

# Theology on the Web.org.uk

*Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible*

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

[PayPal](#)

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

---

A table of contents for *Bibliotheca Sacra* can be found here:

[https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles\\_bib-sacra\\_01.php](https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_bib-sacra_01.php)



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

### Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

### About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>

Digitized by Google

The question with regard to the genuineness of Aristotle's pretended works, and the state in which they are preserved, is discussed in the following works. Franciscus Patritius, *Discussiones Peripateticæ*, T. I. Lib. IV. Renat. Rapin, *Comparison de Platon et d'Aristote*. ed. 2. 1686. Pierre Bayle, *Dictionnaire histor. et crit.*, art. Tyrannion et Andronique. J. A. Fabricius, *Bib. Græca*. Tom. III. Lib. III. cp. 5. J. Brucker, *Otium Vindelic.* pp. 80 seq., et *Historia crit. phil.* Tom. I. p. 799. C. G. Heyne, *Opuscula Academ.* V. I. pp. 126 seq. J. G. Buhle, *Pref. ad edit. Opp. Arist.* Tom. I. pp. xvii, xviii, et *Allgem. Encyc.* v. Ersch u. Gruber, Art. Aristoteles. F. N. Titze, *De Aristotelis Operum serie et distinctione liber singularis* pp. 5 seq. J. G. Schneider *Epimetr.* II et III vor seiner Ausgabe der Aristotelischen *Historia de Animalibus*. Tom. I. Chr. A. Brandis, *Ueber die Schicksale der Aristotelischen Schriften und einige Kriterien ihrer Aechtheit*, im Rhein. Mus. I. 3. Kopp, *Nachtrag zu der vorgenannten Untersuchung*, in Rhein. Mus. III. 1. Stahr, *Aristotelia*, Theil. II. S. 5—172. *Histories of Philosophy* by Hegel, Ritter, et al.

---

### ARTICLE III.

#### THE EARLY HISTORY OF MONASTICISM;—FROM THE ORIGINAL SOURCES.

By Rev. Ralph Emerson, D. D., Prof. of Ecclesiastical History in the Theol. Sem. Andover.

AFTER some general statements and remarks respecting monasticism, the history of its rise in the christian church will be presented in the form of translations from the most authentic sources. The pieces presented will consist chiefly of biographical notices of some of the earliest and most noted monks.

It may well be supposed no easy thing for us of this age and in this country, to form a just estimate or even a very definite conception of monasticism, from the ordinary helps we enjoy. The chief object of my remarks, and indeed of the whole account to be given, will be to aid in the formation of such an estimate, especially in regard to its earliest period in the church.—A full history of the institution down to the present time, would require many volumes.

VOL. I. No. 2.

## DIFFERENT ASPECTS OF MONASTICISM.

Of all the strange exhibitions which human nature has presented to the world, that of monasticism is the most multiform and the most grotesque;—a Simeon Stylites, standing on his lonely pillar, day and night, sixty feet high in the open air;—a saint Antony, immured in his seclusion without being seen by man for twenty years, engaged in imaginary conflicts with devils! Accordingly, monkery has been the object of ridicule and scorn to the whole Protestant world.—This is one aspect. But it has another; and one which is far from being so contemptible.

Of all the baleful institutions that have shaken the world, monasticism, in its insidious and all-pervading influences, has been one of the most appalling as well as mysterious. The power of an Alexander the Great, in moulding the destinies of man, has been nothing compared with that of the old recluse of the desert, the first founder of monastic institutions. If “lying wonders,” whereby the whole of Christendom was deceived for thirteen centuries, and most of it is still led captive at the will and pleasure of the popedom, are no trifle, then is monasticism no object of unmingled contempt. And if the man of sin himself is as much to be dreaded as he is to be abhorred, so likewise is the chief source of that invisibly permeating influence which gradually prepared the nations to bow their necks and even their consciences to his sway. For, without a belief in the continuance of miracles, wrought chiefly by the monks, and without that spirit which a belief in continued miracles inspires and which was fostered in all ways by the monks, what could sacerdotal usurpation have achieved? And without the subsequent aid, afforded more directly and in various ways by the ever-changing and multiplying orders of the monks, how could the pretensions of popery have been so increased and sustained?

Nor, again, when *personally* considered, can those first eremites justly be regarded as objects of unmingled contempt and ridicule. Conscience, however misguided or darkened, can never be despised by a reflecting mind. Nor can any man be despised for following sincerely the dictates of his conscience. Much as we may pity his ignorance or the waywardness of his judgment, we cannot but respect his moral integrity. And when his mistakes become the most grievous and likewise even ludicrous, if at the same time they lead to self-sacrifice, we cannot but admire the

moral fortitude, whatever we may think of the sagacity or wisdom of the man. The sublime and the ridiculous are blended in the same person; and we revere the devotee, while we pity or despise the theorist.

Such were the early recluses. Perfection in holy living, was their aim;—a grand and noble aim. They mistook, indeed, most lamentably in regard to the means. But it was a mistake of the head rather than of the heart. Or if selfishness was the foundation-motive, and therefore a self-righteousness the only product, it was at least a selfishness that reached beyond the grave. It was no silken couch on which they sought to recline. Toils, vigils, fastings, maceration, all kinds of bodily mortifications, together with unceasing prayers, were the means by which these ancient perfectionists were to strive for the immortal crown. And, whatever may be said of later monkish life, no men ever followed the word with the deed, the theory with the practice, more rigorously than did these lean, unshorn, unwashed eremites. As they stole forth in their solitary rambles in the desert, or flit with winged speed, on some errand of love to a distant brother, as Antony in going to the cave of the dying Paulus, well might they have been mistaken for the very demons they came there to vanquish.

Nor was it human praise that they sought. The world of men they wished never to see nor even to hear of again, except in regard to the triumphs of the gospel over Satan's kingdom. Multitudes of them lived and died no man knew where.

