 4. Jahrhunderts, BETHL 137, Leuven 1999, 321 note 7.

¹⁰ See R.D. Williams, Faith and Experience in early Monasticism. New Perspectives on the Letters of Ammonas, Festvortrag von Rowan Douglas Williams anlässlich seiner Ehrenpromotion am Freitag, den 02.07.1999 in der Aula des Erlanger Schlosses, in: H.C. Brennecke/R.D. Williams, Faith and Experience in early Monasticism. New Perspectives on the Letters of Ammonas. Laudatio und Festvortrag anlässlich der Ehrenpromotion von Rowan Douglas Williams durch die Theologische Fakultät der Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg am 02.07.1999 in der Aula des Erlanger Schlosses, Akademische Reden und Kolloquien 20, Erlangen 2002, 19-36.

¹¹ The passage is transmitted in three versions. For respective texts and their English translations, see Appendix 1.

and He would not leave him but help him as <one helps> somebody who dwells in this great heaviness? (55) Or who has ever seen a demon fighting against us and preventing us from doing good and opposing us standing in some bodily <perceivable> place so that he would frighten him and he would flee from him? For they are hidden and we reveal them through our deeds. (56) For they are all from one intellectual essence, but through their flight from God, great diversity has arisen between them because of their varying deeds.

Rubenson observes that in verse 53 we find words very similar to the saying known as the ninth *apophthegma* of St. Antony. Cf. *Letter 6,53*:

our destruction is of our neighbour and also our life is of our neighbour
and *Apophthegmata Patrum, Antonius 9*¹²:

Εἶπε πάλιν, ὅτι ἐκ τοῦ πλησίον ἐστὶν ἡ ζωὴ καὶ ὁ θάνατος. Ἐὰν γὰρ κερδήσωμεν τὸν ἀδελφόν, τὸν Θεὸν κερδαίνομεν· ἐὰν δὲ σκανδαλίσωμεν τὸν ἀδελφόν, εἰς Χριστὸν ἀμαρτάνομεν.

(He also said: “Our life and our death is with our neighbour. If we gain our brother, we have gained God, but if we scandalize our brother, we have sinned against Christ.”)

As can be seen from *Letter 6,50f.* and *6,55f.*, the author not only asserts that the demons cannot be perceived by human beings because of the special qualities of their nature, but also clearly denies the very possibility of their appearances in any form (*Letter 6,55*). That the last opinion could not be shared by the Antony of St. Athanasius’s *Vita* was rightly pointed out by Rubinson: “In the letters the demons are [...] bodiless and invisible and manifest themselves only in the deeds of men [...]. In the *Vita* the demons can, on the contrary, be seen, they smite and run, they speak and prophecy. They appear and transform themselves, they discuss and plan, they are hurt and frightened”. As an explanation of the remarkable difference Rubenson proposes “the creative hand of the author” of the *Vita Antonii*¹³.

David Brakke seems to argue along the same line in his new book about demons and the making of the monk in the 4th and 5th century Egyptian monastic tradition¹⁴. Following Rubenson, Brakke sees in the *Letters* our

¹² *Apophth. Patr., Antonius 9* (PG 65, 77B Cotelier). English translation according to: B. Ward, *The Sayings of the Desert Fathers. The Alphabetical Collection*, London/Oxford 1975, 2. About the *apophthegma* and its interconnection with the cognate *Vita*-tradition, see Appendix 2.

¹³ Rubenson, *Letters* (see note 3), 139. Cf. also Rubenson, *Letters* (see note 3), 87: “In contrast to the imagery of the *Vita*, where the demons are visible and audible, the letters present them as completely internalized”. Rubenson, *Letters* (see note 3), 87 note 5, notes in connection with Ath., v. Anton. 6,49-51: “In contrast to Athanasius he [i.e. the author of the *Letters*] explicitly denies that they [i.e. the demons] can be seen and he implies that they need men as bodily instruments for activity”.

¹⁴ D. Brakke, *Demons and the Making of the Monk. Spiritual Combat in Early Christianity*, Cambridge (Massachusetts)/London 2006, 16f.23.

primary source about the theological views of St. Antony. This leads him to ascribe – possibly more reservedly than Rubenson – the appearance stories in the *Vita* to the pen of St. Athanasius¹⁵.

According to Brakke, St. Antony's combat against the demons is a cross-point of the martyrological imagery of the *Vita*, its apologetic dimension and St. Athanasius's theology of the power of Christ's Cross. Given that for him the *Letters* are genuine, Brakke didn't need any further proofs of the demonic appearances being a part of the Athanasian theological constructions described by him. However, for one who doesn't share Rubenson's thesis, Brakke's analysis of the *Vita*'s demonology – though convincing in other points – provides no reasonable ground to believe that the bishop of Alexandria invented the appearance stories and did not borrow them from his sources¹⁶.

Leaving aside the question whether the thesis about the alleged invention of the demonic appearances by the author of the *Vita Antonii* can be supported with convincing arguments¹⁷ – something that, in my opinion, both Rubenson and Brakke failed to do – we turn now to another equally important problem. The question to ask is how plausible for the “historical Antony” the idea about the visible appearances of the demons or, respectively, about their absolute invisibility would have been.

¹⁵ Brakke, *Demons* (see note 14), 42. Cf. also Brakke, *Demons* (see note 14), 23: “Hardly the subtle markers of the fault lines of differentiated existence traced by Antony himself, Athanasius's demons brutally attack Antony visually, vocally, and physically [...]”.

¹⁶ Surprisingly enough, in his earlier work, D. Brakke, *Athanasius and the Politics of Asceticism*, Oxford Early Christian Studies, Oxford 1995, 225f. Brakke argues that, “when Athanasius wrote the *Life*, he had already developed a mythical framework in which to set the monastic lore of demonic conflict that he inherited”. Cf. also Brakke, *Athanasius* (see note 16), 221: “Certainly Athanasius inherited these lurid depictions of demonic apparitions from his monastic sources”.

