

References for Toll Houses:**St. Hippolytus of Rome ca. 170-235**

".. And when those who are conducted by the angels appointed unto the souls have passed through this gate, they do not proceed on one and the same way; but the righteous, being conducted in the light toward the right, and being hymned by the angels stationed at the place, are brought to a locality full of light.... But the unrighteous are dragged toward the left by angels who are ministers of punishment, and they go of their own accord no longer, but are dragged by force as prisoners. And the angels appointed over them send them along, reproaching them and threatening them with an eye of terror, forcing them down into the lower parts. And when they are brought there, those appointed to that service drag them on to the confines or hell."

St. Athanasius (296-373AD): Life of St. Anthony (251-356AD), p. 79-80

St. Anthony the Great once went way of aerial ascension, and demons tried to accuse him, to hinder him from passing through: "once...having risen up to pray...he perceived that he was caught up in the spirit, and, wonderful to tell, he stood and saw himself, as it were, from outside himself, and that he was led in the air by certain ones. Next certain bitter and terrible beings stood in the air and wished to hinder him from passing through. But when his conductors opposed them,..."

Theophilus (late 4th-early 5th c.), The Sayings of the Desert Fathers: The Alphabetical Collection, p. 81-2

4. The same Abba Theophilus said, 'What fear, what trembling, what uneasiness will there be for us when our soul is separated from the body. Then indeed the force and strength of the adverse powers come against us, the rulers of darkness, those who command the world of evil, the principalities, the powers, the spirits of evil. They accuse our souls as in a lawsuit, bringing before it all the sins it has committed, whether deliberately or through ignorance, from its youth until the time when it has been taken away. So they stand accusing it of all it has done. Furthermore, what anxiety do you suppose the soul will have at that hour, until sentence is pronounced and it gains its liberty. That is its hour of affliction, until it sees what will happen to it. On the other hand, the divine powers stand on the opposite side, and they present the good deeds of the soul. Consider the fear and trembling of the soul standing between them until in judgement it receives the sentence of the righteous judge. If it is judged worthy, the demons will receive their punishment, and it will be carried away by the angels. Then thereafter you will be without disquiet, or rather you will live according to that which is written: "Even as the habitation of those who rejoice is in you." (Ps. 87.7) Then will the Scripture be fulfilled: "Sorrow and sighing shall flee away." (Isaiah 35.10)

'Then your liberated soul will go on to that joy and ineffable glory in which it will be established. But if it is found to have lived carelessly, it will hear that terrible voice: "Take away the ungodly, that he may not see the glory of the Lord." (cf. Isaiah 26.10) Then the day of anger, the day of affliction, the day of darkness and shadow seizes upon it. Abandoned to outer darkness and condemned to everlasting fire it will be punished through the ages without end. Where then is the

vanity of the world? Where is vain-glory? Where is carnal life? Where is enjoyment? Where is imagination? Where is ease? Where is boasting? Riches? Nobility? Father, mother, brother? Who could take the soul out of its pains when it is burning in the fire, and remove it from bitter torments?

'Since this is so, in what manner ought we not to give ourselves to holy and devout works? What love ought we to acquire? What manner of life? What virtues? What speed? What diligence? What prayer? What prudence? Scripture says: "In this waiting, let us make every effort to be found blameless and without reproach in peace." (cf. I Cor. 1.7-8) In this way, we shall be worthy to hear it said: "Come, O blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." (Matt. 25.34) Amen.'

St. Hesychios the Priest (early 5th c.), On Watchfulness & Holiness: Written for Theodoulos, Philokalia Vol. 1, p. 163:

4. Just as a man blind from birth does not see the sun's light, so one who fails to pursue watchfulness does not see the rich radiance of divine grace. He cannot free himself from evil thoughts, words & actions, & because of these thoughts & actions he will not be able freely to pass the lords of hell when he dies.

