

THE EVERGETINOS

A Complete Text

Volume I of The First Book



Translated and Edited by
**Bishop Chrysostomos,
Hieromonk Auxentios,
John V. Petropoulos,
Gregory Telepneff,
and
Hieromonk Ambrosios**

**CENTER FOR TRADITIONALIST
ORTHODOX STUDIES**

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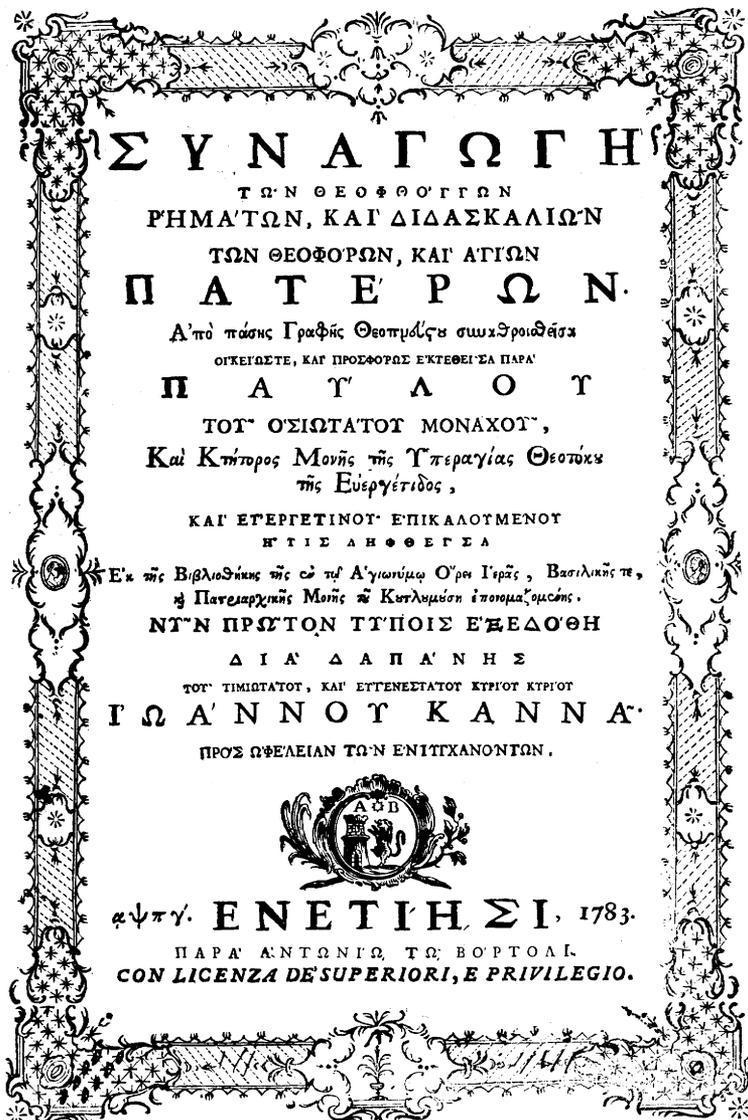
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A NOTE ON THE TEXT AND TRANSLATION

In our English translation of the *Εὐεργετινός*, we have used the 1977 edition of Archimandrite Matthew Langes' four-volume Greek text. This text has long been used by Greek readers and scholars, and is particularly helpful since it contains not only St. Nicodemos' edited version of the original eleventh-century manuscript of the *Εὐεργετινός*, but a careful rendering of these collected writings from and about the Desert Fathers into the modern Greek dialect. Indeed, we have worked with both the older and modern Greek texts. In some instances, loyalty to the older text has made the English translation clearer, since the modern Greek text often employs contemporary idioms, in expressing the complex Greek of the original text, that have no counterpart in English. In other places, the modern Greek text, which sometimes uses explanatory phrases to expand on the laconic original, has provided a better model for a clear English translation. Decisions in this regard have been the prerogative of the various translators, resulting in a text which nonetheless expresses a certain editorial consistency.

