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## ARTICLE VI.

RISE AND PROGRESS OF MONASTICISM.<sup>1</sup>

BY PHILIP SCHAFF, D.D., NEW YORK.

ORIGIN OF CHRISTIAN MONASTICISM. COMPARISON WITH  
OTHER FORMS OF ASCETICISM.

THE monastic institution arose in the beginning of the fourth century, and thenceforth occupies a distinguished place in the history of the church. Beginning in Egypt, it spread in an irresistible tide over the East and the West, continued to be the chief repository of the Christian life down to the times of the Reformation, and still remains in the Greek and Roman churches an indispensable institution, and the most productive seminary of saints, priests, and missionaries.

The germs of the ascetic tendency are found among the heretics and the weak, Judaizing Christians opposed in the writings of Paul. Monasticism is only the full development and organization of asceticism. It is by no means confined to the Christian church, but belongs also to other religions, both before and after Christ, especially in the East. It proceeds from religious seriousness, enthusiasm, and ambition, from a sense of the vanity of the world, and an inclination of noble souls towards solitude, contemplation, and freedom from the bonds of the flesh and the temptations of the world; but it gives this tendency an undue predominance over the social, practical, and world-reforming spirit of Christianity.

Among the Hindus the ascetic system may be traced back

<sup>1</sup> *The Monks of the West.* By Count de Montalembert. Translated from the French. Edinburg and London: 1861. 2 vols. Vol. I. contains the history of Monasticism before St. Benedict of Nursia. Vol. II. is devoted mainly to St. Benedict. The French original is to embrace six volumes, and to come down to St. Bernard.

almost to the time of Moses, certainly beyond Alexander the Great, who found it there in full force, and substantially with the same characteristics which it presents at the present day.<sup>1</sup> Let us consider it a few moments.

The Vedas, portions of which date from the fifteenth century before Christ, the Laws of Menu, which were completed before the rise of Buddhism, that is six or seven centuries before our era, and the numerous other sacred books of the Indian religion, enjoin by example and precept entire abstraction of thought, seclusion from the world, and a variety of penitential and meritorious acts of self-mortifi-

<sup>1</sup> Compare the occasional notices of the Indian gymnosophists in Strabo (Lib. XV. c. 1, after accounts from the time of Alexander the Great), Arrian (Exped. Alex., Lib. VII. c. 1-3, and Hist. Ind., c. 11), Plinius (Hist. Nat., VII. 2), Diod. Sic. (Lib. II), Plutarch (Alex., 64), Porphyry (De abstinent., Lib. IV.), Lucian (Fugit., 7), Clemens Alex. (Strom. Lib. I. and III.), and August. (De civit. Dei., Lib. XIV. c. 17: "Per opacas Indiae solitudines, quum quidam nudi philosophentur, unde gymnosophistae nominantur; adhibent tamen genitalibus tegmina, quibus per cetera membrorum caret"; and Lib. XV. 20, where he denies all merit to their celibacy, because it is not "secundum fidem summi boni, qui est Deus"). With those ancient representations agree the narratives of Fon Kounki (about 400, translated by M. A. Rémusat, Par., 1836), Marco Polo (1280), Bremer (1670), Hamikton (1700), Papi, Niebuhr, Orlich, Sonnerat, and others. See the older accounts of Catholic missionaries to Thibet, in Pinkerton's Collection of Voyages and Travels, Vol. VII., and also the recent work of Huc, a French missionary priest of the congregation of Lazare: *Souvenirs d'un Voyage dans le Tartarie, le Thibet, et la Chine, pendant les années 1844-1846*. Compare also on the whole subject, the two works of R. S. Hardy, "Eastern Monasticism," and "A Manual of Buddhism in its Modern Development; transl. from Singalese MSS." Lond. 1850. The striking affinity between Buddhism and Romanism extends, by the way, beyond monkery and convent-life to the hierarchical organization, with the Grand Lama for pope, and to the worship, with its ceremonies, feasts, processions, pilgrimages, confessional, a kind of mass, prayers for the dead, extreme unction, etc. The view is certainly at least plausible, to which the great geographer, Carl Ritter (Erdkunde, II. p. 283-299, 2d ed.), has given the weight of his name, that the Lamaists in Thibet borrowed their religious forms and ceremonies in part from the Nestorian missionaries. But this view is a mere hypothesis, and is rendered improbable by the fact that Buddhism in Cochin China, Tonquin, and Japan, where no Nestorian missionaries ever were, shows the same striking resemblance to Romanism as the Lamaism of Thibet, Tartary, and North China. Respecting the singular tradition of Prester John, or the Christian priest-king in Eastern Asia, which arose about the eleventh century, and respecting the Nestorian missions, see Ritter, l. c.

cation, by which the devotee assumes a proud superiority over the vulgar herd of mortals, and is absorbed at last into the divine fountain of all being. The ascetic system is essential alike to Brahmanism and Buddhism, the two opposite and yet cognate branches of the Indian religion, which in many respects are similarly related to each other, as Judaism is to Christianity, or also as Romanism to Protestantism; Buddhism is a later reformation of Brahmanism; it dates probably from the sixth century before Christ (according to other accounts, much earlier); and, although subsequently expelled by the Brahmins from Hindostan, it embraces more followers than any other heathen religion, since it rules in Farther India, nearly all the Indian islands, Japan, Thibet, a great part of China, and Central Asia to the borders of Sibera. But the two religions start from opposite principles. The Brahmanic asceticism<sup>1</sup> proceeds from a pantheistic view of the world; the Buddhistic, from an atheistic and nihilistic, yet very earnest, view; the one is controlled by the idea of the absolute but abstract unity and a feeling of contempt of the world; the other, by the idea of the absolute but unreal variety and a feeling of deep grief over the emptiness and nothingness of all existence; the one is predominantly objective, positive, and idealistic; the other, more subjective, negative, and realistic; the one aims at an absorption into the universal spirit of Brahma; the other, consistently, into an absorption into nonentity, if it be true that Buddhism starts from an atheistic rather than a pantheistic or dualistic basis. "Brahmanism," says a modern writer on the subject,<sup>2</sup> "looks back to the beginning; Buddhism, to the end; the former loves cosmogony; the latter, eschatology. Both reject the existing world; the Brahman despises it because he contrasts it with the higher being of Brahma; the Buddhist bewails it because of its

<sup>1</sup> The Indian word for it is *tapas*, i.e. the burning out, or the extinction, of the individual being, and its absorption into the essence of Brahma.

<sup>2</sup> Ad. Wuttke, in his able and instructive work, *Das Geistesleben der Chinesen, Japaner, und Indier* (second part of his *History of Heathenism*), 1853, p. 593.

unrealness; the former sees God in all; the other, emptiness in all." Yet, as all extremes meet, the abstract all-entirety of Brahmanism and the equally abstract nonentity or vacuity of Buddhism come to the same thing in the end, and may lead to the same ascetic practices. The asceticism of Brahmanism takes more the direction of anchoretism, while that of Buddhism exists generally in the social form of regular convent life.

The Hindu monks or gymnosophists (naked philosophers), as the Greeks called them, live in woods, caves, on mountains or rocks, in poverty, celibacy, abstinence, silence, sleeping on straw or the bare ground, crawling on the belly, standing all day on tiptoe, exposed to the pouring rain or scorching sun, with four fires kindled around them, presenting a savage and frightful appearance, yet greatly revered by the multitude, especially the women, and performing miracles, not unfrequently completing their austerities by suicide at the stake or in the waves of the Ganges. Thus they are described by the ancients and by modern travellers. The Buddhist monks are less fanatical and extravagant than the Hindu yogis and fakirs. They depend mainly on fasting, prayer, psalmody, intense contemplation, and the use of the whip, to keep their rebellious flesh in subjection. They have a fully developed system of monasticism in connection with their priesthood, and a large number of convents, also nunneries for female devotees. The Buddhist monasticism, especially in Thibet, with its vows of celibacy, poverty, and obedience, its common meals, readings, and various pious exercises, bears such a remarkable resemblance to that of the Roman Catholic church, that older Roman missionaries thought it could be only explained as a diabolical imitation. But the original always precedes the caricature, and the ascetic system was completed in India long before the introduction of Christianity, even if we should trace this back to Saint Bartholomew and Saint Thomas.

The Hellenic heathenism was less serious and contem-

plative, indeed, than the Oriental; yet the Pythagoreans were a kind of monastic society, and the Platonic view of matter and of body not only lies at the bottom of the Gnostic and Manichaean asceticism, but had much to do also with the ethics of Origen and the Alexandrian school.

Judaism, apart from the ancient Nazarites,<sup>1</sup> had its Essenes in Palestine,<sup>2</sup> and its Therapeutae in Egypt;<sup>3</sup> though these betray the intrusion of foreign elements into the Mosaic religion, and so find no mention in the New Testament.

Lastly, Mohammedanism, though in mere imitation of Christian and pagan examples, has, as is well known, its dervises and cloisters.<sup>4</sup>

Now, were these earlier phenomena the source, or only analogies, of the Christian monasticism? That a multitude of foreign usages and rites made their way into the church in the age of Constantine, is undeniable. Hence many have held that monasticism also came from heathenism, and was an apostasy from apostolic Christianity, which Paul had plainly foretold in the Pastoral Epistles.<sup>5</sup> But such a

<sup>1</sup> Comp. Num. vi. 1-21.

<sup>2</sup> Compare the remarkable description of these Jewish monks by the elder Pliny (Hist. Natur. V. 15): "Gens sola, et in toto orbe praeter caeteros mira, sine ulla femina, omni venere abdicata, sine pecunia, socia palmarum. Ita per saeculorum millia (incredibile dictu) gens aeterna est in qua nemo nascitur. Tam foecunda illis aliorum vitae penitentia est."

<sup>3</sup> Eusebius (Ecl. Hist. II. 17) erroneously takes them for Christians.

