

The Significance of “Repose” in the *Apophthegmata Patrum*

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WHAT MOTIVATED so many people to renounce “the world” and to embrace “the desert” in the mid-fourth century that, before he died in 373, Athanasius could write: “The desert became a *city of monks* who, having abandoned their own, reproduced the heavenly way of life”?¹ Peter asked Jesus: “What is there in it for us?”² We might well ask: what was there in it for those first monks? Judging from the frequency with which the question “What am I to do to be saved?” is asked in the *Apophthegmata Patrum* one might think that they went out into the desert to ensure their own salvation, and, in a sense, they did. But, as a former study³ of this matter concluded, “What am I to do to be saved?” usually meant something like: “How can I be preserved within the monastic order,” or: “How am I to resist the temptations and pressure to return to the world?” The *post mortem* aspect of salvation is not absent, but it is considerably less prominent than the immediate situation in which one struggles to maintain the monastic way of life (it being assumed of course that *this* is the way to *that*). This present study is motivated by the

¹ *Vita Antonii* 14.7 (ed. Bartelink [SC 400] 174), cf. 8.2, 41.4 (“and now the desert is filled with monks”), 44.2–4, and Pallad. *HL* 48.1 (οὐτω τὸ ὄρος ἐπόλισε). Cf. *Historia monachorum in Aegypto* prol. 10 (ed. Festugière p.8.61–63), “I saw another boundless cohort of monks which no man could number, persons of all ages in the wilderness and the countryside...”

² Mt 19:27, τί ἄρα ἔσται ἡμῶν;

³ John Wortley, “What the Desert Fathers Meant by ‘being saved,’” *ZAC* 12 (2008) 322–343.

observation that "repose" words, the noun *ἀνάπαυσις* and the verb *ἀναπαύω*, occur rather more frequently in apophthegmatic literature than one might expect. Does this indicate that those who renounced "the world" did so in the hope of experiencing some kind of repose in the desert?

The Scriptures may have given aspirants reason to expect that they would find repose in responding to the Dominical command to "Leave all and follow me" (Mtt 19:21) that had inspired Antony to take the desert road. There is the admonition of the Psalmist: "Turn again unto your repose (*εἰς τὴν ἀνάπαυσίν σου*) O my soul, for the Lord has dealt bountifully with you" and the assurance: "To the waters of repose he leads me."⁴ More to the point, Jesus says to his disciples: "Come apart in a desert place and repose yourselves a little" (*εἰς ἔρημον τόπον καὶ ἀναπαύσασθε ὀλίγον*) while to the world at large He says: "Come unto me all who travail and are heavy laden and I will give you repose" (*κἀγὼ ἀναπαύσω ὑμᾶς*).⁵ Hence it is small wonder that the word "repose" occurs with some frequency in the lore of those who had indeed "come apart into a desert place." The word is not however employed with any consistency of meaning in the *apophthegmata* but rather with some ambivalence, even *polyvalence*;⁶ four major groups of meanings can be distinguished:

⁴ Ps 114:7 and 22:2; 23:2, *ἐπὶ ὕδατος ἀναπαύσεως ἐξέθρεψέ με* ("He leadeth me beside the still waters," AV).

⁵ Mk 6:31, Mtt 11:28. Abba Isaiah of Scete presents a new beatitude: "Blessed are they whose labors were executed with understanding (*ἐν γνώσει*) for they reposed themselves from every burden..." (*APys* 7.7, *ἀνέπαυσαν γὰρ ἑαυτοὺς ἀπὸ παντὸς βάρους*). As explained in *GRBS* 42 (2001) 290 n.5 and more fully in 46 (2006) 327–328, references to the *Apophthegmata* are in the form of: name, number and ref. to *PG* 65 for *APalph*; by the letter N + number to *APanon* (forthcoming, ed. J. Wortley, CUP); by chapter and item (XX.YY) to Guy's edition of *APys*.

⁶ For the full range of meanings see G. W. Lampe, *A Patristic Greek Lexicon* (Oxford 1961) s.vv. *ἀνάπαυσις*, *ἀναπαύω*.