¹⁷ The idea about the demonic presence in the *Vita Antonii* being the production of the “creative mind” of bishop Athanasius is certainly due to Rubenson's thesis about the priority of the *Letters* as a source. Previous scholarship was unanimous in seeing in these kind of stories the influence of popular religion. Cf. R. Reitzenstein, *Des Athanasius Werk über das Leben des Antonius*. Ein philologischer Beitrag zur Geschichte des Mönchtums, SHAD.PH 8, Heidelberg 1914, 12f.36; J. List, *Das Antoniusleben des hl. Athanasius d. Gr. Eine literarhistorische Studie zu den Anfängen der byzantinischen Hagiographie*, TBNGP 11, Athen 1930, 46f. See also U. Ranke-Heinemann, *Das frühe Mönchtum. Seine Motive nach den Selbstzeugnissen*, Essen 1964, 50f. for an overview of the scholarly opinions before 1964 about the demonic visions in the *Vita*. M. Tetz, *Athanasius und die Vita Antonii*. Literarische und theologische Relationen, ZNW 73, 1982, 20-22, trying to distinguish between the Athanasian additions to the story about the appearance of the devil as a black boy in chapter 6 of the *Vita* and the original material states: “Den Bericht in c. 6 über die Erscheinung muß er übernommen haben, denn die Bezeichnung des Teufels als *ὁ μέλας πῶϊς* oder *ὁ μέλας*, die die ganze Geschichte bestimmt, ist für Athanasius singular” (Tetz, *Athanasius* [see note 17], 21).

3. *Visible and invisible demons in the third-, fourth-century pagan and Christian texts*

Despite the regrettable lack of a systematic study about the demonology of late antiquity¹⁸, there is absolutely no doubt about the fact that, in the first centuries of the Christian era, the more or less standard way¹⁹ of thinking about the evil demons's ability to make themselves visible was the same as the one expressed in the *Vita Antonii*. To say nothing about popular beliefs finding their expression in, for example, magical papyri that were often illustrated with pictures showing the demons and their activities²⁰, the idea that demons can appear and be seen with human eyes was common also among educated pagans such as Apuleius²¹, Lucian²², Maximus Tyrius²³, and Porphyry. The later, for example, takes for granted that the evil demons can change their forms and make themselves manifest if they

¹⁸ It would be an impossible as well as unnecessary task to try to present here an exhaustive bibliography of the demonology of Late Antiquity. Among a few helpful works should be named F. Andres, *Die Engellehre der griechischen Apologeten des zweiten Jahrhunderts und ihr Verhältnis zur griechisch-römischen Dämonologie*, FChLDG 12/3, Paderborn 1914; M.P. Nilsson, *Geschichte der griechischen Religion*, vol. 2. *Die hellenistische und römische Zeit*, HAW 5/2/2, München 1961; F.E. Brenk, *In the Light of the Moon: Demonology in the Early Imperial Period*, ANRW 2/16/3, Berlin/New York 1986, 2068-2145; J. Ries/H. Limet (eds.), *Anges et Démons. Actes du colloque de Liège et de Louvain-la-Neuve 25-26 novembre 1987*, HoRe 14, Louvain-la-Neuve 1989; E. Corsini/E. Costa (eds.), *L'autunno del diavolo. “Diabolos, Dialogos, Daimon”*, convegno di Torino 17/21 ottobre 1988, vol. 1, Milan 1990; A. Monaci Castagno (ed.), *Il diavolo e i suoi angeli. Testi e tradizioni (secoli I-III)*, BPat, Fiesole 1996.

¹⁹ Setting apart the popular beliefs, no overreaching generalization in the matters of demonology with regard to the educated authors of the early Imperial period seems possible, cf. Brenk, *Light* (see note 18), 2140: “philosophical authors treated the matter of demonology with some hesitancy and as an area where there was great latitude of both belief and skepticism”.

²⁰ See e.g. Nilsson, *Geschichte* (see note 18), plate 7.

²¹ Apul., *Socr.* 11 (BSGRT, 19,4f. Thomas): *nemini hominum temere visibilia* [i.e. *daemonum corpora*], *nisi divinitus speciem sui offerant*.

²² A remarkable parallel to the demonic appearances of the *Vita Antonii* is Lucianus Sophista, *Philops.* 31 (SCBO, 194,20-27 Macleod) where the ghost is seen by the philosopher Arignotos: ἐφίσταται δὲ ὁ δαίμων [...] ἀχμηρὸς καὶ κομητῆς καὶ μελάντερος τοῦ ζόφου. καὶ ὁ μὲν ἐπιστὰς ἐπειπᾶτό μου, πανταχόθεν προσβάλλον εἴ ποθεν κρατήσῃεν, καὶ ἔρτι μὲν κύων ἔρτι δὲ ταῦρος γιγνώμενος ἢ λέων. ἐγὼ δὲ προχειρισάμενος τὴν φρικωδεστάτην ἐπίρρησιν αἰγυπτιάζων τῇ φωνῇ συνήλασα κατὰδων αὐτὸν εἰς τινα γωνίαν σκοτεινοῦ οἰκίματος. A closely cognate story is told also in *Plin.*, *epist.* VI 27,5-11 (BSGRT, 232,2-233,15 Schuster/Hanslik). Further parallels see in A.N. Sherwin-White, *The Letters of Pliny*. A Historical and Social Commentary, Oxford 1966, 435-437.

²³ Max. Tyr., *Dissertationes* IX 7 (BSGRT, 76,175-179 Trapp). It must be noted, however, that δαίμονες here do not mean demons but, rather, the souls of the dead heroes. Maximus's teaching about δαίμονες is shortly presented in T. Hopfner, *Griechisch-ägyptischer Offenbarungszauber*. Mit einer eingehenden Darstellung des griechisch-synkretistischen Daemonenglaubens und der Voraussetzungen und Mittel des Zaubers überhaupt und der magischen Divination im besonderen, vol. 1, StPP 21, Leipzig 1921, 9.

want to²⁴. The Christian apologist, Tatian, in the second century also held the same opinion²⁵.

An interesting parallel to the demonology of the *Vita Antonii*²⁶ can be found in the fourth-century Christian pseudoepigraphon *The Testament of Solomon*²⁷. By the magic virtue of his ring, the text's hero, king Solomon, makes a number of evil demons appear before him and tell about their properties – e.g. the most effective exorcism measures – and then dismisses them in order to begin building the First Temple. As in the text of St. Athanasius, the evil demons of *The Testament of Solomon* can be perceived and have either anthropomorphic or animal like form. Early monastic sources such as Pachomian documents²⁸, *Historia monachorum*²⁹ and *Historia Lausiaca*³⁰ share this view.