St. Hesychios the Priest (early 5th c.), On Watchfulness & Holiness: Written for Theodoulos, Philokalia Vol. 1, p. 188:

149. If the soul has Christ with it, it will not be disgraced by its enemies even at death, when it rises to heaven's entrance; but then, as now, it will boldly confront them. But let it not tire in calling upon the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, day & night until the time of its departure from this mortal life, & He will speedily avenge it in accordance with the promise which He Himself made when speaking of the unjust judge (cf. Luke 18:1-8). Indeed, He will avenge it both in this present life & after its departure from its body.

St. Diadochos of Photiki (400-c. 486), On Spiritual Knowledge & Discrimination: 100 Texts, Philokalia Vol. 1, p. 295-6:

100. If we do not confess our involuntary sins as we should, we shall discover an ill-defined fear in ourselves at the hour of our death. We who love the Lord should pray that we may be without fear at that time; for if we are afraid then, we will not be able freely to pass by the rulers of the nether world. They will have as their advocate to plead against is the fear which our soul experiences because of its own wickedness. But the soul which rejoices in the love of God, at the hour of its departure, is lifted up with the Angels of peace above all the hosts of darkness. For it is given wings by spiritual love, since it's a socially carries within itself the love in which single quote is the fulfilling of the law' (Romans 13:10). At the coming of the Lord those who have departed the present life was such confidence as this will be 'caught up' with all the Saints (cf. 1 Thessalonians 4:17); but those who feel fear even for an instant at the moment of their death will be left behind with the rest of mankind to be tried by the fire of judgment (cf. 1 Peter 1:7), and will receive from our God and King, Jesus Christ, the lot due to them according to their works.

For He is the God of justice and on us who love him He bestows the blessings of His kingdom through all ages. Amen.

St. John of Karpathos (7th c.); For the Encouragement of the Monks in India who had Written to Him: 100 Texts, Philokalia Vol. 1, pg. 303-4:

25. When the soul leaves the body, the enemy advances to attack it fiercely reviling it and accusing it of its sins in a harsh and terrifying manner. But if a soul enjoys the love of God and has faith in Him, even though in the past it has often been wounded by sin, it is not frightened by the enemy's attacks and threats. Strengthened by the Lord, winged by joy, filled with courage by the holy angels that guide it, encircled and protected by the light of faith, it answers the malicious devil with great boldness: 'Enemy of God, fugitive from heaven, wicked slave, what have I to do with you? You have no authority over me; Christ the Son of God has authority over me and all things. Against Him have I sinned, before Him shall I stand on trial, having His precious Cross as a sure pledge of His saving love towards me. Flee far from me destroyer! You have nothing to do with the servants of Christ.' When the soul says all this fearlessly, the devil turns his back, howling aloud and unable to withstand the name of Christ. Then the soul swoops down on the devil from above, attacking him like a hawk attacking a crow. After this it is brought rejoicing by the holy angels to the place appointed for it in accordance with its inward state.

St Theodoros the Great Ascetic (7th c.), A Century of Spiritual Texts, Philokalia Vol. 2, p 24, 25

"...Recall the vanity of the world, how deceptive it is, how sickly and worthless; reflect on the dreadful reckoning that is to come, how the harsh keepers of the toll houses will bring before us one by one the actions, words and thoughts which they suggested but which we accepted and made our own..."

St Theodoros the Great Ascetic (7th c.), Texts for the Monks of India, Philokalia Vol. 1, pg. 304

"When the soul leaves the body, the enemy advances to attack it fiercely reviling it and accusing it of its sins in a harsh and terrifying manner. But if a soul enjoys the love of God and has faith in Him, even though in the past it has often been wounded by sin, it is not frightened by the enemy's attacks and threats. Strengthened by the Lord, winged by joy, filled with courage by the holy angels that guide it, encircled and protected by the light of faith, it answers the malicious devil with great boldness: 'Enemy of God, fugitive from heaven, wicked slave, what have I to do with you? You have no authority over me; Christ the Son of God has authority over me and all things. Against Him have I sinned, before Him shall I stand on trial, having His precious Cross as a sure pledge of His saving love towards me. Flee far from me destroyer! You have nothing to do with the servants of Christ.' When the soul says all this fearlessly, the devil turns his back, howling aloud and unable to withstand the name of Christ. Then the soul swoops down on the devil from above, attacking him like a hawk attacking a crow. After this it is brought rejoicing by the holy angels to the place appointed for it in accordance with its inward state."