Nor were their spiritual aims so perfectly confined to individual growth in grace, as has often been supposed. Though they fled from the world, they still cared for it, and remembered it in their prayers. Nor was this all, as their vocation was regarded by themselves. It is a popular but false impression, that they fled from the world in order to escape from its temptations. Not they,—at least not all of them. Such men as they, flee? As well might you speak of Bonaparte's fleeing when he went, with his desperadoes of the revolution, to vanquish the Mamelukes in that same Egypt. No: they went to the desert to fight and vanquish the devils in this their last retreat in the dry places where, as was supposed, they were seeking rest when driven from the abodes of men by the spreading Christianity. And hence they ever called themselves, by way of eminence, the Lord's soldiers. And hence, too, it was, that they spoke of the devils as crying out against even their injustice in invading them in their own dominion.

No: these men were not nature's imbeciles. Their intrepid daring, for instance, in exposing themselves alone and unarmed to the assaults of the wild beasts of the desert, as will be seen in the case of Antony, was such as of itself to command the profoundest respect from the roving bands of Saracens. They had at least courage and self-denial and iron perseverance, if nothing else. Would that these attributes, then so peculiarly needful to the missionary who should bear the cross into the abodes of barbarous nations, had been guided by a better wisdom. Would that the Antonies and Pauluses, instead of mistaking the track of the cast-out devils, had gone with the pure gospel to that moral desert, the abodes of the Goths and Vandals and the more savage Huns, who were so soon to overrun, like demons, the fair face of christianized Europe; or to the haunts of those Saracens who were ere long to drive Christianity from Asia and Africa. Who can imagine the altered and blessed results, had the science of holy living been better understood, and consequently the yet rushing tide of christian heroism, in the third and fourth centuries, been turned back into the apostolic but now arid channels of missionary enterprise.

But so, in the counsels of heaven, was it not to be. And well, perhaps, at least for us at this day, that it was not. For, from the very nature of man and of the divine government on earth, where man is left to try all his inventions, the age of monasticism must, in all probability, one day have come. And had it not come when it did, we might now have been dreaming in the depth of its midnight. We may be grateful, then, as well as solemn, while contemplating the mistakes and consequent gloom of the past, and and may thus become the more forbearing in the sweeping judgments we are apt to form of those who, with no bad intentions, and in an age of but little light and less experience, were left to lead the way in untried paths which have since conducted to results so appalling and unforeseen.

And I may here further add, that this charitable view of the original authors of monasticism, so far as the facts will warrant it, instead of throwing us off our guard against the recurrence of a like evil, is absolutely necessary in order to prepare us the most vigilantly and effectually to anticipate and withstand its approach. Few things can be so perilous to the church as a general belief that no very bad measure was ever introduced by good men, or with a great and good purpose. Then will they look at the character of the men and at the object proposed, instead of

scrutinizing the means by which it is to be effected; and the work is done before its character is suspected. Nearly all the bad institutions in the church—Jesuitism among the rest—have been introduced by apparently good men, and for a professedly good purpose. And notwithstanding all the baleful results of monkery, and all our present light, there are individuals of apparent piety, in our Protestant denomination, who are at this moment commending a return to monastic institutions.

And there is yet one more aspect in which it is needful to view the first eremites, if we would form a just estimate of their character. Iron men as they were, and "soldiers" as they called themselves, they were yet far from assuming a belligerent attitude towards their fellow mortals. Exactly the contrary was the fact. Forbearance, gentleness, and meekness, even towards enemies, was their constant aim. To use their own language, they warred upon their knees. If smitten on the one cheek, they turned the other. Thus strictly and literally did they interpret the ethical precepts of the gospel. Unlike their turbulent successors, they were, in a word, genuine non-resistants. They would not so much as harm the brute creation; and gloried, in return, that even the wild beasts of the field were at peace with them.

Such are some of the more important aspects of primitive monasticism in the church, or rather of the first eremites, as their portrait is delineated by their friends and contemporaries. The difference between that and the picture often and justly drawn of the more modern institution, may better be judged of when the reader shall have inspected for himself the ancient portrait.

#### REASONS FOR PRESENTING THE ORIGINAL AUTHORITIES.

Since their scandalous offspring have been so long and so widely known, and since, too, their own character has been exhibited almost exclusively in its absurd and fantastic attitudes, it is but an act of common justice to those strange men of old, to suffer some one or two of their friendly contemporaries to come forth from the cerements of the dead languages, and tell their story to the modern English world, just as they understood it at the time. None, indeed, but enlightened and honest, truth-knowing as well as truth-telling men, should be unloosed. Or if a Cassian,—the father of Semipelagianism if not also the fabricator of some of the strange stories he tells of the eremites,—be suffered to speak at all, he must be cross-questioned most sternly. But against such

men as Athanasius and Jerome, each the most able and learned ecclesiastic of his age, and of sound principles and piety, what objection can be brought that will not lie against all ancient but uninspired antiquity?

True enough, we must reject much which they tell us, especially in regard to monkish miracles, as utterly incredible. But they tell nothing which they did not themselves believe. And to know what such men could believe and solemnly relate, and what was then so universally believed, is to know something to good purpose in regard to the character of the age, and the state of the church, and the influence which these monks were exercising on the church, spell-binding her absolutely, in the chains of superstition, to be delivered over in bondage to formalism and priestcraft. Emanating from such men, these biographies give us a view of the spirit of the age, in some of its most important features, which we cannot elsewhere gain. In this view, as has well been remarked, I believe by Isaac Taylor, it matters little how much of truth or of falsehood there may be in the recorded marvels. The important circumstance is, that such falsehoods could then be so extensively circulated and believed.

For the purpose just stated, a mere summary of the facts, would be to but little purpose. We must hear the venerable theologian Athanasius tell the stories himself, if we would know how he and his age regarded them. It would have been a much easier task to give a statement of the facts in one's own way, if that would have answered the purpose, than to have toiled for the exact import of every Greek sentence, and then to have sought for some decent English in which to clothe it.