<sup>4</sup> H. Ruffner (*The Fathers of the Desert*, Vol. I. chap. II. - IX., N. York, 1850) gives an extended description of these extra-Christian forms of monasticism, and derives the Christian from them, especially from the Buddhist.

<sup>5</sup> So even Calvin, who, in his Commentary on 1 Tim. iv. 3, refers Paul's prophecy of the ascetic apostasy primarily to the Eucratites, Gnostics, Montanists, and Manichaeans, but extends it also to the Papists: *quando coelibatum et ciborum abinentiam severius urgent quam ullum Dei praeceptum*. So, recently, Ruffner, and especially Isaac Taylor, who, in his "Ancient Christianity" (Vol. I. p. 299 sqq.), has a special chapter on the Predicted Ascetic Apostasy. The best modern interpreters, however, are agreed that the apostle has the heretical Gnostic dualistic asceticism in his eye, which forbade marriage and certain meats as intrinsically impure; whereas the Roman and Greek churches make marriage a sacrament, subordinate it only to celibacy, and limit the prohibition of it to priests and monks. The application of 1 Tim. iv. 1-3 to the Catholic church is therefore admissible, at most, only in a partial and indirect way.

view can hardly be reconciled with the great place of this phenomenon in history; and would, furthermore, involve the entire ancient church, with its greatest and best representatives, both east and west,—its Athanasius, its Chrysostom, its Jerome, its Augustine,—in the predicted apostasy from the faith. And no one will now hold that these men, who all admired and commended the monastic life, were antichristian errorists, and that the few and almost exclusively negative opponents of that asceticism, as Jovinian, Helvidius, and Vigilantius, were the sole representatives of pure Christianity in the Nicene and next following age.

In this whole matter we must carefully distinguish two forms of asceticism, antagonistic and irreconcilable in spirit and principle, though similar in form — the Gnostic dualistic and the Catholic. The former of these did certainly come from heathenism; but the latter sprang independently from the Christian spirit of self-denial and longing for moral perfection, and, in spite of all its excrescences, has fulfilled an important mission in the history of the church.

The pagan monachism, the pseudo-Jewish, the heretical Christian, above all the Gnostic and Manichæan, is based on an irreconcilable metaphysical dualism between mind and matter; the catholic Christian monachism arises from the moral conflict between the spirit and the flesh. The former is prompted throughout by spiritual pride and selfishness; the latter, by humility and love to God and man. The false asceticism aims at annihilation of the body and pantheistic absorption of the human being in the divine; the Christian strives after the glorification of the body and personal fellowship with the living God in Christ. And the effects of the two are equally different. Though it is also unquestionable that, notwithstanding this difference of principle, and despite the condemnation of Gnosticism and Manichæism, the heathen dualism exerted a powerful influence on the catholic asceticism and its view of the world, particularly upon anchoritism and monasticism in the East, and has been fully transcended only in evangelical Protestantism. The precise

degree of this influence, and the exact proportion of Christian and heathen ingredients in the early monachism of the church, were an interesting subject of special investigation.

The germs of the Christian monasticism may be traced as far back as the middle of the second century, and, in fact, faintly even in the anxious ascetic practices of some of the Jewish Christians in the apostolic age. This asceticism, particularly fasting and celibacy, was commended more or less distinctly by the most eminent ante-Nicene Fathers, and was practised, at least partially, by a particular class of Christians (by Origen even to the unnatural extreme of self-emasculation). So early as the Decian persecution, about the year 250, we meet also the first instances of the flight of ascetics, or Christian philosophers, into the wilderness, though rather in exceptional cases, and by way of escape from personal danger. So long as the church herself was a child of the desert, and stood in abrupt opposition to the persecuting world, the ascetics of both sexes usually lived near the congregations or in the midst of them, often even in the families, seeking there to realize the ideal of Christian perfection. But when, under Constantine, the mass of the population of the empire became nominally Christian, they felt that in this world-church, especially in such cities as Alexandria, Antioch, and Constantinople, they were not at home, and voluntarily retired into waste and desolate places and mountain clefts, there to work out the salvation of their souls undisturbed.

Thus far monachism is a reaction against the secularizing state-church system and the decay of discipline, and an earnest, well-meant, though mistaken, effort to save the virginal purity of the Christian church, by transplanting it in the wilderness. The moral corruption of the Roman empire, which had the appearance of Christianity, but was essentially heathen in the whole framework of society, the oppressiveness of taxes,<sup>1</sup> the extremes of despotism and

<sup>1</sup> Lactantius says it was necessary to buy even the liberty of breathing; and, according to Zosimus (*Hist.* II. 33), fathers prostituted their daughters to have means to pay their tax.



slavery, of extravagant luxury and hopeless poverty, the repletion of classes, the decay of all productive energy in science and art, and the threatening incursions of barbarians on the frontiers, — all favored the inclination towards solitude in just the most earnest minds.

At the same time, however, monasticism afforded also a compensation for martyrdom, which ceased with the Christianization of the state, and thus gave place to a voluntary martyrdom, a gradual self-destruction, a sort of religious suicide. In the burning deserts and awful caverns of Egypt and Syria, amidst the pains of self-torture, the mortification of natural desires, and relentless battles with hellish monsters, the ascetics now sought to win the crown of heavenly glory, which their predecessors in the times of persecution had more quickly and easily gained by a bloody death.

The native land of the monastic life was Egypt, the land where oriental and Grecian literature, philosophy, and religion, Christian orthodoxy and Gnostic heresy met, both in friendship and hostility. Monasticism was favored and promoted here by climate and geographic features, by the oasis-like seclusion of the country, by the bold contrast of barren deserts with the fertile valley of the Nile, by the superstition, the contemplative turn, and the passive endurance of the national character, by the example of the Therapeutae, and by the moral principles of the Alexandrian Fathers; especially by Origen's theory of a higher and lower morality, and of the merit of voluntary poverty and celibacy. Aelian says of the Egyptians, that they bear the most exquisite torture without a murmur, and would rather be tormented to death than compromise truth. Such natures, once seized with religious enthusiasm, are eminently qualified for saints of the desert.

#### DEVELOPMENT OF MONASTICISM.

In the historical development of the monastic institution, we must distinguish four stages. The first three were completed in the fourth century; the remaining one reached maturity in the Latin church of the Middle Age

The first stage is an ascetic life, as yet not organized nor separated from the church. It comes down from the ante-Nicene age, and has been already noticed. It now took the form, for the most part, of either hermit or cenobite life, but continued in the church itself, especially among the clergy, who might be called half monks.

The second stage is hermit life or anchoretism.<sup>1</sup> It arose in the beginning of the fourth century, gave asceticism a fixed and permanent shape, and pushed it even to external separation from the world. It took the prophets Elijah and John the Baptist for its models, and went beyond them. Not content with partial and temporary retirement from common life, which may be united with social intercourse and useful labors, the consistent anchorite secludes himself from all society, even from kindred ascetics, and comes only exceptionally into contact with human affairs, either to receive the visits of admirers of every class, especially of the sick and the needy (which were very frequent in the case of the more celebrated monks), or to appear in the cities on some extraordinary occasion as a spirit from another world. His clothing is a hair shirt and a wild beast's skin; his food, bread and salt; his dwelling, a cave; his employment, prayer, affliction of the body, and conflict with Satanic powers and wild images of fancy. This mode of life was founded by Paul of Thebes and Saint Anthony, and came to perfection in the East. It was too eccentric and unpractical for the West, and hence less frequent there, especially in the rougher climates. To the female sex it was entirely unsuited. There was a class of hermits, the Sarabaites in Egypt and the Rhemoboths in Syria, who lived in bands of at least two or three together; but their quarrelsomeness, occasional intemperance, and opposition to the clergy, brought them into ill repute.

<sup>1</sup> From *ἀναχωρέω*, to retire (from human society), *ἀναχωρητής*, *ἐρημίτης* (from *ἐρημία*, a desert). The word *μοναχός* (from *μόνος*, alone, and *μονάζειν*, to live alone), *monachus* (whence monk), also points originally to solitary, hermit life, but is commonly synonymous with cenobite or friar.

The third step in the progress of the monastic life brings us to cenobitism or cloister life,—monasticism in the ordinary sense of the word.<sup>1</sup> It originated likewise in Egypt, from the example of the Essenes and Therapeutae, and was carried by Saint Pachomius to the East, and afterwards by Saint Benedict to the West. Both these ascetics, like the most celebrated order-founders of later days, were originally hermits. Cloister life is a regular organization of the ascetic life on a social basis. It recognizes, at least in a measure, the social element of human nature, and represents it in a narrower sphere, secluded from the larger world. As hermit life often led to cloister life, so the cloister life was not only a refuge for the spirit weary of the world, but also in many ways a school for practical life in the church. It formed the transition from isolated to social Christianity. It consists in an association of a number of anchorets of the same sex for mutual advancement in ascetic holiness. The cenobites live somewhat according to the laws of civilization, under one roof, and under a superintendent or abbot.<sup>2</sup> They divide their time between common devotions and manual labor, and devote their surplus provisions to charity, except the mendicant monks, who themselves live by alms. In this modified form monasticism became available to the female sex, to which the solitary desert life was utterly impracticable; and with the cloisters of monks there appear at once cloisters also of nuns.<sup>3</sup> Between the anchorets

<sup>1</sup> Κοινόβιον, *coenobium*; from κοινὸς βίος, *vita communis*; then the congregation of monks; sometimes also used for the building. In the same sense μάδρα, stable, fold, and μοναστήριον, *claustrum* (whence cloister). Also λαύραι, *laurae* (literally streets), that is cells, of which usually a number were built, not far apart, so as to form a hamlet. Hence this term is often used in the same sense as *monasterium*. The singular λαύρα, however, answers to the anchoret-life. On this nomenclature of monasticism compare Du Cange, in the *Glossarium mediae et infimae Latinitatis*, under the respective words.