²⁴ Porph., Abst. II 39 (BSGRT, 168,5-12 Nauck): καὶ εἰσὶν σύμπαντες οὗτοί τε καὶ οἱ τῆς ἐναντίας δυνάμεως ἀόρατοί τε καὶ τελέως ἀναίσθητοι αἰσθήσεων ἀνθρωπίνων. οὐ γὰρ στερεὸν σῶμα περιβέβληνται οὐδὲ μορφήν πάντες μίαν, ἀλλ' ἐν σχήμασι πλείοσιν ἐκτυπούμενοι αἱ χαρακτηρίζουσαι τὸ πνεῦμα αὐτῶν μορφαὶ τοτὲ μὲν ἐπιφαίνονται, τοτὲ δὲ ἀφανεῖς εἰσὶν ἐνίοτε δὲ καὶ μεταβάλλουσι τὰς μορφὰς οἱ γε χεῖρους.

²⁵ Tat., orat. 15,6f. (PTS 43, 33,22-25 Marcovich): Δαίμονες δὲ πάντες σαρκίον μὲν οὐ κέκτηνται, πνευματικὴ δ' ἐστὶν αὐτοῖς ἡ σύμψηξις, ὡς πυρὸς καὶ ἀέρος. Μόνοις γούνη τοῖς πνεύματι Θεοῦ φρουρουμένοις εὐσύννοπτα [καὶ] τὰ τῶν δαιμόνων ἐστὶ σῶματα, τοῖς λοιποῖς δ' οὐδαμῶς, λέγω δὲ τοῖς ψυχικοῖς. Cf. also Tat., orat. 16,5 (43, 34,15-17 M.): Βλέπονται δὲ καὶ ὑπὸ τῶν ψυχικῶν οἱ δαίμονες, ἐστ' ὅτε τοῖς ἀνθρώποις ἑαυτοῦς ἐκείνων δεικνύτων, ἵνα τε νομισθῶσιν εἶναι τι ἢ καὶ τινος βλάβῃσι καθάπερ πολεμίου [...].

²⁶ Among many studies dedicated to the demons in the *Vita Antonii*, only J. Daniélou, Les démons de l'air dans la "Vie d'Antoine", in: B. Steidle (ed.), Antonius Magnus Eremita 356-1956. Studia ad antiquum monachismum spectantia, StAns 38, Romae 1956, 136-147 focused on the religious background of this motive. L. Keimer, L'horreur des égyptiens pour les démons du désert, BIE 26, 1943-1944, 135-147 sees the demonology of the *Vita* as a continuation of the old Egyptian beliefs, the comparison is, however, too general to give an answer to concrete questions.

²⁷ The critical edition of the Greek text was provided by C.C. McCown, The Testament of Solomon. Edited from manuscripts at Mount Athos, Bologna, Holkham Hall, Jerusalem, London, Milan, Paris and Vienna, with introduction by C.C. McCown, UNT 9, Leipzig 1922. P. Busch, Das Testament Salomos. Die älteste christliche Dämonologie, kommentiert und in deutscher Erstübersetzung, TU 153, Berlin/New York 2006, supplied his German translation of the text with valuable remarks about its place in the context of pagan demonological views of the period (Busch, Testament [see note 27], 51-67) and proposed to understand it as a document that had reacted to purely "spiritual", i.e. non-authorized, exorcisms and insisted on exorcismal practices being legitimated and carried out by the ecclesiastical authority only (Busch, Testament [see note 27], 279-290). Daniélou, Les démons (see note 26) does not take in account *The Testament of Solomon*.

²⁸ Cf. e.g. V.Pach. A 14 (SHG 19, 137,22 Halkin): ἐπέστησαν αὐτῷ λεγεῶνες δαιμόνων, and V.Pach. bohairice scripta 21 (CSCO 89 = CSCO.C 7, 20,10f. Lefort): ογορ ἀγερρητις ἡτογυβηκ ἡενογῶνη εβωλ. "And they [i.e. the demons] began to fight against him [i.e. St. Pachom] openly". An angel vision is reported in V.Pach. bohairice scripta 22 (21,25-22,6 L.). About the ecstatic element in the *Lives* of St. Pachom see W. Bousset, Apophthegmata. Studien zur Geschichte des ältesten Mönchtums, Tübingen 1923, 236-246.

²⁹ Cf. e.g. [Ps.-]Pall., h.mon. 1,38 (SHG 53, 23,245 Festugière): νύκτωρ αὐτῷ ἐρίστανται δαίμονες; h.mon. 2,9 (53, 38,52f. F.): ἦλθον πρὸς αὐτὸν ἐν φαντασίᾳ οἱ δαίμονες ἀγγελικὰς στρατιὰς ἐπιδεικνύντες. The good angels are considered to be visible as well, cf. h.mon. 11,7 (53, 91,32f. F.): εἶδον πολλὰκις μυριάδας ἀγγέλων τῷ Θεῷ παρεστῶτας.

³⁰ Cf. e.g. Pall., h.Laus. 16,2 (ViSa 2, 66,15f. Bartelink): παραγίνεται ὁ δαίμων ἐν νυκτὶ [...]

Coming closer to St. Antony's tradition we can first point out that Antony's disciple, Ammonas, though silent about demoniac visits, considers angel visions a necessary step in the spiritual development of a monk³¹. An angel also shows St. Antony the right monastic way of life in the first Greek *apophthegma* transmitted under his name³². In the 12th Greek *apophthegma* of St. Antony, the demons show him in a vision what had happened to a group of visitors some time before the group reached the elder. Telling them that, Antony demonstrates his knowledge about the concern of his visitors, namely the question of whether the visions they were having came from the demons³³. Though not a vision description, this story – paralleled by chapters 31f. and 62,1 of the *Vita Antonii* – presupposes an image of the saint deeply engaged in audible and visible contacts with the demons³⁴. In a Bohairic *apophthegma* missing in the Greek collection, St. Antonius speaks directly about a visible experience of a demon in his cell³⁵.

Besides these witnesses, St. Antony's activity as an exorcist, richly exemplified in Athanasius's *Vita*³⁶, the *Historia monachorum*³⁷, and the *Historia Lausiaca*³⁸ should also be mentioned. All these testimonies pre-

σχῆμα ἔχων στρατιώτου; Pall., h.Laus. 18,7 (82,58-60 B.): Ἐβδομήκοντα δαίμονες ἐξῆλθον εἰς συνάτησίν μου ἀπὸ τοῦ κηποταφίου, βοῶντες καὶ πτερουσόμενοι ὡς κόρακες κατὰ τῆς ὄψεώς μου. One of the numerous angel visions of the document is mentioned in Pall., h.Laus. 32,1 (150,5f. B.): Καθεζομένῳ οὖν αὐτῷ ἐν τῷ σπηλαίῳ ὄψθη ἄγγελος. Some problems of spiritual combat and demonic afflictions in St. Palladius are dealt with in N. Molinier, Ascèse, contemplation et ministère d'après l'Histoire Lausiaque de Pallade d'Hélénopolis, SpOr 64, Abbaye de Bellefontaine 1995, 118-122.