Many may also like to have in their possession so extensive an account of ecclesiastical miracles, from the most accredited sources, that they may be able the more intelligibly to form their opinions respecting such miracles when compared with those recorded in Scripture. One striking difference which, as I may remark in passing, will be perceived in the two cases, is this, that the monkish miracles were seldom if ever witnessed by those who record them. Another difference very generally manifest, is in the nature, the occasion, or the object of the miracle. And in order to judge of such differences intelligibly, one must have before him the full account as given by the original writers.

One thing in the ancient eremites themselves, in regard to their miraculous powers, is rather remarkable, and different from what we might have supposed. Instead of boasting of this power,



they speak of it as comparatively a small thing, and seem never desirous to increase their own fame by these wonders. They also are careful to attribute all the power and glory to Christ. All this, however, is in good keeping with what has before been remarked in regard to their deep and sincere renunciation of the world and all its glory. It is also one among a thousand proofs of their ever watchful solicitude to follow Scripture examples and Scripture precepts. Casting out devils was their more common achievement in this way, when among men; but they took good care not to rejoice that the devils were made subject unto them.

But how came such men to think that they wrought miracles, if they did not work them? And if they knew they did not work them, how came they to put forth such assertions? Were they lunatics? or were they liars? Or, if they were neither, and made no such pretences, how came such a multitude of marvellous deeds to be told of them? and so told, that an Athanasius and a Jerome, and all the world should believe them? Or, finally, on the other hand, were a portion of these miracles really wrought? and the rest, partly pious frauds, and partly mistakes and unintentional exaggerations, committed in an ignorant and credulous age?—These are grave questions for the philosopher, the theologian, and the student of history. And it is partly for the purpose of increasing the means for deciding such questions, that I have been induced to bring forward these original documents.

I have no room here for the discussion of these questions. And if I had, it would still be better to postpone the discussion till the reader should be in possession of the detailed accounts. I will here only remark, that even many protestant historians suppose the power of miracles to have continued in the church, in some degree, for a number of centuries—Mosheim, for two or three centuries; and Milner, for five or six. The Catholics suppose the power still to exist with them, and are, every year or two, blazing abroad their new wonders. And for us simply to reply to their pretences, or to the assertions of the early fathers, that “the age of miracles is past,” is only a begging of the question. Substantial proof that it *is* or that it *is not* passed, is the thing to be sought.

THE UNHAPPY CONTENTS OF THESE DOCUMENTS, NO GOOD REASON FOR WITHHOLDING THEM, BUT THE CONTRARY.

Most protestants have been willing enough that the later abominations of monasticism should be fully disclosed; and the more

willing, because the disgrace falls more exclusively on the papal church. But some have been filled with sorrow, and others who profess to be protestants have been filled with indignation, at the charges which have been recently and widely circulated against the earlier character of the church as tinged with monastic superstition. They seem disposed, not only to deny such charges as Taylor has adduced, and as Dailé had adduced long before him, but also to blame the mention of such things, even if true.

It is not my present object simply to justify the publication of the documents on which these charges are founded, and thus give all an opportunity of testing their validity; but I wish also to indicate the grounds on which the full presentation of such facts becomes a duty. The man who adduces them, instead of being shame-stricken or conscience-stricken for circulating scandalous truths about good men and about the church in early days, is to be commended. It is not slander, nor does it imply the spirit of slander, as a knowledge of the facts is needful to the safety of this same church, especially at such a period as the present. They are grave and weighty matters in her history, which were prolific in their baleful results to succeeding ages, and are now fruitful in their lessons of admonition to our own and coming generations.

But these documents contain much that is not true: 'And what,' some objector may exclaim, 'what has veritable history to do with such monstrous falsehoods as we here find?' Just as much, it may be replied, as a court of justice has to do with injustice: and for much the same reasons. It is that men may cease from lying, as they should cease from crime; or, at all events, that the innocent may be shielded from their bad consequences. Indeed, in a world where men go astray as soon as they are born, speaking lies, so far is history from having nothing to do with the lies that have been uttered, that there can be no good history which does not expose some of the worst of them. It is a prime office of the faithful historian to perform this self-denying task. And the fact that deadly falsehoods were circulated in the church by some men and believed by multitudes, is itself a most important historic truth; and to suppress such a truth, instead of being a merit, is a fault which should rather crimson the cheek and set on fire the conscience of a modest and honest historian. It is itself but a tacit repetition of the crime of pious frauds which so deeply stained, not only heathen morality, but the early, though not the primitive character of the church.

‘But will not the exposure of these frauds mar the fair fame of that holy mother church we all so much revere?’ Perhaps it will. And if so, then another *perhaps* is deserving of at least as much regard:—perhaps her too fair fame not only deserves to be marred, if the *whole* truth will mar it, but it is even absolutely necessary it should be exposed, in order to preserve her incautious daughters, who are glorying in an ancestral merit which their mother earned for them, from falling into the very errors she was left to commit; and thus falling, to plunge their own posterity back into the abyss of entailed woes from which they have so recently been rescued, and amid which three fourths of the sisterhood are still groaning. The signs of the times are but too ominous, in regard to this matter of monasticism, as well as other papal sins and evils.