1. Physical ease, comfort and relaxation

“You see this Abba Arsenius?” the priest of Scete said to a simple Egyptian monk; “He was the father of emperors when he was in the world; thousands of slaves wearing golden insignia stood around him and there were valuable carpets beneath him...” Such was “the glory and repose of this world” (*τὴν δόξαν καὶ τὴν ἀνάπαυσιν τοῦ κόσμου τούτου*, Cronios 5, 249BC), but the priest gets the Egyptian peasant to admit that, now he is a monk and no longer a shepherd, he knows a degree of repose (*μᾶλλον ἀναπαύομαι*). The priest tells him: “Here you are experiencing repose (*ἀναπαύη*) while [Arsenius] is afflicted.” “So *he* came to lowliness, I to repose” (*ἀνάπαυσιν*), comes the reply (Arsenius 36 101CD; cf. The Roman 1, 385C–389A, 10.110) The peasant monk’s life was of course only “repose” in comparison to the brutal conditions he had known previously; real physical comfort of any kind was considered to be a highly unwelcome luxury that those living in the desert were to avoid:

There was an imperial officer who had done many dreadful things and had defiled his body in every kind of way. Pricked in his conscience by God, he went off and renounced the world. He built himself a cell in a desert place down in a wadi, he took up residence there, taking thought for his own soul (*φροντίζων τῆς ἰδίας ψυχῆς*). When some of his acquaintances learnt of this, they started sending him bread, dates, and things he needed. When he realized that he was living in repose and that he lacked nothing, he said to himself: “We are accomplishing nothing; this repose is casting us out of the repose that is to come (*ἢ ἀνάπαυσις αὐτῆ τῆς ἐκεῖθεν ἀναπαύσεως ἐκβάλλει ἡμᾶς*), for I am unworthy of it.” He abandoned his cell and went away, saying: “Soul, let us go to affliction [here] so we do not fall into affliction there. Grass and the food of beasts are suitable for me, for I have lived and acted like the beasts” (15.131, somewhat expanded version N 528).

The departure of this *ταξεώτης* may well have been motivated by a saying of Antony the Great: “Let us hate all physical repose (*πᾶσαν σαρκικὴν ἀνάπαυσιν*) so that our soul can be saved” (Antony 33, 3.1)—a sentiment that is often repeated.

Abba Isaiah of Scete⁷ said: “Hate everything in the world and repose of the body, for these made you an enemy of God. As a man who has an enemy fights with him, so we ought also to fight against the body to allow it no repose” (εἰς τὸ μὴ ἀναπαύσαι αὐτό, 1.10). Abba Poemen said: “If a monk hates two things, he can become free of the world.” “What are they?” said the brother to him and the elder said: “Repose of the flesh (τὴν σαρκικὴν ἀνάπαυσιν) and vain glory” (Poemen 66, 337B, 1.24). He also said: “All bodily repose (*omnis corporalis quies*) is an abomination to the Lord” (4.34 *bis*); “Bodily repose chases the fear of God away from the soul and destroys all its good labour” (Poemen 57, 336AB, 4.39), and “The will, repose, and being accustomed to them cast a man down” (Poemen 83, 341C). He is also reputed to have said: “If we pursue repose, the grace of God flees from us” (not in *APalph*; 10.80), a principle neatly restated by two anonymous elders: “As long as you act taking repose, you cannot give repose to God” (ἕως οὗ ποιεῖς μετὰ ἀναπαύσεως οὐ δύνασαι τὸν Θεὸν ἀναπαύσαι, 21.49). “To the extent that we desire human company and repose of the body we cannot delight in (ἀπολαύσαι) the sweetness of God” (N 464, 2.34). Similar statements occur elsewhere, leaving no doubt concerning monastic antipathy to physical repose. The reason for it is not hard to find:

Once when the holy Abba Antony was residing in the desert he was overcome by *accidie* and a great darkening of *logismoi* and he said to God: “Lord, I want to be saved and *logismoi* will not leave me alone. What am I to do in my affliction? How can I be saved?” Going outside [his cell] a little way, Antony saw somebody sitting working like himself, then standing up from the work and praying; sitting down again, working at rope-braiding, then standing to pray once more. It was an angel of the Lord

⁷ Isaiah of Scete (d. Gaza 488) composed an *Asceticon* that achieved great fame in the later fifth century; portions of it were inserted in the second and (*a fortiori*) the third identifiable edition of *APSys*: Jean-Claude Guy, *Recherches sur la tradition grecque des Apophthegmata Patrum* (Brussels 1962, rpt. 1984 with corrections, 183).

sent to correct Antony and to assure him. And he heard the angel saying: “Act like this and you shall be saved.” He experienced much joy and courage on hearing this and acting like that he was being/began to be/went on being saved (*καὶ οὕτως ποιῶν ἐσώζετο*, Antony 1, 76AB, 7.1).