<sup>2</sup> Ἡγούμενος, ἀρχιμανδρίτης, ἀββᾶς, i.e. father, hence abbot. A female superintendent was called in Syriac ἀμμᾶς, mother, abbess.

<sup>3</sup> From *nonna*, i.e. casta, chaste, holy. The word is probably of Coptic origin, and occurs as early as in Jerome. The masculine *nonnus*, monk, appears frequently in the Middle Age. Compare the examples in Du Cange, s. v.

and cenobites no little jealousy reigned; the former charging the latter with ease and conformity to the world; the latter accusing the former of selfishness and misanthropy. The most eminent church teachers generally prefer the cloister life. But the hermits, though their numbers diminished, never became extinct. Many a monk was a hermit first, and then a cenobite; and many a cenobite turned to a hermit.

The same social impulse, finally, which produced monastic congregations, led afterwards to monastic orders—unions of a number of cloisters under one rule and a common government. In this fourth and last stage monasticism has done most for the diffusion of Christianity and the advancement of learning,<sup>1</sup> has fulfilled its practical mission in the Roman Catholic church, and still wields a mighty influence there. At the same time it became, in some sense, the cradle of the German Reformation. Luther belonged to the order of Saint Augustine, and the monastic discipline of Erfurt was to him a preparation for evangelical freedom, as the Mosaic law was to Paul a schoolmaster to lead to Christ. And for this very reason Protestantism is the end of the monastic life.

#### NATURE AND AIM OF MONASTICISM.

From the first, monasticism was contemplative, and was thus distinguished from the practical life.<sup>2</sup> It passed, with the ancient Catholic church, for the true, the divine, or Christian philosophy,<sup>3</sup> an unworldly, purely apostolic, angelic

<sup>1</sup> Hence Middleton says, not without reason: "By all which I have ever read of the old, and have seen of the modern monks, I take the preference to be clearly due to the last, as having a more regular discipline, more good learning, and less superstition among them than the first."

<sup>2</sup> *Bíos θεωρητικός* and *bíos πρακτικός*, according to Gregory Nazianzen and others. Throughout the Middle Age the distinction between the *vita contemplativa* and the *vita activa* was illustrated by the two sisters of Lazarus (Luke x. 33-42).

<sup>3</sup> Ἡ κατὰ θεὸν οὐ Χριστὸν φιλοσοφία, ἢ ὑψηλὴ φιλοσ., i.e. in the sense of the ancients, not so much a speculative system, as a mode of life under a particular

life.<sup>1</sup> It rests not only upon an earnest view of life—upon the instinctive struggle after perfect dominion of the spirit over the flesh, reason over sense, the supernatural over the natural, after the highest grade of holiness and an undisturbed communion of the soul with God; but also upon a morbid depreciation of the body, the family, the state, and the divinely established social order of the world. It recognizes the world, indeed, as a creature of God, and the family and property as divine institutions, in opposition to the Gnostic Manichæan asceticism, which ascribes matter, as such, to an evil principle. But it makes a distinction between two grades of morality: a common and lower grade, democratic, so to speak, which moves in the natural ordinances of God; and a higher, extraordinary, aristocratic grade, which lies beyond them, and is attended with special merit. It places the great problem of Christianity not in the transformation, but in the abandonment, of the world. It is an extreme unworldliness, over against the worldliness of the mass of the visible church in union with the state. It demands entire renunciation, not only of sin, but also of property and of marriage, which are lawful in themselves, ordained by God himself, and indispensable to the continuance and welfare of the human race. The poverty of the individual, however, does not exclude the possession of common property; and it is well known that some monastic orders, especially the Benedictines, have in course of time grown very rich. The Cenobite institution requires also absolute obedience to the will of the superior, as the visible representative of Christ. As obedience to orders and sacrifice of self is the first duty of the soldier and the condition of military success and renown, so also in this Christian war against the spiritual enemy, the flesh, the world, and the devil. Monks are not allowed

rule. So in the Pythagoreans, Stoics, Cynics, and Neo-Platonists, ascetics and philosophers are the same.

<sup>1</sup> Ἀποστολικὸς βίος, ὁ τῶν ἀγγέλων βίος, *vita angelica*; after an unwarranted application of Christ's word respecting the sexless life of the angels (Matt. xxii. 30), which is not presented here as a model for imitation, but only mentioned as an argument against the Sadducees.

to have a will of their own. To them may be applied the lines of Tennyson :

Theirs not to reason why,  
Theirs not to make reply,  
Theirs but to do and die.

Voluntary poverty, voluntary celibacy, and absolute obedience, form the three monastic vows, as they are called, and are supposed to constitute a higher virtue and to secure a higher reward in heaven.

But this threefold self-denial is only the negative side of the matter, and a means to an end. It places man beyond the reach of the temptations connected with earthly possessions, married life, and independent will, and facilitates his progress towards heaven. The positive aspect of monasticism is unreserved surrender of the whole man, with all his time and strength, to God, though, as we have said, not within, but without the sphere of society and the order of nature. This devoted life is employed in continual prayer, meditation, fasting, and castigation of the body. Some votaries went so far as to reject all bodily employment for its interference with devotion. But in general a moderate union of spiritual exercises with scientific studies, or with such manual labor as agriculture, basket-making, weaving, for their own living and the support of the poor, was held not only lawful but wholesome for monks. It was a proverb, that a laborious monk was beset by only one devil ; an idle one, by a legion.

With all the austerities and rigors of asceticism, the monastic life had its spiritual joys and irresistible charms for noble, contemplative, and heaven-aspiring souls, who fled from the turmoil and vain show of the city as a prison, and turned the solitude into a paradise of freedom and sweet communion with God and his saints ; while to others the same solitude became a fruitful nursery of idleness, despondency, and the most perilous temptations and ultimate ruin.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Compare the truthful remark of Yves de Chartres, of the twelfth century, Ep. 192 (quoted by Montalembert) : " Non beatum faciunt usa hominem secreta syl-

## MONASTICISM AND THE BIBLE.

Monasticism, therefore, claims to be the highest and purest form of Christian piety and virtue, and the surest way to heaven. Then we should think it must be pre-eminently commended in the Bible, and actually exhibited in the life of Christ and the apostles. But just in this biblical support it falls short.

The advocates of it uniformly refer, first, to the examples of Elijah, Elisha, and John the Baptist;<sup>1</sup> but these stand on the legal level of the Old Testament, and are to be looked upon as extraordinary personages of an extraordinary age; and though they may be regarded as types of a partial anchoretism (not of cloister life), still they are nowhere commended to our imitation in this particular, but rather in their influence upon the world.

The next appeal is to a few isolated passages of the New Testament, which do not, indeed, in their literal sense, require the renunciation of property and marriage, yet seem to recommend it as a special, exceptional form of piety for those Christians who strive after higher perfection.<sup>2</sup>

varum, casumina montium, si secum non habet solitudinem mentis, sabbatum cordis, tranquillitatem conscientiae, ascensiones in corde, sine quibus omnem solitudinem comitantur mentis acedia, curiositas, vana gloria, periculosae tentationum procellae."

<sup>1</sup> So Jerome, Ep. 49, ad Paulinum, where he adduces, besides Elijah and John, Isaiah, also, and the sons of the prophets as the fathers of monasticism; and in his Vita Pauli, where, however, he more correctly designates Paul of Thebes and Anthony as the first hermits, properly so called, in distinction from the prophets. Comp. also Sozomen, Hist. Eccl., Lib. I. c. 12: Ταύτης δὲ τῆς ἀρίστης φιλοσοφίας ἤρξατο, ἔς τινες λέγουσιν, Ἠλίας ὁ προφήτης καὶ Ἰωάννης ὁ βαπτιστής. This appeal to the example of Elijah and John the Baptist has become traditional with the Catholic writers on the subject. Alban Butler says, under Jan. 15, in the life of Paul of Thebes: "Elias and John the Baptist sanctified the deserts, and Jesus Christ himself was a model of the eremitical state during his forty days' fast in the wilderness; neither is it to be questioned but the Holy Ghost conducted the saint of this day (Paul of Thebes) into the desert, and was to him an instructor there."

<sup>2</sup> Hence called *consilia evangelica*, in distinction from *mandata divina*; after 1 Cor. vii. 25, where Paul does certainly make a similar distinction. The *consilium* and *votum paupertatis* is based on Matt. xix. 21; the *votum castitatis*, on 1 Cor.

Finally, as respects the spirit of the monastic life, reference is sometimes made even to the poverty of Christ and his apostles, to the silent, contemplative Mary in contrast with the busy, practical Martha, and to the voluntary community of goods in the first Christian church in Jerusalem.

But this monastic interpretation of primitive Christianity mistakes a few incidental points of outward resemblance for essential identity; measures the spirit of Christianity by some isolated passages, instead of explaining the latter from the former; and is, upon the whole, a miserable emaciation and caricature. The gospel makes upon all men virtually the same moral demand, and knows no distinction of a religion for the masses and another for the few.

Jesus, the model for all believers, was neither a cenobite, nor an anchorite, nor an ascetic of any kind, but the perfect pattern-man for universal imitation. There is not a trace of monkish austerity and ascetic rigor in his life or precepts, but in all his acts and words a wonderful harmony of freedom and purity, of the most comprehensive charity, and spotless holiness. He retired to the mountains and into solitude, but only temporarily and for the purpose of renewing his strength for active work. Amidst the society of his disciples of both sexes, with kindred and friends in Cana and Bethany, at the table of publicans and sinners, and in intercourse with all classes of the people, he kept himself unspotted from the world, and transfigured the world into the kingdom of God. His poverty and celibacy have nothing to do with asceticism, but represent, the one the condescension of his redeeming love, the other his ideal uniqueness and his absolutely peculiar relation to the whole church, which alone is fit and worthy to be his bride. No single daughter of Eve could have been an equal partner of the Saviour of mankind, and the representative head of the new creation.

vii. 8, 25, 38-40. For the *votum obedientiae* no particular text is quoted. The theory appears substantially as early as in Origen, and was in him not merely a personal opinion, but the reflex of a very widely-spread practice.