‘But can it be a duty to lay bare the sins and follies of those ancient worthies, that holy generation of Nicene fathers who had just come out of great tribulation, where they had counted their lives not dear unto themselves, and of whom the world was not worthy? Can it be right and a christian duty?’ Honored forever, with grateful hearts, be every virtue they so nobly displayed. But God did not so reason in regard to the sins of much greater and more ancient worthies than they. Nor did he suffer his prophet Nathan so to reason, even in regard to the man after his own heart. “Thou,” said God to the good but erring king, whose fair fame was more precious to a whole nation, and to the whole church to the end of time, than can be that of a saint Antony or an Athanasius or a Jerome,—“thou didst it secretly, but I will do this thing before all Israel, and before the sun.” And accordingly God did inflict the most public and mortifying disgrace upon him; and then ordered both the crime and the punishment to be placed on the sacred records to be known and read of all men, as a solemn warning, to the end of time. And with the same unsparing but far-reaching wisdom, is the whole of sacred history penned. Not a Noah, nor a Moses, nor a Job, is spared; not a James, a Peter, or a beloved John. And shall we think to be wiser than God? or more merciful to his servants than he? God’s mercy does not exhaust itself on the repenting individual. He has compassion also on coming generations, and warns them by the recorded crimes and punishments of their predecessors. And it was under his wise and kind providence towards us and others, that these revered fathers in the church rose up, one after another, and in their blind though over-ruled zeal, spontaneously recorded as well

as promoted the most deadly errors of their times. And why, when those records have now done nearly all the hurt they can in the church, and God's set time appears to have come for their doing the designed good to us on whom the ends of the world are come, why should we suicidally blot the preserved records or keep them hid from the church's eye, as the Romanists would the Scriptures, among the arcana of the dead languages? Why not as soon blot the affair of Uriah from the sacred roll?

This shortsighted and worldly policy, of late years so prevalent among the incautious protestant churches, is in truth the very policy of Romanism. The Romanists plead, that the full and fearless disclosures of the crimes and follies of good men, in the Bible, will be perilous to the virtue of the people, and will disparage religion itself in popular estimation. And so they conceal the good book. And thus protestants fear that the uninspired disclosures of later crimes and follies in the church, may have a like effect. Such men as the excellent Milner, one age ago, (as in his otherwise admirable Church History), knew not for what a crisis they were preparing the church by suppressing or gilding over the more revolting features of her early history. Satan himself could not have prompted such men to do him so great a service in any other way. He is not only the father of lies, but the greatest suppresser of a knowledge of those lies, when they come to be detected as lies. And for this purpose, he comes to good men, in the guise of an angel of light, and as the greatest friend to the church, and makes them his ready and devoted tools in a cause seemingly so charitable towards man and loyal towards God. And then, if we suppose him to possess the power, what better thing for his cause could the enemy of the church do, than just bid her present advocates to look at her early state as well nigh immaculate, and fearlessly to follow in her perilous steps? At all events, we hear much of this kind of counsel, in these days, from whatever source it may come.

#### MONASTICISM AMONG HEATHEN NATIONS, AND MONASTIC TENDENCIES IN HUMAN NATURE.

It may be well here to remark, in vindication of our common faith, that Christianity is not to be blamed as the sole author of so pernicious an invention as that of monasticism. Indeed, she is not the *inventor* of it at all. In one shape or another, it had existed from time immemorial, both among Jews and Gentiles. At

the period of the christian era, the Essenes, a Jewish sect scattered throughout Syria, Egypt, and the surrounding regions, was essentially ascetic. And more decidedly monkish still were the class called Therapeutae, and which are supposed by some as only a branch of the Essenes, and by others as a separate sect, and by others still as a class of Gentile philosophers. Be this as it may, their principles and practices for the attainment of moral perfection, were such, that Eusebius regarded them as christian monks, and supposed them to have been established in Egypt by saint Mark; and many Catholic writers have accordingly endeavored to trace christian monasticism back to the apostolic age.<sup>1</sup>

In heathen nations, various kinds of monastic institutions and practices have been traced from periods of remote antiquity, as well among the Druids of the West as among the Brahmins of the East. See Sharon Turner's account of the Druids in his *History of England*. This spirit was peculiarly fostered by the oriental and Pythagorean philosophy. And so greatly did these institutions come to resemble those of the Catholics, in Japan and elsewhere, that the Jesuits found them, in the seventeenth century, an admirable preparative to the spread of their own corrupt system of christian formalism.—Mohammedism also has its ascetics.

To the influence of this philosophy and this spirit, pervading as it did the nations where Christianity first spread, is to be attributed the origin of monasticism in the church, and not to anything inherent in the christian system, which most strongly contrasts with other systems by its social, practical, and common-sense character. So far, indeed, is Christianity from being the mother of monasticism, that it is her very nature and one of the grand objects of her mission, to sweep it from the earth. She found the world full of this element—too full, in fact, for her at first to overcome, or even to withstand. And so she at length became pervaded and well nigh overcome by it.

And what greatly increased this heavy task on Christianity, and finally bowed her in bondage to it for ages, is this, that monasticism has its lodgment in the human heart. The tendencies towards it, especially in the more religiously disposed, are often many and strong. It is a self-righteous system. And unsubdued man would rather give his first-born for his transgression, or his body to be burned, than bow his pride. Hence he spontaneously seeks out ascetic devices for propitiation, when he finds not those

<sup>1</sup> See Euseb. Ec. Hist. II. 17. Mosheim, *Com. de Reb. Chr.* p. 55 seq. Also his *Ec. Hist.* I. p. 43, of Murdock's first edition.

to his liking already devised. There is also ever enough around us to disgust and revolt the sensitive heart; and in such a heart, poetic musings, if not also a native love for solitude, do but increase the propensity to exclaim,

O for a lodge in some vast wilderness,  
Some boundless contiguity of shade,  
Where rumor of oppression or deceit,  
Of unsuccessful or successful war,  
Might never reach me more.

To these may be added the native antipathies which some feel to society, and the shame which others feel for their crimes or from their disappointments or their physical defects, and the indolence or the aversion to care which drive still another class from the common occupations of men. And if to all these there be superadded a pervading belief, (such as heathen philosophy and at length a corrupt Christianity afforded,) not only of the propriety but the eminent merit of such a life, we can no longer wonder at the thousands with which the deserts were ere long peopled. Indeed, with all the force of public sentiment and religious opinion against the secluded life, yet where is the country that has not always had its recluses? Each of these is a monk, in his own way, be his religion what it may. We have them among us at the present day, though few and far between; and should doubtless have more of this class, were it not for the fact to which, for a moment, I must next advert.