One who was enjoying physical repose was neither working nor praying, which meant he was not being saved; hence he was in danger of falling apart and being lost. The proverb is universal: “The devil finds things for idle hands to do.” The good monk is unrelenting and hard-working (*φιλόπρονος*), *working* out his own salvation.

It should perhaps be noted in passing that, while there was a tendency to reduce the hours of sleep to a minimum (see Arsenius 14 and 15, 92A; 4.2 and 3) and some rare attempts to eradicate it altogether, e.g. “Forty nights I remained standing among thorns without sleeping (Bessarion 6, 141B; 7.4), nowhere is the sleep the human constitution demands condemned as a luxury. There was a time for sleep: brothers are said to have told Abba Isidore, “Repose yourself a little for you have now grown old” (Isidore 5, 220D–221A), and Abba Poemen once said with unwonted kindness, “If I see a brother dozing off [during worship] I place his head on my knees and give him repose.” Some brothers visiting Abba Poemen recounted how “he said to us: ‘Go and repose yourselves a little, brothers,’ so the brothers went for a little repose” (Poemen 92, 344C; 138, 356D).

2. Hospitality, entertainment (Lampe, A2, “give rest, calm, relieve,” and A3, “refresh, strengthen, restore”)

Care of the sick is sometimes identified as “giving repose”: “One of the elders came to Abba Lot at the small marsh of Arsinoe and asked him for a cell—which he accorded him. The elder was sick and Abba Lot tended him” (*ἀνέπαυσεν αὐτόν*, Lot 1, 253D). Abba Arsenius said to Abba Daniel: “Look after (*ἀνάπαυσον*) your father so he can go to the Lord” (Arsenius 35, 1001C; 11.6). But a much more common use has to do with the entertainment of guests and providing refreshment. Thus Abba Macarius the Great was once given wine “by way of

refreshment” (χάριν ἀναπαύσεως, Macarius 10, 268AB, 4.29). Occasionally it may mean no more than receiving a casual visitor: e.g., “From then on the brothers began inviting him and entertaining (καὶ ἀνέπανον) him in their own cells” (N 192, 7.29, at the end), but usually food and drink are involved, often sleep too. Thus, “if you find yourself in unfamiliar territory and nobody invites you home, do not distress yourself, but say: ‘If I were worthy, God would provide repose for me’” (εἰ ἤμην ἄξιος, ὁ Θεὸς ἐποίει μοι ἀνάπανσιν, N 592/55). When Abba Arsenius was told there were people wanting to see him, he said to Abba Alexander: “Receive them as guests (ἀνάπανσον αὐτούς) and send them on their way in peace” (Arsenius 26, 96B).

Hospitality was of course a grave obligation for monks because it provided an opportunity (rare indeed for solitaries) to give practical expression to the commandment “Love thy neighbour as thyself” (Mk 12:31, Lev 19:18) and to heed the Christ who says “I was a stranger and you took me in” (Mtt 25:35).⁸ So grave was the obligation that it could override the individual’s rule of life: “A brother was visiting an elder. As he was leaving, he said to him: ‘Forgive me, abba, for I have diverted you from observing your rule’; but in response [the elder] said to him: ‘My rule is to repose you (ἵνα ἀναπαύσω σε) and to send you on your way in peace’” (N 283, 13.8). “Two brothers once came visiting an elder; it was not the custom of the elder to eat every day. When he saw the brothers he rejoiced and said: ‘Fasting has its reward, but he who eats again out of love is observing two commandments: he sets aside his own will and fulfils the law in entertaining (ἀναπαύσας) the brothers’” (N 288, 13.11). “Coming out of a coenobion, some brothers went visiting in the desert and there they encountered an anchorite. He received them with gladness and, as is the custom among hermits (ὡς ἔθος ἐστὶν τοῖς ἐρημίταις), set a table before them there and then, perceiving that they were

⁸ J. Wortley, “Hospitality and the Desert Fathers,” in *The Levant – Crossroads of Late Antiquity* (Leiden, forthcoming).

very weary. He put before them whatever there was in this cell and entertained them” (*ἀνέπαυσεν αὐτούς*, N 229, 10.150).⁹ The guest however did not necessarily avail himself of the same dispensation: “They used to say of an elder that he lived in Syria by the road leading to the desert and this was his occupation. No matter what time of day a monk came out of the desert, he would give him refreshment (*ἐποίει αὐτῷ ἀνάπαυσιν*) with all his heart. One day there came an anchorite and the elder ran to him, inviting him to take refreshment, but he did not want to eat, for he said: ‘I am keeping a fast and cannot break it yet’” (N 285, 13.10).