The example of the sister of Lazarus proves only that the contemplative life may dwell in the same house with the practical, and with the other sex, but justifies no separation from the social ties.

The life of the apostles and primitive Christians in general was anything but a hermit life; else had not the gospel spread so quickly to all the cities of the Roman world. Peter was married, and travelled with his wife as a missionary. Paul assumes one marriage of the clergy as the rule; and notwithstanding his subjective and relative preference for celibacy in the then oppressed condition of the church, he is the most zealous advocate of evangelical freedom, in opposition to all legal bondage and anxious asceticism.

Monasticism, therefore, in any case, is not the normal form of evangelical religion. It is an abnormal phenomenon, a humanly devised service of God, and not rarely a sad enervation and repulsive distortion of the Christianity of the Bible. And it is to be estimated, therefore, not by the extent of its self-denial, nor by its outward acts of self-discipline (which may all be found in heathenism, Judaism, Mohammedanism, as well), but by the Christian spirit of humility and love to God and man which animated it. For humility is the groundwork and love the all-ruling principle of the Christian life, and the distinctive characteristic of the Christian religion. Without love the severest self-punishment and the utmost abandonment of the world are worthless before God.<sup>3</sup>

#### LIGHTS AND SHADES OF MONASTIC LIFE.

The contrast between pure and normal Bible Christianity and abnormal monastic Christianity, will appear more fully if we enter into a closer examination of the latter as it actually appeared in the ancient church.

The extraordinary rapidity with which this world-forsaking form of piety spread, bears witness to a high degree of self-

<sup>1</sup> Compare Col. ii. 16-23.

<sup>2</sup> Compare 1 Cor. xiii. 1-3.

denying moral earnestness, which, even in its mistakes and vagrancies, one must admire. Our age, accustomed and wedded to all possible comforts, and far in advance of the Nicene age in respect to the average morality of the masses, could beget no such ascetic extremes. But in our estimate of the diffusion of the monastic life, the polluting power of the theatre, oppressive taxation, slavery, the multitude of civil wars, and the hopeless condition of the Roman empire, must all come into view. Nor must we by any means measure the moral importance of this phenomenon by numbers. Monasticism, from the beginning, attracted persons of opposite character and from opposite motives. Moral earnestness and religious enthusiasm were accompanied here, as formerly in martyrdom, though even in larger measure than there, with all kinds of sinister motives — indolence, discontent, weariness of life, misanthropy, ambition for spiritual distinction, and every sort of misfortune or accidental circumstance. Palladius, to mention but one illustrious example, tells of Paul the Simple,<sup>1</sup> that from indignation against his wife, whom he detected in an act of infidelity, he hastened, with the current oath of that day, “in the name of Jesus,”<sup>2</sup> into the wilderness; and immediately, though now sixty years old, under the direction of Anthony, he became a very model monk, and attained an astonishing degree of humility, simplicity, and perfect submission of will.

In view of these different motives, we need not be surprised that the moral character of the monks varied greatly, and presents opposite extremes. Augustine says he found among the monks and nuns the best and the worst of mankind.

Looking more closely, in the first place, at anchoritism, we meet in its history unquestionably many a heroic character, who attained an incredible mastery over his sensual nature, and, like the Old Testament prophets and John the

<sup>1</sup> Ἀπλάστος.

<sup>2</sup> Μὴ τὸν Ἰησοῦν (*per Christum*, in Salvian), which now took the place of the pagan oath; μὴ τὸν Δία, *by Jupiter*.

Baptist, by their mere appearance and their occasional preaching, made an overwhelming impression on his contemporaries among the heathen. Saint Antony's visit to Alexandria was to the gazing multitude like the visit of a messenger from the other world, and resulted in many conversions. His emaciated face, the glare of his eye, his spectral yet venerable form, his contempt of the world, and his few aphoristic sentences, told more powerfully on that age and people than a most elaborate sermon. Saint Symeon, standing on a column from year to year, fasting, praying, and exhorting the visitors to repentance, was to his generation a standing miracle and sign that pointed them to heaven. Sometimes, in seasons of public calamity, such hermits saved whole cities and provinces from the imperial wrath by their effectual intercessions. When Theodosius, in 387, was about to destroy Antioch for a sedition, the hermit Macedonius met the two imperial commissaries, who reverently dismounted and kissed his hands and feet; he reminded them and the emperor of their own weakness, set before them the value of men as immortal images of God, in comparison with the perishable statues of the emperor, and thus saved the city from demolition.<sup>1</sup> The heroism of the anchoritic life, in the voluntary renunciation of lawful pleasures and the patient endurance of self-inflicted pains, is worthy of admiration in its way, and not rarely almost incredible.

But this moral heroism — and these are the weak points of it — oversteps not only the present standard of Christianity, but all sound measure; it has no support either in the theory or the practice of Christ and the apostolic church; and it has far more resemblance to heathen than to biblical precedents. Many of the most eminent saints of the desert differ only in their Christian confession and in some Bible phrases, learned by rote, from Buddhist fakirs and Mohammedan dervises. Their highest virtuousness consisted in bodily exercises of their own devising, which, without love,

<sup>1</sup> In Theodoret, *Hist. Relig.*, c. 13.

at best profit nothing, very often only gratify spiritual vanity, and entirely obscure the gospel way of salvation.

To illustrate this by a few examples, we may choose any of the most celebrated eastern anchorets of the fourth and fifth centuries, as reported by the most credible contemporaries.

The Holy scriptures instruct us to pray and to labor; and to pray not only mechanically with the lips, as the heathen do, but with all the heart. But Paul the Simple said daily three hundred prayers, counting them with pebbles, which he carried in his bosom (a sort of rosary); when he heard of a virgin who prayed seven hundred times a day he was troubled, and told his distress to Macarius, who well answered him: "Either thou prayest not with thy heart, if thy conscience reproves thee, or thou couldst pray oftener. I have for six years prayed only a hundred times a day, without being obliged to condemn myself for neglect." Christ ate and drank like other men, expressly distinguishing himself thereby from John, the representative of the old covenant; and Paul recommends to us to use the gifts of God temperately, with cheerful and childlike gratitude.<sup>1</sup> But the renowned anchoret and presbyter Isidore of Alexandria (whom Athanasius ordained) touched no meat, never ate enough, and, as Palladius relates, often burst into tears at table for shame, that he, who was destined to eat angels' food in paradise, should have to eat material stuff, like the irrational brutes. Macarius the elder, or the great, for a long time ate only once a week, and slept standing and leaning on a staff. The equally celebrated younger Macarius lived three years on four or five ounces of bread a day, and seven years on raw herbs and pulse. Ptolemy spent three years alone in an unwatered desert, and quenched his thirst with the dew, which he collected in December and January, and preserved in earthen vessels; but he fell at last into scepticism, madness, and debauchery.<sup>2</sup> Sozomen tells

<sup>1</sup> Compare Matt. xi. 18, 19; 1 Tim. iv. 3-5.

<sup>2</sup> Compare Hist. Laus., c. 33 and 95,

of a certain *Batthaeus*, that, by reason of his extreme abstinence, worms crawled out of his teeth; of *Alas*, that to his eightieth year he never ate bread; of *Heliodorus*, that he spent many nights without sleep, and fasted, without interruption, seven days.<sup>1</sup> *Symeon*, a Christian *Diogenes*, spent six and thirty years, praying, fasting, and preaching, on the top of a pillar thirty or forty feet high, ate only once a week, and in fast-times not at all. Such a heroism of abstinence was possible, however, only in the torrid climate of the East, and is not to be met with in the West.

Anchoretism almost always carries a certain cynic roughness and coarseness, which, indeed, in the light of that age, may be leniently judged, but certainly have no affinity with the morality of the Bible, and offend not only good taste, but all sound moral feeling. The ascetic holiness, at least according to the Egyptian idea, is incompatible with cleanliness and decency, and delights in filth. It reverses the maxim of sound evangelical morality and modern Christian civilization, that cleanliness is next to godliness. Saints *Anthony* and *Hilarion*, as their admirers, *Athanasius the Great* and *Jerome the learned*, tell us, scorned to comb or cut their hair, save once a year (at Easter), or to wash their hands or feet. Other hermits went almost naked in the wilderness, like the Indian *gymnosophists*.<sup>2</sup> The younger *Macarius*, according to the account of his disciple *Palladius*, once lay six months naked in the morass of the Scetic desert, and thus exposed himself to the incessant attacks of the gnats of Africa, "whose sting can pierce even the hide of a wild boar." He wished to punish himself for his arbitrary revenge on a gnat, and was there so badly stung by gnats and wasps, that he was thought to be smitten with

<sup>1</sup> *Hist. Eccles.*, Lib. VI, cap. 34.

