

LIFE IN CHRIST

The Devil Hates Spiritual Teaching

ONCE an Elder lived in solitude as a monk in the desert, beseeching God to grant him the following gift: that whenever a spiritual and edifying conversation was in progress, he would not grow sleepy; but whenever someone spoke idly or gossiped, a deep sleep would come upon him, so that his hearing would not be touched by the poison of those words. And, indeed, that which he asked, God gave him. Now, this virtuous Elder used to say that the Devil is a fashioner of idle talk and an enemy of every spiritual teaching. He confirmed this point with the following example:

“Once I was talking with some brothers who were visiting me about various spiritual matters beneficial to the soul. My listeners grew so sleepy that they could not even move their eyelids. Seeing this deep sleepiness, I wanted to show them that this was an obvious operation of the Devil. I began idly to discuss various things. As soon as those with whom I was conversing heard this aimless talk, they immediately came out of their slumber and joyfully began to follow the conversation. So, I sighed,” continued the Elder, “and said to my fellow conversants: ‘Brothers, when we were talking of heavenly things, your eyes were overcome by sleep. But as soon as vain and unedifying talk came up, then all of you eagerly woke up. I implore you, then, my brothers: Reflect well on the action of the evil demon and be careful for yourselves, protecting yourselves from drowsiness whenever you do or hear something spiritual.’”



The Evergetinos: A Complete Text, Book I, Hypothesis XVIII, §A.6, ed. and trans. Archbishop Chrysostomos, Hieromonk Patapios, *et al.* (Etna, CA: Center for Traditionalist Orthodox Studies, 2008), pp. 135-136.