One of the most attractive of the *apophthegmata* tells how when even a Manichean priest came to his door, “[a certain] elder opened up, saw him, recognised him and received him joyfully. He obliged him to eat and, when he had refreshed him (*ἀναπαύσας*), to sleep” (N 289, 13.12). A very early saying expressly links the practice of hospitality and the giving of “repose”: when Macarius the Great visited Antony the Great at the mountain, Antony—after some delay—“received him as a guest and entertained him” (*φιλοξενήσας αὐτὸν ἀνέπαυσεν*, Macarius 4, 264CD, 7.14).¹⁰ It would be misleading to suppose that the source of hospitality was exclusively monastic: “Some brothers once visited Abba Macarius at Scete and they found nothing in his cell but some stale water. They said to him: ‘Come up to the village, abba, and we will entertain you’” (*ἀναπαύομέν σε*, Macarius the Great 30, 273BC). There is also the delightful story of the elder who was received as his guest by a pious greengrocer in the city: “‘Brother, could you put me up in your cell tonight?’ Full of joy, the man received him as his guest. So off he went into the cell and, as the man was making preparations for the need and entertainment of the

⁹ This is just the beginning of *BHG* 1438k, *de coenobitis et anachoretis*, continued below.

¹⁰ Palladius uses a similar phrase: *ἀναπαύσαντες ἡμᾶς καὶ ξενοδοκία καὶ ἐφοδίοις δαιμλεστάτοις* (*HL* 61.7).

elder...” (τὰ πρὸς τὴν χρείαν καὶ ἀνάπαυσιν τοῦ γέροντος, N 67, 20.22; *BHG* 1438i *De lachanopola*). Elsewhere a person “invited the poor and entertained them” (καὶ ἐνέπαυσεν αὐτούς, 13.14 line 21, N 286).¹¹

Freely though hospitality was apparently practiced throughout the monastic community, it is unthinkable that one would have joined the community of monks in order to enjoy that kind of “repose.” The continuation of the story of the brothers from a coenobion (above) who visited a hermit shows what fate awaited a guest who was in less than good faith:

When evening fell [host and guests] recited the twelve psalms and the same during the night. While the elder was keeping watch alone, he heard them saying to each other: “The anchorites in the desert have a more restful life (ἀναπαύονται πλεον ἡμῶν) than we in the coenobia do.” In the morning, as they were about to go [visiting] his neighbor, the elder said to them: “Greet him on my behalf and tell him *not to water the vegetables*.” When the neighbor heard this, he acted according to the instruction: he kept them fasting and hard at work until evening. When evening fell he offered a long synaxis, then he said to them: “Let us break our fast for your sakes, for you are worn out.” He also said: “It is not our custom to eat every day, but we will taste a little something for your sakes.” He set bread and salt before them with nothing to drink; “but we must make a feast in your honor,” he said, pouring a little vinegar on the salt. Then they got up and offered a synaxis until dawn. “I cannot complete the entire order of service since you are here [but will abbreviate it] so you may rest a little (ἵνα μικρὸν ἀναπαυῆτε) since you are from afar.” They would have got away when dawn broke but he implored them, saying: “Stay with us for some time, at least for the three days stipulated by custom in the desert,” but they

¹¹ For a somewhat enigmatic use of ἀναπαύω see Poemen S 17 (Guy, *Recherches* 31): “Abba Poemen said: ... ‘Do we not see the Canaanite woman who followed the Saviour [Mtt 15:28] crying out and begging him to heal her daughter and the Saviour received her favourably καὶ ἀνέπαυεν?’” (*sic*) —“cured the daughter” or “acceded to the mother’s request”?

slipped away secretly, aware that he would not willingly let them go (N 229, 10.50).