<sup>2</sup> These latter themselves were not absolutely naked, but wore a covering over the middle, as *Augustine* in the passage above cited (*De civit. Dei*, Lib. XIV. c. 17), and later tourists tell us. On the contrary, there were monks who were very scrupulous on this point. It is said of *Ammon*, that he never saw himself naked. The monks in *Tabennae*, according to the rule of *Pachomius*, had to sleep in their clothes.

leprosy, and was recognized only by his voice.<sup>1</sup> Saint Symeon the Stylite, according to Theodoret, suffered himself to be incessantly tormented for a long time by twenty enormous bugs, and concealed an abscess full of worms, to exercise himself in patience and meekness. In Mesopotamia there was a peculiar class of anchorites, who lived on grass, spending the greater part of the day in prayer and singing, and then turning out like beasts upon the mountains.<sup>2</sup> Theodoret relates of the much-lauded Akepsimas, in Cyprus, that he spent sixty years in the same cell, without seeing or speaking to any one, and looked so wild and shaggy, that he was once actually taken for a wolf by a shepherd, who assailed him with stones, till he discovered his error, and then worshipped the hermit as a saint.<sup>3</sup> It was but a step from this kind of moral sublimity to beastly degradation. Many of these saints were no more than low sluggards or gloomy misanthropes, who would rather company with wild beasts, with lions, wolves, and hyenas, than with immortal men, and above all shunned the face of a woman more carefully than they did the devil. Sulpitius Severus saw an anchorite in the Thebaid who daily shared his evening meal with a female wolf, and upon her discontinuing her visits for some days, by way of penance for a theft she had committed, he besought her to come again, and comforted her with a double portion of bread.<sup>4</sup> The same writer tells of a hermit who lived fifty years secluded from all human society, in the clefts of Mount Sinai, entirely destitute of clothing, and all overgrown with thick hair, avoiding every visitor, because, as he said, inter-

<sup>1</sup> Compare *Hist. Lausiaca*, c. 20, and *Tillemont, Memoires*, etc., Tom. VIII. p. 633.

<sup>2</sup> The *Βουκολί*, or *pubulatores*. Compare *Sozom., Hist. Eccl., Lib. VI. 33*. Ephraim Syrus delivered a special eulogy on them, *Op. 140*, cited in *Tillemont, Mem.*, Tom. VIII. p. 292 seq.

<sup>3</sup> *Hist. Rel.*, cap. XV.

<sup>4</sup> *Dial.*, I. c. 8. Severus sees in this a wonderful example of the power of Christ over wild beasts.

course with men interrupted the visits of the angels; whence arose the report that he held intercourse with angels.<sup>1</sup>

It is no recommendation to these ascetic eccentricities that, while they are without scripture authority, they are fully equalled and even surpassed by the strange modes of self-torture practised by ancient and modern Hindu devotees, for the supposed benefit of their souls and the gratification of their vanity, in the presence of admiring spectators. Some bury themselves, we are told by ancient and modern travellers, in pits, with only small breathing holes at the top; while others, disdaining to touch the vile earth, live in iron cages suspended from trees. Some wear heavy iron collars or fetters, or drag a heavy chain, fastened by one end round their privy parts, to give ostentatious proof of their chastity. Others keep their fists hard shut, until their finger nails grow through the palms of their hands. Some stand perpetually on one leg; others keep their faces turned over one shoulder, until they cannot turn them back again. Some lie on wooden beds, bristling all over with iron spikes; others are fastened for life to the trunk of a tree by a chain. Some suspend themselves for half an hour at a time, feet uppermost, or with a hook thrust through their naked backs, over a hot fire. Alexander von Humboldt, at Astracan, where some Hindus had settled, found a yogi in the vestibule of the temple naked, shrivelled up and overgrown with hair, like a wild beast, who in this position had withstood, for twenty years, the severe winters of that climate. A Jesuit missionary describes one of the class called Taparoinas, that he had his body enclosed in an iron cage, with his head and feet outside, so that he could walk, but neither sit nor lie down; at night his pious attendants attached a hundred lighted lamps to the outside of the cage, so that their master could exhibit himself walking as the mock-light of the world.<sup>2</sup>

In general, the hermit life confounds the fleeing from the

<sup>1</sup> L. c. I. c. 11.

<sup>2</sup> See Ruffner, l. c. I. 49 seq. and Wuttke l. c. p. 369. seq.

outward world with the mortification of the inward world of the corrupt heart. It mistakes the duty of love; not rarely, under its mask of humility and the utmost self-denial, cherishes spiritual pride and jealousy; and exposes itself to all the dangers of solitude, even to savage barbarism, beastly grossness, or despair and suicide. Anthony, the father of anchorets, well understood this, and warned his followers against overvaluing solitude, reminding them of the proverb of the Preacher (iv. 10): "Woe to him that is alone when he falleth; for he hath not another to help him up."

The cloister life was less exposed to these errors. It approached the life of society and civilization. Yet, on the other hand, it produced no such heroic phenomena, and had dangers peculiar to itself. Chrysostom gives us the bright side of it, from his own experience. "Before the rising of the sun," says he of the monks of Antioch, "they rise hale and sober, sing as with one mouth hymns to the praise of God, then bow the knee in prayer under the direction of the abbot, read the Holy scriptures, and go to their labors; pray again at nine, twelve, and three o'clock; after a good day's work enjoy a simple meal of bread and salt, perhaps with oil, and sometimes with pulse; sing a thanksgiving hymn, and lay themselves on their pallets of straw without care, grief, or murmur. When one dies, they say: he is perfected; and all pray God for a like end, that they also may come to the eternal sabbath-rest and to the vision of Christ." Men like Chrysostom, Basil, Gregory, Jerome, Nilus, and Isidore, united theological studies with the ascetic exercises of solitude, and thus gained a copious knowledge of scripture and a large spiritual experience.

But most of the monks either could not even read, or had too little intellectual culture to devote themselves with advantage to contemplation and study, and only brooded over gloomy feelings, or sank, in spite of the unsensual tendency of the ascetic principle, into the coarsest anthropomorphism and image worship. When the religious enthusiasm faltered or ceased, the cloister life, like the hermit life,



became the most spiritless and tedious routine, or hypocritically practised secret vices. For the monks carried with them into their solitude their most dangerous enemy in their hearts, and there often endured much fiercer conflicts with flesh and blood than amidst the society of men.

The temptations of sensuality, pride, and ambition externalized and personified themselves to the anchorets and monks in hellish shapes, which appeared in visions and dreams, now in pleasing and seductive, now in threatening and terrible, forms and colors, according to the state of mind at the time. The monastic imagination peopled the deserts and solitudes with the very worst society, with swarms of winged demons and all kinds of hellish monsters.<sup>1</sup> It substituted thus a new kind of polytheism for the heathen gods, which were generally supposed to be evil spirits. The monastic demonology and demonomachy is a strange mixture of gross superstitions and deep spiritual experiences. It forms the romantic, shady side of the otherwise so tedious monotony of the secluded life, and contains much material for the history of ethics, psychology, and pathology.

Especially besetting were the temptations of sensuality, and irresistible without the utmost exertion and constant watchfulness. The same saints, who could not conceive of true chastity without celibacy, were disturbed, according to their own confession, by unchaste dreams, which at least defiled the imagination.<sup>2</sup> Excessive asceti-

<sup>1</sup> According to a sensuous and local conception of Eph. vi. 12 : Τὰ πνευματικά τῆς κορυφῆς ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς ; "die bösen Geister unter dem Himmel" (evil spirits under heaven), as Luther translates, while the Vulgate gives it literally, but somewhat obscurely : *Spiritualia nequitiae in coelestibus* ; and the English Bible quite too freely : "Spiritual wickedness in high places." In any case *πνευματικά* is to be taken in a much wider sense than *ἐνεύματα* or *δαμόνια* ; and *κορυφία*, also, is not fully identical with the cloud-heaven, or the atmosphere, and besides admits a different construction, so that many put a comma after *κορυφίας*. The monastic satanology and demonology, we may remark, was universally received in the ancient church and throughout the Middle Age. And it is well known that Luther retained from his monastic life a sensuous, materialistic idea of the devil and of his influence on men.

<sup>2</sup> Athanasius says of St. Anthony, that the devil sometimes appeared to him

cism sometimes turned into unnatural vice; sometimes ended in madness, despair, and suicide. Pachomius tells us, so early as his day, that many monks cast themselves down precipices, others ripped themselves up, and others put themselves to death in other ways.<sup>1</sup>

A characteristic trait of monasticism in all its forms is a morbid aversion to female society and a rude contempt of married life. No wonder, then, that in Egypt and the whole East, the land of monasticism, woman and domestic life never attained their proper dignity, and to this day remain at a very low stage of culture. Among the rules of Basil is a prohibition of speaking with a woman, touching one, or even looking on one, except in unavoidable cases. Monasticism not seldom sundered the sacred bond between husband and wife, commonly with mutual consent, as in the cases of Ammon and Nilus, but often even without it. Indeed, a law of Justinian seems to give either party an unconditional right of desertion, while yet the word of God declares the marriage bond indissoluble. The council of Gangra found it necessary to oppose the notion that marriage is inconsistent with salvation, and to exhort wives to remain with their husbands. In the same way monasticism came into conflict with love of kindred, and with the relation of parents to children; misinterpreting the Lord's command to leave all

in the form of a woman; Jerome relates of St. Hilarion, that in bed his imagination was often beset with visions of naked women. Jerome himself acknowledges, in a letter to a virgin (!) (Epist. 18, ad Eustochium): "O quoties in eremo constitutus in illa vasta solitudine, quae exusta solis ardoribus horridum monachis praebebat habitaculum, putavi me Romanis interesse deliciis. . . . Ille igitur ego, qui obgehennae metum tali me carcere ipse damnaveram, scorpionum tantum socius et ferarum, saepe choris intereram puellarum. Pallebant ora jejuniis, et mens desiderii aestuabat in frigido corpore, et ante hominem suum jam in carne praemortua, sola libidinum incendia bulliebant. Itaque omni auxilio destitutus, ad Jesu jacebam pedes, rigabam lacrymis, crine tergebam et repugnantem carnem hebdomadarum inedia subjugabam." St. Ephraim warns against listening to the enemy, who whispers to the monk: Οὐ δυνατόν πάσασθαι ἀπὸ σου, ἐὰν μὴ πληροφόρησῃς ἐπιθυμίαν σου.