³¹ Ammonas, ep. 7,1 syriace (PO 10, 584,1-7 Kmoskó). About St. Ammonas and his letters see D.-J. Chitty, The Desert a City. An Introduction to the Study of Egyptian and Palestinian Monasticism under the Christian Empire, Oxford 1966, 38; B. McNary-Zak, Letters and Asceticism in Fourth-Century Egypt, Lanham/New York/Oxford 2000, 18-20; Williams, Faith (see note 10), 23-29.

³² Apophth. Patr., Antonius 1 (76A-B C.).

³³ Apophth. Patr., Antonius 12 (77C C.). H. Dörries, Die Vita Antonii als Geschichtsquelle, in: idem, Wort und Stunde, vol. 1. Gesammelte Studien zur Kirchengeschichte des vierten Jahrhunderts, Göttingen 1966, 153, provides a comparison of this *apophthegma* with the *Vita* tradition.

³⁴ F. Graf, Saint Antony. Deconstructing a Visionary, ThZ 62, 2006, 300, argues that the author of the *Vita Antonii* even reduced the amount of "uncontrolled ascetic ecstasy" peculiar to the saint according to his *apophthegmata*. In the same time, Graf, referring to Brakke, Athanasius (see note 16), 293, understands the *apophthegmata* "as just another construct, no more and no less reliable than the other traditions".

³⁵ Monuments pour servir à l'histoire de l'Égypte chrétienne. Vie des saints Paul, Antoine, Macaire, Maxime et Domèce Jean le Nain, texte copte et traduction française par E. Amélineau, AMG 25, Paris 1894, 40,6-41,4. It must be noted, however, that R.-G. Coquin who studies the terminology of monastic clothing in this *apophthegma*, concludes that it is "probablement tardif" (R.-G. Coquin, A propos des vêtements des moines égyptiens, BSAC 31, 1992, 9); See also Coquin, Vêtements (see note 35), 22.

³⁶ Cf. e.g. Ath., v.Anton. 38,1f. (SC 400, 238,1-7 Bartelink); Ath., v.Anton. 62,1 (300,3-5 B.); Ath., v.Anton. 63,1-3 (300,3-302,12 B.); Ath., v.Anton. 71,1f. (318,1-320,9 B.); Ath., v.Anton. 72,5 (322,15f. B.).

³⁷ Cf. [Ps.-]Pall., h.mon. 24,10 (133,40-44 F.); vgl. Rufin., hist. mon. 31,16-18 (PTS 34, 382,67-77 Schulz-Flügel).

³⁸ Pall., h.Laus. 22,9-13 (124,80-126,120 B.).

suppose the saint's close and frequent exorcismal contacts with possessed persons and consequently also with impure ghosts, to which his fame to a great part was due. This image is hardly compatible with that of the author of the *Letters*, whose demons keep silent and never appear and are to be defeated by the opening of the eyes of the heart (*Letter* 6,28), but it perfectly corresponds with the *apophthegmata* witnesses about demon and angel experiences discussed above.

We are, therefore, perhaps not wrong in drawing a preliminary conclusion that the belief in evil angels' ability to make themselves visible is more plausible for the "historical Antony" than the opposite view formulated in the *Letter* 6,50-56.

4. *Letter* 6,50-56 in its historical context

Against the background of the widespread belief that evil angels can be seen if they want to be, the denial of this belief in *Letter* 6,50-56 needs an explanation.

Origen, to whom the author of the *Letters* is indebted for an important part of his angelology³⁹, seems very reserved concerning the demons' visible appearances. Surprisingly enough, Origen (to my knowledge) never mentions them – positively or negatively – even in his sermons where he addresses a public that had little formal education and was certainly familiar with this subject⁴⁰. On the other hand, he contrasts the Divine nature lacking any kind of corporeality with the evil angels' bodies consisting of air-like matter⁴¹. So, according to Origen, angels and demons are invisible but not bodiless what corresponds to the predominant views of the

³⁹ This is rightly pointed out by D. Brakke, *The Making of Monastic Demonology: Three Ascetic Teachers on Withdrawal and Resistance*, ChH 70, 2001, 23.

⁴⁰ About Origen's angelology see the classical work of C. Blanc, *L'angéologie d'Origène*, StPatr 14, 1976, 79-109. The demonology of the Alexandrian teacher have been subject of many excellent studies, cf. J. Daniélou, *Art. Démon: dans la littérature ecclésiastique jusqu'à Origène*, in: DSp 3, Paris 1957, 182-189, and idem, *Message évangélique et culture hellénistique aux II^e et III^e siècles*, BT.HD 2, Tournai 1961, 397-403; A. Monaci Castagno, *La demonologia di Origene. Aspetti filosofici, pastorali, apologetici*, in: R.J. Daly (ed.), *Origeniana Quinta. Historica – Text and Method – Biblica – Philosophica – Theologica – Origenism and Later Developments*, Papers of the 5th International Origen Congress Boston College, 14-18 August 1989, BETHL 105, Leuven 1992, 320-325; G. Sfameni Gasparo, *Eguaglianza di natura e differenza di condizione dei λογικοί. La soluzione origeniana nel contesto delle formule antropologiche e demonologiche greche del II e III sec.*, in: Daly (ed.), *Origeniana Quinta* (see note 40), 301-319; T. Mikoda, *A Comparison of the Demonologies of Origen and Plutarch*, in: Daly (ed.), *Origeniana Quinta* (see note 40), 326-332; H. Crouzel, *Le démoniaque dans l'œuvre d'Origène*, in: M. Lagrée et alii (éd.), *Figures du démoniaque, hier et aujourd'hui*, PFUSL.CG 55, Bruxelles 1992, 31-61, and idem, *Diabole et démons dans les homélies d'Origène*, BLE 95, 1994, 303-331.