St. Theognostos (8th c.?); The Philokalia Vol. 2, p. 373

61. Inexpressible is the soul's delight when in full assurance of salvation it leaves the body, stripping it off as though it were a garment. Because it is now attaining what it hopes for, it puts off the body painlessly, going in peace to meet the radiant and joyful angel that comes down for it, and travelling with him unimpeded through the air, totally unharmed by the evil spirits. Rising with joy, courage and thanksgiving, it comes in adoration before the Creator, and is allotted its place among those akin to it and equal to it in virtue, until the universal resurrection.

From the Octoechos:

Sunday Midnight Office, Tone 1, Sessional Hymns after Ode 6, Theotokion

Guide aright my wretched soul, O pure one, and have pity on it which, for the multitude of my transgressions, hath stumbled headlong into the pit of destruction, O most immaculate one; and, at the dread hour of my death, rescue it from the accusing demons and from every torment.

From the Liturgical Cycle:

Great Compline:

Downloaded from: <http://www.saintjonah.org/articles/tollhouses.htm>

Evidence for the Tradition of the Toll Houses found in the Universally Received Tradition of the Church

Note: What follows is not a comprehensive collection of evidence for the Toll Houses, but evidence that I have repeatedly posted in discussions with those who oppose the idea that the Toll Houses are a legitimate image of what occurs after death, which the Church has embraced. Rather than continue to repost it, I have compiled it here. If you wish to read actual posts I have written in the course of the discussions, you can [click here](#).

Patristic Evidence:

St. Mark of Ephesus:

"But if souls have departed this life in faith and love, while nevertheless carrying away with themselves certain faults, whether small ones over which they have not repented at all, or great ones for which – even though they have repented over them – they did not undertake to show fruits of repentance: such souls, we believe, must be cleansed from this kind of sin, but not by means of some purgatorial fire or a definite punishment in some place (for this, as we have said, has not been handed down to us). But some must be cleansed in their very departure from the body, thanks only to fear, as St. Gregory the Dialogist literally shows; while others must be cleansed after the departure from the body, either while remaining in the same earthly place, before they come to worship God and are honored with the lot of the blessed, or – if their sins were more serious and bind them, for a longer duration – they are kept in hell [i.e., Hades], but not in order to remain forever in fire and torment, but as it were in prison and confinement under guard" (First Homily: Refutation of the Latin Chapters concerning Purgatorial Fire, by St. Mark of Ephesus. Qtd. In "The Soul After Death, p 208f).

St. Boniface (8th Century Anglo-Saxon) records the following account of a monk who died and came back to tell of his experiences:

"Angels of such pure splendor bore him up as he came forth from the body that he could not bear to gaze upon them... "They carried me up," he said, "high into the air..." He reported further that in the space of time while he was out of the body, a greater multitude of souls left their bodies and gathered to the place where he was than he thought to form the whole race of mankind on earth. He said also that there was a crowd of evil spirits and a glorious choir of higher angels. And he said that the wretched spirits and the holy angels had a violent dispute concerning the souls that had come forth from their bodies, the demons bringing charges against them and aggravating the burden of their sins, the angels lightening the burden and making excuses for them. He heard all his own sins, which he had committed from his youth on and had failed to confess or had forgotten or had not recognized as sins, crying out against him, each in its own voice, and accusing him grievously... Everything he had done in all the days of his life and had neglected to confess and many which he had not known to be sinful, all these were now shouted at him in terrifying words. In the same way the evil spirits, chiming in with the vices, accusing and bearing witness, naming the very times and places, brought proofs of his evil

deeds... and so, with his sins all piled up and reckoned out, those ancient enemies declared him guilty and unquestionably subject to their jurisdiction. "On the other hand," he said, "the poor little virtues which I had displayed unworthily and imperfectly spoke out in my defense... And those angelic spirits in their boundless love defended and supported me, while the virtues, greatly magnified as they were, seemed to me far greater and more excellent than could have ever been practiced in my own strength." (The Letters of Saint Boniface, tr. Ephraim Emerton, Octagon Books (Farrar, Strauss and Giroux) New York, 1973, pp 25-27. Qtd in *The Soul After Death*, by Fr. Seraphim (Rose).