<sup>1</sup> Vita Pach. § 61 Compare Nilus. Epist., Lib. II. ep. 140: Τῶν. . . . ἑαυτοῦς ἔσφαζαν μαχαίρᾳ, etc. Even among the fanatical Circumcelliones, Donatist mendicant monks in Africa, suicide was not uncommon.

for his sake. Nilus demanded of the monk the entire suppression of the sense of blood-relationship. Saint Anthony forsook his younger sister, and saw her only once after the separation. His disciple Prior, when he became a monk, vowed never to see his kindred again, and would not even speak with his sister without closing his eyes. Something of the same sort is recorded of Pachomius. Ambrose and Jerome, in all earnest, enjoined upon virgins the cloister life, even against the will of their parents. When Hilary of Poitiers heard that his daughter wished to marry, he is said to have prayed God to take her to himself by death. One Mucius, without any provocation, caused his own son to be cruelly abused, and at last, at the command of the abbot himself, cast him into the water, whence he was rescued by a brother of the cloister.<sup>1</sup>

Even in the most favorable case, monasticism falls short of harmonious moral development, and of that symmetry of virtue which meets us in perfection in Christ, and next to him in the apostles. It lacks the firm and gentler traits of character, which are ordinarily brought out only in the school of daily family life, and under the social ordinances of God. Its morality is rather negative than positive. There is more virtue in the temperate and thankful enjoyment of the gifts of God than in total abstinence; in charitable and well-seasoned speech than in total silence; in connubial chastity than in celibacy; in self-denying, practical labor for the church than in solitary asceticism, which only pleases self and profits no one else.

Catholicism, whether Greek or Roman, cannot dispense with the monastic life. It knows only moral extremes, nothing of the healthful mean. In addition to this, Popery needs the monastic orders, as an absolute monarchy needs large standing armies, both for conquest and defence. But evangelical Protestantism — rejecting all distinction of a two-

<sup>1</sup> Tillem., VII. 430. The abbot thereupon, as Tillemont relates, was informed by a revelation, "que Muce avait egalé par son obeissance celle d' Abraham," and soon after made him his successor.

fold morality; assigning to all men the same great duty under the law of God; placing the essence of religion, not in outward exercises, but in the heart; not in separation from the world and from society, but in purifying and sanctifying the world by the free spirit of the gospel—is death to the great legalistic institution.

#### INFLUENCE AND EFFECT OF MONASTICISM.

The influence of monasticism upon the world, from Anthony and Benedict to Luther and Loyola, is deeply marked in all branches of the history of the church. Here, too, we must distinguish light and shade. The operation of the monastic institution has been, to some extent, of diametrically opposite kinds, and has accordingly elicited the most diverse judgments. "It is impossible," says Dean Milman,<sup>1</sup> "to survey monachism in its general influence, from the earliest period of its inworking into Christianity, without being astonished and perplexed with its diametrically opposite effects. Here it is the undoubted parent of the blindest ignorance and the most ferocious bigotry, sometimes of the most debasing licentiousness; there, the guardian of learning, the author of civilization, the propagator of humble and peaceful religion." The apparent contradiction is easily solved. It is not monasticism, as such, which has proved a blessing to the church and the world; for the monasticism of India, which for three thousand years has pushed the practice of mortification to all the excesses of delirium, never saved a single soul, nor produced a single benefit to the race. It was *Christianity* in monasticism which has done all the good, and used this abnormal mode of life as a means for carrying forward its mission of love and peace. In proportion as monasticism was animated and controlled by the spirit of Christianity, it proved a blessing; while, separated from it, it degenerated and became a fruitful source of evil.

At the time of its origin, when we can view it from the most favorable point, the monastic life formed a healthful

<sup>1</sup> History of (ancient) Christianity, Am. ed., p. 432.

necessary counterpart to the essentially corrupt and doomed social life of the Graeco-Roman empire, and the preparatory school of a new Christian civilization among the Romanic and Germanic nations of the Middle Age. Like the hierarchy and the papacy, it belongs with the disciplinary institutions, which the spirit of Christianity uses as means to a higher end, and, after attaining that end, casts aside. For it ever remains the great problem of Christianity to pervade like leaven and sanctify all human society, in the family and the state, in science and art, and in all public life. The old Roman world, which was based on heathenism, was, if the moral portraitures of Salvianus and other writers of the fourth and fifth centuries are even half true, past all such transformation; and the Christian morality therefore assumed at the outset an attitude of downright hostility towards it, till she should grow strong enough to venture upon her regenerating mission among the new and, though barbarous, yet plastic and germinal nations of the Middle Age, and plant in them the seed of a higher civilization.

Monasticism promoted the downfall of heathenism and the victory of Christianity in the Roman empire and among the barbarians. It stood as a warning against the worldliness, frivolity, and immorality of the great cities, and a mighty call to repentance and conversion. It offered a quiet refuge to souls weary of the world, and led its earnest disciples into the sanctuary of undisturbed communion with God. It was to invalids a hospital for the cure of moral diseases, and at the same time to healthy and vigorous enthusiasts an area for the exercise of heroic virtue.<sup>1</sup> It

<sup>1</sup> Chateaubriand commends the monastic institution mainly under the first view: "If there are refuges for the health of the body, ah! permit religion to have such also for the health of the soul, which is still more subject to sickness, and the infirmities of which are so much more sad, so much more tedious and difficult to cure." Montalembert (l. c. I. 25) objects to this view as poetic and touching but false, and represents monasticism as an arena for the healthiest and strongest souls which the world has ever produced, and quotes the passage of Chrysostom: "Come and see the tents of the soldiers of Christ; come and see their order of battle; they fight every day, and every day they defeat and immolate the passions which assail us."

recalled the original unity and equality of the human race, by placing rich and poor, high and low, upon the same level. It conduced to the abolition, or at least the mitigation, of slavery.<sup>1</sup> It showed hospitality to the wayfaring, and liberality to the poor and needy. It was an excellent school of meditation, self-discipline, and spiritual exercise. It sent forth most of those catholic missionaries who, inured to all hardship, planted the standard of the cross among the barbarian tribes of northern and western Europe, and afterwards in eastern Asia and South America. It was a prolific seminary of the clergy, and gave the church many of her most eminent bishops and popes, as Gregory I. and Gregory VII. It produced saints like Anthony and Bernard, and trained divines like Chrysostom and Jerome and the long succession of schoolmen and mystics of the Middle Ages. Some of the profoundest theological discussions, like the tracts of Anselm and the *Summa* of Thomas Aquinas, and not a few of the best books of devotion, like the "Imitation of Christ," by Thomas a Kempis, have proceeded from the solemn quietude of cloister life. Sacred hymns, unsurpassed for sweetness, like *Jesu dulcis memoria*, or tender emotion, like the *Stabat mater dolorosa*, or terrific grandeur, like the *Dies irae, dies illa*, were conceived and sung by mediæval monks for all ages to come. In patristic and antiquarian learning the Benedictines, so lately as the seventeenth century, have done extraordinary service. Finally, monasticism, at least in the West, promoted the cultivation of the soil and the education of the people, and by its industrious transcriptions of the Bible, the works of the church Fathers, and the ancient classics, earned for itself, before the Reformation, much of the credit of the modern civilization of Europe. The traveller in France, Italy, Spain, Germany, England, and even in the northern regions of Scotland and Sweden, encounters innumerable traces of useful mo-

<sup>1</sup> The Abbot Isidore of Pelusium wrote to a slave-holder, (Ep., Lib. I. 142, cited by Neander): "I did not think that the man who loves Christ, and knows the grace which makes us all free, would still hold slaves."

nastic labors in the ruins of abbeys, of chapter-houses, of convents, of priories, and hermitages, from which once proceeded educational and missionary influences upon the surrounding hills and forests. These offices, however, to the progress of arts and letters were only accessory, often involuntary, and altogether foreign to the intention of the founders of monastic life and institutions, who looked exclusively to the religious and moral education of the soul. In seeking first the kingdom of heaven, these other things were added to them.

But, on the other hand, monasticism withdrew from society many useful forces; diffused an indifference for the family life, the civil and military service of the state, and all public practical operations; turned the channels of religion from the world into the desert, and so hastened the decline of Egypt, Syria, Palestine, and the whole Roman empire. It nourished religious fanaticism, often raised storms of popular agitation, and rushed passionately into the controversies of theological parties; generally, it is true, on the side of orthodoxy, but often, as at the Ephesian "council of robbers," in favor of heresy, and especially in behalf of the crudest superstition. For the simple, divine way of salvation in the gospel, it substituted an arbitrary, eccentric, ostentatious, pretentious sanctity. It darkened the all-sufficient merits of Christ by the glitter of the over-meritorious works of man. It measured virtue by the quantity of outward exercises, instead of the quality of the inward disposition, and disseminated self-righteousness and an anxious, legal, and mechanical religion. It favored the idolatrous veneration of Mary and of saints, the worship of images and relics, and all sorts of superstitious and pious fraud. It circulated a mass of visions and miracles, which, if true, far surpassed the miracles of Christ and the apostles, and set all the laws of nature and reason at defiance. The Nicene age is full of the most absurd monks' fables, and is, in this respect, not a whit behind the darkest of the Middle

Ages.<sup>1</sup> Monasticism lowered the standard of general morality in proportion as it set itself above it and claimed a corresponding higher merit; and it exerted in general a demoralizing influence on the people, who came to consider