3. *Requies aeterna* (cf. Lampe, C)

A small number of items characterise one's eternal reward as repose. "He reposed (*ἀναπάη*) in the Lord" (N 175, 5.46) simply means he died, but it was anticipated that there was more to come: "An elder was asked by a brother: 'Why am I afflicted by *accidie* when I am staying in my cell?' 'Because you have not yet seen either the punishment which lies ahead or the repose for which one hopes'" (*τὴν ἐλπίζομένην ἀνάπαυσιν*) he replied (N 196, 7.35.) Isaiah of Scete fears the last day when "there will be no expectation of repose" (3.8), but a dying monk says he is quitting labour for repose (*ἀπὸ κόπου εἰς ἀνάπαυσιν ἀπέρχομαι*, N 279, 11.115). According to Abba Hyperechios: "The ages of repose are limitless" (*ἀπέραντοι γὰρ τῆς ἀναπαύσεως οἱ αἰῶνες*, Hyperechios 6, 429D; 6.18), and there are other sayings that characterise one's final repose as eternal (N 491, N 551, N 592/2 at the end.) But what is eternal can also be eternally denied: "He shall know no repose for eternity" (N 491, 20.17; BHG 1449w, *De morte duorum monachorum*). Legion are the *apophthegmata* indicating that the worldling's chances of eternal rest are every bit as good as the monk's, so why would one go into the desert just to die?

4. Repose in this world (cf. Lampe, B)

In the overwhelming majority of cases in which the word "repose" occurs in *apophthegmata*, it refers to none of the above, but to a state of mind which it is possible to experience here in this mortal life. There are several references to what might be termed "occasional repose," e.g. when a brother avers "I am not at peace (*ἀναπαύομαι*) with men" (Theodore of Pherme 2, 188AB; 7.9), or when Abba Arsenius took a thieving monk into his cell to win him over and to give the elders some repose (*θέλων αὐτὸν κερδηῆσαι καὶ τοὺς γέροντας ἀναπαῦσαι*, Daniel 6, 156BC, 10.23) The same is said when somebody has "got something off his mind," e.g. a brother who declared his *logismoi* to Abba Poemen and, "having attained repose" etc. (*τυχῶν ἀνα-*

παύσεως, Poemen 58, 336B, 13.5) Repose is often said to have been experienced on receiving forgiveness: “I have entreated you, Lord: forgive me that I might know a little repose” (Apollo 2, 136A), or at the cessation of some torment, as in the case of a brother who, through endurance, survived a severe attack of temptation to *porneia* and “immediately repose came into his heart” (εὐθέως ἦλθεν εἰς τὴν καρδίαν αὐτοῦ ἀνάπαυσις, N 165, 5.15) The temptation to *porneia* is noted as particularly inimical to repose: “A brother asked one of the fathers: ‘What am I to do, for my thoughts are always tending towards *porneia*. They do not give me a moment’s repose (καὶ οὐκ ἀφίει με ἀναπαῆναι μίαν ὥραν) and my soul is afflicted’” (N 184, 5.37), but other temptations could be equally disturbing:

For nine years a brother was tempted to leave the coenobion. Every day he made his sheepskin ready so he could leave but, when evening fell, he would say to himself: “Tomorrow I am getting away from here.” Then, again, at dawn he would say to his *logismos*: “Let us constrain ourselves to remain here this day too—for the Lord’s sake,” and after he had lived like that for nine years, God stilled all temptation in him and he knew repose (καὶ ἀνεπάη, N 207, 7.48)

Abba Achilles spat out the word of a brother who had offended him as though it were blood; “I spat it out and attained repose (ἀνεπάην) and I forgot the distress” (Achilles 4, 125A; 4.9)

Then there come references to a repose of a more lasting nature, e.g. the brother who followed his elder’s instructions “and thus, having found repose, he was making progress in Christ” (καὶ οὕτως εὐρὼν ἀνάπαυσιν προέκοπτε διὰ τοῦ Χριστοῦ, N 208, 7.49 at the end). Abba Poemen (again) said about Abba John Colobos that he besought God and the passions were taken away from him; thus he became without a care (ἀμέριμνος, n.b.). Going to an elder he announced to him: “I see myself reposing (ἀναπαυόμενον) with no battles to fight” (John Colobos 13, 208BC, 7.12). But here too come references that leave it somewhat uncertain whether the promised repose is to be experienced in this world or the next. Of such is the highly enigmatic saying of Abba Alonios: “Unless a man say in his heart: ‘I alone and God are in the world’ (ἐγὼ μόνος καὶ ὁ

Θεὸς ἐσμὲν ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ) he will not experience repose” (Alonios 1, 133A, 11.13; see also 3.46, Megethius 2b, 301A: 14.10, 21.50, 21.60). Abba Sisoës’ instruction is similarly imprecise: “Remain in your cell with vigilance and commit yourself to God with many tears and you will have repose” (ἀναπαύη, 11.66). Abba Poemen¹² however is formal: “Abba Joseph asked Abba Poemen: ‘Tell me how I can become a monk.’ Said the elder to him: ‘If you want to find repose *here* (ὧδε) and in the age to come, say in every situation: ‘I, who am I?’ and do not pass judgment on anybody’” (Joseph of Panepho 2, 228C, 9.8). Prescribing a formula for attaining repose here and now, Abba Poemen told a brother: “Belittle nobody nor condemn nor speak ill [of anybody] and God will grant you repose; then your staying [in your cell] will be untroubled” (καὶ ὁ Θεὸς παρέχει σοι ἀνάπαυσιν καὶ γίνεται σου τὸ κάθισμα ἀτάραχον, 9.11, not found in *APalphi*)