St. Athanasius the Great, in the Life of St. Anthony the Great:

"For once, when about to eat, having risen up to pray about the ninth hour, he perceived that he was caught up in the spirit, and, wonderful to tell, he stood and saw himself, as it were, from outside himself, and that he was led in the air by certain ones. Next certain bitter and terrible beings stood in the air and wished to hinder him from passing through. But when his conductors opposed them, they demanded whether he was not accountable to them. And when they wished to sum up the account from his birth, Antony's conductors stopped them, saying, 'The Lord hath wiped out the sins from his birth, but from the time he became a monk, and devoted himself to God, it is permitted you to make a reckoning.' Then when they accused him and could not convict him, his way was free and unhindered. And immediately he saw himself, as it were, coming and standing by himself, and again he was Antony as before. Then forgetful of eating, he remained the rest of the day and through the whole of the night groaning and praying. For he was astonished when he saw against what mighty opponents our wrestling is, and by what labours we have to pass through the air. And he remembered that this is what the Apostle said, 'according to the prince of the power of the air [10].' For in it the enemy hath power to fight and to attempt to hinder those who pass through. Wherefore most earnestly he exhorted, 'Take up the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day [11],' that the enemy, 'having no evil thing to say against us, may be ashamed [12].' And we who have learned this, let us be mindful of the Apostle when he says, 'whether in the body I know not, or whether out of the body I know not; God knoweth [13].' But Paul was caught up unto the third heaven, and having heard things unspeakable he came down; while Antony saw that he had come to the air, and contended until he was free. . And he had also this favour granted him. For as he was sitting alone on the mountain, if ever he was in perplexity in his meditations, this was revealed to him by Providence in prayer. And the happy man, as it is written, was taught of God [14]. After this, when he once had a discussion with certain men who had come to him concerning the state of the soul and of what nature its place will be after this life, the following night one from above called him, saying, 'Antony, rise, go out and look.' Having gone out therefore (for he knew whom he ought to obey) looking up, he beheld one standing and reaching to the clouds, tall, hideous, and fearful, and others ascending as though they were winged. And the figure stretched forth his hands, and some of those who were ascending were stayed by him, while others flew above, and having escaped heavenward, were borne aloft free from care. At such, therefore, the giant gnashed his teeth, but rejoiced over those who fell back. And forthwith a voice came to Antony, 'Understandest thou what thou seest?' And **his understanding was opened, and he understood that it was the passing of souls, and that the tall being who stood was the enemy who envies the faithful. And those whom he caught and stopped from passing through are accountable to him, while those whom he was unable to hold as they passed upwards had not been**

subservient to him. So having seen this, and as it were being reminded, he struggled the more daily to advance towards those things which were before. And these visions he was unwilling to tell, but as he spent much time in prayer, and was amazed, when those who were with him pressed him with questions and forced him, he was compelled to speak, as a father who cannot withhold ought from his children. And he thought that as his conscience was clear, the account would be beneficial for them, that they might learn that discipline bore good fruit, and that visions were oftentimes the solace of their labours" (Chapters 65-66).

<http://orthodoxinfo.com/death/vita-antony.htm>

St Adamnan (Eunan) who recorded the life of St. Columba:

<http://www.usu.edu/history/norm/bk3ch7.html>

"AT another time while the holy man was tarrying in the Iouan island (Hy, now Iona), one of his monks called Brito, a person given to all good works, being seized with bodily illness, was reduced to the last extremity. When the venerable man went to visit him at the hour of his departure, he stood for a few moments at his bedside, and after giving him his blessing, retired quickly from the house, not wishing to see him die, and the very moment after the holy man left the house the monk closed this present life. Then the eminent man walking in the little court of his monastery, with his eyes upraised to heaven, was for a long time lost in wonder and admiration. But a certain brother named Aidan, the son of Libir, a truly virtuous and religious man, who was the only one of the brethren present at the time, fell upon his knees and asked the saint to tell him the reason of so great astonishment. The saint said to him in reply: "I have this moment seen the holy angels contending in the air against the hostile powers; and I return thanks to Christ, the Judge, because the victorious angels have carried off to the joys of our heavenly country the soul of this stranger, who is the first person that hath died among us in this island. But I beseech thee not to reveal this secret to any one during my life."

