

AN
ELDER
SAID...



Edifying Stories
and Teachings from
Ancient and Modern Times

■ When the machinations of the Evil One have no effect

The Good Advice of a Sorcerer*

“Without first communing
and wearing a Cross around your neck...”

A pious Christian man in Babylon (pre sent day Cairo) of Egypt, from a noble family, was designated a few years ago by the authorities¹ as warden of the prison, where he treated the inmates with kindness and sympathy. **W**e need not reveal his name, since he is still alive.

This man related the following to us, attesting to the veracity of his words with a solemn oath.

“Certain sorcerers were once locked in the prison of which I was warden, and I frequently went to their cell to question them, as is the custom of those in my position, so as to record their statements and deliver a pertinent report to the authorities.

“So then, one of them—the eldest of the lot— seeing that I treated everyone with understanding and compassion, took me aside and told me in the Egyptian tongue: **‘I swear to you by the God Who delivered us into your hands: never interrogate any of us four sorcerers without first communing and wearing a Cross around your neck. My companions are wicked people who want to hurt you, but if you do as I advise, neither they nor anyone else will be able to do you any harm.’**”

* * *

When even demons and sorcerers confess such things, it follows that those who do not believe in the Holy Body of Christ and con-

stantly blaspheme His Cross, thereby inflicting pain on us, are even more impious than the former.

To whom am I referring?² I mean the enemies of the Cross, who are bound to perdition, in accordance with God's judgment, as expressed by the mouth of St. Paul.



(*) Unknown pages of the Gerontikon, Part I, Narratives of the Holy Elders, §13 (Ekdoseis “To Periboli tes Panagias,” pp. 64-67.

1. The authorities: representatives of the Islamic state. **I**n the history of Islam, it was not rare for competent and educated Christians (e.g. St. John of Damascus [see his Life, December 4]) to be placed in positions of responsibility.

2. He is apparently speaking of the Saracens, who conquered the region in the eighth century and were tyrannizing the non-Muslims. **I**ndeed, Islam explicitly rejects the divinity of Christ, and consequently the Cross and the Mysteries of the Church.