This is only one of many such formulae, not a few of which are attributed to the same Abba Poemen. Elsewhere he says: “If you hold yourself in low esteem you will experience repose in whatever place you are staying” (Poemen 81, 341C); “if you are given to silence (ἐὰν ᾗς σιωπητικός) you will experience repose in whatsoever location you reside” (84, 341C). To Abba Isaac he said: “Lighten your [pursuit of] righteousness somewhat” (κούφισον μέρος τῆς δικαιοσύνης σου) and you will experience repose during your few [remaining?] days” (141, 357A), and to a visiting brother: “Go and be with someone who says: ‘What do I personally want?’ and you will experience repose” (143, 357B). He also says: “*Accidie* militates against every good undertaking and impels folk to negligence. If a person perceives its damaging effect yet perseveres in a good undertaking, he experiences repose” (ἀναπαύεται, 149, 360A, 10.87). “A person ought not to concede anything whatsoever to these two

¹² Much controversy surrounds the person of the prolific Abba Poemen; useful summary in Lucien Regnault, *Les Sentences des Pères du Désert, collection alphabétique* (Solesmes 1981) 220.

logismoî: porneia and backbiting/rancour (*καταλαλεῖν*) against [his] neighbour. He ought not to speak anything of them or to think of them in his heart. By turning away from them he will have repose and reap great benefit” (154, 369C, 5.8). “Think of yourself as a foreigner wherever you are living so you do not push your own opinion forward, and you will know repose” (*καὶ ἀναπαύη*, Poemen S4,¹³ 15.49). “He who lives in a coenobium ought to see all the brothers as one, keeping a rein on his mouth and eyes: thus he is able to experience repose” (*οὕτως δύναται ἀναπαῆναι* 4.38, *καὶ ἀναπαύεται ἀμεριμνήσας*, S19).

Thus it is the enigmatic Abba Poemen (to whom more than three hundred of the extant *apophthegmata* are attributed) who seems to state unequivocally that a lasting repose is attainable in this life. It is noticeable too that he twice links that repose with two other concepts closely related to it, each with a long history of its own: *ἀμεριμνία* (S19, as above), “freedom from care,” the “taking no thought” of Mtt 6.25–34/Lk 12.11–16; and *ἀταραξία* (9.11, not in *APalph*, see below), that impassiveness and calmness dear to the Epicureans.

It should not be suggested that Poemen was the only elder to prescribe a path to repose. He was not, but it is sometimes less clear whether the other elders are speaking of repose in this life and whether it is “occasional” or lasting. Abba Isidore once said: “For my part I am going to pack up my things and go off to where there is toil; there I will find repose” (Poemen 44, 332D, 7.20). Abba Elias: “If a person love affliction, it later becomes joy and repose for him” (*εἰς χαρὴν καὶ ἀνάπανσιν*, Elias 6, 184CD). Abba Sisoës: “Be of no significance, cast your will behind you, do not worry yourself (*γενοῦ ἀμέριμνος*, cf. Mtt 6:25) about the concerns of the world and you shall have repose” (Sisoës 43, 405AB; 1.26). Abba Motios: “and if you see the more devout in whom you have confidence doing anything, you do it too and you shall have repose” (Motios 1, 300A, 8.14).

¹³ S refers to the “Texte des pièces supplémentaire d’abba Poemen” in Guy, *Recherches* 29–31.

Of those who seem to promise immediate repose, Abba Agathon said: “Whatever activity a man embraces and pursues, he acquires repose in [doing] it (*ἐν αὐτῇ κτᾶται ἀνάπαυσιν*), but prayer demands struggle until the last breath” (Agathon 9, 112AB, 12.2). The same elder told a brother troubled by *porneia*: “Go, cast your frailty before God and you will experience repose” (*καὶ ἔξεις ἀνάπαυσιν*, Agathon 21, 116A; the same promise is found in N 169, 5.23, and in N 187, 5.34.); cf. “God took the *logismos* away from him and he knew repose (*ἀνεπάη*, N 63, 5.50).