The Shakers may be regarded as an order of monks. In what other light are they to be viewed? They are not, indeed, anchorites, as they do not dwell in separate cells or caves; but they are coenobites, living together for mutual convenience, with a common provision for their wants, with a professed renunciation of the world, with the profession of celibacy and a strong barrier between the sexes, with peculiar habits, and what is more for such an age and such a Protestant country as ours, still holding to the gift of inspiration if not of miracles. A new prophet, indeed, has just arisen among them. In their modes of worship, too, they have resembled and perhaps still resemble most strikingly the wild extravagancies of the ancient Therapeutae. These societies, now existing in five or six of our States, are therefore just as truly to be regarded as a kind of monastic establishments as were those formed by saint Antony, and are under as strict supervision of superiors, perhaps, as are the popish convents.

To these establishments the same spirits may resort that in

papal lands would seek the papal cloisters.—And if they like not so well these austere abodes, there is yet another class of institutions now rising up, here and in Great Britain, of a gayer cast, to which they may resort for a part of the same purposes,—I mean the Socialists. In these last organizations, the world may see, perhaps, a really new development of the same general propensity—a monasticism without a religion. It has seen heathen, and Mohammedan, and Jewish monasticism; and patristic, and papal, and even Protestant monasticism; and whether it is now to see any full exhibition of infidel monasticism, will depend on the fact whether infidelity has spirit and cohesion enough for the protracted effort. It surely cannot be expected to exhibit much of the ascetic spirit, in the appropriate sense of that term.

How far Mormonism is likewise another development of the same general tendency, I will not now stand to inquire. If possessing enough of the same character to be ranked under the same genus, it must, like the great orders of knighthood in crusading times, be regarded as of a very militant species.

But I have said enough to show, that Christianity may well be exonerated from the charge of having given birth to such a monster as monasticism;—nay, enough to serve also as an apology for her not having yet fulfilled the hard task of sweeping it from the face of the earth;—and enough to serve likewise as a palliation of the sore fault into which, in her inexperienced youth, she was beguiled in receiving the meek-faced prodigy to her bosom.

It is time to turn our attention to a closer inspection of its lineaments as seen in the christian type it assumed in the Egyptian deserts. It was there that it first appeared in the christian form, in that land of anchorets, where, from time immemorial, the people have been propense to such a life, and where, as it is said, they may live almost forever and with almost nothing of either food or raiment. And it was from thence that this spiritual offspring of the Therapeutæ soon spread into Asia and Europe.

It is quite probable, as will be seen from some remarks in the life of Antony, that there were individual Christians, in diverse places, who led an ascetic life previous to his day. But how long such had been the fact and to what extent it had existed, we have not the means of determining. Saint Paulus, (as he is called in order to distinguish him from the apostle and other saints of the same name as written in Greek and Latin,) was certainly earlier; and therefore we shall begin with him.

For the following brief account of this Paulus, we are indebted

VOL. I. No. 2.

to the pen of Jerome, who was himself a distinguished monk, at Bethlehem in Judea, where he spent the last thirty-six years of his life, and died in the year 420, at the age of ninety. He was born of christian parents, at Stridon in Dalmatia, and by his residence in Rome and other places, and by his extensive travels, as well as from books, he enjoyed the best means for information, and became the first scholar of his age. He was passionately devoted to the cause of monasticism, which he promoted with all his influence, and defended against its assailants with his customary rancor. He has been charged with too slight a regard to veracity; but the fault in regard to great stories, may rather be imputed to his credulity. Previous to his residence at Bethlehem, he travelled into Egypt for the purpose of obtaining information in regard to the monks there.

His life of Paulus was written about the year 365. The translation, which is designed to be quite literal, is from the Latin as found in Jerome's works, Vol. IV. Part II. p. 68 seq. Paris ed. 1706. The correctness of the authorities on which he founds his opinion that Paulus was quite the first eremite, is now questioned, as Eusebius, in his *Hist. Ec.* VI 9, 10, speaks of Narcissus, bishop of Jerusalem, as having obtained renown by spending many years in the desert at the close of the second century.

#### LIFE OF SAINT PAULUS, BY JEROME.

It has been a question with many, who was the first monk that lived in the desert. For some have traced the practice back to Elijah and John. Of these, however, Elijah appears to have been more than a monk, and John was a prophet before he was born. Others, whose opinion is generally received, consider Antony the founder of the institution, which is partly true. For, he rather incited the zeal of all than preceded the whole of them in the order of time. Indeed, Amathas and Macarius, disciples of Antony, (the first of whom buried the body of his master,) even now affirm, that one Paulus, a Theban, was the author of the thing, though not of the name; which opinion I also approve. Some, as their fancies dictate, tell us, among other things, that he was a man, living in a subterranean cave, and covered with hair down to the foot, and many incredible things which it would be idle to relate. But their fabrications are too impudent to need refutation.

As an account of Antony has been carefully given, both in Greek and Latin, I have determined to write a few things re-



specting the beginning and the end of Paulus—more because the thing has been omitted, than relying on my own ability. But how he lived in middle life, and what temptations of Satan he endured, is known to no man.

Under the persecutors, Decius (A. D. 249 to A. D. 252) and Valerian (A. D. 257 to A. D. 260), when Cornelius of Rome and Cyprian of Carthage, nobly suffered martyrdom, a cruel tempest devastated many churches in Egypt and Thebais. Christians were then eager to suffer death for the name of Christ. But the crafty adversary sought out slow tortures, designing to destroy their souls, not their bodies: and as Cyprian, who himself suffered by him, says, "though wishing to die, we were not permitted to be slain." That his cruelty may be more known, I subjoin two examples.