<sup>1</sup> The monkish miracles, with which the *Vitae Patrum* of the Jesuit Rosweyde and the *Acta Sanctorum* swarm, often contradict all the laws of nature and of reason, and it would be hardly worthy of mention, but that they come from such Fathers as Jerome, Rufinus, Severus, Palladius, and Theodoret, and go to characterize the Nicene age. We are far from rejecting all and every one as falsehood and deception, and accepting the judgment of Isaac Taylor (*Ancient Christianity*, II. 106): "The Nicene miracles are of a kind which shocks every sentiment of gravity, of decency, and of piety: in their obvious features they are childish, horrid, blasphemous, and foul." Much more cautious is the opinion of Robertson (*Hist. of the Christ. Church*, I. 312) and other Protestant historians, who suppose that, together with the innocent allusions of a heated imagination and the fabrications of intentional fraud, there must have been also much that was real, though in the nature of the case an exact sifting is impossible. But many of these stories are too much even for Roman credulity, and are either entirely omitted, or at least greatly reduced and modified, by critical historians. We read not only of innumerable visions, prophecies, healings of the sick, and the possessed, but also of the raising of the dead (as in the life of Martin of Tours), of the growth of a dry stick into a fruitful tree, and of a monk's passing unscathed, in absolute obedience to his abbot, through a furnace of fire as through a cooling bath (Compare Sulp. Sever., *Dial.* I, c. 12 and 13). Even wild beasts play a large part, and are transformed into rational servants of the Egyptian saints of the desert. At the funeral of Paul of Thebes, according to Jerome, two lions voluntarily performed the office of sexton. Pachomius walked unharmed over serpents and scorpions, and crossed the Nile on crocodiles, which of their own accord presented their backs. The younger Macarius, or (according to other statements of the *Historia Lausiaca* — compare the investigation of Tillemont, *Memoires*, Tom. VIII. p. 811 seq.) the monk Marcus, stood on so good terms with the beasts, that a hyaena, (according to Rufinus, V. P. II. 4, it was a lioness) brought her young one to him in his cell, that he might open its eyes; which he did by prayer and application of spittle and the next day she offered him, for gratitude, a large sheep-skin; the saint at first declined the gift, and reproved the beast for the double crime of murder and theft, by which she had obtained the skin; but when the hyaena showed repentance, and with a nod, promised amendment, Macarius took the skin, and afterwards bequeathed it to the great bishop Athanasius! Severus (*Dial.* I. c. 9) gives a very similar account of an unknown anchorite; but, like Rufinus, substitutes for the hyaena of Palladius a lioness with five whelps, and makes the saint receive the present of the skin without scruple or reproof. Shortly before (c. 8) he speaks, however, of a wolf which once robbed a friendly hermit, whose evening meals he was accustomed to share, showed deep repentance for it, and with bowed head begged forgiveness of the saint. Perhaps Palladius or his Latin translator has combined these two anecdotes.



themselves the *profanum vulgus mundi*, and to live accordingly. Hence the frequent lamentations, not only of Salvian, but of Chrysostom and of Augustine, over the indifference and laxness of the Christianity of the day; hence to this day the mournful state of things in the southern countries around the Mediterranean sea, where monasticism is most prevalent, and sets the extreme of ascetic sanctity in contrast with the profane laity; but where there exists no healthful middle class of morality, no blooming family life, no moral vigor in the masses. In the sixteenth century the monks were the bitterest enemies of the Reformation and of all true progress. And yet the greatest of the Reformers was a pupil of the convent and a child of the monastic system, as the freest and boldest of the apostles had been the strictest of the Pharisees.

#### POSITION OF MONKS IN THE CHURCH.

As to the social position of monasticism in the system of ecclesiastical life, it was at first, in East and West, even so late as the council of Chalcedon, regarded as a lay institution; but the monks were distinguished as *religiosi* from the *seculares*, and formed thus a middle grade between the ordinary laity and the clergy. They constituted the spiritual nobility, but not the ruling class; the aristocracy, but not the hierarchy, of the church. "A monk," says Jerome, "has not the office of a teacher, but of a penitent, who endures suffering either for himself or for the world." Many monks considered ecclesiastical office incompatible with their effort after perfection. It was a proverb, traced to Pachomius: "A monk should especially shun women and bishops, for neither will let him have peace."<sup>1</sup> Ammonius, who accompanied Athanasius to Rome, cut off his own ear, and threatened to cut out his own tongue, when it was proposed to make him a bishop.<sup>2</sup> Martin of Tours thought his miraculous power deserted him on his transition from the cloister

<sup>1</sup> Omnino monachum fugere debere mulieres et episcopos.

<sup>2</sup> Sozom., IV. 30.

to the bishopric. Others, on the contrary, were ambitious for the episcopal chair, or were promoted to it against their will, as early as the fourth century. The abbots of monasteries were usually ordained priests, and administered the sacraments among the brethren, but were subject to the bishop of the diocese. Subsequently the cloisters managed, through special papal grants, to make themselves independent of the episcopal jurisdiction. From the tenth century, the clerical character was attached to the monks. In a certain sense they stood, from the beginning, even above the clergy; considered themselves pre-eminently *conversi* and *religiosi*, and their life *vita religiosa*; looked down with contempt upon the secular clergy; and often encroached on their province in troublesome ways. On the other hand, the cloisters began, as early as the fourth century, to be most fruitful seminaries of clergy, and furnished, especially in the East, by far the greater number of bishops. The sixth novel of Justinian provides, that the bishops shall be chosen from the clergy or from the monastery.

In dress, the monks at first adhered to the costume of the country, but chose the simplest and coarsest material. Subsequently they adopted the tonsure and a distinctive uniform.

#### OPPOSITION TO MONASTICISM.—JOVINIAN, HELVIDIUS, VIGILANTIUS, AND AERIUS.

Although monasticism was a mighty movement of the age, engaging either the co-operation or the admiration of the whole church, yet it was not exempt from opposition. And opposition sprang from very different quarters: now from zealous defenders of heathenism, like Julian and Libanius, who hated and bitterly reviled the monks for their fanatical opposition to temples and idol-worship; now from Christian statesmen and emperors, like Valens, who were enlisted against it by its withdrawing so much force from the civil and military service of the state, and in the time of peril from the barbarians, encouraging idleness and passive contemplation, instead of active, heroic virtue; now from friends

of worldly indulgence, who found themselves unpleasantly disturbed and rebuked by the religious earnestness and zeal of the ascetic life; lastly, however, also from a liberal, almost protestant, conception of Christian morality, which set itself at the same time against the worship of Mary and the saints, and other abuses. This last form of opposition, however, existed mostly in isolated cases, was rather negative than positive in its character, lacked the spirit of wisdom and moderation, and hence almost entirely disappeared in the fifth century, only to be revived long after, in more mature and comprehensive form, when monasticism had fulfilled its mission for the world.

To this class of opponents belong Helvidius, Jovinian, Vigilantius, and Aerius. The first three are known to us through the passionate replies of Jerome; the last, through the Panarion of Epiphanius. They figure in Catholic church history among the heretics, while they have received from many Protestant historians a place among the "witnesses of the truth" and the forerunners of the Reformation.

We begin with Jovinian, the most important among them, who is sometimes compared — for instance, even by Neander — to Luther, because, like Luther, he was carried by his own experience into reaction against the ascetic tendency and the doctrines connected with it. He wrote in Rome, before the year 390, a work now lost, attacking monasticism in its ethical principles. He was at that time himself a monk, and probably remained so in a free way until his death. At all events he never married, and, according to Augustine's account, he abstained "for the present distress,"<sup>1</sup> and from aversion to the encumbrances of the married state. Jerome pressed him with the alternative of marrying and proving the equality of celibacy with married life, or giving up his opposition to his own condition.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. vii. 26.

<sup>2</sup> Adv. Jovin., Lib. I. c. 40 (Opera II. 304): "Et tamen iste formosus monachus, crassus, nitidus, dealbatus, et quasi sponsus semper incidens aut uxorem ducat ut aequalem virginitatem nuptiis probet; aut, si non duxerit, frustra contra nos verbis agit, cum opere nobiscum sit."

Jerome gives a very unfavorable picture of his character, evidently colored by vehement bitterness. He calls Jovinian a servant of corruption, a barbarous writer, a Christian Epicurean, who, after having once lived in strict asceticism, now preferred earth to heaven, vice to virtue, his belly to Christ, and always strode along as an elegantly dressed bridegroom. Augustine is much more lenient, only reproaching Jovinian with having misled many Roman nuns into marriage, by holding before them the examples of pious women in the Bible. Jovinian was probably provoked to question and oppose monasticism, as Gieseler supposes, by Jerome's extravagant praising of it, and by the feeling against it, which the death of Blesilla (384) in Rome confirmed. And he at first found extensive sympathy. But he was excommunicated and banished, with his adherents, at a council about the year 390, by Siricius, bishop of Rome, who was zealously opposed to the marriage of priests. He then betook himself to Milan, where the two monks Sarmatio and Barbatian held forth views like his own; but he was treated there after the same fashion by the bishop, Ambrose, who held a council against him. From this time he and his party disappear from history, and before the year 406 he died in exile.<sup>1</sup>

According to Jerome, Jovinian held these four points: (1) Virgins, widows, and married persons, who have once been baptized into Christ, have equal merit, other things in their conduct being equal. (2) Those who are once, with full faith, born again by baptism, cannot be overcome (subverti) by the devil. (3) There is no difference between abstaining from food and enjoying it with thanksgiving. (4) All who keep the baptismal covenant will receive an equal reward in heaven.

He insisted chiefly on the first point; so that Jerome

<sup>1</sup> Augustine says (*De Haer.*, c. 82): "Cito ista haeresis oppressa et extincta est"; and Jerome writes of Jovinian, in 406 (*Adv. Vigilant.*, c. 1), that, after having been condemned by the authority of the Roman church, he dissipated his mind in the enjoyment of his lusts.

devotes the whole first book of his refutation to this point, while he disposes of all the other heads in the second. In favor of the moral equality of married and single life, he appealed to Gen. ii. 24, where God himself institutes marriage before the fall; to Matt. xix. 5, where Christ sanctions it; to the patriarchs before and after the flood, to Moses and the prophets, Zacharias and Elizabeth, and the apostles, particularly Peter, who lived in wedlock; also to Paul, who himself exhorted to marriage,<sup>1</sup> required the bishop or the deacon to be the husband of one wife,<sup>2</sup> and advised young widows to marry, and bear children.<sup>3</sup> He declared the prohibition of marriage and of divinely provided food a Manichean error. To answer these arguments Jerome indulges in utterly unwarranted inferences, and speaks of marriage in a tone of contempt, which gave offence even to his friends.<sup>4</sup> Augustine was moved by it to present the advantages of the married life, in a special work, *De bono conjugali*, though without yielding the ascetic estimate of celibacy.<sup>5</sup>

Jovinian's second point has an apparent affinity with the Augustinian and Calvinistic doctrine of the *perseverantia sanctorum*. It is not referred by him, however, to the eternal and unchangeable counsel of God, but simply

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. vii. 36, 39.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Tim. iii. 2, 12.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Tim. v. 14; compare 1 Tim. ii. 15; Heb. xiii. 4.