Other examples include: “An elder said: ‘If you are staying in a place and you see some people living comfortably, do not associate with them. But if there be another there who is poor, associate with him as long as he is without bread and you will have repose’ ” (*καὶ ἀναπαύει*, 10.144). “An elder advised a brother troubled by *τὰ πνεύματα*: ‘If you are weary, in humble-mindedness remind them once and, if they will not heed you, then cast your burden before the Lord and he will give you rest’ ” (*καὶ αὐτὸς σὲ ἀναπαύει*, 15.96, N 318).¹⁴ “A brother asked a junior monk: ‘Is it better to be silent or to speak?’ The youth said to him: ‘If the words are idle chatter, let them be. If they are good, make an exception for the good and speak. But even if they are good, do not dwell on them but bring them quickly to an end and you will have repose’ ” (*καὶ ἀναπαύει*, 10.163, N 237). Once Abba Paul the Barber and Timothy his brother had agreed to put up with each other, “they experienced repose (*ἀνεπάησαν*) the rest of their days” (Paul the Barber 1, 381A, 16.10).

There is some indication that those who renounced the world did expect to experience repose in the normal state of things. John the Dwarf told of an elder becoming famous who said: “My reputation will be greatly enhanced and I will get no repose from that” (*καὶ οὐκ ἀναπαύομαι εἰς ταῦτα*, John Colobos 38, 216D), and a brother told Abba Simon: “If I go

¹⁴ This is a rewording of Ps 54:23, *καὶ αὐτὸς σὲ διαθρέψει*.

out of my cell and find a brother distracted and I become distracted with him; and if I find him laughing and I laugh with him too, then when I enter my cell I am not permitted to experience repose” (οὐκ ἀφίεμαι ἀνάπαυσιν ἔχειν, Poemen 137, 356C). “Even if the saints toiled here below” says an unnamed elder, “they were already receiving a portion of repose” (ἔλαβον ἤδη καὶ μέρος ἀναπαύσεως, N 235, 10.161). Thus the categorical statement that Abba Megethios “experienced repose” (οὕτως εἶπεν ἀνάπαυσιν) when he heeded his elders is a measure of his sanctity (Megethios 2b, 296A, 14.10). Compare the instruction of Joseph of Panepho to a brother: “Stay wherever you see your soul experiencing repose and not being damaged” (ἀναπαυομένην καὶ μὴ βλαπτομένην, Joseph of Panepho 8, 229D).

What the precise nature of the anticipated repose might be it is difficult to say, other than that it was certainly enjoyed by the mind rather than by the body; one elder said that if one controlled one’s conversation, “then your mind will be at peace” (τότε εἰρηνεύσει σου ὁ λογισμὸς 1.34, replacing καὶ αὕτη ἐστὶν ἡ ταπεινώσις in Matoes 11, 293B [not 243B as sometimes stated]; and N 330). “When Abba John the Eunuch was young he asked an elder: ‘How is it that you could perform the work of God in repose (ἐν ἀναπαύσει)? We are unable to perform it even with effort’” (John the Eunuch 1, 232D); this is a saying that puzzles more than it enlightens. Isaiah of Scete suggests that the desired repose might consist at least in part of having an easy conscience (συνείδησις,) a word that is not often encountered in the *apophthegmata*: “in not passing judgment on one’s neighbour and in belittling oneself—that is where repose of the conscience is located” (τόπος ἀναπαύσεως ἐστὶ τῆς συνειδήσεως, Isaiah of Scete 9.4). One unnamed elder said: “Keep a watch (φύλαξον) on your conscience with respect to your neighbor¹⁵ and you will experience repose” (21.60), and

¹⁵ The expression recurs in Pambo 2, 368C–369A, 10.94; in Pambo 11, 372A; 4.86; and in Joseph 4, 229AB, 10.40—but without the promise of repose.

another affirmed: “He who remains in his own cell for the name of God keeping (τηρώων) his own conscience finds himself too in the place of Abba Antony” (N 202, 7.41).