⁴¹ See Or., princ. praefatio 8 (TzF 24, 96,12f. Görgemanns/Karpp): *non se* [i.e. Christ] *habere tale corpus quale habent daemones (quod est naturaliter subtile quoddam et velut aura tenue [...])*.

period. The bodies of evil angels are especially heavy in accordance with the distance of their removal from God⁴². In his commentary on 1Sam 28,8-14, Origen does not object that the ghost raised by the witch of Endor and seen by Saul could not be a demon because of the evil spirits general invisibility, but argues that demons never tell the truth⁴³. After comparing these passages dealing with demonic presence, it does not seem likely that the teaching about demons in the *Letters of Antony* was simply borrowed from Origen.

A comparison of *Letter* 6,54 with the saying transmitted as the tenth *apophthegma* of St. Arsenius provides, in my opinion, a key for the understanding of the whole passage *Letter* 6,50-56. Cf. *Letter* 6,54:

For who has ever seen God so that he would rejoice with Him and keep Him and He would not leave him but help him as <one helps> somebody who dwells in this great heaviness?

and *Apophthegmata Patrum, Arsenius* 10⁴⁴:

Εἶπε πάλιν Ἐάν τὸν Θεὸν ζητήσωμεν, φανήσεται ἡμῖν· καὶ ἐάν αὐτὸν κατὰσχωμεν, ποραμενεί ἡμῖν.

He also said, "If we seek God, He will show Himself to us, and if we keep Him, He will abide with us."⁴⁵

It seems to me, that *Letter* 6,54 gives an answer to this saying or to a text very closely related to it⁴⁶. First, the author of the *Letters* denies the very

⁴² See about this issue an observation of Monaci Castagno, *La demonologia* (see note 40), 324 note 17, who argues that, according to the inner logic of Origen's system, the bodies of the evil angels should be more "corporeal" than the human bodies, because their primordial sin and, accordingly, their removal from God was more considerable. As Monaci Castagno states, Origen was hardly aware of this difficulty.

⁴³ See Or., hom. in I Reg. V 4 (SC 328, 182,30-37 Nautin): λέγει αὐτὴν ἑωρακεῖναι καὶ τὸ ἰμάτιον τὸ ἱερατικόν. Οἶδα δὲ ὅτι ἐναντίου ἐκ τοῦ λόγου λέγει· «Οὐ θαῦμα· αὐτὸς γὰρ ὁ σατανᾶς μετασχηματίζεται εἰς ἄγγελον φωτός. Οὐ μέγα οὖν, εἰ καὶ οἱ διάκονοι αὐτοῦ μετασχηματίζονται ὡς διάκονοι δικαιοσύνης.» Ἄλλὰ τί ἐστὶν ὅπερ «εἶδεν ἢ γυνή»; «Τὸν Σαμουήλ», καὶ διὰ τί οὐκ εἶρηται: Εἶδεν ἢ γυνὴ δαιμόνιον, ὃ προσποιεῖτο εἶναι Σαμουήλ; Or., hom. in I Reg. V 8 (200,15-18 N.): Πυθάνομαι δὲ ἐπροφήτευσαν τὰ ὑπερουράνια; Ἐγὼ δὲ οὐ δύναμαι διδοῖναι δαιμονίῳ τηλικαύτην δύναμιν ἵνα προφητεύῃ περὶ Σαοῦλ καὶ λαοῦ τοῦ Θεοῦ, καὶ προφητεύῃ περὶ βασιλείας Δαβὶδ ὅτι μέλλει βασιλεύειν.

⁴⁴ *Apophth. Patr., Arsenius* 10 (89C C.).

⁴⁵ English translation with some modifications according to Ward, *Sayings* (see note 12), 9.

⁴⁶ The chronology of St. Arsenius's life remains in many respects uncertain, see about it G. Garitte, *Une "Lettre de s. Arsène" en géorgien*, Muséon 68, 1955, 260 note 4. According to J. David, *Art. Arsène*, DHGE 4, Paris 1930, 746, St. Arsenius withdraw in the desert of Scetis "dans les dernières années du IV^e siècle"; L. Regnault, *Art. Arsenius of Scetis and Turah, saint*, in: *The Coptic Encyclopedia* 1, New York 1991, 240, thinks that "this must be placed around 390". Though we cannot be absolutely certain about the fact that St. Jerome in 392-393 read the same text of *Letter* 6 which is transmitted to us, the problem of the *apophthegma* possible postdating the *Letters* is to be taken seriously. If so, *Letter* 6,54 must have reacted against a very similar text the author of which is unknown. Against the possibility that the influence relations can be seen in the opposite way witnesses the polemical character of Anton., ep. 6,54.

possibility of seeing God, which is put forward in the saying⁴⁷. Then, he rejects that one can keep God, an idea also present and affirmed in the saying⁴⁸. Lastly, he proposes a reason for his polemic, pointing, in accordance with an old Platonic tradition, to the human body as an obstacle to a visual experience of spiritual realities and the Deity⁴⁹.

Letter 6,55 can also be seen in the same light. As a background for what the author has in mind, we can imagine a typical 4th century monastic story with a demon showing himself bodily to a monk in order to frighten him⁵⁰. The most obvious reason for the writer's polemicizing against this kind of beliefs is his anthropology, considering the human body as a product of the fall of the intellectual substance and of its subsequent coming in contact with matter⁵¹. The author of the *Letters* is consequently pessimistic about the body's ability to perceive God or spiritual beings, such as angels or demons.

Questioning visual experience of God and angels, the author of the *Letters* opposes a widespread spiritual tradition in early Christian Egypt⁵². The closest monastic parallel to his polemics is Evagrius of Pontus's teaching of "pure prayer", presupposing that the human mind has to be freed from mental images when praying. It is well known that, with this teaching, Evagrius reacted against practices and beliefs very similar to those criticized in *Letter 6,54*⁵³. To illustrate the importance of these questions, one needs only to recall that shortly after Evagrius's death in 399, two monastic groups began a vehement conflict known as the first Origenist Controversy, the main point at issue having been whether God has a hu-

man form and whether, therefore, he should be seen in prayer as having a corporeal shape⁵⁴.

To summarize these observations, I would like to say that the historical context in which the passage *Letter 6,50-56* seems understandable is that of the Egyptian monastic discussions about the mystical visions which led to the so-called first Origenist Controversy. Whether or not St. Antony could have participated in these discussions on the Origenist side is a complex question that needs more scholarly efforts than could be presented in this article. The conclusion that can be drawn from this treatment of the problem is that the "historical Antony" is not likely to have shared the views expressed in *Letter 6,55*, a statement that once again, should remind us that the problem of the authorship of the *Letters* is still far from being satisfactorily solved⁵⁵. As for the ninth saying of St. Antony partly transmitted also in *Letter 6,53*, we can not consider it as a decisive criterion for the Antonian authenticity of the whole passage because the possibility of this saying's direct dependence on *Letter 6* cannot be excluded⁵⁶.