A martyr, firm in the faith and triumphant under the tortures of the rack and hot plates of iron, he caused to be smeared with honey, and to be laid under a burning sun, with his hands bound behind his back, that he, who had already borne the burning plates, might yield to the stings of insects. Another, in the flower of youth, he caused to be conducted into the most delightful gardens, and there, amid white lilies and blushing roses, while a stream glided by with gently murmuring waters and the wind softly whispered in the leaves of the trees, to be laid supinely upon a bed of plumage, and then to be left confined by soft fetters of garlands so that he could not extricate himself. All then retired, and a beautiful harlot came and began to throw her arms about his neck with fond embrace, and, what it is a sin to speak of, *manibus obtreclare virilia, ut corpore in libidinem concitato, se victrix impudica superjaceret.* What to do or where to turn, the soldier of Christ knew not. Pleasure was vanquishing him whom torments had not subdued. At last, being inspired from heaven, biting off his tongue, he spit it in her face while she was kissing him. And thus the extreme pain that ensued overpowered the sense of concupiscence.

At the time such things were enacted in Lower Thebais, Paulus, now about sixteen years of age, with his sister now married, was left in a rich inheritance by the death of both his parents, himself deeply imbued with both Grecian and Egyptian literature, of a gentle disposition, and full of love to God. And when the tempest of persecution thundered exceedingly, he retired to a more remote and secluded villa. But to what will not the cursed thirst of gold compel the human heart! The husband of his sister conceived the wish to betray him whom he ought to have

concealed. Nor could the tears of his wife, as commonly, nor the relationship, nor an all-seeing God, recall him from the crime. He came upon him; he persisted; he followed cruelty as if it were piety.

When the very discreet youth ascertained this, he fled to the deserts of the mountains; and while awaiting the termination of the persecution, he changed necessity to choice. And advancing by degrees and again stopping, he at length came to a rocky mountain, not far from the base of which, was a large cave, which was closed by a stone. With the natural curiosity of man to discover things hidden, removing the stone and eagerly exploring, he perceived in the interior a large entrance open to the sky, and screened by the broad and luxuriant branches of an ancient palm, and disclosing a crystal fountain whose stream was, through a small aperture, immediately absorbed by the earth from which it sprang. There were also, in this rocky mountain, not a few habitations, in which were seen rusty anvils and hammers for coining money. Egyptian history informs us that this place was a clandestine mint in the time of Antony and Cleopatra.<sup>1</sup>

Delighted with this as an abode presented to him by God, he spent all his life there in prayer and solitude. The palm furnished him both food and raiment. That this may not be deemed impossible by any, I call Jesus and his holy angels to witness, that, in the part of the desert which is near Syria and adjoining the Saracens, I have seen and now see monks,<sup>2</sup> one of whom has been immured for thirty years, living on barley bread and pure water. Another, in an ancient reservoir, (which, in their language, the Syrians call *gubba*,) lived on five figs a day. These will appear incredible to such as do not believe that all things are possible to those who believe.

#### ANTONY'S VISIT TO PAULUS.

But to return from my digression. When the blessed Paulus had lived a heavenly life on earth of a hundred and thirteen years and Antony, now a nonagenarian, was abiding in another solitude, this thought, as he [Antony] used to say, came into his mind, that no monk more perfect than himself had settled in the desert. But

<sup>1</sup> I have not been able to ascertain satisfactorily the positions of this and several other places in the desert, which are mentioned in these sketches. Doubtless it lay east of the Nile.

<sup>2</sup> From the affirmation that he *then* saw them, it has been inferred that Jerome wrote this account while in that desert.

it was revealed to him by night, in his sleep, that there was another, further on, much better than himself, and that he ought to go and see him. Immediately, at dawn of day, the venerable old man, supporting his tottering limbs with a staff, commenced his journey, he knew not whither. And now the mid-day sun was beating upon him with scorching heat; still he held on his way, saying, I trust in my God ere long he will show me the fellow-servant he has promised me. Directly, he sees a man and horse commingled, to which the fancy of the poets has given the name of *hippocentaur*. At this sight he fortifies his forehead with the saving sign, and cries, Ho, thou! where does this servant of God dwell? But he, with a strange gnashing of teeth, and breaking, rather than speaking his words, made out, despite his hideous face, a sufficiently bland address. And by extending his right hand, he points out the right way; and so, with winged flight, passing over the open plains, he vanished from the eyes of the astonished saint. But whether it was the devil assuming this appearance in order to terrify him, or whether the desert, so prolific of monsters, produces likewise this beast, we are in doubt.

So Antony, marvelling and communing with himself on what he had seen, goes further on. Soon, in a stony valley, he sees a dwarfish being, with hooked nose, his forehead rough with horns, and his extremities terminating in goat's feet. Undaunted at this sight, likewise, Antony, as a good soldier, seized the shield of faith and the armor of hope. The animal, however, offered him the fruit of the palm tree for his journey, as a pledge of peace. Seeing this, Antony stopped and asked him who he was. He answered; I am a mortal, and one of the inhabitants of the desert, whom the heathen, under multifarious delusion, worship, calling us fauns, satyrs, and incubi. I come on an embassy from my race. We beg you to entreat for us the common Lord who, we know, came for the salvation of the world, and his sound hath gone forth into all the earth. As he said this, the aged traveller bedewed his face with abundant tears, which his great joy poured forth as an index of his heart. For he rejoiced at the glory of Christ and the overthrow of Satan. He wondered that he could understand his language; and beating the ground with his staff, he cried, Wo to thee, Alexandria, that worshippeth monsters instead of God. Wo to thee, harlot city, in which the demons of all the earth have flocked together. What wilt thou now say? The beasts speak of Christ; and thou worshippeth monsters in-

stead of God! While he was yet speaking, the horned animal fled with winged speed.