It may be that, in the above and similar cases, the repose in question was neither of a high order nor long lasting. We have already characterised the repose experienced when a temptation relaxes or a dilemma is resolved (for instance) as “occasional.” His repose was probably only “occasional” when “Abba Zeno, finding himself embarrassed by gifts, said to himself: ‘What shall I do, for both those who bring [things] and those who want to receive are sorrowing. This will be beneficial: if somebody brings something, I will accept it, and if anybody asks, I will provide him with [something].’ So doing, he experienced repose (ἀνεπαύετο) and satisfied everybody” (Zeno 2, 176BC). Conversely: “When an elder would not take back a book, a brother said: ‘If you do not take it back I will have no repose’ (οὐκ ἔχω ἀνάπαυσιν, Gelasius 1, 145B–148A, 16.2 at the end). Elsewhere, when a sale was being negotiated, an elder said: “if you wish to lower the price a little, it is up to you. This way you will find repose” (Pistamon, 376AB, 6.15). One ought also to provide repose, e.g. to the heart of those who do one wrong (ἀναπαύσαι τὴν καρδίαν τῶν κακοποιούντων σε, 1.8), for in this there is a degree of reciprocity it would seem. “I am not sending him away, for he gives me repose” (ἀναπαύει γάρ με, N 708, 16.7), said Abba Longinus when colleagues offered to replace a troublesome brother for him.

In direct contrast to these examples, Abba Isaiah of Scete suggests something much more profound and lasting: “Love is conversation with God in unbroken thanksgiving, for God rejoices in thanksgiving; it is an indication of repose” (σημείον δέ ἐστιν τῆς ἀναπαύσεως, 17.9) Hence it is hardly surprising that a link is established between *hesychia* and repose: “Abba Moses said to Abba Macarius at Scete: ‘I want to live in *hesychia* but the brothers do not let me.’ Abba Macarius said to him: ‘I see that your nature is simple and you cannot turn a brother away. Go into the inner desert, to Petra, and live there in *hesychia*.’ He did so and experienced repose (ἀνεπάη, Macarius 22, 272B).

“O *hesychia*, the gentle yoke and the light burden (Mtt 11:28) giving repose to (*ἀναπαύουσα*) and bearing the one who bears you” (2.35 lines 25–26), apostrophises an unnamed elder—a phrase that recalls Abba Mark’s praise of *hesychia*: “when the passion is not excited, there is profound calm and great peace within” (*μὴ κινουμένου δὲ τοῦ πάθους γαλήνην ἔχει βαθείαν καὶ πολλήν εἰρήνην τὰ ἔνδον*, 2.22; cf. “the peace of God which passeth all understanding,” Phil 4:7).

Was it in order to experience repose that so many people withdrew into the desert? There are a few indications that, in some cases, it was. A “great elder” (unnamed) said to a troubled neophyte: “So it is not that you might follow the will of the elder [that you became a monk] but that he should follow your will and that in this way you would attain repose?” (*οὕτως ἀναπαύη*, N 245, 10.174). A saying of Theodore of Pherme states the matter more clearly:

A brother living in solitude at The Cells was troubled; he went to Abba Theodore of Pherme telling him his own condition, and he said to him: “Go and humble your *logismos*; be submissive and live with others.” He came back to the elder and said to him: “I find no repose (*ἀναπαύομαι*) with other people either.” The elder said to him: “If you find no repose (*ἀναπαύη*) either alone or with others, *why did you come out to be a monk?* (*εἰς τὸν μοναχόν*; Theodore of Pherme 2, 188AB, 7.9)

If this brother had come out into the desert in search of repose, Theodore then had a severe and salutary warning for him and all like him: “Tell me now: how many years have you worn the habit?” ‘Eight years,’ he said and the elder replied: ‘Right; well, I have worn the habit for seventy years without finding repose for one day (*οὔτε μίαν ἡμέραν εὔρον ἀνάπαυσιν*) and you want to have repose (*ἀνάπαυσιν ἔχειν*) in eight years?’” Theodore was one of the more significant monks, first at Scete until the devastation of 407, then at the mountain of Pherme, a community of five hundred monks according to Palladius (*HL* 20.1). Famous for his rejection of all distinction, his advice was greatly sought after. If a monk of his calibre did not experience a day’s repose in seventy years, one has to conclude that Theodore was actually reproving the brother for a not un-

common error, “For,” says the same Theodore, “Many are they who opt for repose in this world before the Lord grants them repose” (πολλοὶ ἐν τῷ καιρῷ τούτῳ εἴλοντο τὴν ἀνάπαυσιν πρὶν ὃ Θεὸς αὐτοῖς παράσχη, Theodore of Pherme 16, 189A, 10.35). One can only conclude that if there were those who went out into the desert seeking repose such as the world gives, they must have been sadly disappointed. Who can say how many went in search of, and *a fortiori*, how many experienced, that care-free, trouble-free repose of which Poemen spoke?

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