Appendix 1

Letter 6,50-56 according to the three extant versions⁵⁷.

Anton., ep. 2,50-56 latin (= ep. 2,6f. in PG 40, 984B-C de Sarasio)	Anton., ep. 4,50-56 georgian (CSCO 148 = CSCO.I 5, 23,11-24,4 Gariitte)	Anton., ep. 6,50-56 arabic (35,3-13 Cairo 1899 ⁵⁸)
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(50)[6]Caeterum et si quaesieris, non inuenies peccatum eorum nec iniquitatem corporaliter manifestam.	(50) ოკოეთო ეძიებდუ, არა ჰპოო ცოდვად მათი და ორწოლოგობად განცხადებუოლად ⁵⁹ ჳორციელად, რამეთო არა არიან ჳორციელად სახედველ.	(50) الحطايا والافنام التي من الشياطين ليست ظاهرة ولا جسدياً لان ليس لهم اجساد حتى ينظروا (51) لكن نحن اجساد لهم ونفسنا قبل منهم افكار الظلمة وعند قبولها منهم فانهم يصيرونها ظاهرة في الجسد
(51) Corpus enim est animae recip-	(51) არამდე რაითა სცნათ რამეთო	

⁴⁷ Cf. φανήσεται ἡμῖν (Apophth. Patr., Arsenius 10 [89C C.]

⁴⁸ Cf. ἐν αὐτὸν κατὰσχωμεν, παραμενεῖ ἡμῖν (Apophth. Patr., Arsenius 10 [89C C.]

⁴⁹ Cf. e.g. Pl., Phd. 65b-c (SCBO, 65b,9-65c,9 Burnet).

⁵⁰ Cf. notes 28-30 above.

⁵¹ See e.g. Anton., ep. 7,11. About the protology of the *Letters* in general see A. Casiday, "All are from One". On St. Antony the Great's Protology, *StMon* 44, 2002, 207-227. Casiday seems, however, to underestimate the negation of the body and matter, at least as it is proclaimed in the last six *Letters*.

⁵² See about this tradition A. Guillaumont, *Les visions mystiques dans le monachisme oriental chrétien*, in: idem, *Aux origines du monachisme chrétien. Pour une phénoménologie du monachisme*, SpOr 30, Abbaye de Bellefontaine 1979, 136-147, and D. Bumazhnov, *Einige Aspekte der Nachwirkung des Ancoratus und des Panarion des hl. Epiphanius von Salamis in der früheren monastischen Tradition*, *Adamantius* 11, 2005, 158-178.

⁵³ Cf. e.g. G. Bunge, *Palladiana I. Introduction aux fragments coptes de l'Histoire Lausiaque*, *StMon* 32, 1990, 108, who mentions "la polemique (à peine voilée) du traité De Oratione d'Évagre contre une conception matérialiste de la 'vision de Dieu', à laquelle avaient succombé des moines 'anthropomorphistes' de Scété". Cf. also A. Guillaumont, *Les "Képhalaia gnostica" d'Évagre le Pontique et l'histoire de l'Origenisme chez les grecs et chez les syriens*, *PatSor* 5, Paris 1962, 61. It must be noted, however, that Evagrius clearly formulated his belief in the evil angels's ability to become visible in a human-like form, cf. e.g. *Evagr. Pont., Kephalaia gnostica* 1,22 (PO 28, 25,11-27,3 Guillaumont). The position of the author of the *Letters* is, then, in this respect, more critical than that of Evagrius.

⁵⁴ About the so-called first Origenist Controversy in Egypt, cf. D. Bumazhnov, *Der Mensch als Gottes Bild im christlichen Ägypten. Studien zu Gen 1,26 in zwei koptischen Quellen des 4.-5. Jahrhunderts*, *Studien und Texte zu Antike und Christentum* 34, Tübingen 2006, 1-21; a bibliography of the question is to be found in idem, *Mensch* (see note 54), 1 notes 1f.

⁵⁵ For a view quite opposite to the ones expressed in the present article, cf. e.g. I. Perczel, *Mankind's Common Intellectual Substance. A Study in the Letters of Saint Antony and his Life by Saint Athanasius*, in: B. Nagy/M. Sebök (eds.), *The Man of Many Devices, who Wandered Full Many Ways ... Festschrift in honor of J.M. Bak*, Budapest 1999, 197-213, who argues that several passages of the *Vita* depend on the *Letter 7*.

⁵⁶ See in connection with this last question Appendix 2 in the present article.

⁵⁷ The respective editions are cited in full in notes 3f.

⁵⁸ See note 4.

⁵⁹ According to *Lettres de S. Antoine* (see note 3), 23 note 29, to be read as განცხადებუოლად.

iens malignitatem eorum: quam cum susceperit, tunc si velit, in propatulo punit per corpus istud in quo sumus inhabitantes. (52) Nunc itaque, filioli, non demus ei locum ullum, alioquin nobismet Dei excitabimus iram, (53) et illi permiscetur in domibus nostris irridentes nos; quoniam hoc noverunt quod perditionis est nostrae, quae tamen et ipsa de proximo consistit, sicuti et vita de prope. (54) Quis enim unquam Deum aspexit ut videns congauderet ei de re tanta apud semetipsum, ne forte aufugeret eum, sed ut adiudicaret⁶⁰ etiam velut habitanti in hoc pondere tanto? (55) aut quis aliquando aspexit diabolium oppugnantem nos, et prohibentem beneficia adipisci, adversantem nobis et stantem in loco corporali secreto, ut praevidens fugeret ab ipso? Sed illi quidem habitant in occulto, nos autem propalamus eos per studia meliora. (56)[7] Quoniam igitur ex uno Creatore sunt omnes secundum sensualem exstantiam eorum, in fugiendo vero eos a Deo, et multa diversitas est in illis effecta ob diversas operationes ipsorum.