Some might be sceptical in regard to this, but its credibility is defended by what all the world saw in the reign of Constantine. For a man of this kind was brought alive to Alexandria, and afforded a grand spectacle to the people; and afterwards his dead body, preserved by salt from decay in the heat of summer, was brought to Antioch to be seen by the emperor.<sup>1</sup>

But to proceed with my narrative. Antony pursued his way, seeing nothing but the tracks of wild beasts and the wide waste of the desert. What to do, whither to turn, he knew not. And now another day was gone. Nothing remained save the confidence that he could not be deserted by Christ. The propitious shades of the whole night he spent in prayer. And at morning twilight, he sees a wolf, panting with burning thirst, creep in at the foot of a mountain. He followed her with his eyes, and coming near the cave when she had gone out, began to look in. He gained nothing by his curiosity, as the darkness prevented his seeing anything. But, as saith the Scripture, perfect love casteth out fear. And our wary explorer entered, with cautious tread and suppressed breathing, now advancing a little, and then stopping to listen. At length, through the horror of the great darkness, he descried, at a distance, a light; and hastening too eagerly, he struck his foot against a stone. Alarmed at the noise thus produced, Paulus shut the door and secured it with a lock. Then Antony, prostrating himself before the door, prayed for admission, even to the sixth hour and later, saying, Who I am and why I have come, thou knowest. I know I do not deserve to see thee;

<sup>1</sup> Neither Jerome nor the authorities he follows in this narrative, were any more credulous in regard to such monsters, than were many among the ancient heathen writers. The one here mentioned resembles the description given of the fabled satyr, which was an object of heathen worship in Greece, and perhaps was so at this time in Alexandria; and hence the denunciation here uttered by Antony. Plutarch in his life of Sylla, speaks of a satyr as having been brought to Sylla at Athens. And Pliny the Elder, in his Natural History, has abundance of strange stories to tell about monsters of the human and other species; and among the rest that of the centaur, of which Jerome has just expressed his doubts. One has only to read Pliny in order to gain a vivid impression of the profound ignorance which reigned, in his time, of distant regions of the known world, and of the strange beings with which a credulous imagination had peopled such regions.—All this, however, while it may in some degree account for Jerome's credulity, affords not even an apology for the above testimony to specific instances of fact, whether fabricated by Antony himself, or by some of his admirers.

still, I will not depart till I have seen thee. Why dost thou, who receivest wild beasts, repel a man? I have sought and have found; I knock that it may be opened; unless I obtain this, I will die here before thy door. Surely, thou wilt at least bury my body. Such things he persisted in saying, and remained fixed. To him the hero made answer in few words.<sup>1</sup> No one asks as he would threaten; no one calumniates with tears. And do you wonder that I will not receive you, when you come here to die? With such pleasantry, Paulus opens the door, and immediately they rush into mutual embraces, calling each other by their right names, and give thanks to the Lord together. And after a holy kiss, Paulus sat down and thus said to Antony: Behold him whom thou hast sought with such toil. His limbs are decayed with age; and untrimmed, hoary hairs cover him. Thou beholdest a man who will soon be dust. But, as charity beareth all things, tell me, I pray thee, how is it with the human race? Do new dwellings arise in ancient cities? Under what dominion is the world? Remain there any who are led captive by the delusion of devils?

Amid this converse, they perceive a raven, alighted on a bough of the tree above them, which gently hovered down and deposited a whole loaf of bread before their admiring eyes. When the raven was gone, 'Ho!' said Paulus, the Lord, truly paternal, truly compassionate, hath sent us a dinner. I have now, for sixty years, always received half a loaf; but, at thy coming, Christ hath doubled the allowance to his soldiers.

When they had given thanks they both sat down by the brink of the glassy fountain. But here arose the question, which should break the bread; this they discussed until nearly evening, Paulus urging the honor due to a guest; Antony, the respect due to age. At last they agreed that they would both take hold of the loaf and break it between them, each taking for his share what remained in his hands. Afterwards they knelt down and drank a little water from the spring, and presenting to God the offering of praise, passed the night in vigils.

When the day returned, Paulus said to Antony,—I have long known, brother, that thou wast in those parts: long ago God had promised thee to me as a fellow servant. But now that my time of rest is come, and as I have always desired to depart and to be

---

<sup>1</sup> A quotation from Virgil :

Talia perstabat memorans fixusque manebat.  
Ad quem responsum paucis ita reddidit heros.

with Christ, I have finished my course and there awaits me a crown of righteousness, thou hast been sent by the Lord, to cover my body with earth, yea to restore the dust to dust.

Antony, hearing this, entreated him, with sighs and tears, not to leave him, but to receive him as his companion on such a journey.

He replied, Thou oughtest not to seek thine own but another's wealth. It were better for thee to cast off the burden of the flesh and to follow the Lamb. Nevertheless, it is more expedient for the other brethren that they should still be instructed by thy example. Wherefore, I pray thee, go, unless it be grievous to thee, and bring, for my shroud, the cloak which Athanasius the bishop hath given thee.

The blessed Paulus made this request, not because (when he had so long worn no garments but the palm-leaves) he cared much whether his body decayed in clothes or naked, but for the purpose of alleviating the sorrow which his friend would feel if present at his death. Astonished at what he had heard respecting Athanasius and his cloak, and seeing as it were Christ in Paulus, Antony worshipped God in his heart, and could make no reply: but in silence and tears he kissed his eyes and hands, and returned to the monastery, which was afterward occupied by the Saracens. His steps could not keep pace with his zeal: but though his strength was weakened by fasting and broken with years, still his spirit prevailed over age.

At length, weary and panting, he finished his journey and reached his own abode. Two of his disciples, who had long been accustomed to attend upon him, met him and said, Father, where hast thou been so long? He replied, Woe to me, a sinner, who am not worthy to bear the name of monk. I have seen Elias, I have seen John in the desert, and verily I have seen Paul in Paradise. And so, closing his lips and beating his breast with his hand, he brought the cloak from his cell. In reply to the entreaty of his disciples for a more full explanation, he said, "A time to keep silence and a time to speak."

Then he went out, and, without taking a morsel of food, set out to return the way he came, thirsting for Paulus, longing to see him, having only him in his eye and mind. For he feared what really happened, that while he was gone Paulus should render to Christ the soul he owed him. Another day had dawned, and he had gone three hours on his return, when he saw Paulus ascending on high, shining with snowy whiteness amid bands of angels and choirs of prophets and apostles. Then he fell upon his face

and threw dust upon his head, with mourning and cries exclaiming, Why dost thou leave me, O Paulus? Why dost thou go without farewell? Known so late, dost thou go so soon?