St. Diadochos of Photiki (ca 400 – 486 a.d.) from the Philokalia:

"If we do not confess our involuntary sins as we should, we shall discover and ill-defined fear in ourselves at the hour of our death. We who love the Lord should pray that we may be without fear at that time; **for if we are afraid then, we will not be able freely to pass by the rulers of the nether world. They will have as their advocate to plead against us the fear which our soul experiences because of its own wickedness. But the soul which rejoices in the love of God, at the hour of its departure, is lifted with the angels of peace above all the hosts of darkness.** For it is given wings by spiritual love, since it ceaselessly carries within itself the love which 'is the fulfilling of the law' (Rom. 13:10)" (Philokalia, Volume I, p. 295).

Theophilus of Antioch (reposed 412 a.d.) recorded in the Alphabetical Sayings of the Desert Fathers:

"The same Abba Theophilus said, "What fear, what trembling, what uneasiness will there be for us when our soul is separated from the body. Then indeed the force and strength of the adverse powers come against us, the rulers of darkness, those who command the world of evil,

the principalities, the powers, the spirits of evil. **They accuse our souls as in a lawsuit, bringing before it all the sins it has committed, whether deliberately or through ignorance, from its youth until the time when it has been taken away. So they stand accusing it of all it has done.** Furthermore, what anxiety do you suppose the soul will have at that hour, until sentence is pronounced and it gains its liberty. That is its hour of affliction, until it sees what will happen to it. On the other hand, the divine powers stand on the opposite side, and they present the good deeds of the soul. Consider the fear and trembling of the soul standing between them until in judgment it receives the sentence of the righteous judge. **If it is judged worthy, the demons will receive their punishment, and it will be carried away by the angels.** Then thereafter you will be without disquiet, or rather you will live according to that which is written: "Even as the habitation of those who rejoice is in you." (Ps. 87.7) Then will the Scripture be fulfilled: "Sorrow and sighing shall flee away." (Isaiah 35.10).

"Then your liberated soul will go on to that joy and ineffable glory in which it will be established. **But if it is found to have lived carelessly, it will hear that terrible voice: "Take away the ungodly, that he may not see the glory of the Lord." (cf. Isaiah 26.10) Then the day of anger, the day of affliction, the day of darkness and shadow seizes upon it. Abandoned to outer darkness and condemned to everlasting fire it will be punished through the ages without end.** Where then is the vanity of the world? Where is the vain-glory? Where is carnal life? Where is enjoyment? Where is imagination? Where is ease? Where is boasting? Riches? Nobility? Father, mother, brother? Who could take the soul out of its pains when it is burning in the fire, and remove it from bitter torments? (The Sayings of the Desert Fathers: The Alphabetical Collection, translated by Benedicta Ward, p. 81-82).

St. John Climacus:

In Step 7, section 50 of the Ladder of Divine Ascent, St. John gives the account of a monastic who was dying, and who had begun to pass from this life to the next, and to experience the accusations of the demons. The account ends with statement:

"And while, thus being called to account he was parted from his body, leaving us in uncertainty as to his judgment, or end, or sentence, or how the trial ended."

Liturgical Evidence

In both the Greek and Slavonic Euchologion, in the canon for the departure of the soul by St. Andrew, we find in Ode 7:

"All holy angels of the Almighty God, have mercy upon me and save me from all the evil toll-houses [telonion poneron]."

For an English translation of this canon, see page 90, vol 3, of "The Book of Needs" published by St. Tikhon Seminary.