ჩვენ ვართ მათა კორცებ, და სოლო ჩონი შეიწყნარებს მათსა მას ოკოთორებასა, რამეთო რაჲმას შეიწყნარნეს იგინი, მაშინ განცხადებოლად მოიყვანის იგინი კორციითა მით რომელსა შინა ესე მყოფ ვართ. (52) სოლო აწ, შეიღწო, ნომცა ვსცემო მათ ადგილსა; ოკოეთო არა, რისხვად ღმრთისად აღვადგინოთ თავთა⁶¹ ჩონეთა ზედა, (53) და იგინი წარვიდენ სახიდ თოისა და მეციცხვედენ ჩონენ, რამეთო ესე იციან რამეთო წარწყმედაი ჩონენი მოყოსისა გან არს და კოადად ცხორებამ ჩონენი მოყოსისა გან. (54) ვინ სადა ღმერთი იხილა, და იხარებდეს მის თანა, და დაიყენოს იგი თავისა თოისა თანა, რამთა არა ევლტოდის მას, არამედ შეეწოდეს მას ყოფანა⁶² მას მისსა ესოდენსა შინა სიმძიმესა? (55) ანო ვინ სადა ეშმაკი იხილა ბრძოლასა მას მისსა ჩონენდა მომართ, და მყენებენ რამ ჩონენ კეთილსყოფად და მაკდებინ ჩონენ, და დგანდა იგი ადგილსა კორციელსა, რამთა მისა გოეშობოდის და ეივლტოდით მის გან; რამეთო იგინი არიან ფაროლად, და ჩონენ გემოვაცხადებთ მათ საქმეთა გან. (56) რამეთო ერთისა გან არიან იგი ყოველნი ცნობილებისა მის გან არსებისა; და სივლტოდისა მის გან მათისა ღმრთისა გან მრავალი თითოფერება იქმნა ამათ შოვრის თითოსახისა მის თოის საქმისა მათისა.

(52) فأحرصوا أولادي ان لا تجعلوا لهم فيكم موضعاً لنلا يأتي غضب الرب علينا
(53) فيفرحون ويستهزون بنا وينصرفون عنا فلا تطرحوا عنكم كلامي فانهم يعلمون ان حيرتنا هي من بعضنا بعض
(54) ان هو الذي رأى احد منذ قط فمسكه لئلا يبعده وينفر به ويخلصه من مضادة هذا الجسد الثقيل
(55) او رأى الشيطان جسدياً واقفاً قبالة فيهرب منه بل ان الشياطين كائنون في الخفاء ونحن نظهرهم باعمانا
(56) رجميعهم جوهر واحد عقلي

wickedness), then it punishes it has received them (i.e. the and our soul receives from <them> (i.e. the demons), if demons), then it brings them them the thoughts of darkness. it wishes, openly through this here revealing <them> through And in the process of <our> body, in which we dwell. (52) the body in which we dwell. receiving of the <thoughts of So, therefore, my children, let (52) Now, then, children, let darkness> from them, they us not give it any place, lest us not give them any place, (i.e. the demons) make them we stir up the wrath of God otherwise we shall stir up the (i.e. the thoughts) manifest against ourselves (53) and they wrath of God against us. (53) <our> body. (52) Therefore, laughing at us, since they know in?> their home and laugh at you may not provide them any what serves our destruction us, since they know that our place inside you lest the wrath which itself comes from our destruction is of <our> neigh- of the Lord shall come upon us neighbour, just as our life is bour, and likewise our life is (53) whereas they will be joyful from the neighbour⁶³. (54) For of <our> neighbour. (54) For, and will laugh at us and retire who has ever seen God, so that who has ever seen God and from us. Now, not reject my seeing <Him> he would rejoice will rejoice with Him and keep words. For they know that we in himself together with Him Him with himself, so that He have our life from each other. about such a great thing, <and him <as one helps somebody (54) Who has ever seen God so that> He would not leave but so that he could keep Him and help (?) him when he dwells in who> dwells <in> his heaviness He would not leave him and this heavy weight? (55) Or, who has ever seen a demon <in> his he would rejoice with Him and against us and preventing us fighting <against> us here and He would deliver him from refractoriness of this heavy from doing good as he opposes preventing us from doing good body? (55) Or, <who> has seen us and stands in a secret cor- and opposing us and stand- the devil standing in front of poreal place, so that he would ing <in some> bodily <perceiv- him bodily so that he should see him on time and flee from able> place, so that he would flee from him? But the demons flee from him? For they are hidden, and we reveal them by our deeds. (56) And they all are one intellectual essence.

A tentative translation on the basis of all three versions

(50) If you seek, you will not find their sin and iniquities revealed bodily, for they are not visible bodily. (51) But their bodies are we, and our soul receives their wickedness. And in receiving them, it reveals them through the body in which we dwell. (52) Now, then, children, let us not give them any place, otherwise we shall stir up the wrath of God against us, (53) and they will mix themselves with our houses and laugh at us, since they know that our destruction is of our neighbour and also our life is of our neighbour. (54) For who has ever seen God so that he would rejoice with Him and keep Him and He would not leave him but help him as <one helps> somebody who dwells in this great heaviness? (55) Or who has ever seen a demon fighting against us and preventing us from doing good and opposing us standing in some bodily <perceivable> place so that he would frighten him and he would flee from him? For they are hidden and we reveal them through our deeds. (56) For they are all from one intellectual essence, but through their flight from God, great diversity has arisen between them because of their varying deeds.

⁶³ Literal: from near. Probably *prope* is a literal translation of πέλας.

The English translation of the versions

Anton., ep. 2,50-56 latin (= ep. 2,6f. Anton., ep. 4,50-56 georgian (CSCO Anton., ep. 6,50-56 arabic (35,3-13 in PG 40, 984B-C de Sarasio) 148 = CSCO.I 5, 23,11-24,4 Garitte) Cairo 1899)

(50)[6] For the rest, even if you will seek, you will not find their sins nor their iniquities revealed bodily. (51) For it is the body of the soul which receives their wickedness. When <the body of the soul> receives it (i.e. the

(50) If you will seek, you will not find their sin and iniquities revealed bodily, for they are not visible bodily. (51) But you should know that we are their bodies and our soul receives their wickedness; for when

(50) For the sins and misdeeds which <come> from the demons are not manifest and not bodily because they (i.e. the demons) don't have bodies so that they could be seen, (51) but we are bodies for them

⁶⁰ Possibly to read: *adiuaret*. We owe this observation to Dr. I. Perczel.
⁶¹ So without comments in Garitte's edition (Lettres de S. Antoine [see note 3]); to be read as თავთა.
⁶² Probably to be understood as მყოფასა.