The reader will note, too, that we have followed loyally the often idiosyncratic system by which passages are labeled in the Greek text of the *Εὐεργετινός*—a weakness with which he will simply have to deal. We have also avoided editorial addenda and any scholarly treatment of the manuscript tradition of the *Εὐεργετινός*. Our purpose in this translation is to provide a readable text of the standard collection of the sayings and aphorisms of the Desert Fathers as they are available today to the average Greek reader. Those seeking scholarly apparatus or material for a pedantic exercise in philological criticism would do well to look elsewhere. What we have done here addresses the priorities of the soul, not the vagaries of academic whim and desires for scholarly recognition. Of what profit, indeed, a satisfied mind, but an empty heart?



Frontispiece of the first edition of the *Evergetinos*, Venice, 1783

Hypothesis II

As long as we are in the present life, we must do good here and not delay until the future. For after death we cannot set things aright.

A. From the *Gerontikon*

A brother asked Abba Poimen:

“Abba,” he told him, “there were two brothers; one a monk, the other a layman. One night, the monk decided to abandon the monastic vocation the next morning. The same day, the layman had decided to become a monk.

In the meantime, they both died that same night, without being able to realize their intentions. How, then, will they be judged?” And the Elder gave this astonishing answer:

“Elementary! The monk died as a monk and the layman as a layman; for whatever their state at the moment of death, so they departed this world.”

2. An Elder said: “One voice should constantly ring in the ears of man: ‘Today I may be called home.’”

3. Yet another Elder said: “This generation says not ‘today,’ but ‘tomorrow’ [that is, this generation puts off until tomorrow the works of repentance].”

4. It is said of one Elder that, when his thoughts whispered to him, “Forget today and repent tomorrow,” he would snap back and say: “No, I will repent today and leave tomorrow to the Will of God.”

5. Another Elder said: "Any evil which is not brought to fruition should not be thought of as an evil deed; but likewise, anything righteous, if not transformed into virtuous acts, must not be so considered."

B. From St. Ephraim

Brothers and sisters, the period of time which we have at our disposal for repentance is our life on earth. Indeed, happy and blissful is he who has never once fallen into the nets of the Enemy. If, however, someone who was entangled in the nets of the Enemy has been able to break those nets and escape from the captivity of the Devil, he too should consider himself blessed; for, though we live in the flesh, in this way we are saved from the onslaught of the enemy of our souls, just as a fish escapes from the nets of the fisherman. Because, as we know, if a fish is caught and succeeds in breaking the net and dashing to the depths, he is saved as long as he is in water; but when he is dragged up in the net by the fisherman to dry land, then he can no longer help himself.

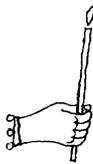
The exact same thing happens to us: that is, as long as we live in the present life, we have received from God the authority and power to break the bonds of the evil intentions of the enemy by ourselves and to cast aside, through repentance, the burden of our sins, being most assuredly brought to salvation and inheriting the Kingdom of God. However, if the fearful command of death falls upon us and the soul leaves the body, and the body is placed deep in the tomb, then we are no longer able to help ourselves, just as the fish, when it is taken out of water, after being caught by the fisherman and safely placed in his fishing basket, cannot in

any way be saved.

2. Brother, do not say to yourself that 'today I will commit a sin and tomorrow I will repent,' for you cannot be sure about the next day; concern for the morrow belongs only to God.

C. From Abba Isaac

He who commits a sin a second time in the expectation of repenting of it later—such a one goes before God with the burden of guile; to this kind of trickster, death comes completely unexpectedly, at an unknown moment or hour, and he does not succeed in reaching that day when he had hoped to repent.



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THE EVERGETINOS: A COMPLETE TEXT
Volume I of The First Book

One of the classic collections of Orthodox spiritual writings, the *Evergetinos* is a source of inspiration, spiritual guidance, and insight into the lives of men and women who, during the first few centuries of Christianity, attained to the highest ideals of the spiritual life. In the spiritual laboratory of the Egyptian deserts, these seekers after salvation, enlightenment, and union with Christ brought into sharp focus the teachings of the Apostles and the message of Holy Writ in their daily lives and activities. The stern, the loving, “fools for Christ”—all of the exemplars of Christian sainthood, the many inhabitants of the many mansions above, are to be found in the rich and profitable lives portrayed in this collection. Also to be found are perfect models for every modern Christian who wishes sincerely to imitate those who have walked the path towards moral and spiritual perfection.

This is the first volume of Book One of the *Evergetinos* and the first of many forthcoming volumes in what will eventually constitute the only English-language text of the complete collection.