Also in the Greek Euchologion, in the same canon, we find in the first Ode:

"Behold a crowd of evil spirits has gathered bearing the record of my sins, and they are shouting aloud and demanding shamelessly my humble soul" (Quoted in the *Mystery of Death*, p. 391, by Nikolaos P. Vassiliadis).

Also in the Slavonic Euchologion:

"O thou that gavest birth to the Lord Almighty, when I come to die, do thou banish from me the commander of the bitter toll-gatherers and ruler of the earth, that I may glorify thee unto the ages, O holy Theotokos."

From Ode 8, of *The Canon of Supplication to our lord Jesus Christ and the Most Holy Theotokos, the Mother of the Lord, at the Parting of the Soul from the body of any Orthodox*, page 81, vol 3, Book of Needs, Published by St. Tikhon's Monastery.

The prayer to the Theotokos at small compline:

".at the time of my departure taking care of my miserable soul, and driving far away from it the dark countenances of the evil demons."

The Octoechos:

"When my soul is about to be forcibly parted from my body's limbs, then stand by my side and scatter the counsels of my bodiless foes and smash the teeth of those who implacably seek to swallow me down, so that I may pass unhindered through the rulers of darkness who wait in the air, O Bride of God." Octoechos, Tone Two, Friday Vespers

http://www.anastasis.org.uk/weekday_verseps1.htm

"Pilot my wretched soul, pure Virgin, and have compassion on it, as it slides under a multitude of offences into the deep of destruction; and at the fearful hour of death snatch me from the accusing demons and from every punishment." Ode 6, Tone 1 Midnight Office for Sunday

http://www.anastasis.org.uk/weekday_verseps1.htm

The prayer of St. Eustratius, which is said in the Midnight Office for Saturdays:

"And now, O Master, let Thy hand shelter me and let Thy mercy descend upon me, for my soul is distracted and pained at its departure from this my wretched and filthy body, lest the evil design of the adversary overtake it and make it stumble into the darkness for the unknown and known sins amassed by me in this life. Be merciful unto me, O Master, and let not my soul see the dark countenances of the evil spirits, but let it be received by Thine Angels bright and shining. Glorify Thy holy name and by Thy might set me before Thy divine judgment seat. When I am being judged, suffer not that the hand of the prince of this world should take hold of me to throw me, a sinner, into the depths of hades, but stand by me and be unto me a savior and mediator..."

From the Pre-Nikonian Slavonic Texts

In the second Canon to the Guardian Angel, found in the "Old Orthodox Prayer book", one finds the following:.

In Ode 5: "Foreseeing all the tortures and torments that await me, and my blindness, distance and the darkness of my passions, thou groanest with pity; thou art mournful and downcast, O my deliverer",

In Ode 6: "Let shame and disgrace cover the dark, foul and fetid faces of the enemy when my poor soul is separated from the body. Let thy most sacred wings then protect my soul, O my guide."

In Ode 7 verse: "O my helper, with thy fiery lance cease not from dispelling the myriads of invisible robbers who attack me round about, seeking to seize and steal my soul."

"As a mind beautiful in goodness, sweet and happy, and bright like the sun, stand before me with smiling face and merry glance, when I shall be taken from the earth, O my guide."

"In thy mercy, loving-kindness and the exceeding copiousness of thy love toward man, O my guardian, protect me under the shelter of thy wings when I depart from the body, that I may not see the hideous faces of the demons."

In Ode 9 verse: "When my spirit is forcibly parted from me, may I see thee, my defender and guardian, calm and radiant, standing at the right of my passionate soul and driving away the bitter demons who seek to seize me."

"My whole life have I spent in great vanity, and my end draweth nigh. I beseech thee, my guardian: be my merciful champion and defender when I pass through the toll houses of the evil world ruler."

Prayer to the Theotokos at the 8th Ode of the canon for Matins on Fridays:

“O Virgin, in the hour of my death rescue me from the hands of the demons, and the judgment, and the accusation, and the frightful testing, and the bitter toll-houses, and the fierce prince, and the eternal condemnation, O Mother of God.”