<sup>4</sup> From 1 Cor. vii. 1, for example ("It is good for a man not to touch a woman"), he argues, without qualification (Lib. I. c. 7) (*Opera* II. 246): "Si bonum est mulierem non tangere, malum est ergo tangere. Nihil enim bono contrarium est, nisi malum; si autem malum est, et ignoscitur, ideo conceditur, ne malo quid deterius fiat. . . . Tolle fornicationem, et non dicet [apostolus], unusquisque uxorem suam habeat." Immediately after this (II, 247) he argues from the exhortation of Paul to pray without ceasing, 1 Thess. v. 17: "Si semper orandum est, numquam ergo conjugio serviendum, quoniam quotiescunque uxori debitum reddo, orare non possum." Such sophistries and misinterpretations evidently proceed upon the lowest sensual idea of marriage, and called forth some opposition even, at that age. He himself afterwards felt that he had gone too far, and in his Ep. 48. (ed. Vallars., or Ep. 30, ed. Bened.) ad Pammachium, endeavored to save himself by distinguishing between the gymnastic (polemically rhetorical) and the dogmatic mode of writing.

<sup>5</sup> *De bono conj.*, c. 8: "Duo bona sunt connubium et continentia, quorum alterum est melius."

based on 1 John iii. 9 and v. 18, and is connected with his abstract conception of the opposite moral states. He limits the impossibility of relapse to the truly regenerate, who "plena fide in baptisinate renati sunt," and makes a distinction between the mere baptism of water and the baptism of the Spirit, which involves also, a distinction between the actual and the ideal church.

His third point is aimed against the ascetic exaltation of fasting, with reference to Rom. xiv. 20 and 1 Tim. iv. 3. God, he holds, has created all animals for the service of man; Christ attended the marriage feast at Cana as a guest, sat at table with Zaccheus, with publicans and sinners, and was called by the Pharisees a glutton and a wine-bibber; and the apostle says: To the pure all things are pure, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving.

He went still further, however, and, with the Stoics, denied all gradations of moral merit and demerit, consequently also all gradations of reward and punishment. He overlooked the process of development in both good and evil. He went back of all outward relations to the inner mind, and lost all subordinate differences of degree in the great contrast between true Christians and men of the world, between regenerate and unregenerate; whereas the friends of monasticism taught a higher and a lower morality, and distinguished the ascetics, as a special class, from the mass of ordinary Christians. As Christ, says he, dwells in believers without difference of degree, so also believers are in Christ without difference of degree or stages of development. There are only two classes of men,—righteous and wicked, sheep and goats, five wise virgins and five foolish, good trees with good fruit and bad trees with bad fruit. He appealed also to the parable of the laborers in the vineyard, who all received equal wages. Jerome answered him with such things as the parable of the sower and the different kinds of ground; the parable of the different numbers of talents with corresponding reward; the many mansions in the Father's house (by which Jovinian singularly understood the different

churches on earth); the comparison of the resurrection bodies with the stars, which differ in glory; and the passage: "He which soweth sparingly, shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully, shall reap also bountifully."<sup>1</sup>

Helvidius — whether a layman or a priest at Rome it is uncertain, a pupil, according to the statement of Gennadius, of the Arian bishop Auxentius of Milan, — wrote a work, before the year 383, in refutation of the perpetual virginity of the mother of the Lord — a leading point with the current glorification of celibacy. He considered the married state equal in honor and glory to that of virginity. Of his fortunes we know nothing. Augustine speaks of Helvidians, who are probably identical with the Anti-dicomarianites of Epiphanius. Jerome calls Helvidius, indeed, a rough and uneducated man;<sup>2</sup> but proves by quotations of his arguments, that he had at least some knowledge of the scriptures and a certain ingenuity. He appealed in the first place to Matt. i. 18, 24, 25, as implying that Joseph knew his wife, not before, but after, the birth of the Lord; then to the designation of Jesus as the "first-born" son of Mary, in Matt. i. 25 and Luke ii. 7; then to the many passages which speak of the brothers and sisters of Jesus; and finally to the authority of Tertullian and Victorinus. Jerome replies, that the "till" by no means always fixes a point after which any action must begin or cease;<sup>3</sup> that, according to Exod. xxxiv. 19, 20; Num. xviii. 15 seq., the "first-born" does not necessarily imply the birth of other children afterwards, but denotes every one who first opens the womb; that the "brothers" of Jesus may have been either sons of Joseph by a former marriage, or, according to the wide Hebrew use of the term, cousins; and that the authorities cited were more than balanced by the testimonies of Igna-

<sup>1</sup> 2 Cor. ix. 6.

<sup>2</sup> At the very beginning of his work, he styles him "*hominem rusticum et vix primis quoque imbutum literis.*"

<sup>3</sup> Compare Matt. xxviii. 20.

tius, Polycarp (?), and Irenaeus. "Had Helvidius read these," says he, "he would doubtless have produced something more skilful."

This whole question, it is well known, is still a problem in exegesis. The *perpetua virginitas* of Mary has less support from scripture than the opposite theory. But it is so essential to the whole ascetic system, that it became from this time an article of the Catholic faith, and the denial of it was anathematized as blasphemous heresy. A considerable number of Protestant divines,<sup>1</sup> however, agree on this point with the Catholic doctrine, and think it incompatible with the dignity of Mary that, after the birth of the Son of God and the Saviour of the world, she should have borne ordinary children of men.

Vigilantius, originally from Gaul,<sup>2</sup> a presbyter of Barcelona in Spain, a man of pious but vehement zeal, and of literary talent, wrote in the beginning of the fifth century against the ascetic spirit of the age, and the superstition connected with it. Jerome's reply, dictated hastily in a single night at Bethlehem, in the year 406, contains more of personal abuse and low witticism than of solid argument. "There have been," he says, "monsters on earth, centaurs, syrens, leviathan, behemoth . . . . Gaul alone has bred no monsters, but has ever abounded in brave and noble men; when, of a sudden, there has arisen one Vigilantius, who should rather be called Dormitantius,<sup>3</sup> contending in an impure spirit against the Spirit of Christ, and forbidding to honor the graves of the martyrs; he rejects the vigils; only at Easter should we sing hallelujah; he declares abste-

<sup>1</sup> Luthur, for instance (who even calls Helvidius a "gross fool"), and Zuingli, among the Reformers; Olshausen and J. P. Lange, among the later theologians.

<sup>2</sup> Respecting his descent, compare the diffuse treatise of the tedious but thorough Walch, l. c. p. 675-677.

<sup>3</sup> This cheap pun he repeats (Epist. 109, ad Ripar. Opera, I. p. 719), where he says that *Vigilantius* (wakeful) was so called κατ' ἀντίφρασιν, and should rather be called *Dormitantius* (sleepy). The fact is *Vigilantius* was wide awake to a sense of certain superstitions of the age.



miousness to be heresy, and chastity a nursery of licentiousness (*pudicitiam, libidinis seminarium*) . . . . This inn-keeper of Caligurris<sup>1</sup> mingles water with his wine, and would, according to ancient art, combine his poison with the genuine faith. He opposes virginity, hates chastity, cries against the fastings of the saints, and would only amidst jovial feastings amuse himself with the psalms of David. It is terrible to hear that even bishops are companions of his wantonness, if those deserve this name who ordain only married persons deacons, and trust not the chastity of the single.”<sup>2</sup> Vigilantius thinks it better for a man to use his money wisely and apply it gradually to benevolent objects at home, than to lavish it all at once upon the poor or give it to the monks of Jerusalem. He went further, however, than his two predecessors, and bent his main efforts against the worship of saints and relics, which was then gaining ascendancy, and was fostered by monasticism. He considered it superstition and idolatry. He called the Christians who worshipped the “wretched bones” of dead men ash-gatherers and idolators.<sup>3</sup> He expressed himself sceptically respecting the miracles of the martyrs, contested the practice of invoking them, and of intercession for the dead, as useless, and declared himself against the vigils, or public worship in the night, as tending to disorder and licentiousness. This last point Jerome admits as a fact, but not as an argument, because the abuse should not abolish the right use.

The presbyter Aerius of Sebaste, about 360, belongs also among the partial opponents of monasticism. For, though himself an ascetic, he contended against the fast-laws and

<sup>1</sup> In South Gaul, now Casères in Gascogne. As the business of inn-keeper is incompatible with the spiritual office, it has been supposed that the father of Vigilantius was a *caupo Calagurritanus*. Compare Rössler's *Bibliothek der Kirchenväter*, part IX. p. 880 seq., note 100; and Walch, l. c.

<sup>2</sup> *Adv. Vigil.* c. 1 and 2, (*Opera*. Tom. I. p. 387 seq.).

<sup>3</sup> “*Cinerarios et idolatras, qui mortuorum ossa venerantur.*” Hieron., ep. 109 *ad Riparium* (Tom. I. p. 719).

the injunction of fasts at certain times, considering them an encroachment upon Christian freedom. Epiphanius also ascribes to him three other heretical views : denial of the superiority of bishops to presbyters, opposition to the usual Easter festival, and opposition to prayers for the dead.<sup>1</sup> He was hotly persecuted by the hierarchy, and was obliged to live, with his adherents, in open fields and in caves.

<sup>1</sup> Epiph. Haer., 75. Compare also Walch, *Ketzergeschichte* III. p. 351 - 338. Bellarmine, on account of this external resemblance, styles Protestantism the Aerial heresy.