Blessed Antony afterwards used to say, that he went over the rest of the way so swiftly that he flew like a bird: and not without reason; for, on entering the cave, he found,—with knees bent, the neck turned upward, and the hands extended toward heaven,—the lifeless body! At first he thought he was alive; and knelt beside him. But hearing none of the pantings usual in his prayers, he rushed to a tearful kiss, and found that even the holy corpse was offering prayer by its posture to the God to whom all things live.

Antony wrapped the body in the cloak and brought it out, chanting hymns and psalms after the christian tradition. He was greatly troubled because he had no spade to dig a grave. Full of thoughts, he wavered between various impulses. If, said he, I return to the monastery, it is four days' journey. If I remain here, I can do nothing more. I will die then, as is worthy. Falling beside thy champion, O Christ, will I pour forth my last breath.

While these thoughts were in his mind, two lions came running, with manes streaming upon their necks, from the direction of the inner desert. At first sight of them, he was terrified; but then, turning his thoughts to God, he stood fearless as if looking at doves. They came directly to the corpse of the aged saint and with a fawning motion of the tail, lay down at its feet, roaring hugely, to give him to understand that they mourned as well as they could. Then they began to dig the ground, vying with each other till they had made a cavity in the sand large enough for one man. Then, as if asking pay for their labor, they came to Antony, moving their ears and bending their necks and licking his hands and feet. He saw that they were asking for his blessing. Without delay, pouring forth his soul in praise to Christ, because even dumb animals knew that He was God, he said, Oh Lord, without whose will not a leaf of the tree drops nor one of the sparrows falls to the ground, give to these according to thy knowledge. And waving his hand, he sent them away.

When they were gone, he bent his aged shoulders to the burden of the sacred body, and laid it in the grave, and placed the earth upon it, and made a decent mound.

The next day, the pious heir, not to fail of possessing the goods of the intestate, took the tunic which Paulus had made for himself, with basket-work of palm leaves. He then returned to the monastery and rehearsed the whole story to his disciples: and on

the feasts of passover and pentecost, he always wore the tunic of Paulus.

In concluding this little work, I must ask those who know not their inherited wealth,—who clothe their houses with marble, who embroider their estates with one thread of villas—what was ever wanting to this naked old man? You drink from gems; he satisfied nature from the hollow of his hand. You weave gold in your tunics; he had not even the clothing of your meanest slave. But on the other hand, to this very poor man, paradise is open; while hell shall receive you, though covered with gold. He, though naked, preserved the robe of Christ; you, in your silks, have lost it. Paulus lies covered with mean earth, but shall rise to glory. You, enclosed in labored tombs of stone, shall burn with your treasures. I pray you, spare yourselves; spare at least the riches that you love. Why will you clothe even your corpses with gold-wrought vestments? Why does not your ambition cease, amid mourning and tears? Do not the corpses of the rich know how to rot unless in silk? Whosoever thou art that readest this, I entreat thee to remember Jerome a sinner,—who, if the Lord were to give him the choice, would much rather have the tunic of Paulus with his merits, than the purple of kings with their empires and their doom.

---

A powerful specimen of moral eloquence, truly, must this last paragraph be pronounced. For so short a one, it has rarely if ever been surpassed. It is as worthy as it is characteristic of Jerome. No wonder that the man who could wield such a pen, and with his whole soul embarked in the cause of monasticism, should excite "the ardor he kindled up, on this subject, among the Roman ladies;" and that he should be able to persuade two of the more wealthy of them, Paula and her daughter Eustachium, to accompany him in his pilgrimages to Palestine, and thence to Egypt, and finally to settle down for life with him at Bethlehem, and there devote their wealth to building monasteries, three for nuns, and one for monks.

But the passage is as characteristic of the age as it is of the genius of Jerome. And this, (though not to the exclusion of its grand moral bearing on the vanity of the world,) is the peculiarly instructive aspect it has for us. "Remember Jerome a sinner." Why, and for what purpose? Not simply, if at all, for the purpose of heeding his admonitions; but to pray for him as a sinner,



while here or in the fancied intermediate state, that he might the better be prepared for heaven itself. Accordingly, it was the custom of the age, at least for monkish writers, to affix to their names the term *Peccator*. And this by the way, came rather oddly to give the sur-name of Mercator to one Marius, a writer of this period; for some ignorant transcriber changed his *Peccator* into *Mercator*, and he has ever since gone by the name of Marius Mercator.

But there is another and more important phase in this doctrinal aspect of the passage. The whole power of this masterly appeal, is directed, not simply to an inward renunciation of a vain world, but to the assumption of monastic austerities—the very object for which Jerome wrote this life of Paulus, and for which he was now extolling his meritorious deeds. For, what was it in the lot of the poor Paulus, that the glowing heart of Jerome so coveted beyond the purple and empire of kings? “His MERITS,” replies the great father. This word, *merits*, is the only bad word we find in the passage; but the more we look at it, the worse does it become to our protestant eyes. And yet it is a word which, for a hundred worlds, Jerome would not have blotted. It is the very word for expressing that part of the false theology of the age, on which his darling institute rested. Here, in this doctrine of human merits, which were to be achieved by will-worship and a despising of the body, is found the enchantment that was then turning the christian world upside down. This was the death in the pottage which had now been two centuries in the seething; and by partaking whereof, the maddened church had been cast into her delirious ravings for holy pilgrimages, and for the ascetic life. Nearly losing sight of the merits of Christ except for sanctifying grace and the pardon of sins committed before baptism, men were taught to rely on their own extra achievements for cancelling their sins after baptism, and for carrying their souls directly to heaven at death, instead of their being consigned to an inferior abode.

One can only weep over the evils that were then flowing, and are still flowing, from the prolific sources of this and a few kindred errors into which the church had gradually fallen.—But as we proceed, we shall have more to see of the effects of this gangrene of self-righteous principles in her theology.

The life of saint Antony, by Athanasius, will next be presented.

[To be continued in the August No.]