Cf. to *Letter 6,53 Apophthegmata Patrum, Antonius 9*:

Εἶπε πάλιν, ὅτι ἐκ τοῦ πλησίον ἐστὶν ἡ ζωὴ καὶ ὁ θάνατος. Ἐὰν γὰρ κερδήσωμεν τὸν ἀδελφόν, τὸν Θεὸν κερδαίνομεν· ἐὰν δὲ σκανδαλίσωμεν τὸν ἀδελφόν, εἰς Χριστὸν ἁμαρτάνομεν.

He also said, "Our life and our death is with our neighbour. If we gain our brother, we have gained God, but if we scandalize our brother, we have sinned against Christ."

Cf. to *Letter 6,54 Apophthegmata Patrum, Arsenius 10*:

Εἶπε πάλιν· Ἐὰν τὸν Θεὸν ζητήσωμεν, φανήσεται ἡμῖν, καὶ ἐὰν αὐτὸν κατὰσχῶμεν, παραμενεῖ ἡμῖν.

He also said, "If we seek God, He will show Himself to us, and if we keep Him, He will abide with us."

Appendix 2

When comparing Antony's Greek *apophthegma* 9 with *Letter 6,53*, Rubenson observes that "neither the saying nor the letter can be said to be directly dependent on the other; the similarities must go back to a common origin in Antony's own teaching"⁶⁴. The way of Rubenson's citing both witnesses show that he focuses his comparison only on the last part of *Letter 6,53* "our destruction is of our neighbour and also our life is of our neighbour" with which he contrasts the whole *apophthegma* 9. However, as it can be easily shown, the second part of the saying and of *Letter 6,54f.* have quite the same function; namely, they are related as comments to the words "life" and "death", both in *Letter 6,53* and in the first part of the saying respectively. Therefore, the text of *Letter 6* that should be compared with the saying extends to the end of *Letter 6,55*. This poses the question about the mutual dependence of the saying and the *Letter* once again.

The following analysis is designed to identify firstly the exact meaning of *Letter 6,54f.* in their relation to *Letter 6,53* in order to compare this relation subsequently with the one we find in the saying. Finally some considerations about the mutual dependence of the two texts will be presented.

Our starting observation is that the connection between *Letter 6,53* and *6,54* is made with reference to 1John 4,20 in mind; as in the biblical passage, the practical criterion of the true Christian life is seen not in the relation to the invisible God, but rather to one's neighbour. Almost the same idea is repeated in 1John 4,12: no man has ever seen God; His presence, however, is granted if we love each other. Life and death as consequences

⁶⁴ Rubenson, *Letters* (see note 3), 162.

of our relationship to other people are put forward in 1John 3,14: ἡμεῖς οἶδαμεν ὅτι μεταβεβήκαμεν ἐκ τοῦ θανάτου εἰς τὴν ζωὴν, ὅτι ἀγαπῶμεν τοὺς ἀδελφούς· ὁ μὴ ἀγαπῶν μένει ἐν τῷ θανάτῳ.

Against the background of other borrowings from 1John in *Letter 6,53f.*, it seems almost obvious that the words of 1John 3,14 were the biblical reference for the passage in *Letter 6,53*, "our destruction is of our neighbour and also our life is of our neighbour". Using the ideas from 1John 4, the verses 6,54f. illustrate this thesis, stating that our life in no way depends directly upon Divine appearances (*Letter 6,54*), and denying that our death may be brought about by visible manifestations of the demonic power (*Letter 6,55*); everything stands and falls with our relationship to the people around us. Given that in *Letter 6,54* we most likely are dealing with polemics against the 10th *apophthegma* of St. Arsenius, which insists upon the possibility of a visual experience of the Deity⁶⁵, the recourse to 1John 4,12,20, where the opposite is stated, should be recognized as an appeal to the authority of the Holy Scriptures in this polemic.

The second part of the ninth saying of St. Antony serves as an explanation of life and death in its first part in the same way that *Letter 6,54f.* is connected to life and death in *Letter 6,53*. However, in this explanation, we find no connection to 1John 3f. and, accordingly, no polemics. The scriptural basis for the second part of the saying is instead "gaining the brother" from Matt 18,15. The word "brother" – though used both in 1John 3,14f. and in 1John 4,20 – signifies a certain shift in the *apophthegma*'s terminology, because the overlapping parts of the saying and *Letter 6,53* concern one's "neighbour".

This terminological shift and the lack of any connection to 1John 3f. in the second part of the ninth saying of St. Antony – a connection which is fundamental for *Letter 6,53f.* – pose the question about possibly different origins for the first and second parts of the saying. The consequence of these observations for the study of the *Letters* is the following. The material, that *apophthegma 9* and *Letter 6* have in common, is the last part of *Letter 6,53* "our destruction is of our neighbour and also our life is of our neighbour" and the first part of the saying "our life and our death is with our neighbour", and it is only with regard to these parts that we can speculate about codependence between the *Letter* and the saying, or about a common source. In this last complex of questions, all possibilities remain open⁶⁶.

⁶⁵ This problem is dealt with above.

⁶⁶ The case of Anton., ep. 1,35-41, transmitted with minimal differences also as *Apophth. Patr.*, Antonius 22, shows that a considerable portion of the *Letters* tradition could be adapted for the collection of *apophthegmata*. The case with the *apophthegma 9* is certainly more complicated, but a direct dependence of the *apophthegma* on the *Letter* can, in my opinion, not be a priori excluded.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Das durch die *Vita Antonii* und eine beträchtliche Anzahl altkirchlicher Zeugnisse überlieferte Bild Antonius' des Großen zeigt ihn als Dämonenkämpfer und Exorzisten, der – wie auch die überwiegende Mehrheit paganer und christlicher Autoren seiner Zeit – von der Fähigkeit der Dämonen, nach Belieben erscheinen zu können, überzeugt sein mußte. Dieser Zug, dem eine historische Plausibilität nicht abgesprochen werden kann, steht im krassen Gegensatz zu der ebenfalls dem Antonius zugeschriebenen *Epistula* 6,55, wo die Erscheinungsfähigkeit von Dämonen in einem polemisch aufgeladenen Kontext in Abrede gestellt wird. Während die Polemik gegen die Möglichkeit der Sichtbarkeit Gottes wie der Dämonen in *Epistula* 6,50-56 auf einen historischen Zusammenhang mit dem ersten origenistischen Streit in Ägypten schließen läßt, wird durch die Diskrepanz zwischen *Epistula* 6,55 und dem Rest der Antoniustradition der weitgehend etablierte Konsens hinsichtlich der Echtheit der sog. Antoniusbriefe problematisiert.