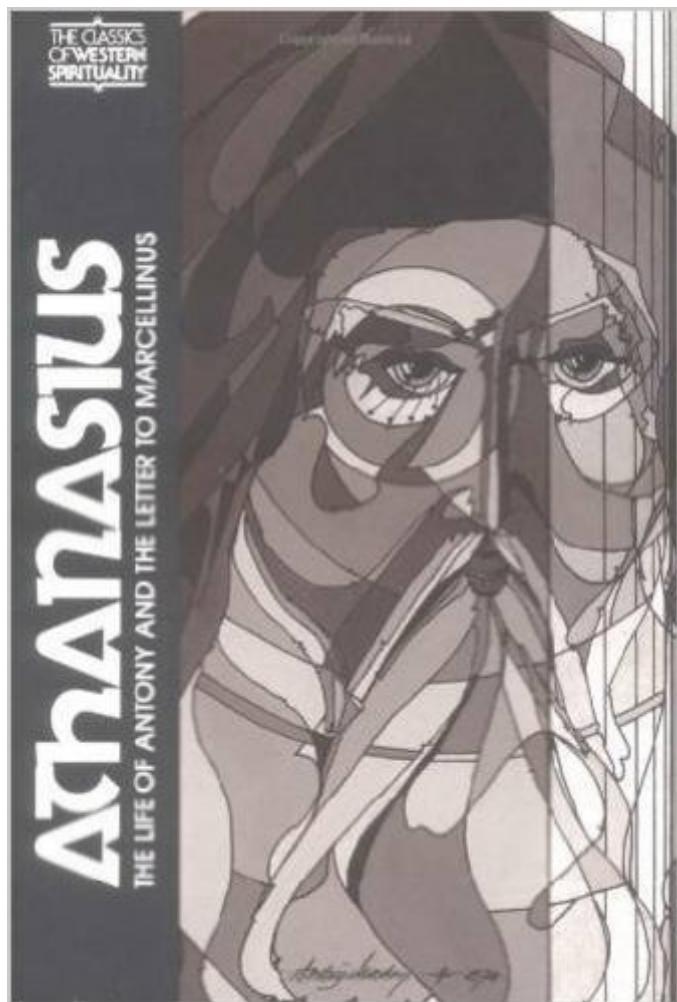


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# Athanasius : The Life Of Antony And The Letter To Marcellinus



## Synopsis

Athanasius: The Life of Antony and The Letter to Marcellinus Translation and introduction by Robert c. Gregg Preface by William A. Clebsch "And it seems to me that these words become like a mirror to the persons singing them, so that he might perceive himself and the emotions of his soul, and thus affected, he might recite them. For in fact he who hears the one reading receives the song that is recited as being about him, and either, when he is convicted by his conscience, being pierced, he will repent, or hearing of the hope that resides in God, and of the succor available to believers-how this kind of grace exists for him-he exults and begins to give thanks to God." Athanasius (c. 295-373) Athanasius was a major figure of 4th-century Christendom. As the Bishop of Alexandria, spiritual master and theologian, he led the Church in its battle against the Arian heresy. Athanasius' The Life of Antony is one of the foremost classics of Christian asceticism. It tells the spiritual story of St. Antony, the founder of Christian monasticism. Written at the request of the desert monks of Egypt to provide "an ideal pattern of the ascetical life," it immediately became astonishingly popular. This work contributed greatly to the establishment of monastic life in Western Christianity. From a literary perspective, it created a new Christian genre for the lives of saints. The Letter to Marcellinus is an introduction to the spiritual sense of the Psalms. The Psalms are presented as a variety of attitudes which coexist in a truly harmonious and whole sense of prayer. William A. Clebsch of Stanford University, President of the American Academy of Religion, in his Preface to this volume, says, "This translator's fidelity to the texts ensures that the reader receives in these works Athanasius' meaning, so far as feasible in the order of his thoughts and in the equivalence of his words."

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Although the preface is a bit lacking, the two works by St. Athanasius translated here are worth not only reading, but contemplating and wrestling with as well. The first work, *The Life of Antony*, is a work about the father of Christian asceticism, St. Antony of Egypt. It contains both narrative and doctrinal content; the doctrinal content is presented in the forms of discourses by Antony, usually to groups of monks. He teaches much on demons and the discernment of spirits, the fate of souls after death, the importance of staying within the Church and staying away from schismatics and heretics. The discourses are, at a few points, a bit polemical - like many works from the early Church - but not excessively overbearing. The uniqueness of the story is not just in Antony's doctrinal discourses, though. The narrative teaches things all its own. One of these things is that by separating one's self from the world the holy person becomes so much more indespensable to the world. Although Antony lived as a monk separate from the world, he was never separated from the world; in geographically and spiritually separating himself from the world, Antony became that much more involved in his world. He taught, healed, exorcised demons and engaged in debates with philosophers, all of this because of his reputation as a holy man. From this follows something else taught by the narrative: the pursuit of God truly transforms one and causes one to become a conduit for God's healing and redemption of the world. Antony received visions and words of knowledge about people and things about to occur and more people were converted to the Christian faith. The work of Antony, as the book repeatedly emphasizes, is the work of God.

"The personalization of the mystical path begun with Philo's presentation of Moses and the patriarchs here reaches a new stage, as Athanasius portrays his contemporary, Anthony the Monachos, as the ideal mystic initiate." Bernard McGinn, *The Foundation of Mysticism* Antony, the Father of Monks: I was captivated when I first heard, at an early age of twelve, the *Life of St. Antony*, written by Athanasius, the heroic defender of church orthodoxy. The stories of Antony's battles with demons, and his toil and escape into the desert to avoid temptation, appeal to Coptic kids, even at early age and is used by the church to promote the monastic ideals in childhood. The *Vita Antonini*, which St Athanasius wrote as the hagiography of Saint Antony, unveils fascinating mystical encounters while living daily within the boundary of a world ruled by the Powers of darkness. Written about 357, three decades after his election for Papacy in the great church of Alexandria, the Megalopolis. Athanasius for more than a half century toiled to preserve Nicene Orthodoxy,

championed by him and by his successors establishing the solid foundation upon which Christian faith of the Christian East was built. **Antony's Pilgrimage:** Antony's monastic pilgrimage was plagued with spiritual warfare during which Antony resisted temptation and became a target for renewed attacks. The rest of the work could be sorted as a manual of monastic instruction, with particular emphasis on resisting evil through self mortification. Within the same patristic tradition John Cassian and Evagrius Ponticus wrote their marvelous books for lay and monastics. Athanasius records Antony's struggles, and tells his readers how to recognize and fight the devil. St.

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